

SANCTUARY

Written by

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(Based on the true story of the Warsaw Zoo Resistance)

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FADE IN:

EXT. WARSAW ZOO - PRE-DAWN - FALL 1939

Fog drapes the silent zoo. Shadows cling to the iron bars of empty cages. An eerie quiet—no birdsong, no lion's roar. Only the wind through skeletal trees.

SUPER: "Warsaw, Poland - Days after the Nazi invasion"

In the distance, the guttural rumble of tanks. A dull boom. Glass windows rattle in their frames.

INT. ZOO ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME

ANTONINA ŻABIŃSKA (early 40s, gentle but resilient) stirs awake. A horse neighs outside—panicked.

Beside her, JAN ŻABIŃSKI (40s, stoic, pragmatic), pulls back the curtain. Fire glows on the horizon.

ANTONINA
It's getting closer.

JAN
It already is here.

A sudden CRACK—distant gunfire. Then another. Then silence again.

INT. ZOO STABLES - MOMENTS LATER

Jan rushes through straw-strewn aisles. He unchains a terrified Arabian horse. Its flanks tremble.

He runs his hand down its neck—calming it—not with words, but touch.

Outside, muffled boots tramp down the cobblestone street.

INT. ZOO ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - BASEMENT - SAME

Antonina descends into the cellar, past canned peaches and rusting tools. She pulls open a false wall behind the shelves.

Inside: Two young Jewish children, barely teens, huddle in silence.

ANTONINA (SOFTLY, IN POLISH)
Don't speak. Don't move.

She hands them a blanket, a small tin of food. One girl silently takes her hand.

Then—

BOOM. A thunderous impact shakes the walls. Plaster rains down.

EXT. ZOO GROUNDS - MINUTES LATER

German soldiers march in through the main gates. Their boots echo off cobblestone. A feldwebel barks orders.

Behind them—a Nazi officer in pristine leather: LIEUTENANT KELLER (late 30s, cold charm). He surveys the enclosures, unimpressed.

KELLER
A pity. Such beauty wasted on
Poles.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE - LATER

A lioness lies dying, a wound in her side. Jan kneels beside her.

JAN (TO HIMSELF)
They didn't even ask if she was
dangerous.

KELLER (O.S.)
We're not interested in animal
safety, Herr Zookeeper.

Jan looks up to find Keller watching him.

KELLER (CONT'D)
You're an educated man. Perhaps you
and your wife can make yourselves
useful.

JAN
We're zoologists. Not
collaborators.

Keller smiles—tight, cruel.

KELLER
No one stays neutral anymore.

He walks off. Two soldiers shoot a zebra just beyond the bars. Jan flinches.

FADE IN:

EXT. WARSAW ZOO - PRE-DAWN - FALL 1939

Mist clings to the bars of empty enclosures. A low fog blankets the walking paths. The zoo is silent.

SUPER: "Warsaw, Poland - Days after the Nazi invasion"

In the distance, the faint rumble of tanks.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE - CONTINUOUS

Beyond the treetops: fires flicker on the horizon. Distant shelling flashes in the clouds.

EXT. ZOO ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A quaint two-story house nestled among the trees. One of its windows is lit from within.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A candle flickers on a small nightstand.

ANTONINA ŻABIŃSKA (40s), refined, maternal, sits upright in bed, eyes wide open. She listens.

BOOM. A dull explosion in the distance.

She turns to her husband—

JAN ŻABIŃSKI (40s), still in his undershirt, standing at the window. His eyes are fixed on the horizon.

ANTONINA

Is it close?

JAN

Not close enough to stop them.

He pulls the curtain closed.

ANTONINA

We should send them deeper. Farther down.

JAN

We can't. If they hear movement—

Another BOOM. Louder. The window rattles.

They exchange a glance—fear, tightly held.

INT. ZOO STABLES - PRE-DAWN

Jan unlatches the door to the stables. Inside: horses snort nervously in their stalls.

He moves quickly, quietly.

JAN

Easy now. No screaming today.

He strokes the flank of a dappled Arabian mare.

CLACK. CLACK. CLACK.

Footsteps on cobblestones outside. Boots.

Jan freezes.

He blows out the lantern.

EXT. ZOO GATES - SAME

The heavy gates groan open.

A column of German soldiers marches in under cover of fog. Helmets, rifles, dogs.

Their breath steams in the cold.

Behind them rolls a command car. A polished Nazi officer steps out—

LIEUTENANT KELLER (late 30s), tall, angular, educated. Dead-eyed charm.

KELLER

Charming. A jungle in the middle of Poland.

INT. ZOO BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Antonina opens a cellar door. Creaks echo into the stone stairwell.

She descends.

The light from her candle bobs on the stone walls.

Behind crates and sandbags—two children, silent, hiding beneath burlap blankets. Pale. Watching.

Antonina crouches beside them. Offers a piece of bread and a small cup of water.

ANTONINA (SOFTLY)
Only speak when I speak first. And
if someone comes—

She places her hand over the boy's mouth gently.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
Like this.

EXT. ZOO ENCLOSURES - LATER THAT MORNING

Soldiers fan out.

A shot rings out—a young zebra drops in its pen.

Jan flinches from a distance.

JAN (MUTTERING)
God forgive them.

KELLER (O.S.)
Tell me, Herr Żabiński—do all your
animals make for easy targets?

Jan turns. Keller stands beside him.

JAN
You didn't come to see animals.

KELLER
No. I came to see if they're worth
preserving. Or repurposing.

JAN
They're endangered. Some are the
last of their kind.

KELLER
As are we all.

Keller smiles. Cold. Controlled.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Berlin will determine the zoo's future. But in the meantime...

(smiling slightly)

I'd like to see full cooperation. Surely you and your wife would rather care for creatures than become them.

EXT. ZOO GROUNDS - LATE MORNING

Cages. Empty. Quiet.

A rhinoceros paces behind bars, unsettled by the echo of shouted German.

Beyond the trees, a flaming rooftop crumbles in the city skyline.

INT. ZOO ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

A pot of water simmers on the stove.

Antonina moves through the kitchen in silence, watching steam rise.

Behind her, SABINA (20s), a young Jewish woman in tattered shoes, stands trembling, clutching a satchel.

SABINA

You shouldn't have let me in.
They'll find me.

ANTONINA

Not if you stay quiet. And not if you act like you're meant to be here.

She walks over, gently adjusting Sabina's coat.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)

You're our new maid. You speak little Polish. You smile. You sweep.

SABINA

I can't sweep.

ANTONINA

Then we'll teach you. But you'll live.

EXT. ZOO MAIN PATH - SAME

Keller walks with MAJOR GRÜN (50s), a thick-necked Wehrmacht officer with a clipboard.

They pass cages that now stand as graves.

KELLER

Most of the specimens are useless now. The bear died last night.

GRÜN

All property of the Reich.

KELLER

Of course. But some of these enclosures are sturdy. Steel bars. Trenches. Reinforced brick.

GRÜN

You want to house people here?

KELLER

Not people. But enemies.

He smiles faintly.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE - DUSK

Jan kneels beside the lioness corpse, now stiff. He covers her with a tarp, piece by piece.

A knock behind him.

ANTONINA (O.S.)

More are coming tonight.

Jan doesn't look up.

JAN

Where?

ANTONINA

The old monkey house. I've already started clearing it.

JAN

It won't hold in winter.

ANTONINA

They won't survive winter outside.

He stands.

JAN

We should be burying animals. Not
hiding people. It's backwards.

ANTONINA

No. It's exactly right.

He meets her gaze. Her eyes burn with conviction.

EXT. ZOO PERIMETER FENCE - NIGHT

A boy of fifteen, bruised and bleeding, ducks through a gap
in the outer wall.

He limps toward the zoo, clutching a folded note.

From the trees—a spotlight sweeps. A dog barks. A shot cracks
the night.

The boy freezes.

Then—Antonina's voice, low and steady:

ANTONINA (O.S.)

Come. Now.

She pulls him down into the brush. Guards march just beyond.

She covers his mouth.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)

You're safe. You made it.

He stares at her, eyes wide with terror.

INT. ZOO BASEMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Lit by candlelight.

Jan unfolds the note from the boy. Reads silently.

Antonina watches from the corner.

JAN

They're asking for passage for six
more. One of them is pregnant.

ANTONINA

We'll find a way.

JAN

It's not a shelter anymore. It's a network.

ANTONINA

Then we act like it.

EXT. WARSAW TRAM - MOVING - MORNING

A rickety electric tram clatters through a quiet neighborhood. Antonina, seated near the rear, clutches a woven basket filled with turnips and bread. Her face is calm—but her fingers tremble.

Outside, the streets bear the scars of bombardment. Rubble piles beside crumbled row houses. Windows boarded or shattered. A woman sweeps glass in silence.

The tram slows to a stop.

EXT. WARSAW STREET - CONTINUOUS

A small crowd has gathered at a makeshift German checkpoint ahead. Uniformed Wehrmacht soldiers shout in clipped, brutal Polish.

Antonina peers through the tram window. A tense hush hangs in the air.

At the center of the square: a boy, no older than 13, kneels in the mud. Blood stains his cheek. His hands are bound with wire.

A German officer addresses the crowd, barking in accented Polish.

GERMAN OFFICER

Caught carrying forged travel papers. A courier for the Judenrat. Let this be your warning.

Antonina stiffens. She knows what's coming.

The boy raises his eyes. He sees the crowd — not pleading, not crying. Just watching.

