

A WOMAN IN THE SHADOWS

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FADE IN:

INT. 1955 SOUNDSTAGE - INDIAN PALACE - DAY

A lavish Indian palace. So detailed, that only the camera and lighting equipment give away that it's a movie set.

The gear and people's outfits let us know we're somewhere in the fifties. To be precise:

TITLE: Berlin, 1955

Tension in the air. Crew and extras in costume stand by impatiently, looking at:

The director's chair, empty. It reads: FRITZ LANG.

The PRODUCER (40s) walks up to the ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (30s). An exchange of WORRIED WHISPERS. Something is terribly wrong.

PRODUCER

Still nothing.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Cancel for the day again?

PRODUCER

But don't dismiss everyone at once.
I don't want the press to get wind
of what's happening.

As the AD heads towards the crew, the DOOR SWINGS OPEN and everyone turns to see

RUDOLF KLEIN-ROGGE (70), an old man who you may or may not recognize as the actor who played the mad scientist in Lang's 1927 classic, Metropolis.

RUDOLF

Who's in charge?

The producer, frowning, addresses Rudolf.

PRODUCER

Sir, this is a closed set.

RUDOLF

Where is Fritz?

PRODUCER

Herr Lang is working and can't be
disturbed.

RUDOLF
Please. I know what a set looks
like when that bastard's working.

The producer is thrown off by Rudolf's tone.

PRODUCER
I need you to leave, Herr...

RUDOLF
Klein-Rogge.

We can sense that the producer recognizes the name, as he struggles to match this man's face with his recollection of the great Rudolf Klein-Rogge.

PRODUCER
I am so sorry, Herr Klein-Rogge, I
hadn't recognized--

RUDOLF
I need to see Fritz.

PRODUCER
I'm afraid that's impossible.

RUDOLF
I can make him shoot this film.

The producer is taken aback. Tempted. But:

PRODUCER
He won't see anyone.

RUDOLF
He'll see me.

INT. 1955 SOUNDSTAGE - FRITZ'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY

Rudolf was right: FRITZ LANG holds the door open for him. The legend, in his 60s but still a towering figure, hides utter shock behind his iconic monocle.

From the silence between them, we sense these men once knew each other well. But that was a long time ago.

RUDOLF
I have some things you left behind.

FRITZ
I left nothing behind.

RUDOLF
Is that why you opened the door?

FRITZ
I wanted to make sure you had aged
poorly. I am satisfied.

Fritz motions to slam the door shut, but Rudolf stops him by holding out what looks like an OLD SCREENPLAY. Fritz recognizes the title: THE INDIAN TOMB. He looks up at Rudolf.

RUDOLF
If you're going to shoot The Indian
Tomb, you'll need this.

FRITZ
I have a script.

RUDOLF
You need the script.

Fritz turns around and walks back into the room, leaving the door open. Rudolf follows him inside; he knows that's as much of an invitation as he's going to get.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)
You have to get back out there and
do this right. You owe it to her.

FRITZ
She stole this picture from me!

RUDOLF
She was protecting you. That's all
she ever did.

FRITZ
Protect. Betray. Different things.

RUDOLF
I will never understand. How it's
possible for you to be so
brilliant... and so fucking dumb.

Fritz stares at Rudolf, bewildered: *Dumb? Me?*

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

If I told you I could explain why she did what she did, if I could make sense of everything that happened, do you think you could get your head out of your ass and listen to me for once?

FRITZ

Can you also explain why I found her in bed with my best friend?

Rudolf takes the blow below the belt.

RUDOLF

I didn't know you considered me your best friend.

FRITZ

Don't flatter yourself. It is not a high bar.

It was said playfully, but it's the truth. And a sad one. Rudolf takes pity on his old friend. Fritz looks away, rejecting Rudolf's compassion. But he does take the script.

And, as he leafs through its yellowed pages, we

FADE TO:

EXT. THE GERMAN BLACK FOREST - DAY

An imposing landscape of mountains, lakes and creeks. Evergreens tower above us. It's nature's power in full display. Or so we think, until...

A gigantic pine tree starts to move towards us. A powerful light goes on and we see THREE YOUNG MEN carrying the tree a few yards away. This is not a forest, but a:

INT. 1919 SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

TITLE: Berlin, 1919

The men helping carry the pine tree ALMOST BUMP INTO

Fritz Lang, now barely 30, but already holding the promise of the legend he will become. He nervously clings to a script.

Suddenly, Fritz sets eyes on her:

THEA VON HARBOU (32). Magnetic blue eyes. Confident, overpowering. The kind of woman everyone loves to watch but is afraid to approach.

In avoiding Fritz, the men lose control of the tree, which FALLS and is DIRECTLY HEADED TOWARD Thea.

Fritz can't take his eyes off Thea, who sits on an apple box, going over some script pages, oblivious to the TREE THAT IS ABOUT TO CRUSH HER and which...

... she DODGES just in time. As the young men rush up to her, Thea dusts herself off.

THEA

I'm alive, everyone! Back to work!
Sorry I scared you. I shouldn't
have been sitting there.

FRITZ

It was foolish indeed.

Thea's irritated frown meets Fritz's extended hand.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Fritz Lang. A friend of the
director of this disaster.

THEA

Thea Von Harbou. The screenwriter
of this... "disaster."

Oops. Fritz tries to fix it.

FRITZ

Well, the writing is not terrible.
It's that actor ruining every line.

THEA

That actor, Herr Lang, is my
husband.

Fritz cringe-smiles, hoping that to be a joke, but Thea holds his gaze. Very serious. No joke.

FRITZ

I take it back, then.

Thea smiles, pleased.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
It must be the writing.

Thankfully, they are interrupted by Rudolf Klein-Rogge (27, the man we saw earlier, now at the height of his career); and JOE MAY (40, larger than life).

JOE
Fritz! There you are!

As Rudolf and Thea kiss:

JOE (CONT'D)
Thea, this is the filmmaker I was telling you about. Fritz Lang, from Vienna. I'd like you to work with him on The Indian Tomb.

Thea throws Joe a dirty look. Fritz smiles sheepishly at Thea while Rudolf shakes his hand enthusiastically.

RUDOLF
Welcome to the team, Herr Lang.
(then, to Thea)
Are you about ready to go home, honey? I'm done for the day.

FRITZ
Miss Harbou. Before you leave, could I please ask you to take a look at these?

Fritz hands her the script. Thea looks at him inquiringly.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
My adaptation of your novel.

She leafs through it, puzzled.

THEA
You wrote the whole screenplay?
Without my permission?

FRITZ
If you will read it. Please.

On Thea, containing her indignation.

While Fritz walks away, Thea skims through the first page. In spite of herself, she's intrigued.

As Rudolf leads her towards the door, Thea doesn't look up from the page.

INT. THEA AND RUDOLF'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thea keeps reading, turning pages quickly.

When she gets to the end of the piece, she takes a beat, then angrily tosses the script on the floor.

Rudolf looks up from his newspaper, a knowing smile.

RUDOLF

That much better than what you had?

Thea shakes her head in disbelief.

THEA

He must have been working on this for months on end. It's the only explanation.

On Rudolf. A knowing smile.

THEA (O.S., PRELAP) (CONT'D)

I've never seen anything like it, Joe.

INT. 1919 SOUNDSTAGE - NIGHT

Late at night. The set is now empty, except for Joe May and Thea. He is giving the last touches to the model of a city. Thea stands behind him, speaking with passion.

THEA

He thinks not with words but with images. It's a gift.

JOE

The great Thea Von Harbou has been impressed. I never thought I'd live to see this.

THEA

He has this movie in his head, Joe.

Joe finally turns his attention to Thea.

JOE

Well, it shouldn't be in his head, it should be on the page, because I'm going to direct this film.

THEA

But he said you told him... He wrote this for free under the impression that you'd let him direct it if it was any good.

JOE

How good is it?

THEA

(it pains her to say)
So much better than my novel.

Joe takes this in, eyes aglow with greed.

JOE

It's too big for a beginner.

THEA

You don't want to do this, Joe. He gets angry, we lose him. And then someone else will be credited with having found the next...

JOE

Joe May?

No. Way better. But she can't tell him that. So she nods.

JOE (CONT'D)

Fine. Alright, alright. Find him another project to write. Teach him the ropes. We'll see if he's ready to direct something smaller in a few months.

Thea is disappointed, but knows this is the best she'll get.

INT. THEA'S OFFICE AT UFA STUDIOS - DAY

Fritz barges in and tosses his script on the table.

FRITZ

I thought you said it was good.

THEA

It is.

FRITZ

Then why did Joe steal the picture from me?

THEA

Because that's what he does. If you want to work as a director in this town, you need to get used to betrayal. And to work under Joe.

FRITZ

I'm ten times more capable than he is!

THEA

If it were just about talent, Herr Lang, do you think I would be working for him?

That silences Fritz. He sits on the couch. Frustrated.

FRITZ

I have that picture in my head. Joe doesn't see what I see.

Thea knows.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Why do mediocre people get to run the world?

THEA

Because it's easier for the mediocre to compromise. It's not pure ideas, but compromised ones that win majorities.

Fritz turns to her, strongly relating to her words. Thea notices the intensity of his gaze on her. She's two parts uncomfortable, one part flattered.

THEA (CONT'D)

I will turn you into a director if it's the last thing I do. But you have to trust me. And be patient.

Fritz walks up to her, getting closer than is appropriate. He takes her hand and, for some reason, she lets him.

FRITZ

Patience is not my forte.

Thea is hypnotized by this man, but still manages to get her hand back.

THEA

We have to start by making the script perfect.

FRITZ

It isn't?

Thea smiles at his wounded pride.

THEA

We can make it better. Together.

Fritz is both skeptical and intrigued. He takes a seat.

FRITZ

Tell me how.

INT. UFA STUDIOS - THEA'S OFFICE - DAY

Fritz and Thea hard at work. Thea annotates the script, showing him.

THEA

If we get rid of this scene and move this one down here...

Fritz looks at what she's doing. Then at her. Deep admiration. Then, becoming inspired:

FRITZ

And then the final persecution would happen across the suspension bridge. To make it feel--

THEA

--more dangerous.

FRITZ

--risky.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

The Prince retains Herbert's wife. He threatens to kill her if Savitri doesn't return to him. And then Savitri jumps...

THEA

Choosing death over going back to her captor.

FRITZ

Precisely. She'd still choose to be reunited with her dead lover, but the image would be more powerful.

They look at each other, thrilled by the pure chemistry between them. Then, as Thea starts to type frantically, Fritz sighs.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

And we're going to give this to him?

THEA

(still typing)

Don't worry, we'll get our chance to get back at Joe.

And, as if on cue, Joe pops his head.

JOE

I want you two in the editing room tomorrow morning.

(to Fritz)

You're going to see pure genius at work, Lang.

When the door closes after Joe, Thea and Fritz roll their eyes at the exact same time and stifle a WICKED LAUGH.

INT. THEA AND RUDOLF'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thea arrives home very late at night. Rudolf seems to be sound asleep, but he opens one eye to check the time. It's having-an-affair o'clock.

INT. UFA STUDIOS - EDITING ROOM - DAY

A black and white image, the close-up of a beautiful woman projected on the screen as an EDITOR (25) carefully glues two pieces of film negative together.

Sitting behind the editor, Joe May, his wife MIA (20s, the woman on the screen), Fritz and Thea wait for the editor to do his job and show them the result. Respectful silence.

Suddenly, Fritz breaks the silence.

FRITZ

Wait. It's a mistake. You should cut to this later.

Everyone turns to look at Fritz. Thea is horrified. The editor, shocked, stops working.

JOE
Excuse me?

FRITZ
Stay on her. Communicate her
sadness. It's a beautiful face.

Mia smiles, flattered. Joe doesn't like this.

JOE
I know that, she's my wife.

FRITZ
So do it.

Joe looks at Fritz defiantly. The editor looks from Joe to Fritz, not sure what he's supposed to do. It feels like a Mexican stand-off. Until Mia steps in.

MIA
Let's try what he says, honey.

Joe nods a threatening nod, the one a mafia boss would give before having someone killed. Fritz is completely oblivious to the tense situation he's created. Thea glares at him.

THEA (PRELAP)
(angry whisper)
What are you doing?

INT. UFA STUDIOS - HALLWAYS - DAY

Fritz and Thea whisper-fight.

FRITZ
Watching and learning, like you
told me to.

THEA
No you're not. You're telling the
director what to do.

FRITZ
You don't think my comment was
correct?

THEA
That's not the issue.

Fritz is genuinely confused.

FRITZ

He doesn't want to make a good picture is what you're saying.

THEA

What I'm saying is that Joe is the kind of man who would rather fail on his own than succeed with help from others.

FRITZ

You help him all the time. Your ideas and your scripts are the only reason his films are decent.

Thea smiles, genuinely flattered. But just for one beat.

THEA

I can't teach you if you're not willing to learn.

FRITZ

I'm very much willing to learn everything about you, Thea.

She is thrown off by his seductive tone, but quickly recovers her composure.

THEA

Go back in that room and, the next time you want to say something, you bite your tongue until it hurts. Understood?

FRITZ

(biting his tongue)
Underthtood.

Thea can't help smiling.

THEA

Alright. I'm going home now. I'll see you at the party.

