



THE PAWNBROKER

By J.A. Brown

GENRE: Sci-fi, Fantasy

LOGLINE:

An Auschwitz death camp survivor must stop the resurgence of the Nazi party after his murdered Father's pocket watch is discovered at his pawnshop, pawned by a former Nazi Death Camp Guard.

SYNOPSIS:

In the summer of 1937, Adolph Hitler gathered 16 of Germany's greatest minds to develop and launch "Operation Stepback" a highly classified top-secret time machine designed to move backwards or forward in time.

In 1944, after being accused of treason, Chief Scientist and Quantum Physicist Carl Aleksander and his family are sent to Auschwitz II-Birkenau Concentration Camp. While there, Carl and Ethel are exterminated, their 5-year-old daughter Katie is kidnapped, and 6-year-old Jonathan, the last remaining member of their family is liberated from Auschwitz and sent to America to pursue a new life.

20 years later, Jonathan Aleksander now 26, a brilliant college student and employee at a neighborhood pawnshop watch as a stranger enters looking to pawn many valuable items, one of those items being his deceased father's pocket watch. Jonathan's now on a mission to learn the origin of the stranger's involvement and begin his journey to unravel the watches strange secrets. With the help of his best friend Malcolm Williams and FBI Special Agent Gerald Shepherd, they're on a mission to bring down the resurgence of the Nazi Party before its evil leader Maj. Helmut Volker, can try once again to conquer the world.

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FADE IN:

INT. AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU BUNK HOUSE - MORNING

SUPER: January 27th, 1945

The silence is eerie and deafening as several PEOPLE are huddled together for warmth. Many potbellied stoves for heat come into view. ETHEL ALEKSANDER (34), suddenly wakes up and feels around for her daughter KATIE ALEKSANDER (4).

ETHEL

Katie, where are you!? Katie!?

Ethel lets out a loud searing SCREAM. In panic, she runs out the bunkhouse door.

JONATHAN ALEKSANDER (6), wakes up and runs over to see his mother Ethel crying, pointing towards the main headquarter buildings and running wildly towards the fence.

Jonathan looks at several other WOMEN pointing and yelling for the guards.

The spotlight above their heads swing and locks on an uncontrollably crying and angry Ethel. The WATCH TOWER GUARD cocks the handle on the 50 CALIBER MACHINE GUN.

ETHEL

Look over there, that's my little girl!? Katie, Katie! That woman took my baby!

GUARD

You! Get back inside!

Ethel runs over to the far gate and once again points to a WOMAN holding Katie's hand and walking fast. Katie looks back, crying.

Another guard and spotlight shine in Ethel's direction. In the doorway, Jonathan tries to run out to Ethel but is held by one of the women.

The 50 caliber machine gun fires as hails of bullets rip through Ethel's torso. Ethel falls to the ground. In the distance, Katie looks up at the woman in the German uniform, holding her hand.

The woman looks back to the fence line after hearing the gunshots and sees the shooting. Jonathan breaks loose and runs towards Ethel's lifeless body. He is in shock and crying uncontrollably.

JONATHAN

No, No, Momma! Momma, Momma,
someone please help my Momma!

A long red stream of blood fills the spot where Ethel's mangled body lies. Jonathan kneels and grabs Ethel's bloody hands and lies on the ground beside her.

Ethel squeezes tight as she takes her last few breaths.

ETHEL

Help me, Jonathan! Help me--

Jonathan stays there, weeping and crying out for his mother as the spotlight in the tower turns off.

The camp ALARM sounds and RUSSIAN SOLDIERS enter Birkenau. PRISONERS start to scramble and hide in their BUNKHOUSES.

SUPER: NEW YORK 1964

PRESENT DAY - INT. CHOCK FULL O'NUTS COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

JONATHAN

(crying)

No, No, Momma! Momma! Someone
please help my Momma!

A sweat-soaked and crying JONATHAN ALEKSANDER, (now 26), sits in a booth, jerks awake from his dream.

