

SKYSCRAPER

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. SNOWY FOREST - NIGHT

From high above, we look straight down a FOREST OF TOWERING PINES standing in a field of moonlit snow.

We glide over the treetops, floating just above their peaks as a light snow falls, the flakes corkscrewing lazily away.

All seems peaceful, silent.

Then we notice a strange light playing against the fresh powder. Red, then blue. Then red again.

We crest a final stand of trees to reveal: AN ENTIRE ENCAMPMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, some three hundred or so police, fire and ambulance, situated in what appears to be the middle of nowhere.

From this angle, directly overhead, the SQUAD CARS and SWAT VANS almost look like toys. Nothing moves. The POLICE OFFICERS and SWAT Team members, hunkered down in firing positions, point their weapons at something unseen.

We tilt from our isolating top-down view to reveal that this paramilitary phalanx is surrounding: a MODEST FARMHOUSE.

It's a standoff of some kind, clearly.

Then we see an ANT-SIZED FIGURE moving urgently across this frozen tableau. We slowly zoom in on the ant, revealing him to be a MAN IN A WINDBREAKER.

We move with him now, tracking a FOLDED NOTE that he carries in his hand, as he brings us to a TACTICAL TRAILER with a seal emblazoned on the door:

**FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION  
HOSTAGE RESCUE TEAM**

The Windbreaker Man enters and we go with him...

INT. TACTICAL OPERATIONS COMMAND TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

...moving through the narrow trailer, past HIGH-TECH OBSERVATION EQUIPMENT manned by SPECIALISTS, to a BACK DOOR. The Windbreaker Man opens the door to reveal a

SMALL COMMS ROOM

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

and a NEGOTIATOR on the phone, flanked by the HOSTAGE RESCUE COMMANDER ("HR1") and the ON SCENE COMMANDER, the man running the show.

The Windbreaker Man hands the On Scene the folded note. He reads it and nods. Meanwhile, the Negotiator works the phone in a last ditch attempt to talk this through...

NEGOTIATOR

...yes, I hear what you're saying. I do. And I would be angry too. But you have to listen to me now. This has gone on long enough and it needs to end, okay? Can you help me here? Help me find a solution so we can end this peacefully for you, for your family, for everyone. We don't want anyone to get hurt -- and I know you don't want to hurt anyone.

(beat)

Ray? Ray?

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - NIGHT

Clutching the phone to his ear is RAY HUTCHINSON (38), bearded, muscled and looking like he hasn't slept in days.

RAY

You don't want to hurt anyone? I'm already hurt. You hear me? I'm already hurt.

(beat)

You say you're giving me a choice but this isn't a choice. Ending this peacefully means I go to prison and my wife and my kids grow up without a father? That's what you're offering me?

(beat, deciding)

I want everyone gone. You and your men, and the snipers too, all of 'em -- gone. I don't see tail lights in the next five minutes, I'll end things my way.

Ray hangs up and turns away from us, revealing his FRIGHTENED FAMILY: his WIFE, his DAUGHTER and his six year-old SON. All three of them hunkered down below the kitchen counter, backs pressed against the cabinet doors.

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CONTINUED:

RAY (cont'd)  
It's alright. Everything's gonna be  
alright now. I promise.

Ray moves to a HEAVY CHEST and throws it open, staring at  
what's inside. A grim look washes over his face.

INT. TAC OPS COMMAND TRAILER / COMMS ROOM - NIGHT

The Negotiator looks up gravely from dial tone in his hand.  
The On Scene looks to HR1.

HR1  
Gold Unit is in position. They have  
compromise authority and are at ready  
green. We're set, sir.

ON SCENE  
(re: the note)  
7th floor approves escalation.  
(to the Negotiator)  
Can you get him back on the phone?

NEGOTIATOR  
He's done talking.

ON SCENE  
(beat)  
Very well.

The On Scene exits the COMMS ROOM and moves into the main  
trailer where he picks up a headset.

ON SCENE (cont'd)  
Gold Unit, this is "Tock", be advised  
you have control. Repeat, you have  
control.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

The REFLECTION in the farmhouse window shows SWAT UNITS  
backing off. Ray's request, it seems, has been met.

The window curtains crack to reveal Ray watching the action.  
We drop down from the window and pivot off of Ray to reveal:

THE FARMHOUSE YARD.

A blanket of snow, some bushes, a woodpile.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We hold on this frame -- but nothing happens. A moment more. Still nothing.

Then...

One of the BUSHES moves. Then part of a WOODPILE seems to detach. And a section of snow right in front of us this whole time, rises revealing itself to have GREEN EYES.

And now we see it: a SIX-MAN FBI HRT ASSAULT TEAM moves from their camouflaged hides and stacks up tight against the wall just below the farmhouse window.

They slough off their elaborate camouflage, revealing each man to be kitted out in body armor and loaded for bear.

We land on the team leader, WILL FORD, a seasoned operator. Will speaks softly into his comm...

WILL  
Gold Unit in position.

Will looks at his second in command, his best friend and a man we'll know later as HORACE. Will nods. Horace moves, setting a heavy-duty BREACHING CHARGE on the farmhouse wall.

Finished, Horace slides back into position giving Will the thumbs up. Will nods and begins the countdown...

WILL (cont'd)  
Five, four, three, two, one...  
Execute. Execute. Execute.

Will depresses a THUMB PLUNGER, igniting the breaching charge -- BANG! The sound is deafening as the wall explodes, leaving a gaping hole of smoke and dust in its wake.

Will rushes in, primary through the door. We go with him, pushing through the thick haze to find

RAY HUTCHINSON

standing there, his back to us. Will and Horace go to guns on him, their sites leveled, fingers poised on triggers.

WILL (cont'd)  
Turn around! Show us your hands!

HORACE  
Do it! Now!

The rest of the HRT UNIT fans out near Will, securing the mother and daughter who won't stop screaming.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Slowly, Ray turns to face Will revealing that he's HOLDING HIS SIX YEAR-OLD SON in his arms -- the boy's head wedged into the crook of his father's neck.

HORACE (cont'd)

Boss...

WILL

Hold your fire.

(to Ray)

Put him down.

Ray hesitates. Horace grips his M-4, staring down it.

HORACE

...I've got him clean...

The boy's eyes lock with Will's.

WILL

No. Don't. I got this.

Will turns to Ray, speaking with authoritative calm...

WILL (cont'd)

Ray, look at me. Look at me. It's over now. It's over. Put your son down, get on your knees and interlace your fingers behind your head. Do it now.

Ray takes it all in, the madness he's caused. The pain.

RAY

I'm sorry.

Ray lets his son slide off of him to the ground, revealing something horrifying: RAY IS WEARING A SUICIDE VEST.

Will's eyes go wide -- he dives for Horace, tackling him behind the KITCHEN COUNTER just as:

THE VEST DETONATES.

boom.

A ring of tinnitus in our ear. Screaming. Will, disoriented, catches glimpses of his team shattered -- dead or dying. A living nightmare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The horror of it washes over Will: his call to hold fire has cost the lives of those he cares about most in this world: his team, his men, his brothers.

Devastated, Will mumbles over and over...

WILL

*No-no-no-no...*

Sound falls away. Everything goes to white.

We're in a hallway now somehow. The strobe of overhead florescent lights rushing past us.

Then a face looks down at us. A Naval surgeon we'll come to know as SARAH. She smiles at us and says...

SARAH

You're gonna be okay.

HARD CUT TO:

TITLE CARD:

**TEN YEARS LATER**

EXT. PARK - DAY

A sun-dappled city park. Green grass. Trees. A little creek babbles nearby. Two kids, seven year-old fraternal twins, HENRY and GEORGIA argue about what to play: hide & seek or tag. Georgia gets her way: they'll play tag.

We find Will, older now, a sadness behind his eyes. But sitting on the grass watching the children play, he can't help but smile.

SARAH (O.C.)

She takes after you, you know.

Will turns to see his beautiful wife, Sarah, the surgeon who saved his life, enjoying the moment with him.

WILL

You think?

SARAH

Oh yeah. Stubborn. Too hard on herself. Cries during sports movies.

WILL

I don't cry during sports movies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH

Rudy.

WILL

Well, come on. It's Rudy.

SARAH

Field of Dreams.

WILL

Everyone cries at Field of Dreams--

SARAH

A League of Their Own.

WILL

That was one time. And I was on medication.

SARAH

Benedryl.

WILL

Extra strength -- and fine, maybe she's got my personality. I'm just glad she got your looks.

SARAH

Me too because you'd make a really ugly woman. Like if we put a dress on you, the only thing missing would be neck-bolts.

Will laughs.

WILL

Hang on -- back up. Did you call me stubborn?

SARAH

You are stubborn.

WILL

Since when?

SARAH

Since always. Now say it.

WILL

Come on. I got it.

SARAH

Then let me hear you say it.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

WILL  
Who's being stubborn now?

SARAH  
I'm being insistent. There's a difference. Besides, don't you want to make a good impression?

WILL  
Not really.

SARAH  
I'm serious, Will. It'll go a long way with him -- it's a cultural thing. Just say it.

WILL  
Fine.  
(beat)  
*Hen gaoxing de wen ni.*

It's Cantonese. And it actually wasn't that bad...

SARAH  
That's great.

WILL  
Really?

SARAH  
Perfect. Perfectly done. The intonation, the enunciation. A+.

WILL  
Thank you. See? I'm not stubborn. I can be taught.

SARAH  
One thing though.

WILL  
What?

SARAH  
I taught you how to say: *Hou hoi sam sik dou nei*, "It's an honor to meet you." But you said, "*Hou hoi sam sek dou nei.*"

WILL  
And what does that mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SARAH  
It's an honor to kiss you.

WILL  
Ah. And that's bad?

SARAH  
Depends on what kind of meeting you  
wanna have.

WILL  
Alright -- I give up. No more  
Chinese. I've gotta get ready.

Will stands up calling out to the kids...

WILL (cont'd)  
Henry! Georgia! Time to go!

The kids look at their father. Georgia capitalizes on the  
distraction, tagging her twin brother...

GEORGIA  
Tag! You're it!

...then bolting. Henry cries foul and gives chase. The two  
kids run toward their father with abandon. Will smiles.

Georgia reaches Will first, wrapping her arms around her  
father's leg...

GEORGIA (cont'd)  
Base! Dad's base! I'm safe!

...and that's when we see that Will's right leg isn't made  
of flesh and bone but rather metal and plastic -- a  
PROSTHESIS FROM THE KNEE DOWN. A scar he bears from that  
fateful night ten years ago.

Henry arrives grabbing hold of Will's other leg.

HENRY  
Safe!

GEORGIA  
I'm already safe, you can't be safe  
too.

HENRY  
Yes I can.

GEORGIA  
That's stupid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

WILL

Hey -- not nice. And your brother's right. You're both safe. Daddy is safe for everyone because-- WHOA!

-- suddenly Will jumps a foot as Sarah dumps an entire bottle of water down his back.

SARAH

Tag you're it!

Sarah takes off running, laughing. Will gives chase, his kids squealing with delight at their parents playing.

Will catches Sarah, planting a big kiss on her before she tickles him and trips him to the ground, falling on top of him as both Henry and Georgia join in: a dog pile on daddy.

Will lets himself get pinned, laughing -- in heaven.

It's then that we PULL BACK from this idyllic familial scene, past the grass and the trees and the babbling brook. We continue pulling back, further and further still, until we reveal something shocking.

This park isn't in a city. And it's not in a small town. This entire THREE ACRE PARK exists on the 100TH FLOOR OF THE TALLEST BUILDING IN THE WORLD.

A newly completed, three-thousand foot tall work of stunning architecture called THE PEARL rises gracefully from shoreline of VICTORIA HARBOR, dwarfing the surrounding skyline. We're in...

### Hong Kong

Then a SOOTHING VOICE...

SOOTHING VOICE (V.O.)

Welcome to The Pearl...

Quickly, we find ourselves in a highly polished PROMOTIONAL VIDEO...

SOOTHING VOICE

...a marvel of modern engineering. Standing at over three-thousand feet, The Pearl's 225 stories make it the world's tallest building...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

We get our first good look at this work of art: a TOWERING, TWISTING, SKYSCRAPER with an OPEN-AIR CENTER CORE running its entire length, from top to bottom, giving the structure an airy, sunlit translucent grandeur.

SOOTHING VOICE (cont'd)  
 ...it's so tall, you could fit the Empire State building inside of it twice! And you'd still have room for a 50 story building on top!

-- B-roll of construction and slick computer generated fly-through designs fill the frame.

SOOTHING VOICE (cont'd)  
 Completed just last year, China's newest beacon of progress boasts a five-star hotel, three full gyms, two 16-screen cinemas, a driving range, as well as world-class shopping and dining at its six-story indoor mall and three star Michelin-rated restaurant with rotating views of the spectacular Hong Kong skyline -- all within its confines...

-- we see cutaways of each feature, happy people enjoying every amenity.

SOOTHING VOICE (cont'd)  
 ...And that's just half the story!

A DIVIDING LINE bisects the building halfway up...

SOOTHING VOICE (cont'd)  
 Next month, The Pearl will open its upper half to permanent residents -- already sold out, with a ten year waiting list, these luxury apartments will serve as home to many of China's most successful citizens. With Pangu Park -- the world's first fully functional high rise garden -- located on the hundredth floor, residents will have their every possible need met, from outdoor sun to indoor fun -- you'll never need to leave The Pearl!

It's then we PULL BACK to reveal we're...

INT. THE PEARL - PRIVATE RESIDENCE - DAY

A stunning three-bedroom apartment on the 98th floor with jaw-dropping views. Henry and Georgia are transfixed by the television playing the promotional video...

SOOTHING VOICE

But that's not all. The Pearl's crowning achievement -- the singular feature that makes this building unlike any other, anywhere else in the world is...

...but just before we reveal what that might be, the TV cuts off. Henry and Georgia turn to see Sarah standing there.

SARAH

TV goes off, shoes on. It's Panda Time!

Excited, Georgia zips up her PANDA HOODIE, pulling the cowl over her head, turning her into a mini-Panda bear.

SARAH (cont'd)

Nice, Georgia. Subtle.  
(beat)  
Where's your dad?

HENRY

Bathroom.

GEORGIA

He's talking to himself again.

INT. THE PEARL - BATHROOM - DAY

Dressed nicely, Will ties the laces on his BROWN WINGTIP. Only the shoe is facing him on the bathroom sink counter, attached to his PROSTHETIC LEG -- a handy way to do it.

He talks to himself in the mirror as he goes, practicing the Chinese phrase over and over, stumbling every time. Will shakes his head muttering to himself...

WILL

Screw it. I'm just gonna high-five the guy.

Finished tying his shoe, Will uses a Kleenex to wipe off a smudge on it, then tosses the tissue paper into the toilet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Will attaches his prosthesis, sliding his pant leg down over it. He goes to flush the toilet but can't find the handle -- there doesn't seem to be one. It's a mystery.

Will looks at a BIZARRE ARRAY of touchscreen buttons next to the toilet -- none of which look like "flush". He presses one and gets a BIDET SPRAY right in the kisser.

One cue, Sarah walks in.

SARAH  
Everything okay in here?

WILL  
Yep, just thought I'd take a shower in the toilet.

Sarah walks over...

WILL (cont'd)  
It's broken. We should call--

...and presses a button, the toilet flushes normally.

WILL (cont'd)  
I was gonna pick that one next.

SARAH  
Sure you were, big guy.

Sarah fixes Will's outfit, drying him off, fussing over him.

SARAH (cont'd)  
Hey -- you think it's weird that we're the only ones on this floor?

WILL  
We're the only ones on any floor from the 96th on up -- so not really.

SARAH  
No, I mean why not put us up in the hotel in the bottom half? Why give us an entire ghost town floor to ourselves?

WILL  
I don't know -- maybe he's trying to impress us.

SARAH  
You think a billionaire, real estate tycoon is trying to impress us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILL  
You think I'm reaching?

SARAH  
I think you drive a Kia. So, yeah.

WILL  
I'm just saying: don't over-think it.

SARAH  
Have you met me?

Will smiles, grabs his jacket, closes his LAPTOP and puts it in his SHOULDER BAG.

SARAH (cont'd)  
Horace is coming to get you?

WILL  
Any minute now.

SARAH  
Can I just say one thing?

WILL  
I doubt it.

SARAH  
Don't give him any money.

WILL  
He's not going to ask me for money.

SARAH  
How do you know?

WILL  
Because he's head of security for this entire building and they pay him for that.

Will and Sarah move into the other room and tag-team getting Georgia and Henry ready, backpacks, shoes, etc. Will puts Georgia's hair into a ponytail, clearly he's had practice.

SARAH  
And how much of that does he double down with?

Will frowns. Moves toward the front door, Sarah follows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WILL

That's not -- he doesn't have a gambling problem.

SARAH

Not anymore -- you helped him.

WILL

Look, that was three years ago -- he got in over his head with the wrong kind of people. He would've done the same thing for me. He made a mistake -- we all make mistakes.

(beat)

And he's sticking his neck out for me. They could've gone with a higher profile guy to handle the security assessment but he put in a good word. He's the reason we're here -- and we could use the money.

SARAH

You have a soft spot for him. That's all I'm saying.

DING-DONG. Doorbell. They look at each other -- time's up.

SARAH (cont'd)

You're a big dummy. You know that?

WILL

You married me.

SARAH

I'm a sucker for handsome. Sue me.

WILL

Love you.

SARAH

Love you too, neck-bolts.

Will laughs. They kiss. The kids go, "Ewww". Will looks at his twins...

WILL

Okay team, daddy's gotta go make the bacon. But let me ask you one thing before I go...

Will points to Henry.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (4)

WILL (cont'd)  
Daddy loves who?

HENRY  
Me!

Will points to Georgia...

WILL  
Daddy loves who?

GEORGIA  
Me!

Will rapidly points between them repeating his question, each time they shout out, "Me!" at the top of their lungs.

Finally, Will kisses each of them on the tops of their heads. Sarah watches the sweet moment, sighing...

SARAH  
I gotta get a chant.

Will winks at her, then moves to the door, opening it to reveal Horace his second-in-command from his HRT days and the only other member of the team to survive the blast.

Nearly Will's size, with some telltale BURN SCARS on his cheek and neck, Horace offers up a big smile.

HORACE  
Brother.

WILL  
Brother.

