

CAPITAL WOMEN

by

Suzanne Jones

1801 Eureka Rd.
Suite 505

Roseville, CA 95661
916.788.1184

Jones / Capital Women / 2

FADE IN FROM BLACK:

Gently and slowly a mandolin eases into the theme of the folk tune HARD IS THE FORTUNE.

ROLL OPENING CREDITS:

CAPITAL WOMEN
WRITTEN, PRODUCED AND DIRECTED
BY SUZANNE JONES

SHORT CREDITS FINISH, MUSIC CONTINUES

TRANSITION TO:

BEGIN MONTAGE. PAN ACROSS EACH PHOTO

A series of sepia prints laid out at different angles. Women of many races working at menial jobs: laundresses, prostitutes and finally, seamstresses.

END MONTAGE/MUSIC

CUT TO:

EXT. CLOSE PAN ACROSS LETTERING ON WINDOW. SACRAMENTO. MILINARY SHOP WINDOW. 1896 - DAY

Arcing across the window next to an OPEN FOR BUSINESS sign are the words THE LATEST FASHIONS FROM PARIS!

PULL BACK:

EXT. SHOP WINDOW

Reflections of passersby. Indecipherable MURMURS. CLATTER of horses' hooves on cobblestone.

CUT TO:

A BOY slips a LEAFLET under the door and moves O.S. down the boardwalk.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP

A woman's voice with a hint of Irish rises above the STREET SOUNDS outside.

MISS AMES (O.S.)

Mary! See to Mrs. Crocker's party
dress... she'll need it Saturday next...

CLOSE on calico skirts as they SWOOSH into the room.

MARY MARGARET, a 21-year-old girl rushes hastily
downstairs. Her hair is piled on top of her head and her
high-necked dress has a half untied satin bow at the neck.

She selects a fine silk DRESS from a neatly-folded pile,
shakes it out, and holds it up to herself, admiring her
reflection in a nearby mirror.

She turns this way and that and finally takes a few turns
around the room as if waltzing in her dream gown.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. SHOP WINDOW

Through the window we see the back of a restless CROWD
milling around an unseen speaker. A strong, clear woman's
voice rises above the MURMURS of the crowd.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY (O.S.)
(monotone)

Our democratic-republican government...

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SHOP

We see only the speaker's gray-haired head and care-worn
bespectacled face rising above the crowd.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY
(monotone)

...is based on the idea of the natural
right of every individual member
thereof to a voice and a vote in making
and executing the laws...

A male voice SHOUTS roughly.

HECKLER (V.O)

G'on back to New York, lady!

LAUGHTER followed by JEERS and BOOS.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP

Mary Margaret drops the dress and rushes to the window. She twists this way and that to get a better view.

MARY MARGARET

Miss Ames!...Oh, Mum!
(emphatically)

MISS AMES!

CUT TO:

CLOSE on a trumpet-shaped skirt RUSTLING into the room at a more temperate pace.

MISS AMES, a 55-year-old woman in a fashionable dress with enormous leg-o-mutton sleeves follows to the window. Gray streaks her hair and wire-rim glasses perch upon her pseudo-aristocratic nose.

She pauses, frowns, and glances over her spectacles from Mrs. Crocker's crumpled dress to the girl at the window. She picks up the dress, shakes it out and lays it aside.

MISS AMES
(smoothing the dress)

What is it, child?

The girl turns and speaks with a heavy Irish brogue.

MARY MARGARET
(excitedly)

Oh Mum! 'Tis thot woman t'war in tha
paper!

Miss Ames turns and frowns as she notices the untied BOW at the girl's neck. She CLUCKS in a motherly fashion.

Mary Margaret turns toward her obediently.

CLOSE on Miss Ames as she fussily reties the bow. She nods in satisfaction and pats the girl as she finishes.

MISS AMES
(as though all is now right)

There now, Mary Margaret. Her name is
Susan B. Anthony...

Slowly and with great difficulty she bends to retrieve the
leaflet from the floor. As she straightens up, she places a
hand on an apparently aching BACK.

CLOSE on the words SUFFRAGE FOR WOMEN emblazoned across the
top of the leaflet.

Miss Ames studies it carefully over her spectacles.

MISS AMES

And she wants women...
To be able to...
(surprised)
Vote!

She purses her lips and shakes her head rather undecidedly.

She places the leaflet briskly on the tiniest of tables, as
if glad to be rid of it.

MISS AMES
(gingerly)

Heaven help us! What's the world coming
to?

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP WINDOW

Suddenly a COMMOTION draws her attention to the window and
street outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SHOP

Between BYSTANDERS we can see a young WOMAN lying at their
feet.

Two MEN assist her to her feet and half-carry her to the
door.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP

A doorbell JINGLES as they enter, leaving the door open.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG (O.S.)
(concerned)

Gently, gently...
(commandingly)
Lay her there!

They carefully lift the unconscious woman onto the counter.

