

Just One Inch

Inspired by A True Story

OVER BLACK:

A school BELL RINGS.

FADE IN:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

High school teacher RACHEL STEIN (60's, gray hair pulled back into a bun) walks out from the Main Office.

In the overhead paneled lights, her face appears drawn and tired with a mirage of wrinkles. She is solemn with the corners of her mouth turned slightly downward, and her lips puckered in a pout.

The loud sound of EXCITED STUDENTS and LOCKERS SLAMMING CLOSED is heard as she joins the crowd of cheerleaders, jocks with the school's emblem on their sweaters, and other students anxiously rushing to exit the school's front door.

Rachel walks slowly with her head down as the students zip past her.

Exuberant teacher, STEPHANIE, joins her. Though only in her twenties, she has a mature expression far beyond her years.

STEPHANIE

Why so glum, Rachel?

Rachel SIGHS DEEPLY.

RACHEL

This is my last week. Forty years went by so fast. Word of advice Stephanie, get married. Don't be married to your job. Life goes by so fast. You'll regret it if you don't find someone to love. I wish I had.

Stephanie nods her understanding.

STEPHANIE

I'm so sorry. So, what are your plans for retirement?

RACHEL

Don't know, but I've learned from my ancestors that life constantly changes. We may not understand or like what happens, but we persevere. Right now, I've got to get to the pharmacy. I keep having these migraines.

Stephanie stops.

STEPHANIE

Oh, darn. I forgot my daily planner. I have to go back. Take care of yourself, Rachel. See you tomorrow.

Rachel waves, continues out the door.

INT. DRUGSTORE - DAY

Rachel gets in line at the pharmacy "PICK UP" counter.

In front of her is a young African-American MOTHER with long braids tied together into a pony tail and gigantic gold hoop earrings. She holds a two-year-old BOY with a small TEDDY BEAR in one hand and sucking his middle fingers of the other hand.

Rachel smiles at him.

The child drops his bear, starts CRYING. The Mother walks forward toward the counter to the awaiting male PHARMACIST.

Rachel picks up the bear, walks toward them.

MOTHER

(to Pharmacist)

Lakeisha Sullivan.

While the Pharmacist searches through bags in a plastic basket, the child throws a tantrum. He squirms and kicks to get away.

RACHEL

3.

Looks like you have your hands full.

MOTHER

He didn't have enough sleep last night. You know how it is.

RACHEL

Not really.

The Pharmacist returns.

PHARMACIST

That'll be forty-three eighty.

The Mother has difficulty opening her purse with the child squirming.

RACHEL

I can hold him, if you'd like.

The Mother smiles, shoves the child into Rachel's arms. She searches her purse, then looks at the Pharmacist with frustration.

MOTHER

I left my wallet on the kitchen table.

Rachel smiles.

RACHEL

I'll take care of that for you.

MOTHER

Really?

RACHEL

Sure. No problem.

Rachel hands the child and bear to her, takes out her credit card.

As the Pharmacist staples the receipt to the Mother's bag, the Mother turns to Rachel.

MOTHER

Thanks. That was kind of you.

Rachel smiles as the Mother takes her medicine, leaves.

Rachel turns to the Pharmacist.

EXT. CROSSWALK - DAY

Rachel leaves the corner drugstore, sees the pedestrian signal flash a countdown from 10.

She quickly enters the crosswalk, notices the Mother and child ahead. The child drops the bear again.

Rachel rushes over, bends down to pick up it up. She stands, YELLS to the Mother now on the sidewalk.

RACHEL

Ms. Sullivan!

The Mother and child turn around.

Rachel doesn't notice a car turning the corner until the last second.

Her eyes widen fearfully as she backs up quickly to avoid getting hit. She falls backwards, hits the back of her head on the street. Rachel's world is spinning.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rachel opens her eyes, hears DOCTOR EMERYK KOPINSKI (80'S, Polish ancestry), and an Asian NURSE talking indistinctly to each other.

The Doctor turns his attention to Rachel. His teeth are crooked, but they make his smile enchanting.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

Hi, I'm Doctor Emeryk Kopinski.
How are you feeling?

RACHEL

Like drums are beating in my head.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

That's pretty common for your type of injury. You hit your head pretty hard. X-rays didn't reveal anything, but just to be safe, we did an MRI. If it looks good, then we can discharge you.

(to Nurse)

Let me know immediately if she complains of dizziness or nausea.

NURSE

Yes, doctor.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

(to Rachel)

I'll be back when we get the results.

RACHEL

Okay. Thank you.

As he leaves, the Nurse pulls the thin cotton blanket up.

Rachel stares into space, then looks at the nurse.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Is there a Rabbi in the hospital?

NURSE

Yes, there is a Rabbi. In fact, I just saw him down the hall. Would you like to talk with him?

RACHEL

Yes, I would.

As the Nurse leaves, Rachel rests her eyes.

A moment later, she is awakened by a SOFT KNOCK. A very old Orthodox RABBI (side curls, prayer shawl, yarmulke, glasses), cracks the door open.

RABBI

Hello. I'm Burt Goldblum. May I come in?

RACHEL
Sure. Shalom Rabbi.

He opens the door wider, enters.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
I'm Rachel. Rachel Stein.

RABBI
Nice to meet you, Rachel. I heard
you would like to talk.

RACHEL
I'm sorry. I'm not very religious.
I don't even go to temple.

The Rabbi pulls a chair closer to her bed, sits.

RABBI
That's okay. We can still talk.
You'll find I'm a good listener.
What troubles you?

Rachel searches his eyes.

RACHEL
I'm confused about the meaning
of life.

RABBI
The meaning of life? Why does
this bother you, my child?

RACHEL
I feel like I've served my
purpose being a teacher, but
I don't know what I'm supposed
to do now.

Rabbi Goldblum pulls the tip of his beard as he thinks for
a second.

RABBI
We never know God's plan. But I
say this, if you're still alive,
then God has other plans for you.

Rachel's eyebrows arch in surprise.

RACHEL

Other plans? What could he
possibly have in store for me?

Rachel stares out the window sadly, then looks back at him.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Can you help me up? I'd like
to walk as we talk.

RABBI

Sure, but I would be happier if
you were in a wheelchair.

The Rabbi helps Rachel stand up next to the bed. She grabs the blanket, wraps it around her hospital gown, dons white cotton hospital slippers.

RACHEL

See, I'm fine. Let's walk.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

The Rabbi and Rachel slowly walk down the corridor.

RACHEL

I could feel the car whisk by
me with just one inch separating
us. One inch has been lucky for
me and my ancestors.

RABBI

One inch?

She nods.

They stop at the end of the corridor, read the saying in large letters on the wall.

CLOSE ON WALL

I FOUND A FRUITFUL WORLD BECAUSE MY ANCESTORS PLANTED IT
FOR ME. LIKEWISE, I AM PLANTING IT FOR MY CHILDREN.
TALMUD TAANIT 23A.

END CLOSE UP.

RACHEL
That's very profound.

She turns toward the Rabbi.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
I almost died today. If I had
died, who would care? All my
friends and family have passed
away. Menopause ended my chance
of having any children, so I am
the last leaf on my family
tree.

Rabbi Goldblum looks at her with empathy in his eyes.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
My ancestors struggled and
sacrificed so much. It's a
shame it all comes to an end
with me. I feel like I've let
them all down.

RABBI
Nonsense, my child. I'm sure
they are all very proud of
you.

Rachel looks sadly down at the floor.

RABBI (CONT'D)
Where did your ancestors come
from?

RACHEL
(pointing)
Let's go sit over there.

They walk to some chairs, sit.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
My ancestry dates back to a
scribe for the Tsar of Russia.

FADE OUT.

BEGIN OVERALL FLASHBACK**OVER BLACK:**

The sound of many horses GALLOPING.

FADE IN:**SUPER: RUSSIAN EMPIRE, AUGUST 1897**

(NOTE: All dialogue is in English with a Russian accent.)

EXT. DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

It's very dark, but in the moonlight we can see many horsemen in red Russian Royal uniforms, wool hats, tall black boots, with their long sabers holstered at their sides.

They gallop closer. Besides the sound of their HOOVES, WHINNYING and SNORTING of the horses can be heard.

Dust flies up from the dirt road as they rush through a charming rustic village of unpainted wooden houses with grass growing on the roofs.

EXT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT

HAPPY RUSSIAN MUSIC is heard coming from one of the candlelit houses in the distance.

The music gets LOUDER as the horsemen approach the house.

INT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT

VLADIMIR KAMINSKAYA (early 30's, in peasant tunic clothes, reddish hair, glasses, mustache, short red beard) SINGS as he plays RUSSIAN MUSIC on his BALALAIKA in a large candlelit room.

His 20-ish wife, SVETLANA (small mole on her right cheek, apron over her plain peasant skirt and blouse) dances in front of the fireplace with their four-year-old barefoot daughter, ELIZABETH (reddish-brown hair, brown eyes, in pink smocked dress).

EXT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT

The horsemen stop in front of the house.

One rider, SERGEI ABRAMEVICH (with very long mustache) jumps off his horse. He approaches the door as another soldier holds onto Sergei's reins.

Sergei BANGS on the door. He twirls the end of his mustache then BANGS again. The music stops.

INT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT

Vladimir looks out through the lace curtains in the window.

His eyes widen in fear.

He turns around, signals to Svetlana and Elizabeth to be quiet.

BANGING on the door again is heard inside. Svetlana angrily motions to Vladimir to go open the door.

Vladimir shakes his head. He is afraid.

Svetlana motions insisting he do.

EXT. WOODEN HOUSE - NIGHT

The rusty door CREAKS as it opens slowly.

Vladimir is shocked to see the man at his door.

He looks at the other men on horses behind, all look similar with long mustaches and long beards.

He notices two riderless horses.

He looks at SERGEI whose face is lit by the candlelight coming from inside.

SERGEI

Are you Vladimir Kaminskaya?

Vladimir nods nervously, looks at the men on horses again.

SERGEI (CONT'D)

11.

I am Sergei Abramevich of his Majesty's Royal Court. Tsar Nicolas II demands your presence. You are to come with us.

Vladimir's body shakes in dreaded fear.

VLADIMIR

But why? I have done nothing wrong.

Svetlana rushes to Vladimir holding Elizabeth.

She stands directly behind him, looks out to see all the men on horses.

SERGEI

Get on the horse. I have no time to explain. His Royal Highness is waiting.

SVETLANA

Vladimir, what's happening? Are you being arrested?

VLADIMIR

I don't know, Svetlana. Go back inside.

She stays at the door watching Vladimir and Sergei get on the horses and GALLOP off.

EXT. WINTER PALACE - NIGHT

Vladimir, Sergei, and the horsemen ride under an arch to enter the red with yellow trimmed palace. Only the sound of the horses' HOOVES on the cobblestones is heard.

INT. GREAT THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Vladimir sweats profusely as he follows Sergei through white gilded doors revealing a long ornate rectangular room. The sound of PEOPLE TALKING suddenly stops.

As Vladimir walks, he looks up at the three-tiered chandeliers and the white columns along the sides of the room.

He notices several people looking at him as they walk along the second-floor balcony that surrounds the room.

MUFFLED VOICES are heard as Vladimir sees the 29-year-old Tsar seated in the distance. TSAR NICHOLAS II, who wears a black uniform and red sash, sits on his red and gold throne as he speaks to his wife, the TSARINA, seated next to him.

Sergei stops at the bottom of the red carpeted stairs leading up to the Tsar. He quickly bows.

SERGEI

Your Majesty.

He backs up, joins many other men in black uniform with blue sashes standing to the side.

Vladimir fearfully stands alone in front of the first step to the throne. It is eerily quiet now.

He looks up, notices the wall behind the Tsar having a two-headed gold eagle on red tapestry, the Tsar's symbol of power.

Vladimir has a closer look at the handsome Tsar (well-trimmed beard, long mustache curved to the sides) wearing a jewel-encrusted hat-like crown with brown mink around the edges. The display of jewels is over-the-top displaying great wealth.

Vladimir gulps.

He eyes the Tsar's German wife, ALEXANDRA (red-gold hair, large eyes), seated to the left of the Tsar holding their 6-month baby daughter, TATIANA.

He notices the Tsarina's elaborately embroidered white lace dress, blue sash, pearl necklace, diamond and pearl crown.

He watches the baby squirm in the Tsarina's lap. It CRIES.

TSARINA ALEXANDRA

Hush, Tatiana.

The Tsar furrows his brows as he takes note of Vladimir eyeing his wife.

Vladimir sees a daughter, 2 years, named OLGA (blue eyes, light chestnut hair, short snubby nose), dressed like the Tsarina. She sits on floor next to her mother.

Alexandra looks to the plain-looking Irish Nanny, MARGARETTA, on her left who speaks with a Limerick accent.

TSARINA ALEXANDRA (CONT'D)

Margaretta, take Olga and
Tatiana to the nursery.

MARGARETTA

(bowing)

Yes, Your Majesty.

Nicholas watches the Nanny leave with the children. He looks at Vladimir.

TSAR NICHOLAS

You are Vladimir Kaminskaya?

Vladimir nods his head slowly in a kind of bow.

VLADIMIR

I am, Your Majesty.

TSAR NICHOLAS

I am told you are the only one
in the village who knows how to
read and write. Is that so?

Vladimir looks at the Tsar.

VLADIMIR

Yes, Sire, in seven languages,
French, English, Italian, Russian,
German, Polish, and Yiddish.

The Tsar's posture straightens. He furrows his brows, looks displeased.

TSAR NICHOLAS

You are a Jew?

Vladimir looks down, fearful of what might happen if he says "yes". BIG SIGH before he looks up at the Tsar.

VLADIMIR

(sotto voce)

Yes, Sire.

Vladimir looks at Sergei, then back at the Tsar.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

Your Majesty, is that a problem?

TSAR NICHOLAS

I thought my father, Tsar Alexander, expelled all the Jews during the Pogrom.

Vladimir looks sadly down at the floor.

Nicholas studies Vladimir for a few silent seconds.

VLADIMIR

(raises his head)

Your Majesty, have I done something wrong? Am I being accused of something?

