

NOT THAT STORY, THIS ONE

Written by

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Adapted from S.S Walia's "The Sikhs are Coming!"

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Summary. Jack Singh is a Montreal screenwriter who reluctantly moves to Vancouver to work with a director known for her misrepresentation of Sikhs in her movies. Commissioned to write a screenplay on the Komagata Maru Incident, Jack tries to do justice to the story but finds the director--funded by the Canadian and Indian government--more interested in perpetuating the lies and propaganda of the past than presenting a fair and balanced account of the incident. Jack can't seem to get any scene right as the director explains her vision and the importance of presenting these Sikh passengers as hard-core freedom fighters, her euphemism for 'terrorists'. When his research indicates the grand majority of the passengers were ordinary farmers who were simply seeking a better opportunity for their families, he finds it difficult if not impossible to present his ancestors as hard-core 'Freedom Fighters'. He soon discovers the director wants to present a movie of freedom-fighters Canada was justified in excluding and India was justified in massacring. Jack struggles with the script and finds himself torn between his ambition to be a produced writer and his duty to his ancestors.

Characters

Rupa. 55. A director/producer from Vancouver.

Jack. 27. A writer from Montreal.

Paul. 38. A journalist in Surrey.

Elisa. 24. Latino. Tall and big boned.

Sue. 24. Waitress.

Hopkinson. Early thirties. Tall.

Reid. Late thirties. Thick moustache. Waxed at the ends.

Stevens. Forties. Short and devious politician.

Munchi. Late twenties. Sikh passenger on the Komagata Maru.

Mewa. Sikh witness to racism, discrimination, and injustice.

Bird. Lawyer for the passengers of the Kogata Maru.

Ram. 27. Singer for Indian band, Jahnuce.

Qor. 24. Singer for Indian band, Jahnuce.

Vinay. 25. Struggling writer.

Ajay. 26. Struggling writer.

FADE IN

EXT/INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- MORNING

A busy street in downtown Vancouver.

Pedestrians hurrying about their business.

Jack searches for a street he cannot find.

He walks by an ally.

Walks backward.

Realizes this is the street.

Turns into the ally.

He heads toward a production office.
 On the door he reads "RKK PRODUCTIONS"
 The door opens and--
 Paul walks out.
 Paul gives Jack a dirty look.

PAUL

Sell out.

Jack doesn't respond.
 He doesn't even know what to make of the insult.
 He watches Paul walk away from him.
 A moment later he enters the building.
 He sits in the waiting room.
 Posters of Sikhs.
 Some show these Sikhs idol worshipping.
 Jack sighs at these misrepresentations.
 Rupa walks out and smiles at Jack.

RUPA

Jack!

JACK

Ms. Kulah. Nice to meet you. Love
 your work.

She smiles.
 Charmed.

RUPA

Come, come. Come in my office.

Opulent office.
 Posters of her movies.
 Rupa sits at her desk.
 Jack takes a seat.
 They stare at each other for a long moment.
 Rupa breaks the silence.

RUPA (CONT'D)

How long have you worked for
 Turdukin?

JACK

Too long.

RUPA

Anything produced?

JACK

Some Reality TV?

RUPA
They write those?

Jack nods.
Rupa smiles at the absurdity.

RUPA (CONT'D)
Not very 'Reality'.

JACK
We script almost everything.

Rupa laughs at this.

RUPA
Well, it's a good quick buck.

JACK
It seems to me Turdukin is more interested in Canadian grants and subsidiaries than actually making movies. They're getting a bunch of cash just because I'm Sikh.

Rupa smiles.

RUPA
I know the producers. Good friends actually. They recommended you.

Jack shifts uncomfortably.
He didn't realize Rupa knew his bosses.

JACK
I didn't mean--

RUPA
Don't worry. You're entitled to your opinion.

She smiles again.

Do you know why you're here?

Jack shakes his head.

JACK
No.

RUPA
Have you heard of the Komagata Maru?

He shakes his head again.

RUPA (CONT'D)

No matter. I need a writer with your background. To write a film that does justice to an incident that happened a century ago. Hot topic in Canada right now.

JACK

I don't even think I can say it.

He tries to say Komagata Maru.
Over and over again.
Messes up each time.
Rupa grins.

RUPA

I'm sure you'll get it. I'll give you the broad strokes.
It's basically about a ship of Freedom Fighters who bring their protests against the British to Canada and get refused entry because, from what I read, the Canadians didn't want them to hold their riots in Vancouver or stir up trouble with Canadians.

JACK

What else did they expect?

Rupa grins.
Manipulating this writer will be easy.

RUPA

I can give you two thousand a week.

Jack's eyes widen.

JACK

For what?

RUPA

To write a script.

Shaking his head in disbelief.

JACK

To write a script for you?

RUPA

Yes, Jack. For me.

JACK

Two thousand? To write?

RUPA
I take it you're interested.

JACK
Hell, ya!

Rupa smiles.
She hands him an envelop of cash.
An advance.
Jack opens the envelop and stares at the cash.

RUPA
Good. We'll put you up at an Inn
close by. There's a cafe in the
area. Bunch of writers and artists
like to hang around there. You
won't find Vancouver like Montreal,
but you'll see...the city grows on
you.

Rupa hands him a stack of files.
Jack stares at the folder, amazed.

RUPA (CONT'D)
Research.

JACK
Awesome!

EXT/INT. MOTEL DOMINION

Jack walks toward the motel practicing how to say the name of
the ship: Komagata Maru.
As he reaches the motel he finally gets it.
He can say Komagata Maru.
He says it a few times.
He stares at the motel.
He walks inside.
Large lobby with a small couch.
A hallway leads to the stairwell.
No elevators.
He walks up to a woman standing behind the counter.

JACK (CONT'D)
Checking in.

ELISA
Name?

JACK
Jack Singh.

She regards the computer.

ELISA
RKK Productions. Cool. I'm an
actress.

JACK
I'm writer.

ELISA
For real?

JACK
For real.

ELISA
What do you write about?

A silence.
Jack's really not sure.
Anything I get paid to write.

ELISA (CONT'D)
What do you like to write?

Another silence.
Good question.
Tough question.

ELISA (CONT'D)
What kind of writer are you?

Yet another silence.
She snaps her fingers.
Jack wakes from his thoughts.

JACK
I'm going to write a movie about
the Komagata Maru.

ELISA
Komagata-Who?

Jack laughs.
His reaction exactly when he first heard the name.

ELISA (CONT'D)
What is it?

JACK
I...I...don't really know. I've got
this.

ELISA
Files?

JACK

Research.

Jack smiles.
 Takes his key.
 Heads to his room.
 Opens the door.
 Walks inside.
 He scans his room.
 Dilapidated furniture.
 Wall paper peeling off.
 Creaking ceiling fan.
 Lies on the bed.
 Opens the folder.
 Reads the first article.
 A newspaper from 1914.
 He laughs at the ridiculousness of the article.
 Ridiculous lies about Sikhs sacrificing chickens for religion.
 As he reads on he gets very serious.
 He reads through the night.

INT. INDIAN VILLAGE 1914

A Sikh villager hugs his two kids, wife and parents.
 He kneels to face his son and daughter.

SIKH VILLAGER

(In Punjabi)

I won't be gone for long. Soon you
 will all join me.

He hands them a bill.
 The crisp bill advertises for farmers.
 The offer is for free land.
 Come for your free land in Canada.
 He got this from a friend who had visited Europe.
 The bill was never meant for India.

A soldier gave it to me. There is
 so much free land in Canada the
 King is giving it away!

He laughs out loud.
 His dreams are about to be realized.
 Their dreams are about to come true.
 Land.
 Farming.
 Prosperity.

He is practically begging for
 people to come over and farm it.
 And not just British Subjects!

(MORE)

SIKH VILLAGER (CONT'D)
 Germans! Italians! Russians! There
 is so much land!

The bill was created to attract white farmers in Europe.
 Not British Subjects in India.
 Canada needs people to farm acres of empty land.
 By 'people' the bill forgets to mention white Europeans only.
 The father beams at the bill.
 Free land for farmers!
 The Sikh villager stands proudly.
 Walks away from his family.
 His family watches him walk away.
 He closes his eyes as sadness overcomes him.
 He must make the sacrifice.
 It is an opportunity for future generations.
 He cannot turn his back on this.
 With one last look at his family, he walks down the dirt road
 with a hand-made bag full of his possessions.

INT. NEWSROOM, VANCOUVER 1914

The writer walks into editor's room.
 He stands in front of the Editor's desk.
 The editor stares at him, furious.
 A long silence.
 The editor holds out a piece of paper.

EDITOR

What is this?

WRITER

Article.

EDITOR

Can't print this!

WRITER

What's the problem?

EDITOR

Since when are women people?

WRITER

It's a perspective.

EDITOR

The wrong one.

Writer looks down.
 Defeated.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

What's next? Chinese and Indians are people, too?! Doesn't work. Not for our paper. I print this I lose my advertisers. I lose them I lose our funds. I lose our funds, you lose your job. Understood?

Writer nods.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Or worse. We get replaced by Chinese and women. And that kid is the end of Canada as we know it.

Writer takes in a deep breath.
He walks away.

INT. MOTEL DOMINION

Jack wakes up.
Pictures and articles strewn across his bed.
He sits up and stares at a picture of a Sikh caricature.
He's serious and unsmiling.
The story is already getting under his skin.
Hard to believe this happened in Canada.

EXT. MOTEL DOMINION

Jack walks away.
Searches for the cafe to continue his research.
He walks down the sidewalk, taking in Vancouver.

INT/EXT. CAFE

Jack walks into the cafe.
He orders a coffee.
Grabs it.
Pays.
Finds a seat.
Spots Paul writing at a desk.
Spots Jahnuce, an Indo-Canadian pop band sitting at a table.
He smiles.
He stands to approach the musical duo.
But they sigh in annoyance when they see him approaching.

JACK

Jahnuce?

RAM

Let me guess. Autograph?

Jack is caught by surprise.

He grabs a napkin from another table.
He places it before Ram.

RAM (CONT'D)
Thirty dollars.

Qor, the other member, sighs.

JACK
Thirty dollars? Don't have that.

Ram puts his pen down.
Refuses to sign.
Jack's face contorts.

JACK (CONT'D)
Haven't heard from you two since
that Mc.Donald's Happy Meal gig in
India. Great value-add to the
burger.

They stare up at him.
A long silence.

JACK (CONT'D)
Cool. You were all I listened to
when I was in elementary.

RAM
Glad to hear it.

An uncomfortable silence.
The duo stare up at Jack.
They want him to leave.
Paul observes this.
Jack takes the hint.

JACK
Well...cool to see you guys.

RAM
Bye.
Qor sighs.
Jack walks away.
Paul tracks Jack, then goes back to his writing.

JACK
(To himself)
Assholes.

Jack sits back down.
Goes through his research.

EXT. DHABA, INDIA 1914

Sikh villager sits with a Sikh soldier.
The Sikh villager seems distressed.

SIKH SOLDIER

(In Punjabi)

The ticket is expensive because the ship is chartered. The Dominion of Canadia cannot deny our rights of free movement within the Empire. So they made a law saying only those coming on continuous voyage may enter. Then they put pressure on shipping companies to halt all ships from journeying between Canada and India.

SIKH VILLAGER

(In Punjabi)

But we will be allowed in? It's all my family's savings.

