

EVEREST

by
Mark Medoff

Revisions by
Michael Cristofer
Lem Dobbs
William Nicholson
Justin Isbell

Current revision by
Simon Beaufoy

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9720 Wilshire Blvd., 4th Floor
Beverly Hills, CA 90212

26 Aybrook Street
London, W1U 4AN

INTERIM DRAFT
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MOUNT EVEREST

29,028 ft 8,848 m

South Summit

28,710 ft

8,751 m

Das
loc.

South Col
26,000 ft
7,925 m

Camp IV
26,000 ft
7,925 m

Geneva

Spur

Camp III
24,000 ft
7,315 m

Camp II
Advance Base Camp
21,300 ft
6,492 m

Camp I
19,500 ft
5,943 m

Base Camp
17,600 ft
5,364 m

Pumori
23,507 ft
7,165 m

Lingtren
22,142 ft
6,749 m

Khumbutse
21,867 ft
6,651 m

Bei Peak
24,878 ft
7,583 m

Lhotse
27,890 ft
8,501 m

Northeast Ridge

West Ridge

Rongbuk
Glacier

Lho La

Khumbu

Icefall

1 **DELETED** 1

2 **EXT. SUMMIT RIDGE, EVEREST. DAY.** 2

Caption: **Everest, 1995.**

Laboured breathing. Mountain summits break through boiling cloud. But we are looking at it through the fog and ice of goggles. There's nothing beautiful about it.

We move with two bent figures, struggling through snow up to their knees.

The front climber stops. Leans over his ice axe, coughs a wracking, rib-breaking cough. There is ice on his eye-brows, his beard. He sounds as if he's dying.

The climber behind checks his watch. Moves up to the front figure and shakes his head.

 ROB
 Sorry, Doug.

This is Rob. Thirty-five, bearded. The Guide. Points to his watch.

Doug rips off his oxygen mask. Then his sunglasses.

 DOUG
 What?

 ROB
 It's two o'clock.

 DOUG
 (incredulous)
 It's there, Rob. Look!

He points along the ridge. Sure enough, we can see the summit some way off.

 ROB
 If we haven't summited by two, we go down. That was the deal.

 DOUG
 But it's right there! It's a stroll.

 ROB
 Two o'clock deadline. You agreed, Doug.

 DOUG
 Rob, I'm begging you. Come on, man.

ROB
 You don't pay me to get you to the
 top. You pay me to get you to the
 bottom. Alive. Alive is down.

Doug sinks into the snow. Puts his head in his hands.

DOUG
 All this way....I'll never get
 another chance.

ROB
 Happy to do the post-mortem back at
 camp. Right now, we got weather
 coming in. Let's go.

Rob puts out a hand. Doug takes it and heaves himself slowly
 to his feet. Stares at the summit ahead. Rob puts a gloved
 hand on his shoulder.

ROB
 Sorry, mate.

Doug turns, starts tramping down the ridge. Rob watches him
 go.

TITLE- EVEREST.

3 **OMITTED** 3

4 **OMITTED** 4

CAPTION: Lake Wanaka, New Zealand, one year later.

5 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS OFFICE - DAY** 5

A poster on the wall. It reads "100% SUCCESS".

The poster is on the wall of a modest office, currently a
 flurry of activity. Phones ringing. Huge Rubbermaid boxes
 lining the walls, stacked three high. STAFF coming and going
 with more boxes checking boxes. Organised chaos. There is a
 phone ringing, ignored.

Rob is on the phone.

ROB
 ...great, Jon, great. Welcome
 aboard, man...Well, see you in
 Kathmandu!

He puts down the phone, makes a triumphant fist.

ROB
 We got Krakauer.

A cheer from everyone.

HELEN
You stole him from Fischer!

ROB
He'll survive. A five thousand word article in Outside Magazine. Five thousand! That's a year's publicity right there.

HELEN
If you get him to the top.

ROB
Good climber, strong as a bull. No problem.

HELEN WILTON - 39, warm smile, pleasant face, Rob's aide de camp - works at a table covered by a mountain chart. Index cards lined up on either side of it, a wall chart with a photograph of each client.

MIKE GROOM, 33 years old, lean, a quiet, serious Aussie guide, walks by with a Rubbermaid box on his shoulder.

MIKE
Crampons, two pairs each. One bag of spare bits.

ROB
You checked we haven't anyone with crazy big or crazy small feet?

Mike dumps the box, points at two photos on the wall chart.

MIKE
Beck Weathers, crazy big. Yasuko Namba, crazy small. Crampons to fit.

HELEN
Carabiners? You got them, Mike?

HAROLD
Right here! Fifty screw-gates, two hundred regulars.

In walks ANDY "HAROLD" HARRIS - 31, handsome, gregarious Kiwi guide, built like a rugby star, carrying a box on each shoulder. Dumps the boxes next to GUY, fellow Guide.

GUY
Hey, not on my pile. This is Pumori gear, that's Everest.

HELEN
 (the phone still ringing)
 Can anyone get that? Harold....

Harold goes over and picks up the phone.

HAROLD
 Adventure Consultants, Harold
 here....Hi, Henry...Yeah, oxygen,
 mate. If you're going to St.
 Petersburg for Fischer, can you
 pick up some bottles for Rob,
 too?....Christ, that's high, mate,
 why so pricey...? Jesus. Hang on-

He cups the phone, shouts to Rob.

HAROLD
 Henry. Can do the oxygen, but wants
 three hundred and twenty-five
 dollars a bottle.

MIKE
 That's nearly double last season!

HAROLD
 Everyone's after it. Reckons there
 are thirty teams rocking up at Base
 Camp this season.

ROB
 (incredulous)
 How many?

HAROLD
 (shrugs)
 What Henry says.

ROB
 Thirty? Plus sherpas and
 porters...Shit, that's gonna be a
 scrum higher up.

Rob seems lost for a second, doing the maths.

HAROLD
 What shall I tell him? Rob?

ROB
 (back in the present)
 Got to have oxygen. Do it. Seventy
 of the three litre bottles, the
 rest, four litres. You-

He points at Mike.

ROB
 Breathe slowly.

6	OMITTED	6
7	OMITTED	7
8	OMITTED	8
9	INT. ROB & JAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN. DUSK	9

Rob has abandoned his dinner and is on the phone. We see somebody else- clearly a woman- out of focus, stacking plates, loading the dish-washer.

ROB
Peach, I don't know what to say.
Beck knows what he's doing up there-
he's done five of the Big Seven,
you know that....Vinson's
technically harder than
Everest...Look, I've done eight
trips to Everest. They've all
worked out- everybody who went out,
came back....

Rob gets up, starts pacing.

ROB
...your husband may well be a
stubborn son-of-a-bitch, Peach, but
up there what I say goes...my wife-
what does my wife think? Well she's
a climber too and-

A hand takes the phone from him. DR. JAN ARNOLD, Rob's wife.

JAN
- Peach, it's Jan here. Rob's wife.
Hi...

She listens.

JAN
Of course you're worried, it's a
big mountain...am I? What's keeping
me awake is the baby inside me that
kicks like a bugger in the
night...Yeah, five and a half
months.

She laughs.

JAN
No, I'm not crazy, I just trust
him, that's all.

From behind, Rob puts his hands around Jan's belly and for the first time we see just how pregnant she is. He puts his head on her shoulder, listens.

JAN

Peach, I can say one thing for certain: there isn't a safer guy to have next to you on a mountain... Okay. Look, I'll be relaying messages from Base Camp from time to time, so we'll speak soon, okay? Alright, bye...bye.

She puts the phone down. Exhales.

ROB

Thanks, love.

JAN

Fierce.

ROB

You should meet her husband.

10	OMITTED	10
11	OMITTED	11
12	EXT. ROB & JAN'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT	12

Rob and Jan on the back porch. Rob has an arm around her shoulders, the other around her stomach. Looking at the stars.

ROB

I broke the news about giving Doug Hansen a discount. You can guess what Maddy said.

JAN

"We're not a bloody charity"?

ROB

Word for word.

JAN

Good thing you're going away for a couple of months...

ROB

Telling me.

They sit down on the porch.

JAN
Can we afford it?

ROB
No. But after last year? Getting that close? Honestly, I'd like him standing on top of the world more than any other client we've ever had.

JAN
Rob Hall, you're going soft.

ROB
Ahh, Krakauer's article will double our clients next year. We'll be sweet.

There is a pause as they look out into the night.

ROB
What you said on the phone. To Peach. That really true?

JAN
Of course I trust you. But the "I'm not worried" bit? Nah, not really. I've never been worried before because I've always been out there with you. Joint venture. This time...It's doing nothing that makes me worry. The waiting. For you, for him.

She points to her belly.

ROB
Or her.

JAN
Hey, I'm the doctor.

ROB
You're not a witch doctor.

JAN
No, I'm the idiot doctor who got pregnant in the middle of the climbing season.

ROB
We're having a baby. That's what matters.

JAN
Just make sure you're back for the birth.

ROB
Try and stop me.

They kiss.

13 **INT. CHRIST CHURCH AIRPORT. DEPARTURES. DAY**

13

The whole team are gathered at the Departure Gates. There is much hugging and wiping away of tears. Jan is remaining strong.

Helen's done with her goodbyes.

HELEN
Time to go, guys! We've got a plane to catch.

The team start to filter through Departures. Rob comes to Jan, takes her hand.

ROB
Okay?

JAN
No. I'm jealous.

He laughs.

ROB
You've already been to the top once.

JAN
So? Go. I'll cry, dammit...go.

Rob kisses her quickly.

JAN
Stay safe.

ROB
Always.

He turns and walks away.

JAN
(to herself)
Don't turn round, don't turn round.

He turns. The tears are falling down her face. She mimes shooing him through Departures with her arms, laughing and crying at the same time. Rob mouths "I love you" and then is gone.

14 **OMITTED**

14

15 OMITTED 15

16 INT. AEROPLANE. DAY. 16

Beck Weathers, an intense looking Texan wearing a brand new "Dole/Kemp '96" campaign t-shirt, is sitting in his seat on the plane, asleep.

CAPTAIN V/O
Ladies and Gentlemen, in case you might want to catch a glimpse of the world's highest mountain, we're flying past it right now. You can just see the summit of Mount Everest on the left side.

Beck's eyes snap open. He cranes his neck. There it is, the summit peaking out of the cloud.

CAPTAIN V/O
Twenty-nine thousand and twenty
nine feet above sea level...

Clouds swirl over the top of it and it is gone. He sits back in his seat and stares ahead, looking pensive.

17 **EXT RUNWAY** 17

AN AIRPLANE - in its descent - landing gear down - beautiful mountains on either side of the runway -

CAPTION: Kathmandu, Nepal

18 INT. KATHMANDU AIRPORT - DAY 18

A MOVING CAROUSEL - your standard luggage circling - and here comes a huge backpack and then all the rubbbermaid boxes of equipment.

PULL BACK TO

PEOPLE waiting for their stuff. A MAN steps forward to reach for his backpack. Mid-40s, friendly face: we recognise him from the photo Rob put back on his board: DOUG HANSEN.

19 EXT. KATHMANDU AIRPORT - DAY 19

Here comes Doug. Making his way to the taxi queue. TWO GUYS already here. Big bags of their own.

DOUG
What outfit are you guys with?

They both turn. One is Beck, the other is JON KRAKAUER, a journalist from Outside Magazine.

BECK
Adventure Consultants.

DOUG
Me too. I'm Doug. Doug Hansen.

He offers a friendly hand to shake.

JON
Jon Krakauer.

DOUG
The journalist?

Jon nods.

BECK
You're one of *them*?

Jon points at Beck's Republican t-shirt.

JON
You're one of *them*?

They both laugh. Beck puts an arm around Jon's shoulder.

JON
Now we've established we hate each other's guts, I think we'll get along just fine.

20 **EXT. KATHMANDU STREETS - DAY**

20

The TAXI making its way through the heart of Kathmandu. BUSES, TAXIS, SCOOTERS, BIKES, TUK-TUKS crowd the middle of the street while PEDESTRIANS and the odd cow stick to the outer edges. Horns, bells and whistles score the scene.

21 **INT. TAXI - DAY**

21

Doug and Beck are in the back, bags on their laps. Jon is up front with the DRIVER. All three of them are staring at the rich street life through open windows. The colors, sounds, and smells attacking their senses.

BECK
(to Doug)
So what do you do when you're not climbing?

DOUG
I'm a mailman.

BECK
Like, you deliver the mail?

DOUG
I have a route in the Seattle metropolitan area, and yup, I deliver the mail.

BECK
How about that! How many summits you checked off?

DOUG
Longs Peak. McKinley. Pico de Orizaba.

BECK
Me, all of that. Plus Popocatepl. Elbrus. Vinson.

DOUG
Oh, and last year I got as far as the South Summit on Everest.

That beats Beck. Jon in the front seat grins to himself.

BECK
Shit! That's pretty high for a mailman.

DOUG
Highest mailman in the world, I reckon. But not the top.

BECK
What happened?

DOUG
I'll tell you sometime.

Jon Krakauer from the front seat -

JON
Rob's summited four times.

BECK
More to the point, buddy, he's put thirty-nine of his clients on the top. Me, I'm going to be number forty.

DOUG
Forty-one, mate. Forty-one.

They laugh. The taxi pulls up outside the Garuda Hotel.

22

INT. GARUDA HOTEL, KATHMANDU - DAY

22

Walls covered in posters of mountaineers and signed photographs of famous climbers. One poster features Rob Hall in a dramatic pose against a backdrop of three great peaks - Lhotse, K2 and Everest.

ROB (O.S.)

"So you have a thirst for
adventure! You dream of standing on
top of a tall mountain!"

We move from the poster-lined hallway to -

23

INT. DINING ROOM

23

Post dinner. A mess of dirty plates on the table. The group turns, watching Rob walk in, reading from his own brochure.

ROB

"For those who dare to face their
dreams, Adventure Consultants
offers something beyond the power
of words to describe!"

Now we see he's flanked by his guides, Mike and Harold. Before him, beers in hand, are gathered his eight clients: Doug Hansen, Beck Weathers, and Jon Krakauer; LOU KASISCHKE, 37, an American lawyer; STUART HUTCHISON, 34, a Canadian cardiologist; JOHN TASKE, 55, an Australian anesthesiologist; FRANK FISCHBECK, 53, an American publisher; and YASUKO NAMBA, 47, a Japanese executive.

Rob looks at them with a mischievous grin.

ROB

And guess why we don't describe it
in the brochure? Because it's
mostly just pain.

Laughter from the group, and a few wry nods. They've been there before.

ROB

And the odd frostbitten toe. Mike?

Mike Groom slips his foot out of his sandals and holds it up. No toes. The laughter dies.

MIKE

Ahh, who needs 'em?

They all laugh again.

ROB

Human beings aren't built to function at the cruising altitude of seven four sevens. Five-and-a-half miles up. From Camp 4, your body is literally dying. The game is- can we get up and back before it does?

BECK

(shouting)

Damn right we can!

ROB

Beck Weathers, everybody. You might have spotted a little bit of Texas, there?

BECK

One hundred percent Texan, people, one hundred percent.

ROB

God help us all. Harold and Mike here are helping guide you. Both fine climbers. Even so.

The two guides wave.

ROB

The rest of the team's already on their way to set up Base Camp. You'll meet them there.

(checking his paperwork)

So today's March 30th. We're expecting to summit round May 10th- weather's usually most stable around then. That gives you forty days to train your body to handle the altitude. I know you're all experienced climbers. You wouldn't be here if you weren't. But Everest is something else again. Ask Doug.

Doug gives a shrug and a grin.

ROB

So here's the rule. I'm your boss now. This is my show. This is what you've paid me for. To keep you alive. So you do what I say. Yes?

A collective 'Yes!' erupts from the group.

ROB

Okay. You've got thirty-six hours till we leave. Try and shake off some of the jet lag.

(more)

ROB (cont'd)

Take a walk round town, grab some food- but be careful what you eat out there- steer clear of the yeti burgers.

24

EXT. KATHMANDU STREETS - DAY

24

Doug, Beck, Yasuko and Jon head out into the heart of the historic city. Jon has a map and seems to know where he's going. Beck big-mouthing all the way -

BECK

I don't know what the hell's happening to our country. Bill and Hillary, Jesus! Why is Hillary still *smiling*? Have you *heard* those phone tapes? Clinton calls Gennifer 'Honey this' and 'Honey that', and when they tell Hillary how Bill's honeying this broad she says, 'Hey, that's how we talk in Arkansas!'. Bullshit! I'm guessing you're a fully paid up liberal, Jon?

JON

Liberals never pay up. I thought you knew that.

Yasuko giggles.

25

EXT. KUMARI BAHAL, KATHMANDU - DAY

25

They are standing in a courtyard of a beautiful carved wooden palace, built in the 18th century. A crowd of tourists, all gazing up at a balcony. Beck is getting impatient.

BECK

What time's this girl coming out?

JON

No one ever knows when she's going to show.

DOUG

That's your living goddess for you. Keeps everyone waiting.

JON

She gets chosen at the age of five, for her beauty, purity and courage. She has to quit when she reaches puberty.

BECK

So what's in it for her?

JON
The honour? The doing of it?
Because it's there?

Beck looks at him.

BECK
Smart answer to everything, huh?

A flicker of red on the balcony, and the LIVING GODDESS appears: a nine-year-old girl dressed in red, her forehead painted red, with big solemn black eyes. A hush descends on everyone. She raises one hand to the tourists. Awed and silent, they wave back. Then her hand falls, and she's gone.

BECK
I say it's all a set-up for the tourists. I bet they have a bunch of living goddesses in there, running shifts.

JON
Supposed to be really good luck getting to see her.

YASUKO
Good. At eight thousand metres I need all the luck I can get.

BECK
Luck's just another superstition. Like her. Don't believe in it.

And he walks off.

26 **INT. GARUDA HOTEL - NIGHT**

26

Rob in a cubicle on the hotel phone, talking down a poor line.

ROB
Interesting bunch. Beck who never shuts up, Yasuko who doesn't say anything at all, just smiles, Jon sniffing around for a story...I wish you were here. Some of them saw the Living Goddess today...yeah, I know. Maybe she's going to give us two weeks good weather, huh?

He laughs.

ROB
I miss you. Take care of that bump, yeah? Bye.