Nicholas looks at his wife, who is smiling. The Tsar relaxes his posture.

TSAR NICHOLAS

Vladimir Kaminskaya, I have heard you are a good man, that you are a hard worker and do as you are told.

Vladimir nods his head over and over nervously in agreement.

TSAR NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

I have decided that you will be my scribe. You will write the
(MORE)

TSAR NICHOLAS (CONT'D)
legal documents and laws as I
decree. You will also write my
messages so the leaders of other
countries who do not speak our
language will understand what I
am saying. You will also
translate all replies and books
I wish to read. Do you
understand?

Vladimir is relieved, smiles.

VLADIMIR
Yes, Sire.

TSAR NICHOLAS
You will always be available to
me. You will live in a guest
room at each palace with your
wife and child, and you will be
well-provided.

The Tsarina nods.

TSARINA ALEXANDRA
I hear your wife is a good cook.

Vladimir's eyebrows rise, surprised the Tsarina knows that.

VLADIMIR
Yes, a great cook, your Majesty.
She makes the most delicious
breaded cutlets.

TSAR NICHOLAS
Well then, she will cook
alongside my chef, Pierre Cubat.

VLADIMIR
She will be honored, your Majesty.

Nicholas leans forward in his throne, looks sternly at
Vladimir.

TSAR NICHOLAS

You will be carefully watched at all times Vladimir Kaminskaya. You and your family will not leave this palace or its gardens for any reason unless I command it. Again, do you understand?

Vladimir nods.

Tsar Nicholas motions Sergei to come forward.

TSAR NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Sergei here, will show you to your quarters. We will start in the morning.

VLADIMIR

Yes, Sire. Thank you.

Nicholas waves them away.

Vladimir and Sergei bow as they walk backwards a few steps, then turn around, and head for the door.

Vladimir leans closer to Sergei.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

(sotto voce)

What happened to the last scribe?

SERGEI

He was executed for disobeying the Tsar.

Vladimir's eyes widen.

SUPER: PETERHOF PALACE, 1901

INT. MONPLAISIR KITCHEN - DAY

Eight-year-old Elizabeth (long hair in a braid with bow at end) stands on a chair next to a long wooden kitchen table. Behind her is a wall having blue and white glazed Dutch tiles.

She watches as Svetlana (in chef's attire of a white pinafore apron over a black dress) gathers a bowl, flour, and honey.

SVETLANA

Lizzie, someday you'll have a family of your own, so it is important for you to learn how to cook.

ELIZABETH

I want to cook just like you, Mama.

French CHEF PIERRE CUBAT walks by carrying a large roasted pig on a silver platter. He speaks with a French accent.

CHEF CUBAT

What? You don't like my cooking?

ELIZABETH

I do, but I like mama's better.

Chef Cubat looks at Svetlana. Svetlana shrugs as she smiles, then looks at Elizabeth.

SVETLANA

Lizzie, Pierre is a famous chef.

Cubat lifts his chin in pride as he sets the pig on the table.

SVETLANA (CONT'D)

You would do well to learn from both of us.

ELIZABETH

Yes, Mama.

Svetlana looks at Chef Cubat, who nods approvingly.

SVETLANA

Watch, Lizzie. I'm going to show you how to make the most delicious honey cake that Pierre and I have created. The Romanovs love it.

SUPER: ST. PETERHOF PALACE, 1904

EXT. PETERHOF PALACE - GARDENS - DAY

Elizabeth (11, hair in long braid with bow at end) and Olga (9, tall, hair also in braid with bow) lock arms as they walk along a dirt path toward the yellow palace through the beautifully landscaped gardens.

Walking behind them is Tatiana (7, reddish hair), MARIA (5, overweight, rosy cheeks), and Margareta holding three-year-old Anastasia's hand. ANASTASIA is a chubby blue-eyed child with reddish hair and very short bangs.

Each girl wears a different colored pastel dress and a large matching bow in their hair.

The Tsarina SCREAMS loudly from inside the palace.

Startled, Elizabeth stops abruptly. She grabs Olga, clutching her tightly.

ELIZABETH

Oh my God, Olga!

They look at each other with wide eyes, then back at the children.

Maria hides her face in Margareta's skirt, while Anastasia CRIES. Margareta picks up Anastasia, tries to comfort her.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(extends arms)

Tatiana, Maria, come here.

Tatiana and Maria run to Elizabeth and Olga for a group hug

OLGA

It's okay. It's only Mama giving birth again. You should be used to Mama's screams by now.

(to Elizabeth)

I hope it's a boy this time, otherwise, we'll be hearing more of her screaming. She's just

(MORE)

OLGA (CONT'D)
going to keep giving birth until
they have an heir.

INT. PETERHOF PALACE - BEDROOM - DAY

Alexandra sweats profusely trying to give birth. She
SCREAMS from pain.

TSARINA ALEXANDRA
No, no, I can't. I can't do
this!

The Doctor comes out from under the bedsheet. Serious look,
shakes his head at the Tsar.

TSAR NICHOLAS
(to Alexandra)
But you will. I command it!

Alexandra looks sternly at Nicholas as if she wants to kill
him.

TSARINA ALEXANDRA
You command it?

She SCREAMS as she pushes the baby out, then falls back
onto her pillow totally drained of energy.

The Doctor bows as he hands Nicholas his son.

Nicholas smiles at the baby, kisses its forehead. As he
looks into the baby's eyes, it urinates into the Tsar's
face.

Alexandra covers her mouth to hide her laughter, then
touches her heart at this loving moment.

TSAR NICHOLAS
(laughs)
It's okay.

A female servant hands the Tsar a towel.

He wipes his face with one hand as he cradles his son in
the other.

Two Abyssinian Guards open the doors as Nicholas rushes out with the baby.

INT. PETERHOF PALACE - DAY

The Tsar carries the baby as he passes one ornate room after another until he reaches...

THE GRAND HALL

A large GROUP of people await the news of the newborn.

Nicholas rushes in as servants open the double doors for him. Everyone bows in unison. Nicholas smiles proudly.

TSAR NICHOLAS

It's a boy! I have a son!

He raises the baby in the air.

TSAR NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

Hail Tsarevich Alexei!

GROUP

(Russian cheer pronounced ура)

Ура.

INT. PETERHOF PALACE - GUEST ROOM - DAY

Vladimir sits at a small wooden desk in front of a window, writes a letter using a quill he dips in ink every few seconds.

He stops writing, looks out the window, and watches.

EXT. PETERHOF PALACE - GARDENS - DAY

The children age as they run through a LABYRINTH OF TALL HEDGES in a game of tag:

- Elizabeth (gorgeous shape with thin waist) to 19.
- Olga (still tall, holds a book) to 17.
- Tatiana (younger version of the Tsarina) to 15.
- Maria (very beautiful now) to 13.
- Anastasia (slender now, very pretty) to 11.

All of them slowly chase Alexei (8 years old, tall for his age, dark blue eyes, brown hair, in sailor outfit).

Elizabeth and Maria, smile, link arms as they walk on the grass near a fountain.

The other children pick flowers here and there and chase a Cocker Spaniel. A French Bulldog, a King Charles Spaniel, several kittens, and cats follow.

Elizabeth lies down on the lawn watching the clouds.

Maria lies next to her on her side, reties the bow at the end of Elizabeth's long braid.

ELIZABETH

(pointing)

Look, Maria. That one looks like
your papa.

Maria lies on her back, looks up.

MARIA

Yes, I can see his curly mustache.

They GIGGLE. Maria rolls over onto her stomach, looks at Elizabeth.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Lizzie, can you keep a secret?

Elizabeth rolls on her side facing Maria, puts one hand under her chin like a pillow, and smiles.

ELIZABETH

Of course, I can.

Maria looks over, smiles at the tutor, PIERRE GILLIARD.

He stands by a tree watching them.

She continues smiling at him as she speaks.

MARIA

Pierre and I kissed.

ELIZABETH

You did not! You're only 13!
Your father would kill you.

Maria looks back at Elizabeth.

MARIA

Well, in my dreams. But I'd
like to.

ELIZABETH

In my dreams I'd like to live
a nice, uncomplicated life with
my true love, and have a family
as wonderful as yours.

MARIA

(watches Pierre)

I hope you do, because you
deserve it.

Maria gets up, smiles broadly, walks briskly toward Pierre.

Anastasia approaches Elizabeth with flowers in her hand,
looks at Maria laughing with Pierre.

ANASTASIA

She's such a flirt. Watch. She's
going to tilt her head as she
plays with her braid, lick her
lips, and then smile.

Maria does exactly that.

ELIZABETH

You sound jealous, Anastasia.

Anastasia looks seriously at Elizabeth. They GIGGLE.

INT. PETERHOF PALACE - GUEST ROOM - DAY

Standing next to a small, but ornate table, Svetlana pours
tea into a glass from a samovar.

She walks up behind Vladimir carefully not to spill the
tea, places it on the desk next to him.

Leaning over to hug her cheek to his, a gold heart-shaped pendant on a black velvet choker emerges.

She looks out the window, sees Elizabeth, proudly smiles.

SVETLANA

She has become a beautiful
young woman, has she not?

Vladimir smiles as he nods.

VLADIMIR

Most definitely so.

EXT. PETERHOF PALACE - GARDENS - DAY

Elizabeth and the royal children walk to the railing overlooking the cascading palatial waters.

They sit on a bench as they listen to a handsome musician playing SOFT MUSIC on his BALALAIKA.

Elizabeth has a beautiful smiling face and seems smitten by him. She imitates Maria's flirtatious ritual.

SUPER: 1917

EXT. ST. PETERSBURG STREETS - DAY

Thousands of furious Russian MEN, WOMEN, and CHILDREN (in long coats to the ankles, men wear hats, women wear babushkas) carry flags and signs as they demonstrate. Their SHOUTS fill the air like thunder.

ALL MEN

Down with the war!

ALL WOMEN

Daite Khleb. Give us more bread!

MEN, WOMEN, CHILDREN

Down with the Tsar!!

INT. MONPLAISIR KITCHEN - DAY

Chef Cubat supervises twenty-four-year-old Elizabeth stuff

and roll cabbage as Svetlana, at the stove, adds vegetables to a pan of boiling water.

ELIZABETH

Why are they rioting, Mama?

Svetlana shakes her head with a furrowed brow.

SVETLANA

They're hungry.

CHEF CUBAT

They feel Nicholas doesn't care about them because he's spending money on a war that nobody wants. He should take care of his own people.

Svetlana looks worried, looks at Elizabeth.

SVETLANA

I hope Vladimir comes home soon.

Elizabeth nods with a worried look.

EXT. NEAR THE BATTLEFRONT - DAY

Nicholas (in long, belted, heavy Cossack fur coat, sword clipped to belt, tall Cossack hat) rides a beautiful white horse. He leads a troop of the Imperial Army. The horses' breaths can be seen in the freezing cold air as it snows lightly.

Vladimir (in belted Cossack coat, Ushanka hat), rides a brown horse behind the Tsar.

At the top of a hill, they approach a General (long trench belted coat, general cap) standing next to his horse and staring at a field below.

Nicholas looks with gaping mouth in horror at...

...the seemingly endless field of dead bodies. Snow falls on some bodies already frozen. Wounded soldiers walk around dazed like zombies.

FROST forms as everyone speaks.

TSAR NICHOLAS

How many men did we lose?

GENERAL

About twenty thousand, Your Majesty.

Nicholas shakes his head sadly.

A teenaged Courier arrives on horseback. He takes a telegram out of his satchel, leans down, hands it to Vladimir.

Vladimir reads it with a furrowed brow, rushes to the Tsar.

VLADIMIR

Your Majesty, it says the people are uprising at Petrograd and are demanding an end to the war. Women are also demanding you feed the children bread. Commander Khabalov wants to know your orders.

TSAR NICHOLAS

Tell him to use all necessary force.

Vladimir looks down at the telegram sadly, then looks up at the Tsar.

VLADIMIR

But, Sire, these people are hungry. You would kill them just because they are demanding bread?

Nicholas stops, turns around, pokes his index finger into Vladimir's chest.

Vladimir GULPS, eyes widen as he fears he is about to be shot.

TSAR NICHOLAS

You will write what I said!

Vladimir looks dejected, but nods frantically over and over.

INT. IMPERIAL TRAIN - NIGHT

Tsar Nicholas, wearing his imperial bathrobe, enters the ornately decorated salon car.

Vladimir, in a plain robe closely behind him, dons his glasses.

Minister of War ALEXANDER GUCHKOV (also wears glasses, bushy mustache ends in a finely trimmed short beard, suit and tie) has have been waiting with TWO GENERALS in uniform.

TSAR NICHOLAS

What is so important, Minister Guchkov, that you disturb me at this hour?

ALEXANDER GUCHKOV

(waves a letter)

Sign this.

Nicholas gestures to hand it to Vladimir, which he does.

Guchkov looks around at the thick upholstered walls and Art Nouveau furniture. He SCOFFS.

Vladimir stares at the Tsar a few seconds before speaking sadly.

VLADIMIR

Sire, by signing this, you agree to abdicate.

The impatient Minister snatches the letter from Vladimir, and shoves it into the Tsar's chest.

ALEXANDER GUCHKOV

Sign this, or I will kill you here and now!

Nicholas has a far-away look for a few seconds. He picks up a pen from his desk, leans over, reluctantly signs it.

INT. WINTER PALACE KITCHEN - DAY

Svetlana and Cubat are busy cooking in the white tiled kitchen. Vladimir rushes in.

VLADIMIR
Bolsheviks are on their way!
Quick, Svetlana, we must go!
Where's Lizzie?

EXT. WINTER PALACE - DAY

Hundreds of BOLSHEVIKS on horseback, wave their rifles, yell as they swiftly approach the palace.

BOLSHEVIK #1
Let's go, Comrades!

BOLSHEVIK #2
Down with the Tsar!

BOLSHEVIK #3
Power to the people!

Vladimir, Svetlana, and Elizabeth (25), flee out a secret side entrance.

LOUD SCREAMS and GUNSHOTS are heard throughout the palace.

ELIZABETH
Why must we go? Why do they want
to kill us?

VLADIMIR
No time for questions. We need
to go. Quickly, this way.

