

Base Camp Zombies

By

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FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAINS - MORNING

Moving high above the terrain. Like a drone. Or a bird. Following a trail through villages, swathes of forest. Across suspension bridges over water. The sky a stunning blue. Higher and higher, rising to...the top peaks of the world. Snow, rock, ice.

SUPER - THE HIMALAYAS NEPAL

SUPER - OCTOBER 2017

Finally to Everest Base Camp, with the mighty world number one in the background. Brightly coloured dome tents huddle near the edge of the Khumbu icefall which designates the climbing route to Everest.

Tiny figures move amongst the tents, perhaps a scientific or communications team. Or maybe a rare summit attempt outside the normal climbing season?

Suddenly, the very earth shakes, a mild tremor rippling under the glacier. The people stop, look about in fear. Another smaller tremor...

At the same time, a massive CRACK as tons of ice rumbles down the slopes nearby. Not far from where the trail to EBC comes in, a small opening in the ridge appears.

Glimpses of a vast space, a cave carved by nature eons ago. A huge mound of rubble rises from the cave floor.

A hellish stench lingers in the cave. More rubble around the opening seems to have been packed there. As if to seal something in...

INT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - ICE CAVE - MORNING

Just inside the opening is a withered wooden post, encased in ice. Tattered prayer flags adorn it. A pair of small bells are tied near the top, ancient and tarnished, carved with intricate symbols and language.

A final tremor - the post sways. A large piece of rock falls from the cave roof, hits the post. It shatters, sending the bells flying. They tinkle, before landing behind a boulder near the trail. Silence as nature holds her breath.

A movement from the top of the mound. Something alive, digging to the surface. Rocks tumble, forced out. A black beak appears, followed by the rest of a deformed bird.

It's a raven. The plumage is sparse, the few feathers remaining are covered in filth and old gore. The head is decayed, the tiny skull visible. One eye is a blind white...the other glows red.

With a shake of its stunted wings, the bird moves clear of the rubble. It stares up at the patch of blue the opening frames. The mouth opens. Maggots squirm out and a loud SCREECH issues forth...

It ECHOES through the cave, out of the opening and across the Khumbu. Back down the trail to the village of...

EXT. GORAK SHEP - MORNING

A handful of buildings made of stone and wood, with blue painted roofs - teahouses and lodging for the trekking and climbing industry. The village sits on the edge of a great open plain, the path to EBC winding north.

An old man, DAWA(102)sits in a chair outside his modest dwelling, dozing, rugged up from the cold. As the SCREECH rolls across the sky, he jolts awake.

Lifts his gaze to the great peaks visible - Pumori, Nuptse and Lhotse. And across the plain, the rising slopes of Kala Pattar, eighteen thousand feet above sea level.

DAWA

The day I have long feared is upon us. The Goddess Mother is displeased. They will rise again...

He reaches down to a battered leather trunk. Takes out a Nepali knife - the curved *kukri*. It's as old as him, maybe older. The hilt made of yak horn still carries a sheen. And the blade - stained with old blood - remains sharp.

The door opens behind him. AMRITA(27) appears, a fine looking woman, wearing traditional Nepali clothing. She frowns as she sees the *kukri*.

AMRITA

Dawa-san, what have I told you? You will injure yourself one day.

She takes the knife from him, puts it back in the trunk.

DAWA

I may have need of it soon. Dark times are coming, great granddaughter. I can feel it.

AMRITA

Hush with your talk. I must get to the teahouse. The first foreign trekkers will be here shortly.

DAWA

They need to be warned. It is not safe at Base Camp. They---

AMRITA

No more. Rest up. I'll bring you some food later.

She adjusts his jacket, kisses him tenderly on the cheek. Heads off to one of the many teahouses. Dawa watches her with affection, a smile on his face. Then it fades as he turns to scan the northern sky.

DAWA

They will rise once more. The gods have willed it...

LATER

Dawa sleeps fitfully. From the southern trail to Lobuche village, a line of trekkers appear. They break off at intervals, guides leading them to their booked teahouses.

One particular group of five HIKERS and two Nepali GUIDES head towards Amrita's teahouse.

INT. GORAK SHEP - TEAHOUSE - MORNING

Simple furnishings of long tables and chairs; a squat wood heater in the middle of the room. A kitchen at one end, stairs leading up to accommodation.

Its already filling up with excited trekkers ready for the final push to EBC. A clock on a wall indicates 10 a.m.

The group of five sit around a table, chatting. From all parts of the globe, they have become comrades over the last nine days of trekking from Lukla.

They are: HANNAH(27)and STEVE(29), an English couple - she's a vivacious woman, he's a bear of a man who loves his food;

MIKE(69)and RODDY(49) two friends from Canada - Mike is very fit for his age, Roddy the methodical one of the pair;

Finally, NICK(55)an Aussie traveling solo. He's tall, with a shaved head and a goatee. And he's your typical smartarse Aussie.

Their guides are ARKAS(32)and MINGMA(40).

ARKAS

Now, please try and eat something. You might not feel hungry. But we won't be back here until three or four o'clock this afternoon.

NICK

Ah, so the story that there is a McDonald's at Base Camp isn't true?

Everyone LAUGHS. Even the quiet Mingma smiles. But as usual, the laconic Aussie humor passes over the head of Arkas as it has during the entire trek.

MIKE

I thought it was a Subway?

STEVE

No, I definitely read that it was a fish and chip shop run by a Brit.

More LAUGHTER.

ARKAS

I'm sorry to, how you say, burst your bubble. But there's only rocks at Base Camp. No food.

STEVE

Well, thats a bummer. I guess we better load up on a meal now.

NICK

Big fella, you eat enough for all of us. It's amazing to watch.

ARKAS

Please, we are on a tight schedule. Mingma will take your orders.

The table descends into discussion of the basic menu.

LATER

EXT. GORAK SHEP - DAY

Dawa sits in his chair, watchful. Trekkers appear from the teahouses, heading onto the trail. Our group emerges. They stop to check each other's backpacks, then troop off. As they pass the old man, Mingma nods. Nick nods too.

NICK

Namaste.

Dawa says nothing. Gets painfully to his feet. Holds one hand out, palm straight. INTONES in a quavering voice. Mingma pauses to look at him, a frown forming.

MIKE

What is he saying?

ARKAS

It's nothing. He's a crazy old man.

MINGMA

He's saying that it is not safe at Base Camp. He says that great evil has awoken. He says that we---

ARKAS

That's enough, Mingma. Keep moving.

Nick stares at Dawa, fascinated by his chant. The old man takes a step forward, stumbles into Nick's arms.

STEVE

Whoa, steady there, old chap.

AMRITA(O.S)

Dawa-san! What are you doing?

She rushes over from the teahouse doorway, helps Nick settle the old man back into his chair. She nods her thanks.

AMRITA

I'm sorry. My great grandfather hasn't been himself lately.

MIKE

No harm done. I bet he's seen a lot in his time. Perhaps he saw Hilary and Tenzing come past in 'fifty three? Imagine that.

Dawa's head lifts at the mention of the first Everest conquerors. He slowly nods. Amrita settles him in.

ARKAS  
People, can we start walking?

RODDY  
As Mike said, no harm done, Arkas.

ARKAS  
I told you we are on a schedule.  
Let's go, Mingma.

MINGMA  
Ok...move 'em out.

His now traditional pre-hike cry sees them off in their familiar line - Mingma, Nick, Mike, Steve, Hannah, Roddy and Arkas. Amrita watches them go. Dawa makes a gesture.

To the trekker's left, the steep slope of Kala Pattar, where they will ascend the next morning to watch the sunrise over Everest. To their right, the beginning of the Khumbu glacier that snakes to EBC. The sky is a vivid, cloudless blue.

ARKAS  
Keep drinking your water, please.  
(beat)  
Two hours to Base Camp.

LATER

EXT. THE EVEREST BASE CAMP TRAIL - DAY

The trekking group edge closer to EBC. A glimpse of the top of Everest is another photo op. Early hikers on their way back, high five as they pass. The excitement builds.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY

Finally they clamber over black ice to reach their goal. A cairn of stones with '2017' scratched on a flat rock is their 'marker'. A sense of achievement for all.

NICK  
Oh wow. We're here. I can't believe it. Doesn't seem real.

He looks at the ground, overcome with emotion. His four comrades move in for a group huddle. Arkas and Mingma watch - they've seen it all before but it's always a great moment.

HANNAH

The Fab Five! You are the best bunch of people.

STEVE

Been a bloody honor, guys.

He hugs his fiancée, gives her a kiss. Mike and Roddy embrace. Nick stares up at the slight view of Everest on offer. Around them, other trekkers celebrate.

ARKAS

Congratulations, team. You all did well. We have a half hour before we head off. Plenty of photo time.

RODDY

Couldn't have done it without you two. Thank you both.

ARKAS

You're welcome. We'll get a group shot at the cairn in ten minutes.

They disperse to take videos and photos. Nick remains, staring up at Everest. Mike claps him on the shoulder. The two have formed a really strong bond, both sharing a wicked sense of humour.

MIKE

Hey, my Aussie brother. Ain't this something? At the foot of Everest.

NICK

It seems so close, doesn't it? Only eleven thousand feet from here to the summit. It's not that far.

MIKE

No, that's right. But it's a damn tough eleven thousand...

(beat)

Say you had the money to climb it, the sixty k or whatever? Would you have a go at it? Take the risk?

Nick still has his eyes fixed on the summit. Nods.

NICK

Yes. It would be worth it.



MIKE

Maybe one day it will happen.

NICK

Yep. Who knows?

Mike embraces him, shakes his hand.

MIKE

You're a good man, Nick. I'm glad I met you.

NICK

Same here, brother. Look, Arkas is at the cairn. Group photo time!

They head over to join their buddies, laughing now. Suddenly, a tremor jolts the site. A collective GASP from the thirty or so hikers. At the same time, more slabs of ice CRACK off and tumble down from the icefall.

HANNAH

Oh, was that an earthquake?

ARKAS

It's ok, people. No need to panic. It's been common since the big quake two years ago.

MINGMA

Chomolungma is not happy.

Everyone seems to hold their breath. But when nothing further happens, the chat and photos resume.

ARKAS

Quickly now. Group shot.

Other trek parties are posing at the cairn then letting the next lot in. Like a conveyor belt of memories. Strangers become temporary mates as they are handed phones and cameras to take the group shots.

ARKAS

Mingma! We're waiting.

The guide has been looking up at Everest, lips moving in a silent chant. He nods, joins them.

STEVE

Ok everyone. Say cheese.

A trekker juggles phones and gets great snaps of our group.

INSERT SCREENSHOT

They break formation, laughing as the next party poses. Arkas checks his watch.

ARKAS

Ok, fifteen more minutes till we leave. Meet back here, ok?

Hannah and Steve sit down on a nearby rock, take out some protein bars. Mike and Roddy head to the edge of the icefall. Nick wanders alone, taking in this bucket list moment in. Snaps some pics, shoots some vid.

He ends up back where the trail comes in. Explores closer to the icefall. He's very close now to the ancient cave but the opening isn't visible unless one was searching for it.

He sits on a rock, sips deep on his water bottle. Watches the cycle of trekkers arriving at EBC even as others leave. A single trekker RYAN(35) strolls over, nods.

RYAN

How you doing, man? Name's Ryan. Mind if I sit here for a bit?

He's a big dude, with an American accent and an infectious smile. Shakes hands with Nick, who indicates the rock next to him, nods.

NICK

Nick. You from the States?

RYAN

Yep. Now, is that an Australian accent? Or maybe New Zealand? Damned if I don't get you guys mixed up half the time.

Nick LAUGHS.

NICK

No, I'm an Aussie. Whereabouts in the U.S you from?

RYAN

Well, I hail from Miami but I live in L.A. You ever been over there?

NICK

I have actually. Back in ninety seven, my wife and I did a three month road trip from L.A to New York in a twenty foot RV.

Ryan is sipping water. His eyes widen.

RYAN

No shit? Man, that must've been freaking awesome. Hell, you've seen more of my country than I have.

NICK

Yeah, it was pretty special. As this trip has been too. You with a group or alone?

RYAN

No, I'm winging it solo. Was on a real tight budget. I did a lot of research and it's a pretty straight forward route. Just been buying my own food and a bed for the night.

NICK

Hey, thats cool. I guess as long as you stay safe with the altitude and that. I'm with four other people. From England and Canada.

Ryan nods as he drains one water bottle. He rummages through his pack, pulls out a bag of candy. Offers some to Nick.

NICK

Cheers, bro. Hey, I'm a huge NFL fan, love the game. Been following the Niners for nearly thirty years.

RYAN

The Niners? Well, good for you. I'm a Fins man of course. We don't get any coverage of their games in L.A as to be expected. Niners are struggling right now. Toughest division in sport! Fins aren't much chop either so I can't comment.

NICK

Yeah the NFL changes pretty quickly. Teams can come good all of a sudden...

RYAN

And go to shit just as quick. I hear ya, man. Hey, is that your friends wa-- Jesus, what the...

He YELLS in surprise as the deformed raven descends silently to land on his left leg. His water bottle shoots from his hand. Ryan leans back quickly. The raven CAWS loudly, buries it's beak into Ryan's thigh. The American SCREAMS in pain.

INSERT - Ryan's bloodstream inside his leg. In slow motion, the mottled beak slides in through skin and muscle. It pulses once...twice, pumping a viscous black liquid which spreads along the arteries.

Ryan flails at the bird, which withdraws the beak, flies off, leaving a stench of decaying feathers. Nick tries to move to help but falls off behind his rock. As he gets to his feet, he sees something glint in the sunlight.

NICK

Shit, mate, are you alright?

Ryan sits up, flexing his leg gingerly. His trek pants are torn around the wound but there's no blood.

RYAN

Yeah, feels ok. Damn bird scared me. Felt like it was drilling into my fucking leg, you know?

Nick carefully moves the fabric to examine the wound. Its a smallish cut that looks deep. Ryan leans over to look too.

NICK

That raven's beak must've been razor sharp. Looks very clean. Odd that it's not bleeding.

RYAN

That is strange. Normally I bleed like a stuck pig.

NICK

Are you ok to walk? You should get it cleaned properly at Gorak Shep.

He stands up, supporting Ryan as he tenderly gets to his feet. He puts weight on his injured leg. Nods.

RYAN

Feels good. No pain at all.

NICK

Maybe we could go to the expedition camp. They'd have a doctor. That bird looked pretty old. Could have all kinds of diseases.

RYAN

I had all my tetanus shots before the trek. I don't want to be bothering anyone over there. Besides, I'm getting hungry.

He takes a couple of steps. Stamps his foot on the rocks.

RYAN

See? Fighting fit. Take more than some damn bird to stop me.

NICK

Well, ok. Me and my buddies will walk with you. Just take it slow, right? And get someone at Gorak Shep to check your leg.

RYAN

I'll do that. Appreciate your help.

He retrieves his water bottle, drains it. Takes out a second one and drinks long.

RYAN

Man, thirsty work. Hey, what you doing there?

Nick is searching behind the rock. Reaches down, holds up something that tinkles - it's the bells from the cave post.

NICK

Thought I saw something before. Looked like a set of keys but it's Nepalese bells by the look. Probably came off a yak. They have them around their necks.

RYAN

Usually they wear the bigger bells but, hey, you got a good souvenir.

Nick examines the bells, scanning the symbols on them. A loud CAW startles them both. The old raven sits above them on a jumble of rocks. The red eye glows like blood.

RYAN

Fucking creepy bird.

He reaches down for a small rock, straightens, pegs it with great agility. It hits its target but the raven has vanished. The two men look at each other.

INSERT - the wound on Ryan's thigh. Black liquid rises to the cut and forms a seal.

NICK  
Come on. Let's get going.

They head towards the cairn. The rest of Nick's crew are preparing to leave. Last minute photos.

NICK  
Hey guys, this is Ryan from the U.S. He's gonna walk back with us. Strangest thing happened. He was attacked by a bird. Can you believe it? Ryan, show them your wound.

They all gather around. But oddly, the gash made by the raven has closed up beneath the torn trouser leg.

NICK  
Hmm, its already closed up.

RYAN  
Like I said, bro, it was nothing. Looked worse than it was.

HANNAH  
Well, as long as you're fine, thats all that matters.

MINGMA  
You said a bird attacked you?

RYAN  
Yeah. Looked like a raven.

The group has started moving off, falling in behind other trekkers leaving EBC. Mingma stops, frozen by the mention of a raven. Arkas hurriedly grabs his arm, silently urges him on, a look of annoyance on his face. The others are ahead.

MINGMA  
A raven...

ARKAS  
Walk. Keep quiet.

Mingma stares at him. Arkas stares him down.

ARKAS  
I'm the boss. Move.

A quick glance at the peaks around them and Mingma heads off. His lips move soundlessly. Chanting...

LATER

EXT. GORAK SHEP - AFTERNOON

It's nearly four pm when they arrive back at the village. Worn out, hungry, but high on the thrill of EBC. Ryan has had no trouble with his leg and is in good spirits.

RYAN

Been a helluva day. Looking forward to a hot meal and maybe a beer.

HANNAH

I'll second that. But first things first. You get that leg checked.

ARKAS

One of the other guides told me there is a hiker from New Zealand here for a few days. He's a doctor.

