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RUBIES

by

Boaz Yakin

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*"A woman of fortitude, who can find?
For her price is far above rubies."*

-Proverbs 31:10

A LITTLE GIRL'S FACE

Fills the SCREEN. Her name is SONIA. Her eyes are wide-excited and frightened all at once-- as she listens intently to the sound of a young boy's VOICE:

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)

A hundred years ago, in a shtetl near Pinsk, a young girl ran off into the woods. Her father wanted her to marry a scholar from the Pinsker Yeshiva, but for some reason-- maybe she was a little crazy, who knows?-- she didn't want to. Anyhow, she ran away.

SONIA

She ran away from home?

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)

Yeah. It was in the middle of winter...

IMAGE: A white, snowy landscape. Doves of snow falling. A tiny, DARK FIGURE wanders into the endless white expanse...

BOY'S VOICE (O.S.)

... and she wandered into the forest. At first no one at home even knew she ran away. They thought she got lost in the snow somewhere and died. They looked and looked for her, but they never found her body. They decided the wolves ate her up. So they quit looking...

The tiny FIGURE is gone-- leaving only a WHITE SCREEN. The Boy's VOICE breaks into a painful hacking COUGH...

LITTLE SONIA

Sits up and reaches over to her brother YOSSIE, a pale, sickly-looking boy whose gaunt face is framed by wispy payes. They are sitting together in the same bed. Sonia hugs her brother, trying to get his coughing to stop....

SONIA

Shhh! Yossi! They'll hear us... Yossi.

Yossi stifles his coughs, slowing his breathing...

SONIA

They'll kill us if they find you here.

(CONTINUED)

2.

CONTINUED:

YOSSI

No, they'll just kill me. I'm your older brother, so it falls on me. I'm the only one around here who's gonna die.

Sonia holds him tightly.

SONIA

I can't go to sleep without you. I love you more than anything-- more than Papa or Imma. More than anything.

YOSSI

More than God?

SONIA

A million times more.

YOSSI

You're a sinner. You're supposed to love God above everything-- and after that, your father and mother. The Toyre doesn't even say anything about brothers and sisters.

SONIA

Then we'll add it in.

YOSSI

You can't *add* anything to the Toyre, dunce. It's finished. It's the word of God, and that's that. Not even the greatest scholar can change a letter of it.

SONIA

Then we'll write our own Toyre.

Yossi looks at his little sister for a moment. He smiles. Then he begins again--

YOSSI

It was the longest, hardest winter anyone could remember...

IMAGE: White SCREEN, filled with snow...

YOSSI

They sat shiva in Pinsk for the girl who had disappeared-- And everyone went on with their business. Until, one day...

(CONTINUED)

3.

CONTINUED:

A DARK FIGURE appears through the driving snow, and begins approaching...

YOSSI (O.S.)

...just as suddenly as she had vanished, the girl came back into town. It was the same girl, for sure, but she seemed different-- And people could hardly believe it was her. She was also, you know, carrying a baby in her stomach. She was pregnant. But when they checked her, they said she hadn't been with a man...

SONIA (O.S.)

Checked? What does that mean? And what do you mean been with a..?

YOSSI (O.S.)

Look, I don't know, okay? It's just how I heard them tell it...

THE FIGURE is drawing nearer, a formless back-lit silhouette, growing larger and darker...

YOSSI (O.S.)

...she had a baby in her stomach, but she didn't have a man. In Pinsk they said she got lost in the forest and was saved by a Demon who made her his wife...

THE FIGURE has entirely FILLED THE SCREEN, which is now completely BLACK.

SONIA (O.S.)

What kind of Demon?

YOSSI (O.S.)

No one knows. They said he had skin black as coal, and eyes green like a cat. And that he was a son of Satan himself...

BACK ON SONIA

Covering her mouth with her hands.

YOSSI

That spring the woman had a baby-- a baby girl. They called her Yitta.

(CONTINUED)

4.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Baba Yitta?

YOSSI

That's right. Our whole family is descended from Baba Yitta. All of us. That's why we have such a strong evil urge in us... why you and me always sleep in the same bed, even though we shouldn't.

Sonia shakes her head in denial. Yossi nods.

YOSSI

It's why you don't love God, and talk about changing the Toyre. You don't watch out... you're gonna end up just like her.

SONIA

Like how?

YOSSI

When she was real old, and finally died, Baba Yitta went up to heaven-- But God didn't want her. So he sent her down to hell. But when she got there, Satan recognized her as his niece. He couldn't bring himself to make her suffer in hell-- so he sent her back up here-- to our world, where she wanders the earth like Cain, alone forever.

Tears well in little Sonia's eyes...

SONIA

Poor Baba Yitta.

YOSSI

Don't cry. Look...

Sonia follows his gaze to the CLOCK by the bedside. It's hands are at MIDNIGHT.

YOSSI

Remember what day it is?

Sonia's expression suddenly brightens... she turns back to Yossi-- Who is now holding a tiny rolled-up CLOTH in his hand.

(CONTINUED)

5.

CONTINUED:

YOSSI
Happy birthday.

Sonia takes the cloth and unrolls it-- revealing a glittering RED STONE in its folds. Her eyes open wide...

SONIA
A *ruby*.

YOSSI
I bought it from Papa's shop, with my savings.

Sonia takes it in her fingers, holding it up to the light... then her expression sinks.

SONIA
It's fake.

Yossi is silent.

SONIA
It's the fake one Papa took out of that ring. He was gonna throw it out.

She looks accusingly at Yossi, who drops his eyes. Then Sonia turns, leans over the edge of the bed, and tosses the stone right down the heating vent in the floor. She sits up and faces the wall.

Yossi gets up off the bed and walks over to the window, looking out into the night. He starts taking off his shirt...

Sonia turns and looks at him, her anger giving way to nervousness...

SONIA
Hey... what are you doing?

YOSSI
I'm going out to the lake.

Sonia sits up, alarmed...

SONIA
Yossi... you're not supposed to. Imma said with your asthma you could choke up and...

YOSSI
I'm the only boy around here who can't swim. I've been watching everybody else, and I know what to do.

(CONTINUED)

1 (Cont.)CONTINUED:

1 (Cont.)

SONIA

No one's even gonna be there to see you swim. They won't know you did it, anyway-- so what's the point?

YOSSI

You'll know.

He pads over to the bedroom door and gently opens it, looking out onto the back porch. The SOUND of CRICKETS fills the room.

SONIA

Yossi! Please don't go!

Yossi looks back and smiles at his little sister. Then he steps out into the night. The SOUND of the CRICKETS grows LOUDER and LOUDER...

Sonia runs across the room and stands by the doorway, hissing urgently:

SONIA

Yossi...

A3

EXT.WOODS- NIGHT

A3*

ANGLE ON THE DARK OUTDOORS-- As Yossi's pale body vanishes into the night...

CUT TO:

3

A YOUNG WOMAN'S FACE

3

Contorted and red, cheeks wet with tears, as she CRIES--

YOUNG WOMAN

Yossi!

WIDE ON A BRIGHT HOSPITAL ROOM

Where the woman is in the process of giving birth, assisted by a DOCTOR and two NURSES...

DOCTOR

Come on, Mrs. Horowitz... just a little more... one more push....

CLOSE ON THE YOUNG WOMAN

Who is Sonia, now in her early twenties-- She grimaces, giving a final effort-- then collapses back onto her pillow in a daze. There is the SOUND of an O.S. SMACK, followed by a

(CONTINUED)

3

CONTINUED:

3

baby's CRIES.... HOLD on SONIA'S FACE, as the BABY is lowered into the FRAME beside her...

(CONTINUED)

7.

CONTINUED:

in a daze. There is the SOUND of an O.S. SMACK, followed by a baby's CRIES.... HOLD on SONIA'S FACE, as the BABY is lowered into the FRAME beside her...

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Congratulations, Mrs. Horowitz. It's a boy.

Sonia looks at her baby through half conscious eyes, unable to move...

DOCTOR (O.S.)
You were calling out the name "Yossi," Mrs. Horowitz. Is that the name you'd like to give your son?

Sonia can't answer... tears fill her eyes, and she begins SOBBING-- But these are not tears of joy-- they are tears of sorrow...

CUT TO:

INT. BAIS AARON SYNAGOGUE/FOYER- DAY

The BABY cries his eyes out, as Sonia presses him tightly to her bosom. They are surrounded by a crowd of HASSIDIC WOMEN, heads covered by wigs, hats and kerchiefs. Sonia looks through the doorway into the *besmedresh*-- the main prayer area--

INT. BESMEDRESH- SONIA'S P.O.V.

A throng of HASSIDIC MEN in black suits; wearing open collared white shirts and slanted black fedoras. All save for the very young are bearded, but only a few sport payes.

A MOEL-- The rabbi who is going to perform the *circumcision*-- stands on the dais and tests the sharpness of his knife by cleanly slicing a thin leather strap with it...

ANGLE ON THE DOORWAY

Sonia blanches, squeezing her baby so hard it screams...

SONIA'S MOTHER, a sad-eyed woman who looks far older than her fifty years, reaches over and relaxes Sonia's arms...

MOTHER
Easy, Sonia... you're turning my only grandchild into a tube of toothpaste.

(CONTINUED)

8.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

He's like a sacrifice... they're gonna sacrifice my baby.

MOTHER

If your father, *zichrono librucha*, wasn't already in his grave, you'd put him in it with this spectacle you're making of yourself. Shimmie's gonna be just fine. Look out there— every one of those men had the same thing, and they're perfectly normal.

SONIA

Normal..?

ANGLE ON THE THRONG OF MEN

A sea of black, swaying in all directions as they pray fervently...

SONIA'S VOICE (O.S.)

They all stand around while some old butcher hacks off my baby's pischke, and you call them normal? Not today. Not my baby...

Sonia turns and starts to push through the knot of women, but she is held fast by:

RACHEL FEINBERG

Sonia's sister-in-law, a beautiful woman in her late twenties.

RACHEL

My brother told me he married a smart girl— he said he married a pretty girl— but he never told me he married such a chicken. You should be proud, Sonia. This is the moment your son becomes a Jew.

Sonia grimaces, attempting to compose herself...

SONIA

But does it have to hurt so much?

INSIDE THE *BESMEDRESH*

MENDEL HOROWITZ, Sonia's young husband, is moving amongst the men squeezed in around the dais, helping them to place a large, ornate CHAIR— "Elijah's seat"— in the center of the podium. He is pale, sweating, and frantic...

THE MOEL

Puts down his knife on a white cloth and calls out:

MOEL
Bring in the boy.

Mendel grabs the Moel by the arm...

MENDEL
Wait! It's alright? The... it's clean? Sharp, no nicks or... You checked? Then double-check! Check again, to make sure that...

(wipes his brow, turning to a friend)
It's hot... it's like an oven in here. I don't want my son cooking in this oven. Someone open a window...

SENDER HOROWITZ, Mendel's older brother, drags him off the dais. Sender is an intense bear of a man— In every way the opposite of his younger brother: Mendel is soft, unformed and vulnerable; Sender is a pure jolt of raw power.

SENDER
You've been coming to this schul for twenty three years, Mendel, and there have never been any windows here. Suddenly this morning there's going to be windows?

MENDEL
Isn't that illegal? A fire hazard or something? This place ought to be condemned-- What kind of a building for people *doesn't* have any windows in it?

IN THE FOYER

Sonia holds onto her baby, as the synagogue's SHAMASH steps up to the doorway, holding out a beautifully embroidered white PILLOW.

Rachel nods at Sonia, who purses her lips, and reluctantly lowers the baby onto the pillow. She fixes the Shamash with a dangerous glare—

SONIA
Don't you drop him.

The Shamash swallows hard, then carries the baby on the pillow into the *besmedresh*— where he hands him off to

(CONTINUED)

10.

CONTINUED:

another man, who hands him to his neighbor, and so on— And in this manner the baby is passed from hand to hand toward the podium...

SONIA
(from the doorway)
Don't any one of you dare drop him!

SENDER AND MENDEL

Are standing side by side at the foot of the dais.

SENDER
Nice girl you married.

MENDEL
(mopping his brow)
How about the doors? Are the doors open? Maybe we could get a nice draft going...
(to one of his friends)
Baruch, can you get us a draft?

BARUCH
A draft of what?

CLOSE ON SENDER

Closely observing the women in the doorway— particularly SONIA, who is glaring fiercely into the *besmedresh*...

MENDEL (O.S.)
Air, Baruch! A draft of air, so my son doesn't choke to death in this...

SENDER
She's a fine looking girl.

MENDEL
Who?

SENDER
Your wife. I'm looking forward to knowing her better— Now that we're gonna be neighbors.

Mendel looks to his older brother, confused...

SENDER
I talked to Reb Fedder. You got the job teaching at the yeshiva in Boro Park. I've already found you an apartment on 45th street— it's a stone's throw from
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

11.

CONTINUED:

SENDER (cont'd)
by me. We'll finally get you out of the
sticks and into the big city.

MENDEL
And... The Rebbe... I'm going to be
close to the Rebbe?

SENDER
Three blocks from the Rebbe's house,
that's where you're gonna be. You'll
pray with the Rebbe, you'll hear the
Rebbe's fabrenge every shabbes-- you'll
be up to your ears with the Rebbe.

Tears of joy glitter in Mendel's eyes...

MENDEL
Sender... I don't know what to say...

SENDER
Just that Sender Horowitz always looks
out for his family-- Especially his
favorite kid brother.

Mendel smiles gratefully, then almost jumps out of his
skin... as the pillow carrying his baby is shoved up to his
arms. He gingerly takes it, and looks down at his son with
teary eyes...

SENDER
Mendel.

Mendel steels himself, and hands the baby over to his older
brother. Sender carries the baby up to the podium, and sits
down in "Elijah's seat," cradling the baby, as the Moel
picks up his knife and begins to recite a BLESSING...

ANGLE ON SONIA

Looking on in dismay, her arm gripped tightly by Rachel...

RACHEL
It's easier if you don't watch.

SONIA
If they can do it, I can watch it.

THE MOEL

Finishes his prayer, then bends over the baby, and lowers
the KNIFE...

CLOSE ON MENDEL

As the baby's sharp CRY cuts through the air. Mendel's eyes roll up in his head, and he drops down in a dead faint...

CUT TO:

A CLEAR BLUE SKY

THE CAMERA BOOMS DOWN to REVEAL a bustling AVENUE-- Lined with countless shops. The sidewalks are crowded, and the 2-way street is clogged by a full-fledged TRAFFIC JAM. The TITLE:

"13TH AVENUE - BORO PARK - NEW YORK"

Is SUPERIMPOSED, as the CAMERA continues descending, until it has reached the windows of a brand-new STATION WAGON-- against which Sonia's face is pressed. Her son is in her arms, and her eyes are brimming with excitement.

SONIA

It's fantastic... so many different kinds of people...

INT. STATION WAGON- DAY

Mendel shrugs, sitting patiently behind the wheel of the slowly moving car...

MENDEL

Fantastic and not so fantastic.

SONIA

Why not fantastic?

MENDEL

Lots of people, lots of influences.

SONIA

They could be good influences.

MENDEL

Sometimes good, sometimes not so good.

Sonia shoots Mendel an annoyed look. They grind to a halt behind another car...

SONIA

Go around, nu.

(CONTINUED)

13.

CONTINUED:

MENDEL

There's no room for a car to pass.

SONIA

There's plenty of room for a car--
unfortunately we're not in a car, we're
in this ridiculous boat.

MENDEL

It's a station wagon.

SONIA

Who ever heard of a station wagon for
three people? You could fit a family of
twelve in this thing.

MENDEL

God willing.

Sonia starts to say something, but bites it back. Mendel
turns and looks tenderly at his wife.

MENDEL

Sonia-- I know you're still mad at me
for naming Shimmie after the Rebbe-- But
he's our first son, and he should be
invested with the highest level of
spirituality. We can call our next boy
Yossi.

VOICE (O.S.)

I don't care what you call him.

Sonia looks over her shoulder:

YOSSI

Her ten-year old brother, looking exactly the same as he did
when she was a little girl, is sitting in the back seat of
the car, twisting one of his payes around his finger.

SONIA

(to Yossi)

Who asked you?

Mendel looks at Sonia, confused and hurt. To his eyes, other
than them, there is no one else in the car.

MENDEL

Sonia, I am his father, after all. Give
me a little credit.

(CONTINUED)

7 MENDEL'S P.O.V.— ON THE STREET

A7*

A flock of black-garbed HASSIDIM are descending the steps of the large synagogue on the adjacent side-street. They are all pressed in close around a single GREY-BEARDED MAN, dotting over his every step...

MENDEL (O.S.)

The Rebbe!

B7' ANGLE ON THE STATION WAGON

B7*

Sonia is barely able to keep the baby from hitting the windshield, as Mendel pulls the car around to the side of the street and hops out...

7 EXT. BORO PARK STREET- DAY

7

Mendel hurries around the car, and bumps right into a *schnorrer*— a bent, old BEGGAR WOMAN— clad in tattered, colorful rags. She speaks in a thick Eastern-European accent:

OLD WOMAN

A few pennies, young rebbe... a little change for an old woman who's been too long on her tired feet...

Frustrated, knowing he can't morally ignore the old woman to get to the Rebbe, Mendel fishes around in his pocket... but it's empty.

MENDEL

My wife's carrying all of our money,
I'm...

The old woman squeezes Mendel's arm...

OLD WOMAN

I've been on my feet such a long time,
young rebbe. Such a long time...

