

**Shine**

by

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**(Shooting Script)**

FADE IN:

INT. TRANSIT LOUNGE - AIRPORT - NIGHT

DAVID HELFGOTT is seated in an indistinct place somewhere in the world. Late thirties, eye lids at half mast, he stares into the wet night, mesmerized by a flashing red light and mumbling at a hundred miles an hour.

DAVID

Kissed them all, I kissed  
them all, always kissed cats,  
puss-cats, kissed them,  
always did; if a cat'd let me  
kiss it, I'd kiss it-Cat on a  
fence I'll kiss it-always,  
always, I will-didn't I? I  
did because I was different  
wasn't I, I was-gotta be  
different again, I was-I-was-  
I-was in those days...

He looks out the rain spattered window, at the FLASHING RED LIGHT  
from an aircraft being fueled outside.

DAVID (Cont'd.)

Life's a perpetual risk,  
isn't it? That's right. I  
think it is. The point is I  
was different in those days.  
It's true, it's true, it  
seems to be true. Or is it a  
blank? A bit of a scrabble.  
You've got to put all the  
pieces together, see if you  
can make a word. Hoo-hoo  
that's funny. It's a  
mystery, it's a mystery.  
Shhh, softly softly new  
story...

DISSOLVE TO:

Iridescent neon raindrops course down a window in the night  
somewhere...suddenly:

A DESPERATE FACE fills the FRAME. It's DAVID in his late twenties; the full head of hair, falling around his soaking wet face, tells us this is years earlier; a sodden cigarette hangs from his lips, spectacles dangle off the end of his nose. He's looking into:

INT./EXT. MOBY'S WINEBAR - NIGHT

A pianist croons the last few bars of "Only the Lonely"; a waiter, TONY, shows the last two patrons to the door.

Tony and a woman in her mid forties, Sylvia, put up chairs; the PIANIST (SAM), slips into a stool at the bar. They chat but all we HEAR is David's ANXIOUS BREATHING as we are seeing it all from HIS POV. He raps on the window.

SYLVIA

What does he want?

SAM

A drink probably. Get lost!

David disappears from the window and appears at the door.

SYLVIA

Poor thing. Let him in.

TONY

He's a derro'!

SYLVIA

He's saturated.

RESUME DAVID'S POV as more words are exchanged then Tony comes over and opens the door to him.

TONY

What's the problem, mate?

DAVID

(a hundred miles an hour)  
 Sorry, sorry, sorry, mate,  
 I'm the problem, I think I'm

CONTINUED

DAVID (Cont'd.)

the problem, such a problem.  
And wet! But it's not an  
ideal world. Is it an ideal  
world? We just have to make  
the most of it, I mean this  
is the way we find it isn't  
it, yeah-yeah-yeah! But it's  
more ideal than it was I  
mean, you know, we're  
privileged, we're privileged,  
we're privileged aren't we  
because not long ago, people  
would be burned to a steak  
wouldn't they, er...

Sees "MOBY'S" embroidered on Tony's tunic.

DAVID

Moby, yay Moby, pleased to  
meet you-

TONY

Tony. Who are you?

DAVID

(hugs Tony)

Tony, Tony not Moby Tony.  
Who am I Tony? Who knows  
Tony? I don't know myself.  
Whooahh! David, I'm David,  
I'm David Tony...How does that  
sound?

SYLVIA

Hello David. How can Sylvia  
help?

DAVID

Sylvia? Is it Sylvia? How  
are you Sylvia? Good to see  
you, Sylvia.

He throws an arm around her neck as though greeting a long lost friend.

DAVID

Sylvia-Tony, Tony Sylvia.

SYLVIA

What can we do for you,  
David?

DAVID

Do for me, Sylvia, what, yes,  
got to stop talking, got to  
top, got to stop, it's a  
problem isn't it? Is it a  
problem?

SYLVIA

It's all right David; just  
tell Sylvia why you're here.

DAVID

Ahhh! Well it's a mystery, a  
mystery, a mystery-

SYLVIA

Are you lost?

DAVID

Am I lost? Perhaps that's  
it. I'm lost, I'm lost, I'm  
lost. How does that sound?

(sees the piano)

Oooh you have a piano; is  
that your piano, Sylvia?  
Beautiful Sylvia. Isn't  
Sylvia beautiful Tony. You  
too Tony. Perhaps I could  
play it. Could I play it?  
You say, you say.

SAM

Like hell baby.

SYLVIA

Shut up Sam.

DAVID

(lurches towards Sam)

Hell baby, The Devil,  
Diablerie Sam Baby!

SAM

Get outa here.

Tony is in fits of laughter..

SYLVIA

David-

DAVID

Sylvia, such a beautiful  
piano, exquisite Sylvia,  
Sylvia-Tony-

(moves towards it)

Could I play, you say, you  
say?

SYLVIA

Why don't you tell Sylvia  
where you live?

DAVID

Live, Sylvia, live-live and  
let live-that's very  
important isn't it? Molto,  
molto. But then again it's a  
lifelong struggle, isn't it  
Sylvia-Tony, to live, to  
survive, to survive undamaged  
and not destroy any living  
breathing creature. The  
point is, if you do something  
wrong you can be punished for  
the rest of your life so I  
think it's a lifelong  
struggle; is it a life-long  
struggle? Whatever you do  
it's a struggle, a struggle

CONTINUED

DAVID (Cont'd.)

to keep your head above water  
and not get it chopped off.  
I'm not disappointing you am  
I Sylvia-Tony-Moby-Sam, yay  
Sam!

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Sylvia's old Humber belts past in the heavy rain.

INT. SYLVIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Tony is driving. Sylvia's in front, both laughing along with David in the back.

DAVID

(a braying laugh)

"Helfgott"—"with the help of  
God"—that's what it means  
Sylvia. How's that? You  
see, Daddy's Daddy was  
religious, vee-eery  
religious, very strict; and a  
bit a meanie. But he got  
exterminated, didn't he, so  
God didn't help him.  
Whooahhh. Not very funny is  
it, Sylvia? Very sad really  
sad—I'm callous aren't I,  
such a meanie because I  
haven't got a soul, is that  
right—that's right isn't it?

SYLVIA (O.S.)

What do you mean?

DADDY

Daddy, Daddy said so. No  
such thing as a soul.

A train WHISTLE SOUNDS in the distance.

SYLVIA

That's ridiculous.

DAVID

Ridiculous; you're right.  
I'm ridiculous Sylvia-Tony,  
and callous daddy said  
because it was a tragedy, a  
tragedy...

The car drives into a tunnel.

BLACKNESS - IN THE TUNNEL

DAVID (V.O.; Cont'd.)

...A ridiculous tragedy.

The SOUND of the TRAIN WHEELS RATTLING, BLASTING A SIGNAL sweeps us into BRIGHT LIGHT:

CUT TO:

ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER PLACE

INT. OLD HALL - DAY

As if in a dream, CHILDREN'S FACES turn to look at camera in soundless slow motion. Some are made up, prissy, perfectly dressed for a performance, accompanied by stage mothers', fanning themselves in the stifling heat, all eyes focused on the next contestant as he makes his way up the center aisle. (HIS POV). Over this we FADE UP:

ANNOUNCER

Let's hear it for our next  
young contestant, David  
Helfgott.

David, 9, makes his way down the aisle clutching a score. His hair is meticulously parted and he wears spectacles. A little uncertain, he stops and looks back to his father.

PETER HELFGOTT is a thickset Polish man in his fifties. He motions for David to keep going then sits, anxious and excited.

DAVID walks up some steps onto the stage.

ANNOUNCER

David's going to play the piano for us, aren't you David?

DAVID

Yes.

He's stage struck by all those faces looking at him, including THREE JUDGES - two elderly females and a man in his thirties. His name is BEN ROSEN.

ANNOUNCER

What are you going to play?

David's attention is taken by a FAN nearby, BLADES WHIRRING.

ANNOUNCER (Cont'd.)

David, what are you going to play?

David snaps out of it, when from the audience.

PETER

(stands)

Chopin! The Polonaise!

Peter smiles full of charm, and a little embarrassed at all eyes on him; he applauds encouragingly then sits.

David's heels click on the bare boards as he crosses to the old upright piano center-stage.

He adjusts his music. His bony legs barely reach the pedals. He fidgets, looks into the spotlight.

He takes a deep breath, then launches into Chopin's Polonaise in A Flat, the first few bars ring out with unusual power, surprising everyone - Ben Rosen in particular.

David attacks the keys with such gusto THE PIANO INCHES FORWARD. He HOOKS HIS FOOT around the leg of the STOOL and DRAGS IT IN.

CONTINUED

He plays on. The piano moves again. He blurs some notes. Again he readjusts the stool without missing a beat; pages of his score flutter to the ground but David plays on, undaunted, segueing to the end.

Rosen watches the courageous performance with wry amazement.

Peter arrives BACKSTAGE flustered, to the Announcer:

PETER

The piano, it is disgraceful.

THE PIANO SLEWS FORWARD. David stands and plays the final few bars with awesome intensity.

ANNOUNCER

This kid's good; he's great.

A moment.

PETER

He's my son!

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - DAY

The expectant faces of two young girls loom large as they look down the street from their perch in a tree--Margaret, 12, and SUZIE, 5.

SUZIE

Did he win or lose?

Along the street, David walks a few paces behind Peter.

MARGARET

He lost.

David jumps over the cracks in the pavement.

MARGARET (Cont'd.)

Now we'll all cop it. Damn you David Helfgott.

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - DAY

Peter broods, his mind turning over. A scratchy recording of Rachmaninov's Third Concerto plays on the gramophone.

David moves a chess piece and waits for Peter.

RACHEL HELFGOTT, Peter's wife, lights the wood stove. Her face, once beautiful, is now blanketed by the hollow look of years of submission. Margaret is doing homework on the kitchen table.

DAVID

It's your turn, Daddy.

Peter flicks a look at the board and moves a piece.

PETER

You know David, when I was  
your age, I bought a violin,  
I saved for that violin, it  
was a beautiful violin.

All listen to the story they've heard before.

PETER (Cont'd.)

Do you know what happened to  
it?

David glances at a PHOTO of a STERN RABBI high up on the wall.

DAVID

He smashed it.

A moment, then Peter SLAMS HIS FIST on the small table, knocking  
some chess pieces off.

PETER

You are a lucky boy. My  
father never let me have  
music.

DAVID

I know Daddy.

PETER  
You are very lucky.

DAVID  
Yes Daddy.  
(lights up)  
Will I play for you?

PETER  
No. You pick up these  
pieces.

David proceeds to on hands and knees while Peter goes to switch the gramophone off.

MARGARET  
(to David)  
I bet I could've won.

PETER  
(in Yiddish)  
Quiet.

David pokes a face at Margaret. She does the same to him, careful for Peter not to see.

David gallops the 'knight' across the board.

There's a KNOCK at the front door. Margaret makes to go.

PETER  
Margaret!  
(she stops)  
I told you, tell your friends  
not to come.

She sits. There's ANOTHER KNOCK which Peter ignores.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- SIDEWAY - DAY

Ben Rosen walks around the sidewalk of the dilapidated old house, uncertain if there's anyone home. He spots someone in the backyard.

ROSEN

Hello.

It's Suzie.

SUZIE

Hello.

INT/EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- BACKYARD - DAY

Peter looks across as:

SUZIE (O.S.)

Daddy, there's someone here.

Rosen appears at the back door.

ROSEN

I hope I'm not interrupting...

Peter stands in the doorway looking down at him, resenting the intrusion.

ROSEN (Cont'd.)

Ben Rosen. I was one of the judges.

Peter doesn't accept the proffered handshake. He motions Suzie in.

PETER

(to Rosen)

Yes?

ROSEN

You left before all the prizes were announced.

David appears behind Peter.

ROSEN

You were very good this afternoon, David.

DAVID

Thank you.

PETER

He can play better.

ROSEN

Maybe he was a little too good. Some people don't like that. We gave him a special prize for his courage.

Peter takes the envelope from Rosen and peels it open. Margaret starts playing the piano in the background.

ROSEN

It was a very difficult piece you chose, David.

DAVID

Daddy chose it.

Rosen notices Rachel sneak a look out the window at him.

ROSEN

Even great pianists think twice before tackling the Polonaise.

David's eye light up as Peter takes a pound note from the envelope.

PETER

A prize for losing!

He pockets the money.

ROSEN

I wouldn't call him a loser.

PETER

(in Yiddish, to Margaret)  
Stop, that is enough.

She stops playing.

ROSEN  
 (in Yiddish)  
 She plays well too.

The Yiddish catches Peter out.

PETER  
 (disdainful)  
 They all play.

ROSEN  
 I'm quite sure David could  
 win lots of competitions with  
 the right tuition.

He offers a business card showing his qualifications.

PETER  
 I teach him.

ROSEN  
 You've obviously done well.

PETER  
 Yes—and no one taught me; no  
 music teachers Mr. Rosen.

ROSEN  
 Of course, it's just that a  
 few bad habits can sometimes  
 mean the difference between  
 winning, or losing.  
 (he knows which  
 string to pull)  
 If you'd like to think about  
 it.

He hands Peter the card. Peter holds his look and closes the door on him.

EXT. STREET -- HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is in darkness.

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter wakes to the SOUND of the PIANO filtering through from the living area.

