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Ararat

By Atom Egoyan

- You can't bring this in.
- Please.
- No fruit or vegetables.
That includes...
pomegranates. It's on your form.
- I like to eat the seed
of this fruit.
One each day. For luck.
- I'm sorry, that's not allowed.

[Announcement]:

reasons, please do not leave
your bags unattended.

Veillez garder avec vous
vos bagages a main
en tout temps

pour des raisons de securite

- What are you doing?

- This way, I don't need
to bring it in.

I eat it here,

at the gate of your country.

Look.

So, I bring luck in my stomach.

Will you try it?

Raffi, the real point of this poem
is that the girlfriend is crazy!

'No!' The girlfriend said angrily,

'I want your mother's heart!'

So the boy went and killed his mother.

You know what they say...

There's always

a woman at the heart of it.

As he ran through the streets
with her heart in his hands,
he tripped and fell.

His mother's heart cried out...

'My poor boy!'

'Did you hurt yourself?'

- You know what?

I completely forgot
you had a party.

- I told you she...

The party's not the point.

The fact is, you make these physical appearances without letting anybody know.

I mean, it makes perfect sense to me.

- Why would I need to tell anyone?

- I'm not saying you need permission.

Permission for what?

- Celia, just try to understand her point of view.

Raffi, stop talking about your mother.

Why can't I read her book?

- Just wait till it comes out.

- But you've read it.

- Give me your copy.

- No.

- Why not?

I'm part of the family.

- Look, I promised her that I...

- What?

- I wouldn't give you my copy.

- Please.

- Celia, come on.

- I'm making it hard for you to be the perfect son.

I'm sorry.

- I don't get why it has to be this way.

- Yes, you do.

- I was happier when you got along.

- It wasn't as much fun.

- Says who?

- The ghost of the father... my father, not yours.

Yours died like a hero.

Mine died in a stupid accident, according to her.

You look after your goals, Raffi. And I'll look after mine.

- Did you give her my book?

- This is too weird for me.

- What is weird, Raffi?
Smoking pot? Or sleeping
with your step-sister?

- I'm old enough to know what...

- What are you telling me, Raffi?
That this is all normal?
That she should continue
to harass me?
Tell people that I'm responsible
for her father's death?
No one asked her to come here.
She could've stayed in Montreal.

- She needed us.

- What she needs is to destroy me
the same way
she thinks I destroyed him.

- Mom...

- She will never understand
why I stopped loving her father's.

- Or for seeing someone else?

- I'm not accountable to her.

- I am.

- Why?

- Because I love her.

That's a new twist to the story.
Why do you need to call it a story?
Don't you have anything better to do
at your age than fall in love?
My age? You were married at my age!

- Thank you.

- Tony, why don't you say grace.

- For what we are about
to receive, may the Lord
make us truly grateful. Amen.

- Amen.

- Dad?

- Yes.

- Why didn't you say 'Amen'?

- Well, I say it inside.

- Inside where?

- Inside my head.

- Can God hear it
inside your head?

- What do you think, Dad?

- God hears all your thoughts.
- But you don't believe in God.

Grandpa, that's not really what happened.

- See you.

- Bye, Grandpa.

- Here's the situation, Dad.

Whenever Tony comes over alone, he's fine.

We play, he laughs,

he's full of joy.

Whenever you're around,

he becomes quiet and withdrawn.

- That isn't true, Philip.

- And we can't stand it.

The more oppression you...

- Oppression?

He loves when I'm there.

- The more you bring this heavy

cloud into our apartment,

the more he believes

that the way we live is wrong.

- Now, I have never

told him that.

- You don't need to.

He can feel your disgust.

- Philip...

- And where did he get that...

Ali doesn't believe in God?

- He asked me why your friend

doesn't say grace with us...

- My friend.

- I told him he had his own God.

And that's true.

Philip, I'm...

I'm trying really hard to...

accept all this. I really am.

- Dad...

you're retiring soon.

You're gonna have a lot

of time on your hands.

Either you make an effort

to change your attitude,

or you're not... welcome

at our place anymore.

- Where you coming from?

- Turkey.

- Can you open this?

What are these?

- It's film.

It's motion-picture film.

It's for a movie.

I have, uh...

- This sort of thing is usually done through a bonder.

- Well, they wanted me to hand-deliver it.

- Who's 'they'?

- It's very valuable footage.

- Can you open it?

- Well, no.

It's exposed film.

It'll destroy it.

- Oh?

- It's for a movie that's being shot here in Canada.

I had to go to Turkey to get some process shots.

- Process shots?

- Shots that'll be used for digital effects. And plates. That sort of thing.

- I don't understand.

- There needs to be scenes of hundreds of people passing through these places.

And it's too expensive to take actors and extras to the middle of nowhere, so we shoot empty shots of locations.

It's cheaper to add people in later on.

- Huh.

L'll be back.

Arshile Gorky's Studio

New York City, 1934

- Arshile Gorky remains one of the most influential figures

in modern art.

His most famous painting,
'The Artist and His Mother,'
is based on a photograph
that was taken in 1912;
the only image that exists
of the artist's early life
in his native land.

