

DADDY ISSUES

a gay romp through history starring Adolf Hitler!

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WME

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CHARACTERS

United States:

VON BLERGHOWITZ
ELEANOR BLERGHOWITZ (his mother)
MOSES BLERGHOWITZ (his father)
RABBI
US DRILL SERGEANT
SOLDIER/RENE
US GENERAL
BLERGHIE (his son)
NEWSBOY ONE

Europe:

ADOLF HITLER
KLARA HITLER (his mother)
ALOIS HITLER (his father)
FRANZ
HEADMASTER
HELGA
ORTHODOX JEW
AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN
AUSTRIAN RECRUITER
NURSE
JEWISH GIRL ONE
JEWISH GIRL TWO
GERMAN WOMAN
GERMAN MAN
MISS GERMANY
MISS AUSTRIA
MISS JAPAN
MISS ITALY
WAITRESS
GERMAN BOY
OLD MAN IN CLUB
OFFSTAGE MALE VOICE
A WOMAN/MONA LISA
HEDWIG
BERTOLT BRECHT
MAN WITH FISH SCALES
NEWSBOY TWO
NEWSBOY THREE

Other:

THE VOICE OF GOD

CAST

Six actors, broken down as following:

VON BLERGH / BLERGHIE (an adult actor to play from childhood to mid forties) **

ADOLF HITLER (an adult actor to play from childhood to mid forties)

Actor One* (Female, late 20's):

KLARA HITLER / ORTHODOX JEW / NURSE / MISS GERMANY / MISS AUSTRIA / GERMAN BOY / WAITRESS / MICHELE / NEWSBOY TWO

Actor Two* (Female, 40's-60's):

ELEANOR VON BLERGHOWITZ / US RECRUITER / HELGA / AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN / JEWISH GIRL ONE / MISS ITALY / GERMAN WOMAN / MONA LISA / BEARDED LADY / THE VOICE OF GOD

Actor Three* (Male, 20's-30's):

FRANZ / RENE / MOSES BLERGHOWITZ / NAZI SOLDIER / HEDWIG / NEWSBOY THREE

Actor Four* (Male, 40's-60's):

ALOIS HITLER / RABBI / HEADMASTER / US DRILL SARGEANT / US GENERAL / AUSTRIAN RECRUITER / JEWISH GIRL TWO / MISS JAPAN / GERMAN MAN / OLD MAN IN CLUB / OFFSTG MALE VOICE / BERTOLT BRECHT / MAN WITH FISH SCALES / EVA BRAUN / THE BIRD / NEWSBOY ONE

Gender and age are suggested but *all* roles are open for gender, race, and age.

* Also functions as the CHORUS

** In the Juilliard workshop of the play, the musical director was visibly staged throughout and revealed at the very end as Blerghie. The play was framed as his memory and "version" of the story. This is not a necessary framework but it was successful.

SETTING

The play is set in New Rochelle, New York and various places throughout Europe (and in Heaven) and various times throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

NOTES

The play should move rapidly, using almost no scenery and swift transitions. The costumes should indicate the time periods and the character's ages.

Slashes in lines of dialogue are places of suggested overlap.

MORE NOTES

The speech Adolf gives on Pg. 30 is meant to be paired with this video clip (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EV9kyocogKo>), beginning at 1:40 seconds, ending at 2:33, likely with some additional editing to see the audience cheering at the end. Another clip may be substituted at the director's discretion. For *The Dictator* clip, any moment where Chaplin is giving a speech can be paired with the above.

It is also acceptable not to use video clips or projections at all. I leave that to the creative team's discretion.

MUSICAL MOMENTS

The following are musical “moments” throughout the play. Some function as traditional songs while others—specifically moments with the CHORUS—provide texture for the piece.

The composer, **Rick Hip-Flores**, has created sheet music for all of the below:

Nothing Bad Will Happen If You Dance—RENE, VON BLERGH, ADOLF, CHORUS

We're German—CHORUS

Adolf!—CHORUS

I Love To Walk On A Rope (Michele's Song)—MICHELE

Love Like A Work Of Art—VON BLERGH, MICHELE

Germany Is Not The Same—CHORUS

Adolf's Lament—ADOLF, ALOIS, CHORUS

All music / songs should be woven in seamlessly with the text and should not stop the fluidity or pacing. Ideally one upright piano is incorporated into the staging, and various actors can serve as the accompanist.

If that is not an option, best to have a single person accompany the play (ideally the musical director) who can also act as a Foley artist of sorts.

There is much opportunity for underscoring, whether that is original music, samples of classical music, or both. Music is most helpful to set various places and emphasize emotional moments of the play.

It should *not* slow the pace or distract from the comedy.

TRANSITIONS

Creative ways of transitioning between scenes and time periods are highly encouraged. Transitions must be swift, and generally it is fine to have actors overlapping at the end of scenes.

There should never be “dead space” in this play. It needs to move, move, move.

tone

The tone of this play is tricky.

It should feel fast-paced, effortless, and fun. But bubbling underneath the surface is the struggle of what it means to be an artist, and what it means to be a man. (And, of course, the horrors of war and the Holocaust.) The humor in the play will work best if the actors playing ADOLF and VON BLERGH (and the others) truly commit to their intentions and find honest emotional underpinnings for their characters.

There is a tonal shift in the play, where some of the silliness and craziness of the energy morphs into something more serious, more real. Again, this will best be navigated if the actors are truthful and play real emotions—frustrations, love, fear—and are less concerned with the comedy, which will come regardless.

The ending should feel touching, sweet, mysterious.

*“In the dark times
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will also be singing.
About the dark times.”*

—Bertolt Brecht

AT RISE: A blank canvas, so to speak.

ENTER: the ACTORS, who prepare the stage, stringing up a white drop cloth to serve as a projection screen and setting out all props and costumes. The ACTORS can be warming up (vocal exercises, stretching) and putting on the finishing touches of their makeup. All the “strings” should be showing.

As this is happening, the actors playing VON BLERGHOWITZ and ADOLF HITLER make their transformations: ADOLF should have a tiny “Hitler” moustache, VON BLERGHOWITZ should wear a yarmulke. They are young boys.

ACTOR ONE turns on a small projector: da Vinci’s THE MONA LISA appears on the projection cloth. ADOLF and VON BLERGHOWITZ are not together, but they both study the painting, riveted.

VON BLERGHOWITZ and ADOLF

Look at her.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

She’s so ...

ADOLF

Angry.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

There is such mystery in her eyes. And her mouth! What is she thinking?!

ADOLF

She is so *mean*. You think you’re better than me, Mona Lisa?

VON BLERGHOWITZ

I wish I could paint her. I wish I could paint! I want to make art like this, art that is moving, that inspires.

ADOLF

I am so jealous of stupid Da Vinci. I will make art that is better than his, and then forever and ever people will know *my* name!

KLARA HITLER (O.S.)

Adolf!

ELEANOR VON BLERGHOWITZ (O.S.)

Blerghie!

ADOLF and VON BLERGHOWITZ

(*Out*): Mama! (*Calling back*): Coming!

*Lights down on ADOLF.
VON BLERGH is now with ELEANOR, a stereotypical Jewish mother.*

ACTOR FOUR

NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK. 1900.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

Mama, must we light the Shabbat candles tonight?

ELEANOR

But of course, Blerghie. It is Shabbat.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

I don't want to celebrate Shabbat. I want to paint. Like Father!

ELEANOR

Father is dead. And you are not smart enough to paint.
You need a simpler profession: Become a lawyer, or a brain surgeon.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

But I don't want to, Mama! *Baruch atah adonaiiiiiiiii* want to paint.

ELEANOR

Enough! I will not have my son pursue foolish dreams. We are Jews in New Rochelle.
Life is already tough. Won't you make it easy, boychik?

VON BLERGHOWITZ

You don't understand me, what I have inside just waiting to come out.

ELEANOR

If you have to make a BM, excuse yourself and use / the bathroom.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

If I don't paint I'll die! I WILL JUST DIE! (*Beat.*) I WILL DIE!

*Lights down on VON BLERGH.
Lights up on a young ADOLF HITLER and his mother.*

ACTOR THREE

LEONDING, GERMANY. 1900.

ADOLF

Today is a dark day. My brother Edmund has died. (*He cries.*)

KLARA HITLER

Adolf. What is the matter with you?

KLARA HITLER (CON'T)

You have gone from being a confident and outgoing boy to crying all the time!

ADOLF

I am so sad, Mama!

KLARA

Because Edmund is dead?

ADOLF

Because I will never again be able to paint him! (*Holds up a poorly drawn painting of a small child.*) He was the perfect model! His skin was so pale.

ALOIS HITLER enters. He is domineering, abrasive. Mean.

ALOIS

Adolf, I will not have any of this! Painting is for sissies. You will grow up to be a man.

ADOLF

I won't be a man, papa, I won't! I want to transfer the beauty of the world onto canvas, to draw birds and animals and flowers and pretty blue skies and sleep with boys!

ALOIS

What did you just say?

ADOLF

I WANT TO BE AN ARTIST!

Alois backhands Adolf. It should hurt.

ALOIS

(*fast*) No son of mine shall ever be an artist! Civil service is where you'll succeed. I am sending you to boarding school, where there are NO girls and ONLY boys. You will spend all day and night with other boys, wrestling and sweating and grabbing each other in the locker room while you wrap skimpy towels around your waists that could drop AT ANY SECOND until you shower naked like cattle with only ONE soap bar and you look at each other's privates then pretend NOT to look but really you are looking and JUDGING to make sure YOU ARE THE BEST!

You will learn to be a normal young man. (*Beat.*) No. More. Painting. BE A MAN! (*It echoes and fades*): *Be a man, be a man, be a man, be a man ...*

ADOLF

But Papa!

Lights up on VON BLERGHOWITZ. It's his Bar Mitzvah.

ADOLF and VON BLERGHOWITZ

What *is* a man?!

Lights down on ADOLF.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

I wish I knew, as today I become one. Sadly, my father is dead. He asphyxiated on oil paint in the garage. He was trying to change the world through art.

ELEANOR (O.S.)

More Hebrew!

VON BLERGHOWITZ

Baruch atah adonaiiiiiiii don't know what I want to do with my life. Mother wants me to be a lawyer and live in the attic, but I want to inspire people! Create art! Only I don't know how to begin.

ELEANOR rushes onstage.

ELEANOR

Don't ruin your Bar Mitzvah with all this artsy schmarty business, Blerghie. This Tallis cost a lotta money. Just BECOME A MAN already and be quiet about it!

She rushes offstage.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

My Torah portion is about trusting God. Abraham trusted God that he wouldn't have to kill his firstborn son. But he was *ready* to kill if God commanded it.

ELEANOR (O.S.)

I'll kill *you* if you don't get to the Hebrew part!

VON BLERGHOWITZ

ARE YOU THERE, GOD? IT'S ME, VON BLERGHOWITZ!
If you want me to be an artist, show me a sign! Show me a sign!

A loud crash. The RABBI walks on.

RABBI

I am sorry to tell you that our gilded Torah just fell from the altar onto your mother's punim. She's dead.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

Mother? Dead? (*Out, excited*): I'm going to be an artist!

Lights down on VON BLERGH.

Up on ADOLF, who is now in boarding school in LINZ, GERMANY.

FRANZ

Hallo Adolf.

ADOLF

Hallo.

FRANZ

We missed you at the hanging out with the other guys at boarding school here in Linz, Germany and doing the sports and the laughing. What are you doing?

ADOLF

Sketching. (*Holds up his sketchbook.*) I drew this of you last night while you were sleeping. Now I'm just putting in the details. Like your moles.

FRANZ

You did *what?!*

FRANZ almost punches ADOLF, then makes out with him.

Later, bitch.

FRANZ exits.

ADOLF

My first kiss! I must record this memory.
(*Writes in his sketch book*): Dearest Mein Kempf: I'm in love!

Lights up on VON BLERGH, also writing in his diary.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

Dear Diary, Today my mother was killed by a falling Torah.

ADOLF

Franz is amazing and I know we'll be *so* happy together.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

I am officially an orphan. To be an artist, I must have life experience. So I am enlisting in the Army. Even though I hate fighting and war.

ADOLF

And yet ... I *hate* school. I am purposely failing out so Papa will see I'm not meant for the real world.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

I must see the world. *Then* I'll be able to paint something meaningful. Onward, ho!
Wherever I will go!

ADOLF

Oh, how I want to live a Bohemian lifestyle, where I can paint all day and wear dresses
all night! But now that I have Franz, I will stay here for as long as possible.

ADOLF and VON BLERGH put their diaries away. Out:

VON BLERGHOWITZ and ADOLF

This is my dream: to create art.

VON BLERGHOWITZ

To see the world.

ADOLF

To love men.

VON BLERGHOWITZ and ADOLF

To be remembered forever.

*Lights down on VON BLERGH.
The HEADMASTER enters.*

HEADMASTER

Adolf, you have failed out of school. We are cutting you loose.

ADOLF

Oh no! Headmaster, I was failing on purpose, but now I'm in love / and—

HEADMASTER

I'm sorry, Adolf. Goodbye.