CUT TO:

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- HALLWAY - NIGHT

He walks down the hallway, drawn by the sparse, haunting music which is familiar: "Rachmaninov's Third Concerto for Piano". Entering the living area he sees:

David playing the piano in near darkness.

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- LIVING AREA - NIGHT

David struggles to get his small fingers across the keys, faltering to a stop..

PETER

Rachmaninov?

DAVID

It's beautiful.

Peter sits beside his son.

PETER

You taught yourself?

DAVID

From the record.

PETER

The record?

DAVID

You always play it.

Peter smiles.

PETER

It is very difficult, the  
hardest piece in the world,  
David.

DAVID

Will you teach me?

Pause. Peter deflects.

PETER

One day you will play it, you  
will make me very proud.

Peter hugs his small son.

PETER

Next time, what are we going  
to do?

DAVID

We're going to win.

PETER

We're going to win!  
(kisses him)  
Now go to bed.

DAVID

Goodnight, Daddy.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER-Peter takes a score from a battered suitcase full  
of music:

RACHMANINOV'S THIRD CONCERTO FOR PIANO

It's awesome in its complexity, page after page.

Peter positions it on the piano, then contemplates the keys with  
his own thickset, clumsy hands.

The FRAMED PHOTO of the RABBI looks down at him.

Peter clenches his fists in frustration.

EXT. BEN ROSEN'S HOUSE - DAY

David and Peter walk along a cobbled path. David stops to look at some goldfish in a large pond. Peter bustles him along to the front door of the house. Rain threatens.

Peter rings the bell. David smiles and goes to do the same but Peter stops him with a look.

The door is opened by Rosen.

PETER

I have decided I would like  
you to teach David.

(hands him some music)

This!

ROSEN

Rachmaninov. Don't be  
ridiculous.

PETER

He can play it already.

ROSEN

He's just a boy. How can he  
express this sort of passion?

PETER

You are a passionate man, Mr.  
Rosen; you will teach him,  
no?

ROSEN

No. I'll teach him what I  
think is best.

PETER

Rachmaninov is best.

(David agrees)

But you are his teacher; I  
let you decide.

ROSEN

(dry)

Thank you. We'll start with  
Mozart.

He lets David in and Peter goes to follow but the door is already closing on him.

PETER

I can't afford to pay.

The door shuts, leaving Peter stranded.

It starts to rain.

(the SOUND of THUNDER advanced from):

EXT. LODGE - NIGHT

(THE PRESENT)

Heavy rain! Sylvia's car pulls up. She jumps out and opens the back door.

SYLVIA

Come on David, Sylvia's  
getting wet.

DAVID

Wet Sylvia, sorry Sylvia,  
such a wet.

They run past a sign clanging on a chain: "EDEN LODGE".

INT. DAVID'S ROOM -- EDEN LODGE - NIGHT

Sylvia is appalled by what she sees. The room is littered with sheet music, rubbish cigarette butts.

SYLVIA

Is this your room, David?

DAVID

It's a room, it's a room,  
home sweet home.

She looks at the piano—a battered honky tonk, chipped keys all burnt by cigarettes.

SYLVIA

You can play?

DAVID

Kind of, kind of play kind of sweet kind Sylvia.

(picks up sheet music)

Chopin, Sylvia, Chopinzee! The Polepopolski. Like Daddy and his family before they were concentrated.

(brushes a Rachmaninov score aside)

SYLVIA

How long have you been here?

DAVID

Golly, I don't know. Aeons I think, a few years, a few—And Schubert, nothing wrong with Schubert except syphilis, was it syphilis? I think it was. Then he got typhoid on top of it and that was the end of him wasn't it? We lost him—

She notices a row of tablet bottles by the bed.

DAVID (Cont'd.)

That was a bit careless wasn't it Sylvia—Whooah we lost him, we lost him, didn't live to swim another day.

MINOGUE enters; late fifties, he has a thick Scottish accent and a suspicious look in his eye.

DAVID (Cont'd.)

Jim. I was a naughty boy wasn't I? Was I a naughty boy? Chop chop, off with the head.

MINOGUE

I was about to send out a search party.

(shuts the window)

DAVID

--Whooahhh, a search party Jim, a party! I won't be invited again, will I Sylvia--?

SYLVIA

He showed up at my restaurant, seemed a bit lost.

DAVID (Cont'd.)

--How's that Sylvia, how's that? A party! A celebration. A fiesta--!

MINOGUE

He's good at that. Thank you for bringing him back.

(ushers her out)

DAVID (Cont'd.)

--Time for a wine and a very fine time. A Mardi Gras and a nice long cigar--Whooah Jim Jim Jim, a party.

He realizes he's on his own. He stares blankly--at the rain hitting the window, GETTING LOUDER until it becomes the SOUND OF APPLAUSE, from:

INT. CONCERT HALL #1 - DAY (THE PAST)

Rows of enthusiastic clapping hands.

PRESENTER (V.O.)

The winner and state champion, David Helfgott.

As the wild applause continues, we end on EXTREME CLOSE-UP of David as he comes up from a bow, now a YOUNG ADOLESCENT. (Several years have passed).

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - DAY

SUZIE

He won! David won!

MARGARET

I can hear that. I'm not deaf.

Rachel nurses baby LOUISE.

RACHEL

That's your clever brother.

INT. CONCERT HALL -- BACKSTAGE - DAY

Peter bursts through the door, rushes up to Rosen and kisses him on both cheeks.

PETER

We won. We won.

ROSEN

Thanks to Mozart.

PETER

Now he can play Rachmaninov.

Rosen sighs.

INT. CONCERT HALL - DAY

David takes center stage.

Peter watches from the wings with Rosen and the other contestants.

PRESENTER

And now to present David with the prize money, our very

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PRESENTER (Cont'd.)  
special guest from America  
ladies and gentlemen,  
currently on tour in  
Australia-Isaac Stern.

Stern shakes hands with David.

Peter applauds vigorously, overwhelmed with excitement.

PETER

He's my son!

STERN

(to David)

You have a very special  
talent, David.

DAVID

Thank you, thank you Mr.  
Stern. So do you.

Laughter.

STERN

How much are you prepared to  
give to your music, David?

DAVID

How much?

PETER

(from the wings)

Everything.

Rosen settles Peter.

DAVID

Everything. But I do like  
tennis—and chemistry too.

Laughter. Peter laughs too.

STERN

Do you play tennis as well as  
you play Mozart?

DAVID

Only against the wall at  
home, I bounce the ball  
against the wall mainly.

STERN

How would you like to comes  
to a special school in the  
States where music bounces  
off the walls?

David's imagination is captured.

DAVID

America?

STERN

Land of the Free. Home of  
the Brave! You know?

Peter's expression falters.

PRESENTER

Ladies and gentlemen, what an  
honor for our young state  
champion to be invited to  
study in America.

The audience APPLAUDS.

People congratulate Peter.

ROSEN

That's fantastic Peter.

Peter applauds enthusiastically despite the uncomfortable feeling  
inside he is yet to fully understand.

David beams into the audience, soaking up that winning feeling.

FADE TO WHITE:

SUZIE'S VOICE

"And now, all the way from  
America, David Helfgott".

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- BACKYARD - DAY

David steps out from behind BRIGHT WHITE SHEETS hanging on the line and bows repeatedly to an imaginary audience.

MARGARET

He's not from America.

She takes the washing off the line. The yard is crammed with empty bottles and scrap metal.

SUZIE

He's going to America and  
when he comes back he'll be  
coming from there, won't you  
David?

David bows still, until Margaret unpegs the sheet.

SUZIE

Aren't you going to miss  
him?

MARGARET

Yes.

David smiles as he realizes she means it.

DAVID

Me too.

YOUTH'S VOICE

Margaret.

Margaret puts the washing down and exits the back gate.

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- KITCHEN - DAY

PETER

I have no money to send David  
to America.

ROSEN

We'll raise it.

Peter scoffs. Rachel looks over for the sink where she's  
scraping marrow from bones into a pot.

ROSEN

Bar Mitzvah.

PETER

What?

ROSEN

David hasn't had his Bar  
Mitzvah.

Peter looks out the window.

PETER

Religion is nonsense.

ROSEN

It's also a gold mine if you  
know where to dig.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- BACKYARD - DAY

DAVID

One day I'll play with an  
orchestra.

SUZIE

Can I come when you do?

DAVID

You can ride with me in my  
Cadillac.

SUZIE

Where are you going to live  
in America?

Behind them, Peter steps out of the kitchen.

DAVID

With a nice Jewish family  
they said.

PETER

And this is not a nice  
family?

DAVID

Oh yes very nice, very-

PETER

You are very lucky to have a  
family!

He stabs a look at the abandoned laundry basket--no sign of  
Margaret.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- REAR LANEWAY - DAY

Peter's FACE appears over the rear corrugated iron fence which  
has a strand of barbed wire running across the top.

In the laneway, Margaret is talking to a GANGLY YOUTH. Seeing  
Peter she pales.

MARGARET

I have to go.

She hurries to the gate. When she opens it, Peter is there; she  
squashes past him, his eyes burning through her.

INT. HELFGOTT KITCHEN - DAY

ROSEN

It's one of the finest music  
schools in the world.

RACHEL

It is for his father to  
decide.

ROSEN

David will be well looked  
after, I assure you.

Rachel nods politely, unconvincingly.

Pause.

ROSEN

(perplexed, steps closer)  
Rachel, David could well be  
one of the truly great  
pianists.

RACHEL

He is just a boy Mr. Rosen;  
he still wets the bed.

Rosen absorbs this. Margaret fumes past.

EXT. STREET - DAY

A RICKETY PRAM WHEEL wobbles along. Widen to reveal Peter pushing the dilapidated old pram down the ordinary suburban street, flanked by David and Suzie wearing grubby school uniforms.

Several KIDS playing hopscotch stop as they see them approaching. Then clear a path for the odd trio to pass. Suzie looks down her nose at them. David performs the 'hopscotch' without missing a beat as the trio continues on its way. The Kids watch after them, like they were from another planet. (POV):

WIDE-SHOT - DAVID AND SUZIE collect several bottles which have been left on the sidewalk, put them in the pram and walk on with Peter.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

Peter straddles a large piece of metal scrap - the head of a truck engine - and heaves it off the pram with a great sense of

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satisfaction. It joins a pile of metal and a stack of empty bottles in the corner of the yard.

PETER

You see how fit I am, you see how strong?

SUZIE

Show me Daddy, show me where the lion scratched you when you worked at the circus.

Peter extends his hand with a sense of theatricality to reveal a long, jagged scar.

PETER

That's what happens when you get too close to the bars.

He stands in a body builder pose, barrel chested.

PETER

Come on David, hit me.

SUZIE

Me!

PETER

David, as hard as you can.

DAVID

Okay. Here comes. Ready.

David's punch bounces off Peter's stomach.

SUZIE

My turn Daddy.

PETER

Harder. Come on!

(David punches again)

You see. A man of steel.

DAVID  
 Steel all right.  
 (rubbing his fist)

PETER  
 No one can hurt me! Because  
 in this world only the fit  
 survive.

Rachel watches from the laundry, sweating over the hot copper;  
 she sees another side to the fun and games.

PETER (Cont'd.)  
 The weak get crushed like  
 insects. Believe me, if you  
 want to survive in America  
 you have to be fit and  
 strong, like me.

INT. SYNAGOGUE -- OFFICE CORRIDOR - DAY

An elderly receptionist types with one finger on an antiquated  
 typewriter.

Peter sits in the narrow corridor, arms folded tightly. He would  
 rather be somewhere else.

On the wall opposite him a long line of FACES--the PORTRAITS of  
 past Rabbis of the Synagogue stare down.

Peter glances at the folded newspaper on the seat next to him:  
 "The Maccabean".

ON THE FRONT PAGE--A PHOTO OF DAVID seated at the piano with a  
 smiling Peter, pointing at a score as if taking David through a  
 lesson.

The elderly typist removes the sheet from the typewriter and  
 smiles at Peter.

He nods politely, then resumes his steely composure.

The DOOR to the RABBI'S office opens. Peter stands.

RABBI

(exits the office  
with David)

See you next week David, and  
don't forget to study.

(hands him the  
'soncino chumash')

We'll see you in Schul,  
Elias.

Peter feigns a polite smile.

DAVID

Thank you Rabbi.

They walk off. David takes the Maccabean from him, noting the  
stand displaying more copies of this latest issue.

Peter puts his arm on David's shoulder, draws him in, as if  
protecting him from an invisible foe.

The Rabbi considers it, then goes back into his office.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - DAY

The POSTMAN rides along the street, past David waiting  
expectantly at his front gate. No mail today.

David watches after him, sighs.

INT. BOKSER MANSION - NIGHT

A CHANDELIER glistens above the entry.

David and Peter enter tentatively. The foyer is dripping with  
dignity and provincial social elite.

David and Peter are immediately set on by the hostess, MRS.  
BOKSER—a busy socialite.

MRS. BOKSER

Mr. Helfgott, it's exciting  
isn't' it? David, the Lord  
Mayor's dying to meet you.

She takes David by the hand, dragging him away. A WAITER offers Peter a drink from a tray but Peter's attention is on David being whisked away. (POV).

CUT TO:

A SHORT WHILE LATER -- faces glowing with appreciation and sparkling jewelry surround David.

MRS. BOKSER

And I would like to thank our wonderful Lord Mayor for establishing this fund for David to go to America.

(applause)

And now to play for us, our very own, David Helfgott.

