

HARRY HAFT

Written by

Justine Juel Gillmer

Based on the novel

'Harry Haft: Survivor of Auschwitz, Challenger of Rocky Marciano'

by Alan Scott Haft

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11955 Walnut Lane
Apt 207
Los Angeles 90025
(310) 804 4956
justinejuelgillmer@gmail.com

EXT. CONEY ISLAND BOARDWALK - NIGHT

A sweltering summer's day is fading, casting shadows across the orange glow of sunset. Neon lights flicker to life on the boardwalk's attractions.

SUPER: BROOKLYN, JUNE 1949

Crowds surge towards the beach, the stalls, the amusements. A giddy sense of post-war reconstruction and joy.

Except for one man, moving through the crowd, like swimming upstream. HARRY HAFT. Brutishly handsome with intense, haunted eyes. He's lived a hundred lifetimes already.

Sleeves rolled up on his heavily patched shirt, revealing ropey forearms and a blue, scratchy tattooed number - 144738.

EXT. BROOKLYN SYNAGOGUE - NIGHT

Far from the sand, a SEAGULL cries overhead as Harry walks down a quieter street.

A RABBI is standing outside the synagogue, enjoying the night air. Welcoming a group of MEN inside.

The Rabbi meets Harry's gaze. Recognizing him with what might be pity. He gestures Harry over to join them, welcoming.

Harry considers. Then walks away.

INT. BROOKLYN JEWISH CLUB - NIGHT

A solitary fan blows hot air and cigarette smoke around, ruffling faded flags of pre-war Eastern European countries.

The PATRONS are all men. Most are Holocaust survivors. Drinking to forget. Tables crowd around a tiny space reserved as a stage.

Harry takes a seat at the bar. Fishes in his pocket for a quarter. Pushes the money across to the BARTENDER in exchange for dark Polish beer.

Harry turns his head to a table of ROWDY MEN. One nods at him. PERETZ HAFT, a sleeker version of his younger brother.

A female SINGER emerges from a back room. Taking command of the stage space, she begins to sing. A Yiddish folk love song, full of longing for home.

A HUSH falls. Even the drunkest of carousers falling silent.

Harry meets his brother's eyes. A mutual connection. The music stirring a memory...

FLASHBACK: EXT. POLISH FIELD - NIGHT 1941

The MOON illuminates two figures, moving quietly through a field of grain.

YOUNG HARRY follows YOUNG PERETZ. Both carry packs full of smuggled goods. Dark caps pulled down low.

Peretz stops. Squats down. Pulls Harry with him. Listening. But there's nothing but the wind.

In SUBTITLED YIDDISH (until flashbacks end):

PERETZ
(whispering)
The border's close.

Harry nods. They moving slowly through the RUSTLING BARLEY - right into a GERMAN PATROL.

SOLDIER
(German)
Halt! Don't move!

The brothers SCATTER. The Germans OPEN FIRE. Peretz dumps his pack. Harry bends to pick it up, hauling the two packs -

- as a BULLET catches his side. Harry stumbles.

PERETZ
Hertzko!

Peretz catches Harry, hauling him up.

EXT. BELCHATOW JEWISH QUARTER - NIGHT

Peretz drags Harry through the dark, quiet streets. Passing burned-out houses with smashed windows. NAZI FLAGS fly overhead.

They duck down an alleyway. Peretz covers Harry's mouth. Hushing him as a GERMAN SOLDIER passes by.

INT. PABLANKSI HOUSE - NIGHT

Peretz kicks open the door, hauling Harry inside - to the surprise of MEIR PABLANSKI, 50's, a once conservative man embracing the new role of black marketeer.

MEIR
What happened?

Harry FAINTS.

INT. PABLANKSI HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A Yiddish folk song plays. A scratchy, quiet recording. The same song from 1949.

Harry's eyelids flutter. Open. The pain floods back. He grimaces. Grabbing at his side.

LEAH
Don't touch it.

LEAH PABLANSKI, gangly, a force of nature, pushes him back down onto the thin bed. Stitching up his flesh wound under smoky candlelight.

LEAH (CONT'D)
If you're going to vomit, tell me first.

Harry looks around, disoriented. A small bedroom. The windows covered with blackout curtains.

A battered, precious RECORD PLAYER nearby. The source of the haunting Yiddish tune.

HARRY
Who are you?

LEAH
Leah Pablanski. Your brother's in business with my father. Or he was.

She pulls the thread tight, closing the wound. Harry gasps.

HARRY
(defensive)
The Germans knew we were coming.

LEAH
Thirty six. That's how many times I've made it across the border. I've never been caught.

HARRY
I bet you've never been shot.

She's not the type to resist a challenge. Leah lifts up her skirt, revealing a puckered SHRAPNEL SCAR on her shapely calf.

MEIR (O.S.)
Leah.

Meir stands in the doorway, too weary of his daughter's antics to be surprised.

MEIR (CONT'D)

Tz'ni'ut gedolah. Tell me what this means.

LEAH

To behave with great modesty, father.

She smooths her skirt down under his gaze.

MEIR

Finish with the boy, then hide the goods he didn't lose.

Leah lowers her head. But when Meir withdraws to the main room, she meets Harry's gaze. They explode in a quiet, hysterical giggle.

Bringing herself under control, Leah stands, picking up the bowl of bloody water, to leave.

HARRY

Leah. Wait. My name is Hertzko.

LEAH

I know. Not very smart, are you?

Harry gestures to his gunshot wound, cocky.

HARRY

But maybe a little bit brave?

It pays off. She's unable to help a smile.

As the Yiddish song SWELLS from the record player...

EXT. BELCHATOW ROAD - DAY 1941

The shimmering, buttery light of an unforgettable summer. Harry and Leah walk down a dirt road. Hands brushing.

Their BLUE STAR OF DAVID ARMBANDS the only clue to the dark world willing to destroy them.

Side by side, Leah's taller than him. But he likes it.

HARRY

You're very tall for a girl.

LEAH

Maybe you're just short.

He's constantly off-balance around her. Her flirting game miles above his own.

HARRY

You're a bit mean, as well.

LEAH

I'm walking with you, aren't I?

HARRY

(astute)

Because your father didn't want you to.

Dust billows in the distance. A NAZI CAR barreling down the road.

Harry takes Leah's hand, pulling her off the road. Hiding from any potential trouble. Hearts pounding.

The car and its heavily armed SOLDIERS pass.

Harry steps back to the road, picking up a rock. Throws it at the disappearing car with youthful bravado.

LEAH

What would you do, if they came back?

HARRY

Kill them. Take their car.

LEAH

(agreeing)

Drive to England. Or America.

HARRY

And never get caught.

Neither of them believe that for a second.

LEAH

Can you swim?

With a grin, she reaches for his hand --

EXT. BELCHATOW RIVER - DAY 1941

-- dragging him into the river. Fully clothed, Harry opens his eyes under water, bubbles spiralling up.

Surfacing, he's hit with a face full of water. Leah laughs. Harry attacks, grabbing her around the waist, dunking her.

If it seems a little too perfect, maybe it is. But this is Harry's memory.

Leah kisses him. Surprised, Harry kisses her back. It quickly turns into more, mad with lust and dizzying first love.

INT. BROOKLYN JEWISH CLUB - NIGHT (BACK TO 1949)

The SONG fades.

The crowd applauds. Some wiping away tears. Swaying with liquor and grief. Harry's expression is softer, the memory relaxing his bones.

Until a man sits next to him. EMORY ANDERSON, American, 30's. An sharp mind wrapped in a body that's seen its fair share of abuse.

EMORY

When are you going to talk to me,
Harry? Tell me your side of the
story.

Harry's reverie is broken. Body tensing. In a thick Polish accent:

HARRY

You know my story.

EMORY

'Survivor of Auschwitz'? That's
just scratching the surface.

Harry drinks slowly. Fists clenching.

HARRY

You should leave, Mr Anderson.

EMORY

Call me Emory. I like it here. Lots
of stories. Birkenau. Jaworzno.

Peretz clocks his brother's body language. Emory's insistence. He stands.

EMORY (CONT'D)

Some people call you a traitor.

Harry quietly drains his glass.

EMORY (CONT'D)

Collaborator. Murderer.

Harry meets Emory's eyes for the first time. A beast lurking, itching to get out. An answering desperation in Emory.

Pushing through the crowd, Peretz reaches them.

PERETZ
(warning)
Hertzko...

Harry SMASHES his fist into Emory's face -

EXT. CONEY ISLAND VELODROME - NIGHT

- but now it's Harry's head SNAPPING BACK, to the ROAR of a bloodthirsty crowd.

SUPER: HAFT VS LASTARZA. JUNE 27, 1949

WIDER, REVEAL an open-air boxing ring. INSECTS dance around the bright lights.

Steam rises from Harry's bare, scarred torso - a bullet wound here, a stab mark there. Sweat runs down his legs. A STAR OF DAVID emblazoned on his shorts.

Harry shakes off the hit. Chasing his much larger opponent ROLAND LASTARZA around the ring, swinging wildly.

Small for a heavyweight, Harry fights without grace, all balls and heart.

Taking in this display are two men who will shape Harry's future: ROCKY MARCIANO, 25, stocky, with a ready smile; and his trainer CHARLEY GOLDMAN, 62, tiny, dapper.

Harry lands THREE VICIOUS BODY BLOWS. LaStarza COUNTERS with a FLURRY of head shots. Harry's HEAD SNAPS BACK. LaStarza BELTS Harry's RIBS.

In the expensive seats, TWO MEN in tailored suits are watching too. FRANKIE CARBO, smooth, charming. BLINKY PALERMO, squat, muscular. Boxing promoters and Mafia soldiers.

The BELL sounds. His right eye swelling, Harry shakes his head at LaStarza - no dice, asshole.

Harry bounces back to his corner. Utterly confident.

His trainer, Bill 'POPS' Miller, 50's, West-Indian born, never seen without a beret, holds an ice-cold SILVER DOLLAR to Harry's SWELLING EYE:

POPS

I told you, stop that friggin'
swinging bullshit. You want to win?
Box.

A BOY climbs into the ring with the '4' round card.

Peretz SHOUTS out from the cheap seats:

PERETZ

(Yiddish)
Hit him in the balls!

Harry grins. Pops pours water into Harry's mouth.

POPS

Spit.

But Harry's distracted by the SPORTS WRITERS surrounding the ring, scribbling notes - except Emory. Face bruised. Meeting Harry's gaze, a challenge.

POPS (CONT'D)

Harry. Harry!

POPS smacks Harry across the face.

POPS (CONT'D)

Keep your eyes on me. Spit.

Harry spits BLOODY FLUID into the bucket.

REFEREE

Seconds out! Round Four!

Harry jumps to his feet. As Pops gets out of the ring:

POPS

Stop chasing him. Don't look for
the knockout!

The bell RINGS. Harry launches himself at LaStarza.

Pops shakes his head. Harry never listens.

Harry and LaStarza CLINCH, Harry struggling to free his arms. Forehead pushed awkwardly into LaStarza's shoulder, Harry catches a glimpse of -

- a handsome SS OFFICER in the audience. Grey-green uniform, DEATH'S HEAD collar and cap. SCHNEIDER. Staring right at Harry.

Harry panics, pulling himself free of LaStarza's grip, stumbling backwards.

LaStarza attacks with a STIFF FLURRY to the head and guts, but Harry barely feels it. Eyes on the crowd -

- but Schneider is gone. He was never there.

Harry snaps out of, swinging at LaStarza - who COUNTERS with a HARD RIGHT to Harry's JAW.

Harry's feet slip. He hits the canvas. The Referee starts the mandatory eight count.

REFEREE

One! Two!

Rattled, Harry grabs the ropes, hauling himself up.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

Three! Four!

POPS

What are you doing? Stay down!
Clear your head!

Harry pulls himself to a wobbling stand. Hands at his sides.

REFEREE

Five! Six!

POPS

Hands in the air! Look him in the
eye!

REFEREE

Seven!

But Harry's too shaken by his vision, his eyes darting around the crowd, wild. He looks concussed.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

Eight! You've had enough tonight.

The Referee waves his hands. It's over.

REFEREE (CONT'D)

TKO!

As the crowd BOOS, throwing trash in the ring.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Harry PUNCHES the wall over and over again, bare knuckled. Leaving bloody smears on the drywall.

Pops packs up his kit, unimpressed. Peretz sits, watching his brother's self flagellation without comment.

POPS

Smart, boy. Bust your damn hands up.

Muffled CHEERING and STAMPING FEET on the floor above, as the crowd is entertained by another fight. PLASTER flakes down.

Pops tosses Harry a roll of money. Harry catches it.

HARRY

Thirty dollars?

POPS

You got licked. Again. Good luck getting your name in the papers now.

HARRY

Thirteen wins. Only six losses.

POPS

All in a row. Because now you're fighting men who know how to fight. Whatever you did in Europe, maybe you don't have what it takes here.

Pops heads out, disappearing into the dark hallway.

Harry throws his thin gloves across the room. Slumps on the bench. Answer enough.

PERETZ

Hertzko...

HARRY

Don't.

Harry strips off his worn boxing boots, body aching.

PERETZ

The war's over.

Harry shoots him a look. Not for him.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

Eight years. If you haven't found her by now...

HARRY

Leave.

Peretz goes. Leaving Harry alone with his loss.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND - FERRIS WHEEL - NIGHT

Now soaring high above Coney Island in an otherwise empty Ferris Wheel car, that's how Harry remains. Alone.

Dressed in street clothes. Knuckles swollen. A black eye spreading down to his cheek.

As the Wheel rotates, Harry watches the Velodrome lights go dark. The boxing night over.

LAUGHTER from below. Harry looks up. A group of YOUNG PEOPLE, joking around. Making the passenger car swing. Enjoying their perfect summer's night.

They're Harry's age. But he feels a million years older.

SCHNEIDER (O.S.)

Hertzko.

Surprised, Harry turns.

A PISTOL is leveled at his forehead. Held there by Schneider. The Nazi squeezes the trigger -

INT. HARRY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

- Harry jerks awake. Heat and fear rising off his sweating body.

Bright summer light streams through the threadbare curtains. His shitty apartment is little more than a bed and a kitchenette. A bronze statuette of APOLLO his most prized possession.

He stands, clutching his bruised ribs. Pulls out a chamber pot from under the bed.

BLOODY URINE splatters the enamel.

EXT. DISPLACED PERSONS SERVICE - BROOKLYN - DAY

Bright and early, Harry waits outside an elegant Victorian office building, impatient. Bruised face drawing stares.

A CLERK unlocks the door from the inside. *Kippah* marking him as Jewish, his accent pure New York.

CLERK

Mr Haft. I told you, come back in a month.

Harry pushes past him, heading inside.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A tiny office, crammed with immigration records.

Harry stands, while the Clerk flicks through recent records. Chewing on a CIGAR that makes Harry's nose twitch.

HARRY

Leah Pablanski. Belchatow, Poland.

CLERK

I remember. Still nothing registered. Let's go through the questions again.

The Clerk blows out smoke.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Could she be under another name?

HARRY

No.

CLERK

I'll mark it as a possibility. Maybe she got married. Birth date?

HARRY

March 18.

CLERK

When was the last time you had contact?

HARRY

1941.

The Clerk exhales another puff of smoke in Harry's face.

CLERK

Eight years ago. Mr Haft, are you sure she survived?

Harry smacks the cigar out of the Clerk's hand. Grabs him by the jacket, SLAMMING his face down on the table.

HARRY

Look again.

CLERK

Get off me! Miriam! Call the cops!

A young woman bursts through the side door of the office. MIRIAM, early 20's, a Brooklyn native, deeply empathetic.

She takes in the situation in a heartbeat. The camp tattoo. Harry's rage. Unafraid, she places her hand on his shoulder.

MIRIAM

(Yiddish)

I need you to let him go. Please.

Something about Miriam calms Harry down. He lets the guy go.

CLERK

You fucking animal!

Miriam steps between them. Placating.

MIRIAM

Let me show you out, Mr Haft.

HARRY

(to Clerk, a threat)

Leah Pablanski.

EXT. DISPLACED PERSONS SERVICE - BROOKLYN - DAY

Harry pushes out onto the busy street. Miriam follows.

MIRIAM

Mr Haft? I want to apologize for my boss.

