

“The Jewish Museum” Commercial
Script
Screenwriter: Alexander Dobrovinsky

A warm evening in beautiful Odessa at the very beginning of the 20th century. We see tables outside a luxury cafe. One of the tables is occupied by a famous, known by the entire Odessa bulk jeweler Mr. Rapoport and his beloved daughter. Both are beautifully dressed. If one didn't know they are Jewish, they could look Italian or French. He is wearing a bowler hat. She took off her straw hat with soft flowing brims and put it on a chair near her.

People leisurely stroll up and down the boulevards; water and newspaper merchants run around. Dignified policemen pass us by, and a couple of local barefoot townies look at them with a smirk and a touch of disdain. The sea is in front of us. Idyllic Odessa.

— Listen, katzele, I don't like it too much. When something in the country is not going the way they want, of course the Jews are to blame. And I just received a letter from New York, from your uncle. He says he is doing well there. Although you know him - lying to me is as easy for him as breathing in the morning. Surely, life is not easy there, and even proper people sometimes have to eat treif meat. But there are no pogroms there yet. Perhaps you and your husband would think it over and go and stay there for a year or two? Maybe maximum three years, G-d forbid. Until things settle down here. Do you think I have anything more important than your well-being?

— But what about you, Daddy? How can I be there without you? It's unthinkable! Don't be ridiculous! I can't live without you. And what about Bella?

— Your sister is completely into art. I wish she was completely into diamonds, like her father and grandfather. But can I make my children do something against their will? Of course, I can do nothing of that sort, I love them too much. She wants to go to Paris? Well, let her go to Paris. And while I'm alive, I will pay for everything...But can I move? Just leave my business behind? And who would support the family?

— Daddy, but children! They will forget their Yiddish, far less Russian! Will you write to me? Every day? Every week?

— Of course! By all means. One more thing... You talk to me. All the time. I hear everything my daughter is saying, wherever she is saying it. And even when I am no longer here, you will hear me, and I will hear you. Why are you crying? Death is a part of life. And if the Creator wanted it this way, then it's right. Who are we to argue with him? And I will always help you, both in this world, and from there.

— Daddy! I love you so much! I would like to die in your arms!

— No, Rivka! You must live.

A young man is passing by with a huge photo camera on a tripod.

— Mister Rapoport! Can I take a photograph of you and your daughter! I'll give you a good price.

— Wow, Daddy, let's preserve that memory: it's such a beautiful evening in Odessa!

Daddy could never refuse his child anything.

Photographer:

— Smile!

The photographer gets under the black cloth of his huge camera. We hear a muffled voice: "Look here!" and then the screen is covered with the white smoke from the flash.

When the smoke and the blinding light disappear, we see a brownish sepia photo of the father and daughter. She put her head on the shoulder of the father she so loves. They are sitting there, full of beauty and dignity, looking directly at the camera – that is, at us. Both are smiling.

[The dialog that follows has the background of a continuous flow of photographs and historical videos. Sometimes these photos and video shots turn into years – i.e., into the four-digit numbers that we understand as years. Then numbers fall apart, burn or just break down into particles. Meanwhile, the dialog never stops. We get a feeling that it's a continuous talk between two people that could take place in someone's living room. They just haven't seen each other for a long time. There are practically no pauses between the men's lines and the woman's lines. One remark flows out of the other.]

— It was horrific. Our neighbors, simple Russian people, saved us. May G-d give them health. None in our family got murdered. And the police did not do anything, they just looked the other way. But your nanny, old Pesya, is not with us anymore... Her son, blacksmith Motaele – you remember, that big guy – killed four for his little sister... and they did not spare anyone in his entire family. You think it's the last pogrom? I am not so sure...

— Bella writes that she lives in Montparnasse. She is doing great. The only thing is, all people there are from somewhere else. And they have strange last names: Fujita, Picasso... There are some of ours, too: some Movsha Shagal, but here he became Marik. He, a frenchman... It's hilarious.

— She says that everything is fine, but there are rumors of the coming war. Does she send you post cards, to Odessa?

— Oh, terrible... Moishe was drafted. And your younger brother has completely lost his mind; he wants to riot. He writes some proclamations. Meshuganer. He will not end well. Why me?

— Maybe we can return now? Revolution is Freedom! I cannot be away from you any longer! Besides, we can't seem to make it in this New York. Everything is so bad here, and the place is not beautiful at all. Where is my beloved Odessa? I miss you so, so much, Daddy!

— You know, things were just starting to get back to normal with that their New Economic Policy when we got robbed. I don't think I will have the strength to start everything from scratch. So, we are the chosen people? It seems we were chosen only to suffer. Oh, Almighty, forgive me for such words and thoughts. Everything is well: my children are alive and I should be happy!

— Finally, my shlimazel husband found a job, and we are moving to some town called Hollywood. Daddy, I know, I know... It is embarrassing that your daughter has a film director for a husband, but there was no other way; besides, everybody says he's got talent.

