

# **"SEVEN SAMURAI"**

by

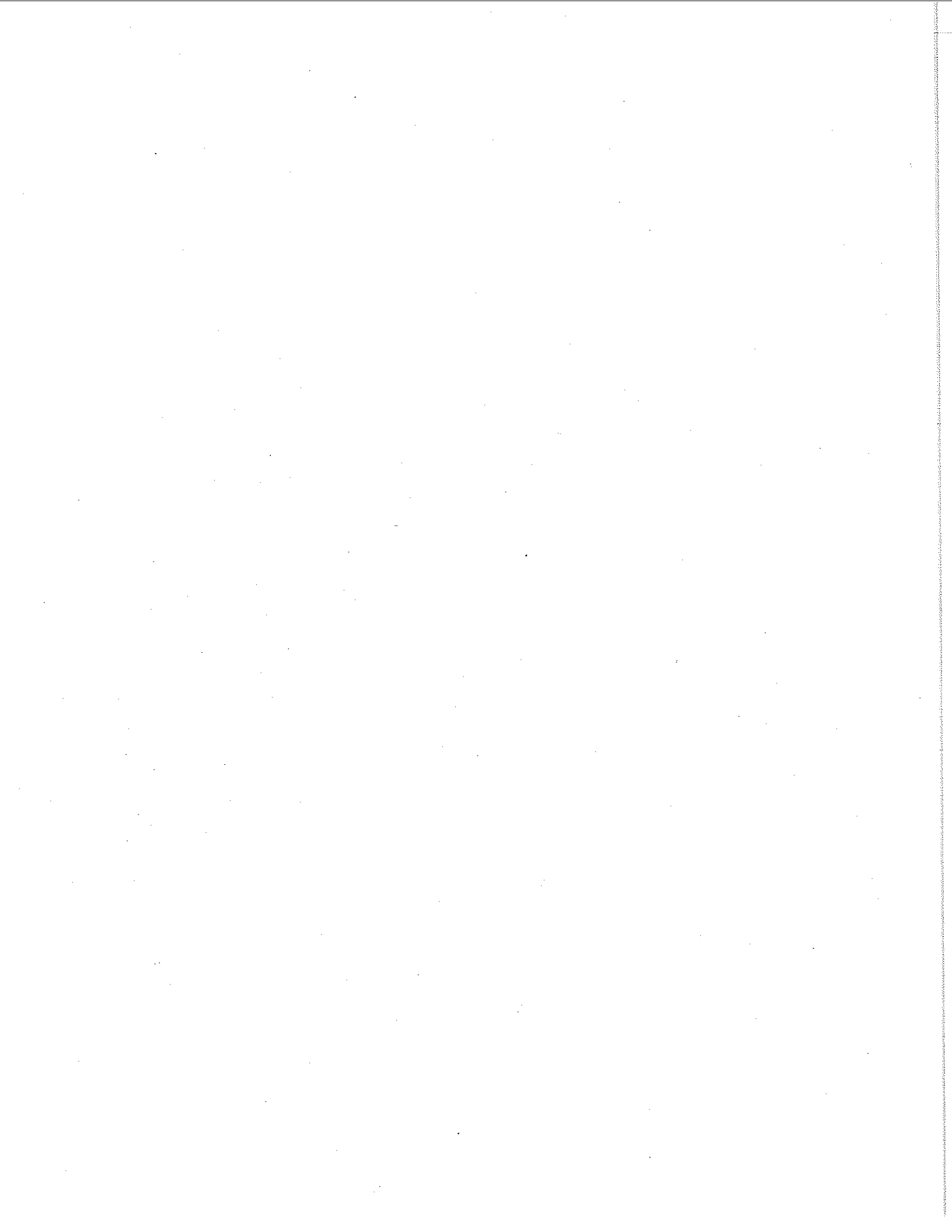
**John Fusco**

(Based on "Shichi-nin no Samurai")

By

**Akira Kurosawa**

**REVISED DRAFT**  
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FADE IN ON:

A MOUNTAIN IN THE CLOUDS -- ABOVE THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Where an isolated Buddhist hamlet sits surrounded by the ruins of a once-high fortress wall.

Asian FARMERS tend the fields while saffron-robed MONKS cross barefoot to an ancient temple. Dogs sleep in the middle of a sun-baked road...

IN THE FIELDS

an old farmer straightens his back to survey the misty distance. A STRANGE WIND is rocking the TEMPLE BELL.

THE HORSE HERD, nearby, is growing restless, beginning to run and whinny as if sensing a weather change...

FARMERS clutch their hats as a DEAFENING NOISE grows and...

A TRANSPORT HELICOPTER

ROARS like a flying beast through a narrow pass.

AT THE TEMPLE

A CHILD MONK squints, gathering his robes. SCRAWNY VILLAGE DOGS run with him, barking at the sky. TITLE:

VILLAGE OF TUKAR

THE HELICOPTER SETTLES ON THE GRASSY SLOPE

KHUN LAO. Asian. Pock-marked. Impossible to read. He surveys the humble village with interest. A PRIMITIVE HORN moans a deep "aum" as the villagers gather at the gate.

KHUN LAO

I love that sound...

He smiles benignly as he exits the helicopter. He wears a military jacket as do his TWO DOZEN grubby followers.

At Khun Lao's command:

THEY LOOT EVERY HOME AND MARKET STALL. A MONK tries to stop them on the temple steps. But a rifle stock drops him hard. Raiders gut the temple.

THE HARVEST IS TORCHED. A pudgy young farmer (SEN-JOE) balls his fists, but an older farmer (KWAN) holds him back.

AT A SMALL STONE BUILDING

Frightened SCHOOL CHILDREN are herded protectively and hidden away by a young teacher. When she has them safe, she turns her striking eyes out toward the violent scene in the fields, assessing the situation. She is TASANEE.

IN THE FIELDS

stunned villagers watch the crops catch flame. Khun Lao eyes a looming peak like an amiable tourist.

KHUN LAO

You have a beautiful place here.  
Who's in charge?

Khun Lao grabs a small boy.

KHUN LAO

You? You're the head man?

The boy GIGGLES as Khun Lao scoops him up. A young farmer, KASEM, crosses to Khun Lao.

KASEM

Please, we have no money...

KHUN LAO

No? Then we're in the same boat. Do you know who I am?

Kasem doesn't have the slightest idea.

KHUN LAO

What other harvest do you grow up here beside barley?

KASEM

Some rice down low, and maize. We trade for cloth and salt--

KHUN LAO

--maize.

Khun Lao turns to a sooty lieutenant of sorts who smiles, revealing a few gold teeth. This is PANG SA.

KHUN LAO

Do you see? These people can grow things at two thousand meters high-- it's in their blood.

(to Kasem)

I admire you people who can live up here like this, there are few of you left.

TASANEE (O.S.)

Then why do you burn our harvest?

Khun Lao looks over at the voice. Everyone does. Young and pretty in the traditional short silk jacket, Tasanee glares at the war lord, wind in her long bangs.

KHUN LAO

We're a long way from everything up here. I like it that way. Because if you knew who I was, Paddy Girl, you'd know that I'm wanted by a dozen countries and banned from a dozen more. Not because I'm some criminal. But because I am Khun Lao. A patriot, looking out for his people.

Tasanee's eyes run the ranks of grubby jungle soldiers--

KHUN LAO

These men fight for a free Shan nation, for their families who are without homes. Maybe you don't understand politics, but I know you can understand what it means to have to feed your children. I need to relocate. Rebuild...

Khun Lao whispers to the boy who eagerly searches the war lord's fatigue jacket.

KHUN LAO

This takes money. So where do we find this money, your people and mine?

With a triumphant laugh the boy produces a pink flower. Smiling, he holds it out to Kasem.

KHUN LAO

We grow it.....from the ground.

Kasem stands frozen. Khun Lao draws his sidearm. Kasem takes the flower numbly. Obeying the barrel of Khun Lao's pistol, he kneels slowly.

KHUN LAO

This is not rice or barley. These poppies will provide for you and Khun Lao. Show me how you plant it.

Kasem can't seem to move at all. Khun Lao cocks his pistol. Tasanee starts forward to help her brother. But her father, AUNG, restrains her.

KHUN LAO

Use your *fingers*, man. *Fingers*.

TASANEE

We are not so far away that we can't reach our provincial governor-

KHUN LAO

--your governor will be happy to know of your friendship with Khun Lao. Maybe he will reward you. We have joined hands as partners recently.

(to Kasem)

Show the people how easy it is done.

Kasem claws the earth, pauses. He stares at the pink flower...

And crushes it.

Trembling, Kasem gazes at a line of prayer flags fluttering across the endless blue sky. A SHOT ECHOES. Tasanee gasps as her brother topples.

Khun Lao holsters his gun. BEHIND HIM his men quickly off-load trays of opium poppies.

KHUN LAO

In a few weeks I'll be back with a hundred men and their families. These flowers will give you and them a future. Care for them as you would your own children.

Khun Lao sends the frightened boy toddling back to his father, a young impish farmer named ARAN.

KHUN LAO

For each poppy not in bloom by my  
return, a child will die.

~~Through her tears Tasanee maintains a fierce gaze. Khun Lao  
meets it...then finally boards his helicopter.~~

As the rotor wash flattens the grass and makes horses run,  
Tasanee races to her brother, pulls him upright. But he's  
slack. Gone.

Aung kneels expressionless over his son. Tasanee watches the  
transport craft lift away as the temple BELL TOLLS. Behind  
her, the SEASON'S HARVEST BURNS slowly into

SUNSET, behind the serene temple -- BEGIN TITLES END.

KWAN (V.O.)

We have storage for barter. We will  
not starve...

INT. TEMPLE -- NIGHT

By the soft glow of butter lamps, a towering GOLD BUDDHA  
gazes impassively down, too big to steal.

Beneath it sits an OLD LAMA, quite possibly the oldest living  
human being in inner Asia.

SEN-JOE

But what to do? Harvest this poison-  
for this war lord to sell?

The ancient lama near the shrine is silent. No breath.

KWAN

The harvest is not the crime. What  
this man Khun Lao does with such a  
crop...this is his fate. Not our's.

ARAN

Perhaps...we plant Khun Lao's  
flowers for only one growing season  
until we--

AUNG

--no.

The heartbroken father rises--

AUNG

We will plant what we have planted -  
-here in Tukar--for three  
centuries. In the name of Buddha...  
(villagers affirm)  
...our fate is unchangeable.

KWAN

Our fate is to plant Khun Lao's  
harvest, and when he returns,  
negotiate--

TASANEE

--Men like Khun Lao do not  
negotiate.

All turn. Tasanee's been listening in the doorway. Her eyes  
glisten with grief, but burn with equal determination.

AUNG

Tasanee--

TASANEE

--I travel for the village.

AUNG

--The provincial governor is not to  
be trusted.

KWAN

If you make trouble off the  
mountain, Khun Lao will come back.

TASANEE

He's coming back any way, Kwan. You  
heard him. I'm going to Mandalay to  
find help.

SEN-JOE

I will go with you.

KWAN

You are my plow man, Sen-joe. You  
are needed here.

AUNG

Find help? From who, Daughter? Your  
white teachers off the mountain?  
The ones who tell you we need to  
let highways come here? To let in  
the world outside our door?

TASANEE

--at least outsiders would see what's going on. We need people who can tell the world about Khun Lao and his army.

KWAN

~~And who will come before Khun Lao does? Who will care?~~

Tasaneer doesn't have a ready answer. No one does. But then someone finally speaks. In Thai (SUBTITLED):

OLD LAMA

Find soldiers.

All eyes go toward the 106 year-old gnome-like priest.

ARAN

The venerable abbot is right. The presence of peacekeepers might help Khun Lao abandon his will to do violence--

Aran's father, DIL, takes his son's sleeve, urges him to sit and let older, wiser men debate.

KWAN

Soldiers. What do you think those men who just came here were? You wish to bring soldiers to our village?

DIL

We'd have nothing to offer them.

ARAN

We have alms. Saved in this temple. For times of poor harvest--

DIL

--not enough to pay for soldiers.

OLD LAMA

(Thai; Subtitled)

Find hungry soldiers.

The old Lama is staring at Tasanee. He knows who travels for the village and he knows who can get it done. Sen-Joe and Aran stand with her, the only ones.

OLD LAMA  
 (Thai; Subtitled)  
 Even wild dogs come out of the  
 forest when they are hungry...

EXT. BANGKOK -- KHLONG MARKET -- DAY

Crowded. Sweltering. Bursting at the seams with market stalls, TOURISTS, FORTUNE TELLERS, and growling Kawasakis.

You can find anything you want in this polluted floating market, from live snakes and tiger paws to knock-off Polo shirts, high heels, and \$20 Rolexes.

And that's where we find CHARLIE CADEU, an American, leaning against a stall, having a smoke.

He hasn't had a haircut in a while, and although he wears a tourist T-shirt that says something like "Year of the Monkey," his eyes tell us that he's no tourist.

Staring nowhere in particular, he watches a PAKISTANI HAWKER peddle fake student and journalist ID's, false passports, little plastic Buddhas, and old dog tags.

Bickering a deal with the vendor is a young foreigner: *Don't try to rort me ya fuckin' blodger*. With fairly buffed, tattooed arms and long, blonde dreads pulled into a top knot, his accent gives him away: an Aussie. A drunken Aussie.

Charlie might be amused. Maybe not. A YOUNG MONK approaches, begging for alms. Charlie ignores him. He draws on his smoke, then finally looks toward THE SOUND OF A COMMOTION, SOME CIVIC DRAMA unfolding at--

THE DOCKS

Where OLD THAI WOMEN are chattering in heated protest with each other, SEVERAL MEN, and some KHAOSAN ROAD HIPPIE.

Standing there, at the center of the argument: a 13 year-old ethnic Lao GIRL and her LITTLE BROTHER. The girl holds a green plastic trash bag, full of belongings. A WATER POSTMAN tries to pull the girl onto his craft, but OLD VENDOR WOMEN intervene, chattering and pulling back at the child.

AT THE MARKET STALL

Charlie, unmoved.

WOMAN HAWKER

They try to cross the Khlong and go home. But they are property of hotel. If taxi take them across, Momason get mad. Take away vendor license over there!

Charlie, bored. He drops his cigarette, crushes it under the heel of a well-worn boot.

ON THE DOCKS

Charlie drifts over to watch the Lao Girl offering cash to a SMALL KOREAN FISHERMAN on a long-tailed pirogue. The man wants to do the job, either to help the children or to make the cash--but the crowd won't let him.

CHARLIE

Can I use your skiff?

The Fisherman looks up at the hard-eyed farang (white foreigner) then considers the protesting crowd as it squeezes in, growing hotter.

OLD WOMAN

Momason sending boys! Taking license!

The Fisherman sees that the farang is fearless. Or crazy. He hands him his skiff pole and climbs to the dock.

Charlie signals to the hesitant girl and her brother. They board. With the CROWD CHATTERING, Charlie steps onto the pirogue and begins poling away from the docks.

SIX YOUNG ASIAN MEN are hurrying to the scene. Suits, hip sunglasses, and cell phones. Trouble, Bangkok-style.

INTO THE PUTRID KHLONG

Charlie shoves off, the girl and her little brother huddling in the hold.

That's when a STRANGER steps down onto the boat, his back to Charlie.

STRANGER

Hotel security at four o'clock. Got your back.

Charlie works the pole as calm as Sunday on a trout pond. He glances at the stranger: Tall blonde guy in a battered brown Bomber jacket, jeans, running shoes.

When he turns his sun-leathered face to Charlie, Charlie sees it: the thousand yard stare that only 20 years of war can leave a guy with. His name is ELLIS. South African.

Like street dogs scenting their own breed, they know what each other are. Ellis sets his rucksack between his shoes.

CHARLIE

They packing?

ELLIS

Don't know.

Charlie's eyes scan the crowded Khlong, he can still hear the RUCKUS BACK AT THE DOCK. As he works the pole in water fungi, he looks at the girl, protecting her little brother.

CHARLIE

Where.

The girl points due west. Charlie gets them going that way, but now a motorized craft is angling toward them from out behind a floating ATM machine. It holds a HALF-DOZEN MEN in surfer jams, wielding fierce machetes. THEY ARE SHOUTING AT CHARLIE in angry Thai.

Ellis glances their way, but he's tracking the hotel security guys who have boarded a water taxi and are in pursuit.

ELLIS

What we have starboard?

CHARLIE

Six. Seven.

ELLIS

Momason has some clout, yeah?

CHARLIE

I bet no one steals her towels.

(looking at the kids)

Is that little one a girl, or a boy?

Ellis squints there for a second, shrugs.

ELLIS

I don't think it matters to some of these sick flippo's. Watch it off your right, Bru.

Charlie glances toward the boat with an insouciant air.

The machete guys are cruising in to block the route. You *birdshitty farang!* You pay for girl! Their leader raises his bush blade into hurling position.

ELLIS

He's not actually going to throw that thing is he?

CHARLIE

No.

ELLIS

Bet you a Purple King he is.

CHARLIE

You're on.

Ellis is right. The big guy hurls the machete forward. But Charlie is faster. He pulls a heater from his waistband and FIRES from a double-clutch--

STRIKING THE FLAT OF THE BLADE and knocking it out of the big guy's hand with such accuracy it spins him. Panic ignites on the bush boat. When Charlie holds his position, the Machete Guys decide to *di di mao* while the *di di maoing* is good.

AT PORTSIDE, ~~the Hotel Security Goons~~ draw guns.

Ellis goes for his unzipped his rucksack and comes up with a bush weapon called a .410 Snake Charmer, a small calibre shotgun with a pistol grip. HE FIRES into the clutch of armed men and HITS THE BOAT MOTOR, sending the craft into a tailspin of black smoke and flaming gasoline.

The Hotel Security Goons are SCREAMING/CHATTERING in outrage as they try to control the boat and set up for return fire. But Charlie and Ellis are out of range now.

CHARLIE

Let's call it even.

Charlie reaches the other side of the humid, stinking *Khlong*. The kids climb off the skiff, run like hell on dirty feet. Waiting for them near a boat is their YOUNG FATHER, skinny and impoverished, but ecstatic to be reunited with his children. He eyes the *farangs* with more suspicion than guarded gratitude.

Ellis smiles at the irony as he accepts a cigarette from the Yank.

CHARLIE

Getting involved in other people's affairs. Bad habit.

ELLIS

Seen you at the Cowboy. Shatload of freelancers just shipped out for Baghad. You waiting on a better contract?

CHARLIE

Diesel convoy needs a military escort. Equatorial Guinea. Advisory package.

ELLIS

Who's outsourcing that one? Sandline?

Charlie won't give it away. Ellis seems fascinated by his character.

CHARLIE

Come on, I'll buy you a cold beer...

EXT. KHLONG MARKET -- SHORT TIME LATER

Charlie and Ellis have returned the skiff to the vicariously triumphant Korean fisherman and now they're finishing their streetside beers. THE CROWD HAS THINNED, but several gawkers remain, intrigued...

Including that Aussie with the long and flamboyant topknot. He begins to dance on the dock. Some incongruous, ritual dance, saluting the smog with his plastic beer cup.

BILLY BOY

A piss-up to you, mugs! That's the way to send them hoonies back to Tiger country!

ELLIS

Someone's been snorting the local yaa-baa.

CHARLIE

Follows me like a street puppy.

ELLIS

Wanna-be?

CHARLIE  
Yo-yo. He answered an ad in Soldier  
of Fortune magazine. Been stranded  
here a month.

They leave the crazy *farang* to draw a crowd. Ellis wastes no  
time in flagging a *tuk-tuk*.

CHARLIE  
Where you headed?

ELLIS  
Anywhere but Africa.  
(beat)  
Stint opening up in a week. Night  
security at a 7-Eleven in  
Chatuchak.

CHARLIE  
(as he starts away)  
Air-condition. Not bad.

ELLIS  
Maybe I should've caught that run  
to Baghdad.

CHARLIE  
What's your handle?

ELLIS  
Ellis.

Ellis boards a *tuk tuk*. Rucksack over a shoulder, he rides  
the three-wheeled noisemaker into the sweltering Patpong  
District.

Charlie starts east through the crowds. But he feels eyes on  
him:

Standing among the thinning spectators on the docks is a  
striking young woman. She stands with the barley farmers Sen-  
joe and Aran. The latter is more intrigued by the dangerously-  
cocked Aussie still drawing a crowd within a crowd of  
HAWKERS, dried cobras, knock off sunglasses--  
"sexy movie buy here"--and bootleg iPods.

