

Flying Circus

by
Kris Krainock

1 UNDER BLACK 1

Sounds of the ocean can be heard: waves crashing, birds squawking.

2 EXT. BEACH -- DAY 2

A YOUNG ABEL BLOCK walks out onto the beach, stumbling with unmeasured, childish steps. His face is not visible. Abel bends down and fiddles in the sand for a moment. He is alone on the beach.

We see the ocean, then a few more parts of the beach as if Abel is surveying the landscape. We see a deserted boardwalk; abandoned carnival rides. Despite the sound of the waves crashing, an eerie silence remains.

We see Abel, his face now visible, peering out at the water. The sound of a far-off rumble can be heard. The rumble belongs to airplane engines. The rumble fades into the sound of a rowdy audience cheering.

3 INT. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 3

Two boxers are in the ring. The arena is clouded in smoke, photographer's flashes are going off, the roar of the crowd is paramount. One boxer takes a punch to the face, knocking him back into the corner. The crowd erupts with cheers.

An ADULT ABEL BLOCK, thin, impish and hollowed out by depression and insomnia looks on, standing ringside, taking notes in a small, black note pad.

We see the crowd's reaction to the violence in the ring. The more brutal the action becomes, the more uncontrollable the crowd seems to get. We see Abel's reaction to the crowd's behavior. He's almost frightened by their aggression.

The fight in the ring continues, becoming bloody now. BOXER ONE is dominating BOXER TWO, who appears helpless under Boxer One's barrage of jabs and blows. Finally Boxer One delivers the knockout punch. Boxer Two falls lifelessly to the ring floor. We see Abel peering from under the bottom rope at Boxer Two's body.

The bell sounds, and Boxer One raises his arms in victory. The sound of the bell and the cheers echo into the next scene before resuming in complete silence.

4 INT. HALLWAY -- NIGHT

4

Through a long, starkly white hallway only lit by dim, hanging light bulbs we see Abel peering from around a corner at a group of people, including a RING DOCTOR examining Boxer Two. We see the Ring Doctor shake his head as if to say Boxer Two has died. They cover Boxer Two with a sheet and disperse.

Abel now comes out from behind the corner, cautiously looking around. His note pad still held tightly in a white-knuckled fist. He walks toward the slain boxer. Once he arrives at the boxer he examines the body and peels back the sheet. We see Abel's shocked and horrified face for a moment before seeing that the face now under the sheet is his own.

5 INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

5

Adult Abel sits up in bed, covered in sweat, taking deep breaths. He exhales noisily, enough to wake his girlfriend, IRENA, who sits up beside him and clings to his arm. Irena is a young woman of great beauty, naturally ravishing with deep features and transfixing eyes. She speaks with a German accent. Abel is still panting for breath.

IRENA

Abel, are you alright? Another one of your nightmares?

Abel doesn't answer her for a moment.

IRENA

What's wrong, baby?

Abel turns to Irena to answer her, but sees on the other side of the room sitting at his writing desk a hideous CREATURE. The light from a desk lamp slightly illuminates the Creature and the typewriter on the desk. The Creature is smoking a cigarette, which is resting between his two claw-like fingers. The smoke coiling up through the light and into the darkness. It speaks with a deep, thick, stagnant voice.

CREATURE

(sarcastically)

Yeah, what's wrong, baby?

6 INT. OFFICE -- DAY

6

We see Abel awake at his desk, sitting in a slouched, upright position. His eyes open quickly and he appears to be startled from the content of his dreams.

Abel finally notices his surroundings. He is in his office at the news and pop-culture newspaper he writes film reviews for. His office consists of multiple desks in a small, congested room with other workers for the newspaper. The other workers or journalists are typing quickly; the smoke from their cigarettes clouding the entire room, visible traces of the smoke are in the sunlight coming through the window. The sounds of the typewriters are harsh and loud, as are the grumbling voices of the other writers. A fellow CO-WORKER approaches Abel.

CO-WORKER

Abel!

Abel, still groggy from his nap, doesn't answer the Co-worker at first, but seems lost in thought.

CO-WORKER

Abel!

Abel snaps out of his trance and gestures to the Co-worker.

ABEL

Yes?

CO-WORKER

Boss wants to see you in his office.

ABEL

Why?

We see the Co-worker looking down at Abel blankly, sweat visible on his face suggesting the room is boiling hot.

We see the door that leads into the BOSS's office. A moment passes before the door opens and two uniformed NAZI OFFICERS emerge. They walk past Abel and glance at him disparagingly.

Abel enters the office. A radio on the Boss's desk is playing softly. Abel makes a sour face at the sound of the music. He winces.

The Boss, an older man, distinguished, handsome, but with a weatherbeaten face is looking toward the window with his back turned to Abel. He turns and begins to speak to Abel in a German accent.

BOSS

Block, come in.

ABEL

Who were those men?

BOSS

What men?

ABEL

The officers.

The Boss pauses for a moment and makes a face as if he is thinking of whom Abel could be talking about.

ABEL

The two officers that just left your office.

BOSS

Oh, right...them... Well, that's what I wanted to talk to you about.

There's a pause. Abel and the Boss look at each other. The Boss walks over to the radio and switches it off. A wave of relief comes over Abel's face. The Boss takes a seat, resting his arms on the desk, which is scattered with news clippings.

BOSS

Things haven't been going well for the paper recently. In order for a paper to be successful, it must operate like any other business. It must pull in more than it puts out. Due to certain restrictions given to us from the powers that be, we've had to cut corners.

ABEL

What kind of restrictions?

The Boss looks up at Abel with only his eyes. There is an uncomfortable pause.

BOSS

You're familiar with the Max Schmeling fight coming up next month?

ABEL

I'm aware of it.

BOSS

I need you to cover it. I want at least a three-page exposé. Leading up to the fight, the fight, and a good closer, something clever... pithy.

ABEL

Me? Why? I'm a film critic.

BOSS

The simple answer is that there's no one else I can ask. You're the son of the famous American boxer, you've got to know something about the sport... As it stands now, you're the most qualified man.

ABEL

What happened to the usual guy? Why can't he do it?

There is a pause. The Boss's eyes look past Abel. Abel turns around in his chair and looks out the office door. The Officers from before are rummaging through some papers on a desk.

Abel turns around and makes a face mixed between understanding and discomfort.

BOSS

I don't understand something, Block. Why the hell did you ever leave America?

7 EXT. BEACH -- DAY

7

We see young Abel peering out at the ocean, a continuation of the first time we see young Abel at the beach. The rumble of plane engines can be heard, along with the sounds of the ocean. We hear Abel's MOTHER calling out to him.

MOTHER (O.C.)

Abel, time to go.

We see Abel turn and look at her. His mother is a beautiful woman. She holds the back of her hat to keep it from blowing off in the wind.

MOTHER

Come on. Before your father gets home.

8 INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

8

Young Abel is splashing around in the bathtub. His Mother is on her knees beside the tub giving him a bath.

They are laughing and giggling. The sound of a door opening and closing is heard, followed by footsteps. Both Abel and his Mother quiet down and listen.

MOTHER

(to Abel)

It's your father. You stay here.
I'll be right back.

Abel's Mother climbs to her feet and exits. Abel goes right back to splashing and playing. He begins making airplane noises, and snarls his face as if he were a death-defying pilot of the First World War.

Abel's bathroom transforms into thousands of feet in the air. Abel appears to be flying his bathtub through the clouds. It is pristine beauty at first, but then an enemy plane can be seen flying overhead, just missing Abel and his tub by inches.

Abel ducks his head and winces at the blaring noise of the plane's engines. Abel raises his head and peers out in front of him. A full scale dogfight is shown a few hundred yards away. Planes are flying every which way, bullets are whizzing past Abel's head. After a moment of disorientation Abel regains his composure and begins flying after the plane that barreled over him moments before. He squeezes the imaginary trigger and bullets, like small pieces of light, blast out of the plane's guns. The enemy plane maneuvers through the gunfire.

The dogfight continues. Other planes are plummeting to the ground around Abel. We see Abel in the tub firing after the enemy plane once more.

The enemy plane is shown circling around, coming toward Abel, about to make a pass. The enemy plane fires. The bullets tear into the side of Abel's tub, ripping giant holes, allowing the water to pour out, simulating the leaking of gasoline from a damaged aircraft. Abel begins to plummet, the sound of a diving airplane drones.

We see Abel returned to his bathroom. He is splashing around violently, still deep in his fantasy. A loud male's shouting, muffled through the wall snaps Abel back to reality. He stops moving and looks toward the wall, listening.

We see the wall and hear the muffled voices arguing. The female voice belongs to Abel's Mother and the male voice belongs to Abel's father LUCAS BLOCK.

LUCAS BLOCK (O.C.)

What did the doctors say?

9

INT. HOME -- DAY

9

We see Abel's Mother and Lucas sitting at the table in the kitchen. Lucas appears to be bruised from the previous night's fight.

MOTHER

The doctor said he had never seen anything like it. Whatever it is, it must be very rare.

LUCAS BLOCK

Great! Rare! That's just another word for expensive!

MOTHER

Well, what do you want me to do? The doctor said Abel is going to have to live an alternate life if there is to be any happiness. What others find joy in, he only finds discomfort and pain.

LUCAS BLOCK

Well, we'll just have to cut it out of his life completely. I don't see any other solution. I can already see the doctor bills piling up!

There is a pause. Abel's mother speaks quietly, rhetorically:

MOTHER

How do you *cut out* something like that?

10

INT. BATHROOM -- DAY

10

We see Abel in the tub still listening to the conversation. We see the wall and hear the conversation continue, muffled.

LUCAS BLOCK (O.C.)

Aren't you going to ask about me? I won last night, goddamn it! Still undefeated.

MOTHER

So, is that where you've been all night? Out celebrating?

A loud crash is heard, as though Lucas has sprung up in anger and knocked over the table. A few more indistinguishable shouts are heard before a thunderous clap, indicating Lucas striking Abel's Mother.

11 EXT. SIDEWALK -- NIGHT

11

We see Adult Abel walking along the sidewalk on his way home from work. The street is littered with Nazi propaganda and decorative flags displaying swastikas. There are other people walking along the sidewalk passing Abel, and a small cluster of Nazi troops standing in a circle at the end of the block.

12 INT. APARTMENT STAIRCASE -- NIGHT

12

Abel begins climbing up the stairs that lead to his second floor apartment. He climbs them unenthusiastically, slouching and grumbling to himself.

At the top of the stairs is the landlady for the apartment building, MRS. SCHUPTNIK. She is an older woman, hefty, large-breasted and militant in demeanor. As Abel ascends up the stairs she begins to shout at him in SUBTITLED German. Her yelling is rapid-fire and jarring in Abel's ear as he passes her, trying to open his apartment door at the top of the stairs.

MRS. SCHUPTNIK

(in German)

Mr. Block! Mr. Block! How many times do I have to tell you, rent is due on the first of every month! It's the third and still no rent! How do you expect that pretty woman of yours to stay with you if you can't even pay rent on time?

ABEL

(in German)

Mrs. Schuptnik, I know, I apologize, it completely slipped my mind.

MRS. SCHUPTNIK

(in German)

You've got your head in the clouds, Mr. Block! Your profession is what's doing it to you, sitting at the picture show all day! What kind of work is that?

ABEL

(in German)

I don't know, Mrs. Schuptnik. I like to think it's honest.

MRS. SCHUPTNIK

(in German)

Smoke and mirrors, Mr. Block. Smoke and mirrors. You should concern yourself less with the imaginary and more with what's real!

ABEL

(in German)

And what's that, Mrs. Schuptnik?

MRS. SCHUPTNIK

(in German)

Rent!

ABEL

I'll have it to you first thing in the morning. Good night, Mrs. Schuptnik.

Abel opens the door and slips inside, closing it behind him.

MRS. SCHUPTNIK

(in German)

Fool!

13

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

13

Abel enters his apartment. Irena is in bed reading a book. She puts the book down, resting it on her chest and looks at Abel. An old fashioned record player is visible on the bedside table. The record has played through and the needle is now making a popping sound against the shellac, which makes a loud, scratchy sound.

IRENA

Another run-in with Mrs. Schuptnik?

ABEL

That woman hates me. It's because I'm American. I know it.

Abel moves across the room and stands at the window, parting the curtains, looking out at one of the Nazi flags hanging on the building across the street.

ABEL

(to himself)

I must be the only one left in Germany.

IRENA

So, tell me about your day. How was it?

Abel continues to look out of the window and notices an older man walking along the sidewalk below. Nazi officers approach him, they speak for a moment and then instruct the old man to walk in the gutter. The old man compliantly does so.

Abel closes the curtain and directs his attention to Irena.

ABEL

Awful. I've been asked--

Irena leans over and places the record player's needle on the record starting the music. Abel looks down at her with an unpleasant face.

ABEL

Turn that off, will you?

Irena scoffs and takes the needle off the record.

IRENA

You never let me listen to my records.

ABEL

Come on. You know what they do to me. I feel like pulling all my hair out.

IRENA

What happened to you to make you hate music so much? You've never told me. I've never met anyone that didn't enjoy music.

ABEL

I don't know. It's been this way for as long as I can remember.

Abel sits down on the bed beside Irena.

ABEL

It's gotten better as I've gotten older. It was really a problem when I was a boy. I must have gone to every doctor in New York. None of them could figure out what was wrong.

14 INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM -- DAY 14

Young Abel is sitting beside his Mother in the doctor's waiting room. A moment passes in silence before a NURSE opens the door.

NURSE
(reading from clipboard)
Abel Block.

15 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY 15

We see an obese DOCTOR with a pipe in his mouth examining Young Abel. His stethoscope is pressed against Abel's bare chest, and his head is slightly turned to the side as if he is listening intently. Sweat is visibly pouring down from the Doctor's hairline, indicating the room is very hot. The Doctor turns to Abel's mother with a look of puzzlement and speaks with a slightly Southern drawl.

DOCTOR
And you say it comes and goes?

MOTHER
Yes, Doctor... It seems to be at random. Over as quickly as it began.

The Doctor turns back to Abel.

DOCTOR
Alright, you can put your shirt back on, son.

16 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE -- DAY 16

Young Abel is sitting on the end of the table in the Doctor's office, kicking his feet in boredom as some time has passed waiting for the Doctor to return. Abel's mother is slouched in a chair next to the door, slightly dosing off.

After a moment of silence the Doctor comes into the room and takes a seat. He takes a few puffs on his pipe.

DOCTOR
If you'll pardon my French, Mrs. Block... I can't find a damn thing wrong with your son.

MOTHER
Nothing, Doctor?

DOCTOR

He appears to be a normal, healthy young man. These spells he's having leave about as much trace as a Haint.

Abel's Mother leans in with a confused look on her face as if to inquire about the definition of Haint.

DOCTOR

(chuckling)

Oh, I'm sorry, Ma'am. A Ghost. Sometimes I let my Southern roots get the best of me.

MOTHER

Well, what are we supposed to do about Abel? About the headaches?

DOCTOR

Well, these spells come and go. They're here one minute and gone the next. My guess is they'll eventually stop altogether. I wish there was more I could do for you Ma'am, but I guess we'll just have to file this one away under unsolved.

MOTHER

(disappointed)

Come on, Honey.

Abel hops off the table and walks toward the door. The Doctor begins to whistle. At the sound of the Doctor's whistle Abel stops in his tracks and winces before beginning to walk again. The Doctor notices this and spins around to face Abel and his Mother.

DOCTOR

(to Abel)

Wait a minute. Did you just get the sick feeling?

Abel doesn't respond for a moment.

MOTHER

(to Abel)

Well, answer the man.

YOUNG ABEL

Yes, but it went away now.

DOCTOR

Let me ask you something. You have a favorite song your mother plays on the phonograph?

Young Abel thinks for a moment.

YOUNG ABEL

No.

DOCTOR

Do you play in the school band?

MOTHER

No, he doesn't. What are you getting at Doctor?

The Doctor smirks and looks up toward Abel's Mother.

DOCTOR

Come with me.

17 INT. OFFICE HALLWAY -- DAY

17

We see a piano under an old, dusty piano cover. The Doctor pulls the cover off and the dust spirals around before disappearing. The Doctor stands before the piano and begins to play a cute, childish piece. He looks toward Abel while doing this. We see Abel cover his ears and nods that the music is causing him discomfort.

The Doctor stops playing.

DOCTOR

How about this?

The Doctor begins to play again, only this time it is a beautiful, classical piece. The music is soft and delicate. We see Abel still in complete discomfort as the music plays on.

18 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

18

We see Abel and Irena on the bed. Irena is curled up next to Abel listening to his story.

ABEL

My mother loved to sing while she painted, but even that gave me headaches, a feeling of nausea in the pit of my stomach.

IRENA

Did they ever figure out what it was?

ABEL

No. The best they were able to describe it was as an allergy. How some people are allergic to flowers or cats... I was allergic to music.

IRENA

That doesn't seem fair. No one should be deprived what is free for everyone else.

ABEL

I often see what joy music brings to people and I envy it. I suppose I'm just deficient in that area.

We see Abel get up from the bed and walk over to his typewriter. There is a blank piece of paper in the typewriter. Abel bends down and rests his fingers on the keys.

ABEL

(to himself)

How am I going to write this article?

Abel then types: **Abel Block and I have fun together.** We see the typewriter's hammer punching the words onto the page.

IRENA

So, finish telling me about your day. I think you left off at, "it was awful."

Abel turns around and looks toward Irena.

ABEL

It was.

IRENA

Why so awful?

ABEL

I've been asked to cover the Max Schmeling boxing event next month.

IRENA

You covering the boxing match? Why? You're a film critic.

ABEL

That's exactly what I said.
Something about my father being who
he was. He was a great champion
once and I guess that qualifies me.

IRENA

Oh, Abel, I hate boxing. So
violent. Brutal. You're a man who
appreciates the arts. Poetry. The
cinema.

