

# FIX FILMS LTD.

## *The Chess Game*

Original short film screenplay

By

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(2<sup>nd</sup> Draft - Paul Laight - December 2010)

(3<sup>rd</sup> Draft - Gary O'Brien - December 2010)

(4<sup>th</sup> Draft - Paul Laight - February 2011)

(5<sup>th</sup> Draft - Gary O'Brien - February 2011)

(6<sup>th</sup> Draft - Paul Laight - May 2011)

(7<sup>th</sup> Draft - Gary O'Brien - May 2011)

(8<sup>th</sup> Draft - Paul Laight - October 2011)

INT. COUNTRY PUB - NIGHT

Silence. Brightness shafts from the ceiling beaming a ray of light onto two opponents facing each other. Amidst the shadows bodies form a human ring around the CHESS PLAYERS. The crowd watches. Faces transfixed.

Someone COUGHS! Breaks the silence. SSSHHH from the crowd!

Calmness personified VIKTOR KOROVIN (mid 60s) EYES the board and then his opponent STEVE MURPHY (30s). Viktor SEES a bead of sweat trickle down Steve's temple. Viktor's hand moves toward his KNIGHT. Makes his move.

INT. COUNTRY PUB - SAME

PHILIP MATTHEWS (mid 40s) enters. Smartly but not overdressed. Well groomed. Moves to the bar - peeks over - intrigued by the gathering. He reaches the bar. SEES a board with a poster: CHESS TOURNAMENT - GRAND PRIZE £300

INT. COUNTRY PUB - MOMENTS LATER

Steve contemplates his move. Philip joins the throng - bottle of beer in hand. Steve moves his queen. Smiles. Hand moves to punch the time-clock.

VIKTOR

No need. Time is up.

Viktor makes his final move.

Checkmate, comrade.

Steve's scans the board. Shakes his head. Can't believe it. Viktor offers his hand to Steve. They shake. Crowd APPLAUD and CHEER their champion.

STEVE

I had that won. I had you beaten.

VIKTOR

A man is at his most vulnerable when he believes victory is in his grasp.

Viktor downs a vodka shot. The jovial landlord MIKE (30s) revels in Steve's defeat; slapping him on the back.

MIKE

You'll never beat a Russian at chess mate!

(to Viktor)

Do you want the cash now, Vik?

VIKTOR

Later. First - drinks all round!

CHEERS from the PUB! Viktor fields handshakes from LOCALS.

INT. COUNTRY PUB - LATER

Bell CLANGS: last orders. Viktor's there. As is Philip. A few locals remain. Philip peels the label off his Becks.

Background (out-of-focus): a HOODED YOUTH sits alone nursing a half-pint-of-lager.

PHILIP

That was an impressive game. Are you a professional?

VIKTOR

You're too kind. I played a little. Years ago. My father taught me.

PHILIP

In Russia?

VIKTOR

(Nods)

I wouldn't want to play another Russian.

PHILIP

What about me?

VIKTOR

You?

PHILIP

For a small wager of course?

BROWN ENVELOPE slaps on the table.

MIKE

There you go, Vik. Don't spend it all  
at once.

VIKTOR

(finishing his drink)  
I already have. You should consider  
lowering your prices, Mike.

MIKE

And how could I fund next year's prize, eh?

VIKTOR

(chuckles)  
Touché. Vodka, please.  
(to Philip)  
And for my smart looking comrade, here?

PHILIP

That's very generous. Becks, thanks.

VIKTOR

I try to be generous. But at his prices...  
Becks for-

PHILIP

--Philip.

VIKTOR

Viktor. Good to meet you. Are you new to  
the area? I've not seen--

PHILIP

--Just passing through. I've seen you  
before. During the battle.

VIKTOR

Battle?

PHILIP

You didn't see me. It's hard to know who's  
watching when you're enjoying yourself.

Philip pauses. Then gestures at the now lonely chess board.

VIKTOR  
(penny drops)  
Aah, yes. Of course.

PHILIP  
You certainly put on a memorable performance.  
Are you prepared to risk your winnings on  
another game?