Harry stops, forcing himself to calm down.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

You hear terrible stories all day, maybe you lose a little kindness...

Post-war, Harry saves whatever gentleness he has left exclusively for women.

HARRY

Not you.

Self-conscious under the charm of his rare smile:

MIRIAM

My problem's the opposite. Too soft-hearted.

HARRY

What is your name?

MIRIAM

Miriam. Miriam Wofsoniker.

HARRY

Can you help me, Miriam?

MIRIAM

Me? I'm a volunteer, one day a week, to do the paperwork.

HARRY

Please.

MIRIAM

This Leah... She's a relative?

HARRY

We were going to be married.

MIRIAM

You must have been very young.

HARRY

Nobody is young in a war.

MIRIAM

And she was taken to which camp? Ravensbrück? Auschwitz? Belsen?

Harry doesn't have a clue. It kills him.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Mr Haft, forgive me, but...

HARRY

My mother, three sisters and three brothers are dead. I feel them inside, gone. Not her. She's alive.

Swayed by the fervor of his belief and despair, Miriam nods. She'll try.

EXT. BROOKLYN BOXING GYM - DAY

Harry leans against a car, waiting impatiently. Examining his bruises in the side mirror.

Pugilistic sounds - HEAVY BAGS, SPEED BAGS and SKIPPING ROPES - emanate from the second floor window.

Boxing manager, Herschel MANDELL, 40's, emerges through the doorway. A shark in a snappy suit. Occasionally with a heart.

HARRY

You were not at my fight, Mandell.

MANDELL

You mean your latest screw-up? I'm cut up about that inside, really. You're not my only boxer, kid.

HARRY

I need to fight again.

MANDELL

And I need to preserve my reputation - and your damn face. Look at that eye. Protect yourself, you're a handsome man. Take a few months off.

HARRY

Get me a fight now. I won't lose.

MANDELL

How hard did LaStarza hit you? What do you want it for? Money? Titles? Broads?

HARRY

You can have half my purse.

Now Mandell's listening.

MANDELL

Ever heard of the Brockton Blockbuster? Dago kid.

HARRY

Rocky Marciano. 185 pounds. 17 wins, 16 knockouts.

MANDELL

Of course you have. He saw you fight. He wants you, July 18. Ten rounds, Rhode Island.

If Harry still believed in God, this'd be the answer to his prayers.

MANDELL (CONT'D)

Don't look so happy, kid. You're a tomato can to Marciano. Understand? A bum. He's gonna be the world champ one day, so they don't want you, they want your story. The real one, to drum up extra cash at the gate. You wanna be famous? Then start telling the truth about what happened in the camps.

CUT TO:

INT. BROOKLYN DINER - DAY

Emory. Even with a black eye courtesy of Harry's fists, he can't disguise his triumph. He lights a cigarette.

EMORY

Smoke?

ON Harry, sitting opposite him. Hating this already.

HARRY

Never.

EMORY

Not even in the camps?

HARRY

You could swap them for food.

EMORY

Then you understand deals. Here's mine. I write your real story, no bullshit, and it hits the papers before the Marciano fight.

HARRY

What's in this for you?

EMORY

I'm a journalist. I seek the truth.

A WAITRESS puts a black coffee in front of Harry. Eyes flickering between the men and their matching bruises. Harry smiles his thanks at her.

As she walks away:

HARRY

Nobody wants the truth about the camps.

EMORY

Try me.

Emory takes out a notepad and pen. A beat, then Harry nods.

EMORY (CONT'D)

You said you survived Auschwitz for six months.

HARRY

Auschwitz-Birkenau.

EMORY

And then you were moved to another camp. Why?

HARRY

I got lucky.

EMORY

I heard you were protected by an SS Officer.

Emory's done his homework.

EMORY (CONT'D)

What was his name?

Harry sips his coffee. The name leaving a bitter taste in his mouth.

EMORY (CONT'D)

You don't give me honesty, I don't make you famous. It's that simple.

HARRY

Schneider.

EMORY

Why'd he pick you?

As Emory waits, pen poised:

FLASHBACK: INT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU GAS CHAMBER - DAY 1943

YOUNG HARRY waits outside a sealed door. His head shaved, tattoo fresh. He's gaunt, but wearing 'normal' clothes and a metal SONDERKOMMANDO BADGE.

WAILS and an arrhythmic THUMPING from behind the door grow weaker. Harry closes his eyes. Blocking it out.

A hand clasps his shoulder, tender, bracing. JEAN, French, a father figure to Harry. Holding a long metal hook.

Silence. Jean nods. Harry ties a rag over his mouth and nose. Unlocks the door.

A NAKED DEAD BODY hits the floor in front of them. Skin stained black and blue from Zyklon B.

INT. CREMATORIUM - DAY

Covered with sweat and ash, Harry and Jean push a METAL CART of naked CORPSES along tracks towards a roaring OVEN.

Their crematorium is one of many. PAIRS of men, stripped to the waist, robotically feed BODIES to the flames.

Harry and Jean tip the cart, spilling the corpses.

Pliers in hand, Harry opens a DEAD MAN'S MOUTH. Seeking gold. Nothing. Behind him, Jean YANKS a GOLD TOOTH free. Drops it into a bucket.

From outside, an off-key WHISTLING. A popular NAZI MARCH.

Fear ripples through the men. They work faster.

Harry and Jean pick up a BODY with metal hooks, hauling it into the oven.

The WHISTLING GETS LOUDER as an SS *Sturmmann* (Stormtrooper) KUTTNER enters the crematorium. Hand on his pistol. Watching the Jewish prisoners work.

A long, tense beat. Satisfied, Kuttner moves on.

Harry pulls the next corpse out of the pile by the ankles - the body of a YOUNG GIRL. She did not die a peaceful death.

Harry backs away. VOMITING up his meager breakfast.

JEAN
(Yiddish)
Close your eyes. Breathe.

Harry hates his weakness, but closes his eyes.

Jean gently picks up the girl's body, cradling her in his arms. Farewelling her in the only way he knows how.

JEAN (CONT'D)
(Hebrew)
Adonai dayan ha-emet.

INT. SONDERKOMMANDO BARRACKS - NIGHT

Harry's eyes are open. Lying shoulder to shoulder with Jean on a straw mattress covering a wooden platform. Sharing a thin blanket.

Jean murmurs the MOURNER'S KADDISH to himself. A clear, calm refrain amongst the SNORES, SOBS and GROANS of the men crowded in misery among them.

In SUBTITLED YIDDISH:

HARRY
Stop. It won't help.

JEAN
If we don't mourn the dead, who
will?

Harry turns away, blocking his ears.

JEAN (CONT'D)
This will pass, Hertzko. Have
faith.

Jean resumes PRAYING, twisting a wedding band woven from grass around his finger. A reminder of the life he used to have.

Harry listens. Finding comfort in the sound of his friend's voice, if not his words.

Pulling up his thin shirt, Harry's fingers gently brush the knotted SCAR on his torso, left by Leah's stitches. Proof that she existed.

EXT. CREMATORIUM - DAY

Marching two by two, Harry, Jean and THIRTY SONDERKOMMANDO move towards the Crematorium, watched by SS GUARDS and growling DOGS.

The group crosses with the exhausted MEN of the previous shift.

SMOKE billows from the solitary chimney. ASH falls from the sky. EMPTY WAGONS outside the crematorium door.

Harry notices Kuttner saluting an SS *Scharführer* (Squad Leader) holding a clipboard. Handsome, elegant, with ideal Aryan coloring. SCHNEIDER, 30.

EXT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU FOREST - DAY

Birch trees sway. A gentle breeze kicks up clouds of SMOKE from a burning OPEN PIT.

Covered with sweat and ash, Harry and Jean unload CORPSES from a wagon, drag them to the pit, heave them in.

Kuttner watches, exchanging jokes with another SS GUARD.

The FLAMES lick higher, fuelled by the bodies. The smoke engulfing the Sonderkommando at the edge.

Harry splutters, spits. Choking on the human soot.

Kuttner and the SS Guard back off with a grimace, sharing a flask of alcohol. Leaving the prisoners to their work.

Harry grimly grabs a pair of ankles -

- but Jean is no longer beside him. He's staring at the body of a WOMAN in the wagon. Head shaved. Desperately thin.

Jean digs frantically to pull her out. Lays her down on the ground. Touches her face. Begins to sob. Whispering to her in FRENCH.

HARRY

Jean...

Harry looks to Kuttner. The Guards have not noticed - yet.

In SUBTITLED YIDDISH:

HARRY (CONT'D)

Jean. Get up.

Hidden from view by the wagon, Jean clutches his wife, rocking her body, lost in a world of grief.

A SONDERKOMMANDO glances over, expression blank. He's seen this before. Returns to his work.

A distant WHISTLING. Kuttner is moving back towards them. The other Guard heading back to the camp.

Harry takes Jean's arm. Trying to pull him up.

HARRY (CONT'D)

He'll kill you. Jean. Please.

But Jean clings to the body of his wife. Harry sees no choice. He hauls Jean to his feet.

In full view of Kuttner, Harry HEADBUTTS Jean, knocking him to the ground, unconscious.

In SUBTITLED GERMAN: (until end of Flashbacks)

KUTTNER

Fucking animals. Halt! On your knees, Jew!

A SS VEHICLE pulls up in the background. Schneider gets out. Watching Harry sink to his knees.

KUTTNER (CONT'D)

I let you live. I let you work. And you brawl like a rabid dog. You know the rules, *Sonderkommando*? "Yes, *Sturmmann*".

HARRY

Yes, *Sturmmann*.

KUTTNER

You know the punishment, *Sonderkommando*? "Yes, *Sturmmann*".

HARRY

Yes, *Sturmmann*.

Without warning, Kuttner PISTOL-WHIPS Harry, knocking him to the dirt. KICKS him, once, twice, three times. Harry curls up in a ball, trying to protect himself.

KUTTNER

Get up.

Harry reluctantly gets back to his knees. Kuttner KNEES Harry in the face, knocking him down. Harry spits out blood.

Schneider watches the punishment, curious.

KUTTNER (CONT'D)

Up! Up, or I'll throw you in that fucking pit myself!

Harry tries to crawl away. Kuttner SMASHES the butt of his rifle into Harry's outstretched hand, SHATTERING BONE.

RAGE RISES. If Harry's going to die, he'll go out fighting. He LAUNCHES himself at Kuttner, PUNCHING him with his unbroken hand. Kuttner staggers back. NOSE BROKEN.

Now Harry's got Schneider's attention.

Kuttner grabs his gun, aims it at Harry's head. Harry freezes.

SCHNEIDER
Halt! Enough!

Schneider approaches, calm.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
I'll deal with this Jew.

KUTTNER
Scharführer, his death is mine.

SCHNEIDER
That's an order, *Sturmmann*.

A born follower of the Reich, Kuttner salutes.

GUARD
Yes, *Scharführer*.

Harry drops to the ground, on trembling legs. Sneaks a look at Jean, who is slowly regaining consciousness.

Schneider casually lights a cigar. Looking Harry over like a man buying a horse.

SCHNEIDER
I saved your life just now, Jew.
You owe me. Do you understand?

HARRY
Yes, *Scharführer*. Whatever you want.

Schneider blows CIGAR SMOKE in Harry's face, pleased.

SCHNEIDER
You won't regret that.

EXT. JAWORZNO LABOR CAMP - DAY

Battered and bloody, Harry sways in the backseat of the open-top SS car. Holding his broken hand.

Driving, Schneider is completely at ease.

The car passes a line of coal-covered, skeletal WORKERS on the other side of a barbed wire fence.

SCHNEIDER
Welcome to Jaworzno.

INT. JAWORZNO HOSPITAL - DAY

A long row of hospital beds. Most unoccupied. At Jaworzno, serious illness leads to one place - Birkenau's gas chambers.

Harry sits on a bed. Broken hand on his lap. Touching the bleached bedsheets with the other. Like a relic from another world.

SCHNEIDER

Patch him up. Feed him well. He'll work here until he's healed.

DOCTOR

Scharführer, I will not waste valuable resources -

SCHNEIDER

I'll be sure to direct extra resources to you for your trouble.

The Doctor's disgust with the Jew dirtying his clean sheets is palpable. But he nods.

Schneider strides towards Harry. Takes his forearm, seeking the tattooed number.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

You belong to me now, 144738.

HARRY

Hertzko Haft. That's my name.

Amused by this spark of defiance, Schneider inclines his head.

SCHNEIDER

Scharführer Dietrich Schneider. Do you speak English?

Harry shakes his head.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Learn.

INT. BROOKLYN DINER - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

The ashtray is filled with cigarette butts. Emory's hands fly over the notepad, filled with journalistic shorthand.

There's an elation to Emory's movements. A lightness to him that's not yet explained. But for Harry, only darkness.

His scarred hands clench, in and out, like a beating heart.

EMORY
Why English?

Before Harry can answer, a whisper in his ear:

SCHNEIDER (V.O.)
*If you want to communicate with the
wolves, learn to howl.*

Harry shakes off the auditory hallucination.

HARRY
He knew Germany was losing. That
the Nazis would be punished.

EMORY
He wanted you to speak for him, to
the Allies. The good German. And
you agreed?

Harry doesn't like his tone. Or this line of questioning.

EMORY (CONT'D)
What happened when Schneider came
to collect his debt?

Harry drains his coffee cup. Bracing himself.

FLASHBACK: EXT. JAWORZNO LABOR CAMP - DAY - 1943

Covered in black dust, Harry and JEWISH PRISONERS haul a cart
of coal towards the mine's train tracks.

Harry's hand is healed, his body strong from extra rations.
His head shaved, he wears prisoner's clothing, but he stands
out - a Hercules amongst skeletons.

As he shovels the coal into a open CARRIAGE, he sees -

- Schneider leaning against his car, parked outside the
barbed wire fence. Impressed by Harry's recovery.

EXT. JAWORZNO ROAD - DAY

Harry RUNS beside Schneider's car as it bumps across a dirt
road.

Schneider checks Harry's pace in the side mirror. Speeds up.

Harry RUNS FASTER. Coal dust sweating off in rivulets.

EXT. JAWORZNO FIELD - DAY

The car pulls up to a stop in an open field. The BARBED WIRE of the CAMP visible in the distance.

Harry catches his breath. Body alert. Unsure of Schneider's plan. But Schneider gets out. Speaking ENGLISH:

SCHNEIDER
Take off your shirt.

Cautious, Harry follows orders.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
You've learnt English. Good. Now
Make a fist. Both hands. I've seen
you punch. Can you box? Don't lie
to me.

HARRY
No, *Scharführer*.

SCHNEIDER
When we're alone, I'm just
Schneider.

Schneider smacks Harry in the face with a STIFF JAB.
Surprised, Harry hits the dirt.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
Lesson one. Defend yourself.

CUT TO:

LATER:

Both men are now shirtless. Sweating. Schneider dances around Harry with grace and power, aiming blows at his face. Awkward, Harry SLIPS his punches.

SCHNEIDER
Slip. Slip. Move your head! Now hit
me.

Harry lowers his hands. Is he fucking kidding?

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
That's an order, Jew. Jab, with
your left.

Harry paws out a weak JAB. Missing by a mile.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
Hard! Jab!

Harry JABS HARD. Schneider absorbs the blow with his hands.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Hit me again.

Harry fires a WILD SWINGING RIGHT. No beauty. No finesse. A brawler's punch. Snapping Schneider's head around.

Harry freezes. Then Schneider laughs, surprised.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

The element of surprise. Very crafty. You've earned a break.

Schneider walks towards his car. Leaving his shirt, SS cap and gun behind. In Harry's reach. But does Harry dare?

Schneider pulls a bottle of WHISKY from the trunk. Leans against the car. Taps the spot beside him. Wary, Harry joins him.

Schneider takes a swig, hands the bottle to Harry, companionable. As he takes it, Harry notes a small TATTOO inked on Schneider's inner arm.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Blood type. All the SS have them. I'll have to cut it out, before the war's lost.

He's cheerfully fatalistic. Harry doesn't know how to take it. But he drinks the man's whisky.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

I want you to become an entertainer. Boxing matches, on Sundays, to help the officers pass the time and make me some *Reichsmarks*.

HARRY

Against who?

SCHNEIDER

Volunteers.

