

MONSOON

by  
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FADE IN:

The SOUND of RUNNING WATER...

EXT. INDIA/NEPAL BORDER - DAY

Scorching sun overhead. Oppressively hot.

A mile-long suspension bridge separates India and Nepal.

MAX SMITHHAMMER (20's, American), two 35mm cameras slung over his shoulder, his Nordic body not designed for this type of heat, photographs NEPALESE CHILDREN jumping into the river as he crosses the bridge into Nepal.

EXT. SUSPENSION BRIDGE - DAY

The KIDS on the bridge gather around Max, begging him for money or to take their picture.

Max crouches, using his one sleight of hand trick to pull ONE RUPEE COINS out of the kids' ears, handing them out.

But it's these boys who are pulling the sleight of hand, purposely distracting Max as their friend slices the strap to one of Max's cameras and takes off with it.

MAX

Hey!

Max sprints down the narrow bridge after the kid, dodging people, bicycles, and even the occasional cow.

EXT. NEPAL/INDIA BORDER - DAY

A single guard station.

MAX

Stop that kid!

The KID tries to duck past the check point, but a GUARD grabs him. Two other BORDER GUARDS quickly come over and start hitting him with long wooden sticks.

GUARD

(to Max)

Sir, stay back.

Max watches as the beating goes on uncomfortably long.

Unable to intervene, Max lifts his lens and starts doing what he was trained to - document.

EXT. NEPAL BORDER - DAY

A one room cement shack guards Nepal's western border.

Max, uneasy, cleans blood off his lens as one of the GUARDS flips through his US PASSPORT. The pages are crisp, only a few stamps - Mexico, Canada, and India.

GUARD

This border is closed to tourists due to Maoist activity.

MAX

I have a work visa from your embassy in Delhi.

GUARD

Sorry. Try back tomorrow.

MAX

Tomorrow? But I need to get to Rukumkot right away.

The guard looks up at the mention of Rukumkot.

GUARD

Those cameras. They are expensive, no?

It takes a moment, but Max gets the message. Not used to paying bribes, he looks around before handing the guard a FILM CANISTER with a thick roll of RUPEES hidden inside.

SLAM! The guard stamps Max's passport:

Republic of Nepal - April 12, 2001

EXT. BORDER - DAY

Nepalese DRIVERS, their teeth stained red from years of chewing betal nut, a local stimulant, wait for their vehicles to fill up with goods and passengers.

Max approaches.

MAX

How much to get to Rukumkot?

DRIVER

Rukumkot? You cannot go there. The police station was raided by Maoists last night. Many were killed. Some beheaded.

MAX

I heard.

DRIVER

Sorry, Ji. No one here will take you. The road is blocked.

MAX

How far is it?

DRIVER

Fifty kilometers.

A beat-up MOTORCYCLE leans against the wall by the driver's Jeep.

MAX

How much for the motorcycle?

EXT. MOTORCYCLE - MOVING - DAY

The breeze brings instant relief from the thick heat and humidity as Max drives along without a helmet.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A sign marks the turn off to Rukumkot up ahead. Max pulls over. He can see the military barriers and NEPALESE SOLDIERS blocking the road North to Rukemkot.

He looks out over the terraced rice fields, then again at the road block, contemplating.

Max steers down the steep embankment and drives through the rice fields to get around the road block.

INT. RUKUMKOT POLICE STATION - DAY

Smoke wafts through the exposed cells and rubble. Army trucks and SOLDIERS come and go.

Max keeps to the perimeter, shocked by the smell and graphic nature of the carnage.

Gaining his composure, Max starts photographing --

SNAP: A dozen or more POLICEMEN lay motionless - stacked like cord wood.

SNAP. SNAP: The bodies of a few Maoist REBELS, some just teenagers, are being thrown into a different pile and burned.

SOLDIER

You! Stop!

The soldiers point their machine guns at Max who raises his hands.

MAX

Easy fellas.

An OFFICER grabs Max's camera, rips the film out.

MAX

(shocked)

You can't do that. I'm an American reporter.

OFFICER

(in Nepalese)

*Load him in the truck.*

The soldiers grab Max, who resists getting man-handled.

MAX

Let go of me. I have a right to be here!

The soldiers thrust Max into the back of the canvas-covered military truck.

MAX

Okay, okay. What about my bike?

Inside the truck, the bench seats are lined with wounded POLICE OFFICERS. Their sunken eyes all stare up at Max, obvious they were the losers here.

Max takes a seat. Offers one of them a smoke.

EXT. KATHMANDU - DAY

The capital of Nepal. A blend of 13th century customs and twenty-first century technologies. Hindu priests and cell phones.

EXT. HILTON HOTEL - DAY

VALETS watch curiously as the olive green military truck drops Max and his motorcycle off in front of the five-star hotel.

Max, haggard, wheels his motorcycle over to one of the valets, then walks into the lobby of the elegant hotel.

INT. HILTON HOTEL - BANQUET ROOM - DAY

Max takes in the large banquet room that has been converted into a working BULL PEN - desks, printers, fax machines - and bustling with FOREIGN PRESS.

Several fake backdrops of the Himalayan mountains are set up for TV broadcasts against the far wall.

PARKER (30's, petulant) sits in front of a laptop at the New York Times desk.

MAX

Max Smithhammer.

PARKER

You're two days late.

MAX

I got delayed at the border.

PARKER

(sarcastic)

Maybe that's because there's a war going on.

MAX

I went to Rukumkot.

This gets Parker's attention.

PARKER

And?

MAX

They confiscated my film.

Parker leans back in his chair, intertwinning his hands behind his head in about as demeaning a way as possible.

PARKER

Different rules here. Look. I know your Charlie's protégé, or whatever, but you're working for me here and I don't have time for initiative, alright?

MAX

Sure.

PARKER

What did you think you would be doing here exactly, Smithhammer?

A rhetorical question, but Max can't help himself...

MAX  
 (sarcastic)  
 I don't know... reporting?

PARKER  
 Well, here's a news flash for you.  
 No one gives a shit about Nepal.

MAX  
 Then what are we doing here  
 exactly?

PARKER  
 Time, Max. We're doing our time.

BULL PEN - NORTHEAST CORNER - MOMENTS LATER

Max crosses the bullpen when someone catches his eye --

CHARLIE BELL (40's, British, handsome and knows it), a  
 BBC correspondent, does a live report against a fake  
 Himalayan backdrop.

CHARLIE BELL  
 As Maoist rebels now control over  
 a third of the country, King  
 Birendra shows incredible  
 restraint...

A nearby TV monitor shows B-roll footage of KING  
 BIRENDRA, the King of Nepal, as Charlie reports --

CHARLIE BELL  
 The rebels' top three demands are:  
 Abolish the monarchy, write a new  
 constitution, and immediately  
 repeal the Mahakali Treaty that  
 they claim allows an Indian  
 monopoly over Nepal's vast water  
 resources.

Max, messing with him, purposely stands in Charlie's line  
 of sight.

Charlie, composed, remains on point, fielding questions  
 from BBC London.

CHARLIE BELL  
 (looks right at Max)  
 Right, Katherine.

CHARLIE BELL

It would seem peculiar that water rights is third on their list of demands, but like in 1776 when our Yank friends sent their Declaration of Independence to King George, it was as much about throwing off economic shackles, as it was about personal freedoms.

(almost flirtatious)

Thank you, Katherine. This is Charles Bell. BBC News. Kathmandu.

A green light turns to red. Charlie charges over.

CHARLIE BELL

About time you showed up. You look like shit.

MAX

Nice backdrop.

CHARLIE BELL

It's a bloody inferno outside. Why suffer? Shall we raise a glass to your first overseas posting?

MAX

It's eight AM.

CHARLIE BELL

Not in London.

The charismatic Charlie drags Max away toward the hotel bar leaving his crew to clean up the equipment.

INT. HILTON BAR - DAY

Max sits with Charlie. Nepalese WAITERS wearing white gloves hover.

Since they sat down, Charlie's been eyeing an attractive FRENCH CORRESPONDENT at the bar. Nothing's changed.

CHARLIE BELL

Jesus, Max. You're lucky they didn't lock you up. What did I tell you about Pulitzer fever on your first assignment?

MAX

You did it.

CHARLIE BELL

Do as I say, not as I do.

The drinks arrive.

CHARLIE BELL  
I've already cleared it with Parker to have you shoot the royal reception for the Chinese Premiere's visit tomorrow night.

MAX  
What did you get me into here, Charlie? Parker and Pageantry?

CHARLIE BELL  
Relax. It's just temporary. I have a three step plan.

MAX  
Just three?

CHARLIE BELL  
One, get you here. Two, buy you a drink, and three...  
(Off Max's look)  
I'm working on it. Getting you out of New York was the hardest part. I had to trade in a lot of favors to get you here, you know.

MAX  
Look. Charlie. I appreciate it. Really, I do. One more night of shooting people getting scraped off the pavement on the skin and skid beat and I... I can never go back to that, ever. But sitting around pool side drinking Mai Tais with guys like Parker isn't exactly my style.

Charlie admires the French Reporter who smiles back.

CHARLIE BELL  
Don't worry about Parker. Underneath all that gluttony are several skinny men trying to get out. This is a cush posting. Enjoy it. Before you know it, some bomb will go off in Pakistan and you'll be on the first flight out of here. Step three.

Charlie waves for another round. Max laughs, you can't get mad at Charlie and he did have a three step plan.

CHARLIE BELL

In the meantime, talk to the ABS guy. Australian. He's looking for a shooter.

MAX

You mean one willing to actually leave the air-conditioning?

CHARLIE BELL

The King's son, Prince Dipendra, had a scandalous rendezvous with his girlfriend last year at the Sydney Olympics and the ABS wants a picture of the two of them together for a follow-up puff piece.

Max gives a "I can't believe I came half way around the world for this shit" look.

CHARLIE BELL

I know. But it's either that or sit around here with me getting sauced and admiring beautiful women.

MAX

How do I find the prince?

Charlie writes on the back of a card - hands it to Max.

CHARLIE BELL

This number's for a driver. Reliable. The other is a heli pilot I use sometimes, an ex-pat who has his pulse on the city, knows how to find things, information. He's Irish and therefore unreliable. Tell him I said as much.

Max takes the phone numbers, happy to be doing something.

MAX

Thanks, Charlie. For everything. I'll let you get back to... work.

Max leaves and Charlie goes over and joins the petite woman from Le Monde.

EXT. NARAYANHITY ROYAL PALACE - DAY

Max sits in the shade of his Nepali guide AMIT's rickshaw. Waiting.

MAX

I can't take much more of this,  
Amit.

Max slugs down some Himalayan bottled water.

AMIT

Monsoons are coming, Ji.

MAX

Not the heat. The waiting. This  
prince isn't much of a morning  
guy, huh?

A BLACK SUV with tinted windows pulls up outside a tan  
building near the palace walls.

Curious, Max lifts his telephoto lens --

MAX

Amit. What is that building over  
there? The tan one.

BAKER and JACOBS, suits and sunglasses, conspicuously  
American, step out into the bright sunlight.

AMIT

The Nature and Conservation Trust  
of Nepal.

SNAP. Max takes their picture. Baker and Jacobs go  
inside --

MAX

A foreign non-profit?

AMIT

No, Mr. Max. It has been around a  
very long time. The King's  
brother, Gyanendra, is chairman.

Three WHITE RANGE ROVERS emerge from the palace.

AMIT

Prince Dipendra. He is coming.

CLICK. Max takes a picture of PRINCE DIPENDRA, 29,  
stout, the next King of Nepal, as he throws handfuls of  
RUPEE coins out the window of his SUV to the street kids.

Max and Amit take off after the prince's caravan, making  
sure not to be spotted.

EXT. CENTRAL MARKET - DAY

Crowded bazaar. Bustling. The smell of spices and fried foods fill the air.

Max takes up position across the street from a cafe.

EXT. FIRE & ICE CAFE - DAY

Max, unseen, photographs Prince Dipendra with his GIRLFRIEND, tucked in the back of the cleared out cafe.

THROUGH VIEWFINDER - MAX TAKES THE OCCASIONAL PICTURE

A CHAI WALLA brings the prince's BODYGUARDS their tea.

An AUBURN HAIREWOMAN, shrouded in a head scarf, enters the cafe.

She saunters past the bodyguards, who barely glance in her direction.

Curious, Max zooms in --

He can't see her face, but she appears European. A small PACKAGE in her left hand.

CLICK. CLICK. CLICK. Max fires away, burning film --

She places the PACKAGE on a table and leaves. No words are exchanged. A professional drop.

Max's film runs out. He lowers his camera as she disappears into the crowded market.

MAX

Holy shit.

Quickly packing up, Max takes off after her --

EXT. CENTRAL MARKET - DAY

Weaving through the throngs, Max follows her --

On the fly, he changes out his roll of film and stashes it under his baseball cap.

The woman moves fast, aware she is being followed. Max reloads.

Locked and loaded, Max tries to get a photo of her face before she ducks around a corner. No luck.

EXT. SPICE MARKET - DAY

Waist-high mounds of cardamom, black pepper, jasmine. A thunder cloud of fragrance.

Max spots her up ahead in the colorful alley. A stout SALT HAWKER gets in his way --

SALT HAWKER

Sir, you buy from me. Very fine salt.

In a window REFLECTION, the woman sees Max is still pursuing. She takes off --

EXT. NARROW STREET - CONTINUOUS

Huge BRASS SPIKES, used to keep elephants out, adorn the buildings of this part of the old city.

Max stops at a juncture --

A lone DONKEY licks gum off the street --

SLAM! Max is thrown up against one of the wooden doors.

A brass spike rips through his shirt, almost impaling his spleen.

Face-to-face with the woman, Max stares into her piercing indigo-green eyes, wide with adrenaline.

She holds a 12" CURVED KNIFE BLADE to his throat.

AUBURN HAired WOMAN

Who are you?

MAX

I'm a... journalist.

AUBURN HAired WOMAN

Why are you following me?

MAX

Prince Dipendra. I saw you give --

Max hesitates. Feels her warm breath on his neck.

She eyes his camera with the telephoto lens.

AUBURN HAired WOMAN

Expose the film. Slowly.

Max opens the camera. Ruins the film.

AUBURN HAIREd WOMAN

Now the other roll.

MAX

What other ro --

She presses the curved blade hard against his jugular --

MAX

Okay. Okay.

Max reaches under his baseball cap and pulls out the roll of film he stashed there.

AUBURN HAIREd WOMAN

Drop it. On the ground.

He does. It bounces off the cobble street - just out of reach. Was it intentional?

A flash of anger in her eyes.

Guarded, she places the tip of the long knife directly over his heart and takes a step back, holding it there.

Max gets a good look at her now. Definitely European, maybe Russian or Italian descent. Striking.

She keeps her focus on Max as she stomps the roll of film into the cobblestone alleyway.

AUBURN HAIREd WOMAN

Why are you photographing Prince Dipendra?

MAX

A story.

AUBURN HAIREd WOMAN

Find another one.

In a quick motion, she knees Max in the balls. He drops.

