THE SONG OF NAMES

Screenplay by
Jeffrey Caine

Adapted from the novel by Norman Lebrecht

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FADE IN

EXT. A CONCERT HALL, LONDON. 7:25 P.M. (NOVEMBER 3, 1951)

As we look down a gentle rain is falling steadily on a carapace of umbrellas, moving like the scales of some gigantic mythical reptile. The reptile turns out to be a well-dressed crowd swirling around the entrance to the hall and funnelling slowly into it; the same rain rolling down posters advertising the event they’ve all come to see: the debut concert of David Eli Rapoport, 21 year-old virtuoso violinist.

BBC RADIO PRESENTER (V.O.)
It is sometimes said that both the shortest and the longest distance in art is that between the very good and the truly great. It may well be that tonight David Eli Rapoport will cross that divide.
Those of us who have been privileged to hear his promotional recording are unanimous in declaring the extraordinary playing of this 21-year-old Polish immigrant music from the gods, the voice of possibly the most naturally gifted violinist of his generation...

Cars are passing, Festival of Britain flags flying from the building. Pasted across its facade are monochrome publicity blow-ups of the lean and Byronic Rapoport and, plastered diagonally across the posters, strip banners reading: “INTERNATIONAL DEBUT PERFORMANCE 7:30 P.M. NOVEMBER 3RD, 1951, with another, smaller, strip overplastered: “SOLD OUT - RETURNS ONLY”.

Touts are busy in the crowd, selling outrageously priced tickets to those who have come without one; there’s a police presence for crowd control - bobbies in glistening rain capes - a phalanx of damp press photographers, a St John’s ambulance crew on stand-by.

Limousines are delivering DIGNITARIES to the front steps, chauffeurs and assistants shepherding them inside under umbrellas.

Big event.

CAMERA FINDS 21 YEAR-OLD MARTIN SIMMONDS

standing at the open stage door, anxiously scanning the wet street and checking his watch. After a few moments he goes back inside.
**INT. LONDON CONCERT HALL, NIGHT (CONTINUOUS) (A’51)**

Here there’s every shade of anxiety. The capacity audience is buzzing with restlessness; the orchestra waits in silence, having long ago finished tuning up.

The BBC RADIO PRESENDER whose voice we’ve been hearing can be seen in the recording booth, holding on to his audience during the delay in the relaxed filibuster style we associate with Richard Dimbleby at the Coronation [still two years in the future].

**BBC RADIO PRESENDER**

So great has been the impact of Rapoport’s recording on the world of classical music that one tends to forget how little known his name still is, and that tonight’s concert will be his first on an international stage...

BACKSTAGE there’s a frenzy of activity and a sliding scale of panic: from the irritation of those mildly inconvenienced by the soloist’s lateness to the near hysteria of those most affected, chief among them.

**GILBERT SIMMONDS**

Gilbert, the concert’s promoter, is a 56 year-old English gentleman-impresario. He’s standing with his wife, ENID (52) and Martin’s fiancée, 21 year-old HELEN. Their son, Martin, rejoins them as we watch, shaking his head. All are wearing evening dress and all are agitated, though none as much as Gilbert.

**GILBERT**

He’s had an accident. There’s no other explanation—

**ENID**

We don’t know that.

**GILBERT**

Martin, I’d like you to phone the hospitals.

**MARTIN**

I already did, Father. Mr Sanderson’s doing it again now.

ANGLE ON SANDERSON, the theatre manager, talking urgently on the backstage phone.

**GILBERT**

Has anyone informed the police?

**MARTIN**

Too soon for that.
GILBERT
How was he this afternoon? Was he all right at rehearsal?

MARTIN
He was fine.

GILBERT
Did he take his violin with him?

MARTIN
He takes it everywhere. He takes it to the loo.

Gilbert shoots his son a disapproving look. Offended by the indelicacy of the comment or by Martin’s attitude?

ENID
Gilbert, stop working yourself up into a froth. Perhaps his watch stopped.

GILBERT
A self-winding wristwatch does not stop.

ENID
It does if you drop it.

HELEN
He might’ve got stuck in traffic.

GILBERT
(to Martin)
Where did he say was he going after the rehearsal?

MARTIN
He didn’t.

HELEN
Dovidl does things his own way, Mr Simmonds. He’s probably walking. He likes walking in the rain.

GILBERT
With a Gagliano under his arm?
(crossing to stage entrance)
Have you seen who’s out there?

ANGLE ON THE AUDIENCE

Several distinguished-looking men and women waiting.
GILBERT
Peers of the realm, members of
Such people are not kept waiting-

MARTIN
He’ll be here. This means as much
to him as it does to you.

GILBERT
Does it really?

MARTIN
I know-

GILBERT
You don’t know. I’m not talking
about money.

MARTIN
I know what you’re talking about.

GILBERT
He could be lying in a gutter
somewhere - hurt, dead...

ANGE ON AUDITORIUM CLOCK: showing 7:50

BACK TO GILBERT- by now on the edge of tears.

The orchestra conductor is looking his way, tapping his
watch, tilting his head enquiringly. Time to cancel.

GILBERT
They’ll have to be told.

MARTIN
Want me to do it?

Gilbert shakes his head. Steps through on to the stage.

GILBERT
My Lords, ladies and gentlemen...
   (voice quivering)
It is with great regret that I have
to tell you... the performer you
have come to see is unable to be
here this evening...
   (gestures helplessly)
Refunds may be claimed at the box
office.

He hurries offstage, holding back his tears.

EXT. SIMMONDS HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD, LONDON. DAY (SUMMER, 1986) 3

TITLE: “35 YEARS LATER”
A black cab pulls up outside the house and sounds its horn.

Imposing and costly when it was built in the 1920’s and owned by the Simmonds family ever since, the house is now run down and in need of repair and repainting. In the double drive sits a single ten-year-old car: an anomaly in this affluent two-car neighbourhood.

INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. DAY (S’86)

The style inside the house is cultured, if a little shabby: floor-to-ceiling bookshelves in the drawing room, full of mostly hardback volumes; a baby grand loaded with classical sheet music; somewhat old-fashioned furniture; soft furnishings in muted colours.

A suitcase stands in the hall, an overcoat and umbrella draped across it, a briefcase leaning against it.

ANGLE ON KITCHEN

MARTIN SIMMONDS is now in his mid-fifties, his body slim and well kept. HELEN, whose cheek he is kissing in valediction, is still, at the same age, handsome.

HELEN
(a ritual, this)
Take your pills, don’t wear the same shirt twice, sell music.

MARTIN
Kiss Emily for me. The minute the baby’s born, stick it in front of the piano. You can’t start too soon.

HELEN
‘It’ is a girl, Martin. The scan’s showing a girl. Granddaughter, not grand piano. I’ll call you if I’m not asleep.

MARTIN
And if the estimate for the roof comes, let me know straight away.

HELEN
Why?

MARTIN
I might have to walk home. Save the train fare.

The taxi’s horn sounds again.
EXT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. DAY (S’86)

Martin emerges, coated, carrying suitcase and briefcase, umbrella hooked over his arm. He climbs into the waiting taxi.

EXT. GATESHEAD RAILWAY STATION – PLATFORM. DAY (S’86)

Exiting the station, Martin is taken aback to find at the barrier the city’s Lord Mayor, CHARLIE FROGGATT (60+), in full regalia, and his driver.

MARTIN
Charlie Froggatt, look at you in your gold chain. Didn’t know this was a civic reception, I’d have worn my ermine underwear.

The driver takes Martin’s suitcase. As they walk towards the station exit:

FROGGATT
(Tyneside accent)
Just come from opening a DIY superstore. You’d think they’d do it themselves, wouldn’t you?

INT. DAIMLER (TRAVELLING). DAY (S’86)

FROGGATT
So you’re still peddling sheet music, I see.

MARTIN
It’s a living. Libraries and schools buy it.

FROGGATT
How long you staying?

MARTIN
Just ‘til Friday.

FROGGATT
What are you doing tonight?

MARTIN
Hanging myself, I expect.

FROGGATT
How about doing an old friend a favour first?
MARTIN
This old friend got any pull with the Libraries Committee?

FROGGATT
You do one for me, I’ll do one for you.

MARTIN
That’s how the Great War started.
    (a beat)
What’s the favour?

FROGGATT
Jury service.
    (off Martin’s reaction)
Competition jury. Tyneside Young Musician of the Year. It’s world famous.

MARTIN
Not the world I live in.

FROGGATT
Under-18’s who’ve slipped through the music education net - they actually play an instrument. You’d be non-playing Chairman.

MARTIN
You’ve got to be joking.

FROGGATT
I never joke about Tyneside. You’d just be a figurehead. Like me. You’re still a name in the music world, man. Your dad knew Paderewski, for Chrissake.

MARTIN
I’m not my father, Charlie. And he didn’t judge Paderewski’s musicianship.

FROGGATT
We’ve got a couple of long-hairs in for that - Tom Noble and Jenny Burrows, you know Jenny. You get the casting vote if they hang.

MARTIN
Forget it, Charlie. I’m here to sell, not buy.

FROGGATT
These kids are next year’s customers.

(MORE)
FROGGATT (cont’d)
Chairman of the Libraries Committee
happens to be my grandson’s
girlfriend’s uncle.

MARTIN
Talk about connected!

EXT. GATESHEAD - DAY (S’86)
The limo crossing the Tyne Bridge.

FROGGATT (V.O.)
Pick you up at eight.

INT. COMMUNITY HALL, GATESHEAD. NIGHT (S’86)
A packed hall, an old Steinway grand onstage. Below the
stage, seated at a trestle table, the panel of five
COMPETITION JUDGES: Martin at their centre, JENNY BURROWS
(50) on his left, TOM NOBLE (68) on his right. CHARLIE
FROGGATT onstage in his mayoral regalia.

FROGGATT
...and I have every confidence this
year’s finalists will maintain the
high musical standard for which
Tyneside is justly famous....

Shouts of approval from the audience.

TOM
(to Martin)
Vienna of the north-east.

FROGGATT
So without further ado, let
competition commence, and may music
speak louder than words.

He sits down to modest applause.

A MONTAGE FOLLOWS, WITH CUTS BETWEEN THE PERFORMERS AND THE
JUDGES COMPLETING THEIR MARK SHEETS

The first finalist is a 10 YEAR-OLD GIRL playing the Bach
Chaconne for clarinet.

PANNING THE FIVE MARK SHEETS

Home-made, on council-headed notepaper, the mark sheets are
divided into three hand-drawn columns headed “TECHNIQUE”,
“INTERPRETATION” and “MUSICALITY”, with a fourth column for
totals. The girl’s scores out of ten are uniformly in the
four-five range. She scores lowest on interpretation.
- AN 11 YEAR-OLD BOY CELLIST playing Kreisler’s *Liebesleid* with piano accompaniment. He’s good for his age but in no way outstanding. Fives and the odd six.

- THE ADJUDICATORS, starting to look glazed. Jenny glancing at her watch.

- 16 year-old MARIA KORVINSKY, rippling off Beethoven’s Bagatelle in G Minor as though warming up.

The audience applause is appropriately mighty.

The judges are smiling now, lavishing nines and tens. Gold found in a midden. Barring a further miracle, they’ve got their winner.

JENNY
(through applause)
Can we go home now?

MARTIN
One genius, Jenny. Might be two.

JENNY
Aye, well, it is Gateshead.

FROGGATT has come back onstage.

FROGGATT
Our final Young Musician hails from South Shields. He’s 14 years old and has already toured internationally with the Tyneside Youth Orchestra...

TOM
(aside)
Wales and the Isle of Man.

FROGGATT
...so please put your hands together for Peter Stemp.

PETER STEMP, a bad acne case, steps onstage and readies himself to play his three-year-old Japanese fiddle.

ANGLE ON ELLEN STEMP (40), his proud mother, in the front row of the audience.

Then Peter does something very odd. Prior to playing his competition piece the boy reaches into his pocket, pulls out a block of rosin and ritualistically swipes his bow strings with it - first a broad upward sweep, then a matching downward sweep. Finally, before putting the rosin away and tucking the violin back under his chin-
There are some titters from the audience at the gesture.

CLOSE ON MARTIN

He isn’t tittering. His reaction is out of all keeping with what has occurred. It’s a reaction of such shock and emotion, so sudden and overwhelming, that it has drained the colour from his face.

TOM
(to Martin)
You all right, man?

Martin doesn’t answer. Too stunned to speak.

Peter begins to play the second movement of Tartini’s “Devil’s Trill” Sonata for solo violin - a difficult piece beyond his skill level, and it shows. But though his musicianship is far from exceptional it’s clear that someone, at some time, has taught him some old-fashioned Kreislerian slides and a particular treatment of the rosin that very few teachers would countenance and no violinist in the history of solo performance would ever exhibit in public... save only one.

ANGLE ON PETER STEMP as he plays, sliding ineptly...

ANGLE ON MARTIN as he listens...

...and the playing changes, as the Tartini fades and we hear an exuberant Wieniawski violin piece, played by an immeasurably superior violinist.

ANGLE ON DAVID ELI RAPPORT (DOVIDL), aged 9, as he plays, sliding with arrogant Kreislerian exuberance...

ANGLE ON THE OPEN DOORWAY

where 9 YEAR-OLD MARTIN is watching and listening from the hallway. The emotions on his young face: jealousy and resentment.

The small drawing room audience is composed of GILBERT (here); ENID (39); PROFESSOR CARL PLESCH (58) - Hungarian-born soloist and London’s most celebrated pre-war violin teacher; and ZYGMUNT RAPPORT (40), Dovidl’s prematurely balding Polish-Jewish father, a Warsaw costume jeweller: not a refugee but with the abandoned worn-down look of one.

Dovald - black hair shiny as jet, legs stick-thin in calf-length shorts - is playing with the flashy show-off style of a child genius who knows that only time and practice stand between him and his birthright: world-renown as a virtuoso. Flesch and Gilbert are listening pleasurably, nodding, knowing it too.
Martin is two months older than Dovidl. His grey flannel shorts are the right length for London juvenile fashion of the day - the only edge it seems he has on this exotic interloper.

Dovidl finishes the piece. He looks up, awaiting requests for an encore; spots Martin in the doorway, meets his eye briefly, looks away.

GILBERT
Professor Flesch? What do you think?

FLESCH
Too many flourishes.
(to Dovidl)
You are not Kreisler, young man.

DOVIDL
Kreisler is not Rapoport.

A statement of calculated precocity. It brings chuckles.

ZYGMUNT
(to Flesch)
You will teach him? He is genius.

FLESCH
I am sent ten geniuses a month, Pan Rapoport. If your son accepts that he has still something to learn, perhaps I can teach him something. You are staying in London?

ZYGMUNT
No, I go back to Warsaw, to my wife and daughters.... If I can find somebody to take David... I leave him here.

FLESCH
Safer. Given the situation in Poland.

GILBERT
(thoughtful)
Very much so.

ZYGMUNT
Do you know of Jewish family, Mr Simmonds? I can pay a little...