ADOLF

Goodbye?

HEADMASTER

So long, farewell. Auf wiedersehen ... you get the point. I'm sure you'll go on to do great
things.

*Lights down on ADOLF.
Up on VON BLERGH and a US ARMY RECRUITER.*

US RECRUITER

Next!

VON BLERGHOWITZ

I'm here to sign up for the army.

US RECRUITER

Name?

VON BLERGHOWITZ

Von Blerghowitz.

US RECRUITER

Age?

VON BLERGHOWITZ

...eighteen.

US RECRUITER

Yeah, right. And I'm J.P. Morgan. Next!

VON BLERGH steps away.

Takes out a marker, draws a "Hitler" moustache, then steps up like a new person.

US RECRUITER

Name?

VON BLERGH

Von Blergho ... just Von Blergh.

US RECRUITER

What a mature and interesting moustache. (*Hands him a uniform.*) You're in! Oh, and son? You might wanna ...

He motions for VON BLERGH to remove his Yarmulke and tallis. VON BLERGH feels slightly uncomfortable about this, but he does. Then:

Light shift. The piercing sound of a whistle. VON BLERGH does jumping jacks with another soldier.

US DRILL SARGEANT

I don't know what I've been told!

VON BLERGH and SOLDIER

I don't know what I've been told!

US DRILL SARGEANT

When I fight I fight for gold!

VON BLERGH and SOLDIER

When I fight I fight for gold!

US DRILL SARGEANT

I am strong I have no fear!

VON BLERGH and SOLDIER

I am strong I have no fear!

US DRILL SARGEANT

I'm not a Jew and I'm not queer!

Silence.

VON BLERGH and SOLDIER slow their jumping jacks.

DRILL SARGEANT blows his whistle.

US DRILL SARGEANT

Take five, ladies!

He EXITS.

VON BLERGH

Wow. He's tough.

SOLDIER

I know. I totally sweated through my underwear. I mean, I would've if I was wearing any. So I guess what I'm trying to say is that I'm not wearing any underwear. (*Beat.*) Cool moustache. I'm Rene.

RENE is sweet, silly. Flamboyant.

Not fit for the army. He might be Southern.

VON BLERGH

I'm Von Blergho ... Von Blergh. My friends call me Blerghie.

RENE

My parents made me join the army. They thought it would make me—

VON BLERGH

Stronger? More responsible?

RENE

(*Beat.*) Like, a lot less gay.

VON BLERGH (earnestly):

How's that worked out for you?

RENE

Don't ask, don't tell.

VON BLERGH

I want to be painter. I joined the army to see the world. But so far all I've seen is the inside of this army base.

RENE

Same here. Except also I've seen inside Private Fitz.
What are your paintings like?

VON BLERGH shrugs.

You want to be an artist but you don't have any paintings?

VON BLERGH

Not *yet*. I can't find my inspiration.

RENE

I can help you with that. Want to hear me sing?

WHAT'LL I DO WHEN YOU ARE FAR AWAY
AND I AM BLUE, WHAT'LL I DO?

VON BLERGH

You have a pretty voice.

RENE

That's what my friend Irving Berlin says. We love to see Broadway musicals together. I love any of the Tin Pan Alley shows, as long as they have happy endings.

VON BLERGH

Happy endings are nice.

RENE

If you're ever feeling scared or excited or a little gassy ... sing something!
(*Beat.*) I feel we could be friends. Would you like that?

*They shake hands as the lights come up on KLARA HITLER, at her typewriter.
Perhaps some of her note appears on the projection cloth as she types.*

KLARA HITLER

Vienna, 1905. Dearest Adolf, I hope you are enjoying life in Vienna. I am sending along as much money as I can, but for every dollar I get from your father, he beats and rapes me, so you can understand perhaps why I don't have so much.

Lights up on ADOLF, who is reading the same letter.

ADOLF

Keep on keeping on. Your mother, Klara.

(*Then*): Oh, Mother!

He takes money out of the envelope, pockets it.

This will keep me going for a few days. Everything in Vienna is expensive, especially the lattes.

I miss Franz but I do like it here. I've been spending my days painting—watercolors!—and am about to apply to the Academy of Fine Arts. I *have* to get in—then I'll be a real painter!

ACTOR THREE

The Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, 1907.

HELGA is examining one of ADOLF's paintings.

HELGA

Interesting work, Adolf.

ADOLF

So you'll admit me to the Academy?

HELGA

No. I do not believe you are fit for painting. Try again next year.

ADOLF follows HELGA in a large circle, ending back where they started.
ONE YEAR LATER.

Interesting work, Adolf.

ADOLF

So *now* you'll admit me to the Academy?

HELGA

No. I still do not believe you are fit for painting.

ANOTHER YEAR LATER.

Iiiiiinteresting work, Adolf.

ADOLF

Surely now—*two years* since I first applied—you'll admit me?

HELGA

Guess again. Your watercolors are too watery.

ADOLF

But to be an artist is all I've ever wanted!

Please, let me study here. This is where I'll find acceptance, encouragement—the chance to be myself and express my true / emotions—

HELGA

Also, we've admitted many, many Jews and do not have room for you.

Specifically because of how many Jews there are here, in this school.

There is room for them, no room for you.

They win. You lose.

She goes to leave, then stops.

Adolf?

ADOLF

(hopeful) Yes?

HELGA

You will never be an artist.

She EXITS.

ADOLF

Dammit! First my Papa, then this woman who looks like my Papa—telling me I will never succeed. And why? Because of the Jews! What is so great about the Jews?

Why THEM and not ME?!

WHYYYYYYYYYYYY—

ACTOR ONE pops in.

ACTOR ONE

Um, do you actually want to know / or—

ADOLF

(ignoring her) I'll get those Jews back for this, if it's the last thing I do!

Everyone will know my name: ADOLF MATILDA HITLER!

Lights down on ADOLF.

Lights up on RENE, posing in his uniform while VON BLERGH attempts to sketch him. It is 1917.

RENE

Being a model is hard. I'm hungry. How's it coming? (*Beat.*) Lemme see.

VON BLERGH

No!

RENE picks up the canvas, which is totally empty.

RENE

Seriously? It's blank!

VON BLERGH

I know! I can't seem to get ... inspired.

RENE

Ohhhh. Poor thing. (*Comforts him.*) This happens to a lot of guys.

VON BLERGH

It does?

RENE

... No. All my friend George Gershwin has to do is *look* at me and he composes an entire symphony! In like, a second. What's your deal?

VON BLERGH

I feel pressure to make great art. It's what my father was trying to do, before his accidental suicide in the garage. (*Beat.*) He painted himself into a corner. Literally.

RENE

You're being too hard on yourself. Give yourself the opportunity to fail. Take a risk.

DRILL SARGEANT enters.

US DRILL SARGEANT

Good news, boys!

RENE

(*Throws the bouquet.*) We're going into the city to see a musical? I hope it's / ragtime!

US DRILL SARGEANT

We're going to war!

RENE and VON BLERGH

War?!?!

VON BLERGH

Finally, something to inspire me! To open my eyes!

RENE

May I phone my parents?

US DRILL SARGEANT

They don't call it the Great War for nothing! We head out to Europe first thing tomorrow morning. Be prepared to risk your lives for your country!

He EXITS.

RENE

Oh, Von Blergh—I'm frightened!

VON BLERGH

There's nothing to be scared of, Rene.

RENE

Losing my original cast records? Dirtying my collection of silk scarves? *Dying—*

VON BLERGH

This is it—our chance to see the world! (*Starts to pack.*) I'll study all the greats: Monet, Rembrandt, Winston Churchill ... I can practically feel the culture seeping into my skin!

RENE

Kiss me before it's too late!

*RENE kisses VON BLERGH.
VON BLERGH pushes him away.*

VON BLERGH

What are you doing?

RENE

You love to paint, you've sketched me nude ... I figured you were gay!

VON BLERGH

You weren't nude, you were in your uniform, and I'm not gay.

RENE

Really? You seem / gay.

VON BLERGH

I'm just ... sensitive.

RENE

(Disappointed): Oh. Well that's *sort of* gay. Can we still be friends?

VON BLERGH

Friends forever.

Now, will you pack my gun in your bag? I need the extra room for my brushes.

Lights down on VON BLERGH and RENE.

Lights up on ADOLF.

ADOLF

Ugh. This homeless shelter is so gross. I totally hate it here.

He spots an ORTHODOX JEW sleeping on the floor.

Jew-boy. I shall rest my head next to you.

ORTHODOX JEW

Spot's taken.

ADOLF

But there's no one / here.

ORTHODOX JEW

It's for Elijah.

ADOLF

What about over—

ORTHODOX JEW

I'm saving all the spots for invisible prophets! Go away!

Rejected, Adolf spots a HOMELESS WOMAN.

ADOLF

Old dirty homeless woman. Do you have money for a soda? I am *so* thirsty.

AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN

I AM HOMELESS.

I have not had a bath in five years, my tongue is fake, it's actually a dead lizard, and my teeth are pebbles from the road! Why would I give *you* money?

ADOLF

What if I paint your picture?

AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN

You are painter? If you do a nice portrait of me, I will CONSIDER giving you money. But I mean *nice*. Classy. Go.

ADOLF

(*Out*): A chance to prove myself as an artist!

(*To HW*): Now, stay still.

He gets out a canvas, begins to sketch her.

Please, stay still—You are wiggling like a worm!

AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN

I have Diabetes.

ADOLF

Fine. (*He sketches. Then*): Here.

AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN

This? Is crap. I should've asked that Jew over there. Jews are incredible artists—

ADOLF

Shut up shut UP about the disgusting Jews. I hate them! And my art is not crap. It is good! Boo hoo, boo hoo. Woe is me.

An Austrian army RECRUITER enters.

AUSTRIAN RECRUITER

Hallo! We need young men to sign up for the Great War! We must defend the Austria-Hungarian Empire! (*Spots ADOLF.*) How about you?

ADOLF

I am not a fighter. I'm artistic.

AUSTRIAN RECRUITER

Is that why you are crying? Because you are ... autistic?

ADOLF

Artistic.

AUSTRIAN RECRUITER

We do not accept autistics into the army. No matter what the British are saying! (*Noticing the HW.*) You! How'd you like to fight for your country?

AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN

Is there free food?

AUSTRIAN RECRUITER

Ja!

AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN

I'd love to!

AUSTRIAN RECRUITER

Come with me.

(To the Orthodox Jew): You too, Moses.

(To ADOLF): Not you.

(To HW): He is not fit for service.

AUSTRIAN HOMELESS WOMAN

He is not fit for anything!

ORTHODOX JEW

Especially not to be an artist!

They all laugh, EXIT together—leaving Adolf alone.

ADOLF

I don't need your dumb Austrian army! I would not like to serve your mixed races!

(Out): I know. I shall go to Munich, and I shall volunteer *there* for the war!

Light shift. ADOLF is now in uniform.

Dearest Mein Kampf: I'm in the army now! Everyone here is *so* masculine. They all have such big boots. I can't wait to draw cartoons and be featured in the army newspaper!

Maybe then another soldier will invite me to hang out in a ditch, or at a grand party! I'll paint him and he will recognize my talent, unlike my Papa who now rests in his grave.

(aside, clutching his chest) Oh, Papa!

One night, the soldier will be all, Adolf? And I'll be all, Ja? Then he'll pounce on me and smother me with kisses!

He turns his back to the audience, wraps his arms around himself so it looks like he is making out with someone. Then he glances over his shoulder:

GOD I LOVE THE WAR!

Lights down on ADOLF.

Lights up on VON BLERGH, RENE, and US GENERAL.

US GENERAL

Now, boys. These European lands are allllll filled with land mines. Those tickers'll go off any minute, any second you touch 'em. Just like a lady. So be real careful not to set one off. Just like a lady. I'm-a move ahead. You boys follow right behind me. Just like a lady.

He EXITS.

VON BLERGH

Europe isn't anything like I expected. I thought we'd stop in small cafes and stroll by rivers—to inspire my painting! Instead we have *land mines*. How'll we spot them?

RENE

I know! We'll pretend it's a musical—like on the Great White Way! There's always a happy ending in a musical—unless it's one of those minstrel shows. We'll sing and dance over the land mines and won't get hurt! Just follow me—it's easy!

We realize he is wearing tap shoes as he begins to sing.

IF YOU'RE FEELING SCARED AND FRIGHTENED OF WHAT LIES AHEAD
REMEMBER MY DEAR FRIEND I'M BY YOUR SIDE

He does a simple tap routine and “jumps” over one of the mines, avoiding it.

IF YOU WANT TO WIN THE WAR, AND NOT END UP DEAD
HERE'S A SECRET THAT I WILL CONFIDE:
JUST TAKE A STEP
THEN LOOK TO YOUR RIGHT
DON'T DALLY BEHIND
AND STEP ON A MINE
OR IT WILL IGNITE
NOW DO IT AGAIN
YOU'RE READY TO TAKE A CHANCE
'CAUSE NOTHING BAD WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DANCE (AND SING!)