BOY (IN POLISH)

Tell my sister I tried.

Antonina's breath catches.

A gunshot cracks.

The boy slumps forward. Blood pools in the dirt.
Gasps ripple through the tram.

TRAM RIDER (QUIETLY)
Just a child...

Antonina stares out the window, unmoving, haunted.
The tram jerks forward.

INT. WARSAW TRAM - CONTINUOUS

Antonina blinks slowly. Clutches the basket tighter.

ANTONINA (WHISPERS)
He was the same age as Ryszard...

INT. ZOO STABLE - LATER THAT DAY

Jan splits firewood with swift, angry blows. One log after another.

Antonina enters. Her face pale. Her hands still shaking.

JAN
No flour again?

ANTONINA
No. And-

She can't say it. She just looks at him.

JAN (SOFTER)
What did you see?

Antonina finally meets his eyes.

ANTONINA
A boy. Kneeling. Hands bound. They
didn't wait.
(beat)
He said: Tell my sister I tried.

Jan lowers the axe. Silence falls.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
We have to move the children. The
cellar isn't safe anymore.

JAN
We're already pushing our luck.

ANTONINA
Luck is gone, Jan.

She turns and walks out, leaving the barn door ajar.

INT. ZOO BASEMENT - NIGHT

Antonina opens the secret panel behind the shelves. The two children inside flinch at the sound.

She kneels, smiles gently.

ANTONINA
How would you like to sleep with
the monkeys?

The girl smiles - a flicker of innocence returning.

EXT. WARSAW TRAM - MOVING - MORNING

The city glides by in broken pieces. Cratered walls. Blown-out windows. A dog trots alone across a ruined sidewalk.

Inside the tram, ANTONINA sits near the rear. She clutches a wicker basket filled with bread, roots, and a tin of oil.

She stares out the window, jaw tight.

The tram slows.

EXT. WARSAW STREET - SAME

A checkpoint ahead. Uniformed Wehrmacht soldiers halt all movement. One raises a hand - the tram squeals to a stop.

Passengers shift uneasily in their seats.

Antonina leans slightly forward, peering through the window.

On the street, a teenage boy, no older than thirteen, kneels in the mud. His face is bloodied. Hands bound in wire.

Crowd gathered. Silent. Unblinking.

A GERMAN OFFICER steps forward. He holds a pistol, polished and casual.

GERMAN OFFICER
(forced Polish)
Caught with forged travel papers.
Smuggling messages from the ghetto.

Antonina's breath hitches.

GERMAN OFFICER (CONT'D)
Justice... is immediate.

The boy lifts his head. A swollen eye. Split lip.

BOY
Tell my sister I tried.

A moment.

Then—

CRACK.

The gunshot echoes like a door slamming shut.

The boy drops forward. Still.

A puddle of blood spreads into the dirt.

A murmur through the tram. One woman gasps, hand over mouth.
Another begins to weep softly.

Antonina stares.

Frozen.

TRAM RIDER (O.S.)
He was just a child...

TRAM DRIVER (O.S.)
Move!

The tram lurches forward. Metal grinding metal.

Antonina closes her eyes.

INT. ZOO KITCHEN - LATER

A kettle whistles.

Antonina doesn't move.

She sits at the table, basket untouched.

Her hands rest, palm down, on the wood. Steadying herself.

JAN (O.S.)
They were checking the street
behind the hospital. Again.

Antonina looks up as Jan enters, brushing dirt from his coat.

JAN (CONT'D)

Grün's men nearly caught a man
carrying sugar. Shot him in the
hip.

No response.

JAN (SOFTLY) (CONT'D)

What happened?

ANTONINA

A boy.

JAN

Inside the city?

She nods.

ANTONINA

He had papers. That's all.

(beat)

He said... "Tell my sister I
tried."

Jan exhales. Deep. He moves to the kettle and shuts it off.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)

They want us to see it. To learn.

JAN

Then we'll pretend we haven't.

ANTONINA

No.

She stands.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)

The cellar isn't safe anymore. I'm
moving the children.

JAN

To where?

ANTONINA

The monkey house. I've started
cleaning it.

JAN

It's exposed.

ANTONINA
So is this whole country.

Jan says nothing.

INT. MONKEY HOUSE - DUSK

Dust clings to empty enclosures. Broken wood slats. Torn netting.

Antonina sweeps. Her sleeves rolled. Determined.

She opens a hatch beneath one of the cages - a maintenance space barely three feet tall.

She crawls inside. Measures the dark.

It will do.

EXT. ZOO PERIMETER FENCE - NIGHT

From the trees, a boy stumbles forward - bleeding, limping. His coat torn.

He reaches the outer wall of the zoo.

A spotlight flashes across the trees.

The boy ducks. Heart pounding. He presses a folded note to his chest.

A DOG BARKS in the distance.

Footsteps approach.

The boy tenses - ready to run.

Then-

A hand grabs his shoulder and pulls him into the brush.

ANTONINA (O.S.)
Shh. Stay low.

Antonina covers his mouth gently. She waits.

A squad of soldiers passes just feet away, rifles slung. Marching in rhythm.

Antonina doesn't breathe.

Neither does the boy.

INT. ZOO BASEMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Candlelight flickers across Jan's face as he reads a crumpled note.

Antonina watches from across the room.

JAN

They're asking for six more. One's pregnant. Another is a nurse.

(beat)

They want sanctuary.

ANTONINA

Then they've come to the right place.

JAN

It's not a hiding place anymore.
It's a passageway. A network.

ANTONINA

Then we make it work.

He looks at her. The weight of what they're becoming settles in the space between them.

She doesn't blink.

INT. MONKEY HOUSE HATCH - NIGHT

Antonina pulls back the hatch. The two Jewish children peek out, blinking.

ANTONINA

How would you like to sleep with the monkeys?

The girl smiles - small, tired, genuine.

Antonina offers her hand.

INT. MONKEY HOUSE - NIGHT

Antonina helps the children settle under a heap of hay and tattered cloth.

A candle flickers nearby.

The boy lays his head down.

BOY (SOFTLY)
Will the lions eat us?

Antonina pauses.

ANTONINA
Not while I'm here.

The girl reaches out, gripping Antonina's hand tightly. A tear slips down her cheek.

Antonina gently wipes it away.

EXT. WARSAW STREETS - EARLY MORNING

Grey fog hangs over the road.

JAN walks with a worn satchel over his shoulder, passing boarded shops and military checkpoints. He holds a requisition slip for animal feed.

Ahead—a train platform.

Smoke hisses from the engine. Cars rattle. Armed German guards bark orders in German and Polish.

Jan stops.

A group of Jewish families — pale, hollow-eyed — are herded toward a cattle car.

Children cling to mothers. Elderly men stumble. No luggage. No coats.

Jan tucks his slip into his pocket and tries to move past.

Then—he hears a scream.

A woman wails as a dead infant is thrown from the car onto the snow-covered platform.

Jan freezes.

A guard kicks the body aside like trash. The train door slams shut.

The mother is still screaming.

Jan stares. Stunned. A young soldier catches him watching.

GUARD
Move along!

Jan nods, quickly turns, keeps walking.
But his hands are shaking.

INT. ZOO VETERINARY ROOM - LATER

Jan scrubs his hands at the sink. Over and over.
Soap. Water. Scrub. Again.
Antonina watches from the doorway.

ANTONINA
What did you see?

He doesn't answer.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
Jan.

He looks up. Eyes hollow.

JAN
I didn't help. I just walked.

ANTONINA
There was nothing you could do.

JAN
There has to be. Or I can't live
here. In this place. With lions and
fences while they-

He stops himself.

Antonina approaches him. Quiet.

ANTONINA
Then we do more.

JAN
How?

ANTONINA
We turn the cages into gates.

EXT. ZOO GATES - AFTERNOON

A rickety cart approaches.

A woman wrapped in a shawl, face gaunt, clutches a crying toddler. Her name is REBECCA LANDAU (30s), a schoolteacher from the ghetto – eyes once sharp, now exhausted.

Jan opens the side gate. She hesitates.

REBECCA
You're... the ones they said?

He nods.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
They burned my papers. Took my
husband. They shot my father.
(beat)
I walked all night.

Jan helps her off the cart.

Antonina emerges from the house. Rebecca sees her – and breaks down.

She stumbles forward, collapsing into Antonina's arms.

REBECCA (WHISPERING) (CONT'D)
I can't keep running. Please.

Antonina holds her. Firm. Protective.

ANTONINA
You don't have to anymore.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Antonina boils water. Rebecca sits nearby, clutching her child, trembling.

Jan watches from the corner.

Then—a knock at the door.

Three short taps. Then silence.

Jan stiffens.

Antonina moves to the door, slowly unlatches it.

Lieutenant Keller stands outside, gloves tucked under one arm. His eyes sweep the room immediately.

KELLER
Ah. Supper time.

ANTONINA
We weren't expecting visitors.

KELLER
Forgive me. Curiosity – not hunger.
The Reich is considering how best
to utilize these grounds.
(pause)
I thought it wise to inspect the
home as well.

Jan steps forward.

JAN
We've nothing to hide.

Keller smiles. He steps inside without waiting.

KELLER
Of course not.

His eyes land briefly on Rebecca and her child.

KELLER (CONT'D)
Family?

ANTONINA
Distant cousins. From Kraków. Lost
their home in the shelling.

A long pause.

Keller watches Rebecca. She lowers her gaze. Tightens her
hold on the child.

