



D.W. GRIFFITH



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screenplay by

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FIRST DRAFT

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D.W.GRIFFITH

Part 1

THE VISION

The chatter of an audience is heard, as we:

FADE IN

Theatrical curtains part. A screen within our screen begins to flicker to life with an EARLY SILENT MOVIE, in the style of Griffith's Biograph films.

(This little movie parallels the early struggles of Griffith's life.)

1. TITLE CARD: "THE FARMBOY'S VISION"
The biograph logo also appears on the card.
2. TITLE: Sleepy Valley.
3. ESTABLISHING LONG SHOT: A small country farmland nestled in a valley.
4. SHOT: A cornfield, crops blowing in the breeze.
5. SHOT: A boy, his mother, and his sister at work in the cornfield, while the father is asleep on the porch of their small house.
6. SINGLE: The father, rocking gently asleep in his chair. At his feet is a dog, also asleep.
7. TITLE: "Roaring Jake" - still fighting for the Confederacy --- with his mighty snore.
8. INSERT: The dog asleep at his feet. His nose twitches at a fly that buzzes around his head.
9. SINGLE: The boy, hard at work with his hoe. He stops and wipes his brow. He leans on his hoe, day-dreaming.
10. TITLE: Young hearts yearning for better things.
11. MASTER: The boy's father wakes up and yells at the boy to get him back to work.
12. SINGLE: The boy falls off his hoe, surprised out of his reverie. He jumps back to work.
13. FULL SHOT: The family working in the field.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

14. A BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE: A pond with weeping willows blowing lazily in the breeze of a summer's day.
15. TITLE: His secret place.
16. SAME LANDSCAPE: The boy meanders down to the pond. He sits and gazes into the water.
17. TITLE: The Vision.
18. A SUPERIMPOSITION appears in the water. It is Jesus Christ! Christ raises his arms out toward the boy. Then the superimposition disappears.
19. TITLE: Convinced he is destined
For greater things.
20. SINGLE: The boy sits by a window writing in a notebook.
21. TITLE: His Conquering Sword.
22. CLOSE-UP: The quill pen with which the boy writes.
23. TITLE: The bumpkin beginnings
of a would-be Shakespeare.
24. SINGLE: The boy in his room writing.

IRIS IN

IRIS OUT

25. EXTERIOR MASTER: The boy is orating under a tree in the meadow. He is reading aloud his little play, holding his notebook in his hand and acting out all the parts himself by switching back and forth from each character's position. He is a big ham actor.
26. TITLE: His first audience.
27. SHOT: A herd of cows impassively watch the boy's theatrics while chewing their cud.
28. TITLE: He confides his dreams
to Sister Bessie.
29. SHOT: The boy pets a cow and talks to it.

30. TITLE: "I don't want to be a farmer -
I want to be a great writer."

31. LONG SHOT: The boy and the cow.

IRIS IN

IRIS OUT

32. MASTER: The Postman, a comedy character actor with a long, white beard, ambles up to where the boy is again at work in the field.

33. TITLE: The outside world beckons.

34. SHOT: The boy opens his letter and reads it excitedly.

35. TITLE: A magazine accepts one
of his little stories.

36. SHOT: The boy jumps up and down excitedly.

37. SINGLE: On the porch, the dog starts to bark, causing the boy's father to fall off his chair. As the father picks himself up, confused at the ruckus, the boy runs up to show him the letter. Sternly, the father reads the letter, shaking his head. He points back to the field, indicating that the boy should go back to work. Disappointed, the boy kicks at the dirt, but goes back to his hoe.

38. TITLE: Determined to make something
of himself, he invests all his
savings in a ticket to the city.

39. SHOT: The local train station, a diagonal angle down the tracks. The boy stands waiting with a small satchel of his belongings. The train pulls in, the boy gets on it, and the train pulls out.

40. TITLE: We would like to imagine
the boy an instant success.
But the reality is not so grand.

41. SHOT: A crowd of rich folk stand waiting for an elevator in a hotel lobby. The elevator door opens, and we see that the boy is the elevator operator. He makes a big show of his job, welcoming the people into the elevator with a grand gesture and chattering away to the amusement of his otherwise snotty passengers. The door shuts and goes on to the next floor.

42. TITLE: He makes a conquest --
A member of a traveling acting troupe.
43. SHOT: The boy is showing off to a pretty girl in the hotel lobby.
44. TITLE: The Lure of the Stage.
45. CLOSE-UP: The girl. She does a few vaudeville steps.

CUT TO:

THE THEATER AUDIENCE

Watching this little silent movie are a mother and her two teenaged daughters (MRS. GISH and LILLIAN and DOROTHY).

As it is 1912, the girls are conservatively and identically dressed, their long, fair hair in curls with little bows. They are pretty girls, dressed to look younger than their age. Their mother is very proper and loving.

DOROTHY suddenly recognizes the girl in the movie on the screen.

DOROTHY

Oh! It's Gladys!
(she pokes her sister)
Look Lillian! Mother, look!
It's Gladys!

CUT BACK TO:

46. SHOT: The boy and Gladys flirting with each other.
47. TITLE: She finds him a job
with the acting troupe.
- MRS. GISH
(voice-over)
Why I believe you're right, Dorothy.
It is Gladys. I would never have thought
Mrs. Smith would allow her daughter to
appear in a flicker!
48. SHOT: Some actors, in medieval costumes, hamming it up to a small audience on an even smaller stage.
49. TITLE: The Twilight Revelers.

50. SHOT: On stage, a person in a bear outfit comes bounding on to the stage. The other actors go running off the stage, wildly gesticulating fear, leaving the bear alone on the stage. Gladys walks across the stage pulling a curtain.
51. TITLE: His first big part.
52. SHOT: Backstage, Gladys helps the bear off with its head. It is the boy, delighted with his success on the stage.

In the movie audience, LILLIAN turns to her mother.

LILLIAN

Maybe Gladys could find work for us in the flickers too, Mother.

MRS. GISH

Why Lillian, the very idea! We are stage actresses.

LILLIAN

Can't we go see her anyway, Mother?

DOROTHY

Oh yes, can't we go! Can't we go! Please, Mother!

Dorothy is bouncing up and down in her seat.

MRS. GISH

Dorothy! Deport yourself! I fear Gladys may have lost all propriety. However, since we must be in New York next week for the Belasco auditions anyway, I see no reason why we can't pay her a visit. Let us not judge, lest we ourselves be judged.

LILLIAN

(angelic)

Thank you, Mother.

Back to the "flicker" on the screen.

53. TITLE: Stranded---an actor's lot.
54. SHOT: Out on the streets of the city, several of the theater players are bidding each other goodbyes - going off in different directions carrying their suitcases. The show has folded. The boy timidly approaches Gladys. They shyly shake hands.

55. TITLE: They vow to meet again.
56. SHOT: Gladys leaves, trudging her suitcase. The boy gazes after her, then turns and exits the frame in the other direction.
57. SHOT: The boy shoveling concrete on a road crew - hard work under the hot sun.
58. TITLE: Working his way back home.
59. SHOT: The boy huddled against the wind on an open flat car of a train as it moves through the countryside.
60. LONG SHOT: The boy's family home. As the boy trudges home in disgrace, the dog leaps from the porch, barking a friendly welcome.
61. MEDIUM SHOT: As the boy approaches the door, his mother's arms reach out for him and embrace him. She is in mourning.
62. TITLE: The tragic news -
His father has died.
63. SHOT: The empty rocking chair, rocking in the wind.
64. TITLE: The family moves to the city,
looking for work.
65. SHOT: The boy is selling Encyclopedias door-to-door. He carries the heavy load of books up the stairs of a city tenement and knocks. A burly beer-drinker opens the door. The boy hardly has a chance to begin his spiel when the brute threatens to punch him. The boy retreats.
66. TITLE: The public is hard to please.
67. SHOT: The boy wearily climbs another set of stairs with his encyclopedias. Pulling himself together, he puts on his salesman's smile and knocks. It is Gladys that opens the door! They hug each other in surprise and happiness, the boy dropping his books.
68. TITLE: The Twilight Revelers re-united.
69. SHOT: The acting troupe, including Gladys and the boy, taking happy bows on the stage.
70. TITLE: In his spare time,
he continues to write.

71. SHOT: Gladys looks over the boy's shoulder as he writes.
72. TITLE: The big break -
The famous producer likes his play.
73. SHOT: In a large office, a very dignified, suited gentleman shakes the boy's hand and gestures toward his manuscript. The boy sports a new suit --- and a mustache, which he twists self-consciously with his fingers.
74. TITLE: A new role to play.
75. SHOT: The boy and Gladys shyly hold hands in a wedding ceremony, with his mother and sister and members of the acting troupe watching.
76. CLOSER 2-SHOT: The boy and Gladys shyly kiss.

IRIS IN

77. END TITLE CARD, with the Biograph logo.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

CITY STREET - DAY

New York City - 1912

Photo montage of Manhattan, ending on a 4-story brownstone at 11 East 14th Street - the old Biograph motion picture studio. A sign on the first floor window says: American Mutoscope and Biograph Company.

MRS. GISH, with LILLIAN and DOROTHY, pause at the sign, then enter.

A RECEPTIONIST, a middle-aged man with a cigar, sits in a booth next to a winding staircase. Mrs. Gish approaches him.

MRS.GISH

Will you kindly let us see Gladys Smith?

RECEPTIONIST

(friendly, but puzzled)

I'm afraid there's no one here by that name.

DOROTHY

(piping up)

But we saw her in one of your pictures -
"The Farmboy's Vision." Gladys Smith.



DOROTHY AND LILLIAN GISH

Suddenly a boyish voice chimes in from behind them.

VOICE

You mean Mary Pickford.

The Gishes turn around and see a teenaged boy sweeping the steps.

BOY

I'll go get her for you.

The boy goes off up the stairs. Lillian and Dorothy look after him.

DOROTHY

He's cute! He sure does look familiar.

LILLIAN

He's the boy in the movie!
 (she turns to the receptionist)
 Isn't he the boy in the movie?
 Why is he sweeping steps?

RECEPTIONIST

(matter-of-factly)

Yeah. That's Bobby Harron. He was in the movie. So was I. You never know what you're going to do next in this place.

CUT TO:

THE WOMEN'S DRESSING ROOM - UPSTAIRS

The boy, Bobby Harron, steals quietly to the open door of the dressing room and eavesdrops on three young actresses who are gossiping in front of the mirror. Bobby leans on his broom, much as we saw him leaning on his hoe as the boy in the movie.

1ST ACTRESS

Mary, have you heard! Mr. Griffith just gave the lead part in "The Sands of Dee" to that new girl, Mae Marsh!

Outraged, Mary tosses her long curls and pouts.

MARY

Mae Marsh! That was my part!

1ST ACTRESS

Mr. Griffith said it was her reward for wearing that awful grass skirt in that caveman picture.

MARY

So! I suppose Mr. Griffith thinks it's more important for an actress to show her legs than having 6 years experience on the stage! Oh, he'll be sorry!

2ND ACTRESS

(giggling)

I heard its 'cause she went out dancing with him last night.

Mary suddenly spots Bobby in the mirror.

MARY

What are you gooning at, dumbell?

BOBBY

(grinning)

There are some friends of yours downstairs looking for you, Gladys.
(He is making fun of her old name)

Mary shakes her fist at Bobby.

MARY

My name's Mary. Mary Pickford, America's Sweetheart! And don't you forget it!

Bobby, playing, puts up his dukes as if to fight. Mary takes a swing at him and he jumps out of the way fast. He doesn't want to tangle with her. She "hms" haughtily, her chin in the air, and exits to greet her friends. Bobby makes faces after her.

As Mary comes down the stairs, Dorothy spots her.

DOROTHY

Gladys!

MARY

Dorothy! Lillian!

The girls hug and kiss - good friends happy to see each other again. Mrs. Gish kisses Mary on the cheek.

LILLIAN

Oh, Gladys. We saw you in the flickers and decided we had to come visit you.

MARY

Oh, my name's not Gladys Smith anymore. It's Mary Pickford. Mr. Belasco thought it sounded better, and so he changed it while I was in "The Warrens of Virginia."

LILLIAN

(impressed)

Mr. Belasco! Why we had hoped to audition for Mr. Belasco.

MARY

(bragging)

I shall be in his new play.

CUT TO a POV of the group from the top of the stairs, as they chatter away animatedly. Sun streams in from the street, bathing the room in warm light.

DOROTHY

If you're to be in a play, how come you're working in the movies?

MARY

Oh, movies are great between stage jobs. I get seventy-five dollars a week!

LILLIAN

(even more impressed)

Seventy-five dollars! Imagine!

MARY

You and Dorothy should try doing movies too. You can always work in them while you're looking for a play.

Lillian is suddenly aware of a presence watching them. Her eyes are drawn to the top of the stairs.

There is a break in the conversation as Dorothy, Mrs. Gish and finally Mary's attention is drawn to where Lillian is staring.

From their point-of-view, we see a tall, imposing man of 37 at the top of the stairs. He wears a tailored suit and a wide-brimmed straw hat. He gazes down intently on the Gishes, his eyes seeming to examine them. It is D.W.GRIFFITH.

From Griffith's POV, we see Lillian standing in the light that streams through the window, the backlighting seeming to form a halo around her long blonde hair. She is a vision of beauty.

Griffith breaks into a few bars of a love duet from "Tristan und Isolde," his fine baritone voice projecting magnificently down the stairs.

MARY
Oh, Mr. Griffith.

GRIFFITH
Yes, Mary?

MARY
I'd like you to meet my old friends -
Mrs. Gish and her daughters, Lillian
and Dorothy.
(to the Gishes)
Mr. Griffith is in charge of all our
productions here.

Griffith proceeds down the stairs. The Gishes are awed by the authority that Griffith exudes. He extends his hand to Mrs. Gish.

GRIFFITH
How do you do, Mrs. Gish.
(teasing Mary)
Mary, aren't you afraid to bring
such pretty girls into the studio?
They might steal your job away.

MARY
(saucy)
I'm not afraid of any little girls,
Mr. Griffith. Besides, Lillian and
Dorothy are my friends

Griffith continues to examine the girls with his eyes - Lillian in particular.

GRIFFITH
(to Lillian)
Where are you from?

LILLIAN
The theater---
but we come from Massillon, Ohio.

GRIFFITH
(mispronouncing the word on purpose)
Massillyoon---well I knew you were
Yankees the minute I saw you.
(to Mrs. Gish)
Can they act?

DOROTHY
(with great comic dignity)
Sir, we are of the legitimate theater.

GRIFFITH

Indeed. But I don't just mean reading lines. We don't deal in words here. This is very different from the legitimate theater.

(he smiles)

There is only one way to find out if you will do. With your mother's permission, would you young ladies please come upstairs into the rehearsal hall.

Griffith points them up the stairs with a sweep of his hand, and Lillian and Dorothy flow with his gesture right up the stairs. Mrs. Gish waits downstairs, ever the quiet chaperone of her two child-actor daughters.

GRIFFITH

(teasing Mary)

Well, Miss Mary. You may well be sorry...

MARY

You're the one who'd be sorry, Mr. Griffith - if you lost my valuable services.

Upstairs is a large, unfinished room, with a large skylight and exposed beams. It is set up with a few basic props - tables and chairs and lamps. A painted backdrop of a landscape hangs askew against a wall. A hand-cranked camera on a tripod sits imposingly at one side of the room.

Several actors are sitting around, including Kate Bruce who we saw as the mother in "The Farmboy's Vision." Griffith introduces the Gishes to the other actors.

GRIFFITH

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the Gish sisters, Miss Lillian and Miss Dorothy -- of the legitimate theater.

(the other actors chuckle)

We shall rehearse the story of the two girls who are trapped in an isolated house while thieves are trying to break in and rob the safe.

Suddenly distracted, Griffith approaches a young woman with a note pad, evidently his secretary, and gives her a memorandum.

GRIFFITH

Miss Weiner, please remind me to tell Mr. Bitzer about a halo effect. I would like to work out with him.

The secretary makes a note.

Griffith suddenly turns his attention back to his actors. Standing by the camera, he gives directions to the girls. His voice takes on an ominous tone.

GRIFFITH

Now Dorothy, you hear a strange noise.

Dorothy watches as Griffith gives the instructions, then begins to pantomime the action.

GRIFFITH

Now run to your sister.
Lillian, you're scared too.
(He watches as Dorothy runs to Lillian)
Look toward me, where the camera is.
Show your fear. You hear something.
What is it? You're two frightened
children, trapped in a lonely house
by these brutes. They're in the next
room.

The intensity of Griffith's voice compells them to react, forgetting their initial stagefright. They do look scared.

Griffith turns to one of the other actors.

GRIFFITH

Elmer, pry open a window. Climb
into the house. Kick down the door
to the room that holds the safe.
You are mean. These girls are hiding
thousands of dollars. Think what
that will buy...

Griffith hams up his description of the scene with great melodramatic flair. The actor, Elmer, goes through the motions with a sinister snarl on his face.

GRIFFITH

Lillian! You hear the door breaking.
You panic! You run and bolt the door!

LILLIAN
(confused)

What door?

GRIFFITH

Right in front of you! I know
there's no door, but pretend there
is. Run to the telephone...

Lillian is catching on. There is no telephone either, but she pretends there is. Elmer keeps making threatening gestures from the side.

GRIFFITH

Start to use the telephone.
No one answers. You realize the wires have been cut. Let the camera see what you feel. This way. Fear! More fear! Look into the camera. Now you see a gun coming through a hole in the wall. Look scared, I tell you!

Griffith raises the intensity of his voice, working the girls into a frenzy.

GRIFFITH

No, that's not enough. Girls, hold each other. Cower in the corner.

Suddenly, Griffith pulls a gun from his vest pocket and takes a step toward the girls. He starts firing the gun in the air.

GRIFFITH

I'm going to get you!
I'm going to get you!

Terrified, the girls start instinctively scurrying around the room trying to get away from Griffith. He pursues them, firing the gun in the air.

Just as suddenly, he stops and puts the gun away.

The girls are hiding underneath a table, with their hands covering their heads. The other actors chuckle in amusement as the girls finally dare to look out.

Griffith is smiling at them, pleased.

GRIFFITH

Girls, you have fine expressive bodies and good instincts. I think I can use you, if you would like to work for me. Would you like to work for me?

The girls crawl out from under the table, trying to regain their composure - rather wonderstruck by the whole thing.

LILLIAN

We would have to talk to our mother first.

GRIFFITH

I can use both of you and your mother as extras today - for which you will be paid five dollars each. That is, unless you have other engagements.

LILLIAN

Oh, well no. We have no other engagements.

GRIFFITH

Good. Bobby, show our new actresses to the dressing room and have them outfitted for the theater scene.

Bobby shows the girls off down the stairs. Griffith grabs Kate Bruce and starts whirling her around in circles.

GRIFFITH

C'mon, Brucie, let's dance.

The older woman enjoys doing a few turns with D.W. He supplies the music, improvising ta-da, ta-da, tada's to waltz time.

The CAMERA MOVES IN on GRIFFITH'S FACE as they dance. We hear the music of his mind become a reality as played by a dance hall orchestra.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK to reveal Griffith waltzing with a pretty young woman. They are but one of several couples waltzing on a small revolving dance floor in a turn-of-the-century New York dance hall. The small orchestra plays to the side.

Griffith's dancing partner is one of the regular dancers from the dance hall. The other girls sit together at one side of the hall waiting to be asked to dance. The young men mill about at a distance looking them over. A sign reads "10¢ a Dance".

As Griffith dances grandly around and around, his eyes catch sight of a woman in her early 30's who is standing impatiently at the side of the revolving floor trying to get his attention.

Griffith finishes his dance and escorts the girl back to the waiting area. He then lets the revolving floor bring him around to the woman who has been waiting for him. It is LINDA ARVIDSON GRIFFITH, his estranged wife.

GRIFFITH

Would you care to dance, Linda?

LINDA

(tersely)

I would care to sit down and discuss business.

This is one woman Griffith cannot charm.

Linda turns and leads Griffith to a booth where they can sit and talk in relative privacy.

LINDA

(suddenly looking Griffith in the eyes)

David, I don't suppose there's
any chance of us getting back
together...

Griffith shakes his head and looks off toward the dancers. This is painful for him.

GRIFFITH

Linda, Linda, we've been through this
so many times. The arguments...
the fights...

(he looks back toward her)

You drain me of my energy.
I can't do my work.

LINDA

Yes. You're married to your work. *Look.*
I need more money. I understand you're
negotiating new contracts.

GRIFFITH

I wouldn't
forget my obligation to you, Linda.
You're still my wife.

LINDA

You forgot about me quick enough
every time some new little girl
came into the company.

GRIFFITH

The camera is cruel, Linda.
It demands young faces.
It's not like when we were on the
stage together. You've never
understood the camera and what
it demands.

LINDA

It's not the camera that's cruel,
David.

GRIFFITH

I have to be faithful to my vision.

LINDA

And that's more important than
being faithful to your wife?

Griffith cannot argue with her anymore. He remains silent. But Linda will not stop. She is too wound up in her accusations.

LINDA

Yes, I know.....please don't start that again, Linda. We both agreed to separate and not divorce.

An actress herself, Linda plays out the argument, acting both sides.

LINDA

How very convenient for you, David.
You and your little girlfriends.
Free to dally, but not to marry.
Be discreet and avoid scandal.
We wouldn't want a scandal, would we?
No. A scandal would ruin your career...
and my source of income.

Suddenly, Linda's tone changes from accusing to wistful.

LINDA

Your career...your vision...
David, you've left me behind!

She looks at him once more, then buries her head in her arms on the table. Griffith sits quietly, his forehead to his hand.

The CAMERA MOVES AWAY from Griffith and Linda, back into the dance floor, where the waltz music again takes over, and the dancing couples block our view of Griffith and Linda.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. BIOGRAPH STUDIO - DAY

Lillian is sitting in front of a window, playing with a kitten. She is all innocence and charm.

We PULL BACK to see that the window is a prop, part of a set in the Biograph Studio hall. Lillian is about to be photographed for the first time. There is a lot of hustle and bustle going on around the set, but she is oblivious to it.

Off to the side, Mary stands watching Lillian with great curiosity.

Griffith is beside the camera talking with his cameraman, Billy Bitzer.

GRIFFITH

What I would like to get is
a halo of light around her head.

BITZER

A halo.

Heavy-set in his early 40's, BITZER feigns disgruntlement whenever Griffith mentions something new. He is a great mechanic, and always looks on the practical side of things. He's a comedian.

GRIFFITH

Yes. I think we can do it by
shining the light in from behind
her, like sunlight.

BITZER

(mulling it over)

A halo....

GRIFFITH

Why don't we just move the light
behind the the window and see what
happens.

Bitzer is still mulling it over. He's about to say "a halo" again, but Griffith beats him to the punch.

GRIFFITH

Yes, a halo.

BITZER (slow and deliberate)

I've figured it out...
and it can't be done.
If ya move the light behind the window,
ya might get a halo, but ya won't
see her face.

(as if reciting from his own special textbook)
If ya shine the light toward the camera,
the face goes dark on the film.

GRIFFITH

Well see if you can't come up with
something, Billy.

Griffith turns back to Lillian.

BITZER

(muttering to himself)
Next he'll want little wings of light.

We CLOSE IN to an INTIMATE 2-SHOT of Lillian and Griffith, as Griffith gives her his instructions for the scene.

GRIFFITH

Now Lillian, you are no longer just one individual girl - you are no longer just Lillian Gish. For me you must be the essence of all girlhood. You must have the wonder, the curiosity, the reserve, and the trust of every girl everywhere.

From the side, Mary strains to hear Griffith's every word to Lillian. An anger grows in her - she has heard Griffith's seduction before.

GRIFFITH

(to Lillian)

Remember, this is not the stage, where the audience may be far away and not able to see what you are doing. The audience is as close to you as the camera. As close as I am.

LILLIAN

What should I do?

GRIFFITH

Don't worry about what you do. Don't try to act. All you have to do is feel what I ask you to feel, and the camera will see what you are feeling.

Lillian listens intently, hypnotized by his voice.

GRIFFITH

(continuing to Lillian)

Now in this scene, Bobby will be seeing you for the first time. It will be love at first sight. But you must be every girl, everywhere, and every boy who sees this motion picture will fall in love with you. This is what you must become for me. Do you understand?

LILLIAN

Yes.

GRIFFITH

Good. Then we're going to shoot it.

Griffith goes back and stands beside the camera. He nods to Pilly, and Billy starts to handcrank the camera.

GRIFFITH

Now Lillian, you are playing with the kitten.

Lillian starts playing with the kitten again.

 GRIFFITH
 (Off-Screen)

Now Bobby comes into the room.
He sees you. Bobby is standing
right where the camera is.
Now slowly, ever so slowly, you
raise your eyes and see him.

Lillian shyly raises her eyes to the camera. She is indeed a lovely
vision of idealized Victorian girlhood.

Mary watches, sizing up her new competition. Now she turns and
quietly leaves the set.

We CUT TO a CLOSE-UP of Lillian, as she gazes into the camera,
radiant in her everygirlness.

CUT TO:

INT. BIOGRAPH STUDIO - A DIFFERENT SET

Griffith is directing Mary Pickford and an older man, Charles Mailles,
in another scene.

Now it is Lillian who stands to the side watching Griffith rehearse
the performers.

Mary is in contemporary dress and is wearing a particularly silly
and elaborate woman's hat. Mailles plays her father in the scene.

 GRIFFITH

Now, Mr. Mailles. You are a very
stern father and you forbid Mary
to wear this ridiculous hat out in
public. Mary, you get very angry -
You've saved all your money to buy this
hat, and your heart is set on wearing
it. Now let's see it.

Griffith steps back and the actors rehearse.

 MR. MAILES

Mary, I forbid you to wear that
disgraceful hat. You look like
a jezebel!

Mary recoils, tightening her fists in determination, but her face
does not look very angry.

 MARY

Well I'm going to wear it!



MARY PICKFORD

GRIFFITH

More anger, Mary. You're acting.
You don't feel it.

Marv flares at Griffith, then repeats her action without much change.

MARY

Well, I'm going to wear it!

GRIFFITH

Well Marv, if that's the best you
can do, perhaps we should have Miss
Lillian try it. Maybe you're getting
a little old for this kind of part.

Marv flares and shoots back her answer at Griffith:

MARY

I know just what you're trying to do!
You're trying to make me jealous.
Well it won't work! And if you think...

Marv shakes her fist toward D.W. at the camera. Griffith smiles
and taps Bitzer on the shoulder.

GRIFFITH

Shoot it, Billy.

Billy starts cranking the camera on Marv, who is now genuinely
angry.

GRIFFITH

Tell her about the hat, Mr. Mailes.

Mailes does his line:

MR. MAILES

Marv, I forbid you to wear that
disgraceful hat. You look just
like a jezebel.

Marv, the total professional, immediately falls into character and
does the scene, using her real anger with Griffith to do it right.

MARY

Well I'm going to wear it!

GRIFFITH

Now that's what I wanted.
It's a darb!. Now let's get
on with the next scene.

Mary does not appreciate having been tricked by Griffith. She stamps off the set, humiliated in front of Lillian and the rest of the company.

CUT TO:

INT. A TRAIN CAR - MOVING THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE

All the Biograph players and technicians are riding the train to a country location in upstate New York.

They are in high spirits, like going to a picnic. The women are singing a very upbeat version of "Yes We Shall Gather At the River." Some of the men are playing cards.

Raoul Walsh, a handsome young actor, is sitting next to Miriam Cooper, a darkly beautiful young actress; they are flirting with each other.

Griffith comes walking down the aisle from the next car. Running up the aisle and dodging past Griffith come Bobby Harron, pursued by Dorothy Gish - both screaming wildly like little children.

Toward the end of the car, Kate Bruce is happily singing and knitting away. Propped next to her is a mirror in which Lillian is trying out a range of facial expressions to see how they look. She makes a pathetic little smile by using two fingers to just slightly push up the sides of her lips. She lets the curiously ethereal expression freeze on her face as she lapses into a reverie.

Griffith takes note of the little smile as he passes by.

GRIFFITH

You look like DaVinci's Mona Lisa,
Miss Lillian, with that curious
little smile. I wonder what you
could possibly be thinking?

Lillian jumps at Griffith's voice, surprised, then embarrassed to be caught looking at herself in the mirror.

LILLIAN

Oh, Mr. Griffith. I was just
practising...

GRIFFITH

Miss Lillian, there's a young
woman in the next car down, with
a new baby. Perhaps you should
go sit with her for a while.

LILLIAN

I don't understand.

GRIFFITH

Well, if you are going to play the part of the young mother in this production, don't you think you had better spend some time observing how a real mother acts?

LILLIAN

The young mother? But I thought Mary was going to play the young mother.

GRIFFITH

If you don't think you're mature enough to do it...

LILLIAN

Oh, I can do it, Mr. Griffith. I can be very mature.

GRIFFITH

I thought so.

(to Kate Bruce)

And Bruce, you'll play Miss Lillian's aunt. Why don't you both go look at the baby.

KATE BRUCE

Yes, Mr. Griffith.

Griffith proceeds on to the next car where Billy Bitzer has his camera apart. He is cleaning and tinkering with the pieces.

BITZER

Hey, Warko, va wanna see the new gismo for making those la-de-da blackouts you're always bugging me ta do? Huh?

He shows Griffith a black metal iris with movable plates to make a circular opening of variable size.

BITZER

Look! We tack it on "mine lieber" here...

(he is referring to his camera)

And remember this, I can close it down...

(he demonstrates the iris)

Or I can open it up. Just like me lady's eveball. That's what ya wanted, ain't it?

Griffith is very pleased.

GRIFFITH

It's an iris, Billy. The camera eye now has an iris!

BITZER

Anyways, it beats trying ta do it with a cigar box! Up down, up down. Maybe it'll get your moneymen friends off my back for wasting film on blackouts.

GRIFFITH

I hope so, Billy. Have you figured out how to do that backlighting idea yet?

BITZER

There you go again. Why can't ya be happy doing it the simple way, Warko. Always has to be something new, something new. Why don't ya ever take a vacation!

GRIFFITH

A vacation! What do you call this we're on now. A week in the country, free expenses, the beauties of nature...

BITZER

Three pictures in 7 days ain't no vacation. I don't care if it's Miami, Florida.

GRIFFITH

Billy, if you had more than one day off a week, you wouldn't know what to do with yourself. What's more enjoyable than making pictures.

BITZER

Drinking beer for one thing. I can't say in the presence of ladies what the other thing is.

Billy signals down the aisle referring to Mary Pickford who is hustling toward them from the next car. She does not look happy.

MARY

I've been looking for you, Mr. Griffith.

GRIFFITH

Well here I am, Mary. How do the accommodations suit you?

MARY

The accommodations suit me just fine, thank you. But what's the meaning of this!

She holds out an Indian costume.

GRIFFITH

(feigning innocence)

Why that's your Indian costume, Mary.

MARY

(sarcastic)

I know that's my Indian costume, Mr. Griffith. But I thought I was playing the young mother!

GRIFFITH

No, I've assigned that part to Miss Lillian.

MARY

(shaking her fist at D.W.)

Oh, you'll be sorry, Mr. Griffith!

GRIFFITH

Well Mary, except for me, you make more money than anyone else in this company; and, at your insistence, your name and picture are now used in the company's announcements. But as far as I'm concerned, you're just another member of the company.

MARY

Not for long. I think you should know that I've accepted an offer from David Belasco to star in his production of "A Good Little Devil." I shall receive top billing and receive twice the salary that this company pays me. So this Indian picture will be the last time that I will be just another member of your stock company, Mister Griffith.

Griffith seems momentarily taken aback. Then he extends his hand toward Mary in friendship.

GRIFFITH

Why I...I'm sincerely sorry that you will be leaving us, Mary. But perhaps it is time that you struck out on your own. You are a very capable actress, and I'm sure you'll be a great success with David Belasco. May God be with you. I wish you well.

Mary accepts Griffith's handshake, herself moved by the sincerity of Griffith's statement.

CUT TO:

EXT. A DIRT ROAD - DAY

The players are walking down the road carrying their suitcases, still singing. Ahead is their destination: a large old resort hotel on a beautiful lake. The sign reads: Cuddebackville Inn.

Arriving simultaneously is an open car driven by the hotel owner, carrying Griffith, Mary, and Billy Bitzer with his camera equipment. The car is hopelessly overloaded. Dorothy and Bobby hop a ride on the running board as the car chugs and spits its way up to the hotel.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP: LILLIAN

She waves her arms about, screaming, helpless, as the wagon in which she is sitting careens along a country road, out-of-control.

Lillian wears an early American settler's costume, with bonnet and long dress. She appears to be alone at the front of the wagon, with the horses dashing madly along.

We PULL BACK to see that on the other side of the wagon are Billy Bitzer and his camera shooting the scene - and a driver who controls the horses.

Gallop~~ing~~ up beside Lillian on another horse is actor Raoul Walsh in a pioneer outfit. He yells to her:

WALSH
Jump! I'll catch you. Jump!

Lillian stands up, hesitates a moment, then leaps toward Raoul's outstretched arms. He grabs her, awkwardly pulling her on to the saddle in front of him.

Walsh hauls his horse to a stop and lowers the stolid Lillian to the ground. A car pulls up in which Griffith has been following.

GRIFFITH
It's a darn! Now that's what I call acting!

Griffith's car proceeds ahead to where the wagon has stopped.

GRIFFITH
Did you get it Billy?

Catching her breath, Lillian looks up at Walsh in admiration.

