

GEORGE

Written by

Jeremy Michael Cohen

Based on a true story

For all the curious little monkeys.

A PIECE OF ART

A fantastical PAINTING of a FURRY BEAST being created before our eyes.

Brilliant hues SPLATTER on the canvas.

Its subject familiar and comforting, but radical all at once.

The work of a madman or genius?

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The souls of artists contain
multitudes of contradictions. But art
is truth, and telling it is the job of
an artist.

Our NARRATOR's voice is booming and proud -- a trustworthy authority.

EXT. REYERSBACH HOUSE - DAY (1897)

An enormous, traditional German HALF-TIMBERED HOUSE with ornate landscaping. May as well be called a palace.

SUPER: Hamburg, Germany, 1897

INT. NURSERY - DAY

A TODDLER (2) -- PAINTBRUSH in each hand -- wobbles at a kid's EASEL. He PAINTS the big, furry DOG at his side.

The brushes DRIP and SPLASH with BRIGHTLY COLORED PAINT. The BARKING dog's fur splotched into a rainbow.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The trouble is that the best artists
have the most complicated souls. Hans
Reyersbach was one of those types.

This is HANS REYERSBACH, painter of family dogs and other famous animals. His eyes alight with MISCHIEF, seraphic ringlets of dark hair bouncing around his impish face.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Time for breakfast, Hans!

His mother, SARAH (early 30s) -- a tender soul -- enters. She's not surprised by the MESS that greets her.

But Hans isn't ready to finish painting. As Sarah bends down to pick him up --

Hans DARTS out the room. The paint-covered dog gives CHASE.

INT. NOOK - CONTINUOUS

Hans' father ABRAHAM (40) -- a STERN businessman with the sense of humor Germans are famous for, blessed with a DISTINCTIVE, SHARPLY POINTED NOSE -- uses a HOT IRON to press the sleeve of the suit he's wearing.

SARAH (O.S.)
Abraham, come help me with Hans!

Abraham grunts and marches out to discover today's trouble.

INT. DINING ROOM - REYERSBACH HOUSE - DAY

A cavernous, wood-paneled room with a table for twenty. A gilded MENORAH proudly displayed under a framed GERMAN FLAG.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Hans was born into a Jewish family that just wanted to be known as upstanding German patriots.

BARK! BARK! The DOG bursts in the far end -- fur DRIPPING and SPLASHING with TECHNICOLOR PAINT.

Hans bounds APE-LIKE -- now CHASING the dog. In each hand he still carries a WET BRUSH that stains the decor as he runs.

Sarah lovingly pursues him -- an enjoyable struggle.

SARAH
Get over here you little monkey!

But Hans outpaces her -- still after the barking dog -- paint splattering here and there. DODGING antique furniture, he knocks a STATUE off an ornate wooden server.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
He wasn't much like his parents, though. Having been -- as they say -- touched by the gods at birth.

SMASH. The statue BREAKS into several parts. CLOSE ON what once was a beautiful bust of DIONYSUS, god of madness.

Abraham stomps in from where Hans and the dog are headed.

The dog runs past Abraham before he can get his bearings, SMEARING his black pant leg with colorful paint.

Abraham eyes Hans -- toddling toward him in a SPRINT -- then glances to Sarah. Frustrated with the wild boy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Abraham and Sarah just wanted the best
for their son.

Sarah, her shirt alive with Hans' colorful paint flecks,
halts her pursuit and shrugs. *This is who Hans is.*

Abraham bends to swoop up Hans. But Hans JUKES and AVOIDS his
father's grasp.

As Hans is about to escape, his foot TRIPS on a chair's leg --

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Things never quite worked out that
easily, though.

SLAM. Hans TOPPLES over. Brushes go flying. PAINT EVERYWHERE.
Hans SHRIEKS and CRIES.

INT. HANS' NURSERY - NIGHT (1898)

Hans (3) -- ENERGETIC -- bounces around his crib. Abraham --
wearing silk PAJAMAS and smoking a PIPE -- enters.

ABRAHAM

Settle now, son.

Abraham, puffing his pipe, pats the top of Hans' head to get
him to relax. Hans settles. But LOCKS HIS GAZE on Abraham.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

One gift all artists have is observation.

Hans stares at his dad, FASCINATED by the pipe.

INT. ABRAHAM'S STUDY - [ANOTHER] NIGHT

Hans has managed to put on a pair of his father's silk
pajamas. Swimming in them, he toddles to a large green
armchair with a table beside it.

Hans climbs up onto the chair. Pajamas everywhere, Hans
reaches for the wooden box. He OPENS it, exposing --

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Which Hans had in spades, along with
an endless curiosity. Neither of which
his parents had the foresight to
appreciate.

His father's PIPE and TOBACCO.

MOMENTS LATER

Hans proudly PUFFS his father's pipe. Abraham -- wearing identical pajamas to his son -- BURSTS IN.

ABRAHAM

Hans! What are you doing?

Hans puffs the pipe again. But this time, he can't handle it. He starts COUGHING MADLY and THROWS the pipe on the floor.

Abraham runs to Hans, picks him up, and pats his back. But --

The pipe catches the rug on FIRE. Abraham notices and panics.

Holding Hans awkwardly away from the fire, Abraham STOMPS it out. Hans SLITHERS DOWN Abraham's body and ESCAPES the room.

EXT. CENTRAL VISTA - HAMBURG ZOO - DAY (1901)

Hans (6) walks hand-in-hand with his mom at the zoo. He's ENTHRALLED -- in love with the creatures around him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Wild animals were to whom Hans related best.

He takes in the GIRAFFES, an enormous ELEPHANT, and makes eye contact with a little MONKEY swinging about in a cage nearby.

SARAH

The animals are neat, right?

Hans -- TRANSFIXED on the monkey -- doesn't acknowledge her.

HARUMPHHH! The snort of an ELEPHANT catches Hans' attention --

The huge pachyderm lies down for a nap in some hay.

Sarah tugs at the transfixed Hans' hand. Time to move on.

EXT. ICE CREAM CART - HAMBURG ZOO - MOMENTS LATER

Hans and Sarah -- holding hands -- wait in line. As she lets go of Hans' hand to grab two cones --

Hans RUNS AWAY before she notices. She turns to look at him --

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He hated missing an opportunity to spend time with them.

SARAH

Hans?

But he's gone...

MOMENTS LATER

Hans bounds around the other side of the zoo. He spots a UNIFORMED ZOOKEEPER pushing a wheelbarrow of dung. A KEY dangles from his belt.

Hans runs to the dung pusher and RIPS OFF his key. The zookeeper doesn't notice as Hans scampers off.

NEARBY - CONTINUOUS

Sarah stands on a bench CRYING and looking for Hans. The ice cream cones melt tragically down her hands.

MOMENTS LATER

Sarah sits on the bench WHIMPERING as --

UNIFORMED ZOOKEEPERS carry out a search and rescue operation. They're oddly efficient, like a military unit:

- Checking under benches and in trash cans.
- Swimming with goggles amongst penguins.
- Inspecting the inside of a hippo's mouth.

EXT. ELEPHANT CAGE - HAMBURG ZOO - SUNSET

A zookeeper leads Sarah, frazzled, and Abraham, unfazed, into the large elephant enclosure. They look ahead to see --

Hans CUDDLED under an elephant's ear like a blanket. Boy and elephant together are UNDENIABLY ADORABLE.

DUNG PUSHER ZOOKEEPER
Found him here while I was shoveling.

His father, unmoved by the cuteness, hoists up Hans.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But Hans' interest in animals was just
one in a long list of hobbies Abraham
didn't like very much.

EXT. REYERSBACH HOUSE - DAY (1902)

Abraham, crowbar in hand, and Sarah, excited, show off a BIG WOODEN CRATE to Hans (7). Hans -- on tiptoes -- tries to glimpse what's inside as Abraham jimmies off the top.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Try as they might, though, Abraham and Sarah couldn't help themselves from spoiling the boy.

MOMENTS LATER

Hans' father holds a shiny new BICYCLE in place. Wants to teach his son to ride. But -- stealing the moment from Abraham -- Hans HOPS ON, WOBBLER a bit, then PEDALS AWAY like he's in the Tour de France.

Abraham puts his hands on his hips, ASTONISHED by his son.

INT. HANS BEDROOM - REYERSBACH HOUSE - SUNSET

Abraham paces with a TEXTBOOK in hand. Hans' colorful DRAWINGS cover the wall. Abraham yells out the window --

ABRAHAM

Come do your work, son!

EXT. REYERSBACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Hans does tricks on his bike: Riding with NO HANDS. POPPING WHEELIES. SPINNING CIRCLES ON THE SEAT.

HANS' BEDROOM

Abraham gives up -- SLAMS the textbook on the floor.

OUTSIDE

Hans -- RIDING UPSIDE-DOWN -- takes a VICIOUS SPILL. Sarah -- horrified -- runs to his aid.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But the painful lessons he mastered on that contraption would serve him well one day.

CLOSE ON HANS: He rubs his smarting head, but GRINS broadly. ADDICTED to the thrill -- a regular adrenaline junkie.

INT. WALDSTEIN HOUSE - DAY

A BABY (6 months) with a full head of STUNNING RED HAIR and SUPERNATURALLY GREEN EYES walks across a room by herself. She's deliberate with each step but STAGGERINGLY DETERMINED.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Around the same time Hans fell in love with bicycles -- just a few blocks away from the Reyersbach's house -- a baby girl taught *herself* to walk six months before the doctors said it should have been possible.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Sit down, Margret! Little girls aren't supposed to wander around on their own!

This is MARGRET WALDSTEIN. She ignores her mom and KEEPS ON WALKING straight ahead with a REMARKABLE FOCUS.

NARRATOR

Margret Waldstein wasn't touched by any gods. But she may have been the most disciplined, determined baby in Germany's history. And that's saying something.

INT. VARIOUS CLASSROOMS (1903-1908)

DETENTION. Hans sits alone in a classroom wearing a "DUMMKOPF" (dunce) hat. And, of course, he's DRAWING.

FADE THROUGH THE YEARS OF HANS GROWING UP:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

School never was for Hans. But he made the most of his time there training for his future career.

In every shot, Hans gets a little older. And his drawings -- CARTOONS OF TEACHERS DRAWN AS ANIMALS -- get a little better.

INT. ABRAHAM'S WIDGET FACTORY - DAY

A spotless marvel of German engineering. BELTS move countless, sparkling WIDGETS in every direction. WORKERS in white jump suits buzz around.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Abraham led his business to wild success.

Abraham inspects a widget up to his eye like a diamond. A FACTORY WORKER (40s) rushes to him.

FACTORY WORKER

Herr Reyersbach, the new shipment of widgets just arrived from Rio de Janeiro. What should we do?

Abraham spins around to answer him. But before he can give direction, he SPOTS --

HANS

Has his FEET KICKED UP on Abraham's meticulously neat desk. ASLEEP in his stately chair.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But grew blind to his son's genius.

ABRAHAM

Smoke practically blowing out his ears, marches to his son.

ABRAHAM (PRE-LAP)
I'm not mad.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
It was worse.

INT. HANS BEDROOM - NIGHT

Hans sits calmly. His mother, next to him, cries in shame. Abraham, holding a bad REPORT CARD, paces angrily.

ABRAHAM
I'm disappointed!

EXT. STREET - HANS' NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (1910)

Hans (15) rides a BIKE with no hands as he wheels a HELIUM TANK and carries a satchel full of BALLOONS. His parents walk ahead of him. Sarah carries a wrapped present.

Hans is different now. Older. Shaggy hair. Sharper features becoming handsome. The beginning of flirtiness in his eyes.

ABRAHAM
Don't embarrass me, Hans. The Waldsteins are important contacts.

Hans rolls his eyes.

EXT. FRONT YARD - WALDSTEINS' HOUSE - DAY

A girl's garden birthday party. Kids, parents, and too much pink decoration. MR. AND MRS. WALDSTEIN (40s) host proudly.

Hans stands away from the crowd, across the yard, making animal balloons with amazing SPEED and DEXTERITY.

ACROSS THE YARD - MOMENTS LATER

Hans stands next to a MENAGERIE OF LIFE-SIZED BALLOON ANIMALS: an ELEPHANT with tusks, a black and white ZEBRA, a leaping LION.

PARTY

The birthday girl, Margret -- now 9 with PIERCINGLY SMART EYES -- stands near her ornate cake, candles already lit. The partygoers sing Happy Birthday.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Margret, little girl as she may have been, was never blind to Hans' prodigious talents.

MRS. WALDSTEIN

Make a wish, Margret!

She turns away from the crowd. Infatuated with something. Her eyes have LOCKED on --

HANS

Who's already tied hundreds of inflated balloons to his arm.

The WIND GUSTS as Hans inflates yet another balloon. It BLOWS the untied balloon out of Hans' hands, and --

Hans is LIFTED UP off the ground a few inches by the dozens of balloons attached to him.

But instead of fear, THRILL on his face, as he FLOATS.

MARGRET

As the blown-away balloon peters out at her feet, she decides she must do something to save Hans.

MRS. WALDSTEIN

Blow out the candles. Now, Margret!

But Margret IGNORES HER and SPRINTS across the yard to Hans, who's now a few feet off the ground.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I guess she saw something worth saving in Hans.

Margret -- all four-foot-nothing of her -- LAUNCHES herself toward Hans feet and hangs on with everything she's got.

EYES LOCKED -- they DESCEND to the ground together.

MOMENTS LATER

Abraham, furious, and Margret's mother, in tears, stand over the two kids. Balloons knock about everywhere.

MRS. WALDSTEIN

You've ruined this birthday party!

Abraham CLAPS a balloon in front of his face. It POPS.

Hans laughs off the situation. He hands Margret the string to a balloon. She clutches it like she'll never let go.

HANS

I get carried away sometimes.

Hans and Margret interact like they're in THEIR OWN WORLD.

MARGRET

I can tell.

They keep their eyes locked on each other -- a moment of metaphysical magic.

OFF a STRAY BALLOON FLOATING heavenwards, we CUT TO:

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY (1913)

An art exhibition for students. JUDGES (50s) make the rounds.

Hans, 18 and a regular HUNK now, stands in front of a WALL-SIZED PAINTING covered with a cloth. Abraham and Sarah stand across from him.

Hans rips away the cloth to REVEAL --

A giant FRESCO alive with color and energy.

The faces of the other competitors and judges WHIP to see --

The scene of Hans getting LOST AT THE ZOO as a small child. Larger than life animals frolicking about. The ice cream cart. And uniformed zookeepers hurrying like soldiers.

Everyone's JAWS HANG SLACK at Hans' creation. More than a few TEENAGED GIRLS' faces belie their crushes on Hans, too.

TEENAGED GIRL ARTIST

Fetching piece of work.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

By the time he graduated high school, any idiot could recognize Hans' artistic gifts.

A judge puts a wreath on Hans' head. He beams. Sarah tears up. Abraham, arms crossed, still has his doubts...

ABRAHAM
Not terrible, son.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY (1914)

Hans and Abraham eat at opposite sides of the huge table. Hans flips through NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC. Abraham, chomping on dry toast, reads a NEWSPAPER. The top headline reads:

FRANZ FERDINAND ASSASSINATED! ALL OF EUROPE AT WAR!

Hans looks up at Abraham. But makes nothing of the headline.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But before he could continue his art education, the world went and did something inexplicably stupid.

HANS
Dad, you know how you're always saying I need to think about my future?

Abraham lowers the newspaper. This is music to his ears.

HANS (CONT'D)
I know you think university is best.

ABRAHAM
Glad you see it my way now.

HANS
Well... I don't even really want to go to *art school* anymore. I think I should just move straight to Paris. Learn from the best and paint professionally.

ABRAHAM
Paris?!? While we're at war?

Abraham holds up the newspaper. Points at the cover story.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)
A great world war has broken out. This will be the war to end all wars!

The news smacks Hans like a sack of bricks.

HANS
I mean, art school *still* is an option.

ABRAHAM

Certainly not! There's no time for
frivolities like art anymore.

Hans sulks. A nightmare scenario for him.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Serving this country will be the
opportunity of a lifetime for you, son!

HANS

Don't hold your breath.

OFF Hans' REBELLIOUS glare, we CUT TO:

EXT. ARMY BASE - DAY

BASIC TRAINING. Hans -- in UNIFORM with a SPIKY HELMET --
scuttles forward and practices BAYONETING the enemy. The
other soldiers thrust their blades passionately. But Hans is
just GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS.

EXT. TRENCHES - EASTERN FRONT - DAY

WAR! Packed, filthy trenches. Bullets buzzing overhead.
Mortars exploding. Smoke wafting about everywhere.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hans was sent to the Eastern Front.
Mercifully for all, he was allowed to
serve as a medic.

Hans -- wearing the RED CROSS symbol of a medic -- cowers in
the packed trench. A nearby OFFICER calls out --

OFFICER (O.S.)

Advance, infantry, advance!

Hundreds of spiky-helmeted German soldiers hop up, run out of
the trench, and attack.

CLOSE ON HANS

TIME SLOWS. AGONY on Hans' face: Fear. Anger. Helplessness.

OFFICER (O.S.)

Gas masks! Put on your gas masks!

Hans -- TREMBLING -- barely manages to attach his mask before
thick smoke consumes him.

EXT. TRENCHES - EASTERN FRONT - NIGHT

The stars shine brilliantly, which feels like a miracle in this war-torn world. Hans lies on his back, holding a notebook above his face. He draws -- lost in his art.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

On some nights, Hans could make the war go away.

CLOSE ON THE NOTEBOOK

A GIRAFFE in a German army helmet, neck outstretched from a trench. It's scared and helpless like the other soldiers.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

During those fleeting moments between mortars and gas, Hans kept sane by reflecting upon the wonder of nature and crafting his own separate reality.

Hans TEARS OUT the sketch and tucks it in a pile of his work. But this one is caught by a GUST OF WIND. FLOATING AWAY...

