

BLACK PASSPORT

Stanley Greene, photographer

Script by
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September 05, 2008

SOMETIMES YOUR WINGS GET SINGED,
OR YOU JUST BURN UP.

PROLOGUE

It's something Alexis Brodovich said. He said the life of an artist is like a butterfly. And if they're lucky they can last for eight months. But I applied it to war photography. And I say the life of a war photographer; if they're lucky it can last for eight years. If you are reading the Tarot and you look at the death card. You can have the physical death but you can also have the spiritual death. And I think that the comparison to eight years is like that, I think you can only do this for eight years. It doesn't mean you can't continue to do it. But I think for eight years you can still keep the positive. If you stay at it longer than eight years, you turn. And not into a beautiful butterfly. You really turn. Cause I see it in myself, I see it in all my friends and colleagues. I mean they are all victims of post trauma. They all have become posttraumatic and deal with it in different ways. And we're not the beautiful butterflies anymore.

We become moths. And what a moth does, it flies to the flame. We're like moths flying to the flame. You know, sometimes your wings get singed or you just burn up.

//GET KILLED. OR YOU BURN UP INSIDE//

The drugs and the alcohol and the party and all of this is to push it away, push it away.

SCENE 1. PARIS. '86.

AU PAIR.

"SMALL CHANGE GOT RAINED ON WITH HIS OWN '38".

I'm hearing Tom Waits' rusty voice fighting with the high screams of the kids. Trying to give them there Saturday evening bath. Mommy and daddy are heading for the door. I am an au pair in Paris with a Leica and two music cassettes. Kind of Blue by Miles Davis and Small Change from Tom Waits. I'm playing them to death.

Just two months before I was living in New York. With my mother and her boyfriend Nick. Nick is a drunk. I mean, you know, when he get drunk he go get out of the car and he go and pie, on the street. Well, one night he made some chicken and then he went out to drink. I had issues with him cause I knew he was running drugs for friends of mine. He used my mother's car, to go down to Harlem, he thought he was a taxi, and he was bringing drugs back to New Rochelle and I found out about it and I could bug him. We basically didn't like each other. Yeah, he made some chicken. My mum didn't want the chicken so she said: 'why don't you have it'. I came home from work. I already had eaten at the paper. So I came and ate the chicken. He came home thinking I grab the chicken. He saw I'm at the table, eating the chicken and he went crazy about me and I'm basically telling him to go ... and he just went nuts and he got the knife. My mother hears me screaming. She comes running of the stairs and calms him down and then says to me: 'What a you wanna do?' and I said: 'what a you mean?' and she says: 'well it's obvious you can't stay here'. So I said:

// 'I WANNA GO TO PARIS' //

So she gave me the money to go to Paris. I quit my job at the paper and I left. In my mind I'm hearing Tom singing:

// AND SOMEONE WILL HEAD SOUTH UNTIL THIS WHOLE THING COOLS OFF //

SCENE 2. '87. PARIS.
FASHION PHOTOGRAPHER.

STANLEY?? STANLEY!

I heard my name called in the streets of Paris. I turned around and looked at this girl with long black hair. I can't recognize her for nothing. Meredith? Meredith who I took pictures of when I was in San Francisco? Meredith who was my girlfriend for a short time. Meredith who came from a poor family in Walnut Creek California. I met her while I was working out there taking pictures.

Meredith had one goal in life, she wanted to be a model. She hooked herself up to this guy who was part of this pyramid club. Basically, he stole the money and he took Meredith to Europe with him and, you know, like Orson Welles in Citizen Cane, who's wife wanna to be an opera singer, Meredith says 'I wanna be a model'.

//HE TOOK HER TO THIS PLACE

AND THEY MADE HER, CREATED HER//

The same time that Bridget Nilsson was created. So she was put on an operation table and, voila.

So now Meredith is Meredite. Pronounced in a French way. The next thing I know Meredite and I are living together. Now I'm taking her pictures again. Marilyn Goutier liked them and that's how I started out as a fashion photographer.

When Meredith made it in the fashion world she broke up with me. She married a millionaire. But we had sex until she left Paris. One of the things that always hurt me is when she said: 'God, if you were only rich'. Now, Meredith left the millionaire, and is living with a woman.

SCENE 3. '89.

EAST BERLIN.

THE BERLIN WALL WAS HAPPENING.

So we went there, Alan and me, it was history and it was close and why not. I never thought of myself as a great fashion photographer. And I felt that all I was doing is photographing interesting subtleness. Walked the streets at night, sleepwalking. You know. Ed van der Elsen. Love on the West Bank. I felt I was working directly in his footsteps. That became my first book Somnambule. Paris nightlife. But the fifties were long gone. Now it's cooking in Berlin. Voila.

//ALL OF A SUDDEN THERE'S THIS, WOW, NEW WORLD//

So, Berlin, Alan didn't want to stay on the West side because he thought it was boring. We went to East Berlin and we got separated, I got lost. That drug rush of almost getting shot that first time by the Stasis.

//I WOKE UP//

SCENE 4. '92. MAURITANIA.

MARIE CLAUDE.

SHE WAS A FREE SPIRIT.

I met Marie Claude in Arles. She did a project for 'Pharmaciens sans Frontières' and was about to leave for Mauritania. I figured I'd join her. So we went on to the desert where we lived with a French family. They were part of this French society of Pharmaciens sans Frontières. Marie Claude and I had a fight. It turned out that she was having an affair with a musician in Marseille. She got pregnant but had a miscarriage. She never knew who the father was. If it was me or him. And I said to her: 'if we are gonna stay together you have to break it off completely'.

She said she did. And so we got through that period and one of the reasons we took the trip was to heal the wounds so to speak and get away from it, you know, a change of environment. While staying at this family's house, she had his address, she wrote him a letter and said to me that she was still confused. So I said basically:

//'FUCK YOU, GOODBYE'//

And left. I was trying to go back to Nouakchott, the capital. But then stepped into the wrong bus. Sitting in between Tuareg tribesmen who, well kidnapped is too strong but I really couldn't leave on my own decision, who took me and said you have a camera, take pictures. So they brought me to this refugee camp on the border of Mauritania and Mali and they made me photograph these people, dying. And I kept saying I'm a fashion photographer.

