

BLACK

Silence.

The sound of a child, CRYING, fades up.

The SHARP WHISTLE of a falling shell CUTS IT OFF.

FADE IN:

EXT. TRENCH - DAY

The First World War by the look of things.

A section of trench wall IMPLODES towards us as the shell smashes into the earth, sending body parts flying across the duckboards. The remains of the wall crumble with a sludge.

Rain batters down on the mud flooded trench. It's impossible to tell what time of day it is. Could be morning, could be midday, could be dusk -- the smoke and rain conspire together.

Above the trench, a thick FOG. No horizon. Any landscape is WHITED OUT. Everything seems to be in slightly slow motion.

Far off sounds of SHOOTING and the SHOUTS of unseen infantrymen, echoing and distorted.

PRIVATE JAMES HARPER, a Scottish infantryman. Possibly a little too young to be seeing action here. He strains to see through the rain.

JAMES

Pete? Pete! Pete!

Cranes his head, listens - the faint sound of SOBBING. Fog seeps down into the end of the trench - the sound is coming from there. The sobbing changes from adult to infant and back again.

James starts off towards the end of the trench, his way hindered by the torn bodies of comrades, debris and the ever deepening mud -- each footstep slowed down, each sound strangely distorted.

DISTANT VOICE (O.S.)

Henry. Jim. Where are you?

The WHISTLE of another falling shell. It HITS.

James is BLOWN BACKWARDS. Hits the duckboards hard him.

Bits of shattered wood rain down, mixed with the rain.

A momentary concussion. His eyes blink open - a surprising view:

EXT. RUINED COURTYARD - DAY

James is now lying on dry earth. Bone-dry and dusty. The rain and mud are gone. Has he died?

He looks up.

He is in the middle of ruined, low level buildings, their style placing him in China. The sun is beaming down on a courtyard.

A WESTERN MAN, dressed in Chinese clothing, kneels on the ground, his head lowered. A WESTERN WOMAN stands nearby, weeping, held roughly by a Chinese BOXER REBEL. A group of WESTERNERS watch, some dressed as clergy, others in Chinese clothes. The entire group is surrounded by armed BOXER REBELS.

The sound of sobbing comes again - this time unmistakably an infant. James sees...

A WOODEN SHACK. Inside it, a young BOY, no more than four years old, is held by a CHINESE WOMAN (40s), her faced aged beyond her years. She cradles the child, shushing it gently as she watches the events outside, hidden from view.

It appears that no one can see James.

The kneeling man remains still, his back to us. He raises his head, keeping his eyes to the ground.

A Boxer steps forward, wielding a sword. Raises it high in the air.

The boy opens his mouth to scream. This time, no sound.

James does the same. No sound.

The sword lingers in the air a moment - it SWINGS DOWN -

CUT TO:

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM. LODGINGS - NIGHT

James Mitchell, now in his early 30's, SNAPS AWAKE, his brow beaded with sweat.

Several blinks.

Gets his breath back.

Looks around -- no war, no baby, no sword -- he is in his bed, in his room, the few belongings he possesses littered around the dark, squalid place. Curtains blow gently by an open window. Busy TOWN SOUNDS come through the window.

He sinks back into the cheap pillow and he exhales - the relief of knowing reality once more.

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A KNOCK at the door. He shuts his eyes.

Another KNOCK.

HENRY (O.S.)
Jim? Jimmy boy, it's late. Come on.

James sighs, reluctant to move.

JAMES
I'm busy.

HENRY FOX opens the doors and strides in -- shoulders broad, an eyebrow arched, a few years older than James, and he's not about to take no for an answer. Dressed simply in a waistcoat, jacket and slacks. This is as smart as he gets.

He marches past James to a chest of drawers.

James doesn't look up.

HENRY
The Lance Corporal will remove his lazy
arse from out of his pit. Or he will come
to know the pain of a steel toecap up his
jaxi.

Henry grabs a one of the several shirts lying on top of the drawers.

JAMES
I gratefully request that the Sergeant
shoves his orders up his manky arse with
said steel toecap.

Henry tosses the shirt at James - it lands on his face.

EXT. OUTSIDE LODGINGS. STREET - NIGHT

SUPER - MYLAPORE, EAST COAST OF INDIA, 1928

James steps out of the dilapidated building which is their lodgings to meet Henry waiting on the street. Stepping out into the underside of the British Raj.

Rows of lanterns cast a yellow glow and long shadows through a nasty fug. Indian and British merchants go about their nighttime business, illicit or not. A port town, there are all shapes and sizes of people and goods here and goods.

BRITISH SOLDIERS idly mill around. A SERGEANT appears and scolds them. They snap to attention, hiding cigarettes.

As they walk through the bustling midnight mayhem, Henry casts a scornful eye at a group of BRITISH SAILORS standing on a corner, clearly drunk and clearly after women.

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A small INDIAN BOY (10) runs alongside the two men, his hands held out - a little smile machine.

INDIAN BOY
2 rupees? 2 rupees?

Henry ignores him.

The boy keeps pace. Holds both his hands further out.

INDIAN BOY (CONT'D)
2 rupees. No mamma. No pappa. 2 rupees.

HENRY
Go on! Away with you...

He raises his hand. James holds him. He reaches into his pocket.

