

THE DEVIL IN THE WHITE CITY

Written by
Graham Moore

Based on the book by
Erik Larson

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BLACK.

HH HOLMES (V.O.)
What's the worst thing you've ever
done?

EXT. CHICAGO - EVENING - SEPTEMBER 3, 1892

CHICAGO SKYLINE: Dusk washes across the smoke and tar of
America's most up-and-coming metropolis.

MOVING DOWN INTO THE CROWDED STREETS: You can smell the hot
blood of a thousand nearby slaughterhouses under the delicate
hats and crisp suits of the city's GENTRY.

Amidst the CLATTER OF PASSING HANSOMS we find:

HH HOLMES - 30s, impeccable in every sense - STROLLS the
bustling south Madison Avenue with a young WOMAN.

WOMAN

Mr. Holmes, that is not a question
for a -

HH HOLMES

- Now what did I say about calling
me -

WOMAN

- *Henry.*

HH HOLMES

Thank you.

WOMAN

Henry, you're speaking to a lady.

HH HOLMES

Well that's what we're here to
determine.

WOMAN

The tongue on you!

HH HOLMES

Guilty, I've been told. But you're
avoiding my question. Tell me: The
worst thing. The most dastardly.
The most devilish.

WOMAN

Well I couldn't even say.

HH HOLMES

Of course you can. Anyone can. And that's my point.

(taking her hand)

Watch your step.

WOMAN

Where are we going? The sun's almost down.

HH HOLMES

Trust me.

She looks into his blue eyes - and she does.

She puts her hands in Holmes' and lets him guide her onto the 57TH STREET BRIDGE, arching above wide railroad tracks, as the GLOW OF DOWNTOWN FADES BEHIND THEM.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

We all remember our misdeeds so vividly. Our hearts are singed by the guilt. I'm sure you remember precisely where you were, how it happened, how you wish it never did.

WOMAN

... I told a lie.

HH HOLMES

(making a show)

Well my God! And I thought you were a lady. Good day, ma'am.

WOMAN

No, Henry, I -

(realizing)

- Are you mocking me? That's not fair! My sister. She'd gotten this new frock from Mother, and she loved it. Loved it like nothing she'd ever had before. One day, she was out, I was alone - I was 14 years old, all right? I tried it on, and... It tore. The back, there was no way to sew it, and I've never been much with a needle to begin with.

HH HOLMES

You lied?

WOMAN

I told her it was the dog.

HH HOLMES

... Annie, I'm going to tell you something now, and while it might be hard to hear I want you to know that I mean it with total honesty: That is the most pathetic lie I've ever heard.

WOMAN

Stop!

HH HOLMES

How would the dog have gotten to the frock and ripped only the back?

WOMAN

I was fourteen, all right? I'll never forget the look on my sister's face.

HH HOLMES

Yes, precisely! Now try this: What's the best thing you've ever done? The most noble, the most altruistic?

WOMAN

(puzzled)
... I have no idea.

HH HOLMES

One silly lie to your big sister will live on in your head in regret and infamy for your entire life; meanwhile all your good deeds evaporate like hot milk.

WOMAN

We remember our sins, but never our triumphs?

HH HOLMES

No no, Annie. Our sins are our triumphs.

He turns to face her.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

Would you like to see something beautiful?

WOMAN

Well who would say no to a question
like that?

Holmes steps aside, pulls her to the top of the bridge...

He gestures out towards...

... THE WORLD'S FAIR, just months into construction.

FROM A MUDDY FIELD, SKELETAL BUILDINGS RISE UP LIKE GIANT
PREHISTORIC BEASTS.

A hundred buildings, each the size of a museum, sprout from
the earth. The AGRICULTURE BUILDING, MANUFACTURES,
ADMINISTRATION, and ELECTRICITY are the biggest - each some
30 stories tall, all formed with WOODEN BEAMS for skeletons.

The buildings stand over THE GREAT BASIN: A man-made lake at
the center of the fair grounds, RIVULETS of CANALS spreading
like fingers out towards Lake Michigan.

The scope, even this early, is breathtaking.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(stunned by the beauty)
... Is that...?

HH HOLMES

Quite literally the largest feat of
construction in the history of the
world.

WOMAN

I've heard... Well they say -

HH HOLMES

- What, "over-budget?" "Behind
schedule?" Words for bean counters,
not for artists. Do you want to
see?

WOMAN

See? How? It's closed off.

HH HOLMES

Has being told you're not allowed
to do something ever made you want
to do it *less*?

She smiles, and he leads her down...

... To a HIDDEN CANAL bringing water into the fair's lagoon.

He eagerly steps in, getting WET TO THE KNEES.

She looks it him apprehensively: Ewww.

But ONE LOOK from him and she has to shrug: "why not?"

And she follows him through the water onto:

EXT. PARTIALLY BUILT FAIR GROUNDS - CONTINUOUS

As she comes up on the OTHER SIDE of the canal, her sparkling HAIR CLIP falls from her head.

Holmes sees and SNATCHES IT.

WOMAN
Give that back.

HH HOLMES
Says the liar to the thief.

And with that Holmes TAKES OFF -

- Running playfully through the grounds -

- Passing the hulking outlines of the great buildings -

- Until he SLOWS and TURNS and both of them laughing she TUMBLES INTO HIS ARMS.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
(re: hair clip)
Looking for this?

She smiles and leans in and the moment is just right... She impulsively KISSES HIM.

He KISSES BACK.

THEIR FIGURES AGAINST THE MIDWESTERN NIGHT WE

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLMES' HOTEL - 63RD ST - NIGHT

A GRAND THREE-STORY on 63rd Street. Drugstore on the first floor, atop which sits what used to be a modest apartment complex, but has recently been renovated - at considerable expense - into a hotel.

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - SAME TIME

The midnight moon shines into Holmes' third-floor private bedroom.

Crumpled sheets on the bed. The Woman lies under them.

WOMAN

... Well. How must you think of me now?

HH HOLMES

Fondly.

Holmes sits on the edge of the bed, fiddling with his boots.

WOMAN

You must say that to all the girls.

HH HOLMES

If you're asking whether I've ever felt fondly towards a woman before, the answer is certainly yes, but I can't imagine that's saying much.

WOMAN

Be coy if you want, fine. You don't think I'm - you know - loose?

HH HOLMES

Just the opposite.

WOMAN

(drains her glass)
I'm feeling lightheaded.

HH HOLMES

It's French.

WOMAN

Well aren't you fancy?

She stares at him as he fiddles.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

(remembering)
... Wait wait, so what about you? What's the worst thing you've ever done?

HH HOLMES

I met a woman in a train station once.

WOMAN

Like you met me?

HH HOLMES

She came and stayed at my hotel. I walked with her along 59th Street, and we flirted shamelessly as we gazed over the muddy bog that would soon become the World's Fair.

WOMAN

Henry.

HH HOLMES

We kissed above the dirt before she came back to my hotel and drank champagne. We made love, and as her passions came to fruition she made the oddest scratching sounds with her teeth.

WOMAN

Henry...

HH HOLMES

She looked so deeply into my eyes after, and she tried to play it coolly but she loved me, I think. And yet, I didn't feel anything. I never do. So, I attempted a small experiment to determine just why. To see what it would feel like. I'm a medical man, you know. And so I watched her face very closely as she sipped my champagne, unaware that I had laced it with poison.

WOMAN

Stop this.

HH HOLMES

She grew light-headed and weak.

The Woman tries to stand -

- But she can't do it. She's been drugged.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

As she fell asleep, I felt her wet breath on my ear.

He leans over her on the bed. Removes a KNIFE FROM HIS BOOT.

The Woman TRIES TO SCREAM. She can't.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

I slit her throat and watched her blood darken the white sheets. I cut her body up into pieces. Arms and lungs and spleen and breasts, each so round and small. I wrapped the messy parts in the bedsheets and buried them beneath the muddy fairgrounds. The girl - she was missed, I think, by loving parents and a big sister with a torn frock. But she was never found.

Holmes SLITS HER THROAT, matter-of-factly.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

It felt...

(thinking hard, trying to gauge his own reaction)

... I suppose it didn't feel like much of anything. Hmmm.

He takes her Hair Clip and stares at it: So beautiful.

He opens up a LOCKED CABINET:

INSIDE: A ROW OF 20 HAIR CLIPS, shimmering by gaslight.

He adds this newest one to his collection.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

... Oh. But that wasn't even the worst thing I've ever done.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO SKYLINE - MORNING - SEQUENCE

Dawn rises across the city of broad shoulders: FREIGHT TRAINS pulling tons of COAL across acres of nearby FARMLAND and into the heart of the NEW METROPOLIS.

INT. CHEAP APARTMENTS - CLARK STREET - MORNING - SEQUENCE

EMELINE CIGRAND, 20s - so much to prove to everyone, especially herself - wakes in her rented room. \$4 a week doesn't buy you much.

She DRESSES, first applying a loose, vest-like LIBERTY BODICE - instead of the horribly tight corsets still in vogue among the women of America - before garters, a skirt, and...

... A BRIGHT RED HAIR CLIP.

Another victim, off to make her way in a very dangerous city.

EXT. CHEAP APARTMENTS - CLARK STREET - SEQUENCE

Emeline makes her way through the bustle of the crowded South Loop, beneath some of AMERICA'S FIRST SKYSCRAPERS, dodging STEAMING HORSE MANURE on the cobblestones to board a -

I/E. TROLLY CAR - COTTAGE GROVE LINE - SEQUENCE

- Gripping the trolley car POLE in her GLOVED HAND, Emeline makes her morning commute.

Hers is the LONE FEMALE FACE heading to work amidst a SEA OF MOUSTACHED MEN.

EXT. GREAT UNION STOCK YARDS - SEQUENCE

Jumping off at the 61st Street stop, Emeline walks passed NINE MILLION SQUEALING HOGS IN WOODEN PENS -

- The GREAT UNION STOCK YARDS, only a few miles from the city's center, REEK of pig slop -

- As Emeline turns away from the HUNDREDS OF GALLONS OF PIG'S BLOOD being poured into the Chicago river.

Stepping from downtown into the southside is like taking a time machine into a distant past.

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - 59TH STREET GATE - SEQUENCE

Emeline approaches the fairgrounds, where 500 UNION WORKERS PICKET the 59TH STREET GATE.

They YELL and CATCALL - "SCAB!" "WHORE!" "CUNT!" - a few even throwing ROCKS at Emeline as she PUSHES THROUGH THE CROWD and onto

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - DAY - SEQUENCE

Morning at the fair grounds: THOUSANDS OF (NON-UNION) WORKMEN are already hard at it - adding STEEL TRUSSES to reenforce the center of the tallest buildings, but other than that, everything is made of WOOD.

As Emeline moves through the construction we see that Holmes was right: The size and scope of this undertaking make Moses and his team look like rank amateurs.

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - MINUTES LATER

Emeline, now carrying a TEA TRAY as befits her position as a lowly assistant, serves a GROUP OF PROSPECTIVE INVESTORS.

The Investors are impatiently waiting for something.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Tea, Sirs? Anyone?

She's met with FRESH GRUMBLINGS from the irritated Investors.

FAIR EXECUTIVE
If you'll just be patient another moment. He'll be right out.
(turns to Emeline,
quietly)
You. Girl. Find him. And hurry.

Emeline nods as she RUNS OFF -

- Moving past the DEEP PITS and GROWING DIRT PILES of digs in progress as she goes into

INT. BURNHAM'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

This TENT would put the Ringling Bros to shame. This is the HQ for planning and operations around here; SUPPORT STAFF and ASSISTANTS FLIT in and out like ants around a hive.

Emeline passes DESKS and OFFICES and a FULL FIRE PLACE before the door to the PRIVATE BACK OFFICE...

... Guarded by a SECRETARY.

SECRETARY
You can't go in there.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Is he inside?

SECRETARY
It doesn't matter.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Two dozen of Chicago's wealthiest are at the front gate waiting on him, dollars numbering into the tens of millions on the line, and you're saying it doesn't matter?

SECRETARY

He put the bolt down.

EMELINE CIGRAND

The bolt?

SECRETARY

To the door. When he puts the bolt down, he's not to be disturbed under any circumstances. That's the order. It's my job.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Oh for God's sakes.

Emeline KNOCKS ON THE DOOR, loud as she can.

EMELINE CIGRAND (CONT'D)

Sir?!

SECRETARY

No, stop! You're not allowed to do that.

EMELINE CIGRAND

(ignoring the Secretary)

Sir, you're needed outside!

Emeline KNOCKS again.

SECRETARY

If you knock on that door one more time you're fired. And don't think I can't do it.

Emeline stares at the Secretary. Who outranks her.

EMELINE CIGRAND

... Fine.

Emeline walks to a nearby desk and takes a piece of FLEXIBLE CARDBOARD --

-- SLIPS IT THROUGH the locked door --

SECRETARY

Hey! What in the world are you doing?!

EMELINE CIGRAND

You said not to knock -

- Emeline LIFTS UP the bolt on the other side, UNLOCKING it -

EMELINE CIGRAND (CONT'D)

- So I didn't.

Emeline OPENS the door defiantly entering

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - BACK ROOM

... Which is a horrible MESS.

Half-drunk wine bottles on the desk. Ink-drenched plans everywhere. And in the big wooden chair behind the desk... A body SLUMPED OVER, sleeping on its forearms.

This is DANIEL BURNHAM, 40s - practically weighed down by the size of the chip on his shoulder.

EMELINE CIGRAND

(not what she expected)

... Sir?

(to Secretary)

Did he sleep here last night?

SECRETARY

He sleeps here every night.

EMELINE CIGRAND

MR. BURNHAM!!!

DANIEL BURNHAM

(stirring)

... What's - Who are you?

EMELINE CIGRAND

My name is Emeline Cigrand.

DANIEL BURNHAM

That doesn't help.

EMELINE CIGRAND

I'm a junior secretary in the front office.

SECRETARY

I am so sorry, Mr. Burnham, I told her no one was allowed to -

EMELINE CIGRAND

- It's 8:20. AM.

DANIEL BURNHAM

God damn it! The investors...

He quickly gets up to leave.

EMELINE CIGRAND

They're waiting for you. But -
(stopping him, adjusting
his tie)

- Okay, now you can go.

SECRETARY

This won't happen again. I'm sending Miss Cigrand away from the front office.

DANIEL BURNHAM

Right. She'll take your job.

Both Emeline and the Secretary stop: What?

DANIEL BURNHAM (CONT'D)

You're fired.

(to Emeline)

And you're my new personal secretary. But I don't care how hungover I am - if I ever miss a meeting again, you're gone too.

ON THE SECRETARY: Shock.

ON EMELINE: Wasn't expecting that.

Burnham heads out to:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - MINUTES LATER

Daniel Burnham leads the group of PROSPECTIVE INVESTORS on a tour of the fair grounds.

Among them are POTTER PALMER and his wife BERTHA - the very wealthiest of Chicago's nouveau riches.

DANIEL BURNHAM

... "Men in those days had
convictions.

(MORE)

DANIEL BURNHAM (CONT'D)

We moderns have *opinions*. And it requires something more than an opinion to build a cathedral." A German poet named Henrik Heine wrote that. Here we have over 400 buildings, designed by the greatest collection of artists assembled since right about the 15th century. We've attractions so plentiful that Buffalo Bill himself arrived to put on a show, but couldn't even get space on the grounds. We're only missing one thing.

Burnham pauses for effect, when he's interrupted by:

POTTER PALMER

(not buying it)

You want our money.

DANIEL BURNHAM

... Yes, Sir, I do. This fair very much needs it. But what I want is something more important: Your *conviction*. I'm not a city boy like you lot. I was born in upstate New York. I learned a trade. I made my way around the world. London. Paris. Berlin. You know what the men in those towns say about Chicago?

ON POTTER PALMER: What do they say?

DANIEL BURNHAM (CONT'D)

"Where's that?" They've never even heard of this place. You lot are the richest, most powerful folks in a place no one knows squat about - you want to change that? This fair is your chance. You want to be the biggest fish in a little pond? Or do you want to be the biggest fish in the whole darned ocean?

POTTER PALMER

... How do we become the biggest fish in the whole ocean?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Simple: We eat all the other fish.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

Daniel Burnham leads the Investors to an empty parcel of land at the very center of the fair grounds.

DANIEL BURNHAM

Audiences are so smart these days.
They've grown calloused to wonder.
Commonplace marvels simply won't
do. We need to shock. Stun them.
Wow them. We will not win with a
hundred base hits. We need one big,
gargantuan, undeniable home run.

Burnham points at the plot of empty mud before them.

DANIEL BURNHAM (CONT'D)

At the last fair in Paris, Mr.
Gustave Eiffel built a tower of
1063 feet. Let's put him to shame.
We're going to build a tower twice
that size. 2000 feet. We will get
the very best in the world to
design it. Sullivan, Mead. New York
thinks we're full of hot air? What
do they call us, "The Windy City?"
Let's prove them all wrong.

On Potter and the other Investors: They're going to do it.