They are passing near Dawa's house. He's dozing out the front as usual. Now he opens his eyes. Leans forward.

RYAN

Can I just have at least a small plate of rice and a Coke? I'm---

NICK

No way! You're seeing the doc straight away.

RYAN

I...ok, ok. I know you guys mean well. I'll see the doc but I'm perfectly fine. Never felt bet---

He suddenly grimaces, gives a sharp bark of pain. Falls to his good knee, holds his belly. MOANS...

MIKE

Ah damn. We need to find that doctor. Sit down, Ryan.

He crouches next to the American, who lowers himself to the ground. Now he holds his head, eyes shut tight, face to the sky. For a moment, thick black veins ripple in his neck.

STEVE

What the...did you see that?

NICK

I knew it. That raven has like rabies or something.

ARKAS

Mingma! Go find the doctor. Hurry!

Mingma stares at the stricken American before running off. Ryan lies back fully, hands still clenched to his forehead.

RYAN

It hurts, goddamn, I can feel it in me. Through my veins. Like a---

He suddenly sits up, SCREAMS. A gush of black liquid like oil from his stretched mouth. Roddy jumps to avoid it. Other groups of trekkers pass, stare in horror and disgust.

DAWA(O.S)

You must...kill him. He will...bring death to us all.

Everyone turns to see the old man wielding the kukri.

STEVE

Fucking hell, Can you believe this shit? Get away, you old bastard.

HANNAH

Steve! He probably has dementia.

Ryan opens his eyes. Coughs out lumps of black ooze. The stench is horrendous. Amrita comes running from the teahouse. Behind her Mingma and another MAN approach.

NICK

Ryan? Try and relax.

Ryan groans, spits more liquid out. Takes a deep breath, looks around. Frowns as he examines himself.

RYAN

I think I'm...I feel better. Can I have my water please?

Roddy kneels down, hands him the bottle. Ryan sips tentatively, then tips it back and guzzles.

MIKE

Whoa, take it slow, buddy. Is that the doctor with Mingma?



RYAN

I feel pretty good now. Maybe it was something I ate?

DAWA

It lives inside you. He must be killed before...

He raises the kukri as Amrita rushes to him. She stops his arm as gently as she can.

RYAN

Jesus, who is this guy?

AMRITA

I'm sorry. My great grandfather gets confused sometimes. Forgive me. I'll take him home.

She firmly leads the old man to their cabin, relieves him of the knife. He says nothing, sits in his chair out the front. Amrita returns to the teahouse as the others watch on.

DOCTOR HUGH WILSON(35) appears. He's a tall, bearded man. Stares at the clumps of vomit. Kneels next to Ryan.

DOC

Hugh Wilson, but I go by Doc. Your guide told me briefly what happened? A raven attacked you?

He examines Ryan's eyes, throat, takes his pulse. Has a close look at the wound on his thigh. Touches it carefully.

DOC

Does that hurt?

RYAN

No, it's fine. I think it might have been food poisoning? A dodgy momo perhaps?

Wilson has another look at the leg. Bends to sniff it.

DOC

Odd. It looks infected but no smell. No pain when I touch it?

RYAN

Can't even feel it.

DOC

Well, you do have a slight temperature. I don't have much medical gear with me. But you should rest up for a few hours. I'll give you some antibiotics.

He stands up. Ryan gets to his feet, helped by Roddy and Nick. Tests weight on his leg. Grins, nods.

RYAN

Feels great. Takes more than a crappy bird to take me out, right?

HANNAH

Good for you! Now, we'll help you to the teahouse and get you to your room. The rest of us can relax.

DOC

Make sure he doesn't over do it.

The group heads off. Ryan takes it slow at first, but he's soon laughing and joking. Nick turns to go, notices Mingma squatting, examining the black chunks Ryan hawked up.

NICK

You ok, Mingma? You look worried. Anything you want to tell us.

Mingma gaze drifts over to the cabin of Dawa. The old man stares back. Mingma slowly rises.

MINGMA

You go...eat. I'll join you later.

He walks to the cabin, sits on the ground. Dawa leans down and soon they are deep in conversation. Nick shrugs.

NICK

Been a crazy long day. I need a Coke. And a sleep.

He follows his friends to the teahouse.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - AFTERNOON

The bright yellow tents look like a field of bulbous flowers. Some larger ones act as kitchen and communal shelter, the rest for sleeping. The excellent weather sees the team in good spirits.

Two of them are DEREK and BREE(both late 20'S)a U.S couple hoping for a dream summit together. They explore the area leading to the Khumbu icefall.

DEREK

Its so brilliant to see it all in the flesh. After watching so many videos, seeing other people do it.

BREE

Should we be worried, hon? These tremors have been...you know.

She chews her lip anxiously, stares at the convoluted maze of the icefall. Derek frowns, takes her hand.

DEREK

Hey, come on now, Bree. Where's my fearless girl? We already talked about this. We'll be fine.

BREE

Yes, I know I'm being silly. But I keep thinking of that documentary? 'Sherpa'? It was so sad. Those poor men dying in the ice.

DEREK

It was. Just tragic. But that was in peak climbing season. There is less ice this time of year. And the weather is better.

Bree nods, smiles. Hugs him. They continue along the edge of the icefall. Unbeknownst to them, they are standing right over the ice cave. The view above changes.

BREE

There's Everest. Teasing us.

DEREK

In a week, we'll both be at the top, looking back down to here.

Bree LAUGHS, swings him around in a circle. He LAUGHS too, happy to see her pepped up again. The sudden motion at altitude sees them lose breath. They stop, sit on a large rock. Bree takes a few snaps with her camera.

BREE

Its not even that cold here.

DEREK

Don't worry. It will be tonight.  
Zero at midnight for sure.

BREE

Well, lucky I have you as a hot  
water bottle, right?

They kiss, breath fogging. The kiss becomes longer, more  
passionate. They embrace fiercely before breaking off.

DEREK

I've heard stories about high  
altitude sex. Apparently it --  
Jesus Christ!

A loud CAWING startles them both. They turn to see the  
deformed raven on a rock behind them. Bree gives a YELP.

DEREK

The fuck? Scared the crap outta me.

BREE

Oh. Is that a raven? It looks  
injured. Poor thing.

DEREK

Yeah, it's a raven. I read about  
them. The Nepali name for them is  
'gorak'. So, Gorak Shep means  
'place of dead ravens', a reference  
to the lack of vegetation.

He moves them away from the bird. It tilts it's ravaged  
head, the red eye tracking them.

BREE

That's sort of cool and creepy at  
the same time.

DEREK

This one looks diseased. Who knows  
what kind of germs it has. We  
should keep an eye on the food  
tents. Odd we haven't seen more.

They head back towards camp. Derek looks around. The raven  
is following them, hopping from rock to rock. He shivers.

DEREK

Fucking bird is freaking me out.

He bends, takes a stone. Pegs it at the raven as he straightens. There's nothing there. The stone hits a rock. Derek scans the sky. Frowns.

DEREK

What the hell?

BREE

Hey, leave it. It's just a defenseless bird. Come on, let's get a coffee from the kitchen. It's amazing what the Sherpa cooks can do with limited facilities.

DEREK

I...sure. Sounds good.

He takes another look before resuming their walk.

Ahead, the first lights of the camp switch on, as the sun begins to set. The temperature drops rapidly, and the couple walk faster to the warmth and comfort of the tents.

Soon it's fully dark. The clear night sky blooms an array of stars. The sounds of the expedition voices, clatter of utensils and laughter lend a background layer to the silent peaks. A single red glow keeps vigil on the outskirts...

INT. TENT - EVEREST BASE CAMP - NIGHT

It's quite roomy for a two man tent. The 'floor' is planks placed on the glacial rock. Two stretcher beds pushed together, sleeping bags and blankets. Gear on either side, a battery powered light hangs from the roof.

The outside zipper comes down. Derek and Bree clamber in, breath frosty. Still fully clothed, they giggle as they collapse on the beds.

BREE

Quick, close it. It's sooo cold.

DEREK

Oh, come on, it's not that cold. Wait till we get up to Camp Four.

He zips up the tent, lies down next to her. He wriggles into his sleeping bag. Bree watches in amusement.

BREE

What are you doing?

DEREK  
Skiing down K2...what does it look  
like I'm doing?

He grins stupidly. Gets comfortable, zips up the bag.

BREE  
So how are you supposed to ravish  
me encased in that? Looks like the  
date is postponed. Good night.

She climbs into her own bag. Turns off the light. Rolls to  
her right, facing away from him. A smile on her lips.

A silence in the dark. Then, the sound of a zipper,  
movements. The light comes back on. Derek is out of his bag,  
spooning her, nuzzling her neck.

BREE  
Yes? What's wrong?

DEREK  
Ah, well, it is sort of cold. Can  
we move that date to like...now?

BREE  
Hmmm, I'm not sure. There's no room  
in the bag for two. I wanted to buy  
a double one, remember?

DEREK  
Yeah, that was my mistake.

His hands roam as she eases out of the bag. She responds to  
his touch, briefly pausing to gather the blankets over them.

DEREK  
I'm warming up already.

BREE  
Less talk, more action.

Their groping becomes more passionate. They don't notice as  
something lands softly on the tent above them.

Suddenly there's a loud RIPPING sound. The couple break off,  
stare up at the roof.

DEREK  
The fuck?

The fabric TEARS. A ragged claw appears. The rent is made  
bigger. The damaged raven peers in, the red eye an angry  
beacon. It opens its beak...CAWS...a ghastly sound.

BREE

Oh, its that bird again. Its probably hungry.

DEREK

Jesus Christ, its pissing me off!  
I'm gonna kill the fucking thing.

He sits up, takes a trek pole, savagely pokes it up at the bird, hitting it in the chest. Another CAW and it disappears, the rip in the tent wider. Cold air pours in. Derek searches for something to block it.

BREE

Honey, that wasn't very nice.

DEREK

Well, it should stay out of the tent. Now we'll freeze.

BREE

Hey, leave it. Its kind of romantic. Our little window to Everest. Right, where were we?

She kisses him, pulling him down. He relaxes, glances up at the opening, the stars visible. They resume their lovemaking, bodies entwined, clothing shed. Bree reaches up to turn off the light. The moonlight casts a glow as they become one under the blankets.

A whoosh OUTSIDE. The raven hurtles through the rip in the tent, CAWING like thunder. The tent fills with a foul stench. Bree lets out a muffled SCREAM as Derek rolls over in shock. The raven lands on his chest.

He YELLS as the hideous beak pecks at him, sliding into his neck like a hot knife through butter...

INSERT - once more, the beak injects the black liquid into the bloodstream. The oily fluid is swept away as Derek's heart pumps frantically in pain and fear...

Bree SCREAMS again, lashes at the bird, trying to dislodge it. Derek shudders, lies still. The raven withdraws the beak, gives another terrible CAW. It's festering wings bat the tents walls as it ascends through the hole.

BREE

Oh sweet jesus, Derek?

The SOUND of running feet over rocks outside. Concerned VOICES. Derek turns his head slowly, looks at Bree. For a moment, his eyes fill with the black liquid. She SCREAMS again, as the tent zipper comes down. As faces peer in, Derek falls into unconsciousness....

INT. TEAHOUSE - GORAK SHEP - NIGHT

Our band of trekkers sit at a table, listening to Arkas give the briefing for the hike up Kala Pattar the next morning.

ARKAS

...and Mingma will wake you at three thirty am to leave from here at four. There will be no time for breakfast, not even a coffee.

GROANS from everyone. Mingma gives a wry grin, but his mind is clearly on other matters.

HANNAH

That's cruelty of the highest nature. No coffee?

NICK

Hell yeah. Oh, man...

ARKAS

I'm sure you'll survive till we get back for breakfast. Now, remember, take plenty of water and snacks. And keep warm. It will be at least minus five at the summit.

More GROANS. They all stand, yawning.

ARKAS

See you all in the morning.

EXT. THE ICE CAVE - NIGHT

The opening is dim and gloomy before the full moonlight pierces the entrance. It cast an eerie glow on the numerous mounds. A stillness before the SOUND of ice cracking...

DAWA(O.S)

The undead ones are rising.  
Preparing to make their way here.  
Following the bells...



A mound SHATTERS. An arm pushes through - dried skin, bone showing. A foot with tattered fur boots kicks upwards. Now the other mounds crumble. Wretched corpses emerge in full.

CLOSE UP - a living skull, mouth moving as dead eyes reanimate. All the creatures - undead, zombies, whatever - stand and SCREECH as one...

INT. BEDROOM - TEAHOUSE -GORAK SHEP - PRE DAWN

Nick wakes suddenly, breath frantic. He thrashes under the doona with invisible opponents. A faint echo fades as he turns on his headlamp, gropes for his phone. It's 325 a.m

NICK

Sweet Jesus, what a nightmare.

He gets up, fully clothed in the cold. Yawns. Looks at the time again as there's a soft knock on the door. He opens it to see Mingma. A nod and he's moving to the other rooms in the hallway. Nick yawns again, stretches.

NICK

It should be a crime not to have a coffee before doing Kala Pattar.

He grabs his backpack and heads out, closing the door.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

A line of trekkers move from the teahouses of Gorak Shep, tiny headlamps like fireflies in the dark freezing night...

As a pale light hints at sunrise, the trekkers - now spaced out on this tough hike - wind their way up Kala Pattar...

The first trekkers arrive at the summit, gratefully rest up. The view is amazing as Everest looms in all her bulk...

Now the stragglers get to the top, tired but ecstatic. Our group of buddies high five, laughing in the cold...

The sun hits Everest making for spectacular photos and vids. It's a celebration of an experience like no other...

The trekkers make their way down in full daylight. Exhausted, hungry, content...

LATER

EXT. TEAHOUSE - GORAK SHEP - MORNING

It's very busy as trekkers order and eat their well earned breakfasts. Our group dig in like there's no tomorrow as Arkas watches on. Mingma sits, lost in his own thoughts.

NICK

That was, with no exaggeration, the hardest physical thing I've ever done in my life. Just brutal.

HANNAH

I'll second that. But well worth it. A fantastic memory.

MIKE

I agree. Very tough.

ARKAS

You all did well. But we're in for a long day. As soon as you finish eating we head off back down the mountain. We stay at Pheriche.

A few good natured GROANS although Steve is preoccupied with his usual overladen plate. Mingma's head suddenly lifts. He looks to the door. Dawa stands there. Arkas's lips harden.

RODDY

It's that old man. I hope he's ok.

Amrita sees Dawa from the kitchen counter. Moves to go to him but Mingma stands, motions to her then he walks through the crowded room to the old man. They converse softly.

ARKAS

No. We don't need this.

HANNAH

What are you on about, Arkas?

The guide says nothing. As Mingma helps Dawa to their table, he stands, withdraws to the kitchen counter to get more coffee. Nick moves along to let Dawa sit down.

MIKE

Mingma? Is everything alright?

MINGMA

No. We are all in great danger. The raven...the American...he is infected with a terrible...curse.

STEVE

Curse? Don't you mean a disease?  
The stuff he was spewing up was  
nasty. And why is the old man here?

Nick has said nothing. He has a bad feeling about all this.  
Dawa starts talking in Nepalese. Mingma listens, nods.

MINGMA

This infection has happened before  
here. Long ago. Dawa saw it. He was  
only young but remembers it all.  
And my grandfather too was here. He  
told me stories.

RODDY

I don't understand. What are we  
talking about here?

MINGMA

The undead. Those who died but  
still live. Those who were defeated  
but have risen again.

(beat)

Dawa will tell the story. I will  
translate. But...please...you must  
believe this is all true. No matter  
how it may sound to your Western  
ears. Dawa-san, if you will...

The old man nods, closes his eyes. It seems he's fallen  
asleep as moments pass. Then his eyes open. And he speaks.

NOTE - MINGMA TRANSLATES AS DAWA TALKS

MINGMA(O.S)

The sickness began when strangers  
from the north...Russians...came to  
climb. Sixty five years ago...

BEGIN FLASHBACK

EXT. GORAK SHEP - DAY-

A cavalcade of men, yaks and donkeys meander along a trail  
towards a cluster of rough huts around an open fire pits.  
The local Sherpas tending their meagre vegetable plots watch  
as they pass, unsure of this development.

SUPER - JUNE 1952

MINGMA(O.S)

This happened in between two Swiss expeditions the same year. The first came close to summiting Chomolungma. The second was abandoned due to bad weather.

The newcomers set up camp, pitching tents. They speak in a harsh language. Tough, hard men. The Sherpas sense trouble.

MINGMA(O.S)

Unlike the Swiss and British before them, the Russians were crude in manner. They approached the village head and demanded help.

The Russians walk amongst the Sherpas, examining their bodies and limbs like animals in a stockyard. Those chosen are pushed and kicked to a large mound of climbing gear.

MINGMA(O.S)

In the days that followed, our people were worked like dogs. Forced to carry heavy loads up through the icefall. Fixing ropes and ladders under Russian whips.

Vignettes of Sherpas climbing in rainy conditions, hammering in pitons, lashing wooden ladders across yawning crevasses. Occasionally, one falls, tumbling without sound.

MINGMA(O.S)

At night, the Russians would drink around the campfire. Bottle after bottle of strong spirits. And later, they would seek out our few women. This went on for weeks...

