

PAWN SACRIFICE

Screenplay by

Steven Knight

Story by

Stephen J Rivele & Christopher Wilkinson and Steven Knight

OVER BLACK:

"Chess holds its master in its bonds, shackling the mind such that the inner freedom of the very strongest must suffer." - ALBERT EINSTEIN

1 EXT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE - ICELAND - DAWN 1

In the grey dawn, a formidable house in the Icelandic wilderness. A single light burns in an upper window.

Caption: **Reykjavik, Iceland 4:15am. July 20th, 1972**

In the distance, a POLICE CAR approaches, lights flashing.

2 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE - ICELAND 2

CLOSE on a hand gripping the padded arm of an armchair. The index finger of the hand is PICKING at a thread.

The HAND belongs to an intense young man with black hair swept back. He sits motionless, peering at a chess game which is a few moves old. The man is BOBBY FISCHER.

A SINGLE FLY begins to buzz against the window.

Bobby eyes the fly. The movement of his eyes is immense. Murderous. The thread he has been picking at suddenly TEARS with a THUNDEROUS RIPPING SOUND.

The fly is trying to get out the window.

3 BOBBY'S PERCEPTION 3

The BUZZING of the fly is a howling hurricane from hell.

4 BACK TO AN OBJECTIVE VIEW OF THE ROOM 4

Silence.

Bobby stalks the fly -- CRUSHING IT with a coffee cup.

He sits back down in a business-like way and stares at the board again, his fingernail beginning to work another thread.

HEADLIGHTS sweep the room and we HEAR a car door SLAM. Bobby's face betrays no reaction -- but his whole hand CLAWS the arm of the chair like an animal in a trap.

At the SOUND of someone running upstairs, he glances from the chessboard to the door, as a knock comes on the door:

5 BOBBY'S PERCEPTION 5

Someone is POUNDING on the door -- it SOUNDS like the Gestapo in an old war movie.

6 BACK TO AN OBJECTIVE VIEW 6

The knock on the door is polite.

Bobby grips the armchair, can't stand the noise that only he can hear -- and he gets to his feet, UPENDING a lamp.

Another knock.

Bobby pinballs around like the fly trying to escape -- breaking shutters as he tries to close them, tripping over a table. ANOTHER KNOCK, even louder.

Then, just as suddenly, his eyes FOCUS on the chess board. A new light comes into his eyes as he stares at it -- and his breathing begins to slow.

A7 ALL SOUND BEGINS TO FADE A7

As he moves toward the board -- his fingers reaching out -- in ultra slo-mo -- to make...a...single...move.

B7 BACK TO THE SCENE B7

Bobby closes his eyes. Content. He has solved the puzzle.

CAPTION: This is the true story of Bobby Fischer.

The door opens. A guy stands there -- mid-40's, pugnacious. This is MARSHALL. He stares at the debris of the room. And at Bobby, who appears perfectly calm.

BOBBY

There was a fly. It's dead now.

A huge agenda between the two men. Marshall composes himself.

MARSHALL

(quoting)

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

The slightest smile begins to form on Bobby's lips.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

I'm quoting the President of the United States. He was talking about you. To me. The President of the United States talking to me. He called three times. Three.

Marshall lifts the receiver, places a phone back on the hook.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

He's been trying to reach you.

Bobby refuses to be intimidated. If anything, his smile widens. Marshall rights an upturned chair.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

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

(hammering it home)

Because. He. Heard. You Quit.

Bobby walks to the window, looks out at the half-light.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

There are boys your age in Vietnam giving their lives right now in the fight against Communism. And all you have to do is win a game of chess.

(plaintively)

...Say something. Bobby, please...
Bobby?

Bobby doesn't answer. Instead, he stares out into the night, and we HEAR another voice.

JOAN (V.O.)

...Bobby?

7 OMIT

7

8 IN THE FISCHER APARTMENT - NIGHT - BROOKLYN

8

Bobby, age 8, stands looking out another window. It is 1952. JOAN, Bobby's sister, 14, comes up beside him.

JOAN

Bobby, it's bedtime.

BOBBY

That man's out there.

Joan looks out. A SEDAN is parked under a streetlight. A LIT MATCH briefly illuminates a MAN'S FACE as he lights a cigarette. Is that a telephoto lens in his hand? She subtly turns him away from the window.

JOAN

Have you eaten anything? There's actually food in the house. Go.

Bobby heads back into a party in full swing. The apartment is packed with Boho's, Eastern European emigres, NY intellectuals. A banner reads, "Brooklyn-Bed Sty American Communist Party PARTY! Coltrane wails on the record player.

BOBBY IS INVISIBLE IN THIS ADULT WORLD

Adults LOOM above him, laughing. A MIXED COUPLE making out, open-mouthed. A man smoking reefer smiles beatifically. He pauses to scribble chess notations in his little notebook.

PARTY GUEST #1

Half the witnesses they call are Communists, the other half are Jews!

PARTY GUEST #3

If you're both, do you testify twice?

PARTY GUEST #1

You can make jokes, Mr. Liberal -- your entire family wasn't gassed in the camps, alava'shalom.

Regina, meanwhile, is in the middle of of an intense conversation with a BALDING MAN. They WHISPER harshly.

REGINA

We agreed he wouldn't know who you are--!

BALDING MAN

Fine. But that doesn't mean----

REGINA

--So I don't see the point!

BALDING MAN

The point is--- Christ, just let me talk to him, then I'll go...

9 IN THE DIRTY KITCHEN

9

Bobby is making a sandwich. The BALDING MAN approaches.

BALDING MAN

Howdy doody, Bobby...

BOBBY

Hullo.

BALDING MAN

Remember me...?

BOBBY

Sort of.

BALDING MAN

I'm your Uncle Paul. From Denver.
How's school?

BOBBY

Okay.

BALDING MAN

Studying hard?

BOBBY

I guess.

BALDING MAN

Ever heard of Physics?

BOBBY

No.

BALDING MAN

But you're good in Math?

BOBBY

I guess.

The man stares at him -- there's something pregnant and unspoken in his regard -- but also somehow thwarted.

BALDING MAN

I hear you like chess.

BOBBY

Yeah.

He looks around, takes a five dollar bill from his pocket.

BALDING MAN

Here. Buy a new set. Just don't
tell your mother where it came from...

Bobby's eyes widen as he stares at the bill. The man reaches out to HUG him, but Bobby shrinks away. Uncle Paul frowns, settles for patting Bobby on the head and then walks away.

10 IN THE LIVING ROOM

10

A heated discussion of Zionism, the Rosenbergs. Bobby wanders past, looks out the window. The DARK SEDAN is still there.

Regina is nearby, deep in conversation -- IN RUSSIAN.

BOBBY

Mama--

REGINA

Not now, honey.

BOBBY

I have to talk to you.

REGINA

Honey, it's past your bedtime.

BOBBY

That car's down there again.

Regina's antennae go up.

REGINA

What car?

BOBBY

You told me to tell you... A red,
1951 Chevy, NY license plate HI62579.

Regina apologizes to her friend in Russian, kneels down.

REGINA
Honey, it's okay--

BOBBY
But you told me--

REGINA
Bobby, you remember what I said about
not letting them intimidate us?
Yes, they watch us -- because we
represent something very threatening
to them, to the status quo. You
remember what that is?

BOBBY
(by rote)
Revolution.

REGINA
Yes! And sometimes these bad people
want to know about our work so they
spy on us. So if someone comes up to
you on the street and asks you
questions about me, or Mommy's
friends, what do you say?

BOBBY
(by rote)
I have nothing to say to you.

REGINA
That's my big boy.
(to Joan)
Joanie, he's got mustard on his shirt.
He has to wear that to school
tomorrow. Soak it for me?

JOAN
Love to.

She takes Bobby's hand and leads him away.

JOAN (CONT'D)
Bedtime for Bonzo.

She tickles as she leads him toward the bedroom

11 INT. BOBBY'S BEDROOM - LATER

11

Bobby lies in bed, wide awake. We HEAR the noise of the party outside -- loud conversation, boisterous laughter.

Bobby stares at the window -- is the man still out there? We feel his anxiety building as he LISTENS INTENTLY to the sound of the shade SLAPPING against the window sill.

Suddenly, he sits up, opens a drawer. He works fast -- like someone breaking the rules -- lights a candle -- rolls the wax into balls and stuffs them into his ears.

The laughter outside is muted.

Bobby stuffs a ball into his other ear. *With both ears blocked -- a sudden and wonderful silence!*

Bobby carries the candle to a CHESSBOARD. In absolute silence he stares at the chessboard. In his hand is the NOTEBOOK.

CLOSE on Bobby's face, candlelit, a study in intensity.

As Bobby stares at the chessboard, everything else in the room literally begins to disappear. The bed, the crummy dresser -- until all that is left is a boy and a chessboard.

12 THE CHESSBOARD 12

Pieces move on their own. Multiple exposures. A move yields hundreds of options. The counter offers thousands more.

CLOSE on Bobby's face. Ethereal Music. Bliss. Then...

13 THE DOOR TO HIS BEDROOM IS FLUNG OPEN 13

Light floods in. Harsh SOUNDS. The spell is broken. The two open-mouthed kissers are looking for a place to fuck.

KISSING MAN

Whoopsee-daisy...
(sees Bobby)
Sorry, kiddo.

BOBBY

Get out of my room. GET OUT!

Regina appears behind them.

REGINA

Bobby! Those are our guests!
(sees his chessboard)
Jesus, enough already with the chess!

She reaches for the board. Pieces fall, ruining the game.

REGINA (CONT'D)

(calling out)
Joan--!

Joan appears.

REGINA (CONT'D)
Put him to bed, will ya?

As Regina returns to the party. Joan kneels to pick up the fallen pieces. Bobby looks up at her.

BOBBY
Please...?

JOAN
Okay. One game.

She sits beside him on the bed and sets up the board.

14 INT. BROOKLYN JEWISH HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - DAY 14

Bobby, Joan and Regina sit in a waiting room. Regina smooths Bobby's hair.

REGINA
Now Bobby, don't suddenly start acting normal and make me look ridiculous...

15 INT. DR. MENGARINI'S OFFICE - LATER 15

On DOCTOR MENGARINI's desk is a LARGE WOODEN CHESS SET. Across the desk we find Bobby. The game is fifteen moves old. Smoke from Megarini's pipe wafts among the chess pieces.

MENGARINI
So Bobby, you go to the movies?
(Bobby nods without looking up)
You like Westerns? Bang, bang?

Bobby nods again. Mengarini glances at Regina.

REGINA
Bobby, have you ever been to the Moon on the subway?

Bobby nods and moves a piece. He's in a kind of trance.

REGINA (CONT'D)
Once I poured a glass of water over his head...

Mengarini studies Bobby as Bobby studies the board.

REGINA (CONT'D)
If I take the pieces away he just plays in his head. Day and night.

Mengarini moves his knight. Bobby counters.

MENGARINI

What do you dream about, Bobby?

Silence. Regina shrugs. Mengarini takes Bobby's rook.

MENGARINI (CONT'D)

You like Parchesi? Monopoly?
(to Joan)
Does he play other games with you?

*

JOAN

He says chess is the only game that
doesn't need luck.

Mengarini has barely finished moving when Bobby makes a move.
This startles Mengarini, who frowns at the new positions.

JOAN (CONT'D)

And he cries when he loses.

Bobby glares at her briefly then returns his focus to the
game. Mengarini squints at the board, then makes his move.

MENGARINI

I play chess at quite a high level.
His game is pretty good. Not
exceptional, though.
(magnanimously)
A draw?

Bobby isn't listening. He's in the zone. He initiates an
exchange: his Queen takes Mengarini's Bishop.

Mengarini grunts, makes another move. Then Bobby pounces.

Mengarini tries to escape but the trap has been sprung.
After several moves it's clear he's doomed.

Mengarini is astonished. Bobby looks up at him -- something
new and...well...murderous in his expression.

JOAN

He hates draws.

MENGARINI

Where the hell did *that* come from?

REGINA

So now you see.

Mengarini is still staring at the board in disbelief.

MENGARINI

Who taught him to play like this?

JOAN

I bought him the set. Last year.

MENGARINI

Which club does his belong to?

REGINA

He doesn't belong to any club. He taught himself.

BOBBY

I need to pee.

Joan takes Bobby's hand and leads him out the door.

REGINA

So, Doctor. What do you think?

MENGARINI

Mrs. Fischer, there are worse things than playing chess. Believe me.

REGINA

He wants there to be nothing else.

Mengarini is now writing on a pad.

MENGARINI

I think he should see a professional.

REGINA

I thought you were a professional.

He hands her the note. "Carmine Nigro, Brooklyn Chess Club."

16

EXT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB, MARSHALL STREET - AFTERNOONT

16

Joan and Bobby walk down a Brooklyn street, arriving at a shabby storefront where A Hispanic MAN, 30's, is waiting.

CARMINE

You must be the Fischers. I'm Carmine Nigro.

(to Bobby)

I'm betting you're the chess player.

JOAN

Bobby, say hello.

Bobby mumbles hello. Carmine unlocks the door.

17

INT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB

17

As Carmine turns on the lights, we WATCH Bobby's face as the room is revealed -- twenty tables, all with boards set up.

CARMINE

Our church. All colors and creeds
welcome.

Bobby walks in as if entering a holy place. The door behind
them bursts opens and Regina bustles in.

REGINA

Sorry sorry the E train was a
nightmare -- you must be Carmine Nigro
I'm Regina Fischer. So....?

CARMINE

Doctor Mengarini says he's good.
But most young people don't have the
concentration to play at this level
so please don't build up your hopes.

REGINA

My 'hopes' are he will give up on
the damn game if someone beats him.

CARMINE

Okay, let's see what we got here...

He grabs two chess pieces, one black and one white, holds
them behind his back and turns to Bobby.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Choose.

TIME CUT: As the game begins, Carmine seems confident. Bobby
makes a move that draws him up short.

TIME CUT: Bobby's moves grow bolder, Carmine's body language
is changing. The fight is on.

TIME CUT: Carmine has to use all his wiles. Eventually,
though, he begins to win, and soon he has Bobby trapped.

Bobby stares at the board, his face reddening. He has lost.
He HATES to lose. He pushes his chair back and walks away,
fighting back tears. Carmine turns to Regina.

CARMINE (CONT'D)

Well, I am officially the twenty-
fifth best chess player in New York
City. But he has great potential.

Suddenly, a piece is SLAPPED back on the board. Bobby has
returned and starts replacing pieces.

BOBBY

Again.

We can't help but see the ferocity in his eyes.

A18 TIME CUT - THE BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB

A18*

A spectator pushes his way through a crowd gathered around the young phenom.

*
*

18 50'S ROCK AND ROLL KICKS IN

18

As we follow Bobby's rise to fame. In THE BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB, a small crowd watches him play. At a tournament -- Carmine by his side -- he defeats ONE OPPONENT AFTER ANOTHER. Regina watches intently.

We see Bobby studying chess as he makes a sandwich, studying as he walks down the street, asleep with his head on a board. In the gym, We FOCUS on his hands as he moves his pieces in what we will come to know as his signature SLAPPING gesture.

INTERCUT multiple exposures of Bobby's HANDS with NEWSREEL FOOTAGE of the next five years: the Rosenbergs are executed;

Playboy bunnies are introduced; revolution in Hungary; hoola hoops, missile launches, A-bomb tests, duck-and-cover.

The images SPEED UP and PROLIFERATE, Bobby's hands becoming a BLUR as the soundtrack BUILDS -- until, when we return to normal speed, the CAMERA PANS UP FROM THE HANDS TO REVEAL:

19 OMIT 19

20 BOBBY - NOW AGE 13 - ONSTAGE AT AN AUDITORIUM 20

He's playing against a man in his 20's.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

...Bobby Fischer played American master Donald Byrne today and beat him in what is already being described as the Game of the Century.

A21 IMAGES OF BOBBY - **DOC STYLE** (50'S ROCK AND ROLL CONT.) A21

shaking hands with opponents, being handed a big gold medal.

50'S REPORTER

So Bobby, congratulations. What's next for you?

BOBBY

I don't know, my game's getting pretty strong...

*

Bobby blinks into the camera, hoists his medal.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER #2 (V.O.)

With the longest string of victories in the history of the competition, Bobby Fischer today became the youngest ever United States Chess Champion--

B21 OMIT B21

21 OMIT 21

22 EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - DAY 22

Bobby wears a sharp suit, a strut in his stride. He carries a large paper bag and a trophy. A KID yells as he passes.

BROOKLYN KID

Hey, Jewboy, way to go!

The other kids laugh but Bobby is oblivious, he's clearly playing chess in his head.