When they're interrupted by:

WORKMAN (O.S.)

OH DEAR GOD!!!!

Burnham and the Investors turn to see WORKMEN YELLING beside a GREAT PIT in which they're digging.

They rush to the edge of the pit to see what the matter is:

IN THE PIT: Two workmen UNEARTH A PILE OF BLOODY BEDSHEETS.

WORKMAN (CONT'D)

Dear lord, the smell...

The sheets fall open to reveal a WOMAN'S BODY. Dead. Cut into pieces.

Everyone RECOILS in disgust.

POTTER PALMER

What in God's name -

DANIEL BURNHAM

- Everyone, back away! Away now, do you hear?!

BERTHA PALMER

Is that... A person?

INVESTOR

It's a body... You've a dead body buried at the fair!

The Workmen scramble out of the pit, just trying to get away from this horrible thing.

ON BURNHAM: Disaster.

POTTER PALMER

(to Burnham)

Jesus, Burnham. Fix this mess. Now.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PHARMACY - DAY

The first floor of Holmes' hotel is occupied by a PHARMACY:

Row upon row of COLORED GLASS BOTTLES, every size and shape imaginable, advertising every potion real and invented. Sea salt, tincture of opium, Bayer Cocaine, a new and increasingly popular over-the-counter painkiller. It's on sale.

Behind the counter: Henry Holmes, negotiating with a SALESMAN named RICHARD PINZER.

RICHARD PINZER

... And you've ordered... Eleven gallons.

HH HOLMES

Correct.

RICHARD PINZER

Mr. Holmes, that's quite a lot of chloroform.

HH HOLMES

Is it too heavy for you to carry?

RICHARD PINZER

No, it's - Sir it's just that chloroform can be a poison.

HH HOLMES

I certainly won't feed it to the roses, if that's your concern.

RICHARD PINZER

Your account is overdrawn as it is. We haven't received a payment from you in months.

HH HOLMES

I don't know about that.

RICHARD PINZER

Perhaps if you cut back on a few items - chloroform, kerosene...

HH HOLMES

Cut back? Do you realize where we are right now? What we're a part of?

(off Pinzer's confused look)

Come with me.

Holmes leads him down the aisles, past a few CUSTOMERS to the WIDE WINDOWS at the front of the shop:

On the street outside, we see the BUSTLE of the growing city.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

Do you know what the expected attendance is for the fair? 150,000 people.

RICHARD PINZER

That's a lot.

HH HOLMES

Per day. And they are going to need a place to sleep. They are going to need hair tonic, horse-hair brushes, cocaine for their toothaches and, yes, chloroform at their bedtime. If I am late in my payments to you, it is only because I am constructing above us the grandest hotel within miles. We are three blocks from the fair's main gate. How can this place be anything other than a wild success? And you and me, we get to be a part of that.

RICHARD PINZER
A part of it?

HH HOLMES
Equity, Mr. Pinzer. I think you could use some equity. For every box you give me now, I'll give you ownership of this operation in corresponding value. And as the value of all around us goes up...

Pinzer looks around: This isn't a bad proposition at all.

RICHARD PINZER
... Can't imagine any man not wanting to be a part of what you're offering, Mr. Holmes.

Holmes pats him on the back.

RICHARD PINZER (CONT'D)
But I'm not sure if this fair will be the success you imagine. Not with this business of the body.

HH HOLMES
Body?

RICHARD PINZER
You haven't heard? Frightful. My pal in the stone business, he said they were digging yesterday when they found a human body buried beneath the fair. Wrapped in sheets. And...

HH HOLMES
And? There's more?

RICHARD PINZER
Yes. The body was all cut into little pieces. God. Can you imagine? What sort of villain would do a thing like that?

ON HOLMES: This is a problem.

INT. FARMHOUSE - CARBONDALE, IL - DAWN

Just after dawn, DETECTIVE FRANK PICKETT - 60, thinks he's seen the very worst this fallen world has to offer, he's wrong - exits his house to tend to his land.

He pushes CORN SEEDS into the soil by hand, one by one, planting what will soon be hundreds of rows of sweet Illinois corn.

He's interrupted by a WESTERN UNION MESSENGER:

WESTERN UNION MAN
- Mr. Pickett?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
(sizing him up)
I don't know you.

WESTERN UNION MAN
Welcome to town. Heard you bought this place from Mr. Andrews.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
How can I help you?

WESTERN UNION MAN
Other way around. You got a message at the Western Union office in Carbondale. Marked "urgent." Thought I'd bring it to you myself.

The Man hands Pickett a TELEGRAM: It's from "DANIEL BURNHAM - THE WORLD'S FAIR."

WESTERN UNION MAN (CONT'D)
You know Daniel Burnham?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
No, Sir, I do not.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - 59TH STREET GATE - DAY

Detective Pickett approaches the fair grounds.

Pushing past the HUNDREDS OF UNION PROTESTORS, he gives his name to GUARDS, who let him in.

INT. BURNHAM'S TENT - MINUTES LATER

Pickett enters Burnham's tent to find his new secretary Emeline guarding the door to his back office, just as his previous secretary had.

Emeline is IMMERSED in the papers on her desk.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Good morning, Miss, I'm -

EMELINE CIGRAND
- He's expecting you.

Pickett opens the back door and enters to find Daniel Burnham going over his plans. Burnham sees him.

DANIEL BURNHAM
(pouring bottle of port)
Will you take a glass?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
No, Sir.

DANIEL BURNHAM
And here they said you were the one
I could trust.

Pickett smiles.

DANIEL BURNHAM (CONT'D)
... How would you like to be the
head of security for the World's
Fair?

ON DETECTIVE PICKETT: Are you serious?

ON BURNHAM: Yes I am.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
... I would not.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Detective -

DETECTIVE PICKETT
- I'm not. A detective. Not
anymore. I retired. And I won't
waste your time any longer.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Why did you retire?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Carbondale grows the sweetest corn
in the state.

DANIEL BURNHAM
I was told there was some sort of
incident.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

You want a bushel, they should be
ripe by Thanksgiving.

Pickett turns to leave.

DANIEL BURNHAM

Chief Hartman said you used to be
the best detective in Chicago.
Before you left.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

No he didn't.

DANIEL BURNHAM

What makes you say that?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Sir, not to be rude, but that's
horseshit. The Chief can't stand
the sight of me, owing to some
unpleasantness between us awhile
back the nature of which is not
your business. I can promise you
that no one on the force is going
to work with me. I am not at all
suited for this job. And so I will
not do you the disservice of taking
it.

ON BURNHAM: He smiles.

DANIEL BURNHAM

... That is exactly what I was
hoping you'd say.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Pardon?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Detective, I'm hiring you *because*
the Chief can't stand the sight of
you. He gave me a list of twenty
names, and yours wasn't on it.
Which makes you perfect. The
situation here is very delicate. If
I invite the police onto my
grounds, they will tell their
superiors, who will tell the Mayor,
and every day I have the Mayor
peaking over my shoulder is a day
my job gets more difficult.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

This fair is sovereign territory,
and you want to be the king?

DANIEL BURNHAM

No. This fair is Xanadu, and I'm
the goddamned emperor... I'll lay
it out plain: A girl has been
murdered. If word gets out,
violence and fear will catch like
brushfire in a dry woods. We won't
have a single guest, much less the
millions we need. From day one
they've said that Chicago is too
dangerous a place for the fair.
1600 murders a year. Off the books,
who knows how many? We're too poor,
too blighted, too crime-ridden. You
really want to let them be right?

ON PICKETT: That was very impressive.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

You give a good speech.

DANIEL BURNHAM

You'll have complete autonomy.
You'll answer to no one but me. You
hire anyone you want, as many of
them as you want. You feel like
showing Chief Hartman, the entire
force, the Mayor, that you can do
what they can't? This is your
chance.

ON PICKETT: What's he going to do?

He takes a STIFF SWIG of Burnham's port. He's in.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

... I think you might be the only
man in Chicago that hates those
fellas more than I do.

CUT TO:

EXT. POLICE STATION, 10TH PRECINCT - 63RD STREET - DAY

The busy front of the local POLICE STATION.

Up the steps and past the dozens of POLICE OFFICERS is...

... Henry Holmes, walking right into the station.

INT. POLICE STATION - BULLPEN - MOMENTS LATER

Holmes moves through the station finally stopping at the adjoining desks of two POLICE OFFICERS.

HH HOLMES
(raising hands)
You caught me red handed.

POLICE OFFICER #1
Henry! What are you doing here?
Bitty says thanks, by the way.
Happy Easter.

POLICE OFFICER #2
Not that the mailman brought me
anything.

HH HOLMES
I'll make you a deal: Find yourself
a good woman like your partner
here, someone who knows how to make
a meal, you settle down with her
and then I'll have my man send you
the finest ham in the city. But
you're not the settling type, are
you?

POLICE OFFICER #2
You're one to talk!

HH HOLMES
(shrugs)
Can I ask you lads for a favor?

POLICE OFFICER #1
Don't think I can get you Florence
Easton's address.

HH HOLMES
Too bony for me anyhow. What's
afoot with this body they found in
Jackson Park? It's three blocks
from my hotel, the guests are
spooked.

POLICE OFFICER #1
Who knows?

HH HOLMES
I figured you might. That's why I'm
here.

POLICE OFFICER #1
And that's where you're wrong.

POLICE OFFICER #2
We heard rumors, same as you, but
Burnham is running the fair as if
it's his own sovereign kingdom.
He's got his own coppers, his own
head of security. Fucking Pickett.

HH HOLMES
Pickett?

POLICE OFFICER #2
Name of the asshole running the
show down there. Frank Pickett.
Doesn't have a lot of friends in
the law around here, you
understand.

POLICE OFFICER #1
Whatever's going on at the fair,
it's not the purview of the police.

ON HOLMES: Hmm. How's he going to get information?

HH HOLMES
Thank you, gents. Seems I'll have
to go straight to the horse's
mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. PINKERTON DETECTIVE AGENCY - HALSTED STREET - DAY

Detective Pickett waits in the tastefully decorated front room of the Pinkerton Detective Agency: America's most preeminent private investigation services, these folks know how to get their man. They do not do so within the confines of the law, and they certainly do not do so on the cheap.

Pickett is approached by AGENT ELLIOT, 50s.

AGENT ELLIOT
Frank. Never thought I'd see you
here.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
(re: resplendent offices)
Likewise.

AGENT ELLIOT

What, the Pinkertons? It's a step up from CPD, I'll say that. You want to see the fingerprint laboratory?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

The what?

AGENT ELLIOT

Fingerprints. You take them right from the hand with charcoal powder. No two men have the same ones.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

That sounds messy. You got my telegram?

AGENT ELLIOT

Of course.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

And?

AGENT ELLIOT

Well look. The amount of money the fair is offering us... As a representative of the Agency, we are willing and able to contract our boys out for any and all services you require.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Good.

AGENT ELLIOT

But I can't say I wasn't shocked to see your name in the middle of this. Head of fair security?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

What?

AGENT ELLIOT

You were the last guy I'd expect to run off and join the circus.

Pickett thinks: His friend is not making a bad point.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

... If this fair works, it'd be a great thing for the city. It might start to clean this place up.

AGENT ELLIOT

This city? No offense, Frank. But Chicago is not a good place to nurture your idealism.

(opening a door)

Lab got the "package" you sent. This way.

CUT TO:

INT. PINKERTON AGENCY - CHEMICAL LAB - DAY

The Pinkerton Agency's brand new CHEMICAL LABORATORY looks practically futuristic - steel, glass, everything crisp and clean.

Detective Geyer and Agent Elliot confer with a young LAB TECHNICIAN - 20s, educated, eager - beside a SHEET-COVERED BODY.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Is this were you folks do your - "fingerprints?"

LAB TECH

"Dermatoglyphics," that's the technical term. You want I should show you how it works?

ON PICKETT: No. He fucking wouldn't.

AGENT ELLIOT

Times are changing, Frank. So's our line of work.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

(to Lab Tech)

Now would be a smart time to impress me.

LAB TECH

Report says she had a lot of lung damage, before she died. She was likely poisoned with chloroform.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

... Is that it?

In answer, the Lab Tech LIFTS THE SHEET from the corpse.

The Tech and Elliot both WINCE A LITTLE at the sight.

But not Pickett.

LAB TECH
He sliced off pieces of her skin.
Even strips.

AGENT ELLIOT
(to Pickett)
Christ. You ever see something like
that?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Sure.
(off Elliot's look)
In dogs.

AGENT ELLIOT
You think a dog did this?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
No, I think her boyfriend did this.
Husband, maybe, if she's old
enough. Murderers haven't changed
since the Bible. There's two
reasons and two reasons only for a
man to kill a girl: What's in her
purse, or what's between her legs.
This looks like the latter variety.

Detective Pickett notices something on the body.

He gets close, examining it.

LAB TECH
What's that then? Something that's
gonna help you find him?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
No. Something that's gonna help me
find her.

REVEAL: Pickett stares intently at a MOLE on the girl's
neck...

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - DAY

Burnham surveys a TEAM OF WORKMEN who grip tightly on a FIRE
HOSE...

... SPRAYING WHITE PAINT AGAINST A WALL.

Emeline approaches.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Mead's train has arrived. Sullivan is coming in on the 2:15, and Hunt and Adler are at their hotels. When would you like to schedule your meetings with them?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Have them all in my office at 6.

EMELINE CIGRAND

At the same time?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Exactly.

EMELINE CIGRAND

You're going to entreat Mead, Sullivan, Hunt, and Adler to design the new tower, all at once?

DANIEL BURNHAM

If I asked them individually, it would seem like I was asking a favor. They'd each say so. But if I ask them all at the same time...

EMELINE CIGRAND

... They'll get competitive?

DANIEL BURNHAM

There's only one construction left unassigned for the fair, and it's the tower. Which none of them wants. But if we make them think they're competing for it...

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - LATER

Emeline ushers LOUIS SULLIVAN into Burnham's back room.

EMELINE CIGRAND

If you'll come this way, Mr. Sullivan.

As Emeline opens the door, Sullivan is surprised to see...

... WILLIAM MEAD, RICHARD HUNT, and DANKMAR ADLER waiting for him.

LOUIS SULLIVAN
What are you all doing here?

The men share an uneasy stare.

EMELINE CIGRAND
I'll leave you gentlemen alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - PERIMETER FENCES - AN HOUR LATER

Later that afternoon, Holmes walks the perimeter of the fair grounds, examining the fences - they've been raised.

He sees NEW GUARD POSTS distributed along the fair's edge.

He looks at the various GUARDS and WORKMAN beefing up the borders of the fair...

... Before settling on the one who seems the easiest target...

... The only woman there...

... Emeline Cigrand.

HH HOLMES
(calling to Emeline)
You there! Miss! Pardon, Miss!

Emeline turns from distributing construction plans to the workers.

She approaches Holmes, and they speak from OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE FENCE:

EMELINE CIGRAND
I'm sorry, the fair is closed to guests. You'll have to wait for opening day like everyone else.

HH HOLMES
Finally! Someone in charge I can speak with. You are in charge of all this, aren't you?

EMELINE CIGRAND
I work for Mr. Burnham.

HH HOLMES

Such a privileged position. I'm grateful for the progressivity of the organization.

EMELINE CIGRAND

I feel as if you're trying to flatter me, but I can't for the life of me tell why?

ON HOLMES: My, she's a prickly one.

HH HOLMES

These tall fences... They're terrible on the views. Why are you raising them?

EMELINE CIGRAND

Who are you, again?

HH HOLMES

Henry Holmes. I'm the proprietor of a hotel down 63rd Street.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Emeline Cigrand.

HH HOLMES

"Emeline." You're not from Chicago, are you?

EMELINE CIGRAND

Is anyone?

HH HOLMES

Someone of nobler birth than we, I suppose.

EMELINE CIGRAND

... My parents were American, but I grew up in Paris. The 14th Arrondissement. Have you been?

HH HOLMES

I have not. It sounds lovely.

EMELINE CIGRAND

And you're here because...?

HH HOLMES

These fences, they wouldn't have anything to do with the body found on the fair grounds, would they?

EMELINE CIGRAND
I don't know what you're talking
about.

HH HOLMES
... Let me show you something.

Holmes leads her down the long aisle of the fences...

... Each on either side...

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
The success of my business depends
upon the success of yours, Miss
Cigrand. No fair, no hotel to house
its guests. And if people do not
feel safe, there will be no fair.

... To the hidden CANAL ENTRYWAY we'd seen him bring the
woman through earlier.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
See here? The water feeding the
canals is deep; anyone could get in
under there.

EMELINE CIGRAND
(surprised)
Thank you. That's actually... Quite
helpful, I'll bring it up with
Detective Pickett right away.

HH HOLMES
Pickett is your head of security?

EMELINE CIGRAND
Yes.

HH HOLMES
And how is his investigation coming
along?

EMELINE CIGRAND
I couldn't say. But you can tell
your guests they've nothing to
fear: He's hired the Pinkerton's,
five hundred of them, to keep the
fair safe. There won't be a villain
within miles by the time they're
done.

