

A LATE VICTORIAN HOLOCAUST

V 2.0

Written by

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Based on true events during the great Indian famine 1876 as described in the history book "Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World" by Mike Davis.

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FADE IN:

SUPER: INDIA, PRE-FAMINE.

EXT. TYPICAL INDIAN FIELD - DAY

A cold breeze blows past the lush, green field.

We see acres and acres of productive farmland.

JACK (V.O.)

If you were to ask me about India just a few months back, I would have replied like any Englishman at the time.

Then, the several settlements that exist near the fields. The people dress nicely, they look happy selling their clothes, and their children play around, speaking inaudibly.

JACK (V.O.)

That they, the small-minded people of India, need to learn how the world works. These lush green lands -but they do not want to pay tax. These tall, bodies, yet they complain about the rain and the weather, never solving their problems themselves.

The once vibrant farmlands morph before our eyes into a landscape of decay. Verdant fields wither to dustbowls stretching to the horizon. Stalks of grain turn brown then vanish, exposing cracked soil.

The people too begin wasting away, mirrors of the dying land that was their sustenance. Joyful children with round bellies and glowing smiles transform into skeletal wraiths, hollow eyes sunken with ceaseless hunger. Their anguished wails pierce the air.

JACK (V.O.)

I would tell you that India may be a struggling, starving country now, but that is who they are, and I'm afraid it's who they'll ever be. All these I would have said months ago. All these I would have believed.

Men who toiled proudly now crumble to the barren earth from sheer exhaustion, flies gathering on fevered faces turned upwards unseeing. Women cradle shriveled babies already lost, mute and numb.

Carrion crows and rats grow fat on human remains scattered about, the only creatures nourished. Once colorful garb turns to tattered rags befitting the walking dead, ragged groups lurching they know not where.

JACK (V.O.)

But the truth lies before our own eyes. We just need to open them to see it. This is a truth I've brought to you. It's sick. It's sad. It's demanding. But this truth is the only comfort I can give, and your listening is the best reward they can get.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: INDIA, 1870s.

INT. DIGBY'S HOME - DAY

Steam comes off a hot coffee behind a typewriter as we frequently see a hand typing on it.

DIGBY (40), a tall, determined middle-aged English man, paces back and forth in his classic English attire as JACK MERRIWEATHER (25), a young, handsome and rude reporter typing on the typewriter.

DIGBY

Are you done now?

JACK

Just a bit, sire.

DIGBY

Well, go on then. Be fast about it.

Jack doesn't respond; he keeps typing.

Digby notices something and looks at Jack suspiciously. Jack notices his glance.

JACK

(feigns innocence)
What?

DIGBY

Quick. Let me see what you have written.

He leans towards the typewriter impatiently and checks what he has written.

JACK

Now, sire, before you overreact, you must know...

Digby gives him a disappointed look, scrunches the paper and throws it in the bin.

JACK (CONT'D)

Wait. Wait. I...

He grunts as he watches the paper fall into the bin.

DIGBY

Have you lost your mind? Just because you're new here doesn't excuse your ignorance. Open your eyes! People are starving.

JACK

I aimed to capture the layabouts in their truest form. I understand if the bluntness gave you pause though.

DIGBY

The vivid language is one matter.

He pauses.

DIGBY (CONT'D)

Tell me - prior to this piece, how much firsthand experience did you have with Indians?

JACK

Well...none to speak of. But everyone knows they are wretched beggars who refuse honest work.

Digby strokes his bearded chin thoughtfully.

DIGBY

I see - so you simply echoed the fashionable perceptions of the day. And did anyone ever challenge the veracity of such beliefs about the "native character"?

Jack shifts in his seat.

JACK
No one of sound mind or station
would, I suppose...

Digby shakes his head.

DIGBY
I won't tolerate such nonsense.
You're under my charge so you'll
write the truth, no matter your
personal views.

He lights a cigar, fuming.

DIGBY (CONT'D)
Start over. I expect better this
time.

He opens the curtains as he stares down the beautiful English districts, and far off, you can see the Indian settlements looking cheerless. He sighs, letting out a puff in the air.

DIGBY (CONT'D)
The folly of power is forgetting
those who lack it. The Indians need
our compassion, though many in
Parliament disagree.

INT. ENGLISH COURT, RECEPTION - DAY

We see Jack and Digby walking towards the reception as they see some Indians by the corner, begging for alms. One of them rushes towards them, touching Digby.

ALMS BEGGAR
(in Hindi)
Please, masterji. Spare us some...

JACK
Get your filthy hands off him.

He tries to push him away, but Digby stops him.

DIGBY
No.

Jack moves back and watches as Jack talks to them and gives them some money.

CUT TO:

Jack and Digby walk up to the reception.

RECEPTIONIST

Welcome, sire. The council is waiting for you.

DIGBY

Come on in, Jack.

INT. ENGLISH COURT, CONFERENCE HALL - DAY

A group of lean Indians walk in with terrible coordination, with their cups of tea and biscuits in hand.

They move towards a round table where Digby, TEMPLE (45), a fat, short-tempered councilman, CORNISH (60), a reasonable, wise, grey-haired statesman and LYTTON (40), a well-decorated general.

They sit and wait as the Indians serve them tea and biscuit and don't say a word till they leave.

Then, they walk out. Jack sits by a corner, salivating.

TEMPLE

Haha. So where were we? Right. Digby was blaming us.

He giggles to himself.

DIGBY

My lords, sires, can we not see that the people are starving?

TEMPLE

And does England control the rain? Or the sun? How is any of this our fault?

He takes pause and sips his tea.

CORNISH

I think, my lord, what Digby is trying to say is that perhaps if taxes were less severe, famine could be averted.

TEMPLE

How?

CORNISH

Sir--

LYTTON

-- Enough empty debate. Hunger exists throughout Britain and beyond. We've limited means. Would you rather Indians eat than our own poor?

Digby looks around and sees them all turning on him.

DIGBY

(sighs)

I'd hope to one day see India self-sufficient. But our taxes now exacerbate famine and death. Is human compassion fully lost to you all?

Digby waits for them to speak up.

INT. ENGLISH COURT, RECEPTION - LATER

They walk out of the halls; Digby looks a little sad.

TEMPLE

Oh! Look alive, Digby. We are giving them bloody rations. You got what you wanted.

DIGBY

It's not enough.

LYTTON

If we keep talking in circles, we'll never get anything done. It's been decided. That's final.

They all nod.

LYTTON (CONT'D)

I'll see you at the Queen's coronation, Digby.

DIGBY

I will be looking forward to it, my lord.

They walk away. Cornish walks towards Digby.

CORNISH

They've forgotten starvation's bite. Power leaves no room for past pains.

Digby nods. After Cornish leaves, he fakes a smile seeing Jack.

JACK
Well that was positive...

DIGBY
Grab the food.

Digby departs abruptly, Jack scrambling behind.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Digby is busy reading his newspapers. Jack stares out of the moving train and watches as the train moves through the British fine district to the malnourished Indian streets. Jack feels uncomfortable as he sees the kids playing in their tattered dresses and the elders looking depressed.

HORN BLARES. The train comes to a halt as they all come out.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Jack and Digby walk down the streets.

JACK
What are we doing here, sire?

DIGBY
What did you think of the council meeting today?

JACK
You seem to have gotten your way. But must we coddle these people with handouts forever?

DIGBY
Don't parrot Temple and Lytton's bile. The Indians grew ample food once.

He lights up a cigar.

JACK
I'm just saying...

DIGBY
-- When the British undersold traditional textiles, Indians had to farm cash crops.

(MORE)

DIGBY (CONT'D)

Then rising taxes forced complete dependence for basic food.

JACK

So their plight is Britain's doing?

DIGBY

There's blame on all sides. But our taxes stripped them of livelihoods sustaining for centuries. We owe amends.

They approach a small dwelling.

JACK

What are we doing here, boss?

DIGBY

We're visiting the Perumals to share extra rations. However meager, it's a needed good news.

JACK

Who are the Perumals?

EXT. PERUMALS HOUSEHOLD - DAY

RAMESH (9), a lean kid filled with energy, is playing in the mud with his friends, clad in his ragged clothes. Jack watches him from afar with disgust.

Then, SUNIL (40), a proud, malnourished Indian man, walks out happily.

SUNIL

Ramesh beta, we got food.

Ramesh throws the ball away and heads inside.

INT. PERUMALS HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Ramesh and GITA (13), a beautiful, soulful teenage kid sitting across the table, are eating to their heart's content. Gita looks up and sees Jack. She smiles at him, and he looks away.

Sunil and his wife, LAKSHMI (35), watch them happily as they stand beside Digby.

SUNIL

We can't thank you enough for your generosity.

DIGBY

Oh! No. It's alright. It's nothing, really.

SUNIL

We have decided to go to the work camp near us.

Digby turns to Sunil, confused.

DIGBY

Why? This is your ancestral home; you shouldn't leave it behind.

SUNIL

Masterji, I have faced enough shame of being unable to feed my family; an ancestral home only exists when there are people to fill it, and I can only help mine by volunteering.

DIGBY

(sighs)
How can I help?

SUNIL

You have done enough. My only regret is that I won't see your face any more. You have been a ray of sunshine in this trying time of ours.

DIGBY

No. I do not think I've done enough. I think yours is a unique experience, and it is worthy of documentation. My subordinate and I will accompany you on this journey.

JACK

(shocked)
We will?

DIGBY

We will help you with everything you will need for the journey, and we won't leave until we are sure that you have settled down.

JACK

Sire!

SUNIL

It really isn't...

DIGBY
-- Consider it the last request of
an old friend.

SUNIL
(emotional)
Thank you so much, sir. Thank you.

He falls to his knees. Digby tries to help him up,
embarrassed. Jack is furious.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

HORN HONKS. Jack walks away from the train angrily. Digby
follows slowly.

DIGBY
Where are you running to, Jack? If
you move a little faster, you might
land in Wales.

He giggles to himself. Jack turns back angrily.

JACK
Sire, I have the ultimate respect
for you, but there are things...

DIGBY
A raise.

JACK
Pardon?

DIGBY
Go on this one journey with me, and
we can talk about a raise when we
return.

Digby walks past him, leaving Jack shocked. Jack regains
himself soon after and catches up with his boss.

JACK
I do not understand...

DIGBY
What? You do not like a raise?

JACK
No. But what Rory are we chasing
here. It's just a bunch of ragged
bodies moving away from their
homes; that is like going to Church
around here.

DIGBY

That is what I'm hoping.