KELLER
Sad times.
(beat)
Still, one must be careful. Even in
places like this.
(beat)
Danger doesn't always wear a
uniform.

He smiles again.

Antonina doesn't blink.

INT. ZOO KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Keller circles slowly.

He runs a hand along the edge of the table. Fingers brush a bowl of peeled potatoes.

He stops at a bookshelf – lifts a small framed photo.

Antonina and Jan. Happier days.

KELLER

Strange, isn't it? The way war
redraws people. Turns scientists
into suspects. Mothers into
smugglers.

Antonina steps closer.

ANTONINA

We're only caretakers. Of
animals... and of each other.

Keller replaces the photo.

KELLER

Let's hope that's all you are.

He lingers at the door.

KELLER (CONT'D)

We'll be expanding patrols through
this district. You'll see more men.
More questions.

A smile.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Best to keep your papers in order.

He exits.

The door closes with a soft click.

Jan exhales.

Rebecca clutches her child, trembling.

Antonina turns away, hides her shaking hands in the
dishwater.

INT. ZOO MAINTENANCE TUNNEL - NIGHT

A narrow, stone-walled passage beneath the monkey house.
Roots dangle from the ceiling. The smell of damp earth.

Jan holds a flashlight. Rebecca and her child crouch behind him.

JAN
When you reach the canal wall, wait
for three knocks. Then crawl.
Quietly. One at a time.

Rebecca nods. Her child snuffles.

JAN (CONT'D)
Do not speak to anyone on the other
side until you hear my wife's
voice.

REBECCA
How will I know?

JAN
She sings.
(beat)
JAN (CONT'D)
She always sings.

EXT. ZOO BACK PERIMETER - SAME

Antonina crouches near the drainage culvert. She hums softly
- a Polish lullaby.

A rustle in the reeds.

Then - a hand emerges from the shadows.

Rebecca crawls out, clutching her child.

Antonina pulls them into the brush.

ANTONINA
Good. You're safe.

Behind them, the water flows black and silent.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Antonina sits on the edge of the bed, removing her boots.

Jan enters, silent. He closes the door behind him.

JAN
That tunnel was for waste. It's not
safe. If it collapses-

ANTONINA

They'll be dead anyway. Here or there.

She pulls off her scarf. Her hair is damp with sweat.

JAN

What happens when Keller finds the hatch? What happens when he asks for papers?

ANTONINA

Then I lie. Again. Like I did tonight.

JAN

And when he stops believing?

ANTONINA

Then I smile harder.

Jan paces.

JAN

We're not trained for this. We're scientists. We raise animals, we-

ANTONINA

We adapt.

She turns to him. Calm. Fierce.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)

The animals aren't the only ones being hunted.

Jan sits. Exhausted.

JAN

I saw a child die on a train platform. His mother screaming after him.

(beat)

JAN (CONT'D)

It won't leave me.

Antonina rests her hand over his.

ANTONINA

Then let it stay. Let it drive you.

INT. GESTAPO OFFICE - NIGHT

Keller lights a cigarette.

Across the desk, FRAULEIN MERTZ (30s), plain-clothed, crisp, and careful – a civilian clerk with sharp eyes – places a folder down.

MERTZ

The Żabińskis are respected.
Formerly connected to the
university. No Jewish ties on
paper.

KELLER

"On paper" is where all lies begin.

He opens the folder. Pauses.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Their maid – where did she come
from?

MERTZ

No registry match. No ration card.
We're still checking.

He taps the photo of Rebecca with her child – snapped silently from a distance.

KELLER

Do so quickly. Quietly.

MERTZ

Of course.

He stares at the photo a moment longer.

Then slowly – smiles.

INT. ZOO BASEMENT - NIGHT

A storm rumbles outside.

Candles flicker along the stone walls. The children sleep in a corner, curled beneath blankets.

Rebecca tends to a wound on her leg – scraped during the tunnel escape. She bites her lip, trying not to cry out.

Antonina enters quietly, carrying a warm cloth.

ANTONINA

Let me help.

Rebecca nods, eyes brimming.

REBECCA

My daughter... she asked if the lions
would eat her.

Antonina kneels, gently pressing the cloth to her leg.

ANTONINA

They won't. You're under my roof.

Rebecca studies her.

REBECCA

You're not like the others.

ANTONINA

I hope not.

Thunder cracks above them. Antonina doesn't flinch.

INT. ZOO COMPOUND - UTILITY SHED - NEXT DAY

Jan pries open a rusted floor hatch beneath a pile of tools.
The smell of mildew wafts up.

Inside: a narrow crawlspace. Damp, but stable.

JAN

We can fit four. Maybe five if
they're quiet.

He turns to JERZY (20s), a rail-thin refugee with sharp eyes
and a nervous twitch.

JAN (CONT'D)

You'll guide them tonight. My wife
will meet you at the far wall.

Jerzy nods quickly. Too quickly.

JERZY

Yes. Yes, of course. Anything you
say.

Jan eyes him.

JAN

You've done this before?

JERZY

No. But I want to help.

A beat.

JAN

Wanting to help is dangerous. Doing it is worse.

INT. ZOO PATH - AFTERNOON

Keller walks slowly, hands clasped behind his back. He watches a soldier hammer new patrol schedules onto a kiosk.

Fraulein Mertz trails behind, clipboard in hand.

KELLER

Any update on the cousin?

MERTZ

Still unverified. But she's staying near the monkey enclosure.

Keller stops.

KELLER

Interesting choice.

He turns.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Double the patrols near the eastern fence. And have someone listen near the drains.

MERTZ

Sir?

KELLER

Animals don't whisper. People do.

INT. ZOO ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - NIGHT

Antonina enters the parlor carrying tea. She freezes.

Jerzy stands by the bookcase, flipping through a leather notebook.

ANTONINA

That drawer was closed for a reason.

Jerzy snaps the book shut.

JERZY

Sorry. I... I was looking for something to read. It's been hard to sleep.

Antonina watches him.

ANTONINA

You don't need to read secrets to sleep better.

Jerzy stares at the floor.

JERZY

I didn't mean anything. I swear.

Antonina takes the notebook, returns it to the drawer.

ANTONINA

You'll guide the others tonight. Focus on that.

She walks off.

Jerzy exhales. Wipes sweat from his brow.

INT. TUNNEL ENTRANCE - LATE NIGHT

Rain pelts the earth above.

Jan opens the hatch. Four new refugees crouch behind him - including a child no older than eight.

Jerzy stands nearby, flashlight in hand. Twitching.

JAN

Remember - low voices. No stops. No mistakes.

Jan claps Jerzy's shoulder.

JAN (CONT'D)

Bring them home.

Jerzy nods. Leads them into the darkness.

EXT. ZOO - DRAINAGE OUTLET - SAME

Antonina crouches beneath a poncho, waiting by the culvert.

She hums softly – the lullaby again.

A moment later – Jerzy appears from the pipe. He pulls out the others, one by one.

Antonina helps the child last.

ANTONINA

You're safe now. Quickly.

She ushers them into the trees.

Jerzy lingers.

JERZY

You were right about that book. I shouldn't have touched it.

ANTONINA

You shouldn't lie, either.

He nods, ashamed.

But Antonina is already walking ahead.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - LATER

Antonina and Jan sit in silence. Tea untouched.

JAN

If they catch one... they'll talk. Maybe not on purpose. But they will.

ANTONINA

Then we move faster.

JAN

And if someone betrays us?

ANTONINA

Then we start again. With fewer names.

Jan looks at her.

JAN

You never used to be this calm about danger.

ANTONINA

I've never lived with it this long.

She stands.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
This isn't hiding anymore. It's
war.

JAN
And we're not soldiers.

ANTONINA
No.
(beat)
ANTONINA (CONT'D)
But we're no longer just zookeepers
either.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. ZOO ENCLOSURE - LION HOUSE - NIGHT

Jerzy sits alone on a bench beside the iron bars of the empty
lion pen.

His leg bounces. His eyes dart. Nervous.

He lights a cigarette. Hands tremble.

From the shadows—Keller steps forward.

KELLER
You're not on the patrol list.

Jerzy startles—drops the cigarette.

JERZY
I—sorry, sir. I needed air.

Keller picks up the cigarette. Hands it back.

KELLER
Funny place for a smoke. Lions
still haunt this place. Even dead.

Jerzy says nothing.

KELLER (CONT'D)
Tell me something, Jerzy.

A pause.

KELLER (CONT'D)
Do they talk about me? The
zookeepers?

JERZY

Only... only when you visit.

Keller steps closer.

KELLER

You know, I believe loyalty is best tested in the dark.

(pause)

If you ever hear something – anything – that makes you uneasy...

He pulls out a folded ration slip and presses it into Jerzy's palm.

KELLER (CONT'D)

Deliver it to me personally. No one else.

Jerzy nods, stiff.

JERZY

Yes, sir.

Keller walks off into the mist.

Jerzy unfolds the slip – marked with Keller's initials.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

A fire crackles. Jan and Antonina sit across from each other, not speaking.

Between them on the table: a list of names. Names of those already hidden. And others yet to come.

JAN

If one speaks, we're undone.

ANTONINA

So we plan for it. Routes. Triggers. Fail-safes.

JAN

Like soldiers?

ANTONINA

Like architects. But of people instead of walls.

Jan studies her.

JAN
You're not afraid anymore.

ANTONINA
I'm afraid of the wrong thing.

She rises, walks to the piano. Opens the lid.

