

REPUBLIC OF INFIDELS

CHAPTER 7: "River Full of Aces"

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. MOSCOW - CLUB - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Sergei looks at himself in the mirror of a dingy men's room while MUSIC throbs outside. The light above flickers, but he's preoccupied with his reflection.

He's as physically broad as ever, his ice blonde hair is a fresh cut fade, and he likes what he sees. He grins at himself.

OLEG (50s) an older man in a trenchcoat with a padre-esque sternness to him watches this display. He moves closer so he can make himself heard.

OLEG

This isn't a school test. If you fail, you won't walk away.

Sergei messes with his hair, and sniffs, dragging a knuckle across his nose. He's high, and Oleg clearly disapproves.

OLEG (cont'd)

Are you listening to me?

Sergei ignores him, slow blinks at himself, then straightens.

SERGEI

I'm ready.

INT. CLUB - DANCE FLOOR

Sergei moves out into the crowd. It's an upscale club, the gliteratti is out in all its coked up, intoxicated force. Deep TECHNO MUSIC thrums through the whole scene.

Sergei scans the crowd, searching through the press of bodies until he spots DAMIR (25) a slightly tubby man in an expensive white suit, and gaudy gold chain.

BEGIN
FLASHBACK:

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

A THUGGISH KID pins a scrawny YOUNG SERGEI (12), holding his arms behind his back while much bigger YOUNG DAMIR (13) hovers over him, a similar gold chain threaded through his fingers.

He punches Young Sergei in the face, splitting his lip. Sergei looks confused for a moment, then grins up at him.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CLUB

Sergei follows Damir with his eyes - he's heading away from a table towards the bar, but he's already drunk and there's a blockade of human flesh holding him up.

Sergei slips through the crowd. Hands, mostly female, move over him. He pauses to catch one, kiss it, then continues towards the table.

Sitting there is a beautiful woman of dark complexion, LYDIA (20s) in a taffetta sheath and tasteful diamond jewelry.

Sergei puts his palms on the table and leans towards her.

SERGEI

You look like a girl I'm in love with.

Lydia hoists a skeptical brow, but she also looks him over.

LYDIA

I'm here with someone.

SERGEI

Damir. I saw. Old friend.

INSERT: Young Sergei, gasping from a body blow. Damir grins over him.

LYDIA

Really.

SERGEI

What is your name?

She refrains for a beat, imperious.

LYDIA

Lydia.

SERGEI

Tell him I'll be outside. Don't describe me, I want to surprise him.

She rolls her eyes, annoyed and put upon.

LYDIA

Fine.

SERGEI

(suggestive)

Good. We'll talk later, Lydia.

She scowls at him and his mixed messages. He smiles lasciviously and makes his way back into the crowd. He navigates over to the speaker banks by the raised stage.

Sergei goes behind the speaker bank, and the sound of the music lessens considerably. He leans out slightly, catches sight of Damir as he comes closer. A strobe light begins to flash.

BEGIN
FLASHBACK:

EXT. SCHOOL YARD - OUTBUILDING - DAY

Young Sergei staggers as THUGGISH KID releases him, his eye blacked, face covered in contusions. Damir kicks his legs out from under him, and he goes down.

Young Damir stands over him. Sergei, slowly, gets to his feet. He sways, but doesn't break eye contact. Damir stares at him, momentarily distracted.

Sergei spits blood in his face, then knees the THUGGISH KID in the balls, sending him to his knees. Sergei BOLTS before Damir or his friend can react.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Young Sergei slides down an embankment, the sound of FEET POUNDING behind him. He searches the leaf-strewn ground, pushes some old plywood aside just as Damir catches up to him.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. CLUB

Damir passes Sergei, heading labouriously towards the nearby exit. Sergei whistles. Damir's head whips around. He squints. Then, his eyes go wide and he jerks away.

EXT. WOODS - FLASHBACK

Young Sergei turns, a length of rebar clutched in his hand. With a grin full of blood -- it's clear he planned this and is enjoying himself-- Sergei raises the weapon.

INT. CLUB

Damir's not fast enough. Sergei catches him by the arm, drags him behind the speakers, the strobe light stuttering their movements.

Damir struggles, but can't escape as Sergei gets him into a chokehold.

EXT. WOODS - FLASHBACK

Young Damir rolls on the ground, his face a mask of blood. Sergei stalks around him, taking his time as he applies one blow after another. Damir SCREAMS as the rebar shatters his arm.

INT. CLUB

Sergei grins as he amuses himself, playing the flailing man around as the strobe fires off. Then, once darkness settles again, Sergei kicks open the exit door.

EXT. CLUB - NIGHT

A black Hummer plows through the fresh snow, coming alongside Sergei and Damir. Sergei drags his semi-conscious victim easily over to the rear of the vehicle.

Two men jump out, and move to assist as the rear door opens automatically. Sergei disdains their help, lifts the unconscious Damir and tosses him bodily into the back of the truck.

Oleg, seated inside the Hummer, taps on the outside of the rear passenger side. Sergei looks to him.

OLEG
Tomorrow. We'll contact you with the
location.

Sergei's attention wanders -- on the corner, a cab stand. He can see Lydia in her mink coat, looking impatient and bereft.

SERGEI
Fine.

He doesn't look at Oleg - he's more interested in the girl. Oleg grimaces. The Hummer drives away.

EXT. CLUB - CAB STAND

Lydia struggles to light a cigarette as the wind picks up. Snow begins to fall. She jumps as Sergei appears next to him.

SERGEI
Where's Damir?

LYDIA
He didn't come find you?

Sergei shakes his head. She fumes, tries again to light her cigarette.

LYDIA (cont'd)
He was supposed to call his driver.
Now my mobile is dead.

Sergei takes the lighter from her, leans close as he lights her cigarette for her.

SERGEI
Why don't you let me take you home?

She takes a drag, looks at him - looks him up, and down, then meets his eyes as she exhales.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Lydia and Sergei, wrapped up in each other, stumble through the door. They kiss with total abandon for a moment, Lydia shoving the door closed with one hand.

They move towards the open plan kitchen, still all over each other, Lydia shedding her mink coat on to the floor, Sergei stripping off his leather jacket.

Flushed, he pauses just long enough to look around at the expensive layout. Lots of black marble, suede leather and brushed steel appliances.

SERGEI

Fancy place for Lubyanka pig.

Lydia, her ardor a little punctured, looks resentfully at him as she slips out of her murderous high heels.

LYDIA

It's mine. I'm an estate lawyer.

He reaches for her but she goes to the kitchen, ducks down and grabs a bottle of Bollinger. She pulls a flute down from the overhead rack, pops the cork, has to suck the runoff.

Sergei takes the flute and bottle from her and pours it perfectly before offering it to her.

She takes it, sniffs, raises herself so she's sitting on the counter's edge, but doesn't drink the champagne in her hand.

LYDIA (cont'd)

You should have been a waiter.

SERGEI

Then you know who I am.

LYDIA

Of course. I looked up the case when Damir told me about the coma.

SERGEI

What are you doing with that asshole?

LYDIA

Why? What are you going to do him?

Sergei smiles.

SERGEI

That's not up to me.

LYDIA

Are you a Vor?

She seems more interested than afraid. He touches her lips with a quieting finger.

SERGEI

You shouldn't use that word.

He takes the untouched flute of champagne and knocks it back, setting the glass aside. Then he produces a switchblade, which he flicks open where she can see.

Her eyes follow it as he catches the hem of her dress. It zips through the taffeta with a sizzle, which falls away from her.

She's fully kitted out in lace garter belt. He leans in, slices through the belt, through her panties, then sets the blade on the countertop like an invitation.

He looks at her, grinning, waiting to see if she'll make an attempt --

Instead, she reaches down, unzips his jeans, and grabs him by the cock. Then, he's inside her. They fuck enthusiastically on the counter. She's a screamer.

BEDROOM - DAWN

Sergei, now naked, reclines back on the pillows. He closes his eyes, then opens them. He looks to the woman lying beside him. Rachel.

He reaches and touches her cheek, all tenderness, his expression now one of authentic, unfeigned affection. She turns, eyes still closed, and he slides an arm around her.

He kisses her hair, and it's obvious that he's possessed of deep feeling for her.

Then, a PHONE VIBRATES.

Sergei's eyes open. Lydia sleeps curled up, not near enough to touch him. He looks at his phone.

INT. STORAGE ROOM

Damir, gagged and bound to a chair, pale with fear, looks out into the dim room. He shivers. His breath is just visible.

Sergei hovers near him, scrolling through his mobile. He looks up at the ceiling - notes the vents, catches the glint of a camera lens between a gap in the ceiling panels.

He smiles. Then turns on the White Album, and sets it on an old fashioned radiator, which amplifies the sound. Then he turns to Damir.

SOUND: "Happiness Is A Warm Gun"

SERGEI

I'm not really big on music. I used to listen to a lot of death metal just to feel some noise in my skull. You ever feel like that?

Damir just looks at him, cow-eyed.

SERGEI (cont'd)

But this girl, you know. She likes that old music. So when I listen to it, I think of her.

(a beat, he grins)

What kind of music does Lydia like?

Damir's expression grows even more fearful, if possible. His eyes follow Sergei as he reaches over and turns up "Happiness Is A Warm Gun".

SERGEI (cont'd)

Don't worry. I only fucked her. But not the way I'm going to fuck you. This won't take twelve hours.

He moves closer to Damir, fixes him with an unblinking stare, and speaks under the music.

SERGEI (cont'd)

See, they think you're just a dirty cop. They want to know about your connections. But that doesn't matter to me. When they told me your name... I thought they must know. But my father paid to have the record sealed. Just like he paid to get me out during the summer.

Sergei walks around Damir's chair, again eyeing the ceiling, looking for surveillance hardware. He leans over Damir and speaks close to his ear.

SERGEI (cont'd)

Do you know how cold it is in Taymylyr? No, of course not. Three months later you woke up in a warm bed. You've been warm ever since, instead of cold in the ground, the way I wanted. But I was too small, and I didn't hit you hard enough. Live and learn.

