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PAWN SACRIFICE  
By Steven Knight

FIRST DRAFT

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## EXT. SOLID GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE, ICELAND - DAWN

In the grey light of dawn we see a large country house made from solid stone in the Nordic style, isolated in the Icelandic wilderness. Ponies graze all around and in the distance there is a beautiful mountain range where the sun is rising.

*Caption: Reykjavik, Iceland. 4.15am, July 20th 1972.*

No lights burn in the whole house. A car is approaching the house very fast up a long gravel drive with its headlights on full beam.

## INT. COUNTRY HOUSE BEDROOM - DAWN

Inside the house we survey the debris of a bedroom which has been recently trashed.

The room is solidly furnished but the heavy oak chairs and bedside tables have been overturned. Two table lamps have been torn from their sockets and the bulbs are smashed.

The only phone is off the hook and the wire has been pulled from the wall. There is not a chessboard or chess piece in sight.

As we move across the room we discover a tall, athletic looking guy with black hair swept back from his face. He is sitting motionless on a chair, peering out of the window. He is wearing a vest and boxer shorts.

This is BOBBY FISCHER.

He seems to be lost in a distant world. We study him for a moment before hearing the approaching car screech to a halt outside. The car door slams and Bobby's eyes re-focus.

*Caption: This is a true story.*

Bobby listens to the door flying open downstairs then the clatter of footsteps on the wooden stairs that lead to the bedroom. Someone is climbing the stairs in a tearing hurry. The bedroom door bursts open but Bobby's face hardly flickers.

A guy in his late forties stands in the doorway, wearing a raincoat and carrying a trilby hat, breathless from the stairs. This is MCALLISTER.

He stares at Bobby and the debris of the room for a moment then enters, slamming the door angrily. Bobby doesn't flinch.

There is evidently a huge agenda between the two men but Mcallister takes a while distilling his anger into words. Finally he speaks in a way that suggests he is quoting...

MCALLISTER

'Never before, in human history,  
has the outcome of an entire  
global war of ideas rested on the  
shoulders of one man'.

Mcallister turns to Fischer. There is no reaction.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

I'm quoting the President of the  
United States. He was talking  
about you. He called me last  
night. Three times.

Mcallister lifts the receiver of the dead phone and places it back on the hook.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

He's been trying to get a message  
to you.

Bobby barely reacts. Suddenly, in a burst of fury, Mcallister kicks one of the chairs. Bobby flinches a little. For the first time we sense Bobby is terrified but hiding it beneath layers and layers of defiance and anger.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

In Moscow President Brezhnev  
opened his *only* bottle of 1868  
Louis Roederer Champagne. Left  
over from the revolution. You  
know why?

A pause. Mcallister hits each word as if it were a hammer on a nail...

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

Because..he..heard...you'd..quit.

Bobby fights his fear. He puts his long fingers together in a temple and rests his chin on them. Mcallister loses his cool again and yells...

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

There are boys your age in  
Vietnam giving their fucking  
*lives* right now for the fight  
against Communism.

Bobby nods once.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

And all you have to do is put  
your fucking pants on and play.

A pause.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

If the Russians win this, they  
win the brain war. There is only  
one man on this entire planet who  
can stop them.

Mcallister suddenly grabs one of the upturned chairs, slams  
it upright and sits astride it, staring at Bobby face-to-  
face. Their faces are close...

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

Now Bobby please...get dressed,  
comb your hair and go save the  
free world.

At last, Bobby re-focuses his extraordinary, staring eyes  
on Mcallister. Mcallister waits...as if his whole life  
depended on Bobby's answer. Suddenly...

EXT. DESOLATE TRAIN TRACK, SONORA DESERT, ARIZONA - HOT DAY

We hear the blast of a train whistle and come close to the  
wheels of the *Argonaut*, the New Orleans to Los Angeles  
train, which is thundering through the desert.

*Caption: Mobile, Arizona, 1950...twenty two years earlier.*

We then cut to a piece of track a third of a mile ahead. A  
little boy, seven years old, is walking down the track. He  
has extraordinary staring eyes and wild black hair. He has  
a look of deep concentration as he tries to figure  
something out, stepping from railway sleeper to sleeper.

This is BOBBY FISCHER as a boy (and what follows is based  
on a true incident).

Behind Bobby we see a small one level house with the screen  
door blowing open and closed in a dusty wind. Bobby stops,  
still deep in thought, and he sits down on the track to  
better concentrate on the problem in his head.

The whistle of the train doesn't penetrate the boy's  
concentration. He continues to think. Behind him the  
train is getting closer.

Then, in the near distance, we see the door to the small  
house fly open. A young girl of eleven emerges, dressed in  
worn overalls with her hair tied back. This is JOAN  
FISCHER, Bobby's sister. She looks all around for Bobby  
then spots him on the track. She yells.

JOAN

Bobby!!

She begins to run as fast as she can up the slope towards Bobby, who is still oblivious to the approaching train, lost in his puzzle. A few seconds later a woman in a floral dress appears from the house too. This is REGINA FISCHER, Bobby's mother. She heard Joan call out and now joins Joan running up the slope toward Bobby, yelling.

The train is now just fifty yards away from Bobby. The whistle screams. At last...Bobby's concentration is broken. He turns through 180 degrees to look down the track. He stands up to face the blunt nose of the train which is almost upon him.

A second before the train hits, Joan snatches him and pulls him to safety. The train shoots by just a yard away. Joan falls back from the track and holds Bobby tight in her arms. Joan is sobbing and sits down on the cinders that surround the track.

Regina arrives in a cloud of dust and snatches Bobby from his sister's arms and shakes him. She yells with incredulous anger...

REGINA

He was playing the game wasn't  
he! He was playing the damn  
game.

INT. BROOKLYN PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

A long dark corridor filled with echoes. Outside, through a high barred window, we see snow is falling.

Caption: *Brooklyn Jewish Hospital, Brooklyn, New York - six months later.*

From a side door (unexpectedly) the ragged, quarrelsome Fischer family bursts through double doors. Bobby is now dressed in cheap winter clothes. Joan is dressed in a boy's overcoat with heavy boots. Regina is smoking a cigarette.

The caption fades up again, as if in response to the arrival of the family....

Caption: *Family psychiatric Division.*

Regina arrives at a frosted glass door with the words  
'Doctor Ariel Mengari, Clinical Psychiatrist.'

Regina stops the family at the door and drops her cigarette on the floor. (Joan picks it up and puts it into a bin). Regina crouches down to brush Bobby's hair from his face.

REGINA

Now Bobby, you act strange,  
exactly the way you usually do.  
Don't suddenly start acting  
normal or you'll make me look  
ridiculous, ok?

INT. PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE - DAY

A shaft of snowy light illuminates the psychiatrist (DOCTOR ARIEL MENGARI). He is sitting at his desk which has been cleared for a LARGE WOODEN CHESS SET on which a game is being played. Across the desk we find Bobby. The game is fifteen moves old.

Mengari is early fifties and he is smoking a pipe. As Mengari questions Bobby, we spend a moment at the level of the board, among the chess pieces as the pipe smoke wafts between them, like the smoke of battle.

MENGARI

So Bobby, do you go to the movies  
at all?

Silence. Mengari looks up and Bobby nods his head.

MENGARI (CONT'D)

You like Westerns? Bang, bang,  
all of that?

Bobby nods his head again. Mengari glances at Regina as if he maybe doesn't see the problem. Regina speaks up to prove a point....

REGINA

Bobby, have you ever been to the  
Moon in a tram car?

Bobby nods his head and moves a piece. It is obvious Bobby is in a kind of trance. Regina speaks softly to Mengari.

REGINA (CONT'D)

Once I poured a glass of water  
over his head...

As Mengari studies the board, Bobby coughs a little on the smoke. Joan wafts the smoke away from his face. Regina speaks in a whisper, staring at Bobby's look of concentration.

REGINA (CONT'D)

If I take the pieces away he just  
plays in his head and that's  
worse. I thought it was Arizona  
making him crazy.

(MORE)

REGINA(cont'd)

But since we moved back to New York he's gone deeper inside.

A pause. Mengari makes a move and speaks to Joan.

MENGARI

Does he ever play other games with you?

Bobby hardly lets Mengari finish moving before making a fast move in response which startles Mengari. Mengari frowns a little at the new positions. Joan defends her brother.

JOAN

He plays hide and seek sometimes.

REGINA

Joan, don't lie. You hide, he plays chess.

MENGARI

What do you dream about Bobby?

Silence. Mengari glances at Regina who shrugs. Mengari makes a move and takes Bobby's rook.

MENGARI (CONT'D)

I happen to play chess to quite a high level. His game is pretty good. Not exceptional though. Check.

Bobby peers at Mengari without expression then moves his Queen to a lethal position. A pause. Mengari studies the new placements and after a moment...he frowns...then looks astonished. Bobby looks up with a deadly expression.

BOBBY

Check mate.

Mengari studies the board for a long moment. Finally...

MENGARI (SOFTLY)

Where the hell did *that* come from?

Regina leaps to her feet and speaks with authority.

REGINA

You see! It is a *possession*. He is possessed..

She fumbles for a cigarette...

REGINA (CONT'D)

I think for him it is a kind of sex...



Mengari is still staring at the board with disbelief.

MENGARI

Who taught him to play like this?  
Which club does he belong to?

Regina lights her cigarette with a shaking hand...

REGINA

Club? You think I encourage him?

Mengari is on his feet, coming around the desk, staring at Bobby with astonishment.

MENGARI

You mean *he taught himself*?

Bobby fidgets. Joan speaks softly...

JOAN

Mama I think he's done a pee.

Regina and Mengari turn to see pee dripping from Bobby's chair. Regina is quietly triumphant...

REGINA

You see. Nothing stops him until  
he's won.

INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT, LOUNGE - NIGHT

Loud Charlie Parker jazz.

We are in a chaotic Brooklyn apartment on the third floor. There are twenty people packed into the room, drinking, smoking, arguing, laughing and dancing to the music. Some are New York Bohemians, others are East European intellectuals, all of them seem intoxicated either by booze or the conversation.

We find Regina dancing with a young guy who has a flop of black hair. From behind and between the crowd, Joan appears, delicately making her way through the uproar carrying a bowl of potato chips toward the kitchen. We follow her...

INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT, KITCHEN - NIGHT

The kitchen is strewn with beer and liquor bottles, dirty dishes, a caged hamster, full ashtrays and lots of COMMUNIST AND REVOLUTIONARY POSTERS.

The kitchen door closes behind Joan and the music and voices fade a little.

As Joan enters the kitchen she finds Bobby asleep with his head on the table, wearing his school uniform.

Joan sighs. We should sense that Joan is the surrogate mother to Bobby. She puts the bowl of potato chips down on the table and wakes him gently.

JOAN

Are you still hungry Bobby? I bought you supper.

He opens his eyes and blinks.

BOBBY

Is everybody still here?

Then the door bursts open and Regina enters. She looks a little tipsy. She searches the cupboards as she talks and grabs a carton of cigarettes and breaks it open...

REGINA

What are you two doing still up?  
Go to bed.

JOAN

It's too noisy.

REGINA

Blame the Government. Every community hall in New York has banned the Communist party from holding meetings.

BOBBY

Mom, you're not meeting, you're dancing.

Bobby is using the potato chips to spoon mustard out of a jar into his mouth. Regina turns to him.

REGINA

Look, Joany he's got mustard all down his shirt. Watch him when he eats. Why does he have to do everything like he's made of rubber?

Regina leaves with her cigarettes. Joan sits down and wipes mustard from Bobby's mouth. Bobby looks upset by what his mother said but Joan waves her arms loosely as if they were made from rubber. After a moment Bobby giggles and Joan giggles too.

INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jazz is still playing loud and everyone is arguing, laughing, drinking, dancing even harder than before.

Joan appears from the kitchen, leading Bobby by the hand through the debris of the party toward his bedroom.

Bobby stops and looks for a moment at his mother who is sitting in a tight huddle with her dance partner, their faces almost touching.

BOBBY

Night mom.

Bobby's voice is lost in the tumult and Regina doesn't turn. Joan glares at their mother, twitches Bobby's hand and leads him on.

INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT, BOBBY'S BEDROOM - LATER

Joan leads Bobby into the bedroom and as they make their way to the bed, we spend some time studying the room. There are no curtains and the bed sags almost all the way to the floor. There is a small desk, a bookcase and a hard backed chair but no other furniture.

*This could be any one of a million slum apartment bedrooms, except for the fact that everywhere in this room there are chessboards.*

Some have the pieces set ready for a new game but most have games half played. There are also drawings of chess pieces stuck to the walls and diagrams written in a child's hand of chess moves, illustrated with diagonal arrows.

The jazz music is still playing loud outside. Joan leads Bobby to the bed and he climbs in fully clothed. In the bookcase beside the bed there are just two books; 'Masters of the Chessboard' by Richard Reti and 'My System' by Aron Nimzowitsch.

Joan kisses Bobby on the forehead.

JOAN

Straight to sleep now, ok?

Bobby nods and Joan goes to the door. The music swells then quietens as Joan leaves. Bobby lies down in the bed and pulls up the covers.

A few moments pass and we hear laughter from the party. Then Bobby suddenly jumps out of bed and goes to three of the half played chess games in turn and makes one move on each board. Then just as quickly he climbs back into bed and snuggles under the covers.

EXT. SNOWY BROOKLYN STREET - MORNING

Traffic noise and chaos. Bedford-Stuyvesant on a snowy, working morning. Joan stops to cross the road, holding tightly to Bobby's hand. Then a big, icy snowball hits Bobby full in the face. Joan sees a ragged gang of kids racing across the road towards them. One of the kids calls out...

KID 1  
Dirty, filthy Commie Jews!

Joan and Bobby set off running.

EXT. BROOKLYN SIDE STREET - MORNING

As Joan pulls Bobby along at break neck speed she skids on the ice and falls. Books are strewn in the snow and Bobby stops. The gang of kids appears around the corner in pursuit.

Bobby sees Joan on the ground and makes a decision. He drops his book bag and flies at the nearest kid.

He hits the kid (who is twice Bobby's size) full in the chest and then *bites his cheek* so hard the kid squeals in pain. The ferocity of the attack shocks the other kids and they step back.

The kid who got bitten is bleeding from his wound. Bobby stares at him with a wild look.

BOBBY  
There. Now you're a Commie too.

The kids look a little scared and back away from Bobby and Joan. Once they have gone, Bobby turns and helps his older sister to her feet. She dusts off the snow primly.

JOAN  
Never bite.

Bobby shrugs.

BOBBY  
Ok.

EXT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB, MARSHALL STREET - MORNING

A battered Ford pulls up outside the locked front door of the Brooklyn chess club. It's a cold morning. A Hispanic guy in his early thirties (CARMINE NIGRO) gets out of the car and produces a heavy bunch of keys as he approaches the door of the club.

He slows when he sees Joan and Bobby Fischer sitting on a step nearby. Joan has a small sandwich box on her knees.

As Carmine begins to unlock the three locks on the door, Joan stands and goes to Carmine. She has rehearsed her words.

JOAN  
Sir, my little brother over there  
plays chess.

Carmine glances at them and continues to unlock the doors...

CARMINE  
Yeah?

JOAN  
And a doctor said he should come  
here.

CARMINE  
A doctor?

JOAN  
He said he should show someone.

Carmine finally engages and peers at them with curiosity.

CARMINE  
We don't open until noon.

JOAN  
Oh, ok.

Joan sits down to wait. Carmine is puzzled. It's cold. He checks his watch. We guess noon is a long way away.

CARMINE  
Are you here alone?

BOBBY  
Mom had to go to the airport to  
meet the second most important  
man in Bulgaria.

Carmine is puzzled, intrigued.

CARMINE  
Where do you live?

JOAN  
Bedford-Stuyvesant.

Carmine reacts to the distance they've come.

CARMINE

How did you get here?

JOAN

We walked.

Joan is smart and sees the reaction on Carmine's face. She gets to her feet and thrusts the small cardboard box into Bobby's hands.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Eat the sandwich first, then show him what you can do.

INT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB

We see the large open room in half darkness. There are lines and lines of tables with chessboards on them.

Then Carmine enters and turns on the lights. We see Bobby's face as the room unfolds before him. *It's like lightning striking.*

There are twenty tables, all with chessboards set up ready to play. Bobby's eyes widen with wonder. It is an entire universe of chess, with nothing in between or around it. Carmine studies Bobby's look of absolute wonder and smiles.

CARMINE

Ok. I am officially the twenty fifth best chess player in New York City. Let's see how good you are.

Bobby looks up at Carmine. Carmine has already grabbed two chess pieces, one black and one white, and he has them behind his back.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Choose.

Suddenly...driving fifties rock and roll music takes us into a *Montage...*

*(We will now see mock ups and actual newsreel footage of Bobby's meteoric rise to chess fame, punctuated by shots of windows smashing. The smashed windows will be unexplained until the next sequence but for now will act as rhythm. The driving music will continue throughout the montage.)*

INT. NAMELESS DARK WAREHOUSE

In a dark place we can't fully discern, someone smashes a window with a baseball bat.

At the same time we hear the voice of a 1950's radio news announcer speaking in urgent newsreel tones...

ANNOUNCER

In New York City today, a teenage sensation...

ARCHIVE INT. UNIDENTIFIED CHESS CLUB

We see Bobby as a young boy, in plaid shirt, walking between chess games...playing against twenty opponents at once...

ANNOUNCER

Bobby Fischer at thirteen has become the youngest ever junior chess champion of America...

The announcer's voice fades...

INT. NAMELESS DARK WAREHOUSE

Another window is smashed....the music continues...

ARCHIVE INT. MANHATTAN CHESS CLUB

We see Bobby Fischer playing against Donald Byrne. Bobby is young and studious and stares intently at the board. The previous radio announcer's voice fades into a second voice...

RADIO ANNOUNCER 2

...Bobby Fischer, aged just fourteen, played American Grandmaster Donald Byrne...and beat him. The game is already being described as the Game of the Century...

INT. NAMELESS DARK WAREHOUSE

Another window is smashed...

ARCHIVE INT. TV STUDIO - 'I'VE GOT A SECRET'

In bleached black and white, presenter Garry Moore is on stage with a young Bobby Fischer...

MOORE

Will you tell us how old you are and where you're from.

Bobby blinks into the camera...

BOBBY

I'm fifteen and I'm from  
Brooklyn.

Garry Moore turns to camera.

MOORE

This young man is Bobby Fischer  
and listen to this, he is already  
the US chess champion. Not just  
the junior chess champion, he is  
the champion of the whole of the  
US, Grandmasters and all..

INT. NAMELESS DARK WAREHOUSE

Another window is smashed...

MOCK-UP ARCHIVE INT. CAVERNOUS HALL, EASTERN EUROPE

The footage is black and white and grainy but we see that  
Bobby is a little older now. He is posing for photographs  
among a group of East European chess masters, with a  
chessboard in front of him. He looks a little bewildered  
at the attention. His sister Joan (also a little older) is  
smiling at his side. We hear a newsreel announcer...

NEWSREEL VOICE...

In Portoroz, Yugoslavia, American  
chess prodigy Bobby Fischer has  
become the youngest ever chess  
Grandmaster in the history of  
chess at the age of just  
fifteen...

We move close and see that Bobby has a large dog tag around  
his neck with his name on it.

INT. NAMELESS DARK WAREHOUSE

Another window is smashed. Glass falls in a shower. In  
harsh City lights and shadows the baseball bat that broke  
the windows is tossed onto the ground. A young man sits  
down on the broken glass and puts his head on his knees...

The music ends.

INT. POLICE STATION

Silence.

We see an empty corridor at two am and hear the echoing  
sound of drunks and crazy people coming from the cells.



