

GOD ' S I S L A N D

Pilot Episode: "The Murder of the Century"

Written by

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Inspired by the book "The Murder of the Century"
By Paul Collins

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, 1897 - DAY TO NIGHT

We open over TITLES with an unhurried visual montage of SWELTERING SUMMER HEAT in New York at the turn of the last century (to the 1896 Metz and Hayden song "A Hot Time in the Old Town"):

-- The rural, forested parkland of OGDEN'S WOODS in upper Manhattan, the air above the uncut grass rippling with heat and quivering with insects; leading into A STAND OF WOODS -- protected, quiet, green striped with shadow and sunlight...

-- Garbage and human filth floating on the EAST RIVER where it runs under the Brooklyn Bridge...

-- Ratty NEWSBOYS in flat caps and knee-shorts raucously playing stickball behind a tenement on the LOWER EAST SIDE, satchels of unsold newspapers on the ground nearby...

-- A small DUCK POND next to a cluster of working-class homes in WOODSIDE, QUEENS, dragonflies skimming the surface as underwater WE SEE A RED SUBSTANCE slowly spreading through the water, stirred by the paddling of ducks...

-- Amid stifling evening heat and buzzing flies, two bored DETECTIVES idle in an otherwise empty HARLEM POLICE STATION, a fan barely moving the fetid air. One of them sits pointlessly at attention, while the other lethargically kills flies with a rolled-up newspaper...

-- A handsome, well-dressed MAN of 33 in evening clothes stands finishing a drink at a bar. He mops the sweat off his brow with a silk handkerchief. Around him are other well-dressed DRINKERS; but where they are convivial, WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST looks bored and frustrated enough to burn the place to the ground. Checking his watch, he sets down his empty glass, grabs his hat and strides out among...

EXT. BROADWAY - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Moving clusters of Gilded Age NEW YORKERS strolling up- and downtown, well-dressed and poor, financiers and con-men, matriarchs and show girls, some quite evidently drunk, all wilting in the humid, oppressive heat; horse and motor carriages passing in the street...

Hearst stands inwardly seething, all restlessness and heat. He mops his face again, and flags down a passing hansom cab.

TITLE: **NEW YORK CITY: JUNE 26, 1897**

END TITLES AND SONG.

INT. HERALD SQUARE THEATRE - NIGHT

Foot ceaselessly tapping, Hearst sits hemmed in by sweating, self-fanning THEATER-GOERS, waiting for the show - any show - to begin already.

We CU on him as the house lights finally go dark: the sweating ORCHESTRA starts to play; the curtain rises and the stage lights go up.

On stage: attractive, already perspiring CHORUS GIRLS begin singing and dancing the opening number of "The Girl from Paris" - "Hail for the Thames on a Summer's Day."

Hearst's eyes roam the stage, looking for something, anything, to keep his restless mind occupied...

On stage: a pretty young blond, MILLICENT (MILLY) WILSON, 16 or so, catches a heel and nearly topples over. She makes a quick recovery and keeps singing, offering an ironic shrug which makes the audience laugh.

For the first time all night, Hearst's face registers a flicker of real interest.

INT. BACKSTAGE - LATER

Hearst slips the BOUNCER a bill and is ushered through the stage door. He seems familiar with the place. We follow him down a narrow corridor criss-crossed by girls in various stages of undress, each noting his presence with a smile or comment:

CHORUS GIRL # 1
Hey mister, enjoy the show?

CHORUS GIRL # 2
Hiya fancy pants, wanna buy me a drink?

CHORUS GIRL # 3
Ain't it hot tonight?

Hearst nods but doesn't pause until he reaches the dressing room he's looking for. He KNOCKS on the half-open door -- through which HE SEES Millicent Wilson putting on lipstick in front of a mirror.

MILLY
(staring at herself)
No more flowers please.

Flowerless, Hearst steps into the cramped, cheaply furnished room. MILLY looks him over in the mirror.

MILLY (CONT'D)

I see you took me literally. You come to laugh at how I almost fell on my pucker out there?

HEARST

That was my favorite part of the show.

She turns around suspiciously.

MILLY

You makin' fun of me?

HEARST

I wouldn't do that.

She sizes him up.

MILLY

My friends call me Milly.

HEARST

I'm Will. Can I take you to dinner?

MILLY

Only if you don't mind my older sister comin'. My mother believes in chaperones.

HEARST

So does mine.

MILLY

Funny, you don't strike me as a mama's boy.

Hearst almost smiles.

EXT. TENDERLOIN DISTRICT, MANHATTAN - LATE NIGHT

A square mile of saloons, dance halls, peep shows, opium dens, gambling joints and warehouses on either side of Broadway in the West 30s. Through this quarter of steaming iniquity, Hearst walks with Milly and her sister ANITA, 20, the ladies not thrilled by the scenery. But Hearst relishes encountering the high and low of life shoved up against each other like this, the more sparks the better. HE SEES:

On the corner ahead, THREE GENTLEMEN quietly negotiating with TWO HOOKERS;

While on the dung-filled street, a carriage and a motor car COLLIDE, and the DRIVERS leap out and begin SHOUTING THREATS at each other;

Then a loud, bawdy LAUGH erupts from the corner, where the hookers and gentlemen have reached a satisfactory arrangement and are now strolling off into the night together.

We CU on Hearst as he watches them go, something almost like envy on his face.

A hand with a silk handkerchief gently dabs the sweat on his brow. It's Milly. Hearst holds her hand a couple of seconds longer than he should, then takes the handkerchief from her and slips it in his pocket. He extends his arm to Milly, and she takes it. They resume walking, Hearst beginning to brood again -- he just wants something to fucking *happen*.

INT. TRIBUNE BUILDING - CITY ROOM - A COUPLE OF HOURS LATER

Clouds of cigar SMOKE hang in the air under BUZZING electric lights. WE HEAR MALE VOICES repeating sentences into telephones and the CLACKING of primitive telecopy machines. We are in the City Room of The New York Journal: a long, vast, cavernous space filled with row after row of rolltop desks, some of them occupied by EDITORS and telephone STORY-WRITERS busy at work.

An ELEVATOR opens in one wall -- Hearst operating it himself. He steps out with Milly, followed a moment later by Anita. They've all had a fair amount to drink, but only Anita seems the worse for it.

ANITA

Say, this isn't Sherry's.

MILLY

What is this place?

ANITA

You said we were goin' dancing at a club.

HEARST

It's a kind of club. Ever heard of the New York Journal?

MILLY

The newspaper?

ANITA
I read the World sometimes.

Hearst looks at Anita coldly.

MILLY
Anita likes the comics -- you know,
"The Yellow Kid."

HEARST
The Journal carries that. With
better color.

ANITA
Who cares?

An EDITOR scurries by, scribbling on a piece of copy.

EDITOR
Evening, W.R.

Hearst practically jumps him.

HEARST
Anything?

EDITOR
Water tower collapse.

Hearst looks disgusted -- that's not news. The editor scurries away. Then Hearst remembers Milly standing there and forces himself into politeness.

HEARST
Would you ladies care for a tour of
the premises while we're here?

MILLY
Sure, I guess.

ANITA
Let's go to Sherry's instead.

HEARST
(ignoring her)
This is the City Room.

Hearst strides ahead in commanding tour-guide mode.

Milly stares after him, intrigued: it's starting to occur to her that maybe this "Will" is a bigger catch than she thought.

INT. TRIBUNE BUILDING - PRESSROOM - LATER

The tour continues, Hearst marching ahead, restless as ever, while the sisters lag behind on sore feet, carrying their high-heeled shoes in their hands.

HEARST

These presses are state of the art.
It's the best color ever mass
produced.

He glances back: Milly is attempting to feign interest; Anita is yawning.

HALSEY, a weary, ink-stained printer, approaches and hands Hearst a fresh-off-the-press edition of the morning paper.

HALSEY

Bulldog edition for your review,
Chief. Evening, ladies. Or should
I say, Good morning?

ANITA

How about Good night?

Hearst scans the front page, his face darkening with disgust.

HEARST

You're telling me this was all
anybody could come up with? *Again?*
Get Chamberlain in my office now.

He stalks off, pursued by Halsey. After a moment, Milly follows, pulling Anita by the arm.

INT. HEARST'S PRIVATE OFFICE - LATER

Off the City Room, Hearst's spacious private sanctum -- decorated with exquisite furniture, statuary, and armor from the grand palaces of Europe. Milly and Anita lie sprawled on a priceless sofa, sound asleep, as across the room we find...

Hearst on his knees on the Persian rug, furiously attacking the SPREAD-OUT PAGES of the bulldog edition. He's in his shirtleeves, one pencil in his fingers and another stuck behind his ear. His feet, oddly, are bare. Angrily, he scrawls the word "PUNK" above the lead headline, which reads "OH! YES, IT IS HOT ENOUGH!".

He stands.

HEARST

Tell me one fucking person in this entire city who doesn't know we're in the middle of a heat wave.

SAM CHAMBERLAIN, the Journal's managing editor, waits nearby, red-eyed from lack of sleep and too much drink.

CHAMBERLAIN

Chief, I understand you're frustration--

HEARST

Do you think people are fucking idiots, Chamberlain? They can't tell the difference between cold and heat? Between an entertaining story and cowshit? Am I a fucking idiot?

CHAMBERLAIN

No, Chief.