HENRY (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

James pulls some foil from his pocket.

JAMES
Here. In lieu of cash, due to our circumstances.

The boy takes the foil and unwraps it - chocolate. Smiling, he runs off with his prize.

Henry eyes James disapprovingly

JAMES (CONT'D)
What?

HENRY
You becoming a soft touch, that's what.

They walk on.

At a discreet distance, the boy begins to follow them, munching on his chocolate.

JAMES
I've got to say it, Henry, I've got my worries this time.

HENRY
Ha! I knew it! You are getting soft!

James stops.

JAMES
Look, Kelly wound up with an iron peg hammered into his brain when he double crossed this bloke.

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CONTINUED: (2)

Henry pats the top of James' head.

HENRY

Look, there's nothing to be afraid of, alright? I've arranged it all. Trust me.

JAMES

And what about Stevens?

Henry looks at James for a moment and then walks on.

HENRY

I'll be damned if I'm going to wind up sleeping under market stalls again. Victor Stevens is going to get what's coming to him. Once and for all.

James moves after him, hurrying his pace.

JAMES

Involving him could jeopardise the whole thing.

HENRY

He's the whole point.

JAMES

What?

HENRY

Look, we'll discuss this over some business drinks, yes?

They have arrived outside a ramshackle looking bar. The painted sign above it has the legend "Chuzzie's". A man lies unconscious near the doorway.

INT. CHUZZIE'S BAR - NIGHT

A loud and noisy shithole full of all kinds of dubious characters; mostly British and all out for a good time. James and Henry fit in perfectly.

They lean at a tall table by an open window, a beer each.

HENRY

We've to meet his man at this corner.
(produces a slip of paper)
There'll be a blind man sitting opposite. Always there, apparently. They'll take us from there.

JAMES

Where?

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HENRY

That's the thing. No one seems to know where Gobinder hides out. But his man said he'll take us there.

James takes a drink and looks out the window into the night.

HENRY (CONT'D)

All very mysterious, isn't it?

He casts Henry a sideways glance. Dubious.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Look, this Gobinder chap has been after this plate for a long time. Old family thing. And he's willing to pay a fortune for it.

JAMES

And what about Victor?

Henry looks into his drink for a moment.

HENRY

After tomorrow, Captain Stevens won't be a problem for us. Ever again.

James looks at Henry; he is uncomfortable with this idea.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Look, we won't have any blood on our hands, alright? Stevens doesn't know he has a fake. When Gobinder finds out, he'll take it as a slur on his family. And we know what happened to the last person to cross him --

JAMES

Kelly.

HENRY

Kelly.

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's taken us this long to get back on our feet, Jim. This is the longest time they have ever spent in one place, all because of Victor Stevens - we have to move on and this is the only way.

(beat)

Trust me. I've arranged it.

James relaxes. A sly smile.

JAMES

The way you arranged to deliver Mr Gupta's daughter to her husband to be?

Henry leans back, mock offence.

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CONTINUED: (2)

HENRY

I had no idea he was that young.

JAMES

He was five.

Laughter.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Alright. A toast.

(raises his glass)

To an improvement in our circumstances.

They knock glasses.

EXT. CHUZZIE'S BAR. BY WINDOW - NIGHT

The sound of the glasses carries out of the window. The small boy from the street sits beneath the open window, munching on his chocolate.

He suddenly dashes away from the window and into the busy streets.

INT. CHUZZIE'S BAR - LATER

James and Henry are considerably drunker. In fact, just about everyone else in the bar is considerably drunker. And louder.

James has his arm around a young English woman, HETTIE; badly applied make up and not what could be considered a Mehm-Sahib. She grins at his every slurred word. Another girl, LILY, stands by him as Henry returns with a round of drinks.

JAMES

Ah, here he is. The Great Arranger has arranged us some more drinks!

Hettie laughs like a navvy. Henry distributes the drink among the four of them and then slips his arm around Lily.

Across the bar, the same British sailors seen earlier stand drinking. Their apparent leader, a big ONE-EYED SAILOR, is eyeing up Hettie over the rim of his glass.

Henry puts his arm around Lily and whispers a quiet proposition into her ear. She bursts out laughing, pushing his shoulder away in mock outrage.

LILY

Why, I never...what a pair of dishonourable rogues we've landed ourselves with, Hettie!

Henry stands up straight, taking mock exception.

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HENRY

Rogues? Rogues? Well, I don't know about you, Mr Harper, but I've never been so insulted in all my life.

James looks at his watch.

JAMES

Well, not for a day, at least.

More raucous laughter.

Henry smartens up his collar and moves over to James.

HENRY

My good lady. I'll have you know that we two are no mere rogues. What you have here, is a genuine pair of Old Contemptibles!

He and James put their arms around each other's shoulders, united by their shared title.

This exclamation carries in the bar. The One-Eyed Sailor puts his glass down and glares at them.

Lily simply laughs at the title. Hettie stops in her laughter -- she's recognised something in the words. Her facetious demeanour fades into something more serious.

HETTIE

Old Contemptibles? What regiment were you in?

James and Henry's laughter ceases instantly at this reference. Henry's face is a mask.

JAMES

60th Division. Gaza and Megiddo.