He comes out of the booth to find Jon in the corner table, writing. He must have heard the whole conversation.

ROB
Getting everything you need?

Jon shrugs.

JON
Early days.

27 **OMITTED** 27

28 **OMITTED** 28

29 **EXT. KATHMANDU AIRPORT - DAY** 29

A HELICOPTER ROTOR - turning once and dying - then again - the blades catching this time - starting to warm up -

A big, old Russian Mi-17 HELICOPTER sitting on the tarmac. Not exactly the picture of safety.

A PILOT opens the door and gets out. He nods, giving a thumbs up to another PILOT - *it's good to go.* Not important now, but...

Remember the tanned face. The Aviators. COLONEL MADAN.

Rob Hall's team come out of the terminal building, hauling their bags. They cross to the waiting machine.

30 **INT. HELICOPTER - DAY** 30

A cornucopia of colored plastic barrels, Rubbermaid boxes and soft-sided carry bags pack the middle, pressing ROB'S TEAM to the fuselage.

The NOISE of the chopper is deafening. Rob passes a bag of cotton balls to Beck who takes some and passes it on. Everyone stuffing their ears as -

31 **EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF THE KHUMBU REGION - DAY** 31

Magnificent. Exotic. High valleys, deep gorges. And here comes the HELICOPTER, cutting through the middle of the valley, in between the mountains.

32 **EXT. LUKLA AIRSTRIP - DAY**

32

Quite possibly the world's scariest airport. Deep in a valley in the middle of nowhere. The tarmac a small strip of pavement that ends at a cliff's edge.

Which the HELICOPTER is currently navigating. Gently touching down. Rob slides the door open and jumps out. One by one the team exits, shouldering their packs.

33 **EXT. LUKLA MAIN STREET.**

33

Sherpas are loading the last of the gear onto a Yak train which starts its slow progress out of the village.

ROB

Let's go!

ENTER A MONTAGE - 6 DAYS OF HIKING - MOVING INTO HIGHER ELEVATIONS - VEGETATION GIVING WAY TO MORE AND MORE SNOW. ICE-COVERED PEAKS COME INTO VIEW.

34 **EXT. KHUMBU VALLEY - DAY**

34

THE CLIENTS trek through this paradise. Streams and water falls, surrounded by juniper, birch, blue pine and massive rhododendron. And behind the clients, A LONG LINE OF SHERPAS AND YAKS carrying an unbelievable amount of gear.

Beck taking huge lungfuls of air at the top of a steep slope. Jon and Doug come trudging slowly towards him. Drop their packs. Inhale air.

DOUG

Christ.

HAROLD

You'll acclimatise. It gets better.

From behind them four, five, then a dozen eight year-olds running barefoot past them up the slope, school-bags on their backs, grinning.

BECK

But never *that* better. Little bastards.

SCHOOL KID

Hey, Mist'ers!

Beck tries a wave but just ends up bending over laughing and coughing.

35 **EXT. FOOTBRIDGE - DAY**

35

High above a river. A wobbly cable bridge. Rob's team slowly navigating across it. Swaying and creaking with each step. A dizzying sight below - in between the footholds - the river rushing full of ice-cold whitewater.

36 **EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY**

36

The little Sherpa town of Namche Bazaar. A hundred rock-walled houses cut into the mountain slope. The team taking off their packs. Stretching. Done for the day.

A beautiful sunset over the mountains as - **a time-lapse** rushes us into the night, brilliant stars freckling the night sky, and they're slowly dissolving, the sky melting from black to blue as -

37 **EXT. THE TREK - DAY**

37

Another day. Rolling hills for miles. And we're rushing over them like we're in the opening of A Sound of Music, past the rich plant life, the roaring streams, cresting a hillside and - here comes our team cresting the hill. One by one they're all stopping. Looking at something in the distance.

THEIR POV

There she is. **EVEREST** - rising above the lower peaks. A mile long plume of clouds shrouding the summit.

Beck pulls out some binoculars. Examines the summit ridge.

We see it in close-up, through the binos as he follows the ridge to the summit.

BECK

You were on that ridge, Doug? Above the South Summit? Last year?

DOUG

Yep.

BECK

Shit. How far away from the top were you?

DOUG

Not far. We had a two o'clock turn around time.

BECK

Hell, I'd have made a run for it.

DOUG

Every day I wake up thinking that.
Every day.

BECK

So why didn't you?

ROB

Because I told him not to. And here's why. Turnaround time, two O'clock. Say two hours to the summit, fifteen minutes for a rest and photos- I don't know anybody who's spent less- an hour back to where we stopped. So that's five fifteen. With another three and half, maybe four hours descent to Camp Four. Sunset at six. That's nearly three hours descending in the dark. Above seven and a half thousand metres. In worsening conditions. Without oxygen. Fastest way of dying I can think of.

BECK

Sorry I asked.

ROB

You think the Living Goddess is sacred? Turnaround time, guys, *that* is sacred.

Rob wanders on along the path.

BECK

What's eating our Glorious Leader?

HAROLD

One of our Sherpas. Tenzing. Had an accident.

BECK

What happened?

HAROLD

Crevasse fall above Camp One. It's not good. Got a heli coming in for him.

A Nepalese Monk shows Doug, Yasuko and Jon to the line of prayer wheels. He runs his hands along the prayer wheels, each one spinning a prayer, and indicates they should do the same. Beck is unimpressed.

BECK

What, you're suddenly all
Buddhists, now? I didn't think
Buddha was a big fan of selfish
ambition. So he's gonna help you
get to the top of Everest? Really?

YASUKO

In Japan, it is discourteous to
refuse a gift.

DOUG

In America too, though maybe not
Texas, hey Beck?

Then they hear the distant drone of a helicopter. They watch
it fly past them up the valley towards Base Camp.

39

34B. EXT. TERMINAL MORRAINE, KHUMBU GLACIER.

39

Moving onto the rubble of the glacier, the team pass one
chorten after the other, each stone cairn a memorial to a
dead mountaineer. Doug turns to Beck.

DOUG

Don't you wish you'd spun some
prayer wheels now, Beck?

It isn't a joke.

BECK

That's a lot of bodies. A lot of
bodies.

They trudge on.

40

OMITTED

40

41

OMITTED

41

42

EXT. PHANTOM ALLEY - DAY

42

The white is now snow. Boots crunch through it. The team are
now trekking through snow, clambering around huge moraine
boulders along the edge of the glacier.

TRACKING - moving straight up - hundreds of feet - as we
rotate around a TOWER OF ICE - the sun striking it - turning
it this magnificent blue as we -

PULL BACK TO

Phantom Alley. A cluster of these beautiful ICE PINNACLES, rising sharply a hundred feet in the air, as we -

PULL BACK FURTHER TO

Wide shot. The team on the trail, ascending. The ice glittering like diamonds in the sunlight.

Rob leading. Bringing everyone to a stop at the crest.

Hundreds of brightly colored NYLON DOMES all across the rock-covered ice field.

ROB

Welcome to Base Camp!

Cheering from the team.

43

EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY

43

Rob leads them through the tent town that is Everest Base Camp. MUSIC is blasting. PEOPLE milling about, chatting, goofing. A few are drinking beer. Feels like a tailgate to a football game.

Sherpas and climbers are unloading gear from the yaks.

ROB

It's like the United Nations this year. Taiwanese team over there, South Africans down the way, a couple of Brit teams over there and in the best spot of all, Adventure Consultants.

Helen's waiting to greet the clients outside the main tent.

HELEN

Hi, everyone! I'm Helen, welcome to Base Camp. It's nice to finally meet you in person.

ANG DORJE, a Sherpa, is coming out of the tent.

HELEN

This is Ang Dorje. Ang Dorje, everyone. Everyone, Ang Dorje. He's your climbing Sirdar. Your lead Sherpa.

Ang doesn't stop, too much work to do, just smiles and waves. The group responds accordingly.

BECK

Speak English?

ANG DORJE
(over his shoulder)
Better than you, Mister America.

BECK
And you guess you climb better than
me, right?

HELEN
Summited three times, Beck.

BECK
Ah, shit!

Laughter from the crowd.

44

EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY - SAME TIME

44

Rob's walking through all of the camps. Saying hello. Surveying. Taking it all in. PEOPLE recognize him here. Nods and waves thrown his way. Thumping techno is coming out of one mess tent, giggling out of another.

He passes three South Africans mountaineers. Ian Woodall and two other climbers. Ian is teaching the two climbers how to put on their crampons.

A Sherpa walks by, a DHL PACKAGE in his hands. Rob watches him as he heads to the "Mountain Madness" tents, one of which has a Starbucks banner attached to it.

A tall brunette, SANDY HILL PITTMAN, 40, surprisingly put-together for 19 thousand feet. She's sitting outside a tent, talking on a briefcase-type satellite phone.

SANDY
This is Sandy Hill Pittman at
Everest Base Camp. I'm holding a
freshly brewed cup of Starbucks
Near East blend and looking around
there are quite a few more
expeditions than last year -
(pausing because -)

The Sherpa is handing her the DHL package. She smiles at him, taking it, and opening it. Current issues of Vogue and Vanity Fair spill out.

Rob shakes his head at the sight.

SCOTT
If it isn't the mayor of Base Camp!

Sitting in nothing but a pair of boxer shorts on a beach chair outside his tent emblazoned with a Mountain Madness logo is SCOTT FISCHER (40, American). He is smoking a spliff.

With his sunglasses, long blonde hair, God-given physique, and overall demeanor, Scott comes off more surfer than climber.

No handshakes or hugs here. A mutual but guarded respect.

ROB
Starbucks, Scott? Really?

SCOTT
Best coffee in Base Camp.

ROB
How's it going?

SCOTT
Not bad, man. Just catching some rays. Acclimatising.

He nods to the reefer. Offers some to Rob who declines with a smile.

ROB
Mountain Madness is right. This place has gone crazy.

SCOTT
Thirty odd teams, right? Some idiot goes and invents Himalayan guiding and look what happens.

ROB
Yeah, yeah, all my fault. Like you're not jumping on the bandwagon. I mean-

Rob looks over to Sandy Pittman...

ROB
- one of yours?

SCOTT
Hey, somebody stole my journalist, so I had to get another. Believe it or not, she's one short of the seven summits.

ROB
She's a lot easier on the eye than Jon Krakauer, that's for sure.

They both laugh.

ROB
There's going to be a lot of traffic. And I don't like the look of some of it.
(more)

ROB (cont'd)
I just seen the South Africans
having a lesson in how to use
crampons, for Christ's sake.

Scott nearly chokes on his smoke.

SCOTT
What the hell are they doing up
here?

ROB
Search me. And who fixes ropes? And
who gets to use 'em? And the
ladders-

SCOTT
- relax, Rob, relax. It'll all
shake down.

ROB
You think? You got a day in mind to
summit?

SCOTT
Was thinking May ten, my lucky day,
but you know how it goes. Whatever
the Mother Goddess decides.

ROB
May ten. Me too. Have a good one,
Scott.

SCOTT
Always do, bro. I always do.

As he walks away he passes Scott's guides, ANATOLI BOUKREEV
(38, Kazakhstani), NEAL BEIDLEMAN (38, American) and their
climbing sirdar, LOPSANG (23, Nepalese, a spitting image of
Scott Fischer, his idol). They nod hello.

ANATOLI
(thick Russian accent)
Hi, Rob.

ROB
(nodding back)
Anatoli. Neal. Lopsang.

39 PT 2 **WE FOLLOW ROB**

39 PT 2

ED VIESTURS (O.S.)
Roberto!

Rob turns, seeing the IMAX TEAM. ED VIESTURS and DAVID
BREASHEARS (both late 30s, American) coming over to say hi.

ROB
Ed. David. Great to see you guys.

They hug it out.

ROB
You really got an IMAX out here?

DAVID BREASHEARS
You want to see it? It's a beast.

He points into their tent: an IMAX camera sits on an immense tripod.

ROB
Rather you than me.

ED VIESTURS
We only have to carry an Imax camera. You have to carry a bunch of paying customers.

ROB
(moving on)
Better get back to them. See you up the mountain.

ED VIESTURS
No Jan?

ROB
Pregnant.

DAVID BREASHEARS
Hey! Congratulations. Enjoy the mountain. You won't be coming back here once you've got a baby.

Rob turns.

ROB
You kidding me? I'll bring the baby. This is home!

He stops, bends down and picks up some litter. Crumples it up and puts it in his pocket. It's bothering him.

45

INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY

45

Rob's team interspersed throughout. Having a snack and a look around. Settling in. Glad to be here.

There's electricity. A sound system. A big communal table. A message board, partially filled with Polaroids of the STAFF and CLIENTS - names beneath all of them.

Dominating one corner of the tent is a Mini HQ. The communication center. Phone. Radio. Fax. Its own board with IMAGES - printed, daily satellite feeds of the weather.

He turns to DR CAROLINE MCKENZIE, team doctor, who's come to stand beside him and Helen, Base Camp Manager.

ROB

I'd like to introduce you to Caroline McKenzie, our team doctor and Helen Wilton, Base Camp Manager. Their combined advice will - literally- keep you alive. Caro, take it away...

CARO

Hi everyone! Nice to meet you. Have you all got a mug of tea? Perfect. Okay. These guys'll tell you all sorts of stuff about mountaineering, but to us doctors, getting to the top of Everest is mostly about one thing: oxygen. And the lack of it. To give you the best chance of summitting, we need to prepare your body for the thin air up there. Right here you're three miles above sea level. You're getting half the oxygen you'd get walking down the street in Tokyo, London or Dallas and we haven't even started climbing. Over the next month, before the final assault, you're going to make three partial acclimatisation ascents, returning here to Base Camp after each one. Rob.

Rob gets up, points to the map on the board.

ROB

The bad news is each ascent begins and ends with the Icefall. No way round it.

46

EXT. KHUMBU ICEFALL. DAY.

46

We are staring at a chaos of deep blue, ice white. Cliffs, gorges, caves all surreally squashed and mutated. Rob continues to speak as the camera moves in and in until we pick up tiny, coloured specks. Moving in further we see they are climbers picking their way through a terrifying maze of crevasses and ice blocks.

ROB (V.O)

Two thousand feet of glacier. Millions of tons of ice moving day and night. Seracs the size of tower blocks, crevasses so deep they don't have a bottom.
(more)

ROB (V.O) (cont'd)
 Not a place to hang around,
 especially when the sun hits it.

A bottomless crevasse. Far below is a mangled set of ladders from a previous year's expeditions.

47 **EXT. KHUMBU ICEFALL DAY.**

47

Jon, Beck, Doug, Yasuko, Frank and Lou trudge past a serac, Harold leading. Yasuko taps Harold, pointing to something in the ice.

Buried in the glacier, something. This really weird, familiar looking shape.

YASUKO
 Is that a helicopter?

HAROLD
 Crashed back in '71. You can't fly
 a chopper higher than Base Camp.
 Air's too thin.

ROB V.O.
 Our sherpas have already fixed new
 ladders across the crevasses. It's
 as safe as we can make it.

48 **EXT. KHUMBU ICEFALL. CREVASSE. DAY.**

48

Jon is crossing a bridge made of lashed-up ladders, his harness clipped into a safety rope above his head.

ROB V.O.
 Which isn't that safe. Nineteen
 people have died in the Icefall. I
 think that's all I need to say
 about that.

Halfway across, he freezes as a thundering noise is heard. A few hundred metres away, a massive serac breaks away from the glacier and comes crashing down.

49 **OMITTED**

49

50 **EXT. CAMP ONE - DAY**

50

Tents set up on the ice. Mike and Harold are helping CLIENTS into camp. Beards a little thicker. They are trudging slowly and all collapse, winded, gulping for air as -

Rob is walking from client to client, pulling water bottles from packs and handing them to his team.

CARO (V.O.)
*You need to keep drinking.
 Dehydration leads to headaches,
 poor performance and lapses of
 judgement- not something you can
 afford those up here.*

ROB (V.O.)
*Further up you get, you'll find it
 hard to eat or sleep. Your
 metabolism is slowing down.*

51

INT. TENT - NIGHT

51

Middle of the night. Everyone hunkered down. We PUSH IN on a FACE. And another. And another.

Beck. Doug. Yasuko. All of them wide awake. Jon in pain, coughing. Yasuko rolls over, trying to get comfortable as -

CARO (V.O.)
*And the higher you get, the worse
 it gets...*

52

EXT. WESTERN CWM - DAY

52

We're with the Mountain Madness team now. Scott up front with Anatoli. Sandy is plodding along beside Lopsang. Neal in back with a SHERPA.

CARO (V.O.)
*You all know about Oedema, right?
 Cerebral oedema, the swelling of
 your brain to the point of loss of
 motor function and eventually
 death. Pulmonary oedema, your lungs
 filling with fluid. You effectively
 drown.*

ROB (V.O.)
 Look out for the signs in the
 people around you. Slurred speech,
 erratic behaviour, dizziness. It's
 got nothing to do with ability.
 Nobody is immune. Not long ago, my
 best friend died of cerebral oedema
 on Dhaulagiri.

CARO (V.O.)
 The only cure is to get down the
 mountain. Fast.

CLOSE ON THE SHERPA - wheezing - stumbling - legs giving out as he collapses to his knees - coughing - bright red blood speckling the snow -

Neal going to his aid - shouting - Scott rushing back to them
- on the radio - as -

CARO (V.O.)
*And what could possibly be worse
than that?*

53 **EXT. WESTERN CWM - DAY**

53

Rob's team traversing this beautiful, snow-blanketed valley cut in between the mountains. Silent outside of the sound of lungs straining for oxygen.

CARO (V.O.)
*Hypoxia. You're oxygen deprived,
you're not sleeping, you're not
getting enough nutrients, you're
hypothermic - your body is slowly
cooling. Know what the penultimate
reaction to this is? The one before
death?*

54 **INT. MESS TENT. DAY.**

54

Cut to Beck back at the mess tent briefing.

BECK
Insanity.

CARO
Is right.

DOUG
He's already insane.

Laughter from the Team.

ROB
*Often a very particular form of
insanity where you start thinking
you're hot. I mean so unbearably
hot that you start ripping off your
clothes and parading around the
mountain in your underpants at
eight thousand metres.*

BECK
I'm not wearing any underpants!

More laughter.

ROB
That is not a sight we want on
Everest, Team...