Gorky is seen holding
a bunch of small flowers
as a fragrant gift
to his absent father,
the intended recipient
of this remarkable photograph.

- I'm confused.

Had Gorky changed his name
by this point?

- No.

He changed it in his twenties,
after his arrival
to the United States.

- Celia, sit down.

- Gorky looks prematurely solemn.

With almond eyes and oval face,
his hair combed neatly
to the side,
Shushan looks bravely
at the camera,
challenging her absent husband...

- Challenging?

Why would you say that?

Isn't it obvious he knew
the Armenians were about to be
massacred? He went to America
to prepare a life
for his family.

They wanted to send him
a photograph
to let him know
they're still alive.

There's nothing challenging...

- Gorky never understood
why his father did not return.

- Celia, just sit down. Come on.

- Aren't you confusing Gorky's father with your dead husband? I mean, your first dead husband. The one who was shot by the police. The terrorist.

- Sit down.

Sit down. We're here to listen to this lecture.

- Let's go.

- 'The Artist and His Mother' is not simply a painted version of a photograph. The differences underline the expressive elements that make this piece such a powerful work of art. Gorky's homage to his mother was bound to take on sacred quality. His experience as a survivor of the Armenian genocide is at the root of its spiritual power. With this painting, Gorky had saved his mother from oblivion, snatching her out of a pile of corpses to place her on a pedestal of life. Let me look at you son. You're missing a button! It must have fallen off... Hold your hand in front of it. Like this?

Yes.

I'm just so shocked to see you here. I've seen all your films and I really...

- Please. Please.

- We're the ones who are overwhelmed by this. I've been writing this screenplay for five years,

done as much research
as possible
and you come up with this.

- With what?

- Well, that Gorky was a child
during the rebellion in Van,
that he was there.

It's amazing.

- My mother

was a genocide survivor.

All my life, I promised to make
a film to tell her story,
how she suffered.

And now,

we are making this film.

- I'm not understanding
something.

Is Gorky in your film?

- Not yet.

- As you were speaking,
we got very excited
about the idea of working
him in. As another character.

Well, not an entirely
new character,
but a character
we could build on.

See, this amazing artist
as a young kid...

It would be great
to have you as a consultant.

- You have her photos, a gift
from the ashes of all
that has been destroyed.

We can open this gift together.

- What's going on?

- Why did you bring up my dad?

Well, he didn't run away.

Okay, my mum just had to
distance herself from him.

- Huh. To save the family.

- He wasn't a terrorist.

- I didn't say he was.

- You said he was a terrorist.

- Did I? Well,
I suppose you could see it
that way.
I mean, he was about to
assassinate a diplomat.
- He was a freedom fighter.
Celia, there's a difference.
- Sure, it was
a really cool way to go.
A lot better than my dad...
jumping off a cliff.
- Jumping.
- He committed suicide.
- Well, that's new.
I thought the story was my mom
pushed him off the cliff.
- Story.
You think I'm making up a story?
- No, it's...
it's not what I meant.
- Raffi, I'm saying
that what happened
to my father matters.
I know that no one else cares,
but it matters to me.
- Well, then how
do I make it matter,
what happened to my father?
- You just do.
- How?
- You go there.
And you stick it in here.
And you listen to it beat.
Beat all night, all day.
That way, you never forget.
- Mount Ararat.
When I was a boy,
my mother used to tell me
this was ours.
Even though it was so far away.
And I used to dream
of a way to approach it,
to make it belong to who I was,
to who I became.

- Marty,
this book is the key
to your character.
It's the actual journal
of Clarence Ussher,
published in Boston
and New York in 1917.
Every scene in this film
is based on this document.
Think of it.
It is the true story
of a man who sees
an entire community wiped out
and is sickened by it.
So... so you can't play it...
- I've read this book.
As well as every available
piece of archival material
that so much as hints
at the region or these people
or the Armenian genocide.
I'm currently rereading
the Bible with Ussher in mind,
so beyond that,
it's pretty much...
up to my imagination.
And now I'm here
to make a film with Edward...
Saroyan.
Okay?
- This painting was very,
very popular even 100 years ago,
when it was painted.
And it's very popular now.
People love this painting.
And I think it's because...
because it's such a warm, safe
picture of two little kids.
We get the feeling that these
two kids in front of the fire,
warming themselves
after their bath...
- How'd it go?
- Think it went great.

- Did you get it?

Did he like you?

- I think so.

[Ring!]

Hello.

Yeah. Oh my God!

Oh my God!

- Good news?

- He just got a big part.

In a movie.

- Let me call you right back.

'Cause I'm in a gallery
and I can't really talk.

- Do you play a good guy
or a bad guy?

- I play a very, very,
very bad man.

Rah!!!

Rah!

Outside the city of Van,
Eastern Turkey, 1915

Just look at them!

Nice and comfortable... sipping
their coffee.

No idea what's about to hit them.

Let me take a shot...

You couldn't shoot a cow!

There's another twenty...

twenty five...

creeping up on us...