The two friends embrace. The observant might notice Horace's right hand is severely misinformed -- mangled from the explosion. The hug breaks and Horace spots Sarah...

HORACE  
Sarah -- you look beautiful.

SARAH  
Nice to see you, Horace.

Sarah gives Horace a polite hug just as Henry and Georgia arrive. Horace can't believe it.

HORACE  
These are the twins? Wow -- are they driving yet? You guys remember your Uncle Horace?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

GEORGIA

No.

HENRY

We're going to see the pandas.

HORACE

Yes -- I heard. That's why I got you guys a little something.

Horace pulls out a trio of GOLD TICKETS.

HORACE (cont'd)

These'll let you stay for the nighttime feeding -- after they close Ocean Park to everyone else. Very hard to get.

He hands the tickets to Sarah.

WILL

That's amazing. Thank you, H.

SARAH

What do you guys say?

HENRY

Thank you.

WILL

Georgia?

GEORGIA

Are you gonna ask my dad for money?

Off of Will's look we move to...

INT. THE PEARL - INNER ATRIUM - DAY

Horace and Will move toward the cylindrical INNER ATRIUM of The Pearl, an open-air center column that runs from the ground floor to the very top of the structure.

The internal circumference is lined with a series of GLASS ELEVATORS and SKYWAY BRIDGES that span the vast opening, connecting various floors directly, giving the space the look of a BRAIN STEM with synapses firing.

Horace jabs the button, they wait.

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CONTINUED:

WILL  
Sorry about that. Georgia doesn't  
have a filter. Sarah thinks she  
takes after me.

HORACE  
Why, does she cry at sports movies  
too?

DING. Elevator arrives. Horace and Will step on.

INT. THE PEARL - ELEVATORS - DAY

This GLASS ELEVATOR travels up the INNER ATRIUM -- a  
sphincter-clenching ride if you're afraid of heights.

Will looks through the glass: elevators rise and fall,  
gleaming in natural sunlight. He marvels...

WILL  
You hear that?

Horace strains an ear. Shakes his head.

HORACE  
I don't hear anything.

WILL  
Exactly. These are mag-lev elevators  
They work on magnetic induction --  
like the bullet trains in Japan, only  
vertical. No cables, no wires,  
nothing. No one's ever built any  
that go this high. It's bleeding  
edge stuff.

HORACE  
Huh. No kidding.

WILL  
How do you not know that?

HORACE  
They hired me to protect it, not give  
tours. But lemme guess: you spent  
the last six months studying every  
nut, bolt and blueprint of this damn  
place.

Will looks away. Horace knows him too well. He teases...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HORACE (cont'd)  
Come on, tell me I'm wrong.

WILL  
You're wrong.  
(beat)  
It was eight months.

Horace shakes his head...

HORACE  
You know he's not gonna ask you to  
build the thing from scratch, right?

WILL  
I like details.

HORACE  
Nerd.

Will chuckles.

HORACE (cont'd)  
Hey -- you hear they switched  
insurance guys on you?

WILL  
No Singh?

HORACE  
No Singh. Singh go bye-bye.

WILL  
Huh. They say why?

HORACE  
Official word, he got sick.  
Unofficial word, he got sick of the  
boss man's speeches.

WILL  
He gives speeches?

HORACE  
You ever met a billionaire who doesn't?

WILL  
I've never met a billionaire.

HORACE  
Well stick around, this is China --  
we got a million of 'em.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ding. The elevator doors open. They step off.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Horace leads Will across an opulent, sunlit private floor stopping at a pair of imposing DOUBLE DOORS.

WILL

(re: the doors)

Wow -- those are them, right? The titanium doors from the blueprints?

HORACE

Nothing says welcome to my penthouse panic room better than ten inches of military-grade super alloy.

WILL

Subtle.

Horace holds his hand against a wall-mounted scanner.

HORACE

Ready to meet Oz?

The double doors swing open.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE - DAY

Horace leads Will past the foot-thick Titanium doors into a penthouse to end all penthouses.

Three floors, exquisitely designed, impeccably furnished and offering up staggering panoramic views. This palace in the sky is fit not for a king, but a Pharaoh.

Will takes it in...

WILL

I mean, I guess if you gotta live somewhere...

HORACE

Right?

Will notices a framed BLACK BELT and ceremonial CHINESE SWORD on the wall next to him.

WILL

He's a black belt?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HORACE

In the same way Doctor Dre is a doctor. Heard he built them a brand new dojo after he "earned" it.

WILL

Hey -- Sarah thinks I should do a Chinese thing when I meet him.

HORACE

Chinese thing?

WILL

Like say some words. A greeting.

HORACE

In Chinese?

WILL

Cantonese. But yeah. You know, to show respect.

HORACE

I wouldn't.

WILL

Why?

HORACE

Because you suck at languages and you'll probably mess it up and embarrass yourself.

WILL

But other than that?

ZHAO (O.S.)

Mr. Ford.

The moment interrupted, Will and Horace turn to see ZHAO (30s), a Chinese Elon Musk and the dashing visionary behind The Pearl, come gliding down a staircase toward them flanked by a handful of SUITS and a discrete PRIVATE SECURITY DETAIL.

ZHAO

It's a pleasure to meet you.

Zhao speaks nearly perfect English, a hallmark of his Oxford education. They shake hands. Will glances at Horace then says...

WILL

*Hou hoi sam sik dou nei.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Will nailed it. Zhao smiles, impressed. Horace is slack-jawed. Zhao rattles off a response in rapid-fire Cantonese.

Finished, the billionaire waits expectantly on Will to answer. Will, of course, has no idea what Zhao just said. A pregnant pause, then Zhao lets him off the hook...

ZHAO

I'm kidding.

Will exhales.

WILL

Oh, thank god. My wife only taught me one phrase.

ZHAO

Sarah, right?

WILL

Yes.

ZHAO

And your children, Henry and Georgia -- twins?

WILL

You do your research.

ZHAO

I've got a good team around me. But I wasn't aware that your wife speaks Cantonese. I thought she was a Naval surgeon.

WILL

She is. But she minored in language and East Asian studies at Annapolis. She was gonna work for Doctors Without Borders in rural China after her service.

ZHAO

What happened?

WILL

She met someone who needed her more.

Zhao smiles. Just then, a stuffy British pencil-pusher, MR. PIERCE interrupts the moment. Zhao pivots to him warmly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ZHAO

Mr. Ford, allow me to introduce Mr. Pierce from the Hawthorne/Stone Insurance Group, the company lucky enough to underwrite The Pearl.

Mr. Pierce smiles thinly, extending his hand.

MR. PIERCE

A pleasure.

WILL

Likewise.

ZHAO

Mr. Singh is ill.

WILL

I heard.

ZHAO

At any rate, I hope your family is enjoying their stay in Hong Kong.

WILL

We've got the whole floor to ourselves -- what's not to love?

ZHAO

Sorry if I went a little overboard -- I guess I was trying to impress you.

(beat)

Shall we begin?

Zhao motions and the group moves off.

INT. PENTHOUSE - BOARDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Zhao stands in front of a WALL-SIZED TOUCH SCREEN which displays a 3D rendering of The Pearl. Zhao rotates and resizes the display as he speaks.

Will sits with his laptop open, Horace next to him. Opposite them, the THREE SUITS and Mr. Pierce.

ZHAO

...with our cutting edge solar arrays and proprietary wind-harnessing technology, The Pearl has a negative environmental footprint -- even at full occupancy, we'll actually give power back to the city.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

ZHAO (cont'd)

(beat)

The residential upper half, with our 24-hour surveillance & security, redundant off-site fire control systems, and on-site emergency medical staff, will be the safest, most luxurious living in all of China, if not the world. We even have our very own dedicated cell tower -- so you'll never miss a call even when you're a mile in the air.

(beat)

The Pearl is not just the future of China but it is, in a very real sense, The Future itself.

The suits clap like ass-kissers. Annoyed, Zhao waves at them to cease. He looks to Will...

ZHAO (cont'd)

What do you think?

WILL

Me?

ZHAO

Yes, of course.

Unsure of the politics of how to respond, Will goes with...

WILL

It's, uh, neat.

ZHAO

Neat?

WILL

Yeah, real neat.

Mr. Pierce jumps in...

MR. PIERCE

I think what Mr. Ford is trying to say is that it would be imprudent of someone in his position to make any comment whatsoever about The Pearl's qualities, aesthetic or otherwise.

(beat)

With all due respect, he's not much more than a glorified security guard.

Sick burn. Will's jaw tightens. He gives Mr. Pierce a cold look but toes the party line...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILL

He's right. I'm only here as a certified independent third party to assess your safety and security measures and, if they're compliant, sign off on them so Mr. Pierce's company can give you the thumbs up to officially open the top half of your building. It's not really my place to comment.

ZHAO

I know why you're here, Mr. Ford. And I know it's not your place to comment -- which is precisely why I'm asking you to. Please, your honest opinion.

WILL

It's been my experience that when people ask for someone's honest opinion, that's usually the last thing they want.

ZHAO

Humor me.

Will glances at Mr. Pierce who gives him a stiff "go ahead" nod. Will clears his throat.

WILL

Well, let me start by saying that what you've built here is truly incredible. You should be proud.

ZHAO

But...?

WILL

But...if it were up to me, I would never insure this building. Not in a million years.

Mr. Pierce eyes Will sternly. The room tightens.

ZHAO

And why is that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WILL

You've built a vertical city here, Mr. Zhao, which is impressive sure, but you've brought with it every single fire, safety and security challenge I can think of -- and you've not only brought them all indoors, you've trapped them three thousand feet in the air.

(beat)

Everything in this building has to go right every single time and too little has to go wrong once for there to be a very serious problem without a viable solution.

(beat)

Look, I'm a simple man. I like my beer cold, my wings hot and fireworks on the 4th of July. But if you're asking for my honest opinion about what you've built here, it would be this: I don't get it.

Then Will looks at Mr. Pierce.

WILL (cont'd)

But, Hell, I'm just a glorified security guard. So what do I know?

The room sucks in. Mr. Pierce shoots daggers at Will. But Zhao smiles and says with all sincerity...

ZHAO

Wonderful. Now I know I can trust you.

Zhao pulls out a TRANSLUCENT FLASH DRIVE.

ZHAO (cont'd)

This drive contains the machine codes for The Pearl's fire and safety control measures -- a master key, if you will, to the entire building. They're linked to your laptop alone and, once installed, will only be accessible for a twenty-four hour window before self-deleting. I trust that will be enough time for you to thoroughly vet our security and submit your final analysis for Mr. Pierce's approval?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

WILL  
More than enough. Thank you.

Zhao slides the FLASH DRIVE to Will who uploads it onto his laptop. A COUNTDOWN CLOCK ticks down from 24 hours.

Zhao glides to the door and looks back expectantly...

ZHAO  
Come on, if we hurry there's still time.

WILL  
Time for what?

ZHAO  
For you to get it.

Zhao smiles. Will looks a little confused.

EXT. THE PEARL - OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

And finally we see it -- the crowning achievement of this incredible structure, and the very thing that gives the building its name:

A STUNNING 360-DEGREE GEODESIC DOME

encases the upper most echelon of The Pearl -- an observation deck fashioned entirely out of laser-cut crystalline glass whose triangular facets fit so perfectly, one into the next, that they almost disappear entirely.

What's more, the footprint of the glass deck itself extends beyond the profile of the building's rooftop allowing for the stout-hearted to walk out beyond the roof and look straight down to the ground, nearly a mile below.

It's nothing short of breath-taking.

We find Zhao and Will up here alone. Will takes in the sight dumb-founded. Zhao stares across the Victoria Harbor.

ZHAO  
I grew up over there, across the water on the Kowloon side. My father sold fish. His father sold fish and his father before him. So I grew up selling fish. Every morning up before the sun. Bone tired in the boat as it went down.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZHAO (cont'd)

(beat)

When I was six years old, our house was burned to the ground by some men my father refused to pay. They killed him that same night when he confronted them in the street.

(beat)

My mother raised me and my eight brothers in sisters in a one-room house smaller than my bathroom is now. At night, I remember staring at this very skyline through our window, as my brothers and sisters slept -- knowing someday I would make my mark, someday I would change what I saw out that window. And no one would ever take it from me.

WILL

I'm sorry for your loss. But why are you telling me all this?

ZHAO

Because you and I aren't so different from each other, Mr. Ford. We're both men from humble beginnings who shaped the world around us, not the other way around.

WILL

Yeah -- next time remind me to invite you to my skyscraper.

Zhao chuckles.

ZHAO

Touché.

Zhao checks his watch then glances at the sun, doing a calculation in his head.

ZHAO (cont'd)

Walk out there and turn around.

Unsure but curious, Will walks out onto the EXTENDED DECK, the section. He turns back to face Zhao.

ZHAO (cont'd)

Once we open The Pearl, the place you're standing on right now will become the newest wonder of the modern world. A testament to what we can do.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ZHAO (cont'd)

(beat)

Count to three and you'll see what I mean.

Uncertain but game, Will plays along...

WILL

One...two...three.

On three, the sun hits a certain point in the sky, its rays striking the geodesic dome just so, causing the light to refract perfectly, bouncing off of each precisely placed facet resulting in a jaw-dropping effect.

Suddenly, as if by magic, the deck, the glass, the entire dome itself, everything -- COMPLETELY VANISHES.

Out on the extended deck, a sheer 3,000 foot drop below him, it looks as though Will is standing on nothing at all, suspended in mid-air.

ZHAO

Welcome to heaven, Mr. Ford.

EXT. HONG KONG OUTDOOR MARKET - DAY

The Pearl looms in the distance, the sun low on the horizon. The street is choked with PEOPLE and VENDORS hawking their goods. We find Will and Horace waiting at a NOODLE STAND.

HORACE

Welcome to heaven? He really said that?

WILL

Yep.

HORACE

But like cool or creepy?

WILL

Kinda both.

HORACE

Rich guys.

Will blows on his hands, it's a bit nippy out.

WILL

I didn't think Hong Kong got this cold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HORACE

Chinese New Year around the corner.  
Always the coldest month.

WILL

Think it'll snow?

HORACE

Are you serious? We're almost at the  
equator. At sea level.

WILL

All I'm saying is my leg knows when  
it's gonna snow -- and it's barking  
right now.

HORACE

Your leg is a moron. I think it's  
snowed like once here in two-hundred  
years.

WILL

So you're saying there's a chance.

Horace rolls his eyes. The VENDOR hands over two cartons of  
noodles. They scoop them up and move off, landing us on

A RAT-FACED MAN

lurking nearby, clocking Will and Horace with intent. He  
moves out, stalking the duo.

We track with Will and Horace as they move through the  
throng, immersing ourselves in the vibrant sights and sounds  
of a bustling Hong Kong street market.

HORACE

Best noodles in town -- 90% why I  
live around the corner.

WILL

I thought you lived at The Pearl.

HORACE

Hell no. Can't afford it.

WILL

I just thought he'd want you there  
for security.

HORACE

I run security for the building not  
him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HORACE (cont'd)

He's got his own private outfit, they been with him for a while. Plus with this bad boy...

Horace raises his crippled hand.

HORACE (cont'd)

...body detail isn't really in the cards for me.

That hits Will hard. Horace notices.

HORACE (cont'd)

Hey -- I didn't mean to--

WILL

No, it's okay. It's fine. It's the truth.

They walk in silence for a beat.

WILL (cont'd)

I see that boy's face sometimes, you know? When I can't sleep. The wife and daughter too. All of them.

HORACE

You talk to somebody?

WILL

Sarah. A counselor a couple times. But it's never gone away. Not completely. The weird part is I don't think I'd want it to, you know?

Horace nods, feeling for his friend. The pair stop. Will looks away, barely holding it together in this moment.

The Rat-Faced Man, sensing his chance, SNAPS OPEN A SWITCHBLADE and closes in on Will and Horace...

WILL (cont'd)

I couldn't save them, I couldn't save the team. I couldn't save anyone.

HORACE

Hey -- that's not on you. Will -- look at me.

Will does.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (3)

HORACE (cont'd)

That's not on you -- okay? The team knew the risks going in. We all signed up for it. We knew the risks. That's not yours to carry.

WILL

Thank you.

HORACE

Now, I'd hug you in public, but I don't want people to think we're dating.

Will laughs, unaware as the Rat-Faced Man approaches behind him raising his blade and looking for all the world like he's about to stab Will in the back.

Will senses something behind him. He turns just as the Rat-Faced man swings the blade -- slicing the strap on Will's LAPTOP BAG and TAKES OFF RUNNING WITH IT, vanishing into the flow of the market.

HORACE (cont'd)

I got him.

Horace bolts after the thief, rushing headlong into the throng of MARKET GO-ERS.

Not one to sit on the sideline, Will scan the area quickly spotting:

A DOUCHEBAG ON A DUCATI.

leaning against his red metal phallus, revving the throttle at a pair of PRETTY GIRLS passing by. He moves off his bike to call after them. They ain't having it.

The Douchebag turns back just in time to see Will swinging his leg over the Ducati 959.

WILL

Next time try flowers.

VRROOM! Will takes off in a blur.

EXT. HONG KONG MARKET / INTERSECTION - MOMENTS LATER

Horace runs full tilt after the Rat-Faced Man, pushing BYSTANDERS aside. He's closing in on him but just then the Rat-Faced Man wheels, pulling out a Glock and firing -- BLAM-BLAM-BLAM!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARKET GO-ERS scream and scatter. Horace dives behind a trashcan -- .40 caliber rounds sparking off it.

Utter chaos as the thief spots a MOTORCYCLE RIDER stopped at the light in front of him.

He points the business end of his Glock at the biker, commandeering the ride and tearing out of there just as Horace comes to a running stop, defeated.

Suddenly, another roar. Horace spins, narrowly jumping out of the way as Will, riding hell-bent for leather on the Ducati, rips past him in hot pursuit.

And now we find ourselves in...

A (reasonably-priced) HONG KONG STYLE MOTORCYCLE CHASE, weaving between ONCOMING TROLLEYS and throughout the precarious inclines and narrow streets of Hong Kong proper.

All of this ends when Will draws even with the thief and leaps from his motorcycle, tackling the assailant to the ground into a

TRASH-STREWN ALLEY

The Rat-Faced Man goes down hard, dropping his gun.

Will gets to his feet first and goes to lay hands on him but the shifty thief pulls out his SWITCHBLADE and takes a swing, slicing Will on the arm. He jumps back clutching the wound, blood already starting to pour.