55

EXT. WESTERN CWM

55

Frank and Lou up front. Frank stops. Gasping.

CARO (V.O.)
Seriously, it doesn't end well. So, watch yourselves. Watch each other. Check your fingers and toes for frostnip. Keep them moving. And absolutely, positively say something if you don't feel right. It's critical. Not just for you, but for the people who will be putting their own lives in danger rescuing you.

Harold and Mike are coming to check on Frank.

Lou peels off a glove. His hand pale. Mike holds up a gloved hand and curls his fingers. Lou does the same. He's okay, but Mike grabs his glove and blows a hot breath into it, then puts it on him.

ROB (V.O.)
Your body will acclimatise. But it takes time. Too high-too-fast heroics will kill you here.

56

EXT. CAMP TWO - DAY

56

CAPTION: **Week Two, Camp Two**

Behind them, FIFTY TENTS are pitched on a snow ledge.

Rob's team, Yasuko the only one without an unruly beard at this point. They are gasping for air, unlike the sherpas who are all breathing easy as anything as they come into camp with big loads on their backs.

They are being instructed by Rob on how to use the oxygen masks.

ROB
Give it a try.

The Team inhale through their masks. Beck pulls his off with a grin.

BECK
Instant happiness, man!

ROB
It is. Be careful with the regulator. The more you open it, the better you feel but the less time it's gonna last. You need just enough to keep going.

Jon is coughing and coughing, grimacing with the pain.

ROB
You'd better have Caroline have a
look at you Jon. Okay! Sleep with
the air on if you can. Tomorrow
Camp Three.

57

EXT. CAMP TWO. DUSK.

57

The mountains glow pink and orange in the last of the
sunlight. Rob is sitting apart from the tents. He checks his
watch, grabbing a pair of BINOCULARS and a RADIO.

ROB
(into radio)
Where are you?

GUY (RADIO)
Camp One.

Rob brings up the binoculars and focuses.

ROB
Oh, yeah... It's fuzzy but I think
I see an idiot on the wrong
mountain.

GUY (RADIO)
Take a closer look.

INTERCUT WITH

58

EXT. PUMORI - DAY

58

Guy Cotter on Pumori, the next peak over, holding a pair of
binoculars trained on Base Camp. A gloved middle finger
pointed right at Rob.

Rob smiles. Gives the middle finger right back. Laughter
over the line.

GUY (RADIO)
Can't chat, I've gotta make camp.

ROB
No problem. Have fun up there.

59

EXT. CAMP TWO. DAWN.

59

Darkness. Sound of the wind. Stop motion as we see clouds boiling up from the bottom of the Khumbu Valley. They tumble up towards us engulfing Camp Two.

Nylon buzzing unremittingly. A vicious wind is whipping at the tents.

The camera moves up two ropes until...

60

EXT. LHOTSE FACE - DAY

60

...it finds climbers, a line of them on each. People going up. People coming down.

Someone near the top of the line has pulled away from the pack. Graceful and controlled movements. In the zone as -

an ice axe - right into the ice. Crampons- stamp, stamp- as the climber moves up. The ice axe is wielded again.

It's Rob. Resting for a spell. He turns to look at the view. The clouds are boiling around him.

ROB
(into radio)
Mike, I'm almost over the hump.
What's our status down there?

A nearly vertical drop off the line. The next climber a good fifty feet below us.

MIKE (RADIO)
Just sent John Taske up. I'm right behind him. Maybe an hour or two?
Everyone's slow. The wait killed 'em.

ROB
Yeah. Looks like we've got some weather coming. Keep an eye out, will ya?

61

TIME CUT

61

We're in the middle of the line. Rob's team moving up. Full gear. Unclipping from a line. Clipping to the line above. Repeat. Slow going, and -

Beck is above him. A BLAST OF WIND slams into him. Brutal and biting. Bringing snow with it. He turns away from it. Holding tight. Conditions just nasty up here, as we -

PULL STRAIGHT BACK

Rob's team getting pummeled by the elements. Visibility diminishing quickly. Rob pulls out his radio.

ROB
Mike! Harold! This isn't
happening! Turn 'em around! Let's
get everybody off the mountain,
over!

62

EXT. KHUMBU ICEFALL - DAY

62

Spindrift thrown at the faces of The Adventure Consultants Team. They turn a corner in the maze of the Icefall and are confronted by the Mountain Madness team on their side, the Taiwanese team crossing one of the ladder bridges and the South African team on the other side, all waiting as the wind whips down the ice corridor.

Rob goes over to Scott.

ROB
What's going on?

SCOTT
The Taiwanese are in slow motion,
man.

Rob shouts across.

ROB
Hey, Ian! Can we come after these
guys? Got a couple of cold ones.

IAN
First come first served, mate.

ROB
Beck got frostnipped...

IAN
So will we if we hang around here
any longer. No can do.

Rob turns to Harold.

ROB
He's a lot of help. Let's get out
of this wind. Harold, keep an eye
Beck.

They huddle at the bottom of a serac. Harold squeezes Beck's fingers. Doug is doing star jumps to stay warm. Spindrift pours down on them.

Ian Woodall is shouting bad-tempered commands at his team mate who is inching across the ladders.

IAN
Get a move on!

Rob and Scott exchange glances.

BECK
Hands are getting numb.

Harold pulls off Beck's glove. Then his own. Looks at the grey tips of Beck's fingers. Starts rubbing the hands in between his own.

HAROLD
Come on, let's get some blood back in them.

ROB
Okay, let's go. I'll go first, belay you across.

Rob edges across. We keep losing him in the snow storm. Finally, shouts across.

ROB
Beck!

BECK
Let me at it.

Anatoli double clips Beck into the safety line. Checks that the carabiners are secure and nods for him to go ahead. Beck takes a step onto the ladder.

ROB
Nice and easy, Beck.

He takes another step - only - HIS CRAMPON IS STUCK - Beck teetering - one hand on the line, the other flailing -

ROB
Grab the rope!

But Beck's frozen hand just slips off it. His crampon still stuck between rungs sends him spinning awkwardly off the ladder.

Sudden tension in the crabs as the rope loads. Close up of ice screws bending.

Vertiginous spinning- the chasm roars up to meet us.

The ropes come taut. The screws hold. Beck dangles below the ladder.

BECK
Woah! Shit...

ROB
You okay?

He tries to get back onto the ladder. Fails.

BECK
Can't feel my hands.

Rob looks at Mike.

ROB
Will it hold two?

MIKE
I'll belay you.

Mike starts screwing in another ice screw.

CUT TO- Rob walking out on the ladders.

Crouches and helps to heave Beck's arms onto the ladders. They bend alarmingly. Both of them freeze. The ladders hold. Beck is on.

CUT TO- Beck getting to the other side. Is on his knees, getting his breath.

ROB
You okay?

Beck stands up.

BECK
There are no guarantees of the summit. I understand that. But to get frostbite in the bloody Icefall because I'm standing in line like I'm in frigging Walmart? That's sure not what I paid you sixty-five thousand dollars for, Rob.

Beck gets to his feet and walks off.

63

EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY

63

Rob's team stagger into Base Camp, utterly exhausted.

ROB
I know you feel like hell. Warm up, stay in your tent for the rest of the day, recuperate.

Everyone going their separate ways. Rob heads for the Adventure Consultants tent shaking his head.

64

INT. MESS TENT. EVENING.

64

Every team at Base Camp is crowded into the Mess Tent. Rob stands at the front.

ROB

You know what it was like in the Icefall today. Everyone waiting around for the ladders. And queues on the fixed ropes above Camp Two...We need to know who is summiting when so that this kind of chaos doesn't happen higher up.

IAN

What, like some kind of *rota*? On Everest? What gives you the right to tell us when we can climb and when we can't?

ROB

I'm not telling anybody. I'm asking, that's all. Adventure Consultants are aiming for May ten.

SCOTT

So are we, man!

Some nervous laughter.

ROB

Well at least we know.

IAN

We're going when we want. And I don't need *your* permission to climb a bloody mountain.

Ian storms out of the tent. His South African colleagues follow somewhat sheepishly.

65

OMITTED

65

66

INT. MEDICS TENT - DAY

66

Caroline is running tests on Beck. Making him do step-ups. Checking his heart rate. Blood pressure.

CARO

How are your fingers.

BECK

I'm fine. Look.

He wiggles his fingers.

CARO

One-seventy. Okay, you can stop.

Beck rests. She checks his pulse again.

CARO

Yep, you're in great shape, Beck.

BECK

Should be. Spend six days a week in the gym.

CARO

Your wife must love that.

Beck stops.

BECK

Damn!

CARO

Beck?

67 **EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

67

Beck coming out of the medical tent, making a bee-line for...

68 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY**

68

Beck blowing in. Helen at her table. Looking up.

BECK

Can I use the fax? I have to send a message to my wife.

HELEN

Sure. One came in for you yesterday. While you were up at Camp Two.

She reaches for a folded piece of fax paper with Beck's name on it.

BECK

Shit. That Sat phone of yours...

ROB

Five bucks a minute, Beck.

BECK

You guys take American Express?

ROB

Emergency?

He chucks the fax at him.

Happy Anniversary, Beck - Peach.

ROB
 Yep, with Peach I'd say that's an
 emergency.

Rob and Helen laugh as Beck grabs the phone and heads out.

69 **OMITTED**

69

70 **EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

70

Beck talking on the sat phone, wandering away from the tented
 city, trying to find a quiet place.

The faraway voice sounds more accusing than pleased.

PEACH V/O
 You're calling me from *Everest*?

BECK
 We have a satellite phone.

PEACH V/O
 Must be costing a fortune. Besides,
 you never call. Are everything
 okay?

BECK
 Fine. Peach, honey, I'm sorry. We
 were up at Camp Two. That's why I
 didn't fax or call yesterday. Happy
 anniversary, okay? I miss you guys.

PEACH V/O
 Your choice, Beck. Sure wasn't
 mine.

BECK
 How are the kids?

PEACH V/O
 Meg had her first date.

BECK
 Hey! My Meg, dating? Who with? Is
 he honest? Do we know him?

PEACH V/O
 You don't. You're never here.

BECK
 I will be. I just need to do this,
 Peach. Then I will be.

PEACH V/O

No, Beck, you won't. After Everest, there's McKinley. After McKinley, there'll be some other mountain. Or it'll be back to boats or motorbikes, the next big escape. You're on a mission to do anything except be with us. You can't help yourself. I get it. Why can't you get it? Just admit it to yourself.

BECK

Peach, I love you. I love the kids.

PEACH V/O

It's easy to say that from eight thousand miles away, Beck.

BECK

Peach-

PEACH V/O

- I just can't do this anymore. Look, you caught me in the middle of making dinner, I gotta go. Be careful up there, Beck.

Peach cuts the line. Beck shakes his head. Stares at the tents, the mountains. Shivers. Starts trudging back.

71 **EXT. BASE CAMP. NIGHT.**

71

From high up the glacier we see the pin-prick lights coming from the tents at Base Camp. Rock music comes from one of the tents.

72 **INT. MESS TENT. NIGHT.**

72

Yasuko, Rob and Helen are dancing on the stone table in the mess tent. The rest of the Team are laughing and singing along.

Rob holds a hand down to Beck who shakes his head.

ROB

If you don't dance, you don't climb.

Beck eyes, Rob for a moment, then leaps on the table and cuts loose.

73 **OMITTED**

73

74	OMITTED	74
75	OMITTED	75
76	OMITTED	76
77	OMITTED	77
78	OMITTED	78
79	OMITTED	79
80	EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT	80

A small bonfire, people gathered round it including Doug, Yasuko, Beck, Harold, Jon. Rob joins them, waving a fax.

ROB

It's a girl. I'm gonna have a girl!
Jan just faxed me.

Smiles and cheers all around.

BECK

Right on, buddy!

JON

When's she due?

ROB

Right after I get home.

DOUG

You think sleeping at altitude is
hard? You're not gonna get a wink
for the next two years, mate.

Suddenly out of the dark: BOOM! And then - CRACK! Like a
shotgun blast as a serac in the icefall collapses.

BECK

Glad I wasn't walking under *that*
serac.

JON

Looking on the bright side, you
wouldn't know much about it if
were...

DOUG

Jan doesn't mind you being out
here?

ROB
She's a climber. She gets it.

DOUG
I think you have to be, otherwise
you just don't get it at all.

BECK
I take it you're not married, Doug?

DOUG
I was.

BECK
Figures.

A rueful laugh.

BECK
Peach said to me, 'If you climb
another mountain, I'll divorce
you.'

HAROLD
Was that before you booked for
Everest or after.

BECK
Before.

They laugh.

ROB
And he still booked it!

BECK
(wincing)
Yeah. Worst of it was, I kinda
forgot to tell her.

Outraged laughter from around the fire.

BECK
(suddenly serious)
Right now, I'm not sure she'd mind
if I was under that serac.

ROB
Don't think so, Beck. She called me
three times before we left- wanted
to know I was going to keep you
safe.

BECK
She did?

Rob nods.

BECK

Huh.

Jon is writing things down in his notebook.

JON

And now it's out on the table,
guys: it hurts, it's dangerous,
it's ruined your marriage and it's
costing you a small fortune. I
gotta ask. You know I have.
Why?

BECK, LOU, JOHN, DOUG, ROB...

Because it's there!

JON

Come on, guys...

They look at each other to see who's going to step up with an answer.

JON

Yasuko? Why Everest?

YASUKO

I am forty-seven years old. I have
reached six of the seven summits.
So now of course I must reach the
seventh.

JON

Yes, but why *any* summits? How about
you, Doug?

Doug hesitates for a moment. Then -

DOUG

There's this school back home,
Sunrise Elementary. I've been to
talk to the kids there a couple of
times. They've given me this flag
to plant on the summit.

He pulls out a pennant and shows it to Jon.

DOUG

To those kids I'm some kind of
superman. And if a postman can do
it, any one of those kids can do
it. I was doing it for me. Now I
reckon I'm doing it for them.

Jon nods, writing.

JON

Beck. Why?

BECK
Honestly? If I knew why, I probably
wouldn't be here.

81	OMITTED	81
82	OMITTED	82
83	OMITTED	83
84	OMITTED	84
85	EXT. CREVASSE. DAY.	85

ROB
One last thing. I say it to every
client, every trip. My job is not
to get you up, it's to get you down
alive. Dead clients are seriously
bad for business.

86	OMITTED	86
87	EXT. MOUNTAIN MADNESS MESS TENT, BASE CAMP - NIGHT	87

Rob makes his way away from the music through the boulder
field of Base Camp down towards the Mountain Madness camp.

In the entrance to a tent, Anatoli is playing a guitar and
singing in Kazakhstani.

Rob sees Scott Fischer standing outside the open entrance to
the mess tent, smoking. Suddenly, Scott's face contorts in
pain. He bends over trying to get some relief.

ROB
You okay?

SCOTT
Hey, Rob, welcome! Want a brew?

ROB
You crook?

SCOTT
Nah, a touch of Delhi belly.

He leans into the tent for Sandy's benefit.

SCOTT
Or maybe Sandy's caviar...

SANDY

I told you not to have the Chateau Lafite with it. Scott is so uncivilised.

They laugh. A peal of woman's laughter comes from another in the tent in the dark, followed by some giggling.

ROB

It's all action down this end.

SCOTT

Yeah, Sherpas don't like it much, disrespectful to Sagarmatha, but what can you do? Can't exactly ban sex at Base Camp.

ROB

Speaking of which, I'm having a girl! Got a fax just now.

SCOTT

Wow, man! Good on you.

He gives him a big hug.

SCOTT

Girls, they're the best. Come on in have a celebration cup of cocoa. Keeping the hard stuff for after the summit, you know?

He holds open the tent flap, but Rob won't come in.

ROB

No, I just want a word, Scott. Just you and me.

SCOTT

Sure.

They move away.

ROB

I don't like these crowds on the ropes. There's going to be trouble above Camp Three.

SCOTT

Been thinking the same.

ROB

Got a suggestion. We're both trying to top out on the tenth, right? We could team up.

Scott looks at Rob, considering.

SCOTT
We've got kinda different styles,
Rob...

ROB
I know. I'm not asking you to sign
a contract- you guide your guys the
way you want, I guide my guys the
way I want. But we combine
resources, expertise and knowledge.
Work with each other instead of
against each other. What do you
say?

Scott considers some more.

SCOTT
I can see the sense in it.

He holds out his hand.

SCOTT
Yeah, okay. Why not?

They shake.

88 **OMITTED**

88

89 **INT. MEDICS TENT, BASE CAMP - DAY**

89

Rob Hall seeks out Caro. He has a pack of balloons in his
hand. Speaks low.

ROB
It's Helen's birthday on Friday.
The big four oh.

CARO
You brought these all the way from
New Zealand?

ROB
Sure. Put them up in the mess tent,
yeah? Chhongba and the kitchen
boys'll help you. He's gonna make a
cake.

CARO
Summit day?

ROB
Double celebration.

He grins and goes out.

90

INT. MESS TENT, BASE CAMP - DAY

90

A meeting of the two teams: Rob Hall, Harold, Mike, Neal and Ang Dorje sit down with Scott Fischer, his guides Neal and Anatoli, and Lopsang, his young climbing sirdar.

SCOTT

We've stashed plenty of O just below the South Summit, right, Lopsang?

LOPSANG

Eight bottles.

ROB

That enough?

ANATOLI

I'm not using O.

ROB

(surprised)
At all?

ANATOLI

English Air. Never.

Rob pauses. Exchanges a look with Scott then continues.

ROB

Okay. Well, we'll add a few more bottles to be sure. There's still rope to be fixed on the upper Lhotse face. And on the ridge.

ANATOLI

Hilary Step need new fixed rope. And South-East Ridge.

Scott nods.

ROB

Then how about we share the fixing? You and Lopsang can divvy it up between you, Ang.

ANG DORJE

I work for you, Rob. You give the orders, I do it.

LOPSANG

I work for Scott.

Both Rob and Scott see they're running into a problem.

SCOTT

That's okay, Lopsang. We're going into this together. You can work with Ang.

Lopsang shrugs. This irritates Ang Dorje.

ANG DORJE

Rob, you know that if I say I will do it, it will be done. Three times I summit Everest. I am not new boy. But what others do is not for me to say.

LOPSANG

You calling me new boy? I summit three times also.