I don't do this.

SCENE 5. '93. SUDAN,
EMMA'S STORY.

I WENT BECAUSE I HEARD ABOUT THIS WOMAN.

I wanted to photograph that story: Emma McCune. Emma was from England and went to Sudan to be an aid worker. She met Riek Machar, a deputy commander of the southern rebels. He had a PhD from Bradford Polytechnic. They immediately got attracted to each other. Riek was already married to a Nuer woman who lived in England with their three children. Emma and Riek started living together. A couple of month later Riek married his second wife.

Then Riek attempted a coup, maintaining that Garang's dream of establishing a united secular Sudan was deluded and that the only hope lay in forcing the North to acknowledge the South's independence. There were atrocities on both sides. We will probably never know what part Riek played in the infamous Bor Massacre, in which a motley army of Nuer, led by a mad prophet, descended on a Dinka village and destroyed it. Emma's friends were never sure how much she knew. She always defended Riek and argued that mistakes were not his.

Emma died in a car accident in Nairobi in 1993. She was naive.

//BUT THEN MOST OF THE WORK IN AFRICA IS DONE BY ROMANTICS.

THE AVERAGE AID WORKER AND JOURNALIST LIVES FOR THE BUZZ//

The intensity of life in the war zone. The heightened sensations brought on by the nearness of death and the determination to do good.

FULLY AWAKE BY NOW.
DEATH HAS MANY FORMS.
HORROR AND BEAUTY, ONE FRAME.
TORN. TURNING.
DEATH, LIFE.

SCENE 6. '93. PARIS.

CAROLINE.

AND I MET CAROLINE.

And Carolina worked for Kodak. And we were going out with each other. And while I was in Sudan Caroline start to fall in love with me. So when I came back we started dating. Then when I did the Putsch she found out that I was inside the White House and she basically said to somebody:

// 'IF STANLEY SURVIVES THIS I'M GONNA MARRY HIM' //

So when I finally came back, we went to Las Vegas and got married. And then we told her parents and her parents made us do it for real. Las Vegas, Caroline thought it was kitsch, she saw it as a souvenir. We married Twice. She set it up and I fell for it. Something like that, but also because I didn't see any other way around it. I didn't see myself continuing. You know I've reached this point where I became ... Sudan, the Putsch, the civil war in Georgia, I mean all that stuff, I was exhausted, I mean it was so fast ...

SCENE 7. '93. MOSCOW.
INSIDE THE WHITE HOUSE.

THE JOURNALISTS WERE INVITED BY RUTSKOY.

We had permission to come on the grounds and walk through the picket lines. A press conference. When everyone was packing up their gear to leave there was Igor, a young Russian journalist. He asked me if I wanna come in and see how they were living. So I went inside and then he said: 'if you want you can stay with us'. The amazing thing about The Putsch is you had these really young journalists, like eighteen, nineteen years old. They were against Jeltsin because he dissolved the parliament. Among the rebels you had fascists, you had orthodox, you had communists, you had anarchists. And you had the common people who were just upset. Their parliament was dissolved and Jeltsin was acting like a dictator. And there was a bunch of these young journalists living in the White House. The western journalists were ordered by their newspapers to leave when they found out about the attack. Cause Jeltsin in a raid said he was gonna kill everyone inside. Igor knew that the outcome of the story was gonna play itself out there. One of the first salvos when they fired the tank rockets hit our floor. A journalist from Siberia was hit and I was lying there in smoke and blood. His blood, I thought it was mine. The floor was on fire, the rebels came in and took the young journalist away. I was thinking I was gonna die. Then they came back and pulled me out of the rubble.

//I THOUGHT IF I'M GONNA DIE AT LEAST I SHOULD RECORD THIS//

It was a very dangerous place to be moving around because the Russian soldiers were firing constantly. The only way to get to the other side of the building is to make this godlet run. Before I was blown up I never would have thought of going downstairs to that main corridor. I went because I want to get to the other side where Rutskoy was held up. The fact that I thought I was gonna die gave me courage. Courage is control of fear. Running across that floor I was controlling my fear. And, to this day, I really think that this incident is the one who steeled me. I'm no hero, but it steeled me so that once you commit to the story you have to see it through.

SCENE 8. '94. RWANDA.

MOB VIOLENCE.

IT IS A DIALOGUE IN GUNS OF NAVARONE.

One of the guys in the group is describing why he don't no longer want to kill with a knife. 'He says when you kill somebody with a knife, you kill em up close'. 'That means that you feel them. You feel their sweat, you feel everything'. 'But if you kill them with a gun, you have distance, you don't have that contact. But with a knife it is very personal'.

In Rwanda the main weapon of choice was the machetes, the axes. I have seen the tools, the chains. The man with the machete cutting down his neighbor differs from the man in the helicopter cutting down unseen people. This was like the day of the locus. These people unleashed all their hatred and hostility, bestiality in such a horrific way. Mob violence. One individual sometimes hesitates. But when he has the backing of a group then he is bolder. Ans when they have whole numbers ... I mean would Hitler have risen to where he rose to if he hadn't the backing of a country? Are you telling me they couldn't smell the stench of death coming out of those furnaces? But also in the other countries. It is inexcusable to allow people to be taking away at night at schools and be ostracized and killed in such horrific ways. Society,

//I THINK THAT WE ARE ANIMALS AND WE ARE JUST AS BEASTLY AS SOME
OF THE ANIMALS WE ACCUSE OF BEING PREDATORS. ONLY THE RAT FEED ON
THEMSELVES? I DON'T KNOW//

Mob violence has no prejudice. Mob Violence can come out of any group, black, white, polka-dot whatever. If people feel put upon, or if they feel that they're in power. It happened in Rwanda.