JACK

Pardon?

DIGBY

That this trip will show you perspectives in ways even I can't. If, after this one, you still think they are the scum of the earth, then I will leave you be. No more strange travels. No more strange meetings. Do we have a deal?

JACK

Aye, sire. Aye.

Jack smiles as they walk down the road.

EXT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jack walks towards the building and sees a stray cat by the side of the room.

JACK

Hello there.

He brings some nuts with him, puts them in front of it, and watches as the cat eats them.

JACK (CONT'D)

Good boy. Good boy.

He pets the cat and strokes it's back.

JACK (V.O.)

Hi Dad. I know my job here bothers you. But England's getting cruel and I must provide for your care somehow.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Jack enters, weary. By his bed lies an OLD PHOTO of his smiling father holding a toddler Jack. He picks up the photo, nostalgic.

JACK (V.O.)

My employer frustrates me. He sees the world so differently...yet pays well.

(MORE)

JACK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If impressing his pompous friends gets me the raise for your medicine, so be it. Just wish you could be here to remind me of right and wrong like before.

Jack gazes wistfully before setting the photo down.

JACK (V.O.)

I best get to sleep. This new assignment already feels ominous. But I'll face it, for you Dad. For us.

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - EARLY MORNING

Cock crows from afar.

Jack wakes up from his bed and yawns. He looks out the window and sees that the sun has already risen.

JACK

Bloody hell.

A MONTAGE of him running to the bathroom and getting ready for work.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

TRAIN HONKS in the distance.

We see Digby by the side reading his newspaper with News about the Queen on the front page. Jack runs in, breathing heavily.

DIGBY

You're late.

He throws the newspaper into Jack's chest as Jack struggles to catch it. Digby stands up and begins to walk.

JACK

One... minute.

He struggles to catch up.

INT. PERUMALS HOUSEHOLD - DAY

Jack flashes his camera.

A MONTAGE of the Perumals packing their belongings.

Ramesh packs his spoilt mattress and all his dresses that don't fill up a small, worn bag.

Gita has a lot of handwork to pack. She is stuffing them in her small bag, but they do not fit. Lakshmi walks by and sees her.

LAKSHMI

What are you doing, beta?

GITA

They won't fit into the bag.

LAKSHMI

Just pack the little you can, Gita.
We do not have room for much.

She walks away. Gita looks sad for a while, smiles and closes off her bag. She picks up a few hand bands and puts them on her hands.

Digby helps Sunil pack his loads as Jack watches from a corner. Sunil whispers something to Digby, and he nods.

DIGBY

Of course, friend. Take as much time as you want.

He walks towards Jack.

JACK

Are they done? It didn't look like they had much.

DIGBY

They want to say their farewells to their neighbors and friends.

JACK

What? That'll take the entire day.

The family hears him as he clears his voice, lowering it.

JACK (CONT'D)

Can't they do it on the road? It'll be faster that way.

DIGBY

Tell me, you didn't say your goodbyes before leaving England?

JACK

(grunts)

Alright. When will we start this bloody journey, then?

DIGBY

Tomorrow. We have to give them time. It's not easy leaving the only home you know. You should know that more than anyone.

Jack nods, pensive, before letting out a nod.

INT. ENGLISH COURT, TEMPLE'S OFFICE - DAY

Digby turns towards Temple with a frown on his face.

DIGBY

What?

TEMPLE

You heard me quite well, Digby. You have been accepted as one of the delegates receiving Her Majesty, the Queen of England, in Delhi.

DIGBY

But I never applied. How can I be accepted for a course I never applied to?

TEMPLE

(disappointed)

Am I sensing disapproval? Are you angry you'll get to meet the Queen?

DIGBY

No. Of course not. It's just...

TEMPLE

There is no just here. No reason. You're to meet the Queen and be happy to hear the News. That is all.

DIGBY

I am happy to meet the Queen.

TEMPLE

Now, that is more like it. Pack your loads; you'll start your journey in a few days.

DIGBY
I understand.

Digby's eyes are on the floor as he sighs.

EXT. TOP OF A BUILDING - DAY

Digby and Jack stands at the top of a building as Jack kicks something off the top.

JACK
No. No. Absolutely not.

DIGBY
I wouldn't ask this of you if I had a choice.

JACK
If you think I'll walk with that family alone into some disgusting camp--

DIGBY
-- Yes, you will. We have an agreement, remember?

He takes a second to gather himself.

DIGBY (CONT'D)
I am going to meet the Queen of England. This might be my one chance to tell her the true story of the Indians' suffering.

JACK
And what has this journey got to do with it?

DIGBY
Because I will need evidence to show her.

JACK
It is a refugee camp; how do you expect they will be treated differently than they were in their own homes?

DIGBY
Look, Jack. This is the deal now. You can take it, or you can't. But this can be the breaking point you have been looking for.

JACK

How? How will following a hunch of ignorant across the woods help me?

DIGBY

That's always your problem, Merriweather. You can't see past what's in front of you. It's why you need to get out there. Gather all the experiences. You are free to make your own assessments.

JACK

If I do this, I get double the raise.

DIGBY

I can add a pound to it, but you're out of mind if you think I'll double for you.

JACK

Okay. I'll take it. But you can't change your mind. It is fixed. That's all.

DIGBY

It is fixed.

He smiles.

EXT. PERUMALS HOUSEHOLD - DAY

The family hold their belongings as they walk out of the building. Jack stands by a side, writing down in his notes.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

As they walk by, other families join them with kids and their belongings.

CUT TO:

Jack stands by a side as he sees that the Indians are stealing glances at him. He ignores them and continues journalling.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Tents are aroused. Jack sits in front of the only tent in the woods, and he has a big meal in front of him that he is now enjoying alone.

He looks around and sees everyone looking at him, salivating.

JACK

What?

They all look away. He grunts and keeps on eating.

INT. JACK'S TENT - NIGHT

Jack wakes up from his sleep and hears some activities outside his tent. He moves slowly and opens the tent swiftly. He sees a bunch of kids feasting on the leftovers. He is shocked, and they're shocked, too.

They pause for a while. ANKUR, one of the Indian boys, and seemingly their leader stands up, promptly.

ANKUR

(in Hindi)

Run!

The kids run away.

JACK

Oh! Bollocks.

He goes back to sleep.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The Indians walk down the woods in a single file. Their spirit is a little bit elevated as they walk.

Sunil starts playing a tune on his flute as an older Indian man sings a motivational song.

Gita and her mother, Lakshmi, share milk in a small cup among them all as they all chorus the song.

Jack is enjoying the music and nodding to it.

JACK

Okay.

CUT TO:

We see Jack sitting by the side, journalling. He stops and suspects something.

He looks back and sees the kids looking at his writing. They're shocked to have been detected.

ANKUR

Run!

They run away again.

CUT TO:

The men gather all the belongings and help the women carry the load.

Jack seems a little tired of carrying his loads. One of the men offers to help him carry his belongings.

JACK

No. Thanks.

The man insists, speaking in their local dialect.

JACK (CONT'D)

No. I said no.

Jack, frustrated, pushes him away as he falls to the ground.

Sunil sees this and helps the man up. They continue singing their motivational song as the man's spirit rises again.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Thunder CRACKS. Rain falls.

Jack peeks from his tent as he sees the men and their families cuddling under trees, using leaves as shields.

JACK

Oh! Whatever.

He walks out and joins them, covering his head with leaves, too.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We see them walking down the woods, Jack taking the other route as usual.

They hear something from the woods as they all wait.

SUNIL

What's that?

The men bring out their spears; Jack watches in awe.

AJAY

I think it's a jackal.

They all wait there, in suspense. Then, an animal leaps from behind Jack as a Indian man tackles him to the ground. The jackal makes its way back into the forest behind them.

Jack pushes the Indian man away in disgust.

JACK

Get off. Get off of me.

The man stands up, looking embarrassed.

INDIAN MAN

(in Hindi)

Strange man. I saved him, and he cursed me.

JACK

Stay away from me, all of you.

The man walks away. Jack sees the look of disapproval on all the faces as they resume their journey.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

We see Jack writing by a corner but the kids stay aloof, too scared to come near. He sighs and keeps writing.

INT. JACK'S TENT - NIGHT

Jack groans as he lifts his shirt and sees he has sustained some wounds.

JACK

Oh! Heavens.

He looks out the window and sees the kids. They look sad and angry at him as they walk away.

JACK (CONT'D)

That's right. I don't need you lots.

CUT TO:

Alone in the dimly lit tent, Jack takes matters into his own hands. He retrieves a makeshift first aid kit and begins tending to his wounds. The distant sounds of the children's laughter and giggles filter in.

Jack winces with each touch, a symphony of pain accompanied by the echoes of youthful joy from outside. Despite the physical discomfort, he perseveres in his self-treatment

EXT. WOODS - DAY

They walk down their usual path as Jack walks on the parallel side.

He sees a stone on their side of the road and rushes to pick it up and sees the people run away from him. He picks up the stone, ashamed.

JACK

I just... I just came to pick this up.

He looks up and sees Gita smiling at him. In the crowd, she's the only one who seems to be happy to see him. He looks away and rushes to his side of the road.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

He is writing in his tent as he hears them laughing outside.

He sighs and keeps on writing. Then, he hears a knock on his tent.

JACK

I'm busy.

The door opens as someone steps in.

JACK (CONT'D)

(furious)

Which part of I'm busy...?

He looks up and sees Gita holding a cup of milk for him with a hand-woven, smiling embroidery.

JACK (CONT'D)

This is for me?

GITA

Yes.

He takes the milk and drinks it.

JACK
Your dad told you to give me?

GITA
No. Me to you.

He turns back, ashamed.

JACK
You do not hate me?

She smiles at him.

GITA
No. You help us. Good man.

JACK
Thank you... Um, what's your name?

GITA
Gita.

JACK
Thank you, Gita.

GITA
You are welcome.

She walks away. He inspects the embroidered fabric and smiles.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We see them walking down the road as Jack approaches them and sees Gita. She smiles and waves at him. He waves back.

Then, she looks forward and continues doing her embroidery as she walks.

EXT. TENT - DAY

Jack wraps some food and walks towards Gita as she sits alone, doing her embroidery.

JACK
Hey there.

She turns back, smiling.

JACK (CONT'D)
I want you to have this. It's some
of the food I have on me.

GITA

Thank you.

She takes it. She stands up and moves towards the playing kids.

GITA (CONT'D)

Food.

JACK

No, it's for...