ON HOLMES: Then he doesn't have much time.

HH HOLMES
Well I certainly hope your
Detective Pickett is successful.

EMELINE CIGRAND
And your hotel.

HH HOLMES
Yes. We need each other, it seems.
The fair and its environs. The
parasite and the host: It's a love
story.

And with a smile and a bow, he leaves.

ON EMELINE: What a very curious man.

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - SAME TIME

Burnham meets with Louis Sullivan, William Mead, and RICHARD HUNT, and DANKMAR ADLER in his office.

It's not going well.

LOUIS SULLIVAN
Daniel... It's not going to work.

WILLIAM MEAD
You put on a good show here, and we
appreciate it. We want to help.
God's honest truth. But what you're
asking for is impossible.

DANIEL BURNHAM
We can build a tower twice the size
of Eiffel's, if we -

RICHARD HUNT
- We can't build one *half* the size
of Eiffel's, and you know it. We
all looked at the geological
surveys... The soil isn't stable.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Geological surveys can be
misleading.

RICHARD HUNT
 Yes, so I used my own eyes. You
 want to see?

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - MINUTES LATER

Daniel Burnham and all the NY architects look at the plot of land reserved for the tower.

Richard Hunt motions to a WORKMAN, who leads a HORSE into the center of the plot.

The men watch as...

... THE HORSE BEGINS TO SINK IN THE MUDDY SOIL.

LOUIS SULLIVAN
 It's like that all the way down.

DANIEL BURNHAM
 I know. So we use a grillage.

RICHARD HUNT
 That'll work - maybe - for the shorter buildings. Anything made of wood. But a tower taller than Eiffel's?

DANIEL BURNHAM
 The investors, the Mayor, the press - They've all been promised a tower. I have to give them one.

LOUIS SULLIVAN
 Sorry, Daniel. A tower is impossible. And we can't let ourselves go down with your ship.

ON BURNHAM: He has no idea how to talk himself out of this one.

CUT TO:

INT. PINKERTON AGENCY - DISAPPEARANCES FILE ROOM - DAY

Agent Elliot leads Detective Pickett into the DISAPPEARANCES FILE ROOM:

CABINET after CABINET OF FILES.

AGENT ELLIOT

Here's what we've got in the way of mysterious disappearances.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

There must be a thousand.

AGENT ELLIOT

A little over two, Frank. That's for this year alone. Families contacted us, paid us a few dollars to see if we could find their loved ones. We're the best in the world - no offense - and these are the ones we couldn't. Do you know how easy it is to disappear in this city?

Pickett looks at the two thousand files of young women who've vanished from the streets of Chicago.

AGENT ELLIOT (CONT'D)

How're you going to find the one you're looking for?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Did you see the mole on the girl's neck? Now. She would have disappeared from the south side. All I need to find is a girl, 20s, brunette, mole on her neck, disappeared recently near Jackson Park and maybe, just maybe, she told somebody where she was staying. And her killer would've needed somewhere quiet, private to chop her up in peace - and he couldn't have risked carrying her far. I'll bet the fellow lives within half a mile of the fair. We figure out where she was staying... We tell the Chief we caught a murderer that he couldn't.

ON AGENT ELLIOT: He's impressed.

AGENT ELLIOT

... You actually are pretty good at this, aren't you?

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - NIGHT

Back in his private office, Burnham takes a very stiff drink of his expensive port before slamming the bottle angrily on his desk.

Emeline watches, unsure of how to help.

EMELINE CIGRAND
... They said no?

DANIEL BURNHAM
How could you tell?

EMELINE CIGRAND
You'll find someone else to design the tower.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Who? And how will we be able to build the damned thing? 2000 feet...

EMELINE CIGRAND
(trying to make light)
Why don't I design it for you?

Burnham looks down... And then at her, strangely.

EMELINE CIGRAND (CONT'D)
... I was trying to make a joke.

DANIEL BURNHAM
And you've learned your lesson there. But now you've given me an idea.

As he starts to WRITE something we

CUT TO:

INT. CITY HALL - MORNING

The next morning, Daniel Burnham addresses a group of REPORTERS.

DANIEL BURNHAM
... Put it in all your newspapers: An open call for submissions. Any man, woman, or child in the city is invited to submit a design for our tower.

REPORTER

Mr. Burnham, there were reports that Louis Sullivan came to town for the job. William Mead as well. Why aren't one of the nation's great architects designing it?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Because I trust the people of Chicago a lot more than I trust some fancy New York architect. Smart ideas are not the sole province of men with smart degrees.

Burnham holds up an ADVERTISEMENT: "Chicago's Fair. Chicago's Tower. Chicago's opportunity. Design the World's Fair Tower!"

CUT TO:

INT. PALACE HOTEL - STATE STREET - NIGHT

Detective Pickett returns to the run-down Palace Hotel, where he's staying for the duration of the fair.

In his rooms, he lights some candles, and goes through STACKS OF PAPERS he brought back from the Pinkerton's office:

ON THE PAPERS: Disappearance records. Letters. A large MAP of Chicago's southside.

As he looks through the records, he finds...

... "ANNIE TIMMONS." 23 years old. Brunette. A photo enclosed by her parents showing her laughing - and a BLACK MOLE ON HER NECK.

ON PICKETT: Pay dirt.

He combs through the files on Miss Timmons, finding...

... A LETTER TO HER PARENTS. He scans through it: "I've found a lovely little hotel on 63rd Street, the owner of which is just the kindest man..."

Pickett looks through the PROPERTY RECORDS: The owner of that lovely little hotel on 63rd Street is named "HENRY HOLMES."

The dead girl at the fair is Annie Timmons. And she disappeared from Holmes' hotel, after meeting its owner.

Pickett looks at his map.

He places his finger on the hotel and WINKS, as if to say:
"Gotcha."

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - ADMIN BUILDING - MORNING

In the early morning, Pickett walks excitedly into the ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, which houses his security office.

He marches past his SECRETARY as he addresses her:

DETECTIVE PICKETT
(to Secretary)
Beatrice, round up a few men for me. Older ones, experienced. And see to it that they're armed.

SECRETARY
Sir, there's a man waiting for you in your office.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
No time.

SECRETARY
Very well, I'll have him leave a note. He said his name was... Yes, Henry Holmes.

Pickett stops dead in his tracks. Turns.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
What?

CUT TO:

INT. ADMIN BUILDING - PICKETT'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Holmes waits patiently in Detective Pickett's office when the door opens, and Pickett enters.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Mr. Holmes. It's a pleasure to meet you.

HH HOLMES
Hope I haven't come at an inopportune time.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
My girl tells me you have some information you think might be helpful to the fair's security.

HH HOLMES
It's likely nothing.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
You came all the way over, didn't you?

HH HOLMES
I live close.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Do you?

HH HOLMES
... It's just... Well, I heard a rumor about a dead woman found here, that's all.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
You shouldn't believe every rumor you hear.

HH HOLMES
If a lady was killed... She wasn't killed with chloroform, was she?

ON PICKETT: Trying to hide his surprise. The Coroner had said chloroform was likely...

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Why do you ask?

HH HOLMES
Let's say there was a man... He owns a hotel on 63rd Street. He's in possession of large amounts of chloroform, perhaps illegally. And he's had... A checkered history with women. Terrible allegations. Would this man be of interest to you?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
If there had been a murder, and you could show me such a man, I would have him in shackles within the minute.

HH HOLMES

Very well.

ON PICKETT: Is Holmes serious? Is he about to confess?

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

Though it pains me to do so, I'd suggest you speak with a Mr Richard Pinzer.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Who is that, now?

HH HOLMES

You see, I own a hotel on 63rd Street. And at the corner of that hotel is a pharmacy. I own the pharmacy. And lately I've noticed that some of the chloroform has gone missing.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

... Missing?

HH HOLMES

From my orders. The supplier, I thought perhaps he was just a bit unscrupulous. The thing is though... He's a friend. Mister Pinzer. And he's also a part owner of the hotel.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Your supplier of drugs is also your co-owner?

HH HOLMES

I couldn't afford a place like that on my own.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

If I check the city records, I'll find this Richard Pinzer is your partner?

HH HOLMES

Please do. The man... Well, there have also been complaints. From female guests. He's been... Ungentlemanly towards them.

ON PICKETT: Jesus.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
... Where is he now?

As Holmes begins to write down an address we

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - ADMIN BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Seconds later, Pickett walks quickly away from his office, addressing his Secretary on the way out:

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Send Elliot to the city records office. I need to know who owns that hotel.

SECRETARY
And where are you going?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
You can tell Mr. Burnham that his fair is almost saved.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - 59TH STREET GATE - MINUTES LATER

And across the fair grounds, Holmes exits through the MAIN GATE.

A slight smile on his face, as he flags down and boards a passing hansom.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE BUCKET OF BLOOD - DOWNTOWN - LATER

The Bucket of Blood is a public drinking house in Chicago's Loop that's as unrefined as its name.

As Holmes descends from the hansom, PICKPOCKETS scurry through the shadows. Holmes passes the BRUISERS at the door and enters:

INT. THE BUCKET OF BLOOD - CONTINUOUS

Inside he finds a corner table, where a MAN is waiting for him. This is BENJAMIN PITEZEL, 20s, nervous and uncomfortable in his own skin, disappears in a crowd.

HH HOLMES
You followed him?

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
I did just like you said, Sir.

HH HOLMES
So then where is he?

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
The California. On Dearborn.

HH HOLMES
What room?

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
Oh, I... I don't know.

HH HOLMES
So then you *didn't* do just as I
said?

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
I didn't know you meant follow him
inside, Sir, I'm sorry -

HH HOLMES
- I'm glad you're sorry, kid.
That's a relief. What about the
kerosene?

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
Yes yes, I did all that.

Holmes tosses some bills on the table.

HH HOLMES
Till next time.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
Will you stay for a drink?

HH HOLMES
I don't drink.

Holmes gets up to leave.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
And if I did I wouldn't drink here.

CUT TO:

EXT. THREE STORY - HALSTED ST - LATER

Detective Pickett and his MEN exit CARRIAGES on north Halsted Street, a quieter and more suburban neighborhood.

They assemble outside a THREE-STORY.

Pickett checks a PAPER. Everyone carries a shotgun.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Pinzer is on the third floor. Back flat.

Agent Elliot arrives and comes to Pickett.

AGENT ELLIOT

I went to City Hall myself. Pinzer is a listed owner of the hotel.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

All right then. We're going to do this slowly, and we're going to do this carefully, and no one is going to get shot. All said though, if someone were to get shot, let's make sure it's him. Not us. Clear?

Elliot and the Men nod assent.

Pickett takes a moment - nice to be back in action, isn't it? - and leads the men into the building.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CALIFORNIA - DEARBORN STREET - SAME TIME

Chicago is the most dangerous city in America. And the Levee District is the most dangerous neighborhood here.

Girls in garish facepaint call out at passerby from beneath flickering gaslamps. Tramps and vagrants stumble drunk from loud saloons and are robbed before they can take a breath of clean air.

This is hell, and into it descends Henry Holmes, before his hired hansom retreats away.

A polite nod to the BOUNCER, who's thrilled to see such a well-dressed man around here, and Holmes enters

INT. THE CALIFORNIA - DEARBORN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Shangri-la for sinners.

RIBALD SONGS come from the piano player in the corner, as MEN order drinks and examine the ARRAY OF WHORES who parade through the bar area before taking their johns upstairs, into any of two dozen private rooms.

The prostitutes all wear a UNIFORM: High-button shoes and sheer chimeses that only barely touch the tops of their thighs.

BLUBBER BOB, an easy 300 lbs, runs this place:

BLUBBER BOB
Help you fella?

HH HOLMES
You must be Blubber Bob.

BLUBBER BOB
How'd you guess?

HH HOLMES
A friend said this is the best show
in town.

BLUBBER BOB
Who's your friend?

HH HOLMES
Pinzer.

BLUBBER BOB
Don't know him.

ON HOLMES: Hmmm. How's he going to find him?

HH HOLMES
You got girls, friend?

BLUBBER BOB
Do I got girls?

And with a SNAP, a half-dozen UNIFORMED PROSTITUTES parade before Holmes.

BLUBBER BOB (CONT'D)
Better question: Do you got coins?

Holmes shows a fresh dollar from his pocket.

Blubber Bob eyes it hungrily.

HH HOLMES

Younger. These ladies look a bit long in the tooth for my taste.

Blubber Bob motions, and another GIRL pokes her head out from a back room – she can't be more than 16, 17.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

"Where the youth pined away with desire / And the pale virgin shrouded in snow / Arise from their graves, and aspire / Where my sunflower wishes to go."

(off Bob's look)

It's poetry, Blubber Bob. William Blake. It's all right, I'm not here for poetry either. But I am here for innocence.

Bob thinks. Motions again... And yet another YOUNG GIRL comes sheepishly towards them. She's frightfully young – not a day over 15.

She looks scared, but does her best to smile coquettishly. As if she even knew what that meant.

Holmes FLIPS the coin at Bob.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

Where my sunflower wishes to go.

CUT TO:

EXT. THREE STORY - HALSTED ST - SAME TIME

Detective Pickett and his Men swarm the building –

– Up the rickety wooden stairs –

– A MAN opens his flat door and is quickly SHUSHED –

– And sent back in.

They get to the THIRD STORY. BACK FLAT.

Pickett stands before the door: This is it.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CALIFORNIA - DEARBORN STREET - SAME TIME

Holmes follows the Young Girl into a BACK BEDROOM.

It's laid out exotically: Rugs and animal skins and bright colored hanging tapestries.

YOUNG GIRL

(flirty)

And where'd you like to take me now, Mister?

ON HOLMES: Jesus, she's so young. It's sad.

HH HOLMES

Listen, you disgusting little creature. I have never stooped to paying for love in my life - it's simply not sporting. The women who share my bed are not bribed; they beg for it. Here's what I need from you: The second I would've got into bed, some compatriot of yours was going to rob me blind. How?

YOUNG GIRL

(confused)

I don't know what you're talking -

HH HOLMES

- Stop or I will beat you worse than Blubber Bob does. I came in here wearing five-dollar shoes and quoting William Blake. I'm the easiest mark you lot have ever seen. You took me to this room because it was the quickest for you to rob me in. Now...

(removes his knife)

... You have very pretty eyes. Tell me how you were going to do it, or I will take them with me.

ON THE YOUNG GIRL: Sheer terror.

She points, shaking, to a PANEL in the wall.

Holmes goes over... The panel SLIDES AWAY at his touch, leading to a SECRET PASSAGEWAY.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

While I was in bed with you, one of your girl friends was going slip through and steal the wallet from my coat pocket?

The Young Girl NODS.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
Does this passageway connect all
the bedrooms?

She NODS again.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
I have to go pay a visit on a
friend. Do not, under any
circumstances, leave this room.

Holmes ENTERS THE PASSAGEWAY and we

CUT TO:

EXT. THREE STORY - HALSTED ST - LATER

Detective Pickett KICKS OPEN Richard Pinzer's door -

- And BURSTS INTO THE FLAT -

- As his Men follow behind him.

They SPREAD ACROSS THE SPARE FLAT...

... Seeing no one.

The place is empty.

Pickett lowers his weapon. Walks around slowly.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
We'll be waiting for him when he
gets home. Till then -

- Pickett STOPS. Sees something.

He goes into the kitchen and behind the table:

A TUB OF CHLOROFORM.

Pickett POPS the lid, smelling it -

- He RECOILS.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (CONT'D)
Yes, that's chloroform.

BUT JUST THEN: We hear a CLICK.

Pickett looks around: What was that?

He looks down...

... THE OPENING OF THE TUB LID HAS LIT A SECRET FUSE UNDERNEATH THE TABLE.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (CONT'D)

Out, now!

In an instant, the CEILING IS ENGULFED IN FIRE.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CALIFORNIA - DEARBORN STREET - SAME TIME

Holmes crawls through the SECRET PASSAGEWAYS that connect the bedrooms of the brothel.

He PEEKS THROUGH TINY WINDOWS into bedrooms: Couples are fucking in every one, a garden of POSITIONS and VARIETIES.

None of the rooms seem to have Pinzer in them, until he gets to one...

... Peers inside...

... And there he is: Richard Pinzer, laying back on the bed, happily receiving a blowjob from a PROSTITUTE.

ON HOLMES: Got him.

Holmes SLIDES THE PANEL and leaps into the bedroom as we

CUT TO:

INT. THREE STORY - HALSTED ST - SAME TIME

Pickett and his Men RUSH down the stairs -

- Pulling the building's inhabitants with them -

- As the ENTIRE BUILDING LIGHTS UP IN FLAME.

They POUR OUT onto the street as the WINDOWS POP from the heat.

Pickett looks up at the building, CRACKLING WITH FIRE.

He stares at the residents on the street: Where the hell is Richard Pinzer?

CUT TO:

INT. THE CALIFORNIA - DEARBORN STREET - SAME TIME

Holmes LEAPS INTO THE BEDROOM and towards the bed -

RICHARD PINZER
HENRY?!?