People fled for the horror. There were millions of people in the camps. No clean water, no nothing. These people were the killers. Cholera broke out. People were dying by the numbers. The world watched.

SCENE 9. '96. CHECHNYA. ITUM KALE.

ASYA.

FEVER DREAMS.

I had pneumonia or something, I was very sick so she would have to put her body next to mine to keep me warm, with these, it sounds like something out of a movie but it's true, with these goats, she would bring the goats and put them close to my body and then she put herself in all of this coverage. I fell in love with Asya. But it was like one of those 'a rose wrapped in barbed wire'. Because there was no way that this relationship could ever going to be consummated. Because she would have gotten her troth slit and I would have gotten mine. Asya took care of me in the mountains. Nothing happened. You know, We didn't kiss. It was all about, you know, looks and touch. But no sex, no lips. But yeah that's what happened.

//I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER. AND SHE WAS A FIGHTER

AND MAYBE THAT WAS SOME BIT OF IT//

My wife, was back home, I can say that I was true. But then, a while ago I saw Eyes Wide Shut. Tom Cruise goes nuts because his wife has a dream, you know, fantasy. My version was a bit more then fantasy, but in retrospective, the really true version, I would really keep the distance but then if I was in a situation that I didn't ... but it's easy cut like that. There is a bit of truth in that. That was her only way of keeping me alive, because I was so sick. So she put her body next to me. So that's a bit of a photographers' life that nobody knows about. But suspect, seriously suspect.

SCENE 10. '96. PARIS.
WITH MY WIFE CAROLINE.

WELL I'M STARTING TO GET ASSIGNMENTS

And Caroline kept saying you don't need to continue doing this. You know this is like crazy. But then Azerbaijan wasn't a war story, it turned into a war story.

I thought I was gonna be there for two weeks, it wind up taking three months. So meanwhile my wife is back home banging everything under the sun. I'm living in Azerbaijan and I'm married and I got responsibilities, I'm in an agency. I'm working for a newspaper. I'm collaborating with a writer and I'm having fixers and translators. You know I'm a real working photographer.

//SLOWLY, SLOWLY THE REALIZATION IS BECOMING CLEAR

THAT I CAN'T COMBINE MY WORK WITH A MARRIAGE//

But I made the choice that's the joke of all time, We did the marriage for real. Caroline said are you ready to do this and I said yes.

Eventually Chechnya destroyed my marriage because then every time that a magazine or newspaper would offer it I would go back. I'd go to Chechnya in a flash.

I think that in the end Caroline felt she had made a mistake. The idea of being married to this glamorous kind of photographer that goes off and does these things has taken his toll because, you know, at night you want to be with each other instead of 1000 miles away being shot at. You don't wanna go through that. That's why she took the coward's way out. Not taking anything away from Caroline. We shouldn't have got married in the first place.

It gave me a great excuse. You know, my wife has left me, instead of becoming an alcoholic I go and shoot war.

SCENE 11. '96. CHECHNYA.

GROZNY.

I CAN TELL YOU ABOUT WHEN WE WERE DRIVEN OUT OF GROZNY.

We picked up this family and took them all the way to the border. Chris, Laurence, Jim, Eric and me got to a place of safety and then we decided to go back. We've been ordered to leave Grozny or be killed because they're going to bomb the shit out of it, and we decided to go back. I can tell you that, I don't know what that makes us look like. What is the point of going back, risking your life. We were safe. We didn't discuss it.

//WE JUST SORT OF LOOKED AT EACH OTHER, SMILED AND WENT BACK TO GROZNY//

But now almost nobody goes there anymore. For one reason or another we've moved onto other issues. Al Qaeda has changed the game. And it is not only the fear factor. Although being beheaded certainly will slow you down. Being arrested and disappearing. I mean, at one time journalists took a certain amount of risk, but when the risk is to the point that you could be kidnapped, disappeared or beheaded, you start to weigh the interest of the magazine to do such a story.

Before we were dealing with individuals where there was this big romance, this love affair of rebels and the whole thing and they trusted us. And then for one reason or another they stopped trusting us or lost faith in us and then we've lost our shields. We're just as vulnerable as anybody else. So particularly for a young journalist who doesn't know who or what the situation is, is even more at risk. I mean, I could probably talk myself out of a bad situation but a young journalist wouldn't know what direction to take it. And that's the problem today. I am seriously amazed that there aren't more journalists being killed. Is it because God protects babies and fools? Or is just that...as yet these guys have yet decided that we're a threat. But I think that day is coming where the numbers are going to go high, because we make so many mistakes all the time. And I'm not even going to attempt to say that we're smart, because we're not. We think we are, and that's what gets you killed. You also have to be aware that you're not some saint. You're just as vulnerable as the victim that's being tortured.

//IN THE HEAT WHEN AL PACINO SAYS//

"I GOTTA HOLD ON TO MY ANGST,
I PRESERVE IT BECAUSE I NEED IT.
IT KEEPS ME SHARP, ON THE EDGE,
WHERE I GOTTA BE."

SCENE 12. '99.

HEIDI.

HEIDI INTRODUCED ME TO CHECHNYA. I FOLLOWED HER.

I tell you a great story about Heidi. We were at a bridge that it took us all day to get to. And finally get permission to cross. All of a sudden the bridge is being bombed. We're on the bridge. Bridges are not the best places to be on when you're being bombed cause there is nowhere to hide. There is this woman who is coming in the other direction. Pulling a suitcase. And she has got all her coats on. Because these people are leaving Abkhazia. We were being bombed at and taking pictures at the same time which is very dangerous. Heidi stops. In the middle of the bridge. Before I know it Heidi is going in the other direction to this woman, helping her pulling the bag. And the rebels, who we were with, they were furious. Because we're vulnerable. But Heidi doesn't give a damn. She is talking to the woman in Russian. And she is not even protecting herself anymore. Her cameras are dangling and she is helping to pull this damn bag. Finally the guys went and got her. They had to shoot.