SIKH SOLDIER

(In Punjabi)

If we are not, then it is clear we are not really subjects of the Empire and everything we've done has been for a lie. If we are not subjects, then why should we fight their wars? Why should we pay their taxes? Why should we swear allegiance to their King? We do so only because we get the rights of subjects. Some backward Dominion cannot deny us of these rights. We've earned our right as subjects in blood.

SIKH VILLAGER

(In Punjabi)

And sweat.

SIKH SOLDIER

(In Punjabi)

Yes. And sweat.

SIKH VILLAGER

(In Punjabi)

I will work there. Save. Then send for my family.

The Sikh Soldier smiles at the villager.

SIKH SOLDIER

(In Punjabi)

I must go, brother. There are rumors of War in Europe. I want to see my family before I'm deployed.

They embrace.

INT/EXT. CAFE

Jack peruses photocopied news articles.
He grabs a caricature of a Sikh.
A news article.
Reads.

INT. NEWSROOM, VANCOUVER 1914

The editor storms toward the writer's desk.
Slams an article on his desk.

EDITOR

What's this quote?

WRITER

Laurier. Just quoting one of his speeches, which directly contradicts his exclusion orders.

EDITOR

I know what it is. We can't print this. That's not our angle. In fact we don't even need to mention that they are British subjects. We don't need to lie. We just omit some information. In all honesty it just confuses the story. Makes it seem as though they've got rights.

WRITER

They do. They fought for the Empire in Hong Kong and Africa. Most of them are extremely loyal to the King.

EDITOR

I understand that, but it's still the wrong angle for our paper. Listen, kid. Pull out the Laurier quote about not being able to deny British subjects their rights to free movement within the Empire.

WRITER

But--

EDITOR

(Interrupting)

No buts. Not if you want to be published.

The writer swallows.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

If you ask me, they're revolutionaries. They want to rable rouse. That's why they're here and that's our angle.

WRITER

That's a joke, right?

EDITOR

No. That's tomorrow's headline.

A cartoonist brings the editor his latest caricature.
The editor laughs.
He shows the caricature to the writer.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Look!

The editor smiles.
The writer doesn't.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

You really want to let these damn Hindoos in!

WRITER

Sikh.

EDITOR

Animals!

Writer sighs.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

I want something that sells. No bleeding heart nonsense about how they helped build and protect the Empire. I want fear.

WRITER

Fear?

EDITOR

Fear.

WRITER

What fear?

EDITOR

I don't know. Talk to that
Hopkinson fellow. He says they're
all terrorists with the sole
ambition of destroying Canada.

The writer sighs, again.

WRITER

He has to say that. His livelihood
depends on it.

EDITOR

So does yours.

WRITER

None of his reports check out with
my sources. He's an exaggerationist
and an extortionist. I'm not using
him or his reports. No one with any
integrity would.

EDITOR

Use him. Not because you want to.
Because you have to. And
exaggerationist is not a word.

The editor returns to his office.
The writer stares at his article.
He rips it in two.
Sets a blank page in his typewriter.
Stares at the blank page.
He doesn't know what to write.

INT/EXT. CAFE

Jack sips his coffee.
He scans the cafe.
Elisa walks in holding a book on voice acting.
She spots him.
Walks to his table.

ELISA

How's the novel going?

JACK

Script.

ELISA
Script?

JACK
Just research right now.

Elisa stares at him in admiration.
A long moment.

ELISA
I don't know how writers do it. I
tried a few times. Can't get past
the first page.

JACK
Happens to the best.

ELISA
You just saying that to make me
feel better.

JACK
No. That's the truth.

ELISA
For real?

JACK
For real.

Another silence.
Elisa loses herself in a reverie.
Then she suddenly snaps out of it.

ELISA
Maybe you can help me write a
script?

JACK
You have an idea for a movie?

ELISA
It's brewing.

JACK
I bet it is. What's it about?

She doesn't answer.
Again, she loses herself in a reverie.
A long silence.

JACK (CONT'D)
You want to sit down?

ELISA
For real?

JACK
For real.

ELISA
Thanks but I just came by to give
back a book a friend lent me.

JACK
Oh, yeah. What book?

He peers at the book.

ELISA
Voice acting.

JACK
You're learning to voice act?

ELISA
Anything to improve. See you at the
motel.

JACK
That sounds...strange...

Elisa laughs.

ELISA
It does, doesn't it? But good
strange.

Jack blushes.
She walks away.
Hands the book to the waitress.
They embrace.
Talk.
Then Elisa heads toward the door.
She waves goodbye to Jack as she exits.
Jack smiles and waves goodbye.

INT. IMMIGRATION INTERROGATION ROOM, VANCOUVER 1914

A Sikh is being interrogated.
Hopkinson tries to interpret Punjabi.
Tries.

HOPKINSON
(In Hindi)
Why the Dominion of Canada?

BRITISH SUBJECT 01

(In Punjabi)
You speak Punjabi?

HOPKINSON

(In Hindi)
Yes. Why the Dominion of Canada?

BRITISH SUBJECT 01

(In Punjabi)
I fought the Boer War. When I came back the British had appropriated my land for industry. My officer suggested the Dominion of Canada. He said they were giving away land to British subjects and non-British subjects alike. I took all my savings. Now I'm here. But instead of free land all I see is lies and false promises.

HOPKINSON

(In Hindi)
Do you have money on you?

BRITISH SUBJECT 01

(In Punjabi)
Do you speak Punjabi?

HOPKINSON

(In Hindi)
Yes. Do you have money on you?

The British subject struggles a bit to understand Hopkinson's terrible Hindi.

BRITISH SUBJECT 01

(In Punjabi)
Spent all my money to come here.
When I make more, I will send for my family.

A secretary waits to type in an immigration report.

HOPKINSON

(To Secretary)
He has been playing a big part in the Freedom-Fighter movement known as Ghadar. He says the only way to free colonies from the Empire is to mutiny. He hopes to inspire Canadians to his cause. He wants to bring Ghadar to Canadians.

The secretary sighs angrily.
 Gives the British Subject a dirty look.
 Proceeds to type in Hopkinson's propaganda.

EXT/INT. MOTEL DOMINION

Jack walks into the motel.

ELISA

Ola!

Jack waves.

ELISA (CONT'D)

That's Spanish.

JACK

I know.

ELISA

You speak Spanish? For real?

JACK

No. I understand some basic words.

ELISA

I see.

Jack moves to ward the stairs.
 She nervously puts her hand up for him to wait.

ELISA (CONT'D)

Wait. I mean could you take a look
 at something.

JACK

A scene.

She pulls out paper.

JACK (CONT'D)

What is it?

ELISA

Scene. In my story.

Jack begins to read.

JACK

Just one scene. Without context...

ELISA

Oh. Sorry. (Considers the scene, then gives him context) She's an actress. Paid all her dues. Graduated. Did some great plays with friends. Now she's just about to audition for a part of her dreams but something crazy's going to happen to her.

JACK

Well...my first comment is you've got a lot of feelings and similes here in the description. Stuff you'd find in a novel. Stuff that isn't actionable. You need to show it. Not say it. Quick rule of thumb: Only what you can shoot with a camera.

Elisa considers this carefully.

ELISA

Only what you can shoot with a camera. Got it. Thanks!

JACK

Look forward to more.

ELISA

For real?

JACK

For real.

Jack walks away.
He heads toward his room.
Enters his room.
In his room he tries to begin a story outline.
Nothing comes to him.
Writer's block.

INT. CAFE-- MORNING

Jack stares at his outline.
Every little noise in the cafe disturbs him.
Paul sits at his usual table, writing.
Time passes.
Night.
Pages of doodles.
No outline.
He gazes up at Jahnuce.
He looks out in the street.
He sees a Sikh laborer from the past.
He walks up to the cafe window.

His little boy walks up to him.
They stare at Jack through the window.
Jack shakes the Sikhs out of his imagination.
Inspired, he begins to write his outline.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- MORNING

Rupa reads the outline.
She looks at Jack.
Then the outline.
Then Jack.

RUPA

I see what you're doing. I really do. I like it but...but...but I wouldn't focus too much on the fact that they were British subjects.

JACK

It's pretty relevant.

RUPA

We don't want people lost in minor details.

JACK

Minor?

RUPA

Just gets confusing.

JACK

Confusing?

RUPA

You kind of get the feeling they had the right to disembark in Canada and that's not what we're going for.

JACK

They did have the right as British Subjects. That's why Canada had to be sneaky with their orders in councils and the 200 head tax, not to mention stopping the Canadian Pacific continuous journeys between India and Canada. They needed all that sneaky shit cause they simply couldn't treat them like aliens.

Rupa pretty much ignores all this.

RUPA

Don't like the farmer angle either.

JACK

Ninety-nine percent were farmers?

RUPA

Farmer just doesn't have mass appeal.

JACK

Fathers wanting the best for their families. Sacrificing everything they have for their one chance.

RUPA

Very noble. Very real. But noble and real get boring fast. Trust me I've been making movies for years.

JACK

But that's the profile of--

She finishes his sentence.

RUPA

Ninety-nine percent. Yes, yes. I know. But what about the other one percent?

JACK

Just seems to me if you're going to do justice to the incident you'd pick the majority perspective.

RUPA

Not sure if my financiers would go for it? We talked more along the lines of the Freedom-fighter angle.

JACK

There's so little on that. I mean some things...but it's all from one man's perspective and really that man had a lot to gain from painting the community as freedom-fighters.

RUPA

Use it. See what it gives.

JACK

(Uneasy)

There were one or two Freedom-fighters, and not even on the ship but already ashore. They weren't even Sikh. The Sikh leaders like Prof Teja Singh were completely loyal.

RUPA

Search the reports for something juicy and revolutionary. That's what we're going for. Juicy and revolutionary.

JACK

Juicy and revolutionary.

RUPA

Juicy and revolutionary.

Jack sighs.

He tries to explain his concerns.

JACK

The reports hurt the community. The man who wrote them lied to do whatever he could to retain his extraordinarily high salary from not one but three governments-- India and Canada and the U.S. He was paid to paint all Indians as terrorists. Paid more than doctors today. You think he would report anything else than a picture of terrorism. I mean I would believe those reports as much as I'd believe the reports on WMDs in Iraq.

RUPA

(Frustrated) Whatever, Jack. Don't go by his reports. That's fine. But I'm sure there were one or two Freedom Fighters on that boat that we can focus on.

JACK

Possibly. But again--I got to ask-- is it fair to paint them all in this light? Most were just ordinary farmers trying to do good for their families.

RUPA

It has more appeal to a mass audience and my financiers.

JACK

I could make the farmer angle interesting. I'm pretty sure I could.

Rupa stares at Jack for a long while.

RUPA

Do you find me unreasonable?

JACK

I just find it might not be a fair perspective. It's like making everyone on the plane that hit the World Trade Center a terrorist just because of the extremism of the one who hijacked the plane.

RUPA

Do you know how difficult it is to make movies? How much money you need? Listen, Jack, I get it. You want to represent the ninety-nine and I'm asking you to represent the one percent and that feels unjust.

JACK

It's just not what I would have done.

RUPA

But it's probably the only way this movie gets made.

Jack sighs.

RUPA (CONT'D)

I was told you were able to collaborate. To incorporate high-level direction without question or complaint.

JACK

I'm not complaining. It just doesn't feel right.

RUPA

How about this. We give the Freedom-Fighter angle a try.

(MORE)

RUPA (CONT'D)

It's not exactly a lie. There were a few who had these feelings.

JACK

It might distract from the real story.

Rupa laughs.

RUPA

The real story is what we make it.