Mendel grits his teeth, then turns back to the car; where Sonia is already leaning out of the window, holding out a DOLLAR BILL. Mendel nods gratefully, and runs around the old woman-- who takes a step toward Sonia...

OLD WOMAN

God bless you and your children... a
thousand blessings on your house...

Her hand almost touches the dollar... then she suddenly stops.

(CONTINUED)

15.

CONTINUED:

OLD WOMAN

God bless you and your children... a
thousand blessings on your house...

Her hand almost touches the dollar... then she suddenly
stops.

SONIA

Don't worry, bubby. It won't bite.

But the old woman isn't interested in the dollar anymore.
It's Sonia's face that she is now studying with her pale,
rheumy eyes...

OLD WOMAN

At last.

Sonia blinks. The old woman reaches out, and closes Sonia's
hand back around the dollar.

OLD WOMAN

God bless you, child.

She turns, and slowly shuffles away... DOLLY IN on Sonia's
confused face...

SONIA

For what?

The old woman brushes past Mendel, who is standing in the
middle of the sidewalk, watching the Rebbe and his entourage
pile into several BLACK SEDANS, which then start up the
street...

Mendel turns and looks back at Sonia, his face beaming like
a little boy's. He SHOUTS-

MENDEL

The Rebbe!

CLOSE ON SONIA

She forces a smile, but her expression is overcast with some
kind of grey premonition... Mendel's VOICE comes in over the
SOUNDTRACK:

MENDEL (O.S.)

-- And so it was that God picked that
humble little mountain, Mount Sinai, on
which to present His greatest gift...

INT. CLASSROOM/YESHIVA BETH EMETH- DAY

DOLLYING ACROSS THE FACES of a class of six-year old HASSIDIC BOYS-- Some of them sitting in rapt attention, others throwing things at each other, others nearly asleep, as Mendel's VOICE continues:

MENDEL (O.S.)

... the gift of His Toyre. But the question still remained: To who was he going to give such a gift? So God set out to find which amongst the Nations of the earth was worthy of receiving His Toyre. He went to the Goyim in Canaan and asked-- "Look what I have here for you-- The Toyre! Do you want my Toyre? And what did the Goyim say? Did they want God's Toyre?"

ANGLE ON MENDEL

Standing at the front of the class, grinning as the kids erupt in a motley chorus of "No!" and "No way!" Mendel is animated and alive, a man joyfully in his element:

MENDEL

Well, they asked first. "Toyre, eh? Tell us what's in it?"

(deepening his voice to a Godly baritone)

In the Toyre it is written: "*Thou shalt not steal!*"

(scratching his head, as the goyim again)

Hmmmm. No stealing? Forget it-- This Toyre is not for us. No thanks.

The boys titter, grinning at one another, as Mendel continues--

MENDEL

So God went searching some more. Where did he search?

BOYS

(shouting out)

America! Yisroel! New York! Everywhere!

MENDEL

God came to America, and asked the American Goyim: "Do you want my Toyre?" And they also said-- "Tell us what's in it, first."

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

17.

CONTINUED:

MENDEL (cont'd)
(voice deepening)
"Honor thy father and thy mother."
(as the American Goyim)
Naaaaaaaah! Respect our parents? I
don't think so! Get that thing- whattaya
call it? Toyre? Get it out of here!

The boys laugh happily...

MENDEL
From one nation to another God went,
always asking: "Do you want my Toyre?"
And always they asked- "What's in it?"
And always he told them: "Thou shalt not
steal. Thou shalt not kill." And always
they threw it back in God's face. "No
way José- this *meshugas* is not for us."
(pauses, looking over his
class)
So God went to Yisroel. "Yisroel," He
asked us- "Jews, do you want my Toyre?"
And what did they answer?

All the boys chime in at once, SHOUTING along with their
teacher:

BOYS/MENDEL
"Naaseh ve nishmah!"

MENDEL
That's right. "We shall do, and we will
listen." Not "Tell us what's in it,
first, so we can decide if we want it."
We shall do, and we will listen.
Anything you want us to do, Lord- We
have already accepted it. And now, only
now, did God see that He had found in us
a people worthy to bear witness, and
carry with us his greatest gift- the
eternal words of his *Sefer Toyre*.

One of the boys, HESHIE, raises his hand. Mendel points at
him.

HESHIE
My father says it's okay to steal from
Goyim. He says to steal by Goyim isn't
really stealing.

Some of the boys laugh. Mendel's expression darkens.

(CONTINUED)

18.

CONTINUED:

HESHIE

I asked Reb Zvi about it, and he said stealing is stealing, no matter from who. But if he's right, then I can't obey the commandment to honor my father, because one can't honor a thief.

Mendel opens his mouth to offer an answer... but he doesn't really have one, so he just stands there, blinking...

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN/HOROWITZ APARTMENT- DAY

A spread of square SWATCHES of different fabrics is spread out over the dining table.

VOICE (O.S.)

-- It's a vast selection, but a few of the samples cry out for immediate consideration. Like this sweet floral pattern here... or this nice blue chiffon look...

Sonia and Rachel are standing in the little kitchen in Sonia's new apartment, looking on as SHAINDY, a bewigged saleslady, chatters on about the selection. The SOUND of Rachel's THREE CHILDREN tearing around can be heard from the next room...

SHAINDY

... I'd personally recommend something light and airy to compliment the charming atmosphere of your home...

SONIA

"Charming" means "small," right?

SHAINDY

I assume you'll hang curtains in the living room as well as here in the kitchen, which opens up a whole range of choices- For instance: You could decide on an atmosphere of integration, and unify the space with a single theme; or you could separate the rooms visually- Different looks, different atmospheres, different states of mind.

SONIA

After listening to you for half an hour I don't know what state my mind is in. I don't even know what language you're

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

19.

CONTINUED:

SONIA (cont'd)
talking, you could be talking Chinese, I
wouldn't know the difference.

Rachel is in the b.g., shouting at her kids in the other
room-

RACHEL
Quiet down, already! You're wrecking
your aunt's new apartment before she's
moved into it!

SHAINDY
In one case the apartment is
whole, unified. In the other the kitchen
is the kitchen and the living room is
the living room. You're cooking all day,
you're exhausted, you walk out of the
kitchen and presto, it's like you're in
another world.

Sonia looks numbly at the saleswoman-

SONIA
One of us here is completely insane. I
think it's you, but you're gonna have
company real soon if I have to listen to
one more word of this meshugas.

TSIPI, Rachel's ten-year old daughter, enters the kitchen
awkwardly carrying little Shimmie.

TSIPI
Aunt Sonia, I think Shimmie's hungry.

Sonia picks up her crying baby, and turns to Rachel:

SONIA
Rachele- pick out one of those samples
for me, will you? All these complex
curtain-choosing theories are too much
for me right now.

SHAINDY
You don't have to chose now. I can just
leave your favorite selections with you
here so that you can devote as much
thought to it as you like...

RACHEL
You're gonna have to live with it,
Sonia, so I think you ought to...

(CONTINUED)

20.

CONTINUED:

SONIA
Just pick one, okay?

SHAINDY
One? So I'm safe in assuming that you've
opted for integration?

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM- MOMENTS LATER

Sonia is alone with her baby. The SOUND of Rachel's kids is audible from outside the door, as Sonia unbuttons her blouse and raises Shimmie to her breast...

CLOSE ON SONIA'S FACE

Reacting to the intense sensation. Her cheeks flush red... she covers her mouth with her hand, trying to maintain her composure... but finally it's too much for her, and she pulls the baby away from her breast, causing him to start CRYING again...

INT. KITCHEN- DAY

Sonia hurries out into the noise, brushing past Rachel and Shaindy...

RACHEL
Sonia?

Sonia picks up the baby's empty BOTTLE from the counter-top, then opens the refrigerator- But there is NOTHING INSIDE.

Sonia sags against the counter, holding her crying son, as Rachel's kids run around in the f.g. shouting at the top of their lungs.

RACHEL
Are you all right, Sonia?
(no answer)
I know, it can hurt sometimes.

SONIA
It doesn't hurt. It's just too... I
don't know... I don't know.

She hands Shimmie over to Rachel, wincing at the noise and confusion...

CUT TO:

INT. MIKVEH/PREPARATION ROOM- DAY

Utter silence. HIGH ANGLE of Sonia soaking in a large white tub. A female ATTENDANT sits on a stool beside the tub, holding Sonia's hand...

CLOSE ON SONIA'S HAND-- As the attendant goes through her fingers one by one, checking for hangnails-- Clipping one off when she finds it... this is followed by a series of IMAGES showing Sonia being prepared for her monthly ritual bath:

Sonia's wet foot extends out of the water, and the attendant goes over it with the clippers, toe by toe...

Sonia rises from the tub, and the attendant wraps her in a white towel..

CLOSE ON SONIA'S FACE-- As the attendant wipes off the corners of her eyes with a white cloth...

ANGLE ON HER BACK-- The towel is lowered, and the attendant runs her hands over Sonia's skin, searching for loose hairs...

INT. HALLWAY/MIKVEH- DAY

Sonia follows the attendant down a long white hallway, past several other women standing there, wrapped in white towels, silently whispering prayers...

INT. MIKVEH ROOM- DAY

CLOSE ON the BACK OF SONIA'S HEAD-- The attendant's fingers run through her extremely short hair, making sure that there are no knots. Sonia walks down the steps, descending into the ritual bath until she is completely submerged...

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM/HOROWITZ APARTMENT- NIGHT

Sonia lies in the bed, under white sheets, in a white nightgown. She relaxes into the mattress, enjoying the feel of it against her body, and looks across the room:

MENDEL

Is sitting by his desk, in his pajamas, mouthing the words he is reading from a book.

(CONTINUED)

22.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Mendel.

He raises a finger without looking up. "Wait a moment."

SONIA

Didn't you pray already?

Mendel nods, closing the book. He turns off the desk-lamp, and walks to the bed.

MENDEL

I wasn't praying-- I was just learning a little Mishnah.

SONIA

Anything good?

Mendel sits down on the bed beside Sonia. He kisses her forehead.

MENDEL

It's all good.

Sonia smiles. She cranes her neck and kisses Mendel on the lips... but he slows her down. He gently moves her back, then turns to shut off the LIGHTS near the bed...

SONIA

Mendel...

(he stops)

Can't we leave it on? Just for a little while? I want to see what we're...

MENDEL

Sonia.

Sonia stops talking. Mendel switches off the light, and the room is instantly dark, save for the pale moonlight filtering through the windows.

Sonia reaches for Mendel again, but he is sitting upright, murmuring a PRAYER with his eyes shut. Sonia sags back on her pillow. Mendel finally finishes his prayers, and slides down into the bed beside Sonia...

Mendel kisses Sonia, and she responds. He rolls on top of her and lifts her nightgown. As they begin to make love, Sonia grows more and more passionate, kissing Mendel's cheeks and biting his neck... From his hesitant reactions it's clear that his pleasure is overridden by his discomfort. He moves his face away, and when Sonia begins kissing and clawing at his chest, he stops and pushes her back to the pillow...

(CONTINUED)

23.

CONTINUED:

MENDEL

Enough... Sonia... *enough*.

SONIA

Enough what?

MENDEL

Just... *enough*.

He moves off of Sonia, sitting up.

MENDEL

It's indecent.

Sonia stares at him, slightly wild-eyed--

SONIA

Making love to your wife is indecent?

MENDEL

Making love like that is.

He runs agitated fingers through his hair...

MENDEL

We aren't here alone, Sonia-- We're under the eyes of God. The Talmud teaches a husband to give his wife pleasure-- And I try, God knows I try-- But for a man it's different. This is supposed to be a mitzvah-- a holy act-- and a man is to think exalted thoughts in order to sanctify it...

(barely able to contain himself)

But I can't do it with you bringing the lusts of Satan himself roaring out of me with your every touch.

SONIA

And I'm supposed to enjoy this? I'm supposed to enjoy myself knowing you're up there thinking of Abraham and Isaac and the damn Rebbe while we're...

MENDEL

God forbid! God forbid you should talk that way about the Rebbe! *God forbid!*

Sonia stifles another outburst... then a COUGHING SOUND catches her attention. She turns her head and looks:

A SMALL FIGURE

Is sitting on the floor across the room, tossing a little metal cube into the air and sweeping four others off the floor, playing a game of "Five Stones."

MENDEL

Oh, Sonia... I'm sorry. I didn't mean to raise my voice to you... I'm sorry...

He caresses Sonia's hair, then leans over and gently kisses her again, whispering "I'm sorry" into her ear as he moves her back onto the bed... but as they drop down out of FRAME we see that there is another figure still sitting in the bed: A SECOND SONIA.

Sonia #2 gets up off the bed and walks across the room to where Yossi, her brother, is sitting, tossing his "stones." She sits down on the floor next to him.

SONIA

Can I play a little?

ANGLE ON MENDEL

Kissing Sonia, moving on top of her again, muttering breathily...

MENDEL

Of course... a little is alright, my darling... a little is alright...

YOSSI

Looks at his sister, sitting across from him, and a SMILE spreads across his face...

CUT TO:

WINE BEING POURED

Into an ornately engraved CUP. A HAND picks it up, and we PAN UP to the intense, bearded face of:

SENDER HOROWITZ

Mendel's older brother, as he blesses the shabbes wine.

SENDER

Baruch ata Adoynai Eloyhenu melech
haoylam, Borei peri hagofen.

(CONTINUED)

25.

CONTINUED:

He takes a sip of the wine...

CUT TO:

SPOONS AND FORKS

Plunging into a pot of thick *chulent* stew. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to REVEAL a large shabbes table, around which a sizeable contingent of the Horowitz clan is seated. Sender is ensconced at the head of the table— beside him is FEIGA, his pleasantly drab-looking wife. Mendel and Sonia are there, as well as Rachel and her husband SCHMUEL— a ruddy cheeked man whose eyes are magnified by thick glasses. CHILDREN of all ages and sizes are squeezed in wherever they can fit...

YECHIEL

Age 11, Sender's oldest boy, is standing and attempting to deliver a *dvar Torah*— "word from the Bible"— over the tumult of the rest of the kids...

YECHIEL

-- And so God spared the Moabites, the reason being that Ruth's family was living among them...

SCHMUEL

Ah, but why didn't God just allow her family to survive an attack? He could have done that, couldn't He?

YECHIEL

The answer to the question is: Of course, God could have done it— but a young girl needs her mother, and a mother needs a husband, and the family needs a house, and the house needs a carpenter, and they need someone to make their clothes...

Rachel forces a spoonful of *chulent* into the mouth of one of her children, overriding his protests—

RACHEL

You don't have to eat it— just put it in your mouth and chew a little.

YECHIEL

(raising his voice to be heard over the din)
So we see that for Ruth to survive, there was need for a whole community. It
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

26.

CONTINUED:

YECHIEL (cont'd)
shows us how family is so important,
even the evil Moabites were spared by
God because they were needed in order to
bring up Ruth.

The men bang the table with their hands and congratulate the
boy with cries of "Yasher coach!"

SENDER
Yasher coach, son. Keep it up and you'll
be a great scholar like your uncle
Mendel.

MENDEL
Please, I'm not so great just yet.

Sender and Schmuel groan at Mendel's genuine humility. The
women are too busy with the children and the food to pay
attention...

SCHMUEL
Modesty is becoming, unless it's false.
All I hear at the Yeshiva these days is
Mendel said this, Mendel said that. Like
the Rambam came to learn by them.

MENDEL
While we're on the subject of the
Yeshiva-- Yesterday one of my students--
a young boy-- asked me a question I
couldn't really answer. His father, he
says, says it's okay to steal, as long
you steal from Goyim. His teacher told
him that stealing from anyone is a sin.
So if he agrees with his teacher, he's
disrespecting his father-- But if he
agrees with his father, he's honoring a
thief, and is in danger of becoming one
himself.

(strokes his beard)
Tough question.

SENDER
Only because you're a scholar.

Every adult at the table looks up at Sender--Women included.
Only the kids are oblivious. Sender allows himself to make
brief eye-contact with Sonia... then he looks back at Mendel.

SENDER
If it's just an opinion, and the boy
disagrees with it, that's all right. You
can respect those you disagree with. But
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

27.

CONTINUED:

SENDER (cont'd)
if his father really is a thief, then
the boy should keep his nose in his own
business, so he doesn't have to judge
what he doesn't know about.

Mendel meets his brother's intense gaze, slightly puzzled.
Then he starts in surprise, as Schmucl BANGS on the table
beside him and begins singing a SHABBES SONG--

SCHMUEL
*Tsur misheloi, mishelo achalnu; barchu
emunai, shevanu vehotarnu kidevar
Adonai...*

Some of the kids chime in...

KIDS/SCHMUEL
Hazan, hazan, hazan-- Hazan et olamo...

Sender breaks into a grin, and joins in on the song as well,
followed by Mendel....

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN- SENDER'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Dirty dishes are dumped into a plastic tub filled with water
by Feiga. Rachel uncovers several CAKES for desert, warning
away her kids by brandishing a knife--

RACHEL
Hey! Those little fingers'll get chopped
off if they wander where they don't
belong!

Sonia walks in and hands Feiga another stack of dishes to
put in the tub...

FEIGA
Please, Sonia, tonight you don't need to
work... you should be out there with
Mendel and the baby.

SONIA
It's okay-- Such a wonderful meal-- I
have to do something. You have such a
beautiful home.

FEIGA
Bless God. The kids are healthy, they
have what to eat-- That's what's
important.

(CONTINUED)

28.