ARAN  
I wish to go back to Tukar.

TASANEE  
If we don't do this, Aran, there  
will be no Tukar to go back to.

Tasanee turns her interest back to the American. But he's gone, like a white ghost in the crowd. KARAOKE into--

EXT. PATPONG DISTRICT -- NIGHT

Bold red lettering proclaims the THAI COWBOY BAR -- "foods, cocktailing, internet." Not every one goes in here.

INT. THAI COWBOY BAR -- NIGHT

A crossroads for IVORY DEALERS, BARSTOOL COMMANDOS, THIRSTY TOURISTS and what falls in between.

Charlie sits alone. Corner table. Back to the wall, reading an English language newspaper. He can hear some endless, drunken Aussie chatter--

AT THE BAR:

BILLY BOY

You could only get into the city by one road, dirt road...right into a shit-storm of Serbian fire--  
howitzers...

The young Aussie is holding court with a SUNBURNED FARANG and a painted THAI BAR GIRL. The enigmatic barman, JAKE, a plus-sized Fijian, mans the booze supply--

BILLY BOY

(sliding an empty)  
Tides out, Mate...

But Jake is already crossing the room with a bottle of cheap vodka, and Billy Boy watches him because he knows that he's going to--

CHARLIE'S TABLE

Where he pours the American half a glass on ice.

CHARLIE

You let monks beg in here now, Jake?

Jake glances toward THE DOOR where the Tukar villagers try not to appear so out of place in the shadows.

JAKE

She was in here yesterday, too.  
Looking for help.

(MORE)

JAKE (cont'd)  
 For her village, she said. Someone  
 in Rangoon told her she could find  
 soldiers here.

Charlie studies the displaced trio for a second--

JAKE  
 Renault talked to her. He said it's  
 some rice farmers way up in the  
 mountains. Land dispute or some  
 shit.

CHARLIE  
 Government sponsor?

JAKE  
 No. But they told Renault he'd be  
 rewarded in his next life.

CHARLIE  
 Don't like those back-end deals  
 myself.

Jake smiles, mops some damp off Charlie's table. Charlie  
 catches Tasanee looking into his sequestered corner. Finished  
 with his drink, he gets up and starts out the open back door.

BILLY BOY  
 (raising a glass)  
 Alpha Mike Foxtrot!

Charlie doesn't even look back.

BILLY BOY  
 (to Thai Bar Girl)  
 That's military speak for Adios  
 Mother Fucker...

EXT. PATPONG DISTRICT -- NIGHT

Charlie drifts down a narrow alley of stalls--

TASANEE (O.S.)  
 Sir...please...

Tasanee catches up with him, Sen-joe and Aran flanking.

TASANEE  
 Are you a soldier?

Something about her delivery takes Charlie aback.

CHARLIE  
Who wants to know?

TASANEE  
The village of Tukar.

CHARLIE  
Tukar...

TASANEE  
Northern mountains. Above where  
Thailand, Laos, and--

CHARLIE  
--Golden Triangle...

TASANEE  
As you wish. We're having some  
difficulties. A war lord named Khun  
Lao...

The name means nothing to Charlie.

ARAN  
He is forcing our village to raise  
his crops.

TASANEE  
Opium.

CHARLIE  
Ah.

TASANEE  
He manufactures heroin in Ho Mong.

ARAN  
He has promised, Sir, to return  
with more soldiers. If we don't do  
as he demands.

SEN-JOE  
We are rice and barley farmers,  
your--

CHARLIE  
--Have you gone to the authorities?

TASANEE  
Khun Lao has eliminated those  
options.

Charlie reads her eyes. She's no dewy-eyed basket weaver. He can see that.

CHARLIE

You're looking to hire mercenaries.

Innocent silence; a tentative yes.

CHARLIE

There's no such thing any more. How do I explain this? Today there's--

TASANEE

--security contractors --  
Privatized Military Firms. Friends at university in Mandalay helped me to contact several.

SEN-JOE

They wish millions of dollars.

TASANEE

All we have to offer are...alms... saved in our monastery.

CHARLIE

Alms.

TASANEE

Baht, rupees, British pounds...

ARAN

--A very nice lady from Germany came to meditate and gave to us euros.

TASANEE

In U.S. dollars: we have almost twelve thousand.

CHARLIE

In today's market that'd buy you... one man...for a month. On the low end.

SEN-JOE

We need more than one man. Khun Lao is coming back with an army.

CHARLIE

Look, there *is* an alternative.  
(off their looks of hope)  
Grow his crops.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (cont'd)  
I don't play the futures market,  
but I bet it pays a lot better than-

TASANEE  
--he murdered my brother.

Charlie grows quiet now.

TASANEE  
He has promised to kill our  
children next.

CHARLIE  
Wish I knew what to tell you. Try  
going back to your provincial  
governor, the media maybe...

Aran sees that Charlie is getting away--

ARAN  
We have, *gold*, Sir.

Tasanees gives Aran a disapproving look. But he presses at  
Charlie as he slows his steps, looks back.

ARAN  
Gold. Stored in a holy place for  
centuries.

CHARLIE  
Make sure you mention that when you  
talk to these firms.

TASANEE  
I saw you at the canal, Mister...

Charlie turns.

TASANEE  
I believe you are a good man that  
we can trust. Or I would have never  
asked for your help.

Charlie meets her gaze.

CHARLIE  
Look, I'll put the word out on the  
circuit. See what I can do.

Tasanees nods, grateful. Aran does a deep "wai" bow, something  
that makes Charlie uncomfortable. He vanishes between market  
stalls.

INT. VILLA INCOGNITO MOTEL -- NEXT MORNING

TUK-TUK MOTORS wake Charlie from a miserably warm sleep. Naked--two brutal scars on his back--he removes his pillow from tight around his ears (an old war habit) and rolls over for his mobile phone. Checks Caller ID. Nothing.

He gets into his jeans, goes to a barred window, looks out at the city. He gets his cowboy boots, removes his handgun from inside one of them, gets his watch off the dresser.

Charlie Cadeau stares out into the morning smog.

CHARLIE

Are you a soldier, Sir...

Her question has lingered like the oppressive cement jungle heat. He'd laugh if it didn't make him feel sick.

INT. PATPONG MASSAGE PARLOR -- DAY

A SOAPY BATH TUB filled with YOUNG THAI GIRLS. In the middle of them is TIPTON. British, unshaven, jaded to the heavenly "soapy" he is getting for a mere 1900 baht and a tip.

TIPTON

Do you know what I love about Bangkok?

The girls don't care, but they giggle and soap him up any way.

TIPTON

You never know who you're going to run into in the Patpong District...

Slowly, from out of the merengue of suds, Tipton produces a Ruger handgun.

TIPTON

But when you do--  
(aiming, dead-eyed)  
--you're both happy to pretend you never saw each other.

He's got the front-sight fixed on the candle-lit doorway.

TIPTON

I thought you shipped out for Nigeria, Mate.

CHARLIE  
Region's currently stable.

TIPTON  
Give it a week, some shit'll blow.

CHARLIE  
There's a contract open at the  
Cowboy.

Tipton places his firearm safely on a folded towel at tub edge. He sinks back into the suds.

TIPTON  
If it's that Yank still searching  
for POW's in Laos, I can tell you  
he's run out of cash.

CHARLIE  
Rice farmers from up north.  
Some opium lord with a rat's ass  
militia giving them trouble. Just  
need to teach some villagers how to  
load Makarovs.

TIPTON  
Sponsor?

Charlie shakes his head, almost as if he can't believe he's doing this himself.

CHARLIE  
A little seed money. Possible  
incentives.

TIPTON  
Indigenous assets you mean.

CHARLIE  
A percentage of mineral resources  
is what I'm smelling, no idea how  
much. Maybe break even. What kind  
of hardware can you get them--

TIPTON  
Break even? Do you know what I got  
for supplying the Mong Tai army in  
the rainy season?

CHARLIE  
Same as you got for supplying the  
rebels they were fighting across  
the river.

Tipton hesitates only a second before smiling at Charlie's chess move.

CHARLIE

If you didn't know there was a price on your head, you wouldn't be taking a bath with your gun.

TIPTON

You're looking for Makarovs. Nine mil conversions?

CHARLIE

A kit and a flying rust-bucket north. Whatever assets I pocket, you take thirty percent. Just like in Darfur.

TIPTON

What are you sitting on, Mate? Jade mines? Teak?

CHARLIE

They said they have gold--who the hell knows--but there's no one else gonna help them.

TIPTON

But you are, Charlie?  
(suspiciously intrigued)  
Fifty percent of the minerals you off-load, and I'll dress you a unit. I've got some surplus on the docks in Phuket.

CHARLIE

I'm being straight-up, Tipton. If you're looking to retire, this ain't the gig.

Tipton stares hard at Charlie, searching for a tell.

CHARLIE

If you're looking for a pay day out of Bangkok...you know where to find me.

Charlie is already heading for the door. Work to do. Tipton ponders the offer as the girls soap him.

INT. THAI COWBOY BAR -- DAY

At Charlie's corner table, Tasanee and the two young farmers have hope in their eyes for the first time.

CHARLIE

You say a hundred soldiers. How many have you actually seen? Armed?

TASANEE

Thirty. Forty, maybe. He calls them freedom fighters. From the jungles.

CHARLIE

What's the elevation of your village?

ARAN

Very high, your Lordship.

CHARLIE

Charlie will do.

ARAN

Yes, your Lordship.

Each time the door opens Charlie tracks the incoming. And then someone enters who catches Charlie's interest.

Charlie signals to Jake that the Afrikaner's drink is on him. Ellis spots Charlie, nods his appreciation.

TASANEE

Is he a soldier?

CHARLIE

Might have been. South African 32nd Battalion is my guess. A lot of them drifting in the market these days.

Ellis brings his beer to the table.

ELLIS

Hear there's gonna be a dog shoot, somewhere up north. Poachers?

CHARLIE

Three weeks. Security and training package. A thousand flat.

ELLIS  
 Can make that per day watching guys  
 do sheetrock in Fallujah.

Charlie agrees. Tasanee and Sen-joe exchange uneasy glances.

ELLIS  
 How many you got so far?

CHARLIE  
 Just you.

ELLIS  
 Did I say I was in?

CHARLIE  
 I didn't see you at the 7-Eleven in  
 Chatuchak.

ELLIS  
 It didn't have air-condition.  
 (beat)  
 A thousand U.S. A few weeks...

Charlie nods, firm.

ELLIS  
 What species are these poachers  
 hunting?

CHARLIE  
 You're looking at them.

Ellis leans back in his chair to meet Tasanee's gaze before she lowers it. She knows what this man is. Ellis takes a drink, doesn't look at Charlie, but nods. Or was it a shrug?

Sen-joe looks at Aran. The latter lifts his prayer beads and displays where he's been worrying one around in his fingers. He slides a second bead onto the taut string: two soldiers.

CUT TO:

A KNEE SLAMMING INTO A FACE

Breaking all 14 facial bones. The SHIRTLESS FIGHTER crumples at the ROAR OF A RABID CROWD here at--

THE CAGE FIGHTS -- KHLONG TOEY SLUMS -- JUST BEFORE DAWN

Money changes hands as the defeated kickboxer is pulled out of the cage, leaving an unlikely victor. SAMMY is small and slight and not dressed in the trunks and wrapped hands of a Mui Thai stylist. Instead, he wears a baggy tee-shirt, military fatigue pants, and a Yankees cap.

AN ELDERLY ASIAN CORNER MAN hands him a canteen of water. Sammy refuses to drink, standing there with a cruel and bitter expression as he waits for the next comer.

But before the MUSCLE-BOUND MUY THAI CHALLENGER can enter the cage, a dark VOLVO pulls up to the docks. All except for Sammy look over at a rotund PAKISTANI BUSINESSMAN in cashmere suit as he steps out from the passenger side.

PAKISTANI MAN

Hoi--wait. That one there, no more fight.

Sammy turns to look now. Calm. His eyes fix on the man.

PAKISTANI MAN

Yeah. That one. Sammy. You fight him and Colonel Police will come close this slip. Yes, you hear me right.

The old Corner Man doesn't like it--nor does the CROWD--but the old guy gently pats Sammy's shoulder, urging him out of the cage.

But Sammy doesn't move.

PAKISTANI MAN

You owe me two nights, Sammy. You left me with no-good boys. I lost big money. *Big money*--understanding English? You just walk out, like you're the king.

Sammy just stares at him. Like he's the king. He glances over his shoulder and watches the muscle-bound Mui Thai Challenger stand there, itching for a match.

PAKISTANI MAN

Come on, it's okay. Get in.

He opens the back door of the Volvo. Air conditioned.

Sammy turns his back to him, faces the Challenger. He signals to the crowd to place their bets. He's going to fight any way.

Two guys make their way through the crowd to watch. Ellis can't help but place a bet, tossing in a Purple King--

But before this bout can start--

The Pakistani businessman signals and a BIG BRAZILIAN gets out from the Volvo, followed by a BIGGER DANE, tattooed like a circus reptile man. And then the DRIVER gets out. He's a scrappy Chinese, muscular when he peels off his blazer.

The Pakistani harbor shark lights a clove smoke and sits on the hood of the Volvo, watching his three goons enter the cage. The driver has already removed a pair of black nunchakus from his waistband.

Charlie and Ellis watch, intrigued as--

They Goons fall on the little Thai. And what happens next defies gravity, logic, and real-time:

Sammy uncorks with one violent spin. It is not fancy Kung-Fu. It is combat Muay Thai of the brutal human cock-fight grade. But before that even registers, it's over. All three are down, no one moving. Like a high-speed car wreck.

Then, as an afterthought, Sammy throws a spinning reverse jump kick and knocks the muscle-bound challenger out of the cage.

Sammy turns his eyes on the Pakistani Businessman. The rotund fellow hurries inside the air-conditioned Volvo and power locks the doors, but not before shouting:

PAKISTANI MAN

You're no good, Sammy! I will have you die!

He speeds away. Sammy doesn't care. He is already putting his windbreaker on and collecting his percentage from the Old Guy. He looks back at the downed men and something burns with cruel satisfaction in his eyes. That was fun.

IN THE SLUM ALLEY

Charlie and Ellis head off the little guy.

CHARLIE

Jin-Sam. Sammy?

Sammy eyes the two *farang* with distrust.

CHARLIE  
(Sammy's cap)  
Yankees fan?

Sammy's reaction indicates he doesn't know who the Yankees are and doesn't care.

CHARLIE  
Tipton told me I might find you here. Says you hire out. The whole package.

SAMMY  
(an almost grin)  
Tipton. Shitty dog.

CHARLIE  
Former Thai Ranger he says.

SAMMY  
Someone owe you money? Or someone like you wife?

CHARLIE  
Three week stint. Teaching some farmers how to fight.

SAMMY  
I don't fight for *farang* like you. No more. Go fuck you.

ELLIS  
Jesus, I like this guy.

CHARLIE  
You're smart, Sammy. Because this isn't Friday Night at the cage fights in Patpong, these guys are disciplined, they train night and day. In tiger camps. They fight to *kill*.

SAMMY  
How many fight for you?

Charlie holds up two fingers. Sammy nods, and does something classic. He holds up one more finger. The *middle* finger...

And he walks away, heading east, between some shacks.

CHARLIE

Rule Number One, Sammy: always walk  
away from a fight you can't win.  
You're smart.

If Charlie thought that might sway the kid, he's wrong. He  
and Ellis exchange shrugs.

BILLY BOY (O.S.)

--Yo! Wait up...

The Aussie kid is wearing a faded fatigue with the sleeves  
cut off revealing some kind of Maori tattoo, banded around a  
biceps. Another tattoo, at the shoulder, appears to be the  
Tasmanian Devil.

BILLY BOY

There's word going around the  
Cowboy...

CHARLIE

Oh, yeah?

BILLY BOY

Got me two stints Black Ops,  
Afghanistan.

ELLIS

Afghanistan. What squad?

BILLY BOY

Classified.

ELLIS

I bet.

BILLY BOY

So where's the action?

CHARLIE

You want action, Kid, go to the  
Bamboo Club.

ELLIS

But wear body armor.

CHARLIE

Go home, Billy. Go back to wherever  
you come from.

Charlie and Ellis keep going. Billy Boy lingers in the  
street, humiliated.

BILLY BOY  
Alpha Mike Foxtrot.

He goes no further, drifting toward the titty bars up the alley.

ELLIS  
Yo-yo. All he needs is a string.

CHARLIE  
Boy's gonna get himself killed in a bar.

The Aussie's drunken voice echoes in the Bangkok slums..

BILLY BOY  
Adios, you washed-up motherfuckers!

EXT. SKY TRAIN -- OVER BANGKOK -- MIDNIGHT

The sleek, high-tech PTS bullets against a neon skyline.

INT. SKY TRAIN -- MOVING -- NIGHT

Charlie and Ellis stand in the CROWDED car, looking tired.

ELLIS  
I can try to get a truckload of former CCB grunts in. Most of them just want to get away from the wife and kids. But it'll take time.

CHARLIE  
We don't have time. We're going to have to leave without ten.

A stern-looking ASIAN DUTY GUARD in PTS uniform and neck whistle seems suspicious of the two as they--

Pass through automated doors into a NEXT CAR. A NIGHT RIDER in long jacket, a face half-birthmarked, looks at them with one good eye. The contractors keep wading--through another set of automated doors into--

THE LAST CAR

A lonely one with lights that flicker on and off as it sucks all of the power out of the city.

There's a guy sitting asleep in the dark, a newspaper on his knee. No one else. Except for:

DUTY GUARD  
Miss your stop?

Charlie meets this guy's suspicious gaze.

CHARLIE  
No. Next one.

The Duty Guard just stares. He is staring at Charlie, but looking at Ellis.

DUTY GUARD  
You flying out in two days?

Charlie studies the guard's hardened eyes.

CHARLIE  
Who's asking?

DUTY GUARD  
A former Gurkha Rifle. What's the pay?

Ellis does a take. This transit security guy can't be a a legendary Gurkha.

CHARLIE  
Three week stint. Thousand U.S.

DUTY GUARD  
Per day.

CHARLIE  
All in.

The Duty Guard looks at Ellis. His striking Tibeto-Mongolian features give up a smile. He starts away...

DUTY GUARD  
More than I'm making now. The bar down on Patpong 2? That where you base your ops?

ELLIS  
Not so fast, Bru.

The Duty Guard turns slowly. Charlie likes his eyes. Cold.

ELLIS  
Any joker can say he's a Queen's Gurkha. I fought alongside the Brigade in Bosnia.

CHARLIE

Some of the best mercenaries in the world.

DUTY GUARD

Tell that to the Queen. She thinks we're good, too. Good enough to die for England...but not white enough to earn a pension.

ELLIS

A Gurkha with battlefield honors never travels without his--

The Duty Guard moves so fast Ellis doesn't quite comprehend how he got behind him to lay his--

ELLIS

--kukri.

--a boomerang-curved knife to his throat.

CHARLIE

It's a beautiful piece of craftsmanship, Ellis. You should see it from this angle.

ELLIS

I feel bad for the guy who tries to get on this train without a token.

The Gurkha sheathes his *kukri* into the crocodile scabbard behind his jacket, a uniform that now appears insulting to this guy's elite pedigree. This is RAJ. Bad of ass.

RAJ

Two days? 0500 hours?

CHARLIE

Any later, we're gone.

Raj passes through the neon strobe of the automated doors, leaving Charlie and Ellis somewhat hopeful.

INT. THAI COWBOY BAR -- NIGHT

After-hours dark. Southeast Asia downpour outside.

While Sen-joe and Aran eat take-out noodles at a table, Tasanee cautiously surveys--

## THE CONTRACTOR WALKING OUT

Fast. Jake the barman is closing the door behind him when someone else appears out of the downpour.

Billy Boy shakes rain from his dreads like a wet stray. He heads for Charlie's table, unsteady on his feet.

CHARLIE

Jake...

JAKE

He's drowning out there, Boys. Let me just get him a coffee.

BILLY BOY

Been looking for you, Charlie. I have nightmares...about your face.

CHARLIE

I was straight with you, Billy. I'm not looking for weekend warriors. We won't be playing paintball up there.

