

My Beloved Bad Mother

written by

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1 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

TITLE: Ukraine, 1992

CLOSE UP OF A YOUNG WOMAN'S FACE.

A young woman is giving birth. Bright light. Her face shows excruciating pain and she screams in pain.

FEMALE DOCTOR'S VOICE (O.S.)  
 Quiet, sweetheart! Just a little  
 more! Push harder!

Suddenly, the young woman stops crying, and the newborn's wail is heard.

FEMALE DOCTOR'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 See that, KATYA! Look, what a  
 strong little fellow was born! What  
 will you name him?

Katya smiles joyfully, with tears in her eyes.

KATYA  
 Mikhail!  
 (and adds fondly)  
 Misha!

2 INT. CANADA. CONCERT HALL - EVENING

CLOSE UP OF A MAN'S HANDS PLAYING THE PIANO

TITLE: CANADA, MONTREAL. OUR DAYS.

The pianist's fingers run skillfully over the keys, performing classical music. After a few seconds, the musician stops playing, running his fingers across the keys, as if gently stroking a living being with love. A dead silence sets in for 2-3 seconds, and then... A BURST OF APPLAUSE!

The camera pulls back, and we see a young, fair-haired man (33) in a tailcoat rising from the piano. He is of medium height with an inspired, handsome face. He presses his hands to his chest in gratitude and bows before the audience!

In the background of the stage, a poster hangs with the logo "Concours musical international de Montréal 2025 - Piano".

The emcee comes out onto the stage, also applauding lightly and pointing to the pianist. With a smile on his face, he speaks into the microphone.

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen! Please  
welcome the First Prize winner of  
the Montreal International Music  
Competition, the brilliant pianist  
— Mr. MICHAEL ROY!

The hall explodes in applause once again!

3 INT. JEFFREY'S APARTMENT (MICHAEL'S FATHER). MONTREAL SUBURB  
— DAY

The living room is furnished with expensive furniture,  
including a bar with drinks, several armchairs and a  
luxurious sofa.

An elderly, grey-haired man, JEFFREY, sits in one of the  
armchairs. He wears a loose, soft button-down shirt. His son,  
Michael, in a slightly worn but stylish sweater, approaches  
and hugs his sitting father.

JEFFREY

(beaming with happiness) )  
I'm happy for you, son! It's a pity  
Rachel didn't live to see it.  
(a slight shadow of  
sadness)

MICHAEL

(sitting in the chair  
opposite)  
She was like a real mother to me!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(a thoughtful smile)  
I wonder if my real mother was as  
beautiful as Rachel?

JEFFREY

Of course! You certainly look like  
her! When Rachel and I saw you for  
the first time, and we saw your  
sweet little eyes, we loved you  
instantly! And Rachel decided to  
keep the name your birth mother  
gave you—Mikhail, Michael.  
(pause)  
But unfortunately, she died shortly  
after your birth.  
(with slight sadness)

Then Jeffrey changes his tone from sad to cheerful!

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

But let's not dwell on sad things  
on such a beautiful day!

(laughs)

I immediately thought then – this  
little boy will be a worthy  
successor to my business. But you  
grew up to be a talented musician!  
Well, I'm even happy about that!

(smiles)

MICHAEL

That is your success, too, father!  
Your heart and your insight led me  
to this award!

JEFFREY

(with a satisfied smile)

And my finances, my boy! It would  
not have been easy to raise you,  
Michael, and give you an education  
with just a loving heart.

An elderly maid SALLY enters the room, bringing a tray with a  
cup of coffee and a cup of tea, as well as sugar in a sugar  
bowl.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Thank you, Sally! To my joy at my  
son's success, I unfortunately  
cannot add the pleasure of a cup of  
my favorite cappuccino! Only tea  
and only without sugar!

(smiles ironically)

Sally places the coffee, tea, and sugar on the coffee table  
and leaves. Stopping for a second, she says:

SALLY

I've worked in your house for many  
years, and I have never seen such  
happy eyes on you, Mr. Roy! Maybe a  
little cookie with your tea?! You  
know I bake them myself and put in  
very little sugar.

JEFFREY

Oh, no! I won't allow that cursed  
diabetes to overshadow the  
celebration!

(MORE)

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

However, if I were to risk my health for the sake of this happy event it should be for something truly worthwhile!

Michael looks at his father with curiosity, as if silently asking – for what?

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

(in a cheerful voice)

Well now, Michael! Bring the bottle of collector's Rémy Martin Black from the bar! I bought it for 25 thousand dollars in 2008, on the day I reached the peak of my business success! Do you remember, Michael? That was the year of the crisis! But not for me! I've kept this bottle for a special occasion!  
(laughs)

MICHAEL

(nods his head)

Of course, I remember! From the little I could see beyond the music stand and the notes!  
(laughs)

Michael walks toward the bar.

JEFFREY

Hard work and persistence – that's the right path! What's the point of fooling around with girls and friends at 18, when you have your whole life ahead!

Michael takes the bottle, two glasses, and walks back.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

You'll always have time to have fun; real fun is when your pocket is stuffed with money!  
(chuckles ironically)

Michael sets down the glasses and begins to open the bottle.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A cheerful and slightly ironic gaze.

MICHAEL

You know, Dad, I heard that a poor man who finds a hundred dollars on the street is happier than a millionaire who earned a thousand dollars instead of the usual ten thousand that same day!

JEFFREY

Of course! And a frog in the swamp rejoices just as much as an eagle in the sky, but it still lives the life of a frog!

Jeffrey arrogantly points to the bottle.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Open it up, Michael! Don't tremble over that swill, it's just cognac! Pour it!

CLOSE UP OF THE EXPENSIVE BOTTLE

Michael clumsily opens the bottle.

MICHAEL

(with irony)

So you were born an eagle right away?

JEFFREY

A person always has a choice of who to be! I made my choice and I taught you! And my experience helped me to stand firm in 2008 and even get richer. But why am I talking only about myself? It's your celebration, son!

MICHAEL

No, no! I'm very interested! And how did your experience help you wrangle out of the crisis?

JEFFREY

(slightly sipping the cognac)

Good cognac! But it's not worth that much money!

(thinking)

You ask how I managed to wrangle out of the crisis? In a crisis, you don't WRANGLE OUT OF IT! You HAVE to ATTACK!

(MORE)

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
But it's better to foresee! I made  
a bet on the COLLAPSE!

Michael looks at his father with bewilderment.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
Yes, yes! I used the "shorting"  
strategy - my "secret weapon"!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael comically rolls his eyes, showing he doesn't understand anything.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
(with irony)  
In short, so as not to overload  
your creative brain, I'll just say  
this - I foresaw, and I attacked!

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

For a second, a predatory expression appears on Jeffrey's face, which immediately dissolves into a good-natured smile. He looks at his son with love.

Michael takes a sip of cognac and looks at his watch. Michael's phone rings. He takes the phone from his jacket pocket.

MICHAEL  
Yes, darling! I stopped by to see  
Dad.  
(pause, Michael listens)

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

In Jeffrey's eyes, there is arrogance and irony simultaneously.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
(with nervousness)  
I haven't forgotten your condition,  
Linda. No, no! I'll be there soon!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S HAND

His hand nervously clutches the glass.

Michael turns off the phone. He has a displeased look on his face.

JEFFREY  
Are you in a hurry?

MICHAEL

No. More accurately, I still have half an hour. You know how Linda is right now!

JEFFREY

Of course, son! A pregnant wife and happy moments of success await you at home, and all this on the eve of your son's birth!

MICHAEL

Why a son and not a daughter?

JEFFREY

I don't want my granddaughter to inherit her mother's character! It's better if it's a boy.

(laughs)

I'm just joking, Michael!

Michael smiles sadly.

4 EXT. UKRAINIAN COMPANY BUILDING - SPRING DAY

TITLE: Ukraine, 1992

A young woman, KATYA, approaches the building on which is written: "ELECTRONICS and SERVICE" COMPANY.

CLOSE UP OF HER BRIEFCASE AND HER MODEST CLOTHES

Katya wears an inexpensive raincoat; her hairstyle is modest, but despite all this, she is a VERY beautiful girl. She is carrying a man's briefcase for documents.

At the entrance, she is met by a guard, a middle-aged man with a military bearing.

GUARD

(kindly)

Hello, Katya! Happy March 8th to you! Happy International Women's Day!

KATYA

(modestly, with a smile)

Thank you very much!

She opens the door and steps inside.

5

Tanya approaches Katya.

6

INT. UKRAINIAN COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

A large room with several desks on which stand computers of that time, as well as several cabinets for documents. One of the tables is set up in the middle, used for a buffet; it has champagne, vodka, and other drinks, as well as light snacks. Three women are bustling around the table. Two of them are young, TANYA and NATASHA, approximately the same age as Katya, and one - MARIA - is about 50 years old.

The young girls are dressed in short skirts and bright blouses. They wear striking makeup. The older woman, Maria, is heavily built; she wears a women's business suit, lots of gold jewelry, and by her appearance and behavior, it is easy to determine that she occupies a higher position in the office hierarchy.

A festive atmosphere prevails. Katya, having already removed her raincoat, enters the room. She wears a plain, cheap blouse and a skirt below her knees. Despite the modesty of her clothes, her beautiful face and graceful movements make her stand out among her colleagues.

Tanya approaches Katya.

TANYA

(cheerfully)

Hi, workaholic! Drop your papers and go brush your hair better!

(mockingly)

Our boss, IVAN, should arrive soon with his congratulations! And they say he won't be coming alone!

Katya, meanwhile, sits down at her desk and takes documents out of her briefcase.

KATYA

(with irony)

Judging by the heavy makeup on your face, which looks like an Indian war paint, our boss must be arriving with Stallone, whom our American partners sent us along with the batch of new computers! Did I guess right?

All the women in the room laugh, except for Maria. She walks up to Katya's desk and imperiously rests her hands with clenched fists on the edge of Katya's desk.

CLOSE UP OF MARIA'S HANDS

Several gold rings and signets are visible on her strong hands.

MARIA

(haughtily, with irony)

Listen here, Madam GOLUB (calls Katya by her last name) You don't work here as a clown, you work as an accountant! Where were you wandering for so long?

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

A proudly raised chin and an independent gaze.

KATYA

I submitted the report to the tax inspection. Per your instruction, Maria!

MARIA

And how did it go?

KATYA

Everything is fine. But our inspector fell ill, and when I went to another one, I stood in line for a long time.

TANYA

(cheerfully, with irony)

And now "Cinderella" also has to bake a pie and wash the floors!

(laughs)

Maria straightens up and with a proud bearing turns to Tanya and speaks in a bossy tone.

MARIA

Nobody asked for your opinion, you silly flirt!

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

Phil adjusts his glasses on the bridge of his nose with an intelligent hand movement and speaks in broken Russian.

PHIL  
 (with a smile)  
 Zdrávstvuyte! Pozdrávlyayu s

IVAN (O.S.)  
 (loudly and cheerfully)  
 Happy holiday, my dear ladies!

CLOSE UP OF IVAN

He is a tall and plump man of about forty, dressed in the style of the post-Soviet space of the 90s. He wears a crimson jacket, a bright tie and a massive gold watch on his arm.

CLOSE UP OF IVAN'S COMPANION

The man next to him, PHIL COHEN, is the complete opposite of Ivan Sergeyeovich. He is thin, wearing an unbuttoned cardigan and worn jeans. He has round glasses and long hair, so he slightly resembles John Lennon.

CLOSE UP OF MARIA

An obsequious smile appears on Maria's face; she takes a chair and places it at the celebratory table.

MARIA  
 Please sit down, Ivan! The table is set; we were just waiting for you!

IVAN  
 (with humor)  
 Well, if my chief accountant gives an order to sit down, it must be obeyed! But I am not alone! Allow me to introduce you to my friend and our American partner – Phil Cohen!

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

Phil adjusts his glasses on the bridge of his nose with an intelligent hand movement and speaks in broken Russian.

PHIL  
 (with a smile)  
 Zdrávstvuyte! Pozdrávlyayu s  
 prázdnikom!  
 (Hello! Happy holiday  
 (greetings!))

## WOMEN

O-O-O! Thank you!  
 (enthusiastic exclamation  
 and applause)

Phil looks around at all those present, who are looking at him with admiration, and stops his gaze on Katya, who is sitting at her desk and sorting through papers.

## CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Katya breaks away from her work and looks at Phil. Instead of her former modesty, a haughtily playful, barely noticeable smile appears on her face.

Phil and Katya meet eyes! Phil takes off his glasses, runs his hand over his eyes, and putting his glasses back on, he smiles and slightly nods his head.

## CLOSE UP OF TANYA'S FACE

She looks at Phil for a second, then at Katya, and her joyful face becomes grim.

## 7 INT. CAFE - EVENING

A small, cozy cafe. Katya and Phil are sitting at a table. On the table is a bottle of champagne and fruit.

## KATYA

(with a smile)  
 I think we've had enough champagne  
 for tonight already.

## CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

He looks at Katya with a desiring gaze.

## KATYA (CONT'D)

(smiling)  
 Why are you looking at me like  
 that? Am I really drunk already?

## PHIL

You are beautiful!  
 (pause, he pours  
 champagne)  
 You have good English  
 pronunciation. Where did you study?

## KATYA

In school and at university!  
 (laughs)

Phil hands her a glass of champagne.

PHIL

I don't believe it! Unless the  
university was in Harvard!

(smiles, pause)

A smart and beautiful girl like you  
could be a wonderful match for any  
man.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Katya takes a sip of champagne and looks at Phil with a  
cunning squint in her eyes.

KATYA

Men don't like women who are too  
smart!

Katya places the glass on the table and plucks a grape from  
the bunch with her slender fingers.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

She very sexily puts the grape into her mouth.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S LIPS.

Sensual lips.

PHIL (O.S.)

Stupid men prefer women who are  
just like them!

KATYA

(laughs)

Has anyone ever told you that you  
look like John Lennon?

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

Phil adjusts his long hair and then takes and lights a  
cigarette. His eyes show interest in Katya's words.

PHIL

You don't want to talk about  
yourself?

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Katya takes a sip of champagne and looks at Phil with a sly  
glint in her eyes.

KATYA

But you are a smart man! If that's  
so, then what is your wife like?

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S HAND

Phil puts out the half-smoked cigarette, pressing it hard  
into the ashtray.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Katya looks into his eyes, awaiting an answer.

Phil raises his gaze to her.

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

He has a harsh expression, which a second later changes to a  
carefree and cheerful one!

PHIL

I am as free as the wind!

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S HAND

Phil gently places his palm on Katya's hand and squeezes it  
carefully but firmly.

8

INT. KATYA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

DARKNESS. The light turns on in the hallway. Katya, turning  
on the light, quietly undresses. The hallway is very poor,  
with an old dressing table mirror.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA BENDING DOWN

Katya takes off her shoes; an old, faded rug lies on the  
floor. She then adjusts her long skirt, lifting it up  
slightly.

CLOSE UP OF A LEG

There is a run in her stocking!

Katya lifts her skirt even higher, revealing magnificent legs  
and examining the second stocking.

KATYA

Damn it! I just bought these  
recently!

Katya walks up to the dressing table, removes the hairpin from her head, and shaking her head, lets down her hair, which spills over her shoulders. To the side of the dressing table is a piece of peeling wallpaper. Katya smooths out this piece, which immediately sags again.

Katya sees her FATHER, a man of about 45, unshaven, in worn-out sweatpants and a dirty undershirt, approaching her in the mirror's reflection.

FATHER  
(yawning, displeased)  
Where have you been whoring around,  
you bitch?

Katya sharply turns from the mirror toward her father.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Katya has a cold gaze.

KATYA  
(coldly)  
I wasn't whoring around! We had a  
celebratory buffet at the office.  
Party event! Maybe you forgot, Dad,  
but today is March 8th!

The Father scratches his belly under his undershirt.

FATHER  
(rudely)  
March 8th, you say? Look at the  
clock, you fool! It's already March  
9th!

The Father turns around, walks to the kitchen and grumbles along the way. The camera follows him.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
(without turning around)  
Party event! Picked up some fancy  
words!

The kitchen is also very poor. A soot-covered kettle stands on the gas stove. On the kitchen table is a plate with leftovers and a bottle of vodka.

CLOSE UP OF THE BOTTLE

The Father takes the bottle and pours vodka into a glass, but the bottle is empty.

CLOSE UP OF THE GLASS

A few drops drip into the glass.

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 (annoyed)  
 You should have said it simply — we  
 were boozing with the broads! Or  
 not just with the broads? Huh?

The Father irritably puts the bottle under the table, where many empty bottles have accumulated.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
 You watch it, slut, don't you dare  
 come back home pregnant with some  
 brat!

The Father opens the refrigerator.

CLOSE UP OF THE REFRIGERATOR

Inside the refrigerator are several pots, some sausage and a whole bottle of vodka. The Father takes out this bottle.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

A sympathetic gaze from the daughter!

KATYA  
 (in a conciliatory tone)  
 Dad, hey Dad! At least eat  
 something! Why are you drinking  
 without a snack? I made soup this  
 morning, it's fresh! Want me to  
 heat it up?

FATHER  
 (in a grumpy tone)  
 She made soup, you see! Rather, you  
 should have brought some expensive  
 booze from your damn reception.

KATYA  
 (loudly and nervously)  
 Bring you booze? You've already  
 drunk a whole tank of alcohol in  
 your life!

Katya quickly walks into her room. It is a small room, with a bed, a wardrobe, and a small table piled with books and notebooks.

FATHER (O.S.)  
 (shouting after Katya)  
 Don't yell, Ekaterina!  
 (MORE)

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 It's night time; you'll wake the  
 neighbors, hussy!

Katya sits down on the sofa and covers her face with her hands.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

She is crying!

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 (shouting angrily)  
 You're starting to sass your  
 father?! A whole tank, I supposedly  
 drank! That's my life! You deal  
 with your own life first!

Katya uncovers her face and looks straight ahead.

CLOSE UP OF A PHOTO

On the table is a photo of a pretty 40-year-old woman in a mourning frame.

KATYA  
 (sobbing)  
 Mommy, why did you leave me?

Katya gets up from the bed, wipes away her tears and looks up above the bed. There hang photos and posters of famous musicians and actors.

CLOSE UP OF A PHOTO

The photo is of John Lennon.

9 INT. PHIL'S ROOM - DAY

CLOSE UP OF FLOWERS.

A huge bouquet of flowers! The camera pulls back, and we see a joyful Katya holding an armful of flowers! Katya is wearing a "cool" denim jacket and jeans (VERY fashionable in the post-Soviet space at that time).

PHIL  
 (with admiration)  
 I told you that this style of  
 clothing would look very good on  
 you!

PANORAMA OF THE ROOM.