LILLIAN

Mr. Walsh, I'm so glad you're experienced at doing this sort of thing. Otherwise, I would have been scared out of my wits.

Walsh shakes his head, his face pale with fright.

WALSH

Miss Gish, I've never done this before in my life!

Lillian's eyes open wide in astonishment.

CUT TO:

EXT. A CLIFF OVERHANGING THE LAKE

Mary Pickford, in her Indian costume, stands at the edge looking nervously down. It is about a 25-foot drop into deep water.

Griffith also looks over the edge. Two cameras are set up below. Raoul Walsh is operating one camera; Bobby Barron is at the other.

GRIFFITH

Are you ready down there?

WALSH

Ready!

BOBBY

I'm ready, Mr. Griffith

Mary turns to Griffith.

MARY

I hope you're ready, Mr. Griffith, 'cause I'm only going to do this once.

Griffith steps back to where Bitzer has his 3rd camera set up back on the cliff.

BITZER

Warko, I hope ya got a real good explanation for ya moneymen friends when they find out we shot the same scene with three cameras...



BILLY BITZER AND D. W. GRIFFITH

GRIFFITH

Let me worry about that, Billy.
Miss Mary is only willing to do
it once, and I want to make sure
we get it.

BITZER

You'll get it ----three times!

As Bitzer begins to crank the camera, Griffith calls out through
a megaphone:

GRIFFITH

Alright Mary, Let's do it!

MARY

(to herself)

This is my last leap for you,
Mister Griffith!

Mary races to the edge of the cliff, as if pursued.

All three cameras are cranking.

She looks around in fear. She is trapped!

GRIFFITH

(through the megaphone)

Alright, now, you two - move in
on her! You have her trapped!

Two very mean looking actors in trappers outfits move menacingly
toward Mary.

GRIFFITH

Alright Mary. JUMP!

Mary straightens up in defiance. Just as the two men are about to
grab her, she throws herself off the cliff.

As we hear the splash, Bitzer stops grinding and turns to D.W.

BITZER

Warko, she's gone. She swims?

GRIFFITH

(wickedly)

Who knows.

Bitzer and Griffith exchange a conspirator's look.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUDDEBACKVILLE INN - DAY

The company is on its lunch break. They sit around at outside tables enjoying box lunches.

Dorothy and Bobby and some of the younger children of the company are playing follow the leader behind a parade of little ducklings that follow their mother around the grounds. The children imitate the ducks' walk and make quacking noises.

BOBBY & DOROTHY

Quack! Quack! Quack! Quack!

Griffith and Bitzer are drinking beer at a table. Bitzer is playing with a little metal flywheel, that he spins on the table.

BITZER

So Warko, when are we going to stop fooling around and get rich in this business? That's what I wanna know. Why don't you get your head outta the clouds.

But Griffith is not listening. He is gazing across at the next table - at Lillian Gish.

Lillian sits alone, her head in the clouds, enjoying a quiet moment. She is aware that Griffith is staring in her direction, but she isn't letting on. The sun backlights her as before, giving her a halo-like radiance.

BITZER

Hey, Warko, the ducks are eating your lunch.

Bitzer is not succeeding in getting Griffith's attention.

BITZER

Hey, Warko, are you there?

A waiter comes to Lillian's table and spreads out a white tablecloth in front of her. The sunlight reflecting off the tablecloth suddenly illuminates her face.

GRIFFITH

That's it! That's the answer!

BITZER

What's the question?

GRIFFITH

Look over there.
(he points to Lillian)
Look at her face!

BITZER
(stubborn)
Whose face?

GRIFFITH
Miss Lillian's!

BITZER
Ya, she's very pretty.

Bitzer starts playing with his little metal flywheel again.

GRIFFITH
No, the light! Look at the light
on her face!

Bitzer looks again at Lillian, slowly realizing what Griffith is talking about.

BITZER
The light on her face...

GRIFFITH
Is there enough light on her face
to show on the film?

BITZER
Ya, maybe.....But what's doing it?

GRIFFITH
It's the sun - reflecting off
the tablecloth.

BITZER
(muttering to himself)
Cigarboxes and now tablecloths.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

Lillian, in her settler's costume, holds a young baby in her arms. The sun is again behind her, backlighting her. In front of her, Bobby and Raoul Walsh hold a white tablecloth, reflecting light onto Lillian's face.

Bitzer has his camera set up for a shot.

GRIFFITH
How's it look, Billy?

BITZER
Like the Virgin Mary.
(he crosses himself)

GRIFFITH
Let me look.

Griffith looks through the lens at Lillian and the baby.

 GRIFFITH
Oh no. No, it won't do.

 BITZER
What's wrong?

 GRIFFITH
Not the lighting, Billy. The
lighting looks fine.
It's the baby!

Griffith strides up to Lillian and takes the baby from her. He examines the baby closely. Bitzer and Lillian and a couple other players crowd around trying to see what the matter is.

 GRIFFITH
 (fully serious)
This baby won't do. It looks
like an old man.

Bitzer makes funny faces at the baby, trying to get it's attention. It is a particularly homely baby.

 BITZER
That ain't no baby -
That's a 40 year old dwarf.

 GRIFFITH
Where's the woman from the orphanage.
We've got to get a different baby.

An elderly woman hustles over to where Griffith is ranting.

 WOMAN
Why whatever is the matter!

 GRIFFITH
I'm sorry, Mrs. Kessler, but this
baby won't do. Too many wrinkles.
Can you get me a different baby?

 WOMAN
 (truly puzzled)
Well, I don't know. I suppose so.
What kind of baby do you want?

Lillian can't hold back any longer. She breaks out with a giggle, and so does Bobby. Soon everyone is laughing, Griffith included.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE LAKE

Griffith is in a boat with a megaphone shouting out orders for a chase scene involving Indians in canoes.

GRIFFITH

Faster! Faster! The trappers
are threatening your princess!
You've got to save her!

Billy is at the front of the lead canoe shooting back at Bobby, who is dressed as an Indian brave and paddling the canoe with great determination.

Behind Bobby are four other canoes, filled with Indians, all paddling furiously forward. There is a classic ridiculousness to all this melodrama.

CUT TO:

INT. EDITING ROOM - BIOGRAPH STUDIOS - NEW YORK

The cutter, young Jimmy Smith holds a strip of negative up to the light. Griffith looks over his shoulder.

GRIFFITH

Cut from the canoes, to Mary being
chased on the cliff. Keep going back
and forth between the canoes and Mary.

CUT TO:

THE COMPLETED INDIAN MOVIE, AS PROJECTED ON A SCREEN (in black & white)

We see the shot of the Indians paddling the canoes to the rescue, then a shot of Mary pursued by the two white trappers. We hear Griffith's continued instructions to his cutter:

GRIFFITH

(VOICE-OVER)

Each time we cut back to the canoes,
make each shot a few frames shorter.
The cutting back and forth becomes
faster and faster.

On the screen, we see the completed intercutting of the race, leading to the climax where Mary jumps from the cliff.

Mary lands in the water and swims to the shore - just as the canoes arrive. Mary and Bobby embrace, as the other Indians pile out of their canoes.

CUT TO:

The two trappers, trying to run away. But they are quickly surrounded by Indians. They give up, throwing their hands in the air.

CUT TO:

Lillian, in her settler's costume, wandering crazed through the Indian teepee village.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP: LILLIAN

She flails her arms in the air in grief and rolls her eyes. She cradles her arms and rocks as if she had a baby - pantomime to indicate an hysterical, bereft mother.

CUT TO:

The canoes, pulled up on the shore.

From one of the canoes, up pops a little girl, a big smile on her face, holding the baby.

TITLE CARD: The Reunion.

The little girl gives the baby to Lillian, who kisses it repeatedly in joy.

CUT TO:

Mary and Bobby, arm -in-arm together, silhouetted on the cliff against a sunset.

IRIS IN TO BLACK.

INT. BIOGRAPH SCREENING ROOM

The lights are turned on in the small Biograph projection room, crowded with the assembled members of Griffith's company. They have been watching the completed Indian movie.

They clap and cheer, pleased with their new movie. Mary Pickford is no longer among them.

An electric undercurrent of excitement is evident in the faces of the company, as Griffith stands in front of the screen and addresses them:

GRIFFITH

(full of confidence and authority)
My friends, I have an announcement to make. This is the last motion picture I will be making for the Biograph company.

There is a hush among the company. They listen in great anticipation.

GRIFFITH
(continuing)

I have just signed an agreement with Mr. Harry Aitken of the Reliance-Majestic Film Corporation to supervise their motion picture productions in California.

We move from face to face of the members of the company. Bobby Harron and Dorothy Gish appear to be listening, but are playing little foot games beneath their chairs; Kate Bruce continues her knitting as she listens; Raoul Walsh, sitting next to Miriam Cooper again, slips his hand on to hers.

GRIFFITH
(continuing)

It is my intention under this new contract to make longer pictures than our little ten-minute stories. Pictures that take on larger, more important subject matters. Pictures that may rank with the great accomplishments of literature and the stage.

No one is more taken with Griffith's words than Lillian Gish. She beams with pride to be a part of this magnificent undertaking.

GRIFFITH

Most of you have been with me for winter locations in California before, so you know how much more agreeable the weather and the land there are for making motion pictures. Like our little motion pictures, California is young and new and full of potential. It is my hope that each and every one of you assembled here will join me in making this move.

Again the company spontaneously claps and applauds Griffith's proposal.

The camera gradually MOVES IN toward Griffith as he stands in front of the glowing white screen.

GRIFFITH

It has been my growing conviction that the gentlemen who control the Biograph Company have no foresight into what motion pictures are to become.

As the camera moves into a CLOSE-UP of GRIFFITH, we see that he is completely taken up with what he is saying. He gazes into space, possessed by his own vision. The white screen behind him seems to radiate light.

GRIFFITH

I believe that in our work over these last few years, we have discovered a new language. The language that was predicted in the Bible....the Universal Language that will reunite the world's civilizations that were scattered in the destruction of the Tower of Babel..... a totally visual language that all mankind everywhere can understand alike. Our motion pictures are this universal language.

The CAMERA has MOVED IN so that only Griffith's eyes stare out from the screen. They are hypnotic in their intensity.

GRIFFITH

We are witnessing the birth of a power that will make ALL MEN BROTHERS..... and END WAR FOREVER.

His speech finished, Griffith remains transfixed by his own rhetoric.

The CAMERA PULLS BACK, revealing the members of the company. The room is absolutely silent; no one quite dares break the spell.

Then someone claps, and quickly they are all applauding. The applause brings Griffith back to reality. He looks around the room at his loyal company and smiles.

Only Bitzer at the back of the room seems less than overwhelmed. He nudges Charles Mailles and says into his ear:

BITZER

That ain't exactly how he told it to me. What he said to me was:
"Stick with me, and we'll all get rich."

HARD CUT TO:

AN EXPLOSION, sending dirt and smoke spraying across a CIVIL WAR BATTLEFIELD.

A TITLE: "OJAI, CALIFORNIA - 1914"

We are in the midst of a maneuvering of troops across the rolling hills of a Southern California landscape. Masses of blue Northern troops and grey Confederate troops, on foot and on horseback, move about. But there is no actual fighting. These are preparations for the battle scenes that will appear in "The Birth of a Nation."

Raoul Walsh, on horseback and wearing a Confederate officer's uniform, is giving instructions to a group of Confederate cavalry soldiers.

WALSH

Our signal will be two flashes
from Griffith's control tower.

A large mirror used for sending signals is on a rotating stand, and is manned by an extra, Sammy.

WALSH

(to Sammy)

You relay the message to Donald
Crisp's troops on that hill over
there, so his charge will be
co-ordinated with ours.

(to the horseriders)

The explosions will go off right
where we are now ten seconds after
the signal - so everyone better
get the hell out of here on cue.

There is a moment of tension waiting for the signal. The horses are nervous, ready to bolt.

Two flashes of light appear in the distance.

WALSH

Alright, let's go!

Walsh turns his horse and spurs it down the hill, brandishing his sword in the air. The troops follow in a spirited charge.

Along a dirt road at the bottom of the hill is proceeding an open touring car carrying two men in business suits: Harry Aitken, Griffith's entrepreneur, and Clarence Seymour, a potential financial backer.

Their car is right in the middle of Walsh's charging troops.

Aitken brings his car to an abrupt halt as the screaming horsemen charge by all around them. One overzealous horseman actually leaps his horse over the car. Mr. Seymour is startled and thrilled; Aitken grins broadly.

Aitken and Seymour proceed along the road to what is apparently the location headquarters - a collection of tents and automobiles at the center of a flurry of activity. There is a large tower in the middle, where Bitzer is setting up the camera.

Griffith is in a makeshift boxing ring, sparring with Tony O'Sullivan, a former boxer with a face that has taken far too many punches.

Aitken and Seymour get out of their car to watch Griffith box. Griffith is in good shape, invigorated by his morning exercise. He spots Aitken and comes over to the side of the ring to say hello.

AITKEN

Mr. Seymour, I'd like to introduce our director-general, Mr. Griffith. Mr. Griffith, this is Clarence Seymour of the California Mutual Trust.

Griffith extends his hand.

GRIFFITH

I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Seymour. I hope you'll pardon my appearance, but I believe a man must sweat at least once a day to maintain his health. I find that movie wars are almost as demanding as real wars - so I endeavor to keep fit to match the vigours of the day.

Griffith dresses as he talks, putting on his white shirt and tie, his jacket and his wide-brimmed hat.

MR. SEYMOUR

I can quite understand, Mr. Griffith. We have already been through the Battle of Chattanooga on our drive here this morning.

GRIFFITH

That was just a rehearsal.

MR. SEYMOUR

It convinced me.

GRIFFITH

We're about to do the real thing, if you want to watch. You'll be able to see it all from here. Now I have to go back to work. It's been a pleasure, Mr. Seymour. Enjoy your visit. I'm sure you and Mr. Aitken have business to discuss.

Griffith proceeds to climb the scaffolding of the tower to join Bitzer. Billy looks bored, sitting beneath a big black umbrella to protect the camera.

GRIFFITH

Ready, Billy?

BITZER

What? Time for lunch, Warko?

GRIPPING

Let's shoot it. Send the signal.

Ritzer starts to crank the camera. The mirrors flash the signal.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

Paul Walsh receives the mirror signal from the tower. He turns to his troops, waving his sword.

WALSH

Alright, you bastards! This
one's for the money!

Walsh charges off down the hill, the others following.

One horseman can't get his horse under control - it keeps rearing. In the distance, we hear the firing of cannons, the whistles of live rounds.

In panic, the horseman spurs his horse down the hill, just in time before a shell bursts in an explosion.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP: LILLIAN GISH, screaming in terror.

In a 2-shot, we see that she is cornered in a small room by George Siegmann - a white actor in blackface - playing the Mulatto heavy of "The Birth of a Nation," Silas Lynch. They are rehearsing in an interior period set.

Lillian is in hysteria, held captive by the Mulatto who plans to rape her. As the helpless virgin, Lillian wears her long hair down in soft curls and a filmy white dress.

SILAS

(peering out the window)
See! My people fill the streets!
With them, I will build an empire.
And you, as my queen, will sit at my side.

Lillian withdraws in horror, then haughtily:

LILLIAN

Have you lost your senses!
Are you mad! You will be
horsewhipped for this insolence.

He leans and advances toward her. She rushes to the door and tries to get out. But it is locked!

SILAS

There will be no horsewhipping.
We have the power now.
 You will be mine!

He advances toward her again. She spins around the table, trying to keep it between herself and her attacker.

We hear Griffith's highly melodramatic voice directing the scene.

GRIFFITH (Off-Screen)

The Black Menace takes no heed
 to your pleadings. He pursues you
 relentlessly. He will not be
 thwarted in his perverted desire
 and lust!

CLOSE-UP: Griffith's face as he directs the scene. His expression changes from hard to soft as he speaks of the character Lillian is playing.

GRIFFITH

Poor, sweet Elsie - flower of womanhood -
 Spoils of a ravaging war.
 This Dark Evil will prevail.
 Now, you collapse into the chair,
 begging, pleading, for him to let you go.

Griffith's tone changes back to a malefic hardness, his face becoming as lustful and cold as his words.

GRIFFITH

Silas lunges at her skirts, pulling
 the hem of her gown to him and
kissing it. Elsie is filled with
 revulsion and horror.

CUT BACK to the scene from behind the camera. We see both Lillian and her attacker playing the scene and Griffith and Bitzer at the camera. Griffith's voice weaves the spell.

GRIFFITH

Elsie makes a final futile effort to
 escape. Silas grabs her and takes her
 in his arms. He hovers over her,
 and she faints limply backward, losing
 consciousness.

Lillian faints in the arms of her attacker.

GRIFFITH

Yes. That's wonderful. Now you
 may relax a moment.

Griffith leaves Lillian and Silas and walks to the other side of the fake wall of the set. There waits LYDIA, the actress who is playing Silas's mistress. She is a white woman in black face.

A MAID is on the floor adjusting the hem of Lydia's costume. The MAID is an exotically beautiful Black girl, about 18 years old.

Griffith gives instructions to Lydia for the next scene.

GRIFFITH

Now Lydia, you are Silas's mistress.
You can hear him in the next room.
He's begging a white girl to become
his wife - his queen!

Lydia listens intently, but without reaction. However, the Maid, who now stands a few feet away, reacts with great feeling to these instructions, perhaps identifying with the emotions more deeply than the actress.

GRIFFITH

(to Lydia)

You become insanely jealous!
You pound on the door! You
rush in and try to tear Silas
away from the white girl.

The maid can barely contain herself. Her performance has succeeded in distracting Griffith.

GRIFFITH

(to the Maid)

And what might your name be,
my dear?

The maid straightens up, timidly at first, but then with poise.

MAID

I am Madame Sul-te-Wan.

GRIFFITH

(amused and charmed)

Indeed. And are you an actress?

SUL-TE-WAN

No, sir. I've never acted.
But I danced and sang with Hewlitt's
Minstrels - that is, until they
ran off with the money and left us
stranded. So then I got this here job.

Griffith chuckles at this story.

GRIFFITH
 Yes. I full well understand
 your predicament. I've had that
 experience myself.

The whole company has stopped and is watching and waiting while Griffith talks, with Sul-te-Wan.

GRIFFITH
 Would you like to be an actress?

SUL-TE-WAN
 Oh, yes, sir.

GRIFFITH
 Fine. I'm sure we'll find many
 uses for you within the picture.

Griffith secretary, Agnes Weiner, interrupts:

SECRETARY
 Mr. Griffith, Mr. Epping is here.

Griffith's face becomes somber. He turns to Bitzer.

GRIFFITH
 Mr. Bitzer, prepare to shoot the
 sequencè. I shall be back in a
 moment.

Bitzer throws up his hands in mock desperation.

Griffith walks off the set.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO

Griffith meets Epping just outside the studio.

EPPING is a smallish man in a business suit and derby hat. In an effort to overcome his small size, he exaggerates everything comically.

GRIFFITH
 Did you get the payroll money?

Epping moans and wrings his hands.

EPPING
 Oh Mr. Griffith, the worst has
 happened. The worst! There's
 no money for the payroll. There's
 no money for anything! Aitken's
 backers have withdrawn their support.

GRIFFITH
 Might I ask the reason?

EPPING
 Aitken says you're not half finished
 yet and already you've spent more
 money than they usually spend on 5
 pictures! They got cold feet!
 Aiken raised the monies you've been
 spending for the past week himself.
 But he's run out of resources too.
 There's no more money!

GRIFFITH
 (refusing to join in Epping's hysteria)
 Is that all?

EPPING
 IS THAT ALL, he asks me!

GRIFFITH
 I guess I'll have to raise the
 money myself.

DISSOLVE TO:

A BRASS BAND, trying to play "Dixie."

The band consists of a make-shift group of old men and little boys dressed up in soldiers' uniforms to look like a marching band. But they are no more musicians than soldiers. They keep rehearsing, but they can't get it right. It's driving everyone on the set crazy.

Griffith is staging the scene where the South marches off to war. Crowds line the street through which the Confederate troops will march in all their glory.

All the regular Griffith company players are being used in the scene either as soldiers or as the women, the children, the elderly, and the loyal black slaves who wave flags and cheer in the crowd.

Bitzer is setting up his camera on a raised platform to shoot down on the street as the parade passes. He sings along with the band sarcastically as they keep rehearsing the first bars of "Dixie" over and over again. It sounds like a broken record.

BITZER
 Oh I wish I was in the land of cotton...
 Oh I wish I was in the land of cotton...
 Oh I wish I was in the land of cotton...

Griffith is moving among the players and extras in the street giving instructions and joking with the company.

Raoul Walsh, in his Confederate uniform, comes riding down the street and swoops up Miriam Cooper from the crowd on to his horse. They ride over to Griffith.

WALSH
How's that for a little action,
Mr. Griffith?

GRIFFITH
It's a darb, Mr. Walsh.
We'll use it.

The band strikes another sour note; Walsh grimaces.

WALSH
Mr. Griffith, the band, it...

GRIFFITH
I know, I know. Just pretend
it's "Dixie." You're an actor,
aren't you.

Walsh gives a soldier's salute and turns his horse away.

Griffith moves along the street to Madame Sul-te-Wan. She is dressed up to play one of the loyal black slaves in the crowd.

GRIFFITH
Well, Sul-te-Wan, and how do you
like your new career as an actress?

SUL-TE-WAN
(all smiles)
I like it jes' fine, Mr. Griffith!

From the attention Griffith is giving Sul-te-Wan, he seems almost to be flirting. Some of the extras exchange looks of disapproval.

GRIFFITH
Perhaps in this scene you become
aroused...
(a long pause)
...by the music and the pageantry.
You're a dancer - what would your
reaction be.

Sul-te-Wan screws her face in concentration on the crippled "Dixie" coming from the band and does a few tentative steps to the music, but the band blows it again and stops for a moment. In the break, Sul-te-Wan picks up her own rhythm, snapping her fingers and smiling broadly. She improvises a provocative little hip-swinging dance.

Griffith is pleased and amused.

GRIFFITH
That will do just fine.

Griffith proceeds along the street to where Mrs. Gish, Lillian and Dorothy are all costumed to play part of the crowd. Lillian has disguised herself to look entirely different than in her major role as Elsie, the Northern girl.

 GRIFFITH
Well, how do you Yankees like playing belles of the Confederacy for a change?

 LILLIAN
Do you think anyone will recognize me, Mr. Griffith?

 GRIFFITH
 (joking)
Why, Miss Lillian, I didn't even recognize you myself. Besides, the camera is so far away that no one will notice.

 MRS. GISH
 (aside to Griffith)
Mr. Griffith, the girls and I would like to invest some of our savings in the picture - \$300 worth.

 GRIFFITH
And how much have you saved in total, Mrs. Gish?

 MRS GISH
\$300.

 GRIFFITH
I see. I appreciate your offer and your confidence in the picture, Mrs. Gish, but you'd better hold on to your savings. You'd be taking too much of a risk.

Dorothy is stomping around in the background with her hands over her ears trying to block out the sound of the band. Lillian keeps nudging her trying to make her behave.

 GRIFFITH
Don't you Yankees appreciate the rousing melody of "Dixie"?

Ebbing suddenly comes running up to Griffith

EPPING
 (out of breath)
 He's here, Mr. Griffith.
 Clune's here!

GRIFFITH
 (confident and calm)
 Does he have his checkbook with him?

Epping waves his arms in desperation.

EPPING
 Come, come!

Griffith walks off briskly with Epping.

An imposing black limousine sits in the dust. By the open door stands CLUNE, a paunchy businessman in a black suit, shuffling his feet, waiting and taking in the activity.

Griffith glad-hands Clune and directs him to the camera platform, giving him a hand up to where Bitzer has set up the camera.

GRIFFITH
 You'll be able to see it all from here, Mr. Clune, just as your audience will see it on the screen. As you'll see, this is not the story of the Civil War that the Yankees tell in their history books. This is the real story, as told to me by someone who fought in the war and knew - Colonel Jacob Mark Griffith, my father. This is the true story about the glory that was the Southern cause and the tragedy that befell the South in defeat.

CLUNE
 That may be all well and good, Mr. Griffith. But I'm a business man first and a Southerner only second. How can you be sure that they'd even show such a revolutionary picture up North?

GRIFFITH
 True art is always revolutionary, Mr. Clune, always explosive and sensational. It's true that this picture won't make everyone happy. Some people will love it; some people will hate it. But both will demand that it be seen. And wise businessmen like yourself, Mr. Clune, will take advantage of the controversy.

(continued)

GRIFFITH
(continuing)

And even though you have the biggest auditorium in town, you'll wish you had even a bigger one to accomodate the crowds that will demand to see this picture.

CLUNE
Well, Mr. Griffith, I don't know.

GRIFFITH
Let me show you this scene, Mr. Clune, and then let's talk about it.

Griffith picks up his megaphone and speaks to the crowd.

GRIFFITH
Alright, Ladies and Gentlemen. We are going to shoot it now. Everyone in their places please. Alright now, soldiers - start the procession. Let's hear the band!

Bitzer starts cranking, the band strikes up their attempt at "Dixie," and the crowd goes wild with enthusiasm and patriotic glee as the soldiers move down the street.

As the pathetic playing of the band reaches Clune's ears, a small smile cracks his otherwise cold and noncommittal expression. The worse they play, the bigger Clune's smile. He chuckles aloud.

CLUNE
Actually that war music would sound great in my theater - with my orchestra playing it.

GRIFFITH
Yes! Just picture those soldiers marching to the thrilling music, played by the best orchestra, not only the best in Los Angeles, but the best in the world! Your orchestra playing Dixie! Why it will tear them right out of their seats!

CLUNE
Well, I don't know. Fifteen thousand dollars is a lot of money...

GRIFFITH

Why, Mr. Clune. \$15,000. Let's see. Your theater seats 1000 people - at two dollars a ticket, two performances a day. That's \$4000 a day. At that rate, you'd make back your investment in 4 days and show a sizable profit before the first week's out. It's simple arithmetic.

CLUNE

(becoming convinced)

It certainly does sound good...

GRIFFITH

You won't regret it, Mr. Clune. We're going to score this entire picture with the greatest music ever written: Mozart, Tschalkowsky, The ride of the Valkyrie by Wagner...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLUNE'S AUDITORIUM - OPENING NIGHT OF "THE BIRTH OF A NATION"

A full piece orchestra is building into "The Ride of the Valkyrie" by Wagner.

On the screen, we see the famous "Gathering of the Klan" sequence from THE BIRTH OF A NATION. The Ku Klux Klan rides through the Southern landscape on galloping horses. Both horses and riders are cloaked and hooded in flowing white costumes, embellished with crosses.

CUT TO:

THE AUDIENCE.

The audience is in turmoil. Half the people applaud wildly; the other half boos and cat-calls. Several people are standing, yelling at the screen or at other people in the theater.

Rotten vegetables are thrown into the orchestra pit, but they play on.

CUT BACK TO:

THE GATHERING OF THE KLAN.

The scene gains momentum, as lone Klansmen meet at a fork in the road and gallop on together.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLUNE'S THEATER

A riot is brewing. A group of black protesters, led by the newly formed NAACP, are picketing the theater. Their placards read:

UNFAIR TO COLORED PEOPLE!

"THE BIRTH OF A NATION" PERVERTS HISTORY!

RACIST LIES!

People start pushing and shoving. A line of policemen with clubs try to separate the angry protesters from the people waiting in line to buy tickets. Sporadic fist fights break out.

CUT BACK TO:

THE SCREEN:

The Gathering of the Klan at full crescendo. One hundred KKK riders rendezvous on a hill, then start their ride.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER

From a private VIP box in the balcony, Mrs. Gish, Lillian, Dorothy, and Bobby Harron are watching the movie. They are all obviously disturbed by the turmoil going on in the theater.

CUT TO:

THE SCREEN:

A scene inside a Southern mansion. A family of Whites huddle in terror, surrounded by Blacks with guns, threatening them.

A black woman, played by Madame Sul-te-Wan, SPITS on a matronly white woman in derision.

CUT TO:

THE AUDIENCE

Caught up in the churning emotions of the movie, a WOMAN becomes hysterical when she sees Sul-te-Wan spit on the white woman. The woman in the audience starts screaming incoherently, flailing her arms in the air. The man next to her, her HUSBAND, tries to lead her up the aisle to get her out of the theater.

From her VIP box, Lillian watches the hysterical woman with great curiosity. Lillian excuses herself and leaves the box, passing into the theater lobby.

Lillian watches as the hysterical woman is led into the lobby by her husband, who is trying to calm her down.

HUSBAND

It's only a movie, Jenny.
Calm down. It's only a movie.

The woman begins to recompose herself. Then she spots Lillian at the other side of the lobby.

Suddenly the woman points at Lillian accusingly, recognizing her as the star of the movie.

WOMAN

It's her! It's her!
Oh my Jesus, it's her!

The husband has to hold the woman back, as her hysteria overtakes her again.

Lillian backs away into the shadows.

CUT TO:

INT. CLUNE'S OFFICE

Griffith is at the window looking down on the chaos that is taking place in the street in front of the theater. He smiles confidently, slowly beginning to realize the publicity value of the situation.

From Griffith's POV, we look down on the battle in the street. News photographers are taking pictures as the police separate the protesters from the people waiting in line at the box office. We pan with Griffith's eyes as he follows the long line that curls several blocks down the street from the box office.

Lillian quietly enters the office. She slumps down into a chair, deeply disturbed. Griffith turns to her.

GRIFFITH

Are you alright, Miss Gish?

GISH

(disoriented)

It's the people...they're reacting so emotionally...The music...the violence. A woman in the lobby, she was hysterical. She recognized me. I don't know why, but I...I... it frightens me.

Moved by Lillian's vulnerability, Griffith kneels before her and takes her hands in his.

GRIFFITH
(calming her)

Yes, I know, I know. Everything will be different now. We've created these emotions, and now, for better or for worse, they've been set loose, and everything is changed. From now on, our lives, and our loves, will not be our own. We will be constantly in the public eye.

The authority of Griffith's voice soothes Lillian. In the intimacy of the situation, she looks up at Griffith, adoration in her eyes.

GRIFFITH

We have given up our private lives for our art. That is a choice we make, we of the theater. Our lives become the images we create - and it is the images that will make people see.

A HEAVENLY CHORUS from Hadyn's "Gloria" builds over Griffith's last words, as we:

CUT TO:

THE SCREEN: The Epilogue of "THE BIRTH OF A NATION"

The orchestra swells with a full chorus of "Gloria" as a TITLE CARD announces: "The Coming of Brotherly Love
Into the Halls of Peace"

A mass of humanity kneels on a huge set of steps, their arms outstretched toward a superimposed image of Christ. The vision of Christ remains as the supplicators FADE OUT and a second scene FADES IN: Flowering fields and happy children at play, with Christ presiding over them.

The music ends and Griffith's logo appears on the screen.

There is polite applause as the lights come up. We are no longer in the large theater, but in the East Room of the White House.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE

The President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson has just watched a private screening of "The Birth of a Nation". Wilson sits with Griffith and a handful of dignitaries and their wives; the Presidential Seal is seen on the wall behind them.

All eyes turn to Wilson for his comment.

The President sits silently for a moment in consideration, then turns to Griffith.

PRESIDENT WILSON
 Congratulations, Mr. Griffith.
 I'm overwhelmed. It's like writing
 history in lightning. And it's
 all too true.

GRIFFITH
 Thank you, Mr. President.

SUPERIMPOSED, A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE SPIRALS OUT FROM THE SCREEN:

HEADLINE: "LIKE WRITING HISTORY IN LIGHTNING"
 SAYS PRESIDENT WILSON

Again we hear the heavenly strains of Hadyn's "Gloria" accompanying:

MONTAGE SEQUENCE: Overlapping images compete for attention.

(Sound montage separated by Dolby Sound System)

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE: The crowds in line for "The Birth of a Nation." Dolly down the line over the excited, extectant faces of the people in line to buy tickets.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: "THE BIRTH OF A NEW ART FORM!"

INSERT: Hands taking in money at a box office window, working as quickly as possible.

GRIFFITH, on stage, taking a bow in the spotlight, to thunderous applause from the audience. He introduces Lillian Gish, who also takes a bow.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: "ALL LOS ANGELES RECORDS BROKEN
 IN UNPRECEDENTED 6-MONTH RUN"

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE: Griffith shaking hands with dignitaries, posing for pictures together, and smiling into the camera.

CLOSEUP: an angry face in a crowd, screaming at the camera:

1ST FACE
Racist bigot!

CLOSEUP: Griffith - giving a statement to news reporters:

GRIFFITH
 To say that I am against Negroes
 is like saying I'm against children,
 whom we in the South have loved
 and cared for all our lives.

The heavenly music turns to troubled, churning music.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: "LINES AND RIOTS ON BROADWAY
FOR "BIRTH OF A NATION""

CLOSEUP: 2nd angry face in a crowd, yelling up at the camera:

2ND FACE

It's a deliberate attempt to
humiliate 10 MILLION AMERICAN
CITIZENS and portray them as
nothing but BEASTS!

CLOSEUP: GRIFFITH - giving a statement to news reporters.

GRIFFITH

I openly admit that it's a Southern
point-of-view. But no one in this
country is forced to go into the
theaters where my motion picture is
playing. They go of their own free
will.

MAGAZINE HEADLINE: "THE HOMER OF THE MOTION PICTURE"
Griffith is the present
day Homer of the motion
picture.