JACK

I guess.

RUPA

I know. (Beat) Plus this would be your first feature and at Twenty-Seven! My god that's an accomplishment! Do not take that lightly. I am going to produce this, Jack. This is going to be made with a top Hollywood director. Not too shabby being produced at your age.

Jack swallows.

JACK

Juicy and revolutionary.

RUPA

Juicy and revolutionary.

Rupa smiles a smile of victory.

INT. INDIAN VILLAGE 1914

A Sikh villager hugs his kids, wife and parents. He kneels to face his son and daughter. Exaggerated, revolutionary bravado. Going to save India by spending my life savings to go to the Dominion of Canada!

SIKH VILLAGER

(In Punjabi)

We will never see each other again but it is the sacrifice all Freedom-Fighters must make! I am leaving to make the ultimate sacrifice for India. I will fight for India's freedom the best way I know how. In Canada.

(MORE)

SIKH VILLAGER (CONT'D)

I will sell everything just to make the voyage to be a Freedom Fighter in Canada. Once we free Canada from the Empire only then will I return home to free India.

SIKH BOY

(stating the obvious in Punjabi)
Why not just stay here? Use your money and resources to free India from Indian soil?

SIKH VILLAGER

(In Punjabi) Oh, the observations of a simple child. It's endearing. That would be too easy, now wouldn't it. I wish it were that simple. No, no. The plight of the Freedom-Fighter is a tough and complicated one.

SIKH VILLAGER'S WIFE

(In Punjabi) He's actually right. We could save all our money if you stayed here.

SIKH VILLAGER

(In Punjabi) Please do not question me. To be a true freedom fighter I must do it in another country where I know no one, where everyone despises me, and where my only hope of employment is cutting trees and mining coal. This is what it means to be a Freedom Fighter for Mother India!

SIKH BOY

(In Punjabi) I don't understand.

SIKH VILLAGER

(In Punjabi) One day you will. You will know why the Dominion of Canada was the only place we poor farmers from India could become Freedom Fighters.

INT. NEWSROOM, VANCOUVER 1914

The editor walks over to the writer's desk.
Plops the writer's article on his desk.
Sighs.

EDITOR

What's this quote?

WRITER

What?

EDITOR

You want to say they are Freedom Fighters? Is that what I'm reading?

WRITER

We need to write the truth. Canadians need to know we are being invaded by Freedom Fighters from India who seek to destroy the Empire by turning us all into Freedom Fighters.

EDITOR

Let me get this straight. You're trying to tell me that the Sikhs who we glorified for protecting the Empire? Who we praised for their incredible martial skills on the battle field want to turn us into Freedom Fighters against the King? Want to come here to declare mutiny? You think that the 400 passengers on the Komagata Maru aren't farmers who want some of that free land Canada has been advertising all over Europe...but are actually here to free India. I don't know....It's a stretch.

WRITER

Not if you think about it. Damn it, think about it!

The editor thinks about it for a long moment.

EDITOR

No. Even when I think about it...it's a stretch.

WRITER

Listen to me. I'm telling you! They're here to free India.

EDITOR

I don't know. I just don't buy it.

WRITER

What does your gut tell you?

He thinks a moment.

EDITOR

They're here...for...some of that
free land we've been giving away
for free.

WRITER

Damn it, you're not thinking
straight!

The writer regards his article.

WRITER (CONT'D)

Why would they want free land to
farm? Does that even make sense?

EDITOR

Well I'm not sure anymore. It did
at some point in time as I was
walking over to your desk...now I'm
not so sure anymore. (Beat) Okay.
For arguments sake. Say they don't
want the free land we're giving all
those white Europeans. What if they
just want better jobs and higher
wages?

WRITER

You don't really believe that do
you? Better jobs? Higher wages? Who
really wants those?

EDITOR

Honestly, I'm really confused. I
don't know anymore.

WRITER

Just run the article. Trust me. We
need to be ready. The Sikhs are
coming!

EDITOR

Okay. I'm trusting you on this one.

WRITER

It's why you pay me.

RUPA (V.O.)

Jack. Hey Jack!

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- MORNING

Rupa calls out to Jack.
Jack's daydreaming.

RUPA
Jack. You with me? Jack.

Jack snaps out of it.

JACK
Sorry. My imagination got the best
of me.

RUPA
Thoughts?

JACK
I'll trust you on this one.

RUPA
You don't seem so inspired.

Jack shrugs.

RUPA (CONT'D)
Why not start somewhere else?

She stands.
Leaves the room.
Comes back with research.
Plops it on his lap.

RUPA (CONT'D)
Start with the trial. See if that
gives you inspiration.

Jack looks down at the folder.
Then at Rupa.
He smiles uneasily.

EXT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- MORNING

Jack walks out as the Jahnuce duo walk in.
Ram and Qor stare at Jack and realize he's someone they can
use to further their end of writing the score for Rupa's
upcoming film on the Komagata Maru incident.

INT/EXT. CAFE

Jack walks into the cafe.
Orders his coffee.
Sits at a table.

Begins to read the research.

INT. CAFE

Ram and Qor stare at Jack.
They walk over to him.
Hand him a signed album.

JACK

Thanks.

RAM

Rupa says you're writing her
script.

JACK

Trying.

QOR

Tough?

JACK

Just a bit.

RAM

You think she'll need a score?

JACK

I imagine so.

Ram sits with him.
Qor follows suit.

RAM

What's the best way to approach
her?

JACK

Beats me.

QOR

How did you get her to listen to
you?

JACK

I was recommended.

RAM

Recommended? Cool.

He pulls out an old poster.
Signed.

RAM (CONT'D)
Almost forgot.

JACK
Thanks. That's great. An album and
a poster.

RAM
No prob, bro. Actually since you're
a writer why don't you give us some
feedback on our song. Would you
mind if we sent things your way?

JACK
Go ahead.

EXT/INT. MOTEL DOMINION-- NIGHT

Jack walks into the MOTEL DOMINION.

ELISA
Ola!

Jack waves.

JACK
Ola.

ELISA
You have a minute?

JACK
Sure.

He approaches the desk.
She pulls out her script.

ELISA
Be honest.

Jack reads.
After a moment he asks--

JACK
Who's scene is it?

ELISA
Gina's.

JACK
Why?

ELISA
She speaks the most.

JACK

She doesn't have to speak at all
and it can still be her scene.

ELISA

For real?

JACK

For real. Just figure out whose
scene it is. What she wants? And
who's standing in her way? It will
help you write it.

ELISA

For real?

Jack nods.

JACK

Try it.

She smiles at him.
He walks to his room.
Inside his room he sits on the bed.
He places the poster of Jahnucce up on the mirror.
He throws the album in the garbage.
He crashes back on the bed.
He reads some files.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, VANCOUVER 1914

Reid holds a leather strap suspended in the air.
A seven-year-old boy has his bare hand on the table.
The hand is swollen and bleeding.
He raises the strap high.
Reid lets it fall down.
Smack!
The child wails!
Stevens watches him through a door way.
Reid releases the boy.
The boy runs out wailing.
Stevens enters.

REID

Henry.

STEVENS

Malcolm.

REID

To what do I owe the honors?

STEVENS

As you know I just won the elections.

REID

Yes. I am aware. I supported you remember.

STEVENS

That's why I'm here. I need a friend. Someone I can trust to take a position that will ensure the safety of the Dominion. I need you to help me stop these damn Hindoos from invading!

REID

You want me to be an immigration agent?

STEVENS

I want you to be the immigration agent. I want you to be Head of Immigration.

REID

(LAUGHS) Head of Immigration? You're serious. I'm an elementary school teacher. I have no experience.

STEVENS

Won't be much different than what you're doing now. Think of these Indians as children or women. They need a firm hand to keep them in line. (BEAT) I need you. Vancouver needs you. The Dominion needs you.

INT. NEWSROOM, VANCOUVER 1914

The writer walks into the editor's room.

EDITOR

What is this?

WRITER

Article.

EDITOR

Can't print this.

WRITER

What's the problem?

EDITOR

The Irish and Sikhs aren't people?

WRITER

Of course they are!

EDITOR

Listen kid. I like your writing style but if you want to be published you've got to consider our benefactors.

WRITER

It's the news!

EDITOR

My news.

Writer looks down.
Defeated.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

What about that report from Hopkinson?

WRITER

He's the worst thing that ever happened to the Sikhs.

EDITOR

The best thing to happen for the paper. His stuff makes our stuff official.

WRITER

Every cent he makes depends on the lies he writes. He makes more money than a lawyer and a doctor combined.

EDITOR

Sounds like you can learn a lot from him.

WRITER

I'll pass.

EDITOR

The Sikhs are bringing communism! That's our next headline! Make it happen and don't complain!

The writer sighs.

EDITOR (CONT'D)

Come now! Be a good Hopkinson and
write what our benefactors want to
hear.

The writer storms away.

INT. CAFE-- MORNING

Jack stares at a blank page.
He pulls out a folder.
He begins to look through the articles.
Now and then he stares out the window.
He stares at a file for a long moment.
Then he looks out the window.
He suddenly sees a Sikh dressed in a three piece suit being
beaten to death by immigration officers.
He shakes his head.
The reverie disappears.
He goes back to his research.

INT. IMMIGRATION INTERROGATION ROOM, VANCOUVER 1914

Sikh, Muslim and Hindu British subjects are being
interrogated in other rooms. Hopkinson tries to interpret
Punjabi without success.

HOPKINSON

(In Hindi)
What are you teaching at the
temple? I know you understand me.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

Did anyone ever tell you that your
Hindi is terrible. Your
Punjabi...well...you shouldn't even
try.

HOPKINSON

Do you know who you're talking to?

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

Do you?

HOPKINSON

A communist. An anarchist. A--

British Subject 02 finishes for him.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

Revolutionary! Yes, yes. I've read your dull, uninspired reports.

HOPKINSON

(Insulted)

You clearly do not know who you are talking to because if you did you would know I have the power to send you home. With a snap of my fingers.

British Subject 02 stares at Hopkinson in disbelief. Even though he's used to corrupt officials in India, Hopkinson takes the cake.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

It is as I said. You don't know me. You are a lost fool. You call me a radical, when I am asking to bring my family here. The radicals, if you had any real knowledge of them, are trying to tell all Indians here to leave Canada to fight in India. You would welcome them, not try to keep them out. My god, they're helping you get rid of Indians. Much better than your Honduras plan!

HOPKINSON

You will never see your family again. None of you will.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

You don't have that kind of power. You are just a little man who thinks he's got everyone fooled. You take one man who is a radical and you use him to say we are all like him. You destroy lives. You destroy entire families. Your reports keep us isolated and bachelors. Your reports close our schools and scare the people. You create a threat that is not there for your own gain.

Hopkinson laughs.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02 (CONT'D)

You laugh as though I speak the absurd...but it works out for you doesn't it?

HOPKINSON

You don't--

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

But I do. I heard of you. Indian
who hates his Indianess.

A silence.

British Subject 02 shakes his head at Hopkinson.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02 (CONT'D)

It's not a secret. What I wonder
did your mother do to make you hate
Indians so much? To hate your own
kind that you would gladly profit
from their pain and suffering? You
must really hate yourself. Not
smiling anymore, are we, Mr.
Hopkinson? Not used to us
Communists or Anarchists talking
back. In English, no less. You
don't scare me. You know why you
don't scare me. You don't scare me
because truth is on my side. Truth
is on our side. If it takes ten
years or a hundred, the truth will
find a way.