23 INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT

23

Bobby has taken a roll of aluminum foil from the paper bag and is covering a window. The trophy has been thrown haphazardly on a sofa. The TV is on:

ERIC SEVEREID (on TV)
 ..Today, the Soviet Union announced
 it has successfully launched the
 first satellite to reach outer space.
 Its name is Sputnik.

He doesn't hear Joan as she enters carrying groceries.

JOAN
 What are you doing?

BOBBY
 You live under a rock? The Russians
 are gonna shoot missiles at us from
 space.

JOAN
 And you think aluminum foil will
 keep out radiation?

BOBBY
 Hey, I'm not the one planning to fry
 the world. You're gonna have a kid.
 You should think about digging a
 shelter.

Joan sees the trophy, lying on the kitchen table.

JOAN
 Congratulations. Wish you'd let us
 come...

BOBBY
Mom? Can't concentrate when she's
 there. *
 (looks around) *
 Where is she, anyway--?

JOAN
 Ban-the-bomb march in Union Square.

Bobby is distracted by a chess game-in-progress. Makes a *
 move.

BOBBY
 Be a hoot if she got blown up by a
 Commie nuke while marching against
 America.

JOAN

She's not marching against America.
She's marching for peace.

BOBBY

Yeah? Chaining herself to the White
House...

JOAN

It's just... Mom.

BOBBY

(suddenly distracted)
--What day is it?

JOAN

Friday.

BOBBY

No. The date. THE DATE!

JOAN

The 26th.

Without a word, Bobby is heading out.

JOAN (CONT'D)

Where you going?

Too late. He's outta there.

24 INT. 'FOUR CONTINENTS' RUSSIAN BOOK STORE - DUSK

24

A slice of Moscow in New York. A samovar. Everyone smoking,
Russian spoken in hushed whispers. The middle-aged BOOKSTORE
CLERK knows Bobby when he enters.

BOOKSTORE OWNER

It just came in.

He points to the magazine rack. Bobby reverently picks up
the latest Shakmanty Bulletin and dives in -- his eyes
MEMORIZING each diagram at a glance -- his photographic memory
like a motor-driven CAMERA. Cachunk. Cachunk. Cachunk.

FROM OUTSIDE THE STORE

A different POV. The store is under FBI Surveillance. Click.

25 INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

25

Bobby lets himself in. He sees Regina's shoes just inside
the door and A PAIR OF SIZE 12 SHOES beside them. Frowns.

26 INT. BOBBY'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

26

The room is little changed -- except for dozens of TROPHIES strewn haphazardly, and stacks upon stacks of chess magazines.

Bobby opens to a page -- and there we SEE the handsome face of Boris Spassky -- the Soviet Grandmaster.

Bobby studies a DIAGRAM of Spassky's latest game. He places his pieces. Working fast. Slap. Slap. He's in the zone.

Then...from the bedroom, the SOUNDS of a man and woman having sex. Bobby puts his fingers in his ears, closes his eyes.

27 INSIDE BOBBY'S HEAD 27

The columns of numbers are jumbled, faded. A SOUND intrudes.

28 BACK IN THE ROOM 28

Bobby HEARS a toilet flush. The SOUND of laughter. A bed creaking. It's all too much. Bobby LEAPS to his feet.

29 IN THE LIVING ROOM 29

Bobby finds Regina in her robe.

REGINA

You're back! And you won!
Congratulations!

Bobby walks to the Size 12 shoes and picks them up.

BOBBY

Every night I hear you two fuck.
Fuck fuck fuck. Bang! Bang! Bang!

REGINA

Bobby, put those down.

A big man -- CYRIL -- appears in the doorway.

CYRIL

Bobby--

BOBBY

I got nothing to say to you. You live in my house but you're not my father, okay?

REGINA

Bobby--

BOBBY

Where's my real father?

REGINA

What?

BOBBY

I was *born*, right? What'd you do with him? Is he on earth? Does he exist?

REGINA
Honey, it was a long time ago...

BOBBY
And you can't remember? Where is he?

REGINA
Gone.

BOBBY
Gone where?

REGINA
It doesn't matter--

BOBBY
That's nice. My real father doesn't matter but Mr. Bigfoot, he matters..!

REGINA
Bobby--

BOBBY
Gone where? When? Who? WHY?

REGINA
Baby, it's late...

Bobby holds the man-size shoes out the open kitchen window.

BOBBY
Now.

Regina deflates. Holds her head. Sighs. Sighs again.

REGINA
...Paul died two years ago. I think you knew that.

BOBBY
Paul? Paul who?UNCLE Paul--?

Regina can barely meet his gaze. Yes. Uncle Paul.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
HE was my father? And you never told me? And now he's DEAD?!
(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)
(starts pacing)
....GET THE FUCK OUTTA HERE. I WANT
YOU TO LEAVE! I WANT YOU AND MR.
BIGFOOT...TO LEAVE!

He FLINGS the shoes out into the street.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Go back to Moscow with your Commie
friends. I am in training. I am
studying day and night to be world
champion, do you understand? The
youngest world champion...ever! I
NEED SILENCE AROUND HERE! Do you
understand! I. WANT.....SILENCE!!!

He storms out.

30 EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK - DAYS LATER

30

Joan makes her way through the misfits, poets and drifters
playing chess in the open air. She finds Bobby asleep at
the chess tables. His suit is wrinkled and filthy.

JOAN
Carmine said you're staying at the
chess club.

BOBBY
Quiet there.

JOAN
What about high school?

BOBBY
Ha. Is she still there?

She sits beside him.

JOAN
She fixed up the apartment. Even
got the hot water heater working.

Bobby looks at her, sensing an agenda.

JOAN (CONT'D)
She won't be living there anymore.
(holds up the key)
She's going to do politics in
California with Cyril.

BOBBY

You mean King Kong.

JOAN

She thought if they went away you'd go home and sleep in a bed.

BOBBY

That's what she told you? And you bought it?

(stands up)

She's running away with some nut-case-Big Foot-communist and, oh you know what? It's for *Bobby's* benefit!

JOAN

You said you wanted quiet.

(looks at him)

You won, Bobby. Be happy.

31 AN INTERVIEW

31

Hand-held, grainy black-and-white.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Bobby Fischer Interview. Take One.

(hits the slate)

So, Bobby, how long before you get a shot at the title?

BOBBY

The Federation makes it very difficult to advance in the rankings. Gonna take a few years. But when that day comes I'll be ready...!

His grin -- when it happens -- is like the sun suddenly breaking through the clouds. 60's MUSIC KICKS IN.

A32 IN A CAVERNOUS HALL (60'S ROCK MUSIC CONT.) **DOC-STYLE** A32

Bobby defeats several opponents. He poses among other East European grandmasters. Carmine is nearby, beaming.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER #3 (V.O.)
 (in Yugoslav; subtitled)
 In Portoroz, Yugoslavia, American chess prodigy Bobby Fischer became the youngest ever Grandmaster in the history of the game...

Bobby has a large gold medal around his neck. An American news reporter puts a large microphone in his face.

REPORTER (O.S.)
 How do you explain your success?

Bobby looks at him for a moment, then simply, without guile:

BOBBY
 I'm better than everybody else.

B32 IN A CHESS CLUB B32 *

Bobby plays TWENTY OPPONENTS at once -- their chessboards surrounding him in a circle. Carmine hovers nearby.

NEWSREEL ANNOUNCER #2
 With each passing year he rises in the International ranking. Maybe someday America can finally claim a champion of its own.

As he moves from one to another, we INTERCUT MORE ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE: JFK'S funeral. The Beatles. The Berlin Wall. Vietnam. LBJ. Cassius Clay.

The CAMERA spins with him as he plays -- faster and faster -- until, as Bobby passes from our view, obscured behind one player, he EMERGES on the other side as the mature 24 year-old we saw in the opening scene.

C32 EXT. BULGARIA TOURNAMENT HALL (TO ESTABLISH) C32 *

Caption: Olympiad of Varna, Bulgaria '62

D32 INT. BULGARIA HALL HALLWAY D32 *

Bobby and Carmine walking. Bobby is psyching himself up.

CARMINE

Okay, Ivanovich relies on the Indian
defense--

*
*
*

BOBBY

He stopped using it in Portorosz.
And Petrossian is no longer defensive
out of the Nimzo. His mother died
last month and he's become more
cautious.

*
*
*
*
*

CARMINE

How do you *know* this stuff?

BOBBY

The magazines, man. They don't know
I read Russian. All I gotta do is
outscore them by two points. That
way they gotta give me shot at the
championship.

CARMINE

Good. Good. How about we think
about the first one first...

32 INT. BULGARIA TOURNAMENT HALL

32 *

The enforced stillness of a chess tournament. Bobby defeats
one opponent after another. He looks invincible. His focus
is absolute.

Nearby, two RUSSIAN PLAYERS have finished their game -- they're shaking hands. A draw.

Bobby looks over, studying their board. Suddenly he stands up from his game and approaches an ARBITER.

BOBBY

(whispering)

Excuse me. Over there -- the Russians --
TBD has an opening on Petrosian,
instead he draws in fourteen moves?

ARBITER

If you'll take your seat please, Mr.
Fischer.

BOBBY

Are you blind? They're playing each
other soft to save their strength
and then padding their point totals
so I can't win -- YOU SHOULD BE
WATCHING THIS!

HEADS TURN as he voice rises. Carmine comes over.

CARMINE

Bobby, sit down, you don't want to
be disqualified.

BOBBY

You see what they're up to? No matter
how many points I get, they're getting
more. This is such bullshit...

Then, into the hall, walks **Boris Spassky!** Bobby can't help but stare as Spassky sits at a nearby table.

Bobby tries to return to his game, but he's upset now. He furtively steals glances at the handsome Grandmaster.

Suddenly, everything is distracting to him.

A chair SCRAPING.

A light buzzes.

A Russian advisor WHISPERING to another advisor.

Bobby looks up at the TOURNAMENT BOARD. He scheduled to play Spassky next.

Bobby crackles with anxiety -- looking over at Spassky -- while his opponent ploddingly contemplates his next move. Finally, unable to stand it:

BOBBY (CONT'D)

...Knight to Kings Pawn Six, Bishop
to Bk4, King to e-5, Queen to Qp2.
King to Nb6, Queen to Bd3. Mate.

His opponent realizes he is indeed doomed.

33 **DOC-STYLE:** A DOOR WITH A SIGN: "SILENCE, MATCH IN PROGRESS" 33

The door opens and Bobby storms out. A cameraman films him.

BOBBY

They're conspiring against me. They
want to destroy me because they know
I'm better than they are.

Bobby is followed by officials and journalists. Carmine
takes his arm.

CARMINE

Bobby...

Bobby yanks his arm free...

BOBBY

The Russians are cheating! There,
I've said it! Nobody else will!

Bobby grabs a guy with Soviet accreditation.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You want that in Russian? *Niet pycni
osmahbi.*

An OFFICIAL takes Bobby's arm...

OFFICIAL

Mr Fischer, if we could go back inside
and talk about this...

Bobby pushes the official -- who falls into a signboard.
Bobby tries to help the man to his feet.

Silence. Then Bobby grabs a chair, stands on it.

BOBBY

Okay, I want to make a statement...
First I'd like to apologize for
pushing that guy. ...You're okay?

OFFICIAL

Something to tell my grandchildren.

As Bobby continues we hear WHISPERED TRANSLATIONS.

BOBBY

I came here to take part in this
tournament, which is my right as
American champion. But it is obvious
this whole thing has been fixed by
the Russkies.

Carmine rolls his eyes. Murmurs around the audience.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They arrange draws so they can save
their strength for the late rounds.
But the corrupt Federation does
nothing to stop it. I've been waiting
ten years to get a shot at the
championship...and I'm sick of it.

(working himself up)

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

CARMINE

Oh, man...

BOBBY

I won't play against fuckin' Commie
cheaters who hate me and hate America.

Bobby sees a radio microphone poking out from the crowd.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Sorry about 'fucks' in there... but
anyway....screw you all. In fact
I'm retiring from chess forever.

Bobby kicks over the chair as he gets down and walks away.

34 EXT. PEOPLE'S HALL - CONTINUOUS

34

Carmine tries to keep up with Bobby as he marches away.

BOBBY
I'm the best in the world and they
know it and they stole it from me!
The whole system is rigged...

CARMINE
Bobby... Bobby, wait--
(catches up to him)
...It's okay to be nervous about
playing him.

BOBBY
What are you talking about?

CARMINE
Spassky. You saw he was next and
you quit.

Spassky is exiting with his handlers, looking cool, confident.

BOBBY
You're fulla shit. It has nothing to
do with Spassky! It's statistically
impossible for me to win now.

CARMINE
First rule of chess. Always someone
better than you.

BOBBY
Better than you, maybe.

He strides away, leaving Carmine behind.

35 INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT - WEEKS LATER

35

The kitchen is a disaster. Old take-out containers and dirty
coffee cups. Chess boards, each with a game-in-progress.

Bobby is asleep, his head on a chessboard. It looks like he lives in his bathrobe. A key in the doorway. Joan enters; with her is her seven-year-old GIRL. Bobby wakes up.

JOAN
Hey, Baby boy...

BOBBY
Didn't know you had a key.

JOAN
(to her daughter)
Say hello to your Uncle.

The girl shyly mumbles a hello.

BOBBY
You like chess, Lizzie? This is the rook. See the castle on top, like in a fairy story, right? It moves like this. And this is the knight, you like horses...?

Meanwhile Joan is subtly cleaning up.

JOAN
So...what've you been up to?

BOBBY
The usual.

JOAN
Getting out much?

BOBBY
Too busy.
(to Elizabeth)
--Here, you try it.

JOAN
...Doing what?

BOBBY
Working on my game! I've developed files this thick on Tal, on Petrossian, on Fila... I'm working fourteen hours a day.

JOAN
So you didn't quit.

BOBBY
(a bit overheated)
I'll play when the Russians stop fixing the Candidates tournament!

JOAN

I know, baby. I know...

She produces a comb and begins to comb his hair. He closes his eyes to a tenderness he rarely gives in to.

JOAN (CONT'D)

So I bumped into an old friend from school... She saw your picture in the New York Times magazine.

BOBBY

I was in the New York Times?

JOAN

The piece about you punching a guy. From the picture, she thinks you're a looker.

(smooths Bobby's hair)

I don't see it, you know? But the point is...you have a date.

*
*
*
*
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*
*

Bobby opens his eyes. Joan smiles.

36 INT. BROOKLYN DINER - NIGHT

36

Sixties rock-and-roll on the juke box. A sweet-faced young girl, MARIA, is waiting. She looks nervous as Bobby enters.

BOBBY

Maria?

MARIA

Bobby?

BOBBY

My sister told me not to scare you.

He smiles. Sits.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Boo. Are you a virgin too?

Maria almost chokes on her coffee.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I don't much care, you know? I don't know why there's even a word for it. There's no word for people who've never flown in a plane or...

Maria looks a little thrown...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

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

MARIA

I...no, I really don't.

BOBBY

Am I scaring you by the way?

MARIA

No... A little.

Maria is beginning to get up to speed with Bobby's craziness. She's unnerved but drawn to his eyes.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I'm Italian.

Bobby doesn't respond.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Joan said you've been to Rome to play chess.

BOBBY

(rapid fire)

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

MARIA

(laughing)

Did you count them?

BOBBY

Are you interested in politics?

MARIA

I'm a Republican actually.

BOBBY

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

Maria laughs again. Bobby is puzzled by her laughter. He re-arranges the sugar cubes with his long fingers...

MARIA

Are you going to eat something?

Bobby puts a sugar cube into his mouth. Peers at her.

BOBBY

Do you play chess?

MARIA

No.

BOBBY

Good.

Maria takes a breath, decides to be bold.

MARIA

Joan said you've quit traveling all over to tournaments and maybe you'd like to start doing regular things.

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

BOBBY

Beautiful.

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

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

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

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Black King here.

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

BOBBY (CONT'D)
White Knight, black pawn, white rook,
black Bishop to your chin--

Maria has closed her eyes, his touch is gentle.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
--your ear to your nose and taking
out an eye for a cheek bone. Move
this here. This here...

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

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Beautiful like a Picasso.

Maria opens her eyes -- overwhelmed by his gentle physicality.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
You believe in love.

MARIA
Uh...

BOBBY
That's what I thought.
(stands; sighs)
Sorry, Joan.

He grabs his coat and leaves. She sits there, forlorn.

MARIA
It's Maria.

37 EXT. 'FOUR CONTINENTS' RUSSIAN BOOK STORE - LATER THAT NIGHT

37

A hunched Bobby walks fast along the busy Brooklyn sidewalk
and ducks into the store, like someone entering a Porn shop.

More SURVEILLANCE SHOTS of him from across the street.

