

THE TWENTY-ONE GUN SALUTE

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A conflict of wills between U.S. President Woodrow Wilson and Mexican dictator Victoriano Huerta leads to a U.S. invasion of Veracruz.

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FADE IN:

EXT. MEXICO CITY - PRISON - NIGHT

A Packard Touring Car stops at a shadowy, closed rear entrance of the prison.

SUPERIMPOSE:

"LECUMBERRI PRISON
MEXICO CITY
1913."

INT. CAR - NIGHT

FRANCISCO MADERO, 40, a small, gentle-looking fellow, sits nervously in back between a 40-ish federal POLICE MAJOR on his right and a RURALE (federal policeman) on his left.

The Rurale gets out and stands by the open door.

The dialogue is in Spanish (English subtitles),

MAJOR

Here we are, Mister President. You will be safe here for now. Get out.

MADERO

Aren't we going to be driven in, Major?

MAJOR

No, that man is going to escort you. Get out, sir.

Madero hesitates, then starts getting out.

The Major draws his pistol. Aiming it at the back of Madero's head, he FIRES.

INT. WILSON HOME (PRINCETON, NJ) - SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

WOODROW WILSON, 56, sits grimly reading an article in the "Washington Post" newspaper.

SUPERIMPOSE: "PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY."

The title of the article Wilson reads is "Deposed President Francisco Madero Killed in Mexico."

WILSON
 (skeptically, under his
 breath)
 "Shot while trying to escape."

Across the room his Georgian wife ELLEN WILSON, 55, signs one of many printed invitations headed "The Inaugural Ball."

ELLEN
 What, dear?

WILSON
 (reading)
 Nothing.

ELLEN
 Has Jessie told you she wants to
 wait and get married in the White
 House?
 (waits for response)
 Woodrow...

He looks up from the newspaper.

WILSON
 What, dear?

ELLEN
 Sounds like an echo. I said Jessie
 and Frank would like to have a
 White House wedding.

Wilson sighs as he looks again at the article.

WILSON
 President Taft says the White House
 is the loneliest place in the
 world. An appropriate place, I
 suppose, to start losing the Wilson
 daughters.

ELLEN
 I'll try not to let you get too
 lonely.

He looks up from the article. They smile fondly at each other.

WILSON
 Is that a promise?

ELLEN
 I cross my heart.

She goes back to her signing.

His smile fades as Wilson looks at a photo that accompanies the article.

The photo, captioned "Provisional President Victoriano Huerta," is of an imposing, uniformed Mexican federal general.

Wilson gazes coldly at Huerta's picture. OVERLAP SOUND:

WILSON (V.O.)
The firm basis of government is
found in one word.

EXT. WILSON'S INAUGURATION - DAY

Wilson gives his inaugural address. Ellen and dignitaries sit behind him.

WILSON
Justice. Justice shall always be
the motto of this administration.
Let us muster the forces of
humanity as we face a new age of
right and opportunity. Men's
hearts wait upon us, men's hopes
call upon us, to say what we will
do.

INT. NATIONAL PALACE (MEXICO CITY) - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Federal General VICTORIANO HUERTA, 59, in military uniform, stands gazing out the doorway of a balcony overlooking the central plaza. He's of Huichol Indian blood.

RÁBAGO
Señor Presidente...

Huerta turns as his male secretary CHUCHO RÁBAGO, 45, brings in handsome U.S. chargé d'affaires NELSON O'SHAUGHNESSY, 35.

RÁBAGO
Aquí está el chargé d'affaires de
los Estados Unidos.

Huerta walks over with a smile to greet Nelson.

HUERTA
Ah! Mister O'Shaughnessy. How are
you?

They shake hands, Rábago leaving.

NELSON

Fine. It is a pleasure to meet you, General Huerta.

HUERTA

I may call you Nelson?

NELSON

Please do.

HUERTA

How soon, Nelson, might your new president name a new ambassador? Might it be you?

NELSON

Oh, I have no idea, sir. We have to see how things go.

HUERTA

Do you know His Excellency Mister President Wilson?

NELSON

Not personally, no, sir.

HUERTA

But you are the man to deal with, eh? How is my English?

NELSON

Excellent -- Your Excellency.

Huerta laughs. He takes Nelson by the arm.

HUERTA

Come, we go for a ride in my car.

INT. CAFÉ COLÓN - NIGHT

A working-class saloon. Among the patrons Huerta and Nelson drink at a table, Huerta with his back to the wall. Nearby sit uniformed bodyguards. MARIACHIS sing.

A waiter sets down a fresh bottle of cognac.

Nelson is completely drunk, Huerta just hitting his stride. Huerta picks up the bottle.

HUERTA

Another copita.

As he pours Nelson another drink, Huerta shares amused looks with the bodyguards watching.

NELSON

Wanna know a secret? Our
sh-shecretary of state, William
J-Jennings Bryan, not only doesn't
drink, he... doesn't allow alcohol
to be served at state dinners.

HUERTA

Ha! I would not wish to be
invited.

NELSON

(half to himself)
If he could see me now.

HUERTA

Your wife, mi hijo. She is with
you?

NELSON

Not yet. She'sh on her way from
V-Vienna.

Huerta slyly points out a couple of smiling señoritas,
clearly available, watching them. Nelson looks.

HUERTA

You would like some companionship,
eh?

Nelson sees four blurred women instead of two.

He emphatically shakes his head "no."

NELSON

Oh, no. No, General. I'm in
enough trouble already.

HUERTA

You are? Because of the ladies?

Huerta laughs. He shakes Nelson chummily by the shoulder.

HUERTA

Que macho!

Nelson falls forward semiconscious on the table.

Huerta and the bodyguards chuckle.

INT. WHITE HOUSE (WASHINGTON, DC) - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Wilson meets with his Cabinet, including Secretary of State WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN, 52; Treasury's handsome Georgian WILLIAM MCADOO, 50; Navy Secretary JOSEPHUS DANIELS, 52; and Secretary of War LINDLEY GARRISON, 60.

WILSON

It's disgusting. Madero was that country's first democratically elected president in forty years. Was that revolution fought for nothing?

BRYAN

Well, it did get rid of the Diaz regime, Mister President. But the rebels are sort of back where they started. Huerta, you know, was one of Diaz's generals.

MCADOO

Who's leading the rebels this time around? Villa? Zapata?

BRYAN

The nominal leader is Carranza. The governor of Coahuila in the north. He calls himself First Chief of the Constitutionalist forces.

GARRISON

It's a civil war, Mister President, and the day is coming, if it's not already here, when we'll need to march in, to save American lives and property from total depredation.

WILSON

God willing, it won't come to that.

DANIELS

Doesn't Huerta claim he's going to hold an election?

GARRISON

It'll be a sham if he does. He'll have himself or some crony elected.

Wilson sighs.

WILSON

Our policy for now is watchful waiting. For a limited time only. I guarantee you, gentlemen, I will not let Huerta stand in the way of a free Mexico.

EXT. MEXICO CITY - TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Nelson stands waiting as attractive EDITH O'SHAUGHNESSY, 35, steps from the train. A porter handles her luggage.

As Nelson kisses her, Edith turns her head slightly, so that the kiss is a peck on the cheek. There is clearly some estrangement, on her part, between them.

NELSON

Welcome to Mexico City.

INT. EMBASSY - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nelson and Edith stop at the door of a room. A trunk and two suitcases sit in the hallway.

NELSON

I wasn't sure about your things, so I told the butler to leave them out here till I know where you want to sleep. This is the master bedroom.

Nelson gestures down the hall.

NELSON

There are two other bedrooms close by, across from each other.

EDITH

I'd like my own room for now, if that's all right.

He picks up one of the suitcases and follows her down the hall.

She starts to enter one of the open bedroom doors.

NELSON

Edith, wait. You take the master bedroom, and I'll take this one.

EDITH

No, I'd rather you keep it.

NELSON
No, then you take this room, and
I'll take the one over here and --

EDITH
(exasperated)
Whatever you want to do, Nelson.
I'm tired.

INT. EDITH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Edith and Nelson enter. Looking the room over, Edith moves to a dresser. Nelson puts the suitcase on the bed.

NELSON
I'll have 'em bring in the rest.

Edith sits down at the dresser.

NELSON
Will you be wanting more to eat, or
something to drink, before bedtime?

EDITH
No, I'll be fine.

She looks tiredly at her reflection in the mirror. He steps over, puts a hand on her shoulder and kisses the top of her head.

NELSON
Good night, dear. Sleep well.

EDITH
Good night.

He starts to go.

EDITH
Nelson...

He stops and turns.

EDITH
I may still go back home to
Philadelphia. I haven't decided.
I'm here for appearance's sake.

NELSON
Somehow I got that impression. But
I appreciate you being here.

He leaves. Edith looks in the mirror and sighs.

INT. CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES (MEXICO CITY) - DAY

Congressional Deputy FELIX MURANTE, 45, rails from the podium to his colleagues in session (about 200 in all). (Spanish, English subtitles:)

MURANTE

And what has General Huerta had to say of the mysterious disappearance, two nights ago, of our esteemed colleague, the Honorable Belisario Domínguez? Not a word! And who among us will be next?

The chamber doors open. Federal General AURELIANO BLANQUET, 60, comes in with armed soldiers. With Blanquet is the burly Mexico City POLICE CHIEF, 52.

There is stunned silence as Blanquet strides down the aisle, the Chief following him, to stand before the podium.

BLANQUET

(to Murante)

What is your name?

MURANTE

Félix Murante.

BLANQUET

(to Police Chief)

Is he on the list?

The Police Chief checks a long list of names.

CHIEF

Yes.

BLANQUET

(to Murante)

You are under arrest.

Deputies angrily protest.

BLANQUET

This Congress is dissolved, by order of the provisional president of Mexico!

(to Police Chief)

Read off the names.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - EAST ROOM - DAY

The bride JESSIE WILSON, 25, and groom FRANCIS SAYRE, 30, have exchanged vows before MINISTER #1, 57.

Wilson, wife Ellen, and daughters MARGARET, 27, and pretty NELLIE, 26, look on, with a roomful of guests, including Treasury's McAdoo.

MINISTER #1

And so, by the power vested in me
by the District of Columbia and by
Almighty God, I now pronounce you
man and wife.

Jessie and Sayre kiss.

LATER

Jessie throws her bouquet behind her, with Margaret and Nellie among the women who fail to catch it.

Nellie and McAdoo exchange smiles as all applaud the lady who caught the bouquet.

Wilson's secretary JOE TUMULTY, a short man about 40, looks concerned as he hands a note to Wilson.

Ellen beside him watches Wilson read the note and sigh.

ELLEN

What is it?

Wilson hands the note back to Tumulty.

WILSON

Our drunken friend south of the
border.

ELLEN

Don't let him spoil the wedding.

WILSON

He already has.

EXT. MEXICO CITY - EL GLOBO SALOON - PATIO - NIGHT

Huerta and Nelson come out of the saloon, followed by two Huerta bodyguards. A MARIACHI BAND (V.O.) plays inside.

HUERTA

A little quieter out here, eh,
mi hijo?

NELSON

Yes. As I was trying to say,
sir, I --

HUERTA

Excuse me.
(to bodyguard, in Spanish)
Bring me the bottle.

The bodyguard heads inside.

NELSON

I am here in my capacity as
American chargé, about your
dissolution of Congress and --

HUERTA

You bring some word from your
government?

Huerta lights a cigarette.

NELSON

No, General, I've come here on
my own. I'm sure Washington hasn't
quite had time to, uh... digest the
news.

HUERTA

(laughs)
Let us hope there will be not too
much indigestion.
(then)
Let me assure you that the arrested
deputies are safe, mi hijo.

NELSON

All one hundred and ten?

HUERTA

Ever how many there were.

NELSON

Might they be released?

HUERTA

Oh, that is not possible. Not yet.
But safe, yes, they will not be
harmed.

NELSON

I have your guarantee of their
safety?

HUERTA

You must tell His Excellency Mister President Wilson that he has my word.

The returning bodyguard sets a bottle of cognac and two glasses on a nearby table.

HUERTA

Come, we will drink on it.

Huerta and Nelson walk to the table.

NELSON

I'm sure you realize, General, there's bound to be strong words from Washington.

HUERTA

It cannot be helped. Every day those deputies would speak out against me, defying me, while I am trying to hold things together.

NELSON

In the eyes of the President, the action you've taken --

HUERTA

(fierily)

Something had to done! I am fighting Carranza and Villa in the north, I am fighting Zapata in the south! I have to fight my own Congress here in Mexico City? And the United States too?

(calms down)

You must forgive me. These problems, they are none of your doing. You only say what you must.

(gestures toward bottle)

Una copita.

They sit down.

HUERTA

His Excellency President Wilson is a hard man to deal with.

NELSON

He says the same of you.

Huerta pours drinks.

HUERTA

You must reassure His Excellency. There will be elections, as I have said. And I will not be a candidate, that I have said. But first, I must deal with these rebels -- these so-called Constitutionalists.

NELSON

He's tired of waiting, General.

HUERTA

He does not understand the situation.

NELSON

That may be true. But we're not going to change his thinking. He has strong feelings, as you know, about democracy and law.

HUERTA

That is good. But there is war here. His Excellency should remember the words of Napoleon Bonaparte: "He who saves his country has broken no law." I am going to save this country. I am going to restore peace to my people, whatever the cost.
(gestures toast)
Salud.

NELSON

Salud. Just one, General.

They drink. Nelson coughs from the liquor.

HUERTA

Mexico, mi hijo, is like the snake. Its life is in its head.
(taps his temple)
I am the head of Mexico. For now there is no other government. His Excellency Mister President Wilson has to understand that.