As they run along a dirt road next to a forest, Elizabeth hears GUNSHOTS. She frightfully looks back, sees horsemen approach.

ELIZABETH
Papa, horses!

VLADIMIR

Run!

The horsemen are too close. Vladimir shoves Svetlana and Elizabeth to the side of the road.

They fall, get up, run into the forest looking back at Vladimir.

Vladimir freezes in fear as a horseman is about to run into him. He backs up quickly, falls backwards onto the ground.

The horse stops in front of him. It stands on its hind legs and BRAYS as it shifts its front legs in the air.

Elizabeth covers her mouth to prevent herself from screaming. Svetlana tries to run to her husband. Elizabeth pulls her back, shakes her head "no".

Vladimir's eyes widen in fear as he watches the horse's foot coming down in SLOW FREEZE FRAMES towards him.

He closes his eyes tightly.

CLOSE ON

The horse's foot lands just missing Vladimir's head BY ONE INCH.

Vladimir opens his eyes.

END CLOSE UP.

He quickly rolls to the side of the road.

END OVERALL FLASHBACK.

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rachel winces, closes her eyes. She pinches the top of her nose together.

RABBI

Are you all right?

RACHEL
It's another migraine.

She looks up at the Rabbi.

RABBI
Let's go back.

RACHEL
No, I'm okay. Anyway, that was
the first time one inch made a
difference.

Rabbi Goldblum nods in understanding.

RABBI
It's amazing how something so
small can be so important.

Rachel nods, continues.

RACHEL
The Bolshevik gallops on as...

RESUME OVERALL FLASHBACK

EXT. WINTER PALACE - DAY

...Vladimir runs as fast as he can to join his family.

He looks back fearfully through the trees, sees the
Bolshevik turn around headed back with his gun out of its
holster.

VLADIMIR
Run! Hide!

The Bolshevik stops his horse, scans the forest for any
movement. Seeing nothing, he FIRES A SHOT in the air, then
gallops off to join the others.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The Kaminskayas walk through the forest over fallen
branches, around fallen trees, around rocks, up a hill,
down a ravine.

ELIZABETH
Papa, I'm tired.

VLADIMIR
Okay, we'll rest.

As they rest, Svetlana removes her shoes, rubs her feet.

SVETLANA
Where are we going, Vladimir?
We have no home. What is your
plan?

VLADIMIR
My brother Moyshe has a farm in
the west.

He looks at Elizabeth.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)
You will love Moyshe, Lizzie. He
has a wonderful sense of humor.
And a farm. Oy, such a farm. Lots
of room for us to build a home.
And animals. So many animals.

ELIZABETH
How far is it, Papa?

VLADIMIR
It should take another three or
four days to get there. Five
maybe. Okay, six or seven at
the most.

He looks around, points.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)
We need to keep going this
direction.

He looks up at the sun, points in a different direction.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)
No, this way. We follow the
(MORE)

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)
setting sun until we get to
the river. Then follow it, and
head north. Now come, let's go.

Svetlana puts her shoes back on.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

The Kaminskayas walk until they come to a clearing.

They hear the sound of children LAUGHING, CREAKING wooden wheels, horses NEIGHING, SNORTING, and BRAYING.

They see a small caravan with horse-drawn wagons and carts, some people riding bicycles, some pushing wheelbarrows full of items.

Many children walk alongside with their parents. Some women wear babushkas on their head, some wear shawls.

The Kaminskayas swiftly walk over to the caravan.

Svetlana and Elizabeth smile, nod at everyone as Vladimir speaks to three men (inaudible), then shakes their hands.

They join the caravan with everyone quietly walking, totally fatigued.

As they walk, a little girl, MISHA (pretty smile, large brown eyes, curly brown hair) walks up alongside Elizabeth. She carries a white RABBIT.

MISHA
Would you like to hold Latke?

ELIZABETH
Yes, sure. I would love to hold
him.

Misha laughs, hands her the rabbit.

MISHA
Latke's a girl, silly.

ELIZABETH

Yes, how silly of me. My name's
Lizzie, short for Elizabeth.
What's your name?

MISHA

I'm Misha.

They continue walking with Elizabeth stroking Latke.

MISHA (CONT'D)

Latke is very smart. She will
come to you if you call her name.

As the sun is about to set, the caravan stops. The men
gather twigs to make a fire as the women prepare food.

Elizabeth hands Latke back to Misha.

Misha kisses Latke between the ears. Several children
run past her carrying handkerchiefs and other pieces of
cloth.

Elizabeth and Svetlana watch the children spread them over
tall grass in the nearby field.

ELIZABETH

(to Misha)

What are they doing?

MISHA

They do this every night. The
cloth collects the morning dew.
Then you wring them out, and
you have water.

ELIZABETH

(smiles at Svetlana)

Of course.

EXT. ON ROAD - NIGHT

Everyone in the caravan sits around the large campfire,
eating, with unintelligible talking.

A middle-aged overweight woman named ANYA (wears a small

head scarf) sees Vladimir and his family huddled around the campfire with no food taking glimpses of the others eating.

She looks at her husband who nods approvingly.

The woman smiles, scoops bowls of soup for them out of her kettle.

She and her husband bring the bowls to them.

SVETLANA

Thank you. That is very kind of you.

The woman sits next to them as they devour their soup while her husband goes back to their wagon.

ANYA

I'm Anya, and that loveable man over there is my husband Avraam. We are from Petrograd. My husband and I are going to Riga and then sail to Finland.

Vladimir nods as he continues SLURPING his soup.

SVETLANA

We are headed west to my brother-in-law's farm.

Svetlana notices Anya smile at Elizabeth.

SVETLANA (CONT'D)

Do you have any children?

She shakes her head sadly.

ANYA

No, they were killed during the demonstrations.

Svetlana and Elizabeth exchange looks, then look back at Anya.

SVETLANA

I'm so sorry.

ANYA

Yes, well, I blame the Tsar.

Vladimir looks at Svetlana, signals with a finger to his mouth for her to say nothing.

Svetlana nods.

Anya collects the empty soup bowls from each of them.

ANYA (CONT'D)

You can sleep under our wagon.
It'll protect you from the
night dampness. We'll give you
some blankets.

VLADIMIR

Most kind of you. Thank you.

Avraam plays his VIOLIN. Others play an ACCORDIAN, BANDURA, and a BALALAIKA.

Everyone SINGS, dances, LAUGHS.

Men pass around bottles of VODKA, drink from the bottles.

EXT. ON ROAD - DAY

The caravan continues in a single line down a curved dirt road. A young male SCOUT rides ahead on his horse.

The Scout hears HORSES and men's VOICES approaching. He stops abruptly, dismounts, cautiously looks through bushes around the corner.

He spies a troop of soldiers marching toward the caravan.

He swiftly mounts his horse, GALLOPS back.

He alerts everyone as he rides from the front to the end of the caravan. He repeats over and over to everyone.

SCOUT

Soldiers are heading right
toward us. We cannot continue!

Vladimir frantically looks over at the forest nearby.

VLADIMIR
(to his family)
Come. We'll go through the forest.

Others abandon their wagons, hide wherever they can. Most hide beneath the five-foot tall rye growing nearby.

Many follow Vladimir's family, including Misha carrying Latke. They scatter.

Those with horse-drawn carts remove the horse's reins from the cart. They follow the Scout, and flee.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The Kaminskayas crouch below bushes, anxiously watch the soldiers march by.

They hear LOUD SCREAMS, lots of GUNSHOTS, and with each gunshot, Elizabeth winces.

They wait a long time after the last GUNSHOT, then look at each other. Vladimir nods.

They stand and walk cautiously.

After only a few steps, they hear a RUSTLE OF LEAVES, then TWIGS SNAP behind them. They freeze with eyes wide in fear.

Vladimir slowly raises his hands. Svetlana and Elizabeth copy. They all GULP in unison.

After a few quiet seconds, they turn around slowly, fearing they are about to be shot.

They see no one except... the rabbit.

Svetlana and Vladimir almost faint.

ELIZABETH
It's Latke! Come here, Latke.

Latke obeys, hops toward Elizabeth.

Elizabeth picks her up, looks back through the trees hoping to see Misha. She fears Misha was shot, sadly looks at the rabbit and hugs it.

The Kaminskayas continue silently walking with Elizabeth carrying Latke.

They cross a road, enter the forest on the other side.

EXT. FOREST - SUNSET

The Kaminskayas stop after walking for miles.

VLADIMIR

We'll camp here for the night.

Svetlana drops to the ground totally fatigued.

They all take off their shoes, rub their sore feet.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

The river should be close.

He looks at Svetlana and Elizabeth.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

If anything, God forbid, happens to separate us...

Elizabeth looks worriedly at her mother.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

... ask anyone in the village where Moyshe lives. They will direct you to his farm.

SVETLANA

What are we going to do for food, Vladimir? I'm hungry.

VLADIMIR

We will eat what the land provides. Insects, plants, moss...

He doesn't finish his sentence.

Elizabeth looks up at Vladimir, sees him staring at Latke.

Her lip quivers. Tears flow down her cheeks as she hugs Latke dearly. She lowers her head, slowly extends Latke to him, then closes her eyes knowing what's about to happen.

As Vladimir SNAPS the rabbit's neck, Elizabeth's body shudders.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Vladimir looks at Elizabeth staring at Latke being cooked on a spit over a small campfire.

VLADIMIR

I'm sorry, Lizzie, but we have to eat.

ELIZABETH

I know, Papa.

VLADIMIR

Let's gather branches and leaves to cover ourselves.

They cover themselves and fall asleep.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The Kaminskayas leave the campfire smoldering and continue walking. Svetlana reties the babushka over her head as she walks.

Suddenly they hear VOICES. They crouch down in fear.

Vladimir silences his family with a quivering finger.

The VOICES get closer. A YOUNG BOLSHEVIK YELLS.

YOUNG BOLSHEVIK

Over here!

The Kaminskayas panic, and bolt.

Svetlana's skirt gets caught on a branch. She frantically tries to free herself, cries out to Vladimir.

SVETLANA
Vladimir, I'm stuck!

Vladimir and Elizabeth stop, quickly turn around.

Svetlana hears a GUN COCKING, turns her head, sees the Bolshevik's gun pointed at her. Look of terror on her face.

SVETLANA (CONT'D)
Please, I beg you, no!

He spits in her face.

Vladimir and Elizabeth watch with shock as the Bolshevik SHOTS her point blank in the head. Her babushka becomes bloody.

Elizabeth's SCREAM fills the air.

ELIZABETH
Mama!

Two other Bolsheviks in the forest stop, run in the direction of Elizabeth's SCREAM.

Elizabeth desperately tries to rush back to her mother, but Vladimir grabs her arm, pulls her towards him. She tries to fight him off.

VLADIMIR
No, Lizzie. We can't stop.
They'll kill us, too.

ELIZABETH
But Mama! We can't leave her!

VLADIMIR
There's nothing we can do. Now
run, Lizzie! Run!

The Bolshevik SHOTS Svetlana one more time as the other men run up to him.

YOUNG BOLSHEVIK
(pointing with chin)
They're over there.

The two Men pursue Vladimir and Elizabeth.

The Young Bolshevik bends over, snatches the velvet choker with heart-shaped pendant from Svetlana's neck, pockets it.

He opens his fly, urinates on her.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

Vladimir and Elizabeth frantically run to a high river bank. They look down at the 45-foot-wide deep river below.

Vladimir fearfully looks back at the men quickly approaching.

VLADIMIR
Do you think you can hold your
breath under water until you
get to the other side, Lizzie?

ELIZABETH
I will try, Papa.

The men aim again, but trees are in their way.

Vladimir pockets his glasses, grabs her hand. They jump into the river.

The men quickly reach the river bank, SHOOT at them.

EXT. UNDER WATER - DAY

As Elizabeth and Vladimir swim underwater, bullets zip past them.

CLOSE ON

ONE BULLET moves slowly in freeze frames, just misses Elizabeth BY ONE INCH.

END CLOSE UP.

Her eyes widen in fear as she panics. She stops swimming for a moment, then her adrenaline helps her swim faster.

END OVERALL FLASHBACK.

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rabbi Goldblum shakes his head over and over.

RABBI

Veys mere. So, that was the second time one inch saved an ancestor?

Rachel nods over and over.

RACHEL

Yes, my grandmother, Lizzie.

Rachel stares into space, then smiles. She looks at the Rabbi.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I am alive because of that one inch.

RESUME OVERALL FLASHBACK

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

On the other side of the river, Vladimir and Elizabeth swim up to the surface, GASP for air. Branches hang down towards the river covering their faces.

They hold onto branches so the fast-moving river doesn't take them away. Only their faces are above water line.

The Bolsheviks don't see them. They continue to SHOOT into the river.

A TALL BOLSHEVIK uses binoculars to scan the river, as a SHORT BOLSHEVIK watches a branch float by.

SHORT BOLSHEVIK

They must have drowned. Let's go.

TALL BOLSHEVIK

We can't go until they are confirmed dead, or we'll hear it from the Commander.

He scans the forest on the other side of the river.

TALL BOLSHEVIK (CONT'D)

Where are you? Come on. You can't get away from us.

They only hear the sound of the RIVER and TREES RUSTLING in the wind.

Vladimir notices Elizabeth quietly crying.

VLADIMIR

Are you okay? You're not shot?

Elizabeth shakes her head.

ELIZABETH

They killed Mama. Why, Papa? I don't understand. Mama's dead. Why?

Vladimir looks down sadly, then looks into her eyes.

He looks back at the soldiers, then back at her again.

VLADIMIR

Give me your skirt, Lizzie.

ELIZABETH

My skirt? Why?

VLADIMIR

Because they're not going to give up until they're certain we're dead.

Elizabeth holds her breath, removes her skirt under water.

She comes up, holds onto a branch with one hand, her skirt with the other. She hands it to him.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

When you're sure they're gone,
(points with his chin)
go that way following the river
until it turns to the left. No,
to the right. Yes. It turns to
the right, Lizzie. Got it?

ELIZABETH

But you're coming with me, right?

He doesn't answer.

She looks at him fearfully realizing what he's about to do.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Papa, please. Don't leave me!
Please, Papa.