VON BLERGH

I don't know Rene ... The war's nothing like a musical.

RENE

Isn't it? Oh, hey guys!

A few SOLDIERS enter. They dance along with RENE. It appears VON BLERGH is also wearing tap shoes, though less sure on his feet.

IF YOU PRETEND
THAT YOU'RE IN A SHOW
THE WORLD WILL SEEM BRIGHT

RENE (CON'T)

THE WAR WILL SEEM TRITE
 YOU'LL FILL WITH A GLOW
 WE'RE BOTH ALIVE
 AND THAT ISN'T HAPPENSTANCE
 'CAUSE NOTHING BAD WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DANCE (AND SING!)

VON BLERGH

But that's *you*. I'm not a performer.

RENE

Not yet!

DON'T WORRY 'BOUT THE BULLETS
 THE MUD
 THE ENEMY
 THE BLOOD
 IT'S ALL PART OF A VAUDEVILLE REVIEW
 IF YOU ARE BY MY SIDE WE'LL SEE IT THROUGH
 NOW STAND UP STRAIGHT

VON BLERGH

OH BOY, CAN'T WAIT

RENE

FOR IT'S YOUR BIG DEBUT!

Come on boys ... let's show him how it's done!

Dance break!

A full-on tap routine. They can really go nuts with it—setting of mines with their tap shoes and dodging them so we hear the explosions, shooting at the enemy, etc. Projections can also be used to enhance the setting.

As they dance, a soldier runs on with various signs to indicate the following battles: FIRST BATTLE OF YPRES, BATTLE OF ARRAS, BATTLE OF PASSCHENDAELE, and finally BATTLE OF THE SOMME.

There should be a marked shift from the comic to the macabre: with each new battle, we should begin to see blood, corpses piling up, and a true sense of death. The sounds of tapping should become indistinguishable from gunshots.

Suddenly it's gotten dark.

At some point, ADOLF enters with his gun and dances along.

VON BLERGH

I'M FLYING HIGH!
LIKE FOURTH OF JULY!
MY FEET REALLY MOVE
NOW I FEEL THE GROOVE
WATCH ME TOUCH THE SKY

RENE

THE BATTLEFIELD'S RIPE

VON BLERGH + RENE

FOR A GREAT ROMANCE!

ALL

'CAUSE NOTHING BAD WILL HAPPEN

ADOLF

KEEP THOSE FINGERS SNAPPIN'

ALL

NOTHING BAD WILL HAPPEN IF YOU DANCE (AND SING!)

A huge explosion.

The stage is covered in smoke, blood, gore, bodies—the casualties of war.

ADOLF

My eyes, my eyes!

He rushes offstage.

RENE

(Pained): Von Blergh! That last dance move, I was too sassy with it. I can't feel my legs.

VON BLERGH

That's because they are no longer there! Help! Help! Where'd all the dancers go?

RENE

Promise me one thing: leave the army, and be a painter. You have talent. I think. Don't let it go to waste.

VON BLERGH

I promise, Rene. I promise.

RENE slips away.

Now I feel truly alone. *(He looks around in the smoke.)* Ow. My eyes!

*The space shifts into a hospital.
VON BLERGH and ADOLF are in separate beds.*

NURSE (to VB):

Don't worry, you're not alone.

VON BLERGH

Are you talking to me, nurse? I can't see anything.

ADOLF

Neither can I! Are you talking to *me*?

NURSE

Yes.

ADOLF

Yes to me, or yes to that other guy?

NURSE

You fainted on the battlefield. They found you crying.

ADOLF (laughing):

How embarrassing.

NURSE

(*To ADOLF*): I was talking to you.

(*To VB*): Although you were also hurt.

There was mustard gas on the field, and you are both temporarily blind.

ADOLF

Oh shit.

NURSE

We're hopeful your eyesight will return.

VON BLERGH

Thank God.

NURSE (motions to ADOLF):

I was talking to him.

ADOLF

But I am a painter! How will I paint if I am blind?

NURSE

(*Beat.*) You got me there!

VON BLERGH

Wait. I am a painter too.

NURSE

Really. What have you painted?

VON BLERGH

Nothing.

NURSE (to ADOLF):

What have *you* painted?

ADOLF

(*Beat.*) Nothing.

NURSE

A couple of real winners!

ADOLF

May I have a pillow?

NURSE

We gave all the pillows to the Jews. Their heads are so soft because their brains are so big. (*Beat.*) I'll be back.

She EXITS.

ADOLF

I feel like I'm stuck in limbo. Hallo? Other painter?

VON BLERGH

You sound German.

ADOLF

You sound American. Too bad. I'd love to have a friend to talk about making art with.

VON BLERGH

I don't know much about making art. I haven't been inspired yet.

ADOLF

I am inspired every day. I know I have talent but why don't other people see it?

VON BLERGH

Maybe if we both regain our sight, we'll use our second chance to make a difference. Create art that really *means* something.

ADOLF

And *then*, rich people will know my name and be like, Oh, Adolf? I love his work. I'd be invited to all the coolest parties and Franz would fall back in love with me!

VON BLERGH

I want—

ADOLF

And then *I'd* start throwing exclusive parties with NO JEWS ALLOWED and so many Jews would want to come and I would be all GO AWAY JEWS, I HATE YOU!

VON BLERGH

Why do you hate Jews so much?

ADOLF

My whole life they've gone first, while *I've* gone last. It's not fair.

VON BLERGH

Maybe life isn't fair for anyone.
Maybe it's all just a waiting game, an / uphill struggle—

ADOLF

You're boring me. I'm going to nap. Shhh, be quiet now. Shh.

VON BLERGH

I didn't say / anything.

ADOLF

Shh.

Dream music. ALOIS HITLER and MOSES VON BLERGHOWITZ appear, speak to their respective sons.

MOSES and ALOIS

Blerghie (Adolf), it's me. Your father.

VON BLERGH and ADOLF

Daddy?!

ALOIS

ADOLF! Give up painting. You are wasting your life away.

MOSES

Continue painting, Blerghie. A man must follow his heart.

ADOLF

Give up? Papa, no! You have never believed in me.

VON BLERGH

I don't even know if I can paint!

ALOIS

Forget this art bullshit. Only one thing in life is important.
Civil service: *that's* where *real men* go!

MOSES

One day you will find your voice and—with your paintbrush—be a part of history!

ALOIS

Blend in, Adolf. Work alongside your fellow countrymen. Find a wife. Spread your German seed. Only *then* will I respect you.

VON BLERGH

What will my voice say, Father?

ADOLF

But I don't *want* a normal life! I shine bright, like a diamond!

MOSES

It will speak to your heart and inspire you.

ALOIS

Find a way to assimilate. Fit in!

ALOIS/MOSES

(*Intensely*): Make me proud! BE A MAN!

They EXIT.

Light and music shift. The beds are taken away. VON BLERGH and ADOLF now can see. They travel to opposite sides of the stage.

The NURSE enters.

NURSE

The war is over. You are both free to leave the hospital.

ADOLF

What if I'd like to stay?

NURSE

Your bed has already been filled.

ADOLF

Don't tell me by / a Jew—

NURSE

They need soft beds because their backs are made of money and graduate school degrees.
Bye bye!

She EXITS.

VON BLERGH

Father's right. I need to leave my mark on the world. I'll search Europe for inspiration!

Lights down on him.

ADOLF

Stupid Jews. Stupid world!
Maybe I will listen to Papa for once. I shall devote my life to ... civil service! Only, I must think of a platform.

Two JEWISH GIRLS pass him. They are chatting with each other.

JEWISH GIRL ONE

Shabbat Shalom, Adonai Echad, bagels.

JEWISH GIRL TWO

Purim, Torah, beemah, expensive purses.

JEWISH GIRL ONE/TWO

Money-privilege-class-education-money-money-money-money.

They EXIT.

ADOLF

Nasty, nasty, nasty! (*He gets an idea.*) Nasty ... Nazi ... (*beat*) There's more than one way to be an artist!

Light shift. ADOLF is now SL in front of a microphone.

Germans. We are in a great economic depression and I am so *depressed* about it.
All because of *the Jews!* They are vampires! Stealing our very livelihoods!

Lights up on VON BLERGH, who is SR.

VON BLERGH

Germans. I am searching high and low for my muse. Are you here?

MISS GERMANY enters, dressed in lederhosen.

MISS GERMANY

Ja! I am your muse. I will feed you the bratwurst and the onions and garlic and then I will rub your belly for the farting and then we eat the weinerschnitzel and then I rub your belly again for the farting and then we make the love and you do the painting? Ja?

VON BLERGH

No.

She EXITS.

ADOLF

Austrians. Become Fascist and you'll get rich so *fascht* you won't know what hit you!

VON BLERGH

Muse, oh muse ... could you be here in Austria?

MISS AUSTRIA enters, still in lederhosen, now holding a ski and a clarinet.

MISS AUSTRIA

I am totally your muse!

VON BLERGH

Didn't I just see you in Germany?

MISS AUSTRIA

No! I am the same as a German only different!

I will take you skiing on the slopes, then serenade you with my clarinet and do other classical music in your ears and you do the painting and we humpty dumpty. Ja?

VON BLERGH

No.

She EXITS.

ADOLF

Japanese people. You hate the United States and you love freshwater salmon. Support me in hating all the Jews of Europe or else you will be sleeping with the fish!

VON BLERGH

Japan. How exotic. Will I find my muse here?

MISS JAPAN enters in traditional dress, bows to VON BLERGH.

MISS JAPAN

I be good wife. (*Covers her mouth with her hand, laughs a tiny laugh*). Make you fish and roll in rice and walk very quiet with my little tiny baby feet. (*Another covered laugh*.) We sit on floor for dinner and sleep on bamboo. Then you paint and we make love and do Kabuki. (*A third laugh*.) Yes?

He shakes his head NO.

She EXITS.

ADOLF

Italians. Help me grow the Nazi party as big as your waistlines!
SEND ME YOUR JEWS!

VON BLERGH

Italy! Surely my muse will be here?

MISS ITALY enters. She's hefty.

MISS ITALY

Mamma mia, here we go again! I'm-a bake you in-a calzone and eat-ta you up! Only kidding. I cut-ta you up and put you on a pizza! No, I do-a da joke! We make-a love so nice, like Tiramisu—you da chocolate and I da cream and I cover you with-a my cream and you do-a the painting and we drink-a da wine and I be-a your muse, si?

She reaches for his groin. He pushes her away and she EXITS.

VON BLERGH

No! (*Out*): This is a lot harder than I thought it would be.

A procession of girls begins ala the "Miss Universe" pageant.

They should have sashes saying their countries, and appropriate theme music is playing—something upbeat that is juxtaposed with actual footage of ADOLF HITLER and the THIRD REICH projected behind all of this.

As each girl passes, ADOLF pins a swastika on their sashes. The swastikas should grow larger and larger. The lights begin to darken

ADOLF

Croatia! Hungary! Ukraine! Poland! * Slovakia! Belgium! Yugoslavia! Romania!

**Lights down on VON BLERGH and the girls.*

ADOLF yells out countries as muted video of an actual speech given by HITLER is projected behind him. At some point, the video shifts to footage of Charlie Chaplin in The Dictator. By the end of this speech, ADOLF is truly terrifying.

ADOLF (CON'T)

We are the race of the future! Look at a German and you will find art in his face. In his beautiful blond hair. Soulful blue eyes. Perfect nose and pretty lips! When you see a German, you want to take him in your arms and kiss him and feel his soft baby skin and pray everything will be all right and let him hold you and hold you and take the pain away and it doesn't matter what anybody says because you love him and you will until the day you die!

(Beat.) Every Jew I have ever met has stolen from me! Places at university, hospital beds ... pillows! THEY DO NOT DESERVE IT! We must eliminate them and in their place, spread our German seed to create our own art ... FOREVER!

The actors age VON BLERGH and ADOLF with makeup and new clothes as TWENTY SEVEN YEARS pass.

Now it is 1934, MUNICH, GERMANY.

CHORUS (drolly):

WE'RE GERMAN!

OUR LIFE IS ROUGH AND SURE ENOUGH
IT'S TOUGH FOR US TO LET LOOSE AND HAVE FUN

WE'RE GERMAN!

OUR TUMMIES ACHE WE NEED A BREAK
BUT THERE IS SO MUCH HARD WORK TO BE DONE

OH WOULD YOU LIKE SOME MILBENKASE
THAT'S A TYPE OF CHEESE
A BRATWURST OR AN APFEL STRUDLE
MAY I HAVE ONE PLEASE

WITH SACRIFICE AND GOOD ADVICE WE HOPE TO THROW OUR CARES
AWAY ...

WE'RE GERMAN!

WE HATE TO LAUGH
WE LOVE TO CRY
WE NEED A BATH
WE'RE GONNA DIE

CHORUS (CON'T)

WE HATE THE JEWS AND WISH THAT THERE WERE NONE
FOR GERMANY TO BE NUMBER ONE ...

Heil, Hitler!