INT. EMBASSY - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - NIGHT

Nelson, about to enter the master bedroom, sees Edith, in nightgown and robe, step out of her bedroom door.

EDITH
Did you see Huerta?

NELSON
Yes.

EDITH
What did he say?

NELSON
The deputies are safe.

EDITH
Where are they?

Nelson, looking tired and irritated, says nothing.

EDITH
You don't know? Then how do you
know they're safe? You have to
secure their release, Nelson.

NELSON
How the hell am I going to do that?

Edith resentfully turns to go back in her bedroom.

EDITH
Sleep on it.

NELSON
Hell, for all I know Wilson is
already --

The bedroom door SLAMS shut. Nelson goes to the door and
furiously shouts at it,

NELSON
-- already sending in the troops!

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. EDITH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Edith listens, upset, standing with her back to the door.

NELSON
In which case I'll be strung up
tomorrow on a lamp post!
(starts to go, then)
While I'm hanging there, it would
be nice to know that you cared!

Nelson heads for his room.

EXT. WASHINGTON - ALLEY OF SHACKS - DAY

Ragged black children play in the narrow, shack-lined dirt street, in which sewage runs. A few black adults move about.

Ellen Wilson walks along with white social worker CHARLOTTE HOPKINS, 36, and Ellen's small secretary HELEN BONES, 50.

SECRET SERVICE AGENTS #1 and #2 walk a few steps behind the ladies. It's a mild day.

ELLEN

So this is Goat and Willow Tree.

HOPKINS

Within sight of Capitol Hill, Mrs. Wilson.

PATRICE, 32, a humbly clothed black woman, stands holding a baby in her arms by a shack. She glances curiously at the Secret Service Agents, as Ellen, Ms. Hopkins and Helen stop.

HOPKINS

Hello, Patrice.

PATRICE

Ms. Hopkins, how are you?

HOPKINS

Fine. This is Mrs. --

Ellen tactfully cuts Hopkins off,

ELLEN

(to Patrice)

You can call me Ellen. This is my secretary Helen Bones.

(smiles at baby)

Is that your only child?

PATRICE

No, ma'am, we have four. This is the youngest.

ELLEN

You could use a better place for them, couldn't you?

PATRICE

We sure could. Everyone could. Everyone here works hard, those with jobs. But this is what we come home to. You know we can't get a place nowhere else.

ELLEN

Well, maybe we can get something done here.

PATRICE

(chuckles)

Excuse me for laughing, Miss Ellen. I sure hope you know the right folks. It would take the president himself to get something done about this place.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - WILSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen is already in bed as Wilson, in pajamas, sits down on the edge of the bed and tiredly takes off his slippers.

ELLEN

The slumlords could build those Sanitary Company houses there if Congress would just make them do it or put up the money.

WILSON

Then talk to the Congress, lady. They've got the money.

He lies down.

ELLEN

Okay, I will. I'll take a couple of senators down there. I'll take a whole committee.

Wilson looks pensive, staring up at the ceiling.

ELLEN

You ought to see those alleys, Woodrow. They --

WILSON

Ellen, I've got enough on my mind.

ELLEN

Pardon me?

WILSON

Ellen, for Pete's sake, I talk about fostering democracy in Latin America, and we've got a butcher next door running Mexico. What should I do?

ELLEN

You're asking me? Honey, "I've got enough on my mind."

Wilson gives her a look. He sighs.

WILSON

(half-seriously)

President Taft was right. This is the loneliest place in the world.

She smiles at him.

ELLEN

You've got your little project, and I've got mine.

EXT. MEXICO CITY - TRAIN STATION - DAY

Nelson meets JOHN LIND, 60, a tall, well-dressed Minnesotan, as he gets off the train.

NELSON

Mister Lind? Nelson O'Shaughnessy.

They shake hands.

LIND

Mister O'Shaughnessy. I bring the regards of the President and Secretary Bryan.

NELSON

Thank you. Welcome to Mexico City.

They start walking, a porter carrying Lind's luggage.

NELSON

Sleep well on the train?

LIND

Fitfully.

NELSON

See much of Veracruz?

LIND

All I cared to see. It's hot as hell there.

NELSON

Well, I'll be glad to show you Mexico City. How's your Spanish?

LIND
"No agua." That's it. No water
unless it's boiled.

INT. EMBASSY CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nelson and Lind sit in a Pierce-Arrow, a chauffeur driving.

LIND
I don't know why he named me
special envoy, but I'm here to lay
the cards on the table. Either
Huerta resigns or the United States
will find a way to force him out.
Those are the President's words.

NELSON
Not to be conveyed that bluntly, I
hope.

LIND
Emphasis on the virtues of
resignation, and our willingness
to help negotiate an interim
government.

NELSON
He's not going to buy it.

LIND
When we see him, do you think he'll
be sober? I'm told he virtually
subsists on alcohol.

NELSON
An exaggeration. Let's just say
he's hard to get with sometimes
unless you're willing to turn a cup
or two. Or ride in his motor car.

LIND
"Ride in his motor car"?

NELSON
He's like a child with a new toy.

Nelson smiles, but Lind doesn't seem amused.

LIND
You get along well with the
general?

NELSON

He's always very cordial. Even calls me his "hijo." That's "son" in Spanish.

Nelson's smile fades as Lind stares at him.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Wilson, looking upset, dines with Ellen and daughters Margaret and Nellie. A maid attends.

ELLEN

What's bothering you, Woodrow?

WILSON

I'll tell you what. Our special envoy to Mexico got no further than the foreign minister. He was told they will only talk to a new ambassador. I had to give Lind permission to terminate his mission.

ELLEN

You're a poet.

WILSON

So tell me, ladies, what do you think I should do?

NELLIE

Name a new ambassador?

WILSON

Recognize Huerta? Absolutely not.

ELLEN

I hope you're not thinking of using armed force.

Wilson becomes almost too agitated to eat,

WILSON

(loudly)

I will do everything --

(lowers voice)

I will do everything within my power to avoid war with Mexico. It would be an easy thing for me to declare war. I wouldn't have to do the fighting.

(MORE)

WILSON (CONT'D)

Neither would those on the Hill, or those in my cabinet, who are clamoring for war, to protect our material interests down there.

ELLEN

I'm glad you feel that way.

WILSON

What we'd do is send some poor farmers' sons down there to do the fighting and dying. But me? Why, I'd be applauded, my administration would be judged a success.

ELLEN

We know what you mean, dear.

Wilson simmers down.

WILSON

Our best hope now is Carranza.

NELLIE

Who?

WILSON

The governor of Coahuila. I've sent William Hale to -- What am I doing? I'm sorry, I shouldn't bring these problems to the dinner table.

ELLEN

We all have problems, dear. Try getting an alley bill passed.

INT. GOVERNOR'S PALACE (COAHUILA) - OFFICE - NIGHT

Seated behind his desk, VENUSTIANO CARRANZA, 53, strokes his white six-inch beard. He has a white pointed moustache, and wears a gray, brass-buttoned uniform (self-designed).

In front of the desk sits American agent WILLIAM BAYARD HALE, 38.

SUPERIMPOSE: "COAHUILA, MEXICO."

CARRANZA

This is a Mexican quarrel, Mister Hale, and must be settled by Mexicans, or else it will never be settled.

(MORE)

CARRANZA (CONT'D)

We would not wish Mister Wilson to intervene on our side, any more than on the side of Huerta.

HALE

I understand, Governor.

CARRANZA

(rises to pace)

Furthermore, as First Chief of the Constitutionalist forces, I reject the idea of an interim government. Our objective is military victory over Huerta. Only then can there be free elections.

Carranza stops pacing. Stroking his beard, he looks at Hale.

CARRANZA

Now Mister Wilson wishes to help us?

HALE

Yes, Governor Carranza. For the cause of democracy. What do you need?

EXT. GOAT AND WILLOW TREE ALLEY - DAY

Ellen and 50-ish SENATORS GALE and BURKE return to a White House car, parked at the alley entrance.

Secret Service Agents #1 and #2 stand by. Black residents watch.

GALE

You have to remember, Mrs. Wilson, the best thing for the black folks, as well the whites, is separate but equal.

Secret Service Agent #1 opens the car's rear door for Ellen.

ELLEN

These alleys are separate, Senator, but would you call them equal?

GALE

Well --

ELLEN

Decent housing is all that we're asking for.

Ellen starts to get in the back seat, then stops, bending forward slightly. She braces herself with a hand against the door frame. Agent #1 takes hold of her arm.

SECRET SERVICE AGENT #1
Are you all right, Mrs. Wilson?

ELLEN
Yes, I... just felt a little
light-headed.

Ellen gets into the car. The men look vaguely concerned.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Wilson meets with Lind, Hale, Bryan, and diminutive advisor "Colonel" EDWARD HOUSE, 53, of Texas.

LIND
Mister President, I hope you won't think I'm trying to question the loyalty of Mister O'Shaughnessy. I'm sure the chargé is just as loyal as the next man. But from what I gathered in Mexico City, he and Huerta seem to have developed a simpatico relationship. It's my feeling that if you receive a suggestion or recommendation from the embassy, you may want to consider its possible source.

WILSON
Meaning Huerta himself?

BRYAN
Perhaps O'Shaughnessy should be instructed to be less familiar with the general.

LIND
O'Shaughnessy allows himself to be seen riding around in Huerta's car. Even having drinks with him in disreputable saloons.

BRYAN
O'Shaughnessy shall be given instructions!

LIND
Huerta even calls him his "hijo."
That's "son" in Spanish.

BRYAN

Perhaps we made a wrong choice.

WILSON

Forget O'Shaughnessy for now. What are we going to do about Huerta?

HALE

Do what Carranza requests, Mister President. Lift the embargo on arms into Mexico.

HOUSE

I second that motion, Mister President. Make it more of a fair fight. That may be all the Constitutionals need.

INT. ELLEN'S STUDIO - DAY

Ellen sits painting a landscape at an easel. Wilson, in his business suit, stands by watching with a smile.

She seems tired, which Wilson, admiring her work and caught up in the conversation, apparently doesn't notice.

WILSON

It's been a whirlwind romance, just like ours.

ELLEN

I'm still concerned about the age difference, though. Aren't you?

WILSON

Yes, I am. But Mac McAdoo's a fine Christian man. He'll take good care of our daughter.

ELLEN

Well, we've tried to talk sense to Nell. But she's about as stubborn as you are, Woodrow.

Wilson puts a hand on Ellen's shoulder, interrupting her painting.

WILSON

Excuse me a moment.

He leans down and gives her a kiss.

WILSON

Look on the bright side, dear.
We're going to be setting a
record for White House weddings.

Wilson walks to the door.

He hears things TOPPLE OVER. He turns to see that Edith has fainted, knocking over the canvas and easel, to the floor. He rushes to her.

WILSON

Ellen!

Secret Service Agents #1 and #2, having heard, hurry in from the corridor. Wilson, kneeling, takes Ellen in his arms.

AGENT #1

What's happened?

WILSON

Get Grayson here!

Agent #2 runs out.

Ellen comes to as Wilson holds her in his arms, Agent #1 leaning over them.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The lights are on in the living quarters.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Ellen rests on a sofa. Handsome White House doctor CARY GRAYSON, 40, sitting in an armchair, rises as Wilson enters.

WILSON

Well, Doctor, what's the verdict?

GRAYSON

Nothing dire to report, Mister President. I think Mrs. Wilson has just run herself down.

ELLEN

I told Doctor Grayson that's nonsense.

Wilson sits down by Ellen, Grayson in the armchair.

GRAYSON

Why don't y'all go spend a week at White Sulphur Springs?

The conversation becomes tongue-in-cheek,

ELLEN

Tell him, Woodrow: I work less than any First Lady in history.

WILSON

I didn't want to say anything, dear.

GRAYSON

A person can get tired doing nothing.

ELLEN

Then that may explain it.

GRAYSON

I'm recommending White Sulphur Springs so your husband and I can play some more golf there.

INT. EMBASSY (MEXICO CITY) - DINING ROOM - DAY

Edith is seated for lunch, a maid attending. Nelson comes in and sits down. She notes his bothered look.

EDITH

What has Huerta done now?

NELSON

It's Wilson. We've lifted the embargo on arms into Mexico.

EDITH

Meaning what exactly?

NELSON

Meaning the United States has taken sides in this civil war, without openly proclaiming it.

Half-Mexican embassy official LOUIS D'ANTIN, 40, enters. He seems reluctant to impart his news.

NELSON

What is it, Louis?

D'ANTIN

General Huerta is here to take you for a ride.

EDITH

That doesn't sound very good.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Huerta's Pierce-Arrow Model 48 cruises, with a security car following. They pass cornfields, peasants pausing in their work to watch.

INT. HUERTA'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Huerta and Nelson are in back, Huerta's chauffeur driving.

HUERTA

I want you to understand something. I want you to tell His Excellency. Francisco Madero was a good, honest man. Too much so for his own good, or Mexico's. He was weak, incompetent, the country was going to ruin. You know this. I had the army, it was up to me. There was no one else. It was not for power or personal ambition, if that is what His Excellency thinks. If I had wanted power, mi hijo, I could have taken it long before. I could have overthrown a government stronger than Madero's.

NELSON

General, the problem --

HUERTA

And I only overthrew Madero, I did not wish him killed. I did not need a martyr on my hands.

NELSON

As far as I know, General, President Wilson has never accused you of --

HUERTA

(angrily)

Then why this persecution?

Nelson seems to search for words.

NELSON

President Wilson is a strong believer in democratic principles.

HUERTA

Fine! My job is not to establish democracy, it is to establish order.

(MORE)

HUERTA (CONT'D)

Then we talk about these principles. His Excellency does not understand this country. Let him lift his embargo. Let him anchor more ships off our coast. Let him send his ultimatums. I will continue doing my duty, as God has given it. I will not yield.

INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR (WASHINGTON) - NIGHT

Wilson advisor House walks along a corridor looking for a room number in the first-rate hotel. A well-dressed couple pass.

Finding the number, House knocks on the door. Someone's well-tailored male ASSISTANT, 30, opens the door.

ASSISTANT

Come in, Colonel House.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

House enters, the Assistant closing the door. JOHN REESE, 55, a folksy but imposing Texan, stands fixing himself a drink.

REESE

Hello, Ed!

HOUSE

John, how are you?

They shake hands.

REESE

Fine. And you?

HOUSE

Good. Nice to see you.

REESE

How's Loulie?

HOUSE

She's fine. Misses Houston.

REESE

Can't blame her for that.

LATER

House and Reese sit chuckling about something as they're having a drink together.

HOUSE

Well, you didn't come all the way from Houston, John, just to have a drink and reminisce.

REESE

No, not exactly. It's this Mexican trouble. It's damn bad for business. So we oil men have come up with a plan, Ed. It's a good one. As his advisor, we'd like you to bring it to the President's attention.

HOUSE

The President's always open to suggestions.

REESE

An expeditionary force to Mexico City could easily unseat Huerta, before Villa and Zapata and the rest of those cutthroats have time to get there. The United States sets up an interim government, one with all of our interests at heart. There are some excellent choices for the job. One man is leader of Mexico's Catholic party, and --

HOUSE

Hold on, John. You're talking about turning Mexico into a United States colony. The President wouldn't listen to that.

Reese hands his glass to the Assistant for a refill. House declines one.

Reese becomes a little less folksy.

REESE

I don't have to tell you, Ed, about the importance of those Mexican oil fields and refineries to Texas. Not just Texas, the whole damn U.S. economy. And it's not just petroleum. Look at the American railroad and mining interests in Mexico. Altogether we're talking one billion dollars. Some forty thousand Americans are living in peril down there.

HOUSE

The President wants to avoid a war.

REESE

What damn war? The Mexican people want to be rescued. We would only be fighting Huerta, if he puts up a fight. And Villa, if he doesn't like what we're trying to do. Hell, Villa can be bought off.

The Assistant hands Reese his refill.

REESE

Things are out of control, and getting worse while we sit here and sip. The United States has to act. The poor folks down there would greet us with open arms. Look at it this way, Ed. If a man's house is on fire, he ought to be glad if his neighbors come put it out.

HOUSE

(ambivalently)

Well, you would think so, wouldn't you?

REESE

And think of our people. Tampico is full of American refugees, and it's about to fall to the rebels. What's gonna happen then?

EXT. TAMPICO, MEXICO - DAY

Clouds of black smoke drift over the river-port city. There is the distant sound of ARTILLERY.

SUPERIMPOSE: "TAMPICO."

An oil storage tank EXPLODES in the distance, more black smoke billows.

Wagons bring wounded Mexican federal soldiers in from the front.

On the Pánuco River, a motor launch, manned by U.S. sailors and flying the U.S. flag, brings a group of North American refugees into port.

EXT. U.S. BATTLESHIP CONNECTICUT - DAY

Anchored outside the harbor.

INT. ADMIRAL'S CABIN - DAY

Rear Admiral HENRY MAYO, 57, stands at a table on which a map of Tampico is spread. With him is handsome Navy Captain RALPH EARLE, 43. Mayo is mustached and stern-looking.

MAYO

I've decided to make your gunboat my flagship, Captain Earle. Much easier to monitor the situation on land, being there at the wharf.

EARLE

I'll be honored to have you on board, Admiral. I'll see to your quarters on the Dolphin at once.

MAYO

The other thing is our fuel supply. We've been shuttling boats between the ships and the harbor, and bringing refugees down the river, till we're almost out of gasoline. I want you to find us a local supply.

Earle looks a bit concerned, as if wondering where to start.

MAYO

Go see the consul. Perhaps he can give you some leads.

INT. U.S. GUNBOAT DOLPHIN - CAPTAIN'S CABIN - DAY

Baby-faced Ensign CHARLES COPP, 28, stands before Capt. Earle.

EARLE

A German national, Max Tyron, has agreed to sell us some gasoline.

Earle hands Copp an envelope and a hand-drawn map.

EARLE

Here's the money, Mister Copp, and a map to his warehouse. You can get there by canal.

EXT. ITURBIDE BRIDGE - DAY

A short railroad bridge on a canal. The bridge is patrolled by Mexican federal soldiers. There are warehouses on one side of the canal, and thick vegetation on the other.

EXT. CANAL - DAY

A U.S. Navy whaleboat, with U.S. flags fore and aft, is rowed along the canal. Aboard are Ensign Copp and eight sailors, all unarmed. They're about a block from the bridge.

Copp spots German businessman MAX TYRON, 53, emerging from his warehouse and waving.

EXT. TYRON'S DOCK - DAY

The men in the whaleboat come alongside the dock, Tyron waiting.

COPP
Max Tyron?

TYRON
At your service.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

A Mexican federal ARMY MAJOR joins a federal soldier who points off, other soldiers gathering to look.

The Major trains binoculars on Copp and his sailors, as six carry cans of gasoline from the warehouse to the whaleboat, in which two sailors stow them.

MAJOR
(in Spanish)
Report this to Colonel Hinojosa on
the double.

EXT. TYRON'S DOCK - DAY

Copp hands Tyron his money as the loading continues.

TYRON
Thank you, sir. Excuse me, I shall
write a receipt.

Tyron heads into the warehouse.

EXT. A STREET - DAY

A mean-looking Mexican FEDERAL LIEUTENANT, 32, heads for the canal with a squad of ten soldiers, armed with rifles. No civilians are about, all the buildings look closed.

EXT. TYRON'S DOCK - DAY

Copp watches his sailors load the cans.

The Lieutenant and his soldiers come marching onto the dock.

SAILOR #1
We got company.

The Lieutenant goes straight up to Copp.

LIEUTENANT
(in Spanish)
You are under arrest. Get your men
out of that boat.

COPP
Sorry, amigo. No comprende.

The Lieutenant, showing no comprehension of English, will continue speaking in Spanish.

LIEUTENANT
I am taking you and your men into
custody.

COPP
Anybody know what he's saying?

The Lieutenant steps to the dock edge. He gestures to Sailors #2 and #3 in the boat.

LIEUTENANT
Get out of that boat or we'll
shoot you.

SAILOR #2
He wants us out of the boat.

COPP
Stay right where you are.
(to Lieutenant)
Look, mister, I don't know who
the hell you think you are, but --

LIEUTENANT
(to soldiers)
Get over here. Half of you, keep
them covered.

While five soldiers cover the sailors on the dock, five step to the dock edge.

LIEUTENANT
Aim your weapons.

The soldiers take aim with their rifles at Sailors #2 and #3 in the boat. The Lieutenant and sailors look at Copp. Copp hesitates, then,

COPP
Get out of the boat.

Sailors #2 and #3 climb out, while the Lieutenant and Copp stare at each other.

LIEUTENANT
Form up to march them!

Tyron comes out of his warehouse, receipt in hand, as the soldiers form around Copp and his men.

LIEUTENANT
Forward march!

The soldiers march off with their captives, the Lieutenant leading the way. Tyron looks incredulous.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tyron catches up with the Lieutenant, behind them the soldiers marching Copp and his men. There are a couple of civilians who watch. (Spanish:)

TYRON
Sir, these men were just buying gasoline.

LIEUTENANT
Without permission. They are in a restricted zone.

TYRON
But, sir, these are United States servicemen. They --

LIEUTENANT
I am under orders to take them to Colonel Hinojosa.

TYRON
But this is all my fault. I --

LIEUTENANT
Get away from me!

Tyron falls back to walk beside Copp. The dialogue is in English again.

COPP
What's he say?

TYRON
He says you are in a restricted
zone. I didn't know, I --

COPP
I don't give a shit what kind of
zone we're in. You tell him
we're --

LIEUTENANT
Silencio!
(to Tyron, in Spanish)
Get away from those men!

Tyron stops. Copp, being marched away, looks back at him.

COPP
Go tell Captain Earle what's
happening!

The Lieutenant goes to Tyron. They speak in Spanish (English subtitles):

LIEUTENANT
What did he say?

TYRON
He said he doesn't understand
what's happening.

The Lieutenant grabs Tyron by the collar and gets in his face.

LIEUTENANT
He said something about a captain.
Don't you lie to me.

TYRON
He said, "Go tell Captain Earle
what is happening."

The Lieutenant turns Tyron loose with a shove. He turns to follow the others.

INT. COLONEL HINOJOSA'S HQ - DAY

Colonel RAMÓN HINOJOSA, 50, speaks to Copp through a Mexican INTERPRETER. Behind Copp stand his sailors. The Federal Lieutenant, looking smug, also is present.

Hinojosa has a cold and dabs at his nose.

HINOJOSA
(speaks in Spanish)

INTERPRETER
You had no business to be in that
area. It is under strict military
control.

COPP
We were just buying gasoline.

The Interpreter translates, Hinojosa responds in Spanish.

INTERPRETER
We didn't know what you were doing.
We were forced to detain you.

HINOJOSA
(speaks in Spanish)

INTERPRETER
At any moment the rebels may attack
at that bridge.

COPP
We're not the rebels. Tell him all
we want is the gasoline. We'll be
happy to leave the area.

EXT. U.S. GUNBOAT DOLPHIN - DAY

The gunboat is moored at a Tampico riverfront wharf. There
is the sound of ARTILLERY in the distance.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - DAY

Copp reports to Earle. Admiral Mayo stands off to the side.
Also present is U.S. Consul CLARENCE MILLER, 55.

COPP
They escorted us back to the dock.
We completed the loading. They
watched us until we left.

Earle glances at Mayo, staring at Copp. When Mayo says
nothing,

EARLE
Okay, Mister Copp, that will be all
for now.

MAYO
One moment.

Mayo steps over to Copp.

MAYO
Mister Copp...

COPP
Yes, sir?

MAYO
You allowed this Mexican officer
to remove two seamen from the
whaleboat?

COPP
Well, sir, he gave an order to
his men there, and --

MAYO
Answer my question. You allowed
him to remove those two seamen?

COPP
Yes, sir, I --

MAYO
Do you know what you did? That
whaleboat was flying the American
flag, fore and aft, was it not?

COPP
Yes, sir.

MAYO
That whaleboat, Mister Copp, was
United States territory. In
allowing them to remove those men,
you allowed them to violate United
States sovereignty.

COPP
I had no choice, sir. We had no
arms. As I said, sir, they aimed
their weapons at the men in the
boat. I was afraid they would
shoot them.

A pause. Mayo indicates that he's through with Copp.

EARLE
You are dismissed.

Copp leaves.

MAYO
Captain Earle...

EARLE
Yes, Admiral?

MAYO
I need someone for dictation.

Earle quickly goes out.

Mayo paces, Consul Miller watching.

MILLER
Well, Admiral Mayo, I trust the matter is closed, with Morelos Zaragoza's apology.

MAYO
The general's apology is not enough. Not after our men have been threatened, arrested, and marched through the streets.

MILLER
Admiral, it was only a couple of blocks. They were promptly released, and --

MAYO
They were marched in public view.

MILLER
Ensign Copp didn't mention any public. It's a restricted zone, so few if any people may have seen it.

Earle returns with a petty officer, who sits down with pad and pencil.

As Mayo thoughtfully paces,

MAYO
(to petty officer)
This note goes to General Ignacio Morelos Zaragoza, military governor of the state.

MILLER
Admiral Mayo, excuse me. As U.S. consul, I insist we first consult Washington before any sort of action is taken.

MAYO

In such situations, with no direct radio to the department, I am allowed to act at my discretion.

MILLER

I can radio or telegraph, sir, and --

MAYO

There's no time or need to consult, Mister Miller. This matter can be handled promptly, here and now.

LATER

While Earle and Miller listen, Mayo, pacing, is in the middle of his dictation to the petty officer.

MAYO

"I don't need to tell you that taking men from a boat flying the American flag is a hostile act, not to be excused.

(thinks for a moment)

In view of the publicity of this occurrence, I must require that you send me, by suitable members of your staff, a formal disavowal of, and apology for, this act, together with your assurance that the officer responsible shall be punished.

(thinks, then)

I must also require that you hoist the American flag in a prominent position on shore and salute it with twenty-one guns."

Miller registers dismay and disbelief.

MAYO

"Your salute shall be duly returned. I must require that your answer be in my hands, and the salute fired, within twenty-four hours."

INT. BRYAN'S OFFICE (WASHINGTON) - DAY

Secretary of State Bryan finishes reading a lengthy dispatch. He hands it to an aide.

BRYAN

I want this cabled verbatim to the President in White Sulphur Springs, with a message from me: "I do not see that Mayo could have done otherwise. I await instructions."

EXT. WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS, WV - COUNTRY CLUB - DAY

Wilson, in golfing attire, sits reading the telegram. With him are his secretary Tumulty, with a notepad, and House.

Ellen, still not looking well, sits talking with Dr. Grayson a few yards away.

WILSON

Who does this Mayo think he is?

HOUSE

I suppose, sir, given the seriousness of the case -- American servicemen being paraded through the streets of Tampico -- he felt prompt action was necessary. He can be overruled, of course.

WILSON

No. We have to support him. This General Zaragoza has already referred the demand to Huerta.

HOUSE

I think you're right, Mister President. To withdraw the demand now could encourage more incidents.

WILSON

Joe, send this reply to Bryan.
(dictates as Tumulty writes)
"Mayo could not have done otherwise. O'Shaughnessy should be instructed to handle this matter with the utmost firmness. Unless those guilty are punished, and the salute is fired, consequences of the gravest sort may ensue." Get that off.