ABEL

I know. I have no idea what I'm
going to do. I haven't thought
about boxing or my father in over
twenty years.

IRENA

Why didn't you ever tell me your
father was a boxer?

ABEL

I guess, because...it wasn't
important. He saw a great beauty in
the sport that I never did. Yes, he
was a boxer. A good one, too. Sixty-
eight fights. Sixty-five wins.
Fifty one knockouts. I have those
numbers ingrained in my head as if
they were my own.

IRENA

Please tell me more about him. I'd
like to know.

ABEL

Well, I don't really know much
about him, other than he was a
fighter. I knew him more as that
than anything else.

19

INT. BOXING RING -- NIGHT

19

We see a young, in-shape Lucas Block dressed in boxing gear standing straight forward with his arms by his sides. The lights of the boxing arena are shining off his sweaty body. His face is one of exhaustion. His black mouthpiece is visible as are two tattoos, one on each forearm. The tattoo on the left forearm is one of a black panther. The tattoo on the right forearm is one of a skull.

ABEL (V.O.)
 He had these tattoos on his arms.
 On his left arm, a black panther...

We see Lucas's black panther tattoo as he jabs with his left hand.

ABEL (V.O.)
 ...because He said the left snuck
 up on you. And on the right, a
 skull...

We see Lucas's skull tattoo as he jabs with his right hand.

ABEL (V.O.)
 ...because the right killed you.

20 INT. BOXING RING -- NIGHT 20

We see Lucas Block squaring off against another fighter, FITZSIMMONS, pummeling him with punches, eventually knocking him to the ground.

We see a SUBTITLE: **Block VS Fitzsimmons, New York 1916**

21 INT. BOXING RING -- NIGHT 21

We see Lucas Block delivering the knockout punch to an African American fighter JOHNSON.

We see a SUBTITLE: **Block VS Johnson, New York 1917**

22 INT. BOXING RING -- NIGHT 22

We see Lucas Block smashing the nose of a fighter FINNEGAN.

We see a SUBTITLE: **Block VS Finnegan, New York 1918**

23 INT. HOME -- NIGHT 23

We see Lucas Block strike Young Abel, who falls to the floor in a similar fashion of a boxer falling to the canvas.

24 INT. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 24

We see an old, smoky boxing arena. There is a boxing match occurring in the ring. We see the crowd members cheering it on. The smoke from everyone's pipes is spiraling up toward the lights.

The flashes from photographs being taken can be seen. We see the reporters ringside, all dressed in fine suits. We then see one fan in particular, a YOUNG BOY in the front row, his face elated with joy. In his hand he's holding a miniature American flag and he waves it as he cheers.

25 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

25

We see Abel now sitting in bed with Irena. Her arm is wrapped around his as she listens intently, her face filled with empathy on the brink of pity.

ABEL

My father saw boxing as everything right and good in America. Everything it was and could be. Maybe the fact that I didn't feel the same way was what he hated most. I think my father wanted me to be that little boy... with the American flag, cheering him on, calling for blood, watching his cheekbones split like orange peels...but my mind was elsewhere...

We hear a voice belonging to a SCHOOL TEACHER.

SCHOOL TEACHER (O.S.)

Abel...Abel!

26 INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

26

We see Young Abel with his head down on his school desk. He is writing feverishly with a pencil.

SCHOOL TEACHER

Abel Block!

Abel quickly lifts his head.

YOUNG ABEL

Yes, Ma'am?

SCHOOL TEACHER

It is your turn.

YOUNG ABEL

My turn for what?

We see the School Teacher roll her eyes in frustration.

SCHOOL TEACHER

To tell us what you'd like to be
when you grow up.

Abel looks down, putting his chin to his chest, embarrassed.

SCHOOL TEACHER

Now, Abel...tell us what you'd like
to be when you grow up. You were
told about this three weeks ago.
You've had plenty of time to think
about it.

Abel lifts his head and looks around the room at the other
school children who are now looking over their shoulders at
him.

YOUNG ABEL

...I'd like to be--

SCHOOL TEACHER

Stand up and properly announce to
the class what you'd like to be.

Abel stands up, pauses for a moment and takes a deep breath.

YOUNG ABEL

I'd like to be... a bird.

The entire class erupts into laughter. We see Abel put his
head down and take his seat.

We see various children's faces all laughing tormentingly at
Abel. Lastly we see the Teacher laughing as well.

27 EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

27

We see Young Abel walking along the sidewalk after school. He
is smoking a cigarette, puffing away, taking a few drags
between steps. He is holding a folded letter in his hands. As
he walks, he unfolds the letter and begins to read it.

We see the letter.

SCHOOL TEACHER (V.O.)

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Block, your son
Abel was the cause of disruption
during today's lesson. When asked
what he wanted to be when he grew
up, he responded that he would like
to be a bird.

(MORE)

SCHOOL TEACHER (V.O.) (cont'd)
 When the other children began to
 laugh, as they naturally would, he
 resorted to profanity to express--

Abel stops reading the letter and crumples it up. He walks
 off the side of the sidewalk, bends down and stuffs the
 letter in the sewer along with his cigarette butt.

Abel begins walking along the sidewalk again. Up ahead of
 Abel we see a CARNIVAL PROMOTER on a soapbox speaking to a
 small crowd of people. Abel reaches the crowd and elbows his
 way into the center.

CARNIVAL PROMOTER
 Come one, come all! Come and see
 the greatest death-defying rebels
 of the sky! The finest air-show
 you'll ever set your sparkling eyes
 on! Daredevils of the heavens
 ripping through the sky! Pilots
 you've only read about in the
 papers! Straight from the war
 effort! Tonight only! And only at
 the Flying Circus!

We see Abel staring at the Carnival Promoter, completely
 overcome by awe and excitement. The Promoter and Abel's eyes
 meet. We see them looking at each other.

28

INT. HOME -- DAY

28

We see Young Abel bust through the door, excited to tell his
 mother about the air-show. Abel's Mother and Lucas are in the
 kitchen. Abel's Mother is sitting at the table and Lucas is
 pacing. Crumpled paper is visible in Lucas's hand.

YOUNG ABEL
 Mamma! Papa!

MOTHER
 Abel, your father and I want to
 speak with you.

YOUNG ABEL
 But there's--

MOTHER
 Abel! Now.

Abel's shoulders shrug as if he's deflating. His face turns
 to one of dread. He takes a seat at the kitchen table.

MOTHER

We received a telephone call from your school teacher today. She said that there was some trouble in your class. She said that you used profanity toward the other students.

LUCAS BLOCK

(yelling)

You told them to go fuck themselves!

There is a pause. An awkward, comical tension is evident.

MOTHER

(to Abel)

What happened?

LUCAS BLOCK

I'll tell you what happened! They think he's a freak! And what do you expect...telling people he wants to be a bird. What kind of nonsense is that?

MOTHER

Don't be so hard on the boy. He has an overactive imagination.

LUCAS BLOCK

Does that explain these?

Lucas tosses the papers he was holding onto the kitchen table in front of Abel.

LUCAS BLOCK

I found them in his bedroom.

Abel puts his head down and tries to fight back tears, sobbing quietly.

MOTHER

What are they?

LUCAS BLOCK

They're stories! Made-up junk about fighter pilots named Francis Von Riptorn and Pirates named Captain Shallowgrave! It's what he does instead of his schoolwork! He sits around daydreaming! The boy has his head in the clouds!

Lucas picks up the stories from off the table.

LUCAS BLOCK
 (to Abel)
 Do you have anything to say for
 yourself?

Abel keeps his head down and doesn't make a sound.

LUCAS BLOCK
 Fine.

Lucas begins ripping up the stories. Abel looks up horrified.

YOUNG ABEL
 No, papa! Please!

LUCAS BLOCK
 Enough! Don't say another word.

Lucas finishes ripping up the stories. Abel watches him and can not help but begin to cry.

LUCAS BLOCK
 You are to stay in your room for
 the rest of the night.

YOUNG ABEL
 But there's an air-show tonight!

LUCAS BLOCK
 I don't want to hear another word
 about planes, or flying, or birds,
 or Francis Von Riptorn! I forbid
 you to even think of such things!

29 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

29

We see Adult Abel looking toward a sleeping Irena on the bed from across the room. Abel flicks off the light and enters another room in the apartment.

Abel stumbles into a dark room and clicks on a small desk lamp. The light uncovers an array of different pieces to model airplanes. Abel takes a seat at the desk, picks up a nearly completed model, takes a thin-haired paint brush, dips it in the paint and begins running the brush delicately along the plane.

30

INT. BAR -- DAY

30

Abel's surroundings transform into a seedy, almost medieval looking bar. Abel is seated at one of the tables. We see that he is no longer working on a model plane, but that he is crafting a set of giant wings. The wings are partly mechanical, but resemble traditional Angel's wings with white feathers attached. Abel is using a tool to tighten a portion of the inner-workings of the wings.

We see a large, steel mug come down on the table and a hand holding it around its handle. The hand belongs to FRANCIS VON RIPTON a robust, aged, but handsome, devilish fighter pilot, dressed in the garb of the First World War. He wears a large leather jacket, decorated with patches. He wears bowed pants and fine leather boots. His mustache is stiffly waxed. His right eye is covered with an eye-patch and his head is covered with a leather helmet.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

What are you working on, Boyo?

Abel is apprehensive to respond for a moment.

ABEL

A set of wings.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

Well, I can see that. What are they for?

Abel looks around the room suspiciously. Decorating the bar are scoundrels all grizzly in appearance.

ABEL

Can you keep a secret?

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

Son, I am the world's foremost secret keeper. For instance, I have never told anyone about Lord Bullingdon's cowardice in the duel with his step-father, and I don't plan on it. Your secret is safe with me.

ABEL

(quietly)

They are for escaping this place.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

You want to escape, huh?

Abel leans back in his chair and nods.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
That's suicide, boy. No one can
escape this place.

ABEL
But I have to get out of here.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
Where would you go?

ABEL
To the end of the Earth, if I must.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
You will need much courage and
daring for such a journey. Do you
have the stomach for it?

ABEL
I think so.

Francis lets out a deep roar of a laugh.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
Think, my boy...you better damn
well know.

Abel pauses for a moment, then makes a confident face.

ABEL
I know I do.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
And what do you plan on doing with
those wings of yours?

ABEL
I'm going to fly out of here.

Francis stops for a moment, looks at Abel through one eye,
sizing him up.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
Fly, did you say?

ABEL
Yes.

Francis sips his mug, some of the liquid pouring down his
face.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
Come with me. I have something to
show you.

31 EXT. FIELD -- DAY

31

We see parked on a grassy field a fighter plane. Francis and Abel approach it. We are able to see coming out of the bottom of Abel's coat, the tips of his wings.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

There is no escaping this place
unless you have the right equipment
and I'm not sure those wings of
yours are going to do it.

Francis rubs his hand along the side of the plane, showing affection.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

She's never failed me before.

ABEL

What are you saying?

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

Would you like a lift?

32 EXT. SKY -- DAY

32

We see Francis and Abel flying through the clouds in the airplane. The clouds are like cotton candy, the sun is filling them, making them pink and gold. Abel is elated, completely happy, filled for the first time with joy.

ABEL

It has always been my dream to fly!

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

Dreams are just reality moving on
without you, my boy!

We see the ground below them. The landscape is wide, stretching meadows, picturesque in beauty.

We then see on the ground one of the hideous Creatures first introduced to us in Abel's nightmare. The Creature looks toward the sky and from underneath its ragged clothing stretches out decrepit wings. The Creature's face resembles Lucas Block's. We see another CREATURE, whose face resembles Abel's School Teacher from childhood. It extends wings as well, and they both take to the sky after Abel and Francis Von Riptorn.

We see Francis Von Riptorn look in a mirror attached to the plane and notice the Creatures.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
We've got company. Six o'clock!

ABEL
Six o'clock?

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
Behind us!

Abel spins around and is almost clipped by a passing Creature. The Creatures attach onto the sides of the plane, causing it to spiral into a dive.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON
(to Abel)
Now might be a good time to test
out those wings of yours!

Abel opens his coat and releases his wings. He closes his eyes and jumps from the plane.

The Creatures turn their necks, watching Abel exit the plane.

Much to Abel's surprise his wings catch him and he begins to fly toward the heavens. Francis Von Riptorn and the plane plummet until they can no longer be seen.

Abel flies on. He breaks through the clouds and we see him as a silhouette against a large, round, flaming sun.

Abel looks over his shoulder and notices that some of the wires in his wings are short-circuiting, causing sparks to fly. Eventually the wings stop flapping, and Abel begins to fall. We see him as a silhouette falling back to earth. He falls all the way until we can no longer hear his scream.

33 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

33

We see Abel sleeping at his desk, the model airplane at his side. There is a loud crash out in the hallway, and it startles Abel awake. The sound of heavy footsteps can be heard then loud, angry unsubtitled German being screamed followed by soft, meek mumbling. We see Abel's apartment door. We see Abel walking toward it and listening to the commotion happening on the other side.

34 INT. OFFICE -- DAY

34

Abel is sitting at his desk, typing at his typewriter. Abel's Boss approaches his desk, stands over Abel and doesn't say a word. Abel stops typing and looks at the Boss.

ABEL

What?

35 INT. OFFICE -- DAY

35

We see a sheet of paper with a list of films on it. Among the names on the list, one catches Abel's attention.

BOSS

They told us to print this list of newly-banned films in today's paper.

ABEL

They're banning M?

BOSS

Not only that! But there's rumor that Fritz Lang has fled Germany for Paris.

ABEL

I can't believe this.

BOSS

I know. This is exactly the kind of story I would have put you on, but I received explicit instructions not to print anything about the rumors.

ABEL

So what do we do?

BOSS

We keep up with business as usual. There's nothing we can do. As long as Goebbels keeps churning out these propaganda films we'll keep giving them good reviews. Besides, you should be concerning yourself with the Schmeling fight.

ABEL

I know, I know.

BOSS

Good. Now, get to work. I don't want to come out here and find you daydreaming.

The Boss returns to his office and Abel walks back to his desk, taking a seat.

We see Abel looking down at his typewriter. We see that the page is blank. We then see Abel looking off into space.

36 INT. FILM SET -- DAY

36

We see Abel in the midst of a busy film set. The film set belongs to the picture **M**.

We see a SUBTITLE;

1931

The SUBTITLE dissolves and is replaced by another one.

On Set of the Fritz Lang Picture "M"

The Subtitle dissolves. Abel is accompanied by a German TRANSLATOR and they both begin moving within the shuffle of passing crew members and actors. There is a loud, but indistinguishable grumble of people talking. We can see a group of little girls in the background speaking to one another. Also visible is a balloon cart and an actor standing in front of it. Abel and the Translator approach FRITZ LANG, the director of the picture, complete with a monocle over his eye. He is screaming in German at PETER LORRE, the star of the film.

ABEL
(to Lang)
Excuse me, Sir.

The Translator repeats Abel's words in German.

Fritz Lang completely ignores Abel and the Translator and moments later grabs Peter Lorre by his jacket collar and proceeds to throw him down a flight of stairs. We see Lorre's painful plummet down the stairs. We then see Fritz turn toward Abel and the Translator completely composed and speaks to them in German.

FRITZ LANG
(in German)
What do you want?

TRANSLATOR
(to Abel)
What do you want?

ABEL
 (to Fritz)
 I'm a journalist for a film
 magazine and I was wondering if you
 could spare a few minutes and
 comment about your new film.

The Translator repeats Abel's words in German to Lang.

Fritz Lang gives them both a look of annoyance. He begins to walk away, signaling for Abel and the Translator to follow. Fritz walks speedily as the crew around him hustles about. The Translator is two steps behind Fritz, while Abel is two steps behind him, his note pad out, trying to jot down notes.

FRITZ LANG
 (in German)
 Go on! Ask me your questions.

TRANSLATOR
 (to Abel)
 Ask him a question!

ABEL
 Uh, has this film posed any new
 challenges for you as a filmmaker?

The Translator repeats Abel's question in German to Fritz.

FRITZ LANG
 (in German)
 No!

TRANSLATOR
 (to Abel)
 He said, "No!"

ABEL
 Is there a golden rule of sorts
 that you've returned to over the
 years or a philosophy that's served
 you well?

The Translator translates the question to Fritz.

FRITZ LANG
 (in German)
 Each picture has some sort of
 rhythm which only the director can
 give it. He has to be like the
 captain of a ship!

The Translator translates the answer to Abel.

Fritz then abruptly stops walking, almost causing a domino effect of the Translator and Abel smashing into each other. Fritz sits down in a director's chair.

FRITZ LANG
(in German)
Quiet!

Immediately the entire set becomes quiet.

FRITZ LANG
(in German)
Action!

The little girls from before begin to jump rope. We see one of the little girls wander off toward the balloon cart. Peter Lorre enters and begins whistling "In the Hall of the Mountain King" by Edvard Grieg.

We see Abel's face and his ears perk up at the sound of the whistling. His face turns to a grimace, and he excuses himself quietly, walking backward.

We see Abel hurrying around the set, trying to escape the whistling. As he gets closer to the door, the whistling erupts into an actual orchestrated version of "In the Hall of the Mountain King." Abel clutches his ears and pushes his way out of the studio door. Abel doubles over in pain. We see flashes of Abel's childhood: him as a little boy, carnivals, airplanes, boxing matches, and the Creatures of his fantasies.

37 INT. MOVIE THEATER -- DAY

37

We see a Nazi propaganda film playing.

We then see Abel slouched in his chair watching the film. We then see a man, HARVEY DOWD, walk in the row behind Abel and take a seat to Abel's right. After a moment, Harvey leans over and taps Abel on the shoulder, speaking in an American accent.

HARVEY
(whispering)
Say, friend...you wouldn't happen
to have a smoke would you?

Abel turns his head around to look at Harvey.

ABEL
(whispering)
No, I don't. Sorry.