Suddenly out of gas, Hearst turns away.

HEARST

Just find me a story.

Half-relieved, Chamberlain slips from the room. Hearst leans his hands on his ornate desk, glancing uneasily at the framed PHOTOS of his parents. SWEAT drips onto the desk; he wipes his face with his shirtsleeve. On those oddly bare feet, he wanders restlessly over to the window and stares outside. Across the street HE SEES:

AN EVEN TALLER BUILDING, capped by an enormous GOLD DOME. Lights are burning in the offices just under the dome. Hearst stares at the grand edifice with a savage -- but respectful -- intensity until, finally, he blinks and...

THE FOCUS CHANGES SLIGHTLY, so that now he's seeing the gold dome through the scrim of HIS OWN REFLECTION on the window. The image seems to haunt him, and he turns away. He notices Milly stirring in her sleep on the sofa. He goes over to her. Her dress has fallen aside, revealing a garter belt and the inside of her thigh. She looks very young. He stands staring at her pure soft skin until he is calmer.

EXT. WORTH HOUSE (HEARST'S RESIDENCE) - DAYBREAK

A carriage pulls up outside Hearst's 4-story mansion. ROBSON, the driver, gets down and opens the door. Hearst emerges carrying a still sleeping Milly in his arms.

He gives a cursory glance back inside the carriage, where Anita lies passed out.

HEARST

Find out where the other Miss Wilson resides, and take her there.

ROBSON

Yes, sir.

HEARST

Give her twenty dollars and assure her that her sister is in good hands.

Hearst carries Milly toward his house. Across the street, the door of another mansion opens and a housekeeper, MRS. HANRATTY, peers out with nosey disapproval. Meanwhile, Hearst's butler, GEORGE, has opened the door to Worth House.

GEORGE

Breakfast for two this morning, Mr. Hearst?

HEARST

Miss Wilson will be needing the guest room, George. My guess is she's a late riser.

George takes Milly from Hearst; clearly, this isn't the first time he's received such a package from his boss. The girl stirs but doesn't wake.

GEORGE

I'll see to it myself.

HEARST

Is Brisbane still at the table?

GEORGE

He is, sir.

Hearst enters the house. George -- with Milly draped in his arms -- gives Mrs. Hanratty across the street a pointed stare.

Mrs. Hanratty primly shuts the door.

INT. WORTH HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAYBREAK

Hearst walks into the dining room, where ARTHUR BRISBANE, 34, serious and thoughtful, editor of Hearst's Evening Journal, is reading the Morning Journal and finishing a soft-boiled egg.

HEARST
How bad is it?

BRISBANE
Don't you know?

Brisbane disdainfully holds up the paper so Hearst can read that morning's HEADLINE: "TWO DEGREES HOTTER!!"

Hearst can't stand it -- he looks away.

BRISBANE (CONT'D)
You didn't steal me from The World
to turn the Evening Journal into
the Farmer's Almanac.

A SERVANT brings Hearst his breakfast. Hearst stares at it, depressed.

HEARST
Is there anything more dishonest in
the world than peace and quiet?

BRISBANE
On a personal level, at least, you
seem to be doing your best to liven
things up. Was that an eight-year-
old girl I just saw George carrying
upstairs?

HEARST
She's sixteen, at least.

BRISBANE
Ah. Well, then.

HEARST
You know I don't give a damn what
people think, Arthur. Society's
nothing but a euphemism for do-
nothings bored by their own
existence. And they despise us for
not being bored too.

BRISBANE
It's not you I'm thinking about,
Will. It's the girl.

Hearst holds up his hands.

HEARST
My conscience is clean.

BRISBANE
As far as I can see, my friend,
those are your hands, not your
conscience.

Brisbane plucks a NEWSPAPER out of a pile of them on the table, opens to an inside page:

BRISBANE (CONT'D)
To take just one example, at
random:
(reads aloud)
"Billy Hearst was spotted down the
coast last week with a party of
young things on his yacht, sighing
for the unattainable, fully
occupied with what he believes to
be Pleasure -- with a capital P."

HEARST
They call that writing? Or even
criticism? Fuck them. I'd kick
that hack off my paper in a
heartbeat. If I happened to be
from New York instead of San
Francisco, they wouldn't utter a
damn whimper about my "morals".
I'm an outsider, and I always will
be.

BRISBANE
Which is exactly how you want it.

HEARST
Yes.

Brisbane stands, reaches for his hat.

BRISBANE
(gently)
Get some sleep, Will. Something
will happen soon -- somewhere.
It's the one law of nature we can
still count on.

Brisbane walks out -- leaving Hearst staring desperately at his soft-boiled egg, as if waiting for it to do something.

INT. PULITZER MANSION - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Self-confined to his specially sound-proofed bedroom, publishing magnate JOSEPH PULITZER, 49 -- half-blind, noise-phobic, perpetually ill, with a trim beard and pince-nez spectacles -- furiously covers that morning's issue of The New York World with insulting blue-and-red graffiti: "AWFUL!!!" "DON'T LET THIS OCCUR AGAIN!!!", etc.

Next, he reaches for the Morning Journal: holds it inches from his face, scrutinizing every headline and illustration, looking for weaknesses and things to steal.

There's a KNOCK on the door -- the sound makes him wince.

PULITZER

What is it?

A MASSEUSE enters.

MASSEUSE

Time for your morning massage, Mr. Pulitzer.

Pulitzer sniffs the air, displeasure on his face.

PULITZER

What is that awful smell?

MASSEUSE

(mortified)

My perfume?

Pulitzer begins loosening his cravat. Through the open door HE SEES:

His comely but long-suffering wife KATE, 40. She appears to him as a BLURRED FORM; but he knows who it is, and that she is waiting to speak to him.

PULITZER

(to masseuse)

Close the door.

The masseuse apologetically shuts the door in Kate's face.

INT. WORTH HOUSE - HEARST'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Hearst washes himself at a basin, naked to the waist; his gaze on himself in an ornate mirror, he pulls a wet cloth across his chest and under his arms. He is tired but strong and virile, still youthful. His mind relentlessly ticking away.

Then some thought seems to stick to him, and he tosses the cloth back into the basin. He starts drying himself with a towel.

A KNOCK, and George enters, carrying a silver tray.

GEORGE

Chamomile tea, sir. Helps with sleep.

HEARST

Get me a fresh suit of clothes, George. I'm going back to the office.

INT. CITY ROOM - MORNING

The elevator door opens -- the car now operated by an ELEVATOR MAN -- and Hearst steps off. He appears fully revived, doesn't hesitate: like a man possessed, he strides to the middle of the big room, where half the roll-top desks are occupied by EDITORS talking on the phone and COPY BOYS waiting for fresh copy... He plants his feet and waits with growing impatience.

Brisbane, standing by an editor's desk, sees him first; then Chamberlain; then everyone else stops what they're doing and the room falls silent.

HEARST

Ask yourselves: What is the New York World doing right this minute? Where are they? Where are they going next? What questions are they asking, and to whom? What do they already know? What are they on the verge of discovering? What's their next headline? What's the lead photo? What's the caption? What's the man on the street want to know more than anything else -- right now, this morning? What can we find out from him that he won't tell us? If you can't give me answers, then you don't belong here. Tap their telephones if you have to; get in their bedrooms. This is New York City, gentlemen. God's Island. The capital of the fucking world. We're either tomorrow's newspaper, bringing tomorrow's news, or we're nothing.

(MORE)

HEARST (CONT'D)

We can't stand around waiting for excitement to come to us, like a bunch of captives waiting to get shot. We have to go out there and bring it into being. Make it happen! *Make* the news! Do whatever you fucking have to.

He turns into his office, slams the door.

A long silence.

BRISBANE

You heard the Chief.

At at once, a dozen men reach for hats or telephones, desperate to make something happen. We move among them, through them, HEARING THEIR VOICES on the phone, absorbing their anxiety and restlessness, to the WINDOW and outside...

As somewhere on the waterfront not far away, a FERRY HORN SOUNDS...

EXT. EAST ELEVENTH STREET PIER - MID-MORNING

The East Side waterfront above the Brooklyn Bridge: a series of dingy, jerrybuilt piers jutting out into the brown-green, garbage-strewn East River. Everywhere you look, somebody is selling something foul-looking. Boat traffic is chaotic and occasionally violent. The blazing summer heat has done nothing but make this human stew more rancid. If Manhattan is God's Island, this is one of the armpits.

On this particular derelict tie-up pier made of rotting boards and barrels, two 13-year-old newsboys, JACK MCGUIRE and JIMMY MCKENNA, lie half asleep, their heads resting on their partially filled newspaper stachels. Jack has the front section of a newspaper tented over his face to block out the sun.

For a few moments, the boys are so still, the thought occurs that they might be dead. Then:

Out on the river, a lumbering ferry sounds its HORN. Disturbed, Jack sits up, the newsprint falling from his eyes. Looking out at the water, squinting in the glare, HE NOTICES:

A good-sized RED BUNDLE, rolling in with the tide.

Now Jimmy sits up. Jack is already standing and stripping off his shirt.

JIMMY
What're ya doin'?

JACK
You never know -- could be loot.

Without another word, Jack DIVES INTO THE RIVER.

The water is filthy, a floating junk yard, utterly disgusting. Some kind of ROTTING CLUMP hits Jack in the face. He's a bad but irrepressible swimmer, and keeps going. He reaches the bundle...