Mike serves the drinks. Hooded Youth walks past and leaves.

VIKTOR  
Risk? I only bet on certainties.

MIKE  
Not in here you don't. Five minutes til closing.

VIKTOR  
(Downs shot/in Russian)  
Come with me.  
(English)  
Come.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COUNTRY PUB - NIGHT

Viktor steps out holding Philip's BEER BOTTLE. Breathes in the night air. Car pulls up. Philip winds down the window. Looks at the Hooded Youth who stands in silhouette under a streetlight. Viktor sees him as he get in the car.

VIKTOR  
Lot of undesirables around here  
these days.

Philip and Youth make eye contact. They know what happened. Car pulls away. Youth disappears into the shadows.

EXT. VIKTOR'S PLACE - NIGHT

Car pulls up. Viktor's place is a small detached property off the beaten track.

VIKTOR  
Excuse the mess. I rarely have visitors.

Viktor hands Philip the bottle as he rummages for his keys.

INT. VIKTORS PLACE - HALLWAY

Door opens. Victor leads them inside his modest abode.  
SUDDENLY: Philip smashes Viktor over the head with the bottle. Viktor GROANS falls to his knees.

Philip grabs Viktor. Pulls him to his feet and uses the momentum to SMASH him into a shelf of ornaments. He picks him up again and hurls Viktor through the living room door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A chess board sits ready on a table. Viktor crashes through the table and SLAPS to the floor. Lungs SUCK for breath as he crawls and slumps against the sofa. Blood stains face. Takes the BROWN ENVELOPE from his pocket and holds it up.

VIKTOR

Take it, take it.

Philip squats down. SMACKS the envelope across the room.

PHILIP

I'm not here for that!

Philip draws a handgun. Points it at Viktor's head.

PHILIP

I know who you are, Nicolas Orlov. I know.  
And you will confess.

VIKTOR

WHO!? I'm just an old Russian. Victor  
Korovela Korovin.

Philip leans in closer to Viktor.

PHILIP

ORLOV! NICOLAS ORLOV! You are NOT Russian!

Viktor matches Philip's gaze, splutters up a little blood.

PHILIP

ORLOV! A mercenary. Butcher. War criminal.

VIKTOR

(on knees/praying)

You have the wrong man. I am innocent.

PHILIP

Innocent? I watched you slaughter dozens of women, children, men. And you REVELED IN IT!

VIKTOR

No! You're insane!

PHILIP

Say it, "I am Nicolas Orlov. The Butcher of Vudovar!" Say it!

VIKTOR

No!

PHILIP

Confess!

VIKTOR

No!

PHILIP

Last chance.

VIKTOR

I'm begging you. Please. Can you live with thought of killing an innocent man?

PHILIP

Let's find out.

Philip stands, finger squeezes the trigger! Shot ECHOES.

FLASH CUTS:

EXT. A REMOTE CLEARING IN THE FOREST - YEARS EARLIER.

From some distance away we see a back-to-us UNKNOWN SOLDIER standing over a WOMAN on her knees.

The Soldier rubs the pistol muzzle over the face of SARAH MATTHEWS (30). Pushes her down. FIRES bullets into her. She falls forward. BLOODIED HAND clutches for grass before life drains from them. Wedding ring glistens in the sun.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

BIG CLOSEUP of PHILIP's WEDDING RING on his finger, the shot widens to show the gun, Philip and Viktor. Viktor GASPS. His left shoulder is a bloody mess.

PHILIP

Sarah. . . You took her away from me.

VIKTOR

I know no Sarah. When did she die?

PHILIP

November 1991. Vudovar. She was an aid worker. We were on our way home. We'd just found out she. . . was. . . pregnant.

FLASH CUTS:

EXT. A REMOTE CLEARING IN THE FOREST - YEARS EARLIER

Same scene through a camera lens. Unknown Soldier shoots Sarah. BANG! Gunfire drops her to the floor.

PHILIP (O.C)

No!! Sarah!!

CLICK! One photo is taken then the battered camera JAMS. Philip lowers his camera, checks it furiously then smacks it as if to punish its' failure.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Viktor stares at the grainy black and white photograph. Shakes his head. Philip snatches the picture back.



