

THE **M**URDERER AMONG US

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**Friedrich "Fritz" Lang** (December 5, 1890 - August 2, 1976) German-American film director. The best-known émigré from Germany's school of Expressionism, Lang produced an oeuvre that established the characteristics of the "film noir" genre that dubbed him the "Master of Darkness". Film scholars consider Lang's films *Metropolis* and **M** to be *his* groundbreaking masterworks. But the inspiration behind Lang's making of **M** is a story that has been largely left untold. On a cold winter night in 1920, Fritz Lang's wife was found dead on the floor of their Berlin flat with a single bullet wound to the chest. Her death was ruled suspicious. Lang rarely spoke of that night, and history books and biographies have left this little known detail of his early years undocumented... or, strangely omitted.

*"My private life has nothing to do with my films."*

**Fritz Lang**

ON BLACK

MAN (V.O.)

The end of genius is sometimes spectacular: A bomb's explosion. A madman's gibbering. An orgasmic suicide before a sell-out audience. A Faustian pact with the Devil in which nothing is left to chance.

FADE IN:

ROOFTOPS. DUSK.

CLASSIC NOIR-STYLE

A MAN RUNS. A leather strapped SUITCASE in his hand.

**SUPER TITLE: BERLIN 1933**

TIGHT ON THE MAN (40) looking nervously over his shoulder, sensing pursuers closing in around him.

He maneuvers around a steeply sloped shoal of chimneystacks. Throws the suitcase over the gap to the next roof. It slides to the edge, clinging to the gutter.

TIGHTER STILL ON THE MAN. A look of relief. A bead of sweat.

He leaps across, almost losing his footing and plummeting to the ground below. He snatches up the suitcase, drops to the fire escape, slides down to the alley, vanishes in the dark.

Sun dips below the horizon. Night falls.

INT. SEWER SYSTEM -- CONTINUOUS

The man makes his way along the cavernous artery of gushing water spilling from conduits to a canal below.

Trudging through knee deep water, he looks up through a metal grate leading to the street and sees a policeman standing guard above. Walks a bit more and locates a manhole with ANHALTER BAHNOF stenciled along the brickwork.

A moment later, sluicing through the water, a UNIFORMED POLICEMAN in pursuit. The officer shines his lamp on the manhole and upon noticing that it's displaced -- BLOWS HIS WHISTLE.

The convergence of loud footfalls and shadows on the stonework reveals a POLICE SQUAD already in the tunnels.

## EXT. WILHELMSPLATZ -- CONTINUOUS

The man turns into a city square with prancing statuary and Communist and Nazi flags hanging side-by-side like two idealistically opposed parents. He burrows into the zigzagging human traffic.

An ORGANIZER spews anarchy on a bullhorn. Books by Freud, Einstein, Mann, Brecht, Hemingway, and Wells thrown into a roaring bonfire.

Bathed in perspiration, the man casts his eyes down and avoids TWO SA BROWNSHIRTS (GERMAN STORMTROOPERS), rifles slung over their shoulders, on a direct collision course with him.

He steps into the motorway to avoid their gaze. Passing automobiles and tramcars puff exhaust fumes.

BLARING HORN from a massive TRUCK.

He sidesteps it by inches. Nearly kills him.

Securely on the walkway now, the man steels himself and carries on.

A street lamp ignites, reveals a DARK FIGURE in a Herringbone TRENCHCOAT crossing the motorway and heading up the street after the man.

## EXT. CANAL -- CONTINUOUS

Fog enshrouded TRESTLE BRIDGE.

We find the man alongside the canal, making his way toward the bridge. A barge chugging thick bursts of coal transports freight up the flat gray waterway.

The streetlamps bump on in sequence as the man makes his way onto the footpath. A traveling OOMPAH BAND approaches from the opposite direction.

Behind him, BOOTS CLINK confidently on the iron bridgework. He shoots a look over his shoulder, spots Trenchcoat behind him, trying to close the distance.

TIGHT ON TRENCHCOAT as a KNIFE slides from his coat pocket. Glinting light flickers off the serrated blade as it's unsheathed.

The man stumbles forward increasing his gait, breath heavy, suitcase tripping up his escape.

The thickening fog is blinding. Visibility less than 10 feet in every direction.

The man breaks for the nearing musicians playing a Bavarian standard. Brushing alongside a French horn, clarinet, and squeezebox. Ducking under a trombone. Narrowly avoiding the gyrating bow of the strolling violinist, and coming face to face with a giant tuba.

Trenchcoat pushing through the musicians, moving quickly past them.

Trenchcoat closes in, slashes the knife through the fog. The blade cuts into the man's greatcoat, slicing the back clean off.

LOW AND TIGHT ON TRENCHCOAT'S look of confusion.

Widen to reveal the man's severed, empty coat hanging from the bridge's studded support spire.

Trenchcoat looks 360, races to the parapet, leans over.

The BARGE trudges from underneath the bridge. The man on its bow, drifting up river.

Trenchcoat slams his fists into the steel spire. Rushes off.

EXT. BARGE (MOVING) -- CONTINUOUS

A SEAMAN appears on deck holding a lengthy metal stave with attached kerosene lamp. The man crouches down, hiding near stacked freight off the port bow.

The barge plummets into darkness as it travels beneath another bridge. The seaman pushes off its support pillars with the stave, steering safely through the narrow passageway.

As the barge clears the bridge, the man spots an abandoned troller anchored to piling near the banks of the canal.

The man leaps onto the troller. His footing breaking through the timeworn hull before making his way off the boat and up the weed infested embankment on shore.

EXT. WOODS -- CONTINUOUS

The man crashes through a thicket of Sycamore trees running full throttle. Vapor trails bleating out of his nose and mouth.

A TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS.

Craning his neck in all directions, he secures the suitcase, and chooses a route.

INT. RAILWAY STATION -- CONTINUOUS

The RATTLE of trains and BOARDING ANNOUNCEMENTS blare through the station as the man crosses the platform to the STATIONMASTER'S BOOTH.

MAN

When is the next train to Paris?

STATIONMASTER

Eight O'clock. Departing in six minutes.

MAN

Fine.

STATIONMASTER

Berth or sleeping car?

MAN

Private, quickly, please.

Perspiring, the man slides damp bills through the slot in the window. The porter thumbs it suspiciously.

STATIONMASTER

Return?

With an expertly raised eyebrow...

MAN

One-way.

The man nervously checks over his shoulder. The platform buzzing with evening commuters, beat cops, and SA Brownshirt foot patrols. No Trenchcoat.

STATIONMASTER

Track two. Boarding now.

He snatches up the ticket and goes through the turnstile, heading towards the northbound line.

A flock of CARRIER PIGEONS explode high overhead.

The Nazi high-speed train known as *The Flying Hamburger* idles on the tracks. Steam billows from its undercarriage, like a fire breathing dragon awaiting flight.

The 10-car chortling beast loads passengers.

The man anxiously holds the ticket, waits in line.

An UNDERGROUND MOB WOMAN in the horde spots the man. She stares at him. Familiarity breeds contempt.

TIGHT ON: Beads of sweat cascading down the man's cheek, soaking his fine linen shirt collar.

The man meets the woman's gaze. Every cell in his body freezes, unsure if he's been tagged. He's one man from safety when she uses her German like a slap --

UNDERGROUND MOB WOMAN

(German)

There. Right there. That's him!

Heads turn. A fervor of excitement permeates the station.

ASKEW ANGLES: Grimacing faces. Glaring eyeballs. Arms extended into accusing fingers.

A wave of emotion spreads through the commuters like a plague. An ANGRY MOB forming before our eyes. What could this man have done?

The train lurches forward on the rails.

The man blunders for the handrail.

WHISTLES and FLASHLIGHTS proceed POLICEMEN as they invade the platform with authority. Some officers led by GERMAN SHEPHERDS.

The man pulls himself inside the moving railcar, disappearing through the steam like a ghost.

Doors close, lock behind him.

EXT. RAILWAY -- CONTINUOUS

The train gains speed and rolls out of the station.

INT. FLYING HAMBURGER -- CONTINUOUS

The man makes his way down the aisle. Glances at TWO OLDER JEWISH MEN who watch him.

The man fills his lungs with air. Sighs relief for the first time. Wrestles with the suitcase as he heads down the...

CORRIDOR

Checking the number plates tacked above the doors, he finds his compartment.

## SLEEPING CAR

Now inside, he produces a switchblade and opens the locked latch of the suitcase.

THE SUITCASE filled with BUNDLES OF CASH.

He snaps to attention at the sound of the compartment door sliding opening, flips closed the case.

A PORTER with a stern face.

PORTR  
Ticket.

MAN  
Of course.

Hands him the ticket.

PORTR  
Papers.

MAN  
You'll find they are in order.

Handing off his papers, the porter scrutinizes them, looks back at him suspiciously.

The man nervously glances out the window. The fog of his nervous breath clouds the glass.

PORTR  
Why are you traveling to Paris?

The man searches for a smart reply.

PORTR  
Wait a minute. Lang...Fritz Lang?  
Are you making a picture there?

The man removes his trademark MONOCLE from his shirt pocket and positions it over his left eye.

FRITZ LANG (MAN)  
Yes, yes I am.

After everything he's been through, we can glean that his ego still craves the attention.

PORTR  
Fritz Lang, the famous film director.  
My wife will never believe it.  
Pleasure to welcome you aboard.  
Enjoy your trip, Sir.

The Porter leaves the compartment. We hang on Fritz's haunted reflection in the window as the German countryside races by.

VOICE (O.S.)  
Training for our '36 Olympics, Lang?

Fritz looks over to LOHMAN (don't worry, you will be officially introduced later), dressed in a Trenchcoat and sitting across from him.

FRITZ  
How did you...?

LOHMAN  
You know the answer to that question.  
Lets start from the beginning, Lang.

With that, we move through the window, following the high speed train from above as it races down the rails on a collision course with Paris.

FRITZ (V.O.)  
They're coming for you --

The SPINNING TRAIN WHEELS transforming into --

INT. SOUNDSTAGE, DECLA STUDIO -- DAY

-- SPINNING HAND-CRANKED CAMERA *on the set of "DIE SPINNEN"* (THE SPIDERS), a silent B-grade adventure serial.

Rolling camera and arc lights pointed at a beautiful ingenue, LIL DAGOVER, clad in a seductive tribal costume, standing in a campy replica of an Incan City.

Shooting script on lap. Cigar smoke clinging in the air. FRITZ LANG, less world weary now, is a powerfully built man in a perfectly-tailored suit. Directing from behind the camera, he's trying to elicit fright from the actress --

FRITZ (cont.)  
-- you're all alone. There's no one  
to help you. You scream...SCREAM!

Lil's eyes widen. Her lips separate. Trying to summon fear, but the result is --

FRITZ  
Cut...cut...cut.

The CAMERAMAN next to him stops hand-cranking.

Fritz approaches Lil to give direction --

FRITZ  
Terrified. It's terror.

LIL DAGOVER  
Terror.

FRITZ  
A conspiratorial organization has  
left you a calling card.

Fritz gestures to the prop department as they dress the set  
in hundreds of fake Tarantulas.

LIL DAGOVER  
What, you mean all them rubbery spiders?

FRITZ  
You're only escape from death is  
Kay Hoog. Sportsman-explorer with  
a vast library, loyal servants, and  
the best wines and women at his  
disposal.

Fritz gestures to her co-star, RUDOLF KLEIN-ROGGE, having  
his rather large and protruding gut cinched into a male  
equivalent of a corset by two stage hands.

LIL DAGOVER  
It's these bloody feathers.

Lil pointing to the elaborate headdress costume atop her head.

FRITZ  
The ostrich plumage on that tribal  
headdress was hand sewn by an  
Oriental.

LIL DAGOVER  
I can feel my neck swelling.

FRITZ  
You're the Priestess of the Sun from  
a world unknown. Lost treasure  
beckons you. Shall I cloak you in  
topper and tails?

Frightened by his air of supreme confidence, Lil replies in  
nervous laughter.

Fritz sinks back into his director's chair.

His producer, JOE MAY, nervous type and prim as a governess,  
walks over glumly.

JOE MAY  
Keep shooting, Fritz. We're over  
schedule. They're threatening to  
shut us down again.

FRITZ  
Ego-mad narcissists, all of them.

JOE MAY  
Perhaps if you didn't go to bed  
with every cabaret dancing ingenue.

FRITZ  
Did you read the script I gave you?

JOE MAY  
You should eat. I'll have the girl  
bring a liverwurst and coffee.

FRITZ  
*"The Cabinet of Dr Caligari".*

Joe May sips his coffee.

JOE MAY  
The audience loves the Kay Hoog series.

FRITZ  
I make and remake the same picture, Joe.

JOE MAY  
I'm too tired.

FRITZ  
A film should depict its times.

JOE MAY  
Germans are seized in rising  
inflation, unemployment, collapse of  
moral standards, political unrest.  
What do they want with lurid. They  
need reassuring.

A STAGEHAND delivers a NOTE to Fritz.

STAGEHAND  
Lady told me to give you this, sir.

JOE MAY  
Well, what does it say?

FRITZ  
(reading)  
"Perhaps rubbery spiders are not scary".

He turns towards Lil, who is rehearsing before the next take.

FRITZ

(to Stagehand)

Tell Miss Dagover, her services are no longer required on set.

JOE MAY

Fritz, you can't fire the star in the middle the picture.

FRITZ

(to Stagehand)

I want her extracted from the premises immediately.

JOE MAY

I hate this job. Fundamentally. Makes me nervous.

STAGEHAND

I'll tell her, Mr. Lang. But the note came from the lady with the brass pen.

Stagehand gestures across the stage to THEA VON HARBOU (39) a blonde stately German with a commanding air. She's scribbling into a pad with a BRASS PEN.

FRITZ

Who is that?

JOE MAY

Thea von Harbou. Writer. Rather prolific one at that. Published her first novel at thirteen.

(beat)

She's Klein-Rogge's wife.

FRITZ

Klein-Rogge is married?

JOE MAY

Mmmmm, appears to be a rather mysterious and closely guarded chapter of their lives.

Fritz takes Thea in. It doesn't go unnoticed by Joe May.

JOE MAY

There's a party tonight for the publication of Thea's new book. You and "L" should come.

FRITZ

No, we can't make it.

JOE MAY  
I hear F.W. wants her to write his  
next picture.

FRITZ  
Murnau?

JOE MAY  
Mmmmm, something to do with Vampires.

The ASSISTANT DIRECTOR yells --

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
Quiet on the set!

The warning bell rings.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
Lights!

The lights sizzle and blaze.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR  
Camera!

A young man with a clapboard steps in front of the camera.

FRITZ  
Action!

Lil gives another weak take. Fritz doesn't notice. His eyes are squarely on Thea Von Harbou.

EXT. RIVER SPREE -- EVENING

Borderless inky water. In the distance, a lone Yacht anchored and strung in glowing Chinese lanterns.

PRELAP SOUNDS OF A PARTY.

EXT. DECK, YACHT -- EVENING

Inscrutable jealous eyes pursuing Thea as she mingles with intellectuals and artists that eddy around her with admiration on their faces.

Joe May sneaks up on Fritz, revealing him as the secret suitor.

JOE MAY  
I see you've resorted to stalking.

FRITZ

Wallowing in the glory of parasite  
celebrity acquaintances. Why the  
odd look on your face?

JOE MAY

Snatched a set of porcelain figurines  
dating back to the Ming dynasty.  
Little shop in the Chinese district.  
Proprietor doesn't have a clue.

FRITZ

Should have snatched a proper tie.

JOE MAY

Thea Von Harbou is emancipated,  
accomplished, a devout nationalist,  
and nearly forty. You don't fall  
in love with people's minds, Fritz.  
Stick to your virgin starlets.

FRITZ

I loathe parties.

JOE MAY

I can imagine how much this little  
extravaganza is costing Klein-Rogge.  
Where's L?

FRITZ

Overboard.

JOE MAY

Funny, I didn't think you the  
murdering type.

FRITZ

Nothing gained by a scandal.

JOE MAY

(realizes he's serious)

I gave the toast at your anniversary  
party.

FRITZ

We inhabit the same house. Furniture  
that you walk around in order to not  
bump up against.

JOE MAY

Why not petition for divorce?

FRITZ

She'll contest it. Besides, I  
insisted on the Catholic rites.

(MORE)

FRITZ  
 It's like a vaccination -- enduring  
 'til death.

Fritz's wife, LISA "L" ROSENTHAL joins them. She's modest, unsophisticated, and desperately trying to exist in her husband's world.

L  
 There you are, Fritz. I was looking  
 for you everywhere.

FRITZ  
 Not many places to hide.

L  
 Very clever. Hello, Joe.

JOE MAY  
 Sweet, L. Ever spirited.

L holds up Thea's new book.

L  
 Look, there's a whole stack of them  
 near the giant prawns.

Joe May spies a strapping clarinet player in the band.

JOE MAY  
 L, how about a dance?

L  
 I accept on one condition.

JOE MAY  
 Name it.

L  
 There will be no talk of dividends  
 and profit margins.

JOE MAY  
 What's your position on counting  
 steps?

L hands Thea's books to Fritz as Joe May escorts her to the floor. Fritz scans the deck for Thea, but she's not there.

He goes to the railing. Stares at the dark water.

THEA (O.S.)  
 Not thinking of ending it all?

Fritz turns, finds Thea next to him holding two Martinis.

FRITZ  
Difficult offing oneself with the  
Gershwin playing.

Thea grins, radiant in the moonlight. Noticing her book in  
his hand --

THEA  
Will you read it?

FRITZ  
No.

THEA  
Then I apologize for the boorish night.

FRITZ  
It would be rude to contradict the  
lady and criminal on such an occasion.

THEA  
I invite your contempt.

Handing him a Martini --

THEA  
Forewarning, I make an absolutely  
frightening Martini.

FRITZ  
Surely with the right Vermouth?

THEA  
Afraid not, it's brain-melting, knee-  
shaking, bladder-weakening, shivers  
down the spine, hair-stand-up-on-the-  
back-of-your-neck terror.

He takes a sip. She awaits his response.

FRITZ  
Dreadful that.

They giggle.

FRITZ  
Your note today "perhaps rubbery  
spiders are not scary".

THEA  
Observation. Hazard of the business.

FRITZ  
No, please enlighten -- tell me  
Mrs. Von Harbou, what frightens you?