FRITZ

Before you go.

Thea turns around to walk away, but Fritz GRABS HER BY THE WAIST AND BRINGS HER TOWARDS HIM.

Their bodies are inches apart. Thea's heart races, as she feels his gaze studying her. He whispers in her ear.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Tell me you feel nothing.

Thea is electrified by the warmth of his breath on her neck. She turns to face him. Lips like magnets, necks tense from withholding the attraction.

He KISSES her. She gives in. Until, finally, she stumbles upon the strength to pull apart.

THEA
I need to go get ready for the party. Which I'll attend with my husband.

Fritz wants to protest.

FRITZ
The thing is--

But she cuts him short.

THEA
I hope you weren't thinking of missing it. I expect to see you there sucking up to Joe like you haven't sucked up to anyone before. And please stop flirting with his wife.

FRITZ
But she's not--

Thea walks away, leaving Fritz behind, crestfallen.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Who I'm interested in.

INT. THEA AND RUDOLF'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - EVENING

Rudolf comes out of the shower and sees Thea in front of the mirror, trying to decide between two dresses.

THEA
Which one?

RUDOLF
It depends. Is he going to be there?

THEA

Who?

Rudolf lovingly sneers at his wife. He tilts his head, but remains silent. Come on, Thea. She looks away.

THEA (CONT'D)

I'm in no mood for games.

RUDOLF

No? You seem to have been playing plenty lately.

Rudolf tosses the latest draft of The Indian Tomb on the bed.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

You think I can't read between the lines?

THEA

If you have something to say, just say it.

RUDOLF

No. You say it. This is not on me.

THEA

What do you want me to say, Rudolf?
That I fell in love? That I'd
follow him to the end of the world?

RUDOLF

I don't know. Is it true?

Thea looks down. Rudolf takes it as a yes. He sits on the bed. Thea sits by her husband. Takes his hand.

THEA

I can stop it. You know I can.
We're stronger than this.

RUDOLF

Not this time we're not.
(a pause)
Are we?

Thea tears up, her heart torn between the man she loves and the man she wants to be with. Rudolf chooses the green dress.

And, as he helps her get into it, we sense Thea is becoming a new woman, and something is definitively broken in this marriage.

INT. THE ADLER HOTEL - A GLAMOROUS COCKTAIL PARTY - EVENING

Thea looks stunning in her spectacular jazz age green dress. Stunning, and anxious. Rudolf hands her a glass of champagne.

RUDOLF
To second chances.

They toast and drink. Then, Rudolf looks at his watch.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)
Are you sure he's coming?

THEA
He said he would. But he's quite
the unpredictable man.

And, on that note, we track Fritz coming into the room, arm in arm with... A GIRL. She's in her late 20s and pretty only because she's still young.

Fritz and Thea lock eyes. It takes a while for her to notice his date. When she does, she feels the air leaving the room.

Thea tightens her grip on Rudolf's arm. She can hear her husband's voice in the distance, like when you fall asleep to a movie.

RUDOLF
His... sister?

The next thing Thea knows, they are standing in front of Fritz and the mysterious girl.

FRITZ
Rudolf, Thea, good night.

An awkward pause as Thea and Rudolf wait for Fritz to introduce his date. Not happening; Fritz is mesmerized by Thea. Rudolf reacts, extending his hand to the girl.

RUDOLF
I'm Rudolf Klein-Rogge.

Fritz finally comes back to his senses.

FRITZ
Rudolf, this is Lisa.

LISA
His wife.

Fritz stares at Thea apologetically. She has turned into an ice statue, frozen and melting in the middle of the ballroom. Rudolf nudges her.

THEA
(icy, professional)
Nice to meet you. I work with your husband.

LISA
I know.

For the first time since we've met her, Thea is speechless. She MUTTERS UNINTELLIGIBLY and walks away.

Rudolf follows her into:

EXT. THE ADLER HOTEL - GARDEN - NIGHT

Thea steps outside, Rudolf following her closely.

RUDOLF
What are you doing?

THEA
He's married!

RUDOLF
And so are you, Thea.

THEA
So what do you suggest I do? Snatch him from her? I'm not going to stoop that low.

RUDOLF
Of course you are. If this was worth breaking us up, it must be worth your pride.

Thea hugs Rudolf. She's desperate.

THEA
I don't want to break us up!
Rudolf, please don't leave me.

Rudolf pulls away. It takes all his generosity to stay cool.

RUDOLF

For such a brave woman, you sure
picked a bad time to be afraid.

At that precise moment, Fritz walks in on them. Rudolf
whispers in Thea's ear.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

Don't blow it.

Rudolf walks away, exchanging a look with Fritz.

Thea walks up to Fritz and SLAPS him across the face.

THEA

You're married.

FRITZ

That's what I was trying to tell
you, but you wouldn't let me!

THEA

That's what rings are for! Where
was yours? Where is it?

FRITZ

I lost it a long time ago. Together
with the things it meant.

She takes pity on him. Until:

FRITZ (CONT'D)

But, surely, you're not saying that
you'd have been any less attracted
to me if I had been wearing a ring.

Unbelievable.

THEA

Do you think this is funny?

FRITZ

I'm sorry. I told her she couldn't
come, but she's... fragile, you
understand? What could I do? I had
already said I would be here, and I
don't break promises.

THEA

Oh, so you want a gold star for
keeping your promise and showing up
with your wife instead?

Fritz shrugs.

THEA (CONT'D)
It must be nice. Being so
completely unaware of other
people's feelings.

FRITZ
I'll admit to being oblivious to
social conventions.
(he looks up)
Not feelings.

He brushes the back of his hand against hers. Thea lets her
hand linger there...

FRITZ (CONT'D)
I'll leave her.

On Thea, taken aback. Unsure whether to feel flattered,
relieved or guilty.

THEA
Are you crazy?

FRITZ
Are you going to kiss me again if I
stay married?

THEA
(Yes.)
No.

FRITZ
Then you leave me no other choice
but to get a divorce.

As much as she wants to help it, Thea's barriers come down.
She lets him get closer and closer.

He tries to kiss her but, in an instant of lucidity, she
pulls away, shaking her head.

THEA
You leave her. Then we talk.

Thea walks away. Determined.

INT. UFA STUDIOS - THEA'S OFFICE - DAY

Thea sits at her desk, in front of her typewriter, but unable to write. Suddenly, the DOOR SWINGS OPEN. Lisa barges in.

LISA

You think you're good enough for him?

THEA

What I think is no one invited you in.

LISA

If you're going to take him from me, the least you can do is answer my question.

Thea lifts her chin. A threat:

THEA

Do you really want my answer?

LISA

I do.

THEA

I think it doesn't matter what I think. It's what he thinks that does.

Lisa studies Thea.

LISA

You admire him. You're new food for his ego. And you can get him places. For now. Just make sure you stay useful to him.

That does it. Thea is now ready to fight back.

THEA

For some reason, I'm not sure you're the person I should be taking advice from on this particular matter.

LISA

I was very full of myself too when he first loved me. He makes you feel that way, doesn't he? If he chose me, I must be great. My life is worth giving up.

THEA
I'm not giving anything up.

LISA
Of course you are. And you will be giving up much more. He'll make you.

THEA
He fell in love. That doesn't make him a bad person.

LISA
Great men don't get to be good.

And she walks away, leaving Thea with that thought.

INT. THEA'S NEW APARTMENT - DAY

Rudolf helps Thea unpack boxes.

RUDOLF
Now I feel like I should go see Fritz and make a scene of my own.

Thea smiles, but her smile leaves a bitter aftertaste.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

THEA
You think he will hurt me like he hurt her?

RUDOLF
Ah. Fear. That's how you know it's the real thing.

THEA
You didn't answer my question.

Because he doesn't want to, and he is saved by the PHONE RINGING. Thea sighs as she walks to pick it up.

THEA (CONT'D)
I keep having to tell people that the previous tenant passed away. People need to read the obituaries.
(picking up)
Hello?

But what she hears at the other end of the line is not what she was expecting to hear. As Thea tries to make sense of what she's being told, we

FADE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Fritz stands by a grave. A perfect black suit, the impeccable white collar of his starched shirt underneath unsuccessfully masking SHEER GRIEF.

The funeral ceremony has come to an end and guests are heading out. Fritz's gaze looks for and finds:

Thea, in the distance, shaded by a tree, watching the scene. Only when his eyes meet hers does she dare approach Fritz.

Thea walks towards Fritz clutching a white rose. It could be a bride walking down the aisle towards her groom.

Upon reaching the grave, Thea carefully puts the rose on the mound of freshly turned soil. He whispers.

FRITZ

It hurts like there's... little
pieces of sharp glass inside of me.
In my chest. My gut. My throat--

His voice shatters. Thea takes him in her arms.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

I pushed her over the edge, Thea.

THEA

Don't, Fritz. This wasn't your
fault. Say it.

Fritz hesitates. Thea takes his face in her hands.

FRITZ

This... was not... my fault.

She kisses his forehead, but Fritz is still uneasy.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

The police asked a lot of
questions.

THEA

I know. But that's over now.

Fritz looks up, surprised.

FRITZ
You know?

THEA
It's all been sorted out. No one is
going to bother you anymore.

Fritz admires Thea's confidence. Exactly what he needs right now, but still not quite grasping what she's saying.

THEA (CONT'D)
I told you I'd be right behind you.

We can see a HUGE WEIGHT being lifted off his shoulders as he realizes she's fought this battle for him. The first of many.

THEA (CONT'D)
We will make it through this.

They did. And, to prove it:

A MONTAGE

Of Fritz and Thea becoming the most admired couple in Germany.

Fritz, ON SET, directs Rudolf as DOCTOR MABUSE. Thea watches.

In an EDITING ROOM, Thea takes notes on a cut.

A RAVING REVIEW of the film.

A simple WEDDING CEREMONY. Utter happiness.

ON ANOTHER SET, Thea hands bowls of hot soup to hundreds of EXTRAS who stand by in the biting cold.

The iconic poster of METROPOLIS takes us to:

The premiere. On the red carpet, our couple smiles for the press. The image FREEZES and becomes a HEADLINE:

M! FRITZ LANG DOES IT AGAIN

In the LIVING ROOM of a spacious apartment decorated with exotic furniture from all over the world, they write.

END MONTAGE

EXT. UFA PALAST AM ZOO THEATER - NIGHT

The largest, grandest movie theater in Berlin dressed up for a lavish premiere. Fourteen years have gone by.

TITLE: Berlin, 1933

The Langs' Mercedes pulls up.

INT. THE LANGS' MERCEDES - NIGHT

Fritz and Thea are a little older and a lot more sophisticated.

They look at ease in their gala outfits, comfortable in their power and success. As they prepare to head out, Thea notices

LILY LATTE (25, a beautiful actress) climbing out of her car.

THEA

Make your entrance with her.

FRITZ

Are you sure?

THEA

The press will love it. They've seen enough of us.

He kisses her forehead and obeys.

Sure enough, as soon as Fritz and Lily step on the red carpet, all the FLASHES turn to them.

Thea watches from inside the car, her face obscured.

A woman in the shadows.

INT. UFA PALAST AM ZOO THEATER - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

An auditorium filled with people in tuxedos and women in elegant evening outfits. Some Nazi officers here and there.

Hitler has just risen to power and barely started to show his true colors.

Thea makes her entrance alone and finds Fritz at the row of seats reserved for VIPs. She sits with him.

INT. UFA PALAST AM ZOO THEATER - COCKTAIL PARTY - NIGHT

The movie is over. A cocktail is being served. Thea talks to ROBERT SIODMAK (32 but already balding, glasses) and his brother CURT (30, looks exactly like Robert).

CURT

Corrupters of the German family,
that's what they're calling us.

ROBERT

The Völkischer Beobachter is going
to publish a devastating review.

CURT

It will be the end of its run.

THEA

Why didn't you come to me with
this? There's people I can talk to.

ROBERT

Not anymore, Thea. Everyone we know
is going down.

THEA

Well, then we need to make some new
friends, don't we?

As she says this, Thea fixes her eyes on:

JOSEPH GOEBBELS (38), the Nazi Minister of Propaganda. He is
skinny, head too big for his height. A limp that he tries
hard to hide.

As Goebbels walks up to Fritz, Thea observes the exchange
between the two men warily.

ROBERT

Talking sense into these people is
about as difficult as talking sense
into a monkey.

CURT

I've read about some recent
experiments. Monkeys aren't half as
silly as these people are.
Apparently, they can--

THEA

Curt. Will you please stop acting
like you don't care?

Curt and Robert shut up and stare at Thea.

ROBERT

We care. Of course we do.

CURT

It's not like we're looking forward
to London's rainy weather.

Robert throws a disapproving glance at Curt. Thea can't take her eyes off Fritz and Goebbels.

ROBERT

There's nothing you can do, Thea.
Nothing anyone can do.

(in a whisper)

We're leaving the country. There's
no negotiating with these people.

THEA

We'll see about that. Please excuse
me one minute.

Leaving the Siodmaks a little abruptly, Thea walks towards Fritz and Goebbels.

THEA (CONT'D)

Fritz, can I be introduced?

GOEBBELS

That's funny, Frau Von Harbou. You
don't need an introduction. And I
wouldn't think I'd need one either.

THEA

Doctor Goebbels.