Lily is a little confused. She looks to her friend.

HETTIE

My dad used to call himself that when he was home on leave.

(a sobering beat)

He was killed in the Somme. Did you --

Henry's glass HITS the table. He's looking away. James steps in. But it's awkward for him as well.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to dredge anything up.

Henry spins back to them, his face lit up as though nothing's been said.

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HENRY

Nonsense! Onwards and upwards! That's what I say. Well, speaking of the war, ladies, I'll have you know I once met Colonel Lawrence himself and...

(looks around)

...between you and me, not one for the ladies, if you catch my drift.

Lily's mouth opens in shock. Hettie is aware of Henry's changing of the subject. A look passes between her and James. She knows to leave it alone.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Yes, well, the word was that he --

Henry's words cease. He is looking at someone. James turns and sees that the One-Eyed Sailor has approached the group.

James and Henry stand up that bit straighter at the sight of the sailor in uniform.

The One-Eyed Sailor surveys the two women. A nasty smile. He's picked Hettie.

ONE-EYED SAILOR

Alright, sweetheart. Wouldn't you rather come and join some real men?

She's having none of it.

HETTIE

I'm fine here, thank you.

He tries to YANK her away. She recoils.

HETTIE (CONT'D)

Piss off!

ONE-EYED SAILOR

Ooh, quite the lady, aren't we? Come on, darlin'. Let's leave these poofy soldier boys to themselves.

James eyes dart between Henry and the sailor. Henry's eyes are full of fire. The sailor releases Hettie and takes a step towards Henry. He gives Henry a contemptful once-over.

ONE-EYED SAILOR (CONT'D)

Well, at least the Kaiser did something right when he called the British Infantry "Contemptible".

He spits on the floor.

Henry steps forward, eyes incandescent - there is a real, cold threat in his eyes. James steps in.

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JAMES

Henry, come on. Henry. Not tonight, eh?
Let me fix this, alright?

Henry's eyes flicker. Considers it. He looks back to the One-Eyed Sailor and steps back, never breaking his gaze.

James approaches the sailor.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Look, mate, we've all fought on common ground in the past. Where's the need for this, eh?

(he looks back to Henry and the women)

I mean, His Majesty's Navy is a fine and honourable institution and I don't know about anyone else here but I won't hear a word against it.

The One-Eyed Soldier looks at James, confused, but still a threat.

Henry is smiling.

The girls are backing up slightly.

James points to the sailor's MEDALS.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I mean, where else can fine men, such as our friend here, be awarded...

(looks the Big Sailor in the eye)

...these pishy trinkets for stubbing their toes in the paddling pool?

The One-Eyed Sailor's eye bulges out of its socket and he launches himself at James, KNOCKING him through a table and against the wall.

James hits the dusty floor, laughing.

Most of the heads in the bar turn. Most of them.

The One-Eyed Sailor's buddies are gathering, ready and smiling, armed with glasses and bottles. One has a chair.

In one swift motion, Henry delivers his BOOT into the One-Eyed Sailor's groin. The man bucks forward and Henry SMASHES his glass on the back of the man's head.

The big sailor's comrades are there in a second.

Henry opens his arms wide - his grin and eyes almost as wide. This is going to be good.

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HENRY
Evenin', ladies!

James gets up to join him, the fire now in his eyes as well.

It's on.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHUZZIE'S BAR - LATER

James and Henry LAND on the ground outside the entrance, bloodied, bruised and both laughing like schoolboys.

Inside the pub, several of the sailors can be seen being carried away - none conscious.

Picking themselves up, they shake hands

HENRY
I think that went rather well, don't you,
Lance Corporal?

JAMES
Swimmingly, Sergeant Major!

They turn and head into the night, singing drunkenly.

Nearby, the dark shadows of an archway.

A pair of WIRE RIM GLASSES catch the light. The faint glimmer of a SMILE can be made out. The smile backs into the darkness.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM. LODGINGS - DAY

James' face. The purity of a drunken slumber.

Dried blood encrusts his nostrils and a bruise decorates his cheek - not a shiner, but damn close. All accompanied by a delirious smile.

A loud KNOCK on the door.

His slumber is unmoved.

Another, even louder KNOCK. It continues persiStevensly.

James' closed eyes screw up and he pushes himself up of his elbows. He gets up and shuffles to the door.

JAMES
Look you arse, it's far too early for any
of your --

The door swings open to reveal the diminutive figure of MRS VIRMA, the landlady.

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She is dressed in the combination of a traditional Indian sari and a western shirt and waistcoat. A rolled cigarette hangs from the corner of her wizened mouth.

James sinks.

MRS VIRMA

What time is that to be making such a damn blasted noise in the middle of the night?

She pushes into the room. James turns and sees it for the first time. It is in complete disarray.

MRS VIRMA (CONT'D)

What a bloody mess! I wouldn't let my dog in this mess! It is a terrible mess!
 (jabs a finger at his chest)
 You are a bloody mess! Look at the mess you are in, boy!

He winces, but nods.

JAMES

I'm sorry, Mrs Virma. I had no idea I'd let the place get in this state. It won't -- it won't happen again.

She stands back, almost appeased. A wagging finger.

MRS VIRMA

Living how you do, I tell you, it will always catch up with you. Always.