She doesn't listen. Jack smiles as he watches her feed all the other kids.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The men are eating outside as Jack comes out of his tent. They all stop what they are doing and focus on him.

JACK

Hello.

Then, he sits with them as they all look at him in shock. Jack looks around, feigning confusion.

JACK (CONT'D)

Are we going to eat or what?

They all scream in jubilation as they start eating. He laughs.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: DELHI, INDIA.

INT. ENGLISH COURT, LYTTON'S OFFICE - DAY

We see Lytton pour Digby some tea as Digby raises it.

DIGBY

Thank you, sire.

LYTTON

Rumor has it you're to interview the Queen about the new railroad.

Digby sips politely.

DIGBY

I am, my lord.

LYTTON

Let's see your questions then.

Digby smiles.

DIGBY

My preparation remains private for now.

Lytton's smile hardens. He leans forward menacingly.

LYTTON

Your profits stem from Crown favors. One word from me and such fortune disappears. Tread carefully when you meet Her Majesty. I expect your full cooperation, as a loyal team player. Understood?

Digby meets his glare.

DIGBY

Will that be all, sir?

LYTTON

Yes. That is all.

Digby stands up, ready to leave. Lytton continues drinking his tea; Digby stops by the door, turning back to him.

DIGBY

One last thing, sire.

LYTTON

What?

DIGBY

Here are the questions.

He puts a paper in front of him.

DIGBY (CONT'D)

Good for you; there is nothing to panic about in there. But you can't hide the truth forever, sire. Sooner or later, it will come out in ways even you can't comprehend.

He walks out of the office.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Gita sits by a corner of the woods, making her embroidery. She notices something and quickly looks back to see Jack.

JACK

Hello?

She greets him with a smile.

JACK (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

GITA

I'm making one of Lord Krishna.

JACK

Oh! Is that like a hero?

GITA

One of our gods.

JACK

What do you need that for?

GITA

Mum is not feeling alright. It will make her feel strong again.

JACK

(smiles)

You are a brave girl, Gita.

She smiles.

GITA

Thank you.

JACK

So, we are getting to the camp in the morning. Are you happy about it?

Gita nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

What will you do when you get there?

GITA

Um...

(thinks for a while)

I'm gonna try making everyone laugh! Big laughs!

JACK

(laughs)

I'm sure the people there are gonna love that. What makes you wanna do that?

GITA

When people are happy, it makes me happy, too.

JACK

That's a fantastic plan, Gita. I hope to one day be like you, Gita.

They both giggle.

LATER:

Sunil sits by a fire, staring at it as Jack walks towards him. Sunil makes space for him as he sits.

SUNIL

Feeling better, Mr. Jack?

Jack nods.

JACK

I might have... Over-reacted before.

SUNIL

I am just glad to hear you regret it.

Jack smirks, nodding again.

JACK

Why do not you tell me your story, Sunil?

SUNIL

My story?

JACK

Yes. From what I know, your family was well-to-do, wasn't it? So what happened?

SUNIL

The British came.

Jack gets ready to write.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

It all started with the taxes. It wasn't much at first; we could afford it. But we were a textile clan. Our entire wealth was built around making dresses, do you understand?

JACK

I do.

SUNIL

We had the best textile anywhere and... And the British wanted it. They wanted our quality. Our dress. So what do they do?

JACK

They grow it on their own lands.

SUNIL

Cheaper versions. Grows fast. Threw us out of business so fast. It changed our lives overnight.

JACK

Did you... complain?

SUNIL

Complain? To who? A white man?

(giggles)

All they see is your skin, and they think your problem is not real, but a fiction you cooked in your head. But that's not you, of course.

Jack hesitates.

JACK

Of course.

SUNIL

I know in my heart that you came with us 'cause you really cared.

Jack lowers his eyes.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

So, that's the story of how we lost everything. But you know what we still have? Our pride. As a nation. As a family.

JACK
I'm sure where we are going, things
will be a bit better.

SUNIL
(smiles)
Sir Digby was right about you.

JACK
What did he say?

SUNIL
That you are the most caring person
in the world when you want to.

Jack raises his eye brows.

JACK
Wow! He really say that?

SUNIL
He also said to be careful that you
might get over-passionate
sometimes.

They both laugh.

JACK
Of course, he said that.

Their laughter echoes through the whole place.

INT. JACK'S TENT - NIGHT

Jack lies down in the tent.

SUNIL (O.S.)
Namaste.

JACK
Good night.

He closes his eyes for a while, thinking. Then, he opens it.

JACK (CONT'D)
Uh! Bloody hell.

He walks out of the tent.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

Sunil watches as Jack takes down his tent and lies beside them.

SUNIL
What are you doing?

JACK
What? If I am traveling like you, I should live the way you live, should I not?

Sunil smiles.

JACK (CONT'D)
Good night.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The people walk down the road, looking tired and uninspired. Then, Jack walks to their front and stands beside Sunil.

JACK
What's going on?

SUNIL
What?

JACK
They're not singing.

SUNIL
Well, they do not sing every time, Jack sahib.

JACK
Yes, but we will be entering the camp soon. Our energies should be up.

SUNIL
I do not think they are up for it.

He ignores Jack, leading his family away. An idea comes to Jack as he walks away.

CUT TO:

We see the men walking away as they hear a tune in the same line as the song they sing. They look up the hill near them and see Jack standing there, blaring the flutes.

He gives Sunil a sign as he smiles. Then, he leads the first verse, and by the end of the verse, everyone joins in with the chorus.

They all walk down the road, holding hands, smiling and walking in unison.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: THE REFUGE CAMP.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, ENTRANCE - DAY

They are standing before a wall now as Jack walks forward. Then, he knocks hard on the wall. He signals to Gita, who knocks too.

GARRISON OFFICER (O.S.)
Who goes there?

JACK
It is Jack Merriweather, the Fall Papers. I understand I am to cover the events happening behind these walls?

Jack turns back and gives the people a signal to calm down. Then, the Garrison slides open a small hole and looks at him.

GARRISON OFFICER
Identification.

Jack shows him the identification.

JACK
Oh! And I came with these refugees, too.

GARRISON OFFICER
They can wait there till the Head Garrison is ready for them.

JACK
Alright. I suppose you won't mind if this enters your record then, would you?

The Garrison closes the small hole. He converses with the others for a while.

INDIAN MAN #2
What is going on?

JACK
They will open up soon enough.

Then, the walls open up.

JACK (CONT'D)
Haha. What did I say?

GARRISON OFFICER
You can all come inside.

Then, they walk in, holding hands.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, RECEPTION - DAY

Jack and Gita crane their necks admiringly at the soaring marble pillars and cavernous arched ceilings adorning the reception hall around them.

Through an arched doorway, a sunlit courtyard is visible, ringed by more beautifully carved colonnades with their sloped roof tiles gleaming.

Everyone else registers behind them.

GITA
Wow.

JACK
So, what do you think? Good, isn't it?

GITA
This is new home?

JACK
Yes. You will never have to worry about anything again. From now on, all the kids will be happy, so you must be happy, too.

GITA
I will be.

Then, Sunil, his wife and Ramesh walk towards them.

SUNIL
Gita Beta. It's time to leave.

JACK
Good. Let's go and inspect the quarters.

They stand up, ready to leave as a Garrison stands before them.

JACK (CONT'D)

What is going on?

GARRISON OFFICER

The General would like to see you.
The rest of you can head to your
quarters.

JACK

Good. I'll see you soon then.

SUNIL

Goodbye.

They walk away as Gita turns back and hugs him.

JACK

Oh! Bye.

He waves at her as she walks away. The Garrison looks at him in disgust.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, GENERAL'S OFFICE - DAY

The door opens as the Garrison walks Jack into the office.

GENERAL DONNER (50), a muscular, authoritative jerk, stands over his seat with a broad smile. There are three other garrisons right behind him.

GENERAL DONNER

Ha! Look. I told you he'll come.

JACK

Hello.

GENERAL DONNER

Ah. Pardon my enthusiasm. We do not
get visitors here that often.
Especially not reporters.

He moves closer.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

General Alphus Donner. But we do
not need formalities; you can call
me General like the rest of my men.

He stretches his hand for a handshake.

JACK

General. I am Jack Merriweather. I am here to cover the events here at the refugee camp.

GENERAL DONNER

(to his men)

Did you hear that? He is here to cover us.

JACK

Well, not you.

GENERAL DONNER

I bet you must be tired. When was the last time you had a good bath?

JACK

Like a week. But it feels like a year already.

GENERAL DONNER

(laughs)

I like the sense of humor on this one.

Jack smiles, feeling a bit embarrassed.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

Why do not you let my boy here show you to your quarters? You take a good bath, rest well, then we can have a tour in the morning.

JACK

That sounds great.

GENERAL DONNER

Good.

He snaps his finger as one of his MEN walks forward and leads Jack away.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, ROAD - EVENING

Jack walks around, admiring the architecture of the place.

JACK

Wow. This is where the Indians live, too?

GARRISON OFFICER

What?

JACK

The Indians? Is this where they live?

GARRISON OFFICER

No. They live on the other side.

JACK

They must be having the time of their life, don't you think?

GARRISON OFFICER

Yeah. I suppose.

Then, they get to the door.

GARRISON OFFICER (CONT'D)

We are here.

JACK

Oh! Thank you.

The Garrison opens the door as he walks in.

INT. JACK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Water running.

Jack is in the bathroom now as he scrubs himself. He remembers something and smiles to himself.

INT. JACK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Jack lies on his bed as he stares at his parent's pictures.

JACK

Good night.

Then, he slowly falls asleep.

INT. JACK'S QUARTERS - DAY

We hear a loud bang on the door as Jack wakes up.

GARRISON OFFICER

Good morning.

Jack groans on the bed.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP - DAY

Jack walks down the road with a Garrison officer as the General smiles at him.

JACK
General.

GENERAL DONNER
(to his men)
Ah! Look at him.
(to Jack)
I hope you had a nice sleep.

JACK
So, when are we touring this wicked place?

GENERAL DONNER
Oh! Agitated, are we?

JACK
That's what I came here for.

GENERAL DONNER
Very well. Come with me.

He leads Jack away

EXT. REFUGE CAMP - DAY

Jack and the General walk around as they see the several improvements they've made to the place.

GENERAL DONNER
...and as you can see this is our new textile factory. We are planning to start working there very soon. We are working very hard here like you can't imagine.

JACK
Great. So when do I get to meet the refugees?