The Rat-Faced Man bounces to his feet and squares off with Will, a man twice his size.

A cornered animal, he attacks, swinging wildly. Will is surprisingly agile -- especially so considering his leg.

Will dodges one lunge, then another. He's got this guy timed now -- and on the assailant's third attempt, Will catches the Rat-Faced Man's wrist, snapping it in one precise move.

The Rat-Faced Man howls in pain, dropping the knife. Will clocks an INTRICATE TATTOO on the thief's forearm.

The Rat-Faced Man scrambles back, looking down at Will's feet where the discarded GLOCK rests. The thief looks to Will, then the gun -- is Will gonna pick it up?

Just then, an out-of-breath Horace comes rushing around the corner, spotting the standoff.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Will reaches down BUT DOESN'T PICK UP THE GUN -- instead he picks up his LAPTOP BAG and kicks the gun away.

The Rat-Faced Man isn't going to stick around to find out why. He takes off running in the other direction.

Horace joins Will as the duo watch the little man run off.

HORACE  
Welcome to Hong Kong.

=====

[READER'S NOTE: in scenes containing only Chinese characters, all dialogue will be spoken in the native Cantonese (with appropriate subtitles). This will be denoted by the use of italics in the dialogue block. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. We now return you to your regularly scheduled screenplay-reading activities.]

=====

CUT TO:

A DEAD GUARD

slumped lifelessly on the floor of his GUARD BOOTH. A fresh bullet hole in his forehead. A WOMAN'S HAND reaches into frame and yanks the ACCESS CARD off of his shirt. We pan off the guard with the woman's hand, revealing we're...

EXT. OFF-SITE CONTROL FACILITY - NIGHT

A LOW-SLUNG CONCRETE BUILDING on the outskirts of the city. THREE SILHOUETTES - the woman flanked by TWO MEN -- move away from the guard booth and toward the building.

INT. OFF-SITE CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

SIX WORKERS man a CONTROL STATION at this secure off-site facility. Only today it's not so secure.

The door opens. The workers turn to see XIA (pronounced "Shi-ya") standing in the doorway holding the access card.

A slip of a woman with a pixie cut and a pretty smile, Xia flashes it just before she pulls out two silenced 9mms and rips off SIX SHOTS, dispatching each worker in turn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Xia enters when suddenly two HEAVY DUTY GUARDS appear out of nowhere right on top of her -- a surprise.

In a blink, Xia launches herself, climbing the guards like a jungle gym as she applies some deft and deadly Black Widow scissor kick action, ending it with a coup de grace by simultaneously shooting each guard with the others gun.

It's all over in under three seconds.

Xia pops up. Blows a stray strand hair out of her face and moves off nonchalantly revealing the two men she came in with, a TECHIE and a TOUGH GUY, standing in the doorway having just watched her in action.

The boys share a look: do not fuck this with chick. They move into the room to do their job.

The TECHIE, dumps a rag-dolled worker out of his chair and pulls himself up to the control board, going to work...

TECHIE

*I can get access to nominal control -- but anything above the 95th floor, in the residential section, will require the baseline machine code.*

XIA

*You'll have what you need, just make sure I get what I need.*

The Tough Guy's cellphone rings. He answers. His face goes sour. He hangs up. Shakes his head. Xia nods.

XIA (cont'd)

*Time for Plan B.*

HORACE (PRE-LAP)

How come you didn't pick up his gun?

INT. HORACE'S APARTMENT - DAY

A well-appointed but modest one-bedroom apartment on the second floor. Horace inspects Will's wound.

WILL

What do you mean?

HORACE

I mean you could've picked it up but you didn't. Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILL

I don't know. I haven't touched one in such a long time -- I guess I just didn't want to hurt anybody today.

There's more to it, but Horace leaves it alone. He stands.

HORACE

You're gonna need stitches. I'll get my kit.

Horace stands up and moves into the adjacent BATHROOM and starts digging out his med kit.

Will's phone rings. Sarah is FaceTiming him. He answers.

WILL

Hey baby -- how are the pandas?

But, surprisingly, Sarah is back at The Pearl. [INTERCUT AS NECESSARY].

SARAH

We didn't really get to see them -- Henry ate some weird candy and started throwing up, so we came back.

IN THE BATHROOM

Horace gets a text message. He reads it. Looks at himself in the mirror -- a haunted man stares back.

IN THE PEARL

Sarah ushers Henry and Georgia off the elevator and toward their luxury apartment door.

WILL

Is he okay? Did he have an attack?

SARAH

No, his breathing is fine. No fever or anything, he just needs to lie down.

WILL

Okay -- I'm coming back right now.

SARAH

Don't rush -- we're cool. Just, you know, no pandas. Which sucks.

Henry chimes in...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY

It sucks!

SARAH

Don't say "sucks", honey.

WILL

We'll go tomorrow, buddy. If you're feeling better.

(to Sarah)

Alright, I'm gonna hustle back. Love you.

SARAH

Love you.

Sarah hangs up, unlocking the door to their apartment when suddenly out of an adjacent APARTMENT DOOR, SIX SECURITY GUARDS appear, carrying HEAVY BLACK DUFFLE BAGS, two of them wheeling a HANDCART with a CONTAINER on it. They stop short at the sight of Sarah and her kids.

The LEAD SECURITY GUARD, sporting a Samurai topknot haircut, smiles kindly...

LEAD SECURITY GUARD

Sorry, miss. We thought this floor was empty.

SARAH

Yeah -- me too.

The kids stare at the men. It's a strangely charged moment. Sarah notices a faded word stenciled on the container:

**ПАРАШЮТ**

Sarah doesn't know what it means but her Spidey-sense starts tingling. Something about these guys isn't right.

SARAH (cont'd)

Everything okay?

LEAD SECURITY GUARD

Everything's fine. Routine floor check.

SARAH

Takes six guys to check an empty floor, huh?

The Lead Security Guard smiles tightly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LEAD SECURITY GUARD  
We like to be thorough.

SARAH  
I'll say.

LEAD SECURITY GUARD  
You have a nice night, ma'am.

With that, the team moves down the hall toward an EXIT DOOR, one of the Guards shoots a glance over his shoulder, clocking her. He asks under his breath...

GUARD  
Want me to clean that up?

LEAD SECURITY GUARD  
Nah. It'll take care of itself.

They push through the exit door, disappearing downward. Sarah watches them go.

GEORGIA  
Mom -- were those guys the police?

SARAH  
No, honey. They're not the police.

Her mind ticking, Sarah hovers her thumb over Will's number about to call him back. Then she thinks better of it and pockets her phone, opening the door and ushering her kids inside. A beat later and we hear her throw the deadbolt.

CUT TO:

WHITE SAND

being poured onto the ground. We're...

INT. THE PEARL - 96TH FLOOR LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

The six guards, now sporting serious CHEMICAL MASKS pour out streams of GRANULATED WHITE POWDER over every surface as though they were salting a road -- a winter wonderland.

The Lead Guard holds the exit door open as his team moves past him, pulling off their masks and heading up the stairs.

The last man standing, The Lead Security Guard, his hand poised above a RED FIRE ALARM HANDLE, takes in the powdered landscape in front of him: a entirely frosted floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He yanks down the alarm handle and exits through the door.

We wait in the 96th floor lobby as the alarm blares. Emergency lights flash. Then the SPRINKLER SYSTEM engages, dousing the entire floor with a wet down from on high.

BUT THE MOMENT THE WATER HITS THE POWDER, IT IGNITES.

INT. HORACE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Will hangs up. In the bathroom, Horace looks concerned. He calls out to Will...

HORACE  
They went back to The Pearl?

WILL  
Henry wasn't feeling well.

HORACE  
That's too bad.

WILL  
Yup -- no pandas.

But something else is bugging Will...

WILL (cont'd)  
Hey -- did you notice the ink on that guy's forearm?

HORACE  
Who the little guy?

WILL  
Yeah.

HORACE  
Didn't notice.

Horace grabs his med kit and exits into

THE LIVING ROOM

where Will continues...

WILL  
Looked like an affiliation -- maybe gang ink. I'll sketch it out for the cops.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

HORACE

We're not gonna call the cops.

Horace's voice has changed, it's colder now, darker...

HORACE (cont'd)

You couldn't just let him take the bag, could you? Had to be a hero. Always gotta be the hero.

WILL

What are you talking about--

Horace pulls out a .45 AUTOMATIC from the med bag and points it squarely at his friend. Will stands, wary...

HORACE

I tried to do this clean -- but now you're gonna have to take the fall for all of it.

WILL

Whoa -- H -- what's going on? Talk to me. Put the gun down and let's talk.

HORACE

I don't have a choice -- I don't have a fucking choice now. It's too late. You messed it up. Why'd you have to mess it up?

WILL

Slow down--

HORACE

I'm sorry.

-- BANG! Horace fires just as Will dives out of the way, taking cover behind the kitchen counter divide.

Horace rounds that corner and pulls the trigger but Will has already closed the gap, knocking the muzzle aside causing the shot to go wide, disarming Horace.

The pair find themselves in close quarters hand-to-hand melee; each man expertly trained. A brutal affair unfolds as Will and Horace fight to the death.

The confines of the apartment take the brunt as books fall from bookshelves, lamps are sent crashing, pictures shatter.

Only one man will make it out alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Horace catches Will with an elbow stunning him; he KICKS OUT WILL'S PROSTHETIC LEG -- a dirty move -- then sweeps the other, dropping Will to the floor -- THUD.

Horace spots the wayward .45 and snatches it up, turning to fire only to have Will use his good leg to kick out Horace's, dropping him to the floor as well.

Will pounces on top of Horace as the two former teammates struggle mightily against each other for control of the .45 when suddenly -- BANG.

The gun goes off. A moment as we don't know who got the worst of it. Then Horace coughs up blood, his eyes rolling back in his head.

A look of dismay washes over Will's face. He releases his death grip on his longtime friend.

Without missing a beat, Will checks Horace's injury: a gunshot wound just below the breast bone. Blood pumps out rhythmically, air sucks in -- a mortal blow.

Will applies direct pressure with his hand as best he can but he knows he's gonna need something to stop the bleeding.

WILL

You're gonna be alright -- sit up -- lean forward.

Will maneuvers Horace's body as he starts to wheeze from a collapsed lung. Horace apologizes, rapidly turning pale.

HORACE

I'm sorry -- I'm sorry --

WILL

Hey -- just stay with me -- Look at me -- fight it now. You gotta fight it.

Will moves into

THE ADJACENT BATHROOM

and grabs a HAND-TOWEL to help staunch the bleeding. That's when Will stops short at the sight of:

A HAND PROTRUDING OUT FROM BEHIND THE SHOWER CURTAIN.

Will yanks the curtain back, revealing the BODY OF A DEAD MAN IN A SUIT, crumpled lifelessly in the tub.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Will nearly stumbles at the shocking sight. He rushes out of the bathroom and back to

THE LIVING ROOM

Where Horace is paper white and not long for this world. Will kneels down next to him.

WILL (cont'd)

Tell me what's going on -- if you tell me, I can help you. Horace? Horace?

HORACE

...They weren't supposed to go back...they weren't supposed to be there...

Will's blood goes cold.

WILL

Who wasn't supposed to be there?  
(beat)  
What did you do?

Horace chokes out a ragged...

HORACE

I -- I'm sorry.

And then he's gone. Will lets go of his friend. And that's when he hears it: SIRENS. In the distance -- a lot of them.

Will moves to Horace's window, yanking open the blinds to see a horror unimaginable:

THE PEARL IS ON FIRE.

An entire floor, maybe two, are ablaze halfway up the building. Based on the silhouette of the structure, Will knows Sarah and his kids are above the fire line.

His heart sinks.

Then more SIRENS. But these are much closer. Will glances down to:

THE STREET BELOW

where a swarm of HONG KONG POLICE (HKP) and SWAT VANS screech to a stop out in front.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

The van doors open and out pours an ASSAULT TEAM. They hustle into the apartment building.

His mind racing, Will only has moments to form a plan. Quickly he snags his prosthesis, securing it to his leg.

He slings his laptop bag and grabs the .45, tucking it away.

He hears HEAVY FOOTFALLS as the assault team ascends the stairs. Will moves to the door, snugging up against it.

He glances down at his feet -- at first we're not sure why. Then a little BLACK SNAKE slithers under the door. A FIBER OPTIC CAMERA.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR

the ASSAULT TEAM stacks up. The OPTICS MAN crouches at the the door working the snake-cam -- its MONITOR showing the battered apartment and a portion of Horace's slack body.

WILL watches the snake-cam's head twist around and just as it bends toward him he snatches it up and yanks it hard...

THE OPTICS MAN,

holding the other end of it, is yanked head-first into the door -- WHAM!

Will opens the door and grabs the dazed Optics Man -- snapping him back into the apartment and shutting the door.

The Assault Team on the other side of the door unloads on it -- shredding the wood to pieces.

INSIDE THE APARTMENT

Will headbutts the Optics Man out cold, then he snatches a FLASHBANG GRENADE off of his webbing, pulling the pin.

The limp Optics Man in one hand, Will tosses the flashbang through one of the GUNSHOT HOLES in the Swiss Cheese door.

Shouts of alarm followed by a THUNDEROUS BANG.

Will opens the door just wide enough to kick the Optics Man through the opening onto his stunned comrades, knocking a few of them over like bowling pins.

Will slams the door shut and moves to a STANDING CABINET, shouldering it, tipping it over to block the front door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

The assault team on the other side begins battering the door open with a METAL RAM. Will only has seconds left.

He races to the window, tearing off the blinds and throwing open the pane.

CRACK -- the door breaks open and the Assault Team rushes in just as Will disappears out the window, dropping from sight.

EXT. BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

Will hits the ground hard -- his leg goes out from under him as he cries out in pain.

He gathers himself quickly, getting to his feet to find himself

SURROUNDED.

The HKP have both ends of the alley blocked off. They inch toward Will from either end, closing in on him like a vice.

Will glances up to see the ASSAULT TEAM in the apartment aiming down on him from the window above.

He's trapped. It's over. Will puts his hands up, pointing desperately at The Pearl, ablaze in the skyline...

WILL  
My family! My family is trapped in  
that building!

But they don't speak English and he doesn't speak Chinese.

WILL (cont'd)  
Please! Listen to me! You have to  
listen! My family--

BANG!

A shotgun blast strikes Will in the chest -- a non-lethal BEANBAG round knocking the wind out of him. Then another, then a third. The big man drops to a knee, weakened, unable to catch his breath. The HKP close in, subsuming him.

CUT TO:

WILL'S BIG WRISTS

cinched in tiny Chinese handcuffs, as he's led through the throng of cops toward a waiting POLICE VAN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE PEARL

burns in the distance as Will is shoved into the back of the van. He looks up longingly at the burning high rise -- the only people in this world he loves trapped inside.

The van doors close on Will's face revealing the burning high rise in their blacked-out windows.

The doors recede from us -- moving away from The Pearl, away from the very place Will wants to be most.

INT. THE PEARL - PRIVATE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Distraught, Sarah finishes leaving a voicemail for Will.

The fire alarm blares. EMERGENCY LIGHTS flash brightly. An ALARM VOICE repeats itself in CHINESE. Henry and Georgia look scared. Sarah hangs up and ushers them to the couch.

SARAH

Get on the couch.

GEORGIA

Mom -- what's going on? Are we gonna be okay?

SARAH

We're going to be fine. There's a fire in the building, but we're safe here -- everything's going to be okay. I'm going to go talk to the firemen.

Sarah moves into the bathroom and turns on the cold water in the bathtub, pulling the stopper shut to fill it. She grabs a towel, rolling it into a tube.

Exiting the bathroom, she kneels down in front of her kids.

SARAH (cont'd)

Look at me: stay on this couch and do not move until I comeback. Understand?

Henry and Georgia nod. Sarah hands Georgia her phone.

SARAH (cont'd)

If daddy calls, tell him we're okay and that I'll be right back.

(beat)

I love you both very much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sarah kisses them then exits.

INT. THE PEARL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sarah wedges the rolled up towel against the foot of the door. Then she goes to the elevators and sees that the display above the door shows a red FIRE LOGO with an X over it. Elevators have been automatically disabled.

Sarah finds the FIRE EXIT door and pushes through it.

INT. THE PEARL - FIRE STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Sarah moves down from the 98th floor -- instantly feeling a WALL OF HEAT rushing at her. She pushes on, down one flight and nearly to the next landing when -- KA-BOOM!

The door to the 96th floor ROCKETS OFF ITS HINGES, slamming into the wall opposite, crumpling like tinfoil. Hungry for fresh oxygen, the flames from the raging fire snake through the new opening into the stairwell.

Sarah scrambles backward -- turning to run back up the way she came. There's no way down.

EXT. THE PEARL - GROUND LEVEL - NIGHT

Controlled chaos as crowds have gathered to gape at the unimaginable sight. An adjacent thirty-foot wide HD BILLBOARD on the side of a NEARBY BUILDING plays the news of the fire for all to see.

EMERGENCY SERVICES are already on the scene, cordoning off the area. Amidst it, we find the FIRE CHIEF walking through the throng talking to the man in charge, CAPTAIN CHAN.

FIRE CHIEF

*...Fire's burning unchecked on the 96th. We're evacuating the building as we speak. Gonna take some time.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*What about people above the 96th?  
Has anyone contacted them?*

FIRE CHIEF

*No.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*No? Why not?*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIRE CHIEF

*Because there's no one above the 96th floor -- it's not open yet.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*You're kidding me.*

FIRE CHIEF

*The owner of the building is in the penthouse on the 220th -- that's it. And the fire will never get there.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*How do you know that?*

FIRE CHIEF

*The automatic fire doors and dampening measures have engaged, sealing the fire in place. If it can't go up and it can't go down, it'll burn itself out in under two hours, even if we don't do anything -- no fuel, no fire.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*You're telling me the building is putting out the fire by itself?*

FIRE CHIEF

*That's an oversimplification, Captain.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Really? Cuz it sounds to me like you're out of a job, Chief.*

With that, Chan yanks open the door to an EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER, disappearing inside. The Chief follows.

INT. THE PEARL - PRIVATE RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Sarah pushes through the door, coughing. Henry and Georgia rush to her. She kneels down and hugs her cubs tightly.

GEORGIA

*Daddy didn't call.*

SARAH

*That's okay. Gimme the phone. Let's try him together.*

Sarah dials Will one final time...



