

# DEFIANCE

SCREENPLAY BY  
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BASED ON THE BOOK "DEFIANCE: THE BIELSKI PARTISANS"  
BY NECHAMA TEC

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FADE IN:

1 NEW YORK CITY - PARK AVENUE - NIGHT - 1982

1

A TAXI pulls over to a curb where an ELDERLY MAN waits with his MIDDLE-AGED SON in THE RAIN.

MIDDLE-AGED SON  
(as they climb in)  
23rd and Lex.

The CABBIE grunts a reply.

MIDDLE-AGED SON (CONT'D)  
How ya doin', Papa, you doin'  
alright?

ELDERLY MAN  
Fine, fine...

MIDDLE-AGED SON  
This is just a check-up, okay?  
Doctor Katz says you'll outlive us  
all.  
(looks out the window)  
Traffic isn't bad. We should be  
back in time to watch the Mets.

He notices his father is STARING, wide-eyed, at the cabby's HACK LICENSE. We glimpse only the last name..."Bielski."

MIDDLE-AGED SON (CONT'D)  
Papa? ....Papa, what is it?

IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR, the old man catches the furtive eyes of the cabby.

ELDERLY MAN  
...You. Can it be?

The eyes in the mirror look away. And then back.

ELDERLY MAN (CONT'D)  
Bielski. Can it possibly be?

As we PUSH IN on the eyes in the mirror, we HEAR THE DESPERATE RASPING SOUND OF PANTING.

CUT TO:

2 A MAN RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE THROUGH THE WOODS.

2

Bombs EXPLODE all around as he passes dead bodies and BURNT-OUT VEHICLES. Without slowing he discards a WW II Red Army helmet, a field jacket, a heavy pack, anything that might impede his flight. He glances back up over his shoulder.

The sky is filled with BOMBERS. He runs on.

- 3 OMITTED 3
- 4 THE VILLAGE OF NALIBOKI 4

A typical Eastern European shtetl. LOCAL POLICE help German *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile killing squads, round up Jews. PEASANTS beat them with sticks as they are herded into lines. One man tries to run and is beaten.

Others look on, or look away with indifference as they are loaded onto waiting trucks.

- 5 TWO MEN HIDE IN THE NEARBY WOODS (ZUS & ASAEL BIELSKI) 5

We study their faces: a turbulent portrait of impotent rage, terrible fear, overwhelming grief, and secret relief.

ASAEL

Where are they taking them?

ZUS

--*Shveig!* *Shveig!*

ASAEL

But--

ZUS

Just shut up! Please...

- 6 AN ALLEY WAY IN NOVAGRUDOK 6

The man we last saw in flight (TUVIA BIELSKI) wearing the remnants of his uniform, slips down a cobble-stoned street. He ducks into a doorway as A PATROL passes by.

- 6A A REMOTE FARM 6A

Zus and Asael move warily through a barnyard. A tethered dog BARKS furiously. A farmer challenges them.

WALENCKI

(in Russian; subtitles)

**WHAT DO YOU WANT?**

Walencki brandishes a pitchfork.

ASAEL

(in Russian; subtitles)

**Some food...?**

WALENCKI

**They are looking for you people.**

The two brothers glance nervously around.

WALENCKI (CONT'D)

**Get away from here! GO!**

ZUS, the older of the two brothers, takes a menacing step toward the farmer but his younger brother holds him back.

(CONTINUED)

6A CONTINUED:

6A

ASAEL

Zus. Let's go.

As they retreat toward the woods, Zus warns the farmer.

ZUS

***We'll be back.***

7 A BOURGEOIS APARTMENT -- DAY

7

Tuvia is getting dressed as AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN -- his wife, RIFKA -- stands by the window, smoking a cigarette.

TUVIA

And no news of my brothers?

RIFKA

They are used to trouble, they'll be all right.

TUVIA

If you stay, you'll have to go to the ghetto.

RIFKA

I can get false papers and pass as a gentile. So can you.

Tuvia shakes his head, no. He finishes dressing. Theirs is a relationship long past passion.

RIFKA (CONT'D)

Will you at least stay tonight?

TUVIA

I need to see to my family. Will you come?

RIFKA

To the country? No.

CUT TO:

8 A MODEST MILL - LATER THAT DAY

8

A PAIR OF LEGS lie motionless behind a trough. Beyond, A MAN'S TORSO. Zus and Asael stare in mute horror.

ASAEL

Papa-- *Gottenyu...*

Flies buzz about dead LIVESTOCK. A WOMAN'S BODY lies nearby.

9 IN THE HOUSE

9

A still portrait of a life interrupted.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

A table set for dinner. Candles lit. An open book. A NOISE from a cupboard. Zus grabs a hatchet.

From the root cellar, a YOUNG BOY, 14, appears. His face is dirty and tear-streaked. They go to embrace him.

ASAEL

Aron.

The boy (ARON) recoils. He is disoriented and WILL NOT SPEAK.

9A EXT. MODEST MILL - MOMENTS LATER

9A

Loaded down with possessions, Asael hurries back to the woods. Zus pauses long enough to pry the *mezuzah* from the door.

CUT TO:

10 THE FOREST AT DUSK

10

Aron stares mutely straight ahead. Asael is shaking uncontrollably and crying. Zus is at a loss what to do.

ZUS

Stop it...

But Asael is lost in a confusion of grief and panic.

ZUS (CONT'D)

Stop it. STOP IT!

Finally Zus grabs him in a gesture halfway between violence and comfort...and holds him as Asael rocks back and forth.

CUT TO:

11 THE NALIBOKI FOREST AT DAWN - VIEWED FROM ABOVE

11

A million acres of dense, impenetrable woods and swamps.

12 ASAEL AND ARON SLEEP HUDDLED ON THE GROUND

12

The sound of a FOOTSTEP. They sit up in terror.

TUVIA

If I was a German you are dead.

ASAEL

Tuvia!

Asael leaps up to embrace him as if he were salvation itself.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

Papa and Mama. They killed them.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED:

12

Asael clings to him. Even Aron allows himself to be held.  
Tuvia hold them silently. Zus appears, hatchet in hand.

ZUS

Big brother returns.

Tuvia and Zus look at each other warily.

ZUS (CONT'D)

You saw them?

Yes. Tuvia saw them. Zus takes the *mezuzah* from his pocket,  
tosses it to Tuvia.

ZUS (CONT'D)

Welcome home.

13 LATER - THE NALIBOCKI FOREST - A LOAF OF STALE BREAD

13

is torn apart by filthy hands as they move through the trees.

ASAEEL

Are you going back to the army?

TUVIA

There is no more army.

Asael worships his big brother.

ZUS

Hope at least you killed a few.

Tuvia just stares at him.

ASAEEL

What is it like? To be in a war?

TUVIA

It wasn't war. It was something  
else.

Zus eyes him carefully.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Where is Sonia and the baby?

ZUS

Horodysze. Hiding in a cellar.  
I'll bring her when it is safe.  
Where is Rifka?

TUVIA

In Novgrudok. She wouldn't leave.

ZUS

You are still separated?

TUVIA

She is still my wife.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

ZUS  
Your rich wife.

Zus chews with the open-mouthed relish of a peasant.

ZUS (CONT'D)  
So why exactly have you come back?

Tuvia just stares at him. The reason is obvious as he holds his younger brothers.

ZUS (CONT'D)  
You have a plan?

TUVIA  
No. Do you?

CUT TO:

14 POURING RAIN - A NEW HIDE-OUT (CAMP #1)

14

Shivering and miserable, they are trying to start a fire. Asael's few remaining matches are sodden.

TUVIA  
Is there anything left to eat?

Only a few potatoes in Asael's bag. WORMS writhe among them.

ASAEL  
Zus finished the last of the sausage.

Tuvia glares at Zus, who glares back. Sibling rivals.

ZUS  
Stankowicz' farm is closest.

ASAEL  
He has dogs.

ZUS  
Fuck the dogs. Wilencki then.

TUVIA  
You think Wilencki is going to give us food?

ZUS  
No. We take it.

TUVIA  
How?

ZUS  
We...Take...It.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

TUVIA

And he tells the police.

ZUS

I have run from the police my whole life. Do you really think it's a good time to stop?

A moment of decision. Who holds the balance of power?

ASAEL

We know these woods. They'll never find us in here.

Tuvia looks at his brothers. He has been outvoted.

CUT TO:

15 THE SMALL FARMHOUSE

15

where Zus and Asael first tried to get food. Asael waits outside, anxiously on guard.

16 INSIDE

16

The farmer (WALENCKI) who threatened them with the pitchfork sits eating a simple dinner.

Zus and Tuvia burst in. Zus brandishes a hoe.

ZUS

(in Russian; subtitles)

**We want food. Be quick about it!**

WALENCKI

(in Russian; subtitles)

**You again!**

ZUS

**NOW!**

WALENCKI

**Sure, sure. Take what you want...**

Tuvia begins to stuff provisions into a sack.

ZUS

**Where is your gun, farmer?**

WALENCKI

**I have no gun.**

Zus grabs a dinner plate and SMASHES IT IN THE FARMER'S FACE.

ZUS

**WHERE IS YOUR GUN?**

Holding his bloody face, the farmer cowers in fear.

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED:

16

WALENCKI

***Please...***

Zus kicks him.

WALENCKI (CONT'D)

***I beg you...***

TUVIA

Zus--

ZUS

He's lying.

He kicks him again. The farmer begins to weep.

ZUS (CONT'D)

***You're lying!***

Zus dumps the remains of the farmer's dinner onto him.

ZUS (CONT'D)

***If I hit you once more, you will  
shit your pants. Twice and you  
will never shit again.***

The farmer knows Zus won't hesitate.

WALENCKI

***Up there...***Zus kicks the man aside. Above the stove is an old rifle.  
Zus grabs it, points it at the farmer.

ZUS

***We were never here.***

CUT TO:

17 THE BROTHERS

17

running through the woods. Zus raises the rifle in triumph.

TUVIA

He was willing to help us.

ZUS

He's lucky I didn't crush his head.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

ZUS (CONT'D)

Fucking Polack. I've eaten shit  
from these people long enough!

TUVIA

This is your plan? To terrorize  
every anti-Semite in Belorussia?

ZUS

No. Some I will kill.

CUT TO:

18 ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST

18

Aron has been left alone. He holds a STICK which he "shoots"  
like a gun -- *kachew* -- as he creeps from tree to tree.

Aron freezes. SOMETHING is moving in the trees. He  
crouches. A dark blur. An animal? It moves off. He follows.

The shape appears again. It's a SMALL GIRL, roughly Aron's  
age. Aron waves at her. The girl stares, then runs off.  
Aron hurries after her into a wooded grove, then stops short.

A PILE OF NAKED CORPSES.

Overflows a newly-dug trench. The small girl runs to A  
MIDDLE-AGED MAN with a crude Star-of-David sewn to his  
tattered coat. He holds an OLDER GIRL, 14, in his arms.

Nearby, three or four OTHERS emerge from hiding. Starved,  
in tatters, the living waiting to die.

CUT TO:

19 A CLEARING (CAMP #1) - LATER

19

where the three brothers gorge themselves on stolen food.  
Someone FARTS loudly.

ZUS

Ah...

ASAEL

You know what Papa would do when  
you did that at table...

Tuvia smacks Zus on the head, taking on a gruff voice.

TUVIA

*Peasant.*

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

Tuvia imitates his father's criticism of Zus. Asael laughs. Zus can't help but laugh as well. Even in grief there is laughter. A glimpse of ties that bind them.

ASAEL

I can't believe Papa's dead.

ZUS

Bernicki.

ASAEL

The police captain?

TUVIA

We don't know he did it.

ZUS

He always had it in for Papa.

TUVIA

We don't know he did it.

ZUS

So we will go and ask him if he did.

ASAEL

Koscik has a pistol. He showed it to me once.

ZUS

One pistol isn't enough. We need rifles. Machine guns.

TUVIA

Machine guns? You're going to take on the whole German army?

ZUS

Just because you didn't...

The SOUND of footsteps. Zus jumps up cocking the rifle.

ARON emerges from the trees. And then, behind him, THE SURVIVORS he discovered among the corpses.

THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN holds a teenage GIRL by one hand and carries his younger daughter.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

The child is hurt.

The brothers stare at him. Wary and unwelcoming.

TUVIA

Set her down.

The man lowers the child to the ground. She isn't moving.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN

I am Avram Rubinski. This is my daughter. She-- The Germans--

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: (2)

19

He cannot bring himself to say the words. OTHERS shuffle forward, still in shock, barely able to speak their gratitude as Tuvia offers chunks of bread and cheese. The man tries to feed his daughter. She is barely alive.

Asael turns to Aron. Gently.

ASAEL

Where did you find them?

Aron still won't speak. Asael addresses the other girl.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

Your sister is sick?

LITTLE GIRL (RACHEL)

They kept her for a week.

We fill in the rest.

ZUS (O.S.)

Tuvia--

Zus has moved out of earshot. Tuvia joins him.

ZUS (CONT'D)

We cannot feed them.

TUVIA

I'll go ask Kosciak for food.

ZUS

And the pistol.

TUVIA

And the pistol.

Without another word, he starts off.

ZUS

Remember to say please.

CUT TO:

20 A RUSSIAN-MADE MAHKAROV REVOLVER.

20

Kosciak, a rotund, florid-faced Pole, hands it to Tuvia.

KOSCIK

I have only four bullets.

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

TUVIA

I cannot thank you enough.

They sit in Kosciak's warmly-lit kitchen. Kosciak's WIFE stands silently by the stove, glaring at Tuvia.

KOSCIK

Your father was a good man.

TUVIA

He said the same of you.

Tuvia can't help but notice Kosciak's wife giving him the evil eye. Kosciak produces a bottle of vodka.

KOSCIK

Ignore the bitch.

(raising the bottle)

To the dead. God rest their souls.

(in Russian; subtitles)

**Bitch-- Do you want vodka?**

His wife just glares at him.

KOSCIK (CONT'D)

I live with this, can you imagine?

HEADLIGHTS sweep over the window. A CAR is fast approaching.

KOSCIK (CONT'D)

Hide yourself. ...The barn.

21 TUVIA HURRIES ACROSS THE COURTYARD AND INTO THE BARN. 21

22 IN THE LOFT 22

He climbs a ladder and is startled to find FIVE MORE MEN AND WOMEN in hiding. They stare in mute terror.

23 OUTSIDE THE BARN 23

Kosciak greets A BELARUSSIAN POLICE CAPTAIN and his SONS as they exit the car. They speak in Russian, with subtitles:

KOSCIK

**Working late, boys.**

POLICE CAPTAIN

**Hunting Jews. Our new bosses are very organized.**

Kosciak offers the bottle.

KOSCIK

**Hunting can work up a thirst.**

(CONTINUED)

23 CONTINUED:

23

POLICE CAPTAIN

***Fifteen in one day. The council is offering a year's free tax for every one you turn in. -***

KOSCIK

***A Jew is worth that much? Do you pay more for a fat one?***

They laugh appreciatively.

24 IN THE LOFT

24

A man COUGHS then shrugs an apology. Tuvia glares at him.

25 BACK TO THE COURTYARD

25

POLICE CAPTAIN

***Caught five of them hiding in a ditch. Smelled so bad I was afraid the Germans wouldn't want them.***

KOSCIK

***Maybe for a reduced price.***

More laughter. More vodka.

POLICE CAPTAIN

***You know the Bielski's?***

KOSCIK

***Sure.***

POLICE CAPTAIN

***We missed two when we visited the parents.***

26 IN THE LOFT

26

Tuvia listens to this casual talk of his parent's death.

27 BACK IN THE COURTYARD

27

POLICE CAPTAIN

***Anybody caught helping them is in for it. You know this, Kosciak?***

KOSCIK

***Do I look like an idiot? Don't answer so quickly...***

More laughter. The Police Captain looks at his watch. Yawns.

(CONTINUED)

27 CONTINUED:

27

POLICE CAPTAIN

**Been at it since dawn. The wife  
doesn't like these long nights.**

He tries to hand back the bottle to Kosciak.

KOSCIK

**Keep it.**

POLICE CAPTAIN

**Bribing an officer of the law?  
Maybe you have more of this black  
market vodka hidden in the barn?**

KOSCIK

**Take a look. And clean out the cow  
shit while you're back there.**

The policeman laughs and climbs back into the car.

POLICE CAPTAIN

**You'll keep your eyes open, yes?**

KOSCIK

**Good hunting.**

28 MOMENTS LATER - IN THE BARN

28

Kosciak and Tuvia speak in harsh whispers.

KOSCIK

--If the laborers find them tomorrow,  
I will be denounced--

TUVIA

What am I supposed to do with--

KOSCIK

Take them into the forest--

TUVIA

--And feed them how? I can't care  
for my own family.

Behind them, several of the REFUGEES have emerged from their  
hiding place. They stare at Tuvia balefully.

29 MOMENTS LATER - BY THE ROADSIDE

29

The refugees are loaded with provisions. A young man, PINCHAS  
ZUCKERMAN, has a tethered GOAT. Another man carries a violin  
case. Kosciak hands Tuvia another bottle of vodka.

TUVIA

Those men? They were the ones who  
killed my parents?

(CONTINUED)

29 CONTINUED:

29

Koscik doesn't want to tell him. Finally he nods, yes.

KOSCIK

You people. Why is it so fucking  
hard to be friends with a Jew?

They embrace.

TUVIA

Imagine being one.

Tuvia leads his motley band toward the woods.

CUT TO:

30 A FOREST TRAIL - DAY

30

Tuvia leads them. He notices an OLD MAN staring at him.

OLD MAN

You sat in back.

Tuvia just looks at him.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

In school. I am Shimon H'aretz.

TUVIA

I thought you were dead.

SHIMON

I am at least half-dead.

(after a moment)

I heard them speaking of your  
parents. I am very sorry.

Tuvia shakes his head.

SHIMON (CONT'D)

And the other brothers? What was  
his name, the wild one?

TUVIA

Zus. He's with the other two.

SHIMON

You are hiding here? In the forest?

Tuvia nods.

SHIMON (CONT'D)

There has been trouble before maybe?  
With the police?

Tuvia doesn't answer.