VLADIMIR

Listen to me. You can do this,
Lizzie. Then follow the sun as
it sets in the west. The west,
Lizzie.

He reaches his pant pocket underwater, takes out his wet wallet.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

Give this wallet to Moyshe and
tell him to get you a ticket to
America to stay with your cousin
Galina and her husband.

His eyes search hers.

VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

I want you to have a better,
safer life. Get married, Lizzie.
Have lots of children. I know
you'll make me proud.

She shakes her head.

ELIZABETH

Papa, no! Please.

VLADIMIR

Be brave, Lizzie. I do this for you so you will have a chance at life. If I don't do this, we'll both be killed.

ELIZABETH

Papa! I beg you. Please don't do this! I love you.

She clings to him tightly refusing to let go.

He pushes her back, stares into her eyes, kisses her tenderly on the forehead, stares again.

VLADIMIR

My love will be with you wherever you are.

He pulls a branch, and lets the river float him away.

As Vladimir floats, he uses the branch to hold Elizabeth's skirt at water level.

The Bolsheviks see what looks like two people floating.

SHORT BOLSHEVIK

There they are!

Vladimir is SHOT dead in the river still clinging to Lizzie's BULLET-RIDDEN SKIRT. The water turns RED.

Elizabeth sees the blood and her father floating away.

She holds both hands over her mouth to keep from crying out. She reaches one arm out to him, then covers her mouth with it, and quietly sobs hysterically.

TALL BOLSHEVIK

We got 'em. Now we can go.

Elizabeth watches the soldiers leave, but waits. She closes her eyes, shakes her head over and over in disbelief.

Wearing only her long-sleeved blouse, petticoat, and buckled shoes, she struggles to climb out of the river using branches to help.

She slips on mud, then finally reaches the top of the river bank.

She has an expression of overwhelming shock as she realizes all she has lost... family... friends. She drops to her knees, and looks sadly back at the river. Her lips quiver as she wipes her eyes with the back of her hand.

Elizabeth SIGHS deeply, then stands.

She walks slowly along the river bank for a long time until she notices it turns right.

Just before sunset, she gathers leaves and branches.

EXT. RIVER BANK - NIGHT

Elizabeth covers herself with the branches.

Her eyes try to close, but she fights them when she hears NOISES, fearful they might be from Bolsheviks.

The sound of the RIVER lulls her to sleep.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Elizabeth awakens to the sounds of BIRDS SINGING. She watches a bird hop among fallen leaves.

She rises, walks to the river. She cups her hand to drink.

She turns around, walks into the forest. She crosses her arms, rubs them for warmth.

She steps around fallen branches, plants, and holes.

Nearing a dirt road, she HEARS HORSES NEIGHING. She quickly drops to the ground in muddy water.

After Bolsheviks pass, she rises. MOSQUITOS attack her over and over. She swats at them, slaps them off her body.

Elizabeth walks to the road. She checks both directions, scratches her legs and neck. She sees no one, then hobbles across the road, continuous to scratch as she walks.

She spies MOSS by a tree, sits to eat it. While she eats, she notices mud next to her. She rubs it on her mosquito bites.

She rises, walks on.

She stops just before sunset, tears her sleeve off, lays it out in the open to catch the morning dew. She gathers leaves and branches to construct her bed.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Elizabeth can't sleep. The branches covering her move as she scratches all night.

She listens to the SOUNDS OF OWLS and WOLVES HOWLING.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Elizabeth rises, checks the sleeve. She squeezes a couple drops, then tucks it into her waist.

She finds a spot, lifts her skirt, squats to urinate.

She walks on yawning constantly. Her eyes try to close as she drags her feet.

Her STOMACH GROWLS. She looks around for food, but finds nothing. She starts to hallucinate.

ELIZABETH

Yes, Your Majesty. I would love
some more tea, and if you please,
another slice of my mother's
honey cake.

She carefully climbs up a hill.

At the top, she looks at the sun and points which way is west. She looks at the great expanse of forest over hills that she must cross. Seems overwhelming. She SIGHS heavily.

She cautiously tries to navigate down the hill, but slips and slides downward on her stomach.

Dazed for a moment, she doesn't move.

She slowly sits up and WINCES from the pain. She notices her dirty petticoat is sopping blood from her thigh. Her hand shakes as she raises it revealing a large cut.

She removes the ribbon from her braid, uses the sleeve as a bandage, ties the ribbon to hold the sleeve in place.

She gets up gingerly. Her braid unravels as she limps.

She picks up a branch, removes smaller branches, and uses it as a walking stick. She MOANS and GRUNTS as she limps. With smaller, painful steps, she continues.

Totally exhausted, she gingerly sits with her back against a tree for support. Struggling to keep her eyes open, she falls asleep before nightfall.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Elizabeth sleeps fitfully. She talks in her sleep.

ELIZABETH

Why Papa? Why?

She is awakened by the sound of strong WIND. The chilly air causes goosebumps on her skin, and the cold seeps through her clothes sending shivers down her spine as she watches the trees sway.

She huddles against the tree to shield her, and crosses her arms for warmth. She bows her head and CRIES herself to sleep.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A ray of sunshine on her face awakens Elizabeth lying next to the tree.

Her arms and hair are full of ANTS. She frantically scratches her head to get them out of her hair, then brushes them off her body.

As she walks on, she looks around for something to eat, but finds nothing.

She steps around ant hills and spider webs, brushes one web out of her hair, then walks out of the forest.

She spies a STUMP, walks toward it. She rests on it to take her shoe off. She sees a large BLISTER.

On the ground to the side of her foot, she notices a BEETLE. She picks it up and contorts her face as she swallows it.

She watches as a flock of GEESE fly in the dark cloudy sky.

She closes her eyes, shakes her head, CRIES toward the sky.

ELIZABETH

Papa, I can't do this anymore.
I'm so tired... and hungry... and
thirsty.

She stops crying, wipes her tears with the bottom of her petticoat.

She looks out at the expanse of fields in front of her, and then, in the distance she sees... a cabbage field.

She can't believe her eyes, forcefully blinks to make sure she's not dreaming.

She quickly looks around for a leaf, covers her blister, dons her shoe. She sprints to the field. Adrenaline prevents her from feeling any pain.

EXT. CABBAGE FIELD - NIGHT

Elizabeth plops down in the field. As she quickly devours some cabbage, it starts to rain. She looks up and smiles at the sky.

ELIZABETH

Thank you, Papa.

She rolls some cabbage leaves like a cup to catch the rain

water, and drinks one, two, three cupfuls as the rain drips down her face.

She stands, extends her arms out, twirls around in circles. She GIGGLES as her hair and clothes become dripping wet.

Suddenly the rain stops and a ray of sunlight kisses her forehead. She stops twirling, closes her eyes, and lifts her chin to let the sun warm her face.

She EXHALES A LONG BREATH of relief.

She lies down and falls asleep with, for the first time, a gentle smile that reflects her contentment.

EXT. CABBAGE FIELD - DAY

When Elizabeth awakens, she eats more cabbage.

She puts cabbage leaves onto her lap until it's full. Then she tucks the end of her petticoat into her waistband to hold the leaves.

She stands and walks along a dirt road passing fields of wheat, rye, and round bales of hay.

EXT. HAY FIELD - SUNSET

As the sun is about to set, Elizabeth stops at a bale of hay. She sits against it and eats some cabbage.

She opens her father's wallet and studies a photo of herself as a baby with her parents. Her lips quiver. Tears roll down her cheeks while she uses her index finger to stroke her parents' faces.

She lays down, looks up at the clouds between the twinkling stars.

ELIZABETH

Look Maria, that one looks like
my Papa.

Her eyes well. Her voice chokes. A single tear streams down her face.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I miss you, Maria. I miss all
of you.

She fights her eyes to stay open and finally falls asleep.

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - DAY

She walks along the dirt road again. She sees a MAN and
WOMAN harvesting wheat.

She excitedly runs to them.

ELIZABETH
(smiles)
Hello. Do you know where I can
find Moyshe Kaminskaya's farm?

They look her up and down with gaping mouths, astonished to
see her disheveled hair full of hay, bloodshot eyes, dirty
face, torn blouse, petticoat full of cabbage leaves, and
exposed legs with one bandaged.

Elizabeth notices their look. She lowers her petticoat to
cover her legs, dropping the leaves.

They don't know what to say, point to a nearby pasture.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Spacebo.

EXT. MOYSHE'S PASTURE - DAY

Elizabeth power walks until she sees a man in the distance.

She can hardly believe she found him. She runs excitedly.

A dirty, thinner, Elizabeth finally approaches MOYSHE
(reddish beard and mustache like Vladimir, glasses, wearing
a vyshyvanka shirt, belt, baggy pants, boots, and cap) as
he spreads hay for his cows.

She stops in front of him. A silent moment as her body
trembles, her lips quiver. She cries hysterically as she
speaks.

ELIZABETH
Are you Moyshe Kaminskaya?

He stops, is taken aback at her appearance.

MOYSHE
Da. And you are?

ELIZABETH
Elizabeth. I am your brother's
daughter.

As she tells him what happened (inaudible dialogue), Moyshe collapses to his knees. He removes his glasses, CRIES. Uses his sleeves to wipe his tears.

Elizabeth also gets on her knees.

He holds her hands as he looks at her. He hugs her tightly. They CRY together.

Moyshe stands.

Elizabeth is too weak, struggles to stand. He helps her up. With one arm around her, he guides her to his wagon.

He helps her up, then flicks the reins for the chestnut draft horse to go.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Moyshe pulls on the reins for his horse to stop in front of an old two-story weather-worn wooden house with grass growing on its roof.

A horned GOAT with a long beard stands on the roof happily munching his lunch.

MOYSHE
Sasha, get down!

Elizabeth smiles as she looks around.

There are two long handmade wooden benches along the front of the house, lots of baskets, hanging onions, and barrels to collect rainwater.

Between the house and huge barn is a well supplying fresh Water. Lots of PAVLOVSKAJA and ORLOFF CLUCKING CHICKENS everywhere.

INT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

As Moyshe and Elizabeth enter, she notices four small children playing with a piglet on the floor.

A middle-aged woman, in traditional embroidered Sarafan costume and shawl, stops cooking. She looks over and is also shocked at Elizabeth's appearance.

The children cower behind their mother, terrified at what they see.

MOYSHE

(to Elizabeth)

This is wife, Katya, Ivan
twelve, Rebecca nine, Mikhail
seven, and Dmitri, four.

(to everyone)

This is my niece, Elizabeth.

KATYA's face softens. She walks over with the children walking behind her holding onto her apron.

She kisses Elizabeth on both cheeks, covers her with her shawl.

KATYA

Welcome. Welcome.

MOYSHE

She's hungry, Katya. Give her
some *tyurya*.

KATYA

Da. Da. Come, sit.

Moyshe and Elizabeth sit at the table as the children go back to playing with the piglet, but keep eyeing Elizabeth.

Katya prepares a bowl, places it in front of Elizabeth along with homemade bread.

Starving, Elizabeth devours the soup, dips the bread to sop up every drop.

KATYA (CONT'D)
Where are your parents? Did
they not come with you?

Elizabeth stops eating, looks sadly at the bowl.

ELIZABETH
(sotto voce)
My mother and father were killed
by Bolsheviks as we fled.

Katya puts her hand over her mouth in disbelief, shakes her head.

Elizabeth has a far-away look as she puts an elbow on the table, chews her thumbnail.

Moyshe sees this, waves a finger at Katya not to say another word.

MOYSHE
Let's not talk about this now.
You eat.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Elizabeth wears her hair in a bun, an apron over her blouse with a simple skirt, boots, scarf. She looks like a peasant girl now. She smiles broadly at Katya as they milk cows.

KATYA
Do you miss the palace?

Elizabeth stands, fills a METAL BOTTLE with the milk, looks at her weathered hands. She wipes the sweat on her forehead with her sleeve.

ELIZABETH
Strangely, no. This is my new
home now, and I love all of you.

She watches Moyshe and the boys shear the sheep.

She walks over, gets a rake, cleans the stalls.

INT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Elizabeth hands plates of freshly baked honey cake to everyone sitting around the fireplace. Faces light up as they eat.

KATYA

Ah. This is good!

Elizabeth sits down next to Katya.

ELIZABETH

I have good memories of my mother teaching me how to make this honey cake.

KATYA

(chews with open mouth)

I will show you how to preserve fruit, maybe add them to the cake.

MOYSHE

Katya trades her kompot in the village for supplies. You can trade your honey cake for what you need.

ELIZABETH

Really? Then I can get some new clothes.

Elizabeth looks at Katya nodding.

She rests her head on Katya's shoulder, watches the fire.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Everyone in the village trades goods outdoors like a flea market with lots of horse-drawn wagons and carts all lined up next to each other filled with food, clothes, tools.

Shops have outdoor tables. Some people trade or sell goods from their wheelbarrows.

Elizabeth stands next to Katya in front of a wooden table full of clothes. She holds up a pretty white cotton blouse and a long blue velvet skirt in front of her.

ELIZABETH

This should fit. What do you think, Katya?

Katya nods, looks at the seller.

KATYA

We will give you a delicious honey cake with kompot for both.

The seller nods.

Moyshe sees a crowd gathering around someone.

He walks over, listens. He rushes with a frightened look toward Elizabeth and Katya.

MOYSHE

The Bolsheviks just killed the Tsar, his wife, and the children!

Look of horror on Katya and Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

What? All of them?

Moyshe nods over and over quickly.

Elizabeth's face pales.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Olga?

Moyshe looks in her eyes sadly. He slowly nods.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

And Maria?

Elizabeth stops talking as emotion fills her. She sways, then faints.

Moyshe catches her before she hits the ground.

MOYSHE

(to Katya)

They are searching for anyone
who lived with the Romanovs!
Quick, we go home.

INT. FARMHOUSE - UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

Elizabeth quickly packs, including the new blouse and skirt.

She struggles with the suitcase down the narrow staircase.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Moyshe waits by his horse-drawn cart, stuffs papers and money into his pockets.

Elizabeth hands him the suitcase.

MOYSHE

I will take you to the train
for America.