THEA  
Real life. What we do to one another.

He turns her words over in his head. Suddenly, FIREWORKS streak into the night sky.

Clearly inebriated, Lil Dagover staggers over.

LIL DAGOVER  
Lights. Lights in the sky!

Lil's sudden shift from bliss to horror seizes Fritz's attention.

Lil SCREAMS.

It's perfect, the scream Fritz has been trying to elicit from her on set.

FRITZ  
(sotto)  
Circle that.

The BAND ABRUPTLY STOPS PLAYING.

Everyone on deck surges to the rails to see --

-- the CORPSE OF A YOUNG WOMAN grazing the surface of the dark water. Her eyes black, skin an unnatural pallor, and hair splayed like tentacles.

EXT. FRITZ'S HOUSE -- LATER

A wealthy suburb in the solid upper-class neighborhood of Wilmersdorf.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Headlights from an arriving car shine in the windows, illuminating aspects of the well-appointed residence.

Eyes flickering awake. Feet shuffling into slippers. Fritz's domestic, FRAU NUSSBAUM (60), prying and ignoble in nature, pads down the stairway.

She pours two tumblers of cognac, topping one off liberally.

Fritz and L enter. Frau Nussbaum helps them with their coats.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
To warm your bones, ma'am.

Frau Nussbaum hands L a Cognac, already anticipating her response --

L  
Not tonight.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Very good, ma'am.

L  
Night, Mrs. Nussbaum.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Nighty-nite, ma'am.

As L ascends the spiral staircase that dominates the room --

FRITZ  
(to Frau Nussbaum)  
She's upset. A girl was killed.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Tsk-tsk, poor thing.

FRITZ  
Garroted. Plunged into the Spree.  
Police think it's the work of that  
serial murderer.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Jah, I heard he mailed a girl's kidney  
to an Inspector at Scotland Yard.

FRITZ  
Bound to be in the morning papers.  
Berliners waking to tea and sympathy.

Handing Fritz a cognac --

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
To rid the nightmares, Mr. Fritz.

Fritz heads upstairs with the nightcap. Frau Nussbaum downs  
L's cognac in a single shot -- her usual routine.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM, FRITZ'S HOUSE -- LATER

L seated at the vanity, taking down her hair.

Fritz yanks off his bow tie, setting it on the bureau next  
to Thea's book. He opens the cover, reads --

*Blossoming Lotus by Thea von Harbou.*

-- runs his finger affectionately along the words.

L  
Did you tell Frau Nussbaum about it?

FRITZ

About what?

L

The murder.

FRITZ

I don't know.

L

What did you say?

FRITZ

One doesn't always have to say what  
one thinks, L.

L

I went by the Institute today.  
Hallways are flooded with legions of  
shell-shocked men; syphilis,  
tuberculosis, amputees, and worse.

FRITZ

Terrible throbbing in the temples.

Fritz opens his bureau drawer and finds a bottle of Aspirin  
near his BROWNING SERVICE REVOLVER, at the quick in case of  
intruder.

L

I'm needed there?

FRITZ

Where?

L

The hospital.

FRITZ

You're needed here.

L

Frau Nussbaum does the cooking,  
cleaning, washing, mending -- what's  
left for me to do?

FRITZ

You do what the others do.

L

You would love a woman like that  
wouldn't you? Someone who needs to  
check her diary to see if she's able  
to luncheon.

FRITZ

You crack on about it, but most women  
would die to have what you have.

L

The woman who wrote the book --  
I saw the way you looked at her  
tonight.

FRITZ

Don't be ridiculous. She's nearly  
forty.

L turns to the mirror, insecurity and self-loathing wearing  
her face.

L

Someone at the party said that she's  
a baroness.

FRITZ

She's not a baroness.

L

(quoting)

Poor Fritz, "Germany's premiere film  
Director marries Russian-Jew Nurse  
from Vilna slums."

FRITZ

Shall I censor the society pages too?

L

You regret our marriage. Don't be a  
coward, admit it.

FRITZ

All right, if you must know -- you  
crack on about the mundane. You're  
settled in your ways, anemic in your  
excitements and sober in taste. If  
it were up to you, we'd go to the  
Spiesehauste for Kippers every night.

L

At least I don't deny where I come  
from.

FRITZ

No, it precedes you through the door  
and takes a seat at the head of the  
table.

L

Do you think of your mother when you  
pretend to be one of them?

FRITZ  
What the hell you're talking about.

L  
You refuse to go to her grave.

Fritz's pain turns to anger.

FRITZ  
My mother was Catholic!

L  
Your mother lies in Weissensee with  
her people.

FRITZ  
A night of enthusiasms, is that what  
you want?

L  
If I could, I would kill you.

Fritz races to the bureau and extracts his BROWNING REVOLVER.  
It's our first glimpse at his rage.

FRITZ  
(handing it to her)  
Here, take it. What are you waiting for?

WE TRAVEL through the common dividing wall to --

FRAU NUSSBAUM'S BEDROOM

-- Frau Nussbaum's ear peeled against the wall, snooping on  
the private affairs of her employers.

WE TRAVEL through the common dividing wall to --

INT. FRITZ'S STUDY -- LATE NIGHT

Alone at his desk, Fritz is reading Thea's book. We can  
tell by his face that the words are aching with resonance.  
Turning the final page, he draws a breath, fights back an  
onslaught of emotion -- Euphoric. Lost.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE, KITCHEN -- MORNING

Blistered sausages hiss in a cast iron skillet on the stove.

FRITZ (O.S.)  
Most victims were missing appendages.

Frau Nussbaum prepares breakfast as Fritz reads aloud from  
the morning paper.

FRITZ

(reading)

Although the latest victim's limbs were intact, authorities say the condition of body and other unprintable offenses point to the work of a serial-killer dubbed "The Monster of Dusseldorf" by the public, and whose early victims hailed from that district.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Jah, monster.

FRITZ

(reading)

Authorities believe the unidentified female victim was dead no longer than a few hours before her body was recovered from the Spree.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Tsk-tsk. Poor girl

FRITZ

Berlin's Chief Inspector Lohmann was unavailable for comment.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Lohmann's the big wheel at the Alex. They say his homicide record is one hundred percent. He'll unmask the monster.

FRITZ

Frau Nussbaum, I have an engagement at half past ten. I'm not to be disturbed. Show them to my study, all right.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Jah, jah, jah, half ten.

Fritz's gaze freezes on L's empty chair and place setting at the kitchen table.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Will Mrs. Fritz be joining for breakfast?

FRITZ

Bit of a restless night, I'm afraid.

PRELAP SOUNDS OF A CUCKOO CLOCK.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE -- LATER

Frau Nussbaum eyes Thea Von Harbou warily as she escorts her up the staircase to the upper chamber.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
This way, ma'am.

Thea unwinds her scarf as she makes her way into Fritz's sanctuary.

INT. FRITZ'S STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

The large garret room has been converted into an office. Fritz, a consummate modernist, is posed behind his custom built Bauhaus desk.

FRITZ  
Thank you, Frau Nussbaum.

Frau Nussbaum remains planted in the room.

FRITZ  
You may go now, Frau Nussbaum.

She flares her nostrils at him and shuffles out.

Fritz stands to receive Thea, but before he's able to make an impression, L barges into the room dressed in a housecoat, head in pincurls.

L  
Fritz...  
(noticing Thea)  
Oh, I didn't realize you had a guest.

THEA  
(to L)  
Hello, Mrs. Lang. I'm here to discuss business with your husband.

L  
Oh, I see. Certainly. Hello.

L self-consciously pats her hair as she eyes Thea's smartly tailored suit.

L  
I'm not usually dressed like this.  
(re. Thea's stockings)  
Are those real silk...

FRITZ  
For God's sake, L.

L  
Well, I'll just leave you to...

L goes to the dormer window in the sloping roof. Pulling back the heavy draperies so that light floods in.

Thea adjusts her eyes to the harsh glare before noticing the FERRIS WHEEL that fills the glass. The upper regions of the monster rising out of the forested common surrounding it.

FRITZ  
Main attraction in Wurstelprater park.

THEA  
It's stunning.

FRITZ  
Best view in Berlin.

L stares at the spinning gears with trepidation.

L  
Fritz says you should try everything once before you die. I get goose pimples just thinking about it.

THEA  
It's quite safe. You needn't be afraid of it, unless you're afraid of yourself.

L turns her words over, leaves. Fritz locks the door behind her, turns to Thea.

FRITZ  
Read your book. Didn't care for it.  
Didn't see the point.

THEA  
Thank you for that unbiased portraiture of my novel. I particularly like the half sentences and insults dropped like curtsies.

Thea removes a pair of glasses from her handbag. Slides them on and studies his face.

FRITZ  
You stare at me as if establishing lunacy.

THEA  
Your left eye, the iris, it's...

FRITZ  
Yes, injury from the war.

THEA

You look nothing like him.

FRITZ

Who?

THEA

Surely you know they refer to you as  
the Stalin of film?

FRITZ

Mark of a truly educated person to  
be moved by a statistic.

THEA

It's a love letter to India. Mann  
called it "burningly ambitious".

FRITZ

A book should tell a good story.  
That's all I'm suggesting.

THEA

I'm sure there are values to such  
honest criticism. I'll make sure  
to telegram the *Romana Maharishi* who  
inspired the rotten opus.

She takes a BRASS PEN and NOTE PAD from her handbag and writes  
down an address.

THEA

My Optometrist in the village. He  
does a thorough examination. I'll  
show myself to the door.

As she's leaving --

FRITZ

You're not really going to work for  
that hack Murnau?

THEA

Who told you that?

FRITZ

A little bird. My birds are reliable.  
Do you want my advice?

THEA

I didn't come for advice.

FRITZ

His last picture wasn't worth the  
train ticket from Babelsberg.

THEA

Goodbye, Mr. Lang.

FRITZ

I want a scenario where characters  
aren't always escaping flooded rooms,  
mental wards, jail cells, and caves.

THEA

You despised my book.

FRITZ

I didn't care for the story. Your  
writing itself seems almost channeled.  
Beautiful, passionate, heartbreaking.

She remains stoic, but his words nearly knock her over.

THEA

I see.

FRITZ

A Fritz Lang and Thea von Harbou  
motion picture. You would have  
complete freedom to create of course.

THEA

Why did you lock the door?

FRITZ

I always lock it when I'm working.

THEA

Lets get one thing straight, you're  
not the general and I'm not the  
troops.

Thea turns to a door off his study.

THEA

What is this room used for?

FRITZ

Storage.

THEA

Is there a window?

FRITZ

Yes.

THEA

I like to end by three o'clock.

FRITZ

You're accepting?

THEA

I never allow anyone into my personal study. Can you agree to those terms?

FRITZ

Agreed.

THEA

Besides, I'm destined for a rather sordid divorce.

FRITZ

From Rogue-Klein?

THEA

A stiff drink and a good part, he'll be fine.

FRITZ

Forgive me, but that was spoken like a man.

THEA

Then it will command your respect.

(beat)

In the meantime, I'd like to get the uncomfortable business out of the way.

As Thea pushes her glasses towards her upturned nose --

THEA

Now Mr. Lang, I'd like to see you without your pants.

The camera pushes towards the window, landing on the colossal rotating FERRIS WHEEL.

EXT. OPTOMETRIST OFFICE -- DAY

A MONSTROUS BLINKING EYE AND MONOCLE sign hangs over the door.

INT. OPTOMETRIST OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Antiquated gadgets, instruments, charts, and diagrams of eye anatomy.

Fritz's grossly enlarged pupil pressed against a magnifying glass as the OPTOMETRIST examines him.

OPTOMETRIST

Open your eye wide. Keep it open.

That's it -- that's good. Blink

please. Blink. Relax.

(MORE)

OPTOMETRIST

(beat)

The damage to your left retina is extensive.

FRITZ

Russia, Italy, Balkans, I did my bit. Bullets missed all the vital organs. Nearly lost the eye.

OPTOMETRIST

It must have been painful.

FRITZ

More of a spreading numbness. Convalesced in Vienna hospital. That's where I met L, my wife. Amongst the carnage.

OPTOMETRIST

Dynamic range is paramount in your profession.

FRITZ

I was meant to be an architect, like my father.

OPTOMETRIST

You'll need to be fitted.

The Optometrist hands him an Oriental silk palace fan. Throws the lights and flips on a projector that illuminates an eyechart on the wall.

OPTOMETRIST

Stand on the white line. Cover your right eye. From the top row.

FRITZ

F - R - P - S - C - Q - E.

OPTOMETRIST

Good. Now the left.

FRITZ

**K. I. L. L.** Err...L. No, it's definitely L.

OPTOMETRIST

Patch or monocle?

FRITZ

I don't understand.

The Optometrist walks in front of the projected eye chart.

OPTOMETRIST  
Perfect vision in the left eye.  
Stone-blind in the right.

FRITZ  
Blind, then why a monocle?

OPTOMETRIST  
Aesthetics. I can have it ready for  
you in a few weeks.

Fritz removes the Oriental fan from his eye and is  
instantaneously met by a large letter "**M**" now projecting  
on the Optometrist's labcoat.

The striking image vanishing into Fritz's psyche as the  
lights flicker on.

OPTOMETRIST  
You may experience some disorientation  
in the beginning, don't be alarmed.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE -- VARIOUS

**MONTAGE TIME PASSAGE with FRAU NUSSBAUM'S POV of Fritz's  
locked study door as he works in seclusion with Thea:**

The locked study door from the bottom of the stairs.

The locked study door from down the hallway.

Lugging a basket of laundry, Frau Nussbaum stops and sternly  
stares at the locked study door, proceeds up the stairs.

Shadows playing under the locked study door.

Frau Nussbaum at the locked study door with a tray of tea.  
Thea appears briefly to retrieve it.

Frau Nussbaum kneeling at keyhole of the locked study door.

CLICK. The locked study door opens, Frau Nussbaum scurries  
out of sight.

Frau Nussbaum's ear peeled against the locked study door.  
Snatches of conversation overheard.

INT. FRITZ'S STUDY -- DAY

PAN across Fritz's desk. Typed script pages with BLUE PENCIL  
notations lead to the shadowy images of Fritz and Thea making  
love.

Thea rolls onto her back.

THEA

I was half-hoping the sex would be  
tedious, you know.

FRITZ

That would make it easy.

THEA

Mmm.

Thea notices a photograph of Fritz and Joe May taken in  
Manhattan Harbor.

THEA

Manhattan skyline. Is this you?

FRITZ

It was.

Fritz steals a tender glance at her.

FRITZ

Adrift. That's how it feels.

THEA

We should get dressed, finish writing  
the scene.

FRITZ

I'm in love, Thea.

Thea manufactures a calming smile.

THEA

Love isn't something you proclaim  
while your wife is out treating  
Diphtheria and dressing wounds.

FRITZ

I'm going to tell her.

THEA

None of us wants the public shame.

FRITZ

I don't care about that. I want to  
marry you.

THEA

It's possible that now is not the  
right time.

FRITZ

Do you love me, Thea?

THEA  
I'm leaving.

FRITZ  
Where?

THEA  
India. Six weeks.

FRITZ  
India?

THEA  
It's where I go to clear my mind.

He interrupts her with the smallest of kisses.

FRITZ  
It's where you go to end things.

EXT. STREET (WEEKS LATER) -- EARLY EVENING

Coal smoke pouring from a seemingly endless row of chimneys. L walks home from the hospital wearing a nursing uniform.

She runs across the road to the Optometrist office, which has just turned over its "CLOSED" sign in the window. BANGS on the glass.

L  
No, wait. Wait...

The Optometrist unlocks the door and L disappears inside.

A moment later, she resurfaces with a small box wrapped in brown paper and twine.

EXT. WURSTELPRATER PARK -- MOMENTS LATER

L walks past the entrance to the amusement park. She notices two sisters who appear to be lost, 14-year-old LOUISE and 5-year-old GURTRUDE, holding an anthropomorphic BALLOON.

A MAN IN A CRUMPLED FEDORA, is assisting them. Sensing something is off, L approaches. But her gaze is diverted by the swirl and dazzle of the RIESENRAD FERRIS WHEEL looming above.

Gurtrude's deserted BALLOON sails by, drifting skyward. L looks back, but the sisters and man are gone.

The BALLOON catches in the telegraph wires, until the wind shakes it free and carries it away.

## AMUSEMENT PARK

Snake charmer, fortune-teller, and shooting gallery booths. L wanders amongst the painted faces, anthropomorphic balloons, and sticks of candyfloss.

A CARNIVAL BARKER, paper windmill stuck in his battered hat, sways L over to a penny slot aptly named: *"What The Frau Saw"*.

CARNIVAL BARKER  
See *"What The Frau Saw"*.

Blushing, L heads to the Ferris Wheel. Before she knows it, she's at the ticket booth.

TICKET MAN  
Last ride of the day.

L  
One ticket, please.

L steps up on the platform as a young couple exits a gondola and she's ushered into their place.

Realizing that the couple have left their BINOCULARS behind --

L  
Excuse me, you forgot...oohh...

But it's too late, the Ferris Wheel CLATTERS and begins its revolutions. The throng people shrinking below as Berlin's city lights rise up. L's apprehension palpable.

The wheel steadily turning, bringing her higher and higher.

The gondola abruptly stops at the top and swings idly.

L nervously looks over to the next gondola, it's empty.

She grabs the binoculars and sweeps them back and forth. Discovering her own house, she dials in a crisp image of the outward-slanting windows off of Fritz's study.

The gondola CREAKS in the wind.

L feels guilty about peeping until Thea's naked body comes into view, standing at the window.

L clutches the binoculars tighter.

L's POV -- Fritz joins Thea at the window, moves his hands down the curve of her back and kisses her passionately.

L can hardly breathe. Everything becoming faint.

EXAGGERATED CLOSE UP of "What The Frau Saw", a dancing girl bent over a stool as the cabaret promoter thrusts her from behind. The gears turning faster and faster.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE -- LATER

L bursts through the door, disheveled. Clammers up the staircase. Pounds her fists on Fritz's locked study door.

The door snaps open. L encounters Thea in the doorway. They hold each other's gaze.

Thea removes the pair of silk stockings that she's hastily thrown inside her handbag and hands them to L as a peace offering.

THEA

French silk. Impossible to come by these days.

L

Fritz!