(CONTINUED)

30 CONTINUED:

30

SHIMON (CONT'D)

So now you go to the forest. A wise choice.

TUVIA

For a dumb schoolboy, you mean.

SHIMON

My whole life I presumed to teach others the right way to live. I had no doubt: this is God's way, this isn't. You'll forgive me if recent events have somewhat shaken my resolve.

TUVIA

It is just like school, I don't know what you're talking about.

(touching him)

Teacher...Come... Come.

(gesturing to the followers)

Please.

CUT TO:

31 OMITTED

31

32 THE CLEARING - LATER THAT DAY

32

The new arrivals squat by a fire where potatoes are cooking in the ashes. Everyone shares from the soup pot. There aren't enough spoons to go around.

Shimon offers Aron something to eat.

SHIMON

Here... You're not hungry?

Aron doesn't respond.

SHIMON (CONT'D)

The little one does not talk?

ASAEL

He saw. Things.

TUVIA, MEANWHILE

stares fixedly as Avram digs his daughter's grave. The gun is still in his belt. Zus is constructing a shelter.

ZUS

I send you for food and you bring more mouths to feed.

TUVIA

You send me?

ZUS

Did you at least get the gun?

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

Tuvia shows him.

TUVIA  
Only four bullets.

ZUS  
Then we'll have to make them count.

Zus heads for the food. Asael is trying to start a fire but the kindling is wet.

SHIMON  
Here...

Shimon takes a book from his coat, rips out pages covered in Hebrew and crumples them into the fire. They burst into flame.

SHIMON (CONT'D)  
The Psalms have many uses.

ZUS SITS AMONG THE NEWCOMERS  
watching as they eat hungrily.

Tuvia stops near Avram DIGGING a grave before heading out of the camp. We realize Avram's daughter has died while Tuvia was away. THE SOUND OF DISTANT THUNDER.

33 A LONE FARMHOUSE - DUSK 33

Tuvia stands in the driving rain, shaking. He stares at the lit windows.

34 INSIDE THE HOUSE 34

The POLICE CAPTAIN we saw earlier eats dinner with his WIFE and TWO SONS. They speak in Russian.

WIFE

***You worked late.***

The man nods, his mouth full of food.

WIFE (CONT'D)

***Tomorrow is Sunday. You have a day off, yes?***

POLICE CAPTAIN

(still chewing; nods)

***...Fucking SS never sleeps...***

The door OPENS slowly. They all look up.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

Tuvia stands on the threshold, dripping wet, a spectral figure. He holds the pistol at his side.

TUVIA

***You know who I am?***

The policeman says nothing. His wife is instantly terrified. One of the SONS stands. Tuvia turns the gun on him.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

***Sit.***

The son obeys. The SOUND of the rain on the tin roof is deafening. Tuvia turns back to the Police Captain.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

***And you know why I am here.***

POLICE CAPTAIN

***...what are you talking about?***

TUVIA

***You have no idea what I'm talking about...***

POLICE CAPTAIN

***If they say find someone, I find him. It's my job.***

TUVIA

***To find Jews.***

POLICE CAPTAIN

***Or lose my job.***

TUVIA

***And it's a good job, isn't it? You like your job.***

POLICEMAN

***I was always fair with your family. ...Everyone knew you were smuggling this and that. But I looked the other way.***

(in desperation)

***...Ask your father.***

TUVIA

***My father? You don't talk about my father...***

Tuvia places the pistol against the man's forehead.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

***Down on your knees.***

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: (2)

34

TUVIA (CONT'D)  
 (bellowing)  
 ON...YOUR...KNEES...PIG!

The policeman begins to weep.

TUVIA (CONT'D)  
 For my parents, David and Beila  
 Bielski... for my brothers and all  
 the others--

POLICE CAPTAIN  
*Please.... I beg you...*

One of the man's SONS makes a move toward Tuvia. Tuvia SHOOTs him in the chest. His mother SCREAMS. The Policeman suddenly starts to stand. Tuvia backs away, shoots him. And then the other son. It is all over in seconds.

35 OMITTED

35

36 TUVIA STANDS THERE, FROZEN

36

The police captain's wife is prostrate and KEENING over her dead family in Russian.

WIFE  
**Kill me, too!**

Tuvia should indeed kill her, too. To avoid being identified.

TUVIA  
**Tell them who did this.**

CUT TO:

36A EXT. POLICE CAPTAIN'S HOUSE - DUSK

36A

The rain still pours down on the house as Tuvia runs away.

37 A FOREST TRAIL - STILL RAINING

37

Tuvia pushes through dense forest. Branches rake his face. Finally he leans against a tree. We move CLOSE on his face.

TUVIA  
 Riboynoy shel oylam, riboynoy shel  
 oylam...  
 (closes his eyes)  
 Lord of the universe, forgive me, I  
 have murdered -- but they were  
 monsters and did not deserve to  
 live.

38 NEXT MORNING - A LOW FOG CLINGS TO THE FOREST FLOOR

38

Zus awakens, sodden and stiff. He looks at the group, now numbering fourteen. People sleep huddled together: Asael holds Aron; Avram keeps his surviving daughter close.

And there is Tuvia -- sitting by the fire. Zus takes the pistol from Tuvia's belt. Checks the cylinder.

ZUS  
Only one bullet left.

TUVIA  
His sons.

Zus nods his approval.

ZUS  
How was it?

TUVIA  
What?

ZUS  
To kill them. It was good, no?

TUVIA  
Shut up.

Tuvia stares into the fire. He is dirty and tired. Zus looks around.

ZUS  
What are we going to do with these others?

TUVIA  
I don't know--

ZUS  
The women will slow us down. And your old teacher--

TUVIA  
You're afraid he's going to beat you for forgetting your homework.

ZUS  
We have to be able to keep moving, and quickly.

TUVIA  
I agree. But they're here.

They consider their predicament.

(CONTINUED)

38 CONTINUED:

38

TUVIA (CONT'D)

We'll sleep farther up the trail.  
If anyone comes, they'll find them  
first. The gunshots will give us  
time to escape.

ZUS

Alright. But no more.

TUVIA

No more.

CUT TO:

39 SEVERAL MORE REFUGEES

39

stumbling into camp behind Tuvia, who carries a heavy sack  
of provisions. Zus gives Tuvia a look.

TUVIA

I know. I know... Tamara, you  
remember Cousin Zus. Please, go  
sit down by the fire. And this is  
Lazar -- Isabel's youngest...

Tamara is pleasant-looking but emotionally wounded.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

This is Isaac Malbin. From Minsk.

Malbin is sweet-faced with little round Trotsky glasses.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Asael, find them something to eat.  
ASAEL!

Zus takes Tuvia aside.

ZUS

Tuvia, I have pity for them all,  
but--

TUVIA

They are family.

ZUS

And how will we feed this family?

TUVIA

We'll water the soup.

One of the new arrivals is a DARK-HAIRED BEAUTY. Tuvia and  
Zus watch her pass. Zus is particularly interested.

ZUS

And this one, is she family?

TUVIA

No.

By the fire, the veterans pepper the newcomers with

(CONTINUED)

39

CONTINUED:

39

questions.

39 CONTINUED: (2)

39

MIRIAM

You are from Lida! Is Isadore Korein  
alive?

LOVA

There are so many in the ghetto, I  
don't know...

TAMARA

Does anyone have news from Vilna?

40 OMITTED

40

40A ANOTHER DAY (CAMP #1)

40A

Food, such as it is, is being handed out to SEVERAL NEW ARRIVALS. Asael brushes Aron's hair. Rachel sits beside her grieving father. She looks at Aron. He looks back.

Nearby, Tuvia and Malbin are building a shelter. Malbin is hopelessly inept. A wall COLLAPSES.

TUVIA

Fuck me! Have you never used a hammer?

MALBIN

Uh. No.

TUVIA

What is it you do, then?

MALBIN

I suppose...you'd have to say...I was...am...an intellectual.

TUVIA

This is a job?

MALBIN

I published a small magazine... actually a journal...well, more like a pamphlet.

Zus passes them, his arm around the dark-haired beauty.

ZUS

Tuvia, this is Rona. Rona is my forest wife.

TUVIA

I see. Congratulations.

Zus winks and walks past. Malbin and Tuvia watch them.

MALBIN

Interesting concept.

TUVIA

As long as his village wife stays in hiding.

MALBIN

Nice to know there are some things even Hitler can't destroy.

(CONTINUED)

40A CONTINUED:

40A

Suddenly the camp grows quiet.

TWO YOUNG MEN who have emerged from the forest, their clothes dirty and torn. One of them aims an army-issue rifle.

ZUS

Hello, boys, what can we do for you?

YOUNG MAN #1

Food. We want food.

Everyone remains still. Zus eyes his own rifle nearby.

ZUS

These little shits are holding us up.

The Young Man motions his partner to take Zus's rifle.

ZUS (CONT'D)

You little shits have the balls to shoot me?

In response, the young man CHAMBERS A ROUND.

TUVIA

This is all the food we have. You are welcome to share.

ZUS

No.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

40A CONTINUED: (2)

40A

ZUS (CONT'D)

I want to see if this little shit  
will shoot me. You like shooting  
Jews, you little shit?

YOUNG MAN #1

You are Jews?

(CONTINUED)

40A CONTINUED: (3)

40A

ZUS

No. We're the Gestapo, you little shit.

TUVIA

Come. Sit. Put down your guns.

ZUS

Or perhaps you'd prefer I shove them up your ass.

TUVIA

Where are you from?

The young man glares at Zus. Then, to Tuvia:

YOUNG MAN #1

Horodyszcze.

The name freezes Zus in his tracks. His wife is there.

PERETZ

We haven't eaten in two days. My name is Peretz, this is Jacov.

JACOV

Two days ago there were three thousand Jews in Horodyszcze. Now there are fifty. Me and him, we hid in a wall.

ZUS

You know a woman there, Sonia Bielski?

The men look at one another.

JACOV

We knew her.

Zus can hardly bring himself to ask the next question.

ZUS

...There was a child.

Jacov shakes his head. Sorry.

Zus leans his head against a tree. After a moment he begins to BEAT HIS HEAD against it until BLOOD pours down his face.

ASAEL

(to the newcomers)

His family.

Tuvia puts his arms around his brother. Zus's shoulders begin to heave. Soon his body convulses with deep wracking sobs. He is absolutely unself-conscious in his grief.

(CONTINUED)

40A CONTINUED: (4)

40A

ZUS

So many dead.

TUVIA

I know.

ZUS

Mama. Papa.

Their heads are close together, their faces wet with tears.

ZUS (CONT'D)

Why not us?

TUVIA

I don't know.

ZUS

I thought they'd be safe. I should have been with them.

TUVIA

No.

ZUS

I could have protected them.

Tuvia just holds him. He, too, is crying quietly.

ZUS (CONT'D)

Better to be rabbits? Hunted?  
Hiding? No...

Zus breaks free of Tuvia's embrace and walks away.

41 LATER - BY THE FIRE

41

Jacov and Peretz are eating. Between ravenous bites--

PERETZ

We are looking for partisans.

JACOV

What is the name of your otriad?

Tuvia laughs ruefully.

ASAEL

What is an 'otriad?'

TUVIA

An armed brigade.

JACOV

We heard the Russians are beginning  
to organize.

(CONTINUED)

41 CONTINUED:

41

TUVIA

Here?

JACOV

And also in the Lipicanska.

ASAEL

Then we are the Bielski Otriad.  
You want to join?

PERETZ

(looks around)

The Russians are fighters.

JACOV

--But you need a gun to join them.  
Without a gun you are nothing.  
They sabotage railroads and kill  
Germans.

ZUS (O.S.)

We will kill all the Germans you  
can handle. Starting tonight.

They stare up at him, his face a mask of blood and filth.

ZUS (CONT'D)

If you're not afraid to use that  
rifle.

42 MOMENTS LATER - JUST OUTSIDE OF CAMP --

42

Zus is loading Wilencki's gun.

TUVIA

--we must get what we need without  
killing. We can't make more enemies--

Zus concentrates on opening the breach.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

--It won't bring your family back  
to life. Or Mama. Or Papa.

ZUS

Blood for blood. You had your  
revenge.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

TUVIA

And I can still see their faces.

ZUS

'Vengeance is mine.' Who said that?

TUVIA

So this is God's work you're doing,  
Zussie?

ZUS

No. Only YOU can play God. Save a  
few lives, take a few others...

TUVIA

We cannot become...like them.

ZUS

If only...  
(a hard look)  
Are you coming with us or not?

TUVIA

Us?

ZUS

Peretz and Jacov.  
(pointedly)  
Asael, too.

Tuvia looks over at Asael, who looks away.

TUVIA

(to Zus)

You are making the decisions now?

A stand-off. Zus stares back at him. The struggle for  
command has grown more obvious.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

We wait for dark.

CUT TO:

43 A BURNING TRUCK

43

Lights up the night sky. A MAN comes running out of a  
tavern, the same man who loaded Jews onto trucks in an  
earlier scene.

MAN

My truck! WHO DID THIS TO MY TRUCK?

Tuvia, Zus and the others appear out the shadows.

TUVIA

We did.

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: 43

The man stops short at the sight of their weapons.

MAN

Who are you?

(realizing)

You don't understand. They made me  
give them my truck...

Zus FIRES. Jacov and Peretz follow suit. The man goes  
down. They throw his DEAD BODY onto the burning truck.

CUT TO:

43A A CLUSTER OF HOUSES - LATER THAT NIGHT 43A

Zus and Peretz are backing out of an open doorway, FIRING  
BACK INSIDE AS THEY GO. From within, the sound of SCREAMS.

ZUS

THIS IS WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU  
COOPERATE WITH NAZI SCUM..!

FACES appear furtively at the windows of nearby houses.  
Zus addresses the little neighborhood, delirious with joy.

ZUS (CONT'D)

WE ARE THE BIELSKI OTRIAD! WE ARE  
JEWS! YOU LIKE TO KILL JEWS! HERE  
WE ARE! WE ARE THE BIELSKI'S!  
TELL THEM!

Tuvia looks around warily. This is getting out of hand.

CUT TO:

44 A ROADSIDE DITCH - LATER THAT NIGHT 44

Tuvia and Asael lie in on one side of a road. Tuvia has  
looped ONE END OF THE WIRE around a post.

45 IN THE DITCH ON THE OTHER SIDE 45

Zus, Peretz, and Jacov WRAP THE WIRE to a tree.

46 UP AHEAD 46

The lights of a MOTORCYCLE, a GERMAN COURIER.

47 IN THE DITCH 47

Tuvia waits until the BIKE is almost upon them. Then he  
TIGHTENS the WIRE so it stretches INVISIBLY ACROSS THE ROAD.

48 THE MOTORCYCLIST IS GARROTED 48

by the wire. His bike goes sliding away as the Bielski's swarm him, KILLING HIM with the last bullet from the Mahkarov.

ZUS rummages through the downed-bike's saddlebags. He finds a beautiful KNIFE and lifts it up triumphantly.

PERETZ

Look--!

MORE HEADLIGHTS fast approaching.

TUVIA

Hide! Everyone!

They all scramble back into the ditch, dragging the dead courier with them.

49 A GERMAN STAFF CAR 49

approaches. As its headlights pick up the downed motorcycle, it slows and pulls off to the side --

50 DIRECTLY OVER THE DITCH 50

Where Tuvia and Zus are concealed. From within the car, we hear VOICES SPEAKING GERMAN. A YOUNG PRIVATE gets out and walks up the road to investigate.

PRIVATE

(in German; subtitled)

It's one of ours, but no one is here. Maybe he was drunk?

From the car, an SERGEANT yells a reply.

SERGEANT

(in German; subtitled)

Move it off the road before the convoy passes. I'll report the sonuvabitch.

As the soldier drags the bike off the road, AN OFFICER steps out of the car and lights a cigarette.

He's followed by the Sergeant. He carries a Schmeisser SUBMACHINE GUN dangling from his shoulder.

51 IN THE DITCH - ZUS 51

can see the Sergeant's feet peeking out over the ditch.

A STREAM OF PISS

Cascades onto him. He tries to inch his body away...

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED: 51

THE PISSING SERGEANT

catches the flicker of MOVEMENT below, SEES Zus lying in the ditch. Stunned, he tries to zip up his fly. It catches.

ZUS LEAPS UP brandishing the KNIFE. He's on the Sergeant before he can get the gun off his shoulder. Stabbing him through his greatcoat, the BLADE BREAKS OFF IN HIS HAND.

MEANWHILE, THE LIEUTENANT drops his cigarette, reaching under his coat for a pistol. Tuvia TACKLES him. The GUN skids away. They roll around on the road, CLAWING, PUNCHING, BITING. Tuvia SLAMS the man's head against the pavement.

52 UP THE ROAD 52

The Private sees Asael and Peretz coming at him. Jacov follows with his rifle. The Private turns and runs down the road. They give chase.

53 FROM INSIDE THE CAR 53

Another OFFICER is in the back seat with A WOMAN. He reaches for his gun, stands up in the seat and begins FIRING WILDLY at Tuvia. TUVIA ROLLS UNDER THE CAR, avoiding the burst.

MEANWHILE, ZUS USES THE HANDLE OF THE KNIFE to BREAK the Sergeant's nose. He RIPS the SCHMEISSER away, firing point-blank into the man, whose greatcoat CATCHES FIRE.

INSIDE THE STAFF CAR

The officer takes close aim at Tuvia, just as ZUS TURNS THE MACHINE GUN on the car BLOWING OUT THE WINDOWS, killing the Officer and the woman -- and saving his brother's life.

54 MEANWHILE, DOWN THE ROAD 54

Jacov fires at the Private, MISSES. The man keeps RUNNING. Jacov fires again. MISSES AGAIN.

FINALLY his THIRD SHOT hits him in the leg. The Private keeps running. Limping now.

JACOV

I got him!

Peretz and Asael can now catch up to the soldier.

FROM FAR AWAY

We SEE them knock the Private to the ground, KICKING him until Jacov catches up to them and FIRES A FINAL SHOT.

55 BACK AT THE STAFF CAR

55

Tuvia stands, out of breath.

TUVIA

Stupid! The gunfire could be heard  
for miles.

ZUS

He was pissing on my head.

Zus is high from the killing, covered in the dead man's  
blood. He begins calling out orders.