//HEIDI IS STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF A FUCKING BATTLE.

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM//

Because Heidi is helping this woman there is no way that I can go forward. So I have to go behind. It is a bit complicated for two of us carrying the bags so I'm lingering in the background and finally taking Heidi's bag.

Her original goal was to help her get there but now she decided, wow, this is gonna be a great picture so she starts to take some pictures. These guys are going nuts because it's getting dark, we have to cross the bridge. Heidi is taking time. I'm trying to be patient. She finally stops taking pictures. That's Heidi.

Now I'm not saying that I'm a heartless beast. But I certainly would not have stopped to help that woman drag that bag. I think out of all of us Heidi is the best of the best and probably more decent than anyone of us.

SCENE 13. '99. MOSCOW,
KRISTEL AND RUSSIAN WOMEN.

I LIVED IN MOSCOW MANY TIMES.

I moved to Moscow when I got hired by Libération to be the Photo correspondent for the Caucasus. Primarily it was keeping an eye on Chechnya. First I lived together with Kristel. Kristel, was my fixer, translator and friend who worked for MSF in the Caucasus. We did all the work together. We met at a party in Moscow. She spoke Russian. She came from Belgium. Kristel and I sort of danced around each other. I think Kristel fell in love with me but didn't know what to do about it. We've never had sex with each other. We've kissed passionately. We've slept in the same bed. We've been under fire together. We've shared thoughts with each other. I've pissed her off. I trained her. No bullshit. I taught Kristel to be a translator, fixer. We were the people you came to. We did it all. She knows the dirt. We lived in Moscow but travelled all over Russia.

My first Russian girl was Natasha. I met her in a bar in Tambov. I said if you ever come to Moscow give me a call. And she showed up a few months later with her sister. So she and her sister lived in my apartment. I travelled a lot and Natasha became furious with me because I was never there. In those days Moscow was really changing. A lot of people from all over the world.

//GIRLS WERE BECOMING CASH WHORES BECAUSE IT WAS A WAY OF GETTING MONEY//

They were going out with Expats who took them to the clubs. Natasha found me. I mean Tambov is the red belt. Cows and dirt and mud. And Communism. I was her ticket out. First she turned into this beautiful flower, on top of it she turns into this super bitch. Yeah, Natasha was quite a piece of work. Natasha was my introduction to Russian women.

The one I really regretted losing was Vika. Vika wanted to marry me. She planned the wedding and everything, and I went to Kosovo. Chrystal was furious. I had this assignment from New York Times, and I said, "I can't go because we're supposed to get married." "You're supposed to do what?!" she said. I said, "I'm supposed to marry Vika." She said, "Are you crazy?" I said, "No, we're going to get married, it's going to be great." She said, "No, you can't do that." We went to Kosovo and Vika was furious. She said, "If you go, I won't be here when you come back." And she wasn't.

At this point in time, I was between Paris and Moscow. Then making the big move to Moscow in '98. I'm staying in Moscow, and I'm subletting my apartment to other journalists and people."

THEY GOT SOME
HUNGRY WOMEN
THERE
AND THEY REALLY MAKE A MESS
OUTA YOU...

I'M GOING
BACK TO
NEW YORK CITY
I DO BELIEVE
I'VE HAD
ENOUGH.

//TOM THUMBS BLUE
BOB DYLAN//

"WHAT I DO NOT UNDERSTAND IS WHY YOU RATHER BE IN
A DITCH IN CHECHNYA, FREEZING, COLD AND SHOT AT INSTEAD OF
BEING IN BED FUCKING ME". //VIKKA//

SCENE 14. '01. ROSTOV-ON-DON.

SERIAL KILLER.

IMAGINE THIS

Kristel was something else. One time were working with Owen Matthews, a journalist, who was doing a story on Alexander Bukhanovsky, a psychiatrist in Rostov-on-Don. In the 1980's Bukhanovsky helped Viktor Burakov, a detective at the Rostov police department to capture Andrei Chikatilo, a rapist-murderer who murdered 52 people. Bukhanovsky made a portrait of the killer, which the police initially regarded. But when they finally caught Chikatilo in 1991 Bukhanovsky's portrait proved to have been uncannily accurate.

At the time we were there Bukhanovsky made Andrei Selenov confess. They called Selenov The Electrician because he would come and knock on the door and you would open the door and he would come rape, and kill. In his cage, during his trial Selenov talks about Bukhanovsky. "He got right inside my head, he has a way about him that makes you tell him stuff you didn't even know was there." What fascinated Kristel and me that Selenov was a former soldier that fought in the Chechen war. Imaging these guys are trained to kill and then they're unleashed on society. Kristel and me were obsessed with Chechnya. But we have different views. She feels that I shouldn't be so hard on the Russian soldiers and I think the Russian soldiers are just killers.

Bukhanovsky showed us this film that affected Kristel to this day. This killer, his name was Anatoly Slivko, filmed himself killing young boys. He was a Boy Scout leader. He would drug them, bludgeon them, and hang them. He's got a picture of this boy hanging, with his legs kicking and he sets the feet on fire. We sat through it, and watched it, it was one hour long.

As an experiment Bukhanovsky is treading active serial killers without reporting them to the authorities. He allowed Owen to interview Alexander, a 21-year-old murderer. Apart from an attempt to commit suicide, by slashing his wrists, Alexander claims that his violent urges have subsided. Owen interviewed him and then said to me, "He's sitting in the room, the doctor's out of the room, go take a picture." I went into the room with Kristal, and he asked Kristal how old she was, and he got all excited. Kristal totally flipped out. I slyly took a portrait of him and he looks like a little sick kid. I thought the hands were more important.

"MY QUESTION IS SIMPLE:
ARE MAN BORN EVIL AND TRYING TO BE GOOD?
OR ARE THEY BORN GOOD TRYING NOT TO BE EVIL?