ROB

Hey, hey, hey. We all work together. We're all professionals here. We get the job done.

91

EXT. MOUNTAIN MADNESS CAMP. DAY.

91

The Team are outside their tents, packing their sacks.

SCOTT

Only essentials. I'm not gonna tell you what to pack but be brutal. One kilo down here feels like ten up there. Light and fast, guys, light and fast.

SANDY

There goes the summit cappuccino!

SCOTT

Gutted, Sandy....

Laughter. Outside one tent, Charlotte packs her head-torch. Turns to Lene.

CHARLOTTE FOX

You taking spares batteries?

LENE

No. Every ounce counts. Putting new ones in down here. They'll last.

She weighs the batteries in her hand then drops them into the pocket in the top of her sack.

92

EXT. MESS TENT. DAY

92

Outside the tent.

ROB
Roll up, roll up! Guys! Bring me
your crampons.

Harold, Ang and Mike are sorting the gear. Ropes, axes, karabiners, first aid. Rob is overseeing it all while sitting on a crate sharpening crampons with a file. Beck hands Rob his crampons.

BECK
They're already pretty good.

Rob touches the points.

ROB
We can do better than that. You'll
be preparing sushi with them by the
time I've finished.

Helen comes out holding a fax. Hands it to Rob with a smile.

HELEN
Weather forecast.

ROB
I like that smile.

He reads.

ROB
Looks as if we're going to get a
break. Bit on the windy side, but
not bad. Not bad at all.

Helen hands another fax over to Doug.

HELEN
Just came in.

DOUG
"Good luck, Dad! Miss you! Hope
this works. Love Angie".

Doug shows the others.

DOUG
My kid. She's the best.

Beck looks away. Stares down the valley.

93

EXT. BASE CAMP. EVENING.

93

THROUGH A VIEWFINDER -

Rob's team - four kneeling in front, four standing behind them - Rob, Mike, Harold, Ang on the sides - posing for a group shot -

ROB
We've got a tough week ahead of us,
but this is going to be the best
Friday of your lives! Remind me:
what the hell are we doing on
Friday, again?

ALL
Summitting!

A cheer from everyone as - *click* - there goes the shutter -
and we FREEZE ON that shot - smiles, cheers, arms raised,
total excitement.

ROB
Okay, everyone get an early night.
Dawn start.

94 **OMITTED** 94

95 **EXT. OUTER EDGE OF BASE CAMP - EVENING** 95

Sunset. Quiet. Serene. Just beautiful.

A sherpa quietly washing pots, staring down the valley.

Rob sitting. All alone out here. Arms on his knees,
watching the sun dip behind the Himalayas. Thinking.

He looks next to him. The Sat Phone lying there.

96 **INT. ROB & JAN'S HOUSE, NEW ZEALAND- NIGHT** 96

Blackness. The PHONE ringing. Jan fumbling for the light.
Grabbing the phone.

JAN
(still asleep)
Hi.

ROB (PHONE)
I wake you?

JAN
No.

ROB (PHONE)
Liar.

97

INTERCUT WITH

97

Rob where we left him. Closing his eyes. This call is the good hurt.

JAN

You okay?

ROB

Better now. Been missing you.

The line quiet for a moment. Just the two of them breathing.

ROB

We start the ascent tomorrow.

JAN

So you summit....Friday?

ROB

That's the plan. The tenth.

JAN

Your lucky day. How's the weather?

ROB

Reckon we got a window.

JAN

Wish I was with you.

ROB

Me too. The scan. You get a picture of the baby?

JAN

Sure did.

ROB

What she look like?

JAN

Blonde hair, nice smile, perfect height to weight ratio, going be a great climber.

They both laugh.

JAN

Kind of folded up. But she's there, Rob. Already. A little me. A little you.

Rob's silent.

JAN

Rob?

ROB
Just taking it in.

JAN
One day we'll all go climbing
together. You, me, our little girl.

Rob's silent.

JAN
You still there?

ROB
Yeah. I'm here.

JAN
Expensive silence.

ROB
It's worth it. You feel so close.
When I'm not on this mountain I
dream about it. But now I'm here
all I want is to be back with you.

JAN
You will be. Soon.

ROB
I know. I love you so much.

JAN
Love you too.

98 **OMITTED** 98

99 **EXT. BASE CAMP, EVEREST - DAWN** 99

Sunrise over the peaks.

100 **CAPTION: MONDAY MAY 6TH** 100

Ang Schering, the Base Camp sirdar, lights sprigs of juniper
incense on the stone chorten.

All our characters are here, caught in various expressions of
belief and non belief as they and the Sherpas toss tsampa
into the air and recite prayers from the oblong scripture
books.

The Sherpa chants the prayer for the new day. The Lama throws
rice onto the chorten.

The smoke of the incense curls up into the sky.

101 **EXT. BASE CAMP - MORNING**

101

102 **EXT. KHUMBU ICEFALL - DAY**

102

MOVING over the ICEFALL. CLIFFS, GORGES, TUMBLING ICE AVALANCHES that have frozen in place - blinding white and beautiful blues in the sunlight contrasting with the inky black shadows -

Scott, Anatoli, and Neal leading the Mountain Madness squad. Traversing a ladder. They're in sync. Looking good.

Rob's team: right in the heart of the ICE AVALANCHE, on a boulder of ice the size of a building, sandwiched between Mountain Madness and the Taiwanese team, using fixed ropes to make their ascent.

Doug is caught on something. He shouts to the person ahead.

DOUG

Hey, Lou! Hold up a sec.

CREEEAAK! The ice pinnacle they are standing on just shuddered. Everyone freezes. What was that? Eyes finding other eyes, looking for comfort when -

CREEEEEEEAAK! Again.

Rob quickly and nimbly pulls himself up next to Doug.

ROB

Don't move.

BECK

(whisper)

Oh, Christ...

Silence. They're all swaying there. Like this chunk of ice could release and tumble down at any moment, then with it. And then, slowly, the swaying stops. But not the nerves.

ROB

Slowly, slowly.

They inch their way off the top of the pinnacle onto the main face. Exhale.

DOUG

Oh, man...

ROB

That was us almost going for the ride of our lives.

BECK

Yee-hah!

And Beck bursts out laughing. Faced with such craziness, there's nothing else to do but laugh with him.

103 **EXT. CAMP ONE - DAY**

103

Rob's team in a huddle. Catching their breath. Hydrating.

Off to the side, DALE KRUSE, a Mountain Madness Client is sat down in the snow. Spent. Neal is kneeling next to him, checking on him. Rob close at hand.

NEAL
Doesn't look good.

ROB
OK. Radio me or Helen if you need help.

Off a nod from Neal, Rob heads back to his group.

ROB
Harold. How are we looking?

HAROLD
All good.

ROB
Then let's crack on.

104 **EXT. WESTERN CWM - DAY**

104

High above this glacial valley. Moving through where we saw the downed helicopter, and suddenly we -

CRANE DOWN TO

The Nuptse Corner. A majestic valley of ice, piercing white in the sunlight.

Doug, Beck, John, Frank, Lou, Stuart, and Yasuko join him. Everyone looking up.

BECK
Wow...

THEIR POV

A beautiful blue sky scattered with clouds. Giving them a breathtaking view of the upper slopes of Everest.

Rob is the last through. Follows their gaze.

ROB
There she is.

JON
A helluva long way to go...

ROB
Best not to look too long at the
summit. Head down, take it one step
at a time.

Movement turns all their heads. Someone coming down fast
from Camp Two. It's Scott.

SCOTT
Yo. Did you see Dale at Camp One?

ROB
Yeah, looked in bad shape.

SCOTT
I'm going down to check him out.
I'll radio if I have to go down to
BC with him. Your guys okay?

ROB
All fine. Good luck.

SCOTT
See yah!

Everyone quiet as Scott disappears into the ice.

105 **EXT. CAMP TWO - DAY**

105

Doug is the last of the clients into camp. He bends at the
waist, hands on his knees, coughing hard, spitting up phlegm.
Trying to suck air. Rob comes up behind him.

ROB
Deep breaths, Doug, deep breaths.

He pulls Doug's Nalgene bottle from his bag. Hands it to
him. Then looks over his team. Breathing hard, but not
nearly as bad when they did this the first time. He holds up
his own bottle.

ROB
Everyone drink up. At least a
gallon a day.

Everyone drinks. A little sombre since running into Scott.

ROB
You all heard Scott back there.
Watch yourselves. Watch each
other. If you see someone wobbling
or talking funny, tell me.
(more)

ROB (cont'd)
 When your brain isn't getting
 enough oxygen it makes you do crazy
 things. I don't want to see Beck
 Weather's underwear, okay?

106 **EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

106

Sunrise. This empty, barren feeling in Base Camp now that everyone is on the mountain. As...

CAPTION: **May 7th**

107 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY**

107

Caroline comes into the tent.

CARO
 Hey, Helen, can you-

Helen holds up a silencing hand. She is on the sat phone.

HELEN
 Okay. Give me the coordinates -
 longitude, latitude.

She cradles the phone under her chin, uncaps a marker, draws on the map a circle in the Indian Ocean at a specific longitude and latitude. From the circle, she draws a couple of ARROWS pointing North and Northeast.

HELEN
 Aha, yep.

Helen is now tracing the second arrow with her finger. The arrow is on a direct path for: Nepal.

HELEN
 Thanks, Adam.

She puts down the phone. Turns to Caroline.

HELEN
 Weather's changed.

108 **EXT. LHOTSE FACE - DAY**

108

Conditions way better than when they first tried this. A long line of climbers clipped to the rope, heading up.

But a group is heading down. Passing Rob. He sees a big, bulky CAMERA on someone's back.

ROB
 The Gucci Team! How goes it?

DAVID BREASHEARS and ED VIESTURS of the IMAX expedition pause to chat.

DAVID BREASHEARS
Hey, Rob.

ROB
What's up, mate?

ED VIESTURS
Wind's rough on the South Col.

ROB
Rough for filming?

DAVID BREASHEARS
Rough for anything. Go careful up there.

They continue down with their team. Two Sherpas hauling gear following them. Rob, a twinge of concern in his eyes, but -

He's clipping onto the next rope, moving up when - DEBRIS FALLS - hitting him - he looks up -

Harold is climbing steadily, hearing the rattle of stones tumbling from above. He swings out on the line for a better view, and it's a mistake, because -

WHAM! A ROCK the size of a football slams into his chest, knocking him right off the mountain - his CARABINER and JUMAR straining on the line - the only thing keeping him here as -

ROB
Harold!

Rob quickly closes the gap between them and reaches out - putting a hand to his butt, guiding him back to the face -

Harold flailing for the rope - got it - he's pulling himself in - finding a foot hold.

ROB
Look at me. Breathe.

HAROLD
I'm good, I'm good.
(massaging his chest)
Going to have one hell of a bruise.

Rob inspects him. Shock and adrenaline pulsing. His eyes dilated.

HAROLD
I'm okay. Really.

ROB
 (exhaling)
 Mate. Don't do that to me. Take
 it easy, okay? If you feel bad you
 gotta go down, get Caroline to
 check you out. Understood?

Harold nods. Grabs the rope and keeps going as -

109 **EXT. CAMP THREE - DAY**

109

Camp Three made up of narrow ledges. Most of the team has
 made it. Jon, Harold, and Mike are lugging ice.

CAPTION: **Wednesday May 8th**

In the entrance to one of the tents, a high-altitude stove is
 already roaring. They drop the ice into it. Melting it for
 drinking water.

Mike's RADIO comes to life.

ROB (RADIO)
 Rob to Mike. Need ya, mate. Lou
 and Frank could do with a bit of
 help.

MIKE
 (into radio)
 Mike here. On my way.

Mike clips onto the line. And disappears over the edge.

110 **INT. TENT. DAY.**

110

Beck and Doug sitting. Both sucking on oxygen. Their eyes
 meet, and they share a rueful grin.

BECK
 Wanna really know why I do it?

DOUG
 Sure.

BECK
 Wouldn't tell a journalist. I get
 depressed. Bad. Suicidal. This is
 my cure.

DOUG
Climbing?

BECK
 Yup. Only time I feel alive. Happy.

DOUG
You happy now?

BECK
You know this is the first trip
that I'm starting to wonder. Having
to do something this insane just to
stay sane? Does that add up?

He shakes his head as Doug laughs. The laugh turns into a
coughing fit.

DOUG
I hear you.

BACK TO THE LEDGE - Lou crawls over first. He stands,
staggering, exhausted. Frank next. Even worse. He's
crawling. Totally shattered.

The team rushes over, bringing hot tea, helping them sit.
Lou complies. Frank ignores them, teetering wordlessly into
a tent.

LOU
I'm finished. Out of gas.

Mike comes over the ledge now, carrying Lou's pack.

LOU
Sorry, Mike.

MIKE
No worries, mate.

Rob is right behind him. Last to make camp.

ROB
Harold, get them both some O, yeah?

Harold ducks into a tent to get oxygen. Rob sheds his pack.
Looks over his squad. The first time they've made it to Camp
Three as a full group.

ROB
I want all of you on oxygen
tonight. It'll help you sleep.

His RADIO -

HELEN (RADIO)
Base Camp to Camp Three. Helen for
Rob. You there Rob?

Rob grabs his hand-held. Pushes a button.

ROB
I'm here, Helen. Over. Any word on
Dale?

HELEN

He's okay. Scott's coming back up to Camp Two tomorrow.

ROB

Doesn't he want to rest up a day? That's a lot of climbing.

HELEN

Says not.

ROB

Okay.

HELEN (RADIO)

Can I get a minute?

Code for "I need to talk to you alone."

ROB

Sure. One sec.

Wanders away from the tents.

ROB

What's up?

111 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY**

111

CLOSE ON - A BULLETIN BOARD - THREE MAPS OF ASIA tacked up there now - left to right - Helen's WEATHER CELL CIRCLE moving at six hour intervals - "6 a.m." to "12 p.m." to "6 p.m." - headed N/NE - but no longer on a direct collision course with Everest.

HELEN

It's big and it's moving fast but it's changed course slightly. It might miss us altogether.

112 **EXT. CAMP THREE. DAY.**

112

The wind is whipping around Rob. He stares at the horizon. Not a cloud in the sky.

113 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT. DAY.**

113

Helen and Caroline stare the map. Now there are another two circles on the map behind the lead one.

HELEN

And it could still go north...

114

EXT. CAMP THREE - DAY

114

HELEN V.O.

But if it doesn't, it's gonna hit
sometime on the tenth, I reckon.

Rob closes his eyes. Bad news. He dials down the volume and
takes a seat on the ledge looking out. The sky this
beautiful color spectrum.

ROB

How bad do you think?

HELEN (RADIO)

Hard to say. It's still a way off.

ROB

Do you know what's behind it?

HELEN (RADIO)

Another two fronts. But they're
spaced. There might be windows.

ROB

Okay. Keep monitoring it. Let me
know where it is in the morning.

HELEN (RADIO)

How have the conditions been so
far?

ROB

Good at Three. High winds on the
South Col. The Gucci Team came
down.

HELEN (RADIO)

You doing okay otherwise?

ROB

Yeah. Team's a bit battered.
We'll see if they've rebounded any
in the morning.

HELEN (RADIO)

Stay safe.

ROB

Thanks, Helen.

Rob tilts his head back, watching the purple sky bleeding
into the blue. Everest cutting through it all.

ROB

Don't you dare...

115 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT. DAY.**

115

Helen puts the phone down.

HELEN
Talk about bad timing.

CARO
Are we looking at another year with
no clients on top?

Helen shrugs.

HELEN
If it's not Friday- and then these
two hit, we're out of time.

116 **INT. TENT - NIGHT**

116

WHEEZING - a MECHANICAL HISSING sound -

A huddle of bodies in sleeping bags. OXYGEN MASKS over their
faces, rubber tubes leading to orange oxygen canisters.
Looking like a sci-fi experiment more than anything. Each
exhale fogging up their masks.

117 **EXT. CAMP THREE. DAWN.**

117

The peaks glimmer a faint pink.

The sound of a tent zip being unfastened. Grunting and
shifting as someone moves to the entrance.

We see a pair of hands grab inner boots and force a pair of
feet into them. Our POV is the climber's.

The feet crunch out a few paces in the snow. Suddenly, a
slip.

One terrible cry for help.

Hands grab at the ice, but find no purchase. We are sliding
fast, then tumbling then falling impossibly fast seeing
nothing but the rock and ice shooting past us until-

SMASH. We hit the glacier below.

Over the image of Cheng's crumpled body, the caption.

CAPTION: **Thursday May 9th 05:00**

118 **EXT. CAMP THREE - DAY**

118

Early morning. Rob is talking to a group of sherpas who are heading down from Camp Three. He comes over to Mike and Harold, both holding mugs of tea.

ROB
One of Makalu's guys. Went out with just his inners on. Slipped. Went all the way. They're going down to help recover the body.

They watch the sherpas go for a moment.

ROB
So. What do we think?

HAROLD
(a long exhale)
Your call, mate.

ROB
Mike, what do you think?

MIKE
It's slowed down?

ROB
Quite a bit since hitting land. But it's curving west, towards Bangladesh.

MIKE
If it's blowing a gale at Camp Four we can always bale then.

On Rob's face. Considering.

119 **OMITTED**

119

120 **INT. TENT - DAY**

120

Doug and Beck, struggling into their full down suits. Rob's head pokes in.

ROB
We're on! Full suits on?
Good men.

121 **INT. TENT - DAY**

121

Frank and Lou are dressed. Rob ducks in and kneels in front of them.

ROB
Get some sleep, guys?

LOU
Like a baby.

ROB
How do you feel, Lou? Think you
can make it? Harold'll take you
down if not.

LOU
Got this far. Give it a go.

ROB
(a big smile)
Good on you, mate.

122 **EXT. CAMP THREE - DAY**

122

Rob's team ready to go. Puffy suits and crampons on. Oxygen
masks over their shoulders.

ROB
Full disclosure: Helen is
monitoring some weather coming in.
Right now it's behaving, so we're
on. But it might change. Two
thousand vertical feet and we'll be
at Camp Four on the South Col. It's
roped all the way.

He turns.

ROB
Our only problem is that lot.

He points up the slope. Already a line of CLIMBERS on, and
waiting for, the rope.

ROB
Nothing for it, except be patient.
Take your time.