35-year-old JENNIE KELLOGG, dressed without a hint of fashion, strides purposefully through the door.

CLOSE on a MEDICAL BAG monogrammed with JENNIE KELLOGG, M.D.

She SNAPS it open and removes a pair of scissors.

She cuts the front seam of the woman's dress. SNIP, SNIP.

MISS AMES
(gesticulating towards the back room)

Mary Margaret, fetch some water!

Mary Margaret heads for the back room.

MISS AMES
(uncertainly)

Will she... be all right?

CLOSE on Jennie, who nods without looking up from her ministrations.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(examining the woman)

I think so...
Her corset's too tight, is all.
(without looking up)
She can't breathe. Her circulation has
been cut off!

EXTREME CLOSE UP as she struggles to cut the tightly-bound corset laces.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(frustrated)

Blasted things! A curse and a nuisance!
There!

The woman EXHALES audibly. CLOSE on her as she breathes more easily.

The woman blinks her eyes open.

Mary Margaret returns with a glass of WATER and hands it to Jennie.

CLOSE on Jennie as she cradles the woman's head in one hand while helping her sip water with the other.

The woman COUGHS.

Jennie hands the glass to Miss Ames.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG

Do you have somewhere she can lie down?

Miss Ames nods toward the back.

MISS AMES

Back there.

The men help the woman to her feet. She's still groggy.

Miss Ames leads them toward the back room and they disappear O.S. Jennie follows to the rear door and pauses.

CLOSE on Mary Margaret running her fingers over the gilt lettering on Jennie's bag.

Jennie turns, notices her for the first time, and smiles to herself.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(kindly)

Ever seen a woman doctor before?

Mary Margaret looks up, startled from her reverie.

MARY MARGARET
(decidedly)

No Mum!

Jennie returns her scissors to the bag.

She runs her eyes over the girl and likes what she sees.
Sensing this, Mary Margaret stands a little straighter.

Jennie smiles to herself and turns her attention to
reordering the items in her bag.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(nonchalantly)

How old are you girl?

MARY MARGARET

Twenty-one Mum!

CLOSE on Jennie as she gathers threads from the cut
garments and nods toward the street.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG

Well Mary Margaret, what do you think
of our Miss Anthony out there?

CLOSE on Mary Margaret. She opens her mouth slightly,
reconsiders, and closes it again without saying a word.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(glancing up)

Would YOU like to be able to vote?

MARY MARGARET
(haltingly)

I... I don't quite know, Mum...
I think so... but...
(a beat)
But some seems to think...

Jennie EXHALES deeply. She takes a step closer.

CLOSE on Jennie as she gazes keenly into the girl's eyes as if to clear the fog from her thinking.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(parroting things she's heard before)
Some seem to think...
(a beat)
Women shouldn't have the same rights as
men?

CLOSE on Mary Margaret who nods, wide-eyed.

MARY MARGARET
(politely)

Some say 'tis unseemly...
(a beat)
For ladies to do like the men folk...
Takes 'em from home 'n hearth 'n all...

Jennie reacts and stifles a LAUGH.

Mary Margaret reacts.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG

Yes, I've heard that argument too...
At medical school...

CLOSE on Jennie. PAN to her left hand, devoid of a ring.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(glancing at her ring finger)

And elsewhere.

Jennie gazes into the distance. Her eyes have a faraway look as though remembering hard-fought battles of her own.

The orator's voice breaks into her thoughts from the background.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY (O.S.)
(monotone)

For any State to make sex a
qualification, which must ever result
in the disenfranchisement of one entire
half of the people...

Jennie rouses from her reverie and SNAPS the bag shut.

She turns towards Mary Margaret.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(seriously but caringly)

Well don't you listen to them Mary.
This country was founded on EQUALITY.
(a beat)
Equality for ALL.
(a beat)
Men AND women.
(a beat)
People of ALL races.
(a beat)
That includes YOU young lady!
(a beat)
And the first step is to open your mind
to ALL the possibilities.

CLOSE on Mary Margaret who smiles uncertainly as though she doesn't really know anything except her own small world.

Jennie casts her eyes about the room for the first time.
She frowns and reads an advertisement aloud in disbelief.

CLOSE on the advertisement as Jennie reads it in disbelief.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG (O.S.)

"Whalebone corsets... strengthen the
back... improve the posture... and procure
the necessary hourglass shape."

Jennie stifles a GROAN.

She turns away in disgust, shaking her head.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(to herself)

Necessary! As long as MEN design the
fashions we'll be nothing but prisoners
of our own clothing.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(to Mary Margaret)

Parisian fashions should be left to
Parisians. This is a NEW world, last
time I checked!

Her eyes light on the bow at Mary Margaret's neck.

She shakes her head, SIGHS and steps towards the girl.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG
(purposefully)

In keeping with this equality then...

CLOSE on Jennie as she carefully unties the bow.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG

We can start by dressing a little more...
(a beat)

Sensibly!