MALCOLM WILLIAMS (24) an African American looks over at him with a concerned expression of a wrinkled brow. Suddenly, Jonathan shakes the table knocking his COFFEE and half-eaten breakfast plate on the floor.

The PLATE and GLASSWARE shatter as they hit the floor.

A WAITRESS (30) sees the incident and strolls toward Jonathan and Malcolm. Jonathan straightens up, takes some napkins, and wipes the tears from his eyes and face. He glances across at Malcolm.

MALCOLM

Jon, are you ok?

JONATHAN

I'm ok, it's these damn dreams! I
have them from time to time.

The waitress looks down at the scattered broken dishes on the floor and then focuses on Jonathan.

WAITRESS
You ok mister?

MALCOLM
He's ok. Right, Jon?

JONATHAN
Yes, yes I'm fine! Is my to-go
order ready?

WAITRESS
It's ready, you can pay at the
counter and you'll have to pay for
the broken dishes, too.

Jonathan looks over at Malcolm and shakes his head.

JONATHAN
Let's go, we're gonna be late
again.

They get out of the booth and walk towards the register.

INT. NEW YORK CITY - PAWN SHOP - MORNING

Jonathan and Malcolm enter the shop and make their way through the crowded pawn shop: there are several JEWELRY COUNTERS, some ANTIQUE FURNITURE and several large ZENITH TV CONSOLES and various COLLECTABLES.

Jonathan approaches the owner CHARLIE ROSS (60s), Caucasian, and his beautiful Puerto Rican wife, ESTELLE (30s).

Jonathan throws his backpack down and places the food on the counter. Malcolm takes a seat behind the jewelry counter.

JONATHAN
I brought breakfast!

CHARLIE
Good boy, Jonathan! Whatcha got?

JONATHAN
Egg, bacon and cheese sandwiches
and some--

Jonathan pauses as the BELL over the front door JINGLES.

ESTELLE
Thanks, I'll take one!

JONATHAN
Sure.

Jonathan passes Estelle a breakfast sandwich. He turns his eyes toward the front door, and they acknowledge the customer who just walked in.

HANS ROLAND (47), short and heavy set with a LONG SCAR across the right side of his face.

HANS
(thick Germanic accent)
Yah, I would like to sell some things, yah?

JONATHAN
Sure, just talk to the owner Charlie over there, he'll assist you.

HANS
Danke. Uh, thank-you.

Jonathan stares at the man. Hans looks deeply at Jonathan as he rests his medium suitcase on the glass counter. Charlie walks over to greet the man.

HANS
Yes, yes, are you the owner?

CHARLIE
Yes, I own the shop. Whatcha got?

Still resting his eyes on Jonathan.

HANS
I've got many items to sell you today, but can that young man assist me?

CHARLIE
No, Jonathan is moving equipment in the back. I'll deal with you.

INT. NEW YORK CITY - PAWN SHOP - LATER

Charlie walks over to Jonathan and hands him a uniquely crafted GOLD POCKET WATCH.

CHARLIE
Malcolm said you can speak and read German, what does this say?

Jonathan leans in, opens the watch lid, and sees a tiny FAMILY PHOTO with an inscription on the inside, which he mumbles to himself.

JONATHAN
 Zu meinem geliebten Carl auf die
 Veranstaltung von unserer Hochzeit.
 Liebe, Ethel.

He furrows his brow, stands up, and quickly closes the lid
 looking even closer at the watch's outer case.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
 Oh my God--

CHARLIE
 Don't tell me it's fake?

JONATHAN
 No, Charlie! This was my father's
 watch!

CHARLIE
 Your father's watch? What?! Don't
 be ridiculous, Jonathan. How is
 that possible?

Jonathan grabs a magnifying glass, opens the watch again, and
 examines the family photo.

JONATHAN
 Charlie, this is my father's watch!
 This is my family in the photo!

Jonathan is sweating and he takes a deep breath.

JONATHAN
 We were all sent to Auschwitz when
 I was six.