SEN-JOE

(rising)

No, but we play darts. And horse games.

CHARLIE

We won't be playing horse games either.

ELLIS

Fancy darts myself.

(to Raj)

You?

The Gurkha shrugs. He could take or leave fucking darts.

The Aussie drifter reddens as he pinches a half dozen beaded necklaces, crucifixes, chains and pulls one such item over his top knot, tosses it onto the table with a tinny clink. A silence hangs in the Cowboy. Wearily, Charlie picks up the dog tags, studies them.

CHARLIE

This your name? *Kikuchiyo*?

Ellis almost spits his Singha. Even Tasanee finds some levity.

The corner table by the open back door: Charlie, Ellis, Tipton (dressed in linen suit and knock-off bling), and Raj the Gurkha. The latter sits a few feet away with a solemn and furtive air. He has traded in the transit cop uniform for a long black duster.

TIPTON

(spreading fax pages)

Six AK's, good condition. Two M-249  
SAWS. One AT-4 shoulder-fired--

ELLIS

--called it.

TIPTON

(tasting whiskey)

--where you getting this scotch,  
Jake? I can get you Black Label off  
the shelf.

Sitting across from Charlie is a clean-cut AMERICAN SECURITY CONTRACTOR with a body by creatine and eyes like a Zen archer. He wears a track suit and everything about him is professional.

CHARLIE

What about marksmanship?

SECURITY CONTRACTOR

Scored a 298, Sir, with an M-16.

Ellis arcs a brow.

CHARLIE

Where was your last gig?

SECURITY CONTRACTOR

Iraq.

CHARLIE

Of course.

SECURITY CONTRACTOR

Made two-hundred grand in three  
months. I go back in December, Sir,  
for another two month stint. I've  
got a window. Figured I can hire  
out, hit my number a little faster.  
What's the pay?

Charlie hesitates for a profound beat.

CUT TO:

CHARLIE

These are tags from some dead  
Japanese soldier. What you pay for  
'em on Silom Road?

BILLY BOY

Ninja training. Code name.

Even Raj can't hold back a smirk. Sips his beer.

ELLIS

Kikuchiyo. Suits him, I reckon.

BILLY BOY

Reckon my boot suits your arse,  
Afrikaner. Your own country threw  
you out.

ELLIS

(wants him gone)  
Jake. Closing time.

But the Aussie returns to his obsession. The American merc.

BILLY BOY

Where's your code of honor,  
Charlie? Where's your *Bushido*?

TIPTON

Where they selling *that*?

BILLY BOY

You told me he was old school,  
Jake. A real mercenary. What a load  
of codswallop.

CHARLIE

Go sleep it off.

BILLY BOY

Corporate war whores...the bunch of  
you...

Aran leans in close to Sen-joe and whispers.

ARAN

This man is very brave.

SEN-JOE

This man is very *drunk*.

Hearing the whispers, Billy Boy fixes his drunken gaze on the  
table of strangers. He spots something of interest.

## BILLY BOY

Come on, Suzy. Let's blow this  
wallow, off.

Billy Boy makes his way to Tasanee. Without breaking stride,  
he takes her arm.

Both Charlie and Ellis--some battered code of chivalry still  
inside--start to rise, but Tasanee signals that she's a big  
girl.

## BILLY BOY

What titty bar you find her in,  
Charlie? Mind if I cut in?

Billy Boy spins her almost perfectly. She goes with it,  
turning with a kind of hypnotic grace. She takes him with  
her. He tries to lead, but she's doing the leading, some kind  
of mountain trance dance. Her mouth set, eyes clear. Gets him  
spinning.

## BILLY BOY

You for real? Or you one of these  
lady boys? Let's have us a look?

He tries to grope her down low and that's where Tasanee does  
a dance move: wheeling, sinking, and KICKING Billy Boy--

## OUT THE OPEN BACK DOOR

Into empty beer boxes and shrimp buckets where he collapses,  
drunk and spent.

## THE MERCENARY TABLE

Is impressed, if not baffled by the concealed acrobatics  
Tasanee has unleashed.

## TIPTON

The girl can cut the rug.

## SEN-JOE

The Dance of the Lion Road, your  
Lordship. It is very old.

Sen-joe and Aran are hurrying, not to Tasanee, but to assist  
the fallen man in the rain.

Tasanee sees Charlie's intrigue. She seems to take some  
pleasure in holding that Ace, making him wonder.

But now she notes that the eyes of the men are focusing on  
the shadows behind her. Someone enters, rain-wet, silent.

Sam-Jin "Sammy," the little human pitbull. He says nothing as he sets a duffel bag down on a chair and gets his shit together.

TIPTON

There's my boy.  
 (spreading more fax)  
 .60 Cal machine but no tripod for  
 it, so it's a three man jobber...

Charlie holds his appreciative gaze on Sammy for a second longer. Sammy looks away, giving no love.

CHARLIE

Okay. We fly-in the unit then go  
 back for the heavy stuff...

EXT. BANGKOK STREETS -- JUST BEFORE DAWN

It comes out the water marks of a polluted, silk-grey sunrise: A POLICE SUV leading a procession of POLICE CARS and a MILITARY VAN. KETTLE DRUMS set the tempo of something ugly...

The Police SUV pulls up to someone who is leaning on the rail overlooking the water way. It's that clean cut Security Contractor with the muscles stuffed into a track suit. He walks up to the window.

SECURITY CONTRACTOR

Found your arms dealer.

CUT TO:

TIPTON

Busting open the door on a back room--

TIPTON

Flight's leaving early. The fucking  
 Mong Tai, Charlie.

Charlie has been grabbing a few hour's sleep on an army blanket. Without a beat, he chambers his heater.

EXT. HIGHWAY -- SOUTHWEST OF BANGKOK -- DAWN

A UTILITY VAN flying down a vacant stretch.

INT. UTILITY VAN -- FLYING

Tipton has the accelerator flattened as he eyes the rearview. Charlie is up front with him, half-turned, heater in hand.

In the next row of seats: Ellis, Sammy, and Raj.

In the rear seat: the Tukar villagers:

ARAN

Here they are coming...!

TIPTON

The police colonel we can pay off with a single malt.

ELLIS

What about the Mong Tai? What do they like?

CHARLIE

They're headhunters.

ARAN

*Motosai!*

IN CHARLIE'S SIDE MIRROR: the speed bike passes the procession of cop cars and is gaining. Coming for the kill.

CHARLIE

C'mon, Tipton, drive like you stole it.

Tipton throws Charlie a look over his sunglasses that says, "you think I didn't?" But then--

TIPTON

Bangkok, we've got a problem.

POV: A SECURITY GATE TO THE GRAVEL AIRSTRIP IS CLOSED

All steel, electric cable and BIG ANGRY SIGNS IN THAI.

TIPTON (O.S.)

It's supposed to be open.

CHARLIE LOOKS OUT HIS SIDE WINDOW to see

The MOTOSAI coming up alongside, the driver bent forward like a jockey. Sleeveless fatigues, rucksack on his back, black skullcap, Oakleys, and long tail of dreads flagging behind him.

RAJ

Ninja.

ELLIS

I was starting to miss him.

TIPTON

What the bloody hell is he doing?  
Shoot him.

POV: BILLY BOY gives Charlie a thumbs-up as he passes them and races for the security gate. He is heading toward a loading ramp some fifty yards up the gate.

RIDING LIKE K-ROB THE BMX ADRENALINE FLYER

BILLY BOY RIDES UP THE RAMP and goes airborne.

CHARLIE

Holy shit.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GATE

The Aussie does a reckless, dust-ripping slide on two wheels, recovers, and throttles for the vacant gate house. He bails and storms the booth.

INT. UTILITY VAN -- DRIVING

Tipton doesn't slow down. He sees THE GATE OPENING and so he keeps the pedal flat. Charlie looks from the opening gate to the turning police lights a hundred yards behind.

AT THE GRAVEL AIRSTRIP

The gate is not yet open enough for the van to squeeze through, but Tipton tries anyway. They shoot the gap, shedding some skin, but making it.

IN THE GATE HOUSE

Billy Boy punches a red knob. The gate begins closing...

ON THE AIRSTRIP

Sits a 1962 OTTER, a military bush plane known in aviation circles as a "one ton airborne army truck."

THE ENGINE IS REVVED AND READY and standing outside the craft is PRINCE ANTOINE DEBEERS, a former Jamaican Air Wing pilot gone outlaw.

ANTOINE

Pick it up, pick it up...

He wears nothing but a scarlet beret, gold chains, baggy fatigue cargo pants, work boots. A Cobra handgun is visible in a side pocket of his baggies.

ANTOINE

Come yush--is not the blue-hair lady tour to Phuket. Pick it up. Here come the po-po's.

Moving fast--hustling duffels and whatever basics they can to the cargo hold.

TIPTON

(over single engine)  
How fast can we lift?

ANTOINE

Fast.

Charlie, gun in hand, drifts out onto the gravel to assess and direct the maneuver. The Police can't breach the security gate, but they are trying...

Billy Boy is running full-out toward the Otter, breathing hard. He stumbles up to Charlie, he wants to say something, but his lungs are burning. It was a hell of a stunt.

CHARLIE

Get in.

AT THE SECURITY GATE

BANGKOK POLICE spill over the gate. A SMALL MILITARY FACTION beats them to it. With arms drawn, they're storming...

INT. '62 OTTER -- CRUISING GRAVEL

Antoine is navigating the rickety rust-bucket down the gravel strip--

TIPTON

Prince Antoine flew with the Jamaican Air Wing. He can drop any cargo, anywhere, anytime--

ANTOINE

(working the joystick)  
--on a dime.

(MORE)

ANTOINE (cont'd)

I don't do business dat don't make  
me smile -- I love my aeroplane  
'cause she got style -- I'm a  
treetop flyer, Mon...she no just my  
aereoplane but my Lady and my  
House. Hang on...

He guns it down the strip, outracing GROUNDFIRE from foot  
police and military who run into a blow-back of gravel--

BILLY BOY

--hey, Mate. I didn't mean nothing--

ELLIS

Forget it.

BILLY BOY

South African mercs are Primo. 32nd  
Buffalo, man--

ANTOINE

--Wait, yush--what you say? What  
you say about South African  
soldiering?

CHARLIE

Ah, shit...

BILLY BOY

Ellis here was--

ANTOINE

--No, no. No be no Apartheid,  
colonizer, Bantu baby-killing  
albino on my plane--

TIPTON

That's all over, Antoine. C'mon,  
take her up--

ANTOINE

--I told you I fly gats, drug,  
coolie girls, diamond load--but me  
don't fly shit, Mon--

TIPTON

--ancient history, Prince, he was  
just a kid. Tell him, Ellis.

ELLIS

None of his business.

ANTOINE

--I said bitch don't fly--

CHARLIE

This man's a hired contractor and he goes with us to the job site.

ANTOINE

One thousand Benjamins?--don't nanny goat me--two thousand, and departure tax, or I don't fly back for the hardwares. Not in this House.

TIPTON

Stay the course, Prince. We'll make your deal...

Another profiteer. That's what Tasanee seems to be thinking as she rolls her eyes. Sen-joe reads her face. He turns her own words back on her:

SEN-JOE

If we don't do this...there will be no Tukar to go back to.

When Tasanee reluctantly nods, Aran slides a seventh bead onto the string.

ANTOINE

(holstering his gat)

Tree-top flying. Fly anyt'ing but the suicide mission. No money dere, Mon. Not for Allah, Jacob, Jehovah. No ticket dere, no...

They soar to cruising altitude, airborne: An American ex-pat, a South African, a Brit, a young Aussie, a Thai, an ethnic Gurkha and a Jamaican sky pirate. Seven war dogs. Seven contractors.

ANTOINE

Let's get this party started...

Seven Samurai.

EXT. GOLDEN TRIANGLE -- DAY

Antoine's Otter touches down between rows of trees onto a flat savannah in the highland haze. Not a bad landing.

DEPLANING -- MOMENTS LATER

Antoine chills by the cargo door as the crew steps out into fresh air and stillness. Far from Bangkok and pollution. But for BIRDSONG, a deep and foreign silence.

CHARLIE is the first to peer up at--

THE HIGH PEAK jutting from emerald forest, 8th Century temple clinging impossibly to sheer cliff in mist.

CHARLIE

Shangri-La...

TASANEE

Tukar. Unchanged for three centuries.

CHARLIE

Village at the highest point?

TASANEE

No. The Dragon's Tail. There, in the clouds.

Tasaneer points with her chin toward A HIGH RIDGE OF RUGGED LAND that sweeps up and over it all.

Antoine comes over to bum a light from Charlie.

CHARLIE

Nice landing. You going back for the hardware?

ANTOINE

Yes, General. Back for the gats and the whiskey cases--

TASANEE

--No whiskey.

BILLY BOY

What she say?

TASANEE

You're going into a monastery community sworn to Buddha's laws. There is no alcohol, no offensive language, lewd behavior...

The war dogs react as she recites the litany of rules.

TASANEE

--or smoking.

Charlie turns a quick look on her as he exhales dust trails from his nostrils.

BILLY BOY  
What the fuck y'do up there?

TASANEE  
You might begin by not saying this  
word "fuck."

Aran is grinning at the dirty word. He can't help it. Sen-joe has to nudge him.

Billy Boy has moved away a short distance to unzip his boogie bag. Digging for something, he removes several keeper copies of "Soldier of Fortune" magazine, then locates a pint of vodka. He takes a private swig.

ANTOINE  
Thank you for flying with us,  
Beautiful Lady. Where the transport  
money at?

She points with her chin to the peak. Antoine gives Tipton a deceptively lethal smile. He'd like to shoot him.

They start the forty-five degree climb...

ANTOINE  
Tipton. Mountain climbing tax,  
too...

ARAN  
It is a climb, Sirs, best made with  
the horses.

TIPTON  
(huffing as he climbs)  
The horses. Right. Is that how you  
work the mines? With horses?  
(off Aran's blank)  
What you told Charlie about. The  
jade.

ARAN  
Gold, Sir. Contained in a great  
Buddha, ten feet high. Up there.

This gives Tipton a second wind as Aran moves cat-vertical up the slope.

RIFLE CROSSHAIRS POV -- from a distance TIPTON looking up the mountain.

IN THE ELEPHANT GRASS BELOW -- a grime-faced THAI DOG SOLDIER is aiming at Tipton with an assault rifle, watching him through the scope. He is perhaps 13 years old, eyes void of innocence. He lowers the rifle, watches the men scale. After a moment, he takes off running...

EXT. VILLAGE OF TUKAR -- DAY

Bright opium poppies sway in the wind. In the few short weeks Tasanee has been gone the flowers have grown six inches. But the village seems abandoned.

The Seven Ronin walk across a sweeping, grassy plain, eyeing the sea of bright poppies.

ELLIS

Now there's a vote of confidence.

BILLY BOY

China white. You know what the street value of that shit is?

TIPTON

A million dollars a pound.

ANTOINE

Cuyah!

ELLIS

Khun Lao isn't not going to take kindly to our visit.

CHARLIE

No, he's not.

SEN-JOE

Where are they...?

Tasanee seems to be thinking the same as they pass through the gates and are met only by scrawny BARKING DOGS in--

THE TOWN SQUARE

Where Charlie surveys the humble farming village. Aran cups his hands around his mouth and CALLS OUT. Nothing.

CHARLIE

At least the dogs have turned out to welcome us.

TASANEE

Pa'!

An echo on a breeze.

IN THE DOORWAY OF THE ANCIENT TEMPLE

Tipton comes up, peers inside. The giant golden Buddha shimmers. Someone appears beside him, sharing his view.

BILLY BOY

Look at that big bloke, hey?

TIPTON

Ten feet tall my ass, he's twenty at least. Praise Buddha...

Billy Boy squeezes past Tipton, surveys the inside of the vacant temple like a looter.

IN THE TOWN SQUARE

Prayer flags turn, hauntingly. Eerie silence. Ribby dogs sniff at the strangers. And then...a tribal HORN DRONES deeply in the passes like the chant of a hundred monks.

Sammy wheels, alert; the others react, eyes going to abandoned balconies and market stalls. Raj turns in a slow and deliberate circle, a hand low inside his black duster...

It is some PRIMITIVE HORN sounding its baleful boom...

VILLAGERS suddenly emerge from the surrounding ruins. Kwan and his farmers, the barefoot monks, heeding the alarm and assembling in the square.

Tasanee's father slows his steps when he sees his daughter standing there with the rugged looking men. But Tasanee, like the others, is looking toward--

THE TEMPLE

Where someone stands on a turret ledge, blowing into a 10-foot brass-and-copper horn.

DOWN IN THE SQUARE

Charlie and Ellis gaze up, incredulous. It's Billy Boy.

CHARLIE

Kid's a liability.

ELLIS

Got that 9 millimeter Think I can take him from here.

Emerging slowly from the crowd is the Old Lama, walking with the aid of a waxwood cane. Tasanee begins SPEAKING THAI to him, explaining--

But Billy Boy is already crossing the square, the long and primitive horn resting on his shoulder.

BILLY BOY

Sorry, Dragon Lady. Not that anyone expected the red carpet, but there's a few decorated aces what just flew all the way up from Bangkok to help these jackaroos-- and they don't even come out of their cow sheds. These are the scrappers we're supposed to train, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Easy, Billy Boy...

THE CROWD OF MONKS AND FARMERS gather in nervous silence, looking over the baker's half-dozen of nasty, hired war dogs. They fear them for what they are, the Karma they carry. One can smell it on them. With devil's booze and smoke.

The Old Lama is staring at Billy Boy with a penetrating look. Offended maybe. Using his waxwood cane he makes his way toward the young Aussie. He draws closer. He looks him up and down, especially the tattoos.

BILLY BOY

(re: his tattoos)

That joker? Tasmanian Devil, know 'er?

The Old Lama stands, inscrutable.

Billy Boy makes the sound of the Taz, startling the ancient priest. But someone begins to giggle. That little boy that Khun Lao once picked up off the ground, he giggles at Billy Boy's antics. Billy Boy does it again and now the titter of laughter travels through the children.

Charlie and Ellis meet eyes, cautiously.

Something happens here that appears to be a historical event: the ancient monk smiles. He smiles large and toothless, his eyes crinkling with an infectious grin as he, too, begins to laugh. He says something in his dusty voice.

## TASANEE

He says...he is sorry that the people went into hiding. But when they hear aircraft they fear the return of Khun Lao. He says...welcome to Tukar.

CEREMONIAL DRUMS and CYMBALS INTO--

THE DANCE OF THE FEARSOME GODS -- LATER

VILLAGE DANCERS, dressed in brocade and wearing masks of animals and wrathful deities, whirl through incense smoke. Tasanee is spinning with scarves and doing spectacular moves that are deceptively martial.

Charlie crosses the square at an easy walk, surveying the village. Ellis moves with him, his eyes on the temple.

## CHARLIE

These fortress walls can take any light missile he can throw at us. And there are solid defensive positions all around.

## ELLIS

We hold the high ground, that's for sure. What about the foot bridge? Drop it?

POV: down the front side of the mountain a three hundred meter foot bridge crosses over a river.

## CHARLIE (O.S.)

Rule Number Two: always have an exit plan.

(walking on, slowly)

As long as we have a good supply of food and water, we can wait them out.

## TASANEE (O.S.)

They won't attack?

The mercs turn, surprised to see Tasanee tailing close. She's fallen off from the circling dance ceremony, sweat misted.

## CHARLIE

Oh they'll attack all right. By monsoon season they'll have to advance or they'll drown in those passes.

Charlie surveys the plain beyond where the small mountain horses graze.

CHARLIE

If we can deprive him of his long range heavy artillery, his only option will be to bring the fight to us and that means his whole army's going to come across that plain. All we have to do is kill them before they get inside and butcher everyone in sight.

TASANEE

How will you manage all this with only seven soldiers?

ELLIS

What did you...what did she...?

TASANEE

They won't fight.

CHARLIE

They *have* to fight.

TASANEE

Killing is forbidden. It is the first precept--above all.

CHARLIE

We came here to arm and train the village.

TASANEE

You are soldiers. Hired to defend.

ELLIS

Half a dozen against Khun Lao's hundred? We'll be dead in the first hour if we're lucky. If he captures us--

CHARLIE

--he won't.

Charlie is already ahead of the debacle, surveying the fortress.