Motion Picture News, dated Mar.13, 191

CLOSEUP: Speaker at the rostrum at a meeting of the
Patriotic Veterans of the American Civil War Association.

SPEAKER

(shaking his fist)
It makes a MOCKERY of the Union
victory in our Civil War!

CLOSE-UP: GRIFFITH, speaking at a public meeting.

GRIFFITH

It is a question of the right of
Free Speech as guaranteed in the
Constitution of the United States.

CLOSE-UP: Spokesman for the N.A.A.C.P. .
(we are hearing both speeches at once: Griffith's and
those of his adversaries)

NAACP SPOKESMAN

We DEMAND that this motion picture,
"The Birth of a Nation," be BANNED,
"TOTALLY AND COMPLETELY..."

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: "BOSTON CENSORS CUT
"BIRTH OF A NATION""

GRIFFITH
(continuing)

For any governing body to officially prohibit this motion picture from exhibition in the locality under their jurisdiction - this is to deny the citizens the opportunity to exercise their free choice, to see or not to see this picture.

NAACP SPOKESMAN
...banned from exhibition NOW and FOREVER MORE...

GRIFFITH
...this is to take away the freedom of speech...

NAACP SPOKESMAN
...banned in this town...
In this state...
In this country.

GRIFFITH
This is censorship.

NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: "CONTROVERSY BOOSTS CIVIL WAR EPIC -
12 MILLION DOLLAR GROSS"

CLOSEUP: GRIFFITH, delivering his speech:

GRIFFITH
The right of free speech has cost centuries upon centuries of untold suffering and agonies. It has cost rivers of blood. It has taken as its toll uncounted fields littered with the carcasses of human beings. All this that there might come to live and survive that wonderful thing - The Power of Free Speech....

MONTAGE ENDS as the CAMERA SLOWLY PULLS BACK to reveal that Griffith is delivering this passionate oration not to the heads of state, but to a small dinner party with the Gishes and Bobby Harron.

INT. GISH HOUSE - LOS ANGELES - DAY

Griffith is standing at a bay window with lacy curtains behind him, backlit by a sunny day.

We are in the Gish's formal dining room. The decor is all in whites and pastels, and so are the Gish's dresses. The only contrast is Griffith himself, who is dressed in formal black.

GRIFFITH
(continuing)

It was not until the arrival of the motion picture that the integrity of free speech was seriously attacked in this country - - when this new art was seized by the powers of Intolerance as an excuse for an assault on our liberties. It is against these powers of intolerance that we must now assert ourselves - in defense of this clean and decent new medium of expression. Otherwise we risk losing all our freedoms to an intolerant few who would regulate our lives.

As Griffith concludes his speech, Lillian and Dorothy, Bobby Harron and Mrs. Gish all applaud politely.

Griffith sits down at the head of the table.

GRIFFITH

This is the speech I'll be delivering next week to the Virginia legislature during their hearings on the censorship of Birth. What do you think?

BOBBY

It's a smash, Mr. Griffith!

LILLIAN

If they have any minds at all, Mr. Griffith, I'm sure you'll win your case.

MRS. GISH

(offering a toast)

May God bring you success.

They all toast, sipping wine from small crystal wine glasses.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SUNSET BLVD. - 1915

Lillian and Griffith walk slowly along this quiet, undeveloped street with its clear view of the Los Angeles basin. A lone car chugs by.

They pause under a street sign and look out at the view - mostly citrus trees. Griffith is inspired:

GRIFFITH

Would it make you happy, Lillian;
would it do you justice -
if I were to rebuild the splendors
of BABYLON for you?

Lillian, radiant, turns to Griffith with a questioning look on her face.

LILLIAN
Babylon?

GRIFFITH
I'm going to do it - in my next picture.
Our picture. It will be the Greatest
Spectacle ever filmed....

He gazes up into the blinding Los Angeles sun.

GRIFFITH
A SUN PLAY of the ages...
The story of man's inhumanity
to man. Right over there, Lillian...
(he stretches out his arm)
I shall rebuild Babylon...

Griffith sweeps his hand across the landscape, and in a MATCHED WIPE, it becomes:

THE BABYLON SET, under construction on Sunset Blvd.

GRIFFITH
(VOICE-OVER)
...for the story of.....INTOLERANCE!

The huge set of Belshazzar's temple and courtyard rises up amid a flurry of activity, dwarfing all other buildings in sight.

At the far end of the courtyard, Bitzer and his camera are being put into the gondola of a huge balloon attached to a winch.

Bitzer looks up at the contraption nervously. He grumbles to his assistants:

BITZER
The Master says go up in a
balloon, so I go up in a balloon.

The assistants undo the rope and Bitzer begins his ascent. Bitzer holds on for dear life as the balloon sways back and forth in the wind tipping over the tripod.

The wind whips the gondola back and forth. It is all Bitzer can do to keep his hat on and his cigar in his mouth. Looking down on the huge set in construction, the view is dizzying.

BITZER
(grees with seasickness)
Folly, folly - a world of folly.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACKLOT - GRIFFITH'S STUDIOS

The shadow of the rising Babylon set looms over the smaller productions being made by Griffith's assistants on the backlot.

Dorothy Gish is being directed in a scene from one of these small productions, OLD HEIDELBERG, by young, hot shot director John Emerson. The assistant director and military advisor for this picture is Eric Von Stroheim. VON STROHEIM stands out on the set because of his appearance - that of a Prussian officer, complete with riding crop and monocle and shaven head.

Von Stroheim stands at the side observing as Emerson rehearses a love scene in which Dorothy is to be kissed by handsome Wallace Reid.

Reid keeps trying to kiss Dorothy, but she keeps turning her mouth away. Finally, Reid lets her go and turns to the director with a hopeless look on his face.

EMERSON

Dammit, Dorothy, kiss him on the mouth!

DOROTHY

(innocently)

Oh, Mr. Emerson, we don't do such things in pictures.

EMERSON

(ominously)

You're going to do it in this picture. How else can you play a love scene.

DOROTHY

In films, we only pretend to kiss. And with the camera at a distance, it seems that we do.

EMERSON

(exasperated)

Dammit! This time the camera is close! And I want you to kiss him. This is the Twentieth Century!

DOROTHY

(pouting)

Mr. Griffith told us we must never kiss actors - it isn't healthy.

EMERSON

Well the Master isn't directing this picture. I am. So you Goddam better do it!

DOROTHY
 (tears coming to her eyes)
 I'm gonna go tell Mr. Griffith!

She stamps off the set, but the imposing Von Stroheim blocks her way.

VON STROHEIM
 The actress does not leave the set
 without the permission of the director!

Dorothy gasps, afraid of Von Stroheim. She backs off and goes the other way. Emerson pursues her.

EMERSON
 Dorothy!

Dorothy pays no attention. She marches across the backlot, right through a crowd of Babylonian soldiers carrying swords and dressed in battle armour.

Bobby Harron, dressed in a cowboy outfit, is standing on the top of a roof. He spots Dorothy and yells to her:

BOBBY
 Hey, Dorothy! Look at me!

He jumps to the ground right in front of Miriam Cooper and Kate Bruce. Miriam is holding a six-gun in her hands and it goes off just as Bobby lands. Kate Bruce puts her hands to her ears and screams.

It's all a stunt for another small movie, this one being directed by Raoul Walsh - who stands beside the cranking camera.

WALSH
Now, Miriam - FAINT!

Miriam falls to the ground.

But Dorothy has seen none of this, as she marches on oblivious to what's happening around her.

Nor does she pay any attention to DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS who suddenly pops up from behind a wall in what appears to be a super-human leap. In mid-air, he tips his hat to her with a flourish.

Dorothy disappears, and Emerson comes pacing after her. Fairbanks again pops up behind the wall.

EMERSON
 Hey, Fairbanks, which way did she go?

Fairbanks disappears agains, then quickly pops up a third time off his trampoline. In mid-air, he points toward the courtyard of the Babylonian set.

FAIRBANKS

' She went that-away.

CUT TO:

THE COURTYARD OF BELSHAZZAR'S TEMPLE.

At the foot of a seemingly endless set of steps leading up to the temple, Dorothy passes a man dressed up as Jesus Christ. She asks him directions.

DOROTHY

Do you know where Mr. Griffith is, Howard?

JESUS CHRIST

The Master is up there.

He points up the steps.

Griffith is seated on Belshazzar's throne, way up at the top of the stairs. There is a flurry of activity around him: he is holding court. Lillian sits at his feet. Behind him, the semi-nude Denishawn dancing troupe is rehearsing an exotic dance. In his lap he pets a baby lion cub.

CUT UP TO:

GRIFFITH.

He is examining in deep concentration the voluptuous SEENA OWEN who plays the Princess Beloved.

SEENA is made up to the hilt and arrayed in the most exotic and revealing of costumes and jewelry.

Interrupting Griffith's concentration is ALBERT GREY GRIFFITH, D.W.'s ineffective brother who now works in the management of the studio.

ALBERT

D.W. - about the story for the newspapers...

GRIFFITH

(paying no attention to Albert)
It's the EYES! The eyes see into the soul!
They aren't big enough. Her eyes
must be twice that size.!

SEENA OWEN

My eyes! I only got one sized eyes!

GRIFFITH

She is Princess Beloved. For her,
half the world was enslaved.

(to Lillian)

She needs eyes like yours, Gish.
She needs your long eyelashes.
Isn't there some way we could glue
some longer lashes around her eyes.
Who could do that?

LILLIAN

I can talk with....the wisemaker?

GRIFFITH

Yes. Yes.

Albert tries again to get Griffith's attention.

ALBERT

D.W., the newspapers...

But now Griffith's attention has shifted to Dorothy, who is running
up the steps toward him, pursued by Emerson.

DOROTHY

Mr. Griffith! Mr. Griffith!

She falls at his feet, crying and nouting - the spoiled favorite
child.

DOROTHY

Mr. Emerson has insisted that I
kiss Wally Reid on the mouth!
I can't do it. I simply can't do it.

Griffith pats Dorothy on the head soothingly, paternally, then
looks sternly at Emerson, out of breath from the stairs.

GRIFFITH

Now, now, my dear.
What's this all about, Emerson?

EMERSON

It's the close-up of a love scene, Sir.
How in Hell's name can I shoot a love
scene if the leading lady refuses to
kiss the leading man!

GRIFFITH

Well, Miss Dorothy, why is it that
you don't want to kiss Mr. Reid?
Don't you find him handsome and attractive?

DOROTHY

You always said it wasn't sanitary
to kiss actors!

GRIFFITH

Well, I'm sure Mr. Reid is quite a
sanitary and healthy gentleman,
Miss Dorothy. And while there are
ways to disguise doing these things
so blatantly on the screen...
(he glances his tacit disapproval at Emerson)
I think you should do as your director
wishes - as he is the one who must
ultimately be responsible for the
picture.

DOROTHY

(pouting)

You mean I have to kiss him?

GRIFFITH

You must do as the character you are
portraying dictates - and follow the
instructions of your director.

Dorothy is hurt, but she pulls herself together with this dismissal.

DOROTHY

Yes, Mr. Griffith.

Albert opens his mouth to ask Griffith about the newspaper again,
just as Bitzer comes barging in, upset over his trials with the
balloon.

BITZER

It's no good, Warko! - ahem, I mean,
Mr. Griffith. If man were meant to
fly, God would have given him wings.
Not balloons.

GRIFFITH

Well, we've got to get the shot.
How are we going to do it?

Griffith turns to Emerson. While Emerson is under Griffith's
supervision, he is also younger potential competition; and Griffith
does not really like him and his new ways.

GRIFFITH

(sarcastic)

Mr. Emerson, you're so good at
coming up with new ideas about how
motion pictures should be made --
perhaps you have a suggestion on
how this shot can be done.

EMERSON

What is it you want to do?

GRIFFITH

I want to start out there --
 (he points to the balloon at the
 other end of the court)
 high above Babylon, looking
 down on the whole set. And then,
 simultaneously, I want to move in
 and down, ending on a close-up
 here on these steps. We've been
 trying to make the shot from that
 balloon, but Mr. Bitzer doesn't
 seem to think it can be done that
 way.

Emerson seems to be thinking it over for a moment, then grins.

EMERSON

Well, you could always build an
 elevator in a tower, to go up and
 down. And then put your tower on
 a train, to pull it in and out.

This suggestion is meant to be preposterous and those around
 Griffith chuckle at Emerson's joke. But not Griffith.

GRIFFITH

I see. Mr. Bitzer? How long
 would it take you to build me
 such an arrangement?

BITZER

I think Mr. Emerson was joking.

GRIFFITH

Perhaps. But I'm not. I think it's
 just what we will do. Put the camera
 on an elevator, attach the elevator to
 the front of a tower, and put the tower
 on some train tracks.

Billy shakes his head in exasperation.

BITZER

Out with the balloon; bring on the train.

GRIFFITH

Thank you, Mr. Emerson. That's
 a valuable contribution. You can
 go back to work on your own picture
 now. Unless of course you have
 some more suggestions on how I
 should shoot mine.

Emerson scratches his head and takes Griffith's dare.

EMERSON

I do sorta wonder if, in all these wonderful sets, the vast scale of things isn't going to dwarf the performances of your actors?

GRIFFITH

I don't know, Mr. Emerson, but somehow I suspect that if I succeed with this experiment, next year you and your cohorts will doubtless be doing the same thing yourself - inasmuch as you seem to have adopted all my other innovations. Now, if you will excuse me....

Griffith rises from the throne and turns to the dancers behind him.

Albert leaps at his chance and hands Griffith a piece of paper.

ALBERT

The story for the newspapers - all I need is your okay.

Griffith looks at the paper and sighs with boredom.

GRIFFITH

Sets...dancers...extras...

(handing the paper back to Albert)
Open your eyes, Albert. See. Hear. Feel. Look around you. Are these ordinary dancers? No. Then write: the terpsichorean majesty of the world renown Demishawn dancers. It's all bigger than life. Write it that way. Paint pictures with words. Extras? Thousands of extras. Sets? They reach up into the sky. Understand? Then release it to the press.

Griffith turns and walks back into the swirl of the Demishawn dancers - dressed in their revealing diaphanous costumes.

A particular young dancer, CAROL DEMPSTER, maneuvers herself into Griffith's path and directs her dance specifically toward him. She succeeds in capturing his attention.

Caught up in the spirit of the moment, Griffith grabs the attractive dancer's hand and swirls her around, mimicking some of the dance troupe's steps.

The other dancers stop and applaud Griffith's athletic attempts at expressive dancing.

Lillian watches Griffith dance with Carol Dempster, with envy in her eyes, as if to say, "I wish it were me in your arms."

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. BABYLON SET - DAY

A tower has been constructed with an elevator on its face and mounted on a flatbed train car, with tracks covering the distance through the courtyard of the set, up to the steps of the temple.

Everyone is in place for the execution of this unprecedented shot.

Griffith walks to the tower in a deep concentration, like a general about to direct an army.

The elevator is at ground level, with the camera set and ready. Bitzer stands waiting at the camera. Lillian sits at the foot of the camera. In the background we hear the hushed murmurs of the thousands of extras involved in the scene.

Griffith steps up onto the elevator platform and gives the signal to Von Stroheim - who is the assistant director in charge of the mechanical movements of the tower.

Two men start cranking the elevator upward, and the platform slowly rises the height of the tower. Lillian holds on and looks up at Griffith worshipfully. From their point-of-view, we see the ground drop away below them.

The platform grinds to a halt. Bitzer focuses his camera on the huge set that spreads out before them.

BITZER
Camera's ready.

Griffith picks up the telephone through which he will direct the scene.

GRIFFITH
We're ready up here, Mr. Von Stroheim.
Have the action begin.

CUT TO:

VON STROHEIM, as he cranks the phone to relay the message.

VON STROHEIM
Mr. Griffith is ready. Begin the action.

MONTAGE:

The orders are relayed to the various groups of extras on the huge set, as the feast scene is activated. With each group, we hear the noise and voices grow and build to a crescendo.

At the bottom of the steps, Raoul Walsh lifts his megaphone and calls out to the courtyard:

WALSH
Actors in the courtyard -
Begin your action!

We see the activity in the courtyard begin. Walsh turns to the steps:

WALSH
Actors and dancers on the steps -
Begin your action!

The Denishawn dancers start their rhythmic movements up and down the steps.

Another assistant director stands on the right wall with a megaphone:

3RD ASSISTANT
Begin your action!

The semi-nude Virgins of the Temple of Sacred Purity begin their ORGY.

Another assistant on the left wall lifts his megaphone:

4TH ASSISTANT
Begin your action!

The soldiers on the high walls move their chariots along the turrets.

On the main stage above the steps, a 5th Assistant gives his command:

5TH ASSISTANT
Let the feast begin!

Belshazzar and his Princess Beloved (wearing her false eyelashes) and the other revelers at the main table, dig into the lavish spread of food and drink.

CUT BACK TO:

GRIFFITH, in the tower. We hear the roar of the crowds below him. He speaks again into the telephone:

GRIFFITH
Mr. Von Stroheim, Begin the descent!

CUT TO:



PRINCESS BELOVED

THE FEAST

BELSHAZZAR

Hands lower the elevator ropes.

VON STROHEIM

Slowly, slowly. Watch your marks!

Von Stroheim turns to the men lined up at either side of the Tower, to push it along the tracks in toward the action.

VON STROHEIM

Forward now! Keep it smooth!
Schweinhund! Do as you were told!

We see the tower begin to move along the tracks.

CUT BACK UP TO:

GRIFFITH, at the camera, as the dual movements inward and downward begin.

We CUT TO WHAT THE CAMERA SEES:

FROM OVERHEAD, WE SEE THE THOUSANDS OF COSTUMED PEOPLE DANCING, CHEERING, AND REVELING IN THE SPECTACULAR FEAST AND ORGY SCENE BELOW. THE CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY INWARD TOWARD THE ACTION AT THE TOP OF THE STEPS, MOVING GRADUALLY IN TO THE LONG TABLE THAT IS THE FOCAL POINT OF ALL THE ACTION. THE SHOT ENDS ON BELSHAZZAR, AS HE SENDS A ROSE TO HIS PRINCESS BELOVED AT THE OTHER END OF THE TABLE, PLACING THE ROSE IN A MINIATURE CHARIOT DRAWN BY TWO HARNESSSED WHITE DOVES.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. STUDIO CONFERENCE ROOM

Aitken's business office is a dark, smoke-filled room, in browns and ochers. A group of investors and bankers in dark business suits sit in large leather chairs about the office, smoking cigars and listening in grave, intense silence as Epping reads financial figures.

EPPING

Banquet hall scene for the feast
of Belshazzar: \$250,000.

Jeweled costume worn by Princess
Beloved: \$7,000.

Pavroll, four weeks at \$12,000 a
week: \$48,000.

Salaries to dancing girls at
Belshazzar's feast: \$20,000.

Pavroll for extras at \$8000 per
week: \$48,000.

(continued)

EPPING
 (continuing)
 Building construction and costs
 of materials: \$300,000.
 Costumes and uniforms for 18,000
 soldiers: \$360,000.

Finished, Epping sits down. Aitken stands and takes over the report:

AITKEN
 These are the total expenditures
 to this point. The production has
 not yet even finished shooting, not
 to mention editing, costs of prints,
 and exploitation. At my estimate,
 the final cost will be in the
 neighborhood of \$1,900,000.

There are gasps from the assembled investors: "Incredible!"
 "Outrageous!" "Tom foolery!"

On the other side of the room in a large chair sits Griffith.
 He says nothing. He remains composed and confident. Watching
 disdainfully, he lets the others say what they will.

On Griffith's right sits his lawyer, MR. BANZHAF, an elderly
 gentleman of old world honor. On Griffith's left sits his brother
 and manager, Albert Grey Griffith.

1ST INVESTOR
 And to think I fought to put money
 in this venture!

2ND INVESTOR
 Mr. Aitken, are the monies available
 for the completion of this production?

AITKEN
 No sir, they are not.

3RD INVESTOR
 I, for one, shall not put up another
 dime. Mr. Aitken, you have allowed
 this situation to get out of control.

4th INVESTOR
 Not only that, it is my understanding
 from our last meeting that Mr. Griffith's
 intent was to release an 8-hour motion
 picture. From our contacts with key
 exhibitors around the country, we have
 found out that, without exception, every
 exhibitor has adamantly rejected the
 idea of running a picture in two 4-hour
 installments on separate evenings -
 as economically unfeasible.

5TH INVESTOR

They insist that it be cut to a length that can be shown in one evening.

AITKEN

In summation, Mr. Griffith, you have continuously refused to heed any of our misgivings regarding the feasibility and continued financing of this picture. And we, the principal investors, are no longer confident that any picture, regardless of its epic magnitude or artistic value, can hope to recoup the kind of financial outlay that your methods of production require.

There is a nervous silence. All eyes turn to Griffith. He rises from his chair and looks down at the assembly.

GRIFFITH

Gentlemen. I full well understand your concern over these expenditures, as businessmen. But you are obviously not men of vision. It seems only yesterday that I suffered these same arguments during the production of "The Birth of a Nation." That picture has since made a number of you, and countless others, millionaires. Nevertheless, I have instructed my good friend and legal advisor, Mr. Banzhaf here....

(he motions toward Banzhaf)
 ...to make available all my personal profits from "The Birth of a Nation" to complete our new picture - thus relieving you gentlemen of further responsibility. Furthermore, I have taken the liberty of having Mr. Banzhaf, as my lawyer, draw up for each of you a personal note of my indebtedness for the sums you have invested, and I have affixed my signature on each of these. I assume that these guarantees will allay your collective anxiety. Now, if you will kindly excuse me, I have a motion picture to complete.

Griffith turns and walks out the door, leaving the investors with their mouths open in amazement.

CUT TO:

EXT. BABYLON SET - EVENING

Griffith walks from the financial meeting alone through the entire length of the now deserted courtyard of the Babylon set. As he walks, the noise of the crowds replays in his mind.

He walks up the long steps to Belshazzar's throne. He turns and looks out over his set, then slowly sinks into the chair.

From Griffith's POV, we see the high walls of the set as a full moon shines down, and the imagined noise in his mind subsides to the actual quiet of the set.

Suddenly, he hears a small voice from behind him:

VOICE

Mr. Griffith, are you alright?

GRIFFITH

Huh? Who is that there?

Sul-Te-Wan emerges from the shadows. She wears a long flowing velvet cape with gold brocade trim and a scarlet turban covering her hair - part of her costume from being an extra in the Babylonian sequences.

SUL-TE-WAN

It's me, Sul-te-Wan.

She appears to Griffith like a mystical Babylonian princess - a vision from his own imagination.

GRIFFITH

What are you doing here at this time of night?

SUL-TE-WAN

I often come here - after everyone else has left - and watch the sun set.

She goes to the edge of the steps and looks out over the vista of the empty set.

SUL-TE-WAN

I get these feelings - like I'm very old - someone from out of the past. Like a Queen, and this is my kingdom.

Griffith coughs, breaking the spell. Sul-te-Wan laughs at herself.

SUL-TE-WAN

It's jes' a thing I do - like dreamin'.

Sul-te-Wan turns and looks at Griffith. He looks tired.

SUL-TE-WAN

Mr. Griffith, have you eaten today?

GRIFFITH

No. No time for that.

SUL-TE-WAN

No time for eatin'! Whv, Mr. Griffith, you need someone to take care of you - workin' all the time like this. What you need is a good, home-cooked meal. And I'm goin' to make you one - somethin' to stick to your bones. Some good fried chicken, buttermilk cornbread, some black-eyed peas with fatback, and a mess 'a greens. Now how's that sound!

Griffith smiles, his mouth watering.

GRIFFITH

Sul-te-Wan, you know just what a man needs.

SUL-TE-WAN

You come on over now, and I'm gonna cook!

GRIFFITH

It's late. I don't want to put you to any trouble.

SUL-TE-WAN

Oh, it ain't no trouble. It's as easy to cook for two as it is for one.

GRIFFITH

Hmmn. How do you usually get home at night?

SUL-TE-WAN

Oh I usually takes the trolley.

GRIFFITH

Why don't you wait for me in my car, and I'll drive you home. And then I think I'll take you up on your kind offer of hospitality. It's been a long time since I've had some good Southern cooking.

They walk off into the shadows together.

CUT TO

INT. EDITING ROOM

Everyone is working late. Lillian, with editors Rose and Jimmy Smith, is supervising two rows of young girls who sit at desks, cutting and splicing film. There are no moviolas. Everything is done by hand. Strips of film hang everywhere.

Griffith enters.

LILLIAN

How did the meeting go?

GRIFFITH

It was as bad as I feared. By the way, Mr. Banzhaf will be issuing a guarantee note to you, your mother, and Dorothy to cover your investment.

LILLIAN

We don't need any guarantee. We're proud and delighted that you let us invest. We only wish you'd taken our \$300 for "Birth," because, if you had, we'd all be rich now too.

Griffith pauses, weary, and looks at the ever loyal Lillian with appreciation. Then his thoughts go back to Sul-te-Wan.

GRIFFITH

I'm going now, Gish. Could you possibly stay and see that today's cutting is finished properly.

LILLIAN

Of course.

GRIFFITH

You know what to do. You're the only one I can really trust.

Lillian lowers her eyes, honored to have Griffith's trust. Griffith turns to leave.

GRIFFITH

Tomorrow, we'll work on the Huguenot sequence together.

Griffith leaves and Lillian goes back to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. STUDIO - NIGHT

Griffith walks to his purple Mercedes. Sul-te-Wan sits waiting for him in the back seat.

Griffith gets in beside Sul-te-Wan, and the chauffeur drives them off, the headlights flashing into the camera.

DISSOLVE TO:

TWO BIG YELLOW EYES, staring out of the darkness.

The eyes belong to a big black cat. As we pull back, we see that the cat is on a table, nibbling at the remains of a fried chicken dinner for two. The only light is from candles, which are burning low.

We are in Sul-te-Wan's house. It is small, dark and mysterious, cluttered with religious and occult objects. There are cats prowling around everywhere.

The camera moves through the house in a DREAMLIKE MONTAGE:

We follow the black cat as it proceeds toward the bedroom. It sniffs around a chair, where Griffith's hat and coat have been discarded. Through the open door to the bedroom, a warm light glows. Wafts of incense smoke are in the air.

The cat walks into the camera, its eyes again filling the screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUL-TE-WAN'S EYES, as she pulls away from the camera, a faint smile on her wet lips. Her back to the camera, she pulls a wrap around her naked shoulders, then disappears into the darkness.

Griffith lounges against the pillows on the bed, a euphoric glaze to his eyes. He wears a Chinese kimono. A cat jumps up on the bed and purrs. Griffith strokes the cat languidly.

Sul-te-Wan reappears, sitting down on the edge of the bed. She smooths out a place on the spread between them.

GRIFFITH

What are you doing now?

His voice echoes in dreamlike ripples.

SUL-TE-WAN

I'm going to read your cards.

GRIFFITH

My cards?

Sul-Te-Wan ritualistically shuffles a deck of Tarot cards. She sets the deck on the smoothed place between them.

SUL-TE-WAN

Cut them.

Griffith cuts the deck in two. Sul-te-Wan rejoins the two stacks. She slowly turns over the top card and places it in front of Griffith.

A disturbed look crosses Sul-te-Wan's face.

SUL-TE-WAN

(dispassionately)

The Tower.

Griffith looks at the card with curiosity. It pictures a tower being struck by lightning and two people falling from its height through the air.

SUL-TE-WAN

It is the card of Downfall
from great heights. Man strives
too high; he challenges the Gods,
and is punished for his arrogance.

FLASH CUT: The tower from which Griffith shot the Feast of Belshazzar.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER LOBBY - NIGHT

Griffith lurks nervously alone in the lobby of a theater in which INTOLERANCE is being shown. We hear only light applause from within as the movie ends.

The audience starts to exit past Griffith. He eavesdrops to pick up a sense of their reactions. Their voices sound distorted and disembodied.

1ST VOICE

It's spectacular, sure. But what's it all mean?

2ND VOICE

Can you believe that guy snoring all the way through!

3RD VOICE

Frankly, I wish we'd just gone and seen that Mary Pickford movie and had some fun. Too intellectual for me.

Griffith follows the last people who straggle out into the street. A few people are at the box office buying tickets to the next day's performance.

Griffith's attention focuses on a young couple who are looking at a poster advertising "Intolerance" as "a Colossal Spectacle" and "A Sun Play of the Ages."

Suddenly, a newsboy comes running down the street.

NEWSBOY

Extra! Extra! War in Europe!
Read all about it!

The young couple, with great concern, buy a copy of the newspaper. Griffith watches as they hurry off down the street, forgetting the movie.

Disturbed, Griffith steps back into the shadows.

CUT BACK TO:

THE TAROT CARDS:

As Sul-te-Wan slowly places another card on the bed cover in front of Griffith.

It is the Knight of Swords, picturing a young man in armor, riding a black horse, his sword drawn.

SUL-TE-WAN

War!

CUT TO:

INT. GOVERNMENT OFFICE - DAY

Griffith sits opposite a minor government representative, listening in silence to more bad news.

OFFICIAL

The President has asked me to convey to you his personal best wishes, Mr. Griffith. But he will not be able to intervene in this case of the censorship in Baltimore of your motion picture, Intolerance.

There is disappointment in Griffith's face.

OFFICIAL
(continuing)

Frankly, Mr. Griffith, given the conditions of impending international conflict, the pacifist doctrine that you advocate, while certainly admirable and inspiring, runs contrary to the feelings of the people. They are excited by this war, and our entry is all but inevitable. We in government are just beginning to recognize the great propaganda value of films. Thus, given the current political reality, we simply cannot endorse your film.

There is a long silence as Griffith gravely realizes the horrible realities that oppose him.

GRIFFITH

I see.

CUT BACK TO:

THE TAROT CARDS:

As Sul-te-Wan slowly, fatalistically, lays another card in front of Griffith.

It is the Ten of Swords - picturing a man lying dead in a pool of blood, ten swords piercing his body.

SUL-TE-WAN

Defeat, desolation, material loss...

CUT TO:

INT. BANZHAF'S LAW OFFICE - NEW YORK.

As in the last scene, Griffith sits in gloom, hearing more bad news, this time from his lawyer, Banzhaf.

BANZHAF

As you must be aware, I'm afraid it has become obvious that "Intolerance" will not earn back but a small fraction of the money that has been invested in it - a debt that you have personally assumed.

GRIFFITH

That, sir, is a matter of honor and trust. I gambled with other people's money, and I lost. Now I suppose it is time for me to pay the piper.

BANZHAF

Therefore, it's my feeling that the offer from Mr. Zukor is a good solution for you. Mr. Zukor will provide funding to produce your future pictures in exchange for the distribution rights. You will retain ownership of the pictures, and the money they generate can be put to paying off your debts.

GRIFFITH

I've been approached by the British War Office to produce a propaganda picture in support of the Allies. It's against my convictions, but perhaps I should hear them out. Anyway, I should like to get away, and I could use the opportunity of the London opening of "Intolerance" to observe the War firsthand.

CUT TO:

THE TAROT CARDS

As Sul-te-Wan lays a fourth card in front of Griffith.

It is the Six of Swords, picturing several hooded figures in a boat as it is poled across still waters.

SUL-TE-WAN

A journey by water...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BOARDING DOCK - NEW YORK HARBOR

Mrs. Gish, Lillian and Dorothy, and Bobby Harron are saying goodbye to Griffith as he boards a boat for Europe alone. This is not a happy moment for any of them. There is a note of melancholy in Griffith's voice.

GRIFFITH

Perhaps I was dreaming too big a dream for one man. I was reaching out - stretching beyond my talents. I was trying to say something for the whole world. Maybe it's not possible.

The first loading whistle blows. Griffith looks upon his loyal friends with great affection.

GRIFFITH

I'll be in contact with you from London as soon as I know what my next film will be.

GRIFFITH
 (continuing)
 I know you must be worried about
 your own futures. I can only ask
 that you not sign any contracts with
 others companies until you hear from
 me.

BOBBY
 Yes, sir, Mr. Griffith.

Griffith shakes Bobby's hand.

LILLIAN
 (holding back the tears)
 You can count on us.

The final loading whistle sounds, and Griffith turns to board the boat. Mrs. Gish embraces him.

MRS. GISH
 May God grant you a safe
 journey, Mr. Griffith.

Griffith kisses Dorothy on the cheek. She is in tears. Then he turns to Lillian and hands her a parcel wrapped in newspaper.

GRIFFITH
 This is all I have in the world.
 Will you keep it safe until I return?

Lillian nods yes, too choked up to speak. Griffith embraces her and gives her a kiss on the cheek.

He turns and walks up the plank alone.

CUT BACK TO:

THE TAROT CARDS:

The final card which Sul-te-Wan turns over is the Queen of Swords.

SUL-TE-WAN
 Royalty, honor, commission...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - NIGHT

A gala reception is in progress, after the Command Premiere of "Intolerance" attended by King George and Queen Mary, the Royal Family, key politicians and dignitaries and London high society.

In a long shot, with great pomp and ceremony, we see a reception line where Griffith, the guest of honor, is presented to the King and Queen. He bows and shakes hands. They congratulate him.

Griffith moves from dignitary to dignitary about the floor gladhanding people and expounding on art and current affairs. Formal music is played by a small orchestra. Elegantly dressed people are dancing.

Griffith is talking with Prime Minister Lloyd George and War Minister Winston Churchill.

CHURCHILL

Where do you get the stories for your motion pictures, Mr. Griffith?

