



# HIDDEN SPARKS

SCREENPLAY BY **JOSEPH J DAVIS**

Do good to all men, evil to none; do good even to the non-Jew in the street, even to an enemy who has pursued you with relentless hate. If you have an opportunity for revenge, do not avail yourselves of it, but load your adversary with favors. Never refuse a favor to any person, be he non-Jew or even an enemy. If your foe is seeking your hurt you may prevent him, but you must not injure him beyond the point of making him powerless to harm you. If an opportunity offer of serving him thank God for the chance, and though he has done you the most fearful wrongs, forget the injuries you have sustained at his hands. Make yourselves wings like eagles to succor him, and refrain from reminding him by a word of his former conduct.

Rabbi Israel Lipschütz of Danzig (1782-1860)

# SUMMARY



LENGTH: 116 MINUTES  
GENRES: DRAMA, LGBTQ




# SETTING

A medical professional in blue scrubs stands next to a gurney in an operating room. The gurney is covered with a blue sheet and has a red handle. The background features a teal curtain and a wall with a power outlet and a small sign.

TAMPA, FLORIDA  
1989



# SYNOPSIS



On a Friday night in Florida in 1989, Alan arrives at the ER and waves off the manager's apologies for paging him. He's the on-call internist. It's what he does, Shabbos or not – and then he sees why.

Paramedics wheel in James, a 17-year-old kid with a swastika tattoo, comatose and mostly naked. Patrick is brought in next, a badly beaten 23-year-old skinhead who was with James last and is shouting for him. After them come more, fresh from a brawl with each other, some of them out for "that faggot" Patrick's blood.

He knows who they are: goddamned Nazis. They know he's the Jew with James's life in his hands, but he's a doctor first.

When Patrick calls him on his scripted sympathy, Alan challenges himself to really see him. Patrick is afraid, afraid of the men who attacked him, afraid of the ones who saved him, but most of all, afraid of losing James.

Denied permission to send James to a hospital with an MRI, Alan relies on the stories of unreliable and hostile witnesses for clues to James's condition. Fingers point to Patrick, but before he can hear Patrick's story, Thomas – James's brother, Patrick's enemy, a hyena in a security guard's uniform – arrives. Robert hauls Patrick away to prevent a fight at James's bedside.

**OPENING**

As Alan works to diagnose James, Patrick begins to trust him. Despite the insinuations of James's brother Thomas that Patrick is a predator, Alan sees genuine love behind Patrick's pain. Patrick tells his side of the story, that Thomas had done something earlier which had terrified James too much to describe.


Alan returns to James. When Thomas attempts to physically intimidate him, he snaps, punches Thomas, and orders him and Bettina out.

Robert and his right hand Eddie escort Thomas outside and overpower him; Robert breaks fingers until Thomas explains that James is in love with Patrick and that he had to show him where that would lead. Robert loses control, and Eddie hauls him away before he kicks Thomas to death.

Armed with Robert's intel, Alan finds the source of infection. With Patrick now at his side, James relives a brutal punitive rape.

# SECRETS





Alan is put on leave for his actions, effective as soon as James goes into surgery. Thomas is gone, and as his mother Bettina has left to find him, Alan waits for a court order for surgical consent – which may take more time to get than James has left. Patrick's grief moves him to schedule surgery without it, potentially ending his career. Before leaving, Alan acknowledges Patrick's love for James, and offers his support.

Bettina returns. James survives surgery. Four weeks later, he is still comatose, only Patrick has not accepted that James will die.

That night, as Patrick cries in his sleep, James briefly regains consciousness.

James begins to recover. A battle of wills ensues over James's future. Bettina insists she will rebuild her family, but with Thomas at large and Bettina denying the extent of his abuse, James panics at the thought of going home and resists the rehab he needs. Patrick invites James to live with him. Hopeful now, James works to build strength while Patrick prepares to care for him and keep him safe.

# CONSEQUENCES AND RESPONSIBILITY





On his 18th birthday, with Patrick behind him and Bettina hurling threats, James leaves the hospital and a lifetime of abuse.

Alan, a visitor now, meets them outside - along with the two men who turned on Thomas. He watches them go, not victorious, but at peace with who he is and what he has done.

Thomas, like most rapists, is never brought to justice. Bettina learns nothing and feels no remorse: narcissists don't.

