

Montreal, 1967

It takes Archie Murdoch nearly the entire summer to work up the courage to finally ask out his future wife.

The two are among a handful of teenagers hired in April to hand out free buttons at the *1967 International and Universal Exposition*, or ‘Expo 67’ for short. It’s now mid-August, and Archie never wants to see another button again in his life.

To Archie’s chagrin, Margo has barely talked to him all summer. She’s barely even noticed him — not even now, as he admires her through a swarm of wide-eyed tourists. Archie and Margo work under a massive, nine-story inverted pyramid that appears to float magically in the air. It’s closing time. He loves this time of day, when the sun dribbles through Margo’s honey-coloured hair, luminous as a halo.

As they drop-off their trays of buttons at an information kiosk by the Canada Pavilion exit, Archie finally makes his move. His words come out hoarse, but audible: “Hey, um, do you want to go for a ride on the minirail with me? They’re letting Expo staff ride after-hours.”

Margo looks up and smiles politely. “No thanks, Archie.”

She slips into the crowd.

At least she noticed me, he thinks. She knows my name.

Archie’s an optimist: he views himself as a hopeful romantic, not a hopeless one. Just because it was love at first sight for him, doesn’t mean it has to be love at first sight for her, too. Archie can appreciate this. Margo needs to fall in love with him at her own pace and feel happy

doing so. He's a feminist, after all — a word he picked up at a party. He can't quite recall what it means exactly, but he's pretty sure it has something to do with listening and not calling a girl fat.

As he walks to the metro, he daydreams about running his fingers through Margo's curls. They're soft and cool to the touch in his mind's eye. It will be only a matter of time before he's running his hands through her hair for real. Archie smiles. Her curls are a tangle of question marks he's sure he will solve — one by one.

Why is Archie so confident he'll marry Margo? He doesn't know. All he knows is she's 'the one,' and that's enough for him. I'm a simple guy, he thinks. When I see a perfect woman, I marry her, and we live happily ever after.

Archie saunters past the People Tree: a five-storey sphere. It's a stunning collage of hundreds — maybe thousands of red, orange, and gold panels and nylon "leaves" that shimmer when tickled by sunbeams, as they are right now. He passes the Christian Pavilion, that he visited on a cigarette break, where he discovered a marble sculpture of Jesus lying limp and freshly crucified in Mary's arms. The sculpture was supposedly by Michelangelo and normally resides in St. Peter's Basilica. Archie's proud of his city. He's grateful to have a summer job at the expo — even if it's handing out free buttons. Montreal built two islands in the middle of the river for the world fair — mostly by carving out a state-of-the-art metro system and dumping the soil near the river bank. The world has come flocking. Archie heard a rumour that Montreal mayor Jean Drapeau even convinced French president Charles de Gaulle to deconstruct the Eiffel tower in Paris and rebuild it at Expo 67. It hadn't worked out in the end — de Gaulle's own cabinet accused him of becoming senile — but Archie's still impressed.

The only thing he has to look forward to tonight is the latest episode of *I Dream of Jeannie*, and he's pretty sure he won't get home in time to catch that. His mom warned him that morning that she wasn't preparing supper tonight; she was invited to a dinner party and she planned to be at her beauty salon all afternoon. Archie and his little brother, Dick, were on their own. Margo didn't want to ride on the minirail with him, so...

Archie decides to take the long way home. He may as well soak in the restless purr of Montreal at night.

He moves upstream through the thinning crowd, a lone figure brushing shoulders and side-stepping strollers that rattle on pebbled pavement. The tourists are returning to their air-conditioned hotels that sprouted up like mushrooms in preparation for the world fair, transforming Montreal's downtown skyline. Archie looks for shade and wipes his brow. He shoves his hands in his pockets and cuts through plumes of laughter and smoke. Families clump together for one last photo under the United Nations pavilion and its row of world flags; children cling to the scent of fried dough; lovers canoodle wherever there's space. Archie had read in *Hit Parader* magazine that San Francisco is being called 'the Summer of Love,' but he doubts San Francisco can beat the scene in Montreal. We're French, he thinks. We basically invented the French Kiss. Next to the USSR Pavilion he spots a cute Asian girl in a Montreal Canadiens crop-top French kissing a black man, his muscles spilling out of his Black Power t-shirt. Take that, San Francisco! To Archie, Montreal looks like two chapped lips slightly parted on a map. It's hard to beat that.