Abel turns back around, but as soon as he is all the way turned, his eyes pop open and he spins around again to look at Harvey.

ABEL
(whispering)
Are you American?

HARVEY
(whispering)
Sure am, brother. You from the States, as well?

ABEL
(whispering)
Yes.

HARVEY
Well, how about that? Small world, ain't it?

We see a lovely YOUNG GIRL turn around in her seat, put her finger to her lips and signal for Abel and Harvey to be quiet.

HARVEY
(to Abel)
Say friend, how would you like to continue this conversation outside? Seeing as we're two commiserating countrymen longing for the sound of a familiar voice.

ABEL
Yes, let's.

HARVEY
Good. I can't understand a damn word of this picture anyway.

Abel and Harvey both stand and begin exiting the theater.

38

EXT. OUTSIDE THEATER -- DAY

38

We see Abel and Harvey exit the theater and begin walking along the sidewalk.

HARVEY
So friend, what's your handle?

ABEL
Abel, Abel Block.

We see Abel and Harvey shake hands.

HARVEY

If you're Abel that must mean I'm Cain.

Harvey lets out a heartwarming chuckle.

ABEL

Funny you say that.

HARVEY

You get a lot of that, I'm sure. I'm Harvey. Harvey Dowd of a little place called Youngstown, Ohio. Where are you from in the States?

ABEL

New York City.

HARVEY

Ah, city boy. That must have been exciting.

ABEL

I suppose.

HARVEY

It didn't suit you though, did it? How else would any sane man end up all the way out here?

ABEL

Actually, I came with my father. He was competing here.

HARVEY

Competing?

ABEL

He was a boxer. He came out here for a fight, but it ended up getting postponed for three months. We had to stay.

HARVEY

Well, I'll be. That's a fascinating story, Abel. It truly is. What made you decide to stay, If you don't mind me asking?

ABEL

Well, actually...I ran away from home when I was a boy. But I'd rather not talk about it.

HARVEY

Say no more, Amigo. I have a bad habit of sticking my big nose where it doesn't belong. But I must say, that must've been damn difficult for a young lad such as yourself, on your own in a foreign country.

ABEL

It was.

HARVEY

Flat out frightening, I'd imagine.

Abel takes a look around and looks somewhat lost.

ABEL

Say, where are we walking?

Harvey lets out a big grin.

HARVEY

Oops, you caught me. I was trying to steer you to the bar. What do you say, Abe...let me buy you a drink?

ABEL

Oh, I really shouldn't.

HARVEY

Come on. You're the first American I've met in weeks. One drink.

There is a moment of hesitation on Abel's part.

ABEL

Alright. One drink.

HARVEY

That's the spirit!

We see Abel and Harvey sitting in a dark bar. They appear to be the only two in the bar except the BARTENDER.

It appears that a significant amount of time has passed for they have multiple empty beer steins lying about, and they both seem a bit drunk.

HARVEY

I've been here off and on since the end of the First World War. All around Europe, really. I guess you could call me a vagabond. I'm never in one place for too long.

ABEL

You know, I must tell you...it feels good to be talking to you, Harvey. I've felt so secluded here recently. I've got this article to write. Stuff I haven't thought about in years and now all of a sudden it has a deadline. I haven't been sleeping and when I do, I have these strange dreams. I feel like I'm losing my mind.

HARVEY

A man has to be willing to put his mind at hazard in order to achieve greatness.

ABEL

I suppose you're right...

HARVEY

You're damn skippy, I'm right. The mind could be a man's greatest resource or his worst enemy.

Abel looks at Harvey, impressed.

ABEL

What do you do for a living, Harvey?

HARVEY

Well, let me answer that with a question. Are you a religious man, Abel?

ABEL

Not particularly.

HARVEY

Politics your poison?

ABEL

No. I've never really followed politics?

Harvey starts to chuckle.

HARVEY

Well, I'll be hard-pressed to find another sale's point, so I guess I'll just come right on out with it. I manufacture bibles.

ABEL

Really?

HARVEY

That's right. One for the Protestants and one for the Catholics. If there's any truth in mass production is a loss in value, I might as well be manufacturing the world's most sought-after toilet tissue. Seven-hundred and fifty bibles a day. But it's a sweet racket. I've got the monopoly. If you want to hear the word of the Lord, you've got to go through me first.

ABEL

I would have never of guessed.

HARVEY

There's a lot about me that you don't know, Abel. But I have been spouting off, so why don't you fess up? Tell me, Amigo, what made you fly the coop in Germany of all places?

ABEL

Why do you want to know about that?

HARVEY

Call it my curious nature.

Abel turns straight forward at the bar and takes the last sip out of his most recent stein.

ABEL

It's not a very interesting story.

40

INT. APARTMENT -- DAY

40

We see a TEENAGE ABEL, thirteen or fourteen years old, rummaging through some old boxes containing Lucas Block's boxing memorabilia and equipment.

Abel runs his fingers over the boxes until he finds the championship belt. He lifts it from the box and examines it, looking upon it with a sense of wonderment. He marvels at the belt for a moment and then puts it on, but it hangs loose around his waist, because he is so thin.

Abel then finds a pair of boxing gloves. They seem worn, well used. He puts them on. Abel then walks in front of a long mirror in the corner of the room. He tries to pose in a fighting stance. He looks at himself in the mirror for a moment, then puts his hands down by his sides and resumes a normal stance.

Then, suddenly, the room's door breaks open and there stands a fuming Lucas Block. Lucas lunges after Abel and grabs him, tossing him to the floor. Abel tries to crawl away while still on his back, bumping into things, knocking some of the boxes from their shelves. Lucas, in three large steps, gets over Abel and begins assaulting him, punching him in the face, splitting Abel's lip.

LUCAS BLOCK

Come on! Put your hands up! Come on! You want to wear the costume, now fight!

Abel tries to put his hands up, but Lucas bats them away and fires another hard right hand into Abel's face. Abel is bleeding heavily now. His eyes have begun to swell.

Lucas, slightly winded, gets to his feet and wipes the saliva from his bottom lip away with the back of his hand.

LUCAS BLOCK

I can't believe you're my own blood. There isn't a hard bone in your body.

We see Abel's hand in the boxing gloves and Lucas looking down upon it.

LUCAS BLOCK

Those things are for champions. Remember that.

Lucas steps over Abel's body to exit the room. Once Lucas is gone, Abel begins to cry. His tears are hardly visible against the blood on his broken face.

41 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

41

We see Teenage Abel pacing in the dark, silent front room of his family's apartment. He walks over to one of the doors, slightly opens it as quietly as possible and peers in.

We see Abel's Mother and Lucas Block sleeping. Lucas is above the covers in normal clothes, suggesting he's passed out drunk. He is breathing heavily. A gurgle in the back of Lucas's throat is audible as he exhales.

Abel closes the door and returns to the center of the room, where he begins looking at one of his Mother's paintings.

The painting Abel admires depicts a fairly modern kitchen with a man sitting on a chair and a woman in the background against the sink. There is a vase of colorful flowers on the table next to the man in the chair. The floor is checkered black and white.

Abel finishes looking at the painting, picks up a small package containing some extra clothing, and quietly opens the front door. He stops one last time, without looking back, keeping his head down and walks out.

42 EXT. CITY SIDEWALK -- NIGHT

42

We see Teenage Abel, his face now swollen, walking down the sidewalk in the middle of the night. The street sounds are nonexistent. The city is completely calm, which is almost insulting to Abel, for his mind is scattered, perhaps beyond repair.

Abel reaches the end of the sidewalk and takes a seat in the corner of a building. He crosses his arms and closes his eyes.

43 EXT. CITY SIDEWALK -- DAY

43

Loud noises of the people on the street wake Teenage Abel up in a daze. He quickly gets to his feet and pretends he hadn't been sleeping on the sidewalk.

Abel walks into the center of the square adjacent to the sidewalk. Inside the square are many vendors selling different things out of carts. Abel passes them, surveying the items. He places his hand on his stomach, as if to say he was hungry.

Abel walks over to a fruit cart. He places his hand on a pear and picks it up. The VENDOR looks at him suspiciously.

VENDOR
 (in German)
 Twenty cents!

Abel feels his pockets. We see Abel's eyes, looking around nervously. We see him look down at the pear in his hand. His arm moves closer to his pocket. His arms stops again. Finally, he puts the pear back and walks off.

44 EXT. CITY SIDEWALK -- NIGHT 44

We see Teenage Abel sitting in a different corner, shivering from the cold weather. His facial swelling has gone down, but his lip has yet to heal and he still has a black eye.

45 EXT. CITY SQUARE -- DAY 45

We see Teenage Abel walking past the fruit cart. He lingers in front of it for a moment and then takes a pear and scurries off.

46 EXT. RAILROAD TRACK -- DAY 46

We see Abel devouring the pear, eating it savagely, without taking a breath. We see him sitting against a hill, which at the foot meets a railroad track. Abel tosses the pear core into the tall grass of the hill. He climbs to his feet and walks up the hill, bending down, using his hands to steady himself. Abel reaches the top and sees over the peak that behind the hill is a Carnival set up on a vacant lot.

47 EXT. CARNIVAL -- DAY 47

It is becoming dusk. The sky is gloomy and the lights that decorate the Carnival's entrance seem to glow against the dark clouds. The wind has begun to kick up, making the air dusty from the ground's dirt.

Abel makes his way to the entrance, holding his package of clothing. He goes through the turnstile, but is stopped by a DWARF's walking cane before he can go any further. The Dwarf speaks in an Irish accent.

DWARF
 Three quid, Mate.

Abel looks down at the Dwarf, startled and confused.

DWARF

Oh. Sorry. (now in German) Three dollars please.

TEENAGE ABEL

I'm afraid I don't have any money.

DWARF

Oh, so you do speak English.

TEENAGE ABEL

Yes.

DWARF

Well, it's three guid or back where you came from. Sorry, kid. I don't make the rules; I just enforce them. Next!

Abel looks behind him at an empty lot. We see the empty lot. There isn't anyone behind Abel in line.

TEENAGE ABEL

There's no one else here.

DWARF

Listen, I'd hate to have to get physical with you. Why don't you just beat it?

TEENAGE ABEL

I don't have the money, but I'd really like to see the Carnival. Is there an air-show?

We see the Dwarf look at Abel's package.

DWARF

No, no air-show, but I'll make you a deal, kid. I'll trade you the package for a ticket. How does that sound?

Abel looks down at his package.

TEENAGE ABEL

You want my clothes? Why?

DWARF

That's my final offer. Take it or leave it.

Abel thinks about it for a moment and then hands the package over to the Dwarf. Once the Dwarf has the package he lets down his cane.

DWARF

Well, come on in! What are you waiting for?

Abel walks forward, entering the carnival.

DWARF

Careful, don't enjoy yourself too much!

The Dwarf lets out an eerie laugh.

We see Abel walking further into the Carnival, which seems abandoned, passing strange and run-down carnival booths. The wind is blowing, kicking up dust.

Abel approaches a tent, hesitates for a moment, and enters.

48

INT. MAGICIAN'S TENT -- DAY

48

Teenage Abel wanders into the tent, which is almost completely empty, except for a few peculiar looking audience members spread out among the wooden chairs. The tent is foggy, and the only light is originating from the stage lights, which are on a MAGICIAN and his VOLUNTEER.

The Magician is an older gentleman, with a continuous five o'clock shadow made up of white whiskers. He wears a top hat, which is old and torn, as is his tailed suit jacket.

Abel stands in the back of the tent and watches leeringly at the Magician perform his trick. The Magician has his Volunteer in a wooden box. He reveals a saw from underneath a cloth. He begins to saw into the box. He saws all the way through and spreads the two boxes apart, showing that the Volunteer is indeed split in half. He puts the boxes back together and begins wiggling his fingers over it, rolling his eyes into the back of his head and mumbling to himself. He then opens the box and the volunteer arises unharmed.

The few audience members begin clapping.

The Magician walks to the front of the stage and takes a bow. As he bows, he takes off his top hat and a white dove flies out from underneath it.

49 INT. MAGICIAN'S TENT -- NIGHT

49

The audience has left, and we see the Magician talking to the Volunteer. The Magician hands the Volunteer an unknown amount of money. The Volunteer takes the money and walks out.

We see Teenage Abel walk out from the shadows and approach the Magician. The stage lights are still on, making it hard for the Magician to see who is in the audience. Abel gets fairly close, but doesn't say anything. The Magician peers out into the darkness, squinting his eyes.

MAGICIAN

Who's there?

There is a pause.

MAGICIAN

If that's you Charlie, I told you I'd have the money by Friday and it's only Thursday night, so buzz off.

The Magician turns back toward his props and begins putting them away.

Abel finally stumbles out of the darkness, into enough light for the Magician to see.

TEENAGE ABEL

No, sir...my name is--

The Magician takes notice of Abel's facial bruises.

MAGICIAN

Jesus, it looks like someone went to work on your face with a ball-peen hammer. The freak show is around the corner, pal.

Abel remembers that his face is misshapen and reaches his hand up to cover it.

TEENAGE ABEL

I'm sorry, sir. I forgot.

MAGICIAN

Oh, I'm just giving you a hard time. Looks like someone kicked the shit out of you. Probably deserved it. Now, if you'll excuse me.

The Magician picks up a box of his props and goes to move off the stage.

TEENAGE ABEL

Wait, sir!

The Magician stops and turns around, annoyed.

MAGICIAN

What is it?

TEENAGE ABEL

May I ask you a question?

MAGICIAN

A magician never tells his secrets.

Abel laughs lightly.

TEENAGE ABEL

Oh, no. That's not what I wanted to ask you.

MAGICIAN

Well, in that case, all questions must be submitted in print, up to ten working days before a desired response. Good night.

The Magician continues with his box of props.

50

EXT. OUTSIDE TENT -- NIGHT

50

We see the Magician part the tent's curtain and walk outside, followed closely by Teenage Abel. The Magician walks toward his trailer.

TEENAGE ABEL

Sir, my name is Abel Block, and I'd like to be your assistant.

The Magician makes a face of complete disinterest.

MAGICIAN

Sorry, kid...this is a one-man show.

TEENAGE ABEL

Come on, every Magician needs an assistant.

MAGICIAN

Yeah, but they're usually beautiful, limber, young women, not skinny guys with punched-out eye sockets.

Abel reaches for the Magician's arm, stopping his walk and slowly turning him toward Abel.

TEENAGE ABEL

You don't have to pay me. Just feed me. Give me a place to sleep. Teach me a few tricks and I'll be out of your hair.

The Magician looks at Abel a moment and makes a face of consideration.

MAGICIAN

No.

The Magician turns quickly around and begins to walk away again. Abel once again lunges for his shoulder, stopping and turning him around.

TEENAGE ABEL

Please, sir. There's nowhere else I can go.

MAGICIAN

You can go home.

Abel looks sorrowfully into the Magician's eyes. Abel opens up his arms as if to tell the Magician "home" was the reason for his appearance.

The Magician really gives Abel a look over. We see Abel's bruises and swollen eyes, his busted lip, the dirt under his fingernails, the holes in his clothes.

The Magician signals with his head for Abel to follow him.

They begin walking side by side. As they walk, we see other carnival employees passing by.

TEENAGE ABEL

Thank you, sir.

MAGICIAN

Yeah, yeah. Don't thank me. This is just a temporary thing, until I can find a suitable assistant. For now, you can start by carrying this.

The Magician hands Abel his prop box to carry.

MAGICIAN

Everything else, you'll learn as you go along. We'll be here for a while.

(MORE)

MAGICIAN (cont'd)

We're a traveling carnival, see? We came over from the States a year ago, been working our way through Europe.

They reach the Magician's caravan. The Magician walks up the two steps to the door, holds onto the knob and looks down at Abel.

MAGICIAN

Home sweet home!

The Magician opens the door. We see the interiors of the caravan, which is in shambles.

51 INT. CARAVAN -- NIGHT

51

We see the Magician's hands striking a match and lighting a small flame in the oven for warmth. The Magician rubs his hands together over the flame.

MAGICIAN

So, you said your name was Abel.
That must make me Cain, huh?

The Magician laughs at his own clever musing.

MAGICIAN

You know the story of Cain and Abel, don't you?

TEENAGE ABEL

No, I don't.

The Magician walks over from the stove and takes a seat in front of Abel.

MAGICIAN

Cain is one of the world's great overlooked exterminators. We hear about Alexander the Great, Attila the Hun, but nothing about Cain. When Cain walked the Earth there were only three other people; Adam, Eve, and his brother Abel. The good son. Well, Cain killed his brother Abel, committing the world's first cold-blooded murder. That day he killed one fourth of the world's population. By those numbers, probably the largest massacre in human history.

Before Abel has a chance to respond, we hear a knock on the door.

MAGICIAN

Come in!

We see the door open. A second dwarf BRUCE walks out from behind it.

MAGICIAN

Ah! Bruce, baby. Come on in.

Bruce makes his way over to an open seat and struggles for a moment getting on.

BRUCE

Who's the kid?

MAGICIAN

Oh, right. Bruce this is Abel. Abel this is Bruce.

TEENAGE ABEL

How do you do?

BRUCE

I'd be a lot better with a few more inches.

MAGICIAN

(to Bruce)

How's life in the freak show treating you?

BRUCE

People can be so cruel. I know I'm there to entertain, but have some fucking compassion. I'm the one in a cage for six hours a day.

MAGICIAN

I hear ya. It's a rough business, Carnival life. That's what I've been trying to tell the boy here. He's my new assistant.

Bruce starts chuckling.

BRUCE

Jesus Christ. Couldn't find a cute girl, had to settle for a guy that looks like one of the elephants stepped on his face?

MAGICIAN

Don't be nasty, Bruce. He's just looking for a leg up.

BRUCE

(patronizing)

Well, he's come to the right place.

MAGICIAN

(to Abel)

Alright, kid...I'm going to teach the scam.