CONTINUED:

Sonia hands Feiga the last of the dishes she's holding, then she leaves the kitchen. DOLLY BACK with her, as she walks back into the dining room...

Sender is sitting alone at the dinner table. Sonia collects a few more dishes, then:

SENDER

Have a second?

Sonia stops, surprised. Sender reaches into his pocket, and pulls out a jewel-encrusted BROOCH. He holds it out. Sonia hesitates, looking into the next room--

SONIA'S P.O.V.-- Mendel, holding their son, is involved in an animated conversation with his brother-in-law Schmuel...

SENDER

Relax, it's not for you. I just want your opinion.

Sonia puts down the dishes and takes the brooch from Sender's hand. A GREEN stone set in a delicately cast gold backing.

SENDER

My principal buyer came across it. It's an antique brooch from Paris, circa 1880, from Querelle. That's a single carat emerald set in gold. My wife's birthday is coming up, so I thought I'd surprise her.

SONIA

It's beautiful.

SENDER

Five thousand bucks. What a bargain, huh?

Sonia forces a smile, and hands back the brooch.

SONIA

You did great.

SENDER

Bullshit.

Sonia's jaw drops.

SENDER

I understand your father, may his memory be a blessing, was the finest gemologist in New Jersey.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

29.

CONTINUED:

SENDER (cont'd)
(Sonia is speechless)
I also understand that you picked up a
thing or two from him.

He holds out the brooch. Cheeks burning, Sonia takes it from
him again and gives it a quick look-over.

SONIA
Querelle never designed a base like
this. I can't tell what the date on it
is, but it isn't 1880. I also think if
you check on this emerald you'll find
it's probably a composite— maybe just a
layer of emerald fused into glass and
backed by foil to give it all that
brilliance. It's excellent work, but I
wouldn't price it at a dime over eight
hundred bucks.

Sender's eyes sparkle.

SENDER
Why didn't you go into the business?

SONIA
My parents didn't want me mixing with...
unsavory characters.
(shooting Sender a quick look)
They wanted me to marry a great scholar
and live a decent, spiritual Jewish life.

SENDER
Did you?

Sonia is silent, confused...

SENDER
Did you marry a great scholar?

SONIA
That, I'm not qualified to answer. But I
know I married a tzaddik.

SENDER
A holy man? Don't you think our Mendel's
a little young for such distinction?

SONIA
Age has nothing to do with it. You're
either born with the heart of a tzaddik,
or you're not.

(CONTINUED)

30.

CONTINUED:

SENDER
And your heart?

Again Sonia is stunned into silence. Sender leans closer to her...

SENDER
Is it in your heart to be the wife of a
tzaddik?

Sonia's lip trembles... sweat beads on her brow, as Mendel's eyes bore into her, then-

RACHEL (O.S.)
All right, dessert's on the table!

Feiga bustles into the dining room, followed by a flock of eager children...

Sonia is in shock. Sender reaches out and takes the brooch from her hand, then he's assaulted by his YOUNGEST SON, who jumps up into his lap... Sender laughs merrily, lifting the boy up into the air...

CUT TO:

COLD WATER

Splashing from the faucet, into Sonia's hands... She is bent over the sink in the kitchen, splashing her face with the cold water...

RACHEL
Sonia?

Sonia straightens up, dripping water. Her face is flushed.

RACHEL
Gottenyu, you're red as a beet.

She puts her hands on Sonia's cheeks...

RACHEL
And hot like an oven. You're burning
with fever, poor thing, why didn't you
say something?

Sonia tries to talk, but her breath just comes out in short gasps...

INT. BEDROOM/SENDER'S HOUSE- NIGHT

Rachel leads Sonia into the dark room, leaving the door partially open to allow in the light from the hallway. Sonia is gulping in air like a woman who has been drowning...

RACHEL

Sit... sit on the bed, you're having a panic attack. Breathe slowly... breathe...

She sits on the bed beside Sonia, massaging her arms and neck...

RACHEL

Your muscles are like iron knots... breathe... just relax and breathe. It must be overwhelming for you- A new city, a new family, all these new pressures...

Sonia begins to relax under Rachel's ministrations... her head slightly tilting back...

RACHEL

You're just wound up too tight... just relax and breathe... relax...

And then, somehow, Sonia's face is right beside Rachel's... her mouth opens, and she embraces her sister in law with a real kiss on the lips. It holds for a brief instant, then Rachel pushes her away...

RACHEL

My God.
(shaking her head)
Sonia... what's gotten into you?

Sonia is as shocked by her actions as Rachel is... she raises her hands to cover her trembling mouth...

RACHEL

You need help.

CUT TO:

A DOOR SWINGS OPEN

Revealing a warm, spacious room cluttered with books. The Hassidic Rebbe MOISHE SHIMEON MYERSON sits behind a cluttered desk. He is surrounded by several of his GABBAIM- a kind of personal guard composed of his most devoted disciples. They lean close to the Rebbe as he speaks in a low voice- straining to catch his every word...

SONIA

Is standing in the open doorway, trembling with nervousness. She looks back over her shoulder...

Rachel is sitting in the waiting room behind her, amongst a group of WOMEN waiting their turn for an audience with the Rebbe. She makes a "Go on!" gesture with her hands...

VOICE (O.S.)

You can see the Rebbe now.

A YOUNG GABBAI is standing beside Sonia. She swallows hard.

SONIA

I... some of these other people have been waiting longer... I think another day might be...

She starts to beat a retreat, but Rachel intercepts her and pushes her back through the doorway...

RACHEL

(whispering)

Don't make a scene.

Rachel then backs away, leaving Sonia standing alone in the doorway. Sonia raises her eyes...

The Rebbe and all his *gabbaim* are looking at her curiously.

REBBE

Come on in, Mrs. Horowitz.

Sonia bites her lip, and eyes on the floor, she steps forward until she is in front of the Rebbe's desk. The Rebbe WHISPERS a few words to his *gabbaim*, and all but one of them turn and file out of the room. The remaining *gabbai* gestures to Sonia:

GABBAI

Take a seat.

As Sonia sits down the REBBITZN- the Rebbe's stern-looking, stately wife- enters from the kitchen and pours some tea into her husband's cup, then glides back out of the room...

The Rebbe's voice is so soft it takes a moment for Sonia to realize she is being spoken to...

CONTINUED:

REBBE

I understand your husband is a truly inspired teacher as well as a great scholar. Filling the hearts of our children with a love of Toyre is the greatest *mitzvah* of all, in God's eyes.

Sonia tries to force a smile-- but it comes off looking more sickly than anything.

The Rebbe studies her with clear, piercing eyes...

REBBE

Most people are practically falling over themselves to get in here-- But you look like you'd give up your firstborn just to get out.

Sonia tries to say something, but she can't manage a sound. She looks at the Rebbe... then at the *gabbai* standing beside him. Then back at the floor.

REBBE

He's making you nervous?

Sonia stays silent. The Rebbe sighs, then whispers a few words to his *gabbai*, who turns and steps into the kitchen. A moment later the *Rebbitzn* enters the room, and stands by the wall, behind her husband.

Sonia looks up at the *Rebbitzn*, but the old woman makes no attempt to acknowledge her.

REBBE

I understand you're troubled.

SONIA

I... I'm not sure what I'm supposed to...

(shakes her head)

I can't find the words.

REBBE

The Almighty gave you a soul to nurture. He gave you a body in which to house it. He gave you a mind in order to understand your soul's needs, and he gave you a tongue in order to express them. If the desire to heal your soul is strong enough, you'll find the words.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

I'm not even sure... where my body ends
and my soul begins.

A moment of silence. Then Sonia speaks haltingly--

SONIA

I feel... ever since I was, I don't
know, a very young girl... I felt, I
feel like there's a fire, a warm fire
somewhere inside of me. It used to be
nice-- It kept me warm... but it's been
getting hotter and hotter... I feel it
growing inside me. It makes my stomach
burn... my nerves, my skin...

The Rebbe looks down at his desk, unable to completely hide
his discomfort at the direction Sonia's discourse is taking.
The Rebbitzn keeps her eyes focussed somewhere on the far
wall, but her jaw is tight.

SONIA

...my skin is so hot... it's so
sensitive now, I can hardly put on a
shirt without... I can't even nurse my
child for the intensity of the... I...
(pausing for breath)

It's too hot. Everything is too hot.
Every touch burns me.

(tears glitter in her eyes)

I have no soul. I have no soul, and
without a soul my body is consuming
itself like a house on fire.

The Rebbe's face is slightly red. He unconsciously dabs at
his cheek with his sleeve...

REBBE

The Almighty gave every one of us a
soul. Whatever torment you are
suffering, you must always remember
that. You have a soul.

SONIA

Maybe. But if I do...

(looks directly at the Rebbe)

It wasn't God that gave it to me.

CLOSE ON THE REBBE

His lips trembling slightly...as we DISSOLVE the setting SUN
into the FRAME... seemingly burning his image away until
only the SUN REMAINS...

23

CONTINUED:

23

YOUNG GABBAI (cont'd)
 than a gentile heretic in the guise of a
 Jew...

The other young men react with an explosion of angry
 remonstrations...

GABBAI #2
 Who do these people think they are?
 They've gone too far this time, these
 fanatics...

But the Rebbe isn't really paying attention to all this. He
 is staring past them into the next room:

A24

INT. KITCHEN- NIGHT

A24*

REBBE'S P.O.V.-- OF THE KITCHEN

Where, through the half-open door, his wife is visible,
 moving around the stove, preparing dinner. She reaches for
 something up in the cupboard, and the kerchief covering her
 grey hair comes loose and floats to the floor... she bends
 down to pick it up...

GABBAI #3 (O.S.)
 Rebbe, please tell us you're not going to
 let this attack go without a stinging
 rebuttal...

23 CONT. CLOSE ON THE REBBE

23 CONT.*

Watching his wife intently, a spark lighting in his eyes...

GABBAI #2 (O.S.)
 Rebbe? If you prefer, we can compose a
 letter and you can...

REBBE
 Tomorrow.

GABBAI #1 (O.S.)
 But.. but Rebbe, by tomorrow this article
 will be all over the...

REBBE
 I said tomorrow.

The gabbaim all fall silent. They look at their Rebbe in
 surprise, then quickly nod and begin collecting their things
 and filing out of the room, wishing the Rebbe "Good night."
 as they step out through the doorway...

24

INT. KITCHEN/REBBE'S HOME- NIGHT

24

The Rebbitzn is mixing the stew in a large pot on the stove, when a pair of HANDS reach in and clamp over her eyes. She

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REBBE

Tomorrow.

GABBAI #1 (O.S.)

But.. but Rebbe, by tomorrow this article will be all over the...

REBBE

I said *tomorrow*.

The gabbaim all fall silent. They look at their Rebbe in surprise, then quickly nod and begin collecting their things and filing out of the room, wishing the Rebbe "Good night." as they step out through the doorway...

INT. KITCHEN/REBBE'S HOME- NIGHT

The Rebbitzn is mixing the stew in a large pot on the stove, when a pair of HANDS reach in and clamp over her eyes. She gives a SHRIEK and drops her ladle into the pot. The Rebbe then leans into the FRAME and whispers in her ear:

REBBE

Guess who?

The Rebbitzn turns around, her nose practically touching her husband's...

REBBITZN

Have you gone crazy? You could give a person a heart attack.

REBBE

Something smells good.

REBBITZN

It's the chulent. I'm making it special, for...

REBBE

No, that's not it...

He leans closer to his stunned wife, sniffing her cheek and neck...

REBBE

It's you that smells so good.

He takes her face in his hands.

(CONTINUED)

37.

CONTINUED:

REBBE

God forgive me, but I think it's twenty years since I told you how beautiful you look.

REBBITZN

It's been twenty years since I looked beautiful.

The Rebbe kisses her full on the mouth. She gasps...

REBBITZN

Moish! You've heard too many evil stories today.

REBBE

Sometimes it's the exposure to evil that brings out our best sides.

He pulls his wife closer...

REBBITZN

You shouldn't get so excited, Moish. The doctor said you can't allow yourself to get...

REBBE

The doctor? What does a doctor know about love?

He gives his wife a gentle, romantic kiss-- He smiles at her then pulls her to him and embraces her even more powerfully than before...

CUT TO:

A HASSIDIC MAN

HOWLING LIKE A BANSHEE-- Grabbing the lapel of his jacket and TEARING it right down the middle... PULL BACK to REVEAL:

THE ENTIRE STREET

Clogged with black-clad HASSIDIM-- Weeping, wailing, gnashing their teeth-- In a genuine show of unadulterated grief. We DOLLY PAST their anguished faces, then BOOM UP over the sea of black hats:

A PODIUM

Has been erected on the front steps of the main synagogue. Behind the microphone, the Rebbe's CHIEF GABBAI is delivering a heartfelt eulogy in a voice cracking with emotion...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHIEF GABBAI

--When the Rebbe's heart stopped beating last night, we lost more than just a man-- For his was a heart that beat not only to maintain the life of one man; it beat to maintain the vital circulation of the entire nation of Yisroel. And who can even begin to understand what force could be strong enough to still such a heart--?

ANGLE ON SONIA

Standing beside Rachel amidst the women gathered around the outskirts of the throng of men. Both women are holding onto strollers bearing their babies. DOLLY IN on SONIA'S FACE, as the *gabbai* continues:

CHIEF GABBAI

-- What kind of a terrible power could have caused such a tragedy..?

The crowd near Sonia parts... and an entourage of mourning WOMEN, flanking the Rebbitzn, make their way past. It seems they are going to continue on their way, but the Rebbitzn stops.

The Rebbitzn pauses for a moment, then turns and steps in front of Sonia. She stares at her with hard, grey eyes. Sonia is utterly confounded. The crowd around them is hushed... also unsure of what is transpiring...

The Rebbitzn cranes her neck forward, so that her lips are right beside Sonia's ear, and WHISPERS something that only Sonia can hear. Then the Rebbitzn moves away, and Sonia is left standing there, stricken.

RACHEL

(under her breath)

Sonia? What did she say? Sonia?

Then there is the sound of an awful CACKLE:

THE BEGGAR WOMAN

Is standing amongst the crowd of women, her bright rags a jolt of rude color against the sea of mourner's black. She is LAUGHING, looking right at Sonia...

Sonia suddenly turns and bolts, pushing her stroller ahead of her, parting the crowd as if it was the red sea...

INT. HOROWITZ APARTMENT- DAY

Sonia pushes the stroller in and slams the door shut behind herself; she pauses for breath... but now Shimmie is CRYING urgently...

Sonia lifts him up out of the stroller and bounces him against her breast...

SONIA

There, there, *tataleh*... shhh... it's all right...

But the baby won't stop crying. Sonia removes the BOTTLE from the stroller and tries to feed it to her child, but he turns his head away, wailing even more insistently...

Sonia snaps. She puts the crying baby back in the stroller, then RUNS out of the living room...

INT. BEDROOM- DAY

Sonia bursts in, slides to her knees on the floor and, like a little girl, pulls the blanket off the bed and covers herself with it...

UNDER THE BLANKET

Which we can somehow see under, Sonia covers her ears with her hands, trying to totally shut out the world... but:

VOICE (O.S.)

Why are you hiding?

Sonia's eyes look to her side, where, under the blanket beside her, her brother YOSSI is sitting.

YOSSI

There's no one here but you. Who are you hiding from?

Sonia just claps her hands over her ears and squeezes her eyes shut. But now an insistent BUZZING is intruding on the silence. Sonia ignores it, but the BUZZING continues... and finally she is forced to open her eyes...

CUT TO:

THE BLACKNESS OPENS UP

Accompanied by the sound of a creaking door, revealing SENDER HOROWITZ'S bearded face...

(CONTINUED)

40.

CONTINUED:

SENDER
Are you... cold?

REVERSE ON SONIA-- Standing behind the door, still holding the blanket wrapped around her. The baby is CRYING in the b.g.

SONIA
Mendel isn't home.

SENDER
I know. Can I come in?

Sonia steps back, allowing Sender into the living room. Sender leans over the baby carriage where little Shimmie is bawling. He gently touches a finger to the baby's lips, and whispers:

SENDER
Shh.

The baby is instantly silent. Sender straightens up and looks at Sonia.

SENDER
Actually, it was you I came for.

Sonia stands silently in the middle of the room, wrapped up in her blanket.

SENDER
I want to offer you a job

Sonia blinks, confused...

SENDER
Your analysis of the brooch I showed you last shabbes was spot-on. I'd like you to run my "store" here in Boro Park.

SONIA
I thought you worked in Manhattan. I didn't know you had a store in the neighborhood.

SENDER
That's because I don't...
(he smiles)
At least not officially. It's a basement in an apartment only a few blocks away. From there I sell a select variety of jewelry-- Only the very finest pieces. Customers from all over the world come
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

41.

CONTINUED:

SENDER (cont'd)
here to buy, because they know by me
they're getting only the best.

Sender slowly circles around Sonia, moving closer in...

SENDER
My buyer, Heschel, has-- had--
impeccable taste. But he's getting old.
There doesn't exist a glasses
prescription strong enough to help his
eyes anymore. I want you to take over
for him. I'll introduce you to all my
suppliers-- You'll go into the city
three days a week and pick out only the
best pieces you come across. There
should be no more than thirty or forty
pieces in the store at any given time--
Each one something Queen Elizabeth would
feel comfortable wearing if somebody
made off with her family jewels. Three
days a week you stay in the store to
sell. But the other three you'll be in
the city, on 47th street, all over--
Sometimes even out of state for a few
days on a special buy. So...
(he stops circling)
What do you say?