38 INT. BROOKLYN, 'FOUR CONTINENTS' RUSSIAN BOOK STORE - NIGHT 38

Bobby enters, looking wired. The Bookstore Owner speaks softly in Russian...

BOOKSTORE OWNER

*Good evening 'Bobby Grandmaster'.
You couldn't sleep?*

BOBBY

Would you please speak to me in American?

BOOKSTORE OWNER

*So why have you gone to the trouble
of learning our language?*

BOBBY

(in Russian)

Okay. Fine. Is it here yet?

BOOKSTORE OWNER

(back to English)

Let me see... It is the TBD you buy, yes? Published by the *Moscow Chess Federation*.

The Owner's WIFE drifts by behind the counter.

OWNER'S WIFE

Ah. The American boy who hates us but can't resist our magazines.

BOOKSTORE OWNER

The October edition is just in.

Bobby finds the magazine in the rack.

BOOKSTORE OWNER (CONT'D)

Page six.

(twisting the knife)

He is becoming the new Messiah.

A photo of SPASSKY. The caption reads: '**World Champion Boris Spassky wins tenth Blitz tournament.**' Once again, Bobby's steel-trap of a mind memorizes each move at lightning speed.

BOOKSTORE OWNER (CONT'D)

They say he won't ever lose a match.

Bobby pays him. The owner hands him a card.

BOOKSTORE OWNER (CONT'D)

Someone left this for you. A lawyer. You are in trouble, maybe?

A39 INT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

A39

An anonymous FIGURE sits behind a desk as a sheaf of SURVEILLANCE PHOTOS are shown to him. We SEE Bobby entering the Russian bookstore.

39 EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK`

39

Patchy snow. Empty apart from Bobby, who sits before an empty chessboard playing a game with invisible pieces.

A GUY in an overcoat approaches. It is MARSHALL.

BOBBY

You want a game?

MARSHALL

What? You think I'm stupid?

BOBBY

You know who I am.

MARSHALL

Yeah, I know who you are. Been trying to reach you.

(hands him a card)

You don't answer your phone.

*
*
*
*

BOBBY

You're the lawyer. What'd I do...?

MARSHALL

Nothing. You did nothing. You do nothing. That's why I'm here.

Marshall hands him an article torn from Sports Illustrated:
'The Russians Have Fixed World Chess, 'By Bobby Fischer.'

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

You were angry.

BOBBY

That was years ago.

MARSHALL

Are you still angry?

Bobby rocks back and forth a little.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

I mean, are you political, Bobby?

BOBBY

Like a rock. Like a baseball bat.

MARSHALL

You told the truth about the Russians.

BOBBY

Sometimes the truth is a hand grenade.

(almost coy)

I just made that up by the way.

Marshall produces a chess magazine, drops it on the table.

MARSHALL

There's been an announcement.

(reads)

'Soviet invasion to hit California Surf. Greatest chess player who ever lived to visit U.S.'

BOBBY

Yeah. They're coming to California to play in The Piatigorsky.

MARSHALL

They say it's just a game, for fun, hand of friendship, all that crap. But you know the truth... They're using chess to say 'screw America'.

BOBBY

Yeah, well, America is soft.

(re the empty tables)

A little bit of weather and I'm all alone here.

MARSHALL

The Russians laugh at us.

(MORE)

*

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

They know there's not one single American can beat a single Russian. Their chess mastery proves to the world Soviet intellectual superiority over the decadent West.

*

BOBBY

Seriously man, who the hell are you?

MARSHALL

I'm just a fan. I love creative people. I also love my country. I also love to make money.

*

*

(leans in)

I want to represent you. Exhibitions. Endorsements. Serious money. Otherwise I wouldn't be out here freezing my ass off.

Bobby laughs in a cloud of breath.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

You're the one man in this country who can put up a fight, maybe even beat them. And I want a front row seat when the good guys win.

*

*

*

*

BOBBY

You don't know if I can still play.

*

MARSHALL

I talk to people. The cafe on Clinton Street. The bookstore... You hate to lose, Bobby. If you weren't beating the magazines you wouldn't keep buying them.

*

*

*

Bobby studies Marshall, who turns to a picture of Spassky.

*

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Carmine thinks you're afraid of him. Yeah, he's going to have some fun over here...

BOBBY

Hey, screw him. Screw Boris Spassky.

*

*

He taps his temple with his long finger.

*

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I have moves in my brain like bullets.
I ran all his games and I know how
he thinks.

MARSHALL

Yeah. Bang-bang. Patzers in
Washington Square. So what?

BOBBY

He has a life. He has a wife.
(brushes away dead
leaves from the board)
All I have is this. That's why I
can beat him.

MARSHALL

If you don't play, you don't win.
Buif you win, you make history.

*
*

Bobby looks at him, a wicked smile spreading across his face.

BOBBY

When I win.

40 OMIT

40

41 INT. MANHATTAN CHESS CLUB, SMOKING ROOM - DAY

41

The Manhattan Club is nicer than its Brooklyn equivalent.
Marshall walks through with A PRIEST in long black robes
enters. This is FATHER LOMBARDY.

MARSHALL

He's been preparing for six hours.

LOMBARDY

I'm just a selector. I hope he
realizes it's a committee that decides
who plays.

*

MARSHALL

You're a grandmaster. He respects
you. You're the only one who ever
beat Spassky.

*

LOMBARDY

We were kids. He'd destroy me now.

MARSHALL

And you've beaten Bobby.

*

LOMBARDY

When he was twelve. And a bad loser.
(MORE)

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

Said the room was too loud, the lamp
was too bright. He's a pain in the
ass.

*

MARSHALL

He asked for you. Wants you to be
his second.

*

*

Marshall hands Lombardy a letter.

*

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

It's a letter of explanation and
apology to the Federation.

*

*

LOMBARDY

With the f word in the first line.

*

*

MARSHALL

He's nursed a grudge a long time.
He's studied how the Russians
play...every day, eighteen hours a
day for four years. For him, Vietnam
and the Beatles never happened.

LOMBARDY

I'm guessing he still has his opinions
about the Soviets?

MARSHALL

You'll promise the committee we'll
keep him out of trouble...

LOMBARDY

The Piatigorsky has been organized
to build bridges, not burn them.

MARSHALL

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

LOMBARDY

I heard he has mental health problems.

MARSHALL

So did Mozart.

LOMBARDY

What if we get him there and he
cracks...

MARSHALL

Bobby won't crack. He will explode.

42 INT. MANHATTAN CHESS CLUB - GAME ROOM - DAY

42

Marshall ushers Lombardy in. Bobby is dressed to kill.

MARSHALL

Bobby? Father Lombardy's here...

*

LOMBARDY

How ya doing, Bobby?

BOBBY

Against Petrosian in Zurich in the
third game you shouldn't have
sacrificed your King's pawn. That's
the thing that got ya.

Father Lombardy rocks back a little...

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

They peer at each other.

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

LOMBARDY
...Depends if you believe in God.

BOBBY
(nods appreciatively)
Good move.

He gestures at the chessboards lined up before them.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
I'm going to show you how you could've
won in thirteen moves.

LOMBARDY
Not possible.

Several tables have been laid out in advance.

BOBBY
Okay, here's where you screwed up.
You got greedy and traded knight for
bishop, sacrificed your pawn. But
what if you'd done this...

He puts the pieces back on the board with an arrogant slap.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
See, the Russians are like boa
constrictors. If you do nothing,
they strangle you to death, but if
you confuse him, attack him
everywhere...

Bobby moves rapidly. Pieces moving, trading.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
First my machine guns attack his
king. BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! All
he can do is defend himself--

Five more moves. Check. Check. He takes a rook.

LOMBARDY

You understand, Bobby, this tournament is about diplomacy.

Bobby ignores him, moves to the next table.

BOBBY

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

LOMBARDY

I heard you were taking medication.

BOBBY

My sister sent me to a doctor who put me on something but I started playing as badly as you. So I stopped.

He makes three more tactical moves.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Now we've got him on the run.

LOMBARDY

What about Rook takes Bishop?

BOBBY

Of course. The smoke clears. He thinks he's safe... But there's a plot to kill the king, an assassin is waiting, forgotten in the background.

Lombardy is entranced.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You see the Russian Queen, standing there, so high and mighty? She thinks she can protect him.

Bobby goes to the next table, making several quick moves--

BOBBY (CONT'D)

--Suddenly the assassin comes to life! The King tries to escape. But now the hunt is on--!

He makes a few furious final moves, trapping the white King.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Even his beloved Queen can't save him. The King is defenseless. The King is dead.

The Kind Falls

LOMBARDY

Holy shit.

BOBBY

I didn't know priests used bad language...

(to Marshall)

I like this guy.

(to Lombardy)

Father? Take the crazy kid to California.

43 EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH

43

Beach Boys harmonies.

ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE & MOCK-DOC: Waves crash on a sun-drenched beach. The surf is up. Long boards and polka-dot bikinis.

Four black limos pull up beside the beach.

Caption: **Santa Monica, California, June 1966.**

KGB men in dark suits and shades emerge. Out of the rear doors step TEN less well-built men, also in dark suits. The SOVIET CHESS TEAM steps hesitantly onto the sand.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)

This is 93 KHJ, Los Angeles...

The KGB men watch the grand masters stroll self-consciously on the beach. A few SURVEILLANCE SHOTS.

RADIO DJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Don't be fooled by the warm weather because the Cold War just blew into town. The Soviet chess team arrived in LA for a good-will tournament.

BORIS SPASSKY lights a cigarette. He is trim, athletic. He wears dark shades, hair brushed back. An impressive figure.

RADIO DJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
With them is the current world champion, Boris Spassky, said to be the best chess player who ever lived.

Spassky takes off his shades and rubs his eyes against the bright light. We sense a certain weariness...

44 EXT. BEVERLY HILLS HILTON HOTEL

44

The fleet of limos cruise up the palm-fringed courtyard. The doormen jump to attention. Photographers take photos.

RADIO DJ (V.O.)
The comrades are booked into the Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel. So much for working class values...

Boris is hurried inside by two KGB men.

RADIO DJ (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If you're listening guys, welcome to the free world and enjoy the sunshine.

45 EXT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, OCEAN AVENUE - DAY

45

In the seedy parking lot, a couple of hookers are smoking. A taxi pulls in. Lombardy, Marshall and Bobby emerge.

Bobby looks at the seedy Motel, shakes his head.

BOBBY
Right.

46 INT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, OFFICE 46

Lombardy and Marshall are checking in while Bobby paces. He checks out the mural of Santa Monica, observes passing kids. *

BOBBY
...Really hot in here... What's going on? *

MOTEL CLERK
Repair guy didn't show. *

BOBBY
(to Marshall)
You said a hotel, not some roach coach that rents by the hour.

MOTEL CLERK
You a rock star?
(to Marshall)
Acts like a rock star. *

BOBBY
You know what? I ain't staying here.

Bobby turns and walks out the door.

47 EXT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, PARKING LOT 47

Bobby emerges with Lombardy and Marshall in pursuit.

BOBBY
You said, "improved accomodations." *

MARSHALL
This is improved. Somebody else is paying for it.

BOBBY
Where are the Russians staying?

Lombardy and Marshall exchange a look.

LOMBARDY
We don't have their kind of money. *

BOBBY
Money?! We invented money --

LOMBARDY
We rely on private donors. *

BOBBY
So find some rich ones! *
(shakes his head)
The Russians get whatever they want *
because their government understands *
what it takes to win. Chess is a *
national priority! They don't put *
chess players next to Route 66! *
(looks at the traffic)
All I want is some QUIET!!

One of the hookers speaks up out of nowhere...

HOOKER
So stop yelling.

Bobby looks up. She's attractive, if somewhat... obvious. *

BOBBY
You're right. Sorry. What's your
name?

DONNA
Donna.

BOBBY
See ya later, Donna. I'm going for
a walk.

HOOKER
Want some company? *

BOBBY
Sure.

He sets off toward the ocean. Donna hurries to catch up.
Lombardy turns to Marshall

LOMBARDY
And he hasn't even started playing.

48 INT. BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL, BORIS SPASSKY'S SUITE

48

The suite is vast. A shower is running. A note in English and Russian: **'The Beverly Hills Hilton Hotel welcomes Mr Boris Spassky....Chess Champion of the World'**.

Along with his dark suit, Boris has packed a Hawaiian shirt. A small crucifix hangs inside his open suitcase. On a table a chessboard with the pieces set for a new game.

Boris emerges, drying himself. Then the door opens. An adviser enters. This is GELLER. He carries a folder.

Their conversation is in Russian with ENGLISH SUBTITLES.

BORIS

You don't knock?

GELLER

You didn't hear me.

Geller immediately turns off the radio jazz.

BORIS
It is interfering with your listening devices?

GELLER
(smiling)
Now you are being paranoid.

Geller goes to the window, looks down.

GELLER (CONT'D)
I came in here because there is a better view. Come and see. There is a black goddess lying by the pool and you can see right up her crotch. This is a great country, yeah?
(peers at him, again:)
I said this is a great country, yes?

Boris doesn't respond. Geller tosses a folder onto the bed.

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

49 EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH

49

Bobby is walking in his sharp suit, the waves drenching his shoes. He is walking with purpose, mumbling, lost in a game being played in his head.

Then we see Donna trailing behind, high heels in hand.

DONNA
This is all you wanted to do?

Bobby has spaced out for a moment. He snaps back. *

BOBBY
Huh? Collect shells if you want. *

DONNA
You walk pretty fast.

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

BOBBY
Maybe I'll sleep here instead.

Donna sits down heavily beside Bobby and lights a cigarette.

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

Donna looks quizzically at Bobby.

DONNA
I fuck people.

BOBBY
Yeah? So do I.
(pondering)
...Listen, after I've won this chess
thing I was thinking maybe I'd get
rid of my virginity. It's getting
stupid, you know--?

DONNA
...You've never had sex?

BOBBY
Not with someone else, no.

DONNA
I'll make you an introductory offer.
300 bucks.

BOBBY
Two hundred.

DONNA
Two-fifty.

BOBBY
Two twenty-five. And if I win I get
the next one for free.

DONNA
You really represent America?

BOBBY
Hell, yeah. I represent America.

*
*
*
*
*

50	OMITTED	50
51	OMITTED	51
52	EXT. BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL - NEXT DAY	52
	The Soviet chess team climb into their fleet of Limos. Boris appears to have two KGB guards allocated just to him.	
53	INT. BOBBY'S MOTEL ROOM	53
	As Bobby is getting dressed, he and Lombardy play "blind" chess. The board, the pieces, it's all in their heads.	

BOBBY
Bishop to Queen 3.

LOMBARDY
Bishop to Knight 5.

BOBBY
Knight to King Knight 5.

LOMBARDY
King Rook to Queen 1.

Each moves elicits a reaction. Delight or dread.

BOBBY
Queen to Knight 4. Ha!

LOMBARDY
You sonofabitch.

BOBBY
(grinning)
Not me. Morphy vs. Anderssen.

Lombardy's competitive instincts are emerging.

LOMBARDY
Bishop to Bishop 1.

BOBBY
King Rook to K1.

LOMBARDY
Pawn to Queen Rook 4.

BOBBY
Queen to King 7.

LOMBARDY
Queen takes Queen.

BOBBY
Rook takes Queen.

Lombardy studies the board in his head.

LOMBARDY
.....Shit.

Bobby just smiles. Marshall knocks and enters.

MARSHALL
You ready?

He hands Bobby a three-page stapled mimeo.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Background on the Soviet and Cuban teams.

BOBBY

Are you kidding? The Russians have a folder this thick on me. They've been studying me since I was twelve.

*

He tears it up, turns to check himself out in the mirror.

*

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They're sitting by the pool in their fancy hotel, having drinks, laughing.
(squares his tie)
We'll see who's laughing tonight.

*

*

*

He starts for the door.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You coming?

Bobby leaves. Lombardy smiles at Marshall.

LOMBARDY

I think he's ready.

54 EXT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT HALL 54

The Soviet flag and the Stars and Stripes hang above a hall.

55 INT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT HALL 55

Players, audience and journalists wait for the matches to begin. The Russians receive last minute briefings. Lombardy is pouring coffee as Marshall enters, frantic.

MARSHALL

He's not anywhere! If he's not seated in four minutes, he forfeits.

LOMBARDY

He'll be there.

MARSHALL

A little prayer wouldn't hurt.

LOMBARDY

I pray for his opponent.

Marshall shakes his head and hurries away.

*
*
*
*
*

56 INT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT, MEN'S ROOM

56 *

Marshall enters and begins to check the cubicles.

MARSHALL

Bobby? You here?

BOBBY (O.S.)

In here.