TEENAGE ABEL

Scam?

MAGICIAN

Magic is a scam, kid. A con. Smoke and mirrors. Hell, Houdini made a fortune debunking people who claimed to do real magic.

TEENAGE ABEL

Why do people watch it if they know it's fake?

MAGICIAN

People will do anything to believe there is something more going on than there really is. They'll pay shilling after shilling just for a moment to believe in the impossible. To feel like there's something greater...grander going on. That something is out of their control. I suppose it makes them feel less responsible.

Abel looks down, deflated by the reality of the Magician's statement.

MAGICIAN

So, here's how it works. During my show, you're going to sit in the audience and when I call out for a volunteer you're going to raise your hand the tallest and brightest. I'll pick you, you'll come up on stage and introduce yourself as if we've never met before. No one will be the wiser.

TEENAGE ABEL

What if someone comes and sees it more than once?

BRUCE

Smart guy, huh? It doesn't fucking matter how many times they see it. These people have shit for brains. You just go up there and play tourist.

MAGICIAN

Nine times out of ten they know you're a plant anyway. Just remember what I told you. They'll do anything to believe. You'll be amazed at what the power of denial can do.

52 INT. MAGICIAN'S TENT -- NIGHT

52

We see the Magician on stage, looking out into the audience.

MAGICIAN

Now, for my next trick I'll need a volunteer!

We see several sets of hands shoot up. We see Teenage Abel raising his hand, almost lifting himself off of his seat. Abel's face has healed completely. The Magician makes eye contact with Abel.

MAGICIAN

How about the rambunctious young man in the front row. Step right up!

Abel runs up and joins the Magician on stage.

MAGICIAN

What's your name, son?

TEENAGE ABEL

William.

MAGICIAN

Great name! Alright, Bill...may I call you Bill?

TEENAGE ABEL

Sure!

MAGICIAN

Okay then Bill. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever dreamed of leaving this world for a world where dreams come true?

TEENAGE ABEL

Yes!

MAGICIAN

Of course you have, Bill. Have you ever wanted to vanish without a trace?

Abel looks somewhat bashful.

TEENAGE ABEL

Sometimes...

MAGICIAN

Sure, sure Bill. Well today's your lucky day.

The Magician looks out into the crowd and addresses them.

MAGICIAN

(to audience)

I'm going to make Bill here vanish into thin air.

The Magician uncovers a large wooden box, standing upright by pulling off a black sheet.

MAGICIAN

Bill, if you would be so kind to step inside the box.

TEENAGE ABEL

Is it safe?

MAGICIAN

Of course it's safe. Trust me, Bill.

Abel steps inside the box. The Magician closes the door. He begins to wiggle his fingers and mumble to himself. After a moment the Magician puts his fingers on the door, getting ready to open it.

MAGICIAN

And voila!

The Magician opens the door, showing an empty interior of the box.

MAGICIAN

He's gone!

53 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

53

We see Adult Abel sitting in his dark apartment in front of his typewriter. The room is completely quiet. Irena is asleep on the bed.

We see Abel looking intently upon the typewriter and what's written on the page.

We see the page. It reads: **Abel Block and I have fun together.**

We see Abel's eyes, large and red. He is lost in thought. He then gets up and walks over to a film projector, sits down beside it and turns it on. The projector displays the image of a previous Max Schmeling fight on the wall. The only sound that can be heard belongs to the projector, a small flickering sound. The light from the projector makes the dust particles in the air visible. Abel leans forward and watches the footage intently. He then leans back in his chair and looks over at Irena.

We see Irena lying there looking naturally beautiful as she sleeps.

We see Abel turn back toward the footage.

We see the footage. Max Schmeling knocks out his opponent, who falls to the ground and is counted out.

54 INT. OFFICE -- DAY

54

We see Adult Abel in his Boss's office. The Boss is sitting down behind his desk, while Abel is standing, hunched with his hands on the desk.

ABEL

(desperately)

I don't know how I'm going to write this exposé. I have no idea what I'm writing about.

BOSS

Calm down, Abel. I'm going to need you to calm down. We need this article. It's very important. Max Schmeling has become a great interest to our Government.

(MORE)

BOSS (cont'd)

His victories are showing the rest of the world how strong we Germans are. The Nazis deliberately requested that I put a man on it that can really make him look good.

ABEL

That man is not me!

BOSS

Listen, it's simple. The sad truth is, people like violence. They like the bloodshed, the broken noses. They want a front row seat to the carnage, that's all. If Max wins, like we're all expecting him to, the exposé should be a walk in the park. Everybody loves a winner, Block. So write about that. Hell, you lived with it every day. Your father was one of the best fighters around, you must've caught a glimpse of that.

There is a pause.

ABEL

What if I can't do it?

BOSS

Then we're both in more trouble than I care to think about.

ABEL

I'm used to writing about art. How beautiful things can be. There's no beauty in boxing. I wouldn't know where to begin.

BOSS

There is beauty, Block. Underneath the blood and the guts, there's beauty. You've just got to dig for it.

ABEL

How?

BOSS

You've been trained in investigatory journalism for Christ's sake. Investigate! And make it good, Block. For both our sakes. Make it good.

ABEL

I just feel like there's something
I'm missing.

BOSS

It's a fluff piece Block, not brain
surgery. Look, maybe you should
talk to somebody, somebody that
know's the game. Get some advice.

ABEL

That would be great. Who?

BOSS

One of the all time greats, Arthur
Kiltzer. He'll help you with
anything you need. There's only one
problem.

ABEL

What?

BOSS

He's a bit of an eccentric.

55 INT. ARTHUR'S APARTMENT -- DAY

55

We see Abel outside of the ARTHUR'S apartment door. He
knocks, the door already slightly ajar, opens further. Abel
enters.

ABEL

Hello? Mr. Kiltzer?

Abel moves through the room. We see that the room is
decorated with old boxing memorabilia and black and white
photographs of boxing events.

We see Abel moving through the room again. Behind him we see
Arthur, an old, short, stocky, bald man with an eye patch
wearing a bathrobe and lifting a crowbar over his head, about
to bring it down on Abel.

Just as Arthur swings the crowbar, Abel turns around and
ducks out of the way, falling to the floor. The crowbar
smashes into a table, breaking it.

ABEL

Mr. Kiltzer! It's me Abel Block! I
was told you were expecting me!

Arthur stops and looks down at Abel. Arthur speaks with a
German accent.

ARTHUR
The boy from the newspaper?

ABEL
Yes!

ARTHUR
Oh, well come on in. Have a seat.

Arthur helps Abel to his feet.

ABEL
Thank you.

They both sit down across from each other.

ARTHUR
What can I do for you?

ABEL
I need help, Mr. Kiltzer. I'm covering the Max Schmeling fight next month and I don't know where to begin.

ARTHUR
Ah! Easiest thing in the world. Boxing stories are basically morality tales. There's a good fighter and a not so good fighter.

ABEL
But how do you know which one is which?

ARTHUR
It's whoever's the favorite. Your boy Schmeling is the hero of this fight. Hell, he's the hero of Germany right now.

ABEL
That's it?

ARTHUR
That's it.

ABEL
But I feel like there's something more. Something that I'm not seeing.

ARTHUR
Like what?

There is a pause.

ABEL

The beauty.

Arthur smiles.

ARTHUR

I see. You want poetry. Well, when it comes to boxing some people see it and some people don't, but don't be mistaken, there is poetry in that ring. People watch ballerinas and think they're beautiful because it's easy. It's delicate, it's dignified. Boxing is more a reflection of real life, rough, abrasive. Maybe it's not as delicate, but every bit as dignified...

Abel makes a face as if he doesn't understand.

ARTHUR

Here, let me show you a few pointers.

Arthur struggles to stand up out of his chair.

ARTHUR

I'm going to teach you the basics of boxing.

ABEL

Oh no, no. You don't have--

ARTHUR

Nonsense! You have to at least know the basics if you're going to write about it. I was a fighter myself before I became a newspaper man. Had to quit when I lost the eye.

Arthur lifts up his eye-patch, revealing a cloudy, white eyeball. He puts the eye-patch back down and makes a fighting stance.

ABEL

Please, Mr. Kiltzer

ARTHUR

What do you think just because I'm old I can't take a punch? Get in a fighting stance.

ABEL

Really I--

ARTHUR

Get in a fighting stance!

Abel pops up and does what he is told.

ARTHUR

Alright, now I'm going to give you
a right!

Arthur swings at Abel, punches him square in the nose and
knocks him down.

Abel remains motionless on the floor. Arthur stands over him.

ARTHUR

You've got to keep your hands up!

We see Abel on the floor, blood begins to trickle from his
nose.

ARTHUR (O.C.)

I hope I've been a help.

56

INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

56

We see Abel hunched over his typewriter. His fingers are
placed on the keys, but he hasn't begun typing. A large piece
of tissue is stuck in his nose. He takes the tissue out, the
tip is covered in dark, dried blood. He tosses the tissue
into the wastebasket and resumes his position at the
typewriter.

The room's window is open. We hear the slight sound of music
coming from somewhere else in the neighborhood. Abel notices
it, gets up and closes the window.

We see Abel sit back down at the typewriter. He reaches over
to a desk fan next to him and turns it on. The fan begins,
sputters and stops. Abel flicks it. The fan begins working
again, but only for a moment. It sputters and stops again.

Able undoes the top button of his shirt. His face is becoming
sweaty. Abel looks down at the paper in the typewriter.

We see the paper. It still reads: **Abel Block and I have fun
together.** Abel rips the paper from the typewriter and tosses
it in the waste basket. He loads the typewriter with a new
sheet of paper. He rests his fingers on the keys again. He
lifts one hand, preparing to begin typing, but as his finger
comes down, the telephone rings.

Abel turns his head toward the phone, startled and annoyed.

We see the phone and Abel getting up from his chair to answer it. As he picks it up, the last ring echoes until fading out.

ABEL

Hello?

There is a pause.

ABEL

Yes, this is Abel Block. Who's calling?

Another pause.

ABEL

I said, yes, this is Abel Block. Who is this?

Another pause.

ABEL

Yes, I'm sure this is Abel Block. I'm sure this is me. Yes. Who's--

We hear the phone hang up on the other line. Abel moves the phone away from his ear and looks at it. He slams the telephone onto the receiver and walks hastily back to his writing desk.

We see the typewriter's keys. One of the keys is covered in dried blood.

We see Abel noticing the bloody key. He moves his head closer to it, examining it.

Abel feels his nose to see if it's bleeding.

We then see him scratching the dried blood off the key with his fingernail. He examines his fingernail. We see the burgundy blood under the nail.

Abel turns his hand and looks at his knuckles. They are bony.

57

INT. HOME -- DAY

57

We see Young Abel standing in front of Lucas, who is sitting down, making them eye level. Lucas has his hands up and is instructing Abel how to throw a punch.

LUCAS BLOCK

Alright, put your hands up.

Abel puts his hands up and makes fists.

LUCAS BLOCK
Make your fists tighter.

Abel tightens his fists, but puts his thumbs within them.

LUCAS BLOCK
No, no. You have to leave your
thumbs out or when you punch
someone you'll break them.

Abel's mother enters the kitchen.

MOTHER
You know, I really wish you
wouldn't teach our child that
nonsense.

LUCAS BLOCK
(to Abel's Mother)
Watch what you say! That *nonsense*
has fed your ass pretty well. (to
Abel) Now, punch my hand.

Abel punches his father's hand.

LUCAS BLOCK
No, harder! With some force! This
is the most valuable thing I can
teach you.

Abel punches with all his might, but his feet remain planted.

LUCAS BLOCK
Better. But, a boxer doesn't punch
with his arms, he punches with his
hips. You've got to build the
momentum from your legs. Try moving
your hips.

Abel tries to punch again, moving his hips awkwardly.

LUCAS BLOCK
No, no, no. You're not moving your
feet. You're a righty, so you pivot
on your left foot, turn your hips
and follow through with your arm.
Understand?

Abel tries it again, but it isn't right.

LUCAS BLOCK

Ah, forget it. It's useless. I
don't even know why I bothered.

58 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

58

We see Abel sitting in front of the typewriter. He is about to type something, but Irena enters the apartment, walks over to him and puts her arms around his neck, distracting Abel.

IRENA

Hello, Baby.

Abel looks annoyed.

ABEL

Hello.

Irena bends down and begins kissing his neck, softly, speaking in between kisses.

IRENA

I've missed you terribly. It feels
like I haven't seen you in months.

ABEL

I know. I've been very busy.

IRENA

I'm very proud of you. I know
thinking about your father isn't
easy.

There is a pause. Irena continues to delicately nibble on Abel's neck.

IRENA

Why don't you come to bed?

Abel awkwardly removes himself from Irena's grip, looking frustrated.

ABEL

Irena, I can't right now. I'm
trying to write. I have something
on the tip of my brain...I just
can't get it out.

Irena looks upset. She removes her arms from around Abel and stands beside him.

IRENA

We need to talk Abel.

ABEL

Listen, I'm sorry. This is very important.

IRENA

So is this! I hardly know you anymore. You're gone in the morning before I wake up and you're home after I go to sleep. When we are here together you're at that damn typewriter or working on your stupid model airplanes!

Abel looks hurt by her statements.

ABEL

I don't know what to say.

IRENA

Of course you don't. You never know what to say. I've never met a man who lives within his mind as much as you. It's as if this body of yours is a prison.

ABEL

I'm sorry. I've been really confused lately. I have this article to write, and it's bringing up all kinds of memories that I would have rather forgotten about.

IRENA

Well, you can't forget about them Abel. They are a part of you and you can't go closing off to everyone that loves you because of it. I love you, Abel.

ABEL

I know.

We see Irena, her eyes filling with tears.

Abel is at a loss for words. He opens his mouth as if to say something, but nothing comes out. He looks at his typewriter and back at Irena.

Irena bolts out of the room, trying to cover the sounds of her crying. She opens the door, exits and slams it closed.

Abel looks back at his typewriter and shrugs.

We see Abel's wastebasket. We see the interior of the wastebasket and the crumbled up paper.

59 INT. HOSPITAL -- NIGHT

59

We see Abel enter to lobby of a hospital and approach the Nurse's station where there is a NURSE behind the desk.

ABEL
(to Nurse)
Hello, Ma'am. I'm here to see my
father, Lucas Block.

NURSE
Yes, Mr. Block. Who are you here to
see?

Abel looks confused at the Nurse's question.

ABEL
I'm here to see my father, Lucas
Block. I'm his son, Abel.

The Nurse consults a clipboard.

NURSE
I'm sorry, sir, but we don't have
any patients by the name of Abel
Block.

ABEL
No. I'm Abel Block. I'm here for my
father, Lucas Block.

NURSE
You're here for your father, Lucas
Block?

ABEL
Yes!

NURSE
Why didn't you say so?

ABEL
Just tell me what floor he's on.

NURSE
He's on the second floor, room six.
Say hello to him for me. Abel's
such a nice man.

Abel looks at her with a mixture of confusion and frustration. He walks away without saying anything.

Abel reaches the elevator. He pushes the call button. The elevator doors open immediately. Inside is an ELEVATOR OPERATOR.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR

Going up?

ABEL

This is the ground floor, isn't it?

ELEVATOR OPERATOR

Just the morgue's below us.

ABEL

Two, please.

The door closes.

60

INT. HOSPITAL'S SECOND FLOOR -- NIGHT

60

We see the elevator doors open. Abel steps out.

ELEVATOR OPERATOR

Watch your step.

Abel stands in the hallway. The elevator doors close behind him. Abel begins walking down the hallway. We see the numbered doors as Abel passes them. First we see one, then two, then three, then four, then five, then what appears to be nine. Abel walks close to the door, reaches his hand up and spins the nine around to look like a six.

Abel then grabs the door knob, twists it and cracks the door slightly.

We see from within the room, the opening door just allowing a beam of light into the otherwise pitch black room.

ABEL

Lucas?

We hear a grumble from within the room. Abel opens the door wider, letting more light into the room and enters.

ABEL

Dad?

Abel reaches his hand out and puts his hand on what he believes to be his father's shoulder, he is lying on his side, his back turned away from Abel.

Abel pulls down on the shoulder, flipping the body over, revealing it to be himself as an older man.

61 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

61

We see Abel wake up in the dark. He looks next to him and sees that Irena's spot is still empty. We hear a loud banging on the door. Abel gets up and walks over to the door. The banging continues. Abel opens the door slightly, peeking out to see who is there.

We see Harvey outside the door, pushing his way in. We can see he has a thick envelope in his hand, bound with twine.

ABEL

Harvey, what are you doing here?

HARVEY

Sorry to drop in on you like this good buddy, but I'm in a bit of a pinch.

Harvey walks to the window, slightly opens the curtains. Abel remains in a daze, holding the door still lightly ajar.

HARVEY

Close the door!

Abel closes the door. Harvey resumes looking out of the curtains. We see a group of Nazi officers on the sidewalk below. Two of the officers are coming from the left and two from the right. They meet in the middle, talk to one another and then move off to the left together.

Harvey closes the window and makes a face of relief, taking out a handkerchief and wiping the sweat from his forehead with it.

HARVEY

That was a close one.

ABEL

What's going on? How did you find out where I lived?

Harvey makes a face as if to say what he was about to tell Abel was difficult to explain.

HARVEY

Abel, I'll be straight with you. I don't manufacture bibles.

Abel clams up, nervous.

ABEL

You don't?

HARVEY

No. I'm an American operative sent here to investigate the rumors that Adolf Hitler is trying to obtain the technology capable of creating a bomb that could level a city within seconds.

ABEL

You are?

Harvey lets out a chuckle.

HARVEY

What? Not what you'd expect for a spy?

ABEL

Well, not really--

HARVEY

That's exactly the point! The less suspicious I look the better chance I have of not blowing my cover. You understand.

ABEL

No, not really.