NEARBY IN THE TRENCH

The sketch LANDS in the lap of a SOLDIER (19) who can't sleep. He looks at it and SMILES. A brief moment of joy.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The madness of a RAGING BATTLE. Hell on earth. Hans, tears in eyes, races to a WOUNDED SOLDIER. Falls to his knees to help his comrade. Hans looks in his TERRIFIED EYES with mercy.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Problem was, Hans' art couldn't stop the war.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (1918)

A grey, dreary day. German soldiers TRUDGE home in DEFEAT. Hans, gaunt and melancholy, doodles on scrap paper.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Eventually World War One came to an end. The countries who fought hadn't learned a damn thing. Not much had changed, really, except Germany was in ruins.

He notices an ORPHAN GIRL (5), blond and in pigtails, looking over the soldiers. She's wearing a tattered old dress and the foulness of war, but maintains her INNOCENCE.

ORPHAN GIRL
 (YELLING OVER TEARS)
 Papa? Have you seen my papa?

The girl's eyes find Hans' and fix on him.

Hans pushes past the other soldiers and beelines to the girl, holding sympathetic eye contact as he approaches.

ORPHAN GIRL (CONT'D)
 Do you know my papa?

HANS
 (SWEETLY)
 I do not.

ORPHAN GIRL
 Will I be all right?

Hans nods yes. But it doesn't help. She BURSTS INTO TEARS.

HANS
 Let me give you something.

Hans reaches into a pocket of his uniform. He pulls out a stained piece of SCRAP PAPER and a NUB OF CHARCOAL.

He sketches a picture of a FLYING BIRD WITH THE GENTLE FEATURES OF THE GIRL. The bird -- tired but determined -- soars toward a big hill.

The girl is CAPTIVATED as Hans draws. He writes in his instantly recognizable script:

THE OBSTACLE IS YOUR PATH. YOU'LL GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.

Hans closes her hands around the top corners of the drawing. He WHISPERS something inaudible to her as she cries.

The girl SMILES at him. Her first moment of HEALING.

INT. REYERSBACH'S HOUSE - DAY

Hans' parents -- AGED AND WEARY -- open the door. Hans enters. Sarah -- prayers realized -- hugs him.

SARAH
 Oh, Hans!

She squeezes him tight, burying her head on his shoulder. Hans doesn't know what to do. He pats her back uncomfortably.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The trauma of battle had only further complicated Hans' soul.

Abraham -- the pain of missing his son written on his face -- wants to say something kind but doesn't have the words. Their eyes meet -- but both look away from the other quickly.

INT. HANS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

It POURS outside. Hans, in bed, can't sleep. A strike of LIGHTNING and a clap of THUNDER. Hans CLENCHES his body as if preparing for an incoming mortar.

INT. HANS' BEDROOM - DAY

It's still raining. Hans sits at his childhood desk. An empty piece of paper and colored pencils in front of him. But nothing's coming.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hamburg no longer felt like home. And the gods had lost touch with Hans.

Abraham ENTERS the room carrying a plate of potato pancakes.

ABRAHAM

Maybe you can start work tomorrow?

He puts the plate down next to Hans. He points at the food, as if to say, *Eat it. They're good for you.* Hans demurs.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)

Time to get on with life. Grow up!

Hans angrily CRINKLES up his empty page as Abraham exits.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Margret -- now eighteen and self-assured, all woman and no girl -- her parents standing behind her, sits across from her caring, concerned PRINCIPAL (50s).

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hans had lost reason to believe in the power of art. But one young artist still had faith.

PRINCIPAL

Margret, you're the smartest kid in the class. And the hardest-working! Why in the world would you want to go to... *art school?*

MARGRET

I'm an artist. And nothing will hold me back from telling the truth.

PRINCIPAL

Your grades are perfect. But look...

He holds up a PAINTING of hers. An almost GROTESQUE PORTRAIT of her parents, who can't disguise their contempt for it.

MARGRET

That's why I need to go to the best art school. Where I'll outwork everyone else. And learn.

MR. WALDSTEIN

Listen to the man. Don't make the foolish choice. You could be a doctor!

PRINCIPAL

Or an engineer!

MRS. WALDSTEIN

Or a nice man's wife!

Margret GROANS and throws her hands in the air.

INT. STAGE AUDITORIUM - DAY

Margret receives her diploma from the principal.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

When Margret was determined, she always got her way.

PRINCIPAL

(DISAPPOINTED)

Congratulations to our valedictorian, Margret Waldstein. Who's throwing away so many other great opportunities to...

INT. BAUHAUS INSTITUTE - DAY

STUDENTS, including Margret, paint at easels, copying an Impressionist painting. The PROFESSOR (50) lectures.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

... Attend the famous Bauhaus Institute. Pride of the German art world.

ART PROFESSOR

You need a subjective lens that transforms quotidian nature into a refracted miracle!

Margret paints more intensely than any of her classmates.

MOMENTS LATER

The professor stands over Margret's easel. REVEAL her painting. A few lifeless apples. Nothing like the example.

ART PROFESSOR

I'm missing the miracle, Miss Waldstein.

MARGRET

I can work harder, Professor!

INT. FACTORY FLOOR - DAY

Hans enters and looks around. EMPTY. The machinery MOTIONLESS -- COBWEBS gathering. Messy PILES OF WIDGETS all around.

INT. ABRAHAM'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Hans slowly opens the door to see his once-proud father hunched over next to an open VAULT. Abraham piles STACKS OF CASH in a wheelbarrow.

ABRAHAM

I'm so happy you're here.

Abraham sees Hans is *not* happy.

HANS

Where is everyone?

ABRAHAM

The men were at the front. And, many of them were... You understand...

He trails off. Hans nods -- understanding all too well.

HANS

What are you doing with all that money?

ABRAHAM

It's worthless now. Inflation. The whole economy's shot.

(BEAT)

This is all to buy a few boxes of new widgets at the docks.

The severity of the situation registers with Hans.

INT. FACTORY FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Hans sits by a STACK of dusty widgets piled over his head. He pulls out tiny piece by tiny piece. Dropping each one into an appropriate container. Mind-numbing work.

Hans' attention strays. He notices some OLD WOODEN CRATES.

They read: **BRAZIL'S FINEST WIDGETS**

We see what Hans DAYDREAMS --

COLORFUL DRAWINGS -- in Hans' style -- come to life all over the crates.

First verdant JUNGLE. Then a WAVE-FILLED OCEAN. Now WILD CREATURES -- birds, reptiles, and monkeys -- prance around the imaginary landscape. Their CRIES RING OUT as the LITTLE ORPHAN GIRL frolics happily with them.

ON HANS: DELIGHTED in his make-believe world.

INT. LECTURE HALL - BAUHAUS - DAY

CLOSE ON Margret, taking notes intently. Slowly PULL OUT TO REVEAL she's the ONLY FEMALE in a sea of male faces.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Margret was never completely comfortable at the Bauhaus.

EXT. MAIN ENTRANCE - ZOO - DAY

Hans -- desperate German citizens in the midst of the Great Depression walking past him -- tries to catch a glimpse of his old friends.

But the zoo is CLOSED. All the cages empty. Hans can't hide his disenchantment.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Life after the war was a never-ending series of disappointments.

INT. MAIN FLOOR - DAY

Hans leans dejectedly against a pile of widgets as he organizes them. Abraham pushes another wheelbarrow of money.

HANS

Going to buy more widgets?

ABRAHAM

Son, this is for groceries.

Hans can't hide his alarm. Abraham shrugs.

ABRAHAM (CONT'D)
How's the counting and organizing?

Hans drops the widgets he's holding.

HANS
Dad, I know you've built this company from nothing just for me. And I know you've always hoped for us to work together. But this isn't my dream.

Abraham sets down the wheelbarrow. Pauses -- REFLECTIVE.

ABRAHAM
You've never told me your dream.

HANS
It's hard to... put into words.

Abraham shrugs and begins to hoist the wheelbarrow again.

HANS (CONT'D)
I don't fit in here anymore, if I ever did in the first place.

Abraham really thinks over Hans' comment.

ABRAHAM
I understand.

HANS
You do?

ABRAHAM
I worked hard so that you could be happy one day. It pains me when you find yourself in trouble. I want to see you grow up so that doesn't happen anymore.

HANS
Dad, I *am* grown up.

Abraham shakes his head *no*. Hans knows he's right.

HANS (CONT'D)
The things people respect in Germany -- soldiers, efficiency, business -- they'll never be for me. This is your home. Not mine.

Abraham nods sympathetically.

HANS (CONT'D)

I had an idea. I know you used to import widgets from Brazil.

ABRAHAM

You want to be a widget exporter?

HANS

No, dad. I want to move to Brazil. I need to leave what I've been through behind. So I can become myself again.

(BEAT TO LET IT SINK IN)

Will you set me up with your contact in Rio?

ON ABRAHAM: The pain of saying yes to losing his son coming through.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Abraham had always wanted what was best for his son... So he did.

EXT. SHIP - HARBOR - RIO DE JANEIRO - DAY (1920)

The rickety ship makes its way past the ICONIC ISLANDS in Rio's bay. A new world ALIVE with verdant greens and marine blues. HOOTS of tropical animals and birds ring out.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

That boat was as nasty as anything that's ever crossed the Atlantic. But Hans realized it was carrying him to freedom. Which, more than anything, is what artists need.

Hans -- sun-kissed and healthy -- stands on the deck. ALIVE AGAIN. A moment of rebirth. He peers towards the horizon --

WHITE SAND BEACHES ahead. FORESTED MOUNTAINS in the distance.

EXT. COPACABANA BEACH - DAY

Hans, all his worldly possessions in a simple RUCKSACK, strolls the famous beach. Its white sand polka-dotted with COLORFUL UMBRELLAS and lithe, tanned bodies.

Hans has changed. His hair longer. Sex appeal evident. A young Serge Gainsbourg -- artist, bohemian, free-spirit.

Hans feels a brush against his feet and looks down--

HATCHLING SEA TURTLES crawling over his feet to the sea.

Now something else catches Hans' attention. His eyes widen --

BIKINI-CLAD BRAZILIAN GIRLS laugh at water's edge.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Rio de Janeiro sure did suit Hans.

Hans GRINS in their direction. They call him over.

EXT. BEACH - SUNSET

Hans paints an ELDERLY VACATIONER (60s) at an easel set up on the beach. Some of his finished work propped up around him.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
And he even started making a little money from painting.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

A BONFIRE PARTY. Flames bouncing up to the sky. Youths party. A band plays steel drums.

Hans DANCES wildly. Lost in the ecstasy of a foreign land.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Hans, rucksack on his back, rides a rusty old BIKE down the empty beach alone. He sips at a bottle of BEER.

A LITTLE LATER

Hans SLEEPS on the sand. His rucksack, bike, and a few EMPTY BOTTLES OF BEER by his side. Hans tosses and turns as a COLD WIND whips up the sand on the beach.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But all that new liberty was a bit too much for a young man used to the discipline of Germany.

INT. GALLERY - BAUHAUS - DAY

A stark white room. Margret, twenty-two now, and her classmates show off their FINAL PROJECTS. A group of MALE ART PROFESSORS make their way to Margret's --

A moody PHOTOGRAPH of a small, elegant house surrounded by towering but ugly edifices. Simple but insightful.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Meanwhile -- as Hans was learning the ways of the world -- Margret battled through the slings and arrows of art school.

The professors trade judgmental glances. Finally one HISSES --

NASALLY ART PROFESSOR

A photograph? No art will ever be expressed in this medium!

CHUBBY ART PROFESSOR

Miss Waldstein, it's *obvious* your life experiences don't amount to much.

Margret looks away. The words WOUND.

SKINNY ART PROFESSOR

Technically proficient. But too *womanly*.

And now the KNIFE GOES DEEPER.

NASALLY ART PROFESSOR

It's clear you don't have the *masculine* strength needed to be an artist.

The professors SNEER condescendingly. Margret stews.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Hans, in a shabby suit, travels through the jungle. A second-hand leather briefcase on his lap. It POURS RAIN outside.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Hans was at a dead end. So he visited his dad's contact to get a real job.

EXT. SHANTY - JUNGLE VILLAGE - DAY

Still POURING. Hans shows off a TOILET SEAT to a VILLAGER LADY(40s). She doesn't care. Shoves him off her stoop.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

He was about as good a traveling toilet salesman as you might expect.

INT. CANTINA - JUNGLE VILLAGE - DAY

Hans sits ALONE at the bar. He motions for *one more*.

EXT. RIVERBOAT - JUNGLE - DAY

Hans -- shirt opened, lounging on the deck of a riverboat -- takes in the sun and sights of the jungle.

Something in the green CANOPY above Hans' head catches his eye. He lifts his stylish sunglasses to take a closer look.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But that job introduced him to the most important business contact he'd ever have.

A little brown MONKEY swings bravely through the uppermost branches of the trees.

This particular fellow seems MORE ALIVE, MORE GRACEFUL than the other monkeys in the trees.

Something ICONIC and RECOGNIZABLE about him. He's TINY in size. His face CHILDLIKE with glee.

Hans giggles at the monkey, who now --

SOMERSAULTS downwards. Barely catching branches here and there. FLINGING HIMSELF ABOUT, unworried about gravity.

The monkey SPOTS something and makes a BRASH DECISION --

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I suppose I reminded Hans of himself.

He JUMPS down, CATCHES a vine with one hand, and SWINGS himself over the width of the river.

Hans holds his breath and tracks the little monkey overhead.

THWAP! The monkey GRABS A BRANCH with two hands overhead, like a graceful gymnast. Hans finally exhales.

The monkey EYES directly below himself at a BIG RED SLOTH barely budging a ripe BANANA toward its mouth.

The monkey uses one of his prehensile feet to SNATCH the banana from the sloth's grasp before the sloth has processed what's happened.

Hans CRACKS UP at the monkey's cheekiness.

Banana in foot, the monkey dismounts the branch and hurls himself toward the riverboat.

Hans is still CAPTIVATED. But REALIZES the monkey is headed right toward him!

The monkey, ROCKETING to Hans, kicks the banana out of his foot into the sky. With his feet now free, the monkey LIGHTLY LANDS on Hans' shoulder and CATCHES the banana in one motion.

Hans looks into the eyes of the wild monkey on his shoulder. They share a WEIRD MOMENT. After what feels like forever --

NARRATOR (V.O.)
I can't tell you why, but it's like
we'd always known each other.

The monkey GIGGLES then rapidly PEELS the banana, bites off half, and shoves the rest in Hans' mouth. Hans chows down.

HANS
Well hello, my little friend!

The monkey HUGS Hans around his head, mussing his hair. Like two old friends having a joyous reunion.

INT. CABIN - RIVERBOAT - DAY

A modest cabin. Hans can't stop laughing as he draws --

The MONKEY -- wriggling about -- his neck STUCK in the bars covering the porthole. His eyes imploring Hans to free him.

Hans sips a GLASS OF WATER, dips his pen in an INKWELL, and finishes a quick sketch. The FIRST HINT of an instantly-recognizable character. He stands and moves to the porthole.

HANS
Keep doing things like this, and I'm
going to have to keep drawing you.

Hans tenderly rotates the monkey's body to the side and slides the creature free. The monkey bounds around, ecstatic, and lands on the desk by the sketch of himself.

HANS (CONT'D)
Not bad, right?

The monkey hops happily. Hans is a harsher critic, though --

HANS (CONT'D)
Eh... Eventually I'll figure out
something meaningful.

Hans takes the drawing and puts it in his beat-up brief case.

HANS (CONT'D)
I'm getting some dinner. Behave!

The monkey jumps to the bed and plops his head on the pillow, pretending to sleep. *Of course I'll be a good boy!*

HANS (CONT'D)
I'll save the maggots for you.

The monkey smiles and sticks out his tongue.

CABIN - A LITTLE LATER

The monkey climbs onto the desk. He tries to dip the pen in the inkwell, but can't get it in with his rough grip.

Frustrated, he drops the pen. With both hands, he LIFTS the inkwell like a mug. Now it's time to inspect it --

Elevating it toward his face, the monkey LOOKS UP and TIPS IT UPSIDE DOWN to look in the hole --

But INK POURS all over him. BLINDED and DISCOMBOBULATED --

He TOPPLES BACKWARDS off the chair. The INK RUNS ALL OVER his coat and pools darkly in the center of the cabin.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

I was too much like Hans. The stubborn type who had to learn from his own mistakes.

The monkey panics, STAINING everything in sight.

He spots a box full of white powder in the corner of the room. It reads: **LAUNDRY DETERGENT**

The monkey bounds to the box and picks it up. Drags it over to the pool of ink and turns the box upside down. Nothing -- just a pile of powdered soap on some ink.

The monkey looks to the desk -- *Ah, the water!* He hops up the chair, grabs Hans' glass, and returns to the pool of ink.

The monkey pours the water over his own head. As it hits his body and then the floor, the mess turns into an overwhelming SLUDGE of DARK BUBBLES.

The DOOR OPENS. The monkey drops the glass, shattering it. Hans -- ignorant of the situation -- carries a tray of fruit.

HANS

They had mangoes. I thought you--

Hans finally notices the situation and CRACKS UP. The monkey's eyes plead innocence, but Hans can't stop laughing.

The monkey runs his hands through his fur and flicks soapy ink, disgusted by his condition. *Aren't you going to help me?*

HANS (CONT'D)

Don't move. I have to draw this!

The monkey slumps his shoulders. Resigned to his fate.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Moonlight beams in through the porthole. The noises of the jungle sing outside. Dark ink stains nearly everything.

On the desk: HANS' FINISHED DRAWING. Four little panels as Hans imagined the monkey perpetrated the act. It's adorable.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

In those days, we were a perfect pair.

The monkey sleeps on Hans' outstretched arm.