- Pinzer JUMPS UP, pushing the prostitute away -

- But Holmes is too fast -

- And is on Pinzer in an instant, SMACKING him into unconsciousness.

ON THE TERRIFIED PROSTITUTE: What's going on?

HH HOLMES
(to Prostitute)
If you scream, you'll die too.

Holmes takes out a SYRINGE from his coat pocket...

... And a bottle marked "BAYER BRAND COCAINE."

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
This man, this degenerate, injected cocaine for sport. Tonight he suffered an overdose. Is that clear?

Holmes PRESSES THE SYRINGE into Pinzer's skin.

PROSTITUTE
Yes... Okay... I...

- But just then Blubber Bob bursts through the door:

Sees Holmes injecting a fellow patron.

BLUBBER BOB
What's this then?

ON HOLMES: Looking out to see the Young Girl in the hallway. Damn it. She ratted him out.

Bob LUNGES TOWARDS HOLMES -

- Who quickly WHIPS OUT HIS KNIFE -

- And the two FIGHT:

Bob is bigger. Stronger. Much more experienced. There is no earthly reason that Holmes should have an edge here... And yet he does.

Because even as he slices Bob's chest, even as Bob's fat punches land on Holmes' sternum, even as Holmes hears the crack of Bob's nose against his boot, Holmes feels nothing. No pain, no pleasure: He doesn't tire. He doesn't scare. He is an instrument of violence, not because he adores violence, but because none of this means anything to him at all.

Holmes stands above the dead body of Blubber Bob.

The Prostitute and the Young Girl each stare at him from separate corners of the trashed bedroom.

ON THE YOUNG GIRL: Who in God's name is this man?

HH HOLMES

... Let's try this again. Blubber Bob and our friend here got into an argument about the bill. There was a fight. It didn't go well.

Holmes STABS the already-dead Pinzer AGAIN and AGAIN in the chest, streaking more blood across the room.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

They killed each other.
(handing \$10 to the
terrified Prostitute)
You'll be gone by the time the police get here. But that's the story you'll tell your friends, won't you?

The shivering Prostitute NODS, and RUNS OFF.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

(re: the Young Girl)
And as for you, you feckless cunt... Come with me.

Holmes motions for the Girl to follow him through the PANEL -

- Into the SECRET PASSAGEWAY -

- Which they take up to the

EXT. THE CALIFORNIA - ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Holmes pulls the Young Girl onto the roof, into the crisp wintry air.

MILES OF ROOFTOPS STRETCH OUT on either side of them.

YOUNG GIRL
Are you gonna... kill me?

ON HOLMES: He's thinking about it...

HH HOLMES
... It hardly seems interesting,
does it? No one cares if you live
or die. No fun at all. If you are
very lucky, and you never tell a
soul I existed, then you will never
see me again.
(re: the city)
The world awaits, and you should
get to it.

And with that, Holmes turns, HOPPING to the next building and
DISAPPEARING among the rooftops.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CALIFORNIA - DEARBORN STREET - MORNING

By dawn, POLICE CARRIAGES have assembled along Dearborn
Street in front of the California.

Detective Pickett emerges from a private one, meeting Agent
Elliot outside the building.

AGENT ELLIOT
You've got about twenty minutes
till the Chief gets here. And
then...

DETECTIVE PICKETT
I'll make it quick. Pinzer is
inside?

Elliot nods, and they walk into

INT. THE CALIFORNIA - DEARBORN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Pickett and Elliot enter into the bedroom in which Holmes
killed Pinzer and Bob.

He sees the TWO DEAD BODIES. Blood everywhere.

From the scene, it's pretty obvious what happened here.

AGENT ELLIOT
Looks like his own vice got to him
before we did.

ON PICKETT: Looking around. This seems so easy... Too easy?
He sees something on the ground beside the bed...

... Hidden in a pool of blood...

... He picks it up: It's a BUTTON FROM HOLMES' VEST.

ON PICKETT: The button isn't cheap... Solid silver...

... Someone else was in this room.

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - DAY

Winter descends upon the half-built fair.

Drifts of snow slap against rickety structures.

Thousands of workmen shiver through their coats as they press on - there are no breaks, no pauses, no days off anymore.

5000 of them digging against the cold.

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - SAME TIME

Daniel Burnham and Emeline Cigrand are in his back office, looking through THOUSANDS OF SUBMISSIONS for designs of the tower.

The designs seem patently absurd - one is a 2000 FT DORIC COLUMN, one has TRAIN TRACKS going to the top, etc.

DANIEL BURNHAM

... You know, when I suggested this, I hadn't really thought we'd have to wade through all of these.

EMELINE CIGRAND

"Smart ideas are not the sole province of men with smart degrees." You were so very haughty about it.

DANIEL BURNHAM

To the press! It's not my fault the people of Chicago are so stupid.

He shows her a design - it's a tower in the shape of a TOBOGAN.

They both shake their heads.

Burnham looks down at the next design in his hands.
He makes a curious face.

EMELINE CIGRAND
(re: his expression)
... What? You look like the people
of Chicago have just shown you a
ghost.

DANIEL BURNHAM
... Not a ghost. The future... The
soil is too muddy to support a
tower, yes?

EMELINE CIGRAND
That's what your geologists said.

DANIEL BURNHAM
So what if the tower wasn't a
tower?

EMELINE CIGRAND
You're aware that the sentence you
just spoke does not make any
literal sense?

He shows her what he's looking at.

EMELINE CIGRAND (CONT'D)
(looking over it)
... Train cars? ... 36 train of
them, held aloft around a giant
spinning circular...

DANIEL BURNHAM
... What if our tower were actually
a wheel?

ON THE PAPER: It's an ENORMOUS WHEEL, surrounded by cars,
each the size of railcars.

This is the world's first Ferris Wheel.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Hand-drawn PLANS for an ENORMOUS FURNACE.

REVEAL: Holmes draws these plans at his desk.

He finishes and brings them down to

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Walking through the hotel, which boasts scattered guests, Holmes opens a HIDDEN BACK DOOR and heads down a WINDING STAIRCASE to...

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

... The BASEMENT, where he finds a team of WORKMEN finishing the walls on the underground chamber beneath his hotel.

HH HOLMES

You're to start on this tomorrow,
gentleman.

Holmes hands the plans to the FOREMAN, who must be at least SEVEN FEET TALL.

EXTREMELY TALL FOREMAN

Of course, Sir...

(looking over plans)

... Wait, I think you must have
made a mistake here.

HH HOLMES

I very much doubt that.

EXTREMELY TALL FOREMAN

This is a furnace, yes? Coal?

HH HOLMES

Very good.

EXTREMELY TALL FOREMAN

You've marked it being 10 feet
wide.

HH HOLMES

I have.

EXTREMELY TALL WORKMAN

That's... Well why would you need a
10 foot furnace in your basement,
Mr. Holmes?

HH HOLMES

... It's a big hotel, my friend.
And it's only getting bigger. I
have so many guests to heat.

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - 59TH STREET GATE - LATER

Later, Emeline Cigrand exits the Main Gate amidst the bustle of workers heading to nearby ale houses after a long day.

HH HOLMES (O.S.)
Miss Cigrand!

Emeline turns to see Holmes, passing by.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Mr. Holmes. Funny running into you like this.

HH HOLMES
Not funny at all. It was purposeful. I came to say thank you.

EMELINE CIGRAND
For what?

HH HOLMES
Putting me in touch with your Detective Pickett. I was told they caught that awful murderer.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Yes. I heard you knew him?

HH HOLMES
You never can tell who a person really is, I suppose. Now: Will you let me thank you for your help?

EMELINE CIGRAND
Relatively sure you just did.

HH HOLMES
Properly. Dinner?

EMELINE CIGRAND
That was your come on?

HH HOLMES
Excuse me?

EMELINE CIGRAND
"Thanks for helping me catch a killer"? It's macabre.

HH HOLMES
It's charming. I'm charming.

ON EMELINE: Really?

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

Dinner.

EMELINE CIGRAND

I've a lot of work to do, Mr.
Holmes. Good day.

And with that, Emeline leaves.

Holmes is terribly confused: Did he just get turned down? Who turns him down?

CUT TO:

INT. UNION LEAGUE CLUB - JACKSON BLVD - DAY

Daniel Burnham waits in a leather chair in the front reception area of the city's most exclusive private club.

He's approached by a HOST:

HOST

... Thank you for waiting, Sir. If
you'll come with me.

The Host leads Burnham through the private club and into the

INT. UNION LEAGUE CLUB - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where Burnham finds a group of men smoking cigars and sharing a laugh.

The men: The investor Potter Palmer, other Investors we met earlier, and MAYOR HARRISON, surrounded by a half-dozen AIDES.

DANIEL BURNHAM

Mr. Mayor, I wasn't expecting to
see you here.

MAYOR HARRISON

Thank you for coming down to my
club. Are you a member here?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Not yet.

MAYOR HARRISON

Remind me to put in a word then.
I'm sure we can get you in.

DANIEL BURNHAM
I'd be grateful.

POTTER PALMER
We asked the Mayor to come by and help us work out this situation with the tower.

DANIEL BURNHAM
You saw my plans for the wheel?
It's going to be revolutionary.

POTTER PALMER
That's one way of putting it. I'd vote for "unsound" myself. You told us, when we invested, that you'd have the best architects in America designing a tower. 2000 feet. And now you've got... Who is this goon?

DANIEL BURNHAM
George Ferris.

POTTER PALMER
Some idiot I've never heard of.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Just because you haven't heard of him, doesn't mean his ideas aren't good.

Burnham and Potter are about to get into it when they're cut off by:

MAYOR HARRISON
(to Burnham)
- I was sorry to hear of your loss.

DANIEL BURNHAM
(wasn't expecting that)
... Oh. Yes. Thank you. Stephen was a dear friend.

MAYOR HARRISON
Some months ago, wasn't it? I trust you got my card.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Of course. You're too kind.

MAYOR HARRISON
Your better half. Professionally speaking.

DANIEL BURNHAM

You put your faith in me to build this fair, Sir, and your faith shall not go unrewarded.

MAYOR HARRISON

I put my faith in your partner. And now he's dead.

Burnham tries to smile through his embarrassment.

MAYOR HARRISON (CONT'D)

You're \$15 million over budget, and the fair opens in three months.

DANIEL BURNHAM

We'll make it back in ticket sales.

MAYOR HARRISON

You haven't read your contract recently, have you? There's this clause... 52C subsection something, who knows? But the thing of it is: You're personally on the hook for any overages.

ON BURNHAM: Shit.

MAYOR HARRISON (CONT'D)

So you. And your family. You owe me and my friends here \$15 million. Does your wife like your house? Do your sons enjoy their school? You've gotten pretty far for a guy who grew up in whatever useless fuck town your parents conceived you. Do you intend to stay?

ON BURNHAM: He is totally and thoroughly fucked.

MAYOR HARRISON (CONT'D)

Now then. Mr. Palmer and his fellow investors gave you money for a tower, to be designed by a name architect. I'd very much appreciate it if you gave them one.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - LATER

Emeline talks with Burnham by her desk.

EMELINE CIGRAND
... They said no?

DANIEL BURNHAM
With considerable vehemence.

EMELINE CIGRAND
What do we do now?

DANIEL BURNHAM
Drink. Or pray. Maybe both.
(heading into his office)
Oh there's some local businessman,
gave us money for new rose bushes.
I said you'd give him a tour.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Might I get one of the girls to do
it?

DANIEL BURNHAM
You are one of the girls. You want
a promotion? Figure out how to
build a 2000 foot tower above an
acre of quicksand. Until then, this
gent gave us \$10,000 so if he wants
a song and dance, you'll sing him
Little Piggy.

Burnham enters his office, leaving Emeline to stew at her
desk.

Until she's interrupted by:

HH HOLMES (O.S.)
... Pardon. I was told this was
where the tour began?

Emeline turns to see Holmes in the doorway, looking at her
expectantly.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Oh for the love of God, not you.

HH HOLMES
(re: tent)
Quite a place you've got here.

EMELINE CIGRAND
No it's not. This is nothing. But-

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - MAIN THOROUGHFARE - MINUTES LATER

Minutes later, Emeline and Holmes walk across fair's main pedestrian area...

EMELINE CIGRAND

- But *this* is something.

... LITERALLY EVERY INCH OF THE GROUND IS COVERED IN WHITE PAINT REFLECTING THE SPARKLE OF ELECTRIC LIGHTBULBS.

It is like they are walking atop heaven.

HH HOLMES

(re: whiteness)

My god. This was Burnham's idea?

EMELINE CIGRAND

He's an ambitious man... What is it with men and their creations? Building these enormous things. There's a sort of man who gauges his worth solely upon the magnitude of his constructions.

HH HOLMES

Legacy.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Pardon?

HH HOLMES

We think that scope is the same thing as legacy. We want to be remembered, Emeline - it's quite simple. In a hundred years, I want people to look back and say "Henry Holmes existed... And he was a man of his age." Mr. Burnham wants the same, I would suspect. We would be the men of our time in times far beyond our own.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Ha! Now that's a line.

HH HOLMES

Don't play dumb... Isn't that why you're going to be an architect?

EMELINE CIGRAND

Who told you I'm going to be an architect?

HH HOLMES

Come on, that was obvious from the first second I saw you. Burnham's ambitious right-hand girl. Don't tell me you're here to fetch coffee.

EMELINE CIGRAND

You want to know why I'm here?

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - WOMEN'S BUILDING - LATER

Emeline shows Holmes the WOMEN'S BUILDING - 80,000 sq ft of neoclassical stone surrounded by an arched loggia and grand lagoon, it's actually one of the *smaller* buildings at the fair.

Inside, OIL PAINTINGS cover every wall.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Do you know who designed this building? ... Sophia Hayden. The only woman architect at the fair, and the first important one in the country.

HH HOLMES

(looking the place over)
She has her gifts.

EMELINE CIGRAND

How could I not come here? It is a place, the first place I've seen, where a woman might come out from the dim periphery of life and make herself useful by the light of day.

HH HOLMES

And that's it, isn't it? This city. This country. All so very polite and refined. It's a stuffy bore. "Don't do this." "Don't do that." Who cares what society wants you to be?

EMELINE CIGRAND

You sound like Susan Anthony.

HH HOLMES

First time anyone's accused me of that.

EMELINE CIGRAND

"Don't wear your skirt like this."
 "Don't speak to a man like that."
 The binding of the modern woman's
 ambitions are worse than that of
 her corsets.

HH HOLMES

Well that's what I'm here for. To
 do a bit of unbuttoning.

Holmes looks at Emeline, who returns his gaze: What does he mean?

Holmes leans in, his fingertips on the buttons of her coat.

She's shocked at his touch – too shocked even to remove his hand.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

To unlatch the clasps of polite
 society.

He UNDOES A BUTTON ON HER COAT...

... Emeline stifles a gasp...

... She knows she should object...

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

To unbind the leather of the age.

... He FLICKS OFF ANOTHER BUTTON...

... And she lets him, too stunned, and, yes, too aroused to speak...

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

To open all that's hidden to the
 light.

... And with that he TUGS OPEN her coat.

Emeline is still fully dressed underneath, and yet to her, and to him, she has never been more naked.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

Yes who would ever live by their
 rules when we can make our own?

Holmes smiles.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

... Oh my. Look at the time.

He quickly COVERS HER BACK UP, as if nothing ever happened.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
A million thanks for the tour, Miss
Cigrand. I do hope you'll let me
call on you again.

And with that, Holmes WALKS AWAY.

ON EMELINE: Standing there alone, a million sensations
flowing through her, some of which she doesn't even have a
name for.

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - WOMEN'S BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Holmes walks away from the Women's Building, a smile on his
face.

ON HOLMES: This is the most fun he's had in ages.

But in the distance, we see:

REVEAL: Detective Pickett, surveying the grounds.

He sees Holmes walking across the fair. Stops. Watches.

ON PICKETT: Something does not feel right about this guy.
What is it?

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - LATER

Emeline slowly walks through the tent, back to her desk.

She takes a deep breath, tries to settle herself.

The experience of Mr. Holmes was... Unique.

She stares at the papers on her desk.

She's thinking about something...

... And has an idea:

She runs into

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

In Burnham's back office, she finds him drowning himself in
Madeira.

DANIEL BURNHAM
You look flushed.

EMELINE CIGRAND
What if we build the wheel?

DANIEL BURNHAM
We can't. The investors won't fund it.

EMELINE CIGRAND
But they already did.

ON BURNHAM: What?

EMELINE CIGRAND (CONT'D)
They already gave us the money. I deposited their checks into our accounts myself. What if we just start building the wheel? By the time they even realize what we've done, it'll be too late to stop us.

DANIEL BURNHAM
(thinking)
... That is insane.

EMELINE CIGRAND
The question is: Do you believe in the wheel or not? If you do, then when it works, and it is a success, and a million guests enjoy it, what can Potter Palmer and Mayor Harrison do to you?

ON BURNHAM: This is crazy... And yet...

