

ESCHER

Written by

Jason Kessler

Inspired by real (and surreal) events

"I am always wandering around in enigmas."

- M.C. Escher

OVER BLACK:

BACH MUSIC from an old record player.

SUPERS APPEAR OVER BLACK - ONE LINE AT A TIME:

This film is an illusion.

Some of it is real.

Some of it is surreal.

Escher would've liked it that way.

The four lines of text begin to SPIN until we...

DISSOLVE TO:

A SPINNING RECORD. The source of the BACH MUSIC.

SUPER: "Nazi-Occupied Netherlands - 1944"

ESCHER (V.O.)

You know the magical thing about a
circle? It ends where it starts. Or
does it start where it ends?

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - DAY

M.C. ESCHER (46, a gentle introverted genius with a world of activity distracting his mind at any moment) sits on a WORKBENCH in an area that resembles a carpenter's studio. An old RECORD PLAYER sings behind him, surrounded by overflowing bookshelves, and various ART, SCULPTURES, and TRINKETS.

ESCHER

Well now, shall we do another?

His son JAN (5) nods excitedly as Escher secures a carved BLOCK OF WOOD in a clamp. Watching Escher work is pure magic for the curious boy.

Escher rolls black ink onto the block with a CRACKLING SOUND.

ESCHER

Remember, Jan, art is nothing but
an illusion. What does this black
ink look like?

He dabs a bit of ink on his finger and holds it up.

JAN

Nothing.

ESCHER

And this white paper?

He lifts a sheet of paper.

JAN

Nothing.

Escher carefully lowers the paper over the ink-covered wood until it sits perfectly on top. Then he rubs a small IVORY SPOON over the paper in small circular motions.

ESCHER

But put them together in just the right way and I can fool you into seeing something more than black ink and white paper.

Escher slowly peels the paper away from the wooden block revealing his famous work *Day and Night* (1938):

On the left is a daytime view of a small city, and on the right is the mirror image of the same city at night. The night sky transforms into a flock of black birds as it extends to the left, and the day sky becomes a flock of white birds as it flows to the right, with the black and white birds fitting together in the middle like a jigsaw puzzle.

Jan marvels at the print.

ESCHER

I have to make five more of these.
Would you like to help?

We move toward the drawing, closing in on one of the black birds, until...

EXT. CLEAR BLUE SKY - DAY

...the ink drawing becomes a REAL BIRD flying in a real sky.

EXT. JEWISH CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

The BIRD lands on a gravestone with a Jewish star on it. But REVEAL below the star: a red SWASTIKA painted on the stone.

The bird takes flight as Escher walks by carrying a bag of GROCERIES and wearing a leather messenger bag.

He's in the Jewish Quarter of Haarlem and it feels like a ghost town. Businesses are boarded up. Empty streets. Swastikas grow like weeds in places they don't belong.

EXT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - DAY

Escher arrives at the back door of a quaint suburban house and KNOCKS lightly.

SAMUEL JESSURUN DE MESQUITA (70s, wise and warm) opens the door and greets Escher with a big hug.

DE MESQUITA
Ah hello! Come in, come in.

A yellow fabric JEWISH STAR is sewn on De Mesquita's clothes.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

De Mesquita's wife ELISABETH (60s) unpacks wheat, potatoes, and other supplies from Escher's bag.

JAAP (40s, De Mesquita's son) plays a card game with his daughter REBECCA (9, alert eyes, emotionally mature beyond her years).

They're all remarkably thin. Their clothes loose.

De Mesquita holds up a copy of *Day and Night*.

DE MESQUITA
Beautiful. One of my favorites.

ESCHER
I'm bringing them to Klaus, I made an extra for you.

DE MESQUITA
Thank you.

ESCHER
(to Rebecca)
And Jan made this for you.

Escher presents Rebecca with a CHILD'S DRAWING of two children with a SMALL BROWN ANIMAL. Her eyes light up.

REBECCA
Is that a dog?

ESCHER
A porcupine.

REBECCA

I love it!

Escher puts an APPLE on the table in front of her.

ESCHER

Jan also made me promise to give you that. He picked it out special for you. The last firm one.

REBECCA

It's perfect. Please thank him.

She pushes away from the table and clambers on top of the kitchen counter to reach the high cabinets.

JAAP

Rebecca don't stand on the counter!

ELISABETH

What are you looking for dear?

REBECCA

Do we have any cinnamon? And almonds? I want to make charoset.

ELISABETH

Oh honey, just eat it fresh.

REBECCA

But it's grandpa's favorite.

ELISABETH

You sweet girl.

Escher and De Mesquita exchange touched looks as they realize that Rebecca's first thought was to share the apple.

Escher lifts Rebecca down from the counter, then crouches to her level.

ESCHER

Jan gave me explicit instructions that this apple is just for you. To enjoy all yourself. Okay?

Rebecca thinks. Then grins like a shrewd negotiator.

REBECCA

I'll enjoy it more if I share it.

DE MESQUITA

Rebecca --

REBECCA

One slice. For each of you. And then I'll have the rest. That's my final offer.

She doesn't even wait for a response before going to the drawer for a knife to slice the apple.

Escher grins at the other adults.

ESCHER

I guess it's settled then.

As De Mesquita and Jaap watch Rebecca slice the apple, Elisabeth grabs Escher's arm. Momentarily acknowledging the gravity of their situation, she whispers:

ELISABETH

Thank you.

ESCHER

Of course.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Curtained windows leave the room relatively dark with thin beams of sunlight bleeding through the cracks.

ESCHER

How are you getting on?

DE MESQUITA

You're here, which makes today a good day.

De Mesquita shuffles over to a liquor cabinet, retrieves a bottle of brandy, pours two glasses, and hands one to Escher.

DE MESQUITA

You have something else to show me?

Escher pulls a drawing from his bag and lays it on the table.

ESCHER

I had this idea playing around my head and I --

He stops as De Mesquita focuses on the drawing:

It's an interlocking pattern created by a series of BLACK MEN and WHITE MEN that fit together perfectly, like a mosaic tile floor. The black figures are hunched over and grumpy looking while the white figures look a bit more upbeat.

DE MESQUITA

Would you look at these ugly little fellows...

ESCHER

One is an optimist and one a pessimist. And because one always serves as the background for the other, they can't exist at the same time. They remain oblivious to each other's existence.

DE MESQUITA

Ah. I am most certainly the optimist, which would make you...

ESCHER

(chuckles)

I can't argue that.

DE MESQUITA

So?

ESCHER

I feel it's missing something.

DE MESQUITA

Beauty, for one?

ESCHER

That too. But it's not exploring anything new. It was a fun puzzle to work out, but -- I feel these little men have more to say.

DE MESQUITA

Let's hope the optimist has more to say than the pessimist.

EXT. ART GALLERY - DAY

Escher arrives wearing his messenger bag and notices a copy of *Day and Night* behind a glass display window.

INT. ART GALLERY - DAY

Works of art line the well-lit, perfectly white walls.

KLAUS (30s), a confident, precise man with small circular glasses, sits at a table flipping through several copies of *Day and Night* as Escher fills out paperwork.

KLAUS
These are by far your best sellers.

ESCHER
What exactly is this for?

Klaus eyes the paperwork.

KLAUS
You have to register with the Nazi
Chamber of Culture to continue
selling artwork under Occupation.

ESCHER
Why do they care?

KLAUS
All I know is they have expensive
taste. I'm raising all the prices.

ESCHER
Do you have a sharper pencil?

KLAUS
What's wrong with that one?

ESCHER
Its lines are sloppy and -- never
mind it's fine.

KLAUS
You're worried a Nazi administrator
will find your writing too ugly?

Klaus laughs. Escher smiles just enough to humor him.

KLAUS
When will you have something new
for me?

ESCHER
I've been playing with some ideas,
but you're not going to like them.

Klaus shakes his head. This is a topic they've been over.

KLAUS
Ideas. Art is not ideas. Art is
art.

ESCHER
Then I guess I'm no artist.

KLAUS

Well lucky for you a few of your ideas have been beautiful enough to pass as art.

Klaus takes a pile of cash from a strongbox, counts out a portion, and hands it to Escher.

ESCHER

Lucky for you as well.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Escher arrives home to find Jan playing with BLOCKS on the floor, and his other sons GEORGE (17) and ARTHUR (15) doing homework at the dining table.

JETTA (40s, short black hair, composed, more savvy than she lets on) cuts vegetables in the kitchen.

JETTA

How'd things go at the gallery?

ESCHER

Good.

He kisses his sons, who keep at their homework.

JETTA

And De Mesquita? How's he?

ESCHER

I don't know how he stays so positive.

JETTA

I'm sure it helps to have food delivered.

Escher sighs as he watches Jetta drop some cut vegetables into a pot of stew.

ESCHER

They can't go outside. They have nobody.

JETTA

I know.

ESCHER

What should I do, let them starve?

JETTA

I *know*.

She CHOPS a small, withered carrot with the knife.

JETTA

We're low. You'll need to do another run.

ESCHER

Jetta --

JETTA

I'm just saying meals will be light until you go.

ESCHER

I'll leave tomorrow. After the lecture.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Jetta enters to find Escher focused, nervously poring over a stack of NOTECARDS, mumbling to himself. Eventually, he notices her...

ESCHER

I hate talking to mathematicians. They're so disappointed when they realize I know nothing about math.

JETTA

Mathematicians study for years. You just pluck it from that brain of yours.

Her comment fails to console him. He anxiously scribbles a note on one of the cards.

JETTA

Why don't you practice on me?

Escher gathers his notecards as she sits on the couch.

ESCHER

(reading from a card)

Today I will show you how my art applies three principles of regular plane filling.

He looks up and catches her smiling adoringly at him. He smiles back. Relaxes a bit.

EXT. LEIDEN UNIVERSITY COURTYARD - DAY

A University Courtyard where STUDENTS and FACULTY walk among 400 year old stone buildings. The SPUTTER OF A MOTOR as an ARMY TRUCK drives by with a large SWASTIKA on the side.

INT. LECTURE HALL - DAY

Ten to fifteen ACADEMICS fill the first few rows of old wooden seats in a mostly empty lecture hall.

Escher scans the room, breathing heavy, as BEREND (59) smiles at his nervousness.

BEREND

You'll do fine.

Berend walks to a LECTERN at the front of the room. Conversations die down as he begins.

BEREND

Crystallography holds a secret beauty that is hard for us to share with the rest of the world. That's why it's exciting to see principles of our research so beautifully illustrated in the art of our guest speaker, my little brother, Mauritz Cornelis Escher.

APPLAUSE as Escher timidly approaches the lectern. The lights dim and a projector whirs to life, casting LIGHT at a SCREEN.

ON THE SCREEN: "Regular Division of the Plane with Asymmetric Congruent Polygons - Lecture by M.C. Escher."

ESCHER

Thank you. My brother claims that my art brings your math to life. And yet I hardly consider myself an artist, and I certainly don't consider myself a mathematician.

The RECEPTIVE LAUGHTER helps Escher relax a bit.

ESCHER

(reading from cards)

Today I will show you how my art applies three principles of regular plane filling: translation, axes, and glide reflection.

A CLICK as the projector moves to a new slide. The audience reacts with interest, but we don't get to see it yet.

ESCHER

But first, I must admit that unlike the scholars in this room, I feel rather unscientific in my approach. I compose these jigsaw puzzles more or less subconsciously.

We tumble toward Escher, falling into the PUPIL OF HIS EYE, filling our view with...

BLACKNESS

ESCHER (V.O.)

It's a game that nags at my mind.

The word "Metamorphose" appears in the black, then slides to the left, followed by a CRISSCROSS pattern of words, that morphs into the black and white squares of a CHECKERBOARD, which then morphs into a jigsaw of INTERCONNECTED LIZARDS as the images continue to stream from right to left.

ESCHER (V.O.)

For me the line between two interlocking figures holds special meaning with its double function.

Lizards become PENTAGONS which become a three dimensional BEEHIVE from which BEES TAKE FLIGHT, only to become the black background for a white school of FISH.

ESCHER (V.O.)

On either side of each line, a figure takes shape simultaneously. But which is real? And which the illusion?

Fish become BIRDS. Then BOATS. HORSES. TRIANGLES that become a series of CUBES that turn into the buildings of a SMALL TOWN, throwing us from two dimensions into three.

ESCHER (V.O.)

As the mind can't hold two things at the same moment, there must be a quick and continuous jumping from one side to the other.

The town ends at a COASTLINE, with a STONE TOWER standing in the water off-shore. But the tower is now a CASTLE PIECE on a chessboard, soon joined by pawns, a bishop, a knight.

ESCHER (V.O.)

While drawing I feel controlled by the creatures I conjure up, as if they themselves tell me the shape in which they'd like to appear.

The CHESSBOARD morphs back into a CRISSCROSS pattern of words. And we end where we started, with the word "Metamorphose" in the center of BLACK.

We pull away, re-emerging from the black PUPIL of Escher's eye. And we're...

BACK IN THE LECTURE HALL

On the screen is Escher's work *Metamorphosis II* (1939-40): a long series of repeating patterns exactly like we just saw.

ESCHER

(off the cuff)

I'm always fascinated with playing tricks on the eye and the mind. But convincing myself that my art tells me what to draw? I suppose that's quite a trick I play on myself.

The Academics laugh and marvel at this quirky, passionate, creative soul speaking before them.

EXT. LEIDEN UNIVERSITY - COURTYARD - DAY

Escher half-listens as Berend and MARKUS (40s, intellectual) smoke cigarettes and chat. He seems distracted by the STONE PILLARS, heavily dirtied with age, but he's JOLTED back to the conversation...

MARKUS

Mr. Escher, I'm curious what you think about Coxeter's work on hyperbolic tessellations.

ESCHER

I'm sorry but I'm relatively useless when it comes to mathematical conversation. I just seem to latch on to the theories without realizing what's happening.

MARKUS

I just want to know if you've ever tried a non-Euclidean approach to hyperbolic tessellations.

BEREND
 (rescuing his brother)
 Come on, don't bombard him.

Markus is about to respond, but holds his tongue as two NAZI SOLDIERS walk past holding boxes of books. A moment of somber silence, then:

ESCHER
 Who knew Nazis were such avid readers?

The others laugh, though it's unclear whether Escher meant it as a joke.

MARKUS
 Troubling times. But it'll blow over. It has to.

BEREND
 Three years is a long time to wait.