She skewers Max's telephoto lens on the elephant spike.

Glass rains down on him. By the time he looks up --

She's gone.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Max picks up his cap (and pride) off the narrow cobble street. The lone DONKEY stares at him blankly.

MAX  
 (to Donkey)  
 Thanks for the heads up.

Having learned his lesson in Rukumkot, Max shows the donkey his sleight of hand trick, pulling the real roll of film from his sleeve.

INT. MAX'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Red Light. Developing trays. A makeshift darkroom.

TONGS swoosh a black and white photo in a chemical bath.

Slowly the image starts to take shape. The silhouette of the Auburn Haired Woman comes into focus.

Max notices something on her left hand. It's a small tattoo of a SNOW LEOPARD.

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - NIGHT

Same SNOW LEOPARD TATTOO magnified ten fold as a TATTOO ARTIST examines the photo of it under a table-mounted lens.

TATTOO ARTIST  
 Very tight. Wasn't slung in Kathmandu. Probably done in Tibet. Maybe Lhasa. Tibetan artist for sure.

MAX  
 How do you know he's Tibetan?

TATTOO ARTIST  
 The style. Plus every artist signs their work. This one did not. Buddhists. No ego.

Max thanks him and leaves. A dead end.

EXT. FIRE & ICE CAFE - DAY

Max stakes out the same cafe as before.

Prince Dipendra, bored, listens to his girlfriend drone on, but Max is not focused on them. He's scanning around for the Snow Leopard Woman.

No sign of her.

The prince leaves and Max packs it in for the day.

INT. THE BURREN - NIGHT

A dimly lit Irish pub. Mostly mountain climbers just back from expeditions in here. Max sips a beer in the corner.

YORK (50's; grey ponytail; Irish accent) slides into the corner booth across from Max.

YORK

So Charlie's sent me a Yank?  
Sorry I'm late. Shuttling some  
boys back from Everest base camp.  
What can I do for you, Danny Boy?

York calls everyone "Danny Boy." Max slides him the picture of the Snow Leopard Woman with Prince Dipendra.

YORK

Spying on the prince is one sure  
way to get castrated, lad.

MAX

Tell me what's happening in the  
photo.

YORK

Public place. Daytime. His men  
are told not to look at her.

MAX

What's the package?

York examines it more closely.

YORK

Hard to tell. A brick of Brown  
Kush perhaps.

MAX

I'm trying to track her down.  
This is on her left hand.

York closely examines the blown up picture of her TATTOO -

YORK

Intricate work.

MAX

She also carries a knife. Curved.  
About this --

Max gestures.

YORK

Khukari blade. Standard Nepali army issue. Easier to track the tattoo.

MAX

I went to every tattoo parlor in town. They all say the same thing. Tibetan artist, maybe done in Lhasa.

York's impressed.

YORK

I have a few contacts in Lhasa. Give me a couple of days to ask around.

(beat)

What you've really got to ask yourself, Danny Boy, is what's this lassie have that no one else does? Not even the Crown Prince of Nepal?

EXT. NATURE CONSERVANCY - DAY

Max stakes out the tan building.

Baker and Jacobs exit. SNAP. SNAP. SNAP.

MAX

Definitely environmentalists.

They get into their BLACK SUV and leave.

Max, on his motorcycle, follows them --

EXT. FORTIFIED BUILDING - DAY

The black SUV pulls into an unmarked side gate of a heavily fortified building.

Max slowly circles around the compound. An American flag and two uniformed MARINES come into view.

Max, shocked, pulls over. It's the US EMBASSY.

INT. THIRD STORY - US EMBASSY - LATER

BAKER (late 30's, intense) and JACOBS (20's, Midwest) stand gazing out of a tinted third story window at Max across the street waiting for them.

BAKER

Find out who he is, and what he knows.

Baker calmly studies Max through the bullet proof glass.

EXT. ROYAL PALACE - NIGHT

Red Carpet. The immaculately clad NEPALESE ROYAL GUARD line the palace stairs. Swords drawn. A King's welcome.

KING BIRENDRA (56, charismatic, keen intellect) and his son Prince Dipendra stand stoically in full military dress regalia to greet the Chinese PREMIERE.

Max accompanies Charlie. He takes photographs of the arriving DIPLOMATS.

He spots Parker and SNAPS his picture just to piss him off.

MAX

What do you know about the Nepalese Royal Family being involved in the heroin trade?

CHARLIE BELL

They've been doing it for decades.

MAX

Why hasn't anyone ever run a story about it?

CHARLIE BELL

Max, the Royals own this country - the police, the military, the courts. Best case scenario they would kill you, worst case you end up in some dungeon sipping chai through a straw for the rest of your miserable life.

A helicopter lands on the front lawn. Out steps the King's brother, GYANENDRA, making a splashy entrance.

Max takes Gyanendra's picture as he greets his brother. No love lost between these two.

MAX

Gyanendra. Not King, but the kingpin.

Charlie studies Max, he knows something is up --

CHARLIE BELL

What have you been up to?

MAX

Just doing a little digging

Charlie's expression turns more serious --

CHARLIE BELL

Maxwell, the Nepalese take their royals extremely seriously. More seriously than we do, which is astonishing, you do see the guards with the large swords and automatic weapons, right?

A Black limo pulls up and out steps the CHINESE PREMIERE and his wife.

CHARLIE BELL

You watch yourself, okay?

Max purposely ignores Charlie for fun as he photographs the Premiere walking up the red carpet to the salute of the ROYAL GUARD.

INT. PALACE - BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

Several huge PORTRAITS of King Birendra's predecessors hang on the walls. Not unlike what you find in Buckingham Palace or the White House - a lineage of lords.

Charlie admires a portrait of a young Queen while Max grazes at the buffet table. Parker joins Charlie.

PARKER

Charlie, there are a thousand kids each year trying to work freelance, what's so special about this kid?

CHARLIE BELL

Remember the time and place you asked me that.

(beat)

Maxwell is different. He's not just some adrenaline junkie looking for the quintessential combat picture, he's extremely driven, in search of something else.

PARKER

And what's that?

CHARLIE BELL

Perfection.

(beat)

Until he finds that, he'll never  
be satisfied.

PARKER

Why?

CHARLIE BELL

Because a photograph changed his  
life.

PARKER

Really? Which one?

CHARLIE BELL

Mine.

EXT. HILTON POOL - 5 AM

A passed out JOURNALIST snores loudly as he sleeps on one  
of the lounge chairs. Max, the only one up at this hour,  
stands on the edge of the pool wearing swim trunks.

He dives and swims the length of the pool underwater.

Max surfaces. Rests on the side, looking around at the  
opulence of the hotel, the snoring reporter.

MAX

Fuck this.

Max gets out of the pool and doesn't look back.

EXT. DOWNTOWN KATHMANDU - ESTABLISHING

Narrow streets, tightly packed with all of humanity.

Max drives his motorcycle slowly through the chaotic  
backpacker's district, stopping in front of a dime-a-  
dozen Nepalese hotel: The Hotel Shangri-la.

INT. MAX'S ROOM - HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - NIGHT

One notch up from a hostel.

Camera equipment, well organized, Max's life blood, lives  
on an end table inside two water-proof Pelican cases.

Max finishes pinning several PHOTOS on the:

WALL

Organized like an investigative CRIME BOARD, most of the pictures are of the Nepalese Royal Family:

PICTURES WITH TITLES: King Birenda, Prince Dipendra, Prince Gyanendra.

Also a picture of BAKER and JACOBS from outside the tan Nature Trust building. "**CIA? Buyers?**" written across it and a line linked to Gyanendra, the King's brother, chairman of the Nature Trust.

A PVC TUBE is wedged across the bathroom door jamb and Max starts doing pull-ups as he studies the wall of photographs. Amit enters.

MAX

What did you find out?

AMIT

Mr. York says the woman provides rich Chinese businessmen with exotic rarities. Horn of rhino. Gall bladder of the bear.

MAX

Aphrodisiacs. What about heroin?

Amit doesn't know.

AMIT

She owns a club in the red light district. I have the address.

Max stops doing pull-ups. Just hangs.

MAX

Here's what we're going to do.

INT. PRIVATE CLUB - NIGHT

Techno beats. Black lights. Could be in Miami or Rio if it was not for the predominately Asian clientele.

Max, in more casual attire now, approaches the attractive FEMALE BARTENDER.

BARTENDER

Let me guess. Guinness?

MAX

Whiskey. Double. No ice.

BARTENDER

Most guys off the mountain want the calories.

Max does look like a mountaineer, broad shoulders, athletic. He places a hundred dollar bill on the bar.

MAX

I'm looking for something to remember my time here by.

BARTENDER

You and half the boys in this place.

MAX

I was thinking of getting a tattoo. Of a snow leopard.

She looks Max square in the eye --

BARTENDER

What you're looking for is dangerous to your health.

Then she intentionally glances upstairs, pockets the money, and moves on down the bar.

Max takes his drink --

UPSTAIRS

Circular booths line the outer walls. Small private parties. Elite.

Across the room, Max sees the Snow Leopard. She's wearing a black thigh-high slit dress with exposed back and joins a group of ASIAN BUSINESSMEN.

They bow to her in respect. A deal going down and she's in charge.

TWO SECURITY GOONS and a CONCIERGE approach Max at the top of the staircase.

CONCIERGE

Can I help you?

MAX

I'm with that party in the corner.

A suspicious look.

MAX

They're clients of mine. Climbing. I'm their guide.

CONCIERGE

I highly doubt that.

He nods to security.

MAX

Hold on. I'm leaving.

Max scribbles a note on a PHOTO, folds it in half --

MAX

Just give this to the woman with  
the green eyes. She knows me.

The Concierge reluctantly takes it over to her.

She glances at AN ENLARGED PICTURE OF HER SNOW LEOPARD  
TATTOO

Written: "You told me to find a new story. You're it."

Alarmed, she looks over, but Max is gone.

EXT. PRIVATE CLUB - NIGHT

Across the street in the shadows, Max sits on his  
motorcycle, waiting.

He sees the Snow Leopard, her legs mostly, getting  
whisked away into the back of a WHITE RANGE ROVER.

EXT. MOTORCYCLE - MOVING - NIGHT

Max weaves through traffic. Follows the Range Rover.

Headlights FLARE in his rearview mirror as a SILVER  
TOYOTA pick-up truck suddenly bumps Max's back tire,  
startling him.

Max speeds up. Tries to shake him. The Toyota right on  
him --

No choice. He has to let her go.

Max threads between two cars, using a rickshaw as a pick.

As Max weaves past it we realize it's AMIT --

Amit acknowledges Max and keeps following the girl while  
Max zooms down an off ramp, luring them away.

The Silver Toyota takes the bait, SWERVES across three  
lanes of traffic, going after Max --

EXT. OLD CITY - NIGHT

Open market. Imitation Gucci and pirated DVD's.

The Silver Toyota pulls along side Max, sideswipes him --

Max dodges. Swerves around a table --

PEOPLE scatter --

The Toyota takes out the table of DVD's --

EXT. MOTORCYCLE - MOVING - NIGHT

Neck and neck.

A tunnel up ahead --

Max can't outrun the Toyota.

Being forced into a cement wall --

An OPEN CANAL runs alongside the road.

Max goes for it --

EXT. OPEN CANAL - NIGHT

Max lands. Hydroplanes. Recovers.

Pure reacting.

Max ducks and disappears into a pitch black COLVERT --

INT. COLVERT - NIGHT

Dark. Wet. Tight.

No room to maneuver in here -- no room to breathe.

The handlebars GRAZE against the sides of corrugated metal --

Max just hangs on --

EXT. COLVERT - NIGHT

Open air. Water spills out of the round colvert.

Max shoots out --

Lands. Eyes adjusting --  
 Twenty yards. A LOG JAM. No time. Nowhere to go --  
 Max lays the bike down --  
 Skin on cobble --  
 Excruciating. Slows him down some, but --  
 Not enough as he slams into the debris pile. Hard.

EXT. CANAL - NIGHT

Max lays face down in an inch of water.  
 The Silver Toyota SCREECHES to a halt on a bridge overhead. The DRIVER, a large Tibetan, gets out and peers down over the railing --  
 Max slowly crawls out of the canal.  
 He and the Tibetan stare at each other for a moment before --  
 Police SIRENS and RED FLASHING LIGHTS approach --  
 The Tibetan watches Max hobble away into an alley --  
 Another time.

EXT. OUTSIDE KATHMANDU - NIGHT

The WHITE RANGE ROVER with the Snow Leopard stops outside a huge gate.  
 Amit pulls over. Pretends to buy some betal nut, a local stimulant, from a small stand.  
 He watches as the twenty-foot high wooden doors open and the Range Rover pulls inside.

INT. HALLWAY - HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - NIGHT

Max, banged up, limping, and bleeding from a cut over his eye, notices the door to his room is slightly ajar.

INT. MAX'S ROOM - HOTEL SHANGRI LA - NIGHT

Cautiously, Max opens the door --

MAX

Amit?

Instead, he's surprised to find BAKER calmly admiring his crime board on the wall.

BAKER

Pretty impressive investigation.

JACOBS closes the door behind Max.

JACOBS

Rough night?

Max finds it unsettling how unassuming they are being.

MAX

I'll live. What do you want?

Baker has the picture Max took of him and Jacobs outside the Nature Trust.

BAKER

I'm Baker. This is Jacobs. What if we were here to propose a mutually beneficial arrangement?

MAX

What kind of an arrangement?

BAKER

Perhaps we point you in certain directions, give a hand when we can, and if there is information that we could use, you share.

MAX

You want me to be an informant?  
For the CIA?

BAKER

More of a partnership, really.

Max is dubious.

MAX

Why me?

BAKER

Call it serendipity. Maybe you found us, maybe we found you. Mutual interests, what does it matter?

Baker point at the wall of photos --

BAKER

But what if I told you I could piece all this together for you - the heroin, the prince's network, how he smuggles it into the US, all of it. Not a bad story for a rookie reporter to break.

Max has the feeling they know a lot more about him than he does them.

MAX

What do you get out of this?

BAKER

To be determined. Call it an investment.

Baker takes the picture of the Snow Leopard off the wall.

BAKER

We can start with her. Who is she?

MAX

You tell me.

Baker chuckles. This kid has spunk.

BAKER

Do you know where she is?

MAX

Not yet. Why is she so important?

BAKER

You're the investigative reporter. Investigate.

MAX

Why should I trust you?

BAKER

You shouldn't. But what else are you going to do, rot here, chasing your tail, or get in the game?

Baker hands Max a 35mm CAMERA LENS.

MAX

What's this?

BAKER

GPS BEACON. Indestructible. Well, within reason. Just take off the lens cap, and press here.

BAKER

We can be anywhere in country in under an hour. If you find her, press it. That's it.

They stroll out, just like that, leaving Max alone, still bleeding, staring at the GPS DEVICE in his hand.

EXT. HILTON - DAY

HELI PAD. York lands a Russian made MI-17 on the roof, picking up Charlie and his CAMERA MAN.

Max runs out, stays low, conscious of the propellers.

