

THE AQUA VITAE PARALLAX

Written by

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Based on, *The Aqua Vitae Parallax*
by Austin Ross.

Address
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EXT. KHUMBU GLACIER, HIMALAYAS - DAY

Altitude: 8000 meters.

EXTREME WIDE SHOT of a bright blue clear sky. The sun is a blazing sphere throwing off sharp light. The Himalayas lay sprawling beneath the brilliant sky. A minute figure makes his way along the landscape.

CLOSE UP of a YOUNG MAN, in his early twenties. He begins his ascent across the glacier and in the direction of the highest peak- Everest. A roughly sewn and ragged bag is slung across his shoulder. He is the only living, moving being on the range. All around him fierce winds blow, swirling the snow. The Young Man walks on.

As he approaches a blocked passageway, he slows his pace and looks pointedly at the obstacle. An minor avalanche begins. It clears a pathway where none existed before. The man climbs on. He's making his way toward the top of Mount Everest.

He stops at a mountain outcropping and takes in the view. He's only a few metres away from the peak. His visage and expression are serene. He takes in the view and a small gentle smile appears on his face. He sits down cross legged in the snow. He pulls the bag off his shoulder. From inside the bag he extracts a ragged, faded woolen shawl. His breath is cloudy as it leaves his mouth. He gently unfolds the shawl and drapes it around his shoulders. A gust of wind buffets the snow around him and the Young Man pulls the shawl tighter around himself.

CUT TO:

EXT. KHUMBU GLACIER, HIMALAYAS - TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE.

The sequence shows the Young man in the same pose barely moving.

He occasionally picks up a corner of his shawl to wipe some perspiration off his face. It's always only the one particular corner.

A circular cycle of day and night occurs numerous times. All the while the Young Man sits in the same pose, meditating.

The snow and ice around him gradually begins to melt away as time passes on. The brown earth beneath the snow eventually begins to show.

CUT TO:

EXT. KHUMBU GLACIER, HIMALAYAS - DAY

By the time his immediate vicinity is devoid of snow, the Young Man opens his eyes. Much time has passed.

He looks around at the scenery. He slowly stands up. The shawl slides off his shoulders and gently falls to the earthy ground.

The Young Man glances at ground where the shawl lies. He then turns from it and walks away.

CLOSE UP of the fallen shawl. The edge of the shawl bears the perfect imprint of the Young Man's face.

CUT TO:

EXT. KHUMBU GLACIER, HIMALAYAS - TIME LAPSE SEQUENCE.

CLOSE UP of the shawl lying on the earth covered mountain outcrop.

SLOW ZOOM OUT as the wind picks up. Slowly the snow and frost return to the area once again. A fine covering of snow begins to encrust the shawl. Eventually layer upon layer of snow buries the shawl until it is completely hidden from view.

WIDE SHOT of the outcropping covered in snow, no different from the rest of the mountain range.

CUT TO:

INT. RAINBOW TEN TENT, BASE CAMP - EARLY MORNING

Altitude: 7,970 Meters.

Fifteen sleeping bags lay about the ground of a large camping tent. Five of the sleeping bags are in a separate corner. Ten sleeping bags, some paired up, are spread across the remaining space. One of the campers, STEVE LEISURE, a blond 35 year old man is the only one awake. He's standing at the entrance of the tent poking his head out into the early morning darkness. He turns away from the entrance, letting the flap fall back to cover the opening.

STEVE
(slightly hoarse voice)
You guys.

CAMPER 1
(GROANS)
Shh!

STEVE
Come on sleepy heads, we've got to start climbing soon!

CAMPER 2
It's not even 4 o'clock yet!

CAMPER 3

C'mon Stevie. Come back to bed.

STEVE

We've got to start moving at first light! We won't make it to the top in time if you sleep in.

CAMPER 3

I'm still exhausted from yesterday. Please Steve. Come back to bed. Just a bit longer.

STEVE

(sighs irritably)

Fine.

(mutters huffily)

If there's a storm and we don't get to the peak in time you'll be wishing you'd listened to me.