British Subject 02 regards the secretary.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02 (CONT'D)

Did you know he was one of us? An
Immigrant? Indian, no less? Did you
know he was a police officer in
India?

HOPKINSON

That's enough!

British Subject 02 looks back at Hopkinson.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

An Indian police officer corrupt as
they get who rose to the top with a
bank account full of bribes. But it
wasn't enough, was it? Like other
Indians he heard of the higher
wages and opportunities in the
Dominion of Canada. Came here for
all those opportunities. But when
they found out you were half
Indian, a bastard no less, that
kind of put limits on what you
could achieve, didn't it?

(MORE)

BRITISH SUBJECT 02 (CONT'D)

But like all of us with a pioneer spirit you found a way. You took the part that limited your growth and turned it into your unlimited potential. You pandered to their fears. You gave them what they wanted and in return they gave you what you wanted. Money. Promotions. Status. Money. Money. Money. All this because you gave the good people of Canada a monster to hate. The Sikh. (BEAT) Little, little man Hopkinson how sad you are. All the money you make from your vaudeville act isn't worth the one family you destroy by painting them monsters. And how many have you destroyed? How many families, Hopkinson? Too many. You should be very careful. Justice is the great cosmic pendulum. What you send out will inevitably swing back your way.

HOPKINSON

Is that a threat?

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

A fact.

British Subject 02 takes out a piece of paper. He unfolds it slowly. Honorable discharge papers.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02 (CONT'D)

I was protecting this Empire before you were even born. I killed many good men for this Empire, and it's a shame a little man like yourself can deprive me of the rights I earned in blood. You sad, corrupt, power hungry official who hates the Indian he is. Go write your ridiculous report. Seditonist. Anarchist. Communist. Call me what you want. Say what you want. I know who I am, and now you know who you are. I just told you.

Hopkinson makes his way to the door, furious.

HOPKINSON

You will never bring your wife and children here as long as I exist.

(MORE)

HOPKINSON (CONT'D)

And so long as I exist you will all
be bachelors till the day you die!
You want to have a family, go back
to India!

INT. CAFE-- MORNING

Jack scans the cafe.
He spots Elisa practicing scenes with a friend at a table.
She waves at him.
He waves back.
He returns to his research.

INT. GURDWARA, VANCOUVER 1914

A Sikh man marries a white woman.
Vicious protests outside.
The Anti-Asian League screaming their hate!
The first Sikh wedding in the Dominion of Canada.

INT. CAFE-- MORNING

Jack smiles at what he just read.
He looks up and Ram is standing with two friends.

RAM

Jack, waz up! Wanted to introduce
two of my buddies Ajay and Vinay.
They're inspiring writers working
on their first short.

They shake hands and sit.

RAM (CONT'D)

I told them you were working on the
Komagata Maru and they were all
like 'what the hell man!' cause you
know it's a huge fuckin
responsibility.

AJAY

Huge.

VINAY

Very huge.

JACK

I know.

VINAY

You got anything yet.

JACK

Just a few ideas.

AJAY

That's good. It's good to have ideas.

JACK

I guess. I want to take the majority perspective of the struggling father wanting to do the best for his family....but the producer is all about the Freedom Fighter angle. So I'm kind of torn.

AJAY

Don't know much about that. But why are they coming to Canada to fight for India's freedom? Or is it Canada's freedom...cause that might make sense...hell anything to get the Queen off our currency.

JACK

It's just confusing the story for nothing.

VINAY

Why?

Jack shrugs.

JACK

I don't know. It's really annoying trying to shoe-horn that angle.

AJAY

Maybe it's more exciting?

JACK

It feels like bullshit. Most of these guys just wanted a better life for their families and that's epic enough. Why sensationalize it like the media did back then? The more I read the more I don't want to take that angle. Just feels wrong.

AJAY

Trust your instinct man.

VINAY

Yeah. Trust your instinct, dude.

AJAY
Anything specific she wanted other
than--

JACK
Freedom Fighters. Nope.

AJAY
Freedom Fighters.

JACK
So ridiculous.

INT. JAIL, VANCOUVER 1914

Reid unlocks a cell door.
He faces Bhagwan Singh Jakh.
He bullshits him in order to get him on a boat and out of
Canada, breaking the law, and going against the courts.
Brute thug methods to do Stevens' bidding despite the law.
He opens the creaking door.
Bhagwan looks at him suspiciously.
He's concerned with good reason.
Why is Reid letting him go so easily?
Something's up.
Something's definitely up.

REID
This way. You made bail.

BHAGWAN SINGH JAKH
You had no legal right to detain
me.

Reid scoffs.
Leads him out the back door.
A dozen immigration officers wait for him.
He walks hesitantly through them.
Bhagwan suddenly realizes what's going on!

BHAGWAN SINGH JAKH (CONT'D)
The courts say I can stay!

REID
I say you go.

BHAGWAN SINGH JAKH
Under whose authority?!

REID
Mine!

BHAGWAN SINGH JAKH
Now you're above the law?

REID
That's right.

BHAGWAN SINGH JAKH
That's everything but right!

A fight ensues.
The officers overwhelm him.
They drag him away.
Drag him down the dock.
Up a gangplank of the Empress of Japan.
Another fight.
They beat him until he's unconscious.
A crowd of Sikhs watch this in horror.
Reid orders the ship to sail away.
The Japanese captain shakes his head at Reid.
He can't believe the lack of respect for the law this man has. Thug politics.

EXT. BURARD INLET, VANCOUVER

Jack walks out toward the water.
He stares out toward the sea meditatively.
He walks over to the Komagata Maru commemorative plaque.
He stares at it for a long while.
He closes his eyes and asks for help from the universe.
To write a story that does justice to the families who suffered at the hands of the thug officers who would break any law to keep them from benefiting from all the opportunities White British subjects were given.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- MORNING

Rupa shakes her head at his new outline.
She can't believe he's still not quite understanding her.

RUPA
I see what you're doing, but we don't need to know that Reid was a teacher.

JACK
An elementary school teacher. No experience. He's a key player in the incident.
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

Not only was he inexperienced and broke the law as he pleased, his position was indicative of systemic corruption, abuse, and outright racism. I don't get how you don't get it.

RUPA

I just don't know how important it is to the Freedom Fighter angle we're going for. We don't want to be wasting time with back story.

Jack sighs.

RUPA (CONT'D)

I know. It's tough. Two visions. Two different visions. But we'll make it work I'm sure.

He shakes his head in resignation.

JACK

Fine. No elementary school teacher scene.

RUPA

And the whole thing with kidnapping a Sikh from the prison and forcing him back to India. It just reflects bad on Canada.

JACK

And?

RUPA

Well, what I mean to say is that this was not the trial I had in mind. I mean he wasn't a Freedom Fighter so who cares if the immigration officer broke the law and went against a writ, kidnapped him and illegally placed him on a random ship out of Canada--

JACK

Beat him to a pulp and sent him out of Canada to god knows where after the courts declared he had the legal right to stay. Come on?!

Rupa stares him down.

RUPA

It doesn't matter. It just distracts from the Freedom Fighter story which...I'm just not feeling here.

JACK

I won't lie. I'm having a hard time.

RUPA

I trust you. You're an amazing writer. I'm sure it will come to you.

JACK

I'm sure.

RUPA

You should take a look at the other trial. The one where the Freedom Fighters were brave and defiant of the law until the end. Now that's a story.

Jack stares at her incredulously.

JACK

I'll do that.

RUPA

I know you will.

EXT/INT. MOTEL DOMINION-- NIGHT

Jack walks into the motel.
Elisa screams out at him.

ELISA

Take cover!

Jack rushes for cover by a couch.

ELISA (CONT'D)

Reloading!

JACK

What the fuck is going on?

ELISA

Do I sound like a soldier? I got a part as female soldier in the next War of Duty.

JACK

Don't do that! You scared the shit out of me!

ELISA

Well, do I?

JACK

What?

ELISA

Sound like a soldier?

JACK

Yeah. You do.

ELISA

For real?

JACK

For real.

ELISA

I was pretty happy to get the part, and at the fact they're using girl soldiers in the next game. About time!

She pulls out the script.
Jack reads the scene.
He takes a long while with it.
This makes Elisa nervous.

JACK

Much better.

ELISA

For real?

JACK

Yeah. I get it. It's Gina's scene. She's worked hard to get where she is. She's waiting in the audition room, waiting for her opportunity. And I want to know more. I definitely want to know more....

She smiles.
He makes his way to his room.
Inside his room he sits at the desk.
He tries to write.
Suddenly the wall begins to bang rhythmically.
He sighs.
Time passes.

He wakes up and it's morning.

INT. CAFE-- MORNING

Jack scans the cafe.
Ajay and Vinay are working on a script.
He returns to his research.

INT. GURDWARA, VANCOUVER 1914

A congregation of Sikh men walk into the Gurdwara.
Immigration officers as well.
They respectfully take off their shoes and cover their heads.
Hopkinson walks in.
Does neither.
When the priest asks him to take off his shoes and cover his head, he blows smoke from a cigar in his face.
Tosses the cigar on the floor.
Scrunches it under his heel.
This is witnessed by several Sikhs.
British Subject 02 picks up the cigar and throws it outside.
He stares at the smoldering cigar for a long while.
He returns inside the Gurdwara.
A priest addresses the congregation.

PRIEST

The passengers of the Komagata Maru need your help. They made the journey but Mr. Reid is breaking every law to keep them prisoners aboard the ship. They need our help as much as we need their help. If they don't get in, your wives and children and parents will never enter Canada. To be with them again we will have to leave Canada. This is what Reid and Stevens want. We cannot let them bully us. We need money for food. They have been starving and held prisoners on the ship for a month now. One passenger, Santa Singh, has already died. How many more will die?

The priest stands before a wooden table.
Hopkinson blocks the way to the table.
British Subject 02 pushes Hopkinson out of his way.
He walks up to the table.
He places all his life savings on top of the wooden table.
He turns.
Walks up to Hopkinson.
Addresses him.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02

You come in our sacred place, you
 smoke your cigars and you refuse to
 take your shoes off. You write your
 lies to pay for your fancy clothes
 and cigars. You think you are
 untouchable. You are just a man. A
 little, little man who hates who he
 is. I pity you.

He digs deeper.
 Suddenly finds more money.
 Returns to the pile to give everything he's got!
 Other Sikhs are inspired.
 They do the same.
 He walks by Hopkinson.

BRITISH SUBJECT 02 (CONT'D)

My family will join me despite your
 lies.

INT. CAFE-- MORNING

Ajay and Vinay walk up to Jack.
 They sit down with him.
 They try to eye his notes.

AJAY

How goes the script?

Jack shrugs.

VINAY

That's not good.

AJAY

What's wrong?

JACK

Producer and I. We have very
 different ideas.

AJAY

What does the witch want?

JACK

Not to waste my time on officials
 and focus on the Freedom Fighters.

VINAY

Reid and Hopkinson?

JACK

You know?

VINAY

Read about it.

JACK

These two must be presented in the best light so to speak.

AJAY

Doesn't seem right from what I've read.

JACK

You've been reading about them?

Vinay nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

I mean this guy Hopkinson makes your average corrupt Indian cop look like a saint. And I got to paint him like a saint.

AJAY

Sucks. But if that's what she wants that's what she gets. She's the money.

JACK

Seems that way.

VINAY

Wouldn't want to be in your shoes.

Ajay gestures toward Jack's notes.

AJAY

So what's next?

JACK

The trial.