(to Katya)

You stay, take care of farm.

Katya nods.

Moyshe puts the suitcase on the cart, gets on.

Katya takes her shawl off, places it on Elizabeth's head, then strokes Elizabeth's cheek.

ELIZABETH

Oh no, Katya. I couldn't take
your favorite shawl.

KATYA

I want you to have it.

She reaches out, holds Katya's hands, looks into her eyes.

ELIZABETH

I will cherish it always. You've
been like a mother to me.

Katya puts her hands on each side of Elizabeth's face, smiles, as she stares into her eyes.

KATYA

Send us a telegram when you get to America.

ELIZABETH

I will. And I promise I will write you a letter every day.

Elizabeth looks at the children, gets on her knees down at their level. She motions for a group hug.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I love you all, and I will miss you and your little piglet, Schnitzel.

Elizabeth stands. Katya moves in closer, hands her a basket.

KATYA

Here, for your journey. Your honey cake, my kompot, and some sandwiches.

ELIZABETH

Spasibo. Thank you for everything.

Katya kisses her on each cheek before hugging her tightly, then makes herself release her.

Elizabeth gets onto the wagon, sits with basket on her lap.

She inhales, exhales a long, deep BREATH as she takes a last look at the farm.

Moyshe urges his horse to go.

Elizabeth waves. The children run behind the wagon until they cannot run any more. They stop and wave.

INT. TICKET OFFICE - DAY

Moyshe and Elizabeth walk up to a pudgy CLERK with a walrus

mustache sitting behind a wooden counter.

Moyshe eyes the Clerk eating pryaniki (gingerbread). He slides Elizabeth's papers toward the Clerk.

MOYSHE

I need passage to America for
my daughter. Third class.

Elizabeth looks at Moyshe, smiles at being called his daughter.

The Clerk slowly licks his fingers. He looks sternly at Moyshe, slides the papers back to him.

CLERK

Sorry, all ships are full.

Moyshe snatches the papers, walks away angrily, but Elizabeth doesn't follow. He stops, looks back at her.

She stares at the Clerk who takes another bite of his pryaniki, chewing with mouth open.

Moyshe shakes his head, walks back, stands next to her.

Elizabeth looks down dejectedly, SIGHS HEAVILY, slowly lifts her head.

ELIZABETH

I see you are a man who
appreciates good food.

She puts her basket on the counter. She lifts the cloth covering the food, breaks off a piece of the honey cake.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I can assure you this will be
the best honey cake you will
ever taste.

She places a piece of cake on the counter in front of the Clerk.

The Clerk looks at it. He smacks his lips, then wipes his fingers on his vest.

He takes a bite of the cake and closes his eyes. As he savors it, the rich moist flavor brings a smile to his face.

He opens his eyes.

Elizabeth holds up the rest of the cake.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
Please, Sir. I'd like to go to
America.

It is silent for a moment as he eyes the cake. He looks down at his ledger.

CLERK
The Hellig Olav departs from
Kristiania. You will need to
take the train to Tallinn, then
ferry across. Is that okay?

Elizabeth looks at Moyshe. He nods.

She smiles broadly, hands the Clerk the rest of the honey cake.

Moyshe slides Elizabeth's papers to him.

EXT. TRAIN PLATFORM - DAY

Elizabeth and Moyshe watch a steam train slowly pull up, stop.

MOYSHE
I know your parents are looking
down with pride.

Elizabeth's eyes start to well, she smiles clenching her lips together to keep from crying.

MOYSHE (CONT'D)
You're strong, Lizzie. I know
you will take care of yourself.
You will survive.

He hands her a piece of folded, faded paper.

MOYSHE (CONT'D)

This is cousin Galinda's address
in New York. I will send her a
telegram of your arrival.

Elizabeth nods.

He pulls out her father's wallet from his pocket, gives it
to her.

MOYSHE (CONT'D)

There is enough money here
to help pay for what you need.

Elizabeth clutches the wallet to her heart. Tears slowly
flow down her cheeks. She wipes a tear from one eye with
her finger.

ELIZABETH

Thank you with all my heart for
taking care of me. I will never
forget you, Moyshe. You have...

The loud Conductor's WHISTLE interrupts her. They stare at
each other, then hug tightly, neither one wanting to let go

Elizabeth boards the train. Moyshe hands her the suitcase
and basket. He waves goodbye over and over.

She blows him a kiss, goes inside.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Elizabeth finds a seat near an open window, quickly leans
out the window, and waves to Moyshe. She cries
uncontrollably knowing that, like her father, she will
never see him again.

The train's WHISTLE BLOWS just before the train CHUGS away.

INT. TALLINN TRAIN TERMINAL - DAY

Elizabeth exits the train.

She notices the SIGN with an arrow for the ferry, walks
toward the exit carrying her suitcase and basket.

EXT. TALLINN DOCK - DAY

Elizabeth approaches the ferry's black AGENT (with white bushy lambchops, beard, a yellow hooded rain jacket with hood down) who stands by the gangplank and smokes a pipe.

ELIZABETH

Is this the ferry to Kristiania?

AGENT

Aye, 'tis.

He notices her fearfully looking up at the two white masts contrasting the dark cloudy sky behind them.

AGENT (CONT'D)

Don't worry about the sails, luv.
She'll get you there.

ELIZABETH

I've never been on a ship before.

She smiles, shows him her stamped contract.

AGENT

Well, welcome aboard.
(points to gangplank)
Go right on, luv.

She looks at the gangplank, then back at the agent. She smiles again, nods a "thank you".

She boards the ferry.

The gangplank is raised. The ship sets sail.

INT. OVERNIGHT FERRY CABIN - DAY

There is nothing but four bunkbeds in the tiny third-class cabin. Elizabeth sits up on her bed. The ferry rocks so much it makes her queasy. She puts her hand over her mouth.

Another female PASSENGER, on her bunkbed across from Elizabeth, notices this.

PASSENGER

You don't look so good.

Elizabeth nods slowly trying to keep from upchucking.

ELIZABETH

Is there a doctor on board?

PASSENGER

You can go to sickbay. Ask a crewmember where it's at.

INT. OVERNIGHT FERRY - HALLWAY - DAY

Several other seasick passengers wait in line in front of the doctor's office. Elizabeth takes a pail from a pile by the door, sits in line on the floor with her back to the wall.

NATHAN LEIBERMAN (tall, young, handsome, late twenties) has a hard time walking toward the doctor's office as the ferry sways very violently.

Nathan accidentally bumps into Elizabeth's leg. He speaks English to her with a German accent.

NATHAN

Oh, excuse me. I don't have my sea legs yet.

Elizabeth manages a half-smile.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I've sailed the Baltic Sea many times, but this is the first time I've felt sick.

Elizabeth is too nauseous to say anything.

The ship rocks fiercely. He puts his hand over his mouth, grabs a pail, sits down next to her.

EXT. KRISTIANIA PIER - DAY

Elizabeth is happy to disembark the ferry. She carries her suitcase and basket, follows many people toward the ship.

She steps into the road as two 1917 cars speed towards her.

The first car whisks by very closely.

She loses her balance, falls backwards onto her derriere.

Her suitcase flies out of her hand. The latch opens spewing her clothes onto the street.

The cars SCREECH to a sudden stop. Nathan opens the door, rushes toward her.

NATHAN

Are you okay?

She doesn't answer, continues picking up clothes.

He picks up some clothes, hands them to her.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Do you speak English?

Elizabeth looks up at him. Their eyes lock. She smiles at the handsome young man as Nathan stares at her beautiful face.

ELIZABETH

My father taught me five languages.
English was one of them.

NATHAN

You're the girl from the doctor's
office.

ELIZABETH

That was you?

NATHAN

Yes. Are you hurt?

ELIZABETH

No, I don't think so.

NATHAN

We're in a hurry to catch the
Hellig Olav.

ELIZABETH
The Hellig Olav?

He nods.

She smiles excitedly.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)
I also have to catch the ship
before it leaves.

NATHAN
Come, ride with us. It's the
least we can do.

ELIZABETH
Okay, yes. Thank you.

He extends his hand. She holds it as he helps her up.

The Driver of the second car puts her suitcase and basket
in his car.

INT. CAR - DAY

Fifty-year old HEINRICH LEIBERMAN, (curly beard, wire rim
glasses, brown three-piece suit, and tie) tips his hat
to Elizabeth.

Nathan gets in, sits next to Elizabeth.

NATHAN
I'm Nathan. Nathan Leiberman.
And this is my father, Heinrich,...

Nathan points to Heinrich's forty-something wife, Ida
(thin, in long-sleeved blouse, skirt to her ankles, and
small hat).

NATHAN (CONT'D)
...and my mother, Ida.

IDA
(with Yiddish accent)
No English.

ELIZABETH

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(in Yiddish with English subtitle)

It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Elizabeth Kaminskaya, but you can call me Lizzie. All my friends do.

The ship's horn BLARES.

HEINRICH

We must be the last ones.

NATHAN

Yes, Papa, but we made it.
(to Elizabeth)
Are you also sailing second-class?

ELIZABETH

No, I'm in third-class.

NATHAN

You seem too refined to be in third-class.

Before she can reply, they arrive at the check-in table.

EXT. KRISTIANIA DOCK - DAY

The Driver hands Elizabeth her suitcase and basket.

She walks over to the SIGN for third-class, hands her contract to the elderly female CREWMEMBER in ship uniform.

CREWMEMBER

You will be sharing a stateroom with a family of three and another single woman.

Elizabeth nods in understanding as the Crewmember stamps the contract, hands it to her.

The Leibermans receive a cordial greeting with respect by the middle-aged male PURSER also in ship attire.

Elizabeth mouths, "thank you", waves at Nathan. He smiles, waves back.

She heads for the gangway down to the bottom of the ship.

Nathan watches Elizabeth. He can't take his eyes off her.

PURSER

Welcome aboard. After going up the gangway, the Host will have a crewmember direct you to your cabin. Your luggage will be waiting inside your cabin. Here is a map of the ship.

NATHAN

Papa, can I see the map?

The Purser continues with Heinrich and Ida, as Nathan studies the map.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Lizzie. Lizzie, wait! Come back.

Elizabeth turns around, walks back to the pier. Nathan speaks softly so no one will hear.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Lizzie, I have an idea. There is a staircase from your deck to where we are on the second-class deck. You see here?

He points on the map.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Meet me at the top of your staircase after breakfast tomorrow. Okay?

ELIZABETH

Okay, I'll try.

She walks along the gangway again as Nathan returns to the table.

INT. SECOND-CLASS DECK - DAY

Elizabeth wears her new white blouse and blue velvet skirt as she waits at the top of the staircase.

Nathan approaches, smiles when he sees her. He looks around to see if anyone is watching, then unlatches the rope. He politely offers his hand.

She gladly accepts it, steps up onto the second-floor deck.

Nathan kisses her hand, then re-latches the rope.

NATHAN

I was afraid you wouldn't show up.

ELIZABETH

I always keep my promises.

Nathan offers her his elbow, escorts her to the door leading to the outside Promenade.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Are you sure I'm allowed?

He looks at her outfit.

NATHAN

You'll fit right in.

A totally beaming Elizabeth holds onto his elbow.

EXT. OUTSIDE DECK - DAY

As they walk along the second-class promenade, Nathan and Elizabeth nod to other passengers also out for a stroll.

They walk to the rail, watch the ocean.

NATHAN

Why are you traveling alone?
Where's your family?

Elizabeth looks sadly at him.

ELIZABETH

They were killed by Bolsheviks.

Nathan shakes his head sadly, puts a reassuring hand on her arm.

NATHAN

67.

Oh, I'm so sorry. I bet they were wonderful parents.

She nods sadly.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Well, we have almost three weeks before we arrive in America. Plenty of time to talk. I want to know everything about you, Lizzie. I want to know your dreams, your hopes...

She nods, smiling at that thought.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Let's make a pact to meet every day after breakfast. Okay?

She smiles, stares into his eyes.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

God, you have the most incredible eyes.

ELIZABETH

I do?

NATHAN

Yes. They sparkle like diamonds.

Elizabeth GIGGLES, tilts her head, fidgets with her long braid, licks her lips, and smiles like she learned from Maria.

ELIZABETH

Are you always this charming?

NATHAN

I am when I'm with a beautiful girl like yourself.

Nathan winks. Elizabeth blushes.

They hear music like, "LET ME CALL YOU SWEETHEART" played by a live band.

Nathan twirls Elizabeth, brings her in close to him. They gaze into each other's eyes for a long time.

For the moment, Elizabeth's past suffering is forgotten. She's beaming.

INT. CARD ROOM - DAY

As Elizabeth, Nathan, and his parents play cards, Nathan and Elizabeth give loving looks.

They play footsie under the table.

Ida and Heinrich take note.

EXT. OUTSIDE DECK - DAY

Nathan and Elizabeth sit on deck chairs with a blanket over each of them. He takes her hand, kisses it, then holds it.

They stare at each other and smile.

EXT. OUTSIDE DECK - SUNSET

As Nathan and Elizabeth watch the sunset, he puts his hand around her waist, draws her close. He stares deeply into her eyes.

She smiles as she strokes her index finger along his cheek.

They kiss passionately.

EXT. SHIP'S RAILING - DAY

Elizabeth and Nathan hold hands as they watch the ship sail towards the Statue of Liberty. Nathan's parents stand next to them.

Nathan turns, looks into Elizabeth's eyes.

NATHAN

Lizzie...

He pauses as he feels his chest. He starts to sweat.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
God, my heart is pounding.

He wipes his sweaty palms on his coat, holds both of her hands, looks into her eyes.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Lizzie, I'm madly in love with
you.

The ship's HORN BLARES loudly. Nathan rolls his eyes at the untimeliness of it.

ELIZABETH
What did you say?

NATHAN
I know we've only known each
other for about three weeks, but
Lizzie, I love you with every
sliver of my heart. I can't
imagine my life now without you.

His eyes search hers.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
When we land, the thought of you
disappearing into this huge
country and us never seeing each
other again, has my stomach tied
up in knots.

He pauses as he gets down on one knee. Other passengers see this, stop, and watch.