They disperse as VON BLERGH enters. He's older. Slightly more assured.

VON BLERGH

Good morning, Munich!

He sets up a canvas on the street.

A GERMAN BOY rushes past and nearly knocks over his easel.

Whoa there!

GERMAN BOY

Sorry, sir. I was just playing a game of tag with myself.

(taps his right shoulder) You're it. *(taps his left shoulder)* No, you're it!

I'm the future of the Aryan race! Who are you?

VON BLERGH

That's a good question. I've searched the world for my muse but still haven't found her.

GERMAN BOY

Too bad!

VON BLERGH

I thought about going back to America but my family is dead.

GERMAN BOY

No one cares, mister!

VON BLERGH

I went to art school and studied painting. But still—after all these years—I haven't been inspired enough to create something original! Which makes me very sad.

GERMAN BOY

Ha ha!

VON BLERGH

My father would be so disappointed.

Turns out I'm good at *copying*, though—which is how I've been making a meager living!

GERMAN BOY

My Papa is an artist. *(Takes paper out of his pocket.)* See!

VON BLERGH

Bet I can replicate it! Watch.

VON BLERGH eyes the sketch, then—quickly—he copies it exactly.

I wager you couldn't even tell which one *I* drew and which one your *Papa* drew. Well?

*The BOY looks between the sketches. Can't tell the difference.
Tags himself again.*

GERMAN BOY

You're it!

He EXITS offstage, giggling.

VON BLERGH

(staring at the sketches) Is *this* my legacy?

Are you there, God? It's me! Von Blergh! If there's any chance I can still be a real artist ... show me a sign! Otherwise ... maybe I'll finally give up.

HEDWIG enters, eating a bratwurst. Spots VON BLERGH. Notices the sketches.

HEDWIG

Artist. Why did you draw two identical sketches?

VON BLERGH

Me? An artist? No. I was just trying to prove I'm good at copying.

HEDWIG

I see. Still you are quite skilled. Hashtag *skilled*.

I will buy your sketches. Here is my card. Call me when you're feeling ... uninspired.

Finishes the bratwurst, pays VON BLERGH, takes the sketches, EXITS.

VON BLERGH stares at the money in his palm and smiles. Looks up.

VON BLERGH

Maybe there's a chance for me yet!

CHORUS

WE'RE GERMAN!

WE LOST THE WAR AND NOW WE'RE POOR

THE FUTURE'S LOOKING TERRIBLE AND GRAY

CHORUS

WE'RE GERMAN!
WE SING THE BLUES AND HATE THE JEWS
OH HOW WE WISH THAT THEY WOULD GO AWAY

GERMAN MAN

I CAN'T SUPPORT MEINE FAMILIE
ALL OF THEM WILL DIE

GERMAN WOMAN

I CAN'T AFFORD GAS HEIZUNG
TIME TO SAY BYE-BYE

CHORUS

WITH SACRIFICE AND GOOD ADVICE WE HOPE TO THROW OUR CARES
AWAY ...

WE'RE GERMAN!

OUR BODIES SMELL
WE'RE FULL OF MANGE
WE LIVE IN HELL
WE NEED A CHANGE

THE JEWS MUST DIE AND BURN UP LIKE THE SUN
FOR GERMANY TO BE NUMBER ONE

NAZI SOLDIER

Heil, Hitler!

ALL

Bette Midler!

They disperse, leaving GERMAN WOMAN and GERMAN MAN onstage, reading newspapers, while VON BLERGH tries to paint, listening to their conversation.

GERMAN WOMAN

Oh, today is a terrible day. President von Hindenberg has died.

GERMAN MAN

Ja! And now the Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler, will assume power.

I am not sure how it is possible for him to do so, or even how he became the head of state, which was confusing and not legal at all. I worry for Germany!

Specifically for the Jews and gypsies and the homosexuals.

GERMAN WOMAN

I do not care so much about the gypsies, but oh, I worry too!

Lights down on GERMAN MAN and WOMAN.

*Lights up on ADOLF, who now resembles the Fuhrer as we've come to know.
He's in a club in Germany. HEDWIG is finishing his set.*

HEDWIG

AND I LOVE A CABARET! Thank you.

ADOLF (to a waitress):

Miss. *Who* is *that* performing in this seedy nightclub?

WAITRESS

Hedwig. Here every Friday and Tuesday for the open mic.

HEDWIG (into his mic):

Is this thing on? (*Licks the microphone, then places his lips around it.*) How bout now?

ADOLF

My is he provocative!

Waitress, set up an introduction. Something subtle.

I don't want to seem desperate.

WAITRESS

YO, HEDWIG! The Fuhrer wants to meet you! (*She makes a sexual gesture, EXITS.*)

HEDWIG

Adolf Hitler. You're much more handsome in person.

ADOLF

(*Flattered.*) Ja?

HEDWIG

Ja.

ADOLF

I loved your show.

HEDWIG

Ja?

ADOLF

Ja.

I love *your* show.

HEDWIG

Ja?

ADOLF

Ja.

HEDWIG

I'm not in a show.

ADOLF

Ja?

HEDWIG

... Ja.

ADOLF

Oh.
Well.
All life is a show.
Ja?

HEDWIG

... *Ja!*
(*Beat.*) Would you like to—

ADOLF

JA I WILL sleep with you, mein Fuhrer!

HEDWIG

I was *going to say* be my personal assistant.

ADOLF

And your lover?

HEDWIG

Don't say that word in public.

ADOLF

Which word? Lover—

HEDWIG

ADOLF slaps him. HEDWIG likes it.

Again! At home I have a / whip—

ADOLF

Stop! No one must ever know that I'm—

HEDWIG

A big ho / mo—

ADOLF

Mobile! Yes, I love to ... walk around! Just walk walk walk—

HEDWIG

No I mean that you're gay—

ADOLF

GAYYTTING ready for a big day tomorrow. I should go.

HEDWIG

I see. You're scared. Of what might happen between us. Because you feel the heat.

OLD MAN IN CLUB appears.

Passes ADOLF ...

OLD MAN IN CLUB

Don't do it.

... then EXITS. ADOLF is shaken.

ADOLF

Now that I'm in power, I must be a normal man, like my Papa wanted. But my urges!

HEDWIG

All right. I will come and work for you. But only because I can help you.
Now shut up you big German fool, and kiss me!

They ravage each other as the lights go down.

LIGHTS UP on ADOLF in a private office, dressing for a speech.

ADOLF

Hedwig. Come here.

HEDWIG is dressed like a slutty Hitler Youth.

HEDWIG

Have I been a good assistant these past months?

ADOLF

Ja! All of our concentration camps are up and running, is that right?

HEDWIG

JA!

ADOLF

You know the rules, ja?

HEDWIG

Don't call you at home or hold your hand in public.

Don't make statements to the press.

Eat five small meals spaced out throughout the day instead of three large ones.

ADOLF

And the most important rule?

HEDWIG

Take the famous art from the Jews, and lock it up for no one except *you* to see!

Hashtag *sneaky!*

ADOLF

We have made progress in deporting *some* Jews, but we must exterminate *all* of them.

HEDWIG

Even my lawyer? (*Adolf nods.*) And my doctor? (*Nod.*) What about my *other* lawyer?

ADOLF

They *all* must go. Otherwise they will contaminate the human race with their curly frizzy gross hair! Come Hedwig—into the streets!

Light shift. They're outside. ADOLF addresses the crowd.

The National Socialist movement will go on for 1,000 years!

Behind him, the NAZI flag drops. The "ensemble" comes out and sing-speaks to ADOLF in a production number to the tune of "Mame." It should feel droll, dry.

CHORUS

YOU COAX OUR FEET RIGHT OUT OF OUR CLOGS, ADOLF!

YOU LOVE TO EAT A JUICY A HOT DOG, ADOLF!

GERMAN WOMAN

WHO EVER THOUGHT A GERMAN WOULD PUT

A SMALL GEFILTE FISH TO SHAME

CHORUS

YOU'VE MADE US FEEL ALIVE AGAIN

YOU'VE GIVEN US THE DRIVE AGAIN

CHORUS (CON'T)
 TO MAKE OUR HOMELAND THRIVE AGAIN, ADOLF!
 ADOLF! * ADOLF! ADOLF!

** The CHORUS disperses—all except HEDWIG, who keeps singing “ADOLF!” as the lights dim to BLACK.*

HEDWIG’s repetition has turned sexual. He screams out:

HEDWIG

ADOLF!

Lights up. We’re back in ADOLF’s office. That number was all his fantasy.

ADOLF

I’m right here, you don’t need to shout. Have you found an artist like we spoke about?

HEDWIG

Totally. (Calls offstage): Oh, artist!

An S.S. man named BERTOLT enters, dragging VON BLERGH.

BERTOLT

Heil!

ADOLF

Oh, hey Bertolt Brecht. What’s up?

BERTOLT

This little piggy tried to run away but I caught him. Then he peed and pooped his pants—

VON BLERGH

I did / not—

BERTOLT

HE PEED AND POOPED HIS PANTS and ran away *again*, like a feral cat. But cats are dumb. I caught the little pee-poop piggy boy and brought him here. For you. Mein Fuhrer.

ADOLF

Thanks, Bertolt.

BERTOLT

But watch out: the bitch that bore him is in heat again! (*Beat.*) Radio if you need me.

ADOLF

I will.

*ADOLF mouths "I won't" to HEDWIG.
BERTOLT exits.*

ADOLF (CON'T)

Holy cow he's annoying. (*He studies Von Blergh.*) Do I know you? You seem ... familiar.

VON BLERGH

Uh—

HEDWIG

I found him on the street when I was eating a bratwurst! (*He takes another bratwurst out of his pocket.*) I have another one right here. Want to watch me eat it?
I can fit the entire thing in my mouth in one / whole—

ADOLF

That will be all, Hedwig. Please tell Eva I shall see her for dinner in about an hour.

HEDWIG

That dyke?!

ADOLF

HEDWIG! You know I don't like that word.

HEDWIG

Fine. Ugly lesb / ia—

ADOLF

Go, Hedwig! Now!

HEDWIG

Why hide the truth? You LOVE / MEN—

ADOLF

MENINGITIS! Yes, I should get vaccinated, thank you Hedwig. Bye bye now, toodle-oo.

He pushes HEDWIG offstage. Then:

VON BLERGH

He seems ... young and gay.

ADOLF

He does love life. Hedwig tells me you have an uncanny ability to replicate artwork, that your attention to detail and specificity cannot be matched.

VON BLERGH

Well yes but I'm not really an artist—

ADOLF

Did I say you were? (*beat*) How would you like to assist your country?

VON BLERGH

Do I have a choice? I was dragged here by a deranged S.S. / man—

ADOLF

There is always a choice. Yours is: help your country or ... be killed. By me.

VON BLERGH

I'll go with the helping then?

ADOLF

Excellent. Now look.

*Lights up on a slew of paintings, which should appear to be done by the masters.
The images can also be projected.*

In the room there is also a tiny cot, a suggested window, and a stool.

VON BLERGH is shocked and in awe.

VON BLERGH

Monet, Rembrandt, Van Gogh—where did you get these?

ADOLF

I stole them from the Jews. Want to see my pride and joy?

*He lifts the cover off a painting: it's THE MONA LISA.
She appears projected on the cloth behind them.*

ADOLF and VON BLERGH

The Mona Lisa!

VON BLERGH

Wow.

ADOLF

I've always wanted her. Now she's mine. Only I can't tell if she's happy to be here ...

*They both stare at the painting, transfixed (and confused).
Then:*

Anyhoo ... You will change the signatures, on her and the others. They should all say, oh, I don't know ... HITLER!

VON BLERGH

But these are by the most famous artists who've ever lived! You want me to *ruin* them?

ADOLF

Not ruin. Enhance. Now that I am king of the world—

VON BLERGH

Well—

ADOLF

Now that I am *king of the world* one might say, Adolf! You have achieved more than any single puny artist ever could. You are—in fact—*more* than a king. You are God.

VON BLERGH

But—

ADOLF

No! I am *better* than God! I'm a man! A big man! A strong man!

...

...

Right?

VON BLERGH

Oh, um, yes sir—Führer—uh not to ... disrespect you but these paintings—
They're incredible and—I ... I don't think I can—

ADOLF

You copy things for a living. No? I am giving you a job. You should be grateful.
You should kiss my mouth.

VON BLERGH

Your what?

ADOLF

My feet.

VON BLERGH

Please, Führer, I don't want to die but—

ADOLF

Only my name—HITLER!—shall go down in history. Make the new signature—mine—
blend in with the paintings as if it has always been here. Let me show you.

He does his signature in the air. It appears on the projection.

Got it? Hedwig will check on you and bring you food. You'll stay here until you're done.

VON BLERGH

There are hundreds of paintings! This could take years—

ADOLF

I have until about (*pulls out an iPhone and checks it*) April thirtieth 1945. Good luck, Von Blergh. If you cross me, I will kill you. Slowly.

He exits.

VON BLERGH is alone. He stares at THE MONA LISA.