Back at the pier, Jimmy helps his pal drag the surprisingly heavy parcel -- tightly wrapped in red-and-gold oilcloth and bound with rope -- out of the water.

Jack pulls out a pocket knife and cuts the rope -- accidentally sinking the blade into the bundle. BLOOD starts seeping out of the slit in the oilcloth.

JACK (CONT'D)
What the hell...

Under the oilcloth, Jack finds another layer, burlap tied with twine. He cuts through that and there's a layer of coarse brown paper. He rips that off... And steps back in shock:

It's the HEADLESS TOP HALF OF A MAN'S TORSO. A chunk of flesh has been sliced away from the well-muscled chest.

Jack turns away and THROWS UP.

EXT. STREET - LATE MORNING

A large, sweating, fervently appalled CROWD has gathered in the street off the pier, jostling each other for a better view at something unseen in their center. Reaching the front, first one and then another of the onlookers suddenly turn away from the sight as if about to be sick. A third -- a WOMAN -- let's out a whimper and begins to SOB.

Two COPS stand nearby, ostensibly performing crowd control. One is busy gnawing on a pickle.

Meanwhile, a MORGUE WAGON driven by two scrawny BODY COLLECTORS lumbers up the street, stopping at the edge of the crowd. The two body collectors jump down and begin shoving their way through to the center. Neither of the cops makes a move to help.

The body collectors reach the front and momentarily reel back at the sight and stench. With great and disgusting effort (trying their best to avoid touching the sawed-off stumps), they manage to raise the TORSO and stumble with it back to the wagon -- at one point accidentally bumping the headless neck into an appalled PRIEST.

Trying to hoist the torso into the back of the wagon, one of the body collectors loses his grip and the torso hits the ground with a sickening SPLAT. The sobbing woman begins to SHRIEK hysterically. The cop finishes his pickle. With a final heave, the body collectors finally get the torso into the wagon.

As the wagon lumbers away -- leaving the disgusted, thrilled, jabbering crowd baking in the noonday heat -- it passes the newsboy Jack, who turns and hurries off down a side street.

INT. BUTCHER SHOP - MINUTES LATER

Still looking a little queasy, Jack enters and approaches the Italian BUTCHER, who's hacking away at a pig carcass with a cleaver.

BUTCHER

You again.

The butcher stares at him, then hacks off a pig's trotter. The ambience isn't helping Jack's stomach.

JACK

Free papers for a week?

BUTCHER

Month.

Jack nods reluctantly. The butcher jerks his head at a fly curtain behind him, and Jack slips through. In a dimly lit back room, the BUTCHER'S WIFE sits reading the comics section of the Morning Journal. On a table beside her is a TELEPHONE; and next to the phone is a jar full of coins. She stares at Jack, then resumes reading.

Jack picks up the phone. He's done this before.

JACK

Yeah. Get me the New York Journal.
I got a news tip.

INT. HEARST'S PRIVATE OFFICE - MID-MORNING

The door to Hearst's office is closed; he's alone. Once again, we find him standing by the window, staring out at the building across the street, that enormous gold dome.

His brooding is disturbed by a KNOCK on the door.

Brisbane enters. Hearst turns from the window.

INT. CITY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The packed, bustling, sweating, clacking, worrying City Room is momentarily brought to astonished silence by the sound of one man's unrestrained, ecstatic BATTLE-CRY OF A SHOUT coming from Hearst's office.

Chamberlain, glancing from his desk through the open door, SEES:

Hearst, with Brisbane smiling on, DANCING a jig of wild, competitive joy.

HEARST

Fire up the Wrecking Crew, Sam!

Fire it up!

INT. PULITZER MANSION - BATHROOM - MID-MORNING

A bathroom like a grand mausoleum. Naked to the waist, a towel draped over his head, Pulitzer stands at the marble sink, bent over a large porcelain bowl filled with hot water and fresh menthol leaves. A private PHYSICIAN in a white medical coat observes from one side. For long moments, Pulitzer's deep, mucousy BREATHING is the only sound.

PHYSICIAN

(German accent)

Good, good. In... Out... In...

Out... We will clear the respiratory passages. We will make the lungs sing again.

Muttering from under the towel:

PULITZER

You're giving me a headache.

PHYSICIAN

Of course. My sincere regrets, Herr Pulitzer.

PULITZER
Please shut up.

Pulitzer removes the towel, straightens up, wipes his face. Without his thick glasses, he is essentially blind.

PULITZER (CONT'D)
My spectacles.

As the physician hands him his glasses, a BUTLER KNOCKS and enters, carrying a TELEPHONE on a long cord.

BUTLER
Mr. Seitz on the telephone for you, sir.

Pulitzer finishes putting on his glasses; peers around at the physician and butler. Once again disillusioned by the reality of his surroundings, he takes the phone.

PULITZER
What is it now, Seitz?

He starts to listen, wincing painfully at the LOUD, TINNY VOICE coming out of the earpiece--

PULITZER (CONT'D)
For God's sake, man, speak softly.

He listens again... And now, as he absorbs the information, his body stiffens, he stands taller and fiercer. One look at the physician and the butler, and both men leave the room.

PULITZER (CONT'D)
Listen to me carefully. This is the opportunity of a lifetime. We handle this properly, Hearst will be back in California, bankrupt, by the end of the year. I want every man we have on this. Cancel all vacations immediately. Where are they taking that torso?
(listens)
Well, where's the rest of it?
(listens, frustrated)
The ribs, man; the groin. Where's the head? I want that head, Seitz. You find me that head before Hearst does, or by God I'll have yours.

He hangs up. He is facing a large ornate MIRROR. A pause; then, step by step, he draws closer to the mirror, peering at it with belligerent curiosity, until his own hawklike reflection is finally clear to him.

EXT. PARK ROW - LATE MORNING

"Newspaper Row" is a dung-filled stretch of Lower Broadway flanked by the World building on one side and the Journal on the other, saloons on each corner and City Hall a block away. Now on a busy workday it's bristling with PEDESTRIANS, horse-drawn carriages, hansom cabs, and the occasional motor car, when suddenly...

BANG! The doors of a low brick structure next to the Journal fly open and a SPRINTING, CHAOTIC MOB of mustachioed, derby-hatted REPORTERS comes pouring out, followed by Chamberlain bellowing after them at the top of his lungs:

CHAMBERLAIN

Get excited, you sons of bitches!
D'you hear me? *Get excited!*

Leaping expertly onto an array of top-of-the-line BICYCLES, the pack goes racing uptown -- nearly running over several pedestrians in the process.

Meanwhile, bringing up the rear, one laggard cub reporter, NED BROWN -- handsome, neatly dressed, 23 -- has been purposefully left a rusted, bent-wheeled wreck of a bike. He jumps aboard and starts pedaling -- but the thing won't steer straight, and the SQUEAKING OF THE CHAIN is so loud that Chamberlain covers his ears.

CHAMBERLAIN (CONT'D)

Brown, you're a goddamn
embarrassment to the practice of
journalism!

NED

Yes, sir!

Sweat pouring down his face, Ned pedals faster -- just barely missing a hansom cab.

CAB DRIVER

Cockchafer!

CHAMBERLAIN

Get outta here, Brown!

NED

Yes, sir!

In a flurry of panicked peddling, Ned squeaks around the corner and disappears -- just as a SECOND WAVE OF MEN emerges, carrying leather portfolios and wooden tripods. They climb on bicycles or small carriages and go racing off after the reporters.

CHAMBERLAIN

Get me pictures! Suspects! Show
me the very face of murder!

Lastly, GRUMMONS, Hearst's "bicycle attorney", emerges from
the brick building shouldering a heavy briefcase.

CHAMBERLAIN (CONT'D)

No lawsuits, Grummons --
settlements. Any cycling
accidents, pay the victims off
directly, as the Chief has
instructed.

GRUMMONS

Yessir, Mr. Chamberlain.

Grummons hops on his bike and pedals off after the others,
just narrowly missing a carriage.

Looking satisfied, sweating profusely, Chamberlain pauses to
take a deep drink from his pocket flask.

EXT. STREET - MIDDAY

Panting for breath and dripping sweat, Ned turns a corner and
comes upon a couple dozen bicycles parked out front of the
Medieval-looking BELLEVUE MORGUE. A couple of POLICE WAGONS
too. He's late.

INT. MORGUE - CONTINUOUS

Hurrying to catch up, reporter's notebook in hand, Ned walks
one long grim corridor after another. It's a labyrinth, and
he quickly realizes he's lost. He goes through a set of
doors and finds a bespectacled MAN IN A LABCOAT studying a
naked corpse with a large magnifying glass. Ned clears his
throat.

NED

Excuse me. Where can I find the,
um, fresh ones?

The man raises his head and stares at him blankly.

NED (CONT'D)

I mean those bodies that are, uh,
more recently... dead?

Expressionless, the man points down the hall.

NED (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Ned hurries out.

INT. BELLEVUE MORGUE - AUTOPSY WING - A MINUTE LATER

He pushes through doors into the morgue's main autopsy wing. We enter with him into...