— Oh, what is happening here... Yes, I am not writing to you, but I am afraid. But you do hear your alter father, don't you? That barefoot townie Boruch became a grosse man at KGB. He wants me to die earlier than my time. And, you know, he won't have to wait too long. But Moishe fulfilled his dream and became a surgeon. He is even in the newspapers: he saves some workers and peasants in Moscow. His entire room is filled with flowers that people give him. I wonder, does he get paid for what he does, or does he eat the flowers? I want to move to Moscow to be with him.

— Daddy! I just read in a newspaper that Boris was executed. That's terrible. I can't wrap my mind around it, I've been crying for a week, that's all I could do. He, the enemy of the people? I left so long ago, I don't understand: is he the enemy of our or their people? Daddy, how are you? DADDY!

— Rivka, my beloved, adored daughter! It's been several years that I'm gone. I left soon after my younger son. It's not proper for children to go before their parents. So I caught up with Boruch. Almost all of your mother's family died at Babiy Yar; Yasha received a medal for liberating Smolensk.

And Moishe is also a hero. Of all the boys, I am most proud of him! He received some high rank, and he never leaves the hospital now; he operates 12 hours in a row every day. If you only knew what hands he's got! And Izya, the pianist, our relative, also came back from war. But he only has one hand now. So he'll play the flute. Just kidding! What else am I there to do in heaven? Cry? I did enough of that on earth....

— Daddy! I haven't talked to you in so long... Although you probably know all about me. My youngest David, my Davidka, my curly ingele, died in Normandy. But your other three grandchildren are getting more and more good-looking. William is a lawyer, Rebecca got into psychology, and Harry is working with his father. By the way, my husband, who you always called a shlimazel, received his second Oscar. Do you know what Oscar is? But once a schlimazel, always a shlimazel. If it were not for me... All your grandchildren and great-grandchildren know about you and remember you. That means you are with us.

— My son was arrested, my distinguished medical doctor son, a war hero and a man who had saved thousands of lives, was arrested, and your beloved brother will probably be executed – Moishele, my quiet ayid, who hasn't hurt one living thing. But I only ask you for one thing: do not betray our Faith. Bring up your grandchildren well. The Almighty has tested us, and we need to go through this, too. I love you and protect you. Daddy.

— I just had a surgery. I can barely walk. But still, I hobbled to be at the demonstration to support the Jews leaving the Soviet Union. After my shlimazel, my first and only man, died, I almost have no strength left. I think we will see each other soon. Your great-granchildren want to go to Russia to find your grave. Daddy, help them.

— I don't understand anything – what's going on there?! And who is this young rabbi that you keep pointing at all the time? And Israel? There was no such state when I was alive. So who is it? There are so many of us now around the world that I can't even keep track of all my relatives. As you can see, katzele, I am old now even by local standards. So who is it?

— Daddy! You will be laughing, but this rabbi is your great-great-granson. And you will be laughing again; you know what he's called? Just like you! Mom, come look, he's so handsome! And you know the name of that newborn meidele, that one his wife is holding? Stay there and look here. Her name is Rivka – just like me! And you know where they live?

— ...It can't be! Nooo! I want to see that. Does everything really come back... Rivka, tell me about Bella, too, and also about...

[Cue in music]

The Jewish Museum in Moscow. A Hollywood star, a young and very famous actress of Jewish descent is looking at exhibits, surrounded by a crowd of reporters, camera people and bodyguards.

In the “Odessa Cafe” section, we can see little tables, with walls covered with postcards and photos from turn of the 20th century Odessa. One of the photos is known to us: Rivka and her father. Nobody knows how it ended up there. Nobody knows who is in the photo.

A man stops by the exhibit. He is about the same age as Mr. Rapoport from the photo on the wall. He is wearing a suit and a bow-tie (of course, a very different one than Mr. Rapoport's), in a stylish small Panama hat... and he looks somewhat like our character from a hundred years before.

The movie star keeps looking at the photo and then at the man in the Panama hat. She turns to a person accompanying her (possibly a translator), and asks him something. We hear only his response: “It's a very famous Moscow lawyer”. She decides to address him.

[in English]

— Sorry to trouble you, but the person in this photo and you... are identical. Look.

The lawyer smiles and comes closer to the exhibit. He studies the photo and suddenly says:

— And the young woman next to «me» is you!

The crowd and the star laugh and look into the image.

She says:

— True. I really do look like that lady. What a strange coincidence!

One of the photographers in the crowd suggests that the actress and the lawyer sit down at the table in the same positions as in the photo on the wall and take a photo.

Feeling a little self-conscious, the actress and the lawyer sit down and take the same position as in the old photo.

We hear a clicking sound, and a blinding light fills the screen – exactly like in Odessa back then.

When the smoke/light disappear, we see a huge, the size of the entire screen, brown cepia photo from Odessa back then. Mr. Rapoport's daughter Rivka put her head on his shoulder. They are looking in the camera and smiling.

In the background we see another photo; it is smaller, but it is in color, and it's from our days.

The lawyer and the actress. In the same positions. And smiling the same way.

[Titles: Moscow. The Jewish Museum and Tolerance Center. Ulitsa Obratsova, 11, Bldg 1A. Open every day, except on shabbat and public holidays. Sunday – Thursday from 12:00 pm to 10 pm; Friday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.]