Sonia is dumbfounded. But she manages to croak out-

SONIA
I'm.... a mother now.

SENDER
Half the mothers in Boro Park are
running cash-businesses out of their own
basements. The days that you're in the
city you can leave Shimmie by my wife,
or by Rachel. The other days you keep
him with you in the store.

SONIA
Does Mendel... approve of this?

SENDER
Does it matter?

Sonia's eyes narrow.

SONIA
Does he even know about it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENDER

I thought I'd let you tell him.

SONIA

I may be a little out of my depth right now... but I'm not a fool. A cash business means no taxes paid. And no taxes paid means theft. Even if it's from the government-- It's a sin.

Sender closely regards Sonia...

SENDER

Once... when I was a boy, I stole the answers to a test from my teacher's drawer. I copied them, and put them back before he noticed. I got a hundred on the test, and I felt terrific. I was dancing for a week, like Gene Kelly.

(pauses)

I knew then that my own conscience would be useless to me in preventing further transgressions. So without telling him why, I asked my father to teach me how to avoid sin. He told me about about his teacher, in Lublin, a *tzaddik* who kept a notebook in which he recorded all his sins-- from the day of his bar mitzvah onward. One day, when he was ninety-three years old, the *tzaddik* forgot his notebook on his desk in the Yeshiva. Just one notebook-- most people would have a library full. My father and some of the other boys ran over to see what sins the great rebbe had committed-- But when they opened the notebook, they couldn't believe their eyes-- The first page had not yet even been completely filled up.

Sender is very close to Sonia. He reaches over and gently removes the blanket from her shoulders...

SENDER

If we all wrote down our sins, my father said, we'd be more careful about committing them. We sin because we're careless, and we don't think about it.

Sender lays the blanket over a chair, and steps back toward Sonia, whose every muscle is trembling with vulnerability...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SENDER

But there was something that bothered me about that story. See, even if the tzaddik was very old, if he had enough presence of mind to keep recording his sins, how could he be so careless as to leave the evidence lying around for everyone to find? And it was then, only then, that I understood...

Sender takes Sonia's hand in his. She flushes, but she doesn't move...

SENDER

It was a front. He kept the book of sins for his students to discover-- But his other sins, he kept in his heart, for they were dearer to him even than was God, and he couldn't bear to part with them. Because in a world where piety is the standard by which we are judged...

His other hand reaches up and caresses the back of Sonia's neck...

SENDER

It's the quality of our sins that sets us apart.

He kisses Sonia's neck. She tries to push him back, but he's too forceful, and she's too overwhelmed to really resist. She begins to return his embrace and, as her arms close around him, Sender moves her back to the wall, crushing her with his body, making her gasp. He hikes up her dress...

CLOSE ON SONIA'S FACE

Her cheek pressed against the wall... there is the SOUND of Sender's ZIPPER being opened, and then his face is beside Sonia's. She gasps. Sender thrusts heavily several times, his breathing heavy -- Sonia's face is flushed in a mixture of shock and pleasure -- Then as quickly as it happened, it is over. O.S. the baby is CRYING again. Sender raises the "QUERELLE" BROOCH into the FRAME near Sonia's eyes. He holds it there, and whispers in her ear:

SENDER

You'll start on Monday.

Sonia's hand closes over the brooch-- And Sender is GONE from the FRAME. We HOLD on SONIA, as she hears the sound of Sender's retreating footsteps... the door opening and closing... leaving her alone with the SOUND of her WAILING CHILD...

FADE TO BLACK.

IN THE DARKNESS

The Baby's cries blend into the wail of a SIREN, and we open on:

EXT. 47TH STREET/DIAMOND DISTRICT- DAY

Sonia walks up the bustling sidewalk, passing store windows filled with mountainous displays of JEWELRY... she brushes past Pakistani "hawkers" standing outside the doors of their stores, trying to lure in customers, past speeding messengers, past Hassidic Men walking in pairs... A slight SMILE begins twinkling in her eyes, as the CAMERA BOOMS UP, looking down on the busy street as Sonia mingles with the crowd...

INT. "TOP NOTCH" JEWELRY STORE- DAY

E.C.U. ON a pair of HANDS, carefully swabbing a bright RING. There is the SOUND of a BELL, and we RACK FOCUS to:

SONIA-- As she steps into the store, and walks up to the counter, where she is met by the MAN -- his back is still toward us -- who was cleaning the ring.

SONIA

Good morning, Mr. Kapoor. I'm Sonia Horowitz-- Sender Horowitz's new buyer.

REVERSE ANGLE-- On a young Hispanic man with deep green eyes. He shifts nervously...

YOUNG MAN

Uh, good morning, Miss Horowitz. But I'm not...

SONIA

Actually, It's Mrs. Horowitz. And there's something I'd like to show you.

She holds up the fake "Querelle" brooch.

SONIA

Recognize this?

The Young Man shakes his head, trying to speak, but--

SONIA

No? You can't remember an antique brooch designed by Querelle that's worth thirty thousand bucks-- which you parted with for five, but is really worth nothing because it's a fake, is that what you can't remember?

(CONTINUED)

45.

CONTINUED:

YOUNG MAN

I... can hardly remember my own name, at this point...

HRUNDI KAPOOR, a middle-aged Indian man, steps up to the Young Man's side:

KAPOOR

Ramon.

(to Sonia)

I'm Hrundi Kapoor.

Sonia stands there, her momentum completely broken.

RAMON

I just work here... this is, uh...

He backs off, scratching his head, as Kapoor indicates the brooch in Sonia's hand--

KAPOOR

I've never seen that piece before.

Sonia regroups, overcoming her flustered insecurity with an intense bravado--

SONIA

You should be ashamed of yourself, Mr. Kapoor. Mr. Horowitz's previous buyer may have been too old, or maybe just too trusting to detect this fake, but he can remember who he bought it from.

Kapoor starts to protest, but Sonia cuts him off--

SONIA

We have two possibilities here, Mr. Kapoor: One-- you yourself didn't know it was a fake, and unwittingly passed it on. Two-- you knew. Either way you're doing dishonorable business. As I understand it, if Mr. Horowitz so desired, he could tarnish your reputation so thoroughly that within a week you'd be out on the street hawking watches out of a suitcase.

Kapoor grits his teeth. He's sweating.

SONIA

Normally Mr. Horowitz would have come down and told you all this himself-- But I think he was a little concerned about

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SONIA

How about: Good Morning, Mrs. Horowitz, welcome to 47th street. From now on I'll be selling to you at 80 percent below retail. Is there anything I can interest you in today?

Kapoor can hardly gather his wits. He grimaces slightly, then:

KAPOOR

Good morning, Mrs. Horowitz... welcome to 47th street.

CUT TO: *

A31

INT. BORO PARK/BASEMENT "STORE"- DAY

A31*

Sender is introducing Sonia to a wealthy ISRAELI COUPLE, whose backs are toward the camera. *

SENDER

Mr. Mizrachi, Mrs. Mizrachi -- Mrs. Horowitz is my new buyer. I'm sure Heschel will be missed, but I promise you whatever she might lack in experience, Mrs. Horowitz more than makes up for with her superb taste. *

The couple nod at Sonia. We hear the man say "I'm sure she will." *

ISRAELI WOMAN

Any relations? *

SONIA

(stunned)

Excuse me? *

SENDER

(Stepping in, with a laugh)

She's my sister in law, Mrs. Mizrachi. I'm keeping things in the family, so she can put my brother through Yeshiva. *

Much laughter, of course. *

CUT TO:

31

INT. BORO PARK/BASEMENT "STORE"- DAY

31

A MIRROR is turned, revealing the face of a wealthy-looking WOMAN in a dark suit. She touches the pearl EARRINGS hanging from her ears. Sonia leans into the FRAME:

SONIA

You like them, Mrs. Gelbart?

MRS. GELBART

What I would like is for my husband, God bless him, to get off his fat ass and surprise me with something, instead of handing me a wad of cash and telling me to go make myself happy.

SONIA

I understand, Mrs. Gelbart, but the joy of the surprise lasts only a few moments, and you're at the mercy of his taste. At least this way you can chose a piece that will give you naches for the rest of your life...

CUT TO:

32

INT. BORO PARK/BASEMENT "STORE"-DAY

32

SONIA, BOUNCING HER SON IN HER ARMS

Sitting at a teakwood desk across from a sharply-dressed YOUNG MAN. A display of RINGS is on the desk top. The man picks up a sleekly designed RING...

SONIA

You have excellent taste, Mr. Sugarman.
That ring was designed by Eddie Sakamoto.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

47.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

I understand, Mrs. Gelbart, but the joy of the surprise lasts only a few moments, and you're at the mercy of his taste. At least this way you can chose a piece that will give you *naches* for the rest of your life...

CUT TO:

SONIA, BOUNCING HER SON IN HER ARMS

Sitting at a teakwood desk across from a sharply-dressed YOUNG MAN. A display of RINGS is on the desk top. The man picks up a sleekly designed RING...

SONIA

You have excellent taste, Mr. Sugarman. That ring was designed by Eddie Sakamoto. You've got a beautiful combination of cobachon and faceted gemstones laid in a platinum band. That design won the first prize in the "Spectrum" competition last fall.

MR. SUGARMAN

What, ah, range are we talking about here?

SONIA

I'm not going to pretend I'm gonna give you some kind of fancy bargain, Mr. Sugarman- I'll sell it to you for what it's worth-- But that in itself is a bargain, considering the quality of the piece and limited availability of this design...

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT STOOP/"STORE"- DAY

Mr. Sugarman leaves the building, nodding at NELSON- the store's "security"- a burly black man who is standing out on the steps, keeping an eye out on the street...

INT. BASEMENT "STORE"- DAY

A WALL SAFE swings open. Sonia reaches in, deposits a tremendous wad of CASH, and closes the safe again.

CUT TO:

A MIDDLE-AGED MAN

Wearing the small yarmulke of the modern orthodox, sits across the desk from Sonia. His name is MR. FISHBEIN, and he grins what only his mother could think is a charming grin...

MR. FISHBEIN

It's so nice to see a new face here. Very inspirational. It just makes me want to... buy something.

He winks.

SONIA

Since it's your wife's birthday, Mr. Fishbein, I'd recommend this silver bracelet inlaid with ruby. It's her birthstone, as it is mine. It should make a lovely...

MR. FISHBEIN

Could you model it for me?

Sonia smiles tightly and slips on the bracelet.

MR. FISHBEIN

It looks fabulous-- But I imagine on such a lovely wrist anything would.

SONIA

The question is, whether or not you think your wife, Mrs. Fishbein, will like it.

Fishbein takes Sonia's hand in his own, removing the bracelet from her wrist...

MR. FISHBEIN

The question is, Mrs. Horowitz, why a woman as lovely as you are isn't wearing any jewelry of her own.

He grins his loopy grin, as Sonia gently extracts his hand from around hers...

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN/HOROWITZ APARTMENT- NIGHT

The door of a MICROWAVE OVEN is opened, and a KOSHER DINNER is shoved into it. Sonia shuts it, sets the timer, and turns back into the kitchen. Mendel is sitting at the table, the baby beside him in a high-chair

(CONTINUED)

49.

CONTINUED:

Sonia picks up the baby's bottle and tries to feed it to him, but he turns his head away...

MENDEL

So... you've stopped, uh, breast feeding Shimmie?

Sonia shrugs, continuing her fruitless efforts to feed the baby...

MENDEL

Isn't it a little soon?

SONIA

Soon for what?

MENDEL

I understand it's supposed to be, you know... important, for a child to be naturally fed for at least three months in order to develop healthy parental bonding.

SONIA

"Healthy parental bonding?"

Mendel gently takes the bottle from Sonia's frustrated fingers and feeds it to Shimmie, who accepts it from him...

MENDEL

I read it in an article.

SONIA

Between all your teaching and all your learning you found time to read articles, now?

The timer BEEPS. Sonia walks over to the microwave, pops it open, and pulls out Mendel's dinner. She puts it down in front of him, then sits across from him. Mendel closes his eyes, and silently mouths a prayer. Sonia stares at him with irritation. He opens his eyes, and digs into his meal, chewing silently...

SONIA

Well?

Mendel looks up.

SONIA

Well?

(CONTINUED)

50.

CONTINUED:

MEDEL

It's good.

Mendel continues eating.

SONIA

But what?

MEDEL

But nothing. It's good. I didn't say but.

SONIA

But you thought it. I could see it in the air like a little grey cloud. A little cloudy "but" something. *But what?*

MEDEL

I understand that most of the nutrients you can find in freshly cooked foods are absent in microwaveable products.

SONIA

It sounds to me like you've been reading articles on a rather wide variety of subjects. Or, more likely, you've been getting an earful from your sister Rachel-- In which case I'd thank her to keep her nose out of my affairs.

Mendel looks up sharply. Sonia stops. Did she say the wrong word? Mendel puts down his fork and looks at her.

SONIA

Do you know what today is, Mendel?

Mendel shakes his head.

SONIA

It's my birthday.

Mendel's spirits sag. He knows he's blown it...

MEDEL

Sonia...

He reaches out to take her hand, but she draws it away. Mendel is stricken. He speaks softly...

MEDEL

I know you're working now, and I know you enjoy it. So I'm glad for you. But you run out of the house at the crack of dawn-- I hardly ever see you, and when I

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

51.

CONTINUED:

MENDEL (cont'd)

do it's to get a microwave dinner tossed at me like I'm some kind of charity case. Now, I know I spend my day with my nose stuck in a book, but I'm not a complete idiot when it comes to these things. You say you're happy- but it's clear that something's missing. What is it, Sonia?

SONIA

What is *what*?

MENDEL

What is it that you want?

SONIA

I don't *know*, Mendel... if I knew...

She looks up at her husband...

SONIA

I just want something beautiful.

MENDEL

But you have it, Sonia. You have it right here. A home, a child and a husband who loves you more than anything in the world.

SONIA

In this world, maybe...

She draws closer to Mendel-- Her voice is desperate...

SONIA

But what about the other world, Mendel? The world of the spirit? The world of the Toyre and the Talmud and the Holy of Holies? Do you love me more than that, too? What about God, Mendel...?

Mendel has tears in his eyes... he can't meet Sonia's erupting passion, and he just shakes his head in confusion...

SONIA

Do you love me more than you love God?

MENDEL

Sonia... that's a terrible thing to ask.

Sonia moves away from Mendel...

(CONTINUED)

52.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

I'm sorry, Mendel. You're a good man.
And this life is good. But it's not
beautiful.

MENDEL

Goodness is beauty.

SONIA

No. Beauty has goodness in it-- But it
can also be terrible.

MENDEL

Is that what you want? That things
should be terrible..?

Tears stream down Mendel's tormented eyes...

MENDEL

Is that what would make you happy?

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT "STORE"- DAY

CLOSE ON SONIA, in a position that looks like her back is
against the wall. Her cheeks are flushed, and we can see
that SENDER is pressed against her, face buried in her neck,
grunting as he pushes into her. We PULL BACK and REVOLVE THE
CAMERA, revealing that Sonia is lying on the teakwood desk,
with Sender lying heavily on top of her. Her skirt is lifted
up, but she is otherwise completely dressed. Her fingers dig
into Sender's shirt-covered back, as their movements grow
faster, breath shorter...

EXT. FRONT STOOP/"STORE"- DAY

Nelson, the "security" man, stops a customer on the steps
outside, indicating his watch... He apologizes for the
inconvenience as the customer reluctantly leaves...

INT. BASEMENT "STORE"- DAY

It's over. Sender immediately begins to rise, but Sonia's
hands, almost involuntarily, hold him fast...

SONIA

Stay...

Sender looks questioningly into her eyes, which she averts
in shame.

(CONTINUED)

53.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

...just for a moment. Stay.

Sender runs his finger over Sonia's exposed ear and whispers...

SENDER

In heaven there is a catalogue of sins
as vast as the clouds; but here and now
the only true sin is weakness...

Sonia touches her fingers to Sender's lips.

SONIA

Don't.

Sender moves her hand aside with his own, and leans closer to her...

SENDER

A woman of fortitude, who can find? For
her price is far above rubies; When her
husband relies on her, he shall lack no
fortune. She arises while it's dark to
feed her household. Strength and majesty
are her raiment; and joyfully she can
anticipate the day of judgement...

Sonia's eyes glitter with tears, as Sender continues:

SENDER

False is grandeur and vain is beauty:
Only a God fearing woman deserves
praise; Give her the fruits of her
handiwork, and let her be praised at the
gates of heaven for her countless deeds.

The tears stream down Sonia's cheeks, as she gazes into the distance...

SONIA

Sometimes I look at men and think-- How
can this be? How can God have created so
ugly a creature for woman to cling to?
Is it some kind of an awful test... or
is it just a joke? Men are ugly... But
you, Sender Horowitz...

She turns and faces Sender, her eyes looking into his...

(CONTINUED)

54.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

You are the ugliest man of all.

Sender leans down, kissing Sonia full on the mouth, and the image begins to blur and lose FOCUS, blending into that of:

A BLUR OF SPARKLING LIGHT

Which comes into SHARP FOCUS as the glittering surface of a DIAMOND...

VOICE (O.S.)

It's a flawless brilliant cut stone from South Africa. Top of the line...

INT. "TOP NOTCH" JEWELRY STORE- DAY

Sonia is standing across the counter from Hrundi Kapoor, appraising the stone set in a classic "Tiffany-style" ring- Looking at it through a loupe- a jeweller's magnifying glass.