Rosen notes Peter's embittered look around the room as the gathering smothers David with affection on his way to the piano—a shake of the hand, a kiss, etc.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

Peter's voice can be heard RAGING inside.

PETER (V.O.)

These people are a disgrace!

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- GIRLS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Suzie nestles up to Margaret and Baby Louise, frightened by the yelling.

PETER (V.O.)

A disgrace.

(a loud thump)

They think they are so important.

(curses in Yiddish)

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- LOUNGE - NIGHT

Peter paces, like a caged lion, bursting with anger.

PETER (Cont'd.)  
What do they know with their  
furs and their diamonds? It  
makes me sick to the stomach.

Rachel is on the receiving end.

PETER (Cont'd.)  
And Rosen. Pah!

INT. DAVID'S ROOM - NIGHT

David lays in bed listening:

PETER (V.O.; Cont'd)  
What kind of man is he? He  
has no children. He's not  
married, I know! Don't talk  
to me about Rosen.

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- LOUNGE - NIGHT

Peter curses again in Yiddish.

RACHEL  
He only wants for David the  
same as you have always  
wanted.

PETER  
Don't ever compare me to him.  
What has he suffered? Not a  
day in his life! What does  
he know about families?  
About how your sisters died?

He adjusts the framed photo hanging on the wall-of Rachel and her  
sisters.

PETER  
And my mother and father.

CUT TO:

LATER Peter sits in near darkness, just staring it seems. We realize he is looking at a scrapbook, ARTICLES AND PHOTOS of DAVID throughout his brief but stunning career, including a PHOTO with Isaac Stern.

Peter stares, his mind turning the same thing over and over.

INT. AUSTRALIA-SOVIET SOCIETY -- MEETING ROOM-NIGHT

David bows to warm applause.

SECRETARY

Thank you Comrade Helfgott;  
your son is a credit to you.

Peter proudly puts his hand on David's shoulder. On the wall there's a communist flag and a Stalin portrait.

The gathering consists of twenty-five people, members of the society. One WOMAN, in her mid-seventies warmly applauds her appreciation of David's talent.

CUT TO:

LATER -- Cocktails are being served. Peter is involved in a discussion. He looks around for David. No sign.

INT. BOOKS - THE SOCIETY READING ROOM -- NIGHT

David takes a book from the shelf - it's on Russia. A GIRL about 17 stares at him through the shelves.

GIRL

You play beautifully.

DAVID

Thank you.

GIRL

My name is Sonia.

DAVID

I'm David.

GIRL

I know who you are.

She laughs; so does David. He's quite taken.

SONIA

You have the most wonderful hands.

He looks at his hands, like he'd never noticed. Then looks at hers.

DAVID

So do you.

She smiles warmly.

SONIA

You're going to America?

DAVID

That's right.

SONIA

Perhaps one day you will go to Russia too.

DAVID

Yes. Why not?

PETER (O.S.)

David.

David puts his hands in his pockets.

DAVID

Right here.

Peter gives Sonia a charming smile.

PETER

Excuse us. There is someone important who wants to meet you, David.

INT. THE SOCIETY MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

We recognize the old woman from above—KATHERINE SUSANNAH PRICHARD. Her face reflects a sharp intelligence and strong humanism.

KATHERINE

I've never met anyone who plays the piano as beautifully as you, David.

DAVID

And I've never met a writer before, Mrs. Prichard.

KATHERINE

You must be very proud of him.

PETER

As proud as a father can be.

Katherine smiles.

KATHERINE

I have a long suffering old piano at home.

PETER.

A suffering piano?

KATHERINE

From neglect. Perhaps you'd come and play it for me, David.

Peter goes to speak, but David interrupts.

DAVID

Oh yes, anything to help.

KATHERINE

I'd like that very much.

DAVID

Me too.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Your attention Comrades. I wish to propose a toast to our founder-

KATHERINE

That's my cue. Excuse me.

SECRETARY (Cont'd.)

--and very special guest this evening, Katherine Susannah Prichard.

Peter applauds along with everyone else.

PETER

You will learn much from this old woman, David. She has been to Soviet Union.

As Katherine joins the Secretary up front, she smiles at David.

PETER

(nudges David)

Smile. Look happy.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - DAY

David hurries out the front door excitedly at the SOUND of the POSTMAN'S WHISTLE.

The Postman 'finds' a letter for David in his satchel and holds it away before playfully dropping it into the letter box. David grabs it and registers where it's come from.

DAVID

America!

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

David excitedly reads a letter from 'The Mickleburg family--New Jersey'.

DAVID

"...we have been informed of your exceptional talent and can only say how privileged we feel to have you come and stay with us."

Peter listens as he chops vegetables on a board, alongside several marrow bones.

DAVID (Cont'd.)

"You will be pleased to know that we are having the Bosendorfer tuned especially for you."

Peter scoops the vegetables into a steaming pot...

DAVID (Cont'd.)

"we eagerly await your innement-

MARGARET

Imminent, fool.

SUZIE

I wonder if they've got a Cadillac?

DAVID

"Imminent arrival...And look forward to hearing you play for us. Kindest wishes, Simon and Basha Mickleburg".

Peter chops more vegetables—the simple words are like daggers. Rachel is mindful of his brooding silence.

SUZIE

Read it again.

MARGARET

Not again!

She turns the radio up.

DAVID  
You're just jealous.

Peter simmers.

SUZIE  
Just the bit about the  
parakeet and the dog and the  
two cats.

Margaret puts her hands over her ears.

DAVID  
"...you'll enjoy the company of  
our parakeet and our poodle  
called Margaret".

MARGARET  
Pig! It is not!

She grabs the letter and David tries to get it; all yelling,  
playing 'keepings off' around the room.

DAVID  
Jealous, jealous, give it!

MARGARET  
Pig! Pig!

PETER  
ENOUGH!

He sweeps a bottle of MILK off the bench; it explodes at Suzie's  
feet.

PETER  
ENOUGH OF THIS NONSENSE!

David pales as peter tears the letter up. Suzie cries-

DAVID  
Daddy?

PETER

Forget it! You are not going. David is not going anywhere.

(silence)

What are you looking at you fools? He is not going to America! I won't let anyone destroy this family!

DAVID

Daddy but Daddy please—

PETER

I know what is best, David. I know because I am your father and this is your family.

Stunned silence. David runs out of the house.

PETER

David! David come back—

The door slams.

RACHEL

(in Yiddish)

*Why now! Why!*

PETER SLAPS HER.

EXT. BEN ROSEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is in darkness.

David knocks. He's been running in a sweat.

DAVID

Mr. Rosen?

No answer.

DAVID.  
Mr. Rosen. It's David.  
(bangs at the door)  
Please Mr. Rosen. Please...

There's nobody home. David slides down the door, clutching his knees, bewildered.

CUT TO:

WATER ripples in the moonlight. David's reflection appears in the pond. He watches the distortion of his face in the water, then slaps the surface and after a moment the images settles again.

He puts his head under...right up to his shoulders.

CUT TO:

UNDERWATER - DAVID'S FACE as bubbles escape from his mouth. (In fact we are in):

INT. HELFGOTT BATHROOM - NIGHT

We realize David's FACE is underwater in the bath. He surfaces, for air...and just stares, breathing awkwardly.

Peter enters in a dressing gown.

PETER  
Come on David, you have been long enough. Are you feeling better now? Silly boy, all this nonsense. This is your home, this is where you belong..

DAVID'S POV: Peter peeling off his dressing gown and singlet, talking but there is NO SOUND - it's like a dream.

Peter goes to get in but stops as he sees something in the bath that horrifies him.

PETER

David!

(slaps David's head)

You animal. You disgusting  
animal.

He lashes at David with a white singlet, splashing water  
everywhere.

PETER (Cont'd.)

To shit in the bath. To do  
this to me. You callous boy.  
To shit like an animal.

David barely reacts as the attack with the wet singlet continues,  
across his bare back, his head...water arcs across the small  
bathroom with each blow.

IT'S AN INDELIBLE ASSAULT.

Just as suddenly as it started, it's over. Peter is gone.

WATER RUNS DOWN THE WALLS LIKE BLOOD.

A DROP FORMS ON THE FLICKERING LIGHT GLOBE, THEN FALLS

DAVID JUST STARES...IN SHOCK. SILENCE.

INT. SYNAGOGUE - DAY

Rachel is huddled with Suzie, Margaret and Louise in the upper  
balcony.

The Jewish community watches as David sings from the torah,  
taking his Bar Mitzvah, had bowed, almost cowering.

Rosen senses something is wrong. He looks across at Peter whose  
stern unwavering expression gives nothing away:

CLOSE-UP: PETER, A MAN OF STEEL

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

WIDE-SHOT - THE HOUSE is in near darkness. Rosen walks up  
purposefully and scrapes the front gate open.

He knocks at the door. No answer.

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

IN THE HALLWAY--ROSEN'S SILHOUETTE through the opaque glass. He knocks again.

Reveal Peter, in the shadowy darkness, the outside world completely shut out.

INT. LOUNGEROOM -- NIGHT

The air is thick with tension. Rachel amuses little Louise.

Suzie flips through the scrapbook.

Margaret fingers the same note on the piano.

All stop as the KNOCKING echoes again through the solemn quiet, like a knell.

Silence.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

ROSEN'S SHADOW waits at the door.

ROSEN (V.O.)

Peter? I know you can hear me. Don't do this to David. You mustn't.

Peter's eyes glow with anger in the darkness.

Silence.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

ROSEN

Peter!

Rosen gives up, turns to go, but then as an afterthought.

ROSEN

Whatever you do, don't  
inflict bloody Rachmaninov on  
him. He's not ready!

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- HALLWAY - NIGHT

In the Hallway, ROSEN'S SHADOW disappears. The gate is heard  
scraping open as he leaves.

Peter just stands there. The SOUND of ROSEN'S CAR is heard  
driving away, the headlights flicker across Peter's face.

INT. DAVID'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Peter stands over the bed where David lays, facing away.

PETER

David..

(no replay)

David. My boy? Still you  
don't speak to me?

Pause.

PETER (Cont'd.)

It's a terrible thing to  
hate, to hate your father.

Silence. He sits on the bed.

PETER

Life is cruel, but music, it  
will always be your friend.  
Everything else will let you  
down in the end. Everything.  
Believe me.

(pause)

Please don't hate me. David.

He begins to cry. He sobs..

David looks at his father crying, full of confusion. Their eyes  
meet and Peter pulls David up and hugs him. David throws his  
arms around his neck.

PETER

(in Yiddish)

Don't hate me.

Peter kisses David repeatedly on the side on the face, all the while stuttering:

PETER

It's tough, life can be tough  
but you have to survive, say  
it. You have to-

DAVID

Survive daddy...

PETER

That's right David. No one  
will love you like me. You  
can't trust anyone but I will  
always be there...always be  
with you, forever. Do you  
understand?

DAVID

Yes Daddy, forever...

They hug as we begin to pull back...looking down on them.

PETER

Forever and ever...

PETER & DAVID

Forever and ever...

INT. DAVID'S ROOM -- EDEN LODGE - NIGHT

Adult David, sits on the floor in the middle of the room,  
scrounging for match amidst the mess of paper and music spread  
around him. He picks up something:

It's a crumpled old letter with distinctive LETTERHEAD.

"ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC"

David peers myopically at it—we only glimpse a few words:

"Dear Mr. Helfgott, we are  
pleased to inform you..."

FADE UP—MUSIC, from the past—"Sospiro" by Liszt. It continues over:

EXT. OVERGROWN DRIVEWAY -- KATHERINE'S - AFTERNOON

Bright light pours through a jungle of trees and exotic plants. David makes his way down the long overgrown drive.

Finally a small weatherboard cottage comes into view, its verandah wreathed in wisteria, jasmine and honeysuckle.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE -- VERANDAH - NIGHT

A PHOTOGRAPH of David is removed from a paper bag. It's David at his best. Supremely confident.

KATHERINE

Perfect; I'll treasure it  
until the day I die.

David has finished eating dinner.

KATHERINE

Are you full?

DAVID

Full as a goog Katherine;  
full as a goog?

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

David plays the final bars of the Appassionata. When he finishes, he looks to Katherine in front of several photos on the mantle, lost in the past, moved by his playing.

KATHERINE

Each time you play Sospiro it  
expresses so completely...the  
inexpressible.

DAVID  
Is that good?

KATHERINE  
(sits next to him)  
It's divine.

DAVID  
Inexpressibly divine.

KATHERINE  
Quite!

He starts playing again.

DAVID  
Tell me a story, Katherine.  
What story is it today?

David watches her—eyes closed, head swaying.

KATHERINE  
A new story—drops of water.

DAVID  
Raindrops?

KATHERINE  
Yes, raindrops.

David's head sways as he plays the passage.

KATHERINE  
Listen. It's the wind.

CUT TO:

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - VERANDAH -- NIGHT

THE VERANDAH. Moonlight filters through.

DAVID (V.O.)  
The wind!

Leaves flutter across the ground..

Branches sway...

DAVID (V.O.)

The stream.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

The river...

DAVID (V.O.)

The Ocean, Katherine!

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DAY

THE PHOTOGRAPH OF DAVID, NOW FRAMED, ON THE MANTLE.

KATHERINE'S VOICE

"...You are Krishna, Christ and  
Dionysos. In your beauty,  
tenderness and strength..."

