

THE CHRISTMAS CARP

Amidst the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, a young boy tries
to hold on to a simple holiday tradition.

WRITTEN BY:

Steph Garcia

Steph Garcia
stephgarcia2@gmail.com

Copyright (c) 2014
This screenplay may not be
used or reproduced without
the express written permission
of the author

SUPERIMPOSE: PRAGUE 1989, AMIDST THE VELVET REVOLUTION

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A small, sparse flat filled with muted colors. MICHAL DVORAK, early 30s, hammers a nail into the wall. The white wash paint chips off as he does. His wife KAJA, early 30s, sifts through a box filled with CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS.

KAJA

We cannot cancel Christmas.

MICHAL

I did not say cancel. We will celebrate. But it will be without presents and without the carp.

Hidden, ALEXANDER, 10, listens in unbeknownst to his parents.

KAJA

Michal, we have money to buy the fish. It is a tradition.

MICHAL

We have it today. But what will happen tomorrow? My job...

KAJA

What is happening is good for us. It is good for everyone.

MICHAL

Maybe. But for now, we must be cautious.

Kaja hands Michal an Advent calendar. He hangs it up.

KAJA

What do we tell Alexander?

MICHAL

No need to tell him right now. We will spare him what we can.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Alexander moves away from the door, distraught.

INT. ALEXANDER'S BEDROOM - LATER

Alexander readies himself for bed. Kaja comes in.

KAJA
Have you said your prayers?

ALEXANDER
Yes mama.

KAJA
You are such a good boy Alexi.
Such a good boy.
(kisses his forehead)
Good night my brouček.

Kaja leaves. Alexander lays in the dark, eyes wide open.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alexander stares at the Advent calendar. Kaja, wearing a ragged coat, runs in carrying a similarly ragged coat.

KAJA
Come. Come now. You will be late.

She throws the coat on Alexander and ushers him out.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

KIDS run out, Alexander included. Three boys, PETR, EMIL, and DANIEL shove him down laughing. Alexander stands.

ALEXANDER
You use the force of your muscles
because your brain is too small.

Petr goes to shove him once more but a TEACHER breaks it up. The three boys disperse. Alexander watches them walk away.

EXT. PRAGUE STREETS - LATER

Alexander walks the cobblestone streets of Old Town. He approaches an OLD MAN. They exchange unheard words. The Old Man looks around and nods for Alexander to follow him.

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

The Old Man and Alexander enter the back yard.

OLD MAN
What do you have to offer?

ALEXANDER
Perhaps this jacket?

OLD MAN
Ha. That jacket is more worn than
my mother-in-law. Your boots.

ALEXANDER
These were a gift from my babicka.

OLD MAN
They are the only thing on you
worth anything. Boots or nothing.

EXT. FISH MARKET - LATER

Alexander, now wearing thin slippers, goes from barrel to
barrel looking at the carp within. He stops at a stand.

ALEXANDER
(handing over coins)
I would like one please.

CARP VENDOR
This will not pay for a whole fish.

ALEXANDER
There must be something I can buy.

CARP VENDOR
I can give you some leftover bits
for stew. But that is all. I'm
sorry.

EXT. FISH MARKET - LATER

Alexander walks alone holding a bag. He is about to walk out
into the square when he is stopped by a POLICE OFFICER.

POLICE OFFICER
You cannot go this way. Another
protest today. Unless you want to
join it, you must go around.

Alexander looks past him to see a LARGE CROWD, surrounded by
more OFFICERS. Alexander turns and heads down an alley.

EXT. ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Alexander walks. At the other end, Petr, Emil and Daniel appear. Alexander stops. Petr shoves him down. Petr and Emil beat him and stomp on his bag. Daniel freezes, afraid.

PETR

Maybe my brain is small, but brains
do not hurt. Muscles do. Prdoch.

He stomps the bag again then leaves with Emil. Daniel stays until Petr whistles. Destroyed fish parts litter the floor.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Alexander, bruised, stares at the Advent calendar. Angrily he tears it down, ripping it up. Kaja and Michal enter through the front door and are taken aback by the sight.

KAJA

Alexander! What are you doing?!

ALEXANDER

Why do we pay attention to this God
who gives us nothing?!

Kaja calms him with a strong hug. She looks at him.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

When he takes Papa's job and
changes things for worse?

KAJA

What happened to your face?

MICHAL

And where are your boots?
(no response)
Alexander.

ALEXANDER

I sold them.

KAJA

Sold them? For these slippers?

ALEXANDER

For the carp. Carp bits anyhow.
These boys from school ruined them.
They ruined everything! And no
Christ was watching over me!

KAJA

He watches over us, my brouček. He gave us each other to lean on and get through this time.

MICHAL

It is not for you to worry about my job or what to do this holiday. You are just a boy.

A knock. Kaja and Michal exchange a look. Michal opens the door. On the other side is Daniel, hands behind his back.

DANIEL

Mr. Dvorak. I am Daniel.

ALEXANDER

It was him! Go away! Prdoch!

KAJA

Alexander!

DANIEL

I was there. I did not hurt you but I did not help you either. I am sorry. I came to offer this.

He brings his hands in front and hands Michal a large carp.

MICHAL

(surprised)

Where did you get this Daniel?

He looks to his feet. He is also wearing ragged slippers.

DANIEL

I am sorry Alexander, for Petr but more for myself and what I did not do. Forgive me. Merry Christmas.

Daniel turns to leave.

ALEXANDER

Your feet must be cold. Mine are.

Daniel turns and smiles. Alexander smiles back.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Come eat with us. We have plenty.

Daniel accepts the invitation with an even bigger smile.

THE END