L throws them to the floor and rushes into Fritz's study.

Thea passes Frau Nussbaum on the staircase heading upstairs with a tea tray. Thea exits the front door as the muffled sounds of an argument are heard above.

A GUNSHOT EXPLODES. TIME STOPS.

The tea tray in Frau Nussbaum's grip CRASHES to the floor. She stands frozen, staring up the staircase.

INT. LANDING, HALLWAY UPSTAIRS -- MOMENTS LATER

Frau Nussbaum moves gingerly along the landing, glancing inside Fritz's bedroom and study as she walks past.

She ambles towards a washroom at the end of the corridor. Light spilling out from beneath the door.

She carefully turns the doorknob, when the door suddenly snaps open and Fritz appears in the doorway.

FRITZ

Hurry, telephone the police.

L's BODY lies motionless on the washroom floor behind him. Her head lolled to one side. Her blood sluiced across the mottled tile. The Browning in her grip.

Frau Nussbaum shudders with fear.

EXT. FRITZ'S HOUSE -- LATER

Reporters loiter the pavement, dangling cameras like black concertinas. Meanwhile in the house, upstairs...

INT. UPSTAIRS WASHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

BLINDING FLASHES from the crime scene photographers camera. A knot of police surrounding L's body.

The photographer snaps off a shot of the blood stained Star of David hanging from a chain around L's neck.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE, STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

Fritz stares out the window. A stiff drink in his hand. Frau Nussbaum shuffles in, prattling --

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Detectives be wanting to talk to you  
before long, Mr. Fritz.

Fritz spots an indentation on his palm left by the BROWNING'S TRADEMARK PATENT on the grip of his gun. A horrified gasp, as he quickly shoves his hands in his pockets.

FRITZ  
Mrs. Nussbaum, about what you think  
you might have seen or heard tonight --

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
I could never forget as long as  
I live -- maybe longer.

Their history rushing in around them.

FRITZ  
You know that there will always be a  
place for you here.

Frau Nussbaum drops to her knees, wipes a BLOOD SPLATTERING off his shoe. She quickly shuffles out, hiding the soiled rag in her apron pocket.

Fritz notices something on his desk -- the small box wrapped in brown paper and twine.

He unwraps it and finds a ribbonless monocle inside.

Places it in his left eye socket. Studies his reflection in a mirror. The eyepiece altering his appearance to a half repellent Cyclops enigma.

Sound of shuffling feet, Frau Nussbaum races back in --

FRAU NUSSBAUM

They're gone.

FRITZ

What?

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Police. Press. Mrs. Fritz's remains.

FRITZ

I don't understand.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

They're down there.

They turn to the window where an ant line of search party torch fire pierces the darkened forest lining the park.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Two little girls found murdered by  
the footpath near the fair grounds.  
Officer said the youngest was  
bludgeoned. The older girl's head...  
they're still looking for it.

INSERT CUCKOO CLOCK: A woodchopper yielding a sharp ax appears through a small trap door as the hands strike midnight.

Frau Nussbaum tightens the shawl over head.

Fritz at the window, an insidious fear spreading over him.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. CITY STREET (NEXT MORNING) -- DAY

PAPERSELLERS, latest editions clipped to boards hanging from  
they're bodies, run down the sidewalk shouting:

PAPERSELLERS

Extraausgabe, extraausgabe!

The headlines read: **"THE MONSTER OF DUSSELDORF STRIKES AGAIN"**

INT. STUDY, FRITZ'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Having fallen asleep in his chair, Fritz opens his eyes groggily to the sound of a hauntingly familiar whistle.  
(*"In the Hall of the Mountain King"* from Grieg's Peer Gynt)  
**(Peter Lorre's famous whistle in "M")**.

He places the monocle in his eye and scans the room in a panic, unable to get his bearings until glimpsing a colossal trapezoid of shadow in the doorway, features barely distinguishable.

LOHMAN (O.S.)

Knock knock.

CHIEF INSPECTOR LOHMAN, a gorilla stuffed into a Herringbone Trenchcoat, is standing in the doorway.

FRITZ

Chief Inspector Lohmann.

LOHMAN

You know me?

FRITZ

I've seen your photograph in the paper.

LOHMAN

I'm never photographed, do you mind?

Lohmann points to a platinum box on the desk.

FRITZ

Suit yourself.

Lohmann, eyes dark orbits, takes THREE CIGARS from the box. Fritz offers him a light, Lohmann declines, tucking them in his coat pocket instead.

LOHMAN

Rang the doorbell. Had to let myself in.

FRITZ

My domestic Frau Nussbaum must be out doing tasks.

LOHMAN

I've heard of you, of course. The serials --

FRITZ

"The Spiders".

LOHMAN

Wonderful how you kept the suspense going. You're a master at it. How at the end one's left guessing.

FRITZ

One learns to keep a sharp eye, in my line of work.

Lohmann casually picks up a PLAYBILL from Fritz's desk and retreats to a corner.

LOHmann  
"The Spiders", that's it.

FRITZ  
(nervously)  
Will there be an inquest?

LOHmann  
Lisa Rosenthal was shot and killed  
by a single bullet through the chest,  
postmortem imminent, fired from the  
Browning service revolver owned by  
Fritz Lang. That's you.

FRITZ  
That's how women do it, isn't it?

LOHmann  
Through the heart. Yes, very  
theatrical --

Lohmann slides the playbill for Bizet's "CARMEN" across the desk.

LOHmann  
-- identical to the death of the  
gypsy girl in "*Carmen*", in fact.  
However, in the play it's her lover  
who delivers the fatal blow, making  
it murder. Well you saw it, you  
know.

Fritz's nervous under his microscope.

FRITZ  
I accompanied my wife to that little  
exercise last week.

LOHmann  
Uh-huh.

FRITZ  
It hadn't occurred to me before, but  
it may have put the thought in her head.

LOHmann  
You had a row with your wife?

FRITZ  
Row?

LOHMAN

These things generally begin with a row.

FRITZ

There was no row.

LOHMAN

What's your relationship with Mrs. von Harbou?

FRITZ

Nothing untoward. She's my mistress.

LOHMAN

Uh-huh.

FRITZ

You think I killed my wife, is that it?

LOHMAN

Lets call it a suspicious suicide.

FRITZ

Look, I heard a shot. I ran down the hallway to the washroom. Pushed open the door. She was lying on the floor. Blood everywhere. Gun in hand.

LOHMAN

Like a lens?

FRITZ

I don't follow you.

Lohmann holds his hands like he's shooting a camera.

LOHMAN

Click-click-click, that's how you saw it?

An abrupt look of anger flashes across Fritz's face.

FRITZ

There's a serial killer massacring children and terrorizing five million people. Perhaps your efforts might be put to better use.

Lohmann smiles, but it's filled with rancor.

LOHMAN

She died instantaneously?

FRITZ

She was dead when I got to her.

LOHMAN

And you're quite certain what you saw was intentional?

FRITZ

Yes. Certain, I couldn't say for sure.

LOHMAN

Accidental then?

FRITZ

No...I don't know. When you say saw it, perhaps I should clarify, I heard it. I was not there.

LOHMAN

So she didn't die instantaneously?

FRITZ

Yes. No. I don't know, I'm all tangled up.

LOHMAN

Did you administer chest compressions?

FRITZ

I was not there.

LOHMAN

You said that.

FRITZ

She was distraught.

LOHMAN

About the affair?

FRITZ

Yes.

LOHMAN

Still, there's something erroneous about the death.

FRITZ

I don't understand?

LOHMAN

The crime scene seems staged. You're a film director. You see what I'm getting at. The matter requires consideration.

Lohmann heads for the door.

FRITZ  
Consideration?

LOHMAN  
(tapping his pocket)  
That's what the cigars are for.

EXT. WEISSENSEE JEWISH CEMETERY -- DAY

Endless catacombs of the dead. Dark clouds. Dark flowers.

A handful of mournful sober faces shouldered together around L's open gravesite. Amongst them, Joe May.

EXT. KNOLL, OUTSIDE WEISSENSEE CEMETERY -- LATER

Downpour. Wet hair plastered to his skull, Fritz bids farewell to his wife from outside the gates of the cemetery as her coffin is lowered into the ground.

Joe May walks up behind him carrying an umbrella.

FRITZ  
It was a proper burial.

JOE MAY  
L was my friend.

FRITZ  
You think I should have been there.  
That it looks suspicious.

JOE MAY  
Let me take you home, Fritz.

FRITZ  
I've been rolling ideas around.

JOE MAY  
A conversation for another day.

FRITZ  
New focus. New direction.

Joe May is stirred, finally gets it.

JOE MAY  
You're firing me.

FRITZ  
New direction. New focus.

JOE MAY  
What about the picture?

FRITZ  
We press on.

JOE MAY  
You have great powers of detachment,  
Fritz.

Unable to meet Joe's eyes, Fritz shifts his gaze back to L's gravesite.

FRITZ  
You learn to economize grief when  
you've been to the front.

JOE MAY  
Right. By the way, congratulations  
on your engagement.

FRITZ  
Rumormongers trying to sacrifice me  
in the small print.

Fritz's mouth stiffens. Chief Inspector Lohmann's outline reflects in the aperture of his monocle.

FRITZ  
Who have you spoken to about this?

JOE MAY  
No one.

FRITZ  
Has anyone been 'round to your place?

JOE MAY  
No, of course not.

Surveilling them from under a tree near the gravesite, Lohmann lights a CIGAR and blows out a jet of smoke.

FRITZ  
They're watching.

JOE MAY  
Have you been prescribed medication?

FRITZ  
I feel like a carp in a bathtub.

JOE MAY  
Well something has induced this  
galloping paranoia.

FRITZ  
They can see into every window.

JOE MAY  
Who...who's watching?

FRITZ  
Trust me, they will ring your bell.  
And when they do, they'll have  
questions -- ways of finding answers.

JOE MAY  
What are you afraid of?

FRITZ  
It would be a shame to forfeit  
the treasures you've accumulated.  
What, with work particularly scarce  
these days. Especially the Mings.  
Serial numbers meticulously rubbed  
out. Stashed underneath the  
floorboards.

JOE MAY  
It was never like this between us in  
the old days. Fundamentally.

Fritz turns up his collar and makes his way home on foot.  
The rain falls steadily, smothering the city like a hand  
over its mouth.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE, STUDY -- DAY

Rain ticks steadily on the windows. Having just arrived,  
Thea is soaking wet.

FRITZ  
You're drenched.

THEA  
Filthy day.

FRITZ  
I'm glad you came.

THEA  
Taxi abandoned me at your door. I  
walked nearly the entire way back  
before I rang the bell.

FRITZ  
Here, let me take your wet things.

Noticing her skinned knee and tattered stockings.

FRITZ  
Are you alright?

THEA  
I'm always tripping up.

FRITZ  
Let me get you something for that.

THEA  
I can't stay long. I know the funeral  
was today. I came to tell you how  
terribly sorry I am for your loss.

FRITZ  
I've missed you.

THEA  
Please, don't --

FRITZ  
Don't go to India.

THEA  
I need to attend to my knee before  
I go.

Thea stops, realizes that she's heading for the bathroom  
where L died.

FRITZ  
You don't ever have to go in there.  
(beat)  
Here, please --

-- Fritz indicates the door adjoining his study.

Thea opens the door to find that it's no longer a storage  
room, but has been renovated into a serene work space.

FRITZ  
Your own corner of the map.

THEA  
It's beautiful.

FRITZ  
I want to marry you, Thea.

THEA  
Klein-Rogge is expecting me.

FRITZ  
You told me once that your life was  
your own.

THEA  
I really have to go.

Tears rolling down her face. He places the key to the door in her palm.

FRITZ  
The window gets pink ribbon light in the mornings. You can complete it with your things.

THEA  
I wouldn't know how.

FRITZ  
I could help you.

THEA  
I never allow anyone inside my personal study.

Fritz kisses her deeply. They begin to make love.

The rain ticks on the window as we TRAVEL through it and down onto the wet street, where neighborhood boys are kicking around a ball.

The ball goes rogue and rolls in front of Lohmann, looking up at the window staking out Fritz's house.

*"In the Hall of the Mountain King"* from Grieg's Peer Gynt orchestral piece starts and crescendos over --

DISSOLVE TO:

**SPED UP 16mm BLACK & WHITE SILENT FILM FOOTAGE:**  
(grainy, white leader, odd markings, sprocket holes)

Fritz and Thea at their engagement dinner party with celebrities in attendance.

Fritz and Thea outside a courthouse holding a marriage certificate.

Fritz and Thea skiing the Alps on honeymoon.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Grieg's tune continues over Fritz asleep in bed. CLOSE on his perspiring face as he fights ghosts.

His eyes shoot open as he shudders awake.

FRITZ  
L!

Turns to find Thea asleep in bed next to him.

Realizing now that there's a steady BANGING sound coming from downstairs.

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE (VARIOUS) -- MOMENTS LATER

Fritz tracks the BANGING sound through the house to the front door.

He tightens the cord on his robe and opens the door. Nobody there. The street outside stifled with fog.

The knocking coming from a MOURNING WREATH slung over the door handle and lashing against the door in the wind.

Angered, Fritz rips it down. Yells out the door --

FRITZ

I know you're out there, Lohmann.

INT. UPSTAIRS WASHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Fritz's haunted face stares blankly at the sparkling white tile floor where L's bloody body was found.

Faint footsteps.

He spins around, finding Thea behind him in a drowsy stupor.

THEA

There can be no understanding between  
the hand and the brain unless the  
heart acts as mediator.

FRITZ

God knows, I --

THEA

(cutting him off)  
It's the opening dedication for  
*Metropolis*.

She stumbles back down the hallway to the bedroom.

FRITZ

(sotto)

*Metropolis?*

SOUND of random typewriter keys STRIKING --

INT. FRITZ'S STUDY -- DAY

-- turns into a steady CLATTERING of typing. Fritz paces around his desk listening to the activity, but it's not coming from inside his room.

The door to the adjacent room open --

INT. THEA'S STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

-- Thea is perched at the edge of the desk, feverishly typing their new manuscript.

She hits the carriage return and snaps her head angrily towards Fritz, who is now standing in the doorway about to pierce her private sanctuary.

THEA

A room of one's own.

FRITZ

I'm to live within your margins, is that it?

THEA

My own corner of the map. Did we not make an agreement?

FRITZ

I don't want an argument.

THEA

Then why are you standing in the doorway?

FRITZ

I had hoped to borrow a cup of your usual composure as you tell me where we are in this story.

Thea takes a deep breath, turns over her typewritten pages --

THEA

Our heroine, the beautiful and evangelical Maria, has taken up the cause of the everyman. Meanwhile, the evil Rotwang builds a robotic gynoid that looks identical to her.

FRITZ

Fusing human and machine energy.

THEA

Precisely.

FRITZ  
Why does he build it?

THEA  
Power.

Fritz straining to see the photograph in Manhattan Harbor with Joe May. The towering skyline behind them MORPHING into the futuristic dystopian vision for "**Metropolis**".

FRITZ  
Oh, this is good.

THEA  
Society is divided into two groups: *Thinkers*, who plan but don't know how anything works. *Workers*, who achieve their goals but have no vision.

FRITZ  
Neither group is complete, but together they make a whole.

THEA  
Exactly, close my door.

FRITZ  
What?

Thea irately swings her chair around, facing him.

THEA  
Friedel please, I'm working.

An ELECTRICAL BUZZING sound. Gyrating VOLTAIC LIGHT encompasses her body, slowing MORPHING her into the iconic robotic metallic figure of Maria, the protagonist in "**Metropolis**".

Fritz stares from the doorway, immobile.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MARMORHAUS THEATER -- EVENING

Fritz Lang and Thea von Harbou's silent masterpiece "**Metropolis**" projects on the massive screen.

The auditorium crowded with tuxedos and gowns gathered for the gala premiere.

Fritz clutches Thea's hand. A MAN in front of them is screwed all the way around in his seat and peering at them.

FRITZ  
Why is he staring at us?

THEA  
Who?

FRITZ  
The man in the third row.

THEA  
Where?

Fritz scans the row again, but all eyes are now on screen.

Angle on the man in the third row. He makes a notation in a pocket notebook -- a *NAZI SWASTIKA* on its cover.

INT. MEN'S ROOM, THEATER -- LATER

Fritz at a row sinks, staring at his reflection in the mirror -- not pleased with the reflection staring back.

WHISTLING in the tune of "*In the Hall of the Mountain King*" from Grieg's Peer Gynt emanates from a stall.

Fritz is rounding the corner to the stalls in the direction of the warbling when he stops dead at the sight of --

-- L's NURSING UNIFORM splayed out on the shiny marble floor. A crimson flower of dried blood over the heart.

Fritz is stunned. Stands there frozen.

A TOILET FLUSHES.

Lohmann exits zipping his fly, stands in the half-light. Fritz is caught off guard, unprepared for this reality.

LOHMANNN  
There you are. Sorry I'm late.

FRITZ  
You weren't invited.

LOHMANNN  
Tough crowd out there.

FRITZ  
They seem to be enjoying it.

LOHMANNN  
Then why the boiling behind the eyes?

FRITZ  
You don't know me, Lohmann.

LOHMAN

I am you.

FRITZ

What did you say?

Lohmann scrapes a match against the wall, lighting a cigar.

LOHMAN

Gal in your picture -- I had a woman  
like that once. Cold. Robotic.  
Can't leave. Can't stay. Like  
stepping on a landmine.

Fritz looks back at L's bloody nursing uniform.

FRITZ

Not tonight, all those people out  
there. I beg you...

LOHMAN

All your hard work and wifes blood.

Lohmann jerking his thumb at the bloody nursing uniform --

LOHMAN

You know we're going to have to talk  
about why this happened.

FRITZ

I haven't heard from you in months.

LOHMAN

Just because you don't see me, doesn't  
mean I'm not there.

FRITZ

You enjoy this charade.

LOHMAN

Fritz Lang is the only person who  
knows what's going on here. He won't  
tell you, but he knows.

FRITZ

I had nothing to do with L's death.  
And we both know that if you had  
evidence to the contrary, I'd be  
retaining a barrister.

Lohmann snorts, places his hand on his face like an eyepatch.

LOHMAN

We're pirates, you and I.

FRITZ

I can look in the mirror with a clean conscience and honestly say that my mind and body are one hundred percent intact.

LOHMAN

So it appears.