The camera moves towards the piano, where David is stooped over. We just see the top of his head until he looks up and we realize, YEARS HAVE PASSED.

David is now a young adult.

He scribbles the words of the poem onto a score, awed by their beauty as she continues to read.

KATHERINE

"to you, all these wild weeds  
and wind flowers of my life.  
I bring my lord and lay them  
at your feet.

EXT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

WIDE-SHOT - LIGHTS burn warmly in the windows of the old home.

CUT TO:

THE FRONT DOOR opens and Katherine sees David out.

DAVID  
Goodnight, Katherine.

She kisses him warmly.

He ambles off, awkward as a puppy, into the night.

KATHERINE  
Good luck, David.

INT. CONCERT HALL #2 - NIGHT

Stagehands carefully position the grand piano on stage. Lights and curtains are being set for a performance.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCERT HALL -- BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Hands soak in a steaming bowl of water, next to it is a score for Rachmaninov's third. David warms his hands in the water, the poise and confidence of his younger years gone, replaced by a shambling insecurity. He throws a nervous look around at the OTHER CONTESTANTS:

A CELLIST warms up...a VIOLINIST paces, a CONTESTANT goes over her score while another pianist, ROGER, 25, warms up on an old upright piano in the corner.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCERT HALL -- FOYER - NIGHT

The AUDIENCE assembles, waiting to go in. A POSTER tells us the occasion is the 'ABC-NATIONAL CONCERTO COMPETITION'.

Arriving amidst the furs and jewelry, Peter is just another face in the crowd. Something draws his attention:

Ben Rosen on the stair. He catches Peter looking. Neither hides their contempt. Rosen comments to his companion:

ROSEN  
Poor man's Leopold Mozart.

CUT TO:

INT. CONCERT HALL -- ON STAGE - NIGHT

A piano cover is removed revealing gold letters:

"BOSENDORFER"

David is drawn towards the grand piano, mesmerized by its magnificence. He circles it, oblivious to everything else. The SOUND OF APPLAUSE FADES UP...

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

That was our final  
contestant...

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ANNOUNCER (RADIO V.O., Cont'd.)

David Helfgott who gave a  
stirring performance of  
Rachmaninov's Third Concerto  
for Piano in D Minor..

Katherine looks at the framed photo of adolescent David.

KATHERINE

Bravo David.

ANNOUNCER (Radio V.O.)

The judges will now confer.

INT. CONCERT HALL #2 - NIGHT

IN THE AUDIENCE: Peter is anxious as THE JURY Confers.

Rosen observes him.

INT. CONCERT HALL -- BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The CONTESTANTS assemble in readiness, wishing each other luck.

An envelope is handed to the announcer who adjusts his bow-tie then steps onto the stage.

David shuffles nervously on the spot, standing next to Roger whose focus is on the stage.

DAVID

It's a tough game isn't it  
Roger?

ROGER

A bloodsport?

ANNOUNCER

Ladies and gentlemen.

PETER LEANS FORWARD IN ANTICIPATION.

ANNOUNCER

I am pleased to announce the  
winner of this year's ABC  
National Concerto Competition  
is—Roger Woodward.

APPLAUSE. Peter's face turns to stone.

DAVID

Well done, well done Roger.

The other contestants congratulate Roger then he walks out onto the stage to the LOUD OVATION.

David watches from the wings as Roger takes his bows in the bright spotlight.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DAY

A FRAMED PHOTO of KATHERINE'S FATHER on the mantle, amidst others including the one of David as a bright adolescent.

DAVID

What was he like Katherine?  
(she looks up from her book)  
Your father.

She puts the book aside.

## KATHERINE

He was forever busy in his study. "Go away, Kattie, I'm writing" he'd always say. One day, I was very young, I got so annoyed I emptied the inkpots all over his desk and I scrawled on his work, pages of it. When he saw it he stood there seething with anger; I could feel it.

(David fills with dread)  
 "what are you doing," he shouted?

It startles David, feeding his own fears.

## KATHERINE

There was this terrible silence. I just stared at him and said, "Go away, daddy, I'm writing."

(David is suspended)  
 He ran at me and picked me up, and cuddled me breathless. My first literary effort he always called it.

Silence. Katherine see there's something troubling David.

## KATHERINE

What is it?  
 (no reply)  
 David?

He extracts a letter from his pocket; she takes it and reads it.

## KATHERINE

The Royal College of Music.  
 A scholarship. David that's marvelous!

DAVID  
 Won't cuddle me Katherine, oh  
 no.

He wrings his hands full of anxiety.

KATHERINE  
 He can't stop you, David.

DAVID  
 Such an angry lion.

KATHERINE  
 Nonsense, he's a pussycat.

She holds him comfortingly and looks into his uncertain eyes to give him strength.

KATHERINE  
 I'll miss you.

CUT TO:

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE-UP - A SMALL BOX which Katherine takes from the sideboard.

KATHERINE  
 These were for my son but he  
 left home before I could give  
 them to him.

David opens it and takes out an exquisite pair of red fur-lined kid gloves.

KATHERINE (Cont'd.)  
 You'll need them. It gets  
 very, very cold in London.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DUSK

A fiery red sky. David walks along, churning with anxiety. He stops and takes the gloves out of the gladstone bag he's carrying. He draws them on, then walks off leaving the bag behind.

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

David enters quietly, makes his way through the darkness.

PETER'S VOICE

Where have you been?

A table lamp is switched on to reveal Peter sitting there.

DAVID

I missed the train.

Peter's eyes glow with hostility.

PETER

That Prichard woman!

David goes to move away.

PETER

What is this?

The gloves David's wearing. He takes a backward step.

PETER

What?

(stands)

Look at me. Look at me!

David has no choice. Peter's eyes burn through him.

PETER

David?

David slowly extracts the letter, backs away as Peter reads.

PETER

You think you can just do as  
you please? Huh?

DAVID

I...I want to go; I'm going.  
You can't stop me.

A terrible silence. Then Peter comes at David like a lumbering bear.

PETER

I am your father. Your father! Who has done everything for you; you cruel, callous boy!

David tries uselessly to fend him off.

DAVID

Daddy--

PETER

I am your father!

He slaps David around the head knocking his glasses off.

DAVID

Please Daddy--

PETER

Stupid boy!

Suzie runs in and tries to pull Peter away.

SUZIE

No--

Peter gives Suzie a BACKHAND.

DAVID

It's not Suzie's fault.

David charges forward, crashing Peter into the wall.

RACHEL

(racing in)

Stop it! Stop it!

Peter throws David across the room. Margaret intervenes.

PETER

Get out of the way!  
 (descends on David)  
 You want to go? Go! Go On!

He has David in a headlock, choking him. They bang into the walls, locked together in a fierce struggle.

The PHOTO of the RABBIT crashes to the ground.

Furniture is skittled—chess pieces scattered.

RACHEL

(screams, in Yiddish)  
 No! Stop! Stop!

She bashes his arms with her fists trying to get him to let go of David who CAN'T BREATHE. Margaret tries to pull Peter away.

MARGARET

I'll get the police!

Finally, Peter lets go of David who slumps to the floor.

PETER

He's all right, leave him.

Catching his breath, he sees his terrified family, only now registering the horror of what has happened.

Silence. David fumbles for his glasses...he picks up the crumpled letter.

PETER

David, are you all right?  
 Are you?

Peter approaches, with remorse.

PETER

Come on David.

DAVID

I'm old enough to make up my own mind?

He backs away, into the corridor.

PETER

(laughs)

He thinks he's going to  
London.

DAVID

I've been accepted by the  
Royal College of Music.

David is full of confusion.

PETER

What do you think is going to  
happen to you in London?

David wipes his bloody nose..edges down the corridor.

PETER

David, listen to me. If you  
go, you will never comes back  
into this house again. You  
will never be anybody's son,  
the girls will lose a  
brother. Is that what you  
want? You want to destroy  
this family.

DAVID

I'm sorry, sorry-

He opens the door. Rachel hold the girls, all crying.

PETER

If you love me you will stop  
this nonsense; you will not  
step outside that door.  
Don't make me do it!

DAVID

...sorry...

David! PETER

David steps over the threshold.

PETER  
You will be punished for the  
rest of your life!!

SUZIE  
DAVID!

The door SLAMS SHUT.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

David runs, in a sweat, on the road to Katherine's. The headlights of a car bear straight down on him. It BLASTS its HORN as it swerves around him.

CUT TO:

A BLAZING FIRE in:

EXT. HELFGOTT BACKYARD - NIGHT

Music scores burn, school books, David's clothes...

Peter throws another pile on, stokes the flames.

BURNING IN THE FIRE—THE SCRAPBOOK—IMAGES OF YOUNG DAVID SURRENDER TO THE FLAMES.

EXT. ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC (RCOM) - DAY

GOLD LETTERS COVERED IN STONE TELLS US WHERE WE ARE. It's an imposing building opposite the Royal Albert Hall.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. UPPER WINDOW, RCOM - DAY

CECIL PARKES, an elderly professor sits looking out the window sipping tea with GORDON VINEY, another teacher.

PARKES  
He's a little fragile.

VINEY  
A Chopinzee!

We see they are looking at:

EXT. ALBERT HALL STEPS - DAY

Where David hurries along. He drops a bundle of music which gets blown everywhere.

INT./EXT. RCOM - DAY

RESUME Parkes and Viney.

PARKES  
I've seen enough to suggest  
he can make the finals of the  
concerto competition.

VINEY  
And what have you seen Cecil?

A gleam in Parkes' eye.

PARKES  
Moments of genius.

Viney laughs.

VINEY  
Genius? Oh really?

POV Below - David scrambles chaotically after his music.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM -- RCOM - DAY

PARKES  
Come on David. Boldness of  
attack!

Parkes bashes several chords with one hand to demonstrate. (His left arm hangs limply by his side, crippled by a stroke.)

PARKES  
Diablerie! The Devil, David!

DAVID  
Whooaah, mustn't break the  
piano.

PARKES  
Liszt broke plenty!

DAVID  
Right!

Swept up, David bashes out some chords - Parkes stops him.

PARKES  
(quietly)  
But you must play what's on  
the page.

He plays (with his good hand) to demonstrate.

PARKES  
Come on, fill in for this  
useless arm of mine.  
(David plays the 'other hand')  
The notes first, your  
interpretation comes on top  
of them.

DAVID  
On top, yes.

Parkes enjoys their playing together. He likes David.

PARKES  
You agree do you?

DAVID  
Oh yes, I always agree.

PARKES  
Is that wise?

DAVID

I don't know. Is it?

They play on. David works the pedals; he's wearing odd shoes, a black one and brown one.

PARKES

Don't forget, it's on the page.

DAVID

Well yes, the notes are, but not the feeling, the emotion which is what I feel.

PARKES

You mustn't sacrifice everything to emotion. It's a question of balance.

DAVID

Is that the question, Professor?

PARKES

Precisely.

DAVID

I thought so.

INT. RCOM -- FOYER - DAY

A THRONG OF STUDENTS is going up the stairs. David is coming down the other way, bumping into everyone.

DAVID

Sorry sorry, oops, beg pardon. Sorry, I'll stand still. There!

STUDENT

Bravo David.

DAVID

Whooahhh, bravo bravo Sarah.  
You look lovely today, Sarah,  
simply beautiful.

SARAH

Thank you David.

DAVID

You too, Muriel.

MALE STUDENT

Ease up, Helfgott.

Laughter; David's popular with them.

REGISTRAR

Mr. Helfgott. Your allowance  
check.

Two students - ASHLEY and ROBERT - look on.

ROBERT

(to Ashley)

Payday. David!

They flank David as he heads through the foyer.

ROBERT

You missed the bank. Pity!  
You'll have to wait until  
tomorrow.

DAVID

Can't bank on the bank.

ASHLEY

We know someone who'll cash  
it, David.

DAVID

Do we Ashley? Do we really?

ROBERT

What are friends for?

INT. SOHO STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

David crosses to Ashley and Robert with a tray full of drinks, while a stripper bumps and grinds. They drink at David's expense and puff on cigars, including David.

EXT. SOHO - NIGHT

David walks along stuffing his mouth with chocolate and coke, taking in the sights; a transvestite with bright red-dyed hair and make-up steps out of a doorway--RAY.

RAY

Got a cigarette, love?

DAVID

A cigarette love--love a  
cigarette.

(offers his packet)

RAY

I'm Ray.

DAVID

Ray? Ray! Raylene! Whooah,  
pleased to meet you. I'm  
David, David Helfgott.  
Ridiculous!

Ray lights up the cigarette, then puts an arm around David.

RAY

You're very friendly, aren't  
you David?

DAVID

Friendly? Do you think so?  
That's very important isn't  
it?

RAY

If you say so, sweetheart.

He steers innocent David into an alleyway.

EXT. TRAFALGAR SQUARE - SUNRISE

CLOSE-UP: The bobbing FACE OF A PIGEON. It coos.

DAVID'S EYES blink open...he sees the pigeon and coos back. His FACE has traces of make up on it. Under his jacket he's now wearing a lurex vest (we saw on Ray).

NEW ANGLE. DAVID is curled up under a massive statue of a LION (which guards Nelson's column). Nearby a Man hoses away bird shit.

WIDE-SHOT - DAVID shuffles off in the early morning light, across the empty square.

INT. RCOM -- CORRIDOR - DAY

DOORS BURST OPEN as David crashes through and tears down the corridor.