His shoes tread softly on the cement path and the glow of the pavilions begins to dim. Soon he's swaddled in shadows and the soothing sound of the river whispering to him through the trees. At the edge of the island, the silhouette of the Jacques Cartier Bridge looms large — an iron spine stretching toward the mainland.

At the foot of the bridge, there's a cluster of makeshift vendors. An old couple stands near a clothesline of t-shirts and baseball caps with the words EXPO 67 emblazoned on them. But the font's strange, the sleeves are too short, and the hats look poorly made. To their left is a woman stirring tin pots on a portable gas grill. She notices Archie observing her.

“T'veux-tu essayer, mon cher?”

Archie peeks inside the largest pot, but all he sees is a bubbling brown sauce.

“What is it?”

“Poutine. C't'écoeurant en crise.”

She picks up a stained tea towel from a crate beside the stove and unwraps it. Inside, nestled like little treasures, are plump cheese curds. She holds them out with pride, beckoning for him to take one.

“Merci,” he says. The cheese squeaks in his mouth as he bites down. It tastes mildly salty.

The woman smiles. She has kind eyes, Archie thinks.

“C't'bon? Ça vient avec des frites,” she says.

“Oui, c'est bon,” Archie answers in a clumsy Anglophone accent. “Merci beaucoup, madame.” He switches to English. “It's delicious, but I'm not really hungry. Have a good night, okay?” He wishes he spoke better French.

The woman nods and turns her attention back to her bubbling pots.

The last seller near the bridge is a reedy teenager about Archie's age, with his palms resting on a table piled high with rusted metal boxes. A sheet of paper taped to the front of the table, in barely legible red crayon, reads: *FEELING LUCKY? \$10 TO FIND OUT.*

"Ten dollars for a rusty box?" Archie says, "Pretty rich, man." Ten dollars is more than he makes for a full day handing out buttons under the sadistic August sun. He can think of better things he can spend his hard-earned dough on, like a classy date with the lovely but hard-to-get Margo.

"My friend," the teen says, "I bring you a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to hold history in your hands. Can you imagine it? These boxes were rescued from a shipwreck in the Mediterranean Sea — the very powerful and legendary Mediterranean Sea." The teen's wispy moustache trembles above his upper lip as he talks. "Ten dollars is your ticket to virtually guaranteed fame and fortune." He wiggles his fingers in the air for dramatic effect as he stretches out the words *fame* and *fortune*. "These boxes and their astonishing secrets have been sealed shut for hundreds of years — except for the two I busted open with a rock an hour ago. I'm talking buried treasure! Do I make myself clear?"

"What were in the two boxes you opened?" Archie says.

"One box was filled with animal teeth and feathers. The other had a bundle of withered flowers tied in a purple silk bow. I would open the rest of these boxes, but—" his eyes dart around nervously "—I'm in a bit of a hurry, you dig? Gotta split before the fuzz rolls by."

Archie's amused, but not sold. He glances at the boxes stacked haphazardly on the table. They appear to be made of bronze; mottled blueish-green and dark like weathered stone.

“You can touch, my friend. Don’t be shy.”

Archie reaches for a box. It’s rough to the touch and surprisingly heavy. Crusts of salt and shell cling to the corners. He tries to lift the lid, but it’s tightly sealed. He gives the box a shake. Something inside rattles.

“Seven dollars and it’s yours.”

“Two,” Archie says.

“Okay, but I don’t have a bag for you.”

Archie kneels to retrieve a two-dollar bill he stashed in his sock this morning.

He’s three-quarters of the way over the bridge when he loses patience with the box. His forearms are cramping up from trying to pry it open using brute strength — all he’s done so far is detach a shell and a bit of crust from the bronze lid. Archie’s standing on the pedestrian walkway hugging Jacques Cartier Bridge. Two cars honk angrily at each other as they speed by. The sun is so low, it looks like it’s about to rear-end Mount Royal.