MARKUS
 (to Escher)
 What do you think? Will things get worse before they get better?

ESCHER
 I'm afraid I'm just as useless discussing politics as I am mathematics.

INT. BEREND'S OFFICE - DAY

Berend sits at his desk in a tiny academic office, sifting through a paper bag filled with food supplies.

ESCHER
 The apples are past their best.

BEREND
 It went over well. Your lecture. My colleagues loved it.

Berend takes out a squishy apple.

BEREND
 Oh that *is* just shy of rotting, isn't it? Perhaps a pie.

ESCHER

I leave for the country tonight.
I'll bring back fresh ones. While
I'm gone, if Jetta needs anything --

BEREND

Of course.
(after a moment)
Do you enjoy it? The long drive by
yourself?

ESCHER

It's beautiful.

BEREND

And the Germans don't give you
trouble at the checkpoints?

ESCHER

(wary)
I give them no reason to.

BEREND

I know we've been over this, but
supplies are getting much more --

Escher gets up to leave, cutting Berend off.

ESCHER

I agree. We've been over this.

BEREND

Have you not noticed we've lost our
country? And here you can be an
enormous help to the Resistance if
you would simply make introductions
to your farmer friends, but --

ESCHER

They wouldn't want any part in it.
And I would never put them at risk.

BEREND

They're already part of it. So are
you. I don't understand how you can
stand aside and let others fight on
your behalf.

ESCHER

I'm sorry, I'll still help with
money...

Escher hands an envelope to Berend.

ESCHER
...but beyond that I'd prefer to
stay uninvolved.

BEREND
(disappointed)
We all do what we can.

EXT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Escher puts a small suitcase in his car, kisses Jetta and
hugs his three children.

JAN
Can you get apples again?

ESCHER
Do you want one giant apple? Or a
thousand tiny apples?

JAN
A giant one!

JETTA
Be safe.

ESCHER
I wish you wouldn't worry so much.

JETTA
"Not worry" he says. The man who
trembles before a lecture.

ESCHER
That's different.

JETTA
You're right. Far more frightening
than German soldiers.

ESCHER
What do Nazis want with a mediocre
artist? I'll see you in a few days.

Escher gets in the car and drives away.

INT. / EXT. ESCHER'S CAR - DUTCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Escher enters a rural landscape, leaving the Haarlem suburbs
behind.

EXT. BLUE FARMHOUSE - DUSK

Escher grabs his suitcase from his car. Then shares a cordial embrace with JOHANN (a well-read, somewhat philosophical farmer) before they enter a rustic, light blue farmhouse.

INT. BLUE FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Escher eats dinner with Johann and his WIFE.

JOHANN

It's getting worse in the cities?

ESCHER

Hard to get large amounts of wheat or potatoes. Fresh fruit's especially difficult. If it's alright, I'd like to get a little more than last time.

Johann hesitates, but his wife chimes in.

JOHANN'S WIFE

Of course. Whatever you need.

JOHANN

Things'll turn around. You'll see. Every winter's followed by a spring. Spend enough time as a farmer, you see cycles in everything.

ESCHER

Huh. I agree. History's filled with seasons of war, starting and ending and starting again, looping inevitably. Where I differ from you is that notion fills me less with hope than despair.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Escher places a sack of potatoes in the car, then hands Johann some money and they hug goodbye.

SERIES OF SHOTS - ESCHER VISITING MORE FARMERS

- Escher's car travels along the Dutch countryside.
- Escher greets a WHEAT FARMER at another farmhouse, and exchanges money for two large sacks of wheat.

- Escher greets an APPLE FARMER and loads a small basket of apples into the car.

INT. / EXT. ESCHER'S CAR - HAARLEM OUTSKIRTS - DAY

Escher approaches the outskirts of Haarlem where GERMAN SOLDIERS have set up a checkpoint.

GERMAN SOLDIER

Papers?

Escher provides his papers to one soldier while the other quickly searches the car.

GERMAN SOLDIER

Where are you coming from?

ESCHER

The North. Visiting friends.
Getting some food for my family.

Escher reaches back and grabs an apple, then hands it to the soldier who takes a bite and waves Escher on.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Jetta unpacks fresh groceries in the kitchen, while Escher and Jan sit on the floor, building a tower of blocks. Jan carefully places a cylindrical column at the top.

ESCHER

There you've done it!

Jan smiles proudly at his father. But as Escher stares at the final BLOCK, he falls into his own thoughts.

JAN

What do you see?

Escher moves his head around the block, and...

HE IMAGINES that the CYLINDRICAL BLOCK is revealed to be completely flat, like a sheet of paper standing upright. He moves his head to view it from different angles, marveling at the illusion.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - DAY

BACH plays. Escher sketches at his drawing table with his son's CYLINDRICAL BLOCK standing upright before him. He's focused. Intense.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - DAY

De Mesquita lowers a glass of brandy and takes a closer look at the DRAWING that Escher's laid out in front of him:

Two stone columns in a room. It's an early version of what will become Escher's *Doric Columns* (1945).

ESCHER

See how the columns start out real,
only to be exposed as illusions at
the ends?

Sure enough, the stone columns fold over like origami,
revealing themselves as two dimensional pieces of paper.

DE MESQUITA

You're like the magician unmasking
his trick.

ESCHER

Exactly! Making it self-evident.

DE MESQUITA

Wonderful.

They look up as Jaap enters.

ESCHER

Hello Jaap.

JAAP

Mauk.

There's something awkward about how Jaap lingers expectantly,
looking back and forth between Escher and his father.

DE MESQUITA

I didn't ask him yet.

ESCHER

Ask me what?

DE MESQUITA

It's just you've already done so
much for us.

JAAP

It's Rebecca. She received a call-
up notice for a work camp.

ESCHER

A work camp? Why would they want a
little girl?

DE MESQUITA
Mauk, when they take nine year old
Jewish girls, they don't actually
send them to work camps.

Escher absorbs the implications.

ESCHER
I've heard rumors, but you think...

DE MESQUITA
Everything you've heard is true.
And worse.

JAAP
We need to get her into hiding.

DE MESQUITA
We thought perhaps you might know
someone you can reach out to.

ESCHER
Oh I don't know...

JAAP
Your brother's an academic. He must
know people in the Resistance.

Escher shifts uncomfortably.

DE MESQUITA
Jaap, can you leave us?

Jaap gives Escher one last desperate look, then heads
upstairs. Escher notices Rebecca peeking through the
banisters above before following after her father.

DE MESQUITA
I'm sorry about that. He's just
concerned.

ESCHER
No, of course.

DE MESQUITA
You've already been too kind. But
we have no one else to ask.

Off Escher, concerned...

EXT. LEIDEN UNIVERSITY - COURTYARD - DAY

Escher and Berend stroll around the courtyard smoking cigarettes as they talk.

BEREND

When is she supposed to report?

ESCHER

Five days. Can they help?

BEREND

That's what they do. But they have too much to do and they prioritize very carefully.

ESCHER

Saving her's not reason enough?

BEREND

It's all relative, isn't it? Saving a young girl is absolutely the most important thing in the world, unless it comes at the expense of two.

ESCHER

Stop being a mathematician. Will they help her?

BEREND

(probably not)
I don't know.

ESCHER

That's not good enough.

BEREND

(patient, but stern)
You choose to stay in your comfortable little world solving your puzzles while in the real world, real people are fighting real enemies. You have no right to be upset with how we fight.

Berend walks away, leaving Escher standing alone in the middle of the courtyard. Thinking. Puzzled.

He FIXATES on the old STONE COLUMNS, dirty with age.

HE IMAGINES the pillars breaking free from their positions and revealing themselves to be flat ribbons that flop and fold over themselves.

He snaps himself out of it and rushes after his brother.

ESCHER

What if I help the Resistance? I'll connect you to my friends in the country. Would that make this a priority?

EXT. AMSTERDAM STREET ALONG THE CANAL - NIGHT

A stone street along the dark waters of Amsterdam's canal. Berend leads Escher down steps to a discreet CELLAR BAR.

BEREND

Never come here without me, okay?

ESCHER

Why would I?

INT. CELLAR BAR - NIGHT

Quiet. Dimly lit. Escher feels the watchful stares of wary eyes as he and Berend enter.

A waitress, SOPHIE (20s, Bohemian feel) greets Berend with a double-kiss.

SOPHIE

Berend! I'm in love with the book you gave me. I can't put it down.

BEREND

That's quite a lucky book, to rest in your hands and enjoy your love.

Sophie smirks as she leads them past a table with two STERN-LOOKING MEN who stare at Escher - perhaps trying to intimidate him.

They round a corner and enter a small nook filled with velvety couches, soft candlelight, and crowded BOOKSHELVES.

SOPHIE

He'll be here in a moment.

She leaves and they wait in silence.

Then Escher hears SOFT FOOTSTEPS getting louder. He looks around, confused at the source, until finally a section of bookshelves swings open to reveal a passage from which...

RUDOLF (30s) emerges. Fit. Handsome. His serious eyes contrast with his flippant smile.

Berend and Rudolf embrace affectionately. Berend plants a kiss on Rudolf's cheek before letting go.

BEREND
My boy.

RUDOLF
Hello dad.

Rudolf approaches Escher and they hug.

RUDOLF
Uncle Mauk. Good to see you.

ESCHER
You've grown up.

BEREND
What's the expression? "War makes men of boys."

RUDOLF
Let's sit.

They sit among the couches. Rudolf offers them cigarettes.

ESCHER
(reluctant)
Okay but this is my last one.

BEREND
He says that every time.

RUDOLF
(as he lights them)
The real question is whether telling yourself it's your last makes you enjoy it more or less.

Escher tastes the smoke. Considers what Rudolf said.

RUDOLF
So. They've agreed to help relocate the girl.

BEREND
That's wonderful!

ESCHER
Where will they take her?

RUDOLF
Better for you the less you know.
I'll stay involved and confirm when
it's done.

ESCHER
Thank you.

RUDOLF
But they *will* need you to introduce
me to your contacts in the country.

ESCHER
I understand.

RUDOLF
We leave tonight.

Escher frowns.

RUDOLF
Is that a problem?

ESCHER
I didn't realize -- I'll need to
stop home first and --

RUDOLF
Are you sure you want this?

ESCHER
Well -- yes, I --

RUDOLF
No, listen. These days everyone
knows danger. And death. But
this... what we do is another kind
of danger.

ESCHER
I know.

RUDOLF
I want to make sure you're not
doing one thing and telling
yourself another.

Escher checks Berend who, with the slightest of nods throws
his support behind his son's words.

RUDOLF
If it would even slightly increase
the odds of winning the world back
from Hitler, I would gladly die.
(MORE)

RUDOLF (CONT'D)
I'd let my friends die. And my
father. And you. Do you understand?

Escher hesitates, then...

ESCHER
Yes.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jetta, panicked, follows Escher around the small room while he packs a suitcase.

ESCHER
It was the only way.

JETTA
You're not like them, Mauk. You
can't do what they do.

ESCHER
I'm not doing anything. I'm going
for supplies like I always do.

JETTA
No. Not like you always do. I have
a bad feeling about this. Do you
not see the enormous risk that
you're taking by --

ESCHER
Of course but I'm trying not to see
it and you're making that
difficult. I don't have a choice,
so I'd rather just --

JETTA
Don't I get a say? It's not up to
you alone. You have a family.

ESCHER
De Mesquita *is* family.

JETTA
I know he's your mentor, and he's
dear to you, but he's not your
family. We are your family.

ESCHER
(melting down)
Of course, but he... he *saved* me
from a life of... of... of being
lost.

(MORE)

ESCHER (CONT'D)

Jetta, he saw who I was before I did, and I would've led a lost, miserable life without him. Of course I'm scared. I don't want to go. But I need to do this for him. I need to. I need to.

He collapses on the bed. Distraught. Emotional. Overwhelmed.

She sits next to him. Sullen. Blank stare.

A few moments of silence. Then she gently touches his shoulder and, in a soothing voice, whispers...

JETTA

You're just going for supplies like you always do.

EXT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jetta stands by as Escher loads his suitcase in his car.

JETTA

Try to enjoy the drive. And say hi to Rudolf for me.

He nods. He seems to have re-found his calm. They kiss goodbye, then he gets in the car and drives off.

INT. ESCHER'S CAR - DUTCH COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

Escher drives. Rudolf in the passenger seat.

RUDOLF

How's your art coming along?

ESCHER

Fine.

RUDOLF

I always tell my father I'd love to see you make something about the working class and the capitalists. I can picture it. A capitalist and a worker fitting together - you can't have one without the other.

(off Escher's silence)

I know. Not your thing.

ESCHER

How about you? I always loved that sonata, how'd it go...

(MORE)

ESCHER (CONT'D)

(sings)

...dee dee dee, da da.

RUDOLF

I lost that one. In the bombing.

ESCHER

Oh. Do you ever think about trying to re-create them? From memory?

RUDOLF

I don't think so.

(after a moment)

I admit, I never thought my father would get you on board.

ESCHER

I'm not on board. This is just for your help with Rebecca.

RUDOLF

Right. Why are you so reluctant to get involved?

ESCHER

You mean besides the obvious danger that I'm trying very hard not to think about?

RUDOLF

(chuckles)

Yes. Besides that.

Escher thinks for a moment. Then...

ESCHER

Lately I've been playing with the idea of illusion. If I draw a sphere, it's not a sphere. It's a flat circular image that I can cut from the paper and fold up in my hand. I've been toying with ways to show this idea. To make the illusion painfully obvious to the viewer. Like two hands that draw each other. Or two solid columns that fold over like paper so they can stand on each other's flatness. Or I even have a thought to make a drawing that looks like it's getting poked from behind so that anyone would immediately see that it's just a flat piece of paper.

(MORE)

ESCHER (CONT'D)

But even if I somehow pull that one off, it will still be a flat drawing, so I will have created only the *illusion* of an illusion.

Escher smiles, tickled by his own thought.

RUDOLF

...and how does this relate to your reluctance to join the Resistance?

ESCHER

Ah yes. That's how we got here. Well I suppose just as all art is illusion, I feel the same about politics. Every ideology I have ever encountered strikes me as an attempt to trick men into believing that what they do is right. When I hear any man justify killing and fighting, all I see is a man holding a two dimensional piece of paper and claiming that it's three.

Rudolf mulls this over before responding.

RUDOLF

(a hint of derision)

So you're a pacifist then. That's a convenient way to view the world.

