

# *Capitalism and Morality*

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## **AN AMERICAN ROMANCE: A TALE OF IMMIGRATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

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*An American Romance* opens with immigrants coming to America and the plot continues with the life story of Steve Dangos. Upon his arrival he plans on traveling to Minnesota to meet his cousin. To get there he walks through Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. Finally he reaches his destination and meets his cousin. From the beginning Steve is a very curious man.

As soon as he arrives Steve is very interested in work. His cousin gets him a job where he works. From the beginning Steve cannot believe the money he will be making collecting iron. Steve learns about the whistling system they have which tells employees when to start and stop working. Their job is to collect iron which will then be made into other products. They work in a large man made canyon. Steve is very interested in the iron and how it is processed into tools and other iron products.

He meets Anna, a teacher, and she introduces him to the encyclopedia and also teaches him how to read. Steve continues to learn through the encyclopedia and life events. He loves his first 4<sup>th</sup> of July, where he is exposed to a day off work full of picnics, beer, music, and baseball. Through his experience Steve learns that America is the land of opportunity and he takes advantage of every opportunity that comes his way. Steve uses machinery he is not trained for at work and continues to probe for more. Eventually he moves and makes his way to the steel industry.

Once again he starts at the bottom, but moves up quickly. Steve asks Anna to come visit and they get married. Their first baby was a girl although Steve wanted a boy. Steve and Anna have many more children and Steve names them after prestigious people such as presidents. Eventually Steve moves up to the foreman position and makes some changes in the process that make it more efficient. He realizes they can put two pieces in at a time. With this new process implemented they can make twice as much steel. The family purchases a car; which does not run properly and breaks down on their way to their son's graduation. With Steve's curiosity he takes the whole car apart to figure out how it works and how he can make it run better. George Washington, their son, is the speaker at graduation and talks about the future and America. He tells the other graduates to face future with hope, faith, and courage. After the graduation one of their daughters asks if she can get married.

George Washington makes the decision to enlist in the Army to fight in the war instead of attending college. Steve's daughter Tina also leaves home when she gets married. As Steve's children are starting to leave home, George asks his father to become an American citizen. Steve studies constantly to acquire his citizenship. He learns about government, presidents, and the pledge of allegiance. Steve receives a telegram notifying him that George has died at war, but he still gains citizenship. While Steve is working

on the car, one of George's former teachers, Howard, brings Steve and Anna some of his poetry from school.

Steve gets the car running better than ever and gets pulled over and goes to jail for going seventy-eight miles per hour. Steve and Howard go to Indianapolis to race and end up in the hospital. Anna takes the gamble and goes with Steve to start a car business. Because of Steve's background in the steal industry, they make the cars with steel bodies so even when they are flipped over the car is still safe. Along with the safety they have also added suspension so the whole car does not shake when it runs. Steve and Howard make a proposal to a car company, but they do not accept. They think the idea is too risky and will not make the car until another similar one comes on the market.

The cousin Steve came to America to see comes to visit and gives Steve the money to start the car business. They start a factory and they put the car into the automobile show in New York. Soon after the show, they are making three hundred cars a day. To meet their demand, they use an assembly line to make the cars faster. One of Steve's sons, Teddy, begins to work for his father. Teddy insists on starting at the bottom to learn the business. Teddy is working in the factory and begins to disagree with his father on business issues. Teddy has been working with the factory workers so he understands them, which his father does not.

The factory wants to be a formal recognized organization, but Steve and the board refuse. They workers go on strike. At a board meeting representatives from the factory workers join the meeting. Teddy speaks for the workers behalf; he states that they need to have faith in each other, and the men want fairness. As he continues he says force is no substitute for wisdom, and men want security of where Steve stands and dignity. The other board members agree with Teddy, and Steve is the only stubborn objection.

Steve retires and he and Anna go on a honeymoon. Steve is frustrated about his relationship with Teddy. At this time Pearl Harbor has been bombed and Teddy stops making cars and begins to make airplanes. Teddy asks for his fathers help, and they begin to work together. The government needs 4500 planes a day, and Steve knows they can do it.

Throughout his life, failure was never an option. From the time Steve came to America he believed it to be the land of opportunity and took advantage of every opportunity that came his way. His curiosity and eagerness to learn helped him with his work and ambitions, and his dedication and motivation led him to success.

Steve continued to change throughout the film. His character was changing because of everything he was learning. Whenever Steve learned something new he would move on to a new job or idea. The more he learned and more experience he had the better ideas he came up with. Steve changed by getting his citizenship. He changed as he became more successful. He became close-minded, but then changed again when he went back and started making planes with his son. Also the longer Steve had been in America the less of an accent he had.

This story uses a great deal of propaganda to promote the American Dream. Steve starts off working in the iron and steel plants and ends up working on cars and airplanes. In the movie, he is exposed to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July festivities. He is told that his son could be president so he names his children after presidents. Propaganda played a huge role in WWII for which Steve and his son made planes for the government.

As *An American Romance* opens all of the immigrants are coming to America. Each and ever one has come to live the American dream. They have come in search for jobs and to seek a better life.

Steve believes that money will bring him happiness. This is the reason he comes to America. The first question he asks his cousin is about a job. He cannot believe the amount of money he will be making. When that job is not good enough Steve moves on to another industry. When Steve and his son disagree about work, he realizes that money will not bring him happiness. He ends up miserable when he is retired until Teddy and he start making planes.

This film demonstrates that businessmen must be innovators and risk takers. Especially with technology, people must always be coming up with new ideas in order to succeed in today's competitive market. Any entrepreneur must be willing to take risks in business. Steve and Howard come up with the idea to make the body of a car from steel. They are marketing for safety to consumers. When they pitch this idea to the corporate world the idea does not flourish. Knowing that they have a great product, Steve and Howard are determined to make it themselves. With no other cars on the market like this they are taking a huge risk that consumers will like the idea. With the financial help of the cousin they make a successful factory and business.

In *An American Romance*, Steve is the main character. At the beginning of the story the audience sees that Steve is the protagonist. When he begins to have problems with business and family Steve becomes the antagonist struggling with opposition to himself. Through his journey to success Steve becomes very close One of the biggest lessons that can be learned from this story is what happens in the boardroom between Steve and his son. The factory workers go on strike because they want to be recognized as an organization. Steve does not agree with the workers and will not let it happen. His son speaks on behalf of the other factory members and explains why they want to be recognized. The primary reason for the organization is to be treated fairly and have some sense of security. After Teddy explains his rationale for the organization the other board members begin to agree with him. Steve is being greedy and stubborn. He does not see any reason for the organization and thinks he will lose money and he does not want to give factory workers any more power.