The room has a minimalistic interior and fresh renovation. There is a comfortable sofa, with a small table next to it that holds a bottle of wine. A Japanese dual-cassette tape recorder (presumably a "Sharp") stands right on the floor.

KATYA

Thank you, dear, but you shouldn't buy me such expensive things! Okay?

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

In response to Katya's words about "expensive things," he cannot help but give a sarcastic smirk! After all, this costs little in his country!

PHIL

Stop it! It is my pleasure to give you gifts!

KATYA

No, Phil! Let's stop at the flowers!

Then Katya shifts her gaze to the tape recorder.

KATYA (CONT'D)

(pointing at the tape recorder)

A university classmate of mine had one just like that. His father was a diplomat!

CLOSE UP OF THE TAPE RECORDER

Phil bends down and turns on the tape recorder.

Phil straightens up and with a show of casual disdain, lightly kicks it with his foot. "The Beatles" begins to play.

PHIL

(cheerfully)  
Play, you silly box!

KATYA

(with pleasant surprise)  
What is that, "The Beatles"?!

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

He is smiling and very pleased with himself!

PHIL

I decided to fully match the image that you like so much!

He walks up to Katya, resolutely hugs her, and kisses her on the lips with a long kiss! Hugging him, she drops the flowers to the floor.

CLOSE UP OF FLOWERS

Flowers scattered on the floor.

Phil breaks away from Katya's lips and breathes passionately.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

She squints her eyes cunningly.

KATYA

That is very cool!

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

With a smile, anticipating Katya's answer.

PHIL

What's cool? Is my kissing cool or what?

KATYA

(playfully)

Listening to "The Beatles" on a tape recorder like this - THAT'S what's cool!

(laughs loudly)

PHIL

(with feigned offense)

Oh, you capricious girl! You didn't like "Lennon's" own kiss?!

Phil abruptly lifts her up in his arms, and they both laugh!

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Licking her lips with a cunning look.

KATYA

But you have a rival!

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

Phil with a smile and playful bewilderment.

PHIL

Who is that rascal?!!

Katya holds a couple of seconds' pause and then answers.

KATYA  
Paul McCartney!

They both burst into laughter! Then Phil carries her to the sofa.

CLOSE UP OF FLOWERS

The scattered flowers lie on the floor. PHIL'S FOOT STEPS ON THEM!

10 EXT. CANADA. STREET NEAR A MARKET - DAY

Michael exits the store with a bag of groceries in one hand and a wallet in the other. He walks up to his car and just as he opens the door, he suddenly hears a phone call. He hastily pulls the smartphone from his jacket pocket, and while getting the phone out, he drops his wallet onto the ground. He tries to pick up the wallet and answer the call at the same time, grumbling discontentedly.

MICHAEL  
Linda, Linda! I already said - I'm  
on my way! How many times can you  
call! Hello!  
(pause)  
What law firm? Wait, I'll just get  
into the car!

Michael gets into the car.

11 INT. INSIDE MICHAEL'S CAR - DAY

Michael clumsily, with a bag in his hand, sits in the car, continuing the conversation.

MICHAEL  
Yes, I'm listening! What law firm?  
I don't understand?

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE (V.O.)  
Don't worry, Mr. Roy! I am the  
branch director of the Evergreen  
Legal International law firm in  
Montreal. You need to visit our  
office!

MICHAEL  
(cautiously)  
Regarding what?

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE (V.O.)

It's in your best interest. I'm calling you on behalf of our client, Ms. Olivia Evans. She initiated a Gift Agreement of assets in your favor. We need to confidentially discuss the legal details and conditions of accepting the gift with you.

MICHAEL

(with extreme surprise)

A gift? To me?! From whom?

MALE VOICE ON THE PHONE (V.O.)

Judging by all appearances, from your mother!

12 INT. LAW FIRM OFFICE - DAY

The office is designed in a style of minimalism and restrained luxury. One wall is entirely glass, with a view of the city. The second is faced with wooden panels on which certificates are hung.

Behind the massive desk are an intercom system and an ultra-thin monitor. An elderly man in an expensive suit, ROBINSON, sits in a costly chair. Opposite the desk are two impeccably upholstered chairs; Michael sits in one of them. He is examining the documents.

MICHAEL

(raising his head)

This is unbelievable. One hundred thousand dollars? From a woman I don't know! (looks at the documents again) Maybe this is a mistake, Mr. Robinson?

ROBINSON

We do not make mistakes - that contradicts the principles of our long practice. Ms. Olivia Evans indicated not only your last name, but also your place of residence and other facts that confirm the beneficiary's identity with one hundred percent accuracy - your identity, Mr. Roy!

CLOSE UP OF ROBINSON'S FACE

A professional smile is on his face.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)  
 So, congratulations to you! Not everyone gets such a windfall!

MICHAEL  
 (nervously)  
 I don't like it when I don't understand something. I want to know — who is this woman?

Robinson calls his secretary using the intercom.

ROBINSON  
 (into the intercom)  
 Liz, make two cups of coffee, please!  
 (then to Michael)  
 And maybe a shot of cognac for the occasion?  
 (with a smile)

MICHAEL  
 No, thank you; I'm driving. Coffee, perhaps!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

He looks at Robinson with a questioning gaze.

ROBINSON  
 Ms. Evans asked me to mention that these funds are a gift from a MOTHER TO HER SON! But this is not stated in the Gift Agreement. You read it yourself! However, there is one significant requirement from our client.

A young female secretary enters the office and brings coffee. Placing the coffee on the table, she quietly and politely withdraws.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)  
 Thank you, Liz.

Robinson takes a cup of coffee and takes a small sip.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)  
 Help yourself! This is Blue Bottle Coffee. Only geniuses in Silicon Valley and your humble servant drink this!  
 (with a slight smirk)

MICHAEL  
 (agitated)  
 To hell with your coffee, Mr.  
 Robinson!

He jumps up and approaches close to Robinson's desk.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
 Explain to me at last what this  
 idiotic story is about?!  
 (starting to yell)  
 My pregnant wife is waiting for me  
 at home, damn it!

CLOSE UP OF ROBINSON'S FACE

Absolute calmness is on Robinson's face.

ROBINSON  
 (calmly, but insistently)  
 Please have a seat, Mr. Roy! You  
 yourself aren't giving me a chance  
 to explain the situation.

Michael sits back down in his chair.

MICHAEL  
 I apologize, Mr. Robinson. I lost  
 my temper.

ROBINSON  
 Nothing. The fact is that Ms. Evans  
 asked us to keep her contacts  
 secret, including her phone number,  
 and of course  
 (pause)  
 her place of residence!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

On his face is confusion and complete bewilderment.

Then Michael silently gets up from the chair and walks to the  
 panoramic window.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

He looks thoughtfully out the window.

ROBINSON (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 What do you see in this window?

MICHAEL  
 What? What did you ask?

ROBINSON

I asked you, Mr. Roy, what do you see in this window?

Michael turns his gaze back to the window.

CLOSE UP - VIEW FROM THE WINDOW

From the height of the multistory skyscraper, lower buildings shrouded in fog are visible.

MICHAEL

(with displeasure)

Nothing special! Houses stand all the way to the horizon! Why these stupid questions, Mr. Robinson?

Robinson approaches Michael, holding a cup of coffee in his hand.

ROBINSON

You, my dear Mr. Roy, see all the way to the horizon - MUNDANITY and GRAYNESS! In these gray boxes of small buildings, people scurry like ants! Take it, this is your coffee!

CLOSE UP OF ROBINSON'S HAND

In Robinson's hand is the cup of coffee he offers to Michael. Michael's hand unconfidently takes the cup.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)

Take it, take it! It's already cooled down a bit.

Robinson smiles and, hugging Michael by the shoulders, leads him to his chair.

MICHAEL

(angrily)

I have to go, sir!

ROBINSON

(stopping)

So, any of these 'little ants' would not think about WHY and FROM WHOM this money comes, but simply WOULD TAKE it!

CLOSE UP OF ROBINSON'S FACE

A slightly arrogant face, full of life experience, on which a barely visible condescending smile can be seen.

Michael takes the cup and, looking at it, returns his gaze to Robinson again.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)

So, my young friend! Allow me to call you that by right of my age? Come, let's sit down! There is a good saying - "The truth is rarely found on one's feet."

CLOSE UP OF ROBINSON'S FACE

A slightly arrogant face, full of life experience, on which a barely visible condescending smile can be seen.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)

But you, Mr. Roy, are a talented person, a musician. You, like me, are not one of the "ants." That's why you are bothered by SO MANY questions. But remember that mammoths died out, and ants live to this day!

(laughs reservedly)

MICHAEL

(dejectedly)

So you won't help me?

ROBINSON

Your curiosity is at odds with my professional ethics. I already helped you become a hundred thousand richer. However

(continues with irony)

Considering your salary as a famous pianist and, most importantly, the wealth of your adoptive father, this money is not so significant to you. Am I right?

Michael, not wishing to continue the conversation, resolutely extends his hand for a handshake.

MICHAEL

Thank you. Goodbye!

CLOSE UP OF A HANDSHAKE

Michael's hand wants to pull away, but Robinson's hand holds it firm!

ROBINSON  
 (forceful voice)  
 Mr. Roy, you forgot to take the  
 Gift Agreement.

On his face is already an unconcealed ironic smile.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)  
 (solemnly, with irony)  
 Indeed, the Bible is a great book!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL

Michael takes the documents from the desk and, pausing, looks  
 questioningly at Robinson.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)  
 (with a smirk)  
 "To him who has, more will be  
 given."

MICHAEL  
 In my life, money is not everything  
 yet!

He turns around and walks to the door.

ROBINSON (O.S.)  
 (calling after him)  
 Because you have never felt the  
 lack of it! Do you want a hint?

Michael immediately stops and turns, looking at Robinson.

CLOSE UP OF ROBINSON'S FACE

Instead of the former ironic smile, we see sympathy on his  
 face.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)  
 I see that you are a decent person  
 and truly want to find your real  
 mother. You are smart, but you are  
 not observant!  
 (smiles)  
 Does the surname of Ms. Olivia  
 remind you of anything or anyone,  
 as a musician?

Michael shrugs his shoulders.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

The thoughtful gaze suddenly changes to joyful realization!

MICHAEL

Yes, of course! Of course! Evans!  
 Bill Evans – the great jazz  
 pianist!! But  
 (pause)  
 What can that suggest to me?

ROBINSON

(with a condescending  
 smile)  
 Michael, do you want me to spoon-  
 feed you?  
 (laughs)  
 Go, my friend, to the sounds of  
 jazz and you will find what you are  
 looking for!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A grateful smile appears on his face.

MICHAEL

Thank you, Mr. Robinson!

13 INT. UKRAINIAN COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

Katya sits at a desk working with papers. On her desk in a vase is a bouquet of flowers. Another girl sits opposite her, also working.

Tanya approaches her and, leaning in, says:

TANYA

(with a spiteful smile)  
 Look at her! Flowers on the desk  
 every day! And do you know from  
 whom?

The girl shrugs her shoulders, showing she doesn't know and isn't very interested.

KATYA (O.S.)

Stop gossiping! You should sit down  
 and work instead! Well, Phil gave  
 me flowers! (in a defiant tone)  
 What's it to you?

CLOSE UP OF TANYA'S FACE

A contemptuous look down at Katya from above.

TANYA

Everyone knows already! It doesn't  
take much brainpower to spread your  
legs for a guy!

Katya puts the papers into a stack, then stretches gracefully  
and then, standing up, walks silently to the door with a  
smile full of superiority.

The girls, glancing at each other, look after her with  
bewilderment.

Reaching the door, Katya stops and turns back.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

An icy, killing glare!

KATYA

And you, Tanya, your mom and dad  
gave you neither brains nor  
beautiful legs! That's why you are  
furious!

Katya leaves, slamming the door loudly.

The girls look at each other in puzzlement.

CLOSE UP OF TANYA'S FACE

The puzzled expression changes to a malicious one!

TANYA

(maliciously)  
What a bitch!

The door opens and Maria enters, breathing heavily. She has a  
folder of documents in her hands.

MARIA

Oh, these bureaucrats at the tax  
office have worn me out! Spent half  
the day!

TANYA

(sardonically)  
Why didn't you send Katya, but went  
yourself? Are you perhaps afraid of  
the American?

Maria tiredly sits down at her desk, throwing the folder onto  
it.

CLOSE UP OF MARIA'S FACE

A condescendingly sad look at Tanya.

MARIA

You're a fool, Tanya! Did you see  
the multimillion turnover our firm  
has with that American's company?  
So you'd better keep silent!  
(heavily gets to her feet)

Then she turns to the second girl.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Natasha, turn on the electric  
kettle! Or in five minutes there  
will be a cup of coffee on my desk,  
or the salary of all you girls will  
be reduced by 5%  
(smiles genially)  
I'd trade half my realm for a cup  
of coffee!

Natasha nods her head and obediently walks to the kettle.

TANYA

(with irony)  
Half a kingdom will be too much;  
half of your salary will be enough.

MARIA

(in a boorish tone to  
Tanya)  
And why are you still milling  
around here, you hen?

TANYA

(offended)  
What's wrong?

MARIA

Did I not tell you? Run to the  
boss! He said he needs you!

Tanya turns around and slowly, maintaining false dignity,  
walks to the door, swaying her hips.

CLOSE UP OF MARIA'S FACE

Her stout face is full of sarcasm.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Go on, hurry up! There you can ask  
the boss why his partner Phil gives  
flowers to your 'gal-pal' and not  
to you!

(laughs)

CLOSE UP OF TANYA

Tanya stops near the door and, turning back, says:

TANYA

(chuckles ironically)  
'Gal-pal', indeed!

Tanya exits, loudly slamming the door behind her.

14 INT. BOSS'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is medium sized. A huge mahogany desk with an organizer, a photograph, and a model of a sailboat. On the wall is a large, bright, and tasteless painting.

The upholstery of the soft furniture is brown leather. Many expensive, but clashing accessories are present.

Ivan sits at the desk. Tanya stands at attention in front of him (back to the camera).

TANYA

(in an offended voice)  
Why do I have to go to this  
backwater again? Aren't there any  
other staff in the office to send?

CLOSE UP OF THE DESK

On the desk lies a very expensive and heavy Benefon mobile phone. Ivan's hand languidly spins it on the surface of the desk.

IVAN (O.S.)

Are you getting impudent, Tatyana?  
Should I send the slow-witted  
Natasha to our branch? Or maybe the  
chief accountant Maria? Huh?!

TANYA

(sulking)  
If Natasha is a fool, why do you  
pay her a salary then? Send the  
smart one - Ekaterina!

CLOSE UP OF TANYA'S FACE

Tanya's offended expression changes to a caustic one.

TANYA (CONT'D)  
Or is she NOW in a special position  
with us?

Ivan leaves his phone alone and authoritatively places his elbows on the table.

IVAN  
(with irritation)  
And you really have gotten  
impudent! What business is it of  
yours, fool!

Tanya begins to sob.

TANYA  
(wiping tears)  
Why do you all say the same thing?  
Maria calls me 'fool', now you too!

CLOSE UP OF IVAN'S FACE

Irritation changes to bewilderment.

TANYA (CONT'D)  
(sobbing)  
But Katya is smart to you. Because  
she understands NOT ONLY  
accounting!  
(sardonically)

Ivan gradually changes his expression; a smile appears on his face, and then he begins to laugh reservedly.

Tanya stops crying, and now it is she who looks at her boss with bewilderment.

CLOSE UP OF IVAN'S FACE

IVAN  
(speaking through  
laughter)  
Ah, so that's what it is? So you  
are jealous of Katya? (laughter  
intensifies) This confirms once  
again that all women, even the  
smart ones, are still FOOLS!

Ivan bursts into Homeric laughter and laughs uncontrollably for several seconds. Then he stops laughing and wipes the tears from his eyes.

TANYA  
What's so funny?

CLOSE UP OF IVAN'S FACE

Ivan props his chin with his fist and looks at Tanya with irony.

IVAN  
Some people might laugh. But it won't be funny for Katya when she finds out.

CLOSE UP OF TANYA'S FACE

Extreme curiosity!

TANYA  
What?!!

IVAN  
The fact that Phil has a wife in America! That's what!

CLOSE UP OF TANYA'S FACE

Tanya wipes the remaining tears with the palm of her hand, and JOY appears on her face!

Ivan languidly leans back in his chair.

IVAN (CONT'D)  
(with irony)  
The guy wanted to relax. (and then spreading his arms out to the sides) What's the big deal? It's normal!

CLOSE UP OF IVAN'S FACE

An insolent, self-satisfied face with an ironic smirk!

15 INT. UKRAINIAN COMPANY OFFICE - DAY

TITLES: UKRAINE, 9 months later

Maria sits at the desk, opposite her is Katya in an autumn coat.

## CLOSE UP OF MONEY

Two hundred-dollar bills lie on the desk.

MARIA

(with sympathy)

Take it, Katya. Be thankful that they at least paid the salary and not our "pieces of paper," but in dollars.

## CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

She has tears in her eyes.

KATYA

Why was I fired? I worked well!

MARIA

I'll tell you more—it will be difficult for me to cope without you. Two fools are left, Tanya and Natasha, and who they will hire instead of you is unknown.

Katya wipes her tears with a handkerchief and takes the money from the desk.

KATYA

(sobbing)

They won't let me see the boss  
(pause) And I can't reach Phil  
either.

## CLOSE UP OF MARIA'S FACE

Maria's expression changes from benevolent to angry.

MARIA

You should think about it well,  
maybe you'll guess why you were  
fired!

Maria brushes non-existent dust from the desk with her palm.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(angrily)

Your young generation has  
completely forgotten decency! You  
jump into bed with men even before  
marriage, and then you cry! Go, it  
will be a lesson for the future!

Katya heavily rises from the chair. A large stomach is visible under the buttoned coat.

16 EXT. SQUARE - DAY

Late autumn, a slushy, gloomy day. Katya walks through the square. An elderly couple walks toward her. Then a young man passes Katya, bumping her shoulder.

CLOSE UP - PATH

There is MUD on the path. Someone's feet walk heavily and churn the mud. Suddenly the wind brings a scrap of newspaper, then the camera shows an empty can, and then more and more garbage!

Along the path stand several people, mostly elderly women, in old, worn clothes. Various items are laid out in front of them on plastic bags - warm knitted socks, spoons and forks, dishes, and other household utensils. Garbage is scattered around. This is an impromptu market. Among them stands a young man in a short jacket and cheap shoes with thin, unseasonal soles. A stack of books is laid out for sale in front of him.

CLOSE UP OF THE GUY'S FEET

The guy's feet are freezing, and he knocks one foot against the other and stamps.

KATYA  
(with surprise)  
Dima, is that you?

DIMA  
(joyfully)  
Katyusha? Is it you?

KATYA  
Yes, it's me! But what are you  
doing here?