HARVEY

Listen, Abel, I'm only telling you all this because I need your help.

Abel looks confused and worried.

ABEL

My help?

HARVEY

Yes, your help. Take a seat.

ABEL

I think I'd rather stand.

HARVEY

Fine by me. Mind if I sit? My dogs are barking today, boy.

Harvey takes a seat and stretches.

ABEL

How can you be so normal about all this?

Harvey grins a toothy grin.

HARVEY

What's normal, Amigo?

ABEL

I don't know, not this!

HARVEY

Alright, just calm down.

ABEL

No! I will not calm down! First my boss tells me to calm down and now you. I don't even know your real name!

HARVEY

Oh, it's Harvey. I didn't lie about that. I also didn't lie about being sent to Germany after the First World War. Reconnaissance type stuff.

Harvey removes a small whiskey bottle from his back pocket, unscrews the lid and takes a sip.

ABEL

I don't want to hear about it.

Abel walks over and takes a seat on the bed. Harvey and Abel are now facing each other.

HARVEY

Well, then enough bullshit. See this envelope here?

We see Harvey showing Abel the envelope.

HARVEY

I'm going to need you to hold onto it for me. Tonight was a close call. I can't afford to be picked up on some routine round up and have it found.

ABEL

What is it?

HARVEY

Six months worth of notes on the information I've uncovered. It details my entire stay here in Germany and it's more than enough for them to hang me from the gallows with my balls in my jacket pocket. Now, I'm only telling you all this because I trust you. Hell, you said it yourself, finding an American here is few and far between.

ABEL

I still don't understand how you found out where I lived.

HARVEY

We can find anybody. Although I had to double check, of course.

Harvey makes a telephone gesture with his fingers and puts it a few inches away from his ear.

HARVEY

"Is this Abel Block? Are you sure?"
Sound familiar?

ABEL

You're the one who called me earlier?

HARVEY

That's right. Last thing I needed was to knock on the wrong door with a handful of Krauts nipping at my heels.

ABEL

I'm sorry, Harvey. I can't get involved with this. I have enough going on right now.

Harvey stands up.

HARVEY

(sternly)

This is more important than any minor psychiatric breakdown you may be experiencing.

ABEL
(nervous)
Who said anything about a
psychiatric breakdown?

Harvey walks toward Abel intimidatingly.

HARVEY
This is the game-ender, Abel. This
is the last surviving people on
this little blue marble eating
sauerkraut breakfast, lunch and
dinner for the rest of their short,
miserable, imperialistic lives.

Harvey and Abel are nose to nose.

HARVEY
You don't want that, do you?

ABEL
(frightened)
No.

Harvey lets out a huge, friendly smile, stepping back from
Abel.

HARVEY
I didn't think so... Abel, old
buddy, if you ever wanted to be a
hero, here's your chance.

Abel glances at the envelope and thinks in silence for a
moment.

ABEL
What do I do with it?

HARVEY
Keep it safe, just for a few days
until the heat dies down.

Harvey walks over to Abel, lifts him to his feet and places
his hands on either side of Abel's arms.

HARVEY
You're an operative in the U.S.
Government now. That's one hell of
a responsibility. Don't foul it up.

Harvey lets go of Abel and walks toward the door.

ABEL
Yeah, but I didn't ask for this
responsibility.

HARVEY
Most of the important things in the
world happened to people who
weren't expecting it.

Harvey opens the door.

HARVEY
I'll call you in exactly one hour.
See how you're doing... Adios,
Amigo.

Harvey smiles, walks through the door and closes it behind
him.

62 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

62

We see the envelope sitting on the corner of Abel's desk.

We see Abel sitting in his chair, leaning just out of the
reach of the desk light, making his face visible, but heavily
shadowed. Abel leans in, turns toward his typewriter.

We see the clock ticking. It strikes eleven.

The telephone rings.

Abel reaches over and answers it.

ABEL
(desperately)
Harvey, I hope you know this isn't
a good time for me! I'm a film
critic, goddamn it! I write about
bad actresses, not boxing events
and I sure as hell don't hide
classified documents from the Nazi
Party!

We hear Irena's weak, sobbing voice over the telephone.

IRENA (O.S.)
Abel?

Abel immediately calms himself.

ABEL
Irena? Is that you?

IRENA (O.S.)

Yes, it's me. What were you talking about, classified documents? Who's Harvey?

Abel becomes wide-eyed, trying to come up with something to say to Irena.

ABEL

Uh, Harvey is a friend of mine from the States. I was expecting a call from him. You know, we like to joke around.

IRENA (O.S.)

Well, I was just calling to tell you that I'm staying the night at my mother's. I didn't want you to worry.

ABEL

You're not coming home?

IRENA (O.S.)

Not tonight. I'll talk to you tomorrow.

ABEL

(somber)

Alright. Bye bye.

Abel hangs up.

We hear footsteps from outside of Abel's apartment door, in the hallway. They are loud, threatening footsteps. The sounds of the footsteps pass Abel's room. We then hear the muffled sound of knocking on Abel's neighbor's door.

Abel turns around in his chair and listens. We then hear muffled, indistinguishable voices speaking.

Abel gets up from his chair and creeps over to the door, unlocks it and opens it just wide enough to stick his head out. Just Abel's head is visible out of the door. He looks down the hallway and sees two NAZI SOLDIERS speaking to Mrs. Schuptnik. We see Mrs. Schuptnik point down the hall toward Abel.

We see Abel's frightened face. He closes the door, runs over to his writing desk and picks up the envelope. He then begins frantically looking for a place to hide it.

We then hear the same heavy footsteps start walking back toward Abel's door. Abel freezes and follows the sounds of the footsteps with his head.

Abel finally stuffs the envelope under his mattress as we hear a loud knock on his door.

Abel rushes over to the door, composes himself, then opens it. Only his face is visible through the crack of the door. The two Nazi Soldiers are standing in the hallway, much taller than Abel, forcing him to look up at them.

They speak in German accents.

NAZI SOLDIER
Are you Abel Block?

ABEL
(fumbling)
Yes, yes I am.

NAZI SOLDIER
May we have a moment of your time?

ABEL
Why yes, of course.

NAZI SOLDIER 2
May we come in?

The Nazi Soldier puts his hand on the door, slightly pushing it. Abel holds it shut.

ABEL
What's this all about?

NAZI SOLDIER
May we enter, sir?

Abel looks down and opens the door, spreading his arm as if to welcome them warmly.

ABEL
Please come in.

The two Nazi Soldiers enter the room. They begin looking around with their eyes.

NAZI SOLDIER
Mrs. Schuptnik next door tells us
you are an American.

ABEL
Uh, yes...that's true.

NAZI SOLDIER

May we ask what you are doing so far away from home?

ABEL

I live here. I'm a film critic... I'm a...I'm actually covering the Schmeling fight coming up.

NAZI SOLDIER

Oh, the Schmeling fight! It's going to be a good one, yes?

ABEL

I should hope so...

There is a pause.

ABEL

May I ask what it is, exactly that you want?

NAZI SOLDIER

We are looking for a man. An American man. He was last spotted in this area. Have you seen anyone suspicious?

Abel looks frightened, his eyes widen.

ABEL

Suspicious? No. You say he's American? I haven't seen any Americans in weeks.

NAZI SOLDIER 2

Mrs. Schuptnik told us she heard voices speaking in here earlier tonight.

ABEL

Well, I live with my girlfriend.

NAZI SOLDIER 2

Male voices.

ABEL

She's very masculine. A fact she does her best to hide. Strangely enough she has a beautiful singing voice.

Abel lets out an uncomfortable laugh to try and hide his lie.

NAZI SOLDIER

I see.

The Nazi Soldier walks over to Abel's writing desk.

NAZI SOLDIER

Is this where you work?

ABEL

Yes.

NAZI SOLDIER

You use this machine?

The Nazi Soldier puts his fingers on the key's of Abel's typewriter.

ABEL

Yes.

NAZI SOLDIER

And you have no idea where our mystery American is?

ABEL

No, sir.

NAZI SOLDIER

You wouldn't be lying to us, would you?

ABEL

Of course not.

NAZI SOLDIER

Are you positive?

The Nazi Soldier shoves Abel's typewriter out of the window. We hear it land on the ground below with a crash.

Abel makes a face of anger and lunges after the typewriter, only to stop abruptly, remembering who he is speaking with.

ABEL

Hey! Why did you do that?

NAZI SOLDIER

If you think of anything you be sure to let us know, Mr. Block. I'd hate to have to come back.

Nazi Soldier 2 begins pointing toward Abel's mattress where he hid the envelope.

NAZI SOLDIER 2
What's that?

ABEL
What's what?

Nazi Soldier 2 walks toward the bed, beginning to bend now.

ABEL
Oh, that's--

NAZI SOLDIER 2
A hole in your floor.

ABEL
What?

NAZI SOLDIER 2
There's a hole in your floor. You better cork that up or you're liable to get mice in here. And once you get one, you get the whole fucking family. They'll eat up the entire floor, the bastards.

ABEL
Oh...thank you. I'll be sure to patch it up.

NAZI SOLDIER
Good evening, Mr. Block. Sorry for any unnecessary toughness, I'd suppose you'd say. Any job worth doing is worth doing right.

ABEL
No hard feelings.

NAZI SOLDIER
And remember, if you think of anything...I'm always around.

The Nazi Soldier winks and closes the door.

63 EXT. SIDEWALK -- NIGHT

63

We see Abel exiting his apartment building, buttoning up his coat. Beside his feet is his smashed typewriter. Abel picks it up and sighs.

64 INT. OFFICE -- NIGHT

64

We see Abel walking into his office. It is almost pitch black, except for the light of the moon making its way in through the windows, and completely empty; everyone else has gone home.

Abel walks over to his desk and picks up his portable typewriter.

Out of his dark office Abel's Boss emerges.

BOSS
(somber)
Block, what are you doing here?

Abel looks toward him startled.

ABEL
I'm just getting my portable. What are you doing here?

BOSS
Working late.

ABEL
But sir, you're in the dark.

BOSS
Come here Abel. I want to speak to you.

65 INT. BOSS'S OFFICE -- NIGHT

65

They both enter the Boss's office. The Boss turns on a small desk light, just slightly lighting the room. The light reveals a half empty bottle of scotch and a glass full of melted ice on the Boss's desk.

ABEL
What's going on here, sir?

BOSS
Do you believe in God, Block?

There is a pause.

ABEL
I don't know.

The Boss lets out a joyless, ironic, sorrow-filled laugh.

BOSS

That may be the best answer I've heard. I don't know either. How could there be a God, Block? Standing by and letting this happen, how could there be?

ABEL

What happened, sir? What are you talking about?

BOSS

I'm a Jew, Block. Did you know that about me?

ABEL

...No I didn't.

BOSS

They're trying to run me out of business. They're trying to run me out of business because I'm a Jew.

ABEL

What are they doing?

BOSS

Nothing outright yet, but they're getting bolder in their strokes. They're running me ragged. They're making me fire my Jewish employees, good journalists with families. Why the hell do you think I have you on the Schmeling fight? You can't even throw a punch, let alone cover a fight.

ABEL

Well, I--

BOSS

How could they do this to me, Block? I'm a business man. I've never done wrong to anyone... I've done right by Germany. I was a correspondent during the First World War. Did you know that?

ABEL

No.

BOSS

Me a Jew, fought for the government
of Germany, the very government
turning its back on me. How could
this be, Block? How could God allow
it?

We see the Boss looking out his window at the night. Abel is standing behind him in silence.

66 INT. BOXING GYM -- DAY

66

We see men jump roping, working on a punching bag and Abel watching two men sparring in the ring.

Abel is taking notes in a small black note pad. He finishes a note, closes the note pad and looks to his right, toward a window in the front of the gym. Behind the glass is Harvey waving for Abel to come meet him outside.

67 EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

67

We see Abel exit the boxing gym and begin walking along the sidewalk with Harvey.

HARVEY

How are you holding up?

ABEL

Terribly.

HARVEY

Yeah, well, you look like shit.

ABEL

Maybe that's because I didn't sleep
at all last night.

HARVEY

That must've not gone over well
with the little lady.

Abel stops walking, as does Harvey.

ABEL

How do you know about her?

HARVEY

I know what you know, Abel. If
you're going to get comfortable
with anything it should be that.

They begin walking again.

ABEL

I had two soldiers in my room last night. They were looking for you.

HARVEY

I have to hand it to the Germans...once they get your scent, it's hard to shake 'em... Did you tell them anything?

ABEL

Of course not.

HARVEY

Good man. I knew I could count on you.

ABEL

They destroyed my typewriter.

HARVEY

Christ, I'm sorry pal. How are you going to write your article?

ABEL

Don't worry about it.

HARVEY

How's that coming along, by the way?

ABEL

I haven't started yet.

HARVEY

When's the fight?

ABEL

In one week.

HARVEY

Nothing like procrastination to calm the nerves.

ABEL

Hey! If it weren't for you all I'd have to worry about is a newspaper exposé.

HARVEY

Stop your bellyaching.

We see hidden beneath Abel's coat Harvey's envelope.

HARVEY

Jesus, are you carrying the damn thing around with you?

ABEL

I thought it was too risky to leave it in my apartment without me there, in case they search the place.

Harvey begins to laugh.

ABEL

What?

HARVEY

Twenty-four hours and you're already thinking like a spy. I love it.

ABEL

Oh yeah? I don't. I'm paranoid, I can't concentrate. I'm looking over both my shoulders.

HARVEY

Alright, alright. Enough. We need to talk. Do you know some place safe?

ABEL

Safe?

HARVEY

You know, private.

ABEL

My apartment.

Harvey thinks for a minute and smiles.

HARVEY

No. I've got a better idea.

We see Harvey steering a small riverboat along a river. Abel is clinched to the railing, holding on for dear life. The sky is overcast and the water is a bit choppy.

HARVEY
(referring to the boat)
Isn't she a beaut?

Abel isn't paying attention to Harvey. He's looking over his shoulder at the water.

ABEL
I knew a girl who drowned in this river.

HARVEY
You're a morose bastard, you know that?

ABEL
There's just not a lot to be happy about is all.

HARVEY
Sure there is. Come on, just look around you.

ABEL
I don't know why I agreed to this. I hate boats.

HARVEY
You've got to start taking pleasure in things, Abel. Otherwise you're liable to miss out on some of the real beauties in life.

ABEL
Hey, don't tell me about beauty.

HARVEY
I'm not talking about the pictures. I'm talking about the little things. The things that go unnoticed.

ABEL
Like what?

HARVEY
Christ, I don't know, Abel. But they're there. You ever heard the expression 'stop and smell the roses'?

ABEL
Yes.

HARVEY

Well, they're talking about you.

ABEL

Thanks for the advice.

HARVEY

Well, that much is free. I'm going to need another favor from you.

ABEL

What now?

HARVEY

I'm going to need you to deliver the envelope to one of my contacts in Berlin.

Abel now immune to such shocking news.

ABEL

What happened?

HARVEY

Everything's got all balled up. I'm sorry, good buddy, but I've been called back to the States on short notice. I leave in a few days.

ABEL

And now you need me to meet your contact and give him the envelope because you'll already be gone.

HARVEY

Whoever said you weren't smart?

ABEL

When is this?

HARVEY

A week from today.

Abel thinks for a moment.

ABEL

The day of the fight? There's no way. I can't do it.

HARVEY

I've already figured it all out. You can meet him on your way to the fight. Easy as pie. It's just a drop off.

ABEL

And what if he's not there?

HARVEY

He'll be there.

The water becomes choppier and Abel grabs the rail tighter.

HARVEY

Grab a hold of something. It's getting a little choppy.

ABEL

I think I'm going to be sick.

Abel stands up, turns around and leans over the side of the boat. The boat hits a big wave, and Abel falls from the boat and into the water.

We see Abel sinking beneath the water. A typewriter is attached to his leg, dragging him down.

A mysterious NUDE WOMAN, presumably the aforementioned woman who drowned, swims toward Abel and unlatches the typewriter from Abel's foot. Their eyes meet for a moment. The Nude Woman smiles and swims off.

Abel, now free from the weight of the typewriter, begins swimming toward the surface.

69

EXT. OCEAN -- DAY

69

We see Abel break the surface of the river; however the river has transformed into a vast ocean, and he is between two battling pirate ships. One of the pirate ships belongs to CAPTAIN WILLIAM SHALLOWGRAVE and the second is manned by the hideous winged Creatures. Shallowgrave is an older gentleman, dressed in a dirty pirate's outfit, a vest and long coat. His belt has a golden buckle and his boots come up to his knees. He is slender, with white hair and white facial hair. His weatherbeaten face is covered in shadow from his enormous hat. He has the chain of a timepiece hanging from his vest pocket and it shimmers in the sunlight.

Shallowgrave throws a rope off the side of his boat and it lands in the water beside Abel. Abel grabs the rope and begins climbing up the ship. Cannonballs are going off, flying past him, crashing into the ship.

Abel climbs aboard. Cannons and gunfire are still blowing past Abel's and Shallowgrave's head.

SHALLOWGRAVE
(shouting over the
explosions)
Welcome aboard, son! Good to have
you with us. The name is Captain
William Shallowgrave.

Abel stands and looks at Shallowgrave, confused.

ABEL
But you're not real.

SHALLOWGRAVE
More real than they'd like to hope,
my boy!

Shallowgrave fires the cannon.

We see a cannon ball smash into the Creature's ship.

We see Abel standing completely befuddled, soaking wet.

SHALLOWGRAVE
Well, don't just stand there! Help
load the cannon!

Abel rushes, picks up a cannon ball, he struggles at first
because of the weight, and loads it in the cannon. Abel looks
at Shallowgrave.

SHALLOWGRAVE
Fire, my boy!

Abel sticks his fingers in his ears and the cannon fires.

We see Shallowgrave take a pistol from his belt and fire
aimlessly at the Creature's ship.