MAX

I really need to talk to you!

CHARLIE BELL

Going to have to wait. Being charged by the hour.

MAX

It can't wait, Charlie.

Charlie senses something is up.

CHARLIE BELL

You have your gear?

MAX

Yeah.

CHARLIE BELL

(to Camera man)

Take a day by the pool. Full pay.

Max loads up into the helicopter. Acknowledges York.

INT. HELICOPTER - MOVING - DAY

York flies them over the lush forest of western Nepal. Max and Charlie ride in back.

MAX

I pursue the stories, if there's information they want, we share.

Max finishes. Charlie, concern on his face, stares out the open bay door.

CHARLIE BELL

Walk away, Maxwell.

MAX

This could be bigger than breaking Iran-Contra, Charlie. They wouldn't have come to my room if I wasn't close to something big.

CHARLIE BELL

Iran-contra? And where's Greg Webb now? Unemployed and suicidal. Leave it alone. While you can still tell up from down.

York hovers over a beautiful emerald green river.

YORK (OVER HEADSET)

Mahakali dam site. You can just make out where construction started before the rebels took over. You got three minutes to get what you need before someone mistakes me for military and fires an RPG up my arse.

Charlie points to what Max should photograph.

MAX

What are these pics for?

CHARLIE BELL

A source inside the summit talks told me that the Chinese Premiere and King Birenda discussed water rights.

MAX

So?

CHARLIE BELL

If it's true, it would be the most drastic shift in Nepal's water treaty with India in decades. Could start quite a flare up with India.

MAX

A war? Over water?

CHARLIE BELL

They said the same thing about oil.

Max leans out of the chopper off a harness.

MAX

What I can't figure out is why the CIA needs me to find the girl? They know she works with Dipendra.

CHARLIE BELL

This is a deep, morally ambiguous hole you're teetering above. It starts out innocent enough, just sharing information, then one day they'll want you to write something for them... maybe it's true, maybe it isn't.

MAX

Relax, Charlie. You know I would never do that.

York listens to Charlie and Max over the headsets while he scans the tree line. Hyper vigilant.

CHARLIE BELL

If anyone ever found out, you would be putting every American journalist's life in danger, accused of being a spy.

MAX

Everyone already thinks we're spies. You taught me that.

CHARLIE BELL

Max, you need to listen to me, god damn it!

This gets Max's attention. He comes back inside the chopper.

CHARLIE BELL

You'd never work as a war correspondent again, anywhere, ever. Get it?!

MAX

I'm not working as a war correspondent now! I spent five years doing what I was told, taking the shit assignments, paying my dues. Five fucking years of weather reports, car accidents, and the god damn Macy's Day Parade.

MAX

Now I get my shot, but I'm half-way around the world shooting B-roll of a river for a washed up lush who'd rather sit around telling war stories, trying to get laid, than growing a pair --

Max stops himself short.

MAX

I'm sorry, Charlie. I didn't mean it. I just... I can handle these guys. You have to trust me.

Silence. Only the SOUND of the rotor blades overhead --

YORK (ON HEADSET)

We good, gentlemen?

CHARLIE BELL

Yeah. We're done here.

INT. OLD EMBASSY BUILDING - DAY

A portrait of President George W. Bush hangs on the wall.

Jacobs and Baker pull up the Snow Leopard file on a flat screen mounted on the wall.

JACOBS

This is the first time she's been seen since '98. You want me to notify the Israelis?

BAKER

Not yet. Let's see what this Smithhammer kid can do.

JACOBS

A bit risky recruiting a reporter as an informant isn't it? The agency hasn't been using them since the seventies.

BAKER

And you believe that?

JACOBS

Why him?

Baker stares at the photo of a younger Kat on the screen.

BAKER

Because she'd smell us coming a mile away.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF KATHMANDU - MORNING

Amit's rickshaw stops. Max steps out with his camera.

AMIT

On the right. Tall wooden doors.

Max grabs his case of camera gear and crosses the street.

EXT. VILLA - DAY

Max, nervous, steps up to the wooden gate. Knocks.

A small door swings open. Ominous.

MAX

This was a terrible idea.

Max steps through the door. A large court yard with several vehicles inside.

The door slams shut behind him and Max is greeted by a CLUB to back of the head. He's out cold.

INT. VILLA - DAWN

DARKNESS. The SOUND of flowing water. Close.

Max has CANVAS BAG over his head. Two massive hands grab his head and dunk him --

UNDERWATER

Max, hands tied behind his back, struggles for air.

COURTYARD

He's yanked out of the water, the wet canvas bag sucked into his wide mouth, making him choke.

The sack is removed and Max's eyes adjust to the morning light --

He takes in his surroundings. A closed in courtyard. Almost Spanish in design. A Fountain.

Across from him sits the Snow Leopard. She wears a white cotton dress that accentuates her contours. Her real name is KATRINA. She goes by KAT.

TENZIN, the giant Tibetan, takes up his periphery. He submerges Max again. Pulls him back up --

KAT

How did you find this place?

MAX

Maybe your help is getting sloppy.

Tenzin resents the comment. When Max resurfaces Kat flips through his passport. A lot of BLANK PAGES.

KAT

Tell me who you work for and what they want with me.

MAX

I told you. I'm a photojournalist. I work for the New York Times.

KAT

Why don't you stay at the Hilton with all the other foreign press?

MAX

I didn't come to Nepal to drink and fuck.

Kat has the picture/note Max passed her at the club.

KAT

No. You came for a story.

Max teeters on the back legs of his chair, Tenzin's left hand the only thing between him and drowning.

Kat likes him. But needs to be sure.

KAT

So you want to take my picture?

Tenzin cuts Max loose. Hands him his camera.

Kat picks up an M16 assault rifle and starts walking across the courtyard.

KAT

Well, here's your chance. But I advise you. Do not flinch.

Unsure if he will be taking the photograph of his own death, Max, nervous, raises his lens --

THROUGH VIEWFINDER

The American made M16 is aimed directly at him.

Max, adrenaline pumping, pulls focus on the barrel, then her face.

Kat FIRES --

A BULLET grazes Max's temple --

Max starts shooting --

The RAPPORT of the automatic rifle overrides the sound of his camera's motorized shutter --

Cement chips fly off the fountain behind Max - raining down on him as he holds his ground pretty well.

Both are focused. Pure concentration. Almost erotic.

Max's film runs out. Kat lowers her weapon.

She smiles. It's disarming.

Kat can tell from the slight tremor in Max's hands that he's not used to gunfire, that he's not military trained.

KAT

You can't fake reflexes. Come,  
have some breakfast.

Max notices the slight quiver in his hand. Kat turns to Tenzin.

KAT

(In Tibetan)  
*Leave now. I'll meet you there.*

Tenzin, sensing an energy, a spark, between these two, yanks the roll of film from Max's camera and crushes it in his hand as he gets in his Silver Toyota and leaves.

EXT. PATIO - DAY

The lavish balcony overlooks all of the Kathmandu Valley. Kat and Max sit for breakfast.

A GUARD has had a gun pointed on Max this entire time.

KAT

What do you want from me?

MAX

Access. I'm investigating the  
heroin trade. The royals. It led  
me to you.

MAX

My sources tell me you deal mostly in other goods so I thought maybe we can help each other out?

KAT

And how do you propose to help me?

Max lays out the pictures of JACOBS and BAKER.

MAX

Do you know who these men are?

KAT

Definitely American. This one is former military. Probably CIA.

MAX

His name is Baker. This one, Jacobs. They're looking for you.

KAT

How do you know?

MAX

They told me.

This gets her attention. She stands. Meetings over.

KAT

Kill him.

MAX

Wait!

She signals the Guard to hold --

KAT

How do I know you didn't lead them here?

MAX

No! They don't know... I came here to warn you. To make a deal.

KAT

But they know I am in Kathmandu because of you?

MAX

Yes. And I'm sorry about that, but, why would I come, I could have easily given them this address.

Kat thinks it over. Not good enough. She gives a hand signal and suddenly that BLACK CANVAS bag comes down over Max's head from behind --

MAX  
(struggling)  
No!

Max is dragged away --

INT. WHITE RANGE ROVER - MOVING - NIGHT

Paved road. Max rides in the backseat with his hands bound. The BLACK BAG still on his head.

He nervously reacts when the driver turns onto a dirt Jeep path through the forest.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Headlights illuminate the open field carved out of the thick jungle as MAHOUT TRAINERS ride on top of ELEPHANTS, directing them to unload crates off flatbed trucks.

Kat's men, SMUGGLERS, disperse the contents onto pack horses.

The DRIVER hauls Max, hands tied behind his back, out of the vehicle. Takes the canvas bag off --

ACROSS CLEARING

An argument between Tenzin and TWO ARMED MEN erupts --

Tenzin engulfs one in a massive bear hug. Crushes his rib-cage. Drops him to the ground. Dead.

The other ONE goes for his gun --

THWACK. He falls. Head shot.

Max turns. Kat is the shooter. Swift. Decisive. Professional.

He stares at her wondering if he's going to be next.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

The two dead men are whisked away while everyone gets back to work. Kat comes over --

KAT  
So what's it going to be?

MAX  
What the fuck are you talking about?!

KAT

You want to see the drug trade.  
This is your chance.

MAX

Or what? End up like them?

KAT

They were thieves. I do not feel  
bad about killing people I can not  
trust.

MAX

What do you feel bad about?

KAT

Not killing them earlier.

Tenzin approaches. Scowls at Max's presence.

TENZIN

(in Tibetan)

*What is he doing here?*

KAT

*When we are done with all this -  
people will need to know what  
happened here.*

TENZIN

*No good can come of this.*

Max, aware they are discussing him, is more concerned  
about the DRIVER riffling through his camera case.

The driver says something to Kat and she pulls out her  
Khukari knife, turns Max around.

MAX

Look, I don't know what he said,  
but --

Kat slices the rope that binds Max's wrists, freeing him.

KAT

Last chance.

EXT. RIVER VALLEY - DAY

These valleys have their own scale. Himalayan.

Max leads his horse up a narrow foot path along a steep  
cliff to a river far below. Not an experienced rider,  
but he's holding his own.

EXT. BONGORI VALLEY - DAY

Snowy peaks in the distance. Max and Kat ride next to each other, engrossed in a heated debate.

KAT

Everything is a commodity. You pedal stories of war and suffering, I smuggle drugs.

MAX

Tell me about Prince Dipendra's network? Do you work for him or his uncle, Gyanendra?

KAT

I don't work for anyone.

A juncture. Kat directs her horse up toward the mountains.

EXT. WOODEN BRIDGE - DAY

A rickety crossing. The wood planked bridge creaks under the weight of their pack animals.

A Tibetan RIDER turns to Tenzin.

RIDER

*Zampa iha Ghang.*

TENZIN

*Zampa iha Ghang.*

The glacial rapids rage below them as they cross. Max looks down. Instant death.

EXT. RIVER CAMP - NIGHT

Max eats alone. Kat joins him.

MAX

I think your man has a crush on me.

Tenzin watches them even now.

KAT

That's just his way. It's not you. He hates all Americans.

MAX

Does he know many?

KAT

His grandfather was trained by the CIA in the 1950's. They took about a hundred freedom fighters to Colorado. Taught them to do missions into China. Then Nixon came into power and wanted closer ties to China, so America left the Tibetan fighters high and dry.

MAX

Three generations. Wow. That's quite a grudge.

KAT

(with admiration)

He is the most stubborn man I know.

Max can tell there is a history between her and Tenzin, who glances at them jealously.

MAX

Every time we cross a bridge the men say, Zam-pa-ee-ha-Kung.

KAT

*Kampa iha khang.* Bridges and temples.

A curious look.

KAT

Freedom fighters are superstitious about places of exposure. Bridges and temples.

MAX

Why temples?

KAT

One entrance. One exit.

MAX

What about you? You a freedom fighter?

KAT

Everyone believes they fight for freedom.

Kat stands. Heads to bed. Tenzin and Max both watching her go.

EXT. RIVER CANYON CAMP - MORNING

Crisp blue-bird sky. Gorgeous sunrise.

Max, up early, leaves camp with his camera --

EXT. RIVER - MORNING

Cascades and clear pools. Morning mist.

Max stands on a granite boulder.

He scans the canyon below, unwittingly finds --

Kat, naked, bathing in an eddy.

He keeps completely still as if he's come across a rare wild animal and doesn't want to spook it.

She's gorgeous. He's breathless.

Unable to resist, he raises his --

VIEWFINDER

Kat, topless, stands waist deep in the frigid pool --

He takes a PHOTO. Then another.

Sensing, she turns and looks right at --

MAX

Caught. Slowly he lowers his lens.

KAT

Bare breasts. Goose bumps. Piercing eyes.

They stare at each other for another moment --

Neither willing to break away from this erotic staring contest.

Kat, unabashed, exits the natural pool. She grabs a towel and dries herself in the warm sunlight.

She looks up again, expecting Max to be watching, but he's gone.

EXT. KAT'S TENT - MORNING

Kat returns from bathing to find a single used ROLL OF KODAK FILM resting on a flat rock outside her tent.

She picks it up. Smiles to herself. A gentleman.

EXT. FOREST CAMP - NIGHT

Campfire. Max drinks whiskey and plays a dice game with several of Kat's MEN. They all speak in Tibetan until --

TENZIN

She is not your type.

Max is taken aback that Tenzin knows English. He tries to mask it by lighting a cigarette with a twig from the fire.

MAX

Kat told me you're a freedom fighter?

TENZIN

Tibet is our country. Illegally seized by the Chinese. In time, we will take it back.

MAX

I thought Buddhists object to killing even a flea?

TENZIN

Perhaps it is better to crush the flea so it will be reincarnated as a more enlightened being.

The threat isn't lost on Max.

MAX

Smuggling animal parts in order to give Chinese businessmen hard-ons isn't exactly what I call the enlightened path.

TENZIN

(getting pissed)

Westerners care more about saving trees than they do people. Why are you here? No one in America cares what happens in the Himalaya.

Max stares into the fire. Thinks before answering.

MAX

It's my job to make them care.

Tenzin rises.

TENZIN

Then you are shit at your job.

EXT. LUSH VALLEY - MORNING

Striking camp. Tenzin and Kat argue in Tibetan as they pack up. Max cleans his camera equipment, pretending not to watch. He has the GPS LENS in his hand, just in case.

TENZIN

(in Tibetan)

*We should leave him here. He'll make people upset.*

KAT

*You mean he makes you upset.*

His lack of response tells her he's jealous.

TENZIN

*Why do you risk bringing him?*

KAT

*He will be useful.*

Tenzin's not convinced. He knows there is more to it than that. He sees a spark in her when she's around Max.

TENZIN

*You're judgement is clouded.*

Kat kisses him on the cheek. She switches to English --

KAT

Trust me.

Her kiss hurts Tenzin more than she will ever know.

INT. OLD EMBASSY BUILDING - KATHMANDU - DAY

Colonial design. Modern amenities. Baker interrogates a petrified NEPALI TEENAGER. Baker's calm demeanor is slightly chilling.