Marshall finds Bobby fully clothed, sitting on the toilet, busily writing on a scrap of paper.

MARSHALL

What the hell? You've go to take your seat!

Bobby gets to his feet, handing Marshall the note.

BOBBY

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

*

MARSHALL

To who?

BOBBY

My mom.

Bobby gives him the letter. For a moment we glimpse the fragile little boy inside Bobby. He goes to wash his hands.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

She lives in California now. She'll be here.

MARSHALL

Bobby, you've drawn Ivanovich in the first round.

BOBBY

Whatever you do, don't let her watch me. She'll screw up my game. Just stop her and give her the letter
(dries his hands)
I've told her to follow on the radio.

MARSHALL

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

Bobby's little boy look is replaced by a roguish grin.

BOBBY

Fourth.

57 INT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT PLAYING HALL

57

A chessboard. A clock TICKS. An empty chair with Bobby's name on it. Russian Grandmaster IVANOVICH sits opposite. An adviser whispers in his ear. Lombardy checks his watch.

REFEREE

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

Ivanovich folds his arms and waits.

A door at the far end of the room OPENS. Bobby saunters in. His casual attitude immediately wrong-foots his opponent. A ripple of APPLAUSE as he raises one hand in acknowledgement.

*
*

An official hands Bobby his "move" card.

BOBBY

(patting his pockets;
to Lombardy)

Gotta pen?

Lombardy hands him a pen. Bobby sits and waits for the clock to run down some more, staring directly at Ivanovich.

*

Ten seconds left on the clock. Ivanovich begins to wilt a little. Bobby smiles a devilish smile and whispers...

BOBBY (CONT'D)

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

Bobby SLAPS his first move, then SLAPS his clock just as hard. His eyes never leave Ivanovich's face.

58 EXT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT HALL, NIGHT

58

The Limos are waiting.

*

The auditorium doors open and Ivanovich appears, escorted by the Soviet team advisor, LIVO NEI, who hurries him into one of the waiting cars. Ivanovich has his head bowed.

59 INT. LIMO - BACK SEAT (TRAVELING - POOR MAN'S PROCESS)

59

The limo pulls away. Ivanovich sits beside Nei, staring straight ahead. They speak Russian with ENGLISH subtitles.

IVANOVICH

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

NEI

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

(looks at him)

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

IVANOVICH

Yes. I do have a headache.

60 OMITTED

60

61 EXT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, OUTDOOR PAY PHONE - NIGHT

61

Rain drenches the parking lot. Bobby is on the pay phone,
wired. Donna appears out of one of the rooms.

DONNA

Hey, heard you won... Congrats!

(watches him)

*What's wrong with the phone in your
room?*

BOBBY

*I heard this click, click. Our phone
was always bugged growing up.*

(dialing)

*Some family, huh? My mom is bugged
by us, I'm bugged by the Russians.*

DONNA

Who you calling?

BOBBY
(on the phone)
Operator, I'm trying to find a number
for Regina Fischer....well how many
Regina Fischers can there be in
California?....
(to Donna)
Making sure my mom doesn't come
tomorrow.
(on the phone)
Somewhere near the beach....
(to Donna)
She likes the ocean.
(on the phone)
Well ask the lady next to you and
she can ask the lady next to her.
You sit in lines, right?

*
*
*

Donna stifles a giggle.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Just look her up in your--

He's cut off.

*

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Shit.

*
*

DONNA
So you want to lose your virginity
tonight?

*

BOBBY
Donna, I haven't forgotten our
arrangement and I'm looking forward
to it.
(smiles)
But tonight I've got to practice. I
killed one of them today so tomorrow
they'll come at me like wasps.

Bobby turns and walks off into the rain.

62 INT. BOBBY'S MOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

62

Bobby and Lombardy are playing "blitz." Speed chess.
Lombardy is pushing Bobby. Bobby pushes back.

BOBBY
Passed up having sex for this.

WHAP. Hits the clock. WHAP. Lombardy makes a counter-move.

LOMBARDY
Passed it up for twenty years.

63 EXT. MOTEL ROOM - SAME

63

Bobby's is the only light still on. From inside, we HEAR
WHAP, WHAP, WHAP as their practice continues into the night.

- 64 EXT. BEVERLY HILTON HOTEL - SAME 64
KGB guys flirt with American women.
A SHADOW slips past. It's Boris Spassky making his escape.
- 65 EXT. BEVERLY HILLS STREETS 65
Boris wanders through residential Beverly Hills.
- 66 INT. SANDWICH SHOP, BEVERLY HILLS - NIGHT 66
Boris is playing a pinball machine inside a sandwich shop.
Geller peering in from the street, spots him and enters.

GELLER
Been looking for you.

*

Boris keeps playing.

GELLER (CONT'D)
*You have a game tomorrow. You should
be sleeping.*

Outside, a limo pulls up and a KGB man gets out. Geller nods through the window that everything is all right.

GELLER (CONT'D)
Disappearing makes people nervous.

BORIS
Is Ivanovich really sick?

GELLER
Influenza. We are flying him home.

Boris looks at him, knows he's lying. Goes back to his game.

GELLER (CONT'D)
*It looks bad to lose even one game
to an American.*

Boris allows the ball to drop out of play.

GELLER (CONT'D)

*If Fischer makes it to the final you
will be there to crush him.*

The CLICK of a SURVEILLANCE SHOT from across the street.

67 INT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL - MORNING

67

Marshall walks out. Lombardy takes him aside.

LOMBARDY

We have a problem.

Bobby is standing by the empty pool, holding a sheet of paper.

BOBBY

I'm not going to play again until my
conditions are met.

MARSHALL

What conditions?

BOBBY

Number one. From now on we arrive
at tournaments in a big black car
like the Russians.

MARSHALL

Limousines cost money.

BOBBY

Number two. My picture was on today's
front page of the LA Times. The
more I win, the more people come. A
thousand people are paying 5 dollars
apiece to see me play. That's \$5,000.
I want 30%. \$1,500.

*
*
*
*

MARSHALL

Bobby--

BOBBY

Money is respect. Chess is a sport.
People respect sports stars.

(reading)

Number three. I need five feet between
me and the audience. I can smell
their breath, it's almost like I
hear their thoughts. My thoughts
need to be on the board.

MARSHALL

Is that all?

BOBBY

And get somebody to check our phones
aren't being bugged.

(starts off)

Screw the limo. I'm walking.

*
*

Bobby sets off. Lombardy sets off after him.

A68 EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

A68

Lombardy catches up to him.

LOMBARDY

You ready to talk about the match
now?

BOBBY

(grins)
Forgive me, father, for I have
sinned..

Lombardy can't help but smile. Bobby can be disarming.

LOMBARDY

Yeah, right. Now....if Benko plays
the Sicilian, what's your counter?

*
*

We can no longer HEAR them as they walk away but their
animated gestures signal the intensity of their preparation.

68 INT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, OFFICE - NIGHT

68

The motel clerk is watching local news on a small TV.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)

Americans don't beat Russians at
chess. But it happened today in
Santa Monica--

INTERCUT **DOC-STYLE** "news" footage of Bobby's victories --
masterful, slapping his pieces, scribbling in his notebook.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

--and when American chess sensation
Bobby Fischer is around, it just
keeps on happening....

Donna and the motel clerk are watching on the tiny TV.

CLERK

Son of a bitch broke three of my
phones looking for bugs.

DONNA
That's what rock stars do. They
trash hotel rooms.

NEWS ANCHOR (V.O.)
Tomorrow, a record crowd will watch
the American -- Bobby Fischer -- as
he faces Russian World Champion Boris
Spassky in the final match.

Donna stares at the screen, wide-eyed.

DONNA
Never fucked a champion before.

69 INT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, BOBBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

69

Bobby lies in bed, lost in thought. Donna is beside him. *

DONNA
Wasn't so bad was it?

BOBBY
.....See, the problem is I'm black...

DONNA
Huh?

BOBBY
I like to open with the Kings Indian
but he's an expert on the Samisch.

DONNA
Who? *

BOBBY
Spassky. So maybe a Grunfeld...
But then I need to find a remedy to
P-B4... *

He spins inward. She's feeling a little left out. *

DONNA
....Did you reach your Mom? Bet
she'd be proud. *

She tries stroking his arm. He withdraws slightly. *

BOBBY
Gotta go back to work.

Bobby is already pulling on his pants, leaving the room.

DONNA
Yeah, it was good for me, too.

70 INT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT 70

Bobby can't sleep. Paces. Studies his notebook. It's
1:00am.Bobby drinks milk. Paces. Studies more. It's **3:30am.** *

He's about to drift off. The alarm clock RINGS. **7:00am.** *

71 INT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT HALL 71 *

Bobby and Lombardy walk a hallway. Bobby looks like hell. *

*

LOMBARDY
Up late, huh? You all right?

*

Their eyes meet for a flicker.

BOBBY
Never better.

72 INT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT HALL - DAY

72

Bobby stops before entering the playing area and sees Spassky.
Boris looks rested and detached. Lombardy sees him looking.

*

*

LOMBARDY
You got this guy.

BOBBY
Think I don't know that?

Across the hall, Boris senses Bobby's gaze. Their eyes meet.
We sense the two men have made fatal contact, and one of
them must be destroyed. Bobby looks away first.

*

Bobby and Spassky approach their table. The audience APPLAUDS.

The two men stand behind their seats. Geller whispers in
Boris's ear. Livo Nei hands him a note pad and pen. A third
brings him a worksheet, a fourth hands him a glass of water.

*

Lombardy leans in to whisper to Bobby.

LOMBARDY
Remember, don't try to overpress.
If he opens with the Nimzo--

BOBBY
(harsh whisper)
You think I'm a idiot!?!

Lombardy is mortified. Bobby is immediately contrite.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
...Sorry, Father.

He looks up to see if Boris has heard him. Boris steps forward, extending his hand. Bobby hesitates and the flicker of hesitation is caught by Spassky. Finally they shake.

Boris sits down calmly as Bobby drops into his chair.

Bobby is distracted by THE SOUND of a chair scraping. His eyes dart to it.

He looks back -- only to realize Boris has been watching him the whole time. Bobby tries to stare at him. Boris smiles. He has already won.

73 EXT. SANTA MONICA TOURNAMENT HALL

73

The door SLAMS open and Bobby bursts through. His fury tells all. He has lost. Lombardy and Marshall hurry to catch up.

LOMBARDY

Bobby, you beat three Russians. *

MARSHALL *

They're waiting to give you the runners-up medal.

BOBBY

A medal for losing? *

LOMBARDY *

No one expected you to beat Spassky. *

BOBBY *

She wasn't here, was she? *

MARSHALL *

Who? *

He doesn't wait for an answer and walks off toward the beach. *

MARSHALL (CONT'D) *

At least talk to the TV people. *

74 EXT. SANTA MONICA BEACH - DUSK

74 *

Bobby trudges in the sand. Tears well as he collapses like a disconsolate child. He has lost. His carefully-cultivated, illusion of invincibility is shattered, revealed for what it is, a cloak for the vast, untouchable hole in his heart.

He idly draws a chessboard in the wet sand -- torturing himself with memories of losing.

A wave rolls in, washing out his drawing. He sits there, water pooling around him.

75 INT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, LOMBARDY'S ROOM - THAT NIGHT 75

Lombardy sits on the bed. Marshall enters. *

MARSHALL

He's disappeared.

He pours himself a drink. *

LOMBARDY

He'll be back.

MARSHALL

How can you be so sure?

LOMBARDY

It's all that matters to him. Without chess, he doesn't exist.

MARSHALL

You think he can ever beat Spassky?

Lombardy nurses his drink, non-committal.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Hypothetically, what would it take to make him world champion?

LOMBARDY

(stares at him)

The desk clerk asked why we're making so many calls to DC. I didn't call DC. Who have you been talking to--?

MARSHALL

There are people...in high places... who take an interest in any confrontation between us and the Soviet Union.

LOMBARDY

The state department?

(no answer)

The CIA?

(no answer)

The WHITE HOUSE?

MARSHALL

Bobby wants limos? He gets limos. And they'll throw in 'honorariums' for each victory.

LOMBARDY
Paid for by who?

Marshall stares back at him. *

MARSHALL
Are you a patriot, father?

LOMBARDY
Mostly.

MARSHALL
Bobby may be a little off but he
understands this whole thing better
than you. *

(looks at him)
We're at war. Only it's not being
fought by guns and missiles -- not
yet at least -- it's a war of
perception. The poor kid from
Brooklyn taking on the whole Soviet
Empire. The perfect American story.

LOMBARDY
(starts to laugh)
Which means you're out *schnorr*
right wing anti-Communist money
people? This wouldn't possibly be
helpful to the Nixon White House?

MARSHALL
...There's such a thing as doing
well by doing good. And you haven't
answered my question... *

Lombardy takes a sip of whiskey. *

LOMBARDY
Bobby Fischer is the second best
chess player I have ever seen. He
also has severe problems in his head.

MARSHALL
Which need to be understood and
managed.

LOMBARDY
Managed? *Bobby?*
(shakes his head)
Ever heard of Paul Morphy? 1855.
(MORE)

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

Greatest player this country ever had -- before Bobby, that is. By 21 he'd beaten every master in Europe. Liked to play ten people at a time. Blindfolded. Then things got a little weird. Started having "visions," became convinced people were trying to poison him. Quit at 26 and eventually killed himself in the bathtub surrounded by twelve pairs of ladies' shoes.

Lombardy takes another sip. *

LOMBARDY (CONT'D) *

This game is a rabbit hole. After only four moves there are more than three hundred *billion* options to consider, more forty-move games than the number of stars in the galaxy, more openings, defenses, gambits than there are atoms in the universe.

(remembering)

It can bring you very close to the edge. I've been there. When I was twenty-three, I--

MARSHALL

(interrupting)

Nice story, father. With respect, my question was about Bobby. Could he win?

Lombardy glares at him.

LOMBARDY

If Bobby went for the title it would mean traveling around the world playing interzonals for three years... That's three years in much worse places than this one.

(finishes his whiskey)

In my opinion he might not make it that long.

Marshall stands up, taking the bottle with him.

MARSHALL

It's your job to see that he does. If we ever find him.

76 EXT. BEACH - DAY

76

Bobby has slept on the beach. His clothes are rumpled and his hair is wild. As he sits up he sees an odd sight.

A hundred yards down the beach, a big black limo has disgorged three MEN. Two are KGB. The third is wearing a Beverly Hills hotel bathrobe. It's Boris Spassky, come for his morning swim. The KGB men carry his clothes.

Bobby watches, fascinated, as Boris shrugs off his bathrobe and begins an exercise regime. Bobby gets to his knees as Boris walks into the ocean and begins to swim. The KGB guys smoke cigarettes, waiting for Boris to finish.

As Boris steps out of the ocean, a KGB guy holds out a towel for him. Bobby leaps to his feet and yells...

BOBBY

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

Boris looks up as Bobby yells, but he is far away and looks like a bum, so he doesn't immediately recognize him...

KGB GUY

*Just some drunk sleeping it off.
America is full of them.*

Bobby, meanwhile, is laughing to himself. He steps into the ocean, fully clothed, and begins to splash around...

BOBBY

Look at me man, I'm free!

He jumps into the waves and begins to play. Boris stares and slowly realizes it's Bobby.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I'm coming for you, man!! Better
get ready -- 'cause I'M...COMING!!

The KGB minders quickly hustle Boris away, but not before he looks back to see Bobby take a sardonic bow.

We might notice something new in Boris's eyes when he realizes that Bobby has recovered from the loss. He is unnerved.

A77 EXT. MOSCOW (ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE)- MORNING

A77

Lomonosov Moscow University Dormitories, February 1967.

77 INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT - MORNING 77

A man answers the door. A postman hands him a Russian magazine. The cover features a photograph of Bobby. We might notice he has large feet inside his ragged tartan slippers.

78 INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM 78

Cyril hands the magazine to Regina. Bobby is on the cover. *

CYRIL *

He is officially entering the race
to become world champion. *

Regina nods, walks away toward the bedroom with the magazine.

79 INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT, SPARE ROOM 79

When she enters, WE SEE walls covered in clippings and photographs of Bobby: headlines from the NY Times, LA Times, London Times and Pravda. Covers from Life and Time magazine.

We PAN past articles proclaiming his triumphs. (**Fischer dominates at Skopje**). 70's hard rock kicks in.

80 **DOC-STYLE: WE'RE IN A HALL (70'S ROCK CONT. OVER)** 80

Bobby is being interviewed.

BOBBY

....The Russians are afraid of me,
man. They've avoided me for years.
(a big grin)
They can run but they can't hide!

A scrum of reporters bears down on him.

REPORTER

Bobby, you're the first American
ever to reach the interzonal semis.
How does it feel? Are you afraid?