Thea extends her hand to shake Goebbels', but he goes ahead and kisses it.

GOEBBELS

I hope you are enjoying your
evening. Now, if you'll excuse us,
I need a word with your husband in
private. We wouldn't want to bore
you with work talk.

THEA

Work talk does not bore me, Doctor
Goebbels. I manage all of Herr
Lang's business. Of course, there's
no reason for you to know that,
since you're a newcomer.

Fritz, clearly tipsy and amused by Thea's boldness, raises his glass. Goebbels processes this.

GOEBBELS

Well, if you insist. I was about to tell your husband that we'll be visiting his set later this week.

THEA

Who's we?

GOEBBELS

Someone from the Ministry of Propaganda. I might even pay the visit myself. Your husband's film is high on our priority list.

THEA

You know I wrote the screenplay, don't you?

GOEBBELS

I did not know that.

THEA

Well now you do. So there is really no reason for you to keep referring to it as his film.

Goebbels is taken aback by this. He looks at Fritz, who just nods, eyes gleaming in admiration for his wife.

GOEBBELS

I'm sorry. Like you said, I'm a newcomer. My deepest apologies.

It sounds and looks like a genuine apology. Thea smiles. And, also doing a great job of sounding honest:

THEA

Oh, please. You don't need to apologize, Doctor Goebbels. I was just trying to welcome you into our world. Plenty of touchy egos. Make sure you don't step on any of those.

Somehow, Thea's tone and smile manage to out-charm the Minister's. It seems impossible for this conversation to get any more polite, until:

GOEBBELS

Thank you for that advice.

THEA

You are very welcome. It will be a pleasure to have you on our set. But do make sure you're announced. We wouldn't want to blow anyone up. Not accidentally, anyway.

Fritz lets go a LOUD GUFFAW, turned on by his wife's veiled threat. Goebbels lets go a nervous chuckle.

INT. THE LANGS' MERCEDES - NIGHT

Thea follows Fritz into the car and slams the door loudly.

THEA

What a dullard!

FRITZ

You were incredible. At one point I thought you were going to step on his foot. "Not accidentally, anyway."

Fritz lets go a HEARTY LAUGH. Thea smiles, but she seems worried as the car navigates the streets of Berlin.

A city with its days numbered, but no one knows this yet.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark as Fritz and Thea stumble through the door, wrapped in each other's kisses. As the passion escalates:

THEA

I really need to get to that budget.

FRITZ

I promise to make it quick.

They both smile and look into each other's eyes as they make love. Fun, quick, efficient pleasure. They climax together. When they're done:

THEA

I think that's a new record.

Fritz pretends to be offended.

FRITZ

You said you needed to work. But if you want more...

THEA

No! No, I do have to work. I do.

FRITZ

Seymour says this one needs to do better than Metropolis or we're never making another picture again.

THEA

Let me handle Seymour.

Thea switches her nightstand lamp on and we

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The lamp, still on an hour later, when the rest of the room is dark. Thea goes over pages with numbers, crossing things out and moving them around.

By her side, Fritz sleeps peacefully. He SNORES LIGHTLY. Thea looks at him lovingly, smiles. She touches his shoulder and Fritz stops snoring. Thea goes back to her budget.

INT. 1933 SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Fritz stands on a platform behind the camera, with his CINEMATOGRAPHER (38). Upon Fritz's order, the platform is lifted slowly by a sophisticated crane.

FRITZ

Higher, higher, higher...

The platform comes to a SUDDEN STOP and JERKS. Everyone GASPS as the camera and the operator come close to falling, but Fritz saves the day.

Then, he looks at the CRANE OPERATOR down below.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Can't it go any higher?

CRANE OPERATOR

Yes, sir, but...

The camera is already thirty feet high.

FRITZ

Keep going!

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Good thing I update my will every
time you call me to make a movie,
Fritz.

Fritz yells to the crew below.

FRITZ

Are the explosives ready?

EXPLOSIVES GUY

All set, Herr Lang!

Thea watches the scene unfold with an expression of calm
trust. It's exactly the opposite of what's on the face of

SEYMOUR NEBENZAHL (34), the producer of the film, who walks
in and looks at the whole thing in horror. Thea greets him.

THEA

Seymour, good morning.

SEYMOUR

Nothing good about it from where
I'm standing.

THEA

This is nothing compared to
Metropolis.

SEYMOUR

How's that any consolation? He
almost got the star killed on that
one.

THEA

You can't be sued for almost
killing someone.

SEYMOUR

We need to talk about costs.

THEA

Yes. I've been looking at the
budget and there's some money we
can move around.

Seymour brightens up like a kid who just learned there's ice
cream for dessert.

SEYMOUR

Really?

THEA

Come, I'll show you.

INT. 1933 SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

A BIG EXPLOSION as seen through the lens of the camera on the platform of the crane.

FRITZ

Cut! We got it!

CINEMATOGRAPHER

You sure you don't need a sixteenth take?

FRITZ

(not hearing the sarcasm)

I'm sure.

Some muffled CHUCKLES as the platform is lowered.

At a table nearby, Seymour examines Thea's new budget.

SEYMOUR

You're a magician. This is incredible.

THEA

After working with Fritz for a while, you learn how to do magic.

A FRAZZLED ASSISTANT (25) approaches Thea and Seymour.

FRAZZLED

Frau Von Harbou, there's someone here to see you. From the Government?

Thea and Seymour exchange a look. Seymour looks worried, but Thea nods, keeping it together, as she is expected to do.

INT. 1933 SOUNDSTAGE - DAY

Thea introduces Goebbels and HEINRICH HIMMLER (33, the Head of the SS) to Seymour. Fritz stands by, doing a poor job of hiding the fact that he doesn't want to be there.

THEA

Doctor Goebbels, Captain Himmler.
This is Seymour Nebenzahl, the
producer of the film.

Goebbels shakes Seymour's hand. Himmler doesn't. He studies
Seymour's unmistakably Jewish traits.

HIMMLER

Nebenzahl, you say?

SEYMOUR

Yes, Captain. It's a pleasure to
make your acquaintance.

Himmler nods but still refuses to shake Seymour's hand, which
hangs there awkwardly until Seymour lowers it again.

FRITZ

Captain Himmler, is something the
matter with your glasses?

HIMMLER

My glasses?

Thea fears the worst.

FRITZ

(extending his hand)
Can you see this?

Himmler looks at Fritz's extended arm.

HIMMLER

Of course I can see that.

FRITZ

Good. Then let's try again.
Seymour.

SEYMOUR

Fritz, really, there's no need...

Fritz forces Seymour to extend his hand. Himmler, livid, has
no option but to shake it this time. It's violent. Thea tries
to ease the mood.

THEA

Seymour is one of the best
producers in Berlin.

(MORE)

THEA (CONT'D)

The German film industry would be lost without him.

Goebbels looks around at the magnificent set.

GOEBBELS

This is all very impressive indeed. How long have you been shooting?

SEYMOUR

Six weeks. We should be done by the end of next week.

GOEBBELS

Unfortunately, I'm afraid we're going to have to stop the shoot until the Ministry has had a chance to review the script.

FRITZ

Excuse me?

GOEBBELS

Because this is a new procedure, we can be a little bit flexible, so we don't need to confiscate the negative.

FRITZ

Confiscate the nega--? What on earth are you talking about?

GOEBBELS

But we do need to see the screenplay. From now on, the Ministry will require approval on all scripts that are to be shot in Germany.

Fritz is beside himself. Thea rests her hand on his arm, trying to calm him down.

THEA

Perhaps there's a better time and place to discuss this?

FRITZ

I'll tell you what the best place and time to discuss this is: nowhere and never! It is simply not a discussion that interests me.

THEA
Fritz, please.

But Fritz is unstoppable now. He has raised his voice and everyone is staring at him.

FRITZ
If you think that you can ban a
Fritz Lang picture, you are
pathetically mistaken. Now get off
my set!

And, with that, he storms away. Goebbels pays close attention to Thea's reaction. Machinating.

EXT. UFA STUDIOS - DAY

Goebbels and Himmler climb into their official vehicle.

GOEBBELS
I'm going to need all we have on
them.

HIMMLER
We, um, haven't been keeping an eye
on them.

I/E. GOEBBELS' OFFICIAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

GOEBBELS
Why not?

HIMMLER
They are well-respected Germans,
they didn't seem to pose a threat
to the Party.

GOEBBELS
Your job, Heinrich, is not to
decide who poses a threat and who
doesn't. Your job is to collect
intelligence on anyone we can use.

HIMMLER
I have limited resources, Joseph.

GOEBBELS
Pull your goddamn resources from
wherever you need to. This is a top
priority.

HIMMLER

No it's not.

Goebbels turns to him, infuriated.

GOEBBELS

You think we can conquer this nation just by way of fear and intimidation, Captain? We need to win our people's hearts. And the Langs' next film, if done properly, will be of great help in that battle.

Himmler scoffs. Goebbels prepares to deliver the final blow.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

You know what the Führer said when he saw their last film? This is the man who will bring us the next great German film.

HIMMLER

Then use whatever it is you've used with the others. Tax incentives, military exemption.

GOEBBELS

In case you haven't noticed, they're rich. And he's a war hero. I need leverage on them and you will get it for me. Or the Führer will be promptly informed of your incompetence.

Himmler finally concedes.

HIMMLER

I'll assign a task team.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thea storms into the bedroom, Fritz stumbling behind her.

THEA

That was really stupid, Fritz.
Really stupid.

Fritz collapses on the bed. While she talks, Thea changes into more comfortable clothes.

THEA (CONT'D)
Would it kill you to listen to me
for once?

FRITZ
I listen to you all the time!

THEA
I mean in public. When I say
"Fritz" and I look at you like
this, it means, SHUT THE FUCK UP.

FRITZ
I know what it means. I didn't want
to shut the fuck up.

Thea looks at him. Profound disappointment.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
What.

THEA
It's mystifying. How you can be so
good at creating other worlds and
so bad at understanding how this
one works.

FRITZ
It's not right, what that Himmler
bastard did to Seymour.

THEA
Well, great. You got to be the
hero. Now I get to fix it.

With that, Thea leaves the room. Fritz follows her into:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Thea pours herself a glass of whisky and sits in front of the
typewriter.

FRITZ
You can't be thinking of handing
them the script.

THEA
What other choice do we have?

FRITZ

They will see it for the social
critique that it is!

THEA

Don't talk to me like I wasn't the
one who wrote this film. I'll make
the appropriate changes.

FRITZ

But I'm not going to shoot a script
that doesn't interest me.

THEA

I know. You're the uncompromising
hero. I remember that.

Thea looks at him sternly. What follows is like a mantra.

THEA (CONT'D)

What's happened when there's been a
crisis in the past?

FRITZ

You handled it.

THEA

Therefore.

FRITZ

(by heart)

It follows from previous experience
that it's unreasonable to presume
that this will be an exception.

THEA

Therefore.

FRITZ

You're right behind me. I trust
you.

THEA

Now. Let me fix this mess.

Thea starts typing and the SOUND OF THE KEYS takes us to...

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - OFFICE - DAWN

Thea, still writing, as the sun comes up over Berlin.

Satisfied with this last page, she pulls it out, stacks it with the rest and binds the script together.

EXT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA - DAY

The script is safely tucked under Thea's arm as she admires this imposing public building, its immense door framed by two huge Swastika flags. Thea goes in.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA - HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Thea treads the hallways as if she were walking on eggshells.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA - WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Thea finally gets to a waiting room, where she recomposes her attitude. Trying to seem confident, she addresses a SECRETARY (30, male, polite).

THEA

Thea Von Harbou. I have an appointment with the Minister.

SECRETARY

Yes, we have been expecting you. It will be just a minute. If you would sit down.

Thea sits. She looks around, taking in the magnificence of the room.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA - WAITING ROOM - DAY

The door to Goebbels' office swings open and the Minister smiles charmingly.

GOEBBELS

Frau Von Harbou. The one meeting I've been looking forward to this morning. Please. Come in.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA - GOEBBELS' OFFICE - DAY

Goebbels shields himself behind and unnecessarily large desk in his unnecessarily large office. Thea sits across from him and sets the script on the table.

GOEBBELS

Thank you. We'll review it right away so that you can resume the shoot immediately.

THEA

I know you're not a film person, Doctor Goebbels, but stopping the shoot now is not an option. It would be too expensive. Is there any way you could make an exception?

Goebbels pretends to think hard.

GOEBBELS

There might be something.

Thea is intrigued.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

I'm establishing a Film Secretariat. I want you to head it. Supervise the making of German films.

Thea is horrified by this, but does a good job of hiding it.

THEA

That could prove... complicated.

GOEBBELS

Because of your husband.

Thea's silence means yes.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

Perhaps this could be your chance to step out of his shadow.

Thea looks at her wedding band, then looks up.

THEA

May I suggest a more diplomatic approach?

GOEBBELS

I'm listening.

THEA

Germany is in dire need of change
and your Party is leading that
change. I support your efforts.

Goebbels smiles, pleasantly surprised.

THEA (CONT'D)

But what you are trying to do--
you, personally, and your
Ministry... It's not an easy task.
Your mission cannot be accomplished
overnight. I hope you won't be
offended if I point out that the
filmmaking community hasn't
responded well to your appointment
as Minister.

