

ARMENIAN RHAPSODY

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INT. HOME OFFICE — DAY

A spacious, sunlit room features a grand piano, a collection of musical instruments, and scattered office supplies.

SCREEN TITLE: Yerevan, Armenia, 1910

A cello leans against the wall, seemingly observing the room. Sunlight streams through tall windows, casting a glow on a cluttered desk strewn with books, notebooks, and sheet music.

The room is silent. From a nearby space, the faint echo of a bouncing ball breaks the stillness.

ANNA (O.S.)
Artem! Enough playing—finish your homework!

ARTEM, 8, a wiry boy with curious eyes, bursts into the office and flops into the desk chair. He shoves books aside, his gaze drifting aimlessly—until it lands on the cello.

Mesmerized, he approaches, his hand reaching out as though drawn by an invisible force.

A faint cello melody begins, growing subtly louder.

INT. SMALL AUDITORIUM OF THE YEREVAN PHILHARMONIC — AUTUMN, EVENING

Artem, now 24, tall and confident, with thick black hair, plays the cello onstage. He accompanies EGON PETRI, a renowned pianist in his 40s, bald with round glasses, during a chamber concert. Artem, captivated by Egon's virtuosity, tries to match his energy.

SCREEN TITLE: 1926

The audience erupts into applause as Egon finishes. He gestures for Artem to join him for a bow.

INT. RESTAURANT IN YEREVAN — SHORTLY AFTER

A banquet is being held in honor of Egon Petri in a small, private dining room. Ten guests are in attendance, including Artem and his teacher, the petite, 50-something pianist-composer ALEXANDER SPENDIAROV.

Guests shed coats and muddy boots in the vestibule before gathering at the table. Artem and Alexander sit side by side, facing Egon.

KHANIAN, 50s, stout and authoritative, stands holding a wine glass.

KHANIAN
Let's raise our glasses to welcome
our distinguished guest, the world-
renowned musician Egon Petri.

He gestures toward Egon, seated beside him.

KHANIAN (cont'd)
Welcome to our land.

Glasses clink as guests drink to Egon, who smiles modestly.
A TRANSLATOR interprets the group's words into German.

Egon speaks, and the Translator relays his gratitude.

TRANSLATOR
I am honored to be in this historic
country. Thank you for your warm
hospitality. To your resilient
nation!

Applause follows. The group begins their meal as laughter
and chatter fill the room.

KHANIAN
(to Translator)
Ask the Maestro if he was pleased
with Artem's accompaniment tonight.

Artem blushes as the question is posed.

TRANSLATOR
The Maestro was very pleased. He sees
a bright future for him.

Alexander looks at Artem with pride. Artem, embarrassed but
thrilled, speaks softly.

ARTEM
I was just trying to keep up with his
brilliance.

KHANIAN
(pointing to Artem)
A proud graduate of our conservatory!

EGON
Bravo!

KHANYAN

(rising, to Alexander)
This praise is for you as well,
Maestro! A man who, despite a
brilliant career abroad, chose to
return to his war-torn homeland—to
enrich it, not only with his
compositions but by educating the
next generation.

Everyone raises their glasses in honor of Alexander, who
accepts the toast with a humble smile.

KHANIAN

To the younger generation—may their
paths be smooth and their art
eternal!

Another round of toasts ensues.

EXT. SIDE STREET NEXT TO THE RESTAURANT — SAME MOMENT

A dusty, cobblestone, decorated with Soviet symbols street,
lined with old, low-rise buildings, shows little traffic.
Vintage cars, horse-drawn carriages, and rural carts pass
by, fitting the era.

A few SCRUFFY STREET CHILDREN wander along the sidewalk.
They approach the restaurant's window, peering inside at the
lively banquet. After whispering among themselves for a
moment, they quickly slip into the restaurant's foyer.

INT. RESTAURANT IN YEREVAN — CONTINUOUS

The children sneak inside, hiding near the doorway as they
continue to watch the celebration. Moments later, they seize
an opportunity—grabbing Egon's boots from the foyer before
dashing out of the restaurant.

Inside the hall, the banquet carries on, undisturbed.

Guests rise and head toward the vestibule, only to discover
Egon's boots are missing.

KHANIAN

This is disgraceful! We must find
them immediately...

The guests are flustered, except Egon, who smiles politely,
hiding his amusement.

INT. YEREVAN PHILHARMONIC HALL — SUMMER, AFTERNOON

Onstage, SUREN, a handsome 22-year-old actor, sits in an armchair. At the piano, Alexander plays a segment from Almast's Dance from his opera Almast. Nearby, a cello rests against a chair.

Alexander finishes his performance.

SUREN

Beautiful.

(glancing at his
watch)

But your student seems to be running late, Alexander Stepanich.

ALEXANDER

That's unusual for him. I hope nothing's happened...

Suddenly, Artem rushes into the hall, moving quickly toward the stage.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

Ah! There he is.

Artem steps onto the stage.

ARTEM

Sorry I'm late. I was finishing the composition you asked for, Suren.

He grabs his cello and readies to play.

ARTEM (cont'd)

(to Alexander)

Maestro, I'd like your thoughts too.

Artem begins playing a soulful melody.

SUREN

It's beautiful. Your tardiness is forgiven. Right, Alexander Stepanich?

ALEXANDER

Bravo, Artem! Once again, I must say how much I regret that you didn't choose our composition department at the conservatory.

ARTEM

You know how deeply I'm devoted to the cello, Maestro.

