

A THOUSAND SUNRISES

by

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Note: Dialogue that appears in [square brackets] is in subtitled Russian.

EXT. SNOWY FIELD - DAY

POOF! CLOSE ON DRESDEN, his face hitting the snow-covered ground, beaten and bloodied.

VOICE (O.S.)

Get up, you worthless commie!

WIDER, we see LOWE, an American soldier, pointing a Beretta pistol at Dresden, who is struggling to pull himself up from the ground. Dresden is Red Army.

LOWE

Come on, Ivan, move it.

TITLE: SIBERIA, 1980

Weakly, Dresden staggers onto one knee, wiping the blood from the side of his mouth. We see he's got handcuffs on.

Lowe looks out across the vast expanse of snow. From his POV, we see an arctic wasteland, stretching as far out as the eye can see, the sky dark and overcast, the only sound that of the HOWLING WIND.

Two men, alone in a white sea of frozen tundra.

LOWE

Bad enough I got ordered to this godforsaken country, but now I gotta haul your sorry commie ass back to base across this frozen shithole.

He scans the dark clouds above, covering his eyes from the blowing snow.

LOWE

Where's that damned pickup?

DRESDEN

(in Russian, not subtitled)

If you think your friends are--

POW! Lowe KICKS DRESDEN HARD in the chest. Dresden collapses, clutching chest, coughing.

LOWE

Shut the hell up, Ivan. You don't speak unless spoken to.

Dresden rolls onto his back, exhausted, the snow sticking to the blood on his face. He gazes up at the overcast sky, his mind remembering...

INT. SOVIET ARMY BASE - FLASHBACK

We're in a tight, cramped space. Dresden and COMMANDER VOLCHENKOV are huddled over a table with a map laid out over it. There's some HEAVY SHELLING going on outside, rocking the small confined space, dust and rocks trickling down from the ceiling.

DRESDEN

[The Afghans are closing in quickly. We won't be able to withstand this barrage much longer.]

VOLCHENKOV

[This is why we must act now. Look here.]

He points at the map.

VOLCHENKOV

[This remote spot in Novosibirsk. Siberia. Sixty-seven degrees latitude. Buried there is the code to launch the Spetsnaz missiles beneath the mountains, that will surely destroy the Afghan command post nearby.]

Dresden fixes him with a steady gaze.

DRESDEN

[But those missiles are nuclear. They will probably annihilate the entire city of Kabul. Maybe outlying regions as well.]

VOLCHENKOV

[It's a risk we must take.]

DRESDEN

[But sir--]

VOLCHENKOV

[Dresden, we will not survive here if we don't act now.]

DRESDEN

[But... there must be some other way.]

Another shell ROCKS the compound. The men struggle to maintain balance.

VOLCHENKOV

[There is no other way.]

He locks eyes with Dresden, a desperate plea.

VOLCHENKOV  
[You would fight for Mother  
Russia, would you not?]

DRESDEN  
[I would die for her.]

VOLCHENKOV  
[Then do this. Go to Siberia.  
Find the missiles.]

He grips his shoulders.

VOLCHENKOV  
[You are our last hope.]

Off Dresden, torn, we CUT BACK TO:

EXT. SIBERIA

Dresden snaps out of his thoughts as Lowe grabs his collar.

LOWE  
Come on, we gotta keep moving.

He looks at the sky, worried.

LOWE  
Gonna be dark soon.

Dresden climbs to his feet, his boots sinking into the snow, his handcuffed hands showing signs of frostbite.

A WIDE AERIAL SHOT - as we see our two small figures trudging over an unforgiving arctic terrain.

CLOSE on the pair. They walk through the snow, the wind howling around them, blowing snow in their faces, Lowe still holding Dresden at gunpoint.

Then, in a heavy Russian accent:

DRESDEN  
Your friends are not coming.

Lowe stops in his tracks.

LOWE  
What'd you say?

DRESDEN  
I said your friends are not  
coming.

LOWE  
Well I'll be damned. Ivan speaks  
English.

DRESDEN  
My name is Dresden.