Some of the Russians lead the Sherpa women out into the dark. Soon, SCREAMS rend the night.

MINGMA(O.S)

On the slopes of Everest, the Sherpas climbed higher, setting up camps as the Russians readied their summit attempt.

A view from high on Everest, looking down to the valley. Tiny lamps visible, canvas tents flapping in the wind.

MINGMA(O.S)

Then...things changed, in the space of twenty four hours. The Russians

MINGMA(O.S)  
 had weapons with them, rifles. They  
 shot at the goraks, the ravens who  
 we saw as the guardians of the  
 Khumbu. More desecration...

The Sherpas watch as the Russians shoot at the scattering  
 birds. Several are hit, falling to the ground nearby. The  
 Russians HOOT and YELL even as they swig more vodka. The  
 dead ravens are prepared, thrown in cooking pots.

MINGMA(O.S)  
 The villagers had already decided  
 to take actions against these cruel  
 men. They knew that it was  
 inevitable more Sherpas would die  
 on the mountain. And more women  
 would be violated.

The dead of night - the Russians slumber after their feast.  
 The Sherpas quietly form up, a small force armed with kukris  
 and sharpened ice axes held in determined fists.

MINGMA(O.S)  
 I myself carried a yak horn, the  
 end honed to a wicked point.  
 Mingma's grandfather stood with me,  
 staring at his blade and chanting.

The sound of SNORING from the tents as the Sherpas creep  
 near. Overhead, a full moon. Suddenly, before the signal to  
 attack can be given, a terrible SCREECHING from one of the  
 tents. The Sherpas freeze as the camp erupts.

MINGMA(O.S)  
 The man who plunged through the  
 tent was in agony. He writhed on  
 the cold ground, his body  
 convulsing. We could see the veins  
 in his neck turn black. His face  
 rippled, the jaws enlarging...

Suddenly, the stricken Russian jumps to his feet,  
 fast...deadly. He launches himself at the nearest Sherpa.  
 Claws at his chest, drawing him to the snapping jaws. The  
 other villagers watch in horror. The rest of the Russians  
 emerge from their tents, sober now, guns ready.

MINGMA(O.S)  
 The first victim was my brother.  
 The creature ripped his throat out,  
 cast his body aside. We were all  
 stunned and about to flee when our

MINGMA(O.S)

Sherpa women came from the  
darkness, with steel and noise.

Chaos descends on Gorak Shep under the cold moon. The infected Russian kills more Sherpas. The women fall upon him, slashing him with their knives.

Nothing seems to stop him until a yak horn is embedded in his forehead. The inky blood splatters across the camp, sizzling in the fire pit. Some of the Russians shoot wildly into the charging Sherpas.

MINGMA(O.S)

Our women were the saviors that  
terrible night. Without them, I  
fear the tribe would've scattered.  
As it was, men and boys turned to  
fight, shamed by their apparent  
weakness. But the creature was a  
new unknown...

(beat)

Only one Russian had transformed.  
But those he had bitten, became  
like him. Suddenly, Sherpa became  
our enemy too...even my brother.

Now, the dead Sherpa rises, SCREECHING, body changing, looking for prey. He - it - smashes into the Russians who have formed a rough defense around the tents. Bullets pummel his chest but he is soon among them. Ripping...tearing...

MINGMA(O.S)

The battle became a blur. Both  
Russian and Sherpa victims of the  
teeth before rising to rend friend  
and foe without discrimination. It  
seemed that soon all of us would  
succumb if none could be stopped.

One of the creatures stumbles into the camp fire, YOWLING in pain. It bats at the flames engulfing it before collapsing into a smoldering husk. A young Sherpa pauses in his kukri attack on another creature to note the effects of fire.

He nods thoughtfully, turns back to his foe. The infected Russian lunges but drops to the ground lifeless as a climbing axe crunches his neck. His protector is a Sherpa girl, barely fourteen, face streaked with blood and tears.

MINGMA(O.S)

It was Mingma's grandfather who rallied the survivors, exhorting them to attack the head of the diseased. This, coupled with fire, could stop the creatures. Or at least, weaken them.

The Russians are overwhelmed, their guns wrested from them, and used to shoot the infected. Now some of the Sherpa women are bitten. They fall, only to reanimate. And their husbands, brothers and even sons are forced to release them with a final blow.

MINGMA(O.S)

We fought like madmen. And we prevailed. With steel, rifles and rocks, the creatures that were Sherpa and Russian were crippled, barely moving on the ground but still not dead. The surviving villagers collapsed in exhaustion and shock, hearts in mourning.

The first glimmer of dawn as the sky turns from black to gray. A silence over the battlefield. Suddenly, a raven corpse near a tent, unused from the feast, now moves...slowly at first but gaining strength from the infected blood that coats it's feathers.

The young Sherpa watches in disbelief as he kneels next to his mother's writhing body. The raven flaps its wings, rises into the air, CAWING loudly. The immobile infected respond, lifting their heads to the sound.

MINGMA(O.S)

Mingma's grandfather saw the danger. That the gorak had started the disease and even now wielded evil power over the creatures. He knew the campfire would not burn all of the infected as there was no wood for fuel. And to gather more yak dung chips would take too long.

The sun is fully up now. The wagons of the Russians are emptied of gear. Sherpas weep as they work, lifting friends and kin who still move into the wagons. The Russian corpses are thrown unceremoniously into their own wagon.

MINGMA(O.S)

It was myself who suggested the ice cave on the glacier as a burial

MINGMA(O.S)  
 place. Perhaps the cold would  
 freeze the infection. Who knows?  
 But our minds were cast in sadness,  
 our energy low.  
 (beat)  
 We only wanted to mourn our losses  
 and forget this night of hell...

The sun breaks out over Everest, Llohtse and Nuptse. The villagers lead the yak wagons over the rough trail to the future Base Camp. The reanimated raven follows, haunting their steps. At last they reach the destination.

MINGMA(O.S)  
 With the last of our strength, we  
 bore the bodies into the ice cave.  
 The village spirit man chanted as  
 we dug a great mound in the glacial  
 scree. He hammered a post near the  
 opening, hanging sacred bells from  
 it to seal off the evil.

As the villagers toil, the gorak flies in, trying to attack them. One of the Sherpas carries a Russian rifle, fires at it. The bullet hits one eye, bringing the bird to the cave floor amongst the undead. It continues to caw fiercely even as the entrance is sealed with rock and ice.

MINGMA(O.S)  
 So, we made our way back to our  
 village. And since that night of  
 horror, I have kept watch on the  
 tomb, ever worrying that the dead  
 may emerge once more. Over the  
 years, the earth tremors have  
 weakened the rock as Chomolungma  
 grows angry. And now it has  
 happened...

INT. TEAHOUSE - MORNING

Dawa and Mingma finish the tale. They suddenly realise Arkas had moved closer to listen in, a scowl on his face. Dawa looks around the table keenly, gauging the response. The five buddies simply look at each other, silent. Finally...

NICK  
 So...the ravens...the goraks they  
 cooked and ate...carried some sort  
 of disease?



MINGMA

Yes.

ARKAS

Fools tales. I'm leaving.

MINGMA

We must go back to Base Camp.  
Before the undead rise.

ARKAS

That would be madness. We have to  
leave Gorak Shep now. Head down to  
Lukla. Or else we will all...

NICK

Come on, Arkas, that's hardly fair.  
More trekkers will be coming  
through soon. You'll let them waltz  
up to Base Camp knowing its unsafe?

STEVE

Wait...Nick, are you saying you  
believe all this? Dead ravens that  
live again? Russian ghosts?

Hannah frowns, shakes her head at him. He shrugs, turns back  
to his breakfast.

HANNAH

Mike? Roddy? What do you think?

MIKE

I don't know.

NICK

I saw the raven attack Ryan. It was  
old, diseased. And we all saw the  
black stuff he vomited up.

MINGMA

I understand that it sounds hard to  
believe. But my grandfather was not  
a man for lies. And Dawa here---

The old man suddenly speaks quickly. Mingma listens.

MINGMA

He says he kept some of the Russian  
guns and other gear. They are in  
his hut.

Arkas adjusts his backpack.

ARKAS

You people are free to do what you want. I'm leaving now.

RODDY

Will you warn the trekkers on the way down? It's only fair you do.

ARKAS

You think they'll believe me?

He stares around the table. No one answers.

ARKAS

Exactly. Good luck. I'll see you all at Namche perhaps.

He walks to the door. It opens as he reaches it. A lone trekker comes in, nods to Arkas as he exits.

This is BEN(27). He has a small backpack strapped to his chest; on his back a large object wrapped in canvas. He scans the room. Bit of a maverick about him...

HANNAH

This guy seems a dude.

STEVE

Solo too. No guide?

NICK

I reckon he's an Aussie.

Ben walks towards the kitchen, stops at their table. Nods.

BEN

Seems pretty quiet here. Hope Base Camp is more lively.

The 'accent' is unmistakable.

MINGMA

I think it may be.

NICK

Told you. Fellow Aussie.

He stands, shakes Ben's hand. The newcomer carefully unstraps his pack, before placing the larger package on a nearby table. He stretches like a cat, yawns.

BEN

Bloody Aussies. We're everywhere, right? Any part of the world be it the jungles of Brazil or the snowfields of Whistler.

MIKE

Aussies are good value! Just ask and they'll tell you.

LAUGHTER all round. Even Mingma manages a smile.

RODDY

So you've been to Brazil? We've done Machu Picchu in Peru.

BEN

Nice. Actually, I haven't been to Brazil. But I'm sure I'll run into some Aussies when I do.

(beat)

The name's Ben. From Sydney.

NICK

Nick. Gold Coast but born in Vic. And clockwise here we have Hannah and Steve from England, Roddy and Mike from Canada, and our guide, Mingma and his friend Dawa. We got back from climbing Kala Pattar a half hour ago.

BEN

Sweet! I'm doing this solo as you can see. Did all the research and I'm coping ok so far.

He takes a wallet from his trek pants.

MIKE

What have you got wrapped up there? Some kind of scientific gear? If you don't mind me asking?

BEN

Hey, not at all. Look, I'll order some food and a coffee, then I'll show you. Maybe I'll give you a demonstration. I left Lobuche super early this morning to get here before the crowds. Excuse me.

He makes his way to the kitchen counter. The others watch as he points to items on the menu. Hands over some rupees.

NICK  
He's a legend this bloke.

MIKE  
Aren't all you Aussies like that?

NICK  
Quite a few aspire to be. But only  
an elite number of us like Benny  
and me pull it off.

He drinks from his water bottle as everyone LAUGHS again.  
Ben returns, sits, takes off his cap.

BEN  
You guys are pretty awesome. I can  
tell already.

LATER

STEVE(O.S)  
Bloody hell. Is that a small plane?

EXT. GORAK SHEP - MORNING

The group are outside in the sunshine. Amrita leads Dawa  
back to their hut to rest after Mingma hugs him. The air is  
nippy but blue sky perfect.

Ben has unwrapped the mysterious package to reveal a high  
tech piece of equipment - a drone but unlike any the  
trekkers had seen before. He assembles it in no time.

BEN  
Mate, that there is the DJI Inspire  
Two Quadcopter. State of the art.  
The best drone on the market.

HANNAH  
It looks like some kind of metal  
spider. Those blades look razor  
sharp.

BEN  
Yep. Ninety four k's an hour top  
speed. She fairly zips along.

RODDY  
You carried that all the way from  
Lukla? How much does it weigh?

BEN

Three and a half kilos. Hardly noticed it.

He makes some adjustments to the sleek craft.

NICK

It's damn sweet. What's the flight time? How does it handle the altitude? What's the ceiling on it?

BEN

Flight time is nearly twenty seven minutes. Ceiling is sixteen thousand feet which is about where are now. Performs well in temps as low as minus one. I hope to test it better at Base Camp.

MIKE

This is gonna be so cool.

BEN

Oh yeah. Now I'll just---

A commotion at the teahouse door. They all turn to see Ryan, pale but smiling, walking towards them. Doc does his best to slow him down. It's not working...

RYAN

Hey, just in time to see the drone.

NICK

Oh, man, how you feeling? We were worried about you.

RYAN

Feeling good! A hundred percent. Well, maybe about eighty, right?

He stops, breathing heavily in the thin air.

DOC

Look, Ryan? I really think you should stay in bed a bit longer. Your temperature is still high.

HANNAH

We can keep an eye on him, Doc. Maybe give him fifteen minutes?

RYAN

Please, Doc? I've heard so much about the Inspire Two. I promise I'll go back to bed after.

DOC

Well, I guess...ok. But no over exerting yourself. And keep the fluids up. Fifteen minutes max.

Ryan LAUGHS, claps him on the back.

STEVE

All yours, Ben. Show us the magic.

WHOOPS of excitement. A few trekkers newly arrived stop to watch. Others, weary already, head to the teahouses.

BEN

Pressure is on! Ok, here we go.

As he adjusts the remote, a shadow falls on the drone. The decayed raven appears from nowhere, flutters down to land on the machine. A silence that spooks them all...

RYAN

The hell? That's the goddamn bird that attacked me.

HANNAH

Somebody get rid of it. It's horrible. Please...

Ben reacts by switching on the drone. He moves the stick. The blades spin slowly before accelerating into a blur.

BEN

Jesus, that's one ugly bird.

The drone lifts. The raven flaps his wings but doesn't budge. A nasty stench blows in the air. Suddenly, the bird CAWS loud, a screech like fingers on a chalk board. It launches itself off the drone, flies off.

At the same time, Ryan sinks to his knees. His mouth opens, and the vile black ichor cascades out. It splatters over Ben's boots. He looks down, jumps in surprise.

BEN

Oh, man, what?

The drone dips towards the ground, momentarily out of control. Ben hurriedly works the remote, makes it land.

DOC

I knew it. He's still very sick.

Ryan convulses as his stomach empties. The thick ebony veins pulse on his body. Doc searches through his medical bag, takes out a syringe.

DOC

Nick, hold him steady.

Nick nods, crouches to pin Ryan's shoulders to the ground. Roddy helps him. The doctor injects into a thigh. It takes effect quickly, the American settles into unconsciousness.

NICK

Damn, he was hard to hold down.  
Right, Roddy?

RODDY

It was unnatural for sure.

DOC

I'll radio Namche. See if I can get  
a chopper here as soon as possible.  
He needs to be in a hospital.

Ben turns off the drone. Pours water on his boots.

BEN

What's wrong with him? You said  
that bird attacked him? Has he got  
rabies or something?

DOC

It's possible. Excuse me. I'll get  
on the radio.

HANNAH

I'll watch him, Doctor.

Doc nods, runs to the teahouse. The others gather around the American who is out to it now. The black gore glistens.

MIKE

Poor guy. We should collect his  
gear to take in the chopper.

NICK

Good idea. I'll find out his room  
number. Man, what a day so far.

He follows the doctor to the teahouse. Mingma is quiet. He looks from Ryan to Dawa's hut. The old man peers back...

LATER

The helipad is a large concrete slab on a ridge near the southern edge of the village. As the arriving chopper descends, Doc and Mingma wait next to a stretcher borne by two young SHERPAS. Ryan lies on it, unconscious.

DOC

I used to fly choppers for an oil rig crew. That was a while ago.

MINGMA

A long way from here. And maybe less dangerous...

Doc looks curiously at the guide as the cold air buffets them. The chopper touches down. The rotors stay spinning as a MEDIC opens the rear door. He drops down, kneels next to the stretcher. Puts a thermometer in Ryan's mouth.

DOC

Thanks for coming so fast. This man is gravely ill. Some type of blood infection, maybe looking at rabies.

MEDIC

Temperature is high. We may fly him straight to Kathmandu if the weather holds. Bring him, please.

The Sherpas carefully carry the stretcher to the door. The medic and Doc maneuver it on board. The medic secures it to the floor, gives the thumbs up. Mingma watches on silently.

DOC

Thanks again. Safe flight.

The SAT phone on Doc's belt vibrates. He answers it, listens, nods. The PILOT checks the instruments.

DOC

Hey guys, I just got a call from Base Camp. They have a sick crew member and their doctor is up in the icefall. They asked if I could come up and check the patient. Can I grab a lift there, please?

PILOT

We'd be glad to. Take a seat.

Doc smiles, throws his medical bag in, climbs in after it. Mingma touches his arm. Doc looks at him.



MINGMA  
Everything alright?

DOC  
I'm not sure. Seems that raven  
attacked a man at Base Camp too.

Mingma's eyes widen slightly enough to be unnerving.

MINGMA  
Be careful. We need you.

Doc nods, gets into his seat. Mingma shuts the door. He moves down away as the rotor blades spin. A few trekkers gather to take photos. Nearby, on the trail south to Lobuche, a herd of yaks arrive, bearing steel gas cylinders.

The chopper lifts a few feet off the helipad, engine getting louder with each second. Higher and higher before banking to the north up the valley. Mingma watches before heading back to the teahouse.

LATER

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - MORNING

The medi chopper lands on a flat area. The Doc jumps out to be greeted by expedition members. He waves to the chopper as it lifts off again and heads south.