Sergei straightens. He circles around to Damir's front, and grins. He cracks his knuckles, makes a show of stretching his neck.

Then he draws the large bowie knife we've seen before: he used it to stab Hudson Ford.

He passes it from hand to hand, looking at Damir now like a piece of meat, ready to be carved.

SERGEI (cont'd)

Ready?

Damir's weeping eyes now fall to the knife.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Oleg walks down the hallway, can hear the strains of "Back In The USSR" playing. He frowns, follows the sound.

STORAGE ROOM

He walks into the storage room and is greeted with a brutal sight: blood everywhere. Blood on the ceiling. Blood on the floor tile in tracks that look like they were made by clawed fingers.

Damir himself is chained to the hot radiator, his face sizzling against the metal. He's dead, but his eyes are open, and his expression is dull terror.

The back of his head is a ruin, the result of some kind of blunt force trauma.

Oleg looks around. He can't find the source of the music - but the sound is coming through the ceiling mounted speakers. He looks back at Damir, disgusted.

This wasn't the plan.

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Oleg heads towards the control room, opens the door, and finds the two-man Vor surveillance team sitting upright in their chairs, looking at the monitor screens.

He moves forward.

OLEG

What --?

Then realizes - they've both been shot at close range, one in the heart, one in the head. Blood soaks the chairs. Oleg draws a pistol at once, but he's not fast enough.

Sergei nudges the door closed and steps from behind it, taking Oleg's head in both hands. He snaps it with a CRACK. Oleg crumples without getting a shot off.

POV OLEG

With his fading vision, Oleg watches Sergei's boots as they step over him.

INT. LYDIA'S PORSCHE - DAY

Sergei jumps into the passenger side, gun in hand. Lydia nods at him -- he's got a fleck of blood on his cheek.

He tosses the gun in the back, pulls down the sun visor and looks in the mirror. He wipes the blood off.

Then he puts his arm across Lydia's seat back. She steps on the gas.

MUSIC COMES UP: BACK IN THE USSR - THE BEATLES.

FADE TO WHITE.

FADE IN:

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Sergei's thirty-odd Lammergeiers stand spread out at the base of the bridge tower.

Vikram, the worse for wear, is hauled by Nero and another LIEUTENANT out to the bow of the deck.

Sergei follows. He pops his collar against the chill wind as his body guard drops Vikram at his feet. The LIEUTENANT unreels a hose used for cleaning the tarmac.

On Sergei's signal, the LIEUTENANT sprays Vikram with it. He comes to, spluttering. Then Sergei tosses down the hose, and helps Nero to pull Vikram to his knees.

Vikram sits there and shivers, face bruised, eyes staring coldly up at Sergei.

Sergei jerks his chin at his soldiers: *get lost.*

The two salute and move off by twenty yards, leaving just Vikram and Sergei out at the bow end.

SERGEI

So this thing, this NCOM. It won't work if I kill you. I can't puppet your corpse to override the access.

He mimes the action and grins. Vikram says nothing, but continues to gaze up at him, a faint smile on his lips.

VIKRAM

No.

SERGEI

The old fashioned way, then. I wonder if you'll give in as easily as she did.

Vikram's eyes narrow.

VIKRAM

Liar.

Sergei gives Vikram the back of his hand hard enough to knock him over. Vikram spits blood, and turns his eyes back to Sergei.

SERGEI

Fine. I hardly touched her. But I could have her brought here, Vikram.

INT. BRIG - NIGHT

The Lammergeiers key card into the general population brig, and the Old Guard marches in, hands still zip-tied. Nero closes the door behind them.

NERO

You have one hour to come to a decision.

She leaves a token guard behind, at the station by the entrance hall.

Once Nero leaves, Desalis immediately tries to bite at his bonds, but can't get through it. The others drop down on the bunks, and try theirs.

Desalis tries again, then pulls until his biceps bulge, then slams his wrists against the rounded edge of the bunk, hurting himself.

DESALIS
Fuck. Fuck fuck fuck.

Edward peels himself out of the shadows.

EDWARD
Problem, Sergeant?

Desalis jumps straight up, startled.

DESALIS
Jesus, Blythe, you almost gave me a heart attack.

Edward pulls out a pocket knife.

DESALIS (cont'd)
Thank god.

He holds his wrists out for Edward to free him. Edward doesn't, just passes the folded knife from hand to hand, slowly.

EDWARD
What did Sergei offer you?

DESALIS
He said Vikram poisoned the reservoir.

Edward takes a step closer to Desalis, looking up at the taller man.

EDWARD
What did Sergei offer you, Sergeant?
Tell me the truth now and we won't have a problem. Lie to me...

Edward pulls out the corkscrew attachment, then the Phillips head screwdriver, then the nail file.

EDWARD (cont'd)
What I will do to you will pass all of Sergei's comprehension of pain. Do you understand?

DESALIS
He didn't offer anything. He said he'd murder our families.

Edward folds all the attachments away at once.

EDWARD

Oh good. You know where your advantage lies, then.

DESALIS

What about the armor advance on the approach? Sergei said Vikram authorized it.

Edward looks at him for a long beat.

EDWARD

No. He authorized Sergei to take and hold the approach. Sergei provided the armor himself, without our knowledge. Any more questions, or can we get moving?

DESALIS

Yes. I'd like to know why I should follow you.

EDWARD

What army did you serve in? Pre-ARC -- this lot doesn't count.

He dismissively indicates the small assembly of Old Guard. Desalis narrows his eyes. He opens his mouth, but Edward backhands him hard enough to send him off balance.

Desalis tries to retaliate, but Edward pins his right arm behind him, presses the knife to his throat. The sergeant freezes.

EDWARD (cont'd)

Welcome to my army, sergeant.

Edward bends down close, his mouth an intimate distance from Desalis' ear.

EDWARD (cont'd)

I give you that rank by courtesy, along with the gift of refraining from tearing off your security guard stripes and breaking your spine in enough places that the only future career you'll have will be entertaining the other cripples with your ability to come in your own face.

Desalis looks at him, then glances at his own men, who all seem unsure of how to act.

DESALIS
Say you won't hurt our families.

A beat. Edward releases him.

EDWARD
No.

DESALIS
And Vikram... he wouldn't. Would he?

EDWARD
If he's still alive by the time we get to him, you can ask him yourself.

Desalis gives him one long look. Then offers up his wrists. Edward uses the pocket knife to cut him free. He hands Desalis the knife so he can free the others.

Edward goes to the door, then glances down the hallway. He puts his fingers in his mouth and WHISTLES.

The BRIG GUARD (18), a pock-faced, dim looking young man approaches, cradling his assault rifle. He knocks the bars with it. Edward steps back.

BRIG GUARD
You fucking whistle at me? You a fucking whore? That why you whistle at me?

EDWARD
What do you think?

BRIG GUARD
Then? Why you whistle?

EDWARD
That's what you do to summon a dog.

The Brig Guard blinks, not quite getting the insult. Then, just as he opens his mouth --

Edward pulls out his Bowie knife, tosses it lightly in his hand to generate momentum, and flings it directly into the guard's mouth.

It punches out through the base of the guard's skull, and he goes to his knees, twitching.

Edward pulls a key-card out of his pocket, then turns to Desalis, and indicates the mattresses.

EDWARD (cont'd)
Under there.

The Old Guard pulls up the mattresses, revealing a neat collection of assault rifles and handguns.

They grab them up, while Edward reaches through the bars and slides the card.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - NIGHT

Sergei goes behind Vikram and crouches down. He grinds the heel of his hand against Vikram's broken fingers.

SERGEI
Will that make it difficult to
operate your toy?

Vikram grunts in pain, breathing heavily through his nose.

VIKRAM
(panting)
If you keep damaging me, I won't have
enough mobility to transfer access.

SERGEI
Tell me how to do it.

VIKRAM
No.

SERGEI
Then maybe I will send for Rachel.
I've already paid her back for this.

He indicates the jagged scar on his face.

SERGEI (cont'd)
I'll put the next one somewhere else.
I don't want to mark up that lovely
face. Well, I do...but I want to use
my teeth.

EXT. THE WALSH - PRE-DAWN

Savage's dive team surfaces, tucked under the curving hull of the ship.

They swim around towards the stern, where a backwash of white water buffets them from the propeller. Oates pulls out a grappling gun and fires it off.

They all wince at the METAL CLANK as it seats itself in some crevice, but even after a long beat, no one comes.

Oates sheds his dive gear, and using his excessive strength, pulls himself up the rope.

Savage follows his example, letting her gear go, and pulling herself up hand over hand.

EXT. REARDECK - PRE-DAWN

They help less active Schick and his pilots over the edge of the railing, then go about the business of stripping off their wetsuits and donning fatigues from a waterproof bag.

They rise, go slowly and silently forward into the ship.

INT. CORRIDOR - PRE-DAWN

Edward leads his troop quietly but swiftly down the passage way. He holds a pistol in hand, the others carry their assault rifles.

From an intersecting corridor, the members of the River spot this assembly. They freeze and press themselves against the wall, which is hardly good cover.

But the hunters are intent, and they pass by without seeing the dive team.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - PRE-DAWN

Sergei stands over Vikram, who wheezes in pain. He's now bleeding from several knife wounds, one cheek crisscrossed with neat incisions.

Sergei contemplates the tip of his knife, then licks blood from it. He crouches down in front of Vikram.

SERGEI

One last time. Tell me how to
override it.

VIKRAM

No.

SERGEI

Your own sister, Vikram. Are you sure you really want to do this do her?

Vikram takes a deep breath, whimpers as his ribs hurt him, then sits up on his knees.

VIKRAM

Sergei, I know you don't have her. Kill me if you want to, but don't bore me.

Sergei stands. He paces a little.

SERGEI

Say I do kill you. Control of this ship dies with you. How long do you think she'll be able to hide from me?