EMELINE CIGRAND (CONT'D)
... It's as you said: Are you a man with opinions? Or are you a man with convictions?

Off Burnham's smile we

CUT TO:

INT. PINKERTON AGENCY OFFICES - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Agent Elliot enters a conference room to find that Detective Pickett has COVERED THE LONG TABLE with the FILES of disappeared girls.

Pickett is pouring over the files, finding connections.

AGENT ELLIOT

... I'm pretty sure you have an office too, you know.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

What do we know about Henry Holmes?

AGENT ELLIOT

At the fair. That's where your office is.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

A lot of young women, new to Chicago, were last seen in Jackson Park before they disappeared.

AGENT ELLIOT

You could say the same for Lincoln Park. Roger's Park. Grant Park. Most anywhere with a "park" in it.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

We have all these letters from worried parents... A number of the girls make a reference. Here, look.

Pickett shows Elliot a series of LETTERS.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (CONT'D)

This one here says she's found a nice new hotel she'll be staying at. This other one... A hotel again, in Jackson Park. Just opened, she says. I've got half a dozen so far mention a hotel.

AGENT ELLIOT

Gosh, that is suspicious. Unless hotels were places that folks from out of town frequently stayed when they visited the city... But no, that's madness.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

What if they're the *same* hotel? Just opened, she said? How many fit that description?

(off Elliot's look)

Just the one. The World's Fair Hotel, owned and operated by Mr. Henry Holmes - long before the investment of Mr. Pinzer.

AGENT ELLIOT

Henry Holmes, who walked into that office of yours and willingly gave up evidence?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

That incriminated somebody else. Something about him is just not right... You remember the body? Strips of skin, that's what the kid said? Cut off? What kind of a man does something like that?

Agent Elliot thinks. Takes a long, hard look at his old friend.

AGENT ELLIOT

... Jeanne says she sent you a message. Asking you over for supper. You didn't write back.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Oh. Sorry. When this is over.

AGENT ELLIOT

The thing is... You don't have to live alone with this. With what happened. No one would blame you if you wanted to leave again.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

I got a guy here, kills people. I'm going to catch him. Hang him. Then your wife can make us supper.

AGENT ELLIOT

What happened is not your fault, Frank. Do you understand that? This city... It's a bad place full of bad people. It's not your fault and you can't fix it.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Bill?

AGENT ELLIOT

Yeah?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Fuck you.

The men stare at each other. Pickett is pissed.

AGENT ELLIOT
 ... I'll look into the property
 records for you. See what I can get
 on Holmes.
 (he turns)
 Jeanne will make a pot roast.

And with that, Elliot leaves his friend Frank alone with his
 piles and piles of vanished girls.

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - SAME TIME

Meanwhile, across town, Benjamin Pitezel meets Holmes by the
 flicker of gaslamps in the latter's private quarters.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
 Not too crummy, this place.

HH HOLMES
 Did you complete the sale?

Pitezel slaps some CASH onto Holmes' desk.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
 There's your \$20 from the medical
 school. They gave me extra for
 those bones, on account of the
 skeleton being so tall. They said
 he was seven foot, easy. Who was
 he?

HH HOLMES
 The last person who worked for me
 who asked too many questions.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHEAP APARTMENTS - CLARK STREET - EVENING - SEQUENCE

Holmes waits outside the door to Emeline's cheap three-story,
 holding FLOWERS. He's picking her up for a date...

... She comes out, sees him, smiles

CUT TO:

EXT. DIFFERENT APARTMENTS - BROADWAY STREET - SEQUENCE

Now outside a different, two-story apartment house...

... A RED-HEADED GIRL comes down the steps to meet Holmes.

As he's dating Emeline, he's also dating this Red-Head.
He holds the door to a HANSOM open, and as she gets in we

CUT TO:

I/E. CARRIAGE - CLARK STREET - EVENING - SEQUENCE

Holmes rides the carriage, laughing as and he turns to his date...

... Emeline laughs from beside him.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO OPERA HOUSE - EVENING - SEQUENCE

Holmes descends from the two-horse hansom and swings around the back, opening up the other door for...

... A BLACK-HAIRED GIRL. Another of his conquests.

He leads the Black-Haired Girl up to the grand OPERA HOUSE - at 10 stories of red stone, one of the few great Chicago buildings not designed by Daniel Burnham - and we

CUT TO:

INT. CHICAGO OPERA HOUSE - EVENING - SEQUENCE

Homes opens the WIDE DOORS to the opera house and...

... Emeline follows him in.

She's enthralled as they're greeted with SHERRY in tiny crystal glasses, served by the white-gloved porters.

CUT TO:

INT. CHICAGO OPERA HOUSE - ORCHESTRA SEATS - SEQUENCE

Holmes takes his sit in the orchestra section, straightening his perfect white bowtie.

He turns to his date...

... A BLOND GIRL, who giggles childishly as she sits beside him.

CUT TO:

INT. CHICAGO OPERA HOUSE - ORCHESTRA SEATS - SEQUENCE

As the curtain rises, a brand-new operetta version of THE ARABIAN NIGHTS begins.

ON STAGE: SHARAZAD SINGS her stories to the KING, always one twist ending away from being killed.

IN THE AUDIENCE: Emeline sits next to Holmes, entranced.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON AVENUE - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

Holmes exits the opera and STROLLS the GASLIGHT STREETS of the West Loop with...

... A BROWN-HAIRED GIRL.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

Back in his private room, Holmes gently leans down to KISS A WOMAN'S HAND...

... And we REVEAL: It's Emeline's.

They KISS for the first time.

Passionately, they fall into bed as we

CUT TO:

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

In a GUEST ROOM, we find the BROWN-HAIRED GIRL sleeping soundly post-coitally amidst RUMPLED SHEETS.

Holmes watches her sleep, re-fastening his shirt collar.

QUICK SHOTS: The RED-HEAD, the BLONDE, the BLACK-HAIRED GIRL, Emeline, all sleeping soundly in guest rooms as well.

Holmes is juggling so many women at once.

INT. HOLMES HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

Back in the privacy of Holmes' room, he removes a PANEL from the wall...

... REVEALING: A WIDE DISPLAY OF KNOBS.

He turns the knobs, like a maestro conducting his orchestra,
and we

CUT TO:

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - GUEST ROOM - SAME TIME - SEQUENCE

In the guest rooms, we REVEAL: TINY GAS NOZZLES hidden behind
the bed frames.

QUICK SHOTS: Gas POURS into the bedrooms, KILLING the BLOND,
the RED-HEAD, the BLACK-HAIRED and BROWN-HAIRED GIRLS.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - NIGHT - SEQUENCE

Emeline sleeps soundly in Holmes' bed.

He turns from watching her to see her RED HAIR CLIP on the
nightstand.

He picks it up, watching it gleam in the gaslight.

Smiles...

... And places it back on the nightstand.

Not yet.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - EVENING - SEQUENCE

ANGLE: Holmes places A BRIGHT BLUE HAIRCLIP at the end of his
collection.

... AND WE REVEAL: The collection has grown. 50 HAIR CLIPS,
every color and size imaginable. Our Henry has been busy.

Holmes looks down - The Blue Clip has a spot of blood on it.

That won't do. He takes a cloth and RUBS it, aggressively.

Places it beside the others.

But now he notices they all have dust on them, don't they?

ONE BY ONE, he starts REMOVING THE CLIPS from their secret case and polishing them obsessively, furiously, until the clips lie in PERFECTLY EVEN ROWS, immaculately.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - 57TH ST GATE - DAY

HUNDREDS OF WORKMEN move what look to be RAILROAD CARS on wheeled platforms -

- They PUSH the cars into the fair -

- And as they get closer to their destination we see what they really are:

The cars for the Ferris Wheel.

Burnham stands with GEORGE FERRIS - 30s but seems even younger - and their team of HEAD ENGINEERS as the cars are laid at the base of the giant wheel.

DANIEL BURNHAM

All right. Now all we have to do is get them up there.

GEORGE FERRIS

Each of those cars weighs over a ton. There's 36 of them. We've never tried to lift anything that heavy before.

DANIEL BURNHAM

Well how have other people done it?

GEORGE FERRIS

No, when I say "we", I mean... People. Human beings. In, umm, ever. That there is the heaviest object ever to be lifted in human history.

ON BURNHAM: Oh dear God.

INT. TAVERN - 61ST STREET - NIGHT

Emeline SHOTS BACK a stiff tumbler of whiskey.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Well goodness isn't that a lovely start? It's been a long day.

(MORE)

EMELINE CIGRAND (CONT'D)
 (to BARTENDER)
 Another, please.

BARTENDER
 Look, Miss, I don't mind letting
 one of your kind hang around for a
 glass or two - the boys like it -
 but this isn't the Tombstone
 Saloon. We've standards.

EMELINE CIGRAND
 You won't serve me another?

BARTENDER
 If I ran this place proper, I
 wouldn't have served you the first.

EMELINE CIGRAND
 Look here, Mister, I don't know
 what you think I -

DETECTIVE PICKETT (O.S.)
 - He thinks you're a whore.

Emeline turns to see Detective Pickett taking the next stool.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (CONT'D)
 What other kind of lady would be
 caught dead having a glass alone in
 a place like this?

EMELINE CIGRAND
 Good thing I'm not alone then.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
 (to Bartender)
 She's with me, Roger.

BARTENDER
 All right, Frank.

The Bartender serves them two tumblers full, then heads away.

EMELINE CIGRAND
 You know him?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
 You plan on living in Chicago long
 enough, I recommend getting to know
 a few tavern keepers.

EMELINE CIGRAND

... You know what I just realized?
You and I, we share the same boss.
What do you think of him?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

I think Daniel Burnham is a true
believer.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Are you?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

... I believe that the good people
of this city will win out over the
bad. And I believe that the fair is
where they'll do it. What I don't
believe is that Richard Pinzer
killed that woman whose body you
found.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Why not?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

I found a silver button beside his
body.

He shows her the BUTTON.

EMELINE CIGRAND

And you don't think it might be
Richard Pinzer's?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

I think it belongs to the man who
killed Pinzer. The same man who
killed Annie Timmons.

EMELINE CIGRAND

And who might that be?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Herman Mudgett.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Afraid I don't know him.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Oh that's right. You know him by a
different name. Henry Holmes.

ON EMELINE: Total shock.

EMELINE CIGRAND

... What?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

You're sweet on him, aren't you?
He's a good looking boy, tongue
like an angel. Don't blame you. But
he's a bad man, Miss Cigrand. The
only thing I'm trying to figure out
is just how bad.

EMELINE CIGRAND

... You came here... You followed
me to this tavern... To tell me
this...

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Yes. I wanted to know if you were
in on it. You're not.

EMELINE CIGRAND

You're mistaken.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

How much do you really know about
Herman? Or, pardon, Henry?

EMELINE CIGRAND

A lot.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Did you know that he's married? Has
a wife in Evanston. Clara. Here's
the marriage certificate.

Pickett takes a set of FILES - they say "Pinkerton Agency" on
the front - and lays them out on the bar.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (CONT'D)

He married her under his birth
name. Herman Mudgett. From New
Hampshire. He became Henry Holmes
when he got to Chicago. Why do you
think he did that?

EMELINE CIGRAND

This wife... She's in Evanston?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Was. I went up there yesterday. The
good Mrs. Mudgett seems to have
disappeared.

EMELINE CIGRAND
I don't believe you.

Emeline stands up angrily -
- Knocking the barstool over behind her -
- And heads to the door.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
He's a killer. I'm telling you this
for your safety, do you hear? Do
not go to him. Do not go to that
hotel.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLMES' HOTEL - NIGHT

The glow of Holmes' hotel in the pitch-black Chicago night.
And sure enough... Emeline ASCENDS the front steps.
ON EMELINE: She can't turn away. She needs to know.

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

Holmes opens the door to his private quarters to find...
... Emeline standing before him.

HH HOLMES
Miss Cigrand! This is a surprise.

Emeline boldly invites herself in, pushing past Holmes into
the wood-fire warmed room.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Do you have anything to drink?

HH HOLMES
Something is the matter.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Oh that's right, you don't drink,
do you? The only teetotaler in
Chicago. That's a careful
affectation if ever I've seen one.

HH HOLMES
Stop this and tell me what's the
matter.

EMELINE CIGRAND
... Clara.

ON HOLMES: He certainly wasn't expecting to hear that name.

HH HOLMES
... I don't know what's happened,
or what you've been told, but I
have no secrets from you.

EMELINE CIGRAND
And if Detective Pickett says
otherwise?

ON HOLMES: So Pickett has been snooping around...

HH HOLMES
... Then I will take that up with
him. But if you want to know who I
am, then you should take the
trouble to ask me.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Are you married?

HH HOLMES
I was.

EMELINE CIGRAND
What's your name?

ON HOLMES: How does he answer this? What does he say?

HH HOLMES
(perfect French.)
... "Arrondissement."

EMELINE CIGRAND
What?

HH HOLMES
Say it.

EMELINE CIGRAND
What?

HH HOLMES
Say it. "Arrondissement."

EMELINE CIGRAND
What are you -
(bad French)
"Arrondissement."

HH HOLMES

I thought so. Your act is quite good. It's only the accent that botches it.

EMELINE CIGRAND

I'm not French.

HH HOLMES

Neither am I, but I learned the damned accent. It's the midwestern O's that doom you.

EMELINE CIGRAND

"Arrondissement?"

HH HOLMES

(east coast-style)

"Roof."

EMELINE CIGRAND

(midwest, like "rough")

"Roof."

HH HOLMES

You're from near here, but not Chicago. Downstate?

EMELINE CIGRAND

Champaign.

HH HOLMES

We all came to Chicago to recreate ourselves. You came from Champaign. I came from a small farm in Gilmanton, New Hampshire – then a struggling business and a terrible, unhappy marriage in the suburbs – and moved to the city to start something new. I lied about who I was, yes, but only so that I could become the person I knew I could be. Just as you did.

EMELINE CIGRAND

You didn't tell me.

HH HOLMES

I didn't tell anyone. Neither did you.

ON EMELINE: This is a lot to take in... But he's right.

EMELINE CIGRAND

I lied to my parents. I couldn't tell them about Chicago. About the fair. About getting a job as a secretary, they'd have skinned me.

HH HOLMES

You told everyone you were French so that everyone would think you were worldly.

EMELINE CIGRAND

You *taught* yourself French so that everyone would think you were worldly.

HH HOLMES

The only way to become a rich man in America is to convince everyone that you already are one.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Or a woman.

HH HOLMES

Or a woman. I'm sorry that I misled you.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Where is your wife now?

HH HOLMES

I don't know. We split years ago. I haven't spoken to her since.

EMELINE CIGRAND

... Now I very much do require that drink.

Holmes smiles.

He takes out TWO GLASSES...

... And a BOTTLE OF HIS "SPECIAL" CHAMPAGNE - The one he's laced with poison.

HH HOLMES

What's the worst thing...

He pours her a glass. Stares at it.

EMELINE CIGRAND

What did you say?

ON HOLMES: If Emeline drinks this, she'll die. He's waited so long for this moment - so why does it feel odd?

He can kill her anytime he wants to. He doesn't need to get rid of her so quickly.

He "accidentally" spills her poisoned champagne, getting rid of it.

He pours TWO UNTAINTED GLASSES of champagne, and brings them to her.

HH HOLMES
Perhaps I'll have a glass with you
after all.

As they toast we

CUT TO:

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - LATER

SHADOWS ON THE WALL: They look like DEMONS.

EMELINE CIGRAND (O.S.)
It's a bat!

HH HOLMES (O.S.)
That looks nothing like a bat.
Here.

SHADOWS ON THE WALL: They form other MONSTERS.

REVEAL: Holmes and Emeline lie under the bedsheets post-coitally, staying up late making SHADOW PUPPETS with their hands by candlelight.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Is that some sort of gargoyle?

HH HOLMES
Are you blind?
(turns to kiss her)
You're really going to have to
learn to tell your monsters apart.

CUT TO:

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - RANDOLPH STREET - DAY

Detective Pickett wants into POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

There's a PATROLMAN on duty at the front desk.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
I'm hear to see Chief Hartman.

PATROLMAN
Do you have an appointment?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
I do not. But you tell him Frank Pickett is here to see him. I think he'll find the time.

INT. POLICE HEADQUARTERS - CHIEF'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Pickett is escorted into the corner offices of CHIEF HARTMAN.

Hartman takes a good long look at Pickett.

CHIEF HARTMAN
... You know they told me all kinds would be coming to Chicago for the fair. Looks like they meant it.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
I need a favor.

CHIEF HARTMAN
Ha!

DETECTIVE PICKETT
And I would venture by any law of God or man that you owe me one.

CHIEF HARTMAN
... What fell, it did not fall on my shoulders.

DETECTIVE PICKETT
And yet you're sympathetic to my position. So I'll make you a deal: You do one thing, and you'll never have to see me, or dredge up this business, again.

CHIEF HARTMAN
What do you want?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Records. Files. Old murder investigations.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE PICKETT (CONT'D)
The Pinkertons have given me a
thousand disappearances, but you've
got the killings. The bad ones.