ESCHER

Are you working on anything new?

RUDOLF

Yes actually. I'm calling it "Music for a Spirit in Mourning." Fitting, right? I think there's something special about art that grows in the middle of disaster.

ESCHER

How's it go?

Rudolf starts to hum a melody.

Escher listens. Absorbed. He'd close his eyes if he weren't driving.

Rudolf's VOICE is replaced by a FULL ORCHESTRA bringing to life the melody of his composition *Musique pour l'esprit en deuil* (1941-1943).

The MUSIC continues over...

SERIES OF SHOTS - DUTCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Escher and Rudolf drive along country roads and pass:

- an army truck full of GERMAN SOLDIERS
- the burnt remains of a farmhouse
- a HUNGRY FAMILY walking with all their possessions
- NAZI SOLDIERS holding a group of YOUNG MEN at gunpoint

The MUSIC ends as Escher and Rudolf arrive at the same blue farmhouse Escher visited earlier.

INT. BLUE FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Escher and Rudolf sit at the table with Johann.

JOHANN
I don't know him.

ESCHER
He's my nephew.

JOHANN
And I don't know him.

RUDOLF
I can pay well. Much more than --

JOHANN
I don't want money. I want nothing
to do with you.

RUDOLF
But --

Johann stands.

RUDOLF
This is about something greater
than any of us. It's --

JOHANN
Every awful misery in this world
was justified by something "greater
than any of us."

RUDOLF
(to Escher)
I can see why you're friends.
(to Johann)
(MORE)

RUDOLF (CONT'D)
Thank you for your time. I'm sorry
to bother you.

They head to the door, but just before they leave...

ESCHER
I'm sorry, I --

JOHANN
Don't ever come back here.

As Escher and Rudolf exit, Escher sees Johann's Wife through a doorway. She looks at him. Disappointed.

INT. ESCHER'S CAR - DAY

Escher stares out the window as Rudolf drives. Brooding silence.

EXT. WHEAT FIELDS - DAY

Escher and Rudolf walk with the Wheat Farmer in the fields.

WHEAT FARMER
I'd like to help, and I need the
money, but I just don't know.

RUDOLF
No one will ever find out.

The Farmer looks to Escher. Trusting.

Escher nods. The Farmer sighs.

WHEAT FARMER
Can you make it triple?

EXT. APPLE ORCHARD - DAY

Rudolf shakes hands with the Apple Farmer. Escher watches uncomfortably.

INT. / EXT. ESCHER'S CAR - NIGHT

Escher and Rudolf drive in silence through the dark countryside. Up ahead, a Nazi checkpoint becomes visible.

RUDOLF
Shit.

ESCHER
Should I turn around?

RUDOLF
No.
(thinks)
When we get up there, slow down,
but *only a little*.

ESCHER
What are you --

RUDOLF
If I don't find you by morning,
tell my father.

ESCHER
Wait, I --

As they take a curve, Escher slows down and Rudolf dives out of the moving car.

Escher is shocked. He begins to panic as he approaches the checkpoint, manned by two GERMAN SOLDIERS.

GERMAN SOLDIER
Papers?

Escher's too nervous to respond. His breath quickens.

GERMAN SOLDIER
Papers.

ESCHER
I -- I was just visiting some
friends in the North and --

GERMAN SOLDIER
Step out of your vehicle.

Escher doesn't move. He FIXATES on the crisp angles of the soldier's COLLAR. The REFLECTION of light off a COAT BUTTON.

GERMAN SOLDIER
Now.

The soldier draws his gun.

Escher closes his eyes and tries to calm down.

When he opens them again, something strange catches his eye. He leans over and sees that the soldiers are just TWO DIMENSIONAL ILLUSIONS - flat when viewed from the side.

Glimpsing this distorted reality calms him. Comforts him. He visibly relaxes. Breathes slower. Regains enough composure to step out of the car and speak.

ESCHER

I'm sorry. Here are my papers.
 (hands them to soldier)
 Would you like some fruit? I have
 fresh apples, or --

The soldier looks up from the papers. Lowers his gun.

GERMAN SOLDIER

I'll take an apple.

Escher leans into the car to grab an apple, and breathes a deep sigh of relief.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Escher sits alone by candlelight. He's been waiting up for a while. He starts to nod off when a light KNOCK wakes him up.

He opens the door to find Rudolf, who quickly slips inside.

Escher pulls his nephew in for a tight embrace, then whispers...

ESCHER

Upstairs.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Escher sits on the couch as Rudolf looks around the studio taking in the details and cradling one of his arms.

ESCHER

How's your hand?

RUDOLF

Feels like I jumped from a moving
 car. Are you okay?

ESCHER

Yes.

Rudolf reads volumes from Escher's face and tone.

RUDOLF

You weren't ready for this.

Escher shakes his head. With his good hand, Rudolf pulls out a map and lays it out.

RUDOLF

Don't worry, nobody is. You did well. Now, remind me the name of the potato farmer outside Alkmaar?

ESCHER

What is that?

RUDOLF

I remember his charming wife, but --

ESCHER

It has their locations. It puts them all at risk.

RUDOLF

No we'd never put them at risk --

ESCHER

What if they caught you with that? You need to tear it up.

RUDOLF

I know this isn't easy for you. But I have to give this to the people above me. The same people responsible for re-locating your friend's granddaughter tomorrow.

Escher paces around the studio.

RUDOLF

The only people who will have access to this are people I trust with my life.

ESCHER

We all prioritize life differently. Don't we?

Escher flips through a stack of drawings and pulls one out. It's a pattern of interconnected black, red, and yellow lizards (*Reptiles* 1942).

He snatches the map from Rudolf and brings it to his workbench.

RUDOLF

I need to give them --

ESCHER
Hold on a minute.

Escher grabs a small metal tool and POKES HOLES in the locations marked off on the map.

RUDOLF
What are you --

ESCHER
Just hold on!

Escher lays the map on top of the lizards drawing, careful to line the edges up perfectly. Then he uses his ink roller to apply blue ink over the map with a CRACKLING SOUND.

He lifts the map off the drawing, which now has several blue dots on it. Then he tears the map to pieces.

RUDOLF
Don't!

Escher hands Rudolf the drawing.

ESCHER
Use this instead. You can buy one of those maps anywhere, and all you have to do is line it up under the drawing and stick pins in the dots and you'll have your locations.

Rudolf stares at the drawing thoughtfully.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S STUDIO - DAY

A neat orderly studio, similar to Escher's.

Rebecca sits at a table drawing a picture, while Escher wanders the room, looking at PRINTS hanging on the walls.

De Mesquita enters.

DE MESQUITA
Rebecca, they're ready for you.

REBECCA
I'm almost done.

Escher looks at a PRINT of a man and woman huddled together surrounded by a crowd of people with strange faces.

ESCHER

This one. I've always wanted to ask, is it you and Elisabeth?

DE MESQUITA

Perhaps in our fatter days.

They share a smile.

JAAP (O.S.)

Rebecca!

Jaap pokes his head in, looking a bit nervous.

JAAP

Come. It's time to go.

REBECCA

One second.

She finishes a final section of her drawing while Jaap battles his patience.

DE MESQUITA

You can't rush art, Jaap.

ESCHER

It's true.

JAAP

You're not helping, dad.

REBECCA

Okay I'm done.

Rebecca hands Escher the finished drawing. It shows a boy and girl sitting on a cloud in a blue sky.

ESCHER

Beautiful.

REBECCA

This is for Jan, will you give it to him?

ESCHER

Of course.

Rebecca lifts a bag and starts toward her father.

ESCHER

Wait, she should take some supplies with her, no? To practice her art?

DE MESQUITA

Good idea.

De Mesquita and Escher scoop up paper and drawing materials and add them to her bag while Jaap waits impatiently.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Escher, De Mesquita, Elisabeth, and Jaap look on as Sophie squats by the back door so she's at Rebecca's height.

SOPHIE

Tell me one more time?

REBECCA

My name is Anika Visser. You're my mother. We live in Amsterdam, and we were visiting grandma and grandpa.

Jaap bends down to give his daughter a final goodbye.

JAAP

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry this is the world you know. I love you.

He squeezes her tightly, tears in his eyes.

De Mesquita puts his hand on Escher's back. Whispers...

DE MESQUITA

Thank you.

INT. HIDING PLACE - NIGHT

Rudolf appraises this small stone cellar of a room. The only furnishing is a tiny mattress on the ground.

He frowns. This won't do. He begins to spruce up the drab place. He adds a colorful blanket to the bed. Lines up a handful of books. Sets flowers in a small tin can of a vase. Puts a stuffed animal on the pillow.

A CREAK of a trapdoor and Sophie leads Rebecca down a ladder into the small space.

Rebecca makes a noble attempt to hide her reaction to her dark, cramped new home.

RUDOLF

You're a brave little girl. I need you to be strong. And patient.

(MORE)

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

And before you know it, this will
be over.

REBECCA

What's your name?

RUDOLF

Rudolf.

REBECCA

Thank you Rudolf. I'm Anika.

They shake hands and he smiles, impressed with her composure.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The DRAWING that Rebecca made for Jan hangs on the wall.

Escher and his three sons have turned the living room into a
maze of furniture and cushions covered with blankets and
carpets, enjoying themselves as they place the final touches.

Jetta watches happily.

Jan sneezes.

ESCHER

Gesundheit.

Jan sneezes again.

Jetta and Escher exchange concerned looks.

EXT. HAARLEM STREETS - DAY

Escher walks with Jan, who is bundled up and looks sickly.

ESCHER

And that one?

Escher points at a cloud in the sky.

JAN

A bunny.

He coughs.

JAN

Looking up makes me cough.

ESCHER

Then we'll have to look down. Do you see anything in the stones?

JAN

That one! It's a kite. And that one's a fish.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Jan sits shirtless as the DOCTOR (50s) listens to his chest through a stethoscope.

DOCTOR

He has an infection of the lung. Ideally I'd give him penicillin, but there's a shortage and the Germans are restricting access.

ESCHER

So what then?

DOCTOR

Have him rest and drink fluids. I can give you something for the symptoms, but without penicillin it may only get worse.

ESCHER

When will you get more?

DOCTOR

I wish I knew. You didn't hear it from me, but best bet, find someone who's friends with Nazis.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Escher watches as Jetta chops a raw chicken and adds it to a pot of soup.

JETTA

How about Klaus?

ESCHER

Actually I was thinking of asking my brother.

She gives him a look.

ESCHER

I'll bet the Resistance has access
to all sorts of --

JETTA

At least try Klaus first. It can't
hurt.

ESCHER

You don't think perhaps it's wrong
to deal with the Nazis? Now that we
know --

JETTA

It's medicine for your son.

Escher frowns as he considers.

EXT. WEALTHY STREET - NIGHT

Escher meets Klaus in front of a wealthy apartment building,
a portfolio under his arm.

KLAUS

You brought them all?

ESCHER

Yes. Anything I should know?

KLAUS

Just that he's my best customer.
High up the S.S. chain. Reports
directly to Himmler. If he can't
help you, no one can.

INT. RICH APARTMENT - NIGHT

A well-apportioned apartment displaying expensive tastes.

Escher and Klaus watch as OBERGRUPPENFÜHRER HANNS ALBIN
RAUTER (49, stocky) flips through a pile of prints and pauses
on Escher's *Day and Night* (1938).

KLAUS

That one's very popular.

But Rauter's uninterested. He keeps flipping until he gets to
Escher's *Hand with Reflecting Globe* (1935): an intricately
detailed print of a hand holding a mirrored sphere in which a
warped self-portrait of Escher is visible.

RAUTER

You're gifted Mr. Escher. To be frank, that gift is under-utilized in most of your work. But in this it's undeniable.

Klaus nudges Escher to respond.

ESCHER

Thank you.

RAUTER

It takes a certain man to do a self-portrait. Many can't bear to look at themselves for so long.

ESCHER

I prefer it to portraits. If I'm forced to be in someone's company while I work, I'd rather it be my own.

RAUTER

Funny. I like that. It's natural to prefer oneself over others. The same is true about nations isn't it?

KLAUS

What do you mean?

RAUTER

As a German, I prefer what is German. Our culture. Our way. And as Dutchmen, you naturally prefer your way. And that's the basis of all warfare, isn't it?

KLAUS

A fascinating way to look at it.

Rauter gazes at the print another moment.

RAUTER

(to Klaus)

I'll take it. Can you have it framed and delivered?

KLAUS

Of course.

Klaus takes the print.

KLAUS
 (to Escher)
 Wasn't there something you wanted
 to ask the Obergruppenführer while
 we're here?

Escher hesitates a moment, then...

ESCHER
 Yes, it's about my son. He's sick.

EXT. NAZI DOCTOR'S OFFICE - WAITING ROOM - DAY

Escher sits with Jan in a waiting room along with a handful
 of UNIFORMED NAZI SOLDIERS.

On the wall hangs the doctor's framed license - with a large
 swastika on it.

INT. NAZI DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Jan lays on an examination table as DR. FELIX HAUSSER (40s)
 prepares to inject a SYRINGE into his arm.

ESCHER
 Just imagine a giant rhinoceros is
 poking you with his horn.

Jan giggles, then winces as the needle goes in.

DR. HAUSSER
 All done. You can get dressed.
 (to Escher)
 Rhinoceros. I'll remember that one.
 My son's around his age.

ESCHER
 Have you seen one?

DR. HAUSSER
 A rhinoceros? Yes. The Berlin Zoo.
 You?

ESCHER
 The zoo in Rome. Clunky creatures.

DR. HAUSSER
 I love Italy. Beautiful country. I
 did a residency in Florence.
 (beat)
 Well your boy should be fine. Let
 him rest. Give him fluids.
 (MORE)

DR. HAUSSER (CONT'D)
Come back in a week for another
injection.

ESCHER
Thank you.

DR. HAUSSER
You're the first non-German sent to
me. You must've done something to
impress Obergruppenführer Rauter.

ESCHER
I think he likes my art.

DR. HAUSSER
Ah an artist. No wonder you love
Florence. Oh wait! One more thing.

Dr. Hausser grabs a small chocolate from a drawer and hands
it to Jan, whose face lights up.

DR. HAUSSER
You must eat one of these if you're
to get better. Doctor's orders.

INT. LEIDEN UNIVERSITY - COURTYARD - DAY

Berend and Escher smoke cigarettes in the courtyard.