Vikram blinks, the wind stinging his eyes.

SERGEI (cont'd)

What I did to that Penitent will look like foreplay after I'm done with her. On the other hand, who knows. Maybe her tastes have changed.

VIKRAM

Is that how you put it to her? That you'd rape some appreciation into her?

SERGEI

You're the one she's afraid of, not me. I would never lie to her.

VIKRAM

You lied to her about our plans for years.

SERGEI

Not once. I would've told her everything...if she'd asked me. She knows that, Vikram.

VIKRAM

Oh, because she has such confidence in you.

Sergei stops. He crouches down in front of his old associate, and looks thoughtful.

SERGEI

(softly)

All your brilliance. How can you be so blind?

Vikram narrows his eyes at him: *What doesn't he know?*

SERGEI (cont'd)

Old friend, I've already been there, And I was there first.

VIKRAM

(grinning)

You really expect me to believe that.

Sergei snarls in genuine anger. He straddles Vikram, standing over him.

SERGEI

She came to me after the Fall, while you were busy "making plans". I will never forget the look in her eyes when she said it. She begged me, Vikram. "Promise me you won't tell me everything is going to be all right." That's how much it hurt her to be around you and your pathetic *optimizm*.

Vikram stares up at Sergei, his eyes staring blankly.

VIKRAM

Please. She hasn't even bothered to look you in the eye for nearly twelve years.

Sergei grins, bends down, looking his rival directly in the eyes.

SERGEI

She's always with me. I can feel her warm under my hand. I can taste her tears. I hear her screaming. The way she feels inside. I wake up in the middle of the night and she isn't there...well, you think *this* is torture.

Vikram swallows. He knows Sergei is telling the truth.

VIKRAM

(defeated)

Do it. Kill me.

Sergei flicks blood off the knife, causing it to spatter on the deck. He looks down at Vikram with icy hatred.

SERGEI

Ask me again in an hour.

INT. CORRIDOR - MORNING

Edward and his team approach the port exit to the flight deck. He beckons Desalis.

EDWARD

Take the starboard approach. Don't engage until you hear fire.

DESALIS

We should attack now, while we have the element of surprise.

EDWARD

Wait for my signal. Understand?

Edward indicates the lateral corridor.

DESALIS

Yes... sir.

He takes half the men down the corridor. Edward looks out from behind the corner on the backs of the Lammergeiers, and beyond them, Sergei and Vikram.

INT. HANGAR - DAWN

Schick, French and Savage make for the two glossy looking F-500 Flying Foxes tucked neatly behind the MCAS.

Savage yanks the charging cables out of both tail ends. Schick pops open a panel and goes to work, typing in some kind of override.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - BRIDGE TOWER - DAWN

Vail, leader of Sergei's reserved thirty, shifts her weight. She adjusts her grip on her weapon, then sniffs audibly. He brushes a knuckle under her nose.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAWN

Edward leans out, his position exposed, but none of the Lammergeiers are looking. One of them starts coughing.

Desalis goes to speak - Edward raises a hand to silence him. He watches, and waits.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - BRIDGE TOWER - DAWN

Vail sniffs again, now running the back of her hand against her nose. She turns her head -- sees the coughing Lammergeier suddenly buckle at the knees.

He goes down, nose streaming with black fluid. The Lammergeiers collectively react, stepping back from the man.

Vail looks at the back of her hand and sees the same black fluid.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - BOW - DAWN

Sergei cocks his head.

SERGEI

You know, from a certain angle, you really do resemble her.

He uses his boot to shove Vikram on to his front. Vikram groans as his ribs are compressed.

SERGEI (cont'd)

And I'll try anything once.

Sergei slips his belt down a hole, like he's really contemplating it.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - BRIDGE TOWER - DAWN

Edward and his team surge out, guns blazing as the Lammergeiers succumb to the delayed action poison.

Vail, in danger of going over, raises her assault rifle and squeezes off a round. Then she falls flat on her face.

Edward leaps over her and pelts towards the bow, using the emergency craft as cover. He sees Vikram, bloodied and barely conscious, and hisses in rage.

He stays low, holding his pistol down as he heads at an oblique angle towards Sergei.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - BOW - DAWN

Hearing the AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE, Sergei's head snaps around. His eyes widen. He looks to his two lieutenants, but they're both dying, faces covered in black liquid.

SERGEI

No.

He looks to Vikram.

SERGEI (cont'd)

How?

Vikram only grins a bloody grin. Sergei kicks him, causing him to curl into himself.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - BRIDGE TOWER - MORNING

Desalis and his team flank the remaining Lammergeiers, but they're done. He raises his assault rifle and slaughters the last of them.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - BRIDGE TOWER - MORNING

Sergei does not see Edward slip in behind him -- but he hears the COCKING of a handgun. He sniffs the air, recognizes a scent.

Sergei turns to see a pistol pointed directly in his face. He looks, confused and astonished, into Edward's face.

SERGEI

Blythe.

EDWARD

I know. It's been an age.

Slowly, he kneels down and touches Vikram's neck. Vikram takes his hand, grips it, even as he cringes in pain. Sergei's eyes flick from one to the other of them.

INT. HANGAR DECK - MORNING

Schick pops the canopy on one of the Skyfoxes, then goes to work on the other's manual interface. Savage climbs into the open one.

After a moment, Schick is able to get the other one open. French climbs in. Schick salutes -- French and Savage salute back. He and his pilots head off at a jog.

INT. JETS

INTERCUT FRENCH/SAVAGE

French and Savage power up the jets. They pull the canopies down. Holographic displays appear in front of them.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK - BRIDGE TOWER - MORNING

Edward marches Sergei, fingers laced behind his head, towards the bridge tower.

SERGEI

So. Are you my replacement?

EDWARD

No. I'm your upgrade. Over there, please.

Sneering, Sergei walks towards the designated spot.

Passing them are Desalis and another Old Guardsman jog out to where Vikram lays, and lift him gently, bearing him away to the corridor entry.

Sergei looks down at his perforated, black bile covered troops.

SERGEI

Lucrezia. How's she doing? Did you bring her with you?

EDWARD

Turn around.

SERGEI

I would like to give her a goodbye kiss, if she's here.

EDWARD
I said turn around.

Edward kicks Sergei in the back of the knee. He staggers, and Edward yanks him around to face him.

EDWARD (cont'd)
I told her I'd bring back an account
of your face when I kill you.

SERGEI
Does she know that you let me happen
to her? Or was it Vikram? Isn't that
just like him.

His eyes slide past Edward, watching the four shapes -- Schick, Tall Pilot, Young Pilot, and Oates -- climb into the two transport choppers, and the V-80 Shrike Attack Chopper.

EDWARD
It's too bad, Vetrov. She's an easy
touch for a little affection. If
you'd learned to fake it better, you
would've had her heart and more.

He holsters his pistol, and draws Sergei's own knife.

EDWARD (cont'd)
Now I'm going to cut yours out and
give it to her in a fancy box. What
should I put on the card?

Sergei pretends to be thinking, delaying.

SERGEI
(as though listing
items)
Tell her she's a backstabbing whore.
Tell her I'd do it all again -- only
next time I'll cut her throat right
before I --

Edward kicks him in the sternum. Sergei grunts and bends over. As he cringes in pain, his eyes spot movement in the distance, near the helicopters close to where he recently tortured Vikram.

Sergei's eyes flick over Edward's shoulder -- the blades of two transports and the Shrike begin to rotate behind his captor's back. He grins.

SERGEI (cont'd)
 (gasping)
 Fine. I'll tell her myself.

Suddenly the ROAR OF CHOPPER BLADES cuts through the wind. Sergei throws himself on the ground as the Shrike, piloted by Schick, pitches towards them.

INT. ATTACK CHOPPER - MORNING

Schick, focused and in his element, rolls the chopper expertly.

SCHICK
 (into his headset)
 Good morning, America, how are we all
 feeling today?

INT. HANGER

Unleashed from their charge cables, the F-500s flare into life, rising vertically from the ground to hover a few inches above it.

INT. SAVAGE'S JET

Savage secures her helmet and flips a few switches, while through her window, French does the same.

SAVAGE
 Skyfoxes are go.

FRENCH
 Confirm. Oates?

INT. TRANSPORT CHOPPER - MORNING

Oates mans a standing machine gun in the steadily rising chopper.

OATES
 Looking good, Commander.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK

Above the scene, the Shrike yaws, turning ominously towards the cluster of Old Guard. They scatter as he unloads with his machine gun, cutting two of them into lengthwise halves.

Sergei, seeing his chance, makes a break for it, pelting towards the edge of the deck.

INT. TRANSPORT CHOPPER

OATES

Oh, no you don't, you demonic little
shit.

Oates tracks him with his machine gun and opens up, riddling the tarmac with bullets.

Edward, torn between going after Sergei, and getting under cover, gives in to the latter impulse and bolts for the safety of the corridor.

His Old Guard follow, but they bottleneck at the door. The rearmost are caught in a line of machine gun fire from the Shrike.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK

Sergei manages to make it to the edge without taking any fire. He goes straight for a rappelling line marked "Hull Service", wraps it around his arm, and dives over.

EXT. HULL

The line, intended to be gradually let down, slows his descent just enough for him to survive the 20-storey fall into the water.

He splashes into it, remains under as more MACHINE GUNFIRE beats down from above.

EXT. UNDERWATER

The bullets don't penetrate far or fast enough to hit him. He swims closer to the hull, finding cover before he surfaces.

EXT. WATER - MORNING

Sergei breaks the surface with a huge gasp for air. He bleeds from both nostrils -- the impact with the water has damaged his sinuses.

Stunned and dazed, he treads water under the hull, watching as directly above him, the two Skyfox jets surge out of the hangar and into the sky.

Sergei spits bloody salt water, and smiles grimly.

INT./EXT. JETS

INTERCUT FRENCH/SAVAGE

French and Savage stretch their wings, taking their jets into the sky in wide parabolas.

SAVAGE

It's coming back to me, what about you?