Bobby freezes. He stares at all the people yelling at him.

BOBBY

I have nothing to say to you...

The words his mom taught him years ago.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU!!

In her room, Regina adds another article: "**Fischer Withdraws from Monaco.**"

We INTERCUT between articles and mini-scenes of Bobby's long road to the championship.

81 IN A NATANYA HOTEL ROOM (70'S ROCK CONT.) 81

Bobby works out with weights as Lombardy watches skeptically.

LOMBARDY

23... 24... Push. PUSH...! 25!

Bobby is wasted but he won't stop.

BOBBY

One more set.

He begins another set. Lombardy starts again at "1".

82 OMITTED 82

83 **DOC-STYLE:** IN A TOURNAMENT HALL (70'S ROCK CONT.) 83

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Today, rising American chess champion,
Bobby Fischer won his twentieth
consecutive game... a world record.

Bobby writes "mate" on his scorecard. The player opposite him has been crushed. Bobby hands the pen to Lombardy.

84 **DOC-STYLE:** OUTSIDE THE TOURNAMENT HALL (70'S ROCK CONT.) 84

Bobby is surrounded by FEMALE FANS swooning over him. Bobby's loving it. He turns to Lombardy.

BOBBY

You sure we can't stay here a couple
more days?

Lombardy grins. Bobby is enjoying the fruits of stardom.

85 IN A HOTEL ROOM (70'S ROCK CONT.) 85

Bobby lies in bed, listening to a tape recording. The CULT PREACHER is understated but authoritative. Like a father.

CULT PREACHER (V.O.)
The tide of history is changing,
friend. God's plan has left them
behind, so they plot to take the
world away from God...

Lombardy passes by in the hallway, looks in.

LOMBARDY
What are you listening to?

BOBBY
The Worldwide Church of God. These
people are into some heavy shit.

CULT PREACHER (V.O.)
They will do anything in their power
to destroy us. If we have any hope
of surviving, we must expose them
before the whole world...

Lombardy walks out, shaking his head.

86 **DOC-STYLE:** IN A PARK (70'S ROCK CONT.)

86

Another interview.

BOBBY
I mean, what do we really know about
radiation? ICBM'S? There are lots
of things our government doesn't
tell us.

Regina adds an article: "**Fischer Boycotts Fed for 2nd Time**"

87 BACK TO THE PARK (70'S ROCK CONT.)

87

An interviewer speaks to him, off-camera

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
So, Bobby, when did you last see
your mother?

BOBBY
....Uh...Haven't seen her in a few
years, actually.

88 IN THE MOSCOW APARTMENT

88

As Regina tacks up the latest cover of Bobby's face. It's as
if she can hear him being interviewed.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
And your father...?

89 IN THE PARK

89

Bobby's eyes flash.

BOBBY

Look, I thought you wanted to talk
about chess.

He summarily walks out of frame.

90 IN THE MOSCOW APARTMENT

90

Regina looks deep into her son's eyes.

91 A HOTEL HALLWAY

91

That same face. Manic mode. Giving orders.

BOBBY

--What'd Vancouver come back with?

MARSHALL

They've agreed to let you approve
the lighting.

BOBBY

Good. What about the clocks? The
BHB model with the button on top
saves two seconds on each move.

*
*

MARSHALL

Flying them in from Germany.

BOBBY

And the placement of the table?

MARSHALL

They say there's not enough room in the hall.

BOBBY

That's *bullshit*! Tell them I *insist* on a ten foot radius.

*

MARSHALL

But if there isn't enough room--

BOBBY

I SAID, TELL 'EM! Now... What about the *money*?

MARSHALL

They won't budge.

BOBBY

Then I won't play.

MARSHALL

Bobby--

BOBBY

Did you read Time magazine?

(quoting)

Quote. Bobby Fischer is changing the face of chess, single-handedly making it the fastest growing sport in the world. Unquote.

(MORE)

BOBBY (CONT'D)

You know how much Joe Namath makes?
\$250,000. That's 12K per game. And
he's never won a single championship.
I'm EIGHT TIME U.S. champ. You know
what I make?

MARSHALL

So what you're saying is you want to
play for the Jets?

Bobby senses Lombardy's gaze, turns to him.

BOBBY

...What--?

LOMBARDY

Just wondering what any of this has
to do with chess.

At the end of the hallway, FANS are waiting.

BOBBY

(to Lombardy)

Gotta pen?

Lombardy obliges; a fan hands Bobby an autograph book.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Tu jeux aux echecs?

The kid nods eagerly. Bobby grins.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Better not be good. I don't need
any more competition.

The fan is thrilled as Bobby signs with a flourish.

92 INT. THE SAME BROOKLYN DINER - DAY

92

Early 70's music. Joan is in booth, anxiously smoking a
cigarette. Marshall is already talking as he sits down.

MARSHALL

Joan, I'm between three airports and
hell. I have ten minutes in New
York to see my wife, kiss my kids
and talk to you. How the hell have
you been? You're looking great.

JOAN

I have to see him. Every time I
call, they say his phone is broken.

MARSHALL

That happens.

JOAN

You mean he breaks them. I want to take him to see a doctor.

MARSHALL

That just won't be possible. He's already in Vancouver ...Joan, it's been a while since you saw him, right?

JOAN

Over a year.

MARSHALL

I can tell you he's in great shape.

Joan opens her purse and produces a pile of letters.

JOAN

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

MARSHALL

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

Joan stares at him. Her face hardens.

JOAN

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

MARSHALL

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

JOAN

(reading)

'The Communists infect my mind with words that just keep repeating'.

Marshall blanches. He's not entirely without conscience.

JOAN (CONT'D)

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

(crumples the letter)

We are Jewish. Bobby is Jewish. What do your people say to him when he comes out with this trash?

MARSHALL

Joan, I swear this isn't just about the title anymore. It's about the beauty of the games he's playing.

(looks around)

Out of all the crazy stuff -- such unimaginable beauty. A Da Vinci. From *Brooklyn*. Once every five hundred years... Grandmasters are watching Bobby play with tears in their eyes.

JOAN

Well, I have tears in my eyes too!

Heads turn. Marshall checks his watch.

MARSHALL

Joan, I'll take care of him.

(touches her hand)

I'll make sure his life doesn't get too crazy.

93 EXT. VANCOUVER TOURNAMENT HALL - **DOC-STYLE**

93

Madness.

Reporters and photographers converge on Bobby,

Caption: **Vancouver Interzonal, May 1971.**

RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Today in Buenos Aires, American chess star -- Bobby Fischer -- beat Russian grandmaster Tigran Petrosian in the semi-final of the World Chess Championships...

Marshall and Lombardy try to shield him as they hurry down the steps of the hall. Bobby is wired as hell.

VANCOUVER REPORTER

Bobby, with this win you're guaranteed a shot at the title. How's it feel?

BOBBY

Pretty good, pretty good.

VANCOUVER REPORTER

The Russians are saying you don't have a chance against Spassky. Any comment on that?

BOBBY

Okay, okay, I'm making this up as I
say it, right, so it might not come
out so good...

Cameras roll and flashlights POP...

VANCOUVER REPORTER 2

Hey Bobby, big angry look over here...

Lombardy gently urges Bobby forward. Marshall holds back.

BOBBY

I just crushed Petrosian six-and-a-half to two-and-a-half. They know what I'm going to do to Spassky.

*
*
*
*

VANCOUVER REPORTER

Bobby, a crazy look over here....

*
*

Lombardy pushes Bobby toward a waiting limo.

BOBBY

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

Murmurs among the press. Lombardy shakes his head.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They point things at my window from across the street. I wouldn't be surprised if they were bugging me right now. Sometimes I hear stuff buzzing in my clothes. I've even heard they can listen through the fillings in your teeth.

*
*
*

Lombardy pushes Bobby into the car. A reporter follows.

VANCOUVER REPORTER 2

Petrosian said he wasn't well. That's the second Russian who got sick...

BOBBY

Sick of me sure as hell.

Laughter. Bobby grins. His mood swings are growing stronger; suddenly he's having the time of his life. Flashbulbs POP.

94 INT. LIMO (TRAVELING) - SAME

94

Bobby is grinning. Marshall puts an arm around him.

MARSHALL

Bobby, Bobby, Bobby..!

LOMBARDY

Congratulations, kiddo.

MARSHALL

Wide World of Sports is offering a segment, Cavett wants you, and -- are you ready...? Mike Wallace called. Mike Wallace. "60 Minutes," Bobby!

*
*

BOBBY

Yeah, well, about time... I don't want to be distracted by a bunch of press, though. I'll do the big ones.

MARSHALL

Great, great... Only-- when we do these shows... just go easy on the...bugging... and the teeth.

BOBBY

Whaddya mean? I'm telling the truth. People love that.

MARSHALL

I know, I know. You just need to be careful. Some things you say, they can be misinterpreted. People get worried when you talk like that...

BOBBY

People? What people?

MARSHALL

It doesn't matter... Which of these interviews do you want to do?

BOBBY

No... You said people are worried. What people?

MARSHALL

Nobody. I think Cavett would be a great idea--

BOBBY

-- WHAT PEOPLE?

MARSHALL

.....Joan.

BOBBY

You talked to Joan? When? Did you talk to her on the phone? Did she call you?

MARSHALL

.....I was in New York. We had a cup of coffee.

BOBBY

You MET with my sister without telling me?! You TALKED about me with my sister?!

MARSHALL

She called me--

BOBBY

You think I'm a child who needs to be TALKED ABOUT?!

MARSHALL

I was looking out for your best interests--

BOBBY

Don't lawyer me!

MARSHALL

I'm trying to help you!

BOBBY

DON'T LAWYER ME! You're having conversations BEHIND MY BACK! With my FAMILY?! Did I ask you to do that? Why wouldn't you tell me about that? Who's working for who here? There are a hundred more of you, you know, just waiting in line.

*
*

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Stop the car!

MARSHALL

Bobby, we're about to get everything
you've ever wanted....

BOBBY

STOP THE CAR--!

The car stops. Bobby jumps out. Lombardy turns to Marshall.

LOMBARDY

I'll walk him back.

95 EXT. VANCOUVER STREET - MOMENTS LATER

95

Lombardy catches up to Bobby and they walk in silence for a
moment. Then:

LOMBARDY

B6 to E1.

After a moment...Bobby responds.

BOBBY

K4 to Qp4.

LOMBARDY

P4 to P5.

They walk on. For the moment Bobby is back on track.

96 INT. VANCOUVER HOTEL RESTAURANT - LATER THAT NIGHT

96

Marshall is eating alone.

MARSHALL

So?

LOMBARDY

He's back in his room.

He sits down opposite Marshall.

MARSHALL

Is he okay?

LOMBARDY

He's in there listening to those tapes of his.

MARSHALL

Isn't it some kind of God Squad?

LOMBARDY

Those people have as much to do with God as you do.

MARSHALL

I'd've thought you'd approve...

He leans across the table.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Should we get him to see a someone, a psychiatrist.

LOMBARDY

Never happen.

MARSHALL

We have to try.
(looks at him)
The concierge told me he asked for the TV to be removed from his room because he thinks the Russians are watching him through the screen.

LOMBARDY

Maybe they are.

MARSHALL

He also believes they are going to try to blow up his plane.

LOMBARDY

He just needs some sleep. What good would a doctor do?

MARSHALL

He could give a diagnosis... He could give him a pill.

The two men stare at each other.

LOMBARDY

And that would be like pouring concrete down a holy well.

97 EXT. OPEN PRAIRIE, RUSSIA - DAY

97

Boris Spassky rides a stallion bare-chested. He is a man at ease. Reaching the crest he pulls up. Below a Lada waits. The sight of the car breaks the spell.

Boris trots over to where Livo Nei leans on the car, smoking a cigarette. Nei's presence means there is news...

98 INT. JFK ARRIVALS - DAY - **DOC-STYLE** 98

The press pack awaits the flight from Buenos Aires. Lombardy emerges from arrivals, followed by Marshall.

RADIO ANCHOR (V.O.)

Bobby Fischer -- the first American
in history to reach the final --
arrived in Reykjavik today....

*
*
*

Bobby emerges...with a brown paper bag over his head with eyes cut for holes. Cameras POP...the real madness has begun.

99 INT. BOBBY'S BROWN BAG 99

WE ARE INSIDE the paper bag. Frantic breathing, the bag sucking in and out. The press is SCREAMING, "You've never beaten Spassky. Why do you think you can you beat him now?"

RADIO ANCHOR (V.O.)

After months of negotiation, Fischer
will now face the current World
Champion Boris Spassky.

*

100 INT. JOAN'S SUBURBAN HOME, LIVING ROOM, NEW YORK 100

Joan is getting her kids ready for school. The radio is on.

RADIO ANCHOR (V.O.)

The Fischer Spassky final will be
televised world wide--

Joan's son comes running up the path.

RADIO ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

--and is already being billed as the
deciding battle in the war of ideas
between East and West.

Joan's son bursts through the door, breathless...

JOAN'S DAUGHTER

Mama, there are men on the lawn.

Joan looks out and sees the press pack gathering on her lawn.

DICK CAVETT (VO)
Ladies and Gentlemen, my next guest
was US Chess Champion at fourteen
and a Grandmaster at fifteen--

101 OMIT 101

102 INT. TV STUDIO - MOMENTS LATER 102

DICK CAVETT
--And now he's hoping to become Chess
Champion of the whole world, Ladies
and Gentlemen, Mr Bobby Fischer...

Bobby is sprawled in a chair, looking by turns shy and cocky.

CAVETT
So where does a chess player live?

BOBBY
I don't live anywhere. Hotels mostly.

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

BOBBY
Cheating.

Bobby grins. Laughter. Cavett glances at his audience..

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

More laughter. Bobby is encouraged to go farther.

BOBBY
Cheating. Yeah, they've done a bit
of that in the past.

CAVETT
An opponent once said you are like
Achilles without the Achilles heel.
Do you have a weakness?

Silence. Bobby looks puzzled.

BOBBY
...A weakness?..... No.

He laughs easily. His lack of guile can be disarming.

CAVETT

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

BOBBY

(his smile fading)
When you break his ego. That's where
it's at--

Cavett reacts with mock alarm.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

--When he sees it coming and he breaks
up inside. When you're, like,
crushing the guy...
(stares into the lights)
Crushing the guy.
(his eyes wild)
Yeah, that's where it's at.

The easy grin is gone. His smile appears haunted.

103 INT. BIG HOTEL SUITE

103

Chaos. Marshall is checking travel documents. A couple of
SECURITY GUYS wait by the door.

MARSHALL

Flight to Reykjavik's at nine. We
need to get to JFK by 7.

The noise is compounded by MUSIC Bobby listens to on a
portable cassette player. He is shirtless, doing push-ups.

LOMBARDY

Does that have to be so loud?

MARSHALL

He doesn't want the Russians to hear
which plane we're catching.

BOBBY

(yells over the music)
THIS GROUP IS INCREDIBLE! They get
thirty percent of ticket sales at
their concerts. I should get that.

MARSHALL

(yelling back)
We agreed to twenty-five...

*

BOBBY
(more push-ups)
Yeah, well it's thirty now.

MARSHALL
Bobby. You agreed. You signed.

BOBBY
Yeah, well, I changed my mind. Thirty
or I don't go.

The room falls silent. The other have 'told you so' faces.

MARSHALL
If I ask for thirty, they'll say
you're scared to face him.

BOBBY
Don't try that psychology crap on
me. Without me no one outside Russia
would know this thing is happening.
I am the light shining on this game.
(standing up)
All of you are here because of me...
I am a hundred per cent of the reason--
no, that's wrong -- Spassky is the
reigning champion -- I want thirty
percent for him too.
(pacing; manic)
But understand one thing: I don't
just play for myself. I play for
Chess.

*

He stares, triumphant, at Marshall -- who nods, conciliatory.

MARSHALL
I'll call them from the airport.
(to the others)
Okay, people, we need to get packed.

Lombardy takes Marshall's arm, leads him into the next room.

LOMBARDY
He told me he doesn't want to go to
Iceland.

MARSHALL
He wants to go.

LOMBARDY
He doesn't know *what* he wants...

MARSHALL

But you do.

Lombardy just stares at him, fuming.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Look, my job was to get him this match. How about you do *your* job...

LOMBARDY

What's that supposed to mean?

MARSHALL

Get him ready. Help him win.

LOMBARDY

What have I been doing for three years?

MARSHALL

Babying him. Catering to his bullshit--

LOMBARDY

Keeping him from cracking up is more like it. This may be hard for you to comprehend, but he's a *person*, not a meal ticket or a political symbol or an instrument of US foreign policy.