Caption: *Bedford-Stuyvesant police station. August 1961.*

Then we hear footsteps. A big middle aged COP appears, followed shortly afterwards by Regina, who clips along the corridor in high heel shoes. She looks older and from the way she is dressed we guess she has been pulled away from a party of some kind.

COP

We found him smashing windows  
with a baseball bat in a derelict  
warehouse.

The cop stops to unlock a barred door and show Regina through to the secure area...

COP (CONT'D)

We brought him in for his own  
safety. It isn't a great idea  
for a white guy to walk around  
this neighborhood in the middle  
of the night wearing a green  
velvet suit and white shoes, you  
know?

INT. PRISON CELL

We are about to properly meet the young adult Bobby Fischer for the first time.

Bobby is lying on the single hard bed inside the cell. He is indeed wearing a green velvet suit and white shoes. His hair flops over his eyes, his chin is stubbled.

*He looks fantastic in the truest sense, in the fantastical sense of the word.*

We will soon see he is handsome and his eyes are extraordinary. His strange clothes are worn without effort or artifice. He dresses this way because he is different not because he wants to be different.

When the key turns in the lock, Bobby opens his eyes. He has a deep, piercing stare. He blinks at the ceiling then turns to see the cop entering, accompanied by his mother.

BOBBY (INSTANTLY)

...Not you.

REGINA (JUST AS FAST)

You see what I have to deal  
with...

BOBBY

Wait, wait, when do you deal?  
When do you 'deal'?

The cop raps the bars with his night stick.

COP

That's no way to speak to your mother. Get on your feet....

Bobby drags himself to his feet. We see him now in his full glory, lithe and muscled with a slow way of moving...even though he is dishevelled. His green suit makes him look like something from a St. Patrick's Day parade but it hangs well.

REGINA

Why have you stopped coming home?

He turns sharply...

BOBBY

Because that new boyfriend of yours has got big feet, and they kind of fill up the apartment, you know? Like slap, slap, slap like fucking Sasquatch all night long...

Bobby has begun to do a crazy impression of a guy we infer is in Regina's life. Bobby inhabits his body in a loose way, his limbs making big sweeping movements. Regina is dispassionate and ignores his play acting.

REGINA

Why did you break the windows?

COP (WEARY)

Ma'am I just need twenty dollars to pay for the damage.

BOBBY (TO REGINA)

I broke them because they were between me and what I wanted.

COP

It was an empty warehouse.

Bobby laughs...

BOBBY

Yeah that's what I want. I want empty rooms.

Bobby's desire for 'empty rooms' has struck Regina hard. She looks at the floor to hide her emotion. The cop wants no part of this domestic drama. He sees Regina is getting upset...

COP

Twenty dollars and you can go  
have your touching reunion  
somewhere else.

Regina looks up. Bobby and Regina stare at each other.  
Almost twenty years of bitterness, neglect,  
misunderstanding between them. Bobby laughs...

BOBBY

She needs time to decide whether  
I'm worth it.

REGINA

Bobby I know I wasn't around in  
the past...

Bobby interrupts and pushes past her.

BOBBY

Pay the man. A dollar for every  
year of my life you screwed up  
plus some change.

Bobby leaves the cell. Regina is about to hurry after him  
but the cop uses his night stick to bar the way.

COP

Twenty dollars.

There is a look of profound sadness on Regina's face as if  
she is reviewing her life with her son. As she reaches for  
her purse she appears to have made a decision about Bobby.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE PARK

It's a beautiful summer's day and the eccentrics who play  
chess in the open air are gathered around the chess tables.  
We see a whole world of early Sixties Beatniks and  
renegades inhabiting the park. It is a refuge for misfits,  
poets and drifters.

Then a young woman of twenty two appears. She is suburban  
and sensibly dressed and looks out of place amongst the  
chess players and bums.

We will learn that this is JOAN AS AN ADULT. She makes her  
way through the tables, looking for someone.

Finally she sees Bobby lying asleep at the foot of the  
statue in Washington Square. He is dressed in a baggy suit  
with battered dress shoes. Joan approaches him. Bobby  
feels her shadow on his eyes and opens them. He fixes her  
with his extraordinary stare...

He is about to get up and walk away but she grabs his arm. She produces a gun and points it at his head. We should be startled at first...until we realize it is a battered old toy gun.

JOAN

I bought Mr Peacemaker so stay where you are.

A pause. Bobby obviously recognizes the toy gun and snatches it.

BOBBY

Where the hell did you *find* this?

JOAN

Under the sofa. I've been helping mom clean up the apartment.

Bobby stuffs the toy gun into his shirt and leans back against the statue plinth.

BOBBY

Joan, do you think Momma's going to sleep with every Communist who comes to New York?...

JOAN

Please...

BOBBY

She's like the Statue of Liberty but instead of standing up with a torch she's laying down with her legs apart...

Joan grabs him and shoves him hard against the statue plinth. Suddenly they are kids again but Bobby doesn't look contrite. He looks away toward the chess tables. She pushes his fringe away from his face.

JOAN

You look like you're not eating.

BOBBY

I eat with the pigeons.

JOAN

That's very heroic. Are they tired of your table manners yet?

A pause. We sense that Joan is about to give Bobby some important news and is searching for the right words. Finally...

JOAN (CONT'D)

After we cleaned up the apartment  
mom got the hot water fixed.

Bobby looks puzzled, sensing an agenda.

JOAN (CONT'D)

And we got lots of tins of food  
in. And she bought you a new  
bed.

She reaches into her purse...and produces a set of keys  
which she offers to Bobby.

JOAN (CONT'D)

The bed is mom's leaving present  
for you. These are her keys. She  
won't be living there anymore.

Bobby is shocked but turns his head away to hide his  
reaction. Joan lays the keys down and speaks about her  
mother wearily...

JOAN (CONT'D)

She said she's going on a march  
for world peace. Los Angeles to  
Moscow...

A pause as they glance at each other.

JOAN (CONT'D)

And after that she's going to  
live in California with this new  
guy.

Neither one of them wants their eyes to meet.

JOAN (CONT'D)

She thought if she went away at  
least you would go home and sleep  
in a bed.

A pause. Joan adds softly.

JOAN (CONT'D)

She said you told her you wanted  
empty rooms.

Bobby hears his own words but stubbornly refuses to let his  
emotion show. Pigeons flutter around them. Joan puts the  
keys into Bobby's jacket pocket.

JOAN (CONT'D)

So please go back to the  
apartment and sleep in your new  
bed....

A pause. Joan produces some cash and offers it.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
Buy stuff. Vegetables. Every day.

Bobby stares at the cash and a flicker of vulnerability crosses his face.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
I'll stop by when I can but with  
the baby you know...?

We stay with his reaction. We might sense he is about to break but he fights it and a mad look of determination replaces his upset. It is a look we will come to know well. A long moment. He takes the cash. She takes his hand and squeezes it.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
I always have your hand.

After a moment she lets go of his hand.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
You're a man now Bobby. Maybe  
this'll make you act like one.

EXT. FIVE STAR TROPICAL ISLAND HOTEL, GARDEN - DAY

A large wooden door is closed and has a sign on it with the words '*Silence, match in progress*'. The door suddenly flies open and Bobby emerges...

BOBBY  
They are trying to kill me...

Bobby is a tangle of arms and flying hair in a creased, dark linen suit. We discover we are in the garden of an expensive hotel. A monsoon rainstorm is drenching the garden and we see a large table of food set for a banquet inside a large gazebo. Peacocks and hummingbirds strut and fly. The scene should look other worldly and bizarre after Washington Square.

*Caption: Curacao International Chess Championships...  
February 1962.*

Bobby is followed out through the doors by a small army of astonished FIDE (chess federation) officials, wearing armbands, along with journalists, chess nerds and others. Where seconds before there was tranquillity, now there is uproar.

The procession around Bobby is joined by stray dogs who begin to yap around his heels as he strides away through the garden.

At Bobby's side we find a MIDDLE-AGED CARMINE NIGRO, who is now Bobby's manager and who is hissing at Bobby to calm down. Carmine has a little grey but he is still trim and neat. He grabs Bobby's arm but Bobby yanks his arm free and yells....

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
They fucking cheated!! They are  
all Communist cheats...

Bobby grabs a guy who is scribbling Bobby's words onto a notepad...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
You want that in Russian?  
OK...*Niet pycni osmahbi.* The  
Russians are fucking cheats.

A peacock spreads its fan and screams. An official grabs Bobby's arm...

OFFICIAL  
Mr Fischer, if we could just go  
back inside the auditorium and  
talk about this...

Bobby twirls around and pushes the official hard and he falls into a table of food. The peacocks screeches. The dogs howl. The crowd are astonished and Bobby finally realizes he's gone too far.

There is silence for a moment. Then Bobby grabs a chair, turns it around and stands up on it.

BOBBY  
Ok, I want to make a statement.

Carmine tries to physically pull him down but Bobby is strong and angry. The rain drums on the roof of the gazebo. Bobby is like a prize fighter, lean and uneasy in his linen suit. He stares around at the journalists with a wary eye....

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
First I'd like to apologize for  
pushing that guy over. Is he  
alright?

The guy is getting to his feet.

OFFICIAL  
Something to tell my  
grandchildren.

Nervous laughter. As Bobby continues we hear whispered translations around the room.

BOBBY

I came here to Curacao because I wanted to take part in the Federation Championship, which is my right because I qualified as American champion.

A fly bothers Bobby and he snatches it out of the air, his fist tight...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

But it is obvious to me that as usual this whole tournament has been fixed by the Russians and the Federation have let it happen.

Carmine rolls his eyes. Murmurs around the audience.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

The Russians arrange draws in advance so they can pack the quarter finals. The Federation is rotten to its insides and everybody knows it.

Bobby begins to work himself up as he talks...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

As a result I am quitting as of right now, now-this-second...

The audience gasps with astonishment...

CARMINE (SOFTLY)

Oh Bobby, man, come on.

BOBBY

Yeah, that's fucking it. I won't play against Communist cheats who hate me and hate America...

It seems Bobby has just decided on this. He blinks a little and sees a radio microphone poking out from the crowd.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Sorry about the 'fucks' in there...but anyway...

He gets mad again....

BOBBY (CONT'D)

...Screw you all and the Federation and your fucking peacocks. I'm retiring from chess forever.



Bobby kicks over the chair as he gets down and walks away through a flutter of peacock feathers...

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - HOT SUMMER'S DAY

Bobby walks down the crowded, dangerous looking street dressed in a sharp suit and white shoes.

He has ten rolls of silver aluminum foil under his arm and he can barely carry them. Some kids yell at him as he passes but he is oblivious, playing a game in his head.

INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT, KITCHEN

The kitchen is now even more of a mess than in the old days, though the radical posters have been replaced with chess diagrams. The kitchen is a tumult of dishes and debris from long ago meals. There are containers from take-out meals and dirty coffee cups. Bobby enters, singing a rock and roll song to himself and dancing as he walks. He moves loosely with a certain grace. He ransacks the place before finding some sticking tape in a drawer.

INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

We get to see the conditions in which Bobby is now living. The house is totally wrecked but amongst the debris there are seventeen chess sets all laid out with games at various stages.

Bobby grabs a hard backed chair and stands on it. He begins the job of covering the windows with the silver aluminum foil. Sunlight pierces the aluminum foil covers in shafts at the edges. He has covered one of the windows with the foil and is about to cover a second.

He doesn't hear the key in the door and, after a moment, Joan enters with a sack of groceries. She also scoops up a stack of mail which has piled up against the door.

When she sees what Bobby is doing she looks astonished at first but she quickly regains her composure and we should suspect Bobby's odd behaviour is routine.

JOAN (EVENLY)

What are you doing Bobby?

Bobby catches her reaction (he knows she thinks he's crazy) but he continues to work.

BOBBY

Don't you listen to the news?

Joan begins to unpack the groceries.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

The Russians are going to shoot  
missiles at us from Cuba.

She nods and studies him.

JOAN

And you think cut price turkey  
aluminum foil from Joe's corner  
store will keep out radiation.

He glances at her but continues.

BOBBY

There's nothing for you to say  
about 'crazy' because this time  
it's not me that's crazy. It's  
not me planning to fry the  
fucking world. What's crazier  
than that?

Joan sits down and begins to sort through Bobby's mail.

JOAN

Six letters from the  
Federation...

BOBBY

I put their letters in the  
toilet.

Joan separates the bills. Bobby works on. Joan then sees an  
envelope with a California post mark.

JOAN

This one's from mom. Shall I  
open it?

BOBBY (INSTANTLY)

You think Krushchev will fire his  
nukes at California too?  
Wouldn't that be a laugh if she  
got killed by a Communist nuke.

Joan peers at Bobby, who looks to be in a bad way. Through  
her attempt to be light, she registers deep concern. Bobby  
continues to put up the silver aluminum foil round his  
windows. Joan comes close...

JOAN

You look terrible Bobby.

There is now an eerie light inside the kitchen coming from  
the splits in the foil. Bobby hears Joan's concern and  
takes a breath. He feels a little foolish and steps down  
from the chair. He sits down.

Joan grabs a chair and sits opposite Bobby. She produces a comb from the bag.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
I bumped into an old friend from school.

It seems like the most natural thing in the world for Joan to begin to comb Bobby's hair back from his face. He closes his eyes and we sense a tenderness he rarely gives in to. They are children again...

JOAN (CONT'D)  
She saw your picture in New York Times magazine.

Bobby opens his eyes...

BOBBY  
I was in the New York Times?

JOAN  
The piece about you quitting.

Bobby closes his eyes.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
From the photo, she thinks you're a looker.

Bobby doesn't hear. Joan straightens Bobby's hair with her fingers....

JOAN (CONT'D)  
I don't see it, you know? I just see a hole where food goes. But anyway...

Bobby opens his eyes. Joan smiles.

JOAN (CONT'D)  
You have a date.

INT. BROOKLYN DINER

Sixties rock and roll is playing and the diner is typical early sixties. A fairly plain young girl (MARIA) is waiting. She looks nervous as she sips her frothy coffee and delicately wipes her lip with a napkin. Then Bobby enters. He is wearing a blue drape coat and his hair is greased back. Maria knows it can't be anyone else and waves at him. He approaches. Some of the tough guys in the diner look at him and snigger but he is absolutely unaware.

BOBBY

Maria?

Maria looks pleased.

MARIA

Bobby?

BOBBY

My sister told me not to scare  
you.

A pause. He smiles as he sits.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Boo.

Before Maria can speak...

BOBBY

Are you a virgin too?

Maria almost chokes on her coffee.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I don't much care, you know?

A pause.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I mean I don't know why there's  
even a word for it. There's no  
word for people who've never  
flown in a plane or...never  
pushed a chess official into a  
gateau...

Maria looks a little thrown...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Do you ever make up words for  
things there's no word for?

MARIA

I...no I really don't.

BOBBY

Am I scaring you by the way?

MARIA

No...a little...

Maria is beginning to get up to speed with Bobby's  
craziness. Bobby runs his fingers through his wild hair.  
Maria is unnerved but drawn to his eyes, his look...there  
is a silence which Bobby doesn't find awkward at all.

He looks all around at the other customers, a nervous energy exuding from his eyes...

MARIA (CONT'D)  
I'm Italian.

Bobby doesn't respond.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Joan said you've been to Rome to play chess.

BOBBY (INSTANTLY)  
It has two hundred and thirty five statues of people who look like they're still in bed.

MARIA (LAUGHING)  
Did you count them?

BOBBY (NOT ANSWERING)  
Are you interested in politics?

MARIA  
I'm actually a Republican.

BOBBY  
Right there, that's why you're a virgin. Republicans only have sex to have babies. Democrats have sex because they can't help themselves.

Maria laughs again. Bobby is puzzled by her laughter and we sense he wasn't joking, he meant it. He has begun to rearrange the sugar cubes with his long fingers...

MARIA  
Are you going to eat something?

Bobby puts a sugar cube into his mouth. He peers at Maria for a moment.

BOBBY  
Do you play chess.

MARIA  
No.

BOBBY  
Neither do I.

Maria takes a breath, decides to be bold.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Joan said now you've quit maybe you'd start doing regular things.

Bobby reads that Maria thinks maybe she is one of the regular things he might do. He smiles to himself then peers at Maria's face. After a moment...

BOBBY  
Beautiful.

He stares some more at her face. Maria reacts...blushing a little. Then...still staring directly at her face...he speaks fast and even...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Capablanca versus Emanuel Lasker,  
Havana, 1921, end game. The  
White King was here...

Bobby touches the tip of Maria's nose...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Black King here...

He touches her chin. As Bobby names different chess pieces he gently touches her eyes, her cheeks, her ears, placing each piece from a remembered set up as if Maria's face were a chessboard...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
White Knight, black pawn, white  
rook, black Bishop...

Maria has closed her eyes, his touch is gentle.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Capablanca won by moving your eye  
to your chin and your ear to your  
nose and taking out an eye for a  
cheek bone.

A pause. Bobby stares at her face and looks troubled...

BOBBY (CONT'D SOFTLY)  
Beautiful like a Picasso.

After a moment, Maria opens her eyes. She looks a little overwhelmed by his gentle physicality and smiles. But Bobby looks at her reaction with incomprehension. He shakes his head.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Maria...I'm trying to tell you  
that I quit chess but chess will  
never quit me. It won't even let  
me see your face.

A pause. Bobby looks down at his knees, shakes his head and looks up. Then, even though he is looking Maria in the eye, he speaks to Joan.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Joan, I'm sorry.

He grabs his coat and leaves.

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK - MIDWINTER MORNING

The chess tables are all empty and flurries of snow blow across the park. The park has been emptied by the weather...apart from one man.

We find Bobby sitting alone at a chess table wearing just a thin blue suit. He stares at the empty chessboard and we should sense he is playing a game with invisible pieces.

*Caption: Washington Square, December 1968.*

He looks up through the blizzard and sees a young boy and his older sister making their way through the park. It is uncertain but it looks like Bobby as a child with Joan. He blinks away some snowflakes and the children disappear.

*This should be a fleeting moment but for the first time we are introduced to the idea that when Bobby is at the table, he sees things that maybe aren't there.*

Then we see a guy in thick winter clothes approaching. His face is covered in a scarf, but when he comes close and pushes the scarf down, we see it is MCALLISTER from the opening scenes. He looks a couple of years younger than when we saw him....

He sits down opposite Bobby and there is a moment's pause.

BOBBY  
You want a game?

MCALLISTER  
What? You think I'm stupid?

Bobby hardly reacts.

BOBBY  
You know who I am.

MCALLISTER  
Yeah I know who you are.

Bobby hides in his collar.

BOBBY  
You're a fucking journalist, right?

MCALLISTER  
No...

BOBBY

Journalists come here to find  
me...

MCALLISTER

Maybe you want to be found.

Bobby glares from above his collar. He is a little wrong  
footed by the stranger....

BOBBY

So who the fuck are you?

MCALLISTER

Someone who read the articles you  
wrote a couple of years ago about  
the Russians being cheats. Are  
you still political Bobby?

Bobby laughs in a cloud of breath...

BOBBY

Yeah. Like a rock. Like a  
baseball bat...

MCALLISTER

You told the truth about them.

BOBBY

Sometimes the truth is a hand  
grenade. I just made that up by  
the way.

Mcallister pulls a chess magazine from his pocket. He  
shivers in an icy blast...snow is falling on the board.

MCALLISTER

I guess you don't read the chess  
magazines anymore.

Bobby glares at the magazine.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

So you won't have heard the news.

Bobby sours a little. Mcallister hangs on to the  
information a little longer.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

They're coming to America.

Mcallister turns the magazine around so Bobby can see the  
headline. We don't see it yet...



MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

The Soviet chess team is coming to California for the Pitiagorsky tournament. Hands across the water, all that shit.