BAKER

Don't you want to go to America?  
I can help with that. Just tell me who your boss's contacts are.

No response. Baker smiles. He cracks open a COKE and places it front of the young man. Jacobs enters --

BAKER

While I'm over there, I want you to write down every name and enjoy the taste of freedom.

Baker places pen and paper on the table and joins Jacobs. The kid eyes the SODA suspiciously.

BAKER

Any word from Smithhammer?

JACOBS

He just disappeared. No contact. You think he's dead?

BAKER

What about the girl?

JACOBS

Langley's sent the recent picture to Interpol and the Hong Kong office. If she turns up, they'll let us know.

BAKER

Alright. Keep a man at the hotel. I want to know as soon as Smithhammer returns. If he returns.

Baker turns back to the kid, who hasn't written down a single name nor touched the icy Coke.

BAKER

(to Jacobs)  
What about Bell?

JACOBS

Mahakali treaty.

Real concern.

BAKER

Alright, I'll take care of it.

Jacobs exits. Baker calmly circles behind the kid.

BAKER

Freedom is not given, it always has to be earned.

Baker yanks back the boy's head, starts pouring the Coke down his throat, an impromptu waterboarding.

EXT. BLACK MARKET - HIGH MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY

18,000 feet. Glaciers cover the vast Himalaya - home to eight of the world's highest peaks.

Large canvas tents line the camp. SMUGGLERS and their goods come from as far as Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Kat, Tenzin, and Max ride into the camp on horseback.

KAT

These same sorts of trade outposts  
existed in the time of Genghis  
Khan.

They ride through a gauntlet of suspicious stares.  
Several acknowledge Kat as they pass.

SMUGGLER #1

Zigsa.

Kat nods.

SMUGGLER #2

Zigsa.

Max turns to Tenzin.

MAX

Zigsa?

TENZIN

It means snow leopard.

Tenzin and the men stop.

TENZIN

Stay near our camp. No pictures.

MAX

Whatever you say, boss.

Tenzin suspiciously looks at Max, reaches over and takes Max's camera case. He opens it.

MAX

What do you think you are doing?

TENZIN

I don't trust you. I will never  
trust you.

Tenzin closes the camera case. Instead of handing it back, he rides off with it. Max stares nervously after him.

EXT. SMUGGLERS CAMP - DAY

A light dusting of snow accentuates the rocky terrain and gathers at the base of the yurt-sized domed tents.

Max chain smokes outside. He goes to take a piss behind a yurt and finds a MAN face down in the snow.

He rolls him over. He's alive, just passed out drunk from a rough night of drinking.

A PISTOL in his belt. Max looks around. Clear. He takes the GUN and slips into the small of his back.

EXT. SMUGGLERS CAMP - DAY

Max wanders through the camp. He notices Tenzin talking with a tall TIBETAN GIRL, serving CHINESE SMUGGLERS tea.

They guard several TIBETAN REFUGEE'S huddled around a small fire.

MAX

They're in pretty rough shape.  
Tibetan refugees?

TENZIN

The journey from Lhasa is very  
difficult.

MAX

What are they doing here?

TENZIN

They've paid these men a  
lifetime's wage to take them to  
India.

The Tibetan Girl keeps looking over at Tenzin.

MAX

You know her?

TENZIN

She is my brother's child.

Max, shocked, notices the emotion in Tenzin's voice.

MAX

What will happen to her?

Tenzin doesn't answer. His expression grave.

Several armed MONGOLIAN SMUGGLERS approach - heading straight for Max. Trouble.

MONGOLIAN SMUGGLER  
You are American photographer?

Max glances at Tenzin for help, but Tenzin offers nothing. It was probably Tenzin who outed him.

MAX  
No camera. See. No problem.

MONGOLIAN SMUGGLER  
(angry)  
Not photographer?!

Max realizes he's stuck. Perhaps the best defence is a good offense --

MAX  
Yes. Yes, I am.

Several MORE SMUGGLERS circle around. Tenzin just watches, enjoying the show. Max prepares for the worst --

EXT. SMUGGLERS CAMP - DAY

Tripod set up, Max frames a shot of a dozen SMUGGLERS posing with their weapons.

Max, in his element, has the Mongolian Smuggler adjust his AK-47.

EXT. SMUGGLERS CAMP - DAY

Kat watches Max pack up his gear. Sensing that he's being watched, Max turns around and catches her. They lock eyes. The sexual tension between them palpable.

She breaks off the staring contest and retreats inside her tent, purposefully leaving the door flap open.

INT. KAT'S TENT - NIGHT

Max slips inside. Kat gets dressed - her bare back facing him. She's aware Max is there, but plays coy.

MAX  
Zigsa.

KAT  
(doesn't turn)  
Don't call me that.

He starts lacing up the back of her corset-bra that conceals her Khukari blade.

MAX

Why do they call you that?

KAT

Up here it is believed that if you kill a snow leopard, then all of the leopard's sins are transferred to your life.

MAX

And you have a lot of sins?

She turns around. Face-to-face.

KAT

More than any man could bear.

Her lips almost touch his. He wants her.

SMUGGLER #1 (O.S.)

Zigsa. They are ready for you.

KAT

(to Max)

Time to see why I brought you here.

Kat steps away and slips on her shirt.

EXT. SMUGGLERS CAMP - NIGHT

Stars only shine this bright in a handful of places on earth. The round canvas tents glow orange like giant jack-o'-lanterns.

Tenzin fumes seeing Max come out of Kat's tent.

KAT

(to Max)

Be polite and keep your mouth shut. Got it?

Max nods.

KAT

Good.

Kat and Max join a stoic Tenzin. No words. Tension high between the three as they enter the biggest canvas tent in camp.

INT. CANVAS TENT - NIGHT

A stout Mongolian named GHAN (50's, wind-worn skin, survivor) sits at a table across from Kat and Tenzin.

Ghan is guarded by a small ARMED ENTOURAGE as Tenzin's Niece serves him tea. Tenzin opens a duffle full of money. A deal going down.

Max observes silently from the entrance.

Kat and Ghan speak in *CHINESE*.

GHAN

*So this is your American  
photographer?*

Tenzin glares, displeased both at Max's presence and that Ghan flaunts Tenzin's Niece as his servant.

GHAN

*We were hoping the King would have  
sent his troops against the  
Maoists by now. Be good for  
business. But it looks like he  
seeks deals with China instead.  
Brave one this King.*

KAT

*He is as self serving as the rest  
of us. Shall we get to it?*

Ghan waves and a CRATE of American made M16 semi-automatic rifles are brought in by his men. Her men bring in the aphrodisiacs.

GHAN

*Tell the General we had some  
difficulty paying off Pakistani  
officials for these. I'm afraid  
the price has doubled.*

Kat picks up an M16. Evaluates it's condition.

KAT

*I thought we were friends, Ghan?*

Ghan smiles. Speaks in English for the first time.

GHAN

Business acquaintances.

KAT

He'll pay it. There is also the  
issue of the Tibetan refugees.

KAT

In the future, please take better care of them.

GHAN

(insincere)

We will try.

Max, confused, realizes Kat is not buying heroin, but trading aphrodisiacs for M16's and Tibetan Refugees.

KAT

And the girl. She is Tenzin's niece. We would like her to be included with the others.

A few of Ghan's men noticeably shift.

GHAN

She is not for sale.

TENZIN

(in Chinese)

*This girl is disobedient.*

GHAN

*She is Tibetan after all. But I like her spirit. And size.*

Ghan's men laugh. Tenzin stands. Everyone's sensors tick up.

KAT

*Steady.*

TENZIN

*I will give you the American for her.*

Max isn't sure what's happening but can tell things are getting heated. People glance at him. Kat, surprised, but contains it.

GHAN

*Why would I want that burden?*

TENZIN

*He is worth ten times this peasant girl.*

GHAN

*I don't need the American government looking for him. His wife on CNN. Bad for business.*

Max hears the word "American" again and realizes they are talking about him.

TENZIN

*No one knows he's here.*

Ghan thinks it over. Kat slides her hand into her jacket pocket.

GHAN

No deal.

Tenzin takes a step toward Ghan --

Ghan's MEN go for their weapons --

All hell breaks loose.

A THUG leaps onto Tenzin's back, knife drawn --

Kat pulls a fresh CLIP from her pocket and before she can load it into the M16 --

BAM! A shot is fired --

Tenzin's attacker drops dead --

Kat reacts and shoots the shooter. She realizes too late it's not one of Ghan's men --

It's Max.

Max stumbles back, stays on his feet.

Kat whips her gun around, takes aim directly between Ghan's eyes.

Everyone freezes. Guns drawn. The OK corral.

GHAN

(In Chinese)

*Be still.*

KAT

Ghan, we are leaving the drugs and the guns, but taking the girl. No one else dies tonight.

She means him.

No one moves. Max, bleeding from his shoulder wound, gun still drawn, provides backup.

KAT

It's a good deal, Ghan!

After a long, tense few seconds, Ghan bursts out laughing. A hearty, guttural laugh.

GHAN

See, I told you we are friends,  
Zigsa! Only friends exchange  
gifts in this manner! Go. Take  
the girl. She is ugly, anyhow.

Everyone exhales.

Tenzin, exits with his Niece, followed by Max and Kat,  
M16 raised, who backs out of the tent last.

EXT. SMUGGLERS CAMP - NIGHT

Tenzin holds Max up, his labored breaths visible in the  
cold night air. Kat checks Max's wound.

KAT

No exit hole.

MAX

(stars spinning)  
You lied. There is no heroin.

KAT

(to Tenzin)  
Get the horses.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - NIGHT

Kat and Max ride together. He is slumped over. In and  
out of consciousness.

Silhouettes against the night sky.

EXT. LAKE - MORNING

They've ridden straight through the night. A secluded  
alpine lake up ahead. Kat whispers to Max.

KAT

Almost there.

Max lifts his head --

In the distance, perched on a cliff overlooking the  
gorgeous lake rests a multitiered Tibetan MONASTERY.

INT. MONASTERY - INNER COURT YARD - SUNSET

They ride in. Colorful prayer flags flap in the breeze.

Max, his shirt drenched in blood, is barely conscious.

The head monk, LODAK (60's, bald, tattoo on forehead) greets them in the courtyard.

KAT

*Lodak. Quickly.*

Lodak and several MONKS catch Max as he faints on the dismount. They rush him inside.

INT. ANTECHAMBER - NIGHT

Flickering candle light. Max, sweating profusely, burns with fever. The monks FACES fade in and out.

Kat THRUSTS pliers deep into Max's shoulder wound.

Fishing around, she finally pulls out the bullet - it CLINKS into a tin cup.

INT. SPARSE BEDROOM - DAY

Max lays on a futon. His shoulder wrapped in clean white gauze. He opens his eyes.

Disoriented. He struggles to sit up. Powers through it.

Lodak comes in. Smiles. Very pleased. Pours him some thick, milky, yak butter tea.

LODAK

Yak butter tea. Drink.

Max does. Grimaces. Lodak laughs.

LODAK

Good!

MAX

Where am I?

INT. MONASTERY COURT YARD - DAY

Max and Kat walk. He's getting his color back.

MAX

How long was I out?

KAT

Three days.

Several MONKS in red robes play basketball in the courtyard, aggressively boxing each other out.

MAX  
What is this place?

KAT  
A safe haven.  
(beat)  
Where did you get the gun?

MAX  
Off a drunk... I just reacted.

KAT  
You're lucky to be alive.

Max notices that she doesn't apologize for shooting him.

PAGODA

They walk past open doors. Inside, several Monks give and receive TATTOO's. Their bodies works of art.

Max glances at Kat's snow leopard tattoo.

KAT  
They are the best in all of Asia.

Rounding the building, they enter the --

GARDEN

Monks cultivate beds of herbs. They all smile at Max. Many are missing some toes and fingers.

MAX  
You help a lot of these guys over  
the mountians?

KAT  
Some. They did the hardest part.  
Leaving their country, their  
families behind.

The way she says it feels very personal.

MAX  
(realizing)  
So you get smuggle aphrodisiacs  
from India, to trade for guns and  
Tibetan refugees from China?

KAT  
The guns are from Pakistan.

MAX  
And those go to?

KAT

The highest bidder. Right now,  
the Maoists.

MAX

So you're a middleman?

KAT

Woman.

MAX

All to pay for Tibetans to escape?

KAT

You must be feeling better.  
You're asking a lot of questions.

He looks at her with a deeper appreciation as they walk through the beautiful gardens.

Kat stops and picks a long BLACK POD off one of the plants being cultivated. It excretes a sticky black tar.

KAT

This plant is extinct in the wild.  
Only grown here. The sap is an  
addictive narcotic. But too much  
and it's a powerful psychotic.

MAX

This is what you hand deliver to  
Prince Dipendra.

She likes his investigative mind. Tries not to show it.

KAT

We have an arrangement. I give  
him something no one else can, and  
he makes sure the royals stay out  
of my business.

Several Monks grin at Max as they pass.

MAX

Why are they all smiling at me so  
much?

KAT

Because I've never brought anyone  
here before.

That sits in the air for a moment as she walks away. Max watches her cross the garden. Exquisite.

EXT. HALLWAY - DAY

Max returns to his room. On the floor outside his door he finds the single ROLL OF FILM - the one he took of Kat bathing in the river - that he gave to her before.

He picks it up. Smiles. Goes inside.

EXT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Monks eat and chat. Quite a ruckus. Max sits with Lodak, who wears black Chuck-Taylor Converse hi-tops.

LODAK

Katrina came to us addicted to the opium. She had lost the will. Tenzin found and brought her here.

MAX

Are her and Tenzin still... ya know?

Lodak drinks his soup. Evades the question

MAX

I saw Tenzin praying in the garden. He's Buddhist?

LODAK

He is monk!

MAX

But I saw him crush a man to death.

LODAK

Tenzin follows doctrine of skillful means. If mind is motivated by compassion, then you transcend all sins.

MAX

So I can kill someone as long as I do it compassionately?

Lodak shakes his head, no.

LODAK

Mind must be motivated by compassion! Here is story. Buddha meets robber who tells him that he will kill five hundred merchants today. So, Buddha kills robber.

LODAK

Takes on bad Dharma for killing one person, but saves robber from five hundred killings worth of bad Dharma. Buddha kills robber out of compassion. Saving merchants, bonus points.

MAX

Sounds like the Buddha should have checked out what kind of merchants they were first.

Lodak's laugh echoes through the dining hall.

INT. MAX'S ROOM - MONASTERY - DAY

Max lays on his futon, writing in his notebook.

KAT

How's the shoulder today?

MAX

I'll make it.

KAT

I brought you something. To help with your circulation.

MAX

Just as long as it's not any more yak butter tea.

Kat unties her silk robe. Let's it drop to the floor.

Her naked form steps onto his futon.

INT. MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Candles light the room sending shadows of their intertwined, thrusting bodies, dancing across the walls.

Max and Kat make love. Wild. Consuming. Primal.

Kat flips on top. They climax and lay next to each other, wrapped in silk sheets.