Jonathan hovers his finger around the image.

Jonathan rolls up his left sleeve and exposes a camp TATTOO.
 Charlie's eyes grow wide. Charlie takes another look at the
 watch. He turns the watch over.

CHARLIE
 So, what does the inscription say?

JONATHAN
 It says--

Jonathan takes a breath, composes himself and stifles his
 tears.

JONATHAN

It says, "To my beloved Carl on the
event of our wedding. Love you
Always, Ethel."

Jonathan and Charlie share a stare with one another and
remain silent.

SUPER: GERMANY 1944

FLASHBACK - EXT. AUSCHWITZ II BIRKENAU - THIRD TRAIN RAMP -
NIGHT

Auschwitz II-Birkenau NAZI Extermination Camp.

A TRAIN rolls slowly towards RAMP THREE. Excess steam shoots
from the brakes as NAZI SOLDIERS take strategic positions to
open the boxcar doors. Some soldiers holding vicious barking
GERMAN SHEPHERDS run to the stopping train.

COMMANDANT JOSEF KRAMER (40s), barks orders over a P.A.
SYSTEM

JOSEF KRAMER

Caution! Keep back until the train
comes to a complete stop!

The train comes to a stop. Soldiers move toward the boxcars
and open the doors. FAMILIES huddle together.

JOSEF KRAMER(O.S.)

Sort like always: men and older
boys for work; then women and
children.

INT. BOXCAR - NIGHT

SERGEANT HANS ROLAND (27) short, heavysset with a LONG SCAR
across the right side of his face, and other NAZI soldiers
are visible.

The boxcar doors slide open. Suddenly, LARGE STORM CLOUDS
form above their heads. They are startled by THUNDER and
flashes of LIGHTENING.

EXT. AUSCHWITZ II BIRKENAU - THIRD TRAIN RAMP - NIGHT

Commandant Kramer and the other soldiers react in awe at the
sudden and violent electrical storm, which intermittently
illuminates and shakes everything around them. Dogs WHINE and
cower at the soldier's feet.

In the distance, two young TEENS jump off the train and run towards the open camp gates. Several attack dogs are released, and the loud firing of MACHINE GUNS rings throughout the camp.

The bullets rip through the two teens, and they fall to the ground motionless.

Scientist CARL ALEKSANDER (52), ETHEL ALEKSANDER (34), and their children JONATHAN (6) and KATIE (4) are the last to get off boxcar number 4. Katie has BLOND HAIR and a small, but noticeable birthmark on her right cheek. Jonathan watches as Carl checks the time on his uniquely crafted GOLD POCKET WATCH.

The watch is uniquely handcrafted and has a small FAMILY PHOTO with a written ENGRAVING on the back.

Suddenly, MACHINE GUN FIRE echoes throughout the yard. Many of the train occupants begin to scramble frantically but are reined in by the guards.

LOUD SPEAKER

The men go to your left. Women and children, go to your right.

ETHEL

Carl, they're splitting us up!

Carl looks composed as he takes a deep breath.

ETHEL

I'm scared, Carl.

CARL

Don't worry; this must be some serious mistake, I'll see if I can speak with the Commandant. Once they find out I work for the Reich, they'll let us go. Take care of the children and I'll be back.

Carl smiles and kisses Ethel, then looks down at a frightened Jonathan. Katie is crying and tightly clutches Ethel's hand.

CARL

Don't cry sweetheart. It will be alright.

Carl rests his hand on Katie's shoulder.

CARL

Jonathan, look after your mother and sister until I get back.

Carl kneels down beside Jonathan.

CARL
And if for some reason I don't come
back--

He leans in closer with wide eyes.

CARL
Don't forget the game we played
with the equations and codes, okay?
Do you remember?

Jonathan nods his head up and down.

Carl smiles and nods.

ETHEL
I love you, Carl!

CARL
I love you, too. Now, don't you
worry. I'll be back.

Ethel and the children are lead in one direction, and Carl and several other mostly ELDERLY MEN are lead to another part of the camp.