Bobby can't help but react.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

Are you still angry Bobby?

Bobby suddenly glares all around at the empty tables as the snow begins to cover them...

BOBBY

Yeah I'm angry. I'm angry that a little bit of snow scares everybody away. America has gone soft.

Mcallister gestures at the magazine.

MCALLISTER

That's why the Russians are laughing at us. And the only man who can stop them laughing plays in the park with punks like me.

Bobby's eyes begin to blaze and he repeats his earlier question with venom...

BOBBY

Seriously, who the *fuck* are you?

MCALLISTER

Someone who loves chess and loves his country and wants to see you play. That's all. You stay here and yell at the blizzard if you want but if you got off your ass you could speak for America.

Mcallister pushes the magazine across the table...then turns up his collar, gets to his feet and walks. Bobby watches him go with burning eyes. He then wipes the thin layer of snow from the headline. *'Soviet invasion to hit California Surf'*.

Bobby stares at it then looks up at the mysterious figure of Mcallister, who is now disappearing in the blizzard. Bobby thinks for a moment...then wipes the snow from the chess squares on the table with a swipe of his sleeve.

## INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT, BEDROOM - NIGHT

The silver aluminum foil on the windows is now in tatters and street light enters from outside in flickering shards. Bobby is playing seventeen games of chess at once, moving from one game to another, moving each piece with a characteristic slap.

He patrols the room like a caged animal, moving a piece and then moving on...relentlessly playing out every game. The magazine Mcallister gave him is open on the desk. We glimpse a sub heading headline *'Soviets set for clean sweep in Santa Monica'*.

He glances at the magazine as he plays, his anger rising. Then we hear a bed creaking from behind a closed door. It becomes the unmistakable sound of someone having sex in a creaky bed. It is coming from what used to be Bobby's mother's room. Bobby snarls and flies across the room to snatch open the bedroom door.

The bed is empty, the room is bare. Bobby takes some angry breaths. He turns back to glare at the open magazine. His mother and the Soviets are one and the same thing. A decision is made...

## EXT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB - NIGHT

A Priest in long black robes appears under the street light outside the Marshall Street Club. He walks up the steps of the club and rings the doorbell. We spend a moment on his fleshy, handsome face.

This is FATHER LOMBARDY. After a moment, Carmine Nigro opens the door.

## INT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB, CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Carmine is expecting Lombardy and they set off walking down the half lit corridor, Lombardy's long robes swishing as he walks.

CARMINE

He's been preparing for your arrival for six hours.

LOMBARDY

I hope he realizes it's a committee that decides the US team. Not just me.

CARMINE

You're the only selector he respects.

Carmine hands Lombardy a letter. Lombardy reads as they walk.

CARMINE (CONT'D)  
It's a letter of explanation to  
the Federation.

LOMBARDY  
With 'fuck' in the first line.

Carmine holds a door for Lombardy.

CARMINE  
He's spent a long time nursing a  
grievance.

Lombardy passes through the door...

CARMINE (CONT'D)  
And he's also spent the time  
studying how the Russians  
play...every day, eighteen hours  
a day.

They have reached a second glass door that leads into the main room of the chess club. Through the frosted glass they can see the black smudge of Bobby's suit as he paces back and forth. Lombardy stops and glances through the glass.

LOMBARDY  
He still has his opinions?

CARMINE  
If you picked him I would keep  
him out of trouble...

LOMBARDY  
The Pitiagorsky has been  
organized to build bridges with  
the Soviets, not set fire to  
them.

CARMINE  
So we lose twelve to zero and  
that's a bridge.

Lombardy sighs, takes a moment and peers through the frosted glass at the restless shadow.

LOMBARDY  
Anyway I heard he's burnt out.

Carmine smiles and speaks softly.

CARMINE  
Bobby didn't burn out.

A pause.

CARMINE (CONT'D)  
He exploded.

Carmine opens the door to the game room.

INT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB, GAME ROOM

Carmine ushers Lombardy into the main hall of the chess club. Bobby Fischer stops patrolling and stands alone at a table. He is dressed to kill in blue suede shoes and a neat black suit. His hair is combed back, his eyes are filled with power.

Carmine leads Lombardy between chess tables. It's a long walk and Bobby Fischer stares at Lombardy. When they arrive....

CARMINE  
Bobby? Father William Lombardy.  
Selector and fellow Grandmaster.

Bobby stares at Father Lombardy's hand and speaks quickly...

BOBBY  
Against Petrosian in Belgrade in  
the third game you shouldn't have  
sacrificed your King pawn so  
soon. It fucked you up.

Father Lombardy rocks back a little...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
You always play too cautiously  
but then you hit a streak and you  
go crazy in the other direction.  
It's a bad fault.

They peer at each other.

BOBBY (CONT'D SOFTLY)  
Hey, if I criticize a priest, do  
I go to hell?

LOMBARDY  
No. Not if you're right.

Bobby gestures at the chessboards which are lined up before them.

BOBBY

I'm going to show you how you  
could've beaten Petrosian. In  
twenty four moves.

LOMBARDY

That isn't possible.

Bobby reaches down and moves the white pawn on the first board.

BOBBY

He always opens like this, right?

Bobby gestures at the second board.

As the conversation continues, Bobby leads Carmine and Lombardy from table to table. Each table has been laid out in advance, following the course of a game that Lombardy played against Petrosian. As Bobby leads them to each table, he makes the next move.

As they move from board to board, they can follow the strategy. Bobby moves the pieces with an arrogant slap. They make their way down the length of the room and double back again, the conversation continuing as they progress.

As they walk and talk, Lombardy in particular looks at each new move on each new chessboard with growing fascination.

LOMBARDY

You understand, Bobby, that this  
tournament is about diplomacy.

Bobby ignores Lombardy and slaps down two new moves.

BOBBY

I want five hundred dollars for  
each game I play. I want to buy  
my sister something for her new  
baby.

They walk on...Lombardy is now getting ahead to see how the game unravels...

LOMBARDY

I heard you were taking  
medication.

BOBBY

My sister put me on anxiety pills  
for a while. They worked...

He turns and gives Lombardy a crazy grin...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
But I started playing chess as  
badly as you so I stopped.

Carmine winces a little but Lombardy is becoming enraptured  
by the game Bobby is revealing. He twitches at the next  
move and Bobby smiles and gestures at the board.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
You think I just fucked up all my  
good work, right?

A pause. Bobby gestures at the empty chair at the table.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
So does Petrosian.

Bobby then moves to the next table and moves a piece, then  
the next table, then the next, then the next, moving one  
piece at a time until he has reached the last table where  
he moves a white piece and then...after a pause...knocks  
over the white King.

He has won the game.

Lombardy studies the progression with growing astonishment  
then realizes the enormity of what he is looking at.  
Lombardy speaks softly.

LOMBARDY  
Holy shit.

A pause. Bobby grins at Lombardy.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Why don't you take the crazy guy  
to California.

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH

Waves crash on a perfect sun drenched day on the beach at  
Santa Monica. The surf is up and we hear driving late-  
sixties surf music.

Then suddenly one...then two...then three black, Russian-  
made Zil cars enter shot. We pull wide to watch ten of them  
all parking in a line beside the beach.

*Caption: Santa Monica California, June 1969.*

The doors open and KGB men in dark suits and shades begin  
to emerge from the cars. They open the rear doors and out  
step TEN less well built men who are also dressed in dark  
suits.

This is the SOVIET CHESS TEAM, just off the flight from Moscow. As the Grandmasters step hesitantly onto the sand the rock music fades into the news jingle of an LA radio station and we hear the voice of the news reporter.

REPORTER

This is 93 KHJ news, Los Angeles...

Behind the Grandmasters, standing by the Zil cars, the KGB men stand and wait. The chess players stroll self consciously onto the sand, like children being allowed a run out. We hear the news report begin...

REPORTER

The Cold War came to the West Coast today when the Soviet Union chess team arrived in Los Angeles for a good-will chess tournament to be held in Santa Monica.

We isolate one particular Grandmaster in shades who is lighting a cigarette. He has his hair brushed back and looks a little more athletic than the others. This is BORIS SPASSKY.

REPORTER

The Soviet team includes the current world champion Boris Spassky, reputed to be the best chess player who ever lived.

Boris Spassky takes off his shades and rubs his eyes against the bright light. We see deep weariness...

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL

The fleet of Zils cruises up the palm fringed driveway towards the five star hotel lobby. The doormen jump to attention to open the doors. A handful of photographers begin to take photos. The voice of the news reporter continues...

REPORTER (INTO MIC)

The Soviets are staying at the fashionable Beverly Hills Hotel on Sunset, along with their drivers, their fitness coaches, a small army of advisers and of course, their KGB bodyguards.

We catch Boris getting out of his car and pulling on his shades again.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Reports say they swept into town  
like Gods...preparing to put mere  
mortals in their place.

Boris is hurried inside by two KGB men.

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, OCEAN AVENUE - DAY

In the slightly seedy parking lot a couple of hookers are  
hanging out washing while a Motel clerk carries a big  
bundle of dirty laundry toward the launderette.

Then in the near distance a large red Plymouth screeches to  
a halt on the Avenue. Horns hoot as the car rocks on its  
suspension in the heat haze. The car reverses sharply then  
makes a sharp turn into the parking lot. The car kangaroos  
to a halt in a screech of brakes. We glimpse Bobby Fischer  
at the wheel.

After a moment, Father Lombardy emerges from the back seat  
of the car, wearing ordinary clothes. He looks a little  
shell shocked. Then Carmine gets out, trying to regain his  
composure from what was apparently a wild ride.

Finally Bobby climbs out of the driver's seat and sweeps  
back his hair. Lombardy speaks softly to Carmine.

LOMBARDY

You said he could drive.

CARMINE

I said he doesn't like to be  
driven.

Bobby is looking all around at the seedy Motel and asks  
loudly.

BOBBY

What the fuck is *this* place?

INT. MOTEL, OFFICE

The Motel registration office is cheap and dirty. An old  
sofa sags by an empty water cooler. Sunlight bleaches the  
carpet. Father Lombardy is at the desk dealing with the  
overweight, cynical MOTEL CLERK. It's hot and the mood is  
irritable.

LOMBARDY

...my players have to have some  
kind of air conditioning in their  
rooms. They get pretty exhausted.



CLERK

They get exhausted sitting on  
their asses?

Bobby is filled with nervous anger as he tries to make the  
water cooler work...

BOBBY

A Grandmaster on average loses  
ten pounds in sweat during a  
game.

The Motel clerk chuckles and angles his head at Bobby...

CLERK

Is he a rock star that guy? Are  
you a rock star? You look like  
Elvis.

Bobby punches the water cooler hard and turns...

BOBBY

You know what? This place  
fucking smells. I can smell  
urine. I ain't staying here.

EXT. MOTEL, PARKING LOT

Bobby emerges into the sun from the booking office with  
Lombardy and Carmine in pursuit.

CARMINE

Bobby, the rest of the team are  
already checked in and they have  
no complaints...

BOBBY (RANTING)

Where are the fucking Russians  
staying?

Bobby has grabbed his car keys and Father Lombardy faces  
him over the roof of the car.

CARMINE

Look, the American Chess  
Federation doesn't have their  
kind of money.

BOBBY

We invented fucking money, come  
on, where are they?

LOMBARDY

Ok, let's insert a little reality  
here.

(MORE)

LOMBARDY(cont'd)

The Soviet chess team is financed by the Soviet Government. They get whatever they want.

CARMINE

Our Government doesn't back us because they don't believe we can win, ok?

BOBBY

You mean we are an embarrassment.

Bobby is steaming. One of the hookers (DONNA) has taken a shine to his suit and his look and waves. She takes Bobby's attention and his anger drifts a little as he waves back. Then he speaks firmly.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Man. Things are going to change around here.

He tosses the car keys to Lombardy and sets off out of the car park toward the ocean. Then, to Carmine and Lombardy's astonishment, he stops and calls out to Donna.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Hey, do you want to come for a walk or something?

INT. BORIS SPASSKY'S HOTEL SUITE, THE BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL

The suite is vast and luxurious.

We take a look around the room for a moment as Boris takes a shower unseen in the bathroom. Jazz is playing on the radio. Boris has already unpacked and we learn a little about him by exploring the room as the shower runs.

First we find a note in English and Russian from the hotel manager which says...*'The Beverly Hills Hotel welcomes Mr Boris Spassky....Chess Champion of the World'*. Beside it there is a photo of Boris and his wife beside the dressing table mirror.

We find his clothes neatly folded and learn that along with his dark suit he has packed a Hawaiian shirt and chinos. There is a book of exercise regimes in Russian beside the bed and a pack of Cuban cigarettes. There is a small crucifix hanging *inside* his open suitcase.

In the few moments we have alone in the room we should gain a picture of Boris as an orderly man and a loving husband. Perhaps the crucifix inside the case might suggest secrets.

On the coffee table near to the closed shutters, there is a chess set with the pieces set ready for a new game.

Boris emerges from the shower naked and drying himself. He pushes back his thick hair and pulls on a robe. As he peers at himself and at the photo of his wife we maybe sense that he is weary of all this. Then the door of the room opens without a knock.

A large, heavy set Russian adviser enters in a dark suit. This is GELLER, the man who runs the Soviet chess Federation. He is carrying a thick folder and some printed sheets of paper. Boris is instantly irritated by his intrusion.

BORIS  
(You don't knock?)

GELLER  
(You didn't hear me.)

Geller immediately turns off the jazz music Boris is listening to. When Boris reacts to this...

GELLER  
(What? I hate jazz.)

BORIS  
(You mean it interferes with the listening devices they have put in my room).

GELLER (BUSY)  
(Don't be absurd)

Geller goes to the window, twitches the curtain and looks down.

GELLER (CONT'D)  
(I came in here because there is a better view. Come and see. There is a black bitch lying by the pool and you can see right up her crotch. This is a great country, yeah?)

Geller peers at Spassky and repeats the question because he is interested in his reaction.

GELLER (CONT'D)  
(I said this is a great country isn't it).

Boris is dressing and responds wearily to the pointed question.

BORIS  
(I have no intention of defecting here. I love my wife and I love my children).

Geller studies Boris with a smile. Then he tosses the folder onto the bed.

GELLER  
(The American team. There is  
someone on this list I hoped was  
dead.)

EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH

Bobby is walking in his sharp suit on the shore line, with the waves drenching his shoes and the hems of his trousers. He is staring straight ahead, walking with purpose, lost in a game.

Then we see Donna trailing a few yards behind him with her high heel shoes in her hand.

DONNA  
Is this all you wanted to do?

BOBBY  
Collect shells if you want.

DONNA  
You walk pretty fast.

BOBBY  
Yeah. Then I stop.

Bobby sits down on the sand and stares out to sea.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Maybe I'll sleep here instead.

Donna sits down heavily beside Bobby and lights a cigarette. He stares out to sea.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
So what do you do, Donna?

Donna looks quizzically at Bobby, curious as to whether he *really* doesn't know. Then she speaks casually.

DONNA  
I fuck people.

Bobby nods.

BOBBY  
Yeah? When I play chess, so do  
I.

INT. MOTEL, CONNECTED BACK ROOM OF A BAR

We see the other nine members of the American chess team all sitting around in a back room. We can hear the jukebox playing surf music through the walls in the other room.

The ad-hoc meeting room is hot and sweaty, with no air conditioning and lots of cigarette smoke. The team are an odd mix of misfits and frail egos. We join the meeting towards the end and Lombardy looks to be controlling exasperation with amusement as he checks his notes.

LOMBARDY

Ok, we've been through breakfast allowances, food allergies, lost keys and how best to grieve for dead pets without losing concentration on your game. Now since you all have your background documents maybe we can wind this thing up before one of us melts.

One of the team (PAULSON) raises his hand...

PAULSON

Mr Lombardy, about this Motel. I'm Presbyterian and I really don't appreciate having to spend the night in a place with whores in it.

Suddenly a voice from the back...

BOBBY

If there are whores, maybe the Federation should pay for them. They know a lot about whoring.

All heads turn. Bobby has entered at the back of the room. His velvet trousers and shoes are soaked. He looks sandy and windswept.

LOMBARDY

You're late.

BOBBY

For *what*?

Carmine speaks softly...

CARMINE

Bobby, I told you there was a briefing.

BOBBY

So brief me.

LOMBARDY

We did it already.

Lombardy gestures at a three page document on his desk. The other team members all have copies of the same document and half of them are using it to fan themselves in the heat.

Bobby snatches a copy of the file from one of the team who is fanning himself.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

It's...background information on the Soviet and Cuban teams...

Bobby scans it cursorily...

BOBBY

Three whole pages, wow.

Browne raises his hand.

BROWNE

Can I just ask, how come big mouth here gets to bring his own manager and we all share one?

BOBBY

Carmine is here to stop me punching people, right Carmine? And right now he's earning his money.

Everyone shrinks from Bobby. Carmine smiles shyly. Bobby is patrolling...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

The Russians will have a folder *this* thick on every one of us, even the ones of us who play like fucking Goofy, like Miles here.

Miles sighs. Lombardy goes back to addressing the others.

LOMBARDY

Ok, the draw won't be made until tomorrow morning. We'll slip copies of it under your doors as soon as we get it...

BOBBY

Yeah and the Soviets had it two days ago because they fixed it in advance.

Bobby begins to very deliberately tear up his three page document. There are turned heads, sighs, looks between the other team members that suggest this is what they were expecting.

LOMBARDY

Do you have a problem?

BOBBY

Yeah. This is all wrong.  
Taimanov doesn't use the Indian  
defense anymore. Petrosian is no  
longer defensive out of the Nimzo  
and there is no mention of the  
fact that Tal is afraid of  
spiders.

Silence followed by controlled giggles. Bobby's eyes are blazing.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

When you play Tal you draw  
spiders on a notebook so he can  
see them. It freaks him out.

MILES

How does he even *know* this stupid  
stuff?

BOBBY

I read Russian. I've been reading  
what they say about each other in  
their magazines. Anybody else  
here took the time to learn  
Russian?

Silence. Bobby is now stalking towards the front of the meeting and closes in on Lombardy, who holds his ground...but Bobby suddenly yells....

BOBBY (CONT'D)

*Fuck!!!!*

He slams his fist on the table. Everyone jumps and stares with incomprehension. Bobby stares back at them with crazy eyes. He seems to see through each one of them...and doesn't like what he sees.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Why don't we talk about why the  
fuck we are here.

BROWNE (SARDONIC)

Well I'm here for the weather.

BOBBY (SOFTLY)  
We are here because this is our  
country...

Miles speaks as he wipes steam from his spectacles...

MILES  
Is it me or does anyone else  
smell hospital clothing? You  
know like, psychiatric...

BOBBY  
This is our country and in this  
crucible...

Some of the other guys begin to giggle again...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
...The Russians are like fucking  
cockroaches and we have to flip  
them on their backs...

Browne clears his throat and raises his hand.

MILES  
Actually I'm a socialist. Does  
that make me a beetle?

Laughter. Bobby turns savagely on Browne and fixes him with the stare he normally saves for destroying opponents at the table. Browne is full of amused contempt at first but soon begins to fidget.

BOBBY  
You...my friend...laugh because  
you are a loser. When you are a  
loser all you can do is laugh.  
I, on the other hand, am someone  
who people laugh at. All my life  
people laugh at me. That is why  
I have to win. To get them to  
shut the fuck up.

He looks around the room and speaks softly.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
I see I will have to do this all  
on my own.

Bobby leaves the room in silence.

INT. BAR, SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

In a seedy bar Bobby and Donna make their way toward the drinks. The customers are mostly black, with a smattering of Sixties Santa Monica Beats and white junkies.



There is wild jazz playing and Bobby has to yell to the barman. He is wearing a dark suit and has his hair greased back.

BOBBY

Can I get a coke and a sandwich?