He slides to a stop in front of a NOTICE.

"CONCERTO MEDAL FINALISTS"  
(Patron: H.M. THE QUEEN  
Mother)

'David Helfgott' is on the list of six pinned on the notice board.

ROBERT

How on earth did we manage to  
make the finals, dear David?

David—out of breath—can't believe it:

ASHLEY

You're a conductor's  
nightmare.

David pulls a 'nightmare' face as he registers his name on the list.

DAVID

It's true, it's true.

ROBERT

What are we going to do?  
(i.e. PLAY)

DAVID

We're going to win, Ashley-  
Robert.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

PARKES

Rachmaninov. Are you sure?

He takes the Rachmaninov Concerto score from David.

DAVID

I'm never sure about  
anything, Mr. Parkes.

PARKES

The Rach' 3? It's  
monumental.

DAVID

A mountain! The hardest  
piece you could everest  
played.

A moment. PARKES dares to even consider it.

PARKES

No one's ever been mad enough  
to attempt the Rach'3.

DAVID

Am I mad enough Professor?  
Am I?

INT. RCOM -- CORRIDOR - DAY

STUDENTS clear a path for DAVID, bumping past them in a flap.  
Over this we hear David's voice.

## DAVID'S VOICE

"Got to practice, Katherine;  
there's three important  
things Mr. Parkes says:  
'work, work, work'..."

David hurries from one door to the next, looking into the practice rooms which all are occupied by students practicing on the pianos...room, after room.

## DAVID'S VOICE (Cont'd.)

"you see, I am to play in a  
very special competition and  
the winner gets to play at  
the Albert Hall before her  
Highest Royalness the Queen  
Mum..."

He arrives at a practice room door, the glass obscured by a jacket hanging on the inside. He opens the door and is set back by the sight of TWO STUDENTS in an embrace.

## DAVID

Whooahh, a duet! Sorry.

He shuts the door, sits in the corridor and proceeds to practice in his head.

INT./EXT. PIANO STORE - DAY

## DAVID'S VOICE

"So I bought a piano, how's  
that Katherine?..."

David presses his face against the window, looking at the exquisite range of grand and concert pianos.

INT. KATHERINE'S HOUSE - DAY

Katherine smiles, standing at the mantle, listening to a REEL TO REEL TAPE RECORDER IN MOTION...

## DAVID'S VOICE

"...a truly beautiful piano..."

INT. DAVID'S BEDSIT - DAY

DAVID'S VOICE

"A suffering piano, like  
yours..."

The piano is a horrible hand-painted white, adorned with psychedelic flowers - a "5 Pound Special" (scrawled on the front). David is seated on the floor of the grotty basement room, a tangle of books, music, clothes, coke bottles and chocolate wrappers. He chews chocolate as he talks into the microphone of a reel to reel tape.

DAVID'S VOICE

"Got a letter from Daddy,  
well kind of, because I wrote  
it you see and he sent it  
back. Ah well, it's very  
hard to express...the  
inexpressible, Katherine..."

David stops the tape. Pinned on the wall is the photo of adolescent David with Peter and numerous envelopes (addressed to Peter in David's scrawl) all marked: "RETURN TO SENDER".

DAVID

Ah well...

He stares, takes a tablet from one of many bottles on the piano.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - DAY (BEGIN MONTAGE)

The CAMERA circles Parkes as he rounds on David playing rapid exercises on the piano.

PARKES

Performing's a risk, there's  
no safety net. And people  
come to see you to fall.  
Arpeggios, first inversion!  
(David obeys)  
Make no mistake David—it's  
dangerous, people get hurt!

David practices as if his life depended on it.

INT. DAVID'S BEDSIT - NIGHT

David crouches, his face an inch from the floor his fingers performing a spidery exercise as he lifts them up and down on the threadbare carpet, getting faster and faster until you can barely see them.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM -- DAY

PARKES

B major scale at 180 beats a minute.

(David takes a beat)

Contrary motion...Come on David. Endure!

David's HANDS are a BLUR...

A SERIES OF SHOTS AS DAVID progresses from one exercise to the next, Parkes barking different instructions. ("Melodic Minor"..."Harmonic Minor", etc.).

PARKES (Cont'd.)

Think of it as two separate melodies, jousting for supremacy. Your hands, giants, with ten fingers each.

David flails at the keyboard.

PARKES (Cont'd.)

F sharp major scales in thirds!

(sotto voice)

That's a bitch.

David punishes the keys, huffing and puffing.

EXT. SOHO - NIGHT

David walks along studying the score for the Rach 3. He sees something up ahead which causes him to take cover in a shop doorway.

NEW ANGLE. Ray walks past with a friend. David checks the all clear then continues in the opposite direction.

INT. RCOM -- LIBRARY -- DAY

PARKES

You have to be able to play it blindfolded.

DAVID

Ooh, that's a trick.

There are dozens of scores and technical books spread out in front of them.

PARKES

Your hands must form the unbreakable habit of playing the notes so you can forget them and let this take over.

(the heart)

That's where it comes from!

INT. DAVID'S BEDSIT - NIGHT

David practices blindfolded. Seated on the piano is scrawny cat.

LATER: David eats from a can of sardines, at the same time handfeeding the cat.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

David plays the lyrical cadenza.

PARKES

The page for Godsake! The Notes!

DAVID

(stops)

I was forgetting them, Professor.

PARKES

Would it be asking to much to  
learn them first?

DAVID

And then forget them?

PARKES

Right.

(slams the lid down)

Just give me the fingering.

David fingers the notes on the lid. (The Cadenza continues into):

INT. DAVID'S BEDSIT - NIGHT

Shivering David sizes up one hand wearing the kid gloves and proceeds to cut the finger-tips off, turning the gloves into a pair of mittens. Wearing a greatcoat, he rubs his hands together and practices.

Headlights outside create weird shadows as David plays the cadenza softly, softly...

DAVID

(to the cat)

How does that sound?

The PHOTO OF PETER keeps an eye on David.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

Light pours in.

PARKES

We're going to rest muscles  
and fingers today, David and  
give the imagination a  
workout. Second movement -  
Intermezzo. Oboe!

He sings the accompaniment. David catches on and sings the piano part with feeling.

INT. RCOM - DAY

David and Parkes walk downstairs, along the corridor singing the concerto with gusto, completely immersed in their performances. They stop, face to face for a lively duet; students mill past.

David and Parkes burst through a door as they build to a climax, FILLING THE FOYER WITH THE JOY OF THE MUSIC.

EXT. RCOM - DAY

VINEY'S POV from an above window:

David and Parkes, arms flying as they continue their performance, up the steps of the Albert Hall.

Viney grimaces: 'Loonies'.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - DAY

David unleashes an awesome run of chords.

PARKES

Don't you just love those big fat chords!

David thrashes the keys.

PARKES

You have to take the piano David or it'll get away from you; make it do things it's never done. It's a monster; tame it, or it'll swallow you whole.

David hears it ROAR, plays possessed, stabbing at the pedals, lashing the keys relentlessly. A CLAMOROUS TWANG stops him.

INSIDE THE PIANO - THE BROKEN STRING bobs up and down; Parkes and David peer in at it.

PARKES

(a distinct laugh)  
Coming along nicely, David.

INT. PRACTICE ROOM - NIGHT

David practices still, on his own; through the window is the Albert Hall, lights shimmering in the cold night air.

(END MONTAGE)

INT. ROOMING HOUSE - DAY

A pile of mail on the floor. A hand rifles through it--there's a small parcel, addressed to David Helfgott'. David studies it curiously then, notices a woman stopped on the stairs, mouth agape, looking at him. He smiles, walks back to his room. He's completely naked.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM - DAY

The PARCEL is unwrapped. A white card falls out. It's from the "Estate of Katherine Susannah Prichard". David picks it up and reads it to himself.

DAVID

"Katherine Susannah Prichard  
requested that all personal  
belongings and remembrances  
be returned after her death.  
Yours..."

David is uncomprehending. He opens THE PARCEL, takes out several audio tapes and the picture frame: IT'S THE PHOTO HE GAVE KATHERINE.

He looks at himself as a SMILING ADOLESCENT, THROUGH THE CRACKED GLASS OF THE FRAME.

EXT. ROOM ENTRANCE - EARLY MORNING

David is seated on the steps, blue with cold, wearing the gloves Katherine gave him. Parkes arrives.

PARKES

David? How long have you  
been here?

DAVID

Mr. Parkes, gee...I don't know--  
all night I think. How does  
that sound?

PARKES

You're frozen; can't afford  
for you to get ill now,  
David.

DAVID

Not now or never, or is the  
damage is done?

PARKES

Damage?

DAVID

That's right. Inside, kind  
of. Or was I born damaged -  
like you?

PARKES

I wasn't born like this (HIS  
ARM) It was a stroke.

DAVID

A stroke of bad luck.  
Whooahhh! Sorry sorry. Sad  
isn't it?

Parkes looks genuinely concerned. He sits next to David.

PARKES

What on earth is the problem?

DAVID

Um...well perhaps, you know, if  
I played well, I could be  
forgiven.

PARKES

What did you do wrong?

DAVID

Maybe...I destroyed the family,  
David the destroyer.

PARKES

You what?

DAVID

If you do something wrong can  
you be punished for the rest  
of your life?

PARKS

David, David-

DAVID

Professor, professor-

PARKES

David, listen to me!

DAVID

Yes Daddy, sorry. Mustn't  
make you angry, not another  
angry lion.

PARKES

I'm not your Daddy and I'm  
not an angry lion.

DAVID

A hyena, more like.

PARKES

A hyena?

DAVID

They sound like...

(imitates Parkes' laugh)  
...and they don't really hunt,  
not really—they eat what's  
left after lions have  
finished; the leftovers,  
that's their specialty-

CONTINUED

DAVID (Cont'd.)  
leftover soup of the day.  
Whooahhh.

Pause. Parkes imitates his own laugh, considers it.

PARKES  
Fascinating.

DAVID  
It is, isn't it?

Viney walks past—with a snigger at the sight of the two of them seated on the steps.

VENEY  
Morning Cecil.

Parkes barely acknowledges Viney, just hisses.

PARKES  
Blithering idiot.

DAVID  
I am, I am! It's true Cecil.

PARKES  
Enough woolly thinking. UP!  
Get up! Follow me.

INT. RCOM -- NARROW STONE STAIRWAY - NIGHT

David follow Parkes. Behind a steel grid, in a wall-recess is a bust of a frowning Beethoven.

PARKES  
Now he was damaged, deaf as a post.

DAVID  
Ooooh, an angry Ludwig...

PARKES

Eighth auditory nerve as a  
matter of fact.

They continue up the narrow stairway, into darkness.

CUT TO:

BLACK. Then a light is switched on. (We've had a scene change  
to):

INT. RCOM -- PORTRAIT ROOM - NIGHT

David takes in the room.

A clutter of books and chests, busts, casts and portraits staring  
at David.

Parkes shows him a death mask.

PARKES

Liszt. Warts and all. He  
was dead when they did that.

DAVID

Dead as a post, poor Franz.

PARKES

You can still pick them up on  
the left bank, quite cheap.

CUT TO:

A CAST OF A HAND is unwrapped from some cloth.

PARKES

Chopin. Look at that wild  
finger; seems to have been  
free all its life.

David absorbs the perfect, white hand.

PARKES

I've got Rachmaninov in here  
somewhere.

DAVID  
Sergei himself?

PARKES  
Not quite.

David looks around the cramped room, at the portraits and masks.

PARKES  
Here.

A WOODEN CASE.

Inside: the cast of a hand, exquisitely proportioned, elegantly long fingers.

PARKES  
Magnificent fingers, so virile.

David extends his hand next to the cast. The similarity is astonishing.

PARKES  
But they don't make the music; they're just electrified little slaves. They do as they're told.  
(David flutters his fingers)  
Precisely. He heard me play the Rach' three.

DAVID  
Really?

PARKES  
He said he could hear himself in my playing; he said it was as if I had touched his soul.  
(beat)  
That wasn't too bad was it.

DAVID  
Not too bad at all.

David watches entranced as Parkes replaces the cast with reverence. He turns to David.

PARKES

Now it's your turn David.  
Once you've done it, no one  
can ever take it away from  
you.

(a lingering moment)

And you must play as if there  
is no tomorrow.

INT. RCOM -- CONCERT HALL - DAY

Applause resounds around the large hall as David takes to the stage.

DAVID

Whoaahhh!

Parkes is in the packed audience of staff, students and guests.

PARKES

(to himself)

Come on David, don't let me  
down.

Full of nerves, David swings his arms as he ambles towards the grand piano, his awkwardness drawing laughter. So he shoves his hands in his jacket pockets where he finds a cigar stub.

More laughter as he touches it to his mouth for the benefit of Ashley and Robert, hooting in the front row.

Parkes grimaces. Viney leans across to him.

VINEY

How many moments of genius  
today, Cecil?

Parkes ignores it.

Silence falls as David sits at the concert grand. He settles, nods to the conductor who counts the orchestra into the haunting opening of the Rach' 3.

DAVID'S FOOT PRESSES DOWN ON THE PEDAL...HIS HANDS DESCEND ON THE KEYS FOR THE FIRST NOTES...IT'S HEIGHTENED, LIKE A SPELL HAS BEEN CAST. IT FLOWS OVER THE AUDIENCE.