DIMA  
(embarrassed)  
Well, I'm selling my books here! I  
quickly sold the fiction, but  
specialized and scientific  
literature is not being bought!

Katya leans down and takes one of the books into her hands.

CLOSE UP OF THE BOOK

On the cover: "Principles of Mathematical Analysis" Walter Rudin.

KATYA

It can't be! That's Rudin's  
"Principles of Mathematical  
Analysis"! That's the "Bible" for  
any mathematician!

DIMA

(with a wry smile)

What can I do? Our institute was  
closed due to lack of funding;  
everything that was there is  
falling apart before our eyes.  
Thousands of factories are closing  
all over the country, thousands of  
people are without means of  
subsistence... what sort of books  
can there be here? And my mother is  
sick! Do you know how much medicine  
costs now?

KATYA

What about your postgraduate  
studies?

DIMA

I have already finished my  
postgraduate studies. I even wrote  
half of my candidate's  
dissertation. But who needs  
mathematicians now? Killers are in  
demand now!

(ironizes spitefully)

17 INT. KATYA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Katya enters the apartment and sees her father lying on the  
floor! He is in sweatpants with stretched-out knees that have  
slipped down his rear, and in an unbuttoned, dirty shirt.

Katya, scared, runs up to him and, falling to her knees,  
shakes her father.

KATYA

Dad! Dad, what's wrong with you?!

The father lifts his head slightly. He is simply dead drunk!

FATHER

Ah-ah! Is that you, you bitch?  
Where is your lover?

(MORE)

FATHER (CONT'D)  
 I'd smash his face! And you, fool,  
 why didn't you get an abortion?

He lifts himself slightly, then falls back onto the floor. Then he tries to turn onto his side and, leaning on his elbow on the floor, speaks, changing his intonation to a fawning one.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
 (fawning)  
 Alright, daughter, don't be mad at your dad! Did you at least get your salary? Your old man needs a hair of the dog, and the food has run out! Heh-heh!  
 (smirks and tries to stroke Katya)

Katya silently stands up and goes into her room (the camera follows her) And just as silently falls face down into the pillow. Her shoulders tremble—she is crying quietly!

The father tries to get up from the floor, then manages with difficulty.

CLOSE UP OF THE FATHER'S PANTS

On the pants, partially pulled down from his rear, there is a wet stain in the fly area!

CLOSE UP OF THE FATHER'S FACE

A drunken, hideous face.

FATHER (CONT'D)  
 (in a drunken voice)  
 Hey, daughter! Where are you?!

18 EXT. UKRAINIAN COMPANY BUILDING. WINTER - DAY

It is cold, snow is on the ground, and the wind is blowing. A representative class car is parked near the building.

Katya, hunched over, approaches the doors. She is dressed in a cheap, unseasonal coat, and a woman's warm headscarf is draped over her head. She presses the intercom button.

BEEP!

Instead of an answer, the door opens and a security guard comes out.

SECURITY GUARD

(with sympathy)

Katya, you came here before! You're  
fired—you know that yourself!

(strokes her shoulder)

KATYA

(with a devastated  
expression)

I know. I must see HIM!

The guard glances around and takes her by the arm, leading her slightly aside.

SECURITY GUARD

Katya, don't you understand? Ivan  
didn't just fire you for no reason.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Katya looks with a pleading and simultaneously questioning gaze.

SECURITY GUARD (CONT'D)

He just doesn't need you, Katya. He  
simply doesn't need you,  
understand?! Phil is flying back to  
America today!

CLOSE UP OF THE DOOR

The door opens, and Phil and Ivan come out of the building. Phil walks out of the building. He is wearing a bomber jacket and a beanie hat.

He shivers from the piercing wind and cold, quickly hiding his hands in his jacket pockets.

Ivan is wearing a long, beige cashmere coat unbuttoned and a long white scarf. He is cheerful, rosy-cheeked, and not cold at all! They take a couple of steps toward the car. The driver—a bodyguard—comes out after them and quickly runs to open the car.

PHIL

Damn! It's cold!

IVAN

(laughs)

It's nothing, you'll fly home  
tomorrow—you'll warm up!

LOUD SCREAM FROM KATYA (O.S.)

Phil! I can't reach you, my love!

Phil, stopping for a second near the car, looks toward Katya in bewilderment. Then he turns his gaze to Ivan.

CLOSE UP OF PHIL'S FACE

Phil grimaces and makes a dissatisfied face, indicating his displeasure to Ivan.

Ivan nods his head and shouts at the guard.

IVAN  
(loudly and  
authoritatively)  
Get her away!

KATYA  
I'm pregnant, Phil!

Phil quickly gets into the back seat of the car and slams the door shut.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA AND THE GUARD  
The guard holds Katya with all his  
might as she tries to break free  
and run to the car.

SECURITY GUARD  
(hissing)  
What are you doing?! I'll be fired  
because of you!

Ivan spits roughly and irritably and gets into the car in the passenger seat next to the driver. The sound of the engine starting is heard.

Katya breaks free from the guard's hands and runs. The car drives away.

CLOSE UP OF RUNNING KATYA

Katya runs after the car (runs toward the CAMERA). Her headscarf has slipped from her head to her neck, the top button of her coat is undone.

There is a lot of snow and ice on the road, and the car accelerates very slowly.

19 INT. INSIDE THE CAR - DAY

Phil sits in the back seat. He turns back and looks through the rear window.

Phil (POV) sees Katya running after the car.

In the distance is the company building, and Katya runs after the car on the snow-covered road (toward the CAMERA).

The car picks up speed. She is further and further from the camera (the car). Finally Katya stops.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA

A flushed face with a semi-mad look. The scarf is off her head, and she is breathing heavily.

KATYA  
(screams!)  
Look, it's your baby!

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S STOMACH

Katya unbuttons her coat:

ONE BUTTON!

SECOND BUTTON!

THIRD BUTTON - won't unbutton!

Katya rips the edges of her coat and pulls it open with a tug! THE BUTTON RIPS OFF The coat flies open, and we see the large stomach of the pregnant Katya!

KATYA (CONT'D)  
(with a heartbreaking cry)  
He is yours!!!

Katya falls to her knees and then - flat - into the snow!

The car disappears in the distance.

The security guard opens the door and, turning around one last time, looks sympathetically toward Katya.

CLOSE UP OF THE DOOR

The door closes with a creak and a dull thud. Focus on the closed door.

After a few seconds, the door opens again, and Maria rushes out with a fur coat hastily draped over her shoulders! She runs across the snow toward Katya lying face down in the snow.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA.

Katya's hand scoops up snow, and then we see how the hand slowly moves toward her head.

Katya lifts her face, red from the cold and tears, out of the snow and greedily bites the snow.

Maria runs up to her and tries to lift her, but slips and awkwardly sits down in the snow next to Katya.

MARIA

(breathing heavily)

Oh, girl, what are you doing to yourself? You can't stay in this cold! You foolish girl, get up!

(tries to get up herself  
and lift Katya)

To hell with that Phil! The scumbag! Stud!

Maria helps Katya to her feet and hugs her.

KATYA

(as if in a trance)

What will I do now? Alone with a child?!

(looks at Maria with a  
devastated expression)

CLOSE UP OF MARIA'S FACE

Tears are on her face.

MARIA

(tries to sound cheerful)

It's nothing, everything will be alright! You're smart and beautiful – you'll find another man! Let's go inside the building, it's cold!

She leads her toward the company building.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I'll call you a taxi now and pay for it, don't worry!

(holds her arm) You go home, get some sleep, and tomorrow – you call me! With fresh minds we will think together about what to do next!

(turns her face with her  
hand)

Do you hear me, Katya?

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

She is as if hypnotized, with an absent gaze.

KATYA

Father said — where you conceived  
that bastard, go back there with  
him!

(looks into Maria's eyes)  
He will throw me out!

MARIA

That damn drunkard! He won't throw  
you out!

Suddenly Katya's face is contorted by a grimace of pain!

Katya doubles over with a moan!

KATY

(screams)  
A-a-a!

MARIA

(in fright)  
What happened?! What?

KATYA

(moans and sinks back onto  
the snow)  
IT'S STARTING!

MARIA

Oh, my God! Wait for me, my dear!

The door opens, and Maria throws it open. In the doorway is  
the security guard's discouraged face.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(screams)  
Call an ambulance! Quickly! Katya  
is giving birth!!

CLOSE UP OF THE HEADSCARF

Katya's headscarf lies on the road. It is being covered by  
snow.

20 INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT. BEDROOM - EVENING

The room is decorated expensively but modestly. The subdued  
light from a table lamp falls on the bed.

CLOSE UP - MICHAEL NEAR LINDA.

Michael and Linda are lying on the bed. Michael, with a tender smile, has put his ear to Linda's rounded stomach. He closed his eyes, listening.

LINDA  
(smiling)  
And what do you hear in there?

MICHAEL  
(with a smile)  
Don't disturb! A new concert is starting.

LINDA  
Your own score!  
(laughs softly)

Michael lifts his head from his wife's stomach and lies flat on his back, with his hands behind his head.

MICHAEL  
(thoughtfully)  
Why do you rarely call your mother?

LINDA  
(with irony)  
Because she drives me crazy! And why did you ask?

MICHAEL  
I was thinking. You know, we always cry about loved ones when they are no longer with us. But the right thing would be to rejoice with them while they are near us.

Linda shrugs, Michael turns onto his side toward her.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
I love you very much!  
(takes her hand gently)  
And I will love our child very much.

Linda also turns to Michael and gently runs her thin fingers through his hair.

LINDA  
I know, sweetie! You will be a good father, I'm sure. Do you know why?

MICHAEL  
Why?

LINDA

Because you yourself grew up in love. Your adoptive parents, Jeffrey and Rachel (may she rest in peace), raised you better than many families raise their very own children.

Linda strokes his head.

LINDA (CONT'D)

You don't have a mother, but God gave you good adoptive parents who gave you a happy childhood.

Michael releases Linda's hand and again lies flat on his back. His face darkens.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A thoughtful gaze.

MICHAEL

I don't know what my mother was like. And why exactly "don't have a mother"?

Linda looks at her husband with bewilderment.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(looks at the ceiling)

I feel that she is somewhere close to me.

21 EXT. LAWN NEAR JEFFREY'S HOUSE - MORNING

A large, beautiful house. On the lawn is Jeffrey, who is pushing a lawnmower. He is wearing an old T-shirt with the McGill University logo and old, worn Cargo jeans with many pockets and a worn denim jacket.

Michael enters the yard, dressed in a light blazer and fashionable dark jeans. Jeffrey turns off the lawnmower.

JEFFREY

(joyfully)

Hello, son! Decided to check on your old man?

MICHAEL

(reservedly)

Hello, Father. Why don't you hire a gardener?

Jeffrey dusts off his jeans in an old-fashioned manner.

JEFFREY

A man my age is drawn to the earth.  
Not into the earth!

(laughs)

But rather closer to the earth. To  
nature!

He walks up to Michael and firmly hugs him around the  
shoulders.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

I'll sell all my assets and buy a  
farm in Alberta.

(smiles)

A very small one, to feed your and  
Linda's little one the most  
delicious milk, and my skinny son

(gently pats Michael on  
the stomach)

to fatten up with fresh beef!

(laughs)

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A warm look appears on his indifferent face! He lowers his  
gaze to his father's clothes.

MICHAEL

You still wear this T-shirt?

(with a smile)

How is it not worn out yet?!

JEFFREY

(laughs)

Because I grew up in poverty,  
unlike you, Michael, and therefore  
I treat things carefully! Besides,  
this T-shirt reminds me of distant  
youth and student adventures! Shall  
we go inside, Michael?

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

A piercing gaze.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

You didn't come to see me early  
this morning just to ask about my  
T-shirt, did you?

22

INT. KITCHEN IN JEFFREY'S HOUSE - MORNING

A huge, bright kitchen. Expensive wooden cabinets, a large marble "island" in the middle. A television is on the wall. The room looks actively used: there are traces of breakfast and a coffee maker on the "island".

Michael sits at the table and watches Jeffrey busy himself at the kitchen table.

MICHAEL

What are you doing, Father?

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY

Jeffrey cuts bread.

JEFFREY

(turning for a second)

I'm making you a salmon sandwich!  
Linda isn't up for cooking right  
now, and you must have drunk coffee  
on an empty stomach!

(expressively raises the  
knife)

Remember, coffee on an empty  
stomach is a direct route to  
gastritis, son!

MICHAEL

(unexpectedly)

Who is Olivia Evans?

Jeffrey turns sharply, holding the sandwich in his hand. Alarm is on his face.

JEFFREY

Who are you talking about, son?

MICHAEL

You have always been honest with  
me, Father!

Jeffrey puts the sandwich on a plate and pushes it toward his son, then sits down opposite him.

JEFFREY

You have also always been honest  
with me. Eat!

(in a commanding tone and  
then with irony)

Otherwise, our conversation won't  
go well!

MICHAEL

You are avoiding the answer.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

A piercing, willful gaze.

JEFFREY

You always spoke to me directly,  
without beating around the bush!  
Why this beating around the bush  
now?

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael lowers his gaze. It is clear that his father's authority has always weighed on him, but then he lifts his gaze and asks the question in one breath.

MICHAEL

Why did you lie to me that my  
mother died?

This time, it is Jeffrey who changes expression and lowers his eyes, unable to meet Michael's gaze. Then his self-control returns to him.

JEFFREY

(looking into Michael's  
eyes)

As soon as you turned sixteen, I  
told you that Rachel and I adopted  
you. I could have said nothing to  
you, but I told the truth!

MICHAEL

The truth cannot be halfway!

JEFFREY

(emotionally)

It can! It can if you love! It can  
if you are afraid to lose the most  
precious thing in your life!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S HAND

He takes the sandwich in his hand, then puts it back on the plate.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael looks at his father, clenching his teeth tightly, and the muscles in his jaw clench.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
 I wanted to tell you EVERYTHING,  
 but by that time I already knew  
 that Rachel was seriously ill.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

He looks at his father with sympathy.

Jeffrey cups his head in his hands.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
 (in a quiet voice)  
 I was just afraid of being  
 completely alone.

Michael stands up, walks around his father from behind and hugs him.

MICHAEL  
 Dad, I love you! But, tell me the  
 whole truth!

Jeffrey lifts his head and firmly squeezes Michael's arm that is hugging him.

JEFFREY  
 Rachel and I didn't have any  
 children of our own. She really  
 wanted one. And so did I.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

In his eyes – the shadows of the past.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
 Our good acquaintances from the  
 Ukrainian diaspora here in Canada  
 advised us to go to Ukraine. And  
 adopt a newborn baby there.

23 INT. UKRAINIAN HOSPITAL. CHILDREN'S WARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The children's ward is a long room, flooded with bright fluorescent light. Metal cribs and incubators stand in rows along the walls, in which wrapped infants lie. The atmosphere is strict and clinical.

CLOSE UP OF THE INFANT'S FACE

The baby's sweet face.

The camera pulls back, and we see the baby lying in the crib.

Standing near the crib are a nurse and the chief doctor of the hospital, BOYKO, in white coats, as well as Jeffrey (35) and his wife Rachel (30), seen from behind. White coats are draped over their shoulders.

BOYKO  
(in a businesslike, dry  
tone)

The newborn is under our medical supervision. His physiological and neurological indicators are within normal limits. Data recorded at birth: body weight 4.100 kilograms, height 56 centimeters.

Jeffrey exchanges glances with Rachel.

CLOSE UP OF THE INFANT

The baby is in the nurse's arms as she lifts him from the crib and shows him closer.

BOYKO (CONT'D)  
The biological mother is a young woman, twenty-three years old. The pregnancy history is uncomplicated, all prenatal tests are clean. Genetic risk is minimal.

Boyko smiles and obsequiously addresses Jeffrey.

BOYKO (CONT'D)  
So this is an ideal choice for your married couple, Mr. Roy! Besides (pause) His mother is currently in a very difficult financial situation. (a meaningful look on his face)

CLOSE UP OF RACHEL

Rachel smiles and nods to Jeffrey.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S HAND

His hand squeezes Rachel's hand.

JEFFREY (O.S.)  
(to Boyko)  
Yes, we agree!

BOYKO  
(a spreading smile)  
That's wonderful!  
(MORE)

BOYKO (CONT'D)  
 All that's left is to discuss the  
 financial side of this issue.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S HANDS

Jeffrey takes a business card from the breast pocket of his  
 suit jacket and holds it out. Boyko's hand takes the card.

JEFFREY (O.S.)  
 (in a dry, businesslike tone) Of  
 course, Mr. Boyko! My cell phone is  
 here. Call me as soon as you get  
 the consent of the mother.

Boyko examines Jeffrey's business card.

JEFFREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Tomorrow an attorney, Meyerson, is  
 arriving from your capital, Kyiv,  
 who will handle the child's  
 adoption case. You, I think, have  
 heard of him?

BOYKO  
 (with a bewildered look)  
 Who hasn't heard of him? A very  
 famous Ukrainian lawyer!  
 (smiles awkwardly)

CLOSE UP OF THE CEILING.

The ceiling is leaking, there is a large wet spot on it.

JEFFREY (O.S.)  
 (in an authoritative  
 voice)  
 That's wonderful, then! That means  
 I don't need to explain  
 responsibility to you.

CLOSE UP OF AN IRON BUCKET

An iron bucket **sits** under the spot where the ceiling is  
 leaking. Water is dripping into it. A pause filled by the  
 characteristic SOUND OF DROPS hitting the metal bucket.

JEFFREY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 And now - let's discuss the terms!

RACHEL  
 (with concern)  
 Has the baby been given a name yet?

BOYKO  
 (with an oily smile)  
 The mother named him Mikhail, but  
 that is completely unimportant! You  
 will name him as you see fit.

Rachel shakes her head negatively.

RACHEL  
 No, no! That's a good name! Mikhail  
 - Michael.  
 (smiles and nods her head)

CLOSE UP OF BOYKO

He nods in agreement, staring at his interlocutor with a fawning gaze. Then the camera moves down and focuses on Boyko's hands. He is nervous and greedily rubs his hands together.

JEFFREY (O.S.)  
 Excellent! I'll expect your call.  
 (and then in an  
 authoritative tone)  
 TOMORROW!

CLOSE UP OF HANDS

Jeffrey holds out his hand to Boyko and SQUEEZES his hand HARD.

24 INT. KITCHEN IN JEFFREY'S HOUSE - MORNING

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S HANDS.

Jeffrey tightly clenches his fingers. Strong, hardworking hands.

JEFFREY  
 The next day Boyko called me and  
 said he had settled the matter with  
 the mother  
 (pause)

Jeffrey looks at Michael, and correcting himself mid-sentence, he adds:

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
 With your mother.

MICHAEL  
 You didn't even bother to find out  
 her name.

JEFFREY

It is enough that I found out  
yours.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael looks at his father with a cold, piercing gaze.