Plays the first few notes of the lullaby – soft, haunting.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
If I stop singing, it means I've
given up.

JAN
And if they hear you?

ANTONINA
Then they'll know I'm still alive.

Jan walks over. Stands beside her.

JAN (QUIETLY)
I met a man today. In the ghetto. A
printer.

ANTONINA
And?

JAN
He says there's more. Whole chains
– Warsaw to Kraków. Escape routes.
False documents. Safe houses.

ANTONINA
Then we connect to it.

JAN
It's more dangerous. More eyes.
More mouths.

ANTONINA
It's also more hands. And more
hope.

He nods.

They share a moment – silent, married by mission.

INT. ZOO ENCLOSURE – MONKEY HOUSE – DAWN

Antonina kneels, pulling hay back from the tunnel hatch. She
opens it, checking.

Inside – dry. Safe.

She closes the hatch again.

From somewhere in the distance – a gunshot echoes.

She looks up.

ANTONINA (V.O.)

In war, you must choose what kind
of silence you serve.

ANTONINA (V.O.)

The silence of survival. Or the
silence of complicity.

EXT. ZOO GATES – MORNING

Jan loads a crate onto a cart. A young man with a false
identity card approaches – a refugee dressed as a
groundskeeper.

He nods at Jan, who gives the faintest return nod.

Another brick in the network.

Antonina watches from the porch. Keller's patrol passes in
the distance.

She tightens her scarf, expression unreadable.

FADE TO BLACK

XT. ZOO GATES – MORNING

SUPER: ACT II

A plume of dust rises on the road.

A black Mercedes staff car, polished to a mirror shine, pulls up to the gates. SS insignia glints on the hood.

Inside:

HAUPTSTURMFÜHRER VIKTOR LANG (40s), slick, soft-spoken, dead behind the eyes.

STURMSCHARFÜHRER HEILMANN (50s), wide-faced, smirking. Decorated and dangerous.

A Wehrmacht soldier jogs to the gate.

SOLDIER

I'll alert Lieutenant Keller, sir.

LANG

No need. The animals don't require an escort.

Heilmann chuckles.

INT. ZOO ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - SAME

Antonina freezes at the window.

ANTONINA

SS.

Jan looks up from his papers.

JAN

Keller?

ANTONINA

No. Worse.

EXT. ZOO PATH - MOMENTS LATER

Antonina and Jan meet the officers near the main path.

Lang removes his gloves with surgical precision.

LANG
Frau Żabińska. A pleasure.

The Reich values Polish institutions that... know their place.

ANTONINA
We serve the city. And its animals.

Lang smiles faintly.

LANG
As all creatures should.

Heilmann grunts, eyeing the empty enclosures.

HEILMANN
Where are the lions?

JAN
Killed during the shelling. Some escaped. We're rebuilding.

Lang walks ahead, uninvited.

LANG
Lead the way.

INT. MONKEY HOUSE - LATER

Lang peers into cages. Empty swings creak. Dried bananas rot on a tray.

LANG
I used to bring my niece to Berlin's Tiergarten.

She thought the monkeys were laughing at her.

(beat)

She didn't know they were starving.

He turns to Antonina.

LANG (CONT'D)
Children often mistake survival for happiness.

Antonina forces a smile.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRWELL - SAME TIME

Rebecca crouches behind crates, holding her child tight.

Footsteps above.

Muffled voices. Laughter.

A floorboard creaks.

The child whimpers.

Rebecca covers her mouth - and the child's.

The voices fade.

She exhales.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE - LATER

Lang runs a gloved finger across a dusty feeding shelf.

LANG

You know what I find fascinating,
Herr Żabiński?

JAN

Please - enlighten me.

Lang turns slowly.

LANG

Cages. We design them for beasts...
then fill them with people.

And sometimes the reverse.

JAN

This zoo was never meant for
cruelty.

LANG

That depends on the animal.

Heilmann lights a cigar.

HEILMANN

Berlin says we need spaces. For the
undesirables.

Places with walls... and trained hands.

LANG
And caretakers willing to obey.

Jan stiffens.

Antonina steps between them.

ANTONINA
The monkey house is structurally
sound.

Cool in summer. Dry in winter.

Lang studies her.

LANG
How efficient.

EXT. ZOO GATES - MOMENTS LATER

The SS officers return to their car.

Lang pauses before getting in.

LANG
We'll be back.

Berlin wants a list of all workers, residents, and
deliveries.

For cultural preservation, of course.

He smirks.

LANG (CONT'D)
And perhaps... a celebration. A zoo
is no good if no one enjoys it.

He gets in.

The car drives off.

Antonina and Jan remain still.

A bird flutters above them. Then vanishes.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jan paces.

JAN
They're preparing to take it. The
zoo. The grounds. Everything.

Antonina remains seated, calm but pale.

JAN (CONT'D)
And the people inside it.

ANTONINA
Then we prepare too.

JAN
For what?

She looks up.

ANTONINA
For war on both sides of the bars.

INT. ZOO STABLES - LATE NIGHT

Jerzy watches the road from a small loft window.
The ration slip Keller gave him is still in his coat.
He pulls it out. Stares at it.
Then puts it back.
For now.

INT. ZOO STABLES - LATE NIGHT

Jerzy replaces the ration slip in his coat pocket. He
breathes shallowly.
Outside, footsteps in the leaves.
He crouches. Peeks out.
Nothing.
Still, he watches.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

Antonina ladles soup into jars. Seals them tightly.
Jan enters, tying his boots.

JAN
They've changed checkpoints on the
east road. It's a longer route now.

ANTONINA
Longer means safer.

She hands him a bundle.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
Double rations. We'll see if
they're waiting.

JAN
And if they are?

ANTONINA
Then someone inside is talking.

EXT. WARSAW OUTSKIRTS - LATER

Jan walks briskly down a path with a sack over his shoulder.

A boy approaches on a bicycle, no older than 15.

BOY
Your papers, sir?

Jan hands him a folded note. The boy reads, nods.

BOY (CONT'D)
Go to the tree with the broken
cross.

Jan continues.

EXT. ABANDONED SHRINE - MINUTES LATER

Jan kneels beside a moss-covered tree. A carved crucifix lies
shattered at its base.

A woman steps from behind a wall - KASIA (30s), strong-
featured, blunt.

KASIA
You're late.

JAN
I took the long way.

She eyes him.

KASIA

We've got movement through Lublin
and Wilno. They're hunting children
now. Not just men.

JAN

They always were.

She hands him a stack of forged documents.

KASIA

Next shipment is twenty. Mixed
ages. Some wounded.

Jan takes them.

JAN

We'll be ready.

KASIA

They're asking more of us. You know
that, right?

JAN

Then they'll get it.

INT. MONKEY HOUSE - NIGHT

Antonina places new bedding beneath the hatch. Rebecca helps,
thinner now, worn.

From outside - a shriek.

Both women freeze.

Another scream. Then a gunshot.

Then silence.

REBECCA

That's the street behind the ghetto
wall.

ANTONINA

I know.

They wait. Neither speaks.

INT. STABLE LOFT - SAME TIME

Jerzy stares at the ceiling. Hands over his ears. Eyes wide.

Another gunshot cracks the night.
He stands suddenly, starts pacing.
He pulls the ration slip from his coat again.
This time he doesn't put it away.

INT. KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Jan places a folded sheet on the table - a map of the zoo with marked escape routes.

Antonina reads a note beside it.

ANTONINA

"Keller requests the use of the zoo for an evening of Reich-sponsored culture."

(beat)

They want to throw a party?

JAN

Drinks among cages. Music among ghosts.

Antonina folds the map.

ANTONINA

Then we give them a show.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Candles lit.

Antonina sits at the piano.

She plays the lullaby - slower this time. Hesitant. Testing the keys like she's testing the air.

Jan watches from the hall.

Outside the window - Jerzy listens. Then disappears.

EXT. COURTYARD - LATER

Jerzy walks alone.

In his pocket - the ration slip.

He approaches the gate.

A shadow detaches from the trees.

Keller.

KELLER

I was wondering when you'd return.

Jerzy hesitates.

JERZY

I don't know if I'm doing the right thing.

KELLER

There is no right thing anymore.
Only what keeps you breathing.

He gestures.

Jerzy steps forward.

INT. ZOO BASEMENT - NIGHT

Rebecca huddles with the children.

Antonina closes the secret wall behind them.

From above - boots stomp across the floorboards.

She extinguishes the candle.

Darkness.

Silence.

Then - her voice. Soft. Barely audible.

The lullaby again.

INT. ZOO STABLES - CONTINUOUS (LATE NIGHT)

Jerzy stares out the loft window.

Still holding the ration slip.

Outside, nothing moves - just wind in the trees.

He folds the slip again. Slowly this time. Carefully.

Puts it back in his coat.

But he doesn't exhale.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - MORNING

Antonina opens a drawer. Finds a cracked ceramic mug and carefully wraps it in cloth.

Jan enters with a damp envelope in hand.

JAN
Keller's aide delivered this.

Antonina takes it, reads.

ANTONINA
A "cultural gathering."
(beat)
Wine, music, officers. Inside a
graveyard.

JAN
He's testing us.

ANTONINA
Then we test him back.

She places the mug beside a bundle of fake IDs.

JAN
There'll be patrols. Eyes on the
cages. The house.

ANTONINA
We'll clean. Set out cheese. Light
candles.
(beat)
And put the children underground.

EXT. WARSAW STREET - LATER

A cart clatters past Jan as he walks the outer fence. He glances toward the distance - smoke rises from the edge of the city.