123 **EXT. UPPER LHOTSE FACE - DAY**

123

TRACKING - up the rope - past CLIMBERS -

Doug making slow but steady progress. He pauses to suck some
oxygen. Then continues on.

Beck is sucking oxygen too, as -

A GUST OF WIND slams into the Face. Everyone on the line
digging in as we -

KEEP MOVING UP THE LINE

Passing climber after climber, until -

We're at the top. Rob lifting himself up and over to...

124

EXT. CAMP FOUR - DAY

124

...the South Col. Barren, littered with previous expedition junk. The wind is blistering up here, howling. Ang and the Sherpas are bent double trying to erect a tent, but it's a battle they're losing as the wind rips through it.

Rob hustles over, nimbly stepping over discarded oxygen bottles, hundreds of them up here, as he grabs a corner of the tent and helps them attempt to anchor it.

Beyond them Anatoli and Lopsang are aiding their Sherpas in doing the same thing.

One by one, climbers are coming up, pitching in.

TIME CUT

The TENTS are up and occupied as the wind continues to rock them. Anatoli, ducks low, making his way over to Rob. Practically yelling in his ear.

ANATOLI

Not good. What do you think?

ROB

Might slow up after sundown. It's been doing that.

Anatoli looks at him.

ANATOLI

I don't like this.

ROB

We only go if it calms.

ANATOLI

I talk to Scott.

ROB

He's coming up today?

Anatoli nods.

125

EXT. CAMP FOUR - DAY

125

Scott is coming up with the last of his clients. Anatoli is waiting for him. Helping him unclip from the line.

ANATOLI

We go down?

SCOTT

Is Rob's team going down?

ANATOLI

Wants to see if this passes.

Scott thinks a moment. This is crucial.

SCOTT

Then we wait.

Scott suddenly doubles over, COUGHING. Anatoli puts a hand on his back.

SCOTT

You lead the group. Lopsang in the middle. I'll follow you all up.

(waving him off)

I'll catch some sleep. Be fine.

126 **EXT. EVEREST - NIGHT (OF MAY 9)**

126

BLACKNESS. HOWLING WIND. NO VISIBILITY. SWIRLING SNOW. FRAIL TENTS BEING SMASHED FROM SIDE TO SIDE TO SIDE BY GUSTS.

127 **INT. VARIOUS TENTS - SERIES OF SHOTS**

127

CLOSE ON FACES bruised and burned by the sun and the cold. Not sleeping, not awake, barely conscious. Rasping breath. Intermittent coughing. Faces in quiet agony. Barely recognizable. Rob's team and Scott's team. Some of them we know - the rest we will meet later. Lying on top of each other, shaking with cold.

SOUND OF THE WIND IS LIKE A MACHINE GUN above their heads, sucking, blowing and smashing the fabric of the tents. The team are leaning against the walls in order that the whole damned thing doesn't fly away.

WE SHOULD LOOK AT THESE PEOPLE AND FEEL THAT THEY ARE AT THE END OF THEIR ROPE, THAT THEY NEED SERIOUS MEDICAL ATTENTION AND THAT THEY COULD NOT POSSIBLY MOVE ANOTHER STEP. AND THEN...

128 **EXT. CAMP FOUR - NIGHT**

128

A HEADLAMP illuminating a prayer flag, flying horizontally in the wind, and then, just like that, it falls. No more storm. The wind has subsided. The sky crystal clear.

Rob standing there. Harold comes out of his tent. They look at each other. Harold holds out his hands.

HAROLD

Nothing!

ROB

Someone up there loves us.

Slowly people are unzipping from the tents. Crawling out. Everyone is staring around in shock.

FRANK

Where'd it go?

DOUG

I say it's the living goddess.

BECK

Maybe she wasn't a tourist trap...

ROB

Okay, everybody, saddle up! We've got a window. Don't know how long but we're going for it! Turnaround time is 2pm. Everyone got that? 2pm.

It's a struggle to smile, but there are pats on the back, encouraging shouts. The dream closer and closer to becoming a reality, as we -

CUT TO

HEAD LAMPS - cutting through the blackness - slowly moving up the mountain -

CAPTION: Thursday May 9th 23:30

129

INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - NIGHT

129

Helen talking on a radio to Rob. She's looking at the map with the weather systems written on.

HELEN

I can't get any more updates until the morning. Maybe it blew through early.

She doesn't sound convinced.

ROB V.O.

Well, it killed us all night and now there's nothing. Absolutely nothing. Gotta be worth a shot.

HELEN

Okay, I'll radio out, tell everyone the news. Any messages?

130 **EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT**

130

Rob on a radio.

ROB

Tell Jan we're on our way. Twelve
hours from now I'll call you from
the top.

HELEN V.O

Good luck and Godspeed to you all.

131 **INT. ROB AND JAN'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAWN.**

131

In her dressing gown, Jan is staring out of the kitchen
window at the first light of dawn. A beeping comes from her
computer on the kitchen table.

132 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - NIGHT**

132

Helen on the sat phone -

HELEN

This is Helen Wilton at Base Camp,
Mt. Everest. We are pleased to
announce that Rob Hall and his
Adventure Consultants Team left
Camp Four at 11:25pm, May 9, and
began the final push for the
summit.

A noise from behind her. There is Caroline and a couple of
sherpas carrying fistfuls of balloons. They fire party
poppers at her.

CAROLINE

Happy birthday!

133 **INT. ROB & JAN'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAWN**

133

Jan has the climbing map of Everest by her side as she reads
the fax that has come through.

JAN

All team members are in good health
and going well. Updates to follow.
Go, Rob.

134 **EXT. THE MOUNTAIN - NIGHT**

134

CLOSE ON ROB bringing up the rear of his team.

135

EXT. SOUTHEAST RIDGE - NIGHT

135

A half moon gives the ridge a spooky glow, making it both haunting and breathtaking. It's eerily quiet without the wind. Just the SOUND of boots in the ice as the climbers make their ascent.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 00:30**

HEADLAMP POV

Casting a bright ten foot circle in front of us. Black everywhere else. As we -

PULL BACK TO

A long column of climbers. Solely identified by their headlamps glowing in the night.

Beck pauses, raises his goggles, and rubs his eyes. He blinks into the night. Trying to focus.

MIKE (O.S.)
You okay, mate?

Mike coming up from behind.

BECK
Yeah, yeah, just- I'm fine.

MIKE
Follow the track. One foot in front of the other. It'll be daylight before you know it.

As we FIND OUR WAY TO - another HEADLAMP -

Doug. Breathing hard. Every third exhale a haggard rasp. He rubs his throat. Hurts like hell. But he's forcing himself forward when -

BOOTS cut into his circle of light. Heading back down.

DOUG
Frank?

FRANK
(wheezing, barely audible)
Turning back. Can't do it.

DOUG
You sure?

Frank nods and continues down. Doug watches. His own doubt creeping in. He shakes it off, keeps moving.

136 **EXT. CAMP FOUR - NIGHT**

136

Mountain Madness departing. Anatoli starting out. Scott, goggles on his forehead, is all smiles, watching and waving to his team.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 12:01**

SCOTT

Go get 'em. I'm right behind you.
Stay steady, conserve your energy.
Charlotte, Tim. See you up there.

The last of them slip into the darkness. Scott's smile drops. He winces. Coughs. In a bad way. Headlamps grab his attention. Coming toward him.

SCOTT

Shit...

Someone going for the summit. It's MAKALU GAU. He stops by Scott.

SCOTT

You're going up?

MAKALU

Why not?

SCOTT

Oh. I just thought...

MAKALU

Cheng is dead. Going down will not help him.

Makalu shrugs and plods on.

SCOTT

Nice.

137 **EXT. THE ASCENT - DAWN**

137

Blue skies and bright sun. Climbers from both Adventure Consultants and Mountain Madness strung out on a diagonal line across the mountain.

138 **EXT. ABOVE CAMP FOUR. DAWN.**

138

Lopsang has a rope around Sandy Pittman and is almost dragging her up the slope, step by step.

Further up, John, Lou and Stuart are in a line behind three Taiwanese climbers. They have stopped to breathe.

John catches up with Lou who is the first of the Adventure Consultants three.

JOHN TASKE
Can you pass them?

Lou shakes his head.

LOU
Snow's too deep.

JOHN TASKE
We're losing time.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 05:45**

Beck wobbles slightly. Stops. He lifts his goggles.

BECK'S POV

A kaleidoscope of colors and blurs. Something very wrong here.

BECK
Shit...

139

EXT. THE BALCONY - DAY

139

Beck has pulled out of the line. Just sitting on this small plateau, waiting as a steady stream of climbers pass him.

ROB (O.S.)
Beck?

Beck turns, but his eyes aren't quite finding Rob.

BECK
Rob? That you?

ROB
Yes, mate. What's wrong?

BECK
I'm out of it. Not seeing too well.

ROB
How come?

BECK
I don't know. I had this operation a couple of years ago. Cornea surgery. Short sighted.

ROB
You never said.

BECK
Never had a problem before.

Rob checks his watch.

ROB
Beck, if you can see better in thirty minutes, climb on. If you not, you can't continue.

BECK
Want me to head down?

ROB
No. If you can't see straight, I don't want you going anywhere. I don't want you walking off the Kangshung Face. You've got to promise me that either you get back into the climb, or you stay here until I come back.

BECK
Promise.

ROB
Okay. Hey, I'm sorry, mate.

140 **EXT. HILLARY STEP - DAY**

140

The last obstacle to the summit. A forty foot high rock cliff and given the altitude, one of the worst traverses in the world.

CAPTION: Friday May 10th 08:30

Harold and Jon K climb up to the foot of the Step. Jon in good shape. Harold takes his goggles off and looks around.

HAROLD
Where the hell are the ropes?

Anatoli is coming up from behind with Neal. Yasuko right behind them.

ANATOLI
No ropes?

HAROLD
No.

Anatoli looks to Neal. A rope around his shoulder. He shrugs it off and starts inspecting a tangle of old ropes. He pulls at one and it snaps in his hands.

ANATOLI
Shit.

HAROLD (RADIO)
 Rob? Rob? Do you read? We have a
 problem here. No fixed ropes on the
 traverse to the Hillary Step.

ROB V.O.
 Ang and Lopsang were sorting that.

HAROLD
 Nope. There's just last year's
 knackered ropes. Me, Neal and Toli
 are going to fix new ones.

141 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY**

141

Traffic jam. Everyone, Rob and Scott's teams waiting for the
 lines to get fixed. Nervous anxiety growing with the passing
 of each precious minute. Everyone getting cold.

Stuart looks at his watch. 10.57.

Caption: 11.30.

Same spot. Neal has moved along the traverse and there's
 some rope fixed, but the waiting climbers haven't moved.
 Stuart sighs. He looks at the view. Just magnificent. Then
 he turns to John and Lou.

STUART
 It's taking too long.

JOHN TASKE
 What do you think?

STUART
 Three hours to summit. Lines
 aren't fixed. And we're in a line,
 here. With a two o'clock turn
 around. There's no way we're going
 to make it.

JOHN TASKE
 Three hours to summit?

John looks at his watch. Looks at the line waiting. Then Lou.
 Shakes his head.

JOHN TASKE
 I'll go down with you.

Lou watches John and Stuart leave, his morale crushed.

LOU
 Guys, wait up.

142 **EXT. BELOW SOUTH SUMMIT. DAY.**

142

DOUG
Rob. I can't do this.

ROB
Yes you can. Take a rest. Here,
I'll give you an extra blast of O.

He turns up the valve on Doug's oxygen.

ROB
Deep breaths.

Doug shakes his head.

DOUG
Go down.

ROB
You can do it, Doug. Remember last
year? *I* turned *you* back. You
would've done it then. You're not
coming back for a third bloody shot
at it. I've seen enough of your
face for one lifetime.

Doug laughs, which turns into a cough.

DOUG
Well, come on, then. Let's get this
bastard done.

Making a supreme effort, he starts to move again.

ROB
Proud of you, mate.

143 **EXT. BELOW SOUTH SUMMIT. DAY.**

143

Rob and two sherpas are behind Doug. They stop as John,
Stuart and Lou descend towards them. They stop as they get
level.

ROB
No go?

JOHN TASKE
There's a hold-up. No fixed ropes
on the traverse to the Hillary
Step.

LOU
None on the Step either.

JOHN TASKE
Ran out of juice waiting.

ROB
Sorry, guys.

Quickly reconfiguring things.

ROB
Okay. Take 8888 and 8888 with you
back to Camp Four. Go carefully.

The two sherpas join Lou, John and Stuart.

ROB
Doug, I'm gonna have to go ahead
and find out what's going on up
there.

Doug nods.

144 **OMITTED**

144

145 **EXT. BELOW HILLARY STEP - DAY**

145

THE LOGJAM OF CLIMBERS still waiting, huddled precariously on the ridge, deteriorating minute by minute. Yasuko jostles forward through the other climbers. She grabs the ORANGE ROPE dangling in front of her...

FOLLOW THAT ROPE QUICKLY UP THE HILLARY STEP TO...

Neal, Anatoli and Ang still fixing the same ORANGE ROPE above the climbers. THERE IS A BRIEF TUG at the rope.

ANGLE YASUKO as she starts to put her weight onto the climbing rope.

ANGLE NEAL AS THE ROPE PULLS HIM AWAY FROM THE MOUNTAIN. HE STARTS TO SLIDE, SHOULDERS THE ROPE AND DIGS IN WITH HIS ICE AXE.

ANGLE YASUKO pulling on the rope as Mike dives for her, pulling her off the rope.

ANGLE NEAL safe again. Takes a breathe. Continues working.

ANGLE YASUKO AND MIKE

MIKE
That rope isn't fixed! Wait, yeah?
Wait!

Disoriented, Yasuko looks up toward Neal and Ang Dorje.

YASUKO
Oh, sorry...very sorry...

She squats to rest with the others, mortified.

Rob emerges behind the queue of climbers.

ROB
I don't believe this. We've lost
John, Stuart and Lou because of
this. What happened?

Harold shrugs.

HAROLD
No fixed ropes. No idea why.

ROB
Who's left?

MIKE
Jon, Doug and Yasuko.

ROB
This is bad.

MIKE
(tapping his radio)
Helen's been trying to reach you.

Rob looks at his radio. The volume's down. He grabs it.

ROB
Helen! I'm losing my team here.
Losing time. And where's Scott?

146 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY**

146

Scott moving slowly. On his RADIO, he hears...

ROB (ON RADIO)
Where's Scott?

SCOTT
(managing a smile)
Yo, dude. Chill, chill...

147 **EXT. BELOW SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY**

147

We find Doug, who has come to a total stop. Climbers pass him, including Lopsang still short-roping Sandy Hill Pittman.

Lopsang stops, takes off his oxygen mask and is sick into the snow.

148 **EXT. THE BALCONY - DAY**

148

Lou, John, and Stuart descending. There's Beck.

JOHN TASKE
You okay, Beck?

BECK
Eye problems. You guys turned back?

STUART
Yeah. There's a log-jam below the
Hillary Step. It's crazy. Come down
with us.

A beat. Beck thinking about it.

BECK
I can't. Promised Rob I'd wait.

LOU
He's going to be a while.

BECK
It's okay. I'm enjoying the view.
What I can see of it.

The three of them shrug.

LOU
Your call.

BECK
Not much of a team, huh?

STUART
There's always next year. Everest
isn't going anywhere.

BECK
Not for me. I've had it with
Everest.

LOU
Wait 'til you're back in Texas,
then say that.

BECK
Man, I want to be back in Texas so
bad...

JOHN TASKE
Sure you're not coming?

BECK
Nope.

They set off without him.

149 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY**

149

Helen holding her radio. Pacing.

ROB (RADIO)
It's a mess up here. Had to replace
all the ropes. Five clients coming
back. What you got?

HELEN
Tracking some more weather coming
in.

150 **EXT. BELOW THE HILLARY STEP - DAY**

150

Rob holding the radio to his mouth as he's looking at the
sky. Bright, blue, beautiful.

ROB
We've still got Doug, Yasuko and
Jon K going strong. What's my
window?

HELEN (RADIO)
Can't say for certain. Last night's
front blew through quicker than we
thought. It's a fair guess to say
the ones behind it are moving at
the same speed. Fast.

ROB
What are we talking about here? Do
you think I can get 'em up or not?

HELEN (RADIO)
I'd say you need to get back to
Camp Four by 4 at the latest, Rob.

ROB
Okay. Got it.

151 **EXT. HILLARY STEP - DAY**

151

CAPTION: Friday May 10th 12:45

A YELL from above. Ropes are fixed. Jon - sitting with
Harold - looks to Rob for approval.

JON
My oxygen's low. Mind if I go for
it?

ROB
Go for it, Jon. Harold, you go
with him.

Jon & Harold start off for the summit. Rob checking his watch. Closing in on 1 p.m. Looks down the mountain.

ROB

Doug, where are you, mate?

152 **EXT. TO THE SUMMIT - DAY**

152

TRACK AWAY from Doug and Rob, moving on and up ahead of them over the snow - past Makalu Gau and Sandy Hill Pittman - along the snow ridge, passing other climbers - up the Hillary Step to the final ascent - past Harold

UP AND UP IN ONE LONG THRILLING IMPOSSIBLE VISUAL ASCENT - past Jon struggling steadily - to find Anatoli -

WITH ANATOLI, breathing hard, no oxygen, as he powers up the last incline, and onto -

THE SUMMIT.

153 **EXT. THE SUMMIT - DAY**

153

A narrow ridge of mountain. A battered aluminium survey pole. A string of prayer flags. Several discarded oxygen bottles. And a view of the world where everything - everything! - is below us. The great peaks of the Himalayas, the valleys of Nepal, the plains of Tibet.

Anatoli stands and gazes, his features impassive.

Now Jon joins him, followed shortly by Harold. Both too shattered to do more than just stand there.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 13:12**

Then they come to life, and like underwater swimmers they move together and hug. Jon pulls out a camera. Harold strikes a heroic pose. Jon takes pictures.

154 **EXT. THE BALCONY, EVEREST - DAY**

154

Beck still sits on the Balcony and waits. He roots around inside his down suit and pulls something out. He holds the fuzzy object close to his face. Finally it comes into some sort of focus, revealing it to be a photo of his family.