MICHAEL

And how much did the purchase cost?

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Jeffrey suddenly flares up!

JEFFREY

(flaring up)

Yes, son! A purchase! Costing your  
happiness!

Jeffrey excitedly stands up from the chair and walks over to  
the table, after which he pours himself a glass of water.

CLOSE UP OF HAND WITH GLASS

Jeffrey's hand holding the glass – is trembling.

Jeffrey takes a sip, turns to Michael.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

(slightly calmed)

You can't even imagine in your  
worst nightmare – what kind of  
childhood would have awaited you in  
that miserable, poor country!

MICHAEL

(reservedly)

The same childhood as other  
children. Next to his own mother.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Sadness appears on Michael's face.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

With a mother who is possibly  
suffering and in need of help right  
now.

JEFFREY  
 (emotionally)  
 With that very mother who gave away  
 her child for ten thousand dollars!  
 She sold you, Michael!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A hint of disgust appears on his face.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
 (sarcastically)  
 However, to be fair – that was huge  
 money for Ukraine at that time!

Jeffrey expressively rubs his index and thumb fingers  
 together.

Michael stands up from the chair.

MICHAEL  
 (contemptuously)  
 You are pathetic in your cynicism!

JEFFREY  
 (flaring up again)  
 And you are foolish in your boyish  
 maximalism! Maybe you should go to  
 Ukraine to look for her?

Michael silently and slowly walks towards the door.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
 (sarcastically)  
 It's actually a wonderful time for  
 travel there right now  
 (a momentary pause)  
 In those rare hours when Russian  
 rockets aren't exploding!

Michael stops near the door.

MICHAEL  
 (coldly and indifferently)  
 I think I hate you right now.

Jeffrey, breathing heavily, leans his hand on the kitchen  
 table.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

There is devastation on his face, but at the same time,  
 determination.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

But, you are wrong! I don't need to go to Ukraine. My mother is much closer than you think!

Michael opens the door and leaves without saying goodbye.

Jeffrey stands, leaning on the table. The sound of the loudly closed door is heard. Jeffrey drops onto the chair, exhausted.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Jeffrey lifts his gaze. There are tears in his eyes.

25 INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The kitchen is small, in a minimalist style. Instead of upper cabinets – open shelves with bright spice jars and handmade ceramics. All appliances are built-in and unobtrusive. A vintage coffee maker is on the table. The kitchen looks cozy, creative, and actively used.

Linda sits at the table opposite Michael, in front of whom is a plate of almost untouched food. He lazily pokes at the food on his plate.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

LINDA

(in a stern voice)

Michael, I always support you in everything, you know that! But I don't understand how you could TALK TO JEFFREY LIKE THAT? To the man who gave you everything!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE.

Michael looks very distressed.

LINDA (CONT'D)

He is very lonely after Rachel's death.

MICHAEL

Yes, that was stupid of me.

LINDA

(with an indignant face)

Stupid?! That wasn't just stupid of you, it was cruel!

Michael emotionally jumps up from his chair and walks away.

MICHAEL  
 (indignantly)  
 Damn it! I wish I hadn't told you anything!  
 (returns back)  
 Do you understand, he spoke of a person as if they were merchandise! Nothing is sacred to him!

LINDA  
 (in a commanding voice)  
 Sit down and finish your food! I tried!

Michael looks at Rachel for a second and, calming down, obediently sits back at the table.

MICHAEL  
 I'm sorry, dear! I've just been somewhat erratic lately.

LINDA  
 (sullenly)  
 It's all because of this Olivia Evans. She burst into our happy life like a ghost!

Michael silently shakes his head in disapproval and starts to eat.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 I'll brew you some mint tea, it calms the nerves well. You need a good night's sleep.

Linda gets up and goes to brew tea.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 You said that your father has nothing sacred?

Linda pours boiling water into the teapot with tea leaves.

Michael swallows his food and puts his fork on the plate, looking questioningly at Linda.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

Her expression changes from stern to benevolent.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 But Michael, it is YOU who is  
 sacred to him! Dearer than anything  
 in the world!

Linda comes up behind Michael and hugs him around the  
 shoulders.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 (with a smile)  
 You know, dear, how much I love you  
 and I would be happy for you to  
 regain your past.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

Linda kisses him on the crown of his head like a child.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 (in a tender voice)  
 But for that, it's not at all  
 necessary to break your present!

Michael kisses Linda's hand.

MICHAEL  
 You are the smartest wife in the  
 world!

Linda hugs Michael and speaks tenderly into his ear.

LINDA  
 (ironically)  
 Yes, I am!

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

Playful sparkles flashed in her eyes!

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 That's why your father doesn't like  
 me!  
 (laughs)

26 INT. JEFFREY'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Jeffrey sits on the sofa in the living room. A blood pressure  
 cuff is on his arm. Sally sits next to him and looks at the  
 monitor readings. A first-aid kit lies near Sally.

SALLY  
 (reproachfully)  
 How could you do this, Mr. Roy!  
 (MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 Almost 200! You shouldn't be  
 drinking!

CLOSE UP - COGNAC BOTTLE

Half a bottle of Rémy Martin Black and a glass are on the  
 coffee table.

Jeffrey, breathing heavily and groaning, removes the cuff  
 from his arm.

Sally puts the monitor away.

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 I know why you are drinking, I  
 heard your conversation with your  
 son.  
 (pause)  
 This won't solve the problem.

JEFFREY  
 (dismally)  
 What do you think, Sally, will he  
 find her?

Sally opens the first-aid kit and takes out a pill, then  
 silently walks to the table and pours water into a glass.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
 Why are you silent?

Sally brings Jeffrey the glass of water and gives him the  
 pill.

SALLY  
 Drink it!

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Jeffrey winces and swallows the pill, washing it down with  
 water.

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

She looks at Jeffrey with sympathy.

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 What can I tell you except that you  
 are an old fool?

Jeffrey, after washing down the pill, holds out the glass to  
 Sally.

JEFFREY

(with distress)

Yes, you are right, my kind Sally.  
I am an old fool who spent his  
entire life so that Michael would  
become who he became!

SALLY

Yes, and he HAS become that! A  
talented and successful pianist,  
and most importantly a kindhearted  
person! A quality you could stand  
to learn from him!

JEFFREY

(gesturing)

Yes, of course! It's easy for you  
to judge! If you had only seen the  
contempt with which Michael looked  
at me when I told him I paid ten  
thousand dollars to his mother!

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

A piercing gaze with sympathy and condemnation  
simultaneously.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

What is my fault?! After all, SHE  
sold him!

Sally stands up from the sofa.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

(raising his voice)

And I paid ten thousand only to his  
mother, plus the lawyer, doctors,  
and bribes to the damn Ukrainian  
officials! Fifty thousand, Sally,  
fifty! At least!

Sally walks over to the coffee table and picks up the bottle  
of cognac, then walks back to Jeffrey.

Walking closer to him, she sharply shoves the bottle in his  
face!

SALLY

(with indignation)

This bottle of yours costs twenty-  
five thousand! A bottle of cognac,  
Jeffrey!!

Then, looking at the half-empty bottle, she adds

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 (angrily, with irony)  
 Although no, now it's cheaper.  
 You've already drunk half of it!

Calmly and imperturbably Sally carries the bottle to the bar.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Jeffrey looks after her with a stunned expression. Then he dejectedly lowers his head.

JEFFREY  
 So what now?

Sally puts the bottle down and returns back.

SALLY  
 (in a peaceful tone now)  
 You've probably heard, Mr. Roy,  
 that a little lie breeds great  
 distrust? And your omission to  
 Michael about his mother was a big  
 lie. (sits down next to him)

JEFFREY  
 Well, then advise me on something!

Sally softly strokes Jeffrey on the shoulder.

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

With a good-natured smile, in a soft voice.

SALLY  
 Well, first of all, not another  
 drop of alcohol. And secondly...

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

His face is strained and he is all attention.

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 You are worried that he will find  
 this Olivia, what's-her-name Evans?

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

Kind eyes and a sweet smile on her face.

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 (in a soft voice)  
 Don't be afraid!  
 (MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 You, on the contrary, help him with  
 it! Michael loves you!

27 INT. SMALL CHAMBER CONCERT HALL - DIM LIGHT, DAY

TITLES: A MONTH LATER

On stage Michael - is rehearsing, playing the piano. (MUSIC:  
 Chopin "Fantasie Impromptu" - very bright and dynamic)

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S HANDS

Michael's fingers either seem to hammer the notes into the  
 piano keys, or suddenly fly like autumn leaves driven by the  
 wind! (10 seconds)

CLOSE UP - ENTRANCE DOOR

The door opens. Chopin's music sounds. (2 seconds)

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael continues to play fiercely! The entire dynamic of the  
 piece is reflected on his face. (5 seconds)

CLOSE UP OF A PERSON'S FEET

Someone's male feet in boots walk through the concert hall.  
 Chopin's music sounds. (3-5 seconds)

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S HANDS

Michael is playing!

A man sits deep in the auditorium. The camera approaches and  
 we see Jeffrey! He sits and listens, unnoticed by Michael.  
 (about 10 seconds) The dynamic of the music increases!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael continues to play enthusiastically, not noticing  
 anything around him. (3-5 seconds)

CLOSE UP - ENTRANCE DOOR

We see the back of Jeffrey as he leaves. (The musical dynamic  
 decreases, the music becomes calmer) Jeffrey turns around at  
 the door. (2-3 seconds)

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Sadness in his eyes. (2 seconds)

CLOSE UP - ENTRANCE DOOR

The door slams shut. The music continues to play.

28 EXT. AUTUMN. STREET NEAR THE CHAMBER HALL - DAY.

CLOSE UP - LEAVES ON THE SIDEWALK

The wind drives the autumn leaves. Chopin's Fantasie Impromptu continues to sound, having transitioned into a calm phase and flowing into the autumn landscape with sad melodies. Jeffrey walks down the street, hunched over, and walks away into the distance (camera view from behind-below).

29 INT. RITCHIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A small room is cluttered with cabinets and various office equipment, some of which is disassembled. The working desk of the hacker RITCHIE takes up most of the room, on which sits a large monitor with an image of some numbers and diagrams, and also a laptop (turned off). A comfortable chair is near the desk. In the corner is a small, old sofa, on which lies a pillow and a crumpled fleece blanket - it is clear that the owner of the apartment most often sleeps right there. Michael sits on the edge of the sofa, looking around with curiosity.

Ritchie himself - a short, stout man of 30 with a benevolent face, dressed in a hoodie, enters the room with 2 plastic cups.

CLOSE UP OF CUPS

2 cups in Ritchie's hands, from which steam is rising.

RITCHIE

Sorry, Michael, it's just instant coffee! The good coffee ran out yesterday.

Ritchie gives one cup to Michael, and sits down in his chair, turning it away from the desk towards Michael.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

I haven't crawled out of my den for three days, but this time it looks like I'll have to. Sausages and bread are running out today.

(smiles guiltily)

I was restoring access to a crypto wallet for one of my clients after a hacking attempt.

(MORE)

RITCHIE (CONT'D)  
 Reviving the "Phoenix bird from the  
 ashes!"  
 (laughs)

MICHAEL  
 (with a smile)  
 You said it right - "den"! How does  
 your girlfriend Ninelle tolerate  
 this "den" of yours until now?

CLOSE UP OF RITCHIE'S FACE

His face's expression becomes gloomy.

RITCHIE  
 Well, she doesn't tolerate it  
 anymore.  
 (with resentment)  
 That French bitch!

Michael spreads his arms in confusion and a silent question.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)  
 Yes, yes, buddy! My, Ninelle, it  
 seems, has a new boyfriend!  
 (and then quickly flares  
 up)  
 Don't trust these women, Michael!  
 My ex-wife, who made off with half  
 my fortune, was a bitch, and this  
 Ninelle turned out to be the same!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

MICHAEL  
 (with sympathy)  
 I'm sorry, Ritchie. Is this a bad  
 time?

Ritchie waves his hand indifferently.

RITCHIE  
 Stop it, Michael! I am glad to talk  
 to anyone right now, and especially  
 to you.

Ritchie bends down under the table and turns on the printer,  
 then starts typing quickly on the keyboard.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)  
 You know, friend, I have learned  
 one thing in this life - that women  
 are only of 2 categories - "woman  
 whore" and "woman mother".  
 (MORE)

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

And how two such incompatible features can be present in these damn broads — is a mystery to me.

(pause)

By the way, speaking of your mother...

(pause)

Ritchie types something else on the keyboard and an image with a list of names and surnames appears on the large monitor screen.

CLOSE UP OF RITCHIE'S FACE

He looks intently at the screen.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

So far, I have only encountered the first option in my life.

(pause)

That's about broads!

(and then, to Michael with irony)

Maybe you will be luckier with Linda?

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

MICHAEL

(with impatience)

Well, what is it?!

CLOSE UP OF THE KEYBOARD

Ritchie's finger demonstratively clicks a key.

RITCHIE

(with a smug smile)

Voilà!

CLOSE UP OF THE PRINTER

A sheet of paper slides out of the whirring printer.

MICHAEL

(ironically)

"Voilà!" Your communication with Ninelle did not pass without leaving a trace!

(smiles)

RITCHIE  
 (not understanding)  
 What are you talking about? Here,  
 take it!

Ritchie picks up the sheet of paper and hands it to Michael.  
 He quickly snatches it and looks closely.

MICHAEL  
 But there are 25 "Evans" surnames  
 here! And in different cities and  
 countries!

RITCHIE  
 And note, there are also some  
 addresses! And would you like there  
 to be 2 surnames, and in one city  
 and preferably in Montreal?  
 (laughs)

CLOSE UP OF RITCHIE'S FACE

His face becomes serious.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)  
 Listen, friend! In the USA there  
 are over half a million people with  
 this surname, in Canada another 35  
 thousand, and over 800 thousand  
 worldwide! Half of them are women.  
 BUT! The good thing is that the  
 name "Olivia" was not as common in  
 the 70s as it is now.

Ritchie picks up his cup of coffee and casually crosses one  
 leg over the other.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)  
 I took age into account - from 50  
 to 60 years old, and the search  
 circle narrowed down in combination  
 with the first and last name. So,  
 the result, in my opinion, is  
 magnificent - 25! Moreover, all  
 candidates live in the USA! You're  
 even lucky you won't have to go to  
 Nicaragua! (laughs)

Michael looks at the list and says with displeasure,  
 gesticulating at the same time

MICHAEL  
 Linda is pregnant, I can't leave  
 for long!

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And look here: New York - 4  
surnames, Houston - 2, New Orleans  
- 1, Chicago - 3, there is also  
Olivia Evans in Holbrook - that's  
completely in the middle of nowhere  
in Arizona! And several cities are  
indicated right up to the border  
with Mexico! However

(breaks away from the  
list)

What am I talking about? Thank you  
very much, Ritchie!

(smiles)

You have helped me incredibly!

Michael holds out his hand to him and they high-five.

RITCHIE

(with a satisfied look)

You're always welcome!

(and then with feigned  
strictness)

But do you remember your promise?

(pause)

You promised to get drunk with me!

MICHAEL

(comically pressing his  
hands to his chest)

I beg you, Ritchie! Just not today!

Ritchie points his index finger at Michael.

RITCHIE

(frowning threateningly)

Precisely today!

Or are you not a man of your word?

Michael sighs resignedly and nods his head in agreement.

Ritchie smiles contentedly, gets up from the chair and playfully lightly hits Michael on the chin, after which Michael cheerfully jumps up and takes a boxing stance opposite Ritchie and they exchange light blows like boys, fooling around. Then Ritchie hugs Michael and they both laugh merrily!

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

Alright, don't forget your list and  
let's go. We'll start right now!

MICHAEL  
 (with surprise)  
 The search for Olivia right now?

Ritchie takes a step back from Michael and looks at Michael with confusion for a couple of seconds.

RITCHIE  
 What search? I meant – the bar! We need to go to the bar right now!!

They both burst into laughter!

30 EXT. STREET ON THE WAY TO THE BAR - EVENING

The first snow is falling. Michael and Ritchie walk, shivering from the cold and chatting merrily about something.

RITCHIE  
 She said to me – "Are you spying on me?" And I told her – " You pour so much perfume on yourself that I can find out where you are just by going outside and sniffing where the wind is coming from!"(laughs)

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael smiles, but suddenly the expression on his face becomes thoughtful.

31 FLASHBACK: INT. LAW FIRM OFFICE - DAY (MICHAEL'S MEMORIES)

CLOSE UP OF ROBINSON'S FACE

Instead of the former ironic smile, we see sympathy on his face.

ROBINSON  
 You are smart, but you are not observant! (smiles) Go, my friend, to the sounds of jazz and you will find what you are looking for!

32 EXT. STREET ON THE WAY TO THE BAR - EVENING

Michael and Ritchie have almost reached the bar. Ahead – an attractive neon sign.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael is excited.

MICHAEL

I know where to look for her!

Ritchie looks at Michael with a questioning gaze.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

I need to go to New Orleans!

RITCHIE

Why there exactly?

MICHAEL

Firstly, there is only one option there. And secondly...

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael's eyes shine joyfully, a smirk is on his face!

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

New Orleans - the capital of jazz!

Ritchie shrugs his shoulders in perplexity.

RITCHIE

I didn't understand anything. So, are we still going to drink?

MICHAEL

Absolutely!

Michael claps Ritchie on the shoulder happily and they walk to the bar door.

33

INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Michael sits at the table, holding his head in his hands. He has a terrible hangover. Linda puts a glass of water on the table and hands Michael an aspirin pill.

LINDA

Here, drink this! It's aspirin. Did you decide to relive your student youth?

(with irony)

I know who the "instigator" is!  
Your darling friend Ritchie!

Michael swallows the pill.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
You need to eat!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

He is sick!

MICHAEL  
(with a muffled groan)  
No-o! I can't fit anything down my  
throat right now.

LINDA  
(smiling)  
Ladies and gentlemen! Behold the  
laureate and future genius of world  
classical music!

MICHAEL  
(with a smile) )  
Linda, I'm going to strangle you  
now like Othello strangled  
Desdemona!

LINDA  
But I didn't cheat on you like  
Desdemona cheated on Othello. But  
you cheated on me!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Astonishment!

MICHAEL  
With whom?!

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

A mischievous smile appears on her face!

LINDA  
With the bottle, you foolish drunk!  
(laughs)

Michael smiles and wearily waves his hand.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
(smiling)  
Why on earth did you and Ritchie  
decide to get drunk? What was the  
reason?  
(with curiosity)

MICHAEL

There certainly was a reason! (stands up) You're right, I should probably drink some tea and force down a sandwich.

LINDA  
Just sit still then! I'll make it  
now.

Linda forcefully makes him sit back down. Then she walks to the refrigerator and takes out a piece of cheese.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
Well, what was the reason?