A child runs across the road - barefoot, chased by German officers.

A scream.

Jan turns away.

We don't see the rest.

INT. ZOO BASEMENT - SAME TIME

Rebecca helps two children into a crawl space behind crates.

She's sweating, her hands trembling.

Antonina places a glass jar of honey beside them.

ANTONINA

If they search, pretend it's a
pantry.

The children nod.

Antonina brushes hair from the girl's face.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)

No matter what you hear... don't
cry.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT BEFORE THE PARTY

The house is clean. Too clean.

Silverware gleams. Tablecloth pressed. Candles set and unlit.

Antonina wipes her hands on her apron, stares out the window.

JAN (O.S.)

You're sure you want to play?

She turns. Jan leans in the doorway.

ANTONINA

If they ask for a song, I'll give
them one.

JAN

They'll be watching you.

She steps to the piano.

ANTONINA

Then let them watch.

EXT. ZOO ENTRANCE - NEXT NIGHT

Cars arrive.

Men in dress uniforms and black SS jackets spill out,
laughing and smoking.

Lang exits first. Smiling as always.

Behind him – Keller, walking slower.

INT. LIVING ROOM – LATER

Candles flicker.

Lang swirls a glass of wine.

Officers chat and lounge, snacking on meat and crackers taken from occupied stores.

Heilmann plays with a stolen lion cub pelt – draped over a chair.

LANG

Charming, isn't it? A jungle repurposed for civilization.

He turns to Antonina.

LANG (CONT'D)

Do you play, Frau Żabińska?

Antonina steps to the piano.

ANTONINA

Something light. I think.

She begins to play – the lullaby. Slower, softer.

The melody floats through the room, surreal.

Jan watches from the corner. His hand tightens on a glass.

Keller stares at Antonina. Not blinking.

The child hidden in the crawlspace below clutches her knees.

The lullaby continues.

INT. BASEMENT – SAME

Muffled notes filter down.

Rebecca closes her eyes, rocking slightly to the sound.

The children press their heads together.

The music masks the boots above.

For now.

EXT. ZOO COMPOUND - LATER

Jerzy walks the edge of the outer path. Alone.
He lights a match. Holds it over the ration slip.
But doesn't burn it.

INT. ZOO OFFICE - POST-PARTY

Keller stands in the now-empty parlor.
The candles are out.
He touches a single piano key.
A soft note echoes.

KELLER (TO HIMSELF)
Everyone's performance is
improving.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

Antonina plays. The room is hushed.
The officers sip wine, heads nodding in rhythm to the soft,
haunting lullaby.
Lang closes his eyes.
Keller, however, watches Antonina's hands.
Her fingers hesitate.
She hits a slightly wrong note - intentional.
Keller catches it.
Antonina continues. Composed.
The lullaby trails off into silence.
Polite applause follows.

LANG
Sublime. You make ghosts sing, Frau
Żabińska.

Antonina smiles, demure.

ANTONINA
They only need permission.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Antonina scrubs plates at the basin.

Keller enters. Quietly. Just the two of them now.

He lights a cigarette.

KELLER
That piece. Was it Polish?

ANTONINA
A folk song. From my childhood.

KELLER
Hmm. I heard it once. In Kraków.
(beat)
A woman hummed it while hiding in a
cellar.

She didn't know we were listening.

He exhales.

KELLER (CONT'D)
You play it well.

He exits.

Antonina doesn't move.

INT. STABLE LOFT - SAME NIGHT

Jerzy lies in his cot, staring at the ceiling.

Below him: faint murmurs from SS voices walking past outside.

He grips the ration slip.

Sweat beads on his forehead.

JERZY (TO HIMSELF)
Just survive. Just survive.

INT. ZOO PERIMETER PATH - NEXT MORNING

Jan meets Kasia near the side gate. Her coat is muddy. She carries a small satchel.

Behind her - a Jewish boy, maybe 10, gaunt, coughing.

KASIA
His parents didn't make it out.
He's been quiet all night.

JAN
We don't have space.

KASIA
Then make space.

Jan hesitates - then lifts the boy into his arms.

JAN (QUIETLY)
You're safe now.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

The boy is wrapped in blankets. He stares blankly at the wall.

Rebecca wipes his forehead.

Antonina sits nearby, holding a small tin of broth.

ANTONINA
What's his name?

REBECCA
He won't say.

Antonina sets the broth down.

ANTONINA
Sometimes names have to disappear
for people to survive.

The boy blinks. Just once.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - NIGHT

Jan spreads out a new escape route sketch on the table.

Antonina reads a slip of paper beside it.

ANTONINA
A shipment of potatoes. And "feed"
for livestock.

JAN
He's coming again. Unannounced.

ANTONINA
Another inspection?

JAN
No. A search. He didn't call it
that, but...

Antonina exhales.

ANTONINA
Then we move everyone to the old
lion enclosure. Tonight.

Jan doesn't answer.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
You disagree?

JAN
We're not farmers. Or smugglers.
We're not trained for this.

ANTONINA
We are now.

JAN
I miss being afraid only of empty
cages.

ANTONINA
I miss being afraid only for
animals.

A pause. Not quite an argument, but close.

EXT. ZOO ENCLOSURE - NIGHT

Jerzy lights a match. Watches it burn to his fingertips.

Footsteps approach - Keller again.

KELLER
I asked for a name. Not smoke
signals.

Jerzy startles.

JERZY
There's a boy. New.

Keller nods. Curious.

KELLER
Where?

Jerzy hesitates.

JERZY
He's already gone. Left this
morning.

A pause.

KELLER
Then next time, tell me while it
still matters.

Keller walks off.

Jerzy stays behind.

JERZY (SOFTLY)
I'm trying. I am.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE - HIDDEN SPACE - NIGHT

The child lies beneath torn fabric, nestled beside Rebecca
and another woman.

Antonina lowers herself through the trap door.

She lays a small stuffed lion beside the boy.

ANTONINA
He guarded this place once.

Now it's your turn.

The boy says nothing.

But his hand moves. Touches the toy.

INT. ZOO ENCLOSURE - NIGHT (CONTINUED)

The child stares at the stuffed lion.

Antonina kneels beside him.

ANTONINA
He was once king here.

The child says nothing.

She gently places the lion at his side.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
He never spoke either. But he
listened.

You can too, if you want.

The boy blinks.

EXT. ZOO GATES - NEXT MORNING

A truck rumbles in - marked with the Reich agricultural seal.

Three soldiers jump down.

Keller steps out, gloves in hand.

He scans the property.

KELLER
Livestock audit. No need for alarm.

Antonina, calm, stands waiting.

ANTONINA
Your timing is always impeccable.

KELLER
So I'm told.

INT. MONKEY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Two soldiers sweep the enclosure, tapping on walls, pulling
aside loose straw.

Nothing.

They move on.

Beneath the floorboards - a hand trembles, covering a child's
mouth.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

Keller walks the perimeter of the room, eyes on the floor.

Jan follows.

JAN

We haven't taken in new animals in weeks. Supply lines are broken.

KELLER

Supply lines are always broken in Warsaw.

(beat)

But sometimes what gets smuggled in... is more interesting than what gets sent out.

He kneels. Taps a loose tile with his knuckle.

Antonina watches from the threshold.

KELLER (CONT'D)

You keep a tidy house, Frau Żabińska.

ANTONINA

It's easier when there are fewer mouths to feed.

Keller smiles. Cold.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME TIME

Rebecca, pale, holds the boy in her lap.

Antonina's voice filters faintly from the floor above.

ANTONINA (O.S.)

Would you like tea? It's not real, of course. But it's warm.

Rebecca clutches the boy tighter.

REBECCA

He hasn't spoken in four days.

CHILD (SOFTLY)

Five.

Rebecca gasps. Looks down.

REBECCA

You remember?

He nods. Still not looking at her.

EXT. STABLES - LATER

Jerzy stacks straw bales near the far wall.

A soldier approaches him - not Keller, younger.

SOLDIER
You know the schedule?

JERZY
I feed at dawn. Clean by
midmorning. Keep to the paths.

SOLDIER
That's not what I asked.

Jerzy stiffens.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)
Anyone come through here late?
Extra crates? Visitors?

Jerzy hesitates.

JERZY
No. Just the Żabińskis.

The soldier squints. Then moves on.

Jerzy watches him go, eyes narrowing.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE - NIGHT

The boy sits alone with the lion plush in his lap.

Antonina enters quietly.

She kneels.

ANTONINA
You spoke today.

BOY
I didn't mean to.

ANTONINA
That's how the best things happen.

She reaches into her coat. Pulls out a crust of bread.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
He used to like these. The real
lion. Stole them from my pockets.

The boy takes it.

Chews.

BOY
Will you get in trouble?

ANTONINA
Almost certainly.

A beat.

BOY
Then why do you help us?

ANTONINA
Because I'm not a lion.

BOY
You could be.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

Jan stands over the map table.

Routes. Names. Schedules.

Antonina enters, silent.

JAN
Another child? Another tunnel?

ANTONINA
Would you have turned him away?

JAN
I would have warned you that the
walls are getting thinner.

ANTONINA
And I would've reminded you that
our silence is already complicity.

A long pause.

JAN
I don't know if I can do this
again.

Antonina stares.

ANTONINA
Then don't. But I will.

She walks away.

EXT. ZOO PATH - CONTINUOUS

Antonina walks the gravel trail between cages.