GOEBBELS

Artists are particular people.

THEA

We-- They are. And the notion of
propaganda is not one they
appreciate.

GOEBBELS

Go on.

THEA

It's hardly a secret that most of
the German filmmaking community is
of Jewish origin. They are
naturally predisposed to see
anything that comes from the Party
under a negative light.

GOEBBELS

Well, but I can't--

THEA

I understand. What I'm trying to
say is I can help you fix that.

GOEBBELS

And where would you start?

THEA

That's easy.

Thea's speech carries us over to:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

A sophisticated party in full swing.

THEA (O.S.)

I'd like to host a party in your honor. In times of change, it's hard to pick sides. No one wants to end up with the losers. People need some encouragement. If they see we support you, most will follow.

The butler, FLORIAN (20s, lanky), and several WAITERS serve drinks to ELEGANT GUESTS.

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

In return, you let our production continue.

Obviously, the Minister decided to take the deal.

Thea, the perfect host that she is, navigates the crowd swiftly, introducing Goebbels to her friends.

We meet some of the most prominent German personalities of the time as Thea introduces them to Goebbels:

THEA (CONT'D)

Minister, meet Georg Wilhelm Pabst. He is Austrian, like my husband.

G. W. PABST

But German at heart.

GOEBBELS

Pleased to make your acquaintance.

THEA

You know Alfred Döblin, of course.

GOEBBELS

Of course.

THEA

And this is the beautiful Leni Riefenstahl.

LENI RIEFENSTAHL (30, stunning) lets Goebbels kiss her hand.

LENI RIEFENSTAHL

It's an honor to meet you, Doctor Goebbels.

While Goebbels takes in Leni's beauty, the maid, MARIA (50s) whispers in Thea's ear. We don't hear what she says, but Thea's expression goes somber.

THEA

Please excuse me. Leni, can I trust you to entertain the Minister in the meantime?

LENI RIEFENSTAHL

It will be my pleasure.

Thea walks out of the room.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Thea walks on Fritz arguing with a PHOTOGRAPHER (30).

THEA

What's the matter?

The photographer hands Thea his card.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Frau Von Harbou, I was hired by Doctor Goebbels to take some pictures tonight.

THEA

Please, Maria, show this gentleman inside.

Fritz, fuming, pulls Thea apart.

FRITZ

Do you understand how his photographs will be used in tomorrow's papers? I will not be their mascot.

THEA

They're not playing us, Fritz. We're playing them.

FRITZ

I won't change the picture. And I most certainly will not pose with that bastard.

THEA

You don't have to. I will.

Fritz is shocked. A decade into their marriage and he still hasn't quite figured this woman out. He looks into her eyes.

FRITZ

Does it really not matter to you?
That people think you're on their
side?

THEA

I know in my heart what I believe.
The people who matter to me know.
Don't they?

She takes his hand gently, and Fritz nod-shrugs.

THEA (CONT'D)

Come on, let's go back inside.

Thea walks back into the party, closely followed by Fritz. His expression somewhere between regret and profound admiration for his wife.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

PETER LORRE (late 20s, the actor in Lang's film M) approaches a man who leans against the window.

We recognize him as Rudolf, Thea's ex husband. He has aged, but he's still a man you'd want to marry if you hadn't found true love.

PETER LORRE

I didn't know she sympathized with
these people.

RUDOLF

She's just doing what she has to do
to get Fritz's movies made, Peter.

We follow Peter's look towards:

Goebbels, who approaches Fritz. By Goebbels, his wife, the very blonde and deceptively sweet MAGDA GOEBBELS.

GOEBBELS

Herr Lang. I'd like to introduce
you to my wife, Magda.

MAGDA

Enchantée, Herr Lang. I love your
work.

FRITZ

Do you? Then I hope you can talk
some sense into your husband,
darling.

Goebbels and Magda frown as Fritz leaves them abruptly.

MAGDA

Artists. So eccentric.

GOEBBELS

He's an egoist. His wife is the one
we can trust.

MAGDA

You think?

GOEBBELS

This whole party was her idea.

MAGDA

Was it? How nice of her. So why do
you think she's doing it?

Magda takes a sip of champagne, eyes fixed on her husband.

GOEBBELS

She's a nationalist. She likes us.

MAGDA

How do you know?

GOEBBELS

Because she told me.

Goebbels hears his own reply and realizes what Magda is
trying to say. He frowns. Magda, her point made, turns her
attention to a tray of assorted sweets.

MAGDA

Oh, look, pastries!

Magda leaves her husband behind, simmering in thought.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - HALLWAY - NIGHT

The party is now over. Thea closes the door behind the last
guest. She turns to Fritz, who looks apologetic.

FRITZ

You know that was not about getting my way, do you?

THEA

Everything is always, at least a little, about you getting your way.

FRITZ

If we're not going to make a social commentary, I don't understand why we're bringing Mabuse back from the dead. It doesn't make any sense.

THEA

Don't lecture me, Fritz. This is my film too.

Fritz looks down.

THEA (CONT'D)

And because it is, I'm working hard to see it made. And in theaters.

FRITZ

I'm sorry.

He tries to cheer her up.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

I think you charmed the limping monkey.

Thea can't repress a smile. Fritz hums a song and they dance their way into the living room.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

FRITZ

The most attractive woman in the party.

THEA

Oh, come on. There were some very pretty girls.

FRITZ

I didn't say girl, I said woman.

Thea rests her head on Fritz's shoulder. He artfully takes her hair down.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

It looked like there was at least
one other guest who agreed with me
on that point.

Thea smiles and looks up at Fritz.

Thea

I knew it!

FRITZ

What?

THEA

You're jealous!

FRITZ

Who, me? Of who?

Thea bursts out laughing.

THEA

(mocking him)

Who, me? Of who?

Fritz tickles her. Thea tries to escape his grip.

THEA (CONT'D)

Oh, tickling, that can only mean
one thing: I'm right!

Thea lets out a giggle and releases herself from Fritz. She
runs towards the other end of the living room. He chases her.

FRITZ

Me. Jealous. Come here, I'll show
you jealous.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fritz comes through the door carrying Thea on his shoulder as
if she were a sack of potatoes. She laughs, kicking her feet
in the air. Fritz playfully throws her on the bed.

As her body falls on the plush bed, Thea stops laughing.
Fritz turns her around and kisses her neck, then her shoulder
blades as he slowly unbuttons the dress. Thea enjoys it.

FADE TO:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - DAY

The next morning. Fritz is having breakfast, surrounded by half a dozen newspapers. We catch a glimpse of the article he's reading. The headline reads

HITLER ANNOUNCES JEWISH BOYCOTT.

Fritz takes a sip of his coffee.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Thea puts her cup of coffee down. She's in the middle of a conversation with Seymour Nebenzahl, the producer.

THEA

We missed you at the party last night. I can't keep going without you, Seymour.

SEYMOUR

Yes you can. You've done most of the work anyway. And it's probably best if my name is no longer attached to the film.

THEA

What are you saying?

Seymour seems uncomfortable.

THEA (CONT'D)

Seymour. What's wrong?

He balks.

THEA (CONT'D)

You can talk to me.

SEYMOUR

Can I? Which side are you on, Thea?

Thea is thrown off by his bitter tone. Seymour instantly regrets it.

SEYMOUR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm a little on edge. Listen. This is what I know. Approval over scripts is just the beginning.

(MORE)

SEYMOUR (CONT'D)
The studio is moving to give Hitler
its full support in the next few
weeks. And a new law is going to
force non-Aryans into retirement.

Thea frowns, appalled.

SEYMOUR (CONT'D)
I'm moving to New York.

THEA
You don't have to do that! They're
not going to be that strict about
this Aryan thing. I will talk to
the Minister.

Seymour shakes his head.

SEYMOUR
For you, it's just a lobbying game.
It's a little different for us.
Everyone knows I'm Jewish. It's
just a matter of time before they
come after me.

THEA
But you're a powerful--

SEYMOUR
There are things that can't be
controlled, Thea. Not even by you.

Thea remains silent. He's clearly made his peace with it and
nothing she can say will change his mind.

THEA
When are you leaving?

SEYMOUR
The less you know, the better. And
don't tell anyone.

THEA
But Fritz--

SEYMOUR
Especially not Fritz.

THEA
Seymour, he needs to know.

SEYMOUR

Please, Thea. If you want to protect me, if you want to protect him, you'll say nothing.

Thea is overwhelmed. She doesn't know what to say.

SEYMOUR (CONT'D)

I'm going to go now.

Thea motions to stand up, but Seymour stops her with a gesture.

SEYMOUR (CONT'D)

Let's not make a fuss about saying goodbye. Someone might be watching.

Thea looks around, paranoid. This can't be happening.

SEYMOUR (CONT'D)

(putting his hat on)

Smile. Hopefully, I'm just overreacting. We'll know soon enough. Just in case, though, I think there's something you should take care of.

Thea frowns. Seymour pulls a newspaper from his suitcase and drops it in front of Thea.

SEYMOUR (CONT'D)

Page fifteen. Look after yourself. And him.

(then, cheerful)

I'll see you tomorrow.

Thea waves sadly, knowing that there will be no tomorrow.

Seymour exits the café. At the door, he turns to look at her one last time. Thea remains seated at her table, not daring to look around. But feeling watched.

Then, she quickly opens the newspaper to page fifteen. She pores over the text and, off her shocked reaction, we:

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Thea walks, her teeth clenched, stiff neck, swift pace.

EXT. FILM-KURIER BUILDING - DAY

Thea walks into a building.

Across the street, A BLOND MAN watches her. He's in his late 20s, built like the paradigm of the Aryan man. We'll come to know him as EHRLICH.

INT. FILM-KURIER BUILDING - HALL - DAY

Thea marches through the hall with the authority she would have if she owned the place. She strides past the reception desk saying:

THEA
Good day. I'm here to see Hans
Feld. I don't have an appointment,
but don't worry.

The RECEPTIONIST (50s, a sour frown) hasn't even had time to look up when Thea has already made it past her.

INT. FILM-KURIER BUILDING - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Thea walks in.

FELD'S SECRETARY
Good morning, Frau Von Harbou.
Please take a seat.

THEA
I'll stand, thank you. I can't be
kept long anyway.

FELD'S SECRETARY (20s) looks at her, puzzled.

THEA (CONT'D)
Run along, tell Hans I'm here.

The secretary, confused, disappears behind a door that reads HANS FELD - EDITOR IN CHIEF.

Thea approaches the closed door. Spotting a speck on the glass, she scratches it with her nail. When the door opens, the secretary is startled to find Thea standing there.

FELD'S SECRETARY
Herr Feld will receive you right
away.

Of course he will. Thea marches into the room.

INT. HANS FELD'S OFFICE - DAY

HANS FELD (45) stands up from behind his desk as Thea takes her gloves off.

HANS FELD

What a pleasure, Frau Von Harbou. I wish you'd told me you were coming, I would have worn a better suit.

THEA

And I wish I were here on more pleasant business, Hans.

Thea takes a seat. Feld gawks at her as she opens the newspaper.

THEA (CONT'D)

Today's edition.

HANS FELD

Oh, the article on your husband, that's what this is about!

THEA

You know I'm grateful for the way your paper has always treated our films.

HANS FELD

There's nothing to be grateful for, Frau Von Harbou; he makes great movies.

THEA

We.

Feld doesn't understand.

THEA (CONT'D)

We make great movies.

HANS FELD

Of course, of course. You make great movies together.

THEA

Do you read everything you publish,
Hans?

HANS FELD

I'm proud to say I do.

Thea reads out loud from the paper she's holding.

THEA

"Although he was born in Austria,
Lang's movies display the
unmistakable traits of true German
character. From Die Niebelungen to
M, there are no signs in his
cinema, of his--"

(Looking up)

"Jewish background."

Upon hearing the word JEWISH, Feld cringes.

HANS FELD

What?! Oh my, I'm terribly sorry,
Frau Von Harbou, I must have
glossed over that.

THEA

And your reporter must have
forgotten to cross-check her facts.

HANS FELD

I'm so sorry about this, I will
immediately publish a retraction.

THEA

No. Please.

(off Hans' confusion)

Publishing a retraction would only
bring more attention to the issue,
wouldn't it?

HANS FELD

Correct. Yes, I think it's smarter
to leave it as it is. And I'll make
sure it doesn't happen again.

THEA

Please do.

HANS FELD

I'm so sorry, Frau Von Harbou, I
really don't understand how this
could have happened.

THEA

I know it's a busy job to run a paper, Hans, and it's hard to keep an eye on everyone all the time.

Hans smiles in relief. Thea doesn't.

THEA (CONT'D)

Which is why you need journalists you can trust blindly.

HANS FELD

I assure you Fraulein Trinker is one of the best on my team.

THEA

I'm sure you're right. And yet... Do you feel this mistake is one an excellent journalist would have made?

Thea stands up and approaches a cabinet filled with awards.

THEA (CONT'D)

She needs to understand that writing for the Film-Kurier is not to be taken lightly. This is the best film newspaper in the country.

HANS FELD

Thank you, Frau Von Harbou. We do work hard to live up to the highest standards of film reporting.

THEA

(Admiring an award)

I remember your father's speech when he got this one. So brilliant.

HANS FELD

You know what, I can't allow this.

Thea, eyes on the wall, doesn't turn around.