EXT. HOUSEBOAT - BAY - RIO DE JANEIRO - DAY

Hans and the monkey follow a RENTAL AGENT over a GANGPLANK.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - MOMENTS LATER

The main area is SPARSE and DIRTY with UNPAINTED boards as walls. A BAREBONES kitchen and an open door to a small bedroom. BIG WINDOWS on either side exposing the bay.

Hans looks around -- envisioning how perfect this can be. Shakes with the agent as the monkey bounds from wall to wall.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

We moved into an ideal place for two eligible bachelors. And I brought out the best in Hans -- unrealized potential only I could see.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - [ANOTHER] DAY

The monkey sits calmly. Hans -- FOCUSED, MANIC WITH ENERGY -- paints him.

Hans' PAINTINGS, mostly WATER COLORS OF THE MONKEY against colorful backgrounds, line the walls. Tens of pieces.

EXT. ART GALLERY - BOHEMIAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Hans, DAPPER, and the monkey approach a crowded storefront. Hans clocks a sign and savors it. The monkey pats his head.

In Portuguese, it reads: **SHOWING THE ART OF HANS REYERSBACH**

INT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

The walls are lined with Hans' vibrant work. But the art is undeveloped and unoriginal -- blatant Impressionist rip-offs.

Patrons line up to congratulate Hans and the monkey, who stand in front of a PAINTING OF THE ORPHAN GIRL.

LATER

QUICK CUTS: Hans flirts and drinks with VARIOUS ATTRACTIVE WOMEN. Clanking glasses. Cheap laughs. Hands on shoulders.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

But Hans' worst instincts could still get the best of him. Which took him away from *our* true calling. Art.

ON THE MONKEY: He can't stand Hans' fraternizing. He rolls his eyes and paces angrily. Disappointed in his friend.

INT. KITCHEN - WALDSTEIN HOUSE - NIGHT

Margret tinkers with a CAMERA. She overhears a conversation --

NARRATOR (V.O.)

After graduation, Hamburg was as unkind to Margret as the Bauhaus' blinded professors.

MRS. WALDSTEIN (O.S.)

I can't believe you'd let him go to Brazil.

DINING ROOM - WALDSTEIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The Waldsteins eat dinner with Hans' parents.

SARAH

We miss him terribly, but...

ABRAHAM

He needed to do *something*.

Mr. Waldsteins raises his hands to make obnoxious air quotes.

MR. WALDSTEIN

"Artists."

MRS. WALDSTEIN

Thinking they're going to change the world by running away from reality.

MARGRET

Slams down the camera. Sick of the disrespect.

ABRAHAM (O.S.)

There's something to be said for it. It's their way to heal the world.

Abraham's idea moves her -- she nods in agreement.

INT. WALDSTEIN HOUSE - DAY

Margret SELLS her parents on the idea of an adventure.

MARGRET

They said, *Margret, you have all the skill in the world. You're already a technical master. And your work ethic is second to none. It's just-*

MARGRET'S MOM

Just *what?*

MARGRET

*You're missing one thing, they said.
(pausing for effect)
An adventure! Seeing the world.
Hardship and danger to imbue your work
with drama.*

Her mother wipes her brow. Sounds scary.

MARGRET'S DAD

Adventure? For a single girl like you?

MARGRET

They insisted! It's the practical thing to do if I want to make money.

Her mom shakes her head *no*.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

I need to do *something* with my life. It's getting bad for us here. And we all have to heal the world in our way.

MARGRET'S DAD

Well... There is the Reyersbach boy.

MARGRET'S MOM

Ugh. She doesn't need his influence.

MARGRET'S DAD

He's on his own adventure. To Brazil, of all places...

Margret feigns surprise. Motions him to tell more.

MARGRET'S DAD (CONT'D)

A bit cuckoo, but everyone agrees he's the most talented young artist to come from Hamburg in years. So gifted!

Margret rolls her eyes. The last thing she wants to hear.

MARGRET'S MOM

Maybe you *could* learn something from him on a *very, very short* visit.

MARGRET

(NEGOTIATION MODE)

I'm *going to* have my adventure.

Her parents look to each other -- know they've already lost.

EXT. DOCKS - RIO DE JANEIRO - NIGHT

Margret -- a large leather SUITCASE in either hand and CAMERA dangling around her neck -- disembarks her ship in POURING RAIN. The port is a disorienting CLAMOR of COMMOTION.

She's wearing a bright YELLOW SUIT topped with an oversized YELLOW EXPLORER'S HAT. As some brutish longshoremen bump into her, Margret sets down her suitcases and pulls a small PHOTO of Hans from her pocket:

ON THE PHOTO: Hans -- hair closely cropped, face clean shaven -- in his army uniform. An ADDRESS is scrawled on the bottom.

WOOT-WOOT! An obnoxious WHISTLE from a group of LEERING OLD MEN (50s) that CATCALL her. They obnoxiously yell at her.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Margret had every reason to run away from what awaited her in Rio. But you'd have to be a damn fool to expect that from her.

She rolls her eyes, picks up her bags, and WALKS AWAY.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - SUNRISE

Hans and the monkey SLEEP on the floor of the main room. The REMNANTS OF TOO MUCH FUN spread out near them.

EXT. BOARDWALK - CONTINUOUS

Margret -- exhausted, thoroughly drenched -- approaches Hans' houseboat with suitcases in hand and camera around her neck.

She looks at the tiny houseboat -- confused and disappointed. But she GATHERS HERSELF and MARCHES up the wobbly dock.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - MOMENTS LATER

KNOCK. KNOCK. KNOCK. The whole houseboat rattles.

The monkey, HUNGOVER, wakes up slowly. Rubs his hairy temples, shields his eyes from the sun. Hans still out cold.

The monkey hisses and waves toward the door: *Go away!*

KNOCK! KNOCK! More insistent now.

The monkey steps over Hans and lumbers to the door --

He jumps up, pulls down the handle, and kicks off the jamb to open the door. Swinging backwards, he looks up to see --

Margret, all bright yellow and shadow on her face, assessing the room. She can't hide her DISAPPOINTMENT with the mess.

MARGRET

Thank you, I suppose.

The monkey -- OFFENDED -- hops down, turns his back to her, and walks to the bathroom. Closes the door behind him.

Margret clocks the debris of the previous night and eyes the man passed out on the floor. She takes a BIG SNIFF -- it's RANK as hell. *What have I gotten myself into?*

Margret sets down her suitcases. Looks at the photo again.

She now stares at Hans sprawled across the floor. *Same man, different eras*, she observes much to her chagrin.

Margret walks toward Hans. Standing over him, she bends down to get a better look. Her big yellow hat shadows his face.

She extends her forefinger and sharply POKES his chest.

Hans slowly opens his eyes, blinking toward sentience.

HANS' POV: An IMAGE SLOWLY COMES INTO FOCUS --

A GIANT YELLOW HAT. Long RED HAIR. But, most of all, PIERCING GREEN EYES looking into his soul.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

I'm Margret Waldstein. From Hamburg.
I'm here to have an adventure.

Hans slowly props himself up. Trying to make sense of her.

HANS

Nice hat.

MARGRET

Thank you?

HANS

Who invited you?

MARGRET

Um. Well. No one really. But—

Hans sits up fully now.

HANS

And who the hell let you in?

MARGRET

That obnoxious little pet monkey.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Watch yourself now, Margret.

HANS

He's my friend. Not a pet.

The toilet FLUSHES. The monkey opens the door, strides out with *CROSSED ARMS*, and *STARES DAGGERS* at Margret.

MARGRET

Sorry...

The monkey rolls his eyes. *Whatever, lady.*

HANS

He's quite fun if you learn how to get along with him.

MARGRET

I can imagine.

Hans stands and GRABS the yellow hat off of Margret's head. She's ANNOYED. Tries to straighten her messy hair.

HANS

Are you on safari?

MARGRET

No. An adventure. That's what they told me I need at art school.

HANS

(SCOFFING)

Art school?

MARGRET

I was studying at the Bauhaus!

HANS

How pretentious.

MARGRET

Fair! But *clearly* you can see the value of a young artist exploring the world.

HANS

So you've come on holiday to *my* houseboat?

MARGRET

I'm an artist. Like you *supposedly* are. I thought I could learn a little—

HANS

(SWAGGER)

I can teach you some things.

MARGRET

I've already had quite a thorough education. Thank you very much.

HANS

I get carried away sometimes.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Margret remembered hearing that line one time before.

She eyes him. That smug face -- exasperating but so alive.

MARGRET

You know I saved you once?

(OFF HIS CONFUSED LOOK)

You came to my ninth birthday party.

You and your helium balloons...

Hans takes a few steps toward her. Cutting her off --

HANS

You're the one person who hung onto my foot when everyone else wanted me to blow away.

MARGRET

I don't think they wanted that. Regardless, nice to see you. Again.

Hans makes a DUBIOUS face. Doesn't want to get into the past.

HANS

So what do you want with me now?

MARGRET

(CALLING HIM OUT)

What's your problem?

(MORE)

MARGRET (CONT'D)

Are you embarrassed for me to see you live like this? Are you even an artist anymore? Doesn't seem like it.

Hans and the monkey DUMBFOUNDED. *Did you really say that?*

HANS

Uh... Yes... No... Of course I'm an artist! A damn popular one in Rio. And much more creative than those self-righteous pricks at the Bauhaus.

MARGRET

In that case, show me around. Prove your genius to me.

HANS

You'd be a fool not to notice it.

The monkey -- defensive -- runs to Hans. Climbs up his body.

MARGRET

What's his name?

HANS

(DUMBFOUNDED)

A name? Oh... He doesn't have one.

Margret eyes the monkey who meets her glance with his.

MARGRET

Just look at him! Any genius would know he's meant to be a George.

The newly-minted GEORGE finally smiles at Margret and excitedly plays Hans' head like a bongo.

HANS

George! Of course he's a George.

GEORGE/NARRATOR (V.O.)

George! Of course I'm a George.

Margret laughs at the intoxicating man and his monkey.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Hans, Margret, and George dine al fresco at a lively place. A waiter brings their drinks. Margret is unhappy with her tea.

MARGRET

Sir, I asked for *light* milk, *no* sugar.

The WAITER (30s) is confused by her seriousness. Hans enjoys her assertiveness which is so out of place in South America.

WAITER

A little rum will fix it!

MARGRET

No. Certainly not. Please bring it as I asked for it.

The waiter takes her cup and rolls his eyes to Hans.

HANS

You're pretty serious about your tea.

MARGRET

One should be serious about getting what they want in life.

HANS

What about a nice German fellow living in Brazil who just wants left alone?

MARGRET

Do you want to be left alone or do you want to be remembered as a great artist?

Hans is annoyed, but George claps in support of her idea.

HANS

I don't see how the two are related.

MARGRET

Well, I worked very hard to come on this adventure. And I plan to be remembered as a great artist. So I won't let your lack of seriousness get in my way.

HANS

Are you hearing this, George?

Hans, indignant, looks to George. But George grins to Margret, sympathizing with her position.

EXT. COPACABANA - LATER

Hans and Margret leisurely ride beach cruisers next to each other. George sits on Hans' handlebars.

MARGRET

So it just comes easily for you?

HANS

Yeah. Always has. Something I was born with, I guess.

MARGRET
(JEALOUS)
Wouldn't that be nice?

HANS
If it's such a challenge, why do you do it?

MARGRET
Well I know I have something of value to give back to the world.

HANS
(SARCASTIC)
How noble.

MARGRET
You've never wanted to pursue something bigger than yourself? Push past your boundaries? Give something back to the world that's never existed before?

HANS
Nah. I just like drawing.

MARGRET
You need someone to push you then! To help accomplish what you don't think you're capable of. It's not meant to come easily.

HANS
Look... It hasn't always been easy. I was blocked after the damn war. It was horrible! All of it.

MARGRET
I didn't know... I'm sorry.

HANS
But I'm here now. And things have never been better. Until you showed up.

He pedals ahead of her and smiles back. *Is he flirting?*

MARGRET
What made it better?

HANS
Oh, I don't know. It's wild here.

He picks up George and throws him back to her. She YELPS. But George lands safely on her shoulder, and she's CHARMED.

HANS (CONT'D)

Mostly that little fellow. I love animals. And he's the best to draw.

MARGRET

Animals. Why do you like them so much?

Hans laughs at first. Then smiles wistfully. He searches for an honest answer for once...

HANS

I don't know. Wild creatures. Can you ever really tame them? They're so beautiful. Each one is a perfectly created piece of art. Every moment for an animal is like that divine feeling when it's just you and the canvas and the art is flowing out of you. They're all being -- no thinking -- just like that.

She catches up. Looks into his eyes -- moved by his honesty.

HANS (CONT'D)

And when an animal -- like George here -- trusts you, it's the best. You have to be pure and present for them to accept you. You can't judge them. For them, the only time is right now. To live with such freeness -- to be like them -- it's perfect inspiration.

He SKIDS to a stop in front of her.

HANS (CONT'D)

How about you? What do you like?

Margret blushes. She wasn't expecting this.

MARGRET

I... don't... know. I'm sorry.

Hans smiles to her. George jumps back to his shoulder. He speeds off looking back to her --

HANS

You'll have to figure it out, Margret.

EXT. VISTA - JUNGLE - DAY

Hans, Margret, and George hike off of a jungle path onto an OVERLOOK with a clear view of all of Rio and the ocean below.

Hans carries a beautiful homemade KITE.

MOMENTS LATER

Hans has the kite FLYING over the tops of the trees. Margret and George stand by his side admiring it.

Hans takes Margret's hands and puts the string in it.

MARGRET

Oh, I don't know—

HANS

(CUTTING HER OFF)

Take it. You'll be great.

She cautiously takes the string and gives it some more slack. The kite catches a gust of wind. And flies even higher.

HANS (CONT'D)

Wonderful! You can do it. Forget about those nasty Bauhaus professors.

Margret smiles to him as George starts jumping up and down at Margret's side. He points to himself insistently.

MARGRET

It looks like someone else wants a turn.

HANS

All little monkeys deserve a chance.

MOMENTS LATER

Hans and Margret SIT next to each other. Their backs at forest's edge.

George is out at the edge of the vista. Running around to-and-fro. The kite soaring crazily overhead.

MARGRET

That little fellow really is something.

Hans smirks back at her -- he already knows that. But Margret bursts up and runs towards --

GEORGE

Who's swept away by the kite. Flying over the side of the vista. Now being blown straight up like an eagle in a draft.

HANS

Falls over backwards LAUGHING.

MARGRET
Aren't you worried?

HANS
This is what we do!

GEORGE

Jumps off the string and lands safely on a branch high in the trees. He wipes his forehead with his paw -- *close call*.

George looks down to Hans, shrieks, and makes an inconsolable face. A young child who needs a parent's hug.

MOMENTS LATER

Hans CLIMBS the tree George is in. Margret stands below.

HANS
I'd never leave you behind, pal.

MARGRET
Are you ever going to love anything as much as you love that monkey?

Hans, almost to George, pauses and looks back to Margret.

HANS
(CHARMING)
Some very secret things are in the works.

He scurries out on a tiny branch closer to George. Margret can't help but laugh with joy.

QUICK CUTS:

Margret SNAPS PHOTOS around Rio with Hans and George:

- Underneath the COLORFUL UMBRELLAS at the Copacabana.
- Colorful COLONIAL BUILDINGS.
- Overlooking the city from the SCENIC VISTA.
- GEORGE DOING TRICKS in the jungle's trees.
- Hans RIDING A BICYCLE WITH NO HANDS, all smiles.
- A SELFIE of the three of them HAPPY in the houseboat.

EXT. ART GALLERY - NIGHT

Hans and Margret, George on *her* shoulder now, SNEAK IN.

INT. ART GALLERY - MOMENTS LATER

As the lights slowly come up, Margret makes her way around the room, darting amongst the art. Hans and George follow.

MARGRET
These are *not bad*, Hans!

HANS
What a compliment.

MARGRET
The professors at the Bauhaus would *hate* these! But they have a certain energy and unrefined potential.

Hans scoffs at her audacity.

HANS
I thought you came to learn from me.

MARGRET
I already went to art school.

HANS
Do you believe me that I'm an artist now?

MARGRET
(FLIRTING)
Heaven forbid your feelings get hurt.

Hans and George wave her off at the same time. But the painting of the little girl and the bird catch her eye.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
This one is amazing. There's a whole story in it. What inspired you?

Hans doesn't say anything. But Margret holds her intense gaze until he finally opens up --

HANS
Everyone thinks kids are too stupid to know anything. And that we should all rush to grow up. But that's nonsense.

MARGRET
Maturity isn't all bad.

HANS
I'm not saying it is. But it takes more creativity to appeal to one single child than all the stuck-up critics in Europe.
(BEAT -- FROM THE HEART)
Myths. They tell a whole story. Anyone, even children, can understand them. Myths are the highest form of art.

Margret nods, agreeing with him.

MARGRET
Who's this little girl?

HANS
(HESITANT)
I met her one day. After the end of
the war. And...

MARGRET
And?

Hans shrugs. Doesn't want to talk about it.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
And you created a myth for her?

HANS
It made her smile again, Margret.

Margret gives Hans a look. One we've seen before. The look she gave him at her ninth birthday party when Hans almost blew away.

MARGRET
And you knew you were an artist?

He nods modestly. Margret takes his hand, and their eyes lock on the other. A return to their metaphysical magic.

EXT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

Margret and Hans walk hand-in-hand across the gangplank into the houseboat. George, ANNOYED, follows behind.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

George, arms crossed across his chest, stomps around outside the bedroom door like an impatient college freshman.

GEORGE (V.O.)
That night I lost my rightful place in bed.
Which gave Margret some big ideas.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Hans and Margret -- George between them -- rest in bed. Margret, torn up about something, stares out a small window toward the ocean.

MARGRET
You'd say I'm a bit too uptight? Too
traditional?

HANS
No big secret.

Margret stands. Puts on a robe. Still looking away from Hans.

MARGRET
And I need to change that to help my
art. Right?

