

PLAYOFF

Original screenplay by
Gidi Maron & David Akerman
& Eran Riklis

Director: Eran Riklis

Producers:
Michael Sharpstien, Jens Meurer, Marc Missionnier, Olivier Delbosc

Revised Draft 9 - March 1, 2010

Property of Topia Communications Ltd
Tel Aviv, Israel

PRE TITLE SCENE:

Silence. A low angle shot of a well worn wooden floor of a basketball court. The smell of the wood, the texture, the years gone by almost jump out of the screen. And then, in CLOSE UP, a ball, a basket ball, comes into the frame and bounces back up. Echoed in the empty hall, the sound of the bouncing ball hitting the wooden floor is the sound of competition, of rivalry, the sound of the game. The ball bounces in and out, in and out of the frame until it does not come back. Silence again.

1. INTERIOR. AIRPORT, FRANKFURT. DAY 1.

A glimpse of a new and expensive wristwatch. Big hands take out a cigarette, adeptly snap off the filter and then bring it to a thin-lipped mouth. A match is struck and the flame brought to the cigarette. It illuminates a blank face, a prominent nose, and strong, charismatic eyes. This is Max (45), a tall, thin man with a tortured appearance. He draws on his cigarette and raises his eyes. Only now we see that he is standing at the beginning of a long corridor palely illuminated by fluorescent lighting and which leads to the exit at its far end. He stops by the exit. He looks at his watch. He deliberates for a moment and then takes off the watch and puts it into his case and replaces it with an older one. Only then he picks up the case, takes a long drag on his cigarette, and makes his way to the exit with only the sound of his footfalls heard in the background.

2. INTERIOR. PASSPORT CONTROL, FRANKFURT. DAY 2.

A border policeman raises his suspicious eyes from an Israeli passport.

BORDER POLICEMAN
Max Stoller?

Max turns his head from the German Shepherd dog sitting facing him, panting. Max smiles at the policeman.

BORDER POLICEMAN (CONT'D)
Business or pleasure?

MAX
Business.

Max gives the policeman an envelope bearing a logo of the German state. The surprised policeman reads the letter, occasionally raising his head to scrutinize Max as if its contents could not possibly relate to the man standing before him.

Max looks around the airport, there's a lot of tension in the air. The sound of a passport being stamped makes him turn round towards the policeman, who hands him his passport.

BORDER POLICEMAN
Welcome to Germany Herr Stoller.

3. INTERIOR. VIP ROOM, FRANKFURT AIRPORT. DAY. 3.

A press conference. Axel (35), an elegant man in a business suit, stands facing the somewhat small gathering of the media.

AXEL
(in English) Until I went to the States I was just like any other good German, a one-woman man - football. But something unexpected happened to me over there. I met another woman - basketball. I fell in love. Love at first sight. And since then I've been fantasizing about bringing her over here, to Germany. And that fantasy is about to come true with the help of a very talented man, the European Champion, who has kindly consented to leave behind a safe career and standing, and come to Germany - Max Stoller.

Standing beside him, Max smiles his thanks.

REPORTER
(German) Herr Stoller, how does it feel to be back in Germany after so many years?

MAX
English please...

REPORTER
(Surprised) Don't you speak German?
(MAX ignores him)

WOMAN REPORTER
(English) Do you have a problem with coming back here?

MAX
(Pretending concern) Should I have?

WOMAN REPORTER

Your personal past here in Germany can't possibly be described as a good experience.

MAX

(Interrupts her) "The man who views the world at fifty the same as he did at twenty has wasted thirty years". Muhammad Ali. A great man in every sense of the word, right?

REPORTER

Why would the European champion, at the peak of his career, choose to coach here of all places? I'm sure you had some better offers...

MAX

Because of the pastries. I heard you've got the best pastries in Europe here. Oh, come on, don't you read the papers?

Everyone laughs, except the reporter.

REPORTER

With all due respect to our Black Forest gateau, Germany is the worst team in Europe.

MAX

(Smiles) Don't knock good pastry...

REPORTER

Have you got anything to say to the people back in Israel who are so angry with you?

MAX

Has anybody got a question about basketball?

WOMAN REPORTER

Why hasn't your family come with you?

MAX

(Smiles at her) I think they've had enough of me. Basketball! Come on, people, I've got the feeling you don't really know anything about it, so allow me to explain.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

On the one hand there's a ball weighing 650 grams and 45 centimeters in circumference. On the other there's a basket with a circumference of 78 centimeters, and all you've got to do is get the ball into the basket. That's all. For those of you who didn't know, that's basketball.

4. INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. AXEL'S CAR/FRANKFURT STREETS. DAY 4.
(DRIVING)

The streets of Frankfurt display a certain drabness and hardship. There is a high police presence on the roads. Max takes off the old watch he put on at the airport, takes the new one from his bag and puts it on. Axel suddenly starts laughing.

AXEL

"They've had enough of me..."
(Laughing) That was great, very funny.

Max is immersed in a folder containing a file on each player.

MAX

If it wasn't true it would have made me laugh as well.

Axel stops laughing at once. He is somewhat embarrassed.

AXEL

I didn't know. I'm sorry.

Max says nothing. He lights a cigarette. On the radio, a report on the hijacking of a Lufthansa airliner. Axel turns up the volume.

MAX

(Referring to the folder) Is this everything?

Axel is sure that Max is talking about the news of the hijacking.

AXEL

Excuse me?

MAX

(Leafing through the files) I can't see the players' interviews...

AXEL

(Not understanding) What do you need them for?

MAX

Statistics don't win games... People do.

AXEL

So let's take you to the hotel. Get yourself settled, and then to a nice restaurant. A meal to introduce you to the players. They're very excited about meeting you.

MAX

(Interrupts him) I'd rather meet them on the court.

5. INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY

5.

The players, wearing their national team blazers (after all there was supposed to be a celebratory meal) are standing on the court embarrassed and confused. Ulrich (23), a tall, thin player, appears to be on the verge of an anxiety attack.

ULRICH

How can you change things at the last minute? We were told there's going to be a dinner!

Dieter (22), a big baby-faced man, appears eager and excited.

DIETER

What do you expect? It's how geniuses work.

Someone starts bouncing a ball. It is Thomas (22), good looking and solidly built. He plays with the ball like a virtuoso.

THOMAS

We're short of geniuses so we've begun importing them. Maybe we should import some players as well...

DIETER

(Laughs) This is the national team.

THOMAS
Precisely my point!

Thomas throws at the hoop but misses. Suddenly, Max's voice is heard behind them.

MAX (O.S.)
Loosen up your wrist as you
complete the throw.

The players turn round and see Max smiling at them, a cigarette in the corner of his mouth and a basketball in his hands. They are somewhat embarrassed. They are not sure if he heard them talking or not. Max tosses the ball to Thomas.

MAX (CONT'D)
Let's see you guys...

ULRICH
(Stunned) But... but we're not... we've
no...

Ulrich of course means that they are not dressed for a game, but he is so surprised he can hardly speak.

MAX
Improvise!

Max exhales a plume of smoke and watches a national team internal practice game, with the players wearing suits. Axel introduces the starting five as they play.

AXEL (O.S.)
Dieter, a bit slow but very strong.
Ulrich, not brilliant but does the
job. Heinrich and Markus. And
Thomas, our captain and star
player.

At that moment the ball comes to Thomas. He dribbles, stops, takes off his jacket, shirt and shoes. The other players are confused, their glances alternating between the new coach and their captain. Some follow Thomas's example and take off their jackets. Max does not say a word but waits patiently until Thomas concludes his "leadership exercise". He seems calm and composed. Axel is embarrassed by his captain's inappropriate behavior.

AXEL (CONT'D)
(Apologetically) He lost his father
not long ago. It's a bit...
complicated.

The players finish getting themselves organized , Thomas throws the ball in from the side, and the game continues. Max does not say a word. His eyes are on the court, mainly on Thomas who despite his provocation displays some impressive basketball. Franz (60), the team doctor and a tall and striking man, is standing next to Axel as he looks at what is happening on the court, surprised. He seems pleased as he compliments Axel.

FRANZ

(Muttering) You wanted a
revolution, you've got a
revolution.

Max walks over to them. He has seen enough. Axel hastily introduces Franz who shakes hands with Max but says nothing.

CUT TO:

The game ends. Max is standing in front of the players who look disheveled and sweaty after running around in their suits.

MAX

Max Stoller. I was born here in
Frankfurt, and now that I think
about it, just a few streets away
from here. Until recently I coached
Maccabi Tel Aviv, the new European
champions. I'm here to take you to
a place that German basketball has
never been before, the World
Championships!

Max stops as he sees the skepticism on the players' faces.

MAX (CONT'D)

I know we've only got two and a
half months before the qualifiers,
and that our first game is against
one of the best teams in the world.
But if you listen to me and give me
your cooperation and sacrifice
yourselves, we can do it.

Max sees Thomas trying to conceal a skeptical smile.

MAX (CONT'D)

Questions?

THOMAS

(in German) You don't speak German?

MAX
(Smiles and answers in German) No...

Max notices Franz's surprised expression

MAX (CONT'D)
(To Axel) Do we have a reservation
at the restaurant?

6. EXTERIOR. ENTRANCE TO THE VILLA ROTHSCHILD HOTEL. NIGHT 6.

Axel's car has just left. Max is standing on the sidewalk with his case. On one side is the entrance to the hotel and opposite is a local cinema. Max looks at some city workers who are busy cleaning graffiti from the walls of the cinema: "MACHT KAPUTT WAS EUCH KAPUTT MACHT" ("Destroy What Is Destroying You"). Across the street he notices a store that sells watches. A tiny smile lights up his face.

7. INTERIOR. THE ELEVATOR. NIGHT 7.

German elevator Muzak. Exhausted, Max looks into the big mirror on the elevator wall and tries to put on a happy face.

8 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM/A FRANKFURT STREET. 8

Max unpacks, taking out an Israeli newspaper over whose headline is Max's picture with the word "Traitor". He goes on arranging his things. The Israeli passport goes into a drawer, the watch into the sock drawer. He sees the paper again and throws it into the bin. Then he takes it out, looks at it for a moment, tears the front page, throws the paper back in the bin and puts the front page in the drawer with the passport. He sits on the bed, smoking, phone in hand. Across the street, a huge poster of "The American Friend" by Wim Wenders is pasted to the walls of the cinema. Max dials. Ronit's answering machine can be heard.

RONIT (V.O.)
(in Hebrew) You've reached the
Stoller family. Please leave a
message and we'll get back to you.

MAX
(On the phone, in Hebrew)) I'm
sorry I missed you... I saw the
paper. I hope you and the girls are
all right... Ah... I've arrived.
Everything's fine. Tell them.. I
called.

He seems to want to say something more, almost hangs up and then changes his mind.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm glad you didn't change the message on the machine.

Max hangs up. He glances at the bed where the new and apparently expensive watch he bought is laying. He smiles a small, sad smile, picks it up and puts it into the drawer beneath his underwear. He goes to the table on which there is a cake. He looks at the cake as if deciding whether or not to taste it. In the end he takes it out to the corridor and puts the tray on the floor. The corridor is empty, only the sound of TVs can be heard. For a moment he stares into the long corridor, lights another cigarette and closes the door behind him.

9 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI ON THE WAY TO THE ARENA. DAY 9

In the back seat, Max looks out at the familiar scenery. The streets seem not to be unchanged and yet there is a strong presence of growing poverty and rage evidenced by the almost crumbling buildings and the numerous graffiti covering every vacant wall: "MACHT KAPUTT WAS EUCH KAPUTT MACHT", "TON STEINE", "PVC/SCHERBEN".

10 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY. 10

Max faces his sweating players.

MAX

Your basketball is the technique and discipline of team plays. To win it's not enough to be a good player. I've got a simple motto - there's always a framework, but there are no rules in it!

Max looks at the players who seem surprised and confused by this statement.

MAX (CONT'D)

That, by the way, is what brought the European Championship to Maccabi Tel Aviv. And they didn't have half of what you've got.

THOMAS

(Murmurs) That and a few Americans.

MAX

(To Thomas) Did you say something?

Thomas shakes his head. Max appears to think for a moment, as if trying to look for something.

MAX (CONT'D)

(To Thomas) Tell me, Captain, can you show me where the west is?

Thomas doesn't understand what's happening. He is embarrassed, the other players watch him in silence, waiting for his reaction. In the end he hesitantly points in the direction of the west.

MAX (CONT'D)

So that's (Points) the east!
(Smiles with relief) So here you can say what you think.

The players smile, while Thomas flushes, his expression angry.

CUT TO:

They start playing again. Max surprises them by throwing a second ball onto the court that creates total confusion. The players stand frozen.

CUT TO:

The exhausted and perspiring players can't really find themselves on the court. It appears that there is total confusion. Thomas seems angry and frustrated. Axel comes onto the court.

AXEL

They want to do an item on the TV news about you... (He smiles challengingly at Franz) Suddenly there's interest in basketball.

MAX

Tell them to come to tomorrow's training session.

AXEL

(Shakes his head) That's not what interests them. They want the personal aspect of why you came and all that...

MAX

(Interrupting) What's interesting about that? I can dance naked in the street or say that I heard voices from outer space telling me to come to Germany.

AXEL

(Laughs) Anything that can get basketball in between football and politics is good..

11 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT

11

Max is lying on the bed smoking, unable to fall asleep. He dials a number. The TV is showing the successful release of the hijacked airliner. He sits on the edge of the bed, wondering whether or not to call again. He lights another cigarette and redials. The German-accented voice of an elderly woman is heard over the line.

ESTHER (PHONE)

(in Hebrew) Mrs. Stoller speaking.
Hello? Hello? Who's this?

Max hangs up.

12 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. AXEL'S CAR. DAY

12

The cameraman and Axel are sitting in the front. Through the rearview mirror Axel glances at Max who is in the back with the reporter. Max seems composed and very professional.

MAX

(To the reporter) I believe that within a few years, not many, basketball will replace football in every respect. Interest, fans, money... Even here in Germany, and that's why you should be more interested in the game itself, not all the nonsense around it.

The reporter smiles politely and looks out of the window.

REPORTER

Seem familiar? Do you know where we are?

Max shakes his head as he attempts to maintain an expression of indifference. The streets take on an appearance of almost intentional neglect.

