

**THE SANDGLASS (aka: THE HOUR-GLASS SANATORIUM)**



Screenplay: Wojciech Has

Cinematography: Witold Sobocinski

music: Jerzy Maksymiuk

Joseph: Jan Nowicki

Jacob: Jozef Kondrat

Mother: Irena Orska

Adela; Halina Kowalska

Dr. Gotard: Gustaw Holoubek

Railway man: Mieczyslaw Voit

Art directors: Jerzy Skarzynski, Andrzej Plocki

Assistant art directors: Piotr Dudzinski, Andrzej Helinski

Costumes: Lidia and Jerzy Skarzynski

#### Summary of main action

A black bird flies against a gray sky. Intertwining branches come into view. We discover we're looking out the window of a train. The train is full of immobile people. One character is moving - a blind train conductor with a lantern. He wakes up a passenger (Joseph) and tells him his destination is near. Joseph leaves the train.

Joseph approaches a building (the sanatorium) through a snow covered cemetery. The giant front door is blocked so he goes in through a side window.

Inside he finds a chambermaid. He inquires about a room he booked. The maid has him wait in the sanatorium's restaurant while she gets the doctor. The restaurant is shrouded in cobwebs. He reaches for a piece of pastry but is interrupted when the maid returns with the doctor.

Informing Joseph about his supposedly dead father, the doctor says that at the sanatorium his father's death hasn't happened yet - permitting the possibility of recovery. After showing Joseph's father (Jacob) lying asleep on a small cot, the doctor discusses the relativity of time and leaves.

Joseph looks out a broken window and sees a duplicate of himself approaching the sanatorium as before except this time the front door isn't blocked - it is opened from the other side by a young boy in a striped sailor suit (Rudolph).

Joseph goes to a dining room and talks with his mother. He accuses her of spreading lies about Jacob. She scolds Joseph as if he was a little boy and tells him to open the shop. She then goes upstairs to an attic where cries of birds can be heard.

Joseph goes outside and wakes up the shop assistants. They argue about the ethics of work and join in a sung prayer. A ladder is brought out and Joseph is made to climb it.

The ladder leads to a young woman's upstairs bedroom. The woman (Adela) opens her window and pulls Joseph inside. She tells him about firemen who always want to eat her raspberry

juice. Joseph puts on a helmet and watches Adela change clothes. Adela shows Joseph an advertisement of a miracle cure for hair growth. Joseph discovers that this ad is from a book he used to treasure and tries to gather the loose pages from around the room. Looking for more pages, he crawls under Adela's bed.

A fireman is under the bed eating something sweet that he calls jam and gives a spoonful to Joseph. An ornithologist gets Joseph to crawl out from underneath the bed.

Joseph is now outside in a town square. Everyone is wearing something birdlike. Cages of birds, boxes of eggs, feathers and birdseed are being bought and sold. The ornithologist notices Jacob who is speaking to a group about the foolishness of literal meanings. Joseph tells his father about the book he rediscovered. Jacob makes fun of Joseph's seriousness. Rudolph is sitting nearby with a stamp album. Joseph goes to sit with Rudolph and is shown the stamp album. The names on the stamps cause Joseph to wonder about landscapes he's never physically been to but feels he knows.

A group of soldiers in ragged uniforms march past. They carry the train conductor on a throne-like chair. Joseph follows this precession as he asks questions about an event and a girl. The conductor nods his head cryptically.

Joseph stops by a herd of elephants to pick up a large colorful butterfly. Behind him is a white adobe wall and a gate. Joseph goes to the gate and peers through it. A young dark-haired girl on the other side tells him about her dead mother's spirit and a person walking with a child across the sky. The girl runs away.

Joseph tells Rudolph about an abducted princess, using the stamp album as verification. Rudolph accuses Joseph of exaggeration. Joseph goes over the white wall.

On the other side of the wall is a grove of trees in what look like a dried up marsh. From the trunks of the trees, faces and skulls with outstretched hands are growing. Joseph approaches a villa, one section of which looks like a large dilapidated paddle wheeled riverboat.

Inside the boat/villa is a ballroom full of waxworks figures in various historical costumes. A man (M. de V) introduces the figures, saying they were all made for one occasion. Included among the figures are soldiers and members of the old Hapsburg empire, including Franz Joseph and his brother Archduke Maximilian. When Franz Joseph's name is mentioned, Maximilian tries to pull his sword but falls over, breaking his head open. A clock mainspring pops out of his head.

Joseph argues with M. de V about the dark-haired girl whose name is Bianca. Joseph insists treachery is being used to hold Bianca in the villa and to obscure her heritage. A group of black guards are heard.

The guards chase Joseph around the boat/villa. They pull moldy stuffed dogs attached to wooden carts.

Joseph finds Bianca's bedroom that is decorated to look like a dark jungle. Joseph tries to get her to sign papers (the pages found in Adela's bedroom earlier). Bianca tries to get Joseph to commit "treason" but he refuses. She confesses she had been a girl who Joseph used to play with when he was younger. The blind train conductor comes by, collecting tickets. Joseph and the conductor talk about time - particularly sidetracks in time. Joseph crawls under a bed, leaving Bianca screaming "coward!"