HANS
That's what I've been saying.

She turns around.

MARGRET
Hans, let's get married.

Hans' and George's eyes open wide. They both sit up ramrod
straight.

HANS
Married? Like... *adults*?

MARGRET
Yes, I suppose. But also like humans
who value each other and their work.

Hans and George give her a suspicious glance. *Are you nuts?*

MARGRET (CONT'D)
(SEARCHING)
And, and... like the impulsive,
hopeless romantics we are!

Hans gets out of bed on the opposite side of Margret.

HANS
I think you're mistaken about us.

MARGRET
I know this is quick, but... come on!

HANS
George and I are not the marrying type.

Margret -- BEFUDDLED -- throws her hands into the air.

HANS (CONT'D)
I've been distracted since you showed
up unannounced. And, let me add,
uninvited. I haven't been working so
my mind's a wreck.

MARGRET
You still haven't said yes or no.

HANS
I didn't leave Germany for a yes or no
kind of life!

Margret looks at him, embarrassed and regretful.

HANS (CONT'D)
George and I are going to the jungle
to paint today.

KNOCK! KNOCK! KNOCK! An unexpected rapping at the door.

DELIVERY BOY (O.S.)
Telegraph!

MOMENTS LATER

Hans, George on his shoulder, is at the open door talking to a DELIVERY BOY (18). Margret -- WIPING TEARS from her eyes -- stays back in the kitchen.

Hans, annoyed, signs for it and slams the door.

DELIVERY BOY
And nice monkey by the-

As the boy is cut off, Hans eyes Margret. *Did you plan this?*

MARGRET
This was not my doing. I swear!

HANS
Ugh. It's from my dad. I don't want it.

Margret approaches Hans, opens the telegraph, reads it ALOUD.
But we hear ABRAHAM'S VOICE --

ABRAHAM (V.O.)
Hans, mother and I miss you. But it's
good you left Germany.

**INTERCUT ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OF HITLER'S RISE TO POWER WITH
HANS' HORRIFIED REACTION:**

-A young HITLER shakes hands and nods furiously to a small group of uniformed Nazi goons. The beginning of the party.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)
A terrible man named Hitler has been
gaining power. Our country has been
hypnotized by him.

-Hitler, all TWISTED PASSION, gives an impassioned speech.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)

He and his Nazi party have been burning books and art. Many writers and artists are being jailed.

-Nazis throw BOOKS into a massive bonfire.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)

He has a deep hatred for us Jews. I don't understand how, but he's convinced many of our countrymen we're to blame for Germany's problems.

-KRISTELLNACHT. Nazis looting Jewish businesses. Beating Jews on the street. Terror.

EXT. ABRAHAM'S FACTORY - NIGHT [FLASHBACK]

NAZI THUGS vandalize Hans' father's business. A STORM TROOPER paints a large STAR OF DAVID on the front, broken window.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)

We can no longer work. Our business has been taken away from us.

Through a HOLE in the middle of the graffiti star, we see-

ABRAHAM - CONTINUOUS [FLASHBACK]

Hanging his head in FEAR and SHAME. The business is RANSACKED. Widgets strewn about everywhere.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)

It's not safe for us. We fear we will soon have to leave our beloved country.

Sarah, slower now, walks to Abraham, who's cleaning. She puts her arm around him. No reaction from the old man.

HANS

RIPS UP the telegraph. FURIOUS and SAD all at once.

HANS

This *cannot* happen again!

MARGRET

I'm sure-

HANS

You don't know what war is like.

MARGRET

We'll figure out how to help them.

Hans -- almost in tears -- doesn't want to get into it.

HANS

We've got to go paint now.

George darts to Hans' art supplies and grabs a few brushes from a can. Hans pauses at the door before exiting --

HANS (CONT'D)

Pack your bags. I'll help you find a new place when I'm back.

Margret is DEVASTATED. Hans turns and exits with George.

EXT. VISTA - JUNGLE - DAY

Hans and George, both visibly upset, arrive at a vista overlooking Rio. They set up an easel.

EXT. VISTA - JUNGLE - SUNSET

The last light of day... And an EMPTY CANVAS.

GEORGE (V.O.)

It was a lot to consider. We needed to clear our minds.

HANS

All right now. We've got this.

GEORGE (V.O.)

But the gods weren't touching us that day.

He moves the brush to the canvas. But doesn't draw a thing.

HANS

Oh, come on, Hans!

(BEAT)

This is *not* your fault! How dare she. Propose? Ugh. The word itself is disgusting.

George hops off Hans' shoulder.

HANS (CONT'D)

We had it made here. Fun. Beautiful women. Paint a little here and there. We would have grown old -- leaving everyone else be, the world not bothering us. That's the life, George.

GEORGE (V.O.)
 Hans wasn't telling the truth. And --
 somewhere in the depths of his soul -- he
 knew it. But he was scared to admit it.

Hans becomes morose --

HANS
 What's she see in me? I don't have
 anything for her. We have no real art
 to share with anyone, George.

The monkey looks up to Hans. He cocks his head as if
 preparing a thought. And George -- in the voice of our
 narrator -- blurts out --

GEORGE (V.O.)
 So I spoke up.

GEORGE
 Love can be a great adventure.

Hans doesn't skip a beat in responding.

HANS
 That *is* true.

GEORGE
 This love could be your masterpiece.

Hans nods along in agreement.

HANS
 Oh, I don't know! Going back to Europe,
 it'll be hard. With what's going on in
 Germany and the threat of war.

GEORGE
 Do we really stand a chance without
 Margret, though?

HANS
 Oh, George! Of course, you're right!

But now the ABSURDITY of George speaking HITS HIM.

HANS (CONT'D)
 George, did you...

GEORGE (V.O.)
 Sometimes genius is simply knowing
 when to shut up.

George bounces up and down. Proud of himself.

Hans -- bewildered -- shakes his head.

INT. HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

Hans and George, supplies in hand, skip in. Margret, in the yellow outfit she arrived in, finishes packing her suitcases.

HANS
(EXCITED)
Margret! Margret!

MARGRET
I'm sorry. I tried to pack, but... Can I stay here one last night-

HANS
Of course! Of course you can!

MARGRET
About before. It was a terrible idea.

Hans hurries to her and puts his hands on both her shoulders.

HANS
It was a brilliant idea!
(BEAT -- OFF MARGRET'S CONFUSION)
Let's move to Paris and get married.
It's the most romantic, artistic thing we could possibly do.

George bounces beside them clapping excitedly.

MARGRET
Paris! How are we going to...
(REALIZING WHAT'S GOING ON)
Married? Are you sure?

HANS
Let's have our adventure.

He KISSES her long and sweet.

HANS (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry about that little outburst before. The war did something to me... And then that telegram from my dad... I don't know how to explain it.

MARGRET
(FORGIVING)
Let's not make a habit out of it.

HANS
 Of course not.
 (BEAT)
 But we *must* figure out how to take
 George with us!

INT. COUNTER - GOVERNMENT OFFICE - DAY

Margret talks to a BUREAUCRAT and signs some documents.

GEORGE (V.O.)
 Margret worked her magic. Figured out
 the papers and money.

BUREAUCRAT
 Congratulations.

He hands her some papers -- two BRAZILIAN PASSPORTS on top.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

A GALLERIST (50s) signs a CHECK and hands it to Margret.

INT. TICKET STALL - DOCKS - DAY

Margret NEGOTIATES with a GRUMPY TICKET AGENT (40s).

GRUMPY TICKET AGENT
 ... No way, lady!

MARGRET
 Coach cabin, but *first class* meals.

GRUMPY TICKET AGENT
 Fine.

He extends his hand to shake on it. BUT Margret won't yet --

MARGRET
 One last thing. My fiancé has a
 friend... A Brazilian friend.

Grumpy Ticket Agent mugs her. *So what?*

MARGRET (CONT'D)
 Actually he's a house pet...
 (OFF THE TICKET AGENT'S GLARE)
 All right! He's a monkey. But he
absolutely must make the trip with us!

GRUMPY TICKET AGENT
 No.

MARGRET
My fiancé would never talk to me—

GRUMPY TICKET AGENT
Personal problem, miss.

Margret looks at him trying to find any compassion. *Please!*

GEORGE (V.O.)
But she couldn't finalize the most
important arrangements.

GRUMPY TICKET AGENT
They find that monkey, they'll drown
him in a heartbeat. Enjoy your first
class meals, though.

I/E HOUSEBOAT - NIGHT

Margret ever-so-calmly explains the situation to Hans. We watch this scene play out SILENTLY from the exterior.

Hans is shell-shocked. Pure DENIAL as he PACES FRANTICALLY.

GEORGE (V.O.)
Margret did the best she could to
break the news lightly. But we took it
kind of poorly...

George goes BERSERK. Bouncing off the walls -- flying here and there. DESTROYING everything in site. Knocking over an easel. FLINGING PAINT. Tearing up canvases.

EXT. VISTA - JUNGLE - SUNSET

Hans and George trudge off of the jungle path.

HANS
Come here, George.

George jumps up to Hans' chest. Hans hugs him like a baby.

HANS (CONT'D)
I want to thank you, my friend. I
thought I'd never be myself again
after the war.

George looks up at Hans.

HANS (CONT'D)
Without you, I'd still be a bum on the
beach. Or maybe in a madhouse in
Hamburg.

(MORE)

HANS (CONT'D)
 But you taught me to draw again. And
 I'm going to have a wife because of
 you, old friend!

George wipes a tear from Hans' cheek.

HANS (CONT'D)
 It'd be selfish of me to keep you.

Hans peels George off his chest. Gently tosses him toward the forest.

HANS (CONT'D)
 Go, George! You'll be happy.

But George won't go. He rests dumbly staring at Hans.

GEORGE (V.O.)
 Hans thought he could get rid of me.

HANS
 (EMOTIONAL)
 You don't understand. If they find you
 on the ship, they'll throw you
 overboard and drown you in the
 freezing ocean! And it's not the same
 in Europe. You'd hate it.
 (BEAT, YELLS NOW)
 Go, George! Leave you stupid monkey!

Hans -- breaking down -- TURNS AWAY from George.

George looks at his friend for a moment. Then he turns around and ambles back toward the jungle. But --

An IMAGINARY VERSION OF GEORGE peels off from the real monkey that disappears into the greenery of the jungle and looks at Hans. **This George is a figment of Hans' imagination.**

The new **IMAGINARY** George bounds to Hans, CLIMBS into his shirt, and cleverly HIDES at the SMALL OF HIS BACK.

Hans -- surprised by the new George clinging to his skin -- smiles in delight.

The new George now HIDDEN, Hans turns to walk away from the vista. The FAINTEST OUTLINE of a tiny monkey protrudes under his shirt.

But we see what Hans has actually left behind --

The real George -- just a small, regular monkey -- bounces around alone on the vista. As Hans walks away, the old, animal George meanders back into the jungle forever.

EXT. DOCKS - BRAZIL - DAY

CLOSE ON: Documents changing hands. A STAMP smashes down.

GATE AGENT (O.S.)
Papers! Papers!

Hans -- grimacing at the gate agent's call for papers -- follows Margret onto the ship. On the small of Hans' back, George's TAIL barely peaks out -- WAGGING happily.

INT. CABIN - SHIP - NIGHT (1935)

A modest room. Hans and Margret rest under the covers. Margret reads, Hans draws. The camera moves down, REVEALING --

UNDER THE BED

GEORGE, on best behavior, HIDING quietly.

EXT. HÔTEL DE VILLE - PARIS - DAY

Hans and Margret, their SUITCASES in hand, SPRINT to Paris's magnificent city hall. The city's GRANDEUR surrounds them.

INT. HANS' SUITCASE - CONTINUOUS

George, hidden amongst dirty clothes, BOUNCES back and forth.

INT. CEREMONY ROOM - HOTEL DE VILLE - LATER

A grand Beaux Arts hall. Hans and Margret -- drunk in love, suitcases at their side -- stand in front of a CIVIL SERVANT who declares them man and wife.

They KISS passionately.

GEORGE - IN THE SUITCASE - CONTINUOUS

Looks glum. Sad to be missing out on all the fun.

INT. LOBBY - HOTEL DE VILLE - MOMENTS LATER

Hans and Margret, in a whirlwind of adrenaline, race out of city hall. Margret stops on a dime.

MARGRET
(TONGUE-IN-CHEEK)
We haven't talked about our honeymoon.

HANS
Oh... Right you are...
(GRINNING)
How about Paris?

The two newlyweds FROLIC off.

EXT. BAR - LATIN QUARTER - DAY

A LIVELY AREA filled with universities, students, and bars. Hans and Margret sit on a busy patio -- luggage on the floor beside them. Hans pours two glasses of CHAMPAGNE.

HANS
À votre santé, Madame Reyersbach!

MARGRET
Cheers, my love!

They clink their glasses and drink.

HANS
My hat's off to you. This whole elopement idea. Not too shabby.

MARGRET
I very immodestly agree.

Something across the street catches Hans' eye. He can't stop staring. Margret turns and looks, too, at a --

MIME SCHOOL

An older TEACHER MIME *silently* BERATES two younger STUDENT MIMES. The teacher points his finger in their faces and indicates the students have brains the size of peanuts.

The older mime slams the door shut in their face. The two students walk away -- silently -- with their heads hung.

BAR

Hans -- in hysterics -- bursts up.

HANS
I cannot stand for this.

Margret -- giggly -- tries to grab him, but he's on his way.

MARGRET
Hans, no, please!

CLOSE ON Margret, enjoying the spectacle Hans makes as he runs to the mimes walking down the --

STREET

Hans taps both the depressed, young mimes on their back. They're SURPRISED to see this stranger --

Especially because Hans now acts like a trained mime himself -
- exaggerated posture, expressions, and all.

As the young mimes look at him, he points back at their school and SIMULATES PUNCHING their teacher.

Both the young mimes nod in agreement. They point like they need to be going. But Hans indicates for them to stay.

MARGRET

Laughs at Hans' nerve. Quite a show he's putting on.

MARGRET

Let them go! They have important mime things to be doing.

STREET

Hans wags his finger at her. *Not yet.* By this point a SMALL CROWD has gathered around Hans and the two mimes.

Hans puts his fingers on both of their lips at the same time. He mimes drawing a SMILE on both their faces and --

Both mimes break out in laughter.

He now finds Margret's eyes with his. He points at her then makes a HEART SHAPE with his fingers. He moves the heart shape over his own heart.

Now he beats the heart shape against his chest, indicating Margret is his own heartbeat.

The two mimes grin from ear to ear as Hans waves for them to go out in the world and find their own loves.

The crowd erupts in cheers. Hans bows as he spots --

MARGRET

Standing, clapping, and making joyful eye contact with Hans.

EXT. MONTMARTRE - NIGHT

An ancient HILLSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD. The epitome of BOHEMIAN.

Narrow COBBLESTONE STREETS. Small BOOKSTORES. The iconic WINDMILL of the Moulin Rouge. Above it all, the massive, all-white SACRÉ-COEUR CHURCH.

Margret and Hans, still with their luggage in hand, mosey around, infatuated by their surroundings.

An ODD BUILDING catches Hans' eye. It's bright blue -- like something he'd draw -- with strange crags and promontories. Built into a hillside beside a cemetery. A sign reads:

TERRASS HOTEL. APPARTEMENTS POUR LES ARTISTES.

HANS

What about that one?

Hans points at it, and they GRIN KNOWINGLY at one another.

INT. HALLWAY - TERRASS HOTEL - LATER

Margret opens the door to room 505. They enter.

IN THE ROOM

Hans flips on the light and brings in the luggage.

HANS AND MARGRET

It's perfect.

Hans looks at the furniture and art on the wall. A baroque mix of styles, periods, and colors. But somehow it all works.

Margret gravitates to the window overlooking the city of light. She pulls open a blowing sheer obscuring the view --

The EIFFEL TOWER in the distance, surrounded by the most beautiful city in the world.

MARGRET

We're home, Hans.

Hans walks to Margret and takes in the view.

George UNZIPS -- just a bit -- the bag in which he's hidden. Peaks his head out. Looks around surreptitiously --

Feeling IGNORED, George hangs his head and hides again as --

HANS

You know... Our marriage still isn't official.

Hans and Margret KISS, STUMBLING toward the bed.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

A perfect morning. Breakfast in bed.

HANS

If the coffee is from Brazil, why does it taste so much better here?

MARGRET
Everything tastes better in Paris.

She plants a kiss right on his lips.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
Even you!

HANS
Why do you think that is?

Margret grabs a croissant and bites into it.

MARGRET
(PUTTING ON A FRENCH ACCENT)
Who cares! We are *françaises* now.

HANS
In that case, there's something I'd
like to do.

MARGRET
Tell me. Please.

HANS
(OVEREMPHASIZING)
Reyersbach. Rey. Ers. Bach.
(PAUSE)
It's so...

MARGRET
German! And ugly. Reyersbachhhh.

She coughs up a hairball on the last syllable.

HANS
We should change our last name.

MARGRET
I don't want people associating us
with that madman in Germany. It should
be simple. Memorable.

Hans nods in affirmation. Margret thinks a beat.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
(REALLY SELLING IT)
Rey! Hans and Margret Rey. We *could be*
French. Or Brazilian for that matter.

Hans, baguette in hand, hops out of bed.

HANS
Genius! The Reys. Citizens of the world.

Hans surreptitiously throws a bit of bread under the bed.

UNDER THE BED

George, moving silently in the shadows, snatches up the food.

HANS (O.S.)
Artists of all lands!

He GRINS -- loves the sound of that.

MARGRET

Loves the idea.

MARGRET
And no one will have to know we're...

HANS
Right. Not necessary at the moment.

MARGRET
I'll get the papers taken care of.

HANS
Papers, papers, papers. They're going
to be the end of me one day!

Margret rolls her eyes -- she'll always deal with the papers.