She spins away. He closes the door. Cradles his throbbing head.

He turns and looks at his room, at the utter mess before him. The place looks almost ransacked.

JAMES

Don't I bloody know it.

EXT. STREET. BY CAFE - AFTERNOON

Henry sits in a small café, shovelling a breakfast of kedgeriee down his throat in a swift, unbroken rhythm.

By his feet is a large, round and flat BROWN PAPER PACKAGE.

James arrives, takes a look at the banquet. Turns away. A mild dry heave.

HENRY

Hungry?

James shakes his pale head.

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HENRY (CONT'D)

Come on. Got to set yourself up for the day.

JAMES

Looks more like a last meal, to me.

Henry smiles.

HENRY

Aw, has the little man got a sore head?

JAMES

Piss off. Wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for our blessed landlady having a go.

HENRY

You too, eh? Apparently we made a hell of a noise when we came back.

JAMES

I honestly don't remember.

HENRY

(finishes off his last forkful)
Well, if it's any comfort, my room was a complete shithole as well, apparently.
Ah, the demon drink.

He wipes his mouth, stands up and surveys the streets.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Right, Jimmy boy. Time to go.

He picks up the package.

JAMES

Is that it?

HENRY

Ye, my lad.
(holds it up like a trophy)
This, my lad, is the answer. Come on.

Henry starts off down the street. James watches him for a brief moment, worry etched into his face and then follows.

EXT. STREET - AFTERNOON

Largely deserted, filthy streets.

James and Henry move carefully, their eyes on every corner. Imposing high sides keeping most sunlight out. Abandoned buildings. Shuttered windows.

Henry clutches the parcel tightly. His careless manner is gone.

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A shuttered wooden door swings slowly open as they pass. They stop and peer into the dark entrance.

JAMES
Is this it?

Henry looks across the road.

On the corner sits the ancient BLIND BEGGAR with no legs, mumbling to himself.

HENRY
Must be.

They give each other a worried look. Unknown territory.

James looks to the open DOORWAY.

JAMES
Hello?

Nothing.

He looks back at Henry, who shrugs.

James looks into the doorway again and then takes slow a step into it. And then another.

The room within is small and unlit.

A HAGGARD OLD WOMAN leaps from the darkness, yells furiously in Hindi at James, grabbing him.

Henry starts forward and pushes her away as James backs out into the street.

He turns, startled -- a WELL-DRESSED INDIAN MAN stands before him, wearing a calm smile. He looks to James and then Henry. Politely spoken.

WELL-DRESSED MAN
I would advise against trespassing in this particular house, gentlemen. As you can see, it's owner is not particularly disposed to visitors. But not to worry.

He utters something sternly in Hindi to the old woman. Uses the word GOBINDER -- she stops her tirade instantly and immediately withdraws into the house, bolting her door.

James and Henry notice the woman's reaction.

WELL-DRESSED MAN (CONT'D)
As you may have guessed, I am here as a representative of His Excellency Amrish Gobinder.
(MORE)

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WELL-DRESSED MAN (CONT'D)
 (he holds his arm out to the
 street beyond)
 And he awaits your company.

Four HEFTY MEN appear from unseen corners and seize James and Henry. One in particular, ZALIM, a nasty giant of a man, carries a large and ornate curved DAGGER. Blind folds are placed firmly over their eyes.

HENRY
 What the bloody --?

WELL-DRESSED MAN
 Do not be alarmed, gentlemen. My employer values his privacy and I am sure that you would understand that the anonymity of his home's location is of prime importance to him. Now, if we may.

He takes the lead. Two of the men take James and Henry's arm and place them on their shoulders, leading them like blind men.

Henry smiles cockily.

James tries.

They are marched away.

EXT. STREETS - EVENING.

James and Henry are prodded and shoved along unseen streets. We cannot see the streets -- only James and Henry's blind folded FACES - the sounds and actions of their escorts are occurring out of frame. Henry is silently counting his footsteps.

The marching stops. James looks around blindly. Henry is still smiling.

HENRY
 So, where do I pin the tail on the donkey?

No response.

The party has arrived at a large WOODEN DOOR. Their captor KNOCKS on the door.

A beat.

The sound of a complicated LOCK working. The large door swings open. They enter.

INT. HALLWAY. GOBINDER'S LAIR - LATE AFTERNOON.

James and Henry are prodded forward, up a wide hallway.

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The sound of the group's footsteps ECHO around crisply.

James can see out of the bottom of his blind-fold. He looks down - the floor is marble, bright and clean.

They are stopped. Their captor SPEAKS curtly in Hindi with another unseen man.

Another door CREAKS open. They are led through and stopped after ten feet into the room.

INT. GOBINDER'S LAIR. LOUNGE - LATE AFTERNOON.

Their blind-folds are removed.

The light in the room dazzles the men. They squint as their eyes adjust.

Before them sits a TINY MAN (40), no more than four feet tall, on a decorative stool. Dark painted markings decorate his the majority of his face and he is dressed in ornate robes. Strange rings adorn all of his fingers.

This is His Excellency GOBINDER.

Two GIANT MEN stand either side of him, making him appear even smaller. They are armed with long, curved SWORDS. One also has a large and brutal looking HAMMER.