GRIFFITH

Well, my stories come from various sources, Mr. Churchill.

CHURCHILL

I'm something of a writer myself. Perhaps some of my stories would make interesting films...

Lloyd George laughs and cuts him off.

LLOYD GEORGE

Hear him out, Mr. Griffith.
By all means, hear him out.
The government would welcome any diversion that might keep Mr. Churchill out of mischief.

They all laugh, but Griffith's attention is wandering.

CHURCHILL

History will decide, Mr. Prime Minister, what is mischief and what is accomplishment.

Griffith's eye is travelling over the opulence of the surroundings: the chandeliers, tapestries, elegantly gowned and bejeweled women, the music and the dancing.

But his gaze keeps returning to one woman in particular, the beautiful Lady Diana Manners, who is standing nearby with two other women waiting to be introduced to Griffith. Churchill takes note of this.

CHURCHILL

Mr. Griffith, may I introduce you to Lady Paget, Lady Laverly, and Lady Diana Manners.

Griffith exchanges pleasantries with the ladies.

GRIFFITH

The opulence of the Court is surpassed only by the grace, charm, and beauty of its ladies. Would that I could capture that beauty with my camera.

The ladies love Griffith's compliments. They titter in smiles.

LADY PAGET

(flirting)

Perhaps such an affair could be arranged, Mr. Griffith - if you were to bring your camera to my estate one afternoon for tea, I think you would find many willing subjects for your photographic studies.

DIANA MANNERS

Yes, what a marvelous adventure that might be. We are all so thrilled to have such a distinguished American artist in our midst. I for one would be honored to be at your service.

The music begins again, and people drift into waltz-time across the floor.

GRIFFITH

(to Diana Manners)

Then perhaps you would honor me with a dance, Lady Manners.

DIANA MANNERS

I'd be delighted.

Griffith and Lady Manners whirl off into a sea of dancers.

In the middle of the dance, several of the lights are suddenly extinguished and the drapes drawn. It is an AIR RAID.

But the music continues, and many continue dancing. Griffith and Lady Manners drift out to a large balcony to observe. No one seems particularly upset - the old British stiff-upper-lip tradition.

In the distance, searchlights pierce the night, searching out and illuminating a Zeppelin high in the sky.

We hear the sounds and see the flashes of anti-aircraft fire; then the explosions of bombs.

1ST BRITISH GENTLEMAN

Rawther noisy tonight, isn't it?

2ND BRITISH GENTLEMAN

Yes, rawther.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. VICTORIA STATION

Griffith is awaiting the arrival by train of his company from the States. All around him are soldiers departing for the war, and others, wounded, arriving back from the Continent.

Through the gate come Dorothy and Bobby, followed by Lillian, Mrs. Gish, and Billy Bitzer, lugging his camera possessively. They exchange joyful greetings with Griffith and gather their luggage together.

A troop train is arriving simultaneously. The sights of bandaged and bloody men, amputees, and paraplegics add a sobering note to the Griffith reunion. The soldiers are being met by wives and mothers in emotional exchanges. Tragedies abound.

Mrs. Gish stands transfixed, tears streaming down her face in compassion.

GRIFFITH

(to Lillian and Dorothy)

It's only in wartime that emotions are caught off-guard. You want to be actresses, but you've never lived. You don't know what life is all about. I hope you may never again have such an opportunity, but since it is here, I don't want you to miss it. You must come back here and study these people and their tragedies - for these are the emotions that you must draw on for our new film.

As they are walking from the station, a Woman's Corps volunteer strides past them with a pronounced, shoulder-swinging, masculine swagger. Griffith grabs Dorothy's arm to direct her attention to this amusing way of walking.

Dorothy, ever the clown, follows the girl for a way, imitating her walk and exaggerating it. The others watch in amusement.

Dorothy turns and struts back to Griffith.

GRIFFITH

Miss Dorothy - It's a dorb!

CUT TO:

EXT. LADY PAGET'S ESTATE - DAY - MONTAGE

Griffith and Bitzer have their camera set up on the lawn and are taking formal shots of groups of society ladies in beautiful gowns.

But it is Lady Diana Manners who is receiving most of Griffith's attention. They play croquet together, then walk together through the formal gardens. They listen to chamber music while taking tea under a lawn umbrella.

Bitzer keeps to his camera, and we can tell from the expression on his face that he does not have much patience, having to wait around while Griffith flirts with Society.

Griffith looks through the camera at a close shot of Lady Diana Manners. She smiles at him through the lens.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE SHOT - LILLIAN - INT. HOTEL ROOM

Lillian gazes out the window in a sad melancholy.

Mrs. Gish understands what is wrong. She comes over and sits next to Lillian, stroking her forehead.

MRS. GISH
I understand, darling.

LILLIAN
(holding back a tear)
Understand what, Mother?

MRS. GISH
You love him, don't you.

Lillian breaks into tears. She sobs and sobs, the dam breaking loose. Mrs. Gish holds Lillian's head to her breast and tries to comfort her.

LILLIAN
(through her tears)
I'm so worried about him, Mother.
He's been so changed since "Intolerance."
And now, instead of thinking about the
new picture, he spends all his time with
those society people. I don't know why
he brought us over here in the first place!

MRS. GISH
I know, darling. It isn't fair.

LILLIAN
Sometimes...sometimes I think he
doesn't even know I exist. He thinks
I'm just one of those little ga-ga
babies that he makes me play. Well,
I'm not! I'm a woman now.

MRS. GISH

Yes, you are, darling. And when we get to Paris, I'm going to take you to all the most famous couturiers - Poiret, Worth, Lanvin - and we'll buy you and Dorothy the most beautiful Paris gowns, and there won't be a man in the world who won't see that my daughters are two of the most elegant young ladies on any continent...

Lillian is somewhat consoled by this fantasy. Suddenly, Dorothy and Bobby come bursting in.

DOROTHY

Lillian! Mother! Look what we found!

It's a little Pekingese puppy.

Dorothy runs over to Lillian and hands her the puppy, which promptly laps the tears off Lillian's face.

LILLIAN

Oh, hello, little puppy!

MRS. GISH

It's awfully cute, Dorothy, but I don't see how we can keep it.

DOROTHY

Oh, but we have to!

BOBBY

The lady that gave it to us said that there's a new law in London that you can only have one dog to a household...

DOROTHY

...so if we didn't take it, they were going to have to put it away.

BOBBY

We saved it's life!

LILLIAN

(to the dog)

What's your name, little lady?

DOROTHY

It's name is Chu Chin Chow...

BOBBY

What's Chinese!

DOROTHY

... And it's a boy!

MRS. GISH

I don't know how we'll be able to take that little dog with us when we leave. There are so many rules and regulations about travelling with pets.

BOBBY

Oh, Mr. Griffith could take care of that. He's an important man, and they wouldn't bother us if he told them it was alright.

Lillian hands the puppy to Mrs. Gish.

LILLIAN

Look, Mother, how can you say no.

The puppy licks Mrs. Gish's face also.

MRS. GISH

(to the puppy)

Oh, alright. I guess you've found a home.

DOROTHY

Now do you think we'll all turn into those little old ladies who always get so silly about their lap-dogs?

MRS. GISH

Hush now, Dorothy. Don't even talk about such things!

Griffith, followed by Bitzer, now strides into the room through the door left open by Dorothy and Bobby.

GRIFFITH

Knock, knock. May we come in?

Griffith is all dressed up in coat, tails, and tophat and has probably had a couple of drinks. He's in a jolly mood.

Chu Chin Chow jumps from Mrs. Gish's lap and barks away at Griffith.

GRIFFITH

Goodness, what have we here?
Have you hired a watchdog, Mrs. Gish?

Griffith picks up Chu Chin Chow in his hands.

GRIFFITH

Say now, what are you barking at me for, little fellow. Do you take me for a burglar?

The puppy quiets down and becomes very friendly. Griffith has a way with animals, just as he has a way with women.

GRIFFITH

I thought so, just a bluffer.

DOROTHY

His name is Chu Chin Chow and he's our new mascot.

BOBBY

You can get him through customs for us, can't you, Mr. Griffith?

GRIFFITH

Well, Bobby, as a matter of fact, I have some papers with me here that will get all of us not only through customs, but anywhere else we may want to go here and in France.

Griffith takes out the papers and shows them to the Gishes, who pass them around, impressed.

GRIFFITH

You will notice that they are all signed by Prime Minister Lloyd George himself. In fact, I just now came from the Prime Minister's office at 10 Downing Street. The Prime Minister has arranged for me to go to the front lines in France to photograph real scenes of the war. And I'm taking you all with me!

Bobby and Dorothy jump up and down with excitement.

GRIFFITH

So pack your bags, because you're all going to cross the Channel tonight. I've made all the arrangements. Mr. Bitzer will escort you, and I'll meet you at the Grand Hotel in Paris tomorrow night.

LILLIAN

(somewhat reticent)

How are you going to get to Paris, Mr. Griffith?

GRIFFITH

I'm going to fly!

DISSOLVE TO:

AIRPLANE VIEW OF A FRENCH BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Below us, World War I rages on amidst smoke and explosions. (Stock footage).

Looking down on this scene from an observation plane is Griffith, wearing goggles and a flying suit.

The small bi-plane lands at a French airfield. Griffith gets out and shakes the pilot's hand.

GRIFFITH

Marvelous! But it all seems so unreal.

PILOT

I assure you, Sir; it's all too real down there.

To accentuate the truth of his comment, the pilot puts his hand through a hole that a bullet has torn in the fabric of the wing of the plane.

GRIFFITH

I must see it for myself.

CUT TO:

INT. GRAND HOTEL - PARIS - NIGHT

Griffith, Lillian and Dorothy, Bobby Harron and Mrs. Gish, carrying Chu Chin Chow, have just arrived at the hotel. They have checked in and a porter is taking their luggage.

Griffith is upset:

GRIFFITH

How can I shoot without Billy!

LILLIAN

It's his German name. They wouldn't okay his passport.

GRIFFITH

Hogwash! Billy is an American!

LILLIAN

They said they'd assign you their best military cameraman.

Mrs. Gish, looking truly weary, interrupts:

MRS GISH

Children, I must excuse myself.
The journey has quite exhausted me.
It's all so frightening. You may
go on, but I'm going to say goodnight.

They all say goodnight. Mrs. Gish follows the porters with their bags up the stairs.

DOROTHY

(to Griffith)
We had an air raid on the train!

LILLIAN

Yes, and we both got seasick on the channel.

BOBBY

I'm too excited to go to bed now!

GRIFFITH

Good. Then follow me.

They exit back on to the street.

EXT. GRAND HOTEL - NIGHT

Paris is blacked out, but the moon is full, illuminating the streets. The sounds of guns firing are heard in the distance.

Griffith, Lillian, Dorothy and Bobby exit the hotel.

GRIFFITH

And now, my children...
(a dramatic pause)
If you wish, I will show you what the most beautiful city in the world looks like with only the moon above it. You may never get another chance to see it like this. When you come here in future years, the lights will be on, God willing.

Griffith offers his arm to Lillian. She takes it, loving the romance of the gesture. Bobby and Dorothy also walk hand-in-hand.

MONTAGE, as they walk silently along the Seine, down the landmark avenues and boulevards of Paris, across bridges, past its great monuments and fountains, ending at the cathedral of Notre Dame.

They enter the cathedral and stand in awed reverence as the morning sun streams in through the stained glass windows.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT. SMALL VILLAGE OUTSIDE PARIS - DAY

Griffith is leaving Mrs. Gish, Dorothy and a few others of their make-shift company at a school house. A nun is busy herding the children into a stone building.

GRIFFITH
(to Mrs. Gish and Dorothy)
Wait for us here. You'll be safer.

Griffith and company are being driven in two open military vehicles, escorted by a handful of French soldiers.

Griffith rides in the front truck, together with his French Army cameraman, a driver, and two soldiers. Griffith wears a French uniform. In the second vehicle are Lillian, bundled in a heavy coat, and Bobby, wearing a French private's uniform, another soldier, a driver, and some props and equipment.

The two military trucks drive off, leaving Mrs. Gish and Dorothy behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

They drive through the bombed-out ruins outside Paris, near the front lines of the war. The sounds of bombardment are now quite close. Lillian looks around at the rubble and destruction in awe and silence.

They are stopped at a military roadblock. The officer in charge steps forward demanding to see their papers. He has no intention of letting them pass.

FRENCH OFFICER
Halte! Vous n'allez pas plus loin
si vous n'avez pas vos papiers.

Griffith hands him his papers. The officer notices Gish in the second vehicle.

FRENCH OFFICER
Mais qu'est-ce qu'une femme fait ici?
(What's a woman doing here?)

The officer looks at their papers. They are the special top priority permits and documents signed by Prime Minister Lloyd George, with the seals of the Prime Minister's Office, the British War Dept., and the French War Dept.

FRENCH OFFICER
 Incroyable! Soyez prudents. Vous
 seraiz a portee de l'artillerie!
 (Amazing! Be careful. You will
 be within range of the artillery!)

He salutes and signals to let them pass, shaking his head in disbelief as they drive past.

As they drive on, the bombardment appears closer and closer. They are approaching the front.

They stop in a bombed out village, at some trenches near the remains of a farmhouse. Some French troop are resting there; wounded men are being treated.

From Lillian's POV, we see another officer run up to Griffith's car, gesticulating that they must be crazy. The high-level papers are again shown. The officer shrugs in disbelief and walks away.

Griffith gets out of the front car and comes back to Lillian and Bobby.

GRIFFITH
 We're going to shoot here. Some
 troops are scheduled to arrive from
 the front lines across that field.
 I want to film them. While we're
 waiting, I want to do a scene with
 you, Lillian. We must work quickly.

Griffith rushes back to where the cameraman is setting up his camera by the trenches.

Feeling the tension, Lillian gets out of the truck. She takes off her coat, revealing a ragged peasant's outfit. In the rearview mirror of the truck, she dishevels her hair. The strain and real danger of the situation make it easy for her to get into the frame of mind of a victim of the war.

She moves to where Griffith is working with his cameraman.

GRIFFITH
 Lillian, I want you to emerge from
 the barn. You're looking for Bobby.
 Maybe he's in these deserted trenches.
 The war has destroyed your nerves.
 Your mind is gone. You wander aimlessly
 through the trench. You fall down.
 You don't know where you are or what
 you're doing.

Suddenly, a shell whines through the air and explodes in the middle of the field right next to them. On the other side of the field, French soldiers appear and start running in their direction.

Griffith sees the soldiers and orders the camera moved to catch the action.

GRIFFITH

Quickly! Move the camera here!

Everything becomes chaotic. Things happen very fast. The cameraman turns his camera on the open field and starts cranking, as the soldiers run toward them for safety.

We hear the whine of several more rounds coming down. Terrified, Lillian is in a state of confusion and panic. Everyone runs around looking for cover, not knowing what to do.

The officer shouts orders telling everyone to get down:

OFFICER

Couchez-vous! Tout le monde, couchez-vous!

Everybody drops, including the cameraman. But Griffith remains up. He grabs the camera and starts cranking it himself.

Shells explode close by. Debris is thrown over them.

The officer gets back up, rushes to the head of the embankment and tries to yell to the soldiers in the field to go back. He waves his arms frantically - as we hear more rounds coming.

OFFICER

Retournez-vous! Retournez-vous!

The soldiers do not hear the officer's warning and continue running toward them. The shells explode in the middle of the soldiers. When the smoke clears, there is nothing left - all have been blown to bits.

Griffith stops cranking the camera, horror on his face. His hands drop from the camera. He turns to the others.

GRIFFITH

My God!

In shock, everyone slowly rises from the ground.

Lillian staggers toward Griffith, tears streaming down her face in hysteria - like the character he had only moments before described to her. She collapses in his arms, crying.

The officer walks over.

GRIFFITH

I'm sorry. I'm truly sorry. I...

OFFICER
You should leave.

GRIFFITH
Yes.

Holding Lillian to his side, Griffith walks her back to the vehicles. The cameraman grabs the camera. The others quickly follow. They get into the vehicles and quickly drive off.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

As Griffith and his vehicles arrive back at the small village, we see that the village has also been bombarded.

Where the school had stood before, there are now only smouldering remains. People are running around trying to extricate the bodies of the children from the rubble. The bodies of the children are lined up on the street.

Griffith, in the lead vehicle, still holds Lillian, comforting her. When Lillian sees that the school has been bombed, she tears herself from Griffith and jumps out of the vehicle before it stops.

LILLIAN
(screaming)
Oh my God! Mother! Dorothy!

She runs frantically through the chaos. She bumps into a nun carrying a dead child. Lillian backs off in horror, getting the child's blood on her hands.

She runs into the ruins where the school used to be, searching for her mother and sister.

A portion of a stone wall crumbles, almost hitting her. She searches frantically.

LILLIAN
Mother! Dorothy!

Beyond the destroyed schoolroom is another portion of the building still intact. She hears Dorothy's weak voice:

DOROTHY
Lillian! Over here, Lillian.

Lillian rushes toward the sound of the voice. She finds Dorothy and Mrs. Gish huddled in a corner. Dorothy is crying. Wrapped in a blanket, Mrs. Gish is in shock. She stares glassy-eyed into space.

As Lillian and Dorothy attend to their mother, Griffith slowly walks up to them. Lillian looks up at Griffith.

In Griffith's eyes there is guilt for what he has subjected them all to - all for his motion picture.

GRIFFITH
We're going home.

FADE OUT

END - PART I



LILLIAN GISH

D.W. GRIFFITH

Part 2

WHERE LOVE ONCE WALKED

EXT. NEW YORK DOCKS - DAY

TITLE: "New York - 1918"

Griffith and his company are disembarking from the ship that has brought them back from Europe. They are greeted by a group of reporters and Mr. Banzhaf.

Lillian and Dorothy walk with Mrs. Gish down the plank, avoiding the reporters. Mrs. Gish still seems shattered from the trauma of the war.

REPORTER

Mr. Griffith, what can you tell us about the war in Europe?

GRIFFITH

Gentlemen, real war is not a glamorous adventure, and never again shall I portray it that way. Real war is frightening and horrible.

Griffith turns away, for once in no mood to hold court with the press. The reporter calls after him.

REPORTER

What are you going to do now?

GRIFFITH

My company and I are returning to California to finish our picture.

Griffith makes his way to the waiting cars. The Gishes are driven off in one car. Griffith gets in the second car with Banzhaf.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL STREET, PALM TREE LINED - DAY

TITLE: "Los Angeles"

Griffith drives up alone in his Mercedes. He parks in front of a small cottage. It is a cheery little house, surrounded by flowers and trees.

Griffith knocks on the door; and Sul-te-Wan, wearing only a bathrobe, opens the door.

SUL-TE-WAN

Mr. David, you're back!

She gives him a big hug.

SUL-TE-WAN

Come on in!

Griffith enters. The interior looks quite different than before, boots on the floor and a hat hanging on the wall - evidence of the presence of a man.

GRIFFITH

You've made some changes.

SUL-TE-WAN

Yesser, lots 'o changes.
I went and got myself a husband!

She shows him her wedding ring. Griffith's face cannot hide a moment of disappointment, but he quickly brightens up.

GRIFFITH

Well I'm very happy for you,
Sul-te-Wan. I guess I've been
away a long time.

SUL-TE-WAN

Yesser, it's been a long time.
Why don't you jes' sit down here
and I'll put a pot o' coffee on...
an' we can gossip.
(she puts on the water)
An'I got some fudge-cake here that's
just right out of the oven.

Griffith sighs and sits down, appreciating the warmth of her welcome. He still feels at home here.

GRIFFITH

I've been trying to round up some
of the old company, but they're all
making their own pictures now.
Raoul Walsh, Von Stroheim - all my
actors are directors now. And Mae Marsh,
Kilian Cooper - their names are up on
the marquee.

SUL-TE-WAN

They all got them jobs 'cause they
worked with you.

She brings him a piece of fudge-cake that no one could resist.

SUL-TE-WAN

Your name's like gold in this town
now. If they worked with you,
that makes 'em important.

GRIFFITH

Even little Mickey Neilan - he used to be my chauffeur - now he's directing Blanche Sweet in 6-reelers.

SUL-TE-WAN

This town's just gone movie-mad!

GRIFFITH

And how's your career going?

The water is boiling. Sul-te-Wan turns to the stove to prepare the coffee.

SUL-TE-WAN

Oh, there ain't much call for black girls in the movies these days.

GRIFFITH

You'll always have a job with my company, Sul-te-Wan.

SUL-TE-WAN

No. Thank you, Mr. David, but I don't think thas' in the cards for me. 'Sides, I've been thinkin' 'bout gettin' nice 'n fat an' havin' me some babies.

She brings over the coffee pot. Griffith takes a small cloth-covered box from his pocket and places it on the table for Sul-te-Wan.

GRIFFITH

I met an old woman in a shop in Wales - I think she was a witch. Anyway, she sold me these cards...

Sul-te-Wan opens the box. It is a very old deck of English Tarot cards.

GRIFFITH

...and she told me that I should make a favor of these cards - to a dark woman - someone who could read the mysteries of the ages and see men's destinies.

Sul-te-Wan's fingers move over the cards.

SUL-TE-WAN

These cards are very old, very old. They got magic in them.

Griffith watches, fascinated with the ritual of her manipulation of the cards.

She lays the deck on the table in front of Griffith.

SUL-TE-WAN

Cut them.

Griffith outs the cards.

Sul-te-Wan rejoins the two stacks. She turns over the top card and places it in front of Griffith.

SUL-TE-WAN

The Six of Cups.

The card depicts two children at play among flowers in a garden.

SUL-TE-WAN

This is a card of memory, Mr. David.
It looks back to childhood, when
things were simple and happy...

Griffith seems suddenly inspired. The camera moves in toward his eyes, which seem to glow.

GRIFFITH

Yes.....I see....

DISSOLVE TO:

GRIFFITH'S VISION:

A beautiful country landscape. The sun shines down on a valley of large oak trees blowing in a warm summer breeze.

We lapse into a MONTAGE of shots from Griffith's next movie, "True Heart Susie." The shots are static, composed as they would appear on the screen, except that we see them in color, as Griffith would see them during production.

Over these shots, we hear a sentimental orchestration of "The Sweetest Bunch of Lilacs"- Lillian's theme (which later became the title music for the "Amos 'N' Andy" radio show).

LAP DISSOLVE TO:



TRUE HEART SUSIE: THE ALMOST KISS



THE SODA SHOP: BOBBY AND LILLIAN

A TINY ONE-ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE, in the country setting.

The doors open and little children come running out, delighted that school is over for the day. We hear them laughing and cheering.

The last two out the door are Bobby and Lillian, dressed as young country-hick school kids. Bobby carries Lillian's books. They are painfully shy with each other, just beginning to explore a puppy love. They walk off together.

TITLE CARD: "Down Memory's misty lane -
Where Love once walked."

A LARGE OAK TREE, with several hearts and initials carved in its bark.

Lillian looks on approvingly as Bobby finishes cutting their initials in the tree.

The two look at each other bashfully, some force of attraction trying to pull them into their first kiss. They rock on their toes tipping their lips toward each other; but first one, then the other, pulls back, chickening out - a comedy of errors and innocence that ends with both deciding it is too difficult.

They walk away together down the path, Lillian imitating the funny duck-walk that we have seen Dorothy and Bobby doing way back in the Biograph days. "True Heart Susie," in its simplicity and innocence, is a nostalgic return for Griffith to those early little films.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SODA SHOP SET

Lillian and Bobby sit together drinking sodas at the counter of a turn-of-the-century country store.

Lillian is all dressed up for the occasion in her best country gingham. Bobby wears a suit and sports a new mustache to make him look older. He plays with the mustache self-consciously. The character he is playing has just returned from college and is showing off to the folks back home.

At the other end of the counter are two "city girls." One of them is played by Carol Dempster, the former Denishawn dancer that Griffith had danced with on the set of Babylon.

The city girls are all dolled up in face powder, rouge, lipstick and fancy clothes of silks and satins. They are eying Bobby and trying to flirt.

Lillian, who is playing the old-fashioned girl, finds their overt behavior unladylike and tries to ignore them. Lillian wears no makeup or frilly clothes. She is prim and tidy.

Bobby calls Lillian's attention to the city girls:

BOBBY

See those two down there.
Men flirt with that kind,
but they marry the pure and simple ones.

Lillian glances at the girls, thrilled at Bobby's words. She is surely the pure and simple kind he refers to.

CUT BACK to where Griffith sits in his director's chair next to the camera, as Billy films the scene at the soda shop. Griffith seems relaxed and happy - and is delighted with the scene.

GRIFFITH

It's a darb!

He gets up from his chair.

GRIFFITH

Now let's get a shot of the
paint and powder brigade.

(He is referring to the city girls).

As Bitzer is moving the camera for the close shot of the 2 girls, Griffith beckons to Lillian.

GRIFFITH

Miss Gish, come here a moment.

Gish comes over and Griffith changes his tone to a more intimate one.

GRIFFITH

It's just like old times, isn't it.

LILLIAN

Yes it is.

GRIFFITH

So tell me, Gish, what do you think of the new girl?

He gestures toward Carol Dempster, who is doing a little dance for the amusement of the crew, while the camera is being set up. Gish probably doesn't think much of the "new girl" at all. She pauses a moment looking for the right answer.

LILLIAN

Well, she's certainly a good dancer...

Griffith laughs, dismissing the subject - teasing Lillian.

GRIFFITH

Are you ready, Billy?

Billy nods yes. Griffith gives the girls their instructions.

GRIFFITH

Girls, this is your close-up. You are trying to get Bobby's attention, just like in the last shot. He is a handsome young man and very prosperous looking, so you two giggle and tell each other little jokes and try to catch his eye.

The two girls do a great comic flirt for the camera.

CUT TO:

EXT. A COUNTRY HOUSE SET - DAY

Griffith is about to direct Lillian and Bobby in the last scene from True Heart Susie. It is a lovely, sunny day, birds are singing, and everyone is happy to be on this pleasant location. The set is a simple farm house, surrounded by flowers and trees.

Griffith is sitting in his director's chair. Lillian sits in another chair next to him. She is still dressed simply, but now to the point of being austere - no longer girlish, but mature.

GRIFFITH

Lillian, I wonder if I could ask your advice about a rather personal matter.

LILLIAN
 (all big eyes and loving)
 Of course , Mr. Griffith.

GRIFFITH
 Lillian, do you think it would be too scandalous if I were to start spending some time off the set with one of the actresses from the company?

Lillian blushes, as Griffith is surely referring to her.

GRIFFITH
 As you know, I have always avoided having any personal life because of my work and because I am legally still a married man. But now that my ambitions have settled down a little, I find that I miss the companionship.

LILLIAN
 I don't think the world would be too shocked, Mr. Griffith. I think it is a lovely idea.

GRIFFITH
 Thank you, Gish. I appreciate your confidence. Now let's do this scene.
 (he rises)
 Bobby!

Lillian is radiant with the prospect of sharing Griffith's love. Lillian disappears inside the house and then reappears at the open window with a watering pot in her hand. In the scene she will be watering the flowers that grow in a flower box under the window.

The camera is set up intimately close to the window. Bobby waits next to the camera. He is dressed in the austere black suit of a country preacher. For the first time, he looks very mature and serious-minded. Griffith takes Bobby aside.

GRIFFITH
 This is the last scene of the picture. Bobby, you have finally realized that it is Susie that you have loved all your life. You have made many foolish mistakes and you have wronged Susie cruelly - but she has remained faithful to you and waited. Finally you have come to announce your love. She will accept and you will kiss her.

BOBBY
 Yes, Mr. Griffith.

Griffith now goes over to Lillian and speaks to her in low tones.



LILLIAN AND BOBBY: THE KISS

GRIFFITH

Lillian, you are at home, alone, as usual. You have resigned yourself to being an old maid - because Bobby has never recognized the great depth and constancy of your heart. And now, finally, he comes to you, and your waiting is over.

Griffith steps back to his place beside the camera and taps Billy on the shoulder to start cranking the camera.

GRIFFITH

Alright now, Susie, you are watering your flowers.

We move in to the scene. Lillian is alone at the window watering her flowers. She is beautiful in her vague melancholy.

GRIFFITH (OFF-SCREEN)

Now take your first step in, Bobby.

We see Bobby's shadow on the wall of the house next to the window.

BOBBY

Hello, Susie.

Lillian looks up from her flowers, surprised. Bobby steps into the frame from the right into a close 2-shot on Lillian over Bobby's shoulder.

BOBBY

Is it too late, Susie? I know now that I have loved you all my life.

Very slowly, Lillian looks up into Bobby's eyes. Her love is deep and mature. This is the moment she has been waiting for all her life. Almost imperceptibly she nods to Bobby - meaning it is not too late. Bobby puts his hands around her shoulders and draws her out from the window toward him. He is going to kiss her. Her eyes glaze at the ecstasy of the moment, staring inward into some profound nowhere. (Everything Lillian has ever felt for Griffith himself she will put into this kiss).

Her eyes close and Bobby draws her into an embrace and kisses her. Griffith lets them hold the kiss for several long beats.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT. CRIFFITH PARK - DAY

Lillian, wearing a riding outfit, rides a horse slowly along a path, enjoying the scenery.

Suddenly Dorothy and Connie Talmadge, followed by Bobby Barron and Rudy Valentino, come galloping by her.

DOROTHY

G'mon, slowpoke!

Lillian rides after them.

They are prosperous young movie stars enjoying a day off from work together. CONNIE TALMADGE is Dorothy's best friend, vivacious and outgoing; together they are a couple of irrepressible clowns. RUDY VALENTINO at this point in his career is just a young dancer trying to break into the movies. His dark and sensual good looks and his general intensity are his calling cards. He is hot to please everybody.

At the stables, Rudy is currying his horse as Bobby watches him. Rudy is shirtless, showing off his body. Bobby is fascinated by Rudy and cannot take his eyes off him; he is infatuated.

RUDY

(with a heavy Italian accent)

The horse, he is, how do you say, the animal the most beautiful in the world.

Dorothy and Connie, followed by Lillian, come walking along past Rudy and Bobby. Dorothy and Connie are clowning around with each other and laughing away. Lillian is more an observer.

DOROTHY

Hey, aren't you Fikes ready yet?

BOBBY

Rudy's just showing me how to curry a horse.

CONNIE (sarcastic)

Well he's not very fast at it. We're going over to Lillian and Dorothy's for din-din. Wanna come?

BOBBY

What ya got to eat?

DOROTHY

A can of worms for you!

Connie and Dorothy laugh and laugh and push each other around, and Lillian walks in circles and makes funny noises.

BOBBY

(to Rudy)

You wanna go eat at Lillian and Dorothy's, Rudy?

Rudy speaks slowly, always looking for words.

RUDY

Yes.....'avbee.....Maybe I cook spaghetti.

(in a louder voice, gesturing to the girls)
Spaghetti por tutti - for everyone!

CONNIE

Spaghetti por tutti? That some funny kinda wop food?

Connie and Dorothy go into another fit of giggles.

RUDY

No, is good! You like it. I make the spaghetti more better than any in the worl . My mama teach me the secret.

CUT TO:

INT. THE GISH HOME - EVENING

Rudy has cooked up a big production number of spaghetti and the kids are all clowning around the table trying to wind it around their forks, Italian-style, and get it into their mouths. They are a raucous group. Mrs. Gish, looking frail and old, sits quietly by, acting as chaperone.

RUDY

No, no, I show you the right way.

Rudy demonstrates how to wind the spaghetti.

RUDY

You see, is easy!

None of the others can really do it, but they are having fun trying, spilling sauce down their chins. Bobby wipes some off his white shirt, but the sloppy stain remains. Lillian is embarrassed trying to eat it. When no one is looking, she cuts hers up with a knife.

There is a knocking at the door.

LILLIAN

I'll get it.

Lillian goes to the door and opens it. It is Griffith with Carol Dempster and he has his arm around her! Lillian is shocked. She stands speechless with her mouth open. Griffith apparently does not notice. He is in high spirits. He walks right in bringing Carol with him.

GRIFFITH

Hello, Miss Lillian. A fine night for dancing, don't you think. You know Miss Dempster, don't you.



CAROL DEMPSTER

Lillian can barely get the words out, trying to appear that nothing is wrong.

LILLIAN

Y-yes, of-of course. H-how do you do, Miss Dempster.

CAROL

Oh call me Carol. I don't go in for that formality stuff very much. It's so "pre-war", if you know what I mean.

Carol herself is anything but "pre-war." She is a very sophisticated young woman. She accentuates her already striking features with eye makeup, a pale face powder and red lipstick. Her dress is of black satin and shows off her figure.

The Gish crowd seem very conservative by comparison. Carol is an outsider to them, and they treat her coolly.

GRIFFITH

What's that smell, Gish? There's always such delicious smells in your house.

Griffith is not waiting for an answer. He is following his nose into the diningroom.

LILLIAN

(weakly, calling after him)
Rudolpho has cooked us some spaghetti.

Griffith strides on into the diningroom and is greeted with enthusiasm by the others. Carol hangs back in the doorway. Lillian stays in the next room, eying Carol.

GRIFFITH

(to Connie and Dorothy)
Oh oh, it's the two brainless ones!
What kind of mischief are you two getting into?

Dorothy and Connie make faces and clown for Mr. Griffith like two little children. Griffith loves it.

Griffith tastes the spaghetti with his fingers.

GRIFFITH

It's very good.

DOROTHY

Rudy made it. He can sew too. Leastwise he says he can. He says he's going to make Lillian and me new riding outfits.