I THINK IF YOU LOOK AT A CHILD WITH A BUTTERFLY AND IT TRIES TO TARE ITS
WINGS OF...
THAT ISN'T EXACTLY...
I THINK THAT WE'RE EVIL...

IT'S EASIER TO BE EVIL THEN IT IS TO BE GOOD.
IT'S HARD TO BE GOOD.

BUT IT'S VERY EASY TO JUST CRUSH SOMETHING,
BREAK SOMETHING.
I'M STILL TRYING TO UNDERSTAND WHAT MOTIVATES THE EVIL PEOPLE".

"WOULD BE NICE THAT YOU WOULD HAVE SOMEONE THAT YOU CAN MISS AND CARE ABOUT. AND BE SOMEONE THAT YOU GENUINE WANT TO BE WITH AND NOT SOMEONE THAT IS HIGH MAINTENANCE. LIKE ONE OF THOSE WOMAN IN THOSE WESTERNS YOU KNOW, STANDING THERE WAITING FOR YOU TO COME BACK. BUT SHE IS NOT SURE THAT SHE'S HAPPY THAT YOUR BACK CAUSE SHE KNOWS THAT YOUR JUST GOING TO GO AWAY AGAIN".

SCENE 15. '02. AFGHANISTAN.

ANNA ON THE PHONE.

ANNA BROKE HER FOOT.

This stupid asshole lifted her when she said not to be lifted and then dropped her and she broke her foot. I happen to be living in a seven floor walk up. I was in Tajikistan. It was supposed to be a two-week assignment, turned into three months. I called Anna. She said that she broke her foot. Anna is a dancer. It's is her life and it makes her fly. And I love Anna. I asked her: 'How bad is it?' 'I broke my foot, I don't know anyone in Paris' 'Couple of your friends carried me upstairs, one I didn't even know'

//GUILD, GUILD, GUILD//

My fixer is behind me: 'who is this?' I said 'It's Anna' He: 'we're going to Afghanistan tomorrow'. I said 'I know we are going to Afghanistan tomorrow but Anna broke her foot. And Anna is like going: 'so what are you gonna do?' And I'm like 'look Anna uh we are going to Afghanistan tomorrow as I just been reminded. And then pause, that deadly silent pause. Like I just broken her heart into a million pieces. 'OK listen I call you right back, I'm gonna try work something out'. In her mind I'm gonna find out if there is a flight back. So she said: 'OK love I'm waiting for you'. I call my friend Daffne. I said Daff. She says: 'I know, Anna called me, she broke her foot'. She said: 'You have to go and do your assignment'. I said Daff that is not the question, can she come to your place'? I said 'Daff, you know my mother died, to this day my brother hates my guts. I mean hate, we're talking real hate. Because I didn't came home from the assignment.

VIKKA when they did the apartment bombings. After there had been a bombing the day before. Apartments exactly like the one we were living in. I went and did an assignment.

CAROLINE, when her sister got married I didn't show up. It's like God is testing me one more time. He's like giving me one more chance to see if there is any human left inside of me. And I sat there for an hour trying to figure out what a decent person would do.

I spoke to Gary the other day. I said Gary if something happens to your wife what would you do. He said: 'Fiona comes first'. All these years later I feel like a shit.

I sat there, I went obviously.

SCENE 16. '02.
PUTIN'S RUSSIA

KRISTEL AND ME TRAVELLED ALL OVER RUSSIA. THE HORROR WE'VE SEEN,
THE STORIES WE'VE HEARD.

We have an expression called: the Babushka Syndrome. The story goes like this: we go to this house, a woman says to us, "Oh my god, you can't believe how evil these men are, these soldiers, they're so horrible. They come to my house and I'm cooking some food on the stove, the babies in the background crying, and this Commander comes to me and says, 'let me taste your soup.' I think he's a nice man so he takes some soup. 'Hmm, it's missing something' he says. 'Maybe some salt, maybe some pepper.' I put some salt in and I put some pepper in and I'm feeling a little better and calmer because maybe he's just going to eat soup and go away. He says, 'you know what's missing in your soup?' He says, 'some meat. Maybe you should have some meat in your soup.' She says, we have no meat. All we have are these vegetables. We have no meat. He says, 'I think I can find you some meat.' He walks over to the baby, cuts his head off, drops it into the pot, says 'Now you have some meat in your soup.'"

Kristel and me we're both like, I can't breath! A few months later we were some place else and this woman starts to cry, "Oh my god, these people are so evil, you can't imagine what they do. They cut off the baby's head and put it in the soup." So we call it the Babushka Syndrome. That's how cynical Kristel and me became.

So we photograph them crying. And they don't stop, I've got tons of pictures of them crying. They start to cry, We say: "Oh, it's the Babushka Syndrome. It's the baby's head in the soup." That's pretty cold.

Anna would have told you that I totally destroyed Kristel, because Kristel was this warm, sweet, wonderful person and that I turned her into this cold machine. Which isn't true. She's not a machine, she's just cynical because she saw so much.

SCENE 17. '04. IRAK.

EVENTUALLY I WENT THERE.

Somebody asked the other day, "You're old enough to have been to Vietnam. Why didn't you go back then?" "I didn't wanna die." So now I photograph war ó a coward hiding on the battlefield.

I needed to go to Iraq. I pushed for it. Nobody would send me ó and no one was letting me embed. The invasion happened without me, and I thought I was gonna miss it. Sure enough, the war was officially over as per George W. Bush. Soon, it became clear to me that I had time. This war was far from over, and worse, we had far from won. The technology failed to get us a quick and clear victory and now we had to get down and dirty. I was gonna do it, like they did it back then, during that other down and dirty war ó on film with a Leica. Fuck the technology.

In Vietnam they all shot with Leicas: Philip Jones Griffiths had one dangling around his neck, so did Catherine Leroy, Sean Flynn, Dana Stone. Okay, a couple of Nikons were knocking around, but most of them were Leicas. Larry Burrows shot that incredible color with one. It really gives you such weight, makes you feel that you are actually part of that generation. That is what a Leica represents to me. The M4. Gorgeous, pure and honest.