EXT. JARDIN DE LUXEMBOURG - DAY

A stunning PARK dotted with STATUES. The grounds abut an elegant CASTLE. Hans PAINTS the scenery at an easel. George hangs on the front of Hans' shirt.

Hans SPLATTERS paint to give his work a surreal feel.

GEORGE
More! Go bigger, Hans! C'mon!

Hans excitedly flicks REDS and YELLOWS. Until he hears --

MARGRET (O.S.)
Bonjour, Monsieur Rey.

George BURROWS back inside Hans' shirt, hiding himself. Hans turns around, CAUGHT OFF-GUARD.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
The name change is all done.

HANS
Oh, um, great.

Margret approaches the easel. Looks at it critically.

MARGRET

The mess in the sky detracts from your detail work of the statues.

HANS

(ANNOYED)

It's not done.

MARGRET

Don't go overboard with the unessential.

HANS

Well, I should get back to it...

MARGRET

(IGNORING HIS HINT)

Some good news. My parents got out of Germany yesterday.

(BEAT -- GETTING SERIOUS)

But your parents still need travel arrangements, papers, and more funds.

(BEAT -- SOLEMN)

I was just at the bank wiring them. Almost all of our savings are gone already, Hans.

HANS

It'll work itself-

MARGRET

(CUTTING HIM OFF)

No. Our priority is getting all of our family out of Germany.

HANS

Of course.

MARGRET

So we're going to need some work here.

He smiles at her mischievously.

HANS

I've always dreamed of working our entire honeymoon.

Hans swoops up Margret into his arms. She gasps and giggles -- very unlike herself -- before they kiss.

START MUSIC MONTAGE - MARGRET AND HANS IN JAZZ AGE PARIS

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Beautiful people DANCE. AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSICIANS play jazz.

Hans and Margret -- looking very *en vogue* -- enter -- ENTHRALLED by the atmosphere. Margret pushes to the bar -- calls the BARTENDER. Hans -- George on his back -- follows.

Bartender presents a magnum of CHAMPAGNE and SPRITZES them.

LATER

Hans and Margret dance closely as the band speeds up. On Hans' back, we see George's tail wagging to the beat.

EXT. CHAMPS ÉLYSÉES - NIGHT

The CITY OF LIGHTS illuminated in a golden haze. The Reys, REVELING in the magical environment, walk home hand-in-hand.

As they KISS, NOTICE George SWINGING between light poles.

INT. LOUVRE - DAY

Hans and Margret look at the legendary works. Hans sets up an easel to replicate them. Margret points, offering direction.

As Hans sketches, *we see his HAND-DRAWN ART fill the frame, obscuring the original masterpieces he renders in his style:*

-The Mona Lisa as the Orphan Girl on a bright background.

-Margret, smiling at Hans, as the Venus de Milo.

-George as the Winged Statue of Victory.

GEORGE

Observes them from the heights of the cathedral-like ceiling.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Margret poses for Hans -- the beginning of his STUDIO taking shape near the window. NOTICE MORE ART AND FURNITURE ACCUMULATING in the apartment.

HANS' PAINTING COMES TO LIFE:

Margret and George -- BOTH DRAWN IN HANS' HAND -- dance wildly in a rainbow jazz club. Hans looks on approvingly.

INT. SALON - GERTRUDE STEIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A bohemian literary salon. Margret in the corner debates two Americans -- a burly HEMINGWAY (30s) and plain-looking GERTRUDE STEIN (60s), who's in charge of this affair.

ACROSS THE ROOM

Hans chats with an American woman with a stern face. She wears cropped hair and a man's suit, and works as an ART BROKER.

This is ALICE BABETTE TOKLAS (50s) -- romantic partner of Gertrude Stein and connective tissue of Paris's art scene.

ALICE
Rey? What is that?

HANS
Who knows? Could be from anywhere.

ALICE
Smart.

Alice motions to Margret, who's forcefully sticking her pointer finger into Hemingway's chest.

ALICE (CONT'D)
She's pretty. But more important,
seems very strong-willed.

Hans nods. Proud of Margret. Alice takes in Hans --

ALICE (CONT'D)
I'd love to see your work.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Hans pulls his sketches and canvases out of a large leather portfolio. Alice, standing close to Margret, inspects them.

ALICE
Trés bien! Plenty of money in this.
(TO MARGRET)
And you, lovey? Don't let your husband
keep all the glory to himself.

Hans rolls his eyes. Margret shrugs modestly.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Want to live in his shadow? Whadya got?

Margret hands Alice an ALBUM OF HER PHOTOGRAPHY from Rio.

MARGRET
I know what the audience wants to see.
And I know how to help other artists.
I have the vision, I do!
(BEAT. THEN POINTS AT HANS)
But my hands don't work like his.

ALICE

If you're willing to tell men who think they're geniuses what to do, I got something for you.

Off of Margret's EXCITEMENT, we cut back to --

INT. TERRASS HOTEL

The art collection is growing quickly. To support the habit --

Hans, Margret, and Alice SELL a few of Hans' pieces to a FRENCH COUPLE (60s). Francs quickly move between hands.

UNDER THE BED

George smiles. Happy to see Hans doing well.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

The Reys DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY. George GYRATES in the wings.

EXT. PARK - SUNSET

A picnic. More than a picnic... A MOVEABLE FEAST --

Great artists sit around a LAVISH SPREAD of food and drink.

Margret PHOTOGRAPHS the afternoon. Through her viewfinder --

Picasso. Hemingway. Stein with Alice. Louis Armstrong. All drinking, arguing, or amorous.

And Hans, OFF TO THE SIDE but loving life, sketching the scene through his childlike lens.

Hans glances around. All clear. He grabs a few grapes.

HANS

Take a look, George.

George PEAKS OUT the shirt. Hans hands him the grapes.

REVEAL the drawing -- almost like THE LAST SUPPER. George holding court amidst the famous artists at the picnic.

ON GEORGE: He smiles -- AT PEACE -- in the rosy sunlight.

END MUSIC MONTAGE

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Margret develops film at the table. Hans enters, arms full of painted canvases and a statue. Margret GRIMACES.

MARGRET

Hans, were those purchases really crucial?

HANS

We're selling my paintings constantly.

Hans sets down the statue and goes about hanging a canvas.

MARGRET

Not well enough to afford our real priorities *and* all this... Alice will have to find us something else.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

GUY LAFAYETTE (40s) -- a resentful man who feels too smart to work in children's literature -- sits behind an ornate desk.

He studies some of Hans' sketches before looking up at Hans, Margret, and Alice across from him.

GUY

Alice is right. You're a perfect fit.

HANS

I'd love to work on a good book, at least.

GUY

Children's books are an assault on culture! We don't do this for the art. Let's at least be honest with ourselves.

Hans and Margret are unsettled. Guy hands Hans a manuscript.

GUY (CONT'D)

Here's the text of the so-called story.

HANS

Well... What am I supposed to draw?

GUY

That's your job!

Margret grabs the manuscript and looks over it.

MARGRET

He wants to exceed your expectations.

GUY

Then do so. Five hundred francs a week.

ALICE

Six hundred francs a week.

Before Guy can respond --

MARGRET

One thousand francs a week for such a coveted artist. *And* Hans is credited on the cover of the book. Final offer.

GUY

One thousand francs. But no illustrators ever get cover credit.

Alice signals to leave well enough alone. They all stand.

GUY (CONT'D)

Monsieur Rey, it's a pleasure.

(ICILY TO MARGRET)

We won't be needing a wife's input at our next meeting.

ON MARGRET: Pissed. *I'm going to show him.*

INT. ADVERTISING AGENCY - DAY

A sleek, modern office. Margret and Alice sit across from DOMINIC LEMIEUX (40s) -- a handsome, self-assured ad exec.

DOMINIC

Alice says she's never met a more promising young art director.

ALICE

Her photos speak for themselves.

Alice hands him a pile of well-composed B&W PHOTOS from Rio.

DOMINIC

There's a narrative. Well told, too. A little simplistic, but great for ads.

MARGRET

I appreciate that... I suppose.

DOMINIC

We'll give you a chance on our next shoot.

(OFF MARGRET'S SMILE)

If it goes well, perhaps we can--

MARGRET

I'm married.

ALICE

She's married.

Dominic whips up a slick grin --

DOMINIC

It's France, after all.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Hans paints a penguin for the kid's book he's working on. Margret sets down a pile of NEWSPAPERS near the bed.

MARGRET

Will you come help me with something?

HANS

Gladly. It's no fun working on someone else's project.

He walks to her. She picks up a newspaper.

MARGRET

I have an idea for this first shoot. We'll have tiny boats floating down the Seine. The boats are made from newspapers an onlooking boy was supposed to deliver. It's his daydream.

(BEAT)

Any idea how to make a paper boat?

He takes the newspaper from her.

HANS

Luckily I was a boy who spent an awful lot of time daydreaming.

In no time at all, Hans folds the paper into an elegant, origami-like miniature boat. Margret's amazed.

MARGRET

Bravo! It feels like when George used to be around... Just... *fun*.

Hans is caught off guard by the comment. He PLAYS DUMB.

HANS

Who?

MARGRET

George! Your monkey. Oh don't pretend like you don't miss him, too.

HANS

Oh, um, we're fine without him.

Margret takes his hand. A sore subject. Hans glances --

UNDER THE BED

He sees a twinkle in George's eyes.

HANS

Loosens up -- smiling at Margret. But now he shifts his body language... Starting to act like a monkey.

Hans bounces up and down like George. Makes monkey noises.

HANS
(SILLY VOICE)
Monkey wants have fun!

He ambles to Margret and smacks a sloppy kiss on her cheek.

HANS (CONT'D)
Monkey play!

MARGRET
(OVER HER LAUGHTER)
The monkey will get to play when he's
done folding boats!

Hans -- still acting like a monkey -- grabs a newspaper. Instantly folds it into a boat and sends it soaring through the air like a paper airplane.

HANS
Monkey play now!

EXT. SEINE - MORNING

The RIVER winds through a field. Hundreds of MINIATURE BOATS made from folded newspaper float on the river. YELLOW DUCKS bob up and down. And a BOY ON A BIKE with a satchel of newspapers sits waiting for direction.

A beautiful scene, but as we pull wider we realize --

It's a PHOTO SET. And MARGRET IS THE BOSS.

However, everyone else on set is a man that doesn't appreciate her telling them what to do.

Margret hurries around giving direction:

- Explaining the plan to Dominic and other executives.
- Instructing the cameraman to make technical changes.
- Arranging the folded paper boats to perfection.
- Coaxing the boy model to give a perfect smile.

Off the FLASH of a photo bulb, we CUT TO:

THE FINISHED PHOTO FRAME:

The boy riding his bike along the river, satchel blowing in the wind *just so*. The immaculate paper boats floating peacefully as ducks swim happily along. [This image will become an illustration in *Curious George Rides a Bike*.]

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Hans works on something more refined than normal --

He draws three people arm-in-arm. A man on either side of a red-headed Margret lookalike. In his iconic hand, he scrawls:

LIBERTÉ. ÉQUALITÉ. FRATERNITÉ.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREETS OF PARIS (VARIOUS) - DAY

Hans' poster PLASTERED on buildings everywhere around Paris.

INT. HOTEL TERRASS - NIGHT

Art is EVERYWHERE -- like they live in a museum. Hans works at his studio while Margret sleeps. The window is wide open. We see what Hans looks at --

The EIFFEL TOWER. Lit up perfectly as ever. GEORGE races up the metal spire, dancing boisterously at the top.

CLOSE ON Hans' brush strokes, REVEALING what he's painted --

A larger than life George, triumphantly atop the Eiffel Tower like King Kong. A perfect piece of POP ART.

INT. GALLERY - NIGHT (1938)

An elegant Parisian gallery. Hans' paintings -- many of George -- his STYLE COMPLETELY HIS OWN now -- line the walls.

Hans and Margret, both beaming proudly in FORMAL WEAR, stand beside Alice. Artist friends mix amongst Paris's finest.

LATER

Hans shows a SOCIETY LADY (50s) the painting of George atop the Eiffel Tower. Answering her question --

HANS

He's an old friend I can't let go of.

SOCIETY LADY

Trés majestique. I'll take it.

Hans shakes with her but stealthily LOOKS UP to the ceiling --
Making eye contact with George. Who hangs upside down,
swinging happily amongst the rafters. A celebratory moment.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Margret balances a CHECKBOOK while Hans reads on a sofa. A
RADIO softly broadcasts updates about Hitler in Germany.

MARGRET

We have to tighten up these next few months.

HANS

What's the big deal?

MARGRET

You should try doing our books sometime.

HANS

We practically print money here.

MARGRET

And we've been sending most of it back
to Germany.

HANS

Rightly so.

MARGRET

That's the point. Helping them is the
priority. But all your other purchases
are leaving us with less than nothing!

Hans takes a big sip of red wine then raises his glass.

HANS

I'm the toast of the town. The sky
would have to fall before we're in
serious trouble.

UNDER THE BED

George shakes his head. Embarrassed at Hans' hubris.

EXT. PARIS ZOO - DAY

Hans and Margret observe a SERENGETI exhibit. Gazelles and
antelopes sprint past the zoo's iconic BIG ROCK.

HANS

Thanks for bringing me here. Whenever things weren't going well at home, I'd always run off to Hamburg's zoo.

MARGRET

You're too wild an animal to keep cooped up inside painting all the time.

Two giraffes adorably nuzzle up with each other. Their NECKS INTERTWINED as they rest. Hans and Margret laugh at them.

HANS

Look at them. They're not worried in the least about Hitler.

Margret takes Hans' hand.

MARGRET

So let's be a little more like them.

Hans smiles. They walk and take in the animals.

A LITTLE LATER

A pack of squawking OSTRICHES runs around a herd of ZEBRAS. Hans and Margret take in the absurd sight with a small crowd.

Everyone amused. Except a SMALL BOY (4) with his business-like FATHER (40).

FATHER

It's homework time, son. Let's go.

The boy -- in love with the animals -- won't let go of the fence. He cries as his father tries to pick him up.

Hans taps Margret's shoulder and rolls his eyes.

HANS

The idiot's going to ruin the boy's whole childhood.

MARGRET

Oh, Hans.

Hans pulls a pen and notebook from his pocket. Starts drawing quickly while looking at the animals. He finishes, tears out the drawing, and heads to the boy and his father.

Hans -- Margret catching up -- hands the screaming boy the picture. The father is none too pleased.

HANS

Go home and listen to your, papa. But remember this.

The boy looks at the drawing --

It's one ostrich running around madly. He says **I WISH I WEREN'T ALWAYS IN SUCH A HURRY.**

Another ostrich -- this one with his HEAD BURIED IN THE SAND -
- says **YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE.**

The boy lets go of the fence, calms down, and laughs.

SMALL BOY

I'm ready, papa.

The father lets down his guard just a bit. Looks to Hans.

FATHER

(PICKING UP HIS SON)

Merci.

MARGRET

Don't forget to work hard!

HANS

Don't forget to have fun!

As the father and his son walk away, Hans looks back to the animals. Happy and present in the moment.

Margret kisses him on the cheek and he puts his arm around her. Still a perfect match.

EXT. VARIOUS STREETS - PARIS - DAY (1939)

A cold, windswept autumn day. Parisians, their scarves wrapped extra tight, go about their business in silence.

NEWSSTAND

Patrons, SOLEMN LIKE MOURNERS, grab the morning rag. The headline says it all: **NAZIS INVADE POLAND!**

EXT. CINEMA - DAY

Margret leads Hans -- PALE and BUG-EYED -- under a marquee.

INT. THEATER - DAY

Hans and Margret sit in a PACKED BUT SILENT theater. Margret glances at Hans -- he's not doing well.

ON THE SCREEN

A "**News du Monde**" logo card spins up over corny music. A few Morse code signals bring a transition to news footage:

-Hitler gives a speech to Nazi troops. Thousands *Sieg Heil*.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)

Hitler's war machine has been mobilized against neighboring Poland to the east.

-Nazi tanks advance in formation. German bombers overhead.

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

In a blindingly fast attack the Germans have dubbed *Blitzkrieg*, the Nazis overwhelmed the ill-equipped Polish forces.

-Polish forces ride to battle on horseback with archaic guns.

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

Although the battle is only days old, it looks like the Poles will soon surrender.

-Decimated Polish cities. Nazis celebrate triumphantly.

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

Hitler has promised he's not interested in wider war. But can the world be sure?

ON HANS: WHITE AS A GHOST. Like he just saw the devil.

EXT. SIDEWALK - SUNSET

Hans and Margret walk home. Hans is a zombie.

HANS

This was not supposed to happen. It was the War to End All Wars, Margret.

MARGRET

The war is just in the east. We'll get all our family out. And we're safe in Paris for now.

HANS

War ruins everything. You were too young last time to understand.

She tries to hold his hand. But he keeps them in his coat.

MARGRET

I know you experienced horrible events
I didn't. But I will not let this one
destroy us.

EXT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

A BLACKOUT. All the lights turned off in Paris.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

The room is eerily dark. Margret sleeps. Hans, George perched
on his shoulder, paces by the open window. He looks unwell.

GEORGE

There's no reason to sulk.

Hans and George whisper to each other.

HANS

I don't like all this one bit, old friend.

GEORGE

You don't seem like yourself.

HANS

I'm not made for all this.

GEORGE

I wish we could all go back to Brazil. It
was so easy for you to draw there.

Hans looks to Margret, sound asleep. A certain MELANCHOLY in
his eyes.

HANS

It's not so simple anymore.

Hans and George look out the window:

HANS' POV: Paris is DARK and BLEAK. Only the faintest outline
of the Eiffel Tower visible in the distance.

HANS (CONT'D)

Have you ever seen anything so sad?

George shakes his head slowly and sympathetically.

Margret stirs a bit. Half-asleep, she mumbles --

MARGRET

Hans?

George scurries down from Hans' shoulder. Tucks himself in a ball along Hans' chest, away from Margret.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
Come back to bed.