Ethel and Jonathan focus on Carl, watching as the large steel gate opens. A GUARD approaches Carl.

GUARD
Are you Professor Aleksander?

CARL
I am.

GUARD
Come with me.

CARL
Please, I urgently need to speak to
the Commandant!

GUARD
That's not necessary, but
Lieutenant Volker would like a word
with you.

Carl swallows hard as they walk down a roadway and walk into
MAIN BIRKENAU HEADQUARTERS.

INT. MAIN BIRKENAU HEADQUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Carl is lead into a room as the doors close behind them.
Seated behind an OAK DESK is LIEUTENANT HELMUT VOLKER (26).

VOLKER

Professor Aleksander, I see you've
made it safely.

CARL

Why are we here, Lieutenant!?

VOLKER

When we last spoke, you made it
clear you wanted out of the
program, but you and I both know
that can't happen. Relocating you
here might change your mind,
though.

CARL

You know Professor Reingold is
trying to ruin me! You've taken the
word of a drunk and liar over mine.
To call me a traitor is crazy. I
had to leave.

Volker walks over to a closet and pulls out a small TAPE
RECORDER and places it on the desk.

VOLKER

Then how do you explain this?

Volker presses play on the recorder.

AMERICAN

Professor, your involvement in this
program is critical to the United
States government and we need your
help in gathering...

CARL

Look, we can not continue to meet
like this! My colleagues are being
followed by the Gestapo and it's
getting to dangerous talking to
you, I need to know me and my
family will be safe.

Volker abruptly turns off the tape recording.

Carl looks on with heavy eyes as his fingers curl and twitch
nervously.

CARL

How did you get that!?

VOLKER

We have our ways, professor. Now, I'm going to make things easy for you and your lovely family. I would like the decryptions to your notes. We've had our top decoders try, but no one can decipher them.

CARL

And you will not be able to! I'm not giving you a damn thing! I want my family and I released from here immediately!

Volker slams his hand on the table.

VOLKER

Professor, you are in no position to negotiate! I promise you that no harm will come to your family, but I need your notes decrypted immediately.

CARL

You bastard!

Volker calls out to the guard.

VOLKER

Guard, take the Professor and his family to my quarters. Make sure nothing happens to them.

GUARD

Ya vol!

VOLKER

Think about our next visit Professor. I will not be as hospitable the next time we meet.

The guard salutes and escorts Carl out of the office.

EXT. MAIN BIRKENAU HEADQUARTERS - MOMENTS LATER

Carl is taken out of the building and walked through several lines of INMATES. A fight breaks out, and the guard motions to Carl to stay where he is.

The guard steps away towards the fighting men, and a few seconds later another guard moves Carl in with several other older men passing by.

INT. MEN'S SHOWER AREA - CONTINUOUS

They are lead inside a large BUILDING with no WINDOWS. Several guards takes their RINGS, WATCHES and other KEEPSAKES, and toss them into a large metal bin.

Carl removes his clothes and places his WATCH in his hand.

Each man is given a new towel and bar of soap, and directed toward the shower.

Carl turns to Sergeant Hans Roland, frustrated.

CARL

(angry)

Can I please speak with Lieutenant Volker!? There has been a terrible mistake! I was being brought back to my family.

Carl reaches down to his discarded pants pocket and pulls out his BADGE and CREDENTIALS and shows them to Roland.

CARL

See look, I'm a scientist working for the Reich. I need to see, Lieutenant Volker --

ROLAND

Get back in line, Jew!

Roland rises from his chair and STRIKES Carl several times with the butt of his WEAPON, sending Carl flying backward. Carl drops the watch, and it rolls across the floor, coming to a stop at Roland's feet.

Roland picks up the watch and tosses it into the metal bin. Carl stands, picks up the towel and soap, and reluctantly enters the shower doorway with tears rolling down his face.

Roland and the other guards laugh as they close and seal the shower door. Roland gives the nod and the shower nozzle SPRAYS. The men inside the shower room YELL, PANIC, and STAMPEDE towards the large sealed door, where they BANG LOUDLY.

