

B A T M A N

"Razing Hellbane"

(OUTLINE)

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ACT ONE

1. EXT. FIVE THOUSAND FEET ABOVE THE EARTH'S SURFACE -- NIGHT
A layer of clouds stretches all the way to the horizon like an endless sea of cotton. The moon is a ghostly galleon, tossed upon cloudy seas. The BATMAN MUSIC THEME plays, dark and foreboding, as the credits appear and vanish. After the final words fade from the screen, a monstrous creature leaps out of the clouds at us with a deafening roar. It is a Boeing 747 and it screams right over our heads and out of sight. SMASHCUT TO:

2. INT. AIRCRAFT. Perfectly quiet. The roar of the engines is replaced by the soothing strains of gentle music in the first class cabin. The passengers are asleep and it's dark, save for a single reading light which illuminates a lone figure sitting next to a window.

A FLIGHT ATTENDANT bends down with a tray and says "Coffee, Mr. Wayne?" BRUCE smiles and says "No, thank you." He goes back to reading his newspaper. CLOSE ON the front page where we see the headline "AN ERA COMES TO AN END IN GOTHAM CITY". Under it is a picture of a beautiful old Victorian mansion with a subheading - HELLBANE MANOR TO FALL TO WRECKING BALL.

The stewardess remarks on the article. "Isn't it a shame, tearing down such a beautiful old place?" Bruce replies "Well, at least they're turning it into a children's park." She asks, "Do you really think it's haunted?"

Another light comes on and a voice calls to her from across the aisle. A DISTINGUISHED LOOKING GENTLEMAN, well dressed, in his fifties, asks how much longer until they arrive in Gotham City. She tells him they'll be landing in about twenty minutes. Refilling his cup, she asks, "Is this your first trip to Gotham?" He tells her no, he used to live there.

The man picks up his newspaper and looks at the same article Bruce was reading. At the bottom of the page is a picture of a BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WOMAN in a wedding dress. CLOSE ON the picture for two seconds, then BACK TO him. He crumples the paper and leans his forehead against clenched fists. CUT TO:

Bruce. He's also looking at the woman's picture. The caption under it reads "CORRINNE HELLBANE -- DISAPPEARED AT SEA. WHAT HAPPENED?" As he reads the article, Bruce's eyes start to get heavy and he drifts off to sleep. RIPPLE DISSOLVE TO:

3. A DREAM. A huge ocean liner moves through a thick bank of fog. A YOUNG COUPLE is standing next to the railing, toasting one another with champagne. One of them is CORRINNE HELLBANE, the woman we just saw in the picture. She is still in her wedding dress. The other person is AXEL MARCH, her handsome new husband. As the fog envelops them, our view is momentarily obscured. When the fog dissipates, Axel is alone on deck. He looks around for Corrinne and notices her bridal veil lying at his feet. He peers over the railing but there's only dark water. Corrinne is nowhere to be found and the fog once again rolls across the screen.

ON THE WAVES BELOW. A hand suddenly thrusts up out of the water. Corrinne AS A GHOST emerges from the waves and flies directly INTO CAMERA. Her wedding gown billows in the wind and her mouth is open as if calling out to us.

4. BACK IN CABIN. Bruce sits up awake. He takes a deep breath and glances down at the picture. Corrinne was twenty-three years old with long blond hair. When he turns his head towards the window, Bruce's face goes white. A WOMAN is staring in at him from outside the plane. She has long blond hair and is about twenty-three years old. She calls out to him, "*Mr. Wayne, I need you...*". She reaches out for him and suddenly a hand comes INTO FRAME behind him. It taps him on the shoulder and he turns to see the flight attendant. It's the same face we just saw in the window. She says, "*Mr. Wayne, I need you to bring your seat up. We're getting ready to land.*" He looks back in the window and sees it was just her reflection in the glass. He rubs his eyes and nods his head "Ok". "Everything alright?" she asks. "You look like you just saw a ghost." CUT TO:

5. EXT. GOTHAM INT'L AIRPORT -- NIGHT.

The sound of screeching tires is heard as the huge plane touches down onto the runway. The engines roar as the plane slows to a safe speed and begins to taxi towards the terminal.