And in the front...

one chicken.

Aim!

Fire!

- Leave your weapons outside!

Get him inside.

Get his clothes off.

And get him ready for surgery.

To make sure that we get help,
I'm sending each of you out to
deliver a copy of this letter.

[Armenian]

The letter says to Americans
or any foreign consul,

that there are internal troubles
in Van.

[Armenian]

So inform
the American government
that American lives
are in danger.

[Armenian]

- And cut.
- That's a cut.
- Okay, everybody.
- Everything you see here is
based on what my mother told me.

What is it?

- You wouldn't be able to see
Mount Ararat from Van.

- Well, yes, but I thought
it would be important.

- But it's not true.

- It's true in spirit.

- See what you can do, okay?

And let me know.

Okay, I gotta go.

Yeah, I gotta get off.

Okay, I'll talk to you later.

Okay, bye.

Sorry, I had a call.

- Rouben, Ani's confused
about the mountain, Ararat.

She has noticed quite correctly
that it would not be seen
from Van.

- Well, we thought
we could stretch things a bit.

I mean, it's such
an identifiable symbol
and given the moment in history
that we're trying to show,
I just...

- So it's something
you could justify?

- Sure. Poetic license.

- Where do you get those?

- Wherever you can.

- So that's my job?
To let you feel better
about distorting things?

- The young boy in our film
gets sent by Ussher
to deliver a letter.
He gets caught by the Turks.

- That's the character
we'd make into Gorky.

- How would you do that?

- Okay. By April 1915,
the Turks have completely
surrounded the Armenian quarter.
Within the quarter,
inside these fortified walls,
the American mission, run by
a Dr. Clarence Ussher. Okay?
Outside, a few hundred men
armed with ancient guns
are surrounded
by well-armed troops
with the latest
in European artillery.
Miraculously,
through their ingenuity,
or their teamwork,
they're able to hold
the Armenian position,
but they're completely isolated.
They're cut off
from the outside world.
Ussher has to somehow get word
to the outside world
about what's about to happen.
And so he hopes
that one of these boys...
Gorky, will get through.

- So do it.

- That's it?

That's all you have to say?
Edward Saroyan is one of the
greatest directors in the world.

- Twenty years ago.

- Yes...

- Whatever.

- Raffi, you know how long
I've been working on this.
If it can help Gorky's story
get told...

- Go for it.

What?

- Why do you still sleep here?

- It's my home.

- Doesn't she want you there?

- It's uncomfortable.

It's too humid.

- Can we talk about what happened
the other night?

- Sure.

- That's why she wanted to read
my book, so she could
humiliate me?

- So fight back.

- Don't be ridiculous.

She knows next to nothing
about art. And I'm certainly not
going to respond
to her accusations.

- You seem to be doing
a pretty good job.

- What are you talking about?

- Just the way you use history
like a weapon.

I mean, talking about
Gorky's mother
as a way of attacking
Celia's issues.

- Celia's issues.

Are you out of your mind?

It was a prepared lecture.

Raffi, she wants to believe
that I murdered her father's,
that I pushed him off a cliff.

Would I do that?

Would you like to believe
that your mother is a killer?

Is that remotely possible
to you?

- Her new theory
is that you made him jump.

- How?

- She thinks
the whole last chapter
of the book is a...
a way of admitting guilt.

- Oh, I see.
The idea being since Gorky
committed suicide,
her father's must have as well.

- It's easy to make fun of her.

- Not as easy as you think.
Raffi,
she wants her father's' death to
be more meaningful than it was.
It gives her a cause.

- We all know how dangerous
those can be.

- She has no right
to compare it to a man.
Your father died
for something he believed in.

- I just wish I had some idea
of what that was.

- This film was shot in Toronto
almost a year ago.

- Yeah, that's right.

- And now you're coming back
from Turkey
with these cans of footage?
Well, this tells me
you worked on this film
as a production assistant
and driver.
This is a letter
of recommendation
for future employment.
It doesn't explain
why you're returning
from Turkey months later.

- There was some stuff
they wanted to add in Turkey.
They added a character.

They?

- Well, the director.

And the writer. And my mom.

- Your mom?

- Yeah.

She's an art-history professor.

She was a consultant

on the film.

She, uh, she got me the job.

- So who's this new character?

- Arshile Gorky. The painter.

- Turkish painter.

- Armenian.

- Now why did you

go to Turkey

to shoot an Armenian painter?

- Well, that's where he's from.

He was born there.

Armenia was historically part

of Eastern Turkey. Anatolia.

- And they sent you alone?

Without a crew?

- Well, they wouldn't have gotten
permission to send a crew there.

- Why not?

- Well, it's not that easy

to shoot a story about

the Armenian genocide in Turkey.

It's politically... sensitive.

- In what way?

- Because the Turkish authorities
don't want to admit it happened.

- Oh. Why not?

- Well, you'd have to ask them.

- So, uh,

what's this story about?

- It's very good.

Your father's very good.

- Effendi.

- Yes.

- Can we discuss a payment?

- Do you know what I think of
as I look at these faces?