LOWE  
I don't give a rats ass what  
your name is. Keep moving.

They keep walking.

LOWE  
Visibility's a little limited  
here, might get delayed a bit,  
but they'll make it.

DRESDEN  
Your faith is misguided.

LOWE  
And I thought I told you to shut  
up.

DRESDEN  
No helicopter can make it  
through this wind--

Lowe suddenly GRABS Dresden, jams the Beretta up his chin.

LOWE  
You're testing my patience.

DRESDEN  
What are you going to do, kill  
me? I'm the only one who can  
lead you to the missiles.

They stand there, face to face. Tense.

DRESDEN  
Go on. Kill me. I beg you.

Lowe narrows his eyes. Can't read him. Is he serious?

Finally, Lowe relents, shoves him forward.

LOWE  
Move.

They resume their march, Dresden in the lead, Lowe behind  
him, Beretta pointed at Dresden's back.

CLOSE on Dresden, eyes squinted from the snow swirling around  
him...

INT. SOVIET BUNKER - FLASHBACK

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! ANGLE on Dresden, peering around the corner  
of a hallway, BLASTING rapid fire from a pair of Makarov  
pistols.

He ducks back behind the corner, as bullets ricochet inches from his face, chipping off plaster from the wall.

ANGLE ON Lowe and GREENWOOD (another American soldier) at the other end of the hallway, taking cover behind the corners, returning fire with MP-5 submachine guns.

LOWE

We got him pinned. There's a maintenance room just beyond that corridor, he's got nowhere to run.

GREENWOOD

So we'll wait till backup arrives.

LOWE

I'm going in.

GREENWOOD

Lowe, you crazy? He already killed two of our guys back there. Orders are to wait.

LOWE

If we wait any longer, he'll find another way out. He's our only chance at finding those missiles.

ON DRESDEN, blasting away with his pistols.

Suddenly, CLICK CLICK-- out of ammo.

He glances quickly over his shoulder, notes the open door to the maintenance room nearby. He bolts.

LOWE bolts after him. Greenwood calls out after him.

GREENWOOD

Christ, Lowe, what the hell--

LOWE

(running off)

Get to the others at the rendezvous point. I'll catch up!

Greenwood watches him go.

GREENWOOD

(under his breath)

Shit.

INT. MAINTENANCE ROOM

Lowe bursts into the room, MP-5 at eye level.

LOWE'S POV - Moving from left to right. Nothing but a maze of steaming pipes and vents.

He advances cautiously, MP-5 at the ready.

POW! He's suddenly slugged across the jaw by a metal pipe. Never saw it coming.

Falls hard to the floor. His MP-5 clatters a few feet away.

He shakes his head. Seeing stars. Woah, where'd that come from?

He starts to crawl toward his fallen machine gun, when suddenly--

THE METAL PIPE IS JAMMED AGAINST HIS THROAT -- choking him from behind.

WIDER - DRESDEN is tightening the pipe around Lowe's throat, trying to squeeze the life out of him.

Lowe PUSHES BACK, plowing Dresden into a stack of empty barrels. They both tumble to the ground.

Dresden loses his stranglehold. Lowe rams a hard elbow into Dresden's ribs.

Lowe scrambles to his feet, tries to make a sprint for his gun. But Dresden grabs his ankle, sending him sputtering to the floor again.

Lowe pries his other foot free, swings a hard boot across Dresden's face.

Seizing the upper hand, Lowe leaps up on top of Dresden, grabs him by the collar, lands of series of fists to his head.

He winds his fist back, ready for another blow, but notices that Dresden is already out cold. Drifting in and out of consciousness.

He drops him to the floor. Out of breath. Panting.

He looks at his bloody knuckles. Then at Dresden's battered face.

OFF Lowe's relieved look, we CUT BACK TO:

EXT. SIBERIA - FOREST - NIGHT

Dresden and Lowe are seated on the snowy ground, against a pair of trees, across from each other, a small bonfire between them, trying to keep warm. The flames provide the sole source of illumination in this dark forest.