CHARLIE

If we rebuild these walls and get the guns behind them, we can put up enough of a fight to scare his boys off. At least before he figures out there's only seven of us.

ANTOINE

Six, Bushmon.

The Jamaican crosses with Tipton and Aran...

ANTOINE

And me don't fly back with the gats if me no see the bling right now, La-dy.

Charlie watches Aran lead the tree-top flyer and the arms dealing British merc to the temple in the mist.

Around them: the exorcising ritual dance heats up as the participants whirl in a larger and larger circle, hemming in the square. Animal masks; angry gods; urgent drumming.

TASANEE

(matching Charlie's gaze)  
Dance of the Fearsome Gods. It chases away karma that might have followed you up the mountain. Traditional welcome, that's all.

CHARLIE

When Khun Lao comes...are they going to dance?

Tasanees gets quiet, looks off.

TASANEE

When the plane goes back for your supplies, it will return with more soldiers.

CHARLIE

No. This is it. And when they find out that we don't have back-up, they'll be boarding that flight out of here.

TASANEE

I will speak with the venerable Ajahn. The Old Man.

Charlie doesn't have a good feeling about this. Ellis either.

EXT. GOLDEN TRIANGLE -- DAY

TWO MUD-CAKED MILITARY JEEPS baja up a flash-burned trail, the topless vehicles packed with grubby ASIAN DOG SOLDIERS. Spotting something, the riders bring up AK-47's.

POV: the 1962 Otter sitting abandoned on the savannah. It is crawling with KID SOLDIERS; like 'hood boys looting a parked BMW.

THE DOG SOLDIERS bail athletically from the jeeps, fan out, encircle the parked aircraft. One of the soldiers squats and studies something in the elephant grass. Boot tracks...and a cigarette butt.

He looks skyward toward the peak in the mist. Sunlight catches an angle on a few gold teeth. It is Khun Lao's lieutenant, PANG SA.

EXT. VILLAGE OF TUKAR -- DAY

SAMMY leans on a post, looking through the dance toward the surrounding clouds, deep in his own thoughts. TWO YOUNG MONKS in saffron robes approach him, stand there. Curious. Sammy eyes their robes with disdain.

BILLY BOY squats on his haunches at the outskirts of the dance, a rapt spectator. Sen-joe stands nearby.

BILLY BOY

Hey, Ace...  
(calling him over)  
Where's all the girls in this village?

He points to a swarm of GIRLS carrying festival scarves in a line. The oldest is eight.

SEN-JOE

There, Billy, Sir.

BILLY BOY

Women I mean.

Again Sen-joe points to the little girls.

BILLY BOY

Rice Boy, we have to chat.

SEN-JOE

After the ceremony, Sir.

Billy looks away. He spots Raj slowly walking the perimeter of the square, like a gunfighter on street watch, taking in the looming peaks.

INT. TEMPLE -- DAY

The golden Buddha glows atop the high, candle-lit altar. Beneath his gaze, Charlie, Ellis, Tipton, and Prince Antoine eagerly watch Aran and a SENIOR MONK pull a heavy floor tile aside revealing--

HIDDEN IN THE TEMPLE FLOOR

a small wooden box. The Senior monk opens the cache to display mixed currencies.

TIPTON

My pilot needs a thousand U.S. now.  
A thousand when he comes back.

Aran translates in Thai for the Senior Monk who looks at the shirtless Jamaican airman, hesitates, then begins sorting through the currency. As Tipton helps him with the exchange rate, Antoine stares up at the golden Buddha.

ANTOINE

The king of bling. That's a big  
papa him.

TIPTON

Indeed. A metric ton of collateral,  
the way I see it.

ANTOINE

And the poppy flower, too? I fly  
dem poppy flower out of here or I  
no come back, Bredren. This ain't  
no humanitarian flight mission,  
Mon.

TIPTON

I told you he was first class,  
Charlie.

CHARLIE

Just get back here fast. We're  
locking down.

EXT. DIL'S BLACKSMITH STALL -- DAY

A MARKET STALL where Aran's father, Dil, works in his blacksmith stall as if distancing himself. He hammers hot metal on an anvil, glancing up at the festival, ambivalent.

Aran stands nearby, holding his son's hand.

ARAN

They will protect us, Father--

DIL

--what do you know of soldiers?  
Fighting? When Khun Lao finds out  
you crossed him--

ARAN

--he will know I'm not a coward.

Dil stops his hammer, mid-blow. With everything he has, Aran stares his father down...then leads his young son out of the stall.

Dil dips a freshly forged scythe into a cooling vat. He stops...a small steel throwing star has almost magically appeared on his anvil. Sammy's eyes are cold. Wolfen.

SAMMY

I'll need fifty.

DIL

I cannot.

SAMMY

When they come, you'll wish you  
had.

Dil stares at Sammy. And that's when a ROARING SOUND disrupts the festival in the square. Sammy looks out--

EXT. VILLAGE OF TUKAR -- DAY

Antoine is outside the gate with a VILLAGE MAN, preparing to mount a pack horse when he HEARS THE SOUND. An AIRCRAFT comes over the peak, banking.

The COPPER-AND-BRASS HORN begins to bellow deep. AIR RAID.

With villagers running past him in a panic, Charlie looks up to see the aircraft flying out of mist over the village. He pulls the .45 from his waistband.

Billy Boy dives for cover; Raj steps away from a doorway to allow RUNNING CHILDREN a path inside. He looks to Charlie to get a read on the situation.

Tipton and Ellis gather with Charlie as the ROAR BECOMES DEAFENING. Horses whinny and run...

TIPTON

Flying army truck. '62 Otter. Just like...

ANTOINE

My aeroplane! They hot wire the House!

Antoine runs across the square, pulling his Cobra from his cargo fatigues.

And now, bursting around a ridge to escort the Otter, a HELICOPTER. One of Khun Lao's men is in the gun door manning a machine gun. He opens FIRE. Everyone dives for cover as the CHOPPER banks and zooms low for the kill.

CHARLIE STANDS STOCK STILL IN THE SQUARE pumping loads into the helicopter. Antoine runs dangerously along the front of market stalls, firing his heater with military precision, YELLING AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS IN PISSED-OFF PATOIS as he watches his plane vanish in purple mist.

IN THE HELICOPTER -- THE DOOR GUNNER

Reels back, hit.

CHARLIE'S GUN CLICKS DRY -- ANTOINE KEEPS FIRING TILL HE'S OUT, too.

CHARLIE

(to Tipton)

Clip, get me another clip...

Tipton's non-action tells Charlie there isn't one.

ANTOINE'

Got a case of loads...

(watching the Otter  
vanish)

...in the House.

Shaken, Tasanee watches from the shadows of a doorway as the village grows silent again. Villagers peer out from hiding. The Old Lama stands on the temple turret, his hands clasped over his ears.

Raj and Sammy join Charlie and the others, center. Billy Boy comes out from hiding, buzzing from the rush. They brace for the chopper to sweep back. It does not. It's gone, leaving a chilling, ear-ringing silence in its wake.

TASANEE

Khun Lao...

CHARLIE

He'll be back. To find out how many we are.

RAJ

Won't he be surprised.

Antoine is still staring skyward, incredulous.

ANTOINE'

Steal my gig. Bitch gotta pay.  
Gotta pay.

ELLIS

Never park in a rough neighborhood.

ANTOINE'

Nuh draw mi tongue, John Crow.

TIPTON

Our package. We can't fly the heavy in, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Gotta be another way. They've got pack horses. Do you have any contacts at the border checks? Anywhere we can buy guns?

TIPTON

Not this far up in Indian Country.

SAMMY

Walking out, Yo. Only way.

Aran comes forward holding his son in his arms. The boy is still blocking his ears, traumatized.

ARAN

Please. We can find you weapons.  
Guns. Many of them.

Charlie doesn't get it, but he's all ears at this desperate point. He looks at Tasanee for confirmation.

SEN-JOE

There has been war in these  
mountains before. Long ago.

Charlie cuts a glance at Tasanee. She hesitates...then  
surrenders a nod.

INT. THE DARK, ANCIENT TUNNELS BENEATH THE TEMPLE

Sen-joe opens a crypt filled with weapons. Tipton lifts a  
rifle. Its leather strap disintegrates. The bolt is rusted in  
place. Charlie just stares. Ellis is speechless.

CHARLIE

What we got?

TIPTON

About 20 Gerbruder Merkel Double  
rifles...

(holds one aloft)

...a Twin barreled beauty with the  
ironclad guarantee that neither  
barrel will direct a round anywhere  
close to what you're aiming for.

CHARLIE

Machine guns?

TIPTON

One air cooled type 92.

ELLIS

At least it's a Lewis.

CHARLIE

Japanese copy.

BILLY BOY

Any good?

TIPTON

Known for a poor round of moderate  
power with insufficient tapering  
which leads to problems of  
extraction.

ELLIS

In English.

ANTOINE

Made in Japan dem no good shit dat  
jams.

CHARLIE

What else we got?

TIPTON

This is the most accurate firearm  
in the bunch. A Mauser Gewher.

CHARLIE

Very useful at stopping a tank...in  
1918.

A beat. It sinks in. They're fucked. Sammy is handling one  
such antique, a cold smile on his face.

SAMMY

Look at this. They got it from lost  
soldiers they probably let starve  
to death in the pass. Because they  
didn't want to pollute their holy  
village.

He glares at Tasanee. She says nothing. Billy Boy handles a  
weapon with youthful fascination.

BILLY BOY

18th Division. Japanese Army.  
Could've been from the Battle of  
Myanmar.

ELLIS

You read that in Soldier of  
Fortune?

He did. But he fairly ignores Ellis, frees up a bolt on a  
rifle.

Antoine feels the weight of a rifle that would look more  
appropriate in a John Wayne western.

ANTOINE

We born fi dead.

TIPTON

Not if we walk out of here  
tomorrow, Mates. Johnny Gurkha here  
can lead us to a road.

RAJ

I'm not your sherpa.

Just then a scent catches Billy Boy's interest. He cocks an  
eyebrow:

BILLY BOY

Hey, smell that? Curry. Smell it?  
These yahoos are hiding the good  
food from us...

Billy Boy heads deeper into the tunnels...

SEN-JOE

Sir, no...

Billy yanks open a door. The VILLAGE WOMEN cower beside a stinking stew pot. Been hiding here for days. A few are real beauties. Billy smiles. Then remembers the company vows to Tasanee. His smile dies.

Sammy appears in the dim glow, surveys the hiding women. One of them has a 5-year old BOY clinging to her.

SEN-JOE

The fathers of the village fear you  
will ruin their daughters.

SAMMY

Spoils of war. Shit happens, Yo.

The woman with boy would crawl through rock if she could, to get away from Sammy's hard-bitten gaze. She is MAI.

TASANEE

It was her husband who was killed  
by Khun Lao. She is frightened of  
soldiers.

Sammy watches her a moment longer. Billy eyes a sweet young thing with hair hastily cropped short.

BILLY BOY

Hallo.

RAJ (O.S.)

Leave them be.

Sammy and Billy Boy turn to see the Gurkha crouched in the dark tunnel, a slant of sunlight on his fierce cheekbones....then he returns to the antiquated store of guns.

BILLY BOY

What's up with Gunga Din?

Charlie, Ellis, and Tipton make their way into the crypt. Charlie surveys the hidden village women. Ellis can't believe his eyes either.

SAMMY  
I'd like to kill every one in this  
village.

Sen-Joe goes pale. But Tasanee meets Sammy's hard gaze.

BILLY BOY  
They want us to protect them, but  
they treat us like we're the scum  
of the earth.

CHARLIE  
Maybe we are.

Charlie directs this to Tasanee. The crypt gets dead silent.

CHARLIE  
But we're all they got right now.

Charlie lets it sink in. He grabs a rifle in each hand. When  
the others don't exactly leap into action, he gives a hard  
look back at them.

CHARLIE  
Let's go. Get these guns to dry  
ground.

Billy Boy winks at the short-haired girl. She looks away from  
him like the devil just blew her a kiss.

EXT. VILLAGE OF TUKAR -- TOWN SQUARE -- DAY

The weapons are being sorted and stacked by Tipton and  
Antoine. Billy Boy looks up from the sad cache to see Charlie  
eyeing the surrounding hills.

TIPTON  
There's no contract holding us  
here. I mean this isn't exactly an  
Executive Outcomes corporate  
agreement.

CHARLIE  
No, it's not. We're not contracted  
to some rich dictator or oil  
company cutting into the jungle.  
All we did was give our word to  
some people who are offering us--

ANTOINE  
--offering us what, Mon!

Charlie thinks about it. Looks Antoine in the eye.

CHARLIE  
Everything they own.

The others exchange glances, try to read each other as weapons are passed around.

Tipton kicks open an old wooden crate of museum relic grenades.

TIPTON  
1915. I love it.

Tipton chucks the grenade over his shoulder. It BLOWS UP. Everyone ducks as dirt and grass rain down. After a beat, Charlie just looks at them all. It's hopeless.

EXT. TIGER CAMP -- LOWLAND JUNGLES -- DAY

Carved out of the jungle canopy, a muddy, bug-bitten training facility for Khun Lao's followers. FLAGS with a tiger image mark the boundaries; .50-caliber machine guns guard them.

56 ARMED DOG SOLDIERS in filthy drab olive uniforms, train in frightening formation. MOVING PAST THEM TOWARD THE INTIMIDATING SOUND OF UNISON MARTIAL CHANTS--

ANOTHER 50 stand in combat stances, throwing brutal sequences of kicks and punches. The art is Banshay, a deadly Burmese fighting system.

ARMED GUARDS open a path for Khun Lao's arriving Lieutenant as he and TWO DOG SOLDIERS march with urgency--

THROUGH A TRELLISED GATEWAY

Where the war lord stands in a clearing before a bungalow. Wearing green fatigues and a peaked army cap, Khun Lao is bent over a golf club...on a makeshift putting green.

His 5 YEAR-OLD SON in tee-shirt and Kawasaki ball cap, sits near the putting cup, bored. He barely glances up at Pang Sa and his men as they breach the trellis and stand at nervous attention.

KHUN LAO  
In golf, games are won or lost at the putting green? Did you know that?

PANG SA

General...

KHUN LAO

It's when you use your head more than your hand, you see. Some day, this boy here will not have to fight. He'll be managing a resort in the Golden Triangle, with casino and golf course. Using his head, not his hand. Not a gun. Where there were once poppy fields...there will be a fairway. And the casino.

Khun Lao has not looked up, concentrating on his shot.

PANG SA

We captured aircraft at the--

Khun Lao's shot banks left. The feudal prince seethes. Pang Sa realizes his misstep. The war lord turns to his golf bag and replaces the putter with a new club. A driver. A brutal-looking wood. He turns toward the ashen lieutenant...

KHUN LAO

Tzuey. Go inside...

The boy runs.

PANG SA

(urgent)

A cargo plane landed at Mount Dong Shan. Troops are in Tukar. Foreign mercenaries, General.

KHUN LAO

(incredulous)

How many?

PANG SA

The aircraft that dropped them is capable of transporting fifteen. Twenty, light...

Khun Lao practices his grip as he digests this news.

KHUN LAO

Shame on these rice farmers. They challenge Khun Lao when Khun Lao tries only to help them? Fucking gooks.

(MORE)

KHUN LAO (cont'd)

(beat)

Get these farang out of my fields.

Pang Sa nods, sweat-drenched, hurries back through the trellis. Khun Lao composes himself, and delicately removes the putter again. He sets up for a shot but he's too angry now. Enraged. His son comes back out with an ice cream.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE -- NIGHT

Charlie crosses the quiet square, pensive. He is gazing out at the vast poppy fields under the moon. He tenses at a sound, sees a FIGURE slipping through a window into a neighboring house. His 9mm flashes--

SEN-JOE (O.S.)

(whispering)

This is okay. Only Tobgay night hunting.

Charlie watches TOBGAY, a young village man, madly kiss a village girl. Lovemaking seems in the offing.

CHARLIE

Night hunting--

SEN-JOE

Must you be shouting!

He hustles Charlie around a corner before getting caught.

CHARLIE

I thought carnal pleasures were forbidden up here.

SEN-JOE

It's okay for them, just not for you.

CHARLIE

Night hunting. I see.

SEN-JOE

You are not sleeping well?

CHARLIE

What happens if we burn those poppies? Torch the crops.

SEN-JOE

No, your Lordship. Not yet.

CHARLIE

Why? Because Khun Lao will bring the heat? He's coming any way. Maybe we can break his morale.

SEN-JOE

Not Khun Lao. Many of our farmers tend to those crops. Because...

CHARLIE

--because they think we might get our ass kicked here?

SEN-JOE

They only want to protect their children. Have you never been afraid, Sir?

Sen-Joe slips off into the night. Charlie watches him go then turns to light a smoke. He sees a silhouette off the square in the village cemetery.

IN THE VILLAGE CEMETARY

Tasanee stands beside her brother's grave site gripping prayer beads. Sensing a presence, she turns.

CHARLIE

We need enforcements from the village.

TASANEE

I have spoken to the Ajahn. He has instructed the people to pray that your presence here will help Khun Lao turn away. So that we may find...peaceful resolve.

CHARLIE

I'm not in the peaceful resolve business, Lady.

TASANEE

I know. And neither is Khun Lao.

She stares at the grave, struggling with her feelings.

CHARLIE

Your brother....

TASANEE

He has another life now. Reborn as something higher.

(MORE)

TASANEE (cont'd)

If we fight, Mister, we'll return  
as lower beings, animals, and never  
see him again.

CHARLIE

If you believe in these ways, why'd  
you ever leave?

(eye-to-eye)

C'mon, you're no rice farmer.  
You've been off this mountain.

TASANEE

University in Mandalay. I wished to  
see the world beyond Tukar.

CHARLIE

Not all that it's cracked up to be,  
is it?

TASANEE

I learned much. I learned that  
Tukar is my true home.  
I learned that my people can keep  
the world from coming in no more  
than we can keep men like Khun Lao  
out. But my mother died five years  
ago because we didn't have the  
medicine she needed. I travel for  
this village now. To barter. For  
western medicine, for  
communications tools, for--

CHARLIE

--hired guns?

Tasaneer gets quiet.

CHARLIE

Look, maybe your people believe  
it's wrong to fight. To fight for a  
cause or for land or for the right  
to grow barley or whatever it is  
you grow up here...but there's  
nothing on this earth more damn  
basic than the right to fight for  
your lives. Protect your families.

TASANEE

But these aren't the things you  
fight for....

CHARLIE

I fight for the client. And right now if the client doesn't fight with me, you're all gonna be lying right there next to your brother. I need volunteers. Have them in the fields bright and early, or I don't think I can hold my men here a day longer.

Tasanee watches him walk away into the night. But something makes him slow his steps, look back at her.

CHARLIE

The other day, when you put Billy Boy in this place...this very old dance...

TASANEE

We're taught when we're children. It's performed in festival to honor old battles.

CHARLIE

So way back when you were warriors?

TASANEE

Before the Buddha showed us the way.

Charlie considers this for a moment, then he starts for his lodging.

CHARLIE

Good night.

TASANEE

Good night, Mister...

EXT. THE FIELDS -- BRIGHT AND EARLY

One volunteer dots the vast plain. Charlie approaches Sen-joe who salutes him. But Charlie ignores Sen-joe. The other war dogs look on.

ELLIS

Now you understand the reason for the draft.

CHARLIE

Where the hell's the little monk, what's his name?

Aran's distant figure watches them from the village.

SEN-JOE

Aran. His wife will not let him,  
Lordship. She is telling and  
telling him of dying and it's  
making him very sad.

CHARLIE

Making him sad? Son of a bitch. We  
can't do this. It'd take a miracle--

ANTOINE'

*Cu-yah*, General...

Charlie stops, matching Antoine's gaze:

Sammy stands in a field of sun flowers as Billy Boy crickets  
around, tying ribbons just below the flower tops of a dozen.  
The pattern is random. Billy Boy steps back. Sammy slips on  
a blindfold and tips his head toward the sky. He lifts a bo  
staff.

CLOSE ON RIBBONS fluttering. CLOSE ON SAMMY listening.

Sammy explodes into life, twirling the stick with force.  
Sunflowers marked with ribbons are decapitated; those  
unmarked are left bobbing in the wind.

TIPTON

Who's a guy like that have to beat  
to prove he's the best?