THEA

Excuse me?

HANS FELD

A mistake like this one is unacceptable for the Film-Kurier. I'm going to fire Trinker.

Thea conceals a smile from Hans. She then turns around feigning surprise.

HANS FELD (CONT'D)
What? You think it's too much?

THEA
I would never dare telling you how to run your business, Hans. Do whatever you think is necessary. I know it will be the wisest move.

Hans nods and shakes Thea's hand.

HANS FELD
Again, I'm terribly sorry, Frau Von Harbou.

THEA
Water under the bridge.

EXT. FILM-KURIER BUILDING - DAY

As Thea exits the building, the man we saw spying on her, Ehrlich, follows her with his gaze.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fritz examines their custom-made mahogany library up close, looking at it from every possible angle.

On the couch, Thea is surrounded by boxes containing files, postcards, photographs and other old paraphernalia.

THEA
Stop it, Fritz. You can't tell it's there.

FRITZ
Show me.

Thea removes a few books from a shelf, revealing a BRAND NEW SAFE BOX embedded in the library.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
Monstrous. This is just horrendous.
My custom-made library...

Ignoring Fritz's whining with the resilient patience that comes from knowing one is right, Thea opens the safe box and shows him a document that is stored in it.

It's his parents' marriage certificate. Thea points to a line in it. We read FAITH: JEWISH.

THEA

Would you rather have something
like this lying around?

FRITZ

What, they're going to search our
apartment?

THEA

Better be safe than sorry.

FRITZ

But I'm already sorry! You ruined
our library!

Thea has had it. She shifts gears. Sternly, now:

THEA

I am not the enemy, Fritz. Pay a
little attention to what's going on
around you. And get your priorities
straight.

Thea, frustrated, walks out.

INT. SS HEADQUARTERS - EHRLICH'S DESK - DAY

Ehrlich's ASSISTANT places a tray of mail on Ehrlich's desk. The letters are addressed to FRIEDRICH LANG and/or THEA VON HARBOU.

Ehrlich opens a letter, skims through it, types something on his typewriter, reseals the letter and leaves it on the outbox tray. He goes for the next one.

INT. CUTTING ROOM - EVENING

Fritz and his editor, KONRAD VON MOLO (35), sit around a moviola surrounded by cans of film.

They examine negative, working in silence.

THEA (O.S., PRELAP)

He's just refusing to compromise.

EXT. STREETS OF BERLIN - DAY

Thea and Rudolf walk arm in arm, with no apparent destination. She talks, he listens.

THEA

It's like he can't see the world is changing under our feet. And I don't know how to open his eyes.

RUDOLF

Because all you've done for the past ten years is shield him from the outside world.

Thea nods. Exactly.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

He's not supposed to be realistic. He's an artist.

THEA

Spare me the lesson, will you?

RUDOLF

All I'm saying, Thea, is you didn't fall in love with him because he was reasonable. You shared a vision with him. Remember that. Go back to it. If you and him drift apart, they win.

THEA

I can't go back, Rudolf.

Thea is not in a reasoning mood and Rudolf can tell, so he keeps quiet. They walk in silence for a while.

Suddenly, Thea spots something that brightens her up.

THEA (CONT'D)

Oh, it's still here! I used to come all the time when we were married. Do you mind?

They walk into:

INT. FAMILY-OWNED BOOKSTORE - DAY

Thea and Rudolf walk down an aisle in the bookstore. Suddenly, Thea's look goes somber.

THEA
(whispers)
There he is again.

Rudolf follows her gaze to find Ehrlich. He studies him.

RUDOLF
Doesn't look like a spy to me.
That's probably one of my admirers.
I'm quite the sensation with young
men, you know?

Thea rolls her eyes.

THEA
Why I keep marrying narcissists is
just beyond me.

RUDOLF
Well, look at the silver lining. At
least he's handsome.

THEA
How is that good news?

RUDOLF
If you have to seduce him, it won't
be disgusting.

Thea hits him on the arm playfully.

THEA
You are impossible.

But. Something in what Rudolf just said struck a chord with
Thea. Pretending to read a book, she scrutinizes Ehrlich,
like a predator getting ready to jump on its prey.

Suddenly, a GROUP OF YOUNG MEN barge into the bookstore.

Some of them are SS SOLDIERS, other are PARAMILITARY SA, most
are HITLER YOUTH MOVEMENT KIDS. They run along the corridors
CHANTING OATHS about the future of Germany.

CUSTOMERS, scared, get out of the way as the invaders tumble
shelves over and take "anti-German" books into a truck
outside.

Thea and Rudolf walk towards the window, where they see THREE
HUGE TRUCKS loaded with books.

MABUSE (O.S., PRELAP)
To instill an infinite empire of
crime. A state of absolute
insecurity and anarchy, raised on
the rubble of the ideals of a world
condemned to live in decadence.

INT. CUTTING ROOM - DAY

We realize these are the words of Mabuse, the character
played by Rudolf in the film that Fritz is cutting together.

On screen, the monologue continues:

MABUSE
When men see themselves as being in
possession of the terror of crime
and mad with horror and fright,
when chaos has become the supreme
law, then the tacit power of crime
will rule.

Konrad, the editor, looks at Fritz.

KONRAD
Please don't tell me you're
planning on keeping that.

FRITZ
You don't like it?

KONRAD
Of course I like it. It's great.
But it's too dangerous.

FRITZ
Accurate is more what I was hoping
you'd say.

KONRAD
Yes, accurate. And therefore
dangerous. They're not stupid,
Fritz.

Fritz stands up and walks towards the door.

FRITZ
It's going in. Cut the third take
of the top of the speech with the
first take of the second half. I'll
be right back.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Fritz exits the building. He is surprised to notice a PROTEST going on in front of a nearby shop.

As he approaches the shop, Fritz sees THREE STORM TROOPERS guarding its door, and a gathering of people holding anti-Jewish signs.

Fritz addresses one of the STORM TROOPERS.

FRITZ

Excuse me. I need to go in there.

STORM TROOPER

I'm afraid that's not a good idea.

As Fritz tries to make it past the trooper, the soldier stands in his way.

STORM TROOPER (CONT'D)

This is a Jewish owned store, Sir.

Fritz

I am aware of that, thanks very much. Now, may I?

An ANGRY PICKETER (40s, female) addresses Fritz.

ANGRY

Are you a Jew?

FRITZ

I'm a man in need of cigarettes.

ANGRY

There's a German tobacco store around the corner.

FRITZ

I've known the Cohens for years. They're Germans alright, so going around the corner when I can have my German cigarettes right here would make me feel quite the idiot.

A MALE PICKETER speaks up.

MALE PICKETER

Are you calling my wife an idiot?

FRITZ

Not just her, sir.

The male picketer THROWS A PUNCH at Fritz, who DUCKS just in time. Fritz looks at the storm troopers.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
I think this would be a good time
for you to intervene here,
gentlemen.

The storm troopers look away.

STORM TROOPER
We warned you.

FRITZ
This is outrageous!

Fritz motions for the door and another picketer HITS HIM ON THE HEAD with the sign he's holding. Fritz PUNCHES him in return. A FIGHT ensues.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALL - NIGHT

Thea walks into the hospital and soon spots Fritz sitting on a chair, forehead freshly stitched and his arm in a sling. She throws him a look. No need for words, really.

THEA
Can you walk to the car?

FRITZ
I most definitely can.

Fritz stands up with such determination that he gets dizzy, and needs to hold on to Thea's arm. She shakes her head in disapproval and, as they walk towards the door:

FRITZ (CONT'D)
I get the feeling you think this is
somehow my fault.

Thea mimics zipping her mouth with her fingers.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

As Fritz and Thea walk out, arm in arm, EHRLICH WATCHES THEM from across the street.

EHRLICH (O.S., PRELAP)
They're drifting apart.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA - GOEBBELS' OFFICE - DAY

Ehrlich sits across from Goebbels, who looks up from the report in front of him and into the eyes of the young SS soldier. Thinking.

GOEBBELS

They don't have to be together to be useful.

EHRlich

Then all we have to do...

GOEBBELS

...is push that wedge between them a little harder. Make their bond grow weaker and weaker.

Ehrlich nods. Understanding his orders.

On Goebbels. A satisfied grin.

INT. SCREENING ROOM - DAY

Thea walks in, closes the door behind her and is surprised to find Rudolf sitting in the front row.

RUDOLF

There you are!

THEA

I didn't know you'd be joining me.

RUDOLF

You know I love to watch myself.

An affectionate kiss on the cheek. Then, she addresses the PROJECTIONIST in the booth.

THEA

Are you ready, Willy?

The projectionist nods and Thea and Rudolf settle into their seats as the lights go off.

On the screen, masterful shot after masterful shot. Although these are just bits and pieces, we can sense in every frame that there's a great movie in the works.

As the images dazzle them, Rudolf spies Thea's expression out of the corner of his eye. Her eyes glisten with pride.

RUDOLF
He makes the struggle worth it,
doesn't he?

THEA
(deeply moved)
Every bit of it.

Thea's expression of joy

MATCH CUTS TO:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thea's smile as she walks into the bedroom, where Fritz is in bed healing from his wounds. Thea walks in and kisses him passionately. Fritz is taken by surprise.

FRITZ
I thought you were angry at me.

THEA
The footage is stunning, Fritz.

FRITZ
Couldn't have done it without you.

They embrace.

THEA
They can't beat us. Not if we're
together.

Fritz nods. She walks out, leaving Fritz with a big grin on his face. He knew she'd come around.

I/E. THE LANGS' CAR - EVENING

Thea sits in her car, watching the door to an official looking building. It's the:

EXT. SS HEADQUARTERS - EVENING

Thea sees Ehrlich exit the building. She turns the engine on.

EXT. HUMBLE BERLIN NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

Thea observes Ehrlich meet up with KLARA (20), a pretty round face framed by light brown hair. They kiss. In love. On Thea, coming up with a new plan.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT BUILDING - BASEMENT - DAY

The storage unit of the building. It's dark and damp.

Thea finds the door marked with their apartment number and uses a key to open it. It takes her a while to find the light switch - she's clearly not been here in a long time.

Inside the storage room, Thea finally finds what she's looking for: a cardboard box. No labels on it. Thea looks at it gravely.

The box has been thoroughly sealed and Thea has to rip it apart to access its contents: photo albums and pictures of Fritz's previous life with Lisa.

Thea goes through some documents and finally finds what she's looking for: the calling card of a DETECTIVE WEISS.

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Thea talks to DETECTIVE WEISS (60). We don't hear what they're saying.

INT. CAFÉ - DAY

Thea and Magda Goebbels are at a table. Thea admires Magda's manicure.

MAGDA

They didn't have the exact shade of red that I wanted.

THEA

I like it, though.

MAGDA

What I need to find is a new hairdresser. Where do you get your hair done?

THEA

We have a girl who comes in once a month. A hair artist from the studio.

MAGDA

Oh my gosh you filmmakers! You have to get me in touch with her. How fancy would it be to get my hair done by the same person who did Marlene Dietrich's?

Thea smiles.

THEA

And she's cheap too.

MAGDA

Well, she knows how to do her job! That kid over there can't take his eyes off you!

Thea turns around and finds Ehrlich. Spying on her. Thea feigns nonchalance.

MAGDA (CONT'D)

So. How's the film going?

THEA

Ah. I knew you hadn't invited me here to discuss manicures and haircuts.

MAGDA

Can't a friend ask a friend about her work?

THEA

Except that you and I are not friends.

MAGDA

Don't be silly, Thea! Of course we are. I was just asking because I know that my husband is getting impatient.

THEA

Well, editing a film takes time.

MAGDA

Would two more weeks be enough?

THEA
Why two weeks?

MAGDA
The Führer will be visiting Berlin
at the end of the month.

THEA
The Führer?

MAGDA
We are so excited. The Minister was
hoping to screen your film for him.
It would be such a wonderful
opportunity, don't you think?

No, she doesn't.

MAGDA (CONT'D)
Thea. My husband's people? They can
be dangerous. You need to make
Fritz understand that.

THEA
See? That sounds much less like
something that a friend would tell
another friend. And much more like
a threat.

MAGDA
Oh, Thea. But I'm just trying to
help.

THEA (O.S., PRELAP)
Clearly, her husband sent her.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thea sits with Fritz, having relayed the information she got
from Magda.

FRITZ
Well, what does she know? She's
just his wife.

As soon as he's said it, Fritz wishes he hadn't.

THEA
And everybody knows how useless
wives are.

FRITZ

Thea. Come on, you know what I meant.

THEA

Actually, I'm not sure I do. Ever since this nightmare started, I no longer feel like I ever know what you mean.

Fritz is hurt. He stands up and walks out.

THEA (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

FRITZ

Well, if you don't understand, Seymour surely will.

THEA

There's nothing Seymour can do!

Thea chases Fritz out of the room. Out of the house and into:

INT. SEYMOUR'S BUILDING - EVENING

Fritz BANGS on the door to Seymour's apartment loudly as Thea stands by, not knowing what to say.

FRITZ

Hello!

(to Thea)

This doesn't make any sense, does it? If he's out, a butler or at least the maid should be in.

Thea takes Fritz's hands to stop him from banging on the door. And with this, Fritz realizes that she knows something he doesn't.