GILBERT
As it happens I do have a family in mind, Mr Rapoport. It isn’t Jewish, but it is musical, and will cost you nothing.

(MORE)
GILBERT (cont’d)
I can promise you the tenets of your religion would be fully respected, its requirements met in every regard.

Gilbert looks across at his wife. He almost certainly hasn’t consulted her about this considerable commitment, an autocratic decision typical of the man. ENID gives nothing back – neither consent nor refusal, approval nor disapproval.

Zygmunt is aware how great a commitment this is. It entails, among other things, kosher food, Hebrew lessons, Sabbath observance. If he appears to hesitate, consider where he has come from. Zygmunt cannot conceive of a Gentile Polish paterfamilias making such an offer.

ZYG\MUNT
This is English family?

GILBERT
It is.
(a beat)
My own son is David’s age. They would share a bedroom.

ANGLE ON MARTIN
Outrage on his face. The brilliant interloper is to be admitted to residence, it seems, without any family consultation at all.

Zygmunt’s eyes are sparkling with tears. He embraces Gilbert, who stands stiffly to receive the embrace, embarrassed by this un-English gesture, not knowing where to put his hands.

Stepping back, Zygmunt reaches into his pocket and pulls from it a velvet-covered ring box. Ceremoniously he presents it to his son, the tears overflowing now. The boy opens the box.

CLOSE ON RING BOX
The inside lid is stamped, in gold leaf lettering: “RAPOPORT WARSZAWA”. But there is no ring inside. Only a small amber block of rosin, pristine and gleaming.

Everybody smiles as Dovidl removes the rosin and swipes it experimentally along his bow strings: first with a stylish upward flourish, then with a downward. He touches the rosin to his lips.

Gilbert and Zygmunt applaud. It’s a subtle little ritual whose meaning seems to have eluded ENID, the giving of this box: partly a jeweller’s joke, partly an expression of hope, partly a father’s farewell blessing.
With his ritualistic stroking of the bow Dovidl has improvised a witty variation; taking the rosin for a run, as it were, as though the gift had been a Stradivarius. The kiss on the rosin is for his father, whom he is aware he may never see again. [For Peter Stemp 47 years later it will be a magical ritual entirely without meaning.]

**EXT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. DAY (A’39)**

His cardboard suitcase at his feet, Zygmunt is about to leave for the bus stop, first leg of his journey back to Poland – to what we now know will be invasion, occupation, ghetto and death camp – and though he doesn’t know what he’s returning to, Zygmunt seems to intuit it. Hence the passion he puts into his last tearful embrace of the son he may never see again.

To Martin and his parents, watching from the doorstep, this is yet another public display of emotion that makes them uncomfortable. It isn’t anti-Semitism, it isn’t coldness; it’s English reserve.

**INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM, GATESHEAD. DAY (S’86)**

The day following the competition Martin is lunching with Peter Stemp and his mother, ELLEN (46): a woman of modest means, wearing her best two-piece for the occasion.

On the table is The Northern Echo: international and local news with a Tyneside flavour; several column inches given to last night’s music competition: picturing a toothy Maria Korvinsky accepting her prize from Mayor Foggatt.

ELLEN
So what’s this about? You didn’t give Peter the prize, now we’re having this posh lunch. Why?

MARTIN
That wasn’t my decision.

ELLEN
You’d have made him the winner, then? If it was up to you.

MARTIN
The girl’s already there, Mrs Stemp. Peter needs more time... better tuition.
(attempting the casual)
Who’s been teaching him?

ELLEN
He gets lessons in school. I can’t afford fancy teachers.
MARTIN
We could discuss that.

ELLEN
Know a good cheap one, do you?

MARTIN
Several good, none cheap.

ELLEN
In South Shields?

MARTIN
London.

ELLEN
Just have to sell the yacht, then, won’t I?

MARTIN
I’ll find a way to cover Peter’s tuition during his school holidays. And a family in London he can stay with.

Ellen looks to Peter. He’s nodding. Wants it.

ELLEN
(indicates newspaper)
Why him? Why not what’s-her-face?

MARTIN
Her too.

ELLEN
You think Pete’s that good, then?

MARTIN
He’ll never be a Heifetz. But he could make a living with an orchestra. Or teaching.
(to Peter)
Who’s been teaching you, Peter?

PETER
School.

MARTIN
And who else? You’ve had a few tips off someone.

Peter shrugs.

MARTIN
That thing you do with the rosin....
PETER
That’s for good luck. I can stop.

MARTIN
What’s his name? Maybe I know him.

A moment of hesitation, then-

PETER
You don’t know him.

MARTIN
I think I might. He used to be a virtuoso. Did he tell you that?

Peter smiling now.

PETER
I don’t think so.

MARTIN
DSark hair, about my age?

ELLEN
It’s not Pete you want, is it?

A harshness has entered her voice. She’s worked it out. The
bursary, the promise of a management contract – they’re about
something other than Peter Stemp.

ELLEN
Come on, Pete. We’re going.
(to Martin)
Thanks for the dinner.

Taking Peter by the hand, she pulls him to his feet. They
leave the dining room without looking back.

INT. MARTIN’S HOTEL ROOM, GATESHEAD. NIGHT (S’86)

Martin is perched on his bed, on the phone to Helen.

MARTIN
(to phone)
What are they calling it? Sorry, her.
(winces)
Lovely name. Kiss little Cressida for me, I’ll see her Sunday.
(a pause)
Helen…? I think I might have found him.

There’s no response. No request to identify the “him”. Just
silence.
MARTIN
Did you hear what I said?

INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. NIGHT (SIMULTANEOUS) (S’86)

Helen’s in bed, her book set aside to take Martin’s call.

HELEN
(to phone, tonelessly)
I heard. Goodnight, Martin.

INT. MARTIN’S BEDROOM. SIMMONDS HOUSE. NIGHT (A’39)

This is the first time Martin and Dovidl have been left alone together. Dovidl is in the bedroom doorway with his cheap suitcase between his feet, waiting to be invited in.

DOVIDL
(heavily accented)
I sleep here, yes?

MARTIN
No. I don’t want you in my room. I like being on my own.

DOVIDL
Is not your choose.

MARTIN
Wrong, clever. It is my “choose”. I have to say if it’s all right and if it isn’t you go back to Poland, and the Germans are going to invade Poland. You’ll have to wear a yellow star and get bashed up by brownshirts.

DOVIDL
What is “bashed up”, please?

A pause.

MARTIN
You better not snore, that’s all.

DOVIDL
What is snore?

Martin does the sound for him. Dovidl pulls a small notebook and pencil from his pocket and records the word.

DOVIDL
If I snore I snore in tune. I am musician. You play?
MARTIN
Piano, a bit.

DOVIDL
Is good for accompanist. Chess?

MARTIN
A bit.

DOVIDL
(grins)
Everything for you is bit. I am genius. I help you, you will be bit genius.

MARTIN
Bet I could get you down.

Dovidl’s pencil gets busy a second time. Another new word.

DOVIDL
What is “get down”, please?

Martin jumps him. Operative definition.

The boys wrestle, grunting and snorting. But eventually it’s the wiry Dovidl who wrestles Martin to the ground and sits on his chest, pinning his arms.

DOVIDL
Also fight a bit.

MARTIN
(terminal frustration)
Bloody foreigner! You can’t even talk proper English!

DOVIDL
You speak Polish? Russian? Yiddish? German? Hebrew?

MARTIN
I don’t have to. I’m not one of your lot.

DOVIDL
What is “lot”?

MARTIN
Foreigners. We’re in England, stupid.

Dovidl climbs off him, retrieves his notebook; wags it.

DOVIDL
Wait six months.
MARTIN
What’s your name, anyway?

DOVIDL
Dovid Eli Rapoport. My family call me Dovidl. You?

MARTIN
Martin L. Simmond.

DOVIDL
I call you Mottl.

INT. GATESHEAD HOTEL BEDROOM. MORNING (S’86)

Martin is eating a room-service breakfast at a small wheeled table when there’s a tentative knock at the door. He opens to:

PETER STEMP

MARTIN
Peter. Where’s your mother?

He checks the corridor. No Ellen. Came alone.

PETER
I’ll take you to him.

EXT. GATESHEAD. DAY (S’86)

They’ve come by taxi to an underpass entrance: a pedestrian tunnel beneath a busy urban road.

EXT/INT. SUBWAY. DAY (S’86)

As Martin and Peter descend the steps we’ll hear a distant violin playing - with only moderate competence - The Rolling Stones’ “Paint it Black”.

Martin’s face falls. Whoever is playing, it isn’t Dovidl.

As they get closer, so does the music. A turn in the tunnel reveals...

A BUSKER

The busker is BILLY, an unkempt grizzly-bearded man in his seventies, wearing a stained raincoat, football socks and dirty plimsolls. He’s playing on a cheap fiddle - complete with unwanted echoes off the tiled walls. On the floor at his feet, among the crisp packets and banana skins, is his cap: dotted with a handful of low-value coins.
Though he’d known from the first bow-stroke that this could not be Doviderl, Martin wilts with disappointment.

Billy nods an acknowledgement at Peter but barely glances at Martin as he finishes the piece with a flourish of poorly executed Kreisleresque slides. Then out comes the rosin, followed by that ritualistic up-and-down stroking of the bowstrings with which we’re becoming familiar, and the valedictory kiss to the rosin, a magical ritual as meaningless to Billy as it is to Peter.

PETER
This is Mr Simmonds, Billy. He’s gonna pay for me to have lessons.
In London.

BILLY
(London accent)
What did I tell you?
(to Martin)
Told him he’d get discovered.

MARTIN
He says you’ve been helping him.

BILLY
(laughs)
Showed him a couple of things.

MARTIN
Where did you learn to play?

BILLY
Taught meself.

Martin takes out his wallet. Extracts a fiver, drops it in the hat.

BILLY
That’s very kind of you, sir.

MARTIN
Teach yourself those Kreisler slides, did you, Billy?

Billy’s face sets.

BILLY
Who wants to know?

MARTIN
Your best customer.

INT. CAFE, GATESHEAD. DAY (S’86)

Billy, Peter and Martin are drinking thick tea from thick, white mugs at a formica-topped table.
BILLY
He never told me his name. It was years ago.

MARTIN
Where did you meet him?

BILLY
London. I used to work the cinema queues up west - when they had cinema queues. I wasn’t bad then-

MARTIN
What year?

BILLY
(thinks)
*High Noon.* When was that?

MARTIN
‘52, I think. Go on.

BILLY
So I’m outside the Odeon, yeah, playing the theme music - you know, from the film - and this cheeky little bugger comes up, tells me I could do with some lessons. ‘Oh, yeah,’ I says. ‘Who from?’ ‘I don’t normally give lessons,’ he says, only he’s saving up for this trip he wants to go on, so how much can I afford to pay him? I told him to get knotted. Don’t even know he can play, do I?

MARTIN
I assume he demonstrated.

BILLY
Takes me violin right out me hand. You never heard nothing like it in your life. Magic. Like something off the wireless.

(shireaks his head in wonder)
Crowd starts chucking half crowns, ten-bob notes. I give him half. Fair’s fair, right?

MARTIN
What did he look like?

BILLY
Like he could do with a square meal.
MARTIN
When was the last time you saw him?

BILLY
Important, is it?

Martin deposits another fiver on the sticky table top.

BILLY
He give me a few lessons. Twice a week for a bit. One day he didn’t turn up. Never saw him again. Must’ve gone on his trip.

MARTIN
Did he say where?

BILLY
Didn’t make much sense, like, but that’s why I remember it.

Martin waits. Billy waits. Another fiver goes down.

BILLY
Said he was going home to play for the Ashes. That’s cricket, innit? When England plays Australia.
(Martin nods)
Didn’t make sense ‘cos he didn’t sound like an Aussie. ‘Who’re you, then?’ I says. ‘Don bleeding Bradman?’

MARTIN
His exact words?

Billy’s brow furrows with the effort of recall.

BILLY
Something about a song. Going home –
to play a song. *(a beat)*
For the ashes.

ON MARTIN

This doesn’t mean anything to us but it contains a world of meaning for Martin.

**INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. NIGHT (A’39)**

A family dinner is being eaten in silence as everybody listens to the evening news on the wireless. It’s a Friday night and for Dovidl’s benefit there are Sabbath candles on the table and a loaf of chala wrapped in a white cloth.
We should note that Dovidl’s dinner plate contains different food from the others’, mostly vegetables.

The news is all about the German Blitzkrieg of Poland: the bombing of Warsaw, the collapse of the Polish army. The Phoney War is a few days old.

Dovidl’s face reflects his struggle to contain his emotion. He’s learning to be English.

GILBERT
I’m sure your family will be all right, David.

ENID
Have you written home, David?

DOVIDL
I am writing letter.

GILBERT
Good lad.

DOVIDL
You permit I make more letter now?

GILBERT
Permission granted, old chap.

As Dovidl prepares to leave the table–

MARTIN
He hasn’t finished his dinner.

GILBERT
Special dispensation. Go and finish your letter, David.

Dovidl slides off his seat and leaves the room.

MARTIN
It’s not fair.

GILBERT
What isn’t?

MARTIN
All this. No bacon allowed in the house, no milk puddings, special food for the genius, and he doesn’t even have to eat it.

ENID
If you’d like to take over preparing David’s food you may have a say in whether he eats it.
MARTIN
And he’s a liar. He stopped writing
two weeks ago.

ENID
It isn’t very nice, Martin, to tell
tales on a friend.

MARTIN
My friends don’t wet the bed.

The Simmonds adults exchange a look.

GILBERT
Considering the position his family
is in, I’d say wetting the bed is
the least we can expect from him.

ENID
(to Martin)
Why don’t you go and see if you can
cheer him up.

MARTIN
Didn’t look all that down to me.

GILBERT
That’s a wicked thing to say! Go to
your room!

MARTIN
Not my room, is it.

He goes.

INT. LANDING/THE BOYS’ BEDROOM. NIGHT (A’39)

Through the partly open door we catch Dovidl looking at a
photograph and crying. It’s a sepia studio portrait of the
Rapoport family taken in Warsaw in 1937: Dovidl’s father and
mother standing side by side; in front of them, Dovidl aged
seven between his two sisters: Pessia (9) and Malkeh (5).
Pessia has her arm around Dovidl’s shoulders; Dovidl’s arm is
around Malkeh’s. All five are solemn and unsmiling, in the
portrait style of the time.

As Martin enters Dovidl slides the photo under his pillow.
Martin doesn’t see it. Trying to recover his equilibrium,
Dovidl blows his nose.

DOVIDL
I have cold.

A sudden unexpected shaft of compassion pierces Martin’s
juvenile soul.
MARTIN
They’ll be all right. We’ll smash the Jerries up for you. No-one stands up to the British Army.

DOVIDL
You are child.

MARTIN
Play you a game of chess if you want.

DOVIDL
Chess with you takes my mind two minutes.

MARTIN
(a grin)
Three. I feel lucky.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD. DAY (A’39)

The two boys are freewheeling down a hill on their bikes, playing “chicken”.