A gloomy, steaming, dripping, fly-buzzing cave of death. Ned looks around -- it's like he took a wrong turn and ended up in Hell by mistake. A CROWD OF REPORTERS and ILLUSTRATORS already there ahead of him, partially blocking his view of the front of the large room. Over their heads, Ned can get only an intermittent glimpse of a long row of MARBLE SLABS, each supporting a CORPSE in a different state of gruesome display. A light MIST falls over the exhibits from spray pipes overhead.

On the central slab is the headless top-half of TORSO from the East River. The chest and shoulders well-muscled; the arms folded in an X with the hands on the shoulders. The unwrapped red OILCLOTH rests beside it.

DR. GEORGE DOW, city Medical Examiner, is explicating his examination of the specimen to the assembled group.

DR. DOW

As you can see, gentlemen, the head was rather crudely sawn off at the larynx, while down below, the torso was cleanly severed under the fifth rib. Under the arms here, observe how a section of flesh has been sliced away from the pectoral region -- perhaps, one might speculate, for the purpose of removing some distinctive physical marking, such as a tattoo.

MURMURS among the crowd -- at the back of which we find Ned, craning his neck to to get a clear look at the torso. His view, however, is blocked by people from every angle.

DR. DOW (CONT'D)

A saw was clearly used for the basic dismemberment, which in my professional opinion rules out the possibility of a prank by medical students.

(MORE)

DR. DOW (CONT'D)
 Infantile though they may be, our students are too well trained to treat a cadaver in such a crude manner.

From beside Dr. Dow, a second medical man - CORONER TUTHILL - gives a low, pointed COUGH.

DR. DOW (CONT'D)
 Coroner Tuthill, gentlemen.

With a professorial air, Tuthill steps up to the marble slab.

CORONER TUTHILL
 Thank you, Chief Examiner Dow. I wish to point out a few notable aspects of the cadaver piece. The stump of the neck, for instance. Upon close observation, you will see definite signs that the skin there has been...
 (dramatic pause)
 boiled.

A MURMUR ripples through the reporters; pencils scratching on notepads.

CORONER TUTHILL (CONT'D)
 Yes, my friends, boiled. Of course, I am not a detective -- my respects, gentlemen.

Tuthill nods in the direction of THREE DETECTIVES standing with arms folded off to the side. The detectives nod back.

CORONER TUTHILL (CONT'D)
 But I would nonetheless ask you all to consider the question -- hypothetical, at this point -- are not *butchers* in the habit of scalding pigs to loosen their skin? And do not butchers have the necessary handiwork to dismember any carcass, no matter how challenging for the layman?

Another MURMUR, more scratching of pencils. One of the detectives is looking at his pocketwatch.

CORONER TUTHILL (CONT'D)
 And are not most butchers in this city *foreigners*? Italians, I mean; and...*Hebrews*.

Another murmur. Some of the reporters and now two of the detectives too are nodding their heads in agreement.

Ned is trying to push in, get a better view, while at the same time trying to jot something down in his reporter's notebook...

He bumps into the back of a grizzled veteran reporter -- GEORGE ARNOLD, 40.

NED

Sorry.

The man stares at him. (IN THE BACKGROUND, Tuthill can be heard droning on about foreigners' predilections for deviant behavior.)

ARNOLD

I've seen you some place.

NED

(hesitantly)

Ned Brown, Mr. Arnold. We both work at the Journal. I'm a big admirer of your work.

A look comes into Arnold's eyes, not entirely pleasant.

ARNOLD

You're the new guy. Went to Harvard, I hear.

Arnold reaches out and grabs the shoulder of another member of the Wrecking Crew -- WIGGINS, weasly-looking -- nearby.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Hey Wiggins, wasn't there just a phone call from Chamberlain for Brown?

Wiggins looks briefly confused. Arnold gives him a meaningful stare.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

This is Brown. The new guy... from Harvard.

WIGGINS

Brown... right. Call came in a couple minutes ago.

ARNOLD

(to Ned)

Wiggins here'll take you to the morgue office. They got a phone there.

WIGGINS

Be happy to.

NED

But...

ARNOLD

Don't think you want Chamberlain up your ass, anymore then he already is.

This is undeniably true. Ned follows the weasly-looking Wiggins out through the doors.

INT. HALLWAY - A MINUTE LATER

Back in the labyrinth of long corridors. The lights are flickering. Wiggins stops outside a CLOSED DOOR, locked with a bolt on the outside. Glancing over his shoulder, Wiggins slides open the bolt and opens the door. Inside, the room -- actually, an equipment closet -- is PITCH BLACK.

WIGGINS

The clerk musta gone to lunch.

Ned peers in doubtfully.

NED

This is the morgue office?

WIGGINS

There's a light on the desk. Phone's there too.

NED

You're sure?

WIGGINS

I wouldn't keep Chamberlain waiting, if I were you.

Ned takes a step...

WIGGINS SHOVES HIM INSIDE, SHUTS THE DOOR AND SLIDES THE BOLT HOME.

NED

Hey!

WIGGINS

Welcome to the big time, kid.

NED (O.S.)

Open the door!

WIGGINS

Harvard, huh? I dunno, you seem kinda like a rube to me.

Pleased with his handiwork, Wiggins walks back toward the autopsy wing. Behind him, Ned has begun POUNDING on the inside of the door.

INT. AUTOPSY WING - A MINUTE LATER

Wiggins resumes his place next to Arnold, gives him a nod.

DR. DOW

Gentlemen, any questions?

As if in answer, there comes the faint, muffled sound of SOMEONE POUNDING on metal somewhere in the distance. Arnold and Wiggins and the other members of the Wrecking Crew hide their smiles.

INT. HALLWAY - TWO HOURS LATER

An ORDERLY is mopping the hallway floor when HE HEARS SOMEONE DULLY WHISTLING "Oh! Susanna" on the other side of the locked closet door. He takes a long, questioning look at the door before finally unlocking it. The whistling stops immediately.

Ned steps out into the light, blinking like a prisoner coming out of solitary. He's still clutching his reporter's notebook.

NED

What time is it?

The orderly just looks at him as if there's no telling what people will get up to if left to their own devices.

NED (CONT'D)

Never mind.

He digs into his pocket and comes up with a coin.

NED (CONT'D)

You never saw me.

INT. AUTOPSY WING - MINUTES LATER

The press conference is over and everyone's gone. Ned stands alone with the cadavers, close enough that the MIST from the overhead pipes falls on his head like light rain. He's too focused on the TORSO to care. This is his chance: he reaches out and lifts one of the hands where it rests on the opposite shoulder. The most surprising thing is how completely unfazed he is to be touching a dead body.

For the next half minute, we watch Ned carefully examine, prod, and touch the torso. He's particularly attentive to the victim's strongly muscled forearms and hands, the smoothness of the palms and fingers, and the neatly clipped fingernails; and the cut-out of flesh from the center of the chest.

When he's finished, he tries to put the arms back in their X position, but rigor mortis has set in; he finds himself in a bit of a wrestling match with the dead man's limbs. At that moment, HE HEARS A LIGHT COUGH behind him and turns to find a lovely young woman (ROSEMARY LONERGAN, 22) observing him with interest. His return interest in her is natural and immediate -- until he notices the reporter's notebook in her hand.

NED

(embarrassed and annoyed)
You with one of the ladies'
journals?

ROSEMARY

(quietly proud)
I'm a reporter with the New York
World.

NED

The World! A woman?

ROSEMARY

And why not? What paper are you
with?

NED

The New York Journal.

ROSEMARY

Ah.

NED

What's that supposed to mean?

ROSEMARY

You know that sound you make when the doctor asks you to stick out your tongue?

NED

Ah?

ROSEMARY

You've just answered your own question.

NED

(annoyed)

Funny.

ROSEMARY

Then you might try smiling. If you know how.

The SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING behind them, as TWO DETECTIVES enter. (Cerebral, determined CAREY and crude, lippy O'MALLEY - - we've already seen them, first in the Harlem police station during the opening montage, and then during the press conference.)

CAREY

You just had a few more questions for the corpse?

O'MALLEY

And I see you brought your girlfriend -- to a morgue.

ROSEMARY

I'm not his girlfriend! I'm a reporter for the New York World.

O'MALLEY

Yeah, and I'm the chief of police.

NED

(sharp)

There's no need to lose your manners.

Rosemary gathers up the RED OILCLOTH in which the torso had been wrapped.

ROSEMARY

I suppose you'll be wanting this, Detectives?

CAREY
That's evidence, Miss, don't go
touching it.

Her back to the detectives, Rosemary sets the oilcloth on one
of the empty marble slabs.

ROSEMARY
I'll just leave it here then.

She looks at Ned.

ROSEMARY (CONT'D)
Goodbye.

Ned nods at her a bit stiffly. She walks past the detectives
and out of the autopsy wing. O'Malley checks out her ass as
she leaves.

EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

Now she stands half-hidden in a doorway across the street
from the morgue. SHE SEES:

Carey and O'Malley exit the morgue and turn the corner.

She waits a few seconds, then sets off after them, keeping at
a distance. Her left hand holds her reporter's notebook.
Her right hand is a fist. Opening it, she stares at what's
inside: A SMALL, TORN-OFF PIECE OF RED OILCLOTH.

INT. PULITZER MANSION - DINING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Pulitzer is sitting at the end of the long table, his lunch
set out before him, untouched. Beside him sits DON SEITZ,
30s, the magnate's beleaguered right hand man, nervously
chewing on a stalk of celery.