FRITZ

Excuse me, but I have a job to do.

LOHMAN

I have a job too. I feel the most alive when I'm doing it.

Fritz storms out. Goes back inside the auditorium, stands at the doors.

ON SCREEN: "METROPOLIS" MONTAGE of rising temperatures, spinning turbines, pressures coming to a head, bubbling liquids on the boil -- forces welling up from the deep.

The projected images reflecting in the glass of Fritz's monocle, fueling the forces roiling inside him.

INT. ARTIST'S STUDIO -- DAY

Jars of oil colors. Assorted brushes. Stacked canvas. PUSH IN on the back of an artist in front of an easel, slashing the canvas in vivid color.

THE CANVAS TRANSFORMING into a montage of the expressionist poster art for Fritz and Thea's film collaborations:

***DR. MABUSE***

***DIE NIBELUNGEN***

***SPIONE***

***FRAU IM MOND***

PULL BACK to reveal Fritz behind the artist pondering the now blank canvas, clearly distressed by the lack of ideas for his next creation.

EXT. TERRACE, FRITZ'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Fritz and Thea are having breakfast in the garden terrace. Frau Nussbaum comes down the path carrying a pot of coffee and the morning newspapers.

FRITZ  
Cantaloupe was lovely, Frau Nussbaum.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Herr Ott says give it a good slap.  
When it talks back it's ready.

FRITZ  
Herr Ott?

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Market stand in Alexanderplatz.

THEA  
That district is teeming with common  
criminals who have a complete  
disregard for the law. Old women  
being attacked for their pensions.  
Just last week a man was beaten in  
front of his children and shaken by  
the bootstraps for the small change  
in his trousers. Surely we can afford  
that nice shop in Covington Garden.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Cantaloupe not talking back there,  
Mrs. Fritz.

Fritz pours coffee, smirking.

FRITZ  
Tell Herr Ott that we could do with  
a nice mango next time.

Thea crossly reaches for her reading glasses and riffles  
through the newspapers.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Herr Ott and the others have been  
doing more then talking, tell you  
that. They've been organizing.

FRITZ  
Organizing?

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
A round-up to do what the police  
don't.

FRITZ  
Vigilantes?

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
To trap the Monster. Got their own  
ideas going about it too.

FRITZ  
Overturning law by brute force  
constitutes a criminal act.

THEA  
It's arcane.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Jah, maybe so, but there won't be a  
scared woman or child left in the  
city once they've done the deed,  
they says.

THEA  
Please put the phonograph on inside,  
Frau Nussbaum.

Frau Nussbaum makes an audible sigh as she starts back up  
the path.

FRITZ  
She's been with me for fifteen years.

THEA  
She thinks she's married to you.

FRITZ  
She's devoted and doesn't steal.

THEA  
She's a drunk.

The stylus screeches before catching its groove. The music  
gushes from the windows. Fritz's eyes widen in recognition.

FRITZ  
What is this? I know this.

Thea peers out from behind the *Berliner Tageblatt*.

THEA  
"In the Hall of the Mountain King"  
It's from Grieg's Peer Gynt.

Fritz's eyes fastened on the newspaper headline in her grip:

**"Monster of Dusseldorf Eludes Police Again"**

His mind ticking away as if hit by a lightening bolt idea as  
the haunting music crescendos.

INT. STUDY, FRITZ'S HOUSE -- DAY

**THE MAKING OF "M"**

Fritz excitedly cutting clippings from the lurid daily headlines detailing the Monster of Dusseldorf crimes.

Thea enters, finds her husband holding a large pair of sheers.

FRITZ

What is the most unspeakably heinous act you can think of?

THEA

Scrapbooking tops the list.

FRITZ

Don't annoy me, Thea. Just listen --  
(reads from clippings)

Christine Klein, thirteen years old,  
found in her bed with throat cut.  
Rose Ohlinger, eight years old,  
stabbed thirteen times and dumped  
near a construction site. Ida Reuter,  
nineteen, skull crushed with a hammer.  
Elizabeth Dirries, also nineteen,  
also bludgeoned.

(pointing)

The Doering sisters massacred right  
down there near the park footpath.

(beat)

It's all here, interviews with  
eyewitnesses, new theories by police,  
there's even a boasting letter sent  
to the press and signed by the Monster  
himself. What do you think?

THEA

I think a very bad man is stalking  
the streets of Berlin.

FRITZ

Right and what better story then the  
one etched indelibly in the mind of  
every German.

THEA

What are you proposing?

FRITZ

No playboy adventurers, industrial  
bigwigs, scientists, inventors, or  
spies.

THEA  
Nonsense, there's always a hero.

FRITZ  
The hero always wins yet they are  
never as compelling to watch as those  
they pursue.

THEA  
Fritz, you can't make a film about a  
serial murderer.

Fritz lowers the scissors, looks at her.

FRITZ  
An ordinary man. An unforgivable  
crime. We're all capable of that.

INT. NERO-FILM STUDIOS -- DAY

HIGH ANGLE of Fritz with three Nero-Film Investors:  
FAT MAN, FEZ HAT, and PINCE-NEZ, sitting at a circular table.

FAT MAN  
Is there a manuscript?

FRITZ  
Thea and I are working on it now.

FEZ HAT  
What's it about?

FRITZ  
I prefer not to divulge any specifics  
until the scenario is complete.

FAT MAN  
Don't want to jinx it, aye?

FRITZ  
I can tell you that the subject matter  
is especially current.

FAT MAN  
Current?

FRITZ  
Especially.

PINCE NEZ  
Good?

FRITZ  
Frightfully.

FEZ HAT

Popular?

FRITZ

The motion picture will be vastly influenced by sound.

FAT MAN

Sound?

PINCE NEZ

I hear F.W. is experimenting with sound.

FRITZ

Murnau.

FEZ HAT

I saw a talking picture called "Blackmail" in London. Very challenging. Young director named Hitchcock.

Prelap CLACKITY-CLACK of the typewriter --

INT. THEA'S STUDY -- LATER

-- Thea feverishly typing as Fritz paces outside her doorway. Their usual routine.

The last key crashing like a punctuation mark, Thea turns and looks at the WHITE ORCHIDS on her desk.

FRITZ

I thought you would like them?

THEA

We step on each other's feet.

FRITZ

And...?

THEA

(nodding to typewriter)

It's confused.

FRITZ

We'll work the story out.

THEA

It requires inquiry.

FRITZ

Inquiry, is...

THEA

Underlying truth.

FRITZ  
I was going to say dangerous.

THEA  
The ability to look from the inside.  
Methods. Procedures. Pathology. A  
synthesis of facts.

FRITZ  
Do you understand what you're asking  
me to do?

THEA  
We need to see everything before us.

FRITZ  
I'm only a plodding director. This  
is completely out of my depth.  
Besides, has it occurred to you how  
long that will take?

THEA  
Writers are patient. We watch. We  
wait. We think. It's our one  
virtue.

FRITZ  
You're asking me to --

THEA  
Shine a flashlight into dark places.

Thea leans over, smells the Orchids.

INT. FRONT DESK, ALEX -- LATER

Berlin's Police Headquarters at Alexanderplatz. Locals call  
it the "Alex".

Wearing a heavy frock coat and holding a dripping umbrella,  
Fritz is pleading with a DESK OFFICER --

DESK OFFICER  
Chief Inspector Lohmann?

FRITZ  
That's right. It's about the murders.

The Desk Officer makes a face like he just drank piss.

DESK OFFICER  
Murders?

FRITZ  
In the papers.

DESK OFFICER  
You want to confess?

FRITZ  
Confess?

DESK OFFICER  
Over two hundred people have confessed  
to the murders.

FRITZ  
Why?

DESK OFFICER  
The glory I suspect. And if it's  
not a confession, it's neighbor  
suspecting neighbor.

FRITZ  
Listen, I'm doing research and if I  
could see the files...

DESK OFFICER  
Sure, down the street, try knocking  
on the doors of Boim's School for  
the deaf.

FRITZ  
Look, Lohmann could vouch for me.

DESK OFFICER  
I'm sure he could, but Lohmann isn't  
here is he.

FRITZ  
I think you know who I am.

DESK OFFICER  
Only by reputation.  
(beat)  
Mind if I ask you a personal question?

FRITZ  
All right.

DESK OFFICER  
How did you do it?

FRITZ  
What?

DESK OFFICER  
C'mon, you were drunk. One thing  
led to another --

FRITZ  
You have me mixed up with someone.

DESK OFFICER  
Goat shit, you're notorious.

FRITZ  
Cruel rumors.

DESK OFFICER  
Tell me, what did it feel like?

FRITZ  
I'd like to speak to someone in authority.

DESK OFFICER  
You don't want to say, sure I understand. But if it was me...  
(lowering voice)  
...if I had nailed Marlene Dietrich, I wouldn't leave out a single detail.

Realizing the influence he holds, Fritz leans in two inches from the Desk Officer's ear --

FRITZ  
It's the way she used her mouth.

DESK OFFICER  
Mouth, huh?

FRITZ  
(sexually charged)  
Had all her molars removed.

DESK OFFICER  
I can see that.

FRITZ  
And she sucked lemon wedges in between takes to keep the muscles tight.

The Desk Officer breathes heavily, aroused.

INT. SQUAD ROOM, 2ND FLOOR, ALEX -- MOMENTS LATER

Fritz bangs up the stairs leading to the second floor, giving way to full access of the departments inner-sanctum.

Tired policemen coming off their beats slump on benches.

A large MAP OF BERLIN on the wall is marked with murder sites and compass circles signaling combed areas.

A blown-up FINGERPRINT projected onto a large screen is being studied by GRAPHOLOGIST.

An OFFICER with a MASTER KEY on a chain around his neck approaches Fritz.

OFFICER  
You here to see Lohmann's brain?

FRITZ  
What?

OFFICER  
File room, end of the hall. You got ten minutes.

Key in grip, Fritz makes his way down the corridor until arriving at the iron grillwork door at the end. Unlocks it and goes inside. Jerks a string that lights a naked bulb.

The room, a dizzying box crowded with floor to ceiling files chronologically marked and dedicated to murderers.

FRITZ  
(sotto)  
Lohmann's brain.

Outside a freight train lumbers past the small window with a loud clatter, sending the files quaking.

Fritz locates a dossier flagged with a BLUE TAB. Hoists it down from the tall shelf.

CLOSE ON the classified file, case name: **Fritz Lang**

Fritz flips amongst the pages of his own file:

Fingerprints taken from the bathroom and gun.

Photographs of the crime scene. Lurid.

Fritz's heart sinks at the thought of all the information gathered on his wife's death. He flips to a page with a ruling marked: "**Suicide**".

The thunderous ROAR from another freight train. The files in Lohmann's brain juddering violently.

INT. STUDY, FRITZ'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

Fritz races into the room breathing heavily. Thea right behind him.

FRITZ  
Put the light out.

THEA

Why?

FRITZ

Just do it.

Thea kills the overheads.

Frau Nussbaum shuffles in with a lit candle.

THEA

What did you do?

FRITZ

I stole it.

Fritz unbuttons his coat and removes a DOSSIER three inches thick hidden in his waistband.

CLOSE ON the classified file, case name: **MONSTER OF DUSSELDORF**

FRITZ

They'll shoot me. I'll get shot.

THEA

What's in there?

FRITZ

Detective notes, fingerprints, photographs -- things of that nature. Methods I've never seen before. They call it the new science. There must have been sixty volumes dedicated to the Monster alone. Files thick as thieves.

Thea gingerly opens the file --

FRITZ

Careful, I have to return that.

THEA

Where are the poison pen letters?

FRITZ

They keep all bodily evidence in another room, under heavy lock and key.

She turns a section in the file marked **CLASSIFIED**.

THEA

What is this?

FRITZ

A twenty-five page special bulletin  
on the case. Things not made public.  
The hunt for the killer goes as far  
as asking organized crime for their  
help.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Herr Ott?

FRITZ

On the payroll.

THEA

Frau Nussbaum can get us to Ott.

FRITZ

I don't want any part of that.

THEA

Look at the file, no physical  
description, no clues. The police  
don't know anymore than we do about  
the killer.

FRITZ

They know he wears a hat.

THEA

That's every person in Berlin.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

The monster is among us.

The candle light casting long shadows on the wall.

EXT. GHETTO, ALEXANDERPLATZ -- NIGHT

Working class marketplace inhabited by thieves, grifters,  
smugglers and your average garden variety hoodlums. Streamers  
of fog twist along the menacing streets, smearing the  
streetlights.

Fritz's parks his Maybach at the curb and leans against a  
circular pillar with countless wanted posters.

HERR OTT, fur-collared overcoat and bowler, padlocks his  
produce stand for the night. He walks along the road carrying  
a wooden pole with affixed cages -- trashing feathers and  
cooing inside.

Fritz tails him into a twisting alley lined with tenements.

Herr Ott ducks into a alcoved cellar. Vanishes.

Fritz trains on the alcoved entry and spiral staircase descending into darkness. Considers it.

The sound of typing emerges.

*(It should be noted, Thea's intermittent typing emerges through making of "M" sequence.)*

CUT TO:

INT. THEA'S STUDY -- CONTINUOUS

Thea hits return and glances at the typed page.

THEA  
Where did it lead?

FRITZ  
An underworld lair known as  
"The Crocodile Club".

THEA  
What happened down there?

On edge, Fritz rummages through his notes.

FRITZ  
I want to organize my thoughts first.

THEA  
I understand.

Thea hits the carriage release and places a fresh sheet of onionskin in the typewriter. Looks back at Fritz --

THEA  
Done procrastinating?

Fritz stares blankly at her.

Prelap sound of footsteps.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. "THE CROCODILE CLUB" -- CONTINUOUS

Fritz descends the spiraling staircase and is swallowed up by darkness.

INT. "THE CROCODILE CLUB" -- CONTINUOUS

A beaded curtain clattering behind him, as Fritz enters the underworld hideout.

The room is a raw dark space. A taxidermied CROCODILE hangs above, its reptilian underside running the length of the room. But where is everybody?

Fritz walks down a long rickety underground passageway, eyeing a sump pump along the way.

A faint hum, growing louder.

Pips of sweat on Fritz's brow.

Coming to the end of the passageway, there's a puzzled look on Fritz's face.

Trains his eyes on a METAL DOOR WITH PRESSURIZED SPINLOCK.

INT. SEWER SYSTEM -- MOMENTS LATER

Fritz descends a steel ladder and sinks into a cavernous artery of gushing water spilling from conduits.

FRITZ

Ugh!

Holds a handkerchief to his nose, can't take the putrid stench.

Herr Ott appears out of the murk.

HERR OTT

Berlin's bowels. Runs right into the Blue Danube.

FRITZ

Herr Ott.

HERR OTT

Why are you shadowing me?

FRITZ

I just want to talk.

HERR OTT

Passport, birth certificate, or marriage reversion?

FRITZ

Sorry?

HERR OTT

Peculiar time to be a jew.

Fritz gets a closer look at the pole Herr Ott carries, the affixed cages occupied by pigeons.

HERR OTT  
Follow me.

Treading ankle-deep water, Fritz stays close behind Herr Ott navigating the catacomb of twists and turns until they reach --

INT. UNDERGROUND MOB LAIR -- CONTINUOUS

A secret area teeming with surging hats, sticks, and fists forming a circle. Torches hanging from the walls.

CAMERA TRACKS down a long table lined with brass knuckles, hammers, bats, pipes, burglary tools, pickax, guns, knives.

Fritz tries getting a better view over the heads and through the gaps between the shoulders. Glimpses a BLOODY MAN restrained to a chair. Writing in pain. Eyes rolling.

UDO, a colossal Ukrainian finger-breaker with a tattoo of a second mouth on his chin, is administering the blows.

Udo turns to Fritz. Towering above him, the second mouth on his chin quaking in rage --

UDO  
We got a copper here!

The angry mob swirls around Fritz. Fritz tries to answer, but the crowd is too loud --

Herr Ott hops up on some piling, addresses the crowd.

HERR OTT  
WAIT! WAIT! WAIT! He's not a cop.

MOB MAN  
How can you tell?

HERR OTT  
Look how he's dressed -- like he's going to shul or a job at the bank.

Whistling, harrumphs, and laughter from around the room.

But Fritz can't take his eyes off the captive man --

FRITZ  
That's him isn't it -- you've caught the Monster of Dusseldorf?

HERR OTT  
No, him...he's a cop.

FRITZ  
Cop?

HERR OTT  
That canary said he would die for  
the cause. The tragedy is that he  
was right.

Udo slams a fist into the cop's kidney. He squeals in pain.

Herr Ott uncaps a pint bottle, offers it to Fritz.

HERR OTT  
Drink.

FRITZ  
No.

HERR OTT  
Definitely not a cop.

More laughter from around the room.

Fritz seizes the bottle and takes a stiff pull.

HERR OTT  
That was a bad idea.

Fritz spits it out, trying not to dry-heave.

HERR OTT  
Your piss is going to burn like hell.

Fritz suddenly queasy, could faint.

UDO  
You must be crazy coming here.

FRITZ  
I wanted to see for myself.

Herr Ott releases the pigeons, they fly to a row of stalls. Numbered bands on their legs corresponding with markers on a large map of Berlin mounted on the wall.

HERR OTT  
We have our own stool pigeons. They  
work quite efficiently.

FRITZ  
Look, I'm a film director. I'm  
researching my next picture.

HERR OTT  
Researching down here?

FRITZ  
It's about you -- all of you.

MOB WOMAN  
A picture about us.

FRITZ  
Your efforts to catch the Monster of  
Dusseldorf.

HERR OTT  
Why should we trust YOU?

FRITZ  
I know you're working with the police.  
I've seen the records.

HERR OTT  
There's an abyss between us and them.  
This district is tethered by one  
leash. They don't cooperate, but  
they don't interfere.

FRITZ  
(nodding to cop)  
Then what happened to him?

HERR OTT  
Sometimes they send a canary. And  
it's not just the police.

FRITZ  
The political police?

HERR OTT  
Enough. We're done talking.

FRITZ  
Why are you doing it?

UDO  
To look after the little ones better.

FRITZ  
Bullshit, what's in it for you?

HERR OTT  
They go house to house, hedge to  
hedge looking for the monster.  
Disrupting our legitimate criminal  
activities.

FRITZ  
So you're going to catch him.