ZUS (CONT'D)

Peretz, Jacov, check the car for  
guns...

(to Tuvia)

This one's yours.

He presents him with the Schmeisser as if it were a trophy.  
Tuvia accepts it, checking the gun efficiently.

ZUS (CONT'D)

I'll check his pockets for more  
ammo.

TUVIA

Hurry--!

AT THE STAFF CAR

Peretz and Jacov emerge with two MACHINE-PISTOLS, several  
BOTTLES OF SCHNAPPS and a beautiful LEICA CAMERA.

JACOV

They were on their way to a party!

They toss one bottle to Zus and another to Tuvia.

56 UP THE ROAD

56

Asael stands over the dead Private. He isn't much older  
than Aron.

57 BACK AT THE STAFF CAR

57

ZUS rifles the pockets of the dead Sergeant for ammo. He  
finds cigarettes and the man's wallet. He opens it.

ZUS

Welcome to Belarus, herr Henkel.

A CHAMPAGNE CORK POPS as Peretz and Jacov toast their  
victory.

PERETZ

Now we are real Partisans...

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED: 57

JACOV  
To the Bielski Otriad!

58 SUDDENLY - ANOTHER SET OF HEADLIGHTS 58

are rounding the bend. Troop trucks. The Staff Car was leading A CONVOY.

TUVIA  
Into the fields! RUN!

Tuvia pulls Peretz off the road, but Jacov reloads his rifle and begins to FIRE at the approaching trucks.

TUVIA (CONT'D)  
Jacov, NO!

THE TRUCKS STOP. Troops pour off and begin RETURNING FIRE.

Jacov is CUT DOWN by a MACHINE GUN.

Peretz, Zus, and Tuvia race into the WHEAT FIELD. It's not clear if they can make it into the woods. A FLARE IGNITES OVERHEAD turning the wheat fields BRIGHT WHITE in flickering incandescence. Malbin is almost paralytic with fear.

ASAEL doesn't know which way to run. He plunges into the WHEAT FIELD...but ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THE ROAD.

ONE OF THE TRUCKS drives forward, CUTTING HIM OFF, using its SPOTLIGHT to reveal him. FIFTEEN SOLDIERS start after him.

59 SEEN FROM ABOVE 59

We watch as they CONVERGE on him.

TUVIA, ZUS AND PERETZ

Have almost made it into the woods when PERETZ IS HIT. He falls. Tuvia and Zus pick him up and half-carry, half-drag him into the sanctuary of the forest.

TUVIA  
Zus. His rifle.

Zus races back to pick up Peretz's weapon.

60 ASAEL, MEANWHILE 60

has realized his mistake. He tries to circle back toward the woods but the SOLDIERS move to CUT HIM OFF. He is fast, but not fast enough. We realize he isn't going to make it.

61 IN THE WOODS 61

Tuvia and Zus look at the scene with mounting horror.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED:

61

TUVIA

Asael...

He rips the rifle from Zus's hands. For a moment we think he's going to go back after him. Instead, he wedges the rifle into a tree-trunk and takes careful aim...

THE SPOTLIGHT SHATTERS

Plunging the field into darkness as the flare burns out.

ASAEL seizes the moment and dives to his knees, disappearing from view and CRAWLING NOW rather than expose himself.

AN IRRIGATION DITCH is nearby. Frantically he DIGS into the soft mud on its banks. As he scrapes his hands raw, he can HEAR his pursuers drawing near, CALLING OUT to one another.

CUT TO:

62 THE FOREST CAMP - DAWN

62

A somber mood. Tuvia watches someone scrape at the porridge congealed in an empty pot. OTHERS stare listlessly into space. ONE MAN chews on a piece of leather, ANOTHER sucks on an old chicken bone.

Zus, meanwhile, is in the middle of a nasty drunk from the captured schnapps. Nearby, Aron shares his ration of bread with Rachel. Little enough, but a connection is made.

Peretz lies nearby. Malbin is trying to comfort him. There is nothing that can help him. Malbin looks to Tuvia.

SHIMON

They thought you were bringing food.

Tuvia just stares at him.

SHIMON (CONT'D)

Did the farmers stop you?

Still no answer from Tuvia.

SHIMON (CONT'D)

They had guns? Dogs?

TUVIA

No.

SHIMON

I don't understand.

Tuvia says nothing. Nearby, a child cries in hunger.

SHIMON (CONT'D)

The Talmud says if you save a life you must take responsibility for it.

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED:

62

TUVIA

Again I have no idea what you are  
talking about.

Around them, the beseeching eyes of so many hungry faces.

SHIMON

I think you do.

VOICE

You are the Bielski's?

A MAN stands in the clearing. BEN ZION GULKOWITZ is tall,  
well muscled, a rifle strapped over his shoulder.

ZUS

How'd you get past the Lazar?

BEN ZION

Who?

Zus stands unsteadily, then lurches into the woods, leaning  
on an occasional tree for support. He finds the erstwhile  
sentry --LAZAR -- ambling toward him.

ZUS

You shit! You worthless shit!

Zus punches him, knocking him the ground. In a sloppy,  
drunken frenzy, Zus SLAPS him again.

TUVIA

Enough!

ZUS

He walked right by you! Someone  
could have been killed!

Tuvia pulls Zus off him.

TUVIA

I said, enough!  
(to Lazar)  
Get up! Get up!

ZUS

If we were real partisans he'd be  
shot.

TUVIA

He made a mistake!

(CONTINUED)

62 CONTINUED: (3)

62

ZUS

MISTAKE! We cannot make mistakes!

As Zus goes for Lazar again, Tuvia roughly PULLS HIM OFF.  
Zus goes flying, tripping over, landing on his ass.

TUVIA

That's right, Zus. No mistakes.  
Like last night.

(looks at him)

First they will torture Asael...and  
then they will hang him.

Tuvia walks away, leaving his brother on the ground.

63 BACK IN CAMP

63

Tuvia rejoins them. Ben Zion looks up at him.

BEN ZION

You are Tuvia Bielski.

TUVIA

You know me?

BEN ZION

I am Ben Zion Gulkowitz.

Ben Zion is besieged by questions about friends and family.

MIRIAM

Pardon me, you are from Vilna. My  
sister lives on Passaya Street.

BEN ZION

The SD came without warning.  
Hundreds were taken. No one knows  
where.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED:

63

THE WOMAN begins to cry.

MIRIAM

My poor sister...dear God, no...

Meanwhile, Peretz's MOANING ceases. A woman grumbles:

WOMAN #1

We'd be better off in the ghetto...

TAMARA

At least here we are safe.

LOVA

There at least we had hope...

SHIMON

No. Here, we have hope.

A FEW MORE join in, grumbling their dissatisfaction. Others take the opposite position. These are Jews, after all, and arguing is a revered sport and a pastime. It escalates.

WOMAN #1

We are hungry!

This is a defining moment for Tuvia. When at first he speaks, it is awkward, ineffectual amid the growing tumult.

TUVIA

I know we have no food. But tomorrow... tomorrow will be another mission.

RONA

Look what happened the last time.

TUVIA

That was a mistake! But the mistakes we made will not be made again!

More objections. Tuvia must raise his voice to be heard.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

We could be here a long time. And we have to prepare.

LOVA

How?

TUVIA

Better security. Better at getting food and information--  
(talking over their objections)  
--at making shelters. Whatever is needed. We all participate. We don't work against each other.

At this he looks directly at Zus. Daring him to object.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (2)

63

TUVIA (CONT'D)

I want to kill Nazis, too, but  
we...just...cannot afford revenge.  
Not right now. We cannot afford to  
lose friends like Jacov and Peretz.

A small voice speaks up.

ARON

Or Asael.

Everyone stares. It is the first time Aron has spoken.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: (3)

63

TUVIA

Or Asael. We... We--  
 (trying to hold it  
 together)  
 --cannot lose anyone.

He looks from face to face. Filthy, ravaged, many of them with tears in their eyes. This is what they need -- leadership, faith, something to believe in.

And gradually, his tentativeness and awkwardness is replaced by something else. A new voice. From deep inside.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

...We will map out where we've been so as to not visit the same farms too often. And we take only from those who can afford to give, and leave those who can't alone.

LOVA

The poorest farmer has more than us.

TUVIA

True. But what I am saying is... what I mean is... We are not thieves.  
 (his resolve growing with every word)  
 Or murderers. We may be hunted like animals but we will not become animals.  
 (looks at them all)  
 We have all chosen this -- to live free, like human beings, for as long as we can. Each day of freedom is an act of faith. And if we die trying to live, at least we die like human beings.

His mission statement. A vision of their future.

Everyone nods in mute acknowledgement. Zus lowers his head. The shift in power between them has occurred. Tuvia has emerged as the undisputed leader.

CUT TO:

64 OMITTED

64

64A FALL IN THE FOREST

64A

The trees take on color as if in celebration of their coming together.

65 KOSCIK'S FARM

65

All is quiet as Tuvia, Zus and Ben Zion watch from the woods.

(CONTINUED)

65 CONTINUED: 65

TUVIA

Now.

They leave their cover and approach warily, guns at the ready.

66 OUTSIDE THE HOUSE 66

Koscik's wife looks up from her garden and glares at them.

TUVIA

**Hello.**

She refuses to be flattered. In Russian:

KOSCIK'S WIFE

**In the barn.**

67 IN THE BARN 67

Zus calls out.

ZUS

**Koscik, put your pants back on and leave those sheep alone.**

He steps into the shadows to find:

KOSCIK HANGING FROM A THRESHING HOOK

that has been driven through his chest. A sign attached to the hook reads (in Polish) "*JEW LOVER.*"

CUT TO:

68 KOSCIK'S NEWLY-DUG GRAVE 68

is just beyond the barn. Tuvia finishes piling on the last shovelful of earth. Koscik's wife stares straight ahead.

TUVIA

I'm sorry.

KOSCIK'S WIFE

(a monotone)

**Come.**

69 A ROOT CELLAR 69

dug into a hillside. Overgrown with tall grass it is undetectable. Koscik's wife opens the heavy door, revealing ASAEL, who emerges blinking into the bright light.

TUVIA

Thank God.

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED:

69

Zus pulls his lost brother into a mighty embrace.

ASAEL

Zus.... ZUSSIE... I can't breathe.

Zus lets him go and Asael reaches back into the root cellar.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

Look.

Two LOVELY YOUNG WOMEN -- BELLA and CHAYA -- emerge, tentative and scared. Though their dresses are dirty, it is obvious they were once expensive. Zus eyes them appreciatively.

ZUS

Asael... Well, well..

ASAEL

(blushing)

Shut up. Look at this--

He has two more rifles and a large box of ammunition.

Tuvia turns to Kosciak's wife, deeply moved.

TUVIA

**Thank you.**

KOSCIK'S WIFE

(turning away)

**Go.**

CUT TO:

70 A FOREST TRAIL

70

They head for home. Zus walks beside Bella.

BELLA

--and then we fell into this horrible bog. Chaya saved me. Honestly, I can't swim at all.

(CONTINUED)

70 CONTINUED:

70

ZUS  
(mesmerized)  
Then I will teach you!

BELLA  
We must have got lost a dozen times.  
I was absolutely resigned to die.

ZUS  
No...

BELLA  
Tell him, Chaya. Was it not the  
absolute worst? And that farmer,  
Mr. Koscik, kept making the most  
vulgar jokes, he said any girl who--

As they continue out of earshot, it appears as though Zus  
would be happy to listen for hours.

DISSOLVE TO:

71 A TOWERING PINE FOREST

71

Aron and Rachel are walking through the woods. For a brief  
moment, viewed through the eyes of the young, we see these  
woods as a magical place. Strange mushrooms, gnarled roots,  
an enormous spider's web glistening with dew.

72 THE CAMP HAS BEGUN TO SHOW PROGRESS

72

Sentries are posted. Zus expertly helps with the building  
a bunker ("zemylnka"). There's a more permanent kitchen,  
a wash trough, a clothesline. Pinchas tends his goat.  
Though primitive and raw...a haven.

SHIMON AND MALBIN ARE DIGGING A HOLE

Their bickering will become for them, as time goes on, a  
sport and a pastime.

MALBIN  
You're trying to tell me all politics  
is meaningless.

SHIMON  
In the West a monster with a little  
mustache, in the East a monster  
with a big mustache. This is all I  
need to know about politics.

MALBIN  
Your messiah will have a mustache,  
too, and a full beard.

SHIMON  
No. The messiahs are all in  
politics, and they're killing us.

Zus unloads two cut and stripped trees.

(CONTINUED)

72

CONTINUED:

72

ZUS

What's killing me is all your  
talking. Back to work.

Malbin and Shimon go back to work.

MALBIN

And Roosevelt? He has no mustache.

SHIMON

My life in these woods is much easier  
because of Mr. Roosevelt, thank  
you.

73 WALKING THROUGH THE CAMP TUVIA AND ASael

73

review their plans.

TUVIA

We need to know what's going on in  
the villages, how the Germans patrol,  
who the informers are--

He realizes that Asael is not fully concentrating; instead  
he is watching as Chaya walks past.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Are you listening to me?

ASael

Yes.

TUVIA

What's her name?

ASael

Chaya. [I believe.]

TUVIA

(yelling)

CHAYA!

He waves as Chaya turns to look in their direction. Asael  
smiles, embarrassed.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

So talk to her.

ASael

I hardly know her.

TUVIA

You spent three days in a cellar!

Asael blushes, returns the focus to their prior conversation.

ASael

Malbin says the Piznarksi granary  
is full. We need two guns at  
least...

TUVIA

Whose turn to go?

ASael

Zus.

TUVIA

You go along, just to make sure he  
understands my orders.

Asael nods.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

(re: Chaya)

Go on...Go!

(CONTINUED)

73 CONTINUED: 73

Asael heads toward Chaya.

74 NEAR A SHED ROOF - BEN ZION 74

We notice a FEW NEW FACES. Their number has exceeded twenty. Among them are two lumbering, dark-skinned men, ARKADY and MOTL LUBCZANSKI. Ben Zion is showing Lazar and the other newcomers how to clean a weapon.

BEN ZION

This is not a gun. It is Bar  
Kochba's spear. It is Ehud's sword.  
You fix the patch to the rod--

They do as he instructs.

BEN ZION (CONT'D)

--then run it through the barrel...  
and don't lose the patch in the  
barrel--

Lazar looks up, sheepishly.

LAZAR

I lost my patch.

ARKADY LUBCZANSKI whispers contemptuously to his brother,  
MOTL...

ARKADY LUBCZANSKI

The village idiot.

Zus shoves Arkady out of the way and approaches Lazar, who cowers. But rather than abuse him, Zus removes the patch from the rifle and hands it back to him.

LAZAR

Thank you, Zus.

ZUS

(returning the rifle)  
It's nothing.

(CONTINUED)

75 OMITTED 75

76 A ROADSIDE - NEXT DAY 76

KISSELY is a MILKMAN with bright red hair and a bushy mustache. He leads a horse-drawn CART laden with milk cans. ZUS AND THE OTHERS rise up out of the ditch. In Russian:

ZUS

(a pleasant tone)

***Good morning, friend. Getting an early start to market? Could you possibly spare us a bit of milk?***

Zus' tone is belied by the rifle in his hand.

KISSELY

***This is what I'm required to give the Germans. If I don't meet my quota they'll shoot me and my family.***

Zus is tempted to shoot him himself.

ASAEL

(to Zus)

Leave half. He can't go to the Germans empty-handed.

Zus glares at Asael.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

Tuvia's orders.

Zus shakes his head, climbs onto the wagon and begins removing cartons.

(CONTINUED)

76 CONTINUED:

76

ZUS  
 (to the milkman)  
*We are so grateful, comrade, for  
 your cooperation. What a lovely  
 coat. Is that a fur collar?*

CUT TO:

77 ZUS, NOW WEARING THE MILKMAN'S COAT

77

joins the others lugging milk cans along the forest path.

LAZAR (V.O.)  
 HALT! WHO GOES THERE!

Zus shakes his head. Lazar stands, pointing his weapon.

ZUS  
 Lazar, you can see it's us, you  
 idiot. You only ask, 'who goes  
 there' when you don't know who it  
 is.

LAZAR  
 Sorry, Zus.

78 THE CAMP

78

is a beehive of activity. Shimon and Malbin are digging.

MALBIN  
 Even Spinoza said existence can be  
 substantiated by empirical evidence.

SHIMON  
 All your secular learning, yet you  
 know nothing of life.

MALBIN  
 How can you say this? Learning is  
 my life.

SHIMON  
 And for every fact that goes in  
 your head, another comes out your  
 rear end.

CHAYA and BELLA receive the bounty from the foragers.

BELLA  
 Milk, eggs -- Chaya, our brave men  
 have brought us a feast!

ZUS  
 Blintzes! You will make me blintzes!

She bestows her best smile upon him.

79 BY THE FIRE

79

New arrivals are being shown around by Ben Zion.

(CONTINUED)

79

CONTINUED:

79

A MAN and WOMAN cry out with joy at an unexpected reunion.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED: (2)

79

ARKADY LUBCZANSKI approaches Chaya.

ARKADY

I don't think we've been properly introduced. Arkady Lubczanski.

CHAYA

Hello.

ARKADY

You are Chaya?

CHAYA

...Yes.

ARKADY

You are getting along all right? Anything you need? An extra blanket?

CHAYA

Oh. Well... Yes, that would be nice.

ARKADY

You'll have it by tonight. Something nice and soft.

(smiles at her)

I couldn't help but notice you don't have a husband yet.

CHAYA

(somewhat taken aback)

Yet?

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED: (3)

79

ARKADY

Most of the woman have already  
chosen. They haven't told you about  
this?

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED: (4)

79

CHAYA

No. But thank you for explaining  
it.

She hurries away. Malbin sits down wearily beside Shimon.

MALBIN

Descartes at least provided for the  
subjective nature of experience.

He takes a spoon from his sock.

SHIMON

Yes. You annoy me therefore I exist.

MALBIN

You are not eating?

SHIMON

By my best calculation, today is  
High Holiday. I am fasting.

Malbin can't believe this. He rolls his eyes and digs in.

One of the NEWCOMERS has brought a violin. He begins to  
play. A bittersweet melody. People stop talking and listen,  
eyes filling at this reminder of a sweeter, civilized time.