HARRY

Jews.

SCHNEIDER

Correct. Winner gets special rations.

HARRY

Do I have a choice?

SCHNEIDER

There's always a choice.

Harry knows better than to ask what the alternative is.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

All you have to do is win.

Off Schneider's friendly grin -

EXT. JAWORZNO BOXING RING - DAY

Harry follows Schneider towards a makeshift RING, four simple posts and a rope strung around them.

Chairs and benches provide a comfortable seat for SS OFFICERS and GUARDS, drinking in a festive, bloodthirsty atmosphere.

Harry steps into the ring, nervous. A sheep amongst wolves.

SS GUARD 1

(German)

One hundred *Reichsmarks* on the fat Jew!

SS GUARD 2

(German)

What a beast! You've fed him too well, *Scharführer*.

Schneider hands Harry a pair of worn winter driving gloves.

SCHNEIDER

To protect your bones.

A tiny SS DEATH HEAD patch is sewn into the leather. Harry slips them on, sickened.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Remember, you fight until one man can no longer get up.

Harry nods. Schneider moves out of the ring.

Body tingling with adrenaline, Harry warms up his arms. Jumps on the spot. Waiting. Feeling the hate-filled gaze of the SS - until they start CHEERING.

Schneider ushers in Harry's OPPONENT. The Jewish prisoner is skin and bone. Open sores on his body.

This is no fair fight. Harry looks to Schneider, horrified. But Schneider just rings the makeshift BELL.

Harry puts up his hands, awkward. His opponent advances, desperate, swinging, missing by a mile. Harry steps back, hitting him with a brutal FIVE PUNCH COMBINATION.

The man hits the dirt. Pushes himself weakly up. Lip split.

HARRY
(Yiddish)
Stay down.

The watching SS HOLLER and SCREAM anti-Semitic curses. Calling for blood.

Harry's opponent lunges forward, punching Harry weakly in the gut. In return, Harry SLAMS the man with BODY SHOTS, finishing with a BRUTAL UPPERCUT.

HARRY (CONT'D)
(Yiddish)
I told you, stay down.

His opponent SLUMPS to the dirt, gasping for air. This isn't boxing. It's a street fight. As Harry turns away, looking into the hate-filled faces of the SS -

BANG!

Harry turns back. His opponent is sprawled on the dirt, DEAD. A bullet hole in his skull.

Schneider replaces his GUN in its holster, casual.

HARRY (CONT'D)
You lied.

SCHNEIDER
I said the last man standing wins.

Harry sways. Sinks to the dirt. Watching an SS GUARD drag the dead body out. A bloody trail.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
It was a mercy. What would you prefer - a bullet or the gas?
(then)
Up you get, Jew.

But Harry shakes his head. No more. Schneider hauls him roughly to his feet. Pinning Harry's arms as he struggles. Forcing him to look at the SS crowd, drunk and rowdy.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

These men want blood. Yours or his,
it's no matter.

HARRY

No.

SCHNEIDER

Tell me. Who do you love most in
this world? Mother? Father?
Brother? A woman?

Harry's body language gives him away. Schneider's got him.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Is she worth fighting for?

Harry's eyes fill with angry tears.

EXT. JAWORZNO - BARRACKS - DAY

Hours later. Harry stumbles towards his wooden barracks. Gore splattering his pants. His knuckles raw, bruised.

INT. BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Harry enters his barracks. PRISONERS stare at him, some horrified or afraid, others looking on with empathy. He shuffles through them towards his wooden bunk.

Harry pushes past them. Climbs onto his bunk.

A RABBI, his beard growing back after a violent shaving, approaches cautiously. Offering sympathy, understanding, with a simple touch.

But Harry doesn't want it. He turns away, wrapping himself in the flea-infested blanket. Bloodied, swollen fingers reaching for Leah's scar on his torso. Feeling every rough bump.

Hoping desperately she will forgive the monster that he has agreed to become.

INT. BROOKLYN DINER - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

Harry's energy is as worn down as the ink of Emory's pen.

EMORY

You kept fighting?

HARRY

Every Sunday.

EMORY
How many men died?

HARRY
Too many.

EMORY
Give me a number.

HARRY
Seventy six.

Harry takes perverse satisfaction in Emory's horror.

EMORY
Did you ever think it might be
better just to die?

HARRY
Every Sunday.

EMORY
But here you are.

HARRY
Yes.

EMORY
Do you have nightmares?

Harry spills his coffee all over the booth, over his lap. He stands up, blotting at it with a napkin.

HARRY
No.

EMORY
Ever see things that aren't there?

HARRY
Never.

EMORY
Hear sounds nobody's making? Voices
you remember?

Harry's itching to shove this asshole's teeth down his throat.

HARRY
No.

EMORY

But I bet you can smell it still.
The dead. The ash.

Unable to take the questions any more, Harry heads for the diner door -

- he catches sight of his reflection in the mirror above the counter. But it's not him. Not the Harry of 1949. His head is shaved. Skin grey. Dark circles under his eyes. Chest bare. Haunted. The JEWISH ANIMAL of Jaworzno.

Harry rushes out the diner door -

EXT. BROOKLYN DINER - CONTINUOUS

- out into the bustling street. The welcome humidity and sunlight. Harry sucks in air - until Emory follows him out.

HARRY

No more interviews. I've changed my mind.

EMORY

I thought you wanted your name in lights. Play this right, you could even be on television.

Harry pushes past him. But Emory's not done.

EMORY (CONT'D)

I heard you're looking for someone.
A girl from home.

Harry stops. Like Emory knew he would.

EMORY (CONT'D)

Figured that's why you want to be famous so badly. She sees your name in the papers, she knows where to find you, right?

Harry's rattled by the depth of Emory's understanding.

EMORY (CONT'D)

I've got connections all over the world. I can help you find her.

There's a yearning in Emory's voice that Harry doesn't yet understand.

EMORY (CONT'D)

Your choice, Harry.

Off Harry, realizing he's made a deal with Devil. Again.

INT. UPTOWN GYM - HARLEM - DAY

Sunlight streams through dirty windows onto faded posters of African-American boxers, Jack Johnson to Joe Louis.

BOYS and MEN of all skill levels skip, work heavy bags and speed bags.

In the ring, Harry and COLEY WALLACE spar, sweating in worn headgear. Coley's 21, African-American, with an easy smile.

Mandell, Pop and Emory are watching.

POP

What are you swinging for, Haft?
This ain't no bar brawl. Box!

Harry grunts, absorbing punishing blows to the gut. He clinches with the taller man.

POP (CONT'D)

Coley, don't let him tangle you up!

As Harry sends Coley reeling back with a flurry of blows:

MANDELL

That's right. You're a fucking
animal, Harry! You hear me?
(to Emory)
You write that down for Marciano. A
fucking animal.

But Mandell's words have the opposite effect on Harry. A whisper on the edge of his hearing:

VOICE

(German)
Animal. Jew Animal.

Harry tries to shake it off. PUMPELLING Coley. But more VOICES join in. Taunting. Cheering.

VOICES

(German)
Jew Animal! Jew Animal!

Harry steps back, dropping his hands -

BAM! A snappy LEFT HOOK knocks Harry to the canvas.

POP

What the hell was that?

Emory's sharp eyes have missed nothing.

Harry spits out his mouthguard. Jumps to his feet, leaving the ring.

POP (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harry BURSTS into the tiny locker room, slamming the door behind him. Pulls off his headgear. Sinks to the floor.

MANDELL (O.S.)
You sick or something? Harry?

Harry braces his feet against the door. Looks up.

The walls are plastered with flaking fight posters.

ROCKY MARCIANO stares down at him. Fists up. Stocky, strong, a future world champion. Taunting him.

Harry pushes himself to his feet. Squaring up against the poster. Forcing himself to be stronger than this.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO - DAY

A FLASHBULB POPS, FREEZING an image of Harry. Boxing shorts, embroidered with the Star of David. A fit, heavily muscled body. Boxing gloves. Piercing eyes. This man is afraid of nothing.

REVEAL Emory is the photographer. Peretz stands at the back, his gaze flickering between his brother and Emory. He doesn't trust the reporter.

As Emory continues snapping away:

EMORY
You're small for a heavyweight.
Ever consider dropping down a
class?

HARRY
No.

EMORY
Hasn't been a Jewish heavyweight
champ since -

HARRY
Max Baer.

EMORY

Madcap Maxie. I was there when he won the title against Primo Carnera. Madison Square Garden, June 14, 1934.

Harry lets his guard down a little. Looks to Peretz. A pleasant childhood memory. There aren't many.

HARRY

My brothers told me about that fight, when I was a boy. Baer knocked Carnera down eleven times.

EMORY

He killed two men in the ring, you know. Never forgave himself for it.

HARRY

Because it was sport. Not war.

EMORY

Every prizefight is a war, right? You think Baer looks at himself in the mirror and hates what he sees?

PERETZ

Why don't you ask him?

Emory switches focus. Knowing he has the attention of both brothers now.

EMORY

I found your records too. Peretz Haft. Rounded up in Belchatow in 1941. German labor camps until 1943, when you were specifically moved to Jaworzno.

PERETZ

Do you have a point, Mr Anderson?

EMORY

(to Harry)

Did Schneider find him for you? Some kind of reward?

Harry meets Peretz's gaze.

FLASHBACK. EXT. JAWORZNO LABOR CAMP - NIGHT 1944

A new shipment of JEWS are shuffling through the gate. Starved young men, flinching at the BRIGHT SPOTLIGHTS and BARKING DOGS.

Harry rushes towards the prisoners. A GUARD raises his gun, but Schneider, following, waves him away.

Harry searches their faces, going from man to man. A painfully gaunt man turns, confused. PERETZ.

Harry envelops his stunned brother in a hug.

INT. PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

Harry gives a sharp nod. Terse.

HARRY
My thirtieth fight.

EMORY
Thirty men. Do you remember their
faces?

Harry doesn't dignify that dickish question with a response.

PERETZ
(Yiddish)
Why are you letting this piece of
shit talk to you like that?

HARRY
(Yiddish)
If I break his teeth, he won't
write about me.

PERETZ
(Yiddish)
He has no respect. You don't need
him.

HARRY
(Yiddish)
I'll take whatever he dishes out,
for Leah.

Emory can't speak Yiddish, but he's smart enough to figure out the gist of their conversation - especially 'Leah'.

EMORY
Did Schneider ever find your girl?

HARRY
Have you?

EMORY
Not yet. I'm still looking.

HARRY

That was Schneider's excuse too.

EMORY

(to Peretz)

What was your relationship with the Nazi?

PERETZ

I don't remember. Are we done?

EMORY

If Harry doesn't want training shots.

INT. UPTOWN GYM - DAY

Harry works the HEAVY BAG, slow, deliberate, for Emory's camera. Every muscle defined, glistening, for the lens.

In the ring, Pop trains Coley on the mitts, listening to Emory probing Harry's psyche.

EMORY

Schneider was your coach. He fed you, kept you and your brother alive. Made you special.

HARRY

If I had lost in the ring, he would have shot me.

EMORY

You were the most protected Jew in Poland. That was risky for him. Part of you must have been grateful. Even learned to like him.

In response, Harry punishes the bag. Emory knows he's gotten under Harry's skin.

EMORY (CONT'D)

Were you friends, Harry?

HARRY

I was his pet. His trained dog. Nothing more.

EMORY

Even beaten dogs love their masters.

Enraged, Harry SHOVES Emory backwards. The camera nearly tumbling from his hands. The BOXERS stop training, staring.

EMORY (CONT'D)

Too far. I apologize. I'm just saying, nothing's black and white. Good people can do bad things. Bad people can do good things.

HARRY

There was nothing good in what Schneider made us do.

EMORY

Us? Did Schneider have other pets?

Harry realizes he's slipped up. But Emory's interest is piqued.

EMORY (CONT'D)

Another fighter? Did Schneider have a whole stable of Jews?

Harry says nothing.

EMORY (CONT'D)

You want this article to go to press or not?

Harry can smell Emory's need. Despite the threat, Harry realizes he has leverage, power even. Just for a moment.

HARRY

Yes. By tomorrow.

EMORY

This is why I'm the journalist, not you. No way this story's ready by tomorrow.

HARRY

Then I won't tell you what you want to know.

Before Emory can respond, Pop calls out from the ring:

POP

Enough glamor shots, Rita Hayworth. Get in here.

As Harry moves towards the ring, Emory's hunger for the truth wins.

EMORY

Two days. I'll bust my tail, get it to the presses. Deal?

Harry nods.

FLASHBACK. INT. AUSCHWITZ CAMP BROTHEL - DAY 1944

Blood drips into warm water, steam rising.

Naked, Harry lies back in a bathtub. A reward, his first proper wash in years. But he's too nervous to enjoy it.

The room is simple but comfortable. A sturdy bed. A jug of water. Bread and cheese. A Nazi flag hangs over the locked window.

Schneider sits on the chair, counting his winnings from Harry's latest fight.

Through the crack of the open door, Harry can see two CAMP GUARDS filing excitedly past, led by POLISH FEMALE PRISONERS. He looks away, to the NAZI FLAG hanging over the locked window. A reminder that this interlude is a false freedom.

SCHNEIDER

It was a symbol of peace and good luck, you know.

Schneider indicates the Nazi flag.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

The Ancient Greeks, the Hindus, Buddhists, all worshipped it. Until the *Führer* twisted the swastika just so, and gave us the *Hakenkreuz*.

HARRY

Good luck...

SCHNEIDER

Our world is full of irony.

A knock at the door. A pretty, hollow-eyed woman of Aryan appearance enters. ELSE, 30.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

This is Else.

He nods at Else, who obediently picks up the bath sponge. Kneels to wash Harry's shoulders.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

To the victor go the spoils. Nobody has had her but me, so she's clean. Half an hour, no more.

Schneider winks, locks the door behind him.

Harry notices a SCAR on Else's inner forearm. A deliberate burn. Where a camp tattoo once existed.

In SUBTITLED YIDDISH:

HARRY

You're Jewish?

Else nods, but indicates a small PEEPHOLE cut into the locked door. Hushed, urgent, she leans in. Continuing to wash Harry's body.

ELSE

Which camp are you from?

HARRY

Jaworzno. The mines.

ELSE

Benjamin Gretzer, from Dusseldorf?
My husband. He's a musician.

HARRY

I don't know him. I'll ask. Leah
Pablanski, from Belchatow?

ELSE

I'm not allowed to mix with the
women's camp. But I can get a
message out.

HARRY

Tell her to survive. That I'll find
her.

Else nods. Struggling to maintain composure.

HARRY (CONT'D)

How long have you been here?

ELSE

Three hundred and twenty one days.

HARRY

But... you and Schneider, it's
against their laws.

ELSE

If there's no child, there's no
proof of an impure act. I can't
have children anymore. He made sure
of that.

One more horror in a long list of horrors. Harry takes her hand. Trying to be comforting.

ELSE (CONT'D)

How old are you?

HARRY

Does it matter?

Else takes this in. Steps away from the bath. Unbuttons her dress, letting it fall to the floor. Standing naked before him. Ashamed. A knotted SCAR across her lower abdomen.

Desire blooms, but Harry averts his eyes. Shaking his head.

She tilts her head towards the door. Harry realizes that Schneider is planning to watch his pet Jews perform.

That neither of them have a real choice.

Harry looks to the door. To where Schneider waits. A silent vow - one day, he is going to kill the German.

But not today.

Harry stands up. Wet, naked. Reaching for Else's hand, he draws her close. Two naked bodies, forced together. Else closes her eyes. Harry strokes her hair, gentle. Determined to find something good in this moment.

REVEAL Schneider's blinking EYE at the peephole -

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. UPTOWN GYM - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

- Emory, gazing through the camera lens. Too troubled by the tale to snap a photo, he lowers the camera.

EMORY

What happened to her?

HARRY

When Schneider didn't want her anymore, she died. In the gas.

For once, Emory doesn't know what to say.

HARRY (CONT'D)

No more questions. Print the story.

Harry climbs through the ropes.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND BEACH - MORNING

Early morning. The sun is rising. Harry runs, legs burning, every step digging into the sand.

An abandoned kid's sand bucket floats on the shoreline. He picks it up, half-filling it with salt water.