DONNA

And a big, big vodka.

BOBBY

No Maraschino cherries.

DONNA

Why not?

BOBBY

Maraschino cherries scare the  
shit out of me.

Donna half laughs at his madness. Some of the guys in the crowd turn to study Bobby, who is oblivious to their stares. Donna studies him. He speaks while taking the drinks...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Listen, after I've won this chess  
thing I was thinking maybe I  
would get rid of my virginity.  
Is that ok with you? It's  
getting stupid, you know?

Donna stares at Bobby as she takes her drink.

DONNA

I don't do introductory offers.

BOBBY (MATTER OF FACT)

That's ok. I'm getting five  
hundred per game. Special deal.

He swigs his coke and looks all around. She studies him as he stares down some big guy who is glaring at him.

DONNA (WITH DISBELIEF)

You really represent America?

Bobby gives the middle finger to a big guy...

BOBBY

Hell yeah. I represent America.

EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL - DAY

The Soviet chess team with all their advisers and KGB guards leave the hotel and climb into their fleet of Zils.

We spend a moment with Boris as he straightens his tie, pulled tight in the eighty degree heat. He appears to have two KGB guards allocated just to him.

INT. SANTA MONICA CHESS TOURNAMENT, PLAYING HALL

We see the tournament preparations from above.

The hall is buzzing as the players, audience and journalists hang out, waiting for the matches to begin. We see the Cuban flag, the Soviet flag and the flag of the United States hanging above the hall.

We notice that the Russians are apart from the others, still receiving briefings and information from their back up team. There is a buzz about the Soviets as pieces of paper are passed and advisers hurry in and out with briefing folders.

Then we find Carmine hurrying through the hall, looking for someone (Bobby).

INT. VIEWING ROOM

Above the hall, behind glass, there are some small offices for each team and also a communal viewing area where the seconds and advisers can gather to watch the games.

Lombardy is pouring coffee for himself as Carmine enters. Lombardy sees the alarm on Carmine's face. Lombardy smiles a weary smile.

LOMBARDY

Stravinsky, of course, will relax  
you and I recommend it.

He offers Carmine the coffee but he refuses, checking his watch...

CARMINE (PANICKING)

He's not anywhere. Not fucking  
anywhere. Jesus...

LOMBARDY

I kind of knew he wouldn't show.  
He's probably with that hooker on  
his way to Mexico. But it's ok,  
I've already registered myself to  
take his place.

Carmine takes a moment then decides not to give up. He hurries away. Lombardy calls after him...

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

You have five minutes.

INT. TOURNAMENT HALL, MEN'S ROOM

Carmine enters and begins to check the cubicles, opening one door at a time.

CARMINE

Bobby? Are you here?

Suddenly....

BOBBY (OOV)

Yeah I'm here.

Carmine reacts with a huge sigh and opens the final door. He finds Bobby fully clothed, sitting on the toilet. He is busy writing a letter on a scrap of paper rested on his knee.

CARMINE

Bobby, what the hell? You have like *seconds* to take your seat.

Bobby gets to his feet and leaves the cubicle, handing Carmine the note.

BOBBY

I had to find somewhere quiet to write this. I want you to give it to her...

CARMINE

To who?

Carmine takes the paper, puzzled, as Bobby washes his hands and pushes back his hair...

BOBBY

My mom.

Bobby splashes his face as he talks...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

She lives in California, so she'll *come*, right?

Carmine takes the letter.

LOMBARDY

Bobby, you've drawn Taimanov.

Bobby hardly hears and instead he gestures at the letter....

BOBBY

When you give it to her explain I  
don't want her in the auditorium  
watching me just yet because  
it'll fuck up my game. Don't say  
'fuck' though.

He dries his hands briskly, like a man who means  
business...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I wrote that I haven't forgiven  
her for screwing up my  
childhood...

CARMINE (INTERRUPTING, FLATLY)

Bobby you've drawn Taimanov in  
the first round.

Bobby ignores him.

BOBBY

Afterwards maybe I'll agree to  
speak to her.

Carmine tries again to get through to Bobby and speaks dead  
pan.

LOMBARDY

Bobby, Taimanov is officially the  
third best chess player in the  
world.

A pause. Finally Bobby engages with what Carmine is saying  
and looks serious...

BOBBY

Fourth.

INT. SANTA MONICA CHESS TOURNAMENT HALL

Silence. At the center of the hall a chessboard is set up.

We see Bobby Fischer's name in front of an empty chair.  
Beside it, a chess clock ticks. We pull away to reveal  
Russian Grandmaster TAIMONOV sitting at the table opposite  
the empty chair, registering huge impatience. Taimonov is  
barrel chested, formidable. An adviser comes close and  
whispers in his ear. They both check their watches. They  
turn to the referee. The referee shrugs...

REFEREE

If he is not here in sixty  
seconds the game will be  
forfeited.

Taimanov folds his arms and waits. After twenty seconds he is about to get on his feet.

Then a door at the far end of the auditorium opens. Carmine hurries in, holding the door. Then Bobby Fischer enters, not hurrying but filled with purpose.

His stride is long and he looks determined, staring straight ahead at his empty seat. There is a ripple of applause as he arrives and he raises one hand briefly, his big open palm pushed at the crowd.

He sits down...and waits for the clock to run down some more. He stares directly at Taimanov. At first Taimanov meets his stare but there is something piercing about Bobby's eyes that make Taimanov uncomfortable.

There are ten seconds left on the clock. Bobby continues to stare and Taimanov begins to wilt a little. Bobby smiles a devilish smile and whispers the countdown to Taimanov...

BOBBY

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six,  
five, four, three...two...

Bobby makes his first move with a characteristic slap and then slaps his clock just as hard. His eyes never leave Taimanov's face.

EXT. AUDITORIUM

The ten Zil cars are lined up and the drivers are hanging out, smoking cigarettes in the afternoon heat. (Nearby is an old school bus with the words 'US FED' on the front, a huge contrast). Then the auditorium doors open and Taimanov appears, being escorted by the selector of the Soviet team LIVO NEI. Nei is skinny, intelligent looking, and wears round spectacles. Taimanov has his head bowed. Livo Nei hurries Taimanov down the steep steps and into one of the waiting cars.

INT. ZIL CAR, BACK SEAT

The Zil pulls away. Taimanov is sitting in the back seat beside Livo Nei. Taimanov is staring straight ahead, looking overwhelmed. They speak in Russian and we see subtitles.

TAIMONOV

(It was like...having a *building*  
fall on me).

NEI

(When we get to the hotel the team doctor will give you a thorough examination).

A pause. They begin to talk like two conspirators getting their story straight.

NEI (CONT'D)

(You lost because you have flu. You probably caught it on the flight).

A pause. Taimanov appears to be heartened by the suggestion.

TAIMANOV

(Yes. I do have a headache).

NEI

(I will open a window).

Nei opens the window a little. Taimanov looks desperately anxious. Nei glances at him just once...

EXT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL - EVENING

The Motel manager is wheeling a bin of clean laundry across the small parking lot when the old school bus that has seen better days pulls in. The US chess team begin to disembark. The Motel clerk grins and calls out to Bobby as he climbs off the bus.

CLERK

Hey rock star.

He throws Bobby a clean towel.

CLERK (CONT'D)

I re-tuned the radio to some weird station and listened to it.

Bobby looks at the towel and at his team mates, who are silently heading for their rooms. We might sense a quiet awe around Bobby. Bobby gestures at the clean linen.

BOBBY

We *all* need clean towels.

The Motel clerk grins and shakes his head.

CLERK

Nope. Only for winners.

INT. SANTA MONICA CATHOLIC CHURCH

There is a service in progress and twenty or so people are in the congregation, singing the hymn '*Immortal, Invisible*'.

At a front pew, we find Lombardy and Carmine singing with the others. Suddenly Bobby strides down the aisle searching for them, distracting the singers. When he sees Lombardy he stands at the end of the pew. Carmine and Lombardy look startled to see him. Before either of them can react, Bobby speaks loudly above the singing congregation...

BOBBY

So what did she say?

Carmine looks embarrassed and shuffles out of the pew to hurry Bobby out of the church.

EXT. SANTA MONICA CATHOLIC CHURCH - SUNSET

The sun is setting over the ocean as Bobby and Carmine emerge from the church. Carmine immediately lights a cigarette and draws on it with relief.

CARMINE (CONFIDENTIALLY)

I haven't been to church for twenty years. He fucking *made* me.

BOBBY (NOT HEARING)

So did you give her the letter?

Carmine hesitates, draws on his cigarette.

CARMINE

Bobby, your mother didn't show up.

Bobby reacts with a jerk of his head. He decides to blame Lombardy...

BOBBY

You mean you missed her.

CARMINE

Bobby, she didn't show up.

BOBBY

Jesus Christ, how could you miss her? This whole thing is so fucking amateur...

CARMINE

Did you even call her to let her know you were playing?

BOBBY

I don't *speak* to her, how can I call her?!

Bobby turns away.

CARMINE

So call her.

Carmine glances back at the church.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Forgiveness, all that shit.

Bobby glances at Carmine then hunches into his collar. Carmine speaks sarcastically as he draws on his cigarette and glances up at the crucifix.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Already I'm preaching. Go ahead. Call your mom.

EXT. MOTEL, PAY PHONE IN THE YARD

Heavy rain drenches the parking lot. It's very late.

We find Bobby under the hood of the pay phone. He is sleepless and wired as hell with an old hand-written letter in his hand which is getting smudged in the rain. He listens to the phone ringing and then puts the phone down and a shower of quarters fall out of the phone.

Donna appears out of one of the rooms after an evening's work and hurries toward her car with her red leather coat over her head. She sees Bobby and stops to peer at him.

DONNA

What's wrong with the phone in your room?

Bobby turns, steps into the rain, looks all around.

BOBBY

I got a click, click, click. I asked the motel guy and he said maybe it's been bugged by the Russians.

DONNA (INCREDULOUS)

Bobby, I think he was probably joking.



Bobby looks defiant.

BOBBY  
Yeah? You never heard of the  
KGB?

Donna lets his apparent strangeness pass. Bobby has turned and is dialing again, wired, soaked to the skin. Donna looks at him with pity. He gets a connection and speaks into the phone...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Hello operator, I'm trying to  
find a number for Regina Fischer.

He consults his letter.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
The only address I have is from  
like...seven years ago...She's  
probably moved.

A pause. Bobby gets irritated...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Yeah but how many Regina  
Fischer's can there be in  
California?

A pause. Bobby is getting mad.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Well ask the lady next to you and  
she can ask the lady next to her  
and so on. You sit in lines  
right? I've seen you on the TV.

Donna stifles a giggle.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Just fucking look her up in your  
fucking book, that's what you're  
paid to do...

He reacts to the call being cut. He smashes the receiver against the phone and then registers that Donna is watching. He turns to her, folding the wet letter into his pocket.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
If you went to your Momma's back  
yard she'd come out to say hello,  
right?

Donna smiles.

DONNA

*My momma? Hell no.*

Bobby finally smiles too. Rain pours on both of them.

DONNA (CONT'D)

Hey you want to lose your  
virginity tonight?

BOBBY (MATTER OF FACT)

Nah, I've got to practice for  
tomorrow.

A pause. Donna gestures at the phone.

DONNA

Maybe your momma's waiting for  
the final.

Bobby thinks about this, clings to it, then walks off into  
the rain.

INT. LATE NIGHT DINER, BEVERLY HILLS - LATE NIGHT

On Rodeo Drive, Boris is playing a pinball machine inside  
an all American 1960's diner. He is dressed in chinos and  
a Hawaiian shirt. The place is emptying. Through a rain  
spattered window we see Geller peering in from the street.  
He spots Boris and enters. Geller is wet from the rain and  
angry as he approaches.

GELLER

(We've been looking for you all  
night.)

Boris doesn't look away from the pinball machine.

GELLER (CONT'D)

(You have games tomorrow, you  
should be sleeping.)

Outside a Zil pulls up and the driver half gets out.  
Geller nods at him through the window, letting him know  
that they've found their quarry. The Zil driver leans into  
the car and switches off the headlights.

GELLER (CONT'D)

(Disappearing like this you're  
making people nervous.)

Boris fires off another ball.

BORIS

(Is Taimanov really sick?)

GELLER

(Yes. Taimanov is really sick.)

Boris glances at Geller and sees he is lying. He returns to his pinball.

GELLER (CONT'D)

(Even so it looks bad to lose even one game to an American so we need to put this crazy guy in his place.)

BORIS

(Who says he's crazy?)

GELLER

(The way he looks. The way he plays.)

Boris is intrigued, fires off another ball.

BORIS

(What exactly is wrong with Taimanov?)

GELLER

(We think it is influenza. We are flying him home.)

Boris stops playing and turns to Geller, allowing the ball to drop out of play. Boris obviously sees significance in Taimanov being flown home. He lights another cigarette and Geller speaks softly to him.

GELLER (CONT'D)

(Tomorrow we can't afford any errors. We will arrange for Tal and Luvinsky to draw and Steiger has agreed to lose to the Cuban who will lose to you. Which means you will go through to the final.)

Boris fires off another ball.

GELLER (CONT'D)

(If the crazy guy makes it that far we need you to wipe the floor with him, ok?)

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - MORNING

The team bus is parked with the doors open and the driver is smoking a cigarette in the heat. The American chess team are all standing around it, looking anxious.

Lombardy emerges from his room and Carmine instantly calls out to him...

CARMINE

William? We may have a problem here.

Carmine gestures at Bobby Fischer, who is leaning against the open door of the bus with a sheet of paper in his hand. He's wearing a shiny two tone suit and crocodile shoes, with his hair slicked back.

Bobby pushes himself to the center of the group of players. The American flag that flies above the Motel sign snaps in the wind.

BOBBY

We're not getting on board the bus until our demands are met.

Lombardy laughs at first but he can see from Carmine's reaction that this is serious.

LOMBARDY

What demands?

BOBBY

Ok, number one, from now on the American chess team arrives at tournaments in big black cars just like the Russians. We don't take the bus. It's embarrassing.

Lombardy steps across the asphalt.

LOMBARDY

Bobby, limousines cost money.

BOBBY

Second, we demand clean linen in our rooms with no blood all over it like in Miles room.

Miles looks to his shoes, not happy to be implicated.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Number three, we get free phone calls home.

Lombardy takes a weary breath.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

And we have somebody check our phones are not being bugged.

BROWNE (QUICKLY)

I didn't sign up for that. That's just crazy.

Bobby turns on Browne and suddenly yells...pointing north.

BOBBY

I looked at a map. Six and a  
half tanks of gas *that* way  
straight up the 101...is Russia.

The other players are distancing themselves from him.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

We are part of the same war  
that's happening in Vietnam and  
the Government doesn't object to  
paying for that.

Bobby looks up at the US flag flying beside the garish  
Motel sign.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

We should all be on five hundred  
dollars a game because chess is  
hard, and we deserve some  
respect.

He begins to lose conviction as he looks back at his  
ragged, eccentric army. Lombardy wipes his eyes.

LOMBARDY

Miles, I'm sorry about your  
sheets.

Miles is eager not to offend.

MILES

It's ok, it was my own blood. I  
had a nose bleed.

Bobby glares at Miles then shakes his head and lets the  
list of demands go. They fly away into the ocean breeze.

BOBBY

Screw the bus, I'm going to walk.

Bobby sets off. Carmine shrugs at Lombardy, hitches his  
trousers and sets off after him.

INT. MOTEL, OFFICE

The motel owner is sitting in his office watching local  
news on a small TV. We see Bobby on the TV screen walking  
through the auditorium through a milling crowd with Carmine  
and Lombardy at his side. We hear the news anchor...

NEWS ANCHOR

In Santa Monica today American chess prodigy Bobby Fischer has surprised the chess world by beating two Russian opponents and making it through to the *final* of the Piatigorsky Cup. He will face the Russian World Champion Boris Spassky.

Donna enters to pick up a set of keys and sees Bobby on screen. She stops and she watches with the motel clerk...

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

One thousand tickets have been sold already to see the American play, a record for a chess game in this country...

DONNA

If he wins, I'll fuck him for free.

CLERK

Crazy son of a bitch took apart three of my phones.

On the TV screen we see Bobby ducking into a doorway and disappearing into the auditorium.

INT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT

We see the crowds milling around. Boris Spassky is accompanied by Livo Nei who is going through a dossier with Boris. Boris looks up and through the crowd.

From his point of view we see a green jacket...a shock of hair...everyone else is wearing dark suits and the green jacket flashes in the crowd of officials. Boris stares and catches sight of Bobby. Bobby catches sight of Boris.

Their eyes meet across the room. Boris's stare is steadfast and detached. He looks rested and trim. Bobby looks wrecked. Bobby's eyes suddenly begin to burn as he stares intently at Boris.

*We should sense that now the two men have made fatal contact, one of them must be destroyed.*

We move close to Bobby, just as Lombardy arrives with some last minute instructions. Lombardy follows Bobby's eye line to Boris. He thinks perhaps Bobby is admiring him.

LOMBARDY (SOFTLY)

That's what a champion of the world looks like.

(MORE)

LOMBARDY(cont'd)

He's up at five every morning to study. Goes to the ocean at six to swim then back to study.

Bobby and Boris's eyes remain locked for a while longer...

BOBBY

I have a routine too. Stand in the rain with a hooker. Wake up. Win.

The locked eyes last a little while longer...but it is Bobby who looks away first...and we should sense it is to hide a present weakness. Boris stares a little longer and finally breaks away.

INT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT - DAY

From above, we see a chessboard with a game just a few moves old. We may at first believe it is Spassky versus Fischer but we pull away to reveal it is MILES playing against TAL.

*As we pass this table...almost incidentally...we see that Miles is drawing lots of pictures of spiders on his work sheet. Tal is looking away in discomfort (Bobby's advice got through).*

Then we see Bobby and Boris Spassky walking toward a central table from opposite ends of the auditorium. The thousand strong audience begin to applaud.

The two men take up position a few paces away from their seats. Geller and Livo Nei are whispering in Boris's ear. A third adviser brings Boris a notepad and pen. A fourth adviser brings him one last crib sheet, a fifth brings him a glass of water. Boris is at the center of a hive of activity.

By contrast, Bobby stands alone.

Boris finally moves to his seat and prepares. Bobby hesitates and just the flicker of hesitation is caught by Spassky.

Bobby finally steps forward and the two men shake hands. Boris is firm and assured. Bobby wilts a little. Boris sits down calmly as Bobby stares down at him and finally drops into his chair.

INT. TOURNAMENT HALL, OUTSIDE REVOLVING DOOR

Through the reflections in the glass we see Bobby approaching in fury.

He slams into the revolving door and the door twirls so fast he gets caught in the vortex of it and goes around a whole circuit before emerging close to shot.

We see from the look on his face that he has just lost the game and that he is furious. Lombardy comes through the doors a few seconds later and hurries to catch up with Bobby....

LOMBARDY

Bobby, you have to stay to pick up your runner's medal.

Bobby keeps walking. Carmine comes through the revolving door in pursuit...

BOBBY

Like I'd pick up a fucking steel collar with spikes...

Lombardy stops Bobby by getting in front of him.

LOMBARDY

Bobby, you just played the best chess player in the world and ran him close.

Bobby grinds his teeth and slaps the wall with his palm...

BOBBY

*Fuck.*

LOMBARDY

It's news. National news. There are a lot of people back there who want to congratulate you. You have done better than any American chess player for forty years. So come on...

Bobby yells....

BOBBY

He saw through me. But instead of changing my game I hung on to it with my fucking finger nails. I should have cut the fucking reins and ran free.

Bobby claws his hands and Carmine and Lombardy look concerned. Bobby is on a furious roll and turns on Lombardy.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Did she come?

Lombardy is puzzled but Carmine understands.