Elizabeth smiles broadly, looks at Ida who smiles, touches her heart.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Elizabeth Kaminskaya, will you
marry me?

Elizabeth looks at Heinrich, who nods approval.

She looks back at Nathan.

ELIZABETH

Yes, I would be proud to.

Everyone APPLAUDS as they kiss for a long time while the ship's HORN BLARES again.

Elizabeth rests her head on Nathan's shoulder as they sail past the Statue of Liberty.

EXT. STARBOARD DECK - DAY

As the ship docks, Nathan, his parents, and Elizabeth look over the rail at the pier.

NATHAN

Lizzie, you have to go through Ellis Island. We don't have to because we're second-class. We'll wait for you there.

(pointing)

You see? Right there. Don't worry about how long it will take. We'll wait for you.

Elizabeth nods.

EXT. NEW YORK PIER - DAY

Third-class men in suits and hats, women and young girls in long dresses and coats, a hat or shawl over their heads, young boys in shorts to their knees, jackets over tunic shirts, and caps on their heads, all carry a suitcase or basket. There is excitement in the air as they disembark the steamship.

Elizabeth, wearing Katya's shawl over her head, is one of them.

EXT. ELLIS ISLAND FERRY - DAY

All the wooden bench seats are crammed with the third-class passengers as they are ferried to Ellis Island.

INT. ELLIS ISLAND - GREAT HALL - DAY

The place is packed. It's very noisy with the sounds of

DIFFERENT LANGUAGES and CHILDREN CRYING. Elizabeth finds an open seat, looks around while she waits to be called.

Some people COUGH, look sickly.

Elizabeth covers her nose with the end of Katya's shawl.

A Young Man in suit and tie gestures three fingers with one hand and points with the other hand to TABLE 3.

Elizabeth approaches a Caucasian OFFICIAL also in suit and tie sitting at Table 3. She stands facing him.

The Official looks up, studies her sternly.

OFFICIAL

What is your family name?

ELIZABETH

Kaminskaya.

The Official writes in his large ledger.

OFFICIAL

Now it will be Kaminsky.

ELIZABETH

Kaminsky?

The Official looks up at her with a piercing glare.

OFFICIAL

You have a problem with that?

She shakes her head "no" rapidly.

The Official STAMPS the papers, gestures for her to continue to another line.

As she walks toward a sign that reads "MEDICAL SCREENING", she notices two large American flags hanging from the side walls. She smiles proudly.

EXT. NEW YORK STREETS - DAY

Elizabeth walks up to the Leibermans seated at a bench.

Heinrich and Ida are asleep head-to-head. Nathan stands excitedly when he sees her.

Heinrich and Ida open their eyes, smile when they see Nathan and Elizabeth kiss.

They all walk down a busy LOUD street.

They stop and watch with gaping mouths at the roar of life:

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Children play ball in the street.
- A mix of model-T cars and trucks.
- Men in suits riding bicycles.
- Packed street cars and horse-drawn carts.
- Policemen on horseback.
- Men unloading goods from horse-drawn wagons.
- People selling goods on sidewalks.
- People everywhere.

END MONTAGE.

NATHAN

You see this? This is America.
And we need to adjust to this
if we are going to survive.

(to Ida)

Mama, you need to learn English.

(to Heinrich)

Papa, you and I will have a job.

(to Elizabeth)

And Lizzie...

He whisks her up.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

...we will marry and start our
family.

Elizabeth LAUGHS as he spins her around.

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Nathan and Elizabeth stand before a Rabbi under a CHUPPAH.

Elizabeth wears Katya's shawl over her head.

Nathan steps on a glass.

A very small group of professional Russian dancers cheer, "MAZEL TOV", then dance.

Heinrich and Ida each toast with a glass of wine.

HEINRICH

To love.

IDA

L'Chaim.

Heinrich puts his glass down, extends his hand. They dance.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY

The store is packed with customers buying flapper dresses, fox stoles, nylons, and snakeskin shoes from Nathan, Heinrich, and Elizabeth.

Business is good. Nathan counts the cash register money, smiles at Elizabeth.

NATHAN

Now is a good time to start our family.

Elizabeth blushes.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Elizabeth lies on her bed drenched in sweat. She SCREAMS, as a MIDWIFE helps deliver the baby. The Midwife and bed are full of blood.

The Midwife cuts the cord, slaps the baby's bottom.

ELIZABETH

What's wrong with it? Why isn't it crying?

The Midwife shakes her head sadly as she shows Nathan the dead baby, then covers it up. She takes it away as

Elizabeth cries.

Nathan is beside himself. He angrily paces rapidly.

NATHAN

I had a son. A son, Lizzie!

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry, Nate. I really did try. Please, I'm sorry.

Nathan storms by Ida, who shakes her head. Ida walks over to Elizabeth, holds her hand, strokes Elizabeth's hair back.

Nathan leaves the room, SLAMS the bedroom door shut.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

(to Ida)

I've never seen him like this.

IDA

He want son to continue family name.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Nathan searches cabinets until he finds a bottle of VODKA.

He sits at the table, drinks straight out of the bottle.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Elizabeth, Nathan, and his parents stare with looks of shock and depression at the baby's simple headstone.

A disheveled-looking Nathan drinks from another bottle.

As Elizabeth, Ida, and Heinrich place stones on the headstone, Nathan tosses his empty bottle aside, walks away.

CLOSE ON HEADSTONE

BERNARD LEIBERMAN

DECEMBER 15, 1920 - DECEMBER 15, 1920

END CLOSE UP.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAY

A deeply depressed Elizabeth stares at herself in the bathroom mirror. She cuts off her long braid, continues to stare at herself.

Ida walks by, takes note.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nathan and Heinrich return from work, hang their hats. Ida informs Nathan (inaudible dialogue) about Elizabeth.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY

Nathan rushes to their bedroom to find Elizabeth in a fetal position on the bed.

NATHAN

Lizzie.

Elizabeth doesn't acknowledge his presence.

Nathan lifts her upper torso, sits on the bed next to her. He places her head on his lap, strokes her short head of hair.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Lizzie. It's okay. We'll have more children.

Elizabeth opens her eyes, speaks very softly and slowly as she stares into space.

ELIZABETH

I let you down, Nathan. I'm sorry.

Nathan lifts her up to a sitting position, grabs her by the shoulders.

NATHAN

Look at me.

She closes her eyes and shakes her head. He gently shakes her.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Open your eyes, Lizzie, and look at me.

She opens her eyes.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry if I reacted poorly. It was wrong of me. I was just caught up in the emotion of losing our child. It wasn't your fault. I don't blame you, so don't ever blame yourself.

He kisses her forehead.

SUPER: 1922

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

With feet in stirrups and drenched with sweat, Elizabeth struggles to give birth as a NURSE (in long white dress and white cap) wipes the sweat with a towel.

The HOSPITAL DOCTOR (in a white lab coat) uses forceps to help remove the baby.

HOSPITAL DOCTOR

It's a boy!

Elizabeth hears the baby CRY. She SIGHS in relief, smiles broadly, collapses from exhaustion.

NATHAN

Good job, Lizzie. I love you.

After the baby is cleaned, the Nurse hands the baby to him.

NATHAN

This one we shall call George, after my grandfather.

SUPER: 1924

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM - DAY

An exhausted Elizabeth watches anxiously as a very OVERWEIGHT DOCTOR holds a female baby up by its feet. He slaps its rear end. It CRIES.

He hands the baby to Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

She has the same mole on her
right cheek like my mother,
Svetlana.

NATHAN

What shall we call her?

ELIZABETH

The book of Ruth says there is
hope in the most devastating
times of our lives, so what
about Ruth?

Nathan nods approvingly, addresses the baby.

NATHAN

(to baby)
Hello, Ruth Leiberman.

SUPER: 1925

EXT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - COURTYARD - DAY

Adorable, GIGGLING, three-year old GEORGE rides his tricycle as one-year old RUTH (brown Shirley Temple curls) plays with a Raggedy Ann doll.

Elizabeth sits on a bench snapping string beans into a bowl while she watches them.

George starts to ride away headed for a busy street.

ELIZABETH

George, stop!

Elizabeth runs to him, grabs him by the back of his shirt, yanks him just as he is about to go into the street.

George GIGGLES as Elizabeth EXHALES her relief.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Stay here next to Ruth.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - DAY

An ELDERLY DOCTOR listens to the lungs of 3-year-old George lying sick in a crib.

There are three papers on the wall next to the crib. Each paper has a small hand that gets larger with age. The paper on the left has a hand with number one on its palm. The center paper has a number two. The third paper has the largest hand with a number three.

The Elderly Doctor looks up sadly at Nathan and Elizabeth.

ELDERLY DOCTOR

He has pneumonia. I'm sorry, but he won't live through the night.

Look of shock on Nathan. He picks up a child's wooden chair, SLAMS it against the wall.

Elizabeth faints.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Elizabeth holds Ruth. Next to them Heinrich and Ida both wipe their eyes with a handkerchief.

Nathan drinks from a bottle again as the small pine casket is covered with dirt.

A Rabbi SINGS a memorial prayer in Hebrew.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAY

There are no customers. Nathan paces as Heinrich stares out the store window and the other five employees lean against a wall or talk to each other.

Nathan address his employees.

NATHAN

We've got a lot of bills and no customers. I'm sorry, but we have to let everyone go. It's either that or close the store.

There is shock and sadness on everyone's face. The employees slowly gather their belongings.

As they exit the store, four imposing men quickly walk in carrying clubs and wearing brass knuckles.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Elizabeth takes out a honey cake from the oven, sets it on the table in their sparsely decorated kitchen as Ida washes dishes, and Ruth (6), sits at the table, plays with her new Patsy doll.

Nathan and Heinrich walk in.

Heinrich hangs their hats as Nathan sits down at the table, SLAMS his fist.

Elizabeth notices his beat up, bloody face, rushes to him.

ELIZABETH

Nate! What happened?

Ida walks over to Heinrich, concerned. He's okay.

NATHAN

Some men came into the store demanding protection money. They said they're going to kill me if I don't pay. Protection! The only protection we need is from them!

Elizabeth goes to the sink, wets a towel.

She rushes back to Nathan, tries to wash the blood. Nathan shoves her hand away.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Papa, we 're going to have to close the store because of this damn Depression.

HEINRICH

What are you going to do with all the inventory?

Nathan puts his elbows on the table, cups his forehead.

Heinrich walks over, pats him on the back.

HEINRICH (CONT'D)

We'll be okay, son. We'll think of something.

NATHAN

How are we going to make any money?

HEINRICH

I have money in the bank.

NATHAN

Banks are closed. I doubt you'll ever see that money again!

Heinrich's eyes widen with panic. He looks at Ida gaping.

Nathan gets up, takes a bottle of VODKA out of the cupboard. He sits down again, chugs it.

ELIZABETH

Nate, I'm more concerned about your drinking. The doctor warned you your liver can't take any more.

NATHAN

You should be more concerned about how we're going to raise Ruth without any money.

Elizabeth shakes her head disapprovingly. She smiles at Ruth, cuts her some cake.

Nathan gets up, accidentally knocks his chair over, grabs the bottle, walks out angrily.

EXT. CLOTHING STORE - NIGHT

Nathan watches his store burn. He closes a LIGHTER, then drinks from a bottle.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

It rains heavily. Elizabeth hugs RUTH closely with one hand, holds an open umbrella in the other. Heinrich holds a large oversized umbrella over him and Ida.

They all stare at Nathan's pine casket in the open grave.

Above the sound of the rain, the Rabbi's MEMORIAL PRAYER is heard.

When the Rabbi is finished, Elizabeth and Ruth walk closer to the grave. They look at each other.

RUTH

Now?

Elizabeth nods.

Ruth grabs some mud. She throws it onto the casket.

The rain dissolve the mud into brown water flowing down the sides of the casket.

Ruth looks up at her mother, watches tears flow heavily down Elizabeth's cheeks.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Mama?

ELIZABETH

I'm okay, Sweetheart.

She wipes her tears with her finger as she continues to stare at the grave, then turns to Heinrich and Ida.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

He was a good man.

Heinrich and Ida nod sadly.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

I was thinking of what we can do now for money. I can cook, so maybe we can make a deal with Jerry at the market since he's not selling much of his produce. I can make some simple soups. Then with your help, we can sell them.

Heinrich and Ida look at each other, nod.

RACHEL (V.O.)

So, my Grandmother once again had to find a way to survive, and cooking was the answer.

EXT. NEW YORK SIDEWALK - DAY

TWO MEN in 1930's suits and hats, walk around a corner, see a long line of people.

MAN # 1

What's going on?

MAN #2

I don't know, but it sure smells good.

They stop, watch Heinrich collect money from an elderly, dirty WOMAN whose unbrushed hair conveys that she is homeless.

HEINRICH

That'll be five cents.

The Woman pays, walks forward to Elizabeth. Elizabeth smiles as she hands her a bowl of soup and Ruth hands her a spoon.

ELIZABETH

There you go. Enjoy.

The Woman's eyes widen. She smiles, walks past Elizabeth,

quickly drinks the soup.

She hands her empty bowl and spoon to Ida, who puts them on a tray.

The Woman walks contentedly towards the two men.

MAN #1

Was it good?

WOMAN

Delicious! Best soup I've ever had.

She extends her hand to them.

WOMAN (CONT'D)

Can you spare a nickel? I want to get some more.

Man #1 takes a nickel out of his pocket, hands it to her.

She runs excitedly to get in line again.

MAN #1

(to Man #2)

Let's get in line.

They follow the woman, wait in line. The line moves quickly.

The two men drink their soup, smile at each other, nod.

They hand their bowls to Ida, walk back to Elizabeth.

MAN #1

That's the best soup I've ever tasted. What's your name?

ELIZABETH

Elizabeth. Elizabeth Leiberman.

MAN #1

Well, I'm Benjamin Kravitz. I own Ziggy's Deli. Where'd you learn to cook like that?

ELIZABETH

In Russia. My mother cooked for
the Tsar and taught me.

MAN #1

A real Jewish, Russian cook.
Just what our deli needs!

Man #2 nods over and over.