Going by the people in the streets it seems that the majority of the residents are Turkish, while the anarchistic graffiti on the walls show that they share the neighborhood with revolutionary students. The closer they get, the police presence increases. Max looks as if this does not touch him at all. He suddenly sees a small corner patisserie "imprisoned" between shut down stores. He tenses. Something in his face moves. He turns his head to see the patisserie better.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
Recognize something?

MAX
(Mumbles) No, nothing. It's all changed.

13 INTERIOR. THE FRONT OF DENIZ'S APARTMENT. DAY 13

Max is standing facing the apartment building that has seen better days. Today it is covered with graffiti.

REPORTER (O.S.)
Childhood memories?

Max turns to the camera and the reporter just as Sema (13) passes by. Her wild black hair stands out in stark contrast with her traditional Turkish dress. She looks at what is going on.

MAX
Nothing in particular. A childhood...
just like every kid.

CAMERAMAN
Can you hold it a moment?

Shift to the cameraman. Sure that she will not understand him, he addresses Sema in "baby" German.

CAMERAMAN (CONT'D)
Girl, move out of the frame please?

SEMA
(Turkish) What?

The cameraman signals her to move aside. He is impatient. Max follows her with a look that has become sad. The reporter's voice brings him back to reality.

REPORTER

It wasn't just like any kid. After all, because of the war you and your mother had to flee the country...

MAX

(Interrupts) Together with tens of millions more all over the world. It was a normal childhood at the time.

REPORTER

Aren't you angry? Embittered?

MAX

The only anger I have is... (Looks at Axel) with this waste of time. (He makes his way back to the car) Time we don't have.

As he walks back to car, trying unsuccessfully to light a cigarette

MAX (CONT'D)

The next time you want to promote basketball, make sure there's a basket and a ball.

He opens the car door and stops. Axel studies him, laughs and gets into the car. Max steals another look. Something in his eyes changes as he looks at the building.

14 INTERIOR. A WATCH SHOP. DAY.

14

Max is staring at a pair of expensive watches on the counter. The saleswoman's voice rouses him.

SALESWOMAN (O.S.)

Has the gentleman made up his mind?

Max takes his eyes off the watches to the very attractive saleswoman.

MAX

I'll take both.

He writes his name and phone number on a piece of paper.

MAX (CONT'D)

If you come across an old Rado, you can get me at this number.

15 INTERIOR. THE EDEN NIGHTCLUB. NIGHT.

15

An "in" Frankfurt nightclub. Throbbing music. Max is watching the action in the club that is filled with beautiful people enjoying a night on the town. Axel and Franz are with him.

WAITRESS
Beer all round?

AXEL
Yes...

MAX
(Interrupts) Bourbon for me...

The waitress moves away..

AXEL
You're not a beer drinker? Are you
sure you were born in Germany?

MAX
I hope I'm not damaging your image.

FRANZ
On the contrary! Somebody once
said: "I'd rather have a poor
whisky drinker than a wealthy beer
drinker".

They laugh.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
(To Max) So how was your visit?

AXEL
I was more excited than him..

Axel recognizes somebody in the crowd

AXEL (CONT'D)
(Getting up) Excuse me a minute... An
old friend.

Max and Franz remain alone.

MAX
Do you come here often?

FRANZ
Axel does... I'm more the traditional
type...

MAX

So you're suffering right now...
because of me.

Franz notices a beautiful girl smiling at Max. He quickly changes the subject.

FRANZ

The last time a beauty like her -
or any woman - smiled at me like
that, science still believed that
the earth was flat.

Max laughs, but suddenly a hand is laid on his shoulder. It belongs to Shimi (42), the club's owner, who looks like a playboy with his open shirt and heavy chain around his neck from which hangs a gold Star of David.

SHIMI

The great Max! Champion of Europe.

He embraces him.

SHIMI (CONT'D)

The man who put Israel on the map.
(To Franz) Nobody messes with us
now. (To Max) Shimi. I own this
joint.

MAX

Pleased to meet you. I think.
(Introduces Franz) Herr Franz, the
team doctor.

SHIMI

(Shakes Franz's hand and doesn't
stop smiling for a moment) Herr
Franz, pleased to meet you. What
did you do in '42?

Franz freezes in embarrassment. Max, too, is embarrassed.
Shimi laughs aloud.

SHIMI (CONT'D)

A bit of humor never killed
anybody. Gas did.

He laughs, pleased with himself, and signals a waitress.

SHIMI (CONT'D)

What are you drinking?

FRANZ

(Gets up) Thanks, but I've had enough. My bladder's bursting.

Shimi indicates the rest room. Franz leaves. Max turns to Shimi.

MAX

(Angrily, in Hebrew) Didn't anybody teach you manners?

SHIMI

(in Hebrew) I like seeing them squirm...

The waitress brings a bottle of champagne.

SHIMI (CONT'D)

Look on it as your home. Anytime you like.

MAX

Thanks, but I'm here to work.

SHIMI

Arbeit macht frei. We're allowed to say it. That's what's so nice about this place. Lechaim.

Max stands up to leave. Shimi stops him. He is serious.

SHIMI (CONT'D)

You've got nothing to back to, Max. Not after what you've done. Trust me, you need a home.

MAX

I'm here to coach a basketball team, no more, no less. You're the one living here.

SHIMI

I'm here to annoy them. To remind them that they didn't succeed and that we won't forget. Do you see the difference, my dear Max? You're here because they're paying you. I'm here to make them pay for what they did.

Before Max can reply, Shimi hugs and kisses him on the cheek in front of the flash of the club photographer. A memento.

16 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI. EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING. 16

On the radio someone is talking about the need for emergency laws. Max is in the backseat. The taxi passes through Max's childhood neighborhood. Max averts his eyes.

17 INTERIOR. THE HOTEL LOBBY. DAY (EARLY MORNING). 17

Early morning. Max comes into the lobby, which is empty except for some cleaners speaking Turkish. The reception clerk hands him a message slip. He seems embarrassed.

CLERK

Herr Stoller, Your wife called...
several times

18 INTERIOR. HOTEL ELEVATOR. DAY (EARLY MORNING). 18

Max opens the message slip, written in German: "I don't want to know where you were last night, I don't care anymore, but the girls wanted to talk to you. The children at school are taunting them - 'The Traitor's Daughters'..." The elevator comes to a stop.

19 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. DAY. 19

Max is on the phone.

RONIT (PHONE)

(in Hebrew) The papers, radio,
television...

MAX

(in Hebrew) What did my mother say?

RONIT (PHONE)

The girls don't want to go to
school because they're being
bullied and you're asking me what
your mother said?

Max remains silent.

RONIT (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Your insensitivity... especially
towards the people that love you...

MAX

(Angrily) I don't do it on purpose!

RONIT (PHONE)
(Interrupting) We've been there,
Max! You know what? You're right.
Why are we fighting? It's over
anyway.

MAX
I went to the apartment...

Now it is Ronit's turn to fall silent. And then her voice softens.

RONIT (PHONE)
How was it?

MAX
(Silent for a moment) It's become
an immigrant neighborhood.

RONIT (PHONE)
That's all you've got to say after
thirty years?

MAX
Thirty-six...

20 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. DAY.

20

A voice shouting loudly in German. Max awakens with a startle as if from a bad dream. He doesn't know where he is and what is happening. It takes him a moment to realize that the voice is coming from the radio. He switches it off and sits up. Automatically his hand reaches for his cigarettes. He takes one out as he watches the mute TV. Max snaps off the filter and puts the cigarette between his lips.

21 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

21

Max lights a cigarette. He is watching a practice session. It seems that the players, especially Thomas, do not know what they are doing. Max does not allow them to play zone defense, and they can't manage to master man-to-man marking, so that the session is constantly interrupted. The players lose the ball and appear to be helpless. It's a mess. Max notices Axel standing to one side and looking worried. He calls the players to gather around him. They arrive, looking exhausted and despairing.

MAX

It's not working because you insist
on making a play instead of going
on your own. I'm talking about
individual balls here! And you're...

Max notices Thomas who is muttering something, unhappy.

MAX (CONT'D)

(Starting to lose patience) If
you've got something to say, then
say it!

THOMAS

I don't think the problem is with
the way we play.

Max studies him. Thomas stares back without lowering his
eyes.

MAX

So in your opinion, what is the
problem?

THOMAS

You're trying to force a system
onto us that's maybe suitable
someplace else.

Murmurs of agreement are heard. Max scrutinizes them and
smiles.

MAX

Basketball is a universal language,
It's a creative, instinctual game.
You've got that, but you're just
scared. When you stop being scared
you'll understand it. Got it?

CUT TO:

The opening five are standing to one side, looking towards
the other end of the court (we cannot see at what). Dieter
glances at the wall clock.

DIETER

(in German) Practice should have
been over.

Only Thomas is standing quietly, the look on his face
demonstrating his resolve to prove to Max that he is wrong.
Max is standing in the middle of court, a moment before tip-
off.

MAX

The winning team is off the hook
for physical training.

Max throws the ball up. Dieter remains rooted to the spot.

DIETER

(Alarmed) What physical training?

MAX

What are you worried about? You
should be able to beat the bench
players without breaking sweat.
Unless of course you want them to
play against the Italians...

The opening five can't get past the bench players. Thomas
begins showing signs of frustration. Axel is troubled by what
he sees.

CUT TO:

The training session is over. Max walks off the court. Axel
is with him.

AXEL

So how are we doing? I've got the
feeling that we're... (Embarrassed)
going backwards a bit. Am I wrong?

MAX

You want to go high, right?

AXEL

As high as possible.

MAX

So for that you need strong
foundations. I'll talk to them...

The players pass them, exhausted. Axel looks after them.

AXEL

(Mutters) They won't hold out...

Max finishes hanging up an NBA poster. He steps back to
examine it. He sees Thomas coming in, having just finished
getting dressed. The rest of the players are gone already.

MAX

"Red" Auerbach. The Boston Celtics.
Eight consecutive NBA titles. Who'd
have believed it, eh? A Jew from
Brooklyn.

THOMAS

So?

Max turns to him as if trying to discover whether Thomas is
pretending.

MAX

Jews and sport? It took us forty
years to get from Egypt to Israel.
It's a three-hour walk.

Max laughs but Thomas remains serious. Max lights a
cigarette.

THOMAS

What have these "personal"
interviews you want to hold with us
got to do with basketball?

MAX

Everything that happens in your
personal life comes out on the
court, to the moment you're facing
the hoop and have to make a
decision that can change the game.

Thomas sits down.

THOMAS

Nothing's happening to me.
("Worriedly") I hope that won't
affect my decisions.

MAX

(Smiling) Aren't you happy with me
being here or is it that you're not
happy in general?

THOMAS

If it's any help I can tell you
that I'm not happy with the way
this talk is going.

MAX

Thomas, I know that losing a father
isn't easy. But I can promise you
that time heals...

THOMAS

With all due respect, Herr Stoller..

MAX

Max.

THOMAS

With all due respect, Herr Stoller,
we're not friends. And my life is
none of your business. If you want
to talk about something personal,
let's talk about you trying to
erase who we are and what we stand
for.

MAX

And why would I want to do
something like that?

THOMAS

I don't know.

He gets up.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

But I'm sure you've no shortage of
reasons...

Thomas stalks out.

23 INTERIOR. FRANZ'S OFFICE. DAY.

23

Soft classical music is playing on the radio. Max is
buttoning his shirt after a routine checkup.

FRANZ

This generation's mixed up. They're
Left, they're Right, they hate,
they love. But mainly they're
detached, searching for a way and
not finding it, they're ashamed of
the past and scared of the future.
They feel threatened by everything.

Franz sits down to write something in Max's medical file.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

I'll check you again in two months.
(Closes the file) Growing up in
these times is evidently not easy.

MAX

Growing up isn't easy at any time.
(Gets up) How was his relationship
with his father?

FRANZ

I only know - and it's not talked
about - that he drank himself to
death. I was at the funeral...
(Looking for words) There were only
Thomas and me, and a drunken priest
there, and the man was some kind of
war here. On the Eastern Front, I
think. What angers Thomas is that
nobody remembers... and it's not very
nice to admit it, but neither do I...

MAX

I apologize for what happened at
the nightclub. It was totally
disrespectful...

FRANZ

(Dismissively) Do you think that we
Germans don't ask the same
questions? My own children have
asked me. And if we're already
talking about it, then nothing
should worry you...

The music on the radio is suddenly cut off and replaced by a
newsflash. Max notices the change in Franz's expression.

MAX

What's happened?

FRANZ

The head of the Employers
Association, Hans-Martin Schleyer,
has been murdered. The Baader-
Meinhof...

MAX

It's best not to listen to the
news. That's what I always tell my
wife.

Max pats him on the shoulder as he gets up to leave, and
suddenly notices Franz's watch.

MAX (CONT'D)

Excitedly, stunned) Is that a 1910
Rado?

There is an expression of surprise and admiration on Franz's face.

FRANZ

I've never met anyone who could identify it.

MAX

And I've never met anyone wearing one.

24

INTERIOR. CASINO. NIGHT.

24

A casino from another period that is filled with people of Franz's kind. Franz appears to be a happy member of the family. Max looks at what is going on around him. He takes out a cigarette and snaps off the filter.

FRANZ

You've got to tell me how a man who doesn't wear a watch can identify a Rado.

MAX

My father collected old watches. It was an addiction. I think the 1910 Rado was his favorite.

FRANZ

(Enthusiastically) Do you have the collection?

MAX

(Shakes his head) Unlike you, I collect only new ones. Have you seen the new digital Casio? It's just come out.

FRANZ

New? New is a fad. Nothing good can of something that hasn't got a tradition and a past.

MAX

You can tell the time on it anywhere. Just press the button, and voila!

FRANZ

Buttons break. This one will keep going forever.

Max thinks for a moment.

MAX

Where can I find one like that?

FRANZ

(Teasingly) I thought that only new
was of interest.

Franz's voice is drowned in a burst of laughter from the next table. The cabaret starts on a small stage, just like the old days. Franz is happy. The air is dense with cigar and cigarette smoke, the MC announces the dancers' names and they come onstage, one after the other, to the shouts of the audience. Loud singing from every direction.

FRANZ (CONT'D)

(Raising his voice) I'll look for
your, even though there's no
chance of finding one. (They clink
glasses) Real schnapps!

Max sips his drink. He looks pale. Beer, alcohol-flushed faces. The German voices grow louder. Max feels he's got to get out and breathe. He mumbles an apology and gets up to leave.