LOMBARDY (SOFTLY)  
No Bobby, your mother didn't  
come. Now let's just go back to  
the hall, take some questions and  
smile.

Bobby kicks the wall.

BOBBY  
You know *why* she didn't come?  
Because she knows that if she  
came to see me play against a  
Russian...she'd want the  
Communist to win against her own  
son.

Bobby twirls around and taps his head bitterly.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
That's what they do to your mind.  
That's what they've done to *her*  
mind. They brainwashed her at  
those meetings.

Bobby yells....

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
The Communists make it so you  
don't even love your *own kids*!

Bobby catches his breath and stares at Carmine and Lombardy  
for a moment.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
I could've got revenge but I  
fucked it up.

Bobby turns and storms away. Carmine and Lombardy are left  
in studied silence for a moment. Down the corridor Bobby  
slaps the walls again. He departs through swinging doors.  
After he has gone Carmine speaks softly to Lombardy...

CARMINE  
You know last night I called his  
sister. She told me their mom  
don't even *live* in California  
anymore.

A pause.

CARMINE (CONT'D)  
Apparently she's never had the  
heart to tell him the truth.

Carmine turns to Lombardy.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Two years ago she moved to  
Moscow.

INT. MOTEL, CARMINE'S ROOM

We see the room in half darkness, with strips of light through the half closed blinds. Carmine unlocks the door to the room and enters. He is startled to find someone already there. In the half light, he sees it is Mcallister.

*We soon realize (to our surprise) that Carmine knows Mcallister and that he is not surprised to see him in this odd circumstance.*

Mcallister turns on a table lamp and he is lit by the thin yellow light. He smiles...

MCALLISTER

He did well today.

Mcallister reaches into his pocket and produces a brown envelope, which he passes to Carmine.

CARMINE

And you did well too.

Carmine takes the envelope and counts the cash without taking it out of the envelope as they talk.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

I guess I don't have to declare  
this for tax, right? Seeing as  
how you are the Government.

Mcallister smiles.

MCALLISTER

I've told you, I'm a private  
individual with an interest in  
chess.

Carmine sits down on the bed and wipes sweat from his neck.

CARMINE

In the war I worked with military  
intelligence. I know a spook when  
I see one.

Carmine puts the envelope in the bedside drawer then looks at Mcallister defiantly.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Ok, I got him here and he beat a couple of Russians. Nice doing business with you.

Mcallister doesn't move.

MCALLISTER

After Bobby's performance today I want to offer you a new deal.

CARMINE

This was a one off.

MCALLISTER (IGNORING HIM)

I will pay all of Bobby's expenses and throw in 'honorariums' of two thousand dollars a month to be split between the two of you...

Carmine's eyes widen...

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

...if Bobby agrees to take a crack at the world title.

Carmine laughs, half scared, half incredulous. He pulls a small bottle of whisky from the drawer where he put the money and takes a swig.

CARMINE

You don't understand Mr Spook. This isn't baseball.

Mcallister studies Carmine without expression.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Taking a 'crack at the title' as you put it means travelling around the world playing interzonals for three years...

Mcallister interrupts and shows that he understands exactly what is involved.

MCALLISTER

It works the same way as a wolf pack. Right now Spassky is the dominant male. He'll wait while all the other contenders fight it out amongst themselves. The winner gets the right to face Spassky one on one.

Carmine studies Mcallister.

CARMINE

Yeah, that's three years running  
round hotels worse than this one.  
I've got a family.

Carmine takes a swig of whisky. Mcallister speaks calmly.

MCALLISTER

Your Marshall Street club will  
also receive a donation of two  
hundred thousand dollars if Bobby  
gets as far as Spassky. Cash if  
you prefer. If he wins we make it  
a million.

Carmine turns slowly, astonished. Mcallister blinks  
confirmation.

MCALLISTER

The world is at a crossroads.  
America needs some victories.

A pause. Mcallister can see doors opening in Carmine's  
mind. Carmine offers Mcallister the whisky.

CARMINE

Hypothetically, what exactly  
would I have to do?

Mcallister takes a swig and glances at Carmine's motel  
phone.

MCALLISTER

For example, yesterday you spoke  
to his sister in New York.

Carmine now stares in horror at the phone, getting the  
inference that the phone is bugged. Before he can speak...

MACALLISTER (CONT'D)

There was some talk of Bobby  
taking medication. That would  
slow down his game. Perhaps you  
can make sure it doesn't happen.

CARMINE

Look, I'm just a chess guy...

MACALLISTER (GENTLY INTERRUPTING)

Yeah. That's why he trusts you.  
That's why we need you.

Mcallister gets to his feet and stares down at Carmine with  
a suddenly earnest expression. He speaks softly.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)  
Think of this...A champion of the  
world....from Brooklyn.

Mcallister leaves the room.

INT. MOTEL, BOBBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

In Bobby's (identical) half lit motel room we find Bobby lying on his back, staring at the ceiling, filled with turmoil. Then Donna lights a match and we realize she is sitting up in the bed beside him, lighting a cigarette.

DONNA  
That wasn't so bad was it?

Bobby lies still, his mind racing. Then he sits up and checks the bedside clock. We see it's five thirty am. Bobby jumps out of bed and pulls on a shirt.

DONNA (CONT'D)  
Where you going?

BOBBY (URGENTLY)  
Every morning at six...

He snatches up his pants angrily...

EXT. HIGHWAY 101 - DAWN

Bobby strides across the deserted street and onto the beach as the sun rises.

EXT. BEACH - DAWN

The sun is just beginning to rise in the East and the first rays of sunlight turn the ocean crimson.

Bobby sits down on the sand and breaths a deep sigh of relief to be alone. He checks his watch and turns to look down the beach. He sweeps back his hair and looks all around. It's early so the beach is empty.

Then he sees three men, a hundred yards down the beach, walking toward the ocean. Two of them are KGB men in dark suits. The third is wearing a Beverly Hills hotel bathrobe. The KGB men are carrying his clothes. A big Zil car is parked at the edge of the beach.

As Bobby wipes his eyes we see the guy in the bathrobe is Boris Spassky, come to the beach for his morning swim.

Bobby watches with fascination as the three men stop a few yards from the ocean.

They are so far away they are almost just silhouettes. Boris shrugs off his bathrobe and begins an exercise regime. Bobby sits up on his knees to get a better look.

*(We should be aware of the huge contrast between the two men. Bobby has spent the night with a hooker and looks like hell. Boris is in good shape and taking care of himself).*

Boris then walks into the ocean, where he begins to swim. The two KGB guys stand and smoke cigarettes, waiting for Boris to finish.

Bobby watches all this and slowly begins to smile. He stares as the two KGB guys hold out a towel for Boris who steps out of the ocean. Bobby leaps to his feet and yells...

BOBBY

Hey!! Asshole!! They're not  
bodyguards, they're fucking  
jailers!! They've got your brain.  
They've got inside your mind!  
They wouldn't even let you kill  
yourself!!

We cut to Boris and his KGB men as Boris dries himself. They stop and stare over at Bobby as he yells at them. Bobby is far enough away and dressed so haphazardly that they don't recognize him...

BORIS

*(Who is that?)*

KGB GUY

*(Just some drunk sleeping rough.  
America is full of them.)*

We cut back to Bobby, who is laughing to himself. He steps forward and splashes in the ocean fully clothed....

BOBBY

Look at me man, I'm free!

Bobby jumps into the waves and catches his breath in the cold spray. He begins to splash and play in the waves. The KGB men have lost interest but Boris is staring at the crazy guy.

From Boris's distance we see Bobby take an elaborate bow and then begin to stride back up the beach, laughing at the sky. Boris shades his eyes and stares at Bobby and we sense that he is beginning to recognize him, though he can't quite believe it could really be Fischer.

Suddenly Bobby stops at the top of the beach and screams out...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
I'm coming for you man!!

We can see from Boris's eyes that he is unnerved.

INT. DARKENED APARTMENT STAIRWAY, MOSCOW - MORNING

An overweight postman in blue uniform is climbing the steps of the apartment with a sack of mail. He arrives at a certain door and pulls out a roll of magazines. We don't see the title of the magazines but we glimpse the name above a Moscow address. The magazines are addressed to REGINA PUSTAN.

As the postman rings the bell, we see a caption.

*Caption: Lomonosov Moscow State University Dormitories, Russia. February 1970.*

The door opens and we see Regina Fischer's face. She looks older than her years and slightly worn out as she takes the roll of magazines.

INT. REGINA'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

Regina trails cigarette smoke and coughs a little as she walks back through her apartment in her robe. The apartment is a mess but the posters which adorn her walls are now graphics of American national parks rather than radical political causes.

A cat jumps into her arms and she pets it and whispers to it in Russian as she goes to the door to a spare room.

INT. REGINA'S APARTMENT, SPARE ROOM/SHRINE

We dwell for a moment on the curious room before the door is opened.

The walls are covered in cuttings and press photographs of Bobby Fischer, with headlines in English, German and Russian proclaiming his triumphs and disasters.

We see headlines from chess magazines declaring victories at Skopje, Nathanya, Philippines and dozens of other international tournaments. We see headlines covering his controversies... '*Bobby Fischer withdraws Monaco; temperament and ideologies clash*'.... '*Fischer boycotts Fed for second time.*'

There are also headlines from the New York Times, the LA Times, The London Times as well as Pravda and European newspapers. There are front cover portraits from Life and Time magazine.

*The contents of the cuttings are less important than the fact that the room is nothing less than a shrine which Regina has devoted to her son Bobby Fischer.*

There is a table in the middle of the room with a full ashtray. Beside it there is a photo of Bobby as a small boy. Regina enters with the roll of magazines in her hand. Her cat tries to follow her but she shoos it out (this is her private room).

She unrolls the magazines and we see they are all chess magazines. She spreads them out on the table, smoking her cigarette. On the second page she sees a photo of Bobby Fischer with a headline in Russian which we only just glimpse.

Regina looks at the headline and reacts. She sits down slowly, reading fast. It is impossible to tell if she is happy or sad. Her cigarette burns away in her hand. She is close to tears as the door is knocked. She doesn't answer the knock but reads the article frantically. The door is knocked again and finally Regina's husband (CYRIL) enters. He is stooped and learned, wearing a ragged robe.

Cyril comes to sit beside Regina. The two of them look weak and poor and as Regina looks up from the article there are big tears in her eyes. Cyril knows already that the cause of her tears is Bobby and he seems wary of it. They speak in Russian and we see a translation.

CYRIL

(Are they happy tears for him  
today or sad tears?)

A pause. She looks at Cyril with wonder in her eyes now.

REGINA

(He is officially entering the  
race for the title of World  
Champion.)

Cyril puts his hand on Regina's hand. She sobs a little...

CYRIL

(So call him...or write to  
him...tell him how proud you  
are.)

She shakes her head.

REGINA

(No.)

A pause. Regina then slowly looks all around at the walls of the shrine she has made.



REGINA (CONT'D)  
(I have given him what he wanted.  
An empty room).

INT. BUSY BROOKLYN DINER - DAY

We feel early Seventies Brooklyn all around in the clothes and decor of the diner at breakfast time. Music is playing on the radio.

Joan is sitting in a booth, anxiously smoking a cigarette. She looks up to see Carmine entering. Carmine is already talking as he slips into the booth. He tries to bulldoze Joan with the jokey chaos of his life.

CARMINE (LAUGHING)  
Joan, my luggage is like a stranger and I'm between three airports and hell. I have ten minutes in New York to see my wife, kiss my kids and talk to you. How the hell have you been? You're looking great.

Joan is firm, dead pan.

JOAN  
I have to see him.

CARMINE  
That just won't be possible. He's already in Vancouver.

JOAN  
I want to take him to see a doctor. I'm worried that if he goes for the title he won't survive.

Carmine takes a breath, tries to be light.

CARMINE  
Joan it's been a while since you saw him, right?

JOAN  
He's been on the road over a year.

CARMINE  
Well I can tell you he's in great shape.

Joan angrily opens her purse and produces a pile of opened envelopes containing hand written letters.

Carmine reacts as if he's been caught out, guessing what they contain. She begins to place them one by one on the table.

JOAN

He writes every week. Every week  
his letters get more crazy. Go  
ahead, take a look.

Carmine is lighting a cigarette.

CARMINE

They're private letters to you  
Joan. I respect his privacy.

Joan stares at Carmine and reads something of the truth.  
Her face hardens.

JOAN

I showed them to a friend who is  
a psychiatrist. He said Bobby is  
displaying signs of delusional  
psychosis and paranoid  
schizophrenia.

Carmine uses his cigarette to hide behind...

CARMINE

Chess is a crazy world right now.  
Some of the things he says about  
the Soviets are true.  
In Tunis we found listening  
devices in his hotel room...

Joan reacts by snatching up one of the letters. She begins  
to read..

JOAN

'It is the Communist pigs who  
infect my mind with words that  
just keep coming round'.

Carmine is reacting...hiding his contrition, his deep inner  
turmoil which we now sense has grown. Joan pauses to give  
emphasis to what comes next...

JOAN (CONT'D)

'The Jews are helping them too.  
The Jews want to keep the chess  
federation all to themselves just  
like they own New York and own  
most Governments in the world'...

Joan screws up the letter and hisses.

JOAN (CONT'D POINTEDLY)  
We are Jewish. Bobby is Jewish.  
 What do your people say to him  
 when he comes out with this  
*trash?*

Carmine decides contrition is not the answer. He looks quietly defiant and finally articulates something which we should sense is a half lie and half his own truth...

CARMINE  
 Joan, I swear this isn't just  
 about the title anymore.

Carmine hesitates. Joan waits...

CARMINE (CONT'D)  
 It's about the beauty of the  
 games he's playing now.

Carmine looks around the diner...

CARMINE (CONT'D)  
 Unimaginable beauty...From a  
 place like this. From Brooklyn.  
 Like a Da Vinci. Once in every  
 five hundred years.

A pause.

CARMINE (CONT'D)  
 Grandmasters are watching Bobby  
 play with tears in their eyes.

Joan yells...

JOAN  
 Yeah, well, I have tears in my  
 eyes too!

Heads turn. Carmine checks his watch and speaks softly.

CARMINE  
 Joan, I'm his friend. I'll take  
 care of him.

Joan is not convinced. Carmine puts his hand on hers.

CARMINE (CONT'D)  
 I'll make sure his life doesn't  
 get too crazy, ok?

EXT. VANCOUVER TOURNAMENT HALL - SUNNY DAY

Craziness is breaking out.

There are twenty reporters and four photographers waiting outside the hall as Bobby, Carmine and Lombardy emerge. The chaotic scrum begins as soon as the press see Bobby...

*Caption: Vancouver Interzonal...June 1970.*

Carmine and Lombardy shield Bobby either side as they hurry down the steps of the hall. The reporters begin to call out. From the confusion we pick out one question in particular...

REPORTER 2

Bobby, you've now beaten two of the top five Russians in succession, do these victories represent more than just chess for you...

Bobby finally stops and calls out...

BOBBY

Ok, ok, ok get this. I'm making this up as I say it, right, so it might not come out so good...

Cameras roll and flashlights pop...

REPORTER 2

Hey Bobby, big angry look over here...

Lombardy is gently tugging Bobby forward, trying to stop him making a statement. Carmine holds back...

BOBBY (IGNORING LOMBARDY)

Every time in the past when the Soviets beat an American they said it was a victory for their system right?

A pause.

REPORTER 3

Bobby, gimme a crazy look over here....

BOBBY

Well I just crushed Petrosian six to zero. Crushed him like a fucking beetle. So that's a victory for our system, right?

Lombardy is trying to push Bobby toward a waiting limo.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They're scared of me now, man.  
That's why they bugged the phone  
in my hotel room...

Murmurs among the press pack. Lombardy sighs as if he knew this craziness was going to happen.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They point things at my window  
from across the street. I hear  
stuff buzzing in my head. I'm  
going to have my fillings  
removed...

Lombardy physically pushes Bobby to walk. The reporters begin to yell questions all at once. A reporter hurries alongside Bobby...

REPORTER 3

Hey Bobby! Petrosian said at the  
end he was feeling sick. That's  
the second Russian opponent who  
got sick...

BOBBY

Sick of me sure as hell.

Laughter. Bobby grins. Cameras pop. Lombardy manages to duck Bobby into the waiting limo.

INT. LIMO, AS IT LEAVES THE VANCOUVER HALL PARKWAY

Bobby is grinning broadly and looking back toward the reporters as they make their escape.

BOBBY

Hey I did a whole fucking minute  
with the press and I didn't say  
'fuck' once.

LOMBARDY

You actually *did* say it once.

Bobby whoops with exhilaration but then turns back to face Lombardy's negativity with a hard stare.

BOBBY

What is it with this fucking  
Priest? He's always trying to  
shut me up.

LOMBARDY

I just think it is more elegant  
that when you win you say kind  
things...

Bobby looks at Lombardy...

BOBBY

How can I say kind things about  
an insect I just crushed?  
Crushed him like this...

Bobby suddenly punches the window of the limo. Lombardy and Carmine are shocked by the force of it. Blood begins to ooze between his clenched fingers. Bobby studies the blood and smiles at their looks of horror.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

What's the matter? Did you think  
it would be green?

CARMINE

Jesus Bobby...

BOBBY

Don't say Jesus in front of the  
Priest, he gets itchy.

Bobby laughs and sucks his own blood then speaks with bloody teeth.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You know what? Maybe the Priest  
is a Commie too. Does that  
happen? You get Commie Priests?  
Maybe yeah.

Bobby is glaring hard at Lombardy then slaps the glass divider between him and the driver.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Stop the fucking car.

The car stops and Bobby opens the door. Lombardy is staring at him dispassionately. Bobby glares at Carmine.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You with him or with me?

CARMINE

Bobby, come on, this is stupid.  
You just won your biggest ever  
victory....

Bobby jumps out of the car. Carmine hesitates and hisses at Lombardy...

CARMINE (CONT'D)

I'll walk him back.

Carmine gets out of the car and hurries after Bobby who is walking fast. Lombardy peers at them with concern.

INT. VANCOUVER HOTEL, RESTAURANT

The restaurant is almost empty and waiters are already setting the tables for tomorrow's breakfast. Lombardy is eating alone. At the window we see a few reporters and photographers still hanging out. Carmine joins Lombardy at the table and a couple of photographers fire off shots through the window as Carmine sits down. Carmine hardly glances at them...they are part of the scenery now.

CARMINE

I got him to sleep at last.

Lombardy nods and eats.

LOMBARDY

I think we need to take him to see a doctor.

CARMINE

His hand's fine. I put some band-aids on it.

Lombardy looks at Carmine, his meaning becoming obvious.

LOMBARDY

The concierge just told me he's asked for the TV to be removed from his room because he thinks the Russians are watching him through the screen.

A pause. Carmine is defensive.

CARMINE

Yeah. I...I helped them take it out. That's how I got him to go to sleep.

Lombardy studies Carmine and nods gently...

LOMBARDY

So we just go along with it, huh?

CARMINE

What good would a doctor do?

LOMBARDY

He would give a diagnosis.

Carmine speaks softly.

CARMINE

And he'd prescribe sedatives. It'd be like pouring concrete down a holy well.

Lombardy peers at Carmine for a long time. Then he pushes his plate of food away, a little disgusted...

LOMBARDY

If you can get a man on the Moon  
you can get a kid from Brooklyn  
to win the Chess Championship of  
the World, right?

Carmine lights a cigarette. Lombardy studies him.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

I'm curious. Who paid for the  
limo we rode in today?

Lombardy stares at Carmine who appears to want this conversation to go away. Lombardy gets to his feet.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

If I feel Bobby's sanity is  
threatened the federation will  
withdraw him from the competition  
until he can get medical help.

Lombardy leaves. Carmine looks at him with a degree of contempt.