Eventually, the banging becomes a gentle tap until it fades off into silence. Suddenly, a Guard frantically runs into the room.

GUARD
Sergeant, that old man, Lieutenant
Volker's man, did he go in there?!
Oh no, what have you done!?

PRESENT DAY - EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

Roland walks down the dimly lit stairs of the subway station.
A MUGGER (22), African American jumps out, wielding a KNIFE
and points it at Roland's neck.

MUGGER
Look what I got here! Mister, give
me your wallet, and whatever is in
your pockets...and I'll take that
briefcase, too.

Roland smiles.

ROLAND
Is that so?

MUGGER
You think I'm kidding, man? I'm not
asking twice!

ROLAND
Neither am I.

The mugger lunges forward to attack Roland, but Roland easily
blocks the attack. He extends his right arm, and a long blade
springs from his sleeve and into the mugger's throat and then
into his chest.

Roland slowly wipes the blood from the long blade on the
pants of the mugger and uses the SUBWAY wall to push the
blade back into its spring-loaded position in his sleeve.

He walks away as several WOMEN approach the scene as
deafening SCREAMS echo throughout the stairway and subway
entrance.

INT. EAGLE EXPORTS BUILDING - NIGHT

Roland takes the ELEVATOR to the 12th floor. Two muscular
TWIN BODYGUARDS (30s), stand outside the main Eagle Exports
office door. One of the bodyguards opens the door for Roland,
who enters.

INT. EAGLE EXPORTS 12TH FLOOR OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Roland steps inside, and MAJOR HELMUT VOLKER (now 46) is talking on the phone.

VOLKER

No, we want 12 million for the shipment and the rest in heroin and guns! Yes, I know that's a lot of cash to prepare, but the pieces are exquisite, mostly diamonds and gold. You're getting a steal. The shipment is worth at least 20 to 22 million. My men will be waiting for the payment tomorrow night at the city pier. Please don't disappoint me.

Volker hangs up. He smiles at Roland.

VOLKER

Herr Roland, my good man, how are you today?

Roland salutes.

ROLAND

Heil! Major.

VOLKER

Heil, so how much did we get today?

ROLAND

\$114,000 throughout the five boroughs.

VOLKER

Excellent!

ROLAND

We still have tons of gold and diamonds left to get rid of, and plenty of pawnshops yet to visit.

VOLKER

That's perfect! Once we get the notes deciphered, we can finish the machine. The Fuhrer would have been proud.

Volker stands.

VOLKER

I'm looking forward to having dinner with him again. Nothing will stand in our way of ridding the world of anyone not supporting our cause...not anyone.

ROLAND

What did Professor Reinhold say?

VOLKER

He said we should have a working targeting system soon. Once we do, we'll pinpoint our direct landing coordinates within a matter of feet. Those encrypted pages will help speed things up once they're adequately deciphered. Did you see the boy?

ROLAND

Yes, he was there.

VOLKER

Excellent! Our contact at the FBI was right. He will stumble upon the watch soon, and then he'll react accordingly.

ROLAND

Are you sure he can decipher the notes, Mein Fuhrer?

VOLKER

My contact says the boy loves puzzles and complex word problems; the boy is a genius and he knows something. It's a pity his father died before properly being interrogated.

Volker stands, takes out his HANDKERCHIEF, and softly wipes off the dust from one of the PICTURE FRAMES on his large WINDOW LEDGE.

INT. THE PAWNSHOP - AFTERNOON

Jonathan stands behind the counter, staring at his father's pocket watch in a daze. Malcolm walks over.

MALCOLM

What's up, Jon? You look like you've seen a ghost.

Jonathan snaps out of his daze.

JONATHAN

No, it's just -- It's just this watch -- A German man sold it to us today, and it belonged to my father. Look, there's a picture of me and my family inside.

Malcolm leans in and looks at it.

MALCOLM

Are you sure, Jon?