INT. HARRY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Harry puts the bucket on the floor, water sloshing. Pulls his sweaty running shorts down and PISSES in it.

He sits down next to the bucket, soaking his bare hand in the mixture to toughen it up. Leaning up against his sagging bed.

A KNOCK at the door startles him. He tips the bucket, spilling it on the floor.

HARRY
(Yiddish)
Fuck!

MIRIAM (O.S.)
Hello? Mr Haft?

Harry takes off his shirt, mopping up the offending liquid.

MIRIAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
It's Miriam Wofsoniker. Hello?

Harry pulls open the door, surprised. To her credit, Miriam's gaze only lingers on his muscled bare chest for a second.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)
I have news about Leah.

HARRY
You found her?

MIRIAM
Not quite. A survivor's organization in Chicago found a woman who recognized Leah's name. They made it through Ravensbrück together.

HARRY
She's alive?

MIRIAM
Until May 1945, at least.

Harry's legs buckle. Miriam rushes inside, helping him to sit on his bed.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Put your head between your knees.

Harry does as he's told. Miriam grabs a chipped glass by the sink. Lets the water run clear, fills it.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Brooklyn's best. Here.

Harry gulps down the water. She pats his naked back like he's a child, before realizing the line she's crossing.

HARRY

I looked for her, in Belchatow. She never went home. Where is she?

MIRIAM

I don't know yet. It's like a puzzle, I have to find all the pieces.

HARRY

I can't pay you, not until after my fight.

MIRIAM

I don't want money, Harry. I can't take away what you've suffered... but I can do this.

HARRY

Soft-hearted.

It's a compliment and she takes it as such.

INT. BROOKLYN JEWISH CLUB - DAY

Exhausted STEVEDORES mix with GARMENT WORKERS, all reading Yiddish newspapers, filling their bellies with hearty food from the old country.

Every plate is scraped clean, every mug drained. These men have known hunger before.

Peretz is amongst them, dressed in a worn suit. Finishing his breakfast, when Harry rushes in.

In SUBTITLED YIDDISH:

BARMAN

I told you not to come back.

HARRY

I need to speak to my brother.

BARMAN

Outside.

Peretz shovels the last of his meal down.

EXT. BROOKLYN JEWISH CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Peretz follows Harry out into the busy street.

PERETZ

What's so important I have to rush my breakfast?

HARRY

Leah survived. She's alive.

PERETZ

Someone saw her? Where is she?

HARRY

Not exactly. And I don't know. Yet.

PERETZ

Hertzko, don't do this to yourself.

Peretz's reaction isn't what Harry had hoped. He deflects.

HARRY

You should look for Sara.

PERETZ

Sara? She's gone. Everyone we knew in Belchatow is gone.

HARRY

I can help you. This story about me for the fight, it's also about you.

PERETZ

No. I have to make a life here, Hertzko. Tell that reporter to leave me out.

His vehemence catches Harry by surprise.

HARRY

Are you ashamed of me, big brother?

PERETZ

I owe you my life, a hundred times over. But am I proud of what we did in the camps?

Peretz's own emotional scars, usually so well hidden, have crept to the surface.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

If I could cut every memory from my head, I would. Schneider, Jaworzno, even Belchatow.

HARRY

You're talking about forgetting our family.

PERETZ

Because I can't think about what happened to them. To our mother. Our brothers and sisters...

Peretz wrestles himself back under control.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

Enough of that. You should know I've decided to marry Rushka. I want you to be my *shomer*.

HARRY

Rushka Rynski? From Temple? Why?

PERETZ

She survived too. We understand each other. No questions.

HARRY

That's not love.

PERETZ

You're a man, start thinking like one. Leah was just some girl you screwed.

Harry grabs Peretz by his shirt, enraged.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

Don't you want to be more than what Schneider made you?

Harry shoves his brother to the ground. As Peretz picks himself up, Harry strides away.

INT. UPTOWN GYM - NIGHT

With ruthless rhythm, Harry punches the DOUBLE END bag, hands wrapped. Taking out his rage over his brother's betrayal.

The gym is empty, clean. Pop switches off the dusty overhead lights. Leaving Harry bathed in flickering neon light of the Apollo Theatre next door.

POP

Enough. Go home. Rest.

HARRY

I'll rest after I win.

POP

Stop. Listen to me for once.

Exhausted, Harry drops his hands. Waiting, impatient.

POP (CONT'D)

You got heart. You can take a punch. But Marciano, he's the hardest hitter in the country. Maybe the world. And he has protection. Understand? Plenty of people want him to be the champion.

If there's a warning here, Harry fails to pick up on it.

HARRY

Then they will be disappointed.

POP

Harry, after everything you've suffered -

HARRY

- what harm can a man with gloves on his hands do to me?

POP

Marciano could kill you in that ring.

HARRY

Do you know how many times I've nearly died?

POP

Stubborn kike.

HARRY

He's just a man, Pop.

POP

No. He's a monster. You ain't never fought someone like this.

HARRY

Yes, I have.

As he turns back to the bag, popping off a fierce series of BLOWS -

FLASHBACK: EXT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU FOREST - DAY 1944

- his bare hands weakly land blow after blow into a muscled midsection -

- before he is caught by a MASSIVE bare fist to the jaw. Harry REELS back against the ring ROPE. CUTS above both eyes. BLEEDING from his nose and mouth.

REVEAL Harry's fighting, bare knuckled, in a RAISED BOXING RING in the middle of a forest.

Beyond the ring, BARBED WIRE FENCING, CREMATORIUMS, never-ending BARRACKS and RAILROAD TRACKS.

Harry's back at Birkenau. Losing to another prisoner, the FRENCH HEAVYWEIGHT, 6 inches taller and 50 pounds heavier.

Neither of them are wearing driving gloves. Pure bare-knuckle brawling.

An ORCHESTRA of JEWISH PRISONERS plays jaunty German folk music for the hundred-strong crowd of NAZIS and their WOMEN, including the Jaworzno Doctor and Harry's nemesis Kuttner.

The monsters of the camps are watching too - RUDOLF HOESS, IRMA GRESE, ELISABETH VOLKENRATH and HEINRICH HIMMLER.

The BELL rings. The Heavyweight lumbers back to his corner. Ribs bruised. A bloodied nose. Harry's given a good fight.

Harry collapses back against the post, gasping. No stool to sit down on.

Schneider splashes water in Harry's face. Blood runs down. Harry blinks, trying to clear his hazy vision.

SCHNEIDER

You see that man with the glasses?
Do you know who he is? *Reichsführer*
Heinrich Himmler.

A name to send chills down the spine of any Jew in Europe. Harry snaps into focus.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Yes. The head of the SS is here to watch you die. He knows your name.

HARRY

The 'Jewish Animal of Jaworzno'.
Not my name.

SCHNEIDER

Then show him who you are, Hertkzo.

It's the first time Schneider has called Harry by his name.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Show him you're not afraid.

The canvas is THUMPED. Seconds out. The BELL RINGS.

Harry waits by the ropes. Gathering his strength. The French Heavyweight approaches. A looming giant.

HIMMLER

(German)

Finish the Jew!

Himmler's words open the floodgates. The Nazis SHOUT and SCREAM.

The French Heavyweight ATTACKS. Harry ducks and moves on shaky legs, until -

- the Heavyweight DROPS HIS GUARD. Harry ATTACKS. No finesse. No technique. Hammering the man's head, body, then back to the head.

The Heavyweight staggers back, but Harry follows. Merciless. Until the Heavyweight is beaten onto the canvas.

The Frenchman tries to stand, but Harry BELTS him back down. He goes still, unconscious.

Standing over the Heavyweight's body, Harry meets Himmler's gaze. Spits out blood. A 'fuck you'.

The tiniest of victories in an unequal world.

EXT. JAWORZNO FIELD - NIGHT

Harry and Schneider sit on the hood of the German's open-top vehicle. Drunk, sharing expensive WHISKY from pre-war bottles.

Harry is a mess. His face and body battered from the French Heavyweight's blows. But he - and Schneider - are elated.

SCHNEIDER

Himmler will never forget what you did today. None of them will. A strong Jew fighting back. They may hate you, Hertzko, but you have their respect.

Schneider slaps Harry on the back. Head swimming from whisky, Harry can't control his tongue.

HARRY

Do I have yours?

SCHNEIDER

Of course.

HARRY

But you're *Schutzstaffel*. Like them.

SCHNEIDER

So?

HARRY

So you hate what I am.

Schneider's taken aback, even wounded by the suggestion.

SCHNEIDER

I never hated Jews. That kind of passion is for simple minds.

He sweeps an arm behind them, where Jaworzno's guard tower SEARCHLIGHTS blink and flare in the distance.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

All this unpleasantness in the camps was just a means to an end. But I don't blame you for not seeing that.

Harry doesn't trust himself to speak. Schneider's eager to make himself understood.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

When I was a student of history and philosophy, one work spoke to me above all others. "You must either conquer and rule, or serve and lose, suffer or triumph, be the anvil or the hammer". The SS was my chance to be part of rebuilding our nation.

(then)

(MORE)

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

But choosing to be the hammer
doesn't mean I enjoy striking the
anvil.

HARRY

Then why do it?

SCHNEIDER

It was inevitable. All great
empires are built off the
destruction of other people. The
Romans over the Gauls. Mongols, the
Chinese. Normans, the Saxons. And
now, Germans over the Jews. Hitler
was not the first to try. Your race
has been expelled from every
Christian country over the past
thousand years.

HARRY

For doing nothing. For living.

SCHNEIDER

But they didn't fight back, did
they? Any logical person would see
this coming, when Hitler rose to
power. The stripping away of your
rights. The beatings. The
humiliations. But still your people
refused to save themselves and
leave.

Harry says nothing. The rage burning inside him too dangerous
to see free.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

I need to piss.

With fumbling hands, Schneider unbuttons his belt, dumping it
- with his PISTOL - in the seat of the car. He moves away,
his back to Harry.

Harry's gaze falls on the gun. He could reach it. He could
shoot this man dead.

Pissing, Schneider looks up at the night sky. To the moon and
endless stars. Regretful.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

I thought Germany could be made
great in a civilized manner.
Brutality, followed by peace.

Harry believes him. But he still inches towards the gun.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

But the monsters of my race were given free reign. Cruel, stupid men. Germany will fall and I will testify to every horror.

Harry picks up the gun. Battered hands trembling.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

If you want to shoot me, you'll have to take the safety off.

Schneider turns, buttoning his pants. Calm, even with a GUN pointed directly at his chest.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

But tell me, my friend, where will you go? In a stolen SS car? Will you leave your brother behind, to die without my protection? How will you ever find Leah?

Schneider approaches, predatory and paternal, all at once. Leans against the car. Seemingly completely at ease.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Ask yourself, is this truly a survivor's move? To kill the one man standing between you and the gas?

Hating himself, Harry allows Schneider to take the gun from him. Schneider keeps it out of the holster, in his hand.

HARRY

If you're going to shoot me...

SCHNEIDER

Why would I do that?

Schneider smiles. Picks up his whisky bottle, clinking it against Harry's.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Prost.

Schneider drinks. Cautious, Harry drinks too.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

In English, it's "cheers". What do your people say?

HARRY

L'Chaim.

SCHNEIDER

L'Chaim. What does that mean?

HARRY

To life.

The irony is not lost on either of them.

Suddenly, Schneider PISTOL WHIPS Harry across the face.

SCHNEIDER

Don't betray me again.

Harry spits out blood. Schneider helps him up, friendly.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Come. Back to the barracks.

EXT. BROOKLYN NEWS STAND - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

As Brooklyn's workers start their day, Harry pushes through the crowd towards a stand selling colorful magazines, cigarettes, sodas and newspapers.

The worker, an ITALIAN-AMERICAN BOY, stares at Harry as he rifles through a New York paper.

BOY

You're him, ain't you? The Jewish Animal.

The boy takes the paper from Harry, flipping it open to the right page. Emory's article.

BOY (CONT'D)

Here. It is you.

Harry can't read the words, but there's a lot of them - and a PHOTO of himself. Boxing gloves. Bare chest. Piercing gaze.

BOY (CONT'D)

Can I see your tattoo?

Harry ignores this.

HARRY

My story is in all these papers?

BOY

The New York ones.

HARRY

Not Washington? Chicago? Los Angeles?

BOY
Why would it be?

INT. NEWSPAPER BUILDING/BULLPEN - DAY

Harry strides into a bustling office, full of REPORTERS. Mostly men and a few tenacious women. Small offices ring the bullpen. Cigarette smoke hangs thick in the air.

A female STENOGRAPHER points Harry in the direction of an office. The door closed.

INT. EMORY'S OFFICE - DAY

The office is cramped. Awards on the walls, none later than 1946. A worn couch, with a pillow and blanket folded precisely. On the bookshelf is a mug with a toothbrush and razor.

Emory is at his desk, tapping intently on a typewriter. A full ashtray beside him. A framed PHOTO too - Emory in military fatigues, with soldiers. A camera hanging around his neck.

Harry enters, slamming the newspaper down in front of Emory. Looming over the smaller man.

EMORY
Is this your idea of a thank you?

HARRY
You said you'd make me famous.

EMORY
I did. Tri-state area. Rhode Island too.

HARRY
You lied to me.

EMORY
You fighting Marciano, it's not enough. Your survival story, not enough. You need to beat Marciano to go nation-wide.

HARRY
And how do I do that?

EMORY
Isn't that your department?

HARRY

I've asked about you, Mr Anderson. You don't know boxing. You're not even a sports writer.

EMORY

I never said I was.

HARRY

Then what the hell are you?

EMORY

Technically, a war correspondent. Award winning. I travelled with the 45th Infantry Division. 1945, we liberated Dachau. That mean anything to you?

(then)

You should be kissing my ass for telling your story, because I understand you, Harry.

HARRY

Understand? Because you saw a camp?

EMORY

Saw? No. I smelt it first. Two thousand bodies rotting in open trains. Jews, mostly.

Viscerally impacted, Harry backs away. The power has shifted, as Emory knew it would.

EMORY (CONT'D)

I admit, I spent the first hour yakking my guts up, but I stayed. To report the truth. Like two prisoners smashing a Nazi guard's face in with a shovel. And the women's barracks. That was really something. Lice. Blood. Shit. And this woman, dead in the dirt outside. Holding a little baby. Both of them shot in the head. But I stayed. Took the photos. So nobody could say it didn't happen.

Realizing he's unwittingly shown his own deep wounds, Emory pulls himself together.

EMORY (CONT'D)

How many sports hacks can say that?

But Harry's seen it, Emory's truth. So close to his own. And Emory knows it.

EMORY (CONT'D)

You want our deal to end, just say so. Good luck finding your girl.

HARRY

When I beat Marciano, that story goes to every newspaper.

EMORY

Then get the hell out of my office and focus on your job.

Harry heads out, leaving Emory regretting his outburst, the self-revelation. With shaking hands, he grabs a cigarette.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK RESERVOIR - DAY

The reservoir WATER shimmers in the heat. Young BOYS fish. LOVERS row boats across the water, shaded by umbrellas and hats. COUPLES neck on blankets on the grass.

Harry RUNS PAST at a brisk pace, already sweating in the heat. Looking around for something -

- and there he is. Rocky Marciano, in the flesh. Running stiffly, punching the air in combinations.

As he passes, NEW YORKERS greet him, point, stare and wave. It's clear - this is his territory.

Harry increases his speed, following Marciano.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - NORTH WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Marciano runs slowly through the WOODLANDS, a stocky bull with endless energy.

Harry follows at a distance. Watching the way Marciano moves.

Marciano SPRINTS, then slows to a stop. Stretching his back. Then turns to face him, affable with a hint of menace.

MARCIANO

You following me?

HARRY

Yes.

Marciano comes closer, trying to place him.

MARCIANO

Seems like you're a big fan. Ain't you gonna introduce yourself?

HARRY

Harry Haft.

MARCIANO

Haft. I recognize that mug now. You're the Jew I'm fighting.

Marciano sticks out his hand. Harry refuses it.

MARCIANO (CONT'D)

Come on, that ain't friendly.

HARRY

You're not my friend.

Rocky laughs, not fazed by Harry's intensity.

MARCIANO

You know, I read about what you been through. This morning, in the paper. Sounds like you've taken a hell of a beating. I respect that.