CHIEF HARTMAN
Bad ones?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Mutilated corpses. Skin cut off in
even strips.

CHIEF HARTMAN
Why?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
You ever heard of a guy kills
multiple women? Over a period of
years?

CHIEF HARTMAN
For what?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
That's just it... Because he likes
it?

CHIEF HARTMAN
A looney?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
Not a looney, quite. Smart.
Methodical. Plans things out in
advance. Can talk people into
giving them whatever he wants. But
what he wants is murdering girls.
In a series. Like... A serial
murderer.

CHIEF HARTMAN
A "serial murderer?"

Pickett and Hartman share a look: What does that even mean?

DETECTIVE PICKETT
("that does sound absurd")
... I know, I know.

The Chief shakes his head as he gets a ring of keys from his
desk, handing them to Pickett.

CHIEF HARTMAN
Seems like time away has made you
even crazier, Pickett.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - NIGHT

It's 2am in Burnham's tent, and he's still at his desk, hard at work. Not that he hasn't had a few glasses of Madeira to get him through.

Emeline comes in, and deposits some PLANS on his desk.

Burnham looks at them.

DANIEL BURNHAM
... Where did you learn so much
about building?

EMELINE CIGRAND
They have these things. Great big
stone structures, full of... What's
the word? "Books." Places are
called "libraries."

DANIEL BURNHAM
They had one of those in Henderson.
Where I grew up.

EMELINE CIGRAND
You didn't go to university?

DANIEL BURNHAM
My university was an 1100 square
foot former dry goods store run by
a Mrs. Estabrook. She'd order books
for me from nearby colleges.

EMELINE CIGRAND
And you never got a degree?

DANIEL BURNHAM
My parents and I were naive enough
to think that perfect scores would
be enough to get me into Harvard or
Yale. I got the scores. Not the
acceptances. I wasn't the right
sort of people, you see.

EMELINE CIGRAND

The man in charge of the greatest construction project since Moses doesn't even have a diploma?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Stephen - my departed partner. He was the credentialed one.

EMELINE CIGRAND

And you're the scrappy underdog?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Something like that.

EMELINE CIGRAND

And even though they won't accept you - the Mayor, Palmer, all the rich Chicago fat cats - you're gonna save their city for them? Whether they like it or not?

DANIEL BURNHAM

I can't tell if you're mocking me or not.

EMELINE CIGRAND

You hired me for the secretarial work. The banter is free.

The two share a smile.

DANIEL BURNHAM

... I'm sorry to keep you here so late. You should go home.

EMELINE CIGRAND

No no, I'll stay till you're done.

DANIEL BURNHAM

You must have a life. Friends. Gentleman callers.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Nothing more important to me than the fair.

DANIEL BURNHAM

So no boyfriends, then?

ON EMELINE: She smiles back, implacably.

Burnham becomes suddenly embarrassed.

DANIEL BURNHAM (CONT'D)
 ... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to
 make you uncomfortable.

EMELINE CIGRAND
 Not at all.

DANIEL BURNHAM
 It's just... I haven't seen my wife
 in months, I'm growing a bit crazy
 for normal conversation.

EMELINE CIGRAND
 I've seen the mail. She's staying
 in the suburbs, while you're here?

DANIEL BURNHAM
 With the kids. John and Daniel.

EMELINE CIGRAND
 It must be quite hard on you.

ON BURNHAM: It is.

DANIEL BURNHAM
 ... Why don't you go home and rest.

EMELINE CIGRAND
 (as she heads back to her
 desk)
 Not until you do.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY - DAY

Detective Pickett enters the Chicago Public Library.

INT. CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY - STACKS - MINUTES LATER

Pickett moves through the library stacks, searching -

- And finds it:

ON THE SPINE OF THE BOOK HE REMOVES: "The Psychopathic Mind,
 by Julius Koch."

DETECTIVE PICKETT (V.O.)
 "And I propose that these men, who
 I will term 'psychopaths,' are not
 mental degenerates - they are *moral*
 degenerates."

INT. CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY - READING ROOM

Detective Pickett reads these early books on the brand-new theory of "psychopathy" by candle-light.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (V.O.)
 "They are not of weak or retarded mind. They may in fact be highly intelligent."

EXT. DINGY HOTEL - 68TH STREET - NIGHT

Later that night, Detective Pickett returns to his dingy hotel with a stack of books in the crook of his arm.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (V.O.)
 "And yet it is in the moral realm in which they are manifestly inferior. For they cannot manage any empathy at all towards their fellow man."

INT. DINGY HOTEL - MINUTES LATER

Pickett enters his darkened hotel room.

Pushes the pile of CITY RECORDS off his coffee table, and smacks the psychology books down.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (V.O.)
 "To these psychopaths, other human beings are as ants. Bugs to be squashed in furtherance of their own goals."

He pours himself a whiskey in the kitchen.

Pickett gets some matches and as he LIGHTS A CANDLE -

- WE SEE HENRY HOLMES STANDING 10 FT BEHIND HIM.

Pickett still has his back to Holmes as he sits at the table, opening his library books.

From behind, Holmes moves slowly towards him...

DETECTIVE PICKETT (V.O.)
 "And what are those goals? They are not criminals, properly understood, though they frequently commit crimes.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE PICKETT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 No, their goals are grander: To
 show us all that their way of
 seeing the world is correct. And
 ours, burdened my morality and
 decency, is a fraud."

... Pickett keeps reading...

... And as Holmes steps closer a FLOORBOARD CREAKS -
 - Pickett turns around to see Holmes -
 - Tries to SCREAM and ATTACK but Holmes is too fast -
 - Holmes SMASHES PICKETT'S HEAD INTO THE TABLE.

Holmes looks down at him: On the floor, half-conscious,
 bleeding from the head.

HH HOLMES
 (re: books)
 Doing a little pleasure reading,
 Detective?

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - BASEMENT - NIGHT

Detective Pickett WAKES UP...

... And finds himself INSIDE HOLMES' ENORMOUS FURNACE.

He BANGS and BANGS on the furnace walls, on the door.

OUTSIDE THE FURNACE:

There it is, Holmes' design brought to life. The enormous
 furnace has been finished, right in Holmes' basement.

Holmes stares curiously at the BANGING COMING FROM INSIDE.
 The steel is so thick, it sounds barely louder than
 footsteps.

Holmes holds Pickett's psychology book, flipping through it.

HH HOLMES
 (loudly so Pickett can
 hear)
 "The psychopath experiences no
 feelings at all. Neither love,
 neither hate, neither blah blah
 blah." Where on earth did you find
 this thing?

INSIDE FURNACE:

DETECTIVE PICKETT

(yelling)

You can't kill me, you idiot. I've left all my notes at the fair. On my desk. Someone will find them, take my place.

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

HH HOLMES

All right, now take this next part here: "The psychopath will likely have tortured animals as a child." That's just absurd. Who would do such a thing? Oh. You think this describes me? You think I'm insane?

INSIDE FURNACE:

DETECTIVE PICKETT

You're caught all ready, and killing me won't even slow the police down.

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

HH HOLMES

Thank you, that is my point exactly: Were I insane, as you suggest, I would do something like kill you to slow the investigation. Or torture you, like in your book. Insane! The problem you're facing right now is that I am in fact of perfectly sound mind.

Holmes TURNS ON THE GAS.

INSIDE FURNACE:

Pickett can smell the gas seeping in.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

You thinking burning me alive is the logical thing to do in your position?

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

Holmes gathers up some MATCHES.

HH HOLMES

Of course not! If I wanted you dead, you'd be dead by now. I just want to talk.

INSIDE FURNACE:

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Let me out.

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

HH HOLMES

I will. If you'll tell me about the night your wife and daughter died.

INSIDE FURNACE:

ON PICKETT'S FACE: He wasn't expecting that.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

... What are you talking about?

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

HH HOLMES

The night your wife and daughter burned alive, silly. Wasn't a hard secret for me to uncover. I've never met anyone who had to sit there, watching, while everyone he loved in the world melted before his eyes. What did it feel like?

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Mr. Holmes, I mean this quite literally: Go to hell.

HH HOLMES

Well if you won't tell me than sure, I suppose I will have to kill you.

Holmes LIGHTS A MATCH and uses it to IGNITE THE FURNACE'S PILOT.

INSIDE FURNACE:

A SMALL FLAME IGNITES ON ONE SIDE.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Oh God this is how you've been disposing of the bodies... After Pinzer... Burning them up...

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

Holmes looks to the KNOB that controls the gas flow.

One turn and that's all it'll take...

HH HOLMES

Esther. Nice name. Did you give it
to her, or did your wife Margaret?

INSIDE FURNACE:

DETECTIVE PICKETT

God damn you.

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

HH HOLMES

Did they scream? Who was louder?

Holmes SLIGHTLY TURNS THE KNOB -

INSIDE FURNACE:

- And the FIRE GROWS TOWARDS PICKETT.

DETECTIVE PICKETT

Stop this!

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

HH HOLMES

Make me.

He TURNS THE KNOB FURTHER -

INSIDE FURNACE:

- And the FIRE GROWS MORE -

DETECTIVE PICKETT

My wife screamed! She kept - for me
to save her.

WE SEE FLASHES OF A BURNING BUILDING BEFORE PICKETT'S FACE:

- His WIFE is in the kitchen screaming, holding his DAUGHTER-

- Pickett is in the hall, trying to get to them, but there's
A WALL OF FIRE between him and his family -

DETECTIVE PICKETT (CONT'D)

The fire was so hot. And loud. They never tell you how loud fire is. The crackling, burning.

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

HH HOLMES

Oh my. Despite your best efforts, you couldn't save them, could you?

INSIDE FURNACE:

DETECTIVE PICKETT

I did everything I could to get to them - But the fire moved too fast-

IN THE BURNING BUILDING: Pickett tries to press through the fire but before he can his family is INCINERATED in flame, right before his eyes.

DETECTIVE PICKETT (CONT'D)

... The fire was set by police officers. There'd been a fight about bribes coming from the Levee District. I wouldn't take any. I told the Chief. We fought. And he struck back by... Teaching me a lesson. They said no one was supposed to get hurt, but afterwards... I quit. Moved to Carbondale. I never wanted to be a part of Chicago again. Until I met Daniel Burnham. And he made me believe that this city could birth something beautiful. That we could stop men like you.

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

ON HOLMES: He is *delighted*.

HH HOLMES

... Now that, Detective Pickett, is the story I wanted to hear.

Holmes TURNS THE KNOB ALL THE WAY UP -

INSIDE FURNACE:

- And the FLAME EXPLODES OUTWARDS TOWARDS PICKETT -

OUTSIDE FURNACE:

Holmes watches as the furnace FLOODS WITH FIRE.

Pickett is completely incinerated.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
And you thought I was insane.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - OPENING DAY - MORNING

A GRAND PARADE ANNOUNCES "OPENING DAY" AT THE WORLD'S FAIR.

Burnham and Emeline watch from a riser as HUNDREDS OF FLOATS MARCH from downtown to the fair grounds.

And yet: THE PARADE IS SPARSELY ATTENDED. Few spectators are lined up; even fewer listen to the Mayor DRONE ON as he CUTS THE RIBBON TO THE FAIR'S MAIN GATE.

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - OPENING DAY - LATER

Mayor Harrison, his entourage trailing behind him, walks the uncrowded fair grounds, stopping before the HALF-BUILT FERRIS WHEEL.

He turns to Daniel Burnham.

MAYOR HARRISON
What in the hell is that?

DANIEL BURNHAM
I can see why you're upset, but I promise you, this wheel will be one of the great wonders of the world.

The Mayor shakes his head. Looks down.

MAYOR HARRISON
... So you just did it anyway, did you? There is some small part of me that almost wants to commend the sheer balls of the thing.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Guessing the rest of you wants to fire me? Only, it's too late. The fair is open, the wheel is under construction - we can't afford to turn back now.

MAYOR HARRISON

... You don't understand, Burnham. You never did. You're not the only one who's about to go bankrupt over this... The City of Chicago is in debt as well. Who will ever open a factory in this town again? We'll be broke. Jobless. And we'll fold. You were supposed to save this city and you just burnt it to the ground. You're the worst thing to happen to Chicago since the Great Fire.

The Mayor is right in Burnham's face, but Burnham doesn't give an inch.

DANIEL BURNHAM

... The wheel will work. And it will be a success. I'll stake my life on it.

MAYOR HARRISON

No, you arrogant prick. You've staked all of ours.

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - SAME TIME

But at the same time, Holmes walks amongst the scattered crowds of Opening Day...

... With all of the SECURITY TEAMS devoted to crowd control, he's easily able to SNEAK INTO THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING...

... Up the unguarded stairs...

.. And into the MAIN SECURITY OFFICE.

It's empty, with everyone out filling seats or tending to the fair's first groups of actual paying customers.

Holmes ambles through the rooms - MAPS and SURVEYS cover the walls, showing the PLACEMENTS of all of the fair's security resources. Useful information for Holmes to have.

And that's when he sees it: DETECTIVE PICKETT'S DESK. Holmes walks over to an empty desk with Pickett's nameplate at the front -

- He quickly YANKS OPEN THE DRAWERS -

- But nothing is inside.

The desk is totally empty.

If Pickett did manage to leave evidence behind, he didn't leave it here.

BUT JUST THEN:

SECURITY SECRETARY (O.S.)
Pardon! Who are you?

Holmes turns to see a SECURITY SECRETARY eyeing him warily from the doorway.

HH HOLMES
... I think I must be lost.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - FERRIS WHEEL - SAME TIME

Burnham and Emeline stare at the HALF-BUILT FERRIS WHEEL.

The basic wheel-shape is there, with spokes outstretching, but without any cars hung along the outside. It's a thousand-ton steel spiderweb.

SECURITY SECRETARY (O.S.)
This one belong to you?

Emeline and Burnham turn: The Security Secretary has brought Holmes over to them.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Henry! What are you doing here?

HH HOLMES
I came to offer my congratulations
- and seem to have wandered a bit
off track.

The Secretary politely leaves the three of them alone.

For very first time, Holmes lays eyes on Daniel Burnham.

EMELINE CIGRAND
Henry Holmes. Daniel Burnham.

HH HOLMES
Mr. Burnham. It's an honor. From
one architect to another, I'm a
huge admirer of your work.

Burnham is really not in the mood for this.

DANIEL BURNHAM
You're an architect? For...?

HH HOLMES
Myself. I own and operate a hotel,
down 63rd Street. I designed it.
Planned it. Built it. Every inch.

ON BURNHAM: He's not impressed this by amateur.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
Not so grand as all you've done, of
course. Your fair is, if you'll
permit my saying so, not just a
masterpiece. It's also my
inspiration.

DANIEL BURNHAM
I'm flattered.

HH HOLMES
The way I see it, you and I are in
the same business.

DANIEL BURNHAM
How do you figure that?

HH HOLMES
Well, it's all about the audience.

DANIEL BURNHAM
The audience?

HH HOLMES
The eager crowd that comes out to
gaze up at your great stone
wonders; the far-flung guests who
check in to my hotel in search of a
foreign adventure; they all want
the same thing - Spectacle.

(gestures to the Ferris
Wheel behind them)

If you want their affection, first
you'll have to get their attention.
And what the audience craves, more
than anything else, is the shock of
something new. If you show them a
truly spectacular sight, something
they have never before imagined in
their short, quiet lives, they may
be afraid. "What is this new
thing!" they may say. "We are
fearful. We cower." They may curse
you. "What gall! What pretensions!

(MORE)

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
 Who would build such a thing?" But
 I promise you this: They will never
 forget what they have seen. And
 they will never forget you. And
 isn't that what this is all about?

ON BURNHAM: Impressed.

DANIEL BURNHAM
 ... I can see why she likes you.

Emeline blushes.

HH HOLMES
 "Make no little plans. They have no
 magic to stir men's blood."

EMELINE CIGRAND
 Who said that?

DANIEL BURNHAM
 I did.

And with a TIP OF HIS HAT, Holmes starts to walk away.

HH HOLMES
 Finish your wheel, Sir. I promise
 you it will be a triumph. And don't
 forget these tools you have at your
 disposal! The money, the manpower.
 We both attract moths to our bright
 flames. Compared to all this -
 imagine what a simple man like me
 must do to make his flame burn as
 hot.

CUT TO:

INT. DINGY HOTEL - 68TH STREET - EVENING

A LANDLORD lets Agent Elliot into Detective Pickett's hotel
 room.

Elliot looks around: The place is a mess.

He looks to the kitchen table...

... Which has been WIPED CLEAN: Holmes has removed all of
 Pickett's accumulated books, evidence.

Elliot looks at the overturned chair.

Leans down to pick it up...

... And sees something on the ground:

A SPOT OF BLOOD.

ON AGENT ELLIOT: Detective Pickett was murdered.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - NIGHT

From above: The expanse of the electrically lit fair stretches before us, a twinkling on the earth.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (O.S.)
Ladies and gentlemen, the hour is
upon us.