SUPER: 1941

EXT. BIRNBAUM'S BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

Ruth (17, wears a 1940 dress, long coat, and galoshes)
walks along a snow-plowed sidewalk to a butcher shop.

A SIGN on the door reads: CLOSED FOR FUNERAL. She turns
around, walks down the block.

INT. BERNIE'S BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

Ruth enters, approaches the counter.

MAX (19, wears a bloody white apron and a baseball cap
backwards) adds a tray of cutlets to the display case. He
can't take his eyes off Ruth.

Ruth looks at hamburger meat in the case with a handwritten
sign, 20 CENTS.

She takes out her change purse, then sees lamb chops.

The shop's owner, BERNIE (bald, overweight) walks in from
the back room carrying a large slab of brisket and smokes
a cigar. He sees Max smitten with her.

MAX

(to Ruth)

Haven't seen you here before.
What can I get you, gorgeous?

Ruth looks around to see who he's addressing, can't believe
he finds her pretty.

RUTH

I usually shop at Birnbaum's,
but they're closed for a funeral.

MAX

A funeral, huh?

(to Bernie)

Sounds like fate to me. Whatta
ya think, Bernie?

Bernie, shakes his head, SCOFFS. Max looks back at Ruth.

RUTH

How much are two lamb chops?

MAX

Two? For you and you're husband?

RUTH

I'm not married. It's for me and
my mother.

MAX

For you and your mother, huh?
What's your name, Sweetcakes?

Max smiles broadly.

RUTH

Ruth. Ruth Leiberman.

MAX

The lamb chops are sixty-five
cents a pound.

Max sees the dejection in Ruth's face.

MAX (CONT'D)

But today Ruth, is your lucky
day. I was just telling Bernie
here...

(nods to Bernie)

...that we're going to give a prize
to the first person whose name
starts with an R.

RUTH

No way!

Ruth looks at Bernie to make sure it's okay with him.

Bernie shrugs.

As Max wraps the lamb chops, he keeps eyeing Ruth. He notices her holding a BOOK ON NURSING.

MAX

My heart is palpitating. I think I need a nurse.

Ruth looks down at her book.

RUTH

I'm not a nurse yet. I'm just reading about becoming one.

MAX

(to Bernie)
Beautiful and smart!

Max leans over the counter with the package.

MAX (CONT'D)

Here you go, Nurse Ruth.

She smiles broadly as she reaches for it.

RUTH

Thank you... uh... uh...

Max doesn't answer. He smiles as he studies her face.

BERNIE

Max. His name's Max. Max Stein.

Max winks.

MAX

You sure are the cat's meow,
Ruth.

Ruth blushes, smiles broadly. She smiles at Bernie.

Max watches as she exits the shop.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm going to marry that woman.

Bernie swipes his hand in the air, SCOFFS. He shakes his head as he swings a CLEAVER DOWN on the slab of brisket.

MAX (CONT'D)

What! The heart wants what the heart wants.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

Ruth enters, sets the package on the counter. Fifty year-old Elizabeth enters.

RUTH

Birnbaum's was closed, Mama.
So, I went to Bernie's.

Ruth unwraps the package. Elizabeth shakes her head.

ELIZABETH

Lamb chops? I thought I asked
you to get hamburger for stuffed
cabbage.

RUTH

You did, but the great-looking
butcher gave me these for free.

ELIZABETH

For free?

RUTH

Yes, can you believe it?

ELIZABETH

Ok. Then I'll stuff the cabbage
with lamb.

Elizabeth gets a sharp knife.

RUTH
And tomorrow I'll get us a
chicken, okay?

ELIZABETH
Are you sure you're going back
just for a chicken?

Ruth smiles broadly.

INT. BERNIE'S BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

Ruth excitedly enters the Butcher shop.

MAX
Well, look what the cat brought
in. Hello, nurse Ruth. Is
Birnbaum's still closed?

RUTH
No. I... I... um.

She looks in the counter.

RUTH (CONT'D)
I came to get a chicken.

MAX
A chicken, huh?

Ruth smiles at him.

MAX (CONT'D)
For roasting, frying, or boiling?

Ruth shrugs.

Max realizes she didn't come just for a chicken. He takes
one out of the counter, stealing glances of her as he wraps
it. He leans over the counter to hand it to her.

RUTH
How much?

MAX
For you, nothin', Sweet Stuff.
(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm glad you came back. The
'Maltese Falcon's' playing at the
picture show. Would you like to
see it?

RUTH

(eyes light up)
You mean on a date? With you?

MAX

Uh, huh. Unless you'd like to
go with Bernie.

Ruth looks at Bernie, then smiles broadly at Max.

EXT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Max and Ruth approach the movie theater booth with a sign
showing 24 CENTS to enter. As Max pays, he winks at Ruth.

Ruth can hardly contain her excitement. He takes the
tickets, proudly extends his elbow. They go inside.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

They share a box of popcorn as black and white NEWSREEL
SCENES play on screen. A NARRATOR describes the action as
SOLDIERS march in front of a reviewing stand with Adolf
Hitler saluting.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

German soldiers march with
precision past Adolf Hitler, as
other soldiers flanking them,
carry Nazi flags. The soldiers
salute Hitler as they pass.

SOLDIERS (ON SCREEN)

Heil Hitler. Zig heil.

Ruth squeezes Max's hand. He puts his arm around her.

Film footage shows a German panzer tank pounding a church
as it advances through the streets of Belgium.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

90.

The Germans have invaded France
and Belgium.

MAX

What is the world coming to!

INT. PIZZA RESTAURANT - DAY

Max and Ruth eat pizza for lunch in a small booth. They each take a slice of pizza from the plate, bump the point as if toasting.

Max feeds the point of his pizza to Ruth. She does the same to him with hers.

He wipes the sauce off her chin with his finger, then licks it.

Ruth GIGGLES. A serious look replaces her smile.

RUTH

I'm worried about the war.
Promise me you won't enlist.

Max holds her hand. Ruth strokes his hand with her thumb, looks into his eyes.

MAX

Not if I don't have to, my
little Honey Bear.

Max wolfs down his slice of pizza, takes another one.

MAX (CONT'D)

Tell me about your mother. How
are you two fixed for money?

RUTH

My mother, Elizabeth, is a cook.
She's the chef at Ziggy's.

Max looks pleasantly surprised.

MAX

Ziggy's? I love that restaurant!
(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

91.

They have the best cabbage soup
and cutlets. And the potato
latkes and blintzes are to die
for!

Ruth's smiles, but it quickly dissipates.

RUTH

My mother has a bad heart. She
watched her parents get killed.
Then she lost two sons, and my
father, who died of alcoholism.

Max shakes his head sadly.

MAX

No wonder she has a bad ticker
with all she's been through.

There is commotion with lots of people rushing by the
window outside. A TEENAGER runs inside.

TEENAGER

President Roosevelt just
announced the Japanese attacked
Pearl Harbor yesterday!

Ruth grabs Max's hands. They look seriously at each other.

MAX

I guess that means we're going
to war.

Ruth's eyes well up.

They both stand. He kisses her forehead, hugs her tightly.

SUPER: 1943

INT. BERNIE'S BUTCHER SHOP - DAY

Max reads a letter with furrowed brows, looks away, SIGHS.

MAX

Well Bernie, looks like you're
(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)
gonna hafta find another helper.
My number's been selected.

Bernie walks over. Max hands him the letter, Max removes his apron.

BERNIE
I wish I wasn't so old so I can
enlist and give that son-of-a-
biscuit Hitler a piece of
shrapnel up his wazoo.

MAX
I better go tell Ruth.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ruth cries as Max tells her the news (inaudible dialogue).

Elizabeth watches as Max gets on one knee.

MAX
Ruthie, dear. My little lovebug.
When I return, will you marry me?

RUTH
Yes, of course. I was hoping
you'd ask.

Elizabeth smiles, places her left hand over her heart.

ELIZABETH
Mazel tov.

Ruth takes the silver ring off her finger, hands it to him.

RUTH
Wear this to remind you of your
promise.

Max kisses the ring, places it on his pinkie. They kiss.

SUPER: JAPAN, 1944

EXT. AMERICAN SHIP - DAY

An American ship with decks full of soldiers, sails towards an island seen in the close distance.

Max gets onboard a landing craft, joins three other American soldiers (19-22) who are smoking.

Their boat splashes into the ocean.

MAX

May I?

One of them, JOEY, reaches out his pack, speaks with a New Jersey accent.

JOEY

Sure, here.

Max takes one.

JOEY (CONT'D)

I'm Joey, that's Sergio, and this big guy is Tyrone, better known as Gargantuan.

Six-foot-nine, muscular, TYRONE lights the cigarette for him, speaks with an Irish accent.

Max takes a puff, then coughs and coughs.

TYRONE

You ever smoke before?

MAX

(shakes his head, coughs)

First time.

Joey notices Max's hands shaking.

JOEY

Well, this is as good a time as any to start.

Max nods, takes another drag.

TYRONE
Were you drafted?

MAX
(nods)
I would never sign up for this.

JOEY
I did. I have six sisters and my
mother to support. Combat pay
is pretty good, not to mention
the benefits.

TYRONE
I wish we were in Germany instead
of Japan. I want to kill Hitler
with my bare hands.

MAX
From the looks of you, I think
you could actually do it,
Gargantuan.

Their landing craft comes ashore.

EXT. JAPANESE FOREST - DAY

The American soldiers advance cautiously with rifles ready.
Not a word is said. They nervously point their rifles at
the slightest NOISE.

After a while, a Sergeant raises his hand to stop. He
spirals his index finger signaling, "this is the place".

The soldiers spread out with some soldiers facing trees.

They lay their rifles down against the trunks, unzip their
pants.

Max joins several men who use their small shovel to dig a
hole.

He removes his helmet, sets it down next to him on his left
side. To his right is Tyrone. They pull down their pants.

Their naked butts can be seen as they squat to defecate.
Several soldiers stare at Tyrone, smile at each other.

TYRONE
(sotto voce)
What? You've never seen an Irish
ass before?

JOEY
None as pretty as yours.

The men snicker with MUFFLED LAUGHS.

Max holds his shovel like a cane for support as he defecates. It is very quiet. He looks up at the sky through the tall trees gently swaying in the breeze.

A soldier near him FARTS LOUDLY.

A sniper's BULLET hits Max's helmet with a CLANK. Max looks down.

REVEAL: a bullet hole in his helmet.

The American soldiers grab their rifles as pants go unzipped. Others stand and SHOOT with their pants down at their ankles.

Max dons his helmet with bullet hole clearly visible, advances cautiously through the forest. It is eerily quiet.

Suddenly a small Japanese soldier comes up from the ground behind him, sticks the end of his bayonet into Max's back.

Max stops walking, drops his rifle, raises his hands. He turns around slowly.

He faces a young teenaged boy in uniform with his finger on the trigger.

Max grabs the rifle, pulls it upward. A SHOT GOES OFF, but the boy holds on tightly. They struggle.

Max gets pierced in the abdomen by the bayonet.

He kicks the boy in the groin causing the boy to pull the rifle back out.

Max grabs the rifle away, and uses the butt of it to knock the boy unconscious. He aims the rifle at the boy, then lowers it, refusing to kill him.

Out of breath and visibly shaking, Max drops to his knees, and CRIES. He takes his helmet off, stares at the child who almost killed him.

Max GRIMACES, looks down at his bleeding abdomen.

END OVERALL FLASHBACK.

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

A young Hispanic man with a bullet hole in his shoulder is wheeled by.

Rachel shows empathy, then looks at Rabbi Goldblum.

RACHEL

My father always reminded me
my whole life that if the
bullet that hit his helmet
had been one inch to the
right, I wouldn't have been
born. What luck, huh?

RABBI

I would call it God's plan.

RACHEL

Yes, well, I don't know if God
planned for us to bomb Hiroshima,
but thank God that pretty much
ended the war.

RESUME OVERAL FLASHBACK

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Elizabeth sits in a comfortable armchair, peels potatoes

over a large bowl on her lap.

Ruth lies on the small couch next to the RADIO listening to MUSIC with her eyes closed. The music is interrupted by a RADIO ANNOUNCER.

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

We have breaking news that
Japan has officially surrendered.
Yes, this is good news, folks.
The war is over!

Ruth perks up.

RUTH

Mama. Did you hear that? It's
over!

ELIZABETH

Yes, my hearing is very good.

LOUD CHEERS are heard coming from outside. Ruth gets up,
walks to the window.

She looks down at the people celebrating in the street.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Some people wave flags or hug, kiss strangers.
- People form a conga line.
- Some men grab women and dance.
- Papers fly from tall buildings like snow.

END MONTAGE.

Ruth SIGHS deeply.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Ruth, why don't you go out and
celebrate with your friends?

RUTH

Because Mama, I haven't heard
from Max. I don't know if he's
alive or dead. He should have
mailed me a letter by now. How
can I celebrate?

Tears flow down Ruth's cheeks as she watches couples hugging and kissing.

The apartment BUZZER goes off. Ruth slowly walks over to the intercom.

RUTH (INTO INTERCOM) (CONT'D)

Yes?

MAX (V.O.) (IN INTERCOM)

Ruthie? It's me. I'm...

Ruth doesn't wait for him to finish his sentence. She bolts out the apartment door.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Ruth quickly runs down four flights of stairs.

INT. NEW YORK APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Ruth opens the main door, smiles broadly.

RUTH

Max! You're home!

They both smile soaking in each other's eyes. They kiss for a very long time.

END OVERALL FLASHBACK.

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Rachel SIGHS HEAVILY, stands.

RACHEL

After they married, they moved to Los Angeles. My father got a job as a meat cutter. Then my mother gave birth to me.

RABBI

And your Grandmother?

RACHEL

My Grandmother got a job as a cook in Hollywood. And again, cooking helped her and my family survive.

RESUME OVERALL FLASHBACK

SUPER: HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA, 1959

INT. HOLLYWOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

A famous male COMEDIAN (34, looks like Lenny Bruce), sits at a table, savors his lunch. He closes his eyes, smiles. He snaps his fingers for the waiter.

COMEDIAN

These are the best fuckin' veal cutlets I've ever had. I want to meet the fuckin' cook.