SONIA

Hm. How's business, Mr. Kapoor?

KAPOOR

Business? The rich are buying at Tiffany's and Saks. The poor people are carjacking the rich ones, and everybody else is sitting on their couch and watching the Home Shopping Network.

SONIA

Not surprising, if this is the kind of merchandise you're showcasing.

A CHUCKLE O.S.- Kapoor turns and shoots an irritated look at:

Ramon, who is standing nearby, arranging a display of earrings. Ramon bites his lip; goes on with his work...

KAPOOR

Listen here, Mrs. Horowitz. I triple check everything I show you. That's a perfectly sound diamond in a perfectly sound ring.

SONIA

It's perfectly sound, and perfectly boring.

She puts it on the counter and slides it over to where Ramon is working.

(CONTINUED)

55.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Back me up here.

Ramon blinks; he does not want to be caught in the middle of this.

SONIA

Boring or not?

Ramon looks up at Sonia. She won't relent. He gives a resigned shrug--

RAMON

Boring.

KAPOOR

Ramon-- Isn't today your..?

RAMON

Half day-- today I'm outta here at...
(looks at his watch)

Now. I'm outta here now. Thanks, Mr. Kapoor...

He eases his way out, as Kapoor steps up in front of Sonia again.

KAPOOR

It's a classic, Mrs. Horowitz. The point of a classic is its steadfastness. There are some things nobody wants to change. I was holding it just for you-- but I'll be more than happy to show it to...

He reaches for the ring, but her hand closes over it first.

SONIA

No, no... I'll take it.

(sighs)

The sad fact is, it's probably the best piece I've seen all week. Lucky me, that it's on an 80 percent discount rate.

Kapoor purses his lips, and reaches for some forms.

KAPOOR

Good choice, Mrs. Horowitz.

Sonia watches Ramon hurry out of the shop, fumblingly pulling on his jacket as he goes. Then:

(CONTINUED)

56.

CONTINUED:

VOICE (O.S.)

I like this one.

Sonia turns. Her brother Yossi is standing beside her, looking at a small pile of GOLD JEWELRY on the counter.

SONIA

Since when are you an expert?

Kapoor looks up at Sonia...

KAPOOR

Excuse me?

YOSSI

I didn't say I was an expert. I just like this one.

SONIA

Which one?

YOSSI

That one.

Kapoor is pointing to a GOLD RING in the pile...

KAPOOR

This one?

SONIA

Can I see it, please?

Kapoor nods, looking at Sonia like she's crazy, as she picks the ring up-- It's intricately designed. She puts the *loupe* to her eye and closely examines it:

THE RING is carved in the shape of two FIGURES-- One a man and the other a woman, wrapped around each other, their hands outstretched to hold the empty MOUNT where a stone is supposed to go.

SONIA

What is this?

KAPOOR

Just some free-floating junk that came in with a batch of useless gold items. I sell them to the melter's at cost.

SONIA

Where is this one from?

(CONTINUED)

57.

CONTINUED:

KAPOOR

Somewhere, Chinatown, I don't know.

Sonia looks at Kapoor.

SONIA

Chinatown? I am holding the most...
(shaking her head)
You look at a piece like this, call it a
piece of junk from Chinatown, and you
wonder why business is bad?

KAPOOR

What, did God put you on this earth for
the sole purpose of busting my chops? If
you like it, I'll throw it in with the
other one, all right?

SONIA

All right.

KAPOOR

And after this, no more of that 80
percent crap, either. You're killing me.
From now on we'll keep it at 40 percent,
all right?

Sonia fixes Kapoor with a steely gaze... then smiles
slightly.

SONIA

All right. But you tell me where you got
that ring.

KAPOOR

Mrs. Horowitz, every day guys come in
here to unload cheap jewelry on me. I
don't ask questions, I just dump them
for whatever change I can get. I swear
on my mother's eyes, I do not have a
clue where that piece came from.

CUT TO:

INT. DIAMOND EXCHANGE- DAY

A light "Klezmer" melody begins on the SOUNDTRACK, as Sonia
walks past counters filled with all manner of sparkling
Jewelry... until she is in front of a counter where a young
SATMAR HASSID is working.

(CONTINUED)

58.

CONTINUED:

SATMAR HASSID

Good morning, Mrs. Horowitz, how are you?

SONIA

Baruch Hashem.

She puts the GOLD RING down on the counter.

SONIA

Do you have any idea who might have
manufactured this ring?

The Satmar Hassid picks it up, turning it over in his
delicate fingers...

SATMAR HASSID

It's missing a stone.

Sonia raises her eyebrows- "Obviously."

The Hassid raises a loupe to his eye and inspects the ring
more closely...

SATMAR HASSID

It isn't marked... doesn't look like the
work of any designer I'm familiar
with... maybe some kind of *chachka* from
Chinatown?

Sonia's jaw clenches. She reaches over and plucks the ring
right out of the young Hassid's surprised fingers...

CUT TO:

A STREET SIGN: "CANAL STREET- CHINATOWN"

The CAMERA BOOMS DOWN to the incredibly crowded, noisy
sidewalk, stopping on Sonia's face. She looks around
herself, grits her teeth, and steps up to the display window
of a local JEWELRY STORE. It's filled with all manner of
thick, gaudy, hideous gold jewelry.

Sonia wrinkles her nose in distaste, but she steels herself,
and enters the shop...

CUT TO:

A "CHINATOWN" MONTAGE

Sonia questions a number of Chinese Jewelry merchants, who
brusquely look over her ring and shake their heads...

(CONTINUED)

59.

CONTINUED:

IMAGES of the bustling activity as Sonia wanders into the streets... VENDORS selling strange looking sea-food... packs of running CHILDREN... ducks and spare ribs hanging in restaurant windows...

Sonia's gaze is fixated by the steaming stand of an out-door food vendor... SONIA'S P.O.V. slowly ZOOMS IN, and the entire SCREEN is engulfed in white steam...

CUT TO:

EXT. BENNET PARK- EVENING

The steam clears, and a WIDE ANGLE shows Sonia sitting alone on a bench, munching on an egg roll...

YOSSI'S VOICE
You're going to hell.

A CLOSER SHOT shows Sonia and Yossi sitting side by side.

SONIA
For eating an egg roll?

YOSSI
For eating pig.

SONIA
It's delicious.

YOSSI
You're going to hell.

SONIA
Really? And yesterday, when I was lying on a desk, getting schtupped by my brother in law-- Yesterday I wasn't going to hell?

Yossi clamps his hands over his ears and hums. Sonia's expression sinks...

SONIA
Oh, I'm sorry... Yossi, come on, I'm sorry. I'll shut up, okay..?

VOICE (O.S.)
Little boys always hate any noise they aren't making themselves.

THE OLD BEGGAR WOMAN

From Boro Park is standing in front of them, leaning on a shopping cart filled with bric-a-brac. She reaches out and caresses Yossi's head, then takes a CHOCOLATE BAR out of her coat-pocket and holds it out to him.

OLD WOMAN

Something sweet with which to coat the world's bitter pill, tataleh.

Yossi takes the chocolate bar. A PASSERBY bumps into the old woman. He apologizes, reaches into his pocket, and hands her a few coins before continuing on his way...

SONIA

You? What are you... doing so far from home?

OLD WOMAN

I might ask you the same question.

Sonia suspiciously regards the old woman, then gestures at the bench...

SONIA

Want to sit a minute?

OLD WOMAN

Thank you, not just yet. But soon. Soon the weight will be lifted from these tired old legs.

She smiles at Sonia. There are tears in the old woman's eyes. She touches Sonia's cheek with her fingers...

OLD WOMAN

Soon.

A young BLACK WOMAN has settled onto the bench near Sonia, unwrapping a sandwich for her dinner. The old woman turns to her, holding out a gnarled hand:

OLD WOMAN

Spare a little change for an old woman who's been too long on her tired feet.

YOUNG WOMAN

(shaking her head)

Sorry.

The old woman nods. Then she leans over, and touches the young woman's ear...

(CONTINUED)

61.

CONTINUED:

OLD WOMAN

Nice earrings.

The young woman forces a smile. As the old woman straightens up and begins to shuffle away, the CAMERA CLOSES IN on the young woman's EAR...

Sonia's eyes slowly widen. Her face fills with nervous excitement. She sidles up closer to the young woman...

SONIA

Excuse me... those earrings are beautiful.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thanks.

SONIA

Would you mind if I took a closer look?

The young woman shrugs her shoulders, resigned to an afternoon of weirdness. Sonia pulls out her loupe and puts it right to the young woman's ear, who sits there, wondering what the hell is going on...

SONIA

Might I ask you how you came by these?

YOUNG WOMAN

Listen, lady-- I'm glad you like them, but they're not valuable or nothing. There's this guy who makes them, in my neighborhood. It's just a neighborhood guy who makes nice stuff.

SONIA

What neighborhood?

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEVATED TRAIN STATION/BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN- DUSK

The "El" train pulls out of the station, and we BOOM DOWN until we are on:

SONIA

Who walks down the stairs to the sidewalk, and steps out onto the bustling avenue of BROADWAY. The sounds of Salsa and Latin rhythms play from within the stores all around her, as she heads up the teeming avenue...

INT. GARCIA HOME- DUSK

A door swings open, revealing Sonia's anxious face. She smiles tentatively...

SONIA

Hello?

REVERSE on the face JASMINA GARCIA, a short Hispanic woman in her late middle-age. She speaks only in Spanish:

MRS. GARCIA

Buenos dias.

SONIA

I'm looking for a jeweller— I was given this address.

Mrs. Garcia doesn't understand. Sonia points at her own finger, miming putting on a ring...

SONIA

Jeweller... jewelry maker.

MRS. GARCIA

Ah, si, si. Entra, por favor.

She motions Sonia inside, closing the door behind her. The room is extremely dark, lit by the flames from dozens of candles.

SONIA'S P.O.V.— The walls and shelves are completely covered with CATHOLIC PARAPHERNALIA-- Ornate crucifixes, paintings of Jesus and Mary, rosaries, and every other kind of goyish *chachke*...

Mrs. Garcia opens a side door, and motions for Sonia to enter. Sonia nods, and steps through the doorway...

INT. STAIRWELL- DUSK

DOLLYING SHOT- from SONIA'S P.O.V.- Descending the dark stairwell, then coming out into:

INT. STUDIO- DUSK

An intensely cluttered space filled with an incredible array of SCULPTUARY-- Shafts of light streaming through multicolored stained-glass windows illuminate unfinished looking works ranging from the romantic to the most modern of styles. It is also a workshop, and several wooden tables are covered with masses of ironworking tools and implements. And, most incredibly of all:

RAMON

Is crouched over a table in the middle of the room. There is a BLOW-PIPE in his lips, from which he is directing a hot blue FLAME onto a tiny piece of metal he is soldering. He puts down the pipe, dips the piece of metal into a cup of water and raises it to...

The ear of a teen-age Latino HOMEGIRL, whose two FRIENDS are standing in the open doorway to the yard beyond the studio.

HOMEGIRL

Yo, I wanted one like Charlene's.

RAMON

This is better, it suits your face.

Sonia steps slowly into the strange, colorful space, staring at Ramon in disbelief...

HOMEGIRL

How much you want for it?

RAMON

The reward of seeing it on such a lovely ear is all I could ask for.

VOICE (O.S.)

Yo, Ramon!

SONIA'S P.O.V. sweeps over to the corner, where a YOUNG MAN and WOMAN, both of them stark naked, are reclining on a mattress in front of an unfinished sculpture of their intertwined forms...

YOUNG WOMAN

I been sitting my naked ass over here three weekends in a row, you ain't paid me jack, and you turning down her dollars?

The homegirl grins as she walks back to her friends...

HOMEGIRL

That's cause your fat ass ain't worth my dollars, homegirl.

YOUNG WOMAN

Yo, the hell with this, alright?

She gets up and grabs a robe, then stalks across the room right past...

(CONTINUED)

64.

CONTINUED:

SONIA, on whose stunned face we hold, as:

Ramon stares at her with narrowed eyes. He's at least twice as surprised to see her as she is him. They exchange a very strange look...

Then Ramon reaches into his pocket, finds some cash, and walks over to where TY, the naked young man, is pulling on his trousers...

RAMON

Here, Ty... take this for now. Talk to her, alright? I need you guys.

TY

Yo, it's cold in here, man.

RAMON

I know, just one more time, alright?

The young man nods, and he and Ramon give each other skin. There is an O.S. SOUND, and Ramon turns:

Sonia has bumped into one of the sculptures, which she steadies with her hands...

Ramon takes a step forward, expression tense...

RAMON

Let me guess. You didn't quite succeed in getting my ass fired at work today, so you followed me home to make sure my life is a living hell here as well.

SONIA

Not exactly.

An awkward silence.

SONIA

You're... quite a collector.

Ramon gestures at the sculptures:

RAMON

You mean these?

Sonia nods.

RAMON

Not exactly. I mean, not on purpose. I make them. Nobody buys any, so I guess I'm collecting them.

(CONTINUED)

65.

CONTINUED:

Sonia looks at an array of unfinished JEWELRY spread out on the table in front of her.

SONIA
What about these?

RAMON
Stuff I sell to the neighborhood girls for some pocket money. Mostly metal shavings from my sculptures. Worthless.

SONIA
Worthless?

She looks right at Ramon—

SONIA
This is art.

Ramon looks at Sonia curiously, with a sudden intensity, then:

TY
Yo, Ray, peace.

Ramon turns toward the young man, who is leaving the studio...

RAMON
Peace, Ty. Later, alright?

Sonia looks around the room, her eyes travelling over the unfinished sculptures all around her...

SONIA
You have an... interesting style, Ramon.

RAMON
It's not really no style. They're just mostly unfinished. I get an idea, you know, get all hot over it, then when I'm halfway through, I can't remember why I started. But thanks.

Sonia is silent. Ramon looks her over for a moment, then:

RAMON
What brings you to my neck of the woods, Miss... Mrs. Horowitz?

Sonia reaches into her purse, and takes out the GOLD RING.

(CONTINUED)

66.

CONTINUED:

Ramon's eyes widen...

SONIA

It was in a pile of junk Kapoor was going to sell to the melters. It's yours, isn't it?

RAMON

(nodding)

I don't know how... It must'a got mixed up in there, somehow... Jesus.

SONIA

This is 24 carat gold.

RAMON

When I come across some cheap alloy, I melt it down and separate out the gold. That's as pure an alloy as you're gonna get without it turning into a beautiful piece of chewing gum.

Sonia holds the ring out to Ramon...

SONIA

Whatever stone you had in it is gone. I'm sorry.

RAMON

It was never there.

He takes the ring from her hand.

RAMON

I made this for my muse.

SONIA

Who?

RAMON

My muse. My inspiration.

SONIA

And... who is she?

RAMON

I don't know. But when I meet her, I will know. And I'll know exactly what stone to put in the heart of my ring.

(CONTINUED)

67.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

It looks to me like you already have all the inspiration that you need.

Ramon smiles slightly. He closes his hand around the ring.

RAMON

Thank you.

SONIA

Ramon...

She pauses, as he looks at her questioningly...

SONIA

Kapoor doesn't have clue, does he? Does anyone in the trade know?

RAMON

Know what?

SONIA

What you do.

Ramon suddenly looks nervous. He turns and walks back to his sculpture in progress, and begins gathering his materials...

RAMON

Listen- I got a job. All this stuff-- it's just a hobby. It's a distraction. That's all.

SONIA

You see the garbage that passes through that store everyday-- Have you really looked at any other designers' work recently? Just to compare styles-- check out the competition?

RAMON

I'm not in a competition.

Sonia studies Ramon for a moment, and finally decides--

SONIA

I want to commission your designs.

Ramon stops what he is doing. He keeps his eyes on the floor...

(CONTINUED)

68.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Ramon, I'm not certified, but I'm as fine a gemologist as you'll ever meet.

RAMON

Or ever hope to.

SONIA

And I don't know from sculpture-- But other than a few Florentine antiques that passed through my father's hands for appraisal, I've never seen any Jewelry as-- beautiful-- as yours in all my life. I have been buying and selling the same dull old garbage to an extremely wealthy clientele that would drink up your work like a thirsty man in a desert. I have access to the finest materials and stones. Please consider my offer.

Ramon straightens up, and slowly walks over to Sonia...

RAMON

I'm very... moved... by your passion, Mrs...

SONIA

Sonia.

RAMON

I am moved, Sonia. But we hardly know each other-- And I can't help wondering if you want to do this for me-- Or if you want this for you.

They are very close to one another. Sonia hesitates for a moment. Then:

SONIA

Does it matter?

Ramon looks closely at her, thinking it over...

CUT TO:

INT. HOROWITZ APARTMENT- NIGHT

The front door creaks open, and Sonia steps into the foyer. She takes off her coat and hangs it up, then stops in front of the hallway mirror. She is now wearing a pair of Ramon's EARRINGS. She turns her head slightly, admiring them. touches her neck, where hanging over her buttoned up c

(CONTINUED)

69.

CONTINUED:

is a lovely NECKLACE. As she touches it, she also models the BRACELET newly adorning her wrist. Then-

VOICE (O.S.)

Sonia.

She nearly hops out of her skin in surprise. She steps into the living room and switches on the light...

Mendel is sitting on the sofa, hands clasped... waiting.

SONIA

Mendel? What are you doing out here
lurking in the dark?

(no answer)

Where's Shimmie?

MENDEL

By Rachel.

Sonia looks at her watch...