AJAY

Cool. What happened there?

JACK

Nothing remotely close to justice.

VINAY

I bet.

AJAY

You got to represent.

VINAY

Yeah. You got to or else there will never be justice for those passengers.

Jack nods in agreement.
Fair point.

JACK

Hell they nearly didn't have a trial.

INT. STREET, VANCOUVER 1914

A dozen Euro-Canadians surround the lawyer representing the passengers of the Komagata Maru.

CANADIAN THUG 01

If you know what's best you'll withdraw from this trial.

Bird stares at them a long moment.

BIRD

Won't happen.

CANADIAN THUG 02

You ain't scared?

BIRD

Should I be?

CANADIAN THUG 03

You should.

Bird scans the thug unafraid.

BIRD

I suppose I'm not.

A long silence.

CANADIAN THUG 01

You've got a big mouth.

BIRD

I'm a lawyer.

They all laugh except for Bird.

BIRD (CONT'D)

You puppies going to yap all day?
Or is there a bite?

(MORE)

BIRD (CONT'D)

Come now...I've got a trial to
prepare for.

Bird pushes through them.

CANADIAN THUG 02

Watch it. You and your family.

Bird stops.
Takes a deep breath.
He'd love to clobber this thug.
He holds his anger back.
Then continues.

INT. CAFE-- MORNING

Vinay and Ajay stare at Jack with open eyes.

VINAY

That tough?

JACK

From what I've read, yeah. Not sure
if I should put an incident like
that in my treatment. Has nothing
to do with the whole freedom
fighter angle.

AJAY

It shows what the Sikhs and his
lawyer were dealing with.

Jack shrugs.

JACK

Rupa might not agree.

VINAY

Dude. It's gotta be real.

JACK

I know.

VINAY

Well, what do you think she would
want? If you don't mind me asking?

JACK

Not that.

AJAY

But what?

JACK

The reverse.

VINAY

Bird threatening Canadians.

JACK

Not Bird. Probably some Sikhs

AJAY

What makes you say that?

JACK

Just everything she's been asking for.

VINAY

For example.

JACK

Well, you read the story and you realize the essence is about how British Subjects wanting the same opportunities and advantages as other subjects; yet they were treated like second-class subjects. Slaves. Most of them gave up all they had to make the journey. They borrowed from family and promised to help their loved ones join them. A pioneer story.

AJAY

And?

JACK

She wants to focus on a revolutionary story. A Freedom Fighter story. Juicy and revolutionary.

VINAY

Juicy and revolutionary?

Jack nods.

VINAY (CONT'D)

Why?

JACK

Who knows! Best guess, her financiers.

AJAY

Who are her financiers?

JACK

You know what...I don't know. I just don't know if I can present the story in this way. Truth is, there were two leaders who were revolutionary types, but they weren't even Sikh. The Sikh leader was actually a loyalist to the end.

VINAY

Maybe she doesn't want truth. Maybe she just wants entertainment.

JACK

Or something worse....

AJAY

What do you mean?

JACK

Not quite sure yet.

A silence.

VINAY

What happened? At the trial, I mean?

JACK

Interested?

VINAY

Hell, ya. It's our history, man.

JACK

Well, they wouldn't give every passenger a trial. They allowed the Sikhs to choose one test case which would determine the fate of all the passengers.

VINAY

That fuckin stinks!

AJAY

Something foul in Denmark.

Jack smiles.

INT. COURT, VANCOUVER 1914

Bird plead's Munchi Singh's case to the judge.

BIRD

So I put to you what would you do? Sacrificed everything--your land, money, time--for the opportunities in this great Dominion. What would you do? You cannot send this man back to India. He has nothing to go back to. (Repeats) He has nothing to go back to. He risked it all like so many of the great pioneers that made Canada what she is today. He came here thinking he'd be treated like a British Subject. Instead he is treated like an alien. Worse than an alien. A leper. Sensationalized news reports. Bogus immigration reports written by an Indian from Kolkata who makes more money than all of us here combined so long--so long--as the Hindu threat is real. A threat I would go so far as to say he engineered and if not engineered, grossly exaggerated to create a monster out of a man and stir up the good people of Vancouver. Do I accuse him of creating a problem that only he could solve for his own self-interest? I do. If the way these immigration officers have openly gone against our law and courts is indicative of anything it is this. They will go to any length, break any law, write anything they need to write to deprive these loyal subjects from their right to free movement within the Empire. Not a fabricated right. A very real right to every loyal subject on that ship. A right the Imperialists promise all subjects in return for loyalty, taxes, and labor and when there is a need to protect the Empire, blood.

(MORE)

BIRD (CONT'D)

I quote our King's foreign policy which no Dominion can undermine: "A British subject is anyone who was a person, or descendant in a male line of a person born within His Majesty's dominion and allegiance." A Dominion may govern its internal affairs but it may not govern foreign and immigration policies. You may not infringe on a British Subject's right to free movement within the Empire. (ADDRESSES IMMIGRATION OFFICERS) But you already know this, don't you? It's why you need your loopholes. 200 on a person. Continuous voyage from country of origin. Once the order is in place you bully liners into stopping all continuous voyages from India to Canada. Why? Why all this trickery? Because you simply cannot deny a British Subject of his rights. If you could, those orders would have never been necessary and you could have simply treated them as aliens. It's thug politics with Stevens and his immigration minions leading the charge. Thug politics! Malcolm Reid Head of Immigration? It is a farce. It is a farce with the passengers of the Komagatu Maru paying the ultimate price. The immigration officers want to call him a revolutionary. It serves their end well. But I put to you that you cannot call him a revolutionary simply because of the grumbling and complaining of unfair taxes and wages in India.

MUNCHI

I just want bring my family here.
Make a good life.

BIRD

Make a good life. Make a good life.
Don't we all. Our forefathers sure did. Aren't we grateful.

INT. CAFE-- LATER

Vinay and Ajay stare at Jack.

AJAY
So they won?

Jack shakes his head.

JACK
No.

Vinay and Ajay sigh.

They stand.

AJAY
Screwed up, man.

VINAY
Hope you do them justice.

AJAY
Seriously.

VINAY
Catch ya later.

Jack smiles.
He watches them sit at a table next to Paul.
Paul gazes at Jack.
Jack smiles.
Paul returns to his work, ignoring him.

INT. NEWSROOM, VANCOUVER 1914

EDITOR
50 British Subjects dead?

WRITER
Budge Budge protest.

EDITOR
We don't know that!

WRITER
26 confirmed. Another 22 missing.

Editor sighs.
Shakes his head.

EDITOR
Change 'British Subject' to
'Revolutionary'. Change 'peaceful
protest' to 'riot'.

WRITER

But they were slaughtered. None of them had weapons--

EDITOR

Make the changes.

The editor makes his way for his office.
The writer watches him leave.
He's not sure what he's going to do.

ELISA (O.S.)

Can I sit, Jack?

INT. CAFE-- LATER

Elisa stands before Jack.

ELISA (CONT'D)

Earth to Jack!

Jack snaps out of his reverie.
Stares up at Elisa and Sue, the waitress.

JACK

Sure.

ELISA

This is my friend, Sue.

Jack smiles.

SUE

Elisa says you're helping her with her script. That's cool.

JACK

When I can?

SUE

What are you writing about?

JACK

Immigration case.

SUE

Abuse? Rape? Extortion?

JACK

Something like that.

SUE

I teach English at a centre in Surrey. You should hear the stories.

JACK

This takes place like a hundred years ago. Not really relevant.

ELISA

Must have been worse back then. I imagine things were less regulated.

SUE

The abuse of power more rampant?

Jack considers this and nods.
Immigration officers had a lot more power in the past.
Especially when they were serving an elected official.

JACK

I guess it must have been.

SUE

Hard to imagine. All I hear about are stories of rape, bribes and sexual abuse. It's really disgusting.

ELISA

For real?

SUE

For real. Men and women.

ELISA

Men?

Sue nods.

SUE

I tell them to go see authorities but they're so scared of deportation or disappointing their families back home that they say nothing. They've got everything on the line. Officers know that so they use their power to get what they want which is usually money or sex. You should consider setting your movie in the present. I could tell you stories.

JACK
I'm sure you could. But this is set
in the past.

SUE
Sure. Next one.

JACK
Next one.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- MORNING

Rupa shakes her head at the scene.

RUPA
This is just not working.

JACK
What's not working?

RUPA
No real mention of Ghadar.

JACK
Ghadar wasn't part of his story.

RUPA
So you say.

JACK
No. He wasn't. Just a family man
who put everything on the line to
come to Canada.

RUPA
Yeah. I get that. It's just not
working. It should be more juicy.
More engaging.

Rupa sighs deeply.

INT. COURT, VANCOUVER 1914

Bird plead's Munchi Singh's case to the judge.

BIRD
Explain to the court why you are
here?

He stands and gestures.
He delivers his exaggerated monologue.

MUNCHI

The answer should be self-evident.
To free my country. I wish to come
to Canada to recruit fellow British
Subjects to join us in our fight to
free India. I am so patriotic that
I sold my land and spent all my
money not for a better life, not
for my family's future, not to get
a higher wage or all that free land
Canada is giving to White
Europeans, but to free India. Why
would I stay at home to fight the
oppressor when I can complicate my
life, live in a bachelor society,
endure endless racism, as I rally
Canadians to help in our struggle.

RUPA (O.S.)

Jack, did you hear me?

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- CONTINUOUS

Rupa observes Jack.
He's lost in his imagination.
Again!

RUPA

Jack!

Jack snaps out of a reverie.

JACK

Sorry, what?

RUPA

I was saying we don't really need
the whole thing with the lawyer's
family being threatened either.
It's distracting.

JACK

Distracting how?

RUPA

I want to know more about the
mutiny? The struggle for India's
freedom--

Jack sighs his frustration.

JACK

That had nothing to do with these passengers. That's the distracting part if you ask me. They're pioneers and farmers, not revolutionaries and freedom fighters. If they were really as you say, they would have just stayed home.

RUPA

Not according to Hopkinson.

JACK

Give me a break! His job and ridiculously high salary from not one but three governments depended on the image of terrorism he was creating out of a really fucking loyal and hardworking community. Sorry, if I don't take his shit for truth, or even partial truth, or the historical works that were based on his shit. Lies referencing lies.

Rupa narrows her gaze on him.

RUPA

You're feeling frustrated?

JACK

Just a tad.

RUPA

Look. It's tough to collaborate. But let's find a way.

JACK

To please your financiers?

RUPA

Of course. I won't hide it. My god, Jack, making movies is expensive. I must of course consider their wishes.

JACK

Who are they? Why are they so adamant on the whole Freedom Fighter angle?

RUPA

Not just them. Me too. It will just sell more.

JACK

And maybe hurt their image.

RUPA

No one's trying to do that.

JACK

Not intentionally.

Rupa sighs, annoyed.

RUPA

Okay, we're going off in all directions now. Let's put this scene aside. How about you write a scriptment by Mewa Singh's perspective.

JACK

Mewa?

RUPA

Mewa.

JACK

Sure. I'll do that.

RUPA

I know you will.

EXT/INT. MOTEL DOMINION-- NIGHT

Jack walks into the motel.
Elisa pulls out her script.
Jack reads the scene.
When he's done he looks up at her.

JACK

Where is this scene going?

ELISA

Gina's auditioning for the main role. The producer is going to like ask her to do something really awful...and she's going to have to make a pretty tough decision with far-reaching consequences. (repeats for effect) Far-far reaching consequences.