Dresden's hands are still cuffed. His eyes hypnotized by the flames.

LOWE

So where'd you learn English?

Dresden doesn't take his eyes away from the flames.

DRESDEN

Berlin.

LOWE

Spent some time with the  
Germans, did you?

DRESDEN

I was a prisoner of the  
Americans.

LOWE

Americans? We haven't had  
prisoners there since the end of  
World War II.

DRESDEN

As I said, I was held captive by  
the Americans.

LOWE

That was over thirty years ago.  
You couldn't even have been born  
yet.

DRESDEN

It seems like a lifetime ago. I  
don't remember anymore.  
Drifting from one conflict to  
another. It all blends  
together. All that remains are  
the wounds. And the pain.

LOWE

Yeah, well, they couldn't send  
my sorry ass stateside fast  
enough. I'm sick of this shit.

DRESDEN

Do you have a family, corporal?

Lowe glares into the flames, his mind a thousand miles away.

LOWE

Wife, and kid. Michael. Little  
boy. Almost a year old. Barely  
got to hold him in the delivery  
room before they shipped me off  
to Afghanistan.

His eyes are getting watery, the flames reflected off them.

LOWE

Got a few letters from Cindy. He already took his first steps. Starting to mumble a few words. He's a fast learner, she said.

(chuckles)

She's teaching him how to swing a bat. He's already got a hard swing. Takes after his dad.

DRESDEN

I can vouch for that.

Lowe can't help but laugh at that. Wipes a tear running down his cheek.

Dresden smiles.

LOWE

How about you? You got family?

DRESDEN

I did. A long time ago. But I had to leave. When I returned... they were gone.

Lowe doesn't say anything. We get the sense he wants to, but he just stares at the fire.

DRESDEN

The life of a soldier is not an easy one, eh? We know this better than anyone. We must leave behind the things we love, to fight the wars of other men.

A silent acknowledgment passes between them.

DRESDEN

Our countries are at war, and we fight for our countries, but you and I are not at war with each other. We are simply victims of circumstance. In another life, we may have been comrades.

LOWE

Yeah, well... we live in a shitty world.

Silence. The only sound that of the CRACKLING fire.

Lowe pushes himself closer to the flames.

LOWE

Sun'll be up soon. Better get some shuteye before we gotta start moving again.

DRESDEN

I will watch the sunrise, if  
this is all right with you.

LOWE

There'll be other ones.

DRESDEN

When you've been around as long  
as I have, the years fade away.  
Time becomes meaningless. The  
only way to measure your life is  
by the sunrise. I have seen so  
many, I can no longer remember.  
But I would gladly trade a  
thousand sunrises for a glimpse  
of death.

A heavy silence.

Lowe studies this man, staring at the flames.

Dresden leans back against the tree.

DRESDEN

Goodnight, comrade.

Lowe slowly lays his head down, staring into the dying  
flames, his eyelids getting heavy...

EXT. SIBERIA - DAY

Dresden and Lowe continue their march through the blowing  
snow, Dresden in front, hands cuffed, Lowe behind him, one  
hand on the MP-5 slung at his side, but more at ease than  
yesterday.

The blowing snow suddenly starts to pick up, kicking up  
around them, getting more fierce.

A RUMBLE comes from overhead. The sound of ROTOR BLADES  
spinning.

They both look to the sky, eyes squinting from the flying  
snow.

From their POV, we can make out a GUNSHIP swooping in  
overhead, but the dense snow and poor visibility is making it  
hard to see it clearly.

LOWE

My team! They found the  
rendezvous point. Told you  
they'd make it.

He lets out a loud "WOOOOOOHHOOOOOO", waving at them.

LOWE  
 (shouting)  
 Down here, fellas!

As the copter nears, the blades start to clear out the blowing snow, revealing the insignia on the side of the black Mi-24 gunship-- the undeniable HAMMER AND SICKLE of the Soviets.

Lowe's face drops.

LOWE  
 Oh shit.

DRESDEN  
 Hurry, we must run!

LOWE  
 What? Why?

