

COME AUGUST 1915

Written by

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Loosely based on the 1915 travel journal of Ferdinand A. Strub

TITLE: PROLOGUE

**EXT. TREE TOP - WINTER DAY**

A lone red-tailed hawk scans the winter sky from the top branch of a bare tree. It spreads its wings and launches into the air. Camera follows, rising to reveal a vast flooded landscape of submerged homes and farms.

SUPER

*Red River of the North 1897*

VO

Epic spring flooding began in late March 1897 on the Red River of the North. Inundating much of Fargo-Moorhead and threatening to wash away the Northern Pacific train bridge spanning the towns.

**INT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE - NIGHT**

A group of burly, bearded men in heavy coats huddle by kerosene lamplight. A TELEGRAPH OPERATOR reads warnings coming in on the wire

OPERATOR (READING)

*River rising fast - STOP - forty feet above flood level - STOP - Ice jams - STOP*

VO

A desperate decision is made -

MAYOR

We'll drive the locomotive out to the middle of the span to weigh the bridge down.

RAILROAD ENGINEER

That's crazy, mayor! We could lose the bridge AND the locomotive! It's too risky!

MAYOR

If we lose the bridge we lose the whole town. Fargo is only here because of the bridge. We'll have no use for a train!

MAN in a winter coat rushes in

MAN 3

It's too dark to see but ice is  
slamming against the bridge!

**EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT**

In near dark, men with lamps direct the engineer to back the locomotive out on the bridge. It disappears into blackness

**EXT. BRIDGE - DAYBREAK**

VO

The townspeople pray and wait for daylight. At first dawn shouts ring out. The bridge and train are still standing.

People weep and hug each other.

FADE

**EXT. FARGO MAIN STREET - DAY**

All along the frontier town people are shoveling mud from their storefronts. Ruined merchandise is piled in wagons and hauled away. Mattresses are drying on the pitched roofs, clothing is strung from trees and lamp poles.

**EXT. STRUB'S BAKERY - SAME**

FERD STRUB (40s) stocky German immigrant, thick mustache and eyebrows, stands on the wooden sidewalk in front of his bakery, the name STRUB still seen on a broken window. He supervises his family in the clean-up. Three sons (10, 12, 15) two daughters (13, 8) all in rubber boots, haul damaged barrels and boxes from the store.

His wife, LOUISA (40s) mixed-blood, Native American, dark graying hair piled in a tight bun. She hugs FERD.

LOUISA

We'll start again, Ferd, we started before and we can do it again.

He turns to his teenage sons who are setting a ladder to the sign hanging overhead "STRUB BAKERY" Mud across the bottom shows the high water mark of the flood. Two daughters wipe windows.

FERD  
 Wilhelm, hold the ladder for your  
 brother. And Annie, darling, get us  
 more water.

**EXT. FARGO MAIN STREET - CONT.**

A pair of work horses pull a LARGE WAGON into view. A dozen flood survivors and children huddle in the back. The driver and a priest get out and approach the bakery.

DRIVER  
 Mornin' Mr. Strub

PRIEST  
 And you as well Louisa.

Handshakes all around

DRIVER  
 Could we have a quick word? Over  
 here?

They move down the sidewalk out of hearing of the children and the wagon.

PRIEST  
 The Home Society is overwhelmed,  
 the orphanage is out of beds. We  
 were wondering... a five-year-old  
 mixed-blood boy, his dad perished  
 rescuing him from a flooded attic  
 and his mother, the Indian woman,  
 died this week from dysentery, and  
 severe dehydration.

DRIVER  
 We know you've got five children to  
 feed already, but you being a mixed-  
 blood family, maybe the boy would  
 be a fit in a good Catholic home  
 like yours-

DRIVER runs out of words. Priest puts his hand on Louisa's shoulder

PRIEST  
 Louisa, you grew up in an  
 orphanage, you know what that life  
 is like...

LOUISA  
 The boy is in the wagon over there?

The men nod. She glances at her husband, he nods. She walks over to wagon, acknowledges the huddled group, many she knows, then smiles warmly to the boy, helps him from the wagon

LOUISA (CONT'D)  
 (Lakota) Tahn-YAHN yah?  
 Subtitle: Are you okay?

The boy nods

LOUISA (CONT'D)  
 Come with me, son. Meet your new family.

FADE

**EXT. FARMHOUSE - OCTOBER DAY**

A weather-beaten farmhouse sits against a flat horizon of plowed-under fields. Clouds on a cold October day. A HORSE BUGGY arrives and stops under a lone oak tree.

**INT. HORSE BUGGY - SAME**

HELGA STRUB (30) Swedish immigrant, large-boned, coiled blonde hair - gazes at the farmstead with disgust

Driving is her husband OTTO (35) German immigrant, balding, bushy mustache. Between them sits MYRTLE (5) who clutches a plush RABBIT doll, and a younger brother (3)

OTTO turns to his daughter in the back seat

OTTO  
 Myrtle, you're going to meet your new cousin. He's adopted and five years old, same as you.

MYRTLE  
 What's his name?

OTTO  
 He had an Indian name, but now he's *Ferdinand Aloysius Strub*, but he doesn't like it, so they call him *Fuzzy*.

MYRTLE  
 (Giggling) *Aloysius*, that's silly.

Her mother turns with a frown

HELGA  
Stop that awful giggling.

OTTO and daughter exchange secret grins. A game they play whenever HELGA isn't looking.

He turns and whispers to his wife

OTTO  
Helga, you could try and smile.

AUNT HELGA  
And you could try and stay sober.

**EXT. FARMHOUSE - SAME**

A FARM FAMILY, six kids (3 to 12) and CITY FAMILY, two kids (6 and 4) gather for an early Sunday dinner.

OTTO and brother WILHELM (35) hug warmly, speaking German

WILHELM  
Willkommen, kleiner bruder...

OTTO  
Wie geht's, Otto?

**INT. FARM KITCHEN - DAY**

LOUISA STRUB (33) part Lakota-Sioux, stands with her back to us at the stove, turns to hand a bucket to FUZZY (6)

LOUISA  
Fetch us some water, Fuzzy.

He rushes eagerly out the screen door, which slams with a bang. Myrtle leaps up to follow

MYRTLE  
I want to pump the handle!

The door slams a second time

AUNT HELGA  
Myrtle! We do not slam doors.

**EXT. WATER PUMP - CONTINUOUS**

The 6-year-olds splash water at each other. They could be twins except for their complexions. Myrtle is white as cookie dough, Fuzzy closer to toast.

MYRTLE  
*(Taunting)* Your middle name is  
*Aloysius*

FUZZY  
 Don't call me that.

MYRTLE  
 My dad told me. '*Aloysius*'

FUZZY  
 I don't like it.

She splashes him again and runs to the house laughing.

**INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY**

The TWO FAMILIES gather at a long table piled with potatoes, roasted chicken, steaming ears of corn.

MYRTLE looks at her mother

MYRTLE  
 Can I eat corn with my fingers?  
 Cousin Fuzzy is.

HELGA  
*(Disapproving)* Not at the table.  
 Take it outside on the porch.

FUZZY looks at his mother, who nods approval, and the kids rush out outside.

**EXT. PORCH - DAY**

Fuzzy and Myrtle compete chewing one row of kernels at a time, butter on their chins. He finishes first and holds the cob up like a trophy. She glares at him

MYRTLE  
 I think you won by cheating

FUZZY  
 I won by eating!

She giggles and wipes her chin on her sleeve.

**INT. FARM HOUSE - AFTERNOON**

The OLDER KIDS clear the dishes and scatter outside. The PARENTS sit with coffee and discuss the weather.

WILHELM offers his brother a beer but OTTO declines with a nod in the direction of his wife.

LOUISA  
How was the train ride up from  
Minneapolis?

HELGA  
Interminable.

LOUISA  
We're glad you were finally able to  
visit.

FUZZY and MYRTLE play on the couch. He grabs her plush RABBIT and runs, waving it triumphant. She stops, hands on hips, determination on her face, taps her foot three times, then charges, knocking him flat to the floor.

They tussle on the rug, tickling each other wildly. The parents laugh until it becomes a little embarrassing and Helga breaks it up

AUNT HELGA  
Stop that, Myrtle. It's not lady-  
like.

**EXT. FARM HOUSE YARD - DUSK**

The CITY Strubs depart in the buggy as the FARM Strubs wave. MYRTLE leans out the back, dangles her RABBIT and taunts Fuzzy

MYRTLE  
I'm going to call him 'Aloysius'

FUZZY turns angry and chases after the buggy in the dust.

FADE

**EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY.**

Title: *Sioux City, Iowa 1902*

MAPLE MOHR (7) stands at the train station with her mother SHANNON (35) and FIVE SIBLINGS (14 to 3). Their dad, LIAM (38) prepares to board the train. The younger kids are crying.

SHANNON  
Your father is going back to  
Ireland to save the family farm.  
(MORE)

## SHANNON (CONT'D)

Your Uncle Sean died, but before he did, he let the whole place run to hell, pardon me saying.

## LIAM

Once I get the fences mended and the roof fixed I'll send for you, one at a time - starting with Michael, then Patrick, then you Maple. The young ones will come with your ma when she decides she's ready.

SHANNON rolls her eyes, pecks him on the cheek

## SHANNON

Don't you worry about us, Liam Mohr, just send money when you've got it.

## LIAM

And you Maple, keep an eye on your sisters. Help your ma, and one day soon we'll all be together on a beautiful green farm.

## SHANNON

Fill their heads with silly notions, then. Better get on the train.

KIDS hug their DAD goodbye and he dances a jig up the carriage steps like a young Dick Van Dyke, singing -

## LIAM

*On the cliffs above Kilkenny,  
I met a lass called Jenny  
Who'd kiss you for a penny  
But if you called her 'darling'  
she'd do it for a farthing -*

The TRAIN departs in a cloud of steam.

**TITLE SEQUENCE**

A 1915 montage of technological wonders of the New Century. Steampunk knobs, dials, gears - dazzling in the light.

**INT. NEWSPAPER COMPOSITION ROOM - DAY**

Ink-stained fingers fly over a LINOTYPE keyboard. Widen to see FUZZY STRUB (25) focused and intense

**INT. TELEPHONE SWITCHBOARD - DAY**

A woman's hands at a telephone SWITCHBOARD. Widen to MYRTLE STRUB (25) plugging wires with monotonous efficiency

**INT. SMALL CAFE - DAY**

A woman's fingers dance across a gleaming gilded-age CASH REGISTER. Widen to MAPLE MOHR (23) expertly bouncing coins into the tray

The title appears:

Come August 1915

**NEWSREEL** intro with historic photos

VO

The New Century gets off with a bang in 1901 (SFX: POP POP!) when President McKinley is shot twice in the chest by an angry anarchist.

Theodore Roosevelt, at 42, is the youngest president in history and begins construction of the Panama Canal.

In 1906 an massive earthquake knocks San Francisco to its knees - then burns it to the ground.

The city begins rebuilding immediately, and in nine short years stages one of the great come-back stories in American history. The Pan Pacific Expo of 1915.

Nineteen million people visit the fair.

**EXT. NEWSPAPER BUILDING - DAY**

Title: *Sioux City, Iowa 1914*

Bustling street scene - Model-Ts, wagons, pedestrians in long October coats.

On the building window - "*Sioux City Journal*"

**INT. PRESS-COMPOSING ROOM - SAME**

A row of men peck at typewriters. A large glass window looks into the adjoining COMPOSING ROOM, where three huge linotype machines are in operation. The EDITOR (60) scruffy, soggy cigar jammed between his fingers, examines the front page, alongside his COPY CHIEF (40)

Headline - *British Bomb German Zeppelin Factory*

EDITOR

Okay. Print it.

COPY CHIEF shouts the order

COPY CHIEF

Roll press!

EDITOR notices a new typesetter through the glass. FUZZY STRUB, 23, lanky, dark hair, in apron and eye-shades. The machine rises nearly to the ceiling. Fuzzy sits erect on wooden chair punching keys, throwing switches, pulling levers, with speed and finesse. A virtuoso.

EDITOR

Say, who's the new kid?

COPY CHIEF

Fuzzy Strub. I lured him down from the *Duluth Herald*. He's a wizard.

EDITOR

How'd you hear of him?

COPY CHIEF

Met him at the Typesetter's Convention last August over in Milwaukee.

EDITOR

A little young to be a delegate ain't he?

COPY CHIEF

His older brother and sister are both typesetters up in Fargo. He was practically born to it.

Fuzzy stops, double-checks the paper he's working from, pulls a pencil from behind his ear and circles a word, walks over and holds it to the glass.

EDITOR

What da hell?

Fuzzy crosses out the word insure and writes ensure? The Copy Chief considers the change and nods.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Don't that get your goat, havin' some kid question your vocabulary?

COPY CHIEF

It saves time making corrections later. I give him all the overtime he wants and let him choose his shifts. It's already paid off.

EDITOR points at the window with his cigar

EDITOR

*Ensure IS the word you wanted.*

**INT. SIOUX CITY SALOON - NIGHT**

Crowded workingman's bar, noisy mix of immigrant languages. A two-man band, accordion and tuba, plays in a corner. A poker game at one table, checkers at another.

FUZZY, in dapper vest and bowler hat, eases through the crowd, slapping backs, shaking hands. Loose-limbed like a young Dick Van Dyke and grinning like the Cheshire Cat.

FUZZY

C'mon you mugs, how about this hard-workin' band? Bartender! Another round for your esteemed clientele, on me!

The men cheer. Bartender fills a dozen glasses of foamy beer from the tap. A German, two Swedes, and a big Dutchman snoring in his chair. Fuzzy is regaling the group with a story -

FUZZY (CONT'D)

So the boss removed the old brass spittoon from the shop floor, and Big Pete, the Canuck, went in to complain -

The men nod their heads, sympathetic to the complaint.

FUZZY (CONT'D)

So Pete sez, "I miss that old spittoon, boss," and the boss fires back "You missed it before Pete, that's why we hadda take it away!"

The table erupts with laughter. Fuzzy is in his glory, friend to every man, money to burn. He waves his hand over his head for another round.

**DISSOLVE TO LATER**

Bartender sweeps the floor, the bar is empty except Fuzzy, slouched alone on a stool.

BARTENDER

Time to take your troubles home, friend.

FUZZY  
 (*Slurring*) Home? That's a good one.

He pulls an elegant watch from his vest. The small hand points to one.

**INT. TELEPHONE COMPANY - DAY**

Title: *St. Paul, Minnesota 1915*

Poster on the wall: *NO jewelry, NO chatting, NO slouching. Stay on script.* A line of identically-dressed YOUNG WOMEN in white blouses and dark skirts work at the switchboards.

A glum SUPERVISOR paces behind them. An OPERATOR is discovered chewing gum, and escorted from the line.

**INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY**

MYRTLE stirs her coffee with a small silver spoon. Down the hall she sees the FIRED OPERATOR emptying her locker.

INGA (24) sits next to Myrtle and speaks softly

INGA  
 So? How did it go yesterday? Tell me everything!

MYRTLE  
 It was a huge success. 2,000 women, arm-in-arm, down Hennepin Avenue.

INGA  
 Does your mother know you marched?