HANS
(APOLOGETICALLY)
I'll just disturb you.

Margret settles and falls asleep again.

George grabs a paintbrush from Hans' easel. He tries to hand it to Hans. But Hans shakes his head no -- the paintbrush falls to the ground.

Hans looks back over the dark city, squeezing George tight.

EXT. VARIOUS STREETS - PARIS

SNOW FLAKES whip around the hazy city. The **BUSINESSES** EMPTY.

But the **BOULEVARDS** ARE PACKED with cars and bicycles -- all headed OUT of Paris to escape a feared invasion.

FRENCH SOLDIER
(SCREAMING TO REFUGEES)
You must have papers to leave the
city! You must have papers!

One of Hans' **POSTERS** blows off a building into the crowds.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Hans -- gaunt, with bags under his eyes -- sits on a chair gazing out the closed window. Margret packs her purse and puts on a winter jacket.

MARGRET
Will you *please* paint today?

Hans doesn't respond. In his own world. Margret annoyed.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
I need to get more wires done.

No response. Hans watches refugees on **BIKES** pour downhill.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
There are horrible rumors, Hans! That
they're shipping Jews out of Germany.
Never to be seen again.

Hans turns to her but hasn't really processed what she said.

HANS

All the people leaving the city have bicycles. I'd love if we had them, too.

MARGRET

Bicycles? You want us to buy bikes *now*?

HANS

I've always loved them... It wouldn't be so bad, is all I'm saying.

MARGRET

It's no time for childish things, Hans!

HANS

You sound like my father.

MARGRET

It's a matter of life and death in Germany. The fascists and Nazi sympathizers are demonstrating here in Paris. And you fancy a bike!

Hans shrugs -- doesn't have the right answer.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

I'm going. Please get some work done.

She turns and leaves, closing the door behind her.

George -- emaciated and weak -- trudges to Hans. Hans bends to pick up his friend.

GEORGE

A bike ride sure does sound nice. She just doesn't understand *real* artists.

HANS

Are we going to make it?

GEORGE

Long as I'm here, we'll make due.

George extends his spindly arm, grasping Hans' hand. *Hold on.*

EXT. PLACE DE LA CONCORDE - DAY

Margret -- on her way to the bank -- walks by Paris's beautiful central square where NAZI SYMPATHIZERS PROTEST --

It's a VIOLENT RUCKUS. The Fascists carry clubs, chant hateful things, and wave ANTI-SEMITIC and PRO-HITLER banners. They're confronted by civilians and FRENCH SOLDIERS.

Margret tightens her scarf, holds her purse close to her body, and strides past the savage rally.

INT. ALICE AND GERTRUDE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Hans enters the stately apartment. But he CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE SEES --

Alice -- letting him in -- is BEAT UP with horrible BRUISES on her face. She walks with a LIMP. Gertrude -- in the background -- lies on a couch with an ICE BAG on her head.

The apartment's furnishing is BOXED UP, ready to move.

HANS

Alice! What in the world happened to you two? Are you all right?

ALICE

(PAINED)

We'll be fine.

Hans tenderly puts his arm around her shoulder.

HANS

Was it a robber? How can I help?

ALICE

If it were only a robber.

(BEAT)

We went to protest the Nazi lovers.

HANS

This is France, not Germany! We can protest freely here. What problem did they have with you?

ALICE

One of the fascists must have recognized us. We're blacklisted by the Nazis. They have an agenda against artists who speak out... And homosexuals.

(POINTS TO GERTRUDE)

We fit the bill on both accounts.

They sit on love seats across from Gertrude.

HANS

I am so sorry. I'm worried about you now.

ALICE

We'll be fine. Your path is much harder, much more dangerous, Hans. You'll need all the help you can get.

HANS

(SHEEPISHLY)

I suppose that's why I'm here.

(BEAT)

We're out of money. Flat broke. It's all going to save our family. And there's no work. Nothing.

Alice nods along -- she gets it.

HANS (CONT'D)

Can you help scrounge up some work for Margret or me?

ALICE

Hans...

Hans just looks at her -- scared of what's coming next.

ALICE (CONT'D)

We're moving back to the U.S. It's not safe for people like us here anymore.

(BEAT)

I don't know how, but you and Margret must escape before it's too late.

Hans' face sinks into his palms. Can't handle the news.

GERTRUDE

Please send Margret our love.

EXT. WINDOW - TERRASS HOTEL - DAY/NIGHT [TIMELAPSE]

Hans stands at his easel -- UNABLE TO PAINT -- as days, night, snow, rain, Margret, George all pass by behind him.

FRENCH RADIO BROADCASTER (O.S.)

In this frigid winter, nineteen forty begins like nineteen thirty nine ended. Hitler wages war throughout Europe. And the French are left to ponder their fate.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Margret, at the kitchen table, marks up black and white photos with chalk. Finishing the pile, she looks up at --

Hans -- frustrated, dry brush in hand -- standing at his easel. A few stray pencil lines. Otherwise a blank canvas.

MARGRET
Can I help you, Hans?

HANS
You can't help me do what I do.

Margret stands, grabs an ENVELOPE, and walks to him. Wants to reassure him. But he moves away and sets down the brush.

MARGRET
I don't want to stress you.

HANS
I'm losing *it*. The magic touch. The part of me where the art comes from.

She puts her hands on his shoulders and draws him close.

UNDER THE BED

George lies, SHIVERING AND WEAK. Struggles to wipe his nose.

MARGRET (O.S.)
I won't allow that.

As George trembles with fever, he barely manages to crack a smile at Margret's hopefulness.

MARGRET

Holds up the envelope. Smiling optimistically.

MARGRET
We got a letter from your parents.
They're in Rio finally! Can I read it?

Hans nods. Margret reads, but we hear ABRAHAM'S VOICE --

EXT. RIO DE JANEIRO (VARIOUS) - DAY

-Abraham and Sarah arrive on a BANANA BOAT to the sunny bay.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)
We've made it safely to Brazil at last.

-Their GERMAN PASSPORTS are STAMPED with BRAZILIAN VISAS.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)
Margret, we're so grateful for your diligence in securing our papers.

-Hans' parents, WEAK now, drag their bags to a new apartment in the colorful, lively city. A BRIGHT PARROT flies by.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)

We see why you were so charmed here.

-In candlelight, Abraham, wiping away TEARS, writes a letter.

ABRAHAM (V.O.)

But we must warn you. The situation in Germany is truly dire. Do not believe what you hear about Hitler's mercy.

BACK TO MARGRET

She reads solemnly. Her voice mixing with Abraham's.

MARGRET AND ABRAHAM (V.O.)

He is bloodthirsty. A murderer of innocents. And he will turn west for France, destroying all you hold dear. Hans, you must act with the utmost maturity in these days. Love, your mother and father.

ON: Hans, DEFEATED. And still resentful of his father.

HANS

It's hopeless, Margret.

MARGRET

No. Not yet. We need to get out of here. Escape. Before it's too late.

HANS

How? We're out of money. I'm blocked. There's no work.

MARGRET

I'll do my best. But I'm depending on you. We're partners. You understand, Hans?

CLOSE ON HANS: IMPOTENT. Feeling like a letdown in advance.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Margret sleeps in bed. She rolls over to hug Hans. But finds no one there.

Margret wakes and sits up in bed. Sad. Frustrated. Alone.

EXT. MONTMARTRE - CONTINUOUS

The lights are out. The streets are empty and coated with dirty snow. The windmill of the Moulin Rouge stands still.

Hans, shivering, sits on a sidewalk bench. GEORGE peaks out the top of his parka, trembling as snow collects on his fur.

Hans feels George's forehead like he's taking a baby's temperature. He's feverish -- Hans can't hide his concern.

HANS

George, you're not doing well.

GEORGE

Don't worry about me. You need to get better. To make art again.

HANS

But I can't when you're like this.

Hans hangs his head. But he and George hear something --

A DOOR CLOSING. FOOTSTEPS. They turn to look to a nearby --

ALLEY

A GERMAN FAMILY of four -- mother and father (30s), son (14), and daughter (7) -- are all bundled up and dragging suitcases. They try to silently sneak away.

FRENCH SOLDIER (O.S.)

Hold it right there, Krauts!

A small group of FRENCH SOLDIERS with guns run to the family.

GERMAN FATHER

I'm a professor. I've lived here for years. We're going to the U.S.

FRENCH SOLDIER

Show us your papers! How do we know you're not spies?

The soldiers TACKLE the father to the ground. The wife and son -- HORRIFIED -- GUNS in their faces -- raise their hands.

The little girl wanders a few steps away from the melee. Her HEARTBROKEN EYES notice Hans. She STARES at him --

HANS

Can barely look back. Old trauma flooding back. He fights away tears as George, startled, hides away in the parka.

But he decides to speak up --

HANS
Leave them alone! They're innocent!

MOMENTS LATER

A French soldier sits on Hans chest, pressing his BILLY CLUB down across Hans' neck. Hans squirms, trying to kick free.

FRENCH SOLDIER
A Brazilian with a Kraut accent?

Hans reaches in his pocket and pulls out a passport.

HANS
Look. Here's my passport and visa and work permit!

The soldier eyes the papers as he knees hard into Hans' gut.

FRENCH SOLDIER
How do I know you're not working for the Nazis?

Hans, in pain, thinks for a moment then blurts out --

HANS
I'm a Jewish artist. What would I want with the Nazis?

The soldier looks at him with contempt but lifts up the billy club from his neck. Hans GASPS in air.

FRENCH SOLDIER
Get your filthy ass inside. No one wants you here either.

The French Soldier SPITS A FAT HAWKER in Hans face and walks away.

Hans -- covered in spit -- lies in SHAME on the snow.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Hans -- DISTRAUGHT -- enters and takes off his snowy parka. George climbs down Hans' body at a snail's pace and labors his way under the bed, where Margret sleeps.

As Hans crosses to the bed, Margret STIRS AWAKE.

MARGRET
Where were you? What happened?

HANS

I needed some fresh air.

MARGRET

In a snowstorm? In a blackout?!?

HANS

I just saw French soldiers round up an innocent German family -- kids and all. For no good reason other than the fact that they're German. And then they... ugh... This war, all this pointless hatred... It's madness!

MARGRET

Exactly why you shouldn't be outside by yourself in the middle of the night!

Hans lets out a guttural GROAN of frustration.

UNDER THE BED

George -- skinnier and unhealthier than ever -- PACES NERVOUSLY as he watches Hans and Margret fight.

ROOM

HANS

I'm not perfect. I'm not like you.

MARGRET

I'm not asking you to be perfect.

HANS

Yes, you are. *Constantly*. Always telling me what a disappointment I am.

BEAT. Margret opens up, fighting back her tears.

MARGRET

I spent every moment of my life until I met you wishing that I had what you do. Your talent. Your access to some amazing wild and free artistic spirit. You have what I pray for. So instead of running away or living in jealousy, I decided I'd partner with you. In every way, Hans. With everything I can give. And I support you, because you have a gift I never will. But -- I want you to know this and think about it -- I've given up a lot so that you can pursue your talents.

HANS

No one asked you to give anything up.

Margret blows up!

MARGRET

Oh, grow up, Hans! Give up your childish fantasies that someone is always going to be there to save you when you fall on your ass.

HANS

If I changed to be what you want, I'd be about as good an artist as you are.

Margret CRACKS -- emotions finally running free.

MARGRET

What would you do alone? Without me?

Hans' eyes twitch nervously. He doesn't say anything.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

(OVER TEARS)

What would you do? Tell me!

Hans breaks down. Stutters. Shakes. Not fully in control.

HANS

Please not, Margret.

(BEAT)

It's just... You don't *know*...

Hans -- PANIC-STRICKEN -- glances around. Looking for George.

HANS (CONT'D)

There are some things...

(BEAT -- SOFTLY)

George?

He walks past Margret to look under the bed.

Margret stares at him. Putting the pieces together.

HANS (CONT'D)

George? Where... What's going on?

MARGRET

(GENTLY)

Look at me Hans.

Hans turns around sheepishly. But he won't look up at her.

MARGRET (CONT'D)
It's all right. It really is.

HANS
I don't know what I'd do. Without you.
(PAUSING IN EMBARRASSMENT)
Or without...

MARGRET
Hans, I understand. I see -- I *finally*
see -- what you're going through.

Hans looks up at her.

HANS
You do?

MARGRET
I do. I see him. And I understand.

GEORGE appears out of thin air right next to Hans. His head hung in shame, just like Hans'.

HANS
You were never supposed to see us like
this.

We LINGER ON MARGRET. She's not exactly mad. Her face is filled with all kinds of emotions -- understanding, empathy, but also pain.

And now we see the image of the puzzle Margret has finally put together:

Her beloved husband in pain. And, by his side, George, the IMAGINARY LIKENESS of his pet monkey from Brazil. Both little boys caught red-handed. And both -- with the same posture and expression -- desperate not to get in trouble.

HANS (CONT'D)
Please forgive us.

GEORGE
Please forgive us.

MARGRET
I finally see what you've been going
through. You don't need to apologize
for it.

Hans fights back tears.

HANS
I've been hiding George since we got
to Paris. It's embarrassing really.

MARGRET

You've been touched in some way most of us haven't been. And that's part of the reason I fell in love with you in the first place. It's messy and complicated, but it's also beautiful and inspirational.

George smiles to Margret -- glad she gets him. He now glances to Hans. They're both RELIEVED.

HANS

Can George stay with us?

Margret speaks calmly but firmly --

MARGRET

No. Not that George.

The imaginary George DISAPPEARS from Hans' side. But Hans remains calm, hanging on Margret's next word --

MARGRET (CONT'D)

I have an idea, Hans. And it's the best I've ever had.

HANS

What is it?

MARGRET

Come here. Look at your easel.

Hans shuffles to Margret. They hold hands.

Margret points to the BLANK CANVAS on Hans' easel.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

Can you see him?

CLOSE ON HANS: In childlike AWE. As he watches --

AN ILLUSTRATED CURIOUS GEORGE APPEARS ON THE CANVAS AS IF HANS' IS DRAWING HIM.

HANS

Of course I see him. I can't believe you do, too.

Margret smiles at him.

THE ROOM AROUND THEM SLOWLY TRANSFORMS INTO HANS' ILLUSTRATIONS.

MARGRET

I see him. I see George. And I see his whole world. And his adventures.

The STARS, pulsing in a hand-drawn yellow, shine extra bright. An illustrated EIFFEL TOWER a little too close.

Hans turns around, taking in this world of his own imagination.

Their possessions TRANSFORM, FLOATING around them. It's as if they're being transported into Hans' mind.

HANS

Oh... Wow...

Margret circles Hans. Her attention shifting between him and the new world around them. A beautiful waltz of artistic creation.

MARGRET

And I see the kids that will love George just as much as you do.

(BEAT)

We have to tell George's story. Together.

Now the work-in-progress George JUMPS OFF THE CANVAS and stands before Hans and Margret. He smiles to them.

HANS

You've never looked better, old friend.

Margret squares up to Hans and takes his hands in hers. Inches from his face, she speaks gently but passionately --

MARGRET

Your gift is your curse, Hans. The gods have touched you, but they throw obstacles in your way, too.

(BEAT -- EARNEST)

We have one chance to survive. And that's by you and me working through this obstacle... Together. We're going to turn George into something good, something that'll last forever, something that will help other people.

The version of George from the canvas bounces to Margret and hops up into her arms.

HANS

You're more brilliant and stronger than I could ever be. No one gives you the credit you deserve, Margret. But I see it. And I want everyone else to.

There are no more important words she could hear right now.

George, in Margret's arms, nods in approval.

MARGRET

Our lives depend on this, Hans. We'll have to get to work quickly.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Margret, alone, sits across from Guy, the resentful children's publisher. He's just listened to her pitch.

GUY

You want me to pay you for *that*?

MARGRET

Yes! This book will sell thousands of copies. Maybe more. Kids need it now.

GUY

It's kindergarten Freud wrapped in what I'm sure will be overly sentimental illustrations.

MARGRET

Not at all...

Margret leans over and pulls an early illustration of George from her bag. She PROUDLY DISPLAYS IT for Guy.

GUY

(SARCASTIC)

I can hear the cash registers now.

MARGRET

How about just a small advance?

He snickers.

GUY

Europe's at war! There's no money for frivolous ideas. The Nazis are coming for us next. Or can your woman's mind not understand that?

MARGRET

Good stories are important for kids
during times of war, Monsieur Lafayette.

GUY

Tell your husband to come pitch me
himself the next time he has a half-
baked idea for a book.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Margaret -- DEJECTED but attempting to hide it -- enters. But
what she sees couldn't thrill her more --

Hans working at his easel. Really FOCUSED in. She's shocked --

MARGRET

You're painting!

Hans steps aside to reveal a self-portrait of his younger
self. In the painting, young Hans smokes his dad's pipe while
wearing his pajamas. Abraham, in a black suit, looks on with
astonishment. It's *almost* the iconic image from the book.

Margret approaches the easel. Taking in the canvas.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

That's some of your best work.

HANS

He said yes, right? They bought the book?

Margret takes Hans' hands in hers. Expecting an outburst.

MARGRET

No.

A LONG BEAT as Margret waits for Hans' reaction.

HANS

Can we still work on it *together*?

START MUSIC/FANTASY MONTAGE - THE WRITING OF CURIOUS GEORGE

(This sequence is a WHIRLWIND OF CREATIVITY AND ART. Hans and
Margret create the CURIOUS GEORGE BOOKS as we know them.
CURIOUS GEORGE ILLUSTRATIONS flip across half the screen as
if a book is being read. On the other side of frame, reality
and imagination mix.)

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Hans and Margret brainstorm at the table.

HANS

There was nothing special that happened to me before the war!

Margret bursts up -- trying to spark Hans.

MARGRET

What about all the crazy stories about your childhood you told me in Rio? The time you threw the spaghetti all over the kitchen! When you ran away under the elephant's ear at the zoo and half of Hamburg went searching for you!