Archie stops walking and lets his eyes climb up the bridge’s hulking green steel framework. He feels like he’s inside the ribcage of a dragon’s rotted corpse. He feels tiny, insignificant, and strangely hungry.

“Are you an ancient pizza slice?” he says to whatever’s hiding in the box. “A vacuum sealed cupcake?”

He tips the box from side to side, listening. The box rattles. Or does it jangle? Archie isn't quite sure what the difference is between the two words, but he knows he's fed up with lugging this corroded, idiotic impulse buy. He places the box on the ground and kicks it with his shoe.

An Expo 67 branded hockey stick lies abandoned in the walkway beside a few empty chocolate wrappers. Unlike the buttons, hockey sticks cost money to buy in the Canada Pavilion gift shop. Archie knows he'd make a good souvenir salesman — he's quite persuasive when he puts his mind to it — but the gift shop is for more senior staff. Besides, he thinks, Margo doesn't work in the gift shop.

He pads over to the stick, picks it up like it might be useful, and turns back to the box, re-energised.

He narrates as he stickhandles. "Here comes Murdoch up the ice. He has Beliveau on his left and Richard on his right. Tim Horton tries to poke the puck away, but Murdoch is too fast; he embarrasses Horton with a quick deke." Archie clumsily shuffles the box back and forth on the ground. He winds up his stick. "There's no one left standing between Murdoch and the net except the goalie. He shoots — he scores! The hometown Forum crowd goes wild! Rookie Archie Murdoch has scored the Stanley Cup winning goal against the defending champion Toronto Maple Leafs. Rahhh! Rahhh!" He imitates the roar of the crowd. "Rahhh!"

Archie takes a slapshot. The box barely budes on the ground.

"Damn it." He raises the stick above his head and brings it down on the corroded bronze box. Miraculously, a sliver snaps off. Archie drops the stick and bends down to inspect the box. There's a small, jagged hole in the lid. The opening is greenish-yellow and brittle, like old bark.

He opens the box, and a pouch tumbles into his hand — rich purple velvet, embroidered with gold thread. Archie loosens the pouch until something slips out. In the cradle of his hand rests a piece of jewellery, delicately shaped like a rhinoceros. It's littered with a patchwork of emeralds, rubies, and diamonds. Archie shivers, causing the rhino to sparkle under the harsh bridge lights.

Okay, this is groovy. Archie curls his fingers around the piece, then slowly peels them back. The rhinoceros is still there, its golden face carved with a smug little grin. No — this really goes beyond groovy. It feels heavy one second, almost weightless the next, then heavy again before finally settling into a normal weight.

He flips it over. The jewellery's a pin of some sort, festooned with gems and perfectly preserved. He traces the curve of the largest gem — a green stone protruding from the rhinoceros's belly — and the delicate pearls threaded beneath. Could this really be from a shipwreck?

A scream rips through the night. Archie snaps his head up and sees three figures clinging to a narrow steel beam, about twenty feet above the walkway, framed by the trusses like saints in the ribs of an exposed cathedral. He squints, brings his hand to his forehead, and makes out three women in miniskirts. One of them has their arms out, like she might take flight. Another is laughing. The third is shouting at Archie, but her words are swallowed by the wind.

The woman with her arms out grabs the other two and jumps. They kick their legs violently, holding each other like a string of paper doll silhouettes — delicate yet unbroken and screaming as they plunge. The three women clear the bridge and disappear from view. He doesn't hear a splash, but he knows the river has them.

A scarf flutters down from the steel trusses and settles peacefully at Archie's feet, light as a final breath. Its yellow-and-orange silk paisley is spattered with wet blood.

His heart's pounding in his chest. He sprints to the walkway railing and gapes down at the river. He waits — for bodies to pop up, for the women to swim towards shore — for signs of life. But all he can see is the frantic water, braided with waves, turning an ashen white.

Hurried footsteps grow louder behind him.

“Oh Jesus,” comes a low voice. “Oh, sweet mother of Mary.”