Waiting right outside until they were finished, two YOUNG MONKS open the door, delivering trays of food. Max and Kat crack up laughing, slightly embarrassed.

Famished, Max digs into the fruit.

MAX

Why is Tenzin avoiding me?

KAT

He is ashamed.

MAX

Because I shot his attacker?

KAT

He offered you to Ghan in exchange  
for his niece.

MAX

But you stopped him?

KAT

No. I shot you.

She smiles and rolls on top of him. Pins his arms.

KAT

What are you going to do about it?

Playful. A challenge. They both know she could kill him  
without too much trouble.

Instead, she lets him roll on top of her, pinning her.

EXT. BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Max, his shoulder still healing, plays one handed.

Kat watches the game as Tenzin speaks with her in  
Tibetan.

TENZIN

*King Birendra has officially  
endorsed the One China policy.*

KAT

*I heard.*

TENZIN

*Soon the King will force all  
Tibetans out of Nepal.*

The Monks are ferocious rebounders. Max gets knocked  
down. Kat smirks. Tenzin can see she is smitten.

TENZIN

*You are distracted.*

KAT

*I am entertained.*

No reply.

KAT  
*I'll take care of it. Is everything set?*

TENZIN  
*Yes, Zigsa.*

She looks at her dear friend. Switches to English.

KAT  
 You have not called me that in a very long time.

TENZIN  
 It is best that I do. Now.

Tenzin doesn't look Kat in the eye.

Max stops playing for a second and looks over at Tenzin and Kat. There is an unrequited love here, unspoken, but present.

INT. MONASTERY - MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Middle of the night. Kat wakes with a startle. Max, lies awake next to her --

MAX  
 Nightmare?

KAT  
 Memories.  
 (beat)  
 I used to dream in Hebrew, now only in English.  
 (beat)  
 Do you think you can ever truly be yourself in a different language?

Max looks into her green eyes. He's falling in love with her - he can't help himself.

MAX  
 I don't know.

KAT  
 You have no idea who I really am. What I've done. What I am capable of doing.

MAX  
 What do we ever really know about someone?

He kisses her passionately and the sheets envelop them.

INT. HILTON BAR - NIGHT

Charlie sits at the bar. A half drunk bottle of Grey Goose sits in front of him. Loud music permeates from a private party where Kathmandu's young elite come and go.

Parker slides in next to Charlie, waves for another glass.

PARKER

Charlie. What's the occasion?

CHARLIE BELL

I'm old and tired, Parker. I don't need an occasion.

PARKER

I meant in there?

A door to the private party opens as several beautiful, hip, Nepalese WOMEN pass by the BODY GUARDS revealing periodic glimpses of the debauchery inside. Dancing, drinking, and drugs.

CHARLIE BELL

Prince Dipendra's cousin and fifty of his closest friends.

PARKER

How's that Mahakali piece coming along?

CHARLIE BELL

The powers that be killed it.

Parker raises his shot glass in a rare moment of sincerity.

PARKER

Hardest thing about this job... the vulnerability.

He drinks. Pours another.

PARKER

And when I'm an editor someday... here's to crushing the hopes of my reporters everywhere.

They drink.

PARKER

Where's Smithhammer if he's not off looking into the water story for you?

PARKER

(snide)  
Still searching for perfection?

CHARLIE BELL

(covering)  
Why? You need him for something?

PARKER

Just keep him out of trouble is  
all I ask.

The door to the party opens again and Charlie and Parker get a glimpse of Prince Dipendra and his COUSIN snorting heroin off a glass table.

PARKER

I knew I should have been a  
prince.

INT. GARDEN - MONASTERY - NIGHT

Kat and Max bathe in a large bamboo tub under the stars. Steam comes off the water and their intertwined bodies.

KAT

The royals are spoiled children,  
set on ruining their country.

MAX

King Birendra seems to be doing a  
good job of keeping civil war from  
breaking out.

KAT

He is a politician who placates  
the Chinese by backing their  
Tibetan deportation policy. It's  
slaughter. That is what this King  
supports. That should be your  
story.

MAX

Then why are you working for his  
son?

KAT

Maybe the son would be better!

MAX

So you brought me here to do a  
story on Tibetan refugees.

KAT

You said you want to pursue real  
stories, important stories, that  
make a difference.

MAX

I do, but I thought we had a deal?  
I warned you about those American  
suits and you show me the heroin  
trade.

KAT

This is more important. You've  
seen how much these people suffer,  
what they go through for freedom.

MAX

You can't save Tibet, Kat.

A flash of anger.

KAT

At least I'm doing something.  
What are the royals doing? What  
are you doing? Observing.  
Staying neutral.

MAX

That's the job. To remain  
objective.

KAT

There is no objectivity when it  
comes to genocide. Being a  
journalist is just an excuse to  
never choose sides.

MAX

I guess I could smuggle drugs and  
kill people.

Kat gets out of her bath. Steam off her skin.

KAT

I kill when it is the only thing  
left to do.

Kat walks away leaving wet prints on the slate courtyard.

Max leans back and dunks himself, disappearing underwater  
to bask in his stupidity.

EXT. ALPINE LAKE - DAY

Wind whips across the crystal clear water. The monastery  
perched above him over a mile away.

Max stands along shore, alone.

He takes out the GPS DEVICE, rotating it in hand, feeling it's weight, contemplating.

After a few moments, Max tosses it into the lake.

EXT. MONASTERY - GARDEN - DAY

Koi pond. A FISH pokes its head up between two lily pads eating a dragonfly. SNAP. Max takes its picture.

Max, looking healthy, takes PHOTOGRAPHS of the monks, garden, the monestary.

Kat leads two horses, fully saddled-up, toward him.

KAT

What are you doing?

MAX

I've been thinking. I'm going to write about the Tibetan refugees, their journey. Lodak's been helping me.

KAT

Good. Now I won't have to kill you.

She mischievously smiles and mounts one of the horses.

KAT

You ready?

MAX

For what?

KAT

Punishment.

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

Max grabs the saddle horn, hanging on, as his horse leaps over a creek.

Kat takes the lead - the better rider.

Max's horse reacts, gains. Their horses rub shoulders --

EXT. SECLUDED WATERFALL - DAY

Horses graze. Max and Kat swim naked under the falls.

The water and companionship washing away years of war scars and loneliness.

They look happy. In love.

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

They lay on the grass. Kat smiles and Max playfully wrestles with her. They're obviously pretty smitten with each other.

Max touches the SILVER LOCKET that hangs in the soft groove of Kat's neck. A sepia picture of a woman inside.

MAX

Your mother?

KAT

Grandmother. Taken two weeks before the Germans invaded Poland. She was sent to Aushwitz.

MAX

She survived?

KAT

(proud)  
No. She escaped. German guards would trade food for sex with the female prisoners. One night she slit the bastard's throat. Walked to Romania.

Max finishes examining the locket. It returns to rest in the cradle of her neck.

MAX

You have her eyes. Did you know her?

KAT

She was murdered in front of me when I was six.

Kat stares off into space, the image seared into her memory, and Max sees something new in those beautiful eyes - an unquenchable desire for revenge.

INT. COURT YARD - MONASTERY - EVENING

Tenzin is waiting for them as they arrive on horseback from their picnic.

Max watches Kat's whole mood suddenly change as she talks heatedly with Tenzin. She comes over.

KAT

Tenzin is going to accompany you back to Kathmandu. I'll meet you there.

MAX

What's going on?

KAT

I'll see you soon.

MAX

Wait. Tell me what's going on.

Kat rides off and Tenzin blocks Max from following her.

TENZIN

It's not of your concern.

Frustrated, Max shoves Tenzin back and storms away.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - OUTSIDE OF KATHMANDU - DAY

Max and Tenzin ride in an open jeep along a deserted dirt jeep trail. Kathmandu can be seen on the horizon.

INT. JEEP - MOVING - DAY

Max breaks the long silence.

MAX

Kat told me you offered me to Ghan for your niece.

(sarcastic)

Were you motivated by compassion?

TENZIN

I see you learned something during your stay.

Tenzin pulls over. Max's guard goes up.

TENZIN

Get out.

Max gets out of the jeep, starts pumping himself up to fight the much larger Tenzin, but Tenzin stays in the driver's seat.

MAX

If we're going to do this, let's do it!

TENZIN

You are going to leave Nepal and never return.

MAX

Or what?

Tenzin pulls out the GPS DEVICE that Max threw into the lake. Max's face is a mix of fight and flight.

TENZIN

It is my job to protect her, even from herself. If you try to contact her, I will tell her about this, and kill you.

MAX

Why not kill me now?

Tenzin reaches for something in the backseat, passes Max his camera case.

TENZIN

Make Americans see what is happening to my people.

Tenzin ACTIVATES the GPS DEVICE, tosses it to Max, and then drives away, leaving Max standing there, stunned.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - OUTSIDE OF KATHMANDU - DAY

Two helicopters circle overhead. Max squints up at them - wind and dust blown down from the propellers - as multiple SUV's roll up on him from both directions

American and Indian OPERATIVES jump out. Weapons drawn.

Baker, not pleased, approaches Max.

BAKER (V.O.)

Tell us where she is or --

INT. OLD EMBASSY BUILDING - DAY

Cupping his hand, Baker choke-holds Max from behind. Max gasps for air, trying hard not to black out.

Jacobs intervenes. Baker lets go.

BAKER

Who is she working for?

Max. Poker faced. Moment of truth.

MAX

She's nothing. Drug smuggler.  
Works for herself.

BAKER

You're telling me that you spent  
the past three weeks with her and  
you have nothing for us?

MAX

Sorry, Baker. She's gone. What  
do you want me say? No story.  
Why do you want her so bad?

They can tell he's not telling them everything.

BAKER

Show him.

Jacobs pulls out a BINDER. Shows Max pictures of Kat's  
VICTIMS as he briefs from memory.

JACOBS

Zaig, Katrina, Israeli Special  
Forces '91-93. Sniper. She joins  
Mossad in '95. '97, Cairo. Car  
bombing. Twenty innocents killed.  
'98. Libya. Assassination of  
Khomeel Abdula and his wife.

INSERT: Abdula and his wife's throats filleted open.

BAKER

After Libya she murders two of her  
Israeli colleagues and disappears.

INSERT: Two dead MEN. Head shots. Precise.

JACOBS

Until you found here. She's  
wanted for murder and treason.

Max doesn't want to believe him. He looks away to cover  
his surprise and feelings for her.

BAKER

I thought we had a deal, Max? Why  
are you protecting her?

Jacobs holds up the GPS DEVICE.

JACOBS  
Who's prints are on this?

MAX  
I told you, it's her associate's.

JACOBS  
Where's he?

MAX  
I don't know.

JACOBS  
Jesus, Max. You must know something.

After a long pause --

MAX  
Look. I really don't know where she is. I haven't seen her in days. If this helps, her associate is Tibetan. His name is Tenzin. Big guy. Barrel chest. Deals in black market goods in the red light district.

JACOBS  
See, that wasn't so hard, was it?

MAX  
Can I go now?

Baker, back to Max, stares out the window.

BAKER  
Your passport. Leave it on the table. You can come get it in a couple of days if this Tibetan pans out.

Max leaves it, heads toward the door. He eyeballs the thick binder on Kat as he passes. Once Max leaves.

BAKER  
Put a tail on him. Twenty-four hour surveillance. And find this Tibetan. Tonight.

EXT. KATHMANDU - ROOF TOP CAFE - DAY

Popular night spot. Overlooks Kathmandu City. Heat lightning flashes against a purple sky.

A half a dozen empty beer bottles rest the table. Max and Charlie have been here awhile and are pretty drunk.

MAX

... and now I'm pretty sure I'm being followed.

Max finishes his tale. Stares out over the vast city --

MAX

Go ahead, Charlie. Just get it over with... Tell me I told you so...

After a long beat, Charlie's expression softens --

CHARLIE BELL

Better to have loved and...

GUN FIRE erupts a few blocks away.

Max and Charlie leap out of their seats.

MORE GUNFIRE. Flashes. Tracer bullets.

CHARLIE BELL

It's coming from the Royal Palace.

Without another word they sprint for the stairway --

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Leaping from Amit's rickshaw before it fully stops, Max immediately starts taking photographs as SEVERAL BODIES are being wheeled inside the emergency room.

Charlie and Max try to enter, but SOLDIERS block their path.

They wave their PRESS PASSES and bully their way forward.

MAX

We're the press! We have a right to go in there!

Inside Max sees King Birendra laying prone on a gurney, two bullet holes in his chest. Several other DEAD BODIES lay on the floor.

A DOCTOR pulls back a WHITE SHEET.

MAX

Holy shit. It's King Birendra.

Max lifts his camera over the soldier's heads.

SOLDIER

No pictures!

The soldier grabs Max's camera.

MAX

Hey!

CHARLIE BELL

BBC. Let us inside. Now!

More SOLDIERS rush over and drag Max and Charlie away.

Max screams at the OFFICER who rips the roll of film from his camera.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Max and Charlie are dragged outside where they watch SOLDIERS pour from trucks and set up barricades.

Charlie gets on his cell while he still talks to Max --

MAX

You think it was the Maoists?

CHARLIE

Or an internal *Coup*.

(into phone)

Get your asses over to...

(to Max)

Where are we?

MAX

Trivander Hospital.

CHARLIE

(into phone)

Trivander Hospital. The King has just been assassinated.

(beat)

Of Nepal, you twit!

MAX

Can't be internal. I mean, why assassinate the King and then try to save him by bringing him to the hospital?

Overhead, BEATING propellers --

A military helicopter lands. Out steps --

CHARLIE

(into phone)

Gyanendra. The King's brother just arrived. We're missing great footage here! Max, you getting this?

Gyanendra, grim faced, is rushed inside the hospital.

SNAP. SNAP. SNAP. Max still has his second camera.

Soldiers force a belligerent Max and Charlie to move out of the area as they create a wide protective swath around the hospital.

INT. HILTON HOTEL - NIGHT

The bullpen buzzes. REPORTERS all race to be the first to scoop the story. Who assassinated the Royal family? Max works with Charlie --

MAX

So all we know is that a few hours ago, the royals were having their monthly dinner, and now eleven of them are dead, including the King. And Prince Dipendra, even though he is in a coma with a bullet in his head, he was just named as the new King. This is nuts.

CHARLIE BELL

(to Assistant)

Get me the British Ambassador on the phone.

Max studies a cork board with head shots of the eleven Royal family members who were murdered tonight - very similar to the layout on the wall of his hotel room.

Possible suspects' PHOTOS are on the right with the MAOIST rebel leader front and center.

Parker calls over to Max --

PARKER

Smithhammer, tell me you have prints from the hospital.

MAX

Drying in the dark room now.

(dishing it out)

But Parker, I thought no one gives a shit about Nepal.

Parker, excited, slaps Max on the shoulder.

PARKER

This is going to be our ticket out of here. We might even make the front page. Massacres always sell.

Charlie, phone to his ear, is on hold.

CHARLIE BELL

(to Assistant)

Any news on why the king's brother wasn't at tonight's family dinner?