SONIA

Oy gevalt... I better go get him...

She turns back to the foyer, but:

MENDEL

He'll be all right.

Sonia ignores him, reaching for her coat...

MENDEL

(shouting)

I said he'll be...

Sonia freezes. Mendel finishes the sentence softly:

MENDEL

... all right.

Silence. Sonia turns and faces Mendel.

MENDEL

Where have you been?

SONIA

Working.

Mendel gets up off the sofa, and walks over to where Sonia is standing. He touches her ear, her throat...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

7
MENDEL

What's all this?

SONIA

They're... samples, from a jeweler I'm going to be representing. It's part of my work for Sender.

Mendel nods, then-

MENDEL

I told Sender you won't be working for him anymore.

Sonia is stunned.

MENDEL

I've asked him to replace you as soon as possible.

SONIA

What did Sender say?

MENDEL

What did Sender say? I'm your husband Sonia-- By you Sender does what I ask. I told him you're needed here at home, and that was the end of it.

Sonia is on the verge of exploding, but all she manages is-

SONIA

All the women around here work.

MENDEL

They work, but their husbands don't get snickered at by everyone in the neighborhood as soon as his back is turned.

SONIA

Why should they be snickering?

MENDEL

If I knew, I wouldn't be sitting here asking you about it.

SONIA

Is that what you're doing? Asking me about it?

Mendel grimaces, in agony...

(CONTINUED)

71.

CONTINUED:

MENDEL

Sonia, I know you've got-- we've got-- problems. I talked about it with some people who know about these things, and...

Sonia starts to protest, but Mendel overrides her.

MENDEL

Please, Sonia. I realize I've been too busy at the Yeshiva, and with my own learning to give you the kind of attention you deserve. I also understand that we're both in desperate need of help, right now.

SONIA

(suspicious)
What kind of help?

MENDEL

I'd like for us to see a counsellor.

SONIA

A what?

MENDEL

A marriage counsellor. A psychologist who specializes in problems married people are having. It's an impartial expert who'll help you-- us-- to understand things more clearly.

Sonia looks closely at her husband, carefully considering it...

CUT TO:

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE- DAY

DR. BAUER, a bearded Hassidic man wearing a large black yarmulke, who looks exactly like a younger version of the Rebbe, presses his fingers together and asks:

DR. BAUER

Do you pray every morning, Mrs. Horowitz?

Sonia and Mendel are sitting side by side across the desk from the doctor. Sonia looks confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Excuse me?

DR. BAUER

Do you pray every morning?

SONIA

I thought you were...

(to Mendel)

You said he was...

(to the doctor)

I thought you were a psychologist.

DR. BAUER

Board certified.

SONIA

Then what's all this about praying?

DR. BAUER

I am a psychologist, Mrs. Horowitz, and I am also a rabbi, uniquely qualified to appreciate the problems afflicting the Jewish soul, which is unique in that it is directly connected to the spirit of the Holy One, blessed be his Name.

Sonia starts to say something, but Mendel put his hand on hers:

MENDEL

Sonia, give the doctor a chance.

Sonia simmers down. She removes her hand from under Mendel's and squeezes her hands together, waiting...

DR. BAUER

Have you been praying, Mrs. Horowitz?

SONIA

No.

DR. BAUER

Have you been keeping kosher?

SONIA

At home.

MENDEL

At home?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. BAUER
(bangs his desk)
Now we're getting somewhere.

SONIA
Where exactly are we getting?

DR. BAUER
It's clear that you've been neglecting
your relationship with the Almighty,
which in psychological terms has
translated into...

SONIA
(to Mendel)
I thought you said he was going to be
impartial.

MENDEL
Whose side is he taking? I don't see...

SONIA
He's taking God's side, that's whose
side he's taking.

DR. BAUER
One can't chose sides with the Lord,
Mrs. Horowitz, one can only...

SONIA
You--- don't tell me what I can or can't
do. I'll pick any side I want, and if
God happens to be on the other end, then
that's just the way it's gonna be.

Mendel reaches for Sonia's hand again, his eyes full of
pained confusion...

MENDEL
Sonia, the way you talk sometimes...
don't you fear the Lord?

SONIA
Sure I fear him. I also fear the drug
dealers on the corner of 33rd avenue,
but am I gonna run around all day doing
everything they tell me to? No. I am
going to cross to the other side of the
street and hope they leave me alone,
that's what I'm gonna do.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. BAUER

And if they don't leave you alone, Mrs. Horowitz?

SONIA

Then I'll get down on my knees and beg for my life.

(stands up)

And if I'm still alive when it's over, I'll go home, pack my bags, and move to a nicer neighborhood.

DR. BAUER

There is no escaping God, Mrs. Horowitz.

SONIA

Then let him do what he wants to me. I really don't care anymore.

MENDEL

And our child, Sonia? Your son. Don't you care about him?

SONIA

So now he's gonna take it out on Shimmie? What is he, this God of yours, an extortionist? I didn't realize when I lit shabbes candles on Friday night I was paying protection to some kind of heavenly Al Capone.

MENDEL

(shaking his head)

How can you be so blind? Don't you see what kind of suffering you're asking for?

SONIA

Mendel, my learned husband— We don't suffer because we ask for it. We suffer because that's just the way it is. There's no reason for it. And if there is, it's certainly something neither you or this Board Certified idiot have a clue about.

MENDEL

We bring suffering on ourselves, Sonia. Because we sin against God.

SONIA

Really? And my uncles and aunts and all their children who were marched into the gas chambers in Treblinka? My aunt Chani

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SONIA (cont'd)
who watched her son tortured right in
front of her eyes? What the hell did
they do to deserve that? And Yossi... he
was only ten when he... what did he do
that was so... what did he do..?

There are tears in Sonia's eyes, as she chokes on her
sorrow, unable to continue...

MENDEL
(confused)
Yossi?

DR. BAUER
We don't question the ways of God, Mrs.
Horowitz. We just...

SONIA
No, you don't question them, Dr. Rabbi--
Or is it Rabbi Doctor? Who cares? I'm
gonna question whatever I want to. But
since I'm not likely to get any answers
in this lifetime...

She turns, grabs her coat, and stalks out of the room,
slamming the door shut.

CUT TO:

MENDEL'S TORMENTED FACE

In the doorway of his brother's house.

MENDEL
Is Sender home?

Feiga, Sender's wife, looks at her brother-in-law with
concern...

FEIGA
Mendel, are you all right?

Mendel steps into the foyer.

MENDEL
Is my brother home?

FEIGA
Sure... yes, he's in his study. Come
wait in the living room-- I'll go get
him.

CONTINUED:

She leads Mendel into the living room, where a slew of Sender's CHILDREN are spread out, reading and playing board games. They immediately greet Mendel in cacophonous good cheer...

KIDS

*Hey, uncle Mendel! Come on and play!
Know what I learned in school today?
Uncle Mendel...*

Feiga steps in and barks:

FEIGA

*Shah! Everyone to their rooms! On the
double-- Double-time march! Let's go
let's go let's go!*

She CLAPS vigorously, and the kids hop up and hurry out of the living room. Mendel sits down on the sofa, hands clasped tightly together, rocking back and forth. A dark-clad FIGURE steps into the FRAME in the f.g. and Mendel looks up. His face is drawn, in agony...

MENDEL

Why?

CLOSE ON SENDER

Standing in the entrance to the living room. His eyes narrow in response to the question.

SENDER

Why what?

MENDEL

Why is this happening?

Sender relaxes a little. He walks into the room and stands over his miserable brother.

SENDER

What's happening, Mendel?

MENDEL

Sonia's gone crazy.

SENDER

Crazy?

MENDEL

She's running around like a *meschuggener*-
saying such things I don't even know
where she gets them from, about God,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MENDEL (cont'd)
about who knows what... I don't even
know what she's talking about anymore.

SENDER
She's just sounds a little wound up. I'm
sure she'll calm down soon.

Tears glitter in Mendel's eyes. He shakes his head...

MENDEL
What have I done? What have I done wrong?
He looks up at his brother...

MENDEL
What have I done?

SENDER
Nothing.

He puts a hand on Mendel's shoulder.

SENDER
You're a *tzaddik*, Mendel.

MENDEL
Then why is this happening to me?

SENDER
Because you've never done anything wrong.

Mendel shakes his head... he can't understand. But he grasps
Sender's hands tightly, and looks up at him imploringly...

MENDEL
I don't know what to do, Sender.
Please... help me.

CUT TO:

INT. BASEMENT "STORE"- DAY

A SUITCASE is opened, revealing a display of RAMON'S JEWELRY
laid out against a black velvet backing.

SONIA (V.O.)
This is an excellent representative
selection of the designer's skill and
versatility, Mr. Berman.

MR. BERMAN, a well-tailored man with a refined air about
him, is sitting across the desk from Sonia and a fidgeting,
extremely uncomfortable looking Ramon. Berman picks up a
BROOCH and examines it with his loupe.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Due to financial constraints, Mr. Garcia has been working primarily with inexpensive materials, as you can see. But I think you'll find the delicacy and balance of his work as stunning as I do.

Mr. Berman picks up a BRACELET and turns it in his fingers...

MR. BERMAN

Yes-- But I'm not quite sure exactly what style I'm looking at. It's somewhat classical, Florentine, almost, but then it's also...

He looks to Ramon for some explanation. Ramon smiles apologetically, trying to find words, but he is frozen by his nervousness; then Sonia leans in:

SONIA

... A touch modern. I know, Mr. Berman, it's a little confusing-- To someone with just a smidgen of taste, but not enough of it, this work might border on kitsch-- But there's a purity in the Florentine influence, and a boldness to the modern flourishes that totally belies that.

Sonia brushes back a strand of hair that is falling out from under the kerchief covering her head, and shows Mr. Berman the earrings she is wearing...

SONIA

It also enhances... the appearance, of the wearer, without drawing undue attention to itself...

(showing the necklace hanging outside her collar)

I apologize for lack of a better model, but with some imagination, I think you'll see a world of possibilities.

MR. BERMAN

Yes... and without as much imagination as you might think.

Sonia blushes slightly; then she reaches into her pocket and takes out the GOLD RING.

(CONTINUED)

79.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Here's an example of his work in fine metals. 24 carat gold. It's hand carved- one of a kind- with an open setting for a gemstone. The perfection of this piece is clear even to the naked eye.

Mr. Berman takes the ring. Sonia and Ramon exchange a look as Mr. Berman carefully inspects it...

MR. BERMAN

I'm inclined to agree with you, Mrs. Horowitz. If you can bear to part with these samples, I'd like to show them to my partners. I'd also like yourself and Mr....

Berman trails off. It's a moment before Ramon realizes he's being talked about-

RAMON

Garcia... Ramon Garcia.

MR. BERMAN

Yes. I'd like you to meet my manufacturer. He's in town every Thursday. We can make an appointment in a couple of weeks if you have the...

SONIA

This week.

Mr. Berman is a little taken back. Sonia tries to hide her desperation under a smile...

SONIA

This week would be best.

MR. BERMAN

I'll see what I can do.

Sonia nods gratefully, and starts to close the suitcase... then she stops, and takes out the GOLD RING.

SONIA

I'll just... hold onto this piece, Mr. Berman. If you don't mind. It's one of a kind, and... well, I'm sure they'll be able to see what they need to see from the rest of the selection.

Mr. Berman looks at Sonia from under a raised eyebrow.

(CONTINUED)

80.

CONTINUED:

MR. BERMAN

Yes, Mrs. Horowitz... I'm sure they will.

CUT TO:

THE WALL SAFE

Being opened. Sonia's hands place the GOLD RING within it, then shut the safe again.

CUT TO:

INT. RAMON'S WORKSHOP- DAY

A small avalanche of GOLD JEWELRY spills out onto a work-table... TILT UP to reveal SONIA, as she speaks hurriedly, her voice tinged with barely suppressed anxiety...

SONIA

-- The meeting went just... well, great.
It couldn't have gone better...

Ramon is kneeling over his sculpture of a man intertwined with a woman, angrily molding the plaster with his hands. TY, the nude male model, is posing alone on the mattress in front of him, but the young woman is conspicuously absent.

RAMON

I looked like an idiot.

SONIA

Don't be crazy, you were just a little nervous. It was charming. Any talking needs to be done, that's what I'm there for...

Sonia avoids looking at the naked Ty as she walks over to Ramon. She passes Ramon's mother, who is dusting one of the sculptures with a rag-- Mrs. Garcia dips her hand into a cup and sprinkles the sculpture with water from her fingers; after which she closes her eyes and crosses herself...

SONIA

(to Ramon)

Trust me. He was trying to play it cool, but his eyes were popping out of his head. We'll have an appointment with the manufacturer this week or...

RAMON

(interrupting)

Damn, can you believe this?

(CONTINUED)

81.

CONTINUED:

Sonia is confused. He indicates Ty, alone on the mattress--

RAMON

She bugged out on me, and I couldn't find anyone to replace her. I'm getting it, though...

SONIA

It's, uh, very nice.

RAMON

Nice, huh. You hear that, Ty? You look nice.

Sonia can't help sneaking a sideways glance at--

Ty, who catches her look, and smiles.

Sonia's eyes instantly look away. Her face is red.

SONIA

The sculpture looks nice.

She is standing right beside Ramon's mother; who sprinkles another sculpture with water and crosses herself...

Sonia looks to Ramon, who shrugs:

RAMON

Don't ask.

He gestures at the jewelry on the tabletop:

RAMON

What's all this?

SONIA

Gold *chachkes*. Junk.

RAMON

I can see that. What I mean is; why is it all over my table?

SONIA

You can melt it all down and start working on a set of unique pieces to augment your portfolio. I'm going to sell them for prices you can't even begin to imagine...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAMON

Sonia, I hardly have enough time to...

SONIA

I know-- That's why I brought you these resumés.

She holds out a sheaf of papers.

RAMON

Resumés?

SONIA

Potential assistants. They've all been highly recommended, but I know when you meet with them in person you'll form your own opinion about their...

RAMON

Whoa- whoa- whoa--

Sonia stops.

RAMON

(insecure)

I got a job to hold on to. A real fuckin' job. I told you this is just a hobby.

SONIA

You seem to be working on it pretty hard, for just a hobby.

Ramon is silent. Then the tension is momentarily broken by Mrs. Garcia, who asks Ramon a question in Spanish--

RAMON

No thanks, Mami...

(to Sonia)

You want a cup of Coffee?

Sonia shakes her head. Mrs. Garcia turns and walks toward the stairwell leading upstairs...

Ramon turns back to his sculpture...

SONIA

We agreed that I would represent your work, and in order for me to do that I need a base to start building on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAMON

I gave you those samples to show and that was it. But meetings, portfolios, assistants... I'll never be able to keep up with my work for Kapoor like that.

SONIA

Quit.

Ramon looks up sharply at Sonia...

SONIA

You've got your real work cut out for you -- you just haven't accepted it yet.

RAMON

Hey, who are you, lady? I mean, I just met you, and you come busting in here like your ass is on fire, telling me how to live my life?

SONIA

You want to go on like this? Wasting your talent, working for some cheap junk *macher* day in and day out, just so you can hold on to some lousy "job?"

RAMON

I don't know where you come from, but around here that's a fuckin' hell of a lot more than most people got. So don't go laughing it off like it ain't shit.

TY (O.S.)

Yo, this is getting too deep for my shivering ass. I'm a leave you two to...

RAMON

Stay right there, alright? We ain't done yet.

Sonia looks at Ramon with desperate eyes...

SONIA

You're an artist, Ramon. I just want... to help you.

Ramon works over his plaster cast, grimacing in frustration...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAMON

Yo, Ty, that's not how you were. Why you keep shifting around, man?

TY

I can't hold it without her here, homes.

Ramon stops. He turns to Sonia.

RAMON

You want to help me? Come over here for a minute.

Sonia looks confused. Ramon steps over and starts leading her to the mattress where Ty is posing.

SONIA

Where...? What do you think... no. No, absolutely not.

RAMON

Just for a minute, so I can get this angle right.

Sonia's eyes are desperately avoiding looking at Ty's body, as they stop near the mattress...

SONIA

I really shouldn't be so close to...

RAMON

Hey, it isn't really you-- it's art, remember? Just use your imagination. This is the garden of Eden. There's no shame here. This is Adam...

SONIA

Shouldn't he be wearing a fig leaf or something?

Ramon guides Sonia down to the mattress, beside Ty, beginning to pose her...

RAMON

... and you're Eve.

SONIA

I suppose that makes you the snake.

RAMON

The devil in disguise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Well, Mr. Snake, I hate to break it to you, but this Eve is keeping her clothes on.

Sonia's hand grasps Ramon's. Squeezes it in supplication. He could stop right there... but he doesn't, lowering Sonia's hand to the mattress...

RAMON

That's alright... move your arm just like that...

Sonia is becoming more enmeshed with Ty, her face growing damp with nervous sweat... then she can't take it anymore. She yanks away from Ramon and scrambles to her feet...

She looks back at Ramon, then turns, grabs her bag, and storms out of the studio...

HOLD ON RAMON

Watching her go with a pained expression...

TY (O.S.)

Smooth, homes.

EXT. STREET/BUSHWICK- DAY

Sonia is hurrying up the crowded sidewalk, heading for the "L", when:

RAMON (O.S.)

Sonia!

She keeps walking. Ramon is running up the street behind her. He catches up, panting...

RAMON

I'm sorry, Sonia... I can't believe I did that to you...

Sonia keeps walking...

RAMON

It's just that you fuckin' scare me, alright?