FRENCH

Just like riding a bisexual.

INT. MEDICAL BAY - MORNING

Desalis and his team lay Vikram out on one of the exam tables. Vikram is conscious, but his breathing is laboured and he's still bleeding from the nose and mouth.

One of the Guardsmen wheels over some kind of 3D printer unit with a hose attached, the words "DYNAMEDIC" emblazoned on the side.

Working carefully, he coats Vikram's broken right hand in a dark grey gel. He then sets Vikram's hand inside the scan chamber.

DESALIS

Are you sure you want to do this without anaesthetic?

VIKRAM

I need to be able to use it.

Desalis looks to the Guardsman. He activates the machine. Inside, the gel is lit up by scanning lights.

After a few passes, it begins to harden, to set Vikram's crushed fingers, his bones making disturbing POPPING noises.

Vikram's face clouds with pain, but he's able to take it.

Desalis' radio CRACKLES.

EDWARD

-- Two jets, three choppers. Do you read me?

DESALIS

(into the radio)

We're in the medical bay.

VIKRAM

Let me speak to him.

Desalis beckons to one of his people - they toss him a headset. He slips it over Vikram's head, then goes to work taping up the cuts on his face.

VIKRAM (cont'd)

Where are they now?

EXT. JETS

The jets climb up in the sky, splitting apart, then performing back-ass tumbles that turn into spiralling descent. They pass the Shrike, which rises above the bridge tower.

INT. BRIDGE

An ALARM yammers as Edward charges into the bridge. He goes to one of the gunner chairs and drops into it, activating the viewer.

EDWARD

(into his radio)

All over us. We're not flush for heavy ordnance.

VIKRAM O.S.

(filtered)

Neither are they.

EDWARD

Can you do this?

INT. MEDICAL BAY

Vikram winces. He looks over at the Dynamedic machine. The gel renders itself, line by line, into a dynamic, flexible cast. There's still thirty seconds on the countdown.

VIKRAM
I just need a little more time.

INT. BRIDGE

Edward looks down the barrel at the Shrike, which hovers ominously before the bridge's windscreens. He pulls down on the triggers, activating a roof mounted machine gun.

Edward FIRES on the Shrike, but it rolls over, almost lazily, evading his fire.

EDWARD
(into his radio)
How much time?

The Skyfox jets ZOOM past, flanking the ship. Edward follows them, but his machine gun is too slow. He activates the row of hull-mounted 125s, but the jets are way ahead of them.

INT. MEDICAL BAY - MORNING

Vikram looks to Desalis.

DESALIS
Two of your ribs are broken. You might be able to operate a gunner chair, but--

VIKRAM
No. I'm in no state. Besides, there's no need.

Vikram pulls his hand, now bound in its dynamic cast, out of the machine. He flexes it, grimaces, but is able to do it. He raises his hand and activates the NCOM.

It's a little wobbly at first, but with pronounced effort, he's able to make it respond. A basic version of the bridge sketches itself before his eyes.

INT. BRIDGE - MORNING

Edward jumps as Vikram, or rather, Vikram's projection, arrives in the bridge. This version of himself is fully healed, and alert.

EDWARD
Bloody hell. How?

VIKRAM

Discipline.

He goes over to the other turret, and sits down in it. The controls activate themselves. Occasionally, he flickers.

EDWARD

I'm never going to get used to that.

Vikram grins at him, then flips a switch. Other switches flip behind him of their own accord, and a viewer comes down in front of him.

INT. MEDICAL BAY - MORNING

Vikram, lying on his back, looks up into the viewer. Meanwhile, Desalis and another Guardsman use the same gel on his ribs, wrapping them to create a dynamic brace.

They use a handheld version of the Dynamedic, shining its light over his ribs.

Dim currents of electricity pulse like veins through the cast on his hand as he manipulates the NCOM.

EXT. MISSILE ARRAY - MORNING

The port-side missile array rises. One of the missiles fires into the sky, directly on course towards the two jets.

INT./EXT. JETS

INTERCUT FRENCH/SAVAGE

They see the array, the approaching missile.

SAVAGE

Front or follow?

FRENCH

Ladies first.

EXT. JETS

The jets stall out at the peak of their climb, hang in the air, and then fall apart as the missile spirals towards them.

Sensors confused by this manoeuvre, the missile overshoots into the sky before correcting itself. Savage loops back up, drawing the missile behind her.

INT. BRIDGE

Edward aims his 125 mm guns at the Shrike, but they're not fast enough to keep up with Schick, who buzzes the bridge again, riddling the bullet-resistant glass.

Edward flinches, but isn't put off. Vikram keeps his attention on Savage's jet, guiding the missile to its target with subtle gestures.

EXT. JET

French, after an interval, swoops in behind the missile. Simultaneously, he begins firing his machine guns into it just as Savage peels off.

The missile EXPLODES in midair as both jets sail gracefully away from it.

INT. BRIDGE

EDWARD

How many more of those do we have?

VIKRAM

Not enough.

Edward switches his tactic, changing his machine gun to manual. He fixes his aim on one of the transport choppers, further out to sea.

INT. TRANSPORT CHOPPER

A short burst of machine gun fire dents the chopper's hull, but fails to penetrate it.

INT. BRIDGE

The transport chopper's lights flicker mockingly on and off. Edward twinkles his fingers back at it, adjusts his aim, and squeezes off another burst.

INT. TRANSPORT CHOPPER

The adjustment sends a spray of bullets through the open hatch. One of them goes through the pilot's neck. He dies instantly.

EXT. TRANSPORT CHOPPER

The chopper goes down, folding into the sea like a dying bird. Sergei, from where he floats, watches it go down. It doesn't sink immediately, but floats as it fills with water.

He sees something in the cabin -- something yellow. He takes a deep breath and dives.

INT. TRANSPORT CHOPPER

TALL PILOT
-- is down. Time to go.

Oates searches for Sergei.

OATES
Just give me a sec--

Bullets rattle along the outside of the chopper. Oates takes three shots in the stomach, and one in the leg.

TALL PILOT
Oates!

Oates falls out of the open hatch, leaving a puddle of blood on the floor. The machine gun swings, bouncing off its mounting with a CLANG.

TALL PILOT (cont'd)
(into his microphone)
Oates and -- are down. His bird, too.

INT. SCHICK'S CHOPPER

INTERCUT TALL PILOT/SCHICK

SCHICK
Dead?

TALL PILOT
Yes sir.

SCHICK

Okay, get the fuck out of here. We'll be along shortly.

TALL PILOT

Yes, sir. Godspeed.

He rolls his chopper and turns for land.

EXT. UNDERWATER

Oates' body plunges through the water. Sergei sees this -- sees the utility belt with knife, pistol and tools -- and swims towards him to relieve him of it.

After a brief struggle he's able to loose it from Oates' body. He kicks off from the body and swims up.

EXT. WATER

Sergei comes up for air. A burning oil slick now surrounds the sinking wreckage of the chopper, but he swims towards it anyway.

EXT. UNDERWATER

Sergei dives again -- kicks as hard as he can until he can grab the strut of the sinking chopper. He pulls himself towards the open hatch.

He manages to get inside the aircraft, but is now in danger of being trapped.

He finds the **yellow Emergency Raft** box fastened to the aft-bulkhead, and pulls at it. As he does this, a seatbelt fastener catches him around the ankle.

He struggles, twists -- remembers he has Oates' knife. He bends down and cuts himself free.

Then, nearly out of air, he kicks away from the chopper, and in so doing, kicks the Emergency Raft box free of its fastenings.

He grabs the box, wraps his arms around it, and allows its buoyancy to take him to the surface.

EXT. WATER

Sergei breaks the surface just as, a stone's throw away, one of the jets surfs along the water, baiting the 125mm guns.

INT. BRIDGE

Focused, Vikram launches another missile, this time sending it underwater.

Edward turns in his chair, trying to clip Savage's jet as she taunts him.

Savage is not immediately visible to the eye. Schick strafes the bridge, still trying in vain to put a hole through the windshield, but keeping his targets busy.

EXT. JET

French manoeuvres deftly, and takes out the missile array with a single well-placed sidewinder.

SAVAGE O.S.
You're batting a thousand, Frenchie.

INT. BRIDGE

EDWARD
Brilliant. What now?

VIKRAM
Wait.

EXT. MISSILE - UNDERWATER

The missile shoots through the water, speeding under the keel of the ship and righting itself just as it nears the surface

INT. SAVAGE'S JET

FRENCH O.S.
(filtered)
Savage, it's underneath you!

The missile breaks the surface, slamming into Savage's cockpit and exploding.

INT. FRENCH'S JET

French shakes himself in anger and grief, holding tight to the yoke and slamming himself against his chair.

FRENCH
Fuck. Fuck! FUCK.

SCHICK (O.S.)
(filtered)
French? Savage?

FRENCH
Savage.

INT. SCHICK'S CHOPPER

He wipes his face with his hand.

SCHICK
She's gone home, son. Time for us to do the same.

FRENCH O.S.
(filtered)
Yeah.

SCHICK
I'm gonna need help getting over the 125s.

INT. FRENCH'S JET

FRENCH
I got you covered. When I give the signal, roll hard to your 8, and stay low.

SCHICK O.S.
(filtered)
You gonna tell me what the signal is?

EXT. JET

French turns his jet around, adjusts the nose.

INT. JET

French takes aim at the windows of the bridge tower, four hundred feet below.

INT. BRIDGE

EDWARD

What the bloody hell is he doing?

Vikram turns to watch, baffled. The jet speeds towards the bridge, **directly at them**.

INT. MEDICAL BAY

Vikram looks up, still baffled, as the screen BEEPS proximity warnings.

INT. FRENCH'S JET

French, at the very last minute, flips a set of switches and pulls hard and down on his yoke. He SCREAMS as the jet bucks upwards.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK

French's jet, now vertically parallel to the windows of the bridge, burns the surface of the tarmac with his engines.

