

**Deleted scene from**  
**THE DINNER PARTY**  
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Her name was Marion. He could barely remember what her face looked like anymore, that's how long ago it was, but he could remember very clearly the venom with which his mother spoke about her.

She was his first true love, the first woman he ever told "I love you," and his mother made her go away. "This is not what we escaped Dachau for," she said in her heavily-accented English. Once arriving on American soil, his father and mother vowed to never speak another word in German again, but their English was still only passable.

Alan pled with his parents—he explained that life was different now, that we didn't need to be afraid of the Nazis, that people could date who they wanted, but his parents wouldn't hear him. "This is not what we came to this country for," his mother told him, her familiar refrain.

His mother's English was very difficult to understand, but the day she went to see Marion, to pay her money in exchange for never seeing her son again, Marion was able to understand her very clearly. Marion took the check but never cashed it. But Alan's mother still felt that accepting the check in the first place proved the type of woman she was.

This was before college, before medical school, but he thought of Marion often. Still, he could never remember her face.

Alan hated his father. He was a cold and humorless man, and Alan resented him for pushing too hard. He was a man who never smiled, was never happy; a man for whom

nothing was ever good enough. Alan dutifully went to medical school (“we didn’t escape Dachau so you could be painter”), graduated at the top of his class, and earned a prestigious fellowship at Connecticut Children’s Hospital. It was a position that 2,000 applicants had applied for, and Alan was chosen. But even that wasn’t enough. Being a pediatric cardiologist wasn’t good enough—at holiday dinners, his father still didn’t seem to understand what he did for a living. “You’re not a surgeon?” his father would question. “Hymie Schultz’s boy is a surgeon.” Even though Alan was the most respected pediatric cardiologist in the country, possibly the world, his father somehow felt that Artie Schultz’s job as a man who touched people’s teeth all day was more prestigious than his son’s job saving children by fixing their hearts.

The day Alan put his father six feet under ground was the happiest day of his life. When Jews bury, it is customary for the mourners to take part in filling the grave with dirt. One family member takes the shovel, throws three shovelfuls of dirt into the grave, and then allows the next family member to do the same. When it came Alan’s time to take the shovel, he began digging and didn’t stop. Long after the time he should have passed the shovel on to the next mourner, Alan wouldn’t let go. His mother thought it was his grief taking over, that it was cathartic, and she was half right. It was closure. As he dug and dug, Alan could hear his father’s voice in his head.

*You can’t marry a shiksa and disgrace this family.*

*You will become a doctor. I didn’t come to this country for my son to be anything but a professional.*

*You’re not a surgeon? Then what do you do?*

He began digging deeper. Harder. He felt the muscles in his back begin to ache, but he wouldn't stop. He couldn't stop. Not until every last bit of land was covering his father's grave.

By the time he finished, he was covered in sweat. He had sweat through his dress shirt, and through his suit jacket, but he didn't even notice. He stared at his father's grave, and wondered why he didn't feel more relieved.

"You did a *mitzvah*," his mother said, putting her arm around him, tears in her eyes.

But it didn't feel that way.

When Alan was twelve, he was invited to Pfeni Silverstein's house for a birthday party. Alan was excited; it was the first boy-girl birthday party in his class. Until then, the kids had segregated themselves by sex. But now, as they turned twelve, the girls seemed to want boys to attend the parties. And Alan very much wanted to be there.

His father allowed him to attend. After all, Pfeni's father had escaped Buchenwald, so Alan knew that he'd be allowed to go. His father only trusted other survivors. But as every other parent dropped their child off at the party, Alan's father insisted on staying. He brought a bottle of scotch and sat upstairs in the kitchen with Pfeni's father while Alan attended the party in the downstairs rec room.

Alan couldn't relax. As the music blared and kids snuck sips from a flask full of whiskey, all Alan could think about was his father upstairs.

One of Pfeni's friends drank a bottle of Coke and then put it down on the floor. All of the party guests gathered around to see what was happening. It was a game, the girls told the boys, called Spin the Bottle. The bottle spun round and round and with each turn, Alan prayed that it wouldn't land on him. He imagined the bottle landing on him, and then, just as he was about to claim his prize, his father barreling down the stairs screaming at him. Always screaming.

Everyone was having fun. Everyone except Alan, of course. But it made Alan happy to see how delighted Pfeni was. He knew she liked him. That wasn't surprising—most of the girls liked him. He heard whisperings of how they thought he looked like Cary Grant. Sure, he had a cleft in his chin, but beyond that, he just didn't see it. Not that he minded the comparison. But Pfeni was different. She, unlike him, was allowed to purchase the school lunch each day, and every day without fail, she'd bring Alan an order of French fries. She had a long nose with a large bump, the sort of nose that Jewish stereotypes were built on. She wasn't very popular with the boys. But he couldn't help but have a soft spot for Pfeni. Out of all the boys to bring French fries, she'd chosen Alan.

His friends had all gotten kissed. Some of the boys were beginning to get a bit tipsy on the whiskey, so when the flask was passed to him again, this time, Alan took a swig. The whiskey burned his tongue, his throat, and he could feel it go down his body, finally settling in his belly. It wasn't an altogether welcome sensation, but he didn't mind it, either. Each time the flask came to him for a turn, he took a large gulp.

The kids began to get restless, so one of the girls changed the game from Spin the Bottle to Seven Minutes in Heaven. Now, if the bottle landed on you, you were to go into

the nearby closet with the girl who'd chosen you and do whatever you wanted for seven minutes. Alan knew that he should have left the circle. The whiskey had completely gone to his head, and he knew that he should sit down with some water. But his friends were all playing, were all having fun. Why shouldn't he have some fun, too?

Pfeni got to take the first turn, since it was her birthday. She knelt down on the ground and gave the Coke bottle a tiny spin. It was so delicate, the way she tossed the little bottle with her index finger and her thumb, and Alan felt as if he were watching the entire thing in slow motion.

*Spin, spin, spin.*

The bottle stopped just as Alan was taking another turn with the flask. He heard it before he could see it—all of his friends were chanting his name. Pfeni got up from the ground and walked over to where Alan stood.

"So, do you want to?" she asked. "Actually, we don't have to."

"I want to," Alan said. He got the distinct feeling that he might have been slurring his words, but Pfeni either didn't notice, or just didn't mind. Alan handed his friend the flask he'd been holding and took Pfeni's hand.

The door to the closet shut with a slam and Pfeni turned a light on. A lone lightbulb hanging down from the ceiling, it gave off an artificial glow. Alan turned off the light and took Pfeni in his arms. He heard her gasp, but that didn't stop him from leaning down and putting his lips to Pfeni's. They were soft and warm, like a blanket you wanted to curl up under and fall asleep. He wondered if she could taste the scotch on his lips. If she cared. Her lips tasted sweet, like sugar and freshly baked bread.

It was his first kiss.

Alan smiled at Pfeni and she smiled back. They each wanted to say something, but neither one could find the words. When Alan looks back on this moment, he thinks that what he wanted to say to Pfeni was something about going steady. But the whiskey and the kiss had gone to his head, and he couldn't articulate how he really felt. All he could do was stare at her dumbly and smile.

Before he had a chance to say anything, the closet door opened. Our seven minutes are over, Alan thought. But it wasn't one of his friends at the door. It was his father. Alan was dragged out of the party by his ear (was it literally his ear? That's how Alan remembers it, anyway.) and forbidden to leave his house, other than to attend school, for a month.