Sonia turns and faces Ramon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SONIA

My father used to say a jeweler's work was the expression of his soul. Your work is beautiful, Ramon-- but what's the point if nobody's gonna know it?

RAMON

You'll know.

There is a silent moment between them. Then:

RAMON

Sounds like you had a wise old man. I never knew mine. My mother ain't got nobody in the world but me and Jesus Christ-- And He don't seem to be making no grocery runs these days, know what I'm saying? How do I know you're gonna come through for me?

SONIA

You don't. But that's life, isn't it?

Ramon takes that in; and finally nods--

RAMON

Just give me a little time.

SONIA

I'm running out of time.

She forces a bitter smile, then turns and walks away...

CLOSE ON RAMON

Watching Sonia go, standing alone in the middle of the sidewalk...

PANNING WITH SONIA

As she crosses the street and heads toward the subway... the moving CAMERA STOPS on:

A BLACK SEDAN

Parked at the curb. The figure in the driver's seat is looking out of the car window-- RACK FOCUS to reveal:

SENDER

Who lights a cigarette, and takes a few thoughtful puffs. He reaches for the ignition, starts the car, and pulls away...

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY/APARTMENT BUILDING- EVENING

Sonia comes out of the stairwell, walks down the corridor, and stops in front of the door to her apartment. She hesitates for a moment, then finds her keys and tries to put them into the lock. They don't work. She tries another key. No dice. She tries to force it, but nothing happens.

Sonia RINGS the bell. No answer. She bangs on the door with her fist...

SONIA

Mendel?

Still no response. She RINGS again, jabbing at the buzzer in frustration...

CUT TO:

INT. FEINBERG HOME- EVENING

The doorbell RINGS incessantly, until the door is opened, revealing Sonia standing out on the stoop, looking wild-eyed and frantic.

SONIA

What's going on?

Schmuel, Rachel's husband, keeps his eyes on the floor and lets her in.

SCHMUEL

You better talk to Rachel about it.

Sonia steps into the apartment, where she is met by a very tight-faced Rachel.

SONIA

The locks to my house have been changed.

RACHEL

You've hardly set a foot in that door for months, and suddenly it's your house?

SONIA

Where's Shimmie?

RACHEL

Sleeping.

Sonia takes a step forward, but Rachel blocks her way...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SONIA
Don't get between me and my baby.

RACHEL
Your baby? You've hardly seen hide or hair of him for months, now suddenly he's your baby?

SONIA
You sound like a broken record, Rachel.

RACHEL
Sit down.

Schmuel clears his throat...

SCHMUEL
Uh, ladies, I think it might be a good idea if you...

RACHEL
Put on your coat, round up the kids and take them to *daven mairiv* at schul, Schmuel.

SCHMUEL
Right. That's what I was going to do. Schul.

He quickly heads off to gather his kids. Rachel turns back to Sonia:

RACHEL
You better sit down.

Sonia hesitates, then grudgingly sits down in a chair across from Rachel.

RACHEL
It's over. Mendel will be granting you a divorce at the earliest possible moment.

Sonia is stunned. Her mouth tries to form words, but nothing comes out...

RACHEL
He's going to stay in the house. Sender has agreed to let you use an apartment he's been keeping for business on the Lower East Side. You're not welcome here anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Is this coming from Mendel-- Or is this coming from you?

RACHEL

What do you think?

SONIA

Where is Mendel? I want to hear this from his mouth.

RACHEL

Don't you think you've already put him through enough?

Sonia takes that in; then makes her decision. She stands back up:

SONIA

I'll take Shimmie and be on my way.

RACHEL

Shimmie stays here.

SONIA

How... dare you?

RACHEL

Shimmie's going to stay here by us, where he can live in a healthy environment.

SONIA

And who's the expert fit to judge what's a healthy environment, all of a sudden?

RACHEL

Certainly not a woman who leaves her husband and child at home so she can run around town having affairs with Puerto Ricans.

Sonia is dumbfounded.

SONIA

Where did you..? Is that what this is all about?

(No answer)

Who said this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RACHEL

It doesn't matter. What's done is done.

SONIA

And what's said is said, and the truth doesn't matter anymore, does it?

Rachel is silent.

SONIA

If you you don't get out of my way, I'm gonna call the cops. I'm taking Shimmie and I'm going to go back to Monsey to stay by my mother.

RACHEL

We already spoke to your mother.

Sonia's brain is reeling... Rachel is too far ahead of her...

RACHEL

She begged us not to let you go back there, and ruin your sisters' chances of making decent matches. This is going to be hard enough on your family's reputation without you making a star appearance and flaunting yourself for everyone to see.

SONIA

What is this-- Some kind of conspiracy?

RACHEL

We have a fine life here, Sonia. A decent life. And you're not going to be allowed to destroy it for everyone around you. For the good of all concerned-- you've got to be cut off.

SONIA

You can't cut a mother off from her child.

RACHEL

No. You've already taken care of that yourself.

Tears well in Sonia's eyes, as she takes in the accusation...

RACHEL

A child needs more than just a mother in order to flourish-- It needs a stable home, a decent family. A caring community. You know that as well as I do.

(CONTINUED)

91.

CONTINUED:

Sonia is silent under Rachel's severe glare...

RACHEL

I don't know where you're headed, Sonia,
but wherever it is... you're going alone.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY/SYNAGOGUE- EVENING

Sonia stalks through the crowded lobby until she is at the entrance to the *besmedresh*- past which no women are allowed. She scans the sea of black-clad men, then turns to a YOUNG HASSID standing by the doorway...

SONIA

Is Mendel here? Mendel Horowitz?

The Young Hassid shrugs, annoyed.

SONIA

Do me a favor and find him for me, will
you? Tell him his wife wants to see him.

The Young Hassid turns and heads into the crush of bodies packing the *besmedresh*.

Sonia waits impatiently by the doorway. She looks around, and notices that everyone in the lobby is eyeing her strangely...

A CLIQUE OF WOMEN casts furtive glances in her direction and whisper to one another as they head up the stairs to the women's balcony...

VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me...

The Young Hassid has reappeared in the doorway...

YOUNG HASSID

I think you should find another time for
this.

SONIA

Is he here?

YOUNG HASSID

Like I said, another time would be
prefer...

Sonia brushes past him, walking right into the *besmedresh*.
We DOLLY WITH HER as she passes through the throng of men,

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

all whom "tctth!" and mumble loudly in a chorus of disapproval...

Sonia keeps walking until she has reached Mendel, stopping behind him. He stands in the f.g., eyes closed, praying fervently...

SONIA

Mendel.

Mendel ignores her, squeezing his eyes shut tighter... focussing on his prayer with increased fervor...

SONIA

Is this it, Mendel? Is this how you want to handle things?

No response. A few young men move in between Sonia and Mendel-- careful not to touch her-- But motioning angrily at her to move...

Sonia glares at Mendel for a moment, then turns, shoves aside one of the young men, and strides out of the *besmedresh*...

HOLD ON MENDEL'S FACE

Eyes tightly shut, lips moving rapidly, trying to drown out the world with the intensity of his prayer...

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT STOOP/"STORE"- NIGHT

Sonia hurries up the street and turns onto the walkway leading to the front door, but is stopped by Nelson, the "security."

NELSON

Sorry, Mrs. Horowitz-- Store's off limits.

SONIA

What are you talking about?

NELSON

Mr. Sender's orders. I can't let you inside.

SONIA

Listen to me, Nelson. There are things that belong to me in there. They are mine. I will go in, get them, and be out in ten minutes.

(CONTINUED)

93.

CONTINUED:

NELSON

Can't do it. Good night, Mrs. Horowitz.

CUT TO:

AN ELEVATED TRAIN

Roaring across the SCREEN-- descending into a dark subway tunnel as it crosses from Brooklyn into Manhattan...

INT. SUBWAY CAR- NIGHT

Sonia sits squeezed in between the passengers in the crowded car. Her eyes are burning with emotion, and for a moment it looks like she is about to break down... but she sets her face in grim determination and holds it back. Not yet.

CUT TO:

INT. LOBBY/LOWER EAST SIDE TENEMENT- NIGHT

The front door opens a crack, and Sonia's face becomes partially visible. She tries open the door all the way, but it won't budge. She pushes with all her might, forcing it in... and looks down... PAN DOWN to reveal:

A SLEEPING DRUNK on the floor, wedged in between the door and the wall. Sonia's FEET step over him, and she walks into the tiny lobby and checks out the list of apartment numbers. She wrinkles her nose in distaste, and heads up the graffiti covered stairwell...

INT. TENEMENT APARTMENT- NIGHT

Sonia steps into the small, dingy living room, and looks around... a chair, a bed. That's all. As she walks around the cramped space, we see that there is a FIGURE behind her, framed in the kitchen doorway...

FIGURE

Welcome home.

Sonia almost jumps out of her skin. She turns around:

SENDER is standing there. He smiles.

SONIA

"An apartment he keeps for business," your sister says. I wonder how she'd feel if she knew what kind of transactions occurred here.

(CONTINUED)

OMIT SCENE

65*

66

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE STREETS- NIGHT

66

Sonia walks down the street. The camera follows behind her-
she gets bumped and turns around.

SILHOUETTE

What's the rush?

Sonia looks up, still panting...

The silhouette emerges into the light. It's the OLD BEGGAR
WOMAN.

OLD WOMAN

Late for a party?

SONIA

I'm lost.

OLD WOMAN

You're in the middle of Manhattan, on the
corner of third street and second avenue.
The J train is three blocks east of here
and the IRT is just around the corner.
Nobody is lost here.

Sonia carefully regards the old woman...

(CONTINUED)

95.

CONTINUED:

SENDER

You'll have nothing, Sonia. Not even
this room. Nothing.

Sonia's face tightens. A slight, bitter smile of
understanding plays in her eyes, and moves away from Sender.
She walks to the door, opens it, and stops there.

SONIA

I'm not paying anymore.

She turns and leaves the apartment.

HOLD ON SENDER'S FACE

His dark eyes glittering in the dim light, as the door
clicks shut.

CUT TO:

EXT. PAYPHONE/LOWER EAST SIDE- NIGHT

LONG LENS on SONIA- Standing at the public phone on a street
corner-- Traffic whizzing by all around her-- We can catch
only FRAGMENTS of the conversation she is having over the
SOUND of speeding motors...

SONIA

Yes... she told me, Mother... Rachel
told me that she talked to you, but I
wanted to make sure for myself that...
No, Mother, don't worry... I won't be
coming home... don't worry...

CUT TO:

EXT. LOWER EAST SIDE STREETS- NIGHT

A GANG OF YOUNG TOUGHS sitting on a stoop WHISTLE and shout
CATCALLS:

TOUGHS

*Yo, baby, bring some of that my way...
You so fly, baby... You're a work of
art...*

At SONIA, who walks into the FRAME, and passes them without
a glance... we STAY WITH HER, as she begins to increase the
speed of her step...

SEVERAL JUMP CUTS: Show Sonia hurrying aimlessly through the
night streets, going nowhere fast... her walk picks up into
a RUN, and the CAMERA stays with her... the lights, the

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

people, the buildings behind her becoming nothing more than a colorful BLUR...

Winded, Sonia slows to a stop and sits down... the CAMERA KEEPS SPINNING AROUND HER... slowing down gradually, as Sonia regains her composure... we PULL BACK far enough to see that Sonia is on a bench in TOMPKINS SQUARE PARK... and the CAMERA completes its final revolution, until it is looking over Sonia's shoulder at a dark SILHOUETTE standing a few feet away, bent over a SHOPPING CART.

SILHOUETTE

What's the rush?

Sonia looks up, still panting...

The silhouette emerges into the light. It's the OLD BEGGAR WOMAN.

OLD WOMAN

Late for a party?

SONIA

I'm lost.

OLD WOMAN

You're in the middle of Manhattan, on the corner of third street and second avenue. The J train is three blocks east of here and the IRT is just around the corner. Nobody is lost here.

Sonia carefully regards the old woman...

SONIA

Who are you?

OLD WOMAN

Just an old woman who's been moving for too long on her tired old feet. But I'm going to rest, now. Will you join me?

Sonia hesitates...

OLD WOMAN

You got any better offers?

Sonia shakes her head.

OLD WOMAN

Don't worry-- I don't bite. And even if I did...

(CONTINUED)

97.

CONTINUED:

Her mouth cracks into a black, toothless grin...

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM/ABANDONED BUILDING- NIGHT

Sonia sits across from the old woman, who strikes a match, and drops it into a TIN CAN filled with loose sticks...

SONIA

You've been following me. Since the day I arrived in Boro Park.

The tin can, which begins to glow with an orange flame, warmly illuminating the women's faces...

OLD WOMAN

It's you who has been following me.

Sonia's eyes are wide with anxiety. The old woman touches Sonia's cheek, and Sonia flinches...

OLD WOMAN

What are you so afraid of, *meidaleh*?

SONIA

The devil.

OLD WOMAN

Oh, yes. And where is this devil?

SONIA

Here... in me. It's been burning me away slowly from the inside out. I have nothing left.

OLD WOMAN

You have your fear.

(grins)

I know a thing or two about the devil, myself...

The fire dances in the old woman's eyes...

OLD WOMAN

She is old. As old as God himself. She's very beautiful, and she is very wise. But we fear and hate her, when we should be making her our trusted ally.

(leaning toward Sonia)

It makes her bitter and vengeful— so she burns us with the flames of her spite. She's sensitive, and not very

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

72

CONTINUED:

72

Sonia stands up, rubbing her aching neck, and starts toward the doorway... then she hears the SOUND of the door opening downstairs, so instead she hurries to the paneless window and looks out...

A73

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING-- NIGHT

A73*

SONIA'S P.O.V.- Of the street. The FIGURE exits the abandoned building and steps into the light... It's YOSSI.

72 CONT. CLOSE ON SONIA

72 CONT.*

her eyes widening with disbelief...

YOSSI

looks up at Sonia and smiles. Then he turns, and starts walking away up the dark street...

CUT TO:

73

INT. FEINBERG HOME- NIGHT

73

Schmuel, bleary eyed, in his pajamas, moves aside as Mendel steps through the doorway.

MENDEL

Where's Shimmie?

SCHMUEL

Shimmie? It's three a.m., Mendel. He's sleeping in the kids room.

Mendel strides into the house, stopping outside the door to the kids' room-- Where Rachel, in her nightgown, is standing.

RACHEL

Mendel? Are you all right?

Mendel just nods, and walks into the kids' room. Rachel and Schmuel exchange confused looks; then Mendel re-emerges, holding his now crying baby in his arms.

RACHEL

What are you doing, Mendel?

MENDEL

I'm taking my son home.

Rachel reaches for her brother's arm...

(CONTINUED)

RACHEL

Mendel... listen to me-- I understand how
this must feel to you, but it's for
the...

(CONTINUED)

INT. BEDROOM- NIGHT

Mendel stands in the middle of the room, dressed in his oversized pajamas. He takes in his solitude. He walks to his bed and sits down on it. He closes his eyes, and moves his lips in a silent prayer. Then he switches off the bedside lamp and lies back. A moment of stillness...

Then Mendel jerks upright and switches the light back on. He hops out of bed, runs to the closet, throws open the door, yanks out his pants and begins pulling them on...

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING- NIGHT

CLOSE ON the RUSTED CAN, as the flame within it flickers out and dies. RACK FOCUS to Sonia's face. Her eyes flutter open...

The old woman is gone. A BLACK SHADOW falls across the floor where she sat.

SONIA

Bubby?

The SHADOW glides across the floor, and SONIA'S P.O.V. follows it as it moves to the doorway, where the FIGURE casting it turns and disappears into the dark... the SOUND of FOOTSTEPS descending creaky stairs...

Sonia stands up, rubbing her aching neck, and starts toward the doorway... then she hears the SOUND of the door opening downstairs, so instead she hurries to the paneless window and looks out...

SONIA'S P.O.V.- Of the street. The FIGURE exits the abandoned building and steps into the light... It's YOSHI.

CLOSE ON SONIA- Her eyes widening with disbelief. She calls out-

SONIA

Yossi!

Yossi looks up at Sonia and smiles. Then he turns, and starts walking away up the dark street...

CUT TO:

INT. FEINBERG HOME- NIGHT

Schmuel, bleary eyed, in his pajamas, moves aside as Mendel steps through the doorway.

MENDEL
Where's Shimmie?

SCHMUEL
Shimmie? It's three a.m., Mendel. He's sleeping in the kids room.

Mendel strides into the house, stopping outside the door to the kids' room-- Where Rachel, in her nightgown, is standing.

RACHEL
Mendel? Are you all right?

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RACHEL
What are you doing, Mendel?

MENDEL
I'm taking my son home.

Rachel reaches for her brother's arm...

RACHEL
Mendel... listen to me-- I understand how this must feel to you, but it's for the...

MENDEL
No, you listen to me. Shimmie is my son, and from now on, he sleeps by me. I'll be grateful for your help during the days, when I'm teaching-- But from this moment on, every night I'll be doing my own learning at home, instead of the *besmedresh*. And when I'm home, my son's going to be by me.

RACHEL
This isn't just a matter of what you want, Mendel. Shimmie needs to be in...

SCHMUEL
That's *enough*, Rachel.

101.

CONTINUED:

Rachel shuts up. Schmucl turns to Mendel... his voice is thick with emotion:

SCHMUEL

I'll get together a couple of the guys from the *besmedresh* who'll be happy to come over nights and learn at your house. We'll learn by you.