MYRTLE  
 Heavens no! Mother thinks suffragists are *spinsters-in-waiting*.

Inga laughs. SUPERVISOR reappears and they hush. MYRTLE slips her lucky spoon back into her pocket.

**EXT. NEWS STAND - EVENING**

MYRTLE and INGA file out of the phone building in a sea of workers. The sidewalk CLOCK reads 5:10

MYRTLE stops at a NEWS STAND to check her horoscope. She runs her finger down the magazine page

MYRTLE

*"Caution is the word, as the day  
may bring bad news."*

INGA

You don't believe horoscopes, do  
you?

MYRTLE

Sometimes they confirm suspicions I  
already have.

INGA points at the headline of the evening paper

INGA

*"Suffragists March in the  
Thousands"*

She opens the paper to a photo spread. There in the top  
corner is a close-up of Myrtle holding a sign *"How Long Must  
We Wait?"*

INGA (CONT'D)

That's you!

MYRTLE

Oh my stars! This is *literally* bad  
news.  
If the phone company... I could  
lose my position. And if my mother  
sees it! Oh, I feel faint -

She leans against a mailbox

INGA

Where are your salts?

MYRTLE

In my bag.

INGA digs out a glass vial and discretely waves it under  
MYRTLE's nose.

INGA

I'll clip the photo for you. You're  
practically famous!

MYRTLE

Please don't say that.

**INT. ALL-NIGHT CAFE - DAYBREAK**

Title: *Sioux City, Iowa 1915*

MAPLE MOHR (21) Irish, short red hair, slender, eyes that sparkle. She stands at the cash register reading a Hollywood magazine.

Early morning sun slices across the checkered floor. FUZZY, in winter coat, enters and takes a seat in a window booth.

MAPLE

*(Thick accent)* You're up early, stranger.

FUZZY

Haven't been to bed yet. Just finished my shift.

Out the window workers trudge through the snow, head-down against the wind

FUZZY (CONT'D)

Look at these poor souls. I wouldn't take a morning shift if they doubled my pay.

MAPLE

How long you been in town, slim? I haven't seen you before - and I never forget a handsome face. Judging by your hands, you're not workin' at the bakery.

He tucks his hands in his lap

MAPLE (CONT'D)

Don't get me wrong. I prefer a man with grit under his nails.

He points to the UNION PIN on his collar

FUZZY

Typesetter. Fuzzy Strub. Pleased to meet you.

She shakes his hand

MAPLE

*Fuzzy?* That's a funny one. Call me Maple.

She points out the name tag on her uniform

FUZZY

And you think my name is funny?

MAPLE

My dad nick-named me for the color  
of my hair.

FUZZY

Well Maple, I HAVE seen you before.

A bell rings as the door opens. A pair of TRUCKERS blow in  
with a gust of snow.

MAPLE

Stay here! I'll be back.

FUZZY finishes his bacon and eggs, lights a cigarette. She  
returns with the coffee pot

MAPLE (CONT'D)

So, you were saying - you've seen  
me before?

FUZZY

Wednesday at the movies. You stayed  
to see the short a second time  
around.

MAPLE

Are you spying on me, Fuzzy Strub?

FUZZY

You were the only one in the  
theater between shows.

MAPLE

I wanted to see the serial again.  
*The Hazards of Helen*. The actress  
does all her own stunts.

FUZZY

How do you know so much about  
movies?

MAPLE

The magazines at the counter. I'm  
going to do stunt work in the  
movies one day -

TRUCK DRIVER

Sweetheart!

She rushes to take their order. One of the DRIVERS reaches  
over and tries to pat her ass. She gracefully steps aside  
like a bullfighter.

When she returns Fuzzy asks

FUZZY

Do you need assistance with these cretins?

MAPLE

I can handle them.

FUZZY

Like *Hazards of Helen*?

MAPLE

I'll show you a stunt! Something simple.

She gets a tin pitcher of ice water and walks over to the men. Arriving, she trips on a chair leg and lands both elbows on the table, spilling the pitcher in one guy's lap and falling backward to the floor. The DRIVER jumps to his feet with his hands on his groin

DRIVER

Jumpin' Jesus that's cold!

FUZZY is already there. He helps Maple stand up. She winks at him. Drivers put their coats on, drop some coins on the table and walk out.

MAPLE

Was it convincing? The timing felt a little off.

He can't believe what he's seeing

FUZZY

Where did you learn that?

MAPLE

My dad did some stage work in Ireland. He taught me some stunts when I was a child and how to fall.

She smiles at him

MAPLE (CONT'D)

And you, Fuzzy Strub, do you know how to fall?

**EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY**

FUZZY walks up the steps to a large house with a sign on the porch *ROOM TO LET*, knocks on the door.

FUZZY  
Anybody home?

MAPLE and her mother, SHANNON (45) open the door

MAPLE  
Mom, this is Mr. Strub who I've  
told you about.

FUZZY  
I'm honored to meet you, Mrs. Mohr.  
I see where Maple gets her good  
looks.

MRS. MOHR  
(*Blushing*) Call me Shannon. Crazy  
of you living for weeks in a hotel.  
Please come in.

**INT. SECOND-STORY BEDROOM - DAY**

Maple and her mom watch him unpack his satchel. A change of  
clothing, Kodak camera, handful of books.

MRS. MOHR  
You travel very light, Mr. Strub.

FUZZY  
Call me Fuzzy please. I keep my  
work duds at the shop - we don't  
want ink all over your lovely  
furniture.

MRS. MOHR  
Very thoughtful. Are you staying  
long in Sioux City?

FUZZY  
I guess until the town gets tired  
of me.

MRS. MOHR  
Well I know how that feels.

They leave and close the door. We overhear from the hall:

MAPLE VO  
I told you you'd like him, mom.

MRS. MOHR VO  
We'll have to fatten him up a bit.

He places his satchel on the bed, opens a false bottom where four elegant pocket watches are concealed. He winds each carefully and returns it.

**INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT**



FUZZY and MAPLE sit together in the crowd.

MONTAGE ON THE SCREEN -

- Beautiful HEROINE is riding her horse when it trips, tossing her to the ground
- Grinning VILLAIN with walrus mustache, ties her arms behind a large tree as she struggles against the rope
- He sneaks up to the side of a large barn with a stick of DYNAMITE and peers in a window
- She whistles and her horse arrives to chew the ROPE
- Villain tosses lit dynamite inside as the HORSE turns and kicks him after it, through the window
- Barn doors blow open and he spills out tattered and covered in straw
- Horse snorts as if laughing and she throws her arms around its neck

AUDIENCE roars

**EXT. THEATER - NIGHT**

FUZZY and MAPLE stand under the marquee wrapped up against the cold. She twirls him around by the collar

MAPLE

It's only nine o'clock. Let's go dancing, Fuzzy Strub. I know a place!

She spots a TAXI and flags it down

**INT. TAXI - NIGHT**

DRIVER

Where to then?

MAPLE

There's a little roadhouse about five miles across the state line.

DRIVER and FUZZY react with surprise

DRIVER

That's an expensive ride ma'am -

FUZZY

When Maple Mohr goes steppin' out, no expense is spared.

DRIVER

You won't find it easy getting a ride back.

FUZZY

I'll pay you well to wait for us, if that's agreeable?

He hands a coin over the seat and the driver smiles

DRIVER

You kids take your time and have a dance for me.

**INT. ROADHOUSE - NIGHT**

At an illegal roadhouse a RAGTIME piano plays. The floor is crammed with couples dancing *The Grizzly Bear*. MAPLE is in there somewhere.

FUZZY watches from a table covered with empty beer bottles.

DRIVER rushes in, pushes his way through to find Fuzzy

DRIVER

The joint is about to be raided! If you don't want to spend the night at the crowbar hotel, best get yer gal and blow this place. I'm parked out back.

**EXT. SALOON REAR DOOR - NIGHT**

FUZZY pulls MAPLE out the back door and helps get her coat on. She's laughing and stumbling as they climb in.

**INT. TAXI - NIGHT**

The taxi departs spitting gravel as four POLICE CARS arrive.

MAPLE

That was so much fun! Do we have to go?

She snuggles up against his shoulder and passes out as the taxi passes a sign for the Iowa border.

FUZZY

*(To himself)* This girl is a firecracker, I'll tell ya.

**INT. MYRTLE'S BEDROOM - EVENING**

Letter writing SEQUENCE - MYRTLE writes from her bedroom desk. We hear her VO

MYRTLE VO

*Dearest Cousin Fuzzy: I was surprise to hear - tho I guess I shouldn't be - that you've relocated again. I pray Sioux Falls is showing you a fun time. I so envy your freedom to just pick up and go whenever - Thanks again for sending me the books.*

**INT. COMPOSING ROOM - EVENING**

He reads the letter at work

MYRTLE VO

*I promise to return them one day when you settle, if you ever do.*

**INT. MYRTLE'S BEDROOM - EVENING**

Close up of BOOKS on her desk - *Zane Grey, Joseph Conrad, Willa Cather.*

She reads his letter

FUZZY VO

*I work a night shift at the paper and afternoon for the City Directory. I'm really socking away the shekels - Say, I'm returning to St. Paul for the New Year bash at my brother's. Promise me you'll be there. I have something I need to tell you.*

She raises an eyebrow, then carefully files his letter in a shoe box, indexed with their correspondence going back years.

FADE OUT

**EXT. TRAIN STATION - MORNING**

Title: *Fargo December 23, 1914*

FUZZY, new suit and tie, steps off the TRAIN and strolls his hometown, stepping over the snow drifts. He glances at his pocket watch and enters a BARBER SHOP.

DISSOLVE to him exiting, brushing clippings off his neck. He sniffs his collar and recoils.

**EXT. SIDEWALK - SAME**

His older sister ANNIE (26) meets him.

ANNIE

*The 'prodigal brother' returns. Look at you, all spiffed up. New suit?*

FUZZY

Howdy sis.

They hug, she recoils

ANNIE

*Gad, I hope they charged you extra for the cologne.*

FUZZY

(Angry) Stupid Fritz spilled it all over me. Claimed it was an accident, but the way the rest of those spud-diggers were grinning -

ANNIE

Maybe you shouldn't have said all those things about the town before you left.

They climb into a HORSE BUGGY. She wraps a blanket over their laps, slaps the reins

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Git it!

**EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY**

They plod along the flat snowy landscape. She pours coffee from a thermos into tin mugs and they settle in for the slow ride to the family farm

FUZZY

How is my favorite niece?

ANNIE

I've finally got her drinking from the bottle.

FUZZY

Takes after her uncle.

She smirks. He turns serious

FUZZY (CONT'D)

I have something to tell you -

ANNIE

You've met a girl! Fuzzy the lone wolf has met a gal!

FUZZY

Not exactly -

ANNIE

Well?

FUZZY

I need you to keep this between us.

She sips coffee waiting

FUZZY (CONT'D)

I'm going to tell mom tomorrow.

ANNIE

Come on, spill it.

FUZZY

I've decided to ask Myrtle to marry me.

She spits coffee all over his coat. It runs from her nose

ANNIE

Cousin Myrtle? Have you lost your mind?

FUZZY

Hopefully -

ANNIE

She's like our sister!

FUZZY

I never once thought of Myrtle as a sister.

ANNIE

The family will never speak to you again!

FUZZY

I have considered that possibility, but I can't go on like this. I can't drink her out of my dreams.

ANNIE

Aunt Helga will be scandalized!

FUZZY

It's not her decision.

ANNIE

She's our cousin!

FUZZY

Only on paper. Not by blood.

ANNIE

She's out of our social class and will marry a society Swede with a family mansion - not a mixed-blood who hasn't even got a teepee.

FUZZY

That's not funny.

ANNIE

She has a business school degree and you quit the fifth grade! She's a socialite and you live out of a suitcase!

FUZZY

I've saved a good deal of money and Myrtle will never want for a good home. I don't believe Myrtle cares about my skin color.

ANNIE

She's out of your league, Fuzzy.

They ride on in silence and arrive at the farm. He tethers the horse under the oak tree.

FUZZY

Mom is the only one who can dissuade me.

ANNIE

When are you going to spring this surprise on cousin Myrtle?

FUZZY

New Year's Eve in St. Paul, at our brother's big party.

ANNIE

It's a huge mistake, Fuzzy. I hope mom will tell you so.

FADE

**EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT**

Subtitle: *St. Paul, New Year's Eve, 1914*

FUZZY staggers along the sidewalk in blowing snow. A car swerves by on the road, someone hollers and tosses a bottle spinning to the curb.

DRUNK

Happy New Year!

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT**

An elderly DESK CLERK opens his eyes, checks the clock behind him. It's after midnight.

DESK CLERK

Looks like you rang in 1915 right proper, friend.

FUZZY

G'night.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

Second-story room lit by a street lamp. Small sink, tiny desk. FUZZY collapses face down on a narrow bed, arm dangling over the side and passes out.

**INT. LIVING ROOM ST. PAUL - EVENING**

DREAM/NIGHTMARE sequence: Seen entirely through Fuzzy's POV as he moves through the party. Forty people, IMMIGRANTS and their American-born CHILDREN. Germans, Irish, Swedes, Brits gather in a large craftsman-style house. A BANNER over the fireplace reads: *1915!*

Voices are muffled. Faces move in and out of focus. The FRONT DOOR opens with a gust of wind and more people enter, shaking off the cold.

His older brother, HUGO (30), similar complexion, slaps him on the shoulder

HUGO

Hey brother. Last I heard you were working up in Duluth.

POV continues through the crowd. His hand grabs a glass of punch from a tray. Discretely he pulls a SILVER FLASK from his pocket and adds a slug of whiskey.

In the dining room he spots himself in a gilded mirror. Gaunt and intoxicated - he toasts his reflection. He pulls a small notebook from his vest pocket - we see *"Tell her. TONIGHT!"*

Another slug for courage. He overhears two YOUNG WOMEN gossiping as they pile food on their plates

WOMAN 1

I hear Myrtle may be bringing a new beau tonight.

WOMAN 2  
About time I'd say -

He lurches away, suddenly looking to escape but his feet seem stuck to the floor. The booze is really kicking in. Around him people are arguing about 'The War'

GUESTS  
They're bombing London!  
It's not our fight.  
We must remain neutral!

The voices echo, the room spins, and Fuzzy slips into a booze-fueled hallucination. A woman plays the piano and the partygoers break into song.

*Oh, This European War* (listen to the song at [ComeAugust1915.com](http://ComeAugust1915.com))

Various immigrants lament the war and worry how it will affect their lives in America.

Fuzzy reels and just as the song ends - the front door opens and his AUNT HELGA steps in - meaner looking than ever. He trips on a rug, knocking plates to the floor in great commotion.

Guests jumps out of the way, giving him a clear view to see MYRTLE untying her scarf. She looks radiant. He ducks out of view. She mustn't see him in this condition. He stumbles desperately through the swinging kitchen doors -

**INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT**

- colliding with the icebox and smashing his GLASS on the floor. He peeks back through the doors to see MYRTLE heading his way. Desperate, he ducks in a BROOM CLOSET, so small he has to squeeze in sideways. Through the crack he sees her enter

MYRTLE  
Fuzzy, are you in here?