VON BLERGH

OhmyGodohmyGodohmyGod. What am I gonna do?
I can't destroy all this famous art—it's not right!
But if I disobey Hitler I'll *die*. What's so great about being right if I'm dead?

He comes to a decision.

Is about to change the signature on The Mona Lisa.

A WOMAN'S VOICE

Don't do it. No, seriously. Don't.

VON BLERGH

What? Who's there?

Lights. Music. Maybe some glitter.

A WOMAN

Don't recognize me? How bout now? (*Smiles cryptically.*) Nice to meet ya. I'm—

VON BLERGH

The Mona Lisa.

MONA LISA

I am appearing via magic to warn you NOT to destroy these paintings. Especially mine. (*With a smile*): If you do I will be miserable, like I am right now.

VON BLERGH

Really? You look sort of happy.

MONA LISA

It's the lighting. Anyway. Von Blerghowitz—

VON BLERGH

It's *Von Blergh*—

MONA LISA

Fine. Not important. What *is* important is that you *don't* erase the artists who created us. Da Vinci was a master! He deserves to be remembered—not Hitler.

VON BLERGH

I know that. I just ... don't want to die.

MONA LISA

No one *wants* to die. Except maybe Jesus. Listen, kid: screw Hitler! Go out on your own. Be an original.

VON BLERGH

But that's my whole problem! There's nothing *original* about me—

MONA LISA

Then fake it! Fake it till you make it, VB!

VON BLERGH

Fake it? What do you—

MONA LISA

That's what being great is all about. You're a late bloomer, I can tell. Your time has yet to come. Van Gogh only sold one painting his entire life. Now? He's immortalized—

VON BLERGH

But Van Gogh was a master—

MONA LISA

A master weirdo! The only difference between someone like *him* and someone like *you* is that he never gave up. Don't give up, Von Blergh. *Fake it till you make it*—

OFFSTAGE MALE VOICE

Mona Lisa! Where are you? It's apple martini time!

MONA LISA

Sorry, kid. Gotta jet. REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU! (*Fog begins to surround her and she starts coughing.*) What the eff is with all this smoke?

She disappears.

VON BLERGH stares at the painting of THE MONA LISA.

VON BLERGH

Fake it til you make it. What did she mean? My God that woman is cryptic!

And yet ... she's right. Father said one day I would find my voice and be a part of history. Maybe today is that day. And the only way I'll ever be original is to stand up to Hitler!

VON BLERGH (CON'T)

What to do, what to do ... *Fake it til you—*

(an idea!) I know! I'll make copies of all the paintings here, and on the *fakes* I'll sign Hitler's name. Meanwhile, I'll preserve the originals and smuggle them out of Germany!

Only I'd need to find a total *moron* to dupe into helping me! Someone really, really dumb.

A knock on the door.

HEDWIG enters with a tray of food.

HEDWIG

Von Blergh! Here is sauerkraut and mustard and beer. And your knoodle.

VON BLERGH

I don't see any Knoodle.

HEDWIG

(Burps.) Sorry.

VON BLERGH

Hedwig you .. um ... look very pretty today.

HEDWIG

I know.

VON BLERGH

Might I request a few blank canvases? I want to ... practice the Fuhrer's signature.

HEDWIG

I suppose that is acceptable. Oh and, Von Blergh? I'm watching you. Like a hawk. A sex hawk.

He EXITS.

VON BLERGH

Once the canvases arrive, I'll begin my subterfuge!

But where will I hide the *real* paintings? *(Looks around.)* I'm Von-trapped!

Frustrated, he kicks over the stand of food, then picks up the fallen items.

The bread has rolled underneath the cot. He feels for it. Then:

Wait! What's this? A trapdoor? *(looks up, to God)* Thank you!

I'll keep the fake paintings I create on display and hide the originals *here*. But who can help me sneak them out of the country?

*The faint sounds of carnival music.
Lights up on GERMAN MAN and WOMAN, lit to suggest they are down on the street, while VON BLERGH peers out the window.*

GERMAN MAN

I am so happy the Fuhrer has allowed the circus into Germany.

GERMAN WOMAN

Supposedly it is the only group of people allowed to pass through the borders. Circus people are so entertaining!

GERMAN MAN

We Germans do love our circuses!

They laugh as the lights dim on them.

VON BLERGH

That's it! I must find a traveling carnie! And quickly!

He tries the door. It's locked. He peers through the window.

My. It does look far.

He begins to climb out of the window.

Lights down.

Lights up on the circus, and the BEARDED LADY.

BEARDED LADY

Remember, folks, monkeys are three dollars each in the lobby.
And our popcorn is safe to eat now, no one ever proved anything.
Wanna hear a joke?

Whaddya call a guy with really big cajones? (*Beat.*) A woman!

And whaddya call a *woman* with really big cajones? (*Beat.*) A guy!

Wait, no ... that don't make sense.

Uh. Anyway, and now, all the way from Paris, our tightrope walking chanteuse!

Spot on MICHELE.

VON BLERGH enters and watches her, entranced. It's love at first sight.

MICHELE

Bienvenue! And welcome to the traveling circus—isn't this fun?

OH I LOVE TO WALK ON A ROPE

I LOVE TO WALK

THOUGH SOME SAY I'M A DOPE

MICHELE (CON'T)

I LIKE IT NICE AND TIGHT
IN DAYLIGHT OR AT NIGHT
AND THOUGH IT'S VERY DANGEROUS I NEVER GET STAGE FRIGHT

OH I LOVE TO WALK
I LOVE TO WALK

I TRAVEL THE WORLD FROM PLACE TO PLACE
EXPLORING THE GLORIOUS HUMAN RACE
AND TRY TO FIND MY PURPOSE ...
AND THAT'S WHY I LOVE THE CIRCUS!

Backstage. MICHELE is removing her makeup. She is with the BEARDED LADY and MAN WITH FISH SCALES.

MAN WITH FISH SCALES

And then I was like: clean your own tank!

He and BEARDED LADY laugh.

BEARDED LADY

Oh Man With Fish Scales, you're hysterical. Hysterical.

MAN WITH FISH SCALES

(Spotting VON BLERGH): Hey there little guppy ... chomp chomp.

He EXITS.

BEARDED LADY

(To VB): You're not allowed back here.

VON BLERGH

I would like to see Michele, the tightrope walker?

BEARDED LADY

She's busy.

VON BLERGH

But—

BEARDED LADY

I SAID SHE'S BUSY. NO HABLA ESPANOL?

VON BLERGH

What?

MICHELE

It's all right, Bearded Lady. (*To VON BLERGH*): May I help you?

VON BLERGH

I loved your act. You are very tight.

BEARDED LADY

Thanks. (*Beat.*) Oh. You were talking to her. (*She travels UC, watches in the shadows.*)

MICHELE

You're ... German?

VON BLERGH

Not originally. I'm an artist. Sort of.

MICHELE

I like sort of artists.

VON BLERGH

I like you.

MICHELE

We can't be together. We're from different worlds.

VON BLERGH

Not *that* different.

MICHELE

Are you from France?

VON BLERGH

No.

MICHELE

The south of France?

VON BLERGH

No.

MICHELE

Then we're different.

VON BLERCH

But I feel somehow like I know / you—

MICHELE

You don't know the first thing about me.

VON BLERGH

I know you're beautiful.

MICHELE

There's more to life than beauty.

VON BLERGH

I want to find beauty and capture it. Tell a story that has never before been told.

MICHELE

The beauty you are looking for won't come from the outside world. It will come from within. (*Puts a hand on his heart.*) I should go. The sword-swallower needs to be greased.

VON BLERGH

No, please! Tell me about your life in the circus. Tell me everything.

MICHELE

I wouldn't know where to start. Would I begin by telling you my parents were murdered by an alcoholic clown? No, I couldn't start there.

How about the time I got trapped in a House of Mirrors for three years and survived on my own saliva and small shards of glass? No, I could not start there, either.

Or when the Bearded Lady took me to Jamaica and forced me to get dreads? I looked hideous! I'm too shy. I can't say any of this to you.

VON BLERGH

Maybe you could *sing* about it?

MICHELE

I could try. (*She does a vocal scale.*) I'm ready now.

EACH DAY I RISK MY LIFE TO WALK ALONG A ROPE
AND STARE AT THE WORLD DOWN BELOW
EACH DAY THAT I'M ALONE I NEVER GIVE UP HOPE
THAT I'LL FIND A BEAU OF MY OWN
THE CIRCUS IS CRUEL, AND THERE'S NO SAVOIR FARE
OH, HOW I WANT A FRESH START
ABANDON THE FREAK SHOW, YES THAT IS MY PRAYER
(AND FIND) LOVE LIKE A WORK OF ART

VON BLERGH

Love is a work of art? I've never thought of it like that.

MICHELE

It's pretty obvious, no? Now you sing.

VON BLERGH

EACH DAY I TRY TO MAKE A PAINTING OF MY OWN
AND FIND THAT I CANNOT SUCCEED
EACH NIGHT I GO TO SLEEP, AND ASK FOR GOD TO SEND
THE ONE MISSING PART THAT I NEED
SOMEONE TO TEACH ME WHAT'S NEW AND WHAT'S TRENDING
A MUSE WHO CAN WAKE UP MY HEART
I'M CASTING MY VOTE FOR A FAIRYTALE ENDING
WHERE I MAKE A WORK OF ART

*Somehow, they're transported somewhere beautiful.
Maybe they're on a tightrope.
Maybe we see the night sky, twinkling with stars.*

MICHELE

ART IS—MYSTERIOUS AND SPLENDID

MICHELE + VON BLERGH

ART POURS OUT FROM YOUR SOUL

VON BLERGH

LOVE IS—THE CURE THAT'S RECOMMENDED

MICHELE

TOGETHER THEY'LL BE BLENDED

MICHELE + VON BLERGH

TO MAKE OUR HEARTS WHOLE

MICHELE

You can definitely sing, painter boy.

VON BLERGH

Thank you.

MICHELE

But can you dance?

They dance for a moment.

MICHELE (CON'T)

SO I'LL BE YOUR MUSE

VON BLERGH

AND I'LL BE YOUR MAN

MICHELE + VON BLERGH

WE'LL ORDER AMOUR A LA CARTE
TOGETHER WE'LL FASHION A NEW MASTER PLAN

VON BLERGH

AND I'LL MAKE

MICHELE

I'LL MAKE

VON BLERGH

I'LL MAKE

MICHELE

I'LL MAKE

MICHELE + VON BLERGH

WE'LL MAKE LOVE ... LIKE A WORK OF ART

They kiss. A clock chimes. They're back to where they started.

VON BLERGH

I must go! Visit me tomorrow? Nazi headquarters?

MICHELE

You're a Nazi?! (*Aside*): How tragic!

(*Back to him*): This was fun, but I don't think it'll work out. I don't do Nazis.

VON BLERGH

Come to me tomorrow night and I'll explain everything—I promise!

MICHELE

(*Beat. She thinks about it, then*): Okay!

Lights fade on Michele and the circus. SPOT on VON BLERGH, who's beaming.

VON BLERGH

The muse is love!

Blackout.

*The next day. VON BLERGH has made progress on two paintings.
HEDWIG and ADOLF are there.*

ADOLF
Von Blergh! I am impressed.

HEDWIG
He's impressed.

ADOLF
You have perfected my signature.

HEDWIG
It's perfect.

ADOLF
It looks like *I* am the master creator!

HEDWIG
He *loves* to master-create. (*Should rhyme with 'masturbate.'*)

ADOLF
If only the Vienna Academy of Art could see me now! That reminds me, Hedwig. We must bomb the Vienna Academy of Art and kill everyone inside. No, just the Jews!

HEDWIG
(*Taking notes*): ... Bomb building ... just kill Jews ... okay, got it.

EVA BRAUN enters.

EVA
(*cold*) Adolf.

ADOLF
Eva Braun.

EVA
We are late to see the circus. You know how I love the monkeys. I hear they sell them for very cheap. And if you pay extra they come with little bells.

HEDWIG
Eva. That dress is a nice change from your usual flannel overalls and plaid shirt.

EVA
They are underneath the dress.
I will be in the car, playing Russian roulette with my drill.
Do not keep me waiting any longer.

She EXITS.

HEDWIG

I HATE THAT CUNT!

EVA

(Re-entering): What?

HEDWIG

I mean, have a good time. Love you. Hashtag *love*.

EVA exits again.

ADOLF

(re: VON BLERGH): Hedwig, keep your eyes on *him*.

ADOLF exits.

HEDWIG sighs loudly. VON BLERGH doesn't pay attention.

HEDWIG sighs again. Still, nothing. Then again, very audibly.

VON BLERGH

... Yes?

HEDWIG

It's not fair! Why does Eva get to be by his side in public?

VON BLERGH

Because she's his mistress?

HEDWIG

She's a dyke! A big lez! It's all for show. He loves *me!*

Look. He gave me this bracelet made from barbed wire around Buchenwald.

So sweet.

You don't give just *anyone* a concentration camp barbed-wire bracelet, right?

We hear a tapping sound—maybe a small pebble hitting the window.