Linda takes out bread, turns on the electric kettle and begins to cut the cheese on the board.

MICHAEL  
(uncertainly)  
I need to leave for a couple of  
days for New Orleans.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

Interest and surprise.

LINDA  
But you were planning a tour in  
Toronto, weren't you? Or have your  
plans changed?

CLOSE UP OF THE CUTTING BOARD

Linda cuts the cheese.

MICHAEL  
My mother is there!

CLOSE UP OF THE CUTTING BOARD

Linda's hand trembled and she hits her finger with the knife!  
A drop of blood is on the finger!

LINDA  
Damn it!  
(puts her finger in her  
mouth)

MICHAEL

What's wrong?

LINDA  
 Nothing  
 (irritably)  
 I cut my finger!

Linda takes a napkin and presses it against the bleeding finger.

MICHAEL  
 (standing up abruptly)  
 Let me get a bandage!

LINDA  
 Nonsense! It's a small cut. Nothing  
 is needed.

Michael walks up to Linda and takes her hand.

MICHAEL  
 (with concern)  
 Let me see.

Linda pulls her hand away.

LINDA  
 (with increasing  
 irritation)  
 I said - I don't need it! Are you  
 sure it's her?

MICHAEL  
 (shrugging his shoulders)  
 No.

LINDA  
 What about your tour?

MICHAEL  
 The trip to New Orleans will take  
 one, two days maximum, and the tour  
 is only in two weeks!

Linda walks and sits down at the table.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

She signals to Michael with her eyes to sit down.

CLOSE UP OF THE CUTTING BOARD

Linda's hand trembled and she hits her finger with the knife!  
 A drop of blood is on the finger!

LINDA

Damn it!  
(puts her finger in her  
mouth)

MICHAEL

What's wrong?

LINDA

Nothing  
(irritably)  
I cut my finger!

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finger.

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is needed.

Michael walks up to Linda and takes her hand.

MICHAEL

(with concern)  
Let me see.

Linda pulls her hand away.

LINDA

(with increasing  
irritation)  
I said - I don't need it! Are you  
sure it's her?

MICHAEL

(shrugging his shoulders)  
No.

LINDA

What about your tour?

MICHAEL

The trip to New Orleans will take  
one, two days maximum, and the tour  
is still two weeks away!

Linda walks and sits down at the table.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

She signals to Michael with her eyes to sit down.

LINDA

And this trip is instead of the rehearsals you need. Well, it's your call!

Michael sits down at the table.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

An attentive gaze!

MICHAEL

It's not about the rehearsals, is it? You're nervous, Linda. Let's talk! What is bothering you?

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

A smile suddenly appears on her face. She turns her head to the side.

LINDA

The water has boiled! I'll go make you some tea.

Linda stands up and walks to the kitchen counter.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(brewing tea)

I spoke with your father yesterday.

MICHAEL

What?!

Linda puts the sandwich on a plate.

LINDA

He came to visit us yesterday. Just when you were drinking with Ritchie.

(with a smile)

MICHAEL

Why?

Linda turns to Michael.

LINDA

That's quite natural! He is worried about you.

(MORE)

LINDA (CONT'D)

We talked about that strange gift -  
100 thousand dollars. From your  
mother who appeared out of nowhere!

MICHAEL

(frowning)

He is worried about himself. Wait a  
minute,

(surprised)

I didn't tell him anything about  
the money!

LINDA

(shrugging her shoulders)

I don't know. Jeffrey knows  
everything. Your father has  
extensive connections! It's a  
strange story altogether! Your  
biological mother was Ukrainian,  
and the surname Evans is clearly  
not Ukrainian!

MICHAEL

(thoughtfully)

She moved to America and got  
married there.

(pause)

That's why I want to figure it all  
out!

Linda picks up the plate with the sandwich and the cup of tea  
and carries it to Michael. After putting it all on the table,  
she sits down opposite Michael and looks at him with an  
ironic smile.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Well, what do you say?

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

She looks at him searchingly.

LINDA

What can I say? Fly to New Orleans!

(smiles)

You need to figure this out.

Otherwise

(pause)

Otherwise you will confuse notes  
and play out of tune on your  
upcoming tour!

(with a smirk)

MICHAEL

(surprised)

And you are not against my trip?

LINDA

What do I have to do with it? It's strange that your father is not against it either.

MICHAEL

(frowning)

Yeah, right! He has already managed to stick his nose everywhere!

LINDA

Maybe you are right – it's unlikely that a stranger would make a gift agreement with an outsider. Especially for such a sum! I hope you've already decided what to spend that money on?

(with a smirk)

Drink your tea, it will get cold!

MICHAEL

I haven't thought about it. (pause)  
But how are you feeling? I won't be around!

LINDA

(with irony)

One would think that when you're around – you're always around!

She stands up and walks to the kitchen counter. Michael follows her with his gaze.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(walking to the counter)

You're either at rehearsals, or getting drunk with Ritchie!

MICHAEL (spreading his hands) But that was only one time!

Linda, having reached the kitchen counter, suddenly turns around! A dazzling smile is on her face!

LINDA (CONT'D)

Don't worry about me, dear! With your departure, I will have one less chore to worry about! (laughs)

Especially since I already wanted to ask Jeffrey to "lend" me Sally for a month, so she could stay with us and help me with the housework. I'm sure my beloved father-in-law won't refuse me! (with irony)

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

A piercing gaze from intelligent female eyes!

LINDA (CONT'D)  
But don't flatter yourself with  
rosy hopes too much!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A guarded gaze.

MICHAEL  
What hopes?

LINDA  
Those very hopes that shatter  
against the harsh realities of  
life! You don't know what kind of  
person you will meet in New  
Orleans. High hopes are fraught  
with enormous disappointments!  
(smiles)

And pain!

(hard gaze)

Linda looks at her cut finger and removes the piece of napkin from it. Then she shifts her gaze to the napkin.

CLOSE UP OF THE NAPKIN

A bloodied napkin is in Linda's hand.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
The bleeding has stopped!

Linda opens the door of the kitchen counter and throws the napkin into the trash can with a decisive movement.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

A resolute look with an ironic smile!

LINDA (CONT'D)  
That's all!

34 EXT. NEW ORLEANS AIRPORT - DAY

Michael in a warm jacket, with a small travel bag, walks out of the airport and glances at the sign with the airport's name. Noise of cars, the roar of an airplane is heard in the distance, people are bustling.

CLOSE UP OF THE SIGN

Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport.

MICHAEL

(with a smirk)

Well, I've already met Armstrong,  
now I just need to find where  
"Evans" is!

Michael takes off his jacket, wipes the sweat from his face and walks on.

35 EXT. "FRENCH QUARTER" NEW ORLEANS - DAY

Michael walks through the French Quarter with its narrow streets, wrought-iron balconies, inner courtyards and bright flowers.

He sees a jazz club ahead of him. A dark metal sign hangs on wrought-iron chains above the door of the old brick building. Large, slightly cracked golden letters read: "EVANS".

36 INT. JAZZ CLUB - DAY

Michael steps from the bright daylight of New Orleans into the stuffy, dimly lit interior of the jazz club. An odor blend of old wood and cigar smoke prevails here. The walls are paneled with dark wood with many scratches and photographs of great jazz musicians. The floor is wooden, worn, with visible traces of dancing and time. Several wooden tables with round tops and heavy, old chairs. A jazz trio is rehearsing on stage: an elderly contrabassist (BILL), an African-American in a cap, a young red-haired drummer (18) and a dark-skinned handsome young pianist (ADAM -25).

BILL

(to the drummer)

No, you overloaded the cymbals on  
the bridge too much! We need a  
"shuffle", not a "groove"!

DRUMMER

Yes, Bill. It just seemed to me that the grace note doesn't fit here.

BILL

It seems to him! It seems to you when you go to bed with a girl after a big drinking binge, and when you wake up — you find your sleeping friend next to you! And you are both naked!

(laughs)

Don't think, feel!

PIANIST

(laughs)

Billy, I will never concentrate like that! Let's work, guys!

Michael approaches the long bar counter.

Behind the counter, a short, nimble WAITER is wiping glasses.

WAITER

(servilely)

I'm listening to you!

MICHAEL

(with excitement)

I need Mrs. Evans!

WAITER

Regarding what matter, excuse me?

MICHAEL

It's personal.

The waiter looks Michael over.

WAITER

(uncertainly)

Personal?

(pause)

Well, she should arrive in about half an hour! Will you wait?

MICHAEL

Yes, I will wait. And

(pause)

I think I'll have a splash of whiskey. No ice.

37 EXT. JAZZ CLUB - DAY

A huge black luxury SUV, with shiny chrome wheels, drives up to the club.

38 INT. JAZZ CLUB - DAY

The jazz trio is playing a light and slightly sad jazz composition on stage (presumably by Bill Evans).

CLOSE UP OF THE PIANIST'S HANDS

The pianist lightly touches the keys.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL.

A thoughtful Michael listens to the music and takes a sip of whiskey.

Suddenly he hears a melodious female voice behind him!

FEMALE VOICE (O.S. - OLIVIA)  
Not bad playing, is it?

Michael turns around and sees a plump, no longer young African-American woman with a kind face in front of him. She is wearing a light, spacious poncho and a wide-brimmed hat.

MICHAEL  
(nodding uncertainly)  
Mmm. Not bad.

OLIVIA  
(smiling)  
But certainly not as good as you,  
Mr. Roy!  
(sits down at Michael's  
table)  
May I sit down? You don't mind?

MICHAEL  
(confused)  
Yes, please!

Olivia holds out a plump hand with a bright manicure to Michael.

OLIVIA  
Olivia Evans! I'm glad to see you,  
Michael!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael shakes Olivia's hand. His face is stunned!

MICHAEL

You?!!

Olivia smiles and nods her head affirmatively.

MICHAEL But you! But you...

(stammers)

OLIVIA

(with kind irony)

You want to say that I don't look like the woman you imagined, and whom you expected to see here? Yes, Michael?

MICHAEL

Generally, yes! But you are the one who gave me the money?

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

She examines Michael carefully, and then nods her head affirmatively.

OLIVIA

Yes, that was me!

(pause)

So, this is what you look like -  
MISHA!

(pronounces the name in  
Russian)

39 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - DAY

A small, but cozy room. The walls are painted in warm tones. A small desk is cluttered with all sorts of small items - from documents to women's perfume. On the desk - a yellow lamp with a lampshade. Near the wall - a soft, shaggy sofa.

Michael tries to sit comfortably on the sofa. He sinks into the sofa and cannot find a straight body position.

Olivia languidly sits down behind her desk, in a huge armchair.

OLIVIA

(smiling at Michael)

Yes, the couch is too soft! I love everything soft and fluffy!

(laughs)

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 Just relax, Michael! Make yourself  
 at home!

Michael nods his head and looks around.

CLOSE UP OF THE WALL

Faded posters and photographs hang on the wall, showing a young, dark-skinned, beautiful singer in various spectacular concert outfits.

Olivia watches Michael with a smile.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 Yes, yes! That's all me! It's hard  
 to recognize that slender beauty  
 with a clear voice in me now!  
 (with a hint of self-  
 irony)  
 And yet in my youth I performed  
 soul and jazz-funk quite well!  
 (with childlike pride)

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

An intense, thoughtful gaze.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 You want to know who I am and where  
 your mother is? I assumed that you  
 would find me sooner or later  
 anyway. And after the call from  
 your father, I was simply waiting  
 for you!

MICHAEL  
 (with surprise)  
 My father called you?

OLIVIA  
 Yes, a couple of days ago. We had a  
 nice chat about you and about Katya  
 (pause)  
 Your mother! Her name was Katya.  
 Ekaterina Golub!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

MICHAEL  
 (thoughtfully)  
 Katya.

Olivia heavily stands up, goes to the cupboard and takes out an album from one of the shelves.

She pulls out a photograph from it, and then, approaching Michael, sits down next to him.

OLIVIA  
I am next to your mother in this  
photo, Michael!

CLOSE UP OF THE PHOTOGRAPH

In the photograph, young Katya and Olivia stand embracing, both beautiful and slender.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael looks closely at the photograph, and a barely noticeable smile reflects the emerging warmth in his soul!

MICHAEL  
(softly)  
Mom.

OLIVIA  
I am giving you this photograph!

MICHAEL  
Thank you very much!

OLIVIA  
(with a smile)  
Look at the inscription on the  
back.

Michael turns the photo over and reads aloud

MICHAEL  
A Dove on an Olive Branch. 1994.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA  
And do you know why it's written  
like that? Because I am Olivia – a  
slender and flexible "olive branch"  
(smiles) )  
And your mother's surname is  
"Golub" (Dove), which translates to  
"Pigeon" in English. Yes, she  
really was like a dove – kind and  
defenseless!

The camera plunges into Olivia's eyes! Into her memories  
(transition to the next scene)

40 EXT. NEW ORLEANS NIGHT STREET - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

A young woman, Olivia, in a short skirt and high heels, walks with a huge African-American guy. They are discussing something and laughing merrily.

SUDDENLY a female scream is heard from a dark alley!

FEMALE PIERCING SCREAM (O.S.)

A-a-a!

(the scream fades out)

The couple stops.

OLIVIA

(pointing with her hand  
into the darkness)

John, some woman was screaming  
there!

JOHN

(indifferently)

Did I? I didn't hear anything!

OLIVIA

(angrily)

What are you trying to pull? He  
didn't hear anything!

Olivia hastily runs on her high heels towards the scream.

JOHN

(with displeasure)

Damn it! Olivia, where are you  
going?!

(lazily runs after her)

Olivia runs around the corner and  
sees two muggers in the semi-  
darkness attacking a girl unknown  
to her (Katya). Katya holds her  
purse with both hands, which one of  
the muggers is trying to snatch  
from her, while the second one -  
holds Katya from behind,  
simultaneously covering her mouth  
with his palm!

OLIVIA

(screams)

Stinking bastards! Get the hell out  
of here!

One of the muggers, who was snatching the purse, lets go of  
his "prey"

MUGGER 1  
Get lost, bitch!

He doesn't manage to finish the word because at that moment Olivia hits him with her foot, turning her heel forward, right in the groin!

MUGGER 1 (CONT'D)  
(doubles over in pain)  
Bi-i-tch!

MUGGER 2  
(letting go of Katya)  
Hey, "Screw"! Let's bolt from here,  
she's with a dude!

The huge figure of John appears from the darkness.

JOHN  
(threateningly, in a bass  
voice)  
What the hell is going on here?!

The muggers retreat backwards and flee into the darkness.

OLIVIA  
(screams after them)  
Cowardly scumbags!

Katya is sitting on her haunches, clutching her purse to her chest.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
(to Katya)  
Hey, girl!  
(walks up and leans over  
her)  
Are you alright?

Katya silently and frightenedly nods her head.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Then why are you sitting around?  
Let's go! Or do you want to wait  
for those assholes to come back?

41 INT. OLIVIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

A large studio room, a huge half-open closet with many stage costumes, near which there is a large mirror on the wall. A low old sofa is in the corner. Near the sofa - a chest of drawers covered with cosmetics, on which a reel-to-reel tape recorder is perched.

Posters and photographs are messily pasted on the bare brick walls. The smell of cheap perfume and tobacco smoke is present.

The kitchen corner is located in the farthest corner of the room. An old, small refrigerator (possibly emitting a loud hum) and a two-burner electric stove, standing on a wobbly, painted wooden table. Bare hooks hang above the table, on which only two or three cups and one or two frying pans hang. An empty package from Chinese food is lying on the kitchen counter.

Katya sits at the table. Olivia walks up to her, holding a bottle of rum and 2 shot glasses in her hand.

OLIVIA

(with a sharp voice, but caring)

Are you going to eat?

(Katya shakes her head negatively)

Did the fright make you speechless?

(ironically)

Here, drink this!

(pours rum)

KATYA

(with a trembling voice)

No, I don't want to!

OLIVIA

(with feigned strictness)

No one is asking you! Drink, I said! I could use a sip of rum too, to relieve stress!

Katya takes the shot glass and drinks half, after which she grimaces horribly. Olivia drinks it down in one go and a satisfied smile appears on her face!

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

A lively, high-spirited woman!

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Turns out life isn't such a piece of shit! What do you say, girl?

(laughs)

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

A smile appears on Katya's face!

Olivia slams the shot glass onto the table and, opening the refrigerator, begins to rummage through it.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (rummaging in the  
 refrigerator)  
 I'm going to feed you after all!  
 (pause) John, you damn glutton! He  
 ate everything up! No, something is  
 left here!

Olivia takes out a package from the refrigerator, straightens up to her full height and, curving her slender body, leans on her free hand on her hip, with a smirk.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (smiling)  
 We won't die of hunger! What's your  
 name, "Buttercup"?

KATYA  
 (smiles sweetly)  
 Katya!

42 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

The wandering smile in the memory of past years is replaced by a kind look at Michael.

OLIVIA  
 That's how I met your mother,  
 Michael!

MICHAEL  
 But how did my mother end up in New  
 Orleans? Why did she ask you,  
 Olivia, to give me the money  
 instead of finding me herself? And  
 where did she get such a large  
 amount of money?

OLIVIA  
 (smiling condescendingly)  
 You, Michael, asked me three  
 questions and it's impossible to  
 give one answer to all three. But I  
 will try to tell you everything I  
 know about your mother, including  
 everything I heard from her  
 personally.

Olivia stands up from the sofa and slowly walks to her desk. Approaching her armchair, she turns to Michael.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (stroking the armchair)  
 A person is happy not when they sit  
 in a comfortable armchair, but when  
 they are in their right place.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 Katya didn't have her place under  
 the sun, because  
 (pause)  
 There was NO sun in her life!

43 INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Sally is preparing food, Linda sits at the table and looks at Sally with an enchanting smile.

LINDA  
 Sally! I am indebted to Jeffrey! I  
 should take housekeeping lessons  
 from you.

SALLY  
 Mrs. Linda! You need to take young  
 mother lessons! That is far more  
 important for you now. But I will  
 be a bad advisor for you in that  
 matter.

LINDA  
 Why? You took care of little  
 Michael, didn't you?

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

A sad smile.

SALLY  
 Because being a nanny and being a  
 child's own mother - those are not  
 the same thing.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

LINDA

But you did everything for him! As far as I know, Rachel - Jeffrey's wife - was very far from understanding how to care for a baby.

SALLY

(laughs restrainedly)  
Oh yes! However, we learned that together. We were both still young women and one thing united us - she, just like me, couldn't have children.  
(with sadness)

44 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - EVENING

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A thoughtful, somewhat bewildered look.

MICHAEL

She spent the money she received from my father so she could leave her homeland?

OLIVIA

No, not to leave her homeland, but to find a new, brighter life. And also - to escape the ghosts of the past that were haunting her.