Rudy blushes at Dorothy's comment.

Connie meanwhile has walked over to Carol and is baiting her:

CONNIE

Gee, Carol, you don't look so good. Maybe you got the flu. It's going around, you know. Better be careful. I hear you catch it from kissing.

CAROL

Well, then you don't need to worry.

GRIFFITH

(to Rudy)

You're a young man of many talents, Mr. Valentino.

RUDY

Well, I don't know. Mostly, I think, I'm a good dancer.

GRIFFITH

Dancing! That's just what I had on my mind. Perhaps you and Miss Dempster could show us some of the new steps.

RUDY

Yes. I would be happy to do this. But first I must prepare. You must excuse me.

Rudy starts to leave the table.

DOROTHY

Hey, Roodie-Toodie, are you going to change your clothes again?

RUDY

I will not be long.

Rudy leaves the room.

DOROTHY

All he does is change clothes all day long. We had to wait half an hour on the set just for him to comb his hair. Mr. Clifton got awfully mad! But I think he's beautiful. Don't you think he'd be better than that Dick Barthelmes in your cowboy picture, Mr. Griffith?

GRIFFITH

I agree he's charming, Dorothy.
But I'm afraid the women might find
him a little too foreign-looking.
They usually only like the American
type.

CUT TO:

A CRANK-UP VICTROLA.

Connie cranks it up, while Dorothy selects the phonograph record.
The tinny orchestration is an early tango.

As the music starts, Rudy and Carol move across the livingroom
in a close dance exhibition - which, from the look on Lillian's
face, is much more overtly sensual than she is comfortable with.

Connie and Dorothy dance together imitating Carol and Rudy. The
others politely watch the dancing.

Griffith takes Lillian off to the side to talk with her, but he
keeps an eye on the dancing.

GRIFFITH

I've taken your advice, Gish.

LILLIAN

My Advice?

GRIFFITH

Yes. About spending time with one
of my actresses.

Lillian is stunned. She can't believe her ears. It was Carol,
not her, that Griffith was referring to.

GRIFFITH

Carol doesn't have any friends in
the company, Gish. Couldn't you
be her friend, help bring her into
your group? She has no family out
here, and I think she must be lonely.

Lillian is speechless, but Griffith takes no notice. He is
watching Carol dance.

GRIFFITH

I think I'm going to try Carol out
in the next picture. I'll have her
play the American girl, and let you
have a little vacation...

He turns his attention back to Gish, as the dancing continues in
the background.

GRIFFITH

...since it isn't a very important picture, and besides, I want you to spend some time preparing for "The Chink and the Child."

LILLIAN
(stunned)

The Chink and the Child!

GRIFFITH

Yes, it's a terrific story. You play Lucy, the poor little daughter of the sadistic Battling Burrows. Whenever he gets drunk or angry, he beats you up.

Griffith is getting caught up, as usual, in the melodrama of his description.

GRIFFITH

One day you escape - bleeding badly, half crazed with pain and terror. You crawl along the street. And that's where the young Chinese finds you. He's idealistic, a poet. He falls in love with you immediately. He carries your poor, beaten body to his room and dresses you up in beautiful silken robes. But then your father finds out that you were with a Chinese and he goes crazy. You try to get away. You hide in a closet. But he breaks down the door. and he beats you and beats you --- to death.

Lillian is trying to interrupt. Her tone is one of pleading.

LILLIAN

But, but....she's only 12 years old. I can't play a 12 year old. I'm a woman now, Mr. Griffith. I'm not a little girl.

GRIFFITH

You can do it, Gish. Look at your friend Mary Pickford. She's older than you and all she ever plays is little girls. The public loves it.

LILLIAN

(desperate)

No. I won't do it! Get a real little girl to play her. Someone 8 or 9 - she'll look 12 on the screen anyway. I'll work with her and help her with the scenes. But I can't play another little girl. I won't.

GRIFFITH

Don't be silly, Gish. You know that no little girl is going to be able to play those scenes at the end when her father drags her home and beats her to death. For this I need an accomplished actress. I chose this story specifically for you. You must play it. It will be your greatest role.

LILLIAN

(weakly)

I don't feel well...

Lillian's face goes pale and she slumps to the floor in a faint. Everyone rushes to her aid. The victrola, in need of another crank, runs down, distorting the music, and stops.

DOROTHY

Lillian, Lillian, what's the matter!

Lillian opens her eyes and looks around, dazed.

LILLIAN

I'm alright, please...

MRS. GISH

Take her into the bedroom.

Griffith picks her up. She makes a feeble attempt to protest.

LILLIAN

No, I can walk...

DOROTHY

It must be the flu.

Griffith carries Lillian into her bedroom and places her gently down on the bed. Mrs. Gish takes over and shoos Griffith and the others out of the room.

LILLIAN

Leave me alone, please...

MRS. GISH

Everyone out now. I'll take care of my daughter.

Mrs. Gish returns to Lillian who is now weeping softly. Mrs. Gish puts her hand on Lillian's forehead.

MRS. GISH

You do have a fever.

LILLIAN

(through her tears)

I'm alright. Tell them I have the flu. I don't want him to see me. I can't stand it. Say it's highly contagious. Tell him anything. I just want to die.

MRS. GISH

Hush, now, Lillian. You must never say that. I'll send them away.

FADE OUT

EXT. SET - DAY

Griffith is rehearsing Carol Dempster for a scene as the leading *lead* in THE GIRL WHO STAYED AT HOME. Carol plays a pre-war American girl and is dressed up in an old-fashioned dress, her hair in long curls - a girlish look reminiscent of Lillian Gish.

They are set up to shoot in a park, where Carol is sitting on a bench. Griffith is trying to elicit some emotions from her - without much success.

GRIFFITH

Now, Miss Dempster, you are sitting here and you are thinking about the boy you love, who is away at war. You love him very much and you wish he were here with you right now.

Carol sits absolutely emotionless. On her face is a slightly perplexed expression, as if waiting for something to happen.

GRIFFITH

Is that how you look when you think about your boyfriend?

CAROL

Oh, are you ready to shoot it?

GRIFFITH

Yes, but I want to see what you're going to do first.

CAROL

Oh. What do you want me to do?

GRIFFITH

(very patient)

I want you to think about your boyfriend who's away at war.

CAROL

That's what I was doing.

Griffith is silent, stymied for a moment.

CAROL

What does my boyfriend look like? Maybe that would help.

GRIFFITH

(thinking)

No...no...don't worry about that.

Griffith turns and walks back to where Bitzer waits with the camera.

GRIFFITH

Alright, let's shoot it.

Bitzer looks at Griffith quizzically, but prepares to crank the camera. Griffith turns back to Dempster.

GRIFFITH

Alright, Miss Dempster. Just do as I tell you to do.

Carol shrugs her shoulders, not a worry in the world. She seems anything but interested in acting. Griffith taps Bitzer on the shoulder to start turning.

GRIFFITH

Alright, now look down at the ground.

Carol looks blankly at the ground.

GRIFFITH

Now slowly, very slowly look up. That's right. Now roll your eyes up and look up at the sky.

Carol follows his instructions mechanically.

GRIFFITH

Now smile - just a little bit.
That's right. Now look down again.
Now say something.

CAROL

What do you want me to say?

GRIFFITH

That's fine. That's very good.

Bitzer keeps cranking, but he doesn't bother looking through the lens. He turns to one of his assistants who is holding a reflector. Bitzer holds his nose and makes a face. He mutters to himself:

BITZER

Lillian Gish she ain't.

FADE OUT

INT. AUTOMOBILE - DAY - HOLLYWOOD, 1919.

Griffith and his lawyer Banzhaf are sitting in the back seat driven by a chauffeur.

GRIFFITH

Well, Mr. Banzhaf, I've been working hard. I have finished 5 pictures in 10 months. No spectacle; no preaching - just 5 simple pictures. How many more before I'll be free of these contracts.

BANZHAF

You have 2 more for Mr. Zukor and now 3 for First National.

GRIFFITH

If I ever get finished paying off these debts for Intolerance, Mr. Banzhaf, then... then I want to get independent of these bloodsuckers. I do all the work, and they get all the money. Do you really think this merger is a good idea?

BANZHAF

At least it will give you a share of the distribution profits.

GRIFFITH

Yes, and do you trust the people who are going to be running this "United Artists?"

Griffith is referring to Hiram Abrams and B.P. Schulberg. This is the first hint we get of Griffith's anti-Semitism.

BANZHAF

Both Mr. Price and Mr. McAdoo were members of President Wilson's cabinet. I think we can assume they are honorable men.

GRIFFITH

I wish we could be as sure about Hiram Abrams and B.P.Schulberg. I don't like what is happening in this town and in this business. These new people care much more about money than they do about motion pictures.

They arrive at Mary Pickford's Spanish-style mansion. There are several other limousines already parked. They walk up the steps; a servant opens the door. Mary Pickford now lives in true opulence. Griffith looks around at the ostentatious display of wealth.

GRIFFITH

I remember not so long ago when little Mary lived out of hotel rooms like the rest of us. She has come a long way.

The large, high ceiling reception room is already crowded with lawyers, managers, and businessmen huddled in groups around their respective clients: Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and Charles Chaplin. Everyone is talking at once in loud voices.

Mary Pickford, now a very astute businesswoman, is talking with Harry Abrams, one of the administrators hired to head United Artists. The four partners-to-be are gathered here for the formal signing of the distribution contract.

MARY

It's very simple, Mr. Abrams. With deferred stock, we will amortize our exploitation expenses and at the same time, kill the middleman.

Mary notices Griffith's entrance.

MARY

Look - Griffith's here. Let's get this over with. I won't breathe freely until all four signatures are on the agreement.

Mary crosses the room to Griffith, who is shaking hands with the others. She takes him aside to speak.

MARY

Well, Mr. Griffith, I worked for you and now we're going to be working for each other. Maybe someday you'll be working for me, and then the cycle will be complete. I suppose you're scared to death about this merger.

GRIFFITH

No, Mary. I'm sure that any venture you have an interest in is just about guaranteed to succeed. You've always had a way with money.

MARY

Yes, and you look down on me because of that, don't you. Well, movies are a business, Mr. Griffith, and you have to treat it like a business if you want to succeed. You see, I know about your debts. Intolerance just about bankrupted you, and now you have to make little pictures like the rest of us. How hath the mighty fallen.

GRIFFITH

If you think so little of my business acumen, Mary, why do you want to go through with this merger.

MARY

I'm greedy, Mr. Griffith. There is a lot of money to be made in this business if you have a reputation like each of us has. By putting our capital together we all stand to make more money. All we have to do is sit back and sell our reputations. I sell "America's Sweetheart" and you - you sell "The Great Master of the Cinema." It's all the same.

Mary addresses the crowd as a whole.

MARY

Gentlemen, shall we?

The four partners-to-be, Pickford, Fairbanks, Chaplin, and Griffith, crowd together in front of a table with the contracts before them and their lawyers behind them. They smile and shake hands, posing for photographs as each one in turn signs the papers.

FADE OUT

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FADE OUT

EXT. THE GISHES' HOUSE - MORNING

It is a big Victorian, 2-story house.

Lillian sits on the steps waiting as Griffith's limousine pulls up. Griffith starts to get out, but Lillian immediately comes down to the limousine, and the chauffeur opens the door for her.

LILLIAN

I waited outside for you because
I didn't want you banging on the
door and disturbing Mother.

GRIFFITH

(somewhat taken aback)
Is your mother not well?

LILLIAN

Mother has not been well since
Europe. Fortunately, she has been
spared the flu, but she exhausted
herself looking after me during my
recovery. I hope my absence ~~hasn't~~
held up ~~production~~ for the company.

Lillian sits as far away from Griffith in the seat as possible. She is cool and aloof - all business. The chauffeur drives along the streets of Hollywood.

GRIFFITH

The company...and I...have missed
your presence on the set very much.

LILLIAN

I am sure that Miss Dempster ably
filled in, in my absence.

A chilly silence, then Griffith makes an overture, trying to weave the old spell again.

GRIFFITH

I have a new title for "The Chink and the
Child", Lillian. I am going to call it
"Broken Blossoms." In the past, I have
sought to scale the heights of man's
potential - and failed. Now I seek the
beauty of the rose. And this film,
"Broken Blossoms," shall be as a tear
shed for the fatal fragility of the flower.
It shall be a poem of loss. The world is
cruel, Lillian. Many beautiful things
perish under the weight of life's ironies.

Griffith reaches out tenderly to touch Lillian's hand, but she withdraws it coldly.

LILLIAN

Well I don't intend to be one of them.

This is a Lillian we have not seen before. She reaches into her handbag and takes out two 8x10 photographs in a folder. She hands them to Griffith. They are glamour photography portraits of Lillian done with a special soft focus, diffused effect.

LILLIAN

I want to show you something. These pictures were taken for me by a still photographer I have discovered by the name of Mr. Hendrik Sartov.

GRIFFITH

(honestly impressed)

They are very beautiful - very beautiful indeed.

LILLIAN

You want me to play a 12 year old girl, but Billy Bitzer's close-ups make me look like an old woman. Why can't you make me look like this on the screen?

Griffith is irritated with her self-assertion. This is the beginning of a cold war between Gish and Griffith.

GRIFFITH

Billy's photography has always been good enough for all the other members of the company, Miss Gish. But, since you're so smart, why don't you get your photographer and I'll let him make you look like this.

LILLIAN

(a touch of sarcasm in her innocence)
Oh, may I?

GRIFFITH

Yes. But you will have to shoot them on Sunday. We're too busy during the week.

As the limousine turns the corner approaching the studio, we see a large billboard advertising: "D.W.Griffith's 'True Heart Susie.'" There is a huge picture of Lillian on it. The billboard catches Griffith's eye.

GRIFFITH

That should be my picture on that billboard, not yours. It's my film.

Lillian looks at Griffith, surprised by the bitterness in his voice. Griffith looks the other way. Stony silence.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO SET

Lillian (in costume for "Broken Blossoms") is trapped in a small closet - screaming in terror, spinning around and around, trapped with no way to get out. Outside on the door is a horrible pounding of someone trying to break the door in. We are looking down from above on Lillian as she goes berserk below us. It is an horrendous, hysterical performance - like a tortured animal.

We cut back to see that we are on a set. Bitzer has his camera set above the closet shooting down on Lillian inside. Griffith looks on from a ladder. He is amazed at the intensity of Lillian's performance. Everyone on the set is frozen in horror listening.

At the door, Donald Crisp (playing the girl's cruel bully father) pounds on the door and utters threats of violence. He is actually breaking through the door with his fists. Assistants are holding the other three fake walls of the closet so that it does not fall apart.

Crisp breaks through the door. He grabs Lillian and hits her to the floor, then kicks her. Lillian slumps back, motionless. There is suddenly a hush on the set.

Griffith climbs down from his ladder and looks in the door at Gish. She remains motionless. Is she dead? A look of apprehension crosses Griffith's face.

After a beat, just when we fear that she really may be dead, Lillian moves her fingers to her mouth and props up the corners of her lips into a pathetic little smile - her trademark.

GRIFFITH

(relieved)

My God, Gish! Why didn't you warn me
you were going to do that.

Lillian looks up at Griffith.

LILLIAN

Do you still think it shouldn't
be me up on the billboard?

Griffith is not amused. He glares at her a moment, then turns away. As Lillian walks out of the closet, the crew members applaud.

As the victorious Lillian walks toward the camera, we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SET

Lillian sits in front of a neutral backdrop. She is wearing a Chinese kimono from Broken Blossoms. There are orchids in her hair, which hangs in long, golden curls like a pretty child.

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Lillian is posing, smiling demurely while HENDRIK SARTOV, her new photographer, somewhat nervously busies himself around her, moving lights and checking angles.

SARTOV is a delicate wisp of a man who moves in little fluttering movements.

The camera is placed very close to Lillian for a large head closeup. Bitzer stands a few feet behind the camera, smoking a cigar. He waits impatiently, pulling his watch out of his pocket to check the time. Griffith is not there, nor any crew members.

LILLIAN

Make me beautiful, Mr. Sartov.
Make me beautiful.

SARTOV

(flattering her)

The photographer does not create beauty, Miss Gish; he can only try to manipulate his lights to do beauty justice.

Bitzer audibly groans, making Sartov all the more nervous.

BITZER

(muttering to himself)

My one day off, and I have to put up with this bullshit...

Finally satisfied with his lights, Sartov looks through the camera.

SARTOV

Ah, Mr. Bitzer, excuse me, but could you change the focus on your camera please.

Bitzer steps up to the camera, enjoying intimidating Sartov.

BITZER

Focus! I already focused it.

SARTOV

Yes, yes I know. But what I need is to soften the focus just a little.

BITZER

(incredulous)

You want it out of focus!

SARTOV

Yes. Just a touch.

Billy looks at Sartov as if he were crazy. He changes the focus, doing a clumsy mimicry of Sartov's fluttery gestures.

BITZER

Anything you say, Mr. Sartov.
Let it never be said that I
haven't cooperated to the fullest.
(he steps back from the camera)
How's that?

Sartov looks through the lens.

SARTOV

Yes. That's what I wanted.

BITZER

So, you ready to shoot?

SARTOV

Yes. And I do appreciate your
help and your patience, Mr. Bitzer.
I'm afraid that I'm as unfamiliar
with the techniques of moving
pictures as you are with pictorialist
photography.

BITZER

(sarcastic)

Yah. Wonderful.

(he turns to Lillian)

Now, Miss Gish, tell me, who's
going to direct you in this lovely
out-of-focus shot.

LILLIAN

I shall direct myself, Billy.
Just start cranking.

Billy starts to crank.

Lillian looks wistfully into the camera, running through her emotions.
Then, staring into the camera, she does her little fingers-to-the-
corners-of-the-mouth smile - her declaration of independence from
Griffith.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The Jazz Age has dawned. Griffith and Carol Dempster are dancing
the Black Bottom to the excited strains of a jazz band. Everything
is upbeat, hot, and getting hotter.

Griffith is hypnotized by Carol - her flippant manner, her hyper-energy.
She is the new woman, the flapper - perverse, unpredictable, exciting.
She is out to have fun and break all the old Victorian rules in the
process.

Carol dances circles around Griffith, who, it must be realized, in now 45 years old and quite obviously of another generation than most of the dancers. But he is game and in shape, and having a ball.

Many younger men in tuxedos eye Carol from the sidelines. She flirts with them a little, but makes it clear that she is with Griffith.

The music stops. Out of breath and in high spirits, Griffith and Carol move off the dance floor to their table.

Carol immediately lights up a cigarette. Griffith is both shocked and amused by Carol's smoking in public - something women in those days just didn't do.

GRIFFITH

You pose a problem for me, Carol.
I can't decide whether to have
you play good girls or bad girls.

CAROL

Hells bells! Who gives a damn about that! Why does it have to be one or the other anyway. Why can't a girl be part good and part bad - like people really are.

Griffith is somewhat taken aback by her frankness - but it is also part of her attraction.

GRIFFITH
 Why, that idea never occurred to me.

Carol blows smoke rings. Griffith makes a decision.

 GRIFFITH
 Carol, I'd like you to share a celebration
 with me over a bottle of champagne in my suite.

 CAROL
 Two sounds like a pretty small party.

 GRIFFITH
 Well, intimacy suits the nature of my
 celebration. Besides, I have a little
 surprise for you too.

 CAROL
 (animated)
 For me! What is it?

 GRIFFITH
 I couldn't very well tell you that.
 It would ruin the surprise. You will
 just have to come up and see.

Carol is intrigued. She's not about to say no. Her smile says yes.

CUT TO:

INT. GRIFFITH'S HOTEL ROOM

A sizable, dignified suite. There is a victrola in the corner and
 a magnum of champagne in a silver bucket on the table. The stage is set
 for a seduction.
 Griffith and Carol enter; she's still dancing.

 GRIFFITH
 Sit down, Carol. Make yourself
 comfortable.

Griffith pours two glasses of champagne and brings one to Carol.

 GRIFFITH
 Let's toast - to my independence.

They toast, clinking glasses and drink up.

 CAROL
 Where's my surprise, Griff?

 GRIFFITH
 I wish you'd call me David, Carol.
 You must be patient a moment for your
 surprise. First we must drink to my new studio.

Carol is restless while Griffith is talking. Looking bored she wanders
 around the room, all the time moving to some imaginary dance.

Griffith looks off into space as he talks about his new studio. He is truly excited for himself about it.

GRIFFITH

I've purchased 15 acres of an old estate in New York, on Long Island, overlooking the ocean. I'm going to convert it into my own studio and move there with the entire company. I will be my own boss, and I won't have to deal anymore with the bloodsuckers who are taking over this town.

(turning to Carol)

What do you think about living in New York.

Carol has found the Victrola. She looks at the record, then cranks it up.

CAROL

It sounds like the cat's pajamas, but isn't it awfully cold there now.

The record starts. It is a female vocalist singing a flapper song. Carol sings along and dances to it, putting on a sexy little show for Griffith.

VOCALIST (and Carol)

I'm a flapper, brave and bold;
I wear my stockings rolled....

Carol pulls up her skirt to show her stockings. The stockings are gaudy barber-shop stripes, rolled down to above her knees and with little bells attached that jingle when she shakes her leg.

VOCALIST (and Carol)

...I drink, I smoke, I chew,
Like all the flappers do.....

Carol stops singing as the record goes on, to ask Griffith:

CAROL

I'm still waiting for my surprise, Griff.

RECORD

At night when you're asleep,
We flappers roam the street...

Griffith smiles and walks over to the dresser and picks up a jewelry box.

GRIFFITH

Now Carol, you must stand still
for a moment and close your eyes.

Carol closes her eyes, but she can't stand still - as long as the music is playing.

Griffith puts a string of pearls around Carol's neck, fastening them at the back. She reaches up with her hands and feels them. She turns around in genuine surprise, like a little girl.

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for a moment and close your eyes.

Carol closes her eyes, but she can't stand still - as long as the music is playing.

Griffith puts a string of pearls around Carol's neck, fastening them at the back. She reaches up with her hands and feels them. She turns around in genuine surprise, like a little girl.

CAROL
For me! They're beautiful!

Griffith has gone over and put a more romantic orchestration on the Victrola.

GRIFFITH
I'm glad you like them.

As he turns around, Carol impulsively gives him a kiss on the cheek, her arms around his neck.

GRIFFITH
If it's too cold for you in New York right now, how would you like to take a trip to the Bahamas with me? I want you to play the leading role in my next production.

CAROL
(sweetly)
Maybe...

No one has ever said just maybe to Griffith before.

GRIFFITH
Just maybe?

CAROL
Not if you're going to have me play another Lillian Gish part.

GRIFFITH
What kind of part do you want to play?

CAROL
I want to play a Carol Dempster part.

GRIFFITH
You shall have everything you want.

Griffith is getting quite exuberant from the champagne and from the fact that he now has Carol in his arms, dancing her slowly toward the couch.

GRIFFITH
I can picture you now - on a tropical island. A young girl approaching womanhood. You are wild and free. You've grown up on a lonely island in the Pacific - far from civilization. You are uninhibited, perverse. Your passions are untrammelled by the conventions of polite society. And you'd have a kindly father - whom you'd love devotedly.

Carol interrupts.

CAROL
Who'd play the sailor?

They stop dancing in front of the couch. Carol will go no further until a few things are settled.

GRIFFITH

What sailor?

CAROL

The shipwrecked sailor who gets washed up on the shore - that the girl falls in love with.

GRIFFITH

(amused and pleased)

Well, alright. How about Bobby Harron?

CAROL

(complaining)

Bobby Harron. Couldn't you find me someone a little more - - - masculine?

GRIFFITH

Who did you have in mind?

CAROL

What about Dick Barthelmes?

GRIFFITH

He's Lillian's leading man.

CAROL

So?

GRIFFITH

Alright.

Carol sinks to the couch. Griffith sits down next to her and reaches out to draw her to him. She stops him with another demand.

CAROL

Who else would come along for this little trip?

GRIFFITH

We'd have to take a cameraman, and a few other crew people, and...

CAROL

...Lillian Gish?

Griffith hesitates. Carol pointedly drops the shoulder strap of her gown off her shoulder, and eyes Griffith seductively.

GRIFFITH

Well, Lillian could stay in Long Island, and perhaps I could have her look after the completion of the studio while we were gone.

Carol moves her lips to an inch away from Griffith's. She whispers:

CAROL

It's a deal.

They kiss, passionately.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

EXT. GRIFFITH'S YACHT - AT SEA - DAY

Carol, in a bathing suit, lies in the sun on the deck of the yacht. She is warm and relaxed and luxuriating.

(Carol is on the left side of the screen. A VERTICAL WIPE moves half way across the screen from the right, into a SPLIT SCREEN effect. We see Carol on the left in the Bahamas and Lillian on the right on Long Island throughout the following sequence of PARALLEL SCENES.)

ON THE RIGHT:

EXT. LONG ISLAND - LATE FALL - DAY

It is a cold grey day. Lillian wears a heavy overcoat, but she is still freezing. She is trying to supervise the laying out of a line of telegraph poles through a rocky area.

The FOREMAN of the work crew has little patience with Lillian. She is trying to be authoritative, but is getting flustered under the burden of responsibility.

LILLIAN

If you can't run the poles through the rocks, then you must divert them through the woods. But we must have the power in the studio in two weeks!

FOREMAN

Lady, I know my business. My men can work just so fast. If it can be done in two weeks, it'll be done in two weeks. If it takes longer, it takes longer.

LILLIAN

But it can't take longer. I've scheduled interiors to begin shooting in two weeks.



CAROL IN THE BAHAMAS

FOREMAN
So change your schedule.

The foreman turns and walks away before Lillian can reply. She is frustrated and nervous.

MEANWHILE, on Griffith's yacht ON THE LEFT:

Griffith, in a bathing suit and short sleeved shirt, comes and stands above Carol as she suns on the deck. He looks down at her body, carrying on a small talk conversation that we do not hear.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH - THE BAHAMAS - DAY

Carol sits on the beach looking out at the ocean, the wind lightly blowing her hair.

Griffith and Bitzer are at the camera shooting Carol. The shot looks very much like a Winslow Homer seascape. Everything is very slow and liesurely, in contrast to the problems Lillian is facing:

ON THE RIGHT:

INT. LONG ISLAND STUDIO - DAY

The main stage is under construction, but right now, the workers are taking a break. Lillian enters and is upset to see no one working. She confronts Frank WORTMAN, the chief builder.

LILLIAN

Why aren't the men working, Mr. Wortman.
We have a very tight schedule to meet.

WORTMAN

(trying to be patient)
Miss Gish, my men take a coffee break every morning at ten. You have a picture to direct. That's a very big responsibility. Why don't you let me worry about the construction and you worry about your picture.

LILLIAN

It's all part of the same responsibility. Mr. Griffith instructed me to oversee the completion of this studio, and that's what I intend to do. Now here are the specifications for the set I'll need.

She hands him several sheets of paper. He looks them over, not very impressed.

WORTMAN

It's not a very big set.

LILLIAN

Well the character in my story is not rich. She lives in a very modest residence. Besides, I have a very strict budget I must stay within.

WORTMAN

A small set doesn't necessarily save you any money. You don't want to get too cramped.

LILLIAN

I have calculated very carefully what I want, Mr. Wortman.

Wortman shrugs his shoulders and turns away.

ON THE LEFT:

EXT. LAGOON

Carol, in a low-cut bathingsuit, dives from a high ledge into the water. Griffith films the stunt.

She swims through the water, a real athlete. On the shore, Griffith waits for her with a towel. The nipples of her breasts show through the wet material of her suit.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ISLAND

On a rope bridge stretched across a deep gorge, Carol performs gymnastics, jumping up and down, oblivious to the danger. Again, she is performing a dangerous stunt herself - for Griffith's camera.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Griffith is shooting a 2-shot of Carol and Dick Barthelmes, the young actor who plays the shipwrecked sailor.

Barthelmes looks at Carol hungrily. She slaps him hard across the face. He puts his hand to his cheek, then smiles - turned on by her violence.

MEANWHILE, ON THE RIGHT:

EXT. CITY STREET SET - DAY

On the Long Island studio backlot, Lillian is directing Dorothy in a scene for a little comedy movie.

Lillian is trying to shoot a trucking shot. The camera is set up on a baggage cart, which is being pulled along the sidewalk to hold the camera on Dorothy's face as she walks along.

The scene opens with the camera still as Dorothy stands on the sidewalk and complains to a man who is evidently supposed to be her husband.

DOROTHY

Well darling husband, so you don't think I'm attractive anymore. Well you just follow me down the street and see what other men think.

Dorothy starts walking down the street, and the crew starts pulling the baggage cart back in front of her.

The man playing Dorothy's husband trails along behind her. The joke is that Dorothy makes outrageous faces - some comic, some flirtatious at every man she passes. Consequently, everyone turns around after she passes and looks after her. The husband thus gets the impression that the other men are attracted by Dorothy's looks.

The cameraman, Hendrik Sartov, is going crazy trying to keep Dorothy in focus. Lillian wrings her hands as Sartov barks orders to both Dorothy and the grips.

SARTOV

No, no, no. It's no good. Faster, Miss Gish. Keep up with the camera. No, that's too close. Keep it smooth, Eddie. No, no, no. It's hopeless!

Everything comes to a halt. Everyone is upset. Lillian doesn't know what to do.

SARTOV

(to Lillian)

I can't keep it in focus unless she keeps up with the camera.

DOROTHY

(also angry)

Why can't the camera keep up with me. I'm the actress!

LILLIAN

(to Dorothy)

Please do what Mr. Sartov says, Dorothy. We have to get this shot, and the sun's going down.

DOROTHY

Why can't Mr. Sartov do what I say. I have to do the acting. I can't think about everything at once.

LILLIAN

Please try, Dorothy. I'm the director. Please do as I say.

Dorothy sticks her tongue out at Lillian and turns away.

MEANWHILE, ON THE LEFT:

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Griffith is shooting another scene from the movie. The villain, in a tropical suit, shows his badge and threatens Carol's elderly father, taking him by the arm.

Carol attacks the villain, helping her father get away. She leaps upon the very surprised gentleman, knocking him to the ground. She pounds him with her fists, kicks and scratches him, as the gentleman tries to defend himself.

Finally, Griffith runs in to break up the fight. He is amused that Carol has gotten so carried away.

ON THE RIGHT:

INT. STUDIO SET - LONG ISLAND

Now it is Sartov who is throwing a tantrum.

SARTOV

Who built these sets! They're too small. There's no place for the camera.

We move in on Lillian, who wishes she had a place to hide. She is responsible for the incorrect size of the set and she knows it. The whole thing is a nightmare for her.

ON THE LEFT:

EXT. YACHT - AT SEA - DAY

The captain of the boat comes up to Griffith and points to some threatening clouds.

CAPTAIN

It looks like we're in for some weather, Mr. Griffith.

GRIFFITH

We're in no hurry. Let's not take chances. Pull into the nearest harbor, and we'll wait it out.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISLAND COVE - DAY

Their yacht at anchor, Griffith, Carol, and the crew row to shore in their small rowboat. They are in high spirits, like on a picnic.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Griffith and Carol dance close together to a Victrola on the beach, while the rest of the crew sits around the fire having a mellow time.

ON THE RIGHT:

EXT. LONG ISLAND STUDIO - DAY

Now it is snowing.

INT. STUDIO

Sartov has set his camera up outside the window of the too small set. Lillian is trying to direct a love scene between Dorothy and the actor who plays her husband.

Evidently, it is cold on the set, because everyone but the performers are wearing overcoats. It is so cold that you can see the people's breath.

DOROTHY

It's too cold, Lillian.

LILLIAN

We won't have any heat until the furnace is installed next week. Try to pretend it's warm.

SARTOV

She can pretend all she wants, but the camera is going to see her breath in every shot.

Lillian is breaking down, tears coming to her eyes.

LILLIAN

Then I don't know what to do.
I just don't know what to do.

Bobby Harron comes running in to the set, still in his overcoat and with snow on his hair. He carries a newspaper.

BOBBY

Lillian! Dorothy! Have you heard!
Mr. Griffith is lost at sea!

They all crowd around the newspaper.

BOBBY

There was a big storm. His boat was supposed to be in Nassau on Wednesday, but no one has heard from him for three days.

They all stand in shock at this bad news.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LILLIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

She can't sleep. She tosses and turns fitfully.

The camera gradually moves in on her, as she opens her eyes. We see the despair on her face.

ON THE LEFT:

EXT. MIAMI HARBOR - DAY

A Coast Guard ship is escorting Griffith's yacht into the harbor.

Reporters meet Griffith at the dock. Griffith is all smiles.

REPORTER

Mr. Griffith, I'm from the Miami Herald. Can you tell us what happened. Were you in great danger?

GRIFFITH

(making up a story for the press)
It was a terrifying experience. We were at the mercy of the elements. The wind and the waves threatened to capsize our boat, throwing us into the shark-infested waters. We were saved only by the heroic efforts of our captain - and by the bravery of a woman. Fortunately, we have captured much of this thrilling action on the camera...

FADE OUT

END SPLIT SCREEN SEQUENCE

INT. LONG ISLAND STUDIO - SET

Griffith is hosting a reception for the stockholders of his newly formed D.W.Griffith, Inc. and their families - by way of opening his new studio. The reception is being held on the set for his forthcoming production of Way Down East - the interior of a large mansion, dressed for a formal ball. The reception is a very informal affair with tables set up for food and punch. Griffith has stepped up on a platform to make a little speech. Lillian stands just below him talking with an investor.