HERR OTT  
We're going to kill him.

Udo grabs Fritz, digs his wallet out of his coat and hands it to Herr Ott.

FRITZ  
Wait, I need that.

UDO  
Not here you don't.

FRITZ  
Maybe we can help each other.

HERR OTT  
Whatever you spit -- we get a cut.

FRITZ  
Cut?

HERR OTT  
Of your motion picture.

FRITZ  
No, I don't think that's a good --

Herr Ott fishes through the wallet, finding Fritz's identification card.

HERR OTT  
We get a cut or you get cut. Get it  
Fritz Lang from One One Charlottenburg  
Lane?

FRITZ  
I recognize a good turn when I hear  
one.

HERR OTT  
You remember the way outta here?

FRITZ  
Big crocodile.

HERR OTT  
There are no crocodiles in Berlin.

FRITZ  
I saw it.

HERR OTT  
Good, because now that you saw it,  
you need to forget it.

Udo shoots his fist straight into Fritz's face.

THWACK.

Everything goes PITCH BLACK.

EXT. GHETTO, ALEXANDERPLATZ -- DAWN

Fritz out cold by a dumpster. Disheveled. Unshaven. He opens his eyes groggily. Disoriented. Eyes blurry.

Checks his coat and finds his empty wallet, keys, and monocle still inside. As he puts the monocle in place -- Lohmann comes into view, looming above him.

FRITZ

Lohmann, what are you doing here?

LOHMAN

You were in my brain.

FRITZ

Jesus, it's morning already?

LOHMAN

What are you doing in my brain, Lang?

FRITZ

Looking at the reports.

LOHMAN

Why?

FRITZ

I'm writ--

LOHMAN

What are you writing -- your confession?

FRITZ

It's about the monster.

LOHMAN

What happened to your face?

FRITZ

Uh, . . . nothing.

Fritz daubs blood from his mouth with a handkerchief.

LOHMAN

They talked to you?

FRITZ

Sure.

LOHMAN

What did you promise them?

FRITZ

The Alex is two blocks south, in  
case you've lost your way.

LOHMAN

I found you didn't I.

FRITZ

Look, it's a good story. An ordinary  
man. An unspeakable crime.

LOHMAN

Well we're all capable of that.

FRITZ

Don't speak for me, Lohmann.

LOHMAN

(sneering)

"I think it's the best work I've  
ever done."

FRITZ

Stop it.

LOHMAN

Those are confidential police records,  
you shit. I should drag you down to  
the Alex right now.

FRITZ

I saw my file, Lohmann. It had a  
**BIG BLUE STAMP** on the jacket.

LOHMAN

Yeah, you like that -- I got a  
**BIG RED STAMP** just like it.

FRITZ

It's over, all right. I don't know  
why you keep digging it up.

LOHMAN

It's digging itself up.

They hear approaching sirens.

LOHMAN

C'mon, you better come with me.

FRITZ

Why would I do that?

LOHMAN

The monster struck again last night.

FRITZ

Last night?

LOHMAN

Grafenberger Woods.

FRITZ

That's not far from here.

LOHMAN

Why pay for the matinee if you can  
see it free, huh Lang?

As Lohmann heads out --

FRITZ

Wait, I have a car.

LOHMAN

Should have taken the train.

Lohmann cocks his head in the direction of Fritz's Maybach --  
completely stripped and burning in the street.

FRITZ

Oh, Jesus.

Lohmann keeps walking.

Fritz hesitates, unsure, then runs to catch up to him.

EXT. COURTYARD, TENEMENT BLOCK -- MOMENTS LATER

A group of SCHOOLCHILDREN standing in a circle, are playing  
a game and chanting in high-pitched voices --

CHILDREN SINGING

(in German)

"Just you wait, it won't be long.  
 The man in black will soon be here  
 with his cleaver's blade so true.  
 He'll make mincemeat out of you".

Fritz and Lohmann walk past a row of tenements. Signs posted  
along the street: "**Wer ist der Morder? 10,000 Marks Reward!**"

FRITZ

(to Lohmann)

Do you hear that awful song they're  
singing.

LOHMAN

As long as they're singing, we know  
they're still there.

A PREGNANT HAUSFRAU hanging washing out to dry from a high story balcony, yells down --

PREGNANT HAUSFRAU  
Elsie! Elsie!

LITTLE ELSIE BECKMANN looks up to the window --

ELSIE  
Ma 'am?

PREGNANT HAUSFRAU  
You children should be at home.

ELSIE  
Yes, ma 'am.

As Elsie turns, she spots Fritz nearing --

ELSIE  
It's the monster! It's the monster!

The children all SCREAM and take flight.

FRITZ  
(to Lohmann)  
Why are they behaving like that?

LOHMANNN  
Children are sensitives.

FRITZ  
Sensitives?

LOHMANNN  
To the diabolic. We've done tests.

FRITZ  
When are you planning on bringing  
this out to the public.

LOHMANNN  
All in good time, Lang.

SMASH! SMASH! SMASH! From the Underwood.

CUT TO:

INT. THEA STUDY -- DAY

The typewriter keys striking against the pulp paper.

THEA  
Fantastic. Keep going.

Fritz yells back from the adjoining office.

FRITZ (O.S.)  
Lets move on to the crime scene.

THEA  
Where?

FRITZ (O.S.)  
Behind a church in Grafenberger Woods.

THEA  
God, what was it like? Describe it.

FRITZ (O.S.)  
Horrible. The crime scene was like  
a haunted fairy tale. "Haunted fairy  
tale" -- that's good, put that in.

THEA  
It's a tad dramatic.

Editing pages with his trademark BLUE PENCIL, Fritz pauses.

FRITZ  
You think?

THEA  
No, it's good. I'm putting it in.

She types it. Fritz appears in the doorway.

FRITZ  
Scratch that. The violence should  
be implied never seen.

Thea rolls the paper up a few lines -- looks.

She aptly rips the paper out of the carriage.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. GRAFENBERGER WOODS -- LATER

Tree branches throw distorted shadows. A gothic style church  
can be seen in the distance.

A knot of police surround the pallid corpse of a young woman  
slain in the woods behind the church. The victim's LEFT HAND  
missing, severed above the wrist.

Lohmann and Fritz observe the scene from a few yards away.

LOHMANNN  
Stay here. Don't touch anything.

Lohmann marches past the police officers with authority.  
Begins conducting his own investigation.

Veiled behind trees, Fritz is strains to see, but TWO OFFICERS securing the periphery block his view.

OFFICER ONE  
Butchered.

OFFICER TWO  
Who found her?

OFFICER ONE  
Priest from the church.

OFFICER TWO  
Someone talk to him?

OFFICER ONE  
He's a servant of God, half-wit.

OFFICER TWO  
I'd like to go back to bed.

OFFICER ONE  
What number is this?

OFFICER TWO  
Twenty two.

FRITZ (O.S.)  
Twenty three.

Fritz scowls at his idiocy, slowly withdrawals.

OFFICER ONE  
Twenty three?

OFFICER TWO  
I didn't say anything.

Fritz wanders through the thick tangle of undergrowth. Leans against a tree and relieves himself. Herr Ott was right, it burns like hell.

Hears something FLAPPING in the breeze in the wooded footpath.

Eyes tired and bloodshot, he squats down for a closer look. A swath of paper weighted by the victims SEVERED HAND, the WEDDING BAND on her finger glitters in the sun.

He looks sharply around, alone.

FRITZ'S POV: It's a POISON PEN LETTER from the Monster of Dusseldorf scribbled in BLUE PENCIL.

Fritz rises. Lohmann looming behind him.

LOHMANN

Trust me, you don't want to get inside  
of that head.

FRITZ

Lohmann! I didn't touch it.

LOHMANN

It was just sitting here in the open  
like a grave marker.

FRITZ

I swear, I didn't touch it.

LOHMANN

Did you read it?

Fritz anxiously fussing with his monocle.

FRITZ

What kind of animal does that?

LOHMANN

He stalks little girls like hunters  
stalk elk over mountains.

FRITZ

Any suspects?

LOHMANN

Suspect everyone.

Lohmann palms the poison pen letter.

FRITZ

Who knows where it can lead.

LOHMANN

System in place at the Alex, it might  
as well disappear into a chasm.

FRITZ

What do you mean? They can run  
fingerprints and...

LOHMANN

It should be analyzed properly.

FRITZ

Right.

LOHMANN

I'll do the dirty work for you.

FRITZ

What?

LOHMANN

Take it.

FRITZ

Me?

LOHMANN

Take it.

FRITZ

Lohmann?

LOHMANN

You want to know the nature of evil,  
here.

Lohmann thrusts the poison pen letter into his palm.

FRITZ

How about you, don't you want to  
know the nature of evil?

LOHMANN

No, because then I'd be out of a  
job.

FRITZ

Lohmann...

LOHMANN

Get out of here, Lang.

Fritz's mouth hangs open.

Lohmann clomps away, vanishing into the dense woods.

INT. NERO-FILM STUDIOS -- DAY

HIGH ANGLE of Fritz with the three Nero-Film investors sitting at a circular table arguing production details.

FAT MAN

Do we have a manuscript?

FRITZ

It's near completion.

FEZ HAT

Why is it taking so long?

FRITZ

Thea and I are studying our subject matter in detail. Avoiding all the grotesque caricatures in lesser films. An accurate psychological profile of the killer is paramount.

PINCE NEZ

What's the name of your character?

FRITZ

Hans Beckert.

FAT MAN

Hans Beckert? That's the name of a balloon vender, bus driver, butcher. Doktor Mabuse, Rotwang, the Thin Man -- that's a name.

FRITZ

It's important that everything look and sound realistic. In fact, I'd like to employ real criminals for the catacomb finale scene.

FAT MAN

Real criminals?

FEZ HAT

How can we entice a star of any caliber when you're asking them to work with real criminals?

PINCE NEZ

No pressure, but Klein-Rogge would be perfect.

FRITZ

Klein-Rogge?

FAT MAN

What's wrong with Klein-Rogge?

PINCE NEZ

Just shot a pirate picture in Norway.

FAT MAN

It's not because he was married to your wife?

Fritz clears his throat.

FRITZ

Hans Beckert needs to be a different. Someone who fits snugly inside the psyche, like a Russian nesting doll.

EXT. GRAND DUCAL LUNATIC ASYLUM -- DAY

Tall iron security fences surround a sinister circular facility with prison windows.

INT. GRAND DUCAL LUNATIC ASYLUM -- DAY

A shabby pisshole with hard edges, harsher shadows.

Inmates spew jeers and hurl spit from their cells as a NURSE on shift escorts Fritz down the main corridor.

INT. DOKTOR WERBEL'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

The nurse gently raps on the door, enters with Lang. Running water can be heard from the adjoining washroom.

NURSE  
Doktor Werbel?

DOKTOR WERBEL (O.S.)  
Yes?

NURSE  
Mr. Lang to see you, sir.

FRITZ  
I appreciate you seeing me on such short notice, Doktor Werbel.

DOKTOR WERBEL (O.S.)  
Yes, I'll be right with you Mr. Lang.

The nurse shows Fritz a chair, leaves.

Fritz waits for the doctor, looking around the room -- bookshelves crowded with psychiatric tomes, lobotomy instruments, and anatomical brains in formaldehyde.

Something catches Fritz's eye -- a steel door with a diamond shaped observation window bored into the wall.

He peers inside the window -- a padded cell for patients in between sessions.

Suddenly a HAND fills the glass. Fritz draws back.

Frantic POUNDING on the door. The hinges RATTLING.

A PATIENT locked inside, caged like a wild animal.

Muffled words emanate from the thick door. Fritz moves closer trying to make them out --

CAGED PATIENT  
(faint)  
Please help me. Hurry get the --

Suddenly a metal plate slides across, closing off the window. Fritz cocks his head to see -- DOKTOR WERBEL, unfazed, buttoning a crisp white lab coat.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Sorry about the interruption.  
Sedative seems to be wearing off.

FRITZ  
Difficult, I imagine.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Patient became highly agitated during  
our session. Needed restraining.  
It's quite common after the procedure.

FRITZ  
Procedure?

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Please, make yourself comfortable,  
Mr. Lang.

FRITZ  
Yes, thank you.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Leucotomy. Greek for cut/slice.  
Severing the connections to and from  
the prefrontal cortex. The Americans  
refer to it as Lobotomy.

Bloody surgical instruments are lying on a metal tray.

FRITZ  
Does it change them?

Doktor Werbel studies Fritz curiously, surprised by the sincerity of the question.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
It's a commonly used treatment in a  
wide range of mental illnesses,  
including schizophrenia, clinical  
depression, anxiety disorders.

FRITZ  
What's he being treated for?

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Poisoned his wife and four children  
then ground up their remains. Hungry  
customers believed they were eating  
pork, when they frequented his hot-  
dog stand near the train station.

FRITZ  
His entire family?

DOKTOR WERBEL  
They deserved it.

FRITZ  
Excuse me?

DOKTOR WERBEL  
They are Satan and his dominion. At  
least in his mind.

FRITZ  
What possesses a man to do that,  
Doktor?

DOKTOR WERBEL  
In my experience, it's the critical  
moment between the intention and the  
act itself. The difference between  
an impulse and a grave if not fatal  
error. Why did you say you were here?

FRITZ  
The Monster of Dusseldorf murders.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Right.  
(beat)  
Did you serve, Mr. Lang?

Fritz stiffens, startled by the question.

FRITZ  
Yes, why do you ask?

DOKTOR WERBEL  
The aftermath of this war has been a  
particularly fertile breeding ground  
for serial homicide strains.

FRITZ  
Strains?

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Haarmann, Denk, and Grobmann most  
notably in the last decade. Have  
you killed someone?

FRITZ

What, no.

DOKTOR WERBEL

It's nothing to be ashamed of, anyone with a gun can kill someone in the service of one's country.

FRITZ

They're clearly deranged.

DOKTOR WERBEL

Actually, killers are usually not psychotic and may appear to be quite normal and often charming.

(beat)

Every human mind harbors a latent compulsion to murder. Guilt and innocence walk a fine line. We are all potential killers needing only the flick of a mental trigger to send us before a jury of our peers.

FRITZ

Do you mind if I show you something, Doktor.

Fritz removes the POISON PEN letter from his pocket.

FRITZ

I understand that you specialize in handwriting analysis. This is a letter from the *Monster of Dusseldorf* himself.

DOKTOR WERBEL

How did you obtain it?

FRITZ

Trust me, it comes from high up.

DOKTOR WERBEL

Whatever I say stays in this room.

THEA (V.O.)

Those were his words?

CUT TO:

INT. FRITZ'S HOUSE, STUDY -- AFTERNOON

Thea enters for her study, rubbing her tired fingers.

THEA

"Whatever I say stays in this room"?

FRITZ

Yes.

Frau Nussbaum shuffles in with a tray of tea and sandwiches.

THEA

What are you having?

FRITZ

Turkey on rye.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Hardly believe what I found this morning in the garden patch.

THEA

The suspense is killing me.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

My own knitting needles, sticking out of the geraniums like Excalibar's sword.

Mumbling as she shuffles out of the room --

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Strange goings on in the house of the dead.

FRITZ

What is she talking about?

THEA

Frau Nussbaum is convinced that the house is haunted. Last week she found her reading glasses on the bridge.

FRITZ

The bridge --

THEA

-- of her nose.  
(smiles)

Mustard?

FRITZ

Yes.

THEA

The Doktor didn't ask you where you got the poison pen letter?

FRITZ

No.

THEA

He doesn't think you wrote it?

FRITZ

I wrote it...?

THEA

Well, did you?

FRITZ

No, of course not.

Refining the typed manuscript with his BLUE PENCIL, Fritz turns over the last page.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. DOKTOR WERBEL'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Using a magnifier, Doktor Werbel considers the poison pen letter written in BLUE PENCIL, with a keen medical eye.

DOKTOR WERBEL

Fractured personality. Feelings of inadequacy. Humiliation stemming from childhood. Pressures of socioeconomic status. By his own admission, he derives heightened sexual gratification by the conquest of woman, but he feels trapped by them as well.

(beat)

Most likely has a cultivated exterior. Dresses impeccably, reads widely, behaves properly in civilization.

FRITZ

A two natured human being.

DOKTOR WERBEL

Estranged to himself. Disconnected from his deeds. Losing touch with the human side.

FRITZ

How do you see it, Doktor?

DOKTOR WERBEL

The repressed looping. The word choice. The blue pencil. It's like looking through the eye-piece of a microscope, the tangled mind exposed, laid flat on the slide.

Doktor Werbel tilts a scrutinizing eye at Fritz.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
It's your handwriting, isn't it?

Fritz stiffens.

FRITZ  
What, no.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Takes one of like mind to do the  
unthinkable.

FRITZ  
You've misunderstood my purpose.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
You think it's easy being committed  
instead of taking the big ax?

FRITZ  
I'm not a patient here.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Then who are you?

Fritz thinks hard about the question. His concentration  
snaps off with the sound of a RING!

On the desk a black telephone with no dial. Doktor Werbel  
hesitates, then--

DOKTOR WERBEL  
(into phone)  
Yes.

Long beat. He hangs it up.

DOKTOR WERBEL  
Seems a resident of our institute is  
missing.

FRITZ  
Missing?

DOKTOR WERBEL  
I need to end our meeting now.

Doktor Werbel escorts Fritz out of the office.

TWO ORDERLIES race up the corridor behind Doktor Werbel,  
tussling him to the ground.

PATIENTS holler from their cells, aroused by the commotion.

The nurse hurries into Doktor Werbel's office, slides the  
steel plate away from the diamond shaped observation window.

NURSE  
Ohmygod, Doktor Werbel!

She unlocks the steel door and liberates him.

NURSE  
Doktor Werbel, are you all right?

CLOSE ON Fritz through the staggering chaos as he comprehends that the bona fide Doktor Werbel was locked inside the padded cell. Fritz communing the entire time with a madman who turned his family into sausages.

CUT TO:

INT. THEA'S STUDY -- DAY

Thea at the Underwood, takes a finished page out of the carriage and places it face down on the stack to her right. Feeds in a new page. Begins typing --

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT: ONIONSKIN PAPER

The keys crashing down to form the words:

THE MURDERER AMONG US

She rips the paper out of the carriage. Brings it into Fritz, who affixes his monocle in anticipation.

As she hands it over --

THEA  
Darn, it smudged.