Martin is the first to swerve – avoiding a horse-drawn milk float. Dovidl sails on, misses the float by inches, and in passing swipes a pint. Riding no-hands, he pierces the top with his finger while still on the move and swigs from the bottle.

It’s Martin who gets nabbed by the milkman – momentarily caught by his coat – before he breaks away and pedals madly down the hill after Dovidl, who has disappeared from view.

MILKMAN
Thieving little bleeders!

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HEATH. DAY (A’39)

Martin finds Dovidl waiting in their private spot on the Heath: beneath a large tree, overlooking the Ponds. Eating a Kit Kat [N.B. Wartime issue: blue wrapper, dark chocolate, price 3d].

Grinning in triumph, Dovidl offers Martin a finger of Kit Kat.

MARTIN
Thought you said these weren’t kosher.

DOVIDL
You rabbi now?
MARTIN
Where’d you get it?

DOVIDL
Your pocket.

He proffers the milk bottle. Martin takes a swig.

DOVIDL
We make good team, yes?

Embarrassed by Dovidl’s open acknowledgement of what in a London boy’s world should remain implicit, Martin sprays him with milk. Dovidl responds by jumping on him playfully. They wrestle standing up for a few moments, then both boys step back to face one another and go by tacit agreement into their slow motion boxers routine.

This consists of each delivering in turn a slo-mo punch which the other has the option either to dodge in slow motion or to receive as a simulated blow, rocking back under the pretended impact with appropriate facial grimaces.

INT. HALLWAY. PROFESSOR FLESH’S STUDIO. DAY (WINTER 1940)

Dovidl has come for his violin lesson, accompanied by GILBERT. On the landing outside Flesch’s studio they meet JOZEF WECHSLER (18) about to descend. He’s carrying a very old violin case, housing the virtuoso’s badge of office: a very old violin.

JOZEF
Professor Flesch isn’t here. I’ve been waiting an hour.

GILBERT
Do you know where he is?

JOZEF
Back in Hungary, probably. He thinks the Waffen SS are coming over London Bridge.

His glance, finding Dovidl, takes in his leatherette-covered violin case, doubtless containing a cheap violin.

JOZEF
(to Gilbert, with an inclination of the head)
Jozef Wechsler. Of Warsaw. You will have heard of me.

GILBERT
Gilbert Simmonds. I believe Professor Flesch has mentioned you.
Dovidl’s look is one of undisguised envy. Wechsler, already an international name at eighteen and with the arrogance of a young god, is who he wants to be - preferably tomorrow.

DOVIDL
(to Jozef)
Dovid Eli Rapoport. Also of Warsaw. Professor Flesch has spoken of you to me also.

JOZEF
He hasn’t spoken of you.
(to Gilbert)
Your boy will need to find a new teacher. You know Dr Steiner of Leipzig?

GILBERT
I know of him.

JOZEF
He has played Mozart with Einstein. He is in London now.

DOVIDL
I learn physics, I go Einstein.

GILBERT
Mr Wechsler isn’t recommending Einstein as a violin teacher, David.

DOVIDL
I practise alone.

JOZEF
And from whom will you learn humility?

DOVIDL
Not from you.

With a sad shake of the head, Jozef leaves.

INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. DAY (W’40)

Having returned home, Gilbert and Dovidl enter the living room to find Martin practising at the piano.

GILBERT
(to Dovidl)
Actually, Steiner’s not a bad idea.
DOVIDL
I do not need teacher. Only to practise.

GILBERT
Who will make sure you don’t skip
the tricky bits when your fingers
are hurting?

Martin swings around on the piano stool.

MARTIN
How about me?

DOVIDL
Hah. Boy of ten.

MARTIN
Older than you.

DOVIDL
Fifty-five days older...
(calculating)
...one point five-one percent. One-
and-six out of a fiver. Small
change.

MARTIN
That’s six Kit Kats-

GILBERT
Boys! Please. It’s a very mature
undertaking.

MARTIN
I’m more mature than he is.

DOVIDL
Hah.

This initiates another ritual. Momentarily forgetting his
father’s presence, Martin jumps off the stool and launches
into the slow motion boxers routine.

GILBERT
Boys, if you’ve finished
demonstrating your maturity –

They stop.

GILBERT(CONT'D)
(to Martin)
Suppose some difficulty were to
arise that I needed to know about,
and your friend asked you to keep
it from me. Wouldn’t that be a
conflict of loyalties?
MARTIN
My loyalty’s to you, Father.

Gilbert puts his arms around both boys’ shoulders.

GILBERT
We’ll give it a go.

INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. DAY (S’86)

Returning from Gateshead, Martin lugs his suitcase into the house. He finds Helen in the living room, marking school essays and too absorbed to hear him enter. He crosses to her, kisses the nape of her neck.

MARTIN
I might’ve been a burglar.

HELEN
With his own key?

MARTIN
Locksmith by trade.
How’s Emily?

HELEN
Blooming.

MARTIN
And little Isolde? What was it?

HELEN
Cressida. Can’t read, write or play a note but she knows her name. You’ll see her tomorrow.

A pause. Silence.

HELEN
How was your trip?

MARTIN
I made back the train fare.

A longer pause.

HELEN
So? What did you find?

MARTIN
Dovidl was still in London in 1952.

HELEN
There’s a hot trail for you.
MARTIN
It means whatever his reason for
not turning up, it wasn’t because
he was dead. We never knew that for
sure before.

HELEN
Just because he was alive thirty-
odd years ago doesn’t mean he is
now.

MARTIN
He’s our age. Why wouldn’t he be?

HELEN
This going to be your new hobby,
Martin? Finding David after half a
lifetime so he can spit in your eye
again?

MARTIN
If you’d lost a brother—

HELEN
(cutting in)
He wasn’t your brother.

MARTIN
He felt like a brother.

HELEN
And what do I feel like?

MARTIN
What?

HELEN
To you.

MARTIN
This isn’t a competition.

HELEN
Everything’s a competition. Read
your Darwin.

MARTIN
Helen, I’m tired, I’m hungry, I
need a bath and I don’t want to
have this conversation.

HELEN
Then we’ll have it later, when
you’re fed and rested.

MARTIN
No, you can do it solo – both
parts. I’ll be the audience.
He turns to leave.

**HELEN**
Where did he go in 1952?

**MARTIN**
I thought you weren’t interested.

**HELEN**
(shrugs)
Historical curiosity.

**MARTIN**
Poland. He went to Poland.

He goes out and closes the door behind him. Helen remains in her chair but does not resume her marking.

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**EXT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. EARLY EVENING (A’40)**

Blast tape on the windows of houses. A car passes with its headlights shaded. A military lorry drops Gilbert at the house.

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**INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. EARLY EVENING (CONTINUOUS) (A’40)**

Same room as Scenes 25 and 26, same piano, but with the furnishings of the period; complete with taped windows and not-yet-drawn blackout curtains. No lights are on and the room is gloomy.

 Barely able to see his music, Martin is at the piano, accompanying Dovidl; playing chords to which Dovidl is practising his staccato technique.

 Suddenly Dovidl stops playing. Martin carries on for a moment or two before he registers this. Then he, too, stops; swivels on the stool to face Dovidl.

  **MARTIN**
I didn’t say you could stop.

  **DOVIDL**
My neck is hurting.

[N.B. Dovidl’s English is already far less heavily accented.]

  **MARTIN**
It’s supposed to.

He swivels back to the keyboard.

  **DOVIDL**
I have done enough.
Martin swivels back to Dovidl.

MARTIN
I decide when you’ve done enough.

Dovidl picks up his violin case.

MARTIN
I’ll tell him, Dov. I mean it.

DOVIDL
Tittle-tattle.

MARTIN
Baby.

Gilbert enters the room, wearing an ARP armband (Air Raid Precaution – a warden).

GILBERT
Sorry to interrupt, boys.

He crosses to the window, closes the blackout curtains, switches on the light.

GILBERT (CONT'D)
Now you can see what you’re doing.

Silence from the boys.

GILBERT (CONT'D)
How are your Hebrew lessons going David? Happy with Mr Rosenthal’s teaching? I know you were getting along well with Mr. Cohen.

DOVIDL
(proudly)
He joined up. R.A.F.

GILBERT
Yes, I know. Important that you keep on with your religious studies. I promised your father.

As Gilbert turns away;

DOVIDL
They do not say Hebrew words same as in Poland, Mr. Simmonds

GILBERT
Then...

He’s about to recommend that Dovidl learn the British style of pronunciation, but in that instant realises that the European style may soon cease to exist.
GILBERT
Say them the way you were taught in Poland.

DOVIDL
Thank you, Mr Simmonds.

GILBERT
(to Martin)
How’s the violin coming along?

Martin exchanges a look with Dovidl. If he’s going to rat him out, this is the moment. It’s a long moment.
MARTIN
All right.

GILBERT
What’s he working on?

DOVIDL
Staccato, Mr Simmonds.

GILBERT
Good, good.
(indicating window)
Well, you may as well keep at it till Herr Hitler’s Götterdämmerung starts up.

He goes out.

MARTIN
You owe me one.

DOVIDL
How you make that out?

MARTIN
I could’ve told him. I didn’t.

DOVIDL
View from the piano stool. Here is standing view: I know you should tell him. I know you did not. He does not know it.

But as Martin begins to play THE AIR RAID SIREN starts up. A moment later the electricity fails and the lights go off.

EXT. AIR RAID SHELTER ENTRANCE. SAME NIGHT (A’40)

The promised Götterdämmerung. Bombs falling, the flash of incendiaries, searchlights and tracer illuminating the sky.

Gilbert, Enid, Martin and Dovidl are descending the steps into the shelter: Enid and Martin lugging blankets, thermos flasks, sandwiches; Dovidl carrying only his violin case.

Dovidl stops to look up at the light show in the sky.

MARTIN
You want to get killed?

DOVIDL
Is not my destiny. It would have been like this – Warsaw would have been like this.
MARTIN
Couldn’t have been worse. Come on.

Dovidl doesn’t move.

MARTIN (CONT’D)
Look, if we’re okay they probably are too. Your mum and dad, your sisters. They’d have had the sense to go to the shelters.

DOVIDL
Look how beautiful it is.

MARTIN
It’s not art, Dovidl. It’s bloody life and death.

DOVIDL
So is art.

A lone figure approaches, also heading for shelter: JOZEF WECHSLER (now nearly 20), carrying only his cased violin.

Martin nudges Dovidl. Look who it is.

DOVIDL
(to Martin)
So what? You want plaque? “Jozef Wechsler cowered here, 1940.”?

Jozef passes without acknowledging them.

DOVIDL
(to Jozef: attempting inclusiveness)
Hampstead Shelter Orchestra.

JOZEF
What instrument do you play?

Having delivered this majestic put-down, Wechsler surges regally past a Dovidl too stunned to reply.

**INT. AIR RAID SHELTER. NIGHT (A’40)**

Jozef has settled among the crowd, camped as far as possible from the Simmondses.

As Martin, Gilbert and Enid busy themselves spreading blankets and pillows, Dovidl removes his modest little violin from its case. He strokes the bowstrings with his block of Warsaw rosin, kisses the rosin, then casually begins to play a jaunty classical piece.
Gilbert’s face displays pride; Jozef is trying to show amused indifference. But it seems there’s only so much a genius can stand. Unable to resist, Jozef at last takes up his own venerable instrument and joins in, merging seamlessly with Dovidl. There is no apparent disparity in skill between these two performers and what at first seems a co-operative exercise soon grows savagely competitive—
as Jozef switches suddenly to a more demanding piece—
—and Dovidl matches him effortlessly, bar for bar, finesse for finesse—
—and Dovidl switches to a notoriously tricky Paganini caprice—
—and Jozef meets the challenge unerringly.
Both of them smiling.
Jozef thinking: ‘This kid’s not half bad.’

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EXT WARSAW AIRPORT. DAY (S’86)

A British Airways plane is about to land...
...Martin exits the terminal and climbs into a taxi

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EXT. WARSAW. DAY (S’86)

Martin’s taxi on its way from the airport to the city centre.

ANGLE FROM TAXI - MARTIN’S POV: 1986 WARSAW CITYSCAPE

This is a Warsaw far removed from the pre-war city Dovidl would have known as a boy but not much different from the one he visited in 1953, except that Solidarnosc flags and hoardings proliferate along the roadside and on the facades of buildings.

The TAXI DRIVER is a man in his seventies. The car radio is playing softly in the background.

MARTIN
Does Warsaw have a Musicians’ Union?

WARSAW TAXI DRIVER
No English.

MARTIN
Un-i-on. Music?

WARSAW TAXI DRIVER
Nie rozumiem.

The driver turns up the volume on his radio.
ON MARTIN

The search isn’t going to be as easy as he thought.
More than two years after the Blitz, London has taken an unexpected overnight pasting from the Luftwaffe. The boys are standing on the rim of a smoking bombsite, holding their bikes, peering into the rubble.

MARTIN
Thought we had the Blitz two years ago.

DOVIDL
This is a footnote.
(a beat)
Look, there’s a body.

ANGLE – an arm protruding from behind a half-demolished wall.
Martin follows Dovidl as he picks his way over the rubble towards it. He stoops to retrieve something shiny. He holds it up for Martin to see. A silver bracelet.

MARTIN
Has it got a name on it?

Dovidl shakes his head. Pockets the bracelet.

He moves out of sight behind the wall, which has a carpeted staircase still intact against it.

Martin pulls a Kit Kat bar from his pocket; unwraps it and takes a bite, surveying the wreckage as he munches. A moment or two passes, then Dovidl reappears, a purse in his hand.

MARTIN
(horrified)
What are you doing!?

DOVIDL
It’s Mrs Harris. She’s on my paper round. The face is gone but I recognise the purse.

He opens the purse, and with a triumphant yell extracts a pound note.

DOVIDL
Treasure of the Mummy’s Tomb!

MARTIN
(appalled)
Do you know what you get for robbing the dead?

DOVIDL
Pound notes.

MARTIN
A firing squad.

Dovidl makes his way over to where Martin is standing and passes him without pausing, flapping the banknote.

DOVIDL
Eighty Kit Kats, Mott.

MARTIN
(calling after him)
It isn’t yours!

DOVIDL
I don’t mind sharing.

Reaching the street, he mounts his bike and pedals away.
EXT. HAMPSTEAD HEATH. DAY (LATER) (S’43)

They’ve repaired to their private spot on the Heath to smoke cigarettes and drink brown ale from bottles. Dovidl is setting out on the grass an array of raunchy playing cards, each depicting a nude woman in a saucy pose.

DOVIDL
Who do you fancy? The ace of clubs has the best tits, the four of diamonds is the best bum.

MARTIN
Your bar mitzvah’s in ten days, Dov. You’re supposed to be a man. Looking at pictures of naked women doesn’t make you a man.

DOVIDL
Neither does watching Shirley Smith undress through binoculars.

MARTIN
That was a scientific experiment.

DOVIDL
In what? Team wanking? Anyway, you don’t look like a man.

MARTIN
Neither do you.

DOVIDL
More than you.