25 EXTERIOR. CASINO. NIGHT. 25

Max is "ejected" from the noisy casino into the cold Frankfurt air. As he starts walking he unbuttons his shirt.

26 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. 26

Max comes into the room. He switches on the TV and goes into the shower. We focus on the TV that is showing the item on Max. Max quickly comes out of the shower and looks at himself on TV. He sees himself against the background of the building that was his childhood home. But his eyes wander from "himself" to the open window on the third floor.

27 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI. NIGHT. 27

Max lights a cigarette as he looks at the old apartment building.

DRIVER

You'll have a job finding a taxi
here later, you might get stuck.

Max pays him and gets out. The taxi drives off.

28

INTERIOR. THE APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY. NIGHT.

28

Max hesitates before mounting the first step. He takes it and starts climbing slowly, his hand caressing the rail. He climbs the stairs as if hypnotized. On his way up a door opens, someone looks at him suspiciously and quickly closes the door. Max stops at a folding door. He knocks. No answer. He loosens his tie so he can breathe easier. He knocks again. A door at the end of the passage opens a crack. Again someone eyes him suspiciously. Max is about to knock again when the door is suddenly opened to reveal Sema. Something in her self-assurance as she eyes Max is in stark contrast to what he expected from the daughter of immigrants. Sema does not convey submissiveness, but the opposite. Her fluent German confuses him even more.

SEMA

(German) What do you want? (She recognizes him) You were here with the television!

It takes Max a moment to regain his composure.

MAX

(English) Are your parents in?

SEMA

(German) There's nobody here but me.

Sema wants to close the door but Max sticks his foot inside.

MAX

Just a moment.

Sema reopens the door and says, in broken English:

SEMA

My mother not here. At work.

A voice is suddenly heard from inside the apartment. It is Deniz.

DENIZ (O.S.)

(Turkish) Sema! Who is it?

Sema shakes her head as if to say, "You can't do anything with that woman". She opens the door and invites Max in.

29

INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

29

Max is standing in the long passage leading into the apartment.

Deniz, wearing a traditional-religious Turkish garment concealing her femininity, appears before him with only her black hair, like that of her daughter, uncovered. Only when she sees that the visitor is a man does she hurry back into the living room. Sema, standing with Max, smiles at him.

SEMA

Head covering.

Deniz returns with her head covered. She is alarmed and excited.

MAX

May I?

Max points towards the living room. He wants to shut the door behind him but Deniz shouts:

DENIZ

(in German) Leave it open! I'll get the papers... We've got all the work visas... It's all signed.

SEMA

(Interrupts) He doesn't speak German.

DENIZ

(Turkish) Who is he? Why did you let him in?

SEMA

(German) You let him in. I told him you weren't home. He's the one they were filming outside.

DENIZ

(Turkish) Ask him what he wants.

SEMA

(Turkish) In which language?

Max, who has been standing silently but upset by the feelings flooding him, suddenly opens his mouth and surprises them in fluent German.

MAX

(German) I just wanted to see the apartment.

DENIZ

(Stressed, starts moving) Better I give you the landlord's address. You should talk to him.

MAX

Lady, you can relax. I just want to see the apartment. Nothing else. I used to live here... many years ago.

SEMA

You're lucky you got out of here.

DENIZ

Sema!

SEMA

(To Max, in English) What's moving out of the "frame"?

Max does not understand her question.

SEMA (CONT'D)

The cameraman filming you wanted me to move out of the frame. What does it mean?

MAX

He didn't want you in the picture.
(To Deniz in German) May I come in?

SEMA

(To Deniz) See? It's all because of these shitty clothes!

DENIZ

Sema!

Sema goes out. Deniz turns to Max.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

I... I'm sorry...

Deniz moves aside. Max hesitantly walks inside, step by step until he reaches the living room. Max stands stunned in the middle of the room that seems like a poor immigrants' apartment. In the background Deniz tries to tidy up. She is embarrassed by the entire situation. It seems that Max does not even notice her.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

How long is it since you were last here?

Max moves to the window from which the whole street and the small patisserie can be seen. He stares at it as if in a trance.

MAX

(Mutters) Thirty-six years. There used be another two rooms...

DENIZ

The apartment's been divided. Thirty-six years? I've only been here for two and I miss home so badly.

Max notices some flyers on the table. On them is a photo of a man and the legend "Do You Know This Man?" Deniz quickly tidies them.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

My husband. He's why we're here. He's disappeared.

Max turns and looks at her for the first time since he came in. Deniz is embarrassed by his look.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

We came to look for him..

Suddenly, something catches Max's eye. It is an old armchair on which there is a pile of clean laundry. He moves over to it. Deniz sees this. She hurriedly removes the pile of laundry from the chair.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

It's clean..

But Max does not hear her. His hand reaches out for the chair. It strokes the carved trademark, "Stoller Furniture". Deniz's voice seems to come from afar.

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

I haven't had a chance to fold... Are you all right? Sir?

CUT TO:

Max is making his way to the door. He has to get out of there. He leaves Deniz standing holding the cup of tea she has made for him.

Max takes out a cigarette, snaps off the filter and swiftly puts the cigarette into his mouth. He needs a smoke badly. His search for a light becomes feverish.

He is on the verge of losing control when Sema's somewhat amused voice is heard behind him.

SEMA (O.S.)

Try rubbing two sticks together...

Max turns round. He sees Sema sitting in a dark corner, smoking. He moves towards her. She offers him her cigarette as she studies him.

SEMA (CONT'D)

You look like you've seen a ghost.

He lights his cigarette from hers and then stubs hers out. Sema is astonished.

SEMA (CONT'D)

What are you doing? That was my last one.

MAX

A girl your age shouldn't smoke.

Max starts walking away to find a taxi. Sema runs after him angrily.

SEMA

You're not my father!

MAX

Lucky for you!

Sema catches him up and blocks his way.

SEMA

You're the lucky one. You'd probably run away like him. Anyway, you owe me a cigarette.

Max does not move. Sema smiles as if she knows what is happening here.

SEMA (CONT'D)

She told you he disappeared and you fell for it. It's a lie.

MAX

(Mutters) And what's the truth?

SEMA

He doesn't love us. (Smiles) Me especially.

Sema's words hit Max with such force that he almost runs her down as he hurries to leave.

31 EXTERIOR. A FRANKFURT STREET. NIGHT. 31

Max is walking rapidly down the dark, quiet street. He is slightly drunk and what he has just experienced makes walking difficult. It seems as if he is alone. This sense of loneliness and the echo of his footfalls against the walls make him shrink into his coat with a feeling of disquiet.

32 EXTERIOR. A FRANKFURT STREET. NIGHT. 32

Max notices a police car following him slowly. He becomes agitated but tries to keep calm, although the stress is evident in his face. As he comes to an alleyway he swiftly ducks into it. Once inside he increases his pace as he looks back.

33 EXTERIOR. A FRANKFURT STREET. NIGHT. 33

Max exits the alleyway from the other end. He is sweating. He looks back and checks that there is no one around. He starts walking when a police car suddenly appears, its siren blaring, and blocks his way. Two policemen quickly get out of the car, grab Max and pin him against the wall.

 POLICEMAN #2
(German) Don't move!

 MAX
(German) I'm the German national coach.

 POLICEMAN #1
(German) And I'm Franz Beckenbauer!

 MAX
Basketball... I'm from Israel.

 POLICEMAN #2
(Laughs) You're drunker than I thought.

Policeman #1 also laughs as he leads Max to the police car. Max tries to resist.

 MAX
I haven't done anything!

The policemen struggle with him.

POLICEMAN #1
So why did you run?

Max still attempts to resist but they bundle him into the car.

34 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

34

Axel, who by his attire has come from a social event, is pacing the room angrily as he talks on the phone.

AXEL (PHONE)
(in German) An apology is no help!
I'm going to take this up with the
Minister!

Axel hangs up and turns to Max who is sitting in an armchair listlessly watching TV as if all this hasn't happened.

AXEL (CONT'D)
I've nothing to say other than to
apologize.

MAX
It's okay.

AXEL
(Upset) Arresting people in the
street is unacceptable! This isn't
Russia!

Max pours Axel a drink. Axel nods his thanks and downs it. Only now can he think.

AXEL (CONT'D)
What were you doing there? I
thought it was of no interest to
you.

Max downs his drink and pours another.

MAX
I lost my way...

AXEL
Come on Max, you couldn't have got
there by mistake...

MAX
I don't recall a clause in my
contract that restricts my
movements in Frankfurt!

Max smiles as he gets up to show Axel to the door as if nothing has happened.

MAX (CONT'D)
I'm sorry you had to leave a family dinner because of me. If you leave now you'll make it back for dessert. What do they say? (Opens the door) Family before everything..

AXEL
Max, my dreams, my career... it's all in your hands. If there's anything wrong I want to know.

MAX
(Smiles) I've never been better.

Axel looks at Max as if he's not buying this last remark.

MAX (CONT'D)
You're in good hands.

35 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. 35

Max takes a shower. He lets the water flow over him as if trying to wash away the night's experience.

36 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. 36

Max is sitting on the edge of the bed. He dials his mother's number. Esther's German-accented voice is heard from the other end of the line. She sounds as if she has been awakened.

ESTHER (PHONE)
(Hebrew) Hello? Hello?

MAX
(Hebrew) Mother?

ESTHER (PHONE)
(German) What's the matter? Is everything all right?

MAX
(German) Yes, yes, everything's fine.(Pause) I went to the apartment.

Esther is silent. Max can hear her breathing heavily.

MAX

Mother... Say something...

ESTHER (PHONE)

If your father had known you'd gone back... There's only death there!

MAX

(Interrupts her) He was never satisfied with me in any case, so what does it matter?

ESTHER (PHONE)

(Angrily) Leave that cursed place and come home! You've got a wife and children here. Save what you've got before it's lost too!

37

INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

37

Max is standing on the sidelines following the practice. Franz and Axel, who looks worried, are sitting on the bench.

FRANZ

(Cynically) What did you think would happen to a man you bring back to the home he was forced to leave thirty years ago? I'll tell you what... you didn't think!

A bad pass by Ulrich shakes Max out of his quiet. He whistles angrily.

MAX

You had a free shot, so go for it!

The abashed Ulrich wants to answer but Max forestalls him. He is impatient.

MAX (CONT'D)

Just don't tell me it's what you're used to! (To all of them) What's the point of remembering things that get you nowhere? Do you even want to win?

The players mutter. Max looks at them angrily. Franz looks at Axel.

MAX (CONT'D)
(Scathingly) Scared of waking the
neighbors? (Lights a fresh
cigarette from the old one) I
haven't come here to lose! (Shouts)
Do you want to win or not?

ULRICH
(Shouts) Yes!

Ulrich is embarrassed at being the only one to raise his
voice.

38 EXTERIOR. A BUS STOP. DAY.

38

It is raining heavily. Thomas after training. He is waiting
at a bus stop. A taxi pulls up. Max is in the back seat. He
opens the door and signals to Thomas to get in. Thomas
hesitates.

MAX
You'll catch a cold.

39 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI/FRANKFURT STREETS. DAY (DRIVING) 39

The radio is reporting on Franz Beckenbauer who his replacing
Pele at the New York Cosmos soccer team. Thomas is sitting
next to Max who is preparing one of his cigarettes. Max
lights his cigarette. Thomas opens the window. The smoke
bothers him.

MAX
Over my career I've seen hundreds
of players. Only a handful had your
talent.

Thomas is surprised. The long haired driver is totally
immersed in the report.

DRIVER
(German, sarcastically) We made him
a Kaiser and he goes to America.

THOMAS
(In English, so Max will
understand) People don't care about
where they come from anymore, only
about where they're going.

MAX
(To the driver) Can you turn that
down a bit, please?
(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

(To Thomas) If you'll stop fighting me and the basketball I've brought with me and let yourself flow, I can promise you you'll be in a completely new place. First, it will dull the pain, and...

THOMAS

...And then I'll forget everything. Like everyone else. And what if I don't want to be in a new place? What if I'm happy just where I am?

MAX

Why are you so intent on screwing up your career?

THOMAS

Why are you so intent on changing us? Why are you here at all? (To the driver) Stop here.

The driver pulls up and before Thomas gets out, Max stops him.

MAX

I'm sure your father would have wanted to see you succeed...

THOMAS

My father didn't want to see anything!

MAX

I don't believe you...

THOMAS

If they'd given him one thousandth of one percent of what Germany spent on apologizing to the whole world, it wouldn't have happened.

MAX

Crimes must be paid for, Thomas.

THOMAS

My father wasn't a criminal! He was a soldier! A simple soldier who fought and bled for this country that forgot him but remembered you!

40 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI. NIGHT. 40

It is still raining heavily. In the back seat, Max is staring out as he smokes. Only now we can see that he is looking at his childhood home. He sees Sema hurrying home.

41 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. 41

Max is sitting on the bed, smoking a cigarette and talking to Ronit on the phone. He is trying to persuade her to come just for a weekend.

MAX
(Hebrew) A weekend, no more. Come
and see... Maybe it's what we need...

42 INTERIOR. A BAR. NIGHT. 42

A noisy, smoke-filled working class bar. Franz comes in and looks around with an expression of disgust on his face. He sees Max sitting at a corner table and goes over to him. The waitress brings them two beers and clears away Max's empty glass. Franz studies Max.

FRANZ
What did you want to talk about?

MAX
(Laughing) Can't I even invite you
for a drink?

Franz remains silent and drinks.

MAX (CONT'D)
I saw a picture of your friend on
TV. In SS uniform.

FRANZ
(Alarmed) My friend?

MAX
Only joking.

Franz does not laugh. They drink in silence, somewhat embarrassed. Max lights a fresh cigarette after stubbing out the previous one.

FRANZ
For someone whose life is sport,
you smoke too much.

(CONT'D)

MAX

A thirteen year-old girl told me
something I can't get out of my
mind. Thirteen!

Franz is momentarily surprised and then the penny drops. At
least he thinks it does.

FRANZ

You've got a problem with your
older daughter, that's it. What did
she say?

Max shakes his head as he smiles sadly.

MAX

My daughters don't speak to me.
It's eating me up. But I don't
blame them. It's just... How can I
put it, the gaps between us, the
worlds we come from... They can't be
bridged.

FRANZ

(Sadly) I know what you're saying.

43 INTERIOR. THE AIRPORT TERMINAL. NIGHT.

43

Max is waiting for Ronit who walks towards him carrying a
small case. Before she can say anything he gathers her to him
and hugs her with such force that surprises her. They stand
embracing for a moment with the sound of the PA system in the
background.