EXT. HONG KONG STREET - NIGHT

The Police Van, escorted by HKP on motorcycles, moves through the crowded streets, sirens wailing.

INT. POLICE VAN - SAME

Will rides wordlessly with the assault team. Suddenly a BUZZING. Will glances at his laptop bag -- he can see his phone in the mesh webbing of one of its outer pockets.

It's Sarah's face. She's calling him. It's nothing short of torture for Will as he's feet away but can do nothing.

WILL  
Answer it!

The assault team ignores him.

WILL (cont'd)  
ANSWER MY PHONE!

Will tries to answer it himself, moving to get up when he takes the butt of a rifle to the gut for his trouble.

Will crumples. Coughing. His phone shows the missed call from Sarah. Will swings his gaze to a SMIRKING GUARD. Will's eyes narrow, he's gonna--

**WHAMMMMM!**

OUR WORLD GOES UPSIDE DOWN. We're trapped in a violent clothes dryer as we spin and tumble.

EXT. HONG KONG STREET - SAME

The police van is T-boned by a BATTERING RAM TRUCK, sending it spinning like a rolling pin into the side of a building.

Instantly, a HALF-DOZEN GANGSTERS, sporting CHINESE DRAGON MASKS, race up in MOTORCYCLES, ambushing HKP officers.

It's over in a blink as the Gangsters cut down the cops.

INT. POLICE VAN - SAME

It's dark in here. The interior van light stutters, offering an eerie strobe effect. We're completely upside down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUNFIRE and shouting outside. A turkey shoot underway.

In the back of the van, the Assault Team members groan, some out cold. Will shakes out the cobwebs just in time to hear the ROARING WHINE of a gas-powered blade saw.

Suddenly a showering of hot sparks rain down inside the van -- the doors are being cut open from the outside.

Then a CROWBAR is wedged in prying this prize box open -- one thrust, then two. The doors crack free revealing:

THREE DRAGON-MASKED GANGSTERS,

smoke roiling past their horns in wicked slow motion.

The Smirking Guard goes for his gun but takes two rounds in the chest from the LEAD GANGSTER. The Lead Gangster swings the barrel of his carbine to Will.

A moment as it looks like this might be the most expensive short film in the history of cinema.

But then the Lead Gangster drops his weapon and reaches past Will, snagging the thing he came for -- the LAPTOP BAG.

The Lead Gangster makes sure the laptop is inside, then he tosses the bag to a waiting COMRADE on a motorcycle. The comrade tears ass out of there.

Fast approaching sirens. No time, the masked Gangsters back away, splitting apart on their motorcycles -- heist complete.

IN THE VAN

Will hears sirens and weighs his options: stay here and stay arrested or seize the moment and go rescue his family.

For a guy like Will, there's only one answer.

He searches for the CUFF KEYS, finding them on the Smirking Guard's belt.

Will quickly frees himself, snags a SIDEARM and exits.

OUTSIDE THE VAN

the SIRENS have grown louder, he's got only seconds to make his escape. BYSTANDERS have begun to gather -- they point at Will when he appears from the wreckage. Some start shouting. Many others record it all on their smartphones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Will gets his bearings quickly, scanning the skyline until he finds what he's looking for, then he heads off in that direction -- people part like the Red Sea as this massive maniac with a gun moves toward them.

We swing around Will to reveal his goal: THE PEARL, burning like a fuse in the night sky.

MATCH CUT TO:

THE PEARL

burning on a TELEVISION SCREEN. We're...

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE BOARDROOM - NIGHT

Standing in front of his wall-sized touch screen, Zhao watches his building burn on the local news. If this worries him, it doesn't show.

The three suits sitting at the table, however, are starting to sweat. One of them whispers to Mr. Pierce...

SUIT

Helluva first day, huh?

Mr. Pierce swallows hard -- this might be the worst day in his insurance underwriting life. He speaks up...

MR. PIERCE

Should we evacuate?

ZHAO

Evacuate?

MR. PIERCE

Yes. Take your helicopter.

ZHAO

And why would we do that?

MR. PIERCE

The building's on fire.

ZHAO

The building isn't on fire. The 96th floor is on fire.

Mr. Pierce nearly scoffs -- he looks at the suits to back him up. They look away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ZHAO (cont'd)

Mr. Pierce, our bodies are the result of millions of years of evolution. When faced with heat, we sweat. When faced with danger, our blood courses with Adrenaline and Cortisol. When faced with extreme cold, hypothermia, our bodies act to conserve heat, cutting off blood to the extremities -- any sacrifice to keep the core warm. The brain. The Pearl is the same. We're sacrificing one floor, so that the rest may live.

Zhao nods at a set of security monitors, showing the fire containment on the 96th floor.

ZHAO (cont'd)

The ninety-sixth floor will burn to ash, the fire will die and we'll rebuild it. The Pearl itself will never be in jeopardy. I assure you.

Just then, the TV News cuts away from its coverage of the fire to show a STOCK PHOTO OF WILL FORD next to SMARTPHONE VIDEO of his escape from the overturned HKP Van.

The room goes silent. Zhao un-mutes the screen...

NEWSCASTER

...the American is the prime suspect in a double-homicide and is wanted for his apparent connection to the fire at The Pearl...

Zhao turns to his head of security, a no nonsense Israeli man named DOV (40s).

ZHAO

Get me answers.

Dov nods and exits. Puzzled, Zhao turns his attention back to the image of Will on his screen.

MATCH CUT TO:

WILL'S FACE

on the same newscast, playing through a window. We're...

EXT. HONG KONG STREETS - NIGHT

The broadcast plays inside a bar, patrons are rapt by it.

We find Will watching too from an ALLEYWAY. He scans the area, every TV screen he sees is playing the same thing: his face right next to the burning Pearl. He's a wanted man.

Will's mind churns: his image is everywhere and he's a foot taller than everyone in this city -- he'll stick out like a sore thumb on the street. Unless...

Catercorner, Will spots a BEGGAR in a WHEELCHAIR panhandling.

CUT TO:

THE BEGGAR

looking up at us. A FISTFUL OF CASH is held out to him. Reveal Will as he brings his finger to his lips: SHHHH. The Beggar smiles a toothless smile and reaches for the cash.

INT. THE PEARL - PRIVATE RESIDENCE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Georgia submerges bathroom towels in the tub as Sarah kneels in front of Henry holding an ASTHMA INHALER.

HENRY

I'm fine, mom.

SARAH

You're fine now, honey, but we're about to go out there and there's a lot of smoke and bad air and I don't want you to have an attack, okay?

(to Georgia)

Dunk them all the way, make sure the whole thing gets wet. The hand towels too.

Georgia does as she's told. Sarah looks back to her son...

SARAH (cont'd)

Two quick inhales, please?

Henry obliges.

SARAH (cont'd)

Good job. Thank you.

(pocketing it)

I'll have it right here with me if you need it, okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY

Okay.

GEORGIA

Mom -- are we gonna die?

The directness of the question stops Sarah short.

SARAH

No honey, we're not gonna die.

HENRY

Where's Dad?

SARAH

He's not here.

HENRY

Is he coming to get us?

They look at their mother. Sarah knows this moment matters.

SARAH

There's nothing in this world that would stop your father from keeping you both safe.

HENRY

And you too, right?

SARAH

And me too.

Sarah opens her toiletry kit and takes out a pair of CHROME SHEARING SCISSORS.

SARAH (cont'd)

Hand me those towels.

EXT. OFF-SITE CONTROL FACILITY - NIGHT

A motorcycle rips toward the chain-link fence. The Tough Guy, now dressed as the security guard, opens the gate. Clutching Will's laptop bag, the Biker roars through.

INT. OFF-SITE CONTROL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The Biker rushes into the room and hands the laptop to Xia. She tosses it to the Techie who snags it out of the air and quickly boots it up, gaining access the precious control protocols he needs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

XIA

*Do it.*

ON SCREEN we see full access granted. The Techie expertly engages all of the anti-fire measures from the 95th down, a cascade of GREEN COLORED FLOORS all the way to the bottom.

Then he deactivates all of the anti-fire measures from the 96th to the top -- all of those floors BLINK RED.

With a swipe on the touchscreen, the FIRE DOORS from the 97th on up slide open, feeding the fire with fresh air.

ON THE 96TH FLOOR

we see the flames ROAR UPWARD, like a living creature -- a twisting tornado of fire thirsty for fuel and hungry for oxygen. The blaze climbs higher -- a kiln burning white-hot.

BACK TO:

TECHIE

*Ladies and gentlemen, I give you a  
6.5 billion dollar chimney.*

XIA

*Lock it in.*

Some fancy keystrokes add an encryption code to the changes in the building, effectively making them permanent.

TECHIE

*Encrypted.*

He pops up and hands Will's laptop to Xia.

TECHIE (cont'd)

*You've got full systems control from  
that laptop and that laptop only. No  
pass code needed. Plug and play.  
Everyone else is locked out.*

XIA

*How long will it take them to crack  
your encryption and regain control?*

TECHIE

*I don't know -- seven hundred years?  
I'm the only one who knows the  
logarithmic base cipher I used to  
encrypt it, so I'm literally the only  
person on planet earth who can crack  
it. Pretty smart, huh?*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

XIA  
*Not that smart.*

THWIP! One silenced 9mm round to the forehead drops the Techie. She tucks her gun away and slides Will's LAPTOP into her messenger bag for safe keeping, pulling out a GLOSSY BLACK BRICK with a BLINKING RED LIGHT in exchange.

The phone in the control room starts RINGING madly. She ignores it, placing the black brick on the doorjamb with a magnetic CHUNK. She activates it and exits.

EXT. OFF-SITE CONTROL FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

Xia moves away from the facility toward the front gate. She touches her ear, speaking to someone unseen...

XIA  
*Heading to on-site.*

The Tough Guy looks over from the GUARD SHACK...

TOUGH GUY  
*We done?*

XIA  
*Yep.*

THWIP-THWIP! Two shots in the ten-ring. He's dead before he hits the ground. She doesn't so much as break stride.

INT. THE PEARL - 98TH FLOOR HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Choked with smoke. Licks of flame are visible through the exterior windows, reaching up from below. It's only a matter of time before the fire claims this floor as well.

The door to the apartment opens, revealing Sarah sporting a wet hand towel tied around her nose and mouth like a cowboy. She's cut a hole through the sopping bath towel for her head, wearing it like a poncho.

She steps into the hallway, holding hands with Henry and Georgia who are dressed just like her: wet towel mask and poncho, giving the kids the look of tiny ghost bank robbers.

GEORGIA  
 Where are we going?

SARAH  
 Up.



INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE BOARDROOM - NIGHT

Zhao stares at his giant WALL MONITOR: every floor above the 95th is BLINKING RED, the anti-fire measures all read as OFF-LINE. Clearly, something is rotten in Denmark.

The suits are agitated. One sips a bottle of water, his hand shaking as he does. Mr. Pierce paces, nervous.

MR. PIERCE

I thought you said the fire wouldn't spread. You said it would be contained. What's wrong with your building? Don't you have sprinkler systems?

ZHAO

Yes and the sprinkler systems on the 96th floor engaged as designed.

MR. PIERCE

Really? Then why didn't the fire go out?

ZHAO

Because the water caused the fire.

MR. PIERCE

Come again?

ZHAO

It's the only conclusion. And there's only one way water itself can cause a fire: through an exothermic chemical reaction. Which means this wasn't an accident -- it was arson.

Dov, Zhao's body man, returns...

DOV

Local control is completely locked out and off-site's not answering. The entire system's been compromised -- our techs are trying to crack it.

(beat)

And there's something else.

ZHAO

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOV

Our log codes show Will Ford's family swiped into their residence two hours ago, before the fire.

That news puzzles Zhao, but he's got bigger fish to fry...

ZHAO

How long to get control of the building back?

DOV

I don't think they really know, sir.

ZHAO

What was their estimate?

DOV

Eighteen hours.

The suit drinking the bottle water nearly chokes on it.

MR. PIERCE

Eighteen hours?! We don't have eighteen minutes! This thing's burning like a match!

ZHAO

Matches burn from the top down.

MR. PIERCE

Oh fuck you, Buddha! We need to leave!

ZHAO

You're missing my point. With the fire doors open above the fire and closed below them, this building isn't burning like a match -- it's burning like a kiln. It's super-heating.

MR. PIERCE

Are you saying it'll collapse?

ZHAO

No -- The Pearl could burn to cinders and never collapse. Collapse isn't the issue.

MR. PIERCE

Then what is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ZHAO

The real issue is that the building doesn't know it's on fire. And if it doesn't know it's on fire, it can't act to preserve itself. Which means the fire will grow hotter and hotter and spread faster and faster until it has nothing left to feed on. Until it eats itself to death. Until it consumes us whole.

MR. PIERCE

Fantastic. Wonderful. I think we've all learned something really valuable here today. I know I have. Now can we please get on the fucking helicopter?

ZHAO

You know what's interesting about you, Mr. Pierce?

MR. PIERCE

What?

ZHAO

Nothing.

Dov chimes in, speaking softly...

DOV

Sir, you know as well as I do that if the fire gets within twenty floors of us it will over-heat the air around the helipad making liftoff impossible. If we're going to evacuate, we need to do it now.

Zhao weighs the situation. Then he makes his decision.

ZHAO

Alert the authorities that we'll be departing.

With that, Zhao exits.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Zhao moves through his lavish bedroom and into his WALK-IN CLOSET. Passing racks of \$5,000 suits, he stops at the back wall -- a PANE OF GLASS looks out onto the skyline below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Zhao places his hand on the glass causing hidden scanners to read his palm print. GREEN BEAMS shoot out from a secret source behind the glass and scan his retinas.

Suddenly, the pane of glass reveals itself to be a cleverly constructed false wall -- it's a 6K LED SCREEN playing a VIDEO IMAGE of the skyline below. A perfect forgery.

The LED PANEL opens inward. Zhao steps through it into...

A VAULT

about the size of a small bathroom. Zhao moves to an old school 1820's FLOOR SAFE and dials in a combination.

He cracks it open, pulling the heavy door back to reveal a single object inside: A TINY RED MEMORY CARD, the size of a thumbnail. Zhao reaches for it.

EXT. THE PEARL - GROUND LEVEL - NIGHT

Tumult as EVACUEES from The Pearl are directed this way and that way by EMERGENCY PERSONNEL. Meanwhile, hundreds of ON-LOOKERS, cellphones blazing, stare up at The burning Pearl: an awesome sight, nothing short of a Towering Inferno™.

Amidst the chaos we find a ONE-LEGGED HOMELESS MAN, dressed in rags and a tattered ball cap, pushing his way through the throng in a wheelchair. No one pays him any mind, which is just how Will Ford likes it.

Will pauses and looks up at the burning skyscraper above him, the mountain he must climb to rescue his family. The sheer size of it takes his breath away.

The task seems impossible. Will's mind races -- there has to be a way. Suddenly he spots the answer. He wheels toward us as we pivot around him to reveal a:

65-TON SUPER CRANE

perched at the very top of an ADJACENT 90-STORY BUILDING still under construction.

We hold a beat longer than we might as suddenly XIA STEPS INTO FRAME. She must've spotted Will. She moves after him.

EXT. ADJACENT BUILDING - ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

In the ALCOVE ENTRANCE, a POLICE OFFICER waves the crowd along: *keep it movin' people. Nothing to see here.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Will rolls into the alcove in his wheelchair, holding out a paper cup, shaking it at him -- begging.

The Police Officer scowls, then barks at Will in Chinese. But Will keeps at it shaking the cup.

Finally, the asshole cop slaps the cup out of Will's hand and in a blink, Will grabs the man's wrist yanking him down into a vicious head-butt -- CRACK. The cop goes slack. Will catches him before he falls.

WILL

Sorry, pal. Next time maybe give a little.

Quickly, Will hops up on one leg and swaps places with the police officer, dropping him down into the wheelchair and covering him up with his ball cap and tattered coat.

Will places the cup in the cop's lap and pushes him forward just as a PASSERBY tosses some change into the his cup.

WILL (cont'd)

Thanks.

The English startles the Passerby but he keeps moving. Will locks the wheelchair in place and pulls out his prosthetic leg from the satchel on the chair-back, attaching it.

Will pats the cop on the shoulder and moves off inside the building. A beat later, Xia appears in the alcove.

She moves to the officer, digging under his hobo jacket and unhooks the RADIO MIC from his shoulder...

XIA

*Shots fired. Shots fired. Officer down. Request immediate back-up. Suspect Will Ford has entered the Scion Capitol building. Armed & dangerous.*

She presses the barrel of her SILENCED 9MM against the unconscious officer's chest, and pulls the trigger -- THWIP.

The officer's body jerks from the impact. Xia picks up the brass cartridge, blowing on it like a lucky penny.

INT. EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER - NIGHT

Flanked by his second-in-command, LIEUTENANT HAN, Captain Chan drinks black tea from a paper cup as he moves through the Ops Trailer, keeping an eye on a series of MONITORS which play local news broadcasts of the unfolding event.

LIEUTENANT HAN

*...Fire Chief says there's nothing he can do. Water pressure from the trucks can only hit the 30th floor, tops. The system crash shut down the standpipes in the building -- there's no way to get water up high enough.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*So what's he saying?*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*He's saying it's gonna burn.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Get a team to that off-site control facility -- we need those systems back online.*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Yes, sir.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*What about the guy -- Will Ford. What do we know?*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Marine Corps, Bronze Star, FBI for six years, Hostage Rescue Team for eight -- early retirement.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Early?*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*I guess there was an incident.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*What kind of an incident?*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*We're not clear on it yet.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Get clear.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Yes, sir.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*What about the other guy? The dead one in the bathtub.*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Still no ID on him but medical examiner says he was killed eight, maybe ten hours beforehand.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*So you're telling me this one-legged American war hero, travels thirteen thousand miles -- with his wife and kids who no one can seem to locate by the way -- to kill a John Doe this morning, dump the body in his FBI buddy's bathtub before offing him too and then, to kind of round out the evening, decides to light the tallest building in the world on fire? That's where we're at with it?*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*That's what it looks like right now, yeah.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*And the attack on the van -- the one that sprung him -- that's part of this?*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Maybe. Maybe not.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Well I don't know about you Lieutenant, but I think we might win a medal for our police work here. Outstanding stuff.**(beat)**How 'bout this: is there anything we do know for sure?*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Zhao's leaving his penthouse by helicopter. Got word ten minutes ago.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Well, thank god the billionaire's safe.**(beat)**Lieutenant?*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Yes, sir?*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Do me a favor? Go find Will Ford.  
I'd like to ask him some questions.*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Yes, Captain.*

Lieutenant Han turns to go but...