Ben Zion has left the new arrivals and approached Tuvia.  
He looks grave. Tuvia immediately knows something is wrong.

TUVIA

What is it?

BEN ZION

The new ones, they are from  
Novagroduk. Your wife--

Tuvia tenses. Ben Zion hesitates...

BEN ZION (CONT'D)

They say...She was killed last week.  
(at a loss)  
I'm sorry.

Tuvia nods. No outward display of grief. An awkward moment.

TUVIA

Thank you for telling me.  
(changes the subject)  
We have to dig a trench around the  
new zemyanka. If it rains I'm  
afraid water will seep in.

Tuvia clearly cannot deal with his news.

BEN ZION

I'll see to it, then.

(CONTINUED)

79 CONTINUED: (5)

79

Tuvia nods and walks away.

CUT TO:

80 ARON AND RACHEL WALK THROUGH THE WOODS - CONTINUOUS

80

Cathedral light cuts through the trees forming visible shafts.

ARON

Jacob's ladders. Like in his dream.  
Asael says you can see the angels.

They walk on, eventually coming upon RAILROAD TRACKS. A TRAIN is rounding the bend, headed in their direction.

RACHEL

Can we stay to watch?

ARON

If we hide.

They move back into the trees as the train NEARS: a slow-moving engine pulling a line of WOODEN CATTLE CARS.

RACHEL

Is that a Nazi train?

ARON

If we had some dynamite we could  
blow the shit out of it.

RACHEL

(with undisguised  
awe)

...Just like your brothers.

Aron can't help but be pleased by this notion.

Then, as the train passes, they can see HANDS gripping the small barred windows. And every now and then a gaunt, desperate FACE.

They stare in astonishment.

CUT TO:

81 OMITTED

81

81A UNDER A SHELTER -- CONTINUOUS

81A

Tuvia sits alone. Outside, the SOUND of the violin continues. Shimon comes to sit beside him.

SHIMON

I am sorry for your loss.

Tuvia nods. He is deep inside himself.

SHIMON (CONT'D)

Do you want to say the Kaddish?

When at last Tuvia speaks, it is almost to himself.

TUVIA

She was a beautiful woman. But cold. Not a day went by she didn't remind me I wasn't a good provider. For years it wasn't really a marriage at all. And now...

He lowers his head. All Shimon can do is sit beside him.

82 THE PERIMETER OF THE CAMP - CONTINUOUS

82

Bella takes Chaya aside.

BELLA

You have lipstick? Please, I know you have some left.

Chaya digs in her pocket and produces a tiny remnant. Bella dabs it on and casually approaches Zus, who is on guard duty.

BELLA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

May I join you?

ZUS

Of course.

BELLA

You get lonely out here?

ZUS

I like the woods.

LAUGHTER and MUSIC waft through the trees.

BELLA

I'm a little scared out here.

Zus knows an opportunity when he sees one. He offers her a drink from his bottle of vodka.

(CONTINUED)

82 CONTINUED:

82

BELLA (CONT'D)

I've never tried it.

ZUS

Go ahead.

She drinks, refuses to grimace. Drinks again. Zus laughs. -  
Bella touches the rifle in his arms.

BELLA

Why is there a rule against women  
having guns?

ZUS

There aren't enough for the men.

BELLA

Women need guns, too.

ZUS

What for?

BELLA

For protection.

ZUS

Women have men for protection.

Bella bites her lip. She's a virgin but also realistic.

BELLA

I want protection.

She steps closer and takes Zus's hand...under her coat...onto  
her breast...never taking her eyes off him.

BELLA (CONT'D)

You will take good care of me? You  
will be my commander.

83 OMITTED

83

84 MEANWHILE - DEEP IN THE FOREST

84

Aron and Rachel are walking back from the train tracks.  
Suddenly he senses movement, freezes:

ARMED POLICEMEN are advancing through the trees.

Aron and Rachel bury themselves beneath piles of leaves  
until the police pass by, then he grabs her hand and dashes  
off--

ARON RUNS through the woods like a deer. She follows.

85 IN THE CAMP

85

He bursts in, SCREAMING.

ARON  
MEN WITH GUNS!

Chaos.

People panic, search for family members, grab whatever they can carry,

ZUS AND BELLA emerge from the woods where they have lain together for the first time. He grabs his rifle.

TUVIA tries to maintain order.

TUVIA  
ONLY FOOD AND GUNS! FOLLOW ASael!

Asael clutches Chaya's hand. Rounding up others.

ASael  
Don't panic. THIS WAY!. GO.

ZUS  
QUIET! NOT ANOTHER WORD!!!

THE POLICEMEN begin FIRING. TWO of the group are KILLED.

Tuvia roughly pushes people deeper into the woods.

TUVIA  
Lova, Ben Zion -- stay with us.  
Asael, keep them moving. Don't  
stop!

THE POLICEMEN enter the camp. A submachine gun RAKES a shelter. KISSELY has found the escape trail into the woods.

KISSELY  
This way--

86 THE FOREST IS DEATHLY STILL

86

Tuvia and Zus usher the group across the river and up the embankment.

TUVIA  
Go! Go! Move!  
(holding back)  
Isaac, keep them moving! Zus, Asael,  
Ben Zion...

Tuvia motions for them to take defensive positions while the others escape.-

The policemen emerge hurriedly through the trees and begin crossing the river.

SHOTS rings out. A Policeman goes down. The German Soldier is shot in the leg. They are dragged from the water.

(CONTINUED)

86

CONTINUED:

86

An edgy silence. From the trees a VOICE calls out in Russian--

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED: (2)

86

VOICE (ZUS)

**LEAVE NOW AND WE WON'T SHOOT THE  
REST OF YOU!**

POLICEMAN

**DON'T BE A FOOL. THERE ARE HUNDREDS  
OF US!**

ZUS

**THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF US! WHO IS  
THE FOOL?**

The policemen exchange apprehensive looks.

TUVIA

**WHERE ARE YOU FROM?**

POLICEMAN

**KARELITZ!**

The confrontation changes languages.

BEN ZION

I'M FROM KARELITZ, TOO. I LIVED BY  
THE SLAUGHTER HOUSE.

POLICEMAN

MAYBE I KNOW YOU. SHOW YOURSELF!

BEN ZION

YOU FIRST!

Derisive laughter from the trees.

POLICEMAN

Give us Bielski and the rest of you  
can go free!

Behind a tree, Tuvia is surprised by the mention of his  
name.

TUVIA

You are from Belarussia, pig! Why  
do you work for the Germans against  
your own people?

KISSELY

For the same reason you steal from  
the poor. To survive.

ANOTHER SHOT RINGS OUT. Kessely is hit in the arm.

KISSELY (CONT'D)

Shit.

ZUS

Next one is to the head!

(CONTINUED)

86 CONTINUED: (3)

86

TUVIA

Soon it will be dark... See how you  
find your way home then!

The policemen are having similar thoughts.

SUDDENLY - A POLICEMAN BREAKS AND RUNS AWAY

Soon it's a full-scale retreat.

AFTER A MOMENT

Tuvia, Zus, Lova & Ben Zion emerge. Zus picks up the dead  
German's machine pistol.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

They'll be back.

(looks around)

We have to find a new camp.

ZUS

Next time just draw them a map.

TUVIA

What does that mean?

ZUS

It means -- we should have killed  
the fucking milkman. Your policy  
of diplomacy is shit.

Zus is breathing hard, full of the adrenaline of battle.

ZUS (CONT'D)

...Two are dead. Winter is coming  
and now we have no shelter. Why?  
Because you don't have the stomach  
to do what must be done.

He walks away.

CUT TO:

87 OMITTED

87

88 THE NOVEMBER WIND WHISTLES THROUGH THE BARE FOREST (MONTAGE) 88

as the group trudges along -- weighed down by cooking gear, food, guns, etc. Asael takes the iron cauldron from Chaya. Zus and Bella walk side-by-side. Pinchas leads his goat.

MALBIN

Where is he taking us? My feet are going to fall off.

SHIMON

A great rabbi once said, "wherever I go, I am always going to the land of Israel."

MALBIN

Well, maybe rabbis should give better directions.

Tuvia walks alongside but apart.

CUT TO:

89 A HILLSIDE 89

The group is sprawled on the ground. Four people share a single cigarette. Shimon and Malbin hardly have the energy to argue. Pinchas feeds his goat. Tuvia walks among them.

TUVIA

Rest and eat. I need volunteers for a scouting party.

Zus raises his hand. Tuvia nods in grudging gratitude. However mixed his feelings, Zus can always be counted on.

CUT TO:

90 A FORK IN THE TRAIL 90

Tuvia looks at Zus, who shrugs. They are in unfamiliar territory. As they move cautiously forward:

A MAN IN A RED ARMY TUNIC

steps into the path, holding an automatic rifle. He WHISTLES softly. More ARMED MEN materialize, surrounding them.

GRAMOV

(in Russian; subtitles)

**WHO ARE YOU?**

Tuvia instantly grasps the situation. He salutes.

TUVIA

(in Russian; subtitles)

**A brigade of independent fighters  
searching for our comrades.**

(CONTINUED)

90

CONTINUED:

90

Zus almost does a double-take at Tuvia's bluff.

GRAMOV

*What brigade?*

90 CONTINUED: (2)

90

TUVIA

***We belong to the Bielski otriad.***

GRAMOV

***We know of you. Jewish bandits.***

Zus's finger tightens on the trigger of his submachine gun.

ZUS

I'll take the two on the left...

Tuvia maintains his composure.

TUVIA

***I'm sure we can clear up this misunderstanding with your commander.***

CUT TO:

91 THE OCTOBER OTRIAD BASE

91

A primitive tent camp. RUSSIAN PARTISANS move about, quiet and cold-eyed men wearing remnants of Red Army uniforms. Zus can't help but be impressed by the array of weaponry.

VICTOR PACHENKO emerges from a tent. A former lieutenant, dashing in a fur cap and long officer's coat. He addresses them in Russian.

VIKTOR

***I am Viktor Panchenko, commander of the October otriad. We have had complaints of a Jewish gang stealing from villages loyal to us.******(a steely look)******How do you respond to these charges?***

TUVIA

***When you take food it is from loyal supporters. When we do, you call it stealing.***

VIKTOR

***We are soldiers.***

TUVIA

***And we fight a common enemy. The motherland doesn't distinguish between Jews and non-Jews.***

Viktor is amused by this bit of Soviet dogma.

VIKTOR

***But Jews do not fight.***

(CONTINUED)

91 CONTINUED:

91

TUVIA

***These Jews do.***

Viktor appraises Tuvia for a moment.

VIKTOR

***We will see. Select your best  
fighters and send them to us.***

Zus looks at Tuvia, knowing he has no choice.

TUVIA

***We are honored to be of service.***

Tuvia and Zus SALUTE and head back the way they came.

ZUS

(under his breath)  
So we're partisans now.

TUVIA

As if we have a choice.

CUT TO:

91A NEW CAMP (CAMP #2)

91A

Has taken root. People hard at work building zemylanka.

92 THE NEW CAMP (CAMP #2)

92

Tuvia and Malbin are working together on a new bunker.  
Malbin expertly nails a header across a doorway.

TUVIA

(throwing a smaller  
hammer)

Here.

MALBIN

If my friends at The New Socialists'  
Club could see me now...

(shakes his head)

I haven't read a book in months.

TUVIA

I haven't read one in years.

Malbin looks up from his work.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

I wasn't a very good student. You  
can ask Shimon.

MALBIN

....I did.

Tuvia laughs ruefully. Considers him for a moment.

TUVIA

Yet you accept me as Commander.

(CONTINUED)

92 CONTINUED:

92

Malbin thinks about it for a moment.

MALBIN

Who else?

Tuvia nods. Good point. They continue working.

MALBIN (CONT'D)

Might I make an observation?

Tuvia gestures, go ahead.

MALBIN (CONT'D)

We need to be strong, but--

TUVIA

...But--?

MALBIN

Other things are important, too.

TUVIA

Such as?

Malbin tries to think how best to put it.

MALBIN

Community.

Tuvia considers the word. As if trying it on for size.

TUVIA

You have more ideas? About all this?

MALBIN

.....A few.

TUVIA

I'm listening...

93 MEANWHILE, THE WOMEN WATCH AS ASAEL LEADS IN NEW ARRIVALS

93

BELLA

More mouths to feed.

RONA

More young bodies to keep us warm.

One of them, a young man, YITZHAK SHULMAN, RIPS the yellow Star-of-David off his coat and kneels to KISS THE GROUND.

SHULMAN

Which one is Tuvia Bielski?

Someone points Tuvia out. Shulman hurries over and kisses Tuvia's hand. Zus is drinking nearby with his cronies.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED:

93

SHULMAN (CONT'D)

None of us knew if you really  
existed. I am from Baranowicze.  
They are going to liquidate the  
ghetto.

Chaya bursts into tears. Asael puts his arm around her.

CHAYA

My parents--

Zus catches Tuvia's glance to Malbin. Tuvia turns back to  
Shulman.

TUVIA

We'll do what we can.

(CONTINUED)

93 CONTINUED: (2)

93

Shulman tries to kiss Tuvia's hand once again, but Tuvia takes his hand, instead, and shakes it.

CHAYA looks deeply into Asael's eyes.

CHAYA

You will help my parents?

ASAEL

I...I...

CHAYA

I've seen you looking at me. If you were to rescue them, I would do... anything...you--

Asael is completely undone by the starkness of this.

ASAEL

No. I mean, yes. All right.

94 ZUS CATCHES UP TO TUVIA

94

and grabs him as he walks away. Their hushed tones belie the growing chasm between them.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED:

94

ZUS

And what exactly does that mean,  
'do what we can.'

TUVIA

We must send for whoever is left  
alive.

ZUS

And if it is a hundred? Six hundred?

TUVIA

Then we will provide.

ZUS

And when the Germans follow these  
hundreds and slaughter us.

TUVIA

I won't let that happen.

Tuvia exchanges a glance with Malbin. Zus catches it. He  
has sensed Malbin's growing influence.

ZUS

You won't let that happen.

TUVIA

No. I'll bring them out myself.

ZUS

From the ghetto.

TUVIA

Yes.

ZUS

*Pan* Tuvia. *Rabbi* Tuvia. Allow me  
to kiss your hand...

Tuvia tries to pull his hand away, but Zus holds him.

ZUS (CONT'D)

You think Pachenko wants hundreds  
more of us in the forest?

TUVIA

I cannot have you contradicting  
me... Not when others are around.

(looks around)

Our family must stick together.

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED: (2)

94

ZUS

And who is it that's risking our family, and for what? For the sake of these--

(gestures at the new arrivals)

--*Malbushim*.

TUVIA

Don't call them that.

ZUS

That's who comes to us from the ghetto. Empty clothes. Bloodsuckers.

TUVIA

They are people. Jews.

ZUS

Pretentious Jews. Jews who stuck up their noses and wouldn't give us the time of day when we passed them on the street. Jews who went out of their way to keep their daughters locked away from our dirty hands.

(savagely)

You think your old teacher will give you a good grade because you saved his worthless ass! They accept you as their leader only because they are too weak and full of shit to help themselves.

TUVIA

--What about Bella?

Tuvia looks over at Bella, who is anxiously watching.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

--You think she'd be with you if it wasn't for what is happening here?

Zus glares at him, but tries to control himself.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

--Is it love Zus?

(CONTINUED)

94 CONTINUED: (3)

94

Zus is sick of talk. He PUNCHES Tuvia in the face. Tuvia is rocked but still he goads his brother.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

You are the man of her dreams? The  
Romeo of Novagrudok?

Zus can't take anymore. He charges Tuvia, who sidesteps and SLAMS him in the gut. All the frustration of the past months, not to mention years of sibling rivalry, translates into fists and elbows.

Ben Zion moves to break it up. Tuvia and Zus turn on him.

ZUS

Is this your business?

Zus gains the upper hand and starts to beat the crap put of Tuvia. Finally, in desperation Tuvia rolls away and picks up a rock. He is about to slam it into his brother's head when suddenly he stops himself.

The two brothers look at each other, both breathing heavily -- realizing that they have crossed some line.

ZUS (CONT'D)

(calls out)

Ben Zion. Krensky. Lova. Israel.  
Let's go.

(to Tuvia)

We are going to join the real  
partisans.

He looks at Asael.

ZUS (CONT'D)

Are you coming?

Asael looks at one brother, then the other. Once again, he is in the middle. He looks at Chaya, then back at Zus.

ASAEL

No.

ZUS

Good. I'll dance at your wedding.

He stops by Bella's side, touches her arm, then disappears down the trail. The others follow.

CUT TO:

95 THE OUTSKIRTS OF NOVOGRUDOK

95

Tuvia and Asael feel naked outside the safety of the forest. In the distance the city looms.

95A THE STREETS OF NOVOGRUDOK

95A

Tuvia and Asael pass by the barbed wire and machine-guns of the guards and dogs manning the barrier to the ghetto.

96 THE WALLS OF THE NOVOGRUDOK GHETTO

96

Tuvia and Asael climb over a dilapidated wall.

- 97 THE DESERTED STREETS OF THE GHETTO 97  
People peer out from behind shuttered windows. Others hurry to get off the street. Tuvia consults a hand-drawn map.
- TUVIA  
This way.
- 98 OMITTED 98
- 98A EXT. FOREST - DAY 98A  
Zus, Lova and Ben Zion march alongside the Russians Partisans.

99 AN APARTMENT IN THE GHETTO - DAY

99

that might once have been home to a family-of-four now HOUSES fifteen. Tuvia and Asael are deep in conversation with several ELDERS of the ghetto Council

ELDER #1

We are not so naive as to believe they won't kill some of us. But all the Jews? It makes no sense. They need us to work. In the factories. The labor camps.

Tuvia notices A PRETTY GIRL standing on a chair in order to hear. Her name is LILKA and we will soon come to know her.

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED:

99

TUVIA

There are rumors. Of death camps.

ELDER #1

We too have heard of such places.  
But have you seen them yourself?  
Can you tell me, with absolute  
certainty, that we are not just as  
likely to die out there with you in  
the woods with Winter coming on...?