Alan's future is in doubt, but he is whole in a way he wasn't before. Patrick doesn't fully understand his feelings for James, but they are guiding him to be a better man. Traumatized and still fragile, James may never fully heal, but he is cherished and protected.

# RESOLUTION



# CHARACTERS

A close-up shot of Alan Green, a man with dark curly hair, a beard, and round glasses. He is wearing blue medical scrubs and a blue nitrile glove on his right hand, which is resting near his chin. A name tag is pinned to his scrubs that reads "GREEN" and "JAMES MEMORIAL". The background is a blurred hospital room with medical equipment.

# ALAN

On the edge of burnout, Alan has become his job. James's arrival challenges him to be more than a doctor, and he learns that he cannot save James without giving anything less than his entire self - if he can find it.

Alan's unspoken beliefs guide him toward compassion and bravery. In opening his heart to James and those around him despite who they are, he finds the core of his own identity, and a unity between what he believes, what he does, and who he is.



# PATRICK

Bounced between foster families and group homes since childhood, Patrick felt himself worthless, unwanted, only good for what others could use him for. His willingness to do the grunt work endeared him to neo-Nazi cult leader Lisa, and her second Robert valued his literacy and intelligence in a social context bereft of both.

Then he met James, a boy at the time, who wanted nothing from him but his attention. Patrick kept James's secrets, lived for his smile, and quietly planned to get them both out once James turned eighteen.

Now James is dying, and Patrick faces what James has really come to mean to him. While James's life hangs in the balance, all Patrick can do is love him.

Once James wakes, Patrick has to value himself enough to assume responsibility for putting that love into action.

# LISA

The hard-nosed widow of a George Lincoln Rockwell - era neo-Nazi, Lisa carries on what's left of her husband's work leading a folkish Heathen cult and running a business selling far-right and Heathen merchandise. Whether she cares about any of it anymore, not even she knows.

Secretly, she is dying of heart failure. Worn out, tired of it all, she has decided to let the disease take its course. Lisa hopes to leave everything to Robert, the closest she'll ever have to a son.

As her inner circle ruptures and her organization shatters into factions, Robert is the one person she cannot lose.



# THOMAS

James's older brother, a narcissist, and a bully. Recruited by Robert for his imposing presence and his ability to manipulate people, Thomas found a rich outlet for his desire for power and control.

He is the glad-hander and the iron fist, contemptuous of everyone but Robert - the only one he considers a real friend. He hates Patrick for giving James the courage to resist his domination, and finally went too far in his attempts to break them apart.

Now, Thomas will do anything to avoid responsibility, even at the cost of his brother's life.





A close-up, low-angle shot of Robert, a bald man with a serious expression, looking down. He has a visible wound on his forehead. He is wearing a dark suit and is holding a dark object, possibly a gun, near his face. The background is blurred, showing an outdoor setting with a railing.

# ROBERT

Discipline, loyalty, duty. Robert sees himself as a soldier. Robert craves structure and order, and has subjugated his own thoughts and feelings to serve Lisa for so long that he hardly knows them. In Lisa's interest, he enforces Frith - the setting down of arms in a neutral place - and is trusted and respected by all sides.

Like Thomas, he is physically intimidating: unlike him, he struggles to understand people, and easily falls for deception. Deep down, he envies Patrick, his naked emotion, and the affection James has for him. As he learns about Thomas's abuse of James, his long-suppressed emotions emerge, challenging his loyalty and cracking the foundation of his identity.



# EDDIE

Before tonight, Eddie took nothing seriously: he'd been there for the beer, the brawling, and the brotherhood. He adores both Robert and Patrick and trusts them completely, and feels honored that what he sees as intelligent men would treat him as an equal.

After having helped save Patrick from a potentially lethal beating, after seeing his devastation, he questions whether his loyalties should be to Lisa's group and its values or to Patrick as a person.

Ultimately, Eddie chooses to simply love whom he loves without condition, knowing he may stand alone against Thomas and the entire cult. In doing so, he steps into responsibility and leadership.

# BETTINA



A tightly wrapped bundle of nerves, Bettina is perpetually exhausted. She works nights as a nursing assistant in a hospice to support James, Thomas, and herself, leaving much of the parenting to Thomas. She fears Thomas, but after years of being belittled and gaslit by him, she also fears that she can't survive alone.