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Lieutenant.*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Sir?*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Never mind. Found him.*

Captain Chan points a large monitor where we see LIVE NEWS HELICOPTER FOOTAGE of Will climbing the vertical spire of the super crane FROM THE OUTSIDE.

CAPTAIN CHAN (cont'd)

*Send a strike team.*

An OPS TECH chimes in...

OPS TECH

*Already there, sir.*

EXT. ADJACENT BUILDING - SUPER CRANE - NIGHT

NEWS CHOPPERS circle, blasting Will with their SPOTLIGHTS as he works his way, inch-by-inch, up the exterior scaffolding of the 300-hundred foot tall super crane.

ON THE CRANE SPIRE, Will mutters to himself...

WILL

*Don't look down...don't look down...*

Will looks down -- the height is dizzying. His stomach drops. He curses himself...

WILL (cont'd)

*Stupid.*

Then, at the base of the crane, Will spots:

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

THE STRIKE TEAM

rushing onto the roof, pointing their weapons up at him.

Their TEAM LEADER hurries to the crane's ENTRY DOOR as the building's MANAGER unlocks it. The Team Leader throws open the door and presses the call button for the CRANE CAR.

ON THE CRANE SPIRE

Two-thirds of the way to the top, Will watches as the CRANE CAR descends past him. Will can't believe it...

WILL (cont'd)  
Shit. There was an elevator?

It's only a matter of moments before the elevator reaches the Strike Team on the roof. No (more) time for jokes, Will redoubles his efforts, climbing feverishly.

Just then, a JET BLACK POLICE HELICOPTER swoops down from the night sky like a bird of prey on the hunt.

ABOARD THE POLICE HELICOPTER

we see a SNIPER, sporting serious-looking night vision goggles, readying his JS 7.62mm bolt-action long gun.

EXT. CRANE CONTROL PLATFORM - NIGHT

At last, Will pulls himself up and onto the CONTROL PLATFORM.

Exhausted by the effort, Will collapses flat on his back for a second, breathing hard. It's eerily quiet up here.

Will gets to his feet and looks at The Pearl. He's roughly 110 stories up -- above the fire line, above the park even.

Will looks down to the rooftop and sees the STRIKE TEAM boarding the crane car. Will chides himself...

WILL  
Great plan, Will. Way to really  
think this through. Now what, genius?

He's got only seconds to do whatever it is he's planning to do. Will spots the GLASS-ENCASED CONTROL CAR -- inside it a panel of buttons and a joystick that controls the boom arm.

He moves to it, scanning the area looking for anything to help him break the door handle and gain access.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He spots a nearby TOOL CABINET. He rushes to it, yanking it open to reveal a set of tools -- among them a SLEDGEHAMMER.

Will grabs it and rushes back to the Control Car. He's just about to bludgeon his way in when he thinks better of it and -- what the hell -- tries the door handle.

Click.

It opens. Will almost laughs. But the sound of the approaching elevator snaps him back into the moment. He rushes over to the platform's ELEVATOR CAGE, grabbing hold of a LENGTH OF CHAIN and a SCREWDRIVER along the way.

Will slips the thick chain through a STEEL LOOP on the ELEVATOR CAGE DOOR, securing it with screwdriver. It'll slow 'em down, but only for so long. Will hurries into the

CONTROL CAR

where he turns the crane on. After some quick and comedic trial & error and he's got the hang of it.

Will rotates the BOOM ARM, swinging it toward The Pearl. Then he EXTENDS toward the face of the building. The crane BEEPS an alert -- it can't extend any further. A THIRTY FOOT GAP remains between the end of the crane and The Pearl.

Will exits the Control Car just as the Strike Team arrives to find themselves locked in. Immediately, they go to work on the door, trying to break the makeshift chain lock.

Time running out, Will grabs the sledgehammer and hustles to THE FAR END OF THE CRANE.

He stares off the end of the diving board, looking at the building in front of him, calculating something in his mind.

Will moves back a few paces then charges at us, holding the sledgehammer high and screaming like a medieval warrior...

WILL (cont'd)

Ahhh!!!

Will HURLS the sledgehammer with all his might -- whoosh!

The sledgehammer hurtles through the air, descending gracefully until it strikes the GLASS EXTERIOR of The Pearl --CRASH!-- punching through the glass but not shattering it, sticking there. Will throws up his hands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILL (cont'd)  
Come on. Really?

Clearly, that wasn't the plan.

INT. EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER - SAME

The entire Ops Trailer as well as Captain Chan and Lieutenant Han watch the events unfold in sheer disbelief.

LIEUTENANT HAN  
*Why the hell would anyone want to get  
IN to a burning building?*

Just then, an Ops Tech breaks in, listening to some chatter on his headset.

OPS TECH  
*Captain -- word coming in right  
now -- we have a location on the  
suspect's family.*

But Captain Chan already knows the answer...

CAPTAIN CHAN  
*Don't tell me -- they're in the  
building.*

OPS TECH  
*Yes, sir.*

EXT. CRANE CONTROL PLATFORM - NIGHT

Will turns from the edge and moves back toward the CONTROL CAR, when he's hit with a WASH OF BLINDING LIGHT.

The Police Helicopter drops down, calling out a DISTORTED WARNING IN CHINESE over its loudspeaker as it swings its body broadside. The light peels away from Will revealing the SNIPER hanging out of the bay door.

Will's eyes go wide -- BANG! -- a high velocity round cracks an inch from his head. Will breaks for it, bolting down the boom arm -- running with everything he's got.

The sniper fires again and again but Will's inside the scaffolding structure of the steel arm making the shot nearly impossible as two more rounds ricochet off metal.

From directly above, the chopper chases Will down the crane arm's length, firing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WHAM -- the elevator door slams open and the Strike Team rushes onto the platform, stopping short at the sight of:

WILL

running flat out toward the end of the arm, nothing but a thousand foot drop and certain death at the end of it.

THE CROWD BELOW

inhales collectively as they watch this tiny figure race toward the end of the plank...

WE'RE WITH WILL

as he runs those final few steps -- no hesitation, no doubt -- to the end of the crane and then -- WHOOSH! -- he LEAPS OFF OF IT, kicking high into the air like an Olympic long jumper. Then...

- e v e r y t h i n g   s l o w s   d o w n -

Silence. Wind rushes by our ears as we hang a hundred feet above the fire in the pitch black of night

THE POLICE HELICOPTER

hovers almost directly above Will, fifty feet up; its rotors turning in timeless slow motion -- WHOOSH-WHOOSH-WHOOSH.

Will begins to fall in a parabolic arc toward The Pearl -- toward the window pane with the sledgehammer embedded in it.

Aiming nearly straight down, the Sniper pulls the trigger.

CRACK!

The bullet races at Will who's falling toward the window pane -- the HIGH VELOCITY ROUND RIPS INTO WILL'S LEFT SHOULDER.

Will cries out as the 7.62mm brass tears through flesh and continues onward, piercing the EXTERIOR WINDOW -- shattering it completely -- a split second before Will hits that very same opening -- THUD!

Speed returns as Will slams into the newly-formed window ledge, the impact knocking the wind from his lungs.

Glass rains down around him as the sledgehammer falls too -- its steel head hooking onto the window ledge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Will falls back but, at the last second, he snatches the sledgehammer handle, dangling there by his one good arm, more than a hundred stories in the air.

The crowd below GASPS!

The sledgehammer starts to slide loose quickly. Will has no choice but to use his other hand -- his injured arm.

He throws it up there, grabbing hold of the window's ledge just as the sledgehammer dislodges, falling away.

Will hangs by his damaged arm. Enduring ungodly pain, he manages to get his good arm on the ledge. Using both arms now, Will pulls himself inside the building. He made it.

ON THE GROUND

the crowd goes WILD -- a folk hero is born.

INSIDE THE PEARL

No celebration. No quips. Exhausted, Will drags himself to his feet and staggers off into the building.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE BOARDROOM - NIGHT

In the boardroom, Zhao and the others watch in astonishment.

MR. PIERCE

What the hell's he doing?

ZHAO

Apparently, whatever it takes.

Dov enters and gives Zhao a look.

ZHAO (cont'd)

If you'll excuse me, please.

Zhao exits as Mr. Pierce and the suits watch the news unfold.

INT. THE PEARL - ANTE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Dov and Zhao step out of the boardroom, settling in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOV

McManus is instrument-rated, it's not his day job, but he's more than qualified to fly us out of here. I sent him up to get the bird ready.

ZHAO

Excellent.

But Dov's face betrays him -- he's not saying something.

ZHAO (cont'd)

Is that it?

DOV

Sir, I've worked for you for nearly eight years now. In that time, I believe I've shown myself to be trustworthy and more than capable...

ZHAO

What's on your mind, Dov?

DOV

Sir -- I can't protect you if you don't tell me what's going on. This isn't a fire, this is a plot -- and I need some answers.

Zhao knows his body man is right.

ZHAO

I can't say for sure.

DOV

I don't need facts. What's your gut telling you? Who's behind this?

ZHAO

Wu-Sai Jun.

That name hits Dov hard.

DOV

Triads?

ZHAO

Black Lotus.

DOV

I don't understand, if the Black Lotus wanted you dead, there are easier ways.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ZHAO

They don't want me dead -- they want this.

Zhao pulls out the RED MEMORY CARD. Just then...

MR. PIERCE (O.S.)

Can we go?

Zhao quickly pockets the memory card. But Mr. Pierce clocks it and senses that's he's interrupted a secret moment...

MR. PIERCE

Is there something I should know?

DOV

Yes -- the helicopter's ready.

Dov moves off, but Mr. Pierce isn't feeling too comfortable about whatever it was he just witnessed.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Flanked by Dov and his security detail, Zhao, Mr. Pierce, the suits approach the grand DOUBLE DOORS to his penthouse. Zhao places a palm on a wall-mounted HAND-SCANNER.

The titanium double doors swing open. They exit.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE PRIVATE ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Zhao and the posse move away from the penthouse's double and step on to a PRIVATE ELEVATOR. The doors close. It goes up.

INT. THE PEARL - 110TH FLOOR - NIGHT

Bizarrely, Will finds himself on a floor filled with LUXURY STORES -- a high-end shopping mall in the sky.

Bleeding on the imported Emperador marble floor, Will staggers past CARTIER, GUCCI and TOM FORD -- all closed. He spots an abandoned JANITOR'S CART up ahead. He rushes to it.

Will digs through the cart, looking for anything that might help him. Quickly, he finds a roll of DUCT TAPE and a bottle of RUBBING ALCOHOL.

Will inspects his gunshot wound: a grisly quarter-sized hole in the meat of his shoulder. Not good. He rips his shirt sleeve off and rolls the fabric into a short tube.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Will unscrews the rubbing alcohol and dumps it onto his wound -- the sudden pain hits him like a wave. Will braces himself against the wall to keep from doubling over.

A breath, then Will thumbs the rolled fabric into his wound, end-first. The pain is enormous, but the deed is done. The wound has been packed. Will grabs the duct tape.

WILL

If you can't fix it with duct tape...

He winds it twice around the meat of his shoulder, tearing the tape with his teeth, securing the ad hoc bandage snugly.

WILL (cont'd)

...then you aren't using enough duct tape.

Will tests his arm. He can move it, but it hurts like a bitch when he does. It'll have to do.

Will loops the duct tape to his belt and moves to the INNER ATRIUM to get his bearings. All of the elevators are off-line due to the fire. NEWS COVERAGE plays on an in-wall TV SCREEN -- from the looks of it, the fire is about to reach the park. Will talks to himself...

WILL (cont'd)

I'll find you. Just hang on.

Will moves to the STAIRWELL DOOR, throwing it open only to stagger back as he's struck with a blast of heat and smoke.

Will tears his other sleeve off, tying the fabric around his face. He gathers himself and enters the

STAIRWELL

which is choked black by smoke. Will spots a RED EMERGENCY BOX with a WOODEN PICK-HEAD AX inside. A sharp elbow is all it takes as Will grabs hold of a three-foot FIREMAN'S AX. He descends into the smoke.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE HELIPAD - MOMENTS LATER

Zhao's LUXURY HELICOPTER sits inside this two-story, glass-walled, hangar in the sky.

Then the GLASS WALLS slide apart like as the ENTIRE SECTION of glossy showroom floor that the helicopter rests on extends into the night sky like a plank on a pirate ship.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

The rotors start to spin as the PILOT preps for take off.  
Zhao and the others exit the elevator onto the hangar floor.

EXT. OFF-SITE CONTROL FACILITY - NIGHT

AN HKF ASSAULT TEAM moves through the open gate, clocking the dead bodies in the guard shack.

They approach the low-slung concrete building, stacking up by the door. The BREACHER uses his METAL RAM to knock the doorknob straight through like a Whack-A-Mole -- THUNK!

The Team yanks the door open and rushes in tripping an INFRARED BEAM and triggering the BLACK BRICK booby trap.

KA-BOOM. A bone-rattling explosion.

INT. EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER - NIGHT

Chaos. Phones ring, people shout as word of the explosion pours in. Captain Chan takes it all in with a grave calm. Lieutenant Han approaches, handing him a print out.

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Got positive ID on the JD in the bathtub.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Who is he?*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Sanjit Singh. Insurance executive for Hawthorne/Stone, the company underwriting The Pearl.*

Chan puzzles over this new piece of information as we...

CUT TO:

PIERCE

standing in the penthouse hangar. He rolls up his shirtsleeve, revealing a FAMILIAR LOOKING TATTOO. We're...

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE HANGAR - NIGHT

The helicopter's rotors at speed, the pilot signals for Zhao and the others to approach. Zhao moves forward but Dov stops him short -- something isn't right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOV  
Hang on --

ZHAO  
What is it?

DOV  
-- The pilot. He's not ours.

SUDDENLY, PIERCE SNATCHES THE SIDEARM FROM THE BELT OF THE NEAREST SECURITY GUARD -- YANKING IT FREE AND SHOOTING THE MAN POINT BLANK.

Pierce turns to Zhao and pulls the trigger just as Dov tackles his boss out of the way, catching a round.

The BAY DOORS on the helicopter are thrown open revealing FIVE MEN in BLACK TACTICAL GEAR -- the very same suspicious men we last saw on Sarah's floor, including the guy with the Samurai topknot, now called FENG.

Instantly, it's a fire-fight. Pierce and his five men with sub-machine guns versus Dov and his three men with handguns.

Caught in the crossfire, the suits are quickly dropped by the assailants as Dov and his squad take cover.

Hunkered down with Zhao behind a METAL TOOL CHEST, Dov pops up and clips a bad guy, causing him to fall off of the HELIPAD PLANK, screaming as he heads all the way down.

Dov drops down, slapping in a fresh magazine.

DOV (cont'd)  
When I tell you, run for the elevator.

Zhao nods. Dov pops up and jerks his aim toward

THE HELICOPTER

where he unloads eight shots through the windshield, stitching the pilot in the chest. The pilot slumps forward onto the controls CAUSING THE HELICOPTER TO LIFT AND TILT TOWARD THE HANGAR -- it only takes a split second for the blades to catch the helipad plank.

An unholy shriek of metal as the copter's body is whipsawed toward the glass walls of the penthouse hangar.

DOV (cont'd)  
Go!--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

--BANG! Dov's voice is choked off as he's plugged in the chest courtesy of Pierce. Shocked, Zhao takes off running...

...just as the 20-ton helicopter SMASHES THROUGH THE HANGAR WINDOWS: an indoor crash-landing 220 stories above the earth.

Zhao reaches the elevator just as the chopper EXPLODES IN FLAMES; shrapnel flies as Pierce and his men take cover.

EXT. THE PEARL - GROUND LEVEL - NIGHT

The crowd reacts to the explosion near the top of The Pearl.

INT. EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER - SAME

Chan and his team watch the explosion on their monitors. Lieutenant Han holds out a phone...

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Sir...*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Not now.*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*It's the Chief Executive.*

The air sucks out of the room. Captain Chan takes the phone...

CAPTAIN CHAN

*Good evening, your Honor.*

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE HANGAR - NIGHT

Pierce spots Zhao disappearing in his private elevator. He shouts at his men as he hurries toward the STAIRWELL DOOR, slamming through it, racing to cut off Zhao's escape.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The elevator opens and Zhao bolts for his penthouse doors, slapping his hand on the palm reader.

Click -- the heavy doors open just as Pierce barrels through the adjacent stairwell door, gun blazing -- BANG-BANG-BANG!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Zhao slips through the narrow opening -- as Pierce's rounds spark and ping off the doors. Zhao slams the EMERGENCY CLOSE button. The titanium doors shut on Pierce's face, locking him out.

BEHIND THE TITANIUM DOORS

Zhao breathes hard -- shaken. He reaches into his suit and pulls out the RED MEMORY CARD, staring at it in relief.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE ELEVATOR - SAME

Pierce curses his luck. His remaining five men arrive. Furious, Pierce snatches a RADIO MIC off of one of them.

PIERCE

*Open the penthouse doors!*

EXT. STREET CAFE - NIGHT

Xia sitting at a street cafe a block from The Pearl touches her ear. [INTERCUT AS NECESSARY]

XIA

*Standby.*

She opens Will's laptop, logging into The Pearl's control systems. She selects the penthouse but can't affect it -- she's locked out of its controls. Not good.

XIA (cont'd)

*The penthouse isn't linked to the building's control system. He's got his own subsystem for his floor. I can't drive it -- I'm locked out.*

Pierce fumes, then doubles down.

PIERCE

*Kill the power to the upper half.  
Cell tower too. All of it. Go dark.*

With a few clever keystrokes Xia cuts the power to the top half of The Pearl and disables its internal cell tower.

EXT. THE PEARL - GROUND LEVEL - NIGHT

The gathered crowd OOHS & AAHS as suddenly the top half of The Pearl goes out like a Christmas Tree getting unplugged.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE - SAME

Zhao's penthouse is thrown into darkness. Emergency lights  
CHUNK ON. He pulls out his cellphone: no signal.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FLOOR - SAME

Standing at the titanium doors, Pierce looks at his team...