Someone WHISTLES from the street below. A tense moment.  
Another whistle. All clear.

ELDER #1 (CONT'D)

--Do you think we haven't all  
considered running away? For every  
one that leaves they kill twenty.  
How can I sacrifice thousands for  
the sake of a few?"

Tuvia looks at them, rubbing his face in concentration.

TUVIA

What if we were to take all of you?

ELDER #1

The old, the sick? There are  
thousands. How will we live?

TUVIA

We will protect you. We have made  
alliances with the Russian Partisans.

ELDER #1

They are as bad as the Nazi's. You  
are too young to know the pogroms--

(CONTINUED)

99 CONTINUED: (2)

99

Tuvia SLAMS HIS FIST on a table.

TUVIA

YOU WANT TIME? Fine, I give you a day. A month. Maybe a year. To live!

(to an older couple)

Your daughter is out there with us.

(to another woman)

Your husband is waiting for you.

An old orthodox RABBI stands nearby.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Rabbi?

RABBI

We...are waiting for God.

Tuvia looks at him in disbelief. Such madness is incontrovertible. A suspended moment.

LILKA

I am going.

This breaks the log jam. Several others join in, "*We are coming,*" "*Us, too,*" etc. Tuvia nods his acknowledgment.

CUT TO:

100 A COURTYARD IN THE NOVOGRUDOK GHETTO - NIGHT

100

A crude tunnel has been dug through a ghetto wall. PEOPLE squeeze through into the adjoining alley. Behind them, a hundred more await their turn.

Out in the alley, Asael stops them momentarily as a car goes by at the end of the street, then gives the all-clear.

Tuvia takes Lilka' hand and helps her pass through. Their eyes meet for just a moment.

CUT TO:

100A OMITTED

100A

(CONTINUED)

101 THE FOREST CAMP

101

The new ARRIVALS file in. Men wear citified coats and some women have furs. They eye the veterans, thinking, 'how dirty they are'; the veterans eye them warily, wondering, 'How will we feed them?'

A handmade sign reads, "New Jerusalem." Chaya is re-united with her parents. She holds Asael's arm and looks up at him with absolute rapture. She is his.

Malbin is collecting valuables. One WELL-DRESSED WOMAN is reluctant to part with her jewelry.

WELL-DRESSED WOMAN  
But they were my grandmother's...

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: (2)

101

MALBIN

And now they belong to the otriad.  
Everyone sacrifices for the sake of  
the collective. We can trade these  
for food or weapons. Next...

Nearby, Shimon is INTERVIEWING another line of arrivals.

SHIMON

--How about carpenters? Any  
bootmakers? Seamstresses?

ARRIVAL #1

I am an accountant.

SHIMON

(deadpan)

That should come in handy. Next...

RIVA

I am a nurse.

SHIMON

Ahhh...welcome. And you, *tateh*?

OPPENHEIM is an old man with thick glasses.

OPPENHEIM

I am a watchmaker.

Tuvia has walked over to observe.

TUVIA

Can you repair guns?

OPPENHEIM

Guns? No.

TUVIA

(hands him a rifle)

See if you can fix this trigger.

Oppenheim slips on a pair of spectacles and studies the mechanism. It sticks. He digs into his pocket and produces a small file and expertly begins to shave the metal spur. He tests it, then hands it back to Tuvia, who CLICKS the trigger.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

You have a new profession.

A murmur of appreciation ripples through the group as Shulman appears -- leading A MAGNIFICENT WHITE HORSE.

(CONTINUED)

101 CONTINUED: (3)

101

SHULMAN

Look what we found running free.  
Must have belonged to an aristocrat.

TUVIA

My God, she's beautiful.  
(strokes her flanks)  
May I?

He mounts her easily, urges her around the perimeter, greeting the new arrivals. Heads turn as he trots past. He is the center of attention, and he knows it. And likes it.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Friends, we are happy to see you safely among us. But there are many things you must learn about living here...

All attention turns to him. The Lubczanski brothers grumble to each other, none too pleased with Tuvia's show-boating.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Once you are settled, you'll be assigned work duties. Everyone works, no exceptions.

101A INTERCUT IMAGES

101A

Of people being introduced to various tasks: shoemaking, sewing, cooking. Asael teaching them to use guns.

TUVIA

We will help supply the Russian Partisans by making clothes, repairing guns.

101B BACK TO TUVIA ON HORSEBACK

101B

Malbin catches his eye and winks -- clearly this has been part of their "strategy" discussions.

TUVIA

Women will learn to use weapons and fight alongside men.

Tuvia takes a rifle from Asael and holds it aloft.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

This is not a gun. It is Bar Kochba's spear. It is Ehud's sword. You will all learn to protect yourselves.

A LITTLE BOY holds Lilka's hand and looks up at Tuvia in wonder. He cuts an iconic figure.

(CONTINUED)

101B CONTINUED:

101B

LITTLE BOY

(to Lilka)

He is a Jew?

Lilka is equally struck -- although there is something more than wonder in her regard. She nods.

TUVU

Pregnancies are forbidden. We cannot accommodate an infant's needs. Our bunkers are overcrowded so you will have to build new ones.

He looks out over the sea of expectant faces.

TUVIA

(continuing)

...This is the one place in all of Belorussia where a Jew can be free.

(looks out over them)

We will make again, here in this forest, the life that was taken from you. We welcome you into our community.

101C LATER - TUVIA IS WALKING HIS HORSE BESIDE THE RIVER 101C  
when Riva stops him.

RIVA  
You are Tuvia Bielski? You are  
really him?  
(Tuvia nods  
tentatively)  
You are a hero. A Maccabee.

She vigorously shakes Tuvia's hand and walks away. Tuvia catches his reflection in the water. And likes it.

102 THE CAMP AT DAWN - TO ESTABLISH 102

102A IN AN UNDERGROUND BUNKER - DAWN 102A

Lilka awakens to find TEN WOMEN wedged in beside her -- back to front -- like spoons.

Idly, she begins to ITCH her scalp. Then her leg. In the pale morning light she sees that she is crawling with lice. She SCREAMS. The women around her wake up, terrified.

LILKA  
Get them off! Get them off me!

CHAYA  
What? Where?

LILKA  
EVERYWHERE! OH, MY GOD, OH, MY  
GOD...

RIVA  
Lice need somewhere to sleep, too.

The others LAUGH, but Lilka is on the verge of hysteria. She stumbles out, stepping on several others as she goes.

102B OUTSIDE THE BUNKER 102B

Crying, she tears at her clothes -- only to discover Tuvia and OTHERS staring at her with interest. She is mortified.

102C LATER THAT DAY 102C

THE WOMEN wash clothes in the stream. Lilka is by the riverbank, scrubbing furiously. Tamara works beside her.

TAMARA  
You get rid of them quicker if you  
boil them.

102C CONTINUED:

102C

Lilka is grateful for this bit of camp wisdom.

BELLA

Tamara, come on in, it's freezing  
and slimy and horrible.

Tamara shakes her head, no.

RIVA

So modest....

BELLA

... So last night I dreamed I was  
taking a real bath. With hot water.

RACHEL

And soap.

(CONTINUED)

102C CONTINUED: (2)

102C

RIVA

And bubbles.

CHAYA

Oh, take me to that dream!

RIVA

I was dreaming of shoes...

CHAYA

Shoes, Riva?

RIVA

There was a man in a shop on Grudek street... and the way he caressed my feet when I tried on his shoes...

Riva swoons. The women burst into ribald laughter. The SOUND of a horse. They look to the opposite bank where:

TUVIA RIDES BY on his horse. Lilka can't help but stare.

BELLA

Doesn't take a fortune teller to know what Lilka's dreaming about...

Lilka blushes furiously. The women laugh even louder.

CUT TO:

103 A FLAT STRETCH OF TRAIN TRACK

103

Gramov shows Zus how to plant a disk-like CONTACT MINE.

GRAMOV

**--buried underneath with this detonator--**

(indicates a finger-like protrusion)

**--almost touching the rail. As the train passes, its weight causes pressure on the detonator, and then--**

(very loud; in English)

**BOOM!**

Zus falls over, startled. Gramov laughs. Partisan humor.

104 FOREST CAMP #2

104

Chaya is on kitchen detail with Tamara.

TAMARA

Yesterday, potatoes with beets,  
Today, beets with potatoes. Special  
treat tomorrow...potato soup. With  
beets.

Not far away, Arkady and several others have created a  
primitive still -- turning potatoes into vodka.

ARKADY

We love potatoes, don't we, boys!  
Here, put some hair on your chest!

They give Aron his first taste.

NEARBY

Bella is walking, arm in arm, with Asael.

BELLA

So...a little bird told me that a  
certain someone is waiting...for  
another certain someone to ask a  
certain question... Go on...

She indicates Chaya by wiggling her eyebrows in her  
direction. Asael shakes his head but heads in that  
direction.

104A NEARBY

104A

Asael "happens" to bump into Chaya.

ASAEL

Hello, Chaya.

CHAYA

Hello, Asael.

ASAEL

May...I help you?

CHAYA

Wash clothes? I... don't think so.

An awkward moment as he stands there watching her.

ASAEL

Chaya... I...was...wondering...if...  
maybe...you...I mean... you and I--

(CONTINUED)

104A CONTINUED: 104A

CHAYA  
I accept.

ASAEL  
You do?

CHAYA  
I do.

104B ANOTHER DAY 104B

Asael and Chaya are getting married. A LIGHT SNOW is falling as they say repeat their vows as Shimon instructs. Their breath condenses in the cold.

ASAEL  
Behold thou art consecrated unto me  
by this ring according to the Laws  
of Moses and Israel.

But rather than a ring, Asael gives her a shiny new rifle.

As the ceremony continues, we:

104C INTERCUT: A TREE LINE OVERLOOKING A MUDDY ROAD 104C

Zus, Ben Zion and several BIELSKI FIGHTERS hide alongside TEN RUSSIAN PARTISANS as a GERMAN TROOP TRUCK approaches.

Pachenko watches as Zus follows the approaching truck through binoculars, then cocks the heavy machine gun.

The truck SLOWS TO A CRAWL as it encounters an overturned PEASANT CART blocking the road.

104D BACK TO THE WEDDING 104D

As Asael kisses the bride, Tuvia is staring not at the newlyweds but rather at Lilka, who has washed and let down her hair. She glances up and meets his eye, then looks away.

As Asael crushes the traditional glass underfoot:

104E ZUS OPENS FIRE. 104E

The driver SLUMPS over the wheel and the truck careens lazily off the road.

GERMAN SOLDIERS spill out, blindly returning fire as Zus's fighters SWARM down the hill. Several are HIT right away.

104F INTERCUT: THE GROWING ECSTASY OF THE WEDDING CELEBRATION WITH THE FRENZY OF BATTLE. 104F

People dance and sing, their joy juxtaposed with the murderous intensity of the firefight, their twirling movements a cracked mirror of the death agonies of fighters of both sides as they are hit and fall.

(CONTINUED)

104F CONTINUED:

104F

Some of the inexperienced Jewish fighters freeze, some fire their weapons blindly. Ben Zion does well. ZUS RUNS AMONG THEM, fiercely EXHORTING them to attack.

ZUS

Get up! Move! SHOOT OR I'LL SHOOT  
YOU...

FROM A VANTAGE POINT IN THE ROCKS

Viktor watches, heartened by Zus' natural aggression.

GERMAN SOLDIERS TAKE COVER behind the overturned truck effectively RETURNING FIRE. Several partisans are KILLED.

ZUS PULLS A POTATO MASHER GRENADE from his belt and RUNS AT THE TRUCK in a mad headlong assault.

ZUS (CONT'D)

ARRRRGGGHHHHHHHHHHHHH!

He ROLLS THE GRENADE under the truck and dives away as it EXPLODES. The remaining Germans RAISE THEIR HANDS.

CHEERING PARTISANS leap into the truck, capturing an arsenal of rifles and ammo. THE JEWISH FIGHTERS join in the looting. Boots, coats, blankets, etc.

Zus approaches the wounded and captured German prisoners, kneeling in surrender, hands behind their necks.

Without hesitation, he shoots them, point-blank, one after another.

VIKTOR approaches Zus, who salutes.

VIKTOR

***You are related to Bielski?***

ZUS

***I am a Bielski, too.***

Viktor looks at him appraisingly.

VIKTOR

***Indeed.***

He walks away. Zus has found a home.

104G LATER - THE OTRIAD SINGS AND DANCES ON

104G

as SNOW continues to fall. The young marriage is a celebration of hope over despair.

DISSOLVE TO:

105 OMITTED  
AND  
106

105  
AND  
106

107 OMITTED

107

108 OMITTED

108

109 THE RUSSIAN WINTER (MONTAGE- MUSIC OVER) 109

SNOW covers the camp. A driving wind. Bundled in scarves, overcoats and as many layers as they can wear, Bella and Chaya break ice in a pot. Tamara takes FROZEN LAUNDRY from a line.

In a bunker, Malbin and Shimon shiver under a shared blanket. Women and children stare blankly into space.

Riva unwraps rags from a man's foot and examines his toes, BLACK with frostbite.

Asael and Tuvia are making their rounds. They pass Aron and Rachel who have built a snowman which they top off by adding a German helmet with a bullet hole in it.

109A IN A STORAGE AREA 109A

Asael shows Tuvia the last few potatoes.

ASAEL

There is talk of returning to the ghetto. \*

TUVIA

Madness.

ASAEL

They've barely eaten in days. Even when our food missions manage to get through, there are armed patrols. Farmers who once helped us now guard their barns with shotguns.

Tuvia considers for a moment.

TUVIA

Send out more missions. And bring shotguns.

Tuvia sets off. In every face he passes, there's misery and accusation in the shivering bodies and trembling blue lips. Children stare at him with sunken, haunted eyes.

109AA A MAKESHIFT STABLE 109AA

Tuvia visits his beautiful horse. He unties him.

109AB LATER - IN THE FOOD LINE 109AB

A whisper runs through the group..."meat"... "what kind?"..."Where'd it come from?"

Tuvia watches them eat hungrily.

109B OMITTED 109B

109C OMITTED  
AND  
109D

109C  
AND  
109D

109E A STABLE - NIGHT

109E

Snow falling outside. Several partisans are singing. Zus is drinking heavily with Viktor; they take pinches of salt with each swallow. Viktor finishes a bottle, tosses it.

VIKTOR  
***Another dead soldier!***

Zus looks at him, bleary-eyed, confused. Viktor explains:

VIKTOR (CONT'D)  
***More dead soldiers than empty bottles.***

ZUS  
(slurring his words)  
That is so...Russian.

He cracks open another bottle and takes a big slug.

VIKTOR  
***At least you drink like one.***

ZUS  
***'A Jew can't drink, a Jew can't fight.' What is it we are good at, Viktor? Dying. That is what we are good at.***

VIKTOR  
***So tell me about this brother of yours...***

ZUS  
***....Asael?***

VIKTOR  
***You are such an idiot.***

109E CONTINUED:

109E

ZUS

*I know who you mean... The Great  
Tuvia Bielski. Savior of the Jews  
and all around Big Shit.*

VIKTOR

*You compete with him.*

ZUS

*He competes with me.*

VIKTOR

*My older brother and I have the  
same relationship.*

ZUS

*He is a Big Shit also?*

VIKTOR

*A soldier.*

(a long moment)

*He was killed in the first hour of  
the German invasion.*

This sobers them up a bit.

109F IN THE ZEMYLANKA

109F

LILKA is shivering, her eyes inward and unfocused.

TUVIA

Lilka?

LILKA

Sorry, Tuvia. I was...thinking.  
It's nothing.

He looks at her intently, knowing there's more.

LILKA (CONT'D)

...Every time new people come into  
camp, I keep hoping... even though,  
I know...

(her teeth are  
chattering)

...I'm sorry.

TUVIA

Everyone here has lost someone.

She looks up at him, helpless to be so revealed.

LILKA

You too?

TUVIA

(a small nod)

Here...

He takes off his wool coat and puts it around her shoulders.

(CONTINUED)

109F CONTINUED:

109F

LILKA

No. Today I go on my first food mission.

Tuvia's order has consigned her to this dangerous duty.

TUVIA

I will have Asael send someone else.

LILKA

No. I must go now. I want to go.

She is clearly scared but desperate not to show it. He reaches into his belt and hands her a revolver.

TUVIA

You know how to use this?

She nods. Leaving, she passes the Lubczanski brothers, who are on their way in.

110 ON MOTL AND ARKADY

110

MOTL LUBCZANSKI

She is a tasty one, your aristocrat.

TUVIA

She is not my aristocrat.

ARKADY LUBCZANSKI

No? We were told, 'hands off,'  
property of the Commander.

Tuvia just stares, daring him to continue.

111 LATER THAT DAY

111

Tuvia walks past the now-empty stable heading into the woods.  
A voice calls out of the misty snow.

VOICE

HALT! WHO GOES THERE--!

TUVIA

Lazar. I am coming from camp. The  
danger is from those coming to camp.

LAZAR

(sheepish)

Sorry, Tuvia...

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: 111

TUVIA  
No sign of the food mission?

LAZAR  
Not yet.

Tuvia looks anxiously into the deep woods.

111A MEANWHILE - DEEP IN THE WOODS 111A

Lilka and Shulman are walking backwards, retracing their steps to obscure their footprints in the drifting snow.

SHULMAN  
We mustn't have any tracks leading back to base.

He loads two sacks of food onto her shoulders.

SHULMAN (CONT'D)  
Stay on this side of the creek until you reach the river then up the hill.  
(points the way)  
I'll wait here for the others.

She nods and trudges on toward camp through waist-deep snow.

112 BACK IN CAMP - OUTSIDE A MAKESHIFT INFIRMARY 112

As they head toward a zemyanka, Riva is briefing Tuvia on the sick. Every now and then, he glances toward the woods.

RIVA  
--several cases of pneumonia...  
Also I'm beginning to see signs of scurvy. No one's had a vegetable in weeks.

LAZAR  
Tuvia!

Lazar is dragging a WOUNDED MAN back into camp.

RIVA  
Bring him to the infirmary. \*

Tuvia glances back toward the woods. Looks at his watch.

RIVA (CONT'D)  
...Shulman will look after her.