Mendel holds his son tightly. He nods gratefully at his brother in law...

CUT TO:

EXT. ELEVATED TRAIN STATION/BUSHWICK, BROOKLYN- NIGHT

The station doors fly open, and Sonia steps out onto the platform at the top of the stairway. She stops and looks around frantically...

SONIA'S P.O.V.-- Of the street below. Yossi's slim figure passes through the pool of light under a street-lamp, then rounds the corner... WHIP PAN BACK TO:

SONIA-- Who immediately begins running down the stairs to the sidewalk...

EXT. BUSHWICK STREET- NIGHT

Sonia races around the corner, running as fast as her legs can carry her...

SONIA'S P.O.V.-- Of Yossi, walking casually, but somehow still far ahead of her-- He is momentarily lit by a street-lamp, and then he is swallowed up by the DARKNESS beyond...

CUT TO:

BLACK.

The SOUND of a door being POUNDED. It swings open, revealing:

RAMON-- standing shirtless in the doorway. His eyes are red, jolted by adrenaline...

Sonia is standing out on the stoop, trembling and out of breath...

RAMON

Jesus.

(CONTINUED)

102.

CONTINUED:

He reaches out for her, and pulls her inside...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. RAMON'S STUDIO- NIGHT

As Ramon guides Sonia into the FRAME, steadying her with his hands on her shoulders...

RAMON

Take it easy... it's gonna be all right.

SONIA

No it's not... nothing's going to be right ever again...

RAMON

Easy, Sonia... easy.

Ramon steps away from her and turns on a light, illuminating the dark studio.

Sonia shields her face.

SONIA

Don't.

Ramon stops. He turns and dims the light.

RAMON

You want something to drink? A glass of water or something? How about a beer?

SONIA

I just need somewhere... safe... to stay. Just for tonight.

RAMON

You can stay here.

Sonia nods, relieved, and sits down on a wooden box by Ramon's worktable.

SONIA

Thank you.

Ramon moves toward Sonia.

RAMON

Want to talk?

Sonia stays silent. Ramon kneels beside her, and she averts her head.

(CONTINUED)

103.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Please don't look at me.

Ramon draws back slightly. There is a moment of silence.

SONIA

I'm so sorry to wake you up like this.

RAMON

I wasn't sleeping.

He stands up and steps over to his work-table...

RAMON

After you took off down that street, the way you were talking, I thought I was never gonna see you again. I cleaned off my table, and I ain't stopped working since. The whole time I've been thinking about the way you walked, with your back held up all straight, like you were cracking, but you wouldn't break...

Ramon lifts a cloth on which several pieces of JEWELRY are laid, and holds it in front of Sonia. Her eyes fill with tears...

SONIA

They're... so beautiful. I don't even have the words...

RAMON

All my life I been trying to make up for my old man splitting by lookin' out for my Moms-- I don't mind, but it ain't fuckin' easy. Then you walk in and I think-- Here's another desperate woman who needs something from me. Freaked me out. But I was wrong... I'm the one who needs you.

Sonia takes the cloth, folding it gently over the glittering pieces.

SONIA

No. You were right to be afraid of me. You need to create, and all I've ever done is destroy. I've destroyed myself, and I've destroyed every good thing I've ever known-- But I won't destroy you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAMON

Sometimes a thing's got to be destroyed, you know? Walls got to be broke down so's you can find what they been hiding inside, all along.

Sonia looks at Ramon tenderly, in agony...

SONIA

Break down these walls and what you'll see is even more ugly than you could bear to look at.

Ramon looks long and hard at Sonia... then he bursts into a loud LAUGH.

SONIA

Don't laugh at me.

Ramon starts to say something else-- But stops himself. Instead he walks around the table to where his SCULPTURE in progress-- the man and woman intertwined-- is standing on a pedestal in front of a 3-SIDED MIRROR so that it is visible from every angle. Ramon puts both hands against the sculpture, gives it a terrific shove, and it crashes to the floor, SHATTERING TO PIECES...

Sonia looks on in shock, as Ramon walks back to to her, then gently steers her toward the 3-sided mirror.

RAMON

You can't even see yourself, can you?

He sits her down on the pedestal. Then he reaches up and touches the earring hanging from her ear:

RAMON

This is nice, right? I agree. But that's all it is. It's a *chachka*. A nice little *chachka*.

He takes out the earring. Then he removes the KERCHIEF covering Sonia's hair. It's the first time-- other than the scene in the ritual bath-- that Sonia's short, dark hair has been exposed. She flinches, reaching up nervously... but Ramon is already removing the other earring from her earlobe. He touches her cheek with his fingertips and turns her head slightly...

THREE ANGLES of SONIA'S FACE look back at her from the mirrors...

105.

CONTINUED:

He reaches around her neck, unfastening the necklace she is wearing.

RAMON
This is a chain, Sonia. It's just a
fucking chain.

He gently unbuttons the top few buttons of Sonia's blouse, exposing her throat and upper chest. He lifts her hand up, and gently slides the bracelet off her wrist...

RAMON
Now look at you...

CLOSE ON SONIA'S FACE-- Looking straight into the mirrors, as Ramon enters the FRAME in profile and whispers:

RAMON
You're beautiful.

Sonia turns slowly and looks at Ramon. Slowly, tentatively, their lips meet in a kiss...

FADE TO BLACK.

A VERTICAL SILHOUETTE

At first just a blur, slowly emerges from the darkness... coming into focus as:

YOSSI; standing in front of a window, through which sunlight is streaming... He is naked, save for his underwear, and his hair is wet. He steps forward, and stops at the edge of a bed...

YOSSI
Sonia?

LITTLE SONIA; age 8, looks at her brother with dreamy eyes...

SONIA
Yossi.

Yossi kneels in front of her...

YOSSI
I swam.

Little Sonia smiles...

(CONTINUED)

106.

CONTINUED:

SONIA

Me too.

Yossi reaches his hand out, and little Sonia takes it, her fingers closing over his...

CUT TO:

THE ADULT SONIA'S EYES

Flutter open. Her head is nestled in a white pillow, a shaft of sunlight illuminating her face... we follow her gaze:

Sonia's pale hand is intertwined with Ramon's dark one.

Ramon is lying curled up on the bed beside her, fast asleep.

A slight smile creeps into Sonia's eyes. She reaches with her free hand to touch his face... but stops herself. She gently extracts her hand from his, and slides herself to a sitting position at the edge of the bed...

SONIA'S P.O.V.— Of a STATUETTE of the VIRGIN MARY on the tabletop by the wall. Mary's head is covered by a veil of mourning...

Sonia is gripped by emotion... then her face hardens with resolve, as she clearly understands what she has to do...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE REBBE'S HOUSE- DAY

The door opens, and the bearded face of the deceased Rebbe's Chief Gabbai peeks outside.

GABBAI

Yes?

REVERSE ON SONIA— She's not wearing a wig, or a kerchief, and her blouse is open several buttons. Nothing radical, but she does not look like a young Hassidic girl anymore.

SONIA

Is the Rebbitzn home?

GABBAI

What can I do for you?

SONIA

I'd like to speak to the Rebbitzn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GABBAI

The Rebbitzn is still in mourning. She doesn't grant audience to strangers.

SONIA

My name is Sonia. Please tell the Rebbitzn that I am respectfully requesting a moment of her time.

GABBAI

I'm sorry, but like I said, the Rebbitzn won't...

Then there is a VOICE from within the house. The *gabbai* turns and listens for a moment, then looks back at Sonia. He indicates her neckline...

GABBAI

Make yourself decent before you come in.

SONIA

If you don't like the way I look, look at your shoes or stick your nose in a book. It's your problem, not mine.

She brushes past him and enters the house...

INT. LIVING ROOM/REBBE'S HOUSE- DAY

Sonia steps inside, tailed by the *gabbai*. The old Rebbitzn is standing in the middle of the room, a vision in black.

GABBAI

I'm sorry, Rebbitzn, but this woman wouldn't listen to..

REBBITZN

Yaakov.

The *gabbai* stops talking. The Rebbitzn motions with her hand. The *gabbai* casts a last, resentful glance at Sonia, then turns on his heel and exits.

WIDE ON THE ROOM-- As the two women regard each other in silence. Then:

SONIA

At the eulogy for the Rebbe, may his memory be a blessing, you came to me. You whispered in my ear. You said--

QUICK CUT: Sonia and the Rebbitzn, surrounded by mourners. The Rebbitzn leans over and puts her lips near Sonia's ear...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SONIA'S VOICE (O.S.)

Thank you.

BACK TO SONIA-- IN THE PRESENT: She looks into the Rebbitzn's eyes...

SONIA

Why?

The Rebbitzn waits for a moment... then she speaks softly:

REBBITZN

I was here, on the day you spoke to Moische. Your words rekindled a fire in a body that was too old to contain it, and like a flash, he was consumed.

(pauses, remembering)

His eyes were looking into mine-- And the last words to pass his lips before he left this world were-- "I love you." It was the first time in twenty years he spoke those words to me.

Sonia's eyes are wide, awestruck...

REBBITZN

You took a man away from his people forever. But for one night you gave a wife back her husband. He left his people, so they wept. But he found me... So I thanked you.

(pauses)

Perhaps I sound selfish to you. But you are still young, and I am very old. Some day, you might understand me.

SONIA

I understand you. But with all due respect-- I don't plan on waiting for some day.

The Rebbitzn slowly nods...

SONIA

I don't belong here, Rebbitzn. I know that now... and I've paid a heavy price for it. I'm leaving my child here. It's like a knife in my heart -- but until I know where I do belong, I'm sure it's for the best.

Her voice hardens with determination...

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CONTINUED:

SONIA

There is still something here that belongs to me, however. I accept your gratitude... for returning to you what should have always been yours. Now I'm asking you to help me reclaim what is mine.

CUT TO:

EXT. BORO PARK STREET- DAY

LONG LENS looking down the block-- As Sonia strides purposefully up the sidewalk, flanked on either side by young HASSIDIC MEN, a half-dozen in all-- Their black fedoras tilted, their tzitzis flying, looking like a bunch of cowboys...

REVERSE ANGLE-- As the "Wild Bunch" walk past the CAMERA-- heading down the street toward the front stoop of Sender's store...

NELSON, the "security," looks on in confusion, stepping in the way of the door-- Then he instinctively moves out of the way as Sonia and the phalanx of Hassidim march past him and into the building...

INT. BASEMENT "STORE"- DAY

The door flies open, and one of the young Hassidim steps inside, followed by Sonia and the others...

The TWO MEN sitting at the desk where Sonia used to do business look up in shock. One, ENGLEBERG, is a thin, bearded Hassid who is Sender's new salesman. The other is MR. FISHBEIN, Sonia's overly admiring middle-aged client.

ENGLEBERG

What's the meaning of this?

SONIA

You're Sender's new guy?

Engleberg looks at Sonia... then at the half-dozen Hassidim behind her. He nods.

Mr. Fishbein has finally recognized Sonia. He stands up wearing an incredulous grin...

MR. FISHBEIN

Mrs. Horowitz? My God, you look absolutely fantastic, if I may say so my...

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

SONIA

Sit down, Mr. Fishbein. I'm not in the mood.

Then there is the SOUND of a creaking door... all heads turn:

SENDER

Has entered the room through the door leading upstairs. He stands there, holding a sheaf of invoices in his meaty hand. He looks at the gang of *gabbaim*, then fixes his gaze on Sonia...

Sonia meets Sender's eyes with her own steely glare... then she turns to Engleberg.

SONIA

I assume the combination to the safe has been changed since I left. Please be so good as to open it. There is an item in there that belongs to me. These men were all *gabbaim* to the Rebbe, and are of unassailable character. They will be witnesses to the fact that I will take only that which is my property, and nothing else.

ENGLEBERG

(nervous laugh)
This is a joke.

SONIA

If you don't open that safe, Mr. New Guy, I promise you it's gonna end with a very ugly punchline.

Engleberg looks at the Hassidim...

The Chief Gabbai nods.

Engleberg turns helplessly to Sender...

Sender looks at Sonia for a moment... Then he himself steps over to the wall safe. He turns the dial several times, and the lock CLICKS OPEN. Sender puts the invoices down on the desk, buttons up his jacket and walks toward the exit... and stops as Sonia steps into his way. She whispers-

SONIA

Now I'm free.

A slight smile creeps into Sender's eyes. Then he starts forward again, and the young *gabbaim* part to the sides of the doorway, as Sender passes through and leaves the room...

CUT TO:

THE GOLD RING

Rising into the FRAME-- Completely filling the SCREEN. Then we RACK FOCUS TO:

RAMON'S GREEN EYES-- Taking it in... then looking beyond it:
Sonia is standing in front of him, holding the ring.

SONIA

I couldn't bear the thought of your Muse
going empty handed-- When you find her.

She hands the ring to Ramon. They are standing in his
studio, very close to each other...

SONIA

I hope she'll be as inspiring to you as
you've been to me.

Ramon takes Sonia's hand, and raises it...

RAMON

She already has been.

He starts to slide the ring onto Sonia's finger, but she
stops him, closing his own hand around it again...

RAMON

It's yours.

SONIA

I'm gonna ask you to hold onto it for me
for a little while, okay?

Sonia turns, and walks toward the door...

RAMON

Sonia...
(she stops)
Where you going?

Sonia thinks it over for a moment, then she smiles:

SONIA

I don't know.

RAMON

If you need a place to... I mean...

Ramon walks over to Sonia...

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CONTINUED:

RAMON

Stay with me.

They look into one another's eyes... then:

VOICE (O.S.)

Ramon... Hay un varon procurando a la
juvenita.

Ramon's mother is standing in the doorway leading upstairs.
Ramon turns to Sonia.

RAMON

There's someone upstairs who wants to
see you.

MRS. GARCIA

El dice ser su esposo.

Ramon takes that in, then looks closely at Sonia:

RAMON

He says he's your husband.

Sonia can't believe her ears. She steadies herself...

SONIA

I should talk to him.

Ramon nods.

RAMON

You got a life-- Go do what you got to
do.

(smiles)

I'm not going anywhere.

INT. LIVING ROOM/GARCIA HOME- DAY

WIDE ON THE ROOM- Mendel is waiting there. His back is
toward us, hands clasped behind him. He rocks nervously on
his heels, looking at the overwhelming display of Christian
paraphernalia spread out before him. If ever the phrase
"Fish out of water" applied, this is it.

Sonia quietly enters the FRAME in the f.g.

Mendel looks over his shoulder. He sees her, and turns
around.

CONTINUED:

SONIA
Mendel.

MENDEL
Sonia. You look... nice.

SONIA
You too.

MENDEL
Sender told me where I could find you...
in case you were wondering.

SONIA
I wasn't.

Mendel ducks his head sheepishly.

SONIA
How's Shimmie?

MENDEL
Good. He stays by me, now.

SONIA
That's good.

MENDEL
I'm sure he misses you.

SONIA
And you?

Mendel looks up...

SONIA
Do you miss me?

Mendel hesitates, uncomfortable, then gently shakes his
head...

MENDEL
You?

Sonia smiles a rueful smile, then shakes her head as well,
and both of them break into LAUGHTER...

Mendel composes himself, the sadness creeping back into his
face...

CONTINUED:

MENDEL

I just came by because I wanted to tell you...

He steps forward, and crosses the room until he's in front of Sonia.

MENDEL

...I'm sorry I forgot your birthday.

Sonia can't believe it. She looks at Mendel with incredulous eyes...

SONIA

My birthday? Do you think... that's what this was all about?

Mendel looks up at his wife. His eyes are sad, and wise.

MENDEL

Of course not. I've been doing a lot of thinking, about things that I never understood how to think about before. I know that the pain we caused each other couldn't be helped— I am who I am, and you are who you are, and we just weren't meant to be together. There was nothing either of us could have done other than what we did.

(pauses)

But I was wrong to have forgotten your birthday.

Mendel reaches into his pocket and takes out a small BLACK BOX.

SONIA

Mendel... Mendel, you know I can't accept a...

MENDEL

Please take it. If not for yourself, then for me. Yom Kippur's coming up, and I want to face God knowing I tried to do right by you.

Sonia takes the box. She opens it:

A SINGLE RUBY is nestled in a bed of black velvet.

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CONTINUED:

SONIA

A ruby...

MENDEL

Your birthstone. I looked it up.

Sonia turns it in the light...

SONIA

It's flawless.

MENDEL

I bought it loose. I figured finding the right setting for it is your specialty, so why interfere?

Sonia looks at Mendel, her eyes glittering...

MENDEL

Please come by and visit-- Evenings, *shabbes*, whenever you can. Shimmie should know he has a mother who loves him.

SONIA

And... the others? What will they say?

MENDEL

What others? As far as Shimmie is concerned, the only voices that matter belong to his mother and father.

Sonia is unable to speak. Mendel reaches over, and gently takes her face in his hands... their faces are close, as if their lips might touch... but instead Mendel gently plants a kiss on Sonia's forehead, and steps away...

Mendel walks to the door and opens it...

SONIA (O.S.)

Mendel...

Mendel looks back at Sonia...

SONIA

God bless you.

Mendel smiles. Then he turns and steps outside...

CLOSE ON SONIA

Her expression a mixture of sorrow and happiness, as the light from the open doorway brightly illuminates her face...

CUT TO BLACK.

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ROLL CREDITS

Over the credits, in EXTREME CLOSE-UP, Ramon's skillful fingers fit the RUBY into the empty setting of the GOLDEN RING, until it is a perfect whole. On the image of the FINISHED RING...

FADE OUT.

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