44 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

44

Max and Ronit are in bed. Intimacy and passion.

CUT TO:

Ronit is at the window. Max is smoking.

RONIT

(Hebrew) What's happened to you?

MAX

(Hebrew) I missed you...

RONIT

Max, we've been apart for longer periods than this. You were never so...

She searches for the word. Max helps her.

MAX

Loving?

RONIT

(Turns to him) Desperate...

Max tries to smile as if he has no idea what she is talking about. He gets up.

MAX

I found an amazing patisserie... (He sees Ronit's sad smile) What?

RONIT

Unbelievable. I could have stayed home, it's exactly the same. You're incapable of talking, even to me...

MAX

Why? Everything's fine...

45 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

45

Warm-up before the practice session. Max comes in.

MAX

Everybody outside!

ULRICH

(Murmurs despairingly) What now?

46 INTERIOR. A CINEMA. DAY.

46

Doctor J, a wizard with the ball, does something previously unseen in basketball: he hangs in the air and dunks the ball with great force. The players are watching a private screening of an NBA game as they munch popcorn. Max stops the film at Doctor J's move, which leaves all of them stunned.

MAX

To fly like that you've got to truly believe that everything you think you know doesn't exist. There's no past? There's no gravity!

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)
There are no physical limits!
(Points to his head) It's all here...
in the most important muscle of
all.

Axel turns to Franz who is sitting beside him.

AXEL
I told you, he's good...
Unpredictable, but really good...

47 EXTERIOR. OUTSIDE THE CINEMA. DAY.

47

The players are grouped outside exchanging opinions about the game they have just seen, as Max comes out with Axel. He is apparently surprised to see the players standing there.

MAX
What are you doing here?

ULRICH
The bus isn't here.

MAX
I know. I sent it away.

DIETER
But... how are we getting back?

MAX
(Pretending surprise) Did you think
the film was for free?

Ulrich looks down at his clothes and shoes, and from them to the cold, busy street. He is in total shock.

ULRICH
We can't run in the street like
this.

MAX
(Smiling) Of course you can.

DIETER
I've just eaten two hot dogs.

MAX
Let's go!

Still stunned, the players start half walking, half running. Thomas is the last one there. He throws Max an angry glance and then starts running, fast.

Max turns and makes his way to a parked taxi. He turns towards Axel who has remained rooted to the spot.

MAX (CONT'D)
What about you?

AXEL
What about me?

MAX
It won't do the team any harm if
you run with them, and it certainly
won't do you any harm either..

Axel laughs, convinced he is joking. He stops laughing when he sees Max start running after the team which can still be seen running down the avenue. Franz comes up behind Axel.

FRANZ
What are you waiting for? You
wanted unpredictable? You've got
it!

The despairing Axel starts running after Max, leaving Franz laughing behind him.

48 INTERIOR. A HIGH-CLASS CLOTHING SHOP. DAY.

48

Max and Ronit are shopping for clothes and shoes for their daughters. Max insists on the best and most expensive items. Standing in line to pay he suddenly thinks he can see Sema. He turns. Several Turkish girls are eying an expensive item with longing. The saleswoman tries to get rid of them. Ronit notices the change in him. She realizes that he is looking at the girls. Strange. Max sees this.

MAX
(Mumbling) I thought I saw somebody
I know.

RONIT
(Stunned) What?

MAX
(Regaining his composure) They
remind me of the girls.

RONIT
(Worriedly looks at the girls then
at Max) Max, what are you talking
about? There's no resemblance at
all.

49 INTERIOR. THE HOTEL RESTAURANT. DAY.

49

Max and Ronit are seated, served by friendly waiters. Max seems thoughtful and distant.

RONIT

What's got to happen for you to be with us?

MAX

Nothing. Just to find a school for the girls. I've already started looking...

RONIT

(Interrupts him) What's got to happen for you to really be with us? Max, you went to the house where you were born... and you haven't said a word about it, as if it was nothing.

MAX

Because there really wasn't anything and there's nothing to say.

RONIT

Take me there. I want to see it.

Max freezes momentarily.

MAX

I went because I had to. That's all. I'm not going back. I've got nothing to do there... (Signals the waiter) You've got to try the Rote Grütze...

RONIT

What are we for you?

MAX

(Momentarily surprised by the question) You're my anchor.

RONIT

(Laughs sadly) Technical.

MAX

What do you want me to say?

RONIT
"Unconditional love", "warmth",
"intimacy"...

MAX
(Takes her hand) I just want to do
the right thing...

RONIT
For who?

The waiter arrives with dessert. Max is glad to see him and
change the subject.

MAX
You've just got to taste this. The
best Rote Grütze in Germany...

50 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. DAY.

50

Max is ready to leave. Ronit is still in bed.

MAX
I may be held up after practice so
maybe we should meet up in town.

RONIT
Okay.

51 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

51

Max is watching the practice session. On the court Ulrich
suddenly does the unbelievable and drives for the basket
although he should have passed to Thomas. Max applauds.

MAX
Very good! So? Did that hurt?

Ulrich appears to have surprised even himself. He gives a
small smile. His teammates slap him on the back.

MAX (CONT'D)
Ulrich! Swap with Thomas.

Ulrich's smile freezes. Thomas is too stunned to react. He
looks at Axel who is also shocked by this decision. Max also
looks at Axel, who doesn't do anything.

MAX (CONT'D)
Let's go!

Thomas looks at Max and then walks towards Ulrich to replace him. Ulrich is now the playmaker instead of Thomas who now plays small forward. The practice continues with great enthusiasm. Axel goes over to Max and stands beside him. He smiles at him, pleased. It's looking good. But he, too, can see what Max is seeing - Thomas is not taking part in the game.

AXEL
He's taking it hard...

MAX
If Ulrich can do it, so can Thomas.
He just doesn't want to, and
there's a price tag for that...

AXEL
We can't afford to lose him...

Ulrich surprises them again with a drive to the basket. Axel applauds enthusiastically. Thomas sees this and bites his lip angrily.

CUT TO:

The practice ends. The players stand in a circle with their backs to each other. Max stands in the middle and looks at them.

MAX
Now everybody gives the one in
front a slap on the back. You
looked good today. You deserve it!

They do as he asks, but hesitantly.

MAX (CONT'D)
Put your heart into it! It's not
courting!

The slaps on the back become harder and are accompanied with laughter. Thomas walks off the court.

52 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI. MAX'S CHILDHOOD NEIGHBORHOOD. DAY.

Max is in a taxi making up his mind whether or not to get out. He finally decides to get out.

MAX
(To the driver) This may take a few
minutes.

53 EXTERIOR. MAX'S CHILDHOOD HOME. DAY.

53

Max is about to go into the building when he suddenly sees Ronit standing facing him, a camera slung around her neck. They look at one another.

MAX

(Mumbling) What... what are you doing here?

RONIT

Photographs for the girls. So they know where their father comes from. The question is, what are you doing here?

54 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

54

Max is watching despairingly as Ronit packs her case.

MAX

You're acting as if you caught me with a lover. Like I've cheated on you or something...

Ronit carries on packing.

MAX (CONT'D)

A poor refugee woman lives there with her daughter... You should see her... (His voice breaks) She's our Michal's age and she's as sad as...

He searches for the words.

RONIT

As you? (She looks at him) I think that I've never seen you like this... Upset by something that's got nothing to do with basketball. It's a pity we can't make you feel that way.

Max holds her. He is desperate.

MAX

I need you all...

RONIT

If I was sure that us being here would make you be with us...I'd consider it.

She finishes her packing and stands facing him, stroking his face.

RONIT (CONT'D)
You're not ready for us, Max...

Max leans against her. They stand in an embrace for a moment.

MAX
(Mutters into her shoulder) And if
it never happens... ever?

The telephone rings. Ronit breaks away, tears in her eyes.

RONIT
That's probably my taxi... Look after
yourself Max...

Ronit leaves. Max remains standing alone in the room.

55 EXTERIOR. THE CHILDHOOD NEIGHBORHOOD. NIGHT.

55

It is very cold. Max is standing on a quiet corner. His eyes are fixed on the entrance to the apartment building. He sees Sema going inside. Behind him, a group of children are playing football. The children call each other by the names of football stars. The ball rolls towards him. He traps it, bounces it skillfully and kicks it back to them. The children are pleased with his performance. There are five children - three German and two Turkish-looking. Max joins their game delightedly. He takes off his coat and runs around the pitch with the ball at his feet. The children laugh and try to tackle him, but he skillfully evades them. With tremendous enthusiasm Max becomes one of them as he dribbles the ball, as the children excitedly watch the sweating "old man" who has gone crazy. They scream with delight at each other, using their stars' names (Joop Heinkes, Paul Breitner, Der Kaiser). The enthusiastic Max dribbles the ball towards the makeshift goal with the movement of a striker about to score, but then turns to the children, picks up the ball, and hands it to one of them. Max looks happy. He is panting. He strokes the head of the boy to whom he has given the ball.

56 INTERIOR. THE APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY/DENIZ'S APARTMENT 56
NIGHT.

Max is standing facing the door. He is still sweating from playing football. He hesitates, gets his breath, and finally knocks. The door opens. Deniz stands there, stunned. Max does not wait to be invited in.

MAX

I want to talk to you...

She looks down the passage to see if any of the neighbors are watching. She goes back inside but leaves the door open.

57 INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

57

Deniz goes into the living room. Max looks around.

MAX

Where's your daughter?

Deniz is surprised and alarmed.

DENIZ

What's happened?

MAX

Nothing.

Max goes to the window and looks down at the street, at the small patisserie.

MAX (CONT'D)

Who owns that patisserie?

DENIZ

No. I don't understand.

MAX

I want to help you.

DENIZ

Help? How?

MAX

To find your husband.

Deniz tries to digest what he has said.

DENIZ

Why do you want to help us?

Max says something in Yiddish. Deniz looks at him, stunned. Max quickly explains.

MAX

You shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth.

Deniz is stressed. Her shock is replaced by suspicion and alarm. She moves away from him.

DENIZ

What do you want in return?

MAX

(Laughs) There's nothing here that I need or want. You know what? Forget I was ever here, forget what I said. It was a mistake.

Max is already on the way to the door when Deniz stops him.

DENIZ

You're right. You're right, I don't have to look in your... mouth?

CUT TO

Deniz brings a coffeepot and cups to the table. She sits down opposite him.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

...And then without warning the letters stopped coming. We never heard any more from him. Everyone I tried to talk to didn't know where he was. I had to come here and look for him. That was almost two years ago. Do you take sugar?

Max shakes his head. Deniz pours.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

I went to the police, I talked to his friends, at his job, and nothing.

MAX

Your daughter's sure that your husband's... run off.

Deniz is momentarily surprised but regains her composure. There is despair in her voice.

DENIZ

Her imagination works overtime.

MAX

Children don't imagine things like that without good reason.

DENIZ

She's not an easy child. She never was and...

MAX

I wasn't an easy child either and
look at me now!

DENIZ

(Confused) I don't... I don't really
understand the connection...

Max is silent as he drinks his coffee. Its flavor surprises
him. He enjoys it.

MAX

The coffee here doesn't taste like
coffee.

Deniz smiles for the first time.

DENIZ

It's like sand.

She says something in Turkish and then translates.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

Where there's no good coffee,
nothing is good.

Max gets up as he finishes off his coffee with great
enjoyment.

MAX

You see? If only for that it was
worth helping you. I'll be in
touch.

Max is already on his way to the door.

DENIZ (O.S.)

Berta.

Max freezes and then turns towards her.

DENIZ (CONT.) (CONT'D)

You wanted to know the name of the
patisserie owner.

MAX

Yes... Thank you.

DENIZ

Do you want me to check anything
else? I'd be happy to help you...

MAX

Look at me. I've got everything I want and need. Do I look like someone who needs help?

DENIZ

(Mutters embarrassedly) Yes.

Max looks at her for a moment and then bursts out laughing. Deniz is serious.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

People I know... from home, who grew up with me and my husband aren't helping me. Then you come in out of nowhere...

MAX

How do you make a living?

She is embarrassed. She lowers her eyes to her hands that are chapped from detergents.

DENIZ

I clean toilets in a restaurant...

MAX

For a moment I thought you were a psychologist or something.

He goes to the door to leave. He opens it and stops. He stands with his back to her. Only now does he realize how he has insulted her.

MAX (CONT'D)

(With his back to her) I apologize.
I was out of line.

He leaves.

58 EXTERIOR. A STREET. NIGHT.

58

Max comes out of the apartment building. He inhales deeply as if he had stopped breathing. He looks towards the corner patisserie.

59 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

59

Deniz is at the window. She sees Max standing opposite the patisserie.

60 EXTERIOR. A STREET OPPOSITE THE PATISSERIE. NIGHT. 60

Max is looking into the patisserie window. There is a Black Forest gateau in it. For a moment it seems he is in another world.

61 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT. 61

Max is facing the muted TV. President of Egypt Anwar Sadat on a historic visit to Israel at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. Max raises the volume slightly.

62 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. NIGHT. 62

Early morning. Thomas is practicing throwing hoops on his own. He fumbles the ball that rolls towards the sidelines where it stops by Max who is standing there. Thomas is surprised to see him. Max passes him the ball. Thomas goes back to practicing.

THOMAS

Can't sleep?

Max takes off his jacket and walks onto the court as he rolls up his sleeves.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

If you can't sleep then maybe
you're in the wrong place. Perhaps
you should go home. I heard there's
going to be peace there soon.

MAX

What I've got to do is take you to
the World Championships.

Thomas laughs.

MAX (CONT'D)

There's nothing like a player who
believes in himself and his team.

THOMAS

If that's really what brought you
here, you shouldn't have replaced
me as playmaker...

MAX

It was a professional decision.

THOMAS
(As he throws the ball and makes a basket) No, it was personal.

Thomas continues practicing. Max stands facing him, blocking his path.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
You're in my way.

Max is busy rolling up his sleeves.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
You know what you are? You're just another apology, another attempt to erase everything. (Laughs bitterly) They bring us a Holocaust survivor in order to forget. Can you see the paradox?

Thomas turns to leave.

MAX
Your father killed himself, Thomas. He chose that option and that's all his story, only his.

Thomas turns angrily.

THOMAS
Take that back!

MAX
It was a choice he made, for his own reasons. So don't blame yourself, and certainly not...