TUMULTY

Right away, sir.

Tumulty leaves. House lights a cigar.

WILSON

I've lain awake at night, Ed, praying that the worst of alternatives might be avoided in dealing with Huerta. Now, with this, it looks like he may leave us no choice but to use armed force.

HOUSE

We would only be fighting Huerta, Mister President. The people down there need our help. Look at it this way. If a man's house is on fire, he ought to be glad if his neighbors come put it out.

INT. NICE RESTAURANT (MEXICO CITY) - DAY

Filled with patrons. Edith eats lunch, while Nelson, across the room, stands listening to someone on a phone. Nelson looks mad and perplexed.

NELSON

(into phone)

I don't believe it. A twenty-one gun salute? Louis, I want you to find the foreign minister.

INT. EMBASSY - D'ANTIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Embassy official D'Antin is on the phone, dispatch in hand.

D'ANTIN

Moheno's not even in town. It'll have to be the sub-minister, uh, Esteva Ruiz.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Nelson on phone as before.

NELSON

I don't care what his name is, call him. Tell him we've got to find Huerta.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Huerta's Pierce-Arrow cruises, with three cars behind it. They pass modest adobe homes along the road.

INT. CAR - MOVING - DAY

Huerta and Nelson sit on the back seat, with sub-minister ROBERTO ESTEVA RUIZ, 35, on a jump seat facing them.

HUERTA

To solve the matter, mi hijo,
I personally will apologize for
the incident. You can have it
in writing.

NELSON

My government won't consider that
sufficient.

HUERTA

What is it you want?

NELSON

The salute.

Huerta doesn't look pleased. Nelson looks conflicted.

NELSON

General, the exchange of naval
salutes is a common international
courtesy.

HUERTA

Exactly -- a courtesy. They are
not fired on demand.

NELSON

Your salute will be returned. The
salute could be arranged very
quietly. It could be fired early
in the morning, when there's no
one around.

Huerta laughs.

NELSON

General, this is no laughing matter.

HUERTA

I know. And what says the foreign
ministry?

Ruiz puffs up, as this is his moment.

RUIZ

Señor Presidente, to fire such a
salute, on demand, would be a
disgrace for our country.

(MORE)

RUIZ (CONT'D)

It would insult our honor,
humiliate our people, and violate
our nation's sovereignty.
Furthermore, we would have no
guarantee that our flag would then
be saluted.

NELSON

I have said the salute will be
returned. We have Admiral Mayo's
word.

RUIZ

Señor Presidente, our sovereignty
is involved here. And our national
dignity. For Mexico to meet this
demand and fire the salute would go
far beyond courtesy. It would be a
disaster.

Huerta looks at Nelson, who seems to have no reply.

INT. EMBASSY - NELSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Nelson dictates to an EMBASSY CLERK. D'Antin is present.

NELSON

"I have discussed the situation
with Huerta. He has given us
a written statement of regret for
the incident. He assures us that
the responsible officer will be
punished. His statement is
included herewith. He asks that
Mayo's ultimatum be withdrawn."

The Clerk waits for any more while Nelson stews.

CLERK

That it?

NELSON

Add one more sentence. "I honestly
cannot understand such an ultimatum
being issued without superior
authority, in view of the tense
situation existing."

EXT. WASHINGTON - TRAIN STATION - DAY

REPORTERS wait as Wilson, Ellen, Grayson, House, Tumulty, and
Secret Service agents leave the train.

REPORTER #1
Mister President, would you comment
on the Mexican situation?

REPORTER #2
Are we going to war, Mister
President?

Wilson holds Ellen by the arm as they walk.

WILSON
Gentlemen, please, let's not jump
to conclusions. We have no quarrel
with the Mexican people. Our only
quarrel is with Huerta.

REPORTER #2
But what if he refuses to fire the
salute?

REPORTER #3 studies pale-looking Ellen.

REPORTER #3
Are you doing okay, Mrs. Wilson?

ELLEN
Yes, I'm fine.

REPORTER #2
Are you willing to withdraw the
demand, Mister President?

WILSON
Certainly not. That is out of the
question.

REPORTER #1
But what if the salute isn't fired?

WILSON
The salute will be fired.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - DOOR TO LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

Wilson and Grayson exit the quarters. Ellen can be seen
inside resting on a sofa, talking to her secretary Helen
Bones.

WILSON
She's not any better.

GRAYSON
I know, sir.

WILSON

Do whatever you have to do, to find out what's wrong.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Wilson reads a dispatch. With him are Bryan and Navy Secretary Daniels.

Wilson hands the dispatch to Bryan.

WILSON

Tell O'Shaughnessy that Huerta's apology is not sufficient. Admiral Mayo has issued a demand and it stands as written.

BRYAN

Yes, Mister President.

WILSON

We'll extend the deadline, but we won't wait for long. Mister Daniels, I want you to order the rest of the Atlantic Fleet to the Mexican coast.

DANIELS

Very well, sir.

WILSON

Meanwhile, send word to Admiral Fletcher at Veracruz, and Admiral Mayo at Tampico, to make contingency plans for landings. Mister Bryan...

(rises to pace)

I want State Department counsel to advise us of what precedents exist for this case. What action was taken -- blockade, seizure of ports, et cetera.

BRYAN

Right away, sir.

WILSON

Tell O'Shaughnessy he must make Huerta understand. That salute will be fired.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Tired-looking Ellen sits leafing through a family photo album on the sofa. Wilson enters, Tumulty outside.

TUMULTY

Good night, Mister President.

WILSON

Good night.

Wilson walks over and sits down beside Ellen. He kisses her cheek.

WILSON

Get much done today, dear?

ELLEN

No. I didn't spend much time in the office.

(then)

The doctors think I may have kidney disease.

Wilson looks at her with surprise and concern.

WILSON

Did they say that?

ELLEN

Not directly. But it's one of the things they're checking.

(then)

You know, I don't think they even intend to get my alley bill out of committee.

WILSON

I'll look into it.

ELLEN

No, I can handle it.

Ellen turns a page in the album. She looks at a photo of oldest daughter Margaret, a bit plainer than her sisters.

ELLEN

I wish Margaret would find a husband, before too long.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Wilson stands alone at the window. Looking out at nothing, he looks troubled and burdened.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Wilson sits listening to Bryan, though he looks a bit distracted. Among the other Cabinet officials are Daniels, McAdoo, and Garrison.

BRYAN

I think it would be good at this point, Mister President, to brief the others on the other two incidents.

WILSON

Fine.

Bryan refers to his notes.

BRYAN

On April eleven in Veracruz, a mail orderly from the battleship Florida was attacked in the street by a Mexican soldier and taken to jail. He was released soon after, having been mistaken by the soldier for a wanted marine deserter. But so far no one at all has been punished for the incident.

MCADOO

Pre-posterous.

BRYAN

There's more. In Mexico City, on that very same day, a coded dispatch from myself to O'Shaughnessy was held for almost two hours in the Mexican censor's office. O'Shaughnessy had to personally demand its delivery.

CABINET OFFICIAL

Did they give any reason?

BRYAN

O'Shaughnessy thinks it was due entirely to the ignorance of the censor.

GARRISON

Well I seriously doubt that.

A pause. Wilson, distracted, seems to realize they are waiting for his comment. He sighs.

WILSON

I submit, gentlemen, that what we have here, in these three recent incidents, is a pattern of studied contempt for this country on the part of the Huerta government.

BRYAN

That's a good term, Mister President.

(writes it down)

"Studied contempt." That's how I'll describe it.

GARRISON

Absolutely. It's all the more reason to stand behind Mayo's demand for that twenty-one gun salute.

BRYAN

On the matter of a precedent for action, Mister President, we have a good one.

(refers to note)

In 1854, the town of Greytown, Nicaragua, was shelled by United States warships in retaliation for an insult to the American consul.

Wilson looks wonderingly toward Bryan's notes.

MCADOO

Well, that's not fooling around.

WILSON

(to Bryan)

Are you sure about that?

BRYAN

Yes, Mister President.

GARRISON

I think we should make 'em fire that salute if we have to blow up the whole damn place.

INT. NATIONAL PALACE - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Huerta, arguing with Nelson, pours a drink.

HUERTA

"Studied contempt"? What is studied contempt?

NELSON

Those are the President's words,
not mine. The point is, General,
that, uh -- the point --

HUERTA

I see no point. They are
unrelated, these incidents you
refer to. They are trivial, due
to ignorance, not intent.

NELSON

I agree these matters seem
trivial, General, but...
(searches for words)
You must look to the urgency, the
expediency, of coming to some
arrangement. Public opinion may
force the President to uphold the
nation's honor, with armed force
if --

HUERTA

There is our nation's honor at
stake here too! Does our honor
mean so little? We are a weaker
nation -- yes, much weaker, and
torn by civil war -- but we, too,
have some pride. Force shall be
met with force!

Huerta finishes his drink.

NELSON

Then what shall I tell the President?

HUERTA

That I must do what is right, not
what is expedient. No salute will
be fired.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The light is still burning in the window of:

INT. THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Bryan reads a dispatch to Wilson and adviser House.

BRYAN

"I have never heard the old Indian
speak more eloquently. I believe
he -- "

WILSON
 "The old Indian"?
 (with disgust)
 John Lind was certainly right about
 O'Shaughnessy.
 (to House)
 He said O'Shaughnessy and Huerta
 had a "simpatico relationship."
 (to Bryan)
 Go ahead.

BRYAN
 (reads)
 "I believe he is sincerely patriotic
 in his statements, and that he will
 probably not yield."

WILSON
 Does he expect me to yield?

Wilson rises to pace in frustration.

WILSON
 What damn choice do I have on this?
 Can I let Huerta back us down?

HOUSE
 No, Mister President. And Huerta's
 not going to back down either.

WILSON
 It's a fine situation, isn't it?
 So how do you compromise on a
 twenty-one gun salute? Change
 it to eleven or twelve?
 (then)
 Tell O'Shaughnessy that unless "the
 old Indian" yields, on Monday I
 shall take the matter to Congress,
 for a resolution to act.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

A view of the living-quarters windows.

DOCTOR #1 (V.O.)
 Chronic nephritis is a degenerative
 kidney disease...

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

Wilson and Ellen sit together on the sofa while they listen
 to Grayson and older DOCTOR #1, seated across from them.

DOCTOR #1

In this case, I'm afraid it's been complicated by renal tuberculosis.

WILSON

What's the cause of chronic nephritis?

DOCTOR #1

In cases like this, we don't know.

ELLEN

And I have tuberculosis?

DOCTOR #1

Of the kidneys. T.B. can strike the kidneys, or other organs, just like it does lungs. And it can go undetected for years.

GRAYSON

We're going to be doing our best. You're going to need lots of rest and antibiotics. But you have to understand that there is no cure.

WILSON

Well you doctors do all you can, I'll see that she gets her rest, and takes her medicine. We'll see that this doesn't progress. And there's a higher power to call on. We're a son and daughter of Presbyterian ministers. The Almighty has always been a part of our lives.

DOCTOR #1

Faith can indeed do miracles.

INT. EMBASSY CAR - MOVING - DAY

Nelson and Edith are formally dressed, the chauffeur driving.

NELSON

If I can't get through to Huerta today, we might as well start packing. This whole thing's some kind of farce. Humiliating. I wish we were back in Vienna.

(on Edith's look)

Forget I said that.

EDITH

You have to assert yourself,
Nelson. Be firm with him.

NELSON

I've tried. I'm just being a
realist.

EDITH

I don't understand it, really.
They fire a salute to our flag,
we fire a salute to theirs, and the
whole thing's resolved. How
juvenile!

NELSON

It's a matter of pride and honor,
Edith. Huerta's also afraid that
we won't salute after he does.

EDITH

Then let's fire the salutes
simultaneously. If no one fires
first, no one loses any face. The
whole thing is settled.

Nelson looks intrigued by the idea.

EDITH

Nelson, have you heard from your
friend in Vienna?

NELSON

No. Edith, I told her it was over.
I told her it was all a mistake,
that I was a fool. I told her I
love you and always will.

EDITH

"You" meaning me.

NELSON

What?

EDITH

You said, "I told her I love you
and always will."

NELSON

Yes. "You" meaning you. I told
her -- "I" meaning me -- I told her
that I love "her", meaning you.
Can I make it any clearer?

EDITH

You need to work on your pronouns,
Nelson.

INT. CHAPULTEPEC CASTLE - SALON - DAY

Diplomatic guests mingle at a reception.

Huerta's wife EMILIA, 52, chats with a diplomat and his wife,
while Edith looks over at the closed door to:

INT. AN ADJOINING BEDROOM - DAY

Huerta, with a drink and cigarette, sits on the edge of the
bed, while Nelson paces.

NELSON

This could be the answer. No one
fires first. It's simultaneous.

HUERTA

I have said no salute will be
fired.

NELSON

I know, General, but you can't keep
saying that. Time's running out.
If we --

HUERTA

(rises)
There is still no guarantee.

NELSON

Of what?

HUERTA

A return salute.

NELSON

General, I've assured you there
will be a return --

HUERTA

Yes, that is what you say. But
what if we agree: simultaneous
salutes. Then what if we fire and
you don't? We will be humiliated.

NELSON

And what if we fire and you don't?
Have you thought about that?

They stare at each other, then,

NELSON
Do you know something, General?

HUERTA
What?

NELSON
This is ridiculous.

HUERTA
Yes, it is.

They both consider.

NELSON
What the hell, they wouldn't have bought it anyway. So what are we left with?

Huerta paces.

HUERTA
If we had an agreement -- something in writing...