Seitz's loud CRUNCHING makes Pulitzer wince.

PULITZER
Must you chew like that?

SEITZ
Sorry, Mr. Pulitzer. I missed
lunch.

PULITZER
(disgusted)
Have mine, then. My stomach's
acting up.

SEITZ
(hopeful)
Really?

Pulitzer's stare is withering.

PULITZER
I have a newspaper in North Dakota,
Seitz, that would welcome you onto
its masthead.

Seitz puts down the celery.

SEITZ
Actually, I'm not very hungry.

PULITZER
I want to know precisely where we
are on this story. This is war,
Seitz. No evasions will be
tolerated.

SEITZ
Of course, sir. One of our men has
managed to get hold of a piece of
the oilcloth the torso was wrapped
in, and is now following two
detectives in an attempt to track
the original purchaser of the
material.

PULITZER
Good. Which one of our men?

Seitz hesitates.

PULITZER (CONT'D)
Are you deaf, Seitz? Which one of
our men?

SEITZ
It's a young woman, sir. Rosemary
Lonergan.

PULITZER
A woman?

SEITZ
It was your idea, actually. You
thought hiring a woman reporter
would send a message to our female
readers.

PULITZER

Did I? What a mountain of crap.
What kind of message?

(beat)

Never mind. None of it matters so long as we have the upper hand. I want a reward offer on the front page of this afternoon's edition. Take this down.

Seitz grabs a pencil and begins taking the dictation in shorthand in his notebook.

PULITZER (CONT'D)

"The World will pay \$500 in gold -- that's gold -- for the correct solution of the mystery concerning the fragment of a man's body discovered early this morning in the East River. All theories and suggestions must be sent to the City Editor of the World, in envelopes marked "Murder Mystery", and must be exclusively for the World. Appearance of the solution in any other paper will cancel this offer of reward." Did you get all that exactly as I said it?

SEITZ

I got it all, sir.

PULITZER

Then what are you waiting for?

Seitz leaves. Pulitzer notices Seitz's half-eaten celery stalk lying on the table, picks it up and stares at it as if it's proof of the continued existence of Neanderthal life. Then he drops it and reaches for the inside of his wrist and starts taking his pulse.

INT. SALOON -- AFTERNOON

Ned drinking at the bar. He's sweaty, it's already been a hard, humiliating day, and he's got no lead to go on. He drinks some more.

A few feet away, an OLD DRUNK starts sniffing the air and wrinkling his nose. Like a scent hound, he finally tracks the disturbing smell to...Ned.

OLD DRUNK

Christ, son. What the hell'd you
get yourself into? You smell
like... *death*.

At the word "death", the other DRINKERS at the bar step away from Ned.

Ned sniffs his shirtsleeve and is appalled. The old guy's right; he literally smells like death.

INT. MURRAY HILL BATHS - ENTRANCE - DAY

Ned enters and approaches the front desk, where a sign reads, "The Most Handsome and Perfect Baths in the World."

An ATTENDANT is folding towels.

NED

I need a bath.

ATTENDANT

Steam and rubdown's a dollar.

NED

Just a bath.

ATTENDANT

Bath comes with the steam and rubdown. One dollar.

NED

Fine, I don't care as long as there's soap.

ATTENDANT

The soap's free.

INT. BATHING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Humid, steamy, Romanesque, high-ceilinged, with white marble floors and a long BATHING POOL. MEN of all ages and sizes shuffle to and fro in white bathrobes and lounge semi-nude in the pool, some smoking cigars.

In one corner of the pool, hemmed in by corpulent bodies swaddled in cigar smoke, Ned sits up to his neck in steaming water, his eyes closed.

We CU on him, the sweat on his face...

INT. HOUSE - FLASHBACK

Ned -- slightly younger, wearing the clothes of a university student -- knocks on the front door of a working class house somewhere in America. The door, unlatched, swings slowly open. Ned enters. The light inside the house is strange, ominous.

NED
(calling)
Ma? Tommy?

No answer. Ned walks slowly through one room, then another...

Outside the kitchen, he abruptly stops:

Through the doorway, HE SEES a YOUNG BOY cowering in terror under a table. Their eyes meet, Ned hurries into the room...

CUT TO:

INT. MASSAGE ROOM - BACK IN THE PRESENT

Ned opens his eyes. He's in a small white room, lying half-naked on a table, his back being worked over by a German RUBBER.

RUBBER
You were sleeping.

Ned blinks, trying to shake off the terrible memory -- which he knows he will never shake off. He finds himself looking at his own reflection in a MIRROR hanging on the wall.

RUBBER (CONT'D)
This is not too much pressure?

NED
No.

The rubber applies more pressure, until it hurts. A part of Ned welcomes the pain. IN THE MIRROR, he watches THE RUBBER'S HANDS kneading and massaging his back.

The rubber notices Ned staring at his hands.

RUBBER
I cut my nails every morning. Use hand cream too. Smooth and soft is how our customers like it. And who can blame 'em? Life is hard.

NED
Sorry, what'd you say?

RUBBER
I said, Life is hard.

NED
No, the other thing. About your
hands...

RUBBER
Keep 'em smooth 'n soft. Short
nails. We all do the same here.

Ned continues staring into the mirror at the rubber's
HANDS... We CU on him as he starts to make the connection...

He sits up.

RUBBER (CONT'D)
There's still some time left.

NED
Can I see your hands?

A bit surprised, the rubber holds them out. They look almost
exactly like the torso's hands back in the morgue.

Ned's heart is hammering in his chest.

NED (CONT'D)
You wouldn't happen to have a
colleague...who hasn't shown up for
work the last couple of days?

The rubber ponders long enough that Ned begins to lose hope.

NED (CONT'D)
Forget it.

RUBBER
Bill Guldensuppe. A rubber like
me. Haven't seen him here the last
few days. Probably drunk, knowing
him.

NED
Likes his schnapps, huh? What's he
look like?

The rubber's face closes up.

RUBBER
You a cop or something?

NED
 (thinking fast)
 He stood my sister up on a date.
 Left her high and dry. I just want
 a word with him.

The rubber nods -- sounds like the Guldensuppe he knows.

RUBBER
 I'd be careful. He's a big fuckin'
 Dutchman and he's got a tattoo of
 his ladyfriend on his chest.

We watch Ned absorb this information. He slides off the table, hurriedly pulls on his clothes. He takes a coin out of his pocket and hands it to the rubber.

NED
 You know where this Guldensuppe
 lives?

RUBBER
 Thirty-Third and Ninth, above
 Werner's Drugstore.

EXT. STREET, LOWER EAST SIDE - AFTERNOON

Piles of HORSESHIT thud onto an unpaved street...

WE PULL BACK to find ourselves in a crowded merchant street. On the far side of the horse stands Rosemary, still holding her reporter's notebook. She's using the animal as cover, peering under its head at the entrance to a FABRIC SHOP across the way.

In a little while, SHE SEES Carey and O'Malley emerge from the shop. They pause outside in brief discussion -- and then Carey tears a PIECE OF PAPER across the middle and gives one half to O'Malley. The two men set off in opposite directions.

Uncertain what to do, Rosemary makes a spot decision to follow O'Malley.

EXT. PARK ROW - AFTERNOON

Hearst exits the building in a state of pent-up frustration. He spots Chamberlain entering the building and barks at him:

HEARST

Mr. Chamberlain, I'm going to lunch. *If there's any news, you can call me at Delmonico's.*

A quick nod, and Chamberlain escapes into the building. Hearst steps into the street to flag down a hansom cab -- when suddenly an elegant CARRIAGE sharply turns the corner, passing so close that he has to jump back. He's about to yell at the DRIVER, when HE NOTICES WHO THE PASSENGER IS.

Pulitzer, however, riding in the carriage, has not seen Hearst.

The carriage pulls up in front of the World building. The driver helps Pulitzer down. Pulitzer is about to enter the building when, as if suddenly catching the scent of his rival, he turns and peers myopically across the street in Hearst's general direction. A long, tense moment as the two media titans -- a generation apart -- stand facing each other across the bustling street; until a delivery TRUCK passes between them, blocking their view.

When the truck is past, Hearst finds his nemesis gone. He stands there, staring at the spot where Pulitzer was.

BRISBANE (O.S.)

I'm afraid you're not going to like this.

Hearst glances up: it's Brisbane, holding a newspaper.

BRISBANE (CONT'D)

From my spy at the World, straight off the press.

With a fatalistic look, Brisbane unfolds the paper and hands it to Hearst. Plastered above the fold on the front page is PULITZER'S \$500 REWARD OFFER.

BRISBANE (CONT'D)

It'll be all over the city in half an hour.

Hearst stares hard at the headline. A long moment, and then a small, ferociously competitive smile slowly appears.

HEARST

Is this all he's got?

Lunch forgotten, Hearst turns and marches back into the Tribune building, Brisbane hurrying to keep up.

INT. ELEVATOR - A MINUTE LATER

Hearst bulls his way onto the ALREADY PACKED ELEVATOR, while the more polite Brisbane squeezes himself apologetically into six inches of open corner. The elevator man closes the gate with difficulty; the car begins to groan upward. Everyone else remains still, sweating, cramped -- except Hearst, who's so taken with his new idea of how to best his enemy that he can barely contain himself: he looks a little mad, drumming on the walls with excess energy. The other PASSENGERS stare at him out of the corners of their eyes in awe, distaste, and a kind of fear.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE - AFTERNOON

The heart of Hell's Kitchen: factories, lumberyards, slaughterhouses, immigrant tenements. Today, hotter than hell. Standing on the street in front of one of the tenements is Ned. He may be bathed and clean and no longer smelling of death, but in this heat he's already sweated through his shirt again.