GENERAL DONNER
Ah! I thought you'd just love to see the developments. There's no need to see anyone. I can show you everything.

JACK

Well, this is a refugee camp, isn't it? It wouldn't be a report if I didn't interview the refugees.

GENERAL DONNER

Well, you walked with them. Can you not just write about that? Look, we do not like our people mincing with them; you know how rabid they can get.

JACK

I think they are just fine.

GENERAL DONNER

(hesitant)

Okay. I guess you can go meet them sometime later then.

JACK

Why can't I see them now?

GENERAL DONNER

Well, we have to prepare them now. Do not we?

He walks away.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Classical music plays.

We see the white men laughing and dancing as Jack enters the merriment.

The General sees him and quickly stands up, hitting his glass of wine.

GENERAL DONNER

Attention everyone.

They all stop what they're doing, facing him.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen of the Garrison, we have in our midst a very special guest of honor. A reporter is in our midst and is about to put our names on the map.

They all nod, cheering happily.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

(regretful)

I remember when I first came here. I was demoted from the army to this... this deserted place. You all remember how it was. How sad and dejected we were. Now, look at us, ei? Look at us.

They all cheer.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

The Queen of England has arrived, and wait till she hears about the incredible things we have done here. She will walk right into our camps and congratulate me herself.

They cheer again, Jack raises his hand.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

Yes?

He sips from his wine.

JACK

General? You have done great things, that's for sure, but isn't this a refugee camp?

GENERAL DONNER

Well, yes, it is.

JACK

Then, why so much talk about yourself and so little about the refugees?

They all look surprised at the audacity. The General laughs.

GENERAL DONNER

Oh! Do you not just love reporters? They say their bloody minds.

JACK

If this is a celebration of the development of the camp, why weren't the refugees invited?

GENERAL DONNER

Well, you can't be serious, can you?

Jack looks serious.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

I'm sure they're equally having their own parties, feasting heavily and praising the Queen's name for giving them so much.

JACK

I only ask to see them. That's all.

GENERAL DONNER

Well, fine. Alright.

JACK

Alright?

GENERAL DONNER

Yes. I said alright. Can we continue the party now?

The band starts playing. People murmur and eat their food.

CUT TO:

One of the Garrison officers is on their seat as Jack talks to them.

JACK

Hi.

The officer doesn't respond.

JACK (CONT'D)

Oh! I can see you're not the kind that talks. Quickly, can you tell me about the working conditions of the refugees?

The officer looks at him as if he has said a horrific thing, stands up and walks away. Jack sighs.

INT. JACK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Jack dresses up in the mirror, looking very determined.

JACK

Let's do this.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP - NIGHT

Jack walks down the long residential roads, sighing.

He finally sees the wall and smiles.

He moves to the door and pushes it, but it doesn't budge.

JACK

Come on.

He pushes it again, and he notices that there is a huge padlock on the door.

GARRISON OFFICER (O.S.)

Who goes there?

He grunts, turning back angrily.

JACK

It's me. The reporter. Jack Merriweather. Would you be so kind as to open the door for a gentleman, please?

GARRISON OFFICER

The door is to be closed after working hours. General's orders.

He sighs.

He turns back, and as he is about to leave, he sees the General.

JACK

General--

GENERAL DONNER

-- I can see that you're no team player. No one here goes behind me for anything. I want you gone by morning.

JACK

General...

GENERAL DONNER

I'm not negotiating this.

He turns back to leave.

JACK

You cannot send me away.

GENERAL DONNER

What did you say?

JACK

I heard your big speech about your demotion. It was great.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

But you forgot that reporters know everything. I know you, General Donner. I've heard about you. I know the vile things you did to be demoted. I know the English men you killed. Do you think your men will still be loyal to you when they hear that?

GENERAL DONNER

(furious)

Give me one reason not to kill you right here.

JACK

Kill me, and more reporters will storm this place. They'll come looking for me. Imagine there surprise when they don't find me here. There will be an investigation. I am English, after-all. Then you'll have no place to hide. All I ask is that you let me meet them. And your secret is safe with me.

The General grunts.

GENERAL DONNER

Tomorrow, then.

He storms away. Jack watches him, suspicious.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP - DAY

Jack walks out of the camp and sees that Indian refugees are walking about, looking good and smiling with people.

Jack looks around, surprised.

JACK

Have I walked into the wrong place?

Then, the General walks in from behind him.

GENERAL DONNER

Ah! Good for you to finally join us.

JACK

What is going on here?

GENERAL DONNER

Why? The refugees, of course. You said you wanted them, but here they are.

JACK

I thought you said they live on the other side.

GENERAL DONNER

Well, one time or the other, they do come to town to... be with us.

JACK

This is...

GENERAL DONNER

Ah! Come on. Let me introduce you.

He urges Jack to move forward as they reach an Indian couple.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

This is Prakash and his wife, Priya.

PRAKASH

Namaste, reporter ji. Thank you for coming to visit us. The General has been so nice to all the refugees here. He provides us with shelter and gives us clothes...

JACK

-- Wow. I haven't even asked a single question.

GENERAL DONNER

Isn't that the beauty of it? They can talk all day long.

JACK

I see.

GENERAL DONNER

Why do not I leave you to it then? I'm sure you have a lot of questions to ask.

He is walking away, and suddenly remembers something.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

One more thing, reporter.

The General shows him a huge bunch of keys.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

The key to the other side of town lies with me. The next time you want to go there, just come and tell me. We treat people who sneak at night as intruders, and... Well, our security doesn't do well with intruders. A bullet here, a wound there. Let's just avoid unpleasantry altogether, shall we?

JACK

I understand. I am sorry for trying to sneak out.

GENERAL DONNER

It is alright. As long as we are on the same page.

He walks away.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, GARRISON OFFICE - DAY

We see the General walk in, looking extremely happy. He realizes something and quickly checks himself. He stops as a realization dawns on him.

GENERAL DONNER

My keys.

His face turns red.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP - DAY

Jack puts the key into the padlock and finally open it.

JACK

Ah! Yes.

Then, he sees a group of garrisons running towards him.

GARRISON OFFICER

Hey there. Stop.

Jack runs into the open door, not looking ahead of him as he rolls down a slippery slope.

As he rolls down, he hits his head on a brick at the end of the road. He groans as he looks up. His expression changes to shock almost immediately.

JACK
 (horrified)
 Bloody hell.

SIZEABLE IRON HOOKS jut out along the grimy walls, some still DRIPPING WITH BLOOD and tufts of human hair. The hard stone floor is stained crimson in patches.

All around, EMACIATED Indian MEN in rags shamble in chains, barely strong enough to stand. They're prodded along by WHITE OFFICERS, who TORTURE them with WHIP and CLUB.

BLOW after merciless BLOW rains on those too feeble and starved to quicken their pace. One SEVERELY BEATEN MAN collapses face first - his handler just DRAGS him limply by the chains embedding in his skin.

PLEADING WAILS and AGONIZED SCREAMS echo from shadowed back rooms. But most haunting is the lifeless, vacant stares of those pushed beyond despair - walking automatons numbly awaiting their turn with Death.

Jack retches violently from the traumatic sight, the hellish images SEARING into his mind.

GENERAL DONNER (O.S.)
 I see you've met the Indians.

Jack recoils in horror, gesturing at the emaciated prisoners.

JACK
 How could you possibly justify this cruelty?

General Donner sneers dismissively.

GENERAL DONNER
 Spare me your self-righteous outrage. You reporters all believe you're above reproach.

JACK
 This isn't about me. These people came to you helpless and starving, needing aid. Instead you've exploited them ruthlessly.

The General snorts derisively.

GENERAL DONNER
 Should we coddle them then? No, they must earn their way as all subjects of the Empire.

Jack gestures angrily at the guards.

JACK

By working them to death while you reap the rewards? You're bleeding them dry!

The General's face purples with rage.

GENERAL DONNER

You impudent whelp! I thought you an intelligent man. But like every other bleeding-heart reporter you let emotions cloud reason.

He turns on his heel sharply.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

Write your sensationalist rubbish! Nothing you say can touch me or my command! Now get out before I have you flogged as well!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ENGLISH COURT - NIGHT

Guests gather outside the court as people walk inside. Digby walk towards the entrance as he sees Robin.

ROBIN

Good evening, Mr. Digby. Congratulations on your latest report! Splendid work.

DIGBY

You're too kind, Robin.

At the entrance, they meet Lytton.

LYTTON

Good. You both are here.

DIGBY

It was my understanding that this was just a simple dinner. But, my God, the crowd...

LYTTON

No past affair compares to Her Majesty's gatherings. Take in the grandeur!

Lytton gestures broadly as they enter the dazzling hall, Digby surveying the scene with a subtle unease.

INT. ENGLISH COURT - NIGHT

Robin is shocked as they walk in. The hall has been redecorated, and everything looks new and shining. There's a chandelier hanging in the middle of the room, and several foods and drinks are being served.

ROBIN
 (gasps audibly)
 This is the biggest party I've ever
 seen in my entire life. It has...
 It has... everything.

LYTTON
 (laughs)
 Of course, it is; it is your Queen
 hosting it.

Then he turns towards Digby, who seems to be lost in thought.

LYTTON (CONT'D)
 So, what do you think, Digby?

Digby turns towards him impulsively as he hears his name.

DIGBY
 Pardon?

LYTTON
 What do you think of the party?

DIGBY
 Apologies. I was just thinking how
 many Indian families could be fed
 for months on what's been spent
 here tonight...

Lytton grits his teeth, smile forced.

LYTTON
 Is now the time for one of your
 bleeding heart speeches? This is a
 celebration!

He marches off fuming as Robin watches wide-eyed.

ROBIN
 I say, you have a singular talent
 for provocation, Sir!

Digby sighs mournfully.

DIGBY
If only they saw what I see,
Robin...

He stares across the room and sees everyone having fun.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, REFUGEE'S SIDE - EVENING

Jack walks around, the harsh reality of the refugee camp unfolding before him. Ragged men work tirelessly, their emaciated frames evidence of prolonged suffering.

SUNIL (O.S.)
Jack?

Jack looks back and sees Sunil. He is on the brink of collapse, his gaunt appearance reflecting the brutality of their circumstances. Sunil's eyes well up with despair as he spots Jack.

Jack hugs him.

JACK
Oh! My God. Are you alright?

SUNIL
It was a mistake. Coming down here.
It's worse... It's way worse than
home.

JACK
You can go back home. Can you not?

Sunil looks around at the mounted guards.

SUNIL
I do not think they're going to let
anyone escape this prison.