Thomas turns to him. He seems to be losing his self-control as he strides towards the indifferent Max.

THOMAS
If you weren't older than me...

MAX
(What would you do? Hit me? It's not as easy as it looks. But I'll make you a better offer.

Max stands in front of him and gestures that he try and dribble past him. Thomas doesn't understand.

MAX (CONT'D)

You get past me and I'll be on the first plane home. If you don't, you do everything I tell you. But I'm warning you - I've never lost and I don't intend to start now.

Thomas nods and starts a fast attack towards Max, who seems arrogant.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm here because I'm the best there is. And you're the only one here who can use that to become a big star. At international level. But you're scared, you're afraid that if you make it, you'll forget. That's the paradox.

He almost manages to dribble past Max, but Max steals the ball. Thomas is stunned. Max turns to him. Now he is serious.

MAX (CONT'D)

Between these walls there's no conspiracy.

Max throws the ball and hits a two-pointer.

MAX (CONT'D)

There's just basketball.

He turns and picks up his jacket leaving Thomas on his own.

63

INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

63

A practice game against a league team. Thomas is playing in his new position of small forward. At first Thomas tries doing what he has always done - passing. But he discovers that he has nobody to pass to. The ball is stolen from him. He appears to be in despair. Axel can hardly conceal his disappointment. He looks towards Max who remains indifferent and keeps silent. Franz, who is sitting next to Max, is also following the action on court with some concern.

AXEL

Can't he see what we're seeing?
(Curses silently) Something's bad happening to him.

One of the other team's players, who is marking Thomas, tries to rile him.

(CONT'D)

PLAYER

What happened? He drop you?

Thomas tries to keep his cool. He gets the ball. Even now he has nobody to pass to. His eyes meet Max's. Thomas does what he was supposed to do and drives for the basket.

Now Thomas is playing the way Max wanted. The more he loosens up, the more he enjoys himself and opens up. The players are enjoying it. Axel and Franz, on the sidelines, look pleased.

AXEL

He's a pro. I told you so. But why does he have to torture me? Why?

Max is following the game with the same serious expression he has every time he is on the court.

The game ends. The losing team stands stunned as they watch the national team conducting their backslapping ceremony. Dieter and Thomas walk towards Max. The rest of the squad is already there.

DIETER

(To Thomas) You finally look happy.

Thomas quickly stops smiling. Max lowers his eyes from the scoreboard that shows 75-69 and turns to the squad who look pleased with themselves.

MAX

You generally give gifts to someone you love... or have you brought Christmas forward?

The players do not understand him. Max points at the scoreboard.

MAX (CONT'D)

Thirty percent of their points were gifts we gave them. Why thirty? Because they weren't good enough to take the rest of the chances we gave them... And that's something that the teams we'll play in the qualifiers will take full advantage of.

The players are silent. The smiles have been wiped off their faces.

MAX (CONT'D)
It's like life - you can be the
best there is...

Max looks directly at Thomas.

MAX (CONT'D)
But without defense you're not
worth much. Dismissed!

64 EXTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

64

Max comes out of the arena. The media are waiting.

WOMAN REPORTER
What do you have to say about
Sadat's visit to Israel?

MAX
It's a fine example of if you leave
the past behind, you can build a
better future? Any questions about
basketball?

Max is already on his way when a question in Hebrew is
suddenly asked.

REPORTER (O.S.)
How does winning with the German
national team feel?

Surprised, Max turns to find an Israeli TV crew.

REPORTER (CONT'D)
(English) Israeli Television...

MAX
(Interrupts, smiling, in Hebrew) I
know who you are... There's lots of
room for improvement. We're on the
way to...

REPORTER
(Interrupts him, in English) I
meant how does winning with the
German national team feel as a
Holocaust survivor?

MAX

(With a forced smile, in English)
Instead of talking to me about the
game that finished ten minutes ago
you persist in talking about things
that happened thirty years ago! I'm
a basketball coach! It's what I do
and it's why I'm here. What do you
want to hear? That I came for
revenge? Is that what you want to
hear?

Max does not wait for an answer and leaves angrily.

65 INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

65

Max is at the window looking down at the patisserie. He turns to watch Deniz who is assertively speaking to the private investigator as he gathers up all her paperwork. Something in her movements, her gravity, the locks of hair that have escaped her head covering... Max cannot take his eyes off her until the moment she looks at him. He quickly averts his eyes and goes towards the door. Deniz follows him with her eyes and then goes back to the investigator.

66 EXTERIOR. A STREET. NIGHT.

66

Max comes out of the building. He sees Sema sitting on the steps. He sits down next to her.

SEMA

It's my birthday next week...

MAX

How old are you going to be?

SEMA

Five years to the day when I can do
whatever I want.

MAX

(Laughs) What do you want to do?

She turns to him and starts laughing. Max doesn't understand.

SEMA

What are you doing here?

MAX

What difference does it make?

SEMA

That's not an answer.

MAX

Then I've got no answer.

SEMA

(Smiles) My mother was right... for a change. She said that what you're doing here is looking for an answer. But what's the question? And why us? You lived here once, so what? Look at me, I don't want to go back to Turkey.

Max remains silent. Sema gets up to go into the hallway.

SEMA (CONT'D)

It was very nice talking to you,
Herr Stoller.

MAX

Why are you so sure he left because of you? Maybe he really has disappeared or something's happened to him?

SEMA

He wanted a son, but if it was a daughter then she should be as obedient as her mother, wear the right clothes, say the right things, not bring shame on the family. As you can see, I'm not a boy and I'm really not my mother. And more to the point - I really don't care!

She goes inside, leaving Max alone.

MAX

(Mutters) I don't believe you...

67

INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. DAY.

67

Deniz opens the door for Max. She is excited. Max hands her a sheet of paper. She takes it and hurries into the living room, followed by Max.

MAX

Those are a few possible addresses.
He said he'll have more later.

Deniz scans the addresses. Tears well in her eyes.

DENIZ
If only I knew how to repay you... If
there's anything I can do...

MAX
There is... Find him. (Gets up) Sema
needs a father.

He goes to the door, stops and smiles. Only now he realizes
that he had closed the door when he came in.

MAX (CONT'D)
I wasn't thinking... I hope it's all
right.

He opens the door and leaves. Deniz remains standing there
for a moment and then makes a decision. She hurries out.

68 EXTERIOR. A STREET. DAY.

68

Deniz comes out of the apartment building. She sees Max
walking towards his taxi. She runs towards him, ignoring the
surprised looks of the Turkish passersby. Panting, she
catches up with him just before he gets into the taxi.

DENIZ
I know you're not short of anything
but I've got to do something...
Something small... perhaps a cup of
coffee? It won't take long, I
promise.

CUT TO:

Max and Deniz are walking down the street. He glances at his
watch as Deniz tries to ignore the hard looks following her.

MAX
I hope the café is worth it because
I'm running late...

DENIZ
It's right here on the corner...

Max halts. He realizes that Deniz wants to take him to the
corner patisserie.

MAX
I think I'll pass.

DENIZ

I thought you said that if you're
given a horse you don't look into
its mouth. It won't take long.

69 INTERIOR. BERTA'S PATISSERIE. DAY.

69

An old-fashioned patisserie. Max and Deniz are sitting at a corner table as each of them tries to hide for his or her own reasons. Deniz feels uncomfortable with the looks of the other customers and Max looks like he wants to avoid meeting somebody. Deniz tries to convey an atmosphere of business as usual.

DENIZ

They serve a very famous cake here.
Would you like to try...

Max cuts her off as he drains his cup and gets up.

MAX

It looks like a cemetery...

She also gets up, her relief evident. Max wants to pay the bill but Deniz stops him.

DENIZ

It's my treat!

She takes out her purse.

MAX

I'll wait outside.

He is about to leave when an elderly woman's voice stops him.

BERTA (O.S.)

(in German) Maximilian? Is that
you?

Max halts as if he has been shot in the back. He turns round slowly. Standing facing him is Berta (73), an elderly woman wearing an apron and her expression a mixture of shock and amazement, which is replaced by an eager smile.

BERTA (CONT'D)

It is you...

Before Max can react Berta rushes to him and embraces him as if he were her long-lost son. Max is frozen while Deniz is surprised by what is happening.

CUT TO:

Deniz looks at Max who impatiently looks at his watch. He does everything he can to remain detached, while Berta clucks around him excitedly. She is caught up in memories.

BERTA (CONT'D)

What times they were. Everything was in order. People respected each other. They were polite - "Good morning", "How are you?" (To Denise, apologetically) A foreigner wouldn't understand. (To Max) I can't believe it. Look at you - the German national team coach. It's a fairy story. You were a...

She looks for the words.

MAX

(in German) A wild little boy.

BERTA

You remember your German! Good boy!

MAX

Not really Berta...

BERTA

Mischievous. Running everywhere. Always in a hurry. You were always an athlete. I remember how your father worried. Poor man. (To Deniz) Sport wasn't so popular back then. Science, literature, psychology, art...(To Max) He was afraid you'd turn into some kind of bandit. If he could see you now he'd...

She suddenly stops. She realizes that she has been carried away. She places a hand on Max's shoulder.

BERTA (CONT'D)

It's a shame he didn't live to see it.

MAX

(in English) He saw other things I did. You probably remember what.

BERTA

(understands but answers in German)
Don't talk rubbish.

MAX

Did other kids steal cakes too?

BERTA

Cakes? One cake.

MAX

It was enough to break him.

BERTA

He was a sensitive man.

MAX

Interesting I don't remember him like that. But it makes absolutely no difference now. (Gets up) The main thing is we're all well.

BERTA

You're going already? You just got here. I don't remember the last time somebody from the old neighborhood was here.

Max kisses her cheek.

MAX

You're looking well, Berta. I'm very glad to have met you again.

BERTA

(To Deniz, happily) You understand what I'm talking about. It's the education of the old days. (To Max) You haven't even tried the cake...

He gives her a forced smile.

MAX

I've got to run.

70

EXTERIOR. A STREET. DAY.

70

Max is walking quickly as if fleeing the place as fast as he can, while trying to light a cigarette. Deniz is trying to catch him up.

DENIZ

I thought it would be a lot worse.

Max doesn't understand what she is talking about. He looks for a taxi.

MAX

What are you talking about? Why aren't there any taxis around here?

DENIZ

What's torturing you? You stole a cake? That's not what...

MAX

Why don't you solve your own problems before trying to solve other people's?

DENIZ

I could ask you the very same question.

MAX

No, you can't!

Deniz grabs his arm. She stops him in the middle of the street. He is unable to light his cigarette. He is about to blow up. She is angry and doesn't care. A passerby mutters a curse at Deniz. A tremor passes through her body on hearing the words, but she tries to remain indifferent. Max looks at the passer by.

MAX (CONT'D)

Hey! Hey!!! Come back here and apologize! Right now!

The passer by gives him the finger. Max wants to go after him but Deniz stops him.

DENIZ

I'm only trying to help...

She starts walking away. Max stops her.

MAX

What did he that jerk say?

DENIZ

(Smiles) I shouldn't have sat alone with you in the café.

She turns and walks away, leaving Max alone in the street. A moment later he starts walking, almost running.

Max is looking for a present for Sema. He finds a children's gift shop. He deliberates about going in.

Meanwhile families are coming and going through the shop door. They look happy about the approaching holiday. Max lights a cigarette and walks away. He sees a taxi and hails it.

72 INTERIOR. EDEN NIGHTCLUB. NIGHT. (THE HANNUKA FESTIVAL) 72

Rhythmic music is playing very loudly. A dancer is shimmying on the stage. The patrons are drinking and dancing. Max is sitting in the middle nook staring at Shimi, who is wearing a yarmulke and ceremoniously lighting the Hannuka candles as if he were in a synagogue.

 SHIMI
(Smiling happily at Max) Happy
Hannuka!

CUT TO:

 SHIMI (CONT'D)
(in Hebrew) You're on top of the
world and you look like someone
hiding in a cellar.

Max looks at Shimi who is sitting opposite him with a bevy of German women. Shimi smiles at him and refills Max's glass with champagne.

 SHIMI (CONT'D)
I'll have soon been here for ten
years. Quite a few Israelis have
passed through. There are several
ways of living here. One: hate them
for what they did to us and never
stop seeking revenge. Never forget.
That's the second way. Don't give a
fuck about anything. It never
happened. Have a good time, drink,
forget it completely. But that's
problematic. It can grab you when
you least expect it. Why isn't
there a stone or a sign to remind
you of what happened here? The
third way, which is mine, is to
combine them all.

Shimi leans back, puts his arm around one of the women and smiles at Max.

SHIMI (CONT'D)
Having a good time is my revenge.
Try it. You can't lose.

Max gives him a forced smile.

73 INTERIOR. EDEN NIGHTCLUB TOILET. NIGHT.

73

Max comes out of a cubicle and is surprised to find a sexy, curvaceous German woman there who has just snorted a line of cocaine. She smiles at him. Max goes to wash his hands. The woman presses herself against him from behind and caresses him.

WOMAN
Shimi said you're sad..

Max submits to her sensual contact when in the mirror he suddenly sees a woman cleaning the floor. Her dress and the way she moves remind him of Deniz. He shivers momentarily. He pulls away from the woman. She tries to tempt him but he pushes her away almost violently and leaves the toilet.

74 EXTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL. DAY.

74

Early morning. Max comes out of the hotel. He inhales deeply like someone who hasn't breathed for a long time and starts walking. He passes a newspaper kiosk. After a few meters he stops and quickly retraces his steps. He takes the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. The subhead reads: "The German national team coach, in Hebrew, after a practice game: 'I'm Here For Revenge!'"

75 INTERIOR. AXEL'S OFFICE. DAY.

75

Max looks at the phones that do not stop ringing throughout the scene. The desk is covered with newspapers. Max looks at one of them. Axel looks like he has slept in his clothes.

MAX
(Smiling despairingly) You wanted
media interest? You've got it.

Axel is standing at the window looking out at the media army there.

AXEL
Like vultures scenting a corpse. In
a moment they'll break in.

MAX

(Indicating the paper) They've been after me since I got here...

AXEL

(With his back to Max) And they've found you! Do you have any idea of the risk I took in bringing you here?

MAX

(Interrupts) You brought me here because I'm the best there is!

AXEL

They warned me, they told me I was making a mistake, that it wouldn't work... (He sits down) It's all my fault.

MAX

(Angrily) What the hell are you talking about?

AXEL

(Mutters) It's my fault because I should have known there was a problem that night you went back to your old home.