THEA (O.S., PRELAP)

He begged me not to tell you.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Fritz and Thea walk home, Fritz still coming to terms with what he's just learned.

Fritz
Poor Seymour. To not even be able
to say goodbye...

Fritz puts his arm around Thea and brings her close to him.
He kisses her on the forehead.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
I can get started on the new
project. The one you think they'll
like.

Thea looks at him. Hopeful. But then:

FRITZ (CONT'D)
But I'm not changing the cut of
Mabuse.

Thea sighs.

THEA
We need to adjust the film to the
script we gave them. Or at least
make it less... uncomfortable.

Fritz stops walking and forces Thea to stop with him.

FRITZ
Thea. I need you to remember why
we're doing this. Both of us. It's
the struggle, the opposition that
is important.

Thea lets this sink in, feeling Fritz's passion wash over her
as they continue to walk in silence.

EXT. BRIDGE OVER BERLIN RIVER - NIGHT

Thea and Fritz walk across the river. It's cold. They are
drawn towards a BONFIRE OF ANTI-GERMAN BOOKS.

Fritz and Thea's gaze are lost in the fire, as they watch the
works of artists that they've read, respected and even
befriended fall prey to flames, to ignorance, to fear.

FRITZ
Maybe The Indian Tomb is in there.

Ashes fly away. One of them lands on Thea's shoulder. Fritz
brushes it off. Then, he uses his hand, dirty with soot, to
wipe away a tear on Thea's face.

They look at each other. Thea takes a deep breath before saying:

THEA
I've been working on something. Let me see if I can use it to our advantage.

FRITZ
We can keep the picture as it is?

THEA
I don't know. Maybe...

She's not convinced, but Fritz can't sense her fear. He smiles, hugs her and sweeps Thea off her feet. Literally, and emotionally.

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Thea sits across from Detective Weiss, who hands her a RED FILE.

DETECTIVE WEISS
Here's all we could dig up on him and his fiancée.

THEA
Thank you, Detective. I really appreciate this.

The detective nods. A man of few words.

THEA (CONT'D)
How about that other--

DETECTIVE WEISS
Everything we have on the plans of the new Government is in here.

Weiss hands her a MANILA ENVELOPE.

DETECTIVE WEISS (CONT'D)
I don't need to say--

THEA
It's confidential information. Of course. I will handle it with care.

Thea tucks the manila envelope away and turns to the last few pages of the red file, which contains a PICTURE OF KLARA that

MATCH CUTS TO:

INT. EHRLICH'S PLACE - ENTRANCE - DAY

The picture of Klara in Thea's hands as she holds it for Ehrlich to see. Ehrlich, standing by the door frame, is shocked. He RIPS Klara's picture off Thea's hands. Angry.

EHRLICH

What does she have to do with anything?

THEA

Let me in.

On Ehrlich. Reluctant. Thea takes a step toward him. Threatening.

THEA (CONT'D)

You want to be their pawn, soldier,
or do you want to take control of
your destiny?

Ehrlich mulls this over. And finally swings the door open.

INT. EHRLICH'S PLACE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ehrlich and Thea sit across from each other. The young spy looks up from the photograph and into Thea's eyes.

THEA

I assume you'll want to marry her.

EHRLICH

So?

THEA

She will never pass Himmler's
racial purity test.

EHRLICH

It feels like you're trying to
blackmail me here, but I'm not sure
exactly how.

THEA

I have powerful friends. I can have her test waived.

EHRlich

Your powerful friends won't remain friends for long if you don't get your husband to comply with Goebbels' demands.

THEA

I know. And I will. But first I need to know. How far would you go to protect her?

EHRlich

Are you sure you want to play this game, Frau Von Harbou?

THEA

How far would you go?

EHRlich

Far.

THEA

Then buy me some time.

EHRlich

You don't have time. The Führer will be screening the film in two days.

THEA

I can't imagine it would be hard for you to be present at the screening.

EHRlich

What for?

THEA

To delay it.

EHRlich

In exchange for Klara having her test waived?

Thea simply looks into his eyes. Confident. Persuasive.

THEA

You have more power than you think, soldier. Don't be afraid to use it.

EHRlich

So I make sure they don't get to see the current cut. They will still want to see one that fits their needs, eventually.

THEa

Eventually.

EHRlich

How will you get him to change the film?

THEa

I have ways. That is, if we have a deal. Do we, officer?

Ehrlich nods begrudgingly. Thea's cue to stand. She shakes his hand. Ehrlich is left behind, simmering in hate and thinking of his next move, which is:

INT. HANS FELD'S OFFICE - DAY

The newspaper editor, looking antsy, answers Ehrlich's questions.

HANS FELD

She was upset because we had published an article in which we referred to her husband as a...
(balks before saying it)
Jew.

EHRlich

Where did you get that information?

HANS FELD

She said it was wrong. I assumed my reporter hadn't cross checked facts properly. Which is why I fired her.

EHRlich

You assumed?

HANS FELD

I run a German film magazine, officer. There are some enemies I can't afford making. The Langs are at the top of that list.

EHRlich

I see. So why didn't you publish a retraction?

Ehrlich doesn't know what to say. He feels trapped. Off his terrified expression we

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Hans sits across from Thea now, sweating drops of guilt.

HANS FELD

You have to understand, Frau Von Harbou. I didn't want to sound uncooperative.

Thea looks tense, the well of her patience beginning to dry.

THEA

What did you say?

HANS FELD

Nothing, just that perhaps you didn't want to bring any more attention to the issue.

Thea looks straight into his eyes. Hypnotic.

THEA

Hans. I need the truth.

HANS FELD

I gave them Trinker's information.

THEA

Does she know that she was fired because of that article?

Hans nods, almost imperceptibly.

HANS FELD

I'm really sorry. I was scared.

Hans swallows hard. He digs in his pocket, finds a piece of paper with a name scribbled on it and his hand SHAKES as he hands it to Thea.

HANS FELD (CONT'D)
I got his name. We can have our
sources look into him. If that
would help.

THEA
That won't be necessary. You've
helped enough.

He resents the accusation, and responds:

HANS FELD
I didn't feel like there was any
other way out.

THEA
Fear will do that to people.

Thea stands up and Hans takes his cue. He stands, puts his
hat on and shakes her hand. When he is near the door, he
turns around to look at Thea.

HANS FELD
I'm sorry, Frau Von Harbou. I
really am. But, if the journalist
got her facts wrong, there really
is nothing to worry about, is
there?

Thea nods, and she looks incredibly nonchalant when she says:

THEA
Not a single thing to worry about.

Even though we know it's not true.

Once Hans is gone, Thea turns her attention to the library
behind her.

She opens the safe and retrieves the MANILA ENVELOPE that
Detective Weiss gave to her. She leafs through the documents
inside, satisfied.

INT. FRITZ AND THEA'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - NIGHT

Thea types: HERR FRIEDRICH LANG and her own address.

She tapes the address to the manila envelope. When she's
done, she looks at it gravely.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Thea walks up to a mailbox. She balks a little before doing it, then MAILS THE ENVELOPE.

INT. SS HEADQUARTERS - HIMMLER'S OFFICE - DAY

The following day, Ehrlich is going through the Langs' mail when he comes across the MANILA ENVELOPE. He sees the note that Thea typed and we

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA - GOEBBELS' OFFICE - DAY

The MANILA ENVELOPE sits on Goebbels' desk. The Minister looks through the documents in it.

GOEBBELS

These are top secret! How did she get them? I thought you were watching her.

EHRlich

Read the note.

Goebbels finds the note, skims through it and looks up.

GOEBBELS

Addressed to her husband?

Ehrlich nods. And Goebbels understands.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

She's trying to scare him into changing the film.

EHRlich

I thought it couldn't hurt if we helped her a little.

GOEBBELS

I'll pay them a visit. In the meantime, whoever leaked these--

Ehrlich doesn't need to hear more. He salutes his superior, acknowledging the order.

INT. POLICE STATION - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Ehrlich paces the room. He's clearly been waiting for a while already and is getting impatient. He addresses the CLERK.

EHRlich

Are you sure you relayed my name properly?

CLERK

Detective Weiss is very busy, Sir.

EHRlich

Not Sir. Officer.

Ehrlich points to the SS badge on his uniform. The clerk smirks at it.

CLERK

Insisting on such... details won't make him want to see you sooner. Sir.

Ehrlich's had it. He MARCHES past the clerk and BARGES INTO:

INT. POLICE STATION - DETECTIVE WEISS' OFFICE - DAY

Ehrlich erupts into the room, where he finds Detective Weiss hunched over A JIGSAW PUZZLE. The Detective looks up. Calm.

DETECTIVE WEISS

May I help you?

EHRlich

I've been waiting outside for half an hour!

DETECTIVE WEISS

I'm sorry. I was busy.

Ehrlich fumes.

EHRlich

Enjoy it while you can, Detective. This sort of attitude won't be tolerated much longer.

DETECTIVE WEISS

I'm sure. Until then, however, we're still the law enforcement.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE WEISS (CONT'D)
And you're still just the Führer's
baby-sitters, so please address me
with due respect.

EHRlich
You met Frau Von Harbou in 1921.

DETECTIVE WEISS
Frau who?

EHRlich
When you were investigating the
death of Herr Lang's first wife,
Lisa Rosenthal.

DETECTIVE WEISS
I'm sorry, that name doesn't sound
familiar.

EHRlich
Why are you protecting them?

DETECTIVE WEISS
I honestly don't know what you're
talking about.

EHRlich
I will have you arrested,
Detective.

DETECTIVE WEISS
On what grounds, soldier? Lack of
memory?

EHRlich
You leaked top secret documents to
a civilian. I take this to my
superior, you're done.

Detective Weiss smirks.

DETECTIVE WEISS
I'm sixty-four years old, young
man. You think you can threaten to
end my career?

Ehrlich gives up. Before heading out:

EHRlich
Whatever it is you're hiding, I'll
find it.

DETECTIVE WEISS
Do keep me posted.

INT. CUTTING ROOM - DAY

Konrad, the editor, walks in and is surprised to find Fritz not working on the cut but reading some documents. We recognize the MANILA ENVELOPE THAT THEA MAILED.

Konrad examines the negative in the reel and frowns.

KONRAD
Still on the scene of the police
station?

Fritz looks up. Absent-minded.

Fritz
Hm?

KONRAD
Are you stuck?

Konrad realizes Fritz is paying no attention. He leans over what the director is reading.

KONRAD (CONT'D)
What is that?

FRITZ
A report outlining the plans of the
new Government. They're setting up
a Race and Settlement Office.
Whatever that means.

Konrad skims through the report, looking worried. Fritz reads some sentences aloud.

FRITZ (CONT'D)
"Christianity teaches the decadent
doctrine that all races share an
equality of soul, which the German
race will soon show to be nothing
but vicious and insidious
illusion."

Konrad points at another passage. Horrified.

KONRAD

"Get rid of decadent Slavs and
Jews, whose blood is poison to the
human race."

Both men keep reading in silence. Horrified. Finally, Fritz
sits back. A blank stare. Until:

FRITZ

I need to take these to Thea. She
will know what to do.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Goebbels sits across from Thea.

GOEBBELS

The Führer is expecting to see a
cut. It'd better be exactly what I
read in the script we approved.

THEA

I'm working to make it happen,
Doctor Goebbels.

Goebbels takes a deep breath.

GOEBBELS

Frau Von Harbou. I really do
believe that you want to be on our
side. But that's obviously not the
case with your husband, who has
done nothing but make this process
unnecessarily painful. From where
I'm standing, you either swim... Or
sink with him. It really is up to
you.

THEA

Like I said. I'm working on it. Is
that all, Minister?

GOEBBELS

As I'm sure you've noticed, the SS
are having you investigated.

THEA

The SS. You had nothing to do with
it.

GOEBBELS

On the contrary, I've been trying
to stop them from prying into
private matters.

(intently)

Into the past.

Goebbels clocks Thea's worry.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

I'm on your side, Thea. Join me.
It's the smart thing to do.

THEA

So perhaps I'm not as smart as you
presume.

GOEBBELS

Yes you are.

He stands up, puts on his hat and does a slight bow.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

I'll show myself out.

EXT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT BUILDING - ENTRANCE - DAY

As Fritz's cab pulls over in front of the building, he sees
GOEBBELS' OFFICIAL VEHICLE speeding away.

On Fritz's worried frown we

CUT TO:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Fritz marches in. Thea is startled.

THEA

What are you doing here?

FRITZ

Am I not permitted to come into my
own apartment whenever I please?

THEA

Not when our film is due at the
Ministry at the end of the week.

FRITZ

You said you were working on something that would make it all go away.

Thea scoffs while she pours herself a drink.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Were you lying?

THEA

Of course not. I do have something, but all it will do is buy us some more time, not "make it all go away." They're not going anywhere, Fritz. Not if Germany doesn't want them to.

Thea takes a long swig.

THEA (CONT'D)

You treat them like they're criminals. But they're who our fellow citizens elected.

FRITZ

Is that why you're conspiring with the Ministry to turn my picture into Nazi Propaganda?

We can almost hear Thea's HEART BREAKING. She turns to him, unable to acknowledge the accusation.

THEA

Is that what I'm doing?

FRITZ

What was Goebbels doing here just now?

THEA

Are you spying on me?