JACK
Really. What?

ELISA
I can tell you but...let me just
put all my thoughts together.

JACK
Cool.

ELISA
Does the scene work so far?

JACK
It's Gina's scene, right?

ELISA
Yeah.

JACK
Is the outcome going to be good or
bad for her?

ELISA
Hard to say.

JACK
You got to know. If it's going to
be good for her overall goals, then
the scene before should have been
bad for her. If it's going to be
really good, then the last two
scenes need to be kind of bad for
her. (BEAT) What happens at the
end? In terms of her overall goals?

ELISA
For what she wants in life it's
bad. But for who she is...it's
really good.

Jack stares at her bewildered.
He's not quite sure what to make of this answer.

JACK
Write it. Let's see.

ELISA
But do you feel Gina's nervous? Do
you feel how hard she's prepared?
That this is her moment. How this
is her one real chance at making it
as an actress.

JACK
I get that.

ELISA
You do?

JACK
Yeah, I do.

Elisa smiles.

ELISA
For real?

JACK
For real.

Jack smiles.
Heads to his room.
Inside his room he collapses on his bed.
Stares at the ceiling.
An argument in the next room disturbs him.
He listens.
He closes his eyes.
Falls asleep.

EXT. BURARD INLET, VANCOUVER

Jack stares out toward the water meditatively.
He then takes a walk.
He walks up and toward a plaque commemorating the passengers.
It's a long thoughtful walk.
He soon spots an Euro-Canadian urinating on it.

JACK
Hey!

The man laughs and runs away.
Jack shakes his head.
Hard to believe someone would do such a thing.

JACK (CONT'D)
(To Himself)
Son of a bitch!

He stares at the commemorative plaque.
Urine leaking down it.
The plaque.
He heads to a nearby store.
Returns with a bucket of water.
Throws the water over the urine.
Looks at it.
Disappears again.

Returns with a rag and bucket.
 Scrubs it good with eyes filling with tears.

VINAY (V.O)
 You look tired, buddy.

INT. CAFE-- NIGHT

Ajay and Vinay and Ram sit with Jack.
 Paul stares at them from a distant table, then returns to his book.

VINAY (CONT'D)
 Jack? Get some sleep man.

AJAY
 Yeah, let us finish the script.
 We'd definitely love to help!

Jack smiles at him.
 Not going to happen.

VINAY
 How's it going anyway?

Jack shrugs.

JACK
 Researching.

AJAY
 Closer to something the witch would want?

Jack sighs.

JACK
 I don't know.

RAM
 Listen to this song I wrote.

Ram sings a song about a passenger who sacrifices all for his family.

JACK
 I like. I definitely like.

RAM
 You think you could share it with Rupa?

JACK
 I could, but she wouldn't use it.

Ram contorts his face.
He doesn't understand.

RAM

Why?

JACK

She wants a revolution song, not a
pioneer song.

AJAY

A revolution song to go with a
revolution story.

JACK

Yup.

RAM

I could do that.

JACK

I'm sure you could. Real question
is...should you?

RAM

I don't understand.

Jack gazes at him a long time.

JACK

Nothing. I'm just starting to doubt
I'm the writer for this story.

Ajay and Vinay give one another a look.
Maybe this is an opportunity for us!

AJAY

What are you thinking?

JACK

Ahh...where do I start? Let's just
say I find her requests strange to
say the least.

VINAY

Maybe the rumor is true.

JACK

What rumor?

VINAY

She's a little crooked.

AJAY

We don't really know. He was investigating her.

Ajay indicates Paul.

VINAY

He's a journalist.

AJAY

He's a little bit out there.

VINAY

He accused her of being a RAW agent.

JACK

What the hell is that?

VINAY

You never heard of 'RAW'?

AJAY

Dude, you've never read 'Soft Target'.

RAM

Screwed up.

AJAY

Research and Armored agents. Scary shit.

VINAY

No dude. Research and Analysis Agents.

AJAY

Whatever. RAW is RAW.

Vinay turns to Jack.
He explains.

VINAY

India's got agents all over the world to control what is said and written about her. Protect her image. Hide her human rights violations. They've got crazy budgets to always protect their image of peace and spirituality and discredit anyone who says the opposite.

RAM

Shit exploded with the Air Canada bombing.

AJAY

India's RAW agents were all over that. Canadian politicians. Media. Everything. That's why everyone got off scott free. Because the RCMP couldn't indite the criminals without exposing how deep India had penetrated Canada. They'd rather the guilty go free than expose how many Politicians India got in their back pocket. That fuckin bad.

VINAY

It's total espionage but the kind Canada don't care about cause it's bad business to really investigate. Read the book. It's insane how deep they penetrated our media and political system. Fuckin crazy.

Ajay laughs.

RAM

You should talk to Paul.

Jack gazes at Paul.

AJAY

Imagine she was getting money from RAW?

JACK

Wouldn't surprise me. History has a way of repeating itself, doesn't it?

This inspires Ajay.

AJAY

Safe Third Country Act.

JACK

What's that?

VINAY

Just another racist law to keep non-white refugees out.

JACK

I have no idea what that is.

RAM
Doesn't matter. Talk to Paul.

EXT. BUDGE BUDGE 1914

The passengers of the Komagata Maru walk off the gangplank. They make their way to a wall of British officers. British Subject04 is dressed in his old military uniform. He has several medals pinned to his chest. Gurdit Singh, the charterer of the Komagata Maru, and his son are beside him. British Subject04 walks up to the officer in charge. He stares the White man without flinching. They stare each other down for a long time. British Subject04 pulls off a medal. Throws it to the ground. Pulls off another medal and throws it on the ground. Other passengers with medals follow suit. The Anglo-Indian British officer stares at him in silence. British Officer04 pulls out his honorable discharge papers. He tears them to bits. The Anglo-Indian British officer goes to grab Gurdit's son. When Gurdit stops him, all the officers begin to fire on the unarmed passengers. Passengers drop like flies. British Officer04 lies dead on the ground as Anglo-Indian British soldiers trample over him. His medal by his hand in a puddle of blood. Shreds of his honorable discharge blow over him. An Anglo-Indian British officer steps on his medal and hand.

INT. CAFE

Jack snaps out of his reverie. He gazes at Paul writing something furiously. He stands and walks over. He hovers above him a long while.

JACK
Mind if I sit down?

PAUL
By all means.

JACK
Why'd you say what you said to me?

PAUL
What did I say?

JACK
You know what you said.

PAUL
I don't remember. I say many
things.

JACK
Sell-out.

Paul narrows his gaze on Jack.

PAUL
Oh, it is you.

JACK
Why?

PAUL
You tell me.

JACK
Tell you what?

PAUL
You're writing a movie for Rupa.

JACK
And?

PAUL
How do you imagine you're going to
write a fair and just movie about
those passengers...when the main
antagonists of that story are
funding your movie...the Canadian
government and the Indian
government...how do you propose to
do that? Or maybe I should say
their movie? Ahh...what we wouldn't
do to be produced?

Jack goes silent and thoughtful.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Is it going good?

JACK
What?

PAUL
What do you think?

JACK
Not really. Different visions.
Different ideas on what to play up
and what to underplay.

PAUL

I'll bet.

JACK

What we're you doing there?

PAUL

Asking her questions?

JACK

What kind of questions?

PAUL

Hard questions.

JACK

Like what?

Paul looks at Jack to size him up.
He's not sure if he should answer.
Finally he decides.

PAUL

There's a rumor. Rumor was she took a million dollars to delay the making of the movie until after the 2006 elections. Another rumor that says she's delaying the movie even longer so that no one else will make the movie on the hundred year anniversary. Other producers will back away from making the movie knowing she's making it. Another rumor says that she's planning to use Amita for a main role.

JACK

What's wrong with Amita?

PAUL

You mean other than the fact that he lead mobs against Sikhs in 1984? That's right. In 1984 he quit acting to be a politician. As a politician he used his voice to hurt our community. Blood for blood. But you should already know all this.

A thoughtful silence.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Listen bud, do what you got to do.
And I'll do what I got to do.

JACK

Which is?

PAUL

Protect them. With this.

He shows Jack his pen.

JACK

Protect who?

PAUL

Who do you think?

A meditative silence.

PAUL (CONT'D)

There is nothing she can offer you
that is worth slandering their
image like that son-of-a-bitch a
hundred years ago.

JACK

Who?

PAUL

You know who. That's what her
sponsors want. They want to tell an
old lie in a new way with a new
medium. Right now they're just
looking for their modern day son-of-
a-bitch.

JACK

Who?

PAUL

You know who. The one who will
write and say what they want. The
one who will help them make it seem
like the Canadian government was
right in sending them away the way
they did. The one who will ignore
all the laws they broke to do what
they did. The one who will make the
Indian government seem right in
mowing them down like runts of the
Empire.

(MORE)

PAUL (CONT'D)

The one who paints these passengers as Ghadarites when nothing can be further from the truth. They may have become Ghadarites as a consequence of having lost everything because of how they were treated by these governments. But they certainly were not when they left India with all the hope and dreams for a better life for their families. Kind of like Gandhi's moment in the train when he discovers he's a second class citizen. It changes him. Same thing with the passengers. What the Canadians did to the passengers changed them in ways they never imagined.

Paul nods at Jack.

We both know the importance of their journey and what it proved to Indians about their status in the Empire. Indians about to be shipped to Europe to die like lambs to the slaughter.

He laughs absurdly.
He shakes his head incredulously.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Imagine the conflict of interest of actually having the Canadian government and Indian government fund this bloody thing. It's not 'I'm sorry we'll make a film to give justice to the passengers'. No, no. It's something else. It's 'how can we come out of this looking as best as we can.' Cause you know if the government had really changed their attitude shit like the 'Safe Third Country' would not exist. 'Safe Third Country' is just an old attitude re-wrapped in a new way just like your fuckin movie is going to be.

Jack nods.

PAUL (CONT'D)

And always remember this...

Jack waits.

You are here because of them.

Paul stares powerfully in Jack's eyes.

You and I both.

He shows him his pen.

You do what you got to do with your sword. I'll do what I got to do.

EXT/INT. MOTEL DOMINION-- NIGHT

Jack walks into the motel.
He looks weak and exhausted.
Elisa pulls out the script.

JACK

Can I take a look at it another time?

Elisa nods.

ELISA

You don't look so good.

JACK

Don't feel so good.

ELISA

You want to talk. Maybe I can help.

JACK

Not with this.

ELISA

That bad?

Jack nods.

ELISA (CONT'D)

For real?

JACK

For real.

Jack enters his room and crashes on the bed.
He stares at the ceiling.
His eyes grow heavy and soon close.

INT. CAFE

Jack stares at a court picture of Mewa Singh.
At a table Ram and Qor and Vinay and Ajay write furiously.
They begin to debate something.
Then Vinay turns to Jack.
The others tell him to ask him.
He gets up and goes to see him.

VINAY

If I'm imposing let me know.

JACK

Go ahead.

VINAY

Just a quick question.

JACK

Shoot.

VINAY

What do you think Gurdit's reasons
were for chartering the ship?
Money?

JACK

God no. Much easier ways to make
money in those times.

VINAY

Right.

JACK

Why? I peaked your interest?

VINAY

Totally.

JACK

From what I understand he was
fighting a legal case in Hong Kong
when he noticed hundreds of
stranded Sikhs who had lost
everything to try to make the
journey to Canada. He heard their
stories. He saw a great injustice
and lie, and was inspired to help
these stranded British Subjects
secure what was their right to
secure.