ABEL
What do we do now?

SHALLOWGRAVE
I don't know. We're out of cannon
balls.

A cannon ball smashes into the deck causing Shallowgrave and
Abel to fall. The debris from the cannon ball is scattered
over the deck. Abel and Shallowgrave remain on their bellies,
talking to each other.

ABEL
What are we going to do? They're
going to sink us!

SHALLOWGRAVE
Not me! Not this ship!

There is a pause.

SHALLOWGRAVE
I'll tell you what we're going to
do. You're going to fly us out of
here!

ABEL
With what?

SHALLOWGRAVE
With your wings, my boy! What else?

We see Abel look over his shoulder. His wings have appeared. Shallowgrave and Abel stand up. Shallowgrave tosses him the rope.

SHALLOWGRAVE
Here, tie this around your waist!

Abel ties the rope around his waist. He stretches his wings out. They look marvelous, magical.

SHALLOWGRAVE
Godspeed, my boy!

Shallowgrave wraps his arms and legs around the mainmast.

Abel takes off, flying into the air. The rope tightens and Abel begins lifting the boat out of the water.

We see the reactions of the Creatures. Their deformed faces are in shock and awe.

Shallowgrave calls down to them, waving his hat in the air.

SHALLOWGRAVE
Farewell, vile urchin of the sea
and air! May your journey be a
cursed one!

We see the ship completely suspended in air. Water is pouring from the bottom of the ship.

Abel continues to fly. He becomes even with the sun, but as he pushes further and higher, the feathers on his wings begin to fall off. His wings stop working and Abel and the boat, along with Captain Shallowgrave fall back into the ocean with a tremendous crash.

70 EXT. RIVER -- DAY 70

We see Harvey pulling an unconscious Abel out of the water and onto the deck of the boat.

We see the river and a few feathers floating, left behind in the water.

71 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY 71

We see Abel asleep in a hospital bed.

We see Harvey's face over Abel, who is just coming to.

HARVEY

There he is. Boy, I'll tell you what, you sank like a sack of bricks. But don't you worry, Amigo, I gave you mouth to mouth resuscitation. You sprang water like one of the fountains of Rome. You just rest now, I'll get you out of here in no time.

Harvey begins to laugh as Abel loses consciousness.

72 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY 72

We see Abel awaking in the hospital bed. It is dusk and the sun is coming through the hospital window. A NURSE, speaking in a German accent is beside Abel checking his stats.

ABEL

(to Nurse)

Where am I?

NURSE

You're in the hospital, sir. You took quite a little fall off the pier.

ABEL

How long have I been here?

NURSE

Three days. Since Monday.

ABEL

That makes today?

NURSE

Wednesday.

Abel begins feeling around.

ABEL
I had an envelope.

NURSE
It's safe sir. We've put it with
your clothing.

ABEL
Where's Harvey?

NURSE
Who's Harvey, sir?

ABEL
The man that brought me here. He
was in my room.

The nurse checks her paperwork.

NURSE
Uh, sir...there doesn't seem to be
a Harvey on the sign-in sheet.

ABEL
But that's--

NURSE
Just try and relax Mr. Block. Try
and get some sleep.

ABEL
Sleep? I've just been unconscious
for three days.

NURSE
No, Mr. Block. You need some honest
to goodness rest. I'll be back in a
few hours to check on you.

We see the Nurse exit the room and Abel put his head back
down onto the pillow. He exhales loudly and closes his eyes.
After a moment his closed eyelids begin to twitch.

73

INT. CARNIVAL GROUND -- NIGHT

73

We see Adult Abel walking into a strange, slightly askew
carnival ground. He is the only one there; otherwise, the
carnival is completely abandoned.

In the distance Abel can see a RINGLEADER. He is an eerie character, strange, dressed in a traditional Ringleader outfit. Abel approaches him.

RINGLEADER

Welcome, Abel. We've all been waiting a very long time for you to come. Right this way.

The Ringleader gestures with his hands for Abel to enter the Freak show.

We see the entrance to the Freak Show. Abel walks toward it.

74 INT. FREAK SHOW -- DAY

74

The Freak Show is a dimly lit, concrete tunnel, stretching what seems like infinitely, with a small speck of light visible at the end of the tunnel.

We see Abel walking through the Freak Show, various "freaks" in cages hissing, grunting and laughing at him as he passes. We see Bruce the Dwarf, among others.

Abel reaches the end, walking backward. He slips into a black curtain.

75 INT. FUNHOUSE -- DAY

75

On the other side of the curtain Abel reappears in a hallway, which leads to a kitchen. There is a sign above him that reads **FUNHOUSE**. He begins walking through the hallway. Along the walls in the hallway are mirrors. On the left side of him his reflection shows him as a boy and on the right side of him his reflection shows him as an old man.

The mirrors end when the hallway reaches the kitchen. Everything within the kitchen is covered in thick coats of paint, including two people. The floor he's walking along is checkered black and white. We see footprints are being left in the paint-covered floor.

Abel looks at the people. They appear to be Abel's Mother, who is standing perfectly still, as if frozen against the sink and a man who resembles his father sitting on a chair facing Abel, also completely frozen.

Abel is in one of his mother's paintings, the painting he examined as a teenager before running away; therefore, everything is two dimensional, or cut in half, from Abel's point of view. The woman has only the back portion of her body. Her front portion is completely smooth.

The Man is cut down the middle with one side of his face, one arm and one leg. They are also covered in a thick layer of paint. All other furnishings in the kitchen are both cut in half and covered in paint.

Abel moves about the man and the woman, examining them, frightful.

Abel notices a vase full of flowers on the table. They too only have a front portion. Abel moves around to the other side of the table to look at the flowers. He reaches out and touches one of the petals. The petal is moist with paint and some of it comes off on Abel's fingers. Abel examines his fingers. The flower petal he touched then falls from the flower and hits the table as if it were a drop of water, becoming liquid watercolor paint on contact.

Abel then moves around the table and walks over to the woman. Abel reaches out his hand to touch her shoulder, but his hand goes right through her and covers Abel's arm in paint.

The hole in the woman's shoulder causes the rest of her to crumble and she falls to the floor looking like a puddle of watercolor paint.

76

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

76

We see a GERMAN DOCTOR standing over Abel. The Doctor speaks with a German accent.

GERMAN DOCTOR

How are you doing this morning?
I've been told you are an American
and that you speak German fluently.
How nice. But for the sake of our
conversation I'll be pleased to
speak your native language,
butchered as it might be.

The Doctor lets out an affable smile.

ABEL

Whatever you prefer, Doctor.

The Doctor takes a seat and slaps his hands on his knees.

GERMAN DOCTOR

So, how are we feeling?

ABEL

I'm feeling fine. Ready to go home.

GERMAN DOCTOR

Yes, medically there is no reason to keep you, but I'm the psychologist from downstairs and it's just a routine procedure for me to meet with patients that have...oh, how should we say...unusual incidents such as yours.

ABEL

What do you mean, unusual? I fell overboard, almost drowned. Harvey revived me and brought me here.

GERMAN DOCTOR

Yes, the nurse told me you mentioned a Harvey. Who is he?

Abel makes a face of frustration.

ABEL

The man that brought me here. Harvey Dowd. We were out on his boat, the water was choppy, I fell in.

GERMAN DOCTOR

Yes, well...we don't have any record of anyone named Harvey Dowd entering the hospital. And we have a witness that told us they saw you, Mr. Block, leaping from the pier.

ABEL

That's impossible. That's not what happened.

GERMAN DOCTOR

Well, that's why I'm here...to make sense of what happened. I'd like you to stay the night downstairs for observation.

ABEL

I'm sorry, I can't. I have very important things to do.

GERMAN DOCTOR

I understand that, Mr. Block, but it's not open for discussion, we must keep you. It is typical of any suicide case.

(MORE)

GERMAN DOCTOR (cont'd)
 The patient must be put under at least twenty-four hours of surveillance so that a proper report can be drawn up on the mental state of said patient. A bunch of legal mumbo-jumbo, as you Americans would say.

ABEL
 But--

GERMAN DOCTOR
 Now, my advice to you is to be as corporative as possible.

The Doctor gets up from his chair and walks to the door.

GERMAN DOCTOR
 The nurses will be in shortly to move you to your room.

We see Abel looking at the Doctor, speechless.

GERMAN DOCTOR
 Auf Wiedersehen, Mr. Block.

77 INT. PSYCH WARD -- DAY.

77

We see mentally ill patients spread about the Psych ward, some are talking to themselves, some are looking out of the window, some are confined to their beds.

We see Abel in bed, completely paralyzed in anger and confusion.

We see a PATIENT in the bed next to Abel, trying to get his attention by making noises.

PATIENT
 Hey...hey!

Abel looks over at him. The Patient sits up in bed and swings his legs over the side.

PATIENT
 So, you're nuts, huh?

Abel turns his head back and resumes looking toward the ceiling.

PATIENT
 Oh, come on. What's wrong with you?

ABEL

Nothing.

The Patient begins to laugh.

ABEL

What are you laughing at?

PATIENT

That was a trick question. There's something wrong with all of us. Us in here and them out there.

The Patient points toward one of the locked windows.

PATIENT

We just don't hide it as well. We have a faulty mechanism. The only thing wrong with us is we can't live in denial. That's our real problem. We see how fucked up this world is and we take it all in, every last detail... Tell me that wouldn't drive someone insane.

Abel thinks about what the Patient is telling him.

PATIENT

It's our faulty mechanism, man. I've figured it out, that's why they're keeping me here.

ABEL

Maybe it's because you're ill.

PATIENT

No more ill than the doctors or nurses in this joint. No way. They just don't like me knowing what I know. I found the loop hole and they want to shut me up. They'll want to shut you up, too. They'll call you crazy, make everything you say part of your, uh, 'mental psychosis.' They'll use it to discredit you. I'm surprised they just don't round us up and shoot us. It will get to that, mark my words. The day will come when the mad become expendable and they finish the job.

Abel is semi disturbed by the Patient's rant.

ABEL

You're nuts.

PATIENT

Maybe...maybe... that's a distinct possibility.

We hear over a loudspeaker a female nurse's voice.

FEMALE NURSE (O.C.)

(in German)

Music time, everyone. We're going to put on a record, now.

We hear the sound of the needle being put on the record. Soft, melodic music begins to play.

We see Abel, his face becomes twisted at the sound of the music. He gets up from his bed.

PATIENT

Hey, where you goin'? (calling out after Abel) Think about it!

Abel scuffles over to the Nurse at the nurse's station and begins tapping impatiently on the thin metal bars separating the nurses from the patients.

ABEL

Hey, could you turn that off! I have a condition--

FEMALE NURSE

(in German)

Back away from the bars at once!

ABEL

Please! I think I'm going to be sick!

FEMALE NURSE

(in German)

Sir, I'm warning you!

Abel grunts in agony and begins slamming his hands against the bars.

NURSE

(in German)

Guards!

We see two, large, towering GUARDS emerge from a side room. They grab Abel and restrain him.

The Patient Abel was talking to runs up and begins shouting at the Guards, pulling on them.

PATIENT
Hey, let him go!

Abel struggles on the ground.

78 INT. PADDED CELL -- DAY 78

We see Abel in a straightjacket, sitting in the corner of a padded cell with a completely deranged look on his face. His facial hair is now thick and his hair is a mess.

79 INT. ROOM -- DAY 79

We see Abel, still in the straightjacket, being escorted into a large, dark room by the two Guards.

In the room is a large table. A string of lights above the table are the only lights in the room. Seated at the table are other DOCTORS and what appear to be two NAZI OFFICERS, their faces obstructed by darkness. One of the Officers is smoking a cigarette and the smoke can be seen coiling through the light. The German Doctor from before is sitting in the center of the table. His face is the only one illuminated in light.

The Guards set Abel down in a chair in front of the table.

GERMAN DOCTOR
Oh, I don't think that will be necessary. You wouldn't harm us, would you, Abel?

ABEL
(sarcastically)
I wouldn't think of it.

The German Doctor nods to the Guards to remove the straightjacket. They do so accordingly.

Once Abel is free from the straightjacket, he stretches out his arms and cracks his neck.

GERMAN DOCTOR
That's better, isn't it?

ABEL
Much.

GERMAN DOCTOR

Now, let's get down to business, shall we? I've been watching you, Mr. Block, and not only do I think you're completely sane, I also think you are rather intelligent. I've taken the liberty of looking into you Mr. Block, and what I've found is that our government, and our leader, Adolf Hitler, in his infinite wisdom, has taken a special interest in you. You are in the unique position to help us.

ABEL

How?

GERMAN DOCTOR

I understand that you'll be reporting on the Max Schmeling fight?

ABEL

That's right.

GERMAN DOCTOR

Well, we have information indicating that Max Schmeling will win that fight, thus allowing you to report a victory for him and for Germany. The fact that you are American will only add to the credibility of the article for the rest of the world.

There is a pause. We see Abel's face, disturbed.

GERMAN DOCTOR

How would you like a position in the Ministry of Propaganda? Writing for us, enlightening the citizens of Germany. Think of the influence you'll have, the power.

Abel looks completely shocked. He breaths in deep, pushing out his chest and exhales loudly.

ABEL

That's quite an offer, although I think you should know I might have some Jewish ancestry on my mother's side.

We see one of the Nazi Officers extinguish his cigarette.

NAZI OFFICER
We'll decide who is Jewish here,
Mr. Block.

We see the Nazi Officer rise from his chair and walk over to Abel, his face still not visible.

We then see the Nazi Officer bend down in front of Abel, his face coming into the light and revealing a giant scar along his cheek. He pops up a pack of cigarettes and sticks it in Abel's face.

NAZI OFFICER
Smoke?

80 INT. PADDED CELL -- DAY

80

We see Abel in his padded cell without a straightjacket. He is sitting in the corner, rubbing his hands together, tapping his feet.

The cell door opens and one of the guards stands before Abel. The Guard tosses Abel a complete suit, buttoned around a hanger.

GUARD
Put this on.

ABEL
Why?

GUARD
You're going to a lovely dance and
you must look pretty.

The Guard closes the door.

81 INT. CAR -- NIGHT

81

We see Abel in his suit sitting beside the German Doctor in the back of what appears to be a nice vehicle. The German Doctor continues his cheerful demeanor.

GERMAN DOCTOR
I can not tell you how pleased I am
that you've decided to join us.
You've made my job so much easier.

ABEL
I didn't have much of a choice, did
I?

GERMAN DOCTOR

Of course you had a choice. You just happened to make the right one.

ABEL

Where are we going?

GERMAN DOCTOR

We are going to an annual ball, which is held every year for the top medical officials. Many top military men are here as well.

ABEL

You guys sure do like to celebrate yourselves, don't you?

GERMAN DOCTOR

We like to celebrate ourselves. You keep forgetting you are one of us now. Yes, we like to celebrate ourselves. I suppose it's a bit premature, but we'll have much to celebrate soon enough.

ABEL

Who?

GERMAN DOCTOR

You, me, Germany.

ABEL

Why?

GERMAN DOCTOR

You wouldn't want me to ruin the surprise now would you? You just enjoy yourself tonight.

We see the car pull up in front of a beautiful building with a large set of stairs leading to the main doors.

We see the German Doctor get out of the car, then bend down back in to look at Abel.

GERMAN DOCTOR

You're to come in with the driver. Remember, as of right now you are still under my care and you are to do as I tell you.

(MORE)

GERMAN DOCTOR (cont'd)
 What is it that you Americans say,
 'I do not trust you as far I can
 throw you?' Not yet, anyway. Oh,
 and buck up. It's a party.

The German Doctor closes the door.

82 INT. DINING ROOM -- NIGHT

82

We see Abel sitting around a table with decorated Nazi members and doctors. The German Doctor is seated beside Abel, who is looking rather defunct. Despite wearing nice clothing, his hair and facial hair are still a mess. We see Abel's face lost in thought, his mouth agape. A NAZI MEMBER tries to get his attention.

NAZI MEMBER
 Mr. Block...Mr. Block?

The German Doctor nudges Abel. Abel snaps back to reality.

ABEL
 Um, yes, sir...

NAZI MEMBER
 I understand you write for the pictures.

ABEL
 About them.

NAZI MEMBER
 Pardon me?

ABEL
 I write about the pictures. I'm a film critic.

NAZI MEMBER
 Then perhaps you'll agree. Film is 100 years behind every other art.

ABEL
 Actually, I think the cinema is quite capable of creating things as beautiful, and certainly as enduring, if not more so, as any other art. It's just that, an art. It takes time for an art to come into its own. The cinema is still very young.

GERMAN DOCTOR

Goebbels couldn't agree more.
Cinema has become one of our most
reliable and effective tools in
educating the public.

ABEL

I'd hardly consider those films
art.

GERMAN DOCTOR

(stern)

Mind where you are, Mr. Block. Not
everyone may share
your...incendiary thoughts, and not
everyone may be as tolerant to them
as I am.

There is an awkward pause.

NAZI MEMBER

What films have you reviewed
recently, Mr. Block?

GERMAN DOCTOR

Actually, he's covering the Max
Schmeling fight.

A GERMAN WOMAN sitting beside the Nazi Member makes a face of
disgust.

NAZI MEMBER

Boxing? Unusual for a film critic.

GERMAN WOMAN

How repulsive a sport. Grown men
beating each other that way.
Completely uncivilized.

ABEL

I couldn't agree with you more...
I was asked to take over by my
employer after the usual
sportswriter was let go once it was
discovered he was Jewish.

GERMAN WOMAN

I applaud you for taking his place,
even when you didn't like the
subject you were covering. True
journalism lives, I see. Most
people don't understand that work
must still be done despite the Jew
problem.

ABEL

The Jew problem?

GERMAN WOMAN

Yes, they work in our stores, teach
in our schools, scurrying about,
hoarding food and money like
vermin. A true detriment to our
society.