He's just scared the world will not respect him. It's very important to Adolf to be ... macho. But inside he's like a small girl. I wish he knew how much I love him. Besides, what is more macho than two men together?

VON BLERGH

Um ... *(Another pebble hits the window.)* You know! You should go to the circus. Find Adolf, tell him how you feel.

HEDWIG

The circus? No. I have bad memories from my youth.

The circus was like a prison for me.

HEDWIG (CON'T)

My father was a fortune teller. He used to make me dance for pennies.
DANCE, BITCH-BOY, DANCE!
(*Beat.*) Plus, Adolf doesn't like to be seen with me in public ...

VON BLERGH

He's shy! Go now, before Eva feeds him funnel cake and they go on a rollercoaster.

HEDWIG

I LOVE FUNNEL CAKE!

VON BLERGH

But first—bring me some more paint? All different colors? And more canvases, too?

HEDWIG

(*suspicious*) What are you up to, artist? You're not trying any tricks—are you?!

VON BLERGH

(*Coming up with this on the fly*): Well, I want to ... paint you.
But I need to capture your vibrancy. All the colors of the rainbow.

HEDWIG

I *love* rainbows.

VON BLERGH

That makes sense. So?

HEDWIG runs offstage, then re-enters with paint cans and canvases.

HEDWIG

Paint away, painter man!

He EXITS. VON BLERGH opens the window, calls down to MICHELE.

VON BLERGH

The coast is clear! I am lowering a piece of string for you to climb up!

*He lowers a piece of string through the window.
Muffled sounds as MICHELE scales the building. He helps her into the room.*

MICHELE

That's quite a workout. (*Looks around.*) So this is where you live? Are you really a Nazi?

VON BLERGH

I'm not! See?
This is where I'm being *kept prisoner!*

VON BLERGH (CON'T)

Hitler's forcing me to deface famous paintings he stole from the Jews. But I've come up with a scheme! Look!

He pulls a painting from the trap door and holds it up to a replica he made.

MICHELE

Why, they're nearly identical—except for the signatures.
What'll you do with the original?

VON BLERGH

The circus is allowed to travel in and out of Germany!
If *you* take the paintings, they'll be safe.
Once the war is over, we'll return them to their rightful owners.

MICHELE

If Hitler finds out what you're up to, he'll kill you. Are these paintings really worth risking your life?

VON BLERGH

These paintings represent creativity, freedom of expression ... love!
Isn't that worth fighting for?

MICHELE

(Touched): Love is always worth fighting for.

VON BLERGH

Please. You're my only hope.

MICHELE

My name is not Hope, it is Michele!

(She slaps him.) Yes. I'll do it.

(She kisses him.)

My dream was to be a librarian so I could catalogue history, but I don't have the bone structure for it. Only now I can be *part* of history and finally use my wits!

VON BLERGH

Come back tomorrow. We must work swiftly.

A knock on the door.

ADOLF (O.S.)

Hallo?

VON BLERGH (to MICHELE):

Quickly! Go!

He pushes her—and the painting—out the window.

MICHELE

Wait—

VON BLERGH

I love you!

We hear her fall as ADOLF barges in.

VON BLERGH (CON'T)

Fuhrer. Aren't you supposed to be at the circus?

ADOLF

Ja but I forgot my purse. I mean my wallet. I mean my gun.

(Beat.) Were you talking to someone?

VON BLERGH

(Nervously, trying to cover up): My muse. He's in the air. All around me.

ADOLF

Your muse is male?

VON BLERGH

Is he? Um—

ADOLF

Here's a secret: so is mine!

You're a fascinating creature. I would *love* to vape you.

VON BLERGH

I don't think I'd like that—

ADOLF

No? I adore it. Day, night—I vape any chance I get.

He takes out a vaporizer. Smokes.

How would you like to be my second mistress?

VON BLERGH

I'm flattered, really—

ADOLF

Your skin is smooth, like a woman's. I like that. Want to see my parakeet?

VON BLERGH

You like birds?

ADOLF

I've had a Cockatoo.

ADOLF rips off a sheet covering a golden birdcage.

It is manly, yes?

VON BLERGH

Um—

ADOLF

Napolean had one. Want to hear it sing? SING, BIRDY, SING!

The bird (ACTOR FOUR) sings, "Here's to the ladies who lunch ..." then ADOLF covers it again.

We don't want it too confident. (*Throws it offstage.*) Want some of my masculinity?

VON BLERGH

Excuse me?

ADOLF

(*Reveals a bottle of cologne.*) Masculinity. By Eastern Europe. (*Spritzes himself.*) It's the scent of Eurasian nomads, inspired by Attila the Hun.

VON BLERGH

That's not—you can't buy masculinity.

ADOLF

I already did. I take what I want. Just like Pol Pot, or any of those grabby Brits.
I am a man!

VON BLERGH

A *kind* of man.

ADOLF

I was in the army.

VON BLERGH

So was I!

ADOLF

I am painter!

VON BLERGH

Me too!

ADOLF

Gasp! We are so different. And yet both ... (*he thinks 'the same'*) ... men?
(*Beat.*) Be my third mistress.

VON BLERGH

No.

ADOLF

Don't you realize what I can offer you? Fame. Fortune. Champagne. More fame. More fortune. Gas chambers without the gas.

VON BLERGH

So ... just chambers?

ADOLF

More champagne!

VON BLERGH

I don't need any of those things. All I care about is art.

ADOLF

You think the only way to be creative is with a brush?
I am the most creative person in the world and I haven't touched a canvas in years.

VON BLERGH

Exactly! If you don't care about art, then let me go—and return the paintings to their proper owners!

ADOLF

No.
Unless ... you've changed your mind about being my mistress?
Or what about: my *wife*.

VON BLERGH

You know I'm not a *woman* / right—

ADOLF

Here.

He drops to his knees and pops open a velvet ring box.

Try it on.

VON BLERGH

(*disgusted*): There's a finger still in it.

ADOLF

Oops.

*Removes the finger and tosses it over his shoulder.
Presents the ring again.*

Good as new. We'd be quite the team. Unstoppable, some might say.

ADOLF is about to kiss VON BLERGH when HEDWIG rushes in.

HEDWIG

Adolf! Oh A— (*Sees the two of them.*) O. M. G.

VON BLERGH

Hedwig, it's not what you / think—

HEDWIG

I *think* he just proposed to you!

VON BLERGH

Oh. Then it is.

ADOLF drops VON BLERGH.

ADOLF

This is awkward.

*He EXITS.
HEDWIG stares venomously at VON BLERGH.*

HEDWIG

Was this all part of your plan? I went to the circus! Eva spotted me and threatened to send me to a concentration camp! Do I *look* like I can concentrate?

VON BLERGH

I'm / sorry.

HEDWIG

You knew this would happen, didn't you? (*Gets an idea.*) You want him for yourself!

VON BLERGH

That's far from accurate—

HEDWIG

You love him!

VON BLERGH

I definitely do / not.

HEDWIG

I WILL GET YOU! One misstep and—(*Mimes cutting his throat.*) Goodbye.

He EXITS.

Blackout.

NEWSBOYS enter with papers. (we're circa Spring 1943 by now):

NEWSBOY ONE (*American*)

ALLIES GAIN MOMENTUM!

He's shot. Crumples.

NEWSBOY TWO (*British*)

JAPANESE BASE NEUTRALIZED!

He's shot. Crumples.

NEWSBOY THREE (*Russian*)

GERMANY ATTACKS SOVIET FORCES!

He's shot. Then someone throws a bratwurst at him. Then he crumples.

Throughout, VON BLERGH is drawing copies of the original paintings ADOLF has stolen.

He compares the copies to the originals, then hides the originals in the trapdoor underneath his bed.

Simultaneously, we see ADOLF staring at a blank canvas. It tempts him beyond belief but he can no longer bring himself to paint. Or even try to paint.

He holds back his tears. Then HEDWIG enters, a sheet over his naked body. Handcuffs dangle off one wrist.

HEDWIG

Adolf, I thought you were going to unlock me! ... What's wrong? Are you ... crying?

ADOLF

No!

HEDWIG

Your eyes are red and wet—

ADOLF

I was ... testing out new tear gas on myself. Good news. It works. Now go—

HEDWIG

What are you doing?

ADOLF

I said *Go*, Hedwig—

HEDWIG

But—

ADOLF

I SAID GO!

HEDWIG is upset, about to leave.

HEDWIG

I know the war is stressful. Some of the Jews won't die, they are like cats—they have six lives!

ADOLF

Nine. Cats / have—

HEDWIG

Fine, 69 lives! Whatever! But you can trust me. Tell me why you are upset. It doesn't make you any less manly to admit your feelings.

ADOLF

(struggling to say) It's not enough. I fear ... all this will never be enough.

HEDWIG

For what?

ADOLF

(looks back to the blank canvas) Enough to make me happy.*MEANWHILE, at the circus:**MICHELE is sneaking away when she's spotted.*

BEARDED LADY

Where are *you* going?

MICHELE

Out. To the store ... for some milk.

BEARDED LADY

Why don't you just milk one of the midgets?

MICHELE

I want, um ... skim milk.

BEARDED LADY

Interesting. Because you're LACTOSE INTOLERANT!

MICHELE

Sacrebleu!, you got me!

BEARDED LADY

You're going to see *him*, aren't you? The painter.
He's no good for you. He's a Nazi!

MICHELE

But he's not. See? He's being forced to work for Hitler. Really, he's a good man.

BEARDED LADY

I had a good man once. Then he became the leader of the Third Reich.

MICHELE

You were in love with Adolf Hitler?

BEARDED LADY

I was his beard. Literally. And sure, it was fun at first: listening to him rant and rage, watching him kill people, all that butter ...

But I knew too much. I'd seen him vulnerable. So he shipped me off to the circus. This boy you've been seeing? Get rid of him. Or he'll ruin you—like Hitler ruined me!

MICHELE

Von Blergh is different. We're in love.

BEARDED LADY

If the others knew you were seeing a Nazi, they'd kick you out of the circus in a heartbeat. You'd be on the streets. Is that what you want?

MICHELE

Please don't say anything, Bearded Lady!

BEARDED LADY

I should keep quiet when I know he's wrong for you? Nazis like that? Who kill your brother?

MICHELE

Brother? What / brother—

BEARDED LADY

Forget that Nazi, find another! One of your own kind, stick to the circus. Nazis like that just want your cherry—

MICHELE

(*ala West Side Story*): OH NO BEARDED LADY, NO!

Von Blergh is sort of smart and sort of kind, and locked high up in a Nazi tower, like a male Rapunzel. He *loves* me. He *needs* me. *Please* don't tell the others. Can't you remember what it feels like to be in love? To be touched?

BEARDED LADY

I haven't been touched in years. But I suppose I can *try* to rememb—

(*It comes to her like a vision.*) *Ohhhyeeaaahh*. August. Many moons ago.

A night as sticky and sweet as a honey bun.
Candles on the nightstand, lavender on the pillows, my favorite German singer Frau Heidi Mon Dirty Birdy on the record player. A sensible satin pajama set covering my nude body, my beard trimmed for summer.

There I lay, waiting for him. A knock on the door.
Adolf, is that you? I say. *Ja!* he replies, *It is me!*

I open the door and there he is, my man, come to rock my world.

Hallo, I say. *Hallo*, says he.
He pushes me onto the bed. He kisses me.
Oops! There goes my sensible satin nightshirt!
Another kiss. Oops! There goes my sensible satin nightpants.

We shouldn't! I cry. *We must!* he cries louder.

His touch is like a fire poker, his penis just the same.
I am lost, I am found, I am high, I am low!
I am neither man nor woman yet I am *both* man *and* woman as our bodies press together and make the squeaky sounds of love.

(*She makes sounds that grow louder and larger into an orgasmic climax.*)

BEARDED LADY (CON'T)

More sauerkraut! Frau Heidi singing Dichterliebe. (Sung): “*Im wunderschönen Monat Mai*”— Yes! No! Yes! No! I—

*A moment of pure orgasm.
All of a sudden, she stops. Contains herself.*

So to answer your question, I seem to faintly recall being touched.

(*Beat.*) Oh who am I kidding?!
Go to him, Michele. I *will* keep your secret safe, but hurry—for we leave Germany soon!
And we’re *never* coming back!

Lights out. SPOT on MICHELE, running desperately in the night.

MICHELE

Mon amour, I am coming for you!

*Light up on VON BLERGH. The amount of paintings have dwindled.
VON BLERGH looks a bit tattered, he now has a beard.*

*He hears a tapping at his window. Opens it and holds out a tiny bit of string,
awaits Michele’s entrance. She climbs up and into the room.*

VON BLERGH

It still amazes me that you are able to climb up the side of this building, into this room holding onto nothing but a piece / of—

MICHELE

I HAVE BAD NEWS!
The circus is leaving. At the end of the week we head to Spain. Olé!

VON BLERGH

I’ll come with you!

MICHELE

You work for the Nazis. The clowns would kill you before they’d take you in. Even if there *is* still room in the car.