Harry says nothing. Marciano's affability slips.

MARCIANO (CONT'D)

Okay, tough guy. It's been a real thrill, but don't follow me no more.

Marciano jogs away.

MARCIANO (CONT'D)

See you in Rhode Island.

But Harry's not done yet.

INT. MARCIANO'S GYM - MANHATTAN - DAY

Harry slips through the back door of a Catholic Youth gym, pulling his cap over his head.

A CROWD is gathered around the ring, watching Marciano SPAR. Raw, explosive, fighting out of a low crouch. He's not just great, he's extraordinary. Terrifying.

Mobsters Blinky Palermo and Frankie Carbo discreetly watch from a vantage point out of the crush as -

- Rocky WEAVES under his opponent's HOOK. Grimaces as red-hot pain shoots down his back. Covering quickly, he ATTACKS.

CRACK! Marciano's OPPONENT hits the canvas. He gets up, shakily - and is KNOCKED straight back down again by a vicious RIGHT. KO'd on the canvas.

MARCIANO (CONT'D)

(cheerful)

You okay? Someone help him up. Come on. Get him out. Who's next, boys?

Harry's arm is grabbed by gnarled fingers. Charley Goldman, hauling Harry away.

CHARLEY

Marciano sees you in here, he'll rip your fucking head off. Move.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Charley pushes Harry out the back door.

HARRY

I'm just here to watch -

CHARLEY

You think I don't know who you are?

Charley pulls the day's paper out of his back pocket.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

Hell of a write-up. Poetic.

(reading)

"How does a man survive a world bent on destroying him from the inside out? To sleep soundly and look only forward, never back?"

Charley folds up the article. His gaze finds Harry's tattoo.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

144738. That a real number? All those people?

HARRY

Yes. But most of them are dead.

CHARLEY

Including all my family from Warsaw. That's the sad history of our people. We're always the fucking punching bag.

HARRY
You're Polish?

CHARLEY
I was born in there, long time ago.
Charley Goldman.

Harry shakes the offered hand, cautious.

HARRY
Hertzko Haft. Harry's the name
America gave me.

CHARLEY
My real name's Israel. Don't tell
nobody. Let me give you some
advice, Hertzko. Don't come here
again.

As Charley heads back into the gym:

HARRY
Any advice for the fight?

CHARLEY
Wise guy.

HARRY
(Yiddish)
Israel, help me. Please. You know
why I need to win.

Charley considers, torn. Finally:

CHARLEY
Get out of the city. Escape the
heat, train in the fresh air. Try
Greenwood Lake.

HARRY
Why?

CHARLEY
Stop asking questions. Go tomorrow.

Harry considers - any advice is better than none.

EXT. GREENWOOD LAKE - DAY

Harry stands on the edge of expansive lake, surrounded by
green, forested hills. A world away from the sweaty melting
pot of the city.

Sucking in the fresh air, he starts to RUN towards the distant VILLAGE.

INT. GREENWOOD LAKE VILLAGE GYM - DAY

Harry enters the tiny gym, panting, sweating -

- to see Charley waiting by the ring with Mandell and Pop. Despite his diminutive size, he's clearly holding court.

CHARLEY

You've lost seven of your last nine fights. Marciano's bigger, taller, hits harder, has more experience. Pugilistically speaking, you were taught wrong from the beginning.

POP

You think I haven't tried?

CHARLEY

I ain't blaming you, I'm blaming the SS.

(to Harry)

Here's the big secret. Rocky's got a slipped disc. He's hurting and wants to end this fight quickly. What do you do, Hertzko?

HARRY

Attack. Make him go backwards.

Charley and Pop share a mutual moment of frustration.

POP

That's exactly what he wants you to do.

CHARLEY

He'll just plant himself and counter you. No, you make him come to you. Keep your distance, make him miss, then move, so he has to chase you.

MANDELL

Get to the good part, Charley.

CHARLEY

I'll give you two days training. But you never tell nobody I was here. Nobody. Got it?

HARRY

Why would you help me win?

CHARLEY

Win? *Boychik*, all I'm giving you is the chance to lose with a little dignity.

HARRY

I'm not going to lose.

POP

Prove it.

Pop holds the ring ropes open. An invitation - and a challenge. Harry climbs in.

EXT. GREENWOOD LAKE ROAD - NIGHT

Haloed in the headlights of Mandell's car trailing him, Harry runs along the shore road. Punching, slipping and bobbing as he moves.

Mandell drives. Charley calls out from the car window:

CHARLEY

Chin down. Tuck it into your shoulder when you throw that jab. Then move your head. Don't give Rocky a target.

Harry listens. Learning. Doing as he's told.

MANDELL

(impressed)

Sure we can't convince you to switch teams?

CHARLEY

Don't push your luck.

Harry picks up the pace. Supremely fit, supremely confident.

FIREWORKS EXPLODE INTO THE SKY from a lakeside hotel.

Instinctively, Harry hits the ground, covering his head.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK. EXT. JAWORZNO CAMP - NIGHT 1945

Harry's nightmarish memory.

BOMBS light up the night sky on the outskirts of the camp. Deafeningly loud. RUSSIAN WAR PLANES zoom overhead.

Flat on the ICY GROUND, covering his head, Harry hears GERMANS SHOUTS, the RATTLE OF GUNFIRE, the BARKING of DOGS.

When he dares to look up, the camp is pitch black, in chaos.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. GREENWOOD LAKE ROAD - NIGHT (BACK TO 1949)

Mandell's car SCREECHES TO A HALT. Missing Harry by inches.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A tiny attic room, with little more than a twin bed, a bare bulb, and Harry's suitcase. A place to sleep, nothing more.

Not that Harry's doing any sleeping. He lies on the bed, eyes wide open. Still shaken by the hallucination.

A KNOCK at the door. Harry jumps. Mandell enters, in pyjamas. Tosses Harry a bottle of pills.

MANDELL

I saw the lights on. Here. To help you sleep.

HARRY

I don't like pills.

Harry tosses them back. Mandell lingers.

MANDELL

My old man, he was in the Great War. Got pinned down in a shell hole at Argonne Forest.

(then)

He's no fan of fireworks either.

Harry says nothing. He doesn't need to.

MANDELL (CONT'D)

Look, kid, if you don't get your head on straight...

HARRY

There's nothing wrong with me.

MANDELL

Of course not. But you gotta win, right? Beating Marciano's your ticket to the big time.

(MORE)

MANDELL (CONT'D)

To finding your girl. And to win,
you gotta sleep.

A beat, then Harry holds out his hand. Mandell tosses the pills back again.

Harry pops two. Turns over to sleep. Mandell switches off the light.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK: EXT. BELCHATOW RIVER - DAY 1941

Naked, Leah lies in Harry's arms on the riverbank. Basking in sunlight and post-coital wonder.

As she runs her hands over his flat stomach, Leah's fingers reach down to his stitched wound, healing. She bends down to kiss it.

Squinting at the bright sun, Harry takes a deep breath of the lazy summer air. Hearing BIRD SONG mixed with the gentle thud of Leah's HEARTBEAT.

A SPLASHING from the river gets Harry's attention. Curious, he sits up, looking to the source -

- to see SCHNEIDER standing in the water. Watching them. Hand on his pistol.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

Dawn light glows through the dirty window.

Harry's eyes snap open. Breathing fast. Panicking. Flushed. Even his memories aren't safe anymore.

EXT. GREENWOOD LAKE - DAY

Harry pounds the pavement until his shaking legs force him to stop. Soaked in sweat. Gasping for air.

Down the bank, the glimmering lake beckons.

Harry wades in, plunging into the cool water. Dragging himself down to the muddy bottom. Trying to lose himself. To block everything out.

Seconds tick by in the silent world. When Harry emerges, taking a deep breath -

- a car is pulled off to the side of the road. Charley sits on the hood. Waiting patiently.

CUT TO:

LATER:

WATER trickles down Harry's legs, sending rivulets through the dust of the bonnet.

Soaked, he's sitting quietly next to Charley, who puffs his cigar, looking out over the lake.

CHARLEY

You religious, Hertzko?

HARRY

Not any more.

CHARLEY

Me neither. But life makes you wonder, sometimes. Like I didn't choose boxing, it chose me. Pulled me out of nothing. Nine years old, my first fight. Love of my life.

HARRY

(wry)

Then you need a good woman.

CHARLEY

Both have a way of stripping you down to the spark of what you are.

HARRY

The Jewish Animal?

CHARLEY

Brockton Blockbuster. Cinderella Man. Manassa Mauler. They're just names. Nothing to do with the man who wears them.

Harry takes this in. Quiet.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)

See, I believe boxing chose you too, in the camps. Saved your life. Brought you to America. Maybe it'll even help find your girl. But one day, if you don't love it, it'll let you go.

Charley clips the embers off his cigar. Putting it back in his pocket.

CHARLEY (CONT'D)
I gotta go back to Marciano.
(Yiddish)
I wish you blessing and success,
Hertzko.

Charley holds out his gnarled hand to shake. Harry clasps it.

INT. RHODE ISLAND AUDITORIUM FOYER - DAY

SUPER: HAFT VS MARCIANO. JULY 18, 1949

Cigarette smoke hangs in the air. A crush of FIGHT FANS and JOURNALISTS jostle for position. Emory pushes to the front, watching as -

- Harry and Marciano enter, wearing only boxing shorts. Rocky is all stocky, powerful muscle. Harry is leaner, slightly shorter.

Behind them are their teams - Pop, Mandell, Charley and CUTMEN, wait for the results.

The crowd's attention is on Harry, openly gawking at the 'Survivor of Auschwitz'. But Harry ignores the whispers.

Marciano steps up to a METAL SCALE on wheels. Waits as the WEIGHMASTER adjusts the balance arm.

WEIGHMASTER
Rocky Marciano weighs in at 184.5
pounds.

Marciano shows off his biceps, grinning at the cheering crowd. He steps off the scales, winking at Harry.

Harry stares straight ahead. Steps onto the scales.

WEIGHMASTER (CONT'D)
Harry Haft weighs in at 174 pounds.

Emory notes this down. Beside him, a LOCAL MAN scoffs.

LOCAL MAN
What the hell is this kid doing,
fighting at heavyweight?

Harry hears him. Ignores it.

Harry and Marciano switch to fighting stance for an official photo. Staring each other down, fierce.

The BULB FLASHES.

As Harry blinks away the afterglow, he sees a familiar face at the back of the crowd.

Peretz.

EXT. RHODE ISLAND AUDITORIUM - DAY

Peretz leans against the red brick wall of the arena. Smoking a cigarette. Waiting.

He squints up at the banner hung high above the main entrance: 'TONITE: ROCKY MARCIANO VS HARRY HAFT'.

Now dressed, Harry comes outside. Lingers by the wall, unsure how to breach the gap between them.

PERETZ

I said I'd never miss a fight.

Aware of his brother's sensitivity, Peretz drops the cigarette, grinding it into the concrete.

Harry catches sight of Emory, leaning against a car in the parking lot, watching them. Peretz follows his eyeline.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

Remember what we used to say, in Jawornzo? If we survived -

HARRY

- no man would ever own us again.

Harry knows it's a warning about Emory.

HARRY (CONT'D)

After I win, I won't need him anymore. But he needs me.

PERETZ

Why?

Harry shrugs. After a moment, Peretz reaches into his pocket.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

Telegram came for you.

Peretz reads the TELEGRAM aloud.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

"Dear Harry. Good luck with your fight tonight. Your friend, Miriam"

Harry's surprised. He takes the telegram when it's offered. Looking over the unfamiliar English letters.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

Friend?

HARRY

She's helping me find Leah.

PERETZ

She spent good money sending this to you. Is she pretty?

HARRY

Why do you care? You're marrying Rushka.

PERETZ

And you'll be there.

Harry nods. They've been through too much to hold grudges. Relieved, Peretz extends an olive branch.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

Have you eaten? Come. You're giving up too much weight to Marciano already.

Harry's all bravado.

HARRY

I'd fight him as a lightweight. Easy work tonight, brother.

Peretz wishes he could believe that.

INT. RHODE ISLAND AUDITORIUM - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Harry sits backwards on a chair. Strong legs in purple boxing shorts shaking from adrenaline - and nerves.

The room is vast. Rows of lockers stretch the length of a room intended for hockey and basketball teams.

Muffled CHEERING and STAMPING FEET from the ceiling, from the tiered seat above. PLASTER flakes down.

Mandell lays out Harry's worn boxing boots. His cheap flannel robe, with the name 'HARRY HAFT' painted on.

Pop finishes taping Harry's knuckles. His fingers spread, then clench.

POP
You know the plan?

HARRY
Win.

POP
That's goddamn right.

Harry stands, cracks his neck. Shrugs his shoulders. Opens his mouth wide, stretching his jaw. Trying to focus.

POP (CONT'D)
Put your gloves on. Let's get them
shoulders warmed up.

Mandell heads over with the gloves, helping Harry pull them on. Loosely tying the laces.

MANDELL
Charley Goldman sends his regards.
(then)
I got a good feeling about tonight,
Harry. You look sharp.

The DOOR opens. Curious, Harry looks over to see THREE MEN. Frankie Palermo, Blinky Carbo and a man mountain, clearly the MUSCLE.

FRANKIE
Sorry for the intrusion.

Pop puts the mitts down. Nervous.

POP
What are you doing, Frankie?

He moves towards Harry, putting out his hand to shake.

FRANKIE
Harry, it's a pleasure. I read your
story. You're a tough sonofabitch.

HARRY
Who are you?

FRANKIE
Frankie Carbo. That's Blinky
Palermo. You might have heard of
us.

POP
I told you, not him.

FRANKIE

I took it under advisement.

MANDELL

What the hell is this, Pop?

FRANKIE

Herschel Mandell, right? Take a walk. I'm here to talk to your fighter.

He nods. The Muscle takes Mandell's arm, to hustle him out.

MANDELL

No fucking way. Whatever you got to say to him, you can say to me.

POP

Mandell...

FRANKIE

No, that was rude of me. You're his manager, you got his best interests at heart. Stay.

The Muscle pulls a chair out for Frankie to sit down.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

Here's the problem. We represent the interests of Rocky Marciano.

HARRY

So?

BLINKY

So you gotta go down in the first round.

FRANKIE

We thought you were just a tomato can. Take it as a compliment, kid.

HARRY

Fuck you.

This is not the response they were expecting. The temperature drops. Pop hastens to protect his fighter.

POP

The boy doesn't know who you are.

HARRY

Yes, I do. There's nothing you can pay me to throw this fight.

FRANKIE

Because you want to find your girl?
I read that, too. Very touching.

BLINKY

Enough bullshit. No money. You take
a dive, or we'll kill you.

He's deadly serious. Mandell's afraid now. Pop's ashamed.
Harry hides how shaken he is.

HARRY

You think you scare me? The Nazis
tried that. I'm still here.

Blinky pulls out a gun. It's not a flashy gesture. It's a
well-used tool.

BLINKY

You think we're fucking with you,
you stupid kike?

Frankie eases his associate down.

FRANKIE

I can see why Pop likes you, Harry.
You got balls. But use your head.
You survived the camps by being
smart. Is a prizefight worth dying
for?

Frankie stands. No more needs to be said.

FRANKIE (CONT'D)

See you out there, kid.

Frankie walks out, followed by Blinky and the Muscle.
Shutting the door behind them.

Mandell turns on Pop, enraged.

MANDELL

They own you. You asshole.

POP

They own everybody. You know that.

MANDELL

And how much do they pay you to
steer your fighters in their
direction?

HARRY

What do I do?

POP

Take the dive. You don't have a choice.

HARRY

No. Marciano thinks I can beat him. Otherwise they wouldn't have come.

POP

Marciano has no idea he's 'protected'.

HARRY

But Charley does.

If true, it's a heartbreaking betrayal.

MANDELL

Goldman didn't set you up. He hates that side of the game. But you're right, kid. The mob's worried.

HARRY

What happens if I win?

POP

They might decide you're worth more to them alive. But they'd own you, Harry, for the rest of your career.

It's an impossible choice. Harry POUNDS his fists into the metal lockers. Slumps.

HARRY

If I don't fight, if I don't win, Leah will never find me.

POP

Can she find you if you're dead?

Harry processes, for a long beat.