Jack hugs him again.

CUT TO:

They are both sitting on a platform as Sunil eats some food.

SUNIL (CONT'D)
Thank you. I've not had anything
this good in days.

JACK

I'm sorry. That was the only thing
on me.

SUNIL

Can you go check on Lakshmi and the
kids? I'm worried sick about them.
I do not know how they are doing?
Please?

JACK

Yes. Of course. I'll check on them.

SUNIL

Thank you. Thank you so much, Jack.

Jack nods, offering a hand to Sunil.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, REFUGEE'S SIDE - NIGHT

We witness Jack strolling away from the factories and the
desolate residential areas. The usual sounds of children playing
are absent; exhaustion and hunger have replaced their joy.

The women flee from him as if he's a vulture, their fear spread
across worn faces. He approaches a girl with a hopeful smile.

JACK

Hello? I want to...

The girl SHRIEKS and dashes away. Jack recoils in shock.
Undeterred, he glances ahead and spots a band of young boys
brandishing broomsticks and makeshift weapons, courageously
attempting to ward him off.

Ankur walks to the front.

ANKUR

Don't... do not come any closer.

JACK

Okay.

He puts his hands up.

ANKUR

We know what you want and are not
letting you take any of us anymore.

JACK

Wait, they're using you?

ANKUR

We are not going to those factories. They're hell. We are either going to die here now or follow you.

JACK

I'm sorry, but I'm not here to use you. I am looking for a woman, Lakshmi and her two kids, Gita and...

ANKUR

Gita?

JACK

What? You know her?

ANKUR

Why should we trust you?

JACK

Because I am a friend. I am not your enemy.

ANKUR

Everyone on your side is our enemy.

Jacks holds out his hand, showing him the hand-woven, smiling embroidery that Gita gifted him.

JACK

Not me. I didn't come with a guard because they gave me none. Because they do not want me to see you at all. They do not want the world to know what they're doing to you. How they are treating you. But I am here to expose it all to the world. To tell your story. Show your struggles. The only question now is if you will have me or not.

Ankur stares at Jack's hand. The boys look at each other.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, GARDEN - NIGHT

The boys lead Jack to the garden, where Gita sits in the middle, playing with the butterflies and pretty flowers.

Jack is mesmerized.

ANKUR

This is the only living garden in the whole camp. It is where you'll always find her.

JACK

Thank you.

Jack gives them some pennies as they fight for it among themselves.

Jack ignores them and walks towards Gita. He looks before her and sees beautiful artwork.

JACK (CONT'D)

Is that for sale?

She looks back and sees Jack. She looks extremely happy and hugs him.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey.

Jack is emotional as he holds her.

CUT TO:

They are both sitting in the garden now.

JACK (CONT'D)

Are you not going to go home?

GITA

There's no home here.

JACK

How's your mother and brother?

GITA

Maa is fine. These days, she just puts water on the fire till she wastes all the firewood. Sometimes, I want to tell her not to bother. We know there is no food. She shouldn't be wasting the trees, too.

JACK

(emotional)

And... And your brother?

GITA

I don't know. He won't play. Not with his friends. Not with me.

(MORE)

GITA (CONT'D)

He's always sneaking out. He's always angry. I can't get a hold of him.

JACK

Gita.

GITA

Yes?

JACK

When was the last time you ate?

GITA

Food?

JACK

Anything?

GITA

I do not know. Sometimes, when it gets really bad, I ask my friends if it's okay to eat them, and they flap their wings and help me for a little.

JACK

Your friends?

Gita shows him some butterflies. Jack pauses, staring at her blankly.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm worried, Gita. I do not have anything on me. But the next time I come...

GITA

Do you want me to paint something for you?

Their eyes meet, and Jack sees the pain in Gita's eyes. He hugs her close as tears fall off her cheeks.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, REFUGEE'S SIDE - NIGHT

Jack walks to the middle of the camp angrily as he climbs a tall platform carrying a loudspeaker.

JACK

People of Hindustan!

All the workers stop working and turn to him.

JACK (CONT'D)

I am Jack Merriweather, and I know that many of you may not even know me. That's alright. But I'm a friend. I am here to help you.

The General and his men run to the place.

GARRISON OFFICER

Should we stop him?

GENERAL DONNER

No. Let him speak.

JACK

For too long have you suffered servitude silently. No more! Your oppressors thrive on your submission - throw off their yoke! Fight for the dignity long denied you!

He looks towards the General, who folds his arms.

JACK (CONT'D)

Who among you cries freedom? Who will break these chains binding you?

No one moves, heads bowed in resignation.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sunil? Will you not fight with me?

Sunil shakes his head.

SUNIL

I cannot risk more loss for false hopes...Forgive me.

The General claps slowly, mocking.

GENERAL

A rousing speech! But these cowards came begging our scraps. They choose submission - makes governing simple!

Jack pleads urgently.

JACK

You drive them to starvation and death! End this barbarism, I implore you!

The General scoffs.

GENERAL

You've overstepped for the last time. Return to your hovel before I end your sniveling for good.

He departs grinning. Jack watches the broken refugees and sighs.

INT. ENGLISH COURT - NIGHT

Lytton glowers amidst the emptied hall as servants clear platters.

LYTTON

Throw those scraps away!

He spots Digby and scoffs derisively.

LYTTON (CONT'D)

Let me guess - self-righteous indignation kept you from enjoying the feast?

DIGBY

More that watching excess wasted daily while people starve numbs the spirit.

Lytton bristles angrily.

LYTTON

Ever outraged over phantom slights! Know that I vouched against your joining court due to such insolence.

DIGBY

I serve my conscience above glory. Can you say the same?

Lytton hurls a crystal glass furiously.

LYTTON

You scorn the hand that feeds you! I have given my life to crown and country! How dare you impugn my integrity!

DIGBY

Because deep down the truth convicts your soul.

(MORE)

DIGBY (CONT'D)

I retreat not from that truth,
however painful. Good evening, my
lord.

Digby exits calmly, leaving Lytton fuming.

EXT. DIGBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Digby starts packing his bags.

ROBIN

What are you doing, sire?

DIGBY

I'm simply tired of it all. I'm not
going to stay here and take it.

ROBIN

Where are you going to go?

DIGBY

Where I should have gone in the
first place.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, REFUGEE'S SIDE - NIGHT

Gita is lying down outside their small hut as Jack walks in
and sits by a corner.

GITA

Is everything alright?

JACK

Yes. I just need to clear my mind,
I think?

He brings out his writing materials.

GITA

What are you writing? Your
newspaper article?

JACK

(smiles)

Yeah. I'll show you if you can read
them.

GITA

Why are you writing them?

JACK
(sighs)
Because I'm angry. Aren't you?

GITA
Why are you angry?

JACK
Because of the way they are
treating you... your family and
everyone here. I want to do
something. I need to do something.

Gita rushes to a corner and looks for something.

JACK (CONT'D)
What is it?

Gita ignores him and keeps searching.

JACK (CONT'D)
What...?

She brings out a flowery drawing of a smiling face.

JACK (CONT'D)
(smiles)
How can you be so calm through all
this?

GITA
I just choose to believe that
everything will be alright.

Then, she lies down on her arms.

JACK
Yes. Everything will be alright.

She closes her eyes and falls asleep.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP - DAY

Jack wakes up and sees Ramesh standing over him with a stick,
his hands shaking.

JACK
Uh! Well, hello...

Then, Ramesh pokes him with the stick.

RAMESH
Go away. We do not want you here.

Jack groans as the mother rushes out and stops him.

LAKSHMI
Ramesh. Stop.

RAMESH
Tell him to go away.

Lakshmi gets on her feet.

LAKSHMI
Please forgive him. He's just a kid.

JACK
It's alright. It's fine.

RAMESH
Do not beg them. They're evil. They're bad people.

JACK
But I'm your friend, Ramesh. I travelled with you, remember?

RAMESH
That means nothing.

LAKSHMI
(to Ramesh)
Stop talking. Please pardon him. He doesn't know what he's talking about.

JACK
It's alright. I'm not angry. I understand.

RAMESH
One day, I'll lead an army and drive the likes of you out of our land.

JACK
I have no doubt you will.

He bends down to meet his height.

JACK (CONT'D)
Always keep your head high, Ramesh. No matter what. That way, no one can destroy your spirit.

RAMESH

I know that.

He heads inside angrily.

LAKSHMI

Ramesh! Ramesh!

(to Jack)

Thank you. Thank you so much.

He looks around.

JACK

Where's Gita?

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, LAUNDRY - DAY

We see kids launching dresses on the laundry platforms, scrubbing them hard.

Behind them, Lakshmi leads Jack around.

LAKSHMI

They came for them days ago. Said everyone has to be useful. The kids have to learn responsibilities.

JACK

No kid anywhere should have to go through this.

LAKSHMI

Can you please talk to them? I can do it if they want, but I do not want them using my Gita like that.

JACK

It's alright. I'll see what I can do.

CUT TO:

Henry storms over as Gita scrubs clothes feverishly. He lashes her with his whip.

HENRY

Faster, wretch!

Jack grabs his arm, fuming.

JACK

How dare you strike a child!

Henry rips away haughtily.

HENRY

And who might you be to question my methods?

JACK

I'm Jack Merriweather. I won't stand by while you abuse a starving girl half to death!

Henry scoffs derisively.

HENRY

I'm charged with instilling a proper work ethic in these lazy heathens. Sparing rod and all...

He sneers sanctimoniously. Jack trembles with outrage.

JACK

You hide brutality behind scripture! She's struggling to even stand, much less serve your ends. This is wickedness!

Henry brushes past him coldly.

HENRY

If you won't assist in disciplining them into good Christians, get out of my sight.

He continues his cruel lashes as Jack leaves, disgusted but determined.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, JACK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jack is writing in his book. He look back at the wall, thinking. After a long thought, he stands up and walks towards the wall.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

Jack is sitting in a corner, writing. He pauses for a second, thinking.

AJAY

Hello there.

Jack looks behind him and sees Ajay walking towards him.

AJAY (CONT'D)

You cannot just sit there. If the guards see you, they will whip you with a lash. I do not think that is something you and I want to see.

JACK

They made you a guard?

Ajay is shocked and looks at him carefully.

AJAY

Well, they needed someone the people respect to put them in check. I am more of a glorified slave, really.

JACK

That is a cruel thing to do.

Ajay sits beside him.

AJAY

It is a bit better than the life the others live, though.

JACK

You are an officer now? Why don't you just file a complaint?