- No, effendi.

- I think of what's in their mind
as they stare in your camera.

Their desperate need
to be remembered.

For what, we may ask.

Payment is a gesture
of thanks, no?

- Yes, effendi.

- So let us examine
what it is that you have to be
thankful for.

A man of my position has chosen
you to take his portrait.

And this has
brought you prestige?

Honour?

How will you give thanks?

You're welcome.

Would you like
to thank me as well?

- Stefan!

- Another time, another means.

Very different ways to...
express gratitude.

- But deliver us from evil.

[Armenian]

Fortune is the kingdom.

And the power
and the glory

[both:]

[Both:]

[All:]

- We have to go.

- God bless you.

Do you remember when we took this
photo to send to your father?

Yes.

If the Turks capture you,
you will never give up your faith.
You will never forget your mother tongue.
If you survive...

it will be to tell this story.

Of what has happened here.

Of what will happen...

We will win, Mother.

Take this picture with you.

You will not forget me.

We will win.

- Now I want you to remember

that this has to be nailed

into the ball of the heel.

Not the sole,

'cause there is no bone

in the sole. It'll fall off.

- Ahhh! Ah! Ah!

Ah! Ah! Ah! Ahhh!

- An appeal for Christian help.

Did your missionary

feel so persecuted?

We've invested you Greeks

and Armenians

with power and freedom.

You should be

thankful!!

[Faraway screaming]

This your mother?

- Well, she's given you

this photograph

so that you may remember her.

Look at it now.

This is a face of a woman

who has raised you

to feel superior to us.

She's taught you that Turks

are vengeful and ignorant.

That we're bloodthirsty.

Now I'm going to teach you

something.

What is about to happen to

your people is your own fault.

For as much as you talk about

your prophet Jesus Christ

in the depths of your souls,

you believe in nothing...

but commerce and money.

My streets overrun with
your markets and moneylenders.
Your greed has led us
to corruption and ruin.
Now you yourselves
will be ruined.
Get this back
to your American missionary.
Pick it up!!
You take that back
to your American missionary.
He must sign it. Otherwise,
he must accept 50 of my soldiers
in the mission compound.
You understand?

- You said that this character
gave something to the boy
to take back to the missionary
for him to sign.

- It was a document
stating that Ussher
refused Turkish protection.

- But that's obvious. He's was
helping protecting Armenians.

- Exactly.

Actually, Ussher and Jevdet Bey
had met a few times before.

He tried to stop him
from carrying out his plans.

- What plans?

- For genocide.

Over a million people
were killed.

An ancient civilization
living on ancestral lands.

It was systematic
and fully planned.

The entire Armenian population
of Eastern Turkey
was eliminated.

- Now I need permission to put
in your mission compound.

- Why?

- Well, to protect you,

of course.

- We're under the protection
of the United States of America.

- The United States of America.
They're so far away.

- It won't be safe to send
so many Turkish soldiers
into the heart

of the Armenian quarter.

It's bound to cause trouble.

What danger are you trying
to protect us from?

- If you have a problem
with taking my soldiers,
you must sign this statement
that you refuse the protection
of the Turkish government.

[Raffi]:

signed the document,
it would be like giving
the Turks permission
to slaughter the Americans
in the compound.

The same way
that they were massacring
the Armenians outside.

- You've lost me.

- Well, it was the same document
that he'd presented to the boy.

If the United States government
ever made an inquiry
into the incident,

that statement,
the document the Turks

wanted us to sign,
would affirm that the Americans
were offered protection
but that they refused.

- And if he let them in?

- Well, the Turks would use it
as a strategic point.

With that many soldiers and
artillery based in the mission,

they'd have a foothold
in the Armenian quarter.
- A Trojan horse.
- Right.
- So what did he do?
- Our premises are part of
the United States of America.
They're extraterritorial
by treaty right.
Completely neutral.
And we will preserve
this neutrality to the last.
[Armenian]
Stop! Levon stop!
What are you doing, brother?
Levon, you'll be killed.
Come back, Levon!
- They were heroes.
What happened in Van
in April 1915
was an amazing act
of self-defence.
We hadn't done anything
like that
since we held back the Persians.
- And when did you hold back
the Persians?
- 451.
- 451.
- Well, like I said, we, uh...
we go back.
- Could you come back
to the office please, sir?
- See, I don't know why
I'm wearing this sword.
I didn't have it in the movie,
so it's kind of ridiculous.
This is so tight, I can't...
Does it have to be so tight?
- I wanted to thank you.
- Are you kidding?
- All right, we'll just take it
from the top here, all right?
- This was... this was

a huge break for me.
I mean, you're one
of my favourite directors.
I want to thank you.
Can I...
can I ask you something?
Did you cast me just because
I'm half Turkish?
- No.
It's because I thought you would
be perfect for the part.
- But being Turkish didn't hurt.
- Ah, didn't hurt, no.
- You know, you never asked me
what I thought of the history.
- What is there to think?
- Whether I believed it happened.
A genocide.
- Well, I'm not sure it matters.
- I don't want
to take up your time,
I just...
The thing is, when I...
play a part,
it's supposed to...
come from here.
Not here. All right?
'Cause I was doing some research
and, uh...
I think the Turks
had a real reason to believe
that the Armenians were a threat
to their security.
I mean, their eastern border
was threatened by Russia
and, I mean, if they believed
that the Armenians
were gonna betray them...
So this was... this was war.
Populations get moved around
all the time. So...
- Then again,
thank you for your work.
- Ali, we're ready for you.