INT. BIO BOX - DAY

A STUDENT checks the level as the tape rotates on the reel to reel.

INT. CONCERT HALL - DAY

David plays with spellbinding intensity, sucking in air to fill his lungs...

CUT TO:

TAPE RECORDER REELS TURNING. We are now in:

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

Peter listens to the tape. The tape box is in his hands. Scrawled on it is:

"Me playing the Rach' 3."

Peter is mesmerized.

INT. CONCERT HALL - DAY

The orchestra as the tempo builds. David's HANDS glide through the most difficult sequences. Parkes sits forward, his good hand willing David on.

Viney is amazed.

CLOSE ON DAVID—HE DOESN'T HEAR MUSIC, HE HEARS SOUNDS...THE NOISE OF THE OTHER INSTRUMENTS, IT'S A WEIRD, NERVE SHREDDING CACOPHANY...

CONTINUED

SWEAT DRIPS OFF HIM ONTO THE KEYBOARD. THE SILENCE IS SURREAL, HEIGHTENED, SLOW MOTION AS DAVID ENDURES THE PAIN AND THE ANGUISH IN HIS BODY, HIS HANDS DESCENDING ONTO THE KEYS...HIS FEET PRESSING THE PEDALS, SOUNDS LIKE DEEP RUMBLING EXPLOSIONS...

THE AUDIENCE IS CAUGHT UP IN THE SPELL.

ALL DAVID HEARS IS A THUDDING, CLATTERING SOUND--THE HAMMERS INSIDE THE PIANO WHICH IS TAKING ON A LIFE OF ITS OWN, LIKE A MECHANICAL BEAST HE HAS TO SUBDUE BEFORE IT SWALLOWS HIM UP. THE PERCUSSIVE SOUNDS OF THE HAMMERS AND THE GROANING OF THE PIANO UNDER ASSAULT ARE DEAFENING. DAVID TRIES TO BLOCK THEM OUT AS HE PLAYS ON...

RESUME SOUND: THE MUSIC is divine, the Audience entranced as they watch David pour his whole being into it. And as it builds to the finale, the camera swirls around David dizzily.

INTERCUT:

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

Peter listening to the tape. In his hand a GOLD MEDAL on a ribbon. (The Concerto Medal).

The agony and awe tell in HIS FACE.

INT. CONCERT HALL - DAY

RESUME David as the concerto CLIMAXES SPECTACULARLY.

Parkes leaps to his feet with the rest of the Audience all applauding wildly.

DAVID

Whooahhh!

He's dripping with sweat...it takes moments to realize it's over.

Parkes slaps his one good arm against his thigh and stabs a triumphant look at Viney.

PARKES

That's what I call genius.

David stands, holds his hands up to his sweaty face as the APPLAUSE DEAFENS...

David sweats, hyperventilating-

DAVID

(mumbles)

Did my best, Daddy...

The BRIGHT, GLARE of lights SWIRLS...

David gasps short breaths...

DAVID

How's that...

All SOUND FADES OUT. From DAVID'S POV, it's like a dream...A BLUR of LIGHT AND FACES-

HE BEGINS TO FALL BACKWARDS - IN SLOW MOTION, IN SILENCE UNTIL HIS HEAD HITS THE STAGE.

HIS SPECTACLES FLY OFF-

EYES WIDE OPEN, HE STARES AT THE BRIGHT SWIRLING LIGHTS.

SILENCE. Then, a PHONE RINGS AND RINGS AND RINGS ON...

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - DAY

David's glasses are put on a METAL TRAY.

Electrodes are placed on his temples...The E.C.T. DIAL is turned up.

David's FINGERS flutter as the current runs through his body and then they shiver to a STOP...

David lays there, staring into the void of white light.

The PHONE KEEPS RINGING.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP - THE PHONE STILL RINGING. A hand picks up the receiver.

MAN

Hello.

(no response)

Hello, who is this?

The accent strikes us—it is Peter. We are in:

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

PETER

Hello?

DAVID (V.O.).

Hello Daddy?

INT. PHONE BOOTH - DAY

David, hair cut short, pale and gaunt, clutches his bag.

DAVID

Daddy? I'm back.

INT. HELFGOTT HOUSE - NIGHT

RESUME Peter, numb. He listens in silence, then hangs up slowly.

New angle: Seen through the window: Peter stands there, stunned..

HE PULLS THE BLIND DOWN..

FADE TO BLACK..

SLOW FADE IN..

EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY

A TAXI WINDS ITS WAY UP THE LONG DRIVE AND STOPS. A YOUNG WOMAN STEPS OUT.

She walks up some steps, to the entrance of an imposing old building.

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL -- CORRIDOR - DAY

WIDE-SHOT - THE WOMAN walks down a bare corridor to a desk where she exchanges words with a NURSE.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL -- GARDENS - DAY

The WOMAN accompanied by the NURSE walks amidst several patients enjoying the morning sun. They arrive at someone seated on a bench.

NURSE

Someone here to see you,  
David.

No response. Suzie walks around to face him.

SUZIE

It's me, David. Suzie.

WE SEE DAVID'S FACE FOR THE FIRST TIME--MANY YEARS HAVE PASSED. HIS HAIR HAS THINNED OUT--HE LOOKS MUCH OLDER THAN HIS EARLY THIRTIES. (THIS IS THE DAVID WE RECOGNIZE FROM THE SECOND SCENE).

DAVID

Suzie? Suzie!

(myopic)

Do we know Suzie?

NURSE

Your sister, David.

DAVID

Sister nurse, sister Suzie.

(takes her hand)

Sweet Suzie, Suzie...

WIDE-SHOT - THE NURSE leaves. Suzie sits on the bench with David. David rocks back and forth, practically oblivious.

SUZIE

David? I won't be able to  
come and visit so often.

DAVID

So often, sweet, soft, Suzie.

SUZIE

I'm going live in Melbourne.

DAVID

Ooh, that's a trick. Don't  
tell Daddy. The milk,  
mustn't cry over spilt milk;  
ah well, what can you do  
Margaret?

SUZIE

Margaret's in Israel,  
remember?

DAVID

I remember Margaret. She  
called me a pig. All very  
complicated; complicated in  
Israel, a battleground.

(holds his head)

A war zone, a war; what a  
bore it's a war...a war...

(mumbles on)

Suzie holds his hand—but he's oblivious to it.

CUT TO:

BRANCHES SWAYING IN THE BREEZE...

CLOSE-UP DAVID, inanimate, listens to the PURE SOUND of the  
LEAVES RUSTLING, tuned right into it...

The silence is SHATTERED AS A METAL TROLLEY CRASHES INTO A TABLE.

(We are not outdoors but in):

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL -- DAY ROOM - DAY

David is seated in front of a window through which we see the swaying branches but the only sound now is the CLATTER AND COLDNESS OF THE DAY ROOM where a TV blares high up on a wall and stupefied patients sit slumped in armchairs.

A NURSE hands him a vial of tablets from the trolley. David takes them.

CLOSE-UP on David again -- THE DIN FADES. He tunes into the Sound of the WIND and the LEAVES.

HIS FINGERS tap the arm of the chair, that same spidery finger exercise we remember from many years ago.

Shadows lengthen as hours pass.

HIS FINGERS continue the same exercise...Finally, they stop.

David blinks. He has heard something. Or has he?

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSP' CORRIDOR -- MEETING ROOM - DUSK

Shuffle shuffle go David's FEET on the cold, waxed floor, dragging a trail.

David inches down the deserted corridor, a cigarette dangling from his lips.

He stops at the door of a locked room and looks in.

HIS POV - the ROOM is deserted, chairs stacked against a wall, shutters closed to the late afternoon sun. On the bare floor stands a PIANO.

New Angle. David stares at it for the other side of the pane of glass, trance-like.

WIDE-SHOT. At the far end of the corridor, David hasn't moved, still he stares into the room. A NURSE approaches.

NURSE

David, I knew I'd find you here.

DAVID

Nurse, I've been a bit  
naughty again haven't I? I  
misbehaved, is that it?

NURSE

Come on David.

She ushers him away, down the sparse corridor, voices fading.

DAVID

Come on David, go-go-go,  
gotta-win-gotta-win—Come on,  
whoohh...

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL -- BATHROOM - NIGHT

David is in the bath staring at the dappled effect of the water reflected off the ceiling. He mumbles something then lays there thinking.

In his head, the sound of a few fleeting notes from the past...a piano somewhere, or is it?

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL CORRIDOR -- MEETING ROOM - DAY

David shuffles along the long corridor we saw him in earlier. He follows the SOUND of PIANO PLAYING.

He arrives at the door of the MEETING ROOM. It's open.

Inside, several patients dance to the tune 'Daisy' while others do abstract activities. David shuffles through them, towards the person playing the piano.

BERYL is a matronly figure with a warm smile which she turns on to this poor creature in David who perches next to her. She goes to turn her music but he beats her.

BERYL

Oh! So you can read music?

DAVID

Kind of, kind of, perhaps I  
could turn over a new leaf.  
Whoooah.

David rests his head on her shoulder. She plays on.

BERYL

My name's Beryl Alcott.  
What's yours?

DAVID

Alcott Beryl, Alcott's a lot  
like Helfgott; it's true,  
it's true.

BERYL

Helfgott?

DAVID

That's it! Ridiculous!  
Would you believe it means  
"with the help of God",  
Beryl. Incredible!

BERYL

What's your first name, Mr.  
Helfgott?

DAVID

Incredible Beryl, first  
things first Beryl, it's  
David. How does that sound?

She stops playing-quite clearly stunned.

BERYL

You're David Helfgott?

DAVID

That's right, Beryl, that's  
right-

BERYL

I used to watch you win all those competitions.

DAVID

Ah well, win some, lose some. Can't lose them all, Beryl; it's not your fault.

(touches the keys)

Whoohah.

(stops himself)

BERYL

I was quite a fan.

DAVID

So you don't mind if I turn for you?

BERYL

Do you still play?

DAVID

Mustn't play, mustn't play doctor said, end in tears if I misbehave—

BERYL

You mustn't?

DAVID

That's right. Is that right? Might damage me, that's right isn't it, because it did once before--a long long time ago; that's the story, so what can you do Beryl? Come on Beryl, boldness of attack!

(she plays, troubled)

The point is you've got to share and care and care and share and just behave. Isn't that right - that's right, that's good Beryl, give Beryl a medal!

INT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - DAY

Beryl walks along with a NURSE.

BERYL

What goes on in his head?

NURSE

God only knows.

BERYL

Is he schizophrenic or something.

NURSE

No, he just lives in his own little world; no trouble at all.

BERYL

Poor lost soul.

NURSE

He could leave tomorrow, but he's got nowhere to go.

EXT. PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL -- DRIVEWAY - A NEW DAY

David shuffles out puffing on a cigarette, a battered suitcase in one hand, a plastic bag in the other had. The door of an old Morris opens and Beryl calls out.

BERYL

David.

He gets in the car.

BERYL

David, you know I can't abide smoke.

DAVID

Sorry Beryl, sorry.

(he gets out)

BERYL

What are you doing?

DAVID

I'll walk, I'll walk-

BERYL

You don't know the way. Get in.

DAVID

I'll follow you-How does that sound?

(shuffles off)

BERYL

It's all right, God bless you David.

David jumps into the car. As it drives off he hangs out the window with the cigarette in his mouth.

DAVID

How's this Beryl? Is this all right? Whooahhh!

The car drives down the drive, out the gates of 'Glendale'-CHORAL SINGING: Vivaldi's 'Gloria' from:

INT. CHURCH HALL - DAY

Choir Practice. Beryl sings along in full voice with the choir as she plays the organ: David turns for her.

Vivaldi's 'Gloria' continues over:

INT. BERYL'S HOUSE -- SMALL BEDROOM - DAY

David sits up out of a dream, disoriented by his new surroundings.

Beryl appears in the doorway, dressed in a nightgown with a glass of water and tablets for David.

BERYL

It's all right David, Beryl  
is here.

She sits on the bed. A frame of Christ hangs on the wall.

DAVID

Here-here never fear, but  
where's the nurse—the nurse,  
the sister Beryl?

BERYL

This is where you live now.

DAVID

It's true it's true, David's  
all better now, it's true.

(guzzles the tablets)

I'm fine, I'm fine, I'm fine?

(mumbles on)

That's right isn't Beryl? Is  
that right? That's right...

She holds him, strokes his head tenderly.

BERYL

This is where David Helfgott  
gets right back on the rails.

DAVID

That's the story--

He innocently rests his hand on her breast.

INT. CHURCH HALL - DAY

The choir sings on, straining their voices to the heavens.

INT. BERYLS' HOUSE - DAY

Beryl enters to complete chaos—the television blaring white  
noise, furniture, newspapers, dishes, spread high and low. Her  
reaction tells us it's not the first time.

She picks her way through the fallout to the BATHROOM:

The shower is running, the bath overflowing and David is in it creating waves.

DAVID

Don't you just love those big fat chords?

INT. CHURCH - DAY

The CHOIR - focused on salvation from somewhere up above builds for a big finale.

David turns for Beryl...then his HAND continues onto her BREAST. She slides it away and hopes no one saw it.

INT./EXT. BERYL'S CAR -- TRAVELING - DAY

Clouds reflected in the windscreen. David's face stares out expectantly.

BERYL

Mister Minogue is a lovely man, a real Christian gentleman; you'll like him, David. The Botanical garden's just down the road, nice walk; and guess what-- you'll even have your own piano.