He looks up. She looks at him sympathetically. Apparently his interest in Lilka isn't quite as secret as he imagines. \*

112A BACK TO THE WOODS 112A

Exhausted, cold and alone, Lilka is becoming increasingly disoriented in a snowy landscape where every tree looks

112A CONTINUED:

112A

alike. She turns in a circle, trying to decide which way to go.

A MANGY DOG appears out of nowhere, its coat matted, its ribs showing, a wild look in its eye. It GROWLS ferociously.

LILKA

Shoo-- Shoo--

(CONTINUED)

112A CONTINUED: (2)

112A

But the dog, as ravenous as she, smells the food and won't back down. It inches forward, FOAMING at the mouth.

Lilka tries to step back but the dog LUNGES, snapping its jaws. It's terrifying. She looks desperately for help.

Suddenly the dog LEAPS at her. She turns away and it rips a sack from her shoulder, knocking her down. Viciously it begins tearing the sack apart in search of the food within.

A SHOT RINGS OUT. The dog drops.

Lilka holds the smoking gun in two hands. Grimly, she pockets the weapon, picks up the sack of food, and starts off.

Reconsidering, she walks back and hoists the dead dog onto her shoulder, too. More food.

112B IN THE INFIRMARY

112B

Riva bandages Edjelman's head. Tuvia looks at all the sick.

TUVIA

What's wrong with them all?

RIVA

If it's typhus we're in trouble.  
The lice are carriers.

ASAEL

The partisans have ampicillin. But  
they say they need it for themselves.

In the background Lilka enters, face scratched, blood smeared hands and arms -- like some kind of primitive huntress.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

(sees he is distracted)  
Tuvia...

TUVIA

Medicine for typhus. I heard you.  
I'll go see Viktor right away.

On his way out, he passes Lilka, who is being looked after.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Are you all right?

LILKA

Fine.  
(handing him the gun)  
Thank you.

Tuvia can clearly see that she is shaken -- but he has no time to ask more. He has to find out about the medicine.

TUVIA

I must go.

113 THE PARTISAN ENCAMPMENT (TO ESTABLISH SNOW) 113

114 INSIDE A TENT 114

Viktor, Gramov and Zus are poring over a map of the area.

VIKTOR

*--and every time we try to move,  
they radio back to police HQ which  
houses the transmitter...here.*

ZUS

*--So we attack the transmitter.*

VIKTOR

*Yes, yes, my Hebrew warrior. Except  
for the troops in Stankiewiczze and  
the machine guns out front.*

THE TENT FLAP OPENS. Tuvia enters. He has developed a cough.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

*Two Bielski's in one room! To what  
do we owe this honor?*

TUVIA

*We have sickness. I need ampicillin.*

VIKTOR

*This medicine is reserved for  
fighters.*

TUVIA

*If typhus breaks out in our camp,  
it may spread to yours.*

VIKTOR

*I will have to take that chance.*

Zus looks from one immovable force to the other.

TUVIA

*I must insist. Comrade.*

VIKTOR

*You'd better not.*

Zus is watching this dick-measuring with keen interest.

ZUS

*There would be medicine in the police  
headquarters at Stankiewiczze, yes?*

(CONTINUED)

114 CONTINUED:

114

He looks to Gramov, who looks to Viktor, who nods.

ZUS (CONT'D)

***Tuvia and I grew up there.***

(looks at Tuvia)

***Perhaps the Bielski otriad will  
volunteer to take out the  
transmitter.***

Viktor looks from Zus to Tuvia.

TUVIA

***Of course.***

Zus grabs his submachine gun.

ZUS

Krensky, Ben Zion. Let's go.

CUT TO:

115 THE TOWN OF STAKIEWICZE

115

is quiet at midnight on this snowy evening.

116 IN A BACK ALLEY

116

Tuvia and Zus sit in the cab of an old truck, its exhaust sending plumes of condensation into the freezing night.

ZUS

Well...

He looks into the back where the others wait, anxiously clutching their weapons. Tuvia tries to hold back a cough.

ZUS (CONT'D)

Stay with the truck. And make sure it's in gear when we get back.

TUVIA

I'm going in with you.

ZUS

I give the orders tonight.

Across the square, the police station looms.

TUVIA

You don't have to do this.

ZUS

I don't?

(a bitter laugh)

What about the typhus?

(CONTINUED)

116 CONTINUED:

116

TUVIA

So more die. They will anyway.

A grim smile from Zus. Tuvia is broken up inside.

ZUS

I have been given this mission by  
my superior officer.

He starts to get out the cab. Tuvia reaches into his pocket,  
takes out the *mezuzah* that once blessed their parents' home.

TUVIA

Zus...

(hands him the *mezuzah*)

For luck.

Zus pockets it and joins the others creeping into the  
shadows.

But rather than follow them into the police station, we  
HOLD on Tuvia's face. Suddenly we HEAR The sound of gunfire.  
Then nothing. Ten seconds. More gunfire. Twenty. It is  
excruciating. Thirty. The longest CLOSE-UP in film history.

117 INTERCUT - FLASHES OF WHAT IS HAPPENING INSIDE...

117

Ben Zion bursts in and opens fire, killing two policemen.

Krensky jumps the counter and smashes the transmitter.

A policeman appears behind them on the stairs and shoots  
Krensky in the back. Ben Zion whirls and kills him.

117A TUVIA WANTS TO HELP. HE PULLS HIS GUN, UNLOCKS THE DOOR.  
OPENS IT. STOPS. HE HAS PROMISED TO WAIT WITH THE TRUCK.

117A

Zus, meanwhile, rummages cabinets, looking for ampicillin.

BEN ZION

Let's GO!

In the back room, Zus keeps rummaging. A window EXPLODES.  
Ben Zion is hit. Mortally wounded, he sinks to his knees,  
returning fire as Zus reappears.

118 TUVIA WATCHES

118

as Zus bursts out the door. He races to the truck and  
struggles into the passenger seat, BLEEDING FROM HIS  
SHOULDER.

ZUS

Go. GO!

TUVIA

What about the others?!

(CONTINUED)

118 CONTINUED: 118

ZUS  
GO, DAMN YOU!

119 IN THE TRUCK (TRAVELING) 119

From his coat Zus takes out a BLOOD-SOAKED PACKAGE.

119 CONTINUED:

119

ZUS

Medicine.

TUVIA

The others?

ZUS

Fighters die so that *malbushim* may  
live, that's what you believe, yes?

Tuvia absorbs the accusation as if taking a punch.

TUVIA

So you're a communist now, Zus?

Zus lays his head back on the seat, closes his eyes.

ZUS

Communist, Zionist, Manicurist,  
what difference does it make? You  
got your medicine.

TUVIA

Come back to us.

Zus won't look at him.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

You are my brother.

ZUS

So you remember.

CUT TO:

120 A MOURNER'S CIRCLE IN THE TREES

120

for Ben Zion and Krensky. Shimon addresses the group.

SHIMON

Merciful God, we commit our friends  
Ben Zion and Krensky to your care.  
We have no more prayers, no more  
tears. We have run out of blood.  
Choose another people

We PAN PAST the familiar faces.

SHIMON (CONT'D)

We have paid for each of your  
Commandments. We have covered every  
field and stone with ashes. Sanctify  
another land.

(looks at them)

Choose another people. Teach them  
the Deeds and the Prophecies. Grant  
us but one more blessing -- Take  
back the gift of our holiness.

121 IN A ZEMYLANKA - LATER THAT DAY 121

Tuvia is still drinking heavily. He is COUGHING STEADILY, his face sweaty with fever.

The SOUND of angry voices from outside the bunker.

122 OUTSIDE - IN THE FOOD LINE 122

Arkady Lubczanski has pulled a knife on Asael, who backs away, STUMBLING into a group of bystanders.

ARKADY

Next time, I cut off your nose,  
*pisher.*

Tuvia emerges from his bunker. He is weaving a bit and his words are slurred.

TUVIA

Whassa problem, Arkady?

ARKADY

Those who risk their lives to bring back food deserve a larger portion than those who risk nothing.

ASAEL

Everyone gets the same portion.

ARKADY

Not when you're serving, *pisher*. I see you digging to the bottom of the pot for your little forest cutie and her parents...

ASAEL

She is my wife!

TUVIA

Policy is...Same for all. If someone is stealing he'll face consequences.

Asael is astonished that Tuvia would go against him in public and embarrassed by his public drunkenness.

ASAEL

What consequences?

Others are closely watching this test of Tuvia's authority.

TUVIA

Reduced rations for one week.  
(a beat)  
Both of you.

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

122

ARKADY

WHAT?!

TUVIA

(in his face)

ARE YOU QUESTIONING MY DECISION?

Arkady is tempted to take him on. But he backs down.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

(raises his voice)

This matter is settled. Everybody  
back in line.

People are staring at him.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? BACK IN  
LINE!

His eyes meet Lilka's. She looks away. Asael takes Tuvia's  
arm and pulls him aside.

ASAEL

Tuvia, I would never--

TUVIA

Yes. I know.

ASAEL

Then why am I to be punished...?

Tuvia just takes another swallow from his bottle.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

Fischer is with them. So is Levine.  
On food missions, they take first  
for themselves and only bring back  
what's left over--

Tuvia's head is throbbing. He closes his eyes.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

--and they spread rumors, that you  
are power-hungry and corrupt, that  
you take whatever woman you choose--  
(Tuvia can't help  
but laugh)  
--that we keep gold for ourselves,  
and that--

He stops himself.

TUVIA

--What?

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED: (2)

122

ASAEL

...that you drink too much and are  
no longer fit to lead us.

TUVIA

....Maybe they're right.

Asael looks at him. No longer the brother he once idealized.

ASAEL

Zus would have punched him senseless.

TUVIA

Zus.

ASAEL

I miss him.

β TUVIA

He has made his choice.

He reels away toward the woods.

CUT TO:

122A IN HIS ZEMYLANKA - LATER

122A

Tuvia is lying in his bunker, vomiting and burning up with  
fever. Shimon has brought him soup.

SHIMON

Drink this.

(winks)

From the bottom of the pot.

Tuvia can barely get the soup down.

TUVIA

...the way they look at me... with  
their pasty faces. Let them starve,  
we're all going to die out here  
anyway.

SHIMON

Not easy being the big boss. Moses  
was a lonely man when he led us out  
of bondage.

TUVIA

...Moses.

SHIMON

So I'm a sucker for a biblical  
allusion. But what is society  
without leaders. Without leaders,  
we falter.

(CONTINUED)

122A CONTINUED:

122A

TUVIA  
I am not a leader.

SHIMON  
Neither was Moses, but somehow that  
seemed to work out.

CUT TO:

123 THE PARTISAN CAMP

123

Several partisans are singing a drinking song while Zus  
silently soaks his feet in a bucket. Lova walks in. His  
face is black and blue.

ZUS  
Lova, what happened? Who did this?  
  
Lova sits and buries his head in his hands.

ZUS (CONT'D)  
Lova. Tell me. Who?

LOVA  
Gramov. Two others. I used the  
officer's latrine.

ZUS  
For this they beat you?  
  
Lova is trying not to weep.

LOVA  
They said they wouldn't shit in the  
same hole as a Jew.  
  
Zus gets to his feet.

CUT TO:

123A INT. PANCHENKO'S TENT -- MOMENTS LATER

123A

Zus bursts in to find Panchenko deep in conversation with  
Gramov and others. They look up at the intrusion.

ZUS  
**Forgive me, Commander.**

PANCHENKO  
**Zus. Join us.**

He offers him a glass of vodka. Zus doesn't take it.

ZUS  
**I want to report the mistreatment  
of a comrade.**

Gramov looks up. Zus meets his eye.

(CONTINUED)

123A CONTINUED:

123A

ZUS (CONT'D)

**This man beat Comrade Lova -- for  
no reason at all.**

GRAMOV

**I had a perfectly good reason. He  
is a Jew.**

The other men LAUGH. Panchenko frowns at Gramov.

PANCHENKO

**--and you are an ignorant Tartar.  
(offers Zus vodka)  
Ignore him. Here...**

ZUS

**Anti-semitism is a violation of  
Party discipline.**

Panchenko sighs. Does he really have to deal with this?

PANCHENKO

**He's right, Gramov. Apologize to  
the Jew.**

GRAMOV

**I apologize, Jew.**

PANCHENKO

**There. You see?  
(...a command)  
Now drink up.**

Zus doesn't know what to do. He accepts the vodka.

124 EXT. THE BIELSKI CAMP (TO ESTABLISH)

124

Guards ring the snowy perimeter.

125 OMITTED

125

126 THE BLURRED IMAGE OF AN ANGEL FRAMED BY A HALO OF SUNLIGHT

126

as it swims into focus. Tuvia opens his eyes. It is Lilka.  
She sits beside him, mopping his forehead with a cool rag.

LILKA

Your fever broke in the night. The  
medicine helped.

TUVIA

How long was I asleep?

LILKA

Two days.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED:

126

TUVIA

And you've nursed me the whole time?

LILKA

Chaya helped.

TUVIA

Did you study nursing at university?

LILKA

We devoted ourselves to more  
essential knowledge -- like Greek  
Philosophy and Latin.

(CONTINUED)

126 CONTINUED: (4)

126

TUVIA

I never went to university.

LILKA

What kind of work did you do?  
Before.

TUVIA

My wife's father had a store. Before  
the Race Laws.  
(looks at her)  
She is is dead.

LILKA

I'm sorry.

TUVIA

Tell me more about university.

LILKA

It all feels like a dream. I spent  
months trying to master Chopin's  
nocturnes.

TUVIA

I'd love to hear you play.

LILKA

You know Chopin?

TUVIA

Who doesn't? Chopin the butcher  
from Novogradok.

LILKA

(laughs)  
If you're well enough to tease me,  
you're well enough to eat. I'll  
see what's for supper.

She gets up to go.

TUVIA

Thank you, Lilka.

127 OUTSIDE TUVIA'S BUNKER

127

THE LUBCZANSKI'S have taken the fullest advantage of Tuvia's  
illness. There are now TWO LINES of people waiting for  
food.

The *malbushim* line up like prison inmates. Lazar looks into  
his bowl -- two beans floating in a scummy broth.

IN THE SHORTER LINE

Motl, Arkady, Fischer, Levine and a few others are enjoying  
real food. Lazar calls out from the other line.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED:

127

LAZAR

Hey, Arkady This isn't soup, it's piss.

ARKADY

I will piss on your head and you will say it's raining. Eat it.

\*  
\*

The rest of Lubczanski's cabal laughs.

TUVIA emerges from his bunker. The first thing he sees is Asael, whose face is BATTERED AND SWOLLEN.

TUVIA

What happened?

Asael just looks over at the food line -- where Arkady has grabbed Chaya by the waist -- to the delight of the others.

Tuvia strides over to them.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

What is this?

ARKADY

New policy. Fighters get better food.

TUVIA

Against my orders...

ARKADY

You are no longer Commander. Sorry.

Tuvia nods, considering his remark for a moment.

AND THEN TAKES OUT HIS PISTOL AND SHOOTS ARKADY IN THE CHEST!

He then turns the gun on Motl and the others -- they literally cower in fear. He raises his voice to those watching.

TUVIA

As long as I am the leader of this group, you will obey my commands. THERE WILL BE NO MORE COMPLAINING! NO MORE SITTING! NO MORE DOING NOTHING. ANYONE WANTS TO LEAVE, THEY LEAVE. NOW! The rest work. Every morning we get up and we work. WE WORK. In the snow and the cold and the dark. Tomorrow we begin to build ten new zemylanka, we double the number of food missions. ....We work.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

(looks down at Arkady)

Take his body into the woods and leave it for the wolves.

He turns and walks away. As he passes the food lines, people subtly move out of his way and whisper after he is gone.

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED: (2)

127

Whereas once he was greeted warmly by all, now his isolation  
is complete.

\*

He is the Commander.

127A TUVIA CAREENS THROUGH THE TREES 127A

Tripping over roots, and finally leaning against a tree, he is mumbling, almost incoherent -- part prayer, part profanity.

DISSOLVE TO:

128 OMITTED 128

129 THE FIRST BUD OF SPRING 129

struggles through patches of snow. Ice drips from branches.

130 OMITTED 130

130A THE OTRIAD 130A

Takes a group portrait. The forest is green again.

131 THE SUNSHINE IS WARM 131

on the women's bodies as they bathe in the river.

CHAYA

Who has the soap? I know there was a little left?

BELLA

Use the sand. It's good for your skin.

RIVA

And what skin! And already married, too!

Bella laughs. Chaya splashes her playfully with water.

BELLA

I've turned into a skeleton.

CHAYA

And you were always so worried about staying slim.

BELLA

When we get out of this forest I am going to eat only cake and grow as big as a house.

Tamara appears. She's wearing a long overcoat.

LILKA

Join us. At least the sun is warm.

(Tamara turns away;

Lilka joins her)

Tamara?

TAMARA

I can't, Lilka...

(lowers her voice)

I'm pregnant.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED:

131

LILKA

I had no idea.

TAMARA

I've kept it hidden for months but  
now it's obvious. No one can know.

They move away from the others. Tamara shows her.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

It could come any day.

(CONTINUED)

131 CONTINUED: (2)

131

LILKA

.....Who is the father?

TAMARA

I--- It was when I was escaping. A man with a gun stopped me. I thought he was a Partisan. He told me to follow him and he took me to this place...

The memory overwhelms her. She begins to break down.

TAMARA (CONT'D)

Inside me something broke....I wanted to die. Every night I have nightmares -- what will happen when Tuvia finds out.

LILKA

He will understand.

TAMARA

No. You mustn't tell him!

LILKA

I won't. Don't worry.  
(touches her arm)  
What are you going to do?

Tamara's eyes fill with a new resolve.

TAMARA

I feel this new life inside me.  
It's the only thing keeping me going.  
I won't give it up, I'll kill myself.

Lilka puts her arm around her.

131A IN THE DEEP FOREST -- ARON IS OUT HUNTING

131A

From his belt hang the pelts of two dead rabbits.

He hears A SOUND. Three GERMAN SOLDIERS are putting camouflage on their helmets. Beyond, A GERMAN ARMORED COLUMN. The assault is coming.

CUT TO:

132 THE CAMP

132

where Shimon and Malbin are playing chess. Shimon has developed a bad cough.