Margret has excited Hans. He moves to his easel to sketch --

BLACK AND WHITE SCENES FROM THE BOOK APPEAR AROUND HANS AND MARGRET. But Hans -- drawn as a child -- appears instead of George in the sketches.

EXT. CAFE - [ANOTHER] DAY

They sip coffee while Margret critiques some early sketches. They're all of YOUNG HANS getting in trouble -- no George.

MARGRET

There's something missing here!

Margret reaches down beside her into her purse and pulls out the illustration she showed Guy.

GEORGE springs to life from the page.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

But he's missing in the book. He always has to be there...

(OFF HANS' NODDING)

Hans... George *is* you.

The EPIPHANY of a lifetime registers on Hans' face as George climbs onto Margret's shoulder.

HANS

You're saying... George needs to take my place in the book?

Margret and George both enthusiastically nod yes.

HANS (CONT'D)

Did I ever tell you you're a genius?

Margret beams -- appreciates the gratification for once.

EXT. SEINE - [ANOTHER] DAY

Hans and Margret walk by the river where Margret had her photo shoot. *But now the river, boats, and ducks are drawn in Hans' hand. George bounds behind them.*

MARGRET

George's mishaps... They're kind of sad and pathetic unless someone is there to appreciate his effort and set him back on the right path.

HANS

Are you trying to say something about me?

MARGRET

Hans, George needs a friend. No... a mentor. No... A partner, Hans!

HANS

Someone to save him when he gets a bit too curious.

MARGRET

Right. To bring out the best him. Point him in the right direction.

HANS

That's you, Margret.

Hans stops. We see what he's picturing --

MARGRET -- dressed in the YELLOW OUTFIT and HAT FROM her first day in Brazil -- is drawn in frame.

Margret looks at the illustrated version of herself. She's genuinely touched.

MARGRET

It doesn't feel right with the rest of the book.

(BEAT -- THOUGHTFULLY)

It should be your father. He was the first one there for you. He deserves it. It's what's best for the story. Trust me.

HANS

You sure?

Margret nods yes.

ABRAHAM - his SHARPLY POINTED NOSE recognizable instantly -- appears drawn in frame. He wears one of his formal suits.

The illustration of his father smiles at Hans. The ultimate seal of approval Hans needs from his dad.

HANS (CONT'D)

He should be wearing a yellow outfit.
Like when you came into my life and
saved me.

The illustrated characters glance at each other. Margret and Abraham meld into THE MAN WITH THE YELLOW HAT.

MARGRET

I don't know if I saved you.

HANS

You did. And you're doing it again.

Margret BEAMS at the *MAN WITH THE YELLOW HAT*, who now holds George.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

The whole room is illustrated in the style of Curious George. Hans and Margret -- George resting between them -- snuggle under the covers.

MARGRET

You know what scene we need?

HANS

When I wrecked my new bike?

George pops a wheelie in front of them. Margret watches in astonishment but shakes her head no.

HANS (CONT'D)

When I painted the walls like a jungle?

Laborers walk out the door, leaving cans of paint behind. George quickly paints the wall like a forest with palm trees, a giraffe, two leopards, and a zebra. Margret shakes her head no again.

MARGRET

The first time we met!

HANS

And certainly not the last time you
saw me get carried away.

As Hans kisses Margret --

The whole frame dissolves into George hanging onto balloons... Sailing out their window... Through the window.. Over Paris... And now it's the illustration from the book.

END MONTAGE

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Hans finishes a frame from the book at his easel. It's George smoking The Man's pipe. Margret inspects and critiques --

MARGRET

Almost. But make George a little more innocent. A kid who can't help himself.

Hans nods along in agreement.

HANS

They always said I was touched. But I've never seen anyone so in control of their art as you are right now.

MARGRET

(MODESTLY)

Let's focus on the book.

Hans takes her note. Adjusts George's mouth with his brush.

HANS

How's the story coming?

MARGRET

"He was a monkey. Very curious. Too much so, in fact."

(BEAT -- NOT HAPPY)

Not quite there yet.

HANS

You'll get it! What's next for me?

MARGRET

The Man With The Yellow Hat coming in. He's not mad, but can't hide his disappointment. Still charmed all the while.

Hans nods, understanding all too well, and gets back to work.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Hans sleeps in bed. Margret -- pacing -- talks out the text of the book. Scratching and rewriting. Finished illustrations beside her.

Margret smiles -- she's cracked a great line --

MARGRET

"George promised to be good. But it's easy for little monkeys to forget."

AN AIR RAID SIREN SOUNDS, practically shaking the elegant buildings of Paris. A LOW DRONING NOISE hums in the sky.

Hans BURSTS AWAKE. Jolts up. His face a fear-stricken boy's.

HANS

The war is here! It's *here*, Margret!

Margret gets up and hurries to him, but Hans rushes past her toward the window. THE DRONING GROWS LOUDER.

Hans tears open the curtains -- a formation of NAZI FIGHTER PLANES flies past the Eiffel Tower.

Hans can't take his eyes off them. Years of repressed trauma bubbling to the surface.

Margret walks to the kitchen and turns on the radio. Between the air raid sirens, we HEAR --

NEWSCASTER (RADIO)

The Nazis have launched a surprise invasion from Belgium. The Germans have bypassed the Maginot Line and are rapidly advancing toward Paris...

As the radio broadcast continues, Hans sits on the bed. Tears stream down his face as he looks up at Margret.

HANS

I can't do it again.

Margret remains STOIC. She looks at Hans right in the eyes.

MARGRET

We must Hans. Selling the book is the only way we can escape the Nazis. We need the money for tickets and papers and... all the bribes we'll have to pay.

He shakes his head No. Ready to give up.

GEORGE

Yeah right. Us against the greatest war machine ever assembled?

MARGRET

There are children that need George right now. Our art can help kids get through this. We must.

Hans stands. Nodding. Inspired by his wife's conviction.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Hans stares out his window. His CANVAS BLANK. Margret stands at the wall where she's PINNED up Hans' drawings next to corresponding NOTE CARDS. She inspects the story closely.

HANS

Now they're all coming back to Paris. As if they'll be safe here. Fools.

HANS' POV: The streets of Montmartre packed full of desperate REFUGEES. Many of them on BICYCLES.

MARGRET

We can't worry about anything else right now.

HANS

Easy for you to say. I'm missing the one thing, the one person that-

MARGRET

(CUTTING HIM OFF GENTLY)

What are you missing?

Hans stands and looks at Margret. Really takes her in, appreciating her love. He CLOSES THE DRAPES -- understanding he's not missing a damn thing.

HANS

I need you, Margret. Help me finish the book.

Margret walks towards his canvas. Takes his hand.

MARGRET

George is going to finish the story at the zoo. Please paint George patiently waiting for his next adventure.

Hans grabs a brush. Margret smiles with quiet satisfaction.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Margret holds Hans' finished illustrations together as a book. She flips through them, studying them intently.

Hans at her side waiting for her judgment. Margret inspects the drawing closely -- sees that something is missing.

MARGRET

We can't just print the story next to the illustrations. You'll have to write out the words as a *part* of the pictures. It's all one piece of art!

ON HANS: WORRIED that it'll destroy his illustrations.

HANS

But the text. It's inelegant...

MARGRET

No, Hans. The lettering will be gentle but firm. Like a parent *creating* a story *with* their child. And because you're doing it, it'll fit in perfectly. It's not just a story. And not just a picture book. It's a-

Hans -- so satisfied by her pitch -- finishes her sentence.

HANS

Myth!

MARGRET

The highest form of art.

LATER

-Hans uses a brush to write Margret's words on his paintings. Margret stands next to him reading the opening of the book.

MARGRET (V.O.)

"What a nice little monkey," he thought.

-She smiles at Hans' attention to detail.

MARGRET (V.O.)

"I would like to take him home with me."

-The sun sets outside. Hans finishes the last words.

MARGRET (V.O.)

"What a nice place for George to live!"

-Hans and Margret admire the finished book. Notice BOTH Hans' and Margret's names on the FRONT COVER.

INT. PUBLISHER'S OFFICE - DAY

Margret stands tall in front of Guy's desk -- flipping through the book. Air raid sirens wail in the background. Guy is less cocksure right now -- HUMBLED by the fear of war.

GUY

Well, it *is* a lovely kid's book.

MARGRET

It's not just a kid's book! Or some silly drawings. It's a timeless myth.

GUY

Let me see it.

He stands and reaches for the manuscript. Eyes it closely. Runs his fingers over BOTH THEIR NAMES on the cover.

GUY (CONT'D)

Brilliant how he incorporated the words into his illustrations.

MARGRET

That was my idea.

GUY

(CONDESCENDING)

Right, dear.

He looks up at her. A long, tense beat. Finally --

MARGRET

Are you going to buy it?

GUY

I guess the war is here now.

(PAUSE -- DEFEATED)

And children are going to need a good story.

MARGRET

Glad to hear you've come around to see it that way. *Dear*.

GUY

Four-thousand francs is all we can do.

MARGRET

Six thousand. And we'll retain the international rights in case we move.

GUY

Ha! Good luck getting out of Paris!

MARGRET

We keep the international rights.

GUY

Four thousand. You keep international rights. And we take your name off the cover to keep things... *simple*. Hans drew the pictures and wrote the words. Why confuse anyone simply to flatter *your* pride?

ON MARGRET: This blow hurts. But she needs to cut a deal.

MARGRET

Five thousand. We keep international rights. And... only Hans gets credit... To keep it simple.

They shake. Margret unsure how to feel.

GUY

You're a hell of a wife. Send Hans my *felicitations*.

INT. HALLWAY - PUBLISHING OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Margret STRIDES down the hall -- she knows she's won the war. She HUGS the manuscript to her chest with crossed arms. But it hurts like hell to have lost the battle for her credit.

CLOSE ON MARGRET: An avalanche of emotions.

She laughs at herself -- can't believe what she pulled off. Then she glowers -- PISSED OFF at Guy's disrespect. Finally she's OVERCOME BY IT ALL -- TEARS RUN DOWN HER CHEEKS.

Drying her cheeks with her forearms, SHE KEEPS ON GOING.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - DAY

Margret enters, holding the manuscript under one arm and a fat MANILA ENVELOPE extended with the other.

MARGRET

He bought the book. We have five thousand francs to escape.

Hans, sitting by the window, bursts up. He rushes to her. But she stops his embrace. She's not as excited as he expected.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

It's not time to celebrate yet.

HANS
What's wrong?

Margret shrugs.

HANS (CONT'D)
What happened with him?

MARGRET
It's not a big deal... He demanded
that we take my name off the cover.
It's just you getting the credit...
But... What can we do?

Hans eyes widen -- ready to commit a grave crime.

HANS
Are you kidding me? It was your idea!
I should go choke that little weasel.

Margret grabs his arms to calm him.

MARGRET
I made him give us the international
rights. The best thing we can do right
now is survive. And then sell our
beautiful book all over the world. If
people like it as much as we think,
history will work itself out.

Hans is awed by his wife.

HANS
You're an amazing woman. You better
get the credit you deserve one day.

MARGRET
We'll worry about that *one day*. Right
now, I'll get our papers in order.

HANS
Papers are man's stupidest creation!

MARGRET
But necessary if we're going to get to
America where the book will be safe.

HANS
Well... Can I do something?

She hands him the pages of *Curious George*.

MARGRET
You can guard the manuscript.

ON HANS: Frustrated. Doesn't want to be useless.

HANS
I want to get us bicycles.

MARGRET
We have five thousand francs to our name. Do you really—

HANS
(CUTTING HER OFF)
Most of the refugees have them. I know we'll need them. Please trust me.

She measures him up and agrees to it. Hands him some CASH.

I/E. VARIOUS - PARIS - DAY

-CLOSE ON: A VISA gets STAMPED on Brazilian passport pages.

-Margret pushes her way through a JAM-PACKED train station.

-CLOSE ON: Margret hands over a STACK OF CASH in return for TWO TRAIN TICKETS. The most beautiful thing she's ever seen.

-Margret leaves the busy train station. IMMENSELY SATISFIED.

START BIKE MONTAGE - VARIOUS BICYCLE SHOPS - DAY

-Hans tries to enter a bike shop. The door won't open. A shopkeeper inside points to a sign. It reads: **SOLD OUT.**

-Hans stands in another bike shop. The racks are completely empty. He's STUNNED. A GIRL (12) -- probably the shopkeeper's daughter -- looks up at him.

BIKE SHOP GIRL
What do you expect, Monsieur?

-Hans pokes around a small, dusty, slightly sad bike shop. SPARE PARTS messily stacked in heaps. The SHOPKEEPER (80) is a hunched-over elderly gentleman with an asthmatic wheeze.

HANS
Can I buy your spare parts?

ASTHMATIC BIKE SHOPKEEPER
They won't make a full bicycle.

HANS
You got nothing? No bikes?

The shopkeeper shrugs. *Nope, sorry.* He turns away from Hans.

Hans is ready to give up. A certain sad desperation overtakes his face. Until... He NOTICES behind the front counter --

A rusty, old TWO-SEATER CIRCUS BIKE with a COMICALLY-LARGE BASKET and big RIBBON BOW on the front.

HANS (CONT'D)

I need *that*.

-Shopkeeper gives him a quizzical glance. But Hans commandeers the old man's shop.

-Hans SAWS the bike apart. LOWERS the seats. SANDS off rust.

-Hans takes the ribbon off. TRIMS the basket to normal size.

-Shopkeeper coughs up a lung as he hands Hans a mismatching seat and handlebars.

-The two-seater is now TWO SEPARATE REASONABLY-SIZED BIKES, but they're embarrassingly mismatched.

-Hans paints both bikes a uniform, pleasant blue.

-Sun setting, Hans wheels both bikes on either side of him to the exit. The old man holds the door open. They GRIN AT EACH OTHER, and Hans, bicycles in hand, WALKS OUT TRIUMPHANTLY.

END BIKE MONTAGE

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Margret -- packed bags at her feet -- secures the *Curious George* MANUSCRIPT in a large LEATHER PORTFOLIO. The door opens. *Ring. Ring.* Margret looks up.

Hans enters, wheeling in both bikes, ringing one's bell.

MARGRET

How in the world did you get those?

HANS

You doubted me?

She gives him a look. *Of course, I did!* He smiles proudly.

HANS (CONT'D)

And your mission?

MARGRET

Everything's in order.

(HOLDING UP THE PORTFOLIO)

And this is the manuscript.

Hans points to the basket on the smaller bike.

HANS

That... shall go *here!*

Margret puts the leather-sheathed manuscript in the basket with triumphant flair. She's all business now --

MARGRET

We'll leave at sunrise.

Hans takes in the news. Nodding and scared as hell.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - NIGHT

Hans and Margret in bed, their packed bags near the door. Margret sleeps peacefully. Hans TOSSES AND TURNS.

Hans turns to the window. Wishing ruefully an old friend would show up...

But nothing.

Hans gets up and looks out at the dark, frightened city.

ON HANS: Horrified. Doubting he can handle the journey ahead.

INT. TERRASS HOTEL - SUNRISE

Hans and Margret each wear a backpack as they wheel their bikes to the door. The bikes' crossbars have smaller bags tied to them. The apartment is sad -- not quite empty, but all their personal touches have been removed.

Margret leads the way and opens the door. She turns back toward their lovely Parisian home.

MARGRET

Au revoir, Terrass. Merci.

Margret wheels her bike out the door. But Hans stays inside the apartment. He looks under their old bed looking for someone.

HANS' POV: Imaginary George's eyes look back up to him from the dark.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

Let's go, Hans.

Imaginary George walks up to Hans in the middle of the room. They hold hands. But Margret can't see George.

HANS
Can I take George with me?

Margret's taken aback.

MARGRET
He was supposed to stay in the book!

HANS
(DESPERATE)
Margret, please...

MARGRET
Now's not the time!

Margret looks away -- toward the future ahead -- and wheels her bike into the hallway, leaving the room forever.

Hans pulls up his jacket. George joyfully climbs up Hans' body and hides under his shirt. Now Hans is ready to go.

EXT. TERRASS HOTEL - MONTMARTRE - MORNING

The Reys -- led by Margret and the MANUSCRIPT in her basket -- ride downhill, away from the Terrass. TENSION between them.

They weave between hordes of refugees heading the other way.

GEORGE (V.O.)
It was finally time to leave Paris. We rode all day. The only people heading straight toward the incoming Nazis.

Scout planes with ominous SWASTIKAS circle overhead.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A busy street. Margret leads the way.

SMASH! Another BICYCLIST T-BONES Margret at an intersection. She falls sideways as --

The manuscript FLIES OUT of her basket. Lands in the street.

Hans jumps off his bike to help Margret, but she --

CRAWLS towards the manuscript. It's being trampled by bikes and pedestrians. PICKS IT UP as she's about to be run over.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Margret turns into a small, empty alley. Hans follows.

A French ARMY JEEP turns into the alley from the other side. SPEEDING right at them. Blares its HORN.

They stop and look around. NOWHERE TO GO. Jeep keeps coming!

Hans BREAKS IN A WOODEN DOOR along the alley wall. He pulls in Margret and their bikes as the jeep passes. CLOSE CALL.

EXT. CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉE - PARIS - DAY

Monuments LINED WITH SANDBAGS to prevent their destruction. BOMBS EXPLODING on the outskirts of the city.

Hans -- George's tail wagging from under his shirt -- struggles to keep up with Margret. Heading toward the *Arc de Triomphe*, they pedal *against* the stream of refugees pouring into Paris.

Nazi fighter jets ZOOM overhead, sending a chill to Hans.

EXT. CHECKPOINT - OUTSKIRTS OF PARIS - DAY

Finally out of Paris. Huge lines, but the Reys at the front.

FRENCH SOLDIER
Papers! Papers!

Margret hands them their papers. Hans can't hide his nerves.