CHARLIE

Nobody.

MEN OF THE VILLAGE are gathering to watch Sammy with  
burgeoning interest.

SAMMY twirls the staff upright, strikes a cat stance. At his  
back several sunflowers with ribbons have escaped his first  
flurry. He moves the staff fluidly and it breaks in two. And  
now three. *Three wooden sections held together by short  
lengths of chain. With the 3-sectional weapon in hand, he  
executes a jumping, spinning, back kick, taking the head off  
one marked flower and whipping the 3-sectional as he does. He  
beheads the last flowers marked with ribbons.*

The village men stand, rapt. Especially the monks. Sammy does  
a formal bow to close his set.

ELLIS

Keep swinging, Bru, you're winning  
the hearts and minds...

As Charlie observes, intrigued, a CHUBBY YOUNG MONK waddles  
up wearing a permanent sunny smile.

SEN-JOE

This is my brother Kiet! He is  
joining hands with us!

The mercs behold him, underwhelmed. Ellis smiles, shakes his  
head, starts to walk away when--

GUNFIRE SPLITS the air.

Kwan and his hold-out FARMERS tending to the poppies, clutch  
their hats, crouch.

NEAR A STONE HUT -- Tasanee is teaching school when BULLETS  
CHIP STONE. Tasanee stands frozen for a moment as--

Khun LAO'S SIXTEEN MAN SHOCK SQUAD bursts into the village,  
FIRING WILDLY, scattering the villagers in SCREAMING panic.  
The VILLAGE HORN begins to sound, deep and baleful.

Charlie appears, pushing Tasanee down. Clutching an archaic  
Gerbruder rifle, he begins herding the children into the  
stone hut. As GUNFIRE STRAFES the market stalls, he pulls  
Tasanee into the school.

INT. VILLAGE SCHOOL HUT -- RAID

Tipton, and Antoine pile in next, each having grabbed a  
Gerbruder on the fly.

CHARLIE

Ammo?

Tipton tosses a weathered cartridge belt onto the stone floor  
between them. The men dig for shells, load as a BARRAGE chews  
up the room and CHILDREN SCREAM.

CHARLIE

Get low to that side wall...go, go.

Tasanee begins directing the terrified kids to the east wall.

EXT. THE SQUARE -- RAID

Mai, the young widow, stands in the square panicked, holding her crying son. Someone grabs her. Large hands.

RAJ

Stay down!

Raj gets Mai into a stall then runs in a crouch across the courtyard as Raiders FIRE mercilessly. A BULLET HISSES PAST and strikes the VILLAGE MAN sounding the horn, cuts him down. He falls from the turret.

IN THE STALL -- Mai hears wild, animal-like breathing. Breathing wildly, Billy Boy huddles there with them.

BILLY BOY

Incoming, Charlie!

BOY

Incoming Charlie!!

His mother clasps his mouth.

RAIDERS #1 and #2 are rushing an alley when someone hisses to them directly behind. They wheel, AK's aimed. Sammy stands there, facing them. Two ticks of the clock--and as they swing their guns up, Sammy explodes into a violent whirl with his bo staff, taking out #1 with a downstrike then breaking the staff into the 3-sectional to turn the lethal nunchanku on #2. Kills them both.

IN THE HUT -- Charlie jerks upward, aiming the rifle out a window and FIRING the dull pops of an old weapon. It jams.

ANTOINE

Japanese shit dem--

CHARLIE

(unjamming the rifle)

Close range, let's move--

IN THE SQUARE -- RAIDER #2 and #3 are storming toward the stall where Billy Boy hunkers down, hyperventilating. He freezes for a moment then yanks a support leg...turnips flood the cobblestones. Khun Lao's insurgents trip. Raider #2's rifle skitters across the street, Billy Boy dives for it when...

...TWO HANDS SNAP IT UP. Ellis eyes Billy.

ELLIS  
Nice work, Kikuchiyo.

THE AFRIKANER FIRES, workman like. RAIDERS #3 and #4 drop.

TIPTON SNATCHES UP #2's MACHINE GUN just as #3 bursts around a corner. Tipton squeezes the trigger. NOTHING.

RAIDER #5 SMILES and takes aim when Tipton hammers the bottom of the cartridge magazine on the pavement and fires. #4 goes sprawling.

ELLIS GRABS #5's MACHINE GUN and tosses it to Antoine as he comes rounding the corner. Taking #5's sidearm, Charlie and the posse FIRE, dropping FOUR MORE RAIDERS...

OFF TO ONE SIDE, Billy Boy sees a Raider fall. He scrambles for his gun when RAIDERS #8,9,10, and 11 surround him. They raise their machine guns.

Seeing the terror on Billy Boy's face, #11--a HULKING SLOE-EYED KILLER -- presses the barrel to the Aussie's forehead.

Billy Boy grits his teeth and closes his eyes, hears a SHOT. But he isn't hit. He opens his eyes...the SLOE-EYED MAN is dying at his feet. Billy Boy hears steel cutting like wind...

...RAJ spins with his Kukri blade and disables RAIDERS #8 and 9. Using the Snow Tiger System of the Bando fighting art, he rolls the blade like a short sword. But he doesn't appear to see #10 standing at his back, an AK in his filthy hands. Raj begins to move out.

BILLY BOY  
Raj. Behind you...

Raj keeps walking away, gun at his back.

BILLY BOY  
Raj...

RAJ  
Wait till he shakes his head.

Raj is gone. Before the Gurkha's words even register to Billy, he sees the FALLING SHADOW of the dead man--

DIL EMERGES FROM THE BLACKSMITH SHOP

Peering from his hiding place.

DIL  
Aran!

Someone shoves him back inside. It is Charlie as he hurries along the street, passing Sammy from the opposite direction.

SAMMY

Killed two.

Sammy keeps going, moving tight to the wall.

IN THE SCHOOL HUT

Tasanee is protecting the children with her body when a DOG SOLDIER darkens the doorway. The kids stare at him, terrified. The Soldier gestures roughly to Tasanee, ordering her and the children to face the wall.

Trembling, she makes them do so as she stands facing the Dog Soldier. The armed man gestures hard to her. Tasanee swallows. But obeys, turning. Slowly...turning...faster... 180 degrees and whirling with one of her dance-like kicks. She puts the gunner's lights out.

NEARBY SEN-JOE AND BROTHER KIET

Are about to be cut down by RAIDERS #12 and 13 when ANTOINE BLASTS #12 into the fountain. In the moment, #13 FIRES...

A SLUG SLAMS INTO ANTOINE'S THIGH. The impact blasts him backward...his machine gun helicopters away...he falls heavily to the ground, watching as...

#13 RUNS TOWARD HIM, SHOOTING steadily. Antoine looks over...his machine gun lays at Sen-joe's bare feet.

Sen-joe stares at it.

ANTOINE

Trow it here, Mon...

But Sen-joe can't seem to make himself touch it. A long beat. Sen-joe snaps out of it and throws Antoine the weapon.

ANTOINE CATCHES IT and, with a feral ROAR, empties a full clip into his assailant. Coming to his feet, Antoine steals a clip from the dying insurgent, reloads, pounds lead.

He stands over the corpse. Then spots a shiny gold necklace on the man's neck. He rips it free. Then pauses, feeling Sen-joe's horrified gaze.

ANTOINE

Didn't sign up for this coolie shit...

Antoine lets the necklace drop and limps away, cursing, empty-handed.

EXT. ACROSS THE SQUARE -- RAID

The skirmish is winding down as Charlie and Tipton finish off a few of the wounded raiders. It's clear they have won this round. Now Tasanee races up.

TASANEE

Where is Mai--and my nephew?

They look around, spot Billy Boy sprawled on the ground. Bleeding. He took a hit at the shoulder. Grazed at the Tasmanian Devil. It all seems surreal to him in the moment...

BILLY BOY

My arm's on fire, Charlie...

Charlie hurries to the kid, checks him quickly.

BILLY BOY

Don't let me die, Charlie. Not in a fucking cow shed.

CHARLIE

Stay down.

Charlie spins back into action, two-handing his pistol.

EXT. VILLAGE GATE -- RAID

Mai is racing away in a panic, carrying her small boy when RAIDER #14 grabs her. Using her as a human shield, he retreats for the plain when...

SAMMY

Yo.

#14 SPOTS SAMMY leveling a confiscated rifle at him. Thinking, #14 sticks the barrel of his machine gun against the boy. YELLING IN THAI, he is clearly ordering Sammy to toss him his gun.

Long beat. Sammy tosses the man his assault rifle.

SAMMY

(to the man)

Go ahead. Take her.

#14 grins as he slings Sammy's rifle over his shoulder and drags Mai and the boy off.

Sammy can hear the boy WAILING as he watches them go, expressionless.

ON THE PLAIN -- #14 is dragging his captives away when something jabs him in the lower back. He jerks, freezes.

SAMMY stands with a hand open in a delivery as if he's just pitched a horse shoe. Now he opens his other hand to reveal another one--a fist sized shurikan. IN SLOW MOTION he unleashes the throwing star.

#14 is hit at the back of the neck and he drops. Sammy looks at Mai. She gazes at him, horrified, but he's already walking away.

EXT. DEEPER INTO THE PLAIN -- RAID

The last of the raiders -- #15 and #16 -- flee down the mountain when a GUNSHOT ECHOES. A beat passes. #15 tumbles into the elephant grass, motionless.

AT THE VILLAGE GATE, CHARLIE SHIFTS HIS PISTOL OVER, lining up his next shot when Tasanee yanks his hand down.

TASANEE

They're retreating.

No time to argue, Charlie shoves her away hard and aims for the last running man. Tasanee spins, and with a single perfectly placed strike, knocks the gun from Charlie's hand. He looks at her.

Meanwhile, THE FINAL RAIDER is reaching the cover of the lush forest when Charlie seems to say to no one:

CHARLIE

Got him?

CLOSE ON: RAJ'S KUKRI leaving its crocodile sheath.

RAJ

Got him.

Raj lets the Kukri fly like a steel boomerang. A long beat passes...the raider reaches the woods. Then pitches forward into a tree. Claws to hold himself up. Collapses.

Raj says nothing. Marks where the raider fell, then starts walking that way to retrieve his weapon. Tasanee appears torn between relief and horror.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST -- DAY

Raj eases up...his kukri is jutting from the dying man's back. He kneels beside him, assesses the damage. The dying dog soldier pleads in Thai.

RAJ  
Speak English?

DOG SOLDIER  
Please...

RAJ  
When does Khun Lao return?

DOG SOLDIER  
Harvest...harvest moon...

Raj digests this, looks off, casually. He retrieves his blade from the man's back.

RAJ  
You have wife?

DOG SOLDIER  
Yes. Yes, please...

RAJ  
I did, too.

The kukri cuts air.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE -- LATER

Outside the gates, Kwan stands in his opium fields, shaking. Half of his farmers lie in the flowers, massacred. Kwan stares at his former field worker Sen-joe as he staggers past, still stunned, into the square...

The villagers gaze around in shock. Khun Lao's troopers scattered, dead. Billy sits wounded. Three villagers are injured, too. Antoine limps up to Sen-joe who looks badly shaken.

ANTOINE  
You did what you had to, Bredren.

Sen-joe gestures furiously at the Raider Antoine decimated.

SEN-JOE

But what of you? Did you had to?

ANTOINE

(considers this)

There's a lot of sin in me.

Ellis drifts over to where Charlie is examining Billy Boy's shoulder wound.

ELLIS

The kid did all right. Pulled our chestnuts out of the fire back there...

Billy Boy glances up at the Afrikaner, grateful. As the remaining injured are taken away Tipton says softly:

TIPTON

Charlie.

Tipton stands above the village man shot from the alarm turret at the beginning of the fire fight. It's Aran. His WIFE begins to keen.

CHARLIE

Get her out of here.

Several village women support Aran's wife as they take her away. Everyone watches Dil pick up his son's body and walk him away.

He passes Sammy. Their eyes meet.

Charlie turns, eyes Tasanee and addresses the villagers.

CHARLIE

These were advance troops meant to test us. If I'd let them go, they'd return to Khun Lao and tell them we are but a few soldiers. Khun Lao has an army. Unless we meet him with an army, we'll all die. I don't know when he's coming, but I guarantee you he's coming with everything he's got.

RAJ

A week.

Raj is back from the plain setting his kukri deep in the sheath under his duster. The war dogs exchange looks: a week? The villagers stand motionless.

CHARLIE

If you want to fight, we'll teach you. If you don't, we'll leave in the morning.

Shaken, none of the villagers move. Looks travel among the soldiers. Doubt. And something utterly foreign to them...torn consciences.

CHARLIE

Round up every weapon there is. Whether we're leaving or staying we're gonna need 'em.

Tasanee looks on as the mercenaries start stripping the bodies of their weapons.

CUT TO:

BINOCULAR POV

As someone spies on the scene, finding SAMMY...the mystery spy's powder-blackened finger draws a line in the dust, accounting for Sammy. There are now four lines marked. BINOCULAR POV: as Tipton and Billy Boy are spotted and...THE FINGER scores the dust twice more. Six.

BINOCULAR POV: honing in on Charlie.

THE FINGER draws a final line. Seven in all.

THE FINGER rises up to adjust the field glasses. PANG SA crouches in some rocks overlooking the village. He steals down to a beat-up Humvee and ROARS off.

EXT. THE PLAIN -- DAY

A paltry pile of confiscated weapons lie on the grass outside of the village gate. Stacked beside them are antique rifles and one very funky old machine gun--the Japanese air cooled Type 3. Charlie, Tipton, Ellis and Antoine stare down at their armory.

ANTOINE

Why don't we just shoot each others now and get this shit over wid, Mon?

CHARLIE

He's coming on the harvest moon.  
So he'll have night surprise on his  
side-- but with good light.

BILLY BOY

Tactician. Ghengis Kahn attacked  
the same way.

CHARLIE

Let's leave Ghengis Khan out of  
this.

Charlie turns his gaze toward the Dragon's Tail, dark and  
forested. Raj emerges from chest-high elephant grass.

RAJ

There are tire tracks leading down  
the mountain. At least one got  
away.

Charlie reacts. This is not good. And now THUNDER IN THE  
THAILAND SKY. RAIN OVER--

INT. HOSTEL -- REAR OF TEMPLE -- DAY

Dirty from the skirmish, the war dogs are sitting at various  
posts, eating bowls of barley soup. THE RAIN POURS OUTSIDE.

CHARLIE

When he finds out it's just us,  
he'll try to take us out in one  
round. We need to stand ready.

TIPTON

That's called firing squad,  
Charlie. I prefer to get bit by a  
green mamba and die an awful neuro-  
toxic death on the way down the  
fucking mountain. Who's leaving  
with me?

ANTOINE

Not my fight, Mon.

TIPTON

That's one. Raj?

The Gurkha doesn't answer. He eats quietly.

BILLY BOY

What about code of war, Tipton?  
Like the Spartans.

ANTOINE

Aw, no Kangaroo Bwoy, no start--

BILLY BOY

Like the Samurai. What about  
*Bushido*...

ANTOINE

Boy got clipped, now he's cock of  
the walk.

BILLY BOY

Samurai. The first mercenaries,  
Man. Loyal to the cause, to each  
other--

TIPTON

--they were also the biggest  
fucking capitalists going. The  
first Private Security Firm on the  
market. They got paid in land, rice  
fields, fiefdoms...Halliburton with  
swords.

ANTOINE

War be business, Mon.

ELLIS

Not at first.

Curious eyes find Ellis alone, in a corner.

ELLIS

At first you're a patriot, young,  
fighting for your country...they  
give you the medal of honor for  
doing their dirty work. Then a new  
regime comes in, calls you a war  
criminal, kicks you out. But all  
you know how to do is fight...so  
you find work, Bru. Wherever...

RAJ

Fight for the Queen...or the  
Muhajadeen.

ELLIS

For white South Africa...or the  
Angolan Liberation Army--

TIPTON

--train the Croats, then supply guns to the Serbs--if they make a better deal. But I draw the line at that nut in North Korea.

Everyone stops, looks at Tipton. Even Antoine.

TIPTON

He has a reputation for bouncing checks.

ELLIS

You can try to go home, Billy. But you don't fit in. Never will again.

TIPTON

Soldiers of Fortune 500. Even the Royal Gurkha's are incorporated now, true, Raj?

Raj wishes it wasn't, but he nods.

TIPTON

So to hell with *Bushido*, Billy. Or whatever your real name is. We've got no stake here. We leave at 0500 hours. Charlie?

Charlie stares out the window into the rain.

CHARLIE

With his own people along, Khun Lao won't need the villagers. He'll kill them all if we're not here. Every one of them...

Sammy is standing as he eats, leaning and peering out the window at the village children.

SAMMY

He should have done that a long time ago. Who needs them? They only know how to beg. Beg for us to fight so they can hide in their temple. Just like they hide their gold in their temple. Monks are foxy beasts.

The room is silent but for the heavy rain outside. All eyes on Sammy as he stares out into it.

SAMMY

But who made them that way? Guys  
like Khun Lao's army. Guys who kill  
for money.

(eyeing Charlie)  
Guys like you.

Charlie just stares impassively at Sammy.

BILLY BOY

You know what they're eating out  
there in the rain? Tubers. Boiled  
tubers they dug out of the  
mountain...

(downing his soup)  
So that we could have their barley,  
the cream of the crop.

Charlie peers out the window. Undaunted, Tipton pours some C  
rations into the soup.

TIPTON

With a little dried beef C ration  
it's passable as consomme' Kobe'.

Antoine follows suit. As they eat, a silence fills the bunk  
area, weighs on the men as village children peer in from the  
rain.

Charlie gets up and opens the door. He looks out.

INT. HOSTEL -- REAR OF TEMPLE -- DAY

Rain-soaked Village Children are crowded in with the dirty  
war dogs who share their MRE rations with them: dried beef,  
cocoa, lemon pound cake, wet-fruit packs, and fig bars.

Charlie unwraps chocolate bars, passes them out. Earnest  
smiles break across the children's faces.

Sammy sits off and away, watching the famished village kids  
eat. One of the kids has come up short. Sammy casually tosses  
him a ration pack.

INT. RAJ'S QUARTERS -- NIGHT BEFORE LEAVING

Raj is packing his duffel in the small monk hostel when he  
hears someone CHOPPING WOOD. A few terraces below his, Mai  
and HER BOY are splitting logs. The axe is heavy for the  
small woman and the child has trouble steadying the wood on  
the block.

Raj stares down for a moment, then resumes packing.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE -- NIGHT

Charlie walks along pensively. With no one watching, he lights a cigarette, looks up at the phase of the moon...he walks past a certain house and stops there. He sits on the fountain, looking that way. Sees movement in the lit window.

IN THE WINDOW: Tasanee, her back to the night, letting her hair down long. She brushes it.

CHARLIE tries not to look.

SEN-JOE (O.S.)  
Lord Charlie.

CHARLIE  
Night hunting?

Sen-Joe grins mischievously for a moment. But there is more pressing business at hand.

SEN-JOE  
Is it true your men are leaving here?

CHARLIE  
They don't have any choice.

SEN-JOE  
Tonight...everyone is called to the temple. To remain until Khun Lao has taken his harvest and gone.

Charlie looks back at Tasanee's window. She's no longer there.

INT. MAI'S HOUSE -- NIGHT

A pitiful fire smokes. Mai and her boy are settling at a table to eat when they hear a log SPLINTER.

EXT. COURTYARD -- NIGHT

Mai and her boy open the door. Raj is splitting logs with powerful ease. He looks at her. A long, considered moment. He lifts his chin to the boy, making him come forward. Raj loads the boy's arms with a stack of firewood.

Mai steps aside. Her boy wobbles under the prodigious stack, carries it indoors. Raj watches him, almost smiles at the effort...then he swings the ax, chops some more.

Mai watches him, both uneasy and grateful.

INT. TEMPLE -- NIGHT BEFORE LEAVING

The Buddha stares off in candle glow. Tipton sits nearby, gingerly inspecting something--

CHARLIE (O.S.)  
Looking for souvenirs?

Tipton starts.

TIPTON  
Did you see these? Centuries old texts. Worth a few quid I imagine. I come in here and read them sometimes.

Charlie gives him a look: "You...reading?"