MALBIN

You call that a move?

SHIMON

I call it an inevitable conclusion  
based on unimpeachable reasoning.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED:

132

SHIMON (CONT'D)

The question, my friend the Genius,  
is what are you going to do about  
it.

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED: (2)

132

MALBIN

I'm thinking about what I'm going to do about it.

SHIMON

Aha! I got him!

MALBIN

You didn't get me. You think you got me? How about this?

SHIMON

(gobsmacked)

Who would make a move like that?

MALBIN

A genius maybe.

Tuvia has been listening nearby. Aron races into the camp.

ARON

Tuvia...

We SEE Aron whispering in Tuvia's ear.

(CONTINUED)

132 CONTINUED: (3)

132

TUVIA  
(calls out)  
Asael!

Asael comes running.

TUVIA (CONT'D)  
Get a message to Zus. He's got to  
tell Viktor they're coming.

CUT TO:

133 OMITTED

133

133A EXT. CAMP PERIMETER - DAYS LATER

133A

Tuvia stands peering out into the forest. Asael joins him.

ASAEL  
Lazar spotted another patrol.  
They're getting closer.

Tuvia nods. Suddenly, he HEARS a strange sound. An animal?

TUVIA  
Do you hear that?

134 IN THE WOMEN'S ZEMYLANKA

134

We HEAR the SOUND for what it is... The cry of a newborn.

A baby boy in this mud manger. Riva and Lilka have assisted.  
Tamara holds her new baby to her breast.

Suddenly -- the blanket serving as a door is SWEPT ASIDE.

TUVIA stands there. Tamara cries out and shields the baby.  
Lilka springs up and pushes him back outside.

135 OUTSIDE THE BUNKER

135

Tuvia walks angrily. Lilka keeps up.

LILKA  
She promises not to take extra  
food...

TUVIA  
This is against my orders.

LILKA  
So you are going to shoot her, too?

Tuvia stares at her. He has never seen this side of her.

LILKA (CONT'D)  
Please, Tuvia. The baby is all she  
has to live for.

TUVIA  
I cannot allow it.

He turns away.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED:

135

Lilka SPINS him around, surprising him with her strength and the strength of her passion.

(CONTINUED)

135 CONTINUED: (2)

135

LILKA

You must let it live!

TUVIA

I cannot keep the living alive.  
 Tamara and the man who fathered  
 this child are responsible for its  
 fate.

LILKA

She was raped by the Nazis.

Tuvia closes his eyes. He is tired of being in charge,  
 tired of being the arbiter of other peoples' fate.

LILKA (CONT'D)

...You tell us to hold onto our  
 humanity. Not to become like  
 animals. What better way than by  
 bringing a life into this world of  
 suffering and death. It's our only  
 hope.

Tuvia is undone by her intensity. The very nearness of  
 her. The smell of her newly-washed hair. The glow of her  
 skin.

He looks at her. And nods in surrender.

LILKA (CONT'D)

Thank you, Tuvia.

She kisses him. A chaste kiss of gratitude.

She pulls back and they look into each other's eyes.

The next kiss is something entirely different.

TUVIA

Lilka...

LILKA

I knew what was expected of the  
 women here -- yet you never touched  
 me...

TUVIA

Shhh..

LILKA

I'm not afraid of anything, Tuvia.  
 I'm not even afraid of you.

They kiss deeply.

136 IN TUVIA'S BUNKER - LATER

136

Lilka lies in his arms.

(CONTINUED)

136 CONTINUED:

136

TUVIA

The Germans are coming into the forest. I don't know what is going to become of us.

LILKA

It doesn't matter. If I had stayed in the ghetto I'd be dead. You saved my life.

TUVIA

No. You have saved mine.

He reaches for her but before they can begin to make love again-- THE BLANKET DOOR IS PUSHED ASIDE. Malbin is there.

MALBIN

Oh.....I..... Hello, Lilka.

LILKA

Hello, Asael.

TUVIA

Yes?

MALBIN

We've caught one.

CUT TO:

137 A GERMAN SS SCOUT, HANDS TIED BEHIND HIS BACK

137

is led into the clearing. He wears the same uniform as those who marched the villagers into the forest for execution.

ASAEL

He's a scout.

TUVIA

They're coming for us.

Group members have begun to gather around him. They begin to hurl insults -- *schtik drek, paskudnyak* -- as the hapless man is pushed to his knees.

ASAEL

We found this in his pouch.

He hands Tuvia a sheaf of documents -- including a map.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED:

137

TUVIA

Entrance points, wetlands, obstacles.  
 (hands it to Shimon)  
 You read this.

SHIMON

(re: the documents)  
 They've assigned an entire division  
 to surround the forest.

A tidal wave is coming.

ASAEL

Don't they have a war to fight?

SHIMON

(still reading)  
 Assault begins in two days.  
 Passover. How fitting.

Meanwhile, some of the group have begun **TORMENTING** the man.

MOTL

Monster!

He kicks him in the head.

SHULMAN

Bulvan!

Shulman **PUNCHES** him in the face.

GERMAN COURIER

*Bitte....Bitte...*

TUVIA

(to Asael)  
 Did you reach Viktor?

ASAEL

He's on his way.

The tormenting of the poor courier is gaining intensity.

MALBIN

Tuvia--

The German lets loose a torrent of pleading.

GERMAN COURIER

Ich habe frau und kinder!

SHIMON

He says he has a wife and children.

Lazar picks up a stick. The German tries to crawl away;  
 the crowd blocks his escape, pushing him back into the  
 center.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (2)

137

LAZAR

So did I!

RIVA

If you let him go, he will lead  
them back here.

Tuvia looks at Malbin. What to do?

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (3)

137

MALBIN

Ask if he'll promise not to reveal  
our location.

Shimon translates.

SHIMON

Sie müssen versprechen nicht zu  
sagen wo wir sind.

The man looks up at him, pleadingly.

GERMAN COURIER

*Nein....Nein...*

SHULMAN

He'll say anything.

He breaks the stick across the man's back.

LAZAR

We want justice...

MOTL

Justice...

Soon it is a chant: "Justice! ....Justice!" Tuvia looks at their faces. Only months ago they were decorous, civilized. Now they are hungry, almost feral. Murderous.

Bella has been silently watching. She steps into the circle, looks down at the terrified German man.

BELLA

My son's name was David. David  
Kagan.

We SEE now that she is holding a sharpened hoe.

BELLA (CONT'D)

He was fifteen. He had blue eyes.

She raises it above her head.

BELLA (CONT'D)

He played the piano.

She swings with all her might. The others watch with a mix of thrilled horror and perverse delight. A line has been crossed. Riva steps forward, holding a large shovel.

RIVA

My sister's name was Ellie...

As she swings the shovel, the CAMERA begins to back away. Miriam steps forward, carrying a large rock.

MIRIAM

My husband was Meyer...

The group closes in, obscuring our view of the body. Aron can't take any more. He runs off into the woods.

(CONTINUED)

137 CONTINUED: (4)

137

MOTL  
My parents, Sol and Raya.

137 CONTINUED: (5)

137

AVRAM

For my daughter, Sonya.

MORDECAI

For my mother.

RACHEL

My sister.

LILKA

My whole family.

ALL

JUSTICE! JUSTICE! .

Tuvia closes his eyes. He has done nothing to stop it.

Asael looks at Malbin and Shimon. They are undone by what they have witnessed. Tuvia walks away.

Behind them, the group separates -- staring at the lifeless body on the ground. And then they look at each other, their blood lust sated, beginning to reckon with what they have done. What they have become.

138 TUVIA STANDS ALONE IN THE FOREST, HIS FACE IN SHADOW

138

He sees Aron, squatting beside a tree, crying silently. Tuvia kneels beside him, cradling him.

TUVIA

*Reeboynoy shel oylum...* Lord of the Universe. We have done unspeakable things yet still I seek your mercy...

He HEARS something. Malbin waits at the edge of the forest. His face is drawn and pale from what has just happened.

(CONTINUED)

138 CONTINUED:

138

MALBIN  
Viktor is here.

CUT TO:

139 VIKTOR AND ZUS

139

are waiting in the clearing. Tuvia approaches. He and Zus nod to each other but do not speak. It is excruciating.

Tuvia and Viktor walk into the woods. Zus waits with other BODYGUARDS as Asael joins them. Zus wears a Nazi jacket.

ZUS  
He doesn't look good.

ASAEL  
I could say the same about you.  
Where'd you get the jacket?

ZUS  
Let's just say the former owner no longer had need of it.

Zus winks. The other bodyguards stare impassively.

ZUS (CONT'D)  
Embrace me.

Asael looks confused for a moment, then embraces him.

ZUS (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Hide this.  
(shoves a revolver  
into his pocket)  
Wolnicky stores ammunition for us  
in his barn. There's no guard.

He slaps Asael fondly on the cheek and rejoins his comrades.

140 VIKTOR AND TUVIA

140

sit on a downed tree and converse *in Russian*, with subtitles:

VIKTOR  
***You found these on the prisoner?***

Tuvia nods. Viktor studies the scout's documents. Tisking.

TUVIA  
***We can't fight an entire division.***

VIKTOR  
***The battle on the Eastern Front has begun. The more troops we engage here, the fewer they have to attack the Motherland.***

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED:

140

TUVIA

***We've done our part for the  
Motherland.***

(CONTINUED)

140 CONTINUED: (2)

140

VIKTOR

***My orders are to take command of all partisan operations. You will bring the rest of your fighters to me.***

TUVIA

***And the others? Old people, women and children.***

VIKTOR

***In war there are casualties.***

TUVIA

***And if I refuse?***

VIKTOR

***You are officially a deserter. Do you know the policy on dealing with deserters?***

Viktor unfolds a paper flyer from his pocket.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

***...The Germans are offering fifty thousand marks for information leading to your capture.***

(hands it to him)

***Not a very flattering likeness. Too Jewish.***

Viktor rejoins his bodyguards, turns back for a last word.

VIKTOR (CONT'D)

***Have your men in my camp by tonight.***

He walks off. Asael takes the wanted poster from Tuvia.

ASAEL

I wouldn't show this around. There are some who'd turn in for less.

CUT TO:

141 LATER - A SPOTTER PLANE BUZZES HIGH ABOVE - HUNTING

141

Down below, Viktor and the Russian partisans have struck their tents and hidden beneath the sheltering trees.

Viktor's gaze follows the plane. He gives an order into a field radio. Zus has been listening.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

ZUS

***You want them to find Tuvia's camp.***

Viktor just looks at him.

ZUS (CONT'D)

***You're deliberately sacrificing them so we can remain safe?***

VIKTOR

***No. So we can keep fighting. Everyone must sacrifice in the struggle.***

ZUS

***Those are my brothers.***

VIKTOR

***I am your brother! He is your brother! Comrade Zus. Your Jewish sentimentality is heart-warming, but counter-revolutionary.***

Zus has secretly known he would hear these words. He grips his rifle but holds his tongue.

BACK TO:

142 THE SPOTTER PLANE -- FLIES OVER THE BIELSKI CAMP

142

Tuvia stares up at it. Have they been spotted?

Shimon is sitting nearby with a group of children. He looks pale. His cough is worse. He is very ill.

SHIMON

...but the children of Israel were afraid to leave Egypt. Until Moses said, 'Do not trust in me, trust in God.' He will take care of you'

(a wrenching cough)

And so tomorrow we celebrate the Passover by sitting around and arguing just as we have done for centuries.

Tuvia stares at them, a curious expression on his face. Malbin comes to stand beside him.

MALBIN

(looking at the plane)

Did it see us?

(CONTINUED)

142 CONTINUED:

142

TUVIA  
Tomorrow is Passover. Yes?

MALBIN  
...How should I know?

TUVIA  
Moses. The Exodus.

Malbin doesn't get it at first.

TUVIA (CONT'D)  
--He left before Pharaoh could stop them.

Now Malbin understands. He looks at Shimon.

MALBIN  
You want to move them all? The old, the sick. They'll never make it.

It isn't the first time Tuvia has consigned people to their death, and apparently it won't be the last.

TUVIA  
We leave now. Spread the word.

143 MOMENTS LATER - THE BIELSKI CAMP

143

is a blur of activity as everyone mobilizes for evacuation. Sacks and cooking equipment is tied onto impromptu packs. Asael and Malbin coax the older people into motion--

ASAEEL  
Come, tateh--

OPPENHEIM  
But my tools--

The SOUND of approaching aircraft. Tuvia searches the sky.

Riva pairs each of the elderly with a child. Tamara tucks her newborn under her coat.

The SOUND of the approaching aircraft grows LOUDER. People look up, shielding their eyes. Then from out of the sun, two ominous silhouettes:

STUKA DIVE BOMBERS!

TUVIA  
TAKE COVER!

144 THE SCREAMING WHISTLE OF THE FIRST BOMBER

144

panics the crowd.

(CONTINUED)

- 144 CONTINUED: 144
- Some race into the forest; others are frozen. Tuvia grabs people and bodily drags them to cover.
- STRAFING 20MM CANNON chew up the ground.
- Several people are hit before they can reach cover. Lilka herds everyone she can into:
- 145 A BUNKER 145
- where people crowd in like sardines. Chaya and Riva gather children around them. They hear the WHISTLE of an incoming shell....BOOM! Dirt from the roof rains down on them.
- 146 BOMBS BEGIN TO RAIN DOWN 146
- Dirt and debris everywhere. AN INCENDIARY SHELL HITS high in a tree. Its branches burst into flame.
- An hysterical woman leaps out of a bunker and is BLOWN APART.
- 147 MEANWHILE - IN VIKTOR'S CAMP 147
- Zus listens helplessly to the distant sound of bombs dropping on his brothers.
- 148 BACK IN THE BIELSKI CAMP - A DIRECT HIT ON A ZEMLANKA 148
- It explodes into a million pieces. Wood shrapnel everywhere. Where once was a bunker, now there is only a gaping crater.
- Tuvia races into the maelstrom to help the wounded.
- AN EXPLOSION KNOCKS HIM DOWN
- He tries to clear his head but he cannot focus. ALL SOUND FADES AWAY to be replaced by a high-pitched hum.
- 149 TUVIA'S WORLD IS IN SLOW-MOTION 149
- Falling dirt and debris, tumbling bodies, exploding bunkers -- a surreal effect.
- 150 IN REAL TIME -- THE CAMP IS BEING TORN APART 150
- Cowering in safety, Malbin sees Tuvia lying in the open and gathers his courage -- RACING through danger to his side.

MALBIN

Are you alright?

Tuvia shakes his head, points to his ears. He cannot hear.

(CONTINUED)

150 CONTINUED:

150

MALBIN (CONT'D)  
ARE...YOU...ALRIGHT?

When Tuvia speaks, his WORDS sound DULL and MUFFLED.

TUVIA  
MUST...GO!

MALBIN  
...WHAT?

TUVIA  
THE GERMANS...COMING...!

Malbin looks around, panicked. Asael appears out of the smoke, yells at Malbin above the din.

ASAEL  
Get them out of the bunkers!

Malbin runs off. Asael helps Tuvia to his feet. A nearby explosion SHOWERS THEM with dirt as they CRAWL to safety. The world RAMPS BACK TO NORMAL SPEED at a dizzying rate.

ASAEL (CONT'D)  
We need to hold them off...until  
the rest are safe.

Tuvia still can't hear. Asael pantomimes firing a rifle.

ASAEL (CONT'D)  
...HOLD...THEM...OFF!

Tuvia nods, trying to clear the buzzing in his head.

TUVIA  
...MACHINE GUN...

ASAEL  
With Levine and Miriam... There.  
(points out positions)  
Lazar, Rosa, and Schmuel. There  
and there.  
(Tuvia nods)  
And me.

Tuvia shakes his head, no.

ASAEL (CONT'D)  
Yes.

He runs off. Still clearing his head, Tuvia regains his footing -- suddenly realizing the the bombing has stopped.

151 AT THE ENTRY WAY TO A ZEMYLANKA

151

Malbin appears, eyes wild.

MALBIN

Everybody out! Now!

But the group's natural reaction is to stay huddled in safety

(CONTINUED)

151 CONTINUED: 151

MALBIN (CONT'D)  
THE COSSACKS ARE COMING!

This gets the job done. People begin to crawl out.

152 OTHERS EMERGE FROM THE BUNKERS 152

YOUNG PEOPLE holding hands with OLD, PARENTS with CHILDREN on their backs. Tuvia urges Lilka and Bella to hurry them into the woods.

153 MEANWHILE -- THE ASSIGNED DEFENDERS, MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE 153

take up their assigned positions: Levine mans the heavy machine gun behind a log; Lazar, Miriam and Rosa in the trees.

Tuvia anxiously waits for the last of the women and children to disappear into the forest.

A SUDDEN SILENCE DESCENDS - EVERYONE LOOKS TO THE SKY

Tuvia realizes the bombers have broken off their attack. He knows the ground troops will soon follow.

He turns to Asael, grabbing his shoulders.

TUVIA  
Don't try to fight... Just slow  
them down. Then join us.

Asael nods. No need for more words. They embrace fiercely. Asael pushes Chaya toward Tuvia.

ASAEL  
Take her.

She resists, clinging to his arm for a moment.

TUVIA  
Come.

He forces her to join him and catch up to the others.

154 THE CAMP 154

is eerily quiet as the dust begins to settle. The defenders check their weapons with grim efficiency. They are no longer inept innocents; they have become warriors.

155 DEEPER IN THE WOODS 155

Tuvia catches up with the fleeing group and urges them on.

156 MOMENTS LATER -- THE DEFENDERS WAIT ANXIOUSLY 156

We study their faces. Beautiful in their stoic acceptance.

(CONTINUED)

156 CONTINUED: 156

SUDDENLY -- A FUSILLADE from the woods. Rosa falls dead.

The defenders RETURN FIRE. Levine fires the machine gun;  
Miriam feeds the belt.

157 UP AHEAD WITH THE FLEEING GROUP 157

Tuvia hears small arms fire. He knows what it means.

158 BACK AT THE CAMP 158

The rear guard action can't hold out for very long. Tree by tree, they begin to fall back.

Asael fires blindly into the murky shadows. The SOUND of a man crying out.

