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# THE GIRL WHO STOLE EVERYTHING

by Norman Rawin  
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## EXCERPT

"What is this field?" Nadia wonders aloud as the camera people jostle with their equipment.

Charlie glances at her a little shyly. "We needed something, you know, unpeopled. With a good view into the distance." She waves at the trees, the escarpment, the cloudless sky. They walk toward the chair. Nadia settles herself on it.

"We need you," Charlie says, "to sit still when you play."

Nadia puts her boots firmly on the grass and gets her instrument in place, mid-thigh, to feel the right looseness. She gives the strings a strum. Charlie hovers nearby and then is gone.

Gazing into the distance Nadia wonders if she will ever again play music in so strange a setting.

"So?" Charlie is back. "Are you ready?"

Her song is titled "Rumanische Fantasien." Of the recordings she sent as possibilities, it's the one that fit the filmmaker's idea of a Jewish-Polish song. Or a Polish-Jewish song, depending on who she corresponded with. Charlie had written to say the director thought Nadia played like "an old Polish bluesman."

"BURN THIS AFTER READING," she wrote. "CAN YOU BELIEVE HE SAID THAT?"

Charlie lays a light hand on Nadia's shoulder and speaks quietly.

"When I've backed away, count fifty. Then play. You won't be aware of us at all. The camera guy will be able to shift his depth of field, so we'll bring you in close. Okay?"

Nadia nods. Once Charlie is out of view she counts from fifty to ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, slowing herself at four, three, two, one . . . and into the slow repetition of the song's first chords. A bird calls and she takes this as her cue to shift into the quicker pace at the centre of the song, a whirl of rhythm, four times as fast as the rest, which might have once given dancers at a wedding what they needed to propel the bride up on a rickety chair, like the one she sits on. Ecstatic music. Then back to the slow, stately march in order for the song to close in on itself and return to where it started. It's a song that could, effectively, go on forever, in and out of its fast and slow sections.

Nadia listens to the way the dulcimer sounds in the meadow. As she nears the song's final movement, a crazy thing happens. In the near distance, by a line of fence posts, a figure appears, bent over at first, then upright, carrying something under her arm. The figure comes closer and Nadia sees that it is a woman. Old and stout. She carries a basket under one arm. Her hair is white against the greens and browns of the countryside. The woman stops to listen. This is a distraction, but Nadia winds the song up without a hitch. She sits still, hands on the dulcimer's strings. The crew begins to grumble and call in Polish.

"That was great!" Charlie rushes by, heading toward the woman on the field. Nadia watches as they talk. Then the old woman walks off toward town. Charlie makes her way back. "That was beautiful. The crew loved it. That," she points at the old woman heading down the road, "we didn't expect. But we're going with it. A little local flavour. Okay?"

Nadia nods.

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