We see a WAITER walk up behind the German Woman and
decapitate her with his serving tray. Her head rolls about
the table.

We see Abel smiling at his fantasy.

GERMAN WOMAN (O.C.)

Wouldn't you agree?

We see the German Woman unharmed, looking at Abel awaiting
his response. We see everyone around the table holding their
breath waiting for Abel to speak.

ABEL

...Yes, of course.

We see the German Doctor exhale and smile.

We then see a CLOWN fumble out of a back room, walking onto
the dance floor. The other dinner members begin to clap,
drawing the German Doctor's and Abel's attention.

We see the German Doctor lean over to Abel.

GERMAN DOCTOR

(whispering to Abel)

Oh, this is the entertainment for
the evening. Truly wonderful. I
found him myself. I hope you like
magic.

We see the Clown begin to pantomime, smiling and opening his
mouth without making any noise. He begins making a bird sign
with his fingers. He then cups his hands together and then
quickly opens them again revealing a real bird.

The crowd begins to clap.

We see Abel's face lighten up.

The Clown takes a kazoo from his trousers and begins to play
a sad song.

Abel's face winces at the music. We see sweat begin rolling from his brow.

We hear the music. It is soft and beautiful. Abel's face begins to relax. A pleasant, peaceful look comes over his face.

We see the Clown playing the song.

The song finishes and the Clown takes a bow. The crowd erupts in applause, including Abel.

83 INT. PADDED CELL -- NIGHT

83

We see Abel back in his hospital clothes in his Padded Cell. The German Doctor is standing in his doorway.

GERMAN DOCTOR
You did well tonight.

ABEL
Good. Now, when the hell can I get
out of here?

The German Doctor begins examining his fingernails while he speaks to Abel.

GERMAN DOCTOR
You'll be able to go home tomorrow.
Get some sleep, Mr. Block.

The German Doctor closes the door.

We see Abel sitting in the dark.

84 INT. PADDED CELL -- DAY

84

The door to the padded cell opens. We see the Guard standing in the doorway holding a box containing Abel's regular clothes.

GUARD
Get dressed.

The Guard tosses Abel the box. Abel goes through it, searching for Harvey's envelope.

ABEL
Where's my envelope?

GUARD

I didn't see any envelope. Now,
hurry up.

We see Abel's horrified face.

85 INT. PSYCH WARD HALLWAY -- DAY.

85

We see Abel walking down the psych ward hallway in front of two large Guards. Abel's eyes are darting around.

We see the German Doctor's office.

We see the envelope, unopened on the corner of the German Doctor's desk.

We see Abel seeing the envelope. His eyes widen and focus toward the desk.

ABEL

(to Guards)

Hey, fellas...mind if I take a leak
before I get outta here? The bus
ride into town is pretty long.

GUARD

Hurry it up.

The Guards walk over to a chair near the wall, one of them sits down and they begin to talk inaudibly.

Abel walks a few steps into the bathroom. The door closes and a few moments go by.

We see the door open again and Abel peeking his head out. He looks toward the Guards. They aren't paying attention to him, deep in their conversation.

We see Abel slip out of the bathroom and walk along the wall. He gets to the German Doctor's door and looks inside.

We see the German Doctor talking to one of the Nurses, flirting, his back to Abel.

Abel slowly creeps into the German Doctor's office, being as quiet as possible. He reaches the desk, bends and stretches, his fingers touching the corner of the envelope. He looks at the German Doctor, who is still occupied with the Nurse.

Abel grabs the envelope and hides it in his coat. He sneaks back to the door. As he walks back into the hallway one of the Guards confronts him.

GUARD
What are you doing in there?

ABEL
I was looking for you. I'm ready to
get out of here.

GUARD
Come on.

They begin walking toward the front door.

We see Abel walking and then hear the German Doctor calling
after him.

GERMAN DOCTOR
Abel!

Abel freezes, a look of panic across his face. He turns
around and faces the German Doctor. The German Doctor walks
up to him, getting uncomfortably close and raises his hand
between his and Abel's chest.

GERMAN DOCTOR
You weren't going to leave without
saying goodbye?

ABEL
(sighing relief)
Of course not.

Abel awkwardly lifts his hand and shakes the German Doctor's.

GERMAN DOCTOR
I look forward to working with you.
We'll be in touch.

ABEL
Goodbye.

GERMAN DOCTOR
Auf Wiedersehen, Mr. Block.
Farewell, goodbye.

We see Abel being escorted by two large Guards out the front
of the Hospital. Abel's eyes have large, dark bags under
them. The color has completely left his face and he walks
with small steps, slowly, his arms down by his side.

We see Harvey at the bottom of the stairs waiting for Abel with his Arms extended.

HARVEY

How are you doing partner?

Abel walks, emotionless, into Harvey's arms. Abel does not wrap his arms around Harvey, but keeps them hanging by his sides. Harvey wraps Abel up in a tight grip. After a minute of a hug, Harvey extends himself away from Abel, keeping his hands on his shoulders.

HARVEY

What happened to you?

ABEL

They said you weren't real.

HARVEY

What?

Abel pushes away from Harvey angrily.

ABEL

They said they had no record of a Harvey Dowd on the sign-in sheet!

Harvey looks at Abel like he's stupid.

HARVEY

Abel, I'm an American spy. I can't go putting my name on a sign-in sheet.

ABEL

They said there was a witness who saw me jump off a pier.

HARVEY

Well, damn it, I had to tell them something.

ABEL

(yelling)

You son of a bitch! They put me in a straightjacket!

Harvey lets out a little laugh.

HARVEY

Jesus, I'm sorry pal.

ABEL

You're sorry? I had a meeting with
Nazi Officials!

HARVEY

You did? They're not onto you, are
they?

ABEL

On to me? I haven't done anything.

HARVEY

Well what'd they want?

ABEL

They want me to write propaganda
for them.

HARVEY

That's just fucking perfect. I
needed someone with a low profile,
now they're reviewing your resumé.

ABEL

I told them I would.

HARVEY

You did what?!

ABEL

I had to. What else was I going to
do? Tell them no while they had me
in a padded cell? They'd never let
me out... I'm now working for the
American and German government. I'm
a fucking double agent.

Harvey thinks for a moment.

HARVEY

This is all right. We can fix this.
I'll get you on the next train out
of Germany.

ABEL

I was planning that already. It's
about time I get out of here.

HARVEY

Where are you thinking of
relocating?

ABEL

I'm going home.

HARVEY

Great! We'll meet up for drinks back in the States. We'll laugh about all this one day, you'll see.

ABEL

Just leave me alone.

HARVEY

I won't be in your hair much longer. I'm leaving today. I pushed back my trip to make sure you were alright.

ABEL

How thoughtful of you.

87 EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY

87

We see Abel and Harvey walking down the sidewalk in front of Abel's apartment.

HARVEY

He'll be in a suit, glasses and black gloves.

ABEL

(sarcastically)
Very discreet.

HARVEY

Hey, leave the discreetness to me, alright?

ABEL

Alright, alright. When is this all happening, again?

HARVEY

It's tonight at Seven, on your way to the fight.

ABEL

Oh my god, the fight's tonight?!

HARVEY

(sympathetically)
Jesus, you had a hell of a time in there, didn't you? You lost track of the days. You've been there for a week pal.

Harvey makes a bashful face.

Abel takes a seat on his stoop and runs his hands through his hair.

ABEL
What am I going to do?

HARVEY
You'll be fine. Just follow the plan.

Abel puts his head down, completely defeated.

HARVEY
I hate to leave you now, but I'm going to be late. It's been a hell of a pleasure meeting you.

Abel stands up and reaches out his hand to shake. They shake.

ABEL
I wish I could say the same.

HARVEY
Oh you don't mean that.

ABEL
Goodbye Harvey.

Abel turns to walk up his stoop and into his apartment.

HARVEY
Abel--

Abel turns around and looks down at Harvey.

HARVEY
Remember to stop and smell the roses.

Harvey lets out a big smile. Removes his hat and holds it in his hand.

HARVEY
Adios, Amigo.

Harvey vanishes.

We see Abel enter his apartment. We see a note on his writing desk. Abel rushes over and begins to read it silently.

We see the note and hear Irena's voice reading it.

IRENA (V.O.)

I am leaving, Abel. I haven't heard from you in over a week and I am taking that as a sign that you do not return the love I have for you. I do not want you to worry about me. I am taking a train to Paris. I have always wanted to see Paris, and now seems like the perfect time. I know the boxing match is tonight, and I know how terrible this article has been on you. I hope for your happiness and I wish you luck, Abel. Goodbye. Irena.

Abel closes the note and runs out of the apartment door.

89

EXT. TRAIN STATION -- DAY

89

We see Abel pushing his way through a sea of people, leaping in the air, trying to spot Irena.

Abel runs to the platform and sees Irena, dressed in a beautiful dress, decorated in flowers, sitting with her luggage.

Abel runs to her and stops a few feet away when she looks up and notices him.

IRENA

Abel, what are you doing here?

ABEL

I've come to stop you from leaving.

IRENA

Oh, Abel...it's too late for that. I'm getting on that train to Paris.

ABEL

But you can't go.

Irena fights back tears and lets out a coy laugh.

IRENA

Please, let's not pretend we're in the pictures. You disappeared on me. What kind of leading man does that?

ABEL

I don't know. I'm not much of a leading man. But you can't go, please.

IRENA

I have to.

ABEL

I'm sorry. I'm sorry for how I've been this last month. I haven't been myself.

IRENA

It's not just this past month, Abel. It's how it always is. I've never been important in your life. I knew from the beginning that there were things about you I could never know. I was fine with that then, but I'm not anymore.

ABEL

I know I live in a fantasy world, that I have my head in the clouds most of the time. It's even becoming too much for me. I can barely tell what's real anymore.

IRENA

I'm real, Abel. I always have been. Now, I want you to go.

ABEL

But I don't want to.

IRENA

Please.

ABEL

I'm sorry, Irena.

IRENA

Don't apologize. I just want you to be happy.

Abel begins fighting back tears. He lets out a little smile to hide that fact.

ABEL

How?

There is a pause. Irena looks as if she is thinking.

IRENA

Maybe stop looking for the beauty
in things. Maybe just let them be
beautiful on their own, for what
they are.

Irena leans in and kisses Abel's cheek, pressing her face
against his. Before she breaks away, she closes her eyes and
breaths in.

IRENA

Goodbye.

Irena pulls away, grabs her bag and runs off.

We see Abel standing still while everyone around him hustles
in different directions. He is the only one who remains
still.

We see Irena pass through the crowd, like a zigzag.

90 INT. APARTMENT -- DAY 90

We see Abel return to his apartment, sit down on the bed and
then lie down fully. We see him staring off into space.

91 EXT. CARNIVAL GROUND -- DAY 91

We see Adult Abel, a few years younger than his normal adult
self, packing away some of the Magician's things. The
Magician is behind him. He appears a few years older.

Abel looks up and sees Irena walking along through the
carnival ground. He stops in his tracks and looks at her,
falling in love. She glances up at him and smiles softly,
then looks down at her feet.

Abel puts down his box of tricks and watches Irena as she
walks. He reaches into the box and pulls out the magician's
trick-wand that becomes a bouquet of flowers, and chases
after her.

ABEL

(to Irena)

Miss, please stop.

Irena stops.

IRENA

Can I help you?

ABEL

Yes, I brought these for you.

Abel turns the wand into the flowers and hands them to Irena.

IRENA

Oh my, how lovely.

She sniffs the flowers and makes a sour face.

IRENA

They smell like dust.

Abel looks embarrassed. Irena smiles and continues to walk. Abel follows after.

ABEL

What is your name?

IRENA

Irena. What's yours?

ABEL

Abel.

IRENA

Oh, I thought your name was Bill.

Abel begins to laugh.

ABEL

No, that's just for the show.

IRENA

I see. Well, Abel...perhaps I will see you around.

Irena walks off. Abel stops and looks at her, madly in love.

We see Abel walking back to the Magician.

MAGICIAN

What was that all about?

ABEL

Nothing.

MAGICIAN

Well, take a good look around.

ABEL

What do you mean?

MAGICIAN

We're hitting the road again.
Moving on to Poland.

Abel looks after Irena. She is far away, among a crowd of exiting people, but she is still visible.

ABEL

When do we set out?

MAGICIAN

Two days. You better get packed.

Abel pauses, thinks for a moment.

ABEL

I'm not going.

MAGICIAN

What?

ABEL

I'm not going with you. I've met a girl and I'm going to stay.

MAGICIAN

You've met a girl? Let me tell you something, Abel...I've met many girls, a few women too, and none of them have offered me what the road has. La strada! Freedom, danger, adventure! The road will never leave you with no money in your pocket, or food in your belly. In fact it's at times the only place to go when you have no food or money. At least it's faithful. Women aren't so reliable. They're wicked and they all leave, every one of them.

ABEL

I'm sorry you feel that way.

MAGICIAN

You're serious about this, aren't you?

ABEL

Yes.

The Magician looks at Abel a moment in silence.

MAGICIAN

Alright then, go on, get out of here. But don't say I didn't warn you.

The Magician reaches out his hand to shake. Abel embraces it.

ABEL

Will I ever see you again?

MAGICIAN

Hard to say. I've been known to reappear from time to time.

The Magician lets out a raspy, wholehearted laugh.

92

EXT. FIELD -- DAY

92

We see Abel and Irena walking hand in hand on a field full of tall grass, blowing in the wind. Abel is covering his eyes with his free hand. We can see that Irena is leading him toward a hot-air balloon. There are other people boarding other hot-air balloons as well.

IRENA

Alright, open your eyes.

Abel uncovers his eyes and sees that he is at the foot of a giant hot-air balloon.

ABEL

Oh my god.

IRENA

Come on, get in.

ABEL

Is it safe?

IRENA

I think so. Come on.

They both get in.

We see the air balloon fire up.

We see all the air balloons lifting off into the air.

We see Abel looking down at the ground as it becomes smaller and smaller. He kisses Irena.

Again we see all the air balloons, they are floating delicately in the air, almost gliding.

We see Abel the happiest we've ever seen him.

93

EXT. FIELD -- NIGHT

93

It is dusk. The sun is setting. We see Abel and Irena sitting on the grass together.

ABEL

(to Irena)

Thank you. That is the most fun I've ever had. It's always been my dream to fly.

IRENA

Really?

ABEL

Yes. Ever since I was a little boy I wanted to be a pilot. Really I wanted to fly, but being a pilot was the only way I knew how to do it and these air balloons were the closest I've ever gotten.

IRENA

Why didn't you become a pilot?

ABEL

Ah, my father wouldn't allow it. I guess it wasn't what he envisioned for me... There was an air-show in my town when I was a kid. I wanted to go so badly. But my father didn't take me. I knew then that he'd never let me become a pilot, if he wouldn't even take me to a stupid air-show. So, I gave up on it. Tried to put it out of my mind.

Irena makes a sad face. She then looks up, past Abel and into the distance.

IRENA

Hey, what's that?

We see a small patch of light in the distance. Abel leans up and looks.

ABEL

I don't know.

Irena grabs Abel's hand.

IRENA
Come on, let's go see.

94 EXT. FIELD -- DAY

94

We see a sign that reads: **Porcelain Bathtubs**

We see a square made of white, porcelain bathtubs in the middle of the grassy field, only lit by small, soft lights also in a square suspended from pipes around the tubs. There are a few other couples examining the tubs as Abel and Irena charge in.

ABEL
This is so strange.

IRENA
I think it's romantic.

Irena sees a certain tub and her eyes widen.

IRENA
Oh, let's try this one!

Irena gets inside the tub and sits down. Abel begins to laugh.

IRENA
Oh, and now this one!

Irena gets up and hops into another tub.

IRENA
This one is comfortable.

Abel gets on his knees beside the tub Irena is sitting in. He leans in and kisses her. She closes her eyes and kisses back.

95 INT. APARTMENT -- NIGHT

95

We see Abel is sleeping on his bed. It has become night and the sun is down. Abel wakes up in a panic and looks at his timepiece, resting on the bedside table.

We see the timepiece. It reads 6:55.

Abel gets up, grabs his coat, grabs Harvey's envelope off of his writing desk and runs out the apartment door.

We see Abel sprinting down the road, holding the envelope in one hand and trying to put on his coat with the other.

We see Abel running down the street a ways. We then hear from behind Abel a Nazi troop calling out to him in German.

NAZI TROOP
(in German)
You there! Stop!

Abel continues to run, looking over his shoulder at the Nazi Troop. When he turns his head back around, we see one of the Creature's hands pushed against Abel's chest stopping him from running. We see Abel look down at the claw-like hand and then up at the Creature's face.

We see the Creature. It is looking down at Abel. He then lets out a tremendous roar, so loud that it blows Abel's hair back violently.

We then see a SECOND NAZI TROOP in place of the Creature with his hand extended against Abel's chest.

NAZI TROOP 2
(in German)
Halt!

The other Troop comes up behind Abel.

NAZI TROOP
(In German)
Why were you running like a madman
and why didn't you stop when I
called after you?

Abel pauses for a moment, still looking at the second Nazi Troop, his mouth open like he is about to speak but no sound comes out. He then composes himself and turns to the first Nazi Troop.

ABEL
(in German)
I'm sorry, I didn't know you were
calling after me. See, I'm a film--
a sports writer and I'm covering
the Max Schmeling fight. I didn't
want to be late.

The Nazi Troop looks down at the envelope.

NAZI TROOP
 (in German)
 What's in the envelope?

ABEL
 (in German)
 Notes on the fight. Research.

NAZI TROOP
 (in German)
 May I see it please?

There is a pause. Abel looks panicked. He hands the envelope begrudgingly to the Troop.

The Troop opens the envelope.

We see Abel's face, eyes wide. The tension is tangible.

The Troop looks over the contents. He flips through a few pages, closes up the envelope and hands it back to Abel.