MARTIN
Bollocks.

DOVIDL
That too.

MARTIN
Being a man doesn’t mean that, does it?

DOVIDL
What are you now, a Talmud scholar? What does it mean, O wise one?

MARTIN
Among other things, respecting the dead.

DOVIDL
Why? Because they’re dead? Out of interest, are they supposed to know they’re being respected?
MARTIN
Their loved ones know.

DOVIDL
Mrs Harris didn’t have any loved ones. No-one’s going to miss her. Mind you, she made good fishcakes. I’ll miss her fishcakes.

MARTIN
(truly appalled)
Is that all she meant to you?

DOVIDL
What else?

MARTIN
This was a human person, Dov. She probably went to bed last night planning to... I don’t know, make fishcakes, and she ends up dead in the rubble of her house. Don’t you feel anything?

Dovidl turns to look at him.

DOVIDL
Do you know how many people died last night, Mottl? I don’t just mean in London. Across Occupied Europe. Shot, bayonetted, blown up, starved, burnt alive, hung-

MARTIN
That’s not the point.

DOVIDL
Tens of thousands. And no-one even knows their names. So tell me, little man from NW3, which ones do I have to “feel” for? All of them or just the ones I trip over in the morning after?

INT. SYNAGOGUE. DAY (S’43)

DISCOVER GILBERT AND MARTIN

Sitting together at the back, wearing skullcaps for respect but as out of place as Hottentots at a Greek wedding. They’re attracting curious looks from the regular congregation (this being the synagogue Dovidl regularly attends), none of whom have seen them here before.

CAMERA FINDS ENID, alone in the women’s section, even more isolated.
ON DOVIDL

Wearing a dark blue suit and embroidered silk kippah, the bar
mitzvah boy is at the bimah, fluently reciting his Hebrew
Torah portion.

DOVIDL
(...)
Lay yisyatzev ish
bifneychem: pakhd’khem
umayraakhem yiten Adonay
Elaykhekhem al penay khol
hooretz asher tidrekhvi vah,
kaasher diber lokhem.

(...)
No man shall stand up
to you: the LORD your God
will put the dread and the
fear of you over the whole
land in which you set foot,
as He promised you.

The Torah is covered.

DOVIDL
Borikh atoh Adonay, Elayheyni
melek hoaylom, asher nosan
loni tayras emes v’khayei
aylom nota b’saykheni.

DOVIDL
We praise You, Eternal God,
Sovereign of the Universe:
You have given us a Torah of
truth, implanting within us
eternal life.

CONGREGATION
Borikh ato Adonai nayseyhn
hatayroh.

CONGREGATION
Shekoyach!

We praise You, O God, Giver
of the Torah.

May your force grow!

EXT. FRYDERYK CHOPIN UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC. DAY (S’86)

A ‘modern’ concrete structure in central Warsaw, built in the
sixties.

INT. FRYDERYK CHOPIN UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC. DAY (S’86)

Photographs of prominent Polish musicians decorate the walls,
several violinists among them. Away down the corridor a
chamber orchestra can be heard practising.

Martin arrives at the door to an administrative office.
Inside he finds a middle-aged female RECEPTIONIST.

MARTIN
Dobry dzien, Pani.

No response. Obviously doesn’t speak her own language.

MARTIN
Do you speak English?

The receptionist tilts her head. A tentative yes, possibly.
MARTIN
I’m looking for a violinist - David Eli Rapoport. He isn’t one of your graduates but he might have performed here in the ‘fifties...

INT. ARCHIVE. F. CHOPIN UNIVERSITY OF MUSIC. DAY (S’86)
A secretary produces a heavy bound volume and plops it down in front of Martin.

INSERT LIST OF NAMES as Martin scans it.

Hundreds of names and dates of graduation. Many names ending in -SKI and -ISCZ. Radivicz... Rakowicz... Razinsky. No Rapoports.

MARTIN
These are all graduates of the school. Isn’t there a record of musicians who’ve played here?

SECRETARY
For record store you go
Sródmiescie.

MARTIN
I don’t mean a recording. A written record.

He taps the book sharply in demonstration. The secretary responds by closing the book with a snap. His tap seen as a violation.

ON MARTIN

Although he didn’t expect instant success, his expression shows his disappointment. He realizes it’s a hopeless task without at least a working knowledge of Polish.

MARTIN
Thank you. Dziekuje Ci.

He turns and leaves.

INT./EXT. BAILEY’S OF BROADWICK STREET. NIGHT (S’43)
Gilbert arrives by taxi with the two boys outside one of London’s most venerable musical instrument sellers.

INT. BAILEY’S. NIGHT (S’43)

He is greeted warmly by ADRIAN BAILEY (57) as a valued customer of long standing. Dismissing Martin with a glance, Bailey contemplates Dovidl appraisingly.
BAILEY
How old is the boy?

DOVIDL
The boy’s thirteen.

GILBERT
A man, Mr Bailey - in David’s culture.

Taking Dovidl’s left hand in both his own, Bailey flexes Dovidl’s fingers.

BAILEY
Good fingers.
(to Gilbert)
Do you have a luthier in mind?

GILBERT
Nothing outrageously expensive, Mr Bailey. But a good one.

BAILEY
Let’s leave the Strads to the millionaires. I have something special for him.

Bailey smiles, then disappears into a back room.

Martin is scowling.

A few moments of awkward silence pass before Bailey returns holding a worn violin case and a bow. He sets the case down and extracts the instrument.

At the sight of it Dovidl’s eyes gleam with avarice.

BAILEY
This is a Nicolo Gagliano filio.

He hands bow and violin to Dovidl, who receives them with the reverence due a holy relic.

BAILEY (CONT.)
The son of Alessandro Gagliano made this instrument in 1735, the year of his father’s death. Many think it was a tribute violin.
(to Dovidl)
And your father-

MARTIN
Foster father.
Gilbert glares at his son.

**BAILEY**
...does not have to be Rothschild to afford it.

**GILBERT**
Happy bar mitzvah, David.

**DOVIDL**
Thank you, sir.

**MARTIN**
Where’s mine?

Forced laughter from the two men. If Gilbert is aware how cruel he’s being to his natural son he isn’t showing it.

But Dovidl is too distracted to spare a thought for Martin. He’s examining the instrument with a lustful eye.

Taking the ring box from his pocket, he extracts his block of rosin, swipes the bowstrings with it – once up, once down – then kisses the rosin. Bailey shoots Gilbert an enquiring look but no explanation is offered.

Dovidl has tucked the Gagliano under his chin and is testing its range and resonance, playing short snatches of music in various styles and in rapid succession.

A smile of pleasure extends across Bailey’s face.

**BAILEY**
(to Gilbert)
See how she responds. It will be a happy marriage.

**INT. WARSAW HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT (S’86)**

Martin is working the Warsaw phone book, calling any possible source he can think of. It’s another hopeless task, limited by his rudimentary Polish, the poor English of his interlocutors and scratchy phone connections.

**MARTIN**
(to phone)
Rapoport. R-A-P-O-R-T. He would have been here from about the early 1950’s. I don’t know how long-
(interrupted)
Of course. Thank you anyway, Pani.

**TIME CUT**

**SAME SCENE, PERHAPS AN HOUR LATER**

Another phone call.
MARTIN
(to phone, frustrated)
No, I’m asking for your enquiry rates...
(listens)
Money. Pieniadze. Do you charge by
the assignment or by the hour?
(listens in frustration)
I’m sorry to have troubled you. I’m
afraid I need someone who speaks
fluent English.

Fluent Polish comes down the line.

MARTIN
(to himself)
Q.E.D.

Putting down the phone, he crosses to the window and stands
looking out at the city.

A train passing in the near distance triggers a memory...

*INT. LONDON RAILWAY TERMINUS. DAY (W’47)*

GILBERT descends from the boat train with an ENSEMBLE OF
MUSICIANS, their luggage and instrument cases plastered with
Polish and other European travel stickers. Returning from a
two-week cultural tour of post-war Russian-occupied Poland.

Waiting at the platform entrance are MARTIN and DOVIDL, both
now seventeen. Martin is still a pink-faced adolescent;
Dovidl, already man-shaped, has a pronounced beard shadow and
the stricken, grief-rimmed eyes of an unconfirmed orphan.
Those eyes searching Gilbert for news.

GILBERT
I’m sorry, David. I tried very
hard, you must believe me.

DOVIDL
Are you sure you went to the right
address? Dzielnia 21?

GILBERT
Your apartment - the tenement your
family lived in... no longer
exists, I’m afraid.

Dovidl’s face. Gilbert places a sympathetic hand on his
shoulder.

GILBERT (CONT’D)
Not the worst news, David.
Definitely not the worst.
(to Martin)
Can you manage the cases?
ANGLE ON WARSAW STICKER ON SUITCASE as Martin lifts it.

INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. NIGHT (W’47)

Same day. At dinner: Gilbert, Enid, Martin, Dovidl.

GILBERT
(to Enid)
David’s family definitely survived
the Ghetto. We know that much. They
were deported before the Uprising
in ’43.

ENID
Deported where?

A pause. He hates even the word.

GILBERT
Treblinka.

Dovidl has already been told this but the terrible name
shocks him anew.

DOVIDL
They’re dead, Mrs Simmonds.

GILBERT
No, David! That is not something we
may assume. There was a mass
I will not give up the search and
you must not give up hope. There
are any number of places they could
be - one of the DP camps, Russia, possibly-

DOVIDL
Why did you take Jozef Wechsler to
Poland and not me? I play as well
as he does.

GILBERT
You’re not ready yet.

DOVIDL
I could’ve looked for myself. I
speak Polish.

GILBERT
So does Jozef, and what it got him
was the worst news - confirmed by
the Polish authorities. The other
reason I didn’t take you is that
I’m responsible for you in a way I
am not for Jozef.

(MORE)
GILBERT (cont'd)
You’re both Polish citizens – something we must rectify, by the way. They could have kept you there. Witness what happened to poor Jozef.

ENID
What happened to him?

GILBERT
His entire family’s gone. The Poles have kept him.
(a beat)
In an asylum.

INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. NIGHT (SAME EVENING)(W’47)
A search is underway for Dovidl. Gilbert comes in from the garden, his face fretted with concern.

GILBERT
He’s not in the shed. Did he say anything?

MARTIN
Just said he wanted to be alone.
(a beat)
He took his violin.

ENID
Is he likely to do anything silly?

MARTIN
Yes, Mother. Run away and join a band.

GILBERT
For God’s sake, Martin! His entire family’s almost certainly been wiped out! Show some compassion.

MARTIN
You mean the way he would, in my position?

GILBERT
I don’t doubt it for a moment. He’s been like a brother to you.

MARTIN
And a son to you.
GILBERT
If there’s some secret place you
boys have I’ve no need to know
where it is. Just go there and find
him.

Martin goes out without a word.

ENID
David isn’t the suicidal type.

GILBERT
All artists are the suicidal type.

EXT. HAMPSTEAD HEATH. NIGHT (SAME NIGHT) (W’47)

We find Martin and Dovidl sitting under a tree in their
private place on the margin of Hampstead Ponds: Martin
smoking a cigarette, Dovidl a pipe.

The sepia family portrait we saw in Scene 21 is lying beside
Dovidl on the grass. The Gagliano, out of its case, hangs
bizarrely from a branch by the loose end of one its strings.

MARTIN
My father thinks you’ve topped
yourself.

Dovidl smiles.

DOVIDL
Against my religion.

MARTIN (CONT’D)
Prodigal quasi-son wanted home,
Dov.

DOVIDL
Goody. Quasi-fatted calf for din-
dins.

MARTIN
You really are a cold bastard, you
know that?

He flops down beside his friend.

DOVIDL
(indicating the violin)
It’s that thing I’m killing: the
varnished tyrant. I’m glad you
came. Murder needs witnesses.

Noticing the photograph, Martin picks it up and studies it.
INSERT PHOTOGRAPH

MARTIN
(of the photo)
Why haven’t I seen this?

DOVIDL
It’s how I’ve kept them safe.
Hiding them. From everyone.

MARTIN
I’m not everyone.

Martin picks it up, studies it.

MARTIN
Which one’s Malkeh?

Dovidl points.

DOVIDL
She’s five there. Pessia was nine.

MARTIN
What was it like? That life?

DOVIDL
Still Life with Jews. Boys playing
football, old men praying, ritual
baths for the women. Malkeh was too
young for that so she would stay
home - I’d play her a lullaby at
bedtime. My father would wander the
streets - every day, Mottl, imagine
- every evening except the sabbath -
selling his jewellery, pieces he
made while the rest of us were
asleep. Just so we could eat.
Sometimes we didn’t...

Emotion catches him by the throat.

MARTIN
It’s only presumption of death. Why
your rabbi won’t let you say
kiddish, right?

Dovidl manages a smile.

DOVIDL
Kiddush is the blessing over wine.
I can still say that. This is the
Kaddish:
(closes his eyes)
(MORE)
DOVIDL (cont’d)
Yisgadal v’yisqadash sh’mai
rabah...

MARTIN
Don’t, Dov. Not if you’re not
supposed to.

DOVIDL
Do you think I’d go mad if I knew
for certain? Strip off and run
naked through the streets like
Wechsler, waving my violin.
“Israelites to your bows! The
Philistines are upon us!”

MARTIN
I don’t think he did that.

DOVIDL
Can’t see it working in Hampstead.

MARTIN
Wechsler started out half barmy.

DOVIDL
And I’m not?

MARTIN
You’ve got me.

DOVIDL
A stabilising influence.

MARTIN
Ordinary and boring.

DOVIDL
Good for leaning on. Like this
tree.

MARTIN
Nice to know I’m good for
something.

DOVIDL
Stop fishing for compliments,
Mottl. This is my life crisis, not
yours.

MARTIN
Hey, how about a joint life crisis?
Joint suicide note. We don’t have
to do it, just drive my father
nurs.

Dovidl laughs.
DOVIDL
Do you think he'll ever recover?

MARTIN
Who?

DOVIDL
Wechsler. Will he stay mad for ever, do you think? What do they do to lunatics in Poland, I wonder? Ice cold baths? Heap ashes on your head? It's a place of ashes, Mottl. It'd be exactly the right treatment.

**INT. ASYLUM. WARSAW. DAY (S'86)**

Nothing much has changed here since the place was built in the 1920s. Martin makes his way along a corridor of glossy brown tiled walls and shiny linoleum floors to a receptionist's window, where he shows a piece of paper bearing Jozef Wechsler's name to a MALE RECEPTIONIST. After staring at the name for long seconds the receptionist points along the corridor.

**INT. ASYLUM VISITING ROOM. DAY (S'86)**

Martin has been directed to a small, bare room with an iron grille over its single high window and walls covered in faded, yellowed paint more than sixty years old.

JOZEF WECHSLER (now 65) is wheeled in by a NURSE almost as old as the asylum itself. She positions him under the window.