NELSON
Sure. Why not?

HUERTA
We fire the salute -- twenty-one guns. You return the salute -- round for round...

NELSON
Round for round.

HUERTA
If I had Moheno draw up an agreement --

NELSON
A protocol.

HUERTA
Would you sign it?

NELSON
You get Moheno working on it. I'll talk to Washington -- here, on the nearest phone. We'll see what they say.

INT. SALON - DAY

Huerta with a smile joins Edith at the reception.

HUERTA

What boors we are, to go off and leave such a lovely lady and the others. We thank you for your so kind patience.

EDITH

De nada. May your conference with Nelson bear fruitful results.

HUERTA

Let us hope.

Huerta takes two glasses of champagne from a waiter-borne tray.

EDITH

Where has he gone?

HUERTA

To make a telephone call.

He hands her drink to Edith.

EDITH

You look smashing today, General.

HUERTA

(clearly flattered)

When this trouble is over, I am going to Washington in my best clothes, to show your people I am not some machete-carrying ape.

He chuckles and they gesture a toast.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - WILSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen lies in bed, with her daughter Nellie holding her hand.

ELLEN

I haven't been keeping any secret, Nell. We just found out today. But don't you worry. I'm going to have good care.

NELLIE

You're going to have the best. You're going to beat this, Mama.

(MORE)

NELLIE (CONT'D)

Look, if you want, we can put
off the wedding, till you start
to feel better. Then --

ELLEN

Oh no, I won't hear of it, Nellie.
I plan to dance at your wedding,
so don't you put it off.

NELLIE

I'm sure you will, Mama.

They hear from the adjoining sitting room,

WILSON (O.S.)

Absolutely not!

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Wilson, in shirtsleeves, stands talking angrily on the phone.

WILSON

How dare O'Shaughnessy propose
some written agreement with a
government we don't even recognize.

INT. WILSON BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen and Nellie as before.

NELLIE

I'm going to go now, Mama, and let
you rest. If you can rest with
that going on.

INT. BRYAN'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Bryan is on the phone at his desk.

BRYAN

The procedure for the exchange of
naval salutes is established by
tradition, international custom.
That's protocol enough.

INT. SITTING ROOM - NIGHT

Wilson is still angry on the phone.

WILSON

(into phone)

Of course it is. Tell O'Shaughnessy
for the last time -- Hold on.

Nellie stops by him to give him a good-night kiss on the cheek.

NELLIE
I love you, Dad. Good night.

WILSON
Good night, Nell. Pray for your mother.

NELL
I will. You too.

Nellie leaves.

WILSON
(into phone)
Mayo's demand remains unchanged and shall be met unconditionally. Good night.

Wilson hangs up.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen in bed wipes a tear from her cheek, as if not wanting him to see it, as Wilson enters.

ELLEN
You shouldn't get so upset, dear.

He starts undressing.

WILSON
It's that brute General Huerta. How can I help it? I'm sorry. It's like trying to deal with the devil himself. And then there's O'Shaughnessy in Mexico City.

ELLEN
What about him?

WILSON
How did we find him? The Foreign Service couldn't have a more incompetent man.

ELLEN
What do you want him to do?

WILSON
I want him to stop letting Huerta lead him around in circles.

INT. EMBASSY - NIGHT

Nelson, Edith, and D'Antin sit as if waiting for something.

The PHONE RINGS. Nelson answers,

NELSON
(into phone)
Embajada.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CAFÉ COLÓN - PRIVATE ROOM - NIGHT

Portly Foreign Minister QUERIDO MOHENO, 40, is on the phone. MARIACHI MUSIC can be heard from the main room.

MOHENO
I have found Huerta. I have given
him Washington's answer.

NELSON
What does he say, Mister Moheno?

MOHENO
No salute will be fired. He says
there is nothing more to discuss.

NELSON
I understand.

MOHENO
He said to tell you this: You
tried very hard. He is sorry.

NELSON
So am I.

MOHENO
Buenas noches.

Nelson and Moheno hang up.

Edith and D'Antin look at Nelson, glumly gazing off.

EDITH
Well?

NELSON
(wearily)
Even over the phone, you can hear
the mariachis at the Café Colón.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE DRIVEWAY - DAY

Two cars bring in Congressional leaders.

INT. PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Wilson sits with the text of a speech on his lap, but he's not reading it. He gazes absently out the window.

Tumulty enters with notes.

TUMULTY

The Congressional leaders are here,
Mister President.

Wilson rises, speech in hand.

WILSON

Very well.

TUMULTY

Also, State just called. They confirm that ship Ipiranga is of German registry.

WILSON

Well, we're doing something about it, no matter what registry. Any further word from Mexico City?

TUMULTY

Not since O'Shaughnessy's dispatch quoting Huerta: "There is nothing more to discuss."

WILSON

He's right.

They walk toward the door.

TUMULTY

Mister President...

They stop at the door.

TUMULTY

There are questions from the press about Mrs. Wilson. Rumors about her health.

WILSON

Tell them Mrs. Wilson is doing well. Tell them she's been under the weather.

(MORE)

WILSON (CONT'D)

Mrs. Wilson is going to get through this.

Wilson moves off.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Wilson, meeting with ten CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS, finishes reading aloud the text of the speech,

WILSON

"Any action will be to keep our great nation's influence unimpaired, for the uses of liberty, both here and abroad, for the benefit of mankind."

Wilson lays the speech aside.

WILSON

That, gentlemen, is the address I'll be delivering to the joint session. Any comments, please.

LEADER #1

It's a fine speech, Mister President. I wouldn't change a word.

LEADER #2

I agree. The country's behind you on this, Mister President. A resolution is as good as passed, for whatever action you feel necessary.

Mustached Senator HENRY CABOT LODGE, 64, speaks up,

LODGE

Mister President...

WILSON

Senator Lodge.

LODGE

I'm inclined to agree that it's time for some sort of intervention in Mexico. However, I think the basis for any action should be more substantive -- broader, if you will -- than these incidents you've cited.

WILSON

What broader basis for action would you propose, Mister Lodge?

LODGE

The protection of American lives and property. Our investments in Mexico are substantial, to say the least. And we have citizens' lives endangered by the fighting. In Tampico --

WILSON

Senator, as I state in my speech, the use of armed force -- if necessary -- will only be used against Huerta, for the incidents cited and the refusal to meet our demand. To go in on a broader basis could mean war with the Mexican people.

Lodge looks confused.

LODGE

Mister President, we're talking about war in any event.

WILSON

(firmly)

We are not. We're talking about action against the dictator Huerta, that's all.

Silence, then,

LEADER #3

Have you a specific action in mind, Mister President?

WILSON

Yes. What I say now is confidential. It will not be added to this afternoon's speech. Through our Veracruz consulate, we've learned that a German freighter, the Ipiranga, is due shortly at Veracruz with a large shipment of arms for the Huerta government. Rifles --

(checks note)

Two hundred machine guns, fifteen million rounds of ammunition. If Huerta is allowed to receive such a shipment, he could hold out indefinitely. Our immediate course of action, therefore, is to prevent that cargo from reaching him.

LEADER #1

We stop the German ship?

LEADER #4

Can we legally do that? Without a blockade?

WILSON

No. The plan is to seize the customs house, and cut off that cargo.

LODGE

We're going to seize Veracruz?

WILSON

No, the customs house, Senator, and related facilities. Those arms must never reach Huerta.

LEADER #3

We could meet armed resistance, Mister President.

WILSON

Senator, who at Veracruz is going to take on the Atlantic Fleet to defend Victoriano Huerta?

A few glances are exchanged, but no one responds.

WILSON

It's like Colonel House has said. If a man's house is on fire, he ought to be glad if his neighbors come put it out.

INT. U.S. CONGRESS - HOUSE CHAMBER - DAY

Wilson addresses a joint session of CONGRESS.

WILSON

The Tampico affair can therefore not be regarded as a trivial or isolated incident. We have been singled out for these slights and affronts by the Huerta government in retaliation for our refusal to recognize Huerta as the provisional president of Mexico. We must support to the full Admiral Mayo's demand, by using --

(MORE)

WILSON (CONT'D)
 (interrupted by applause)
 By using our armed forces as may be
 necessary to obtain from Huerta the
 fullest recognition of the rights
 and dignity of the United States of
 America.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

All is dark.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Secret Service Agent PHILLIPS, 40, with loosened tie, a
 newspaper in hand, picks up a RINGING PHONE.

PHILLIPS
 (into phone)
 Agent Phillips speaking.

INT. BRYAN'S HOME - NIGHT

Bryan, in pajamas and robe, is on the phone.

BRYAN
 This is Secretary Bryan. I need to
 speak with the President.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Phillips on phone as before.

PHILLIPS
 Mister Bryan, the President just
 got to bed two hours ago. Is it
 that important?

INT. DANIELS' OFFICE - NIGHT

Navy Secretary Daniels, casually dressed, is also on the
 phone.

DANIELS
 This is Secretary Daniels. I am
 also on the line. Wake up the
 President.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Wilson, in pajamas and robe, picks up a phone.

WILSON
(into phone)
Yes?

INTERCUT PHONE CONVERSATION

BRYAN
Mister President, we are sorry to disturb you at this hour. We have news from the Veracruz consul concerning the freighter Ipiranga. It's expected to arrive in port at eleven o'clock this morning.

DANIELS
It doesn't leave us much time, Mister President.

WILSON
Where is Admiral Badger with the rest of the fleet?

DANIELS
Still two days away. Even Mayo can't get there from Tampico in time, if we move by eleven.

WILSON
Do we have any choice?

DANIELS
Admiral Fletcher has enough men to handle it. The Veracruz garrison is only some six hundred men.

BRYAN
Considering our strength and objective, I really expect no resistance.

DANIELS
Nor do I, Mister President. It should go quite smoothly.

WILSON
We're trying to help them, after all. We're trying to get rid of Huerta.

DANIELS
The consul also reports three trains -- about thirty boxcars -- waiting to get those arms to Huerta. I think we have to move.

WILSON

I agree. Order Fletcher to seize
the customs house.

EXT. VERACRUZ - DAY

A picturesque city between sand hills and sea. There's an
overcast, threatening sky.

SUPERIMPOSE: "VERACRUZ."

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

Anchored in the inner harbor is the U.S. transport Prairie.
Anchored outside the breakwater are the U.S. battleships
Florida and Utah.

INT. BATTLESHIP FLORIDA - ADMIRAL'S CABIN - DAY

Rear Admiral FRANK FLETCHER, 59, meets with Navy Captains
WILLIAM RUSH, 57, and HENRY HUSE, 56, Commander HERMAN
STICKNEY, 47, and Marine Lt. Col. WENDELL NEVILLE, 44.

Capt. Rush stands with a pointer at a map of Veracruz.

RUSH

To review, then: All boats to
the terminal wharf. Upon landing,
I will immediately set up
headquarters, with signalmen, at
the Terminal Hotel. Colonel
Neville, your First Marine Regiment
will go inland as far as Guerrero
Street, taking the terminal
station, rail yard, cable office,
and power plant. First Rifle
Company will occupy the post office
and telegraph station. Second
Company will proceed southeast and
occupy the customs house. Third
Company in reserve at the wharf.
Any questions?

There are none. Mustached Admiral Fletcher steps forward.

FLETCHER

Now I'd prefer to wait for that
freighter before showing our hand.
On the other hand, I don't like the
looks of the weather. If a norther
hits, there can't be a landing at
all. That's a chance we can't
take. We have the order and we're
not going to wait.

HUSE

What about Admiral Mayo?

FLETCHER

A large number of U.S. citizens are at risk in Tampico if the rebels break through. I'm going to tell Mayo to stay there. Till the rest of the fleet gets here tomorrow, it's up to the men of the Florida, Utah, and Prairie. Anything else?

(waits, then)

Mister Neville, return to the Prairie. Signal when ready.

INT. U.S. CONSUL'S OFFICE (VERACRUZ) - DAY

U.S. Consul WILLIAM CANADA, 50, sits at his desk as a MARINE GUARD enters.

MARINE GUARD

Mister Consul, sir, Commander Stickney is here.

Commander Stickney walks in. Canada rises, the Marine Guard leaving and closing the door.

CANADA

Commander.

STICKNEY

Consul, I'm here to inform you that a landing of marines and bluejackets will commence at eleven hundred hours. You should inform the other consulates.

CANADA

Very well.

STICKNEY

Watch the Prairie. As soon as you see the first men disembarking, contact the federal commander. Assure him that only the harbor area is involved. We're not here to take the whole city. Tell him we trust there will be no resistance.

INT. FEDERAL COMMANDER'S HQ (VERACRUZ) - DAY

Mexican Federal General GUSTAVO MAASS, 52 and a dandy, grooms his handlebar mustache at a mirror.

His AIDE, 34, a sergeant, comes in. (Spanish:)

MAASS
Any word on the Ipiranga?

AIDE
Nothing yet, General.

Maass glances at a clock. It's almost eleven.

EXT. CENTRAL PLAZA - DAY

In the front arcade of the Hotel Diligencias, North Americans and well-to-do Mexicans sit reading their newspapers and chatting. Townspeople move routinely about in the plaza.

EXT. BARRACKS (ACROSS TOWN FROM HARBOR) - DAY

Dapper General Maass, his Aide following, steps out of his headquarters building. Soldiers move about on the grounds. Maass notes the threatening sky. (Spanish:)

MAASS
Looks like a storm brewing.

AIDE
Yes, my General.

EXT. TRANSPORT PRAIRIE - DAY

U.S. marines with knapsacks and rifles load via gangway into whaleboats.

EXT. BATTLESHIP FLORIDA - DAY

U.S. sailors and marines with their equipment load into whaleboats.