JONATHAN

Yes, Malcolm I'm sure. The last time I saw this watch, my father was checking the time.

MALCOLM

Damn, Jon!

JONATHAN

He kissed me, my mother, and my sister Katie, and then he was led off by a guard. We never saw him again.

MALCOLM

How did the watch end up here, then?

JONATHAN

They must have taken it from him. He would have never given it up.

MALCOLM

I've read stories about the Holocaust in school, but I never met anyone who was there.

Jonathan shakes his head and sighs.

JONATHAN

Now you have. I've kept my past a secret, but now it's coming back.

MALCOLM

Why did Hitler hate the Jews so much?

JONATHAN

He hated anyone that wasn't pure Aryan.

(MORE)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Hitler considered us "parasitic vermin" worthy only of eradication. He sent us to our deaths for his radical and racist ideology. My Father had a brilliant mind, but he never stood a chance.

Jonathan's eyes probe the watch.

JONATHAN

I need to see Professor Mannheim. He said that he worked with Simon Wiesenthal who supposedly helped capture Nazi war criminals after the war.

MALCOLM

Can I come along?

JONATHAN

Sure.

Estelle appears beside them.

ESTELLE

Where are you running off to?

JONATHAN

We're going to my school to speak with one of my professors. Tell Charlie I borrowed the watch, but I'll bring it right back.

Jonathan and Malcolm exit the pawnshop.

INT. MANHATTAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (MIT) - DAY

PROFESSOR CECIL MANNHEIM (60), caucasian, heavy-set renowned scholar, physics professor and Nazi Hunter, sits at his desk in his office.

A Nazi hierarchy poster beginning with ADOLF HITLER with BIG RED Xs crossed over him and other THIRD REICH members is on the wall behind his desk surrounded by all kinds of GERMAN HISTORY textbooks.

Jonathan and Malcolm enter through the open door. Professor Mannheim looks up.

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

If it isn't my brightest student!
How are you, Jonathan?

JONATHAN

Not so good, Professor. Malcolm Williams, this is Professor Cecil Mannheim.

MALCOLM

Hello, Sir.

Malcolm and the Professor shake hands. Professor Mannheim gestures for them both to have a seat.

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

What can I do for you gentlemen?

JONATHAN

Remember I told you about my family and what happened in Auschwitz during the war? Today, a man by the name of Hans Roland walked into the pawnshop and sold us my Father's watch --

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

Is that so -- You said Roland, Hans Roland?

Jonathan nods.

JONATHAN

You know him?

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

Yes, I've heard his name mentioned many times. He runs in the same pack as his boss Helmut Volker. Volker's the owner of Eagle Imports & Exports. He and Hans Roland are very dangerous men. My organization has been tracking Volker and his party for years.

Malcolm looks uneasy and glances over at Jonathan.

MALCOLM

Your organization?

JONATHAN

Malcolm, I told you Professor Mannheim is a Nazi Hunter.

The Professor nods.

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

I'm semi-retired, my boy, but I know of many stories that have now surfaced about stolen Jewish gold taken from the unfortunate prisoners killed at the death camps. Their valuables smuggled out of Germany after the war.

MALCOLM

So Jonathan's father's watch was stolen?

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

Most likely. Taken away before they exterminated him. There's a large cell of former Nazis living right here in New York. Their main goal is to restart the Nazi Party. They believe that if the same rules and laws apply as they did in the late 1930s with one chancellor and an all Aryan nation, the world would be a better place. No one is safe, my boy. That's from what our intelligence has uncovered..

MALCOLM

You were right, Jon.

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

They are calling themselves the New Generation Party. The new Fourth Reich.

JONATHAN

The Fourth Reich!?

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

Yes, Jonathan. Fortunately, we've been on to them since after the war. Some of them now work at the Berlin Circus. They're in town for a performance.

MALCOLM

The Berlin Circus!

PROFESSOR MANNHEIM

Yes, and they have other organizations, too, but the Berlin Circus is their headquarters.

(MORE)