She spots the broken glass on the floor

MYRTLE (CONT'D)  
For heaven's sake, someone could cut their foot. Where's a broom?

She approaches the closet. He holds the door shut with all his might as she tries the knob

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

That's odd. Why would anyone lock a broom closet?

The KITCHEN DOOR swings open and HELGA enters

HELGA

Myrtle come out here, there's someone I want you to meet.

When she's gone he extricates himself from the mops and brooms, rushes out the back door, trips down the steps and lands face down in the snow.

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAWN**

He awakens in the same face down position, lifts his head from the pillow, relieved the nightmare is over. As he stands up his foot knocks the SILVER FLASK spinning it across the floor. With horror in his bloodshot eyes he realizes it wasn't just a nightmare.

FADE

**TRANSITION MONTAGE - INT./EXT. - DAY/NIGHT**

- CALENDAR pages flip JANUARY to FEBRUARY to MARCH
- FUZZY punches in at the newspaper, hangs his coat
- punches out at the time clock
- trudges against blowing snow to a second job location
- punches in a different clock
- works alone furiously at the keyboard
- Sits on bar stool looking lost

**EXT. - ROOMING HOUSE SIDEWALK - DAY**

He shovels snow in front of the ROOMING HOUSE piling it high along the curb. MRS. MOHR waves from the front door for him to come in from the bitter cold.

**INT. KITCHEN - DAY**

He removes his boots and follows her into the kitchen.

MRS. MOHR

I made some hot coffee and banana bread, you warm yourself there by the oven.

FUZZY

That's very kind, Mrs. Mohr.

She gives him a disappointed look

FUZZY (CONT'D)

I mean *Shannon*.

MRS. MOHR

That's better. Oh, and the postman left you this

He looks at the envelope

FUZZY

From my sister, Annie, up in Fargo.

MRS. MOHR

I'll leave you to it.

He slices the envelope open with the bread knife and begins to read. A look of pain forms on his face.

ANNIE VO

*- I hear you put on quite a performance New Year's Eve, then fled town without so much as a goodbye - everyone is worried about you.*

**INT. FUZZY'S ROOM - DAY**

He writes a reply at the desk

FUZZY VO

*I know I made a damn-fool of myself, but please don't antagonize me. If you'll let it drop, that would be appreciated.*

He considers how to continue when he's shocked to look out the second story window to see MAPLE staring directly at him, dangling from the rain gutter.

Before he can react, she smiles, lets go, and drops out of view. He rushes down the stairs and out the side door

**EXT. BACKYARD - DAY**

FUZZY

Maple!

He finds her climbing out of a huge snow pile shoveled to cushion the landing.

FUZZY (CONT'D)

You scared the wits out of me!

MAPLE

I thought you'd never look up from your writing. My fingers were giving out.

FUZZY

You could have broken your neck!

MAPLE

Don't be silly. You've been so glum lately I thought it might cheer you up. You're not any fun anymore, Fuzzy Strub.

FUZZY

I'm sorry it's just - say, how about I take you and your mom to the pictures tonight?

She claps her hands and runs in the house.

**INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT**

FUZZY sits between MAPLE and her MOM as the screen flickers and the piano begins.

ON SCREEN - NEWSREEL hypes the **Pan-Pacific Expo** at San Francisco. Throngs of visitors stroll the gardens and pavilions.



All the icons of the new century parade before the camera:  
*Thomas Edison, Teddy Roosevelt, Henry Ford, Edison, John  
 Philip Sousa, Houdini, Chaplin -*

Hollywood idol *Mabel Normand* appear on screen and MAPLE grabs his arm in excitement. His face lights up. An idea has popped in his head. The one he's been searching for.

FADE OUT

**INT. FUZZY'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Winter sun shines through the curtain as he writes at the desk.

FUZZY VO

*Annie: I've come up with a plan!*

**INT. ANNIE'S KITCHEN - DAY**

She holds the letter in one hand while attempting to feed her two-year-old in a highchair, bibbed and waiting. She puts a wooden spoonful of mushy peas in the toddler's mouth.

ANNIE

Not another Fuzzy plan! (*to the baby*) Your uncle is one stubborn son of a... biscuit.

FUZZY VO

*Myrtle always said she wanted to see the Pacific one day. I'm going to take her to the World's Fair in San Francisco.*

ANNIE

She'll never agree!

Her outburst startles the baby who spits mush all over

ANNIE (CONT'D)

*(To the baby) Even you know it's a dumb idea!*

FUZZY VO

*I know what you're going to say. 'Myrtle will never go'. But hear me out -*

The baby accepts the next spoon listening intently

ANNIE

*(Reading) I'm telling her that my landlady's daughter, Maple, is determined to go to the fair, but needs a traveling companion. And I'm telling Maple that it's all Myrtle's idea! Then I'm going to tell each of them that the other has already agreed.*

Baby pauses eating in suspense

ANNIE (CONT'D)

*(Reading) Their mothers will hate the idea. That's when I'll step in and volunteer to escort them! A perfect gentleman! No one will suspect the whole thing was my plan in the first place.*

ANNIE (CONT'D)

*(To the baby) He's going to try and fool both women AND their mothers at the same time!*

The baby laughs and pounds her tray.

**MONTAGE - INT./EXT. - DAY/NIGHT**

CALENDAR pages flip APRIL - MAY

- MYRTLE sits between her parents at Lutheran church service. Her dad falls asleep with his mouth open during the sermon. Myrtle keeps shifting her position to prevent her mom from noticing

- MAPLE shows Fuzzy a cover of PHOTOPLAY magazine, then drags him to the backyard to take head-shots of her with his Kodak

- FUZZY attends an auction of 'Fine Timepieces' and bids on another pocket watch

- CALENDAR flips JUNE - JULY - AUGUST

**EXT. RIVER VALLY - SUNRISE**

BLACK BIRDS sing on a telegraph wire as a steam LOCOMOTIVE thunders around a curve into view.

Subtitle: *August 5, 1915*

**EXT. SIOUX CITY STATION - MORNING**

FUZZY and MAPLE wait on the platform for MYRTLE to arrive. He points at the two large suitcases Maple brought.

FUZZY

I specifically told you Maple - ONE trunk only. Now Myrtle will be annoyed.

MYRTLE steps down from the car and her gaze lands on the two trunks next to Maple. He starts to explain just as the porter emerges with Myrtle's second case.

FUZZY (CONT'D)

Well, if that don't beat anything.

MYRTLE

How is a person expected to pack for three weeks in one trunk?

MAPLE

That's what I told Fuzzy!

MAPLE puts her arms around MYRTLE, who freezes. FUZZY, sensing the awkward moment, hugs them both.

FUZZY

Well, finally, here we are! Myrtle Strub I'd like you to meet Miss Maple Mohr - and versa visa.

MAPLE

Your cousin has told me so much about you.

MYRTLE

I hope you didn't believe him!

They laugh. He checks his pocket watch

FUZZY

We'll miss our connection if we stand on ceremony. Keep one eye on the clock, ladies, that's the key to travel.

The girls walk off chatting, leaving him to find a porter.

MYRTLE

I love your short hair, it's so modern.

MAPLE

I just had it cut. And I'm admiring your new boots!

MYRTLE

Fuzzy warned me to be ready for a lot of walking. I probably should have broken these in.

HE trails with a PORTER and the luggage, annoyed - then he starts to notice - everyone is gazing at his beautiful companions. Heads are turning. His shoulders rise. He's the proudest man alive.

#### **INT. TRAIN CAR - MORNING**

The TRAIN is filled with a great cross-section of America. Old farm couples, freckled kids with buckteeth, ranchers in cowboy hats, all leaning across the aisle, introducing themselves. Maple listens in to pick up phrases and accents. As we move down the AISLE we hear:

OLD WOMAN

What a lovely family. Where y'all coming from?

MOTHER

We hail from KIN-tucky.

OLD WOMAN

Why my sister-in-law is from Kentucky!

MOTHER

Isn't that a coincidence?

A PLUMP WOMAN chats with a YOUNG COUPLE

PLUMP WOMAN

... to see my Aunt Gertrude -

HUSBAND  
My wife had an Aunt Gertrude!

MAPLE locates an empty booth, MYRTLE sits across from her.

MAPLE  
So long Sioux City.

She watches the town fade from view, turns to Myrtle

MAPLE (CONT'D)  
So you're a *Hello Girl*! Can I hear  
your voice?

MYRTLE  
This is my voice -

MAPLE  
No, the way you speak on the  
telephone, I'm asking.

MYRTLE assumes the posture and flat intonation

MYRTLE  
"This is the operator, how may I  
direct your call?"

MAPLE  
That's you! I feel like I'm meeting  
someone famous!

MYRTLE blushes

MYRTLE  
And you work at an all-night cafe?

MAPLE  
I did.

Myrtle looks confused at the past tense. Fuzzy arrives. An awkward moment as he decides who to sit next to. Maple decides for him, sliding over, patting the bench.

He loosens his collar, settles down into the seat with a smile.

FUZZY  
I suggest we establish a Committee  
for the journey.

MAPLE  
We'll surely be moving fast to see  
everything. How would a Committee  
work?

FUZZY

Women can vote now in California,  
and I propose we adopt that -

MAPLE

Finally, men allowing us to vote!

MYRTLE

It's good there are three of us  
because my cousin and I don't agree  
on anything!

FUZZY

In the case of a dispute- not that  
I'm suggesting there will be-  
anyone can call for a vote.

MYRTLE

What if we need quick decisions?  
Like we're about to miss a  
connection, or the all the cafés  
are closing soon?

FUZZY

(*To Maple*) Myrtle can foresee any  
possible problem -

MYRTLE

You're saying I'm a worrier?

FUZZY

Certainly not!

MAPLE

I have an idea! A secret code.

Myrtle gives Fuzzy a glance.

MAPLE (CONT'D)

If we get into some trouble and  
need to make a fast getaway!

MYRTLE

A get-away?

MAPLE

Like in the movie serials. Bandits  
or kidnapers!

MAPLE (CONT'D)

(*To Fuzzy*) How much do you think  
Myrtle would bring in a ransom,  
Fuzzy?

(A repeated comic gag, the girls keep catching his eye with an expression "*Is she serious?*")

FUZZY

Let's talk about what you want to see when we get to beautiful San Francisco.

MYRTLE consults her notebook

MYRTLE

The Pacific of course. And Chinatown. But I really look forward to hearing Helen Keller's talk at the Expo.

FUZZY

Maple, what's on your list?

MAPLE

Harry Houdini! They're going to chain him in a wooden box and toss him into the Bay to escape!

MYRTLE

And you, cousin?

He leans back in the seat

FUZZY

The Hawaii exhibit and the grass skirts. This boy is going to be in the front row, I'll tell you that!

Maple scolds him

MAPLE

Now you best be behaving yourself, Fuzzy Strub. Now give a proper answer.

FUZZY

The Technology Pavilion is churning out a Model-T Ford every ten minutes.

MYRTLE

It takes me that long to get dressed in the morning.

They all laugh. FUZZY beams - his plan is working beautifully - he closes his eyes for a nap.

**EXT. OMAHA SIDEWALK - DAY**

Subtitle: *Omaha, Nebraska*

STREETCAR rumbles by to reveal them struggling on the sidewalk with the luggage. It's hot.

MYRTLE

The agent said the hotel was a short walk.

MAPLE

I'm just thinking about a cool bath.

FUZZY

If you both hadn't packed everything you own -

MYRTLE stops and holds a handkerchief to her nose

MYRTLE

My heavens, this place smells like -

She won't say it.

FUZZY

That's the famous *Omaha aroma*. Trains bring cattle from across the Great Plains. Feed-lots, abattoirs - and the great Missouri washes the effluence away.

MYRTLE

It's enough to put one off their lunch.

**EXT. HOTEL - DAY**

A grand four-story HOTEL. A huge sign on the roof - HOTEL LOYAL

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - DAY**

Potted palms, oriental rugs, men in Stetsons and boots. Luggage stacked everywhere. PORTERS in monkey-suits push carts about.

MAPLE

Would you be lookin' at this crowd!

MYRTLE stops a harried PORTER

MYRTLE  
Could we get some help?

PORTER  
Talk to the desk, ma'am. It's the  
Cattlemen's Association Annual  
Round-Up.

A long line of frustrated guests wait at the counter.

MYRTLE  
(*To Fuzzy*) I did suggest  
reservations.

MAPLE  
Wait here.

FUZZY  
What are you up to?

Myrtle gives him the glance again.

Maple strolls through the lobby gathering looks, gazes up at the ornate ceiling and trips over a luggage cart, landing on a stack of suitcases with her skirt hiked up to reveal a yard of stocking. Cattlemen jump out of the way.

DOCTOR  
Let me through! I'm a doctor. Are  
you all right, young lady?

MAPLE  
(*Eyes fluttering*) I think so -

MYRTLE straightens Maple's skirt and helps her to her feet.

DOCTOR  
You're lucky you didn't break one  
of those lovely legs.

A nervous MANAGER arrives

MANAGER  
So dreadfully sorry, folks. We'll  
get you checked in right away.

MYRTLE whispers to Fuzzy

MYRTLE  
I'm not sure the act required  
exposing oneself quite like that.

FUZZY

I tell you this girl is a  
firecracker.

**EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM, OMAHA - DAY**

The Union Pacific TRAIN STATION swarms with travelers. The  
CLOCK reads - 11:52

Our VILLAIN arrives, straight out of a silent film. Dashing,  
dastardly - pencil-thin mustache, fedora - CADDINGTON T.  
WOLFE (35)

Trailing are two men in overalls, pulling a cart laden with  
metal film canisters.

WOLFE

Get these film cans loaded on the  
Mail Car. And no smoking, these are  
flammable. Move it!

He checks the mirror of his pocket watch, and secretly  
attends his mustache with a tiny pearl comb.

**EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - SAME**

MYRTLE and MAPLE find the platform blocked by a wealthy East-  
coast FAMILY with servants and NANNY. A spoiled DAUGHTER (7)  
with ribbons in her hair, has a tantrum

DAUGHTER

I hate the train! Why can't we go  
to Vienna?

MOTHER

I told you. There's a war on.

NANNY tries to placate the girl with a china doll. DAUGHTER  
lets it drop to the platform

DAUGHTER

It's not fair!

MYRTLE has heard enough. She leans down

MYRTLE

There are children your age  
starving in Belgium as we speak.

DAUGHTER shrinks behind her mother

MOTHER

(*Insulted*) Come away, Lucretia. My, the class of people that travel by train.

MAPLE puts her hand on MYRTLE's shoulder

MAPLE

Now that was NOT your *Hello* voice!

MYRTLE

If you ever needed proof that inherited wealth breeds idiocy -

MAPLE

Sit you down on this bench to catch your breath.

MYRTLE

Would you hand me my salts?

MAPLE

You should do public speaking!

MYRTLE

Don't be ridiculous.

MAPLE

You're going to surprise yourself one day Myrtle Strub. I'm sure of it.

FUZZY returns with the tickets

FUZZY

Pullman sleepers for you two. I'll manage with a regular seat. I promised you gals would travel in style!

MYRTLE

Perhaps I'll finally get some sleep.

FUZZY

You didn't like the hotel?