6. INT. PASSENGER TERMINAL.

PEOPLE are deplaning and we see ALFRED standing off to one side, waiting for Bruce. A WOMAN, fifty-ish, dressed in expensive clothes is anxiously awaiting the arrival of her son home from college. She is accompanied by a MAN dressed in a chauffeur's uniform. The man we saw earlier, who was sitting on the other side of the aisle from Bruce, exits the plane and comes walking down the breezeway. When he sees the woman, he stops dead in his tracks. His face registers shock. The woman lets out a small scream and goes straight for him. He stands there, petrified, as she points her finger and then rushes past him to embrace her SON. He looks back with surprise, then breathes a sigh of relief.

A man steps up to him and takes his bag for him. "Is that her?" he whispers. The distinguished man replies "Yes. She didn't recognize me. Thirty years is a long time." He smiles and they leave.

Meanwhile, the woman is making quite a fuss over the boy and Bruce tries to get around them. The woman looks up and says "Bruce! Bruce Wayne." Bruce looks at her and says "Mrs. Tilford. So nice to see you."

Agatha Tilford is one of Gotham's leading socialites. Once very beautiful, the age lines are beginning to show in her face. She introduces him to her son, Lionel, who's home from the university for the holidays. As they walk through the airport Bruce tells her he was sorry to hear about her husband passing away. "Yes," she says, "Henry was a good man." She smiles at her son "But we're carrying on his good works." Bruce remarks that he

was just reading about her donation of Hellbane Manor to the city for use as a park.

"Oh yes," she exclaims "and you simply must join us for the wrecking party tomorrow night!" It's for a worthy cause. She tells him all the proceeds will be going to help Gotham's underprivileged. Many of the fashionable, chic set in Gotham high society have agreed to wear hard hats for one night and to pay for the right to destroy the grand old mansion. Bruce thanks her for the invitation and says he'll have to check his schedule.

7. EXT. AIRPORT PASSENGER PICK UP.

They get into their respective limousines and drive off.

8. INT. BRUCE'S LIMO. It's spacious and elegant, with A TV, VCR, phone, wet bar, etc.; positively sybaritic. Alfred asks Bruce if he had a good business trip. Bruce says five days away has left him exhausted; he can't wait to sleep in his own bed again.

As they drive through the downtown area, they pass a large cathedral, Bruce notices SEVERAL WOMEN out front dressed in bridesmaids gowns and SOME MEN in tuxedos. As they move past the church, Bruce gets a glimpse into the alley next to it. A MAN AND WOMAN are being accosted by some HOODLUMS. Bruce tells Alfred to stop the car. He pushes a button on the back of the seat and a panel slides open, revealing a hidden compartment. We can see the batman cowl folded neatly inside. He says, "I've missed this."
CUT TO:

9. INT. ALLEY -- NIGHT.

There is a metal grate in the asphalt from which steam rises up in a thick white plume; probably a vent to the nearby church basement. The two punks, dressed in leather and carrying chains, pipes, etc. are standing over a man who is hunched on the ground, holding his stomach. The woman has her arms around him. One of the punks is rifling through the man's wallet and says, "Ten bucks? You're gonna have to do a lot better than that." She pleads "We told you, that's all the money we have." The punk reaches over and grabs her purse. She says "No!" as he yanks on it. "Let me have it!" he shouts as he lifts his hand to strike her.

Suddenly a dark glove grips tightly around his wrist. The thug turns and comes face to face with a terrifying sight. Peering out from within the plume of smoke, is the outline of some dark creature from hell. Its eyes burn through the fog like pinpoints of lights. The shape of the cowl conjures up the image of a demon. "Who... who are you?" stutters the punk as he tries to back away. Batman steps into the light, bringing his face right up to the man's nose. "I'm Batman," he whispers.

The other thug tries to charge him but Batman levels him with a karate kick. The second man swings but Batman deflects the blow with a forearm block. He throws the thug with a judo flip against the brick wall, watching him slide to the ground.