The bullet resistant glass, unable to stand up to the heat of the jet's ventral thrusters, melts into plastic slag. It goes through Vikram, and melts through the gunner chair.

A piece of it hits Edward in the shoulder, burning through his shirt. He cries out in pain, then manages to scrape it off using his knife. It takes skin with it.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK

Schick does as instructed, and gets down low on the port side. He roars landward.

INT. FRENCH'S JET

Seeing this, French reroutes the thrusters and shoots straight up into the sky.

EXT. SAVAGE'S JET

The jet streaks into the morning sky, far out of range of anything left on the Walsh. Reaching the top of his ascent, French turns the jet for the Cradle.

Below him, the Shrike follows.

INT. ACADEMY - DAY

The Marines and sailors suit up, though they are in no rush. The men shave, while the women help each other, braiding and pinning long hair. There's a familiarity to this ritual.

Ortiz looks on, herself a great deal more fresh after a night's sleep. Kurosawa sidles up to her, arms crossed.

KUROSAWA

Shouldn't we...

She nods her head in the direction of the closed office door.

ORTIZ

Give them a few more.

Delaware's radio, sitting with his weapons, CRACKLES. Everyone's head turns.

FRENCH O.S.

(filtered)

- repeat, Skyfox inbound.

They look at each other.

INT. ACADEMY - OFFICE

Rachel and Delaware sleep nestled in a pile on the floor, covered by his fatigue jacket and nothing else. They are dead to the world, Rachel's head tucked against his shoulder.

A sharp KNOCK rouses Delaware at once, but Rachel just makes an annoyed noise. A SECOND KNOCK, harder this time.

DELAWARE

Honey. Come on. If we're gonna die, let's die with our britches on.

RACHEL

I'm up.

She stretches, yawns, reaches for her nearby clothes. Delaware pulls on his fatigue pants, and opens the door to face Ortiz.

She holds up the radio.

ORTIZ

It's French.

Delaware looks at Rachel. She nods him on. He takes the radio and heads out into the hall.

DELAWARE O.S.

French. Give me a status report.

Rachel, left behind, slowly dresses herself, rolling her head to get the stiffness out of her neck.

She goes to stand up, and her hand lands on the fallen photograph of her brother and mother.

She shakes the smashed glass away, and pulls the photograph out of it, frowning at smiling Vikram. She focuses on him.

Something **clicks**.

She scrambles to her feet, and seizes every family photograph in the office she can lay her hands on, pulling them out of their frames. She grabs an iPad off the shelf.

INT. ACADEMY

Rachel, fully dressed and kitted out now, comes into the room just as everyone seems to be hurrying to strap on their weapons and gear.

She looks at Delaware, but he's still on the radio, now fighting to unroll a drawn map.

INSERT: His finger goes to the approach switchbacks to the north.

INT. JET

French calls up a view screen, and looks at his payload.

FRENCH

I'm running low on firepower.

INT. ACADEMY

DELAWARE
Stand by for coordinates.

He looks at the map, studying it. Rachel loses patience and seizes the radio out of his hand, ignoring the map entirely.

RACHEL
Coordinates are twenty-seven degrees,
fifty-seven by twenty-five point six
north --

INT. JET

French looks at her panel, one eyebrow cocked.

RACHEL (O.S.)
(filtered)
--by thirteen point six east.

INT. ACADEMY

A moment of radio silence.

FRENCH (O.S.)
(filtered)
I see them.

EXT. APPROACH - DAY

The Lammergeier tank crews sit around the four tanks, each strategically placed on the narrow roadway, staggered at the switchbacks.

DINESH (30s) holds a half eaten sandwich in one hand. He punches his comrade's shoulder and laughs until he chokes, caught in the middle of some joke that has him reeling.

He doesn't notice the building JET noise as it steadily increases.

EXT. FLIGHT DECK

Edward, holding his burned arm stiff at his side, walks out towards the bow, eyes skyward. He picks his way over the remains of the Lammergeier soldiers.

Behind him, the Old Guard members start to clear away the corpses. He walks on, looking up. Then he sees it.

INSERT: French's jet, little more than a dot, speeding towards the mountain side.

INT. JET

French makes an adjustment to his display. He arms one of his heavy missiles.

FRENCH
 (to the jet)
 Skyfox, switch over to hybrid mode.
 And open a frequency.

The jet sound recedes. A communication screen appears.

EXT. THE APPROACH

Above, the Skyfox F-500 drifts over, hardly louder than a stiff wind.

Dinesh coughs as he recovers from his joke. After a moment, his second pops up from the tank cockpit, holding the radio.

DINESH
 What is it?

INT. JET

FRENCH
 Calling Alpine Guard Armor unit. Come
 in, Armor unit.

EXT. THE APPROACH

Dinesh lowers his sandwich, suddenly confused. Who is this guy? He takes the radio.

DINESH
 What?

FRENCH (O.S.)
 (filtered)
 Look up.

Dinesh looks up. His eyes bug out. He opens his mouth, but before he can scream -

EXT. FLIGHT DECK

Edward, from his vantage point, can't quite see the approach behind the slope, but has an excellent view of COLUMN OF FIRE as it EXPLODES into the sky.

EXT. JET

French swoops low over the burning, twisted metal wreckage.

EXT. THE APPROACH

Dinesh, somehow spectacularly alive, scrambles away from the burning tank column and runs off the road, and straight into the minefield.

He hits a mine immediately and is blown apart.

Above his scattered remains, the jet engines fire up, and ROARS off.

EXT. ACADEMY

Rachel, Delaware and the rest of the team stand outside, buffeted by the down draft as Shrike One and the transport chopper descend.

Schick lands, and drops out of the cockpit, jogging over to Delaware.

SCHICK

Captain.

DELAWARE

Where...?

SCHICK

French didn't tell you?

DELAWARE

No time.

SCHICK

Oates and Savage are dead, sir.

Delaware closes his eyes as he absorbs this new blow. Schick squeezes his arm.

SCHICK (cont'd)

You would've been proud.

He looks around at the approaching Marines, the remaining members of the River: Kurosawa, Wailea.

SCHICK (cont'd)
Jesus Christ, is this it?

DELAWARE
We lost Littlehawk, too.

Rachel moves to go to Delaware's side, but then stops. She turns. Delaware follows her gaze.

A large group of the Cradlers have formed at the margins of their position.

Rachel goes to speak with them, which she does a few moments. A ripple runs through the crowd. She turns and looks back and Delaware. She crooks a finger.

He heads over, loping a little from his old injury.

Halee, one of Odessa's prostitutes, appears to be in charge of the pack. She looks at Rachel with hollowed out eyes. Spirit lingers at her knees.

HALEE
That's the crew? That's all?

RACHEL
You can choose to believe me or not.

Halee looks on Delaware with a critical eye.

DELAWARE
Yes. That's all. You are?

HALEE
Mind your own business.

Delaware straightens, and addresses the group.

DELAWARE
I'm Captain Ford, those of you who haven't already heard. If any of you serve Sergei Vetrov, you are my enemy. If you don't, then we have no quarrel.

A Voice calls out.

VOICE (O.S.)

I thought Captains were supposed to go down with their ship. So what are you doing here?

DELAWARE

I just lost half my personal team trying to recover her. You've seen what her weapons can do. Do you think Vikram cares which of you dies?

VOICE 2

We know the Koris. Who the hell are you?

RACHEL

Oh, my brother isn't indifferent to your fate. He's been planning to purge you since long before the ship arrived. You're inconvenient to him. And Sergei...

HALEE

Sergei killed Odessa. He killed Jamie. He killed Chhaya. Who will protect us?

DELAWARE

Sergei is only powerful as long as Vikram backs him.

HALEE

But he has the ship.

DELAWARE

For now.

He turns, and heads away towards the chopper stage. The blades begin to spin.

RACHEL

They're weaker than you think. Trust me.

She follows, and together they load into the chopper.

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

Rachel and Delaware sit side by side in the transport chopper, not speaking, but holding hands. The remains of the River -- Kurosawa, Savage and Wailea, grieve together.

INT. THE WALSH - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - DAY

Vikram walks into, moving gingerly. He's shed his bloody shirt. The flexible rib splint wrapped around his trunk pulses its vein-like lights gently.

Edward, his arm now patched up, rises and stands before him.

EDWARD
We need to talk.

VIKRAM
Get out of my way.

Vikram brushes past him, and heads for the captain's bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Carefully, he lays himself down on the bed, taking short breaths until he's able to fully extend his body.

Edward comes in, wedging himself into the doorway with his arms.

EDWARD
We need to resupply. We can't put up a fight if we don't have anything to fight with.

VIKRAM
What are you proposing?

EDWARD
We send out a salvage team. There are a hundred thousand underwater wrecks from old wars, just teeming with ordnance we can repurpose.

VIKRAM
We could only search to safe dive depths. It would take months.

EDWARD
Not with the ship's sonar.

VIKRAM
Leave? No.

EDWARD
Why not?

VIKRAM

We need soldiers more than missiles.

Edward runs his hand over his unshaven face.

EDWARD

You really still think this is one big experiment, don't you? You're afraid that Sergei's survived to threaten your sparkling reputation with the great unwashed. Or is it little sister's initiative that scares you?

Vikram looks at him, both doleful and condescending.

EDWARD (cont'd)

I'm beginning to think I should have taken up with her.

Vikram's gaze remains steady.

VIKRAM

Why don't you? I don't particularly need you now.

Edward, hurt and enraged, draws back. He turns and leaves, slamming the door so it bounces back on its hinges. Vikram curls in on himself and closes his eyes.

INT. CHOPPER - DAY

Delaware, Rachel and the Marines look down at the colossal dam from above, the Black Monastery and the neat, elegant grid of the village.

EXT. THE CROWN - DAY

The transport chopper and the attack chopper descend in the wide open space near the dam. The Crown residents hide inside their doors.

INT. OLD GUARD OUTPOST - DAY

The skeleton crew of ten Old Guard rush to grab their weapons, and proceed out towards the descending choppers.