BECK

Doing a bit of sunbathing at twenty-seven thousand feet! I don't know why I'm not doing it with you guys at sea level. Your Mom's right. I should be with you. All of you. Not stuck halfway up a mountain going blind.

(more)

BECK (cont'd)
 What are you running from, Beck?
 Whatever it is you gotta stop. You
 really gotta stop before it's too
 late.

155 **EXT. THE SUMMIT - DAY** 155

Now Neal, Martin and KLEV, all from Scott Fischer's team, are on the Summit. Anatoli is taking their picture. Jon and Harold have gone.

156 **EXT. THE SUMMIT - DAY** 156

TIM, CHARLOTTE and LENE from Scott's group are now on the summit. Neal takes their photographs.

Sandy now makes it to the summit, but she's out of oxygen and can barely move straight. Lopsang is by her side, fixing her up with one of his own bottles.

157 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT, EVEREST - DAY** 157

Scott toiling along. Stopping to rest. He's in terrible shape.

158 **EXT. THE SUMMIT - DAY** 158

Mike and Yasuko reach the summit, where only Lopsang and Anatoli now remain. Yasuko fumbles for her pack and pulls out a little Japanese flag. She tries to stick it in the snow.

Makalu Gau appears behind them, half-carried by his two Sherpas. They deposit him on the summit, exhausted. Makalu looks round like a dazed child, unaware where he is.

159 **EXT. THE SUMMIT - DAY** 159

Mike, Yasuko and Lopsang still on the summit. Anatoli, Makalu and his Sherpas are gone.

MIKE
 (to Yasuko)
 We better get you down.

Sitting down, Yasuko seems not to hear him.

MIKE
 Yasuko. Come on. Let's go.

Rob now makes it onto the summit.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 14:15**

MIKE

Hey!

Rob embraces Mike and Yasuko.

ROB

You done me proud, Yasuko. Well done, well done!

(to Mike)

Doug's on his way.

MIKE

How far behind?

ROB

Not far. You go on down with Yasuko. I'll wait for him, bring him down safe.

MIKE

Okay. Yasuko.

He holds out his hand to Yasuko. She grabs it and he hauls her unsteadily to her feet. They start to descend. Rob pulls out his radio.

ROB

Base Camp, this is Everest Summit, over?

HELEN V.O.

Woohoo! Congratulations, Rob!

ROB

Thanks, Helen. Jon Krakauer's on his way down, Yasuko's with me and Mike. Doug's still on his way up. Over.

HELEN V.O.

I'll get the word out, Rob. Well done!

Rob cuts the radio. Smiles. Then looks at the route. Still no sign of Doug. Looks at his watch.

ROB

Where are you, man?

The camera flashes down the mountain to the Hillary Step...

160

EXT. HILLARY STEP. DAY

160

...where it picks up Doug toiling slowly on the fixed ropes.

161 **EXT. THE SUMMIT - DAY**

161

Rob and Lopsang still on the summit. Rob gets out his radio.

Rob goes to the edge. He sees Doug some way below, moving slowly. Checks his watch. Makes a decision.

DISSOLVE TO

Doug two-thirds of the way up now. Time melting away -

BINOCULAR POV

Scanning Everest - locking on - CLIMBERS - still on the summit - as we zoom fast away from the Everest massif across the valley onto the ridge of Pumori.

162 **EXT. PUMORI - DAY**

162

Guy Cotter, Rob's friend, pulls the binoculars down. He's on the lower slopes of Pumori.

GUY

What the hell are they doing up there this late?

He pulls his radio.

GUY

(into radio)

Guy Cotter to Everest Base Camp.
You there, Helen?

HELEN (RADIO)

I'm here, Guy. How's it going?

GUY

Yeah, fine. Look, Helen, I've got a clear view of the summit. There's climbers still up there. That's not our guys, right?

HELEN (RADIO)

We got three up. They're all on their way down.

Guy raises the binoculars again. A steady stream of clouds moving in the distance.

GUY

Hope so. Tell 'em to move fast.
There's cloud coming up the valley.
A lot of it.

163 **EXT. BASE CAMP. DAY**

163

The flags tied around the chorten at Base Camp are whipping in the wind. Crows pecking at the rice fly off in a flurry.

164 **EXT. THE SUMMIT - AFTERNOON**

164

SCOTT FISCHER ARRIVES. Lopsang throws his arms around him. Scott collapses out of his arms, to the ground. Rob kneels at his side.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 14:45**

Lopsang pulls out a thermos of tea.

 ROB
 You look like shit, mate.

 SCOTT
 (laughs)
 I feel worse. Stomach. Killing me.
 All of my team, all of us made it.

 ROB
 Well done, mate. Well done.

 SCOTT
 What about your lot?

 ROB
 Mixed. Still waiting on Doug.

Scott groans in pain, then smiles, then reaches up, wraps an arm around Rob, pulls him to him, hugs him.

 SCOTT
 I'm tired man.

 ROB
 Get yourself down, mate. Lopsang.

Lopsang takes Scott's arm and leads Scott off the summit. Scott turn.

 SCOTT
 What you doing?

 ROB
 Waiting for Doug.

Scott shakes his head.

 SCOTT
 Outta time.

But there is Doug appearing out of the mist, crawling up the ridge. He moves relentlessly forward, eyes on the prize. He doesn't see...

Rob, Scott and Lopsang coming down toward him.

ROB

Doug...

But Doug doesn't respond, just keeps going. Lopsang and Scott continue down. Rob stops. Goes to Doug. Takes his arm. Doug just looks at him.

ROB

Doug, too late. Way too late. Come on, let's get you down...

Doug pulls away, keeps going up. Rob grabs him, stops him.

ROB

Doug, I'm sorry. Got to turn back.

Doug mumbles something, pulls away again, keeps going up. Rob maneuvers in front of Doug and blocks his way.

ROB

Doug, Doug, listen... You have to turn back. It's too late.

But Doug squeezes himself forward, inch by painful inch, still moving toward the summit.

Rob lets him go. Doug stumbles forward. Stands. Takes a step. Then collapses. Nobody moves. Then Rob goes to Doug, helps him up. They look at each other.

DOUG

You told me I could do it...

Rob rests a hand on Doug's head. Doug leans into him. Rob holds him up. Then he looks down at...

ROB'S POV - SOME CLOUDS BELOW THEM...deceptive looking wisps of white.

BACK TO ROB, weighing the situation. AND THEN HE MAKES THE FATAL DECISION. He takes Doug's weight against his body and gets them both moving....TOWARD THE SUMMIT.

ROB

Okay, Doug. Let's get this done.

Descending, Jon Krakauer reaches the South Summit. The wind is up now. He sees Harold, rooting around in the cache of oxygen bottles.

JON
What you doing, Harold?

HAROLD
Need to take some O up for Rob and Doug. But they're all empty.

JON
No, there's some full ones. I checked on the way up.

Harold shakes his head.

HAROLD
Uh-uh.

JON
Pretty sure. Have another look.

HAROLD
I just have. They're empty.

JON
Harold-

HAROLD
-look, mate, I checked twice, alright? They're all bloody empty.

Jon is taken aback by the sudden abrupt tone.

JON
Okay, okay.

HAROLD
I need to find some O.

Harold turns back to the bottles. Jon shrugs and continues his descent.

Harold's POV staring at the dials. The numbers are coming in and out of focus.

Harold stands back, stares down the valley. Sees the cloud bank rolling towards him.

166 **EXT. THE BALCONY - DAY**

166

Beck still waiting. Shivering now. Singing to himself, some Texan country song.

CAPTION: Friday May 10th 15:30

Hearing FOOTSTEPS.

BECK
Rob? That you?

It's Mike and Yasuko. Yasuko's glaze turned zombie.

MIKE

Beck, it's Mike. What are you still doing here?

BECK

I can't see.

MIKE

How bad?

BECK

I thought you were Rob. That bad.

MIKE

Okay. You're coming with me.

BECK

Rob told me to wait.

MIKE

Rob's two hours behind me, mate.
And he's got his hands full with
Doug. And we got weather coming.

More FOOTSTEPS. Mountain Madness folks. Neal leading his five clients back - alone. No Anatoli. No Lopsang.

NEAL

You guys alright?

MIKE

Beck can't see.

Neal looks at Yasuko. Then Beck. Both are worse off than any of his clients by a mile. Mike has a problem.

NEAL

I'll take her. You take him.

MIKE

You sure?

Neal already roping himself to Yasuko.

MIKE

Thanks, mate.

Mike throws a short-rope around Beck.

Arm in arm, Doug and Rob staggering the last few feet -

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 16:00**

Rob and Doug reach the summit. Doug falls to his knees, taking Rob down with him. Rob holds Doug up. Doug smiles through semi-consciousness.

ROB
You did it, mate. You're here.

Doug nodding. Wishing he could cry. Embracing Rob.

DOUG
Because of you. You...
...got me here.

ROB
No way. This is all you. I knew
you could do it. Now, come on.
It's late. Way late.

Doug's pulling something out of a pocket. Clumsily - desperately. It's the Sunrise Elementary School flag. And a camera.

Rob takes the shot, Doug hardly able to hold the flag up.

Then Doug goes down on his knees. Points to his mask. Needs more oxygen.

ROB
We'll get you some more O. Come on,
I'm right behind you.

Rob looking over his shoulder. At the horizon. That smile frozen for a moment. Then falling, because -

ROB'S POV

THE STORM. Out there in the distance. Dark, dark clouds. Was it there a minute ago? Hard to say because it's moving at a speed that doesn't even seem possible.

168 **EXT. BASE CAMP. DAY.**

168

The wind catches at a tent flap, rips it out from under the restraining stone. A climber stumbles over to tie it back down, his hat whipped off by another gust. Laughter from his team mates.

A pile of cooking pots, drying outside, clatter to the ground.

169 **EXT. PUMORI. DAY.**

169

Guy Cotter on the lower slopes of Pumori, staring at the valley.

PUMORI CLIMBER
 Thunderheads. The last thing you
 want to see at twenty-nine thousand
 feet. And I'm speaking as a pilot.
 When we see those in the cockpit,
 we change course pronto.

Guy gets on the radio.

GUY
 Rob, it's Guy here.

ROB (RADIO)
 Hi, Guy.

GUY
 Hope you're all tucked up at Camp
 Four, mate, there's weather coming
 in.

170 **EXT. SUMMIT APPROACH. DAY.**

170

Rob is staring at it. Fear on his face.

ROB
 I see it.

171 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT/ EXT. EVEREST SUMMIT** 171
APPROACH/ PUMORI. DAY.

Caro and Helen in the tent, poised by the radio, listening.

HELEN
 Rob! Where are you?

ROB (RADIO)
 Doug and me. We've just left the
 summit.

A flash of Guy turning to his Climbing Partner.

Caro turns to Helen in silent horror.

A couple of clients from another expedition who have been
 chatting outside, come to the door. Sudden tension.

ROB
 I see it. In a bit of trouble here
 with Doug. Need oxygen. Urgent.
 Harold? Mike? Any of the Madness
 Guys still high?

HELEN
 Yes, yes, Rob...copy. There's extra
 O at the South Summit. Right?

HAROLD (RADIO)
 (cutting in -)
 Rob, no. This is Harold. Bottles
 empty here. Repeat, no O.

Rob's face. Concern.

ROB
 Are you sure?

Harold sitting by the cache of bottles at the South Summit.

HAROLD
 There's no oxygen here. No oxygen.

ROB
 Where are you, Harold? Are you at
 the South Summit?

HAROLD
 No. No gas. Checked. Empty.

HELEN
 Ang cached full bottles there.
 Where are you, Harold?

HAROLD (RADIO)
 Everest.

Everyone in the mess tent looks at each other, disturbed.

HELEN
 Harold, I know you're on Everest,
 mate. Where?

HAROLD
 No gas, Rob.

An eerie beat.

ROB
 Harold, you just keep moving down
 to camp, okay?

HELEN
 Rob, you get moving yourself. Hear?

ROB
 Yeah, will do. But we need some
 air.

HELEN
 Understood. We'll see if we send
 somebody up, okay?

ROB
 Okay. Out.

The roll of thunder.

172 **EXT. TRIANGULAR FACE. DAY.**

172

Neal and Mike coming to the end of the fixed rope with their group. Gusts of wind are knocking them in every direction. Impossible to walk. Impossible to stay upright. Sandy drops to the ground, gasping.

SANDY

Dex. Give me shot. Dexameth...

The group fall to the ground, exhausted, clinging on to stop the

Charlotte pulls a toothpaste case out of her jacket, extracts a hypodermic, pulls aside Sandy's pants and jabs the needle into her hip.

As Charlotte puts the Dex kit away, she pulls out her head lamp. Switches batteries.

Neal & Mike approach.

NEAL

Come on, guys, keep moving.

They stagger to their feet.

173 **EXT. SOUTH EAST RIDGE. DAY.**

173

Lopsang and Scott on the ridge. Scott stops.

SCOTT

I'm ill, Lopsang, I'm ill. Gonna jump to Camp Two. Yeah?

LOPSANG

No, no, no.

SCOTT

Yeah, man. Jump. Speed things up.

LOPSANG

No, Scott, I rope you.

Lopsang gets a rope out of his rucksack.

174 **EXT. HILLARY STEP. DAY.**

174

Doug paused on the line, exhausted.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 16:30**

Rob dropping in next to him.

ROB
Come on, Doug. I need you to keep
moving, mate.

Doug looks like he's about to collapse.

ROB
Come on, Dougie!

Doug barely responds. Rob shakes him.

ROB
Listen, mate, you've got to move!
We've got to get down or we're
gonna be in big trouble, you hear?
You hear me?

Doug nods faintly.

ROB
Good man! Right, go, go, go!

175 **EXT. THE BALCONY. DAY.**

175

Wind whipping around two climbers struggling downwards.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 17:45**

The climbers turn out to be Scott- sucking for air like he's
on a ventilator and Lopsang supporting him. Scott staggers.
Sinks to his knees. Lopsang grabs him. Tries to get him
back up.

SCOTT
I'm finished, pal.
(coughing)
You go on ahead.

Lopsang shakes his head. Squeezes his shoulder.

LOPSANG
No. I stay with you.

SCOTT
Please, go... Send Anatoli back
with some O...

Lopsang doesn't move. He won't leave him. Scott knows it.
He knocks his hand away.

SCOTT
Lopsang, do as you're told.

Lopsang takes a step back.

LOPSANG
I send Anatoli back.

SCOTT
You're a good friend, Lopsang. The
best.

Lopsang starts heading down.

Scott staying strong for a few seconds longer because -
Lopsang glances back. Scott raises a hand. Lopsang waves,
then keeps going, disappearing down the mountain, as -

Scott doubles over, coughing, pounding the ground, as -

CRACK! Lightning and thunder.

176 **EXT. HILLARY STEP - AFTERNOON**

176

Rob is still pulling Doug along on a short rope, when he
hears it. He snaps his head around, looking out. And
suddenly it's more than just thunder.

A THROATY RUMBLE - growing - surging from below -

ROB
(quietly realizing)
Oh, no. No, no, no...
Move, Doug. We've got to move!

177 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT. DAY**

177

Harold hears it too. He looks out, wondering what it is.

178 **EXT. SOUTH EAST RIDGE (MIKE & NEAL'S GROUP). DAY.**

178

NEAL IS LISTENING TO THE SAME SOUND. And so is Mike. And
the rest of this group. They lift their heads, listening...

179 **EXT. HILLARY STEP (SCOTT). DAY.**

179

Back to Scott. He cocks his head, looking out, as -

As if a wave has hit, Rob is engulfed in cloud.

Harold on the South Summit is similarly engulfed.

Further down the mountain, group after group of ant-sized
mountaineers suddenly disappear in a white wall.

**THE BLIZZARD DETONATES LIKE AN ATOMIC EXPLOSION. A TERRIFYING
SOUND. IN A FLASH, A THICK WALL OF CLOUDS BOILS UP AROUND
HIM, THE FORCE THROWING HIM BACK. HE DISAPPEARS. THE WORLD
GOING WHITE. THE SOUND UNREAL... A DEAFENING ROAR. THE DEVIL
LOOSE IN A FROZEN HELL.**

180 INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT. DAY. 180

Everyone waits. Suddenly, a shadow descends over the tent. The side of the tent is hit by a massive gust of wind, sending papers flying.

HELEN

Oh God.

181 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT. NIGHT.** 181

Battered by the wind, Harold is turning the valve of an oxygen bottle. Puts his ear to it as it hisses with released oxygen.

HAROLD

Full. It's full. Oh no, oh no.

He starts stuffing bottles into his rucsac.

HAROLD

I'm coming Rob, I'm coming.

182 EXT. BELOW HILLARY STEP. NIGHT. 182

The heart of the storm.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 19:00**

Barely picking up Rob and Doug. They've finally reached the bottom. He's unclipping them from the line. Doug almost falls over. Rob grabs him. Starts punching him to get the blood flowing.

ROB

C'mon, Doug! Come on!

183 **EXT. SOUTH COL. NIGHT.** 183

The Mountain Madness team moving blindly down the Col.

Lene and Tim are dragging Charlotte, trying to keep her on her feet.

NEAL PUSHES SANDY INTO A SLIDE. As she starts to move, Neal glissades down in front of her, braces himself and arrests Sandy's slide with a body block.

MIKE IS SHORT-ROPING THE BLIND BECK who steps out into thin air, pulling Mike off his feet. They both start to slide. They both jam their ice axes into the hill, roll their body weight on top of them to stop their fall.

Mike takes a step forward in the dark. He takes another half step and stops suddenly, his foot dangling.

MIKE
Beck, stop!

NEAL
What's up?

MIKE
Something wrong. Gotta stay here.

Neal continues to stare out.

NEAL
Why?

PUSH INTO THE WHITE AND DROP.

It's a 7,000 foot vertical drop off the face of the mountain.

MIKE
Huddle up. Together. Everyone right
here. Tight! Move! Now!

Mike and Neal herd Tim, Charlotte, Lene, Klev, Beck & Yasuko
into a tight group.

NEAL
Stay close, stay awake. Beat on
each other. Keep each other awake.
Look for a break in the clouds.
We're close!

They do. Except for Yasuko. She's fading. Neal takes a glove
off, tries to feel her breath, then her carotid artery. He
pulls her into his arms, rocks her while Klev tries to warm
her hands.