MAX

(Bangs on the desk) It's not my home!

AXEL

Something's happened to you here... in Germany. You're not the same man that came here.

MAX

I'm trying to explain that...

AXEL

Don't explain to me! Explain to the players!

Axel answers the phone.

Max scans the squad standing before him, disappointment and remoteness in their eyes.

MAX

We've got exactly two weeks before the game. And our defense is still far from something we can live with. One-on-one defense is the key...

He stops. He realizes he is talking to the wall.

MAX (CONT'D)

All right, cards on the table. First, it didn't happen. My words were taken out of context. An inaccurate interpretation. In brief, it's a sham. You're here to play ball and not get into politics.

THOMAS

(Interrupts) We know why we're here. Now we know why you're here too.

Max tries to stifle his anger. He smiles at Thomas.

MAX

Go and get changed.

Thomas doesn't move.

THOMAS

And all that after your lectures about forgetting the past... You almost had us fooled...

MAX

Are you hard of hearing? Get off the court!

THOMAS

Don't worry, I won't be the one to ruin your revenge.

Thomas stalks out.

MAX

Don't bother coming back. You're finished here.

Max turns to the rest of the squad who are stunned by the fact that Thomas is no longer with them

MAX (CONT'D)

Let's go! Split up into pairs!

Nobody moves. Max raises his voice.

MAX (CONT'D)
I said let's go!

They move listlessly. Max watches the practice that goes slowly and without motivation. His expression reveals that he knows he's in trouble.

77 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

77

Max is writing up his notes on the training session as Franz comes in. Max does not stop what he is doing.

MAX
(Sarcastically) You should keep
your distance. I might damage your
reputation.

FRANZ
If you knew me at all you'd know
that my reputation isn't all that
hot. "A warm home for cold fish"!
That's all I have to tell you about
newspapers.

Max has finished packing. He is on his way out.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
I'm here if you need anything.

MAX
I appreciate it.

FRANZ
Don't go out the front way. They're
waiting for you.

78 EXTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

78

The main entrance is crowded with media people. Max pushes through them without batting an eye despite the questions being fired at him from all directions.

79 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI/THE HOTEL. DAY.

79

Max looks exhausted. He looks at Frankfurt through the window. The taxi reaches the hotel. Max sees the crowd of reporters in the hotel entrance.

MAX

Drive on...

80 INTERIOR. THE APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY/DENIZ'S APARTMENT 80
NIGHT.

Max is standing facing the door that has been sprayed with obscenities. He knocks.

81 INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. NIGHT. 81

Max is standing in the middle of the living room. David Bowie's music can be heard from the next room. It is turned down. Sema comes out of her room and goes into the kitchen.

SEMA

I don't know what time she'll be back. (Cynically) She's out chasing the ghost...

MAX

She'll find him in the end.

She nods despairingly

MAX (CONT'D)

What's written on the door?

SEMA

(Smiles) Words I'm not allowed to say at home.

Max, who feels he is to blame, is amazed by her smile.

MAX

And are you happy with it?

SEMA

At long last there's a ruckus with the neighbors and I'm not to blame.

Max suddenly looks tired. He sits down on one of the chairs and puts his face into his hands.

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

Would you like something to drink?
I'm making a cup for myself.

MAX

(Mutters) It's all my fault.

SEMA (O.S.)
You didn't answer me... Are you all
right?

Max raises his head. Sema is standing in front of him,
examining him.

MAX
I'm tired.

SEMA
You can have a rest here if you
want. There's no chance of anyone
looking for you here.

Max looks at her in surprise. She smiles at him.

SEMA (CONT'D)
(Teasingly) You don't have to look
so surprised that I know how to
read. What I didn't understand was
what revenge they were talking
about. Maybe it's got something to
do with your father...

Max stops her with a thunderous blow to the table, which
almost falls apart.

MAX
Enough!

Sema recoils. She was unprepared for this sudden outburst.
Max is in a fit of rage. It begins with restrained anger and
turns into a vortex of fury.

MAX (CONT'D)
You don't know what I went through!
You only think you do! Your mother,
you, that old woman who only knows
how to bake cakes... "A sensitive
man"! Sensitive? Who leaves because
of a stupid cake? (Pounds the
table) Answer me?

Sema is too scared to speak or move. She is on the verge of
tears.

MAX (CONT'D)
No answer? It's actually something
you should understand. Your father
left you, didn't he? Because of
what? What did you do to make him
leave? I'm sure it wasn't because
of a cake!

82

INTERIOR. SEMA'S ROOM. NIGHT.

82

Max, filled with remorse, is standing outside Sema's room. He knocks on the door. There is no answer. Max goes inside as if negotiating a minefield. Sema is sitting on her bed reading a book. She completely ignores him. Her face shows the traces of weeping.

MAX

What are you reading?

She does not reply.

MAX (CONT'D)

I apologize. I'm sorry Sema.

He waits for a response but it does not come. He turns to leave, but stops. His hand touches the doorpost and strokes it. He speaks in a cracked voice.

MAX (CONT'D)

This used to be my room. (Smiles sadly) It's strange. I've managed to forget everything because thirty years have passed, but I still remember every detail as if it were yesterday...

He turns round to Sema.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm sure he hasn't left...

Sema raises her head to him. Tears flow down her cheeks.

SEMA

How can you be so sure?

MAX

Because if I were your father I would never leave you. And I'm a shitty father, believe me.

Max is almost outside when Sema's voice reaches him.

SEMA

"He cannot love. It had to do, I think, with the riddle of his existence..."

Max turns round, surprised. She shows him her book.

(CONT'D)

SEMA

Peter Pan. I don't believe you. I'm
sure you're a good father...

83

INTERIOR. THE APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY. NIGHT.

83

With tears in his eyes, Max is walking down the stairs as
Deniz comes up them. She is surprised to see him. She is
totally confused.

DENIZ

What... what are you doing here? I
thought I wouldn't be seeing you
again...

MAX

Didn't you find him?

She shakes her head.

DENIZ

I've got a few more addresses.

Max waits for a moment. He is about to go on his way when
Deniz grasps his hand, touching him for the first time.

MAX

The neighbors will see you...

DENIZ

(Points at the graffiti) There's no
more room on the door.

MAX

I'm sorry I got you both into this.
Maybe you can move somewhere else?
I'll pay...

DENIZ

(Interrupts) Where to? Downtown? A
German neighborhood?

Max is silent. Deniz looks at him for a long time.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

You can stay here if you want.

MAX

No. I don't.

DENIZ

It's all right. I don't care what
they say about me anymore. I'll
sleep on the couch...

MAX

I can't sleep in this building.

84 EXTERIOR. A STREET. NIGHT.

84

Max is walking down the empty street. He walks without seeing the street signs. Without raising his head he skillfully navigates the alleys and turns as if sleepwalking, as if he is driven by something stronger than him. He quickens his pace.

85 EXTERIOR. A DISCOTHEQUE. NIGHT.

85

Max is standing stunned and breathless outside a glitzy discotheque with flashing colored lights. Loud music and the laughter of the dancers comes from inside. Groups of young people are crowded around the discotheque, some dressed as punk rockers. Laughter. Singing. One couple is against the wall, making out. He shifts his eyes from the discotheque to the street sign and back again, finding it hard to believe that they are the same. A roasted chestnut seller is beside him selling his wares from a smoking grill. He looks at Max, who is pale, excited, his lips trembling.

CHESTNUT SELLER

(German) Hot chestnuts?

Max looks at the stranger beside him, he stares into space and mumbles, perhaps to himself, perhaps to the man, as he points at the discotheque.

MAX

(German) This where my father's
factory was. Albert Stoller...
"Stoller Furniture", you can still
see the sign.

The chestnut seller looks at him in amazement.

MAX (CONT'D)

"Stoller Furniture", the best
quality furniture in the area... And
look at it now...

As he speaks, three drunken teens singing loudly come towards them. They are blind drunk.

As they pass them, they turn round and give the Nazi salute, stop, and burst into laughter. Max loses his cool and attacks one of them, totally out of control. The other two struggle with him with silent violence. Some people who have come out of the club gather round them in a circle, shouting encouragement as if at a boxing match. A police car siren is heard approaching.

86

INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

86

Deniz, wearing a conservative nightgown and her hair loose, is carefully dabbing at the blood oozing from Max's nose. He looks battered. Max cannot but notice the heady fragrance of her hair and the hidden parts of her body that peep from her nightgown.

MAX

I want to take you both out for dinner.

DENIZ

Don't move...

MAX

To an expensive, nice restaurant. Candles, music, champagne.

DENIZ

I don't drink alcohol. What was the fight about?

MAX

Why don't you drink?

DENIZ

I'm a Muslim, remember?

MAX

And I'm a Jew. So what?

She sees that his eyes are fixed on her neckline. Embarrassed, she quickly straightens up and moves away, leaving a dressing on his nose. Max takes out a cigarette while Deniz makes up the couch.

DENIZ

Press it against your nose so it stops bleeding.

Max stands at the window and lights his cigarette.

MAX

What if it doesn't stop?

DENIZ

All things come to an end. Nothing lasts forever. But if you don't deal with it... then yes... it might carry on bleeding and then there's usually an infection, and that could be chronic.

MAX

Is that why you're looking for him?

DENIZ

It's why you're suffering so much. You're not dealing with it.

Max does not respond. He stares at the patisserie with his head against the window.

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

I don't know much about the Holocaust, but from the little I've heard... How do you go on living after something like that?

MAX

(Mutters) You just move on.

DENIZ

(Not hearing) What did you say?

Max does not turn around. His voice is broken.

MAX

He died because of me.

Deniz stops making up the couch. She freezes.

MAX (CONT'D)

I was in bed waiting for him to come home from work. He always came home at the same time and always stopped off at Berta's for bread. I could see his face when she told him about the cake I'd stolen.

Max doesn't notice that his cigarette ash has fallen to the floor.

MAX (CONT'D)

When he got home late I realized how upset and ashamed he was. He didn't come into my room.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

(Sadly) For a moment I felt a kind of relief, but then I realized that he was so angry and hated me for what I'd done, that even his belt wouldn't help. I lay there all night listening to my parents quarreling quietly. It was the first time I heard them quarrel. She probably defended me...

He lights another cigarette. His hands are trembling.

MAX (CONT'D)

Next morning I was standing right here. I saw him going to Berta's. He suddenly seemed so short. And it was strange because he was always tall. He had presence. A proud man... Then I realized he was simply ashamed. That's why he seemed so short.

He suddenly laughs.

MAX (CONT'D)

The Jews hid, they fled... They were shot in the street. Our upstairs neighbor was thrown out of the window, and all my father could think about was that his son stole a cake. So he went to apologize and never came back.

Deniz sees that Max is trembling slightly. She leaves the couch and goes to him from behind. Hesitating momentarily, she places her hand on his shoulder. They stand that way for a moment. Max turns to her. She embraces him and he responds. She envelops him. They stand that way for a long moment. Max murmurs into her body:

MAX (CONT'D)

I need you...

Deniz caresses him as she kisses his forehead and eyes.

DENIZ

I'm here... I'm here...

Max's hand leaves her back and he gently strokes her cheek. They kiss, they hesitate and then there is passion but they stop short of going all the way.

87 INTERIOR. HOTEL ROOM. DAY

87

Max, after a shower, watches the Christmas decorations in the form of Santa Claus being hung on the cinema next door.

88 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. DAY.

88

Axel is standing on the court watching the players, who are warming up listlessly. He looks at his watch, then at the wall clock, and from there to the members of the national basketball association who are keenly observing what is going on. Max is late. He comes in. Axel wants to say something but changes his mind when he sees Max's face is still bruised from the fight. Max ignores Axel's look and gets the session underway. Axel goes over to him

AXEL

All the national executive are here.

Max glances at the group of suits who are all making notes. He watches the practice, which looks bad. The players are not functioning. They can't get their game going as lose the ball all the time. Axel can't contain himself any longer. He goes to Max and they talk as they follow the practice, which is getting progressively worse.

AXEL (CONT'D)

What happened to you?

MAX

I walked into a wall! (To the players) Let's go!

The players fluff another move.

AXEL

(Indicating the players) It looks like you're not the only one.

He glances at the executive who appear to be less than happy, and looks back at the players.

AXEL (CONT'D)

At least they were on time and don't look like they've been hit by a bus. And just today, with all the bigwigs here. It would have been better if you'd called in sick.

Max turns to Axel and studies him.

MAX

(Quietly) Today is the first time,
as a player and coach that I
haven't arrived a half hour before
everyone else.

AXEL

So what does that mean?

MAX

(Smiling cynically) That I'm human?
And how can I put this: I have to
admit that with you, nothing's
changed.

Axel looks at Max and goes back to watching the awful
practice session.

AXEL

You know what might be very human?
To admit you made a mistake by
dropping Thomas.

Max wants to say something but Axel forestalls him

AXEL (CONT'D)

Your nose is still bleeding. You'd
better go and see Franz.

Max touches his nose, that is indeed bleeding again. He turns
to Axel, who leaves the court towards the dressing rooms, not
towards the executive.

89 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

89

Max is looking at the Santa Claus sign that has been
completed but is not yet lit up. The sign is suddenly
switched on! Santa Claus in colored lights. The phone rings.

90 INTERIOR. AXEL'S OFFICE. NIGHT.

90

Axel pours cognac into two glasses.

AXEL

Courvoisier Initiale Extra...

He offers a glass to Max. They both sip the cognac.

MAX

It's worth waiting fifteen years
for.

Axel refills their glasses. He seems to be having difficulty with the situation.

AXEL

I had a long, hard discussion with the national executive. (Takes another sip to gain time) Max, they're not happy with the way things are going..

MAX

I had a personal problem and I've solved it. You can pacify them. Everything will be just fine..

AXEL

How? I'm there on the sidelines with you.

MAX

We'll work on it. We've still got a few days until...

Max suddenly falls silent. The penny has dropped.

MAX (CONT'D)

What's going on?

Axel shifts uncomfortably. He drinks from the glass he poured for Max.

AXEL

It's just not working.

MAX

Because of a little fuss? So go to your executive and tell them to use earplugs!

Axel hands him a sheet of paper.

AXEL

The whole squad's signed it. If you carry on, they're leaving.

Max looks at the paper.

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

Max, you've got to accept that it's over and move on.

Max puts the paper down on the table. He strives to contain his anger.