ALEXANDER

Of course! But one doesn't exclude the other. Keep writing, by all means! I'll speak with the administration about publishing or staging your works.

ARTEM

I don't know if I'll ever be able to repay you.

ALEXANDER

Don't even think about that.

SUREN

Well then, shall we try this first?

ARTEM

Sure!

Artem begins playing the same melody again. Suren rises from his seat and, in his resonant, melodic voice, recites a passage from Jivani's poem "They Come and Go."

SUREN

Sounds good, doesn't it, Alexander Stepanich?

ALEXANDER

Wonderful!

Alexander approaches Artem, placing a hand on his shoulder.

ALEXANDER (cont'd)

It's a wise choice to base your first serious work on Armenian poetry. But remember, greatness lies in blending the national with the classical.

SUREN

This is a work of genius, my friend.

Artem beams with pride, rejuvenated by their praise.

INT. ARTEM'S PARENTS' KITCHEN — EVENING

The modest kitchen exudes warmth, the scent of homemade food wafting through the air. ANNA, a well-dressed woman in her 60s with kind eyes, is busy preparing dinner.

The door creaks open, and Artem enters, his face clouded with sorrow.

Without removing his coat, he slumps into a chair at the table. Anna glances at him, immediately sensing his heavy mood.

ARTEM
Good evening, Mom.

ANNA
Hello, my boy. Why the long face?

ARTEM
Alexander Stepanich has passed away.

Anna stops what she's doing, wipes her hands on a towel, and sits across from him.

ANNA
How?

ARTEM
A stroke.

ANNA
What a terrible loss.

ARTEM
His heart couldn't withstand the intrigues...

ANNA
Ah, my son... A man's life is like that of a mole.

ARTEM
A mole? Why a mole?

ANNA
Because we spend our lives digging through obstacles, carving out our own paths in the hope of seeing just a sliver of light at the end... Spendaryan undoubtedly reached that light.

ARTEM
Yes, he was a great man and an extraordinary composer. He did so much for me.

Anna reaches across the table, gently stroking Artem's hand.

ANNA
Don't lose heart, my boy.

ARTEM
I won't, Mom. I'm just sad... Where
are Dad and Misha?

ANNA
Your father's still at work, and your
brother... He's been gallivanting all
day. It's as if I have to do his
studying for him too.

ARTEM
You're too hard on him.

ANNA
Not at all. If he had even a fraction
of the diligence you showed during
your student years, I wouldn't say a
word.

ARTEM
He's still young. He'll find his way.

ANNA
Ah, if only...

ARTEM
Will Dad be home soon?

ANNA
Any minute now. Why?

ARTEM
I wanted his advice. I've received a
job offer—from Leninakan.

Anna straightens in her chair, her curiosity piqued.

ANNA
Leninakan? Really?

ARTEM
Yes. The position of director at the
music studio. I'd also be teaching
alongside it.

ANNA
But you're so young...

ARTEM
(smiling)
Perhaps the leadership knows
something about my organizational and
teaching skills that you don't.

ANNA
Impossible. No one knows my son
better than I do. But how will you
manage there, all alone? Who will
cook for you, wash your clothes?

Artem stands, walks behind Anna, and embraces her gently.

ARTEM
I'll manage just fine, Mom. You've
taught me everything I need to know.

ANNA
Have I?

ARTEM
Of course! Do you think your son
can't wash his own clothes or cook a
meal?

Anna wipes a tear and rises, a small, proud smile breaking
across her face.

ANNA
You know, my boy, in these hard
times, a stable job is a blessing.
We're barely making ends meet as it
is. But for you to be so far away at
your age...

ARTEM
Mom, you know better than anyone what
an artist's life is like.

Anna gently strokes Artem's face, her expression softening
with pride.

ANNA
I do, I do... My artist.

Artem kisses and embraces Anna, who looks at him with
admiration.

Artem's brother MISHA (20, tall, thin) enters.

MISHA
Evening. What's going on here?

ANNA
Nothing, son. Your brother just
decided to leave.

MISHA
Where to?

ARTEM
Leninakan.

MISHA
Why?

ARTEM
I've been offered a job.

MISHA
What, there's no work here?

ARTEM
Not right now.

MISHA
Come on, something will turn up. Why
rush?

ARTEM
I can't just sit around waiting for
work to find me—then miss an
opportunity like this.

ANNA
Boys, sit down. I'll bring some food.

MISHA
No, Mom. I'm not hungry.

ARTEM
Me neither.

ANNA
Well, then wait. I'll be right back.

Anna exits. Misha's mood visibly shifts. Artem gently places
a hand on his brother's shoulder.

ARTEM
Come on, let's sit and talk for a
bit.

They sit across from each other at the table.

MISHA
When are you leaving?

ARTEM

In ten days.

MISHA

Got it.

ARTEM

Listen—this doesn't mean I'm disappearing. I'll be here anytime I'm needed.

MISHA

I know.

ARTEM

I can't just stay idle while our parents work themselves to the bone to support us.

MISHA

What can I do to help?

ARTEM

You? Nothing. Your job is to study hard and stop running around town.

MISHA

Okay, Okay...

ARTEM

I'll take care of the rest. But you need to understand—there's no way to succeed in our field without hard work. Got it?

MISHA

Yes.

ARTEM

Don't end up regretting wasted time later. That's important.

MISHA

I understand.

Anna enters cheerfully, holding a plate of pastries and a bottle of wine.

ARTEM

Mom, why'd you spend money on this?

ANNA

Oh, don't worry. We have to celebrate your first appointment, don't we?

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