A WOMAN
WHO SURVIVED
WAR, EXILE AND
PERSECUTION

A suitcase
can carry more
than belongings.

It can carry
a life.

GRANDMOTHER AND HER SUITCASE

A TRUE STORY OF SURVIVAL, FAMILY AND A LASTING CHOICE

WRITTEN BY ALEX AVETIS
BASED ON THE NOVEL BY ALEX AVETIS

WAR | EXILE | FAMILY | SURVIVAL | A NEW BEGINNING

A Lifetime of Starting Over



Feiga has survived war, exile, imprisonment and the deaths of the men she loved. In Israel, she finally has a home and the means to remain there for the rest of her life. Yet the rooms around her have grown quiet. When her grandson asks her to join the family in America, the woman who has spent a lifetime finding ways to survive must decide what she still needs in order to live.

The Story in One Breath



After escaping wartime Lithuania and surviving Soviet imprisonment, a resourceful Jewish woman finds security in Israel, only to face a final choice between the home that provides for her and the family waiting in America. GRANDMOTHER AND HER SUITCASE follows her across decades through the practical decisions that keep a household alive, and the losses that make each new beginning harder than the last.

Feiga



Feiga is a woman who acts. She packs before the last train leaves, finds work where there is none and makes a meal into an offer of companionship. Her courage does not free her from fear or loneliness. It lets her continue while carrying them. The film stays close to her intelligence and tenderness, allowing the audience to discover the person behind the family’s reliance on her: a woman who also wants to be loved and looked after.

The Last Train



In June 1941, the German advance reaches Lithuania. Feiga leaves Kaunas with her husband, their children and her elderly mother, carrying a small suitcase and a heavy black fur coat. An air attack scatters the passengers of their crowded train. Blood on her daughter’s dress belongs to someone else; her mother and little son are missing. When the family finds one another in the forest, reunion brings no safety. They must keep moving east.

The Coat Comes Back



Along the road, Feiga gives the fur coat to an elderly stranger who is shivering. That night, hidden with other refugees in a barn, she cannot quiet her son’s cries from the cold. German motorcycles approach. The stranger returns with the coat, and the child falls asleep in its warmth. The motorcycles pass without discovering the hidden families.

What the Lining Holds



On a Siberian collective farm, hunger and cold begin to overcome the family. Feiga remembers the rubles she sewed into the coat’s lining before the war. Opening the seams reveals the possibility of obtaining passports and paying for another journey. Her mother dies before they can leave and is buried in the coat. Feiga takes the children onward to Kazakhstan, where a local woman offers shelter and, at last, food on the table.

The Workshop



After the war, the family returns to Lithuania. In Vilnius, Feiga creates a concealed workshop making leather shoes that the shops cannot supply. Her husband brings scraps from the factory; two women sew beneath the house. This work supports the household and exposes it to prosecution. The suspense grows from ordinary actions: checking a seam, moving a pair of shoes, listening for someone at the door. The means of caring for her family has become a threat to their future.

The Cost of Waiting



Feiga is arrested for illegal production and suspected theft of state property. Nearly a year passes in custody. At home, her husband gives money and valuables to men who promise to secure her release. Their demands continue, and officials subject him to brutal interrogation. Feiga’s imprisonment separates two people who are trying to protect one another without knowing what the other is enduring. The uncertainty reaches beyond the cell into every room of the family home.

The Empty Place



Released at last, Feiga returns to children who have grown and a husband whose injured movements reveal what happened to him. She refuses to measure his devotion by his inability to free her. Together they close the workshop. Soon afterward, he dies. At the kitchen table, she removes the second cup from the place opposite her. The place opposite her stays empty.

A Journey Taken Alone



A second marriage offers companionship and the hope of emigrating to Israel. On the night before their departure, her husband suffers a fatal cerebral hemorrhage. Their suitcases are already packed. Feiga eventually makes the journey alone, but a new country does not immediately become a home. Demeaning treatment from a relative and the isolation of her own apartment leave her struggling to imagine a future. After so many departures, she has arrived somewhere without knowing to whom she belongs.

A Meal Becomes a Bond



Manus Morgenstern, a wealthy widower, misses his wife’s Polish-Jewish cooking. Feiga agrees to prepare lunch. The relationship grows through meals, conversation and the daily pleasure of having someone to return to. She chooses to move into his home and gives her own apartment to a relative. His generosity is real, and so is her affection. Yet when Boris visits and asks whether she is happy, she admires the evening and invites him to dinner instead of answering.

Security and Silence



As Manus grows old, Feiga helps him eat, wash and move through the house. After his death, she is again left facing an empty chair. His will provides lifelong accommodation and monthly support, conditional on her remaining in Israel. She has what she once struggled so hard to secure. Still, clothes accumulate in the wardrobe and the house grows quiet. The final conflict takes shape inside that apparent safety: what does a protected life mean when there is no one with whom to share it?

The Last Suitcase



Boris comes from America and asks her to live with the family in Las Vegas. Leaving means surrendering the security Manus provided. Feiga opens her old suitcase and chooses a few dresses and a family photograph. The decision is hers. Having carried so much through a lifetime of forced departures, she can finally decide what to leave behind and whom to move toward. The suitcase becomes the measure of what matters when possessions no longer answer the need for company.

The Film’s Visual Language



The film is shaped by objects touched and used: the coat’s lining, leather beneath a needle, a cup lifted from an empty place, the suitcase opened once more. Restrained performances and attentive detail carry the movement between countries and decades. Cold forests and enclosed Soviet interiors gradually give way to Mediterranean light and the warmth of a family kitchen. These changes serve Feiga’s experience, while recurring objects let the audience feel what she has carried from one life into the next.

Audience and Emotional Promise



GRANDMOTHER AND HER SUITCASE is a historical family drama for adult audiences drawn to women’s lives, migration and the bonds between generations. Its Jewish family history is approached through work, meals, grief and the need for belonging. The scale of the journey remains grounded in one woman’s choices. A producing partner is invited to develop an intimate, performance-led film whose final emotional destination is a family table and the relief of no longer being alone.

A Place at the Table



In Las Vegas, the family welcomes Feiga into its home. Her daughter urges her to eat, returning the care that Feiga has spent her life giving. That night, family voices reach her bedroom. In the morning, she joins them at the table. The suitcase rests beside the bed, no longer waiting for an escape. For the first time in years, she wakes to the sound of people she loves in the next room.

Grandmother and Her Suitcase



A historical family drama

Written by
Alex Avetis

Based on the published novel by Alex Avetis, GRANDMOTHER AND HER SUITCASE is a completed English-language feature screenplay seeking a producer partner. The screenplay, extended synopsis and development materials are available on request. Contact Alex Avetis at info@alexavetis.com or visit alexavetis.com.

alexavetis.com

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