FRITZ

Should I be? What else are you hiding from me?

THEA

I don't know that hiding is the word, but a lot. Everything you couldn't possibly handle.

FRITZ

Try me.

THEA

Really? Because we've been sitting on a time bomb for a while now and you've kept looking the other way.

She walks up to him, unleashing all the anger she's been keeping under a lid. As if all her patience had finally been drained.

THEA (CONT'D)

The truth, since you're suddenly so interested, is that I managed to buy us some time, but we're on a countdown to the Führer's return. The Minister suspects we turned in a fake script. We're being spied on by the SS. And you're a Jew. So you go ahead and tell me why we're putting everything on the line for this one movie.

Fritz speaks in a low voice. Controlled. Sure of himself.

FRITZ

Because that's what will remain. The world has changed and it will change again, Thea. What changes doesn't matter. It's what stays that does.

THEA

How about I'm terrified? Does that matter to you?

FRITZ

Fear is their weapon. Courage is ours. I won't be scared into compromising my vision. What does an artist have left if he does?

THEA

Oh, I don't know. His life? His freedom?

Thea slumps on the couch.

THEA (CONT'D)

I can't believe this. It's fourteen years ago all over again.

FRITZ

What does that have to do with anything?

THEA

I won't let you do to me what you did to her.

FRITZ

What I did to her? Lisa committed suicide.

THEA

Is that why I had to pull so many strings to bury the investigation?

FRITZ

Lisa decided that she wanted to die. You said it yourself that I shouldn't blame myself.

THEA

Well, I've changed my mind. You should blame yourself. Because what happened, Fritz, is that you had this vision in your head of what you wanted. Like when you're directing. Except that life can't be directed. And people aren't actors. Lisa knew that she wasn't in your vision. And she got out of the way. Suicide, murder... They're just words.

Fritz takes a step back. Physically, and emotionally.

FRITZ

I'm not letting you do this to us, Thea. You of all people know what a struggle it was for me to get over it. But I will never regret having fallen in love with you. I had to, to be me. I wasn't scared of the consequences of being me then and I am not scared now.

THEA

If you love me so much, why are you accusing me of betraying you?

Fritz hangs his head. Apologetic.

FRITZ

I saw the Minister's car leaving
our house. My house! What was I
supposed to think?

THEA

You're supposed to trust me
unconditionally. Or have I not
earned it? I've cleaned up after
every one of your messes. None of
your movies would have happened
without me. And, had it not been
for me, you might be serving time
for murder right now.

FRITZ

Go to hell, Thea. I might live in
my own world, but I'm not a
monster, and I'm not letting you
paint me in that light.

Fritz SLAMS the door on his way out.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thea, in bed, tries to read. But she can't concentrate.

LOUD CLATTERING comes from the kitchen.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Thea leans on the doorframe watching Fritz bustling about the
kitchen clumsily, trying to fix himself something to eat.
Feeling observed, Fritz eventually turns around.

FRITZ

How long have you been there?

Fritz holds a giant pan in one hand and two small eggs in
another one.

THEA

You know how time flies when you're
enjoying yourself.

FRITZ

Very funny. And do we have to give
Maria a day off every week?

THEA
Ever since they abolished that
practical thing called slavery.

FRITZ
Whose idea was that anyway? I don't
recall anyone asking me.

Thea rolls up her sleeves.

THEA
What were you trying to make? Fried
eggs? Scrambled?

FRITZ
That thing we had for lunch on
Monday.

THEA
(in disbelief)
Klose? Jesus, Fritz, that's made
with potato, not eggs.

Fritz shrugs.

Thea reaches for an apron, but Fritz stops her.

FRITZ
No. Teach me.

THEA
If I teach you, there will no
longer be a reason for you to keep
me around.

FRITZ
Except for the sex.

THEA
Except for that.

They look into each other's eyes. No words need to be spoken;
their eyes say they are both sorry.

Fritz motions to speak, but Thea puts her finger over his
mouth. She forces a smile, putting the apron away.

THEA (CONT'D)
Let's go out.

INT. THE ADLER HOTEL - NIGHT

The lobby bar of a luxury hotel. Fritz and Thea sit in a booth, drinking and eating in silence.

FRITZ

Remember the first time I brought you here?

THEA

You didn't bring me here. It was a party. This is where you introduced me to your wife, remember?

FRITZ

I never apologized for that.

THEA

You never apologize for anything.

That was meant to sting. And it did. Fritz looks down.

FRITZ

Do you think I'm a bad man, Thea?

THEA

Great men don't get to be good.

He looks at her, taking in the weight of what she said, perhaps remembering the woman he first heard it from.

Suddenly, a LOUD NOISE near the door of the hotel. Fritz and Thea turn their heads to see what's going on.

AN ARMY OF STORM TROOPERS BARGE INTO THE LOBBY.

They're dragging a YOUNG WOMAN along.

One of the soldiers KICKS HER. The woman STUMBLES to the floor. A SOLDIER grabs her.

SOLDIER

Stand up! Let everyone see what a whore you are!

The troopers LAUGH while exposing the woman to the crowd.

She's in her mid thirties. Fair skin. Blue eyes. She would be blonde, were it not for the fact that her head has been shaved. She reminds us a little bit of Thea.

A sign around her neck reads: I GAVE MYSELF TO A JEW

Fritz reads the sign. Horror across his face, for the first time since we've met him. Real horror.

The woman's face is badly bruised, dried tears on her face. She staggers to stand up as she is dragged by the troopers across the lobby, which goes suddenly DEAD SILENT.

Fritz motions to stand up, but Thea stops him.

THEA

One hospital visit is enough for
this week.

Her whisper dies away as a soldier yells:

SOLDIER

Alright, I think everyone's seen
this bitch. Let's get out of here.

The shameful parade makes its way out of the lobby. People start to whisper and gradually raise the volume of their voices.

After a minute, everything is back to normal. Back to normal. Just. Like. That.

Fritz and Thea sit in silence, shaken. Fritz is the first one to speak up, trying to control the tremor in his voice.

FRITZ

Do you have a list of the changes
that the Ministry wants?

Thea doesn't understand.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

For the picture.

THEA

Yes. Yes, I do.

FRITZ

Give it to me. I'll change the cut.

Thea looks at him. Deeply moved. They hold hands across the table.

INT. CUTTING ROOM - DAY

Fritz and Konrad sit in front of the moviola, surrounded by cans of film. Konrad holds on to a piece of paper.

KONRAD

They want us to kill him?

Fritz assents.

FRITZ

We have shots of the mob, we can cut it so that it will look like they got to him.

KONRAD

It will also look like you don't know how to shoot a lynching. And like I don't know how to cut one together.

FRITZ

I don't have a choice, Konrad.

Konrad sighs and starts to load film into the moviola.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thea gets home to find Fritz drowning his sorrows in alcohol. He is jaded and in a bad mood. He self-toasts.

FRITZ

Here's to turning a masterpiece into a piece of shit.

Thea

Look at the bright side.

Fritz looks at her in disbelief: the bright side?

THEA (CONT'D)

We'll be able to release the movie, make our money back and move on to the next.

FRITZ

Sure. We'll make the films Hitler and his friends want us to make. It's going to be wonderful.

Thea sits up. Fritz downs the rest of his drink and puts the glass down violently.

FRITZ (CONT'D)

Good night.

She watches him walk out. A sad gaze

MATCH CUTS TO:

INT. CUTTING ROOM - DAY

The same sadness in her eyes as she watches the new cut.

Rudolf sits by her side, watching too.

The expression on their faces says everything we need to know: it's BAD.

Rudolf stands and turns the lights on, addressing the projectionist.

RUDOLF

We've seen enough. Can you give us
some privacy, Willy?

The projectionist leaves the room, the film still playing on the screen as Rudolf turns to Thea in angry disappointment.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

How did you get him to go through
with this monstrosity?

Thea looks down. Embarrassed.

THEA

I just opened his eyes to what's
happening. To the danger we're in.

Rudolf is disgusted.

RUDOLF

So he compromised his vision to
protect you. And you're okay with
that?

THEA

I've spent the last decade making
his films my top priority. Is it
that crazy to expect him to think
about us for once? Can't our lives
be more important than his art?
Just this one time?

RUDOLF

Not like this, Thea. You've
manipulated him.

THEA

It must be easy to watch this from
the fence and judge me.

RUDOLF

Easy is not a word I would use to
describe what I've gone through.
You think it was easy to let go of
you?

Of course it wasn't.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

But I knew I had to do it, because
I saw how great you'd be together.

Rudolf motions towards the screen, where the images of the
new cut are still being projected.

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

But this, Thea... This was not
worth breaking two people's hearts.

Thea's soul sinks as Rudolf walks out quietly.

She is left alone with the images of the new Mabuse. Until
the reel finally comes to an end.

And she sits up, newfound determination.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Thea approaches the ticket window.

THEA

Two for Paris, please. No return.

CASHIER

The 7AM tomorrow?

Thea nods reaching for her wallet, but then hears a FAMILIAR
VOICE behind her.

EHRlich

I'm afraid I can't let you do that.

Thea goes on purchasing the tickets, pretending not to have
heard him. Ehrlich CLUTCHES HER ARM to stop her from
retrieving the tickets. Thea shakes his hand off violently.

THEA
Leave me alone!

Thea hits Ehrlich, who grabs her by the arms to contain her fury. The scene stirs people's attention. A SECURITY GUARD (40s) approaches them.

SECURITY GUARD
What's going on here? Do you need help, sir?

EHRlich
That won't be necessary, thank you.

Ehrlich hugs Thea and manages to stop her from hitting him. It looks like a lovers' brawl.

EHRlich (CONT'D)
Calm down, sweetheart. Calm down.

Thea gives up, her body going limp as Ehrlich walks her away from the ticket window.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

As soon as they're out of sight, Thea pulls away violently.

THEA
I got him to change Mabuse, what else could you possibly want from us?

EHRlich
You can't take all the credit for making him change the film.

Thea doesn't know what he means.

EHRlich (CONT'D)
Surely, you don't think that scene at the hotel was happenstance?

On Thea. Horrified, as she realizes that Ehrlich orchestrated the torture of the woman who had "given herself to a Jew."

EHRlich (CONT'D)
You gave me the idea. It was good. Very basic, of course, but solid: using fear. Don't get me wrong. We do things like that all the time. I just made sure your husband got front row seats to this one.

Thea simmers in despire. For Ehrlich. And for herself. She grinds her teeth as she speaks.

THEA

What do you want?

EHRlich

What you promised. Use your regained influence to have my fiancée's racial test waived. It should be easy enough. Now that the Minister is so pleased with you.

THEA

And then we can leave?

Ehrlich nods.

EHRlich

I'll make sure the path is clear.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA - GOEBBELS' OFFICE - DAY

Goebbels greets Thea with the widest of smiles. Thea shakes his hand and takes a seat like a robot that's been programmed to do this.

GOEBBELS

Frau Von Harbou. Congratulations. It must have been hard to talk your husband into this.

THEA

I think you will agree with me that it's best if we release the film as soon as possible. Also, the official version of the facts should be that there's been technical issues. It's in both parties' best interest not to talk about censorship. This should be released as the director's original cut.

Goebbels looks at her in awe.

GOEBBELS

Honestly, it would never have occurred to me, but I agree. The Führer will be pleased.

Thea can't contain her sarcasm.

THEA

Wonderful. That's all we ever wanted.

GOEBBELS

Have you reconsidered my offer to head the Film Secretariat?

Thea is strategic about her response.

THEA

I need time to think about it. If done properly, it will a big time commitment.

GOEBBELS

Of course.

THEA

Now, I have a favor to ask. On behalf of a... friend.

Goebbels sits back, self-complacent, ready to listen. Something eerie in his smile.

GOEBBELS

I am so glad you came to your senses. It's much better to be on our side, isn't it?

FADE TO:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Thea comes in and closes the door behind her, a sigh of deep relief. Fritz, who is reading on the couch, looks up.

Thea curls up beside him. Fritz keeps on reading.

THEA

We should leave.

Fritz, shocked, closes the book and looks at his wife, suddenly regaining his confidence in her.

FRITZ

You would do that for me?

THEA

For both of us.

Euphoric, Fritz stands and lifts Thea off her feet.

FRITZ

I always knew you'd handle this.

THEA

Liar.

They kiss. Then:

FRITZ

Paris?

Thea, close to tears:

THEA

Paris sounds perfect.

INT. SS HEADQUARTERS - HIMMLER'S OFFICE - DAY

Ehrlich sits in front of Himmler. The young soldier's face is bright red.

HIMMLER

We are the vanguard of the new Germany, officer. I cannot allow impure blood in the Order.

EHRlich

I assure you, Captain, nothing in Klara is impure.

HIMMLER

I see that you have feelings for her. But the lineage analysis doesn't lie. She descends from Slav immigrants. See? It's very simple.

Himmler pulls out a GENEALOGICAL CHART with black, white and mixed circles that go down several generations.

HIMMLER (CONT'D)

See these black balls here? Two of her grandparents were Slavic. What that means is she has mixed blood. What happens if we cross your blood with hers? Well, we contaminate it, of course. No SS officer can be allowed to bear impure children.

EHRlich
But... I love her.

Himmler is utterly puzzled, as if he didn't understand what that means.