- I got your car around back.

Drive you home.

Mr. Saroyan!

- Yes?

- Why didn't you answer him?

- Because he's having regrets about playing the part.

I can understand. He will receive anger from his people.

- But he thinks Turkey was at war with Armenia.

Doesn't it bother you that he doesn't get the history?

- No, not really.

- I mean, why didn't you explain to him that we were citizens, we were Turkish citizens.

We had a right to be protected.

- Are you driving him home?

- Yeah.

- Huh. Take this.

Buy him a bottle of champagne.

Let him think

that he has done something... special?

- Something special.

- I'm sorry, Mr. Saroyan, I don't think I understand.

- Young man, do you know what still causes... so much pain?

It's not the people we lost, or the land.

It's to know

that we could be so hated.

Who are these people,

who could hate us so much?

How can they still deny their hatred?

And so hate us...

hate us even more?

- That was a good scene.

- Thanks.

- Must be really weird to get

into that... head space.

- Yeah.

- I mean, I was raised with all these stories, you know. Evil Turks and everything, so... I'm a little hardened to it all. But what you did today, I mean, it, uh... It made me feel all that anger again.

- Hey, thanks.

So I take it you're, uh... Armenian.

- Well, yeah. Yeah, that's what I meant when I said I was, you know, raised to feel out of hatred to... the person you're playing.

- Right. Right.

- You really pulled it off.

- Well, it'd be kind of hard to disappoint you.

- What do you mean?

- Well, you were kind of prepared to hate my character... you said.

- Well, sure.

But I'm also kind of suspicious of stuff

that's supposed to make me feel anything. You know?

When I was watching it, like even though I know you were supposed to make me feel like hating you, I... I resisted it. But, uh...

But then, I mean, by the end of the scene, I just... I...

- You felt like killing me.

- Yeah.

My dad was killed trying to assassinate a Turkish diplomat. It was almost 15 years ago. I could never understand...

what would make him
want to murder...
what he had to imagine that
Turkish ambassador represented.
But today, you gave me a sense
of what was going on
in his head.
I wanna thank you.
- Well...
you're welcome.
- Shit.
- What's this?
- It's from Edward.
He wanted to give it to you.
And thanks.
- Now, was this before or after
my conversation with him?
- After. I guess he wants to show
there are no hard feelings.
- Ah.
Okay. Thanks.
- Were you serious
about what you told him?
- What?
- That you don't think
it happened?
- What, the genocide?
- Yeah.
- Are you gonna shoot me
or something?
Look, I never heard
about any of this stuff
when I was growing up.
You know?
I did some research
for the part.
From what I read,
there were deportations and...
Lots of people died.
Armenians and Turks.
It was World War I.
- But Turkey wasn't at war
with the Armenians.
I mean, just like Germany

wasn't at war with the Jews.
They were citizens. They were
expecting to be protected.
That scene you just shot was
based on an eyewitness account.
Your character, Jevdet Bey, the
only reason they put him in Van
was to carry out
the complete elimination
of the Armenian population
in Van. There were telegrams,
there were communiqués.

- Look, I'm not saying
that something didn't happen.

- Something...

- Look, I was born here.

So were you. Right?

- Yeah.

- This is a new country.

So let's just drop the fucking
history and get on with it.

No one's gonna wreck your home.

No one's gonna destroy
your family.

Hmm?

So let's go inside and uncork
this thing...
and celebrate.

Hmm?

- Do you know what Adolf Hitler
told his military commanders
to convince them
that his plan would work?

'Who remembers the extermination
of the Armenians?'

- And nobody did.

Nobody does.

[Announcement]:

For security reasons,
please do not leave
your bags unattended.

Veillez garder avec vous
vos bagages a main

en tout temps

pour des raisons de securite

- Roll up your sleeves.

- Why?

- Please, roll up your sleeves.

- I don't take drugs.

- Can you open that bag, please?

The number you gave me

has been disconnected.

- They must've closed

the production office.

- Then who's paying your bills?

- What bills?

- The cost of your travel.

- I'm paying for it myself.

- I thought this was

for the film.

- It is.

- Then why wouldn't they

be paying for it?

- Because...

they don't know I went.

They didn't want to shoot there,

so I... I went myself.

I found myself a cameraman and
we went to shoot this material.

I thought the director might

need some extra shots,

stuff that he could

cut in later.

- And what about the digital
effects, the people marching?

- Well, that can still be added
if that's what they want to do.

- Can you play one of these
on this?

- Yeah.

- Could you put it on, please?

- Kind of personal.

- Then let's go

somewhere private.