MYRTLE

I wish they'd showed a better short last night at the movie than *Hazards of Helen*. All that jumping off trains, leaping into rivers!

MAPLE

It's good to be ready for anything.

FUZZY

Myrtle, if we have to leap from the train, I promise to hold your hand.

MYRTLE

Well, that's hardly reassuring!

**INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY**

MYRTLE and MAPLE find seats while FUZZY chats with a conductor.

MAPLE

What have you there?

MYRTLE

It's my lucky spoon. A souvenir my dad gave me when I was little.

FUZZY sits down next to MYRTLE and begins playing tour guide

FUZZY

We follow the the North Platte across Nebraska, reaching Colorado around sunrise.

Walking towards them, checking the seats, comes WOLFE. Fuzzy spots him and immediately tenses up. Wolfe's eyes lock on Maple. He smiles

WOLFE

Pardon me, is this seat occupied?

Before FUZZY can object, MAPLE slides over

MAPLE

Please join us.

WOLFE stows his Fedora in the overhead, produces cards, hands them around

WOLFE

If I might introduce myself?  
Caddington T. Wolfe.

MAPLE mimics the EAST-COAST ACCENT she heard on the platform, reads the card

MAPLE

*"Vice President. Distribution  
Pacific Coast Pictures,  
Hollywood, CA."*

WOLFE

At your service, I'm sure.

MAPLE

I am Lottie Drover, and this is my sister, Pollany, of the Dayton-Drover family. Perhaps you're familiar with our grandfather, Dieter Dayton-Drover? Of the Drover Millinery Company in Baltimore.

MYRTLE whispers to FUZZY

MYRTLE

What on earth is she doing?

WOLFE is enchanted and stumbles for words

WOLFE

Baltimore? Oh, yes of course.  
Lovely hats, if I may say so.

He turns to MYRTLE

WOLFE (CONT'D)

*And Pollany, such a lovely name,  
fairly trips off the tongue.*

MYRTLE

*(Unsure how to respond)* How kind.

FUZZY extends his hand

FUZZY

Fuzzy Strub.

MAPLE

Our escort, Mr. Strub, is an accomplished man of letters.

WOLFE

I recognize the lapel pin.  
*Typesetters' Union.* Proud profession, the press. Pity her best days seem numbered.

FUZZY

*(Insulted)* And how do you figure that?

WOLFE

It's obvious, isn't it? Newsreels will replace newspapers. Why mess with smudges on your fingers when you can see the news actually happening on the screen?

FUZZY

And how do movie goers know where your films are showing?

WOLFE

They are listed every day in the paper - Oh, I take your point.

MAPLE

*(Changing the subject)* What brings a Hollywood man to Omaha?

WOLFE

The public is insatiable, Lottie, and 1915 is turning out to be our best year yet. Distribution is the name of the game.

MAPLE

I'd love to visit a film set.

His eyes sparkle

WOLFE

Well Lottie, I'd be happy to arrange a tour.

MYRTLE

How far are you traveling, Mr. Wolfe?

WOLFE

Please, call me Caddington. Pacific Coast Pictures is premiering a new Chaplin comedy in Denver this week! My assistants are loading the film cans to mail car now.

Fuzzy begins tapping his foot nervously.

MAPLE

We'll look for it when we reach Denver.

WOLFE

I criss-cross the western states to make sure theaters meet our high standards, and to ensure the distribution runs smoothly.

He leans back in the seat

WOLFE (CONT'D)

20 hours to Denver. Plenty of time for us to get well-acquainted.

FUZZY, losing his patience, checks the time. WOLFE notices his watch

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Lovely watch. A Waltham Vanguard if I'm not mistaken.

FUZZY

You know your time pieces.

WOLFE

Excellent taste, I do say. But I knew that already when I first saw your companions.

FUZZY panics. A wolf in his hen house! The whole plan is in danger on the second day. He stands suddenly

FUZZY

I'll go see what's holding things up.

WOLFE

Capital idea. And ah, Fuzzy, if we could get some iced tea for the ladies?

FUZZY surreptitiously grabs Wolfe's FEDORA and hurries to the Mail Car.

**INT. MAIL CAR - DAY**

FUZZY enters, disguised in the fedora with his collar up, introduces himself to the Mail Car MANAGER and hands over Wolfe's card

FUZZY

Caddington T. Wolfe of Pacific Coast Films. If you could offload these reels immediately. Change of plan. This is for your trouble.

He lays a half-dollar on the counter. The MANAGER stares at the coin, looks up, but FUZZY is gone.

MANAGER  
You! Unload these film cans from  
the train.

WORKER  
Sez who?

MANAGER  
(*Holding the card*) I'm guessing  
this is your boss.

**INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY**

Meanwhile - WOLFE entertains the LADIES

WOLFE  
I can't decide which of you -  
Lottie or Pollany - is the  
loveliest sister. I swear I can't.

The TRAIN begins to lurch forward.

WOLFE glances out to platform and is shocked to see the BROTHERS loading the cans back on a wagon. He grabs his valise and reaches for the missing hat

WOLFE (CONT'D)  
Someone will pay for this.

He shoves passengers out of the aisle and hops off the moving train.

**EXT. STATION PLATFORM - SAME**

From a train window his fedora flies after him, rolling on its brim until it comes to rest against the wagon. WOLFE turns to the train, hatred in his eyes. Locomotive noise drowns out his curse

WOLFE  
Damnation!

**INT. TRAIN CAR - SAME**

MYRTLE and MAPLE stare out the window mystified as he disappears from view

MAPLE

Mr. Wolfe's exit was even more impressive than his entrance!

FUZZY returns acting innocent

MYRTLE

The craziest thing just happened! That Hollywood fellow jumped off the train.

Maple notices beads of sweat on his brow. She's suspicious.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

And Maple, what's with all the made-up names?

MAPLE

No one in the movies uses a real name. *Caddington T. Wolfe*? Come on. I was just having a little fun with him.

FUZZY

That slickster saw you gals as easy marks. He knew I was on to him. That's why he ran off.

MAPLE puts her arm around him, teasing

MAPLE

Our hero!

MYRTLE

And *Pollany*?

MAPLE

I think it suits you. You'll never meet these people again, Myrtle. Be whoever you want.

Myrtle looks out the window

MYRTLE

You make that sound so easy.

**INT. DINING CAR - EARLY EVENING**

Elegant, mahogany-paneled dining car, globe lamps, etched glass windows. The girls are seated waiting for Fuzzy

MAPLE

My dad was a song-and-dance man but there was no money in it. He went back to Ireland, when I was seven, promised to send for all of us, one at a time. But when it was my turn they skipped me over for my younger brother. dad said he needed strong arms. Mom said she needed me here to help with my sisters.

MYRTLE

That is so unfair.

MAPLE

He never got to live his dream. That's not going to happen to me.

MYRTLE

Do you write to him?

MAPLE

To the devil with Liam Mohr.

FUZZY arrives. The waiter returns

WAITER

Could I get you all something to drink first?

FUZZY

If the beers are cold, keep 'em coming.

MAPLE

I'll have a beer as well.

MYRTLE

Iced tea, thank you.

**EXT. CURVE OF THE RIVER - SUNSET**

TRAIN follows the river through a valley.

**INT. SLEEPER CAR - NIGHT**

Later Myrtle returns to the sleeper car alone

PORTER

Put your shoes out if you'd like them polished. Have a good night.

MYRTLE, now in a robe, climbs to the upper berth and settles in with a *Ladies' Home Journal*.

**INT. PARLOR CAR - NIGHT**

A boisterous group of passengers plays craps in a corner. MAPLE blows on the dice and they cheer. She tosses and wins

MAPLE  
The luck 'o the Irish!

FUZZY  
Another round!

He chats with the BLACK PORTERS

FUZZY (CONT'D)  
You men keep organizing, you'll win representation yet.

PORTER  
Thank you, sir, we keep pushing.

FUZZY  
Pullman can't run his cars without you.

PORTER  
Mighty kind of you to say so.

MAPLE finishes her beer, suppresses a burp, giggles

MAPLE  
I'm done. Don't stay out all night, Fuzzy.

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING**

WOLFE is eating breakfast and furiously writing notes on hotel stationary. A man in dark suit arrives with telegrams.

MAN  
Our associates met the train at Denver but didn't observe any threesomes matching the description.

WOLFE  
(*Enraged*) How hard can it be? A skinny guy with a farm tan and two beautiful women. I certainly didn't have any trouble spotting them!

The man has stopped listening, distracted by a plate of toast on the table

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Take the toast already! The Denver theater will have to delay the premiere by a day. This will prove an expensive screw-up.

A second GOON arrives dressed identically, BROTHERS clearly. He lays more telegrams on the table

MAN 2

Baltimore has no listings for any Dayton-Drovers, nor millinery company with a name like that.

WOLFE

Brilliant! She invented it all. Who are you really, Lottie Drover?

Two brothers looks enviously at the toast

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Find that girl gentlemen, and you'll have all the toast you can eat.

Brothers grin at each other

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Wire the Studio's prop department. I need a Union Pacific Special Agent card.

MAN ONE

You got it boss.

WOLFE

And file a report of a pickpockets working the San Francisco train. Can't have too many hooks in the water. What are you waiting for?

**EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - DAY.**

TITLE: *Pike's Peak, Colorado*

FUZZY leads along a path through a pine grove. The LADIES wear boots and carry parasols. Birds chirp, branches sway in the dappled sunlight. They reach a vista of PIKE'S PEAK

MYRTLE

I have never seen anything more magnificent in my life.

MAPLE

Smell those pine trees.

MYRTLE

Take a photo, Fuzzy.

He opens the folding Kodak and snaps pictures as MYRTLE stoops to collect stones.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

To think that I might never have taken this journey.

MYRTLE stuffs rocks in Fuzzy's coat pockets. MAPLE fills her parasol with rocks. Fuzzy tries to hurry them.

FUZZY

You can collect rocks on the way down.

MAPLE

Don't be hurrying us, Fuzzy Strub. Isn't he always hurrying us, Myrtle?

MYRTLE

He certainly is.

HE reaches into his pocket and pulls out a tiny box tied with a ribbon, smooths it, puts it back.

**FLASHBACK: INT. FARGO KITCHEN - DAY**

From his visit home in December. His mother peels potatoes over the sink

FUZZY

I have to catch the train back, mom. Are you going to say anything?

She wipes her hands on a towel, turns with a weary look

LOUISA

You're going to cause a lot of pain, Fuzzy. So I would say 'don't do it.'

She sits down, takes his hand

LOUISA (CONT'D)  
But '*lovers of old*' would disagree.

FUZZY  
You and dad?

LOUISA  
We had to leave St. Paul to start fresh. But '*Strubs are born stubborn.*' Your uncle married a Swede and your dad married a Sioux. And we adopted you.

FUZZY  
But you and dad have been happy, haven't you?

LOUISA  
People are going to say terrible things -

FUZZY  
(Angry) I don't care.

LOUISA  
I meant what they are going to say about your cousin.

She unclasps a tiny silver locket from her neck

LOUISA (CONT'D)  
Take this, and if Myrtle feels the same as you, give it to her as a sign of my blessing.

FUZZY  
But it's your wedding locket.

LOUISA  
I don't need it anymore, Fuzzy. And maybe you will.

**RESUME - EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE**

FUZZY  
When we reach the top, I have something to give you, Myrtle.

MAPLE  
A surprise for Myrtle!

He scans the horizon and his jaw drops. A dark STORM CLOUD rolls up the ridge towards them

FUZZY

There's a storm coming!

MAPLE

It's just smoke from the cog train.

FUZZY

We have to hurry, or we won't make it to shelter!

MYRTLE

What did we just say about hurrying us all the time?

The girls continue rock hunting as fog engulfs them and a hard RAIN begins. He grabs Myrtle's PARASOL and they huddle under it. The wind threatens to yank the handle from his grasp.

FUZZY

Open your umbrella, Maple!

MAPLE

And lose these beautiful stones?  
I'd sooner drown.

Now it's a downpour

FUZZY

There's no point in standing here.

They begin the slog back down the mountain, rivers of rain rushing under their feet

MYRTLE

Hold the umbrella properly, Fuzzy.  
We're getting soaked!

FUZZY

I'm barely under it now!

MAPLE

A gentleman would walk ahead and get wet!

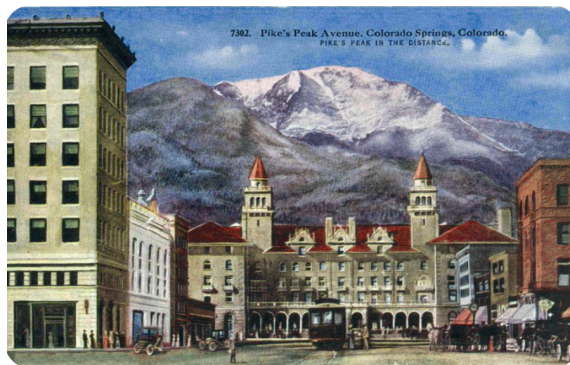
A sudden GUST blows his cap off and it disappears in the mist. Rain drips from his chin. He hands Myrtle the umbrella and marches ahead, furious

FUZZY

Don't listen to me. Get soaked, the both of you.

MYRTLE

Wait Fuzzy, we were just joking.



**INT. ANTLER HOTEL ROOM - EVENING**

RAIN streaks the window. Wet clothing hangs from knobs and bed posts. MAPLE is taking a bubble bath with the door open. MYRTLE, in a robe, sits on the bed writing postcards.

MAPLE

This is the biggest bathtub I ever did see! I feel bad for Fuzzy, down there in the basement.

MYRTLE

I told him we needed reservations. I'm glad the manager found a place for a cot.

MAPLE

At home we take turns in the kitchen tub.

MYRTLE

You don't have a bathtub with piping?

MAPLE

Yeah, but it's upstairs for the roomers - not us. I still share a bed with my younger sisters!

MYRTLE

This trip is the first time I've ever shared a bedroom with anyone.

MAPLE

Not even a beau?

MYRTLE

You do cut right to the point,  
don't you?

MAPLE

Imagine, you've never shared a  
bedroom, and I've never even had my  
own bed.

They laugh, then Myrtle turns serious

MYRTLE

There's something I should tell you  
about my cousin. Fuzzy can be  
prickly, as you saw today.

MAPLE

Prickly?

MYRTLE

He's quick to take offense and long  
to hold a grudge.

MAPLE

Why is that?

MYRTLE

He feels people let him down along  
the way. It's why he bounces from  
town to town. Why he quit school,  
quit Fargo.

**INT. STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT**

FUZZY sits on a cot next to shelves of cleaning supplies, a  
lone bulb overhead, writing to his sister

FUZZY (VO)

*Dear Annie:*

*Arrived at Colorado Springs. The  
girls have a grand room on the  
second floor but I'm in a storage  
closet. Hotels are sold out all the  
way to California!*

*By the time you get this letter -  
a week from now - I'll either be on  
top of the world or maybe the  
bottom of the bay -  
I'll admit I'm feeling pretty low  
tonight.*

**EXT. DENVER ORPHEUM - DAY**

TAXI drives up to the new Orpheum Theater. WOLFE leans forward to pay the driver, who frowns at the lousy tip.