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

Motor launches tow the first whaleboats, loaded with marines, from the Prairie toward shore.

EXT. MEXICO CITY - OUTDOOR THEATER - DAY

Nelson and Edith sit among dignitaries enjoying a Mexican traditional music and dance festival.

Huerta, sitting with General Blanquet, exchanges friendly waves with Nelson and Edith.

EXT. VERACRUZ HARBOR - DAY

Strings of whaleboats, loaded with marines and sailors, are towed by motor launches toward the terminal wharf.

INT. MAASS' HQ - DAY

General Maass, alarmed, is on the phone.

MAASS
(into phone)
Señor Consul, what are you saying?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CONSUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Canada tries to reason with Maass on the phone.

CANADA
Please do not resist, General
Maass. They will need your help
to keep order in the city.

MAASS
How can you say not resist? Señor
Consul, can't we tell them to wait?
Can't we first have a conference?

CANADA
The landing has already started.

MAASS
Ay, mi Diós!

Maass hangs up and dashes outside.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Maass looks desperately around, then heads for:

INT. A BARRACKS BUILDING - DAY

Rushing in, Maass finds Colonel ALBINO RODRÍGUEZ CERRILLO, 45, doing paperwork at a desk. (Spanish:)

MAASS
Rodríguez, the gringos are landing!
Get your men!

The Colonel rises as Maass turns to hurry back out.

RODRÍGUEZ CERRILLO
What do you want us to do?

MAASS
Repel the invasion!

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Rushing out, Maass stops General FRANCISCO FIGUEROA, 56.
(Spanish:)

MAASS
Figueroa, assemble your men! You
will defend the barracks!

FIGUEROA
What's happening?

MAASS
We are under attack!

Maass' Aide catches up with him.

MAASS
(to Aide)
Send a wire to the minister of war:
"The North Americans are invading.
I await instructions."

The Aide hurries toward a car. Maass looks around, as if
wondering what to do next.

MAASS
Ay, mi Diós.

EXT. HARBOR - DAY

The boatloads of marines and sailors head for the terminal
wharf.

EXT. SEAWALL - DAY

A crowd, including many North Americans, gathers along the
seawall, watching the boats approaching the wharf.

INT. VERACRUZ NAVAL SCHOOL - DAY

A Mexican INSTRUCTOR, 43, lectures in Spanish to teenage
Mexican naval cadets in a second-floor classroom.

INSTRUCTOR
By the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo,
the United States received Arizona,
California, Nevada, New Mexico,
Texas, Utah, and part of Colorado.

A CADET
Only part of Colorado?

The Instructor notices something outside.

INSTRUCTOR
Yes. They already had the other
part.

The Instructor moves to the windows, facing the harbor. The cadets also move to the windows, to see what's happening.

They see the U.S. marines and sailors landing on the wharf.

EXT. SEAWALL - DAY

The crowd watches the landing.

There is a light air among the North Americans in the crowd, but Mexicans -- as if beginning to realize what's happening -- begin to back away and leave.

EXT. INDEPENDENCIA AVENUE - DAY

Colonel Rodríguez Cerrillo marches a battalion of federal soldiers along the street from the barracks. He orders some to take defensive positions along the way.

EXT. TERMINAL WHARF - DAY

U.S. marines and sailors continue to land. (The total landing party will be some 500 marines and 285 sailors.)

INT. BARRACKS - ARMORY - DAY

Mexican civilian volunteers are being supplied by federal soldiers with rifles and ammunition.

INT. MILITARY PRISON (NEAR BARRACKS) - DAY

Maass gives a pep talk to a large group of CONVICTS, still in their stripes, as soldiers hustle in with a rifle supply.
(Spanish:)

MAASS
It is the duty of all good Mexicans to fight for the land where they first saw the light of day. If you don't have the honor to fight, in this our time of need, then leave the arms here for someone who has.

A CONVICT
We're ready to fight!

CONVICTS
Viva México! Viva la patria!

Maass gestures for the soldiers to start distributing arms.

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY

As U.S. marines and sailors continue landing on the wharf, an adjacent plaza is being used as a staging area.

Col. Neville marches his marines from the plaza toward the terminal station.

Capt. Rush leads a squad of sailors, including signalmen, toward the Terminal Hotel.

EXT. STREETS - SERIES OF SCENES - DAY

Citizens close their doors, shopkeepers pull down iron grills, schoolchildren are sent home by teachers.

INT. TERMINAL HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Rush enters with his sailors. Quickly checking the layout, Rush goes to the MANAGER at the desk, while hotel guests curiously look on.

RUSH
(to sailors)
Semaphore section to the roof!
(to Manager)
You speak English?

MANAGER
Yes.

RUSH
I'm Captain Rush of the United
States Navy. We're going to have
to use your hotel.

EXT. CENTRAL PLAZA - DAY

Rodríguez Cerrillo, marching his soldiers into the plaza, orders some to positions in the Hotel Diligencias arcade, others to positions behind the plaza's benches and bandstand.

EXT. OLD LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

An old tower, seemingly abandoned, on Benito Juarez Street.

INT. OLD LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

Mexican FEDERAL SOLDIERS #1 and #2 finish hauling a one-pounder gun to the top floor, where they have a view of:

EXT. THE WATERFRONT - DAY

U.S. marines and sailors fan out from the plaza near the wharf, the crowd watching.

EXT. STREETS - SERIES OF SCENES - DAY

Armed civilians and convicts take defensive positions -- rooftops, balconies, windows, barricades -- and lie in wait.

EXT. ROOF OF TERMINAL HOTEL - DAY

A Navy signalman wigwags a message with flags to:

EXT. THE FLORIDA'S BRIDGE - DAY

Admiral Fletcher and a QUARTERMASTER look shoreward through binoculars.

A signalman hands a note to the Quartermaster, who reads it to Fletcher,

QUARTERMASTER

"Rail station, cable office, power plant, all okay. No resistance."

Fletcher still looks off through binoculars.

FLETCHER

What about the customs house?

EXT. CUSTOMS HOUSE - DAY

The building looks deserted. The only sound is of MARCHING BOOTS on cobblestones in the distance.

EXT. MORELOS STREET - DAY

Ensign GEORGE LOWRY, 25, marches a company of sailors along the ominously deserted street, toward the customs house a block and a half away.

From a roof, a window, an arcade, unseen eyes watch, to the sound of the MARCHING BOOTS.

As Lowry and his sailors march through an intersection, a RIFLE SHOT rings out.

A FUSILLADE follows. Two sailors fall, the others take cover in doorways, behind arcade columns, wherever they can, FIRING back in all directions.

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Occupying U.S. sailors listen with concern to the distant sound of GUNFIRE.

They suddenly come under FIRE from buildings across the street. They take cover. Two sailors fall.

EXT. TERMINAL HOTEL - DAY

Capt. Rush comes out to see what the SHOOTING is about. He is immediately SHOT through his calf.

A sailor helps him back inside as FIRING continues.

EXT. ROOF OF TERMINAL HOTEL - DAY

The wigwagging signalman is hit by a RIFLE SHOT from a building across the street. He falls, a sailor on the roof FIRES back.

EXT. MORELOS STREET - DAY

Lowry and his sailors are pinned down, exchanging FIRE with the well-concealed Mexicans.

Lowry and SAILOR #4 are behind two arcade columns, BULLETS HITTING the walls around them.

INT. OLD LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

Mexican Soldiers #1 and #2 in the tower FIRE their one-pounder gun at:

EXT. MORELOS STREET - DAY

The round BLASTS a chunk from one of the columns where Lowry and Sailor #4 are positioned.

EXT. MEXICO CITY - OUTDOOR THEATER - DAY

The music and dance festival is in progress.

A Mexican messenger says something to Huerta where he sits.

Huerta and Blanquet rise, Huerta pausing to look grimly toward Nelson and Edith.

Edith notices as Huerta turns to leave. She nudges Nelson.

EDITH
Something's happened.

EXT. VERACRUZ - HARBOR AREA - DAY

Throughout the area now GUNFIRE is heard.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Lowry, Sailor #4, and four other sailors try to reach the customs house. They come under FIRE from buildings, including MACHINE-GUN FIRE from an upper-story window.

Sailor #4 is SHOT in the head.

EXT. FLORIDA'S BRIDGE - DAY

The Quartermaster reads a signal to Fletcher,

QUARtermaster
"Under fire. One thousand
defenders reported in area. Need
support. Hurry Utah's troops."

FLETCHER
Signal the Utah to land her
battalion.

INT. OLD LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

Soldiers #1 and #2 again FIRE their one-pounder gun at:

EXT. MORELOS STREET - DAY

Sailors are still pinned down, under FIRE from well-concealed civilians and convicts. The one-pounder's round BLASTS the pavement, wounding a sailor with debris.

EXT. CONSULATE - DAY

In front of the building, sailors FIRE a hand-drawn, 3-inch gun at:

EXT. THE OLD LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

The EXPLODING SHELL hits the tower.

INT. OLD LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

Soldiers #1 and #2, rattled by the hit, see the gun in front of the consulate. They scramble to aim their gun at it.

EXT. CONSULATE - DAY

The 3-inch gun FIRES again.

INT. OLD LIGHTHOUSE - DAY

The EXPLODING SHELL scores a bullseye, killing both soldiers.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY

Federal soldiers wait behind barricades. Maass stands in front of his headquarters as his Aide speeds up in a car.

As he jumps out, the Aide waves a dispatch. (Spanish:)

AIDE

General, we've been ordered to
retreat to Tejería!

MAASS

To the roundhouse! Everybody to
the train!

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Lowry and sailors are pinned down by the RIFLE and MACHINE-GUN FIRE from buildings.

SAILORS #5 and #6 slip into the building where the machine gun is located.

EXT. UTAH - DAY

A battalion of sailors loads into whaleboats.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Wilson studies a document at his desk. In front of the desk sit Bryan and House.

House checks the time on his pocket watch. He exchanges glances with Bryan.

HOUSE

Daniels should have called you by
now, Mister President, with word on
Veracruz.

WILSON

Not necessarily.
(to Bryan)
Did you get that letter off to
O'Shaughnessy?

BRYAN
Yes, Mister President.

INT. A SECOND-FLOOR ROOM (VERACRUZ) - CUSTOMS ZONE - DAY

VERACRUZ POLICEMEN #1 and #2 FIRE their machine gun out the window.

Sailors #5 and #6 burst in. They SHOOT the Policemen as they turn around.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Lowry and his sailors see Sailor #5 signal all clear from the second-floor window.

LOWRY
Let's go!

Lowry and the sailors break for:

INT. THE CUSTOMS HOUSE - DAY

Windows SHATTER, Lowry and sailors come bounding in.

Armed customs officials drop their weapons and surrender.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

More sailors hurry to the customs house from Morelos Street, RIFLE FIRE from buildings continuing.

INT. CUSTOMS HOUSE - DAY

Lowry finishes a quick inspection, scattered SHOTS heard outside. He turns to the nearest sailor.

LOWRY
Get word to Captain Rush: "Customs house secured."

EXT. CORNER - MONTESINOS & CINCO DE MAYO - DAY

A U.S. marine, manning a machine gun on the street corner, RAKES Cinco de Mayo with bullets.

Armed civilians on Cinco are FIRING, running for cover, some SHOT down in the street.

EXT. CENTRAL PLAZA - DAY

Rodríguez Cerrillo retrieves his soldiers, who have been waiting in position, listening to the GUNFIRE in distance.

RODRÍGUEZ CERRILLO
 Come on, men! To the roundhouse!
 Come on before they leave us!

EXT. ROUNDHOUSE - DAY

Maass loads his soldiers on a freight train.

EXT. CINCO DE MAYO AVENUE - DAY

Marines SHOOT IT OUT with civilians. Two marines lie dead or wounded.

A convict is SHOT from a roof, more convicts and civilians lie dead in the street.

INT. TERMINAL HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Rush stands propped at the desk as he speaks on a phone, his lower leg in a bloody bandage.

RUSH
 Consul Canada, what the hell's
 going on? Didn't you talk to the
 federal commander?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CONSUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Canada is on the phone, scattered SHOTS heard outside the building.

CANADA
 Yes. He wouldn't listen. Word now
 is, the garrison's been ordered to
 retreat to Tejería.

RUSH
 Where?

CANADA
 Tejería -- ten miles away. The
 men you're fighting are mostly
 civilians and convicts.

RUSH
 Convicts? What the hell's going
 on?

EXT. MORELOS STREET - DAY

More FIRING in the street, dead Mexicans and two dead sailors on the pavement.

SAILORS #7 and #8 burst through the door of:

INT. A BUILDING - DAY

Sailors #7 and #8 kill two armed civilians, who have been shooting from a window, in a BLAZE OF GUNFIRE.

During this, a WOMAN, protecting a child, crouches screaming in a corner.

The sailors look at her, then leave. She goes crying to the two dead civilians, as GUNFIRE continues outside.

EXT. STREET - DAY

As Sailors #7 and #8 hustle down the street, Sailor #7 is SHOT and falls.

Sailor #8 helps him up and half-drags him off, as GUNFIRE continues.

INT. EMBASSY (MEXICO CITY) - NELSON'S OFFICE - DAY

D'Antin stares out the window into space. Nelson and Edith anxiously enter.

D'ANTIN

We've landed at Veracruz.

D'Antin gestures toward a dispatch on the desk,

D'ANTIN

Dispatch from William Canada.
There's fighting in the streets.

Nelson picks up the dispatch and reads it.

EXT. VERACRUZ - HARBOR AREA - DAY

GUNBATTLES continue, dead or wounded Mexicans, marines, and sailors lie in streets.

EXT. TERMINAL WHARF - DAY

More boatloads of sailors are landing.