She turns into a driveway, past a FAMILIAR SIGN:

"EDEN LODGE"

INT. DAVID'S ROOM -- EDEN LODGE - DAY

David plays a clamor of notes, puffing on a cigarette, the sound from the piano a muddle of confusion.

THUMPING from UPSTAIRS stops him--

He sits on the floor...picks up some sheet music, peers myopically at it and then discards it.

PULL BACK - NEW ANGLE - LOOKING DOWN

David surrounded by the debris of sheet music which covers the entire floor of the small room..

(It could be days, months or years he's been here).

CUT TO:

INT. DAVID'S ROOM -- EDEN LODGE - NIGHT

David plays the piano (MUTE) puffing on a cigarette, his head rolling back and forth. LOUD THUMPING from above.

VOICE

Shut up!

David stops.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM -- EDEN LODGE - MORNING

Minogue enters with breakfast.

MINOGUE

Top of the morning!

David is slumped at the piano, stupefied.

MINOGUE

Let's make sure we eat our brekky today, David.

He turns the TV off and closes the lid of the piano, locking it.

MINOGUE

It's the last of the Chrissy pud.

He puts a check in front of David and hands him a pen.

MINOGUE

Look at you. You need to go out and exercise.

David signs the check.

MINOGUE

Get some fresh air into those lungs of yours, David.

DAVID

(mumbles...)

Exercise, yes Jim! Only the fit survive. That's right, isn't it—because the weak get crushed like insects, like grasshoppers.

MINOGUE is already on his way out.

EXT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - DAY

JOGGERS run past. David mumbles, watches after them...then jogs off in their wake—a shuffle more than a jog; he looks wonderfully absurd dressed in a tattered great coat and a cigarette hanging from his mouth. He runs up alongside a very serious JOGGER who gives him the hairy eyeball then accelerates away. More joggers run past in the opposite direction.

DAVID

Whoooahhh!

David follows them...disappearing over a hill.

EXT. CITY STREET -- TALL BUILDINGS - NIGHT

It's raining. David jogs in the shadows of the tall buildings, aimless, lost in this deserted part of town...

UP CLOSE - the only SOUND is his BREATHING...each step is heightened (SLOW MOTION), the water glistens off his face...it's more like a DREAM, with NO SOUND AT ALL NOW. He presses on, as if drawn by an invisible force.

HE STOPS UNDER A BRIGHT STREET LAMP, RUNS HIS HANDS DOWN HIS SOAKING FACE...THEN REGISTERS SOMETHING...THE SOUND OF A PIANO SOMEWHERE IN THE NIGHT...

EXT. MOBY'S WINEBAR - NIGHT

Rain spattered glass reflects a blue neon sign. David's FACE ENTERS FRAME as he looks into:

INT./EXT. MOBY'S - NIGHT

(This is the second scene - from a different perspective)

DAVID'S POV: the last two patrons leave. The chairs are being put up. Tony, the waiter, draws the others' attention to David. David raps on the window. He is let in. Sylvia comes over.

INT. DAVID'S ROOM -- EDEN LODGE - DUSK

David is unusually still, seated at the locked piano. He stares at the red sky outside. A kaleidoscope of different SOUNDS filters in, almost as if David isn't singling them out one by one: Traffic; children playing, someone coughing, a distant siren...then all goes SILENT.

CLOSE on David; something is on his mind. Finally, he whispers:

DAVID

Chopin.

INT. MOBY'S - NIGHT

Sam sits at the bar with some friends. There are about twenty customers in all. He sees something:

SAM

Sylvia, your stray dog's back.

It's David, walking towards the piano, nodding at the few customers.

TONY

(to Sylvia)

Do you want me to get rid of him?

SYLVIA

I'll handle it.

SAM

('plays' to the customers)  
Hey baby, give us a tune.  
What's it going to be?

Laughter, as David sits at the piano.

DAVID

A tune-a tune baby, no  
worries.

He picks at a couple of notes.

SAM

Bravo! Encore!

DAVID HOOKS HIS FOOT AROUND THE LEG OF THE PIANO STOOL-

DAVID

Encore! Encore whooahhh!

DAVID DRAGS THE STOOL IN CLOSER-

SAM

Sock it to us Liberace!

More laughter. Sylvia approaches.

OBLIVIOUS, DAVID TICKLES A NOTE...

SYLVIA

David?

She reaches out to touch his shoulder when:

Suddenly - the PIANO ERUPTS with the exhilarating SOUND of 'The Flight of the Bumblebee'.

SAM is dumbstruck.

SYLVIA is astonished.

Everyone is spellbound.

David, shrouded in smoke, bent double to the keyboard, delivers a stunning performance.

Suddenly it's over. Stunned silence as the final notes resonate.

APPLAUSE. CHEERS. WHISTLES. MADNESS. MUSIC.

INT. MOBY'S WINEBAR -- DAY

A BRIGHT FLASH--David, in a white tuxedo, is having his photo taken at the baby grand.

CUT TO:

The photo in a framed poster - a flyer advertising:

"THE CLASSICS AT MOBY'S"

DAVID

Whoahhh!

Sylvia and Tony laugh.

INT. MOBY'S WINEBAR - NIGHT

David is at the piano--business is booming. Standing room only at the bar; all tables full.

David laps it up, fields requests, laughs and jokes with the crows, as eager as a puppy.

EXT. HELFGOTT HOUSE -- BACKYARD - DAY

Someone is reading a newspaper. We see the eyes--aged, weary. It's Peter--mid seventies. He's staring at:

A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE headed:

"REMEMBER WHO"

It's accompanied by a photo of David surrounded by women at the piano; and inset is a photo of him as a bright twelve year old, headed:

"DAVID SHINES"

Peter stares across the empty back yard.

INT. MOBY'S WINE BAR - NIGHT

An even bigger crowd, clapping, stomping, cheering.

DAVID

Thank you thank you baby...

A BRIGHT FLASH as someone takes a photo

DAVID

(blinded)

Oh, help, my glass, my  
glasses...

A girl holds David's wine glass to his mouth. Another replaces the stub smoldering on his lips with a new one.

DAVID

Ah, a live one! A hot one  
baby!

Beryl leaves unimpressed.

CUSTOMER

Give us Beethoven's Fifth.

DAVID

Sure baby, no worries.  
Symphony or Concerto?

EXT. MOBY'S - NIGHT

It's later. SOMEONE'S POV from across the street as DAVID exits.  
Inside, Sylvia and Tony put up chairs.

David shuffles up the stairs to the first floor flat, above the  
neon sign.

INT. SMALL FLAT -- ABOVE MOBY'S - NIGHT

Blue neon pulsates in the window.

David has his head in the fridge. He hears the door:

DAVID  
Mangiare, sweet Sylvia-

He turns and drops a can of orange juice, not expecting to see:  
PETER at the open door, large as life. Silence.

PETER  
Hello David.

DAVID  
Daddy, hello Daddy...

He breaks off, picks the tin up, puts it on the bench.

PETER  
Are you well, David?

DAVID  
Well, well, Daddy, couldn't  
be better.

He wrings his hands, a confusion of nerves; he deflects:

DAVID  
But the lids, can't open  
them, something wrong..

He fumbles through several other cans on the bench.

PETER  
What could be wrong?

DAVID  
It's a mystery, a mystery.

Peter opens the top drawer, then the next and finds an opener.

PETER  
Watch.

He pops open a can and smiles, trying to be warm.

PETER

You see how easy it is?

DAVID

Yes, Daddy. Yes I do.  
Couldn't be easier, could it.  
(mumbles on)

Peter watches him...then tears his eyes away because the pain of it all is too much. He looks around.

PETER

Do you realize what an opportunity you have here?

DAVID

Opportunity, opportunity of a lifetime...

PETER

You are very lucky.

DAVID

A very lucky boy, that's right, isn't it? Mustn't ever forget...

(trails off)

Silence. Peter hugs David...then lets him go. Pause.

PETER

You know David, when I was a boy, I had a violin; it was a beautiful violin; do you know what happened to it David?

Pause.

DAVID

What happened to it? No Daddy...no idea, what happened, no...

Peter is crushed suddenly burdened with the weight of enormous loss.

David fossicks in the cupboard for a glass, mumbling.

DAVID

The thing is, um, have to be  
fit, to survive, to stay  
alive. That's right isn't it?

When he turns around, Peter is gone. But there is something on  
the floor. David picks it up.

IT'S THE GOLD MEDAL he won in London. He studies it blankly then  
crosses to the window.

INT./EXT. DAVID'S FLAT -- STREET BELOW - NIGHT

POV - on the street below Peter walks away, into the shadows—a  
solitary, doomed figure. He disappears into the night.

DAVID

Goodnight Daddy.

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - DAY

The boot of a car is opened; a SUITCASE is lifted out. It  
belongs to GILLIAN, a woman in her fifties who emanates a great  
sense of warmth and calmness.

GILLIAN

Where are the kids?

SYLVIA

Around somewhere. I must  
warn you, I have someone  
staying on weekends.

GILLIAN

He's not another Scorpio, is  
he?

SALVIA

Very funny, Gills. He's a  
child prodigy.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - DAY

Gillian follows Sylvia through a trail of chaos...INTO THE LOUNGE where the television is blaring, the radio and lights on, the sofa cushions spread all over; into the HALLWAY where there are discarded clothes, a shoe, socks...into the BATHROOM:

SYLVIA

David.

The shower is on, spurting like crazy, the floor is soaked, towels everywhere. Sylvia turns the shower off.

SYLVIA

It's a madhouse. David!

EXT. BLUE SKY AND FLUFFY WHITE CLOUDS - DAY

David's FACE floats dreamily up into frame. He's wearing a Walkman, eyes closed, his face plastered in zinc cream.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

The fridge is open, the radio on, food spread everywhere, burnt popcorn all over the stove, some of it still popping. Gillian looks bemused as Sylvia shuts the fridge.

GILLIAN

You shouldn't've gone to so much trouble.

SYLVIA

Those kids were meant to be keeping an eye on him.

The KIDS enter from the back. JESSICA 11, ROWAN, 9.

SYLVIA

Where in God's heaven is David?

EXT. BLUE SKY - DAY

David seemingly 'floats' up into the sky again.

EXT. SYLVIA'S BACKYARD - DAY

Sylvia and Gillian exit ahead of the kids.

JESSICA

He's been hogging it.

ROWAN

For hours.

A look of amazement fills Gillian's face:

David bounces up and down on a trampoline, listening to a Walkman and wearing a greatcoat which flies up with every bounce.

Gillian is drawn towards the odd figure on the trampoline.

SYLVIA

David.

He turns around to see them, the greatcoat flying right up to reveal he's naked underneath.

DAVID

Is that you, Doctor?

Sylvia exchanges a 'can-you believe-it' look with Gillian.

GILLIAN

Doctor?

SYLVIA

David, I want you to meet someone.

DAVID

No more hot water Sylvia, all gone. Where did it go?

He lands in front of them, rips the Walkman off.

SYLVIA

Gillian's a very dear friend of mine.

DAVID

A friendly Doctor. I feel  
better already. Whoahh!

GILLIAN

I'm pleased to meet you,  
David.

SYLVIA

Gillian's not a doctor-

DAVID

Not-a-doctor, sweet Sylvia.

SYLVIA

She's an astrologer-

DAVID

Ooh, a specialist, a heart  
surgeon.

SYLVIA

--She's from Sydney.

DAVID

An open heart surgeon.

SYLVIA

Don't be ridiculous.

DAVID

I'm ridiculous,  
ridiculous...um?

GILLIAN

Gillian.

DAVID

Gillian. That's it!

SYLVIA

If you ask Gillian nicely,  
she might just do your chart  
for you.

DAVID

Do my chart? Would she,  
would she do my chart?

GILLIAN

Of course, David.

DAVID

What's a chart, Gillian?

GILLIAN

An astrological chart.

DAVID

Oooh, the stars? I love the  
stars, they're astronomical-

GILLIAN

And the planets.

DAVID

Astronomical-The planets!  
Music for the spheres, the  
food of love, astronomical-  
gastronomical, whoaahh!

(hugs her tightly)

The food of love Gillian,  
whoahhh!

GILLIAN

(to Sylvia)

What's he like when he gets  
to know you better?

INT. MOBY'S WINEBAR - NIGHT

David ends a piece on the piano, to a packed house.

Gillian is seated at the bar, talking to Sylvia.

SYLVIA

So what does he do?

GILLIAN

He's an investment advisor;  
that's how I met him.

SYLVIA

So far so good. How serious  
is it?

(Gillian shrugs)

Come on Gills, on a scale of  
one to ten.

Gillian holds up her hand to display a chunky diamond ring.

SYLVIA (Cont'd.)

God, that serious. So when's  
the happy day.

GILLIAN

I hate to rush into things.

Gillian watches David making his way through the throng, shaking all the hands offered to him, swigging from a wine glass, almost knocking over an ice bucket. His presence is infectious. He exits.

INT. STAIRS -- MOBY'S - NIGHT

Gillian looks up to the first floor where she sees a door ajar and cigarette smoke pouring out. She walks upstairs:

INT. DAVID'S FLAT ABOVE MOBY'S - NIGHT

GILLIAN'S POV. David's crouched over a newspaper, its pages spread out all over the floor. He chain smokes.

GILLIAN

Mind if I come in?