MARSHALL

I am so sick and tired of your sanctimonious bullshit... If you don't have the stomach for this I suggest you go find a church, get down on your knees and thank God you don't live in Russia.

LOMBARDY

What if something happens?

MARSHALL

Like *what*?

Lombardy glances through the open door at Bobby, who has turned off the music and inserted a home-made tape of The Worldwide Church of God. Lombardy doesn't want to give voice to his worst fears.

LOMBARDY

...I don't know.

Marshall shakes his head and turns back to getting ready.

*

Lombardy heads into Bobby's room. The Worldwide Church of God comes from the tape player. *

CULT PREACHER (V.O.)
--and when you see how the tide of history is changing, friend, you see how desperate they are.

LOMBARDY
Can you turn that off for a second?

BOBBY
What's up...? *

LOMBARDY
Bobby. If you don't want to go, then you shouldn't go. *

A long moment as Bobby stares at him. *

BOBBY
I thought you wanted me to win. *

LOMBARDY
I do. Too much, maybe. But I think... all the pressure... is... bad for you. *

BOBBY
I'm cool. *

Lombardy has to say it, whatever the consequences. *

LOMBARDY
...You need help. *

BOBBY
What kind of help...? Oh. You mean *psychology*. You think I need *psychological help*?! You know who invented that, right? The Jews. I don't need anybody's help. I don't need the Jews' help, I don't need God's help. And I definitely don't need your help, Father.
(looks at him)
When I call you, 'Father,' I think, like, he's not my dad. Is that what you think? That you're my Dad? *

LOMBARDY
I don't think I'm your dad, Bobby. *

BOBBY

You're not my dad because I don't
have one. You know what you are?
You're a loser. You couldn't beat
Spassky so why should I? You quit
so you want me to quit. Is that it,
Dad? You'll feel better if I turn
out to be a loser... LIKE YOU!

*
*
*
*
*
*
*

Lombardy stares at him, then starts out. Bobby is immediately
contrite.

*
*

BOBBY (CONT'D)

(calling after him)

Hey, I've been working on a new
variation on the Indian Defense,
wanna take a look?

LOMBARDY

Later.

In the hotel room, Marshall has overheard the tirade.

MARSHALL

Love how you handle him.

Lombardy picks up his bag.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

We're not leaving for half an hour.

LOMBARDY

(fighting back emotion)

...I'll...take a later flight.

He leaves. Bobby appears in the doorway.

BOBBY

Where's he going?

MARSHALL

Jesus has left the building, pal.
We're on our own.

104 EXT. MILITARY AIRFIELD - GATE - MOSCOW 104

A Zil limo with a Soviet flag enters a military compound.
They're escorted by police cars with flashing lights.

In the back seat sits Boris, Geller at his side. A KGB guy
sits at his other shoulder. Boris looks like a prisoner.

105 EXT. JFK AIRPORT - CURBSIDE 105

A limo pulls to the curb. Marshall and the security guys
jump out. Then Bobby appears. He looks like a hunted animal.

106 INT. MOSCOW MILITARY AIRBASE 106

Boris is marched through the airbase. One KGB guy carries
his coat. Another carries his suitcase.

107 INT. JFK TERMINAL - UPSTAIRS HALL 107

Marshall, Lombardy and the security guys hustle Bobby through.

108 EXT. MOSCOW MILITARY AIRBASE 108

Boris boards an Aeroflot jet. Russian soldiers salute. Geller
salutes back but Boris just stares.

109 INT. JFK AIRPORT 109

Bobby and the others ride up an escalator.

110 AT THE TOP OF ESCALATOR 110

Suddenly JOURNALISTS spot Bobby...

JFK JOURNALIST

There he is!

Bobby shoves Marshall aside, turns, and runs back down the
up escalator.

111 EXT. JFK AIRPORT 111

Bobby leaps into a taxi.

BOBBY

Drive, drive!!

Bobby sinks down out of sight as the cab pulls away. We HOLD on his face, eyes darting, as we HEAR:

JOHANNESON (V.O.)
Ladies and Gentlemen, It is with great pleasure that I welcome the world to our little island--

A112 EXT. REYKJAVIK (TO ESTABLISH)

A112

112 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND

112

Caption: **National Theater, Reykjavik, Iceland, July 1st 1972.**

JÓHANNESSON
--for the most important sporting event in history. Joining us today are the distinguished Ambassador of the Soviet Socialist Republic TBD, and Ambassador Tremblay of the United States of America.

A jostling crowd, news crews from around the world. The crowd applauds the Icelandic Prime Minister, JOHANNESON. He nods to US AMBASSADOR TREMBLAY and his Russian counterpart.

JÓHANNESSON (CONT'D)
Also the great match adjudicator from the World Chess Federation, Lothar Schmid...

SCHMID
Thank you, Prime Minister. I am honored, but confused. I was always led to believe that chess needed two people for a game. Unfortunately, so far, we only have one.

Boris Spassky is sitting with Livo, Nei and Geller.

SCHMID (CONT'D)
Happily, our Russian friends have managed to get here on time. We are indeed honored to have with us the World Champion, comrade Boris Spassky.

Applause as Spassky smiles shyly and waves.

SCHMID (CONT'D)
However... it seems our American friends have managed to lose their famous Mr Bobby Fischer...

He turns to US Ambassador Tremblay. The crowd boos.

SCHMID (CONT'D)

One hopes they are not so careless
with their nuclear weapons.

The crowd laughs. The Soviet Ambassador smiles at Tremblay,
who whispers to an aide.

TREMBLAY

Son of a bitch. Where *is* he?

AIDE

Mr. Ambassador, we have a problem.

113 OMIT 113

114 INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT - DAWN 114

As if frozen in time. Strips of aluminum hang from the
windows. Chessboards are set up but covered with dust.

Bobby sits alone at a chessboard.

115 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND (**DOC-STYLE**) 115

US Ambassador Tremblay is waylaid by JOURNALISTS.

ICELANDIC JOURNALIST

Mr. Ambassador, is Bobby Fischer's
behavior affecting US/Icelandic
relations?

ICELANDIC JOURNALIST #2 (V.O.)

There's talk of the Icelandic
Parliament asking for the removal of
the US Air Force base--

ICELANDIC JOURNALIST

Is it true Fischer has demanded two
million dollars to come to Reykjavik?

TREMBLAY

I love chess. The world loves chess.
We are here to celebrate chess.

(to an aide)

Tell me Fischer is on a plane.

The aide looks like he's about to throw up.

TREMBLAY (CONT'D)

Get him here! Even if you have to
use a damn tranquilizer dart.

116 INT. THE FISCHER APARTMENT - NIGHT 116

The apartment is in shadows. Bobby dials the phone.

BOBBY

Joanie, where the hell are you?

117 INTERCUT - JOAN'S BEDROOM 117

Joan's in bed beside her sleeping husband.

JOAN

Hello?

BOBBY

Joanie?

JOAN

Bobby, is that you? Where are you?

BOBBY

...I'm here.

JOAN

In *Iceland*?

BOBBY

No. Here. Home.

JOAN

You're in New York?

BOBBY

Had to get away from them...

JOAN

Bobby, are you okay?

BOBBY

The whole world is pulling at me,
Joanie.

JOAN

Stay there, baby. I'll come in.

He's a lonely little boy in a scary world.

BOBBY

...They're asking me questions, making
me do stuff. So many people.
Crowding me. I can't think, I can't
think about chess.

JOAN

I'm coming now. You stay there.

Bobby HEARS a CLICKING on the phone.

BOBBY

You hear that? They're listening.
They're always listening...

At that moment there is a heavy KNOCK on the apartment door.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They're HERE! They're coming to get
me, Joanie!

JOAN

Oh, Bobby....

The KNOCKING gets heavier. Someone is breaking down the door. Bobby whimpers. Finally the door flies open and Marshall enters, accompanied by two HEAVIES we haven't seen before.

MARSHALL

Hey, pal, we were worried about you.

Bobby confronts them with fists clenched. Marshall gently closes the door and gives a slip of paper to one of his men. The guy goes to Bobby's phone and begins to dial.

BOBBY

Hey! You pay for that call!

MARSHALL

Bobby, why'd you run away?

BOBBY

(a speed rap)

I changed my mind the money's no
good they're charging five bucks a
ticket the hall holds eleven hundred,
twenty-four games max...that's 132
grand! They should be paying me
more we're capitalists, right?

MARSHALL

Big news. Just got us an extra 125K.

It's like Marshall is gentling an escaped animal.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Some English chess nut. Wants to
see you play so bad.

The guy on the phone nods, holds up the receiver.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

But it's not just me who wants you to play, Bobby. There's someone on the phone wants to speak to you.

BOBBY

My mom?

MARSHALL

Better. Henry Fucking Kissinger.

Bobby stares at the phone in disbelief.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Henry Kissinger! On your phone. In *Brooklyn!* Pretty amazing, huh?

Marshall gently takes the phone and offers it to Bobby.

BOBBY

You're joking me.

MARSHALL

Wants to speak to you on behalf of the President.

Bobby looks around where the Communist Party used to meet. He thinks he sees the banner hanging as it once did.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

All these years you've been talking about America. Now you are America. Take the phone.

Bobby takes the phone and puts it to his ear.

KISSINGER (O.S.)

Hey, Bobby Fischer...

Bobby takes a breath, almost sobs.

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

This is the worst chess player in the world talking to the best. The President and I want you to do your duty for your country. What do you say?

Bobby is at a loss for a moment. Then focuses.

BOBBY

I guess I'll go do my duty. Sir.

70's ROCK MUSIC KICKS IN.

118 EXT. FISCHER APARTMENT, NIGHT (MUSIC CONT OVER) 118

Marshall emerges, checks the street. A bread van is parked nearby. Two heavies emerge on hurry him into the van..

MARSHALL

No limos. We travel in disguise.

BOBBY

I will accept one seven five US.
That's the deal, right? Half in cash.

The doors SLAM shut and the bread van roars away.

A119 EXT. MANHATTAN TUNNEL (2ND UNIT) A119

The van heads toward JFK.

BBC ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

This is the BBC World Service.
American chess Grandmaster, Bobby
Fischer, is believed to be finally
on his way to Iceland for--

The announcement becomes an Italian broadcaster...

ITALIAN ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

--his match with Boris Spassky.

It becomes a CACOPHONY of radio commentary in various languages that Bobby is on his way.

119 OMIT 119

120 OMIT 120

121 INTERCUT: MAN-ON-STREET INTERVIEWS: (MUSIC CONT OVER) 121

A BUS DRIVER

Fischer is to chess what Ali is to
boxing. I love him.

A LONG-HAIRED HIPPIE

--Least there's one reason to feel
good about America, you hear me?

122 INT. MANHATTAN CHESS CLUB - SAME (MUSIC CONT OVER) 122

Father Lombardy watches a small TV, his emotions roiling.

123 INT. JFK AIRPORT BAGGAGE TUNNEL(MUSIC CONT OVER) 123

Men in dark suits escort Bobby as he steps out of the van.

124 INT. REGINA'S MOSCOW APARTMENT - DAY (MUSIC CONT OVER) 124

On a black-and-white TV, a grainy image of Bobby emerging at Reykjavik airport. Regina is watching. The announcer is Russian but we recognize the name 'Bobby Fischer.'

125 INTERCUT - A MONTAGE OF NEWS COMMENTATORS (MUSIC CONT OVER) 125

John Chancellor, Walter Cronkite, Harry Reasoner -- all in breathless anticipation of the match.

126 A TV SOUNDBITE (MUSIC CONT OVER) 126

As Bobby arrives in Reykjavik.

BOBBY

This thing with me and Spassky.
Instead of bombs we're having it out
with little pieces of ivory.

127 EXT. ICELAND - DAY (MUSIC CONT. OVER) 127

A police car speeds down empty Icelandic roads. Bobby sits in the back with Marshall, staring out at the bleak landscape.

They arrive at the same house we saw in the opening shot.

128 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE (MUSIC CONT. OVER) 128

Bobby enters, takes in the beautiful decor.

MARSHALL

Five bedrooms. Pick any one you
want. Place even has a sauna.

Bobby is incredulous....and moved.

BOBBY

This is the first house I ever lived
in.

129 INTERCUT - TV SOUNDBITES - ARCHIVAL - (MUSIC CONT OVER) 129

CBS News is all over it.

ERIC SEVAREID (on TV)

A chess craze is sweeping the nation.
Sales of chess sets have tripled in
the past weeks and stores literally
can't keep them in stock...

130 VARIOUS IMAGES - ARCHIVAL - (MUSIC CONT OVER) 130

Kids playing chess at home, in schools, in the park.

131 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE, BOBBY'S BEDROOM 131

Bobby is on his knees searching for listening devices. A gentle knock on the door and Lombardy enters.

BOBBY

Hey, they said you weren't coming.

Bobby looks wired, sleepless -- but his vulnerability is so compelling. Lombardy is full of emotion but he covers it.

LOMBARDY

I'm your second. *

They look at each other. Three years have forged a deep bond between them.

BOBBY

Thank you. Father.

LOMBARDY

Anything I can get you, Bobby?

BOBBY

Yeah. Help me check for bugs. These cheaters'll do anything to get me.

132 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE, LIVING ROOM 132

Marshall is signing contracts when Lombardy enters.

MARSHALL

Couldn't stay away, huh? I get it. *
Yankees are playing for the pennant *
and you've got a front row seat. *

Lombardy just looks at him.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

A billion people around the world
watching two guys play chess.
President Nixon has had a TV put in
the Oval Office.

(lights a cigarette)

World War III on a chessboard. We
lost China. We're losing Vietnam.
We have to win this one.

133 EXT. NATIONAL THEATER, REYKJAVIK, ICELAND 133

TV CREWS report in their own languages. The only words we
understand are 'Bobby Fischer' and 'Boris Spassky'...

Caption: **July 11th 1972. Game One.**

ABC COMMENTATOR

This is ABC's Wide World of Sports
bringing you live coverage of the
World Championship of Chess...

*
*

Boris Spassky arrives, looking relaxed. News cameras shoot
him as he steps out to cheers. No sign of Bobby.

*

ABC COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)

Best of 24 games. Each win is worth
a point, each draw is half-a-point --
the chess version of a fifteen round
heavyweight prize fight.

*
*

134 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL 134*

Utter stillness.

Schmid -- the adjudicator -- looks at the big clock above
the stage.

Boris sits erect in his chair, refusing to be psyched out.

*

The crowd is growing restless and SLOW HAND CLAPPING begins...

*

A135 INT. NATIONAL THEATER HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS A135

As Bobby approaches the stage, the SOUND of CLAPPING grows
louder. He stops.

B135 ON THE STAGE B135

FLASHBULBS signal Bobby's entrance! Some applause, some
boos. As Bobby strides across the stage, Spassky holds out
his hand but Bobby walks right past him. He greets Schmid,
then waves to the crowd.

Then Bobby seems to notice Spassky for the first time, smiles.

BOBBY

Boris!

He lurches over, sticks out a hand.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
How ya been? Good? You look good.

Spassky is wrong-footed. Doesn't know if he's being fucked with. A BLIZZARD of FLASHBULBS as they shake.

SCHMID
Now we come together for the drawing of the colors.

Boris takes two pawns, black and white, in his closed fists.

BORIS
Choose...

We now follow the word 'choose' as it travels West.

135 INT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB, NEW YORK CITY 135

Carmine and others watch raptly.

BORIS
Choose...

136 INT. WHITE HOUSE, OVAL OFFICE, WASHINGTON 136

Through a half open door, we see the backs of the President and his advisers watching TV...

BORIS
Choose...

137 INT. KREMLIN, PRESIDENTIAL SANCTUM, MOSCOW 137

President Brezhnev is watching as well...

BORIS
Choose...

138 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL, STAGE 138

Close on Boris's hand opening in SLOW-MOTION.

SCHMID
Mr Fischer chose black. Mr Spassky will begin.

Bobby and Boris's eyes meet. The applause crescendos.

139 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL, STAGE 139

Silence.

Bobby and Spassky sit absolutely still. Fischer's thumb and forefinger push his lips into a contemplative grimace.

Boris moves his Knight to King's Bishop Four.

- 140 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY 140
 The advisers look down on the stage. Bobby makes his move. *
 A whisper passes among them. Lombardy makes a note.
- 141 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL, STAGE 141
 TIME-CUT. A large SCREEN above the stage shows the moves.
 Bobby studies the board.
- A142 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY A142
 Lombardy and Marshall stand together.

MARSHALL

So far, so good...

LOMBARDY

They're both following the Nizmo. A
 draw in the opening game is fine.

- B142 BACK TO THE STAGE B142
 Behind him, Bobby hears an official shift his weight. A *
 piece of paper CRINKLES in his hand.