A U.S. NAVY LIEUTENANT, 42, looks off toward the Naval School, from which SHOTS ARE FIRED toward the wharf.

He grabs SAILOR #9 and gestures toward the Terminal Hotel.

NAVY LIEUTENANT
 Go tell 'em to signal the Prairie.
 Tell 'em we've got fire from the
 second floor of the Naval School.

SAILOR #9
 Yes, sir!

NAVY LIEUTENANT
 Tell 'em to shell the shit out
 of it!

INT. NAVAL SCHOOL - SECOND-FLOOR DORMITORY - DAY

Commodore MANUEL AZUETA, 60, and his teenage naval cadets are
 at the windows, FIRING rifles at the landing parties.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

Sailors aim two 3-inch deck guns at the Naval School.

Azueta and cadets continue FIRING their rifles.

The first deck gun FIRES, then the second. An EXPLODING
 SHELL hits the second floor of the school.

Azueta and cadets take cover as the second shell smashes in
 and EXPLODES.

The deck guns FIRE again.

An EXPLODING SHELL hits, then ANOTHER, dust and debris flying
 on the school's second floor.

Some cadets lie wounded, cries of pain, other cadets try to
 help or are hunkered down.

Azueta kneels, takes wounded cadet VIRGILIO URIBE in his
 arms.

AZUETA
 Virgilio...

Virgilio is dead.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

The PHONE RINGS, Wilson answers while Bryan and House sit by.

WILSON
 (into phone)
 Yes?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DANIELS' OFFICE - DAY

Daniels is on the phone, a dispatch in hand.

DANIELS

Mister President, we have a first report from Admiral Fletcher at Veracruz.

WILSON

Yes?

DANIELS

The harbor area is secured. However, there has been armed resistance -- mostly by civilians. American casualties: sixteen dead, twenty-six wounded.

Wilson looks stunned.

DANIELS

As many as a hundred Mexicans dead. I'll keep you posted, sir, as the admiral reports. There's still some shooting going on.

WILSON

Thank you, Mister Daniels.

Wilson hangs up. He looks shaken.

BRYAN

What has happened, Mister President?

WILSON

(pause)

It hasn't gone as well as expected.

EXT. STATE OF MORELOS - ZAPATISTA CAMP - DAY

The wiry Indian EMILIANO ZAPATA, 33, surrounded by four or five armed Zapatistas, walks through the camp.

A North American CORRESPONDENT, one of three being kept by Zapatistas at a distance, calls to him,

CORRESPONDENT

General Zapata, could we get a statement on today's landing at Veracruz?

Zapata stops, a ZAPATISTA translating the question for him. Zapata and the Zapatista walk over to the correspondents.

ZAPATA
(speaks in Spanish)

ZAPATISTA
(translates)
"Write this. If the pigs from
Yanquiland march on Mexico City -- "

ZAPATA
(speaks in Spanish)

ZAPATISTA
"We will stop fighting Huerta and
help Huerta fight the pigs."

EXT. COAHUILA - GOVERNOR'S PALACE - DAY

As he's leaving, Governor Carranza, wearing tinted glasses and his brass-buttoned First Chief uniform, speaks with Mexican REPORTERS #4 and #5, who take notes.

With him are two aides and General ÁLVARO OBREGÓN, 50, a genial officer of professional bearing who is missing one arm.

They speak in Spanish with English subtitles,

CARRANZA
This action of Woodrow Wilson is a
flagrant violation of Mexican
sovereignty. That is all I have
to say at the moment.

REPORTER #4
Governor Carranza, do you plan to
take military action, sir?

Carranza, ignoring the question, walks away.

REPORTER #4
General Obregón, sir --

OBREGÓN
If First Chief Carranza so orders,
we will fight them, and fight to
the death.

EXT. VILLISTA CAMP - DAY

Stocky, mustached PANCHO VILLA, 34, eats beans and tortillas with a group of his Villistas, while being interviewed by North American REPORTER #6. (English:)

REPORTER #6

What do you think, General Villa, of the United States seizing the port of Veracruz?

VILLA

Let me tell you. The gringos should hold Veracruz so tightly that not even water can get in to Huerta.

Villa laughs. His Villistas laugh as if on cue.

INT. NATIONAL PALACE - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Huerta finishes a drink at his desk.

With him are General Blanquet and Foreign Minister Moheno. A map is spread on the desk. (Spanish:)

HUERTA

I have had enough for one day.

(rises)

You will closely monitor the situation. I want a full report in the morning.

(starts toward door, then)

Moheno, we must not forget to give O'Shaughnessy his passports.

EXT. EMBASSY - NIGHT

An angry crowd, chanting "Mueran los gringos," demonstrates in front of the building, guarded by federal soldiers.

INT. NELSON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Edith, by the window of the darkened office, watches the chanting crowd.

Nelson moves to her side, puts an arm around her shoulders, and watches too.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Wilson sits in his robe in a chair. He reads the Bible, open to Psalms.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen awakes, finds Wilson is not in bed. She rises with effort.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - NIGHT

Ellen enters in her nightgown. Wilson rises.

WILSON

Darling, you shouldn't be up.

Wilson, Bible in hand, walks over to meet her.

ELLEN

You shouldn't be either.

They sit down together on the sofa.

ELLEN

What are you reading?

WILSON

The Psalms.

(sighs emotionally)

All those lives lost today, Ellen.

I can't get it off my heart.

ELLEN

You can't blame yourself.

WILSON

Then who do I blame? Sending poor farmers' sons to fight and die.

Just what I said I wouldn't do.

INT. NATIONAL PALACE - PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - DAY

Huerta sits at his desk with a cigarette as Nelson is shown in by the secretary Rábago, who leaves.

Huerta motions to a chair in front of the desk. Nelson sits down. Huerta gestures toward something on the desk.

HUERTA

Your passports.

Nelson takes them from the desk. Huerta opens a drawer. He takes out two glasses and a bottle of cognac.

HUERTA

We will have a last copita.

Huerta pours the drinks.

NELSON

Please believe me, General, when I say I didn't know. I was told nothing beforehand of the Veracruz landing.

Huerta shrugs. He rises with the drinks. He moves around the desk toward Nelson, who rises.

HUERTA

What does it matter? Even if you had known, you could have said nothing to me.

NELSON

I could have protested.

Huerta hands Nelson his drink.

NELSON

Of course, that wouldn't have mattered either.

Huerta gestures a toast. They drink, then,

HUERTA

You leave tonight, by special train. The safest way is to Veracruz. You will be well guarded, as far as Tejería. There your people can meet you.

NELSON

I will let them know.

They drink another toast, emptying the glasses. Nelson coughs, Huerta smiles. They set the glasses down.

They look at each other for a moment.

HUERTA

Mi hijo, you have been a friend.
Vaya con Dios.

They shake hands.

NELSON

Gracias. Adiós.

Huerta turns to go back to his desk, Nelson turning to walk to the door.

Nelson stops and looks back.

NELSON

General...

Huerta, about to sit down, looks at Nelson.

NELSON

Take care.

HUERTA

"The bullet that is to kill me has not yet been molded" -- Napoleon Bonaparte.

Huerta sits down. Nelson leaves. Huerta gazes off into space.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Wilson meets with Bryan, Daniels, Garrison, McAdoo, and the rest of the Cabinet.

BRYAN

The problem I see is this: Now that we've occupied Veracruz, what do we do with it?

MCADOO

We can't just give it back.

Wilson seems to be in a miserable, irritable mood.

WILSON

We seized the port to cut off that shipment of arms to Huerta. Didn't I make that clear?

BRYAN

Yes, Mister President.

MCADOO

What happened to those arms, by the way?

BRYAN

The, uh, Ipiranga proceeded to another port. Huerta got the arms.

Garrison sighs with disgust.

GARRISON

We didn't get the salute, we didn't stop the arms. What did we get?

WILSON

So Huerta got the arms. He'll get nothing more through Veracruz. We'll hold it until Huerta's gone.

GARRISON

We could use it as a base, Mister President, for a march on Mexico City.

Wilson reacts with exasperation.

WILSON

We are not down there for war! How many times do I have to say it?
(to Bryan)
What's that city that Pancho Villa just took?

BRYAN

Zacatecas.

WILSON

Zacatecas. A crushing blow, I'm told, to Huerta. It opens the way to Mexico City for the Constitutionals. There's no reason for us to go in.

DANIELS

But we hold Veracruz as a trump card.

BRYAN

A fortunate by-product of the invasion.

WILSON

Don't use that word, though.

BRYAN

By-product?

WILSON

Invasion.

BRYAN

Oh. Of course not.
(to all)
What's a better word we can use?

DANIELS

Incursion.

CABINET OFFICIAL #1
Same thing.

GARRISON
Seizure.

MCADOO
That's worse.

CABINET OFFICIAL #2
Occupation.

BRYAN
That's now. What did we do initially?

WILSON
We landed.

BRYAN
Let's call it a landing.

EXT. VERACRUZ - CENTRAL PLAZA - NIGHT

A squad of U.S. marines marches past the lit plaza, where citizens are at their evening promenade.

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - NIGHT

Nelson sits alone, looking off at the plaza.

EDITH
There you are.

Edith sits down beside him.

EDITH
I hear the Army's coming in.

NELSON
Yeah. They can't get any locals to run the place. It would be considered collaboration. So tomorrow Uncle Sam declares martial law. The American flag will be raised, and the battleship Florida will fire a twenty-one gun salute.

EDITH
That almost sounds like a joke. How long do you think we'll be here? Uncle Sam, I mean.

NELSON

Till Huerta's out. We've got Veracruz. Soon the rebels will have Tampico. The two major ports. We've got Huerta virtually cut off from the world. And from all the revenue that comes from that customs house. There's no need to march on him now. He's finished.

Nelson takes an envelope from his pocket, and hands it to Edith. She takes a letter from the envelope.

EDITH

What is it?

NELSON

My recall from Mexico.

EDITH

(reads it)

Where do you think they'll send us?

He looks at her, as if catching the "us."

NELSON

I'm going to resign from the Foreign Service. If it's all right with you. The way I feel now...

EDITH

Do you know what? I was hoping you would say that.

They look at each other. She smiles sadly. They emotionally embrace.

EXT. BROOKLYN NAVAL YARD - DAY

Wilson speaks before an audience of naval officers and sailors. Navy Secretary Daniels and an admiral sit behind him.

SUPERIMPOSE:

"MEMORIAL SERVICE
BROOKLYN NAVAL YARD
MAY, 1914"

WILSON

I reflect upon this day with great sorrow, in that we have lost men who were in the flower of their youth.

(MORE)

WILSON (CONT'D)

Someone's son, or a child's father,
who fought in the name of freedom
and democracy for all. Notice how
truly these men were of our blood.
Their names that were read here
bear the marks of the several
national stocks from which they
came.

Wilson's voice thickens with emotion.

WILSON

But they are not Irish or German
or French or Jewish or Italian
anymore. They were Americans. May
God grant us all that vision of
patriotic service, and strength as
Americans, that is here borne upon
our hearts with such solemnity,
grief, and pride.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - BLUE ROOM - DAY

The bride Nellie and groom McAdoo stand before Minister #1.

MINISTER #1

I now pronounce you man and wife.
You may kiss the bride.

Nellie and McAdoo kiss. Among the wedding guests watching,
Wilson stands with his arm around Ellen, who looks weaker
than ever.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

Ellen and Margaret still wear the dresses from the wedding
as Ellen sits down to rest. She seems to be in some pain.
Margaret leans over her.

MARGARET

Are you all right, Mama?

ELLEN

Yes, darling, just tired. Would
you get me those pills over there?
Two of them.

Margaret pours a glass of water from a pitcher, and brings
the glass and pills. She kneels down by Ellen's chair.

ELLEN

Well, Margaret, any chance of there
being a third White House wedding?

Ellen takes a pill.

MARGARET

Nothing that serious yet, Mama.

ELLEN

I'm sure you meet a lot of young men in New York. You just pick out a good one.

She takes the other pill and sets the glass on an end table.

MARGARET

Do you want me to come home and stay, Mama, now that Nellie has flown the coop?

ELLEN

Oh no, dear, you look after your singing career.

MARGARET

I don't have much of one yet to look after.

Margaret holds on to her.

MARGARET

I just want you to get well, Mama.

Ellen strokes her daughter's hair.

INT. NATIONAL PALACE (MEXICO CITY) - SALON - DAY

Huerta, with Emilia at his side, stands before a solemn group of federal officers, Moheno, and other government officials.

HUERTA

(in Spanish)

As my last official act, I appoint Francisco Carvajal as foreign minister. He will then succeed me as provisional president, upon my resignation at this moment.

SUPERIMPOSE: "JULY, 1914."

HUERTA

I leave in good conscience, having fought for order in Mexico, and in defense of our national honor. Mexico will survive these turbulent times. Let some men do their worst.

(MORE)

HUERTA (CONT'D)

There will be others, God willing,
to redress the wrongs they may do.
Mexico, like the Earth itself, will
abide forever.

(gives arm to Emilia)

Viva la patria. Adiós.

The group applauds as Huerta and Emilia walk out together.

OFFICIAL #1

Que viva!

OFFICIAL #2

Viva México!

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Ellen lies in bed. She is almost too weak to talk, as Dr. Grayson, in a bedside chair, leans over her to hear.

SUPERIMPOSE: "AUGUST, 1914."

Daughter Jessie, looking sad and tired, sitting in an armchair, apparently can't hear what Ellen says.

GRAYSON

I'll tell him, Mrs. Wilson, don't
worry.

INT. SENATOR GALE'S OFFICE (CAPITOL HILL) - DAY

The "Washington Post" lies on the desk. The front-page headline reads, "Britain Declares War on Germany."