Steve makes his way across the tent and stops at an empty sleeping bag. It's placed close to where CAMPER 3 is snuggled in his own sleeping bag. Steve, still seeming huffy climbs in to his accommodations and snuggles up to Camper 3.

CUT TO:

EXT. BASE CAMP - TWO HOURS LATER

Early morning sunlight shines on a cluster of eleven tents, their surrounding landscape covered in snow.. Ten of these are small two-person tents. Outside the largest tent, nine puffy eyed men are eating power bars and sipping steaming beverages from thermos flasks. They wear brightly coloured soft-shell mountain jackets.

Steve exits the large tent, fully geared up. He has his goggles on and an oxygen tank strapped to his back. He's dressed like the others in a bright soft-shell jacket with the hood up. He stops when he sees that his friends aren't fully ready to go.

STEVE

(groans)

You'll are still *eating*?

CAMPER 4

(rolls his eyes)

Jeez Steve, relax. This is supposed to be *fun*.

Steve opens his mouth to retort when a SHERPA exits the tent and walks up to the group.

SHERPA
(accented English)
Ok. Everyone has to get ready now.
No more time to waste.

Steve's friends and fellow climbers hurriedly chomp down on the rest of their power bars and gulp down their beverages. All the while they briskly walk over to their large tent and enter it to retrieve their gear.

STEVE
(mutters)
Sure. Take *him* seriously but call me a killjoy.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIMALAYAS - LATER

Altitude: 7900 meters.

EXTREME WIDE SHOT of a large portion of a steep side of a mountain. Eleven people- the Sherpa leading the group comprising of Steve and the other nine climbers- make their way up the mountain. All eleven climbers are connected by pitons, carabiners and climbing rope. The terrain is steep but the Rainbow Ten are agile. Steve brings up the rear in the line of climbers who move upward in a single file.

Snow covers much of the mountain but the sky is clear and the sun shines bright.

All of a sudden a strong wind picks up and begins buffeting the climbers. The gale begins swirling around the snow settled on the landscape. The climbers are obscured from view.

WIDE SHOT of the group of climbers. The Sherpa at the top stumbles.

CLOSE UP of his hand slipping and losing it's grip on the ice pick buried into the side of the mountain.

LONG SHOT of the Sherpa being whipped away by the ferocious wind. He flies off the side of the mountain. The force of his body being thrown off yanks at the climbing rope attached to his body.

CLOSE UP of the various pitons being ripped away from the side of the mountain.

CLOSE UP of Steve forcefully imbedding his ice pick into the mountain face. He then swiftly pulls out a small sharp knife tucked into his jacket and slashes through the climbing rope connected to him.

WIDE SHOT as with a low RUMBLE, an avalanche starts up higher up from the climbers.

CLOSE UP SHOTS of various climbers scrambling to get a hold on the mountain surface as the pistons and ropes yank them downward.

WIDE SHOT as the avalanche picks up speed and draws closer to the climbers.

LONG SHOT of the Sherpa SCREAMING as he falls downward.

WIDE SHOT as all the climbers connected to the Sherpa also begin to fall. They fall in order of who was closest to the Sherpa in the ascent.

Steve is the only member of the climbing expedition who isn't yanked away with the Sherpa's descent. He clings onto his ice pick and digs his studded boots into the snow. However the avalanche is gaining on him. The ice begins to lose it's grip in the mountain slope as the RUMBLE of the avalanche signals it's approach. The snow around the ice pick loosens and the ice pick starts slipping along with Steve's shoes.

Once the avalanche reaches Steve, he begins to fall albeit at a much slower pace than his fellow climbers. With the force of the avalanche he's flipped on to his back and his large rucksack acts as a giant sled. He begins gliding down the mountain slope while his friends fall rapidly.

The free falling team reaches the edge of a cliff. The other nine climbers fall right off the cliff and into the abyss. Steve, who's riding the tail end of the avalanche, reaches the cliff a few seconds after his friends. As he nears the edge of the cliff his rucksack slows down his descent. A part of his rucksack snags a protruding rock in the snow, stopping his fall mere centimeters from the edge of the cliff.

As he is stopped by his rucksack from falling over the edge, Steve hits his head on the tightly packed snow. He falls unconscious.