EXT. THE CROWN - DAY

Rachel exits the chopper first, looking straight into the row of ten assault rifles. The Guardsmen look at her, raising their faces in confusion.

RACHEL

You want to shoot me? I'm unarmed.
Shoot me.

She holds out her arms to demonstrate. This performance is clearly not only for them, but for the Crown residents looking on.

Delaware and his people slowly trickle from the choppers, but remain apart, waiting.

Without warning, Ali, his wife Zarah and their teenage son KALIHL (15) leave the shelter of their home and walk out.

Zarah pushes the soldiers aside like a curtain, Ali in tow. Zarah walks to Rachel, and with the shamelessness of any auntie, grabs her face and looks at her.

Then she embraces her tightly. Rachel hugs her back, suppressing a sniff.

ZARAH

(in Nepali,
translated)

Can you swear you are not a prisoner
of these people?

RACHEL

(in Nepali)

I swear it. I'm free.

The Old Guard, leaderless and now without initiative, look to Zarah. She nods, and they lower their weapons and wait.

Ali moves past this scene and approaches Delaware slowly, but deliberately. He looks him up and down, and then sees his breast pocket name tag -- "FORD".

ALI

I met your brother.

Delaware blinks down at this small, weathered man -- an unexpected oracle. He's affected, not sure what to say.

ALI (cont'd)
I don't believe the lies. He was a
good man.

DELAWARE
(choked)
Yes. He was.

ALI
You are a good man, also.

DELAWARE
How can you be sure?

ALI
I prepare the dead, Captain Ford. I
know the living. I am sure.

He squeezes Delaware's arm.

The Old Guard, and the lead villagers gather around Rachel.

KALIHL
We've had no news since Vikram left,
only rumour. Then, the tanks -- they
just blew up! That's what they're
saying.

RACHEL
I can't explain everything right now.
There's something I have to do. When
it's time, I'll send for you.

EXT. SHELL TOWN - AFTERNOON

Sergei, soaking wet, wrestles with the emergency raft. Using French's knife, he slices it open to let out the air, tosses it out into the water with a rock wrapped in it. It sinks.

Exhausted, cold and battered, he staggers up the strand, heading towards the tallest building in the area- the South Barracks.

A crowd of people, including Halee and Spirit, look on with interest as he makes his way down the thoroughfare. They move in, little by little.

Sergei doesn't appreciate the danger until a TEENAGE BOY (18) steps into his path. Sergei straightens and looks directly at him, noting the lead pipe clutched in his fist.

SERGEI
Get out of my way.

The boy shakes his head slowly, though he is visibly shaking. Sergei draws his pistol and takes a few steps forward.

 SERGEI (cont'd)
All right. Here I am. Take your swing. But you only get one.

The boy hesitates. Sergei whips the pistol around and delivers a firm tap the boy's temple with the butt, dropping him instantly.

In the same movement fluid movement, Sergei raises the pistol and aims it into the crowd, targeting one, then another of them.

 SERGEI (cont'd)
Anyone else?

They scatter. Sergei looks down at the barely conscious boy, who moans in pain.

 SERGEI (cont'd)
You're lucky I'm in a hurry, you little punk.

He moves on, limping towards the barracks.

In the receding crowd, Miryam Leclerc stands tall, intrigued by the scene. She's dressed as a civilian, except for a dark stole nearly the same colour as her maroon sweater.

She goes to the boy and kneels down. Behind her, her followers linger in the shadows, five that we can see.

She touches the boy gently and helps him up. He stumbles, fairly badly concussed. Miryam gestures and summons one of her followers to help bear him off the street.

INT. SOUTH BARRACKS - COMMANDER'S QUARTERS - DAY

Sergei sits stiffly in a chair, shirtless, eyes closed as STEFANIA KIRYANOVA (20) clumsily tends his wounds.

She, the youngest and weakest, has clearly been elected by her peers - a group of four other Lammgeiers more gangbanger than soldier - for the thankless task.

She douses one of Sergei's chest wounds with alcohol, and he opens his eyes, his entire abdomen contracting as he tenses with pain.

Breathing heavily through his nose, he looks up at Kiryanova, eyes full of rage. But he's too tired to lash out, so he subsides.

KIRYANOVA
(tiny whisper)
I'm sorry.

He applies a bandage to his chest with one hand, and turns his attention to the others.

SERGEI
You, and you, get out.

Kiryanova rises to follow, but he grabs her wrist.

SERGEI (cont'd)
You stay. Help me with this.

He indicates a split contusion under his left shoulder blade that's bleeding. Meekly, Kiryanova nods and goes to tend it. He takes a slug from the vodka before handing it off.

He winces as she sponges the wound, but doesn't react as violently. She tapes a bandage over it. He leans back, grunts in pain as he exhales.

SERGEI (cont'd)
Come over here. Put your hand--

He indicates his ribs. She blinks, and he raises his eyebrows at her. She lays her hand across his bruised ribs .

SERGEI (cont'd)
Feel for anything that might be a
break.

KIRYANOVA
It's hard to tell under the swelling,
sir.

SERGEI
Fine.

He leans back gingerly against the chair back, and takes the vodka from her, taking another belt.

SERGEI (cont'd)
Who are you, anyway? You're no
fighter.

KIRYANOVA
I'm no one.

SERGEI
Tell me your name.

KIRYANOVA
Stefania Kiryanova. I -- I'm a radio
operator.

He touches his mouth with one finger.

SERGEI
My operator in the Crown was a
terrorist spy. Are you a spy?

Kiryanova's eyes go big.

KIRYANOVA
N--no, Commander.

SERGEI
Then why so afraid? Look at me, I'm
helpless. What can I do to you?

She takes a half step back, very aware his that under his
injuries, he's still incredibly physically powerful.

She meets his eyes, and tries to summon some courage.

KIRYANOVA
I don't believe you, sir.

He smiles.

SERGEI
An intelligent double agent would
have cut my throat by now.

She blinks at him, then bows her head.

SERGEI (cont'd)
Still. Anyone can say they're loyal.

He rises with some effort. Terrified, she goes down on her
knees, pressing her face into his boots.

KIRYANOVA
I'm loyal, I swear it. Please--

SERGEI

Christ, get up. I said get up.

She scrambles to her feet. He takes her chin in his hand.

SERGEI (cont'd)

If you want to prove it to me, then listen.

She looks up at him, tears and innocence. He licks his lips, enjoying her fear.

KIRYANOVA

How?

SERGEI

You're going to find someone for me.

INT. THE BLACK MONASTERY - MAIN HALL - DAY

Rachel charges into the space while Delaware and the entirety of his crew, minus two Marines, follow gingerly into the cavernous, oppressive space.

Rachel snatches up the family photographs on the mantel, and then plows through to another room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Rachel looks through another set of family photos, grabs all of the ones of Vikram.

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

Kurosawa looks at Delaware.

KUROSAWA

What is she doing?

But Delaware is contemplative, and doesn't respond. He makes his way vaguely into the centre of the building, while his people slowly drift towards the veranda.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Rachel grabs more photos, opens a drawer and comes up with a few prints, and some data keys. She brings all of it with her, juggling it in her arms.

One image falls, a full studio portrait of her family. The glass smashes. She scoops it up, winces as she cuts herself, then hurries on.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Delaware walks down the hallway, almost dazed. He sees light -- a door ajar.

INT. RACHEL'S ROOM - DAY

Delaware looks in. He realizes intuitively it's Rachel's room -- the Oxford pennant, the Jefferson chair, all of the books. He steps in cautiously.

There's a thin layer of dust where the window's breeze hasn't blown it away. He looks over at the bed -- the sheets are mussed, and there's still a dent in the pillow.

He lightly touches the sheets, coming up with a thin patina of dust. The bed is exactly as it had been when last it was occupied.

Behind him, a noise shakes him out of his reverie. Rachel strides in, and dumps the pile of photographs on to the bed.

Impatient, she hip checks him to get around him, and shoves everything -- the leftovers of her studies with Hudson -- off her desk.

DELAWARE

Hey, slow down.

RACHEL

Go through those and pull out anything with Vikram from after approximately 2035.

Delaware doesn't immediately move, but just stares. She pulls out one of the iPads, plugs it in, and starts going through the data keys.

INSERT: She scrolls rapidly through an endless stream of family photos -- there's maybe 1 of Vikram for every 20 of the rest of them, but still plenty.

DELAWARE

Rachel.

She doesn't hear him.

DELAWARE (cont'd)

Rachel.

She looks over her shoulder at him.

RACHEL

What?

DELAWARE

Is this where--?

RACHEL

What?

She then takes his meaning.

RACHEL (cont'd)

No, of course not. Do you see any
blood stains?

This strikes Delaware's nerves. He takes her arm and yanks her roughly out of her chair.

RACHEL (cont'd)

What are you doing--?

DELAWARE

I need to see.

He lets go of her, slightly ashamed, trying to suppress his emotion.

DELAWARE (cont'd)

Please.

Rachel sets down the iPad, sighs in a put-upon way, and takes Delaware's hand.

INT. BRIDGE - EVENING

Vikram, his body moving far more freely now, sits down in the captain's chair. He calls up a screen, and searches out the physical bodies of his soldiers, their heat signatures.

He finds the bulk of them in the common room, heads together. He gestures, and an audio screen appears.

Then, he merges the screens and stretches them. They turn into manifestations of the soldiers, as though now seated in his presence.

DESALIS

The mortars on this ship could reach it, easily.

OLD GUARD

He wouldn't do that to our families. Sergei lied, it's that simple.

DESALIS

A week ago I would have agreed. But then, why did Rachel run?

They look thoughtful. Vikram, irritated, gestures and they disappear.

He calls up the diagram, and searches the cold blue-grey rooms. He moves it until he finds a solitary glowing figure in the gym, lifting weights.

He zooms in, turns the image into full video, and watches impassively.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Lacking a spotter, Edward stretches out on the bench and works a machine. He's down to shorts and a wifebeater, now partly transparent with sweat.

