

Bone Music

FADE IN

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Post-war USSR is the antithesis of uplifting.

It's a SNOWY melancholy 1950's Soviet Union street. Dirty brick everywhere. Clouds like dryer lint.

Panning through the apartment buildings, PIANO MUSIC begins playing.

We come to the outside of NICHOLAS' house. Just as BLEAK and MISERABLE as the others, but a light shines through the window. We peer in...

INT. NICHOLAS' HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

LIVING ROOM

...and find NICHOLAS (8), our little hero, dark haired, rosy cheeked, dancing with his MUM (30). She's a cheery woman dressed in drab, looking sickly.

She's playing a slightly OUT-OF-TUNE PIANO and SINGING sweetly as Nicholas dances along.

They've done everything they can to make the living room COSY: There are DUSTY PILLOWS and BLANKETS strewn over an OLD COUCH.

Atop the piano, PHOTOS of Nicholas' mum singing in front of a crowd; SHEET MUSIC is scattered about the room. A dusty RECORD PLAYER sits idly next the piano.

The living room door SWINGS OPEN and DAD, (30) a story-book giant of a man, with a face that's likely never smiled, bursts into the room, his finger to his mouth - SSH!!! - he points OUTSIDE.

Mum understands, quickly closes the piano. Dad flicks off the light, and pulls the blind down.

Mum grabs Nicholas and huddles below the window, looking nervous. She coughs AWFULLY and UNCONTROLLABLY, but tries to stifle it.

Dad stands tall, his back against the wall so he can peak outside of the window. We follow his gaze, back to the street...

EXT. STREET - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

...which is THUNDEROUSLY SILENT. As if the wind itself is afraid of being too loud.

Military TANKS roll into view, SOLDIERS marching beside it. They're surveying the windows. CURTAIN TWITCHERS in other houses quickly disappear from view.

Dad watches through the window.

INT. NICHOLAS' HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Nicholas looks at his mum's scared face. He opens his mouth to speak, but she stops him and KISSES his forehead. She coughs again and it's a horrible, thick cough.

Dad looks at her, worried. Then dares another peek outside as the tanks roll by. The street goes silent again and Dad relaxes. He exhales and looks at the piano like it almost got them killed.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Nicholas is close to home when he notices a car outside.

INT. NICHOLAS' HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nicholas goes inside. Peeks in and sees a DOCTOR in the living room talking to his mum and dad. The doctor hands them an x-ray. It's not good news.

They're talking inaudibly, but when they see Nicholas, they stop and stare at him, then at each other.

Dad's head hangs. Mum COUGHS again, THICKER, more HORRIBLE.

INT. NICHOLAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER

Nicholas is on his bed, dressed in a black suit. He's all CRIED OUT.

On his bedside table, there's a picture of him and his mum hugging, along with a funeral notice. He looks at it before rolling onto his back.

On the ceiling, there are posters of AMERICAN SOUL SINGERS. In some way, a horrid reminder; he rolls onto his side.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

It's dark. Nicholas' switches on the light. The living room feels somehow lifeless now.

He walks over to the PIANO, opens the lid, and PRESSES DOWN on the key. It echoes in the empty room.

He lifts up the seat of the piano and sees a single vinyl record - his mum's face on it. He takes it out and puts it on the record player.

He looks at the machine, expectant. He PRESSES A BUTTON. Nothing happens.

He PRESSES ANOTHER ONE. Still nothing. He PUSHES the needle down onto the record, but it's stiff and refuses to budge.

Annoyed, he PUSHES HARDER. It's not working. He pushes all the buttons, pushing the needle down at the same time. He doesn't understand.

He checks and realises it's not plugged in. He pushes the cord into its socket.

Everything happens very fast - the record starts to spin; the needle starts to scratch. A TERRIBLE SCREECH echoes around the house.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

The peace of the street is shattered as the screech pinballs off all the walls. Cats meow, dogs howl, lights flick on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

In his panic, Nicholas can't think how to stop the music. He's got his hands over his ears.

Dad rushes in, sums up the situation in a sweep of the room and rushes over and pulls the plug.

The sound STOPS.

Nicholas stares bashfully at his Dad. Dad picks up the record - it's scratched beyond repair.

Tears well up in Nicholas' eyes and he begins BAWLING his little eyes out. He wraps his arms around his father, who can't even be mad.

INT. NICHOLAS' HOUSE/KITCHEN - MORNING

Nicholas is eating gruel at the kitchen table, he's dressed for school.

His Dad walks in. They barely look at each other.

Dad sits next to his son, sipping coffee. Nicholas glances at the record player, the treasured record sitting ruined next to it. His Dad notices him looking. Nicholas looks away.

Nicholas finishes his breakfast puts his bowl in the sink, leaves.

EXT. STREET - MORNING

Nicholas walks into a more centralized area, SOLDIERS become more frequent. The soldiers are CHECKING ID PAPERS and FRISKING PEOPLE.

ARMY TRUCKS are driving down the streets; PRO-GOVERNMENT rhetoric echoes over LOUDSPEAKERS. Music shops are boarded up; as if Nicholas needed any more reminding that the record he ruined is irreplaceable.

Soldiers are also hanging up PROPAGANDA POSTERS.

While the words are foreign, the symbolism is pretty clear:

*ENJOYMENT IS CONTROLLED.*

As Nicholas walks, the clouds open and it begins to rain.

A SERIES OF SHOTS AS THIS WALK TO SCHOOL IS REPEATED.