Haggard and sallow, looking nearer eighty, Jozef is rocking rhythmically to and fro in his wheelchair, as though in mockery of Jewish prayer; his long, once-nimble fingers fiddling compulsively with the buttons of his striped pyjamas. Nobody here has thought to avoid the cruel irony of those stripes upon a Jewish patient bereaved into madness by the Holocaust.

Martin has brought grapes. Handing them to the nurse, he pulls up a hard, upright chair and seats himself by Jozef. The nurse remains standing.

**MARTIN**
Jozef? Do you remember me? Martin Simmonds? From London?

No response from Jozef.

**MARTIN (CONT'D)**
David Rapoport was my foster brother.

(MORE)
MARTIN (CONT'D)
You and he played together during
an air raid - in Hampstead.
(no reaction from Jozef)
You came here with my father on a
contact tour after the war.

Jozef seems entirely unaware of his presence.

Martin appeals silently to the nurse for help.

NURSE
You are friend from Pan Wechsler?

MARTIN
I knew him in London, before...
Before. Does he understand me?

NURSE
Sometimes he remembers.
(to Jozef)
Your friend has come far for to see
you, Jozef.

Jozef, still rocking back and forth, says nothing.

MARTIN
(to nurse)
Don’t you have any pyjamas that
aren’t striped?

NURSE
Pyjamas...?

MARTIN
They look like... Never mind.

NURSE
You are good friend?

MARTIN
Friend of a friend. I was
wondering... if someone we knew in
London ever visited him. Another
violinist.
(a beat)
David Rapoport?

NURSE
Jozef has not much visitor. His
family is dead.
(a beat)
Just only the woman.

MARTIN
Woman?
NURSE
June 15 woman. She comes one day every year. June 15.
(disapprovingly)
Not his wife.

EXT. WARSAW APARTMENT BLOCKS. DAY (S’86)
We’re in an area of post-war apartment blocks in pale colours, with a few green verges. Could be anywhere.

INT. ANNA’S APARTMENT BUILDING. DAY (S’86)
Entering one of the buildings, Martin climbs five flights of iron-banistered stairs to the fifth floor. This time we might think he’s close, the elusive Dovidl perhaps only a few steps away...

He rings a doorbell. Waits.

The door is opened – though only partially – by a tall, slender woman with high cheekbones, blue eyes, a small, straight nose and short blonde hair: recruiting poster for the mature Aryan matron. ANNA WOZNIAK, 50 but looking younger.

MARTIN
Pani Wozniak? Anna Wozniak?

A nod, slightly suspicious. Despite Solidarnosc and the thaw it has already begun to bring, the secret police are still active in 1986; they come in all guises.

MARTIN
Do you speak English?

Another nod.

MARTIN (CONT’D)
I’m told you might be able to help me...

INT. ANNA’S APARTMENT. DAY (S’86)
Like the Simmonds house, this is the living space of a cultured person on a strict budget: many books, few furnishings.

ANNA
I hardly know Pan Wechsler. I visit him as a duty.

MARTIN
One day a year. June 15th.
ANNA
Yes.

MARTIN
Mind if I ask why?

ANNA
Why do you want to know?

MARTIN
I’m trying to find someone who knew him in London. Another violinist. David Rapoport.

Anna’s reaction tells Martin he’s struck gold.

MARTIN
You know him?

ANNA
(realization)
You are Martin!

INT. ANNA’S APARTMENT. DAY - LATER (S’86)

CLOSE ON a framed portrait of Pope John Paul II hanging on a wall and a simple wooden crucifix fixed above it.

Martin is looking at them as Anna returns to the room with a coffee tray.

ANNA
David came the year your queen was coronated. I lived then on Dzielna, where he grew up. It is how we met.

MARTIN
How long did he stay in Warsaw?

ANNA
A few months. He was not allowed a visa for very long.

MARTIN
Any idea where he went after that?

ANNA
This he did not tell me.

Though Anna is more forthcoming now that she knows who Martin is, we sense that she’s not yet entirely trusting.

She sees that he’s looking at the crucifix.
ANNA
They are allowed in private homes.
I took them down when David was with me.

There’s an implication of intimacy in “with me” that Martin doesn’t acknowledge.

ANNA (CONT’D)
It would not have pleased him to see them, I think.

MARTIN
No, he’s not a big fan of religion.

ANNA
Your friend is a soul... on pause.
Is there a word for that?

Martin shakes his head, unsure what she means.

ANNA (CONT’D)
Believing one thing, another thing, nothing - all at the same time?

MARTIN
Agnostic?

She shakes her head.

MARTIN (CONT’D)
Ambivalent?

ANNA
Yes. David was ambivalent.

EXT. NORTH LONDON STREETS. EARLY MORNING (S’47)

The boys are walking to the synagogue early on a summer’s morning. Dovidl carrying a velvet prayer bag.

MARTIN
What’s this thing I’m supposed to witness?

DOVIDL
A ceremony.

MARTIN
Not another bar mitzvah!?

DOVIDL
Not quite.

MARTIN
Bit early to raise one of those quorum thingies.
DOVIDL
This doesn’t need a minyan. Just a witness.

MARTIN
Nice to count for once.

DOVIDL
Probably not to God, Mottl. Only to me.

MARTIN
Do you think He knows where your family is? God.

DOVIDL
Oh, He knows, He just won’t say. Would Jesus if you asked him?

Martin smiles.

MARTIN
Why? Thinking of converting?

DOVIDL
Jews can’t convert.

MARTIN
Disraeli did.

DOVIDL
Disraeli was baptised. Wetting his head didn’t wash the Jew out of him. Or out of Jesus. Ethnicity isn’t soluble in water, Mottl. Religion – well, that’s a coat. When it gets too hot you can take it off.

They arrive at the synagogue and enter.

INT. SYNAGOGUE. EARLY MORNING (S’47)

Empty pews, unoccupied bimah, a few stragglers leaving after the Shacharit service. The red glow of the Eternal Light over the Ark signifies the continuing presence of God.

MARTIN
You just lost your minyan.
DOVIDL
No, this is perfect.
(indicating the Eternal
Light)
He’s here. The ceremony’s for Him.

He pulls from his prayer bag a striped silk tallith, which he
drapes about his neck, and the embroidered kippah he wore at
his bar mitzvah, which he places on his head.

DOVIDL (CONT’D)
(to Martin)
Listen and don’t interrupt.
(intoning, to the Eternal
Light)
Hear, O Israel and the God of
Israel. On this nineteenth day of
Sivan in the year 5707, in London,
in the presence of Martin Simmonds,
also of London I, David Eli
Rapoport, son of Zygmunt and Esther
Rapoport of Warsaw, do freely and
of my own will renounce the faith
of my forefathers...

MARTIN
What are you doing?

DOVIDL
Converting. Be quiet.

MARTIN
To what?

DOVIDL
Nothing.
(continuing his ceremony)
I do most solemnly renounce and
repudiate, now and for ever, in the
name of the surviving, the reviled
and discredited faith of the
perished: the faith of Abraham,
Isaac and Jacob...

MARTIN
This isn’t funny, Dov-

DOVIDL
... the accursed faith of the
despised, the mocked, the
persecuted, the slaughtered; the
faith abandoned by Jesus. Thus do I
renounce the Torah and Talmud. Thus
do I divorce myself from the
community of Israel...

Dipping into his bag, he extracts a knife. With the prayer
shawl still around his neck, he begins to cut it into pieces.
Martin has stepped back in horror. Though not himself a practising Christian, he knows the momentousness of self-excommunication.

MARTIN
YOU CAN’T DO THIS!

DOVIDL
...And, as I separate this garment, so do I separate myself, now and for all time, from the beliefs, practices, traditions, rituals and obligations of Zion.

The tallith has drifted from his neck in tatters. Pulling the skull cap from his head, Dovidl cuts it in half and drops the pieces at his feet.

DOVIDL (CONT’D)
Amen.

His footsteps resonate on the tiled floor as he leaves.

Martin stares silently after him.

EXT. BALCONY OF ANNA’S APARTMENT, WARSAW. DUSK (S’86)
Anna has brought Martin on to the balcony of her apartment.

ANGLE: THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBOURHOOD

A reconstructed square of post-war apartment blocks built on the site of the razed ghetto; a site as displaced in time as that of any ancient battlefield, this one echoless by design.

MARTIN
If this is where the Ghetto was, where are the ruins?

ANNA
Where the past belongs. Under the ground.

MARTIN
So he just left, didn’t say where he was going?

ANNA
Must we have these interrogations, Martin, like a Sherlock Holmes story?

MARTIN
It’s why I’m here.
(a beat)
Where was he staying? Didn’t he come to say goodbye?
Long pause.

ANNA
For his first days, in a pension - not a very good one.

MARTIN
Where after that?

ANNA
With me.

INT. WARSAW BISTRO. NIGHT (S’86)

Over dinner, vodka flowing freely-
MARTIN
He used you. You know that.

ANNA
Martin, I loved your friend. It’s how you live with people you don’t always like. By loving them.

MARTIN
Loving Dovidl’s a mistake.

ANNA
We don’t choose who to love.

MARTIN
(anger building)
Trusting him’s a mistake. You can’t trust them.

ANNA
Them?

MARTIN
Artists. They die, they disappear, they leave you. They don’t understand love or loyalty.

ANNA
You must stop looking for him, Martin. It would not be good to find him.
MARTIN
For him or me?

ANNA
Both. If he wanted to be found
don’t you think he would have come
to you long ago?

The anger that has been building in Martin bursts out.

MARTIN
We thought he was dead! My father
gave up on life when he
disappeared! Had a stroke two
months later. It killed him.

ANNA
David told me of your friendship.
Not how it ended.

Reaching across the table, Anna covers Martin’s hand with her
own.

ANNA (CONT’D)
He is the soloist. We are the
accompanists. He took our light. We
have none of our own.

MARTIN
I don’t accept that.

ANNA
Yes. You do.
(a beat)
We use each other.

53
EXT. ANNA’S APARTMENT BLOCK. NIGHT (S’86)

Re-establishing.

54
INT. ANNA’S APARTMENT. NIGHT (S’86)

DISCOVER MARTIN in bed with Anna. Post-coital. For him it’s
as though he has performed the act under some irresistible
compulsion. Anna senses it.

ANNA
You have never done this before?
Been unfaithful to your wife?

MARTIN
No.

ANNA
How does it feel?
MARTIN
Like betrayal.

He turns his head to look at her. Is this why she lured him into her bed? To show him the obverse face of betrayal? She reads the question in his eyes.

MARTIN
Where did he go when he left Poland, Anna?

ANNA
Again this? I told you, he did not say.

MARTIN
I don’t believe you.

He points at a crucifix over the bed.

MARTIN (CONT’D)
Swear on that.

ANNA
Oh, Martin, that cross has heard more lies than... Goebbels’ bathroom mirror.

MARTIN
Swear anyway.

ANNA
I swear on the holy cross he did not tell me where he went.

MARTIN
Why do you visit Wechsler?

ANNA
I told you this also. I go in place of David.

MARTIN
How often did he go?

ANNA
Once only. To play for him the Song. June 15th, 1953. He never went again.

MARTIN
What song?

ANNA
Martin, it’s why David came to Poland. To play the music where the ashes are. It was his obsession.
MARTIN
Tell me.

ANNA
There is nothing to tell. I was not permitted to hear it. He sent me from the room when he played for Jozef. The only other time I was made to wait in the car... when I took him to Treblinka.

INT./EXT. ANNA’S CAR/TREBLINKA. DAY (S’86)
Anna’s Polski Fiat passes a small roadside kapliczka [Catholic monument] as they approach Treblinka.

EXT. TREBLINKA - SYMBOLIC CEMETERY ENTRANCE. DAY (S’86)
Anna drives in and stops by a sculpture representing railway tracks at the entrance to the symbolic cemetery. Beyond the memorials the forest can be seen encroaching at the perimeter: still raw, undressed, startled by discovery.

Anna shuts off the engine.

ANNA
This is where I waited. None of this was here. Only fields, some railway tracks.

MARTIN
Did he tell you about his family? Pessia would have been fifteen, Malkeh ten or eleven. They never appeared on any lists. We encouraged him to keep hoping. Maybe we shouldn’t have.

ANNA
He never spoke of them. To David Jews were not Poles. I am a Pole, I live where he lived, I stole his life. To him I am one of the persecutors.

MARTIN
You were just a child then.

ANNA
You don’t have to be guilty to feel guilty.
EXT. TREBLINKA – THE SYMBOLIC CEMETERY. DAY (S’86)

DISCOVER MARTIN AND ANNA walking through the symbolic cemetery: a garden of stone slabs of various sizes, each one representing an annihilated Jewish community.

Neither Anna nor Martin speaks as they wander among the stones, reading the names of villages, towns, cities; here only the dead do the talking. Martin stops by the largest stone of all, inscribed “WARSAWA”, contemplates it in silence...

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL. DAY (S’86)

As they approach the airport terminal in Anna’s Fiat Polski-

        ANNA
        The morning after, he was gone. He left behind everything.

        MARTIN
        What’s everything?

        ANNA
        Me. Poland. His past. You. (a beat) The violin.

        MARTIN
        Wait a minute. He left the Gagliano?

Anna’s Polski pulls up outside the terminal.

        ANNA
        I found it after he went - I couldn’t believe he did that on purpose. Something so precious. I went in a taxi to the airport to return it. (a beat) He told me to sell it.

        MARTIN
        And send him the money?
ANNA
The money I was to keep.

MARTIN
Did you?

ANNA
It was not mine to sell.

MARTIN
His either.

ANNA
That is why he took it back.

Retrieving his bag from the back seat, Martin opens the passenger door. Unsure how to conduct the valediction.

MARTIN
So... I suppose this is goodbye.

ANNA
I never lied to you, Martin. He never told me where he was going. (moment of decision) When I was giving him the violin a flight was called. Suddenly he was in a hurry. (a beat) The flight was to New York.

ON MARTIN: a surge of excitement pulsing through him; a trail thirty-three years cold but still a trail.

MARTIN
(kissing her)
Thank you.

ANNA
God bless you, Martin. I would say I hope you find him... but I hope you do not.

Martin closes the car door, heads into the terminal.

57A  OMITTED

58  OMITTED

59  INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. NIGHT (S’86)

Martin returns from his travels to a house in semi-darkness. The hall light is on but Helen isn’t in the living room, nor in the kitchen...
MARTIN
(calling)
Helen?

No answer.

He climbs the stairs and enters the bedroom, where he finds Helen in bed, reading. Her eyes flick up, then back to the book.

MARTIN
What’re you reading?

She shows him the cover. *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism* by Kahn and Green [published 1985].

MARTIN
Don’t tell me the ending.

Ignored by Helen, Martin busies himself unpacking his suitcase, removing his jacket etc.

MARTIN
No, I didn’t find him. Thanks for asking.

No response.

MARTIN
I know where he went after Poland.

Still nothing back from Helen.

MARTIN (CONTD.)
New York.

HELEN
Next stage of the ‘Great Quest’?

Martin seats himself on the bed.

MARTIN
You don’t care if I find him, do you?

Helen shrugs.

MARTIN
Why? You used to like him.

HELEN
(raising the book)
I used to like pony stories.