MAX

I've sacrificed far too much to get to what I am today!

AXEL

And what's that?

MAX

Champion of Europe!

AXEL

So why aren't you behaving like one?

MAX

You sort it out because I've no intention of destroying everything I've got because of all your crap.

AXEL

(Angrily) "Our crap"? I brought you here because I thought you were like me. "A new future..." But you're just like the rest of them here, stuck in the past.

Max remains silent. He can't argue with that.

AXEL (CONT'D)

I gambled everything I had on you. I took a risk when...

MAX

(Cuts him off, quietly) Do you know what they're calling me in Israel? A traitor! From being a national hero I've become a traitor! My mother won't talk to me, my wife doesn't want to see me anymore, my daughters don't want to go to school because they're ashamed, and maybe they're all right, but you dare to speak to me about risks?

Axel is silent.

MAX (CONT'D)

All I've got left to try and save something is my good name and the chance of getting to the States.

AXEL

That's why I'm suggesting that you leave now before it's completely ruined. I know we've got a contract. I can't force you to go, but if you go now it will look as if we were out of line.

Max looks at him for a long moment.

MAX

I'm not going anywhere, not until I know I've exhausted all the possibilities... It's not going to happen to me a second time here.

AXEL

Just promise me one thing. Take the Christmas weekend to think it over again.

91 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. NIGHT.

91

We find Max, who has come from Axel's office, standing in the middle of the empty court, exactly in the center circle. Christmas decorations are hanging here too.

MAX

(German) Merry Christmas, Herr Stoller.

92 INTERIOR. THE HALLWAY IN THOMAS'S APARTMENT BUILDING. DAY. 92

Max hesitates momentarily and then knocks on the door. The door opens.

MAX

I'm sorry to intrude on Christmas Day...

He stops in mid-sentence when he sees Thomas in the doorway. He looks unkempt. His clothes are wrinkled and he is unshaven.

93 INTERIOR. THOMAS'S APARTMENT. DAY.

93

Max looks at a photograph of Josef, Thomas's father, in an infantry officer's uniform. Thomas comes in from the kitchen with a bottle of beer. He moves some dirty laundry from the couch and sits down.

THOMAS

There's one thing I admire in you Israelis. You know take care of those that have fought for you. Who gave their all... That's good.

Thomas brings the bottle to his lips and drinks. Max puts the bottle down.

MAX

(Mutters) You haven't learned a thing from me...

THOMAS

Of course I have. I've learnt that you mustn't forget, no matter what the price. You gave up everything because of that.

MAX

If I've given up anything it's only because of basketball. When you love something, you give up other things. And I know you love this game.

He looks at the photograph of Josef.

MAX (CONT'D)

What would your father have said if he saw you like this?

THOMAS

Before or after he went to the local bar? (Laughs) I hadn't thought about it till now, but you and he almost the same. He drinks to forget and you're in basketball for exactly the same reason. You don't really love it. You're just hiding behind it.

He looks at the photograph of Josef.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

The difference between you is that apart for a few marks a month he was of no interest to anyone. They consigned him to oblivion after the war. (Smiles cynically) We don't want to remember, we'd rather forget. (He looks at Max) And you... you're part of it.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)
They couldn't find anyone better
than you to do it.

Max studies Thomas.

MAX
I want to tell you a little story:
When I reached Israel after the
war, alone and penniless, a
foreigner with all his possessions
in a bag with clothes and
photographs. The first morning I
woke up, I sat down and thought:
What are you going to do with your
life, Max? And then I had this
moment when I understood something.
I went to the beach, walked into
the water, and threw the bag into
the seas. I turned round and I
haven't looked back since. Only
forward.

Thomas looks at Max in silence. He appears to be trying to
digest the parable. Max gently lays his hand on his shoulder.

MAX (CONT'D)
You're getting lost, Thomas. I only
hope you understand that before
it's too late... (He gets up to
leave) In any event, you're not
coming back until you apologize to
the whole team. (In German) Merry
Christmas.

Max leaves the apartment, leaving Thomas ill at ease.

94 EXTERIOR. A FRANKFURT STREET. DAY.

94

Max is standing in the festively decorated street that is
filled with families and couples. The festive atmosphere only
makes his loneliness more acute. He hails a taxi.

95 INTERIOR. MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. DAY.

95

Max is lying on the bed, smoking. Christmas carols are heard
outside. He turns on the TV hoping to detach himself, but it
too is showing Christmas carols/a family movie.

Max is standing at the window, looking out. He suddenly makes
a decision. He picks up the phone and dials "0" for
reception.

MAX
Get me a car rental company.

96 INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. DAY.

96

Deniz stands facing Max.

DENIZ
Are you sure this is how you want
to spend Christmas?

MAX
Have you got a better suggestion?

SEMA
You're both crazy. I'm not going.
I've got more important things to
do.

MAX
Like what?

SEMA
Prepare for my birthday, look at
the wall, jump out of the window...
take your pick. Anything's better
than chasing ghosts. In brief, I'm
not going!

97 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. THE CAR. DAY (DRIVING).

97

Max is driving with Deniz beside him, excited.

MAX
Have you got the addresses?

She takes the private investigator's printed list from her
purse. Some of the addresses have already been struck
through.

MAX (CONT'D)
I promise to have you back in time.
24 hours. No more.

Shift to Sema. She is sitting in the back seat. She is in a
bad mood.

SEMA
At least let's hear some proper
music.

98 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. THE CAR/A RURAL ROAD. DAY (DRIVING). 98

They drive through the green countryside. Deniz opens the window and inhales deeply. She looks happy. She puts her head out of the window. Her head scarf is blown off. Max laughs. The sullen Sema even joins him. Deniz is embarrassed for a moment but decides to give herself up to the wind blowing her beautiful hair about her face.

CUT TO

Sema has fallen asleep in the back seat. The radio is playing quiet music.

MAX

Her music's driven me out of my mind.

Deniz laughs.

MAX (CONT'D)

You should laugh more often.

Deniz is embarrassed. Max lights a cigarette.

MAX (CONT'D)

Aren't you afraid of what you might find out?

DENIZ

Yes, but it's better than living without knowing... like you.

MAX

I know exactly what happened.

DENIZ

No you don't.

MAX

You're a stubborn one.

Deniz quotes a Turkish proverb and then translates it.

DENIZ

'When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight...'
Jubran Khalil Jubran.

(MORE)

DENIZ (CONT'D)

There's a difference between a child's experience and an adult's understanding... You prefer living with the doubt that perhaps you are wrong. Maybe it's because you're scared of discovering that what you went through back then is right.

MAX

It is.

DENIZ

You can't know, and until you do you won't stop grieving..

SEMA

(Waking up) What's that music? Did somebody die?

She leans over and changes the station.

99 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. THE CAR/A MAIN ROAD. DAY (DRIVING). 99

Max is driving. He seems preoccupied. Deniz is sitting beside him trying to read a road map while Sema, behind them, seems calm and peaceful.

They come to a crossroads. Max thinks for a moment, then signals and turns left. Deniz shouts:

DENIZ

What are you doing?

MAX

Taking a shortcut.

DENIZ

But we're going the wrong way!

Deniz quickly unfolds the map. She is engrossed in it as she tries to find where they are.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

I told you... We don't stand a chance of getting to all the addresses. Why...

She raises her head to scold Max but immediately falls silent and open-mouthed. In front of them she sees the sea - the North Sea.

100 EXTERIOR. A BEACH. DAY.

100

Max is sitting watching Deniz running along the shore to the freezing water if only to touch it, experience the feeling. Sema, standing beside him, can hardly conceal her delight.

SEMA

Mama! The water's freezing!

Deniz cannot hear her. Sema tries to explain Deniz's behavior to Max, lest he think that Deniz has lost her senses.

SEMA (CONT'D)

You've got to understand her. She hasn't seen the sea for two years. It's hard for someone who lived her whole life by the sea.

Sema rushes to Deniz to stop her from going into the water, but Deniz gets there first and splashes her. They start a water fight. Max cannot but smile at this family scene. His eyes glisten. Deniz, playing with Sema, sees Max stand up and go to the car. Her smile freezes until Sema splashes her with freezing water again.

CUT TO:

Max and Deniz are sitting facing the sea on an improvised blanket. Max has arranged a small picnic, which is why he drove away. Deniz, her hair and clothes damp, is sitting with her back to him looking at the sea and at Sema who is collecting shells at the waterline. Max suddenly sees tears flowing down her cheeks. He is concerned.

MAX

Is everything all right?

Deniz nods and tries to smile through her tears.

DENIZ

I was brought up, and only recently I also believed, that without a man, without obeying the laws, I did not have the right to live. (Smiles) You're a good man, Max Stoller.

MAX

(Smiles sadly) I've never taken my wife and girls to the sea. It's half an hour from home.

He gets up and starts packing up the picnic.

MAX (CONT'D)
I'm anything but a good man.

Deniz's eyes are locked onto the sea.

DENIZ
I talked to Berta. I think you
should talk to her.

MAX
(Angrily) Did anyone ask you to do
that?

She turns to him.

DENIZ
There are things you should know...

MAX
I don't want to know! Just by being
there I almost lost everything.
What difference does it make? It
won't bring him back to life!

DENIZ
It will bring you back to life.

101 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. THE CAR. DAY (DRIVING). 101

Max is driving, preoccupied. Deniz is beside him and looking
out at the scenery. Sema has fallen asleep in the back seat.

102 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. THE CAR/A SMALL SUBURB. DAY. 102

Max watches Deniz as she disappears into a small apartment
building.

MAX
This is the last one for today...

Sema's voice is heard from the back seat. She is not happy
with Deniz.

SEMA (O.S.)
This is so embarrassing.

MAX
Embarrassing? You should be proud
of her. There aren't many people
who've got the mental strength not
to give up. Your mother's a brave
woman.

Sema looks sullen. She does not look at the building into which Deniz has gone.

SEMA
Is that why she's humiliating herself? Knocking at strangers' doors looking for her husband... I'd never do that.

Max is silent.

SEMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'll be like you.

Through the rearview mirror Max glances at Sema, who is deep in her own thoughts.

MAX
Like me?

SEMA
You haven't wasted your time with searching and questions of what happened and when, and all that crap that's no use to anybody. And look where you are and where she is.

He is silent for a moment and then looks towards the building entrance again.

MAX
There's only one problem with that. No matter how high you get, these questions tend not to let you alone.

SEMA
How is that possible? Are they haunting you? It's you that won't let go of them.

Sema sees Deniz walking back, dejected. Sema can barely conceal her disappointment. She is on the verge of tears. She had hoped that Deniz would find him.

SEMA (CONT'D)
In any case, in the end all she's left with is heartache...

MAX

There are two more names... I'm sure
it's one of them.

104 INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. DAWN. (24 HOURS LATER) 104

Max is at the window looking down at Berta's patisserie when he hears a sound behind him and sees Deniz. She is standing facing him in her nightgown, with her beautiful hair freshly combed. Max stops breathing for a moment. She doesn't say a word and starts untying the lace of her nightgown. It almost falls from her shoulders when Max swiftly moves to her and covers her body again.

MAX

What are you doing?

DENIZ

She's asleep, I checked.

Again she tries to take off her nightgown and again he stops her.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

I thought this is what you wanted..

MAX

I destroy everything I touch. I
don't want to...

DENIZ

(Sarcastically) Toilet cleaners
don't attract you?

MAX

Deniz, you really don't want this.

She moves away from him.

MAX (CONT'D)

I understand your disappointment,
but you mustn't give up. Not now,
when you're so close.

She looks at him for a moment and then starts laughing.

DENIZ

And that from someone who's even
scared to cross the road to ask a
few questions.

He remains silent. Deniz fastens her nightgown.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

I think that at long last I understand why you're helping us. Even though you're trying to deny it, you've got this need to know what happened. It's stronger than you. You can't control it... But you haven't got the guts to see it through, so you're doing it through us. Why couldn't I have seen it earlier?

MAX

Maybe it's because there's nothing to see!

DENIZ

Perhaps. In any event, the search is over. I mean my search. I've finished.

She looks at Max standing facing her, helpless. They are silent for a moment.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

That means you're free. You can go and not come back. It's over.

He does not say a word. She gives him one last look, goes into her bedroom and closes the door. Max remains standing there for a long moment.

105 INTERIOR. DENIZ'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

105

Deniz is lying in bed with her eyes open. She hears the door close as Max leaves. She curls up in a fetal position as she is choked with sobbing.

106 MAX'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

106

Max is sitting alone in his room. He is talking to Ronit on the phone. He seems broken.

RONIT (PHONE)

Max, I asked you not to call any more.

MAX

I just wanted to talk to the girls..

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)

Ronit?

RONIT (PHONE)

They're asleep.

He is silent for a moment. He looks tortured and on the verge of tears.

RONIT (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Max, I asked you to stop calling.

MAX

(Mumbles) I don't know where I am..

RONIT (PHONE)

What?

MAX

I'm sorry... for everything.

107 INTERIOR. BUILDING HALLWAY/DENIZ'S APARTMENT. DAY. 107

Max is climbing the stairs. He stands outside Deniz's door. He is carrying a gift-wrapped package. He knocks on the door. Deniz, red-eyed from crying, opens it. She does not say a word. She leaves the door open and goes back inside.

108 INTERIOR. DENIZ'S APARTMENT. DAY. 108

Max is standing in the middle of the living room that is decorated for Sema's birthday, but there are no children there. Deniz removes the untouched plates of refreshments.

DENIZ

I tried to explain to her that no matter what she does, what she wears, what music she listens to... she'll never be one of them.

MAX

(Stunned) Nobody came...

DENIZ

Neither German nor Turkish kids.

MAX

Where is she?

Deniz shakes her head, indicating that she doesn't know. Max hurries out.

109 EXTERIOR. A HIDDEN CORNER/A STREET. DAY.

109

Sema is sitting immersed in her own thoughts when she suddenly hears Max's voice.

MAX (O.S.)
Happy Birthday.

She raises her head. Max gives her his present. She does not smile.

SEMA
Happy for who?

MAX
Aren't you going to open it?

She does not reply. Max stands before her, decisive.

MAX (CONT'D)
Get up!

She is surprised by his commanding voice.

MAX (CONT'D)
Has the music you listen to damaged
your hearing?

She gets up listlessly.

MAX (CONT'D)
There's only one thing that can
help...

SEMA
(Sarcastically) Force everybody to
love me?

MAX
Hey! I don't want to hear things
like that again!