FENG

*How do we get in?*

PIERCE

*We can't. But I know someone who  
can. And he happens to be in the  
building.*

FENG

*The American? But we don't know  
where he is.*

PIERCE

*We don't have to know where he is --  
we know what he wants. All we need  
to do is get to them first.*

INT. THE PEARL - PANGU PARK - NIGHT

Sarah and the kids kneel by the stream in the park.

Georgia, still sporting a soiled Panda hoodie, re-wets their  
towels in the ersatz lake. Henry coughs from smoke  
inhalation -- an asthma attack taking hold.

SARAH

*It's okay, baby. Just slow down.  
Slow down and breathe. In for three,  
out for three.*

Sarah gives him two hits from the inhaler and helps Henry  
calm his breathing, trying to get his attack under control.

The MUFFLED ROAR of the unchecked blaze GROWLS from below, a  
leviathan rising. Sarah's worried.

SARAH (cont'd)

*Okay, we gotta go.*

GEORGIA

*Why? There's water here.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SARAH  
It's not safe.

HENRY  
How do you know--

BOOM! -- a FIRE DOOR on the far end of the park rockets off its hinges as flames reach through the new opening.

SARAH  
Run!

Sarah hustles her kids through the park as from all angles the fire begins to claw its way into the floor.

Fire breaks through the seams in the sod -- ZIG-ZAGGING through the grass like snakes, chasing Sarah and the kids.

They rush for a STAIRWELL DOOR just as it EXPLODES LIKE A PIPE BOMB. They duck as the door WHIZZES overhead shearing through a METAL LAMPPOST behind them.

Sarah grabs her kids and yanks them in the other direction, pushing them toward their only escape: THE INNER ATRIUM.

Henry struggles. Sarah picks him up, carrying her son, as the trio rush across

THE SKY BRIDGE,

a narrow footbridge with a glass canopy that spans the diameter of the INNER ATRIUM.

From above, we watch as Sarah and the kids race across the sky bridge; the world below them filled with ash and fire, glowing like the mouth of a volcano.

ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE BRIDGE

they find respite -- this part of the park hasn't been consumed by fire yet. Sarah puts Henry down, spotting another STAIRWELL DOOR on the opposite wall. She's about to make for it when, suddenly, it opens revealing FENG.

The guy doesn't miss a beat -- he smiles warmly...

FENG  
Hey! We've been looking everywhere  
for you guys.

Sarah exhales -- relieved. Then Feng speaks into his mic...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FENG (cont'd)  
Got 'em. They're in the park.

Something about his tone catches Sarah, she doesn't like it.

HENRY  
Mom -- is that a fireman?

SARAH  
I don't know, honey.  
(calling out)  
Who are you?

FENG  
Building security. We met earlier,  
remember?

Feng continues walking, closing the gap between them as Sarah subtly moves in front of her children.

FENG (cont'd)  
You need to come with us now -- the  
building's not safe, we're evacuating.

Feng reaches for Sarah, she steps back.

SARAH  
I want to see your ID.

FENG  
Miss -- please. We don't have time.

SARAH  
You work for the building -- ID.

Feng's jaw tightens.

FENG  
Fine. You got it.

He reaches to his belt and pulls out his H&K COMBAT PISTOL.

FENG (cont'd)  
Let's go, bitch.

Sarah's face falls. Feng grabs her, spinning her and wrapping a big forearm around her neck.

FENG (cont'd)  
Kids too.

Henry and Georgia start to tear up...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SARAH

It's okay -- it's okay, guys. Just do what he says.

Surreptitiously, Sarah slides her hands into her front pant's pocket, pulling out the pair of CHROME SCISSORS.

FENG

Listen to your mommy ki--AHHH!

Sarah stabs Feng in the upper thigh -- he cries out -- and flips him over her shoulder in a slick judo move.

SARAH

Run!

Henry and Georgia take off running back across the sky bridge, as Sarah dives for Feng's H&K, snatching it up and turning back just in time to take a boot to the mouth.

Sarah goes sprawling as Feng rises, yanking the scissors from his leg and tossing them aside. He picks up his pistol but tucks it away and pulls out a TACTICAL KNIFE, spinning it menacingly -- he's gonna do this old school.

Sarah gets to her feet, unarmed and out-muscled.

Easy prey in front of him, Feng attacks. But Sarah is more than he bargained for as she side-steps his swing, blocking his knife arm expertly before kicking his knee out.

Feng goes down hard, howling. Sarah turns and takes off running back across the sky bridge.

IN THE PARK

Holding hands, Henry and Georgia find themselves in the middle of a legitimate forest fire. In all the smoke and madness, they get turned around quickly -- burning trees everywhere.

Henry starts coughing harshly, letting go of his sister's hand. And that's when a MASSIVE PIECE OF CEILING COLLAPSES.

Henry and Georgia dive out of the way just as the section smashes between them through up smoke and fire.

Like a pilot in the fog, Henry gets turned around -- he can't see Georgia any more. He calls out for her. Nothing. Unsure, he picks a direction and heads that way, calling out for his sister.

DOWN A WALK PATH

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (4)

Henry comes toward us, coughing madly and calling out for Georgia. He doubles over at a PARK BENCH, trying to catch his breath. He's alone and terrified. And that's when he spots Sarah running across the bridge toward him.

HENRY

Mom!

Henry takes off running toward her.

ON THE SKY BRIDGE

Sarah races toward the far end when suddenly a BURNING TREE from the park falls, crashing through the Inner Atrium glass wall and SLICING THROUGH THE SKY BRIDGE IN ONE CLEAN STROKE.

A HAIL OF HOT EMBERS explodes as the END OF THE BRIDGE drops at a sharp angle, nearly taking Sarah with it.

She turns back to see Feng hobbling toward her. He tucks away his knife and pulls his H&K. No more games.

She's trapped. Sarah takes a step back, her heels dancing on the edge of the broken bridge and a fall to her death.

FENG

I wasn't supposed to kill you -- but  
I don't give a shit anymore.

He's about to pull the trigger when suddenly his face goes slack. Then blood cascades down his chin and he face-plants to reveal a FIREMAN'S AX in his back and

WILL

standing there, ten feet behind him, having hurled the blade. Sarah rushes to him, they embrace.

WILL

Are you okay?

SARAH

I'm fine -- how did you get here?

WILL

Tell you later -- we gotta get the kids.

SARAH

They're back in the park.

Will nods breaking into action -- he dislodges his ax and goes to snag Feng's gun when...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

BBBRAAAAT!

GUNFIRE rains down on the GLASS CANOPY of the sky bridge, shattering it. Two of Pierce's MEN three floors up unload.

Will grabs Sarah's hand as they take off toward the open end of the bridge through the maelstrom, exiting:

INTO THE FAR SIDE OF THE PARK

which has itself begun to burn. Will and Sarah hug the curve of the INNER ATRIUM wall, circling around counter-clockwise back toward the blocked end of the sky bridge...

HENRY

Mom! Dad!

There's Henry -- he was circling around clockwise toward them. Will and Sarah kneel down, hugging their son.

SARAH

Where's Georgia?

HENRY

I don't know! We got split up -- she's back in the park somewhere.

Will and Sarah share a look -- they know how grave that is.

WILL

I'll find her. We gotta get you guys outta here first -- they're coming down for us.

SARAH

Will -- what the hell is going on? Who are they?

WILL

I don't know yet. The only thing that matters to me right now is getting you out of here.

Will's eyes land on a nearby Inner Atrium Elevator.

WILL (cont'd)

Come on.

INT. THE PEARL - PANGU PARK - SAME

Lost and frightened, Georgia moves through the park.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She calls out for her mother and brother but, with the roar of the fire, her cries are quickly swallowed up.

She spots a GLASS STAIRCASE cut into the exterior window wall of the building itself -- a tourist attraction feature.

BOOM! A FIERY SINKHOLE suddenly opens up in front of Georgia, the ground beneath her feet eroding. She back pedals from its lip and bolts for the glass staircase.

Just as she disappears, we land on the TWO GUNMEN we last saw shooting at the skyway bridge. They spotted Georgia.

GUNMAN #1

(into mic)

We got the girl.

He nods to his buddy, they move for the stairs.

INT. THE PEARL - INNER ATRIUM ELEVATOR - MOMENTS LATER

Sarah and Henry are in the car, Will stands outside it.

SARAH

I'm not doing this--

WILL

Henry can't stay in this building -- there's too much smoke. You know that. Whoever those guys are, they're serious. The only safe place for you both is on the ground.

Will finds a WALL PANEL and cleaves it open with his ax revealing a complex array of cables and wiring. He digs through the cabling as he talks...

WILL (cont'd)

These elevators are Mag-Lev -- they work on electromagnetic induction. But in the event of a power failure, they're held in place by a hydraulic fail-safe brake.

(beat)

The power's out from the midpoint of the building on up -- but it's still on below the fire line. Once I cut the hydraulic cable, you'll fall.

SARAH

Will--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILL

Listen to me -- you'll fall through the fire and hit electricity again -- the magnets will kick back on and stop you. You'll be traveling too fast for the flames to matter. Trust me.

SARAH

I'm not leaving you --

WILL

You're not leaving me, you're saving Henry.

(beat)

It's almost 1,000 feet from here to the fire line. That'll take you about nine seconds. Count to ten and then pull this emergency stop handle -- okay?

SARAH

What about Georgia?

WILL

I'll find her. I promise.

It's a solemn vow. And Sarah knows it's the only way. She kisses him.

SARAH

I love you.

WILL

I love you too.

Will hugs Henry.

WILL (cont'd)

I need you to be strong buddy -- take care of Mom, okay? Can you do that for me?

HENRY

Yes.

WILL

Good. It's gonna be scary, but you'll be fine. Just hold on and count backwards from ten, okay?

Henry hits his inhaler and nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY  
Okay.

WILL  
Daddy loves who?

HENRY  
Me.

WILL  
That's right.

Will hugs his boy, kissing his forehead.

WILL (cont'd)  
Step back.

They move back into the elevator, sitting down on the floor. Will lines up his ax blade on a THICK YELLOW HYDRAULIC CABLE.

Will and Sarah lock eyes -- a look of love and strength between them. Then Will steps into a home run swing -- THWACK!-- a clean cut.

Instantly the car plummets -- Sarah's SCREAM Dopplers away as they disappear in a blink.

INT. THE PEARL - INNER ATRIUM - SAME

The ELEVATOR roars past us at 170 MPH -- a complete, stomach-dropping, free fall.

IN THE ELEVATOR

WARNING ALARMS BLARE as Sarah holds Henry in a bear hug on the elevator floor -- the world coming apart around them. They count backwards together: *ten...nine...eight...*

The CARRIAGE SHAKES AND SHUDDERS as a staccato of light strobes the glass car -- fire then smoke, then fire again. A descent into Hell itself. *Seven...six...five...*

The elevator glass SHATTERS from the unbridled G-Force. *Four...three...*

The centripetal force pinning her, Sarah reaches for the RED EMERGENCY HANDLE, fingers dancing across it but not quite...

SARAH  
...Two...ONE!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She yanks the handle. Nothing happens. They keep falling. Sarah yanks the handle again -- then a loud CHUNKING noise as she's slammed to the floor, a SHOWER OF SPARKS explodes all around the car. Finally the carriage chokes to a stop.

Sarah looks at Henry -- the boy smiles. They made it.

INT. THE PEARL - 360 RESTAURANT - NIGHT

With its kitchen a concentric circle around the inner atrium, this fancy-ass restaurant offers up stunning 360° views of the Hong Kong skyline. The priciest meal in town.

What's more, the floor itself is comprised of GLASS PANELS, offering up views of the park below. With the fire raging unchecked, the setting is lit with an unearthly orange glow.

We find Georgia standing in the middle of the space, breathing hard. Panic setting in. She hears a noise and spins to see the two GUNMEN rushing up from the stairs.

Instinctively, Georgia ducks -- hiding a split second before the men arrive on the scene.

The Gunmen scan the restaurant. They know she's here. Gunman #1 motions to his partner, they split apart, stalking through the Michelin-rated finery.

GUNMAN #1

It's okay -- we're the good guys.  
You can come out now, you're safe.

GEORGIA,

hiding under a table, is anything but convinced. She spots a STEAK KNIFE on the setting above her.

She sneaks her fingers up to snag it -- her hand disappearing just as Gunman #2's eyes sweep that exact spot.

The Gunmen close in on her location, tossing over tables as they go. Closer and closer to her hiding spot. Tension squeezes us like a vice as Gunman #2 stops in front of Georgia's table.

UNDER THE TABLE

Georgia dare not breathe. She clutches her steak knife and spies Gunman #2's foot right in front of her. The young girl screws up her courage and drives the knife home.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gunman #2 ROARS. Georgia bolts from cover. Gunman #2 FIRES -- but his pained shots are wild, lighting up glassware and cutlery all around Georgia as she dives behind the CIRCULAR KITCHEN WALL against the inner atrium.

INT. THE PEARL - PANGU PARK - SAME

Will, searching feverishly in the fire, hears the gun shots from above. He spots the glass staircase and breaks for it.

INT. THE PEARL - 360 RESTAURANT - SAME

Gunman #1 grabs Gunman #2's carbine, jerking it aside.

GUNMAN #1  
*We need her alive! She's the bait.*

GUNMAN #2  
*She fuckin' stabbed me!*

GUNMAN #1  
*Get over it.*

He motions and the pair split up again -- each taking opposite entry points into

THE CIRCULAR KITCHEN AREA

where Georgia crawls on all fours, staying low. She opens a low STAINLESS STEEL CABINET and crawls inside, shutting it.

The hunters stalk their prey slowly, opening each cabinet as they go -- it's only a matter of time.

In the small darkness, Georgia begins to cry, terrified.

Gunman #2 throws open Georgia's cabinet, revealing her.

GUNMAN #2  
*Found you, you little shit. You're gonna pay for what you--*

WHAM! Out of nowhere, Will freight trains him, sending Gunman #2 smashing him against the inner atrium glass.

WILL  
*(to Georgia)*  
*Go!*

She does as Will turns his focus to Gunman #2 who fires at point blank range.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But Will side-steps the shots, grabbing the muzzle and stitching the atrium glass panel with them before kicking Gunman #2 in the back, sending him through the panel and down to the first floor the hard way.

Will pivots just as Gunman #1 opens fire on him. Will ducks as pots and pans dance and pinwheel overhead.

Gunman #1 goes dry and reloads allowing Will to grab a CAST IRON SKILLET and, using it like a medieval shield, charge.

Caught between reloads, Gunman #1 jerks his sidearm and unloads into the iron plate, but Will is already on top of him -- the beat down is merciless.

Will's about to end it when he hears...

PIERCE (O.S.)

Enough!

Will turns to see Pierce standing there, holding Georgia, a pistol to her head. All the fight goes out of him.

For a moment, Will's confused -- the last time he saw Pierce was in Zhao's penthouse boardroom. Quickly though, Will puts together the double-cross. His eyes narrow. Then he looks to his frightened daughter and reassures her...

WILL

It's gonna be okay, honey.

The Gangster gets to his feet and drives the stock of his weapon viciously into Will's gut, dropping the big man to his knees -- Will never takes his eyes off Georgia.

INT. EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER - NIGHT

Captain Chan moves down the length of the trailer, heading for the door, flanked by Lieutenant Han...

LIEUTENANT HAN

*The Night Tigers are military -- counter-terror.*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*I'm aware of that, Lieutenant.*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*But this isn't an act of terrorism.*

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN CHAN

*That's not how the his honor sees it. He sees an expertly-trained foreign national, wanted for murder, on the loose inside that building preparing to do god-knows-what. He's not going to take any chances.*

LIEUTENANT HAN

*And you agree with him?*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*It doesn't matter if I agree with him. It's happening.*

Chan exits...

EXT. EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

...Lieutenant Han follows.

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Captain...*

CAPTAIN CHAN

*There's nothing I can do. We've got thirty minutes to resolve this scenario or it becomes a military operation and we're on the sideline. So unless someone can tell me something different is going on inside of that building, they're gonna use a broadsword on it.*

Then:

OFFICER (O.S.)

*Sir...*

Chan turns to see: an OFFICER standing there with SARAH AND HENRY, dirty, blanketed, but alive.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FLOOR - NIGHT

Pierce holds Georgia at gunpoint. The young girl whimpers and shakes, tears rolling down her face, scared for her life. Flanked by Pierce's three remaining men, Will is on his knees, his hands zip-tied behind him.

Will does his best to console his daughter...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILL

Honey -- look at me. Look at my eyes. Everything's going to be alright. I promise. You hear me?

Panicked, Georgia can only nod her head yes.

WILL (cont'd)

I love you, sweetheart.

GEORGIA

(shaking)

I love you too, Daddy.

PIERCE

I'm afraid I'm going to have to interrupt.

Will glares. If a look could kill, Pierce would be toe-up.

WILL

The dead man in Horace's bathtub -- Singh -- that was you?

PIERCE

No -- that was your pal. That's the nice thing about dealing with degenerate gamblers, they'll do anything to pay a debt. Even sell out their dearest friend. Now -- you still haven't answered my question.

WILL

I already told you: the only way that door opens is if Zhao opens it from his side or if this floor's fire alarm triggers it -- but that can't happen because you guys took the entire system offline. You understand? It can't be done.

PIERCE

Nonsense. Anything can be done with the proper motivation. So let me help. You're gonna get in there and you're gonna bring Zhao, and what he's holding, to me or I'm gonna throw your daughter off the fucking roof.

Pierce grabs Georgia's arm, shaking her sharply.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PIERCE (cont'd)

I hear it's like heaven up there.

GEORGIA

Daddy!

Will lunges to his feet, charging at Pierce. One of Pierce's MEN cracks him on the skull, sending him to the floor.

Will coughs and writhes, his eyes watering. Pierce shoves Georgia to one of his men, then he moves over to Will, kneeling down to cut his zip tied hands, smirking as he does.

PIERCE

Tick-tock...

Pierce grabs Georgia by the hair and yanks her toward the STAIRWELL EXIT DOOR. The girl yells for her father -- Will reaches out for Georgia from the ground, a futile gesture.

Pierce and his men disappear through the STAIRWELL EXIT. His daughter's cries cut short as the door seals shut.

Will gets to his feet, shaking out the cobwebs. He moves to the stairwell door, trying it with no luck -- it's locked.

He starts pacing, muttering to himself, his mind racing...