GRIFFITH

Ladies and gentlemen, as stockholders in D.W. Griffith, Incorporated, I have invited you here today because I thought you might enjoy the opportunity to see the facilities where our motion pictures will be produced. Right now, you are standing on the set for our next production. For this production, I have purchased the rights to a stage play that is one of the most popular American classics - a play that is loved by audiences of all ages across the country. I am referring to Lottie Blair Parker's heart-stirring melodrama, "Way Down East!"

There is a buzz through the reception and polite applause. We cut to one new stockholder, however, who is something less than impressed. He whispers to another gentleman beside him.

STOCKHOLDER

Way Down East! He's got to be kidding. That old warhorse was already out of date when I has a kid.

We cut back to Griffith.

GRIFFITH

And I should also like to introduce the actress who will be playing the leading role of Anna Moore in Way Down East - Miss Lillian Gish.

Lillian takes a bow to more polite applause.

GRIFFITH

And I should also point out that it was Miss Gish who oversaw for me the completion of the construction of these facilities while I was away on location. And at the same time, she served as directress of the first production to be completed here. And I would like to congratulate her on this dual accomplishment.

More polite applause for Lillian.

GRIFFITH

Now I don't want to keep you from the punchbowls any longer with boring speeches. I just want to welcome you to our studio and hope you enjoy the day's activities. Thank you.

Griffith steps down to where Lillian stands with one of the stockholders

STOCKHOLDER

Well, Miss Gish, how did it feel running the whole show while the boss was away?

LILLIAN

It was one of the most harrowing and unpleasant experiences of my life, Mr. Caldwell - one that I hope never to suffer through again. Trying to direct has made me appreciate and understand all the better the great responsibility and accomplishment that Mr. Griffith deserves credit for, as director of his pictures.

She nods her formal acknowledgement to Griffith as if to return the public compliment he has just given her.

LILLIAN

In the future, I will be content to remain an actress and let Mr. Griffith do the directing.

GRIFFITH

You are very modest.

(to the investor)

Actually, Miss Gish knows as much about making pictures as I do...

As he is speaking, Carol Dempster, looking tanned and radiant, walks up and slips her arm through Griffith's, thus laying claim to her new rights. Griffith accepts her arm just as casually.

GRIFFITH

...and she knows more about acting for them than anyone else. Gentlemen, this is Miss Carol Dempster. Miss Dempster plays the lead in the picture that I just finished shooting in the Bahamas.

Lillian is outraged, but trapped by the situation She tries to conceal the jealousy that rages within her. Carol is cool and confident.

STOCKHOLDER

Oh, then you were lost at sea also, Miss Dempster. It must have been frightful.

Carol nods sweetly.

GRIFFITH

It was an experience that I'm sure
neither of us will soon forget.

Griffith winks at Carol and she winks back. Lillian observes the winks and bristles.

GRIFFITH

Now, if you will excuse me, I shall
go get us all a glass of punch.
Mr. Caldwell, perhaps you might
assist me.

CALDWELL

Certainly.

Griffith and Caldwell move off toward the punch bowl, leaving Lillian and Carol alone. Lillian fidgets, trying to avoid looking at Carol. Carol very coolly takes out a cigarette holder and lights up a cigarette.

CAROL

Did you see the lovely cigarette
holder that David found for me while
we were in Nassau?

LILLIAN

Mr. Griffith has always known how to
charm little girls with trinkets.

CAROL

Well he certainly charmed me. How
about you, little girl.

LILLIAN

I'm sure Mr. Griffith just wanted to
thank you for enduring so heroically
the ordeal of being lost at sea.

CAROL

Lost at sea.....

(she giggles)

I think that was the name of the hotel
we stayed in.

Lillian is outraged.

LILLIAN

I'm going to go find Mr. Griffith!

She storms off almost knocking over Mr. Caldwell who has been working his way back through the crowd with 3 glasses of punch. He spills all three, but Lillian does not stop.

On the other side of the room, Griffith is gladhanding other stockholders, but his attention is riveted on a pretty 15 year old girl with long blonde curls who is standing a distance away talking animatedly with two other older girls, her sisters. Her mother stands with them talking to a stockholder.

Griffith excuses himself from the people with whom he has been talking and approaches the girl, startling her with a burst of his commanding voice.

 GRIFFITH
You are Little Nell!

 GIRL
 No, sir, I am Evelyn Baldwin.

 GRIFFITH
 No, you are Little Nell in Dickens' "Old Curiosity Shop." You would be perfect for the role. Have you ever acted?

 GIRL
 No, sir. I know nothing about acting at all.

Lillian finds her way through the crowd and pauses a few feet from Griffith, observing the lavish attention he is bestowing on this child. Griffith sees Lillian staring at him.

 GRIFFITH
 Miss Gish. I've just found Little Nell. Isn't she perfect! Perhaps I'll make her a famous actress just like you.

In a cold fury, Lillian turns on her heels and storms away. Griffith shrugs and turns back to the little girl. He addresses the girl's mother.

 GRIFFITH
 Madam, are you this child's mother?

 MRS. BALDWIN
 Yes, Mr. Griffith. I'm Mrs. Baldwin and these are my daughters, Evelyn, Judith, and Mary.

 GRIFFITH
 You have a charming family, Mrs. Baldwin. Is your husband a stockholder in my company?

 MRS. BALDWIN
 My husband died in the Great War, Mr. Griffith. We are here with my brother who has invested in your company.

GRIFFITH

I'm very sorry to hear about your husband, Mrs. Baldwin. Perhaps you and your daughters would do me the honor of sharing dinner with me one day. You see, your daughter Evelyn is the perfect image of a character in a story I should like to film one day. In my business, I'm forever on the lookout for new talent. I see in your daughter great potential.

MRS. BALDWIN

We should be most charmed to take dinner with you one day, Mr. Griffith. Wouldn't we girls?

GIRLS

Yes m'am.

The girls answer in accord. Griffith is charmed by them.

FADE OUT

EXT. BRIDGE - LONG ISLAND - WINTER DAY

It is snowing. The river is frozen, except just before the bridge where water runs over a small falls. Three tripods and cameras are set up on the bridge with small oil burners below them to keep the mechanisms from freezing up. ^{OTHER CAMERAS ARE SET UP ON THE SHORE.} Along the banks, a network of poles and ropes edge in across the frozen surface. Just below the falls, a low catwalk has been constructed just above the water. Men are huddled in groups around fires on the banks - waiting. It is bitterly cold and windy.

These are the shooting set-ups and safety precautions arranged for shooting the scene in which Lillian will float toward the falls on an iceberg, only to be saved at the last moment by Richard Barthelmes.

We see Griffith walking along the bridge with Bitzer, giving instructions to the crew.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDIO SET

Griffith and Bitzer enter from outside and shed their snow-covered coats and boots.

Sartov is setting up lights on Lillian who lies on a small cot, her hair disheveled, wet and stringy, her face pale and haggard.

GRIFFITH

Now, Billy, if you would assist Mr. Sartov, we'll shoot the final scene while we're waiting for the ice to start moving.

Billy bristles in rage.

BILLY

I will not assist anyone.

GRIFFITH

(unable to believe his ears)

-What?

BILLY

I will not assist Mr. Sartov.
I am the cameraman. Mr. Sartov
can assist me.

GRIFFITH

We all have to work for the good of
the picture, Billy. This kind of
shot is Mr. Sartov's specialty. The
days are gone when only one cameraman
shoots everything.

BILLY

Then you don't need me!

Billy stomps off the set. Griffith does not attempt to stop him.

SARTOV

Look, Mr. Griffith, I...

GRIFFITH

It's not your fault, Mr. Sartov.
Just proceed with what you're doing.

Griffith is upset, but there is work to be done. He looks at Lillian
in her disheveled condition.

GRIFFITH

Gish, you look awful. Go put on fresh
makeup and comb your hair.

LILLIAN

Oh no, Mr. Griffith. This is how
I should look after the rescue.

GRIFFITH

Yes, but the climax is over. The
audience will want to see you looking
beautiful again.

LILLIAN

No. I won't look right. It isn't
realistic - after all I've gone through

Griffith is getting angry. He is in no mood to argue.

GRIFFITH

Don't tell me how to make motion pictures! Realism has nothing to do with it. This picture has got to make money. Now hurry up and do as you're told!

Silently, resentfully, Lillian gets up and goes to her dressingroom.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FROZEN RIVER

We hear a deep, ominous rumbling as a huge crack moves across the frozen surface. The ice is beginning to break apart.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. STUDIO SET

Griffith sits silently apart in his chair, his head in his hand, waiting for Lillian to return to do the shot. Suddenly he becomes aware of someone standing next to him. It is Bobby Harron, looking nervous and dejected.

BOBBY

Mr. Griffith?

Griffith looks up, surprised to see him there.

GRIFFITH

Bobby! What are you doing here?

BOBBY

I had to talk to you, Mr. Griffith.

GRIFFITH

Yes...

BOBBY

I, I was wondering if - if you'd have a part for me in your next picture. You see, I've had an offer from another company. But I - I'd much rather stay with you.

GRIFFITH

I see. Well, Bobby, you're a fine actor. One of the best in the business. It doesn't seem fair for me to hold you back. Perhaps it is time for you to branch out on your own. You know I wish you God's best in whatever you do.

BOBBY

(shocked and hurt)

You mean - you want me to go?

GRIFFITH

It would be selfish of me to try to keep you, Bobby. I have no parts for you right now, and I don't foresee any in the immediate future.

BOBBY

(desperate)

But I'd play anything - small parts, extras. I'd sweep the floor!

Griffith stands and puts his arm around Bobby in a fatherly gesture.

GRIFFITH

Bobby, you have a great career ahead of you. You know more about motion pictures than most directors. The public loves you. Go now and make full use of your talent and your knowledge. Make me proud of you.

Tears are streaming down Bobby's face. He clings to Griffith.

BOBBY

I don't want to go! I want to stay with you! I don't want to go! I don't want to!

At the commotion, Lillian comes running in from her dressing room.

LILLIAN

Bobby! Mr. Griffith! What's the matter?

Bobby tears himself from Griffith and runs out of the studio.

LILLIAN

What's going on? What's wrong with Bobby?

GRIFFITH

I just told Bobby that he should accept an offer to work for another company.

Lillian is stunned.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FROZEN RIVER

The ice begins to break apart along the cracks.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. STUDIO SET

Griffith stands face to face with Lillian.

GRIFFITH

Gish, I won't lie to you. My independence, this studio, it won't last long. I've been buying time. If this picture is a huge success, I'll buy a little more time. If it isn't, I'll soon have to declare bankruptcy. Every penny is invested in this picture. After it's finished, there will be no money to continue salaries, and the whole company will be laid off.

LILLIAN

(gravely)

Does that include me?

GRIFFITH

Yes, I'm afraid it does. Those of you who have been with me the longest command the highest salaries. I can no longer afford to pay them. That's why I let Billy and now Bobby go. That's why I must let you go also.

LILLIAN

Is Carol Dempster being laid off?

GRIFFITH

No. I'm going to feature Carol in my next production.

Lillian cannot believe her ears. She steps back from Griffith and points the accusing finger at him. Suddenly, all that she has kept back within herself over the years comes surging out.

LILLIAN

You! You monster! You two-faced, heartless liar! You who said that we must give up our private lives for our art! You who so sanctimoniously told me that our lives must be above reproach! You have betrayed me! You have betrayed my love. All I ever had was my life on the screen. I gave that to you - willingly. Because I believed you. I believed that I could be your ideal - that I could fulfill your vision - that together we could change the world....

(CONTINUED)

LILLIAN

And now you throw that all away.
 For who! For what! For that golddigger!
 That untalented, ruthless little
golddigger Carol Dempster! Do you know
 what a fool you are making of yourself
 over that woman. Do you know that people
 are laughing at you behind your back.
 Are you blind? For all your visions, are
 you so blind that you cannot see what she
 is? She is cheap, ambitious....

GRIFFITH

(interrupting)

That's enough, Lillian.

LILLIAN

She is the antithesis of everything
 good and decent you have ever stood for.

GRIFFITH

I know. That's why I love her.

Lillian is shocked into silence.

GRIFFITH

You and I have no more to learn from
 each other. What happened on the screen
 was our love affair. Now it's over.
 We both have other places to go.

Suddenly an assistant comes running in, excited.

ASSISTANT

Mr. Griffith! Mr. Griffith!
 The river's breaking up! The ice
 is moving!

GRIFFITH

Is everything ready?

ASSISTANT

Yes, but it's happening fast.
 We must hurry!

GRIFFITH

Alright. We're coming. Light the
 fires under the cameras. We don't
 want them freezing up.

The assistant rushes out. Griffith turns to Lillian.

GRIFFITH

Lillian, I want to go over the safety
 precautions once more. You can't go
 beyond the second marker or you'll be
 beyond our control points. The only...

LILLIAN

(interrupting)

I know what I must do.

EXT. THE RIVER

The ice is breaking up and flowing down the river and over the falls.

Lillian struggles through the blizzard, oblivious to the wind and snow that lash against her unprotected face. She is lost, dazed, yet pushes on.

She wanders out on to the ice, stumbling, falling, standing again. She passes a red marker that is hammered into the ice to direct where she is to fall for the camera. We zoom in to the marker.

CUT TO:

THE BRIDGE

ZOOM in to a cameraman as he cranks his camera intently.

CUT TO:

THE SHORE

ZOOM in to a 2nd cameraman, as he cranks away on Lillian on the ice.

CUT TO:

THE SHORE

ZOOM IN to Griffith, standing next to a 3rd cameraman. Griffith watches intently. Next to him is Richard Barthelmes, bundled up in a raccoon coat. He is ready to go - to play his part in the rescue scene. Griffith holds him back with a hand on his shoulder.

CUT TO:

LILLIAN, on the ice. She stumbles past a 2nd red marker. We ZOOM IN to the 2nd marker.

CUT TO:

ZOOM IN to Griffith's face - in terror as he realizes that Lillian has gone beyond the safety point. She is putting herself in real danger. Barthelmes, next to Griffith, is equally alarmed.

BARTHELMES

She went past the marker!

We've got to stop her!

(he yells out)

Lillian! Come back! You've gone too far!

CUT TO:

LILLIAN, at the edge of the breaking ice. She slumps to the ice, her hair and hand falling over the edge of the ice into the water. She appears to be unconscious. She lies motionless. The ice on which she lies breaks off from the rest and slowly begins to move. Through the howl of the wind, we can hear the crew calling out to her frantically from the shore, but she pays no attention.

CUT TO:



LILLIAN ON THE ICE

THE RESCUE

GRIFFITH - watching in shock. He turns to Barthelmes excitedly.

GRIFFITH

She can't hear us.
Play the scene! Rescue her!

He shoves Barthelmes forward. Barthelmes starts across the ice toward Lillian.

CUT TO:

LILLIAN, motionless on the ice. The piece of ice on which she lies continues to break away the rest and moves faster.

CUT TO:

Barthelmes, running on the ice toward Lillian, but now separated by the breakage and the movement of the ice.

CUT TO:

GRIFFITH, on shore, tense, watching. The cameraman next to him, cranking, recording it all.

INTERCUT: Lillian; Barthelmes; the cameramen and crew; and Griffith - as the piece of ice that Lillian is on moves relentlessly toward the rapids. Barthelmes must now leap from ice floe to ice floe, to get to Lillian. Everything moves faster and faster.

Griffith races along the shore to the bridge. Members of the crew work their way in from the shore over the breaking ice, holding on to the ropes and poles - but Lillian is clearly beyond their reach.

One man loses his grip on the ice-encrusted ropes. He falls into the water and is swept over the small rapids. On the other side of the bridge, he is dragged from the water by people on the catwalk.

Barthelmes is now two pieces of ice away from Lillian, but the pieces are too far apart and the positions keep shifting. He takes a running leap and lands on the edge of the next piece of ice. He falls half way into the water, but pulls himself back out on to the ice floe.

Lillian is about to go over the rapids.

Griffith, on the bridge, looks down helplessly on the action, just out of his reach in front of him. The cameras keep turning. Griffith yells to Barthelmes.

GRIFFITH

Jump! Save her! Jump!

Barthelmes recovers his footing and leaps miraculously on to the piece of ice that carries Lillian. He picks her up. The ice tilts to go over the rapids. Barthelmes leaps with Lillian in his arms to the next block upstream and toward shore. Immediately he must leap again, gaining but seconds on the current that threatens to carry them both into the rapids. He leaps again, falls, recovers, carrying Lillian away from the rapids, back across the ice floe - finally to the safety of the rope and pole network.

Barthelmes holds on for dear life as crew members grab him and Lillian and pull them to safety.

Griffith rushes to the shore where Lillian and Barthelmes are being pulled from the ice. They are immediately wrapped in blankets and led away to shelter.

Griffith arrives just as Lillian is being helped up the bank by Kate Bruce.

GRIFFITH
(frantic)

I almost thought we lost you!

Lillian looks Griffith in the eye. She is totally cold and dispassionate.

LILLIAN

You have.

As Lillian is helped away, Griffith stands on the bank looking after her longingly.

CUT TO:

GRIFFITH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Griffith is asleep in bed - a troubled sleep. He is dreaming. The camera moves in toward Griffith's face:

DISSOLVE TO:

GRIFFITH'S DREAM

Subjective camera moves into a special 3-screen projection room: one screen in front and one on each side. It is Griffith's fantasy one-person screening room.

We sit down at the control panel - 3 large knobs - one for each screen. A hand turns on the left screen. On it appears:

A VISION OF HELL.

Satan, the old devil himself in a black cape, is urging on an orgy of scantily-clad young men and women, drinking and laughing and lusting after one another. They climb up toward us from a fiery pit, led by a handsome masked violinist. We hear the sensuous seduction of his violin music. Satan looks out of the screen at us, laughing.

SATAN

Eat and drink, for tomorrow -
Out goes the light!
Sin is as important as goodly night,
For tell me neighbor,
Without Wrong ---
How could there be Right!

A hand at the control panel now turns on the screen to the right. On it appears:



THE MASKED VIOLINIST

A STREET SCENE

Against cold, lonely, desolate city streets, we see a solemn group of street evangelists. Beautiful, virginal women, clad in hooded capes, sing a hymn: "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," while an earnest preacher holds his Bible clutched to his heart.

PREACHER

Life is not always what it seems,
It's but a thing made out of dreams,
So make pure and sweet the dreams.

We hear both the violinist from the left and the hymn from the right.

Now the hand turns the middle control, and there appears on the middle screen:

CAROL DEMPSTER

In a long shot, she is dancing, wildly, crazily to some hot jazz. She dances closer and closer toward the foreground, ending in a large close-up as she looks out at us from the screen. Carol is ever restless, like a bird, excited, full of energy.

Her eyes glance to the left, in the direction of the screen depicting the Vision of Hell. Her passions are attracted by the seductive violinist. Then slowly, sinisterly, the violinist removes his mask to reveal a deformed, monstrous face beneath.

Startled, Carol turns her head in the direction of the other screen, where the preacher is on his knees praying for lost humanity, while the chorus sings. Carol's higher instincts are attracted to the sweet music.

She is torn between good and evil.

We now see that it is Griffith who is at the controls of the three screens. He gazes at Carol, hypnotized by her strange presence, so perverse, yet attractive. Yet he is ever aware of the presence of Heaven and Hell on either side of him.

Carol addresses Griffith from the screen.

CAROL

Sometimes, Dreams do come true, Griff.
Not by accident, their dark path emerges
into the light. Your dreams are of your
inner self. And perhaps all would come
true, if you'd but dream aright.

Carol directs Griffith's attention to the screen on the right. The scene has changed from the street preacher to:

INT. HIGH CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL

Lillian, in a brown novitiate's robe, lies prostrate in front of the great altar. A heavenly chorus of women's voices fills the cathedral.

Griffith calls out to the image of Lillian, in melancholy:

GRIFFITH

Lillian!

BOBBY, at the Hollywood party.

He is hidden in the shadows peeking through some curtains, a voyeur. He is watching an orgy of naked flesh.

At the center of all this flesh is Rudy, his naked body draped only in strings of pearls, gold, and jewels, like an exotic prince. Around Rudy, smothering each part of his body with caresses are beautiful, naked young women.

Bobby is an innocent voyeur. He wishes he were touching Rudy. Bobby strokes himself through his pants.

CUT BACK TO:

LILLIAN, her hair now cut short.

She stands as the white-clad sisters remove her brown tunic. For just a fleeting moment, we see the white perfection of Lillian's naked body. The Nuns dress Lillian in a simple, classical white nun's outfit, a long white transparent veil covering her face.

Lillian peers from beneath the veil out past Griffith into some vacant depth.

Griffith calls out to her again in melancholy:

GRIFFITH

Lillian...

As Lillian's image recedes into the darkness of the screen, Carol mocks Griffith from the adjacent screen:

CAROL

It's a darb, Griff!
It's a darb!

CUT TO:

BOBBY and RUDY in the back seat of a moving limousine. - NIGHT

RUDY

Do you want a kiss?

BOBBY

(longingly)

Yes....

RUDY

I'll give you a kiss...

Bobby shuts his eyes. From out of the darkness, illuminated intermittently by lights flashing by outside, we see that Rudy has a syringe and a needle in his hand. He is going to inject it into Bobby's arm - heroin.

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RUDY

(sinisterly)

I'll give you a kiss to remember
me by.

He plunges the needle into Bobby.

Griffith grasps at the controls trying to stop what he is seeing,
but the controls no longer work.

GRIFFITH

No! No, don't!

CUT TO:

CAROL, on the middle screen.

Carol suddenly reaches behind her back and pulls out a dagger.
She threatens Griffith with the dagger.

CAROL

After this you'll let little girls alone!

Griffith pulls back in horror.

CUT TO:

LILLIAN, in the cathedral.

She walks down the aisle in a processional toward the altar. She
wears her white dress and veil. The other nuns sing a heavenly
chorus. It is like a wedding ceremony - her marriage to Christ.

CUT TO:

BOBBY and RUDY, in a hotel bedroom.

Bobby clings desperately to Rudy, who is leaving.

BOBBY

No, don't go! Please don't go!
Stay with me! Please! I'd sweep
the floor! Anything!

(The scene strangely recalls that in which Griffith told Bobby that
he would no longer use him in his movies)

Rudy is dragging Bobby across the floor, as Bobby clings to his
leg, hysterically trying to hold him back. Bobby is lost in a
heroic nightmare.

Rudy kicks him back across the floor and leaves, slamming the door
behind him. Bobby picks himself up and tries to get to the door,
but falls, in a daze.

Bobby starts flailing around on the floor, emitting a horrible moan
like a dying animal.

CUT TO:

LILLIAN, at the altar.

She kneels in front of the Bishop, repeating the vows which he delivers in Latin. The Bishop completes the ceremony by putting a silver wedding ring on Lillian's finger.

The chorus soars, but it cannot drown out the moans which Bobby continues to emit on the left screen.

CUT TO:

CAROL, singing and dancing.

Carol is doing a refrain of her flapper song, but this time her voice is distorted and sinister. She dances with the dagger, making threatening gestures to emphasize the lyrics of the song:

CAROL

I'm a flapper, brave and bold
I wear my stockings rolled.
I drink, I smoke, I chew,
Like all the flappers do.
At night when you're asleep
We flappers roam the street...

The soundtrack is now a nightmare blend of Carol's song, the heavenly choir, and Bobby's moans. Griffith holds his ears trying to block out the sound.

Suddenly, Bobby's moaning stops. As if in reaction, Lillian looks up from her vows. The heavenly chorus stops.

Carol also stops singing and turns toward Bobby's screen. In horror, Griffith also turns. An eerie silence.

CUT TO:

BOBBY, alone in the hotel room.

Half-crazed and in tears, he searches desperately through a suitcase. He finds what he has been looking for - a gun!

Griffith sees the gun and panics. He tries desperately to change the control knob, but to no avail. He tries to yell out to Bobby:

GRIFFITH

No, Bobby! Don't! Don't!

But Bobby does not hear. He puts the gun barrel in his mouth and pulls the trigger. On the explosion, we CUT BACK TO:

INT. GRIFFITH'S BEDROOM

Griffith, asleep in his bed, screams from his nightmare:

GRIFFITH

No! No!

Griffith struggles back to consciousness, soaked in a cold sweat - freaked that his visions have turned into nightmares.

-(END OF DREAM SEQUENCE)

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOWN HALL THEATER - NEW YORK - NIGHT

The marquee announces the world premiere of D.W. Griffith's DREAM STREET.

The camera moves in toward a lobby poster. It reads:

D.W.GRIFFITH'S DREAM STREET
 "Dream people who look out from wistful windows
 or walk with Visions on the Street of Dreams."

At the bottom of the poster is added:

SPECIAL PROLOGUE: "The Evolution of the Motion Picture"
 A Talking Commentary by D. W. Griffith.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER

As the curtains open and the orchestra plays a fanfare. The audience hushes. On the screen appears a static full shot of Griffith standing in front of a neutral backdrop. He address the audience:

GRIFFITH
 Ladies and Gentlemen. I am D.W.Griffith.
 What you are witnessing is, I believe, a
 major breakthrough in the evolution of the
 motion picture - a picture that talks.

Gradually, at first almost imperceptibly, Griffith's voice falls out of synchronization with the picture.

GRIFFITH
 This is made possible by a new invention -
 which is quite simply the joining of the
 motion picture to the phonograph record.

CUT TO:

THE PROJECTION BOOTH

We see the record on a phonograph, attached to the projector by a complicated series of pulleys and other exposed and rather makeshift-looking mechanical connections.

GRIFFITH
 By adding the spoken word
 to the stories that we now tell in
 motion pictures, we create a new medium,
 fully the equal of stage plays and great
 literature.

CUT BACK TO:

THE SCREEN

Griffith's voice is now quite noticeably out of sync. The audience is beginning to titter in confusion.

GRIFFITH

People think in words. If motion pictures are to become a major forum for ideas, we will first have to make them talk.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. PROJECTION BOOTH

Griffith himself bursts into the projection room and yells at the projectionist:

GRIFFITH

It's too slow! It's falling behind!

Fretfully, Griffith looks over the apparatus, not knowing what to do.

His speech continues ever more out-of-sync, on the screen:

GRIFFITH

20 years from now, the motion picture theater will probably be a thing of the past. Like the radio, motion pictures could be turned on in one's home, broadcast from one central projection room. Propaganda will enter more and more. Pictures are becoming increasingly an international agency, both politically and socially. The screen has become the greatest medium for understanding among nations...

Desperate to correct the sound, Griffith tries to jump the record ahead, scratching the record. The needle gets stuck in a groove.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER

The audience starts to laugh hysterically as Griffith's image on the screen keeps talking pompously away, while the sound keeps repeating:

GRIFFITH'S VOICE

...for understanding among nations...
for understanding among nations...
for understanding...

FADE OUT:

FADE IN

INT. APARTMENT - NEW YORK - DAY

Griffith is giving young Evelyn Baldwin acting lessons in the livingroom of the Baldwin apartment. It is a genteel home reminiscent of the Gish household.

Mrs. Baldwin and her other daughters sit on a sofa watching with great enjoyment this parlor entertainment.

GRIFFITH

In this scene, Little Nell opens the door, and there she sees her father! He's been wounded, and he can hardly walk. She rushes to him. She has found her father at last! Now, you play the father, and I'll play Little Nell.

Griffith is teasing Evelyn and she loves it, giggling.

EVELYN

No, I play Little Nell, and you play the father.

GRIFFITH

I always have to play the father. This time, let's switch roles. Alright?

EVELYN

(giggling)

Alright.

Griffith takes a few steps back and grandly does a pantomime of opening a door, stepping through, and closing the door behind him.

GRIFFITH

Now I open the door, and oooh!
There you are - my poor old father!

Griffith makes a very funny face to indicate Little Nell's great heart-breaking pity for her father. Evelyn laughs, as do Mrs. Baldwin and Evelyn's two sisters.

GRIFFITH

No, you musn't laugh. You're a poor old man, and I call out to you.

Griffith extends his arms toward Evelyn.

GRIFFITH

Daddy! Daddy! I've found you at last!

Evelyn falls down laughing.

GRIFFITH

Oh, Daddy! You've fallen!
You poor, poor old man!

Griffith runs over to Evelyn and picks her up to her feet. She just laughs harder every time he says "Daddy".

GRIFFITH

Let me help you up, Daddy.

He lets go of her and she falls back to the floor, laughing away.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Carol and a girlfriend, Gloria, are doing a hot Charleston to impress their dates - two sharp young men who are lounging at their table, looking blasé.

Carol's date, Carlos, is a gigolo type, smouldering in imitation of Valentino. Gloria is a dizzy blonde, so drunk she can hardly stand up.

GLORIA'S DATE

Your girlfriend's got a lot of endurance, Carlos. Gloria's boiled to the ears - looks like she's going to drop any sec.

CARLOS

Carol only drops when she's ready - or when I want her to. Get the picture?

The men exchange guffaws. Carlos casts a suggestive look at Carol.

Carol is the center of attention on the dance floor - and she really puts on a show.

NOAH, the waiter, known for his outrageous behavior, sashays across the floor with drinks on a tray - trying to steal some of the attention from Carol. When his vamping gets some applause from onlookers, we see Carol react - she isn't about to be upstaged.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the dance floor, Griffith enters with Evelyn, Mrs. Baldwin, and the two older sisters. Griffith is treating them to a night on the town. The women all wear corsages.

The Griffith party is shown to a table for dinner - with a view of the dance floor. Neither Griffith nor Carol are aware of each other's presence.

Noah, the waiter comes dancing back across the floor with another order on his tray. Eying the two men at Carol's table flirtatiously, he deliberately bumps his ass against Carol's as he goes by behind her. He flashes her a phoney doubletake, as if it had been an accident.

Carol sees this as an open challenge: With a wicked glint in her eyes, she percolates, plotting her revenge. Noah, the waiter spins off into the crowd.

Noah, the waiter slides up to Griffith's table to take his order. He shifts his act into a caricature of a straight waiter.

NOAH

Good evening, Sir. Would you care
for cocktails before dinner?

GRIFFITH

(teasing the girls)

Well I guess we'd better have
three glasses of milk.

The girls protest.

GIRLS

No! No!

GRIFFITH

No? Well, then how about a bottle
of your best champagne.

WAITER

Yes sir.

Noah, the waiter dancs off back across the floor.

Carol and Gloria have returned to the table. Gloria plops down drunkenly next to her date, fanning herself, exhausted.

Carol stands by the table, still moving to the music. She watches as Noah, the waiter passes them again, swinging his hips outrageously. He gives Carlos a big wink as he goes by the table.

CAROL

(to her date)

That Bozo's tryin' ta crab my act.
He's in for a surprise.

The waiter comes swishing back with the champagne and glasses on a tray. As he goes past Carol, she very deliberately trips him.

Noah, the waiter falls flat on his face, the glasses crashing to pieces. The cork explodes out of the champagne bottle and sprays champagne around the dancefloor.

Carol laughs gayly away.

Noah, the waiter picks himself up, trying to retrieve his tray and the bottle of champagne. He mutters under his breath:

NOAH

You d-did that on purpose, you,
you vulgar little hussy!

CAROL

Ah go kiss a prune!

Giving the champagne bottle an extra shake, Noah aims it at Carol and sprays her in the face.

NOAH

Oh, excuse me!

Carol jumps on the waiter, kicking and scratching, overwhelming him. Her friends have to drag Carol off him. The other waiters pull Noah away.

All dancing stops. The band stops. Griffith stands up to see what is causing the commotion. He sees Carol and quickly excuses himself from the table.

As they escort Noah, the waiter toward the kitchen, he yells back:

NOAH

Trash! Just cheap trash!

Carol, all revved up and wet, laughs with her friends.

CAROL

If it's onr thing that don't mix,
it's me and pushy he-she's.

She spots Griffith moving toward her, a stern look on his face. Carol rolls her eyes.

CAROL

Jimminey Jesus Christ! It's the
boss!

The hubbub subdues, and the band starts playing again - a slow, saccarine 2-step.

Carol smiles as Griffith approaches, acting as if nothing were wrong.

CAROL

Griff!

She turns to the table, putting on a phoney nonchalance.

CAROL

Carlos, Gloria, Tony - this is Mr. D.W.Griffith.

The two men stand up, but Griffith does not acknowledge their presence. He stares daggers at Carlos, then rudely hustles Carol away toward the lobby - to a place where they can talk.

CAROL

Griff, you're hurting my arm, dammit!

She wrestles herself free, crosses her arms and pouts, as Griffith accuses her:

GRIFFITH

I thought you were tired and were going to spend the evening at home!

CAROL

So I changed my mind. I figured I'd go out and have a good time for a change. So what are you doing - spying on me!

GRIFFITH

Who is that man you are with?

CAROL

Oh Jesus, Griff. That's Charlie. He's nobody. An old friend. We used to dance together at Denishawn.

GRIFFITH

He looks like a gigolo to me.

CAROL

He is a gigolo. So what! Maybe I sometimes like to go out with somebody my own age!

Griffith is hurt. His tone changes from accusing to pathetic.

GRIFFITH

Don't you care for me at all, Carol.

Realizing she has hurt him, Carol softens and becomes affectionate.

CAROL

Oh, Griff, you old fool. You know I care for you.

GRIFFITH
 (taking heart)
You do?

 CAROL
You're the only one for me, Griff.
You're my sugar-daddy. I just gotta
go --- dancing once in a while. You
know me.

 GRIFFITH
Why do you have to go dancing with them?
Why not with me. You know how I love
dancing - just the two of us.