James spots the hammer. He tenses slightly.

Behind the two giant guards, adding to the grandeur, is a large, decorative window, flooding the room with sunlight. An ethereal glow surrounds the odd little man sitting before them.

Henry almost laughs. Almost.

The little man speaks in Hindi, a delicate, airy voice.

WELL-DRESSED MAN
Do you have the object?

HENRY
We do.

He offers it forward.

The well-dressed man takes the package and unwraps it to reveal a FABULOUS GOLDEN PLATE, its rim adorned with dozens of multi-coloured CUT JEWELS, glowing in the bright light. He gives it to Gobinder. The tiny gangster examines the plate.

James and Henry wait expectantly. James looks nervously at Henry.

The room is silent.

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Gobinder's eyes lower. He TOSSES it to the floor, CLANGING just in front of James. His eyes remain on it.

James looks to Henry, waiting for an answer.

HENRY (CONT'D)

With His Excellency's permission, is there some problem? This is the original piece, as His Excellency requested, is it not?

The well-dressed man does not reply. The only people actually looking directly at James and Henry are the two giant guards.

The well-dressed man stands back and a EUROPEAN MAN (40s) appears from the back of the room, slim and unhealthy looking in a faded suit with a pair of wire rimmed glasses: VICTOR STEVENS. A smug smile.

James and Henry recognise him immediately. The coldest stares imaginable.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Victor.

An INDIAN WOMAN glides into the room, holding a plate identical to the one just presented.

One look from Stevens says it all.

JAMES

(to Henry)

Our rooms. We don't remember making a mess --

HENRY

-- because we didn't.

Henry's broad shoulders sink. But just for a moment as his anger at Stevens fires him up again.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Bastard. You were in our rooms. Switched them.

Henry visibly suppresses something violent.

STEVENS

Alcohol is such a terrible substance, gentlemen. I find it does tend to blur the concentration. Which can, of course, be useful.

The two giants immediately step forward and seize James and Henry. Gobinder remains seated and silent, eyes down on the floor.

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WELL-DRESSED MAN

His Excellency will not be made a fool of. Nor will he be cheated. He has heard of your reputation and is grateful to Mr Stevens preventing you from doing to him what you have done to so many others.

Stevens smiles in calm satisfaction.

Henry is brought to his knees before Gobinder, held firm by one of the behemoths.

STEVENS

After all of this time, lads. Finally, you get to make amends.

The giant guard produces an IRON PEG and HAMMER. He places the peg on top of Henry's skull. Henry shuts his eyes.

James looks around the room, looking for something. Anything.

His eyes find the plate on the floor at his feet.

The giant raises the hammer, about to drive the peg into Henry's brain.

James STAMPS his foot down on the rim of the plate and it flies up, HITTING the executioner square between the eyes with its rim. He staggers back.

Henry is up in an instant. He grabs the plate and WALLOPS James' guard with it. The two of them are free.

The well-dressed man BARKS ORDERS at the guards. Zalim produces his nasty dagger, ready.

Henry lunges at the little man on the stool and HOLDS HIM UPSIDE DOWN, BY THE ANKLES. His men draw swords but a squeaky noise of Hindi PROTEST makes them stop.

A tense moment of silence -- the guards with swords raised - Henry with Gobinder hanging by his ankles.

Their only obvious exit is the doorway on the other side of the armed men.

James starts slowly towards the back of the room, to the window. Henry starts to back up slowly as well, still holding the tiny gangster aloft.

The guards match them, step for step. Zalim never takes his eyes from Henry.

JAMES

Henry?

HENRY

Right here, Jimmy boy

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JAMES

You know what they say about people in
glass houses --

The well-dressed man begins to issue orders to his men very slowly, his voice rising. Gobinder's PROTESTS rise in unison.

HENRY

-- shouldn't throw angry gangsters.

Henry SWINGS Gobinder towards the men.

The men hold their arms out, ready to catch him as he SWINGS towards them but --

-- Henry swings the little man back and INTO THE WINDOW.

The window SHATTERS into thousands of multi-coloured shards as Gobinder SAILS through it, SCREAMING down onto the street six feet below. James and Henry LEAP after him.

EXT. STREET. BENEATH WINDOW - EVENING.

James and Henry HIT the ground hard. Henry is slightly winded. James looks up.

The screaming little ball of rage that is Gobinder has landed in the straw of a donkey pen. The donkey BRAYS at the intrusion.

James and Henry take off down the dusty street.

EXT. STREET. ARCHWAY - EVENING.

Running down the street, James pulls Henry into an archway.

JAMES

Alright. This is it. We have to get out
of Mylapore. And now.

HENRY

Seeing as I like my skull intact, I'm
inclined to agree with the Lance
Corporal.

(beat)

Ok, brains. So, what next?

James ponders for a moment. In the distance, the HORN of a ship sounds.

JAMES

Well, this is a port town, isn't it?

Henry nods.

Behind them, Zalim and several MEN armed with BLADES and GUNS appear at the end of the street.

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The two spot them and start off down the street. They come to a junction. With a look of acknowledgment, they split up.

The men in pursuit split up accordingly.

EXT. MARKETPLACE - CONTINUOUS

James turns a corner and heads straight into a bustling market place. He heads between the parallel stalls, hoping to lose himself amongst the buyers and sellers.