VON BLERGH

Then don’t go with them. I’m almost done here. When I am, the Fuhrer will let me go. We’ll travel somewhere they accept everyone. (*Beat.*) I have a friend in North Korea!

MICHELE

Once you work for the Fuhrer you *always* work for the Fuhrer.
He’s like a melody you can’t forget.

MICHELE (CON'T)

Or Herpes: once you've got it ... it's not going anywhere.

VON BLERGH

I am furious with the Fuhrer! Unless ... let's go *now*. We'll sneak out, wear disguises, and start out lives anew!

MICHELE

Oui!

VON BLERGH

Great!

MICHELE

No!

She stares at all of the paintings and the blank canvases.

As much as I love you, I could never live with myself if we let Hitler get away with his crime!

VON BLERGH

What are you suggesting?

MICHELE

We must get word out to others. Stop Hitler—for good!

VON BLERGH

But how?

MICHELE

You're a painter. Why don't you paint something?

VON BLERGH

With you as my muse, I can do anything! I'll make a painting that *seems* to be simple, but upon further reflection is *rich* with complications! And I won't make just one painting—I'll make ten! And embedded within the art will be: *code!*

MICHELE

Code?!

VON BLERGH

Detailing Hitler's crimes! We'll smuggle the canvases *out* of Germany and deliver them to important heads of state—surely they will take action! The future of the world is at stake—the future of ART! But what will the message *be?*
(*He thinks.*) Dit. Dit da dit. Dit. Dit dit dit daaaa dit dit / dit dit—

MICHELE

Are you having a seizure?

VON BLERGH

I'm doing Morse Code!

MICHELE

There's a better way. In the circus, we have a special code: colors.
Red means GO.

VON BLERGH

Doesn't red usually mean stop?

MICHELE

Not in the circus. It means more: ATTACK, get really into what you're doing.
Green means WATCH OUT!

VON BLERGH

That's actually the opposite of—

MICHELE

Blue means ART, or artistic, for when a certain routine is very complex.
Orange means Germany.
Violet means ELEPHANTS, because if one them gets loose ... you know.
Pink means a piece of equipment is destroyed, so not to use it. And Yellow—
Yellow means the Fuhrer.

VON BLERGH

So I could draw a painting that had Green. Violet. Pink. Blue Orange. Red!

MICHELE

That would mean, Watch out! Elephants are destroying art in Germany. Attack!

VON BLERGH

No—What about, Red Orange Violet Pink. Yellow?

MICHELE

That would mean, Attack! German elephants are destroying the Fuhrer.

VON BLERGH

Ugh, I don't think the code will work!

MICHELE

(An idea!): How about: Green. Yellow. Pink Blue Orange. Red.

VON BLERGH

Watch out! The Fuhrer is destroying art in Germany.

VON BLERGH + MICHELE

ATTACK!

VON BLERGH

That works! Gosh, you're smart—you would have made a great librarian.

MICHELE

If only I had fatter ankles.

(Beat.) You make the paintings, I'll do the drop offs.

Write CIRCUS on the top. Together we'll change the course of history!

They embrace.

VON BLERGH

Should we include something in the secret message about, you know—the Jews?

MICHELE

What about them?

VON BLERGH

What Hitler is doing to them. Don't you think that's also something various world leaders will want to know?

MICHELE

There's not enough room for both messages.

(Beat.) Hopefully someone *else* will stop the Jews from being killed.

They kiss.

Wait! The Mona Lisa. I feel I am being watched, and I can't tell if she approves.

VON BLERGH

It's just the lighting.

Again, they kiss.

Wait! There is something I must tell you. I'll understand if you hate me once I do.

MICHELE

Zut alors! You're scaring me.

VON BLERGH

I lied about who I am. The truth is ... *(shamefully)*: I'm Jewish.

MICHELE

That's it? Oh, Von Blergh. I'm a carnie. We both have horns.
Besides, I suspected you were Jewish. (*Points to his crotch, makes a "snipping" motion.*)

VON BLERGH

(*Sheepishly*): You don't think I'm less of a man for hiding the real me?

MICHELE

I don't mind that you try to blend in. But don't you know you were born to stand out?

They kiss.

MICHELE falls asleep as VON BLERGH paints all night, filling the blank canvases with his "coded" paintings—ten identical pieces of art.

In the morning, MICHELE stirs.

VON BLERGH

Darling, are you awake? I've been painting all night!
I taste every spec of air, every molecule!
I feel ... alive! This is what I was born to do, I finally—

Knocking:

HEDWIG (O.S.)

Von Blergh?

VON BLERGH (whispered to MICHELE):

Quick! Get dressed and out the window!

HEDWIG (O.S.)

I have your breakfast! It looks really yummy!

MICHELE scrambles to collect her clothes.

VON BLERGH wraps the canvases in twine, about to hide them.

VON BLERGH (calling out):

Just a second!

(*Whispered to MICHELE*): You must leave at once!

MICHELE

Lower the twine, my love, so I may drop!

VON BLERGH

I just used it all on the paintings!

HEDWIG (O.S.)

Von Blergh?

VON BLERGH

Quick—hold my hand and I shall fling you out the window.

MICHELE

What?!

VON BLERGH

Only for a second! Once he's gone, I'll pull you back in!

VON BLERGH takes her hand, steps on a stool, and tosses her out the window.

MICHELE

Don't let go, mon amour!

VON BLERGH

(calling out to HEDWIG): One more minute, I'm not dressed!

HEDWIG rushes into the room, holding a breakfast tray.

HEDWIG

Oh excuse me. I thought you said you weren't dressed.
What are you doing?

VON BLERGH

Just my morning exercises.

MICHELE

(Softly): My arm ...

HEDWIG

What was that?

VON BLERGH

My arm! It's 'arm day,' so ...

HEDWIG

I heard something. A woman's voice.

VON BLERGH

Do you mean your own voice?

HEDWIG

Nein. I'm going now. P.S. I still hate you. Hashtag *hate*.

He storms away, then notices the paintings bundled up in twine.

VON BLERGH

Don't look at / those, they're nothing—

HEDWIG

Red. Orange. Blue-Pink—(*gasp!*) I recognize this code. My father was in the circus!
Attack Germany ... art is destroying the Fuhrer.
What does this mean?

VON BLERGH

Oh. You're looking at it upside down.

HEDWIG

Ah, silly me, silly me. (*He flips the painting, gasps again.*) You're going betray the Fuhrer! You're selling war secrets!

VON BLERGH

Not *selling* them! I'm giving them away for free!

HEDWIG

I must tell Adolf so he will kill you! Adolf? ADOLF! DADDDDDYYYYYYY!

He runs off.

VON BLERGH yanks MICHELE back into the room.

VON BLERGH

Hedwig's onto us. You must flee with the coded paintings! (*Hands her the bundle of paintings.*) If they kill me, Michele—know that you are the love of my life.

MICHELE

And you are mine. I will not fail you. Together we'll make:

MICHELE + VON BLERGH

(*sung*): LOVE LIKE A WORK OF—

ADOLF (O.S.)

He WHAT?!?!?

VON BLERGH

Ugh, we don't even have time for a reprise! (*They kiss.*) Now go! *Go!*

He lowers MICHELE out the window as police sirens and whistles sound.
Blackout.

LIGHTS UP on VON BLERGH, gagged and tied to a chair.

ADOLF

I'm sad you betrayed me. I thought we were friends.
Well, not friends but I thought we liked each other.
Well, not liked each other but—I thought you were going to make me famous.
And that we could be sexually compatible.
What do you have to say for yourself?

VON BLERGH mumbles something.

What? Oh. (*Removes the gag.*) Why did you do it, Von Blergh? Why?

VON BLERGH

For love.

ADOLF

Love? What is that?

VON BLERGH

A feeling.

ADOLF

You betrayed me for a feeling? I ought to rip your tongue out and feed it to my dogs!

VON BLERGH

You don't know anything about love because you've never loved anything.

ADOLF

That is not true. I love ... killing the Jews!

VON BLERGH

That's not love. It's anger. And jealousy. And fear. Everyone has the right to live—

ADOLF

Not Jews!

VON BLERGH

To pursue happiness / and—

ADOLF

NOT JEWS!!!

VON BLERGH

(harsh) You're pathetic. You disgust me.

ADOLF

(hurt) Me? Pathetic? No one but my father has ever spoken to me like that.

ALOIS HITLER appears. Only ADOLF sees him.

ALOIS

You are worthless, Adolf! Worthless!

ADOLF (to ALOIS):

No I'm not, Papa!

ALOIS

You are my biggest failure, Adolf.
You are *nothing* like the man I hoped you would be!

ADOLF

But I did everything you told me to do! Joined the civil service. Found a wife.
Spread my German seed ... metaphorically, but still!

ALOIS

I wanted you to be someone people respected.
Not *forced* to respect. You soiled the Hitler name.
Before you—it was good. Now? (*spits*) You are a disgrace.
You will NEVER be a *real* man!

NEVER EVER NEVER!!!

ALOIS disappears. ADOLF is truly shaken. Then, to VON BLERGH:

ADOLF

I should kill you right now, but ... Hold me?

VON BLERGH

What?

ADOLF

(*Vulnerable*): Touch me. Love me.

VON BLERGH

No.

ADOLF

I JUST WANT TO BE LOVED! (*He chokes back tears.*)
All this time I tried to please my Papa when I should've pleased myself.
How could I ever be a bumbly little nobody?
I'm no paper pusher!
I'm wild. I make a statement! I shine bright ... like a diamond?
(*Beat.*) Nothing is my fault. I am accountable for nothing!

VON BLERGH

That's your big conclusion?

ADOLF

(Hard): Tell me the name of the girl who took the paintings and I'll let your family live.

VON BLERGH

The joke's on you, Fuhrer! I'm an orphan!

ADOLF

Damn you, Von Blergh! Always one step ahead!

VON BLERGH

And the joke is *double* on you because all those paintings I changed the signature on? They're fake.

ADOLF

But they looked so real!

VON BLERGH

Thank you.

ADOLF

So. You betrayed me not once, but twice.

I shall prove my Papa wrong and do what a real man *must* do: torture you until you tell me her name. We'll start with ... a million kisses!

ADOLF begins to kiss VON BLERGH everywhere—at first VON BLERGH giggles, but then he begins to say stop, a little louder each time until:

VON BLERGH

STOP!

ADOLF

Fine. When I find the girl ... I'll make her life hell. *(Beat.)* And then I will slit her throat.

He begins to laugh maniacally. Lights down.

Lights up on GERMAN MAN and GERMAN WOMAN, reading newspapers. GERMAN BOY and NAZI SOLDIER are behind them, milling about.

ACTOR THREE

April twentieth, 1944. Berlin, Germany.

GERMAN MAN and WOMAN lower their papers.

GERMAN MAN

Have you heard what the newspapers are saying about Von Blergh?
That his paintings are made with blood—*human* blood!

GERMAN WOMAN

I hear his paintings are made with flowers, which I find equally disturbing! *And* I hear
he's defied the Third Reich! He's tucked away in one of the concentration camps.

GERMAN MAN

The jewnalists say the Russians are almost here!
They have already broken through Hungary! In a few days, the war will be over!

GERMAN WOMAN

What will be come of us? And of Germany! Do you have a mint?

Pulsing, anxious:

CHORUS

GERMANY IS NOT THE SAME
IT'S A TRAGEDY!
NOW THEY SAY WE'RE GONNA LOSE
IT'S ALL OVER!
WHAT'S MORE: THEY'VE STOLEN ALL THE JEWS!
A TAKEOVER!

WE TRIED TO DO RIGHT
BUT PERHAPS WE DID NOT
HITLER TOOK POWER
MAYBE WE SHOULD HAVE FOUGHT ...

They consider for a moment, then shrug.

EHHHHH

Upbeat, bright:

NEVERMIND, EVERYTHING'S GORGEOUS
BEAUTIFUL, RADIANT, SHINING
JUBILANT, MAGICAL, SUNNY
GAY AND FUNNY
NEVERMIND, EVERYTHING'S GORGEOUS ...

WE'LL STILL THE WAR
OF THAT YOU CAN BE SURE
... OR NOT.

CHORUS (CON'T)

COULD BE! (*GERMAN MAN exits*)
 WHO KNOWS! (*NAZI SOLDIER exits*)
 WE'LL SEE!

GERMAN WOMAN and GERMAN BOY EXIT.
HEDWIG enters SL, EVA BRAUN enters SR.

HEDWIG

Oh. Eva Braun. Hello.

EVA

I was just looking for Adolf. The Fuhrer. My *man*.

HEDWIG

Cool.

(*Hard to say*): We don't have to be enemies, you know. We could be ... friends?

EVA

I don't think so.

HEDWIG

We are playing a dangerous game, with only one winner and one loser.
 A game called ... love?

EVA

It's true. Adolf barely speaks to me anymore.

Everyone in my hiking group is talking about it. I am like a leper.

What happened?

We used to have such nice conversations whenever I was stage-managing an
 experimental play or visiting a cat shelter just for fun.