- 'L'm here, Mum.

Ani.

In a dream world, the three

of us would be here together.
Dad, you and me.
I remember all the stories
I used to hear about this place.
The glorious capital
of our kingdom.
Ancient history.
Like the story that Dad
was a freedom fighter-
fighting for the return
of this, I guess.
And then he died.
And now something in me
died too.
What am I supposed to feel
when I look at these ruins?
And do I believe
that they're ravaged by time,
or do I believe
that they've been
wilfully destroyed?
Is this proof of what happened?
Am I supposed to feel anger?
Can I ever feel the anger
that Dad must've felt when-'
- When he tried to kill
a Turkish diplomat?
- How did you know?
- You gave me your passport.
Files are kept.
You have to be
the son of a... terrorist.
Will you turn that back on,
please?
- 'He tried to kill that man.
Why was he prepared
to give us up for that?
Mom, what's the legacy
he's supposed
to have given me?
Why can't I take any comfort
in his death?
When I see these places,
I realize how much we've lost.

Not just the land
and the lives,
but the loss of any way
to remember it.

There is nothing here
to prove
that anything
ever happened.

[Turkish]

- Excuse me, please don't get
too close to the paintings.

- I like looking at the details.

Do you know anything
about this artist?

- Not really. I mean, I picked up
a little from that lecture
the other night.

The one you left.

- What do you remember
from the lecture?

- How much he suffered,
losing his family.

His mother dying of starvation
in his arms.

- When you look at this painting,
can you understand?

- Understand what?

- That he would kill himself.

His home was lost,
his family destroyed,
never to be seen again.

This painting
shows his pain.

So much pain.

He couldn't stand it.

[Armenian music playing]

- What do you think?

- I haven't finished it.

- What you've read so far.

- Rouben...

I'm not the best judge
for this kind of thing.

I've never read a script before.

- Did you get to the part where

Gorky rushes into the street
and grabs the rifle
from the wounded Turk?

- Yes.

- I know Edward's style
is a bit over the top, but...

- It's really...

It's very... good.

Listen...

maybe I'll get more excited
when I actually see it.

It's...

it's difficult for me to...

imagine these things

Go retrieve the rifle! Run! Run!

As a boy involved

in the heroic defence of Van,

Gorky was witness to one

of the most courageous moments
in Armenian history.

But the years

which were to follow

would see him lose a home,

his people,

and most dramatically,

his beloved mother.

In his most famous painting,

Gorky leaves

his mother's hand unfinished.

As if the history

of its composition,

like that of his people,

had been violently interrupted.

The earthly sensuality of

the mother's touch is no more.

Only pure, burning

spiritual light remains.

- Excuse me.

You said before that Gorky

worked on that painting

- That's right.

- Is it possible

to work on something that long

and leave it unfinished?

- The painting is finished.
The unfinished hands
of his mother
were left purposely that way.

- Yeah, but...
don't you think he finished
his mother's hands
and after,
decided to erase them?
That he needed to destroy
what he made?
Can we talk about his suicide?

- No.

- Why not?

- Because it was not
what I had intended
to read today.

- I'm just curious about the way
you described the suicide
in your book. You... you make it
sound as if Gorky was obsessed
with memories of the genocide,
but you don't talk about...
...coming to this event.

- Okay, okay. I just want
to talk about the suicide.
What's your fucking problem?

- You... you said something
to my father.
Like what?

- That you were having an affair.
Don't get involved in things
that don't concern you.
Did you intend to destroy his life?
What are you talking about?
My father left my mother for you...
my father gave up everything for you.
I have nothing to apologize for.
My father loved you.
My father was suffering, if he knew
that you were having an affair...
I have no doubt that he would
have killed himself.
Your father died accidentally.

He tripped, and fell.
I don't have any other way
of explaining it.
It's a question of time.
There's no rush to separate...
Listen, I didn't see him fall.
You didn't see him fall, or you don't
want to think you saw him fall.
I don't remember anything but the
fact that he slipped and he fell.
I can't remember it the way you want me to.
And even if I could remember what you
want me to remember...
...I wont.
I don't need to.
Do you understand?
- Hey! Hey, no!
Let go. Let go.
- She was carrying a knife.
- Yes.
- So there was a certain degree
of premeditation?
- It was a pocketknife,
something she always carries.
- Because she never knew
when she might need it.
- What do you mean?
- I'm talking about her job,
what she did for a living!
Oh, yes, I know
all sorts of things.
When she was arrested,
the police discovered
she'd dealt drugs, as well as
various credit frauds
on the Net. You were questioned
about your involvement;
she insisted you had nothing
to do with it.
It's all on your files.
Was that true?
- What?
- That you had nothing
to do with it?