VINAY

That's a lot of information.
Probably just easier to leave it
out.

JACK

I probably couldn't put that scene
in. Or if I did...instead of
philanthropy I would have to make
it seem like an act of revolution
from the get-go.

VINAY

(Unsure)

But that would be wrong.

JACK

It would be a stretch. One not very
aligned with his business sense.

VINAY

I see. But Rupa would want to
present it as revolutionary move.

JACK

Or challenge.

VINAY

What's the difference?

JACK

In one case he's a trouble maker
bringing a ship of fathers and
dreamers to their doom. In the
other, he wants to give these
fathers and dreamers a fighting
chance. And if they are rejected he
wants to challenge the idea of Free
Movement that the Imperialists are
actually using to seduce Indians to
die in their wars.

VINAY

That's a mouthful. Probably just
better to leave the scene out.

JACK

I'm not sure yet. Truth is there is
a nice plural protagonist arc in
this story that Rupa has yet to
see. One I think she might like, or
consider as a compromise....I just
have to put my thoughts together.

VINAY

I don't even know what that fuckin means.

JACK

It means they all start the journey for a better life. Pioneers. But then, as Canada starves them, deprives them of food, water and justice, as the Head of Immigration breaks any and every law he likes to make those passengers suffer...this abuser of power and the one he serves slowly shows these passengers they have no rights. They have no status. They have no justice. They have no hope. Broke and left with nothing they have no choice but to bring their lesson of who they are in this Empire home. And why is this so crucial? Why is this so important? World War One has begun. Thousands if not millions of Indians will be sent to Europe to die based on a lie. Gurdit realizes if they can let Indians know that everything that has been promised to them by the Imperialists is bullshit, well there is a good chance he'll save a lot of Indian lives.

VINAY

But to riot?

JACK

Riot?! No one said anything about a riot. Protest. Peaceful protest. Big difference.

VINAY

I heard--

JACK

You heard wrong. No riot. Yes, Hopkinson wrote a bullshit report about them having guns and weapons. But the entire ship was checked before they disembarked and not one gun was found. Not one.

VINAY

I heard it different.

JACK

Not one gun found. Fact. Verifiable fact that completely undermined Hopkinson's so-called intelligence.

VINAY

But they shot first.

JACK

Maybe their war medals. But definitely not a gun.

VINAY

But--

JACK

No butts. Just bullshit reports to make them look like terrorists.

VINAY

Twenty something dead.

JACK

Fifty something. Because of one man and his pen.

VINAY

Crazy how some Sikhs today are all about how they were Ghadarites.

JACK

That is true. But that is the consequence not the motive of the journey. Big difference. Important difference. Consequence. And that's why it's a great plural protagonist story where they all arc toward peaceful protestors to open the eyes of their countrymen at the end of the journey. Protest is a consequence, not the initial motive. That's really important. I want to write this story...just got to figure out how to present this plural protagonist angle so Rupa feels like she's getting what she wants for the movie she wants to make.

VINAY

Fuck her. Just write the truth or whatever your instinct tells you is the truth. That's your only obligation.

JACK
This angle is fair.

VINAY
You think so?

JACK
I do. They started off as one thing
and because of the racism and
injustice they experienced on the
journey it became something else.
Kind of like Gandhi in the train.
It's only when he wasn't allowed to
sit in first class did a real
change begin in him. Same with
these passengers. Only when they
were treated like slaves and not
subjects did they slowly begin to
change. A ship full of protesters
headed back home to open India's
eyes.

VINAY
Plural protagonist.

JACK
Plural protagonist.

VINAY
Thanks.

JACK
No problem.

Jack watches Vinay sit back at the table.
He watches the whole table argue over a scene.
It almost seems as though they're writing something.
Something about the Komagata Maru incident.

EXT. BURARD INLET, VANCOUVER--NIGHT

Jack walks toward the water.
He reaches the edge and stares out.
He closes his eyes.
He recites a Sikh meditation over and over again.

EXT/INT. MOTEL DOMINION--LATER

Jack walks into the hotel.
Elisa smiles and pulls out her script.
Jack holds out his hand.

JACK
I can't...not tonight...

ELISA
Just one scene.

JACK
Really tired.

ELISA
That tired?

JACK
That tired.

ELISA
For real?

JACK
For real.

Jack walks to his room.
Enters.
Crashes on his bed.
Sits at his desk.
Begins to type on his laptop.
Time passes.
Night turns to day.
He's still typing.
He stares at the treatment, satisfied.

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- MORNING

Rupa sits with the laptop on her thighs.
She shakes her head, disappointed.

RUPA
You make it seem like a protest.

JACK
It was a protest.

She takes in a deep breath, then sighs.

RUPA
My understanding was it was a riot.

JACK
I don't know where you read that.

RUPA
They went with the purpose of
revolution.

Jack shakes his head.

JACK
That's not what I got.

RUPA
I see that.

JACK
They went there to open eyes. To protest. To keep Indians from dying in their war. Not to riot.

RUPA
But they had weapons.

JACK
Not a single one.

RUPA
You sure?

JACK
Hopkinson said they did. Because he did the Komgata Maru was stripped searched as soon as it docked. Not a single weapon was found.

RUPA
So how come they shot first?

JACK
They didn't.

RUPA
But don't you think it would be more heroic if they did?

JACK
No. I don't. Their way of protesting was far more powerful. They wanted to prevent Indians from joining the military.

RUPA
By burning their discharge papers?
By throwing their medals?

JACK
Yes.

RUPA
I'd have to disagree. The audience won't get it. Too abstract.
(MORE)

RUPA (CONT'D)

They'll be confused. But if you made them shoot--

JACK

They didn't have weapons!

RUPA

We don't know for sure.

JACK

We know for sure. Officials searched the boat and found nothing. We have the report.

RUPA

It's debateable.

JACK

It really isn't.

RUPA

This is really tough, Jack.

JACK

You're telling me.

RUPA

If we present it like this...

JACK

It will seem like a massacre against unarmed men. Which it was. These guys were soldiers and farmers you think they could have been defeated that easy had they had guns? Come on? It was a massacre. Period. It was done to silence and intimidate and prevent the truth of what these passengers had discovered in Canada from coming out in India. They didn't want to lose their greatest fighting force so they kept them from protesting. The passengers did not want fellow Indians dying in Europe for a lie. For the false promise that they were actual British Subjects.

RUPA

Yes, yes. So you say.

JACK

It's the truth.

RUPA
Your truth. I'm not so convinced.

JACK
I am.

RUPA
I understand what you're trying to do and I just want to be transparent with you...it's not working for me.

JACK
They were shot in cold blood because of a false report that made them something they were not.

EXT. BUDGE BUDGE 1914--CONTINUOUS

The passengers of the Komagata Maru charge off the gangplank. They scream like animals and shoot at the authorities. The authorities have no choice but to return fire.

RUPA (V.O.)
Jack!

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- CONTINUOUS

RUPA
Jack! You didn't mention anything about Mewa...

Jack snaps out of his reverie.

JACK
I wanted to run the Budge Budge scene by you first. I have an idea about doing a plural--

RUPA
The riot is not relevant.

Jack laughs at this.
When he sees she's serious, he gathers himself.

JACK
Hopkinson's reports destroyed over three hundred lives and killed 50 in Budge Budge.

RUPA
Twenty six.

JACK

Another twenty five or so went missing.

RUPA

We don't know for sure.

Jack goes to say something but she silences him with her hand.

RUPA (CONT'D)

Stop. We have different ideas on this, and I am a bit worried now.

JACK

I just feel we need to get this right.

RUPA

Of course we do! Of course! What right is...that's another story...

Jack nods.

RUPA (CONT'D)

Lots of pressure I know. But I want you to really think about what you're doing here. This would be your first produced film. A multi-million dollar venture between Canada and India.

Jack scoffs.

RUPA (CONT'D)

What?

JACK

Nothing.

RUPA

Don't blow this away trying to punch up an interpretation of the story that no one really cares about. Passengers. Fathers. Family. Dreams. Not interesting. Freedom Fighters. Very interesting. You understand? This has got to work for my financiers. That's not debateable. Think about what this story could do for your career. Opportunities like this come once in a lifetime. Once in a lifetime. Seize it.

JACK
Seize it?

RUPA
Seize it.

RUPA (CONT'D)
Let's try one more time. Mewa.
Freedom Fighter.

JACK
I'll try.

RUPA
I know you will.

Jack nods.
He realizes this is his last chance with Rupa.

INT. CAFE

Vinay and Ajay walks over to Jack.
Jack stares at a picture of Mewa.
He doesn't know what to write.

JACK
What's up?

VINAY
Not going so well.

JACK
Could be better.

VINAY
Tell me...you think audiences could
actually follow a Sikh as a
protagonist?

JACK
I don't understand the question.

VINAY
I mean for a mainstream
audience...a guy with a beard and a
turban...

JACK
Strange question.

VINAY

I mean what would you say if someone told you they wanted more time on non-turbaned, clean-shaven passengers than bearded turbaned Sikhs.

AJAY

Hypothetical. Just hypothetical.

JACK

To please a mainstream audience? I don't know man, you think Rupa would ask me to do something like that?

VINAY

If she did, how would you go about it?

JACK

It's just weird. The grand majority were turbaned, bearded Sikhs. You want to do a movie about the Komagata Maru you gotta represent.

VINAY

That's true.

JACK

Why?

VINAY

We were just wondering how that would work.

JACK

I see. I wouldn't do it.

VINAY

Things going good?

JACK

Yeah.

VINAY

You don't sound so sure.

JACK

Yeah. I think I know what I have to do.

VINAY

Cool, bro. Catch ya on the flip side.

JACK

Sure.

Jack watches him return to the table.
Again they debate like they were writing a script.
Jack then starts typing his story on the laptop.

EXT. WOODS, VANCOUVER 1914

Mewa runs through the woods.
Immigration officers chase him.
He trips over a branch.
He's captured by immigration agents.

MEWA

You will never defeat Ghadar. We
will spread our truth throughout
Canada and in doing so we will free
India.

INT. CAFE

Jack deletes what he just wrote and starts again.

JACK

(To himself)
More Freedom Fighter.

EXT. WOODS, VANCOUVER 1914

Mewa runs through the woods.
He's captured by immigration agents.

MEWA

You will never defeat the great
mutiny we have planned for India.
First I must free the Canadians!

INT. CAFE

Jack deletes what he just wrote and starts again.

JACK

(To himself)
More.

EXT. WOODS, VANCOUVER 1914

Mewa runs through the woods.
He's captured by immigration agents.

MEWA

You will never defeat the great
mutiny we have planned for India.
First I must free the Canadians.
Once the Canadians are free we will
together free India. There is
nothing that can stop us from
freeing the Empire. Freedom for the
world one Dominion at a time!

INT. CAFE

Jack reads.
He's pleased.

JACK

(To himself)
Missing something.

EXT. WOODS, VANCOUVER 1914

Mewa runs through the woods.
He's captured by immigration agents.

MEWA

You will never defeat the great
mutiny we have planned for India.
First I must free the Canadians.
Once the Canadians are free we will
together free India. There is
nothing that can stop us from
freeing the Empire. Freedom for the
world one Dominion at a time!
Arrrrhhhhhhhhh! Freeeeeedom!

Mewa beats the two officers and runs away only to be tackled
by four other officers.

EXT. IMMIGRATION OFFICE, VANCOUVER 1914

Hopkinson interrogates Mewa.