A BUZZ of activity starts up across the room. Charlie's other FEMALE ASSISTANT runs over --

CHARLIE BELL

What is it?

FEMALE ASSISTANT

There's a rumor that Prince Dipendra did it. Killed everyone, then put a bullet in his head because the King refused to let him marry some girl.

MAX

Devyani Rana.

FEMALE ASSISTANT

How'd you know?

MAX

She's his girlfriend.

CHARLIE BELL

(to Max)

You have pictures of Dipendra and the girl?

MAX

Yeah. Back at my hotel.

CHARLIE BELL

Go get them. Right now.

Max turns to go.

CHARLIE BELL

And Maxwell.

MAX

Yeah?

CHARLIE BELL  
 (sly grin)  
 Step three.

Max smiles back, fuck'in Charlie.

CHARLIE BELL  
 (into phone)  
 Cheers.  
 (he hangs up)  
 I have independent confirmation.  
 A palace guard saw Dipendra  
 carrying an M16. Direct quote,  
 "his face was expressionless, like  
 a mask, as he shot everyone."

FEMALE ASSISTANT  
 CNN's running with it!

Charlie, Max, Parker, everyone stops and watches --  
 SEVERAL MOUNTED TV'S THROUGHOUT BULLPEN  
 Clips of Prince Dipendra as a child playing with guns.  
 TEXT AT BOTTOM OF SCREEN: "Massacre at the Palace."

CNN REPORTER  
 With speculation swirling in  
 Kathmandu as to the Regicide of  
 the Nepalese Royal family, we are  
 hearing reports that it was Crown  
 Prince Dipendra, the King's eldest  
 son, committed out of a blind act  
 of passion, before turning the gun  
 on himself. Prince Dipendra is  
 currently in a coma with a single  
 bullet wound to his left temple.

BACK IN BULL PEN --

CHARLIE BELL  
 (to Max)  
 If you can get back here with the  
 photos of the prince and his  
 girlfriend within the hour, we can  
 run them on BBC morning World News  
 and you'll still have them for the  
 Times deadline.

Max heads for the door.

INT. AMIT'S RICKSHAW - MOVING - DAY

As the city wakes to the news, people start streaming into the streets. Max stares out the window at people's reaction to the news. Utter disbelief.

AMIT

The entire country. No one knows what to do with themselves.

BBC plays on Amit's radio. Charlie's voice --

CHARLIE BELL (ON RADIO)

His face was expressionless, like a mask. Then Prince Dipendra, in an attempt to take his own life, put his pistol to his left temple...

EXT. CITY CENTER - DAY

Thousands of MEN are queued up outside barber shops. They pay their respects to the fallen King by having their heads shaved. A sea of baldness.

Amit can't get past. The streets too packed.

MAX

Wait here. I'll walk.

INT. MAX'S ROOM - HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - DAY

Max riffles through the stack of the eight-by-ten prints until he find the ones of Dipendra and his girlfriend at the cafe.

He takes a moment to look at the ones of Kat and the drop, seeing her much differently now.

He instinctively takes the photos of her out of the stack, leaving them in his room.

EXT. HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - DAY

Max exits. Makes his way through the hordes of mourning Nepalese.

Someone is following him. A BLOND AGENT. American. One of Baker's men. Max picks up the pace, weaving through the crowded street.

EXT. KATHMANDU - CITY STREETS - DAY

Max rounds a corner and SOMEONE in a GREY HOODIE grabs him and pulls him into an open garage.

GREY HOODIE

Be still.

The BLOND AGENT passes by --

INT. GARAGE REPAIR SHOP - DAY

Kat lowers her hood. Head shaved. Her Auburn hair down to a quarter inch like half the men in Kathmandu. It shows off her eyes even more.

MAX

Kat, what's --

She kisses him. He kisses back. Passionate.

KAT

I wasn't sure I'd see you again.

MAX

Why?

KAT

People are looking for me. Those suits. Looks like they are after you as well.

MAX

What do they want?

KAT

Sins past? Sins present?

(beat)

You need to destroy all ties to me. Every picture. Of Lodak. The Monastery. No trace. The negatives. Where are they?

Her eyes are constantly moving. Scanning the crowd.

MAX

Safe. In my hotel.

KAT

Promise me you'll destroy them.  
Get out of Nepal.

Kat sees something she doesn't like out on the street.

KAT

I'm sorry.

She darts out into the crowd that lines King Birendra's funeral procession.

MAX

Kat, wait!

Max can't stop himself. He goes after her --

EXT. STREETS - KATHMANDU - DAY

All of Kathmandu seems to be out in the streets lining the funeral route. Over half a million PEOPLE.

King Birendra's body, wrapped in saffron cloth, is being carried on an open platform.

Max pushes through the crowd --

MAX

Kat!

Behind the King's body, a covered Palanquin carries his wife's remains, too disfigured to be displayed openly.

Max spots Kat for a moment before she disappears into the carpet of bald heads that follows the procession.

Thousands weep for their fallen King.

Max pulls out his cell phone and calls --

INT. RICKSHAW - MOVING - DAY

Amit, weaving through the city. Max rides in back, keeps looking to see if they are being followed.

Military barriers block a lot of the streets.

MAX

Can you get to the Hilton?

Amit takes a short cut.

AMIT

No problem, Ji.

(beat)

Gyanendra is about to make an announcement.

He turns up the RADIO --

GYANENDRA (ON RADIO)

In regards to the rumors of the tragedy that occurred last night. A report has come to our attention that an automatic weapon went off suddenly, seriously injuring King Birendra and several more of my immediate family.

MAX

He's saying Dipendra accidentally fired a machine gun that somehow killed eleven people? That's ludicrous.

The mood on people's faces on the street has changed from concerned loyal subjects to angry mob. They too are not buying this story.

AMIT

Everyone believes Gyanendra is behind the massacre.

Hundreds of NEPALI CITIZENS start marching toward the palace, grabbing rocks, planks, anything they can throw.

MOB

Gyanendra the murderer!

MAX

Amit. Forget the Hilton. Follow them!

Amit pulls a hard U-turn. Guns it.

In back, Max, focused, loads his camera as they follow the angry mob back the other way.

EXT. ROYAL PALACE - NIGHT

Dark streets. Hundreds carry TORCHES. Their flames ignite the sky.

ARMY SOLDIERS blockade the palace.

The gates suddenly open and Gyanendra's caravan of White Range Rovers make their way through the crowd trying to get inside.

ELDERLY NEPALESE MAN

Murderer!!

ROCKS are being thrown at Gyanendra's vehicles.

Windshields spiderweb.

CAR TIRES are rolled into the streets. Set ABLAZE.

Without warning, ARMORED VEHICLES spray the torch bearing mob with WATER CANONS --

People are wiped off their feet --

Max photographs everything, much steadier than before, no longer a rookie. He switches to his short lens --

AMIT

We have to get out of here, Ji.

MAX

Just a few more --

A volley of RUBBER BULLETS hits the crowd --

One SHATTERS Amit's jaw --

Max, realizing, drags Amit to his feet and they get the hell out of there...

As Gyanendra's hobbled caravan enters the palace. Safe.

INT. CLINIC - MORNING

Hundreds of INJURED line the corridor. Amit gets patched up by a NURSE. Max talks to Charlie on his cell.

MAX

Well, you have to admit Charlie, it's pretty fucking convenient that Gyanendra was absent from the dinner and that somehow his wife and son survived unscathed.

BEEP. Call waiting.

MAX

Charlie. I got another call. I'll be there with the pics as soon as I can.

(answers other call)

Yeah.

BAKER

Smithhammer.

MAX

How'd you get this number, Baker?

BAKER

Outside. Two minutes.

EXT. CLINIC - MORNING

A black SUV waits in front of the clinic. Jacobs stands by the open back door. Baker inside.

INT. SUV - MOVING - DAY

Max rides in back between Baker and Jacobs. Cozy.

Jacob's flips open a camcorder screen. Presses play.

JACOBS

This was taken from a surveillance camera at the royal palace the night of the massacre.

CAMCORDER - BLACK & WHITE FOOTAGE

A palace gate. Security check point. Kat carries a small duffle bag. The guards wave her through.

Kat's good at knowing where the cameras are positioned, conceals her face, but Max notices the SNOW LEOPARD TATTOO on her left hand. No denying it's her.

JACOBS

We believe she wore a mask of Prince Dipendra. Was in and out in under ten minutes.

Baker hands Max a rubber MASK of Prince Dipendra's face. Convincing.

BAKER

All witnesses corroborate that the assassin never spoke. His face, "like stone."

MAX

(quoting Charlie's source)

"His face was expressionless, like a mask..."

Max's looks pale. Stunned. It adds up.

MAX

Where was Dipendra's body found?

BAKER

What? Why?

MAX

Just tell me where he was found.

BAKER

In the garden. On a bridge over a pond. Single round. Left temple.

Max sits. Subconsciously touches the scar below his collar bone where Kat shot him.

BAKER

Your girl murdered eleven people, Smithhammer. We're not sure why. I think you do.

MAX

Compassion.

Baker and Jacobs look at each other. All of the blood rushes from Max's face.

BAKER

Stop the car.

EXT. BUSY STREETS - EVENING

Max pukes in the gutter. Baker hands him a handkerchief.

BAKER

Take us to her, Max. This is not just a story.

A donkey cart approaches. Max, acting on pure impulse, breaks for it, uses the cart as a blocker.

Jacobs starts after him, but Baker intervenes --

BAKER

(unconcerned)  
It's alright. Give him some time.  
He's not going anywhere.

Jacobs seems less sure, but yields to Baker's authority.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Sprinting, Max turns a corner, and stops. Makes sure he's not being followed.

EXT. KATHMANDU - ABANDONED STREETS - NIGHT

Military trucks patrol enforcing the mandatory curfew.

Sealed store fronts. Parked rickshaws. Nothing stirs.

Except Max, who darts through the empty streets --

EXT. KAT'S VILLA - NIGHT

Max stops outside. There's no guards at their posts or at the front gate. No lights on. He heads inside --

INT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

It's eerily quiet. Cleared out. Only the SOUND of the fountain with the BULLET HOLES.

INT. KAT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

He comes inside. Empty except for the warm breeze that blows the paper-thin, ceiling-high drapes.

Max hears the SIRENS outside echo through the narrow streets of Kathmandu announcing the mandatory curfew.

MAX

Jesus, Kat. Tell me you didn't do this...

EXT. KATHMANDU STREETS - NIGHT

Max works his way through the streets avoiding the occasional Army patrol.

TWO SOLDIERS round a corner, spotting Max --

He takes off --

EXT. SLUMS - KATHMANDU - NIGHT

Max, trapped, tries a door. Locked. Then another. No luck. He turns the knob on the third and --

INT. SLUM APARTMENT - NIGHT

Max ducks inside. A NEPALESE FAMILY stares at him as if he's a ghost.

A soldier POUNDS on the door. Max holds the door knob.

NEPALI SOLDIER

(in Nepalese)

*We're looking for a white man.  
Have you seen him?*

The FATHER stares at Max.

FATHER  
 (in Nepalese)  
*I think I would know if a white  
 man was in my house. Are you  
 stoned? Get lost!*

The Soldiers move on to the next apartment --

FATHER  
 (to Max)  
 They are gone. Tea?

Max loosens his grip on the door knob, impressed by the Father's calm hospitality.

MAX  
 Thank you.

The Man's WIFE serves Max a cup of chai. Max sees footage of Prince Dipendra as a young man on the small TV tuned to the local news.

MAX  
 What's happened?

FATHER  
 Prince, King Dipendra, he died one  
 hour ago. Gyanendra is now King.

Images of a young Prince Dipendra at a shooting range. Max moves closer - intently examines the screen.

MAX  
 Dipendra was right handed.

Dipendra indeed fires his pistol with his right hand.

MAX  
 Then he wouldn't put his pistol in  
 his left hand to kill himself.

The family all stare at a stunned Max as he realizes Kat really is responsible for killing the royal family.

EXT. SIDE ALLY - HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - NIGHT

Max peeks around the corner.

He sees TWO AGENTS - one American, one Indian - dressed as tourists in front of his hotel.

Max heads up the fire escape to the roof.

EXT. HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - NIGHT

Max climbs down a gutter --

He reaches his balcony and slips inside --

INT. MAX'S ROOM - HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - NIGHT

Inside, he's surprised to find Kat tearing up the place, looking for something.

MAX

Find what you're looking for?

Startled, Kat snaps around, silenced pistol aimed at his head. Max raises his hands up, and she lowers the gun.

KAT

The negatives. Where are they?

MAX

I told you I would take care of them.

Max is tentative. Unsure he trusts her. The gun.

MAX

What's going on, Kat?

KAT

I had to make sure.

She's not her composed self. Seems rattled.

MAX

You should leave. Right now.  
There are two CIA agents outside.

KAT

I know. Give me the photos.

Max walks over to the bathroom door, dislodges the PULL UP BAR from the door jamb. Inside are the negatives.

KAT

Clever.

Before handing it over.

MAX

You were at the palace.

KAT

How do you know that?

MAX

There's a tape. Security camera.

KAT

Where is it?

MAX

What were you doing there?

Max eyes the pistol at her side which she clenches more tightly.

KAT

There's no time for this, Max.  
Who has it?

MAX

Why? Are you going to kill them  
too?

They stand there in the dark, each trying to read the other. A chasm between them now. She realizes he doesn't trust her.

A KEY in the lock of the door. They both turn --

Kat grabs a chair and jams it under the door handle, buying some time, but when she turns around --

Max is already outside --

INT. MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jacobs kicks open the door. Gun drawn. He runs out onto the patio --

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Max climbs up the rain gutter, the NEGATIVES tucked into his belt.

Kat is right behind him - one story behind - coming fast.

Max jumps to an adjacent balcony --

Almost drops the negatives, recovers --

EXT. ROOF TOP - HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - NIGHT

Max sprints across the roof top.

An AGENT comes barreling through a rooftop door --

PHST! Kat fires her silenced pistol at the Agent, who dives behind a chicken coop, unscathed.

Kat runs after Max across the flat roof tops that sprawl for miles across the city.

EXT. ROOF TOPS - OLD CITY - NIGHT

Max scrambles over the slate roof tops that are packed with NEPALESE hoping to get a glimpse of the royal cremations.

Kat, nimble, twenty-yards back, gains on him --

Jacobs and two other AGENTS behind her, and pursuing --

EXT. BAGMATI RIVER - ROYAL GHAT - NIGHT

Sandal wood. Stacked higher than a grown man.

Several BRAHMIN PRIESTS, draped in white robes, place King Birendra and the other nine ROYAL BODIES onto the beds of the sweet scented wood.

EXT. ROOF TOPS - NIGHT

A WIDE GAP between two buildings.

Max LEAPS. Lands and rolls. A magnificent jump.

Kat stops short. Too big a gap, and they stand facing each other on opposite sides, trying to read the other's sad eyes.

The city amazingly still as the eight royal funeral pyres ERUPT in FLAMES in the distance.

A few DROPS OF RAIN begin to fall. The Monsoons.

Kat looks down --

Several canopies, put up in anticipation of the rain, reach out from the balconies below them.