INT. HELICOPTOR COCKPIT - MORNING

Soon they are approaching Gorak Shep again. The pilot and CO-PILOT work efficiently as a team. The thin air always adds an element of the unknown but they are an experienced pair. The co-pilot looks over his shoulder.

(Note:all dialogue in chopper subtitled from Nepalese)

CO-PILOT  
How is he?

MEDIC  
Not good. Blood pressure is rising too fast. Badly dehydrated. I've a drip attached. Twenty cc of clevidipine. And his veins are close to the skin surface. Turning black. Never seen anything like it.

CO-PILOT  
 Keep us informed. I'll radio  
 Kathmandu and get a priority  
 landing organized.

He turns back to the instrument panel. Takes the radio receiver. Next to him the pilot nods.

CO-PILOT(ON RADIO)  
 Hello, Kathmandu tower? This is  
 Khumbu Mediflight one six one.  
 Requesting urgent permission to  
 land with an emergency patient.

A crackle of STATIC...

KATHMANDU TOWER(ON RADIO)  
 Kathmandu Tower, copy that, one six  
 one. Weather is clear, traffic low  
 so permission granted. We'll give  
 updates as you get nearer. Will you  
 require an ambulance on arrival?

A sudden SCREAM from the rear, cut off abruptly. The co-pilot turns to look. The radio falls from his hand. The pilot swings his head to look as dark arterial blood sprays the perspex in front of him.

PILOT  
 What in the name...

Ryan has torn free from the stretcher and has the co-pilot pinned in his seat. He's eating his way into the man's throat. On the floor behind the seats, the medic lies like a bloodied rag doll, neck split open.

The pilot SCREAMS as the American - once a man but now a creature - tosses the co-pilot aside and lunges at him. The chopper veers dangerously as the pilot lets go the stick to ward off the attack.

KATHMANDU TOWER(ON RADIO)  
 Hello, one six one? Is everything  
 alright? I heard screaming...

EXT. GORAK SHEP - MORNING

Hannah and Steve emerge from the teahouse. Nearby, Mingma and Dawa stand near the hut, looking at the sky. Suddenly, Mingma points and SHOUTS, starts sprinting towards them. The SOUND of an engine...

STEVE

Is that the chopper returning?

HANNAH

It is...oh, god, what's wrong with it? Look...

The chopper appears now, low, banking at a crazy angle. Figures are visible in the cockpit, struggling.

STEVE

Jesus, is that blood on the canopy?

Mingma races up, watches the stricken chopper with them.

MINGMA

It's the American. He's fully changed. He has killed the crew.

The chopper skids overhead, narrowly missing a rooftop. The yak herd bellow and kick as it ROARS above them.

INT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT - MORNING

The pilot desperately tries to fight off Ryan and keep the bird in the air. A sharp bank sees the American tumble to the floor. The pilot uses the breathing space to grope under the seat. He takes out an emergency flare pistol.

Ryan springs up with brutal speed. The pilot brings up the pistol as something at the edge of his vision blooms.

The flare gun goes off right in Ryan's face. Flame and sparks singe him but he ploughs on. The pilot SCREAMS once more, turns his head, arm up to see...

The huge communications tower, one of several that link the entire valley up to Everest herself. As Ryan's jaws close in on the pilot's face, the chopper hits a pylon about fifty feet up. The CLANG of metal on metal echoes over Gorak Shep.

EXT. GORAK SHEP - MORNING

Nick, Ben and Mike hurry from the teahouse, drawn by the noise. All around them, trekkers watch in shock. Some film the events on their phones...

BEN

Oh man, this is insane.

INT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT - MORNING

Ryan feeds on the pilot even as the chopper yaws into the tower. The structure bends, sways. Electronic equipment at the top is destroyed.

A satellite dish topples free, crashes to the ground. Somehow, the chopper bounces off the steel, veers down at an angle towards the open ground nearby. Ryan stares out with crazed eyes, SCREECHES as the chopper hits hard. It slides for twenty feet, dust rising before coming to a halt.

Silence, blessed silence for a few moments...

EXT. GORAK SHEP - MORNING

Total shock. It's like a war zone. Everyone stares at the downed chopper which has come to rest at the end of the vilage. Behind it, the damaged transmission tower sways.

MIKE

My god, this is terrible. I'm not sure anyone could survive that.

MINGMA

Or anything...

Nonetheless, they all run towards the crash site. There's no flame or smoke, just some random sparks.

STEVE

Thank god it's not burning. And the fuel tank has broken off.

He points to a round metal cylinder leaking small drops of gasoline about thirty feet from the wreck.

NICK

What the hell just happened?

Mingma watches the chopper intently. A kukri appears in his hand, held to his side.

A movement in the wreckage. The faint sound of TAPPING on metal. It stops, then starts again.

HANNAH

Someone's alive! Listen...

Now Mingma walks quietly to the mangled cockpit, low to the ground, trying to see in.

MINGMA

Nobody move.

RODDY

This is crazy! They need help.

MINGMA

No. The evil still lives.

A CRASHING noise. The sound of GRINDING metal. But not from the chopper. Ben searches, points past the wreck.

BEN

The tower. It's about to fall.

Suddenly, the SAT phone in Mingma's hand CRACKLES with static and a voice SCREAMS from it. It's Bree from EBC...

BREE(ON RADIO)

Oh sweet Jesus, can anyone hear me?  
I'm at Base Camp. People are dying.

In the background, the sound of agonized SCREAMS. And HOWLING. Pure carnage in audio.

MINGMA

This is Gorak Shep. What is happening there?

BREE(ON RADIO)

There's a sickness. My partner...people are killing each other. PLEASE...HELP US...

She SCREAMS long and loud, gut wrenching to hear.

MINGMA

Try and stay calm. We---

The radio cuts out. No sound, no static.

MINGMA

I...hello? HELLO?

MIKE

The doc...I hope he's ok.

NICK

Oh man...the tower is falling.

All eyes turn to the comm tower. It sways, pieces of the dish falling to the ground. Rocks back to level. Everyone holds their breath.

HANNAH

Maybe not.

More banging from the wrecked chopper. The trekker's eyes flit from the tower to the wreckage, trying to take in all the chaos at once.

RODDY

Someone is definitely alive in there. We have to help them.

He runs up behind Mingma who glances over his shoulder.

MINGMA

Please...stay back. It's not safe.

MIKE

Oh damn, the tower...

Suddenly, everything goes to shit. A huge CRASH as the chopper's windscreen is kicked out. Ryan emerges, his body and face contorted, rippling with muscle, sweat and black veins. He ROARS at the sky, leaps at Mingma.

At the same time, the comm tower finally topples off balance, smashes down behind the chopper. The noise is immense as rocks and dust fly into the air. The line of trekkers on the trail stop to watch in utter confusion.

STEVE

What the bloody hell?

Ryan lands on one knee in front of Mingma. The Sherpa lunges, driving his knife into the American's thigh. Black ichor spews out. Mingma pulls the knife out.

The thigh wound doesn't faze Ryan. He hurls himself at Mingma, batting away the kukri. Mingma braces his feet, holds the snapping jaws at bay. But slowly, Ryan's hideous visage draws closer to the Sherpa's neck.

RODDY

No! Shit, we have to do som---

There's a sudden flash behind Ryan. His head separates from his neck, falls to the ground. Mingma pushes the body back in surprise. Hannah stands there, a long piece of rotor blade in her hand. She takes a deep breath.

HANNAH

That's how they stopped them in nineteen fifty two, right?

A stunned silence. Steve helps Mingma up, goes to Hannah, takes her arm. She trembles a little.

STEVE

I...are you ok, honey?

HANNAH

Yes. It...it had to be done.

MINGMA

Thank you. You saved my life.

Mike examines Ryan's corpse, careful to avoid the liquid.

MIKE

Why is there hardly any blood?  
There should be fountains of it.

Nick walks over to the body, kneels next to Mike.

NICK

It's the black stuff. His body is  
riddled with it. From the raven.

MINGMA

Ben? We need your drone. Quickly!

BEN

I... what for?

MINGMA

You heard the distress call from  
Base Camp? We need to see what's  
happening there.

Ben nods, runs back to collect the drone and the laptop. He returns, switches on the remote. Hannah's lip quivers as she realizes she just killed a 'man'. The others notice.

MIKE

Hannah, don't feel guilty. You did  
the right thing. Ryan  
wasn't...human anymore.

She nods, as Roddy moves to give her a hug.

MINGMA

And there are more like him. Many  
more. From the ice cave.

BEN

Drone is ready, Mingma.

MINGMA

Good. Send it to Base Camp.

Ben nods, tap buttons. The Inspire2 whirs into life, ascends like a silver bird. Hovers before moving off to the north.

BEN

Should be there in twenty minutes.  
Nick, can you open the laptop? We  
can watch the view on the screen.

Nick gets to work. Soon, the screen shows the trail beneath the POV of the drone. Mingma covers Ryan's body with a panel from the chopper before addressing the group.

MINGMA

Mike, Steve? We need to stop any  
trekkers from going to Base Camp.  
Tell them...I don't know, there's  
been an avalanche on the trail,  
anything. Do your best.

The pair nod, head off to where a line of the first trekkers are setting out from the teahouses. The other watch.

HANNAH

You think the expedition at base  
Camp have been attacked?

MINGMA

It sounded like it. We may have to  
accept they have all been killed  
and changed into the undead.

All eyes turn to the laptop screen.

LATER

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY - DRONE POV

Moving about eighty feet in the air. The trail visible along the glacial moraine. Glimpses of the peaks and blue sky as Ben makes minor adjustments to the course.

Nothing out of the ordinary to see. Ahead the faint shapes of the yellow expedition tents at EBC. Then...a dark mass becomes clearer - like an anthill in turmoil, spewing millions of ants...

Closer, the view drops as the drone descends. Now EBC is seen fully. Moving figures among the tents, bright patches of color - crimson. No, not patches...more like pools on the rocks. Pools of blood...



Closer - the figures are more of the creatures like the late Ryan. Clothing ripped by contorted muscles, wounds on their bodies, attacking humans as the camera rolls. It's like a scene from hell...

From the ice cave, more creatures issue forth, joining the carnage. Expeditions members, both male and female, are slaughtered by their former friends and workmates, only to reanimate and enlarge the ranks of the undead.

As the drone jets overhead, the creatures look up, even as 'leaders' among them head to the trail to Gorak Shep...

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY

Close up of one of the undead. The jaws widen to SCREECH at the shimmering object in the sky. The noise ECHOES back through the microphone to the laptop...

EXT. GORAK SHEP - DAY

On the screen, the monstrous face seems to stare and HOWL directly at the trek buddies. GASPS among them...

HANNAH

Oh lord there's hundreds of them.

MINGMA

Yes. Heading this way.

Mike and Steve come running, breath heavy in the thin air.

STEVE

It was no good. They didn't believe us. I guess coming all this way is...oh bloody hell...

He stares at the screen in horror.

MIKE

The tomb. Mingma was right.

BEN

He sure was. You know, I came to Nepal to walk in the footsteps of Hilary and Tenzing, and experience the majesty of the Himalayas.

(beat)

I didn't expect I'd have to be Rick fucking Grimes.

RODDY  
That would be funny in different  
circumstances.

BEN  
Yup.

HANNAH  
Mingma? Now what?

The Sherpa guide stands in thought, assessing the situation.  
Nick stares at the screen, frowning.

MINGMA  
We need to prepare defenses. Find  
weapons, anything useful.

NICK  
Guys? I've noticed something on the  
drone footage which may be  
important. The speed at which  
people are changing into these  
things has increased dramatically.

Mingma pauses in his prep to listen.

RODDY  
Go on.

NICK  
Well, Ryan was bitten yesterday  
afternoon, right? But he didn't  
fully change until this morning.  
About twelve hours later.  
(beat)  
But the people at Base Camp...well,  
they're changing almost immediately  
after they, ah, die.

Now they all stop and are listening, looking at each other.

BEN  
Shit, you're right.

All eyes on Mingma who's thinking quietly. He nods.

MINGMA  
I can only guess that because the  
first victim, the American was only  
bitten by the raven, not the actual  
undead, then it took longer to  
transform. But now, as we've seen,  
death at the hands of the creatures

MINGMA  
means a quick change. To become as  
them. Anyway, enough talk...

Mingma looks around at the band of friends who are now the  
front line of this deadly conflict.

MINGMA  
If the worst happens, we'll retreat  
to our teahouse. but...I have some  
ideas to fight the zombies.

(beat)  
Ben, your drone. You said the  
blades are sharp? Like razors?

BEN  
Shit yeah. Got the scars to prove  
it. Wait, I think I see where this  
is going. And I like it.

MINGMA  
See if you can slow then down.

He turns to look at the downed chopper.

MINGMA  
Steve? Follow me. Hannah, go with  
Mike to the teahouse. Gather as  
many knives, cleavers, whatever you  
can use as a weapon. Tell the  
kitchen staff it's an emergency.  
Roddy...go see Dawa. He has some of  
the old Russian guns. They may  
still work.

RODDY  
How will I talk to him without an  
interpreter?

MINGMA  
He can understand English and  
actually speak some. He just  
prefers not to. Go now, hurry.

Everyone heads off to their respective tasks. Nick sits down  
with the laptop while Ben fiddles with the remote.

BEN  
Man, I've always wanted to do this.

NICK  
What? Slice up zombies?

BEN

Hmm? Oh, no, not specifically  
zombies. Just slice the fuck up out  
of...anything. You know?

Nick grins as he adjusts the screen.

NICK

Bloody Aussies. We're crazy. Oh,  
god, look at these things.

They watch as the screen fills with hideous shapes...

MINUTES LATER

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP TRAIL - DAY - DRONE POV

The horde has left EBC itself and streams down the trail  
towards Gorak Shep. The lead zombies move at a frightening  
pace. The drone ascends, does a three sixty pan. A small  
group of trekkers are just visible heading towards EBC...

EXT. GORAK SHEP - DAY

Ben watches the screen over Nick's shoulder.

NICK

Damn. They're gonna run into the  
trekkers in, say, half an hour.

BEN

Best we do something then.

An evil grin on his lips. He hits a few buttons.

BEN

Upping to max speed. Descending to  
six feet. Let's hope the camera  
doesn't get covered in gore...

Nick senses movement to his right. Mingma and Steve appear,  
dragging the chopper's fuel tank towards the trail. They  
stop. Mingma surveys the area, nods. They head back over to  
their 'base'.

At the same time, Hannah rushes up carrying a plastic bucket  
filled with steel cutlery. She tips it out on the ground.  
Mike has another bucket of the same.

HANNAH

Is this ok, Mingma?

Mingma rummages through the sharps, holds up a wicked cleaver. Steve and Mike select some knives.

MINGMA

It's not much but we don't have---

He suddenly sees the yak herd laden with gas cylinders, the herder having calmed them down after the earlier chaos.

MINGMA

Wait...we may have found some extra defense. They won't be needing the gas at Base Camp.

Roddy and Dawa come into view, the latter carrying a wooden crate. The old man seems to walk better than normal.

BEN

Mingma! The drone is ready.

Everyone stops to watch the screen. The view hurtles at the zombies at head height.

HANNAH

They're moving faster now.

BEN

Not for long.

Roddy and Dawa arrive. Roddy puts the crate on the ground.

RODDY

Dawa says he kept the guns cleaned and oiled all these years. He said he always knew that, uh---

DAWA

(in broken English)

That they would rise again one day.

He points at the advancing creatures on the screen.

DAWA

And they have.

The final few seconds of flight and the drone accelerates...

BEN

Here we go.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP TRAIL - DAY - DRONE POV

The drone hits the lead creatures like a chainsaw through chipboard. Heads explode as the blades slice a path. Undead are dead again for good as black ichor hits the gray rocks.

Straight down the middle of the horde, the silver machine plows, the blades whirring, shredding decayed flesh and ancient clothing. It emerges at the rear, rising...

NICK(O.S)

Holy shit...

EXT. GORAK SHEP - DAY

The tip of Ben's tongue protrudes in concentration. On screen, the view rotates as the drone swings in a wide berth. Smears of gore on the camera reduce the visibility but it's soon cleared by the icy wind.

A quick glimpse of Everest in the background and the drone is charging back, descending to approach from behind. Bodies are strewn along the trail but the main horde still churns relentlessly towards Gorak Shep.

MIKE

It's taken out quite a few.

HANNAH

But they're not slowing down.

STEVE

That was bloody incredible.

MINGMA

The trekkers are close.

BEN

I'm on it. Hopefully they'll see the danger soon themselves.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP TRAIL - DAY - DRONE POV

As the drone zooms along, some of the creatures turn to look at it this annoyance, displaying a chilling intelligence. Then the blades ate once more among them, decapitating at will. It nears the front, covered in black gore..

Suddenly, a dark shape swoops in from the side, hits the drone midair. The screen flickers...

BEN(O.S)  
What the fuck?

EXT. GORAK SHEP - DAY

Ben struggles with the controls. The on screen view spins in a dizzy circle. A loud BANGING over the speaker and the camera goes blank.

STEVE  
Did one of the creatures do that?

NICK  
Not sure. Maybe the blades are damaged? They went hard at it.

BEN  
No, it was that fucking raven. Oh, I've got a picture again.

On the screen, the view appears, this time a skewed look at the sky, mixed with the feet of the undead moving past. Ben leans over Nick's shoulder to check some readings.