HOPKINSON

You were working with other Sikhs
to destroy Canada to free India.

MEWA

Makes sense doesn't it?

HOPKINSON

You're plan will never work! Not with me in the picture.

MEWA

Our plan has already worked. Right now as we speak two thousand Sikhs wake up before 5 AM. Pray. Cut trees, lay track, mine all day, face indescribable racism and live bachelor lives so that they can bring their families over to help them convince Canadians to help them free India!

INT. CAFE

Jack reads.
Deletes.

JACK

(To himself)
Too pioneer.

EXT. IMMIGRATION OFFICE, VANCOUVER 1914

Hopkinson interrogates Mewa.

HOPKINSON

You were working with other Sikhs to destroy Canada to free India.

MEWA

We appreciate the wonderful write ups. You are helping us without knowing it.

HOPKINSON

You're plan will never work!

MEWA

Our plan has already worked. Right now as we speak two thousand Sikhs wake up before 5 AM. They scream in the streets to free India. They go door to door preaching for revolt and attacking any Canadian who doesn't listen.

(MORE)

MEWA (CONT'D)

We have now an army of Canadians
ready to help us free India.

HOPKINSON

We will stop you!

MEWA

You will try.
The truth cannot be stopped.

INT. CAFE

Jack reads.
Deletes.

JACK

(To himself)
Better. Maybe....

EXT. IMMIGRATION OFFICE, VANCOUVER 1914

Hopkinson interrogates Mewa.

HOPKINSON

You were working with other Sikhs
to destroy Canada to free India.
You're very lucky I am man of the
law who would never abuse his power
against Indians who remind me of my
Indian mother who I happen to
really, really hate and deny.

MEWA

So the rumors are true. You despise
and deny what you are.

HOPKINSON

No I don't!

MEWA

But you just said your mother was
Indian.

HOPKINSON

No she wasn't. I'm white. Pure
white. I dare anyone to say
otherwise. The last thing I do is
project my hate for my Indian
mother on the Indian bachelor
society.

MEWA

You just admitted it.

HOPKINSON

What?

MEWA

Your mother's Indian.

HOPKINSON

No I didn't.

MEWA

Is this a trick? Are you trying to confuse me on purpose.

HOPKINSON

No, Mr. Singh it is you who is confused!

MEWA

That's what I said. That's what I just said!

HOPKINSON

Stop mincing words. And tell me everything!

MEWA

You want to know our plan?

HOPKINSON

Your plan will never work!

MEWA

How wrong you are! Wrong! Wrong! Our plan has already worked! Right now as we speak two thousand Sikhs wake up before 5 AM. They scream in the streets to free India. They go door to door preaching for revolt and attacking any Canadian who dare not listen. We have now an army of Canadians ready to help us free India. Join us Hopkinson and together we will convince Canada to free India!

HOPKINSON

Never!

Hopkinson slams his fist on the table.

HOPKINSON (CONT'D)
We will stop you!

MEWA
The truth cannot be stopped!

HOPKINSON
The truth will be stopped!

INT. CAFE

Jack reads his scene.
Nods.
Prints.
Picks up his script at the printer.
He walks by Jahnuce and notices books on the Komagata Maru on
the table.
Paul watches him walk out.
Jack cannot look at him.

EXT/INT. MOTEL DOMINION--LATER

Jack walks down the street holding his script.
He walks in.

ELISA
I get to read a scene today!

JACK
Sure.

He hands her his scene.
She reads his script as he reads hers.

ELISA
Wo. This guy's intense. He's wants
to convince Canada to free India.

JACK
He's a Freedom Fighter.

ELISA
That's cool...I think....

Jack is taken aback by Elisa's script.
Almost like a punch in the face when he needed it most.

JACK
What is this...I don't
understand...

ELISA
It's not good.

JACK
Gina auditions.

ELISA
Yeah. For a lead role. She does a great job and they pick her. But then--

JACK
They ask her to do an accent...and act 'like a clueless latino'

ELISA
But that had nothing to do with the role and they're just adding it cause she's a latina. She doesn't want to because it has nothing to do with what she auditioned for.

JACK
But they want the accent cause they want to make mainstream laugh. They want to 'spice' it up and make it funny for the mainstream audience.

Elisa grows very serious.
It is almost as though Jack is getting a message from his ancestors.
His eyes begin to well up as she speaks.

ELISA
But she knows it belittles who she is and where she comes from. And she knows she could never do that. She knows that who you are is where you come from. She doesn't want to make fun of who she is or where she comes from. There's enough of that on TV.

Jack swallows.

JACK
But it's her opportunity.

ELISA
Yup.

JACK
She doesn't do it. She turns down the part...Is that credible?

ELISA

Yup.

JACK

Why? You didn't write why?

ELISA

You think I have to?

JACK

I don't know if I believe it.

ELISA

Oh yeah. Believe it.

JACK

Why does Gina give up the role when she knows she can easily pull off the accent and the other bullshit.

ELISA

Cause she knows the line. The line she won't cross to become an actress. Because she also knows that in the audience there will be a little Gina who's self-image and sense of self-worth will depend on what she does on the screen. She knows her responsibility to that little Gina all too well. To pave the way to better roles and representation in the media. She just cannot start off on the wrong foot. So she tells the director to fuck off and decides she'd rather work a menial job at a motel and write her own movie script for that little Gina. That's the only way she gets to live with herself in the future.

Jack stares at her with new eyes.
A long silence.

JACK

For real?

ELISA

For real.

Jack just stares at her incredulously.

ELISA (CONT'D)

Okay. What's wrong?

JACK

Nothing.

ELISA

Seriously. Just tell me.

JACK

No. Nothing. It's a...a...really powerful moment. A character defining moment. I really, really dig this Gina.

Elisa smiles and winks at him.

ELISA

Yeah, me too.

Jack walks away in shock.

He enters his room.

Into his bathroom.

He holds his script up.

Sets it on fire.

Throws it in the bathtub.

No way he's going to harm a little Jack's self-image.

No way.

He sits at his desk.

Turns on his laptop.

Types away.

EXT. WOODS, VANCOUVER 1914

Mewa runs through the woods.

He's captured by immigration agents.

They beat him to a pulp.

JACK (V.O.)

This whole time you were suggesting the Freedom Fighter plot. Because of that I wasn't able to see what the real plot was.

They knock Mewa out unconscious with a stone.

EXT. IMMIGRATION OFFICE, VANCOUVER 1914

Hopkinson interrogates Mewa.

Two thugs stand by Mewa's side.

JACK (V.O.)

The last thing it is...is a Freedom Fighter plot. Or why don't we just say it...a terrorist plot.

HOPKINSON

Tell me what I want to hear.

MEWA

And lie and hurt my community more than you and your money hungry informants already have?

Mewa shakes his head.

MEWA (CONT'D)

So you can write another one of your reports and hurt us more. Make the good people of Canada so scared of us they would keep us bachelors for the next hundred years. You don't know who you are talking to. I know who I am talking to. I have watched you destroy my community lie by lie. I have watched you walk into our temples and humiliate us with your cigars and your shoes. I watched you create your own promotions and triple your salary at our expense. You want to intimidate me. You want me to corroborate your lies. Nothing you can offer me will convince me. So do what you must and I will do what I must. (BEAT) Kill me. I would rather die before helping the devil.

HOPKINSON

Strong words.

Hopkinson gestures to his thugs.

HOPKINSON (CONT'D)

Let's see how long you last before you beg to sign.

Hopkinson leaves the room as his thugs enter and beat Mewa to a pulp.

JACK (V.O.)

See it's a revenge plot. It's got all the right beats. The inciting incident that gets the protagonist into revenge. Racist laws. Lives destroyed. Families broken. Dreams destroyed. Fifty dead at Budge Budge.

Hopkinson watches Mewa withstand his thugs.

EXT/INT. COURTHOUSE

Inside Hopkinson stands alone in front of a door.

JACK (V.O.)

But that's not the only beat. The second and most important beat of a revenge plot is this: The failure of the law to help the protagonist secure justice thus making revenge the one and only recourse for justice. It's in every movie. The law fails or is so corrupt it's part of the problem. Well, that's the clearest beat in this story. You've got Stevens a politician putting a simple thug he can control as head of immigration.

Flashback. Stevens appointing Reid as Head of Immigration.

You've got an Elementary school teacher doing whatever he wants whenever he wants for Stevens in spite of the Supreme Court.

Flashback. Reid illegally forcing a Sikh on a boat.

You've got Hopkinson using the law and his power to help Stevens create the image of the Indian community he needs to break the law and treat them like animals. They say the fish rots from the head down. The failure of the system begins with Stevens the head and ends with Hopkinson the tail.

Mewa walks up to Hopkinson.
Hopkinson smiles.
Mewa shoots him in the head.
Shoots him several times while he's on the ground.
Drops the gun.
Gives himself in.

We establish those two beats correctly and we've got a text-book revenge story. To do anything else...is to...

INT. PRODUCTION OFFICE-- MORNING

Rupa stares at him blankly.

JACK

Is to...is to tell an old lie in a new way with a new medium. And I'm not interested in that.

Rupa nods.

RUPA

I suspected as much. I'm afraid I do not agree. I have been given a script much more aligned to the way I saw this thing. Only...the writers have strangely taken this as a Plural Protagonist story.

Jack laughs.

RUPA (CONT'D)

They even included a song about revolution...homage to the Freedom Fighters who came to Canada to fight the British.

Jack swallows a lump of disgust.
He stands.

RUPA (CONT'D)

Sorry it didn't work out.

He stares at her.

JACK

They just keep on getting fucked don't they?

RUPA

Who?

JACK

You know who!

RUPA

Jack. One more thing. Everything we discussed is confidential. It's in your contract. You cannot speak to anyone about any of this.

He looks at her and smiles.

JACK
Sue me!

EXT/INT. CAFE

Jack walks by the cafe.
He sees Paul working hard.
He enters.
Walks up to Paul.

JACK
You were right.

PAUL
Well...I didn't want to be.

JACK
But it won't be me.

PAUL
No?

JACK
No.

JACK (CONT'D)
I'm here because of them.

Paul fist bumps Jack.

PAUL
Don't worry. The truth finds a way.
It always does.

Jack smiles.

JACK
I hope so.

PAUL
Have faith, brother.

Jack nods.

INT. MOTEL DOMINION--NIGHT

Jack walks down with his bags.

ELISA
I'm sorry it didn't work out.

JACK
I'm not.

ELISA
Thanks for the help.

JACK
No, thank you.

ELISA
I didn't do anything?

JACK
You did more than you know.

ELISA
For real?

JACK
For real.

ELISA
Take care of yourself.

She kisses him on the lips.
Slips something in his pocket.

JACK
I needed that.

ELISA
Me too.

He walks toward the exit.

ELISA (CONT'D)
Hey, maybe we can write something
together one day.

JACK
I'd like that.

ELISA
My email's in your pocket.

He smiles at her.
Turns and heads out the motel.

EXT. BURARD INLET, VANCOUVER--LATER

Jack sits with his bags packed.
He watches a ship disappear in the distance.

As he watches Sikhs in three-piece suits walk up to him from all directions and sit beside him.

Hundreds of them.

Each one giving him a silent look of gratitude as they sit crossed legged and close their eyes and meditate.

Jack closes his eyes.

And he too meditates on God's name.

Disclaimer. This is a work of parody and/or speculative fiction. All of the characters, names, products, incidents, organizations, religions and dialogue in this script are either products of the author's imagination or are used satirically/fictitiously.