Darkness all around.

From a hidden spot - Jerzy watches her pass.

Unseen. For now.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Antonina finishes setting a tray of tea. A knock at the front door.

She answers to find a young couple—FRIEDRICH (30s, thin, soft-spoken) and ELSA (20s, pretty, reserved).

FRIEDRICH

Apologies, madam. We're distant kin
of the late keeper Gorski.

(beat)

We heard this was still a place for
refuge.

Antonina studies them. Too clean. Too calm.

ANTONINA

I'm afraid we've no space for
guests. The zoo is mostly empty.

ELSA

We won't stay long. Just rest.

Antonina nods, slowly.

ANTONINA

Of course. Come in.

INT. PARLOR - LATER

Antonina pours tea. Friedrich and Elsa sit stiffly, hands folded in their laps.

FRIEDRICH

Lovely home. Quiet. Too quiet.

ANTONINA

We prefer it that way.

Elsa's gaze lingers on the floor.

ELSA
Is there a cellar?

Antonina smiles gently.

ANTONINA
Only cobwebs and wine vinegar.

Friedrich lifts his cup. Sips.

FRIEDRICH
And lions? Do you still keep any?

ANTONINA
Only ghosts.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME TIME

Below the parlor - Rebecca and the boy huddle silently.

The floor creaks overhead.

The boy listens - tense - then slowly opens his hand, showing the stuffed lion.

He presses it close.

INT. PARLOR - MOMENTS LATER

Elsa stands. Walks casually to the bookshelf.

Runs a finger across the spines.

She knocks a book slightly off-center - it taps the wall twice.

Then she smiles.

ELSA
Your shelves are very well organized.

ANTONINA
They have to be. Everything here is... fragile.

Friedrich rises.

FRIEDRICH
Thank you for the tea, Frau
Żabińska.

ANTONINA
Any time.

They exit.

EXT. ZOO GATES - MOMENTS LATER

The couple walk side-by-side.

Once out of earshot-

FRIEDRICH
Nothing above ground. But she knows
we were lying.

ELSA
Good. Let her feel it.

They pass through a checkpoint - where a Gestapo officer
waits beside a parked car.

No words exchanged. Just nods.

The officer lights a cigarette. Watches them disappear.

INT. STABLE LOFT - LATE NIGHT

Jerzy sits on the cot, rocking slightly.

He lights a match. Stares at it. Burns his finger.

Drops it.

JERZY (TO HIMSELF)
They know. Everyone knows.

He paces.

Pulls the ration slip from Keller out once more.

His hand trembles.

JERZY (CONT'D)
I didn't say anything. I didn't.

But his voice cracks.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE - SAME

The boy holds the stuffed lion in both hands.

Antonina sits nearby, exhausted.

BOY

The woman at the tea... she was listening.

Antonina looks up.

ANTONINA

You heard her?

He nods.

BOY

She tapped.

Antonina's breath catches.

She stands.

ANTONINA (QUIETLY)

Good. You tell me when people knock the wrong way.

The boy smiles. Just slightly.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

Jan enters, jacket half-buttoned.

Antonina stands at the window.

JAN

What is it?

ANTONINA

Two guests yesterday. Said they were relatives.

JAN

Were they?

ANTONINA

No.

Jan's face tightens.

JAN

Then the clock's running out.

She doesn't look at him.

ANTONINA
It always was.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The hatch opens.

Rebecca crawls out with the boy. His arms wrapped around her neck.

Antonina helps her up.

REBECCA
If they come again?

ANTONINA
They won't ask this time.

Antonina reaches behind a crate - pulls out two forged papers.

ANTONINA (CONT'D)
You leave tomorrow. Through the canal.

REBECCA
And you?

ANTONINA
I'll play the piano. Like always.

EXT. ZOO PATH - NIGHT

Jerzy walks the edge of the fence. Moonlight on his coat.

From the trees - Keller steps out.

KELLER
It's time, Jerzy.

Jerzy turns slowly.

He looks hollow.

KELLER (CONT'D)
Say the word. I'll handle the rest.

Jerzy swallows.

Says nothing.

But he doesn't walk away.

EXT. CANAL EDGE - NIGHT

A grate swings open under cover of darkness.

Antonina kneels beside Rebecca and the boy, helping them down into the tunnel.

ANTONINA
You know the path?

REBECCA
Three turns, one ladder, then wait
for the knock.

Antonina nods. Hands the boy his stuffed lion.

ANTONINA
Keep it close.

The boy holds it to his chest.

BOY
Will I see you again?

ANTONINA
If not in this life... then in the
one where lions still roar.

Rebecca climbs in behind him.

REBECCA
Thank you. For all of it.

Antonina shuts the grate.

They vanish into darkness.

INT. STABLE LOFT - SAME NIGHT

Jerzy sits in silence.

The ration slip still in his pocket - folded and sweaty.

His eyes flicker toward the gate.

EXT. ZOO GATES - LATER

Keller lights a cigarette beneath a streetlamp.

A black vehicle idles in the road.

Mertz approaches with a clipboard.

MERTZ

We have a signal. Underground confirmed. No military clearance.

KELLER

Good. Keep it that way.

MERTZ

Sir?

KELLER

No orders. No reports. No questions.

She nods.

Keller turns toward the zoo.

KELLER (CONT'D)

We begin at dawn.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Antonina sits on the edge of the bed, slipping on her shoes.

Jan watches from the doorway.

JAN

Did they make it?

ANTONINA

I don't know.

(beat)

But we gave them a chance.

JAN

That used to feel like enough.

He walks in, sits beside her.

ANTONINA

You were right to be afraid.

JAN

You were right not to stop.

They sit in silence.

Then - she reaches over, takes his hand.

ANTONINA

Play one more hand with me?

He squeezes her hand in return.

EXT. WARSAW - CITY STREET - SAME TIME

Rebecca emerges from a sewer hatch beside a crumbled bakery wall.

The boy climbs after her.

A man in a torn scarf helps pull them out - no words spoken.

They run.

Behind them - a patrol car turns the corner.

But never sees them.

INT. STABLE - DAWN

Jerzy throws hay into an empty pen.

His hands shake.

He drops the pitchfork.

A voice behind him-

KELLER (O.S.)

Thank you, Jerzy.

Jerzy turns. Keller is already walking away.

No further instruction.

But the message is clear.

Jerzy's knees buckle - he slumps into the hay.

INT. BASEMENT - EARLY MORNING

Antonina opens the hidden panel.

Inside: a new group of four people - silent, tired, waiting.

She counts them.

ANTONINA
You'll move tonight. Stay small.
Stay unseen.

MAN IN CORNER

We heard trucks.

ANTONINA
Then you stay quieter.

She closes the wall again.

EXT. ZOO GATES - MOMENTS LATER

Two black trucks idle in the trees.

Men climb down - SS, Gestapo, and one civilian officer.

No insignia. No shouts.

Just quiet efficiency.

Keller steps from the lead truck.

He nods once.

The men fan out.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - PARLOR - SAME TIME

Antonina lights a single candle.

Sits at the piano.

Hands hover over the keys.

She begins to play.

The lullaby.

Slow. Steady. Defiant.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - PARLOR - EARLY MORNING

Antonina plays the lullaby - slower this time, hands trembling. The soft notes echo like whispers in a crypt.

Suddenly - a distant BOOM. The house vibrates.

She stops.

Another, closer now – a rumble like thunder.

Antonina rises and walks to the window.

EXT. WARSAW SKYLINE - CONTINUOUS

Across the rooftops – plumes of smoke rise.

Faint flickers of fire dance behind buildings.

The Warsaw Ghetto is burning.

INT. STABLE LOFT - SAME

Jerzy watches it too – face pale, eyes wide.

He hears faint cracks of gunfire, like distant popping corn.

A scream – far off, but unmistakable.

JERZY (TO HIMSELF)
It's all ending. All of it.

He paces. Then stops. Then shouts–

JERZY (CONT'D)
I didn't ask for this! I didn't ask
for any of this!

No one hears him. Or if they do, they're silent.

EXT. ZOO PATH - MORNING LIGHT

Boots crunch on gravel.

SS soldiers fan out across the grounds. Quiet. Efficient.
Mechanical.

No orders shouted – just nods and hand signals.

A few officers head toward the main house. Others toward the
stables.

Keller remains in the shadows, smoking.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

Antonina rushes down.

ANTONINA
They're coming.

Two men, a mother, and a teenage girl wait behind crates.
Faces pale.

MOTHER
Where?

ANTONINA
Down. Stay low. Don't speak.

She opens a trap door beneath the old coal bin. They slip in.

Antonina hesitates – then places the boy's stuffed lion just
outside the hatch.

Closes it.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE – MOMENTS LATER

Jan meets her at the base of the stairs. Rifle slung over
shoulder – more bluff than defense.

JAN
How many?

ANTONINA
All of them.

A long silence.

JAN (SOFTLY)
Then let's greet our guests.

INT. ZOO STABLE – SAME

Soldiers enter.

Jerzy stands stiff.

SS COMMANDER
All clear?

Jerzy nods.

But one soldier lingers – spots a broken hay bale stacked
oddly against a wall.

Moves toward it...

Suddenly – a lion roar echoes across the grounds.

Everyone freezes.

COMMANDER

A lion?

JERZY

An old recording. For the tourists.

COMMANDER

Play it again.

Jerzy hesitates – then dashes to the office and presses a phonograph needle down.

A scratchy lion's roar fills the stable again.