Spotlights shine from the tops of the tallest buildings: The first spotlights in history, lighting a path through the night for the fair's guests.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The wait is over and only one
question remains...

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - FERRIS WHEEL - SAME TIME

Those same spotlights point up at the now FULLY CONSTRUCTED FERRIS WHEEL.

To give a sense of the size of this thing: The weight of the bolts alone holding it together? 28,000 pounds.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (O.S.)
... Who will be the first into the
sky?

A MASTER OF CEREMONIES addresses an EAGER CROWD of fair-goers - hundreds of people in an unruly line to be first on this crazy new contraption.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (CONT'D)
Get your tickets for the very first
spin of Mr. George Ferris's grand
wheel right here, don't be shy ---

IN THE AUDIENCE: Holmes and Emeline gaze up at the great wheel.

EMELINE CIGRAND
I'll be honest. It looked smaller
in the plans.

HH HOLMES

Look at what you've done.

EMELINE CIGRAND

Well it wasn't exactly me. George designed it and Daniel built it -

HH HOLMES

- Please. This is yours, and we should celebrate your accomplishments. In fact I have an idea.

EMELINE CIGRAND

What?

Holmes produces TWO TICKETS from his pocket.

HH HOLMES

Care for a ride?

EMELINE CIGRAND

(shocked)

How did you...?

HH HOLMES

I wrote to Mr. Burnham's office - with instructions for the message to avoid your desk. I wanted this evening to be... Special.

ON EMELINE: She's quite touched.

Holmes and Emeline JOIN the throng -

- People PRESSING IN for tickets -

- But its getting so crowded -

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Now, there's room enough for all -

- The GUARDS and ATTENDANTS try to hold people back -

- But Holmes PUSHES to the front -

- Delivering himself and Emeline safely onto a car.

I/E. FERRIS WHEEL CAR - CONTINUOUS

Holmes and Emeline press into the first car with another 20 GUESTS.

The door is LOCKED from the outside. They're trapped in here, for better or worse.

OUTSIDE:

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

And now, the moment we've all been waiting for... The first turn of George Ferris' wheel!

INSIDE THE FIRST CAR:

Everything SHUDDERS.

Holmes and Emeline are rocked from side to side as the great machine GROANS.

HH HOLMES

I'm surprised this thing is safe.

EMELINE CIGRAND

We all are.

They both look out the windows and notice:

OUTSIDE:

BOLTS start SNAPPING OUT from the wheel's frame.

SNAP SNAP SNAP...

INSIDE THE FIRST CAR:

HH HOLMES

(whispering)

Is that supposed to happen?

EMELINE CIGRAND

I don't know... No one's ever done this before.

OUTSIDE:

SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP ---

INSIDE THE FIRST CAR:

SHUDDERING from the steel in every direction -

- Holmes and Emeline both wobble, terrified -

- Before the car LURCHES upwards -

- And ROCKS to a halt.

HH HOLMES
Darling, are you all right?

EMELINE CIGRAND
Yes. Yes I think so.

HH HOLMES
(to concerned other
patrons)
Not to worry. This is perfectly
normal.

OUTSIDE:

Below, another 20 patrons board the second car.

INSIDE THE FIRST CAR:

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Has this thing ever been tested?

EMELINE CIGRAND
Yes.

HH HOLMES
Thank God.

EMELINE CIGRAND
But not with anyone on it.

The car LURCHES upwards again -

- Sending all the patrons FALLING over one another.

OUTSIDE:

NUTS and BOLTS are FLYING OFF as the great machine ROTATES
the third car into position.

ON THE GROUND:

Daniel Burnham watches in horror with the OPERATOR.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Stop the machine. Stop it now.

OPERATOR
Sir, I can't.

DANIEL BURNHAM
I'm telling you, it's not stable,
bring that thing back down right -

OPERATOR

- No no, I mean, I have no way to get those people down.

(off Burnham's look)

There's no reverse switch. The only way to get the people in that car down is to spin it all the way around.

ON BURNHAM: Oh no.

OUTSIDE THE THIRD CAR:

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

All aboard, watch your step now!

Another 20 people pour into the third car.

INSIDE THE FIRST CAR:

EMELINE CIGRAND

God damn it.

ANOTHER PATRON

Ma'am, is everything going to -

HH HOLMES

- It's going to be all right. Everyone! Listen. This is perfectly normal, I assure you. And look, we're not even so high up, are we?

EMELINE CIGRAND

(whispering)

It's not the fall that'll kill us, it's the tons of steel that'll land on our heads.

- LURCH as the car SHOOTS UP another 30 feet into the air -

EMELINE CIGRAND (CONT'D)

Damn it damn it damn it damn it -

HH HOLMES

- Emeline. We're going to be all right. I promise.

SHUDDER and SHAKE.

EMELINE CIGRAND

It's not safe. All these people...

HH HOLMES

So?

EMELINE CIGRAND

SO?!

LURCH and GROAN as the car SHOOTs up again.

OUTSIDE:

Well over a hundred lives are suspended in the air now.

The machine CREAKS -

- As a GUST OF HEAVY WIND BLOWS ACROSS THE CARS -

- BENDING THE ENTIRE WHEEL.

INSIDE THE FIRST CAR:

Everyone tipping over to the left -

HH HOLMES

Take a deep breath. There you go.

EMELINE CIGRAND

How can you be so goddamned calm?

HH HOLMES

Because I'm ascending into the air,
high as any man has ever risen
before, with the woman I love by my
side.

ON EMELINE: He said he loves her...

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

What exactly do I have to complain
about?

EMELINE CIGRAND

I love you too.

HH HOLMES

Do you trust me?

EMELINE CIGRAND

Yes.

HH HOLMES

Good. And I trust you. And this
machine is going to work.

LURCH as the car shoots up -

OUTSIDE:

SNAP SNAP SNAP SNAP of more bolts flying off when -

INSIDE THE FIRST CAR:

The car seems to slow...

OUTSIDE:

A BOLT is about to pop...

... But it doesn't. It holds the weight.

INSIDE THE FIRST CAR:

Everything WOBBLER...

... And SETTLES.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

See?

Emeline looks - all is still save the gentle sway of the car.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

Take my hand. And come look at
this.

As the car SMOOTHLY GLIDES up into the next position -

- Holmes guides Emeline to the window -

- And they look out over the fair:

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THEY SEE THE ENTIRE "WHITE CITY" AT
NIGHT. MILES OF GLIMMERING THE LIKES OF WHICH NO ONE HAS EVER
SEEN IN THE HISTORY OF THE EARTH.

EMELINE CIGRAND

I... Oh wow...

HH HOLMES

Your fair is a triumph, Emeline.
Despite the soil, the sacrifices...
You've done it. You're the most
remarkable woman I've ever known.
We are alike in so many ways... And
there is so much we can share
together. So much we've yet to do
together. Look at all our life can
be.

He gestures to the gorgeous expanse of the fair.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
Will you share that life with me?

Holmes gets down on one knee...

... But his jacket falls open...

... And Emeline notices something very strange:

ONE OF THE BUTTONS ON HIS VEST ISN'T LIKE THE OTHERS.

It's been replaced... Recently. Holy shit.

She stares, transfixed and suddenly terrified, as Holmes...

.... Removes A DIAMOND ENGAGEMENT ring from his pocket.

ON EMELINE: Shock. Terror. Thrill. Excitement. All at once.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
I want you to run away with me.
Let's leave Chicago. The fair. All
of these people holding us back.
Let us start anew, together, only
us. As the people we've always
wanted to be. Will you do that with
me? Miss Emeline Cigrand, will you
be my wife?

ON EMELINE: Every emotion in the world swirling in her head.

The other patrons in the car see Holmes on his knee, and turn to watch: All eyes are on Emeline.

Holmes looks up at her expectantly: Why isn't she answering?

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
... Emeline? Emeline it's okay,
don't be scared.

EMELINE CIGRAND
... Yes.

Gleefully, happier than we've ever seen him, Holmes puts the ring on Emeline's finger before embracing her.

A CHEER from the other patrons!

A slow sweep upwards as the car rises higher in the air!

And Holmes and Emeline kissing against the glorious night!

But on Emeline's face: Terror. Something is deeply wrong.

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - MORNING

Burnham goes over attendance records with his ACCOUNTANTS.

DANIEL BURNHAM

This can't be right. Check the numbers again.

ACCOUNTANT

I did. I'm sorry, Mr. Burnham. There was an attendance spike around the wheel, but not enough - the day's figures are still standing at 15,000.

DANIEL BURNHAM

That is one tenth of what I'd need to make this fair a success. What else am I supposed to do?

ACCOUNTANT

Not my purview. But whatever it is, I'd recommend moving quickly. Because with these ticket sales, your fair is losing more money every day.

ON BURNHAM: After all that... He's failed.

He walks out of his office to Emeline's desk -

- But it's empty.

DANIEL BURNHAM

(to Other Secretaries)

Where's Emeline?

The other SECRETARIES SHRUG: No one knows.

CUT TO:

INT. PINKERTON AGENCY OFFICES - DAY

Emeline waits for Agent Elliot, who meets her with a concerned expression on his face.

AGENT ELLIOT

Miss Cigrand? Your message said you knew Frank Pickett?

EMELINE CIGRAND

I did. And I think I've made a terrible mistake. I hoping you're the man to help me make amends for it.

CUT TO:

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - PRIVATE QUARTERS - NIGHT

Benjamin Pitezel reports some bad news to his employer, Mr. Holmes.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL

... Far as I can tell, she's plum vanished.

HH HOLMES

What do you mean? I saw her yesterday. We were engaged. She left in the morning...

BENJAMIN PITEZEL

She didn't go to work. She didn't go home. Unless you think she's around here somewhere, I'd say she's disappeared.

ON HOLMES: Where is she... But just then, he has an idea.

He goes to his LOCKED CABINET, unfastening it and opening up his array of hairclips.

He looks over the clips -

- ONE OF THEM IS MISSING.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL (CONT'D)

Sir? What is all that?

ON HOLMES: Emeline discovered his secret. And stole a clip.

He's been betrayed.

HH HOLMES

That is not your concern.

He angrily goes to get his jacket.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL
Where are you headed?

HH HOLMES
I know where she is. There's only
one place she'd think she's safe.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - NIGHT

The crowded fair at midnight:

EVERYONE is here. The unkempt thousands, eager for
entertainment. Their necks craned high, their voices
explosive cacophony in the breeze.

The "white city" glows in the night. Literally. This is the
Paris of our dreams. The Rome of our legends. The Atlantis
that never was.

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - SAME TIME

Emeline and Agent Elliot speak with Daniel Burnham.

DANIEL BURNHAM
... These accusations are awfully
dramatic.

AGENT ELLIOT
Trying to apprehend him at his
hotel would be madness. Who knows
what devices he has rigged to
explode in there?

DANIEL BURNHAM
So you propose to do it at my fair?

EMELINE CIGRAND
He's already on his way.

DANIEL BURNHAM
What makes you say that?

EMELINE CIGRAND
Because I'm here.

Daniel Burnham looks at Emeline: Jesus.

DANIEL BURNHAM
 ... There are a thousand security
 officers on duty tonight. Mr.
 Elliot, they are at your disposal.

Elliot nods: Thank you.

Emeline hands Agent Elliot a PACKAGE.

EMELINE CIGRAND
 You know what to do with that?

AGENT ELLIOT
 I do.

DANIEL BURNHAM
 And you promise me you can keep her
 safe?

AGENT ELLIOT
 Sir, with all this, I think I could
 keep her safe from the devil
 himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - 57TH STREET GATE - NIGHT

In the crowd, Holmes BUYS A TICKET and enters the Fair.

He SNAKES across the grounds to:

THE COLD STORAGE TOWER.

Holmes tries the door: Locked.

He takes a rock and SMASHES the clasp.

FAIR GUARD
 (approaching)
 Hey there! What's all that?

HH HOLMES
 Pardon me I was looking for -

- In a flash Holmes WHIPS OUT HIS KNIFE AND SLICES THE
 GUARD'S NECK.

Drags the body into

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - OLD STORAGE TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Holmes tucks the dead body away.

Looks around: Everything here is rotting wood. Kindling awaiting a flame.

He takes out MATCHES and as he lights one we

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - NIGHT

Burnham and Emeline HEAR COMMOTION from outside.

EMELINE CIGRAND

What's that?

DANIEL BURNHAM

Stay here.

Burnham goes OUTSIDE to check...

DANIEL BURNHAM (FROM OUTSIDE) (CONT'D)

... Oh dear God...

Emeline follows him:

REVEAL: In the distance, the Cold Storage Tower has become a SEVEN STORY COLUMN OF FLAME.

On the ground, all hell is breaking loose.

Pandemonium.

The crowds have become teeming ants on a hill, trampling one another... And the fair.

Everything Burnham worked so hard to build is being devoured in the riot.

DANIEL BURNHAM (CONT'D)

STAY INSIDE.

Emeline goes back into the tent while Burnham RUNS OFF -

- To organize the FIREMEN by the COLD STORAGE TOWER:

Burnham BARKS ORDERS at the Firemen:

DANIEL BURNHAM (CONT'D)

Let storage burn - the priority must be stopping the fire from spreading. If it gets near the wheel...

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - SAME TIME

Back to Emeline, pacing nervously in Burnham's tent.
The SCREAMS from outside are terrifying.

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - SAME TIME

Outside, Holmes approaches the entrance to the tent.

As he gets close we

REVEAL: 30 FEET AWAY, from the top of the nearby GUARD TOWER, Agent Elliot is watching the tent entrance...

... With a SHOTGUN.

He has Holmes dead in his sights.

AGENT ELLIOT

Henry Holmes! Don't move!

Holmes turns to see Agent Elliot pointing a shotgun at him.

What can Holmes do?

He smiles...

HH HOLMES

I see why you were keen on this plan at the time. It's only... I know this fair a lot better than you do.

... As Elliot looks down to see that the TOWER BENEATH HIM IS ON FIRE.

As the wooden boards under Elliot's feet GIVE WAY, sending him falling down to the earth, Holmes SLICES the ropes holding up Burnham's tent -

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - BURNHAM'S TENT - SAME TIME

Inside the tent, Emeline watches as the roof starts to cave in above her -

- She's about to run to the front when she -

- STOPS. Thinks.

ON EMELINE: He planned this, didn't he? If she walks out the front of the collapsing tent, he'll kill her.

So she goes to the BACK OF THE TENT -

- Grabbing one of Burnham's precious MEDEIRA BOTTLES -

- SMASHING it -

- And using the jagged edge to RIP OPEN THE TENT BACK -

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - OUTSIDE BURNHAM'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

- Emeline escapes just as the tent COLLAPSES behind her.

She turns to see, on the other side of the tent:

HOLMES. Waiting.

HH HOLMES

... You've been around my house.
You've seen things you did not
understand. I would appreciate the
opportunity to explain them to you.

Emeline RUNS -

- And Holmes CHASES EMELINE THROUGH THE PANDEMONIUM.

Two desperate figures racing across the end of the world.

In flames, the White City is becoming a Black City of soot.

Emeline runs across every part of the fair -

- The GONDOLAS CAPSIZING on the river -

- The ELECTRIC LIGHTS EXPLODING from power surges -

- The Ferris Wheel CREAKING from strain -

- A million wonders TRASHED on the ground.

You can see the smoke rising from as far away as downtown.

With every plume goes the hope of a generation.

BACK NEAR THE TENT: Agent Elliot, wounded, rises from the fallen guard tower and looks around: Where is Emeline? Where is Holmes?

BACK TO EMELINE: CROWDS are PUSHING AGAINST her -

- As she fights against the current, she needs to get away from the melee - but where?

And then she sees it: The Electricity Building.

Emeline DASHES INSIDE

INT. FAIR GROUNDS - ELECTRICITY BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Neoclassical stonework meets top-of-the-line technology.

Throughout the cavernous structure lie ELECTRIC LIGHTS and DEVICES of such variety and invention that the world at large will not see these things for decades. It's like Emeline has literally run into the future...

... And the future is EXPLODING: Power surges WREAK HAVOC on the devices. Everything is SPATTERING, FRYING, MALFUNCTIONING.

Behind her:

Holmes enters. Slowly.

Where is she hiding?

A GAME OF CAT AND MOUSE: Emeline hides behind the BLINKING LIGHT DISPLAYS, while Holmes stalks her quietly.

HH HOLMES
(calling out)
It's not safe here. Come with me.

ON EMELINE: She hides behind a GROANING GENERATOR...

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
We're not like other people. You know that. They follow the rules. They do as they're told. We do as we like. We don't let manners dictate our happiness. "Don't put your elbows on the table." "Don't spit on the sidewalk." "Don't make love to strangers." "Don't examine their insides."

POP POP POP. Exploding lights behind Holmes.

Emeline dashes to another display, farther from him.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
We're better than these people,
Emeline. Why would you live like
them, when you could live like me?
Like us?

POP POP. The world is coming down around them.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
Please come out.

POP. CRASH.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
Please come out of the dark.