She slips the ribbon from the girl's collar.

CLOSE on the RIBBON as it tumbles to the floor in SLOW
MOTION.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG (O.S)

And less like packages waiting to be
opened!

She places both hands on Mary Margaret's shoulders and nods
towards the street.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG

Miss Anthony's come a long way, Mary.
She's been fighting for women's rights
for 40 years.

(a beat)

She's helped us get the right to own
property...

(a beat)

Keep our own wages...

(a beat)

And our children after divorce.

She has the girl's rapt attention.

DR. JENNIE KELLOGG

It would be a shame...
(switching to the girl's vernacular)
No, it would be a SIN..
(Mary reacts to the word)
To not even hear what she has to say!

Mary Margaret smiles uncertainly.

Jennie gives her one last purposeful look as if to firmly plant the idea in her head and departs.

Jennie steps to the doorway. Mary Margaret follows and watches her disappear into the crowd.

She bends and plucks the ribbon from the floor. She holds it lightly in the palm of one hand.

She fetches the leaflet from the table and examines it while half-listening to the orator.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY (O.S.)
(monotone)

Webster defines a citizen to be a
person in the United States, entitled
to vote and hold office...

Miss Ames emerges from the back room with the two men, who nod respectfully to Mary Margaret and leave through the open door.

MISS AMES
(to Mary Margaret)

She's resting comfortably...

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP WINDOW

CLOSE on a tomato as it SPLATTERS against the window and slides down the glass.

A SHOUT rises from the crowd.

A couple of blue-uniformed MEN rush past the window.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP DOORWAY

Miss Ames and Mary Margaret rush to the doorway and poke their heads out.

A 10-year-old BOY comes running past the window.

MISS AMES

You there! Boy!

The boy stops in his tracks and GASPS for breath.

MISS AMES

What's going on down there?

BOY
(excitedly)

The Lady! They're throwing things at her, Ma'am!

He rushes on as the women watch.

The orator's voice continues, unperturbed.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY (O.S.)
(monotone)

The only question left to be settled now is: Are women persons? I scarcely believe any of our opponents will have the hardihood to say they are not...

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP DOORWAY

CLOSE on Mary Margaret's hand as she slips it ever so gently over her mistresses' arm.

MARY MARGARET
(politely)

Beg pardon, Mum.

Miss Ames turns to the girl in surprise.

MARY MARGARET
(deferentially)

If it weren't a hindrance, Mum...

(a beat)

I'd like to go too... that is...

(a beat)

I'd like to hear whot the Lady is sayin'.

CLOSE on Miss Ames' surprise as she tilts her head back and cocks an eyebrow.

PAN as Miss Ames notices the ribbon in Mary Margaret's hand, her empty collar and the leaflet in her other hand.

Miss Ames opens her mouth slightly in consternation, reconsiders, and closes it again.

She nods as though recognizing a lost cause.

MISS AMES
(placing her hand on the girl's arm)
All right. Go then.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. SHOP DOORWAY

Mary Margaret slips past her into the street and disappears into the crowd.

CUT TO:

INT. SHOP DOORWAY

Miss Ames slowly closes the DOOR, which suddenly seems very heavy. She leans against, SIGHS, and surveys the room with tired eyes.

PAN from shelves filled with frivolous RIBBONS and LACE, to ridiculously large HATS, walls covered with FASHION PLATES of women with impossibly tiny waists and exaggerated bosoms.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY (O.S.)
(monotone)

Being persons, then, women are
citizens, and no State has a right to
make any new law, or to enforce any old
law, which shall abridge their
privileges or immunities...

Her eyes come to rest on the ADVERTISEMENT for corsets.

CLOSE on the ADVERTISEMENT.

She EXHALES deeply and audibly.

With heavy feet she steps towards it.

She carefully removes it from the wall.

She lays it on the counter face down, as if it were something requiring burial.

MISS AMES
(to herself)

I really never could abide those
blasted things...

Turning to the door, she opens it and slips outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHOP DOORWAY

She steps into the street, closing the door behind her.

CLOSE on the closed door, which seems to announce the end of many things.

FADE TO BLACK

HARD IS THE FORTUNE begins a Capella in a mournful woman's voice and plays throughout the superscript.

SUPER:

In 1896 Susan B. Anthony spent 8 months campaigning women's suffrage in California, only to have the measure defeated.

15 years would pass before California women won the right to vote in 1911.

In 1920 the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote throughout the U.S.

Only decades later would minority voting rights be safeguarded.

BEGIN MONTAGE OF SHOTS. PAN ACROSS EACH PHOTO

1890's sepia prints of suffragettes giving speeches, women of many races working at more serious jobs: nurses, doctors, lawyers.

ROLL FULL CREDITS OVER MONTAGE

The bluegrass tune HARD IS THE FORTUNE rips, rollicks and rolls with full vocals and instrumentation as credits roll.

END MONTAGE/MUSIC

FADE OUT.