TIPTON  
Some are in Italian. Seems this explorer came through here a few centuries back and had a lot of the scriptures translated. Did you know that these people believe there's no individual? That we're no different from the grass or the trees or the rain...  
(gently turning a page)  
They don't think we ever really die. The body is just material, and the material world is an illusion...

CHARLIE  
I think their Shangri-La is the illusion, Tipton. World's catching up to them whether they like it or not.

TIPTON  
Maybe. But I'm thinking of staying on. Just a bit longer.

Charlie turns on his heel, stunned.

TIPTON

I've got a few things to figure out here.

He looks up at the giant Buddha, reflecting.

TIPTON

Like how I'm going to melt his fat ass down.

Charlie looks over his shoulder:

VILLAGERS are now entering the temple. All of them, taking refuge. Charlie and Tipton clear out...

INT. TEMPLE -- NIGHT

The temple is gunwaled with villagers as the Old Lama sits up at the shrine.

KWAN

Let them go. We have seen that disease does not cease disease.

Tasanee sits beside her father, listening.

DIL

We have no choice, they're going. But Khun Lao is coming to take this village. Where do we go, Kwan?

AUNG

We go nowhere. We remain here in this temple...to begin long days of prayer. We will be here when Khun Lao comes. We will meet him only with peace.

TASANEE

And there will be no temple standing when he leaves.

Tasanee rises. She looks over the crowd of conflicted villagers.

TASANEE

We sent for hungry soldiers...and we found them. Men who fight only for money. What did we expect them to be? Saints? They tried to protect us.

(MORE)

TASANEE (cont'd)

Whether because they are hungry, or they care about our lives, it doesn't matter now.

Tasanees doesn't see Charlie watching from the darkened doorway. Listening...

TASANEE

What matters is that tomorrow they leave and we are again alone...on this mountain. By standing up to Khun Lao and fighting, we betray and abandon the teachings we seek to preserve.

Aung nods, pleased that his daughter is getting it.

TASANEE

But if we do not stand up...what is preserved? Opium fields? Crime against men? Khun Lao taking more villages? All that we have is here. For a short time, we must not be sheep. Buddha forgive me--but from where the sun sets tonight--we must be tigers.

Aung stares at his daughter...then lowers his eyes.

Charlie lingers a moment longer...in thought...then he leaves.

INT. CHARLIE'S QUARTERS -- NEXT DAWN

A hand awakens Charlie. He squints. Billy Boy's beaming.

EXT. TEMPLE -- DAWN

Charlie walks out into the glare of morning and slows...

IN THE SQUARE every man and teenaged boy in the village (except for Kwan and his few hold outs) stands in a crude approximation of a military formation. Aung stands among them, solemn. Sen-joe steps forward and once again salutes Charlie.

BILLY BOY

You gonna salute the little tacker, Charlie?

CHARLIE

I haven't saluted anyone in fifteen years.

RAJ

Maybe you haven't found a man worth the effort.

Charlie eyes Tasanee. A beat. He salutes Sen-joe. Sen-joe looks like he's going to bust. The villagers erupt into CHEERS. Charlie looks to each and every war dog, sees their reaction to the turn-out.

SEN-JOE

What to do, Lordship?

Charlie looks at his Ronin. What can they do? The locals have shown up.

CHARLIE

(to Ellis)

Split them up into squads and get some intel coming in. I need a couple young men who are very brave, very smart and very fast.

SEN-JOE

These monks, they fly like eagles.

He motions to the saffron-robed acolytes. Charlie eyes their young faces and wishes he had older candidates. But he doesn't.

TIPTON

What you got in mind, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Still remember your Morse Code?

Sammy feels a gathering of serene monks assembling behind him. He peers over his shoulder as they look to him for leadership. One holds a stick.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAILS -- LATER

The young novice monks climb high into the mountains carrying packs. Raj is with them. At a high outcropping of rock, the Gurkha unloads a heavy coil of cable. He begins bolting one end of the cable into rock, creating a long zip line. Below them, preparations are underway...

EXT. FORTRESS WALLS -- DAY

Like a barn raising, Antoine is leading a crew of VILLAGE MEN as they reinforce the ruins of the old walls. TEAMS OF YOKED WATER BUFFALO pull large timbers into place.

Billy Boy, sweat-drenched, is dragging timber with his one good arm when he hears HORSE WHINNIES. He tips a glance toward--

HORSE PASTURE where a young village woman is in with the herd, trying to catch a rogue STALLION that fairly froths at the teeth.

Billy recognizes the girl as the one with the short cropped hair he ogled earlier in the tunnels. He watches her...

HORSE GIRL

(re: horse)

No good now. Because hearing gun shot. My herd run away. Lost now.

Billy comes over the fence, lands beside her, looking at her pretty features. She backs away. He takes a coil of rope from a post.

BILLY BOY

Ya mind?

She moves aside and Billy walks slowly into the herd, closes part of the gate so that the stallion is in tractable space.

BILLY BOY

Hullo, Mate. It's aright...

He moves comfortably around the horse, lightly flipping the loose end of the lariat across the stallion's back as he circles, trapped in the enclosure. The stallion snorts like a dragon at him. Again, Billy lightly flips the rope across the horse's back and makes a gentle whistling sound.

The village Horse Girl wrinkles her brow, unsure.

BILLY BOY

See him turning the inside ear to me? He's listening...

Billy "round pens" the stallion, getting him trotting in a loose circle around him...he actually knows what he's doing.

EXT. BAMBOO FOREST -- DAY

A circle of Village Monks stand tight around Sammy as he fashions a long bo staff. (THAI, SUBTITLES):

SAMMY

Long ago...the Manchu army attacked  
a Buddhist temple in the mountains.  
Every harvest season, they  
attacked. To rob and to kill.

When he hands the staff up to a novice monk, it becomes clear that half of the circle are already holding one...

SAMMY

The Monks refused to fight. Because  
Buddha law says we must not kill.

A SOUND OF AFFIRMATION travels through the monk assembly.

SAMMY

But Buddha also said be a soldier  
of truth, always. Defend life,  
always. But do not kill.

The monks hold their staffs tentatively as Sammy tosses a new one to a Senior Monk.

SAMMY

Those monks took the Manchu spears  
left on the battleground. They  
removed the points...and taught  
themselves to use the stick to  
defend their lives. When the army  
came again, they fought them. And  
drove them away. Today, the monks  
of Shaolin Temple are legends.  
After the harvest moon, you will  
be, too. If you let me teach  
you...to defend life. Yes?

No one responds. Sammy's hard, untrusting eyes sweep the circle, unsure if his rare oratory hit home.

SENIOR MONK

Yes.

Sammy and the monk lock eyes. DISTANT GUNFIRE makes a few of them glance north.

EXT. MAKESHIFT FIRING RANGE -- DAY

Charlie and Tipton train a large group of Farmers to shoot the elephant gun-sized Mauser rifles. The First Farmer triggers his--and it ROARS like a blunderbuss scaring the shit out of the entire village. Some scatter and hide.

CHARLIE

Christ, did you know it was that loud?

TIPTON

You're not gonna stop a tank with a cap gun.

They look over -- the villagers seem to be shouting invectives toward the farmer who squeezed the trigger. It is Sen-joe's sunny-faced brother Kiet, setting up for another shot.

Charlie mops sweat from his neck. He is looking out at the high ridge of land on the backside of the village.

CHARLIE

If he sends troops through that pass they can take us from the weak side, and I don't think we have enough gun to cover there.

TIPTON

We can't give them that option. Jesus, this is crazy, Charlie.

SOME LIVELY SHOUTING draws both man's attention to--

THE TOWN SQUARE

Where Ellis is putting a squad of Farmers through a formation drill, South African bush style. He leads, running with an old-fashioned bolt-action rifle while a LONG COLUMN OF FARMERS runs behind him. They are storming the gate as if meeting a charge.

ELLIS

Envelope!

The Farmer right behind Ellis SHOUTS IN THAI and the column breaks into two, flanking along walls. It doesn't quite come off, a few wander lost in the middle. TASANEE, watching from where she teaches school, gives a concerned look Charlie's way. Is it hopeless?

ON THE FIRING RANGE -- Charlie meets her gaze, shrugs.

CHARLIE

(re: Ellis' squad)  
Crow Bar. When was the last time  
you saw that?

TIPTON

The Alamo?

CHARLIE

You're just a wealth of  
encouragement, aren't you? Hey--  
Sergeant Kiet, why are they yelling  
at you when you try to hit the  
target--tell them they should be  
cheering you, we're a team.

KIET

--it is okay, Lordship. It is how  
it is done at the Festival of the  
Horse when we play the arrows.

TIPTON

They try to rattle each other, make  
the other miss the target.

CHARLIE

Did he say play the arrows? What  
arrows?

#### OUTSIDE THE GATE

Kwan and his holdouts tend the poppies. The former stands in  
the blaze of bright flowers, watching the training with quiet  
disgust. But FOUR OF HIS FOLLOWERS defect with their potato  
hoes and join--

#### A TRENCH LINE

Where Villagers dig deep fox holes, ten yards apart. Suddenly  
a QUIET THUNDER begins to build on the plain. Everyone  
freezes with their picks and shovels. THE RUMBLE GROWS --  
LIKE AN AVALANCHE -- a Farmer dives into a fox hole as...

#### A STAMPEDE OF HORSES

Explodes over a hill. Driving them from the rear, hellbent on  
that rogue stallion is Billy Boy, a durag tied in tribal  
fashion.

BILLY BOY

Cut it in, cut it in, Mugs!

Billy Boy is quirting the stallion's croup with a tail of rope, jackaroo-style as he rides. He drives the stallion up the side of the herd and forces them inward, around...toward the fenced pasture where the Horse Girl waits, smiling huge.

Billy Boy drives the captured horses into the corral, WHOOPING and hollering. The girl closes the gate, looking at the Aussie like she's got a crush.

When the dust clears, he has a bit of an audience, Charlie among them.

BILLY BOY

Just helping out the little miss.  
These brumbies are rank, but they  
can go right down the side of the  
mountain--at a run. Born to it...

CHARLIE

Where'd you learn to ride like  
that?

BILLY BOY

(beat)  
Afghanistan. 10th Motown.

CHARLIE

Bullshit.

BILLY BOY

Bin Laden's horse was faster.

Billy Boy rides by and scoops up the Horse Girl. Her scream of protest is more like a laugh as Billy gallops away with her, just having fun.

Charlie shakes his head, amused. But also intrigued.

EXT. IMPROVISED ARMAMENTS YARD -- LATER

Tipton is dismantling old hand grenades and collecting black powder in windrows, drying it in the sun.

Several Village Women are busily crafting bamboo chutes while another group are spreading out rice paper. Charlie walks through the bustling industry with Tasanee, curious--

TIPTON

We're just getting ready for  
Chinese New Year.

Mai appears, hands Tipton a flour sack of some kind. He cuts a wink at Charlie.

TIPTON

Beet sugar. Black powder. Coffee grounds. Pine resin. And manure of water buffalo...equals nitrocellulose. Or something pretty damn close to it.

Tasanee looks at Charlie for reassurance.

TIPTON

Why you smiling?  
(to Tasanee)  
Why's he smiling?

Tasanee is kind of smiling, too.

CHARLIE

You'll never guess what their national sport is.

ON THE PLAIN -- MOMENTS LATER

MONKS and FARMERS string up ornate long bows inscribed with frightening pagan demons. Kiet is slapping the ground, screaming and SHOUTING THAI INVECTIVES as--

An ARCHER draws back his bow string, 60 pounds of pull. The SHOUTING GROWS frenzied as all of the archers join in.

CHARLIE

What are they yelling at that guy?

TASANEE

They're telling him that his wife is lonely, because he has a very small...very tiny...

CHARLIE

Got it.

--THEY FIRE...hundreds of yards out into the plain a SWARM OF ARROWS riddle a line of simple wooden targets.

Charlie stands with Tipton and Raj.

CHARLIE

Gentlemen, meet our first artillery unit.

Tipton and Raj: expressions priceless.

## EXT. THE MOUNTAIN -- DAYS LATER

Sammy leads his Shaolin brigade through stick fighting drills. They "flower" their staffs, twirling them in formation. When Sammy attacks man after man, they block and defend, WOOD CLACKING WOOD in skillful tempo.

When Sammy gets past a Young Monk's defense, he pulls him to center by his toga. Sammy extends his own staff to demonstrate its six foot length. He scribes a circle in the dirt around himself.

SAMMY

That is fighting space for each man. That space is your house. At this distance, you control the fight, protect the house, Yo?

YOUNG MONK

Protect the house.

The Young Monk assumes his fighting stance, hard-earned sweat beading on his shaven crown. Sammy smiles.

## EXT. FORTRESS WALLS -- LATER

Antoine tests a sniper position, aiming a confiscated Thai rifle. Sensing someone behind him, he turns.

A CHILD MONK stands there, watching him. The little monk hands him something. It is a small plane carved from wood.

Antoine eyes the child with a kind of suspicion. Is this a bad joke? But the child's smile is earnest. Again, he offers the gift. Antoine takes it, holds the fragile thing in his large hand. He nods in acceptance.

The Child, grins wider, runs away down the length of the wall. Antoine watches him go, then sets up for a test shot again.

## EXT. MOUNTAIN -- LATER

Charlie and Raj stand at the bank of a swollen river as they survey the valley below. Raj is pointing something out.

RAJ

I followed it for a few miles. Khun Lao's been cutting a highway.

CHARLIE

Convoy route. To drive the shit to his plant.

RAJ

(a nod)

He can get men up here in trucks. A lot of men.

Charlie is staring down below at the flash-burned road, thinking hard on it. Daunting stuff. Finally, he turns and walks away, leaving Raj.

CHARLIE

Dam it.

RAJ

What?

CHARLIE

The river. Dam it.

As Charlie walks away through the tall elephant grass, Raj looks at the swollen river behind him. He smiles...

RAJ

Yes, Sir.

EXT. VILLAGE OF TUKAR -- DAY

Mist-drenched poppy fields, bright flowers swaying on a breeze...a sea of them.

It's been two months since Khun Lao left them and they are tall now. Ready for harvest. Kwan and his holdouts tend to them watching, while in the open plain below--

VILLAGERS continue to dig trenches, build earthworks. They look up as HORSEMEN TROT BY: Billy, Ellis, Raj, and Antoine. They ride armed, and look hard-eyed. Bad of ass.

Billy Boy leads a riderless white horse proudly up to Charlie who is working out a map.

BILLY BOY

I broke him for you, Commander. Try him out. He's got a soft mouth so go easy...

Charlie stands there, uncomfortable about something. Everyone watches, they want to see Charlie mount tall.

CHARLIE  
I've got to lead ground units.

ELLIS  
You don't like horses...?

CHARLIE  
They're too goddamned big. They bite.

ELLIS  
These mountain ponies?

ANTOINE'  
Rahtid! Big man afraid of horses.

TIPTON  
(from nearby)  
That's genetically impossible. He's from Texas.

Charlie is stomping away, Gerbruder rifle in hand.

CHARLIE  
(summoning)  
Ground units!

As Billy and the posse dismount, they smile along with Tasanee as she watches Charlie give the horse herd a wide berth.

CHARLIE  
(passing Sammy)  
We ready?

When Sammy answers with a COMMAND IN THAI, his Shaolin brigade--now including Dil--answers in deafening unison, upending their bo staffs into fighting position.

ANTOINE  
Big up the Wu Tang Clan...

INT. TEMPLE -- NIGHT

BLACKNESS. A match pierces the dark, touches a candle wick. Someone is kneeling before the golden Buddha.

From shadows farther back, the Old Lama emerges to see who has come to pray in the middle of the night. He squints at the back of the kneeling man.

Sammy turns, candle glow lighting half his face. ( THAI, SUBTITLED):

OLD LAMA  
You once wore the robes.

Sammy ponders the words from the ancient priest then turns back to the shrine. Silent for a time.

SAMMY  
When I was a boy. Ran away.

OLD LAMA  
Many orphans do.  
(off Sammy's silence)  
They run away from the monastery,  
looking for the family that left  
them there.

Sammy tightens, wishes the old man would go.

OLD LAMA  
But the monastery found you. Yes?

SAMMY  
No. The Thai army did.

The Old Lama digests this in a bottomless silence.

OLD LAMA  
It is never too late to return to  
the Righteous Path.

SAMMY  
The men you need here right  
now...are not men who walk the  
Righteous Path. You need men who  
are already reborn among dogs.

Sammy smiles with the profound bitterness of a childhood stolen by war.

SAMMY  
You found seven.

But the look the Old Lama gives him in return almost breaks him down. Sammy has to leave. The Old Lama remains in the candle light, watching the young man go.

EXT. HOSTEL -- SAMMY'S QUARTERS -- NIGHT

The village party has wound down, most everyone asleep now as Sammy returns to his quarters. But something is in the doorway, waiting for him. Sammy opens the burlap bundle. Fifty shurikens--throwing stars forged from pig iron--gleam in the moonlight.

SAMMY

Thank you.

Dil appears behind him. You can't spy on a guy like Sammy.

DIL

My son was brave. All I have left  
of him now is my grandchild...

Sammy's not sure what he's getting at. Finally:

DIL

Teach me to defend him when Khun  
Lao comes.

When Sammy turns, he sees that Dil is holding a bo staff.

EXT. TEMPLE BELL TOWER -- NIGHT

Raj stares watchfully out, idly swinging a small chain as Charlie climbs into the tower.

CHARLIE

My watch. How we lookin'?

Raj nods. Not a guy to waste words. Charlie spots the necklace swinging absently in the Gurkha's hand.

RAJ

Memory box. From my homeland.

Raj shows Charlie the small clamshell style locket with Hindu design.

RAJ

Supposed to protect you from  
misfortune. Gift from my wife  
before I shipped out for Kabul.

CHARLIE

(beat)

Where is she, Raj?

Raj grows silent, looking out toward the sun coming up over the Himalayan foothills far to the east.

RAJ

While I was off fighting someone else's war, some rebels came through my home village. They took her and forced her to be their guide, their sherpa, show them the mountain trails across borders, carry their packs, like a mule. When she got them to their destination...

CHARLIE

Jesus, Raj...

RAJ

Worse than that, Charlie. The guy's name was Khun Lao. I thought the Burmese killed him a long time ago. Then I heard his name again...in a bar in Bangkok.

Charlie doesn't know what to say.

RAJ

When this is done, I'm heading to those foot hills, make my way to K2. Climbing the bitch. All the way to the top, and I ain't coming down. I've seen enough. Fought enough for ten lifetimes.

Raj finally looks at Charlie. He offers Charlie the amulet.

RAJ

Want you to keep it. Our business is coming this way...

Raj leaves the tower. Charlie considers the amulet for a moment then pockets it.

EXT. CAMP FAR OUT IN THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE -- NIGHT

Khun Lao turns in the glow of a fire as a Humvee RUMBLES on into the camp. Pang Sa swings out. He is battle worn, but most telling of all -- he is alone.

KHUN LAO

How many?

Pang Sa is afraid to even confirm. Afraid he'll get clubbed.  
Or worse.

KHUN LAO

How many?

PANG SA

Seven.

KHUN LAO

Seven. Seven men killed sixteen of mine when we held the advantage of a shock strike? Are you serious?

Pang Sa nods unhappily.

PANG SA

Report from Hong Mo: a *farang* leads them. Private contractor.

KHUN LAO

He means to fight Khun Lao, this contractor? Why...? The villagers, don't tell me they're...

PANG SA

(shakes no)  
Sheep. Hiding.

KHUN LAO

Get everyone moving. We've got to end this guy.

Pang Sa obeys.

INT. VILLAGE OF TUKAR -- NIGHT

The moon is not quite full.

Charlie is alone in the tower while the village sleeps soundly. He senses a presence...

CHARLIE

Can't sleep?

TASANEE

I heard something...

CHARLIE

Just water building up in the high passes. Rock slides.

TASANEE

Monsoons haven't started yet...but  
thank you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

I like that better than Mister. Or  
Lordship...

TASANEE

What is your last name?

CHARLIE

Doesn't matter.

TASANEE

It does to me.

Charlie looks at her for a moment...then fishes his dog tags  
up from inside his shirt. She seems surprised when he hands  
them to her.

TASANEE

Cadeau.

CHARLIE

You say that pretty good. You say  
it like you're from Louisiana.  
That's where I was born. But raised  
in Texas.

TASANEE

This says New Jersey.