Like Thomas, she has strong narcissistic tendencies. How she imagines things to be is how they must be, and the most important people in her life exist more as roles she has invented for them than as human beings.

When Thomas disappears, she recasts herself as the tragic mother of a broken son, and cannot accept that James refuses the part she has made for him.



A photograph of two young men walking in a city. The man in the foreground is wearing a black t-shirt and light-colored jeans, looking off to the side. The man behind him is wearing a dark green bomber jacket over a t-shirt with a graphic of a landscape, and dark pants. He is looking forward. They are both holding handles of what appear to be luggage or bags. The background is a blurred city street with buildings.

# JAMES

At seventeen, James is the youngest by far. Gentle and introverted by nature, he assumed a skinhead identity at twelve years old in an attempt to impress Patrick. Thomas approved of his new identity at first, eventually trapping him in it by having him marked with a swastika tattoo.

As James matured, his feelings for Patrick intensified until every look could expose him. The front he put up began to crack, and Thomas's attempts at control grew increasingly brutal. Afraid to ask for help, James dreamed of escape, and tried only to survive.

James awakens into a different world. With Thomas missing, Patrick at his side, and Eddie and Robert backing them both, James is finally able to take his first steps toward freedom.



# **WRITER'S STATEMENT**



In Avot O'Rabbi Natan 23, the question is posed: who is the strongest of all? The one who conquers desire? The angels of God? Or some say, it says, that the strongest of all is the one who can turn his enemy into his friend.

Although this is not Alan's goal, it is his result. Thrust into a frightening situation, Alan first falls back on the wisdom of Rabbi Israel Lipschütz of Danzig: "Do good to all men, evil to none; do good \_ even to an enemy who has pursued you with relentless hate... If an opportunity is offered of serving him, thank God for the chance."

Alan is human: his first reaction to Robert is far from thanks and praise. But from the moment Patrick challenges him to care, Alan's actions are guided by not only his knowledge as a physician, but by his belief in the sacredness of life. At first, these guides are coherent, as when he treats James as a person rather than as a body. His personal and professional principles diverge over the right of a person to refuse lifesaving treatment: his discussion with Ben of James's odds of surviving surgery is grounded in Jewish medical ethics regarding when to risk a person's life for a chance at saving it. Ultimately, Alan chooses the possibility of saving James's life over either set of principles.

By the end, Alan has become a friend to Patrick; he faces an uncertain future in wholeness. James, damaged but not destroyed, takes his first steps into freedom. Patrick emulates Alan's bravery, returning love through action. Eddie has freed himself from a limited concept of what it means to be a man. Robert, afraid but not alone, has only begun to think and feel for himself. The possibilities of what their lives can be have been restored. Thomas vanishes to become a shadow lurking in every dark corner: has he gotten what he deserves, or has he gotten away with his monstrosity? We don't know and they don't know: this is how the world is.

The incompleteness of James's healing, the ambiguity of Alan's future, and the lack of a satisfying conclusion to Thomas's evil are all deliberate choices. In times when the world seems so very broken, doing what small things we can to repair it can seem like emptying the sea with a spoon. We may pursue justice, and justice often eludes us. But although we are under no obligation to complete the work, neither are we free to desist from it. We should do good because it is good, rather than in the expectation of reward, or even success. There we can find the strength to keep going when the task so far exceeds our abilities.

This is why I want to tell this story now. As a transgender American, it is a continuing challenge to see the humanity in those who do not see it in me. It is easier to judge those who have fallen for the propaganda or given in to social pressure or who simply haven't given the value of my life any thought at all than it is to see them as human beings whose lives also have value. It is easy to resent those who do too little and too late to move toward tolerance than it is to hold them in gratitude for having taken any steps at all.

I've written Alan as he is to honor people who helped me emerge from a place of stuckness and find the potential in my life again, who showed me love not because I deserved it, but because I needed it. Through a mostly gentle hero, I want to show that it is possible to turn an enemy to a friend, not always, but sometimes. To show that where there is still life, there is the possibility of change, though it be small and incomplete. Also, to show that sometimes, compassion and kindness isn't the answer. Sometimes, it's necessary to fight, and sometimes to walk away. Whatever we do, there will still be monsters in the shadows, and maybe it's mostly shadows for a while. If that is to be the case, I want to show one man's way of keeping the light alive.

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