His burn wound is bandaged, but blood seeps through, a consequence of his exertion.

Vikram watches him from the entrance, his eyes travelling over the Edward's physique. Finally he breaks the lull, and approaches him.

VIKRAM

It won't heal if you don't rest.

Edward does another set.

EDWARD

Does that concern you?

Vikram frowns. He moves around the bench and sits down at the very edge. Edward rolls his eyes, finishes his set and leans up, straddling the bench.

EDWARD (cont'd)

You're looking better.

Edward gestures to his hand. Vikram holds it up, demonstrates a slightly stuttered articulation of his fingers.

EDWARD (cont'd)
Does it hurt?

VIKRAM
It works. That's really the only important thing.

EDWARD
Right. Well.

He rises, but Vikram straddles the bench to face him. He puts his hands on Edward's knees.

VIKRAM
Don't.

EDWARD
What?

VIKRAM
Don't walk away from me. Please.

Vikram looks up at him, his expression pained. Edward's eyes travel over the bruises and cuts him by Sergei, still visible and raw.

Slowly, he lowers himself back on to the bench.

VIKRAM (cont'd)
You have every right to be angry with me. You, Desalis. I merit your contempt.

EDWARD
So it's humility today?

VIKRAM
I'm not trying to--

EDWARD
--You are an amateur and a child. You expect soldiers to follow you, but you have no experience soldiering yourself. You pretend to omniscience and yet, you fail to anticipate combat scenarios because you are a pedant versed in strategy, and completely innocent of tactics.

VIKRAM

I know.

EDWARD

--I'm not finished.

VIKRAM

Okay.

EDWARD

You are crippled by your emotions. You think you've hidden your guilt, but it's written all over you. You think you can kill your way to supremacy and program justice in afterwards. I'm not the only one who sees it.

VIKRAM

Edward. I can't hold the centre alone. Are you with me? Truly?

EDWARD

Ask me for my support. Ask me for it.

VIKRAM

How can I ask you to support me when I don't even know what I'm doing?

EDWARD

You know what you need to do. You don't like the politics of the thing.

Vikram, nettled, shifts in his seat.

VIKRAM

No. It's more than that. You know it.

EDWARD

I do.

Edward slides closer, and holds the younger man's face, drawing his thumbs over his cheekbones.

EDWARD (cont'd)

I could do it. Quick and clean.

VIKRAM

No.

He shoves Edward's hands away from his face and goes to rise, but Edward catches his wrists and pulls him back.

EDWARD

Then how? How did you think this would go? Did you think it would be bloodless?

VIKRAM

I tried. I put safeguards in place to prevent--

EDWARD

You're making a fool of yourself with your men. They'll desert you for Rachel the instant you confirm their fears.

Vikram stares down at the floor.

VIKRAM

I am aware of it.

EDWARD

She'll kill you. She won't hesitate.

Vikram raises his head. He smiles, his eyes wet.

VIKRAM

You're right.

Edward melts. He pulls Vikram to him, kisses him.

EDWARD

I want to see you age, Vikram.

He pushes Vikram's hair back, looking into his face with open, honest affection. Vikram crumples, throws his arms around Edward, and kisses him fiercely.

Edward pulls off Vikram's shirt, runs his hands lightly over the dynamic cast bracing his ribs, and the various wounds on his chest. He presses his face into his neck.

The instant Edward's view is obscured, Vikram's anguished expression drops.

He stares into the middle distance while Edward nuzzles him, bored triumph written all over his face. He smiles thinly.

EXT. THE SKY BURIAL GROUND - DUSK

Rachel and Delaware hike up the winding trail. He looks to his left at a pile of vultures, feeding on a nearby corpse. One of the lammergeiers lifts its eyes to him.

He hesitates, watches it. It's the first time he's seen one in person. It hops closer to him and quirks its head.

Rachel realizes he's halted, and turns.

RACHEL
We're wasting time. We can come back later.

Delaware continues to look at the bird, which continues to look at him.

DELAWARE
We might not survive.

She isn't convinced. She turns her back and continues up towards the Black Temple. The bird flaps back to its meal, scattering the smaller vultures.

Delaware follows after her.

INT. BLACK TEMPLE - DUSK

Rachel pushes open the rattan doors with a SCRAPE, speaking over her shoulder.

RACHEL
The longer I'm away from my work, the lower our chances get.

She turns, sees the scene -- much unchanged, tacky with a river of Hudson's blood, kept cool and undisturbed in the thin air.

She stops dead, and goes completely, utterly still.

INSERT: Flashes, the confrontation, Hudson's eyes, her hand slicing across his throat. Red blood.

Delaware steps in behind her, his eyes taking in the scene. His jaw tightens, and his eyes water, but he is stoic.

It's only when Rachel's knees go out from under her that he realizes -- she's out of body. She catches herself on the floor, hands going straight into the old, sticky blood.

She lifts up her hands, looks at the brown smudges. She sees it red, glistening. She scrambles backwards, falls.

Delaware takes a single stride over her, lifts her and forces her to look at him. Her eyes don't see him. She can only look at her hands.

DELAWARE

Rachel.

He shakes her.

DELAWARE (cont'd)

Rachel. Look at me.

Finally, she does. Then she pushes him away and leaves. He follows her out.

EXT. BLACK TEMPLE - DUSK

Rachel dry-heaves on her knees, trying to fight off the panic attack. Delaware goes straight to her. He kneels down, takes her hand, and takes his water bottle out.

He pours it on her hands, and uses his own handkerchief to clean the smudges off. Her lip quivers, and she won't meet his eyes.

He tilts her chin up, making her look at him.

DELAWARE

I have to go back in there. Do you understand?

Slowly, she nods.

DELAWARE (cont'd)

I'll only be a moment.

She nods again. He helps her up, pulls her to him and gifts her a swift kiss on the forehead.

INT. THE BLACK TEMPLE - DUSK

Delaware slips in and looks around at the small, ancient place. The last bare rays of sunset illuminate the sticky blood in patches.

He takes in the scene, which is oddly beautiful in the dying light -- like a small cathedral illuminated in orange.

Through the dimness, his eyes find the altar, something else: his medic bag.

In two steps, Delaware has it in hand, causing a cloud of dust to rise. He wipes the dust off, and lays his hand on the canvas.

He takes one last look at the place of Hudson's death, just as the light dies. Then he leaves.

EXT. THE SKY BURIAL GROUND - TWILIGHT

Rachel stands at some remove down the path, shoulders shrugged against the rising wind. She looks down at the lights of the Cradle, and beyond -- the ship.

Delaware comes down the path, a little stiff on his leg, bag in hand. Rachel turns to him, sees it in his hands.

DELAWARE

Here.

He offers it to her. She looks at him, confused and conflicted by the gesture.

RACHEL

I can't.

DELAWARE

He would've wanted it. Don't argue.

He doesn't wait for her response, but shoves it into her hands. She stands with it, blinking.

DELAWARE (cont'd)

Come on. It's getting cold.

She shoulders the bag, follows, and takes his outstretched hand.

INT. THE WALSH - BERTHING - NIGHT

The bruised and battered Old Guard sleep in bunks.

INT. CAPTAIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Vikram, naked, sleeps restfully. Edward lies awake next to him, staring into the dark. A long beat. He gets up, pulls on a shirt and sweats.

He grabs a duffle bag from the closet, ready to leave, then hesitates.

He touches Vikram's exposed neck, his jaw. He shifts in his sleep, but doesn't wake.

EDWARD
 (whispered, to
 himself)
 You aren't fooling anyone, boy.

He leaves.

EXT. THE BLACK MONASTERY - NIGHT

Kurosawa, French and Wailea sit together on one side of a massive bonfire. On the other are the Marines, Ortiz, Schick.

Delaware and Rachel approach. Delaware moves to sit with his halved team, but Rachel pulls away.

RACHEL
 I think I need to get some sleep.

DELAWARE
 I'll be along.

He embraces her, kisses her forehead, and watches her even as he settles down next to Kurosawa.

KUROSAWA
 What are you doing?

DELAWARE
 What does it look like I'm doing?

Wailea lets out a wry little chuckle.

DELAWARE (cont'd)
 What?

KUROSAWA
 That girl does not need sleep.

DELAWARE
 You all have a serious, serious lack of appreciation for just how insubordinate you are.

FRENCH
 That's how you raised us, chief.

A long beat.

DELAWARE
 I know you're hurting. All of us are hurting. But we do have a plan.

Kurosawa puts a hand on his arm.

KUROSAWA
She's going to finish this. All we
can do is be ready.

EXT. MARKET DISTRICT - NIGHT

Lucretia, leaning on an elegant bone handled cane, stretches her legs. She walks along the promenade near the finer merchant stalls, ostensibly examining the merchandise.

Out of the corner of her eye, she picks out Edward, leaning against the retaining wall, looking rakish and martial in his fatigues.

EXT. OUTDOOR TAVERN - NIGHT

Edward and Lucretia walk together under oil lamps, her hand slipped into his crooked arm like a Victorian couple.

LUCRETIA
Your bonnie lad let you off the
leash, then?

EDWARD
I'm not his dog. He can do without me
for a couple of hours.

LUCRETIA
A lot can happen in a couple of
hours.

He brushes his knuckles under her jawline.

EDWARD
Tell me about it.

LUCRETIA
(suspicious)
What are you up to?

EDWARD
Just lonely, is all.

LUCRETIA
Vikram not living up to your
expectations?

EDWARD
He won't--

He looks up at the dim light of the Crown, and stops himself.

LUCRETIA

Ah. I see your trouble.

He stops, and looks at her.

EDWARD

Take me home with you.

He kisses her, fiercely. She pulls back from him, then smiles up at him, touching his face. She takes his hand.

INT. OUTDOOR TAVERN - NIGHT

In the corner, dressed like a local, Kiryanova watches the striking couple. On the table, under her hand, a neat drawing of Lucretia is visible.

When they move on, so does she.