The soldiers laugh.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Sentimental pigs.

They exit.

Jerzy exhales – crumples against the wall.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

Antonina whispers to the boy through the grate.

ANTONINA

You're brave. Just like the lion.

He nods, clutching the stuffed animal.

BOY

The sky is on fire.

ANTONINA

Yes. But you're safe in the earth.

She closes the grate.

EXT. WARSAW - VARIOUS LOCATIONS - INTERCUT

- Jews leap from windows as buildings burn around them.
- German soldiers fire without aim, methodical.
- Smoke chokes alleys where children hide in barrels.
- The skyline flickers like a wound.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Keller enters, flanked by two SS men.

Antonina stands by the stove, boiling water.

KELLER
Still playing hostess?

ANTONINA
Someone has to.

KELLER
You hear the music outside?

ANTONINA
I hear people dying.

KELLER (FLATLY)
No, Frau Żabińska. You hear the
future.

He approaches the piano - presses a key.

KELLER (CONT'D)
This country will be remembered by
what it silenced.

Jan steps into the room.

JAN
She asked you to stay out of our
home.

A beat.

Keller smiles.

KELLER
You should pack light. There won't
be much left.

He walks out.

INT. BASEMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

The boy wakes in the dark.

Someone breathing near him - a soft sob.

He crawls toward the sound.

Finds the teenage girl.

He reaches into his coat - hands her the stuffed lion.

BOY
He keeps secrets.

She hugs him.

EXT. ZOO GATES - NIGHT

The SS begin withdrawing.

Trucks reverse.

Keller lingers at the gate, watching the house one last time.

MERTZ
Nothing found. No official record.

KELLER
Yet they play lullabies while
Warsaw burns.

He drops his cigarette. Crushes it.

KELLER (CONT'D)
Next time, we don't knock.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - PARLOR - LATE NIGHT

Antonina sits at the piano. Silent.

She lays her hands on the keys, but doesn't play.

A knock at the door.

She freezes.

Another knock - softer.

Jan appears in the hallway, rifle in hand. He gives her a look - be ready.

He opens the door.

EXT. ZOO HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Keller stands alone, in civilian coat, hat in hand. No soldiers. No car in sight.

He offers a polite nod.

KELLER

I was nearby. Thought I'd stop in.

Jan doesn't move.

JAN

We're not open for visitors.

KELLER

It's a private visit.

Antonina appears behind Jan.

Keller sees her – his expression softens, just a shade.

KELLER (CONT'D)

I won't stay long.

He steps inside, uninvited.

INT. PARLOR – MOMENTS LATER

Keller studies the piano.

KELLER

It's quiet tonight. The lullaby
must've run out.

ANTONINA

The keys still work.

KELLER

Then play.

She doesn't move.

KELLER (CONT'D)

No? Pity. You played it better than
most.

He steps toward the piano, places his hand on it. Feels the
wood.

KELLER (CONT'D)

When I was a boy, my mother sang to
me. Before the Great War took my
father.

(beat)

Do you think lullabies can stop
wars?

ANTONINA

No. But they help children sleep
through them.

They stare at each other.

KELLER

I'll be transferred soon. Berlin
wants...new people.

He doesn't explain.

KELLER (CONT'D)

I won't be back.

He turns, walks to the door. Pauses.

KELLER (CONT'D)

I don't believe in ghosts.

(beat)

But this place is full of them.

And he's gone.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

The boy lies curled up beside the teenage girl and the
mother. He stirs.

Outside the wall - a faint CRACK of gunfire.

He sits up, eyes wide.

Another shot - closer.

BOY (WHISPERS)

They're back...

The teenage girl grips his hand.

Footsteps above. Then nothing.

INT. STABLE LOFT - SAME

Jerzy crouches in the hay, rifle in hand.

He peers through the window - sees flashes of gunfire from a
few streets over.

A nearby house is ablaze - screams audible on the wind.

He clutches the ration slip Keller gave him long ago – still in his pocket.

He sets it down in the hay.

Then lights it on fire.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Antonina wakes to the sound of birds.

She rises, pulls back the curtain.

Sunlight streams in – but the sky is smudged with smoke.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK - PRE-WAR ZOO (BLACK AND WHITE OR MUTED COLOR):

– Lions sunning themselves lazily – Children running between enclosures, ice cream in hand – Antonina and Jan laughing, holding hands – A newborn giraffe wobbling in its pen – The boy, years younger, feeding a goat

Then–

CRASH – back to present.

INT. BASEMENT - THAT DAY

Antonina descends the stairs slowly, exhausted.

She finds the boy awake, drawing on the wall with chalk.

A lion, big and strong.

Next to it, a tiny mouse.

ANTONINA

What's that?

BOY

A friend.

She kneels beside him.

BOY (CONT'D)

When the lion's too tired... the mouse tells the story.

INT. ZOO STABLE - LATER THAT DAY

Jerzy prepares a wooden cart. Silent.

He places a folded coat inside. A stuffed lion. A slip of paper.

He doesn't say where he's going.

But he's going.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Antonina plays the lullaby - slower now.

The notes aren't quite right.

JAN (O.S.)
You're changing it.

ANTONINA
It's time.

She adds a few new chords.

A different ending.

EXT. ZOO WALLS - PRE-DAWN

Thick fog clings to the earth.

Jerzy pushes a wooden cart along the inner path. Inside: two children curled beneath blankets. The teenage girl walks beside him, eyes wide with fear.

They reach a stone wall covered in ivy. He knocks twice.

A moment - then a hand appears, pulling ivy aside.

A narrow tunnel mouth is revealed - no bigger than a coal chute.

Jerzy helps the girl and children into it, one by one.

JERZY

Ten paces forward, then left. It opens into the cellar. Wait there 'til the sun's up.

He pulls the ivy back over.

As he turns - a voice.

GESTAPO OFFICER (O.S.)
Where does that path lead?

Jerzy freezes.

Two Gestapo men stand near the trees, half-shrouded by mist.

Jerzy shrugs.

JERZY
Just hay storage. Empty.

They don't respond. One lights a cigarette. Watches him.

He pushes the cart forward - back toward the stables - slow and deliberate.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME

Antonina wipes soot from the stove tiles. Exhausted.

Jan enters, rifle in hand.

JAN
Gestapo were inside the fence
again. Two of them.

ANTONINA
Looking?

JAN
No one asks questions anymore. They
just... look.

ANTONINA
What do we do?

JAN (BEAT)
We pray they don't find anything.

A long silence.

JAN (CONT'D)
Or anyone.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

The boy lies beside the teenage girl, listening.

Above them, a soft creaking of floorboards.

He whispers:

BOY
He's not coming back, is he?

The girl doesn't answer.

INT. STABLES - NIGHT

Jerzy paces, shaken.

He peers through the slats in the barn door.

The Gestapo are gone.

But one of them dropped something - a matchbook from the Eldorado cabaret.

He picks it up. Opens it.

Inside, a phone number. No name.

He pockets it.

EXT. ZOO - BACK LOT - NEXT NIGHT

Jan meets a man in a black overcoat - quick exchange of bread for ration stamps.

No words.

The man disappears into the trees.

Jan returns, eyes darting.

JAN (TO HIMSELF)
One more night.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Antonina plays the piano. The lullaby returns - but with an extra note at the end.

The boy, from the top of the stairs, repeats the note on a toy xylophone.

She hears it - and smiles for the first time in days.

ANTONINA
That's yours now.

INT. GESTAPO OFFICE - CITY CENTER - NIGHT

Keller's old office. Now occupied by a younger, more brutal officer.

On his desk - a file marked "Zoologischer Garten".

Inside: photos. Surveillance notes. A list of names.

He underlines two:

Żabiński, Antonina

Żabiński, Jan

Then circles:

ZYCHSKI, Jerzy

He closes the file.

EXT. ZOO STABLES - TWO DAYS LATER - NIGHT

Jerzy sits outside the stables. Rain falls gently.

A child's drawing - the lion and the mouse - sits in his lap.

Footsteps.

He turns - too late.

A Gestapo officer stands behind him.

OFFICER
Come with me.

Jerzy doesn't resist.

EXT. GESTAPO INTERROGATION BUILDING - NIGHT

A low bunker lit by bare bulbs and fear.

Inside, Jerzy screams - muffled, distant.

INT. HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Jerzy lies on a cot, bloodied, barely conscious.

A younger SS lieutenant stands outside the bars, watching silently.

He holds a notepad – sketches of zoo blueprints from memory.

SS LIEUTENANT
So many animals. So few cages.

Jerzy turns away.

INT. GESTAPO OFFICE - LATER THAT NIGHT

The same SS lieutenant sits at a desk. A new file marked:

OPERATION: ZOOFALL
Inside:

- Map of Warsaw Zoo
- Suspected hide points
- Names: Żabiński, Zychski, and others

SS LIEUTENANT (TO AIDE)
Midnight. No sirens.

AIDE
What about civilians?

SS LIEUTENANT
Shoot anything that moves.

EXT. ZOO - NIGHT

Boots hit the gravel.

A platoon of SS soldiers storms through the front gates, rifles ready.

Inside enclosures, lions ROAR.

A tiger slams its body against a cage door.

Antonina wakes in bed, hearing metal creak.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Antonina stumbles to the window – her breath catches.

SS soldiers march through the paths.

She sees one stop at the flamingo pond and raise his weapon.

BLAM! A splash of feathers and blood.

ANTONINA

No...

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

The boy flinches at the shot. The teenage girl pulls him close.