Or using different colored markers to turn a plain white T-shirt into a striped, flannel one.

God, I'm crafty. I used to be important to the Reich. To Adolf. But now ...

HEDWIG

I know! We only hanky panky like / once a day!

EVA

Once a year!

They stare at each other, shocked.

Maybe the game we are playing doesn't have a winner. Maybe it has two losers. Me and
 you. (*HEDWIG goes to hug her.*) Don't touch me. Goodbye.

EVA exits. HEDWIG is alone.

HEDWIG

I never wanted to be the other woman.

Lights down on HEDWIG.

Lights up on ADOLF and VON BLERGH, who looks beaten and bruised.

VON BLERGH

You'll never find the real paintings! Never!

ADOLF wails.

VON BLERGH (CON'T)

YOUR PLAN HAS FAILED! You are nothing!

ADOLF

No. *You* are nothing. No one will look for you when you die.

Which will be now, when I shoot you with my gun.

The only thing lower than you is a Jew.

VON BLERGH

That's not true.

ADOLF

Ja, it is. Jews are awful. They're / so gross.

VON BLERGH

I'M JEWISH!

VON BLERGH breaks free from the chair.

ADOLF

(Gasps, looks around): What is going on? What is happening?

VON BLERGH

The strength of the truth broke my bonds!

God is on my side.

I finally realize what kind of man I am: a man who stands up for what he believes in. *(He stands.)* I am a man who does the right thing—even when that is the hard thing.

And that is something you will *never* be.

Then the door bursts open: it's HEDWIG and EVA BRAUN.

Startled, ADOLF pulls up his pants, points his gun at VON BLERGH.

ADOLF

Ah! You two have arrived just in time for me to kill Von Blergh!

HEDWIG

We have bigger problems! The Russians are coming. The end is near!
Let's burrow a hole in the earth with our hands and crawl to China!
We *love* noodles! Hashtag *noodles!*

EVA

No, Adolf! Come with me!
We'll marry then bunker down and do a sensible double suicide.

ADOLF looks between EVA and HEDWIG.

ADOLF

Both options are tempting ...

HEDWIG

Don't you want to be with me forever? Perhaps one day two men will be able to marry.

Beat. Then everyone starts to laugh.

Ja, dumb idea. But still—

EVA

Is that really how you want to be remembered, Adolf?
With him?
Or with me.

*ADOLF really has to think about it. How does he want to be remembered?
It's a big moment.
Music starts, the CHORUS becomes the voices inside ADOLF's head:*

CHORUS

THINK, ADOLF, THINK!
TIME IS RUNNING OUT
TWO ROADS, ONE CHOICE
TIME IS RUNNING OUT
RUSSIA IS COMING THAT'S FOR SURE
THAT IS A LOSS YOU CAN'T ENDURE
HOW IN THE WORLD CAN YOU MAKE PAPA PROUD?

KLARA HITLER

LOOK AT HIM
BEAUTIFUL AND SMART

BEARDED LADY

LOOK AT HER
UGLY AS A FART

ADOLF

I KNOW THAT HEDWIG CARES FOR ME
EVA IS DOWN ON BENDED KNEE
THE VOICES INSIDE MY HEAD CAN BE SO LOUD

BESIDES KILLING THAT JEW ...
TELL ME, WHAT—GOD—SHOULD I DO?

CHORUS

CHOOSE HIM

ADOLF

THAT'S WHAT MY HEART SAYS

CHORUS

CHOOSE HIM

ADOLF

THAT'S WHAT I'M FEELING
INSIDE ME THERE'S A HOLE
I THINK IT'S CALLED ... A SOUL?
WITH HEDWIG BY MY SIDE I FEEL SO STRONG

CHORUS

CHOOSE HER

ADOLF

THAT'S WHAT MY HEAD SAYS

CHORUS

CHOOSE HER

ADOLF

AND BE REMEMBERED

CHORUS

A NAZI THROUGH AND THROUGH
THE KING WHO SLAYED THE JEW

ADOLF

BUT EVA BY MY SIDE JUST FEELS SO WRONG

ALL THESE YEARS I'VE HAD TO LIVE A LIE AND WONDER
WHAT LIES YONDER
ALL THE TEARS AT NIGHT I'VE HAD TO CRY AND NOW I'M
FORCED TO PONDER ...

ADOLF (CON'T)

CHOOSE HIM
AND HAVE A FULL LIFE
CHOOSE HER
AND HAVE A GAY WIFE
TO PLUCK MY EDELWEISS
I'M FORCED TO PAY A PRICE
MY *JOIE DE VIVRE* COULD BE MY OWN DOWNFALL
OH HOW'S A LITTLE GERMAN BOY TO CHOOSE AT ALL

ALOIS appears.

ALOIS

ADOLF, OH ADOLF—YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY HOW I WANT MY SON TO BE

ADOLF

Papa?

ALOIS

ADOLF, OH ADOLF—A MAN SHOULD BE A MAN! THAT'S MY PHILOSOPHY

ADOLF

Enough, Papa! Enough!

ALOIS

A REAL MAN IS STRONG AND ATHLETIC
SOMEONE THE WORLD CAN REVERE
A REAL MAN IS NEVER PATHETIC ... OR QUEER

The CHORUS joins in and backs up ALOIS.

ADOLF, OH ADOLF—LIFE IS NEVER EASY THAT'S JUST HOW IT GOES
ADOLF, OH ADOLF—THIS SICKNESS THAT'S INSIDE YOU MUSTN'T BE EXPOSED
IT DOESN'T MATTER IF YOU'RE WRONG OR RIGHT BUT SON YOU NEED A PLAN
FORGET ABOUT HAPPINESS: BE A MAN

Overlapping:

ADOLF

CHOOSE HIM
THAT'S WHAT MY HEART SAYS
CHOOSE HER
THAT'S WHAT MY HEAD SAYS
IN HISTORY I FEAR
MY NAME WILL DISAPPEAR
TONIGHT COULD BE MY FINAL CURTAIN CALL

ALOIS + CHORUS

ADOLF, OH ADOLF—YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY HOW HE WANTS HIS SON TO BE (I WANT MY SON TO BE)

A HO-MO-SEX-U-A-AL

ADOLF, OH ADOLF—A MAN SHOULD BE A MAN! THAT'S HIS (MY) PHILOSOPHY

IT'S IN-TEL-LEC-TU-A-AL

GAY GAY GAY IS NOT THE WAY TO BE REMEMBERED AFTER ALL

ADOLF

OH HOW'S A LITTLE GERMAN BOY

ALOIS + CHORUS

YOU HAVE TO MAKE A SACRIFICE

ADOLF

IT'S HARD TO BE A GERMAN BOY

ALOIS + CHORUS

LISTEN TO YOUR DAD'S ADVICE

ADOLF

OH HOW'S A LITTLE GERMAN BOY TO CHOOSE ...

CHORUS

TO BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN

ADOLF

AT ALL!

Papa! For once and for all you *will* be proud of me—and history shall remember me as the greatest man who ever lived!

The song ends. We are back in the scene:

ADOLF (CON'T)

(*pained*) Sorry, Hedwig. The suicide one sounds better to me.

EVA

Ha! I win.

HEDWIG

You bitch! You coward! You monster!

HEDWIG (CON'T)

(Then, lighter): Bye!

He EXITS, along with EVA.

ADOLF

But *first* I must take care of ... YOU.

*He presses the pistol to VON BLERGH's temple.
Suddenly, ghosts from VON BLERGH's past appear.*

ELEANOR BLERGHOWITZ

Oh, Blerghie. You look too thin. Are you eating?

RENE

Be strong, my friend! Hitler may take your body, but he will never take your soul!

ELEANOR BLERGHOWITZ

Your *Jewish* soul!

MOSES BLERGHOWITZ

You're a good man, Blerghie. You accomplished what I never could: you made art.

ELEANOR BLERGHOWITZ

Did you go to the bathroom?
Don't forget to eat something before you come to Heaven!

The ghosts disappear.

VON BLERGH

(To ADOLF): I've tried to hide all these years but the truth is in my blood: I am Von Blerghowitz! A painter! And a Jew!

(Beat.) Phew, that feels really good to say out loud.

I'm so happy to just *come out* with it, I mean I've been holding it in for such a long time that I—

*A gunshot rings out.
VON BLERGH flinches, then realizes ADOLF missed him.*

VON BLERGH (CON'T)

Ha! You missed. You can't even shoot a gun properly.
Adonai is smiling down at me, and he—

Another shot. This time, ADOLF doesn't miss.

Blood gushes from VON BLERGH's temple, running down his face, spilling out of his mouth, staining his clothes. Everyone watches in shock.

It is horrifying.

Lights fade on VON BLERGH as projected onto the cloth is muted video from when the camps were liberated by the Soviets.

NEWSBOY ONE

ADOLF HITLER COMMITS SUICIDE IN HIS UNDERGROUND BUNKER ALONG WITH EVA BRAUN! TOTALLY UNEXPECTED AND STRANGE!

All of this FADES as we see ADOLF and VON BLERGH in hospital beds.

Each man has a blindfold on.

They are now in LIMBO.

The NURSE appears, wipes some of the blood from VON BLERGH's face.

NURSE (to VB):

Don't worry, you're not alone.

VON BLERGH

Are you talking to me? I can't see anything.

ADOLF

Are you talking to *me*?

NURSE

Yes.

VON BLERGH

I have a strange feeling of déjà vu.

NURSE

You are in limbo. You are both waiting for ... judgement. From God.

VON BLERGH

Does that mean I'm—

VON BLERGH

Dead?

ADOLF

NOT dead?

ADOLF

(Beat.) I mean, what he said. Dead.

Tell the judge or whoever that I am a good man. I tried to make the world a better place.

NURSE

Did you succeed?

ADOLF

I would have. If a certain little someone nasty little ugly Jew-y painter hadn't ruined me.

VON BLERGH

Are you talking about *me*?

ADOLF

Oh geez. He's here? May I take off my blindfold?

NURSE

No. Limbo is meant for self-reflection. No distractions.
So you may be judged fairly for your time on Earth. Good luck.

*She EXITS.
Silence.*

ADOLF

I wish I had something pretty to look at. A painting to comfort me.
Maybe Ms. Mona Lisa?

VON BLERGH

Is that all you can think about—after all this? Art?

ADOLF

Art is all I ever think about. (*Beat.*) I'm frightened.

VON BLERGH

There's nothing to do now but wait.

They wait.

ADOLF

I hate waiting.

VON BLERGH

Me too. ARE YOU THERE, GOD? IT'S ME, VON BLERGHOWITZ!

*Lights! Music!
Something celestial is about to happen.*

THE VOICE OF GOD

Hello.

ADOLF

Hallo! God?!

THE VOICE OF GOD

You have done well, my son. I have been watching you. Are you ready?

VON BLERGH

(Awed/frightened/intrigued): God?

ADOLF

Which one of us are you talking to?!

THE VOICE OF GOD

There is no need to be frightened. Come, my child. Let us go home.

VON BLERGH is chosen.

ADOLF is not.

The stage clears as we see MICHELE, who has aged into an old woman.

MICHELE

I did smuggle Von Blergh's paintings out of Germany and delivered them throughout Europe—and to America. Luckily, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had a sister in the circus and was able to decipher the code.

He then deployed a team of men—Monuments Men—overseas to rescue the paintings.

Except one.

Sometimes when I look at her ... it's like he's here. With me.
But it might just be the lighting.

Von Blergh never knew if his plan had been successful.
He also never knew I was pregnant with his child. *A son*. Together we made a life for ourselves in New Rochelle. Every night I dreamed we would one day be reunited.

I named our baby: Blerghie.

MICHELE dies.

It is now her funeral. BLERGHIE—a young man—gives her eulogy.

BLERGHIE

My mother accomplished many things in her ninety years. In the hospital she told me she was most proud of her late-in-life conversion to Judaism, which taught her how to be spend-thrifty and re-use old tissues. She was also proud of her relationship to God, who she said “hovers around us like bad gas.”

BLERGHIE (CON'T)

What she *meant* was that he's always there, even if you can't see him.
 Helping us. Guiding us. He guided my parents to each other, and they found love.
 I hope wherever they are now, they're finally together.

I'd like to announce I'll be donating a painting from my mother's private collection to the Louvre, where it will be displayed in a special exhibit next to one of my father's.

He only produced ten works of art in his entire life, but many feel they truly changed the world.

*Projected behind him is The Mona Lisa and one of Von Blergh's coded paintings.
 Lights fade on BLERGHIE as we focus on the paintings.*

*Then, in silhouette, we see ANGELS—or at least the hint of them.
 We're now in HEAVEN.*

The angels spread their wings and sing something almost hymnal. There might be mist. Everything could be white, or quite the opposite—blasted with color.

*MICHELE appears as a young woman. Nervous, excited.
 Looks for VON BLERGH but can't find him.*

Then—she spots something in the distance as the music grows louder.

MICHELE

Mon amour ... Is it really you?

*MICHELE reaches for VON BLERGH.
 White light BLINDS us.*

THE END