Max nods, warning her that Jacobs is approaching behind her, sorrow in his eyes.

Kat smiles at Max, and then she JUMPS --

Surprised, Max rushes to the lip of his roof. Sees canopy after canopy collapse under her weight, slowing her fall.

Kat lands hard in the alley below. Battered, but okay.  
 Jacobs reaches the gap between the buildings --

JACOBS  
 (into radio)  
 The woman got away.

He sees Max duck into a doorway --

JACOBS  
 (defeated)  
 So did Smithhammer.

EXT. JODPUR DISTRICT - NIGHT

Amit, jaw bandaged, comes out in the rain to meet Max.

AMIT  
 Monsoons have come.

MAX  
 Yeah. I need you to hold on to my  
 negatives for me. Keep them safe.

AMIT  
 With my life, Ji.

Max knows he will.

INT. HILTON HOTEL - NIGHT

Charlie, disheveled, bed head, opens his hotel room door.  
 Max, soaking wet, looking haggard, stands in the hall.

CHARLIE BELL  
 Christ, Maxwell. What the hell  
 happened?

MAX  
 I need your help, Charlie.

Charlie lets Max in, instinctively looking left and right  
 down the hall before closing the door.

INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max enters. Charlie's FEMALE ASSISTANT pulls her jeans  
 over her panties.

MAX  
 Hey, Chloe.

FEMALE ASSISTANT

Hey, Max.

Max paces. The TV is on. BBC News. Chloe grabs the rest of her clothes and shuffles out of Charlie's room.

CHARLIE BELL

What's going on?

MAX

I don't know. But I've really stepped in it this time, Charlie.

Max paces.

CHARLIE BELL

Calm down. You're outside yourself, Maxwell.

MAX

I shouldn't have come here. I might be putting you in danger.

CHARLIE BELL

Max. Sit down. You're not making any bloody sense.

Max heads for the door.

CHARLIE BELL

Maxwell!

(Max stops)

You're soaking wet. Why don't you take a shower, I'll order us some food, a couple of drinks, and we'll sort all this out, alright?

Max, drenched and distraught, finally agrees. But first he bolts the door, just to be sure.

INT. CHARLIE'S ROOM - 3 AM

Max, in the bathroom, talks to Charlie out in the room.

MAX

I know who killed the royal family and it wasn't Prince Dipendra.

He waits for Charlie's response, but doesn't get any --

Max walks out wearing only a towel to find Charlie, drink in hand, looking rather peaked.

MAX

I have the proof, but can't...  
What? What is it, Charlie?

CHARLIE BELL

Sorry, old chap.

BAKER (O.S.)

I thought we had a deal,  
Smithhammer?

Baker sits calmly in a chair. Jacobs guards the door.

MAX

Something came up.

Charlie can't look Max in the eye.

BAKER

Don't look so surprised.  
Charlie's indiscretions have  
always given us plenty to bargain  
with, eh, Charlie?

CHARLIE BELL

I tried to warn you. A deep  
ambiguous hole.

Baker pours Max a drink.

BAKER

(to Max)  
I see you found the girl.

MAX

She found me.

BAKER

Where is she?

MAX

I don't know.

Baker studies Max's face. Uncomfortably long.

BAKER

What if I told you I have a story  
for your paper about a bright,  
young, ambitious, reporter who  
made a deal to work for the CIA...

MAX

That's not what happened.

BAKER

According to who?

Baker points to the BBC TV footage of the eleven Royal funeral pyres burning.

BAKER

She murdered eleven people in cold blood, Max. You are not the type to want that on your conscience. To be involved in this.

MAX

And what type would that be?

BAKER

The self-preserving kind.

Max thinks carefully for a moment. Baker sips his drink.

MAX

What do you suggest we do?

EXT. TURQUOISE POOL - HILTON HOTEL - DAY

Rain drops on the swimming pool. A BELL BOY spies on Max as he slips past the diving board.

The Bell Boy immediately makes a phone call --

BELLBOY

He's leaving, Zigsa.

EXT. HILTON HOTEL - DAY

An Indian Intelligence officer, aka RAW AGENT, working with the CIA, spots Max exiting a side gate.

RAW AGENT

(on radio)

He's departing the Hilton now. On foot.

The RAW AGENT follows Max down the street.

EXT. KATHMANDU - DAY

Max picks up the pace, doing his best to lose the tail.

EXT. BAGOTI RIVER - DAY

It's raining hard now. Max runs along the flooded river.

He looks back. The RAW AGENT still coming. He can't shake him.

Behind both of them, a motorcycle RIDER watches both Max and the RAW AGENT.

INT. SHIVA TEMPLE - DAY

White marble floors. Slick from the rain.

Max ducks inside --

An elaborate maze of hallways.

The RAW AGENT, gun drawn, moves slowly through the corridors, checking each corner --

Max searches for an exit. All corridors lead him deeper into the shrine --

INT. SHIVA TEMPLE - INNER SHRINE - DAY

Max enters the main sanctuary. A BRAHMIN PRIEST sits in prayer. Incense burns.

The RAW AGENT, gun raised, steps between two marble pillars --

RAW AGENT

You should know better than to enter a building with no exit, Mr. Smithhammer.

Kat comes sprinting out of the shadows --

She slides across the wet marble, sweeps out the Indian Agent's leg.

As his head bounces off the hard marble, Kat elbows him in the face, just to be sure.

From the floor, Kat sweeps the blind spots of the room with her silenced pistol, operating on autopilot.

She clears three corners and then lands her aim on Max.

His face tells it all --

MAX

You shouldn't have come back for me.

Not even her years of training, of discipline under fire, can stop her legs from buckling slightly as everything comes into clear focus.

KAT  
Bridges and temples.

She drops her gun and it CLANGS on the white marble floor as a SWARM of AGENTS take her down in a massive scrum.

In all the photographs Max has taken of pain and suffering, nothing compares to the way Kat looks at him right now.

INT. SHIVA TEMPLE - MOMENTS LATER

They haul her away. Kat doesn't resist.

BAKER  
You did the right thing,  
Smithhammer.

Max sits down on the wet marble, exhausted. He notices the RAW Agent who followed him going ballistic at Jacobs for using him as bait without his knowledge.

EXT. OLD EMBASSY BUILDING - DAY

Puddles outside. The streets drenched.

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - NIGHT

Jacobs watches Baker work over Kat in the interrogation room directly below them.

Max enters. An AGENT stops him at the door.

AGENT #1  
(to Jacobs)  
Sir?

JACOBS  
You can't be in here, Smithhammer.  
No way.

MAX  
You wouldn't be here right now if  
it weren't for me. This was the  
deal, we share, right?

Jacobs thinks it over.

JACOBS  
(to Agent)  
He's okay.

They look down through a huge one-way viewing panel in the floor into the interrogation room below.

INTERCUT - OBSERVATION AND INTERROGATION ROOMS

BAKER

You comfortable? Can I get you anything? Cigarette? Food? Soft drink?

Max notices the high tech recording equipment.

BAKER

Why don't you tell me about Tripoli?

KAT

The game you're playing is not winnable. There are way too many variables. One day you'll realize all of this was a complete waste.

BAKER

Is that what you told your two Mossad buddies as you slit their throats?

KAT

All men betray sooner or later.

She looks up through the ceiling panel. Max feels as if she's looking right through him.

BAKER

You were at the palace the other night. Helping the prince.

This gets a small reaction from Baker. She's smart. Goading him. Max listens intently --

KAT

You think Gyanendra will be your puppet, but you didn't really do your homework, Michigan, because any Nepali street kid can tell you the people don't trust him. King or not.

Baker's balls his fists.

KAT

So, who will they turn to now? The very people you want least in power.

SLAM! A hard right to her face.

Baker strikes her again, cracks open her lip. She grins through bloody teeth.

Max needs some air. Steps out of the observation room.

BAKER

I can't decide who I'll enjoy  
handing you over to more,  
Gyanendra or your old Mossad  
buddies.

Kat, her lip bleeding, SPITS in Baker's face.

Baker hits her again. Knocks her unconscious.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

Max sees Baker leave the interrogation room and he slips inside the room unnoticed.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - DAY

Kat's bound to her chair. Head slumped. Blood and saliva strands to the floor.

Max leans in to wipe the blood from her lip --

BAM! She head butts Max to the face. Blood gushes from his nose.

KAT

Tenzin was right about you all  
along.

MAX

Kat. I'm not with these guys. We  
had an arrangement, but...

KAT

Looks like you chose a side.  
Bravo.

She looks away in disgust.

MAX

What's going on? Did Gyanendra  
hire you? What treaty? His One  
China policy?

No answer. Blood gushes from Max's broken nose.

MAX

Kat! Tell me what happened!

KAT

Why should I? I'm just a story to you.

They stare at each other, both bursting with pride, neither willing to admit they love the other.

OBSERVATION ROOM

Jacobs comes back into the empty room with a cup of coffee. He looks down and sees Max talking to Kat.

JACOBS

Fuck!

He presses a button --

JACOBS

Smithhammer. Get out of there!

INTERROGATION ROOM

MAX

I can't help you if you won't tell me --

KAT

(angry)  
You think I give a shit about what they do to me? You think I want to live? What do I have to live for?

A challenge.

MAX

You have... Tenzin, Lodak, the monastery. Did you do it for them? For Tenzin?

KAT

Shut up. Don't say their names!

MAX

Kat, you need to listen to me --

KAT

(looking up)  
I did it! Do you hear me! I said, I DID IT!!! I killed them.

Kat, bound to the chair, thrashes and screams up at the ceiling panel.

Max takes a step back -- Her sudden confession makes him question if she really did do it.

Jacobs comes running in. Yanks Max out of there.

Kat continues to scream and thrash.

A caged animal.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - AMERICAN EMBASSY BASEMENT - DAY

Unsure what he believes anymore, Max comes in to clean up. He finds Baker washing Kat's blood off his hands.

MAX

What's going on, Baker? You showed me evidence that she did it. Did she?

BAKER

I showed you evidence that she was there that night.

Max slams Baker up against the paper towel dispenser.

MAX

Fuck you! Who did it? You?!

Baker thinks. The only SOUND is of the FAUCET still running.

BAKER

Our people didn't execute this if that's what you mean.

MAX

Jesus Christ, who teaches you guys to talk like that?! How about a straight fucking answer? Who authorized and carried out the assassination of King Birendra?

A look. Max lets go of Baker's shirt. Baker goes back to washing the blood off his hands.

BAKER

We're just moral support on this one. Dad in the bleachers.

MAX

Support of who? Is she even involved in this?

BAKER

Honestly. I don't really know.

MAX

How is that even possible?

BAKER

This is a finesse sport. We encourage, suggest, and when things don't go as planned, damage control.

MAX

Damage control?

Baker doesn't answer. He calmly lathers. Kat's blood turns the soap pink.

BAKER

I'm going to need the negatives of Jacobs and me outside Gyanendra's nature conservatory.

Max looks at Baker in the mirror washing his hands. The water pouring out of the faucet, his mind putting it all together.

MAX

Charlie knew. He was looking into it, but you had him kill the story.

(realizing)

The Mahakali treaty. Jesus. You had King Birendra assassinated because he was going to sell his country's water to China instead of India.

Baker shuts off the water. Methodically dries his hands.

BAKER

You know how long a person can go without water? Three days. A child? Try holding a country together when half a billion people run out of fresh water. We need a stable, nuclear, India. They need water. The choices become very simple.

MAX

You're insane.

Baker, righteous, almost a fatherly tone.

BAKER

We're saving lives here, Max. Millions of lives.

BAKER

How is it that the Maoists, made up of mostly illiterate farmer's sons, put ending the Mahakali Water Treaty with India third on their list of demands? Third. Why do you think that is?

MAX

Because China is backing them.

BAKER

Millions of lives.

Baker exits.

Max stares at himself in the mirror, then slams his fist against the metal paper towel dispenser.

INT. BASEMENT CORRIDOR - DAY

Exposed pipes. Max stops Baker before he goes back inside the interrogation room.

MAX

What will happen to Kat?

BAKER

We'll hand her over to Gyanendra for insurance. If this continues to blow up in his face, he's going to need a get out of jail free card.

MAX

So Gyanendra botches it and she's your Lee Harvey Oswald to march out in front of the cameras because the entire country figured out he's behind it.

BAKER

We actually could use someone with your particular skill set right now. If people read it in the New York Times...

Baker's opportunistic nature disgusts Max.

MAX

(with contempt)  
Get Charlie to do it.

BAKER

Look, Max. You have your whole career ahead of you. A potentially bright career.

BAKER

Choice assignments, access to world leaders, perhaps a best selling book, maybe even a Pulitzer if you play your cards right.

(beat)

Go get those negatives and we'll talk about your future.

Confident he knows Max better than Max does, Baker turns and re-enters the interrogation room. Max and Kat lock eyes for a second before the door slams shut.

EXT. MAX'S ROOM - HOTEL SHANGRI-LA - DAY

Max smokes on his balcony watching the rain.

The file he gave to Amit sits on a chair - an inside exclusive on the biggest assassination of modern times.

Max picks up the photograph of Kat, bathing in the river.

He stares at it for a long time.

Perfection.

EXT. OUTSIDE KATHMANDU - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

World famous Tibetan Temple of the Tigress. The huge center dome is lit up and visible for miles.

EXT. TEMPLE OF THE TIGRESS - NIGHT

Max approaches the temple's outer wooden doors. He recognizes an ARMED GUARD as one of Tenzin's men.

MAX

Please give this to Tenzin.

He hands him the photo of Kat.

INT. TIGRESS TEMPLE - NIGHT

A MONK leads Max to the central shrine.

The domed cathedral on the inside is adorned with statues and ancient hand-painted murals on the walls.

Tenzin, shirtless, sits alone in the Lotus position, meditating. Max sees that his entire torso is tattooed in Tibetan Sanskrit. Buddhist prayers.

TENZIN

Sit.

Max sits down next to him. Not exactly the confrontation he was anticipating.

TENZIN

This mural depicts the famous Jatica tale of the Tigress mother.

They look up at the mural of a Tiger.

TENZIN

Tiger mother is starving and unable to produce milk for her cubs so she will have to eat them. Buddha sees this and lays down so she will eat him instead. Allow her to produce milk for her cubs. But the tigress mother is even too weak to kill Buddha so Buddha opens up his veins with a knife and lets her lap up his blood. Do you understand the meaning of this story?

MAX

You would sacrifice everything for her.

TENZIN

Would you?

Max hesitates and before he can answer Tenzin swings, knocking Max across the floor. Tenzin rises, grabs Max, incredibly agile for his tremendous size.

TENZIN

I should have killed you long ago.

He catapults Max into a nearby wall.

Tenzin slams Max to the floor - cringe worthy.

Max slowly rises. Almost wants the punishment.

He raises his fists. Walks into Tenzin's reach.

Big hit to the face. He's down again.

Then up, and again down. The beating of a life time.

Tenzin looms over Max, fist cocked back, he holds --

TENZIN

Why are you doing this?

He can see it in Max's eyes, he loves her. They both do.