- L... I knew about it.
- Well, you didn't tell anyone?
- No.
- So you didn't have a problem with the fact that your sister was dealing in drugs?
- Step-sister.
- Ah, yes, step-sister.
Most people are...
obvious about the crimes they commit.
By the time I get them to this room,
it's just a matter of time before...
it all comes out.
- What?
- Their shit.
- I don't understand.
- My job becomes pretty simple, really.
I sit where you are,
I watch them on this toilet,
waiting for the truth,
the compressed tablets of heroin.
Sometimes they get so nervous,
the body acid breaks the package and they overdose.
But that can take hours.
I sit and wait.
It's usually pretty silent.
They have time to think.
So do I.
You know what goes through my mind, Raffi?
I wonder if I should feel sorry for them.
They're usually kids around your age;
I'm about to destroy their lives.
I know they're sorry for what they've done

and they'll never
go through it again.
But the action has been taken.
It's too late.
- I had to go there.
- I have no doubt about that.
Aflame was lit in your heart.
You thought things
would be clarified by...
going there.
They weren't.
You lost meaning.
And people are vulnerable
when they...
lose meaning.
They do stupid things.
- I didn't lose meaning.
It's more like the meaning
of things changed.
- What are you doing?
- There's something
I need to read to you.
- Ani, you're being ridiculous.
Her attacking the painting
had nothing to do
with this film.
- I won't go on with this.
- You need to. We all do.
- What does this mean to you?
- I'm sickened by it.
- Because you feel responsible?
- No, of course not.
I'm sickened because people
shouldn't do those things.
- What, attack works of art?
- What's your point, Ani?
- Rouben, you're sickened
because that painting
is a repository of our history.
It's a sacred code,
that explains who we are
and how and why we got here.
- Excuse me, you can't cross set.
We're rolling.

We have an intruder on set.

- Okay.

We'll handle it from here.

- Oh, clamp, clamp.

- What is she doing?

- Oh, look at this.

- It took us hours

to set this up.

- I need to talk to you.

- Better be paying me

for overtime.

- Please, we're shooting a scene.

- All right, no. We're cutting.

- What is this? Goddammit!

We're surrounded by Turks.

We've run out of supplies.

Most of us will die.

The crowd needs a miracle.

This child is bleeding to death.

If I can save his life, it may
give us the spirit to continue.

This is his brother.

His pregnant sister...

was raped in front of his eyes,
before her stomach was slashed
open to stab her unborn child.

His father's eyes

were gouged out of his head
and stuffed into his mouth.

And his mother's breasts
were ripped off.

She was left to bleed to death.

Who the fuck are you?

'-In a field of cinders,
where Armenian life was dying,
a German woman,
trying not to cry,
told me the horrors
she'd witnessed.

I must tell you what I saw
so people will understand
the crimes that men do to men.'

It was Sunday morning,
the first useless Sunday

dawning on the corpses.
I saw a dark crowd in the courtyard
lashing a group of young women.
And animal of a man shouted,
'You must dance,
dance when the drum beats.
With fury, the whips cracked
on the flesh of the women.
Hand in hand, the brides
began their circle dance.
Dance, they raved.
Dance till you die.'
'...dance with bare breasts, without shame...'
[cracking whips and shouting]
Then,
someone brought a jug of kerosene.
'The brides were anointed.
'Dance,' they thundered.
There is a fragrance sweeter
than any perfume.
With a torch,
they set the brides on fire.
And the charred bodies
rolled to their deaths.
The German woman
looked at me and said:
'How shall I dig out
these eyes of mine?'
Tell me. How?'
[Screaming]
This is it, Mom.
The Madonna and child,
on the island of Aghtamar,
where it all began.
I was there
when they shot that scene.
It was the same day
she attacked the painting.
The painting based on this.
I left for Turkey a week later.
- Does she know
you went to the island?
- Who?
- Your mother.

- No. No, she doesn't.
- Have you spoken to her?
- No.
- People lose touch.
- There's something
I've been meaning to ask you.
- Yeah?
- Aren't there dogs
used for this sort of thing?
- What sort of thing?
- Well, if you think
there are drugs in these cans...
- Yeah, we have dogs for that.
- So, uh...
why don't you use one?
- What?
- A dog.
- A dog would take away
what I like most about this job.
- What's that?
- The opportunity to...
better understand
how the mind works.
A dog would come in and bark.
And that bark would mean

only one thing:

That there were drugs
in these cans.
Ruff! You're lying.
I caught you. You're a liar.
That's what a dog does.
- Right.
- I'm not saying that
what a dog does isn't important.
But there are...
other issues involved.
Aren't there?
Things a dog doesn't have
the capacity to consider.
A dog...
wouldn't know
he's being retired,
that this is his last day,

his final interrogation.

Is someone picking you up?

- No.

- Good.

Might be worried.

Even I'm worried.

- About what?

- About you.

What are we gonna do?

There's no one I can contact.

There's no way of confirming...

that a single word that

you've told me tonight is true.

- Everything I've told you

is exactly what happened.

- My mother never told me about

what happened during the march.

Only one story.

They had a pomegranate tree

in the garden.

And when they came

to take the family away,

she grabbed one of the fruit.

She knew the journey

would be long.

Every day, she would take out

one seed and eat it.

She would bite it bit by bit,

pretending that one seed

was a whole meal.

Try it.

Now, when I eat

a pomegranate seed,

it gives me two things:

Luck

and a power to imagine.