BEN  
Still got power but the stabilizers are busted. Can't move it for now.

MINGMA  
We can retrieve it later.

STEVE  
There may not be a later.

HANNAH  
The zombies are still coming.

There's a doubt amongst the group now. A sense of doom at the terror that looms not far down the trail.

RODDY  
Maybe Arkas was right. Maybe we should leave. It's not our fight.

Dawa can feel the negative mood unfolding. He speaks in his broken English. They all listen.

DAWA  
If you run now...without trying to stop them then...how will you feel if they escape to the outside world? And...harm your loved ones?

Mingma watches, gauging the panic that's near the surface. He focuses on Hannah, knowing the final call will depend on her as the lone female...

STEVE

Hannah and I have plans of starting a family soon. I wouldn't want her to be in danger. So we might leave?

He looks at his fiancée, clearly torn in his decision. Hannah stares at the ground, deep in thought.

NICK

No one would begrudge you, big fella. You guys are the youngest here, with more to live for.

MIKE

I...you have a young family too, Nick. You would risk not seeing them again?

The tall Aussie peers at the laptop screen, the deformed feet of the rear undead churning past the camera before disappearing down the trail. He SIGHS.

NICK

Yes. My kids would expect it of me.

Hannah lifts her head to look at him. Ben claps him on the back. Roddy nods slowly. Mingma waits patiently.

STEVE

Han? Are we....?

HANNAH

Leaving? No. We're staying with our buddies. We're a team.

Mingma smiles, a rare sight this last hour.

STEVE

I thought you'd say that. Part of me hoped you wouldn't...

(beat)

But I'm glad you did.

BEN

Man, you guys are tight. I love it. But, ah, we have some zombies to fight. Mingma? What's the plan?



MINGMA

I'll show you.

He runs off towards the yaks which move on the trail. Whistles to the herder. The others watch as he talks to the men, points to EBC. The yak herder's face pales. In no time, the yaks are being led over to the fuel tank.

RODDY

What is he doing? Oh, I see it now...the gas cylinders.

NICK

Didn't take much persuasion. I guess the old stories are passed down in the whole region.

Mingma signals to them to come over even as he and the yak herder untie the cylinders from the yak. They stack them all near the fuel tank. Before the friends can get there, the scared yak herder and his animals head back towards Lobuche.

MINGMA

If we set up the gas cylinders around the fuel tank, we can ignite it when the undead reach here.

STEVE

I...sounds good but how do you do it safely? It's dangerous stuff.

HANNAH

Steve's right. We could blow ourselves up easily.

Mingma frowns. He moves cylinders closer to the fuel tank.

MINGMA

If we lay a trail of petrol to---

NICK

Wait. I have a better idea. I used to work for a gas production company. We filled these type of propane cylinders all the time.

He tips over one of the heavy cylinders so it's sitting upside down. He opens the valve. Liquid gas pours out.

NICK

Anyone have a lighter?

Mingma produces one, throws it to him.

MINGMA

It's Arkas's. I 'borrowed' it.

HANNAH

Ha! I knew he was sneaking a ciggie  
off the trail some days.

Nick flicks the lighter wheel. Holds the flame to the raw  
gas. The others step back in alarm.

STEVE

Here, steady on, mate.

NICK

It's perfectly safe. It won't  
explode. It just burns.

Sure enough, a flame shoots out in a stream but the cylinder  
is untouched. Even Mingma is impressed.

MIKE

That's amazing. And it won't blow  
up? Who'd have thought.

NICK

Nope. It's a controlled situation.  
There's a lot of misconceptions  
about gas and explosions. The gas  
will just burn itself out without  
any danger. We had safety experts  
come and show us this stuff once a  
year. All part of the job.

He shuts off the valve, the flame is gone.

NICK

Now, we arrange these around the  
fuel tank, wait until the zombies  
are near, open the valves, light  
them all and run for cover. When  
the heat builds up enough, it  
should ignite the fuel tank and...

DAWA

Boom.

MINGMA

Yes. And we finish off any  
survivors. I like it.

BEN

Hell yeah, that's a plan and a  
half. Blow the suckers to bits!

Some LAUGHTER eases the tension, though Roddy studies the gas setup thoughtfully. Dawa peers off to the trail, wanders away, unnoticed. The others gee each other up.

NICK

The only problem we have is that the gas can't be ignited too early. We have to time it so the zombies are right on it when it blows.

MINGMA

Which means someone has to light them at the last minute.

NICK

Exactly. It will be dangerous.

A silence as they contemplate this.

MINGMA

I'll do it. My ancestors demand closure. The gods will it.

HANNAH

No, Mingma. You're our leader. We need you if the gas doesn't end it.

The Sherpa starts to speak but sees the wisdom in her words. He nods reluctantly. Waits...

RODDY

I'll do it.

They all look in surprise at the 'quiet' Canadian. The straight man of the trek. The rock.

MIKE

Roddy? Are you sure, buddy? You have a young family too.

RODDY

Yes, I do. We all have reasons to survive. But maybe today I'm the one to step up to the plate.

HANNAH

Roddy, no, you can't---

RODDY

Please. No arguments.

He holds out a hand. Nick looks at the lighter before tossing it over. Hannah looks anguished. Steve hugs her.

BEN

We should scout down the the trail.  
See where the horde is.

Suddenly Dawa CALLS out from the top of a small ridge.

DAWA

The trekkers are coming back. And I  
can see the undead not far behind.

BEN

Damn fuckers are fast.

STEVE

Here we go.

Mingma runs to Dawa, peers over the ridge. He helps the old  
man towards the teahouse. YELLS to the others.

MINGMA

Roddy, you have a few minutes.  
Prepare the gas. Everyone else,  
gather the weapons and get to the  
teahouse. Quickly!

Roddy starts to flip the cylinders, turning them so the  
valves face the fuel tank. He works smoothly.

NICK

Stay safe, mate. Run like hell  
after you light them.

He moves off, carrying the crate of guns. Mike brings the  
bucket of knives. Ben has his laptop and remote. They  
converge on the teahouse, waiting for Mingma and Dawa.

Roddy watches them go, continues to align the cylinders.  
Soon they are in a neat circle around the fuel tank.

Roddy checks his handiwork. Flicks the lighter wheel  
nervously. Glances at his friends who are at the teahouse.

RODDY

Well, Roddy my boy...don't muck  
this up. Take your time.

He hears YELLING, SCREAMS from the ridge. A ragged bunch of  
trekkers appear, laboring in the thin air. Suddenly, a young  
woman trips, falls to the ground. She CRIES out, holding her  
ankle. The others ignore her, one man even leaps over her.

RODDY

Hey, you can't leave her. Hey---

The trekkers reach Roddy. One guy slows, takes in the cylinder/fuel tank setup. Shakes his head.

TREKKER

(German accent)

That won't stop these things.

He's gone, looking back in fear. Roddy curses. He runs to the young woman, helps her to her feet. She CRIES out in pain again, tears of panic mixed in too. Thirty metres away, the first of the horde appear. She SCREAMS loud and long.

Roddy scoops her up, carries her as best he can, back past the cylinders. Mingma is already sprinting from the teahouse. He takes the girl, who is wondering how her bucket list suddenly went to shit list. Mingma carries her back.

NICK

Oh damn. Roddy's lost time. He's...

Roddy turns, sees the horde so close. He runs to the cylinders, turns them on, lighting each as he goes. He glances up, realizes things have gone to hell. Streams of liquid fire pump out onto the fuel tank.

RODDY

Please, lord, look after my family.

He runs to the fuel tank, leaps up on it. YELLS...

RODDY

Come and get me, you bastards.  
Leave my friends alone!

STEVE

What the hell? Why isn't he running? Roddy...jesus.

MINGMA

He's stalling them. He knows they'll be past the blast zone if he runs now. Brave man.

MIKE

Oh, Roddy. Oh, god no...

Mike moves out to run to help but Mingma has anticipated it. He steps in to block. Mike is crying, fighting to get past, but Mingma grabs his arms, holding him.

MINGMA

No. We cannot help him. He would want you safe. Be strong for him.

NICK

Man, this sucks.

HANNAH

Mingma is right. We can only hope that Roddy somehow can make it.

On the fuel tank, Roddy winces as the heat builds on the fuel tank. The metal starts to blacken. About ten of the creatures are ahead of the main pack. They swarm right up to the tank. One runs past, directly into the cylinder flames.

Instantly it becomes an inhuman torch, HOWLING as the fire engulfs it. The others hold up for a moment, confused by the fire. Some look to retreat. A narrow window opens...

STEVE

Roddy! You have some time. Run!

Roddy sizes up the options. Gets ready to jump over the cylinders to freedom. Suddenly, a large zombie charges at the fuel tank, SCREECHING as it leaps in the air. It lands next to Roddy, bare deformed feet sizzling on the metal.

Roddy fends off the snapping jaws, turns to jump. The creature - which seems to be one of the original Russians from the fifties - lunges, grabs Roddy's legs. He falls hard on the now red hot metal, face blistering.

He kicks his legs at the zombie but GRUNTS in pain as the creature bites deep into his calf, then moves up his body. Now the main group of creatures arrive at the scene.

BEN

Ah shit. Its bitten him.

MIKE

Roddy...no...

Roddy whips around, holding the teeth at bay with one hand. The other gropes in his pant pocket. Pulls out the kukri Mingma gave him. He ignores the heat and bite pain.

RODDY

Taking you with me, you bastard.

He swings the knife hard, buries into the back of the zombie's neck. The blade hits the brain stem, extinguishing the 'life'. Roddy falls back to the metal, eyes already filling up with the black liquid as he changes.

More of the undead climb onto the fuel tank, maddened further by the smell of death. Roddy - now full transformed - stands up. He HOWLS like his new kin but, oddly, turns to look at his trekking buddies, perhaps one last time...

STEVE

He's one of them. And it's gonna---

BOOM

The explosion is huge in the thin air, the flash like a miniature supernova in a far galaxy. Roddy and all the creatures on the fuel tank are shredded instantly into tiny pieces. Hannah SCREAMS, Mike sobs, the others are stunned.

A barrage of shrapnel shoots out around the site, taking out more of the arriving horde. The trek buddies dive back inside the teahouse. A great pall of black smoke envelops the shattered fuel tank and cylinders.

EXT. TEAHOUSE - GORAK SHEP - DAY

A hail of hot metal hits the outer walls of stone and wood. Nothing penetrates but all windows on that side are smashed. Roddy's trek mates huddle on the floor with other guests, as glass flies overhead like a swarm of rabid bees.

Finally, a silence as the echoes of the explosion dissipate. Mingma is the first up, tiny glass fragments falling from his jacket. He surveys the room.

MINGMA

Anyone hurt?

Murmurs of 'no', couple of small cuts', 'nothing major'. The others get to their feet and head to the windows. The blast zone is a haze of black smoke, visibility zero. The gas cylinders and fuel tank are just charred pieces of junk.

HANNAH

Did we get them all? Oh, poor Roddy. So brave...

BEN

I think we...I don't know.

MIKE

Yes, he did it. I'm sure.

MINGMA

Quiet please. Listen...

They peer out, straining to hear. The smoke drifts as a light breeze picks up. A SOUND from the other side of the ridge - a low HUM that seems to pick up steam.

DAWA

No. Only the creatures out in front died. It's not over. The rest live.

NICK

Ah shit.

Shapes appear over the ridge, streaming into the blast zone. The bulk of the undead...the horde. Enraged. SCREECHING...

MINGMA

Grab a weapon. Anything.

He picks up an old gun from the table. Tosses it to Steve. Points to a window. Does the same to Mike before taking the third gun himself.

MINGMA

Pick your targets. Aim for the head if you can. Or slow them down.

Mike and Steve look at each other, their guns, then head to a window each. Outside, the horde has reached the twisted metal. Unerringly, they lock onto the teahouse.

HANNAH

How do they know we're in here? Can they see us? Smell us?

MINGMA

We are living, with beating hearts. That is enough to draw them to us.

Then he is firing with smooth precision. He takes down two creatures immediately. Mike and Steve quickly get accustomed to the weapons, add their fire. More zombies drop for good.

BEN

How much ammo is there?

MINGMA

Not a lot. And it's nearly seventy years old. Some may misfire.

Even as he speaks, his hammer falls on a dud. He ejects it.

NICK

We need something else. We can't just wait here and fight them hand to hand. There's too many.



DAWA

It may come to that.

Mike blows off the head of a South African trekker who is nearly to the windows. Now there are inanimate bodies strewn on the ground as Steve and Mingma make their sparse bullets count. But the main part of the horde get closer...

BEN

The helicopter...it would have a flare gun for emergencies, right?

MIKE

A flare gun won't stop those things. We need a damn cannon.

BEN

Take another look outside. A lot of them are covered in fuel from the tank. Just ripe for ignition.

MINGMA

Good idea.

NICK

Right, I'll go and check the chopper. No arguments, ok? I'll sneak out the back.

Mingma's gun clicks empty. He throws it down. Pulls out his kukri. Mike fires his last. Steve is still shooting.

MINGMA

Hurry then, Nick.

Nick nods, makes his way towards the kitchen. Mingma turns to the other trekkers who are huddled together, watching this odd band of heroes. They all clutch various weapons of - knives, walking sticks, a cleaver. Even a heavy fry pan.

MINGMA

All of you. Prepare to fight. Watch each other's backs. Be strong.

HANNAH

Nick! Wait!

Nick turns at the kitchen door as Hannah picks up his backpack, tosses it to him. A TINKLING sound from within. Dawa and Mingma look around in surprise.

HANNAH

In case you find more useful stuff.

Nick grins his thanks before disappearing. Outside the windows all has gone quiet suddenly.

STEVE

What the hell? They've stopped.

Mingma runs to look out. Sure enough, the horde is motionless, seemingly lost for the moment.

DAWA

The one named Nick...he has the bells from the tomb?

MINGMA

I did not know this. But...

MIKE

Bells? What bells?

STEVE

Uh, sorry to be the bearer of bad news but...Nick told me he found these Nepalese bells at Base Camp.

Mingma turns from the window. Deep in thought.

MINGMA

They were special bells to seal the undead in the tomb. The earth tremors opened the cave and dislodged them. Now the undead follow who carries the sacred bells. That's why...yes!

Outside the horde are moving again. To the left, along the side of the teahouse. Towards the wrecked chopper.

BEN

Oh boy. This keeps getting freakier. The damn zombies have GPS abilities? Who woulda thought.

HANNAH

Can't we use this to our advantage? Nick could lead them to a cliff. Or throw the bells into a crevasse.

Mingma confers with Dawa, who shakes his head.

MINGMA

No, the undead are locked onto Nick now. His heartbeat, blood flow. And there's another factor - the raven. Dawa says it must be killed too. That may finish it all.

He glances out the window. The horde are now moving faster, heading to the chopper.

MINGMA

Grab a weapon. We'll come up behind them. They'll be focused on Nick.

They all head to the door. More hikers are appearing now from Lobuche and making their way to the teahouses.

STEVE

Dawa, what happens if we can't stop them? If something happens to Nick? Will they go back to the tomb?

DAWA

No. They will follow the nearest prey. And swarm down the mountain...

MINGMA

That must not happen.

He's away, running in pursuit of the horde.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY

The expedition site. Silent. Completely destroyed. Yellow tents smeared with red and black gore. No bodies remain - they've all become the undead and are at Gorak Shep.

Suddenly, movement from the collapsed medic tent. Scrabbling. A canvas wall lifts, rips away from the support struts. A hand gropes into view...

Doc slowly frees himself, stands up. He has multiple cuts and bruises but no sign of infection. He scans the area, stunned by what he witnessed earlier before hiding.

DOC

Mingma and the old man were right. The sickness...it's incredible.

(beat)

If it gets out of the valley to Kathmandu and the world then...god help us all.

He shakes his head, exhausted. Picks up a water bottle, drains it. Sees the expedition chopper behind the tents. It looks undamaged. Doc grits his teeth, limps towards it.

EXT. GORAK SHEP - DAY

Nick nears the edge of the teahouses. A silence now.

NICK

Sounds like the ammo is gone.

He looks over to the chopper wreck, forty odd metres away. He peers round the side of the last teahouse. Eyes widen as he takes in the sight of the horde streaming his way.

NICK

Fuck. How did they---

HOWLS and SCREECHES from the undead as they spot him. Nick doesn't hesitate - he sprints out into the open, towards the chopper. A glance back - he sees his friends behind the horde. Pours on the gas harking back to his footy days.

NICK

Better be flares. Or I'm fucked.

He reaches the chopper, clambers onto the cockpit. Another look - fifty metres and closing.

NICK

Shit.

He searches frantically in the twisted cockpit. The body of the pilot is crushed into the instrument panel. He gags at the sight but has to move the body to search better. The flare gun tumbles from the pilot's hand, spooking him.

NICK

Oh thank you, lord.

He wrenches a seat free to see a wooden box containing spare shells for the flare gun. Carefully loads up. Stands up.

Behind the creatures, Nick's buddies jog, waiting to attack.

HANNAH

Nick's on the chopper. And I think he's got the flare gun.

BEN

Mingma! What's the plan?

Mingma slows down, checking his options. They are twenty metres behind the horde, unnoticed.