Olivia takes her smartphone and dials a number.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

(into the phone)  
" Scooter", bring a couple of "immodest" servings of Boudin Balls and two cappuccinos to my dwelling! Aunt Olivia is terribly hungry, and so is her guest!

MICHAEL

(protesting)  
No, thank you! I'm not hungry.

OLIVIA

(ironically)  
You haven't eaten since you flew in this morning, and I can tell by the cacophony that's rumbling in your stomach!

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (laughs restrainedly)  
 I have a musical ear too!

Michael smiles modestly.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

A shadow of sadness passes across Olivia's face, which immediately dissolves into a good-natured smile.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 These treats were wonderfully  
 cooked in the café where your  
 mother got a job.

MICHAEL  
 (with interest)  
 She worked in a café?

OLIVIA  
 Yes. First in the kitchen – she  
 helped the cook, and she herself  
 cooked beautifully. Unlike Aunt  
 Olivia!  
 (with self-irony)  
 But later, the owner of the café,  
 finding out that she not only knew  
 English perfectly but also  
 understood accounting matters, took  
 her into the office, and she began  
 to earn quite well.

MICHAEL  
 Quite well enough to save 100  
 thousand dollars?

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA  
 Quite well to feel like a PERSON  
 after many years of humiliation and  
 poverty!  
 (sharply)  
 Something you, young man, wouldn't  
 understand!

MICHAEL  
 I grew up in a well-off family and  
 there is indeed a lot I wouldn't  
 understand. But I am trying!  
 (emotionally)  
 After all, the money she gave me  
 was truly a large amount!

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

A strong-willed and intense gaze!

OLIVIA  
 (coolly)  
 Because the money you received is  
 not hers!  
 (pause)  
 It's mine!

45 INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Sally is wiping the kitchen countertop.

LINDA  
 (with a smile)  
 Sally, everything is already  
 perfect as it is! Go rest!

SALLY  
 I probably won't fall asleep before  
 midnight anyway. I sleep poorly in  
 a new place.

LINDA  
 You better get used to it! I'll  
 need your help even after the  
 birth! At least for the first  
 couple of months, my kind fairy!  
 (with a charming,  
 mischievous smile)

SALLY  
 (smiling)  
 Who knows! Once Michael finds his  
 mother, you, Mrs. Linda, will  
 immediately have the best nanny in  
 the world! Grandmothers love their  
 grandchildren even more than their  
 own children!

LINDA  
 (with sarcasm)  
 Especially if she didn't raise her  
 own son. What a nanny that will be!  
 And besides, it's not a fact that  
 he will find her.

SALLY  
 Unspent maternal love works  
 miracles!

(MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

Believe me, Linda — The Lord giveth  
and the Lord taketh away. We cannot  
judge that woman without knowing  
anything about her. But the main  
thing is that Michael will  
certainly find her!

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

LINDA

(caustically)

Oh yes, of course! "His heart will  
show him the way!"

Linda stands up from the chair and gestures actively.

LINDA (CONT'D)

(with vicious sarcasm)

She came to a rich country "seeking  
happiness," with money received  
from selling her own child! And  
judging by the surname "Evans," she  
actually found it! She found  
herself a gullible husband with  
money. And now, with age, her  
maternal feelings have awakened!

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

A wise and composed gaze.

SALLY

Don't judge others for their  
happiness, Mrs. Linda! He who  
judges others for their happiness  
will never find his own!

Sally walks up to Linda and embraces her in a motherly way,  
while softening the tone of the conversation.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Come on, you need to lie down.  
You've been sitting next to me for  
a long time.

(leading Linda towards the  
kitchen exit)

And even if the trip to Orleans  
turns out to be in vain for  
Michael, trust me — Jeffrey will  
certainly find her! I know the grip  
of that old bulldog well!

(smiles)

Linda stopped dead in her tracks.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

Surprise, through which fear shows through!

LINDA  
Jeffrey decided to look for  
Michael's mother?!

Sally, supporting Linda by the arm, nods her head with a smile.

SUDDENLY  
Linda doubles over in pain in her  
stomach!

LINDA  
(groans)  
A-a-a!

46 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - EVENING

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA  
A few years after I met Katya, she  
had to go to Ukraine. Her father  
died from chronic alcoholism. They  
had an apartment there - it was in  
a neglected state, requiring  
repairs. But in a good area!  
Therefore, it could be sold for a  
considerable sum, which Katya  
desperately needed. She had a goal!  
And by that time, I had already  
been raising a son for five years.  
(pause)  
From that handsome bum! A silly  
young thing!  
(nods her head toward the  
wall)

Michael looks at the wall, and among the many photographs of  
the young singer Olivia, he sees her photo together with a  
large, handsome African-American man.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S PHOTO WITH THE DARK-SKINNED MAN

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
(with a smirk)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (with a smirk)  
 Yes, that handsome big stud John  
 was my first husband and the father  
 of my son - Adam!

MICHAEL  
 And what, you owed my mother money?

OLIVIA  
 Ah, yes! I got distracted from the  
 topic, sorry!  
 (smirks)  
 No! Your mother didn't lend me any  
 money!

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

After a momentary pause, she speaks in a quiet, intense  
 voice.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 She gave me a PRICELESS GIFT!

MICHAEL  
 (surprised)  
 What gift?!

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR!

The door opens slightly, and the PIANIST'S (Adam's) head  
 appears in the doorway.

ADAM  
 (politely)  
 Excuse me, Mrs. Olivia! I have  
 something for you!  
 (with a sly look in his  
 eyes)  
 He opens the door and carries into  
 the room a tray with the food  
 Olivia had ordered.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
 (to Michael)  
 Hello, I apologize for interrupting  
 your conversation!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael nods his head and studies the entering pianist with  
 curiosity.

OLIVIA  
 (surprised and with irony)  
 What, Adam, have you decided to  
 take on the duties of our waiter on  
 top of your rehearsal? (smiles)

Adam obsequiously places the food from the tray onto Olivia's desk and smiles flatteringly!

ADAM  
 Mrs. Olivia! I need to step out for  
 an hour!

OLIVIA  
 (with feigned strictness)  
 In an hour the cafe will have  
 patrons and you will have to play!  
 Haven't you forgotten? Where are  
 the devils carrying you off to?

ADAM  
 In an hour, at best, only one  
 couple will show up, who will order  
 a drink and will be eating each  
 other up with loving eyes!

Adam backs toward the door.

ADAM (CONT'D)  
 Jazz lovers arrive closer to  
 midnight, and right now it's only-

OLIVIA  
 (interrupting him  
 strictly)  
 And right now, vanish from my  
 sight! Can't you see—I have an  
 important meeting! And be on stage  
 in an hour! Got it?!

Adam, with his back to the door, feels for the handle and nods his head.

ADAM  
 Got it, got it! Vanishing!

Adam slams the door shut behind him.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

The feigned strictness disappears from her face, and a kind smile returns!

OLIVIA  
 (to Michael)  
 Well, did you see that sly one and  
 good-for-nothing?  
 (laughs)  
 That was my son - Adam. You saw him  
 in the hall, Michael, when he was  
 playing the piano.

Her face becomes dreamily serious, and then she directs a  
 fixed gaze at Michael.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 Adam is the very same PRICELESS  
 GIFT from Katya. A gift that cannot  
 be measured in money!

47 INT. JEFFREY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Jeffrey is talking on the phone.

JEFFREY  
 (in a businesslike tone)  
 And how many women with that  
 surname left the territory of  
 Ukraine during that time?  
 (pause)  
 I know there is a war and complete  
 chaos in the registries. Then get  
 the data from the migration service  
 of Poland!  
 (pause)  
 You will present your additional  
 expenses to me in the report. Until  
 next time.

Jeffrey ends the conversation.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

A calm, thoughtful, and composed gaze.

48 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - EVENING

Michael sits on a chair opposite Olivia's desk and they are  
 eating the brought Boudin Balls.

OLIVIA  
 (looking at Michael in a  
 motherly way)  
 Is it tasty, Mikey?

MICHAEL  
 (sighing heavily)  
 I understand now what the words  
 "immodest servings" meant!  
 (smiles)  
 I've gained a ton of weight!  
 Honestly!

Olivia smiles contentedly and takes a sip of cappuccino.

OLIVIA  
 (with irony)  
 Passion for tasty food ruined me!  
 Where is my fine brown frame now?  
 Where is my slim body gone?  
 (sings)  
 Michael looks at her with genuine  
 warmth.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (sighing affectedly)  
 Years have passed. Alas!

Then Olivia takes another sip of cappuccino and pushes the cup aside.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (in a serious tone)  
 Your mother returned two months  
 later, having settled all the  
 inheritance matters and sold the  
 apartment. She returned with decent  
 money. It seemed that the Lord God  
 had finally sent her luck. Her goal  
 was to buy a small cafe.  
 Katya found a small café location  
 in Bayou St. John, nestled on a  
 quiet street lined with classic  
 "shotgun houses" overlooking the  
 bayou. It wasn't fancy, but it was  
 vibrant, affordable, and full of  
 life. It seemed — that was it! But  
 suddenly, disaster struck!

MICHAEL  
 (nervously)  
 What other new disaster has struck  
 my mother?!

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA  
 The disaster struck not your mother  
 — not Katya.  
 (MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (looking down sadly for a  
 moment)  
 Me, Mikey!

49 INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Sally is talking on the phone, standing next to the bed where the helpless Linda is lying. She groans! She is having contractions!

SALLY  
 (patiently and  
 monotonously)  
 Rosemont-La Petite-Patrie, house  
 number...  
 (pause)  
 I'm glad you've already heard!  
 What? Symptoms? The young woman is  
 having contractions! She's about to  
 give birth, damn you!  
 (loses her temper)  
 We need an ambulance, not a phone  
 consultation!  
 (pause)  
 I'm glad you are already on your  
 way!  
 (and then muttering to  
 herself)  
 Blockhead!

Sally turns to Linda with a life-affirming smile.

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 The ambulance has already left!  
 They've hitched their best racing  
 tortoise to the carriage! Come on,  
 let me bring you some warm clothes  
 so you'll be ready for their  
 arrival, okay? And don't be afraid  
 of anything, Linda!

Linda smiles at Sally's joke and nods her head. And then—  
 another CONTRACTION! Linda groans, gripping the pillow with  
 her hand!

50 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - EVENING

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

Sadness in her eyes!

OLIVIA

By that time, I had already divorced John. I got tired of his amorous adventures which began right after Adam was bor (pause) Katya and I were clearly unlucky with decent men! (with irony) But I had a job, and that was the main thing! I could feed my son. And I was young and full of energy. Until that stoned bastard—

Olivia pauses and breathes heavily for a few seconds, pressing her hand to her chest.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

It clenches my heart just thinking about it.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A look full of sympathy.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

She continues the story.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

You see, Michael, I couldn't just sit at home with a child. I had to earn a living. That's why during the day I took him to the "Child Care Center," and in the evening, if I had to perform, my mother-in-law helped me. Unlike her good-for-nothing son, she cared very much for Adam! During the day I was at work, and in the evening she helped me — may the Lord rest her soul!

(crosses herself)

That's how it was — during the day he was at the Center, and in the evening, he was either with me or with Mabel, my mother-in-law.

(pause)

But, of course, more often with Mabel.

(ironically)

A singer's work is in the evening, and rehearsals are during the day. Alas, I was not the best mother. A career as a club singer is no walk in the park!

(sadly)

MICHAEL  
 (trying to encourage her)  
 I know what that's like, Olivia!  
 (smiles)

OLIVIA

Yes, of course, you are a musician!

MICHAEL  
 So what happened?

OLIVIA  
 That guy was on drugs and drove his car right onto the sidewalk, where children were walking from an outing with their caregiver. Luckily, there was a high curb in his path, which slightly changed the trajectory, but two children and the caregiver died instantly on the spot, and several other children were taken to the hospital with injuries. And among them was my son – a five-year-old little mite!

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

Tears in her eyes!

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 He had a broken leg and a serious traumatic brain injury from hitting the asphalt. He needed urgent surgery. Doctors said that such a complex operation could only be done in Baltimore, in the neurosurgery department of The Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Olivia wipes the corner of her eyes with her fingers, slightly smearing her makeup.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 (smiling sadly)  
 This is how I always cry buckets when I remember! I've even smeared my mascara.  
 (looks at her fingers)  
 The insurance wasn't enough, some friends helped a little, and my mother-in-law also didn't stand aside.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
 But more than half the sum was  
 still missing. And time was  
 measured in hours!

51 INT. KATYA'S APARTMENT - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Katya's apartment is a neat, clean dwelling, where order in everything contrasts with the chaos of the big city. It smells of freshness and ground coffee. Large wall clocks hang on the wall. Katya and Olivia are sitting at the table.

Olivia is sobbing, Katya strokes her shoulder, trying to calm her down.

KATYA  
 You need to pull yourself together!  
 Get a grip, friend! You are a  
 strong woman!

OLIVIA  
 (through sobs)  
 I, I... I just don't know what to  
 do! I've already called everyone I  
 could! (buries her face in her  
 hands)

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

A sympathetic and yet calm gaze!

KATYA  
 How much is still missing?

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

Olivia takes her hands from her face and looks at Katya with tear-soaked eyes.

OLIVIA  
 A lot! Fifty-eight thousand!

The young Olivia's imploring eyes dissolve into the mist, then FADE IN to the elder Olivia's tear-soaked face in the present day.

52 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - EVENING.

CLOSE UP OF FACE

Olivia, with tear-soaked eyes, continues her story.

OLIVIA

I knew that Katya had money from selling her apartment. I didn't ask her. I couldn't ask her! That money would open the door to a new life for her. But I couldn't not come to her either! I just looked at her with an imploring glance!

53 INT. KATYA'S APARTMENT - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

In her eyes is a silent and desperate cry for help!!!

ELDER OLIVIA - (V.O.)

I understand now that it was cruel towards Katya. But I had no choice!

54 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - EVENING.

Michael stands up and hugs the crying Olivia.

MICHAEL

(with concern)

Oh, please! Calm down! Should I get you some water?

Olivia shakes her head negatively and once again sinks into her memories.

55 INT. KATYA'S APARTMENT - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Katya, with a cold gaze, stands up from the table and walks to the window. She takes a deep breath. Then, turning back, she asks, in a mechanical voice, without emotion.

KATYA

Want me to feed you? Do you remember how you fed me on the first night we met?

(a barely noticeable smile)

And then you'll stay over at my place!

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA

Bewilderment and confusion on her face.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

A wide smile!

KATYA (CONT'D)

The money won't be here until  
morning anyway!

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

Olivia's face is illuminated by a grateful smile, with a shadow of doubt. She cannot believe that she has a chance to save her child!

56 INT. KATYA'S APARTMENT - MORNING (FLASHBACK)

The sun shines through the window! The camera moves along a sunbeam that illuminates the face of the sleeping Olivia.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA

Olivia, lying in bed, squints from the bright sun and stretches! Suddenly, concern appears on her face! She is looking somewhere!

CLOSE UP OF CLOCK.

he clock is ticking - tick-tock, tick-tock! The image of the clock FILLS the screen and DISSOLVES into the elder Olivia's eyes.

57 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - EVENING

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA

(having calmed down)

When I woke up, Katya was gone. And  
an hour later, she returned and  
gave me the money. (pause)

It was almost all her money. She gave me her dream!

Michael sits, deep in thought.

MICHAEL

So, my mother gave her money to  
save the life of a stranger's  
child?

OLIVIA

I think every stranger's child was  
her own.

(MORE)

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Among the many laughing children's voices, she always heard your voice, Michael! Perhaps she wanted to atone for her guilt with this sacrifice.

MICHAEL

Guilt before whom? Before me? But she gave me away to good people.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA

Before God. And not for giving you away, but for SELLING you!

Olivia picks up the phone.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

You probably don't smoke, Michael?

MICHAEL

(smiling)

No, I never started!

OLIVIA

(speaking into the phone)

"Scooter," bring Aunt Olivia a cigarette!

(pause) What? To hell with your customers! I'm stressed!

(and then to Michael)

I rarely smoke, but sometimes...

You won't mind?

(guiltily)

Michael gestures — no problem!

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

After I took Adam to Hopkins Hospital, I only talked to her once more. I was so overwhelmed with worry and anxiety that I didn't even thank Katya properly.

KNOCK AT THE DOOR

"Scooter" enters with a quick stride and hands Olivia an open pack from which she takes one.

"SCOOTER"

Take the whole pack, so I don't have to run back and forth every time!

(MORE)

"SCOOTER" (CONT'D)  
 (in an offended-indignant  
 tone)

OLIVIA  
 (conciliatorily)  
 Well, you know I won't be able to  
 resist if I know I have a pack of  
 cigarettes lying around! This way,  
 I'll only smoke one! Stop, stop!  
 (calling after the already  
 running away "Scooter")  
 And light it?

"Scooter", sighing and making a face, returns and flicks his  
 lighter. Olivia affectedly lights up, holding the cigarette  
 with the tips of two fingers.

"SCOOTER"  
 Can I finally go?

And without even waiting for an answer, he practically runs  
 to the door, but stops for a second, turns, and addresses  
 Olivia.

"SCOOTER" (CONT'D)  
 (gesturing dramatically)  
 And by the way, those aren't my  
 "damn customers" waiting by the bar  
 —they're yours!

Olivia opens her mouth to reply, but he runs out, slamming  
 the door behind him.

Olivia shakes her head in surprise and takes a small  
 decorative ashtray from her desk drawer, while Michael smiles  
 ironically. Then his face becomes serious.

MICHAEL  
 What did you talk about with her on  
 the phone the last time?

OLIVIA  
 (taking a deep drag)  
 We hardly talked. She asked how  
 Adam was, and then, when she  
 learned the surgery was successful,  
 she told me she was leaving America  
 and going back to Ukraine. And she  
 added that—

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

A cigarette is smoldering near her lips, with a long,  
 dangerously trembling column of ash hanging from it.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Forever!

CLOSE UP OF CIGARETTE

The ash falls.

MICHAEL

Why?!

Olivia brushes off the ash that fell onto her clothes.

OLIVIA

She said that there wouldn't be  
enough money for the cafe anyway,  
and something else along those  
lines.

(pause)

But perhaps she simply found peace  
in her soul.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Thoughtfully.

MICHAEL

I understand now why you said, "She  
wanted to atone for her guilt with  
this sacrifice."

(pause)

But why did you decide to give the  
money to me, and not to her?

(emotionally)

And why almost twice the amount?!

OLIVIA

I adjusted the amount for inflation  
over all those years!

(with a smile)

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL

Distrustful look.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

With a slight shade of sad irony.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

But

(pause)

Maybe I wanted to atone for my  
guilt too!

MICHAEL  
Before Katya?

OLIVIA  
Before her, before my mother-in-law  
Mabel, who helped me raise Adam,  
and I rarely even visit her grave.  
Before Adam, for not being there  
with him at that terrible moment  
and not shielding him with myself.  
(pause)  
To offer back a small measure for  
the great kindness I received.