HARRY

Schneider owned me. He kept me afraid. Every day.

POP

And you lived. This is the survivor's move.

HARRY

I'm tired of just surviving.

POP
You don't have a choice.

HARRY
There's always a choice.

Harry holds out his gloves to Pop. Laces dangling.

RING ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
... fighting out of Harlem...

EXT. RHODE ISLAND AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Harry stands at the entrance to the auditorium. Robed, hood up. Pop and Mandell behind him.

The ring's only fifty away. Hot lights blindingly bright.

RING ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
*... with thirteen wins, eight by
knockout, and seven defeats...*

The CROWD is thousands deep in tiered seating, but he has never felt so alone. Pulsing with energy. Eyes wide. Nervous sweat trickling down his face. Terrified.

POP
Don't do this, Harry. Please.

But Harry's no coward. Never has been.

RING ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
... the Survivor of Auschwitz...

His gloved hands reach for the scar at his side. Closing his eyes. Desperately trying to summon the memory of the riverbank, with Leah.

RING ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
... Harry Haft!

He's terrified. But he's going out fighting.

INT. RHODE ISLAND RING - NIGHT

The ring canvas is speckled with blood and sweat of the undercard bouts.

Harry slides through the ropes. Trembling. Scanning the crowd. But there's no sign of Palermo or Carbo.

Ringside is full of sports REPORTERS. Front and centre is Emory. Peretz is further back, in the cheap seats.

A ROAR from the crowd. Harry refocuses. Sees Marciano in his corner, raising a fist to the crowd. Charley beside him.

But Harry can't keep his eyes off the crowd. Desperately seeking the mobsters.

Pop pushes Harry forward, to the centre of the ring. The REFEREE and Marciano waiting.

Marciano's not friendly now. Utterly focused. He wants this fight over, quickly.

Pop massages the back of Harry's neck as the Referee instructs them.

REFEREE

You both know the rules of the
Rhode Island State Boxing
Commission. Protect yourself at all
times. Keep your punches high and
clean...

Harry stops listening. Closes his eyes. Trying to summon up his happy memory of Leah. Anything to calm him.

CUT TO:

EXT. BELCHATOW RIVER - DAY 1941

The riverbank is empty. There's no sign of Leah.

CUT BACK TO:

RING:

Harry jerks, opening his eyes, as his gloves are SLAPPED DOWN by Marciano.

Harry shakes himself. Stripping off his robe. Baring his teeth for the mouthguard. Determined.

SUPER: ROUND ONE.

The BELL RINGS.

Harry charges like a bull, landing a HARD RIGHT to Marciano's gut. Marciano absorbs the blow. Surprised. Then loads up, fires back with a LONG RIGHT.

Harry has never been hit so hard.

He recovers, steadying his legs. Hands up. Chin down. Just in time.

Marciano UNLOADS on Harry, battering him around the ring. Harry covers up, taking the blows on his gloves, until -

- Harry ATTACKS, explosive. Pushing Marciano back. Pounding his ribs, his kidneys, his back.

Harry's not hearing the screams of the crowd. Not Peretz. Not Pop. Just GRUNTS. The SMACK of thin leather on flesh. The WHISTLE of air pushed out of lungs.

Marciano ties Harry up, forcing him to the ropes. Walking him back like a battering ram. Harry tries to fight his way out, but Marciano's impossibly strong.

SCHNEIDER appears in Harry's peripheral vision. Standing on the step to the ring. Hands on the rope. Judging.

Harry was half-expecting him to turn up.

Against the ropes, Harry trades blows with Marciano, brawling, slugging. No fancy footwork. It's rough, even a little dirty. Harry lands a PERFECT RIGHT to the body - and the BELL RINGS.

It's Harry's round. Marciano wanted a bum. A tomato can. He got a fighter.

Harry stumbles back to his corner. Knowing he's just signed his death warrant.

Pop rubs a towel over Harry's sweating shoulders and face.

POP

You're a goddamn fool, but you make me proud.

From his corner, Marciano stares at Harry. Cold. Business-like. But it's what's behind Marciano that frightens Harry.

HIMMLER and his SS OFFICERS, sprinkled amongst the crowd. Silently watching. As though Harry's fear has conjured them into being.

CUT TO:

SUPER: ROUND TWO.

Harry and Marciano trade PUNCH for PUNCH. Sweat and spit flying. Fierce. Furious. Evenly matched, until -

- it's not Marciano anymore. It's a JEWISH PRISONER. Skeletal. Striped pants. Body crawling with lice and filth.

Shocked, Harry drops his guard. Marciano launches his trademark 'phantom' OVERHAND RIGHT.

BAM! Harry reels back against the ropes. A nasty CUT above his left eye pumping out BLOOD.

Harry covers up. Cheekbone swelling. Desperately wiping his bloody eye with his gloves. He can't see. So he HITS BACK, wildly.

A lucky shot CRUNCHES into Marciano's iron jaw. Marciano twists to avoid the full blow. A tiny grimace of pain. Slipped disk making its presence known.

It's enough to let Harry off the ropes. But now Marciano's pissed.

Marciano BATTERS Harry around the ring. Groggy, Harry slips, ducks, weaves - but it's not enough. Rocky's just getting better.

This is Marciano's round. They both know it.

The BELL RINGS. Groggy, Harry catches himself on the ropes. Staggering. But he does not fall.

In his corner, Pop has to lower Harry to the stool. The CUTMAN packs a thick salve into Harry's open cut, trying to stop the bleeding.

Blood splatters the canvas like rain.

Pop shouts instructions at Harry, but Harry's not listening. He's staring into the crowd.

The stadium is full of Harry's 'ghosts'. Seventy-five DEAD PRISONERS, wearing the clothes they died in.

Harry VOMITS into the spit bucket, terrified.

Emory sees it, and instinctively understands. Harry's having a very public breakdown.

Peretz pushes towards the crowd to the ring. Helpless to do anything but watch.

REFEREE

Seconds out! Round Three!

Pop hauls Harry to his feet. Slaps his face.

POP
Don't you give up now, Haft. You
hear me?

CUT TO:

SUPER: ROUND THREE

The BELL RINGS. Marciano approaches. A beast. A demon.
Unstoppable. Harry steps forward, bunching his fists -

- but his boxing gloves are gone. Replaced with Schneider's
worn winter gloves. SS skull embroidered.

Stunned, Harry looks down. The canvas beneath his feet is
covered with Jaworzno dirt. A bloody drag mark trailing up to
Marciano -

- who lands a killer LEFT RIGHT COMBINATION.

Harry's head snaps around. Blood gushing from his cut eye.
Skin splitting. He clutches the ropes, right in front of
Emory.

But it's not Emory anymore. It's Schneider. Gun in hand.
Ready for Harry's failure.

Harry turns around, DUCKING a wild LEFT HOOK from Marciano.
Tangles Rocky's arms up, shoving his forehead into Rocky's
shoulder. Walking him backwards. Working Marciano's gut, his
ribs.

The crowd is on their feet. Screaming.

Harry's dominating. All speed, all strength, until -

- his feet slip on a patch of blood and sweat. He hits the
canvas. The REFEREE starts the eight count:

REFEREE
(counting him out)
One! Two! Three...

Harry's learnt. He takes a knee. Waiting. Catching his ragged
breath. He risks a glimpse at the crowd -

- and the hallucinations are gone. No Schneider, no SS
officers, no dead prisoners.

REFEREE (CONT'D)
(counting him out)
...Seven! Eight!

Harry jumps to his feet, ready to rumble -

- but it's not Marciano waiting for him now. It's the Jewish Animal of Jaworzno. Harry himself, circa 1945. Head shaved. Bloodied. Dirty. Dead-eyed and murderous.

Harry's nerves fail him. Panicking, he backs away, flat-footed - but his dark self ATTACKS. A LEFT BODY SHOT to the gut makes Harry double over. A SHORT RIGHT drops Harry to the canvas. Drooling spit and blood.

The 'Jewish Animal' looms over him.

JEWISH ANIMAL
(Yiddish)
Stay down.

Now it's Marciano above him. Fist clenched, ready to hit again.

Harry blinks. Blood in his eyes. Trying to push himself up. Then he collapses. His eyes rolling back.

It's over.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - NIGHT

Alone, Harry sits on the floor. Leaning against the wall.

Bare chest splattered with gore. Hands still taped. Holding a bloody towel to the cut above his eye.

A man whose entire future has been shattered.

He barely looks up as someone POUNDS on the door.

MANDELL (O.S.)
Harry. Come on, kid. Open the
fucking door.

The POUNDING grows louder -

FLASHBACK. EXT. JAWORZNO BARRACKS - NIGHT 1945

- as GLOVED FISTS on the flimsy wooden barracks. CAMP GUARDS banging on the outside, waking the prisoners up.

GUARD
(German)
Get the fuck up!

INT. JAWORZNO BARRACKS - CONTINUOUS

Sharing a wooden platform bunk, Harry shakes Peretz awake. Both men are thin now. Rations are tight. But they're still stronger than the half-dead PRISONERS around them.

SUPER: JANUARY 1945

EXT. JAWORZNO CAMP/TRAIN TRACKS - NIGHT

SNOW litters the ground. WIND moans around the barbed wire fencing.

Half-asleep, freezing cold, the PRISONERS are being herded towards CATTLE TRAINS by the Guards. Some are bare foot, dressed in rags.

Breath frosting in the cold air, Harry and Peretz stick together, jostled along by the crowd. Wearing long, striped coats.

Harry spots SCHNEIDER, unusually dishevelled, by the gate.

HARRY
Schneider!

Harry pushes through the crowd, pulling Peretz with him.

HARRY (CONT'D)
Is it the Americans?

Schneider's tone is clipped. No longer friendly.

SCHNEIDER
Russians.

The train doors slide open. The guards start pushing the prisoners inside.

PERETZ
(Yiddish)
They're going to kill us.

HARRY
Where are they taking us?

SCHNEIDER
Germany.

He slips Harry a FLASK and a knot of hard BREAD.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
I can't protect you anymore.

HARRY
What do you mean?

SCHNEIDER
Your word won't save me now. Not with the Communists.

HARRY
Schneider...

SCHNEIDER
Get in the train.

HARRY
We had a deal. I'll keep my word.

Schneider pulls out his PISTOL.

SCHNEIDER
I won't tell you again, Jew.

Harry's survival instinct kicks in. He pushes through the crowd, hauling Peretz behind him.

Climbing up into a carriage, Harry watches Schneider disappear into the darkness of the evacuating camp.

A HIGH PITCHED WHINE assaults his ears. The RUSSIAN SQUADRON is returning.

As Harry watches the Allied planes fly overhead -

- a panicking GUARD slides the METAL DOORS SHUT, plunging the frightened men in darkness.

His protector gone, Harry's suddenly not special anymore.

INT. UPTOWN GYM - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

A few days after the Marciano fight.

Dressed in street clothes, Harry stands at the entrance of the gym. His bruises vibrant, his face and hands still swollen.

He watches the BOXERS train. A world in which he no longer belongs.

Working with Coley in the ring, Pop notices Harry.

INT. UPTOWN GYM - LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Harry opens his locker. A sad pile of belongings. Headgear. Training gloves. Spare socks. Faded wraps.

Pops stands at the door.

POP
Frankie won't come for you, if you quit fighting. That was the only deal he'd take.

Harry already figured as much.

HARRY

You want me to thank you?

Harry packs his boxing gear into his sports bag.

POP

I want you to find a sweeter life.

Pop tosses him a roll of money. Harry catches it. Flicks through. Two hundred dollars.

POP (CONT'D)

From Mandell. He don't want his cut.

Harry puts the cash in his pocket. Closes his locker. A sense of strange, unimaginable finality.

HARRY

What happens when you stop?

POP

Depends if you ever loved fighting at all.

Harry looks down at his scarred knuckles. Either way, the proof will be with him for the rest of his life.

POP (CONT'D)

You got out before you got hurt. Some mornings, my hands don't stop shaking. This leg don't work at all.

Harry picks up his bag. Looks at the faded posters on the wall. At the image of Marciano, staring down at him.

HARRY

I could have lived with that.

POP

At least this way, you'll live. Good luck to you, Harry.

Harry hands Pop the bag of boxing gear. He has no use for it anymore.

EXT. UPTOWN GYM/APOLLO THEATRE - DAY

As Harry emerges from the gym into the sunshine, he sees Emory, waiting under the Apollo Theatre sign.

Before Harry can say anything, Emory pulls out a stack of papers from his pocket.

EMORY
Telegrams to and from my contacts,
looking for Leah.

This stops Harry in his tracks, as Emory knew it would.

EMORY (CONT'D)
I'm sticking to my promise.

HARRY
Have you found her?

EMORY
Survivors, they didn't just come to
America. I'll keep looking, for a
price.

HARRY
Another deal?

EMORY
You owe me the end of your story.

HARRY
Owe you? No win, no story,
remember? Your rules.

EMORY
Maybe those rules have changed.
People need to know the truth.

But Harry sees through it, to Emory's need.

HARRY
You need to know.

Harry pushes past Emory, walking down the busy street.

EMORY
Wait. What do you want, money?

Emory digs in his pockets, pulling out cash.

HARRY
I want Leah back. You can't give me
that.

Harry keeps walking. Desperate, Emory chases after him.

EMORY

Harry. Come on. Wait! You want me to beg, you son of a bitch?

Emory hauls Harry by the shoulder, turning him around. Instinctively, Harry DROPS HIM with a hard GUT PUNCH.

HARRY

Stay down.

But Emory pushes himself up, gasping. Defiant.

EMORY

What do you want to hear, Harry? I'm weak? You win. Call me whatever you want. Hit me until I'm out cold. But I haven't slept sober in years, until I started writing your story. Living it, in my head. Letting it out on the page. And when I told you about Dachau... it was like dropping a stone I'd be carrying around for years.

As Harry considers:

EMORY (CONT'D)

Maybe it'll help you too. What have you got to lose?

FLASHBACK. EXT. GERMAN FARMLAND - DAY 1945

The METAL DOOR of the train slides open. Four miserable days after it was closed.

Harry and Peretz emerge first from the darkness, squinting at the sudden sunlight. Hungry, thirsty but alive.

Others were not so lucky. DEAD BODIES litter the carriage.

A German GUARD pounds the side of the train.

GUARD

(German)

Out! Move!

Harry and Peretz join the pitiful lineup of survivors in a FROST-COVERED GERMAN FIELD. The Guard FIRES his GUN in the air.

GUARD (CONT'D)

(German)

March! Any prisoner who falls behind will be executed.

Harry takes his brother's hand, pulling them to the front of the line. Determined to survive, the Haft brothers trudge forward, under the watchful eye of nervous SS GUARDS.

A long line of exhausted, shivering Jews following.

Staccato GUNSHOTS ring out. The execution of the weak.

EXT. FLOSSENBÜRG CAMP - NIGHT

WINTER RAIN lashes down on the surviving Jaworzno PRISONERS. A third less than when they left their camp.

Stumbling down a path between BARBED WIRE FENCING, the brothers huddle together. Filthy coats wrapped around them. Peretz has developed a HACKING COUGH.

LONG WOODEN BARRACKS appear through the mist.

SKELETAL FIGURES stand out in the rain, watching their approach. DEAD BODIES on the ground.

Another camp. Another hell on earth.

Harry spots Schneider in the distance. Rain-soaked, unsettled. Talking animatedly to Flossenburg GUARDS.

Suddenly, Harry is slammed in the back by a RIFLE. He hits the muddy ground.

GUARD
(German)
Keep moving, Animal.

INT. FLOSSENBÜRG BARRACKS - NIGHT

Dripping wet, Harry and Peretz enter the dark barrack. RAIN drums through holes in the roof. Wind whistles through holes in the wooden walls.

MEN stare back. Stacked three or four to a bunk. Vermin-infested and dying of starvation.

Harry and Peretz's relative good health stands out like a beacon. Drawing hostile stares - and worse, aggression.

In SUBTITLED YIDDISH: (until end of FLASHBACKS)

PERETZ
Why are they looking at us like that?

HARRY
Now they have even less to eat.

Harry spots a free space on the highest platform.

HARRY (CONT'D)

There.

Harry uses the last of his strength, pushing Peretz up onto the platform, then climbs up after him.