An aide hands him the phone receiver as Senator Gale steps to the desk.

GALE

(into phone)

Yes, Mister President?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. WHITE HOUSE - LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

Wilson, with a heavy heart, sits talking on the phone.

WILSON

Senator Gale. Mrs. Wilson is
dying.

GALE

No, Mister President. I knew she
was ill.

WILSON

She has kidney disease. Incurable.

GALE

I'm so sorry to hear this.

WILSON

It would mean a lot to her,
Senator, if I could tell her that
her alley bill has passed.

GALE

Mister President, I will see that
the Senate passes that bill this
afternoon. We'll see that it gets
through the House tomorrow.

WILSON

Thank you, Senator.

GALE

Mister President, our prayers are
with you, sir, for you and Mrs.
Wilson and your family.

WILSON

Thank you.

Wilson hangs up.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Two or three windows are lit.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Wilson sits holding Ellen's hand. He's musing, she's half
asleep. Margaret sits with eyes closed in a nearby chair.

ELLEN

(barely audible)
Woodrow...

He leans forward to her.

WILSON

Yes, darling?

ELLEN

Is there going to be war?

Tumulty quietly enters with a note in hand. He waits by
Wilson's side.

WILSON

The Germans have invaded Belgium.
There's war in Europe, but we're
going to stay out of it. Out of
the bloodshed.

He glances at Tumulty, who hands him the note.

WILSON

We're going to work someway for
peace.

He reads the note. He leans forward again to Ellen.

WILSON

(gestures with note)
Ellen, the Senate passed your alley
bill today. The House will pass it
tomorrow.

ELLEN

Then you better sign it.

WILSON

I will.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE - DAY

It's morning.

INT. ELLEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Wilson, holding Ellen's hand, sits with eyes closed, as if
exhausted. Also sitting in the room are the three daughters,
McAdoo, and Grayson.

Wilson opens his eyes, as if sensing something, and looks at
Ellen. Grayson rises from his chair and goes to her.

WILSON

Is it all over?

GRAYSON

Yes, Mister President.

The daughters cry, McAdoo comforting Nellie.

Wilson still holds Ellen's hand, as Jessie comes to him
consolingly.

WILSON

(softly)
What am I going to do?

EXT. WHITE HOUSE GARDEN - DAY

Wilson sits in a state of depression. He seems all but oblivious to the worried House, sitting by him with notes and cigar.

HOUSE

Here's a rundown from Bryan on Mexico.

SUPERIMPOSE: "NOVEMBER, 1914."

House, with his Texas drawl, clearly tries to humor Wilson with his report, though Wilson doesn't seem to be listening,

HOUSE

(from notes)

The rebel convention at Aguascalientes elected General Eulalio Gutiérrez as provisional president. Carranza's gotten out of Mexico City, seeing as how Villa is helping Gutiérrez move in. But Carranza still says he is "first chief." He has moved into Veracruz now that we have moved out. Carranza and his general Obregón plan to build up a force to retake Mexico City. Villa has vowed to defeat them.

House looks at Wilson, staring off.

HOUSE

I understand your grieving, Mister President. I know you may never completely get over your loss. But a lot of work lies ahead.

WILSON

(after a moment)

I'm like a machine, Ed, that's run down, and there's nothing left in me.

HOUSE

There's so much that you have to do, Mister President, for humanity, with this disaster unfolding in Europe. It will take all of the leadership, all of the tenacity, that you and others can muster.

(MORE)

HOUSE (CONT'D)
 Few men, Mister President, have
 been given the opportunity to
 serve, as you have been given.

INT. HELEN BONES'S OFFICE - WINDOW - DAY

Ellen's former secretary Helen looks out at Wilson and House
 where they sit in the garden. She seems worried.

Dr. Grayson, with a cup of tea, steps to Helen's side to look
 out too.

HELEN
 We have to do something for Mister
 Wilson. I don't know what.

Grayson considers.

GRAYSON
 Well, Mrs. Wilson had the answer.
 It was a dying wish.

Helen looks at him quizzically.

INT. TAVERN (BARCELONA) - DAY

Huerta, in coat and loosened tie, sits reading a "New York
 Times" article entitled "Villa Loses Decisive Battle at
 Celaya, Mexico."

SUPERIMPOSE: "BARCELONA, SPAIN, APRIL, 1915."

Among the patrons, Huerta as he reads sits at a table with a
 NORTH AMERICAN and a SPANIARD, both 50-ish gentlemen.

NORTH AMERICAN
 You see, Victoriano, at the Battle
 of Celaya, Obregón showed Villa
 something new. The use of
 trenches, barbed wire, and machine
 guns.

Huerta, finished reading, folds the newspaper and hands it
 back to the North American.

HUERTA
 Yes. That's the best account I
 have read. Obregón has studied
 well the war in Europe.

SPANIARD

Victoriano likes to speak of
Napoleon. Celaya was Pancho
Villa's Waterloo.

NORTH AMERICAN

(to Huerta)

So that leaves Carranza in charge?

HUERTA

Yes. But he had better keep his
eye on Obregón.

They chuckle.

SPANIARD

The more things change, the more
they seem to stay the same.

The two gentlemen watch Huerta sip his drink.

NORTH AMERICAN

Do you ever wonder, General, what
would have happened if you had
fired that twenty-one gun salute?

The Spaniard looks displeased with the North American.

SPANIARD

It was out of the question. It was
a matter of Mexico's national
honor.

Huerta gazes off.

HUERTA

Yes. What a price we have to pay
sometimes. For honor.

EXT. WASHINGTON COUNTRY CLUB - GOLF COURSE - DAY

Wilson hits a long shot. His golfing partner is Grayson.
Four Secret Service agents are present.

GRAYSON

Looking good.

Wilson's mood seems solemn, as if this is work, not play.

WILSON

Keep holding back, Carey, and I'll
win this round.

They walk toward the green.

GRAYSON

Mister President, before she passed away, Mrs. Wilson asked me to tell you something, when the time was right.

They stop, Wilson looking at Grayson.

WILSON

What did she say?

GRAYSON

That she hoped you would marry again someday. She said, "I know Woodrow. He can't live without a woman's love."

WILSON

(sighs)

Thanks for telling me, Carey.
But Ellen was the love of my life.

Wilson resumes walking, Grayson lingering for a moment before following.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HELEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Helen Bones sits in her office with attractive EDITH BOLLING GALT, 42.

HELEN

The President, after Mrs. Wilson died, told me I could stay on as long as I wanted, no longer as a secretary, but in the role of White House hostess.

GALT

That was so nice of him.

HELEN

He has been very kind.

Helen slyly notes Secret Service agent Phillips stop by the open door and mouth "He's here" to her. Phillips moves on.

HELEN

But I think we've heard enough about me. Let's go have our tea and hear about you.

INT. FIRST-FLOOR CORRIDOR - DAY

Helen walks along with Galt. Behind them, Wilson and Grayson, still in their golfing attire, enter the corridor. Helen looks back and stops.

HELEN

Oh, it's the President.

Wilson and Grayson wait as the two ladies walk over to them.

HELEN

Mister President, this is a friend of mine, Edith Galt. I invited her over for tea.

GALT

Hello, Mister President.

HELEN

Would you and Doctor Grayson join us?

Wilson gazes at Galt.

WILSON

We've met before.

GALT

Yes, we have. I'm so flattered you remember. It was at a reception.

HELEN

She runs her late husband's jewelry business.

WILSON

Well, I...

HELEN

Come join us, Mister President, please.

GALT

We would be so honored.

GRAYSON

Mister President, I prescribe a cup of tea.

WILSON

Very well.

As Wilson and Galt lead the way, behind their backs Grayson gives a thumbs up to Helen.

HELEN
You too, Doctor Grayson.

GRAYSON
I'll be happy to tag along.

EXT. EL PASO, TEXAS - TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Passengers disembark from a train.

SUPERIMPOSE: "EL PASO, TEXAS, OCTOBER, 1915."

Among those who walk from the train are Huerta and PASCUAL OROZCO, 55, wearing overcoats and hats. Huerta doesn't look well.

They are confronted by three U.S. FEDERAL AGENTS in suits.

FEDERAL AGENT #1
Victoriano Huerta?

HUERTA
Yes?

FEDERAL AGENT #1
Pascual Orozco?

OROZCO
Yes, what do you want of us?

FEDERAL AGENT #1
We have warrants for your arrest.

INT. A CELL BLOCK - NIGHT

DOCTOR #2, 61, comes out of a jail cell with his bag. Huerta lies semiconscious on a bunk in the cell. A U.S. soldier locks the cell door.

SUPERIMPOSE: "FORT BLISS, TEXAS."

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Doctor #2 is met by a U.S. ARMY COLONEL, 54.

DOCTOR #2
What is he going to be tried for?

COLONEL
Conspiring with others to violate
U.S. neutrality laws.

DOCTOR #2
 (sad chuckle)
 Neutrality, eh?
 (then)
 For trying to go back to Mexico?

COLONEL
 For trying to incite rebellion
 there. That was the alleged
 intention. Pretty sad, really.
 So what has he got?

DOCTOR #2
 A severe case of liver disease.
 I don't think he will live to
 incite anything or stand trial.

EXT. WASHINGTON - GALT'S HOME - DAY

A Christmas wreath is on the front door. Two Secret Service
 agents stand near either side of the door.

SUPERIMPOSE: "DECEMBER, 1915."

MINISTER #2 (V.O.)
 Do you, Woodrow Wilson --

INT. PARLOR - DAY

Wilson and Galt stand before MINISTER #2, 58.

In the room are about 40 wedding guests, including Wilson's
 three daughters and the two husbands, and Helen and Grayson.

MINISTER #2
 -- take Edith Bolling Galt to be
 your lawfully wedded wife, to have
 and to hold from this day forward,
 for better or for worse, for
 richer, for poorer, in sickness and
 in health, to love and to cherish,
 from this day forward until death
 do you part?

WILSON
 I do.

INT. HUERTA'S CELL (FORT BLISS) - NIGHT

Huerta lies gasping, half-conscious. He takes a deep breath.
 As he breathes his last,

HUERTA
 No salute... will be fired.

EXT. WASHINGTON - CAPITOL HILL - DAY

A spring day. SUPERIMPOSE: "APRIL, 1921."

SENATOR #1 (V.O.)
Would you state your name, please?

INT. SENATE HEARING ROOM - DAY

Nelson testifies before a committee of SENATORS. Edith sits behind him in the audience.

NELSON
Nelson J. O'Shaughnessy.

SENATOR #1
And what is your occupation?

NELSON
I'm a foreign representative for
Western Union.

SENATOR #1
And during the first half of 1914,
what was your occupation?

NELSON
I was in the Foreign Service. I
was the United States chargé
d'affaires in Mexico City.

SENATOR #1
Then you had a pretty good vantage
point on Mexican-American
relations, which is the concern
of these hearings, did you not?

NELSON
Yes, sir, I did. I might add that
my lovely wife Edith has a
published memoir on the subject.
I have a small part in it.

Some polite LAUGHTER.

SENATOR #1
Then, to begin with, how would you
describe, in general terms, the
Wilson administration's policy
toward Mexico?

Former envoy John Lind sits listening in the audience.

NELSON

During the period in question, I would describe it as ill-conceived, cruel, and totally unnecessary.

CHAIRMAN

My goodness. And why would President Wilson pursue such a policy as you have described?

NELSON

Through no ill intent, sir. It was done both for the sake of American interests, and through a misguided sense of idealism.

LATER

SENATOR #2 addresses Nelson.

SENATOR #4

A journalist remarked at the time that our whole Mexican policy boiled down to this: The President didn't like Victoriano Huerta.

NELSON

That played a part, I suppose. But how much? I knew General Huerta, and liked him. But he did some unlikeable things.

LATER

SENATOR #3 addresses Nelson.

SENATOR #5

On the matter of the salute, would you agree that we left General Huerta no political choice, once we decided, come hell or high water, to support Admiral Mayo's demand?

NELSON

I do agree, yes. That demand was made out of arrogance. And I would like to say this, if I may. We don't live in a perfect world. This country should continue to be a world leader.

(MORE)

NELSON (CONT'D)

But with respect for our immediate neighbors, as well as for others.

(then)

Edith reminded me just this morning of a great quotation. Porfirio Diaz was a dictator for many long years in Mexico. Diaz was the reason the Mexican Revolution was fought. But Porfirio Diaz, scoundrel though he was, said something well worth remembering, for what it says about the history of relations between our two countries. He said, "Poor Mexico. So far from God, and so close to the United States."

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Nelson and Edith come out of the hearing room, in which people move about in recess. As they start to leave,

LIND (O.S.)

Nelson...

Lind has followed them out of the hearing room.

LIND

Hello, Edith.

(to Nelson)

You had some pretty harsh words for President Wilson's Mexican efforts. In my testimony this afternoon, I'll try to balance things out.

NELSON

Feel free. Like the senator said, I had a pretty good vantage point.

LIND

Then you needn't be reminded that Huerta is no longer in Mexico.

NELSON

No, he's not.

LIND

And Mexico has a constitutionally elected president. By the name of Obregón.

NELSON

Yes. Let me ask you something.
Couldn't Mexico have gotten where
it is without us?

LIND

I don't know. But we certainly
helped the cause.
(kindly smile)
You're a good man, Nelson. I just
don't think you were cut out for
foreign affairs. I know I wasn't.

Lind nods to Edith and goes back into the hearing room.

NELSON

I wasn't, he wasn't. He's right on
both scores.

Nelson and Edith walk together toward the building's exit.

NELSON

If only my father hadn't invested
all his money in the Nicaragua
Canal.

She smiles at him sympathetically.

They walk out into the sunlight.

FADE OUT.

THE END