EXT. TRAIN TRACK, ARIZONA

We are once again with Bobby as a small boy as he walks down the Arizona train track. He sits down, his mind deep in thought. This time the scene is mute and instead of the noise of the train we hear Bobby as an adult, mumbling in voiceover...

BOBBY (MUMBLING, DISTRACTED)

King to King two, pawn to rook  
five, King to Bishop three, pawn  
to rook six, King to Knight  
four...

Suddenly, noiselessly, the train is upon Bobby. As the train is about to hit...Bobby yells...

INT. PLAYING HALL, BUENOS AIRES TOURNAMENT

Bobby is yelling...

His sudden scream fills the hall. He is sitting in a crowded auditorium opposite Petrosian with all eyes on him. The train track was a hallucination, a place he went to while working out his moves.

Bobby stops screaming and we see a caption...



*Caption: Buenos Aires Interzonal, Semi-final, November 1971.*

There is a large, hushed audience and officials stand in silence all around but Bobby's sudden outburst has caused heads to turn and murmuring to begin all around the room. Bobby hides his reaction quickly and we should suspect that he has become accustomed to these moments of disassociation from reality.

When Bobby looks up he sees a look of terror on Petrosian's face. Bobby's sudden scream has unnerved him. Even as Bobby recovers, he realizes his own strange behavior is an advantage. Bobby angles his head and peers at Petrosian. He whispers.

BOBBY

What's the matter Commie, is the  
crazy guy scaring you?

Bobby looks at the chess clock beside the board. He smiles as his opponent wilts a little. Bobby goes in for the kill...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Ten, nine, eight, seven...

Bobby is staring deep into his opponents eyes with his crazy stare as he counts down the clock. He makes his move and slaps the clock. His opponent swallows hard.

EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE, RUSSIA - DAY

On an open expanse of Steppe, Boris Spassky is riding a black stallion bare chested. He gallops across the open land and then canters slowly to the brow of a hill. He looks to be a man at ease, exhilarated by the landscape and the freedom.

As he reaches the brow of the hill, Boris sees a Lada car parked beside the tree where he has left his plaid shirt hanging from a branch.

Boris reacts with some anxiety then trots his horse down to the car. As he approaches, we see Livo Nei leaning on the car and smoking a cigarette. Boris dismounts and grabs his shirt as his horse steams. Nei's presence means there is news and Boris knows it...

Boris half smiles as he pulls the saddle from his horse, sensing what the news is. He pulls the harness off the horse too then slaps its rear to make it gallop free. As he does this, we hear an American news reporter in voiceover. The voice is stiff and formal in the style of the period...

RADIO ANCHOR (OOV)  
This is NBC nightly news...In  
Buenos Aires, Argentina today...

Livo Nei nods his head just once to confirm the news Boris was evidently expecting. The radio anchor continues and confirms it too...

RADIO ANCHOR (OOV)  
...American chess star Bobby  
Fischer beat Russian opponent  
Tigran Petrosian in the semi  
final of the World Chess  
Championships.....

INT. JFK ARRIVALS - DAY

We see the press pack gathered, waiting anxiously for the flight from Buenos Aires. There are a hundred reporters from all over the world. Then Lombardy emerges from arrivals, pushing a trolley, followed by Carmine...who hesitates. He turns back and takes an arm. The NBC news broadcast continues...

RADIO ANCHOR (OOV)  
Fischer will be the first  
American in history to reach the  
final of the World Chess  
tournament and he has now gone  
undefeated for twenty games...a  
world record.

Bobby emerges from the arrivals channel...and he has a *brown paper bag over his head with eyes cut for holes*. The press pack react...the cameras begin to pop...the real madness has begun.

INT. BOBBY'S BROWN BAG

We are inside the brown paper bag which Bobby has put over his head. We are close to his frantic breathing, the bag sucking in and out. Outside we hear the screams of the press pack...The NBC news report continues...

RADIO ANCHOR (OOV)  
Fischer will now face the current  
World Champion Boris Spassky at  
the final in Reykjavik,  
Iceland...

INT. JOAN'S SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM, NEW YORK

In a modest suburban kitchen, Joan is preparing sandwiches for the kids packed lunch. The radio is on and we hear the NBC broadcast continuing (now in radio quality)...

RADIO ANCHOR (OOV)  
...the Fischer Spassky grand  
final will be televised world  
wide....

Joan holds her reaction to the news inside as she wraps the sandwich. One of her kids comes running up the garden path toward the glass patio door.

RADIO ANCHOR (CONT'D)  
...and is already being  
billed...as the first major  
battle...of World War Three.

Joan reacts with trepidation. Her son bursts through the door, breathless...and dives inside.

JOAN'S SON  
Mama, there are some men on the  
lawn asking for you.

Joan reacts with puzzlement. The radio bulletin continues with news of the SALT 2 PEACE TALKS between the US and the Soviet Union. Joan slowly turns to look out of the kitchen window. She see two cars parked and two more pulling up. Reporters and photographers are beginning to gather on her lawn.

As we watch the press gathering, we hear the voice of TV talk show host Dick Cavett from the following scene...

CAVETT (OOV)  
Ladies and Gentlemen, my next  
guest was US Chess Champion at  
fourteen and a chess Grandmaster  
at fifteen...

INT. TV STUDIO, THE WINGS OF 'THE DICK CAVETT SHOW'

We are in a dark area beside the blinding lights of the studio floor. Bobby is having last-second powder applied to his face by a make-up girl...

From the studio floor we hear Dick Cavett continuing...

CAVETT (OOV)  
...and now he's hoping to become  
Chess Champion of the whole  
world, Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr  
Bobby Fischer...

Bobby sneezes on the powder...

INT. TV STUDIO, STUDIO FLOOR

Cavett is angling his body towards Bobby as he asks him sly questions. Bobby is sprawled in a small chair, looking by turns, arrogant and terrified.

CAVETT  
So where does a chess player  
live?

BOBBY  
I don't live anywhere, I live in  
hotels...

A short silence...Bobby glances around...

CAVETT  
In the past, you've made some  
pretty strong charges against the  
Soviets, a couple times accusing  
them of, of...

Cavett hesitates...

BOBBY (FIRMLY)  
Cheating.

Laughter...Cavett glances at his audience..

CAVETT  
Cheating is the word I was  
looking for...

More laughter which Bobby doesn't understand. We cut to Bobby's face and the sound dies away. We see his eyes darting as he stares at the studio audience. He sees the cameras pointing at him, the faces all staring and we sense his fear. The silent moment unnerves him and then the sound pops back...

CAVETT (CONT'D)  
An opponent once said you are  
like Achilles without the  
Achilles heel. Do you have a  
weakness?

Silence. Bobby looks bewildered. Cavett dives for safety...

CAVETT (CONT'D)

What's the best moment when you win at chess, what's the home run moment?

Bobby's eyes die a little...

BOBBY

When you break his ego. That's where it's at.

Cavett reacts with mock alarm. Bobby's face darkens...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

When he sees it coming and he breaks up inside. When you're, like, crushing the guy...

Bobby stares out at the audience. A brief silence as the cameras eat up his crazy expression...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Yeah, that's where it's at.

EXT. TV STUDIO, NEW YORK - NIGHT

A group of twenty young women and girls are being held back by four New York policeman at the rear entrance of the TV studios, waiting for Bobby to appear after recording the interview. A limousine waits. We see a billboard advertizing The Dick Cavett show. There are a group of press photographers gathered too.

After a moment Bobby is led from the stage door by two security guys. Bobby has a coat pulled over his head. Mcallister is directing the security guys and pushes Bobby towards the limousine. We see all this in the flash of cameras coming from the press pack. The girls begin to scream as if Bobby were a pop star.

The girls are all yelling 'Bobby!' Then suddenly the scrum of girls is joined by Joan. She looks distressed and angry as she pushes her way to the barrier. She yells between the cops...

JOAN

Bobby! It's me!! Bobby!

Carmine has emerged from the studio door too and glances for just half a second in Joan's direction. Joan yells with fury...

JOAN (CONT'D)

Carmine, where are you taking him?!! I've called you a hundred times!

Carmine breaks contact and hurries into the limo. The limo drives away at speed. Joan yells again...

JOAN (CONT'D)

Bobby!!

She tries to squeeze between the cops but she is held back, just as if she were another adoring fan.

INT. BEDROOM OF HUGE SUITE AT THE YALE CLUB, NEW YORK

We find Mcallister, with a cigarette dangling, packing Bobby's clothes into a suitcase. From beyond the bedroom door we hear seventies rock playing. Mcallister drops ash on one of Bobby's suits as he packs it. He brushes off the ash then squeezes the suit into the suitcase. He fastens it closed then lifts it off the bed.

He turns and heads for the door.

INT. MAIN ROOM OF THE SUITE, THE YALE CLUB, NEW YORK

Chaos. Bobby is pacing back and forth. Carmine is checking travel documents and smoking. We find Miles and Walter Browne from the US chess team eating sandwiches over a chessboard. Mcallister has a couple of guys standing by the door, peeking out into the corridor.

Another of Mcallister's men is frisking a bewildered limo driver for microphones. The rock music is loud. Mcallister enters with Bobby's suitcase. He raises his voice.

MCALLISTER

Does the music have to be so loud?

Carmine comes close, grabs a sandwich and glances at Bobby...

CARMINE

It's so the Russians can't hear which plane we're catching...

Bobby turns and sees the suitcase in Mcallister's hand.

BOBBY

I told you I ain't going anywhere until I see my sister. I wrote her and promised her when I was in New York I would see her.

Mcallister chews on a sandwich and leafs through an itinerary.

MCALLISTER

Bobby I forgot, she called. She said she understands your schedule is crazy and she'll see you after the tournament.

Bobby reacts but Carmine takes his arm...

CARMINE

Bobby we have to go. There's a car waiting.

BOBBY

Wait, wait, I haven't even agreed the money yet.

Mcallister sighs.

MCALLISTER

Bobby we've been through this. We got you thirty per cent of the gate off the top. It's the best deal any chess player ever had.

Bobby's pacing has taken him to a window. He glances out into the street.

BOBBY

What about reporters? There'll be reporters at the airport.

MCALLISTER

No one knows we're leaving tonight. There'll be no reporters.

Mcallister picks up Bobby's suitcase.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

No TV's. No cameras, no bugs...

Mcallister holds the suitcase out for Bobby to take.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

No Maraschino cherries.

Bobby thinks, takes a breath, sweeps his hair from his face. Suddenly...

EXT. AIRPORT ROAD, NEAR A MILITARY AIRFIELD, MOSCOW

The heavy seventies rock we heard in Bobby's room continues as theme.

On a featureless windswept plain, we see a fleet of Zils making their way toward a military airstrip where a single Aeroflot plane awaits. The Zils have Soviet flags on the hoods and are escorted by motorcycle outriders and Russian police cars with flashing lights...

We cut inside the back of one of the Zils and find Boris, staring out. Flashing lights illuminate his face. Geller is at his side. Another KGB guy sits at his other shoulder. Boris looks like a prisoner, just like Bobby.

INT. JFK AIRPORT - LATE NIGHT

The heavy rock continues. A limousine pulls up at departures. Carmine is first to jump out. Mcallister and a couple of his guys jump out too and Miles and Walter Browne jump out of a town car following.

Then Bobby appears. He looks like a hunted animal. Carmine has him by the arm. Mcallister holds the door as Carmine hurries Bobby forward. Bobby hesitates. Carmine shoves him through the door.

INT. MOSCOW MILITARY AIRBASE

We find Boris being escorted by dozens of KGB men who are marching fast through the airport toward departures. *Two lines of Russian soldiers all salute as Boris passes.* Geller salutes back but Boris just stares at them. Geller holds the door for Boris.

INT. JFK AIRPORT, CONCOURSE

There are only a few stragglers left inside the airport, along with contract cleaners. Bobby, Carmine, McAllister and the others walk fast in a group, looking left and right with Bobby in the middle. The heavy rock continues.

INT. JFK AIRPORT, CONCOURSE

Bobby and his entourage turn a corner in the long airport corridor. We see some guy in green overalls driving a cleaning machine over the shiny floor. As the floor cleaning machine clears, we suddenly see ten journalists turning and one-by-one they spot Bobby...

JOURNALIST 2

There he is!

They begin to run up the shallow slope towards Bobby and the others. Bobby turns and shoves Miles and Carmine aside to get a clear way of escape. He then turns on his heels and runs...



## EXT. JFK AIRPORT

We see Bobby leaping into a yellow taxi where the driver is fast asleep. The driver wakes with a start and Bobby yells...

BOBBY  
Drive, drive, drive!!

## EXT. NATIONAL THEATER, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

The National Theatre is Iceland's most prestigious building and tonight it is lit for the biggest occasion in its history.

Dozens of news crews from around the world are waiting. As we join the scene, almost as if in a choreographed dance, the US Ambassador to Iceland (TREMBLAY) and the Soviet Ambassador (ASTAVIN) are arriving, accompanied by fleets of Zils and Limousines. There are red carpets and searchlights lighting up the sky and crowds of people gathered to watch.

*Caption: National Theatre, Reykjavik, Iceland, July 1st 1972.*

We join the US Ambassador as he is ushered from his car. Then we join the Soviet Ambassador as he emerges. The Soviet and the US Ambassadors are both quickly surrounded by CIA and KGB men. The two groups of men in dark suits glare at each other as the two Ambassadors shake hands.

As they do, we see Lombardy hurrying through the crowd towards the US Ambassador. He speaks quickly to Tremblay's bodyguard and is then allowed to speak to him. All the time there are smiles and waves and drifting classical music. Lombardy gets close and speaks softly.

LOMBARDY  
Mr Ambassador, we have a problem.

Tremblay turns.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)  
Bobby Fischer has disappeared.

## INT. BOBBY'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT - DAWN

The apartment is frozen in time. Strips of silver aluminum foil still hang from the window frames. The chessboards are still set up. The place is a mess but it has settled into something almost beautiful. Thin dawn light enters in shafts.

We find Bobby sitting alone at a chess table where *no move has been made*. He has found some old clothes and beside the table there is a coat he wore when he was a child and also the heavy overcoat Joan wore when she was young. Beside that is the toy gun Joan gave to Bobby... 'Mr Peacemaker'.

Bobby picks up the toy gun and puts it to his head. His hand shakes. He closes his eyes and speaks flatly...

BOBBY

Mr Peacemaker. Make the peace.

He pulls the trigger. He opens his eyes.

INT. NATIONAL THEATER, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

All the dignitaries are gathered and a crowd of six hundred guests begin to applaud as a Master of Ceremonies announces...

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

Ladies and gentlemen, the Prime  
Minister of Iceland, Olafur  
Johannesson...

Applause. We catch the US Ambassador looking embarrassed, knowing what comes next. Two seats away from him is Lombardy who is also looking drawn and anxious.

The Prime Minister is on his feet.

JOHANNESSON

It is with great pleasure that I  
welcome the whole world to our  
little island for what is being  
described as the most important  
sporting event in history.

The Prime Minister looks across at Tremblay with barely disguised irritation, hidden with amusement...

JOHANNESSON (CONT'D SARCASTIC)

However, I am confused. I was  
always led to understand that in  
order to play chess you needed  
two people. Unfortunately so far  
we only have one.

The crowd murmur. As Johannesson speaks, we cut to Boris, who is sitting with Livo Nei and Geller. They all register unease as Johannesson continues...

JOHANNESSON (CONT'D)

Our Russian friends managed to get here on time but apparently the Americans have lost Mr Bobby Fischer...

There are some jeers and boos from the crowd. Johannesson turns once again to Tremblay...

JOHANNESSON (CONT'D)

One hopes the Americans are not so careless with their nuclear weapons, which they would hide on our own little island if they had the chance.

Sniggers from the Russians. We cut to Tremblay who shifts in his seat and hisses at Lombardy...

TREMBLAY

Tell your people to get that son of a bitch here right *now* or we'll lose every air base and tracking station in Iceland.

INT. BOBBY'S APARTMENT - LATER

The apartment is still in half darkness as Bobby stares at an un-played game of chess. Then Bobby hears a key in the door. He turns sharply. Joan is standing in the doorway. Bobby hides his overwhelming reaction. She enters. Bobby gets to his feet and he and Joan face each other. Joan holds her emotion in check.

JOAN

The whole world is looking for you Bobby.

Bobby looks at his shoes.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Do you want me to help you get away?

Bobby tries not to break but he nods quickly to his shoes.

BOBBY

I can't play anymore Joany. When I go to the table I see people and hear voices...

Joan takes a step closer. Bobby's eyes are shining...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Save me like you did on the train track.

She reaches out and takes hold of his hand. She squeezes it tight.

JOAN

We'll get your things and we'll go somewhere quiet, ok?

Bobby nods. Then he looks up with tears on his face. He can't stop himself and he steps forward to grab her. He hugs Joan hard....

*But then...Joan vanishes. It isn't Joan he is holding in his arms, it is her overcoat which he has bunched up in his fists. He realizes Joan was a hallucination.*

At that moment there is a heavy knock on the apartment door. Bobby looks startled.

Now the knocking on the door is heavier...and then someone is breaking the door down. Bobby whimpers and stares in terror. Finally the door flies open...and Mcallister enters, accompanied by Carmine and two of Mcallister's men.

Mcallister and Carmine look delighted to see Bobby but Mcallister gestures at Carmine that he'll do the talking.

MCALLISTER

Hey Bobby. The man. We were worried about you.

Bobby gets up and confronts them with his toy gun in his hand. Mcallister gently closes the door. Carmine lights a cigarette.

Then Mcallister quietly gives a slip of paper to one of his men with a phone number on it. The guy goes to Bobby's phone and begins to dial in the background as Mcallister talks. Carmine is staring at the gun.

CARMINE

That's a toy, right?

Mcallister is a professional and speaks softly.

MCALLISTER

If it wasn't I'd have taken it from him by now.

Mcallister addresses Bobby...

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

Bobby, what happened? Why did you run away like that?

In terror Bobby begins to search for excuses.

BOBBY

I changed my mind. The money's  
no good.

Mcallister smiles, comes closer.

MCALLISTER

Well you know what, we just heard  
there's an extra \$125,000 on the  
table for you if you play.

Bobby reacts with astonishment. Carmine gets to his feet  
and approaches...it's like they're gently stalking an  
escaped animal.

CARMINE

Yeah apparently some English guy.  
A chess nut. Wants to see you  
play so bad...

MCALLISTER

A guy like me.

Bobby steps back from them.

BOBBY

We split that, right? Boris and  
me.

CARMINE

It's just for you Bobby.

BOBBY

No! Money is respect. Chess  
deserves respect.

Mcallister chuckles. He and Carmine come closer.

MCALLISTER

You want respect? Man, don't you  
know? You've got respect.  
You've got the respect of the  
whole US Government.

Mcallister glances at the guy on the phone who nods and  
holds up the receiver.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)

There's someone wants to speak to  
you. They said when we find you  
they have to talk to you.

Bobby turns to study the phone. Carmine wipes sweat.

BOBBY

Is it Joany?

Mcallister smiles.

MCALLISTER  
Better than that.

Bobby hesitates. Carmine whispers.

CARMINE  
Bobby, it's secretary of State  
Henry fucking Kissinger now  
answer the phone.

Bobby straightens, stares in disbelief. He drops his toy gun to the floor. Mcallister takes the phone and hands it to Bobby. Bobby listens in silence. We hear Henry Kissinger's voice down the phone.

KISSINGER (FROM PHONE)  
Hey Bobby...

A disbelieving pause.

KISSINGER (CONT'D FROM PHONE)  
This is the worst chess player in  
the world talking to the best.  
The President and I want you to  
go do your duty for your country.  
What do you say?

Bobby focuses on Carmine who nods through a sweaty, anxious smile.