[Beeping]

- Hello?

- Mom. Hi.

- Raffi?

Raffi, where are you?

- I just got back to Toronto.

They've stopped me here

at Customs,

with all the footage
I got for the film.
They're wondering
what's inside the cans.
- What cans?
What are you talking about?
- The stuff I had to shoot
around Van.
They've stopped me here
at Customs and, uh...
they want to open the cans,
but they can't. Because...
Raffi, do you want me to lie?
- Yes.
I miss you too.
I have so much to tell you, Mom.
I went to Aghtamar.
- Aghtamar?
- I found the mother and child
on the church.
I had some days free,
so I went to Aghtamar.
Here, I'm gonna hand
you over to the inspector.
I think he wants to know more
about the film this is for.
- Hello. Are you Raffi's mother?
- Yes, I am.
- Are you a professor
at the university?
- Yes, that's right.
- And you're involved
in this film?
- Yes, I was hired
as a historical consultant.
A book I wrote
was used as a reference.
- What was the book about?
- It was about the life
of Arshile Gorky.
- Is he the main character
in the film?
- No.
- What was your son shooting

in Turkey?

- He had to go to the place
where Arshile Gorky was born.

- Why?

- To shoot some material.

- And how is this material
to be used?

- To help show what happened.

- How did he die?

- Who?

- Gorky.

- Why are you asking me
these questions?

- Did he kill himself?

[Cheering and clapping]

- Ani, we have to go.

- Where are you?

- Where am I?

- Listen, she's at the premiere
of the film,
and she'll have to get back
to you, okay?

- Hello? May I speak
to my son, please?

- So the film
is completely finished.

- Please, let me speak to my son.
Raffi?

- Yeah.

Tell me what to do.

- Sure.

L'll meet you at home.

- Marty, how are you responding
to the people
who say this is all
an exaggeration?

- It's, you know...
it's documented.

And really, every word I say
is directly quoted
from Ussher's own journal.

- Marty!

- That's where I met them,
right on the train.

- To Ararat.

- Yeah. They were shooting a commercial.

- A commercial?

- I became friends with the cameraman and I told him that I wanted to get an image with this. This. This. I wanted to get a shot of Ararat in the picture.

- What for?

- For the film. I thought it was something we could use.

- How? The film is finished.

- I wasn't thinking about that. He had to bribe a soldier to take us up. That's a military road, okay? You can't just go up there. That's his voice. You can actually hear it on the... We went up about halfway and then... We shot this footage from there. On film. On this film.

- Why didn't you tell me this before?

- I had to tell you the other story.

- Why?

- Because it meant something to me.

- So this voice on the tape, this crew person, gave you the film, let you use his camera, bribed a soldier... and then drove you up Mount Ararat.

- Yes.

- Did he ask you to do him a favour in return?

- Who?

- Raffi...

Did he ask you to bring anything into this country?

- He asked me to bring those cans.

- And what's in them?

- He said it's film.

- Why did you believe him?

- Ani.

Ani!

[Screaming]

- Close the door.

- Can we turn out the light?

- Why?

- So the film won't be ruined.

- You're still convinced.

- You can feel it in the dark.

- All right, Raffi.

Turn out the light.

Forthe last time,

what do you think is in here?

- Film.

That's what he told me.

That's what I need to believe.

- And what would happen if you didn't believe it?

- L'd be a criminal.

- And what would you say if I told you it was heroin?

- It isn't.

- What makes you so sure?

- You'd turn the light on.

- Sir? The arrivals?

The international arrivals?

- You let him go?

- Yep.

- But what was in the cans?

- Would you believe me if I told you?

- What do you mean?

- Heroin.

- No.

- Film?

- But I don't get it.

You did check the cans.

- Yeah. One.

- What was in it?

- Ah, it doesn't matter,
for Chrissake.

- Dad!

- I trusted him.

- But he was lying to you
all night. He...
He changed his story.

- The more he told,
the closer he came to the truth.
Till he finally told it.
I couldn't punish him
for being honest.

- But he was smuggling drugs.

- He didn't think he was.

- How do you know?

- He didn't believe
he could do something like that.

- Dad...
what came over you?

- You did, Philip.
I was thinking of you.

- How are you responding
to the people
who say this is all
an exaggeration?

- This film is the kind of film-

- You have a visitor.
...you can do only once
in your lifetime.
Because it tells a story
which is a true story...

- Arshile Gorky was born
in a small village
on the shores of Lake Van.
From the shores of this village,
the island of Aghtamar
was in plain view.
Gorky, as a child,
would go to this island
with his mother,
who would show him
the detailed carvings

on the walls of the church.
- Why are you showing this to me?
- This is the origin,
from the memory of this place,
right to the photograph,
to the sketch,
to the painting.
You told me to go there.
I had to put something in my
heart. If that was gonna happen,
it was gonna happen here.
That I was prepared
to throw my whole life away.
And last night,
as we were sitting in that...
dark room,
as I heard him open the can,
I felt it.
- You felt what?
His ghost.
The ghost of my father.