He turns to the young couple to see if they're alright when, suddenly, there is the sound of a pipe organ striking an eerie chord. It's like something we would hear out of Phantom of the Opera or the Abominable Doctor Phibes. Batman turns to look and his eyes grow wide in shock. Fifteen feet above him, hovering in mid-air, is a YOUNG WOMAN, blond, about twenty-three, wearing a bridal gown. She is floating at the top of the plume of steam and her dress billows in the wind. Batman's jaw opens wide as he stares in astonishment.

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT TWO.

10. EXT. ALLEY. The ghostly figure slowly turns her head and looks down at Batman. Her face registers surprise and she shouts "Look out!" He turns to see one of the thugs about to brain him with a lead pipe. He jumps out of the way and dispatches the punk with a haymaker, sending him sprawling to the ground. The thug lands on top of the grate and his body blocks the steam from coming out. As the mist dissipates, we see that the woman in the wedding gown is standing on a balcony, looking down. A MAN in a tuxedo comes out and says, "Everything alright? We're about to start the rehearsal, honey." She looks over at the young couple on the ground and says "Yes. I came out here to find John and Priscilla. Are you two alright?" The man stands up, motioning to Batman, and says "Yeah, thanks to him." CUT TO:

11. INT. LIMO. Batman slams the door shut and says "Drive." Alfred puts the car in gear and pulls away from the curb. He glances at Bruce in the rear view mirror and notices that he looks visibly shaken. "Everything alright?" he asks. Bruce picks up the newspaper article and looks at the picture of Corrinne Hellbane again. The likeness is uncanny. He asks, "Alfred, what do you know about the legend of Hellbane Manor?" DISSOLVE TO:

12. INT. WAYNE MANOR -- PRIVATE STUDY & LIBRARY -- NIGHT. Bruce is in his bathrobe, standing, reading from a large book while Alfred stokes the fire. It's not unlike Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, discussing a case. The book Bruce is holding is entitled "Unsolved Mysteries". He reads aloud that Corrinne Hellbane's disappearance has never been explained. She was the daughter of Maxwell Hellbane, a rich shipping magnate, who died and left her a fortune when she was only twenty-one. She married Axel March two years later and, on their ill-fated honeymoon to Europe, she disappeared from their cruise ship during a storm. Some thought she may have fallen and drowned. Others accused her husband of throwing her overboard so that he could inherit her vast fortune. Devastated by Corrinne's death, Axel March sold the house and moved away to start a new life elsewhere.

Bruce shuts the book and wonders aloud why this woman has been so much in his thoughts lately. Alfred suggests it's probably because he read the newspaper article about Hellbane Manor being torn down. "It's fresh in your mind, that's all" he

says. "No matter, it'll be gone by this time tomorrow." Bruce opens the book and looks at the picture of Hellbane manor again. DISSOLVE TO:

13. MATCHING SHOT. EXT. HELLBANE MANOR -- MIDNIGHT. The batmobile drives up in front of the massive gate and stops. The motor cuts and Batman sits there looking in at the dilapidated old structure from across the immense front yard which stretches a good sixty yards. The place is boarded up and silent, save for old shutters banging in the wind and the occasional creak of loose timbers. The scene is lit by moonlight, and the house looks like a vestige from the Victorian days of nineteenth century England. The trees are overgrown and take on dark, menacing shapes as they are silhouetted against the night.

Batman shakes his head and sighs. There's nothing to this. He turns the key and starts to turn the car around. Behind him, we see a light flicker in one of the second story windows.

14. INT. BATMOBILE. He starts to drive away. He glances at the rear view mirror just in time to see the light flicker again. A surprised look sweeps over his face. He stops the car and gets out. He climbs over the fence and darts across the lawn towards the house. We see him hopping over gravestones as we CUT TO:

15. INT. HELLBANE MANOR -- SECOND FLOOR. Close on a pair of hands holding a flashlight and a crowbar. The beam of light moves

slowly across a barren floor, illuminating a room that has been untouched for almost a decade. The dust is thick and cobwebs hang everywhere. The moonlight through the window illuminates the room so that we can see the intruder's face. He's the distinguished looking man we saw on the plane in the opening scene.