**INT. THEATER OFFICE - SAME**

WOLFE enters followed by one of the GOONS lugging film canisters. THEATER MANAGER in suspenders, cigar between his teeth greets him.

THEATER MANAGER

You're a day late. We hadda cancel the premier.

WOLFE points at the canisters, then the cigar.

THEATER MANAGER (CONT'D)

Sorry. Say! You got an envelope hand-delivered yesterday by a young lady -

WOLFE snatches it away and checks the name

WOLFE

Ah, Miss Drover, we meet again!

Inside is Maple's HEAD SHOT. Wolfe flashes it at the manager

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Is this the gal?

THEATER MANAGER

Hair was shorter, but yeah, that's her alright.

WOLFE reads the note:

*"Caddington: Sorry you had to depart the train so quickly at Omaha, perhaps we'll see you in S.F. Yours, Lottie Drover."*

WOLFE

Oh, sharp as a tack, this one!

THEATER MANAGER

Is she in one of your movies?

WOLFE

Not yet!

He slides the photo back in the envelope and holds it to his chest

WOLFE (CONT'D)  
Lead on, Miss Drover.

He grabs the GOON BROTHER by the shoulder

WOLFE (CONT'D)  
They're a full day ahead of us. I want this Fuzzy Strub tossed from the train. There's a bonus in it.

GOON BROTHER  
I thought you wanted his fingers broken?

WOLFE  
Yes! That too. Good of you to remember. First his typesetting fingers, then the heave-ho!

GOON BROTHER  
And the girls?

WOLFE  
Telegram reports daily! Hurry.

FADE

**INT. TRAIN CAR - MORNING**

CONDUCTOR  
San Francisco Limited, bound for Salt Lake, Ogden. Tickets, please.

F,M,M sit in a booth reading.

MAPLE  
What's in the newspaper, Fuzzy?

FUZZY  
*Former president Roosevelt, speaking at the San Francisco Expo, calls for the conscription of able-bodied men.*

MYRTLE  
You could be sent to the trenches!

FUZZY  
Right now I'm headed west with the two most beautiful women in America, and that's all I'm thinking about.

MAPLE

What are you reading, Myrtle?

MYRTLE

Helen Keller's new book.

MAPLE

Read a little, would you?

MYRTLE

I marked this passage -  
*'The deaf child must trap words  
 by a slow painful process from a  
 first stammered syllable to the  
 sweep of thought in a line of  
 Shakespeare'*

FUZZY

And you, Maple?

MAPLE

Well after that, I'm a bit shy to  
 say. It's the new best-seller  
 everyone is crazy about! *Tarzan of  
 the Apes*. Tarzan is in a fight-to-  
 the-death with a great ape, to save  
 his love Jane.

FUZZY

Read some.

MAPLE

*(Reading) - her lithe, young form  
 flattened against the trunk of a  
 tree, her rising and falling bosom -  
 as Tarzan's huge biceps held at bay  
 the mighty tusks -*

MYRTLE

Good heavens! I think we get the  
 picture. Huge biceps and heaving  
 breasts, indeed.

FUZZY

I was waiting to hear who gets the  
 girl.

MYRTLE

Seriously, Maple. You're too smart  
 for that kind of romantic nonsense.

MAPLE

Someone is going to make a movie  
and Jane is a great role - a  
fearless woman who swims in piranha-  
infested rivers, swings on vines -

FUZZY

And lands in the arms of her ape-  
man.

MAPLE

It's call 'acting'

MYRTLE

Well I believe if anyone is perfect  
for such a role, it's you, Maple.

MAPLE blushes

MAPLE

Thank you, Myrtle. Coming from you  
that means a lot.

CONDUCTOR strolls through

CONDUCTOR

We are coming up on the famous  
Hanging Bridge at Royal Gorge. Make  
your way to the open car at the  
rear of the train.

**EXT. ROYAL GORGE - DAY**



The open OBSERVATION CAR hugs the canyon wall. MYRTLE has a  
worried look on her face

MYRTLE

Imagine someone seeing this canyon  
and thinking 'Let's run a train  
through here'.

MAPLE snuggles up against FUZZY

MAPLE

I'm sorry about yesterday, Fuzzy.  
It wasn't nice to tease you so.

When she moves to the other side MYRTLE whispers to him

MYRTLE

At first I wasn't sure about Maple -  
but now I quite admire her spirit.

FUZZY

I told you she was a swell gal.

MYRTLE

(Serious now) I just want to say  
that, I see why you're taken with  
her.

He turns away quickly to hide his face

MAPLE

Let's get a photo together! Take  
our picture, Fuzzy.

He fumbles with the Kodak

FUZZY

Try not to blink - smile -

The TRAIN rounds a curve in the river and disappears from  
view.

**DISSOLVE TO MAP OF WESTERN STATES**

TRAIN ICON moves from Colorado to Ogden Utah.

**EXT. OGDEN THEATER - AFTERNOON**

They stare at a poster outside the Ogden Theater:

MYRTLE

Remind me again why we stopped in  
Ogden?

FUZZY

All trains run through Ogden no  
matter what direction you're  
traveling. Promontory Point, where  
they hammered the Golden Spike, is  
a only a few miles from here.

MAPLE

(Joking) Just think, Fuzzy, if we'd have come through Utah sooner, you could have married both of us -

MYRTLE

And WE could have both divorced you in Nevada!

The girls find this idea hysterical. He is not amused.

FUZZY

What say we spend 35 cents each and see this show? The dancing girls sound up my alley.

MYRTLE

The hypnotist act might be intriguing.

MAPLE

You don't believe any of that do you? It's a stage act.

MYRTLE

Stranger things are true, in my experience.

FUZZY

(Teasing) Like the horoscope and astrology?

MYRTLE

Don't ridicule me! It's widely accepted today that lunar cycles affect everything - man, beast, the tides.

MAPLE

(Agreeing) What do you say to that, Fuzzy Strub?

FUZZY

If my intuition is correct, the man will prove a fraud.

**INT. OGDEN THEATER - NIGHT**

FUZZY sits in the middle, MYRTLE on his left, MAPLE on the aisle. Curtain rises, crowd applauds.

EMCEE (35) in green suit and bow tie takes the stage

EMCEE

Welcome to Ogden! How many of you  
folks are from out of town?

Half the CROWD cheers.

EMCEE (CONT'D)

And how many of you are headed to  
San Francisco?

More cheering.

EMCEE (CONT'D)

Well, welcome to our production of  
*The New Gold Rush!*

A Gilbert-and-Sullivan style operetta begins. A medley of  
tunes painting a more complicated and darker vision of San  
Francisco, and gently poking fun of all the naive tourists  
flocking to the Expo.

(Hear the tune *The New Gold Rush* at [ComeAugust1915.com](http://ComeAugust1915.com))

Curtain falls. The audience applauds nervously.

MYRTLE

I believe they are making fun of  
us.

MAPLE

Shush! The hypnotist is next.

FUZZY

Wake me when the dancing starts.

HENDRIKSEN (55) "Master of Mesmerism!" appears before a  
backdrop of question marks and clock faces. He has a  
VOLUNTEER balanced, stiff as a board, across two chairs

HENDRIKSEN

Ladies and gentlemen, observe the  
hypnotically-induced catatonic  
state!

Two ASSISTANTS gently set the man back on his feet. AUDIENCE  
cheers

HENDRIKSEN (CONT'D)

For my next demonstration I need  
four female volunteers.

MYRTLE is surprised to see MAPLE already heading for the stage

HENDRIKSEN (CONT'D)  
Ah, enthusiasm wins the day. Come on up here young lady.

MAPLE springs lightly onto the stage and waves at the crowd

HENDRIKSEN (CONT'D)  
(*Whispers to her*) We are going to have some fun with these rubes, so just play along. It's what they pay to see.

MAPLE winks and HENDRIKSEN completely forgets where he is. A moment passes as he regains his senses

HENDRIKSEN (CONT'D)  
Tell our audience your name and where you're from.

MAPLE  
(*Thick mountain accent*) Wy-non-a Briggs, from KIN-tucky.

HENDRIKSEN  
(*To audience*) I believe we pronounce that 'KEN-tucky'.

MAPLE  
Well, none of my KIN do!

AUDIENCE roars. She mugs behind his back. He's not sure what is so amusing

HENDRIKSEN  
I'll need three more women. You. And you over there. And lastly the lady in the hat. Come up, please.

WOMEN take seats on the stage, MAPLE on the far right

HENDRIKSEN (CONT'D)  
I'm going to say a word and you're all going to fall into a deep trance - until I tell you to wake. Understood?

They sit politely with hands on their knees.

HENDRIKSEN (CONT'D)  
Now we need a special word. Let's say an animal name, shall we?

AUDIENCE  
Bear! An elephant! Beaver! Rat!

An ELDERLY MAN jumps up

OLD MAN  
Catfish!

AUDIENCE howls.

HENDRIKSEN  
Well, technically that's two animal  
names, but let's go with it.

He paces in front of the seated women

HENDRIKSEN (CONT'D)  
I want you to listen to my voice.  
The next time you hear 'Catfish'  
you will fall asleep.

The CROWD fidgets anxiously

HENDRIKSEN (CONT'D)  
'Catfish!'

The women collapse in their chairs.

AUDIENCE  
Ooooh!

HENDRIKSEN  
Now, let's have another animal for  
our ladies to portray.

AUDIENCE  
Cat! Horse! Chicken!

HENDRIKSEN  
Chicken it is. When I say the word  
you will all believe you're a  
'chicken!'

The WOMEN stand and start clucking at the ground. Audience  
howls. HENDRIKSEN takes a bow, turns to see MAPLE standing  
dangerously astride two chairs, arms flapping, and crowing  
like a rooster

MAPLE  
Cock-a-doodle-do!

AUDIENCE explodes with laughter. He scowls - he's being  
upstaged.

HENDRIKSEN

I said 'chicken' not rooster! When  
I clap my hands three times, you  
will all sit, wake, and remember  
nothing.

SFX

*CLAP, CLAP, CLAP!*

The WOMEN wake confused. MAPLE still teeters precariously on her high perch. Audience gasps. She slowly tumbles to the floor in a summersault and lands with arms spread.

HENDRIKSEN, furious, signals for a curtain drop and storms off stage. AUDIENCE stomps the floor. FUZZY wakes to the ruckus.

FUZZY

Did I miss the dancers?

MYRTLE

(Annoyed) You missed everything.  
Come along. Or, stay here and  
sleep.

FADE

**EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY**

A tiny STATION in the desert. A water tank resupplies the locomotive.

**INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY**

TWO NUNS escorting an unruly group of 8-year-olds boards. An OLD PRIEST brings up the rear. They take the rows behind FUZZY and MYRTLE.

An old NUN claps her hands

NUN

*CLAP!* Settle down all of you.

A Native-American WOMAN sells baskets of cherries. FUZZY hands her a dime and gestures to give them to the children

NUN (CONT'D)

Bless you for your kindness.

KIDS wrestle for the window seat, spitting pits out in the hot air.

FRECKLED BOY stands on the seat and peers over MYRTLE's shoulder. Seeing her cleavage, he mischievously drops a pit into the void.

Myrtle jumps out of her seat

MYRTLE

What? My heavens, I never -

FUZZY grabs the grinning BOY by the ear

BOY

Ow! Let me go.

FUZZY

Does this rascal belong to anyone?

NUN

(Clap!) Enough of this rough-housing.

#### **EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY**

The train departs and a PAIR OF MEN, matching dark suits, push through the crowd. They reach a MAN sleeping with his hat over his eyes and knock it off his head. Seeing the man is elderly, they keep moving.

MAPLE strolling the corridor, overhears them

MAN

Check every compartment, closet, and commode - one car at a time, to the caboose. We're looking for this Strub fella.

#### **INT. DINING CAR - DAY**

FUZZY and MYRTLE wait at a table. He has a stein of beer, she an iced tea.

MYRTLE

What could have delayed Maple?

FUZZY consults his watch

FUZZY

Let's give her five minutes and then order.

A loud CRASH of china. WAITERS gather in the aisle - and out of the commotion appears MAPLE in a hurry

MAPLE  
Get up! We have to move!

FUZZY  
Why?

MAPLE  
Maybe you know better than me. Two men, dangerous men, searching for a *Strub*.

MYRTLE  
Who would even know we're here?  
Fuzzy, you're in some kind of trouble?

FUZZY  
Me?

MAPLE  
A few broken dishes won't stall them long.

MYRTLE  
You did that?

A WAITER is reading the menu to a COUPLE across the aisle

WAITER  
The meatloaf is popular, and our pan-seared catfish -

On 'catfish' FUZZY nods off instantly. Myrtle shakes him

MYRTLE  
Fuzzy! Wake up!

MAPLE  
He's hypnotized!

MYRTLE  
And he said it was all a lot of hokum!

A MAN behind them orders dinner

MAN  
I'll have the roast chicken.

On '*chicken*' Fuzzy starts pecking at the table top

MYRTLE  
He thinks he's a chicken!

MAPLE

Well, chickens can walk! Let's get  
him out of here.

MAPLE pretends to throw feed on the floor and he clucks  
along. As they exit the car the men spot them. MAPLE shoves  
another cart into the aisle.

Reaching their seats, MAPLE notices the OLD PRIEST has  
removed his collar in the heat. She snatches it and wraps it  
around Fuzzy's neck.

MAPLE (CONT'D)

Powder! Quick! In his hair!

MYRTLE dusts his hair. MAPLE rubs her finger along the window  
to collect ash and smears dark lines under his eyes. They  
split up and mingle in the crowd.

FRECKLED BOY, seeing his chance for revenge, catches up with  
the two men

FRECKLED BOY

They dressed that mean man up like  
a priest! Now give me a nickel.

MAN

Here kid, have a dime.

The other CHILDREN begin racing in the aisle. OLD NUN stands  
up angry - claps three times

NUN

Children! (*Clap! Clap! Clap!*)

FUZZY wakes suddenly, confused, but knowing he needs to hide.  
He ducks in the car toilet.

**INT. TRAIN TOILET - DAY**

He catches his reflection in the mirror - us shocked at his  
appearance

FUZZY

What in hell?!

**INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY**

The men locate the real PRIEST, jerk him to his feet and  
start to drag him off. The old nun screams

NUN

What are you doing to Father  
Henry?! Help! Someone help!

The PASSENGERS rise up. The two men, afraid to hit women and children, are corralled and held until TRAIN SECURITY arrives, and escorts them away.

FADE

**INT. SLEEPER CAR - NIGHT**

MYRTLE and MAPLE drink tea while PORTERS prepare their berths

MYRTLE

I will not speak to him again until  
he explains himself.

MAPLE

You really chewed him out!

PORTER interrupts

PORTER

Your berths are ready.

Myrtle climbs to the second rung and then steps back down,  
dizzy

MYRTLE

Oh my -

MAPLE

Are you all right?

MYRTLE

I'm quite light-headed.

MAPLE

I'll take the upper.

MYRTLE

You don't mind?

MAPLE

Not at all.

THEY switch. PORTER dims the carriage lights.

**INT. BAR CAR - SAME**

FUZZY, powder still in his hair, pours his heart out to the bartender

BARTENDER

So, you're in love with a gal but she doesn't know?