BEREND
You got penicillin?! Nobody can get
penicillin right now.

ESCHER
Was it wrong? I don't feel good
about it.

BEREND
What was his name?

ESCHER
Rauter. Hanns Albin Rauter.

BEREND
The Obergruppenführer?

ESCHER
Yes.

Berend puts out his cigarette.

BEREND
Let's go.

ESCHER
Are you disappointed?

BEREND
Disappointed? The opposite! I'm
impressed!

Escher puts out his cigarette and follows after Berend.

ESCHER
Where are we going?

INT. LEIDEN APARTMENT - DAY

Markus, the academic from earlier, leads Escher and Berend into his apartment.

MARKUS
Ah Mister M.C. Escher! That was a
neat trick with the map. Very
clever.

Escher sees a handful of ACADEMICS in focused conversations around the room. In a corner, one of them rolls ink through stencils over pieces of art, just like Escher did.

MARKUS
I've been thinking about what you
said in your lecture, and in
particular your "Development"
series, and I really think if you
want to move beyond a square limit
you should explore Coxeter's
theories of --

BEREND
Markus. Is he still here?

MARKUS
Yes, I'm sorry.
(warns them)
He's in a bit of a mood.

Markus leads Escher and Berend into...

A DINING ROOM

...where Rudolf is seated at a table, arm in a sling, poring over documents. He hardly looks up to acknowledge them.

RUDOLF
What do you need dad? I've got a
lot to do.

BEREND
You'll want to hear this.

Rudolf looks up, unconvinced.

BEREND
Obergruppenführer Rauter's in
Haarlem. Mauk sold him a print.

RUDOLF
(to Escher)
You met him in person?

BEREND
It gets better. The
Obergruppenführer was so taken with
our Mauk that he had a Nazi doctor
give him penicillin for Jan.

RUDOLF
What was his name? The doctor?

ESCHER
Felix Hauser.

Rudolf jots down the name in a small notepad.

RUDOLF
How did you leave it with Rauter?
When will you see him again?

ESCHER
I don't know, I -- it's through my
friend Klaus. An art dealer.

RUDOLF
Get another meeting with him.

ESCHER
Wait I --

RUDOLF
Do you have a follow-up with the
doctor?

ESCHER
Next week, but --

RUDOLF
Find out how much penicillin he
has.

ESCHER

Hold on. I don't feel comfortable with this sort of --

RUDOLF

We're fighting a war. I don't have time for your discomfort.

Escher, conflicted, unsure how to respond.

BEREND

(to Escher)

You said you felt bad dealing with the Nazis? This should make you feel better.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - DAY

The usual glass of brandy in front of Escher - a cup of tea for De Mesquita who looks sick and wears a bathrobe.

DE MESQUITA

So you feel that selling your art to this Nazi makes you, what, a collaborator?

ESCHER

How would you feel? If one of your prints hung in a Nazi home.

DE MESQUITA

But it's for the best, right? You took care of Jan, and now you can help the Resistance.

Escher looks uncomfortable.

DE MESQUITA

What's wrong?

ESCHER

Lately I've just had trouble knowing what's right.

DE MESQUITA

Not everything's black and white. Right or wrong. We're not your little optimists and pessimists who can't exist at the same time. Life is messy. Full of contradictions and impossible choices. You just do the best you can.

De Mesquita coughs as he pours a healthy dose of brandy into his tea, then raises his mug in a cheers...

DE MESQUITA

To finding joy in the middle of all
this misery. A beautiful paradox,
isn't it?

Escher sips his glass, taking in De Mesquita's words.

EXT. HAARLEM STREETS - DAY

Escher hurries along the street, eyes down, dour face, holding his coat tightly around him.

He stops and looks around: unhappy faces rush back and forth, hunched over, bundled up against the cold.

A handful of Nazi Soldiers wait around for orders. Even *they* look miserable.

Escher finds the sun in the sky and focuses on its BRIGHTNESS. Feels it on his face. Looks back down at his surroundings. But now everything's different. Brighter. The colors more vibrant.

He focuses on interesting PATTERNS in the rooftops, a glimmering REFLECTION OF LIGHT in a window, the interlocking FINGERS of an OLD COUPLE holding hands.

He spots a FLOWER SHOP. Sees a FLORIST (female, 20s) cutting stems inside. Eyes a bouquet of TULIPS in the window.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Escher watches Jetta place the TULIPS in a vase.

JETTA

(shouting across the room)
Stay away from your brother. I
don't want you two getting sick.

Jan lays on the couch under a blanket while his older brothers play a game on the floor nearby.

ESCHER

How's he doing?

JETTA

Much better. Please thank Klaus.

ESCHER

I will.

He heads to the stairs, but then Jetta calls to him...

JETTA

Mauk.

(re: the tulips)

They're beautiful.

He smiles at his wife before heading upstairs.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - DAY

Escher at his drawing table, listening to BACH and doodling versions of his optimist and pessimist.

INT. HIDING PLACE - NIGHT

The BACH continues over Rebecca on her tiny bed, drawing with the art supplies that Escher and De Mesquita gave her.

EXT. HAARLEM STREETS - DAY

Escher walks with Jan along a street with a large presence of GERMAN SOLDIERS. Jan coughs.

JAN

I'm not nervous about the shot this time.

ESCHER

Good boy.

A soldier holding a YOUNG MAN at gunpoint starts punching and kicking him. Escher ushers Jan in the opposite direction before he can notice.

ESCHER

Maybe the doctor will have another piece of chocolate for you.

INT. NAZI DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

Jan gets dressed as Dr. Hausser turns to Escher.

DR. HAUSSER

He's doing well. I think he'll be better in a few days.

ESCHER

I brought something to thank you.

Escher pulls a drawing out of his portfolio. It's his work *Inside St. Peter's, Rome* (1935): a view of the inside of St. Peter's Cathedral from an impossibly high angle. The perspective is mesmerizing.

DR. HAUSSER

Is this...

ESCHER

St. Peter's, in Rome.

DR. HAUSSER

I don't know what to say. Thank you. You made this?

Escher nods.

DR. HAUSSER

Now I see why Rauter was impressed.

ESCHER

I was wondering, actually, if I can ask a favor.

Hausser looks up from the print, wary.

ESCHER

I have some friends. Sick friends who aren't as lucky as I was to get access to penicillin.

DR. HAUSSER

How many friends?

ESCHER

Too many. But three in particular.

Dr. Hausser considers a moment, then sighs.

He opens a cabinet and retrieves a few VIALS OF PENICILLIN and a SYRINGE, wraps them all in a MEDICAL GOWN, and hands it to Escher who quickly tucks it away in his bag.

ESCHER

Thank you.

DR. HAUSSER

I didn't do anything. Thank you for the picture.

Escher nods, takes Jan's hand, and heads to the door, but Jan interrupts...

JAN

Wait! What about the chocolate?

Dr. Hausser smiles at Jan and reaches for the drawer.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - DAY

Elisabeth stands over an unwrapped MEDICAL GOWN with the VIALS OF PENICILLIN. She's just finished prepping a SYRINGE to inject into Jaap's arm.

Escher shows De Mesquita a rough sketch of his optimist and pessimist - but now they are three dimensional characters shaking hands.

ESCHER

I felt they wanted to meet each other, so I gave them an introduction.

De Mesquita laughs, then coughs.

INT. NAZI DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - NIGHT

Dark. Empty.

FIDDLING NOISES at the door -- it opens and TWO MASKED FIGURES sneak silently across the room, rifling through drawers and shelves, until they find...

A LARGE STASH OF PENICILLIN, and start emptying it into bags.

INT. / EXT. CAR OUTSIDE NAZI DOCTOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Rudolf behind the wheel of a car, watching the building across the street.

A GUNSHOT and a FLASH from a room on the second floor.

Rudolf starts the car. A few moments later the two Masked Figures rush from the building into the car breathing heavy - adrenaline pumping.

RUDOLF

Who was it?

MASKED FIGURE

I don't know. I -- I thought no one would be there.

Rudolf frowns and peels away.

INT. NAZI DOCTOR'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

A handful of Nazi personnel investigate the doctor's office like a crime scene.

Obergruppenführer Rauter steps in slowly. Sees the emptied cabinet of penicillin. Stares down at the dead body of Dr. Hausser in a dried pool of blood.

Then he looks up at the wall and sees the framed PRINT that Escher gave the doctor.

EXT. HAARLEM TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Escher follows Berend through a crowd of people in a large plaza in front of a massive 14th century Town Hall building.

ESCHER

(upset)

He was a good man. He had a son
Jan's age.

BEREND

Lower your voice. How about *them*?

Berend points at the front of the crowd where a makeshift gallows has been set up and ten DUTCHMEN stand with nooses around their necks.

BEREND

They're good men. *They* have families.

ESCHER

Since when does one tragedy lessen another?

Berend pushes further through the crowd and Escher follows.

ESCHER

He was nice to me. I never would have told you anything if I knew --

BEREND

Please. Not right now.

Berend looks at the gallows where a NAZI OFFICER prepares to give the order.

The ten faces of the ten men range from silent defiance, to dazed bewilderment, to sheer panic.

Escher takes it in - the gravity of the moment finally impacting him.

The Officer nods. A soldier pulls a lever. The ten men hang.

Escher watches, sickened.

As the HANGING BODIES turn on their ropes, they're flat. Two dimensional. Illusions.

EXT. ART GALLERY - DAY

As soon as Klaus sees Escher enter he rushes over.

ESCHER

What is it?

KLAUS

Obergruppenführer Rauter wants to see you as soon as possible.

ESCHER

Why?

KLAUS

He didn't say. Come on.

Klaus grabs his coat and rushes out the door, followed by a concerned Escher.

INT. WEALTHY APARTMENT - DAY

Escher warily follows Klaus as they enter and find Rauter admiring a PAINTING.

RAUTER

Johannes Vermeer. "The Astronomer."
Painted in the 1600s. Remarkable.

Both Escher and Klaus can't help but step closer for a better look at the masterpiece.

RAUTER

Hitler's a big fan of Vermeer. He wants to own every single one of Vermeer's paintings.

KLAUS
How much did it go for?

Rauter sets the painting down, leaning it against the wall. A black swastika is stamped on the back of it.

RAUTER
Nothing. It was retrieved from a French Jew. I pulled some strings to have it brought here on its way to Berlin.

(switching gears)
Mr. Escher. I understand Dr. Hausser was able to help you with your son. Is he feeling better?

ESCHER
Yes. Thank you.

RAUTER
Are you aware that Dr. Hausser was found dead this morning, his office ransacked, a stockpile of penicillin stolen?

ESCHER
Yes I was sorry to hear.

RAUTER
Were you?

ESCHER
Very sorry. He had a son the same age as my Jan.

Rauter picks up a framed print. It's the copy of *Inside St. Peter's, Rome* that Escher gave Dr. Hausser.

RAUTER
I saw this in his office.

Klaus gives Escher a curious look. For a brief moment, Escher FIXATES on the print, but he pulls himself out of it almost immediately.

ESCHER
I was grateful to the doctor. It was a token of my gratitude.

Rauter frowns and looks at the print.

RAUTER
I'm taking it to his family in
Arnhem. His son will grow up
looking at it.

ESCHER
I don't know what to say.

RAUTER
And I'd like a copy for myself.
Paid for, of course.

KLAUS
I'll have one delivered.

RAUTER
Friends of the Reich should be
rewarded. Just as enemies must be
punished.

Rauter eyes Escher - is it meant to be threatening?

Escher looks away from Rauter and spots his print *Hand With Reflecting Globe* hanging on the wall. He steps closer and gazes at his warped reflection in the sphere.

RAUTER
You'll be pleased to know I exacted
justice for Dr. Hausser's murder.
Tenfold. We hung ten members of the
Resistance in retaliation.

The reflection TWISTS AND DISTORTS - causing Escher to sway dizzily.

EXT. WEALTHY STREET - NIGHT

Escher is still a bit shaken as he and Klaus walk away from Rauter's apartment building.

ESCHER
I'm quitting the Nazi Chamber of
Culture.

KLAUS
What? Why?

ESCHER
I can't be around it anymore. Any
of it. I'm done.

KLAUS
But I won't be able to sell your
work anymore.

Escher walks away.

KLAUS
(calling after him)
It's a bad idea. At least think it
through!

INT. LEIDEN APARTMENT - DINING ROOM - DAY

Escher at the table with Berend and Rudolf.

RUDOLF
You're certain he's traveling to
Arnhem?

ESCHER
In three days.

RUDOLF
Good. Next time you see him --

ESCHER
I can't see him again.

RUDOLF
I know you're upset about the
doctor. I am too. He wasn't
supposed to be there.

ESCHER
And the ten men. They all died
because of me.

RUDOLF
Because of you we're getting
penicillin to people who
desperately need it.

BEREND
You're saving lives in the end.

ESCHER
I'm not a mathematician. I can't do
mental arithmetic over life and
death and be okay with it. I know
you think what you do is justified,
but for me it's... it's more
geometric. It's about perspective.
(MORE)

ESCHER (CONT'D)

Every act of violence that appears
righteous from one angle looks
awful from another.

RUDOLF

The Germans are destroying our
country. Frankly, I'm unconcerned
with their perspective.

ESCHER

I'm sorry. I don't mean to
disappoint you.

Berend sees how shaken Escher is. He hugs his brother.

BEREND

It's okay. You've done enough.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jetta prepares a meal in the kitchen. George and Arthur do
homework at the table.

Escher sits on the floor with Jan, pushing wooden blocks
around the carpet as if they're cars.

There's a sadness about Escher. But he smiles as he watches
Jan play. Innocent. Simple.

We fall closer to Jan's block until it becomes...

EXT. TREE-LINED ROAD - NIGHT

...a real Nazi TRUCK moving along at the front of a convoy of
vehicles.

Obergruppenführer Rauter rides in a BMW MOTORCAR just behind
the truck.

UP AHEAD lies a Nazi checkpoint. But on closer look, one of
the soldiers is revealed to be -

RUDOLF IN A NAZI UNIFORM with two other Nazi-uniformed
RESISTANCE FIGHTERS. He glances at the tree line where more
FIGHTERS wait in the shadows.

Rudolf steps in front of the truck and waves it down, causing
the TRUCK DRIVER to stop.

Rauter looks up as his car slows to a stop behind the truck.

RAUTER
 They shouldn't be stopping us.
 (yelling)
 Get out of the way!

