

42

INT. BASEMENT - DAY

42

Beth slowly comes up behind Mr. Shaibel. He reaches out and touches one of the knights... thinking... She comes closer, the shadow of her head falling on the board--

MR. SHAIBEL

What do you *want*, child?

She stands still. He turns to her.

MR. SHAIBEL (CONT'D)

You should be in *chapel*.

Saying the word like he bit into something rotten.

BETH

What's that game called?

MR. SHAIBEL

You should be upstairs with the others.

BETH

I don't want to be with the others.  
I want to know what game you're playing.

He looks up at her a moment, then shrugs.

MR. SHAIBEL

It's called chess.

She takes a step back and he resumes his game. Beth watches as he stares at the pieces. Motionless. As if he hates them.

She watches him reach out and pick a piece up by its top with his fingertips, hold it for a moment as though holding a dead mouse by the tail and then set it on another square.

BETH

Will you teach me?

Mr. Shaibel says nothing, doesn't even register the question. All we get are the DISTANT SINGING VOICES. She tries again...

BETH (CONT'D)

I want to learn to play chess.

Mr. Shaibel reaches out a fat hand to one of the larger black pieces, picks it up deftly by its head and sets it down on a square on the other side of the board. Not looking at her--

MR. SHAIBEL

I don't play strangers.