FUZZY

That's right, Carl.

BARTENDER

And you can't tell her?

FUZZY

I can't.

BARTENDER

Why not?

FUZZY

I can't tell you.

BARTENDER

Can't tell her - can't tell me.

FUZZY

That's right.

BARTENDER

Who can you tell?

FUZZY

I told my sister.

BARTENDER

What did your sister say?

FUZZY

Don't do it.

BARTENDER

Do what, exactly?

FUZZY

Tell her.

BARTENDER

Tell her what?

FUZZY

Can't tell you.

BARTENDER

Umm-umm, you are definitely in a  
sit-u-ation.

FUZZY

What I can do?

BARTENDER

Can't tell you.

FUZZY

My glass is empty, Carl.

BARTENDER

You need to go get some sleep.

FUZZY

One more?

CARL pats him on the shoulder

BARTENDER

Call it a night, friend.

**INT. SLEEPER CAR - NIGHT**

The TRAIN lurches FUZZY against the corridor walls. He tries to walk sober but the train keeps fighting him.

He locates the NIGHT PORTER polishing shoes

FUZZY

Which berth is Miss Strub?

PORTER

Top, on the end.

FUZZY

Good night.

He tip-toes down the aisle, quietly climbs up the ladder and whispers into the curtain

FUZZY (CONT'D)

Psst! Myrtle. Wake up -

There's a stirring

FUZZY (CONT'D)

Shh! Myrtle, I have to tell you something. I - I - I'm in love with you and always have been.

CURTAIN opens and MAPLE's sleepy face appears

MAPLE

Fuzzy?

Shocked, he loses his grip and falls backward to the wood floor, hitting his head with a

SFX

CRACK!

SCREEN GOES  
BLACK

**INT. OGDEN HOTEL - MORNING**

Sunlight filters through the window as WOLFE has his breakfast and flips through the *Ogden Standard*.

WOLFE

By now they should be halfway across Nevada - and soon to be one passenger lighter.

He flips through the entertainment section

WOLFE (CONT'D)

What's this? "*Audience Gal Upstages Hypnotist*".

His eyes widen

WOLFE (CONT'D)

*"This reviewer got a chance to see the Ogden Theatre's latest offering 'The New Gold Rush' last night. The songs were okay, but the high point was the hypnosis act when a lovely young volunteer simply commandeered the stage and brought the house down. As best as can be recalled the beauty gave her name as Wynona Biggs. If you're reading this Miss Biggs, please give the newspaper a call, we'd love to talk to you."*

He drops the paper

WOLFE (CONT'D)

You were right here! More elusive than ever.

(MORE)

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Perhaps your name is Wynona Biggs?  
I think not. Enough! To San  
Francisco to find you.

**INT. SLEEPER CAR - MORNING**

Light streams in the train window as a DOCTOR (60s) holds a  
stethoscope to Fuzzy's chest

DOCTOR

Keep the ice pack on his skull.

MYRTLE

I should have gone and dragged him  
out of the bar car last night.

MAPLE

Thank you doctor.

DOCTOR

You kids have a wonderful time in  
San Francisco.

MYRTLE covers Fuzzy with a blanket

MYRTLE

Oh, cousin, what am I going to do  
with you?

**EXT. SF FERRY TERMINAL - DAY**

SFX

Seagulls squawking

MYRTLE and MAPLE stand at the ferry rail as the S. F.  
Terminal Building appears through the fog like an apparition.  
The tower emblazoned: *1915 - California Invites the World*

MAPLE

What a beautiful sight. Where's  
Fuzzy?

CUT to FUZZY hauling suitcases, one at a time, down the metal  
stairway. He notices a SUSPICIOUS MAN in dark coat inspecting  
arrivals, and ducks out of view. A SMALL CHILD runs into the  
man's arms, followed by a WIFE. FUZZY exhales, relieved.

**EXT. MARKET STREET - MORNING**

Streetcars, jitneys, horse and wagons, fill the intersection. Giant billboards welcome arrivals- *Wrigley's Gum, Fatima Cigarettes, Kodak Film.*

A TAXI DRIVER straps their luggage to the running boards. MYRTLE and MAPLE climb in the back seat. The DRIVER's eyes pop as he admires them in his mirror.

MYRTLE

(*To Maple*) Will you ask my cousin why he's hiring a taxi when our hotel is right there at the end of the block?

FUZZY

(*To Maple*) Inform Myrtle there's been a change of plan. After all the trouble I've been, I'm going to spring for the top hotel in town!

MYRTLE

But we have reservations -

She remembers she is not speaking to him.

FUZZY sits next to the driver

FUZZY

The Palace Hotel, friend.

MAPLE

Isn't that a bit extravagant, Fuzzy?

FUZZY

Nothing is too good for my beautiful companions.

The taxi pulls from the curb and is immediately stuck in traffic. FUZZY admires a shiny gizmo on the dash

FUZZY (CONT'D)

What's this fancy technology?

DRIVER

That my friend is the end of the carriage business. It's called a *taxi-meter*. No longer is the driver trusted to provide a fair service for a fair price. The company is watching me to the tenth of a mile.

FUZZY

It's a new century -

DRIVER

It's a DAMN insult to the honest working man, that's what it is!

MAPLE

That hardly seems fair.

FUZZY

Is that the Chronicle Newspaper building on the right?

DRIVER

Yes, sir.

FUZZY opens the door and hops out

MYRTLE

(Exasperated) What now?

FUZZY

I'm going to surprise some old work buddies who moved out here. I'll meet you two at the hotel.

MYRTLE is furious. FUZZY hands the driver a quarter

DRIVER

Very decent of you, sir!

**EXT. MARKET STREET - MORNING**

FUZZY enters the revolving door of the CHRONICLE BUILDING and comes right back out. He glances to make sure no one is tailing him, then proceeds till he finds a WATCH STORE

Sign on the window, *Watches and Jewelry Bought and Sold*

He pulls something from his pocket and enters.

**EXT. PALACE HOTEL - MORNING**

TAXI pulls up to the curb. A PORTER escorts them to the lobby.

**INT. PALACE HOTEL CAFE - MORNING**

MYRTLE and MAPLE wait in a grand breakfast room, drinking coffee from china cups. MAPLE is gobsmacked at the mirrored walls and gilded ceiling

MAPLE

Would you be looking at this?! It's a *palace* for sure. If my old cafe had been half this nice, I might still be in Iowa.

A look of realization on MYRTLE's face

MYRTLE

You're not returning with us, are you?

Maple grabs her purse and stands up

MAPLE

Sorry, I've got an errand to run.

MYRTLE shakes her head in disbelief.

**EXT. SIDEWALK - MORNING**

MAPLE dodges the morning crowd until she finds the *WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH* office. She pulls WOLFE's business card from her purse and enters.

**INT. HOTEL CAFE - MORNING**

FUZZY arrives as MYRTLE writes postcards in the garden room, just as MAPLE returns

FUZZY

I'll get us checked in.

MYRTLE continues writing without looking up.

MAPLE

I'll go with you.

**INT. LOBBY - MORNING**

MAPLE grabs FUZZY's sleeve and whispers

MAPLE

As far as last night is concerned, it's none of my affair -

He's completely distraught

FUZZY  
You haven't told Myrtle?

MAPLE  
No. And if you have any sense you  
won't either.

She look to see no one is watching, then slugs him in the arm

MAPLE (CONT'D)  
Oh, did you have me fooled, Fuzzy  
Strub!

FUZZY  
That was never my intention -

MAPLE  
Okay, maybe I encouraged you a bit -  
and you were starting to grow on me  
- but this is going to end badly,  
and I don't care to see it.

FUZZY  
Maple, please -

MAPLE  
I mislead you, and you mislead me.  
Guess we can call it even. But  
those men?

FUZZY  
I swear I never saw them before.

MAPLE  
They knew your name!

FUZZY  
That's why we had to switch hotels.

He hands her a wad of bills

FUZZY (CONT'D)  
Register us under your name, or  
make up one. I know you know how.

He rubs the BUMP on his head

MAPLE  
I hope it knocked some sense into  
you.

Meanwhile - MYRTLE watches from behind a potted plant, observing this exchange. A moment later Fuzzy and Maple return

FUZZY

I'm going to get you both a beauty treatment at the hotel spa. How does that sound?

MYRTLE continues to ignore him

MAPLE

So what's our plan for today?

FUZZY

Rest up. I thought we could take a tour of Chinatown and have an early dinner. Shall we see the rooms?

Myrtle speaks only to Maple

MYRTLE

You go ahead. I promised mother I'd send a postcard immediately on arriving.

Fuzzy and Maple go to the elevator.

Across the lobby is a small LUGGAGE ROOM where the hotel switchboard operator works. A sign hangs on the door:

*"Back in 15 minutes"*

MYRTLE sidles to the room and steps in

**INT. LUGGAGE ROOM - SAME**

Myrtle puts on the headset, and plugs in a wire

MYRTLE

Long distance, please, operator.  
Sioux City, Iowa.

VO OPERATOR

I'm sorry, we have no trunk lines to that location

MYRTLE

Connect me through Sacramento. Then relay through Denver, please. It's important.

## INT. HOTEL LOBBY - LATER

MAPLE chats with an impeccably dressed BELLHOP (25)

MAPLE

I must say that porter's uniform quite suits you.

BELLHOP

*Bellhop*, miss.

MAPLE

And what's the difference?

BELLHOP

We *bellhops* interact directly with the guests, providing a level of service and sophistication inside the hotel. A point of pride, miss \_\_\_?

She offers a gloved hand

MAPLE

Miss Quince, but please call me Ellie

He smiles, then shakes his head

MAPLE (CONT'D)

(Surprised) You don't believe me?

BELLHOP

Ellie Quince? As in *Eloquence*?

MAPLE

Is it that obvious?

BELLHOP

Not to worry. Many of our famous guests register under assumed names.

MAPLE

Like?

He feigns shock at the notion that he'd say.

BELLHOP

*Privacy is our Promise* at the Palace.

MAPLE

You must meet a lot of famous people.

He taps his nose again

BELLHOP

I won't mention, Ellie, between us, a certain gentleman -

He performs a quick impression of Charlie Chaplin's duckwalk

BELLHOP (CONT'D)

- was a fixture in the bar here while filming a jitney chase this April.

MAPLE

Really?

BELLHOP

You didn't hear it from me. People say he's the most recognized person in the world right now, but you wouldn't know without the silly mustache and hat.

MAPLE

And handsome?

She taps her nose - he blushes

BELLHOP

Please, Ellie - but, yes, quite, if you must know.

MAPLE

Do they shoot a lot of movies in San Francisco?

BELLHOP

Indeed. There's a shoot at the Japanese Tea Garden day after tomorrow. (He gets an idea) You know they hire people as walk-ons, you'd be perfect! You have the look.

MAPLE

What should I do?

BELLHOP

Show up on the day, early, dress nicely, and if they need people for the background, they might pick you.

**EXT. FERRY TERMINAL, MORNING**

WOLFE steps off the ferry annoyed. An eager STUDIO AIDE (19) greets him with a stack of telegrams

STUDIO AIDE

Mr. Wolfe!

WOLFE holds up a hand to quiet him.

STUDIO AIDE (CONT'D)

The studio sent these.

WOLFE opens an envelope labeled *Prop Department* and examines the fake I.D.

WOLFE

*"Union Pacific Special Agent.  
Jack Aster"*

He scowls, opens a telegram

WOLFE (CONT'D)

*(Reading) AT PALACE HOTEL TIL SAT.  
LOTTIE DROVER  
Ha! The mystery lady herself!*

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING**

MYRTLE waits in the lobby writing post cards. MAPLE arrives, dressed out for the day.

MAPLE

Top o' the mornin'

MYRTLE

I didn't hear you get up.

Young BELLHOP walks by

BELLHOP

Have a fun day at the Expo, Ellie.

MYRTLE

*(Confused)* Ellie?

CLERK hands a message to Myrtle, she reads it

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

It's Fuzzy. He's waiting at the cafe across the street. And he can sit there until he tells me what is going on.

MAPLE

I wouldn't be in a big hurry to press him -

MYRTLE finally loses her patience

MYRTLE

I'm sorry Maple - or should I say *Ellie*? - but at the moment, I don't feel I can trust either of you.

MAPLE opens her mouth to respond but holds her tongue. They depart through the REVOLVING DOOR - just before WOLFE arrives in disguise. They pass unnoticed.

**EXT. EXPO GROUNDS - MORNING**

FUZZY, MYRTLE, MAPLE walk the Expo's Grand BOULEVARD. A TOUT approaches

TOUT

Interested in a tour? All the most amazing palaces, top quality -

FUZZY steps quickly in his way

FUZZY

We'll be fine on our own, friend - thanks, now buzz off.

TOUT tips his hat.

MAPLE

That wasn't very friendly, Fuzzy.

FUZZY

I was thinking we'd start at the Entertainment Zone and -

MYRTLE interrupts

MYRTLE

I think I'll explore on my own this morning.

MAPLE looks from one to the other

MAPLE

Listen, we've been tied together like a three-legged-potato-sack-race since Iowa. Why don't we split up and meet back here for lunch? Say the Ghirardelli Cafe, over there.

Neither of the other respond.

MAPLE (CONT'D)

Two o'clock then.

She strolls off in one direction. MYRTLE in another. FUZZY - stunned, stands with his hat in his hand watching them go.

**EXT. THE HALL OF HORTICULTURE - DAY**



MYRTLE listens in on a young GUIDE, wearing a *Women's Traveler Aid Society* sticker.

GUIDE

It's the first expo to feature a unified color scheme. French Green for the garden lattices, Cerulean Blue for the vaulted ceilings, Burnt Orange for moldings. The glass dome is larger than St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

MYRTLE gazes up in awe. She turns excitedly but there's NO ONE to share it with.

**EXT. PALACE OF FINE ART - DAY**

MAPLE strolls the colonnades of the Palace of Fine Arts. TWO YOUNG WOMEN, roughly her age, admire a classic nude statue titled *Spring*. Maple introduces herself and asks for directions.

**EXT. ENTERTAINMENT ZONE - DAY**

FUZZY works his way through the crowd to the HULA SHOW. He quickly loses interest. His heart isn't in it. Day One of the Expo and they've deserted him.

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MIDDAY**

WOLFE, in disguise, scopes out the lobby from behind a newspaper. He notices the BELLHOP, scurrying about - who seems to be familiar with everyone - and calls him over

WOLFE

Boy!

BELLHOP

How might I be of assistance, sir?

WOLFE

I'd like a word with the hotel  
detective, it's important.

BELLHOP

Whom should I say - ?

Wolfe shows him the fake badge.

BELLHOP (CONT'D)

I'll let him know you're here, Mr.  
Astor.

WOLFE

Wait boy!

Bellhop winces. WOLFE hands him a folded note

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Deliver this right away.

BELLHOP looks at the name and shakes his head

BELLHOP

Sorry sir, we have no *Miss Drover*  
registered here.

WOLFE can't believe it

WOLFE

YOU personally know the name of  
every guest in a 500 room hotel?

BELLHOP smiles

BELLHOP

Sir?

WOLFE

Early twenties, pretty, short red  
hair?

BELLHOP taps his nose

BELLHOP

Not in a position to say, sir.