Rudolf draws a PISTOL and shoots the TRUCK DRIVER.

GUNFIRE erupts from all directions targeting the convoy - and the Nazis immediately return fire.

RAUTER
 Drive! Get us out of here!

His DRIVER sits up to shift gears, but a bullet flies through his head - spraying Rauter with BLOOD.

Rudolf creeps along the side of the truck, inching closer to Rauter's motorcar as the fire-fight continues around him.

Rauter reaches across his dead driver's body to open the door and push the body out. Then, crouched low to avoid WHIZZING BULLETS, he shifts gears and pulls out from behind the truck.

Rudolf and Rauter lock eyes for the briefest of moments before Rudolf SHOOTS Rauter, hitting his arm.

Rauter slams on the gas - peeling past Rudolf, barely missing him. Rudolf unloads bullets that SPARK off the car as Rauter makes his escape.

INT. NAZI HOSPITAL - DAY

Obergruppenführer Rauter lies in a hospital bed, arm heavily bandaged, as he speaks with a SUBORDINATE OFFICER.

RAUTER
 Our retaliation needs to be...
overwhelming.

EXT. HAARLEM TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Escher is drawn in by the sound of GUNFIRE, and enters the large stone plaza to find a Nazi firing squad surrounded by a crowd of onlookers.

WORKERS IN CHAINS carry a row of dead bodies into the back of a truck, and a new row of PRISONERS is led in front of the firing squad.

Only moments later...

NAZI OFFICER

Fire!

GUNSHOTS and the Prisoners fall dead - only to be tossed in the back of the truck and replaced with a new row of PRISONERS.

Escher's shocked by the sight of the unending line of prisoners waiting to be shot. It extends across the square, at least a hundred people long, heavily guarded by well-armed GERMAN SOLDIERS.

Escher scans the crowd and sees distraught faces.

He flinches at another round of GUNSHOTS.

INT. LEIDEN APARTMENT - NIGHT

Markus and HIS WIFE eat dinner.

A CRASH as NAZI SOLDIERS break through the front door.

The soldiers detain Markus at gunpoint and spread out to search the apartment.

INT. HIDING PLACE - NIGHT

Rebecca huddles in the corner of her bed hugging her knees. She's thin. Weak. Scared.

She FLINCHES at the sound of GUNSHOTS outside.

She hears GERMAN YELLING.

She closes her eyes and hugs her legs tighter. A TEAR trickles down her face.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - DAY

Escher fiddles with a small clay FIGURINE of a worm-like creature that will later appear in his *House of Stairs* (1951).

Berend and Rudolf watch him patiently, waiting for a reaction, which finally comes...

...as Escher HURLS the figurine across the room, SMASHING it to pieces.

BEREND

Mauk --

Escher holds up his hand to silence his brother - takes another moment to compose himself.

ESCHER

If I didn't tell you where Rauter would be, you wouldn't have ambushed his convoy, and none of those prisoners... there were so many. So many. Just lined up.

RUDOLF

One hundred seventeen.

BEREND

You can't blame yourself Mauk.

RUDOLF

He's right, it's my fault.

ESCHER

Your guilt doesn't absolve me of mine. Don't you see? We're stuck in an endless loop of violence and now I've helped it along.

RUDOLF

We're fighting *against the violence*.

ESCHER

Fighting, fighting, and more fighting. Look at history. What seems like a good cause today is always used to justify tomorrow's tyranny.

BEREND

There's more. Markus was arrested. Now our hiding locations are compromised.

ESCHER

Which ones?

RUDOLF

All of them.

BEREND

Haarlem, Leiden, and Amsterdam.

ESCHER

Rebecca?

RUDOLF

Hers too. My source tells me the Nazis will start raids in three nights. By then we need to relocate everyone.

ESCHER

(skeptical)

Everyone. In three nights.

RUDOLF

We need a system to organize it all so if any one link gets caught it won't bring down the whole chain.

BEREND

Mauk... we need your help.

ESCHER

You're joking. There's no way.

RUDOLF

It's the only way.

BEREND

(calmly)

Without a system, there's no operation. Without an operation, Rebecca will die. And hundreds with her.

Escher is overcome with emotion. Embarrassed, he abruptly stands and paces to a bookshelf, keeping his back turned from the other men to hide his watery eyes.

Berend and Rudolf exchange a look and wait silently as Escher gathers himself.

ESCHER

I'm not meant for this sort of thing. It's too much.

Berend stands and starts to approach Escher, then thinks better of it.

BEREND

We'll give you a few moments.

Rudolf follows Berend out, leaving Escher alone to pace the room in a raw, emotional, daze.

JETTA (O.S.)

Mauk?

Escher turns to find his wife approaching him. She spots his red, watery eyes and immediately wraps her arms around him from behind. Comforting him.

He stares at her slender wrists, draped around his neck. He traces a line along her wrist with his finger. She smiles.

JETTA
You still love them?

ESCHER
Your wrists? Just as much as the first day in Siena.

JETTA
Good.

She lays her head in the crook of his neck.

JETTA
You're not done yet? With your brother?

ESCHER
Not yet.

They stand in silence a few moments together.

LATER - NIGHT

Rudolf on the couch, Berend paces, Escher hunched over his drawing table. They've been here a while.

ESCHER
Okay come here.

Rudolf and Berend crowd behind Escher.

ESCHER
We have three cities. Amsterdam, Haarlem, and Leiden.

Escher indicates three CITY MAPS on the table.

ESCHER
Around twenty locations in each city that need to be changed. So we need a point A and a point B. And we need to communicate these two points to your operatives without tipping off the Germans if anyone gets captured.

BEREND
Sounds about right.

ESCHER
Right. So. If I create a repeating
pattern like this...

Escher shows a rough sketch of a repeating pattern drawing of interlocking fish and birds.

ESCHER
...and I color one of the eyes red
and one blue...

Escher dabs red ink over the eye of one of the fish, and blue ink over the eye of one of the birds.

ESCHER
...then when we line it up over a
map, red equals the old location,
blue is the new one.

Rudolf considers.

BEREND
How do you make the locations line
up with their eyes. Is that easy?

ESCHER
(grinning)
No it's incredibly difficult.
And we'll need an individual
woodcut for every re-location.

Escher goes to his record player and puts on BACH.

BEREND
You're going to make sixty woodcuts
by tomorrow morning?!

ESCHER
We are. Start cutting.

Escher tosses a long BLOCK OF WOOD to Berend.

As the MUSIC continues...

MONTAGE - ESCHER, BEREND, AND RUDOLF WORK THROUGH THE NIGHT

- Berend cuts small blocks of wood.

- Escher uses a metal tool to carve details into the wood.

- Rudolf rolls ink onto individual blocks.
- Escher perfectly lines up a block over a sheet of paper, using a map as a guide.
- Escher applies red and blue ink to individual eyes, and we realize that it's...

MORNING

They've been at it all night.

Rudolf rolls ink over a block of wood, but hardly any gets transferred. He pours a jar of ink into a dish but only a few drops come out.

RUDOLF
We need more ink.

BEREND
How many did we get through?

ESCHER
(sighs)
Twenty-two.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Jetta feeds the boys breakfast as Escher goes for the door.

JETTA
Mauk!

She rushes to the kitchen, grabs a piece of bread and hands it to Escher.

He gives her a kiss and continues on his way.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - DAY

De Mesquita hands Escher a large jar of ink.

DE MESQUITA
When the stores run out of food,
that we can live with. But they run
out of ink? That's just unbearable.

ESCHER
I wish you could come see what I'm
working on.

DE MESQUITA

A new project?

ESCHER

A special project - for the Resistance. Art with purpose.

DE MESQUITA

I can't wait to hear more.

ESCHER

For now just know that it will keep Rebecca safe.

Escher steps to the door, but pauses...

ESCHER

What if I arranged for you to go into hiding too?

DE MESQUITA

I'm too old for all that.

(off Escher's concern)

Here's how I see it. Every day is a game. If I wake up in my own bed then I win and the Nazis lose. Right now I'm on a winning streak and I plan to ride it as long as I can.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

BACH plays as Escher, Berend, and Rudolf continue making prints.

RUDOLF

How many left?

BEREND

Maybe thirty?

RUDOLF

I'll get them started on the first batch and we'll do the rest tomorrow night.

Rudolf leaves. Escher stands and stretches his back. Flexes his cramped fingers. Gazes out the window.

ESCHER

How do they do it? Without getting caught.

BEREND

However they can. Move in the dark.
Avoid checkpoints. Go slow.

ESCHER

I can't imagine.

BEREND

Makes you happy to be here at home,
making art, doesn't it?

Escher gazes out the window and the BACH MUSIC morphs into Rudolf's *Musique pour l'esprit en deuil* as he IMAGINES that he sees...

EXT. HAARLEM NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

...across the street an invisible trapdoor opens from the wall of the house and a RESISTANCE MAN (20s) steps out cautiously before waving a MOTHER (30s) and DAUGHTER (9) to join him.

They scurry over to the next house and hide behind a bush.

A GERMAN SOLDIER walks by, searching for them. As he looks in their direction, they turn sideways, revealing that they're two dimensional and flat - their profiles just vertical lines that the Nazi fails to detect.

Then they dart off and find themselves at the bottom of...

A STAIRCASE. They rush up the steps. But the Nazi appears in their path up ahead and spots them.

Before he can reach them, they slip to the...

OTHER SIDE OF THE STAIRS. Standing upside down as if gravity has been reversed - like in Escher's print *Relativity* (1953).

The Nazi rushes to the spot he last saw them, and pauses directly above them, confused, before continuing away down the stairs.

They sneak along the upside-down side of the stairs, and then a SHOUT...

GERMAN SOLDIER

Hey! Stop!

...and a SURREAL CHASE is on. They scurry along the upside down stairs until they reach a ladder that they climb, and it brings them into a...

STRANGE WORLD OF CONVEX AND CONCAVE STAIRCASES

They're in a mind-bending space that resembles Escher's *Convex and Concave* (1955), rushing up and down warped stairs and paths with paradoxical perspectives, always just steps ahead of the German soldier until they climb up to...

A ROOF

...that looks like the infinity staircase in Escher's *Ascending and Descending* (1960). Round and round they go, running "up" the infinity staircase with the soldier chasing behind them, until the soldier stops for breath, and they catch up to him from behind. But before he can turn and grab them, they leap over a railing and land in a...

STONE-LINED TUNNEL

...that extends ahead to a distant vanishing point. They rush along the tunnel until they get to a ladder that they climb in order to reach a...

HOUSEHOLD HALLWAY

...where a trapdoor opens from the ceiling. The mother and daughter rush up into an attic and the trapdoor closes behind them just as the Nazi arrives.

The Resistance Man greets the Nazi with an innocent smile.

BLUE LIGHT fills the space as we pull up and away, until we're...

ABOVE THE HOUSE in a suburban neighborhood. A BLUE DOT of light covers the house.

We rise even further and see an entire map layout of a city with more BLUE DOTS over other houses coming into view.

BEREND (O.S.)

Mauk.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - NIGHT

Escher snaps out of it. The music returns to BACH from the record player.

BEREND

We better get back to it.

Escher gives a last look out the window before returning to his desk.

He compares a city MAP to a small DRAWING of interconnected lizards. He places the city map carefully over the drawing. The map has one RED DOT on it and one BLUE DOT.

We PUSH IN on the red dot until we're overlooking a...

EXT. HAARLEM NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

...and we PUSH THROUGH the roof of one of the houses until we're...

INT. INSIDE THE HOUSE - NIGHT

...where a RESISTANCE MAN (20s) takes a YOUNG WOMAN (teens) by the hand and leads her to the front door.

She's scared. They're both scared. This is not the surreal fantasy Escher just imagined. This feels more REAL.

The Man and Woman nervously step outside into the dark night.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT

The Resistance Man and Young Woman creep along an alley. He peers around a corner, and then...

GERMAN SOLDIER

Hey! Stop!

But there's no chase. No music. No surreal illusions. The soldiers descend upon the Resistance Man and BEAT HIM.

One of the soldiers throws the woman aside. Her head CRACKS against the wall and she falls to the ground.

The soldier looks down at her. Lifts his gun. Grins. BANG!

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

The same Resistance Man is badly beaten. Broken. A NAZI INTERROGATOR has been doing the breaking for some time.

As Obergruppenführer Rauter enters, arm in a sling, the Interrogator gives a tired Heil Hitler salute, then hands something to Rauter.

It's a DRAWING of interconnected lizards, birds, and fish, all in black ink except for one dot of RED and one dot of BLUE over two of the eyes.

Off Rauter, considering...

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - DAY

Escher asleep on the couch. Berend asleep on the workbench.

Jetta enters. Wrinkles her nose at a smell - and rolls her eyes at the two cigarette butts in an ashtray.

She sits beside Escher. Strokes his hair.

He stirs. Recognizes her. Sees sadness in her smile.

ESCHER

It's done. We're done. Don't worry.

JETTA

No more?

ESCHER

No more. I promise.

She breathes a sigh of relief.

JETTA

Come. Eat some breakfast.

But then, BANGING comes from below the open window.

She peeks outside and her face goes white.

MORE BANGING. Escher joins her at the window and sees...

A NAZI STAFF CAR parked out front. SOLDIERS knocking on his front door below.

NAZI SOLDIER (O.S.)

Open up!

Escher and Jetta look at each other. Panic.

BEREND (O.S.)

Stay here.

Berend has woken - immediately poised and alert.

ESCHER

What do they --

BEREND

Stay here!

Berend disappears down the stairs.

EXT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

A Nazi Soldier BANGS again before the door opens, revealing Berend wearing an overly friendly smile.

NAZI SOLDIER
Mr. Escher?

BEREND
What can I do for you?

NAZI SOLDIER
Come with us.

BEREND
Happy to oblige.

Escher and Jetta watch from the upstairs window as Berend is handcuffed and loaded into the back of the Nazi Staff Car.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Jetta watches expectantly as Escher hangs up the phone.

ESCHER
I need to meet Rudolf.

Escher grabs his coat and hurries to the door, but Jetta clutches his arm.

No words. She just clings to him a moment.

He kisses her and pulls her head against his chest in a tight embrace. Then he disappears out the door.

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Berend, tied to a chair.

A Nazi Interrogator rolls up his right sleeve. Punches Berend in the face. Rolls up his left sleeve. He's taking his time.