FOUR ARMED MEN appear from the same corner. They scan the area, searching.

Amongst the stalls, James moves quietly but swiftly, anxiously looking over his shoulder.

The men do not appear to see him. Their leader BARKS an order and they split up and spread across the market, openly brandishing their weapons. Shoppers and traders regard the men with fear.

James silently lifts a hat from the stall of an unwary trader. He puts it on, forward brim down.

One of the men enters the same market lane as James at the far end of the lane, WORKING HIS WAY TOWARDS HIM.

James pretends to examine an urn at a stall. Immediately, the STALL OWNER approaches and attempts to begin a sale. James feigns interest in the object, arguing a price, looking anxiously towards the approaching villain all the while.

The man approaches James.

James instantly swings around, SMASHING the urn against into his hunter's head. He slumps and the stall owner unloads a barrage of angry Hindi at James. A sharp CRACK rings out and the stall owner slumps backwards, a RED BLOOM spreading across his chest.

An anonymous CRY OF ALARM at the dead man behind the stall is heard and the place falls into PANIC. People run in all directions in an attempt to get away.

Another SHOT hits the side of the stall and James SPINS away. He pushes through the running market patrons but cannot get through them.

Turning, he sees the other three men bearing down on him from separate directions.

Retreating from the surging crowd, James heads towards a large fish stall, where two of the men will obviously intercept him. Reaching the stall, he KICKS STRAIGHT INTO IT. It collapses, spreading wet and slippery fish about the place.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One of the men SLIPS instantly. James lifts a large sack of fish and lobs it towards the other man, KNOCKING him away.

He leaps down from the ruined stall.

The gun-toting man is close on his tail.

James finds himself confronted with a wall and a pile of grain sacks. He LEAPS towards the piled sacks of grain and starts up them towards the low roof of the building.

His fingers find the top of the wall and he begins to haul himself up. A BULLET skims the wall as he climbs desperately, panting for breath. He clambers over the top of the wall and on to the top of the flat roofed building.

The assassin runs and jumps up onto the piles of sacks and, holstering his weapon, begins his own climb. His big hands reach the top of the wall when --

James' boot SWINGS down with full force, SHATTERING the man's finger's. He falls away down onto the sacks of grain.

James affords himself a very quick look over at his handiwork and then starts off across the top of the adobe building.

EXT. ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

The loud sound of a commotion comes from the other side of the building and then GUNSHOTS and MORE SCREAMS. James heads to the edge and sees Henry in the midst of his own chase, pursued by the rest of the men through a square. It doesn't look good for him.

James looks around. From his high viewpoint he sees an ELEPHANT PEN on the other side of a corner at the end of the square. He gives a sharp, particular WHISTLE.

ON HENRY

Henry looks up from his chase to the roof and sees James, pointing.

Gets the idea.

FROM ROOFTOP

Henry veers toward the corner and disappears.

ON HENRY

He vaults a wooden barrier of a pen. The LOW GROWL of unseen elephants.

Henry looks up at something. Cautiously. Reaches forward. The sound of a LATCH undone.

EXT. STREET BEFORE PEN - CONTINUOUS

Henry's pursuers race up the street, their weapons held high, evil mania and bloodlust in their eyes.

Henry SCREAMS around the corner, racing towards the men, laughing hysterically.

Smiling, they run towards him, ready to remove this fool from the face of the earth.

Behind Henry, three ELEPHANTS, RUMBLING around the corner.

Unstoppable.

The men stand and take in the sight of the charging beasts, frozen for a moment as Henry runs straight past them, laughing. Instinct returning to them, they all spin around and flee from the tons of rolling elephants.

The elephants break out into the square and CHAOS is unleashed.

One of the men TUMBLES. Doesn't even have time to look at the stamping feet which PULVERISE him into the ground.

Zalim and the other men retreat in the crowd.

Henry looks up and sees James, still on the roof, pointing somewhere to his left. Henry heads for that direction, leaving the elephants to destroy the square. He doesn't look back.

EXT. STREET BY LOW ROOFED BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

James lowers himself down from the roof and heads down the small street, still looking over his shoulder

EXT. DOCKS - EVENING

Sunlight is fading as James appears. He crouches down behind several cargo crates and peers out at the docks between the crates --

Several ships are moored. Cargo is loaded and unloaded from them. He sees passengers waiting to board a STEAMER. Chinese people board alongside westerners. James spots the name of the ship - THE YANGTZE BIRD. For a moment, he looks distant --

CUT TO:

EXT. RUINED COURTYARD - DAY

-- back to the dream.

The man kneeling. His head bowed. The sword SWINGING DOWN.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The child CRYING.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOCKS - LATE AFTERNOON

James is SNAPPED out of his daydream by Henry, messy and clearly out of breath.

HENRY

Ah. Alive. Well done, that man. So, it's the old stowaway plan, is it then?

James stares at the steamer.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Which one do we like the look of?

James makes a decision. He points to The Yangtze Bird.

JAMES

That one.

Henry takes a peek.

HENRY

(mulls for a split second)
Good enough. But this time we're passengers, alright? Hiding in those tanks coming from Madagascar. That stank.