EXT. BOBBY'S APARTMENT

Bedford-Stuyvesant sweats too in the hot night air as two of Mcallister's men emerge from the apartment block entrance and check the street. There is a bread van parked nearby and the lights on the van are switched on at a signal given by the men.

Then Mcallister and Lombardy emerge, either side of Bobby, who looks hunted and dazed. They hurry Bobby toward the back of the bread van.

MCALLISTER  
No limos this time. We travel in  
disguise.

Bobby is ranting quietly...

BOBBY  
Respect, ok? That's what this is  
for. For the good of the game,  
right?

Mcallister and Carmine load Bobby into the back of the bread van. Mcallister slams the rear doors then jumps into the passenger seat and the bread van roars away.

EXT. JFK AIRPORT

We see the bread van arriving at a rear entrance to the airport building. Guys in dark suits are waiting to escort Bobby as he jumps out of the van looking bewildered. Mcallister trots to his side and hands him a plane ticket.

MCALLISTER

We're going to the war Bobby.

Bobby is hyperventilating. His face hardens and he bursts through the double doors ahead of him.

INT. REGINA'S MOSCOW APARTMENT - DAY

On a black and white TV we see a grainy image of Bobby emerging through the door of a plane at Reykjavik airport. He hesitates on the plane steps.

We pull away to reveal it is Regina who is watching the TV images. She is smoking a cigarette. The news item is in Russian but we hear the name 'Bobby Fischer'.

Regina is expressionless as we see a scratchy image of Bobby hurrying down the steps of the plane and running head first through a crowd of journalists toward a police car. Regina's only reaction is to squeeze the tissue in her hand tight when his name is mentioned.

INT. POLICE CAR

The car speeds down empty Icelandic roads.

*Caption: Reykjavik, Iceland, July 4th 1972.*

Bobby sits in the back seat with Mcallister and Carmine either side of him. The siren is wailing and Bobby looks like a prisoner (another reflection of Boris) as he stares out at the bleak Icelandic landscape. They arrive at the same house we saw in the opening shot.

INT. GRANITE HOUSE, BEDROOM

It is the same bedroom we saw in the second scene. Bobby is searching for listening devices behind the curtains, getting on his knees to run his fingers along the skirting boards. He hums to himself as he searches, opening drawers, peeking into lamp shades...

There is a gentle knock on the door and Lombardy enters. He stops and stares at Bobby for a moment with quiet horror.

LOMBARDY (SOFTLY)  
Welcome to Iceland Bobby.

Bobby half turns then resumes his search.

BOBBY  
Help me look for bugs, man.  
They're fucking everywhere.

Lombardy hesitates...watches Bobby search for a moment, then angrily turns and leaves.

INT. GRANITE HOUSE, KITCHEN

Mcallister is smoking a cigarette by the window. Outside, Icelandic ponies graze. Upstairs we can hear Bobby searching for bugs in his room. Lombardy enters. The tension between the two men is palpable. Lombardy stares at Mcallister, allowing the noise of Bobby's search upstairs to make his point for him. Mcallister stubs his cigarette.

MCALLISTER  
Bobby is here to do an important job.

LOMBARDY  
If he's working for the CIA he should get paid more money.

Mcallister half smiles, stares out of the window.

MCALLISTER  
Bobby is touched by the angels.  
Let the angels do their work.

EXT. NATIONAL THEATER

We see the place from above, surrounded by huge crowds of people. As we move lower we find TV crews from every continent making reports in their own languages. The only words we understand are 'Bobby Fischer' and 'Boris Spassky'...

*Caption: July 11th 1972. Game one.*

We move through the crowds to find huge screens set up outside the auditorium with a live feed of a large mahogany chessboard inside.



We then reach the main entrance as Boris Spassky arrives in a white Jeepster, travelling in the center of a huge convoy of black Zil cars. Boris looks relaxed and tanned as he jumps out of his Jeepster to huge applause and cheering.

Boris milks the adoration for a while, but up close we may sense the fear as he looks across the tops of heads to see if Bobby has arrived. There is no sign of him.

#### INT. NATIONAL THEATER

Inside, suited officials with arm bands and thousands of milling fans are waiting to cheer Boris. There are enormous screens all around the reception area and in the restaurants. Boris is led into the main auditorium.

#### INT. PLAYING HALL

The main hall is vast with a huge oblong light box above the stage. The seats are full to bursting. There are TV cameras all around the stage, and there, in the center of the stage, a large table with the mahogany chessboard set up.

The crowd get to their feet and yell support as Boris enters the hall. He makes his way to the stage with Livo Nei and Geller by his side. Twenty bodyguards and KGB guys march behind them.

Boris leaps onto stage and waves his hand at the crowd. As he does he whispers to Livo Nei.

BORIS

(Where the fuck is Fischer?)

The official adjudicator (Schmid) is looking anxiously at the big clock above the stage. Spassky is standing in a huddle with Livo Nei and Geller. The applause dies and soon the crowd are getting restless. Slow hand clapping begins. Then there is a commotion at the door. Bodies appear. We see Lombardy and Carmine...followed by a flash of cameras...

Bobby steps warily into the auditorium in his sharp suit. He has a hunted expression and flinches as camera lights flash. Some of the crowd applaud, others jeer and boo. Bobby then walks slowly down the aisle toward the stage. He passes Mcallister, who stares impassively as Bobby walks by.

Bobby steps onto the stage alone and stares all around in bewilderment. The applause builds for the two men. Bobby turns and walks toward Boris, who holds out his hand to shake...

But Bobby walks straight past him. He walks on a few paces as if he were about to leave the stage but he sees Carmine in the wings. Bobby looks bewildered...then stops and turns around. He spots Boris and walks back to him and grabs his hand.

There is a blizzard of camera flashes as they finally shake hands. Bobby finally smiles...

SCHMID

Now we come together for the  
drawing of the colors.

The crowd are buzzing with anticipation. Camera flashes are once again blinding as Boris picks up a white pawn and a black pawn. He shuffles them and then holds out his closed fists. He looks at Bobby's uncertain face and smiles...

BORIS

Bobby? Choose...

We now follow the word 'choose' as it travels West.

EXT. AUDITORIUM, ICELAND

On the big screen outside the theater, the massive crowd sees Boris holding out his hands to Bobby....

BORIS

Choose...

INT. WHITE HOUSE, OVAL OFFICE, WASHINGTON

Through a half open door to the Oval Office, we see the backs of six guys in suits (the President and his advisers) who are watching a large screen TV...

BORIS

Choose...

INT. KREMLIN, PRESIDENTIAL SANCTUM, MOSCOW

President Brezhnev is seated in a large swivel chair, watching his TV...

BORIS

Choose...

INT. STAGE

We are back at the playing hall. We cut close to Boris's hand opening slowly.

SCHMID

Mr Fischer chose black. Let the game begin.

Huge applause and cheers. Bobby and Boris's eyes meet. Then the uncertainty leaves Bobby's eyes as he goes to his seat and sits down. Boris sits down at the same time. The cheering and applause builds to a crescendo and then...

INT. PLAYING HALL, STAGE

Silence.

Bobby is sitting at the table opposite Spassky, who sits imperiously still. Fischer has his thumb and forefinger pushing his lips into a contemplative grimace.

Bobby moves his Knight to King Bishop Four. A whisper goes around the hall...

INT. VIEWING GALLERY

The gallery is across the hall from the stage and has a glass wall so the advisers and seconds can see down onto the stage. There is also a large screen showing all the moves close up. We see Bobby's move on the screen. A whisper goes around the gallery too. Lombardy and Carmine are together at one end of the gallery. Livo Nei, Geller and ten other advisers are at the other end. They eye each other across the divide.

As Bobby moves, Lombardy makes a note on his pad.

LOMBARDY

He's inviting Spassky to take the Indian defense.

Spassky moves. The Russian advisers all scribble notes.

CARMINE

Spassky is taking the invitation.

INT. STAGE

Bobby studies the board. He feels Boris's eyes on him and shifts a little. Behind Bobby there is a movement... Bobby hears someone moving along a row of seats. He turns irritably...

BOBBY

Could you hush...

....he suddenly sees Regina making her way along the row of seats.

Bobby takes a sharp breath and looks quickly back to the board. His face is an explosion. He hisses to himself...

BOBBY (CONT'D EXCITED, ANGRY)  
How the hell did she get in here?

Boris angles his head at Bobby, puzzled. Up above we glimpse Lombardy peering down from the viewing area.

Bobby turns to the audience once again, *but this time Regina has disappeared.*

The seat is empty. Bobby blinks fast. He hears someone opening a door behind him and he turns sharply...but his mother is nowhere to be seen.

He glances up at Spassky who is registering Bobby's sudden discomfort. Spassky then makes his move and slaps his clock.

Bobby takes some sharp breaths and dares to look into the empty seat in the auditorium again. This time, he sees Regina again, staring straight at him. She lifts a camera to her face and takes a photo.

As the photo flashes, Bobby leaps to his feet and strides toward the seating area. Bobby now sees that the seat is empty once more. Bobby stops and looks confused.

Suddenly...a whisper in his ear...a replay of Regina's words in the doctor's surgery all those years ago.

REGINA  
It's a possession...he is  
possessed..

Bobby turns fast to see a female official walking by.

BOBBY  
What did you say? Hey,  
you...what did you say?

The official looks puzzled and walks on. Bobby is breathing fast. He looks all around and then calls out to Schmid...

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
We're gonna have to stop this.  
There are cameras everywhere in  
here. I can hear them rolling...I  
can't concentrate...

INT. VIEWING GALLERY

Geller and Nei are watching at the far end of the viewing area. Carmine is staring anxiously down at the auditorium.

Lombardy has seen Bobby getting agitated and hurries out to go down on the floor...

INT. AUDITORIUM

Lombardy arrives on the floor and hisses to Bobby, whose arms are swinging wildly as he paces back and forth...

LOMBARDY

Bobby are you ok?

Bobby looks all around the room and a thousand faces all stare at him, none of them his mother. He is aware now that his mother was a hallucination. He has to think of another reason to explain his behavior...

BOBBY

It's too fucking noisy in here, you know? Too many cameras. We have to get the cameras out of here.

Bobby points to a velvet curtain.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Behind there. I can hear them...

LOMBARDY

Bobby, it's ok. They're just TV cameras.

BOBBY

And there's something wrong with the lights in here....

He looks across at the seating area. He is trying to blame the lights for what he saw....

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I'm seeing like...*shadows*...I can't see what anything is.

LOMBARDY

Ok Bobby I'll ask them to turn up the lights. Spassky has made his move, you go sit down.

Bobby is vibrating with tension. He stares at the faces of the crowd, the unblinking gaze of the cameras. He swings his arms around and then returns to his seat. As he does, Spassky studies him with cool contempt...

Bobby looks down at his lap then dares to look at the seating area. *He sees his mother sitting there and beside her he sees his sister Joan as a small girl and also himself as a small boy.*

He whimpers a little and looks down at his knees which are shaking. A voice in his ear...

REGINA

Why does he do everything like  
he's made of rubber?

Bobby waves his arm wildly to get the voice away from him. He looks out of the side of his eyes at the audience and sees Regina has gone. He looks up at Spassky. Spassky is detached and calm...a half smile appears on his face. He looks at Bobby's clock and sees his time is ticking away....

In a soft whisper Boris begins to count down, a mocking imitation of Bobby in his previous games...

BORIS (SOFTLY)

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six...

Bobby lowers his head. He looks back to the board...and makes his move.

INT. VIEWING GALLERY

Carmine is standing at the glass staring down at the game. At the far end of the viewing room, almost in silhouette, we see Geller and Nei also watching the game.

Lombardy returns from the floor and hurries to Carmine. Carmine is watching the game and Lombardy joins him just in time to see Bobby move a piece. Carmine hisses...

CARMINE

*Ah shit....*

EXT. AUDITORIUM

We see the move being made on the giant screen outside the auditorium. A gasp goes around the crowd. Among the international TV crews there is a buzz going round too. We join an anchor for ABC news...

ANCHOR

The game was following a set  
pattern known as a Nizmo. Then  
Bobby Fischer made one move that  
will hit the front page of every  
newspaper in the world tomorrow  
morning...

A pause.

ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Because Bobby Fischer has made a  
huge mistake....

INT. AUDITORIUM

We come close to Mcallister who is watching without expression as Walter Browne whispers interpretations into his ear. Suddenly, on stage, Bobby leaps to his feet once more...

BOBBY

I can still hear the cameras!  
And I can't see in here. I can't  
see a damn thing in here...

Bobby turns to the audience and meets Mcallister's eye. He stares at Mcallister with terror in his eyes. Mcallister meets his gaze impassively.

Bobby suddenly turns and claws at the velvet curtain at the back of the stage.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I want these people out of  
here...

Two TV cameramen are pulled into the light by Bobby and the crowd begin to jeer and hiss.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I can hear them whispering!!

The crowd begin to boo some more and then slow hand clap. Mcallister's face doesn't betray his anxiety, but after a tense moment he suddenly gets to his feet and leaves.

INT. DARK CORRIDOR BEHIND THE PLAYING STAGE

A dark, uncertain place with odd light shafts slipping through black-out curtains. We hear the audience applauding and cheering. Then the black-out curtain billows and in a shaft of light Bobby appears in a fury.

He hears reporters yelling outside and stops. As he does, Lombardy and Carmine appear. The fire exit door bursts open and some reporters spill inside.

Lombardy grabs Bobby and pulls him through the nearest door.

INT. PING PONG ROOM

There is a small room used as a recreation area for staff in the theater. There is a drinks machine and a ping pong table. Carmine and Lombardy push Bobby inside and lock the door. Suddenly the noise of the auditorium and the reporters disappears.

Carmine and Lombardy take a breath.

CARMINE

Ok Bobby you get yourself together ok? You just lost one game. It's ok there are lots more games to come. When you're calm we'll get you out to the car.

Bobby is breathing hard but then he stops and looks all around the room.

LOMBARDY

The reporters will go after Spassky, so we can slip you out another way...

Bobby has stopped breathing. He is staring around the room in wonder. He studies the bare walls and the ping pong table as if they were works of art. Carmine and Lombardy are puzzled.

CARMINE

Bobby? Are you ok?

Bobby is still staring in awe.

BOBBY

It's...*quiet* in here isn't it.

Carmine and Lombardy look at each other. We will learn that Bobby has just decided upon a new strategy.

EXT. THEATER

Crowds cheer and applaud. Boris Spassky is leaving the theater to a hero's reception, wearing shades, looking like a movie star. Some in the crowd are waving Soviet flags. Crowds push forward to get his autograph. He is accompanied into the waiting Zil by Livo Nei.

INT. ZIL, OUTSIDE THE THEATER

The crowds are pushing their hands against the glass as Boris and Nei settle into their seats and the car pulls away.



Boris removes his dark glasses and we see he looks deeply weary behind his dark glasses. Nei squeezes his arm.

NEI

(He broke at the first hard blow.)

Boris nods, rubs his eyes and looks wary. Nei studies Boris, surprised he is not happier.

BORIS

(For no reason he shot himself in the head).

The crowds outside the Zil are still swarming around the car.

NEI

(You loaded the gun).

Boris stares thoughtfully out of the window.

BORIS

(My chess teacher taught me. A man who is prepared to commit suicide always has the initiative.)

INT. GRANITE HOUSE, HALLWAY

The door to Bobby's room is locked and from inside we hear loud rock music playing on his short wave radio. We study the closed door for a moment. Then Lombardy arrives at the door with a burger and fries. He knocks the door hard and calls out loudly.

LOMBARDY

Bobby, come on, we need to talk about the next game. I've got food. I promise it's not fish. We had some food sent down from the US Air Force base.

There is no reply. Lombardy looks concerned. He knocks the door again. After a moment a slip of paper is pushed out from under the door. Lombardy sighs and picks it up.

INT. GRANITE HOUSE, KITCHEN

Carmine is sitting in the kitchen, sipping whisky from the bottle. Mcallister is peering out of the window, smoking. Outside we see the Icelandic police guards and a US Air Force jeep. Walter Browne is studying the game Bobby just lost on a chessboard on the kitchen table. The music from upstairs leaks out. Lombardy enters with the un-delivered meal and the piece of paper.

Lombardy dumps the meal, plate and all, into the trash. He looks devastated as he hands the sheet of paper to Mcallister.

As Mcallister reads, Lombardy summarizes for Carmine and Browne...

LOMBARDY

He says unless the rest of the games are played without an audience and without cameras he isn't going to play.

Mcallister looks incredulous as he reads on...

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

And he'll only carry on if the rest of the games are played....

A disbelieving pause...

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

...in the ping pong room behind the main stage...

Carmine grabs the sheet of paper...

CARMINE

The fucking *what*?

LOMBARDY

The room where we hid out. He says it's the only place that's quiet.

Lombardy leans back against the wall and looks up at the ceiling...the source of the music.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

God help him, he's just making impossible demands to make sure the Russians will say no. It's his way of quitting.

He turns to Carmine then glares at Mcallister.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

Your horse just fell at the first fence. I guess the American dream is over.

Lombardy pushes past Mcallister and leaves.

EXT. ICELANDIC HILLS, BESIDE A BUBBLING SPRING

The scene is a pastoral idyll. There are rolling hills in the background and the spring steams in the morning air.

We find Bobby playing around and laughing with a small herd of Icelandic ponies which roam free in the hills. He runs with them, shoos them, strokes their manes. Over this we see an incongruous caption.

*Caption: Game two.*

INT. PLAYING STAGE

The auditorium is full but there is a kind of stunned silence. The 'Game two' caption remains.

Boris steps on stage from the wings but there is no applause. Schmid nods for the clocks to be started. Boris stares across the board. Bobby's seat is empty.

EXT. ICELANDIC HILLS

Bobby has jumped aboard one of the ponies and rides a little way, laughing. The horse bucks and throws him off and he rolls on the grass (Bobby's haphazard riding is a contrast to Boris's horsemanship earlier).

INT. PLAYING HALL

Boris sits down and moves a pawn. The audience are not moving a muscle.

EXT. ICELANDIC HILLS

Bobby is on his knees, looking all around, suddenly deep in thought. A pony comes close and licks Bobby's hand.

INT. PLAYING STAGE

Bobby's clock hits zero. There is a sigh from the audience. We hear Schmid announce.

SCHMID

Mr Spassky wins by forfeit. He  
now leads the tournament by two  
points to zero.

Schmid produces a typed sheet and begins to read from it.

SCHMID (CONT'D)

And according to Federation  
rules...Mr Fischer now has twenty  
four hours to indicate in writing  
that he wishes to continue in the  
agreed venue...

## EXT. ICELANDIC HILLS

Bobby checks his watch and becomes thoughtful as he gets to his feet and walks with the ponies...We hear Schmid continuing in OOV.

SCHMID (OOV)  
...Otherwise, Mr Fischer will be  
disqualified and Mr Spassky will  
be declared World Champion.

A half smile appears on Bobby's face...almost as if things are working out exactly the way he wants them to.

## INT. SAGA HOTEL, BORIS SPASSKY'S ROOM - LATER

A bottle of Champagne sits in a bucket of ice inside the plush suite. We glimpse a message card tied to the neck of the bottle. The door opens and Livo Nei enters with Boris. The mood is subdued. Boris is coiled and tense.

Nei goes to the bottle and reads the card.

NEI  
(It is from President Brezhnev.  
He says congratulations on your  
second victory).

BORIS  
Victory?

Boris suddenly snaps. He strides towards the bottle, pushes Nei aside and then hurls the Champagne at the wall, where it smashes and fizzes.

## EXT. GRANITE HOUSE (REPEATED SCENE)

We repeat the scene which opened the movie, with the granite house at dawn and Mcallister's car driving towards it.