Peretz checks for watching eyes, then pulls a tiny lump of STALE BREAD from his pocket.

PERETZ

Last piece.

HARRY

We don't know when we'll have food again.

Seeing the wisdom, Peretz puts the bread back in his pocket. His whole body shakes as he COUGHS.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Try to sleep.

Peretz closes his eyes, exhausted.

Harry feels the prickle of someone's gaze. Looks down to see a RUSSIAN JEW staring at them from another bunk. Calculating. Harry meets his gaze. Unwavering. Alpha male. Until the Russian looks away.

Harry curls around his brother for warmth.

INT. FLOSSENBUERG BARRACKS - NIGHT

The RAINSTORM is fierce, battering the wooden structure.

Peretz shakes Harry awake. Before Harry can speak, Peretz covers his brother's mouth with his hand. Inches to the edge of the bunk, pointing. Harry glances down -

- to see the Russian Jew and TWO COMPANIONS are SMOTHERING another MAN. Weakly, their VICTIM kicks and struggles with a MUFFLED SCREAM.

Watched in silence by a hundred dying men of the barracks.

Horrified, Harry and Peretz pull back, out of view. They wait until the THUMPS and WEAK GASPS fade away. Harry dares to look back over the edge -

- as the Russian Jew uses a stolen knife to cut a long strip of FLESH from the dead man's arm. Shovelling it into his mouth. His companions HACK into the man's thin legs.

Harry gags, turning away from the horrors in front of him. Touching the scar at his side, seeking comfort.

Certain now that he has to do something drastic to survive this hell.

EXT. GERMAN FARMLAND/FOREST - DAY

Weeks later. Freezing rain soaks the German countryside. Like the end of the war, spring is slow to come.

Harry, now desperately thin, walks through prickling, knee-high GRASS. His shoes ripped and worn. His striped pants hanging off him.

But he keeps going, at the front of the line, following the LEAD GUARD. Hauling Peretz, who's LIMPING badly. His foot swollen, infected.

Behind the brothers, the line of Jewish PRISONERS stretches on. Walking corpses. The Russian cannibals amongst them.

HOOVES thunder towards them. Schneider, on HORSEBACK. Hand on his pistol. His usually crisp uniform is soaked, his long coat muddy. His STALLION is foaming at the flanks. The Nazis are on the run.

Schneider rides past to scout ahead, without a glance back to the Hafts. Betrayed, even now, Harry watches him go.

GUNSHOTS ring out from behind them. The execution of the slowest and sickest. Harry and Peretz know better than to look back.

LEAD GUARD

(German)

Keep moving!

Sliding the bayonet onto his rifle, the Lead Guard moves to the back of the line to join the executions.

Even half-dead, Harry recognizes an opportunity. He looks around. The field stretches on over the horizon, but to the side, up the CREST of a HILL, is THICK FOREST.

HARRY

Peretz.

Harry nods at the forest. Peretz understands immediately. But he's too tired. Too sick. Too frightened.

PERETZ

If we try, they'll shoot us.

More GUNSHOTS from behind. SCREAMING too, as BAYONETS are used in place of bullets.

HARRY

If we don't try, we'll die on this march.

PERETZ

I can't run, Hertzko.

HARRY

You can.

A DUTCH JEW behind them speaks up. Hope burning like the fever wracking his body.

DUTCH JEW

I'll run with you.

HARRY

If you slow us down...

DUTCH JEW

I won't.

HARRY

(to Peretz)

Schneider said the Allies are close. We just have to find them. I'll protect you.

PERETZ

That's what I promised our father, when he was dying. I'd protect you.

Peretz's sense of failure is palpable. Knowing he's a burden.

HARRY

When all this is over, you will.

A beat. Then Peretz nods. He's in.

Harry looks to Schneider's horse, in the distance. Behind them, to the murderous, distracted Guards. It's now or never.

Harry takes a deep breath, filling his tired lungs -

- and takes off RUNNING. Adrenaline surging, urging his wasted legs forward. Sprinting up the crest of the hill. The Dutch Jew at his heels.

SHOUTS ring out behind them. The Nazis are in pursuit.

At the top of the rise, Harry risks a glance back -

- but Peretz isn't with him. He's still in line. Watching his brother leave. A sacrifice. An act of love.

BULLETS zip through the air, kicking up puffs of grass and dirt. Harry DUCKS -

- but the Dutch Jew is HIT. Dead, he tumbles into Harry. Falling together down the other side of the hill.

SCHNEIDER (O.S.)
(German)
Bring the Animal to me!

Harry pushes the dead man off him, scrambling to his feet, running towards the forest -

- just as Schneider crests the rise on his snorting horse. Watching Harry disappear into the trees.

Behind the German, the death march moves on. Taking Peretz with it.

EXT. GERMAN FOREST/RIVER - DAY 1945

Soaked by the rain, Harry stumbles through the trees, following the sound of RUNNING WATER. His boots sink into MUD and DEAD LEAVES, leaving clear tracks.

A RIVER emerges through the mist. Harry stops to drink, gulping down the water - and freezes like prey at the sound of an approaching HORSE.

SCHNEIDER (O.S.)
What does one do with a rabid
animal?

REVEAL Schneider approaching behind him, high in the saddle.

Terrified, Harry's eyes dart to the rocks under the river's surface. Seeking a weapon.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
On your feet, Jew.

Harry stands. Turns to face Schneider, defenseless. Frail. Hands behind his back. But he will not be cowed. Schneider sees it.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)
A fighter to the end.

HARRY
The war is almost over. You can let
me go.

SCHNEIDER

Go where? Back to Poland? You murdered your own people. You collaborated with the enemy. When Europe drags itself out of this bloody nightmare, there will be no place for men like us.

Schneider aims his pistol at Harry's forehead -

- and Harry HURLS a river rock at the HORSE's muzzle. Startled, it REARS. Schneider topples to the ground, dropping the pistol -

- and Harry CHARGES at him. SLAMMING Schneider into the mud, BEATING him, all rage and revenge. But the German is stronger. Kicking Harry off, Schneider crawls for the PISTOL -

- until he's HAULED BACKWARDS, choking, Harry's arm around his neck. Schneider HEADBUTTS Harry. A CUT opens above Harry's eye, spraying crimson.

Schneider grabs the gun, FIRES at Harry looming above him - but Harry DIVES ASIDE. The bullet WHIZZES past his head, BURSTING his eardrum.

The horse SHIES, galloping away.

BLEEDING from the ear, Harry desperately GRABS a ROTTING LOG from the forest floor, BATTING the gun from Schneider's hand, then SMASHING the wood into Schneider's face.

Face bloody, nose broken, Schneider stares up at Harry. Utterly at his mercy.

SCHNEIDER (CONT'D)

Hertzko...

Harry hesitates. Relief flashes in Schneider's eyes - until Harry CLUBS the wood into Schneider's skull until it CRACKS.

But Harry doesn't stop. He keeps smashing the German's broken face and skull until it is obliterated beyond recognition.

Harry falls back. Staring at Schneider's lifeless body. It's over.

CUT TO:

LATER:

Harry, now washed clean, is burying his striped, lice-ridden prisoner's clothing under a pile of leaves.

He's dressed in Schneider's bloodstained SS uniform. It's too big on Harry's starved frame - but the perfect disguise.

Tucking Schneider's gun away in its holster, Harry picks up Schneider's cap out of the mud. The final piece of the transformation. The perfect Nazi.

Harry staggers away, leaving Schneider's naked body to rot.

EXT. APOLLO THEATRE - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

Harry leans against the wall, face turned up to the sun, letting the warmth draw him back from the cold, terrifying memory.

Emory's hands shake as he lights a cigarette. Listening.

HARRY

I walked for weeks. Slept in barns.
Stole food. Followed the roads
until I found American soldiers.

EMORY

How the hell did you not get caught
by the Germans?

HARRY

I did. Twice. An old man and his
wife. A mother and her son.
(then)
I left the boy alive.

His eyes tell the full story. The horrors of what he did to escape. The guilt he still feels.

EMORY

I'm sorry.

HARRY

For me? Or for them?

EMORY

For the whole damn mess.
(then)
Your brother survived that death
march. How?

HARRY

I don't know. I found Peretz in
Berlin, three months after the war,
working the black market. He said
he decided not to remember.

EMORY

"I like the dreams of the future
better than the history of the
past."

(then)

My wife, courtesy of Thomas
Jefferson.

HARRY

Smart woman.

EMORY

Smart enough to divorce me.

(then)

One more question, Harry. Seventy
six men. Ever fight anyone you
knew?

HARRY

No.

He's lying. They both know it. But Emory lets it go.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Don't come looking for me again.

Emory holds out his hand.

EMORY

To dreams of the future.

Harry grasps Emory's hand. Shakes.

INT. HARRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sunlight streams through the open window onto Harry's bed,
stripped of its threadbare sheets. The apartment is empty.

Peretz watches from the doorway as Harry wraps the Apollo
bronze in a jacket, packing it into his suitcase.

PERETZ

Brownsville's run by criminals.

HARRY

Jewish criminals.

PERETZ

Don't get involved.

HARRY

I can't afford to live anywhere
else.

PERETZ

Maybe. I have a job for you. A factory in Manhattan.

HARRY

A factory.

PERETZ

They need a hat blocker. You'll learn.

Definitely not a future Harry ever imagined for himself. But he tries to be grateful.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

How did you find this Brownsville apartment?

HARRY

Miriam lives in the building with her parents.

PERETZ

You should ask her to walk with you one night.

HARRY

She's not that kind of woman.

PERETZ

A date, then. No man should be alone.

HARRY

Now you sound like our mother.

PERETZ

Because she's not here to tell you this. But you know what she would say? Why did you survive, Hertzko, if not to live?

Harry's worn down. By grief. By his failures. By his confessions to Emory. His brother's words make sense - if he'll listen.

PERETZ (CONT'D)

Leah's not real. Not anymore. She's just a memory. A dream. Time to wake up.

HARRY

I can't. I never said goodbye.

FLASHBACK: EXT. BELCHATOW JEWISH GHETTO - DAY 1941

Harry and Leah sneak down a ghetto street, flushed with excitement.

In SUBTITLED YIDDISH:

HARRY

What do I say to your father?

LEAH

That it's too late to stop us.

HARRY

I'm serious, Leah. He has to say yes. I have to marry you.

LEAH

Do you have a coin?

Strange request, but Harry pats his pockets. Comes up with a small *groszy* coin.

LEAH (CONT'D)

Give it to me.

HARRY

Don't we need witnesses?

LEAH

Just say it.

(Hebrew)

"You are hereby betrothed unto me with this ring in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel."

HARRY

(stumbling Hebrew)

"You are hereby betrothed unto me with this ring in accordance with the laws of Moses and Israel."

Leah kisses him.

LEAH

Now my father can't say no.

With a grin, she pulls Harry along the street -

EXT. GHETTO SQUARE - DAY

- out into the central square. Once a bustling marketplace, framed by houses.

Leah stops. Staring at large POSTERS, pasted on every available surface. Written in German.

HARRY
What does it say?

LEAH
(reading)
"All Jewish men aged sixteen to fifty, must register today."
Register for what?

A OLD JEWISH WOMAN hisses at them from a window above.

WOMAN
Boy! Get home before the Germans see you.

HARRY
Why?

WOMAN
Not one man has come back. The Nazis are taking them away.

She SLAMS the window shut.

EXT. FIRE BRIGADE BUILDING - DAY

German SOLDIERS preside over a long line of JEWISH MEN patiently waiting in line. Peretz among them.

REVEAL Harry and Leah approaching, hiding in the shadows of the broken-down buildings, as -

Peretz disappears inside the building.

HARRY
I have to warn my brother.

Leah pulls him back down.

LEAH
Don't be stupid. They'll take you too.

HARRY
I won't let them. And if Peretz doesn't register, they can't take him either.

LEAH
Haven't you noticed they do whatever they want to us?

HARRY

Go home, Leah. Please. Tell your
father I have something to ask him.
I'll meet you there.

LEAH

(relenting)
Don't be late.

Harry kisses her, gets to his feet.

LEAH (CONT'D)

Wait!

She hands him the COIN.

LEAH (CONT'D)

Take this. Then you have to come
back to me.

Harry takes the coin. Kisses her again. Then moves out of the shadows, fearless. But before he reaches the German soldiers, he turns back, to meeting Leah's gaze.

She's afraid. Seeing it, he tries to make her laugh. Flicking the coin up, pretending to fumble the catch.

It works. Leah grins. Harry watches it. Memorizing every beautiful feature.

Turning, he flicks the coin up in the air, reaching out to catch it -

INT. HARRY'S BROWNSVILLE APARTMENT - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

- and opens his hand to reveal a DIME.

Harry's standing at an open window, looking over the crowded tenement he now calls home.

Lines of fresh washing hang between buildings. Kids play in the street below. A NEIGHBOR practices a mournful *klezmer* tune on a FIDDLE.

His new place is a shoebox. Barely room for the Apollo statue. PENNIES and DIMES are spread out on his sagging bed. All the money he has in the world.

A KNOCK at the door. Harry tugs the bedsheet over the coins. Opens the door to see -

- Miriam, holding a basket. A big, warm smile.

MIRIAM

Welcome to the neighborhood.

Harry pulls the cloth across to reveal her traditional gift: BREAD, a bag of SALT and a jar of HONEY.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Bread, so that you shall never know hunger. Salt, so your life shall always have flavor. Sugar, so your life shall always have sweetness.

(self-conscious)

My mother is very traditional when it comes to gifts.

HARRY

Thank you.

Miriam notices the bronze statue.

MIRIAM

That's Apollo, isn't it?

Harry nods. She picks it up, admiring.

HARRY

I won the Jewish Boxing Championship, in Munich after the war. General Clay gave it to me.

MIRIAM

Is it real bronze? Be careful. Some people around here, they have nothing. Not even morals.

HARRY

You have enough for all of us.

She places Apollo back down, carefully.

MIRIAM

I'll leave you to get settled in.

HARRY

Miriam. Wait. It's a beautiful day. Will you walk with me?

His heart's not exactly in it, but he's trying.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND BOARDWALK - DAY

Harry and Miriam walk down the crowded boardwalk. A cacophony of amusement games, food stalls, running CHILDREN, TEENAGE COUPLES and FAMILIES enjoying the sun.

Miriam finishes an icecream with every ounce of enjoyment.

MIRIAM

Do you like it here?

HARRY

New York? Or America?

MIRIAM

Both. Either. Does it feel like home? Not just where you live?

HARRY

I don't know. I haven't thought about it.

MIRIAM

I've never gone anywhere. That's why I love this city so much.

She indicates the packed beach below, reflecting the city's melting pot of ethnicity.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

People from every country are here. The whole world in one place.

Harry's trying to listen, but the competing SCREAMS of delight from the Thunderbolt and Cyclone roller coasters are making him jumpy.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

A lot of girls at my work speak Italian. I told my parents I wanted to learn, but I guess it is a waste of money.

A SOLDIER, hand in hand with his GIRLFRIEND, accidentally bumps into Harry. Harry tenses.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Are you feeling alright?

HARRY

Of course.

He stops, clutching the railing. Pretending to look at the beach. Trying to gain control of his creeping sense of panic.

HARRY (CONT'D)

It's such a beautiful beach.

MIRIAM

Can you swim?

HARRY

What did you say?

Suddenly, Miriam's been replaced by YOUNG LEAH. Asking him the very same question in 1941.

LEAH

Can you swim?

Harry closes his eyes. Shaking the hallucination.

MIRIAM

Harry?

There are suddenly too many people. Too much noise. Harry pushes through the crowd, away from her.

EXT. BEACH/UNDER BOARDWALK - DAY

Miriam finds Harry sitting under the boardwalk, head in his hands. Crippled by panic and self-loathing.

She sits beside him. Quiet. Looking out at SUNBATHERS on the beach. KIDS playing in the gentle waves.

MIRIAM

A woman at my Temple survived Belsen. She sleeps with an axe under her pillow. One night, she wakes up and sees Nazis at the door. She chopped that door to pieces before she realized they weren't real.

Miriam touches Harry's back, lightly. Unobtrusively soothing. Just like the first time they met, it calms him.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

I read your story. What happened to you in the camps...

HARRY

Was my choice. Every fight, I could have refused.