JAMES

Ok, but how do we get aboard?

Henry stands up and straightens his clothes.

HENRY

You leave that to the Sergeant, Jimmy boy.

Henry stands up, brushes himself off and walks calmly away. James watches.

EXT. DOCKSIDE. BY SHIP - EVENING

The passengers gathered by the gangway are an assorted bunch; Chinese merchants, European missionaries and a group of four British soldiers.

James watches as Henry observes the soldiers from a discreet distance - several of them look worse for wear and another swigs from a bottle -- and then Henry's appearance seems to change - he stands up straighter than we've ever seen, pushes his chest out and strides up to the soldiers.

HENRY

(with all the authority of a
Sergeant Major)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY (CONT'D)

In the name of shite! Just what the bloody hell is going on here?

The soldiers all turn in surprise at the barking sergeant's voice but relax when they are apparently presented with a civvie.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What in the Almighty's name are you arses doing mulling around here like this? There's passengers needing help boarding this vessel! And the King's men stand here, drinking their own piss? You're a stain on the name of the army!

One SOLDIER takes a step towards Henry, a wry smile on his face.

SOLDIER

Oh, I'm terribly sorry, mate.

(beat)

Who the hell are you, dishing out orders?

Henry walks right up to the soldier, looking down his nose at the lad, never breaking his gaze.

HENRY

You identify yourself, you scrawny little shit, and your C.O., before I introduce you to the other side of the dock!

The young soldier is still unconvinced.

SOLDIER

Oh really? And where's your uniform. We don't know you from Adam. Do we lads?

The other three move in, squaring up.

HENRY

My uniform is on the private's mother's bedroom floor, not that it's any of his business!

He pulls down his sleeve to reveal a tattoo: the emblem of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, 60th Division.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Sergeant Major Henry Fox, Royal Scots Fusiliers, 60th Division, fought at Gaza and Megiddo under Allenby when your old lady was still wiping your rancid little arse, sonny boy.

(practically screams)

'TTENTION!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The young soldiers are taken aback at this verbal assault and snap to attention. Henry has them - every bit the sergeant major.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Names!

The soldier who challenged Henry pipes up.

SQUIRE

Sir! Privates Squire, Wilmott, Harvey and Stewart. Welsh Regiment. En route to Shanghai on orders of Colonel Wilson.

HENRY

Wilson?

(fake sotto)

Jesus. That arse.

(back to the soldiers)

Your orders.

PRIVATE SQUIRE, the one we've been hearing from, presents their travelling orders. Henry examines them, deliberately taking his time.

BY THE CRATES

James is stifling laughter behind the crate when he hears a FAMILIAR VOICE.

INDIAN BOY

2 rupees?

He turns and sees the same little Indian boy, his hand held out with the same request.

BY DOCKSIDE

Henry turns his head to James' direction.

HENRY

Lance Corporal Harper!

BY CRATES

INDIAN BOY

2 rupees? No Mamma, no Pappa.

JAMES

Sorry, I've nothing.

(he holds out his own hands)

Nothing. Ok, off you go. Shoo, shoo.

Henry shouts again.

HENRY (O.S.)

Harper!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

James straightens himself up and walks over to Henry.

The boy stands and watches. He sticks his hand in his pockets and munches on another bit of chocolate.

BY DOCKSIDE

James strides over to the group, in character and almost as officious as Henry.

JAMES

Yes, sir?

HENRY

Harper, I want you to oversee these men in the loading of passenger goods aboard the vessel.

James looks incredulously at Henry for a moment, but Henry isn't dropping the role.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for? Christmas? Move your arse, Harper! One, two! One, two! One, two!

James gets to it, assembling the men, maintaining role.

Henry steps aside, the papers in his hands. He turns away from the group and pulls out a pencil, scribbling on the papers.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(sotto)

Jesus, this Wilson's handwriting's worse than mine.

He finishes scribbling and smiles.

CUT TO:

LATER

The passenger's goods are loaded aboard to their great relief.

HENRY

Alright, boys, good work. Much better. Much better. 'ttention!

They all snap to attention, including James.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Right, an amendment to your orders. I was forewarned about the possibility of your atrocious behaviour here.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY (CONT'D)

Under Colonel Wilson's orders, Lance Corporal Harper and myself will be accompanying you on this little jaunt. As long as that is alright with you, Priate Squire.

He stares Squire straight in the eyes. Squire is frozen.

SQUIRE

Yes sir!

HENRY

(calm)

Alright. Well then, get on board.

(shouts)

Come on! One, two! One, two! Quickly!
Quickly! Quickly!

James leads the men aboard.

Henry turns and looks at the dock. A triumphant smile. He strides after them.

BY CRATES

The little Indian boy watches them board the ship from the same crates James hid behind. He runs away as the steamer sounds its HORN.

CLOSE ON DOCKSIDE

ROPES are cast off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HARBOUR MOUTH - NIGHT

The sun sets, painting a vivid and serene orange backdrop as the Yangtze Bird makes her way out of the port, heading for the open Indian Ocean.

Calm waters ahead.

EXT. YANGTZE BIRD. STERN - NIGHT

James leans against the rail, watching the lights of Mylapore slowly shrinking in the distance. Henry approaches.