MARTIN
He was fun to be around.
HELEN
Oh, yes. Charismatic genius and all
that. Except geniuses aren’t very
good at being human.

MARTIN
I know his faults, okay. I’ve known
them a lot longer than you have.

HELEN
Then why waste your time on him?
Our time.

MARTIN
I may be all he’s got.

HELEN
I’m all you’ve got.

It takes a moment for the import of this to register.

MARTIN
He’s not a fucking rival, love.

Now she looks up, meets his eye.

HELEN
He was from the day I met him.

JAUNTY JEWISH BAND MUSIC OVER – the Hora Nayeem, played with
some unusual strings riffs–

INT. DANCE HALL, LONDON. NIGHT (MAY, 1948)

ON DOVIDL the source of the riffs.

Having joined the band for the length of the song, he is
seated cross-legged on the floor in front of the cellist,
bowing the strings while the cellist does the fingering: a
party trick which is drawing loud applause from everyone in
the hall.

HELEN and MARTIN (both 18 here) are watching this: Helen with
fascination. She hasn’t met Dovidl yet.

The occasion is a celebratory dance: the hall hung with
Israeli flags, portraits of Ben-Gurion, a banner declaring
the date (May 14th, 1948) and proclaiming the birth of the
State of Israel.

In one corner a recruitment stand has been set up, a couple
of tanned sabras in khaki shirts enjoining North Londoners to
enlist in the new army, to fight the massed Arab hordes
preparing to destroy their infant nation. “ISRAEL NEEDS YOU!”
reads the sign.
The song ends and Dovidl makes his way through the crowd to Martin, the band now playing Bublitschki.

DOVIDL
Thanks for coming, Mottl.
(eyeing Helen)
Ah, the much-advertised Helen. No interest in Israel, I assume, but Mottl’s here for me, so you’re here for him, yes?

HELEN
A dance is a dance.

MARTIN
(to Helen)
My brother: Dov the Apostate. Not soluble in water.

DOVIDL
(indicating recruiters)
Shall I join up and shed blood for Israel, Mottl? The baby’s one day old and already bashing up its neighbours, keyneynahora.

MARTIN
I think they’re only taking Jews, Dov.

DOVIDL
There goes our reputation for draft-dodging.
(to Helen)
But they do take women. One up on God.

HELEN
If you’re an apostate how come you’re celebrating a Jewish state?

DOVIDL
They give great parties. Never missed one yet.

HELEN
When was the last one?

DOVIDL
516 B.C.

Dovidl offers his hand. Helen takes it, allows herself to be led onto the dance floor.

Martin is left abandoned.
INT. TAXI. NIGHT (MAY, 1948)

Dovidl is lolling drunkenly against Helen in the back seat, eyes closed.

MARTIN
Sorry about this. We can dump him and go back if you want.

HELEN
No, it’s okay. Drop me off first.
(a beat)
I haven’t seen him at lectures. Is he in our year?

MARTIN
He isn’t at UCL. Trinity, Cambridge, reading Maths.

HELEN
(pulls a face)
Maths!

MARTIN
Music plus chess equals maths. Simmonds’ Equation.

Helen’s eyebrows go up. Dovidl’s being a science major makes him doubly exotic. She brushes a stray lock of hair out of Dovidl’s eyes, which open at her touch.

DOVIDL
Dead and gone to heaven. “L'amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle.”

HELEN
Am I supposed to be impressed?

DOVIDL
You kidding? Maths and Dante?

Helen laughs.

The taxi pulls up outside a terraced house.

Helen climbs out.

HELEN
Nice meeting you, Dovidl.

She closes the taxi door and is gone.

As the taxi moves off—

MARTIN
What do you think?
DOVIDL
(eyes still closed)
Impregnable fortress. Best of
British luck with that one,
brother.

INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE, DINING ROOM. NIGHT (S’86)

Alone in the house, Helen is working her way through a box of
memorabilia.

We’ll see, among other things: the programme for Dovidl’s
aborted 1951 debut concert; a faded newspaper clipping from
the following day, Headlined: “VIOLINIST MISSING”, 21-year-
old Dovidl pictured; and, most prominent, the sleeve to the
promotional recording referred to in Scene 1: featuring
Dovidl’s rendering of the BACH PARTITAS, which we’ll hear
playing over.

Helen’s face is registering a complex emotional cocktail
that’s tricky to read: transportation, nostalgia, dislike, regret... and something else...

INT. LONDON CONCERT HALL. AFTERNOON (A’51)

The orchestra is packing up its instruments, preparing to
leave after the final acoustic rehearsal. Dovidl casing his
Gagliano.

MARTIN
You should lock that in the
dressing room. It’ll be safe there.

DOVIDL
Did Ulysses lock away his bow?

MARTIN
If it was pissing down in Ithaca,
absolutely.
(nervous)
How do you feel? Are you nervous
about tonight? I’m not nervous. How
do you think the rehearsal went?

Dovidl grins. “Nervous” isn’t in his lexicon.

DOVIDL
How did it sound?

MARTIN

DOVIDL
It was crap.
MARTIN
Good crap, though.

DOVIDL
Great rehearsal, crap performance.
Crap rehearsal, great performance.

MARTIN
What are you going to do now?
(checks watch)
You’ve got... four and a half hours.

DOVIDL
Get drunk.

MARTIN
(as Edward G. Robinson)
Take my advice, kid. Get yourself laid.

DOVIDL
That what you’re going to do?

MARTIN
Me? I’m doing haircut and manicure. Pull out my hair in handfuls, bite my nails to the quick.

DOVIDL
(a smile)
See you in the trenches.

He wanders off. Martin watches him go.

INT. YELLOW CAB, MANHATTAN. DAY (S’86)

A yellow cab in traffic. Martin in the back seat, studying a list of auction houses and specialist dealers in classical stringed instruments. Several names have already been crossed off. The next on the list is “FEINMAN BROTHERS”.

EXT. FEINMAN BROTHERS, MANHATTAN. DAY (S’86)

Martin enters a shop in a lower Manhattan side street: “FEINMAN BROTHERS: STRING INSTRUMENT SALES, RESTORATIONS, VALUATIONS”.


The old man who emerges at the sound of the shop’s bell is a Manhattan counterpart of Mr Bailey, only at least 20 years older.

FEINMAN
Can I help you?

MARTIN
I’m looking for a Gagliano violin.

Feinman smiles.

FEINMAN
Father, son or grandson? Alessandro or one of the Nicolos?

MARTIN
Nicolo Filio. Made in 1735.

FEINMAN
(another smile)
Ah, my English-sounding friend, you are hunting dodos. I know of only two listed Nicolo Filios made in ’35. Neither has changed hands in living memory...

MARTIN
This one may not be listed.

FEINMAN
Then it’s a fake.

MARTIN
It was bought in London. Bailey’s of Broadwick Street.

FEINMAN
My father — olav hasholem — used to do business with Adrian Bailey. Fakes he didn’t sell.

MARTIN
Has anyone ever tried to sell you a 1735 Gagliano?

FEINMAN
You’re looking for the instrument or the owner?

MARTIN
Both.
FEINMAN
When they come up for sale they go
to the larger auction houses.

MARTIN
This one hasn’t.

Feinman examines his memory.

FEINMAN
Maybe four or five years back a
woman phoned, wanted a valuation.
But that might have been a Nicolo
II – I’m not sure. She spoke to my
brother Herschel.

MARTIN
Did she give a name?

FEINMAN
An address. Herschel told her,
“Bring it in, we’ll look.”

MARTIN
Did she?

FEINMAN
She wanted he should schlep out to
Brooklyn with it. Had to be this
particular day, this particular
time – I don’t think the husband
knew she was selling.

MARTIN
So he didn’t go?

FEINMAN
To a man my age, Herschel’s age,
time also is a Gagliano.

MARTIN
Would your brother remember where
in Brooklyn?

FEINMAN
Herschel passed away last year,
olav hasholem.

MARTIN
My sympathies.

FEINMAN
Crown Heights somewhere. If it’s
important, I could maybe find the
address....
**INT. YELLOW CAB (TRAVELLING), CROWN HEIGHTS. DUSK (S’86)**

A strengthening gale is blowing as Martin rides through the suburban streets of Crown Heights in a yellow cab, past shops bearing Hebrew and Yiddish lettering, bearded, long-coated men clutching their wide-brimmed hats and fedoras against the wind as they go to and from the yeshiva on Eastern Parkway.

It’s the last place in America Martin would expect to find the apostate Dovidl. Plainly it’s the wrong Gagliano, unless its owner bought it from Dovidl...

The cab pulls up outside a house.

**EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS HOUSE. DUSK (S’86)**

Martin waits in the wind until the door is opened by a prematurely worn-out-looking woman in her early forties (BROCHE). A seven year-old boy, ZYGMENT (JUNIOR), dressed in ultra-orthodox style, peeps from behind her legs.

The light thrown from the interior reveals a mezuzah on the doorpost.

**MARTIN**

Sorry to bother you but I was given this address...

Taking in Martin’s appearance – not ultra-orthodox, therefore someone to be suspicious of – she manoeuvres the boy protectively behind her.

**MARTIN (CONT’D)**

I’m looking for a violin...

**BROCHE**

Gay holon deyn tate. Go fetch your father.

The boy dashes back into the house, calling-

**ZYGMENT (JR.)**

Tatti!

**MARTIN**

...a Gagliano-

He breaks off as the man of the house appears, the boy behind him, clutching his legs. Following them are a girl of six and another a year younger, crowding to see who the stranger is at the door.
The man is Martin’s age, his hair and beard still thick and black, the beard framing a face still handsome, a jawline not in the least jowly. He wears the long black coat of an ultra-orthodox Jew and, beneath it, a collarless white shirt. But he’s instantly recognisable.

DOVIDL
You took your time, Mottl.

MARTIN’S REACTION

He’s hardly able to believe that this is Dovidl, yet so constrained is he by the circumstances of the encounter that he’s unable to react freely. All he can do is shake his head in wonder.

DOVIDL
As you see: I took off the coat, I put it back on.

So saying, he pulls a long black coat from a hook by the door and shrugs into it as he steps outside, closing the door behind him, shutting Martin away from his life.

INT. DOVIDL’S CAMPER (TRAVELLING). NIGHT (S’86)

It’s a battered old camper and there’s silence inside it, disturbed only by engine and wind noise as, driven by Dovidl with Martin beside him, it rattles through the streets of Brooklyn.

In Martin’s face we’ll see thirty-five years of pent-up anger, perplexity and frustration waiting for expression; in Dovidl’s face as he drives there is nothing readable.

Eventually Dovidl pulls in at a lonely parking spot overlooking the East River.

EXT. EAST RIVER OVERLOOK. NIGHT (S’86)

On a night like this Dovidl’s is the only vehicle in the parking area.

INT. DOVIDL’S CAMPER. NIGHT (S’86)

Dovidl sets the hand brake and cuts the motor. The silence is disturbed now only by the wind and the ticking of the cooling engine. Dovidl turns finally to face Martin...

...and receives, full force in his face, A FLURRY OF REPEATED HARD BLOWS which split his lip and draw blood from his mouth and nose.

Dovidl makes no attempt to dodge the blows or shield himself from them.
He just sits there and receives them as his due. Though this is a far cry from their old slow-motion boxers ritual, the moment should echo it darkly.

Breathing hard, Martin finally sinks back in the passenger seat. Dovidl dabs at his bleeding face with his sleeve.

With a shake of the head Martin pulls from his pocket a neatly folded clean pocket handkerchief. Brushing Dovidl’s hand aside, he takes over the dabbing with this.

After a few moments Dovidl appropriates the handkerchief and continues wiping his own blood, but in doing so notices that Martin’s knuckles are bleeding too. Abandoning his own injuries, he wraps the handkerchief around Martin’s hand instead. Blood brotherhood. No words spoken. Until-

DOVIDL
Say it, Mottl. Say what’s on your mind. It’ll make you feel better.

MARTIN
You’ve no fucking idea. Do you? Why did you do it?

DOVIDL
I’m not sure you’d understand.

MARTIN
I didn’t expect it to be you.
Tonight, when I came about the violin. You were the last person in the world I expected to find.

DOVIDL
When I abandoned the Holy One it took Him four years to find me. It’s taken you thirty-five.
(a smile)
Not bad.

MARTIN
God didn’t punish you. I will.

DOVIDL
So will He, in time, blessed be His name.

MARTIN
My father put everything he had into you, you ungrateful bastard. Hebrew lessons, bacon-less breakfasts, pudding-less dinners, bar mitzvah, fucking Gagliano...

(MORE)
MARTIN (cont’d)
and that concert — he didn’t even
insure it, didn’t think he needed
to. He treated you like his
favourite fucking son — for twelve
years — and you buggered off
without a word. He thought you were
dead! He lost everything that
night. Two months later, he died
with your name on his lips.

This revelation shocks Dovidl into silence. He opens the
driver’s door and steps out into the gale to process it.

MARTIN’S POV — DOVIDL BATTERED BY THE WIND, COAT TAILS FLYING

Dovidl re-enters.

DOVIDL
Do you remember what you said the
last time I saw you? “Get laid,”
you said.

OVER SCENE 71

DOVIDL (V.O.)
So I did. But in my eagerness I’d
come out without cab fare. I had to
go back by bus...

71

EXT. TERRACED HOUSE, NORTH LONDON. DAY (A’51)

Carrying his violin case, Dovidl waits by a suburban bus stop
in a leafy street of terraced houses. Rain still falling.

DOVIDL (V.O.)
So I did. But in my eagerness I’d
come out without cab fare. I had to
go back by bus...

A bus arrives. Dovidl boards. The bus moves off.

72

INT. LONDON BUS. DAY (A’51)

Dovidl climbs to the upper deck. He slumps into a seat,
cradles the violin case in his lap, closes his eyes...

73

EXT./INT. BUS. DAY (A’51)

The driver leaves the bus, thinking all his passengers have
departed. It’s one of several buses lined up empty in the
street where their route terminates.

Dovidl wakes on the top deck of the empty bus. He makes his
way down the winding staircase and into the street, where
it’s raining heavily.
EXT. STOKE NEWINGTON HIGH STREET. DAY (A’51)

The street is adjacent to Stoke Newington Market. Stallholders are covering their goods and packing up early, all too busy to be approached for directions. Dovidl wanders past in the rain, carrying his case of Gagliano, no idea where he is, except that it’s a Jewish neighbourhood - past barrels of pickled cucumbers, marble slabs of herring - transported by sights, sounds and smells reminiscent of the Warsaw of his childhood.

He turns a corner... and finds himself at a dead end: a railway embankment. Hopelessly lost.

But there’s a shop on a corner: Frumkin’s.

INT. FRUMKIN’S. DAY (A’51)

One either side of a marble counter the shop’s proprietor, FRUMKIN (55) - a tubular man in a soiled apron - is deep in argument with KATZENBERG (60), a black-bearded, black-coated customer. Their argument, Talmudic in character, is being conducted in Yiddish (subtitled).