Above him, leaning out of their apartment windows gossiping and hanging laundry over the fire escapes, are several German HOUSEWIVES. But none of them pay Ned any attention; and the door to the building is clearly locked. Ned is stumped -- until, glancing at WERNER'S DRUGSTORE on the ground floor, he has an idea...

EXT. NINTH AVENUE - FIVE MINUTES LATER

Ned is again standing on the street beneath the housewives -- but now HE'S POSING AS A SALESMAN and carrying a brand-new DISPLAY BOX OF FANCY SOAPS.

NED
(calling up)
Good day, ladies!

This time the women look down at Ned, then at each other: there's immediate feminine interest -- in handsome Ned as much as anything he might be selling.

HOUSEWIFE #1
Hello, there.

NED
Ladies, I have the finest European soaps for sale -- Arabian sandalwood, French lavender, Bulgarian rose. Only five cents a bar!

HOUSEWIFE #2
Five cents, is that all?

HOUSEWIFE #3
Come up and show us, then.

NED
(smiles)
It would be my pleasure.

INT. TENEMENT BUILDING - HALF AN HOUR LATER

Sweating even more, Ned climbs the stairs with his eyes glued to the SASHAYING ASS of Housewife #3, who's climbing ahead of him. There are only TWO BARS of soap left in his display box.

They reach the second floor landing. The housewife stops in front of a door with a brass nameplate that reads: "AUGUSTA NACK, LICENSED MIDWIFE".

HOUSEWIFE #3
This is her place.

NED
Thanks.

The housewife steps close to him.

HOUSEWIFE #3
(low)
New York doesn't have *licensed*
midwives. You understand?

Ned nods. To his utter surprise, the housewife grabs his face and PLANTS A KISS on his mouth.

HOUSEWIFE #3 (CONT'D)
You sell a nice little soap.

She hurries off downstairs.

Ned pauses a moment to gather himself. He KNOCKS. A long silence -- and then from within the apartment HE HEARS THE SOUND OF SOMETHING HEAVY BEING PUSHED ACROSS THE FLOOR. Then two locks are unbolted, and the door opens partway.

AUGUSTA NACK, German, late 30s and bluntly sensual, partially blocks the doorway, pinning him with hard, suspicious eyes.

AUGUSTA
What do you want?

Behind her, NED CATCHES A GLIMPSE of ROLLED-UP RUGS and PACKED TRUNKS: the apartment appears to have been readied for a permanent move. All of the trunks are STAMPED with the word "HAMBURG".

NED

Madam, you're in luck -- I have two bars of soap left. All your neighbors bought some. It's the very finest European-milled--

She SLAMS the door in his face.

NED (CONT'D)

...soap.

INT. HELL'S KITCHEN HOTEL - MINUTES LATER

A seedy establishment, to say the least. Ned rushes into the lobby and up to the DESK CLERK.

NED

Where's your pay phone?

DESK CLERK

End of the hall. The hookers got priority.

Ned hurries down the hallway.

EXT. TRIBUNE BUILDING - AFTERNOON

Hearst comes charging out of the building again, a man on a mission. The street is blocked by a TRAFFIC SNARL of carriages and cars. Looking around, he spots a BICYCLE out front.

INT. PULITZER'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Standing at the window of his palatial, twentieth-story office, PULITZER WATCHES with cold, competitive concern as down below THE TINY FORM OF HEARST pedals away on his stolen bicycle.

A TELEPHONE is on a table within Pulitzer's reach. He picks up the mouthpiece.

PULITZER

Get me Seitz.

EXT. MANHATTAN (MOVING) - DAY

Hearst pedals furiously through crowded streets. He rides with the ferocious, nervy speed of a modern-day bike messenger, repeatedly shouting "GET THE HELL OUT OF MY WAY!" at anyone in his proximity, barely missing carriages and the occasional automobile, and sending PEDESTRIANS scurrying for safety.

As Hearst speeds past Madison Park, a WORLD REPORTER on a bicycle spots him, realizes who it is and what must be happening, and takes off in hot pursuit...

At the next busy intersection, Hearst is forced to stop for a passing FIRE TRUCK. The World reporter catches up to him and, with a cheeky smile, tips his hat.

WORLD REPORTER

Mr. Pulitzer sends his thanks for the tip.

Hearst is furious; the instant the fire truck is past, he jump-starts his bike and the two men are off, sprint-racing each other through the crowded, chaotic streets to see who will reach the news scene first. They're neck and neck until...

Hearst spots a MILK WAGON blocking the upcoming intersection, and at the last possible second, at top speed, he leans his shoulder into the other man...

HEARST

Here's a tip for you.

CRASH! The *World* reporter SLAMS HEADFIRST into the wagon, sending BOTTLES of MILK crashing to the street; while Hearst, avoiding the wagon by inches, races onwards wearing a look of fierce satisfaction.

HEARST (CONT'D)

Fucker.

Back at the scene of the accident, BLOOD from the reporter's head pools with spilled milk on the ground.

INT. WERNER'S DRUGSTORE - AFTERNOON

Damp with sweat, Hearst peels BILLS off a roll and into the outstretched hand of the STORE OWNER.

The hand remains outstretched. Hearst peels off a few more bills. The owner hands him SEVERAL KEYS.

EXT. HELL'S KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Various sweating members of the Wrecking Crew pull up on their bicycles in the shadow of a rickety overpass around the corner from Augusta Nack's tenement. Ned spots them and walks over. A truck containing PIGS for the slaughteryard rumbles past; then a wagon heaped high with MANURE.

George Arnold gives Ned an insulting wink.

ARNOLD
Any phone calls, Harvard?

Some of the others CHUCKLE knowingly.

NED
Your mother called. She wanted to know when I'd be free to fuck her again.

No one's chuckling now. A moment of stunned silence -- then Arnold, his face red with fury, LUNGES for Ned, wanting to rip his head off. A few of the Crew grab him and hold him back.

ARNOLD
You cocksucker.

NED
(calmly enjoying himself)
No, that would be your dad, George.

Arnold lunges for him again.

WIGGINS
(low)
George, the Chief's comin'! Get a holda yourself.

Reluctantly, Arnold pulls himself back -- just as Hearst walks up to the group and surveys them man to man with a cold eye (while mopping his sweaty face with a silk handkerchief).

HEARST
I have just leased every available apartment in this building, which for the moment is still home to Mrs. Augusta Nack, landlady and paramour of the late William Guldensappe, whose headless torso now rests in the Bellevue Morgue.
(MORE)

HEARST (CONT'D)

We are short a clear motive for the killing, a strongly muscled accomplice, and the rest of the victim's body. One of you men will guard the entrance to the suspect's building; the rest will take immediate command of every hotel pay-phone booth in the vicinity. We will deny the World's reporters every possible means of access, and stay a step ahead of the police until we decide the time is right for the Journal to reveal the murderer to the public. That's all for now.

Hearst watches as the Wrecking Crew disperses on foot and bicycle. All except Ned, who lingers behind.

NED

Mr. Hearst...

HEARST

And you are?

NED

Ned Brown. I'm the one who called Chamberlain with the tip.

HEARST

And now you want to be recognized for your daring initiative. Is that it?

The question silences Ned.

HEARST (CONT'D)

There's a story out there, Brown. *Unfinished*. If we don't lay claim to it, he will. And that would be unacceptable. Do you understand me?

NED

(frustrated)

Yes, sir.

EXT. NINTH AVENUE - A MINUTE LATER

Sweaty and frustrated, Ned picks his crappy bike off the ground. A COUPLE walk by, conversing in GERMAN. Unable to understand a word they're saying, Ned shakes his head to himself, his frustration only growing.

Then another WAGON rumbles down the avenue -- this one piled high with STEAMER TRUNKS AND FURNITURE. He stares after it.

He's sweating again. Unthinkingly, he reaches into his pocket for his handkerchief... In the pocket he feels something small and hard... pulls it out.

It's a MARBLE -- the kind played with by boys everywhere. Seeing it suddenly reminds Ned... He checks his cheap pocketwatch...

NED

Shit.

Jumping on his bike, he squeaks off as fast as he can go.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - LATE AFTERNOON

Sweating and weary-legged, Rosemary doggedly trails O'Malley along a crowded street somewhere in Brooklyn. SHE WATCHES him turn into a DRY GOODS STORE. She waits at a distance, leaning against a building to take the weight off her sore feet.

After half a minute, O'Malley comes out again. With a look of disgust, he crosses off another name on the half-sheet of paper given him by Carey. Then -- to Rosemary's unhappy surprise -- he turns and walks straight toward her.

O'MALLEY

Ready to quit?

ROSEMARY

You knew I was following you?

O'MALLEY

Do I look like a fuckin' idiot?

Rosemary doesn't answer.

O'MALLEY (CONT'D)

I'm tired of doin' Carey's shitwork. All he does is steal the credit anyway. Likes to call himself the "Murder Man" -- ain't that a kicker?

(beat; steps closer)

You're a bit of a looker though, aren'tcha? Come have a drink with me.