KLEV
It's okay. We'll get you home.

Tim holds Charlotte. The others rock and beat on each other.

184 **EXT. SOUTH COL. NIGHT.** 184

A huddle of bodies in the snow. Beck raises his head. Does he
hear something? No. Impossible. But we hear it too, faint,
snatched on the wind.

185 **EXT. SOUTH EAST RIDGE. NIGHT.** 185

Harold is battling his way along the ridge.

186 **EXT. SOUTH COL. NIGHT.** 186

Mike Groom sees stars in the sky for a second and it's gone.
He points. Screams into Neal's ear above the storm.

MIKE
I saw stars! I know the way!

NEAL
You sure?

MIKE
Anybody who can walk, gotta go.
We'll bring help. The rest stay
close, keep moving your arms. Talk
to each other!

He bends to talk to Beck who doesn't seem to compute.

MIKE
Beck. Yasuko. I'm going for help.
(firm)
Someone will be back for you.

Yasuko doesn't respond. Beck merely nods. Mike and Neal go
to stand when - A HAND - grabs Neal, stopping him. It's
Yasuko. Holding onto him. A beat. Then her hand falls as -

187 **EXT. SOUTHEAST RIDGE - NIGHT**

187

THE STORM RAGES ON. Rob and Doug have dug in, trying to wait
it out.

DOUG
(teeth chattering)
Go...

ROB
What?

DOUG
I'm dead weight. You go on...

Rob turns to Doug.

ROB
We going to get that oxygen, okay?

Doug goes quiet. Eyes closing.

ROB
Doug, stay awake.
Doug?

His eyes blink open.

DOUG
Rob?

ROB
Stay with me, mate. Get moving,
mate, get moving.

DOUG
Best day of my life, Rob.

ROB
Glad to hear it, mate. Stay close.
We're going to get through this.

Rob with an arm around Doug, bringing him closer, rubbing his arms.

ROB
Okay, let's go.

Doug takes an exhausted step forward, slips.

ROB
Doug!

Doesn't even try to save himself. Without a sound, like a dead weight, his body tumbles, twists and falls into the night.

188 **EXT. CAMP FOUR. NIGHT.**

188

Neal's crampon kicks against an empty oxygen cylinder. He peers through the dark. Puts up his hand. The rest of the team stop. A noise in the dark, apart from the storm.

Neal, Klev, Mike and Lene head towards the sound. There are Pemba and the sherpas banging metal pots and shouting into the wind.

189 **EXT. CAMP FOUR. NIGHT.**

189

Wind ripping through the tents. Neal stumbles into a tent. Collapses, half in, half out.

Mike, Lene and Klev stumble on to another tent. Fall into it.

190 **INT. TENT. CAMP FOUR. NIGHT.**

190

Anatoli is there. He sits up in his bag. Only has to look at them to know that it's worse than bad.

LENE
Toli. Need your help. Charlotte,
Sandy, they're dying...

ANATOLI
Where?

LENE
They're across. Across. Near.

She points in the darkness. Then collapses into Anatoli. He grabs an oxygen mask and puts it on her.

And then Lopsang stumbles in.

LOPSANG

Scott. Up. He's not good. Hurting bad. Need O. Please go. Please.

LENE

They're close, Toli. Sandy, Charlotte. They need help.

LOPSANG

Scott. Up.

KLEV

Please, Toli. They're on the Col. Just over there!

Anatoli is torn. Starts putting his gear back on.

ANATOLI

You come with me?

He looks at them. They are utterly spent, shaking uncontrollably. They don't even reply. Lopsang closes his eyes and slumps forward.

Anatoli heads into the storm. Makes his way to another tent.

191 **INT. LOU'S TENT. NIGHT.**

191

He unzips and crouches in the entrance.

ANATOLI

I need help.

LOU

Can't see. Snow blind. Harold, Beck, Doug. They're all out there.

Anatoli zips the tent up.

192 **EXT. CAMP FOUR. NIGHT.**

192

Anatoli puts up his hood, dons his goggles and heads away from the tents into the night.

193 **EXT. SOUTH COL. NIGHT.**

193

Ice on the exposed skin. Unstoppable shaking. Yasuko, motionless, sunk into her herself. Tim is hitting Charlotte on the back.

CHARLOTTE FOX
Enough, Tim. Enough...

TIM
Keep talking. Move you arms. Come on!

Charlotte is holding onto Sandy. Sandy is mumbling.

SANDY
Max, is that you? Max, baby?

Suddenly, Beck stands up. Points into the darkness.

BECK
I've got it! I've got it all figured out!

And he collapses backwards in the snow.

194 **EXT. SOUTH COL. NIGHT.**

194

Anatoli sees a pin prick of light in the dark. Charlotte's head lamp. He struggles towards it. Finds the huddle of bodies.

He crouches by them.

TIM
Where is everybody?

ANATOLI
Just me.

Shrugs off his rucsac and sets up Sandy with oxygen. Gets a thermos of tea out and gives it to the shaking hands of the Team.

He tries to rouse Yasuko, but her eyes are shut, snow over her face.

ANATOLI
Okay, who come with me? Who can walk?

CHARLOTTE
Me.

ANATOLI
I come back. I come back.

He heaves her to her feet and supporting her, they struggle into the dark.

Despair on Sandy's face.

195 **EXT. APPROACH TO SOUTH SUMMIT. NIGHT.** 195

Harold, trudging upwards slowly but without pause into the teeth of the gale.

CAPTION: **Friday May 10th 21:00**

196 **INT. JAN'S BEDROOM - NEW ZEALAND - NIGHT** 196

Jan is asleep. Suddenly she wakes, sits up, grabs for the light and then the clock. Looks at it. Checks her laptop. No messages. Picks up the phone.

197 **EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT** 197

THE STORM is raging. The wind ripping down tents, blowing debris everywhere, trying to wipe the camp off the mountain.

198 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - NIGHT** 198

Rain AND snow pound the roof. Helen is on the phone with Jan.

INTERCUT:

JAN

I haven't heard from you. It's after midnight here. Why isn't anybody calling me?

HELEN

They've been hit by a storm. It's bad.

JAN

Where is he?

HELEN

Don't know exactly. He was still on the summit at four.

JAN

(sinking)
Oh, God. Can he get down?

HELEN

Rob can. Doug can't. There's at least thirteen people stranded up there. And the storm is just getting worse...

199 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - NIGHT** 199

Guy, sweating and out of breath, blasts in. Going right to Helen. Helen puts a finger to her lips, ssshhhh.

GUY
(whisper)
Where is he?

Guy sees her face. Her posture. One hand clutched on the radio, the other the sat-phone. Stops in his tracks.

HELEN
(into sat-phone)
Jan, I'll call you as soon as I hear from him. I promise you. The minute I hear.

As she hangs ups she turns to Guy.

HELEN
I haven't heard from him.

GUY
Where was he last?

HELEN
Hillary Step. With a client.

GUY
Which one?

HELEN
Doug Hansen.

GUY
How was he?

HELEN
Not good.

GUY
No. Last year he crashed on the descent.

A horrible silence.

GUY
(grabbing the radio)
Rob, it's Guy. Where are you, mate?

HELEN
I've been doing that for the last two hours, Guy.

Silence. Guy trying again -

GUY
Guy Cotter to Rob Hall. You there, Rob? Talk to me, mate.

Caro ducks into the tent. She goes to Helen, both of them watching Guy, the radio, no answer...

GUY

Rob. Keep your energy, mate. You catch a break, you move. Worry about yourself, okay? You hear me? We'll send people for Doug. Just keep moving. You've got to keep moving.

Silence fills the tent. The quiet realization that this might be the longest night of their lives...

200 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT. NIGHT**

200

Relentless. Rob has ducked behind the meagre shelter of a rock. His eyes are closed. They flutter open. He gasps, shaking violently. In the dark, a light flickers and then is lost in the storm.

A figure comes towards him, guided by Rob's head lamp. A face looms down at him.

ROB

Harold?

Harold slumps down beside him. Gives him an exhausted smile.

HAROLD

Alright, mate? Gonna get you home.

201 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - NIGHT**

201

The wipe board now has four columns for the four teams, listing climbers on the mountain. There's a fifth column titled "Not Returned."

CAPTION: **Saturday May 11th 02:00**

All hands on deck in here. Spare climbers. Sherpas.

HELEN

Okay, everyone. We set off at dawn-
weather permitting. Thank you.

GUY

Those of you going, get some sleep
while you can.

A few people leave. Helen, Guy, and Caroline stare at the "Not Returned" column.

GUY

Come on, Rob. Get off there, mate.

202 **INT. CAMP FOUR. NIGHT.**

202

Anatoli heaves Charlotte into one of the tents. Sits down heavily, exhausted.

ANATOLI
Oxygen. She needs O.

Sherpas bring her tea, Mike takes off his oxygen and gives it to her.

ANATOLI
Have to go back. Anyone?

They look at him blankly. With a supreme effort, he heaves himself to his feet again and goes out.

203 **EXT. BELOW SOUTH SUMMIT. NIGHT.**

203

Harold and Rob are trying to release the valve on the oxygen set.

HAROLD
Won't go. Frozen.

Gives up.

HAROLD
Sorry.

They huddle against each other.

ROB
You came all this way for me.

HAROLD
Anytime, mate, anytime.

ROB
(an attempt at a joke)
Next time, get one with a decent valve, eh?

HAROLD
Yeah. Next time.

204 **EXT. SOUTH COL. NIGHT.**

204

Sandy, Yasuko and Neal are huddled together in the snow. Anatoli looms up in the dark. Screams above the wind.

ANATOLI
The oxygen- good?

Sandy nods.

ANATOLI

Yasuko?

Neal shakes his head. Anatoli checks her. Her face is covered in snow.

ANATOLI

We go.

He gets out a rope, ties it to Sandy. Hauls her to her feet. And they stumble off into the night.

Yasuko is left in the snow.

205 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT. NIGHT.**

205

Harold and Rob, covered in snow, huddled on the edge of the mountain. Harold's iced eyelids flutter open. He sits up.

He pulls down his hood, takes off his hat underneath. Drops it in the snow.

HAROLD

Hot. Really hot.

Then he painfully gets to his feet. Stands. Takes off his jacket. Allows the wind to snatch it away. Takes a few steps forward then is tumbling into the night with a shout that is lost in the storm.

ROB

(groaning)

Harold?

206 **INT. CAMP FOUR. NIGHT.**

206

Anatoli shepherds Sandy into a tent where Sherpas give her tea.

ANATOLI

I go no more.

And Anatoli slumps forward, unconscious and sitting.

207 **EXT. BASE CAMP - DAWN**

207

The storm has subsided. The sun about to rise.

CAPTION: Saturday May 11th 04:00

HELEN (V.O.)

Rob, it's Helen. Are you there?
Please pick up. Talk to me.

208

INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAWN

208

Helen at her table. Haggard. Eyes rimmed red.

Guy slumped in a chair. Same tired eyes. Nobody's slept. Caroline comes in.

CARO
(the board)
Any word on the others?

HELEN
Anatoli managed to get three clients back from the South Col last night. But Beck and Yasuko are still out there. They're trying to mount a search. But everyone who's been up there is...

A grim beat. When suddenly -

ROB (RADIO)
Come and get me.

The three of them stare at the radio. Mouths agape. They gather around it, hope restored.

CARO
Rob! Where are you? We're sending people for you.

ROB (RADIO)
I can't move any more.

Guy grabs it.

GUY
Rob, you have to get moving.

209

EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY

209

Actually, we're just below it. This little ravine right under the summit. A short, but steep climb to the top.

First light in the sky.

Rob sitting there. Absolutely frozen. A miracle he's alive, let alone talking right now. He's looking at his legs. They're not moving. His mask in his lap.

ROB
Hands are frozen. Harold was here.
Leg's aren't working too well.
Trying to de-ice mask.

CARO (RADIO)
 Rob, you must make that mask work.
 The sun's coming up. Get warmer,
 then get moving.

ROB
 Okay. Just trying to get the O
 sorted out. Was Harold here?

HELEN (RADIO)
 Rob. Is Doug still with you?

A beat. Rob looking around now. He's all alone. Last
 night's events foggy and distant.

ROB
 No.

210

INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY

210

Helen, Guy, and Caro absorb the news that Rob is all alone up
 there.

GUY
 Don't worry about Doug, Rob. Just
 get yourself down. Where are you?

ROB (RADIO)
 Little dip below the South Summit.

Guy knows the spot.

GUY
 I know it. You're close, Rob.
 Clear the line as best you can.
 You can do this. Get yourself up
 out of that dip and slide your ass
 down from there.

CARO
 And get out your dex tablets. Take
 your dex, Rob.

ROB
 Okay...
 (a beat)
 I could do with a little help.

GUY
 We're trying to get you help, Rob.
 Sherpas are coming up with tea and
 oxygen. But come on down, mate.
 You've got to come on down...

211 **EXT. SOUTH COL - DAY**

211

One of the search parties. Stuart Hutchison with a couple of Sherpas. Coming upon the bodies of Beck and Yasuko. Stuart kneels between them. A grim task lying ahead.

He peels the three-inch-layer of ice from Yasuko's face. She's the color of the snow. She's breathing, but not responding to anything. Hypothermic coma. As good as dead.

Next, he wipes the ice out of Beck's eyes and beard. No reaction. But like Yasuko, Beck is also breathing faintly.

Stuart turns. The Sherpas have given him a wide berth. Superstitious about death.

STUART
They're still breathing.

One of the Sherpas shakes his head.

SHERPA
They're gone.

Stuart with one last look at his friends before he stands.

212 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY**

212

Rob, his mask cleared, is trying to stand. He wobbles, both feet asleep with frostbite. He looks up to the top of the slope he has to climb. Twenty five feet. Thirty tops.

He tries a step. Arms out to steady himself and -

His ICE AXE falls from his hand. No sensation in his hands either. He looks down at it. Then back to the top of the slope. Twenty five feet. Might as well be a mile.

He starts kicking a step in the ice with his virtually useless foot. Then another. Then another. He steps up. Six inches. This could take a week.

213 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY**

213

The waiting game. The RADIO buzzes.

MIKE (RADIO)
Helen, Mike here.

HELEN
What you got, Mike?

MIKE (RADIO)
Stuart just got back. Bad news.
Beck and Yasuko didn't make it.

HELEN

Okay. Thanks for letting us know,
Mike.

Caro is looking at the board. Those who didn't make it.

214 **EXT. THE BALCONY - DAY**

214

The sun gone. Clouded over. The wind picking up again. Looking ominous. Anatoli and Lopsang are pushing through with a couple of Sherpas. Searching as they go.

There's a hunched BODY. Anatoli goes to it. Wiping the snow away. It's SCOTT. Frozen. Jacket unzipped, skin exposed to the elements. Dead.

Anatoli kneels and bows his head. Lopsang stands. Staring at his hero. The tears coming as the WIND blasts them -

215 **EXT. ROCK STEPS - DAY**

215

Ang Dorje and two Sherpas are trying to traverse the Rock Steps. Wind and snow ripping at them.

CAPTION: **Saturday May 11th 10:00**

It's starting to look like deja vu up here. A Sherpa SHOUTS. Ang looks over. He's shaking his head. *We can't do it.*

Ang looks up the steps. Feeling helpless. Rob is up there somewhere. Gets out his radio.

ANG DORJE

Ang to Base Camp.

216 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY**

216

Helen, Guy, and Caro waiting for any kind of update.

HELEN

Ang!

ANG DORJE (RADIO)

Have to turn back. Storm very bad again.

Helen's eyes find Guy's and Caroline's. All of them going pale.

GUY

(taking the radio)
Your call, Ang.

ANG DORJE (RADIO)
 Sorry. Will try again when storm
 passes. Leaving tea and oxygen
 here. Sorry.

GUY
 (setting the radio down)
 If he can't make it, no one can.

CARO
 We need to tell him they're not
 coming...

It's to Helen and Guy. Who's going to do that?

HELEN
 I can't. I'm sorry, I just can't.

The thought bringing tears to her eyes. She stands and moves
 for the door. Guy grabs the radio.

GUY
 (into radio)
 Hey, Rob. It's Guy. How're you
 doing, mate?

INTERCUT WITH

217

EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY

217

It's taken Rob all day to get halfway up this slope. A feat
 that's equal parts amazing and tragic. He's perched here,
 crampons kicked in, fumbling for his radio.

ROB
 Can't stop shaking. Send a couple
 of boys up with a thermos of
 something hot.

GUY (RADIO)
 Soon as we can. The boys have hit
 some high winds. Your best shot is
 to keep moving lower.

A pregnant beat. Rob reading between the lines.

ROB
 They turn back?

GUY (RADIO)
 Just for now.

ROB
 Oh. I have to think about that.

Silence for a few seconds. He knows. They know.

ROB
It's okay. I can hang out here
another night.

GUY
We'll try again at first light,
okay?

ROB (RADIO)
Any later than nine, tell them
they're fired.

Guy manages a sad smile. This hurts more than anything.

Rob pockets the radio. He looks at the last fifteen feet.
So close, but...

He can't do it. Too much to do alone. He rolls onto his
back. Closing his eyes as he takes a breath. And then -

He lifts his feet. Releasing his crampons. He's sliding
back down. Comes to rest at the bottom of the dip.

218 **EXT. SOUTH COL - DAY**

218

The sun slipping from behind the thick clouds, briefly
illuminating TWO MOUNDS OF SNOW AND ICE. Beck and Yasuko.

CLOSE ON BECK

A layer of ice covering his face. He's not moving. It sure
as hell looks like he's moved on to the next life, but as the
sun slowly hits his face...

HE GASPS! This horrible wheeze. Somehow he survived the
night. Ice around his eyes cracking as he opens them.

He moans and tries to move an arm, but it's sticking straight
out, frozen. He tries the other. It's moving, but his hand
is completely exposed, black with frostbite.

With a loud SCREAM, Beck smacks the ice over his face with
his own frozen hand, clearing it.

He rolls, ice breaking and falling away. He's getting up on
an elbow. And just doing that looks like it's taken all of
his energy, but -

Beck grits his teeth, getting up on his knees. He tries a
step forward on his knees and falls over, face first.

He tries again. Slower. Finally getting to his feet this
time. He takes a gingerly step forward. Manages to stay up.
Another step, he's into a snow bank, and...