MAX

Do it.

But Tenzin lets go. Sits down, breathing heavy from the penance he just dished out.

Max slowly pushes himself up to a seated position against the wall. They rest side-by-side.

MAX

I know where they are keeping her.

EXT. OLD EMBASSY BUILDING - DAWN

Pouring rain. A three car caravan pulls up front. An AGENT jumps out of the black SUV and runs inside.

INT. OLD EMBASSY BUILDING - DAY

Baker, Jacobs, and Kat, her hands handcuffed behind her back, wait in the atrium. The Agent hands the KEYS to Jacobs.

AGENT

Streets are flooded. Low visibility.

BAKER

(to Kat)  
Time's up.

She feigns a head-butt. Baker flinches. Makes her day.

Max enters. His own face pretty beat up.

JACOBS

What the hell happened to you?

MAX

Bike accident.

BAKER

You got the negatives?

Max hands over a file.

MAX

I want to come along. See this through.

Baker coldly flips through it - makes sure it's all there.

BAKER

Let's go.

Kat steams. Her affection for Max has mutated into simmering rage.

EXT. FLOODED STREETS - KATHMANDU - DAY

Three black SUV's form a mini caravan, snaking slowly through the flooded city streets.

INT. MIDDLE LAND ROVER - DAY

The monsoons are in full force. The wipers useless against the downpour.

Max rides shotgun. Kat sits in back with Baker. Her wrists, handcuffed together behind her back, makes sitting excruciating.

Baker flips through Max's file.

BAKER

This is some fine investigative journalism.

Flipping the page, Baker comes to the PHOTO of him and Jacobs outside Gyanendra's Nature Trust. He tears it up.

BAKER

Perhaps this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Max grips the armrest. Visibility is near zero.

Jacobs can barely make out the tail lights of the lead vehicle which suddenly turn RED.

Jacobs SLAMS on the breaks --

BAKER

What is it?

JACOBS

Not sure.

The wipers SWOOSH back and forth. Rain PELTS the roof.

Jacobs squints at something move outside - something BIG!

An ELEPHANT suddenly SLAMS down on the roof of the lead vehicle - crushing everyone inside.

BAKER  
Get us out of here!

SMASH! Behind them. Another ELEPHANT crushes the sweep vehicle.

JACOBS  
We're blocked in.

Kat swings her legs to the ceiling - a perfect half-pike - and slides her handcuffed wrists up and over her feet --

On the downswing she loops the chain over Max's head, dragging him by the neck into the backseat.

GUN FIRE erupts outside --

As an elephant grabs their front axel, lifting the SUV off the ground to a 30 degree angle --

Baker draws his SIDEARM --

The vehicle suddenly drops to the ground. Hard.

Kat has Max by the jugular --

KAT  
(to Jacobs)  
Unlock the doors or I break his neck.

She pulls the 3 inch chain hard across Max's throat - his face immediately turns red from lack of oxygen.

Baker presses his Smith & Wesson directly into Kat's forehead.

BAKER  
You think I care?

KAT  
Kill me and you're all dead. I assure you.

Kat's composed tone is chilling. Baker hesitates for a second. It's enough for Kat to disarm him --

KAT  
Can always tell the field agents from the suits. Reflexes. Unlock the doors. Now.

Baker can see the vehicle is surrounded by MASKED MEN.

And those damn wipers SWOOSHING back 'n forth.

BAKER  
(to Jacobs)  
Do it.

Kat slowly backs out, using Max as her human shield.

KAT  
(to Baker)  
Pass him the file.

BAKER  
Why?

KAT  
Insurance.

Reluctantly, Baker hands the file to Max.

Kat and Max back out of the vehicle and disappear behind the veil of rain.

FRONT SEAT

A massive elephant HEAD fills the windshield, followed by the vehicle lurching off the ground again, rising up --

BAKER  
Shoot it.

JACOBS  
What?!

The elephant tilts the SUV up and over with them inside.

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Kat forces Max down the alleyway, Baker's gun against the back of his skull.

Tenzin is up ahead.

Sporadic GUN FIRE persists behind them --

Max looks back --

EXT. KATHMANDU - STREET - DAY

A battered Baker crawls out of the vehicle into the flooded streets.

A military truck pulls up to the three crushed vehicles, two elephants, mayhem.

Blue-fatigue wearing NEPALESE SOLDIERS stream out and take up positions.

Tenzin waits by his SILVER TOYOTA. The engine running.

He gives Kat a puzzled look as she still holds the gun to Max's head.

TENZIN

Quickly!

Two-by-two, the soldiers dart up the street, kneeling and taking aim at Kat --

They FIRE --

Tenzin grabs Kat. His huge arms envelope her, protecting her with his massive frame --

Bullets riddle across TENZIN's back --

Kat feels his weight slumping against her, his grip loosens.

She tries to slow his fall. His mass too much --

Tenzin leans against the Silver Toyota.

TENZIN

(to Max)

Take her. Go!

Kat turns, opens fire. Wrathful.

SOLDIER

Face shot, killed instantly, his finger remains depressed on the trigger, spraying machine gun fire everywhere --

The shots spatter across the body of the male elephant.

ELEPHANT

It rears up in pain, trumpeting wildly. Berserk.

Kat turns back around to find Max helping Tenzin into the Silver Toyota.

MAX

Kat! Come on!

She jumps in the back seat next to Tenzin. Max gets in the driver's seat and takes off --

INT. SILVER TOYOTA - MOVING - DAY

Max tears down a steep staircase.

MAX

Hold on!

Kat struggles with Tenzin in back. Desperately tries to stop the bleeding from his chest. Too much blood.

TENZIN

Katrina.

He looks at her with huge eyes.

KAT

Don't talk. You're going to be okay.

They both know she's lying.

TENZIN

(in Tibetan)

*Do you remember the first time I saw you? So pale. Fragile.*

KAT

You thought I was dead. You saved me.

TENZIN

(In Tibetan)

*My little white dove.*

A content expression on his ashen face.

She FEELS the air coming out of his lungs through the bullet holes. She frantically tries to stop it with her hands.

Then no more air seeps out --

He's gone.

Kat, devastated, gently lowers his head back onto the headrest.

INT. SILVER TOYOTA - MOVING - DAY

Max drives. Checks the rearview mirror constantly. Kat now rides shotgun. She seethes over Tenzin's death.

KAT

It should be you lying back there.

MAX

Kat, I --

She lashes out, punching him across the jaw.

Max instinctively hits the breaks, hydroplaning into the side wall of the alley, ricocheting off, and spinning to a stop.

Before Max knows he's okay, Kat double kicks him out of the driver's side door.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - DAY

Max lands on his back in a puddle.

Kat leaps on top of him, still handcuffed, punching him across the face.

KAT

You played me all along! Set me up!

Straddling him, she points the barrel of Tenzin's gun to his heart.

KAT

The monastery. Do they know about the monastery? Did you tell them!

MAX

Kat.

His tone says of course not.

She stares at his face. As much as she wills it away, her true feelings for him betray her... in a single tear.

KAT

You expect me to believe anything you say?

MAX

No.

KAT

Ask me if I did it.

MAX

Kat. Please.

KAT

Ask me!

MAX

I don't care.

Kat holds the barrel of the gun against Max's chest.

KAT

You cared before. ASK ME!

MAX

All that matters now is that I get you safely to the Tigress Temple. You can kill me there, if you want.

KAT

How do you know about --  
(realizing; stunned)  
You told Tenzin the route. You planned this --

Max gazes up at a her. The gun barrel. She's shaking. Boiling over with emotion at Max's betrayal, Tenzin's death, and having to do this --

BAM. BAM. BAM. Kat fires her gun.

She looks up into the pouring rain --

Kat gets up. Walks back to the pick-up. Physically and emotionally spent.

Max lays in the puddle, opens his eyes, the rain soothes his bruised face. She couldn't do it.

EXT. KATHMANDU - STREETS - NIGHT

Site of the ambush. The three wrecked black SUV's.

Baker and Jacobs talk with an ARMY CAPTAIN while huddled over a map of the city.

CAPTAIN

There are road blocks here and here. They can't get out of the city.

BAKER

What about this road?

CAPTAIN

Flooded. They would not be able to get across the Bagmati River unless --

BAKER

Unless what?

CAPTAIN

They have elephants.

A look.

JACOBS

What about the airports?

CAPTAIN

There are five private and of course Tribhuvan International.

BAKER

Have officers check passengers on all international flights.

JACOBS

Tell them to check all the female passenger's hands for a small tattoo of a snow leopard.

CAPTAIN

You want them to check every hand of every woman boarding all international flights? That will be extremely difficult.

BAKER

Just do it!

The Captain radios it in. Baker's calm and calculating veneer showing a few cracks.

JACOBS

What do we tell Washington?

BAKER

Nothing. Yet. I can contain this.

Jacobs' expression implies he isn't so confident. Their jobs on the line.

JACOBS

She won't fly unless she ditches Smithhammer.

BAKER

He's already dead.

EXT. BAGMATI RIVER - KATHMANDU - NIGHT

Tenzin lays prone in a wooden row boat.

Max waits by the Toyota while Kat says goodbye.

She gently kisses Tenzin's forehead.

Stepping back, she casts the boat out into the water. It floats downstream, carrying Tenzin with it, into the mist.

INT. SILVER TOYOTA - NIGHT

Max and Kat sit in the truck. She has Tenzin's gun in her hands.

MAX

He loved you.

KAT

Perhaps too much.

MAX

I don't believe that.

He loves her too. Notices the handcuffs.

MAX

We need to go. You sure you don't want to go to the monastery?

KAT

Even if we could get there, I won't risk bringing this to them.

She looks at him.

KAT

Why'd you come back for me?

MAX

I guess I found something worth choosing sides for.

They sit quietly for a moment.

KAT

Do you trust this guy?

MAX

What choice do we have?

INT. AIRPORT HANGER - NIGHT

York's under the hood of his Russian-made helicopter when Max and Kat burst into the hanger. They both look beat to shit.

YORK  
Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Those  
American wankers do that?

Kat conceals her pistol.

MAX  
York, we need a lift to the  
border. Right now.

YORK  
Not in this shit, I'm afraid.

York picks up a wrench, understanding something is up.

Kat raises her gun --

KAT  
Mine's bigger. Drop it.

He does. She pats him down. York notices her hands are cuffed. The tattoo.

YORK  
So this is your elusive snow  
leopard lassie.

KAT  
Open the bay doors.

YORK  
I told you, I can't fly in --

KAT  
This is a Russian made MI-17 with  
twin turbine engines regulated to  
4000 meters at 60 knots. I've  
flown in much worse.

MAX  
York, I'd do what she says.

Kat sees a HACKSAW on York's work bench.

KAT  
First, get these off me.

INT. HELICOPTER - FLYING - DAWN

The sky is ominous as they skirt swaths of clouds. Rough thermals and pelting rain.

York keeps it low so at least they won't be too high if they go down.

Kat and Max face each other in back. Cargo door open.

KAT

I got a call from the prince's body man and went to the palace to make a delivery. I never saw the prince. Perhaps he smoked too much of the tar I sold him and lost his mind. Or maybe I was set up and he was already dead. I don't know. I just want you to know that it wasn't me.

He nods. They sit silently for a moment.

KAT

Now I need to shoot you in the leg. Give you an alibi.

MAX

You just enjoy shooting me.

KAT

Perhaps.

MAX

I'm going with you.

KAT

You can't. They'd find you.

MAX

I don't care.

She plays along, wishing it could be so.

KAT

Where would we go?

MAX

Tel Aviv.

(off her surprise)

They'd never look for us there.

She touches her locket with picture of her grandmother.

KAT

I'd take you to my grandmother's house, in Jerusalem.

MAX

I would like that.

They both know it's not going to happen, but it's nice to enjoy the fantasy.

Kat spots a military helicopter following them in the distance, snapping them back to reality.

She nods to Max who looks out and sees it.

KAT

I told you I dream in English.

EXT. RICE FIELD - DAY

York touches down in the flooded rice paddies near the river. Max and Kat jump out, ducking underneath the huge rotor blades.

A long SUSPENSION FOOT BRIDGE hangs over the Mahakali river separating Nepal and India.

EXT. SUSPENSION FOOT BRIDGE - DAY

Max and Kat run across the wooden-planked bridge clutching the metal cable railings --

It takes all their strength to hold on.

The river, at flood stage, rages thirty feet below them.

EXT. SUSPENSION BRIDGE - DAY

They stop half way across the bridge. Mid-river.

Through the sheets of rain they can make out INDIAN BORDER GUARDS along the far shore, cutting them off.

KAT

They must have radioed ahead.

Back on the Nepali side a helicopter lands --

Baker and Jacobs jump out, guns drawn. Kat shakes her head, ironically.

KAT

*Zampa iha Ghang.*

MAX  
Bridges and temples.

She evaluates the Indian guards. Suicide.

An enormous uprooted TREE floats by in the turbulent brown water below. No escape.

She hands Max the Smith & Wesson she took from Baker.

MAX  
I could have borne your sins.

KAT  
I know.

Max kisses her.

The Indian BORDER GUARDS take up positions on the far side of the bridge while Baker and Jacobs block the Nepali side.

Max and Kat don't care. Still locked in a passionate embrace -- the rain wet against their faces.

Suddenly Kat pulls away.

She climbs over the railing. The river rages below.

Baker draws his GUN --

Kat glances at Max one last time.

Baker FIRES as --

Kat DIVES --

Max watches her fall toward the brown water.

She hits the swift current and disappears.

Max scans downstream. He doesn't see her surface.

The gusts of wind swing the bridge violently. Max grabs onto the cable railing to brace himself --

On the railing. A drop of blood.

He lifts his hand. More blood. Not his.

EXT. NEPALI SHORE - DAY

Max, drenched, steps back onto terra firma.

Baker and Jacobs come running up.

Without breaking stride, Max thrusts Baker's pistol into his hand and keeps on walking.

MAX

You got her. And her sins.

Baker and Jacobs share a look.

They see the Indian military officers on the other side of the bridge scanning the shoreline.

The brown water rages below. No escape.

INT. MILITARY HELICOPTER - FLYING - DAY

Max sits in the open compartment chopper across from Baker and Jacobs.

They fly over miles of bright green terraced rice paddies. Max stares out at the landscape.

BAKER

You're going to have to do better than that.

The Monsoon rains are clearing up. Some sunshine peeks through.

Max pulls out the file, the decision heavy in his hand.

Resolved, Max passes it over to Baker who grabs it eagerly, but Max holds onto his end of the file.

MAX

Let her go. If she survived that, she deserves to live.

Baker doesn't like to lose, but he wants the file.

BAKER

We still have to get control of the story.

MAX

I'll write the article for the Times, but after that, we're through. For good.

BAKER

What's the cover story?

MAX

We stick to the original. Prince Dipendra did it for love.

MAX

(beat)  
I'll make them believe it.

Max lets go of the file. Stares out the window.

Baker leans back, smiles to Jacobs, satisfied Max will deliver.

Max glances at the river one last time. No sign of Kat.

For love...