DAVID

Whoahhh the star doctor,  
entree, entree! Sorry, the  
paper, it's not your fault,  
it keeps getting bigger.  
Amazing. Amazing who you

CONTINUED

DAVID (Cont'd.)  
find when you're not even  
looking; he's here.

GILLIAN  
Who?

DAVID  
Roger-Roger-Roger, here!

On the entertainment pages, an ADVERTISEMENT for:

"ROGER WOODWARD - IN CONCERT"

--And a photo.

DAVID  
Roger the winner. Roger,  
he's a star, he's a hit-a-  
hit-a-hit; I need a hit, I  
need a hit.  
(grabs the cigarettes)

GILLIAN  
You've got one going already.

DAVID  
Yes! One's more than enough.  
One two three the Rach' 3,  
how's that sound?  
(hums off a piece of paper.)

GILLIAN  
It started out being a  
letter.

DAVID  
A letter, Gillian. I think  
so, I think it's true, it  
seems to be true, is it true?

GILLIAN  
"Dear Professor Cecil, Royal  
College"

DAVID  
Of Music Gillian, Royal  
College of Music. A mystery,  
it's a mystery-

GILLIAN  
What is?

DAVID  
--he only had one arm you  
see, it was a stroke, a  
stroke-

GILLIAN  
The poor thing.

DAVID  
--A stroke of bad luck.  
Whooah! It's not funny, it's  
sad, very sad, poor pussycat,  
his paw was damaged beyond  
repair and it wouldn't do as  
it was told, sad, sad  
pussycat. It was bad luck  
wasn't it, he was damaged, he  
was-

He nestles onto her shoulder

DAVID  
Am I -- Am I damaging you?

GILLIAN  
Not at all. What's the  
matter, David?

DAVID  
The matter-the matter, it  
started out being but it's  
all a bit of a blank-ablank-

CONTINUED

DAVID (Cont'd.)

a-blank because it's a long  
time ago, it was, a long-  
long-long-long-time-ago and  
that's the story Gillian,  
inexpressible, inexplicably  
inexpressible-

(peers at the page)

To express the inexplicable.

GILLIAN

Why not tell me what you want  
to say?

DAVID

Why not-why not? What don't  
I want to say? Whoooh,  
that's a hard one.

GILLIAN

It's quite simple. "D.E.A.R.  
Dear..."

(writes)

DAVID

That's it dear-dear-dear-

GILLIAN

Dear Cecil?

DAVID

Parkes, Cecil was Parkes, Mr.  
Parkes. Touched his soul,  
Sergei Vasilievitch himself,  
that wasn't too bad was it,  
the Rach' 3 in D minor? Hard  
as elephants, elephantine-

GILLIAN

"Dear Mr. Parkes..."

DAVID

Long time, whooah such a long  
time-

GILLIAN

It has been such a long time"

DAVID

It has-it has-

GILLIAN

"And..

DAVID

"And-and-and-I hope."  
'Hope', Gillian hope how does  
that sound?

GILLIAN

Pretty good to me.

DAVID

"I hope you remember me...and  
the Rach' 3...

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

DAVID (LETTER V.O.; Cont'd.)

"I am feeling much better now  
and have started playing  
again..."

A shiny black concert grand. Someone dressed in immaculate black  
tails plays. (MUTE). We do not see who just yet.

DAVID (V.O.; Cont'd.)

"-And I would very much like  
to play for you again one  
day, more than anything in  
the world, Mr. Parkes. I  
should like that very much.  
I hope you are well. Ah,  
well, what can you do?

CONTINUED

DAVID (V.O.; Cont'd.)  
Looking forward to seeing you  
again one day. Yours, David  
Helfgott."

REVEAL--THE PIANIST IS ROGER WOODWARD a face we recognize from all  
those years ago.

In the AUDIENCE--David nestles into Gillian's arm.

EXT. TOWN HALL -- STAGE DOOR - NIGHT

A crush of fans surrounds Woodward as he exits.

Nearby--David and Gillian.

DAVID  
Roger the winner. He won, I  
lost--

GILLIAN  
Just because you didn't win  
that doesn't mean you're a  
failure.

DAVID  
No Gillian, and just because  
you lose, doesn't mean you're  
a winner, does it? Whoahhh!

Woodward drives off in a taxi, past Gillian and David.

GILLIAN  
Why do you think people come  
to Moby's--

DAVID  
For the food, the mangiare.

GILLIAN  
And the music, to hear you.

DAVID

Yes-yes but it's not very filling, it's not because you can't eat the music can you; not very, not at all, not at all--got to keep on playing Gillian, gotta keep on playing that piano, I'll get it right yet--

GILLIAN

What do you mean?

DAVID

--s'right Gillian. I mean, I mean I got it right before didn't I? Can't let everyone down, can't--can't eat the music at Moby's.

She sees his yearning as he watches after the taxi.

DAVID

Ah well Roger, well done Roger...

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE - DAY

David hugs Gillian, buries his head on her shoulder. He's soaking wet, a towel wrapped around him.

SYLVIA

Smile David.

DAVID

I am Sylvia.

SYLVIA

At the camera. Here!

She takes a photo of Gillian and David.

SYLVIA

Time to go.

DAVID

Ah well, what can you do?

SYLVIA

David, look on the bright side-

DAVID

(overlaps)

The bright side, the silver lining.

SYLVIA

--You'll see Gillian again one day.

GILLIAN

Life goes on.

DAVID

It does--it does, is that what it does?

GILLIAN

Of course it does.

David holds onto Gillian. Sylvia heads for the car with the suitcase.

SYLVIA

Come on David, she has to go.

DAVID

Little wriggles to look after.

GILLIAN

Hardly, my kids are all grown up. It's just little old me.

DAVID

I never grew up, I grew down. It's just me. Whoaah! Bit of a handful. Bit of a handful, Gillian.

She gently touches his face.

GILLIAN

Shhh.

DAVID

Softly, softly.

He touches her face like a child and smiles.

DAVID

Will you marry me?

A moment. Gillian is astonished.

GILLIAN

It wouldn't be very  
practical, David.

DAVID

Practical? No, of course  
not, but then again, neither  
am I Gillian, not very  
practical at all.

SYLVIA

(from the car)

You'll miss the plane.

GILLIAN

That's very sweet of you  
David. I don't know what to  
say.

DAVID

The stars Gillian darling!  
Ask the stars!

CUT TO:

INT. SYLVIA'S CAR (TRAVELING) - DAY

SYLVIA

He's such a sweetie, isn't  
he?

Gillian—clearly touched—casts a wistful look back at David waving like mad, receding in the distance as the car drives away.

INT./EXT. GILLIAN'S HOUSE -- STUDY - DAY

COMPUTER SCREEN a the following is typed in:

"DAVID HELFGOTT - DATE OF BIRTH..."

Gillian taps away.

She fossicks around on her desk for her notes, then pauses to look at the photo of her and David pinned on a corkboard amidst postcards and other paraphernalia.

She can't stop thinking about him.

CUT TO:

Gillian stands on her balcony, lost in her thoughts.

INT. GILLIAN'S HOUSE -- STUDY - NIGHT

Gillian works in the blue glow of her computer screen, tapping in astrological information from star charts. She stops and absently toys with the ring on her finger.

She hits a KEY and waits for the chart to come up...in her hand, she discovers she has removed the RING.

Gillian puts the ring down. Over this we HEAR CRIES of JOY as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. GARDENS - DAY

The Wedding! David kisses Gillian endlessly in front of a gathering of friends and family, including Sylvia, Tony, Rachel, Louise and Suzie.

CELEBRANT

Let her breathe, David.

David hugs the celebrant.

DAVID

I won't kiss you. It's all right, I won't kiss you too.

CELEBRANT

I should hope not!

INT. MOBY'S - DAY

Singing. Dancing. Celebration! Several OPERA SINGERS accompanied by David chorus for the big finale of 'Funiculi Funicula'.

Sylvia grabs Gillian and gives her a kiss.

SYLVIA

So what do the stars say?

GILLIAN

Turmoil.

SYLVIA

I could've told you that.

Other guests wish Gillian well but all throughout, her eyes don't leave David at the piano.

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- BEDROOM - NIGHT

Gillian and David are curled up in bed together.

DAVID

Sorry Gillian, did I damage you?

GILLIAN

Far from it.

DAVID

You made a noise-

He moans, mimicking her. Gillian laughs.

GILLIAN

David.

DAVID

David the Destroyer.

GILLIAN

Oh yes, Attila the Hun.  
David darling, I'm not  
damaged.

DAVID

That's right. Like me. I  
wasn't always was I, not when  
I was young-  
(grabs a cigarette)

GILLIAN

What was there is still  
there, inside you.

DAVID

Is it Gillian darling, is  
that where it is? Can you  
see it?

GILLIAN

Of course I can.

DAVID

Whooh Gillian can see it, no  
one else can because they  
think, "oh poor David, poor  
pity God didn't help him", I  
know, the thing is I know

CONTINUED

DAVID (Cont'd.)  
because I live here all the  
time inside the damage  
inside-

She plucks the unlit cigarette from his lips.

GILLIAN  
Not anymore kiddo, starting  
now.

They kiss passionately.

EXT. WINTERY BEACH - DAY

It's deserted all except for Gillian-reading on the sand-and  
David frolicking in the shallows.

Gillian smiles as David waves madly. She waves back.

He runs along and dives under the water.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

DAZZLING SHAFTS OF SUNLIGHT. David rises up towards the surface  
where we see pages floating on the water. IT'S MUSIC.

DAVID BREAKS THE SURFACE and breathes the air, like he's been  
reborn. We are at:

EXT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- POOL - DAY

He is surrounded by pages of music floating in the pool. Gillian  
exits the house.

GILLIAN  
(sees the music)  
Oh no, poor Ravel.

DAVID  
Poor Maurice, all unraveled.

GILLIAN

It's nearly time to get ready.

DAVID

Can I swim some more, darling?

GILLIAN

Ten minutes, swim the Campanella. That should do it.

INT. SYLVIA'S LOUNGE - DAY

Gillian frantically dries the soaking music with a hairdryer. Rowan and Jessica help with the aid of a fan.

DAVID

(buttoning his shirt)

It won't work, Gillian darling.

GILLIAN

Keep trying. Damn, page fifteen's missing.

SYLVIA

(to the kids)

Will you two go and get ready!

DAVID

The Cadenza!

EXT. POOL - DAY

Gillian peels the lost page of the pool filter.

GILLIAN

Gotcha!

INT. SYLVIA'S HOUSE -- LOUNGE - DAY

David—all done up in tuxedo, meticulous from his bow-tie down to his:

GILLIAN

Odd shoes! Your first  
concert in years and you wear  
odd shoes.

DAVID

I'm a sausage.

GILLIAN

You certainly are. Sit.  
(undoes the laces)  
Up straight.

He does a parody of good posture.

DAVID

Sit up straight.  
Stupstraight...

He starts to slump as Gillian does his lace.

GILLIAN

Relax.

He sits bolt upright.

DAVID

Relax! Must learn to relax.

GILLIAN

(kisses him)  
Perfect.

INT. CONCERT HALL #2 - NIGHT

A FULL HOUSE gives an ovation.

ONSTAGE—David stands by the piano, mopping his bow. He shuffles across the stage bowing again and again to cries of "Bravo" and "Encore".

In the audience there are many faces we recognize. Suzie is there, with Rachel and Louise. Another face from the past is Ben Rosen. There are many patrons from the wine bar as well as Sylvia and her Kids.

GILLIAN

Ladies and Gentleman - David  
Helfgott.

He shies behind Gillian and cuddles her, both hands on her breasts. Laughter..

She walks him to the front of the stage, the ovation resounding around the hall. She hugs him.

GILLIAN

They want an encore, David.

DAVID

Oh do they darling?

GILLIAN

What are you going to do?

DAVID

I'm going to win!

The AUDIENCE STANDS...ROW AFTER ROW, APPLAUDING...

DAVID brings his hands up over his eyes, full of child-like wonder, overwhelmed.

DAVID

Whooah!

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

A headstone:

"PETER HELFGOTT"

Gillian is with David at the simple gravesite.

GILLIAN

What do you feel?

DAVID

Nothing...

GILLIAN

Nothing at all?

DAVID

Well...I'm shocked, stunned and completely amazed - how does that sound? My fault, all mine, all mine-

GILLIAN

You can't go on blaming yourself for everything that's happened.

DAVID

Can't go on blaming yourself, no Gillian and you can't go on blaming Daddy because he's not here any more.

GILLIAN

But you are.

DAVID

I am here, it's true-it's true, life goes on, is that right Gillian, is that it?

GILLIAN

Yes!

DAVID

It does, it does-whoahhh, forever and ever it goes-

GILLIAN

Not forever.

DAVID

No-no, never forever, not quite, the point is it's not all lamb loin chops is it but it goes on and you just have to keep going too, you can't give up—can't give up.

GILLIAN

Certainly not—

DAVID

(overlaps)

Certainly not—

GILLIAN

--every time that blooming Saturn comes along and gives us a bit of a jolt.

DAVID

The stars Gillian.

GILLIAN

Everything has its season.

DAVID

It's a mystery, it's a mystery—

GILLIAN

There's always a reason.

DAVID

And we just need to seize the reason for the season.  
Whooah!

WIDE-SHOT. As they walk off through the panorama of endless graves.

MUSIC. ROLL CREDITS.

The End.