WOLFE

Well, leave the note at the desk in  
case she arrives.

Bellhop returns to the desk and discreetly reads the note:

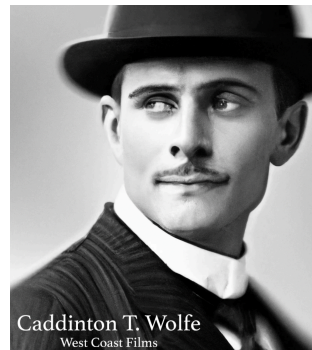
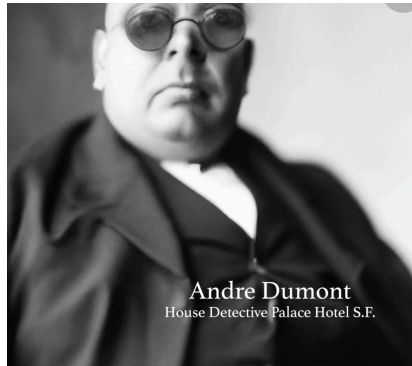
## BELLHOP

*Miss Drover:*

*Or should I say Miss Biggs? What's in a name? Clearly you play many roles. Ha! Two can play! Meet me in the bar tomorrow around six. Quite curious to see who shows up. Yours, Caddington.*

**INT. LOBBY - AFTERNOON**

Descending the grand staircase is the squat, powerfully-built French HOTEL DETECTIVE, ANDRE DUMONT (60) Impressively tailored, large round head, and extraordinarily thick glasses.



BELLHOP points to where WOLFE is waiting. DUMONT speaks with comically-thick French accent

DUMONT

Allow me, if I may - Andre Dumont.

WOLFE looks up and almost jumps out of his skin. Dumont's eyes look like they are swimming in little fish bowls. Rattled, WOLFE almost spills his real name

WOLFE

Cadding- I mean, Jack ah... Jack Astor, Special Agent for the Union Pacific.

Dumont ogles him with suspicion

DUMONT

How may I assist you?

The young BELLHOP eavesdrops. From his POV we hear snippets -

WOLFE

- a male and two females, early twenties. Professional pickpocket crew working the U.P. trains and currently, we believe, staying here under false names.

DUMONT sketches in a small notepad as WOLFE pantomimes height and weight. Dumont holds up a reasonable stick-figure likeness of a the trio.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

The Union Pacific hopes this can be handled quietly. There is likely to be a reward -

DUMONT

The hotel's reputation is paramount.

Wolfe leans in conspiratorial

WOLFE

Between us - the best cure for a pickpocket is to have their fingers broken.

DUMONT's eyes roll like water down a drain, then suddenly lock on WOLFE

DUMONT

San Francisco is no longer the Wild West, Mr. Aster. If you're suggesting -

WOLFE

Certainly not. Just a turn of phrase if I may say so.

**INT. HOTEL ROOM - EVENING**

MYRTLE fusses anxiously over her suitcase on the bed. A RAP at the door

MYRTLE

It's open

MAPLE exhausted, hangs her coat on a hook

MAPLE

Did you find Fuzzy?

MYRTLE stuffs a pair of slippers in the suitcase

MAPLE (CONT'D)

Are you leaving?

She takes the slippers out again

MYRTLE

I don't know what I'm doing! Or what is going on -

MAPLE

It's not like Fuzzy to miss lunch AND dinner. Maybe he left a message at the desk -

MYRTLE

He didn't.

MAPLE tries to lighten the conversation

MAPLE

Perhaps he booked himself on the first boat to Hawaii.

MYRTLE

You think this is funny? I don't see the humor in it.

MAPLE

You were pretty rough on him this morning -

MYRTLE

Me, rough on him? I'm not the one who's going to desert him.

MAPLE

What does that mean?

MYRTLE

I've held my tongue until now. Fuzzy promised your mother he'd see you home safely. What will he say to her?

MAPLE

He's probably at that Ned Kelly's place buying drinks for everyone.

MYRTLE

And I fear you've involved him in some serious trouble. All that talk about '*What if we get kidnapped?*' I assumed you were joking! You have no idea how crushed he'll be!

(MORE)

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

You tricked him, led him down the garden path!

A beat of silence, then both at the same time

BOTH

I thought we were friends.

Myrtle sinks down on the bed, Maple joins her

MAPLE

Can't you see, Myrtle? You've got it all backwards. Fuzzy tricked ME on this trip too - boy did I take the bait.

MYRTLE

What nonsense are you talking now?

MAPLE

I'm the decoy, Myrtle, not you.

MYRTLE

What?

MAPLE

It's not me Fuzzy planned this elaborate seduction for - it's you.

MYRTLE

That's ridiculous -

MAPLE

He's in love with you.

MYRTLE

With me?

MAPLE

That's why I never saw it.

MYRTLE

He told you this?

MAPLE

The whole trip was to get you far far away from your mother -

MYRTLE

You don't know what you're saying.

MAPLE

It's not me, Myrtle. You're the one who's going to break his heart.

MYRTLE swoons

MYRTLE  
I can't- this is just-

And with that she FAINTS cold on the bed.

MAPLE searches for smelling salts, decides instead to let Myrtle sleep. She pulls a blanket over her. Turns off the tub, flicks off the light, and hurries from the room.

**INT. FUZZY'S HOTEL ROOM - EVENING**

FUZZY, distraught, paces his room. Standing at the door he leans forward and slams his head against the wood

SFX  
BANG!

He winces. And repeats

SFX (CONT'D)  
BANG!

**EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

MAPLE approaches, hears the banging - turns the knob and shoves the door open

MAPLE  
Fuzzy?

SFX  
BANG!

**INT. FUZZY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

The door knocks him to the floor

MAPLE  
Now what are you doing?

He takes a moment to recover his senses

FUZZY  
Where's Myrtle?

MAPLE  
I had to tell her -

FUZZY

Oh no.

MAPLE

She was packing her bags to leave!

FUZZY

Where is she now?

MAPLE

Resting. Let her sleep.

She examines his forehead

MAPLE (CONT'D)

Now you've got one on each side of your head.

He struggles to stand but she pushes him down

MAPLE (CONT'D)

Listen to me. Let her sleep.

**INT. HOTEL'S PIED PIPER BAR - NIGHT**

Behind the long elegant bar hangs Maxfield Parrish's mural of the PIED PIPER of Hamelin.



FUZZY hunches over a whiskey, holding a piece of ice to his forehead.

BARTENDER

More ice, sir?

FUZZY swirls the cube in his glass

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

I meant for your head.

They share a quick laugh. Fuzzy points at the mural

FUZZY

Tell me, friend. What's the real story of the Pied Piper, was he a good guy or bad guy?

BARTENDER

Depends on your point of view. There are three different endings. In one the Piper leads the children over a beautiful mountain where they all live happily ever after.

FUZZY

I like that.

BARTENDER

A second version maintains the Piper returned the children and collected more money than the town owed him.

FUZZY

Sounds unlikely.

BARTENDER

The third version he lures the children away from their parents, into danger, and they all drown in a river, like the rats.

FUZZY

Maybe the Piper had a good plan but it all back-fired?

BARTENDER

Could be. What's your story?

FUZZY

It'd take too long to tell, but I'm afraid it's not going to have a happy ending.

He rattles his glass

FUZZY (CONT'D)

One more time friend, and more ice.

FADE

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING**

MYRTLE walks across the lobby still in shock from last night.

At the REVOLVING DOOR she absent-mindedly tries to exit the wrong way, jamming up people trying to enter.

**EXT. SIDEWALK - SAME**

She passes a stalled Model-T. An angry MAN struggles with the crank as the car BACKFIRES - spooking a HORSE, which bolts into the road, causing a TAXI to veer up the curb into the window of a Chinese laundry. MYRTLE continues walking, oblivious to chaos all around her.

**EXT. EXPO GROUNDS - MORNING**



A MILITARY BAND strikes up and begins to march. She blindly walks through them causing a pair of tuba players to collide and tumble to the ground.

**INT. FESTIVAL HALL - DAY**

At Festival Hall she takes a seat near the back. A large banner reads "*Union for Woman's Suffrage*".

On stage, with the help of an INTERPRETER, HELEN KELLER (35) addresses the packed crowd

KELLER

- I recall that day when Miss Sullivan came to a small town in Alabama to open the doors of the world - and let me come in out of the silence -

MYRTLE is rapt, overcome. Tears run down her cheeks.

**EXT. TEA GARDEN - MEANWHILE**

A three-story PAGODA nestles amid garden paths and ponds.

Film DIRECTOR (35) in jodhpurs and beret, talks to his CAMERA MAN. A group of hopeful EXTRAS, each holding a card with a number on it. PRODUCER looks them up and down

PRODUCER

You - 4, 5, and 8 stand over there  
and admire the topiary - and you  
two lovely gals - 10 and 12 - down  
by the Koi Pond looking at the  
fish.

MAPLE, number 12, and the other gal, position themselves by the pond, grinning at their good luck.

DIRECTOR

Are the actors ready?

ACTORS (*classic silent-comedy married couple*) tiny bald HUSBAND and huge WIFE. They climb into a RICKSHAW. Wife squeezes to get in, crushing husband against the side.

MAKE-UP man reaches in and dusts their faces with powder.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Bring the rickshaw over here to the  
starting point.

An old CHINESE MAN, bamboo hat and sandals, struggles to pull the RICKSHAW up a rise. Reaching the top he slips - the rickshaw rolls backward picking up speed. WIFE screams and clutches HUSBAND, crushing him to her bosom

WIFE

Help!

RICKSHAW careens backward towards MAPLE. Seeing her chance, she waits a beat, then leaps up on a boulder at water's edge - teetering theatrically - then tumbles head first into the pond - as the rickshaw plows into the flowering bushes.

PRODUCER rushes over

PRODUCER

Is everyone okay?

MAPLE stands up, dripping from head to toe, a giant KOI flopping in her arms.

PRODUCER (CONT'D)  
That's a re-set! Ten minutes  
everyone.

PRODUCER relieves MAPLE of the fish and tosses it back in the pond.

MAPLE  
I can do it again better -

PRODUCER  
No, and no. We don't have time for  
a wardrobe change. But I will give  
you a piece of advice, miss, that  
could prove useful in your career.

MAPLE  
Please do -

PRODUCER  
Before you do a stunt as  
spectacular as that again - make  
sure you hear someone yell  
"Action!"

He looks at his watch, it's 11:40

**INT. FUZZY'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY**

He wakes and checks his watch. 11:40. He leaps out of bed,  
sways, then sits back down.

**INT. LOBBY - DAY**

ELEVATOR opens and FUZZY emerges, well-dressed and well-  
hungover. He scans the lobby cautiously, then darts towards  
the REVOLVING DOOR. Just as two large SECURITY MEN in  
matching suits link him by the arms

FUZZY  
Hey, what the hell do you think  
you're doing?

They lift him off the floor for a moment, feet dangling

SECURITY MAN  
Come quietly and we won't alarm the  
other guests.

He's escorted up the staircase to the balcony level, and to  
an UNMARKED DOOR.

The BELLHOP observes from a distance, follows, sidles up against the door to listen.

**INT. DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY**

FUZZY is dropped into a plush high-backed chair. Across from him sits Detective DUMONT at a huge wooden desk. He finishes writing a note before leaning his large head into the glow of the desk lamp - which reflects in his round lenses like demon eyes. FUZZY recoils in the chair.

DUMONT

Allow me - Andre Dumont, house  
detective here at the Palace. Would  
you be so kind as to state your  
name and occupation?

FUZZY glances around the paneled room to see the SECURITY MEN blocking any escape. In a dark corner he notices another MAN (WOLFE) seated in a chair, his face shadowed beneath the straw hat.

FUZZY

Ferdinand Strub. Linotype operator,  
if it's any of your concern. I'd  
like to leave, I have friends  
waiting for me.

DUMONT points to one of the MEN who nods and exits the room.

DUMONT

Make yourself comfortable, Mr.  
Strub, while we search your room.

FUZZY leaps from the chair

FUZZY

You have no right!

DUMONT

You're not registered here *Mr.*  
*Strub*, so you have no grounds to  
object.

FUZZY

There is nothing in my room -

DUMONT

So nothing to be concerned about.  
Sit down please.

**EXT. YACHT ESPLANADE AT EXPO - DAY**

MYRTLE red-faced from crying, makes her way slowly to the harbor.

On a BOAT, fifty feet off the pier, HARRY HOUDINI (45) is being shackled, blindfolded, and crammed into a wooden crate. A huge CROWD looks on in horror as it's hammered shut and lowered by crane into the bay.

A MAN with a large megaphone counts off the seconds

MAN

- forty-six seconds under water! In total darkness! Fifty-seconds! He can not hear, nor call for help! Sixty seconds -

The crowd fidgets nervously. MYRTLE holds her own breath. When HOUDINI finally pops his head out of the water the exhausted crowd cheers wildly. Tears pour down Myrtle's face again. Slowly her eyes brighten, she's had an epiphany.

**INT. HOTEL DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY**

SECURITY MAN displays Fuzzy's VALISE open on a table, the contents in a pile.

SECURITY MAN

- and a the false bottom, we discovered these four time pieces.

FUZZY

Those are my property. I purchased everyone of -

DETECTIVE DUMONT holds up a document

DUMONT

A report filed with the Union Pacific - a stolen watch - between Omaha and Denver. On the day you admit traveling on that train.

DUMONT holds the REPORT close to his face

DUMONT (CONT'D)

A '*Waltham Vanguard, 23 jewel*'. The very model you are carrying on your person.

It finally hits FUZZY that he's been outwitted by a mile.

FUZZY

I tell you I bought these -

DUMONT

I warn you now - if you continue to protest your innocence against this evidence - and your use of a false name - I am prepared to search your companions' rooms as well.

FUZZY staggers

FUZZY

You can't invade their privacy, they are ladies.

DUMONT

To the hotel they are suspects.

FUZZY

They have nothing to do with this.

DUMONT points to a SECURITY MAN who starts to exit

FUZZY (CONT'D)

Please don't, wait -

DUMONT

The Union Pacific does not want the publicity, and the Palace will not allow our guests disquieted.

FUZZY

I've been set up I tell you!

DUMONT

Repeat that, and I call the San Francisco Police Department.

He reaches for the phone. Fuzzy surrenders

FUZZY

Alright.

DUMONT

Ah, chivalry wins the day. We'll retain the stolen goods and you are escorted on the train out of California tonight and never return. You will not have the opportunity to warn any accomplices. You vanish. No goodbyes.

Fuzzy buries his face in his hands. DUMONT turns to the security men

DUMONT (CONT'D)

Hold Mr. Strub in the basement until the arrangements are made.

There's a NOISE as someone leaves the room. FUZZY sees the chair in the shadows is now empty.

**INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY**

BELLHOP ducks out of view as WOLFE comes out the door rubbing his hands in glee

WOLFE

Oh sweet sweet revenge. Poor Lottie and her sister, abandoned, alone in San Francisco. And I step in. Ha-ha-ha.

**EXT. STREET OUTSIDE HOTEL - DAY**

MAPLE in still in soggy clothes spots MYRTLE returning to the hotel at the same time

MAPLE

Myrtle! Over here!