MINGMA

We'll see what Nick does.

On the chopper wreck, Nick loads a flare. The sound of the horde is deafening as they home in on him.

NICK

Here goes nothing.

He aims the pistol at the zombies. Pulls the trigger. A loud POP. The charge flies from the gun, trailing red smoke. Hits the leading creature. A huge WOOMP...a flash of red light and flames, as the fuel ignites on undead bodies.

STEVE

Bloody hell.

The SCREECHING gets louder as burning zombies flail before falling to the ground. Nick stares in awe at his handiwork, methodically ejects the empty shell, loads another. The horde continue forward, trampling over the truly dead.

NICK

Have some more, you arseholes.

He fires again. Another resounding THUMP as sparks meet fuel soaked clothes. More of the creatures go down in a fiery end. But there is still a heap alive and they surge around the chopper. Behind them, Mingma and crew run silent.

Nick reloads as a Scottish trekker turned zombie leaps onto the chopper. It slaps the gun out of Nick's hand, sending it flying out on the open ground. He steps back to avoid the jaws, tumbles into the cockpit.

The bells in his backpack jangle, driving the horde even crazier. Nick tries to get up but he's stuck for now.

HANNAH

Oh, Nick's down.

Mingma increases his speed as the others follow. Nick kicks his legs up as he attempts to sit up. The zombie looms over him, trying to grab a leg to bite.

Nick's hands claw for something...anything to help. Under the co-pilot's seat, his fingers close on an object. He swings it up, realizing it's a sawn off shotgun. The muzzle is in the zombie's mouth as he pulls the trigger - BOOM

BEN

The fuck?

The zombie's head explodes like a watermelon. The body tumbles off the chopper. Mingma gets to the flare gun, scoops it up. Fires point blank into the horde now milling around the chopper.

Flames roar again as more of the creatures catch alight and burn to death. And the brave trekkers are amongst the rest with knives, hammers and steel bars. Nick climbs from the cockpit, jacks the shotgun, fires it into zombie faces.

Mingma leaps up next to him, even as Nick passes him more shells for the flare gun. Reloads and fires once more.

It seems like our heroes will prevail as they dance and weave, working in unison, covering each other's backs. One by one, the zombies are dispatched. Permanently...

MINGMA

Keep fighting. Kill them all.

Suddenly, a black shape appears, hurtles at Mingma. He looks up too see the raven - even more deformed now - in his face. He slashes blindly, but loses his footing. He falls into the heaving mass of bodies below...

NICK

Mingma! Someone help him!

Mike and Steve intensify their attack, wielding blade and iron to forge a path to the Sherpa. Mingma struggles from the clutches of the zombies, climbs back onto the chopper.

But before he's clear, a female cook from the expedition grabs his leg, bites deep into it. Mingma grunts, plunges his kukri into the undead's eye.

HANNAH

Mingma! No...

Mingma stands next to Nick who watches, stunned. Takes Nick's arm, looks down at his wounded leg. It's already swelling, the trek pants ripping. His thigh is visible, the black veins moving up through his bloodstream.

MINGMA

There are too many left. You must escape...to Base Camp. They will follow...lead them up Everest. It's the only way.

NICK

No! We can save you. We can...

Tears roll down his face. The remaining zombies are pinned against the chopper, the dead piled up. The trekkers pause for a moment, shocked by Mingma's imminent change.

MINGMA

Be strong, my friends.

He takes the shotgun from Nick, jacks it, put it to his own mouth and pulls the trigger, even as his eyes turn black.

BOOM

Hannah SCREAMS, sinks to the ground. Steve hammers a pair of zombies, rushes to comfort her. Nick stands stunned, Mingma's blood sprayed on his face. The Sherpa's body falls down into the undead.

MIKE

No...NO!

A noise in the background. The faint SOUND of an engine or motor. A lot of the zombies are now dead or squirming on the ground, disabled.

A Brazilian trekker fighting next to Ben is bitten in the neck. He YELLS, curls into a ball on the ground, waiting for the inevitable change. Ben turns, dispatches him with an icepick to the back of the head.

BEN

Come on! Don't stop. We've nearly done it. Nick, wake the fuck up!

The troops rally from their grief. Nick picks up the shotgun, jacks it, blows away a SCREECHING zombie.

NICK

For Mingma.

The background NOISE is closer. Nick runs to the end of the chopper, looks north. Another chopper is flying low towards them. The THUMP of the rotors undulate the thin air. The remaining undead look up, confused.

STEVE

Who is that?

MIKE

I think...yes, it's the Doc?

The chopper lands about forty metres away. The Doc leans out the door, beckons to them. Another trekker goes down, guts ripped out. Ben spots the flare gun, grabs it. Fires back into the ten or so creatures left. They ignite and burn.

HANNAH

Have we killed them all?

They run to the chopper except Ben who circles the dying group of zombies. He darts in to finish some off with his icepick, wary of the still lethal jaws. At last...

BEN

It's done. We finished it.

He crouches next to Mingma's body, touches it tenderly. Stands. His comrades are in the chopper, emotionally and physically spent. Ben runs to the chopper door. Smiles.

BEN

Proud of you guys. We--

DOC

Ben! Shut up and get in. It isn't over yet. Hurry!

Ben frowns, jumps in. Slams the door even as they rise.

INT. HELICOPTOR - DAY

Doc grits his teeth as he works the controls. The others - only the original trek members left now - look at each other in confusion. The chopper banks, angles towards the village.

NICK

I don't understand, Doc. We killed them all. They followed me...the bells from the tomb.

STEVE

Is it the raven, Doc? It's alive?

DOC

Look. Look down and see it's not over. Not by a long shot...

The chopper hovers over the teahouses, near the helipad and trail to Lobuche. And down on the ground, surging, milling, is a huge horde of zombies. At least two hundred...



MIKE

Oh, lord. But how...

BEN

There must have...after the explosion, some wandered off to attack the new arrivals. We just didn't see them in the chaos. Fuck.

NICK

Goddamn it to hell. All that hard work for nothing.

The chopper drops down. Now, the undead look up, HOWLING. Most are former trekkers with the odd Russian from the fifties in there. Gore covered backpacks litter the area.

HANNAH

No. We can do this, guys. Nick, the bells. We have to lead them to Everest like Mingma said.

DOC

I take it Mingma and Roddy are dead? I don't...see them.

MIKE

They sacrificed themselves to help us defeat these things. And Hannah is right. We still have a chance.

Nick is already in his backpack. He brings out the bells.

NICK

Take her down closer, Doc.

DOC

What are these bells? You say the zombies are drawn to them?

BEN

They were sealing the ice tomb at Base Camp. Mingma told us the undead will follow them.

NICK

Doc, just above the ground. I need to make sure they hear them.

Doc muses on this, nods. Concentrates on a slow descent. Nick sits in the open doorway, clutching the bells. When the ground is close enough, he leaps out.

MIKE

Be careful, Aussie.

NICK

Don't worry. I'll be back in quick smart. Hopefully...

EXT. GORAK SHEP - DAY

Nick runs closer to the teahouses. The edge of the horde is visible. The yak herd runs crazily near them, are taken down. They change into zombies too, add to the insanity.

Nick holds the bells up, shakes them. The chime RINGS out. Nothing happens. The horde now moves towards the trail south to Lobuche and the world.

BEN

Get closer, Nick.

HANNAH

Hurry! They're heading down the mountain by the looks.

Nick runs closer. He's about thirty metres from the nearest zombies. They don't even notice him as the 'leaders' guide the horde to fresh hunting grounds. He stops. RINGS the bells with all of his energy, breath heavy in the altitude.

NICK

For...fucks sake. Can't you hear them, you bastards? LISTEN!

He's waving the bells now angrily. Suddenly, the horde stops as one, turns, sniffing the air. A murmur becomes a COMMUNAL SCREECH as two hundred zombies lock onto their target.

NICK

Ok, yes, that's it.

MIKE

Run, Aussie. Run like hell.

Nick sprints back to the hovering chopper. The horde have changed direction as fast as a shoal of fish. They are cutting the gap with frightening pace.

STEVE

Don't look back, mate. Just run!

DOC  
I have to get higher or we'll all  
dead. Hold on.

The chopper lifts a few feet.

HANNAH  
You can't leave him, Doc.

BEN  
He won't. But he can't risk  
everything either.

MIKE  
If they get Nick and the bells,  
that's game over anyway, right?

No reply as they watch the drama unfold. Nick is under the chopper now, the fastest zombie on his hammer. Without breaking stride, Nick leaps, arms swinging, the bells CHIMING. They fly from his hand into the chopper.

Nick grabs the chopper strut with both hands, hangs, getting his breath back. The zombie continues the pursuit.

STEVE  
He's on, Doc. Take her up fast!

As the chopper rises, the zombie jumps, clawing the air. One decayed hand latches onto Nick's dangling right leg.

HANNAH  
Noo! Nick...

Nick's grunts at the strain on his hands. One hand slips from the strut. He's trying to shake off the zombie but it's already getting it's other hand up to grab him.

MIKE  
Jesus, do something, haul him up.

The zombie now has both hands on Nick's leg. It's jaws open in preparation to bite. Nick kicks to no avail. Can only look down and await the outcome. Hannah sobs in frustration.

BEN  
Steve, anchor my feet!

He rushes to the door, kneels, leans out. Steve sees his plan, hurriedly pins Ben's legs before he can tumble out. Nick looks up as Ben lets his upper body hang down past him.

NICK  
Can't hold on...much longer.

BEN  
All good, bro.

He has the flare gun in his hand, arm extended. The jaws are inches from Nick's leg when he fires...POP

The flare narrowly misses Nick's face, hits the creature flush on the head. Flames erupt as the shell burrows into the rotting skull. The zombie SCREECHES, falls back into the horde that has now gathered below.

BEN  
Suck on that!

HANNAH  
Oh, thank god.

MIKE  
They're safe, Doc. Head to Base Camp. The horde should follow.

DOC  
I'll land further along so Nick can get in. That was close.

Nick still dangles, eyes closed. Ben rests his head on his arm for a moment. Presently, Nick look up, grins.

NICK  
I owe you, mate.

BEN  
No worries. I'm sure the ledger will even up before this ends.

He smiles wearily. Steve still holds his legs, Hannah assisting. They all watch the horde in silence as the chopper heads north along the trail to EBC...

DOC(O.S)  
We can land a few times so Nick can ring the bells. To make sure they follow us right to Everest...



EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY

The chopper touches down away from the charnel house of bodies. Everyone gets out, stretches.

STEVE

How long till they get here?

MIKE

They seem to getting faster and stronger. Maybe a half hour?

HANNAH

I'll fix us some food and coffee.

DOC

So you mentioned Mingma had an idea about killing the zombies?

Nick is already amongst the expedition gear, pulling out ropes, clips, all kinds of climbing gear. He opens a large box to reveal portable oxygen cylinders and masks. Ben takes his drone in search of a workshop tent.

DOC

Nick? Talk to us.

NICK

Look...I have a plan. It's not much but then we don't have many options. So, basically I'm going to climb as high as I can, with the bells, and hope the altitude or the weather or...whatever, is enough to kill the horde.

DOC

You're right. It's not much of a plan. But leading them into the icefall might do it. It's dangerous in there. Especially after the recent tremors.

BEN

Sounds like one of the worst plans in the history of planning, Nick.

The others smile. Nick LAUGHS, a welcome sound.

BEN

But with this team of champions, it just might work.

MIKE

Doc, what about if you drop Nick and me on the other side of the icefall? He rings the bells and the zombies get crushed in the ice.

Steve has made his way to a ridge, ironically not far from the ice tomb. He watches the southern trail for the horde.

DOC

I can do that, good idea. A hell of a lot safer than going by foot.

NICK

I...wait, Mike, who said you're going with me? It's a potential one way trip, you know that.

MIKE

Yeah, I do, buddy. That's why you need me. To make it a return trip.

Nick opens his mouth to protest, sees Hannah nodding.

NICK

Ah what the heck. You'd follow me anyway. Bloody Canadians...

STEVE

I see them! Maybe twenty minutes away. It's hard to say.

Hannah has been sorting through the expedition gear. She finds a crate, opens it. Studies the paperwork with it.

HANNAH

These can help with a quicker acclimatisation. Special tents like a portable hyperbaric chamber.

Ben nods, pleased. He holds up a medical kit, takes a capped syringe out filled with a blue liquid. Looks at the manual.

BEN

Oh boy, here's some good gear too. A mix of oxygen and chlorophyll. The expedition was planning to test it while climbing.

NICK

We'll definitely need that.

He holds up the shotgun from the medi chopper.

NICK

And I'm taking this for some extra assurance. Just in case.

STEVE

Almost here, guys! They are picking up the pace. Time to get moving.

Mike is already loading gear into the chopper, helped by Hannah. Doc gets in the pilot seat, turns the engine on.

NICK

Ben, what will you guys do when the zombies get here?

BEN

Mate, they won't even notice us. They'll be too busy tracking your Aussie arse, right?

They both LAUGH. Steve climbs down from the ridge, runs over to them. Helps pack the last of the gear.

STEVE

Good luck all.

BEN

We can keep in touch with the radios. And my drone.

HANNAH

I won't say goodbye. I'll say see you later. Stay safe please.

There's a moment between the four surviving trek buddies. Even Ben pauses from tinkering with the drone to take it in.

MIKE

Be back in no time. Right, buddy?

NICK

I expect coffee on our return.

He RINGS the bells loudly before they get in the chopper. Steve shuts the door, steps back, arm around Hannah. The chopper lifts off, slowly, banks towards the icefall, soon a small dot in the whiteness. The bells seem to ECHO...

Ben picks up the drone, heads to the tents. Steve and Hannah follow and they're gone.

The SOUND of the horde precedes their arrival - SCREECHING...HOWLING...SNARLING...



They sweep through the camp like a freight train. Overhead the accursed raven CAWS. It hovers above the tent where our heroes hide before leading the undead up the glacier.

EXT. EVEREST - LOWER SLOPES - DAY

The chopper sits on a flat area of rock, surrounded by the great peaks. Behind them is the edge of the icefall. The weather has held, though a mass of cloud looms to the east.

Working as a team, the gear is unloaded. Doc watches as two backpacks are filled, sorted into varying weights.

DOC

I need a cigarette.

MIKE

Didn't know you smoked, Doc?

DOC

I don't. But I need one.

(beat)

You know this is madness, right? How high will you go? You haven't acclimatised properly. Your bodies will be struggling like nothing you've experienced. And I'm guessing neither of you have climbed before?

MIKE

I've done Machu Picchu in Peru. And I've hiked in the Canadian Rockies.

Doc GROANS, shakes his head.

NICK

I've done Midway Terrace.

DOC

Midway Terrace? What the hell is that? A rock wall in Australia?

NICK

Nope. It's the suburban street I trained on back home. Biggest hill in my area. Bloody steep. Used to kill me going up and down six times. Like this it was...

He holds his hand at a ninety degree angle, a smartarse grin on his face. Mike LAUGHS, claps him on the back.

MIKE

Doc, I know it sounds crazy. But Nick and I talked about it earlier. It's our only option. No one else can do anything. There's no outside help to come in and stop the horde.

DOC

Maybe I should've flown to Kathmandu, I dunno, contacted the authorities. The army, anybody.

NICK

You think they would believe you? Come on, man, zombies?

Doc muses on this, shrugs.

MIKE

Nick's right. And even if they did, then what? Call the army in? Fighter jets flying up the valley to blast these creatures? Innocent trekkers dying? I don't think so.

NICK

Doc, we're doing this. It may be crazy but we don't care. Now go.

DOC

Damn, you guys are...ok, I'll meet you at Camp Two and bring you back here to sleep.

LATER

BEGIN MONTAGE:

The chopper lands at Camp Two higher up the mountain. Nick and Mike get in. They seem fit and well...

The chopper lands at Camp One. The pair get out, hurry to the tent as the light fades...

The chopper gets to EBC just on dusk. The Doc gratefully accepts coffee and hot food from Hannah...

The ECHO of the bells across the icefall as dawn breaks. The horde move through the maze like ice. Some fall from the steel ladders into crevasses. But there's always more to take their place...

The chopper moves over the icefall to land at Camp One. Nick and Mike emerge yawning to once more ride the chopper...

At Camp Two, Doc drops off Nick and Mike. A quick wave and the chopper is off...

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY

Ben works the drone controls, watches the screen. Steve comes from the kitchen tent, hands him a coffee. Hannah pops her head out, spatula in hand. Doc is checking the chopper engine. It's clear and sunny but Ben frowns.

HANNAH

Eggs in ten minutes. Don't be late.

STEVE

Thanks, babe. Ben, any sighting?

BEN

Nope. Cloud is too thick up there.

The radio CRACKLES into life. Nick's voice pierces the air.

NICK(O.S)

Base Camp? You there, Ben?

BEN

Loud and clear, mate.

NICK(O.S)

We're just leaving Camp Two. We'll get to Camp Three decide on our next move. Any visual on the horde?

BEN

No, too much cloud up there. But the weather monitor here says the wind will pick up by lunchtime. That should give the drone a clearer view. You guys ok?

NICK(O.S)

Yeah, all good. Well, apart from Mike snoring all night. His new nickname is 'The Canadian Chainsaw'. Had no sleep.