He's down again. Lying there. Breathing slow and shallow. And he could close his eyes and stay here. It would be just so easy to stay here. But...

He struggles up again. Determined. He's to his feet. Shaky step after shaky step. Arm frozen and sticking straight out to the side. This frozen Frankenstein staggering forward, no idea where he's going -

219 **EXT. CAMP FOUR - DAY**

219

Activity continues here. Anatoli and Ang Dorje are preparing to start up the Col to search for Scott and Rob.

CAPTION: **Saturday May 11th 18:00**

Jon Krakauer, Stuart Hutchison, Frank Fischbeck, Lou Kasischke are trying to organize their own descent. Lots of activity. AND THEN, ONE BY ONE, THEY ALL STOP MOVING, AS THEY NOTICE...

Someone staggering toward camp. This zombie heading toward them. Beck.

JON

Jesus Christ. It's Beck.

220 **INT. TENT - DAY**

220

Stuart and Mike zip Beck into two sleeping bags, turn up his oxygen, pack him with hot water bottles. Beck is delirious, his face burnt brown, his fingers black with frostbite.

BECK

Enough, now. Have to get home.

Peach. Kids. Want me home...

And he passes out.

STUART

He's unconscious. I can barely get a pulse.

MIKE

It's a goddamn miracle he made it this far. He's not going to make it. Even if he did, there's no way to get him out of here. Not without hands. Just make him comfortable. Let him die in peace.

Stuart nods grimly. Mike pats him reassuringly on the arm and leaves the tent.

Off Beck, skin charred black from frostbite. Breathing so shallowly that it almost looks like he's already dead. As -

221 INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY

221

Helen gripping her radio. Face in shock. Caroline ducks in.

CARO
What is it?

HELEN
Beck Weathers is still alive.

Off Caroline's shock.

HELEN
Said he just staggerd into camp.
They don't think he's going to make
it. Should we call Peach? She's
been told that Beck's dead.

CARO
If you tell her he's alive and he
dies tonight...She doesn't need
that.

Guy comes in now. Takes off his hat. Sees their faces.

HELEN
Beck found his way to camp.

GUY
Holy shit.

HELEN
He's bad. But hanging on.

Suddenly Guy loses it. He kicks over a chair -

HELEN
Hey! Guy!

GUY
Rob's stuck on the mountain and the
bloody *Texan* survives!

No answer to that. Guy calms down.

GUY
I know. I know. I'm sorry.

CARO
Rob's got another night above eight
thousand.

Their eyes meet. They all know what they have to do now.

HELEN
We need to call Jan.

Another grim beat.

A RINGING PHONE takes us to...

222 **INT. ROB & JAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT** 222

Jan snatching up the phone -

223 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY** 223

Helen is on the sat phone with Jan.

HELEN

He's just below the South Summit,
He has oxygen. But it's iced up.
Don't know whether he's managed to
free it up.

224 **INT. JAN'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT** 224

Jan on the phone.

JAN

Then we have some time. Is anybody
up there with him?

INTERCUTTING...

HELEN

No. We lost Doug.

JAN

Oh, no. No. No.

Silence.

JAN

They have to get him down before
dark. He won't last another night.

HELEN

They know that. We all know that.
But the storm's come back really
badly. Jan, we can't get anyone up
to him tonight. We tried.

Jan takes this in. A long beat. She knows what that means.
Her eyes on the map of the mountain. So this is how it
ends...

JAN

Okay... Can you put me on with him?
Is there any way?

Helen looks around her, desperate. There's the radio, the
FAX, the SAT phone... How?

HELEN

Let me try...

Jan waits, holding the phone. Meanwhile...

225 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY**

225

Rob in the ravine. Sitting. Eyes open. Strangely peaceful. Looking at the swirling clouds.

GUY (RADIO)

Rob, it's Guy. I've got Jan for you.

Rob, his voice slow and thick, answers.

ROB

Jan? You got Jan? *My* Jan?

GUY

Yeah. Patched her in from New Zealand.

ROB

I'm here. One sec.
(mustering everything he
has left -)
Okay.

226 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY**

226

Helen, Guy, and Caroline sit around the radio.

HELEN

(to phone)

Jan. Here's Rob.

She puts the sat phone to the radio. Two plastic devices. Helen turns her head away, trying not to hear. Tears streaming down her face.

ROB (RADIO)

Hi, my sweetheart.

227 **INT. JAN'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT**

227

Jan in her office chair, one hand on the phone, the other on her belly.

ROB (PHONE)

How are you?

JAN

I'm thinking about you. You sound good. Are you warm, my darling?

228 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY**

228

ROB
I think I may have a bit of
frostbite.

JAN (RADIO)
I'm looking forward to making you
all better. I can't wait for you
to come home.

Rob closes his eyes.

ROB
How's the bump?

JAN (RADIO)
She's good. Missing you.

His voice breaking now.

ROB
I don't think I'm going to get to
meet her, sweetheart. I'm so
sorry.

229 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - DAY**

229

The birthday balloons still floating on the ceiling as we
TILT DOWN to - Helen, Guy, and Caroline - hunched there,
listening to this conversation. Silent tears streaming down
their cheeks.

230 **INT. JAN'S HOME OFFICE - NIGHT**

230

Jan struggling to keep it together herself.

JAN
Don't say that. If anyone can make
it, you can. Remember? You can do
anything.

Silence.

JAN
You still there?

ROB
I'm here. You feel so close.

JAN
I am close. Don't feel that you're
alone, okay? I'm with you.

ROB
 I love you.
 (starting to slur)
 Please don't worry too much.

ON JAN - this is goodbye...

JAN
 I love you, Rob...

231 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT - DAY** 231

ROB
 Sleep well, my sweetheart.

He turns his radio off. Lies down. Looking at the sun dropping in the sky. Just so big and beautiful up here.

232 **INT. MESS TENT, BASE CAMP - END OF DAY** 232

Silence from radio and phone. Helen, Caro, Guy and the others unable to move or meet each other's eyes.

233 **INT. ROB & JAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT** 233

Jan lies with the phone limp in one hand, the other hand feeling her baby. Silent. Staring at nothing.

234 **INT. BASE CAMP. MESS TENT. NIGHT.** 234

Helen sitting stunned. A movement and a sherpa comes in. He is carrying a cake for Helen's birthday, candles lit. She looks up, stares at it. Nothing could be more inappropriate.

SHERPA
 Rob said.

Helen gets up and puts her arms around the sherpa and sobs.

235 **EXT. SOUTH SUMMIT, EVEREST - SUNSET** 235

Rob sits alone and watches the sun drop in the sky. At last it disappears over the great peaks. Deep shadow races over the icy slope and covers him in darkness.

FADE TO BLACK

236 **EXT. CAMP FOUR, SOUTH COL - DAY**

236

DAZZLE of light. SCREAM of wind. The morning sun seen through a bustle of climbers as the survivors gear up for the descent.

CAPTION: **Sunday May 12th 08:30**

Mike Groom is gathering Stuart, Jon, John, Lou and Frank. All are moving slowly, weakened by staying too long at altitude. Mike, Stuart and Jon also have frostbite. Round them we see the devastation of the storm - a tent ripped from its moorings, still flapping on one anchoring rope.

237 **INT. TENT, CAMP FOUR - DAY**

237

BECK'S POV - Tent cloth smacking in the wind. A crack of daylight through the flapping tent door. The others climbers glimpsed mustering outside.

A feeble voice, impossible for those outside to hear.

 BECK (O.S.)
Help. Help.

The last couple of PEOPLE are just about out of frame.

 BECK (O.S.)
 (louder)
Help... Please... Anyone...

Too late. The last person just left.

 BECK (O.S.)
Please someone help me.

SOMEONE has come back. Making his way to us, looking from tent to tent. It's Jon Krakauer. He's not seeing anyone. He shakes his head. Is he hearing things?

 KRAKAUER
Hello?

 BECK (O.S.)
Here... I'm here...

Krakauer walks up to the tent. He crouches in the doorway, sees the snow on the inside, a body lying in here.

 KRAKAUER
 (eyes widening)
Beck? You alive?

ON BECK - Staring back at him out of a snow-encrusted face.

BECK

What the hell... have to do...to
get a little goddam service around
here...

238 **INT. ADVENTURE CONSULTANTS MESS TENT - NIGHT**

238

The trio still huddled around the radio. No one can bring themselves to move. The RADIO buzzes, but it's not Rob's voice on the other end -

MIKE (RADIO)

Helen, it's Mike. Beck made it through the night. David Breashears and Ed Viesturs have offered to help get him to Camp One. But there's no way we can get him through the Icefall...

239 **INT. KITCHEN. BECK'S HOUSE. TEXAS. DAY.**

239

Peach is on the phone, silent. She puts her hand on the table to steady herself. Sinks into a chair.

PEACH

But you said...you said.

HELEN V.O.

We were wrong. He's alive, Peach.

PEACH

Are you sure?

HELEN V.O.

We don't even know how. But he is. Beck's some fighter.

PEACH

He's that, for sure.

HELEN V.O.

But, Peach, we can't get him down the Icefall.

PEACH

I'll get him down. What do we need? A helicopter, right?

HELEN V.O.

Yes, but-

PEACH

- no "yes buts", Helen. I'm not interested in no "yes buts". Just tell what we need.

240 **EXT. LHOTSE FACE - DAY**

240

Five climbers lowering Beck in a web of ropes to -

Three climbers waiting for him. Helping out in any way.
Familiar faces that we met on the trek: David Breashears and
Ed Viesturs from the IMAX expedition.

Beck done in. His eyelids heavy.

DAVID BREASHEARS
Hey. Stay awake, Beck. We've
gotta keep moving.

BECK
Tired...

DAVID BREASHEARS
I know you are. But sleep is
death, and you've survived too much
for that to happen right now.

The first mention of Beck surviving. He blinks. Latching on
to the ray of hope.

BECK
Okay...Stay awake.

They keep moving down.

241 **EXT. ROYAL NEPAL GOLF COURSE, KATHMANDU - DUSK**

241

MOVING - like one those shots introducing a hole during the
British Open - past the green - down the fairway to -

The tee. Woosh! Someone teeing off a nice drive.

We recognize the aviators and tanned face. Colonel Madan.
He started their chopper in Kathmandu. He bends to grab his
tee, handing his driver to his CADDY when -

A young American diplomat, DAVID SCHENSTED, comes out of the
club house looking for him.

SCHENSTED
Colonel Madan?

MADAN
Yes.

SCHENSTED
David Schensted. I'm with the U.S.
Embassy. Sorry to bother you sir,
but we have a bit of an emergency.

Madan nods politely. Go on...

SCHENSTED

A U.S. citizen has severe frostbite on Everest. They can only get him to the top of the Icefall.

MADAN

The Icefall? Air's too thin to fly up there.

SCHENSTED

I know. I told them that.

(an apologetic shrug)

Lisa Choegyal gave me your name.

She told me to ask you. She said,

"Colonel Madan has a brave heart."

Madan gives no reaction to that.

SCHENSTED

But if you tell me it can't be done, sir...

MADAN

I don't know if it can or can't be done. I only know that no one has done it.

He pauses to reflect.

MADAN

Do I have a brave heart? I'm forty-two years old, Mr. Schensted. In all my life I've never had the opportunity to find out.

242 **EXT. CAMP ONE - DAY**

242

David Breashears and Ed Viesturs outside Beck's tent. John Taske comes out.

DAVID BREASHEARS

How is he?

JOHN TASKE

Can't do much else for him here. He's probably going to lose everything.

David and Ed look down the Icefall. No way, no how.

HELEN (RADIO)

Everest Base Camp to IMAX.

DAVID BREASHEARS

(into radio)

I'm here, Helen.

HELEN (RADIO)
A helicopter's going to try for Beck.

DAVID BREASHEARS
We're still at Camp One...

HELEN
I know.

David and Ed look at each other. Both know the odds here, but...

DAVID BREASHEARS
Okay. Let him try.

David reaches into his pack, brings out a bottle. He surveys the camp. Looking for the best possible spot for a helicopter to land.

DAVID BREASHEARS
Hey. I need help clearing this area. We got a chopper coming in.

David turns the bottle upside down and squeezes while he walks, one foot in front of the other, ejecting bright red Kool-Aid as he goes.

He turns, tosses the bottle to Ed, who does the exact same thing from the other side as we -

PULL BACK

Ed finishing up. They've formed a makeshift helipad in the snow. This giant red "X". And mere feet from it...

A sharp sloping cliff that falls into a bottomless crevasse.

243 **EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

243

Everyone outside, hands shielded against the sun, watching.

A helicopter approaching from below, flying over Base Camp. Heading up. Over the Icefall.

244 **INT. HELICOPTER - DAY**

244

Madan at the controls. Total focus. Next to him, his CO-PILOT, is trying, and failing, to conceal his nerves.

They're cruising over the middle of the Icefall when -

The helicopter SHUDDERS. Taking a huge dip. Madan grips the throttle with two hands. Doing his best to keep it steady. And out the window -

245 **EXT. CAMP ONE - DAY**

245

The red "X". David and Ed have everyone standing back.
David motioning for it to come in when -

A gust of wind. Sending the chopper backward and -

246 **INT. HELICOPTER - DAY**

246

The blades coughing, gasping, trying to grip onto something.
The copilot looks over, shaking his head, terrified.

CO-PILOT
(Nepalese)
Go back! It's not possible.

Madan nods. He swings the chopper around.

247 **EXT. BASE CAMP - AFTERNOON**

247

MADAN LANDS THE HELICOPTER. The Co-pilot jumps out. People
watch amazed as...

QUICK CUTS: Madan strips the chopper of as much gear as he
can. Working fast, talking to no one, he then siphons fuel
out of the tank. The Co-pilot is losing it...

CO-PILOT
(in Nepalese)
No, no, no! You can't do this!

MADAN
(in Nepalese)
We won't know unless we try.

He grabs the Co-pilot, hugs him and then takes off.

248 **EXT. CAMP ONE - LATE AFTERNOON**

248

Thwap-thwap-thwap! Here it comes again. David doing hand
signals. Climbers around Beck, watching the approaching
helicopter, ready to load him in.

Thirty feet away...and...touchdown.

Barely. The tail and back half of the chopper hanging over
the crevasse.

Madan gripping the stick - eyes never leaving the control
panel as - he raises a single finger to the window - he can
only take one.

David and Ed rush it. Grabbing the door. Climbers load Beck
in. David closes the door. A nod to Madan as he steps back -

249 **INT. HELICOPTER - LATE AFTERNOON**

249

Madan tries to lift off - rotors churning - but - he can't.
Madan turns to Beck.

MADAN
Problem here. Air very thin..

BECK
Better... offload me...

MADAN
More air lower down. I'm going to
lift the tail and push us over the
edge. Then we will fall a little
bit. Maybe fall a lot. Until the
blades can catch some air. Okay?

Beck just looks at him. Then...

BECK
Sir... If you're willing to take
this chance... I'm with you.

MADAN
(smiles)
Good man. So. Hold on, I guess.

STAY INSIDE THE CHOPPER AS MADAN PUSHES IT OFF THE EDGE AND
WE FALL THROUGH THIN AIR FOR ONE THOUSAND FEET, PLUMMETING
TOWARD OBLIVION, ENGINE SCREAMING UNTIL...

THE BLADES FINALLY CATCH. SAFE.

As the chopper begins to cruise, Beck starts to cry.

250 **EXT. THE MOUNTAIN - SUNSET**

250

THE HELICOPTER CRUISES TOWARD BASE CAMP, A TINY MACHINE
FLOATING AGAINST THE GREAT SLAB OF A MOUNTAIN, FRACTURED
LIGHT DANCING IN PRISMS AS THE SUN BEGINS TO SET.

251 **EXT. BASE CAMP, EVEREST - DAY**

251

Helen, Caro, Guy and others waiting the return of the
helicopter.

The chopper lands. They run forward to Beck. Their voices
half-drowned by the roar of the rotors.

HELEN
My God, Beck! You bloody miracle!

CARO
They're ready for you in Kathmandu,
Beck. The sooner the better.

Guy shakes Madan's hand.

GUY
What you just did - I didn't know
it was possible.

MADAN
Nor me.

His Co-pilot climbs back in.

The chopper rises once more, and skims away down the valley.

HELEN
Look!

They look up the slope from the glacier -

A LINE OF CLIMBERS HEADING DOWN -

MIKE, STUART, LOU, JOHN, JON - MOVING IN SLOW MOTION - BEYOND
EXHAUSTION - BUT THESE ARE THE SURVIVORS...

THEY JUST KEEP ON COMING...

Helen and Caro stand and watch, eyes glistening.

Then they go forward to meet them. Guy follows, and the Base
Camp Sherpas.

Caro and Helen take them in their arms, hugging first one,
then another. No words.

Jon Krakauer drops down to his knees, finally letting the
strain wash over him. He sobs silently.

252 **EXT. CHRISTCHURCH AIRPORT - DAY**

252

Wide airport scene. A plane lands.

253 **INT. ARRIVALS LOUNGE, CHRISTCHURCH AIRPORT - DAY**

253

Jan, very pregnant, waits with Maddy in the arrivals lounge.

Helen Wilton appears, pushing her laden trolley, accompanied
by Guy Cotter, carrying his bags.

Helen sees Jan and leaves her trolley and half runs to take
her in her arms. As they embrace it's Helen who's crying.

Jan holds her close. Her eyes find Guy's, and there's so much
pain there, but she doesn't cry.

Then she moves from Helen's arms into Guy's silent embrace.

Then they all move off, through the airport, arms round each other, little figures dwindling into the distance...

DISSOLVE TO -

254 **EXT. EVEREST - DAY**

254

The peak seen towering above all other peaks, against a clear blue sky. Sun on its snow-covered flanks. Majestic, timeless...

SUPERIMPOSE CAPTIONS:

Jan Arnold Hall gave birth to a baby girl, Sarah.

Ten years later Jan and Sarah climbed to Base Camp on Everest.

Jan has asked that Rob Hall's body be allowed to rest where he died: 'He wouldn't have wanted anyone to risk their lives to bring him back.'

Beck Weathers survived, with the loss of both hands. He and Peach are still married.

Doug Hansen is commemorated on a plaque in Sunrise Elementary School, Seattle.

END CREDITS