Archie spins around. There's a man's panting, a little boy perched on his shoulders. The kid screams.

“Knock it off!” the man barks at the boy, who stops screaming on a dime. To Archie, he says: “Did you see what happened?”

“They jumped,” Archie mutters.

The kid screams a second time, even higher pitched.

“Damn it, Bobby! Knock it off!” He roughly shakes the boy on his shoulders. “Go to your mother.” He lowers his son to the ground, and the kid scampers over to his mom a few feet away, who already has two distressed older children clinging to her. The mom bends down to welcome her child.

“Sorry about that,” the dad says to Archie.

“Sure,” Archie mumbles. He doesn't care about the kid. He focuses his attention back on the St. Lawrence River where a wave is lingering in the water below, sloshing around like a tongue licking its lips after enjoying a satisfying meal. He looks back at the walkway, where a crowd is slowly forming. He feels like he could vomit. “Why the hell was she laughing?” he asks the dad.

“What are you talking about, laughing??”

A siren wails nearby, its cry echoing through the steel bones of the bridge. Bright red light washes over the scene like spilled paint, catching in the rivets and shadows. Soon a cruiser pulls up along the curb. The officer inside mutes the siren but keeps the red light spinning. He steps out of the car, adjusts his cap, and marches straight to a maintenance catwalk linking the bridge road and walkway.

Gossip ripples through the crowd. The police officer approaches the section of railing where Archie’s leaning. The officer is clean shaven and middle age — solidly in his thirties. His uniform is short-sleeved and pale blue beneath the badge on his chest. A tie strains under his collar. His peaked cap sits stiff on his head, and a leather belt at his hips holds the weight of his revolver, handcuffs, and wooden baton. The officer doffs his cap and smiles at the family beside Archie.

“Bonsoir, madame et monsieur. Vous parlez français ou anglais?”

“Sorry, we only speak English,” the dad says. “We’re from Vermont.”

“I speak English, it’s okay. Tell me what happened.”

“We didn’t see anything. All we heard were screams.”

On cue, the boy lets out a high pitch scream.

“Damn it, Lorraine, can’t you control your son!?”

The boy giggles and the older children clamp his mouth with their hands.

“This guy saw the whole thing,” the dad says, gesturing at Archie. “He says he was laughing about it.”

“What were you laughing about?” the officer asks.

“I wasn’t laughing, *they* were laughing. And then they jumped.”

“More than one person?”

“Three people. All women, I think.”

The crowd squeezes around them like a snake. Archie feels short of breath.

“Can I go?” Archie says. “They jumped into the river. Right here. That’s all I know. You should send a boat to search for them or something.”

The officer studies Archie, his eyes sweeping up and down.

“I’ll call for a search boat in a moment. What’s that in your hand, son?”

Archie shows him. The cop whistles.

“Pretty fancy. Seems like something a lady might wear on her evening stroll, don’t you think?”

Gossip in the crowd swells into a buzz.

“I bought it. It’s mine. Honest.”

The cop’s smile hardens. “I think you should come with me, son.”

“Am I under arrest?”

“Would you like to be?” The cop plants his cap on his head. Then, to the crowd, he booms,
“Clear a path, please!”

The mass of bodies shuffles. The cop advances towards Archie.

“I think I should hold that for you for safe keeping — until we reach the station.”

Archie’s shoulders slump. He sticks out his hand. He lets go of his buried treasure.

The cop drops the brooch into his breast pocket.

“Walk,” he says, nodding toward the cruiser and its spinning light.

They move toward the maintenance catwalk linking the walkway and the road. A woman in the blob of bodies shouts, “A scarf! Officer!” Others begin to parrot her: “A scarf. A scarf. A scarf.” “Officer. Officer. Officer.”

The blob parts, revealing the scarf that fluttered down from the steel trusses. The cop draws his baton, twirls it once, and gestures Archie toward the scarf.

The scarf looks like a tiny, bloodied body under the lights. A breeze nudges it, and it twitches. Archie shudders. The cop pulls a crumpled paper bag from his pocket, shakes out a few crumbs, and stuffs the scarf inside.