## INT. GRANITE HOUSE, BOBBY'S BEDROOM - DAWN (REPEATED SECOND HALF SCENE)

*We return to the second scene.* This time, only Bobby and Mcallister's words are heard. We join Bobby sitting in his boxer shorts....his gaze fixed...

MCALLISTER  
There are boys your age in  
Vietnam giving their fucking  
lives right now for the fight  
against Communism.

Bobby nods once.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)  
And all you have to do is put  
your fucking pants on and play.

A pause.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)  
If the Russians win this, they  
win the brain war. There is only  
one man on this entire planet who  
can stop them.

Mcallister is now close to Bobby and his shadow falls on  
Bobby's face.

MCALLISTER (CONT'D)  
Now Bobby please...get dressed,  
comb your hair and go save the  
free world.

A long pause (this time we will hear the answer).  
Finally...flippantly...Bobby looks at Mcallister.

BOBBY  
Ping pong.

At last we come around to Mcallister. His face turns to  
anger then to stone.

MCALLISTER  
I will report your words to the  
President of the United States.  
You have betrayed your country.  
May you rot in hell you crazy son  
of a bitch.

After a moment Mcallister turns and leaves, slamming the  
door as he goes. Bobby's eyes flicker. We sense a steely  
determination....

INT. SAGA HOTEL, BORIS'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Boris is pacing around the room, playing six different  
games of chess all at the same time. He is wearing pyjamas  
and for the first time he looks a little vulnerable. *In  
his anxiety and fast movement he almost resembles Bobby.*

He checks his watch and goes to look out of the window. We  
see TV crews loading their gear into trucks. We sense the  
world believes the game is up.

INT. GRANITE HOUSE, OUTSIDE BOBBY'S BEDROOM DOOR

Carmine arrives at the door with a stack of telexes. He knocks.

CARMINE

Bobby, I have messages from like a million people including veterans who lost bits of their bodies in Korea telling you to open this fucking door.

Silence. Carmine kneels and begins to shove the telexes under the door. As he does, he calls out...

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Bobby, you still have two and a half hours.

There is no reply.

INT. SAGA HOTEL, BORIS'S ROOM

As Boris prowls from chess game to chess game, he begins to mumble to the empty space on the other side of the chessboard he is facing...

BORIS

(Robert James Fischer you have to see reason...)

He takes a breath, gets hold of himself...then growls... He checks his watch. He stops and glares at the telephone by the bed. He goes to it and picks it up and speaks directly without dialing...

BORIS (CONT'D)

(I want you to know I cannot win this way! I know you are listening because you always listen....)

He puts the phone down and then looks all around the room. He speaks to the walls...

BORIS (CONT'D)

(Mr Bubnov, Mr Geller, President Brezhnev, I know there are always listening devices in my rooms in case I am planning to escape. So I know you can hear me.)

He makes three fast moves on three different chessboards. Then he yells out at the walls and ceiling...

BORIS (CONT'D)  
 (I do not want to win this way!!  
 Do you hear me?!!)

Boris makes some more moves on the chessboards. He stops and angrily addresses the walls again...

BORIS (CONT'D)  
 (I need to destroy him now or he  
 will be following me forever like  
 a devil!)

After a moment there is a knock at the door. Boris goes to the door. It is Geller, also in pyjamas.

GELLER  
 Is everything ok?

BORIS  
 What makes you think it isn't?

GELLER (DEFENSIVE)  
 I heard you through the walls.

Geller pushes past Boris and enters the room. Boris turns...

BORIS  
 Then you will know I have made a  
 decision.

A pause.

BORIS (CONT'D)  
 I want you to get a message to  
 Bobby Fischer. Now. This  
 minute.

GELLER  
 For all I know they have already  
 dragged him away to the lunatic  
 asylum.

BORIS  
 I have decided. I will agree to  
 play in the ping pong room.

Geller stops in his tracks and turns to Boris.

EXT. ICELANDIC MOORLAND

An Icelandic geyser bubbles blue and steams in the morning air. Near to shot there is an old bicycle on the ground. An Icelandic police car approaches at speed down an empty, windswept road. It slows down as it approaches the bike and then skids to a halt.

Carmine and Lombardy leap out of the back of the car. The policeman driving the car gets out and examines the bike. He nods his head. Carmine immediately cups his hands and yells out to the rugged hillsides all around.

CARMINE

Bobby!!!!

EXT. MOORLAND, OVER THE BROW OF A SMALL HILL

Bobby is kneeling beside the spring again, tossing pebbles into the water, almost as if he is waiting for something. He is dressed in a two tone suit and white shoes. He hears Carmine yelling his name.

He checks his watch. A half smile appears on his face. He looks like a man whose plan has just worked perfectly. He tosses another pebble and then gets to his feet.

EXT. MOORLAND/POLICE CAR

Carmine is still yelling Bobby's name but then Lombardy spots Bobby skidding and sliding down the scree hillside. Carmine yells...laughing with disbelief...

CARMINE

Bobby!! You won't believe it!  
Spassky has agreed to play in the  
ping pong room!

Bobby doesn't appear to be in the least bit surprised, but instead he shrugs as he strolls nonchalantly toward Carmine and Lombardy. He addresses Lombardy directly...

BOBBY

In chess you have to know your  
opponent. My Indian defense has  
worked.

Bobby pushes past Lombardy toward the bicycle. Lombardy studies him...and slowly his mouth falls open as he begins to have a realization. He stares with disbelief at Bobby.

Bobby climbs aboard the bike and casually begins to cycle away down the long straight empty road. Lombardy is still staring at him with wonder. Carmine looks at Lombardy.

LOMBARDY

That son of a bitch.

A pause.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

It was...a move.



INT. LONG CORRIDOR INSIDE THE NATIONAL THEATER.

Lombardy and Carmine are walking fast backstage through swing doors. Lombardy is holding a sealed envelope. Carmine checks his watch.

CARMINE

We got two minutes.

Suddenly the door ahead of them opens and Mcallister appears.

MCALLISTER

The President of the United States wants to know what is going on.

Lombardy and Carmine push past him.

LOMBARDY

Tell the President he should make Bobby Fischer his Secretary of Defense.

Lombardy and Carmine hurry on with their sealed envelope. Mcallister looks confused.

INT. REYKJAVIK AIRPORT - DAY

The lounge is filled with reporters and news crews lining up to fly home. We see boards detailing flights to Moscow and to New York and there are two separate lines of passengers, hauling their equipment.

Then a guy runs toward the Moscow queue and hisses something in Russian. There is disbelief, people dropping their cases. Then an American TV employee appears and calls out to the American queue...

AMERICAN

Hey any NBC guys here, I got bad news. You're not going home.

INT. PING PONG ROOM

The room is now bare and claustrophobic. The ping pong table and drinks machine have been removed. A table in the center is just a simple table and the chess set seems too grand for the environment.

After a moment, Geller, Nei and then Boris enter the room. Geller and Nei are hiding huge misgivings as they look around the room. Geller sniffs the stuffiness in the air.

Schmid follows them in and checks his watch. Schmid looks peeved too...

SCHMID

If he is even one minute late  
this time, I will fine him.

Boris flickers a little as he grabs the back of his chair and squeezes it.

Then Bobby enters. He is wearing a sharp suit and crocodile shoes. All heads turn. Carmine and Lombardy enter behind him and take up position by the door. Bobby looks neither to the left nor right but immediately goes and sits down in his seat at the table.

For the first time Boris looks genuinely unnerved as Bobby stares into space across the board. Schmid speaks up.

SCHMID

Perhaps at least you would be  
gracious enough to thank Mr  
Spassky for acquiescing to your  
demands.

Bobby is expressionless.

BOBBY

I'm so grateful I'm going to let  
him watch me play.

Geller and Nei glare at Bobby, knowing that he has Boris on the back foot. Schmid meanwhile is pointing at a small surveillance type camera in the corner of the room.

SCHMID

There is only one camera. Just  
there. It does not move. It  
will relay pictures from  
this...*little* room...to the rest  
of the world.

A pause.

SCHMID (CONT'D)

Now please...can we just play  
chess?

BOBBY

I'm waiting.

INT. BROOKLYN DINER

The diner where Bobby once met Maria has been altered a dozen times and now looks seventies *kitsch*. A huge crowd of people are watching the TV in total silence, drinking coffee and beer without taking their eyes from the screen.

*Caption: Game three.*

At a certain table we see a hand written sign which reads...*'Bobby Fischer sat here, 1961'*.

On the TV we see a grainy image of Boris sitting at the table alone. Then we see Bobby sitting down and making his move. The crowd all instantly cheer the move. A voice from the back.

CUSTOMER

What the hell are we cheering, we don't know even if it's good or bad.

The crowd all turn and hush him. There is a tense moment. Then we see Spassky considering the move. After an agonizing few moments, Spassky knocks over his King. The crowd all roar as if this were a football game.

INT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, OFFICE

It's another hot summer day. The Motel clerk is staring at his TV screen. Donna is beside him, staring at the screen too.

*Caption: Game four.*

A businessman enters, sweating in his business suit. He just wants a room for the night. As he goes to the counter he sees the Motel clerk is totally engrossed in the TV. The customer waits in silence..a little unnerved by the way the Clerk is staring at the screen.

CUSTOMER

Excuse me...

CLERK (TO DONNA)

Spassky took Bobby's Bishop.

DONNA

So what? I took his virginity.

CLERK (TENSE)

Wait, Bobby's moving again.

The customer is perplexed. He speaks softly.

CUSTOMER

Excuse me...Fischer already won game four. He won it last night.

The clerk finally focuses on the customer.

CLERK

We know. We're watching the re-run. Ok with you ass hole?

INT. SMOKY BAR, MOSCOW.

The place is functional and drab, clouded in cigarette smoke. A single large TV screen is showing flickering images of the next game between Bobby and Boris...

*Caption: Game five.*

There is a lively and angry debate among the customers in Russian. On screen we see Bobby staring intently at Boris through the drifting cigarette smoke.

Then we find Regina and her husband, clinging on to each other near to the back of the bar. Suddenly there is a huge groan from the crowd. We see a flicker of delight on Regina's face which she hides. A disgruntled drinker drains his glass and gets up to go the bar. As he gets up he calls out...

DRINKER

(They are poisoning our man. They  
are doing something to his mind.)

As the drinker passes, Cyril glances at Regina and she squeezes his hand.

At that moment on the TV screen Boris gets to his feet.

INT. PING PONG ROOM

We join at the same moment that Boris gets to his feet. Schmid is sitting nearby. Boris grunts and begins to wander around the tiny room.

Bobby's eyes follow Boris as he walks and Boris seems to shrink away from Bobby's unflinching gaze. It's as if the two of them are now in a prison cell and this is just how Bobby wanted it. Then Boris turns to Schmid, who is half dozing in a hard backed chair near to the door.

BORIS

(There is something coming from  
my chair).

Schmid double takes...

SCHMID

Your *chair*?

Boris looks a little embarrassed but he is spooked by Bobby's stare and angry so he blurts out...

BORIS

It is a vibration or a sound of  
some kind.

(MORE)

BORIS(cont'd)

Maybe high frequency, I don't  
know...it is affecting my mind...

Boris dares to glance at Bobby. Bobby is staring at him impassively, in exactly the way Boris used to stare at Bobby...Boris looks away.

EXT. BACK STAGE, CORRIDOR

We can hear loud applause coming from the stage on the other side of the black out curtains. This time it is Boris who is marching away in a fury. He is yelling to the army of advisers who are hurrying in pursuit. Livo Nei and Geller are closest.

Boris stops and stares at them in fury. He has no logical complaint but blurts out...

BORIS

(Have you never heard of the  
CIA?)

He turns and continues to walk, yelling...

BORIS (CONT'D)

(I want my chair x-rayed!)

INT. REYKJAVIK HOSPITAL, X-RAY ROOM

A team of radiologists, accompanied by a bewildered looking Schmid are setting up Boris's chair ready to be x-rayed in a room normally used for sick patients. Schmid is wearing a lead vest. The head radiologist places the chair in position then leads Schmid out of the room.

INT. REYKJAVIK HOSPITAL, REVIEW ROOM

We see Boris and Nei studying a series of x-rays of the chair. Boris studies each frame intently, while Livo Nei studies Boris just as intently.

NEI

(Boris it is just a chair.)

Boris turns sharply and hisses.

BORIS

(Next you will be telling me that  
Fischer is just a chess player).

Boris walks.

INT. GRANITE HOUSE, BOBBY'S BEDROOM

Bobby is sitting in half darkness, in silence. He is studying a chess game. Grey half light comes through the windows and his curtains billow.

For the first time Bobby looks utterly serene as he studies the pieces on the board. Then there is a knock at the door. Bobby doesn't respond.

The door opens...and Regina enters. She looks young and we should know that she is a hallucination. Bobby doesn't look up. Regina comes to sit opposite him.

BOBBY (WITHOUT LOOKING UP)  
I wouldn't sit there if I were  
you, Momma. People get sick.

Regina smiles. A pause...

REGINA  
Do you forgive me?

A pause. Bobby moves a piece without looking up.

BOBBY  
Are you proud of me?

Regina doesn't reply.

REGINA  
What happened to you?

Bobby makes another move.

BOBBY  
I used to go back to the world.  
But I had to make a choice. So  
now I'm here all the time.

He finally looks up and smiles at Regina. She smiles back.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
All the time. I'm at the table  
all the time. I can never go  
back.

Bobby looks down at his fists which clench tightly.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
Are you watching, Momma?

Bobby doesn't dare to look up.

REGINA

Yes, I'm watching on TV. Every  
move.

Regina reaches over and puts her hand on his fist then  
removes it.

Bobby slowly looks up...and instead of seeing Regina he  
sees Boris Spassky staring back... We are suddenly in the  
ping pong room and as Bobby looks up, Spassky slowly looks  
down at the board.

*Caption: Game six.*

Spassky reacts to the move that Bobby just made. Boris  
studies the move then quickly looks up at Bobby with  
disbelief. He looks back to the board. He realizes  
something awful. We can feel his world falling apart. His  
eyes are beginning to glisten.

EXT. NATIONAL THEATER

The crowds are now huge around the venue with TV news crew  
vehicles spilling out of the car park and into the streets.  
Bobby's latest move has been relayed to the giant screens  
outside.

The ABC news anchor is standing with his crew and a  
professional chess adviser. The anchor is not broadcasting  
but is sipping coffee and listening to the feed into his  
ear piece, pushing it into his ear as he studies the move  
on the giant screen. He is replying to voices in his ear  
through his mic.....

ANCHOR (TO STUDIO)

Ok, he just did what? Don't use  
jargon, just in plain English.  
Ok...he's playing a wild game.  
What does that mean? Look I got  
some guy from the crowd down here  
who knows stuff...

The anchor looks up at his chess adviser who hisses in his  
other ear...

ADVISER

He's doing things there are no  
names for. He's like...going into  
it free. Nobody's seen these  
moves before...

There is a gasp from the audience and the chess adviser  
turns to study Bobby's latest move on the big screen.

ADVISER (CONT'D)

Jesus...what the hell is *that*?

## INT. VIEWING GALLERY

Carmine and Lombardy are sitting in armchairs, staring up at the black and white screen like religious adherents looking up at God. Mcallister is a little way behind them, chewing a match.

At the other end of the gallery, the Soviets are studying their own screen. They are also staring, totally speechless.

We survey their faces as the moves are made on the screens. They are all looking in awe. Fischer and Spassky are swapping moves in fast succession. Finally Mcallister comes close to Lombardy and speaks softly.

MCALLISTER

What's going on?

A pause.

LOMBARDY

Did you ever watch a spider make  
a web?

Across the gallery we catch Livo Nei wiping his eyes as he stares. We sense that he is in awe too. Geller glances at him just once. Fischer makes another move.

## INT. PING PONG ROOM

We see a look of total serenity on Bobby's eyes. He has reached a kind of *Nirvana*.

Bobby makes a move.

Boris blinks once. He looks up at Bobby. Bobby's eyes are still, his mind empty. A flicker of incomprehension crosses Boris's face...then he half smiles as he realizes he is beaten.

After a long moment, he knocks over his King with a flick of his finger. The King falls in slow motion. Bobby looks up.

## EXT. AUDITORIUM

The crowd breaks into huge applause...then cheering.

## INT. VIEWING GALLERY

Lombardy and Carmine slowly get to their feet and begin to applaud, filled with emotion.



After a moment, Nei gets to his feet too and applauds. Geller glares at him. Finally Mcallister gets to his feet and applauds too.

INT. PING PONG ROOM

There is silence in the room. Then...after a few moments...Boris also gets to his feet and begins to applaud.

Bobby looks up, confused and astonished that his enemy is applauding him. Boris applauds firmly.

EXT. NATIONAL THEATER

The crowd are applauding wildly as they see Boris getting to his feet and acknowledging the beauty of the game Bobby just played.

INT. PING PONG ROOM

Boris continues to applaud. The life seems to drain from Bobby's body and he slowly lowers his head. His long arms lose their tightness and he sinks into his chair.

As the cheering continues, we suddenly fade to black (the effect of the sudden black screen should be a little shocking).

We see a caption card as the applause and cheering grows.

*Caption: Bobby Fischer went on to win the World Championship and become the first American to hold the title. Game six remains one of the greatest games of chess ever played.*

EXT. AUDITORIUM

We cut back to Bobby just as suddenly. He is now emerging from inside the theater to acknowledge the adulation of the crowd who are whooping and cheering. Carmine and Lombardy are by his side. Both men beam with pride. In the background, Mcallister lights a cigarette. Bobby looks shocked and humbled. He waves just once.

We continue the *sound* of the wild cheering as we once again fade to black and see a caption.

*Caption: After winning the championship, Bobby Fischer never played another federation tournament and never defended his title.*

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, WINTER BLIZZARD

The cheering stops and is replaced by the sound of a howling wind. We cut to Bobby walking alone through the snow blasted park. He has a scarf wrapped around his face. He stops and sits down at one of the chess tables and wipes snow from it with his sleeve. He stares down at it.

After a moment Joan appears from the blizzard and sits down opposite Bobby. We are unsure if this is reality or a hallucination but we see Bobby look up and smile at Joan.

Joan takes his hand and squeezes it.

JOAN

You did it Bobby.

Bobby nods and smiles some more. We cut to black and see another caption card.

*Caption: Fischer's victory is considered by historians to be a crucial landmark in the war of ideas between the West and the Soviet Union.*

EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, WINTER BLIZZARD

Out of black Bobby and Joan hug each other and then part. Bobby turns to walk away into the blizzard. As he goes, Joan calls out to him...

JOAN

Bobby, I will always have your hand.

Bobby turns up his collar and walks into the snow.

We cut to black and a card caption.

*Caption: Bobby Fischer's sanity disintegrated after the victory and his paranoid delusions and obsessive rants saw him ostracized by America and by most of the world.*

EXT. REYKJAVIK GRAVEYARD

The snow swirls and we may think that we are still in Washington Park. But through the snow we gradually see gravestones and, near to shot, a mechanical digger scratching away at the frozen earth of Iceland.

Cut to black and caption card.

*Caption: Bobby Fischer lived in exile, shunned by most of humanity for thirty years. He died in 2008. He chose to be buried in Iceland.*

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE, BROOKLYN - NIGHT

We see snow swirling. We see uncertain lights. We might still be in the graveyard in Iceland, but then, through the swirling snow, Bobby as a young man steps forward with a baseball bat.

We see we are inside an abandoned warehouse. Bobby smashes a window with the baseball bat and takes a breath. Then he arrogantly throws the baseball bat in the air and lets it clatter on the ground. He grins, dusts his hands and walks out of shot, leaving a night time view of Brooklyn through a broken, dirty window.

A caption appears over the shot without fading to black.

*Caption: Bobby Fischer was the first and last American chess champion of the world.*

Fade to black.

THE END