Michael stands up and starts walking back and forth with  
slow, small steps.

MICHAEL  
And how did you find me, Olivia?

OLIVIA  
Katya mentioned the doctor's  
surname in the conversation.  
(thinking aloud)  
Boyko! Yes, Boyko!  
(takes a cosmetic bag out  
of her handbag)  
My lawyer contacted his colleague  
in Ukraine, and he gave that doctor  
a little money. He named your given  
name, which Katya gave you, and the  
surname of your adoptive parents –  
Roy. Everything was simple after  
that! Michael Roy was already a  
well-known pianist by that time,  
and there was no other well-known  
pianist with that name!

Olivia, smiling, takes a mirror out of the cosmetic bag.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Doubt increasingly torments Michael!

Olivia looks in the mirror.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
What a nightmare!

Michael approaches Olivia's desk closely.

MICHAEL

You mean, after managing to find me, you didn't even try to find Katya? After such a friendship and such help given to you?!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Intense stare!

Olivia dabs the corners of her eyes with a napkin, and then, putting the cosmetic bag aside, raises her gaze to Michael.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

You're not telling me something!

OLIVIA

It's exactly because I didn't want to answer such a question that I didn't want to meet you in person, but sent the money through a legal firm.

(sighs)

Well, you're right! My lawyer Bernie's colleagues in Ukraine made an inquiry to the relevant authorities, greased the palm of the right people, and—

MICHAEL

(impatiently)

And?!

OLIVIA

And it turned out that Katya had settled in a different part of Ukraine, in a small village in the east. Maybe she didn't want to go to her hometown so as not to stir up memories, or maybe she simply didn't have enough of the remaining money for an apartment in a big city? I don't know!

MICHAEL

(impatiently)

And what village is that? I will go there and find her!

OLIVIA

You won't be able to go there, because that village is already under the control of Russian troops.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

Sad, thoughtful gaze.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

Furthermore, that village is not there at all anymore.

58 EXT. MONTREAL. CITY ROAD - NIGHT

An ambulance with flashing lights speeds along the night city road.

59 INT. AMBULANCE SALON - NIGHT

Linda is lying in the salon. A doctor and Sally are sitting next to her. Linda groans, and Sally strokes her arm and soothes her.

SALLY

Everything will be fine! We are almost there! Just bear with it a little longer!

60 INT. OLIVIA'S OFFICE - NIGHT

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA

When Bernie's Ukrainian colleagues, for an additional (with displeasure), quite considerable fee, contacted the Russians and their representatives arrived at that location, they couldn't even find Katya's house.

CLOSE UP OF OLIVIA'S FACE

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

There was nothing but ashes instead of a village! The peaceful people who didn't manage to leave beforehand had no chance to survive in that hell!

Michael is sitting on a chair to the side of Olivia's desk, hunched over, resting his elbows on his knees, and barely noticeably swaying.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)  
Now you know everything, Michael!

MICHAEL  
(raising his eyes)  
But what if she managed to survive!

OLIVIA  
(shrugging)  
Anything is possible! But even if  
it is, finding her in a war-torn  
country with hundreds of thousands  
of refugees will be practically  
impossible!

61 EXT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Michael and Olivia are standing outside the club.

MICHAEL  
I won't give up the search!

OLIVIA  
(with understanding)  
I thought as much! Can I drive you  
to the airport? We can chat a  
little more on the way!  
(smiling)

Michael gets into the car.

MICHAEL  
(admiringly)  
Yes, Olivia! A wonderful club, an  
expensive car... You are a successful  
businesswoman!

OLIVIA  
(waving dismissively)  
I beg you, Michael! I simply got  
married for the second time, to a  
successful music producer!

Olivia puts the key into the ignition.

MICHAEL  
You married well!

OLIVIA  
(with irony)  
No. I divorced well!

62 EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

Michael gets out of Olivia's car and, before closing the door, says:

MICHAEL  
Thank you, Olivia!

OLIVIA  
(from inside the car)  
If a miracle happens and you find  
your mother, say hello to her for  
me and tell her she doesn't have  
one son, but two!  
(waves)

Olivia's car drives away. Michael watches it, then walks toward the airport.

THE PHONE RINGS!  
Michael takes out his smartphone  
and puts it to his ear.

MICHAEL  
(dryly)  
Yes, Dad!

JEFFREY (V.O.)  
(excitedly)  
Hello, Michael! Where are you right  
now?

MICHAEL  
(cautiously)  
At the airport. My flight to  
Montreal is in two hours! Has  
something happened?!

JEFFREY (V.O.)  
Yes, son!

MICHAEL  
(frightened)  
What?! Is something wrong with  
Linda?!

63 INT. HOSPITAL. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

A long, endlessly stretching corridor of the maternity ward. Rows of fluorescent lights burn brightly overhead. There is silence; only the quiet beeping of equipment can be heard. A silent, tired nurse quickly walks down the corridor. She pushes a cart with medications.

Jeffrey, smiling, stands in the corridor with his phone, next to Sally.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

A wide and happy smile!

JEFFREY

(into the phone)

Linda is fine! More than fine, in fact! What happened is that you became a father!

(laughs)

Congratulations, Michael! You have a baby daughter!

64 EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael slowly and silently takes the phone away from his ear. He is happy and stunned at the same time!

65 EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Winter. The snow sparkles under the bright sun. Linda, wrapped in a warm fur coat, exits the hospital with a winter baby carrier in her arms, in which the baby is protected from the cold. She is accompanied by a doctor in a half-unbuttoned warm jacket, under which a white coat is visible. A smile shines on Linda's face!

Happy Michael, with flowers in his hands, meets Linda near the hospital.

66 INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

A celebration reigns in the room! A banner hangs on one of the walls: "WELCOME HOME BABY!" There is a covered buffet table with champagne, wines, and snacks. Many exotic fruits.

Michael, wearing a handsome white turtleneck sweater, fusses near the table. The guests include Jeffrey in an expensive suit, and Ritchie - surprisingly dressed in a slightly crumpled TUXEDO, as well as EMMA - Linda's mother.

Emma is a caustic, skinny woman, with a narrow chin and ageless, smooth skin showing obvious signs of plastic surgery intervention. She is wearing a lot of fashionable costume jewelry and high-heeled shoes. Emma constantly chatters non-stop.

EMMA

Mikey, darling, say  
(awkwardly twisting her  
ankle)

Oh! What on earth is this carpet  
covering? I almost broke my leg!  
You know, I'm convinced that the  
quality of a good rug is about foot  
safety, and most importantly—  
(giggles)

A good mood! I adore beautiful  
things! No, of course, this  
covering needs to be changed, trust  
me, my friend! But I'm not talking  
about that—

(pausing for a second,  
lost in thought)

What did I want to ask? See, Mikey,  
how just one thing can spoil a good  
thought! Ah, yes! Is this Champagne  
Brut, or dry? I don't drink dry!

JEFFREY

(with irony)

A good thought, Emma, is when  
you're mulling it over! Because  
during that time, others can  
finally hear each other.

CLOSE UP OF EMMA'S FACE

Emma takes an olive on a skewer from the table and affectedly  
puts it into her mouth, approvingly rounding her eyes.

EMMA

Not funny, Jeffrey!

MICHAEL

(barely noticeable smile)

The Champagne is exclusively Brut!

Ritchie, taking a full plate of goodies from the buffet  
table, approaches Jeffrey while chewing.

RITCHIE

(trying to sound smart)

The digital way of delivering  
information, which is essentially a  
digitized thought, differs from the  
voice way in that—

EMMA

(interrupting Ritchie)  
 In that you can chew and not look  
 crude at the same time!  
 (with malicious sarcasm)  
 Ritchie makes a meaningful face,  
 and Jeffrey laughs.

JEFFREY

You are inimitable, Emma! I adore  
 you!  
 (laughs)

EMMA

(with aplomb and irony)  
 And I can't stand you!

67 INT. NURSERY ROOM - DAY

Linda and Sally are fussing near the baby crib. Linda is flustered, and it is clear that she is far from knowledgeable about child care. She only gets in Sally's way.

SALLY

Mrs. Linda! Go back to the guests!  
 I'll manage here myself! Don't  
 worry!

LINDA

Yes, perhaps you are right. It's  
 not good to leave the guests for  
 too long!

SALLY

Exactly! That's what I mean!  
 (sighs in relief)

68 INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

Linda enters the room in a comfortable, soft house dress. A slight nervousness shows in her movements.

MICHAEL

My love!

Michael walks toward her.

Emma, with a glass of Champagne in her hand, makes a series of small steps toward Linda, comically balancing on her high heels.

EMMA  
My darling daughter, how happy I  
am!

Michael hugs and kisses Linda.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
(standing near them)  
Mikey, let me hug both of you! I am  
so happy, so happy!

Emma tries to hug them, but the glass of Champagne in her  
hand gets in the way.

LINDA  
(with slight irritation)  
Mom! You're going to spill  
Champagne on us!

EMMA  
Yes, yes, of course!  
(drinks the Champagne  
quickly)

At this moment, Michael and Linda slip away from her.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Jeffrey with an open smile.

JEFFREY  
Linda, darling—eat something!

LINDA  
(kisses Jeffrey on the  
cheek)  
Thank you, Jeffrey! Especially for  
Sally. What would I do without her!

Emma puts a small piece of something from the table onto her  
plate.

EMMA  
Proper nutrition should become your  
main daily concern, Linda!

CLOSE UP OF EMMA'S FACE

Admonishing gaze and a mentoring tone.

EMMA (CONT'D)  
(chewing)  
You are a nursing mother, and  
proper nutrition is a science!  
(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)

Well, don't worry, your mommy will  
compose your diet and constantly  
adjust it!

Holding a plate in one hand, Emma raises her other hand with  
her index finger pointing up.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Every day!

Emma kisses her daughter on the cheek, then turns back to the  
table.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

Linda watches her mother leave, and rolling her eyes, she  
sighs heavily and pulls a sour face.

Michael hugs her from behind. Linda takes his hands, and her  
face lights up with a smile!

MICHAEL

(whispering)

Don't worry, I'll save you!

(both laugh)

Emma takes Champagne from the table and affectedly walks to  
the corner of the room toward an armchair, and sitting down  
with a straight back, she looks like a wooden doll.

JEFFREY

(to Michael)

What are your next performances  
after Toronto, son?

MICHAEL

(hugging Linda)

What's next? I don't know yet,  
maybe Europe. That's my  
impresario's concern.

(smiles)

EMMA

Jeffrey, have you ever considered  
helping your son?

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Ironic gaze with some weariness.

JEFFREY

What other brilliant idea has  
dawned upon you, my incomparable  
Emma?

Emma sits in the armchair, her back arched with an aristocratic manner, holding a glass in her hand.

EMMA

Isn't it time for you, Jeffrey, to find a good job for Michael as a pianist, so that he doesn't have to travel around cities and countries just to make a living?

MICHAEL

Emma, I am at the peak of my popularity. I am invited on tours and concert circuits! Maybe you'd like to suggest I get a job as a pianist in a restaurant?  
(laughs)

EMMA

I don't see anything funny! At such a difficult time for Linda, a loving husband should be right beside his wife!

RITCHIE

(quietly, to Jeffrey)  
And far away from his mother-in-law!

EMMA

(in an unpleasant, loud voice)  
I heard that, young man!

Ritchie scrambles behind Jeffrey's back!

JEFFREY'S PHONE RINGS

Jeffrey takes his smartphone out of his jacket pocket and puts it to his ear, walking into the next room. The camera follows him.

JEFFREY

Yes, Detective, hello!

MALE VOICE (V.O.)

Hello, Mr. Roy! I have new information for you regarding the disappeared Mrs. Golub you are searching for, but it is not very encouraging yet.

JEFFREY  
 (calmly, but with  
 irritation)  
 I pay you money not for  
 "encouraging" or "unencouraging"  
 information. I pay for RELIABLE  
 information!

Michael approaches Jeffrey with a glass of Champagne in his hand.

MICHAEL  
 (smiling)  
 Dad, you can't even tear yourself  
 away from business on a holiday!

JEFFREY  
 (into the phone)  
 I will call you back in a couple of  
 hours.

Jeffrey hangs up and, with a smiling, apologetic face, replies:

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
 Well, what can I do, Michael! There  
 is no rest for an old man with all  
 these worries!

MICHAEL  
 You find the worries yourself, Dad.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
 Tell me, why didn't you tell me  
 that you had been in touch with  
 Olivia? I wouldn't have had to  
 travel to New Orleans.

JEFFREY  
 It was necessary that you learn  
 everything about your mother not  
 from me.

MICHAEL  
 Necessary for whom?

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Thoughtful, after a moment's pause.

JEFFREY

For both of us. For you, so that  
your soul could find peace. And for  
me – so that I could understand  
that I have that very soul!

Michael hugs his father by the shoulders.

MICHAEL

Yes! Now I will plunge headfirst  
into a new life. A life where the  
main place will be occupied not  
only by music, but also by my  
daughter!

(smiles)

Your granddaughter! But in a few  
days, I have to go on tour–

(with concern)

Linda is staying here alone! Right  
after giving birth. I'm torn,  
Father! But this damn contract–  
(exhales with a whoosh)

JEFFREY

(patting his shoulder)

You just told me that I have a  
granddaughter!

(laughs)

But that simultaneously means that  
Jennifer has a grandfather! Allow  
me to feel like a real grandfather  
and take over the care of the  
little one, even for a short time!  
Besides, Linda is a wonderful  
mother who has a reliable nanny–  
Sally!

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

An encouraging, optimistic gaze!

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Don't think about anything, son,  
except music!

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael looks at his father gratefully!

MICHAEL

(with irony)

And what about your important  
business?

JEFFREY

I'll throw my phone in the trash!  
(laughs)

MICHAEL

(with slight sadness)  
It's a shame that my mother—  
(stumbles)  
It's a shame that Rachel doesn't  
see our happiness today, Father.  
(pause)  
And my real mother, too.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Jeffrey lowers his gaze for a second, and then says as if casually:

JEFFREY

But no one has seen Katerina's  
grave, have they?

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A surprised gaze, with a silent question frozen within it.

EMMA (O.S.)

(unpleasant, intrusive  
voice)  
Michael, where are you?

Emma energetically minces toward them on her heels.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Michael, Jeffrey, there you are! I  
didn't immediately notice the  
wallpaper in the nursery, and only  
now have I been horrified! White  
with blue specks! That's just  
terrible for a child's psyche! I  
hope it's at least quality non-  
woven material and not toxic vinyl  
that releases formaldehyde?! Oh  
God, give me strength!  
(a theatrical gesture with  
her hands)

Jeffrey and Michael look at each other and sigh  
simultaneously, and a second later... burst out laughing!

69

EXT. UKRAINIAN VILLAGE - DAY

CLOSE UP OF A SOLDIER

The flat tire of a military vehicle. A young, wounded soldier lies on the ground nearby. The camera focuses on his Ukrainian army chevron.

TITLES: EASTERN UKRAINE, COMBAT ZONE, 2023

Female hands lift the soldier with difficulty. He is very young, almost a boy. The soldier moans.

WOMAN'S VOICE (KATYA) (O.S.)

Alive! Thank God!

CLOSE UP OF KATYA

She is aged, but still retains her winsome features. She is dressed in a long skirt and a brown blouse, without a headscarf. Her hair, tied in a bun, is slightly disheveled. Fear and determination are simultaneously visible in her eyes! She is dragging the soldier WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY!

KATYA

Get up, son! I can't drag you all the way myself! We need to hide you!

The soldier, OREST, overcomes the pain, gets up, and clasps Katya around the shoulders.

70

INT. KATYA'S HOUSE - DAY

A very poor interior. A scratched wooden floor, whitewashed walls, and a small wooden window covered with a short fabric curtain. The camera focuses on the upper corner of the wall, where an icon with the face of Jesus Christ hangs. In the corner stands a bed where Orest lies.

Katya brings him a cup of tea.

KATYA

(caringly)

Here, Orest, drink this! It's an herbal infusion! You're shivering!

Orest slowly raises himself and takes the cup, then drinks.

OREST

Thank you, Katerina!

KATYA

Everything will be fine! You are not wounded, but you have a severe concussion from the explosion. You need to rest up!

OREST  
 (anxiously)  
 I can't stay here! I'm from Western  
 Ukraine, the Russians hate all of  
 us; they consider us Nazis!

CLOSE UP OF OREST'S FACE

He is frightened!

OREST (CONT'D)  
 If they find me, they'll kill me!

KATYA  
 (confidently)  
 They won't find you! (with an  
 encouraging smile) You're not a  
 Nazi, are you?

OREST  
 (with irony)  
 What kind of Nazi am I? I didn't  
 even want to go to war! They caught  
 me on the street in the evening  
 when I was returning home, brought  
 me by force to the territorial  
 recruitment center, and sent me to  
 a training unit the next day. And a  
 week later—to the front! That's how  
 I ended up here!

Orest takes another sip of tea.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Compassion in her eyes!

OREST (CONT'D)  
 Our unit was surrounded, and a few  
 of us soldiers tried to break  
 through, but our vehicle was  
 attacked by a drone. I—  
 (pause)  
 I was the only one who survived by  
 a miracle.

KATYA  
 It's alright, I'll hide you. You'll  
 rest up a bit, and then we'll think  
 about how you can get out of here.

OREST  
 Do you have children?

KATYA

Yes, a son.

OREST

Is he fighting, too?

KATYA

Luckily, no. He is far from here,  
abroad!

OREST

(disapprovingly)  
Why did he leave his mother, a good  
woman like you, alone?

Katya smiles thoughtfully and sadly.

KATYA

Because I am NOT a good woman! And  
it wasn't him who left me, but I  
who left him.

SUDDENLY A LOUD KNOCK AT THE DOOR!

ROUGH MALE VOICES OUTSIDE THE DOOR (O.S.) Anybody home? Open  
up!!

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Fear on her face!

71 INT. JEFFREY'S HOUSE. HALLWAY - DAY

CLOSE UP OF THE FRONT DOOR

Semi-darkness. Light slightly falls on the door. Suddenly the  
doorbell rings. A few seconds later, the bright light turns  
on.

Jeffrey walks up to the door and opens it. On the threshold  
stands—KATYA! She is wearing an inexpensive winter coat, and  
a headscarf covers her head.

KATYA

(in a quiet voice)  
Hello. Are you, Mr. Roy?

JEFFREY

Mrs. Golub?

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

She slightly nods her head. An uncertain smile crosses her face.

72 INT. MICHAEL'S APARTMENT - DAY

The nursery room. Linda is standing near the baby crib. Michael approaches her from behind and hugs her.

MICHAEL

I am the happiest pianist in the world!