WILL

Come on, Will...think...think...

Will moves to an exterior-facing TWENTY-FOOT WIDE PANORAMIC WINDOW, its CURTAINS drawn back like an elegant movie house to reveal the skyline and fire raging five floors below.

He spots an in-wall FIRE ALARM BOX -- its digital display flashes: OFFLINE. Will pulls the handle a couple times, nothing. He's fucked.

Will tries to pry the Fire Alarm box off the wall, to get at its innards, but without any luck. It's on there tight.

It's then that Will spots something on the other side of the panoramic window...

WILL (cont'd)

Hello, beautiful.

Sitting directly opposite the fire alarm, on the exterior of the building, is its CONTROL BOX resting there on the exposed fascia. He spots a METAL TRASH CAN and picks it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Will slams the trash can against the panoramic window -- CLANG! Nothing. A chip maybe. Will tries again, no luck.

WILL (cont'd)

Damn it.

Will moves down the PANORAMIC WINDOW, away from the FIRE ALARM until he comes to the window's end.

He stops at an ADJACENT PANEL OF GLASS, just as tall but only about four-feet wide -- an easier target.

Will presses on it with his hand, judging its thickness. Knowing now what it takes now, Will backs up and then charges: using the trash can like a battering ram -- WHAM!

INSTANTLY THE WHOLE SECTION SHATTERS INTO A MILLION PIECES and Will's momentum carries him THROUGH THE OPENING!

He lets go of the trash can, barely managing to grab hold of the WINDOW TRANSOM to keep from falling through completely.

Will gathers himself and scans the penthouse level. His eyes land on a BRONZE STATUE of a CHINESE WARRIOR resting on a four-foot MARBLE PEDESTAL.

He shoulders the pedestal sending the statue crashing. The Warrior's HAND breaks free and in it a SIX-INCH SHORT-SWORD ("Dao"). Will picks up the thin blade -- it'll do.

He looks at the CURTAINS hanging to one side of the panoramic window. He yanks them down, quickly finding the BRAIDED CORD that the mechanism uses to retract them. Will loops the cord around his elbow like a length of rope.

Finished, Will knows he's still missing one more thing. He reaches for his belt and holds up the DUCT TAPE.

CUT TO:

WILL'S HANDS

wrapped like a boxer's before a bout but with duct tape, STICKY SIDE OUT. Will finishes the last strip and tests his new hand adhesion by placing his palms together.

CUT TO:

THE MARBLE PEDESTAL

lying on its side at the foot of the shattered window panel. One end of the curtain rope is tied around its the pedestal, the other end Will lashes around his waist, knotting it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

We see that Will has also duct taped his feet. He checks the stickiness of one, talking to himself...

WILL (cont'd)  
Can never be too careful when you're  
doing something this stupid.

Standing at the open window, the wind howling madly, nothing but a three-thousand foot fall and certain death below him, Will steadies himself...

WILL (cont'd)  
Kids, don't try this at home...

...and then he steps out, pivoting around the window transom. But his first step is a poorly placed one and Will stumbles, nearly falling.

HE CLUTCHES THE TRANSOM AND PULLS HIMSELF BACK IN -- his life flashing before his eyes. Will lets out a little laugh -- nerves getting the better of him. Two steady breaths and Will gives it another go.

He pivots out stepping onto the SIX-INCH LEDGE that runs along the base of the panoramic window. Will presses his body as close as he can to the glass -- his duct taped hands sticking nicely to the window.

Slide step by slide step, Will crosses the twenty-foot wide section of glass, eyeing the CONTROL BOX on the far side.

Below him, the fire rages -- climbing ever-closer.

INT. EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER - NIGHT

Being tended to by an EMT, Henry breaths through an oxygen mask as nearby Sarah sketches something for Chan.

SARAH  
It looked like this...

Sarah flips around a clipboard to reveal a crude facsimile of the Black Lotus Triad tattoo. Chan and Han share a knowing look.

CAPTAIN CHAN  
And how many of them did you say you  
saw?

SARAH  
Six.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN CHAN

Do you have any idea what they're doing up there? Why they're doing this?

SARAH

No.

LIEUTENANT HAN

And you claim your husband isn't involved?

SARAH

I don't claim that -- I'm telling you that. He's not involved.

Lieutenant Han pulls his boss away for an aside, speaking in Cantonese.

LIEUTENANT HAN

*Captain -- this doesn't pass the smell test. None of it does. If the Black Lotus are there to get something -- to steal something -- why light the building on fire? And if they're trying to cover their tracks -- fine -- but why trap yourself above the fire line and then destroy your only means of escape? It doesn't make any sense.*

A sudden realization hits Sarah. She cuts in in Cantonese, surprising the officers.

SARAH

*That's not their only means of escape.*

LIEUTENANT HAN

Really? Then how are they planning to get out?

SARAH

They're gonna jump.

LIEUTENANT HAN

Excuse me?

SARAH

They're gonna jump off the top. When I saw them that first time, they had containers with them marked in Russian.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sarah grabs a computer terminal. Types in the word for PARACHUTE then hits translate to Russian.

**ПАПАШКОТ**

Pops up. She points at it.

SARAH (cont'd)  
That's the word I saw on the  
container they had.

Sarah moves to a WALL MAP of HONG KONG, scanning it.

SARAH (cont'd)  
(to Han)  
Gimme your pen.

The lieutenant hesitates, looking to Chan for the okay.

CAPTAIN CHAN  
Give her your pen...

He obliges and Sarah snags it, checking its length against the map's scale legend. She marks an X on the map.

SARAH  
The Pearl is here.  
(beat)  
A base jump from a thousand meters up  
gives you about triple that in  
lateral descent distance -- call it a  
mile to be safe, two pen lengths.

LIEUTENANT HAN  
How do you know that?

She turns her phone's screen to them and shrugs...

SARAH  
I Googled it.

The Captain shoots his Lieutenant a look: she got you there.

Sarah measures out two pen lengths from the X in all four directions, then connects the points with a crude circle.

SARAH (cont'd)  
That's your search area. If they  
land, they'll land within that  
circle -- and if they have friends,  
they'll be waiting to pick them up at  
the landing zone. Someplace flat and  
open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Impressed, Captain Chan moves closer to the map...

CAPTAIN CHAN

And secluded.

(scanning the map)

They won't go for Victoria Park -- too obvious and too many trees to get hung up on. South, but you'd never clear the peak. West, maybe, but it's a longer haul to an open spot. Risky.

SARAH

There. What's that -- on the other side of the harbor? The Kowloon side.

Sarah points to a BROWN RECTANGLE in the water.

LIEUTENANT HAN

That's nothing. It's a construction sand barge -- bay dredge.

Sarah gives Chan a look. He's thinking.

LIEUTENANT HAN (cont'd)

Captain, you can't seriously be considering this. For all we know, she's in on it.

SARAH

You think I'd willingly trap my own children in a burning building?

LIEUTENANT HAN

I think you could be playing a role. You could be a distraction to allow your husband to escape. This could all be part of his plan.

Sarah can't believe this guy. She turns to Chan...

SARAH

Captain, I know you wanna get this right and the last thing you want to do is to point your gun at the wrong guy.

(beat)

Take me out to the sand barge. If it's empty and I'm wrong, what have you lost? But if I'm right, it might be your only chance to catch the men responsible for this whole thing.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (4)

Captain Chan considers this. He's about to respond when suddenly there's a RUMBLING FROM THE CROWD OUTSIDE.

Something's going on. Chan breaks for the trailer's exit door, followed by Lieutenant Han and Sarah.

EXT. EMERGENCY OPS TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

The trio come to a stop just outside the trailer. They stare at the HD BILLBOARD, stunned.

ON SCREEN, we see long-lens news footage of Will inching across the PANORAMIC WINDOW, nearly a mile above them.

They turn from the giant video screen and look up with their own eyes to see Will's ant-like form, clinging to the side of the building -- an insane act. The act of a desperate man.

SARAH

Captain, does that look like someone with a plan to you?

Chan glances at Sarah -- his wheels turning.

EXT. THE PEARL - PANORAMIC WINDOW - NIGHT

220 stories above the earth, Will presses himself against the glass, inches from his goal. One more step.

Will makes the step --BOOM!-- a glass panel on the floor below him explodes like a car bomb.

Will lunges for the control box, clutching it to keep from falling. Two more explosions rock the tower from below.

Will finds footing around the box. He reaches into his waistband and pulls out the statue's sword, wedging it into the seams of the box, prying at it.

With a crack, it pops open and Will goes to work on the wiring. He finds what he's looking for -- a GOLD WIRE.

Using the statue sword, Will strips the wire, cuts another one, and hot-wires them together. A GREEN LIGHT on the conduit panel turns off and a RED LIGHT starts FLASHING.

THE FIRE ALARM BOX

on the other side of the panoramic window flashes the words: FIRE-FIRE-FIRE.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FOYER - SAME

The CONTROL PANEL next to the PENTHOUSE DOORS flashes the same: FIRE-FIRE-FIRE. With a heavy metal CHUNK, the TITANIUM DOORS UNLOCK AND SLOWLY START TO SWING OPEN.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE BEDROOM - SAME

The panel by Zhao's bed blinks: FIRE-FIRE-FIRE. Zhao pulls open his nightstand drawer snatches up a PALM-SIZED BERETTA NANO -- an executive's gun meant to be concealed. Zhao exits.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

Zhao rounds the corner to see the front doors to his penthouse wide open. He moves to the nearest control panel and tries to shut the doors, but the programming won't allow it -- the fire alarm overrides his controls.

Thinking fast, Zhao pulls his smartphone out of his pocket, snags a nearby USB cable and plugs his phone directly into the panel itself. He starts thumbing away like mad.

EXT. THE PEARL - PANORAMIC WINDOW - NIGHT

Will lets go of the control box and begins to make his way back across the panoramic window, slide step by sli -- BOOM!

A DEAFENING EXPLOSION rattles the world.

Will falls.

Everything goes topsy-turvy as we plummet. Suddenly, we're jerked to stop as Will's securing rope snaps taught.

That's the good news.

The bad news is that the sudden force of the fall has caused Will's securing rope to slip down his body -- coming to a snug cinch point around the ankle of Will's prosthetic leg.

Fire raging around him, Will dangles upside down by his ankle, a mile up, like a rabbit caught in a rope snare.

THE MARBLE PEDESTAL

is yanked against the window frame at a poor angle, wedging itself against the transom in anything but a secure fashion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Swinging upside down, Will gets his bearings. He tries to curl his body up toward the rope -- like a hanging sit-up -- but the added strain of the move causes his prosthetic sleeve to loosen -- WILL'S LEG IS SLIPPING OUT OF IT.

Will falls back, dangling by a leg that's coming loose. Like a car teetering on the edge of a cliff, any movement from Will might cause his leg to come undone completely.

The earth a postage stamp below him, Will steadies himself, becoming as still as possible, barely daring to breathe.

Will knows he's going to have one shot at this. He gathers his courage and makes one sharp move.

With a grunt, he breaks into action using his free leg to kick off the face of the building while throwing his hands toward his toes, propelling himself upward with such force that his RESIDUAL LIMB POPS OUT OF THE PROSTHESIS.

For a blink, Will is in complete free fall -- no rope, no leg -- but his hands snag hold of the CARBON FIBER FEMUR at the last possible second.

A strange sight indeed: a one-legged man, clinging to a metal leg, attached to a rope, 3,000 feet in the air.

Will starts pulling with everything he's got. A dead-hang rope climb. The weight of this undulating action causes

THE MARBLE PEDESTAL

to strain against the window transom, inching closer and closer to dislodging completely.

WILL

free-climbs for all he's worth, hand-over-hand, a man of undying determination: his arms burning, but his eyes focused on the open window ledge ten feet above him.

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FOYER - NIGHT

At the control panel for the doors, Zhao has used his smartphone to hack bypass the fire alarm function and he instructs the doors to reset.

Zhao jabs the "SECURE DOORS" button the panel and watches as the titanium Goliaths lurch toward each other.

Zhao takes cover behind a LOW CABINET, checking his mini-Beretta, ready to plug anyone who comes through the door.

EXT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE FLOOR - NIGHT

Will's forearm slaps over the marble pedestal. He pulls himself up and over the final hurdle.

Exhausted, Will collapses. But only for a moment as he suddenly sees the penthouse doors closing -- he's only got seconds before they shut again, sealing him out for good.

Leaping into action, Will starts pulling up the rope, his prosthesis dangling on the other end like fish on a hook.

Just then, another explosion from below rocks the penthouse floor causing the marble pedestal to break free and plummet through the window like an anchor.

The cord rips through Will's duct-taped hands, smoking them as Will's prosthesis whips back to him like a boomerang.

Will clutches his leg as it's being pulled from his grip by the four-hundred pound pedestal on other end of the rope.

Will glances back at the penthouse doors -- they're almost closed now: he's gotta make a choice his leg or the door.

But Will makes a third play: he pulls the statue's sword from his waistband and cuts the rope with one downward hack. The rope whips through the window opening as Will tumbles back, his prosthetic leg in his hand.

Will jams his leg into the PROSTHETIC SLEEVE and spins to see the penthouse doors a foot from sealing shut.

Will bolts for them, diving into a head-first slide on his side -- like a car up on two wheels -- and narrowly SKIMS THROUGH THE OPENING. He made it.

Only, he didn't.

Will's PROSTHETIC ANKLE is caught in the door like a bear trap. Will tugs on it with both hands, it won't budge.

With one final pull, Will yanks his leg through the doors, which quickly seal shut behind him, tumbling back into a heap on the foyer. Then:

ZHAO (O.S.)

Don't move.

Will looks up to see Zhao pointing his tiny Beretta a foot from Will's nose. Will's shoulders slump at his luck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILL  
You're too close.

What an odd thing to say. Zhao doesn't follow...

ZHAO  
What?

WILL  
You're...

WHACK!

With cat-like quickness, Will slaps the Beretta out of the inexperienced billionaire's hands as he yanks Zhao's wrist downward and simultaneously sweeps his leg, dropping him to the polished floor -- a slick-ass take down.

WILL (cont'd)  
...too close.

Will pounces on him, driving the point of his good knee between Zhao's shoulder-blades, pinning him there.

WILL (cont'd)  
We need to talk.

CUT TO:

A SMALL MAN IN A SHARP SUIT.

Tan, salt & pepper hair. Bushy eyebrows. Capped teeth. A Chinese Martin Scorsese. This is WU-SAI JUN, kingpin and crime lord of Hong Kong. He smiles at us.

WU-SAI JUN  
*I know this is difficult.*

We're...

INT. GANGSTER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Opulent, dark. The den of a powerful man. Zhao sits opposite Jun. Xia sprawls on a nearby chaise as Feng looms in view.

Behind Jun, the most striking feature: a wall comprised of GLASS TERRARIUMS, each containing a solitary SNAKE.

WU-SAI JUN  
*For a man like you, this must come  
with some discomfort.*  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WU-SAI JUN (cont'd)  
*But you can take solace in the fact  
 that it's all for a greater good.  
 The glory of The Middle Kingdom.*

ZHAO  
*Forgive me, but I don't see how  
 extortion glorifies China.*

WU-SAI JUN  
*This isn't extortion, Mr. Zhao, this  
 is business.*

ZHAO  
*And if I refuse?*

Wu-Sai Jun smiles. This man might take more convincing. He rises from this seat moving toward the back wall of snakes.

WU-SAI JUN  
*There are ten snakes in the world to  
 which there exists no known antivenom.  
 (re: the terrarium wall)  
 I've made a home here for each one.*

Jun slides out one particular terrarium from the wall like a drawer in a bureau. The BLACK & BLUE STRIPED SNAKE inside it coils, ready to strike.

WU-SAI JUN (cont'd)  
*The snake handlers of Burma practice  
 an ancient art called Mithridatism.*

He opens the top of glass box. The snake hisses, a warning.

WU-SAI JUN (cont'd)  
*They believed that by ingesting small  
 amounts of a snake's poison over  
 time, they would become one with the  
 animal, rendering its venom harmless.*

Jun rolls up his sleeve, revealing his BLACK LOTUS TRIAD TATTOO. He places his arm in the terrarium, holding it there in front of the hissing reptile but never taking his eyes from Zhao.

WU-SAI JUN (cont'd)  
*The Blue Krait's venom has been used  
 for centuries by indigenous Malaysian  
 tribes to hunt big game. It's said a  
 single bite can stop an elephant's  
 heart in under ninety seconds.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Suddenly Jun throws his fingers out, splaying them in a sharp motion that causes the snake to strike -- biting Jun on his forearm, just under his tattoo.

The gangster winces but doesn't waver -- watching Zhao the entire time.

The snake recoils. Jun lifts his arm out of the terrarium and observes two trickles of blood running down his forearm. Pointedly, he licks the blood from his arm and then, gentile as you please, rolls his shirt sleeve back, buttoning it.

WU-SAI JUN (cont'd)

*I know this arrangement may seem  
poisonous to you now but, over time,  
once you've completed your building, I  
promise you: you won't feel a thing.*

Zhao looks pained. A moment, then...

ZHAO

*Give me the account number.*

Jun nods to Xia. She slides over a piece of paper with a lengthy number on it. Zhao takes it and enters the info into his phone. By the looks of things, he's transferring \$50 million from his account into a different one.

He hits transfer. His phone chimes: complete.

ZHAO (cont'd)

*Are we done?*

Jun gives us a reptilian smile.

WU-SAI JUN

*Good luck with construction.*

Zhao stands, straightens his jacket and exits.

WILL (PRE-LAP)

*You paid them off?*

INT. THE PEARL - PENTHOUSE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Zhao sits on a couch as Will looms above him.

ZHAO

*If I didn't, they would've crippled  
my labor force and cost me triple  
that amount in construction delays.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILL

So you caved. But if he got what he wanted, why's he doing all this?

ZHAO

I didn't cave. I could never let The Pearl become corrupted by the likes of Wu-Sai Jun.

(beat)

As soon as he accepted my payment, he chopped it up, dispersing it to all of his other off-shore accounts in smaller increments.

WILL

He laundered it.

ZHAO

Essentially, yes. But what he didn't know is that I hid a Trojan Horse in my wire transfer -- a digital dye pack that infected every account any portion of my payment touched, feeding the routing and account information back to me.

Zhao holds up the RED MEMORY CARD.