More BOOMS upstairs. Wood cracking. Glass shattering.

A lion ROARS - then a long, horrible silence.

EXT. ZOO STABLES - CONTINUOUS

Jan runs across the yard, ducking into the stables.

He finds a family huddled in the loft.

JAN

Go now. The canal. Take the east trench - stay below the treeline.

They run. He watches - then grabs a shovel.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Antonina stands frozen as an SS OFFICER enters.

Not Keller. This one's younger. Crueler.

He surveys the piano, then Antonina.

SS OFFICER

This is where the lullaby lives.

ANTONINA

There are no Jews here.

SS OFFICER

No. But there were.

(beat)

And ghosts make poor alibis.

He places a bullet on the piano.

SS OFFICER (CONT'D)

For the next one we find.

He leaves.

Antonina doesn't move.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE - NEXT MORNING

Antonina finds the lion's cage open.

Inside: blood. Fur. A single bullet casing.

She stares.

Then kneels.

INT. BASEMENT - THAT NIGHT

The boy draws on the wall again - this time, a lion with a hole in its chest.

The teenage girl watches, tears in her eyes.

She covers the hole with her hand.

EXT. WARSAW STREET - DAYS LATER

Antonina walks with a basket - silent, numb.

She turns a corner.

Three bodies hang from a lamppost.

A sign tied to one: FOR HARBORING RATS

The boy's coat - too familiar - hangs from one of the bodies.

Antonina stumbles back - gasps.

Then - a closer look - not him. Another child. Another victim.

Still, it crushes her.

INT. PARLOR - THAT NIGHT

Antonina plays the lullaby again.

This time, she stops halfway through.

The silence is deafening.

EXT. GESTAPO COURTYARD - PRE-DAWN

Jerzy, pale and trembling, is dragged between two SS guards.

The younger SS lieutenant stands nearby, sipping coffee.

A shovel waits beside a shallow trench.

Jerzy looks up – sees a single caged bird hanging from a hook above the door.

JERZY (SOFT)
Don't sing.

The guards push him to his knees.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

The boy wakes with a start. Silent. Alert.

He hears a strange bird call. Familiar. Off.

He climbs to the narrow window.

EXT. GESTAPO COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

The bird flaps wildly in its cage – sensing what's coming.

Jerzy smiles at it.

A shot rings out.

We don't see it – just the bird's feathers scattering, then silence.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The boy watches feathers drift past the window.

He backs away. Draws something.

We don't see it yet.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE - THAT NIGHT

Antonina stands before the mirror. Her reflection barely recognizable.

Jan enters, quietly.

JAN
They executed Jerzy.

ANTONINA (SOFT)

I know.

JAN

Do we stop?

She doesn't answer. Just turns to the piano. Sits.

Instead of playing, she opens the top – pulls out a note hidden beneath the strings.

On it: a name, a date, a safe house.

ANTONINA

We go again.

EXT. WARSAW ZOO – NIGHT

A young mother and her child wait in the shadows.

Antonina opens a gate – motions them through.

She leads them into the lion enclosure.

MOTHER

There's nothing here.

Antonina pulls aside an old feeding trough – revealing a trapdoor.

ANTONINA

There is now.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE – MOMENTS LATER

The mother and child descend into the cellar, where the boy waits.

He hands the little girl a toy lion made of rags.

She smiles.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HOUSE – LATER THAT NIGHT

Antonina and Jan sit at the kitchen table in silence.

A knock at the door.

They freeze.

Another knock.

Jan rises – rifle in hand – opens the door.

No one.

Just a small wooden crate.

Inside: a live rabbit and a note:

“Some animals still need saving.

– H.”

Antonina reads it. Her hand trembles.

ANTONINA (QUIETLY)

Keller.

JAN

A warning?

ANTONINA

No. A goodbye.

EXT. WARSAW – SPRING 1945 – DAY

The city is dust and bone.

Rebecca, aged and tired, walks toward the zoo gates.

She passes hollow cages, scorched earth.

Inside the house – silence.

She reaches the basement steps... descends.

INT. BASEMENT – CONTINUOUS

The boy, now older, stands at the far wall.

He turns – sees her.

They stare at one another.

She falls to her knees.

He runs into her arms.

INT. PARLOR – LATER

The piano sits untouched.

Rebecca walks to it. Opens the lid.

Inside: the toy xylophone.

She presses a note.

BOY (O.S.)
That one's mine now.

She turns – he smiles faintly.

EXT. ZOO COURTYARD - DAY

Antonina stands where the lion once roared.

New sounds: crates of animals arriving from other sanctuaries.

A fox. A stork. A tortoise.

Rebirth.

She closes her eyes.

In the distance – a child plays the lullaby on the xylophone.

INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

The boy finishes his drawing on the wall:

A lion.

A mother.

A child.

And a cage—open.

The teenage girl watches. He hands her the chalk.

She doesn't take it.

GIRL
You finish it.

EXT. WARSAW STREETS - NIGHT

Antonina rides her rusted bicycle, a crate of food on the back.

She turns down a ruined side road – rubble piled high – when a truck headlights sweep across her.

She freezes. The truck slows.

SS soldiers inside glance her way.

The driver keeps going.

She breathes again.

INT. LION ENCLOSURE - LATE NIGHT

Jan helps the last family down into the crawlspace beneath the feeding pit.

He reaches to close the trapdoor–

CHILD (O.S.)
Will there be more lions?

JAN (SOFT)
Someday.

He locks the door behind him.

INT. PARLOR - HOURS LATER

Antonina, alone, plays the lullaby.

Her fingers hesitate... then finish the melody – the full version.

Outside, a lion ROARS.

She freezes – then smiles faintly.

It was just thunder.

EXT. ZOO - DAWN

Smoke rises in the distance – the Ghetto burns.

Antonina watches from a rooftop.

She turns and sees a red fox slink between rubble.

ANTONINA (SOFT)
Still here.

INT. BASEMENT - SAME

The boy wraps the toy lion in cloth. Hugs it tight.

He lies beside the girl. They don't sleep.

Just wait.

EXT. ZOO - SPRING 1945 - DAY

Time has passed.

Allied tanks roll through Warsaw. Children chase them.

EXT. ZOO GATES - CONTINUOUS

Rebecca, now aged, enters the cracked gates. Her coat is torn but her eyes are bright.

Inside, silence.

She approaches the lion enclosure.

No lion.

She kneels, places her hand on the stone.

REBECCA
You kept him safe.

INT. BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

The boy stands in the shadows.

She turns. Sees him.

He holds the toy lion out to her.

She drops to her knees. Embraces him, sobbing.

INT. PARLOR - LATER THAT DAY

Antonina sits at the piano. Jan at her side.

She plays the lullaby, slower now.

A child's hand joins in - a xylophone note.

Then another.

Outside: animal crates arrive.

Life returns.

EXT. ZOO - WEEKS LATER

The zoo reopens to children.

A new sign:

Zoologiczny Ogród Warszawski

Reopened May 1945

FINAL SCENE

INT. BASEMENT - DUSK

The boy's drawing remains on the wall.

But now there's more.

A lion with wings.

The Warsaw skyline behind it.

And at the bottom:

"He who saves one life..." "...saves the world entire."

A light breeze stirs through the basement.

A final, faint xylophone note.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. JERUSALEM - YAD VASHEM MEMORIAL GARDEN - DAY - 1965

A grove of trees. Still. Sacred.

A long row of plaques - each name carved into stone.

We PAN SLOWLY past them..

Then land on one:

ANTONINA ŻABIŃSKA

JAN ŻABIŃSKI
Righteous Among the Nations

INT. CEREMONY TENT - SAME

A modest crowd.

Elderly Antonina, now gray-haired but proud, sits beside Jan, his hand resting on hers.

A rabbi steps to the podium.

RABBI
In a world that burned, they became
shelter.

Where there were cages, they made sanctuary.

Applause swells.

EXT. TREE GROVE - MOMENTS LATER

A small sapling is planted in the earth.

Antonina kneels. Brushes soil over the roots.

Behind her, survivors and descendants watch silently – some holding children.

Jan wipes his eye.

MONTAGE - "AFTERLIVES"

– Rebecca, now middle-aged, teaching a class of children in Tel Aviv. A toy lion on her desk.

– The teenage girl, now a nurse, bandaging a child's arm in a postwar clinic.

– The boy, now grown, visiting the reopened zoo – holding his son's hand.

EXT. WARSAW ZOO - PRESENT DAY - MORNING

Visitors stroll under fresh banners. Laughter echoes.

A new generation passes beneath the stone archway.

INT. BASEMENT - PRESENT DAY

The boy's mural still faintly clings to the wall - weathered but intact.

A small placard nearby:

During WWII, over 300 Jews were hidden in this basement.

Many survived thanks to the courage of Antonina and Jan Żabiński.

EXT. YAD VASHEM - TREE GROVE - SUNSET

The tree planted earlier now stands tall.

Wind rustles the leaves.

At its base, a child places a folded drawing:

A lion.

A woman.

A child.

And a gate - open.

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER:

Based on true events.

Between 1939 and 1945, Antonina and Jan Żabiński hid over 300 Jews inside the Warsaw Zoo.

Many survived.

Jerzy Zychski was never seen again.

The zoo reopened in 1945. It remains open today.

SUPER #2:

In 1965, Antonina and Jan were recognized as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem.

A tree bearing their names still grows in Jerusalem.

FINAL FADE OUT.

THE END.