//MY HAND CAN WRAP ITSELF AROUND THAT CAMERA AND IT IS LIKE
MILES DAVIS PLAYING THE TRUMPET//

In good hands, the Leica is the most powerful weapon ever made.

I wanted to cover Iraq the way my heroes covered Vietnam and Beirut. We'd gone to Fallujah to meet with insurgents, to photograph a weapons cache. Instead they took me to a couple of charred bodies. "Spies." Blackwater contractors.

"SEEING THOSE DEAD
BURNED BODIES,
REALLY SHOCKED ME UP.
LATER BACK AT OUR HOTEL,
I FELL DOWN AND CRIED,
I'D LOST SOMETHING
THAT DAY AND I KNEW
I WAS NEVER TO
GOING TO GET BACK."

SCENE 18. SAN FRANCISCO '79.

FLASH BACK

AN LSD TRIP, WHY NOT CALL IT A DREAM.

This buddy of mine has a girlfriend. She was what? 17, 18. Really pretty. A nice, nice girl. No question. But he was a bit screwed up. He was a real dear friend of mine. He was doing drugs, mostly heroine in those days. Man she felt that she wanna to get close to him and be part of his world. So he got her on drugs. And she liked it, but she didn't really get into it.

These two dealers. They were twins. Saïd and Massoud. Drug dealers, but also part of the jet-set, party scene, in San Francisco. They were super rich. Gave a lot of parties. Their whole thing was to seduce girls with drugs. One day our girl went looking for my friend and he wasn't around. The twins showed up. I don't know the details. They gave her what we affectional call a hot shot. Which is a mixture of cocaine and heroin.

//AND SHE CONSEQUENTLY OD-ED AND CHOKED ON HER VOMIT//

We all knew they did it. Plus we found out that the brothers were informers for the cops. So there was no way to touch them. One night in a restaurant. They were sitting there having diner and laughing with there friends. We kind of wiped up the floor with them. We did all of the fuck. Tuning their bodies, running them down the table, you know, really hurting them. Taking them driving across the street. You know. By their hear. Then putting them in front of a pole, where there was a telephone. We called the police telling them that there was some garbage for them to pick up.

One night in Marin County there is this huge drug party. And these two characters show up. The evening gets very tense. I felt that six sense. And somebody says to me: 'look, maybe you should leave, because we're hearing things'. 'And just in case, I put something in your car'. Me: 'I'm fine' He: 'underneath the seat'. So I linger, later on and driving down the road. There is this Mercedes Benz. Lights are on. And there are these two guys struggling with it. And I slow down. I see Saïd and Massoud. And they are acting really hincky. But I'm up and enough distance from the car and it's just when I'm getting out the car that Saïd pulls out a gun. And, before you know it I'm underneath the seat of the car and I have a gun. Before you know it two people lie dead.

SCENE 19. SAN FRANCISCO

'76. FLASH BACK.

WELL, SAN FRANCISCO WAS A VERY INTERESTING TIME.

Arriving in San Francisco was really where it all started to come together. I'm in an environment where 24-7 you live, bleed, drink, eat, screw, art. The San Francisco Art Institute is open twenty-four hours a day. You walk into the school at night and go into your friends' studio. They be sitting there struggling with their own ideas on painting, sculpture. And you sit down and have a joint or a beer or some cold pizza and talk about art. And they didn't judge or be prejudice because you're a photographer and then you're in that environment.

//IT WAS THIS KIND OF FAMILY. YOU'RE ALL PART OF THE SAME THING.

THE CREATION OF ART//

And your relationships were very close and a lot of them were very sexual and sweet and intellectual. Wasn't just art, music. We were all kindred spirits.

Ed Kashi, I used to give him equipment 'cause I was one of the monitors. Donna Ferrato came there, and she wasn't even going there but even she was influenced by the San Francisco Institute. Janis Joplin -not while I was there- but Janis Joplin use to work in the cafeteria. Larry Clark who did Tulsa, went on to do Teenage Lust and then all the films, was a photographer. Jim Goldberg, he was there. Larry Sultan. I mean the list is long. Long, Long, Long.

And it was one of the best, and at the same time, one of the most peaceful times of my life. I discovered Chinese cinema because I lived in Chinatown. I went to a theatre and saw this Hong Kong movie which influenced Quentin Tarantino. I discovered books, booze. Laurence Ferlinghetti and City Life Books. Gregory Corso. Alan Ginsberg. All these cats are running around. Francis Ford Coppola.

Rudolf Nureyev dancing in a nightclub. It was all that.

The old joke about San Francisco was that in San Francisco it is all visual, in New York it is all technical. So here I'm coming from the East Coast to the West Coast and now discovering, the visual, really discovering it. And taking the technical and making a marriage. And because I'm in an art school that teaches filmmaking and video, those influences were starting to drip on me.

The Punk movement was emerging. And these guys were my roommates and so sometimes, So I took pictures.

SCENE 20. '05. IRAQ RELOAD.

I COMPARE MYSELF TO A GUNSLINGER.

Some say war photographers are like soldiers. I don't see that. Why do boys become soldiers? There is no gunslinger in the soldier's motive. Well, Patton used to have a pearl handgun. But the soldier is about being honorable. The personal motivation for being a soldier is to serve one's country. Or to follow in your father's footsteps. That was David Douglas Duncan ó he was a soldier, not just because he was a US Marine, but he was just built like that. He was no outsider.

//THEY'RE ON THE CHESSBOARD. BEING A SOLDIER IS ALL ABOUT
DISCIPLINE AND TAKING ORDERS TO COMPLETE THE MISSION//

Lee Marvin in The Big Red One is a real soldier ó he has orders and he gives orders: if you don't go up that hill I'm going to put a bullet in your head. If you work for the wire services, you take orders, you execute and make your deadline. Every day. That is a soldier mentality ó very precise, very concise. But the guys I know are no soldiers. Jan is no soldier, with his tattoos. Chin with his Chinese philosophy, no way. Some don't even want to be embedded. Yuri is driving around in Iraq by himself. Photographers see themselves as soldiers of fortune perhaps, lost samurais. Chris is definitely a samurai. There is a bit of role-playing going on. Gunslingers, on the outside, outcasts, loners. Quick on the draw. Load, aim and shoot.