 CAROL
Well, maybe I can meet you later.
But I can't just leave my friends.

 GRIFFITH
At my room? Just the two of us?

 CAROL
Sure. Just the two of us.

 GRIFFITH
Carol, you know I don't want to
restrict your freedom; I just...

 CAROL
Okay, okay. I said I'd meet you later.
We can talk about it then.

She moves off back toward her friends. Griffith watches after her, still upset, then turns back to his table and the Baldwins.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GRIFFITH'S HOTEL ROOM - NEW YORK - THAT NIGHT

Griffith enters from the corridor. The lights are already on, the radio is playing romantic music from the bedroom. Carol's coat has been thrown carelessly on the couch. There is a trail of Carol's clothes that lead to the bedroom. Griffith follows the trail into the bedroom. She is not there, but the bed is open and the sheets are in disarray. The door to the bathroom is open only a crack and the lights are on in there. Griffith moves toward the bathroom.

 GRIFFITH
Carol?

HARD CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM

Carol is pinned against the wall in a sexual embrace with Carlos. They freeze at Griffith's voice.

 CAROL
Wait just a second, Griff!

Griffith takes a couple more steps toward the bathroom, then stops.

GRIFFITH

Carol, I'm sorry about tonight.
I - I was rude to your friends.
It-It's just that you mean so
much to me.

Carlos sneers as he listens to Griffith's pleading outside. Slowly, forcefully, he begins again to pound his body into Carol. Carol tries to protest, but quickly gives in. She has to use all her acting skills to conceal her gasps from Griffith in the other room.

CAROL

Let's forget.....about tonight.
I already have.
I'll be out in a jif.
Why don't you get ready for bed.

GRIFFITH

It's just that...what with
everything else going wrong, I...

CAROL

Going wrong? What's going wrong?

GRIFFITH

I didn't want to worry you with
all this, Carol.

CAROL

That's what friends are for.

Carol turns on the shower, so she can't really hear him.

Griffith turns and walks over to the dresser in the bedroom. Sitting down in front of the mirror, he starts to take his shoes off, directing his voice toward the bathroom door.

GRIFFITH

I'm in trouble. My pictures aren't
making money. I can't borrow any more
from the banks. I'll have to sell
the studio.

CAROL

(yelling from the bathroom)
What?

Realizing she can't hear him, Griffith turns and looks at himself in the mirror, not happy with what he sees. He is no longer a young man. He is losing his hair.

GRIFFITH

(talking to himself)

So I've signed a contract with Adolph Zukor to direct pictures for his Paramount Studios in New York. I won't have final say anymore. I won't even own the pictures. I'll just get paid a weekly salary - like everybody else. I won't be able to keep my staff, my players, my crew-----except you, Carol. My only condition was that you would also get a contract - to star in each of my pictures.

Carol suddenly appears in the mirror, standing behind Griffith. She has entered silently from the bathroom. She wears only a white silk robe, tied at the front. She smiles serenely, and puts her arms around Griffith's neck.

GRIFFITH

Carol!

Griffith turns and throws his arms around her waist, burying his head in her breasts. He needs her badly. He almost weeps.

GRIFFITH

Oh, Carol. I've given up everything for you. I've had fame, riches, independence --- and I've had loneliness...

Carol holds Griffith's head to her body, so he cannot see as she signals to Carlos - who sneaks out the door in the background.

GRIFFITH

Now all I want is you.

Carol steps back from Griffith. She undoes the tie to her robe. She opens the robe to reveal her naked body to Griffith's eyes.

CAROL

Well now you've got me.

She invites Griffith into her arms. He moves in to her. She envelopes him with her robe.

FADE OUT.

END PART II

D.W.GRIFFITH

Part 3

THE STRUGGLE

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - SIMULATED NIGHT

Nostalgic music begins over a MONTAGE of scenes from Griffith's movies with Carol Dempster - recreated in color as they would be seen in master shots during the shooting.

Carol is acting out Griffith's fantasy of their relationship.

In this scene, from "Isn't Life Wonderful," Carol and Paul (played by Neil Hamilton), have both been knocked unconscious by a gang who have stolen their complete harvest of food from a wagon that they have been pulling by hand through the woods.

Carol awakens and crawls to Paul, who is also just waking up. Their overturned wagon is behind them.

CAROL

Oh, Paul, I thought they had
killed you. Did they take it all?

They realize that the wagon is empty - their life savings gone. Carol holds Paul in her arms. Despite the dire circumstances, she finds a spark of hope.

CAROL

Do you mind very much, Paul.
Afterall, I've still got you -
and you've still got me.
That's what matters most, isn't it?

We hear Griffith's voice, off-screen, giving Carol her cue:

GRIFFITH'S VOICE

Now the moon comes out from
behind the clouds - bathing
the two lovers in soft light.

Carol looks up, as if at the moon.

CAROL

The moon! Look!

Paul also looks up. They both seem inspired.

CAROL

Oh Paul, we've escaped them --
I've still got you! Oh, ISN'T
LIFE WONDERFUL!

Carol is radiant with hope.

DISSOLVE TO:



W.C. FIELDS AND CAROL DEMPSTER

EXT. CARNIVAL SIDE SHOW - DAY

A scene recreated from SALLY OF THE SAWDUST.

Carol, in a ballerina's dress, and W.C.Fields are on a little stage trying to attract the attention of some customers. Fields juggles, while Carol does little dances and strikes poses as his helper.

CAROL

The great McGargle! Let's hear it
for THE GREAT McGARGLE!

Two policemen start to question Fields.

POLICE

Are you McGargle?

FIELDS

Yes I am - among other things.

POLICE

You're under arrest for violating
the city ordinance against gambling.

FIELDS

Gambling? You must be mistaken.
It's just the Old Army Game.

Carol suddenly jumps on the two officers, knocking them over, kicking and hitting them furiously.

CAROL

Run, Pops! Run!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Carol and Fields walk off together into the distance along the railroad tracks, as a train passes them and disappears around a turn.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE-UPS - CAROL

A series of lingering close-ups of Carol as she appeared playing a crusading flapper in THAT ROYLE GIRL. Each shot represents a different, albeit ambiguous, emotion.

OFF-SCREEN, we hear Griffith's voice:

GRIFFITH (V.O.)

The girl of today is not a thing of sharp blacks and whites. You can't say she's bad, and let it go at that. She's wise and foolish, innocent and sophisticated, moral and immoral, tender and hard - she is everything that life around her is.

From the last of the series of close-ups, we pull back to reveal that Carol is posing on a set interior (for THE SORROWS OF SATAN).

Griffith is looking through the lens at her to set up the shot. He is older. His face is beginning to show the strain. He chain smokes Camel cigarettes.

TITLE: "Paramount Studios
New York - 1926"

Griffith turns to the cameraman.

GRIFFITH

This is what I want.

The cameraman looks through the lens.

CAMERAMAN

(skeptical)

Uh huh. Well if that's what you want, we can certainly do it. But it's going to take a little time. I have to change all the lights.

CAROL

(peevish)

Not again! All we do on this set is wait for the cameraman. If you need me, I'll be in my dressingroom.

Carol starts to stalk off the set. The cameraman is upset and turns to Griffith (who himself seems rather disgusted and weary).

CAMERAMAN

But we need Miss Dempster here to get the lighting right.

CAROL

(yelling back)

Then use my stand-in. That's what she's being paid for, isn't it?

Carol disappears off the set. Griffith shrugs to the cameraman and turns away. This is not the Griffith who used to be master of his set. Now he seems curiously uninvolved.

Evelyn Baldwin, now 18 years old and pretty, is the stand-in that Carol was referring to. Griffith nods to her to take Carol's place in front of the camera.

GRIFFITH

Miss Baldwin, if you would....

Evelyn is the only other familiar face on the set. The cameraman and the crew have been assigned to Griffith by the studio.

Griffith wanders off to the sidelines and sits down alone, smoking his cigarettes.

A studio junior executive, LEBARON, approaches him. From Griffith's weary expression, we can see that he'd rather not be bothered by this man.

LEBARON

I don't mean to criticize, Mr. Griffith. But are all these close-ups of Miss Dempster really necessary. We have a schedule to meet, and each close-up wastes a lot of time.

Griffith only half tries to hide his obvious irritation.

GRIFFITH

Since this is the story of how a woman's devotion redeems the soul of the man she loves, Mr. LeBaron, every close-up is essential to establish the radiant presence of that woman. Because that presence is the center of the film.

(continued)

GRIFFITH (continuing)

It counteracts all the banalities of this story that your company has given me to photograph.

The Sorrows of Satan is not exactly a project that I would have chosen myself, but at least my contract stipulates that it's up to me to decide how to realize it as a film.

LEBARON (defensive)

Alright. Fine. I'm not trying to interfere. But today's audience likes action, not this slow, romantic stuff.

GRIFFITH

I've been making pictures longer than you've been out of short pants. I think I know what an audience responds to.

Dismissing LeBaron with this statement, Griffith turns away. LeBaron mutters after him.

LEBARON

Maybe you've been making pictures a little too long...

Griffith walks back to the camera where Evelyn Baldwin is standing in for Carol. As if to escape the other irritations on the set, Griffith seems to enjoy teasing the still very girlish Evelyn.

GRIFFITH

Well, Miss Stand-In-For-The-Star, how do you like your new job?

EVELYN

It's all so exciting, Mr. Griffith!

GRIFFITH

Exciting, is it? You realize, of course, that yours is one of the most important jobs on the set.

EVELYN

No, you're just teasing me. All I do is stand here.

GRIFFITH

Well, evidently that's how they judge a job's importance in these modern movie studios. The less you do, the more important you are. The producers are the most important because they don't do anything at all. You only have to stand here, so that makes you second most important.

The cameraman cautiously approaches Griffith, as if he were afraid to interrupt him.

CAMERAMAN

Ah, Mr. Griffith, we're ready for Miss Dempster.

GRIFFITH

Then send for her.

CAMERAMAN (hemming and hawing)

Well, ah, you see, Miss Dempster doesn't like it when crew members come to her dressing room.

GRIFFITH

I see. Alright, I'll get her myself.

(to Evelyn)

You see, Evelyn, the director is another very important job - I get to be the messenger boy.

Griffith walks through the stage to Carol's private dressing room. He enters without knocking.

GRIFFITH

Carol, we're ready.

Carol is on the couch kissing a young man in a tuxedo, EDDIE LARSEN. Eddie jumps up when Griffith surprises them, boyishly embarrassed at being caught necking. Carol is totally blasé - she could care less. Griffith is stunned, jealous. Eddie is a rich young Texan used to getting what he wants. Right now he wants Carol, and it doesn't even occur to him that Griffith, an older man, might be involved with her

EDDIE

Hey now, you caught us! Ah just can't keep my hands off her, the little beauty. I'm Eddie Larsen. You must be Mr. Griffith. I'm glad to meet you.

Eddie extends a hand toward Griffith, but Griffith ignores him. He glares down at Carol, who plays with her fingernails. There is an open case with a large diamond sitting on the table next to her.

EDDIE

Look, I hope you don't mind my stealing a couple kisses from your star, Mr. G., but she did say that she was on her own time, and I'm afraid I just took advantage of that fact.

GRIFFITH (coldly)

Miss Dempster is required on the set.

Carol gets up and walks past Griffith toward the set, without saying a word.

EDDIE

Well look, no hard feelings, Mr. G.
But if I can talk Carol into it, I
might just steal her away permanently.
You see, I've just asked her to be my
wife. 'Course she hasn't said yes yet...

Griffith turns and pursues Carol toward the set, leaving Eddie with his mouth open.

Carol strides on to the set and takes Evelyn's place in front of the camera.

CAROL

(to Evelyn)

Scoot along now, Honey. Playtime's over.

Evelyn gives Carol a funny look, not appreciating being treated like a child. She walks off to the sidelines. The crew seems to hate Carol; she pays no attention to them.

Griffith reappears on the set and grabs Carol's arm, as if to demand an explanation. But in front of the crew, he says nothing. It is all in his eyes which are crazed with jealousy. Carol wrenches her arm away.

CAROL

He's nobody. Just an admirer.
I'm allowed to have admirers, aren't I.
(loudly, so the crew will hear)
I'm ready. Where's the guy I'm supposed
to kiss?

The guy she is supposed to kiss is Ricardo Cortez, a handsome young man with slicked hair in imitation of Valentino. He has been sitting off to the side waiting. Next to him is an older woman, probably his manager. As he heads toward the set, he mutters to her:

CORTEZ

How am I supposed to feel passion
for a woman who hates me.

Griffith steps back to the camera as Ricardo approaches Carol, giving her a big phoney smile. She looks back with cold indifference. As Griffith gives the instructions for the scene, there is a detached, fatalistic tone to his voice.

GRIFFITH

This is a love scene. You are two
struggling young artists. You have been
attracted to each other for a long time.
You have shared poverty together. You
both know that it is inevitable that you
will become lovers. Now the woman has
come to the man's room. It is her
invitation. He takes her in his arms
and kisses her.

CAROL

Let's just get it over with.

A boy puts a slate in front of Carol and Ricardo, and the cameraman starts the electrically run camera.



THE REPEATED KISS: CAROL AND RICARDO CORTEZ

Griffith's face is ashen as he watches the scene take place before his eyes - powerless to stop the woman he loves from being drawn to the passion of a younger man. Ricardo is doing his best to project a smouldering Latin lover image and Carol abandons herself to the mood. It is a convincingly erotic mutual seduction. Considering Carol's coldness before the camera started turning, she must now be an accomplished actress.

Carol and Ricardo break from their kiss.

GRIFFITH

Let's try it again. More passion, Miss Dempster.

Carol glares at Griffith. She knows that the first take was convincing. Why is Griffith making them repeat it.

Carol and Ricardo repeat the scene, again very convincingly.

GRIFFITH

(mechanically)

Again.

We see a montage as Griffith has them do the scene again and again - a masochistic ritual. Only Griffith's tortured eyes give a hint of the perverse reason for doing it.

FADE OUT

INT. BANZHAF'S LAW OFFICE

Griffith, resigned and preoccupied, sits opposite Banzhaf. Banzhaf is upset, trying to make Griffith listen to reason. Griffith hardly seems to be listening. His gaze goes beyond Banzhaf, out a window.

BANZHAF

Please, Mr. Griffith, I can't impress upon you strongly enough the seriousness of your situation. The rumors of your dispute with Mr. Zukor must be put an end to. Your reputation as a reliable director is at stake. If you cannot come to terms with Zukor to complete your commitment, you will lose the credibility to enter other contracts here. I understand that it is the fault of Mr. Zukor's interference that your pictures have not done well at the box office. But if you withdraw now, the industry will lay the blame to you. Zukor is willing, even anxious, to continue, providing only that you accept an actress of his choosing, and not Miss Dempster, for the lead.

At the mention of Carol, Griffith stiffens, intractable. Banzhaf pleads with him.

BANZHAF

Can't we find some workable compromise.

GRIFFITH

No. There can be no compromise on the issue of Miss Dempster.

Banzhaf is exasperated.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS

Griffith walks alone, dejected along the street. He enters his hotel.

INT. HOTEL

He takes the elevator up to his room.

Griffith opens the door to his room. There is a letter pushed under the door. He opens it. His face turns deathly pale. We hear Carol's voice-over as he reads the letter.

CAROL (V.O.)

Dearest David - You have been so good to me, I hate to end it like this. But I could not face you, as I knew you would never let me go. By the time you read this, I will already be on my way to the West Coast with Eddie Larsen, whom I intend to marry. I no longer want to be an actress. I just want a normal life like anyone else. My decision is final. I hope you can understand. I am sure that you will find someone new to take my place. Affectionately, Carol.

CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL LOBBY

The desk clerk shakes his head.

DESK CLERK

No, I'm sorry, Sir. Miss Dempster checked out this morning.

Griffith looks crazed and desperate.

GRIFFITH

Do you know where she went?

DESK CLERK

We sent her luggage to the train station. I believe her destination was Los Angeles.

GRIFFITH

Call the station. Get me a ticket
on the next train for Los Angeles.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A train roars along the tracks, heading West.

INT. TRAIN

Griffith sits alone in a Pullman car, drinking. He looks as if he has been drinking for days. He hails the waiter.

GRIFFITH

Waiter - another scotch.

The waiter pours Griffith another drink. Griffith nurses the drink, gazing blankly into space.

Through his alcohol blurred vision, Griffith suddenly becomes aware of a presence sitting opposite him in the booth. It is a very suave, sophisticated older gentleman in a top hat and tails. He smokes a cigarette and casually blows the smoke toward Griffith, with an amiable, knowing smile.

(This is Griffith's vision of Satan, as played by Adolphe Menjou in THE SORROWS OF SATAN).

GRIFFITH

(in a drunken slur)

Who are you?

SATAN

(charming)

Oh come now, you know me.
Perhaps this would help.

Satan leans forward into a very low light, casting his face into a sinister shadow effect.

SATAN

You've always pictured me as a boogiemer, but as you get to know me better, I become a rather sympathetic character. In fact, I think we could become good friends.

GRIFFITH

What do you want with me?

SATAN

I only come when I'm called.
So the question really is -
what do you want with me?

GRIFFITH

I want her back.

SATAN

Yes, I thought so. Unfortunately,
it's already too late. She's already
married him.

Griffith drops his head to the table, crying.

SATAN

There, there, my friend. It's not
as bad as all that. What were you
going to do, anyway: chase after
her? Do a jealous lover scene? Shoot
her? Or perhaps him? Or both, most
probably. Why not sublimate it all
into a film. You've done it before.
But here I am, acting like the voice
of Reason. You force me into playing
strange roles, my friend.

Griffith looks up from the table.

GRIFFITH

I gave up everything for her.
I have nothing left.

SATAN

Oh, but that's not true. You have
something very valuable left.

GRIFFITH

What's that?

SATAN

Your vision.

GRIFFITH

My vision?

SATAN

Yes. Sell it.

GRIFFITH

Who would buy it?

SATAN

Hollywood!

Satan laughs maniacally away.

CUT TO:

PERIOD FOOTAGE MONTAGE OF HOLLYWOOD IN THE MID-1920'S.

As Satan laughs, we see FLASHES of the young film capitol, its stars, and its productions: A Cecil B. Demille orgy; the chariot race from BEN HUR; Valentino in SON OF THE SHEIK, the entryways to the new studios.

SATAN (V.O.)

Hollywood - the great bastardizer
of all you have created.....
your child.....your MONSTER!

CUT BACK TO:

GRIFFITH AND SATAN

SATAN

You can continue making pictures -
if you're willing to work once more
in Hollywood. But there is a condition -
a condition attached to your gift of
vision. The condition is this:
You will be able to see, but....
NO ONE WILL BELIEVE.

Satan laughs away again at this cruel irony.

SATAN

I'm sorry, my friend. I'm just
doing my job. No hard feelings, huh?
Afterall, you've seen all the high
places; your life wouldn't be complete
without a glimpse of the gutter!

Satan laughs away again.

The waiter comes back. By now, several other passengers are staring at Griffith's booth: Griffith is alone in the booth, staring into space and laughing demonically.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. MARY PICKFORD'S ESTATE - DAY

Griffith stands before Mary, hat in hand. He is wearing his best clothes, but they were tailored to him in days when he was in better shape. He is apologetic; she is cold and businesslike. It is as if she has been waiting for this moment all her life. Griffith has finally come crawling to her.

MARY

Is this a social visit or a business visit? Either way, I hope it won't take too long. I'm a very bust woman.

GRIFFITH

I want to get back into the picture business out here, Mary. I guess I've sort of.....lost touch.

MARY

Yes, we've heard that you've been chasing after one of your leading ladies again. You never learn, do you?

GRIFFITH

That's over now. Now I just need to work.

MARY

I don't know if there's much call for your kind of pictures anymore, D.W. People don't like being preached to.

GRIFFITH

I have nothing to preach about anymore. I just want to make pictures.

(CONTINUED)

MARY

Our pictures here are geared to make money. Everyone who works for us must be willing to cooperate in achieving this goal. Do you think you would be able to cooperate in doing this - even if to do so seemed to conflict with your ideas about art?

GRIFFITH

Yes. I'll cooperate.

MARY

Good. I can arrange a contract for you with Joe Schenck. But on my terms. You will make first class pictures and receive a generous weekly salary - just like you used to give me back at Biograph - but we will have final say on choice of projects, casting, and final cut.

Marv gives Griffith a cold, hard stare anticipating objections. He makes none. She plays her trump.

MARY

And, you will also sign over to me your voting shares in United Artists stock.

GRIFFITH

You drive a hard bargain, Marv.

MARY

No one else would even hire you.

CUT TO:

LONG SHOT: EXT. MARY'S ESTATE - DAY.

As Griffith walks alone from the house, slowly and defeated.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STUDIO SET - A SPACIOUS CASTLE INTERIOR

GRIFFITH

You have sinned - and you must die!

Griffith, his arms outstretched to the heavens, speaks with old testament wrath, his eyes fixed on two young lovers caught in an embrace.

Griffith is rehearsing the ending of DRUMS OF LOVE, a costume melodrama based on the legend of Paolo and Francesca. The story concerns an older man who returns from the wars to find that his beautiful young wife and his handsome younger brother have become lovers. The actor Don Alvarado plays the Valentino-styled Paolo; Marv Philbin, a dumb blonde starlet, plays Francesca. For this rehearsal, Griffith is taking the part of the older brother. (The situation parallels the scene where Griffith had caught Carol kissing Eddie Larsen).

GRIFFITH

Now, he takes Francesca - the woman who has wronged him - he takes her in his arms for one last kiss.

Griffith grabs Mary Philbin and pulls her to him, pausing dramatically for one last longing look at her face before the fatal kiss. Griffith is deeply involved in his performance - but Mary Philbin can't help giggling mawkishly. Griffith tightens his grip on her. She protests.

MARY PHILBIN

Hey, that hurts!

GRIFFITH
(ominously)

It's supposed to hurt. If you were a real actress, you would want it to hurt.

Mary Philbin genuinely attempts to wriggle loose. Griffith tightens his grip viciously.

GRIFFITH

He kisses her!

Griffith kisses her deeply on the lips. There is fear in Mary Philbin's eyes as she acquiesces to the kiss.

Griffith pulls back from the kiss, but continues his iron hold on Mary Philbin.

GRIFFITH

And as he kisses her, he draws his dagger from his belt...

Griffith draws a real knife from behind his back and raises it to Mary Philbin's neck. Her eyes glance sideways at the dagger in horror.

GRIFFITH

...and plunges it into her neck!

Mary Philbin screams for real as Griffith plunges his knife, just missing her neck. She goes limp in his arms. Griffith releases his grip and lets her fall to the floor.

GRIFFITH

And then he turns to his brother...

Griffith turns to Don Alvarado, who has stood in shock watching Griffith. Griffith looks at Alvarado with the same righteous fury that he had just shown to Mary Philbin. Alvarado is transfixed.

GRIFFITH

You also who have betrayed me,
Shall now embrace your death.

Griffith grabs the surprised Alvarado into an embrace, kissing him also firmly on the lips - and thrusting his dagger as if into Alvarado's side.

He lets Alvarado go, and Alvarado cooperates by falling to the floor. Mary Philbin is still on the floor watching the rest of the scene.

Griffith stands a moment gazing in righteous victory into the stage lights. Then, suddenly, his rigid body relaxes - as he comes out of his play-acting. He turns back to Mary Philbin and Don Alvarado, who watch him intently from the floor. Griffith smiles, the melodrama over.

GRIFFITH
(lightly)

And then the two of you will
crawl toward each other to die,
in a close-up, in each other's arms.

Griffith gestures to where the close-up will be shot on the floor. Alvarado and Mary Philbin both breathe a sigh of relief.

Griffith now turns to an actor in costume who has been watching from the side. It is Lionel Barrymore, who is playing the part of the older brother that Griffith has just demonstrated.

GRIFFITH

Do you get the general idea,
Mr. Barrymore?

BARRYMORE

I only hope I can do it justice,
Mr. Griffith.

Behind Barrymore sits Billy Bitzer, alone in a chair. He looks much older, time and liquer having taken their toll. He takes a drink from a flask.

Barrymore steps on to the set and offers Mary Philbin his hand to help her up from the floor.

GRIFFITH

Alright, let's do it again - this time
with Mr. Barrymore.

John CONSIDINE, a junior executive at the studio, steps up to Griffith. In a loud voice, so that everyone will hear him, he interrupts Griffith.

CONSIDINE

Look, Griffith, is that how you
intend to end this picture?

GRIFFITH
Yes. It's a tragedy.

 CONSIDINE
I don't care what it is. Audiences don't like unhappy endings. It was Mr. Schenck's and my understanding that it was to have a happy ending.

 GRIFFITH
To do that would be contrary to all the laws of drama.

 CONSIDINE
 (threatening)
Do you plan to cooperate or....

 GRIFFITH
 (defeated and humiliated)
Alright.

Griffith turns to the cast, who have been watching this confrontation in silence.

 GRIFFITH
Alright. We're going to try a different ending. We'll have the young lovers live, and kill off the old duke. That should make everyone happy.

Griffith turns to the cameraman.

 GRIFFITH
Will the cameraman please set the lights for the scene. I'm going to have a little tea.

Griffith turns and walks over to where Billy Bitzer sits, disheveled and obviously drunk. Griffith puts his hand out, and Bitzer hands him the flask. Griffith toasts to Bitzer.

 GRIFFITH
Here's to cooperating and making everybody happy. Let the young live and let the old die. Right, Billy?

Griffith takes a drink.

Bitzer no longer jokes with Griffith. He is now a bitter old man. Griffith has had him put on the payroll to help him out, but he has no real function on the set.

 GRIFFITH
So what do you think, Billy?

BITZER

What the hell difference does it make.
You pay me to be a cameraman, and all
I do is sit here. A goddam charity case.

GRIFFITH

These indignities we must both endure.
(he motions the flask back to Bitzer)
It pays for our habits.

Bitzer takes the flask back and takes another drink.

BITZER

(bitter)

I'll drink to that.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SPEAK-EASY - NIGHT

Griffith sits at the bar - a solitary drinker, drowning his sorrows. There is a tacky floor show in which a line of girls do suggestive steps while parading through the club to cheesy music.

One of the girls, a hardened blonde with a good eye for money, gives special attention to Griffith and succeeds in catching his interest. After her little act, she saunters suggestively over to Griffith. She has a fake French accent.

GIRL

I see you looking at me - maybe
you would buy me zee drink, yes?

Griffith is drunk and flattered by her interest.

GRIFFITH

By all means. Bartender, give this
young lady whatever she would like
to drink.

Griffith waves a big bill to the bartender. The girl is impressed.

GIRL

Ooh la la! Then maybe I have zee
champagne.

She stands at the bar in front of Griffith. He looks at her body.

GIRL

My name eez Lulu.

GRIFFITH

Lulu, huh. Well, Lulu, have you
ever acted in movies?

LULU

No, not yet. But zee show business eez my life.

GRIFFITH (lapsing into his old line)

Yes, I couldn't help but notice your dance. You have a very expressive body, and that's a quality that is very important in screen acting.

LULU

Oh, I am so pleased you like eet.

She runs her hands down the sides of her dress to accentuate her body.

GRIFFITH

Perhaps you would like to audition for me. I'm always looking for new talent. You have perhaps heard of me - I'm D.W.Griffith.

LULU

(not really recognizing his name)
Oh yes. And you are in zee movie business?

GRIFFITH

Yes I am.

LULU

Oh, I like the movies very much!
Maybe I have seen some of your movies, no?

GRIFFITH

Perhaps. I made BIRTH OF A NATION...

LULU

Yes...

She obviously has never heard of the movie.

GRIFFITH

INTOLERANCE, WAY DOWN EAST...

LULU

Oh yes! I saw that one - when I was zee little girl. It was so funny...

GRIFFITH (fully aware of the irony)

Now I'm making a picture about an old fool who gets taken in by a golddigger. Do you think you could play a golddigger, my dear?

LULU

Oh, ves

GRIFFITH

Maybe I could audition you tonight - at my suite. We could act out a scene.

LULU

Sure. That sounds great. But get would be necessary that I get paid to do thees audition, ..

GRIFFITH

Yes, money - of course.

The girl nods to a photographer who promptly approaches Griffith and flashes a picture of him and Lulu. Lulu puts her arm around Griffith and smiles into the camera. Griffith is startled and confused. The photographer moves away as quickly as he had appeared.

GRIFFITH

No, no pictures, I...

LULU

Oh, it's alright. He is just the club photographer. Don't you want a picture to remember the evening by.

GRIFFITH

(fearing scandal)

No, I have to leave.

Griffith gets up, a bit unsteady, and almost in a panic heads toward the exit, leaving the surprised Lulu behind. She runs after him, dropping her accent.

LULU

Hey, dammit! What about my audition.

GRIFFITH

No, I'm sorry.

Griffith hurriedly exits. Lulu looks after him, her hands on her hips, pissed off.

LULU

You old geezer! I hope you drop dead.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. GISH HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

The phone is ringing. Lillian, carrying her old Pekingese Chu Chin Chow, approaches the phone. She wears a white dressing gown, her long hair combed out for the night. On the wall behind her is an idealized portrait of Griffith by Henrik Sartov, framed in gold.

LILLIAN

(to the dog)

Hush now, Chu. Who could be calling at this time of night?

Lillian picks up the phone.

LILLIAN

Hello?

GRIFFITH'S VOICE

Lillian? Guess who this is.

LILLIAN

(cautious)

Mr. Griffith?

From Griffith's voice, he must be smashed out of his mind.

GRIFFITH

You guessed! What are you doing right now?

LILLIAN

Why I was in bed. Do you know what time it is?

GRIFFITH

Forget time. Come have a drink with me.

LILLIAN

It sounds like you've already been drinking.

There is a long silence from Griffith's end.

LILLIAN

David? Are you alright?

GRIFFITH

Have you seen my latest picture, Lillian?

LILLIAN

No, but I've so been looking forward to it.

GRIFFITH

Don't bother. No one's interested in silent pictures anymore. anyway. The bastards won't let me do a talkie.

LILLIAN

All the talkies I've seen are dreadful. Besides, you always said that the great thing about pictures was that they could be understood the world over.

GRIFFITH (not listening to her)

The bastards won't even talk with me. I think they're going to fire me.

LILLIAN

Who? Who are you talking about?

GRIFFITH

Marv's boys. Schenck. It's the Jewish curse. Why don't you come have a drink with me, Lillian, and we'll curse the Jewish curse.

LILLIAN

(hesitant)

No...no, I don't think I can.

Another long silence from Griffith's end.

GRIFFITH

You won't have a drink with me?
Well I don't blame you. Good night.

He hangs up.

LILLIAN

But David, please, wait, I...

But she is too late. She speaks pathetically to her dog.

LILLIAN

He hung up, Chu Chin Chow.
He wouldn't have called at all,
except that he was drunk.

She gazes at Griffith's portrait and speaks to it.

LILLIAN

If you'd ask me one day when you
were feeling better, I'd say yes.

(then, to her dog)

Wouldn't I, Chu. Do you want a
special treat? C'mon, let's check in on
mother, then I'll find something sweet for you.

The camera holds on the portrait of Griffith, as Lillian slowly leaves the room carrying Chu Chin Chow.

FADE OUT

INT. FINE ARTS STUDIO - HOLLYWOOD

Griffith walks alone through the corridors of a new office building. He enters the office of Joseph Schenck, President. He confronts a secretary at her desk in the outer office. She doesn't look up from her work. She could care less.

GRIFFITH

Excuse me, is Mr. Schenck free?

SECRETARY

Ah, no. He's in a meeting right now.

GRIFFITH

I'm Mr. Griffith. I have an appointment.

SECRETARY

Oh, Mr. Griffith. Yes. Why don't you have a seat. I'll let you know when he's free.

The secretary disappears into the inner office. Griffith nervously looks through a folder of papers he has with him. His hands are shaking. The secretary reappears.

SECRETARY

Your appointment was supposed to be for tomorrow, not for today, Mr. Griffith.

GRIFFITH

(panicked)

No, no, I'm quite sure it was for today.

We see the secretary erase Griffith's name from her appointment book under Thursday. She is lying.

SECRETARY

Today's Thursday. Your appointment was for Friday.

GRIFFITH

(pleading)

I must see Mr. Schenck. It's absolutely vital. This appointment has been cancelled and rescheduled three times. I was assured that he would see me today. Please, he must see me; he must!

SECRETARY

I'll check with him again, but it's the wrong day.

The secretary disappears. Griffith seems desperate. The secretary reappears.

SECRETARY

Mr. Schenck will see you now - but only for a minute. He does have another appointment scheduled.

Griffith pulls himself together as best he can and proceeds into the office. Schenck is behind his desk. Considine stands at the window. They put on fake business smiles of friendship as if nothing were wrong.

SCHENCK

D.W! Good to see you. Have a seat. You don't mind if Considine sits in do you. We were just talking about you.

Griffith sits in a chair facing the window, the glare in his eyes.

GRIFFITH

Have you read my proposal for the Lincoln project yet?

SCHENCK

Of course we have. Of course. Very promising. Very worthwhile...

Schenck looks at Griffith forcing him to take the initiative.

GRIFFITH

(hesitantly)

Well, do you think we can come to an agreement to proceed with it?

When Schenck is slow to respond, Griffith tries to build up the project.

GRIFFITH

I feel that it's an ideal project for a dialogue picture. The words of Lincoln have been an inspiration for people all over the world. It could be very popular. School children could see it as part of their classes, and older people, naturally, out of interest for the ideals that Lincoln has come to stand for...