- Nicholas miserable in a light jacket.
- Miserable in a T-SHIRT.
- Miserable in the RAIN.
- Miserable in a HEAVY JACKET, snow pouring down.

EXT. CITY STREET/ALLEY WAY - NIGHT

The montage end as Nicholas is walking home, dragging his feet.

There's a noise down an alley. He positions himself so he can see, but not be seen.

(CONTINUED)

He sees FOUR SOLDIERS loading boxes from a basement into a army truck.

TWO OTHER SOLDIERS are beating a couple of long-haired YOUTHS.

A soldiers batters one of the men with a truncheon. He goes down screaming, before being dragged into the cabin of an army truck.

The other men are also BEATEN and BROKEN, pushed into the truck before it's closed and the truck speeds off.

One of the boxes SLIPS OFF THE BACK of the overloaded trucks as it rounds the corner.

Nicholas sneaks down and opens the box.

We don't see what's inside, but Nicholas is EXCITED.

He looks around, then picks up the box and runs from the alley.

INT. NICHOLAS' HOUSE - NIGHT

NICHOLAS' BEDROOM

By candlelight, Nicholas is going through the records that were in the box. There's some familiar records, but not the one he really wants. He starts to tear up.

The door is slightly ajar, and although Nicholas doesn't see him, his Dad is at the door, watching.

KITCHEN

Nicholas is at the kitchen table. Same grey routine; Same grey dinner. His father walks in; same grey father.

Nicholas takes his bowl to the sink and goes to leave, but his dad grabs him by the arm. Nicholas gulps.

DAD'S BEDROOM

Dad flicks on the light, bathing his bedroom in light.

The place is filthy. Bed unmade. Clothes piled high. A room without love.

(CONTINUED)

He goes over to a mirrored dressing table, opens a drawer and pulls out a large A3 envelope.

Then, he rolls up a rug that's on the floor, throws it over his shoulder, then gestures Nicholas to follow him.

HEAVY FOG. Dad and Nicholas sneaking down the street. Nicholas has no idea what is going on, but Dad is still clutching the envelope, rug over his shoulder.

Nicholas is stumbling to keep up, clearly unsure what's going on, where they're going.

Dad pushes Nicholas behind him and they hide in the shadows as TWO SOLDIERS march by.

Dad puts his finger to his lips.

EXT. ABANDONED FACTORY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The FACTORY is large, gated and looks deserted. Barbed wire surrounds the perimeter. It sits amongst a load of other buildings, also in disrepair.

MORE SOLDIERS are marching by.

Dad waits till they leave, then stands atop a DUMPSTER, throws the rug over the barbed wire and helps Nicholas over.

They head around to the back of the factory.

EXT. BACK OF THE FACTORY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A door, almost invisible against the dark wall. Dad leans against it and gives three sharp raps on the door, followed by two more. Then a single knock.

Silence. Dad looks around anxiously.

A slider in the door opens, EYES peer out and look Dad up and down. The slider shuts. The sound of locks.

The door opens and LEX (50) opens the door and ushers them inside.

INT. INSIDE THE FACTORY - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A light turns on and Nicholas gets a clear look at LEX for the first time. He's tall and gangly, has greying hair, and deep-etched lines in his pale face. A burning cigarette dangles from his mouth.

Dad gestures for Nicholas to wait there.

Dad whispers to Lex. Lex looks angry. They have an argument, Lex shakes his head.

Dad holds up the ENVELOPE, then thrusts it into Lex's chest.

Lex softens, thinks, then looks down at Nicholas.

INT. FACTORY BASEMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Lex's shape darkens a door. He flicks on the light. A set of stairs leads down to a basement.

At the bottom, Nicholas sees it's a very crude music recording room. Crude sound blocking materials are glued to the walls. DUSTY MICROPHONE STANDS. RECORD PLAYERS in various states of disrepair.

There's a GRAMOPHONE. A LATHE and other RECORDING EQUIPMENT. A TINY PIANO.

Nicholas' nerves are overtaken by curiosity as he begins to peruse the room like a museum. There are photos on the wall, of SINGERS. Nicholas notices a photo of his mum and dad; his Dad on piano, his mum singing.

His Dad notices, smiles and puts his hand on Nicholas' shoulder.

Dad hands Nicholas the envelope. On the outside it says "MRS. ELENA PETROV". Nicholas opens the envelope and takes out a chest x-ray.

Lex walks over and takes the x-ray from Nicholas' hand, then places it on a table. His back to us as he begins to work.

When he turns round, he holds up the x-ray, it's been cut into the shape of a record, the heart slap bang in the centre.

Dad sits down at the piano, adjusts a microphone. And begins to twinkle the ivories. He stops after a few bars.

(CONTINUED)



Nicholas, still confused, looks at Lex, who places the x-ray record on one side of the recording lathe. On the other side he places another record. It's got "Elena Demo" written on it.

Lex counts Dad in, then presses down two buttons. A needle drops on the x-ray, another on the original.

Dad starts to play the piano as Nicholas' mum's voice begins playing.

Nicholas looks on in wonder as Dad plays the entire song to his mum's backing vocals. Occasionally, we see the needle scratching into the make-shift record.

Dad does a final piano solo and then stops. The x-ray record spins until Lex stops it.

He takes off the record and hands it to Nicholas, who stares at it as if he has his mum in his hand.

Dad puts his hand on his shoulder as Nicholas clutches it to his chest.

END.