EXTREME CLOSE SHOT FRITZ'S POV:

The ink on the "**M**" in the word MURDERER bleeding, misshapen.

Fritz bewitched by the distorted letter, can't take his eyes off it.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM -- EVENING

Fritz at the mirror, buttoning a crisp white tuxedo shirt.

Thea comes up behind him, helping him with his bow tie. Evening dress sparkling, she's never looked more radiant.

He kisses her tenderly. Their fingers mingling together. He's never been more in love than this fleeting moment.

INT. LOBBY, FRIEDRICHSTADT-PALAST THEATER -- NIGHT

Booming down on the opening night gala reception for the theatrical production of "Spring Awakening".

Fritz and Thea are with a group of patrons discussing current events. DR. JOSEPH GOEBBELS joins them.

THEA

Fritz, I'd like to introduce you to  
Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels.

As they shake hands --

GOEBBELS

Pleasure.

FRITZ

Likewise. A Doctor...?

GOEBBELS

I did my doctoral thesis on 18th  
century romantic literature.

Fritz glances his NAZI ARMBAND.

FRITZ

Age of Enlightenment.

GOEBBELS

My interests in the arts have taken  
root in another direction.

FRITZ

Politics.

GOEBBELS

Adolf Hitler and I are big fans.  
The magistry of "Metropolis" caused  
the Fuhrer to break down and weep.  
He said and I quote: "Here is a man  
who will give us great Nazi films!"

Fritz stunned, nearly speechless.

FRITZ

You humble me.

(beat)

Excuse me, I could do with a drink.

GOEBBELS

The bar's over there.

FRITZ

I can find my way.

Fritz heads for the bar, could vomit.

Runs into his old chum Joe May nursing a Martini.

FRITZ  
Joe May, been awhile.

JOE MAY  
This is a historic occasion, Fritz  
and Thea are the toast of the town.

FRITZ  
You saw the pictures?

JOE MAY  
Afraid I don't get out as often as I  
would like these days.

FRITZ  
You want to insult me, fair enough.  
But you can't envy me at the same  
time.

Joe May shrugs, downs his drink.

JOE MAY  
Recently came into an authenticated  
armoire from the Capethian dynasty.

FRITZ  
Thinking of leaving Berlin?

JOE MAY  
Thirty thousands marks.

FRITZ  
Why the reduction?

JOE MAY  
Too big to smuggle out.

FRITZ  
Who is he?

Joe May grins good-naturedly.

JOE MAY  
Bit personal.

FRITZ  
Over there, with my wife.

Joe May flicks his gaze to Thea now flanked by three tuxedos:  
Rudolf Klein-Rogge, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, and a dashing young  
INDIAN GENTLEMAN.

JOE MAY

Armband is Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels,  
soon to be appointed Reich Minister of  
Public Enlightenment and Propaganda.  
And one of Adolf Hitler's closest  
associates.

FRITZ

We've been introduced.

JOE MAY

You know Klein-Rogge, rumor has it  
he's slamming morphine with a cabaret  
dancer.

Thea reaches out and touches the Indian Gentleman's hand.  
Fritz's lips forming a straight line.

JOE MAY

Ayi Tendulkar. Doctor from India.

FRITZ

(sotto)

India.

JOE MAY

He beds the wives of influential  
Berliners. They take pleasure in  
sleeping with foreigners, it's like  
travel: Candlelit dinners. Little  
presents. Clean sheets.

FRITZ

You're enjoying this?

JOE MAY

The truth tortures.

FRITZ

At last, we're getting somewhere.

JOE MAY

They're *greifers*.

FRITZ

*Greifers*?

JOE MAY

Grabbers of Jews.

(beat)

It's very simple. Either you're  
with them or you're not. And your  
wife is more Prussian than you're  
monocle.

The theater bell rings signaling it's time to take their seats.

FRITZ  
I'll come see the armoire.

JOE MAY  
Be careful, Goebbels stalks Jews  
like hunters stalk deer over the  
mountains. And Thea Von Harbou is a  
ten point antlered beauty.

Fritz's eyes widen, realizing that Joe May's words echo  
Lohmann's --

FRITZ  
What did you say?

-- but Joe May's already heading inside the auditorium with  
the other patrons.

INT. AUDITORIUM, FRIEDRICHSTADT-PALAST -- LATER

Well into the dreadful play.

ON STAGE: The ACTOR delivering Moritz's monologue is a short  
odious piglet of a man with a moon-shaped face, sad bulging  
eyes, and low pitched purr of a voice.

ACTOR PLAYING MORITZ  
It's as if I were hearing my dead  
Grandmother tell the story of the  
Queen without a head. She was a  
perfectly beautiful queen, fair as  
the sun, lovelier than all the maidens  
in the land, only she had come into  
the world, alas! Without a head.

Laughter from the audience. The actor throwing off more  
nervous energy than a caged snake.

Fritz and Thea watch from their box seats in the balcony.

Fritz scans the audience with opera glasses. Locates Goebbels  
in the Orchestra section scribbling in a notebook with a  
*NAZI SWASTIKA* on its cover. Ayi Tendulkar seated next to  
him.

Fritz looks back at Thea. Suspicious. Pained.

Heckles from the audience. The actor stammers, it clearly  
throws him off.

ACTOR PLAYING MORITZ  
Err...err...err confounded rot! I  
haven't been able to get the Headless  
Queen out of my head!

The actor moves to the top of the proscenium arch. A loud chorus of BOOS from the audience.

Fritz lingers on the actor, sympathizing with the vile creature on stage, drawn to him. He glances at the playbill, Moritz played by: **Peter Lorre**.

INT. BACKSTAGE (INTERMISSION) -- LATER

Stage hands, actors, understudies, in the wings.

Fritz finds Peter Lorre's name on a door, enters.

INT. DRESSING ROOM, BACKSTAGE -- CONTINUOUS

A box of exposed hot water pipes and cracked plaster.

In costume, hair drawn back tightly to fit under a wig cap, PETER LORRE is seated at the dressing table. Bottle of Scotch on the table nearly empty.

PETER LORRE

Do you have the tabasco sauce?

FRITZ

No.

PETER LORRE

Did they send you to fire me?

FRITZ

What, no.

PETER LORRE

It's still early.

FRITZ

I'm a director.

PETER LORRE

Plays?

FRITZ

Motion pictures. That's why I'm here, I have a role looming.

PETER LORRE

Loooooooooming?

FRITZ

I'd like to offer the role to you.

PETER LORRE  
Err...err...err...me?  
(suspicious)  
What kind of part?

FRITZ  
Leading part.

PETER LORRE  
Is this a joke?

FRITZ  
Mr. Lorre, I'm offering you the  
opportunity to act in a film.

PETER LORRE  
Err...err...err have you seen the  
show tonight?

FRITZ  
I'm quite a fan.

PETER LORRE  
You heard them out there -- their  
reaction?

FRITZ  
You provoked them. Nobody else could  
have played that role. It would be  
like doing *Macbeth* without *Macbeth*.

PETER LORRE  
It never occurred to me that my puss  
could be photographed.

A STAGEHAND enters with a bottle.

STAGEHAND  
Here's the Tabasco, Mr. Lorre.

PETER LORRE  
Err...err...err...bring it here.

Lorre dabs the Tabasco sauce on two cotton balls, places  
them on his puffy froggy-eyes.

STAGE HAND  
It's how he gets into character.

FRITZ  
Outstanding.

## INT. FRITZ'S STUDY -- LATE NIGHT

Fritz at his desk contemplating production design drawings, storyboards, and script pages for "M". The pages crowded with his blue-penciled notations.

He reaches for across the desk for one of his signature pencils, but the holder is empty. He angrily brushes the work aside.

The telephone on Fritz desk rings. He answers.

FRITZ  
(phone)  
Hello.

LOHMAN (O.S.)  
Quite a meat grinder you're caught  
in, Lang. Couldn't pen a better  
scenario if you tried.

FRITZ  
(phone)  
Lohmann.

Fritz goes to the window, spots Lohmann in a TELEPHONE KIOSK across the street.

Meanwhile downstairs...

## KITCHEN

Frau Nussbaum preparing a tea tray when she encounters PENCIL SHAVINGS on the counter -- smudging her finger tips BLUE.

Overhearing bits of conversation upstairs, she gingerly picks up the downstairs telephone. Eavesdrops on Fritz's conversation while she retrieves the tea tin from the cabinet.

She pulls off the tin lid and to her shock, finds a heap of BLUE PENCILS inside, while simultaneously grasping that Fritz's voice is the ONLY VOICE on the other line.

## FRITZ'S STUDY

Fritz eyes Thea's locked study door as Lohmann speaks.

LOHMAN (O.S.)  
You didn't go to the after party.  
She must be wondering where you are?

FRITZ  
(phone)  
I had a headache.

LOHMAN (O.S.)  
Right. Her dance card is probably  
full anyway.

FRITZ  
(phone)  
Leave it.

LOHMAN (O.S.)  
Don't say you didn't see it coming.

Fritz takes a heavy breath, ready to talk --

FRITZ  
(phone)  
Lohmann wait, don't hang up,  
I want to talk --

CLICK.

Fritz looks out the window, the telephone kiosk now empty.  
He slams the phone down.

FRITZ  
Bastard!

Fritz removes a SWITCHBLADE from his top drawer. Goes to  
Thea's door, wedges the blade into the lock.

SNAP.

Fritz stands in silence at threshold of her inner sanctum.  
Turns on the lights. Hesitates before he steps inside.

THEA'S STUDY

Fritz topples drawers, leafs through personal journals and  
private letters, searching for traces of an affair. Sickened  
by his own behavior, he stops. Then his eyes lock on the  
bookshelf with Thea's published novels.

He removes one book in particular, opens a cover --

*Blossoming Lotus written by Thea von Harbou.*

Below it reads -- **For A.T.**

FRITZ  
(sotto)  
A. T. -- Ayi Tendulkar

He stares at it, bewildered. Stunned. Confused.

Turns to see Thea now standing in the doorway, still dressed  
in her gown.

THEA

How's your headache?

FRITZ

Worse.

THEA

I left the party. I was concerned  
about you.

FRITZ

Concern for me?

THEA

Did you find what you were looking for?

FRITZ

I wanted answers.

THEA

By breaking in and devouring my  
personal papers like Silverfish?

FRITZ

You've been with him?

THEA

The truth has a price, Fritz.

FRITZ

Has it been the entire time?

THEA

Only when I needed it to be.

FRITZ

That's it -- that's all you have to  
say to me?

THEA

My life is my own.

FRITZ

You're my wife!

THEA

You made sure of that.

FRITZ

I sacrificed everything for you.

THEA

I never asked you to.

FRITZ  
Is this how it's going to be --  
coming at each other guns blazing?

THEA  
The difference is mine isn't loaded.

He backs her up against the window. She's paralyzed.

FRITZ  
You have no idea what I'm capable of.

THEA  
Just like that -- like you blue  
penciled your first wife out of the  
final draft?

FRITZ  
Did you ever love me?

THEA  
I do still --

Fritz catches his distorted reflection in the window.

THEA  
-- even when the monsters are close.

Fritz lets her go. Immobilized, he drifts to the floor.

EXT. AIRFIELD -- DAY

Large industrial hangar along the outskirts of Berlin.

INT. ZEPPELIN HANGAR -- CONTINUOUS

The structure housing a sleekly designed AIRSHIP with a prominent Nazi Swastika symbol on its fin.

Fritz and the Nero-Film Investors stride past the massive rudder as they survey the space as a potential stage.

The interior MORPHING into an exterior tenement building.

INT. MURDERER'S ROOM, TENEMENT BUILDING -- NIGHT

The MURDERER sits at a windowsill, his back to us, writing a poison pen letter. As we slowly PUSH IN on his back --

-- Peter Lorre, dressed in Hans Beckert's trademark overcoat, spins around, stares directly into the lens and says --

PETER LORRE  
I can't do it.

A scaffold above leads to Fritz, seated beside a camera on tripod operated by WAGNER, the photographer.

FRITZ  
Cut! Cut! Cut!

PULL BACK to reveal the tenement building is a set for "M".

INT. "M" SET, NERO-FILM STUDIO -- MOMENTS LATER

Peter Lorre and Fritz standing off to the side near wardrobe and props.

PETER LORRE  
I can't do it.

FRITZ  
It's a black box. Think of it as  
the audience.

PETER LORRE  
No, I can't --

FRITZ  
What?

PETER LORRE  
Whistle. I can't whistle.

FRITZ  
You never said anything.

PETER LORRE  
You never asked.

FRITZ  
Don't be ridiculous, put your lips  
together like this --

Fritz whistles a few bars of the Gynt tune.

Peter Lorre blows and blows, nothing but air.

FRITZ  
Stop! It's torture. You could  
inflate the Graf Zeppelin with all  
that hot air.

PETER LORRE  
I'm sorry, Fritzy.

FRITZ

Actors fence, ride horses, charm  
snakes, but you can't whistle.

PETER LORRE

I err...err...err...fence.

FRITZ

Nevermind, just stand on your mark  
and try saying your line without  
spitting.

PETER LORRE

(stirred)

Err...err...you never said I would  
be playing a compulsive murderer of  
children.

FRITZ

It's a sympathetic role.

PETER LORRE

Sympathetic? Rape. Murder.

FRITZ

It's a crime which he resents very  
much afterwards.

PETER LORRE

My heart's bleeding for him, but I'm  
the one who has to get under the  
skin of a psychopath.

FRITZ

Hans Beckert is a murderer,  
Peter Lorre is a matinee idol.

PETER LORRE

I don't know if I can do it.

FRITZ

Pathos. Catharsis. Channel it.

Peter, issuing one of his hesitant smiles.

PETER LORRE

I could have spent the morning  
tending to my roses.

Fritz looks around to the crew, angrily announces --

FRITZ

That's an hour for lunch.

Peter Lorre scuttles off to his trailer. Fritz waves a  
production assistant over.

FRITZ  
Keep him docile. No matter what it takes. I can't afford to lose the day.

Production designers KARL VOLLBRECHT and EMIL HASLER approach.

KARL  
We looked over your renderings for the final scene.

FRITZ  
It's important that the kangaroo court look absolutely authentic, you understand.

EMIL  
I'll draw up some blueprints.

Fritz spots something from the corner of his eye --

FRITZ  
Lohmann.

He marches across the stage towards Lohmann, now camouflaged behind a cookaloris.

FRITZ  
What the hell are you doing here?

A MAN with similar stature to Lohmann, cowers.

FRITZ  
You're not Lohmann.

MAN  
I didn't mean to inter --

FRITZ  
Did Lohmann send you?

MAN  
Lohmann?

FRITZ  
What do you want?

MAN  
Nothing, sir.

FRITZ  
Who let you in here, huh?

MAN  
We haven't worked together. I'm Adolf Jansen your sound --

FRITZ

Sound?

MAN

Recordist, sir.

PETER LORRE'S DRESSING ROOM

Peter Lorre makes terrible faces in the mirror trying to get into character.

KNOCK at the door.

PETER LORRE

Err...err, yes --

A MAN with a MEDICINE BAG enters.

PETER LORRE

I didn't ask for a physician.

MAN

I'm not a physician.

He opens the bag and removes a syringe and vial of MORPHINE.

PETER LORRE

Who are you?

MAN

The gardener.

He fills the syringe with fluid and injects the needle in Peter Lorre's arm vein.

PETER LORRE

What are you doing!

THE GARDENER

Tending to the roses.

Peter Lorre's head lolls back. His eyelids flutter and then amplify to unveil blossoming irises.

His pupil morphing into a hypnotic spinning spirals --

INT. "M" SET, NERO-FILM STUDIO -- LATER

-- PULL OUT to reveal that the hypnotic spinning spiral is a display hanging in a BOOKSHOP window next to a huge arrow phallicly bobbing up and down.

A YOUNG GIRL stares, fascinated by the continual motion.

The blood-thirsty Hans Beckert/Peter Lorre sets off after the vulnerable girl.

The girl runs to her mother. We FOLLOW them along the pavement, arms around each other, as they pass the Hans Beckert, who has ducked inside the bookshop doorway.

Eyes drooping, mouth hanging open, Hans Beckert sways in a nervous fit. Puts his hands on his chest, nervously scratching them.

Fritz next to the camera.

FRITZ

Cut!

(beat)

That was brilliant, Peter.

PETER LORRE

You really liked it, Fritzy.

FRITZ

Absolutely believable.

Peter Lorre's not acting, he's doped up. Staggering away --

PETER LORRE

By the pricking of my thumbs,  
something wicked this way comes.

FRITZ

Macbeth.

PETER LORRE

Err...err...Macbeth.

Fritz waves Wagner over.

FRITZ

Get the film to the lab. I want to  
see rushes first thing tomorrow.

INT. "M" SET, NERO-FILM STUDIO -- LATER

Most of the crew have wrapped. Fritz in front of a microphone recording the Gynt whistle himself (Peter Lorre's famous whistle in "M").

BOOM OPERATOR wearing headphones, listens to a crude wireless transmitter, trying to stay awake. His eyes snap open.

BOOM OPERATOR

They caught him. They caught him!

He tunes the antenna, turns up the crackling volume --

RADIO NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)  
This is a special announcement from  
Radio Berlin: the Monster of Dusseldorf  
has been apprehended. The murderer,  
identified as 48 year-old Peter Kurten,  
has confessed to 79 offenses including  
sex crimes and murders and if found  
guilty will be sentenced to death by  
guillotine. Kurten told police that  
he urged his wife to turn him in for  
the reward money. He was according to  
friends, a most unlikely murderer. We  
repeat...

The blood drains from Fritz's face.

EXT. PRISON, ALEXANDERPLATZ -- DAY

Cold stratum of guard towers and well-fortified gates.

A throng of citizens surround a prison bus stopped outside  
the iron-barred entrance. Fritz amongst them, vacillating  
in the tumultuous motion.

The bus door opens and a PRISON GUARD shouts --

PRISON GUARD  
Prisoner eins-sieben-null-null-eins.

PETER KURTEN (Monster of Dusseldorf), meek and hardly  
dangerous looking, is ushered off the bus by flanking guards  
and paraded along the crowd.

Shackled to steel collar and chains, Kurten is forced to  
take baby steps, flinching under the barrage of shouts and  
jeers. Above, tower guards CLACK and train their rifles.