EXT. HAARLEM STREETS - DAY

Escher walks cautiously. Alert. The Nazi presence in the streets of Haarlem feels especially strong.

A TRUCK filled with Nazi soldiers zooms past Escher, barely missing him.

Up ahead the truck stops. Soldiers leap out and begin setting up a checkpoint.

Escher lowers his head, turns down a side street, and picks up his pace.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Escher and Rudolf sit in a dark corner of a mostly empty coffee shop. Rudolf smokes a cigarette. Offers one to an anxious-looking Escher.

ESCHER

Okay, but it's my last one.

RUDOLF

Just this once let's not wish for that. It sounds more ominous than you intend.

It takes Escher a moment before he smiles.

RUDOLF

There you go. You can't forget to smile. Even during the worst.

ESCHER

Is that where we are now? In the worst?

RUDOLF

(a smoky sigh)

We know he's been arrested. But they thought he was you. So with any luck they'll see it as a misunderstanding and let him go.

ESCHER

And the operation?

RUDOLF

They caught wind pretty early and cracked down right away. Checkpoints everywhere. Strict curfews. We had to suspend things.

ESCHER

How many did we save?

RUDOLF

A few.

Escher reacts - only a few?!

ESCHER
What about Rebecca?

Rudolf shakes his head.

ESCHER
You can still move her though,
can't you? Just her?

RUDOLF
There's nothing we can do now.

ESCHER
I'm not talking about a whole big
operation. Just one girl.

RUDOLF
All the roadways and waterways in
and out of Amsterdam are choked
off. It can't be done.

ESCHER
But you can still save her if you
want to, can't you? You must.

Rudolf frowns at his uncle. Appraises him.

RUDOLF
Do you have a place you can hide?
(off Escher's blank look)
They'll be back for you. You can't
stay at home. You need to go
somewhere.

Escher FIXATES on his coffee: a white WISP OF CREAM that
hasn't yet blended with its dark surrounding slowly spins in
a gentle dance.

RUDOLF
Uncle!

Escher is jolted back out.

RUDOLF
You've always been a bit of a --
what do I want to say?
(thinks, starts over)
Sometimes while composing a piece,
I'd live in that musical world. It
would overtake me. Consume me.
Wherever I looked I saw musical
notes. Rhythms. Harmonies. Until I
finished puzzling it all out.
(MORE)

RUDOLF (CONT'D)

Only then would I truly be back in the regular world with everyone else. I suppose it's the nature of being an artist. And you, well, let's just say I always admired how much of an artist you allowed yourself to be. But we need you here now. Fully here. Your family needs you here. You're in it now, and there's no going back.

Off Escher, looking overwhelmed.

EXT. HAARLEM STREETS - DAY

Rudolf and Escher leave the coffee shop together. A daze remains in Escher's eyes. But Rudolf is alert. He notices two GERMAN MEN in suits across the street, staring - as if they were waiting for him.

RUDOLF

Stay with me.

Escher, about to go his own way, follows his nephew in the opposite direction, though he doesn't yet know why. As they walk along the street, the two German men follow.

Escher sees Rudolf glance at the men before turning down a side street.

ESCHER

Are those men following us?

RUDOLF

Stay calm.

The German men round the corner behind them as Rudolf leads them down another street.

Escher grows more alarmed as they walk, frequently looking back over his shoulder. He sees the men emerge from around the corner behind them and pull out GUNS.

Rudolf leads Escher around another corner, bringing them into an empty alleyway. Escher realizes it's a dead end, and his panic rises.

RUDOLF

Just stay calm.

The German men round the corner into the alley. Trapping them in. For a moment the four men stand facing each other.

GERMAN MAN

Turn around.

Rudolf slowly complies, showing his back to the men. But Escher remains motionless.

WHAP! One of the men pistol-whips Escher across the face, spinning him onto the ground.

GERMAN MAN

On your knees.

Rudolf kneels. Remarkably calm. At peace.

Escher, still wobbly, manages to get to his knees. BLOOD starts to flow from a gash that has been opened on his brow.

A drop of blood falls onto the stone in front of Escher.

More drops follow, painting the stone red.

Escher FIXATES on the blood. He reaches out and traces his finger through it. Shaping it. Fashioning it into a pattern.

BANG! A gunshot - and a spray of blood is added to his canvas from beside him.

He CLOSES HIS EYES.

BANG! A second shot.

Escher opens his eyes. He's still alive. He turns around and sees that Rudolf is already on his feet, sprung into action, next to Sophie who stands over the bodies of the two men, a pistol in her hand.

RUDOLF

Quickly.

Escher follows the two of them to the edge of the alley. Rudolf peeks around the corner.

Sophie hands Escher a handkerchief, but he just clutches it.

She takes it back and wipes the blood from his face.

They set off down the street together at a hurried, but inconspicuous pace. When they reach a major intersection, Rudolf turns to Escher.

RUDOLF

Get into hiding and stay there.
Good luck.

Rudolf hugs Escher firmly. Then darts off, followed by Sophie.

Escher, alone in the intersection, reaches up and touches the gash on his forehead. Pulls his hand down. Sees bright fresh blood on his fingers. Looks around.

People and vehicles pass through the intersection in various directions. Hardly anyone takes notice of Escher - just another sad sight during a horrible war.

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Berend. Bloody. Tied to a chair at a small table.

The Nazi Interrogator stands at attention with a Heil Hitler salute as Rauter enters the room, arm in a sling.

He takes his time removing a cigarette.

RAUTER

(to Berend)

I am Obergruppenführer Hans Albin Rauter.

(to Interrogator)

His hands.

The Interrogator unties Berend's hands. Rauter sits down across from Berend. Gives him a cigarette. Lights it.

RAUTER

You are Berend George Escher. Professor of geology at Leiden University. Father of Rudolf Escher. Talented composer. Member of the Communist party. Known leader in the Dutch Resistance.

Berend remains expressionless as he smokes his cigarette.

RAUTER

That must be difficult for you, no?

BEREND

Oh you know kids. Always rebelling.

RAUTER

Brother to Mauritz Cornelis Escher.

BEREND

Don't let him hear you call him Mauritz. He prefers Mauk.

(MORE)

BEREND (CONT'D)
Or if you really want to make him
happy, call him M.C.

RAUTER
I met your brother. Nice man.
Talented artist.

BEREND
He'd be pleased to hear you say
that. How did you come to meet?

Rauter grins.

RAUTER
Why did you pass yourself off as
your brother?

BEREND
I didn't.

RAUTER
Were you protecting him?

BEREND
Your soldiers called me "Mr.
Escher," which I am. And told me to
come with them, which I did.

RAUTER
You must have known they were there
for the Mr. Escher who *lived* there.

BEREND
It crossed my mind. Yes. But if a
Nazi with a gun tells me to do
something, I do it. I don't presume
to know what he wants better than
he does.

Rauter takes a moment to appraise Berend. Smiles. Takes out a
piece of paper and unfolds it on the table: it's a repeating
pattern drawing of lizards, birds, and fish.

Rauter waits in silence. Cold eyes stare knowingly. Berend
realizes it's on him to speak next...

BEREND
You *are* a fan of his, aren't you.

RAUTER
In the past twenty-four hours we've
apprehended several Resistance
members, each with a drawing of
your brother's.

BEREND

I guess my brother has many fans.

Rauter waits for a better answer.

BEREND

You know those aren't real drawings. Well obviously they're real, but a man with your eye must see that they're rushed. Sloppy.

RAUTER

Your point?

BEREND

It's a publicity stunt. He gave these out to as many people as possible to promote his work. Shameless if you ask me. I'm not surprised you're finding them in everyone's pockets.

INT. OUTSIDE HOLDING CELL - DAY

Rauter eyes Berend through a one-way mirror as he speaks with his Subordinate Officer.

OFFICER

He's lying.

RAUTER

He's good. We may have arrested the right Escher brother after all.

INT. ESCHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Jetta patches up the gash on Escher's face, while George, Arthur, and Jan crowd around.

ESCHER

(to George and Arthur)
You'll need to be excessively cautious.

JAN

I don't want you to go.

ESCHER

I know, but I have to.

JAN

Are you scared?

ESCHER

Yes.

JAN

That's okay. Just pretend a giant rhinoceros is with you. He'll keep you safe.

Escher hugs Jan tightly.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - DAY

Jetta, shell-shocked, watches as Escher, a fresh bandage over his eye, points at an open drawer.

ESCHER

And in this drawer are the account numbers. And my address book.

She pulls him into a tight hug.

They hold each other. Fear. Love. Tears.

Over in the corner sits an unfinished sketch of Escher's optimist and pessimist. We PUSH IN on the pessimist, who becomes...

EXT. HAARLEM STREETS - DAY

...Escher walking hunched over along the street. Dour. Hopeless.

He walks past the Flower Shop. It's closed. Boarded up. Broken glass where the display window once stood. A large red SWASTIKA painted on the door.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S KITCHEN - DAY

De Mesquita opens his back door to find Escher holding a small satchel.

ESCHER

I need a place to hide.

DE MESQUITA

That's our specialty.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

De Mesquita lifts a bottle of brandy and sees there's very little left. He splits it between four glasses and doles them out to Escher, Elisabeth, and Jaap.

DE MESQUITA

To life.

ESCHER AND ELISABETH

To life.

They all drink except Jaap, who stares off, paying little attention.

ELISABETH

It's quite an incredible thing you all did, trying to re-locate everyone like that.

ESCHER

But we failed.

JAAP

You should have moved Rebecca first.

DE MESQUITA

Jaap.

JAAP

Then she'd be safe now.

DE MESQUITA

Or she'd be caught.

ELISABETH

Are you sure they know where she is?

ESCHER

I don't know.

ELISABETH

So she might be fine?

ESCHER

She might.

Escher's tone rings untrue, so he continues with less sugar-coating:

ESCHER

My nephew thinks *all* the locations are compromised. And that the Nazis will start raiding them tomorrow.

ELISABETH

The poor thing.

Silence... broken when Elisabeth notices De Mesquita's face.

ELISABETH

Oh Samuel.

De Mesquita is weeping - quietly and inconspicuously - struggling to temper his emotions. But getting spotted by the others only opens the floodgates.

DE MESQUITA

Excuse me.

He hastily leaves to the kitchen, followed by Elisabeth.

Jaap glares at Escher. Then gulps down his glass of brandy and retreats up the stairs.

Escher looks toward the kitchen and sees De Mesquita and Elisabeth, framed by the doorway, crying in each other's arms, lit by two Sabbath candles burning low.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S STUDIO - NIGHT

On the wall: the PRINT of a man and woman huddled together in a crowd of strange faces.

Escher stares at the print.

A SPARKLE OF LIGHT reflects off a TEAR that forms in the man's eye and slowly slides down his face.

Escher goes to the desk. Finds paper and a pencil. Begins sketching. Focused. Determined.

The SKETCH starts to take shape - lines and curves.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - DAY

Jetta, alone in Escher's studio. Wandering around by candle-light in her husband's private sanctum. Missing him.

She searches through a portfolio of old drawings. The outside of the portfolio is labeled "Siena."

She finally finds what she's looking for. Pulls it from the others. Brings it over to the couch and sits with it. Stares at it. Gets lost in it - letting it take her somewhere else.

REVEAL: it's a pencil sketch of two female arms resting on a table. The slender WRISTS are the focus. *Her* wrists.

INT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

De Mesquita sits at the table staring at a piece of paper.

DE MESQUITA

It's mad. Extraordinarily clever.
But mad.

ESCHER

Do you think it can work?

De Mesquita passes the paper back to Escher

DE MESQUITA

You don't need to do this.

ESCHER

It's me or no one.

Escher folds the PAPER and slides it into his coat pocket.

ESCHER

I see a way to save a life. Even if
the odds are damn near impossible.
As long as there is one,
infinitesimal chance, it's a puzzle
with a solution. Difficult puzzles
are my specialty.

DE MESQUITA

I don't know. I just don't know.

ESCHER

I do.

EXT. DE MESQUITA'S SHED - NIGHT

Escher pulls a bicycle from the shed.

He looks back one last time. Sees De Mesquita and Elisabeth, huddled together in the doorway.

A bittersweet smile. Then Escher rides off.

EXT. COUNTRY ROADS BETWEEN HAARLEM AND AMSTERDAM - NIGHT

Escher pedals in the dark, lit only by the moon.

Up ahead, CAR HEADLIGHTS.

He brakes and scurries to the side of the road. Stashes the bicycle behind a bush. Crouches low. Waits for the car to pass. Then re-emerges and continues his journey.

EXT. NEAR CHECKPOINT OUTSIDE OF AMSTERDAM - NIGHT

Escher surveys a checkpoint up ahead that stands on a bridge between him and Amsterdam. He sees similar checkpoints on similar bridges in either direction.

He thinks. Unsure.

Then he lifts a large rock and bashes it against the wheel of the bicycle, bending the frame.

He uses the rock to scrape a hole in the knee of his pants and spreads dirt all over his clothes

EXT. AT THE CHECKPOINT - NIGHT

Two GERMAN SOLDIERS lift their guns as Escher approaches carrying the bicycle.

ESCHER

I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

GERMAN SOLDIER

What are you doing?

ESCHER

I know there's a curfew, but I was riding in the country and busted my bike. I had to walk the whole way.

He points out the damaged tire.

One of the soldiers frisks Escher and finds the folded PAPER in Escher's pocket.

He unfolds it. Looks at it. Takes it to the other soldier who pulls out ANOTHER PIECE OF PAPER - one of Escher's repeating pattern drawings.

The soldiers look back and forth between the two pieces of paper, comparing them.

Escher waits nervously.

GERMAN SOLDIER
Go ahead, hurry home.

He hands Escher's paper back and waves him on.

Escher hurries past the checkpoint, onto the bridge.

He pauses in the middle. Glances down at the paper. Allows himself a tiny, relieved smile. Then folds the paper, puts it back in his pocket, and continues across the bridge carrying the bicycle.

EXT. AMSTERDAM STREET ALONG THE CANAL - NIGHT

Escher stashes the bicycle against a building, then continues down a stone street that lines the canal.

He pauses and looks both ways before hurrying down the steps to the Cellar Bar that he visited with Berend earlier.

He knocks lightly and waits.

He knocks again, a bit louder. Waits.

Looks around.

Goes to knock again but stops when he hears footsteps on the other side of the door.

A beat.

ESCHER
(whispers)
I'm Rudolf's uncle. Please let me
in. Please.