BOBBY

Could you hush...

The official looks puzzled. Bobby tries to concentrate.

A few COUGHS. Bobby looks at the audience and imitates a
 particular cough viciously. A few sniggers.

Then... a low BUZZING, WHIRRING noise from behind him.

- 142 BOBBY'S PERCEPTION 142
 The sound of A CAMERA is like the rip of a buzz saw. An
 electrical panel BUZZES. The COUGHS of the audience are
 magnified as if in a TB ward.

- 143 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL, STAGE 143
 Back to normal sound. Bobby tries to concentrate. Can't.

BOBBY

What IS that?

Boris slumps back in his seat. Some eyes roll.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
That buzz buzz buzz...

Schmid cocks an ear.

SCHMID
It is just a camera.

BOBBY
Buzz, buzz, buzz. Jesus.

Bobby gets to his feet and begins to pace. The crowd begins to WHISPER. He turns on them...

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Could you all shut up? Could everyone
stop?

Silence. Then a deliberate cough from some teenager.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
JESUS!
(to Schmid)
Coughing, buzzing lights. Cameras
everywhere. I can hear them rolling.
You're gonna have to do something...

A couple of people in the crowd dare to boo.

144 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY 144

Lombardy and Marshall share a look. An inauspicious
beginning. Nei turns to Geller.

GELLER
He is deliberately trying to unsettle
Boris. Help him.

Lombardy sees Nei leaving and decides he too must go down.

A145 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, STAIRCASE A145

Lombardy and Nei race down the steps, two at a time.

145 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL 145

Nei is speaking to Schmid. *

Bobby looks out at the sea of staring faces.

BOBBY
We have to get rid of the cameras.
(points to a curtain)
Behind there. I can hear them...

SCHMID *
They are just TV cameras. *

BOBBY
And there's something wrong with the
lights....
(looks at the board)
It's too dark...I can't see what
anything is.

He looks out into the darkness. *

BOBBY (CONT'D)
And the audience.

SCHMID
What's wrong with the audience? *

BOBBY
They gotta move back.

Then Spassky abruptly makes his move.

SCHMID
Mr. Spassky has made his move. *

BOBBY
(pointing)
And up there... You don't hear what
I do...

Lombardy looks up into the lights. Hears nothing. *

146 BOBBY'S PERCEPTION 146 *

The buzzing of FLORESCENT LIGHTS sounds like a SWARM OF WASPS.

147 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL, STAGE 147

Bobby swings his arms around, trying to shake it off. Finally
he returns to his seat. Spassky studies him dispassionately.

BORIS
You don't look so good Robert James...

Bobby lowers his head, looks back to the board...

148 OMITTED 148

149 OMITTED 149

- 150 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING STAGE 150
- Bobby tries to concentrate.
- A chair SCRAPES.
- He looks up, distracted. Looks back at the board.
- The SOUND of someone TALKING in the audience.
- He looks up again.
- With each distraction, Bobby is more unsettled. A cough SOUNDS like a CANNON, a squeak is a SCREAM.
- Bobby's eyes dart furtively. He reaches for a piece.
- 151 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY 151
- Lombardy returns to the gallery as Bobby moves his Bishop. *
- LOMBARDY
He's inviting Spassky to exchange.
(studies his notes)
I hope to God this is a trap.
- Spassky makes his move. The Russian advisers all scribble.
- LOMBARDY (CONT'D)
Spassky's taking the invitation.
- 152 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL, STAGE 152
- Bobby is in the throes of a full-fledged anxiety attack. His heart is pounding, his breathing ragged.
- Spassky knows it. He is a vulture attending his prey.
- Bobby is a slow-motion train wreck. The distractions begin to proliferate -- each one EXAGGERATED, the sound MAGNIFIED.
- A SERIES of rapid CUTS -- like a deck of cards shuffling.
- Bobby is fighting for his life. He can't take it a moment more. He reaches out to make a move...
- 153 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY 153
- LOMBARDY
Ah shit....
- 154 INT. NATIONAL THEATER 154
- We SEE the move on the large board. A GASP from the crowd.

ABC COMMENTATOR

That move will hit the front page of
every newspaper in the world tomorrow

*
*

155 IN BROOKLYN 155*

Carmine closes his eyes.

156 IN LONG ISLAND 156

Joan shakes her head.

157 IN MOSCOW 157

Regina clutches her chair.

ANCHOR

-- Because Bobby Fischer has made a
huge mistake....

158 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL 158

Suddenly, onstage, Bobby leaps to his feet...

BOBBY

I can still hear the cameras!
(turns to the curtain)
I want these people out of here...

Bobby YANKS the curtain and drags two TV cameramen, blinking,
into the light. The crowd begins to laugh, others jeer.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

They were *whispering!!*

The crowd begins to BOO and then slow hand clap.

SCHMID

...first game goes to...Boris Spassky.

The SCOREBOARD reads: **Spassky 1 Fischer 0.**

159 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, BEHIND THE STAGE 159

Bobby stalks away in a fury. He heads downstairs.

A160 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, STAIRWAY A160

Marshall and Lombardy race downstairs to catch up to him.

160 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PING PONG ROOM 160

Marshall and Lombardy manage to catch up to Bobby in a small
room used as a recreation area: a drinks machine and a ping
pong table. Suddenly the noise of the auditorium disappears.

MARSHALL

It's just one game. One point.
You'll take him tomorrow. Twelve-
and-a-half points is a long match.

Bobby is breathing hard -- but then he stops and looks around.

LOMBARDY

The reporters will go after Spassky.
We can slip out another way...

Bobby is staring around in wonder -- studying the bare walls.

MARSHALL

Bobby? Are you okay?

BOBBY

It's *quiet* in here.

Marshall and Lombardy look at each other. They think Bobby is being crazy. Later we will learn he has just found the answer to his problems.

A161 INT. THE WHITE HOUSE, OVAL OFFICE A161

Watching TV, the President throws his pencil in anger...

161 EXT. NATIONAL THEATER - NIGHT 161

Boris Spassky leaves to a hero's reception. Some wave Soviet flags. The crowds push against the glass as they pull away.

162 OMITTED 162

A163 EXT. REYKJAVIK STREET - NIGHT (SECOND UNIT) A163

Bobby's car heads home.

163 INT. BOBBY'S CAR - SAME (POOR MAN'S PROCESS) 163

Bobby, Lombardy and Marshall ride in silence. When Bobby speaks, it is oddly detached, as if talking to himself.

BOBBY

The board. When I look at it, I see
nothing. It's always been...I don't
know...alive.

(shakes his head)

With that move, I tried to make it
come alive. I thought...maybe I could
make it...alive again. Jolt it.
It's never happened before. I don't
get it.....

He closes his eyes. Lombardy and Marshall look at each other.

A164 EXT. REYKJAVIK STREET - NIGHT (2ND UNIT)

A164

Boris' limo heads home.

164 INT. LIMO, TRAVELING (POOR MAN'S PROCESS)

164

Boris and Nei settle into their seats and the car pulls away.
Boris removes his sunglasses. He looks deeply weary.

NEI

*He broke apart at the first hard
blow.*

BORIS

*He shot himself in the the head.
For no reason.*

NEI

You loaded the gun.

Boris stares thoughtfully out of the window.

BORIS

*My chess teacher taught me....A man
who is prepared to commit suicide
always has the initiative.*

165 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE, HALLWAY

165

Lombardy brings Bobby a dinner tray. As he enters, we HEAR
another RECORDING of The Worldwide Church of God.

CULT PREACHER (O.S.)

*...We know the truth of history,
friend, you and I. We see them
everywhere, working through their
banks and corporations, through
politics and the media...*

LOMBARDY

*You should be preparing for tomorrow
instead of listening to this garbage.*

BOBBY

*You really don't get it, do you?
This isn't about me, or Spassky, or
even Russia and America. This is
about power, absolute global power.*

LOMBARDY

Bobby--

*

BOBBY

*You think they care about chess --
wooden pieces on a board?*

*

(his eyes are wild)

*They run everything. Behind the
scenes, pulling strings in secret!
Now I know who they are.*

*

Marshall has entered during Bobby's rant.

MARSHALL

Who? Who runs things?

LOMBARDY

(wearily)

He's talking about the Jews.

MARSHALL

The Jews? What about the Jews?

BOBBY

They've been there from when I started playing. They've always been there.

Lombardy shakes his head and walks out.

MARSHALL

You got your ass handed to you today. If you don't get your head in the game, you're going to be humiliated in front of a billion people.

Bobby is madly scribbling something, hands it to Marshall.

BOBBY

Give them this.

He ushers Marshall out and slams the door.

166 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE, LIVING ROOM

166*

Lombardy is studying Bobby's disastrous move in Game One as Marshall enters.

LOMBARDY

What he did today makes no sense...

MARSHALL

(hands him the note)

Unless the rest of the games are played without an audience and without cameras he isn't going to show up.

LOMBARDY
 (reading the note)
 He'll only continue if the games are
 played--
 (a disbelieving pause)
 --in the ping pong room...??????

*
*
*

MARSHALL
 He says it's the only place that's
 quiet.

*

He looks up at the ceiling. We HEAR the muffled recording.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
 And he wants a different board.
 Says the marble makes too much noise
 when he sets the pieces down. Shit.
 Shit. Shit. The kid has the world
 in the palm of his hand and he's
 throwing it all away.
 (thinks)
 It's like you said about Morphy.
 Chess is destroying his brain.

*
*

LOMBARDY
 Chess isn't destroying Bobby.

*

MARSHALL
 Then why the crazy demands? It's
 like he wants them to say no. I
 think he's afraid of what happens if
 he loses.

LOMBARDY
 I think he's afraid of what happens
 if he wins.

167 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL

167

The audience sits in stunned silence.

Boris steps onstage but there is no applause. He sits down at the chess table. Bobby's seat is empty.

Caption: **Game Two.**

168 EXT. ICELANDIC HILLS

168

A pastoral idyll. We find Bobby playing around, laughing with an Icelandic pony. He runs with it, strokes its mane.

- 169 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING HALL 169
- Boris sits perfectly still. Schmid hits the clock and the COUNTDOWN to Bobby's forfeit begins. The audience doesn't move a muscle.
- Suddenly the door to the auditorium OPENS and all heads turn. But it is only a match official who freezes in his tracks.
- The clock TICKS.
- 170 EXT. ICELANDIC HILLS 170
- Bobby rides his bike through the hills. It's the most carefree we've ever seen him.
- 171 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PLAYING STAGE 171
- Boris's clock hits zero. A sigh from the audience.
- SCHMID
Mr Fischer failed to show. Mr Spassky
wins by forfeit.
- The SCOREBOARD changes to: **Spassky 2 Fischer 0.**
- Schmid reads from a typed sheet.
- SCHMID (CONT'D)
According to Federation rules, Mr
Fischer has 24 hours to indicate in
writing that he wishes to continue.
- 172 EXT. ICELANDIC HILLS 172
- Bobby is on his knees. A pony comes and licks his hand. Bobby checks his watch...
- SCHMID (V.O.)
Otherwise, Mr Fischer will be
disqualified and Mr Spassky will be
declared World Champion.
- 173 INT. SAGA HOTEL, BORIS SPASSKY'S ROOM - LATER 173
- Spassky is alone -- pacing -- listening to radio commentary.
- RADIO ANCHOR (V.O.)
What a disappointing turn. Experts
are saying the match is Spassky's,
regardless of what happens now --
- Livo Nei enters, carrying a bottle of champagne.

RADIO ANCHOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
--a two point advantage is considered
practically insurmountable.

A message card is tied to the bottle. Nei reads it aloud.

NEI
From Comrade Brezhnev. He sends
congratulations on your victory.

BORIS
Victory?

Nei opens the bottle and pours two glasses.

NEI
If Comrade Brezhnev says it is a
victory--
(toasts)
-- it is a victory.

174 EXT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE (REPEATED SCENE) 174

We repeat the scene that opened the movie --

The granite house at dawn. The police car approaching.

175 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE, BOBBY'S BEDROOM - DAWN 175

The scene continues where it left off:

MARSHALL
Bobby, please...get dressed, comb
your hair.

A long pause. Finally, Bobby looks up at Marshall.

BOBBY
Ping pong.

Marshall's face turns to stone.

MARSHALL
I will report your words to the
President of the United States. You
have betrayed your country. May you
rot in hell you crazy son of a bitch.

Marshall leaves. Bobby looks...almost content.

176 INT. SAGA HOTEL, BORIS'S ROOM - EARLY MORNING 176

Boris is pacing, playing six boards at once. He wears
pajamas. In his anxiety and fast movement he resembles Bobby.

BBC ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 The world chess championship looks
 to be ending in humiliation for the
 American, Bobby Fischer, whose demands
 that the game be held in a store
 room have led to widespread ridicule.

Boris checks his watch.

177 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE, OUTSIDE BOBBY'S BEDROOM 177

Marshall holds a stack of telexes. He knocks.

MARSHALL
 I have messages from a million people
 all over the world who want you to
 open this door.

Silence. Marshall kneels and shoves them under the door.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
 You still have two-and-a-half hours.

No reply. Marshall opens the door. Bobby is gone.

178 INT. SAGA HOTEL, BORIS'S ROOM 178

Boris prowls from chess game to chess game, he stops and
 stares at the empty chair on the other side of the chessboard.

BORIS
*I know exactly what game you are
 playing and I will not let you win.*

Boris begins to speak to the walls and the furniture.

BORIS (CONT'D)
*I cannot win this way.
 (to the room)
 I know you are listening. You are
 always listening.*

He approaches the wardrobe and speaks with formality.

BORIS (CONT'D)
*Mr Bubnov, Mr Geller, General
 Secretary Brezhnev, I know your
 listening devices can hear me.*

He suddenly HURLS a chess table across the room.

BORIS (CONT'D)
*I WILL NOT WIN THIS WAY...DO YOU
 HEAR ME--!!*

After a moment, a KNOCK at the door. Boris half smiles to himself. It is Geller, also in pajamas.

GELLER
Is everything okay?

BORIS
What makes you think it isn't?

GELLER (DEFENSIVE)
I heard you through the wall.

BORIS
I have made a decision... If I don't beat him, he will escape from this island in one piece.

Geller picks up the overturned table.

GELLER
It's not your fault the American is insane...

BORIS
He is NOT insane!
(shakes his head)
If you think that, he has fooled you the way he has fooled everyone else.

Boris begins to pace. His manic energy resembles Bobby's.

BORIS (CONT'D)
He knows if we play I will destroy him. Crush him. So he uses madness as an excuse to avoid the inevitable. I will not let him slip from my grasp. I have him pinned. I am two games ahead.
(yells)
I HAVE HIM!

Boris starts to unbutton his pajama top.

BORIS (CONT'D)
Get a message to Fischer. Now. This minute.

He tears his shirt off and throws it onto the bed.

BORIS (CONT'D)
I will play him in the ping pong room. I will play him in the toilet if he likes. He will not escape!

Boris stares at Geller with steely resolve.

BORIS (CONT'D)

Tell him.

179 EXT. ICELANDIC LANDSCAPE 179

An old bicycle on the ground. An Icelandic police car approaches at speed. Marshall climbs out, cups his hands.

MARSHALL

Bobby!!!!

180 EXT. ICELANDIC MOORLAND 180

Bobby is tossing pebbles into the water. He hears Marshall.

181 EXT. ICELANDIC MOORLAND 181

Marshall is still yelling as Bobby appears over the hill.

MARSHALL

Bobby!! You won't believe it!
Spassky has agreed to play in the
ping pong room!

Bobby picks up the bicycle and Marshall fears the worst.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Where the hell are you going?

Bobby casually begins to cycle away down the empty road.

BOBBY

To the ping pong room.

182 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, CORRIDOR 182

Lombardy, Marshall, and Bobby are walking fast backstage.

MARSHALL

We've got two minutes.

183 OMIT 183

184 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PING PONG ROOM 184

The ping pong table and drinks machine have been removed. In the center is a simple table.

Geller, Nei, and Boris enter. Schmid checks his watch.

SCHMID

If he is even one minute late, I
will fine him.

Then Bobby enters -- wearing a sharp suit. He immediately goes and sits down in his seat at the table. *

Schmid gestures to Marshall, Lombardy, Geller and Nei. *

SCHMID (CONT'D)
Gentlemen...

He is asking them to leave. They do. *

SCHMID (CONT'D)
(to Bobby)
Perhaps you would be gracious enough to thank Mr Spassky for acquiescing to your demands.

BOBBY
I'm so grateful I'm going to let him watch me play.

Spassky understands enough English to understand. He smiles. Schmid points to a small camera in the corner.