ZHAO (cont'd)

This card contains the account information for every single dollar Wu-Sai Jun and the Black Lotus Triads have. Over half a billion dollars in illicit monies in thirty-six separate holding banks around the globe.

(beat)

I hand this over to the Chinese government and they can freeze all of his assets -- destroying his entire operation and sending him to prison for the rest of his life.

(beat)

This card IS their operation. And they'll stop at nothing to get it back.

WILL

Follow the money.

ZHAO

Indeed.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (2)

WILL

Then why didn't you turn it over to the authorities? Be done with it.

ZHAO

If I did that, Wu-Sai Jun would have no reason not to kill me. I'd be signing my own death warrant.

(beat)

As long as I hold onto this, we have detente. They had to leave me alone and let me build The Pearl without interference.

WILL

But how does getting that particular card help them -- you must've made copies.

ZHAO

I did, of course. But this is the original. With it, they can reverse engineer my Trojan Horse payment and scrub their accounts clean again -- no digital dye, no way for the authorities to trace the money and find their secret accounts. If they get their hands on this, all of my other copies would be worthless.

(beat)

Besides, their plan isn't to let me live. Their plan is to get their hands on this and the moment they do, I'm a dead man.

Will paces, putting it all together now...

WILL

So they lit the building on fire because they knew you'd grab the most valuable thing in the world to you and flee -- just like anyone would.

ZHAO

No one could get it out of my safe except for me. They just needed to give me a good reason.

Will stands.

ZHAO (cont'd)

Where are you going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WILL

We're gonna give them what they came here for.

ZHAO

Didn't you hear me? As soon as they have it, they'll kill me. They'll kill us both.

WILL

Maybe. But they have my daughter and that's all that matters to me.

ZHAO

I'm not eager to die.

WILL

In ten minutes this entire floor is gonna be on fire, so the way I see it, you can either stay here and die or come with me and have a chance to live.

Zhao weighs the offer, he knows Will isn't wrong.

ZHAO

What's your plan?

Will glances at the ceremonial CHINESE SWORD mounted on the wall. He turns back to Zhao.

WILL

You got any duct tape?

Zhao eyes the American suspiciously.

EXT. THE PEARL - NIGHT

The tallest building in the world burns. In epic grand finale fashion, we circle the building landing on:

THE GLASS OBSERVATION DECK

The light from the flames below dance off of its facets, making it sparkle against the skyline like a black diamond.

INT. THE PEARL - OBSERVATION DECK - SAME

Pierce and his THREE MEN wait inside the CANOPIED GLASS, each strapped into a sleek, low-profile, PARACHUTE PACKS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Georgia, her Panda hoodie dirt-stained, sits on the ground, eyes red from crying. Suddenly, she sees something...

GEORGIA

Daddy!

Pierce and his men turn to see Will pushing Zhao forward like a prisoner, his wrists duct taped together in front of him.

Pierce grabs Georgia roughly, yanking the girl to her feet as his men fan out. Will and Zhao stop twenty feet from them.

PIERCE

See? I knew you'd find a way.

Pierce nods at his biggest guy.

PIERCE (cont'd)

Check 'em.

The BIG MAN moves to Will and starts patting him down. He gets to Will's leg -- feels something funny. Will pulls up his pant-leg to reveal his metal prosthesis.

Will shrugs. The Big Man moves on to Zhao, patting him down as the billionaire lifts his duct-taped hands above his head.

BIG MAN

They're clean.

The Big Man returns to his post. Pierce nods his approval.

PIERCE

Smart.

Will holds up the RED MEMORY CARD.

WILL

Here it is. Now let her go.

PIERCE

Go to your daddy, sweetheart.

Georgia starts for Will, but Pierce stops her short -- grabbing her by the hoodie, toying with Will.

PIERCE (cont'd)

You know -- on second thought -- I'd like to have that memory card first.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Will's about to toss it to him when suddenly ZHAO LIFTS HIS DUCT TAPED WRISTS, REVEALING THAT HE'S BEEN PALMING HIS BERETTA NANO -- hiding it beneath the silvery tape.

ZHAO  
I can't let you do it.

Will blanches. Zhao has double crossed him. Pierce and his men lift their weapons as Zhao snatches the memory card out of Will's hand and steps behind him for cover.

WILL  
What the hell are you doing? This isn't the plan.

ZHAO  
The plan's changed.  
(to Pierce)  
I want a parachute.

Pierce grabs Georgia, jamming his gun against her cheek.

ZHAO (cont'd)  
I don't care about the girl -- a parachute or your boss gets nothing.

Will's jaw sets -- the tension high. Pierce calculates the angles, then turns to his BALD GOON.

PIERCE  
Give him your parachute.

BALD GOON  
Huh?

PIERCE  
Give him your fucking parachute.

Pierce points his weapon at his subordinate. The Bald Goon hesitates, then pops the chest buckle on his chute and slips it off, holding it out.

ZHAO  
Bring it here.

The Bald Goon checks with Pierce who nods: do it. Baldy moves closer, too close now.

ZHAO (cont'd)  
Stop. Drop it there.

The Goon does as he's bid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ZHAO (cont'd)

Step back.

Zhao holds up the red memory card.

ZHAO (cont'd)

Here's your card.

With that, Zhao suddenly flings the memory card away like a mini-Frisbee. Instinctively, everyone turns to watch it go.

But not Will -- he looks at his daughter and yells:

WILL

Run!

And she does. Georgia bolts as Zhao opens fire. Will reaches into the SIDE POCKET of his right pant leg, taking hold of something and PULLING WITH ALL HIS MIGHT TO REVEAL:

THE CHINESE SWORD WHICH HE'D DUCT TAPED TO HIS METAL LEG.

It shears through Will's pant leg with ease and he now holds a three-foot razor-sharp blade in his hands. In a flash, Will lunges, driving it through the Bald Goon's sternum as Pierce and his men OPEN FIRE!

The entire observation deck erupts into a gunfight as everyone moves to what cover they can find.

It's a gunfight in a glass house -- panels shatter, raining down shards left and right, each new opening ushering in a howling rush of wind like an airplane emergency door being thrown open at 40,000 feet.

What's more -- with the firelight from below, the entire space takes on the eerie effect of a house of mirrors. Reflections dance in double and triple exposure as this life-and-death finale unfolds in triplicate before us.

Amidst this maelstrom of glass and wind and gunfire we find:

WILL

wedged up behind some cover, his sword at the ready. Out of the corner of his eye he spots the REFLECTION OF GEORGIA tucked into a ball covering her ears. He has to get to her.

Just then, Will sees the BIG MAN rushing toward him. Will throws this sword -- it strikes the Big Man in the chest but, strangely, the Big Man doesn't react -- instead he SHATTERS into a thousand pieces: a reflection.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Which means: THE BIG MAN IS BEHIND WILL.

Will spins just in time to knock the muzzle of the Big Man's sub-machine gun aside as it looses a rip of automatic fire.

In a blink, the two are in a close-quarters grapple to the death. Will quickly gains the upper-hand.

The Big Man sees the tables turning against him and drives his thumb into Will's shoulder wound. Will cries out as the Big Man headbutts him, dropping Will to the deck in a daze.

The Big Man pounces, wrapping his meaty forearms around Will's neck, putting him in a deadly sleeper-hold.

Will's seconds away from blacking out. He reaches for the sword -- lying on the rooftop just out of his reach.

The Big Man jerks Will away from it, placing himself between Will and the sword, his back to the SHATTERED GLASS PANEL.

BIG MAN  
Nighty-night...

CUT TO:

ZHAO

trading shots with Pierce. Zhao ducks back down, reloading. Pierce pulls a GRENADE and tosses it at Zhao.

The grenade lands perfectly. Zhao sees it and dives from cover as it explodes, exposing him to Pierce's gun-sites.

Pierce unloads, clipping Zhao in the leg as the magnate scrambles for safety.

BACK TO:

WILL

being choked out. His fingers stumble numbly over the Big Man's face. The Big Man almost smiles -- it's over.

And that's when Will grabs hold of the PARACHUTE'S RELEASE HANDLE. With his last remaining strength, Will pulls it.

The Big Man's parachute ejects from his back -- quickly catching the rushing wind and yanking him through the broken glass panel like he was shot out of a cannon -- WHOOM!

The Big Man's scream is cut short when his head catches the window transom on the way out -- offering up a meaty THUNK.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Will scans the rooftop for Georgia. But instead, he spots

THE RED MEMORY CARD

lying on the ground out in the open.

Will rushes for it, snatching it up and turning to break back for cover when he comes face-to-face with the FINAL GOON.

No words -- the Goon fires at point blank range: BANG!

But the Goon's gun doesn't go off. His torso jerks in three successive spasms, as he's punched through by three shots, falling to reveal Zhao, clutching his gunshot leg.

WILL

You're a pretty good actor for a  
billionaire.

ZHAO

How do you think I got to be one?

Clearly, Zhao's "double-cross" was part of the plan. Will holds up the memory card...

WILL

Found something for you.

ZHAO

Great. Now let's get your daugh--

THE AREA ERUPTS INTO SPARKS

as Pierce has flanked them, unloading his sub-machine gun on them. Pierce goes dry -- he curses his luck, ducking down.

Zhao pitches forward onto Will who pulls him down to safety

BEHIND COVER.

Will checks Zhao's wounds -- he's been gut-shot badly. Blood pours from his mouth. Not good.

WILL

Hang on -- stay with me.

Zhao shoves his gun into Will's hands -- the first time he's touched one in ten years. Zhao looks him in the eye.

ZHAO

Find her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

WILL  
I'm coming back for you.

Will nods and moves off.

CUT TO:

WILL

moving through the observation deck, stalking -- looking for Georgia, a hair trigger ready for Pierce. Then...

GEORGIA (O.S.)  
Daddy!

Will spins to see Pierce holding his daughter out on  
THE EXTENDED DECK.

The same place Will stood when he first came up here.  
Nothing below their feet but a thin piece of glass and a  
three-thousand foot fall.

Pierce holds a grenade in one hand and Georgia against his  
body -- making a crack shot difficult.

The tableau is a haunting mirror of the farmhouse standoff  
that cost Will so dearly. Will is struck cold.

PIERCE  
You shoot me, I drop this, she dies.  
Disarm.

A pained moment. With no choice, Will obliges -- crouching  
down to place his gun on the deck. But...

At the last moment, Will fires!

But he doesn't fire at Pierce -- HE FIRES AT THE GLASS PANEL  
BENEATH HIS FEET. The entire floor panel SHATTERS -- PIERCE  
AND GEORGIA FALL STRAIGHT THROUGH IT.

Will leaps for the opening -- diving through the hole,  
reaching out with everything's he's got and, at the last  
possible second, he catches hold of GEORGIA'S HOODIE.

Surprise and horror on his face, Pierce falls away from  
us -- the GRENADE EXPLODES next him, obliterating the  
villain in mid-air. A grisly demise.

Will yanks his daughter back through the opening -- narrowly  
avoiding the blast -- and up to the rooftop. She collapses  
on his chest. Safe.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED: (7)

Will holds his daughter tight. She clings to him, shaking.

GEORGIA  
Daddy, I wanna go home.

Will kisses the top of her head and exhales.

WILL  
Me too, honey.

EXT. SAND BARGE - NIGHT

The sand barge is little more than a dirt square, made from the dredge of the surrounding bay, dotted with RUSTED OUT CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT. A forgotten place.

Surrounded by three black SUVs and a dozen ARMED MEN, Wu-Sai Jun glasses the top of The Pearl with binoculars. Xia strides up.

XIA  
*He's not answering.*  
(beat)  
*He should've been here already.*

Wu-Sai Jun doesn't like it. His gangster's intuition ringing alarm bells in his mind.

WU-SAI JUN  
*We're leaving.*

He moves for the SUVs when suddenly he sees a pair of HEADLIGHTS racing down the ACCESS ROAD toward them. The headlights split, revealing themselves to be SIX PAIRS, not one -- Hong Kong PD.

IN THE LEAD CAR

Captain Chan rides shotgun, Lieutenant Han at the wheel. Sarah, vested up, is in the back.

CAPTAIN CHAN  
Get down and stay down. Do not leave the car. Understand?

Sarah obliges, scooching down low.

WU-SAI JUN

screams at his men to open fire -- and they do: unloading on the approaching cops with peels of automatic gunfire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The cops broadside their cars and hop out behind cover, trading shots with the gangsters.

The handwriting is on the wall as Chan drops two gangsters with crack shots -- they've got the bad guys outnumbered.

Jun squats behind a wheel-well, blindly firing.

Xia fires expertly, clipping a pair of cops -- but she sees the situation is hopeless.

One by one, the gangsters drop their weapons and surrender. Wu-Sai Jun as well. The cops rush forward to take the bad guys into custody as Xia sneaks off into the darkness.

XIA

slinks through the junkyard, looking for an escape. She spots CAPTAIN CHAN'S CAR unmanned and idling thirty meters away, apart from the round-up taking place by the SUVs.

This is her shot -- she hurries

INTO THE CAR

hopping into the driver's seat and reaching for the gear shift when:

SARAH (O.S.)

Hey.

Xia looks back just in time to catch the heel of Sarah's boot on the point of her chin -- CRACK! The crisp violence of the kick knocks Xia out cold.

The lady killer slumps like a rag-doll onto the steering wheel -- the horn blares.

A beat later, Chan throws open the passenger door to see the result. He looks back at Sarah sitting there. She puts her hands up innocently...

SARAH

I never left the car.

Chan exhales, relieved. That's when Sarah spots something slipping out of Xia's bag...

SARAH (cont'd)

That's Will's laptop.

Chan and Sarah share a look. She grabs it, opening it up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAPTAIN CHAN

What are you doing?

SARAH

Trying to get The Pearl's fire system  
back online.

Sarah noses through the building control app, trying to get  
a sense of things.

CAPTAIN CHAN

Do you know how to do that?

SARAH

Not remotely.

CAPTAIN CHAN

But you're good with computers?

SARAH

Terrible. But the control program is  
still open and it seems pretty  
straightforward...

CAPTAIN CHAN

How 'bout we get that to someone who  
knows what they're doing.

SARAH

Captain, my husband and daughter are  
in that building and it's on fire  
right now. I'm not waiting another  
god damn second. So you can either  
arrest me or --

DING! The computer chimes. Sarah spins it to face Chan,  
showing The Pearl ENTIRELY GREEN from top to bottom with a  
flashing indicator: SYSTEMS ONLINE.

SARAH (cont'd)

-- you can say thank you.

Sarah smiles, Captain Chan shakes his head at her moxie.

EXT. THE PEARL - OBSERVATION DECK - NIGHT

The entire observation deck blazes like a house on fire.  
Will places Georgia next to an injured and weak Zhao.

WILL

Stay here. I'll be right back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGIA  
No! Don't go!

WILL  
I'll be right back, I promise.

Will squeezes his daughter and moves off through the smoke and fire searching for

THE PARACHUTE

which he spots resting on the deck, surrounded by fire. Will's about to make a move for it when suddenly there's EXPLOSION from a NEARBY COOLANT TANK.

Will shields his eyes, turning back to see the parachute burning, melted and disfigured and smoking -- useless.

The turn of events is gutting -- engulfed by fire, Will and Georgia have no escape. Will returns to Georgia and kneels down next to her, pulling her close...

WILL (cont'd)  
Daddy loves who?

Georgia begins to cry...

GEORGIA  
Me.

WILL  
Who?

GEORGIA  
Me.

Will holds his daughter tight, protecting her to the last. The flames rise around them, a funeral pyre a mile in the air. Suddenly there's a

HISSING SOUND.

From all sides, The Pearl's anti-fire measures kick in, dousing the observation deck with FLAME-SUPPRESSING FOAM and CO2 GAS. Will can't believe it.

INT. THE PEARL - VARIOUS FLOORS - NIGHT

-- QUICK CUTS of FIRE SYSTEMS COMING ONLINE on various floors, extinguishing the remaining flames with WATER and FLAME-SUPPRESSING FOAM.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The fire is rapidly quelled. Zhao's building, once enabled, is a formidable foe and ardent defender of its corpus.

EXT. THE PEARL - GROUND LEVEL - NIGHT

The GATHERED CROWD stares up at The Pearl, watching as floor by floor, the flashing golden fire is put out. They begin to cheer, slowly at first, then wildly.

EXT. THE PEARL - SKYLINE - DAWN

The first rays of a new day pierce the eastern sky, revealing The Pearl, smoking but standing tall. Unbowed.

EXT. THE PEARL - GROUND LEVEL - DAY

The crowd has thinned some now. Suddenly a commotion is heard. People pull out their phones, a buzz zips through the gathering as citizens begin to part revealing:

WILL, GEORGIA AND ZHAO

moving away from The Pearl's MAIN ENTRANCE DOOR. Will carries Georgia in one arm and supports Zhao with the other.

The trio collapse. Will calls out to the gawking crowd...

WILL  
Call an ambulance!

Suddenly a RUSH OF POLICE OFFICERS push through the crowd surrounding Will, weapons drawn. Will puts his hands up.

WILL (cont'd)  
No -- no -- this man, he needs help!

But no one moves. Will implores them...

WILL (cont'd)  
Please!

Will's shoulders slump -- after all of this, he's still seen as a criminal. It's almost more than he can bear.

Just then, a bark of Chinese and the cops part to reveal Captain Chan striding up. A quick nod from Chan allows EMT TECHS to pass by and rush to Zhao's aid.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAPTAIN CHAN

Will Ford -- I've been dying to meet you.

WILL

My wife and son? Are they okay? Are they alive?

CAPTAIN CHAN

Ask them yourself.

Chan swings out of the way to reveal:

SARAH AND HENRY

pushing through the throng, rushing toward them...

GEORGIA

Mom!

Sarah drops to her knees to hug her daughter as Will watches, emotion overwhelming him -- his family safe.

Will moves to them, kneeling down as the trio envelop him in their arms. Overcome, tears begin to fall down Will's dirt-streaked face.

We HOLD ON this familial embrace, RISING UP and then, as if by miracle, it begins to snow. Tiny swirling flakes that won't survive impact -- but it is snowing all the same.

From above we watch the snow fall as a tumult of PEOPLE and PARAMEDICS and POLICE eddy around the quartet.

But Will, Sarah, Henry and Georgia remain solid, together -- a rock amidst a rushing stream.

The moment is unmistakable: Will has finally saved the family he couldn't save those many years ago -- his own.

FADE OUT.