KATZENBERG
Nisht dus meynt di Gemore. That isn’t what the text means-

FRUMKIN
Oh, ihr hat gehat a perzenlekhe taytsh fin Eybishter?

Dovidl addresses them in Yiddish.

DOVIDL
Entshulditgz az ikh brekh I’m sorry to interrupt-

The two men glance up at him. White shirt and tie, three-piece suit. Lost goy, obviously. But how come he speaks their language?

DOVIDL
Ihr kent efsher zugn wi bin ikh...

FRUMKIN
Fin wi zeynt ihr?

DOVIDL
Hampstead.

KATZENBERG
Fin der heym?

FRUMKIN
Where are you from?

DOVIDL
.

KATZENBERG
Originally.
DOVIDL
Warshe.

KATZENBERG
Ayer mishpokhe?

DOVIDL
Oykh fin Warshe.

KATZENBERG
Ikh bin fin Siedlice.

DOVIDL
Farn krig?

KATZENBERG
Far dem, in mitn, nokh dem. Der Ghetto, Treblinka, yetzt doo.

Dovidl’s face is registering wonder and disbelief.

DOVIDL
Ihr hat Treblinka ibergelebt!

KATZENBERG
Eynige habn ibergelebt. Eyer mishpokhe zeynen geharget geworn?

DOVIDL
Ya. Ikh meyn ... ikh weiss nicht ...ikh weiss az zey zeynen geven in Treblinka ober inz keynmohl nicht...


KATZENBERG
Nein, tit mir leyd, yinguerman.

() Ihr wilt wissn?

KATZENBERG
No. I’m sorry, my young friend.

FRUMKIN
(to Katzenberg)
Nemtz ehm. (to Katzenberg)

KATZENBERG
Take him.

Dovidl frowns. Take him where?

KATZENBERG
Kimtz.

KATZENBERG
Come.
Dovidl glances at his watch. He has a concert to prepare for. Has he time for this, whatever it is? But the decision is made for him. Stretching his arm around Dovidl’s shoulders, Katzenberg leads him out into the street.

**EXT. YOUNG REBBE’S SYNAGOGUE. DAY (A’51)**

An alley leads them to what appears from the outside to be an ordinary residential house, somewhat run-down; but as Katzenberg and Dovidl enter, both saturated from the rain-

**INT. YOUNG REBBE’S SYNAGOGUE. DAY (A’51)**

—we see that the ground-floor partition walls have been removed to create a large, low-ceilinged prayer hall, furnished like a synagogue and consecrated as one, supported by steel beams and pillars. Around twenty men and youths (no women) are swaying in prayer.

Katzenberg strides to the bimah and slaps his hand loudly on the lectern.

**KATZENBERG**

Inz habmir do a Rapoport fin Warshe!

We have a Rapoport from Warsaw!

Instantly the praying stops. A smooth-cheeked BOY of thirteen slips out of the room.

ON DOVIDL, understanding none of this. He looks to Katzenberg for an explanation but receives none.

Almost immediately the boy returns. With him is a bearded man in his thirties: THE YOUNG REBBE.

Though twice this man’s age, Katzenberg inclines his head respectfully in his presence.

**KATZENBERG**


Rebbe, this is Dovid Eli Rapoport. From Warsaw. He wants to know.

The Young Rebbe nods. Shaking Dovidl’s hand—

**YOUNG REBBE**

Sholom aleikhem, Dovid.

**YOUNG REBBE**

Sholom aleikhem, Dovid.

**DOVIDL**

Ikh will nisht stern eynker davenen.

**DOVIDL**

I don’t want to disturb your...

**YOUNG REBBE**

Bitte, zetz aykh.

**YOUNG REBBE**

Please, take a seat.
He gestures. Dovidl and Katzenberg seat themselves. The entire congregation now strikes an attitude of attention. Prayer books are closed, backs straightened.

The Young Rebbe climbs the steps to an elevated bimah, on which there is a lectern, and on the lectern, alongside the Torah, a large privately-bound book the size of a ledger.

Katzenberg speaks softly to Dovidl in Yiddish while the Rebbe opens the ledger and reverently begins turning its pages....

**KATZENBERG**

Dovid, in inzer kehilah siz inzer shpetzieler tafkid, wus der Alter Rebbe hat inz gegeben, tzi haltn, di Memorbukh far Treblinka. S’zeynen nisht gezven shrißtlische zichroynos, di nemen fin di toyte nor gehalten gevorn dorkh di mentehsen. In wayl s’zeynen gewen azoyfil toyte, in dos leben fin di wus woltn gedarfren denken is gewen azoy shwakh, tzen eltere zeynen geworn oysgeklibn als a Minyan fin Zikorn, in beoyfrag tzi oyfhaltn di nemen far eybig. Nor drey fin di tzen habn ibergelebt.

Having found his place, the Young Rebbe is smoothing down a double page of the Book of Remembrance.

**KATZENBERG**

Shpeter m’hat upgeshrhibn di nemen. Ober, natirlekh, di liste is nisht a complete. Oyb di nemen finayer tayere keroyvim zeynen nishtu, dus maynt nisht az zey hohn ibergelebt.

David nods, impatient now for the mere chance of knowing after a decade of ignorance and speculation.

The Rebbe begins to chant a recitation.

What he chants – a musical theme based on traditional laments – is *The Song of Names*, in Yiddish, as it was originally remembered: a partial list of the dead of Treblinka.

The melody should be so soulful, so powerful, so immediately arresting that at first audition it will burn itself indelibly into the memory of all who hear it.
YOUNG REBBE
Rapoport ay Rapoport ay Rapoport...

CONGREGATION
Ay Rapoport.

YOUNG REBBE
Rapoport Avrum, fin Varshah;
Rapoport Berel un Chayeh-Soroh, fin
Kutne, mit kinder Yossel, Yechiel un
Leah...

CONGREGATION
(in Hebrew)
Yehi zikhrom borikh!

YOUNG REBBE
Rapoport, Chaim-Dovyd, Rapoport
Shua-Chaim, fin Zychlin; Rapoport
Yerachmiel, mizinke Elke, mit
kleynar Shloime, mit Shneyur-Zalmen
un mit Rivke...

CONGREGATION
(in Hebrew)
Yehi zikhrom borikh!

YOUNG REBBE
Rapoport Anya, fin Varshah;
Rapoport Bella, mit kinder, mit
Reuben un Rifke; fin Varshah:
Rapoport Zygmunt, wayb Esther, mit
tochter Pessia, mit tochter
Malkeh...

CONGREGATION
(in Hebrew)
Yehi zikhrom borikh!

Looking up, seeing Dovidl’s face, the Rebbe halts his song.

ON DOVIDL

his eyes awash. Here, for the first time, in this most
unlikely of settings, a place to which he has come seemingly
by accident, he has heard at last the names of his family
included in the roll of the dead; confirmed what until now
was only a supposition. He has closure. Nothing in his life
will ever be the same again.

Katzenberg’s arm once more enfold the grieving Dovidl as he
weeps, unashamed, among these strangers of his tribe.

INT. DOVIDL’S CAMPER. NIGHT (S’86)

Here it’s Martin’s eyes that have filled.
Lashed by gusts of wind, the camper rocks on its springs, back and forth as though itself dovening. A week-old newspaper flies against the windscreen and briefly plasters itself across it before taking wing again, the past momentarily obliterating the present.

DOVIDL
They set the names to music to make them easier to remember. This is oral tradition, Mottl. It gave us the Torah, passed down mouth to ear for a hundred generations. It’s the chain I cannot break.

(a beat)
The two little girls you saw at my house were named for my sisters: Malkeh and Pessia. My son I named for his grandfather, Zygmunt. On Yom HaShoah each year I say Kaddish for them.

(a pause)
Do you know what one of the worst fears was for those in the camps? It wasn’t dying. It was dying with their entire family. Leaving no-one behind to say Kaddish for their souls.

A long silence follows.

MARTIN
I’m glad it brought you peace. It doesn’t explain why you never wrote, never phoned, never sent a message... Why did you cut us out of your life? In all those years did you ever give any of us a thought?

DOVIDL
Often.

MARTIN
Then I don’t understand.

DOVIDL
I wouldn’t expect you to.

More silence.

MARTIN
How long did this Song take?
DOVIDL
The complete version? Five days. They do it in shifts - five rabbis - once a year. I’ve only heard that done once. So many names, Mottl.... (a beat)
Afterwards I sat shiva...

OVER SCENE 79

DOVIDL (V.O.)
...the full week - no half measures among the ultra-orthodox. No washing, no shaving, no diversions. Just prayers.

79
INT. YOUNG REBBE’S SYNAGOGUE. DAY (A’51)

First the Young Rebbe leans over Dovidl and with a knife cuts the lapel of his jacket.

DOVIDL (V.O.)
...the full week - no half measures among the ultra-orthodox. No washing, no shaving, no diversions. Just prayers.

Then Dovidl receives a blessing from the congregation.

CONGREGATION
Ha mokaym yenakhem eskhem
besokh shar avaleh Tzion
virusholayim.

CONGREGATION
May the Eternal console you among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

80
INT. DOVIDL’S CAMPER. NIGHT (S’86)

MARTIN
You could have deferred that. I would have sat with you.

Dovidl turns his head to look at Martin. Another wild gust rocks the vehicle.

DOVIDL
A concert no longer seemed important.

ANGLE - THE CAMPER, relentlessly assaulted by the gale.

MARTIN (CONT'D)
(his tone has softened)
You were still in London a year later.
DOVIDL
My life had changed. The Almighty had remembered my family. I’d abandoned Him, He hadn’t abandoned me.

(MORE)
DOVIDL (cont'd)
In return I made Him a promise: I would compose a violin version of the Song of Names and play it at Treblinka. Then I would devote the rest of my life to His worship. *(smiles)*
If I had come back - what would you have done?

MARTIN
I don’t know... *

DOVIDL
(nods)
Of course. I owe you a violin.

MARTIN
You owe me a concert. *

DOVIDL
I’m not a bright new discovery any more, Mottl. I doubt anybody remembers me. When I play now it’s always in an empty room. No audience but God.

MARTIN
People still remember your recording.

DOVIDL
Then let that be my memorial.

MARTIN
Not enough for me. *

DOVIDL
It’ll have to be.

MARTIN
That’s not enough. You owe me a concert. If you disappear again I’ll find you. *

DOVIDL
Good luck with that.

Dovidl restarts the engine and backs out of the parking area. *
ANGEL - The camper drives off.

80A INT. CROWN HEIGHTS HOUSE. NIGHT (S’86)

We find Dovidl alone, sitting silent and motionless in a darkened room in the middle of the night: the Gagliano in his lap. Thinking. Remembering. Calculating his moral obligation as once he calculated the number of Kit Kats in a fiver.

He walks off camera...

DOVIDL’S VOICE
Martin Simmonds.

...and comes back, the phone in his hand.

DOVIDL
I have two conditions...

80B INT. MANHATTAN HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT (S’86)

Early hours of the morning and still dark. The shrill ringing of the beside phone wakes Martin from sleep. Blindly he stretches out his hand, pulls the receiver off its cradle and presses it to his ear. He hears:

DOVIDL’S VOICE
(from phone)
I have two conditions...

FADE TO BLACK

81 EXT. LONDON ESTABLISHING SHOT. MORNING (A’86)

NOT Big Ben, NOT Westminster Bridge, NOT Tower Bridge!

81A EXT. LONDON HOTEL. MORNING (A’86)

A black cab deposits Dovidl outside the hotel.

81B INT. LONDON HOTEL. MORNING (A’86)

Dovidl registering at the desk.

DESK CLERK
Welcome to London, sir.

TITLE: “MONTHS LATER”

81C INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. NIGHT (A’86)

Helen and Martin are dressing to go out to dinner.
HELEN
How do you know he’ll be there?

MARTIN
He’s changed, Helen.

HELEN
Nobody changes. Least of all him.
MARTIN
He’s got his religion back.

HELEN
He’s the same selfish arsehole he always was. In a black coat.
(a beat)
Can he still play?

MARTIN
He says so. That’s his risk.

HELEN
What’s he risking?

No reply from Martin.

HELEN
This is exactly what your father did. You’ll spend every penny we’ve got, he won’t turn up, you’ll have a stroke, you’ll die, he won’t even come to the funeral.

Again Martin declines to respond.

EXT. KOSHER RESTAURANT, LONDON. NIGHT (A’86) 82
TO ESTABLISH

INT. KOSHER RESTAURANT. NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)(A’86) 83

CAMERA FINDS Martin and Helen at a table set for three, eating breadsticks and drinking mineral water. Waiting. Helen seems distinctly nervous, looking at her watch.

HELEN
It’s now ten to eight.

MARTIN
In artistic circles that isn’t even late for lunch.

HELEN
Has he told you the programme yet?

Martin shakes his head.

MARTIN
One of his conditions.

HELEN
Probably show tunes. Rusty virtuoso plays the best of Broadway.
MARTIN
For that he wouldn’t need to rehearse.

HELEN
You’ve seen him rehearsing?

MARTIN
He won’t let me in the room. That was his other condition. He knows my father’s watching. He thinks God’s watching.

HELEN
Same old audience. Everyone he’s let down before.

MARTIN
It gives him the illusion of control-

HELEN
Newsflash, Martin. If the illusion’s good enough only the magician can tell it isn’t the real thing.

MARTIN
I can tell.

DOVIDL has entered. As always now, in ultra-orthodox dress.

DOVIDL
Martin. Helen. You’ve aged well.

Under strict orthodox rules he may not touch a woman who is not his wife, so there’s no kiss, no handshake. Helen’s look is unwelcoming, guarded. She doesn’t answer. Dovidl smiles. He seats himself, picks up the menu, starts to peruse it.

MARTIN
That’s it? After 35 years? Hello- Helen-what’s-for-dinner?

HELEN
He’s hungry. He’s been rehearsing silence all day.

Dovidl smiles at her over the menu.

MARTIN
Everything okay? Hotel all right?

DOVIDL
Adequate.
MARTIN
Dov, I know we agreed you select
the programme, but as the organizer
of this concert I need to confirm
some things.

DOVIDL
Such as?

HELEN
That it won’t include “Doh a deer,
a female deer.”

DOVIDL
That isn’t in the programme.

No response from Dovidl. Helen’s look to Martin says: “What
did I tell you?”

MARTIN
Dovidl, if you make a fool of me
I’ll kill you.

HELEN
(to Dovidl)
Or I will. That’s not an idle
threat, by the way.

Dovidl smiles again. Taps the menu.

DOVIDL
None of this is kosher.

HELEN
It’s a kosher restaurant.

DOVIDL
To them, not to me.

MARTIN
Okay, just tell me how long it’ll
be. The programme.

Dovidl sets down the menu, picks up the wine list.

DOVIDL
How long was the original?

MARTIN
That what you’re doing? The ’51
programme? The Bruch and the
Partitas?

DOVIDL
Isn’t it what you wanted?
MARTIN
(surprised but delighted)
Well, yes, but... No, no, that’s great.

HELEN
Does it matter? Look at him. He isn’t going to be there. Are you, David?