The door opens - Sophie appears through the crack.

SOPHIE
C'mon then. Hurry.

Escher slides inside.

INT. CELLAR BAR - NIGHT

Escher looks around the dark, empty room as Sophie puts away a PISTOL behind the bar.

SOPHIE
You shouldn't have come here.

ESCHER
Is he here?

SOPHIE
Who?

ESCHER
Rudolf.

SOPHIE
No.

ESCHER
Do you know where he is?

SOPHIE
Of course not. Everyone's in
hiding. You should be too.

Escher collapses in a booth, despondent.

Perhaps out of pity, or curiosity, she grabs a bottle and two
small glasses and sits opposite him. Pours.

SOPHIE
You have a place to stay?

ESCHER
In Haarlem. I don't know how I'll
get back.

SOPHIE
You came from Haarlem? How?

ESCHER
By bike.

SOPHIE
You rode a bike from Haarlem.

He nods.

SOPHIE
How'd you get past the checkpoint?

ESCHER
Banged up the wheel, told them I
had an accident.

Sophie nods, impressed. She lifts her glass. He clinks it
with his and they drink.

SOPHIE
What do you want with Rudolf?

ESCHER
Rebecca. The little girl. You
remember her?

SOPHIE
Of course.

ESCHER
I have a plan. To move her.

Unseen by Escher, Rudolf enters from the back area and starts
listening in.

SOPHIE
(skeptical)
You have a plan.

ESCHER
I have to save her. I need to try.
Even if it seems pointless to you.
I just need to know where she's
hiding and I need help gathering a
few supplies, but I'll take the
risk myself. Please. I can't just
sit by.

She shakes her head, surprised, marveling at his conviction.
But he misinterprets it.

ESCHER
I -- I know I don't belong here...

SOPHIE
No?

Sophie raises her eyebrows at Rudolf as Escher continues
unaware.

ESCHER
...but that's why it shouldn't
matter to the Resistance if I fail.
I wish I could just tell him my
plan because I feel like if he
heard it, then --

RUDOLF
Uncle Mauk.

Escher turns and sees Rudolf behind him.

RUDOLF
(grins)
You look like you've seen a ghost.
(MORE)

RUDOLF (CONT'D)
Let's hear this plan of yours,
shall we?

INT. BOOKSHELF-LINED NOOK - NIGHT

Escher follows Rudolf over to the wall where the secret passageway through the bookshelves lies open.

Rudolf picks up a candle and enters the passage.

With Sophie behind him, Escher takes a deep breath and follows, into the...

SECRET PASSAGEWAY

...down stone steps, to a large wooden door. Rudolf knocks twice, and a moment later the door opens to reveal a...

INT. BASEMENT CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

It feels like a military operations center. LARGE MAPS on the walls. A RADIO communications set-up. A series of COTS in the back where a handful of RESISTANCE MEMBERS (male and female, 20s-40s) are resting.

Escher takes it all in.

RUDOLF
Welcome to the Resistance.

LATER

Escher, Rudolf, and Sophie sit together at a table.

RUDOLF
They're stopping and searching any boat that could be hiding anything.

ESCHER
(excited)
Ah, yes. Exactly. And how do you hide something if you can't hide anything?

Escher takes out the piece of PAPER and lays it on the table. It looks like a design for some sort of rowboat.

We PUSH IN on the SKETCH OF THE ROWBOAT until it becomes...

EXT. AMSTERDAM CANAL - NIGHT

...a SMALL ROWBOAT floating in the dark water.

We hear them before we see them - Escher and Rudolf swimming slowly toward the boat, heads bobbing just above the water.

They untie the boat and, as quietly as possible, lead it back across the canal where Sophie is waiting at the opening of a STONE PASSAGE in the side of the canal wall.

INT. STONE PASSAGE - NIGHT

Sophie leads the way by candlelight, followed by Rudolf and Escher carrying the rowboat along the passage.

INT. BASEMENT CHAMBER - NIGHT

The rowboat sits in the middle of the room.

A buzz of activity as Rudolf, Sophie, and various other Resistance Members carry out different jobs. Some saw. Some sand. Some stain wood.

Escher, hair still damp from the canal, orchestrates the activity like the foreman of a building site.

INT. STONE PASSAGE - MORNING

Rudolf and Escher carry the boat along the stone passage.

They get to a metal door and open it, revealing the first rays of the MORNING SUN.

They lower the boat into the water of the...

EXT. AMSTERDAM CANAL - MORNING

The morning sunlight SPARKLES over the water as Amsterdam starts its day with a trickling of boat traffic.

Rudolf stands perched in the stone passageway over Escher who sits in the rowboat.

RUDOLF

You know where you're going?

ESCHER

Yes.

RUDOLF
Because I can draw you a map of
lizards and frogs.

ESCHER
(grins)
Thank you Rudolf.

RUDOLF
Good luck.

Escher casts off, rowing the small empty wooden boat out into the canal as Rudolf closes the metal door with a low CREAK.

And with that... Escher is alone. A few morning birds. The SWISH of his oars cutting into the water.

It's peaceful. Quiet.

EXT. AMSTERDAM CANALS - DAY

Escher gets to an intersection in the waterway. Looks around to get his bearings. Turns in one of the directions.

EXT. AMSTERDAM CANALS - DAY

Escher finishes tying the boat to a small dock on the side of the canal, then climbs a stone stairway up to the street.

He checks the house numbers as he walks, searching for the right one.

He tries to act calm as he passes a few GERMAN SOLDIERS.

Finally he spots the house he's looking for. Looks around, waits until the coast is clear, takes a deep breath and approaches the front door.

INT. HIDING PLACE - DAY

Rebecca's small hiding room is much as we last saw it. But the flowers have long since withered, and several of the books are strewn about.

And Rebecca is skinnier. Paler. Ungroomed.

A CREAK of the trapdoor. Escher climbs down into the space.

Rebecca looks at him with curiosity, and he tries to hide how awful he finds her situation.

He kneels next to her. Squeezes her in a gentle hug. Sees a pile of DRAWINGS in the corner.

ESCHER
You brave girl.

EXT. AMSTERDAM STREETS ALONG THE CANAL - DAY

Escher eyes his surroundings warily as he walks hand-in-hand with Rebecca along the canal - quickly but not rushed.

They go down the stone steps to where the boat's tied up.

ESCHER
Are you ready to go somewhere
impossible?

EXT. AMSTERDAM CANALS - DAY

The canals are busier and more crowded than earlier.

Nazi patrols scan the water traffic. Some of the larger boats have been called over to the sides for inspection.

In the midst of it all, Escher paddles along in an EMPTY ROWBOAT. The Nazis don't give him a second look.

Escher takes a turn away from the center of Amsterdam and approaches a large WATER LOCK - the gateway that separates the canals of Amsterdam from the larger waterway beyond.

A CHECKPOINT is set up at the water lock, with a few boats lined up in front of Escher.

He watches nervously as a GERMAN SOLDIER boards the boat in front of him, searching compartments and opening boxes.

GERMAN SOLDIER (O.S.)
Papers.

Escher FLINCHES - unaware that a second SOLDIER had approached. He quickly hands over his papers.

GERMAN SOLDIER
Where are you headed?

ESCHER
Haarlem.

GERMAN SOLDIER
In that?

ESCHER

I know. It'll take a while.

GERMAN SOLDIER

The war might be over by the time
you get there.

Over the above conversation, we slowly shift our angle until we see that the emptiness of the boat is an OPTICAL ILLUSION.

From a lower angle we see Rebecca hiding beneath a thin plank of wood designed to appear like an empty space when viewed from above.

The soldier takes a moment to review Escher's papers.

A BLACK BIRD lands on the edge of the boat and stares at Escher, then hops down onto the hidden compartment, ruining the illusion - seemingly WALKING ON AIR!

Escher tries to shoo the bird without raising the Soldier's attention, but the bird just looks up at him curiously.

Finally, just before the soldier turns his attention back to Escher, the bird hops back up to the edge of the boat.

GERMAN SOLDIER

Good luck.
(makes a rowing gesture)
I hope your arms can take it.

He laughs and hands back Escher's papers, then continues on to the next boat.

Escher breathes a sigh of relief.

As he lifts his oars and starts rowing, the BIRD takes off.

We follow the bird up into the...

EXT. SKY - DAY

...where it's joined by a flock of BLACK BIRDS all flying together in a triangular formation.

Before our eyes, reminiscent of Escher's *Day and Night*, the spaces between the black birds morph into WHITE BIRDS flying in the opposite direction with the black birds becoming a dark sky in the background.

One of the white birds breaks off from the rest and flies down until we're in a...

EXT. HAARLEM NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

...in the Jewish Quarter, approaching De Mesquita's house.

The bird lands on a DRAWING lying on the ground. Several other drawings blow in the wind along the street.

ESCHER

They'll be so excited to see you.

Escher leads Rebecca toward the house and notices one of the drawings. He picks it up. Recognizes it as De Mesquita's.

He notices the other drawings blowing around.

He rushes to De Mesquita's house and stops when he sees the front door. Wide open. Broken from its hinges.

INT./EXT. DE MESQUITA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Escher runs through the house, searching for any sign of his friends.

ESCHER

Samuel!

The place is in disarray. Furniture turned over, valuables ransacked. Broken glass. De Mesquita's drawings are strewn about everywhere, fluttering around from gusts of wind.

ESCHER

Samuel! Elisabeth! Jaap!

He frantically searches every room. Clinging to desperate hope. But he slowly accepts it - they're gone.

He returns to the front doorway, where Rebecca waits for him.

REBECCA

They're gone?

He nods.

REBECCA

Why?

He sits on the stoop and shakes his head. In a daze. He stares at the empty street. All is still except for a few drawings, fluttering in the wind.

A drawing blows past and lands at her feet. She tries to grab it, but the wind pushes it just out of reach.

She chases it, but it keeps blowing away just before she can grab it, until she finally outsmarts the wind and snatches it up.

She returns to Escher and he takes the drawing from her. It's De Mesquita's print of a man and a woman huddled together in a crowd of strange faces, but now it has a large Nazi BOOT PRINT covering it.

TEARS fill his eyes as he stares at it.

REBECCA

Do I have to go back? To the cellar?

There's a quiet strength in Rebecca's innocent eyes. After all this, she's preparing herself to go back into hiding. It melts Escher's heart.

ESCHER

No dear. You'll stay with me from now on. I'll keep you safe.

INT. ESCHER'S STUDIO - DAY

CRACKLING as Escher rolls black ink onto a block of wood.

SUPER: "Two months later"

He carefully lowers a white sheet of paper over the ink-covered wood until it sits perfectly on top.

Jan and Rebecca watch closely as he rubs a small IVORY SPOON over the paper in small circular motions.

ESCHER

Are you ready to see what's hiding on the other side?

REBECCA AND JAN

Yes.

Escher slowly peels the paper away from the wooden block revealing his finished version of *Encounter* (1944):

The familiar two-dimensional pattern of interlocking optimists and pessimists, but with three-dimensional versions breaking free of the background and marching in a line until they meet in the middle where one optimist and one pessimist shake each other's hand.

ESCHER

You see back here they serve as each other's backgrounds. They can't exist at the same time. But up here they've broken free of their flat existence to march in a circle until they meet each other up here.

JAN

I'm glad they met each other.

REBECCA

This one reminds me of you.

She points at the optimist.

JAN

Why are they walking in a circle?

ESCHER

You know the magical thing about a circle? It ends where it starts. Or does it start where it ends?

Something STRANGE happens. We PAN over until Rebecca is no longer in frame and we find ourselves back in the first scene of the film.

ESCHER

Well now, shall we do another?

Jan nods excitedly as Escher secures a carved BLOCK OF WOOD in a clamp. Watching Escher work is pure magic for the curious boy.

Escher rolls black ink onto the block with a CRACKLING SOUND.

ESCHER

Remember, Jan, art is nothing but an illusion. What does this black ink look like?

As the opening scene continues to unfold exactly as we remember it, something EVEN WEIRDER happens. We PULL OUT and see the CAMERAS and LIGHTING EQUIPMENT filming the first scene. We see the set for what it is... unmasking the movie magic so it's self-evident.

The scene continues under the following TITLE SEQUENCE:

- "This film is an illusion."
- "But the following is real."

- "Samuel Jessurun de Mesquita, his wife Elisabeth, and his son Jaap were sent to Auschwitz and murdered by the Nazis in February of 1944."

- "Berend Escher was eventually released by the Nazis and went into hiding until the end of the war."

- "Obergruppenführer Hanns Albin Rauter was found guilty of war crimes and sentenced to death in 1949."

- "The Dutch Resistance helped over 300,000 people hide from the Nazis. Even with the help of the Resistance, 75% of all Dutch Jews were killed in the Holocaust."

A SERIES OF ESCHER'S MOST RECOGNIZABLE WORKS along with the following TITLES:

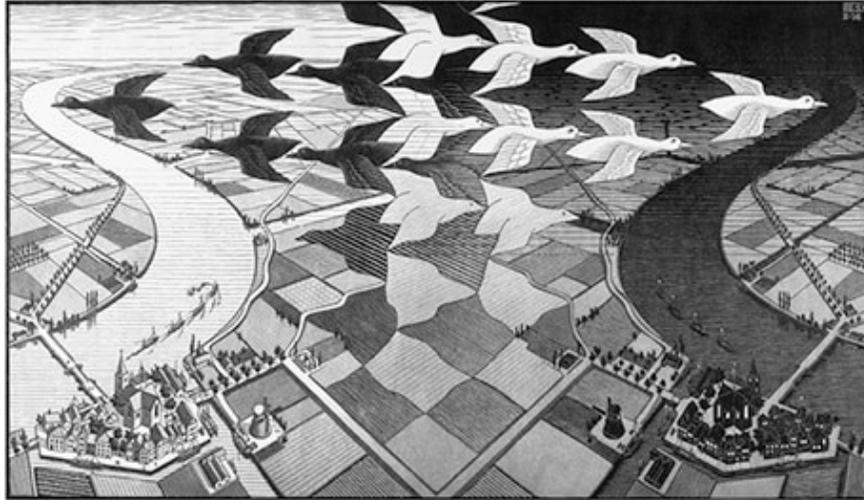
- "M.C. Escher was one of the world's most famous graphic artists. His most popular creations explored themes of opposites, illusions, and paradoxes. His art continues to amaze millions of people all over the world. He died in 1972 at the age of 73."