Linda turns to him with a smile and a silent question.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

(smiling)

There are many laureates of music festivals, but to become both—a laureate and a father—all in one year, not everyone is that lucky.  
(laughs quietly)

LINDA

Yes, you are a lucky guy!  
(laughs)  
Quiet, quiet!  
(puts a finger to her nose)  
She just fell asleep.

Linda straightens the baby, and they quietly leave the nursery room. The camera follows them. They walk into the kitchen, and Michael opens the refrigerator.

LINDA (CONT'D)

You are a good father, Michael. And according to Jeffrey, you were an obedient child. I think your real mother wouldn't have had big problems with your upbringing, even in that country...  
(lost in thought)  
I keep forgetting... Oh, yes—Ukraine.  
(distorting the word)

Michael takes juice from the refrigerator.

MICHAEL

You don't know what you're talking about.

(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
 (and then, trying to  
 change the subject)  
 The juice is cold; should I warm it  
 up a little for you?

LINDA  
 No, thank you. I don't want any.

Michael pours juice into a glass and takes a sip.

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

A strong-willed face. Tightly pursed lips.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 Yes, of course, I can't understand  
 her. After all, my child is with  
 me.

MICHAEL  
 Even after what I told you about my  
 mother's fate, you don't feel sorry  
 for her?  
 (sets the glass down  
 forcefully in a huff)  
 You yourself are a mother!

LINDA  
 (angrily)  
 Exactly! I AM A MOTHER! And that is  
 why no difficulty would have made  
 me abandon my little one! And now,  
 of course—you are a famous pianist,  
 a well-off man! The perfect  
 scenario: "Oh, how miserable I am,  
 hello son, pity me!"  
 (scoffing)

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

The ironic smile changes to an angry expression.

LINDA (CONT'D)  
 My own mother drove two of her  
 husbands to the grave, including my  
 father! And she made my youth  
 unbearable! Do you think yours is  
 any better? What does she want from  
 you after so many years?

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Sharp emotional pain!

MICHAEL

The only thing she ever wanted her whole life was a little emotional warmth! And why are you even talking about this? She is most likely no longer alive!

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

Linda turns her head away. Anger in her eyes. The camera pans down and focuses on Linda's hands. She nervously wrings her fingers. Meanwhile, Michael continues speaking.

MICHAEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You know, Linda, I think there are no bad mothers!

Linda abruptly turns her head toward him.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

A wise and insightful, slightly sad gaze.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

There are no bad mothers! There are zigzags of a difficult fate. And only God can judge our mothers who gave us life, but not we!

Michael walks up to Linda and takes her firmly yet gently by the neck.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

And I will try very hard so that you and the little one, Jennifer, NEVER experience these twists of fate yourselves. May your life path be straight and sunny! I love you!  
(kisses Linda on the cheek)

THE PHONE RINGS!

Michael picks up the smartphone. On the other end of the line is his father.

MICHAEL

Yes, Dad!

JEFFREY (V.O.)

Hello, Michael. I have news for you.

MICHAEL

What news?

CLOSE UP OF LINDA'S FACE

Extreme apprehension on her face!

JEFFREY (V.O.)  
I found your mother.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael is stunned!

MICHAEL  
Where? How did you manage to find her? Olivia Evans hired a detective and couldn't!

73 INT. JEFFREY'S HOUSE. BEDROOM - DAY

Jeffrey sits on the edge of the made bed.

JEFFREY  
(with irony)  
Perhaps, Mrs. Olivia was mistaken in the abilities of her detective. But most likely, she was just searching too far away. And your mother was nearby. She was living in the same country as us!

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Where is she?!

JEFFREY  
(smiling)  
In my kitchen! Sally is trying out all her culinary skills on her! She can't showcase her talents on me with my diabetes!  
(laughs)  
MICHAEL (V.O.)

I am setting off right now!

JEFFREY (CONT'D)  
I await you, son.

Jeffrey exits the bedroom.

74 INT. JEFFREY'S HOUSE. KITCHEN - DAY

Katya sits at the table, drinking tea. A plate with an uneaten slice of pizza is in front of her.

KATYA  
 (with a grateful  
 expression)  
 Thank you, that was very delicious!

SALLY  
 (in a feigned commanding  
 voice)  
 And now, Mr. Roy, please take your  
 guest to the living room; I need to  
 wash the dishes here and tidy up a  
 bit!  
 (smiles)

75 EXT. SNOW-COVERED ROAD - DAY

Michael's car drives down the road at a high speed.

76 INT. CAR INTERIOR - DAY

Michael, agitated and tense, stares intently at the road.

77 INT. JEFFREY'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jeffrey and Katya sit in armchairs facing each other in the living room. Katya sits modestly, knees pressed together, with her hands placed on them. Jeffrey rests his elbow on the armchair's armrest and places his fist under his chin. His gaze is thoughtful.

JEFFREY  
 Well, and how did you manage to  
 hide that Ukrainian soldier?

KATYA  
 (with a slight smile)  
 You won't believe it, in the  
 closet!

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Katya takes a deep breath.

KATYA (CONT'D)  
 When the Russian soldiers entered  
 the house, they looked all around,  
 checked the basement, and left. But  
 they didn't check the closet.  
 (shrugs) Perhaps they felt shy  
 around me, an elderly woman?  
 (MORE)

KATYA (CONT'D)

They didn't want to rummage through women's things.

JEFFREY

(disbelievingly)

Soldiers, and suddenly felt shy?

KATYA

Why not? They were also very young boys, and they have mothers back home, too. One of those who conducted the search at my place came back the next day. I was in my yard at that moment, and when I saw him, I almost lost my power of speech from fear—I thought, well, now they will definitely find that boy, Orest.

Katya presses her hands to her chest and sighs.

KATYA (CONT'D)

And that soldier—he hands me a package of groceries and says, "Here, take it, Mother! It's for you!" And in that package were various preserves, tea, sugar, there was even chocolate. His soldier's dry ration! He gave it to me and left silently.

(pause)

It's all that cursed war—it turns a human into a beast!

(with sadness)

But otherwise, we are all cut from the same cloth! Everyone wants to live, to love, to breathe.

JEFFREY

And what happened next?

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Eyes as bottomless as the ocean, reflecting all the days she has lived!

KATYA

And next—I hid Orest for two months. It was a little scary, of course, but they didn't search me a second time; apparently, I didn't arouse suspicion. I don't look like a saboteur!

(MORE)

KATYA (CONT'D)  
(laughs reservedly) And two months later, the Ukrainian troops retook our village. They took that boy with them.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Empathy in his eyes.

JEFFREY  
And what about you?

KATYA  
(modestly straightening her blouse)  
I also left a few days later with the volunteers. By that time, the roof of my house was riddled with holes by shrapnel, and there wasn't a single whole window—some I covered with polyethylene film, some I stuffed with old rags. And it was already autumn—how could you spend the winter there? It was impossible. So I left.

(pause)  
Later I found out that after I left, a shell hit my house and completely destroyed it.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Tears glistened in her eyes.

KATYA (CONT'D)  
And I was left without housing and without means—all alone.

Katya sighs heavily.

KATYA (CONT'D)  
They brought me to Western Ukraine. It was relatively quiet there, but life was hard. I got a job as a cleaning lady; the money was barely enough to pay for the rented apartment. There was also a small cash allowance from the state, but then that was canceled too. Our government probably decided that there were too many of us—refugees—and there wouldn't be enough money for everyone!

(smiles sadly)

(MORE)

KATYA (CONT'D)

That's when I remembered the phone number that boy Orest left me before they took him away.

Sally stands near the front door, wiping her eyes with a handkerchief!

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

Sally wipes away tears!

KATYA (CONT'D)

When I called, his father, Bohdan, answered the phone. He immediately invited me to his place. He was a kind man, may God grant him health!  
(smiles)

He told me that Orest was first in the hospital, and then Peter somehow smuggled him abroad so that Orest wouldn't end up on the front lines again.

Katya takes the cup and sips her tea.

SALLY

(clutching her hand to her chest)

Would you like some more tea?

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

She nods affirmatively with a grateful smile!

KATYA

I wouldn't refuse. This tea is very delicious! So, as for how Bohdan smuggled his son abroad—I don't know. After all, men haven't been allowed to leave since the beginning of the war. But Bohdan was a well-off man; he had a farming business. He had something to sell. And for big money, anything is possible there. You yourself know that, Jeffrey!  
(a slight shadow of irony)

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Jeffrey lowers his eyes for a moment.

JEFFREY

And what happened to you afterward?

KATYA

Peter thanked me very much; he said he owed me his son's life. And then he suggested I go abroad—to Canada. He gave me an address of someone I could contact, and money for the road. That's how I ended up at a Christian mission in Kelowna.

She clutches her hand to her heart and takes a deep breath.

KATYA (CONT'D)

I've been there ever since. I help various unfortunates, including Ukrainian refugees, just as I was myself not long ago!  
(smiles)

Jeffrey nods his head with understanding.

Sally brings a teapot with freshly brewed tea and a small bowl of candies, placing them on the table.

78 INT. CAR INTERIOR - DAY

Michael is driving at a high speed. He is extremely tense and anxious.

79 INT. JEFFREY'S HOUSE. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jeffrey and Katerina sit in armchairs opposite each other. Cups of tea are in front of them.

JEFFREY

(thoughtfully)

Yes, Katya. I never thought I would become the cause for the breakdown of your entire destiny.

KATYA

(with a genuine smile)

Oh, come on, Jeffrey! You have nothing to do with this! My fate is my choice. And perhaps God's. I am happy that Misha—

(corrects herself)

That Michael fell into a kind family! And for the fact that you did not change his name that I gave him.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

He looks intently at Katerina, trying to understand: is she being cunning, or is this genuinely her simplicity?

KATYA (CONT'D)  
 (with embarrassment)  
 I was afraid to come to you,  
 especially after the call from your  
 daughter-in-law.

JEFFREY  
 (surprised)  
 Linda called you?! When?!!

KATYA  
 A couple of days before your call.

The camera focuses on Katya's hands and moves in closer.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S HANDS

Katya, nervous, intertwines the fingers of both hands and clenches them into a lock.

The camera moves up and focuses on Katya's face.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Wipes a tear from her cheek.

KATYA (CONT'D)  
 She said that my son did not want  
 to see me and that he had left for  
 a long tour in Europe.

Jeffrey clutches his head in his hands, then turns his gaze to Sally.

JEFFREY  
 (to Sally)  
 Did you hear that? I don't believe  
 my ears! But how did she find out?!

Sally stands, guiltily lowering her head.

SALLY  
 It's my fault, Mr. Roy!

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

Guiltily face.

SALLY (CONT'D)  
 It's my fault, I'm an idiot; I let  
 it slip!

(MORE)

SALLY (CONT'D)

When Michael left for his tour in Toronto, I was helping Linda babysit Jennifer. So, in my excitement, I blabbed that Jeffrey had already found Michael's mother and that he would surprise Michael upon his return. And I named her and said that she... that is, Mrs. Golub, lives in Kelowna.

(pause)

Forgive me, Jeffrey!

Jeffrey reproachfully nods his head.

JEFFREY

Fine! That's even good for me. Now I know exactly what to expect from her in the future!

SALLY

You already suspected! She is just like her mother. But Michael loves her very much, on top of that, they now have a child

JEFFREY

Exactly! That's why (raises a finger) Michael should not be told about this. Right? What do you think?

(to Katya)

KATYA

What can I think?

(shrugs)

As you say, Mr. Roy! You are right—it's not worth bringing discord into their family.

(pause)

So Michael is not against seeing me?

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

A spark of hope appeared in her eyes!

JEFFREY

(spreading his arms)

What are you talking about?! Michael searched for you everywhere! He desperately wanted to see you, Katya! And

(pause)

Just call me Jeffrey! Okay?!

CLOSE UP OF SALLY'S FACE

Sally smiles happily!

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

She looks with a questioning gaze and a guileless smile.

KATYA

I'm probably causing you some  
inconvenience, aren't I? Don't  
worry—I'll leave as soon as I see  
him!

(her eyes grow moist)

If only I could just see him!

Jeffrey lowers his head, then stands up, walks to the window,  
and flings the curtains wide open! His movements are clumsy  
and somewhat awkward.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA

Katya continues to look at Jeffrey with a blissful smile.

KATYA (CONT'D)

Jeffrey, I see that you love my  
(stumbles)  
that you love Michael! It must have  
been difficult for you to call me,  
wasn't it? Why did you do it?

Jeffrey returns and sits back down in the armchair.

He shows his palms to Katya.

JEFFREY

Look at these hands, Katya! I  
worked hard my whole life, and  
there were times when these hands  
held a heavy sledgehammer, and not  
just big money.

The camera moves closer and focuses on Jeffrey's face.

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

Jeffrey is very agitated.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

But I never felt such happiness as  
when I first held Michael in these  
hands. Rachel, my late wife, and I  
found a new life. And now—

(pause)

(MORE)

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

Jeffrey clutches his head with both hands.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

And now I feel like I'm being torn into two parts! One part of me is yelling, "What have you done, you fool?" And the other part of my soul is whispering to me, "You did the right thing!"

(pause)

It whispers in Michael's voice!

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY'S FACE

An unbearably painful question in his eyes.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

What are those voices?

KATYA

(sadly)

Each of us hears two different voices. (then with a smile) It's important to know how to choose the right one.

(and again, with sadness)

I learned this too late.

JEFFREY

(unexpectedly)

I called him.

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

An incredibly expressive gaze, in which a silent question is visible—is he really talking about HIM?

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

(in a confident voice)

Yes, I called Michael and told him you were here, and he will be here soon!

Suddenly, Katya begins to breathe heavily and tries to unbutton the top button of her blouse.

JEFFREY (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you? Are you feeling ill?!

KATYA

No, it just got stuffy! Everything is fine.

(MORE)

KATYA (CONT'D)  
 (clutching her hand to her  
 heart)  
 I need some air!

JEFFREY  
 Of course! Of course, let's go!  
 (helps her stand up)

SALLY  
 (caringly)  
 I'll bring your clothes now, Mrs.  
 Golub!

80 EXT. STREET NEAR JEFFREY'S HOUSE - DAY

Jeffrey and Katya walk along the snow-covered street beside the road, near Jeffrey's large house. There are snowdrifts all around.

KATYA  
 (with an innocent smile)  
 Forgive me if I startled you. My  
 heart. Although I feel well in the  
 fresh air.

Jeffrey, holding her by the elbow, looks down at his feet.

JEFFREY  
 My heart has been acting up lately,  
 too. Alas, neither of us is getting  
 any younger! But the fresh air of  
 Kelowna is a wonderful way to  
 improve one's health! Isn't that  
 right?  
 (smiles)

KATYA  
 The weather there is good—fresh  
 air, not too cold, and lots of  
 snow.  
 Just like long ago in Ukraine.  
 (with sadness)

Jeffrey looks up and stares into the distance.

Michael's car speeds out from around the corner!

JEFFREY  
 (with a smile)  
 Here comes Michael!

81 INT. MICHAEL'S CAR INTERIOR - DAY

Michael cannot handle the steering on the snow-covered road! He is trying to steer the car out of a skid by turning the wheel!

82 EXT. SNOW-COVERED ROAD - DAY

Michael's car skids toward the roadside, and one side of it hits a pole standing on the curb. BOOM!!!

CLOSE UP OF KATYA'S FACE

Horror on her face!

Katerina starts running towards her son's car on the snowy road (runs TOWARDS CAMERA). The snow is deep, and it is difficult for her to run!

FLASHBACK: Young, pregnant Katya runs after Phil's car (runs TOWARDS CAMERA).

Elderly Katerina runs towards her son on the snow-covered road; her headscarf has slipped to the side; she is breathing heavily.

KATYA  
(screaming in despair)  
My son! Misha-a!!

Suddenly, she stops and clutches her hand to her heart.

Katya falls to her knees, then sideways, and finally onto her back!

Michael climbs out of the slightly dented car, holding his bruised elbow. He sees his mother and starts running towards her!

Jeffrey runs towards Katya!

Jeffrey and Michael reach Katya almost simultaneously.

OVERHEAD CAMERA VIEW.

Katya lies in an unnatural, half-side, supine position, with her legs bent. Michael and Jeffrey lean over her. The camera moves higher and higher...

83 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Jeffrey and Michael sit in the doctor's office, with anxious expressions. A doctor, a middle-aged man, sits across the table from them.

DOCTOR  
 You can stop worrying; the  
 patient's condition—  
     (struggles to pronounce  
     the name)  
 Yeka-a-terina—  
     (smiles)  
 is fully stabilized. A heart attack  
 is certainly very serious, but—

CLOSE UP OF JEFFREY AND MICHAEL

They exchange glances and look tensely at the doctor.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)  
     (smiling)  
 But hypertension is not a death  
 sentence. Proper treatment, and  
 most importantly—complete calm.  
 Fresh air and healthy food!

MICHAEL  
 Can we visit her?

DOCTOR  
 That, I cannot allow you yet. Right  
 now, any emotions are dangerous for  
 her—both negative, and overly  
 positive, intense emotions. But  
 don't worry—she already knows that  
 you, Michael, are fine! That news  
 will give her strength!  
     (smiling, gesticulating)  
 And in three to four days, you can  
 visit her!  
     (then strictly)  
 But for no more than ten minutes!

Jeffrey and Michael nod in response.

84 INT. JEFFREY'S CAR INTERIOR - DAY

Michael sits in the passenger seat with a tired look. He holds a photograph which he is examining.

The driver's door opens, and Jeffrey sits down behind the wheel. He briskly closes the door and glances at Michael.

JEFFREY  
You look unwell, son.

MICHAEL  
(wearily)  
Didn't sleep all night.

JEFFREY  
(places his hand on his  
shoulder)  
Shall I drive you home?

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

Michael nods affirmatively in response. Then he lowers his gaze to the photograph.

MICHAEL  
She is beautiful, isn't she?

Michael hands the photo to his father. Jeffrey takes the photograph and looks at it.

CLOSE UP OF THE PHOTOGRAPH

The photo shows young Katya and Olivia embracing.

Jeffrey returns the photo to Michael and nods affirmatively.

JEFFREY  
(smiling)  
She is!

Jeffrey starts the engine.

CLOSE UP OF MICHAEL'S FACE

He wearily leans his head back onto the seat cushion and closes his eyes.

85 EXT. SUN-DRENCHED GREEN MEADOW - DAY (MICHAEL'S DREAM)

Point of View (POV) shot.

Little boy Michael runs through the tall grass toward his mother—young Katya, who is wearing a very beautiful dress. He runs up to her and looks at her (camera view from below). Katya takes his hand and says gently with a smile:

KATYA  
Time to go home, Misha! Let's go home!

Misha (POV) walks, holding his mother's hand and looking alternately at her and at the endless green sea of the meadow.

FINAL CREDITS: My Beloved Bad Mother

THE END.