SCHMID
Only one camera. It does not move. It makes no sound. It will relay pictures to TV sets in every corner of the earth.
(a frozen smile)
So please, gentlemen, if can we remember...the world is watching.

As Bobby looks around, a slow, satisfied SMILE begins to soften his face as he revels in the stillness. It is *quiet*.

A185 INT. VIEWING GALLERY

A185

Lombardy turns to Marshall.

LOMBARDY
...Did Nixon really call you?

MARSHALL
(an inscrutable smile)
Game's starting...

B185 INT. PING PONG ROOM

B185

Bobby reaches out to make his first move. D4.

Caption: **Game Three**

Boris reacts to the move, looks up at Bobby, unsettled. *

185 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY

185

Nei and Geller are stupefied.

NEI

*What is he doing? He's never played
this opening before.*

Marshall sees their reaction.

*

MARSHALL

What's happening?

*

*

LOMBARDY

He's playing the Benoni. Black.
Two games behind. It's suicide.

*

*

*

*

- 186 IN THE PING PONG ROOM 186*
- Spassky moves: Pawn to Q5. Bobby captures: Pawn takes Pawn.
Spassky counters. Pawn takes Pawn.
- 187 IN THE VIEWING GALLERY 187
- Bobby plays Pawn to Q3. Spassky responds Knight to B3.
- MARSHALL
He's giving him the center of the
board...
- LOMBARDY
(to himself)
Oh, Bobby...
- 188 INT. BROOKLYN DINER 188
- A hand-written sign reads... 'Bobby Fischer sat here, 1961'.
The crowd watches a grainy image of Bobby and Boris on TV.
Bobby makes a move. The crowd cheers. A voice from the back.
- CUSTOMER
What the hell are we cheering? We
don't know if it's good or bad.
- The crowd all turn and hush him.
- 189 TIME CUT -- THE PING PONG ROOM 189
- Bobby and Boris exchange pieces -- a Rook for a Bishop.
Then Bobby does the unthinkable -- he exposes his Queen.
- 190 IN THE VIEWING GALLERY 190
- Marshall is speechless. Lombardy is incredulous and bemused.
- MARSHALL
What the hell--?
- Geller and Nei look on, hungrily.
- GELLER
Take it, Boris. Take it.
- 191 IN THE PING PONG ROOM 191
- Spassky is clearly unnerved. He senses a trap but cannot
see it. Bobby's queen sits exposed -- his for the taking.

- He looks up at Bobby, who smiles inscrutably.
- Finally, Boris cannot resist. He takes the queen.
- 192 IN THE VIEWING GALLERY 192
- NEI
- YES!
- 193 IN THE PING PONG ROOM 193
- Bobby immediately counters -- taking Spassky's Bishop. This precipitates A BLOODBATH: piece after piece is taken in a vicious chess version of a knife fight.
- Finally, the smoke clears and both men study the carnage.
- 194 INT. 'FOUR CONTINENTS' RUSSIAN BOOK STORE -- BROOKLYN 194
- The clerk and her husband are glued to the TV.
- BOOKSTORE CLERK
- A draw.
- 195 IN THE VIEWING GALLERY 195
- GELLER
- A draw is good. We are ahead.
- 196 IN THE PING PONG ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 196
- Spassky studies the board. Looks up at Bobby.
- BORIS
- (in English)
- You accept a draw?
- Bobby slowly shakes his head. No draw.
- Slowly, almost sadistically, he reaches out and makes a move.
- Spassky goes white.
- 197 IN THE VIEWING GALLERY 197
- They watch as Spassky makes a move -- which Bobby immediately counters. Another move. Another counter. Bobby is now bullying Spassky across the board.
- Geller and Nei are becoming increasingly upset.
- 198 IN THE PING PONG ROOM 198
- Spassky studies the looming endgame, his face withering.

- 199 INT. 'FOUR CONTINENTS' RUSSIAN BOOKSTORE - BROOKLYN 199
- BOOKSTORE OWNER
It seems the strange little boy has done it.
- 200 IN THE VIEWING GALLERY 200
- Lombardy looks over at Geller and Nei, smiles sweetly.
- LOMBARDY
He hates draws.
- 201 IN THE PING PONG ROOM 201
- After an agonizing moment, Spassky knocks over his King.
The SCOREBOARD changes to: **Spassky 2 Fischer 1.**
- 202 EXT. TIMES SQUARE (ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE W/VFX) 202
- The electronic newsboard announces "BOBBY FISCHER WINS GAME THREE." Taxis HONK. *
- RADIO COMMENTATOR (O.S.)
-- the first time Fischer has ever won a game from Spassky.
- 203 INT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT 203
- Lombardy is asleep when he HEARS a strange SOUND and sits up in bed. He checks his watch. It's 3:30 am.
- He walks down the hall. A light SPILLS from under Bobby's door. From inside, the SOUND is much clearer now:
- SLAP. SLAP. SLAP.
- Bobby has been up all night playing chess alone.
- 204 INT. SANTA MONICA MOTEL, OFFICE 204
- The Motel clerk and Donna stare at his TV screen.
- Caption: **Game Four**
- A businessman enters. The Motel clerk is totally engrossed.
- BUSINESSMAN
Excuse me.
- MOTEL CLERK
(to Donna)
Spassky took Bobby's Bishop.

DONNA

So what? I took his virginity.

CLERK

Wait, wait... Bobby's making a move.

CUSTOMER

Excuse me...They drew game four last night.

CLERK

We know, asshole. We're watching the re-run.

The SCOREBOARD now reads: **Spassky 2 1/2 Fischer 1 1/2**

205 EXT. COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT 205

The middle of the night again. A SINGLE LIGHT burns in the upper window we know to be Bobby's.

And we HEAR a faint but now familiar sound...

SLAP. SLAP. SLAP.

206 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PING PONG ROOM - NEXT DAY 206

Bobby and Boris take their seats.

Caption: **Game Five**

207 INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT - DAY 207

Cigarette smoke swirls. We reveal Regina watching, smoking. On her black-and-white TV, Boris stands and begin to pace.

208 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PING PONG ROOM - SAME 208

Boris wanders the tiny room, unnerved. He meets Bobby's stare -- as if the two are alone in a prison cell.

Boris sits down without taking his eyes from Bobby. Bobby is implacable now, totally focused.

Boris turns to Schmid, who is dozing in his chair.

BORIS

Excuse me.

(Schmid stirs)

There is something coming from my chair.

SCHMID

Your chair?

BORIS

It is a vibration.

SCHMID

A what?

209 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY 209

Geller and Nei huddle in front of a black and white monitor. On the screen, Boris is on his knees, examining his chair.

GELLER

What the hell is he doing? Praying?

Nei glances over at Lombardy, who looks up with a smile as if to say, 'Welcome to my life.'

210 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, PING PONG ROOM 210

Boris is kneeling, examining the steel tube legs of his chair.

BORIS

A sound of some kind -- maybe high frequency, I don't know...it is affecting my concentration...

Boris glances at Bobby, who is staring at him impassively.

BOBBY

Buzz, buzz.

A211 INT. NATIONAL THEATER A211

SCHMID

Game 5 goes to Mr. Bobby Fischer.

The SCOREBOARD changes to: **Spassky 2 1/2 Fischer 2 1/2**

Cheers now for Bobby.

211 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, BACK STAGE, CORRIDOR 211

Boris marches away in a fury, his entourage in pursuit.

BORIS

...It is coming from the chair!

Geller and Nei don't know how to respond.

BORIS (CONT'D)

It was making a SOUND...!

Boris sees their skepticism.

BORIS (CONT'D)

*Have you never heard of Watergate?
You know what the CIA is capable of?
(MORE)*

BORIS (CONT'D)

(stomps off)

I want this chair X-rayed!

212 INT. REYKJAVIK HOSPITAL, X-RAY ROOM, LIGHT BOX 212

Boris studies the x-rays while Livo Nei studies Boris.

BORIS

*Do not let them swap it. Do not let
this chair out of your sight.*

Boris storms out. Geller whispers to Nei.

GELLER

*The American son of a bitch has driven
us all crazy.*

213 OMIT 213

214 EXT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE - NIGHT 214

Not quite dawn. A single light burns in the upper bedroom
and we know it is Bobby, having been awake all night.

215 INT. GRANITE COUNTRY HOUSE, BOBBY'S BEDROOM 215

The clock reads 4:00am. Bobby sits in a chair, staring into
space. On the table before him is an unfinished chess game.

Lombardy knocks and enters.

LOMBARDY

Bobby?

Bobby doesn't even hear him.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

(louder)

...BOBBY?

Bobby is in some half-awake fugue state. He looks up. For
a moment it's as if he doesn't recognize Lombardy.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

Can I get you anything?

A hint of recognition comes into Bobby's eyes.

BOBBY

No. Thanks.

LOMBARDY

It'll be light soon.

BOBBY

It's never dark here.

LOMBARDY

...Do you want to talk about
tomorrow's game?

No answer. Bobby just stares out the window.

LOMBARDY (CONT'D)

Bobby, I just want to tell you...that
the chess you've been playing...is...
inspiring. My whole life, I--

Lombardy stops himself. Bobby isn't listening; he's far
away. When at last he speaks, his voice is lifeless,
expressionless with exhaustion.

*
*

BOBBY

I used to wish I was born deaf...

Lombardy doesn't know what to say. Bobby's eyes are far
away. He has wanted and dreaded this moment his whole life.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

It's funny... at the beginning of a
game there are so many options...
and at the end....there's only one.

He is talking about more than chess.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

I want to go back to the main hall.

LOMBARDY

You're kidding.

BOBBY

But nobody in the first seven rows.

LOMBARDY

Are you sure?

BOBBY

It's okay. The noises have stopped.
Nothing gets through.

Lombardy doesn't know why but he is near tears. There's
something so forlorn about Bobby at this moment.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

It's like there's no one there
anymore.

(a long moment)

Not even me.

He goes back to staring out the window. Lombardy stands
there, not knowing what to say or do.

Finally he walks over, takes a pen from inside his jacket
and puts it in Bobby's pocket, then backs out of the room.

216 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, MAIN STAGE

216

Applause as Bobby and Boris return to the main stage.

Bobby sits, stares at the board. Continues to stare at it.

Slowly -- almost imperceptibly at first -- the room begins to FADE around him -- just as in his childhood bedroom.

The walls, the camera, eventually even Spassky DISAPPEARS. Until it is only Bobby and the chessboard -- which begins to GLOW as the lines of infinite possibility present themselves.

Bobby makes his move and SLAPS his clock. Boris examines Bobby's move with more than a little confusion. He looks up and sees no expression on Bobby's face.

Bobby is in the zone. He has reached some kind of absence in which there are only moves -- and Spassky knows it.

Caption: **Game Six.**

Boris studies the board again, then quickly looks back up at Bobby with disbelief, then back to the board.

217 INT. NATIONAL THEATER LOBBY 217

An ABC commentator is listening to the feed on his headset. *

ABC COMMENTATOR *

Don't use jargon... In plain English just tell me what he's doing? The people here say he's playing like a wild man. Could you ask our chess guy exactly what Fischer is doing?

The anchor reacts to a lost signal. He looks to his producer.

ABC COMMENTATOR (CONT'D) *

Lost the feed.... I need someone to tell me what the fuck is happening...

218 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY 218

Lombardy is watching as if in the midst of a religious experience.

MARSHALL

...What is he doing?

LOMBARDY

There are no names for it. Yet.

The Soviets are equally speechless.

- 219 INT. NATIONAL THEATER 219
- Spassky finally summons up the will to make another move. Without any hesitation, Bobby POUNCES -- like a panther.
- A collective GASP from the audience.
- Spassky stares at the move. His world is falling apart.
- 220 INT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB 220
- Carmine and the others watch in wonder.
- 221 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY 221
- MARSHALL
What the hell was *that*?
- LOMBARDY
...It is beyond my ability to explain or understand.
- Across the gallery we catch Livo Nei's awestruck expression.
- 222 INT. NATIONAL THEATER 222
- Absolute silence.
- Bobby is going for the kill, crushing the fly. Serene.
- He makes his move.
- Boris blinks once. He looks up at Bobby. Bobby's eyes are still, his mind empty. A flicker of incomprehension crosses Boris's face. Then he half smiles as he realizes he is beaten.
- He KNOCKS over his King with a flick of his finger.
- It falls in SLOW-MOTION -- like a building being demolished.
- 223 OMITTED 223
- 224 INT. NATIONAL THEATER, VIEWING GALLERY 224
- Marshall applauds wildly.
- Nei gets to his feet too and applauds. Geller glares at him.
- Lombardy applauds, filled with emotion.
- 225 INT. JOAN'S LIVING ROOM 225
- She and her kids are jumping up and down, clapping.

- 226 INT. MOSCOW APARTMENT 226
Regina fights back tears.
- 227 INT. BROOKLYN CHESS CLUB 227
The chess players are going wild.
- 228 EXT. TIMES SQUARE (ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE) 228
Cars HONK, pedestrians CHEER.
- 229 INT. NATIONAL THEATER 229
Silence.
Then...Boris gets to his feet and begins to applaud.
Bobby is at first confused, then astonished.
- 230 INT. NATIONAL THEATER 230
For one last, delicious second, Bobby is in the safe, quiet, zone. Then a WAVE of SOUND hits as THE AUDIENCE APPLAUDS.
Bobby CRINGES, then slumps in his chair like a puppet with its strings cut. The crowd applauds even more as they see Boris acknowledging the beauty of the game Bobby just played.
- ABC COMMENTATOR *
Bobby Fischer has just won game six
and his opponent Boris Spassky is
actually on his feet, applauding.
- People applaud wildly; the anchor has to raise his voice...
- ABC COMMENTATOR (CONT'D) *
Grandmasters never, ever applaud an
opponent's victory. But I guess
this is something--
(re at cheering crowd)
--no one has ever seen before.
- 231 OMIT 231
- 232 INT. NATIONAL THEATER 232
The crowd ERUPTS as Bobby emerges and heads down the stairs. A mass of humanity SURGES forward -- crowding him, touching him -- everybody wants a piece of him.
We SENSE Bobby's panic. The SCREAMS, the FLASHBULBS, the faces, the hands reaching for him. It's all too much.

Then a face in the crowd -- it's Regina! -- But it can't be. She's in Moscow. Bobby looks again but she's gone.

BOBBY

Mom!

He frantically looks around. Then another face -- Joan! Of course she, too, couldn't possibly be there.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Joanie!

And then....is that Uncle Paul? No, that's impossible. Marshall and a couple of his guys usher him into a limo.

233 INT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

233

Bobby sits in the back as the limo moves slowly through the crowd. Fans POUND on the glass but he looks straight ahead.

Over this a caption:

Bobby Fischer went on to beat Boris Spassky 12 1/2 - 8 1/2.

234 EXT. LIMO - CONTINUOUS

234

The Limo makes it way through the cheering crowd.

Suddenly, amidst the crowd, Bobby catches a glimpse of THE TELEPHOTO MAN -- who has spied on him since he was a child. He leans back out of sight.

He never tried to defend his title and no other American has ever become world champion.

235 EXT. WASHINGTON PARK, WINTER BLIZZARD

235

The cheering is replaced by the sound of a howling wind.

Bobby walks alone in the snow-blasted park. He stops at one of the chess tables and wipes away snow with his sleeve.

His descent into insanity was swift and permanent.

He stares at the empty squares.

236 INTERVIEW SOUNDBITE

236

BOBBY (V.O.)

-- It's a worldwide Jewish conspiracy--
Mossad, the defense industry and the
media. Secret government projects
using microwaves to monitor our brains.

Alienating the world with his bizarre behavior, his US passport was revoked and he lived in exile, eventually becoming homeless.

*

237 INTERVIEW SOUNDBITE 237

BOBBY (V.O.)
9-11, man. Wonderful news. Time
for the fucking U.S. to get their
heads kicked in. Shows you that
what goes around, comes around...

238 WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK 238

Bobby stands up from the table and slowly walks off into the blizzard...until he disappears...and all that we see is:

A WHITE SCREEN that RESOLVES INTO:

239 SLOW-MOTION MOCK-ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE (HIGH SCHOOL GYM) 239

Bobby at the height of his power, playing 20 boards at a time, his movements graceful, passionate, full of life.

Bobby Fischer died in 2008 and was buried in Reykjavik, Iceland, the site of his remarkable triumph.

240 INTERVIEW SOUNDBITE 240

A smiling Bobby sits on a bench in Washington Square.

BOBBY
Chess and me, we're pretty
intertwined. I don't really have
much else in my life right now.
Maybe someday I'll spread out a
little. For now, though, I'd like
to be world champion--
(a slow smile)
--And then keep it for, say, twenty
years. Yeah.

CLOSE on Bobby as a big grin spreads across his face.

FADE OUT.