MYRTLE, face still flushed, throws her arms around Maple, who is shocked at the gesture

MYRTLE

Oh Maple, my dear dear friend. I'm so sorry for those things I said last night - My, you're soaking wet! What happened to you?

MAPLE

What's happened to you?!

Words pour out of MYRTLE in an unbroken torrent

MYRTLE

I've had the most astonishing day!

MAPLE

Yes?

MYRTLE

First I heard Helen Keller tell how she fought to escape from the DARK and the SILENCE. And then Harry Houdini does the exact opposite! He locks himself into the DARK and the SILENCE, and faces HIS fears. She struggled to speak, he learned to hold his breath! Both ESCAPED the darkness. And I thought, what am I so afraid of?

MAPLE

I said you'd surprise yourself one day.

MYRTLE

Anne Sullivan wrote the letters W-A-T-E-R in her palm. WATER, Maple! And I touched MY face and tears were streaming down and I saw how BLIND I've been! Every boy I ever knew I compared to Fuzzy, and not one ever came close. And the RISK he took! He gambled everything because he believed in ME!

MAPLE

That he did.

MYRTLE

And YOU, Maple! I so admire you -

**EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE - DAY**

As they enter the revolving door the BELLHOP hurries them away from the entrance.

BELLHOP

Your companion, Mr. Strub has been arrested and you two are under suspicion as accomplices!

MYRTLE

Accomplices in what, for heaven's sake?

BELLHOP

A Special Agent for the Union Pacific has evidence against you of pickpocketing.

MAPLE

Wait! Is this agent quite tall?

BELLHOP

Indeed.

MAPLE

Thin mustache?

BELLHOP

The very same!

MAPLE

Myrtle! It's that Hollywood man, Caddington, from the train! He's the one chasing Fuzzy!

MYRTLE shoves her way through the REVOLVING DOOR so fast other guests are ejected to the sidewalk.

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

MYRTLE

Where are they holding him?

BELLHOP

Up there on the balcony level, the door on the end, but you can't go up there!

She's up the staircase two steps at a time.

**INT. DUMONT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS**

MYRTLE raps on the DOOR, takes a deep breath, hands on her hips, and TAPS HER FOOT four times -

(FLASHBACK - MYRTLE as a child, when she challenged Fuzzy over the plush rabbit)

She shoves her way in, knocking a man over

MYRTLE  
WHERE are you holding my cousin  
hostage?!

MAN  
Ma'am you can't come in -

She turns, eyes blazing

MYRTLE  
I'm done having people tell me what  
I can not do! I DEMAND you release  
him this instant!

MAPLE follows into the room. DUMONT's eyes twinkle, delighted at this twist in the plot.

DUMONT  
Très bien! The suspects have all  
gathered!

MYRTLE  
What is this evidence you have.  
Show it to me!

DUMONT  
On the table, Miss Strub.

MYRTLE  
Fuzzy keeps records of everything  
he purchases.

She searches the valise pockets and finds a thin sheaf of hidden receipts.

MYRTLE (CONT'D)  
Here - (*reading*) '*Minneapolis  
Auctions, Sioux City Jewelry  
Exchange, Duluth Brothers Fine  
Watches*'

DUMONT  
And the watch reported stolen on  
the train?

MYRTLE  
That man Wolfe saw him wearing it  
on the train, commented how much he  
admired it.

DUMONT  
Who is this Wolf?

MYRTLE  
A slick, smug, self-satisfied  
Hollywood con man!

DUMONT  
A thin mustache, perhaps?

MYRTLE  
The same.

DUMONT  
It appears we'll need another word  
with Agent Astor if he hasn't  
departed already.

MAPLE steps forward

MAPLE  
Excuse me sir, but Mr. Wolfe is to  
meet me in the bar at 6, if you'll  
allow me a few minutes to give him  
a piece of my mind?

DUMONT is tickled at this

DUMONT  
We'll give you until 6:15.

To SECURITY MAN

DUMONT (CONT'D)  
Keep Mister Strub under guard until  
we untangle this puzzle.

**INT. PIED PIPER BAR - EVENING**

An elegant bar filled with a wealthy, well-dressed crowd.

WOLFE, back in his dapper clothes and fedora, poses elegantly  
on a stool with his legs crossed, cigarette in hand. He  
places his hat on the stool next to him to save the seat.

BARTENDER  
What's your pleasure, sir?

WOLFE  
Put a bottle of the bubbly on ice  
with two glasses.

BARTENDER

Very good.

**INT. HOTEL LOBBY - SAME**

BELLHOP huddles with MAPLE and MYRTLE at the bar door. He hands her an elegant pair of boots.

BELLHOP

Here, put these on.

MAPLE

Where did you get these, Maurice?

BELLHOP

You simply would not believe what ends up in the lost-and-found here. Who are you playing tonight, Ellie? Lottie? Someone new, perhaps?

MAPLE

"Lottie Bernard-Dumont of Quebec"

BELLHOP

Splendid! Now, remember how we rehearsed this. I'll cue Myrtle for her entrance. Are we ready?

Maple steadies herself in the boots and strolls to the entrance.

BELLHOP (CONT'D)

Aren't you forgetting something?

MAPLE

What?

He smiles

BELLHOP

*Action!*

**INT. PIED PIPER BAR - EVENING**

Heads turn as she enters. She waves to WOLFE at the bar. He's dazzled - sits up straight, swallows nervously.

She adopts the east-coast accent again

MAPLE

Mr. Wolfe! It is so good to see you again. I didn't know if my correspondence reached you.

WOLFE

I assure you the greater pleasure is mine, Lottie. Please have a seat.

She smooths the back of her gown and slides onto the stool. The CROWD is watching.

Champagne pours, glasses clink

MAPLE

I do want to apologize, Caddington, for the fictitious names - but women like Pollony and I, with the burden of wealth, must be always cautious.

WOLFE

I understand completely. You're not from Baltimore?

MAPLE

Four generations in Quebec, the Bernard-Dumont family. Lottie is my real name.

WOLFE

And how is your enchanting sister?

MAPLE

Pollany is going to drop by.

WOLFE

I'm delighted.

She leans in

MAPLE

Pollony, you see, was recently betrayed by a silver-tongued paramour, who pilfered her heart and a fair piece of her property.

He strokes her arm

WOLFE

I wish I'd been there, Lottie, to deal with that blackguard.

She returns his touch

MAPLE

I wish you'd been there too.

He chokes on his drink

MAPLE (CONT'D)

Our uncle here in San Francisco suggested a trip to take Pollony's mind off her trouble.

WOLFE

Very thoughtful of your uncle.

BELLHOP strolls through announcing loudly

BELLHOP

Message for Mr. Astor! Mr. JACKASS-tor!

WOLFE turns toward the bar until the bellhop passes. It suddenly occurs to him that something is very wrong

WOLFE

What did you say your family name was?

MAPLE

Bernard-Dumont.

WOLFE

And your uncle lives in San Francisco?

MAPLE

Actually, he lives here at the Palace.

WOLFE

ANDRE Dumont?

MAPLE

Why yes, in fact he's coming down in five minutes. I can't wait to introduce you.

Wolfe slips off his stool

WOLFE

If you'll excuse me a moment -

**INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS**

Bellhop watching, gives Myrtle her cue

BELLHOP

The wolf is running! Ready Myrtle?

MYRTLE

I've never been more ready.

**INT. PIED PIPER BAR - CONTINUOUS**

WOLFE turns to flee and is shocked to see MYRTLE walking straight towards him

WOLFE

Pollony, what a delight -

MYRTLE

My name is Myrtle Strub and I'm here to pull your nose.

With that she grabs it between thumb and forefinger and twists till he buckles to his knees.

WOLFE

Yeow!

He pulls a monogrammed handkerchief from his vest and dabs at his nose. Checking for blood he sees his MUSTACHE, a theatrical prop, stuck to the cloth. He shoves Myrtle aside racing to the door where the BELLHOP waits to stick out a leg and send him sprawling to the floor. He scampers to get up and finds himself staring into DUMONT's bulging eyeballs.

WOLFE (CONT'D)

Yikes!

DUMONT

Well Mr. Astor, or Mr. Wolfe, it appears we have more matters to discuss.

DUMONT to SECURITY MAN

DUMONT (CONT'D)

Release Mr. Strub and hold this imposter.

WOLFE is escorted away. A moment later FUZZY enters the bar, head down, expecting the worst. Instead he finds Myrtle blushing.

MYRTLE

My hero!

She throws her arms around him and kisses him. He's in shock.

MAPLE chokes up and applauds. BELLHOP, seeing Maple, chokes up himself and applauds. The CROWD, having witnessed the scene, applauds.

And above the bar the PIED PIPER plays his flute and leads the children to a happy ending.

MYRTLE grabs FUZZY's arm

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

We still have time before sunset.  
Let's go see the lights come on at  
the Expo!

FUZZY

I'll fetch a taxi and meet you out  
front in ten minutes!

MAPLE

*(Teasing)* Don't you be hurrying  
Myrtle, Fuzzy Strub!

MYRTLE

Will you join us?

MAPLE

No, no, no - you two birds go. I've  
got things to take care of here.

**EXT. EXPO GROUNDS - EVENING**

Fuzzy and Myrtle stroll the fountains and formal gardens  
holding hands

MYRTLE

Why didn't you tell me the truth?

FUZZY

Oh I tried Myrtle.

MYRTLE

When?

FUZZY

At the New Year's Eve party -

MYRTLE

You disappeared before I got there!

FUZZY

Someone said you were bringing a beau and I couldn't face it. So I fell in the punchbowl and then out the back door.

She stops to admire a great expanse of PANSIES, plucks one and tucks it in the buttonhole of his coat

MYRTLE

What will we do Fuzzy? I mean when we go back. Tell me you've thought this through and know what we're doing.

FUZZY

With you at my side we can face anything they throw at us.

MYRTLE

You deceived me.

FUZZY

Never! Okay maybe a little, but I had to.

MYRTLE

When else did you try and tell me?

FUZZY

Pike's Peak.

MYRTLE

You got soaked. We teased you so.

FUZZY

I deserved it.

MYRTLE

Who else have you told?

FUZZY

Annie. She's so fond of you, I thought she'd understand, but I guessed that wrong.

MYRTLE

Who else?

FUZZY

Mom. And a couple of bartenders.

MYRTLE

You told Maple before me.

FUZZY

That was an accident. I thought I was talking to you!

She leans up against him

MYRTLE

I worried you'd completely lost your mind.

FUZZY

I have completely lost my mind - over you.

Not the type to be seen KISSING someone in public, she does anyway. They sit on a bench at the waterfront. Golden Hour streaks the hills and ripples across the bay

MYRTLE

Let's watch the sun set. It's so beautiful.

They're quiet for a moment, then

MYRTLE (CONT'D)

What did you do to that ridiculous Hollywood man?

FUZZY

I had his films removed from the train and I guess he didn't like it.

MYRTLE

When they arrested you, why didn't you show that strange detective your receipts?

FUZZY

He threatened to search your personal things if I didn't agree to disappear. I could never live with myself if I'd been responsible for ruining your reputation. I would have never shown my face again.

The SKY darkens and the ILLUMINATION begins. Crowds of people move towards the TOWER OF JEWELS.

A TOUR GUIDE leads a group

## TOUR GUIDE

At over 40 stories in height, the  
Tower is clad with 130,000  
reflecting glass jewels -

Colored lights sweep the sky as a FOG rolls in

## FUZZY

The most beautiful thing I've ever  
seen.

She turns to realize he looking at her

## MYRTLE

*(Suddenly serious)* When did you  
first feel you loved me?

## FUZZY

I can't remember a time when I  
didn't.

## MYRTLE

*(Starting to panic)* My mother's  
head is going to explode! Promise  
me we'll keep this secret.

## FUZZY

We'll move someplace and start all  
over, like my parents did. I'll  
always be there and we will be  
happy together. Say you believe me.

## MYRTLE

I believe you, I'm just scared.

## FUZZY

I have something

He pulls the TINY BOX from his pocket. She opens it

## MYRTLE

This is your mother's wedding  
locket, Fuzzy!

He drops down on one knee

## FUZZY

Will you, Myrtle, marry me?

She's shocked

MYRTLE

Don't ask me that, Fuzzy. Can't it be enough that I love you at this moment in time, with all my heart? Stand up will you? How can I kiss you like this?

FUZZY

Hold the locket, as our secret - until we can figure things out? Until you're ready?

He places the locket around her neck. She tucks it down her cleavage.

MYRTLE

I'll keep our secret close to my heart.

FUZZY

You know I'll wait a lifetime.

MYRTLE

We still have a week of August left before we have to go back, Fuzzy. Let the future wait its turn.

They kiss. Somewhere in the distance an ORCHESTRA plays, mingling with the colored lights and fog. CAMERA pulls back to reveal the whole glittering scene.



FADE

**EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - DAY**

LOCOMOTIVE crosses a dry river gorge, steam billowing.

**INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY**

FUZZY and MYRTLE nestle against each other. He reads a newspaper. She gazes blissfully out the window as the landscape whistles by and rubs her lucky spoon.

MYRTLE

We've crossed into Nevada. Which reminds me, Maple gave me this letter and said not to read it until we were on our way and out of California.

FUZZY, puppy-eyed, smiles

FUZZY

What does Maple say?

MYRTLE

*Dearest Fuzzy and Myrtle:*

*By now you are on your way back to Minnesota. I didn't want to clutter your last days here with talk about me, so I've saved it until now.*

*Friday I have my first film role. I play a waitress in a cafe. Perfect casting, no? All I do is pour coffee and walk away, but it's a paid part!*

DISSOLVE to see MAPLE writing -

**INT. SMALL APARTMENT - MORNING**

She sits at a table in the new apartment with four YOUNG GALS, cramped together, one in a bathrobe with her wet hair in a towel, one ironing a blouse, another making coffee.

MAPLE VO

*One of the other walk-on girls offered me a place to stay in an apartment with four other gals!*

*Fuzzy I know you'd like to see this!*

**INT. TRAIN CAR - DAY**

Back to Myrtle

MYRTLE

*(Reading) I wrote to my dad  
telling him my news. I hope he can  
share my excitement. I was inspired  
by both of you and decided I should  
take the chance.*

*I wrote my mother so, Fuzzy, you  
won't have to explain why you left  
me in California! I know she won't  
blame you.*

*I wish you both the best of  
everything though I know it won't  
be easy on your return. You are the  
best friends a girl ever had and I  
will never forget our many  
adventures.*

*Yours, Maple*

Myrtle folds the letter back in the envelope. Fuzzy discretely wipes a tear from his eye

FUZZY

I tell you dear, that girl is a  
firecracker.

CAMERA moves slowly away down the aisle, passengers chattering, excited to be headed somewhere new.

COLLEGE KID with his arm in a cast talks to a TRAVELING SALESMAN

COLLEGE KID

I broke it in a game against  
Boulder.

SALESMAN

Why my company has a factory up  
near Boulder!

COLLEGE KID

Dang, ain't that a coincidence!

**EXT. DESERT LANDSCAPE - DAY**

TRAIN disappears slowly across a dry Nevada lake bed as the

CREDITS ROLL