AJAY

Ah! You must be joking. I have two elderly parents at home. If anyone ever catches me talking to you...

JACK

Okay. Okay, I understand. But there's still one thing you can help me do.

AJAY

Is it dangerous?

JACK

No. I promise.

Ajay sighs.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - DAY

Jack walks solemnly through the impoverished Indian section, taking in the squalor and oppression with growing unease.

He passes workshop after cramped workshop where EMACIATED MEN, women, and even children work endless hours doing backbreaking manual labor. ANY RESISTANCE is met with swift, merciless beatings from the British officers overseeing them.

Inside one workshop, Jack sees a WOMAN COLLAPSE from exhaustion. An irritated OFFICER kicks her limp body.

OFFICER

Get this filthy heathen out of the way! The rest of you - no slowing down!

The Indians silently comply, their exhaustion and misery visible on their gaunt faces. Jack exchanges distressed glances with Sunil across the room.

In another workshop, a burly red-faced BRIT whips a YOUNG BOY savagely across his bare back for accidentally spilling some grain. The boy screams, unable to stifle his agony.

BRIT

Clumsy whelp! That food is more precious than you!

Jack clenches his jaw, face draining of color seeing such wanton cruelty. He forces himself to keep walking.

INTERCUT WITH:

Ajay in guard attire subtly inspecting the other workshops, maintaining calm decorum. Inside, conditions prove equally harsh on these enslaved people.

Women claw apart piles of old rags, exposure and malnutrition making them look decades older than their age. Behind them a CART overflows with BASKETS OF BLOOD-SOAKED LINENS.

In the dim barracks, a row of MEN lie weltering on bare dirt in contorted positions, clearly sick and dying. A lone medical orderly glances at them blankly, making no effort to help.

BACK TO JACK:

Reaching the end of the workshops, Jack spots Ajay giving a subtle nod. They covertly reconvene behind a building. Jack is dazed, grasping for words.

AJAY

I wish I could say the other areas are better...

Jack just shakes his head bitterly.

JACK

This is a bloody death camp. We have
to expose this nightmare.

A silent agreement passes between them.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, GITA'S CAMP - NIGHT

Jack sits by flickering lamplight, writing feverishly by a crumbling wall, finding solace in his words. Just then Gita appears, a faint smile on her drawn face.

GITA

More writing, Jack?

Seeing her lifts Jack's spirits slightly.

JACK

Yes - your story, Gita. The story
that needs telling.

Jack embraces her frail shoulders as she sits beside him. He angrily recalls the camp abuse she endured.

JACK (CONT'D)

Those demons see you all as beneath
them...but your spirit outshines
them all! I'm writing of your
courage.

Gita meets his eyes, profoundly moved. She fingers her handmade bracelet depicting Lord Krishna then touches Jack's cheek gratefully.

GITA

You're my friend, Mr. Jack. Friends
see each other, right?

Jack clenches his teeth, emotion welling up.

JACK

I am...

As Gita rests her head on Jack's shoulder, he feels her
SHAKING UNCONTROLLABLY, skin BURNING UP.

JACK (CONT'D)

Gita! You're ill...

Gita attempts an unconvincing smile, putting on a brave face to the end.

GITA

Just...tired. I'll be alright.

Jack forces a smile too, stroking her hair, willing it to be true. He holds her frail body until her breathing slows into sleep. Kissing her forehead, a single tear falls down Jack's cheek.

JACK

Sleep well, dear one...

He keeps watch over her slight form.

INT. REFUGE CAMP - DAY

We hear a SCREAM as Jack jumps off the small bed he is lying on in the living room.

JACK

Bloody hell.

He looks around; Gita is nowhere to be found.

JACK (CONT'D)

Gita? Gita?

He stands up and walks further inside the camp as he sees Sunil rushing in.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, GITA'S CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Sunil rushes in panicked to find Lakshmi wailing mournfully over Gita's lifeless body. He collapses with inconsolable grief over his daughter.

Jack arrives to the heartrending scene. He crouches solemnly beside the grieving family, tears welling in his own eyes. Sunil looks up at him with profound despair.

SUNIL

(in Hindi)

My little girl...my sweet Gita...

Lakshmi gently closes Gita's eyes. Sunil lifts up her frail body, clutching it close as he carries her outside.

EXT. REFUGEE CAMP - CONTINUOUS

A grim procession forms behind Sunil, who walks slowly carrying Gita. The refugees shuffle behind with heads bowed as Lakshmi leans heavily on Jack for support.

Sunil lays Gita's body gently on the ground then falls weeping over her. The refugees gather mournfully around the heartbreaking scene.

Jack faces the callous British officers nearby, pointing in anguished outrage at Sunil crying over Gita's broken body. He sees General arrive with his men.

GENERAL DONNER

What's this, reporter?

JACK

Ask this murderer what he's done!
His cruelty killed an innocent
girl!

Murmurs ripple through the people. Henry scoffs.

HENRY JACOBS

Lies! I disciplined the child as
duty requires - nothing more!

GENERAL DONNER

These wild accusations try my
patience...the girl clearly had
some underlying condition. Now
remove this contagion from my camp!

Jack trembles with fury.

JACK

You deny all blame, but the truth
remains - your greed destroys them,
one by one. Hear me - this land
will shed your bloodstained regime!

Henry cackles.

HENRY JACOBS

As if these sniveling rats have the
means or bravery to rise against
lionhearts who conquered their
nation! Paint yourself their
savior, but you're still an
Englishman - same as I!

Jack lifts Gita's frail body gently.

JACK

All the more damning that I ignored
their plight for so long. But no
more!

He carries her off grimly as the General turns away, unmoved.

GENERAL DONNER

Cleanse this site thoroughly. I
won't have pestilence take me too.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, REFUGEE'S SIDE - DAY

Jack walks solemnly through the camp, Gita's fragile body in his arms. The sea of refugees gathers silently behind him, the weight of her loss tangible.

He lays her down gently, tears streaming down his face. Sunil touches his shoulder in quiet solidarity.

SUNIL

You showed her more kindness than
her own father, Jack.

JACK

I promised she'd be safe...

Jack buries his face in his hands.

SUNIL

She was happy knowing the fact that
there is still good in this world.
You.

JACK

And she still...

SUNIL

-- That is my fault.

Jack shakes his head.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

You tried your best to show us a
path to liberation. But I was too
scared for my family. Look where we
are now...

Jack is quiet. Sunil nods to himself.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

Maybe it's time I start fighting
back. I do not care if it's with my
last breath. I can't let them get
away with this.

Jack raises his hand, quieting Sunil.

JACK

No. You need to think this through. These people... They're... They're dangerous. I was wrong. No amount of violence can take them down. They won't just sit down and let you take back what they got.

SUNIL

No thinking. No, Sir. Thinking was what got me into this mess in the first place. I won't let the fear win anymore. Not again.

JACK

Let me help you, then. It's not something you can do alone.

KAASHI

I will fight back with you, too.

KAASHI, a man on crutches walks out.

SUNIL

No. No. You do not have to do this. They killed my daughter, and I have the right to avenge her. You owe no such obligation.

KAASHI

I am not doing this for you, Sunil. I have been silent for long. I am a Gujarati and I am about to show them what I am made of.

Ankur walks into the front.

ANKUR

I am in, too.

JACK

No. No kids.

ANKUR

Gita was our friend. They took her from us.

KAASHI

The Englishman is right. We can't involve the kids in this. But the kid is also right. Gita was the only one who had hope in her eyes, and they took that from us.

They all talk inaudibly, agreeing to fight.

JACK

We have only one advantage now. And that is the fact that they won't be expecting us. For once they know we are upon them, the battle is lost. That is why we must win quickly and drive them out before anything happens. Do we understand?

They all nod.

JACK (CONT'D)

To victory.

They all cheer.

ALL

(in unison)

To victory.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, FACTORY - DAY

A shot of Jack spreading a map on the table. We see all the Indians gathered around, listening to the plan.

JACK

One thing we have going for us is that they have given us the day off to mourn Gita's death because of my complaint. It also means we have only one day to plan and execute it.

KAASHI

We have to make it count, then.

JACK

This is the map of this entire place. I have drafted it in my free time. This...

He points to parts of the map.

JACK (CONT'D)

This is the factory. Where we are now, this is where you live - Resident areas. And these are the parts where the English officers among us stay.

SUNIL

What are we waiting for, then?
Let's go get them.

JACK

No. They have better weapons and
better resources than we do. We
have to think of something else.

AJAY

I have an idea.

Then, Ajay walks forward.

AJAY (CONT'D)

Mr Merriweather may have walked
this entire place, making the map,
but there are some places that only
a guard will know.

JACK

Like where?

AJAY

The military has its own weapon
station outside, but the men here
have one, too, in case of an
emergency. I say we take the
weapons first.

JACK

How?

Ajay smiles.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, SECRET ARSENAL - NIGHT

Ajay and Jack walk towards the arsenal as two guards walk out
to stop them.

GUARD #1

What are you two doing?

AJAY

Oh! I take it you haven't heard.

GUARD #1

Heard what?

AJAY

The General has called a party.
Said people from beyond the border
can come too.

GUARD #2
They are inviting us to a party?

GUARD #1
Quick. I'll get my jacket.

He runs in and gets his jacket happily.

GUARD #2
I'll see you there.

JACK
Yes. You will.

They walk away. The Guards quickly lock the door and leave.

CUT TO:

Sunil and the others come out of hiding. With a plier, he cuts off the lock – THE INDIANS CHEER.

SUNIL
Let the plan begin.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, JACOBS RESIDENCE – NIGHT

Henry Jacobs is woken up by a smell. He gets up suspiciously.

HENRY JACOBS
What is going on?

He moves out towards his window and sees smoke.

HENRY JACOBS (CONT'D)
What the...?

He looks out into the forest and sees the whole cotton farm ablaze.

HENRY JACOBS (CONT'D)
(horrified)
Oh! No.

He rushes out of his room.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP – NIGHT

Henry rushes out and sees that some of the guards are lined up at the entrance.

HENRY JACOBS

What are you doing here? Go get some water and stop the spread of the fire.

GUARD #3

We can't do that.

HENRY JACOBS

Why not?

GUARD #3

We have to defend the base, Sir.

HENRY JACOBS

From what?

GUARD #3

From that.

He points forward as he sees the Indians rushing forward with fury, sweat and screams.

HENRY JACOBS

Goodness. Gracious.

The Guards hold their stand as they clash with the Indians. The fight ensues.