Considine has circled around behind Griffith's chair, out of his line of vision, making Griffith increasingly nervous. He has everything to lose. Griffith keeps turning back and forth trying to hold the attention of both men, neither of whom reveal the slightest emotion on their faces.

SCHENCK

There's no question, D.W., but that it's a good, respectable project. The thing is, you've never done a dialogue film before and...

GRIFFITH

But noone's done dialogue films before. It's a new medium. And I have so many ideas on how to make the dialogue really live - not just imitation of stage technique - but the way people talk in real life. You're letting other directors try their hands at dialogue pictures...

CONSIDINE

(from behind Griffith's back)
Those other directors haven't had three flops in a row.

SCHENCK

I don't think we need to remind D.W. about his past failures. On the other hand, D.W., you have to understand that on a project of this magnitude, we can't take chances.

We see Griffith gear himself for a rejection.

SCHENCK

That's why I've asked Considine here to take charge of the production, as supervisor. You will be responsible to him on all decisions. He in turn will report directly to me on a day-to-day basis. This way, we'll all be working together hopefully to the betterment of the picture.

Griffith is so relieved to hear Schenck talking in concrete terms about making the picture, he gushes his gratitude.

GRIFFITH

Then, then, I can make the picture. I can't tell you how relieved I am. I was afraid, well, it became so hard to see you. You rejected so many of my ideas.

Schenck gets up and starts walking Griffith to the door, his arm on his shoulder.

SCHENCK

I was just waiting for the right project, D.W. Now I'll have Considine get together with you later. We have some other business to discuss now.

GRIFFITH

Thank you, Joseph, thank you.

Schenck shuts the door behind Griffith and turns to Considine.

SCHENCK

Get the picture done, but I don't want him coming around here afterwards begging to do another picture. Make it so hard on him that he'll never want to set foot in this studio again.

CONSIDINE

(sinister)

You can count on me.

FADE OUT

INT. SOUNDSTAGE - A CONFERENCE ROOM IN THE WHITE HOUSE - 1860's

Griffith is directing a scene from ABRAHAM LINCOLN. This is the first time we have seen the use of sound equipment. The early sound apparatus is crude and almost immobile. The camera and cameraman are encased in a large box to soundproof the set from the noise of the camera. The microphone is on a boom held directly over the performers' heads, as today. The soundmen are in a separate booth with glass windows at the end of the soundstage.

The camera housing is too bulky to move. Throughout the scene, then, the camera holds on Lincoln, who sits in a chair while the other characters move to him to speak their lines.

Griffith sits in a director's chair at the side of the set and watches the proceedings in silence. Considine stands in the background.

In the scene, a troubled, weary Lincoln (played by Walter Huston) sits listening (much like Griffith) as several very worked-up politicians harangue and pressure Lincoln. Lincoln appears very grave.

POLITICIAN
(impassioned)

Let the Southern states go their
way and us go ours! For I tell you,
Mr. Lincoln...

The politician is interrupted by the entrance from another room of little Tad Lincoln, Lincoln's son. Tad is singing a song about his father.

TAD (singing)
Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
Out of the wilderness,
Out of the wilderness.
Old Abe Lincoln came out of the wilderness,
Down in Illinois.

The politicians hush as Tad climbs up on his father's lap.

TAD
Daddy, Mama wont let me stay up.
She wants me to go to bed, and I
don't wanta.

LINCOLN
Now don't you think its time for
little boys to be in bed, Tad?

TAD
But I want to stay up with you.

LINCOLN
But your mother?

TAD
If you say so, she can't make me.
You're the President!

LINCOLN

Tad, I suppose you're the only person
in the country who thinks I should
have any authority.

A long pause, as Lincoln lets the politicians mull over this crack
that is really directed at them.

LINCOLN
(to Tad)

Now run along.

TAD

Alright, Daddy. Goodnight.

Tad gets down and walks away.

Lincoln turns back to his cabinet.

LINCOLN

Gentlemen, don't you suppose that
my heart bleeds for all the sorrow
this war has brought upon us? Do
you suppose that there is a human
being that wants peace more than I
do? But we want lasting peace; and
we can have that only by preserving the union.

(pause)

And Gentlemen, the Union is going
to be preserved.

The scene over, Griffith speaks up from his chair.

GRIFFITH

Thank you everyone. That was fine.
Mr. Huston, may I speak with you.

Huston comes over and sits beside Griffith. Huston obviously
respects Griffith a great deal and listens to his comments with
great seriousness.

GRIFFITH

I think we should make a few dialogue
changes for the close-up of your last
lines...

Considine meanwhile strides on to the set and announces to the cast and crew:

CONSIDINE

That's all for this scene.
You can strike the set.

Griffith rises in protest.

GRIFFITH

No, no. We have to do a close-up
of Lincoln at the end!

CONSIDINE

(a finality in his voice)
Strike the set.

Considine comes over to Griffith, who drops back into his chair. He is genuinely intimidated by Considine - who, for his part, seems to take pleasure in bullying Griffith.

CONSIDINE

You got some complaint, Griffith?

GRIFFITH

Well I, I was just discussing with
Mr. Huston some small dialogue changes
that would make his final lines flow
better - if we could just do a close
shot on Lincoln.

CONSIDINE

You know very well there can be no
dialogue changes. The dialogue will
remain just as approved by Mr. Schenck
in the current draft.

GRIFFITH

But the making of a film has to be
a living process. Changes invariably
occur during shooting.

CONSIDINE

Not on this production. On this
production, changes will not inevitably
occur. It's my job to see to that.
You'll make the movie that's in the script.
There'll be no surprises.

GRIFFITH

(broken)

Then the film will be still-born.

CONSIDINE

(pointedly bullying him)
How's your health, Griffith?

This is a question that clearly unnerves Griffith. He does not look well at all. He has none of his old energy on the set.

GRIFFITH

My health is alright.

CONSIDINE

Is it? Are you sure you're well enough to continue this production. You really don't look well at all. Mr. Schenck is quite concerned.

GRIFFITH

(looking down)

I'm well.

CONSIDINE

A man your age should take better care of himself.

Considine turns and walks away, his demoralizing for the day having been accomplished. As he walks away, Huston tells Griffith in a low voice:

HUSTON

If it's worth anything at all, Mr. Griffith, I'm on your side against those bastards.

GRIFFITH

Thank you, Mr. Huston.

(then, smiling, in reference to the scene just shot)

You seem to be the only one around here who thinks the director should have any authority.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOUND STAGE - ANOTHER DAY

Griffith is now clearly in failing health. He is using a cane to help support himself as he stands talking with a sound engineer.

GRIFFITH

What I'm thinking is if you had:
parabolic reflectors on your microphone, they might act to collect in the sound. Then you could work from a greater distance away, and I'd be freer to move my actors around a little more.

ENGINEER

Hmm. I don't know. Maybe it could work.

Considine sees them talking and abruptly interrupts.

CONSIDINE

What's the discussion.

ENGINEER

Mr. Griffith has an idea that the microphone could be...

CONSIDINE

(not letting him finish)

Griffith, I told you that the soundmen are to be no concern of yours. We don't have time to experiment.

Griffith points to the box that encases the camera.

GRIFFITH

That thing sets back visual technique 20 years!

CONSIDINE

Then I'd think you'd be comfortable with it. Griffith - you do everything else like they did 20 years ago. Why don't you just face it. You're washed up. You're through. You're a has-been - and only a contract makes us put up with you at all.

These cruelties echo in Griffith's head, as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Griffith sits alone in his underwear beside his unmade bed, a single lamp illuminating the darkness. With shaking hands, he pours a drink from a flask into a drinking glass and downs it. Considine's painful accusations continue to haunt him.

CONSIDINE'S VOICE (V.O.)

You're washed up. You're through.
You're a has-been - a has-been!
You're too sick to even stand up -
too sick or too hung over. I'll be
surprised if you even last to finish
the production...

Griffith holds his hands over his ears trying to block out the nightmarish voice that keeps repeating and repeating:

CONSIDINE'S VOICE

Finish the production... Finish the
production... Finish the production...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOUND STAGE

The set is a re-creation of Ford's Theater, Washington, for the final scene of the production - the assassination of Lincoln. We see a long shot of the stage and Lincoln's box, as the scene is being played out.

Lincoln sits in a special box above the stage watching and listening to the players on the stage.

ACTRESS ON THE STAGE

Would you mind bringing me my wrap.
I feel a draft.

ACTOR ON THE STAGE

I think you must be mistaken -
Mr. Lincoln has just stopped the draft.

Lincoln, and the rest of the audience, laughs at the joke. The play goes on. The door behind Lincoln opens and John Wilkes Booth sneaks in, his handgun drawn. He shoots Lincoln. Lincoln slumps in his seat. Booth jumps from his box down to the stage, startling the players.

BOOTH

Sic semper tyrannis!

Booth jumps from the stage and runs off. There is a confused silence. Then Mary Lincoln, also in Lincoln's box, realizes what has happened.

MARY LINCOLN

Mr. Lincoln! Mr. Lincoln has been shot!

There is an uproar in the audience.

MARY LINCOLN

(weeping hysterically)

Get a doctor! Someone get a doctor!

As the scene ends, we pan from this long shot of the scene into a close shot of Griffith, himself slumped in his director's chair, as he lowers his sights from the scene and closes his eyes. It is over - the nightmare that this production has been for him. He is a physical wreck.

Off-screen, we hear Considine's voice, as he takes over the last details and the wrapping of the production.

CONSIDINE (OFF-SCREEN)

Alright, now Mr. Griffith wants to get just one last close-up of Booth on the stage, and then we will wrap this scene and wrap this production. The people in the balcony will not be needed in this shot; Nor will we need Lincoln, Mrs. Lincoln, the guards...

GRIFFITH

(to himself)

Nor will you need me.

Considine's voice fades out as Griffith rises, gathers his things, and very slowly walks alone from the set.

EXT. FINE ARTS STUDIO - DAY

Griffith walks from the studio to the street. A taxi cab awaits him.

CAB DRIVER
Where to, Mister.

GRIFFITH
New York.

CAB DRIVER
What?

GRIFFITH
Union Station.

Exhausted, defeated, Griffith slumps into the back seat of the taxi cab. The cab moves away, and the last sights of Hollywood flow past, as the cab driver chatters away.

But Griffith is silent. He stares into a glaze of nothingness.

CAB DRIVER
You know who was in this cab just a week ago? Greta Garbo! Boy oh boy! Now there's a woman for you - a real star. I get a lot of 'em - movie stars. Drive 'em around. Sure beats Brooklyn. All them big stars, in the flesh. Guess I'm a little movie crazy. But then isn't everyone.
You know what I sometimes think about? Ya know, daydreamin' and all. I imagine someday I'll get this fare, and it'll be some big deal movie producer, and he'll see me, and I'll be just what he was lookin' for - for some movie he's making. You know, maybe they need someone for a big love scene with that Joan Crawford. Wouldn't that be the turk's treasure. You can laugh, but that's how a lot of the big G's in this business got their starts. It wouldn't be the first time. Look at that Gary Cooper...

FADE OUT

EXT. NEW YORK CITY

Establishing period footage. TITLE: "New York - 1930"

INT. BANZHAF'S LAW OFFICES - DAY

As we have seen them before, Banzhaf and Griffith sit opposite each other discussing Griffith's finances. Griffith still seems in poor health, playing with his cane as they talk.

GRIFFITH

I'd never thought of myself as being someone who could retire, Mr. Banzhaf, but now that I have no choice, it's easier, almost welcome. I only regret leaving my finances in such disarray.

BANZHAF

Actually, your company is in better shape than I had told you before. The Internal Revenue Service has returned \$100,000 from overpayment of taxes during the past 10 years. With your share of that money, you should at least be able to live in comfort.

Griffith's eyes light up at the mention of this unexpected money.

GRIFFITH

The company has \$100,000 ready cash?

BANZHAF

Yes, and if properly invested...

Griffith suddenly stands, dropping his cane. The surprising force with which he makes this move startles Banzhaf.

BANZHAF

Mr. Griffith, are you alright?

GRIFFITH

With \$100,000, I can produce one more movie, without anyone else telling me how to make it - one last movie of my own...

As we move in toward Griffith's eyes, we see that they are glazed with that old look of inspiration, gazing off into some new vision.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. A CITY STREET - NEW YORK - DAY - 1930

Evelyn Baldwin, now an attractive young woman, walks along the busy sidewalk. We hold on her as she passes through the crowd. A little girl, Marv, is skipping rope with some friends; she calls out to Evelyn.

GIRL

Hey, Nan! Where's Johnny? Ain't he gonna come mooch dinner?

Evelyn (playing Nan) laughs goodnaturedly.

EVELYN

Oh, he'll be along later.

Evelyn walks up the steps and enters a tenement building.

Griffith is shooting this street scene in front of some actual tenement buildings on location in the Bronx. His unblimped camera is set up just off the curb in the street. Behind the camera, looming up over the small crowd of curious onlookers, is a 6-foot microphone reflector on a 6-foot stand, aimed toward the sidewalk where they are shooting. This is the parabolic reflector microphone that Griffith has had invented and is trying out for the first time.

Evelyn Baldwin is acting in this scene from the movie which will be titled "THE STRUGGLE". She has grown into a pretty young woman with a thin, wiry body. She is like a simpler, quieter version of Carol Dempster.

Standing next to the camera, Griffith looks almost miraculously well, fit, and full of his old energy. After Evelyn disappears into the tenement, Griffith turns and shouts to his soundman.

GRIFFITH

How's the sound, Jerry?
Is it going to work?

SOUNDMAN

It works alright! I can hear everything.

GRIFFITH

But do you hear the camera?

SOUNDMAN

Not enough to worry about.

Griffith is very pleased with this news. He slaps his hands together.

GRIFFITH

It's a darb!

The cameraman next to Griffith doesn't understand.

CAMERAMAN

It's a what?

GRIFFITH
Don't worry about it.

Griffith gestures toward the disc reflector.

GRIFFITH
We're going to take this
parabolic reflector, and we're
going to shoot on the streets, we're
going to shoot in the factories;
we're going to do everything they
told me in Hollywood couldn't be done!

Griffith is his old self again, full of energy and enthusiasm.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SOUND STAGE

The set is the livingroom of a modest city apartment - all decorated in streamers and balloons for a party. Griffith is rehearsing the party scene. We see that Griffith works as effectively with sound and dialogue as he has in the past with images.

On the crowded set are Mary, the little girl who was playing on the street in the previous scene; Evelyn Baldwin; Johnny, her boyfriend in the picture; Florrie, an attractive woman in her 30's who plays the hostess; Mr. Craig, a stuffy rich gentleman and guest of honor, who sits in a chair; Kate Bruce, from the Biograph days, now an older woman playing a grandmother, also sitting to the side; and numerous men and women playing guests and neighbors. (The part Griffith will play in the rehearsal is that of Florrie's alcoholic husband, Jimmy, who is also the older brother of the girl played by Evelyn).

Griffith has taken Evelyn aside for some instructions.

GRIFFITH
Now Evelyn, it's your engagement party. It should be one of the happiest moments of your life. But then Jimmy, your older brother, comes barging in drunk and spoils everything. You love him, but he's on the way down and can't help himself; the old drunk is ruining your life. You run out of the room, and cry your eyes out.

Then Griffith addresses the whole cast.

GRIFFITH
Let's try the scene where the engagement is announced. I'll play Jimmy, and it will be up to the rest of you to simply try and deal with me the best you can. Alright, I'll be outside the door. So start with Florrie turning on the radio and imagine some spiffy music - La de da de da de da da, La de da de da da da...
(he improvises a little jazz song)

Griffith goes outside the door to the apartment set. He disheveles his hair and loosens his tie to play the drunk.

Inside the room, Florrie goes to the radio.

FLORRIE
Let's have a little music.

Everyone pretends some gay music is playing. Mary, the little girl, stands on a chair in a doorway where two paper hearts are hanging on strings.

FLORRIE
Attention everybody! Everybody
attention please!

Everyone hushes, the attention focusing on Mary, with the two young lovers, Evelyn and Johnny, standing in front of her holding hands. Mary reads the names on the two hanging hearts.

MARY
Nan Wilson...Johnny Marshall.

JOHNNY
That means we're engaged, folks.

Everyone applauds. Mr. Craig, the rich boss, stands to make a toast.

MR. CRAIG
Well, here's to the happy couple's health.

EVELYN
No wait, we've got to have Jimmy for this.

On cue, Jimmy (played by Griffith) comes walking in the door, drunk out of his mind. He slurs his words.

GRIFFITH
Hello, everybody. Gee, this is great.
Hello, Florrie, great party. Everything's
great. Hah! Welcome to our party. Haf
a good time!

Griffith stumbles around, unintentionally pulling down the party decorations.

GRIFFITH
Hey, who put that on like that!

Everyone is quite upset. Griffith crashes around, quite out of control.

MARY
What's the matter with Daddy, Mommy?

FLORRIE
I don't know dear, he's sick. You
wait in here until Mama comes.

Florrie pushes Mary into the next room and shuts the door, looking on in horror as Griffith assaults the rich boss, Mr. Craig.

GRIFFITH

Well, as I live and breathe, if it ain't the big shot himself. How's the old sport?

MR. CRAIG (very stuffy)

How do you do, Mr. Wilson.

GRIFFITH

Awh, c'mon. Not Mr. Wilson to you. Jimmy! Jimmy. We're goin' ta be one big happy family.

At this point, Evelyn runs from the room crying. Several of the other men try to coax Griffith away from Mr. Craig.

MAN

C'mon, Jimmy, let's go out and get a cup of coffee.

GRIFFITH

Coffee! No. Wait a minute. This is my house an' I'm gonna haf a good time, an' nobody's gonna stop me either.

Mr. Craig turns to Florrie and gets ready to leave.

MR. CRAIG

I'm sorry, but I have to catch a train to the country, Mrs. Wilson. I'm afraid I'll have to be running along.

FLORRIE

I'm so sorry, Mr. Craig. You won't hold this against Nan will you.

Griffith breaks away and stumbles back to Mr. Craig.

GRIFFITH

Hey, what's the matter; what's the big idea. You can't go. The party ain't begun yet. No sir-ee. Sit right down and make yourself at home.

MR. CRAIG

(angry)

I'm sorry, sir; but I've got to go.

Griffith pushes Mr. Craig back into his seat.

GRIFFITH

Sit down!

The other guests pull Griffith away. Mr. Craig quickly leaves.

GRIFFITH

Awh, what's the difference.
 (noticing Mr. Craig's exit)
 He went, didn't he. Well, alright,
 let the big stiff go. We can have
 a better time without him. Hey,
 Mulligan, Whaddaya say we get down
 to some serious drinking, Huh?
 Jes you an'.... I got a bottle right...
 (he searches in his pocket for
 his bottle, but can't find it)
 Hey, I've been robbed!

Crying, Florrie confronts Griffith, who continues to search his pockets for his bottle.

FLORRIE

You're just a bum. Just a bum.
 You're no good for yourself or
 anybody else.

Deciding that the scene is over, Griffith suddenly straightens up, a big grin on his face. He has really enjoyed doing all this hammy acting.

GRIFFITH

Very good, everyone. Very good.

He turns to old Kate Bruce, who has remained sitting and knitting through all of this.

GRIFFITH

C'mon, Brucie. Let's go dancing!

She stands and Griffith gracefully waltzes her around the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DANCE HALL - NEW YORK

It is the same place that Griffith used to go in the Biograph days, with the slowly revolving dance floor. It hasn't changed much in all these years. With its cracking paint and faded decorations, it shows its age as much as the dancers who still go there - mostly older couples who waltz to old favorites played on a large organ.

Like two old friends, Griffith and Linda Arvidson Griffith, his long separated wife, lean against the rail and watch the dancers. There is nostalgia in their voices.

LINDA

Tell me, David. Is it a big picture?
 Is it going to make me rich again?

GRIFFITH

No, it's just a little picture, Linda.
 But it's honest and real - about real people
 and the tragedies that ruin their lives.

GRIFFITH

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 (noticing Mr. Craig's exit)
 He went, didn't he. Well, alright,
 let the big stiff go. We can have
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 But it's honest and real - about real people
 and the tragedies that ruin their lives.

LINDA

I don't know, David. It doesn't sound like something people are going to want to see. They want escape, fun.

GRIFFITH

I'm not making it for them.
I'm making this one for myself.

LINDA

(changing the subject)
Why did you want to see me?

GRIFFITH

I've been thinking of settling down. And I was wondering if you might finally give me that divorce we've been avoiding all these years. I don't think you have anything to lose anymore, and I don't think I'll be needing protection from any more ambitious starlets.

Linda laughs.

LINDA

You've provided very well for me over all these years. I guess I can't begrudge you your freedom now.

GRIFFITH

Thank you, Linda. Will you come to the opening of my film?

LINDA

I wouldn't miss it for anything.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIVOLI THEATER - NEW YORK - 1931

The marquee announces: Opening Night: D.W.Griffith's THE STRUGGLE.

INT. THEATER

On the screen, we are in the middle of the movie: a street scene in New York. A ragged drunk stumbles along the street pathetically asking for hand-outs from passersby.

DRUNK

Give me a dime for a cup of coffee?

MAN

(accusingly)

Why don't you get a job!

DRUNK

There are no jobs.

The man shrugs and walks on.

There are laughs and catcalls from the audience in the theater. They are reacting inappropriately and raucously to the movie. A man in the audience yells a joke at the screen.

MAN IN THE AUDIENCE

Why don't you join Actor's Equity!

The audience laughs even louder at this heckling.

On the screen, some children spot the drunk and point at him:

1ST CHILD

That's Mary's old man.

2ND CHILD

He's a bum!

1ST CHILD

He's a drunken bum!

2ND CHILD

Let's go tell Mary!

Again, the audience laughs in derision at the screen.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVOLI THEATER

Griffith and Evelyn Baldwin, dressed up for the opening, sneak out of the theater early. Griffith hails a cab.

INT. CAB

Evelyn is crying, upset that the people were laughing at the movie.

GRIFFITH

There, there Evelyn. It wasn't you they were laughing at. It was me.

EVELYN

(through her tears)

I don't care about me. I never wanted to be an actress anyway. It's just all so unfair. How can people be so unfeeling. Why don't they see all the love that you put into it!

GRIFFITH

(gloomy)

I suppose because it's just not a good picture.

EVELYN

That's not so! Don't you ever even think that for a moment! It's a beautiful picture. All your pictures are so beautiful and so full of love, I just... I just want to cry they're so beautiful.

GRIFFITH

You're probably the only one in the world that thinks so anymore.

EVELYN

Well, they're all wrong! Someday they'll see and then they'll be sorry for the awful way they've treated you.

Evelyn puts her head on Griffith's shoulder, and he affectionately puts his arm around her. Both are quiet for a moment, then Griffith seems to light up. He draws her away from him and holds her gently by the shoulders as he looks into her teary eyes.

GRIFFITH

Evelyn, my career is over now; I've got to face that. But, you know, I'm not unhappy. Because now maybe I can do something I've always wanted to do, but never could. I'd like to find a girl - a sweet, gentle, loving girl - a girl who could be happy without big ambitions. And then I'd marry her and buy a little house in the country and settle down, and maybe write - I've always wanted to write, but I've never had the time.

(then, as if coming out of his fantasy)
Of course, there probably aren't many women who'd be interested in an old has-been like me...

EVELYN

That not true! You're not a has-been and you're not old, and all the women look at you and wish they could catch you for a husband - at least all the ones with any sense do.

GRIFFITH

And what about you?

EVELYN

(shyly)

Yes. I do too.

GRIFFITH

Do you think you could accept the affections of an old man who cares for you very much?

EVELYN

Yes - but I wish you's stop calling yourself an old man.

GRIFFITH

Then you'd marry me?

Evelyn meekly nods yes. Griffith hugs her, both of them laughing and crying at once.

GRIFFITH

Oh, Evelyn, Evelyn. I must admit,
all of a sudden, I don't feel like
an old man at all.

Sentimental music begins as we:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JUSTICE OF THE PEACE OFFICE

Griffith and Evelyn are saving their marriage vows. Griffith puts a ring on her finger, and she puts one on his. They kiss. It looks almost like a scene from one of Griffith's old movies.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL KENTUCKY - DAY

Griffith and Evelyn pull up in front of a small house surrounded by overgrown shrubs and flowers. Griffith himself is driving his old Mercedes convertible. A salesman is waiting for them. They get out of the car and inspect the house. Evelyn is so excited that she jumps up and down, hugging Griffith, who seems equally pleased.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY BANDSTAND - DAY

In front of a small local audience, Griffith stands at the speaker's podium, flanked on both sides by a line of young women in bathing suits. Griffith wears an official's badge. He is one of the judges in the "Miss Louisville" Beauty Pageant. We hear a piece of his speech:

GRIFFITH

What is beauty? Well, surrounded by all the beauty on this stage, it seems almost a silly question to ask. But I guess I'm old enough to make a statement frankly - and that's that every woman, and every man too, for that matter, can possess true beauty. Because true beauty comes from something inside you - something that you feel and think. It's imagination. It's having a dream - a vision. Whatever's boiling in that pot inside you, that's true beauty.

LAP DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THEIR KENTUCKY HOME - DAY

Griffith sits in a rocking chair on his porch. He has a pen and a notebook in his lap, but he is not writing. He is looking out over his charming yard, where Evelyn is at work in her garden.

TITLE: "Kentucky - 1936"

A postman comes walking along the dirt road that goes by their house and Evelyn accepts a letter from him. She walks toward the porch carrying the letter.

GRIFFITH

What is it?

EVELYN

It's a special delivery letter for you from Hollywood!

Excited, Griffith opens the letter.

EVELYN

Maybe they've finally accepted one of your screenplays.

GRIFFITH

No, Evelyn. It's from the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences - and they've voted to give me an award!

We can see that Griffith is pleased and surprised.

CUT TO:

INT. AUDITORIUM - LOS ANGELES - 1936

The audience is giving him a standing ovation as Griffith steps to the podium to accept his special Oscar.

There are tears in his eyes as Griffith stands holding his award, and the applause goes on and on.

In the audience, we see many familiar faces from the past: Mary Pickford, Raoul Walsh, Richard Barthelme, Walter Huston, Lillian and Dorothy, and Evelyn - all applauding the Master.

GRIFFITH

My friends, I... This means so much to me. I can't begin to express what's in my heart. I thought I'd been forgotten. This business has come such a long way since those early days of the one-reeler and the hand-cranked camera. That's all we had when I started out in this business. No one knew how to tell stories with pictures then. We had to invent everything ourselves - the close-up, parallel editing, backlighting. I remember that in order to make a fadeout, we just put a cigar box in front of the camera and slowly opened the lid. You've come a long way since then. Now pictures talk and sing and dance - some are even in color. I still go to the pictures whenever I can, and I love them, one and all, and I love you all for making the pictures. I know it isn't easy.

(CONTINUED)

GRIFFITH (CONTINUED)

It's hard work, and sometimes it's heart-breaking. I know. We had many worries in those old days - small worries. Now you people have your worries and they are big ones. They have grown with the business. But no matter what its problems, I still say that the picture business is the most wonderful business in the world. God bless you all.

More applause.

CUT TO:

INT. LIMOUSINE - NIGHT

As Griffith and Evelyn are being driven from the Academy Award ceremony, Griffith suddenly turns to Evelyn.

GRIFFITH

I'm not going to return to Kentucky with you, Evelyn.

EVELYN

(stunned)

You're not?

GRIFFITH

No. I'm staying here - in Hollywood, This is where I belong.

EVELYN

But David, there's no future for you here. Haven't they made that clear enough to you.

GRIFFITH

Didn't you hear them tonight?

EVELYN

Yes. But I didn't hear any of them offer you a job. They don't want your screenplays. They don't want you. They've honored you, and now they'll forget you.

GRIFFITH

Evelyn, you've put up with a lot from me these past years. I've tried to be a good husband. I know how it upsets you when I drink. But you see I drink because, well, I guess I'm just not cut out for the quiet life. I'm a bachelor at heart.

(a long, difficult pause)

But this town - this town is like my child. It treats me badly now. It's shut the door on me. But I still want to hang around and see how it grows - see if it's going to make something of itself - maybe someday even fulfill some of the dreams I had for it.

Evelyn starts to weep quietly. Griffith holds her head gently to his chest.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

BACKSTAGE - A THEATER

The curtain has come down on the final act of a production of "Hamlet." Lillian Gish, dressed as Ophelia, is taking bows on the stage to great applause.

Waiting for Lillian in the wings is Sul-te-Wan, with a large bouquet of flowers. Lillian is very surprised to see her.

LILLIAN

Why Sul-te-Wan!

SUL-TE-WAN

Mr. Griffith asked me to give you these here flowers.

LILLIAN

(her eyes brightening)
Was he here!

SUL-TE-WAN

No mam.

Lillian looks disappointed.

LILLIAN

Did you see him?

SUL-TE-WAN

Yesam. He showed up at my door, an' he gave me this money an' he said, "Won't you please take some flowers for me to Miss Lillian on her opening night."

LILLIAN

What else did he say?

SUL-TE-WAN

Nothin'. He wouldn't come in.

LILLIAN

(hesitant)
How - How did he look?

SUL-TE-WAN

Not so good, Miss Lillian.

The barrier between Lillian and Sul-te-Wan seems to break down somewhat in their common concern for Griffith.

LILLIAN

(emotional)

Isn't there anything I --- we
can do for him.

SUL-TE-WAN

(her voice cracking)

I wish there was, Miss Lillian.
But I don't think he wants no old
friends comin' 'round. Not now.

There is an awkward, teary moment, then Lillian and Sul-te-Wan embrace.

DISSOLVE TO

EXT. HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD - NIGHT

TITLE: "Hollywood - 1948"

There is a gala premiere at Grauman's Chinese Theater. A crowd has gathered to watch the stars arrive. Search lights wave back and forth across the sky. As the limousines arrive and the stars step out, they are announced by an M.C. for the benefit of the spectators on the street.

We see Griffith alone, standing among the crowd in an old suit, watching the festivities.

M.C.

Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight is surely one of the most exciting premieres in Hollywood's history. I've never seen so many stars turning out. In fact, right now, I think, yes, it's Alan Ladd! Alan Ladd, ladies and gentlemen! And with him, Miss Veronica Lake! Isn't she beautiful! Look at that dress!

The crowd surges, and Griffith is pushed back off the curb. He falls to the pavement, water splattering on his jacket. When he is slow to get up, a man starts to give him a hand.

MAN

Are you alright, old-timer?

But his wife pulls the man away.

WIFE

Don't get involved, Harry. Look at him. He's just a bum - a drunken bum.

The couple move off. Griffith, who probably has been drinking, drags himself to his feet.

Griffith walks very slowly along Hollywood Boulevard and enters a sleazy bar.

INT. BAR

Griffith enters and sits down at the bar. He is known there.

GRIFFITH

A double bourbon, Barney.

BARTENDER

Sure thing, Mr. Griffith.

An aging hooker sits on the next stool, smoking a cigarette and eving the men. She's a mess. The bartender brings Griffith's drink.

GRIFFITH

Barney, perhaps you would introduce me to this young lady.

The hooker laughs raucously.

BARTENDER

Sure. Rhonda, this is D.W.Griffith, the famous movie producer.

The hooker laughs again derisively.

RHONDA

Buddy, if you're a producer, I'm Mary Pickford. You're a bum just like the rest of us.

Griffith takes a \$50 dollar bill and places it on the bar to pay for his drink. The hooker is impressed.

GRIFFITH

Perhaps I could buy you a drink, my dear.

RHONDA

Why not.

GRIFFITH

What would you like?

RHONDA

Gin.

Griffith nods to the bartender, who gives Rhonda her drink.

GRIFFITH

Are you by any chance an actress, my dear?

RHONDA

Sure, can't ya tell.

Griffith looks at her with such compassion that her hardness actually softens a bit.

RHONDA

Actually, it's funny. Or not so funny really. But yeah, originally, I came out here thinking I'd become an actress. It just didn't work out that way.

GRIFFITH

Where were you from, my dear?

RHONDA

Charleston - South Carolina.

GRIFFITH

Charleston. I thought so - a daughter of the South. I've always been partial to Southern women. Would you be willing to come to my hotel room with me? I'd expect to pay you for your time.

She eyes him suspiciously - an old man, but so earnest and so kind.

RHONDA

Why not.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOSEVELT HOTEL - GRIFFITH'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is small, cluttered, messy, and in disrepair. Griffith's Oscar is prominent on a shelf - it is the first thing that Rhonda sees as she and Griffith enter from the hall.

RHONDA

Hey, is this for real?

GRIFFITH

Yes.

RHONDA

Then you really are a movie producer?

GRIFFITH

Yes.

She picks up the statuette.

RHONDA

It's heavy.

GRIFFITH

Would you care to dance?

RHONDA

Huh?

Griffith turns on a radio to a melodic waltz-time orchestration.

GRIFFITH

Would you care to dance with me?

Griffith offers Rhonda his arm. She looks at him standing there, a true gentleman, treating her with unaccustomed dignity. Moved, she reaches out her hand. Griffith takes her hand and draws her to him.

They dance, slowly, awkwardly at first, then increasingly gracefully, around and around. The sordidness of the surroundings disappears. It is just Griffith and his dancing partner, turning around and around, timeless, placeless. There is light all around them. The light becomes brighter and brighter, bleaching out the image of the two dancers, who seem to dissolve in the light.

END CREDITS

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