SEMA
Nobody forced you to stay.

He grabs her hand and pulls her after him.

SEMA (CONT'D)
Where are we going?

MAX
It always helped me...

110 INTERIOR. BERTA'S PATISSERIE. DAY.

110

Max is sitting opposite the despondent Sema as Berta serves them her famous Black Forest gâteau.

BERTA

(To Max, in English) I knew that if you came back it would be because of this. (To Sema) He and his father loved this cake.

MAX

And my mother...

Berta completely ignores this last remark, as if his mother was not part of this story.

BERTA

(To Max) How many years since you had some?

MAX

Ever since I left. Don't you remember that my mother used to come in with us sometimes?

Berta ignores this question too.

BERTA

(Laughing) You left? You never left, Maximilian. Leaving is impossible. Not from a place like this.

Berta moves to serve other customers. Max tries to tempt Sema.

MAX

(To Sema) Go ahead, try it.

She is uncooperative. He tries reasoning with her.

MAX (CONT'D)

I began in exactly the same place as you. No father, a new country... not belonging. The most unpopular kid.

She gives him a look of "I don't buy that". He smiles to himself.

MAX (CONT'D)

They'd mimic my accent. Laugh at me.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

But the more they laughed, the more they pushed me to succeed. Do you understand?

She does not raise her head. She toys with the cake on her plate.

SEMA

I don't really care about them...

She is choked by her tears.

SEMA (CONT'D)

It's my birthday... I thought he'd come or at least send a letter... a card... I disappointed him so much and I can't do anything about it. It's too late.

Max is almost crying too.

MAX

Don't say that.

SEMA

But it's true...

He takes her hand. He understands her.

MAX

So prove to him that you're better than he thinks. If I succeeded, so can you. And you're far more talented than me and almost as good looking...

She can't help smiling. She looks at him for a moment, gets up quickly and kisses his cheek.

SEMA

Thank you.

He is moved by her gesture.

MAX

Now open your present.

Sema who takes the package and shakes it. By the sound it makes she quickly and smilingly decides what it contains.

SEMA

A paintbox. (Rebuking) Max, I'm thirteen! Have you forgotten?

She opens the package.

SEMA (CONT'D)
I'm not a little girl. I stopped
painting when...

She stops talking when she sees the impressive box. She opens
it to find a beautiful watch. She is amazed.

SEMA (CONT'D)
Are you sure this is for me?

When she receives no answer, she raises her head to find him
weeping silently and uncontrollably. He has just finished
tasting the cake.

SEMA (CONT'D)
(Stunned) You're crying...

He does not reply. He looks as if he is somewhere else
completely.

111 INTERIOR. THE TOILET, BERTA'S PATISSERIE. DAY. 111

Max is sitting on the toilet bowl, weeping uncontrollably.
Sema's voice is heard through the door.

SEMA (O.S.)
Max?

MAX
I've got something in my eye. Go
back to the table.

BERTA (O.S.)
Maybe a damp towel?

Max tries to collect himself.

BERTA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Maximilian...

Max, who has almost regained his composure, is assailed by
another bout of uncontrollable weeping that comes straight
from his gut.

112 INTERIOR. THE KITCHEN, BERTA'S PATISSERIE. DAY. 112

Berta is pouring hot water into a cup for tea.

BERTA

I think she's gone to get her mother. She was frightened.

Max looks drained.

MAX

Poor kid, and on her birthday too.

Berta gives him the tea.

BERTA

Careful, it's hot.

MAX

Why did you stay, Berta? Why didn't you leave like everyone else?

Berta starts mixing cake ingredients.

BERTA

It's my home. How can you leave a home? What happened to you?

MAX

I don't know. I just had a taste. That's all. It all came back. It was so real. I could actually touch him.

BERTA

You used to come here every Sunday morning.

MAX

Him in his suit...

BERTA

Always in a suit... A striking man.

MAX

He'd sit facing me with that disappointed and tortured expression...

BERTA

I remember you sitting on his lap eating the cake together. Laughing.

MAX

My father?

BERTA

How could you remember? You were little and that was a time that anyone would want to forget.

MAX

All I remember is a hard man who got up every morning, went to work, came home in the evening, sat in his armchair, and didn't say a word. I was like air for him.

BERTA

He loved you...

Upset, Max interrupts her.

MAX

He wasn't capable of loving or touching.

Deniz's voice is suddenly heard.

DENIZ (O.S.)

Is that why you stole the cake?

Max turns towards her voice. Deniz is standing by the door. She has been there for several minutes.

MAX

Yes... I evidently wanted a bit of attention. (Angrily) A spoiled brat!

Max tries to stifle the tears again welling in his eyes.

MAX (CONT'D)

(To Berta) I should have known he'd come to you and pay for it, even with the Gestapo in the streets. If I hadn't taken the cake he wouldn't have been caught. He would have left with us... He'd be alive today.

He raises his eyes to Berta who is somewhat stunned. He smiles sadly.

MAX (CONT'D)

You didn't know that...

BERTA

The cake? I didn't tell him about the cake you pinched.

Now it is Max's turn to be surprised.

BERTA (CONT'D)

He came in here a month later and paid for the cake. I remember it well. You had already left. And I was sure he'd left with you.

Max has difficulty in understanding.

MAX

If... if you didn't tell him about the cake, then why did he leave? If they didn't capture him that day, why didn't he come home? It can't be.

BERTA

I thought you knew the answer. Because I asked him but he didn't want to talk about it. What was important for him was that you'd managed to get away.

Max looks at her for a moment. He can't understand what is happening. He puts his cup down and gets ready to leave.

MAX

You're a good woman, Berta, but I'm afraid you're a bit senile.

BERTA

Ask Günther. He certainly knows what happened there.

On hearing her last sentence, Max smiles. Now he is convinced she is senile.

MAX

It's a bit difficult to speak to the dead...

BERTA

Günther's not dead. I've even got his address here somewhere...

She goes to look for the address. Max is now totally confused.

DENIZ

Who's Günther?

MAX
(Mutters) A family friend. It was
him who saved us.

Berta comes back with the address.

113 EXTERIOR. A STREET IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. DAY. 113

Deniz is hurrying after Max who is walking away from the
neighborhood, upset.

DENIZ
If you don't believe her, then call
your mother and ask her.

MAX
My mother? She's worse than Berta.
She's just like you, just like this
whole crappy world - holding onto
the past as if there's no life
without it! She's lived in Israel
for thirty years and she never left
Germany.

DENIZ
Don't you want to know what really
happened?

MAX
I know what happened - he's dead!

Max starts walking. Deniz stops him.

DENIZ
But you're alive...

114 INTERIOR. FRANZ'S HOME. NIGHT. 114

A living room cluttered with watches. Max is standing by the
glittering Christmas tree, looking at one of the watches.

FRANZ (O.S.)
I'm glad you came.

Max turns to Franz who gives him a glass of whisky. Franz
himself looks drunk.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
Do you know what it means when you
start drinking alone? (Drinks) That
you're alone.
(MORE)

FRANZ (CONT'D)
(Sits down) And how are you? How
are you enjoying Christmas?

MAX
Like you, shitty. (Sits down) Why
don't your children speak to you?

Franz is silent for a moment.

FRANZ
Where are your cigarettes?

Max passes them over. Franz lights one. They sit together,
gazing at the tree.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
Today is the longest day of the
year. Thirty-one hours. Thirty-one
hours. That's what it takes Santa
Claus to get to everybody. On the
logical assumption that he travels
from east to west.

MAX
What are you talking about?

FRANZ
I'm talking about 822.6 calls per
second! One thousandth of a second
to visit each child. Stopping,
getting off the sleigh, climbing
onto the roof, down the chimney
into the living room, filling the
stockings with goodies and leaving
presents under the Christmas trees,
climbing back up the chimney and
back down to the sleigh to get to
the next house, and so on and so
forth. And as you know, he's not
what you'd call slim. It's
difficult!

Max cannot but smile.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
(Gets up) I almost forgot...

Franz goes to the safe in the corner and opens it. He takes
out a Rado watch and puts it on the table in front of the
amazed Max.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
Wear it in good health. And bad
health, too.

MAX
(Reaching for his wallet) How much
did it cost you?

FRANZ
It's a Christmas present.

Max tries to protest but then the phone rings.

FRANZ (CONT'D)
It's probably God. He heard me
slandering Santa Claus.

Max laughs. Franz goes out of the living room. Max looks unbelievably at the watch. The open safe suddenly catches his eye. He sees some old photos. From where he is sitting he thinks he can see one of somebody in an army uniform. He gets up and goes to the safe, mesmerized. He is almost there when Franz's voice stops him.

FRANZ (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What do you think you'll find in
there?

Max turns to Franz who goes to the safe.

MAX
There's a photo... Is it you?

FRANZ
Everyone's got a safe like this,
Max.

MAX
Is that you in the photo?

FRANZ
(Closes the safe) And what
difference would it make?

Max stares at him for a long time.

MAX
It makes all the difference.

Max gets up to leave.

FRANZ
You can't cut yourself off from the
past, Max! You can't! Not if you
want any kind of future...

Max looks at him, and for a moment it seems that he wants to say something, but in the end he goes out of the living room, leaving Franz alone facing the Christmas tree. Franz sees the watch, that Max has not taken, on the table.

115 EXTERIOR. A PHONE BOX. NIGHT

115

Max is upset and excited. He is talking to his mother who also sounds upset.

ESTHER (PHONE)
What difference does it make when
your father was caught?

MAX
It makes a difference to me.

ESTHER (PHONE)
He's dead, Max. They killed him.

Max is silent. Through the phone box window he sees Deniz getting out of a taxi that has drawn up outside.

ESTHER (PHONE) (CONT'D)
Why are you doing this? Nothing you
can do will bring him back.
Nothing.

Max has difficulty speaking.

MAX
I killed him.

ESTHER (PHONE)
(Surprised) What? What are you
talking about? You didn't kill him.

MAX
I'm going to talk to Günther...

ESTHER (PHONE)
(Shocked) Günther? Max, please.
Leave it and come home before it's
too late.

MAX
It's already too late.

He hangs up.

116 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI IN A SIDE STREET. NIGHT. 116

The taxi stops outside a small house.

DIRECTOR

This is it.

When nothing happens the driver looks into the rearview mirror. Max and Deniz are sitting in the back seat. Max does not move.

DENIZ

Do you want me to come with you?

Max shakes his head. He opens the door and gets out. Deniz watches him walk towards the house.

117 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI. NIGHT. 117

Max and Deniz are sitting silent in the back seat.

118 EXTERIOR. THE ROADSIDE. NIGHT. 118

Max is on the roadside vomiting violently. Deniz is trying to help him.

119 INTERIOR/EXTERIOR. A TAXI/FRANKFURT. NIGHT (DRIVING). 119

The taxi stops at a red light. Max looks out.

MAX

She should have told me.

DENIZ

A child who's just lost his father,
is forced to escape from his home
to a new country, and then has to
face the fact that his mother... the
only stable thing remaining for
him, loves another man and because
of that his father has left them...
She did the right thing.

MAX

You wouldn't have done it.

Deniz looks out of the window, a sad smile on her face.

DENIZ

I found him. Ibrahim. My husband.

Max looks at her, surprised.

DENIZ (CONT'D)

The day we went out together, at
the last address we went to.

MAX

Why didn't you say anything?

DENIZ

What could I say? That he's married
to a German woman and they've got a
baby?

The light changes to green. The taxi drives on. Max looks at Deniz who is looking out of the window. He too looks out. They sit there, at their own windows with a space between them. Max reaches for her hand. He touches it precisely in the middle of the seat, dead center. She opens her fingers. Their fingers intertwine. Max squeezes her hand hard.

MAX

Sometimes it's best to just let go...

Silence.

DENIZ (O.S.)

So what now?

MAX

(Not really understanding the
question, but the answer is very
clear) What now? Now I've got a
game to win...

120 INTERIOR. A CORRIDOR IN THE BASKETBALL ARENA. NIGHT. 120

Max is striding alone down the long corridor leading into the arena. The sound of basketballs bouncing on the court can be heard from a distance, becoming stronger as Max comes closer to the court. The sound of excitement before a big match. He walks up to the court and sees the Italian team practicing. The players seem relaxed and experienced. The Italian coach feels Max's presence, turns around and gestures towards him. Max nods. He smells the cold air in the arena, looks at the empty tribunes and walks away. Axel comes towards him, tense before the game. Max does not stop.

AXEL

(Disappointedly) Only about three
hundred bought tickets...

Max stops at the dressing room door. He smiles encouragingly at Axel.

MAX

We'll have three thousand soon, I promise you.

Axel smiles but is not convinced. He adds.

AXEL

Franz won't be coming. He's not feeling well.

Max looks at him for a second and enters into the dressing room.

121 INTERIOR. THE DRESSING ROOM. NIGHT.

121

Max stands facing the squad who watch him expectantly. He surveys them. Thomas is obviously not there. He smiles at them.

MAX

(in German - for the first time in front of the team) My name is Max Stoller and I was born not far from here. I'm a Jew, I'm an Israeli, and together we're going to win today...Lets go!!!

122 INTERIOR. THE BASKETBALL ARENA. NIGHT.

122

CLOSE UP of the wooden floor - same as we saw in the pre title scene. A ball comes in to the frame and bounces on the floor. Its sound fills the air, now mixed with the sound of the small crowd. CLOSE UPS of the tense, focused players of the German team. CLOSE UP of Axel walking up and down the side lines, smiling nervously. CLOSE UP of Max, cool, calm and collected but with a sparkle in his eyes. CLOSE UP of the referee who puts the whistle in his mouth and blows it. CLOSE UP of the ball going up into the air. Max watches it, following it as it goes up and up into the air.

123 INTERIOR. BERTA'S PATISSERIE. DAY.

123

A knife cuts a cake and we see Berta who finishes placing four cakes on a tray. She makes her way between the Turkish migrants in the patisserie until she reaches the table where Max, Ronit and their two daughters are sitting. They look happy.

124 EXTERIOR. A SEASIDE VILLAGE IN TURKEY. DAY.

124

A young girl is happily riding her bike. The watch she is wearing tells us it is Sema. She reaches a house facing the sea. Deniz is hoeing her vegetable garden. Sema goes over to her and shows her a newspaper report: "Max, Mr. Basketball, puts Germany on the World Basketball Map..." There is a photograph of Max with the starting five - that includes Thomas, right next to Max, both smiling and excited.

THE END