ROSEMARY

No, thank you. I've got work to do.

O'MALLEY

(turning nasty)

Yeah, and you're doin' a right smash job of it, aren'tcha? Wise up, darlin' -- they only hired you because of what's under your clothes.

He tosses the half sheet of paper on the ground, turns and saunters up the street.

Rosemary stands there, trying to keep her chin up. Then, after a few moments, she picks the paper off the ground and looks at it.

On it are the NAMES OF EIGHT DRY GOOD STORES, THE FIRST FIVE OF WHICH HAVE BEEN CROSSED OUT. The Sixth name on the list is "RISER'S DRY GOODS - WOODSIDE, QUEENS".

INT. RIGER'S DRY GOODS - EARLY EVENING

A tiny BELL chimes as Rosemary -- sweatier and more beleaguered -- enters the shop. The PROPRIETOR is finishing wrapping a purchase in brown paper and twine... When the CUSTOMER leaves, Rosemary steps up to the counter and hands him the torn-off piece of red oilcloth that she's carried all over the city.

ROSEMARY

(pessimistic)

I don't suppose you've sold this fabric to anyone lately?

The Proprietor takes the oilcloth and holds it up to the light.

PROPRIETOR

And why would this be any business of yours?

ROSEMARY

My interest is of a personal nature.

The proprietor stares meaningfully at the curve of her breasts under her blouse.

PROPRIETOR

And how personal would that be?

Rosemary looks him coldly in the eye and holds her hand out.

ROSEMARY
I'd like my cloth back, please.

The proprietor's expression turns hard. He hands her the piece of oilcloth back.

EXT. STREET - A MINUTE LATER

Rosemary stands on the sidewalk, tired, hot, and dispirited. Then she happens to glance at a CLOCK on a building across the street -- and realizes that things have just gotten worse.

ROSEMARY
(to herself)
Not again!

She starts RUNNING down the sidewalk toward the EL STATION on the corner.

INT. EL TRAIN (MOVING) - EVNING

Standing in a hot subway car packed with sweating Irish and German IMMIGRANTS, an exhausted Ned rides the elevated train home to Flatbush. It's a long way to another world.

INT. NED'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Carrying a paper sack of groceries, Ned lets himself into a cramped, dingy railroad flat. There's nothing Harvard about this place -- or about Ned in it; he moves and speaks here with a rougher, more authentic edge than the Ned we see across the bridge.

He looks around, dispirited: the place is strewn with clothes and what look to be a boy's things. He continues on into the kitchen. He pulls a loaf of bread, a salami, and a bottle of milk out of the paper sack and puts them on the table with plates and glasses.

He starts slicing the bread. A few moments, then his little brother TOMMY, 12, quiet and watchful (the same boy from Ned's flashback), enters the kitchen and sits at the table. Ned hands him a plate with a slice of bread and a chunk of salami, pours him a glass of milk. Tommy immediately starts wolfing down his food, as if he hasn't eaten all day.

NED
 Don't wolf your food.
 (beat; more gently)
 There's plenty tonight.

Ned sits down with a plate and a bottle of beer. The two brothers eat in silence for a while. Ned occasionally glancing at Tommy, concern in his face.

NED (CONT'D)
 Look, I'm gonna have to go back to work for a while.

Tommy's face is a mask, but his eyes turn accusing.

NED (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry, alright? You'll be okay till I get back.

Tommy glances up at a PHOTOGRAPH on the wall. Then Ned stares at it too: a careworn, pretty woman in her early 40s.

NED (CONT'D)
 I miss her too, Tommy.

INT. RESTAURANT - EVENING

EDWIN LONG, 27, handsome but thin-lipped, sits alone, his pocket watch and a glass of beer on the table before him. He's the only person in the whole place who doesn't appear to be sweating.

Rosemary appears in the restaurant entrance, carrying a book-shaped object wrapped in brown paper. She spots him and hurries over, flushed with heat and out of breath.

ROSEMARY
 Edwin, I'm so sorry.

He stands for her, but his manner is cool.

EDWIN
 You were sorry last time too. And the time before that, as I recall.

ROSEMARY
 Will you forgive me?

EDWIN
 (stiff)
 Of course.

She slides onto the seat across from him, setting her parcel on the table.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
What's in the package?

ROSEMARY
Just a book I'm reading.

EDWIN
You look flushed. Have you been running?

ROSEMARY
It's been sort of a long day.

Edwin picks up a menu.

EDWIN
Writing those articles on cosmetics must be rather draining.

His patronizing remark cuts her to the quick. She says nothing.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
Would you care for a glass of lemonade?

ROSEMARY
Maybe something stronger?

EDWIN
Very well.

Edwin signals a passing WAITER.

EDWIN (CONT'D)
A ginger beer for the lady.

WAITER
Right away, sir.

The waiter heads off. Edwin reaches out and takes Rosemary's hand where it lies on the table.

EDWIN
Rosie, wouldn't you rather just stay home and concentrate on preparing for the wedding? It's only six months off. Of course you're not going to work once we're married. Why not just stop now and be done with it?

Rosemary puts her other hand on the paper-wrapped parcel -- as if just needing to know that it's there.

ROSEMARY

I've promised my sister some rent each week. It's not much, but I'd hate to let her down.

EDWIN

I've offered before--

ROSEMARY

Thank you, Edwin -- but we're not married yet.

Edwin let's her hand go.

INT. PULITZER MANSION - EVENING

The Pulitzer home is a magnificent tomb. Pulitzer and his wife Kate dine at opposite ends of a very long table, waited on by SERVANTS. With his broken eyesight, Pulitzer can't actually see his wife clearly, which is how he prefers it.

For several long moments, they eat in steely, practiced silence, as far from each other as two people can be. Then Kate puts down her silver.

KATE

Lucille's coming-out party is less than two months away.

PULITZER

So the accountants inform me.

KATE

Don't forget, Joseph. You promised ten thousand for the party.

PULITZER

And not a cent more. You seem determined to transfer your penchant for extravagance undiluted to the next generation.

KATE

You've played a role, too.

Pulitzer chews his food carefully.

PULITZER

Lucille is the only child of mine who hasn't disappointed me.

KATE

Then perhaps you are too easily disappointed.

PULITZER

I'm a newspaper man, Kate. It is my curse to see things with ruthless clarity.

From across the table, Kate points her knife fiercely at Pulitzer -- WHO WITH HIS POOR EYES CAN'T SEE THE GESTURE.

PULITZER (CONT'D)

This meat is tough as hide. I can't eat it.

He pushes his plate away.

INT. STEAMER OFFICE, WATERFRONT - EVENING

A CLERK stands behind the counter in the empty office, perusing ADS FOR LADIES UNDERGARMENTS in the Evening Journal.

Ned enters, sweatier even than before. The clerk hastily pushes the newspaper aside.

CLERK

What can I do for you?

NED

The next steamer for Germany -- when is it?

CLERK

Day after tomorrow. Hamburg. Departs seven in the morning.

NED

Do you have an Augusta Nack on the passenger list?

CLERK

Who wants to know?

NED

The Journal.

The clerk's face turns blankly expectant. Seconds pass before Ned realizes he's waiting for a bribe. He pats his pockets.

NED (CONT'D)

I'm a little short at the moment.

CLERK
Ain't we all.

Ned starts digging in his pockets, pulling out... a dirty handkerchief; an extra stub of pencil; some coins, a single, very crumpled bill. He pushes it all across the counter to the clerk.

The clerk pushes the handkerchief and pencil back, stuffs the money in his own pocket.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Hack, you said?

NED
Nack.

Pulling out the passenger list, the Clerk runs his finger down the page...

CLERK
Here she is. Traveling alone,
second class. One way.

NED
Thanks.

CLERK
This about that torso murder?

NED
I don't know what you're talking
about.

CLERK
I hear there's Jews involved.

Ned stares at him.

NED
Is that right?

CLERK
And the World's put out five
hundred dollars reward -- gold --
for anybody can solve the crime.

This catches Ned unpleasantly by surprise.

NED
How much?

CLERK

Five hundred. Now that's real money.

INT. PARK ROW SALOON - NIGHT

A journalist's hangout - MEN, talk, whisky, smoke.

Chain-smoking at the bar, already a bit drunk and talking to the BARTENDER, stands a slender, loquacious MAN, 26, with sallow skin and haunted, beautiful eyes.

SALLOW-SKINNED MAN

I'm telling you, brother, if this was Havana, you'd find half a dozen cold-blooded marauders lurking behind those rubber plants over there, waiting to cut you to pieces with rusted machetes. And one of them would be the president of the country. That's right, El Presidente himself.

The BARTENDER, cleaning a glass, has heard all this before.

BARTENDER

Hate to disappoint you, Mr. President, but this isn't Havana. And those aren't rubber plants -- they're palms.

SALLOW-SKINNED MAN

Poetic license. Listen to me -- have you read Ambrose Bierce's "Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge?"

BARTENDER

Can't say I have.

The sallow-skinned man looks offended. The bartender turns to two other customers (Hearst and Brisbane) just stepping up to the bar.

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

What can I pour for you, Mr. Hearst?

Hearst puts a hand on the sallow-skinned man's shoulder.

HEARST

What are you drinking, Stephen?