DRESDEN  
 They will kill us both. We must find shelter.

LOWE  
 But those are your guys.

DRESDEN  
 I have become expendable, like you. Come on.

Dresden starts to run.

RATATATATAT! A streak of MACHINE GUN FIRE kicks up the snow near their feet.

DRESDEN  
Hurry!

LOWE  
 Motherfuck--

Lowe slings up his MP-5, pulls the trigger, UNLEASHING AN AUTOMATIC VOLLEY OF SLUGS up at the gunship.

The gunship RETURNS FIRE -- a line of high caliber slugs RIPPING INTO THE SNOW AND UP INTO LOWE'S TORSO.

He lets out a GRUNT as he falls to one knee.

Dresden, several yards away, turns back, sees Lowe on one knee, crimson red blood staining the white snow around him.

He looks up, notices the gunship arming one of its S-24 rockets.

He bolts toward Lowe.

DRESDEN

NOOOOOO!!!

The gunship FIRES-- the rocket sailing with a piercing HISSSS.

Feebly, Lowe lifts his MP-5...then...

KABOOOOOOM!! The rocket HITS THE GROUND, sending Lowe and Dresden FLYING through the air -- Lowe catching the brunt of it.

Overhead, the Mi-24 makes a low pass, before veering off.

Dresden lifts his face from the snow, blood coming down the side of his head. He gets to his feet, trudges his way toward the crumpled, smoking body of Lowe.

He drops to his knees, feeling Lowe's scorched fatigues with his cuffed hands. Most of his clothes are charred black, half his face is burnt to a crisp, tendons and bone beneath exposed, most of his left arm blown off.

His eyes are glazed over, semi-conscious, barely alive.

Tears streak Dresden's grime-covered face.

He wipes some blood from the gash in his forehead with his fingers, then wipes his blood on Lowe's face, mingling their blood together.

DRESDEN

Sleep, comrade. I will see you soon.

HIGH AERIAL SHOT of our two figures, alone in the vast landscape of snow, DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SANTA MONICA PIER - MORNING

Early morning, just before dawn. The pier and the beach below are empty. Waters calm.

DRESDEN leans over the railing, wearing a long black coat, looking out into the ocean. His coat billows in the light breeze.

TITLE: SANTA MONICA, PRESENT DAY

It's quiet. Calm. Dresden appears at peace.

VOICE (O.S.)

What have you done to me?

Dresden glances over his shoulder, spots the FIGURE standing behind him, a BLACK HOOD pulled over his head, concealing his face underneath.

DRESDEN

I'm so glad you came, comrade.

BLACK HOOD

Why am I still alive?

We can't see his face, but we recognize the voice - LOWE.

DRESDEN

The why is hard to explain. I do not understand it myself, to be honest. I've simply come to accept it.

LOWE

My wife is an old woman. My son, Michael... he can barely recognize me anymore. On those days when I look in the mirror, I don't recognize myself. Everyone around me is getting older and dying, and I haven't aged a day. Neither have you.

Silence, as the sound of the WAVES lap up on the shore below.

DRESDEN

It was a war, maybe a century ago, maybe more, a war like all the other wars. I lay dying in a field that stank of death. Someone, a fellow soldier, an enemy, I can barely see... he touched his blood with mine. And that day, death escaped me, as it has every day since. I get hurt, injured, stricken with disease, cancer... the pain becomes unbearable. But still, death escapes me.

LOWE

You should have let me die.

DRESDEN

Do you remember the sunrise, that morning in Siberia, over thirty years ago? I do. And I remember the thousands more since then.

LOWE

I'd trade them all...

DRESDEN

...for a glimpse of death.

He smiles. Looks back at Lowe. Notices the hanging left sleeve of his coat where his left arm used to be.

DRESDEN

Come stand beside me, comrade.  
Let us watch the sunrise  
together.

Lowe steps up to the railing. Dresden gives him a glance, catches a glimpse of his face beneath the hood, half of it still charred and burned.

They look out into the horizon, the sun just beginning to rise beyond the ocean.

FADE OUT