MIRIAM

Choosing between living in hell and dying is not a real choice.

(then)

Harry... I know you're not religious, and I'm no expert. But what if telling your story to that reporter was your *T'shuvah*?

Miriam takes his hand.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

T'Shuva's about finding closure, right? Speaking out loud about your mistakes. Saying, this is what I did, this is who I was. You take possession of your wrongs, so you can start again.

HARRY

That won't change what I've done. Or bring back the dead.

MIRIAM

You didn't murder those men in the ring. The Nazi's did.

HARRY

Not all. One was mine.
(then)
Still want to hold my hand?

MIRIAM

I'm not going anywhere. No matter what you did.

As Miriam waits, patient...

FLASHBACK: INT. JAWORZNO BOXING RING - DAY 1944

SMACK! A PRISONER flies out of frame, blood spurting from his mouth.

The crowd of SS OFFICERS has grown. Now they've brought WIVES and GIRLFRIENDS. Rowdy with drink.

CROWD

(German)
Jewish Animal! Jewish Animal!

Harry dances around as the prisoner struggles to get up. Toying with him. He's learnt to entertain.

A JEWISH ORCHESTRA plays a jaunty tune, dead behind the eyes.

Harry beats his opponent to the ground with a LOOPING RIGHT HAND. The crowd CHEERS. The man doesn't get up.

Harry watches, emotionless, as the unconscious man is dragged out of the ring.

Pleased, Schneider pours whisky from a flask into Harry's mouth.

SCHNEIDER

Four down. One to go.

Harry just nods. Flexing his sore hands in their thin gloves. Blood stains the leather.

The final opponent enters the ring. Striped, ill-fitting pants. Head shaved. *Sonderkommando* badge. Just another lamb to the slaughter.

Until Harry looks at his face.

HARRY

Jean?

Jean meets Harry's gaze. A nod of recognition, even pleasure to see an old friend.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Schneider. I know him. From Birkenau.

SCHNEIDER

The man you protected?

Jean removes his shirt to reveal his sunken chest. Every rib. Folding the shirt carefully, he places it down in the dirt with dignity.

HARRY

He's my friend.

SCHNEIDER

I told you, don't think of them as human.

An SS OFFICER rings a bell. The CROWD starts to SHOUT in anticipation.

HARRY

Not him. I won't do it.

SCHNEIDER

Hammer or anvil, Hertzko. Your choice.

Schneider pushes Harry towards Jean, who smiles at him through broken teeth.

In SUBTITLED YIDDISH:

JEAN

I hoped it would be you.

Jean ATTACKS. Harry DUCKS and SLIPS every wild punch. Refusing to punch back.

The SS laugh, entertained. Schneider is less amused.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Hit me, Hertzko.

HARRY
No.

Harry TANGLES Jean into a CLINCH. Mind racing. Trying to find a solution to this nightmare.

JEAN
The ring, or the gas. My choice.

Jean KNEES Harry in the balls, freeing himself. Laying into Harry with PUNCHES, a man with nothing to lose.

As the SS BOO and SHOUT, Harry lets Jean hit him. Absorbing the weak blows, then CLINCHING again.

Already breathless, Jean whispers to Harry, desperate.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Let me die a man, Hertzko. Please.
I want it to be you.

Heart breaking, Harry makes his choice.

HARRY
Close your eyes.

Harry UNLEASHES a vicious HOOK and RIGHT, sending the older man flying back. Hitting his head on the hard earth with a CRACK. Unconscious.

The SS cheer. Schneider reaches for his gun -

- but Harry kneels. Fighting back furious tears, he puts his hands around Jean's thin neck. CHOKING him. Twitching, Jean GASPS and SPLUTTERS, but Harry's grip doesn't loosen.

EXT. BEACH/UNDER BOARDWALK - DAY (BACK TO 1949)

Harry shakes, engulfed by grief. Unable to cry. But he doesn't have to. Tears slip down Miriam's face on his behalf.

MIRIAM
You gave your friend a gift.

HARRY
Death?

MIRIAM

Respect. Dignity. A choice in how
he died.

They sit in silence, looking out over the ocean.

EXT. BROWNSVILLE TENEMENT - DAY

Harry and Miriam approach the tenement in silence.

MIRIAM

Thank you for the walk, Harry.

She kisses him on the cheek. Something crackles between them.

HARRY

Miriam...

MIRIAM

You don't have to explain.

And that's why he wants to.

HARRY

Even if Leah's gone, she's not gone
for me.

MIRIAM

That's why I haven't stopped
looking for her.

She can see Harry doesn't understand.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

When I was *bat mitzvahed*, I
discovered that Hebrew has so many
different words for love. Because
there are so many kinds of love.
That's the nice thing about a heart
- it can't get filled up by just
one person.

Harry can feel the weight of his future pressing down. Miriam
unlocks the front door, willing to leave it at that.

HARRY

I have no money. I can't read. I
don't know how to be a husband, or
a father. I will try to change
these things. To leave my past
behind. For you. If you believe you
can... share me with her.

As proposals go, it's unorthodox and painfully honest.

MIRIAM

I can do that.

Harry kisses her, sweetly. It's not perfect. She's not Leah. But maybe, just maybe, he can be happy.

EXT. FRUIT & VEGETABLE SHOP - BROOKLYN - DAY 1963

SUPER: SEPTEMBER, 1963

A broad shouldered, powerful man is hauling an empty CART towards a small store, in the heart of bustling 1960's Brooklyn.

OLDER HARRY. Hair a little thinner. Broader. Still handsome. But his demons have taken their toll.

Leaving the cart, Harry moves inside, passing a *Mezuzah* hanging on the door frame.

INT. FRUIT & VEGETABLE SHOP - DAY

A small, well-kept shop bursting with fruit and vegetables.

Miriam is finishing serving a MALE CUSTOMER, wrapping his purchases in newspaper.

MIRIAM

Two dollars, eighty nine cents.

As the customer hands over the cash:

CUSTOMER

There he is. Harry the fighter!

The customer fakes punching Harry in the guts. Miriam covers a smile at Harry's expression. As the customer heads out:

MIRIAM

Did everything sell?

Harry nods, crossing to her. His eye caught by the open newspaper on the counter.

A print ad for a shaving cream, with a celebrity endorsement. ROCKY MARCIANO. Only 40, the 'Brockton Blockbuster' has aged badly. Chunky, balding - but wealthy, a superstar.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

At least you've kept your good looks.

Harry smiles. Picks a bunch of grapes, wrapping them in Marciano's face.

HARRY

Alan! Get out here!

MIRIAM

You're yelling at him again.

HARRY

He's lazy.

MIRIAM

He's just a child.

HARRY

Then why the hell did we spend so much money on his *bar mitzvah*?
Alan!

ALAN HAFT rushes out from the back room. 13, sensitive, the polar opposite of his father.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Take this to your Uncle Peretz.

ALAN

I'm doing my homework.

He shrinks from Harry's glare. Looks to his mother.

MIRIAM

Go on.

Alan grabs the package, heading out the front door. Miriam meets Harry's eyes, disappointed.

HARRY

What?

MIRIAM

You know what.

She busies herself with a box of apples. Frustrated, Harry considers getting into the argument - but the telephone RINGS, interrupting.

Harry grabs it, irritable.

HARRY

Hello? Yes, I'm Harry Haft. Who's asking?

He listens. And keeps listening.

Miriam looks over, curious. Whatever Harry's hearing, it's shocked him to the core.

EXT. MIAMI HOTEL - DAY

Palm trees sway in the tropical breeze. A taxi pulls up outside a rundown HOTEL on the beach. A sign out the front, in bright 1960's colors: 'WELCOME TO MIAMI BEACH!'

In suitable vacation wear, Harry, Miriam and their three children - Alan, HELENE (9 years old) and MARTY (5 years old), get out of the taxi.

INT. MIAMI HOTEL ROOM - DAY

A room crowded with two double beds and a pull-out bed. A glimpse of an ocean view out the window.

Miriam fusses with Helene and Marty, all in their bathing suits. Rubbing suntan lotion on their exposed skin.

Excited, Alan stands at the window, straining to get a glimpse of the ocean.

INT. MIAMI HOTEL - BATHROOM - DAY

Harry, shirtless, stands in front of the mirror. Shaving with precision. Hands shaking. Adrenaline coursing through his veins.

Putting the razor down, he looks at himself with a critical eye. His hairline. His belly. The passage of time undeniable.

A KNOCK at the door startles him.

MIRIAM (O.S.)

Harry? The kids want to go to the beach.

INT. MIAMI HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Harry comes out of the bathroom. Helene grabs his hand, pulling him towards the door.

HELENE

Popsie, let's go!

HARRY

Your mother will take you.

(to Miriam)

I'm going for a drive. Alan, you're coming with me.

ALAN

But we just got here.

HARRY

Don't talk back. Get dressed.

Alan grabs his clothes, pissed off but not daring to risk his father's wrath. As he goes into the bathroom to change:

MIRIAM

(to Helene and Marty)

Head down to the beach. No swimming until I get there. Understand? Helene, hold Marty's hand.

Helene takes her brother's hand, pulling him out the door.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

A drive?

HARRY

I'll be back soon.

Miriam reaches out. Feeling his nervous energy.

MIRIAM

Don't lie to me, Harry. Please.

But Harry moves away. Uncomfortable. A horrible suspicion crosses Miriam's mind. A silent awareness.

Alan leaves the bathroom, stepping into the tension. Miriam picks up her beach towel.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

We'll be at the beach. Come back when you want to.

She walks out, hiding her distress for the sake of her son.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Growing more nervous with every second, Harry's hands grip the steering wheel. Driving past rows of HOUSES in the Miami suburbs, an urban sprawl built on swampland.

Alan navigates with a map from the passenger seat. Checking the house numbers against a scrawled address.

ALAN

There.

He points to a colorful home surrounded by fruit trees.

EXT. MIAMI HOUSE - DAY

Harry knocks at the door. Adjusts his shirt. Smooths his hair. Alan watches his father, no idea what's happening.

It's opened by MICHAEL LIEBERMAN, 40's, American, a kind man worn down by a terrible tragedy.

HARRY

Mr. Lieberman? I'm Harry Haft.

Michael takes his measure for a long moment.

MICHAEL

Call me Michael. I'm glad you came.

Michael lets them inside.

INT. MIAMI HOUSE - DAY

Michael leads them into a comfortable family home. A teenage girl of Alan's age, SARAH, sits on the couch. A plate of homemade cookies in front of her. A pitcher of lemonade.

MICHAEL

This is Sarah. Our son Ben is at a friend's house.

Sarah stands, to greet them. Her eyes meet Alan's for a moment, in shared confusion.

HARRY

How did you find me, Michael?

MICHAEL

A journalist tracked us down. Mr Anderson? Said he knew you.

(then)

There's something you should know before you see her -

LEAH (O.S.)

(Yiddish)

You got old, Hertzko.

Harry looks up to the staircase. And there she is. LEAH. Gaunt, pale, clearly sick.

But all Harry sees is YOUNG LEAH, grinning at him. Teasing.

HARRY

Leah.

Tears well in Harry's eyes. She's real. Alive. Just as overwhelmed to see him.

Leah moves slowly down the stairs. Michael helping her the last few steps. His love and devastation clear.

LEAH
Walk with me?

Weakly, she takes Harry's arm. Fingers grazing the Auschwitz TATTOO.

EXT. LEAH'S GARDEN - DAY

Harry and Leah sit side by side on a bench, perfectly positioned to catch the sun. Fruit trees line the yard. A cosy fish pond. A place of utter tranquility.

There's so much ground to cover, so much pain to acknowledge, neither of them can say it.

HARRY
I looked for you.

She takes his hand. Touching his scarred knuckles.

LEAH
I saw your name once. In the newspaper.

She draws a New York newspaper clipping from her pocket. Carefully folded around the PHOTO of Harry, in 1949. Chest bare. Boxing gloves.

LEAH (CONT'D)
I was already married.

As Harry absorbs this blow, her fingers trace his wedding ring.

LEAH (CONT'D)
Your wife. She's kind to you?

HARRY
Always. Too much.

LEAH
Good.

Leah looks through the window into the house. Inside, Alan and Sarah talk with teenage awkwardness. The generation that the Nazis tried to ensure would never exist.

LEAH (CONT'D)

There's nothing the doctors can do
for me.

Harry suspected as much. But it hits him, worse than any
blow.

HARRY

You're still beautiful.

LEAH

Liar.

Leah leans into him, head on his chest. He puts his arm
around her.

LEAH (CONT'D)

Do you remember the river, in
Belchatow? In the camps, when I
wanted to give up, I thought about
that day.

Harry fights against the urge to sob.

HARRY

Run away with me?

He's only half-joking. And she loves him still.

LEAH

Not very smart, are you?

Harry kisses her forehead.

INT. MIAMI HOUSE - DAY

Alan stares out the window, watching his father and Leah
holding each other, silent. The complex, adult emotions too
difficult for a boy to comprehend.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Alan's eyes flicker between the freeway ahead, and his
father, driving in excruciating silence. Body trembling.

Alan reaches for the radio, but Harry roughly turns it off.
Tires SCREECHING, he HAULS the car across three lanes.
Driving onto a knoll overlooking the freeway.

Harry stops the car with a jolt. Breathing hard. A beat, then
- he PUNCHES the WINDOW, shattering it.

Alan jumps, frightened.

BLOOD running down his arm, Harry gets out of the car.

EXT. FREEWAY KNOLL - DAY

Harry walks a few steps. Collapses down, sitting in the grass. Starts to SOB.

Through the smashed window, Alan stares, wide-eyed. He's never seen his father cry.

After some time, Harry's sobs subside. He pulls a handkerchief from his pocket, wipes his face.

Alan gets out of the car, cautiously approaching, as Harry wraps the handkerchief around his BLEEDING hand.

ALAN

Mr. Lieberman told me to give this to you.

He awkwardly thrusts a small PHOTO at Harry. A black and white shot of healthy Leah. A beaming smile. Bursting with spark and personality.

Harry snatches it from him. Drinking in the image.

Alan's eyes are on the blood, running down Harry's TATTOO.

ALAN (CONT'D)

Was she in Auschwitz too?

HARRY

Who told you I was in Auschwitz?

Alan shrinks from Harry's sudden rage.

ALAN

Nobody. Just kids at school.

(bolder)

You never tell me anything about you.

HARRY

Because you're like your mother. You feel too much.

Harry sees Alan flinch, absorbing the emotional blow. He forces himself to soften, for his son's sake.

HARRY (CONT'D)

One day, I'll tell you everything, Alan. Then you'll understand me.

The Hafts sit in silence. The traffic rushing past. Palm trees dancing in the tropical breeze.

Harry gets to his feet. Extends a hand to his son. Forcing himself to return to his real life.

HARRY (CONT'D)

Let's go for a swim.

Alan's face lights up.

EXT. MIAMI BEACH - DAY

In colorful bathing trunks, Alan RUNS into the WAVES, splashing his siblings. Washing away the trauma like only a kid can.

Harry sits quietly beside Miriam, who's sunning herself on a deck chair. His hand now bandaged. His eyes red from crying. Her empathetic, fearful gaze misses none of it.

A long beat. Then Harry hands over the photo of Leah. Miriam takes in the image of her greatest rival.

MIRIAM

I think I'd like her.

She hands the photo back. Harry is awed by his wife's generous spirit.

SCREAMS of joy draw his attention to the ocean, where his children laugh and play. Harry freezes. Overcome by a familiar flush of terror.

SCHNEIDER stands at the edge of the water, watching him. The lapping tide washing over his polished boots.

Miriam reaches out, tentative. Calming him with her touch.

MIRIAM (CONT'D)

Harry, whatever you're seeing can't hurt you. You're here, with us.

Emboldened by her words, Harry stares back at Schneider. His 'black dog'. His constant companion. Refusing to be scared.

Schneider fades away. Maybe not forever. But for this day.

INT. OCEAN - DAY

Harry dives into the waves. His tattoo shimmers in the warm water, changing shape. He floats peacefully in the underwater world.

Surfacing, Harry looks to his wife and children, playing in the ocean. His gift of survival.

With a smile, he swims over to join them.

SUPER:

Harry 'Hertzko' Haft was inducted into the National Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in 2007.

He was their first Holocaust survivor.

He died nine months later.