CHARLIE

That's just the base where I  
trained.

TASANEE

How did you...how did you become...

CHARLIE

Usual fog of war stuff. I got  
airdropped into the Sudan to save  
some refugees. Women and kids. Only  
our friendly neighborhood spook  
wrote down the wrong GPS numbers.

TASANEE

I don't understand--

CHARLIE

--instead of saving those  
civilians, I...

His voice trails. She fills in the void, watches his eyes.

CHARLIE

Like I say, fog of war...but I think that's about the time I started fighting for a paycheck.

TASANEE

But that's not what you're fighting for now.

He looks at her for a long moment.

CHARLIE

Your name...Tasane...what's it mean?

TASANEE

I don't know. Just a name.

CHARLIE

It means Beautiful View.

She does a take, can't help but laugh.

TASANEE

How do you know this?

CHARLIE

I asked around.

Tasane appears both betrayed and moved by this.

CHARLIE

For the first time since I was a very young man, I feel like I'm fighting for a place that means something to me.

TASANEE

Maybe you're just tired of it, Charlie. Maybe you wish peace.

CHARLIE

To guys like me that's another way of saying unemployment. Guys like Ellis. Sammy. Tipton. They wouldn't know what to do with it, peace. A family. A life...

TASANEE

Can you remember wanting those things?

Charlie doesn't answer. He looks at her in the moon glow.

CHARLIE

You make me remember.

When she doesn't look away, he moves closer to her, but stops short. She allows him a simple kiss. Almost childlike. It makes him remember. And, for a moment, it makes him forget.

Until a METALLIC WHISTLING cuts through the night. A searing light BURNS IN THE SKY making HORSES start racing in a panicked circle.

TASANEE

Charlie...

CHARLIE

Illumination round. He's two days early.

Charlie lights a torch, sending a signal. Tasanee quickly leaves the tower.

EXT. VILLAGE GATE -- NIGHT

The panicked villagers run as an ARTILLERY SHELL levels the fountain in the square. SCREAMS through cut the night air.

EXT. KHUN LAO'S FIRE BASE -- NIGHT

Khun Lao's men are using a battery of Howitzer cannons to SHELL the village from a mile away. Nearby, guerillas unload more guns and munitions from massive transport trucks. Khun Lao himself dispatches a half dozen personnel carriers up the mountain toward the village...

INT. VILLAGE SQUARE -- NIGHT

The villagers run, terrified. Around them, the SHELLING is deafening. Tasanee hurries past Sen-Joe.

TASANEE

Soldiers to arms.

Sen-Joe SHOUTS THE ORDER IN THAI as he and other villagers begin to separate from their wives and children.

Sen-Joe and Kiet look scared as Ellis tosses them their Mauser Tank rifles.

ELLIS

Hold the east wall.

Mai's boy is crying. In the chaos, he's become separated from his mother. Raj scoops him up, finds Mai. She takes the boy and holds a look with the Gurkha...

RAJ

Go to the tunnels. You'll be safe.

Raj turns, catches a rifle, runs to a position.

INT. TEMPLE TOWER -- NIGHT

The sky is crawling with shells as Charlie watches HEADLIGHTS far down the mountainside, cutting fog. Nearby, two dozen torches stand ready. Charlie selects one striped with blue paint.

EXT. THE RIVER -- NIGHT

Gathered at the dam site are THREE FARMERS with TWO TEAMS OF BUFFALO. They see the signal from the tower. One of the farmers SHOUTS. His twin buffalo lurch forward in the yoke, drawing chains taut and pulling at the dam struts. They barely move.

EXT. ROAD LEADING TO THE VILLAGE -- NIGHT

The personnel carriers WHINE up the switchback roads, gunwaled with Khun Lao's Dog Soldiers.

EXT. THE RIVER -- NIGHT

The Farmers are flogging their water buffalo and shouting in frantic Thai. The horned animals dig in and pull. But HEADLIGHTS are already washing past them. At least two trucks are already up the road toward the village.

Finally THE STRUTS CREAK...and GIVE. THE DAM BURSTS!

EXT. ROAD LEADING TO THE VILLAGE -- NIGHT

Two personnel carriers just miss the SURGE OF MUDDY WATER AND DEBRIS as it pummels the other four vehicles.

The DOG SOLDIERS packed in the beds, gaze down the grade in startled confusion as the cascade washes out the road behind them, cutting them off from the convoy they were leading.

AND WAITING UP AHEAD, a massive tree felled earlier, blocks their passage. The DRIVER of the first truck SHOUTS ANGRY ORDERS. Dog Soldiers bail from the bed and scramble toward the roadblock.

That's when it happens:

A HISSING SOUND fills the night...a Dog Soldier, caught in the headlights, pivots oddly then crumples, an arrow deep in his back. Man after man is struck by arrows.

IN THE TREES -- Ellis, gripping a rifle, waits. Then:

ELLIS

Envelope.

A COLUMN OF FARMERS runs forward, bush-trooper style, "enveloping" and throwing themselves at the fallen tree as a barricade. They UNLOAD PRIMITIVE TANK GUNS, one round each, all at once.

As KHUN LAO'S DOG SOLDIERS fall, RETURN FIRE kills a farmer, but--

Ellis, Charlie, and Tipton burst into the headlights, SHOOTING. Like the Earp Brothers, side-by-side and just as steady. BULLETS SMASH WINDSHIELDS. Men buckle.

SIX DOG SOLDIERS shoot their way backward into the trees for cover...into a clearing where they are swallowed by Sammy and a gantlet of clubs--Shaolin bo staffs.

Only one Dog Soldier is left standing, swinging his AK-47. Something drops him. Raj, kukri in hand. Antoine is already behind the wheel of the truck, pirating the vehicle.

As Khun Lao's men are finished off, the remaining village gunners quickly field strip their weapons.

EXT. KHUN LAO'S FIRE BASE -- NIGHT

A single muddied personnel carrier has returned, escaping the floodwaters. Soldiers bail from the bed, shrilling out their report--

PANG SA

He took out part of the road.

KHUN LAO

No, not just the road. Khun Lao's highway. This fucking guy wants a battle, I'll give him a bloodbath. Tell the rear guard to show themselves.

SOMEWHERE, PANG SA'S REEDY VOICE IS HEARD...

SHOUTING over a walkie. Whoever's listening pulls a lighter and jacks its flint to life...A MONG TAI LEADER lights a torch. Behind him, torch after torch is lit...

INT/EXT -- MOVING PERSONNEL CARRIER -- NIGHT

The truck nears the village gate. Aboard it, the mercenaries and village warriors are enjoying their victory when Antoine spots something in his rearview and slows the truck. Charlie gazes down the plain.

CHARLIE

Jesus.

Below Khun Lao's bivouac, the darkness is dotting with yellow points of light...

BURNING TORCHES gripped in grubby fists...HUNDREDS OF JACK BOOTS begin to march. PULL UP to reveal SHRAPNEL FACE LEADING A COLUMN OF FORMER BURMESE NORTHERN COMMAND SOLDIERS.

CHARLIE AND THE OTHERS STARE SILENTLY as the valley glows.

CHARLIE

How many?

TIPTON

Eight hundred.

ELLIS

I'd say more like a thousand.

TIPTON

Just trying to think positive.

They drive into the village and FARMERS bolt the gate.

EXT. KHUN LAO'S FIRE BASE -- NIGHT

A WALKIE crackles in Thai with a report to Pang Sa.

PANG SA

We have laid planks at the crossing. We have passage.

Khun Lao walks toward a parked Humvee, heavy chains on tires.

KHUN LAO

Take me up.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE -- MOMENTS LATER

The soldiers and villagers stare at their trove of captured weaponry. Yesterday it would have seemed like a lot. But now...

SEN-JOE

What to do, Lordship?

Charlie says nothing. He climbs onto the old fortress wall and surveys the plain. The soldiers and a few of the villagers come up behind. All see...

KHUN LAO'S ARMY seething below, making preparations.

CHARLIE

He's set up a spotting station.  
He'll direct the battle from there.

All eyes study a distant bluff in the light of the near-full moon. The hill is arrayed with powerful field glasses on tripods.

TASANEE

Charlie....

Just then, Charlie sharpens--a Humvee comes up the mountain. Everyone goes for their weapons when it stops. Charlie raises his hand, no, and watches a TALL FIGURE get out and stand there. A clear target. Fearless.

KHUN LAO

Colonel Cadeau, come alone.

EXT. THE PLAIN -- NIGHT

Charlie walks toward the Humvee. Behind him, Charlie's army lines the walls, guns ready. Khun Lao studies them.

KHUN LAO

You've made an army out of a bunch of barley farmers. Now that's leadership.

He lights a cigar, offers one to Charlie. He takes it.

KHUN LAO

You've done it. Made them want to fight for you. Why?

CHARLIE

They're my client.

KHUN LAO

(laughing)

You've outsourced jobs for big fucking spenders, rich dictators. Now you're going to die for a village no one even knows is up here? For what, Charlie?

CHARLIE

How do you know my name?

Khun Lau answers with cigar smoke. Smiles.

KHUN LAO

Let's not bullshit each other. Men like us, we fight for money. But there's something more. The shit we've done, our fates are sealed. They don't let men like us back into our own countries. No matter what, you're lost. So walk away from this. You can go.

CHARLIE

Go where? To do what?

KHUN LAO

In a year, two at the most, this village will be a city. These people will know there's a world outside of them. They'll have money, telephones, TV's...

CHARLIE

They just want to be left alone.

KHUN LAO

And you're going to take a bullet for that?

(MORE)

KHUN LAO (cont'd)  
 I've offered them progress.  
 Building things. Health clinics...

Charlie doesn't bite. Khun Lao shrugs.

KHUN LAO  
 That's all there is then. I sell  
 your heads to the Mong Tai. Unless  
 you surrender tonight. Then you'll  
 get the biggest payday ever.

CHARLIE  
 And what about them?

KHUN LAO  
 I need this mountain, my fields are  
 up here. I need homes for these  
 people--look at all of them I've  
 got on my hands. I'll let the  
 farmers go.

CHARLIE  
 That's a lie.

KHUN LAO  
 Everybody lies, Charlie. These  
 monks promised you resources,  
 right? Fuck that, I sacked the  
 place two months ago. They've got  
 shit.

Charlie wasn't expecting this and Khun Lao sees it.

KHUN LAO  
 I'll offer this once. Forget this  
 ridiculous fight and these sheep  
 will fall apart. You and your men  
 can stay with me and get fat or  
 move on. I'll give you your plane  
 and you go. But stand your ground  
 and I'll slaughter every last one  
 of you. It's your choice, Charlie.

EXT. VILLAGE GATE -- NIGHT

Tasane watches Charlie storm past her into the temple.

INT. TEMPLE -- NIGHT

Women, children and babies watch the Old Lama pray. Charlie  
 hurries through them and climbs the alter.

He scrapes his K-Bar knife across the Buddha -- GOLD LEAF  
PEELS BACK REVEALING GRAY LEAD.

Charlie steels himself to go out and tell his men.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE -- JUST BEFORE DAWN

The seven mercenaries stand near hitched horses that are  
rigged with light mountain saddles.

CHARLIE

I told you there was gold here.  
There's not.

ANTOINE

The Buddha, Mon.

CHARLIE

It's worthless.

TIPTON

Not to them.

Antoine looks at Tipton like he's got malaria.

CHARLIE

Khun Lao is offering a pay day to  
any freelancer who wants to go down  
to his camp. He's giving us an out.

Charlie scans the faces in silence.

RAJ

My business is here.

Sammy seems to struggle with the choice, looking over at his  
monks: they are sitting with backs to the wall, their bo  
staves on their shoulders. Ellis rubs his eyes, tired. Tired  
of fighting.

ANTOINE

Gimme back mi plane?

CHARLIE

You were only supposed to drop us  
in, Prince. You don't owe any one  
anything. You can fly out.

Antoine thinks on it.

ANTOINE

Seven fly in, seven fly out. Let  
them come, Mon.

He slams a clip into a Makarov machine rifle.

BILLY BOY

Yahoos. Goddamn jackaroos set us up. I knew we couldn't trust these dirt-farmers.

CHARLIE

That's right, Billy. You knew. You knew because you were a dirt-farmer yourself.

Billy Boy does a wild-eyed take. All eyes are on the young Aussie now as Charlie stares him down.

CHARLIE

Born in a cow shed. Where? You never served.

Billy Boy trembles with a rage as he leads a mountain pony off a distance, stands there. Looks like he might ride out. He does a fancy mount, wheels his horse around and glares at Charlie.

BILLY BOY

West Queensland, cattle station.  
Poor as shit. Like *them*, Charlie.

The other six watch him sit his horse, enraged. The villagers watch, too.

BILLY BOY

I *couldn't* serve. I'm blind in one eye. Kicked by a colt when I was twelve. *Couldn't* get in.

(beat)

*Couldn't* get out. Alpha Mike  
Foxtrot.

Billy Boy turns toward Charlie, his eyes burning.

BILLY BOY

I'm a jackaroo, Charlie. A fucking cow drover.

CHARLIE

And that might be all we need right now, Pal.

Billy Boy squints at Charlie through the torch light. The others exchange glances.

EXT. KHUN LAO'S CAMP -- DAWN

The dawn sky; full of silk-grey clouds and the promise of rain. THUNDER grumbles in the passes.

Beneath it, Khun Lao's grimy freedom fighters gird for the decisive battle. Khun Lao kneels before his son, Zu, who is wearing his Kawasaki cap on backward. The war lord turns it around the proper way and taps the bill.

ZU

I fight with you.

KHUN LAO

I fight today so you'll never have to.

The soldiers escort the boy away as Khun Lao turns to his troops. A wind rips at the tattered uniforms of 800 Northern Command deserters and seventy of Khun Lao's hard-core followers.

KHUN LAO

You men have trained for no more than a bowl of rice at the end of each day. Win here and you will sleep in warm beds as rich men. Lose, we'll die here.

(beat)

Spare the poppies. Nothing else.

As his army ROARS with growing blood lust, Khun Lao climbs into a Humvee and races up the final leg of "Khun Lao's Highway."

EXT. VILLAGE OF TUKAR -- THE PLAIN -- DAWN

Kwan and his holdouts are loading the last of their belongings into buffalo carts. They can't look at the villagers remaining to fight as they file into the meadow with other deserters...

EXT. KHUN LAO'S SPOTTING STATION -- DAWN

Pang Sa watches Khun Lao exit his Humvee.

PANG SA

They're falling apart.

BINOCULAR POV: villagers make their exodus with Kwan.

KHUN LAO  
And still he fights. So be it.

INT. UNDERGROUND PASSAGES

Cramped and chaotic as the women and children and some elderly take refuge under Tasanee's urgent direction.

EXT. VILLAGE -- DAWN

On the fortress wall the Seven watch stoically as two dozen village warriors race past Kwan and disappear over a hill.

CHARLIE  
How many are left?

ELLIS  
Fifty.

A last villager bolts.

RAJ  
I'd quit asking while you're ahead.

Rain begins to fall. Charlie looks skyward.

AT THE SPOTTING STATION

KHUN LAO sits back moodily.

KHUN LAO  
Get it over with.

PANG SA keys his shortwave and GIVES THE ORDER.

IN THE VALLEY, HUNDREDS OF JACK BOOTS START TROMPING as Khun Lao's forces move up in formation. His Mong Tai diehards bring up the rear.

BACK ON THE WALL, THE MARCHING ECHOES fearsomely. All eyes watch the dark column of soldiers funnel up the valley.

CHARLIE  
Positions.

The Aussie nods and drops out of view, sliding in his reckless style down a rope. Ellis runs at a crouch down the gangway, ammo clips duct taped to him.

CHARLIE  
Lock it.

THE MAIN GATE IS BOLTED with heavy timbers.

CHARLIE WATCHES Khun Lao's diehards leave the valley and spread across the plain like a malignant cancer.

CHARLIE  
No shooting 'til--

SEN-JOE  
(repeating loudly)  
No shooting 'til--

CHARLIE  
(clasping a hand over Sen-  
Joe's mouth)  
No shooting 'til I say so. Why?

VILLAGERS  
We don't have the bullets to waste,  
Lord Charlie.

Charlie gazes at the villagers, pretending to be brave but terrified. Yet they hold steady.

CHARLIE  
Good men.

Khun Lao's diehards keep coming. JACK BOOTS LOUD. A coming monsoon gust sends the temple bell TOLLING MADLY.

CHARLIE  
Someone wanna put a sock in that?

A villager races off to do so.

DOWN IN THE CRAMPED AND CROWDED TUNNELS

Village women and children can HEAR GUNFIRE and the TOLLING BELL and they would panic...if not for Tasanee who directs them down the tunnel, gets them to sit backs to the wall. She looks skyward, listening. The EARTH GRUMBLES...

OUT ON THE WALL

Charlie looks at Khun Lao's front lines. They're coming. His eyes fix...

CHARLIE  
GROUND!

RISING FROM MUDDY FOX HOLES

25 FARMERS heft their mix of old rifles and LET LOOSE to meet-

KHUN LAO'S DOG SOLDIERS. But the Dog Soldiers do not stop, even as several fall. THEY CHARGE, FIRING AK-47's.

ONE FARMER FALLS DEAD onto another who is so shaken, he abandons the fight, burrows deep in the earth. A GRENADE IS LOBBED IN, BLOWING out mud and clay.

FROM THE WALL, CHARLIE SHOTS. Tasanee's father, Aung, takes aim beside him. But the old man can't seem to pull the trigger.

AT THE SPOTTING STATION -- KHUN LAO likes what he sees. But then he hears something unusual. A RUMBLING THUNDER. Out on the plain--

KHUN LAO

What the fuck is *this*?

20 HORSEMEN ride out of the downpour at full gallop. Holding point is Billy Boy, armed. Flanking him on each side, Raj and Ellis. Behind them, Antoine and a FLYING WEDGE OF MOUNTED FARMERS, armed with confiscated assault rifles.

Riding Cheyenne war party style they thunder around the flank of the front lines and cross the plain--as if on an insane dare-- FIRING INTO THE REAR OF KHUN LAO'S FRONT LINES.

KHUN LAO -- WATCHES THROUGH BINOCULARS, rapt.

FROM THE WALL, CHARLIE SHOTS AS HE WATCHES his cavalry throw the Khun Lao offensive into disarray. But the 30 or so Dog Soldiers who have breached the fox holes are now storming the gate. Aung finally squeezes the trigger. And kills one.

THE DOG SOLDIERS keep charging, but several stumble and drop to a silent death. Because--

AT THE WALL, SAMMY is in a cat-stance, winging throwing stars with deadly accuracy.

OUT ON THE PLAIN

Billy Boy rides in a daredevil 2-point position, firing from a gallop as the mounted squad races for A PLOW TRAIL THROUGH THE CENTER OF THE POPPY FIELDS.

Raj fires from saddle until he's empty. FARMERS ARE SHOT FROM THE SADDLE, HORSES BUCKLE. RAJ AND HIS HORSE GO DOWN.

UP ON THE WALL

Charlie fires until his gun is spent. Shouting directives, he gropes for more shells nearby. But JACK BOOTS land an inch from his face as a DOG SOLDIER breaches the wall, aims a Makarov auto-loader at the American's head.

Charlie doesn't see it coming: the spinning jump-kick that breaks the Dog Soldier's neck. Charlie looks up to see Tasanee. So does an impressed Sammy.

Still in her fighting stance, she is staring tiger-like at ANOTHER DOG SOLDIER climbing upward. She wheels into a crane-like spin and takes him out.

Charlie's eyes meet her's for a second...and then he grabs a fallen AK, rolls. She grabs one, too, and takes cover behind the ruined walls. She works the action as she has seen it done in the training.

ON THE PLAIN -- RAJ DOWN

Ellis spins his mount in a frothing circle, catching a riderless horse by the loose reins and holding it for Raj. The Gurkha wields his kukri like a sword, cuts down close-range rebels as he grabs saddle and swings himself up--

AT THE CORNER WALL

THE YOUNG MONK BLOWING INTO THE GREAT HORN is cut down by a DOG SOLDIER who has climbed the wall. ANOTHER DOG SOLDIER climbs up behind him, aims...

TIPTON RAISES THE WORLD'S MOST INACCURATE RIFLE--the twin barreled Gerbruder. Both barrels SPIT BULLETS which miss the attackers completely.