NAZI TROOP
 (in German)
 Sorry for the inconvenience, sir.
 You better hurry. The fight is
 about to begin.

Abel, horrified, shocked, confused.

ABEL
 (in German)
 Thank you.

The Nazi Troops walk off. Abel stands there for a moment trying to understand the situation. We then see him start walking again, turn down an alleyway and open up the envelope, ripping it.

He looks at the paper. It reads: **Abel Block and I have fun together** over and over again. He flips through the pages only to find more of the same.

Abel looks completely deranged at this point. His face is a combination of horror and insanity, but eventually become emotionless. He begins dropping the papers into the alleyway. He finally drops them all and they blow around his feet in the slight breeze.

We then hear from a large speaker a voice in German.

VOICE (O.C.)
 Ladies and gentleman! The fight
 you've all been waiting for!

Abel looks over his shoulder in the direction of the voice.

97 INT. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 97

We see Abel, moving slowly, his face still emotionless. He takes his seat in the front row. MAX SCHMELING and his OPPONENT enter the ring, a REFEREE is also in the ring.

We see Abel's face. We see his eyes.

IRENA (V.O.)
 Maybe stop looking for the beauty
 in things. Maybe just let them be
 beautiful on their own, for what
 they are.

We see the fighters move toward each other.

We see Abel's face watching the boxers differently for the first time.

98 INT. STAGE -- NIGHT 98

We see a BALLERINA dancing, performing a dance move similar to that of a movement from a boxer..

99 INT. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 99

We see Schmeling's feet pivoting gracefully.

100 INT. STAGE -- NIGHT 100

We see the Ballerina's feet on point.

101 INT. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 101

We see Abel's face, his eyes softening. He is seeing the beauty in boxing for the first time.

Schmeling and the other Boxer continue to fight.

102 INT. STAGE -- NIGHT 102

We see the Ballerina spinning around in front of a massive crowd.

103 INT. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 103

We see Schmeling and the other fighter, the massive crowd behind them.

Schmeling punches his Opponent, knocking him to the canvas.

We see the Referee begin counting the Opponent out.

104 INT. STAGE -- NIGHT 104

We see the Ballerina continue to dance.

105 INT. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 105

The Referee counts ten and begins waving his arms over the Opponent.

We see the crowd rise to their feet in cheers.

106 INT. STAGE -- NIGHT 106

We see the Ballerina bow and the audience stand and cheer.

107 INT. BOXING ARENA -- NIGHT 107

We see Schmeling leaving the ring victorious.

We see Abel sitting alone in his chair, as everyone else has rushed the ring. His eyes are moist.

108 INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT 108

We see an OLD ABEL, sickly, lying in bed with an older, female CARETAKER by his side.

CARETAKER

You rest easy, now, Mr. Abel.

We hear a slight grumble come from Abel.

The Caretaker gets up from the side of the bed and meets another WOMAN near the door. The room is dark, furnished with wood. There is a candle flickering on the bedside table.

We see the Caretaker whispering to the Woman.

CARETAKER

(whispering)

I'll be surprised if he makes it through the night. It's a shame, poor man dying alone like that.

WOMAN

(whispering)

Isn't there anyone?

CARETAKER

(whispering)

No one I've ever seen and I've been his caretaker for more than ten years. From what little he's told me, he's lived an interesting life. Lived in Germany, came back to the States before the war broke out, and as he tells it, just in time, too. Had some sort of breakdown, though. Got real sick and was in the hospital.

WOMAN

(whispering)

That's a shame.

CARETAKER

He's a peculiar man. I just hope he goes peacefully.

We see the Caretaker and the Woman leave the room quietly, closing the door behind them.

We see Abel in bed, his eyes with a glaze over them, his face, calm, lost in thought.

109

EXT. FANTASY WORLD -- DAY

109

We see Adult Abel standing beside Francis Von Riptorn and Captain William Shallowgrave, all with their hands tied, captured by the hideous Creatures, which are many in number and surrounding them.

The world they are in consists of a beautiful riverbank, and a body of water that is running off the end of the Earth. The sun is beneath the earth, on the rise.

We see the world as flat, and we see the water pouring off and evaporating into space.

We see a guillotine. Abel, Francis and Shallowgrave are standing a line awaiting their execution.

Francis is first in line. The shrieks of the Creatures can be heard, monstrous, loud, grotesque.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

(to Abel)

It's been an adventure hasn't it,
my boy?

ABEL

I'm sorry it had to end this way.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

Nonsense, my boy! I wouldn't have
it end any other way.

A Creature grabs Francis and sticks him in the guillotine.

ABEL

I wish there was something I could
do.

Francis looks up from the guillotine with a smile.

FRANCIS VON RIPTON

Well, sure there is, son. This is
your fantas--

The blade of the Guillotine slams down onto Francis's neck, decapitating him. We see his head fall into the basket and roll over, facing up.

Abel leans over and looks inside the basket. We see Francis's eye wink. Abel looks toward Shallowgrave.

SHALLOWGRAVE

(to Abel)

What do you say we start a fight?

We see Shallowgrave's hands slipping loose of the rope that ties them.

SHALLOWGRAVE

My hands have been tied in tighter
knots in the bedroom!

Shallowgrave goes for his sword. He unsheathes it and begins gracefully fighting the Creatures, cutting off their arms and heads. One after the other comes after him and he continues to slay them.

SHALLOWGRAVE

(to Abel)

Spin around!

Abel spins around and Shallowgrave cuts Abel's rope with his sword, freeing him.

We see one of the creatures cutting the rope that ties Shallowgrave's ship to the dock with an axe. The ship begins to float toward the waterfall that spills over the Earth.

SHALLOWGRAVE

My ship!

Shallowgrave begins chasing after it. He reaches the end of land and jumps into the water, grabbing onto the cut rope still attached to the ship. He climbs it, gets aboard and looks toward Abel.

SHALLOWGRAVE

Now, my boy! Now! This is your chance to escape!

Shallowgrave removes his hat and waves goodbye with it. We see him and the boat sail over the edge.

We see Abel, Creatures surround him, he spreads his wings and pushes his way through them, reaching the edge of the Earth. Abel leaps off and begins to fly. He flies higher and higher, above the climbing sun. He executes a somersault and a twists in the air as he continues to fly into the darkness, over the sun and into space.

110 INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT 110

We see Old Abel in bed. His eyes close and he is dead.

111 EXT. PARK -- DAY 111

Old Abel is playing chess with YOUNG MAN in a park.

We see Abel make the winning move.

OLD ABEL

Checkmate.

YOUNG MAN

Ah, that was a good game, Mr. Block.

OLD ABEL

Another one?

YOUNG MAN

I think I have time for one more.

OLD ABEL

Ah, a young man not afraid to lose.
I admire that.

The young man lets out a playful laugh. They reset the board and begin a new game.

YOUNG MAN

Have you always been this good at chess?

OLD ABEL

Not always. My mother taught me how to play.

YOUNG MAN

Your mother?

OLD ABEL

Yes, she was a wonderful player. Her father taught her how to play and so she taught me.

YOUNG MAN

Did your father play?

OLD ABEL

Oh, no. He thought of it as trivial, boring. He never understood that it was the perfect analogy for life. Strategic, difficult, and most dangerously of all, time consuming. You have to pick the right moves to keep the game going. It takes patience, endurance... (bashfully) But look at me going on, who am I to talk?

YOUNG MAN

You told me last time that you worked in a carnival as a magician's assistant.

OLD ABEL

Yes, I did.

YOUNG MAN

What made you want to do that?

OLD ABEL

Well, I was still in Germany at the time. I was on my own, I didn't have much money and I just kind of stumbled upon it.

Abel looks down at his hands, bashful, coyly smiling.

OLD ABEL

When I was a boy I wanted to go to a carnival they were having in my town. There was going to be an air-show, promising magnificent stunts.

Abel pauses for a moment.

OLD ABEL

But my father didn't take me. I don't know why, but that's stayed with me more than anything else. How awful he treated me, and my mother. I just remember the hurt I felt from missing that air-show. Funny how certain memories stick out more so than others. I can even remember the name. The Flying Circus.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, the Flying Circus. I've heard of that.

OLD ABEL

You have?

YOUNG MAN

Of course, it's famous.

OLD ABEL

It is?

YOUNG MAN

Yeah. The only one more famous is Barnum and Bailey. I think it's still around.

Abel looks astonished.

YOUNG MAN

You know what this means?

OLD ABEL

What?

YOUNG MAN

You can still see it.

OLD ABEL

Oh, that's alright.

YOUNG MAN

What do you mean? You just told me it's one of things you remember most. I could never live with that regret.

OLD ABEL

Regret is something you learn to live with. It's amazing how much a man can hide away within himself. You'll do it. You'll swallow things, miss opportunities, make stupid mistakes. That's life.

YOUNG MAN

But this is your opportunity to amend one of those regrets. I don't understand why you would miss it again, after all these years. The one thing I've learned for myself is that most chances don't come around again.

The Young Man gets up. Abel sits, thinking about the Young Man's words.

YOUNG MAN

I've got to go. Same time next week?

Without turning his head, Abel replies.

OLD ABEL

Yes. Same time next week.

112 INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT

112

We see Old Abel walk into his bedroom. He sits down at his desk and begins working on a model airplane.

Visible on the wall is a frame containing a Pulitzer Prize and a plaque that reads: **1935 Pulitzer Prize for Journalism Awarded to Abel Block for his Article "Nazi Corruption in Boxing: The Max Schmeling Fight"**

We see the door crack open and the Caretaker poke her head in.

CARETAKER

Are you going to need anything else tonight, Mr. Abel?

OLD ABEL
 (somberly)
 No...no. I'm fine. Thank you. Good
 night.

CARETAKER
 Good night, Mr. Abel.

The Caretaker closes the door.

Abel resumes working on his model airplane. He then stops,
 sitting still, a thought bothering him.

113 INT. BEDROOM -- NIGHT 113

We see Old Abel toss his suitcase on the bed.

114 EXT. RAILROAD -- DAY 114

We see a train moving along the track on an overcast day.

We see trees swaying in the wind.

115 INT. TRAIN -- DAY 115

We see Old Abel riding on the train, looking out the window.
 Raindrops are visible on the glass. The slight jolt of the
 train rocks Abel back and forth in his seat.

We see Abel's face through the rain-covered window.

We see the ground rushing past.

116 EXT. TRAIN STATION -- DAY 116

We see Old Abel getting off the train. He steps onto the
 platform and looks around.

117 EXT. SIDEWALK -- DAY 117

We see Old Abel walking down the same sidewalk he walked down
 as a child. He lumbers along, weak. His face filled with
 optimism.

We see Abel get to the end of the block. There is a fruit
 stand. Abel stops and examines the fruit. He picks up a pear,
 pays for it and walks off.

The sun is out and beating down on his shoulders. Abel removes his jacket and hangs it over his arm.

118 EXT. CITY SIDEWALK -- DAY 118

We see Old Abel walking past shops and restaurants. He looks in the window of one of the restaurants, cupping his hands around his eyes against the glass.

He sees a picture of his father in his boxing gear hanging on the restaurant's wall.

119 EXT. CITY SIDEWALK -- DAY 119

We see a LITTLE BOY with a top hat on the ground to collect change. He is performing a magic show. There are two ADULTS standing around, watching him.

We see Abel watching the Little Boy from across the street. He makes his way over and stands with the other Adults.

The boy tries to do a card trick, but the trick fails and the cards fall on the ground. The two Adults walk away without giving the Boy any change. The Little Boy, frustrated, begins picking up his playing cards.

Abel bends down and helps him pick up the cards.

LITTLE BOY

Thanks.

OLD ABEL

You're welcome.

LITTLE BOY

I can't get this trick to work.

OLD ABEL

How many tricks do you know?

LITTLE BOY

Just this one.

Abel lets out a small chuckle.

OLD ABEL

Here, let me show you something.

They both stand up. Abel takes a coin out of his pocket. He places the coin in the center of his hand. He turns his hand, turns it back and the coin is gone. He turns his hand again and when he turns it back the coin has reappeared.

The Little Boy's mouth opens, amazed.

LITTLE BOY
How did you do that?!

OLD ABEL
Oh, no...a magician never tells his secrets.

LITTLE BOY
It's alright if the other person is a real magician!

OLD ABEL
And you're a real magician?

LITTLE BOY
Yes, sir. You bet I am.

OLD ABEL
How can I be sure?

LITTLE BOY
I'll never tell anybody, I promise.

OLD ABEL
Alright, only if you promise.

LITTLE BOY
I promise.

Abel smiles, leans in, cups his hand around the Boy's ear, whispering to him.

120 EXT. HILL -- DAY

120

We see Old Abel sit down for a rest on a grassy hill. Abel sits for a moment, closes his eyes and enjoys the breeze against his face.

Abel opens his eyes and we see that Irena, still young, has appeared beside him on the hill. She is almost nonchalant in demeanor.

OLD ABEL
Oh, Irena. I'm glad you're here. I was afraid I might never see you again...You look very beautiful.

IRENA
Thank you, Abel.

OLD ABEL
Irena?

IRENA
Yes?

OLD ABEL
What have you come here for? Now of all times, when I was feeling happy.

IRENA
To see you, of course.

OLD ABEL
But why?

IRENA
Because you needed to see me one last time. You have to ask me a question.

OLD ABEL
Is it wrong of me to ask you why you left me?

IRENA
No, it's not wrong of you.

There is a pause. Abel looks down and laughs to himself quietly, bitterly.

OLD ABEL
After all this time of wondering, now that you're in front of me... it doesn't seem like the right question.

IRENA
Then don't ask it.

OLD ABEL
I'm sorry, Irena. I shouldn't haven't ignored you, I should have been there for you more.

Irena lightly laughs.

IRENA
Don't be sorry. I am very happy without you. There just wasn't enough room for me in your life.
(MORE)

IRENA (cont'd)
You cared more about your dreams,
they were most important.

OLD ABEL
My dreams? They were just that...
dreams. You were real, you gave me
the love I needed, I just couldn't
see is all.

There is a pause. Abel is brooding with regret and sorrow.

IRENA
How do you feel?

OLD ABEL
I feel stifled, cheated... consumed
with regret, as if you were to
poked me I'd burst with it.

IRENA
Oh, don't have regrets about me,
Abel. You did me the greatest favor
anyone could. You let me go, before
it was too late.

OLD ABEL
But I do. I'd give back everything,
my Pulitzer Prize if meant I could
take back what I've done.

IRENA
Oh, right. The article. Did you
find what you were looking for?

OLD ABEL
Yes. Thanks to you. Because of what
you told me.

IRENA
That's good, Abel. I'm happy for
you.

OLD ABEL
I never stopped caring for you, you
know.

Irena laughs condescendingly.

IRENA
Poor Abel, you're so sentimental.
You were a critic. I thought you
were supposed to be objective.

OLD ABEL

I never really was much of a critic. A journalist, a pilot. I never was really much of anything.

IRENA

You were all you could be.

There is a pause. Abel exhales, his demeanor softening, his voice becoming weaker and sentimental.

OLD ABEL

Well, it wasn't enough...I think I know what question I'd like to ask you.

IRENA

What's that?

OLD ABEL

Can you tell me you love me? I'd like to hear it once more.

IRENA

You know I can't do that. I have fallen in love with someone else. I am young and still capable of love. It is you that is old and at the end of your life.

Abel begins to cry noiselessly, the tears just rolling down his wrinkled cheeks.

IRENA

Don't cry, dear. Promise me you'll be happy, Abel. I want you to be happy.

Abel looks at her.

IRENA

Come on. Tell me you promise.

OLD ABEL

(choking on tears)
I promise.

IRENA

Good.

Irena leans over and kisses Abel on the cheek.

IRENA

I must leave you now.

OLD ABEL

I know.

We see Abel sitting on the hill alone, a gust of wind blows, rustling up his hair and causing his shirt sleeves to flap in the wind.

121 EXT. CARNIVAL GROUND -- DAY

121

It is evening, but the sun is still high in the air. Old Abel is walking along a field where the air-show should be, but all he sees are two CARNIVAL WORKERS talking to one another, appearing to pack up the carnival equipment into a truck.

We see Abel walk toward them in a panic. He tries to get their attention, but he is too far away for them to make out what he's saying.

OLD ABEL

Hey there!

The Workers turn toward him and signal that they can't hear him, mouthing the words "what" and putting their hands behind their ears.

CARNIVAL WORKER 1

What?

CARNIVAL WORKER 2

What are you saying, old man?

Abel gets close enough from them to hear.

OLD ABEL

Have I missed it? Have I missed the air-show? Am I too late?

CARNIVAL WORKER 1

Nah, you're early. We're just setting up.

Abel smiles, exhaling, his shoulders relaxing.

OLD ABEL

I'm not too late.

We hear a rumble. Abel's ears perk up. The rumble is the same rumble we hear when Abel is a boy on the beach.

We see two airplanes flying from out in the distance.

We see the planes, two biplanes cutting through the clouds.

As the planes get closer Abel begins following them with his finger, raising his arm in the air.

The planes appear overhead. Old Abel follows through with his finger as they fly over him, and as they pass over he transforms into Young Abel, finishing coming down, pointing his finger after them.

Young Abel remains bent down for a moment, pointing.

We see that the entire Carnival is up and running behind him. The lights from the rides are glowing, the rides themselves are functional, the sun is almost completely set.

Children are running around with firework sparklers in their hands, playing and laughing.

Young Abel stands up straight and looks forward.

We see a LITTLE GIRL dressed in the same dress Irena wore when leaving Abel at the train station, holding a sparkler and running in a zigzag across the field in front of Young Abel, also as Irena did at the train station.

Eventually Young Abel runs off and joins the other children.

We get further away from the carnival, revealing the entrance that has a sign decorated in light bulbs. The sign reads **Flying Circus**. Each bulb lights individually around the words, then they all flash in unison three times, blinking on and off.

Fade out.