The waiter goes to the kitchen.

Elizabeth comes out wearing an apron and hairnet. She slowly walks over wiping her hands with a towel.

COMEDIAN (CONT'D)

This is delicious!

ELIZABETH

Thank you. They were the Tsar's favorite.

COMEDIAN

The Tsar? Well, I feel honored.

He slicks his hair back.

COMEDIAN (CONT'D)

Do you know who I am?

Elizabeth shakes her head.

COMEDIAN (CONT'D)

I'm a fuckin' comedian. What's your name?

ELIZABETH

100.

Elizabeth, but you can call me
Lizzie.

COMEDIAN

Well, Lizzie. I'm gonna eat
here every fuckin' chance I get.

Elizabeth smiles.

A famous blue-eyed singer and actor, FRANK sits at a
booth with his friends nearby. He gestures with his index
finger for Elizabeth to come over. She obliges.

FRANK

Did you make these sandwiches?

ELIZABETH

Is there something wrong with
the food, Sir?

FRANK

No, honey. My friends and I were
just saying these are the best
sandwiches we've ever tasted. I
just wanted to thank you. My egg
sandwich is perfect. And when
my guests are happy, I'm happy.

He stuffs a twenty-dollar bill into her pocket. Elizabeth
smiles.

ELIZABETH

I'm glad you're all enjoying them.

She starts to walk back to the kitchen.

FRANK

Just a minute, Honey.

Elizabeth's smile dissipates. She turns around, puts her
hand in her pocket, pulls out the money thinking he changed
his mind. She walks back to the booth.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I know the owners of Foxy's in
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Vegas. They could sure use a good cook like you. Whatever they're paying you here, I'll make sure Foxy's doubles it.

Elizabeth happily puts the money back inside her pocket.

COMEDIAN

(yells)

What the fuck, Frank. Don't take her away!

Frank waves him off.

RACHEL (V.O.)

After three years in Vegas, my Grandmother came home to live with me and my parents.

INT. ELIZABETH'S LOS ANGELES HOME - DAY

Elizabeth walks in through the front door carrying a suitcase. Ruth walks by, is surprised.

RUTH

Mama! What are you doing here?

ELIZABETH

I got tired of Vegas, and I missed you.

They hug.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

Remember when we moved out here, you said you wished you had a house in Malibu? Well, I made enough money to buy that house you've been dreaming of.

RUTH

You did? You made that much?

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rachel and the Rabbi walk into Rachel's room. Rachel sits on the bed. The Rabbi sits in the chair next to her.

RABBI

So, what finally happened with your Grandmother?

RACHEL

In 1980 tragedy struck when we lived in Malibu. And once again my Grandmother's desire for an uncomplicated life had an obstacle.

RESUME OVERALL FLASHBACK

INT. MALIBU HOUSE - NIGHT

BEGIN MONTAGE:

- Thirty-four-year-old Rachel gets into bed as torrential RAIN is heard pounding the roof.
- Max and Ruth watch television in the Master Bedroom as LIGHTNING flashes.
- In the kitchen Elizabeth pours hot tea from a kettle into a glass just as LOUD THUNDER shakes the house.
- She cautiously walks toward her bedroom with her tea so as not to spill it.

END MONTAGE.

INT. MALIBU HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

A WEATHER REPORTER on TV stands in front of a map.

WEATHER REPORTER (ON TV)

Rain, rain, and more rain. With the recent Agoura fires, the danger now becomes mudslides.

RUTH

Should we be worried?

MAX

103.

Naw, I don't think so. We don't
have a hill or mountain near us.
I feel sorry for the people near
PCH.

Max fidgets with the pillows behind him.

RUTH

Back still hurting?

Max nods.

MAX

Carrying those slabs of beef has
a toll.

He reaches over to the night stand. Swallows Percocet.

Ruth turns off the tv and lights. Both fall asleep.

Ruth is awakened by a loud CRACKING SOUND. She looks out
her window from bed.

In the moonlight trees fall over, are dragged away by
rapidly flowing water.

Her eyes fearfully widen.

The house CREAKS. The window GLASS BREAKS LOUDLY.

RUTH

Max. Wake up. Max!

She uses both arms to try to forcefully wake him.

RUTH (CONT'D)

Oh my God, Max! Wake up!

The bedroom wall behind the headboard caves in onto them.

Their bed is pushed to the other side of the room. Mud
pours in quickly, covers them.

INT. MALIBU HOUSE - ELIZABETH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

One wall collapses. Water quickly fills Elizabeth's room.

Her bed floats outside like a boat. Rain pours on her.
She opens her eyes.

Her bed wedges against a large tree preventing it from
being swept away.

INT. MALIBU HOUSE - RACHEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rachel wakes up, rushes through ankle-high water towards
her Parent's bedroom, only to find it demolished.

She runs to her Grandmother's bedroom.

RACHEL

Grandma? Grandma, where are you?

She looks through the open wall, sees the bed outside
wedged against the tree. The water is now knee-high around
Rachel, and rising.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Grandma, are you there?

ELIZABETH

Yes, Rachel. I'm here.

Suddenly a large Jeep SUV flows by and wedges between
Elizabeth's bed and the house. Rachel studies it. She has a
plan.

RACHEL

I'm coming. Don't move.

Rachel quickly wades through the water towards the SUV.

She steps onto the back bumper, puts one foot on the
wiper. As she climbs on top of the car, the wiper breaks.

She holds onto the roof rack as she slithers slowly across
the roof on her stomach. She carefully steps down onto the
hood of the car, and jumps onto the bed.

She lies in bed with her Grandmother, holding her tightly.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

ELIZABETH

Yes. Where are your parents?

RACHEL

Mom and Dad's room is gone!
I don't know where they are.
What are we going to do?

Elizabeth kisses her on the forehead, hugs her tightly.

ELIZABETH

I don't know. But, never give
up hope, Rachel. Hope gives
you strength.

EXT. MALIBU HOUSE - NIGHT

The house slides off its foundation. All the walls of the house cave in, followed by the roof.

EXT. MALIBU HOUSE - DAY

The sun rises revealing Elizabeth and Rachel asleep in the bed still wedged against the tree.

A large lifeboat with two RESCUERS paddles down the now calm water towards Elizabeth and Rachel.

RESCUER #1

Hello. Are you okay? Anyone
hurt?

RACHEL

Grandma, wake up. We're being
rescued.

Elizabeth doesn't respond.

RACHEL

Grandma, wake up!

Elizabeth's eyes open. She smiles at Rachel.

Rachel SIGHS her relief, hugs her.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
(to Man)
We're okay.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

As they look at the graves, Rachel (34) wipes her eyes. Eighty-seven-year-old Elizabeth has an expression of overwhelming shock.

RACHEL (V.O.)
In that one night, I lost both
my mother and father. The horror
of what happened is something
that will live with me the rest
of my life. And my Grandmother,
well... her grief was too much to
bear.

Rachel looks at Elizabeth, notices tears flowing down her face.

RACHEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It was the first time I saw tears
flow down my Grandmother's face.
Burying her daughter was like
cutting the tiny thread that was
holding her heart together.

Elizabeth steps forward, places a stone on Ruth's gravestone. She clutches her heart, collapses, and dies.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Grandma!

Rachel rushes to her.

She swiftly lifts Elizabeth's head and shoulders, holds them in her lap. She stares at Elizabeth's face. A moment of silence.

RACHEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In that moment, I felt great
love and empathy for her. All
the pain and suffering of
(MORE)

RACHEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
losing everyone she loved,
and all the hardships she
endured under the most
difficult circumstances, yet
she never gave up.

Rachel's body shakes. Her eyes well up. Her mouth quivers. She bites her lip trying to stop it. She sadly shakes her head.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
(sotto voce)
I love you, Grandma.

She cries uncontrollably, buries her head into Elizabeth's chest as she hugs her tightly.

There is another moment of silence before we hear,

RACHEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
This great woman became my idol.
She taught me many things, but
I think her perseverance
impressed me the most. I miss
her dearly.

END OVERALL FLASHBACK.

SUPER: PRESENT DAY

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rabbi Goldblum's eyes well in tears. He removes his glasses, wipes them with a handkerchief.

Rachel wipes her tears with the knuckles of each index finger. She sniffs in her runny nose.

RACHEL
I had her buried with her aunt
Katya's shawl because it meant
so much to her.

The Rabbi nods in understanding.

RABBI

And, you my child. You lost everyone.

She nods sadly, looks down, tears flow down her cheeks.

RACHEL

This is why I question the meaning of life.

The Rabbi is about to speak, when Dr. Kopinski approaches. Rabbi Goldblum takes note of his serious look.

RABBI

I can come by a little later if you'd like.

RACHEL

No, please, I'd like you to stay.

Rabbi Goldblum nods.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

Well, the MRI revealed a tumor.

Rabbi Goldblum shakes his head in disbelief. Rachel stares at the Doctor with a gaping mouth.

RACHEL

What? I fell, and now I have a brain tumor?

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

From the size of it, apparently, you've had this for quite a while. Have you had any headaches, blurred vision, or dizziness?

RACHEL

Yes. I get migraines. I was on my way to the pharmacy when I almost got hit by that car.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

We need to remove the tumor
(MORE)

DOCTOR KOPINSKI (CONT'D)
otherwise, it could metastasize
and spread to other organs.
Then it would be inoperable.

Rachel shakes her head.

RACHEL
I don't want the operation. I
just want to go home. I see
no point in continuing with
my life.

The Doctor furrows his brow, is clearly disappointed at her
decision.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI
This is not something to be
taken lightly. It's terminal.
If we don't operate, you
understand, you probably will
have only six months to a
year at the most.

RACHEL
I'm not going to have the
surgery. What does it matter if
I die in a few months or a few
years? You don't understand I
have nothing to live for.

Doctor Kopinski looks in frustration at Rabbi Goldblum.

RABBI
Yes, you do. You have yourself.
Live for yourself, Rachel. Fight
to stay alive.

RACHEL
But, don't you see? I'm the
end of the line. It doesn't
matter.

Doctor Kopinski crosses his arms.

Rabbi Goldblum SIGHS, speaks slowly, calmly.

RABBI

Someone once said, 'We are born, and then we die'. What counts is what we do in-between.

Rachel searches his eyes as she takes this in.

RABBI (CONT'D)

The Talmud says, 'Even if a sharp sword is right at your neck, never despair Gods Mercy!' Never give up, Rachel. To do so is a sin.

Rachel stares sadly into space, thinks about this.

RABBI (CONT'D)

You should take a lesson from your grandmother. To give up would be a disgrace to her memory. Her courage and perseverance are her gifts to you, and this is how you repay her? In this respect you are letting her down.

Rachel reacts as if what the Rabbi said was a slap in the face.

RABBI (CONT'D)

Right now, you need surgery, and I'm sure she would advise you to have it.

She stares at him during a long moment as she thinks.

RACHEL

(sotto voce)

You're right. You're absolutely right. I need to live if only to honor all the sacrifices my ancestors made in order for me to have a life.

She looks at Doctor Kopinski.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Okay, let's take it out.

Rabbi Goldblum pats her hand.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI
I'll go reserve the OR stat.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Rachel lies in bed groggy with her head bandaged. Rabbi Goldblum sits on a chair next to her.

RABBI
Nah. You see? Things happen
for a reason. I'd say the
accident was a blessing because
you didn't know about the tumor.
I'm glad you decided to have
the surgery.

Doctor Kopinski walks in smiling.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI
Am I interrupting?

RACHEL
No, not at all. Come in.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI
I have good news. Fortunately,
the tumor was in a good location.

Rachel looks perplexed at the doctor for what she considers an inane response.

RACHEL
A good location?

DOCTOR KOPINSKI
Had the tumor been one inch in
either direction, it would have
been inaccessible. You are very
lucky, young lady.

Rachel looks at the Rabbi.

RACHEL

There's the one inch again.

Rabbi Goldblum smiles in understanding.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

Fascinating, I, too, have missed death by just one inch. I remember hiding under a one-inch thick floorboard to evade Nazis.

RACHEL

Really? I would love to hear more about that.

Their eyes lock in on each other. He smiles.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

Another time, perhaps. Well... feel better. I'll check in on you later.

RACHEL

Yes, please do. Thank you.

As Doctor Kopinski exits, Rachel looks at Rabbi Goldblum. She SIGHS deeply.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

I still don't understand why I'm still alive. What do I do with my life now?

RABBI

Maybe you are meant to write about your ancestors... their struggles, sacrifice, your Grandmother's survival. Think about it, my child.

RACHEL

I will. I definitely will.

Rabbi Goldblum pats her hand.

RABBI

113.

It's been a pleasure talking with
you, Rachel. Get well soon.

RACHEL

Thank you, Rabbi.

Rabbi Goldblum exits.

After a few seconds, Rachel carefully reaches for the
phone, speaks inaudibly.

Moments later a VOLUNTEER KNOCKS, enters.

VOLUNTEER

Hello, did you ask for pen and
paper?

RACHEL

Yes, I did. Thank you.

The Volunteer smiles, hands it to her, exits.

There is another KNOCK on the door.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Come in.

Dr. Kopinski enters again.

Rachel has a worried look fearing he has some bad news.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Is there something wrong?

DOCTOR KOPINSKI

No. I... I was wondering. I
know we hardly know each other,
but I'd like to get to know
you better and hear some more
about your courageous Grandmother.

Rachel EXHALES DEEPLY, relieved it wasn't bad news.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI (CONT'D)

When you're feeling better,
(MORE)

DOCTOR KOPINSKI (CONT'D)
would you like to have dinner
with me?

Rachel's eyes light up. She imitates Maria's flirtatious ritual her grandmother taught her. She tilts her head, licks her lips, then smiles.

RACHEL
Yes, of course. I'd be delighted.

Dr. Kopinski grins like the Cheshire cat.

DOCTOR KOPINSKI
Great. So, get well soon.

RACHEL
Yes. Thank you.

As Dr. Kopinski leaves, Rachel smiles up at the ceiling, then looks down at the paper.

She thinks, then starts to write.

CLOSE ON PAPER

FOR LIZZIE, 1893-1980

END CLOSE UP.

FADE OUT.