INT. SOUTH BARRACKS - SERGEI'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Sergei, apparently bored of rest, sits up. He's -- of all things -- sketching. He uses cardboard and a soft, dark pencil.

His work has the blocky aspect of Soviet Realism, but it's more influenced by a mapmaker's craft than an artist's skill.

Even so, he's captured Rachel's likeness from memory, a sketch portrait of her looking over her shoulder in disdain. He adds details, blurs a few lines, then looks back at it.

INSERT: He then writes WHORE across her face, and scratches the face out until his pencil dulls.

He tosses the image and the pencil away, and sits back, wincing from his bruised ribs.

There is a timid KNOCK at the door. Sergei reaches down to pick up a handgun that lies on the floor next to his bed. He slips it under the covers.

SERGEI

If you want to come in, knock like a man, not a little girl.

The door opens a crack, and Kiryanova pokes her head in. Sergei sits up.

SERGEI (cont'd)

Well?

KIRYANOVA

I found them.

SERGEI

Them?

KIRYANOVA

There was a man with her. Tall and dark, with a British accent. They talked about Vikram.

SERGEI

Edward Blythe. Friends together, then.

She offers him the drawing of Lucretia, a small map on the obverse. Sergei gets out of bed, hissing in a painful breath, then stands and takes the paper.

Kiryanova averts her eyes from his nakedness as she hands him the note. He takes it, but can't resist putting a bit of intimidation on her, taking her chin and forcing her to look up.

She stares at him with wide-eyed apprehension. He grins and releases her from his scrutiny.

SERGEI (cont'd)

Don't worry. You're not my type.

She spares him a glance, but he's gone to get his fatigue trousers. He sits down on the bed, sets the paper next to him, and draws them on.

SERGEI (cont'd)

Come here. Show me what I'm looking at.

She bends over the note and indicates the lines and Xs.

KIRYANOVA

It's a box, fifth down the row, at the water's edge. I think the bunker must be underground, because I listened for twenty minutes and didn't hear anything inside.

SERGEI

Very good, Kiryanova. You may be the least useless person here. I should promote you.

KIRYANOVA

Please don't, sir.

He looks her over, her diminutive size, her frightened aspect.

SERGEI

No, it wouldn't be a very good idea, would it?

She shakes her head. Her timidity intrigues him, and he moves a little closer to her. Then he looks down at the image of Lucretia, a drawing we now know to be his style.

KIRYANOVA

Should I...should I send out a detachment?

SERGEI

No.

He sits down at the edge of his bed.

SERGEI (cont'd)

That's all. You're dismissed.

She ducks her head.

KIRYANOVA

Yes, sir.

SERGEI

Kiryanova --

She turns, apprehensive.

SERGEI (cont'd)

(dangerously)

Not a word.

She nods, and then exits quickly. Sergei watches her go, then begins to pull on the rest of his now-laundered clothes.

INT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Vikram sits rigid in the captain's chair, twenty displays hanging in the air in front of him, glowing gently.

He gestures with his injured hand -- misfires -- then does it again. A communication screen appears. He sends out a CALL SIGNAL.

INT. LUCRETIA'S BUNKER - NIGHT

Edward lies coiled around Lucretia, who sleeps soundly. His eyes open in response to the soft BEEP of his radio. He reaches over, then picks it up.

He walks, naked, to the window cut out of the western wall, and looks out at the lightening sky.

EDWARD

Bonjour.

INT. THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

VIKRAM

Where the fuck are you?

INTERCUT VIKRAM/EDWARD

EDWARD

Why, did we have plans?

Lucretia stirs. She opens one eye, then the other, and watches Edward, sleepily enjoying the view.

INT. THE BRIDGE - NIGHT

Vikram pulls up a weapons screen, with an aerial map of the Cradle.

VIKRAM

Say the word and I'll make you into a crater.

EDWARD

You do that, darling. But remember that it's very hard to find good help these days.

He tosses the radio next to the bed.

Lucretia sits up, arms across her knees.

LUCRETIA
He sounds angry.

EDWARD
Fuck him.

LUCRETIA
You do.

He drops down on to the bed, and lays his head down in her lap.

EDWARD
My Dorian Grey. The angelic exterior is the cover for his sinful, tortured soul, but his texture is still so very...supple.

LUCRETIA
Do you love him?

Edward shrugs.

EDWARD
He begs for my favours, then lies to my face in the same breath.

LUCRETIA
For someone who gets bored as easily as you, that must be exciting.

EDWARD
Until that gets boring. What then?

LUCRETIA
Change sides. If they'd even have you.

Edward looks up at her from her lap, frowning slightly.

EDWARD
You're serious.

LUCRETIA
You must have considered it.

He says nothing, but gazes at the metal ceiling. Then he returns to her embrace.

INT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

Vikram sits in his chair, stiff as a board, eyes glossy, mouth set. He looks to the north peaks, to the Crown, then over to the east where the Cradle is.

He then raises a hand, and sends a gesture command to the NCOM.

INT. LUCRETIA'S BUNKER - NIGHT

Edward and Lucretia kiss in a very familiar, comfortable way, when both of their heads are turned by the SHIP'S WHISTLE. It vibrates through the air like thunder.

Edward gets up and goes to the window. The ship glides past.

EDWARD

He's heading for the narrows.

LUCRETIA

Shouldn't you do something?

EDWARD

Like what?

Edward looks at the behemoth ship, then back at Lucretia. She shrugs.

EXT. BLACK MONASTERY - VERANDA - DAWN

Delaware, in undershirt and fatigue pants, looks out at the vista through binoculars.

Rachel, dressed in a robe, comes up behind him and offers him one of the two cups of tea she's carrying.

Underneath them, the Marines and the River get in gear.

DELAWARE

He's putting us in mortar range.

RACHEL

Are you saying we weren't before?

DELAWARE

International accord. They won't launch outside a certain target zone.

RACHEL

How much ordnance does she have left?

DELAWARE
Enough to wipe us off the map. We
should evacuate.

RACHEL
He's bluffing.

DELAWARE
If he's not bluffing--

RACHEL
Then I'd rather get shelled here than
get driven into the landmines by
Sergei.

DELAWARE
Schick reported Sergei went
overboard. That's a 20 storey fall.
He's dead.

Rachel takes the binoculars and looks through them.

RACHEL
I'll believe it when I see his
corpse.

Suddenly determined, Rachel shoves the binoculars back into Delaware's hand, unclips his radio from his belt, and sends out a CALL SIGNAL.

INT. BRIDGE - MORNING

Vikram makes an adjustment to the navigation. A BEEP -- his call signal -- comes through the communications display. He activates it.

VIKRAM
Long time no talk, little sister.

INTERCUT VIKRAM/RACHEL

RACHEL
I can see you. You probably can't see
me.

VIKRAM
No.

INT. THE BLACK MONASTERY - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Rachel walks inside with the radio. Delaware lingers outside, then follows.

RACHEL

I'm home, having a nice cup of tea and watching the sun come up the way we used to. You know, before you murdered our parents.

VIKRAM

Rachel.

RACHEL

You might as well do it. Kill us. All of the villagers, all of the children. All of the people we grew up with. Put a big hole through it.

VIKRAM

I don't want that.

RACHEL

Of course you don't. This is the humanity you want to preserve. We're the acceptable ones. Except I told them everything, so they know all about you now.

VIKRAM

Listen to me --

RACHEL

I guess that makes you the unacceptable one, now. The substandard. The corrupt. The "destructive element".

Delaware comes up from behind her.

DELAWARE

Rachel.

He tries to grab the radio but she ducks under him.

RACHEL

You had better make a decision, Vikram.

VIKRAM

You think I'm going to surrender?

RACHEL
If you want a quicker death.

VIKRAM
I won't hurt you. But if one of those
choppers rises over the peaks, I'll
torch them the way I torched Ford's
little protege.

Delaware yanks the radio out Rachel's hand and switches it
off. He glares at her.

DELAWARE
You're being reckless.

Rachel kicks a pillow moodily, then drops down into the
leather couch.

DELAWARE (cont'd)
I know you still care about him.

RACHEL
I want him dead.

He gets down on his haunches in front of her, laying his
hands on her thighs.

DELAWARE
That's how I know you still care
about him.

RACHEL
I was so blind. I don't understand
it.

DELAWARE
He protected you from that part of
himself.

RACHEL
I wanted to believe the lies.

She leans her head back, sighs. He stands over her, goes
around behind her and starts massaging her shoulders.

DELAWARE
This thing, this program you've
cooked up. Do you really think it
will work?

RACHEL
Maybe. I hope. I have no way of
knowing until I try it.

DELAWARE

So we -- my crew, my soldiers -- our job is to get you on board the ship. That's the objective.

RACHEL

You'll be killed. You heard him -- you can't even get off the ground. You wouldn't have lost the Walsh in the first place if I--

He lays a finger over her mouth, then bends down and kisses her.

DELAWARE

I made plenty of stupid mistakes long before you were ever a factor.

Rachel senses the logic of this, and relaxes.

RACHEL

You're right. Stupid.

DELAWARE

Yes. Stupid.

He kisses her again -- then for longer. Then one of his hands drifts down under her robe--

They are interrupted by a cough. French stands in the doorway, looking prim. He stands at attention.

FRENCH

Sir.

Delaware pulls his hand out of Rachel's robe and straightens.

DELAWARE

What is it?

French looks back over his shoulder in the direction he came from. He opens his mouth to speak, frowns...then just points, indicating his commander should follow.

EXT. THE BLACK MONASTERY - MORNING

Rachel, now dressed in t-shirt and jeans, follows fully-uniformed, armed Delaware through the crowd of Marines. They're all circled around one person, weapons aimed.

Inside the circle is Edward, also fully kitted out in his SAS fatigues and gear, even his beret in place. He stands, arms raised over his head, expression cheerful.

EDWARD

Hello, darlings.

Delaware and Rachel look at each other, bemused, then back at Edward. He just smoulders.

FADE OUT