Then Levine is hit. Miriam pushes him out of the way and TAKES OVER. She expertly kills several assault troops who appear out of the woods.

The rest of the attackers TAKE COVER.

159 WITH THE FLEEING GROUP 159

Malbin waits anxiously for Tuvia, clutching a map.

MALBIN  
(struggling to control  
his panic)  
This swamp here...goes...for miles.

TUVIA  
Show me.

160 BACK AT THE CAMP 160

Lazar runs from tree to tree, keeping up a steady stream of fire. He is surprisingly brave. Until A GRENADE flies out of the woods and lands at his feet, killing him instantly.

The Assault Troops have begun to outflank them. Asael is suddenly in jeopardy. Sara sees the danger.

MIRIAM  
GO!

Miriam keeps their ATTACKERS pinned down as the two men race for new positions. Then she is hit. She keeps firing anyway, her finger locked on the trigger even as she is dying.

More troops begin firing from their flank. Asael has no choice but to break off. They race into the woods.

161 BACK TO THE FLEEING GROUP 161

Tuvia hears the guns go silent. This, too, has meaning.

162 A RISE REVEALS THE IMMENSITY OF THE KRASNAYA GORKA SWAMP 162

Malbin stares at what lies ahead.

MALBIN  
Oh, my God...

162 CONTINUED:

162

TUVIA

Are the others back yet?  
 (Malbin looks  
 stricken; he shakes  
 his head)  
 .....Asael?

Malbin shakes his head once more. Asael is not coming back.  
 Chaya begins to weep. Riva comforts her.

SHULMAN

We've got to keep going!

BELLA

The Germans will be here any minute!

MALBIN

(to Tuvia)  
 Do we wait...a while?

MORDECAI

We could hide...

MAN #3

I say, fight them here.

MOTL

Yes. Fight!

SHULMAN

That's crazy!

Tuvia is in hell. If he waits for Asael, he risks them all  
 being caught. Suddenly it all falls apart. Tuvia sinks to  
 his knees as if his legs can no longer bear his weight.

MALBIN

Tuvia--?

Tuvia can't speak. He has no more answers. Nothing to  
 say. He stares at the impenetrable swamp. The end of the  
 line.

The sudden vacuum of leadership is felt by them all. They  
 stare at one another, anxious and rudderless.

WOMAN (ZOE)

My father cannot make it.

RONA

There are snakes--

Tamara's newborn is crying. She tries to comfort it. An  
 old woman stares at the swamp in terror.

MAN #1 (FROHMAN)

The children...

SHULMAN

We'll put them on our shoulders.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: (2)

162

BELLA

Tuvia, what do we do?

Oppenheim is petrified. Rona is crying.

MALBIN

TUVIA--

And still Tuvia is silent.

More arguing. A general MURMUR of dread is rising.

Malbin goes to kneel beside Shimon, who is covered in sweat --  
undone by the forced march.

MALBIN (CONT'D)

What's wrong with him?

SHIMON

(fighting for breath)

...He.....is.....tired.

Malbin hears something, looks up.

FROM HIGH ABOVE - THE SPOTTER PLANE APPEARS

They have been found. Lilka kneels beside Tuvia.

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: (3)

162

She takes his hand silently.

LILKA

Come--

He shakes his head.

TUVIA

You have a weapon?

She shows him her revolver. He checks the clip, then looks into her eyes.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Use it on yourself before you let them take you.

She nods gravely. Suddenly a VOICE interrupts.

VOICE

Why are we stopping?

Everyone turns. It's Asael. Back from the dead. He hands off a wounded comrade to Riva's care.

ASAEL

(wild-eyed)

They're coming!

(to Tuvia)

Why aren't we moving?

Tuvia looks up at him, lost. Almost helpless.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

We must keep going!

TAMARA

In there?

RONA

It is impossible!

More murmuring. Asael raises his voice.

ASAEL

Nothing is impossible! What we have done is impossible!

The murmuring quiets.

Asael meets Tuvia's eyes. He is literally willing his older brother to be strong for them, as he has been, time and again.

ASAEL (CONT'D)

God will not part these waters. We will do it ourselves.

RONA

But how?

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: (4)

162

ASAEL  
Not by miracles. By our strength.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: (5)

162

ASAEL (CONT'D)

(turning to the man  
beside him)

Take the rope from your pack.

(confused; he obeys)

Now, you....give me your belt.

SHULMAN

We don't have enough rope.

ASAEL

We'll link arms. Make a chain. A  
human chain.

MOTL

What are you talking about?

Tuvia is deeply moved. His little brother has become a  
man. Once more, he finds his voice.

TUVIA

Each person takes care of the other.

(meeting Asael's eye)

....Give him your belt.

Asael nods at Tuvia gratefully. The group is hushed,  
apprehensive. Then:

ONE MAN

Removes his belt and offers it to Asael.

ANOTHER STANDS, HOLDING HIS BELT

And then another. One by one they offer them. There is  
something quietly heroic in the gesture.

Tuvia looks at the group, looks away, fighting back emotion.

162A THEY WADE IN, WAIST HIGH

162A

People link arms and hold on for dear life yet still they flounder. A man goes under, is pulled up. A harrowing undertaking.

162AA THE BELTS ARE ROPED ACROSS THE DEEP POOL

162AA

People cling to it as they drag themselves, hand over hand.

(CONTINUED)

162B SOMEONE CLIMBS OUT TO WALK ALONG THE BANK.

162B

TUVIA

No tracks on land. Get back in.

It is almost impossible to make any progress. Especially when one is weak and malnourished.

162C IN A DEEP BOG

162C

The mud sticks to their clothes, faces. Soon they are indistinguishable from their surroundings.

When one person sinks in the muck, it takes three to get him back on his feet. The column slows.

Tuvia gestures for them to keep moving. They can't. Literally cannot. He begins to physically push them on. Sometimes harshly. Eventually they are moving again.

CUT TO:

163 A GHOSTLY LANDSCAPE

163

Gnarled bare trees shrouded in mist. They trudge forward, their expressions wan and empty. Tuvia find Malbin and pulls him aside.

TUVIA

(whispering)

How much farther?

Malbin shrugs his shoulders. Who knows...?

163A THE WATER IS ALMOST HEAD HIGH

163A

Parents hoist children onto their shoulders, hold weapons overhead as they claw at tall reeds to propel themselves forward, step by tortuous step.

SHIMON clings to a tree. His wracking cough is terrifying and he is deathly pale.

TUVIA

Come...

Shimon can't catch his breath, he just shakes his head, no. He can't go on. Tuvia half-drags, half-carries him onward.

CUT TO:

164 A SPIT OF LAND IN THE SWAMP - DUSK

164

They rest, eat what little food is left. A litter carrying Shimon is deposited on dry ground. He is barely alive.

MALBIN

Is he...?

Tuvia shakes his head. It's only a matter of time. The Spotter Plane drones overhead.

TUVIA

Take off your glasses. Reflections.

Tuvia moves off to check on the others.

MALBIN

Shimon, listen to me, the physical plane is just an illusion. Only the spiritual plane is real.

SHIMON

(fighting for breath)

No. The physical plane is where man acts to redeem himself.

MALBIN

You've redeemed yourself enough, you should shut up now.

SHIMON

Look who's talking about shutting up... I need to tell you something.

MALBIN

(leans closer)

What is it?

SHIMON

You shouldn't think so much. The world around you is beautiful.

MALBIN

(stunned; looks around)

This world?

SHIMON

Even this one.

Tuvia has come to sit beside Lilka. She leans into him.

TUVIA

We're lost.

LILKA

No. ....No.

She puts her arms around him.

(CONTINUED)

164 CONTINUED: 164

They hold each other and drift off to sleep.

CUT TO:

165 AT NIGHTFALL - A SQUAD OF GERMAN SOLDIERS 165

sit around a campfire at the edge of the swamp.

FROM NEARBY

The LIGHTS of their fire can be seen flickering through the reeds as the ragged column MOVES SILENTLY past.

TUVIA

Not a sound. Pass the word.

We watch as the ORDER is passed down the line.

Parents hold hands over their childrens' mouths. Shimon is carried on an improvised litter made of branches.

CUT TO:

166 A FOREST CROSSROADS 166

Panchenko and a few others are on horseback. Behind them the rest of the Partisans are marching away.

Zus and the Jewish fighters are on foot, awaiting orders.

(CONTINUED)

166 CONTINUED:

166

PANCHENKO

***You will hold this crossroads until  
the brigade has completed its  
retreat.***

Zus looks around at the position.

ZUS

***For how long?***

Panchenko's orders are never to be questioned.

PANCHENKO

***Until you are ordered to withdraw.***

ZUS

***And if we cannot hold the position?***

Panchenko looks at Gramov, who stands nearby cradling a submachine gun.

PANCHENKO

***Comrade Gramov will enforce  
discipline, if necessary.***

Gramov smiles. The implications are clear: nobody retreats.

PANCHENKO (CONT'D)

***You have served us well, Comrade.***

ZUS

(a wintry smile)

***I am so honored, Comrade.***

Panchenko wheels his horse and gallops off. Zus and his men take cover in the woods.

In the distance we can HEAR the unmistakable SOUND of approaching armor. Lova kneels beside Zus.

LOVA

What are we doing here? Zus?

Half a mile down the road, A TANK rumbles into view.

LOVA (CONT'D)

Tell me. Who are we doing this for?

With a shaking hand, Zus tries to light a Molotov cocktail but his matches are wet. He reaches into his pocket for more. Instead he finds the *mezuzah* that was once affixed to his family's door.

As he stares at it, the SOUND of the approaching tank grows louder.

BACK TO:

- 167 THE KRASNAYA GORKA SWAMP 167  
empties at last into a shallow river. On the opposite bank  
is dry land, and beyond, the deep forest. And safety.  
The bedraggled group makes their way across.
- 168 OMITTED 168

169 ON THE OPPOSITE BANK

169

Asael pulls people up onto dry ground. They lie there, freezing and exhausted. Some cannot control their shivering.

SHULMAN

What's next...Sinai?

Tuvia can't help but laugh. Soon they are all laughing. It ripples throughout the group. Joyous. Contagious. An overwhelming feeling of relief.

They are safe.

Tuvia lies on the ground. All the adrenaline has suddenly left his body. Then Aron appears, tugging at his sleeve. Shimon is asking for him.

Tuvia kneels down beside his teacher, whose eyes are closed. Malbin is weeping quietly. Who will he argue with?

SHIMON

(a whisper)

.....Tuvia...

TUVIA

Right here.

Shimon is at the end.

SHIMON

...Something...to say...

TUVIA

Shhhh....

SHIMON

...no...please.....

(finding the strength)

I almost lost...my faith....but  
you...were sent..by God..to save  
us.

TUVIA

Ridiculous.

SHIMON

I know..... But just...in case....I  
thank...HIM.....and I thank you.

He closes his eyes.

It's too much for Tuvia. Hard as he tries, he cannot stop the tears from filling his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

170 SUDDENLY -- UP THE RIVERBANK 170

Trees begin to FALL OVER -- as if pushed by a dinosaur.

A PANZER TANK

emerges onto the banks, less than a quarter-of-mile away.

ITS TURRET BEGINS TO SWIVEL

The menacing gun turning in their direction.

171 THE GROUP IS CAUGHT OUT IN THE OPEN. 171

THE TANK ROARS FIRE. The first round EXPLODES among them. Several are killed.

TUVIA

Back to the river!

He pushes people down. They cling to the banks, cowering. THOSE WITH WEAPONS take cover, using the embankment as if it were the lip of a trench.

They RETURN FIRE -- old men, young women, even some children.

172 A SQUAD OF GERMAN INFANTRY ADVANCES 172

behind the tank, using it as protection.

Aron kills one. But the Germans are well-trained. They direct a withering fire -- forcing the partisans to keep their heads below the embankment.

BUT THE TANK IS UNSTOPPABLE

It turns its attentions on the riverbank -- its first round SAILS OVERHEAD, sending up a huge geyser of water.

But the next round PLOWS INTO THE EARTH, tearing a huge chunk of earth and killing two of the brigade.

TUVIA grabs a satchel and begins filling it with grenades. He throws the satchel over Malbin's head, grabs his arm and races, crouching low, beneath the lip of the riverbank.

Asael provides covering fire. So do Lilka, Chaya and the women alongside the men.

UP AHEAD

A stand of trees hides Tuvia from view as he climbs out of the river and heads into the forest. He pulls Malbin down just as A SQUAD OF GERMAN INFANTRY approaches and begins to set up a heavy machine gun.

(CONTINUED)

172 CONTINUED:

172

Tuvia POPS UP behind them, spraying them with his submachine gun. He then turns the heavy machine gun on the infantry advancing behind the tank -- to devastating effect.

But now, the tank turns its attention to Tuvia. Its machine gun begins to chew up the forest, forcing Tuvia to take cover.

Without pausing to think, Malbin grabs a grenade from the satchel and races toward the tank.

It falls pitifully short, exploding harmlessly as Malbin is cut down.

173 TUVIA IS NOW ISOLATED AND PINNED DOWN

173

Bullets tear chunks out of trees as he tries to take cover.

THE TURRET SWIVELS IN HIS DIRECTION

It is only a matter of moments before he is dead.

WHEN SUDDENLY FROM OUT OF THE WOODS

Zus and the rest of Jewish fighters emerge, firing on the run. Without regard for his own life, Zus charges.

The German infantry is caught in a cross-fire as the Bielski brigade climbs out the river, firing wildly.

Zus guns down the tank commander manning the machine gun from the open hatch. Jumps onto the tank and DROPS A GRENADE inside. An EXPLOSION of BLACK SMOKE BILLOWS.

Zus stands up amid the billowing smoke. He sees Tuvia who is staring back at him.

174 BOTH GROUPS MEET - THE DESTROYED TANK SMOLDERS NEARBY

174

Asael is the first to reach Tuvia, who is carrying the German assault machine gun.

TUVIA

Only weapons and ammunition! Spread the word.

Tuvia hands him the machine gun.

ASAEL

Anything else?

Tuvia looks at him. Is he fucking with him? Just a little.

TUVIA

Go on.

Lilka is carrying a small child.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Lilka, please help. We've got to get the injured into the forest.

LILKA

What about the dead?

TUVIA

Everybody gather your things! We have to get out of the open!

Nearby, Aron removes the machine from the tank and hands it to Zus. Bella approaches. Zus embraces her.

Tuvia seizes one of the German rifles. He yells to Shulman.

TUVIA (CONT'D)

Shulman! Weapons only! Tell them.

(CONTINUED)

174 CONTINUED:

174

Shulman follows Tuvia's order.

TUVIA (CONT'D)  
(throwing the weapon)  
You've been promoted.  
Congratulations!

Tuvia turns, sees Bella with Zus. They see him. Zus hands Bella the machine gun from the tank and approaches.

TUVIA (CONT'D)  
Where is the rest of your unit?

ZUS  
Good question.

TUVIA  
You are going back?

ZUS  
No.

They look at each other. So much unsaid. No time to say it.

TUVIA  
We've got to build a new camp.

Zus nods.

ZUS  
Perhaps you have room for one more?

(CONTINUED)

174 CONTINUED: (2)

174

Tuvia reaches out his arms and they embrace fiercely.

175 IN THE DEEP WOODS - LATER

175

They walk in silence. Lilka comes to walk beside him, resting her head on his shoulder as they walk.

Tuvia looks up at the shafts of light slanting through the towering trees, as if allowing himself to appreciate its beauty for the first time.

Suddenly, he stops, listening, puzzled.

TUVIA

Don't you hear it?

ZUS

What...?

TUVIA

Nothing. Isn't it beautiful?

We HOLD on Tuvia. He has aged ten years in one.

(CONTINUED)

175 CONTINUED:

175

But for now he allows himself a brief moment of satisfaction. We might even see the ghost of a smile. But it is short-lived as Asael appears by his side and we see concern once again clouding his face. Another problem to attend to.

And as THE CAMERA BEGINS TO PULL AWAY he is already hurrying to catch up with the others.

As they all disappear from sight into the sheltering darkness of the woods, these words appear on screen:

**THEY LIVED IN THE FOREST FOR TWO MORE YEARS.**

**IN THEIR NEW CAMP THEY BUILT A SCHOOL, A HOSPITAL, A NURSERY. AND STILL MORE CAME TO FIND THEM.**

**AT THE TIME OF LIBERATION, TWELVE HUNDRED WALKED OUT OF THE FOREST.**

DISSOLVE TO:

176 THE OPENING SCENE - NEW YORK CITY - 1982

176

Park Avenue. Traffic. More words on screen:

**ASAEL JOINED THE RUSSIAN ARMY AND DIED SIX MONTHS LATER.**

**ZUS AND TUVIA EMIGRATED TO THE UNITED STATES.**

In the taxi, THE ELDERLY MAN thrusts his hand through the slot in the Plexiglas window separating him from the driver.

ELDERLY MAN

Here is money. I can get more. So much more. Take it, please.

CAB DRIVER

No, no....

Indeed, when the CABBIE speaks, though the voice is older and somewhat frail, we recognize it as Tuvia's.

ELDERLY MAN

What else can I give you, do for you?

AGED TUVIA

Nothing, it isn't necessary.

Tears stream down the elderly man's cheeks.

ELDERLY MAN

We are alive because of you.

(looks at his son)

My children. His children. So many. ....Thousands.

(CONTINUED)

176 CONTINUED:

176

Behind them, HORNS are HONKING. This is New York City.

AGED TUVIA  
Please, the traffic...

ELDERLY MAN  
Bless you, Tuvia Bielski. May the  
Lord bless you and keep you all the  
days of your life.

THE CAB PULLS AWAY FROM THE CURB INTO THE RAIN -

MIDDLE-AGED SON  
Papa, who was that man?

The Elderly Man watches the cab pull away, wiping his eyes.

ELDERLY MAN  
That wasn't a man. That was an  
angel.

As the cab pulls away, the CAMERA CRANES UP until it is  
lost in an anonymous sea of traffic. These words appear on  
screen:

**TUVIA BIELSKI NEVER SOUGHT RECOGNITION FOR WHAT HE DID.**

**HE DROVE A CAB IN NEW YORK CITY FOR TWENTY YEARS.**

**TUVIA AND LILKA REMAINED MARRIED UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1987.**

FADE OUT.