Fritz is pulled along by the current of the crowd, almost  
dragging him under, until cresting right in front of Kurten.  
Fritz close to his ear, discreetly mutters --

FRITZ  
How do you live with what you've  
done? I need to know.

Peter Kurten stops. Processes it.

As he's pulled away, Kurten turns to Fritz, offering a glimpse  
into the monster --

PETER KURTEN  
It's going to snow.

A SIREN BLASTS from the tower, followed a loud THRUM as the  
iron doors swallow Kurten.

Fritz shoots his eyes to the sky, it's never more clear.

EXT. FRITZ'S HOUSE -- DAY

Fritz climbs out of a taxicab, returning home. A group of neighborhood children are playing soccer the street.

Relieved that they're safe from the monster, Fritz kicks the ball around with them, when a SHADOW passes over his eyes. Looks up at something that stops him dead --

-- a titan FLAG of Third Reich support above his door, stirred by the wind.

Fritz eyes fill with sadness. Emotional.

Behind him, a dark car squeals to a halt at the curb. TWO DETECTIVES inside. The one behind the wheel pokes his head out the window --

DETECTIVE  
Get in, Lang.

INT. HOLDING ROOM, ALEX -- LATER

The detectives and their POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER, scrutinize Fritz like a mannequin on display.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
We know you struck a deal with the Herr Ott in exchange for your own neck.

FRITZ  
That's an outrageous lie.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
Really, then why is that yid prick and his cronies on the payroll for your picture -- would you like to see the ledger?

FRITZ  
Extras.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
Extras?

FRITZ  
What's the harm, they're just ordinary citizens in need of a little money for their families and struggling businesses.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
They're pick-pockets, con-men,  
burglars, and safe-breakers.

FRITZ  
Sure, now that you don't need them.  
Now that you've caught your monster.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
I've heard you're arrogant.

FRITZ  
Lohmann footnote, no doubt.  
(shouting)  
I know you're listening Lohmann!

The detectives look at each other puzzled.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
You have blood on your hands,  
Mr. Lang. So listen carefully,  
last day of shooting at the blimp  
hangar, when those low-life scum  
have gathered for your big climactic  
scene --

FRITZ  
Who told you that?

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
-- we're going to dispatch a force  
to systematically take the Berlin  
underground down.

FRITZ  
Why come to me? Wait, you don't  
expect me to play along?

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
You're one of the most beloved figures  
in Germany. Above suspicion.

FRITZ  
You know what they do to snitches.  
I'll be exterminated -- my corpse  
plucked from the Blue Danube.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
So you won't help us?

FRITZ  
I would rather plummet from Golden  
Lizzy's wings.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
(to Detectives)  
Throw him in the clinker.

FRITZ  
On what charge?

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
Failure to aid a police investigation.  
Colluding with criminal elements.  
You'll get two years, longer if I'm  
inclined to reopen the investigation  
into your first wife's murder.

FRITZ  
You mean suicide.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
Murder, self-murder -- same guilt.

FRITZ  
I want to speak to Lohmann, right now.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
Lohmann's dead.

FRITZ  
What?

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
Working the Monster of Dusseldorf  
case nearly drove him mad before his  
ticker gave.

FRITZ  
That's impossible.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
I don't know what fantasy world you're  
living in, Lang -- but trust me,  
prison's no fairy story.

Fritz trying to process it. The Chief Commander nods to the  
detectives who pull handcuffs.

FRITZ  
Wait a minute!

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
Leave a man alone in a cell for a  
couple of days and a lot comes back  
to him that he couldn't remember  
before.

Fritz turns to the window, eyebrows furrowing. It's SNOWING.

INT. HALLWAY, ALEX -- LATER

Cops with snow on their boots and jackets pass by Fritz as he heads for the door. Before exiting, Fritz glimpses a photograph of Lohmann mounted on the wall.

PUSH IN on the caption underneath:

**IN MEMORIAL CHIEF INSPECTOR LOHMAN 1880 - 1925**

Fritz jolted. His mind churning. Puts on his hat and disappears into the hypnotic falling snow.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE BERLIN -- EVENING

Snow assaulting the city like mortar shells.

INT. BEDROOM, FRITZ'S HOUSE -- LATER

Fritz enters to find Thea is in bed, nearly asleep.

THEA

It's snowing.

FRITZ

I know.

THEA

You look pale, like you've seen a spook.

FRITZ

You weren't at the studio today.

THEA

I had an engagement.

Fritz bends down, kisses her on the cheek.

FRITZ

Cocktails with the Minister of Propaganda, no doubt?

THEA

You're obviously upset.

FRITZ

Why are you in bed?

THEA

I took a sleeping tablet.

FRITZ

You never do that.

THEA

I fell.

FRITZ

Fell?

THEA

Mmmm, stairs. I'm always tripping up.

FRITZ

Sure it wasn't while you were hanging  
that gigantic flag of party support  
above the door?

THEA

I'm just an errand boy. It's you  
they want.

FRITZ

(re. ankle)

It's swollen, you need a doctor.

THEA

You can't sleepwalk forever, Friedel.  
Berlin is changing.

His worst fears confirmed.

FRITZ

You joined the party.

Ayi Tendulkar comes through the door with a cold compress.  
Fritz a deer caught in the headlights.

THEA

Ayi's a doctor. I asked him to come.

AYI TENDULKAR

It's nice to meet you. Regrettable  
that it's under these circumstances.

FRITZ

(seething beneath)

Truly, regrettable.

AYI TENDULKAR

Our girl sprained her ankle. I've  
given her something for the pain.  
Couple of days, she'll be back to  
climbing mountains.

FRITZ

Kilimanjaro, perhaps.

AYI TENDULKAR

Perhaps. Well, I should go.

THEA

You'll catch your death in this, let me  
send for a car.

AYI TENDULKAR

I enjoy the walk. Good-night.

Ayi leaves. Fritz looks to Thea for help in understanding.

FRITZ

How much do they know, Thea?

THEA

Fritz...

FRITZ

How much?

THEA

I have nothing to hide.

FRITZ

Did you give them the manuscript?

THEA

They've liked what they've seen so  
far, very much.

FRITZ

They've watched it?

THEA

Roughly assembled footage, that's all.

FRITZ

They'll destroy it.

THEA

They can help us.

FRITZ

They'll take the scissors to it.  
Make it an example and then proudly  
parade it as part of their propaganda  
machine.

THEA

Please, with your professional pity.

FRITZ

You have no idea what they're capable  
of, they're probably in the neighbors  
toilet listening to us right now.

THEA

Are you really that deluded?

FRITZ

You deceived me.

THEA

No, I saved you!

FRITZ

Who's deluded, now?

(beat)

I've never loved anyone as I loved you.

THEA

I'm sorry, this is difficult for me?

FRITZ

You've always had trouble writing endings.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. FRITZ'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

CLOSE on the Nazi flag waving above the door, the **SWASTIKA** morphing into --INT. "**M**" SET, NERO-FILM STUDIO -- DAY-- **"M"**, Hans Beckert's trademark letter on the back shoulder of his jacket as WARDROBE presents it for Fritz's approval.

FRITZ

It's Hans Beckert's badge of shame.  
His scarlet letter. Larger.

PETER LORRE'S DRESSING ROOM

The Gardener arrives with his medicine bag. Peter Lorre ushers him inside, closing the door behind them.

STAGE

Fritz going over his shot list, when Herr Ott approaches.

HERR OTT

Excuse, please.

Herr Ott hands Fritz a bottle of gin.

HERR OTT

Go ahead, we're toasting.

FRITZ

I'm not going to have a seizure and drop dead am I?

HERR OTT  
It's safe, but you drink first just  
in case.

FRITZ  
What are we toasting to?

HERR OTT  
To clear conscience or poor memory, eh?

Fritz almost chokes as he knocks it back.

A CLANG OF STEEL as the hangar doors are hoisted and a swarm  
of UNDERGROUND CRIMINALS flood into the studio.

FRITZ  
My god, how many are there?

HERR OTT  
Hundred, maybe more.

FRITZ  
We agreed on twenty five.

HERR OTT  
Take this lot to nab the monster.

FRITZ  
It's a picture.

HERR OTT  
Your picture.

Clearly doped up, Peter Lorre exits his dressing room. Herr  
Ott sizes up the human cartoon caricature approaching --

HERR OTT  
We'll make him squeal like a pig  
stuck under a gate.

Herr Ott joins his cronies as Peter Lorre reaches Fritz.

PETER LORRE  
Fritzy, I want to talk to you about  
my motivation in the finale scene.

Fritz nods the angry mob that Herr Ott is rousing.

FRITZ  
Don't worry, they'll help you find it.

PETER LORRE  
They look like a rough bunch.

FRITZ  
Extras.

PETER LORRE  
Err...what are they playing?

FRITZ  
Themselves.

INT. "M" SET, NERO-FILM STUDIO -- LATER

CAMERA PULLS BACK WIDE revealing the catacomb set for the climatic kangaroo courtroom scene in "M".

Fritz behind the camera, adjusts his monocle.

FRITZ  
Quite please. Camera. Sound. Speed.  
Aaaaand action.

CAMERA PANS across the faces of Herr Ott, Udo, and other mob members as Peter Lorre/Hans Beckert is shoved down the steps for trial (the mob treating him like they've caught the real monster).

Fritz comprehends that he's lost control of his film to the real mob, but it doesn't matter because what he's getting is better than he imagined.

Morphine fueled and genuinely frightened by his fellow actors, Peter Lorre sweats, pants, pleads and squeals his way through Hans Beckert's writhing and primal confession --

PETER LORRE/HANS BECKERT  
I can't help myself! I haven't any control over this evil thing that's inside me -- the fire, the voices, the torment! Always...always, there's this evil force inside me. Silently, but I can feel it there. It's me, pursuing myself. I want to escape... to escape from myself, but it's impossible. I can't. I can't escape. I have to obey it. I have to run...run...streets...endless streets. I want to escape. I want to get away. And I am pursued by ghosts. Ghosts of mothers. And those children. They never leave me.

Fritz mouthing the lines along with Lorre when he spots a hauntingly familiar face in the mob --

-- L, his dead wife. How can this be? He looks back again, but the ghost is gone.

Unbeknownst to Fritz, Thea is in the studio listening to every word of dialogue.

Her face pained as it slowly sinks in that she's hearing Fritz's self-confession.

PETER LORRE/HANS BECKERT

I see the posters and I read what I've done. I read...and...and read. Did I do that? But I can't remember anything about it, but who will believe me? Who knows what it feels like to be me? How I'm forced to act...

(eyes close to ecstasy)

How I must...don't want to, but must. And then a voice screams...I can't bear to hear it. I can't...I can't go on. Can't go on...can't go on. Can't go on...

The crew and cast turn to Fritz, wait breathlessly --

FRITZ

Cut! Brilliant!

WAGNER

Do you want to go again?

Fritz nervously checks his watch.

FRITZ

Brilliant. Print it. That was your finest moment, Peter.

Peter Lorre stomps up to Fritz and takes a swing. He ducks just in time.

FRITZ

What was that for?

PETER LORRE

That wasn't acting. That was real. You saw them, they practically crucified me.

(beat)

It was good, wasn't it.

Peter Lorre issues a hesitant smile as two stage hands restrain him and escort him off the stage. En route to his waiting car, Peter Lorre passes by Thea --

PETER LORRE

Powerful words.

THEA

I didn't write them.

Thea looks at Fritz one last time before exiting the stage doors forever. Fritz never aware that she was ever there.

The lights power down and the crew begin packing equipment.

Fritz races over to Herr Ott and his cronies, who are ambling through the studio preparing to leave. Fritz trying to warn them --

FRITZ

You should go now. All of you.

Fritz and Herr Ott trade a look.

Suddenly the carbon-arc lights bump on in sequence.

POLICE ON BULLHORN (O.S.)

This is the police. This is a raid.

Nobody move. Get your papers ready.

MOB WOMAN

Coppers!

POLICE WHISTLES as OFFICERS burst through, storming the stage.

Entrances and exits blocked. Cops draw batons. The mob prepare for a fight.

Heavy breathing bellowing, Fritz not sure whether to run or hide as Herr Ott's stare digs into him.

HERR OTT

They can't hold us on trumped charges for long, Lang. When we come for you, it will be from all sides, like Mosquitoes at a picnic.

CRANE UP, the place goes nuts.

INT. FRITZ'S HOME -- DAY

Fritz enters the particularly quiet house calling out for --

FRITZ

Thea!

Frau Nussbaum shuffles down the stairs.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

She's gone, Mr. Fritz.

FRITZ

Gone for the evening?

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Gone for good.

FRITZ

What?

FRAU NUSSBAUM

She went to the studio to tell you.  
Said someone would come round for  
the rest of her things.

Fritz heads for the door, prepared to find her.

FRITZ

Where is she?

FRAU NUSSBAUM

India.

EXT. STREET, APARTMENT BUILDING -- EVENING

Neighborhood of upscale walk-ups.

Waiting Taxicab idles in the street.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

Fritz, carrying a briefcase, climbs the angular staircase to the upper level. A radio, somewhere, is suddenly silenced.

Fritz finds the door, knocks...

INT. JOE MAY'S APARTMENT -- DAY

Several knocks bring Joe May to the door. He looks through peephole. Opens the door a crack.

FRITZ

Sorry, I know it's late.

JOE MAY

Do you want to see the armoire?

FRITZ

Yes.

Joe May removes the door chain, leads Fritz inside.

JOE MAY

Follow me.

The walls festooned with nail holes and faint outlines where paintings and tapestries once hung. Apartment in shambles, Joe May has fallen on hard times.

FRITZ  
What happened to your flat?

JOE MAY  
Put out cheese, the mice come. You look  
awful by the way.

Joe May's lover FREDERICK, an strapping Aryan wearing a silk kimono, hurriedly retreats to another room.

JOE MAY  
The armoire is there.

Fritz hands Joe May an ENVELOPE. He fans through a lump of banknotes.

JOE MAY  
This far surpasses the price we agreed  
on.

Fritz spots Joe's identical photograph of the two of them traveling abroad, youth and optimism on their side.

FRITZ  
Do you ever think about that time in  
the harbor? The Manhattan skyline.

JOE MAY  
I think about it.

FRITZ  
They wouldn't let us off the boat.

JOE MAY  
They were misguided.

FRITZ  
Time passes quickly, perhaps that's  
good.

JOE MAY  
Does Thea know you're here?

FRITZ  
Thea's gone.

JOE MAY  
The money's not for the armoire?

FRITZ  
No.

Fritz sets the briefcase in front of Joe May.

FRITZ  
Open it.

JOE MAY  
You're giving me heart palpitations.

Joe may hesitates.

FRITZ  
Open it, Joe.

JOE MAY  
Oh, Christ...

He lifts the briefcase lid. Inside TWO FILM REEL CANISTERS.

FRITZ  
It's the negative for "M". I want  
you to smuggle it out.

JOE MAY  
Sorry, the price for that is too high.

Suddenly the bedroom door snaps open and Frederick, now dressed a NAZI MILITARY UNIFORM steps out. He nods to Joe May before leaving.

JOE MAY  
An enemy is an enemy until they're  
you're friend.

FRITZ  
One has to keep their ear to the  
ground.

JOE MAY  
What kind of trouble are you in?

FRITZ  
The police. Berlin Underground.  
And Goebbel's knocks at my door.

JOE MAY  
This city is covered with a net of  
informers. Every square mile under  
surveillance. They will assemble  
themselves. They're like the Queen,  
able to navigate the board in any  
direction. You won't be able to  
move without causing a stir.

FRITZ  
I know it doesn't change things  
between us, Joe. But I ask for your  
forgiveness.

JOE MAY  
It doesn't work like that, Fritz.  
The past doesn't change for anyone.

SILENCE. Long beat.

JOE MAY  
Sit down.

INT. FRITZ'S HOME -- DAY

A persistent doorbell rings through the house.

BATHROOM

Depressed by Thea's departure, Fritz soaks in the bathtub with a pitcher of martinis. His monocle streamed up.

The doorbell again. Yelling to Frau Nussbaum downstairs --

FRITZ  
Frau Nussbaum, are you going to get that?

KITCHEN

Frau Nussbaum collects milk bottles from the dairyman at the back door.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Where's dairyman Schmidt?

We recognize Udo in disguise by the tattoo on his chin, he's been released from jail.

UDO  
Retired. Two marks, ma'am.

As she hands over the money, Udo gets a good look inside, casing the house before the door closes.

The decisive doorbell again.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
I'm coming...I'm coming.

Frau Nussbaum unties her apron as she heads for the front door this time, leaving a pot of eggs boiling on the stove.

LIVING ROOM

HAMMERING AT THE DOOR

Frau Nussbaum opens the door to find SS OFFICER KRAUSE and THREE NAZI STORMTROOPERS waiting on the stoop. They invade the house with authority.

Fritz races down the stairs wearing a bathrobe.

FRITZ  
What's the meaning of this?

SS OFFICER KRAUSE  
Herr Lang we have orders to confiscate  
the film negative for "M" and  
immediately accompany you to the  
Reichspropagandaministers office.

Fritz's eyes dart nervously around the room.

FRITZ  
Confiscate the film, why?

SS OFFICER KRAUSE  
We have our orders.

FRITZ  
I'm afraid the film negative is at  
the lab. Composites are being printed  
for its release.

The Stormtroopers look at one another in confusion, not sure  
what to do.

SS OFFICER KRAUSE  
(to Fritz)  
Get dressed.

The Stormtroopers search room-to-room as Fritz heads upstairs.

BEDROOM

Fritz rushes into the wardrobe and grabs a trouser and jacket  
with stiff collar.

He picks up the telephone and begins dialing when he realizes  
that he can't get a dial tone. Grasping that someone  
downstairs is listening in, he slowly replaces the phone to  
its cradle, stands there looking at it.

Fritz slides open the bureau drawer and stares at his trusty  
Browning. Slams the drawer closed.

As he dresses, he quickly scribbles something onto stationary,  
folds it in half.

LIVING ROOM

SS Officer Krause stares at Frau Nussbaum in a motionless  
rage, her Jewishness unmistakable to him.

SS OFFICER KRAUSE  
Where's the mistress of the house?

As Fritz descends the stairway --

FRITZ  
Trekking Mount Kilimanjaro with her  
Indian lover. I'll get my hat.