Crawling out from the bed, Joseph ends up in his father's attic that is full of exotic birds. Jacob takes Joseph's helmet and makes a nest out of it. Joseph then puts on a bowler hat and helps give his father an enema. Afterward, Jacob shows a decal book and Joseph removes a filmy layer on the page to reveal a brightly colored bird. Spontaneously Joseph begins to make bird calls which Jacob identifies and categorizes. Joseph leaves the attic and goes downstairs.

His mother, referring to Jacob's textile shop, complains that people nowadays only buy on credit. She gives Joseph a tray of food for Jacob and sends him out to the shop.

Carrying the tray outside through a village square, Joseph again meets Adela who seems charged with passion. She pulls a woman's severed head from a cauldron and puts it on Joseph's tray. Instantly a man wants to buy the head but Joseph refuses to sell.

In the shop, Joseph finds his father standing on a shelf blowing a horn while his customers demand that he "do business!" Bolts of fabric are unrolled, inspected and argued over. The shop is completely crowded. Joseph grows tired as he tries to find a way through the mass of people. Jacob is now roaming through the crowd also and tells Joseph to go and welcome an old selfish friend who is arriving soon. On his hand and knees Joseph pushes a large bolt of cloth until it unrolls, forming a red carpet leading from the crowded shop into an empty village street at dusk.

Three wealthy travelers approach Joseph. Joseph tells them what his mother said about people buying on credit. The three find credit offensive and assert the importance of selling for cash. They leave and Joseph is joined by a poor watch seller who says the arrival of the travelers means there will be seven years of good fortune. Joseph and the

watch peddler walk past a group of mourners holding candles and praying. Further on is a long table surrounded by what looks to be influential members of the community, having a great feast. Joseph's mother shows him his place at the table while the watch peddler moves on down the road. Adela, serving the table, presents Joseph with an enormous fish on a platter. After being distracted by an old man mumbling a prayer, Joseph looks again at the table and discovers the fish has been eaten. Rudolph pulls Joseph under the table.

Being fed up with Joseph's inventions of fantasy, Rudolph refuses to loan out his stamp album again. Joseph, in a kind of giddy ecstasy, puts false eyes over his own and says he'll make a last ditch effort to prove the truth of his visions.

Crawling from under the table, Joseph returns to the ballroom of the wax figures. He finds out that Bianca and M. de V. have left the villa. Joseph brings the wax figures to life, has them mount horses and rides off with them to look for Bianca.

By a lake they find a coach and stop it. Inside the coach is Bianca with Rudolph. Joseph confesses that he made a mistake in interpreting the stamp album. M. de V. shoots himself with a pistol. When he falls we discover that he too is a wax mechanical figure. Joseph helps form a parade that is both a funeral procession for M. de V. and a marriage celebration for Bianca and Rudolph. Left alone with the again lifeless wax figures, Joseph prepares to shoot himself but is stopped by an officer who arrests him for having a dream that was criticized in high places. Joseph is blindfolded and walks toward a tree and his mother. He touches his mother's head.

The mother removes Joseph's blindfold. He is again in the dining room. She sadly tells him Jacob's shop has closed and leads him upstairs to the attic.

In the attic all the exotic birds are dying and being eaten by maggots.

Joseph with pale skin is lying on his father's cot in the sanatorium. Jacob walks over and tells Joseph that he has rented a place for a new shop. He tells Joseph how to find it and leaves.

Joseph wanders through the deserted sanatorium and outside into a cemetery where a grave is being dug.

Joseph finds his father's new shop, which is all boarded up. He pries the boards off and squeezes inside.

The shop is full of zombie-like customers standing near Jacob's counter. Jacob produces a bolt of cloth but when it

is unrolled, we see that the fabric is being eaten by insects and is riddled with holes. Jacob tells Joseph that a letter has arrived and is in the back room.

Joseph does not find the letter in the back room. Jacob and the customers vanish from the shop. A sudden crowd appears outside the shop window, running in panic through the street. Joseph crawls out of the window.

Re-entering the sanatorium, Joseph finds his father in the restaurant ordering plate after plate of meat and surrounded by scantily dressed women. Alarmed, Joseph goes into the hall to get the doctor.

The chambermaid is in the hall. Joseph shouts at her about the neglected condition of the sanatorium. The maid advises him to lie down and relax and leads him to Jacob's room.

Inside, Jacob is lying on the cot, very sick. He accuses Joseph of abandoning him to chase girls in town. He says the shop is going to pieces and that the assistants are stealing from him. After asking a final question ("Have any letters come from home?"), Jacob dies.

Joseph finds the doctor and the chambermaid and complains that time regained is old, worn out and full of holes. The doctor takes Joseph's blood pressure and advises him to wear warm clothes. He is dressed in the outfit of the train conductor and sent down the hall. All the furniture in the sanatorium is tied up and numbered. Joseph feels his way along for he is now blind. He reaches a door and walks through.

Joseph is in an open grave. He uses a tombstone that has fallen into the grave to climb out of the pit. It is night outside and a thousand candles are scattered around the cemetery. Joseph's mother stands immobile in grief, staring into the grave, not noticing Joseph as he stumbles past her toward the looming silhouette of the sanatorium.