16. INT. HELLBANE MANOR -- DOWNSTAIRS. P.O.V. FROM ACROSS THE ROOM. The front door opens slowly with a "Crreeeeek" sound and we see Batman's silhouette standing in the doorway. From across the room, he looks like a demon entering a haunted house. There are several pieces of furniture covered with cheesecloth and painter's tarp. Batman steps quietly into the foyer and looks around. He begins to move towards the stairs when suddenly there is a loud "Rwayerrrr" sound and he turns to see two luminescent eyes peering at him from a foot away. He leaps backward in surprise and knocks over a chair. The BLACK CAT, which was sitting on top of an old sofa, runs off into the darkness.

UPSTAIRS. At the sound, the man turns immediately with a panicked expression on his face. He clutches the crowbar and turns off the flashlight.

ON BATMAN. He is coming up the stairs slowly. CLOSE ON HIS FEET to show that the stairs are rickety and full of dry rot. Bits of it crumble under his feet as he climbs.

ON THE LANDING AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. We see the man hiding behind the corner in the shadows. He is holding the crowbar high, waiting for Batman to come around the corner.

Batman steps on the last stair and a piece of the bannister breaks off in his hand. He stands there silently for a moment and we see in his eyes that he senses something. He steps forward, holding the piece of the bannister over his head. The crowbar comes smashing down but is blocked by the piece of wood. Follows an intense fight sequence as the two men battle fiercely at the top of the stairs, while the man tries to bludgeon Batman with the crowbar. Under the weight of the struggle, part of the floor finally gives way and the two come crashing down through the stairs. Batman's foot gets wedged between some broken floor boards and he struggles to yank it free. In the meantime, realizing his advantage, the man picks up the crowbar and lifts it high. With an angry cry, he starts to bring it down on Batman's head with all his might. Batman looks up, wide-eyed, as his leg is pinned and he can't move out of the way. He holds his hand up in front of his face, anticipating the blow.

END OF ACT TWO.

ACT THREE

16. The crowbar starts down when there is suddenly a shrill cry behind the man. He turns to see a shapeless, white, ghostly figure hovering over him. He recoils in surprise and Batman seizes the moment to quickly smack him in the jaw while he's distracted. The man flies backward to the ground, losing his grip on the crowbar. Batman grabs the crowbar and the man looks around frantically for a moment. He gives a cry of frustration and then runs out the door into the night. Batman struggles to get his

foot free but it's stuck. We hear the shrill cry again and Batman looks up at the ghost. He sees it's just a piece of cheese cloth that the cat got tangled up in. The cat is up on a ledge and finally manages to wriggle free. The cloth falls harmlessly to the floor. Batman sighs, shaking his head, then uses the crowbar to break away the boards and free himself. He stands up and looks closely at the crowbar. A look of understanding suddenly sweeps across his face. ON CROWBAR, we DISSOLVE TO:

21. INT. HELLBANE MANOR -- NEXT DAY -- LATE AFTERNOON.

MATCHING SHOT. PULL BACK from crowbar to reveal it's being held in the hand of a man who is selling it to a customer. He stands behind a large table full of picks, sledgehammers, crowbars, hard hats, goggles, etc.. There's a lot of commotion as people purchase their wrecking tools.

22. EXT. HELLBANE MANOR.

A CROWD of Gotham's very chic rich set are continuing to arrive for the wrecking party. We see luxurious limos and fancy sportcars driving up. CUT TO:

23. BACK INSIDE HELLBANE MANOR. People are writing checks and Agatha Tilford is officiating. She thanks everyone for coming and tells them to pick their "weapons"; all they have to do is sign a contribution pledge for the playground fund and then go at it. We see several SOCIALITE TYPES saying things to each other like,

"Isn't this fun? I've always wanted to see how the silent majority lived." "Wearing overalls is such a blast and isn't this hard hat wild?!" etc. etc.

Agatha goes on to warn them that this is supposed to be fun but they insist on certain precautions so no one will get hurt. Everyone has to wear protective goggles if they smash any glass and they must confine their activities to the bottom floor. That's because the upper level is in severe disrepair and won't support much weight.