SUNIL

Fight. Take back your lands.

Henry watches in horror as the Indians take down the guards.

HENRY JACOBS

Hell no. I'm not staying here.

He runs away.

HENRY'S POV. He runs down the road as the Indians shoot and fight with more advanced weapons. He watches his army men scream and die. Soon, he clashes with Jack. He falls back and takes a breath of relief.

HENRY JACOBS (CONT'D)

Reporter? Oh! Thank God.

JACK

What's the issue, Henry?

HENRY JACOBS

This is crazy. These Indians do not know their place anymore. We need to escape.

SUNIL (O.S.)
He's not going anywhere.

He turns and sees Sunil standing behind him, looking extremely pissed off.

HENRY JACOBS
Let's not make any irrational decisions. Let's be civil. Be cal...

Sunil swiftly thrusts a blade into his chest. He groans.

SUNIL
That one is for Gita.

He removes the blade and thrusts it again.

SUNIL (CONT'D)
Her smile will never surface again.
(stabs)
Her drawings.
(stabs)
Her hopes.
(stabs)
And the hope that your kind will never step on our land ever again.

Henry laughs, and coughs heavily, spitting blood.

He rises, and Sunil advances, ready to end it.

HENRY JACOBS
Wait... I am sorry. I know we haven't fought fair.

Sunil hesitates for a second. It's enough for Henry to push him away.

SUNIL
Stop!

Henry, with his last ounce of strength, staggers toward the nearby church. Desperate and dying, he reaches for the bell's rope, yanking it forcefully.

The colossal bell CLANGS AND ECHOES, its haunting sound carrying across the battlefield and toward the General's position.

JACK
(horrified)
No!

HENRY JACOBS

So why should we start playing fair
now?

He chuckles before succumbing to his fatal wounds.

SUNIL

What happened?

JACK

He just signed our death warrant.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP - NIGHT

The lifeless bodies of guards sprawl across the camp, and the relentless tolling of the bells reverberates in the air. The Indians, alerted by the sound, gather at the entrance.

Ajay, Jack, and Sunil rush to the front.

AJAY

What happened? I thought they
weren't supposed to be notified.

JACK

Henry Jacobs pulled the bell at the
last minute. Now, everyone knows we
are coming.

SUNIL

It doesn't matter. We can take
them.

AJAY

You do not understand. Their
weapons are a million times better
than yours. They have bigger guns.
Better fighters. You certainly
can't win this.

JACK

I think it will be best to retreat.

SUNIL

No. We are not retreating.

JACK

You need to understand.

SUNIL

We understand. We know what's at
stake here, Jack.

JACK
Then why...?

SUNIL
Because we have tasted freedom and
will not succumb to slavery again.

JACK
Don't do this.

SUNIL
It's already done, my friend. You
should move back. I do not think
you will do well on the
battlefield.

GENERAL DONNER (O.C.)
(over speaker)
This is General Donner speaking.

JACK
I should stay with you.

SUNIL
No. We need you to survive. We will
need someone to write our story if
it doesn't go well, won't we?

Sunil and Jack stare at each other.

SUNIL (CONT'D)
We will need someone to tell Gita's
story.

He smiles, sadly. Jack can only nod in response. They shake
hands.

SUNIL (CONT'D)
Till next time, Mr. Merriweather.

Jack smirks.

JACK
It has been an honor.

GENERAL DONNER (O.C.)
(over speaker)
This is your last warning. Stand
down.

SUNIL
The honor is all mine.

Jack nods and walks to the side with Ajay.

AJAY

Are we really just going to watch
this massacre?

Jack can't give a response.

GENERAL DONNER (O.C.)

Well then. Have it your way.

Sunil turns to his people.

SUNIL

Men of Hindustan, look around!
Behind this wall, our enemies
gather, hoping to crush our spirit.
They outnumber us, and the world
believes we will fall. But I say,
so what?

The man nods.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

We stand on the precipice of death
in this wretched slum. What better
way to meet our fate than by
fighting for our beliefs?

They all cheer.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

Let this be our final stand, for
our fathers, mothers, sisters,
brothers, sons, and daughters. When
the annals of history are written,
let them record our names among
those who fought with unwavering
courage.

They all turn to the gates, ready to fight.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

So, my brothers, my sisters, let us
embrace this moment, for today we
bring hell to the devils!

GENERAL DONNER (O.C.)

Breaching the wall in three...
two... one...

The Indian men are ready as silence reigns for a second.
Suddenly, the door opens inwards, and something shoots
straight at the Indian men.

Panic grips them as they realize it's a bomb, landing mercilessly in their midst.

SUNIL

Take cover...!

EXPLOSION. Jack and Ajay hit the ground, the shockwave reverberating as the Indian men fall, engulfed by the fiery wrath...

AJAY

What the...?

As smoke and debris clear, a TERRIFYING SIGHT emerges from the smoldering gate—General Donner at the lead of an IMPOSING PHALANX of heavily armed British soldiers.

Face smeared with ash and soot, the General cocks his rifle with cold pleasure. His booming voice echoes across the compound.

GENERAL DONNER

NO MERCY, MEN! ANNIHILATE THESE
VERMIN!

The soldiers unleash a relentless HAIL OF GUNFIRE into the crowd of fleeing refugees. The Indians scream and dive for cover, but many are SHREDDED by the bullets.

Pools of blood spread across the dirt as the heartless slaughter continues. The General uses his BOOT to crush the skull of a writhing injured man.

Seeing his people mercilessly massacred, a rage overtakes Sunil. Roaring vengeance, he snatches up an abandoned machete and charges straight for the General!

At the last second, the General WHIRLS, grabbing the blade and BOOTING Sunil squarely in the chest. We hear RIBS CRACK as Sunil helplessly flies backward...

JACK

No.

GENERAL DONNER

Let me guess; you're the leader of
this insurrection.

Sunil crawls, struggling to get his blade again. He kicks Sunil angrily as he groans.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

If you think that this ends with
your death, you're quite mistaken.
I'm never going to let you die now.

He picks Sunil up and butts him with his head till he starts
to bleed.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

I will make an example out of you.

He keeps on hitting him.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

I will make you wish for death,
boy. And I will make sure you won't
get it.

Sunil laughs.

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)

What's funny?

SUNIL

You think you can stop death when
it knocks on the door? Stop this.

With a swift movement, Sunil cuts him on the wrist as the
General moves back.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

Till we meet again, General.

Then he stabs himself in the heart.

JACK

(horrified)

No.

He runs from his place of hiding towards the battlefield. The
General stands over Sunil's dying body.

GENERAL DONNER

What a foolish man!

He spits on his body and walks away. Jack rushes towards him
and holds him in his hand.

JACK

No. No. No. No. No.

SUNIL

It's... It's alright.

SUNIL (CONT'D)

Gita... Find a nice spot. Get a flower.

JACK

Right... Yes, my friend.

Then, Sunil dies. Jack breaks down. He looks around and sees that the British men have subdued everyone.

BRITISH MAN ON SPEAKER (O.C.)

If you do not want to die like the rest, drop your weapons and face your punishment.

And it's over as swiftly as it began. They all start dropping their weapons. Jack stands up angrily and starts running towards the residential areas.

A brutal MONTAGE unfolds as Jack navigates the battlefield, weaving through corpses, scorched landscapes, and, ultimately, the smoldering remnants of residential areas.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, GITA'S CAMP - NIGHT

Jack runs inside to see Lakshmi and Ramesh sitting by Gita's dead body.

JACK

Is that.. her?

LAKSHMI

Where's Sunil?

RAMESH

Where's my father?

JACK

Lakshmi. I'm so sorry.

She keeps a strong face.

LAKSHMI

How did he die?

JACK

Fighting.

LAKSHMI

(nods)
Thank you.

RAMESH

(furious)

Thank you? His people killed my father. And he couldn't even help him.

JACK

I'm sorry, but I cannot do this right now. I need to.... give Gita a burial.

Ramesh stands up, defensive.

RAMESH

No. I'm not letting you take my sister.

JACK

Ramesh. It's your father's last wish.

RAMESH

Oh!

He moves away.

LAKSHMI

Take good care of her?

JACK

I will.

Then, he walks forward and carries her body.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'll be back, Lakshmi.

Lakshmi nods. Jack carries her body gently as he rushes out. Lakshmi watches him go. She looks at the battlefield in the distance.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, COTTON FARM - NIGHT

A portion of the farm is engulfed in flames as Jack dashes through the forest, clutching Gita's lifeless body in his arms.

LAKSHMI (V.O.)

Not every story has a happy ending.
Life isn't always a fairy tale.

(MORE)

LAKSHMI (V.O.) (CONT'D)

There comes a time when you must recognize the conclusion, accept that it's alright not to fight any longer.

CUT TO:

Jack stumbles upon a secluded spot. He falls to his knees, hands trembling, and begins to dig.

LAKSHMI (V.O.)

I believe this is where it must all come to an end. We've exhausted every avenue, tried every conceivable path.

He sweats profusely as he digs the grave.

LAKSHMI (V.O.)

This is as far as our story goes.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, GITA'S CAMP - NIGHT

Lakshmi is sitting before Ramesh as she talks.

RAMESH

Are you okay, maa?

LAKSHMI

I am. Listen to me, Ramesh. Mr Merriweather will come back, and he will come for you.

RAMESH

I do not want to go with him.

LAKSHMI

You can't stay here, my love. The world here is cruel and bitter; I do not want any of that in your heart.

RAMESH

(sobs)

What are you saying, mother?

LAKSHMI

I have something I need to do. Will you go to the room for me?

RAMESH

What is it?

LAKSHMI

Just know one thing, my son. Your father. Your mother. Your sister. We all fought for what's best for you. If I stay here, I'll be a burden, and I'll only drag you behind. But with Mr. Merriweather, I think you can have a good future.

RAMESH

Mother.

LAKSHMI

I love you, son.

RAMESH

I love you, mother.

With that, she pushes him inside a room and locks it from outside. Ramesh bangs the door from inside.

RAMESH (V.O.)

Maa? Maa!

Lakshmi, with a straight face, walks into the makeshift kitchen as the BANGING continues.

RAMESH (V.O.)

Maa! Maa!

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, COTTON FARM - MORNING

Dawn's golden rays wash over Jack as he lays the last flower on Gita's humble grave.

JACK

Nice, isn't it?

There's silence for a while. He stares at the handmade bracelet on his wrist.

JACK (CONT'D)

I think you'll like it. Not that you'll like seeing graves or anything.