//WE LOVE PATHOS//

Pathos is the human condition. I give you the fact that both the soldier and the war photographer are somehow escaping the average life. For both it's about adventure and risk. But to be a soldier you have to be young, to be a photographer you don't have to be young. Though I'm bombarded by young photographers who ask me how to become a conflict photographer. I tell them: "Get a life." If they persist, I tell them about the consequences. I tell them there is no glory. They glamorize the idea of becoming a conflict photographer, but they have no idea what it means.

SCENE 21. '04. PUERTO RICO,
HAÏTI, CIRCLE OF HARM.

CAN I COME WITH YOU.

I went to Puerto Rico and Haiti. For Amnesty International and MSF (Medicines sans Frontières) we were working on this project 'Living under constant threat'. The theme was violence against woman. I don't generally have a specific story unless a magazine really outlines it for me. Nine times out of ten I just go and sniff the air. This time, I had an idea of what I wanted to do, The circle of harm around women in Puerto Rico and Haiti. Abused by family, became addicted looking for comfort. Became hookers to pay for the drugs. But I needed to go there and see it, and Al went with me. Al and me became lovers and she was interested in Photography and I said to her, "The only way you can learn Photography is by taking pictures." And she said, "Well, can I come with you?" And I said yes. Al is probably the most courageous girl I've ever met. Al is an incredible swimmer. I mean, we're talking real swimming, we're not talking swimming pool, ocean stuff. She goes out to the Caribbean, naked, and swims for hours, hours. Everyone's on the shore, seeing her swim off. And it's getting dark, the waves are getting choppy, and this guy's saying, "Ah senorita, it's dangerous...it's sharks." Finally she is coming out and I have to wrap her up, she's shivering and she says, "You know, I was out there and was floating and just lost track of time. I was playing with these fishies that kept bumping up against me and were nudging their heads up against me." The guy said, "Oh those were sharks!" She was swimming with the sharks. Because she didn't fear them, they didn't attack her.

In Puerto Rico, we were with my friend José and he says to her, "Stay in the car, we're trying to find some drug dealers to see if we can get them to let us photograph their life." When we went back to the car Al is not there. She walked into this housing project called the One Millions, where it's super dangerous. Even the cops won't go in. José says, "Oh man. We have to get her, it's really dangerous man, they're gonna rape her." We walked in and Al is having a conversation with some dope dealer. She can speak some Spanish. It was like, "Ah, this is my friend, this is my boyfriend!" It was Al that got me in touch with the drug dealers, the woman drug dealers. She made that happen because she talked to them.

SCENE 22. '05. MEXICO.
ANN LAUREN, ALI MOON, AL.

LET'S GO ON AN ADVENTURE.

Al even wanted to go with me to Lebanon. But I went with Paolo and Thomas and Kadir. And having Al with those three that would have never worked.

A couple of months before Al and me traveled through Mexico. I said to Al: "Let's go on an adventure together". That was real love. We lived in a van for 6 months. We were soul mates, 24/7. How soul can you get in a van that's like that big.

There was a lot of stuff that she was dealing with in her life. Everyone was always telling her what to do and she hated it. Her father would tell her what to do and if I tried to tell her what to do, like this one time Al wanted to sleep on the streets so she could understand what it's like to be a homeless person and I said, "Come on". And she said, "Oh, you're like my father. You're just trying to dictate your world to me."

Al could have been the perfect traveling companion. Half way the Mexican trip I left her to do Iraq. But I came back. We could have traveled the world together. A sane person probably would have gone for that. I was ready to throw it all away right up into the point of Lebanon for this 23-year-old crazy French girl.

I mean, I left her. And in respect, to do Lebanon, I couldn't have taken Al. And as she said when we went to Lebanon, "You left me alone, and you promised you'd take me."

I had to go and cover that conflict. And that kind of work you have to do alone, There's no way of doing that together with the love of your life.

SCENE 23. '05. USA,
NEW ORLEANS, KATRINA

THE OTHER DAY WHEN I WAS IN NEW ORLEANS.

George Bush visiting the Ninth Ward, it was raining, I had all the elements, it was perfect. The shots I did must have been good. I shot it digital, on an SD card. I walked across this bridge where they're gonna throw the flowers into the Mississippi for those that are gone. I'm photographing. All of a sudden the thing comes up on full. The wet, the rain, the tension, everything. This card is so bloody thin that it just fell out of my hand. 138 images straight into the Mississippi.

//GONE. NEVER SEEN. NOT ONE IMAGE, NO IDEA WHAT WAS ON IT//
All of a sudden I realized the experience of actually taking the pictures in a way meant more to me, then having them. The idea, the energy that was behind it. I understood how Gary Winnogrand could shoot 5000 rolls of film, not develop it and not care what was on it. That's a scary thought.

I realized it's about doing, about shooting. At those moments I feel alive. And best is shooting war. War is the most purest form there is. In war, you don't have editors, you don't have anything, it's just you and surviving with other people surviving. Like all of a sudden everybody is caught up in this thing.. Life is at that time magical. It's a less complicating form of life.

It's about walking or standing still.

//YOU TURN OFF YOUR PHONES. THERE'S NOBODY HAMMERING

AT YOU. DID YOU PAY THIS BILL OR DID YOU FIX THE SINK//

I don't sleep generally. For me, going into a conflict is like, everything comes into play. Your wits, your senses, everything is fine-tuned. It is like a crystal bullet to the head.

At those times I'm fully at ease. Everything slows down. There's a kind of Zen to it. You become totally in tune with yourself, your camera, your body, and everything else gets pushed out.