LAUGHTER from Mike in the BG. Steve and Ben grin.

BEN

You'll have to make the bugger sleep outside, right?

A moment of silence framed with STATIC.

BEN

Shit, I've lost them. Hello? Nick?

STEVE

I'm sure it's just interference.

The SOUND of breathing then...panic.

NICK(O.S)

Oh, christ, no. How the fuck? Mike, quick, grab what you can...

BEN

Nick? What is it?

More NOISE of gear being moved. And a new SOUND faint in the BG...the echo of HOWLING. Doc moves closer to the table now.

NICK(O.S)

The horde...the cloud parted just now. I can see them, goddamn it! I can see all the way to Camp One.

(beat)

They made it through the icefall, maybe lost some...fuck it all.

BEN

Shit, man. Ok, don't panic. I'll send the drone up now, try and hit them again. Jesus, it's---

DOC

Nick? It's the Doc. I'm coming up in the chopper. I can take you to Camp Three.

CRACKLE and STATIC mixed with HOWLS and SCREECHES...

NICK(O.S)

Doc, the wind has really picked up here. The cloud mass has gone completely. It's too dangerous.

MIKE(O.S)

Aussie, we have to move. NOW!

NICK(O.S)

Coming, brother. Nick...Doc, do what you think can help. But don't risk your lives, right?

DOC

That's bullshit and you know it.  
You told me only hours ago, risking  
your lives was our only hope. I'm  
heading up now in the chopper.

He races over to the chopper, a look of steely resolve on his face. Soon, he's rising up and gone.

BEN

I'll send the drone up too. Keep  
tabs on the horde. Good luck, guys.

NICK(O.S)

We gotta run. Thank you, mate. Out.

Hannah comes out with plates of scrambled eggs. Sees the look of despair on Steve and Ben. Sits quietly.

HANNAH

It's bad news?

Steve nods. Ben turns his mind to the drone controls.

STEVE

The zombies have caught up to them.  
The icefall hardly slowed them.

Hannah closes her eyes, takes deep breaths. Opens them.

HANNAH

We need to stay positive. Our  
buddies won't give up just yet.

She puts a plate in front of the pair.

HANNAH

You need to stay fueled. Eat...

EXT. EVEREST - CAMP TWO - DAY

Nick and Mike pack their gear hurriedly. The sunlight - dense with UV at this altitude - is dazzling. They start making their way up the mountain.

The wind is getting stronger now, cutting off the sound of the zombies further down. The cloud bank is pushed in again. Mike stops, takes out a pair of binoculars. Peers down.

NICK

We need to find a flat area for the  
Doc to land. Can you see them?

MIKE

Not yet. We have some breathing space with the cloud rolling in.

LATER

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY

Ben runs the buttons like a concert pianist.

BEN

Steve, can you turn that contrast down? Cheers...oh perfect picture.

STEVE

There's Camp Three. And Mike and Nick. No sign of the horde.

BEN

The old girl is handling pretty well. Not sure I can take her much higher though. Doc must be close.

Right on cue, the screen shows the chopper hovering. Steve picks up the radio.

STEVE

Doc? You there? We can see you from the drone. Looks all clear for now.

The radio SPUTTERS, CRACKLES. Ben rotates the drone. The cloud reduces visibility below Camp Three.

DOC(O.S)

I hear you. Reception not good. I'm heading down to land ahead of the guys. Will keep in contact.

BEN

I'll be your eyes, Doc. Out.

EXT. EVEREST - DAY

Nick and Mike struggle upward as the wind intensifies. They see Doc waving, pointing to a rocky area about fifty metres ahead. The drone is behind them, hovering near the edge of the cloud mass that is slowly following them.

The chopper touches down gently, the wind threatening to push it off the mountain. Doc frantically beckons...'hurry'

Nick and Mike grit their teeth, pick up the pace, the rolling cloud not far behind them now. The drone swoops low.

They reach the chopper, which is parallel to the steep drop nearby. Nick opens the door, a task in the wind. Both are momentarily winded from their exertions.

NICK

You first, Mike. Age before beauty.

MIKE

Aussie comedians...the worst kind.

He lifts his foot to the step. Climbs. Suddenly slips, falls back onto Nick. They both tumble to the ground, lie panting.

Doc curses, jumps out his side, runs around the front of the chopper to help them. He gets Mike on his feet and in. Nick claws his way upright, gets in. Doc slams the door, runs back around, blades hissing overhead.

A NOISE from the cloud - a low but steady SCREECHING. Doc gets to his open door. Nick watches the cloud anxiously.

NICK

I think they're here, Doc.

Doc nods, jumps in, buckles up.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY

Ben moves the drone to get a better picture. Turns the audio up. Peers at the screen full of cloud, head tilted.

BEN

That noise...

The front of the cloud...shapes moving...

HANNAH

It's them.

INT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT - DAY

Doc reaches out to shut his door. Without warning, a zombie hurtles from the mist and jams itself in the gap.

DOC

Fuck! Help me, guys...jesus...

He leans away, pulling the door shut to try and dislodge the snapping horror. It's claws flail as its body is squeezed.

MIKE

Oh shit. Nick...quick.

The pair leap across behind the Doc's seat. Mike jabs at the creature with a knife. Nick scrabbles amongst their gear.

MIKE

Doc? Take it up. Slowly.

Doc nods, works the stick with one hand while avoiding the zombie's frantic efforts. The chopper rises. below, the rest of the horde rampage through the camp, SCREECHING.

DOC

Kill it! I can't hold the door much longer. Hurry...

Mike stabs the zombie's chest, drawing the thick blood. The zombie smashes the weapon from Mike's hand, squeezes further in the cockpit. Nick finds what he was after. Stands up.

NICK

Mike! Duck!

Mike ducks his head as the metal spear of a walking stick whooshes into the zombie's forehead. Nick keeps pushing. The point goes right through the skull. The door flies open. One more shove and both zombie and stick are gone.

The chopper continues to rise as they watch the corpse land amongst it's undead brethren. Everyone breathes again.

MIKE

Damn. That was close.

NICK

Doc? You ok? You didn't get...

DOC

Bit? No. Maybe some scratches. I'm fine thanks to you two.

He peers out at the great bulk of Everest as they ascend. Its like being on an elevator on the outside of a building.

NICK

We're not far from the summit.

MIKE

Nope.



DOC

Let's hope you don't have to go  
that far, right?

Nick and Mike nod but a quick glance indicates what seems  
'impossible' has now become 'maybe'. Or even 'why not'...

BEN(O.S)

Hey guys? Everything ok? We saw  
what happened though it was blurry.

DOC

All good. I'll drop Nick and Mike  
off at Camp Three and head back  
down. Is the horde following?

BEN(O.S)

Yep. Hot on your trail by the look.

NICK

Shit, they don't even need to hear  
the bells. They've locked right in  
on us. Need nature to help now.

As if on cue, a RUMBLE from outside. The very air around the  
chopper ripples. Doc has to clamp the stick to stop the  
machine from yawing into the rock.

MIKE

Was that another tremor?

DOC

Yes. A big one.

NICK

Mingma was right. The gods aren't  
happy. Maybe they are listening...

The chopper angles out away from the mountain before  
continuing to ascend.

LATER

Camp Three is visible. Doc slows the machine, looking for a  
flat spot. Suddenly, the radio CRACKLES...

BEN(O.S)

Uh, guys? I'm tracking the horde.  
They've sped up! It's incredible.

DOC

Shit.

NICK

Doc? Don't land here. Take us to  
Camp Four. No arguments.

DOC

Oh man...

MIKE

He's right, Doc. We have to go  
higher. Whatever it takes.

Doc takes a deep breath, exhales emotion out. Nods slowly.  
Pulls back on the stick to take the bird up...

BEN(O.S)

Good luck. I'm bringing the drone  
back. I'll send it up in the  
morning to see where the horde is.

EXT. EVEREST - CAMP FOUR - DAY

The chopper lands. Remnants of old expeditions litter the  
site. Nick and Mike struggle out, unload their gear. Doc  
waves as the chopper lifts off. The afternoon sun starts to  
fade as they set up a tent. Mike checks the oxygen.

NICK

At least we can get some sleep. We  
have a few hours up our sleeve.

MIKE

That's something.

A tremor ripples under their feet. The sound of ice CRACKING  
further down the slope.

NICK

Let's hope the mountain can kill  
off these things.

Another tremor sees them climb into the tent. More rockfall  
from the mountain near them. Some aftershocks...

LATER

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAY

The laptop vibrates across the table as the ground shakes.  
From the icefall comes the SOUND of tons of ice falling.  
Hannah's coffee spills from the cup.

BEN

Christ, that's a bad one. Hopefully  
it's taking out more zombies.

STEVE

Here comes the doc.

The chopper becomes visible above the glacier. It lands.  
Hannah goes to the kitchen tent. Steve goes to meet Doc,  
shakes his hand. Another tremor hits as they walk back.

DOC

The tremors are getting worse. This  
could be twenty sixteen again.

Hannah emerges with a coffee for Doc. He nods, sips.

DOC

Thank you. I needed that.

STEVE

So what happens now?

HANNAH

We wait. We rest up. Nick and Mike  
have at least a few hours to sleep.

BEN

The horde won't stop now. They'll  
keep on during the night.

DOC

If there's no other option...I may  
have to go up in the chopper  
and...I dunno, crash it into them.

Hannah is stunned. Steve and Ben exchange bleak looks.

HANNAH

Surely it won't come to that?

DOC

There may be no other choice.

He closes his eyes, sighs. He leans forward over Ben,  
staring at the screen, mumbles...

HANNAH

Doc? You ok?

A drop of black liquid falls in slow motion onto the back of  
Ben's hand as he works the keyboard. He examines it.

BEN  
What the hell?

He glances up and behind as another drop splashes onto the table. Doc sways on his feet, looking at his wrist. In between glove and jacket - a bite mark oozing the black gore. Hannah's eyes widen. She runs to the kitchen tent.

BEN  
No...jesus no.

He jumps to his feet, the table rocking. Steve scrambles to save the laptop from damage, confused as to whats going on.

STEVE  
Here, settle down.

Doc holds his hand up to his face, studies the blood. His body ripples as the inky fluid moves through his veins. Now, Steve realizes, slumps to the ground. Ben is in tears.

DOC  
It must've...the zombie...I thought  
it didn't get near me. Ah well...

BEN  
Fuck...it's not fair, Doc.

He takes a step towards Doc, arms out.

DOC  
No. Stay back. You must...kill me.

The change begins. His trek pants split, thighs enlarge. His jacket rips. The veins of his neck become like black rope.

Hannah steps from the tent. She holds one of the Russian rifles. She points it at Doc.

DOC  
Hurry...

Already his voice is becoming guttural...feral.

STEVE  
Han? Can you...let us do it.

HANNAH  
No. Step out of the way, please.

Doc falls to his knees as Hannah moves closer to him. His head rolls back, jaws changing into savage fangs. Hannah aims the gun, concentrating on a fast kill. A silence...

Suddenly, Doc transforms fully, leaps to his feet, SCREECHES at the top of his infected lungs. Steve takes off to intercept the Doc zombie as it lunges at Hannah.

BEN

Oh fuck.

Hannah SCREAMS, stumbles backwards away from the attack. Steve dives at the last minute at Doc's feet, sending the creature to its knees again. It turns to swipe hard at Steve as he gets up. He flies off into a tent.

Doc turns back to Hannah with a HOWL. But she has regained her composure and steps forward with the gun. As the undead Doc locks eyes with her, she pulls the trigger.

Doc's head explodes, the black ichor spraying the rocks. Dead on it's feet, the Doc zombie topples back. Hannah sinks to the ground, sobbing. Steve gets up painfully, makes his way to console her. Ben weeps as he stares at Doc's corpse.

A fluttering NOISE above their heads...the raven swoops down as if to taunt them. Circles, CAWING before flying off towards the icefall. Ben watches it. Anger set on his face.

STEVE

Nick and Mike...they're on their own now. We should call them.

BEN

Yes. In a moment...

Hannah stirs, gets to her feet. Stands staring forlornly at the chopper. Steve and Ben join her.

HANNAH

I'll fly this damned thing if I have to. We can't abandon our friends. We won't...

STEVE

Han, I know it's tough but--

BEN

I can fly it.

Hannah and Steve turn to him. He has a sad face on. SIGHS.

BEN

I did lessons a couple of years ago. It was a birthday present from a rich aunty. Good ol' Aunty Pat.

HANNAH

Oh. Can you remember how to?

BEN

Not really. But I guess I'll have to, right?

STEVE

I...bloody hell. This trek just keeps better. It's insane.

They embrace as the light fades.

EXT. EVEREST - CAMP FOUR - DAY

The view behind them is stupendous. But getting their flimsy tent up is the main priority for Nick and Mike. The camp itself is tiny. A scrap of humanity perched on the side of Everest. A cache of oxygen cylinders, some food and water.

NICK

We should have a few hours up our sleeves. Maybe...

MIKE

We need to sleep. Surely the horde can't get this high tonight. I'll radio the guys.

He turns on the two-way. Before he can speak, it CRACKLES. A voice, faint...it's Steve.

STEVE(O.S)

Nick, Mike? You there?

MIKE

We're here, buddy. The weather is clear but it will be dark soon.

There's a pause. Other VOICES in the background. CRYING too.

STEVE(O.S)

We've got...we've got some bad news. The Doc is dead. He was bitten. Started turning...we had to...we had to kill him.

NICK

Oh man. That is just...jesus.

MIKE

No. It's not fair. Damn it all...

A silence for a few moments.

BEN(O.S)

I know. So many good people...gone.  
But we won't give up on this. Guys,  
if I need to, I'll fly the chooper  
up myself to help you.

Nick and Mike exchange wry, weary smiles.

NICK

Why does it not surprise me that  
you would know how to?

MIKE

Nothing surprises me anymore.

BEN(O.S)

Well, hopefully you can get some  
sleep and see what morning brings.  
I'll send the drone up at first  
light. Take care, bud---

The radio cuts off abruptly. Nick and Mike sit for a moment  
then crawl towards the tent, energy low.

NICK

Time for food and sleep.

MIKE

Shall we take turns to keep watch?

NICK

No. We need to both rest up. And  
there's no guarantee we won't fall  
asleep anyway. But we should keep  
moving up when we wake and the  
weather holds. I'll set my phone  
alarm for eight hours from now.

MIKE

Let's hope the zombies slow down.

They disappear into the tent. Once again the sun drops  
behind the great mountains.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - PRE DAWN

Ben is already at the table, setting up the screen. Hannah emerges from her tent. It's a clear morning but very cold.

BEN

Sending the drone up now.

HANNAH

I'll make coffee and wake Steve.

BEN

Let him sleep a bit longer. It's gonna be a long day.

The radio CRACKLES. Ben turns the volume up.

NICK(O.S).

Morning, guys. We're nearly to the Hilary Step. We slept really well and left at two a.m.

BEN

Damn, you boys are legends. You can tackle K2 after this.

NICK(O.S)

Yeah, good idea. Hopefully there's no zombies there.

LAUGHTER in the B.G from Mike that dissolves into a hacking COUGH. Ben looks at Hannah. Her eyes are closed. Sad...

BEN

Any sight of them? I'm sending the drone up now.

NICK(O.S)

No visuals. But they'll be coming.

HANNAH

Hang in there, buddies. We'll be up in the chopper if need be.

NICK(O.S)

Cheers, Han. We'll sign off now. Keep us posted.

The radio clicks off. Ben stares at it then gets up, prepares the drone. Steve comes out of the tent, yawning.



STEVE

I heard them on the radio. Is Mike sick? He sounded bad.

HANNAH

They are both struggling. Their bodies are taking huge hits. Yet they keep going.

BEN

As we must. As they want us too.

Back at the table, works the keyboard. The drone rises, blades spinning. Higher then it's off up the mountain.

HANNAH

I'll make breakfast.

STEVE

And I'll pack gear we may need for the chopper.

They busy themselves. Ben watches the screen.

BEN

(whispers)

We may need a miracle...

LATER

EXT. EVEREST - NEAR THE HILARY STEP - DAWN

The sunlight seems to bounce off the peaks around them. Nick and Mike labor up, each breath and step a milestone. Suddenly, a tremor...rocks and ice fall from a cliff face to their left. A mist of snow envelops them. They huddle.

NICK

Jesus, that was closer than the ones from last night.

MIKE

Mingma said...the mountain was...unhappy...

His words are punctuated by painful breaths. He's at the end of his tether. Nick takes out the radio.

NICK

Ben? We're approaching the Hilary Step. Any views yet?

BEN(O.S)

The drone is over Camp Four...I can see the tent there. Nothing moving.

NICK

Shit, surely they can't be past there yet? That means...

BEN(O.S)

Be positive, mate. You heard those tremors overnight. Those fuckers were probably swept off the mountain. They can't be moving that fast, right?

Mike is rummaging in his backpack. Takes out the syringes. Jabs one into his thigh through his clothes. Lies back.

NICK

All we can do is keep going up.

He watches Mike's breathing settle. Mike looks at him, smiles. Nick grins back, takes the other syringe, pumps it into his own leg. Feels the effect kick in.

BEN(O.S)

The drone is getting higher. Still no sign...oh fuck. I see them...damn, looks like ten are left. And they are moving so fast.