EHRlich (CONT'D)
There has to be a way to make an exception. I'll do whatever it takes.

HIMMLER
Perhaps I didn't make myself clear.

Himmler points to the chart again. His CHATTER FADES as we focus on Ehrlich. Thinking. Suddenly, he speaks up:

EHRlich
What if... Say I had some valuable information. Could we negotiate an exception?

Off Himmler's intrigued look, we

CUT TO:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

The mood is festive at the Langs' soon-to-be former home.

A few suitcases on the bed. Their young butler folds a shirt carefully, looks at the result. Not great. He starts over. Maria, the maid, comes in.

MARIA
How are we doing in here, Florian?

The butler shows her the wrinkled shirt. Maria smiles, takes it and folds it artfully.

Florian tries the new technique. It yields better results. Maria nods in approval. As she is about to leave the room:

FLORIAN
Maria?

She turns around.

FLORIAN (CONT'D)
What's going on?

MARIA
Think of this as a long vacation.

FLORIAN
Should I look for another job?

As she walks in, Thea overhears her butler.

THEA
No. Your salaries will be maintained. It's important that you continue to work here. You don't have to come in every day, but be sure to check on the apartment twice a week. You can take turns.

FLORIAN
And make sure everything's ready for your return?

Maria looks at the young man, taking pity on his naïveté.

THEA
Exactly.

Fritz walks in.

FRITZ
Pack my summer suits too.

Florian is confused. Thea tries to reassure him.

THEA
Just in case.

Fritz kisses Thea on the forehead.

FRITZ
I'm going to the bank. It shouldn't take too long.

Thea nods, but, at that precise moment, they hear THE DOORBELL RING.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - HALL - DAY

Maria gets the door and is shocked to find Ehrlich flanked by TWO OTHER SS OFFICERS.

OFFICER 1 hands a piece of paper to Maria and, without waiting for her to read it, the three men MARCH PAST HER down the hallway.

Maria is left speechless, holding on to what looks like an OFFICIAL DOCUMENT.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Alerted by FEET MARCHING down the hallway, Thea and Fritz step outside.

FRITZ
What the...?

EVERYTHING HAPPENS SO FAST.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

OFFICER 1
Herr Lang, Frau Von Harbou, under the provisions of Article One of the Decree of the Reich for the Protection of People and State of February 1933, you are hereby taken into protective custody.

Thea and Fritz are shell shocked.

Thea turns to Ehrlich:

THEA
What are you doing?!

Ehrlich can't hold her gaze.

As OFFICER 1 motions to put Fritz and Thea in cuffs, Ehrlich stops him.

EHRlich
No need for that.

Fritz looks at Thea for an explanation, but she has none.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Alone in the room, Thea sits at the table looking threadbare.

Finally, the door opens. Thea looks up.

It's Goebbels. Thea stands, collecting the remnants of her dignity.

THEA

Doctor Goebbels. Finally. This is an outrageous--

GOEBBELS

Sit down.

Taken aback by his harsh tone, Thea obeys.

Goebbels sits at the table too. He looks tired, like he's been fighting his own fight. After a deep sigh:

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

This would all have been so much easier if you had listened to me.

THEA

But I did! We changed the film!

GOEBBELS

Trying to blackmail an SS officer was not a smart move, Thea. You of all people know how far some will go for love.

Thea doesn't understand.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

Here's what the kid found out. Your husband is Jewish.

THEA

Please. It was only his mother, and she converted when she married.

GOEBBELS

We also know that his first wife died from a gunshot that was fired by a gun owned by Herr Lang.

THEA

She committed suicide!

GOEBBELS

That is indeed what the police report concluded. A police report that was signed by Detective Weiss. Someone you know well.

THEA

That doesn't mean anything. I know many people.

GOEBBELS

Detectives also have families. People they want to protect.

THEA

I don't know what the Detective told you, but my husband is not a murderer.

GOEBBELS

How can you be sure? You and I both know Herr Lang will do anything for his films. And you were instrumental in getting his career going. Who knows what he did to... secure you.

The ROOM STARTS TO SPIN around Thea and she is forced to sit down. She is nauseated.

THEA

My husband did not kill Lisa.

GOEBBELS

Perhaps not. But does the truth really matter? Wouldn't the accusation be enough to ruin your careers? A lie told a thousand times...

That's it right there: the sickening principle of propaganda.

Thea suddenly feels every ball she was juggling DROP.

She holds her head in her hands. We can hardly hear her when she says:

THEA

What do you want?

GOEBBELS

I'm organizing an event for the whole filmmaking community at the Kaiserhof Hotel. Tuesday. I want you to be there, accepting the charge of Director of the Reich Film Secretariat.

A long pause. Silence HEAVY LIKE LEAD.

Thea finally speaks up. With authority. Her mind made up.

THEA
In exchange for that, my husband
will be allowed to leave the
country.

Goebbels frowns.

GOEBBELS
You don't want him to stay?

THEA
One of us dying is enough.

Goebbels is on the fence. Thea insists:

THEA (CONT'D)
You don't need him.

GOEBBELS
But will he leave without you?

THEA
I will find a way to make him.

That thought brings tears to Thea's eyes, but she doesn't want Goebbels to see them, so she rushes to the door and stands there, her back to him.

THEA (CONT'D)
You have your deal, let me go.

Thea BANGS ON THE DOOR.

THEA (CONT'D)
Open the door!

Goebbels gives the order:

GOEBBELS
Let her go.

The door is UNLOCKED from the outside and Thea RUNS OUT.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Fritz is waiting for Thea outside the police station. He STRIDES towards her. The two bodies come together as though thrust against each other by a slingshot.

FRITZ

They have nothing on us. It's going to be okay.

His hug as if
they had been apart for a lifetime.

Her hug as if
they were going to spend their lifetimes apart.

They climb into their car.

I/E. THE LANGS' MERCEDES - DAY

In the backseat, Fritz and Thea hold hands. Thea looks out their window and doesn't face him to say:

THEA

My passport has expired. I need to stay behind while I get it renewed. You can wait for me in Paris.

He caresses her neck. Thea enjoys it like it's the last time.

FRITZ

No. I'll wait for you here. We will leave together.

THEA

You go, Fritz.

Fritz shakes his head.

THEA (CONT'D)

Please?

Fritz shakes his head again.

Thea rests her head on the cool window pane, her mind racing.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Thea and Fritz have dinner. She isn't eating, but rather tinkering with the food on her plate.

THEA

I want to stay here.

Fritz's next bite stops mid-air.

THEA (CONT'D)

I've been thinking about it a lot.

FRITZ

But we can't make the films we want to make here.

THEA

We can't make the films you want to make.

FRITZ

I don't--

THEA

The Minister is setting up a Reich Film Secretariat. He wants me to be its Director.

FRITZ

So?

Thea gathers the strength to look at him.

THEA

This could be a big step up for me, Fritz.

FRITZ

You don't mean that.

She speaks quietly and mechanically, as if this were a speech she had rehearsed in her head a million times before. It is.

THEA

I don't want to stay in your shadow forever.

FRITZ

In my shadow? How are you in my shadow?

THEA

I'm tired of writing only for you.

FRITZ

I've never been against you writing for other directors. As long as they're good.

THEA

No one is good enough for you! And where am I supposed to find the time, when all I do is manage your life and keep you out of trouble?

FRITZ

Keep me out of trouble? I can take care of myself, Thea. The only reason I let you do it is because you want to!

THEA

You drain all of my energy, Fritz.

Fritz pushes his chair back and tosses his napkin on the table.

FRITZ

If you think there's better directors out there, go ahead and work with them. See if you can find someone who will take your micro-managing.

THEA

I was doing fine before you came along.

FRITZ

Excuse me for having turned you into the most respected screenwriter in Germany.

THEA

I did that on my own.

Fritz stands up.

FRITZ

I'm going to get some fresh air before I say something I'll regret.

Fritz slams the door on his way out. Thea flinches with the noise. It's her cue to fall apart, finally able to show how she's feeling:

DESTROYED.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Thea sits on the living room floor. She's cried her eyes out.

Maria comes in. She's never seen Thea in this state and it scares her, a woman who is never afraid of anything.

THEA

I don't want to see anyone, Maria.

But, when she looks up, Thea sees Rudolf walking past the maid and into the room.

Thea hugs Rudolf like a castaway would hang on to a piece of wood.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Time has passed. We don't know how much. And neither do they.

Rudolf stares into the void, mulling over something as Thea stares at him, begging. Then, he comes to his senses, shaking his head.

RUDOLF

No. I won't. You can't ask me to do that.

THEA

But what can I do? Staying here would kill everything that's great about him.

RUDOLF

So tell him that.

Thea loses her patience. She paces the room, frustrated.

THEA

If I tell him, he will stay. We've been through this already, Rudolf. Please try to understand!

RUDOLF

You think I haven't been understanding enough, is that it?

Thea immediately regrets her words.

THEA

I'm sorry, I didn't mean that. You know I didn't mean that. You have to help me. Please.

Welling up:

THEA (CONT'D)

I can't ask anyone else.

RUDOLF

He will hate us forever.

A sad, sad smile.

THEA

That's the idea.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Thea's head rests on the pillow. All is pitch black when she hears KEYS DANGLING and the MAIN DOOR OPENING.

Thea quickly turns on her side. Now we see that Rudolf is lying beside her. He is also wide awake, tense.

Thea straddles Rudolf. Nothing about this is sexy, but just deeply, truly sad.

Thea's back towards the door, her full concentration on Fritz's STEPS APPROACHING THE BEDROOM.

She hears the DOORKNOB TURNING and closes her eyes. So does Rudolf.

It takes a while for Fritz to process what he's seeing. He leans on the doorframe, in part because he's drunk, but mostly because he's shocked.

HEARTBROKEN.

Finally, unable to take it any longer, Fritz closes the door slowly, quietly.

Hearing the door CLICK, Thea stops pretending. A tear falls on Rudolf's pants, which are still buckled.

INT. THE LANGS' APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Fritz opens the safe and grabs his passport.

INT. KAISERHOF HOTEL - AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

TITLE: Kaiserhof Hotel, March 28, 1933.

An auditorium filled with people in tuxedos and women in elegant evening outfits.

Actors, actresses, directors, screenwriters, composers, producers. Rudolf sits at the front, looking haggard.

The walls are lined with TROOPERS IN SS UNIFORMS.

The lights are dimmed and the stage lights up. Thea walks up to the atrium. She pauses, then locks eyes with Rudolf.

Rudolf nods imperceptibly, and it seems to be all the encouragement Thea needed.

THEA

Cinema is the true art of our time. As representatives of the filmmaking industry, we must assume the political and moral responsibility that weighs upon our work. And it is of vital importance that the new government is fully involved in supporting our community. To discuss the film policy of the new Government, it is my pleasure to introduce Doctor Joseph Goebbels, Imperial Minister for the Enlightenment of the People and Propaganda.

Goebbels makes his stellar appearance.

GOEBBELS

Thank you, Frau Von Harbou, for that introduction. First, an announcement.

A dramatic pause.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
I am proud to announce that the
great Thea Von Harbou has agreed to
direct the Reich Film Secretariat,
which I am formally instituting
with this act.

The auditorium CLAPS, its sound carrying over as we:

FADE TO:

I/E. TRAIN - NIGHT

The sound from the previous scene fades away as we see Fritz
on the train. Crushed. His expression

MATCH CUTS TO:

INT. 1955 SOUNDSTAGE - FRITZ'S DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Fritz's face twenty years later, as he's listening to Rudolf
wrap up his story.

RUDOLF
She couldn't say anything. She
couldn't even leave you a letter.
She knew that you would have stayed
if you had known.

Fritz wants to cry, but hides it in his tone.

FRITZ
So what you're saying... Is she
saved my life by going to bed with
you.

RUDOLF
Essentially, yes.

It takes all the courage he has left to ask:

FRITZ
Did she... read my interviews? What
I said about her later?

RUDOLF
She read everything.

Fritz wishes he could take back everything he ever said.
Rudolf consoles him:

RUDOLF (CONT'D)
 She saw all of your films. And
 thought they were worth a broken
 heart.

A faint whisper:

FRITZ
 Four broken hearts.

Sensing that Fritz doesn't want to see him break down, Rudolf
 stands to leave. At the door, he turns around:

RUDOLF
 Make the film, Fritz. Like I said,
 you owe it to her.

INT. 1955 SOUNDSTAGE - INDIAN PALACE - DAY

The set we saw in the first scene.

The director's chair, empty.

Everyone stands by. The producer and the AD look at each
 other, ready for another day of inactivity.

But then, Fritz walks in. Everyone holds their breath as he
 makes his way to his chair.

Fritz sits, feeling and looking like the great artist that
 Thea made and saved. Ready to direct the end of this story:

FRITZ
 Action!

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER BLACK:

**Thea Von Harbou had just passed away when Fritz Lang returned
 to Germany to direct his remake of Joe May's "The Indian
 Tomb."**

Still, he had the credits of the film read

SCREENWRITER: THEA VON HARBOU

**After this film, Fritz Lang remade "Doctor Mabuse," the last
 film that he and Thea had made together before he went into
 exile.**

Fritz lived for sixteen more years without ever making another movie.

He was quoted saying that making those two films felt like "A circle beginning to close."

FADE OUT.