Tipton swears as Charlie shreds the incoming with a burst from the AK. Both attackers crumble.

TIPTON

Always gotta show off, don't ya?

SEN-JOE

Mong Tai!

COMING THROUGH THE PASS AT THE DRAGON'S TAIL -- the Mong Tai rear guard are unbearably close.

TIPTON

They'll stop at the half-angle and set up RPG positions.

CHARLIE

How you know?

TIPTON

I sold them a training package.

CHARLIE

Jesus. This is it, Boys: wake the Dragon.

SEN-JOE waves a wet scarf. His brother Kiet picks up the fallen HORN, bellowing a signal through misty passes.

ON THE PLAIN--the horsemen hear the signal as they ride for their lives.

ELLIS

GULLY!

But when the HORN BOOMS IN TWO MORE SHORT SIGNALS, Raj doesn't go with them: he executes a galloping "roll-back," quirts his pony, and paces in the opposite direction. A lone rider, his duster tailing.

Behind the remaining posse, a PERSONNEL CARRIER now pursues. The chase is on: military truck running down/gunning down horse soldiers.

TOWARD THE GULLY -- HORSEMEN GALLOP IN THE RAIN

BILLY BOY

Prince! Drop rein! Let him go!

Prince lets wet leather slide through his hand as THE HORSES GO AIRBORNE--IN SLOW MOTION--JUMPING IN UNISON OVER STRATEGICALLY-PLACED TIMBERS.

The military truck hits the speed bumps, grounds out, unloads a SPILLAGE OF DOG SOLDIERS. They FIRE AT THE RETREATING HORSEMEN who are STEEPLECHASING the timbers.

ELLIS'S HORSE IS SHOT OUT FROM UNDER HIM

the Afrikaner rolling, losing his gun. When he sees the TROOPS coming at him, he commands the others:

ELLIS

GO!

Billy Boy looks over his shoulder and sees that going back is a lost cause. They have to reach the gully.

UP ON THE DRAGON'S TAIL

RAJ RIDES HIS MOUNTAIN PONY at a 45-degree climb. He dismounts at a run, kneels at a long fuse and tries to light it, but the rain dampens his torch, extinguishes it.

He looks down to see THE MONG TAI ARMY wedged in the pass, setting up their artillery. And then, a RIFLE STICKS IN HIS BACK. He's caught.

ON THE PLAIN -- NEAR THE GULLY

Ellis crawls in mud for his rifle, grabs it, and throws himself behind his fallen horse as a barricade. He FIRES MULTIPLE ROUNDS, ducking shrapnel. But then he hears his name. Someone YELLING IT.

ANTOINE is riding back at a kamikaze gallop, ponying one of the farmer's horses. Riding full bore for Ellis and swearing in every angry Kingston curse he knows. One-handing his assault rifle, he unloads the full clip, dropping Dog Soldiers as THEY FIRE ON HIM.

Ellis jumps the free horse at a run.

Antoine is hit twice. Three times. Now he is shredded, but he keeps riding into the hail, UNLOADING all he's got. Until he's blown out of the saddle and lost in the rainy fog.

Ellis cuts a 360, FIRING, then galloping for the gully, PURSUED BY DOG SOLDIERS ON FOOT.

DOWN INTO THE GULLY -- ELLIS RIDES

Catching up with the others. They ride into a desperate clutch deep in the flooding gully, preparing rifles and waiting for--

THE FOOT SOLDIERS TO SPILL INTO THE GULLY

Licking their chops over the high ground and the sitting ducks below. But then FROM THE ENTIRE RIM OF THE GULLY, VILLAGE ARCHERS rise out of the grass and RAIN ARROWS down into the attackers. They shout invectives to each other as they unleash HUNDREDS OF ARROWS in a BLACK RAIN.

The horsemen catch their breath, watching. Rain plasters Ellis, washes blood from his shirt.

ELLIS  
...where's Prince...

Billy Boy slumps forward in his saddle. Ellis sees blood running. Billy Boy slides off the saddle, hits mud.

ELLIS

Billy...

BILLY BOY

Guns. Gotta get those guns to  
Charlie...

AT THE WALL-- CHARLIE, TIPTON, AND TASANEE WATCH THE DRAGON'S  
TAIL as the Mong Tai set up for the kill.

CHARLIE

(shooting)  
Come on, Tipton, it's gotta work...

TIPTON

(shooting)  
If Raj can get there, it'll work.

Tasaneer FIRES A VOLLEY from her borrowed AK, gripping the  
weapon with all she's got.

ON THE DRAGON'S TAIL -- RAJ STANDS WITH HIS BACK TO FOUR MONG  
TAI. He drops his rifle at their command...and when one of  
them bends quickly to confiscate it, he decimates him in the  
same arc of the kukri that kills two more--GUNFIRE RIPS THE  
AIR-- The LAST DOG SOLDIER IS EMPTYING A ROUND when the  
Gurkha shoots a Bando kick that sends the guy off the ridge.

Wounded, Raj tries to light the fuse, but the rain is coming  
down too hard. He has two choices. Run or go UNDER THE LEDGE  
OF ROCK where a line of tin barrels are strung on a zip line.

SEEING THE MONG TAI ready to shell the village, Raj goes  
under the ledge, swings his kukri and chops the fuse short.  
Very short. He lights his torch...touches the fuse, then  
looks toward a zip line leading down the mountain. His only  
chance at escape. If he can jump. He does. But--

A CHAIN OF EXPLOSIONS rip along the cliff above THE MONG TAI  
and then DETONATE a hundred yard long wall of rock. THE MONG  
TAI ARMY is buried alive under the rock pack. And Raj is  
gone.

AT KHUN LAO'S SPOTTING STATION: the war lord flies to his  
feet, furious.

KHUN LAO

Take the village...

CHARLIE WATCHES the survivors of the Mong Tai race up the  
flooded plain to join Khun Lao's diehards at--

THE FOOT OF THE WALL where Khun Lao's sappers lay Claymore mines, running fuse. THE GATE is pounded by mine CONCUSSIONS and riddled with shrapnel. Somehow, it holds.

CHARLIE

Gimme artillery! C'mon!

SEN-JOE and KIET brace and fire from the wall as VILLAGE ARCHERS release their arrows, dropping Khun Lao's sappers in the rain.

THE WOODEN RAMPART SUPPORTING THE BATTERY

Collapses, spilling villagers over the wall and down into the muddy battlefield...

KIET AND HIS REMAINING MEN LAND HARD AT THE FOOT OF THE WALL, watching helplessly as Khun Lao's men race up firing. Tasanee's father appears to have broken his leg. Khun Lao's men are getting the edge now.

SEN-JOE FIRES ANOTHER SHOT FROM THE RUINED WALL then grabs a rope and starts over the wall when Charlie stops him.

CHARLIE

Hold the wall, Soldier...

Charlie fast-ropes into the chaos below. He lands and STARTS FIRING, dropping all comers as he stands over Tasanee's father, protecting him.

CHARLIE

Do we pray?

AUNG

(on the ground, loading clip)

We fight.

Tasanee, still armed at the wall, sees this and is moved. She runs to another location, reloading.

OUT ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Charlie is protecting Aung, firing steady. Now he spins, hearing a POWERFUL MOTOR ROARING...

...ONE OF KHUN LAO'S HEAVY TRUCKS is cleaving through his ranks as it hurdles, mud-caked, toward the village.

THE TRUCK: a charred hulk, smokes and belches fire. A Howitzer cannon juts through the windshield.

A huge, battering ram projects from the bumper. One of Khun Lao's men falls into the behemoth's path. It grinds over him.

CHARLIE

Here they come...

CHARLIE'S ARMY FIRES en masse. But still it comes on...

CHARLIE

Ready...

INSIDE THE TRUCK: A SUICIDE GUNNER unloads a HOWITZER as the vehicle races for the gates. They prepare to ram the gates, but to their surprise, they don't need to.

CHARLIE

Sen-Joe!

SEN-JOE SHOUTS IN THAI. THE HORN SOUNDS over the gunfire.

THE TIMBERS SLIDE BACK, THE GATES OPEN

letting the THE TRUCK BARREL its way into the center of the courtyard. FIFTY DOG SOLDIERS pour into the village.

They expect ducks in a barrel. But that's not what they get.

Because descending from the temple heights on ropes are FIGHTING MONKS. The monks wield their stick weapons with brutal precision, taking down surprised Dog Soldiers, disarming some.

Sammy cyclones with his 3-sectional and takes gunners out in a swath. He is then attacked by TWO BANSHAY-TRAINED soldiers with blades. Sammy crushes them in the downpour.

ANOTHER BANSHAY SOLDIER comes at Sammy, but he is cut down by Dil, his arm outstretched in perfect throwing star form.

OUT IN FRONT OF THE FORTRESS

THE LAST FRONT LINERS storm Charlie, Aung, Tasanee, Sen-Joe and Kiet. But then they begin to spin and drop like moths hitting a bug light.

Because ELLIS is riding in firing not one but two assault rifles. The intensity of the discharge knocks him out of the saddle, but he never stops firing. Can't afford to.

AT THE SPOTTING STATION -- KHUN LAO sees the battle reaching unlikely logger heads.

KHUN LAO  
 Let's finish this.  
 (to Pang Sa)  
 Bring her in. Give me 100 meters  
 sheaf.

PA SANG  
 (hesitating)  
 We have troops up there.

When Khun Lao turns a look on him, Pa Sang communicates the order into his Walkie.

ON THE BATTLEFIELD--a sound rises from the passes. Not thunder, not hoof beats. A CHOPPER. Khun Lao's military chopper coming in to finish the job. It's over.

CHARLIE  
 (in monsoon and mud)  
 Sound second gunnery!

SEN-JOE SCREAMS IN THAI. KIET, from the ruined wall, blows into the HORN. It BULLFROGS DEEP across--

THE HOLDOUT CAMP

Where KWAN watches the fighting numbly as he makes exodus with his buffalo cart. He hears the HORN groan deep.

Summoning everything within him, Kwan rips aside a blanket covering the air cooled Type 92 machine gun along with a dozen Mauser Tank Guns.

KWAN TIPS THE TYPE 92 SKYWARD, readies...and...

BLOWS THE CHOPPER OUT OF THE SKY

Charlie and Ellis watch; Sammy watches; Khun Lao watches; A FIREBALL IN THE SKY as the CHOPPER CRASHES into a connecting chain of mountains.

NOW KWAN'S HOLDOUTS GRAB THEIR WEAPONS AND FIRE as they charge for the village, screaming like a Lao hill tribe.

AT THE SPOTTING STATION -- KHUN LAO stands, stunned.

KHUN LAO'S SOLDIER  
 We're going to the village. It will  
 be decided there.

IN THE SQUARE

The fighting Monks take on the last of Khun Lao's raiders. Sammy, wounds made bloodless by rain, has a confiscated machine rifle in hand and has been using it, but now he turns and finds--

A DOG SOLDIER aiming an AK-47 at him. The Thai soldier is 14. Sammy is ready to kill him, until he sees how young he is. He hesitates. So does the kid soldier. In the monsoon rains they stare at each other. Sammy can't shoot. He drops the machine rifle...turns and walks off through puddles. Toward the temple...

The boy Soldier, no feeling behind his eyes, is going to gun Sammy down in the back. He squeezes the trigger--

TIPTON

Sammy!

Tipton pulls in, unloading a Gerbruder. The Kid Soldier cuts Tipton down. Sammy turns, stunned. Then Dil disarms the kid soldier with his staff, takes him down hard.

A SECOND DOG SOLDIER raises a bayonet over Tipton. But A GUN STOCK DROPS HIM. Charlie.

TWO DOG SOLDIERS close at Charlie's back. Tipton, mortally wounded, shoots them both from the ground. Charlie turns to see them fall.

CHARLIE

Now who's showing off?

TIPTON

Forty per cent, Charlie, just like Darfur...

Tipton's gone. Charlie is swept with the charging tide of Kwan's gunnery squad, the stick fighting monks, the last archers...

IN THE TEMPLE

The Old Lama sits in perfect stillness as HELL ROCKS THE WORLD OUTSIDE. Someone enters, shoes scuffing the stone floor. Sammy. Rain-soaked, he walks as steadily as he can toward the shrine. He drops hard to his knees.

A single drop of blood falls to the stone. Then another. He topples over onto his side.

Sammy dies in the Old Lama's arms.

DOWN IN THE TUNNELS

MORE DOG SOLDIERS try to get underneath, but they find themselves facing an armed woman. The Horse Girl holds a captured machine rifle and aims it as she orders them to drop weapons. She's protecting the children and old women with all she has.

OUT AT THE RUINS OF THE WALLS

A HUMVEE CAREENS AROUND THE CORNER. PANG SA DRIVES. KHUN LAO FIRES a 60mm machine gun. The rounds chop the mud toward Charlie...

SEN-JOE THROWS HIMSELF IN FRONT OF CHARLIE. A bullet clips Sen-Joe's shoulder and sends him spinning...

AS ELLIS SNATCHES up an abandoned sniper rifle and fires...

PANG SA CROUCHES BELOW THE DASH, steering as Ellis's bullets BURST the Humvee's windshield. The Humvee barrels straight for them with KHUN LAO FIRING.

CHARLIE IS ON HIS FEET NOW, murder in his eyes. The Humvee is twenty yards away and closing...Charlie double grips the pistol Billy gave him and FIRES--

CHARLIE'S ROUNDS SLAM INTO THE ENGINE. IT SEIZES but the Humvee continues to juggernaut right for Ellis...

AND CHARLIE IS RUNNING as...

KHUN LAO BEADS ON HIM...

CHARLIE IS HIT IN THE VEST. He plows on...

THE HUMVEE IS RIGHT ON ELLIS when Charlie shoves him out of its path...

And flattens in the puddles...

And lets the Humvee ROAR right over him...!

Charlie snaps to his feet and FIRES, exploding the rear windscreen and taking out Pang Sa. He FIRES AGAIN at--

Khun Lao, hurrying out of the Humvee. The war lord is hit in the back...He spins, FIRES and...

Hits Charlie in the shoulder...

Charlie's pistol flies away, vanishes in rain wallows. Khun Lao takes careful aim. He's got the farang nailed. And that's when Charlie says, calmly:

CHARLIE

Kill shot.

Ellis, on his side, aims the sniper rifle. The Afrikaner's damaged hands go steady. Stone cold steady. He pulls the trigger...and it would be an Odessa Steps moment if not for the hollow click of an empty magazine.

KHUN LAO TAKES TWO STEPS TOWARD CHARLIE and FIRES...just as he staggers against the Humvee, turning slowly. He grabs for the Humvee then slides hard to the flooded grounds. Dead.

Charlie and Ellis gaze up into the curtain of rain to see the shooter:

Billy Boy. He stands in the rain, shirtless, but for a confiscated flak vest and his Bangkok dog tags. A pistol in each hand. With his top knot and his pseudo tribal tattoos, he appears--for a hazy, surreal beat in the Thai monsoons, not a wanna-be, but a warrior.

BILLY BOY

Adios Mother Fucker...

Billy falls to a knee, still gripping the pistols. Then he topples over, ass-up in the rain.

Charlie lays there bleeding as the rain pounds him. A few feet away, Ellis lies bleeding, too.

EXT. THE VILLAGE -- LATE DAY

The rain has let up. A heavy mist blankets the aftermath. Charlie is on his back, staring upward at clearing sky.

CHARLIE

Hey?

ELLIS

Yeah.

CHARLIE

Hear it?

BILLY BOY

Hear what?

CHARLIE

That's what I mean.

Charlie props himself on his one good elbow. He watches a SOLITARY FIGURE come out of the mist.

The figure is covered in blood and powder burns, but Charlie recognizes the young night hunter he spotted a few evenings ago:

YOUNG VILLAGE MAN  
Sir, we are finished now.

A MOMENT LATER -- IN THE SQUARE

Charlie and Ellis walk through the village, a graveyard. And yet, amid the carnage, eight village warriors are still standing. They salute. Charlie salutes back. He looks over curiously...

About a dozen of Khun Lao's men huddle, holding their hands up. Tasanee and the village women all hold captured machine guns on their prisoners. They wear fierce looks.

KHUN LAO'S SOLDIER  
Is it true that Khun Lao is dead?

Tasanee seems to be waiting for the answer as much as the captured soldiers. Charlie nods.

KHUN LAO'S SOLDIER  
He holds our families hostage.

CHARLIE  
Not any more.

Khun Lao's soldiers drop to the ground and bow. Ellis shoots Charlie a look. Charlie squints around.

ON THE WALLS, villagers hold captured machine guns on Khun Lao's remaining Dog Soldiers.

BILLY BOY  
Goddamn, Charlie...we won. We won...

CEREMONIAL DRUMMING BEGINS...

EXT. VILLAGE OF TUKAR -- FESTIVAL OF THE HEROES -- DAYS LATER

VILLAGE DANCERS, dressed in brocade and wearing masks of animals and wrathful deities, whirl through incense smoke, turning with scarves...

Charlie walks through the village with Tasanee, the two close together. Charlie looks toward the festival.

CHARLIE  
Dance of the Fearsome Gods?

TASANEE  
 (shakes her head)  
 Dance of the Heroes.

She and Charlie look off at the festival. The Old Lama draws near and speaks softly in Thai.

TASANEE  
 He says the village is grateful to you. He prays we did have resources, something of--

CHARLIE  
 --tell him you people have paid us enough. We're square.

Ellis and Billy Boy ride up on pack horses, a riderless one in tow. The white one that Billy Boy broke for Charlie. A fourth horse is loaded down with duffel bags and belongings and the tools of their trade: guns.

CHARLIE  
 (eyeing the horse)  
 While you're helping your village balance the old and the new...you might want to look into chair lifts.

TASANEE  
 What will you do next?

Charlie eyes the mountains beyond, the peaceful village. The tempo of the festival; horses at pasture; monks crossing the square in silence. Then he looks at her. A long look.

CHARLIE  
 Remember.

She steps closer to him, loops her prayer beads around his neck.

TASANEE  
 So will we.

Charlie turns to face the dreaded saddle. Sen-Joe is there offering clasped hands as a mounting block. Charlie accepts, but almost goes off the other side. He recovers his dignity and gets his heels down in the stirrups.

TASANEE  
 We'll be here, Charlie. Charlie Cadeau...

Charlie looks at her, his eyes a bit wet. Maybe from the mountain sun. He salutes Sen-Joe and Sen-Joe bows.

RIDING AWAY ACROSS THE PLAIN -- MOMENTS LATER

Charlie, Ellis, and Billy Boy. They trot past the FUNERAL BIERS of the village's men and their's. They pass THE POPPY FIELDS as Kwan and Aung supervise the burning of the opium plants. Charlie gazes through the flames and rising heat as the farmers watch them go.

A sound rises from back in the village. The TEMPLE BELL rocking gently on a breeze. So peaceful...

CHARLIE

We got our ass handed to us, Boys.  
Nature of the business...

Ellis looks at him, confused.

ELLIS

We won, Bru.

CHARLIE

The farmers won. We didn't. They'll return to peace...their families. The stuff they believe in. They're like this damn mountain, Ellis. Us...

The wind moves over the tops of elephant grass...

CHARLIE

Where do we go?

ELLIS

Anywhere but Africa.

Charlie starts to rein his horse for the down slope, but he realizes that Billy Boy is fixed in the saddle, staring off at the fields and the horses. The gentle tolling of the bell.

Someone is watching them ride away. The Horse Girl. Standing with her aging mother.

BILLY BOY

All that ash, good for the soil.  
They should have one hell of a barley crop next year.

Charlie and Ellis look at the Aussie, his wounds bandaged, his eyes searching the horizon.

CHARLIE

They might need extra hands for  
that harvest.

Billy Boy looks at Charlie. Holds the look...

BILLY BOY

She's got a beautiful smile, don't  
she, Charlie?

Charlie nods. Billy rides in a tight circle for a moment,  
gives Charlie a look. Charlie returns it. The Aussie kid nods  
goodbye to Ellis then starts for the village at a purposeful  
trot.

Charlie and Ellis both watch the kid with a kind of envy.

CHARLIE

All right, Ellis. Where's the  
clutch on this puppy?

Ellis smiles, gives some heel, and the two ride away. Like  
gunfighters who have outlived their time. Like Samurai with  
no master...

Like the last dogs of war, INTO THE SUNSET.

FADE OUT.