Handing Frau Nussbaum the note.

FRITZ  
Few things needed at market.

Frau Nussbaum's eyes widen.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Right away, Mister Fritz.

Frau Nussbaum grabs her coat and heads for the front door, but SS Officer Krause blocks her in the doorway. Seizes the note in her hand.

CLOSE ON note: Eggs, milk, sausage, sweets.

SS Officer Krause folds the note and hands it back.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Almost forgot the basket.

Frau Nussbaum retrieves the shopping basket near Fritz before leaving.

The Nazi's turn their gaze to Fritz.

CLOSE ON the eggs in the pot in the kitchen. They roil under the intense heat.

INT. KAISER WILHELM CHURCH -- LATER

A priest performing Mass to a few scattered parishioners.

Joe May and a couple of BLACK MARKET HAWKERS are staggered in pews doing business.

HAWKER #1  
Old man Goldberg succumbed. China,  
some silver, and a rare cartography  
collection.

JOE MAY  
Wedgwood candlesticks?

HAWKER #2  
Counterfeit.

JOE MAY  
It'll be our little secret.

Joe May crosses out a note scribbled in a little pad.

JOE MAY  
Saffron.

HAWKER #3  
Gem?

JOE MAY  
Spice. Chef at the Excelsior will  
pay top dollar.

Joe May flips the pad closed, crosses himself as he gets up.  
Frau Nussbaum standing in the aisle. She hands him a note  
from Fritz.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Mr. Fritz put it in the basket. Did  
all the shopping before I found it.

The shopping basket falls and eggs break open at their feet.

EXT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA -- CONTINUOUS

A monster of stone and concrete on Wilhelmsplatz, across  
from the Chancellery and Hotel Kaiserhof.

The library on the corner is being ransacked and an organized  
book burning conducted on the pavement.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA -- CONTINUOUS

Massive, echoing. Fritz and his escorts make there way down  
a seemingly endless corridor. SA Brownshirts with guns pass.

SS OFFICER KRAUSE  
(to Fritz)  
Wait here.

Classic paintings hang in the corridor. At the end,  
Rembrandt's final portrait.

EXT. STREET -- LATER

An old Mercedes haphazardly parked.

Joe May hurriedly loads the briefcase with the film canisters  
with the negative for "M" into the trunk.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA -- LATER

Fritz anxiously awaiting his meeting with Propaganda Minister  
Goebbels, when there's a bustle of activity outside his door.

GOEBBELS WIFE and SEVEN CHILDREN have arrived with a lunch basket and are ushered into the Propaganda Ministers office.

Fritz checks his watch, idles.

EXT. GERMAN COUNTRYSIDE -- LATER

AERIAL SHOT follows Joe May's Mercedes on a icy serpentine route, running through woods.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA -- LATER

Fritz looks pensively at his reflection in the window.

INT. JOE MAY'S MERCEDES (MOVING) -- LATER

Fat snow flakes pelt the window and as the windshield wipers drag them away, a boarder check point comes into view.

SS BOARDER GUARD exits the guardshack, raising his arm for the driver to stop.

Joe May nervous until spotting Frederick, his lover and inside contact, in the guardshack. Relieved, Joe May rolls down the window.

SS BOARDER GUARD  
Passport.

JOE MAY  
Here you are.

But Frederick will not make eye contact with Joe May, in fact he turns up the radio in the guardshack.

Another SS BOARDER GUARD comes from behind, checking under the car with a mirror and a DOG that sniffs for bombs.

The dog nears the trunk. The dog starts barking.

The tail lights and tailpipe exhaust pierce the cold.

INT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA -- LATER

Fritz stares at the inscription on an accommodation plaque:

***"Reichspropagandaminister Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels"***

Goebbels voice startles him --

GOEBBELS (O.S.)  
Sixteen vowels.

Goebbels, dressed in his party uniform, raises his hand in salute. Fritz nervously reciprocates.

GOEBBELS  
Come this way, Mr. Lang.

Fritz follows Goebbels as he limps back to his office. Goebbels seven children swarm them as they enter.

GOEBBELS  
My wife Magda and my children.

FRITZ  
Pleasure.

GOEBBELS  
Children, this is Fritz Lang.  
The most famous film director in  
all of Germany.

The children sheepishly grin. Goebbels digs in his pocket --

GOEBBELS  
Little mice, what do we have here...

-- pulls out handful of chocolates.

GOEBBELS  
Sweets for my sweethearts. Harald,  
Helga, Hildegard, Helmut, Hegwig,  
Holdine, Heidrun.

Goebbels pecks Magda on the cheek.

GOEBBELS  
Run along now with your mother now  
children.

INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

A sizable and nearly empty office, at the end Goebbels desk. Fritz stands uncomfortably in front of Goebbels like a child in need of reprimanding.

GOEBBELS  
Have a seat.

FRITZ  
There is no chair.

GOEBBELS  
Did you read Brecht's quote in this  
mornings newspaper?

FRITZ

"Where one burns books, one eventually burns people."

GOEBBELS

It's true Germany's artist and intellectuals are waking up late in the day, but they are waking up.

SS Officer Krause enters with TWO WING-BACKED CHAIRS, setting them in front of Goebbels desk before leaving.

GOEBBELS

Please...

Fritz takes a seat, stares at the third chair.

FRITZ

Will someone be joining us?

Goebbels drags his club foot around the desk and opens his diary to a particular entry. Reads his notation:

GOEBBELS

Thursday, May 21st, 1933 -- Magda and I saw the rough assembly for "M". Fantastic! Against humanitarian soppiness for the death penalty. Well made. Fritz Lang will be our director one day.

FRITZ

You flatter me, Herr Minister.

GOEBBELS

I saw a dreadful picture last night. American. A man in a loin cloth running around with monkeys. It won't see the light of day in Germany.

(beat)

Look, I am terribly sorry but we have to confiscate your film.

FRITZ

Confiscate, why?

GOEBBELS

I assure you it's just the ending we didn't like. It lacked the ideals to save it from a perverted and inconclusive ending.

FRITZ

I don't understand.

GOEBBELS  
The Fuhrer despised it.

FRITZ  
The Fuhrer watched it?

GOEBBELS  
Found the influence of America's  
cultural invasion on the motion  
picture bothersome.

FRITZ  
It's a German picture.

GOEBBELS  
"Metropolis" and "Die Nibelungen",  
are German films.

(beat)  
Hitler wants you to serve as the  
architect of a new agency supervising  
motion picture production in the  
Third Reich.

FRITZ  
My father wanted me to be an architect.

GOEBBELS  
Nazi's Fuhrer of film.

Hearing it gives Fritz pause, he suddenly realizes the depth  
of trouble he is in.

FRITZ  
Again, you flatter me.

GOEBBELS  
Not everyone is qualified for culture.

FRITZ  
I assure you that I take your offer  
very seriously and intend to weigh  
it carefully.

There's no hiding Goebbels displeasure.

GOEBBELS  
It does not go unnoticed that a  
banner of party approval is raised  
over your house.  
(beat)  
Do you consider yourself a Catholic?

Goebbels, tapping into what haunts Fritz. Mustering a curt  
riposte...

FRITZ

I assure you, you won't find any  
atheists in the trenches.

GOEBBELS

What is your creed?

FRITZ

I consider myself a German patriot.  
(beat)  
And a Catholic.

GOEBBELS

It comes through the mother, one's  
being or not being a Jew.

FRITZ

There was a conversion. Catholic.  
There are records.

GOEBBELS

Priest for marriage, Rabbi for dying.

Fritz accepts the comment as someone aware of their fate.

GOEBBELS

Irony of ironies, the man with the  
monocle is virtually blind.

(beat)

Truth is you're only half. We know  
all about the 'flaw' you have.  
Setting aside your family, and  
naturally along with them your own  
Jewish heritage.

(beat)

This of course can be overlooked in  
light of your service during the  
Great War and contribution to Cinema.  
You see, we decide who is Jewish or  
not, Herr Lang.

Fritz realizes that he can no longer sleepwalk -- it's 1933  
and events will soon jar him awake.

GOEBBELS

You have twenty-four hours. Tic-toc.  
Oh, Herr Lang --

FRITZ

Yes.

Pointing to the empty chair --

GOEBBELS

The empty chair in the room is always  
Germany's interest.

A clock ticks somewhere in the room. The hands on the clock ticking toward a fateful hour.

EXT. MINISTRY OF PROPAGANDA -- CONTINUOUS

Fritz explodes through the doors and into the city square teeming with Berliners returning from factory jobs, lugging shopping, and pushing baby prams.

INT. GOEBBELS OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

SS Officer Krause enters and repossesses the two chairs.

GOEBBELS

Wait.

SS OFFICER KRAUSE

Sir?

Krause balancing the chairs in his hands like a scale. Goebbels considers them as if trying to deliberate a question.

GOEBBELS

He's going to run.

SS OFFICER KRAUSE

Sir?

GOEBBELS

Go after him. I want Fritz Lang arrested immediately.

EXT. CITY SQUARE -- CONTINUOUS

HIGH ANGLE of the Victory Column, Fritz crosses underneath Golden Lizzy's wings.

An UNDERGROUND MOB MEMBER following Fritz, opens the hatch door on a cage and releases a PIGEON into the air --

INT. UNDERGROUND MOB LAIR -- MOMENTS LATER

-- the PIGEON flies into its designated stall. Then a second later, another PIGEON flies into a stall.

Herr Ott draws the corresponding line on the map, tracking Fritz's movements.

HERR OTT

Smoke him out.

Underground mob members study the map, contemplating.

INT. KITCHEN, FRITZ'S HOUSE -- LATER

Frau Nussbaum chanting a Kiddush prayer, ceases the ritual at the sound of a key turning in the lock.

As Fritz enters --

FRITZ  
Did you find Joe May?

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Jah, gave him letter.

FRITZ  
Good.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
What did they do to you, Mr. Fritz?

Fritz looks at the poor man's Seder on the table and hand-embroidered Star of David on the sash around her neck.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Seder, day of the Exodus.

FRITZ  
I remember. Go on, we drink together.

Touched, Frau Nussbaum pours the wine into two glasses.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
To rid the nightmares.

FRITZ  
(toasting)  
Day of the Exodus.

Frau Nussbaum lowers her glass, intuitively knowing --

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
You're leaving.

FRITZ  
I could send for you in a few months.  
Come work for me once I'm settled.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
Where?

FRITZ  
Paris. London. United States. I  
don't know.

FRAU NUSSBAUM  
I could never leave my home.

FRITZ

Black clouds are amassing over this country. Soon there will be no home.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

I'm German. It's in my bones.

Suddenly, POUNDING on the front door.

FRITZ

Promise me you'll get out.

Frau Nussbaum blows out the candle. HOLD ON the black smoke rising.

Fritz races upstairs to the bedroom. Unlocks the combination wall safe and hurls the money inside into a suitcase.

Frau Nussbaum shuffles into the room with Fritz's coat.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Hurry, there's no time.

OUTSIDE

SS Officer Krause POUNDS on the front door, signals for some stormtroopers to go around back.

INSIDE

Fritz backs away from the door, realizing that he's surrounded.

FRAU NUSSBAUM

The roof, hurry!

Fritz races upstairs to the only exit left -- the bathroom, where L died. Can barely bring himself to open the door.

BATHROOM

Fritz contemplates the spot where L lay in a pool of blood.

Goes to the slip-up window and hoists it open.

FRITZ'S STUDY

Frau Nussbaum peers over Fritz's desk reading a handwritten letter bequeathing all his worldly possessions to her.

ROOFTOP

Fritz lifts himself onto the pitched roof. He's on the edge, the only thing between him and an ugly drop is sheer determination. The Ferris Wheel swirling behind him.

Bringing us back to the opener...

...only now it's from the PERSPECTIVE OF HIS PURSUERS.

ROOFTOP

From the ground, tucked in the shadows, Udo follows Fritz, leather suitcase in hand, maneuvering the steeply sloped shoal of chimneystacks.

FRITZ'S HOUSE

SS Officer Krause and the stormtroopers burst through the doors, systematically going room to room searching the house. Frau Nussbaum enters from the kitchen.

SS BOARDER GUARD

Where is he?

FRAU NUSSBAUM

Shul, Day of the Exodus.

The stormtroopers gather around Krause, confirming that Fritz is indeed gone.

Krause tilts his head, looking at her --

SS OFFICER KRAUSE

(to Stormtroopers)

I want a search of every train station.

INT. UNDERGROUND MOB LAIR -- CONTINUOUS

Several pigeons in their stalls now, Herr Ott scrutinizes the map dotted with pins.

HERR OTT

(to gang)

He's leaving Berlin.

The mob members grabbing their bats, knifes, brass knuckles, and pickaxes before heading out.

EXT. CANAL -- LATER

A fog enshrouded TRESTLE BRIDGE.

BOOTS CLINK confidently on the iron bridgework. The man in the herringbone Trenchcoat slides a KNIFE from his pocket. Glinting light flickers off the serrated blade as it's unsheathed.

PAN-UP to reveal that it's Udo following Fritz. He increases his gait, trying to close the distance.

INT. ALEX -- CONTINUOUS

RING. Desk phone. Police Chief Commander, picks up.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
(into phone)  
Yeah.

Slams the phone down.

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
(to squad)  
Lang was just spotted buying one way ticket to Paris.

DETECTIVE  
Paris?

POLICE CHIEF COMMANDER  
Get the dogs.

INT. PLATFORM, RAILWAY STATION -- LATER

A MOB MEMBER opens up his birdcages as he spots Fritz going through the turnstile, heading towards the northbound line.

A FLOCK OF CARRIER PIGEONS explode high overhead.

The *Flying Hamburger* idles on the tracks. Steam billows from its undercarriage, like a fire breathing dragon awaiting flight. The 10-car chortling beast loads passengers.

Suddenly WHISTLES AND FLASHLIGHTS proceed POLICEMEN led by GERMAN SHEPHERDS invading the platform with authority. SS Officer Krause and his stormtroopers converging with Herr Ott and his cronies, everyone hunting Fritz.

Grimacing faces. Glaring eyeballs. Arms extended into accusing fingers as they spot Fritz.

But it's too late, Fritz blunders for the trains handrail, pulling himself inside the moving railcar and disappearing through the steam like a ghost.

The wheels grind and the train lurches forward on the rails then gains speed and rolls out of the station.

INT. COMPARTMENT, FLYING HAMBURGER TRAIN -- LATER

We hang on Fritz's haunted reflection in the traincar window.  
The German countryside racing by.

LOHMAN (O.S.)  
Training for our 36' Olympics,  
Mr. Lang?

Fritz turns and see Lohmann sitting across from him, cigar clenched in his teeth.

FRITZ  
I thought you were dead?

LOHMAN  
I don't want to wear out my welcome  
and I can understand why you would  
think that, but trust me I have only  
your interests in mind.

Fritz looks at him carefully through the wafting smoke.

LOHMAN  
Didn't figure you for the running type.

FRITZ  
I was scared to death. They betrayed  
me, what was I supposed to do?

LOHMAN  
Whole country was betrayed, Fritz.

Fritz turns back to the window.

FRITZ  
There's no god back there. Not in  
Germany.

LOHMAN  
It isn't the place of our youth.

FRITZ  
They'll get away with it.

LOHMAN  
Nobody gets away with anything,  
that's my observation.

The car is plunged into darkness as the train bombs into a tunnel. Fritz's BROWNING SERVICE REVOLVER is sitting between them when the light returns.

LOHMAN

Look, I'm just asking you to meet me halfway. You can't refuse to admit reality in hope that it will go away. It doesn't work like that. We decide who we take to the dark.

FRITZ

What do you want?

LOHMAN

You know the answer to that question.

Car plunged into darkness as train bombs into the first of a quick chain of tunnels -- light returns.

LOHMAN

Bullet's in the chamber.

FRITZ

You want a confession? Well you're not going to get it.

LOHMAN

I didn't come here to discuss the terms.

Fritz eyes the BROWNING.

FRITZ

Simple shot to the head, isn't that what they taught us in the great war.

LOHMAN

Way I see it, it's just show business. Moment between ACTION and CUT, anything can happen.

Car is plunged into darkness as train bombs through another tunnel.

Sound of a GUNSHOT.

Light returns, the BROWNING is in Fritz's grip.

PAN OVER to a single BULLETHOLE dead center in the leather upholstery where Lohmann was seated opposite.

WIDE SHOT of compartment, Fritz sitting alone.

Fritz's face plunged into darkness as the train bombs into a tunnel.

## A VOICE (V.O.)

The end of genius is sometimes  
spectacular: A bomb's explosion. A  
madman's gibbering. An orgasmic  
suicide before a sell-out audience.  
A Faustian pact with the Devil in  
which nothing is left to chance.  
Sometimes, more often to be sure,  
it is lonely and most ordinary.

**"MY PRIVATE LIFE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH MY FILMS"**

***Fritz Lang***

**FRITZ LANG:**

Fritz Lang escaped Germany for the constraints of the Hollywood Studio System and was later stigmatized by the communist hysteria of the McCarthy era. His visual style was simplified and he was forced to make American Studio pictures. His worldview became increasingly bleak and pessimistic. He died in 1976. Extremely secretive about his personal life, he never spoke about his Jewish heritage or his wife's death in public interviews. "**M**" is considered his masterpiece.

**THEA VON HARBOU:**

Thea Von Harbou became a Nazi in 1932. She married Ayi Tendulkar. After the war she was detained by British military and forced into unskilled labor. She wrote 75 screenplays, including several with a Nazi stigma. In 1954, one of her first films was shown at a retrospective in Berlin. She was the guest of honor and slipped when leaving the theater. She died as a result of that fall. "**M**" is considered her masterpiece.

**PETER LORRE:**

After the filming of "**M**" Peter Lorre was plagued with death threats and hostile public crowds. Misunderstood and disillusioned, he went to the United States, where the roles he had to play were rarely suited to his talent. He underwent many treatments for drug addiction but never fully recovered. Frustration hounded him to an early death. "**M**" made Lorre a star.

**JOSEPH GOEBBELS:**

Following Hitler's death, Goebbels served as Chancellor for one day. He ordered the cyanide poisoning of his six children before he and his wife committed suicide.

**PAUL KURTEN "THE MONSTER OF DUSSELDORF":**

Paul Kurten confessed to 79 crimes. He was beheaded six weeks after the premiere of "**M**".