BACK IN ESCHER'S STUDIO

We move toward the wall where we find De Mesquita's drawing. A man and a woman, huddled close together, surrounded by a crowd of strange faces - the stain of a Nazi boot print stamped over them.

TITLE: "He kept his mentor's drawing in his studio for the rest of his life, never removing the Nazi boot print."

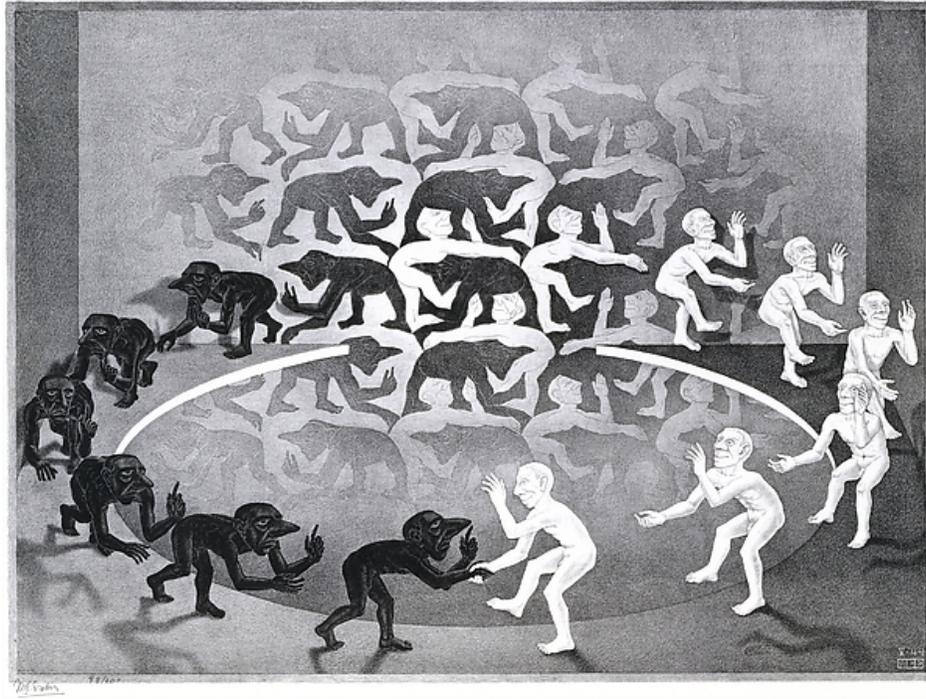
FADE TO BLACK.



Day and Night (1938)



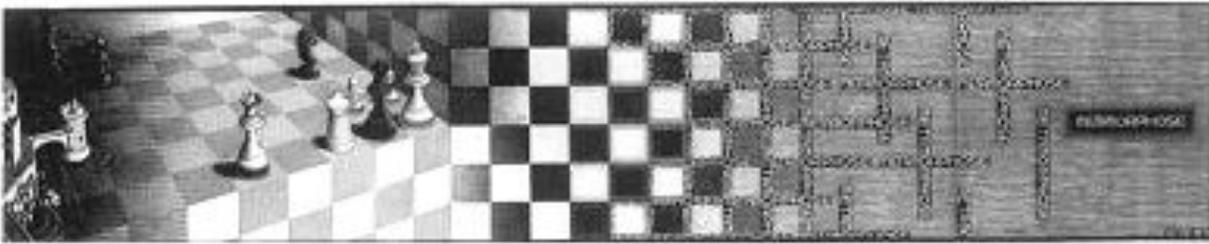
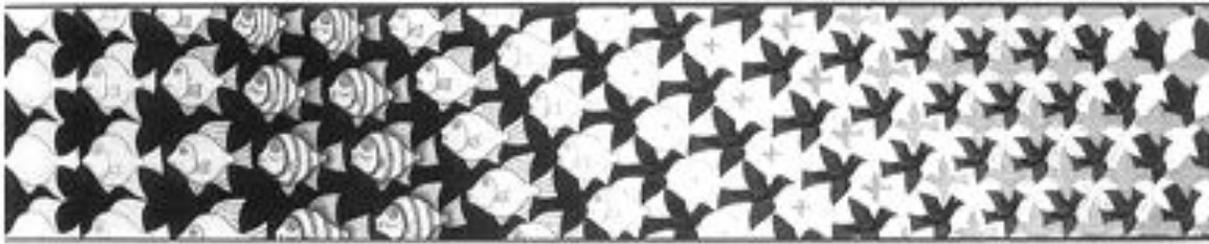
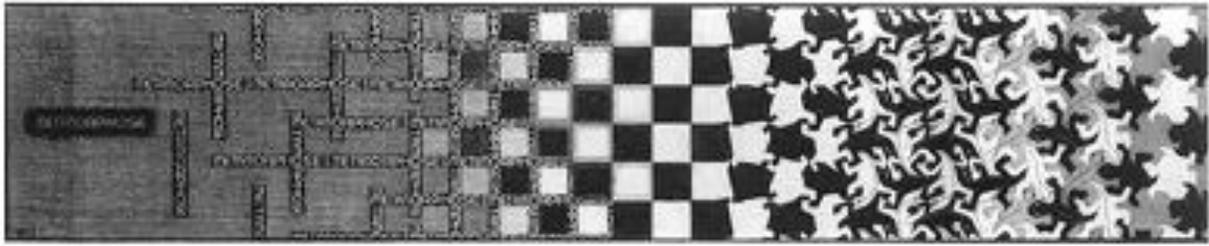
Hand with Reflecting Globe (1935)



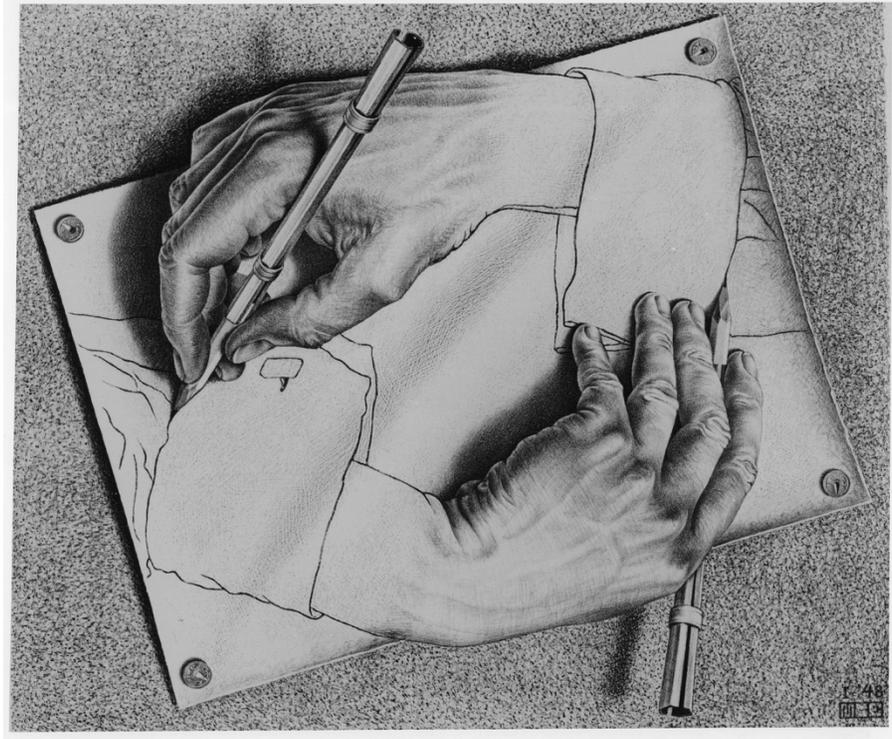
Encounter (1944)



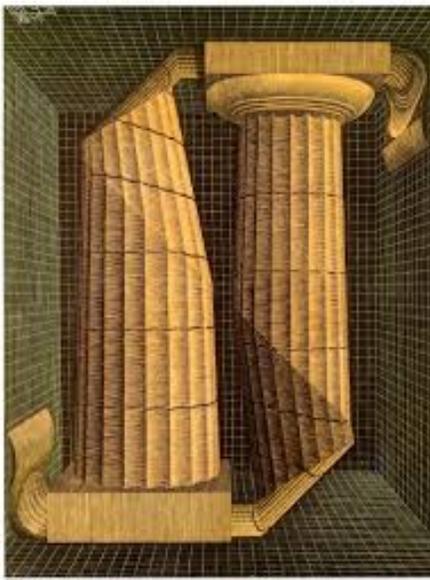
Reptiles (1942)



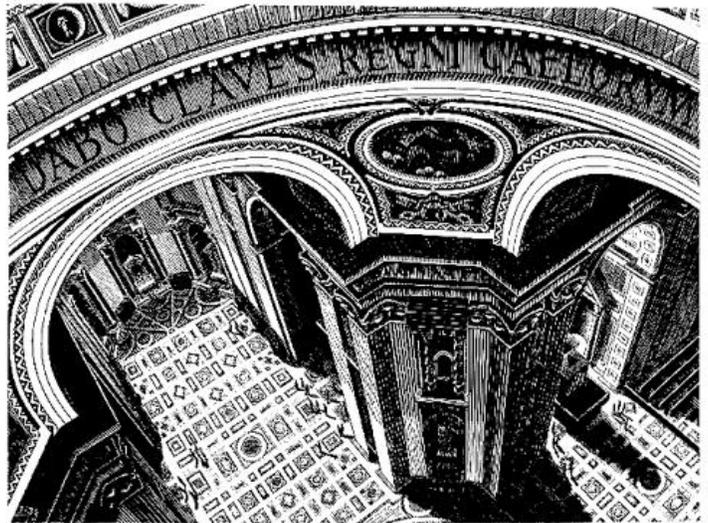
Metamorphosis II (1939-40)



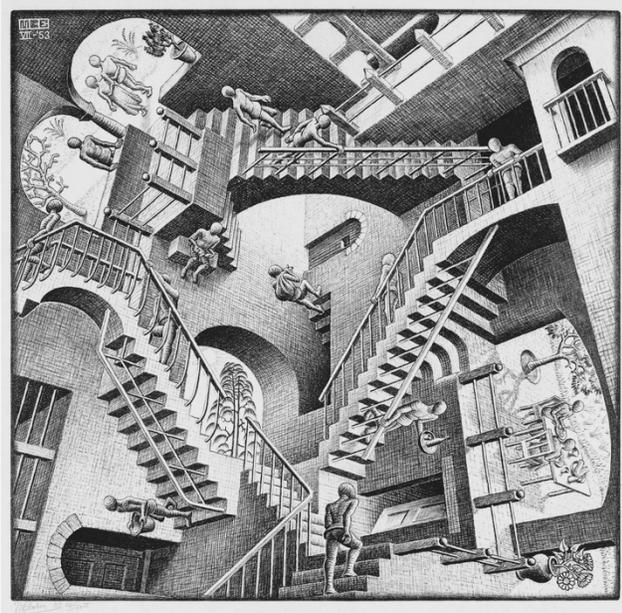
Drawing hands (1948)



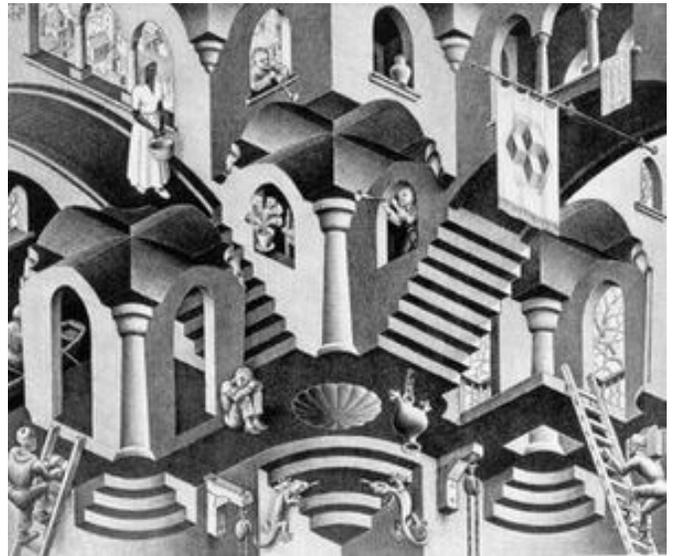
Doric Columns (1945)



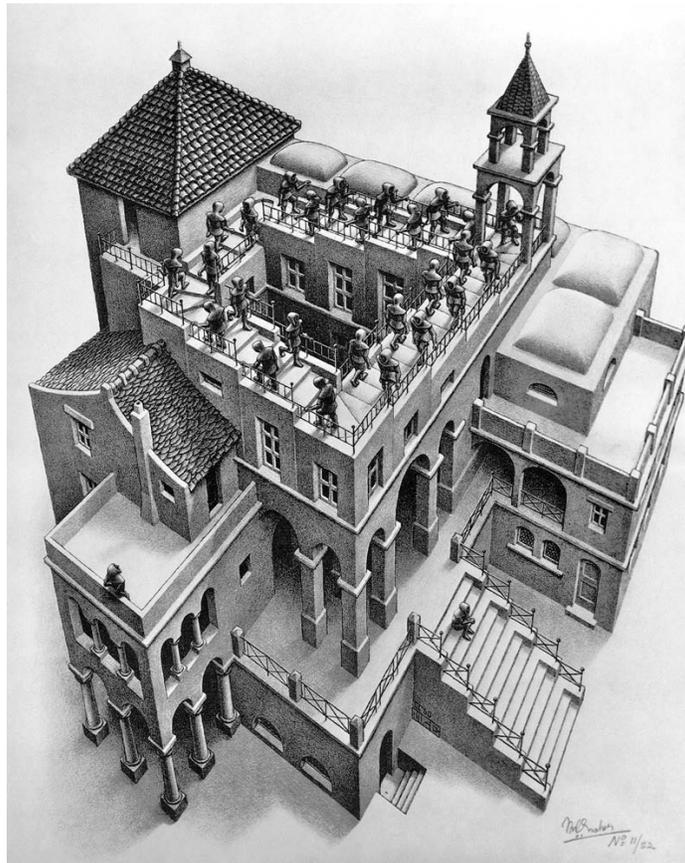
Inside St. Peter's, Rome (1935)



Relativity (1953)



Convex and Concave (1955)



Ascending and Descending (1960)



Print by Jessurun De Mesquita, trampled by a German army boot