FRENCH SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Only soldiers can leave Paris.

MARGRET
Why? We're Brazilian citizens!

FRENCH SOLDIER
So? Are you going to fight with us?

MARGRET
We're on a *diplomatic mission*. Ask your officer about the Reys. Cultural ambassadors. Wink, wink.

The soldier is CONFUSED.

HANS
We're important spies. Go!

He LOOKS THEM OVER. Then TURNS to find his officer. The Reys SPEED OFF past the checkpoint towards the countryside.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

They ride quickly on an empty road. The SOUNDS OF WAR nearby. But coast is clear. Until --

BOOM! A stray shell explodes feet from them.

Their bikes literally BOUNCE OFF THE GROUND. They both screech to a halt, and Margret secures the manuscript.

Hans steps off the pedals. IN A DAZE. But --

Margret GRABS his arm. PULLS him ahead as she pedals.

EXT. VILLAGE - SUNSET

Hans and Margret are exhausted and covered in grime. They ride past a small, medieval village where a battle rages between Nazis and the French. WHIZ! Bullets zipping nearby.

ON HANS: Scared shitless. Battling his demons.

MARGRET

We've got to keep going, Hans!

HANS' POV: In a ditch off the side of the road, German soldiers line up a bunch of French prisoners -- RIFLES pointed at their backs.

GERMAN SOLDIER (O.S.)

Ready! Aim!

Hans trembles as Margret pushes forward.

MARGRET

Don't look back, Hans! Don't look--

GERMAN SOLDIER (O.S.)

Fire!

BANG! Gunshots ring out as --

George PEAKS OUT to Hans.

GEORGE

Keep going! Don't stop now!

Hans, staring straight ahead, follows Margret.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The Reys pedal on a small, wooded road. Margret points to a village with chimneys billowing smoke in the distance.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - ÉTAMPS - NIGHT

Margret talks to a FARMER and WIFE outside their cottage. She shows them her papers. Takes some bills from her envelope.

INT. BARN - ÉTAMPS - NIGHT

Hans and Margret -- their bags, bikes, and coats beside them -- sleep on hay next to cows. George rests atop a bull's head.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - ÉTAMPS - SUNRISE

Hans and Margret -- refreshed -- pedal away from the barn.

GEORGE (V.O.)

We thought the next day was going to be a lovely ride toward freedom.

A GERMAN BOMBER dives down out of a giant formation. Feels like it's almost overhead. BAY DOORS OPEN. A BOMB DROPS!

SWOOOOOOSH... BOOM! The little barn they slept in explodes.

They grimace at each other... But keep pedaling.

EXT. VARIOUS - PARIS - DAY

Nazi TANKS drive past the Arc de Triomphe. GOOSE-STEPPING Nazi soldiers follow down the Champs d'Elysées.

GEORGE (V.O.)

But June 14, 1940, was one of the worst days in French history. And the scariest of our lives.

The French flag FALLS from the Eiffel Tower. The red and black Nazi SWASTIKA FLAG is draped in its place.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Margret and Hans PEDAL SLOWLY. Their faces are hollowed out -- EXHAUSTED and DEHYDRATED. George's tail droops limply.

GERMAN VOICE (O.S.)

Stop! Get off the bikes! Show us your papers!

Hans and Margret -- TERROR on their faces -- screech to a halt. George retracts his tail up Hans' shirt.

Two NAZI SOLDIERS (20s) pointing RIFLES run into the road.

MARGRET
 (WHISPERING)
 Let me handle this.

HANS
 They can't take George from us.

Margret makes eyes at Hans. *Not right now.*

NAZI SOLDIER #1
 Papers, now! Where are you going?

Margret raises her hands slowly as the soldiers approach.

MARGRET
 We're Brazilian citizens. Artists
 trying to get back home. We have papers
 and train tickets to Spain.

Margret hands a soldier their Brazilian passports and papers.

NAZI SOLDIER #2
 You don't sound Brazilian.

Margret doesn't react. The soldier closely inspects their papers. The other soldier eyes Hans --

ON HANS: Losing his cool.

NAZI SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
 (TO HANS)
 Do you have any contraband?

Hans STAMMERS -- can't get a word out.

NAZI SOLDIER #2 (CONT'D)
 Weapons? Ammunition? Animals?

Hans can hardly breathe. Margret pipes up --

MARGRET
 Our tickets are for tomorrow. We have
 to get back on the road now to make it.

Soldier #2 doesn't care. Pokes his BAYONET into Hans' chest.

NAZI SOLDIER #2
 Do you have contraband? We'll kill you
 if you lie.

MARGRET
 He was shell-shocked in the Great War.
 Please be gentle.

SWEAT BEADS on Hans' face. Margret tries to comfort him by touching his hand, but it doesn't register with Hans.

SOLDIER #2

What are you carrying? Tell me!

HANS

I have a monkey. You can't have him.
He's too important.

The soldiers look to each other. Confused but also upset.

NAZI SOLDIER #1

A monkey? You're going to die for a monkey?

NAZI SOLDIER #2

Give it to us! Or we'll shoot you right now!

Margret -- keeping her composure -- reaches for the leather portfolio holding the manuscript.

MARGRET

Please! He's not well!

(BEAT AS SHE UNWRAPS THE MANUSCRIPT)

This is what he's talking about.

She hands the soldiers the beautiful manuscript.

MARGRET (CONT'D)

It's a book he's written. For scared children.

The soldiers -- scornful -- leaf through the pages. They're taken in by it. And -- finally -- the book cracks their exteriors -- THE HINT OF SMILES on their faces. The soldiers glance to each other.

NAZI SOLDIER #1

We'll take you to our officer.

EXT. NAZI CAMP - DAY

A BARBED WIRE ENCLOSURE for PRISONERS.

ON HANS: In a frightened stupor, slumped against the fence.

GERMAN VOICE (O.S.)

Ready! Aim! Fire!

He HEARS: Cries of terror. Machine gun rounds. Bodies hitting the ground. But he's so scared he can't even react.

Margret, manuscript on her lap, sits between Hans and a PRIEST (30s), who prays on ROSARY BEADS. The gentle man maintains his calm somehow.

MARGRET

I'm sorry to bother you, Father.

The priest looks up at her.

PRIEST

Please don't worry.

MARGRET

German?

He nods *yes*.

PRIEST

Would you like me to perform your last rites?

This gets Hans' attention. He looks to the priest. Tears wet his cheeks.

MARGRET

But we've done nothing wrong.

PRIEST

That's never stopped them.

MARGRET

Why aren't you in Germany? What do they want with you?

PRIEST

I protested their killing of innocents -
- Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, artists.
So they put me in a death camp. I
escaped. But they found me here.

Hans -- not all there -- slowly stands and looks to Margret.

HANS

I need to do one thing.

Margret nods for him to go for it. The priest takes her hand.

MOMENTS LATER

MARGRET'S POV: Hans stands at the opposite side of the enclosure. Mumbling to himself. Pulling his hands in and out of his shirt.

ON MARGRET: Pity for her husband.

HANS

Manages to pull George -- now scared himself -- out of his shirt. George tries to cling to him, but Hans lifts him to eye level.

HANS

George, you need to listen to me. These people won't understand you. They won't like you. And they'll kill you. You need to go. Do you understand?

GEORGE

We've been through so much. Why now?

HANS

Margret was right. If I save you, it's all worth it. You'll be able to help other people.

The sound of a GATE in the barbed wire enclosure opening.

NAZI SOLDIER #1 (O.S.)

Brazilians. Come with us. Now!

George tries to clutch back onto Hans, but --

Hans THROWS GEORGE over the barbed wire. To freedom.

HANS

Go George! Run!

HANS' POV: George flees into the distance. Running free.

Margret stands, manuscript in hand. Hans moves to her and holds her hand. The priest glances kindly to them as the two soldiers that captured them push them off to face their final judgment.

OUTSIDE THE ENCLOSURE - MOMENTS LATER

The soldiers march Hans and Margret toward a tent.

HANS

I love you, Margret. Thank you for everything.

She squeezes his hand. The words mean the world to her.

INT. OFFICER'S TENT - NAZI TENT - DAY

Hans and Margret stand in front of a well-organized desk. The two soldiers behind them. The MANUSCRIPT in Margret's hands.

A SENIOR OFFICER (45) enters. He's TALL, BLOND, and ALL-BUSINESS. The three Nazis exchange Sieg Heils.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER AND SOLDIERS
Heil Hitler.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER
Who are the prisoners?

NAZI SOLDIER #1
Supposedly Brazilians with train
tickets to Spain.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER
Spies?

NAZI SOLDIER #2
Can't tell.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER
Let me see.

The soldier hands the officer their papers. He inspects closely.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER (CONT'D)
(SCOFFING)
The Reys. Of Rio de Janeiro. Riding
through the French countryside.

Margret stands stoically. Hans -- weak in the knee -- starts SWEATING and SHAKING. He reaches for Margret's hand.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER (CONT'D)
If you're guilty but honest, we'll send
you to work in the east. If you're
guilty but lie to me, my men will do
what they must in the field behind us.

(BEAT)
Are you spies? Do you have weapons? Do
you have contraband to sell on the
black market?

MARGRET
The answer to all your questions is no.

The officer moves to Margret -- invading her personal space.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER
You don't sound Brazilian.

MARGRET
You've seen my passport.

NAZI SOLDIER #2

The man was babbling on about carrying a monkey.

The Nazis all eye Hans now.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER

Ha. A monkey... Contraband like anything else. Punishable by death.

ON HANS: On the verge of breaking down.

NAZI SOLDIER #1

She said he was shell-shocked in the Great War.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER

Oh... A Brazilian who fought in the Great War. How interesting.

(BEAT)

They're not worth my time. Take them to the normal spot.

Margret sticks out the *Curious George* manuscript in the officer's direction --

MARGRET

Hold on! This is what he's talking about! It's an innocent book about a monkey. Please look...

The officer takes the book and holds it up to his working eye. He's CAPTIVATED BY IT -- taking him to another place.

Hans notices the officer likes the book. He PULLS HIMSELF TOGETHER and makes a case.

HANS

(STARTING SLOWLY)

It's a book for children. Who are scared -- just like many soldiers are right now -- during this horrible war.

(BEAT)

When I was young, I once realized that what I do can help people during times like this. So I know that right now it's my to duty to give them this. I want to help kids -- Jew, Gentile, Nazi, Ally, black, white.

The officer looks up from the book to Hans.

HANS (CONT'D)
(GAINING CONFIDENCE)

What's going on in the world right now is evil. And I despise what you stand for. But it will pass. It's just the bitterness of old men who fear progress.

(BEAT)

However there are children who will create a better world. Their hearts are still pure. Right now -- even though dictators wish otherwise -- their souls need filled with love and freedom and curiosity.

The soldiers look to their officer who peers at Hans.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER
(GENTLE)

I have six children. My oldest boy died fighting in Poland. My youngest girl is four years old, back in Hamburg, waiting for the zoo to open again.

(BEAT -- DEADLY SERIOUS)

But the war must be fought and won for there to be peace again.

A LONG MOMENT between the officer and Hans.

HANS

Shoot us if you must. But make sure the book gets to children. Everywhere! In Germany. Your own kids! And the countries you're invading.

The officer hands Margret back their papers and the manuscript.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER
In times of war, children need good stories.

The officer turns away from them and walks out of the tent. He sniffles a bit and raises his hands to dry his eyes.

SENIOR NAZI OFFICER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Let them go.

Hans and Margret look to each other -- SAVORING the miracle.

The soldiers -- STUNNED -- exit the tent.

MARGRET
George saved us again.

GEORGE (V.O.)
I don't know if I can take credit for
all that.

HANS
Because you taught me how to let him go.

EXT. NAZI CAMP - SUNSET

Hans and Margret hastily RIDE AWAY from the Nazi tent city,
the manuscript safely in Margret's basket.

EXT. WOODED ROAD - NIGHT

Hans leads the way now. Margret starting to tire out.

HANS
We've got this, Margret.

GEORGE (V.O.)
Even though Hans let go of me, I
wasn't about to leave his side.

WOODS BESIDE THE ROAD

George runs through the brush, keeping pace with the bikes.

INT. TRAIN STATION - ORLÉANS - DAY

Margret and Hans ride their bikes into a smaller station.

Margret spots a BROTHER and SISTER (about 16) -- lost and
confused. They give the surprised teens, both GRATEFUL, their
bikes and run toward their train.

George, HIDDEN HIGH ABOVE on a sign, smiles at the good deed.

PLATFORM - A LITTLE LATER

Hans and Margret show a PORTER their tickets and get on a
train under a sign that reads: **MADRID**.

As they board, George SWINGS DOWN from the rafters and lands
on the roof of the train chugging ahead.

INT. TRAIN - NIGHT

Nazi planes fly overhead. The HORRIFYING WHIR of bombs
rushing toward the earth. Margret squeezes the manuscript
tight. Hans contorts his face.

GEORGE (V.O.)
All things considered, the rest of the
trip went pretty smoothly.

Bombs EXPLODE not so far away. The train shakily RUMBLES ON.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - LISBON - DAY

Hans and Margret -- their bags in tow -- look around the SUNNY, COLORFUL city. They beam and take in the fresh air.

George stealthily swings between the bright tiled buildings.

GEORGE (V.O.)

We finally made it to Lisbon. The one city in Europe you could still sail away from. Without a penny to spare.

INT. TICKET OFFICE - LISBON - DAY

CLOSE ON: Margret pulls the remaining francs out of the envelope. She exchanges them for two tickets.

EXT. SHIP - DOCKS - LISBON - DAY

Hans and Margret -- standing on the deck -- kiss. Squeezed between them, the MANUSCRIPT that saved their lives.

GEORGE (V.O.)

And, for the last time, Hans would board a ship taking him to a new life.

HANS

I'm going to get your name back on the cover of the book if need to sail around the world.

Margret squeezes Hans tight. George -- high above in the rigging -- SMILES down on them.

EXT. SHIP - NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY

The Reys' ship approaches ELLIS ISLAND and the STATUE OF LIBERTY. Hans and Margret on the deck CHEERING with the rest of the passengers. Hans stares out to the horizon --

HANS' POV: The GREEN TORCH of freedom looks so MAGNIFICENT.

Hans inhales deeply -- savoring the air of their new home -- and beams. Margret puts her arm around him. They've made it.

INT. APARTMENT - GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY (1942)

Hans and Margret host a small party. All types of interesting folks in attendance -- this is their kind of neighborhood.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Hans and Margret quickly settled into New York City. Surrounded by other artists.

Margret passes a **VICTORY BONDS** COLLECTION CAN around. The guests -- many refugees from their diverse looks -- chip in.

Hans takes in the scene: Laughter. Joy. And ART -- everywhere -- hung up all over the walls.

He's at peace.

REVEAL:

GEORGE

Sitting outside the window. Smiling -- happy for his friend. It's from George's vantage we've been observing this party.

INT. PUBLISHER - NEW YORK CITY - DAY

A kindly AMERICAN PUBLISHER (50s) sits across his desk from Hans and Margret. A big window behind him shows off New York's skyline.

GEORGE (V.O.)

And it took Margret no time at all to get our book published in the U.S.

He hands them the ENGLISH TRANSLATION of *Curious George*. Hans immediately points to --

MARGRET'S NAME listed first on the front cover. Where it belongs.

Hans takes her hand, squeezing it tight. Margret subtly nods to the publisher thanking him. Grateful smiles all around.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - DAY (1945)

Hans and Margret walk hand-in-hand through the famous parade from the LIFE MAGAZINE PHOTOS celebrating V-DAY. The SAILOR and NURSE kiss as the Reys walk by. Confetti showers down.

GEORGE (V.O.)

By the time the war was over, children across the country were reading my story.

Hans points up toward the CHRYSLER TOWER --

GEORGE frolics high above them.

Hans and Margret are thrilled to see him.

CLOSE ON HANS: He's a changed man. Content. Relaxed in his own skin.... MATURE.

GEORGE (V.O.)

Hans' soul had straightened itself out on our journey to freedom. He was happy now. His art told the truth. I guess he had grown up in all the right ways.

George FLASHES A SMILE TO HANS and DESCENDS THE SKYSCRAPER, joining the joyous crowd.

Hans holds Margret's hand, then takes in the scene --

Times Square becomes illustrated in Hans' hand -- another of his iconic images.

THE END

The EPILOGUE rolls over BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS of the Reys:

- Hans and Margret growing up with their families in Hamburg.
- Hans as a struggling bohemian in Rio.
- Margret unhappy at the Bauhaus.
- Hans and Margret in love in Rio then Paris.
- A book signing in the U.S. surrounded by George memorabilia.
- The Reys old and happy together.

HANS AND MARGRET SOLD THE U.S. RIGHTS TO *CURIOUS GEORGE* TO HOUGHTON MIFFLIN IN NOVEMBER 1940.

SINCE THEN, *CURIOUS GEORGE* BOOKS HAVE SOLD OVER SEVENTY-FIVE MILLION COPIES AND HAVE BEEN TRANSLATED INTO FOURTEEN LANGUAGES.

ALTHOUGH THE *CURIOUS GEORGE* BOOKS WERE INITIALLY PUBLISHED WITH HANS AS THE SOLE AUTHOR, LATER EDITIONS PROPERLY CREDITED MARGRET AS A COAUTHOR.

HANS AND MARGRET BECAME CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES ON APRIL 8, 1946.

THEY NEVER HAD KIDS OF THEIR OWN, BUT BROUGHT JOY TO MILLIONS OF CHILDREN THROUGH THEIR WORK.

HANS PASSED AWAY IN 1977 AT AGE SEVENTY-EIGHT. MARGRET SPENT THE REST OF HER LIFE AS A GUARDIAN OF *CURIOUS GEORGE*, AN ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN, AND PROTESTOR AGAINST ANIMAL CRUELTY. SHE PASSED AWAY AT AGE NINETY IN 1996.