VIKTOR

I can see you're desperate to find this Orlov. But this photo. His back is to us. It could be anyone!

PHILIP

After you pulled the trigger. You turned.

Philip pushes the gun into Viktor's bloody shoulder. His face scrunches in pain.

PHILIP (cont.)

And smiled a smile I'll never forget.

(staring at the picture)

The last photo. My final memory.

VIKTOR

It's not me! It's not me! IT'S NOT ME!

Viktor sees Philip is momentarily distracted and suddenly smashes Philip's gun from his hand. Sends it across the room. He then kicks Philip in the chest. Throwing him back onto the floor against an armchair.

Philip is winded and lies stunned, just long enough for Viktor to grab the gun and turn the tables. Viktor kneels down by Philip and smacks him across the face with the gun. There's a moment as Viktor gains his breath.

VIKTOR

So, supposing I am this Orlov. What did you hope to gain from killing me?

PHILIP

You don't deserve to live!!

VIKTOR

(flicker of anger)

Revenge is a coward's emotion. So, this Orlov was a soldier?

PHILIP

A murderer?!

VIKTOR

War is like chess. There are pawns. There are Kings. Not all of us are destined to be Kings.

FLASH CUTS:

EXT. A REMOTE CLEARING IN THE FOREST - DAY

Unknown Soldier - back to us - removes Sarah's blind-fold. RUBS the gun over her face, Looks in her eyes. FIRES. She falls down in SLOW MOTION.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Viktor points and rubs the gun muzzle over Philips' face.

VIKTOR

I'm a simple man. I enjoy a drink. A gamble on the horses. A game of chess, when I can find a worthy opponent. Some days I don't leave the house. Don't speak to a soul. Every now and then something occurs in the village to lift the tedium. A fete. The chess tournament. A funeral. The village idiots are easily pleased. It's not what I'd call life. It's boring. I'm glad that you've found me - not that your pitiful little photo would prove it. I don't know how you did it. And I don't really care. I just thank you for this great gift. The chance to kill again! Tonight, I, Nicolas Orlov will kill again!

Pulls the trigger: CLICK! CLICK! CLICK! Simultaneously: BANG! A shot rings out. Viktor falls to the floor. Shot in the throat, still clicking the empty gun in vain. Starts choking on his own blood.

Philip looks to his side. REVEAL the Hooded Youth (DAVID, MATTHEWS - 24) standing in the doorway. Smoking GUN in one hand, a DIGITAL CAMERA in the other. There's an electronic BEEP sound as the recording stops.

David walks closer as Philip moves over to the spluttering Viktor. David REWINDS. Shows Philip the open CAMCORDER SCREEN. Philip moves David's hand so that Viktor can see his face fill the CAMCORDER SCREEN. Presses PLAY. We HEAR a recording of VIKTOR'S voice.

VIKTOR'S VOICE (off/from camera)

Tonight, I, Nicolas Orlov will kill again!

Philip takes his gun back from Viktor. Removes the magazine. Holds it up, EMPTY, to Viktor's face. Reaches into his pocket. Pulls out a full magazine. Waves it in front of Viktor who coughs up blood.

VIKTOR

One bullet. Clever move. For an amateur.

PHILIP

I knew you wouldn't confess immediately. I had to let you think you'd got the upper hand first. After all - a man is at his most vulnerable when he believes victory to be in his grasp.

VIKTOR

(coughing up blood)

Pulling that trigger won't bring her back. All you did was stand by. Take photos. That's all you journalists do. Soldiers risk their lives. You didn't even try to save her. I'm paying the price for your cowardice. Killing me won't end the guilt. I'll haunt your nightmares forever!

Something clicks in Philip and he begins SMASHING Viktor over and over until his face is a bloody pulp.

PHILIP

NOT ANYMORE! NOT ANYMORE!

Philip smashes until: David places an arm on his shoulder.

DAVID

Dad. It's done.

David holds up a WHITE ENVELOPE labeled "Police". Drops it onto Viktor's bloody chest.

FADE OUT