“Alright folks,” he says, “the show’s over. Get home safe. *Rentrez chez vous. Merci.*”

He leads Archie to the catwalk and opens the gate with a key. Archie steps inside. The floor is a lattice of metal. Beneath his shoes, the river hurries by, restless and dark. A damp gust rises — thick with a fishy stench. The gate creaks shut behind him. The two are utterly alone, suspended in a narrow stretch of steel more than a hundred feet above the rushing water.

“Wait a second,” the cop says.

Archie hears a bag crumpling and feels the cop’s hands tugging on the back of his jeans, turning him around.

“Here, take this.” The cop hands him the bloodied paisley scarf. Archie waits for further instructions. Almost playfully, the cop says, “Give it back.” He stuffs the silk scarf back into the paper bag.

“Thanks for your fingerprints, sonny boy. You got no idea the favour you just did me.”

Archie’s watched enough movies to spot a crooked cop. He scans his surroundings to see if any bystanders have noticed what’s happening but realizes the gates on either end of the catwalk block out any view. He’s in a steel cage, suspended in air.

The cop fishes the brooch from his breast pocket and pins it to his chest — like a medal. A smile slithers across his face.

“Looks like I won’t be sleeping on the couch tonight.”

“Give it back!”

The cop shrugs, as if to say, *Give what back?* He unclips the handcuffs on his belt.

Archie’s hands curl into fists. Instead of the lovely Margo draped on his arm, it’s handcuffs. This isn’t how tonight was supposed to go.

The cop jerks his chin toward the police car — its light still spinning like a kaleidoscope, spraying the beams of the bridge blood red. He rattles the handcuffs.

“Turn around. You’re wearing these, whether you like it or not. Why don’t we think of it as a jewellery swap?” He snickers, adds: “No funny business, sonny boy.”

Archie nods, obedient. His shoulders slump. He turns around, hands loose and lifeless.

Then — he spins and yanks the brooch from the officer’s shirt. The clasp snaps with a soft, metallic ping, and comes free. Two pearls break off, tumbling to the floor, immediately plunging straight through the slitted metal grate.

He rams his elbow into the cop’s gut.

The cop doubles over. “Câlisse, tabarnak!”

Archie runs.

He could lose him if he darts through oncoming traffic. He hears the cop groaning as he reaches the gate.

He shoves it. Locked. Shit.

The cop rises to his feet. Archie whips his head left, then right — eyes wild. He’s caged. Trapped. He looks up. An emergency staircase hangs overhead, folded in the air.

He jumps. Misses. Jumps again — grasping the edge. He hangs on tight as the stairwell yawns open — narrow, vertical, like a skeleton’s throat.

Archie shoves the brooch into his pants pocket and clammers up the stairs — steep as a ladder, hauling himself rung by rung, the cop’s boots hammering below. As he rises, the trusses narrow and squeeze around him. The roar of cars below dissolves into the pounding in his head. A ferocious gust slams into him, and he stumbles — barely regaining his footing. One slip and he’s

done — nothing but air, concrete, and a spiderweb of steel below. And if, by some miracle, he misses all that, the river takes him.

He climbs higher, with no plan of escape. Higher. Higher. One cold, clammy rung at a time. Downtown unfurls to the west, scattered office windows glowing like cryptic constellations. Below, the cop curses and shouts — his boots clanging against the metal. Gingerly, Archie wipes the sweat stinging his eyes with his wrist.

He reaches a narrow catwalk circling the stairs. It's half-shielded by a crossbeam and placed a bit far from the stairs. He jumps onto the slitted steel floor and nervously grabs hold of the railing with both hands. There's no more electrical lighting this far up. Through the floor, cars look like Chiclets and people like ants. The river has him surrounded on all sides, murky grey and indifferent. He crouches. Dizzy. Trembling.

The wind moans through the steelwork. It sounds hungry, almost human.

Then the world seems to stop moving for an instant. He allows himself to be still, too. Maybe the cop will give up and leave.

But the sound of boots on metal grows louder. He peers down. Rung by rung, the cop climbs into view.

“I didn't do anything!” he shouts down.