ON EMELINE: She's backed against a wall. There's a WINDOW to the outside...

... But on the other side of it: FIRE.

She has nowhere else to go.

She sees on the floor: A PIECE OF BROKEN GLASS.

She takes it, slips it behind her into the ribbon of her dress.

She STEPS OUT INTO THE LIGHT.

Holmes can see her now.

POP POP.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
Thank you. Let's go.

Slowly, warily, Emeline moves towards him. He can't see the broken glass she's hiding.

He holds his hands in the air. He means no harm.

She steps closer.

But BEHIND HOLMES' BACK: He's hidden his KNIFE in his belt.

They each step closer and closer, both hiding weapons.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)
I love you.

EMELINE CIGRAND

I love you too.

And with that...

... Emeline SWINGS HER BROKEN GLASS AT HOLMES -

- As he SWINGS HIS KNIFE AT HER -

- And he's faster.

He JABS THE BLADE right into her neck.

Again into her stomach.

ON EMELINE: Looking into his eyes, choking up blood.

She falls to the ground.

Emeline is dead.

ON HOLMES: He looks down at the lifeless corpse of the only person who ever came close to understanding him. Is that sadness?

EXPLOSIONS OF ELECTRICITY BEHIND HIM, the lightning that Edison and Tesla and Westinghouse had locked in bottles finally BREAKS FREE.

And Holmes stands there, alone at the end of the world.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO SKYLINE - DAWN

Dawn breaks across the city.

The soft smoke from the burnt fair rises into the air - you can smell the ash as far away as downtown.

INT. HOLMES' HOTEL - LOBBY - MORNING

A HOTEL GUEST drags her BAGS across the lobby to the main desk.

She RINGS THE BELL. No answer.

She keeps ringing, but no use - there's no one on duty.

Hmm. She shrugs, heads out the door without paying her bill.

EXT. HOLMES' HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER

As the Guest exits the front doors, she looks behind her -
- There's a SIGN on the entrance.

THE SIGN READS: "HOTEL CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. - HH
Holmes"

CUT TO:

INT. UNION STATION - DOWNTOWN - MORNING

As we've seen before, A FLEET OF YOUNG WOMEN descend from the
incoming trains, eager to begin their new lives in Chicago.

And moving among the women, against the crowd...

... Holmes and Pitezel.

They carry their bags ON TO A TRAIN.

INT. TRAIN CAR - FIRST CLASS - MINUTES LATER

Holmes and Pitezel take their seats in the first class cabin
as the train leaves the station with a triumphant TOOT TOOT.

Holmes LIGHTS A CIGAR.

He offers one to Pitezel, who accepts - They both PUFF.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL

Appreciate your giving me a chance,
Mr. Holmes. Taking me with you.

HH HOLMES

I think I'm going to miss Chicago.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL

Pittsburgh won't be so bad.

HH HOLMES

You ever been to Pittsburgh?

BENJAMIN PITEZEL

No.

HH HOLMES

My point exactly.

They each PUFF for a moment.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

... I know that you've seen a lot of strange things around my hotel lately.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL

As long as you pay me, what you keep to yourself is your business.

HH HOLMES

That's just the thing, friend... You already know too much.

ON PITEZEL: What the hell? And that's when he starts to feel... Very... Faint...

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

It's a nice thing about chloroform. You can put in champagne. You can also put it in cigars.

BENJAMIN PITEZEL

No... No, Mr...

HH HOLMES

Don't worry, kid. You'll be sound asleep in just a moment - I promise you won't feel a thing when I toss your body from the train.

ON PITEZEL: Tries to stand but he's too woozy....

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

I thought I might be able to trust people in this world. To let them in. Share my secrets. But I was wrong.

ON PITEZEL: ... Falling into unconsciousness.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

I suppose a man of any vision at all is doomed to be alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. FAIR GROUNDS - SAME TIME

At the same time, Daniel Burnham strolls sadly across the rubble of his burnt and ravaged fair.

Much of the fair remains - but much has been turned to dust:

The Machinery Building, the Transportation Building, the Electricity Building and more are all badly damaged.

Millions of dollars wasted. Hundreds of thousands of hours of work. His fair won't beat Paris' - it will be the greatest, most public, and most expensive failure in American history.

Everything Burnham dreamed is now ruined.

An ASSISTANT comes toward him.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Any sign of her?

ASSISTANT
I'm sorry. Miss Cigrand seems to have vanished completely.

ON BURNHAM: She's gone.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
There were... Well, the guards say they found bodies. Near Cold Storage. From the fire. More than a dozen certainly, it's hard to say.

ON BURNHAM: And he'll never see Emeline Cigrand again.

DANIEL BURNHAM
(turning to tent)
... Leave me alone.

ASSISTANT
Sir, don't go in there just yet.

DANIEL BURNHAM
Excuse me?

ASSISTANT
The police. They're waiting for you inside.

DANIEL BURNHAM
What are you talking about?

ASSISTANT
At least a dozen bodies. There's an investigation. Safety protocols for the fair - "gross negligence," that's what they - I've sent word to the lawyers. I'm so sorry.

(MORE)

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
 But they said they're going to put
 you under arrest, Mr. Burnham.

CUT TO:

INT. PRIVATE CLUB - BACK ROOM - DAY

Mayor Harrison and his CRONIES share a breakfast of ham and eggs in the back room of their club.

A MAYORAL AIDE enters -

MAYORAL AIDE
 Morning's papers, Mr. Mayor.

- And lays the papers down on the table.

The Mayor looks at the screaming headlines:

"WORLD'S FAIR DISASTER"

"DOZENS FEARED DEAD"

"DANIEL BURNHAM IN CUSTODY"

MAYOR HARRISON
 ... Well, you've got to hand it to
 Mr. Burnham: At least when he fell,
 he fell with a good hard thump.

CUT TO:

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA STATION - PITTSBURGH - DAY

Pittsburgh isn't as big or as populous as Chicago, but it's not too far from it - it looks like a great place for a man to start again.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA STATION - PITTSBURGH - SAME TIME

Holmes arrives in Pittsburgh dragging his suitcases across Pennsylvania Station...

... But minus one Benjamin Pitezell.

Holmes looks around: A new city. A new hunting ground.

CUT TO:

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL - NIGHT

Daniel Burnham is led, handcuffed, into his jail cell.

ON BURNHAM'S FACE: The depths of his loss: Career ruined. Fair a failure. Friend and confidante dead. And now his life, over.

The doors to his cell SLAM SHUT.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW HOTEL - PITTSBURGH - DAY

A hansom pulls up outside of a NEWLY CONSTRUCTED HOTEL.

If not quite as magnificent as the hotel in Chicago, it's not far from it.

Holmes emerges from the hansom, staring up at his new "castle": Could be a lot worse.

INT. NEW HOTEL - PITTSBURGH - MOMENTS LATER

Holmes UNLOCKS the front door and ENTERS THE BARREN HOTEL to find...

... AGENT ELLIOT AND A DOZEN POLICE OFFICERS WAITING FOR HIM.

They all brandish SHOTGUNS.

ON HOLMES: What has just happened?

AGENT ELLIOT

Let's try this again: Henry Holmes.
AKA Herman Mudgett. You're under
arrest for the murders of Emeline
Cigrand and Annie Timmons.

Elliot holds up...

... A BRIGHT BLUE HAIRCLIP.

ON HOLMES: It's the clip that Emeline stole!

AGENT ELLIOT (CONT'D)

The missing hairclip of one Annie
Timmons. We'll have her parents
identify it.

HH HOLMES
 ... That will do you precious
 little good in a court of law.

AGENT ELLIOT
 Oh, and there's this...

Agent Elliot holds up a piece of paper with a few BLACK
 SMUDGES on it.

AGENT ELLIOT (CONT'D)
 ... Took them from the hairclip.
 They're called "fingerprints."

Elliot smiles.

ON HOLMES: What in the world is that?

CUT TO:

INT. COOK COUNTY JAIL - DAY

Daniel Burnham sits in his jail cell, staring at the wall.

PRISON GUARD
 (approaching)
 Burnham! Time to go.

DANIEL BURNHAM
 Has my wife come with the bail?

PRISON GUARD
 Dear God, I certainly hope that's
 not your wife...

OFF OF BURNHAM'S CONFUSED FACE WE

CUT TO:

EXT. COOK COUNTY JAIL - MINUTES LATER

Daniel Burnham exits the jail to find someone waiting for
 him. It's...

... Mayor Harrison.

MAYOR HARRISON
 Top of the morning to you.

DANIEL BURNHAM
 Come to see that I'm actually
 hanged, then?

MAYOR HARRISON

You know they always told me you were a bit of a gloomy Guss. I can see why.

DANIEL BURNHAM

Sir, now that there is hardly a single hurt or indignity that remains for you to submit me to, there's a small something I've been hoping to get off my chest for awhile now... Fuck. You.

MAYOR HARRISON

... I think you should come down to the fair. There's something you might want to see.

ON BURNHAM: What?

CUT TO:

INT. FAIR - MAIN GATE - MINUTES LATER

Burnham stares wide-eyed at the fair's main gate...

... AT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ENTERING THE FAIR.

Lines to the entrances stretch for blocks in any direction.

The Mayor NODS to some guards, who let him and Burnham in passed the lines.

Inside the gate, it's busier than we've ever seen it.

DANIEL BURNHAM

(so confused)

It's never been so crowded...

MAYOR HARRISON

I've gotten word from the ticket sellers. Attendance today... It's the highest in your history.

DANIEL BURNHAM

I don't understand.

MAYOR HARRISON

More than 100,000 thousand people are coming to see the fair today.

DANIEL BURNHAM

But... So much of what I've done is burnt.

MAYOR HARRISON

No no, you fool... They've come to see the ashes.

Burnham looks on, stunned, as THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE take in the Fair.

Families ascend to the top of the Ferris Wheel: They ooh and ahh at the wreckage from hundreds of feet in the air.

FROM THE TOP OF THE FERRIS WHEEL: We ride with the passengers and see the city of Chicago below us, gleaming in the sun. We see the fairgrounds beneath our feet. And we see the black stain of the fire, the shocking and enticing scar on the brilliant all-white face of the Fair.

ON BURNHAM: He did it.

His fair is a triumph after all.

CUT TO:

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - CELL - DAY - SEQUENCE

Holmes WAKES in his prison cell. It's far from what we'd expect: Polished bathtub, linen sheets, his own sink, a personal writing desk.

Holmes sits at his desk, enjoying his morning's coffee and the DAY'S PAPERS: New York Times, Philadelphia Inquirer, Chicago Tribune.

He opens the Tribune to see a curious face looking back at him:

HIS OWN.

His mugshot is on the front page of the newspaper.

The headline reads: "CHICAGO'S OWN JACK THE RIPPER?"

Accompanied by photos of the hotel, of the furnace, of BONES FOUND IN THE BASEMENT.

Holmes stares, fascinated: So this is what notoriety feels like...

CUT TO:

INT. BURNHAM'S SUBURBAN HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING - SEQUENCE

Daniel Burnham sits to breakfast with his FAMILY, happy for the first time in a long time. He opens the paper to see his own headline:

"THE ARCHITECT WHO SAVED AMERICA'S FAIR"

And a photo of his own face.

CUT TO:

INT. COURT ROOM - PITTSBURGH - DAY - SEQUENCE

Holmes stands with his COUNSEL as a JUDGE SENTENCES him for his crimes.

CUT TO:

EXT. HARVARD YARD - HARVARD UNIVERSITY - DAY - SEQUENCE

Daniel Burnham stands at the dais in an ELABORATE GRADUATION CEREMONY.

ON BURNHAM: After all this time, he gets his Harvard diploma.

CUT TO:

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - CELL - DAY - SEQUENCE

From his prison cell, Holmes EXCITEDLY COMPOSES A BOOK at his desk.

A PRISON GUARD enters, bringing in his lunch.

Holmes shows the Prison Guard the cover of what he's writing:

"THE MEMOIRS OF HENRY HOLMES"

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO CEMETARY - EVENING - SEQUENCE

Two CEMETARY WORKERS pour dirt over a grave.

ON THE GRAVESTONE: It reads: "FRANK PICKETT."

And it's positioned between two other GRAVESTONES:

"Martha Pickett" and "Esther Pickett"

Detective Pickett has been laid to rest beside his family.

CUT TO:

EXT. CIGRAND FAMILY HOUSE - CHAMPAIGN, IL - SEQUENCE

Agent Elliot delivers a box of Emeline's POSSESSIONS to her GRIEVING PARENTS.

CUT TO:

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - HALLWAY - DAY

Daniel Burnham walks down the hallway of Moyamensing Prison, a printed copy of "THE MEMOIRS OF HENRY HOLMES" under his arm. From the book cover, a PICTURE of Henry Holmes stares back at us with just a slight grin.

A GUARD leads Burnham down the hall, towards Holmes' cell.

GUARD

(re: book)

You read that thing? My wife won't stop talking about it. Says it's so gruesome. Couldn't put it down.

Burnham doesn't say anything as the Guard unlocks the door to

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Burnham enters the meeting room, where he comes face to face with Henry Holmes.

Holmes is seated in a chair. Handcuffed. Strangely calm.

The two men stare at each other. Burnham hates Holmes more than anything, but he's trying to hold it in.

HH HOLMES

... You're just in time.

Burnham sits across from him, slowly.

HH HOLMES (CONT'D)

My execution is in a few hours. I was starting to worry you wouldn't make it.

(silence from Burnham)

You enjoyed my book?

DANIEL BURNHAM

... You read your Bible, Mr. Holmes?

HH HOLMES

Religiously.

DANIEL BURNHAM

The Reverend last Sunday, he said something I liked. He was talking about Cain and Abel. The oldest story in the world. A hero. A villain. A murder. Good stuff. And so the question he was asking was, "why?" Why did Cain do it?

HH HOLMES

Why do you think?

DANIEL BURNHAM

That's the part that I had forgotten: Cain worked the soil. But Abel, he worked the flock. And so they each prepared a tribute to the Lord - and the Lord, he liked Abel's better. The man who tills the soil will always be jealous of the man who tills the flock. He'll lash out for attention. A whining child, upset that he's not as smart, not as accomplished, as his fellow man.

HH HOLMES

That's why you think I killed her?

DANIEL BURNHAM

You killed her, you killed the others, you tried to ruin my fair, all because you wanted to be me and you couldn't hack it. And I came here today to tell you that you were right: You're not me. You could never have built what I did. And I hope that thought tortures you for what very little is left of your life.

HH HOLMES

... You believe that you've won, don't you?

DANIEL BURNHAM

I believe that by sunset you will
be good and dead. Forever.

HH HOLMES

Everyone dies forever, Daniel. The
question is: how many people get to
live that way?

Burnham stares as Holmes begins to smile and we

CUT TO:

EXT. GALLOWES - MOYAMENSING PRISON - LATER THAT DAY

A THOUSAND PEOPLE attend the hanging of the most famous
killer in America.

HH HOLMES (V.O.)

This is the thought that will yet
disturb your slumbers. That as the
years go by, as the reports of your
accomplishments fade into the sepia
of old newspapers, it will be me
they can't wash off.

Henry Holmes takes the gallows stage in a suit of all black.

A noose is laid around his neck.

HH HOLMES (V.O.)

Your public. Your audience. Which
of us has gotten under their skins?
Scarred their hum-drum reveries?

Holmes bows his head, ever so slightly, to the audience. A
gentle bow just before -

- THE TRAPDOOR OPENS AND HIS NECK IS SNAPPED.

There is a CHEER from the crowd.

Among them, we find Daniel Burnham, watching resolutely.

HH HOLMES (V.O.)

People have been buying tickets to
our story for thousands of years.
Since your friends there - Cain
and... What's the other one's name?
The one no one talks about?

(MORE)

HH HOLMES (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Our show, our dance, we'll be
performing it forever.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETARY - HOLMES GRAVE - DAYS LATER

Daniel Burnham attends the burial of Henry Holmes.

Burnham watches as WORKMEN pour 10 feet of concrete over Holmes' grave. As if they're trying to make sure nothing so evil can ever escape onto the earth again.

TEXT ON SCREEN: Henry Holmes, as well as the detectives who arrested him and the leading journalists who covered his trial, all published memoirs of the case - every single one of them a best-seller. In the hundred years since, his story has sold tens of millions of books.

TEXT ON SCREEN: After his success with the World's Fair, Daniel Burnham became the most celebrated architect in America. His designs grace the skylines of New York, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Detroit, San Francisco, Boston, Milwaukee, Manila, Washington DC, and, of course, Chicago.

CUT TO:

INT. MOYAMENSING PRISON - MEETING ROOM

Back in his final meeting with Daniel Burnham, Holmes concludes his speech.

HH HOLMES
Which of us is going to die today?
And which of us is going to live
forever? As we pass from history
into legend, which will endure -
sin, or virtue? Will it be your
towering palaces of marble and
rock? Or me. Your villain. Your
blackguard. The devil in your white
city.

As Burnham can't look away from Holmes' knowing smile we

CUT TO BLACK.