Now Dvidl produces from his pocket and unfolds the 1951 concert programme. Slides it across the table to Martin. Helen cranes to see.

INSERT 1951 PROGRAMME

BRUCH VIOLIN CONCERTO NO. 1 IN G MINOR

INTERVAL

BACH: VIOLIN PARTITAS NUMBERS 1 AND 2

MARTIN
This is the ‘51 programme!

DOVIDL
(without looking up)
The wines aren’t kosher either.

EXT. CONCERT HALL, LONDON. DAY (A’86)

The same concert hall we saw in earlier scenes. Martin approaching the building on foot.

INT. CONCERT HALL. DAY (A’86)

In the dark interior he finds the doors to the rehearsal room closed, guarded by a SECURITY MAN. A notice on the door reads: “REHEARSAL IN PROGRESS. STRICTLY NO ADMITTANCE”.

Recognising Martin from previous attempts, the security guy shakes his head.

SECURITY MAN
Sorry, Mr Simmonds.

MARTIN
Can’t I just put my ear to the door?

SECURITY MAN
Won’t help. It’s soundproof.

Martin puts his ear to the door. Shrugs. Nothing audible.
MARTIN
Have you heard him playing?

SECURITY MAN
Like I said, soundproof.

The door opens. Dovidl comes out carrying his violin case.

DOVIDL
(to Martin)
Still warm. Want to feel?

As he passes Martin-

MARTIN
(emotional)
Dov...

Dovidl turns.

MARTIN (CONT’D)
You won’t let me down, will you?

DOVIDL
No, Mottl. I won’t let you down.

86  EXT. CONCERT HALL. NIGHT (A’86)  86

Outside crowds swarm and jostle on the sidewalk, as they did
thirty-six years ago. History in the remaking. This concert,
too, according to the posted notices, is a sell-out.

87  INT. CONCERT HALL. NIGHT (A’86)  87

The hallways are so thronged they’re almost impassable as the
audience makes its way into the hall’s auditorium. As in
1951, notables can be seen in the balcony, anticipating the
long-delayed debut of David Eli Rapoport.

ON MARTIN AND HELEN

waiting out the last minutes backstage. Martin, like his
father before him, is in a state of mounting anxiety verging
on panic. Helen seems almost to be relishing what is looking
increasingly like another Dovidl no-show.

MARTIN
I told him half-six.

HELEN
And I told you to put a guard on
him.
MARTIN
Virtuoso violinist handcuffed to thug. Make a great cartoon.

INT. DOVIDL’S HOUSE, CROWN HEIGHTS. DAY (A’86)

BROCHE packing, among other things, Dovidl’s Warsaw family photograph into a suitcase; the three children of his new family packing smaller suitcases of their own. Cardboard boxes are strewn around the floor and on surfaces.

INT. DOVIDL’S LONDON HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT (A’1986)

Here Dovidl’s suitcase is already packed and waiting. He’s sitting at the desk, writing a letter...

INT. CONCERT HALL. NIGHT (CONTINUATION OF SC.87)(A’86)

VARIOUS ANGLES:

THE AUDITORIUM - buzzing with expectation-

THE ORCHESTRA TUNING UP, not for the first time-

THE STAGE MANAGER - checking his watch against the hall clock-

MARTIN
It’s the same fucking nightmare!
Where the hell is he?

HELEN
If I had to guess? Thirty thousand feet over our heads. On his way to join a Tibetan monastery.

MARTIN
I made him swear on the Torah.

Helen rolls her eyes, as if to say “What do Jews do instead of crossing their fingers?”

MARTIN is wiping the sweat from his face with an already sodden handkerchief, tears of frustration starting to gleam in his eyes. How could he have been such a fool?

And then, like an apparition...

...DOVIDL is there, in the wings with them.

Tonight he’s wearing a dark suit, a discreet skullcap on the back of his head, Gagliano and bow in his hand. Comme il faut.
DOVIDL
Did you think I wasn’t coming?

He doesn’t wait for a response but strides on to the stage to clamorous applause. He bows to the audience.

DOVIDL
Good evening. I’m sorry to be late. I hope you didn’t mind waiting thirty-five years.

Relieved audience laughter.

Dovidl nods to the conductor. The orchestra begins its introduction...

ON MARTIN: with the programme in his hand, holding his breath. Nightmare visions of disaster are crowding his brain – visions of some popular tin-ear monstrosity being played for ironical effect.

But then his eyes close, his breath is expelled with relief as he hears the opening notes of the Bruch, as advertised.

MARTIN
Thank you, God.

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INT. 1951 LONDON CONCERT HALL. NIGHT (A’51)

ON GILBERT after his cancellation announcement, shamed and broken; a ruined man financially, professionally and emotionally; the auditorium empty.

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INT. 1986 CONCERT HALL. NIGHT (CONTINUATION OF SC.89)(A’86)

ON DOVIDL

playing the final notes of the Bruch. He has performed to a high professional standard... yet there’s something missing in his playing, and that something is feeling, the personal engagement of the artist’s soul which distinguishes the very good from the truly great.

HELEN
(grudgingly)
He can still play. I’ll give him that.

MARTIN
Yeah, he was good.

Dovidl is bowing to the audience, leaving the stage to appreciative but not overwhelming applause. The audience begins to flow out in the direction of the lobby.
DOVIDL
(to Martin)
Well?

MARTIN
Good. It was good.

DOVIDL
It was crap.

MARTIN
Good crap, though.

Dovidl smiles.

DOVIDL
Wait fifteen minutes.

He disappears to his dressing room.

HELEN
Is it me, or isn’t he being just a little too compliant?

Martin nods his agreement. A similar sense of foreboding has gripped him too: a fear that Dovidl’s uncharacteristic compliance so far may have been a magician’s misdirection, presaging some outrageous act of rebellion still to come. And since the concert’s second half is scheduled to be a solo performance without orchestra, Dovidl will have all the latitude he needs to go rogue.

ANGLE ON THE STAGE – being cleared of chairs and music stands.

ANGLE ON BACKSTAGE CORRIDORS AND DRESSING ROOMS

The orchestra musicians leaving for the night, packing away their instruments, putting on their coats...

INT. CONCERT HALL AUDITORIUM. NIGHT (A’86)

The second half of the concert is about to commence. The audience has returned and is waiting expectantly, clearing its collective throat. Unaccompanied solo performances are the acid test: nobody to cover the violinist’s mistakes.

ANGLE ON MARTIN AND HELEN

standing now at the back of the hall. All the tension we saw in them before the concert has returned in the last fifteen minutes.

Now Dovidl makes his second entrance. Wearing this time, to the amusement of all, the long black coat and fedora of ultra-orthodox uniform.
Something's coming, and it isn't Bach. We know what it is, what it has to be. We've known it for some while.

As Dovidl waits for the embarrassed titters to die away we'll witness for the last time that now-familiar ritual: the long upward sweep of the rosin, the long downward sweep, and finally the blessing of his lips.

Setting his bow gently to the Gagliano - the gesture of a lover - Dovidl opens with a single note so pure and mournful, so protracted, so tender, that even in this initial stroking of the instrument we realize that the first half of the concert wasn't misdirection at all, it was foreplay. This, though they don't know it yet, is what the audience came for.

Many of them are checking their programmes, puzzled, as is Martin, not to be hearing Bach.

ON MARTIN AND HELEN

They exchange a look. Uh-oh.

And now, for the first time, we'll hear David Eli Rapoport's solo violin version of The Song of Names, composed in 1952 in London in fidelity to his vow: a complex, exquisitely harmonized arrangement of the simple sung melody that changed his life.

It should be at once unbearably soulful, immediately memorable and technically stunning; a masterwork of nuance and colour and shadow; a description in music of a People's suffering, delivered via the ear to the blood.

At first we'll hear only the single voice of the Gagliano, playing the original sung melody...

INT. WARSAW ASYLUM. DAY (S'53)

...and then a second violin enters in harmony - playing a variation on the melody - as we see DOVIDL (23) play The Song of Names for JOSEF WECHSLER (32 here but looking fifty).

Outside the room Anna can be seen listening to Dovidl's playing.

EXT. TREBLINKE. DAY (S'53)

Yet another variation as the voice of a third violin joins the other two while Dovidl "plays for the ashes" in the barren field that covers his family's bones.

IN SHOT, in the background, by the original railway tracks as yet devoid of symbolic representation, Anna waits in her car [not the Polski; probably a Trabant].
INT. YOUNG REBBE’S SYNAGOGUE (SYNAGOGUE). DAY (S’51)

Finally the trio of violins come together, now heard to choir accompaniment as they merge into a single piece, in perfect harmony with the sung melody in the Stoke Newington synagogue.

Here we reprise the scene of Dovidl’s epiphany - the Young Rebbe chanting the names to the same melody, the congregation responding.

INT. CONCERT HALL. NIGHT (A’86)

BACK TO SCENE

CU DOVIDL

as he finishes playing The Song of Names in public for the first and only time.

He draws out the final perfect melancholy note as long as possible, before fading slowly to silence.

Then nothing.

THE AUDIENCE - stunned into a silence of their own.

MARTIN - moved beyond the capacity to move.

When, seconds later, the audience recovers itself, their applause lifts the roof.

Dovidl bows low. Then leaves the stage. There will be no encore. There will be no return.

The rest is coda.

INT. DRESSING ROOM. NIGHT (A’86)

Martin has come with Helen to Dovidl’s dressing room, the door of which stands ajar.

They step inside. Nobody here, no sign of occupancy. Just a discarded suit over the back of a chair, on its seat the cased Gagliano, and on the violin case-

AN ENVELOPE ADDRESSED TO MARTIN.

Glittering on the floor inside the threshold are THE SHATTERED REMAINS OF A BLOCK OF ROSIN.

Helen’s eyes go to the envelope, Martin’s to the scattering of bright yellow shards.
DOVIDL’S VOICE (V.O.)
My dearest Mottl, you’ll remember how I was forbidden to say Kaddish for my family until their deaths were confirmed and the anguish this caused me. It saddened me more than I can say to learn from you that my disappearance had caused that same anguish in your father. Above all things I want you to be spared it...

INT. HOTEL LOBBY. NIGHT (A’86)
Martin has come to the hotel to confirm that Dovidl is no longer there. The receptionist is confirming it, showing Martin the duplicate of Dovidl’s check-out invoice.

DOVIDL’S VOICE (V.O.)
...Two months ago, when you found me, I told you I no longer lived a life you would recognise. I no longer thought of myself as an individual, which an artist is required to be. I chose instead to submerge myself within a community of faith...

EXT. DOVIDL’S HOUSE, BROOKLYN. MORNING (A’86)
We’ll recognise it from Sc. 67. A phone is ringing inside.

DOVIDL’S VOICE (V.O.)
...It’s a social organism we borrow from nature: a body sharing a common history, common values and a common memory, to which the price of admission is the surrender of self...

INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE, MARTIN’S HOME OFFICE. DAY (‘86)
Martin is phoning from his home office. The single American ring tone in his ears.

DOVIDL’S VOICE (V.O.)
...It’s the most enduring of families, impossible to extinguish. We take care of one another in ways that natural families cannot...
The phone is on the floor, ringing out in an empty house. Dovidl’s family has moved out.

INTERCUT WITH

Martin hanging up the phone.

DOVIDL’S VOICE
...What you did, Mottl, was return to me my individuality. You thrust it back into my hands like an unwanted gift. I consider all debts paid today. You have made me free and for that I thank you. But from the depths of my soul I must ask you not to find me again. You must think of me now as dead and act accordingly...

Martin is re-reading Dovidl’s letter, probably for the tenth time; Helen is looking out of the window.

DOVIDL’S VOICE (V.O.)
...May the Holy One bless you and keep you and your family always in His sight. Your affectionate brother, Dovidl.

HELEN
Let him go, Martin.

MARTIN
How am I supposed to think of him as dead when I know he isn’t?

HELEN
Trust the text. He’s given you permission. Probably the only selfless thing he’s ever done.

Martin shaking his head. Refusing to accept it.

HELEN
That prayer Jews say for the dead?

MARTIN
Kaddish.

HELEN
Say that.
MARTIN
I can’t. I’m not Jewish, I’m not his brother, and he isn’t dead.
A long silence follows. Helen has only one card left to play.

**HELEN**
That day he didn’t show up?

He turns to look at her. She remains staring out of the window.

**HELEN (CONT’D)**
When you left him, after the rehearsal? Nobody knew where he went?

Martin makes no response but recalls it clearly.

**HELEN**
I’m where he went.

**MARTIN’S REACTION**

There isn’t one; at least nothing discernible. He never knew of a romantic liaison between Helen and Dovidl; but neither has he told Helen that he slept with Anna in Poland. This revelation balances the scales. It assuages both his guilt and hers and it’s enough to dispel the myth of Dovidl.

Helen reaches out and takes his hand.

**HELEN**
You’re a better man than he was, Martin. You always were.

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**INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE. NIGHT (A’86)**

Hours later, Helen is sleeping as Martin climbs out of bed.

**MARTIN (V.O.)**
Yitgadal v’yitgadash sh’mai rabah...

**WIDENING TO:**

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**INT. SIMMONDS HOUSE, MARTIN’S HOME OFFICE. NIGHT (A’86)**

CAMERA FINDS THE CASED GAGLIANO...

...PANS TO MARTIN

Wearing a dressing gown over his pyjamas, he has come here from his bed in the small hours. From a copy of Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable he extracts a postcard-sized card printed with transliterated characters of the mourner’s Kaddish – the kind Reform synagogues issue to congregation members who have no Hebrew.
From it he reads aloud the ancient Aramaic prayer. His reading, marked by mispronunciations and mistaken cadences, is coloured by a spectrum of emotions: love, anger, above all overwhelming sadness; his voice breaks as he assigns Bovidl his desired place among the dead, laying him finally to rest.

[THOUGH WE WON’T HEAR ALL OF IT, THE FULL PRAYER READS:

**MARTIN**


Y’hei sh’mei raba m’varach l’alam ul’almei almaya.

Yitbarach v’yishtabach v’yitpaar v’yitromam v’yitnasei, v’yit’hadar v’yitaleh v’yit’halal sh’mei d’kud’sha b’rich hu, l’eila min kol birchata v’shirata, tushb’chata v’nechemata, daamiran b’alma. V’im’ru: Amen.


**MARTIN**

Magnified and sanctified be God’s great name throughout the world that God created and governs by divine will. May the Kingdom of God be established during your lifetime, and during your days, and during the days of all the house of Israel, yea speedily and in the near future, and let us say, Amen.

Exalted, glorified and honored be the name of the blessed Holy One whose glory is beyond all blessings, hymns and praises that people render, and let us say, Amen.

May great peace emanate from Heaven with good life for us and for all Israel, and let us say, Amen.

May the One who makes peace in the heavens, make peace for us and for all Israel, and let us say, Amen.]

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

On the sound track, initially overlapping Martin’s prayer, then gradually displacing it, we’ll hear the fully orchestrated version of The Song of Names, which will continue to play until

CREDITS END