“That's not my problem!”

The cop continues to climb.

Archie huddles against the steel lattice railing, the brooch digging uncomfortably into his thigh. He pulls it out. The rhinoceros looks at him, a permanent smirk chiselled into its golden face.

“What are you looking at?” Archie says. He flips it over, then back again, and runs his finger over the spot where the clasp snapped off. “You’ve gotten me in a heap of trouble.”

The cop unleashes a stream of French curses as he climbs closer.

Maybe he’ll slip, Archie thinks. Or give up. He stares at the rhinoceros and rubs it halfheartedly for luck, wishing it held a genie.

Lights in the bridge brighten in intensity — blinding Archie.

“Câlisse, tabarnak!” yells the cop.

Archie keeps rubbing the stone. He hears a sharp clang.

“Crisse, j’vais tomber!”

The bridge begins to twist around them. Steel groans, deep and animal. Archie watches as the crossbeams above his head bend grotesquely. A pressure blooms between his temples — clawing, insistent. The wind howls. Lights pulse again, too bright now. Too white.

For a moment, Archie isn’t sure where he is — whether the bridge is above or below. The rhinoceros grins up at him. Was its smile always that wide?

He closes his eyes. Rubs the stone harder. Hears the cop slip, cry out, fade.

His eyes snap open. He sees a massive wave licking the bridge, slurping up cars and people.

Archie staggers to his feet, lurches forward, tipping over the railing.

Everything goes dark... until the bridge comes gently into focus.

He's standing on the walkway, a purple velvet pouch in his hand. He seems unhurt — other than a slight ringing in his ears. Hands shaking, he loosens the pouch and the brooch tumbles out. The broken clasp is fixed. He rolls it over: the lost pearls are back, too. The rhino stares up at him with its mischievous grin.

Reeling, Archie looks around. The sun seems brighter. The cop's gone — and the cruiser. The crowd has vanished. Only a smattering of pedestrians drift by, oblivious.

And then he sees them.

Three women, arm in arm, strolling just ahead. One is wearing a yellow-and-orange paisley scarf knotted at her neck, laughing.

He takes off after them.

The women sway as they walk, unsteady, as if tipsy. They talk over each other, giggling. As he closes the distance, words begin to reach him.

“...It's not logical how hot he is.”

Giggles.

“Oh my God, Brenda, you've got the hots for an alien.”

More giggles. Their British accents are thick.

“I've got dibs on Kirk. Mmm.”

“We need to get their attention somehow.”

Archie catches up to them just as the one with the scarf asks, “Like, what if we jumped — do you think they’d beam us about their ship?”

“Don’t do it!” he blurts.

His shout slams into them like a bowling ball, and the women scatter like pins.

The woman with the scarf drifts towards Archie, smudging the air with hints of vanilla, bergamot, and incense. She smells, he thinks, like his aunt. But she looks mid-twenties. Her eyes are wide and glassy, pupils dilated and dull.

“Look at that,” she slurs, “it’s Captain Kirk. Hi, Captain Kirk.”

She stops just inches from his face. Her breath reeks of cotton candy and beer. Archie flushes.

“We dropped acid,” says another, by way of explanation. More giggling.

“Actually, um, I saw Bill Shatner at Expo last week. He was working at the Bell Telephone Pavilion. He’s a Montrealer.” Archie pauses. “Like me.”

“Dance with me,” she says, draping her arms around his shoulders. “Captain Kirk.”

They sway under the bright lights of the bridge. For a second, he forgets the madness of the night. Her eyes settle on his slackened palm.

“Holy shit, that’s fucking fab,” she says. “Can I wear it?” She looks lovingly at the brooch.

“That’s fucking fab!” parrots a familiar high-pitch voice.

A family is approaching them, a little boy perched on his father’s shoulders.

“Goddamn it, Bobby. Knock it off.”

Archie’s hand closes protectively around the brooch, the cold horn grazing his thumb. He remembers everything, even though most of it he wants to forget.

“Excuse me,” he mumbles, slipping out of her arms. “I need to find Margo.”

He sprints across the remainder of the bridge, chasing his shadow into the city.