SALLOW-SKINNED MAN

W.R.! It's been an age. Whiskey, thank you. Can you believe this cretin hasn't read Ambrose Bierce?

BARTENDER

That's because I'm too busy pouring him drinks.

He pours three shots of whiskey for the three men.

HEARST

Arthur, you know Stephen Crane. He published some brilliant pieces with us before you came over.

BRISBANE

Of course.

Brisbane raises his glass to Crane.

BRISBANE (CONT'D)

I'm a great admirer of The Red Badge of Courage. A profound and courageous book.

CRANE

I thank you humbly, sir.

Crane downs his shot and presents it for a refill, which is swiftly poured.

HEARST

Bierce wrote for me at the Examiner. He said that Crane here was a writer who'd never experienced war, yet had such capacity for feeling, it was as if he was drenched in blood.

(to Crane)

I must say, I envy you. Living every day as though it were your last.

CRANE

Only a man with many enemies can become immortal.

Hearst raises his glass.

HEARST

Then we're both well on our way to living forever!

The men LAUGH and clink glasses; Hearst is in the best spirits we've yet seen him.

INT. PULITZER MANSION - KITCHEN - NIGHT

A LIGHT comes on: Pulitzer, in dressing gown and slippers, enters the large, empty kitchen. The servants and cooks have all gone to bed. He shuffles around, myopically opening cupboards, searching for something to eat.

A beautiful young woman in an evening gown -- his favorite daughter LUCILLE, 18 -- enters the kitchen.

LUCILLE

Forgot to eat dinner again, Daddy?

Pulitzer turns around in surprise; then his face warms with an affection that we've never seen in him.

PULITZER

Oh, it's you, Lucille.

LUCILLE

You look positively lost. Let me make you something.

Pulitzer steps aside passively. He watches patiently as Lucille gets bread from the breadbox and preserves from the pantry, and fixes him a piece of bread with jam. She even cuts off the crusts.

LUCILLE (CONT'D)

Here. This shouldn't bother your stomach too much.

Pulitzer takes the plate from her with fatherly gratitude. In her presence, he seems almost docile. He takes a bite.

PULITZER

It's good.

Lucille yawns and stretches.

LUCILLE

Goodnight, Daddy.

He kisses her tenderly on the forehead.

PULITZER

Goodnight, my dear.

Lucille leaves. And as Pulitzer stands by himself at the counter, in his dressing gown, finishing his bread and jam...

WE HEAR, from somewhere else in the city, the VOICE OF STEPHEN CRANE drunkenly but brilliantly reciting Rudyard Kipling's poem "If":

CRANE (O.S.)

If you can dream -- and not make
dreams your master;/ If you can
think -- and not make thoughts your
aim,/ If you can meet with Triumph
and Disaster/ And treat those two
impostors just the same...

EXT. NEW YORK YACHT CLUB - NIGHT

Hearst's 112-FOOT STEAM-POWERED YACHT "VAMOOSE" is tied up at a private pier, its lanterns aglow. WE TRACK SLOWLY FORWARD FROM THE SHIP'S STERN...

CRANE (O.S.)

If you can bear to hear the truth
you've spoken/ Twisted by knaves to
make a trap for fools,

...TO THE COCKPIT -- where Crane, one hand gripping a whiskey bottle, continues his recitation to a bored, bemused audience of MILLY AND ANITA...

CRANE (CONT'D)

Or watch the things you gave your
life to, broken,/ And stoop and
build'em up with worn-out tools;

...AND PAST THE THREE OF THEM, slowly forward over the long expanse of beautiful ship...

CRANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If you can make one heap of all
your winnings/ And risk it on one
turn of pitch-and-toss,/ And lose,
and start again at your
beginnings,/ And never breathe a
word about your loss:/ If you can
force your heart and nerve and
sinew/ To serve your turn long
after they are gone/ And so hold on
when there is nothing in you/
Except the Will which says to them:
"Hold on!"

...TO THE BOW -- where Hearst stands by himself with his back to his guests (and to us), separate from everyone, looking out over the dark river...

CRANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 If you can talk with crowds and
 keep your virtue,/ Or walk with
 Kings -- nor lose the common
 touch,/ If neither foes nor loving
 friends can hurt you,/ If all men
 count with you, but none too much:

And now WE BEGIN TO SLOWLY CIRCLE AROUND HEARST...

CRANE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 If you can fill the unforgiving
 minute/ With sixty seconds' worth
 of distance run,/ Yours is the
 Earth and everything that's in it,/
 And -- which is more -- you'll be a
 Man, my son!

...Until, just as Crane finishes his recitation with a moving flourish, WE FINALLY SEE HEARST'S FACE: the rapt, almost painful intensity of his listening, and the TEARS of private yearning and recognition that have flooded his eyes.

EXT. STREET, BROOKLYN HEIGHTS -- NIGHT

A well-to-do, tree-lined street of rather grand brownstones, lit by gas lamps.

So tired she's practically limping, Rosemary approaches one of the handsome houses. In her hand is the BOOK-SHAPED PARCEL wrapped in brown paper that Edwin remarked on in the restaurant. She climbs the stoop, lets herself in with a key.

INT. BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Her room in her sister's house is simple: bed, chest of drawers, mirror, desk.

She stands in front of the mirror in her nightgown, brushing her hair. Her eyes are beginning to close from exhaustion.

Before slipping into bed, she notices the small, almost flat parcel, still wrapped in brown paper, sitting on her desk. Unwrapping it, she frees her REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK from its disguise. This is what she was hiding from Edwin. She flips to her last page of notes and reads a few lines to herself. Then she gets into bed and turns out the light.

A few moments pass before, in the darkness like a guilty afterthought...

She gets out of bed and kneels down to say her prayers.

INT. PULITZER MANSION - DAYBREAK

A SERVANT, footsteps echoing through the sleeping house, walks down a long hallway carrying a silver tray on which the MORNING JOURNAL lies folded... He climbs a set of stairs, walks down another long hallway, KNOCKS once on a door, and enters...

INT. PULITZER'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pulitzer, gaunt and severe in a dressing gown, sits in a wingback chair.

He takes the newspaper.

SERVANT
Breakfast, sir?

But Pulitzer is staring in rageful fascination at the front page.

PULITZER
Get me Seitz on the phone.

SERVANT
Yes, sir.

The servant leaves. Calm and lethal, Pulitzer continues to stare at the newspaper. Hearst has outfoxed him!

EXT. LOWER MANHATTAN (MOVING) -- DAYBREAK

Hearst walks slowly through the streets of the wakening city. Rather than savoring his first-round victory over Pulitzer, he looks a bit sad, emotionally depleted. And he hasn't slept in God knows how long. His head is down as he walks. And yet...

All around him WORKERS AND BUSINESSMEN are on their way to work; and milk wagons are making deliveries; and, just ahead, a NEWS TRUCK is pulling onto a paved square, where A PACK OF NEWSBOYS (Jack and Jimmy among them) is waiting.

And now Hearst raises his head, and SEES:

BUNDLES OF NEWSPAPERS -- *his* paper -- tossed from the truck and immediately leapt upon by the newsboys like a pack of starving animals.

The newsboys cut the bundles with pocketknives and stuff their satchels full of the folded, freshly printed copies and race off in all directions.

IT'S JACK THAT HEARST WATCHES: the kid takes his full satchel, plants himself confidently on the corner of the square NOT TEN FEET FROM HEARST, and begins hawking his wares at full volume to anyone who will listen:

JACK

Extra! Extra! Read all about it in the Morning Journal! Thousand dollar gold reward for anybody who can solve the murder of the century! That's a thousand dollars gold!

And HEARST WATCHES, rapt, as Jack is quickly overrun with CUSTOMERS, each man snapping up a copy of the Journal for two cents and moving on, instantly replaced by others, a sea of men hungry for the tabloid news that Hearst is feeding them.

In no time, Jack's satchel is empty. He's pleased with his haul. Now he sees Hearst watching him.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sorry, mister, I'm all out.

Hearst stares at the boy. His chest filling; standing his full, imposing height: By God, he's William Randolph Hearst again!

And as he stands there, for the moment triumphant, WE BEGIN TO HEAR THE WHINE OF INSECTS AND THE CHIRPING OF BIRDS...

EXT. OGDEN'S WOODS - MORNING

And now we are deep in a protected, quiet stretch of green forest.

WE HOLD ON THIS EMPTY SCENE, not sure where we are exactly or what we're supposed to be seeing, but feeling increasingly with each passing second an ominous, creepy tension, as if we're about to discover something terrible. And now we move to take in...

A FATHER and his TWO YOUNG SONS taking a stroll through a green meadow. All appears lush and unsullied -- it's Eden, before the Fall.

Laughing, the older boy punches his brother on the arm and TAKES OFF RUNNING...

His brother chases after him...

FATHER

Boys, don't wander too far!

Running headlong, the lead brother enters the edge of a STAND OF WOODS -- protected, quiet, green striped with shadow and sunlight...

As he runs deeper into the woods, WE SUDDENLY REALIZE THAT WE'VE SEEN THIS PLACE BEFORE (in the opening shot)...

And now, abruptly, the boy STOPS. HE SEES SOMETHING SIZABLE AND RED on the ground ahead, half-hidden by tree roots and weeds. It frightens him, but sparks his curiosity, too. Slowly, he starts approaching the thing in the weeds, getting closer, closer, closer...

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF SHOW