//IT'S A TRANCE//

SCENE 24. '06. LEBANON.

KADIR?

So we went to Lebanon. Everybody was there. I experienced that war really has become an industry. At one time we heard that they were going to unload bodies. And everybody is going there because the magazines want these images. And I see everybody taking pictures of the coffins and the bodies. These people they're my friends, even more, my family but at the same time they are my competitors.

Paolo asked Kadir, he said: "What are you doing here? This is not your kind of story." Because Lebanon was a real war, well everyone thought this was going to be a serious war. In the end, it wasn't what the so-called experts expected. But Paolo said: "This is not your story." Paolo at that point hadn't covered that many wars either, he always on the artistic point of it, but Kadir took great offense with that. I realized that since that time, Kadir has pushed himself even more harder to prove that he can stand with those guys. He was totally frustrated in India because he went there to do a story on the Maoist rebels, and he couldn't get near it. So when somebody like Phillip drops in or Paolo goes to Darfur, for Kadir it's become a real push to make that all happen.

The ultimate thing to become, in an environment among the guys, is the war photographer. The rest is nice and you need it to grow as a photographer. You need to be clever, you can work for NGOs, but the actual top of the building is to be a war photographer.

I don't know if I'm past all that. For me, I need to have the insecurity. I need to believe that I need to keep pushing the envelope. Lately I didn't take that many pictures. And I'm the one that's supposed to be photographing all the time, and now I've fallen into the trap of only photographing when I have an assignment. How stupid is that? But then again I also believe what Cartier-Bresson said, that sometimes you have to stop taking pictures so that your eyes can see again.

SCENE 25. '07/'08. CHAD/DARFUR.

WE'RE TRYING TO TALK, THIS MAN AND I.

Except he cannot communicate in French. So he becomes frustrated. In the end, he picks up his stick and he draws his story, in the sand. That is pure caveman. He is telling me about a battle, a massacre. They raped his wife and shot her. Without thinking I made a photograph of his drawing. And therefore it became history. Like millions of years ago. The caveman who went outside, saw this monster with big teeth... He tries to warn the others, pointing to his teeth and stretching out his hands to show them long and sharp. Nobody understands. So he goes and draws it on the wall. Cave drawing. That is what I do.

Stories are the basis for all ideology: how you saw it happening determines what side you're on. The Virgin Mary got pregnant by immaculate conception. Might as well be that a Roman soldier knocked her up. That would have given us a different story. Wars are fought because people have different takes on the same story. And people act because they believe in their take on it... politicians, generals, terrorists. There are people whose take is not out there ó we don't see them, we don't hear them. Tens of thousands of them fled Darfur, in silence to the world. We can see evidence of their flight, an attempt to escape hell... just to arrive in another kind of hell.

//I WANT TO TELL THESE STORIES, THEIR STORIES.

THEY MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

I BELIEVE THEY CAN CHANGE PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVES//

Photography is my language and it gives me the power to tell what otherwise is not told. Eugene Smith told me vision is a gift, and you have to give something back. He haunts me like that. It's not the bang bang that compels me. It never was. At the end of the day it is not about death, it is about life. The quest is to try to understand why human beings behave the way they do. The question is, How does this happen? And sometimes, the only way to find out is to go to where it is happening. One day the neighbors are talking to each other over the fence, and the next they are shooting at each other. Why is it that we don't consider life precious, and instead, we literally let it drip through our fingers?

SCENE 26. '08. SLEEPLESS.

People ask me if there are similarities between Gene's life and mine. Yeah, we both wore black sweaters. He didn't have any hair. He wore berets, I sometimes wear berets.

But Gene was white, and religious in a lot of ways, and we both had this thing with our mothers. I suppose that's a given. We both had affairs and love stories with younger women. Gene was a drunk and did drugs. I did drugs but stopped because I need to be able to keep a steady hand. And, like me, Gene had insomnia. The funny thing in the studio late at night, when we would go home, Gene would still be up, and when we came in the morning, Gene would still be up. He would never go to sleep. I mean, he was on Benzedrine. Speed. Plus he was drinking, I mean, he was obsessed.

And the other thing I inherited from Gene is this obsession with truth, when those who are obsessed with it aren't as truthful. We want the truth in everyone else and we try to be true to ourselves or to what we construe in ourselves, but in reality, Gene lied to everybody, to himself in the end and to his wives. But the work needed to be true. Gene was totally selfish. He only cared about his work, but look, the greatest story of all time is that the maid had to take a job to support the family. And Gene is like telling Life Magazine to get fucked because he's upset with the way they cropped a picture instead of saying, "Ok, let's have a conversation here." We're talking, Gene was fighting, in those days 14, 24 pages. I've got the original magazine where Eileen is saying, "How could they do this?" and Gene says, "No, it's good. It's good." Because he reached a point where he finally realized that his own self-centered or own vision of the world was just hurting everyone around him. And then when they did the layout for Minamata, which is one of the best layouts, have you ever seen it? I mean, this thing's amazing. [shuffling] There's Gene. There it is, isn't that amazing? I'm lending you these, they may be able to inspire you for layouts. Yeah, Eileen was 22 when she went with Gene. His wife of only 10 months was only 22. Eileen was 22. Imagine. 22! He's got a gray beard, he's looking like he's got to be 50, and she was 22. Gene's last big story, this was it. Look at the layout. There you go!

Because, it's like what I keep saying, if you're good, you at least want to know what you're fighting. I'm stronger than that.

//BUT BAD ALWAYS IS CONNECTED WITH POWER.//

Sure, but like a lot of women go out with bad guys because they feel that they can rehabilitate them, and besides, bad guys are more interesting. They take risks, they're edgy, they push you, they take you places sometimes you don't want to go, but they take you there and you're glad for the ride.

So if you're close to the bad guys, you're close to that interesting world. So if you're not interesting yourself, you're at least experiencing it a bit. Or you can go back and tell your friends, "You know, we're close, him and me." And that's interesting.