He has decorated the grave with beautiful flowers and petals.

JACK (CONT'D)

You changed me in ways I never expected, just by being yourself.
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

I suppose there's still much I need
to learn, isn't there?

Overcome with memories, Jack's stoic facade crumbles. His
shoulders shake with sobs.

JACK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for being a bloody idiot
from the start.

He takes a deep breath.

JACK (CONT'D)

Sir Digby was right. We are the
villains after all.

Jack rises, and he walks away, leaving behind a heartache
that lingers in the morning air.

INT. REFUGE CAMP, GITA'S CAMP - DAY

Jack walks in, breathing heavily as he walks in.

JACK

Lakshmi. Ramesh.

No answer.

JACK (CONT'D)

Where are you?

Still no answer. He looks around. There's banging on the
door. Jack opens it to find Ramesh inside.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ramesh.

He tries to move closer, but Ramesh moves back.

RAMESH

What am I supposed to do?

JACK

Where's your mother?

RAMESH

(teary-eyed)

She said to go with you. She said
to have a life. But what life can I
have? What can I do now?

Jack looks around and sees something in the kitchen. He walks
there, slowly. He is horrified.

JACK

No...

We see that Lakshmi is dead on the floor.

RAMESH

What am I supposed to do now?

Jack hugs him as he cries.

JACK

It's going to be okay. It's all going to be okay.

They hold each other tightly.

EXT. REFUGE CAMP, BURIAL SITE - DAY

The men throw down the Indians into holes without mercy.

Jack holds Ramesh's hand, turning to leave the burial site. Suddenly the General storms over furiously with armed guards.

GENERAL DONNER

And just where do you think you're going?!

Jack shields Ramesh, meeting the General's livid glare.

JACK

We're leaving this wretched place!

The General grabs Jack's shirt, teeth bared inches from his face.

GENERAL DONNER

The only place you're going is a SHALLOW GRAVE!

His men raise their rifles at Jack. Ramesh whimpers terrified.

JACK

What are you doing?

GENERAL DONNER

This is for taking part in a mutiny against the crown. This is for betraying the commanding officer.

JACK

I didn't--

GENERAL DONNER (CONT'D)
 -- And the brat stays here!
 (to his men)
 Take aim...FIRE ON MY COMMAND!

Jack braces himself, clinging to Ramesh.

RAMESH
 What's happening?

JACK
 Shh... It's okay. It's alright.
 Once you hear the shots, just run
 and don't look back.

RAMESH
 No...

JACK
 It's your only chance.

Jack turns to the General.

JACK (CONT'D)
 Your brutality ends today!

General laughs.

GENERAL DONNER
 I'll miss your bloody audacity.

DIGBY (O.C.)
 Unhand them this INSTANT!

Just then Digby gallops up, leaping down from his horse.

JACK
 Digby! Am I glad to see you...

GENERAL DONNER
 Who is this? Who are you?

Digby gets down from the horse.

DIGBY
 Here. If you are so curious.

He shows him his identification.

GENERAL DONNER
 (shocked)
 Sir.

DIGBY

I hear it is your dream to be in the Queen's presence one day. Is this how you treat the people who sit in the same room with the Queen?

GENERAL DONNER

(embarrassed)

Why are you here... Sir?

DIGBY

My subordinate had been here for a while. I decided to check on him. See if he is still alive.

GENERAL DONNER

We will never touch...

DIGBY

Like the many men in the furnace over there?

GENERAL DONNER

They disrupted the peace and order...

DIGBY

Tell me something, General Donner, weren't you the General demoted for his... lack of discretion? What good will a bad news do to you now?

The General reluctantly releases Jack, glancing warily at Digby.

DIGBY (CONT'D)

I suggest you slither away quietly ...for your own good.

The General weighs his options then gestures his men to stand down.

GENERAL DONNER

Consider this your lucky day.

He storms off bitterly as Jack embraces Digby in relief.

JACK

Thank you, Boss.

DIGBY

I never thought I'd see you actually defend an Indian kid.

JACK
I never thought I'd see you here at
all.

INT. JACK'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

We see Jack pour a cup of tea for Ramesh. He nods and takes
it.

DIGBY
(disturbed)
You're telling me now that he's the
sole survivor?

JACK
Gita was... she died of stress. Her
father died in the war, and her
mother... Well...

DIGBY
That must have been hard on you
both.

JACK
Is there even any hope for these
people? No one here cares for them.
I do not suppose anyone ever will.

DIGBY
In my meeting with Queen. I learnt
something important.

JACK
What?

DIGBY
They are building a new train for
the people. I suppose that could be
the start of the change.

JACK
A railroad.

DIGBY
Yes. It could help bridge the gap a
little.

JACK
But it won't be enough.

DIGBY
Yes. That's why we have to do the
rest.

JACK

We?

DIGBY

I suppose you can recall all the experiences you had over here?

JACK

I do not think I will ever forget them.

DIGBY

Then, we write. That's the only war we can fight. We write and tell their stories. That's the way we honor them.

He moves towards Ramesh and hands him a sandwich. Ramesh takes it mysteriously and eats it hungrily.

JACK

See how he is eating it?

DIGBY

I do not think he's ever eaten a sandwich before.

JACK

Imagine how many sandwiches a British boy eats in a day.

Digby shakes his head. Jack sighs.

JACK (CONT'D)

I must thank you for convincing me to embark on this odyssey in the first place. I was admittedly quite ignorant about the plight of these people.

DIGBY

As are most Englishmen, I'm afraid. But that narrow worldview leads to the oppression we witnessed.

He swirls his tea pensively.

DIGBY (CONT'D)

I saw hints of myself as a young man in you, Jack. Cocksure. Judgmental. I took pains to broaden your perspectives - hoped you'd gain empathy for people unlike yourself.

(MORE)

DIGBY (CONT'D)

And perhaps...atone indirectly for
youthful hubris I now regret.

Jack blinks surprised. Digby smiles wanly and looks at Ramesh.

DIGBY (CONT'D)

We can only hope the world sees
them through our lenses.

Jack nods, looking at Ramesh.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Train HONKS.

Digby, Jack and Ramesh walk into the train.

AJAY (O.S.)

Wait. Wait. Excuse me.

Jack turns back to see Ajay running towards them.

JACK

Ajay?

AJAY

(grinning)

Mr. Merriweather.

JACK

What are you doing here?

AJAY

Well, I was let go. That's what.

Jack is shocked. Train HONKS, AGAIN.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Ajay pours some tea for Ramesh as he drinks it.

DIGBY

So they just let you go?

AJAY

Bit strange, isn't it?

JACK

For no reason?

AJAY

Well, I fed a bunch of prisoners against the General's order, so there is that. He cannot kill anymore Indians in there, apparantly.

JACK

(smiles)

You are a good man, Ajay.

AJAY

And so are you, Mr Merriweather.

DIGBY

So, what do you plan to do now?

AJAY

I haven't decided. I was thinking I might start a movement or something.

DIGBY

Movement?

AJAY

You know, fight for the people's rights and all that.

DIGBY

Well, good luck with that. They didn't want me in court. I do not think they will want a man like you.

AJAY

It wouldn't hurt to try, would it?

JACK

Not one bit.

Ajay smiles. Ramesh watches them all.

INT. DIGBY'S HOME - DAY

Digby and Jack walk into the house with Ramesh and see Temple standing there.

Temple embraces Digby eagerly.

TEMPLE

Welcome home! I bring glad tidings.

He spots Ramesh with mild disdain.

TEMPLE (CONT'D)

A souvenir from abroad? No matter...Did you hear of the new railway under construction?

Digby's eyes narrow warily.

DIGBY

I did interview the Queen on trains, yes. How does this relate?

TEMPLE

It shall greatly ease cotton transport from the colonies! A boon for processing and British industry alike.

Comprehension dawns on Digby. His smile evaporates.

DIGBY

And how precisely does this serve the oppressed and starving natives?

Temple scoffs.

TEMPLE

Let the wretches be thankful they glimpse progress! Now I'll leave you to...

He briskly departs. Jack slams the wall angrily.

JACK

Can you imagine?

DIGBY

I can't... I do not even want to.

JACK

We need to start writing.

DIGBY

Yes, we do.

INT. DIGBY'S HOME - DAY

A montage of Jack and Digby writing in the room.

JACK (V.O.)
And so we started. Not a story. Not
an article. But I am an entire
book.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: ENGLAND.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

We see people walking around on the street holding books and
discussing.

JACK (V.O.)
Soon, the book hit the streets, and
it sprung conversations and lots of
interest.

INT. PARLIAMENT - DAY

We see people talking in the parliament, advocating
inaudibly.

JACK (V.O.)
With the help of the book, the
Famine Committee was created to
ensure something like this never
happens again.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: INDIA.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

People marching down the street, advocating passionately.

JACK (V.O.)
The tragedies of the famine led to
the creation of the Nationalist
movement in India.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S APARTMENT - DAY

Jack sits on his chair and writing as he thinks.

JACK (V.O.)

But to me, the deed is done. So many precious lives lost. The Perumals and so many victims of British ignorance. Gita was one of a kind. But she's just one girl in the millions that died in this whole shenanigan. I have to make sure something like this never happens again.

Then, he hears a knock on his door. He stands up and opens the door, and we see Digby.

DIGBY

Are you ready?

JACK

Fully packed.

DIGBY

Well. Let's go then. Ireland awaits.

Jack smiles and takes his bag.

JACK (V.O.)

We've heard news of a small potato famine happening in Ireland. We are not going to sit idly by. We have to cover it. Something like this will never happen again. Not while we live.

FADE TO BLACK.

SUPER: INDIA, 70 YEARS LATER.

EXT. RED FORT, DELHI - AUGUST 15, 1947

A sea of Indian FACES look on expectantly at the fort's ramparts. Many wave flags with the spinning wheel emblem of the independence movement.

We spot RAMESH PERUMAL in the throng, wearing Gita's faded bracelet, his weathered face alight with pride.

Then PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, India's first Prime Minister, steps up to the microphones.

NEHRU

"At the stroke of midnight hour,
when the world sleeps, India will
awake to life and freedom..."

The crowd ERUPTS in deafening CHEERS.

NEHRU (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

"...A moment comes but rarely in
history, when we step out from the
old to the new, when an age ends,
and when the soul of a nation finds
utterance."

Ramesh pumps his fist, overcome with emotion. We see his lips
form his dear sister's name - "Gita". As Nehru concludes his
iconic speech, there is barely a dry eye among the gathering.

FADE OUT.