As she talks, we see the distinguished looking gentleman comes through the front door, accompanied by two large men. They try to remain unnoticed as they quickly sneak up the stairs and out of sight.

BACK ON AGATHA, she finishes her talk and abruptly a woman shouts "It's time to break the ice!" She smashes a mirror and all hell breaks loose as people start destroying the place.

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS. The lead man turns to the other two and says, "Alright, you know what to do." They answer, "Don't worry. We won't let anybody through." The man takes a crowbar and a pickaxe and disappears down the hall. No sooner is he gone than one of the two men turns to see a dark, caped figure standing there. "Whaaa?" he cries in surprise. The men try to fight Batman but he sends them sprawling. They take off running down the hall.

They burst through double doors into the room where the other man is and we see that he's been knocking a big hole in the plaster. The man shouts at them, "I hired you to keep people out.

That includes you!" They try to hold the doors shut as they frantically tell him that Batman is outside. The doors suddenly and violently fly open, knocking them backwards and out cold. Batman comes in like gangbusters.

Batman says, "Axel March, I presume." The man reacts with surprise. Batman continues, "It's over for you." Axel shouts back, "No, it's over for you!" He throws the pickaxe and Batman ducks out of the way. The pick sticks into the wall. Axel attacks and they are wrestling about the room. As they fight, Batman tells him that he's taking him in for the murder of Corrinne Hellbane. If she had died at sea, there would have been no reason for Axel to come back here, unless it was to remove, before the wreckers found it, the evidence that would prove Axel was guilty. On those words, he smacks Axel to the ground and we can see into the hole that Axel made in the wall. Inside, we see the remains of a wedding dress, deteriorated over many years.

Axel admits in rage that he did do it and he got all the money, but Batman will never live to tell anyone. He picks up the crowbar and leaps at Batman.

DOWNSTAIRS. The wrecking melee is in full swing when suddenly Batman's foot breaks through the ceiling. Agatha screams "Look out!" as the chandelier crashes to the floor. She tells everyone to stay there and she runs upstairs to see what's going on.

She arrives upstairs just in time to see Batman throwing Axel March off of him. She screams "What are you doing?! Who are

you?" Batman says, "Meet Axel March, Agatha. I know it's been a long time for you two." She is stunned. She says, "Axel...I-I didn't recognize you." Batman tells her that they've both changed a lot in 30 years. But March wasn't alone in his plot to do away with Corrinne Hellbane. Axel says, "How could you know that?" Batman tells him that someone had to pose as his newlywed bride to be seen boarding the honeymoon ship. They were disguised in a bridal veil, and that person was Agatha Tilford. Agatha gasps. Batman tells her that she most likely booked separate passage back so she could return alone to Gotham after Corrinne's 'accident' at sea.

Agatha starts crying and admits that she was deeply in love with Axel. She never dreamed he would abandon her only a few months later. Axel shouts, "Did you really think I would marry a fool like you?" He tells her she shouldn't be upset though. She did well for herself by marrying the wealthy man that he sold Hellbane to -- Henry Tilford. Then in exasperation he asks, "But why in heaven's name did you arrange to have this 'tomb' destroyed in a wrecking party. Didn't she realize the evidence would be uncovered?!" Agatha replies, "You never trusted me, Axel. You forget -- you never told me where you'd buried her. So who is the fool now?" DISSOLVE TO:

23. EXT. HELLBANE MANOR -- DAYS LATER -- EVENING

A wrecking ball is leveling the last of Hellbane manor. Batman watches from a hill as the sun sets and the moon comes out from

behind the clouds. The wind starts to blow and he takes a final look at the newspaper article with Corrinne Hellbane's picture on it. "Was it you or did I just dream it all?", he whispers to the photo. "In any case, you're avenged at last." A strong gust of wind comes up and blows the newspaper out of his hand. It spirals high up into the sky and disappears into the clouds. As he looks up at them, the clouds slowly form into a shape that looks unmistakably like a woman in a long flowing gown. MUSIC SWELLS.

THE END