HENRY

Right, well that lot are in their quarters. I've arranged for a cabin of our own - separate quarters for officers and all that, eh?

Henry gives a mock salute and laughs.

James' gaze doesn't shift. Henry notices. He follows James' gaze to the receding port.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENRY (CONT'D)

What's got into you? First you're worried about Stevens and now --

JAMES

Don't you think I was right to be?

HENRY

Well, look, it's done, alright? He got one over on us but we're here and he's back there. We need never see him again. Onwards and upwards, eh?

He slaps James on the shoulder.

JAMES

It is amazing, though.

HENRY

I know, we do good by ourselves.

JAMES

There is that. No, what's really amazing is how you plan to keep us this charade with those privates during the whole month we're going to be marooned on this boat.

Henry ponders. A month, eh?

HENRY

Ah, I'll think of something, Jimmy boy. Let them relax, know they're in good company.

He leans with his back against the rail, staring ahead.

James continues to stare out to sea.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Just out of curiosity, why did you choose this boat, Jim?

James looks at him.

JAMES

What do you mean?

HENRY

I saw you. You deliberately chose this boat over the other one.

(beat)

Why?

James thinks for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JAMES

Dunno. We've been all over. We haven't been to China. Not yet, at any rate.

HENRY

You rarely do anything without reason, these days, Jim.

(turns to him)

Choosing the boat headed where you were born?

JAMES

My god, why can't I be the impulsive one, sometimes, eh?

Henry's almost disappointed

HENRY

You know me better than that.

James doesn't respond. Henry shakes his head knowingly.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Enjoy the view.

He leaves. James takes a look back at Henry and then back out at the tiny lights of Mylapore, far off in the distance.

INT. GOBINDER'S LAIR. PRIVATE CHAMBER - NIGHT.

A silk screen. The small SILHOUETTE OF GOBINDER being tended to by one of his silhouetted women. A high pitched torrent of ABUSE and CURSES issues forth in Hindi.

The well-dressed Indian man stands looking at Victor Stevens, expressionless.

The miniature gangster's rant subsides.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

His Excellency has never encountered such audacity before.

(Gobinder's ranting restarts)

He is both appalled and amazed at the actions of these two men and promises a vast reward for the man who hunts these two dishonourables down and takes delivery of the payment they are due to His Excellency.

He steps away from the silk screen and addresses Stevens directly.

WELL-DRESSED MAN (CONT'D)

The information you have and the obvious trail the two men have left will surely prove useful. You know these men, Mr Stevens?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEVENS

I've been after them for ten years. They are also in debt to me. I know what they'll do. Where they'll go.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

His Excellency is confident that you will apply such knowledge in order to track them down.

Gobinder is carried away from behind the screen and vanishes behind a curtain.

A group of Gobinder's men file in behind Stevens - amongst them is Zalim wearing a menacing smile.

WELL-DRESSED MAN (CONT'D)

You will take these men and return with the heads and hearts of the two criminals. You will, of course, be compensated appropriately.

STEVENS

Thank you. His Excellency's generosity is well known.

The well-dressed man looks directly into Stevens's eyes.

WELL-DRESSED MAN

It is indeed, Mr Stevens. However, I am sure you are aware of His Excellency's other qualities.

Stevens stiffens slightly.

The well-dressed man takes a step towards him.

WELL-DRESSED MAN (CONT'D)

If you do not return with their heads, then Zalim, here --
 (beat)
 -- will return with yours.

EXT. GOBINDER'S LAIR. ENTRANCE - MORNING

The massive wooden door swings open and Stevens emerges with Zalim and the men.

He looks up at the morning sun and takes a deep, relaxing breath. Smiles.

Looks down to his side to where the little Indian Boy waits. The child holds out his hand. Stevens kneels down next to him. He speaks warmly to the boy.

STEVENS

Thank you very much. You did very well. Here you are --

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He produces a bar of chocolate and gives it to the boy.

STEVENS (CONT'D)

Off you go, now. Go home. This place is dangerous.

The little informant disappears.

ZALIM

So, you move on the words of a child?

Stevens gives the giant a contemptful sideways; moron.

ZALIM (CONT'D)

And where does the wise little one say we should go?

The men laugh with Zalim.

Stevens looks straight ahead.

STEVENS

A spot of sea air sounds pleasant, don't you think?

(turns to the men)

What say we charter a boat?

EXT. YANGTZE BIRD. INDIAN OCEAN - MORNING

A bright and beautiful morning. The Yangtze Bird cuts through the water.

INT. YANGTZE BIRD. CABIN - MORNING

Sunlight breaks through the shutters. Fairly Spartan and cramped.

Henry lies in his berth, snoring. An unmovable object.

James' berth is empty, the covers drawn back.

EXT. YAGTZE BIRD. DECK - MORNING

Clear sky and bright sun. James wanders the deck, taking in the air.

He leans against the rail, looks out to sea. The wind ruffles his hair and he closes his eyes, savouring the moment. He turns around.

Sitting on a chair is a YOUNG ENGLISH WOMAN (20s), effortless beauty countered by a plain dress, a blanket across her knees. She peers at James over the top of a book. The book lowers and smiles at him.

YOUNG WOMAN

Nice view.

(CONTINUED)