Nick winces. At the same time, he hears noises down the slope. SCREECHING...HOWLING...

Mike sits up. Slowly gets to his feet. Now the undead are visible, maybe fifty metres away.

NICK

Gotta go, buddy. We got contact.

BEN(O.S)

Ah shit, I'll see if I can cut them some more.

Mike is making his way to the steel ladder that leads up the Hilary Step. Nick feels in his backpack, takes out the shotgun from the medi chopper. Checks the load. Two shells left. No spares.

NICK

Start climbing, Mike. I'll hold them off.

Mike stops, turns, limps back to stand next to Nick.

NICK  
What are you doing? Climb!

MIKE  
Ain't leaving you, brother.

Nick SIGHS. Watches as the zombies get closer.

NICK  
Ok. Let's end this.

He aims the shotgun, waiting...

EXT. EVEREST - DAWN - DRONE POV

Swooping down, the undead ahead and below. The tiny figures of Nick and Mike near the STEP.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - DAWN

Ben at the keyboard, Steve and Hannah hovering.

HANNAH  
Kill them, Ben. Kill them all.

BEN  
I will. Just have to...ah fuck.

STEVE  
What is it?

BEN  
Losing power and speed. The air is too thin. I can't control it enough to hit them.

WHAM...Hannah slams her fist on the table. Slumps into a chair, sobs in frustration. Ben and Steve can only watch the drama unfold on the screen...

POV - the drone gets lower, right above the zombies.

EXT. EVEREST - THE HILARY STEP - MORNING

The lead zombie is only metres away. Nick steadies the shotgun. BOOM. The zombie's head disintegrates. A RUMBLING sound from nearby. Mike peers up at the cliff face. More chunks of ice fall. The next zombie approaches at speed.

BOOM - it too gets its foul head blown off. Nick turns to run to the ladder, but Mike grabs his arm, hauls him with a huge effort towards the edge of the abyss on their left.

NICK

Mike, what the fuck---

He sees the remaining zombies swarm up to them as his mind registers the CRACK of the entire cliff face toppling down in the space they were. He hides his face as ice hits his body like frozen darts. The NOISE is deafening.

It feels like hours but finally the avalanche moves further down the slope and a calm settles at the foot of the STEP.

Nick and Mike get up slowly. No sign of the zombie corpses or their 'living' brethren. Just a long new ridge of rock and ice. The sunlight reflects as Everest settles...

Nick and Mike lean against each other, exhausted but jubilant. The radio CRACKLES as the drone hovers above the cloud of snow and rock.

BEN(O.S)

Whoa, that was awesome. There is no way any zombie could survive that. You did it. You fucking did it!

Hannah and Steve YELL in the background, overjoyed.

NICK

No, mate. We did it. As a team.

MIKE

You betcha. Love you guys.

HANNAH(O.S)

We love you too, Mike. Can't wait to see you both down here.

Nick and Mike look at each other with pained expressions.

NICK

Well, guys? We, ah, we don't think we'll be coming back down. Truth is we have limited oxygen. And we're both knackered. We used the injections but they aren't enough.

As he speaks, Mike reaches out, clutches Nick's hand. Squeezes as they contemplate the words. A silence then the reaction from EBC...

HANNAH(O.S)

No. Do not talk that way. You can make it. Take your time. There's oxygen at the lower camps. You---

MIKE

Hannah dear...there's no chance we get down. We can see out to the east. There's a big storm rolling in. It will blow us off Everest.

STEVE(O.S)

Hannah's right. You can't give up.

BEN(O.S)

Mike's right. I'm checking the forecast now. It's a bad one.

Nick starts COUGHING, a deep rasping hack. Mike holds him steady until it passes.

NICK

I'm sorry, Han. Our bodies are damaged. We probably have altitude sickness already. We're spent.

The only SOUND now is Hannah weeping...

MIKE

We've discussed it. We're going to try for the summit as it's so close and the weather is good for now.

(beat)

We figured it would be nice to get up there. Lay down and...fall asleep. Not a bad way to go, right?

BEN(O.S)

Bullshit! I'm not letting you go. I can fly the chopper. Pick you up before the storm hits. There's medical gear here to help you.

NICK

Come on, Ben, you know that's crazy talk. The chopper can't get to the summit. I won't have you risk it.

BEN(O.S)

It's been done before. A French dude landed on the summit in twenty eleven. Was tricky but he did it.

MIKE

I don't...no, Nick's right. We--

BEN(O.S)

We're not listening. We're coming up. We're not leaving you. See---

Suddenly the radio cuts out. Nick and Mike look at each before shaking their heads and LAUGHING. That quickly segues into COUGHING fits.

NICK

Damn lunatic Aussies. I guess we better keep moving.

MIKE

I don't like it. It's too dangerous. But I'm glad they're going to try. That's kind of cool.

They check their oxygen levels before turning to approach the Step. Away to the east, huge black clouds loom...

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - MORNING

Hannah switches the radio on and off but it's dead.

STEVE

We've lost the signal.

BEN

Due to the storm I guess.

HANNAH

How soon till you get the chopper up? We don't have a lot of time.

BEN

Maybe an hour or so. I have to get used to the controls and the conditions. Let me have a look.

He heads over to the chopper, gets in, sits in the pilot seat, examining the setup. Hannah gives up on the radio, checks the weather screen.

STEVE

They should be near the summit by then. At least we can watch them with the drone.

HANNAH

The storm is intensifying. And it's picking up speed.

A curse from the chopper. Ben gets out, walks back.

STEVE

What's wrong?

BEN

Fuck all fuel left. Won't be able to have much of a practice run.

He stares up at Everest. Hands in pockets.

BEN

Well, at least I won't have time to be scared. Right, guys?

EXT. EVEREST - HILARY STEP - MORNING

A ladder is bolted to the steepest part of the rock face. Nick and Mike examine it from below. The clouds higher up part for a moment. A tantalizing view of the summit...

MIKE

It's so close, brother.

NICK

I just hope Ben...the chopper, damn it, they'll end up...

MIKE

Keep the faith. I got a feeling they'll be alright.

LATER

Nick is at the top of the step, lying on his stomach. He peers down at Mike who is on the ladder a few feet below.

NICK

That's it, mate. You're doing fine.

Mike rests, trying to draw in breath. He gazes around at the panoramic view. Adjusts his feet to climb another rung.

MIKE

Feeling good. oh boy, I wish Roddy was here. He'd love this.

NICK  
I'm sure he's watching us.

MIKE  
Yep. I reckon so. Ok, here we go.

He takes a step up, settles. Slides his clip along the fixed line next to the ladder.

Suddenly, Nick sees a blur of movement from the mist further down the slope. Somebody - or something - emerges.

Stops to SCREECH...

NICK  
Fuck! Mike, climb. CLIMB!

Mike glances down. One zombie somehow survives. Snarling, fully changed...hungry. It races towards the ladder.

EXT. EVEREST BASE CAMP - MORNING

Ben, Steve and Hannah stare in shock at the screen.

BEN  
Jesus. Will this hell ever end?

HANNAH  
Ben, you have to make the drone attack it. Hurry!

Ben works the remote, moves the drone closer.

BEN  
I don't...I don't think I can do it without harming Mike.

HANNAH  
(screams)  
It doesn't matter! Kill it!

Ben nods, bites his lip. Before he can do anything, a dark shape smashes into the drone. There's a crunching SOUND before the screen goes dead.

BEN  
What...that fucking raven again.

Hannah is already running towards the chopper. Steve still stares at the screen before at her, a dazed look.



BEN  
Hannah, wait.

HANNAH  
There's no time. Fly this bloody  
thing! We need to get up there.

Ben stands quickly, knocking the table over. He runs to her.

BEN  
We can't all go. The weight at that  
altitude will be too much.

HANNAH  
You'll need help. We all go.

STEVE  
She's right.

Ben SIGHS. Gets in the cockpit. Sits for a moment,  
familiarizing himself with the controls. Steve and Hannah  
climb in, strap into the seats.

INT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT - MORNING

Ben pushes a button. The motor WHINES, the rotor blades  
start to spin. He nods, looks at the couple.

BEN  
I can do this. Just like a big  
drone, right?

Hannah manages a wan smile. She's close to tears. Steve  
gives Ben the thumbs up, hugs his fiancée.

BEN  
Let's go save our mates.

He increases the revs before easing back on the stick. The  
chopper rises. EBC shrinks below them. To the right, the  
bulk of Everest looms. At a hundred feet, Ben banks the  
chopper and they head up over the icefall...

EXT. EVEREST - HILARY STEP - MORNING

Mike moves the ladder painfully. His foot slips and he hangs  
by his hands for a moment, before regaining the rung.

NICK  
You have time. Concentrate.

MIKE

Brother, I'm spent. It's hopeless.  
We can fight it off.

NICK

I don't want to hear that talk.

The zombie Sherpa reaches the foot of the ladder.

NICK

Where's that Canadian spirit? Machu  
Picchu and all those other places?  
Come on, I can reach you.

He's lying fully on the rock, arms extended. Mike has  
another look down - the zombie is scrambling up the ladder.

NICK

Do it, mate. For Roddy and Mingma.  
Get up here and we can finish the  
last one with my icepick.

MIKE

Yes. I can...do that.

He climbs two more rungs. Reaches a hand up. Nick strains,  
forces his right hand further. Their hands touch.

NICK

One more step. Don't look down.

Mike sucks more oxygen. Climbs another rung. Nick takes his  
hand. Suddenly below, the zombie has swarmed up. It grabs  
Mike's left leg. HOWLS in triumph. Mike grunts.

MIKE

It's got me.

He kicks wildly but there's no energy left.. He glances down  
at the zombie, makes a decision. Nick doesn't see him unclip  
his line. He reaches down to take Mike's free hand just as  
Mike other foot slips off the rung. Now the entire weight of  
Mike and the zombie is on Nick's tired shoulders.

NICK

Oh christ. I won't let you fall,  
brother. But you have to try and  
kick it off. Get back on the rung.

Mike levers his free leg up and back on the rung. The zombie  
crawls further up his other leg, holding his calf.

MIKE

The icepick. Pass it down.

Nick nods, releases one hand, gropes for the icepick near him. Carefully lowers it to Mike before clutching Mike's other hand with both of his.

NICK

Kill it, Mike. Hurry.

Mike angles his body, swings the icepick down. It narrowly misses the zombie. Nick CURSES as the weight jolts his arms. The zombie looks up, SCREECHES. The jaws elongate.

Mike frantically swings the pick again. It hits the top of the zombie's head, knocking it to one side. The creature HISSES but doesn't let go.

NICK

One more, Mike. Kill the fucker.

Mike summons a final effort. But even as the pick swings up, the zombie bites deep into his leg. Mike SCREAMS, hammers the icepick down with renewed fury. The point drives deep into the undead skull, spewing black gore that freezes.

NICK

No, goddamn it...no.

He's trying to hold on, tears in his eyes. Watches as the zombie's life force vanishes and it falls back down the ladder. It hits the slope, slides down, gaining speed like a roller coaster. Then it's over the precipice and gone.

Mike pants, COUGHING into his mask. Claws his good leg back onto the rung. His wounded leg hangs, the ripped trek material already swelling. Nick stares down, physically and emotionally spent.

NICK

It's not fair. You deserved to make it, man. Fuck it all.

MIKE

You have to let me go. To end it.

NICK

No. Been enough death.

MIKE

I'm not climbing up. You won't be able to hold me forever.

He lets his free foot slip off. Nick YELLS as the weight smashes his shoulders again. Mike hangs, the icepick still in one hand. His lower body convulses as the black infection moves relentlessly through his body.

NICK

Not...letting...you go.

MIKE

Damn you, Aussie! In a few minutes I'll come up there and kill you. you need to end it now. For our friends. For all who have died.

(beat)

For me.

Now the infection is in his torso, rippling up to his brain. Already the black veins appear in his neck...

NICK

No.

A movement and the undead raven shoots out of nowhere to hover next to Mike. It CAWS at Nick, the stench of death spitting at him. Taunting him.

MIKE

I love you, brother.

As the inky fluid reaches his eyes, his body surges with power. He spins the icepick, swings it up hard to smash Nick's hand with the flat side. Nick SCREAMS as his hands open. As Mike starts to fall, he reaches out to snare the raven, which claws and SCREECHES. Smiles at Nick...

NICK

No!

As if in slow motion, Mike falls back, his body fully changed now. One huge HOWL and he vanishes into the swirling snow, clutching the frenzied raven to his chest.

Nick rips off his goggles, weeps openly, not feeling the harsh, cold air. He rests his head on his arms for a moment.

Finally lifts his head up, stares around, sits up. A thought comes to him. He searches in his jacket pocket, takes out the accursed bells that caused some much trouble.

NICK

Rest easy, Mike.

He hurls the bells out into the abyss. They make a final TING as they fall out of sight. Nick crumples into a ball, numb in body and mind. Unmoving even as fresh tremors ROCK the mountain...

EXT. EVEREST - MORNING

Down the slope, a wide crevasse looms to receive the still 'living' Mike and the raven. Then they are falling into a huge natural cavern like Gandalf and the Balrog in Moria...

INT. EVEREST - CAVERN - MORNING

Mike and the raven hit the bottom of the chamber hard. The cavern floor is strewn with some of the earlier horde. Seconds later, the bells tumble in to land nearby.

Another tremor. Rock and ice pours down into the cavern.

A final rumble and once more Cholornungma is content...

LATER

EXT. EVEREST SUMMIT - DAY

A few tattered prayer flags from old expeditions flutter at the top of Everest. The curve of the Earth visible to the west. To the east, the impending storm moves closer.

Movement over the ridge. A figure, crawling on all fours. A few feet from the top, Nick struggles to his feet, stands unsteady. focuses before limping to the top of the world.

NICK

For you, Mike. For us.

He sits down. Gazes at the stupendous view. Takes a digital camera that somehow has survived. Snaps a few selfies. Some will be blurry but it doesn't matter now. He puts the camera back in his pocket. Eyes the coming storm. Lies back.

NICK

Mike was right. This isn't such a bad place to die. I just wish...I could see my friends one last time.

He can feel his body shutting down. Stares up at the blue sky, the edges already darkening.

NICK

So tired.

He's asleep in seconds, brain slips into unconsciousness. So he doesn't hear it. The SOUND of an engine...

Like a giant butterfly in a dream, the chopper gently descends to touch down near Nick's body. Steve and Hannah appear, out the door, moving to him. Ben fights to keep the chopper steady at this immense altitude.

The couple drag/slid Nick back to the chopper and in, even as the maelstrom hits the east face of Everest. The chopper lifts off into the buffeting winds, bouncing like a raft in the ocean towards the Tibetan side.

It's touch and go for a moment before Ben wrestles the machine into some control, and they head to EBC...

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

CLOSE UP - Nick's face, serene, body wrapped in blankets, His eyes flutter, open. The engine noise is immense.

HIS POV - Hannah smiles, fixes an IV line to his arm. Steve concerned. Nick turns his head to see Ben in the cockpit.

HANNAH

Stay calm, Nick. You're safe.

NICK

I...you flew to the top?

HANNAH

Yes.

STEVE

We didn't see Mike up there with you. Is he...gone?

NICK

Yes. But he...

(coughs)

He saved the world.

He drifts back into oblivion as Hannah and Steve weep. Ben peers back over his shoulder, tears in his eyes, before he returns to the controls and getting them home...

EXT. EVEREST - DAY

POV - the great bulk of Everest, the storm raging at the summit as the chopper swoops away and ROARS over us...

EXT. EVEREST - BELOW THE HILARY STEP - DAY

A line of CLIMBERS roped together heading towards the summit. Suddenly, a hole opens beneath the feet of the figure at the end. He vanishes from sight.

SUPER - THIRTY YEARS LATER

INT. EVEREST - CAVERN - DAY

Over the years, the cavern has partially opened in area due to earth tremors and natural geological movement. The climber falls in dim light, YELLING before the line pulls him up with a jerk. He hangs about ten feet over a huge mound of rocks and ice. Radio STATIC from his helmet...

CLIMBER(ON MIC)

Whoa, that was scary. Yeah, I'm fine. Looks like a natural cavern.

(beat)

Wait, don't haul me up yet. I can see something on the cavern floor...lower me down a few more feet and I'll light a flare.

Way above him, tiny lights appear as his buddies peer down. The climber hangs for a moment before the line drops slowly. He touches the rock floor, unattaches from the rope.

CLIMBER(ON MIC)

I can see...damn, it looks like old bodies...yeah, probably climbers from years ago. Spooky down here.

A pause then the red fire as he ignites a flare. Holds it up. Amongst the rubble, some of the zombie corpses, perfectly preserved by the cold. Something glints in the harsh light. The climber bends to pick up an object.

A faint TING as he holds the sacred bells to his face. Examines them before putting them in his pocket. He has a last look around before going back to the rope. Hooks up.

CLIMBER(ON MIC)

Hmm...found some old bells. Ok, guys, you can haul me up now. Then it's full steam to the summit.

He tosses the expiring flare to one side. There's an sudden movement from the cave floor. An explosion of fetid wings...

The climber turns to see the raven launch at his face, the CAW echoing across time from Hell itself...

BLACK