

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

L I O N

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Luke Davies



LION

by Luke Davies

Based on the book *A Long Way Home* by Saroo Brierley

[*Note: throughout, all dialogue is in the appropriate dialect/language, with subtitles where appropriate. In Khandwa, Saroo's home town, this is Hindi; in Calcutta, where he is lost, it is Bengali - which he doesn't speak. So if Saroo is hearing Bengali, we won't always see subtitles, except where necessary for our own understanding.]

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EXTREME HIGH AERIAL - DAY (1987)

We're soaring - 20,000 feet above this vast island earth -

VERY HIGH AERIAL - DAY

15,000 feet now - we're soaring over a dark emerald ocean -

HIGH AERIAL - ABOVE INDIA - DAY

4,000 feet, *whooshing* effortlessly over cities, villages, countryside, rail lines - all the mad glory of India -

AERIAL - INDIA - DAY

2,000 feet, soaring, slowing, high above an ochre landscape -
- way down there: a TINY FIGURE picks its way through the fringes of a small trash heap by a dam -

AERIAL - ABOVE FIELD NEAR DAM, KHANDWA - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

20 feet above ground now, we're following that tiny figure (a SMALL BOY) from behind, as he scampers through the trash -

EXT. RUBBISH-STREWN FIELD NEAR DAM, KHANDWA - CONTINUOUS

His TINY HANDS come into frame. Scavenging.

IN TIGHTER: the same hands. Clearly a practised routine.

A YELLOW BUTTERFLY flutters onto the hand. The hand STILLs, so as not to scare the butterfly.

Our tiny figure (SAROO, 5) stands up, ever so carefully.

FRONT ANGLE: we see him properly for the first time. Studying the butterfly. Entranced. Then he notices a few more.

WIDER: he's in a field entirely filled with their fluttering.

Delighted, he spreads his arms wide. He moves through the butterflies - fluttering all around his head and shoulders.

Suddenly - a 5-year-old testing his powers - he ROARS -

SAROO
ROARRRGHHH!!

- laughing - the butterflies scatter all around him -

VOICE (O.S.)
Saroo! Saroo!

In the distance, up on the railway line that runs along the ridge, a silhouette. Saroo's BROTHER (GUDDU, 12) waves.

EXT. RAILWAY TRACKS - AFTERNOON

Saroo and Guddu hide in wait in the shrubs along the track.

A huge COAL TRAIN lumbers toward them, picking up speed.

Guddu bursts out - clambers up onto the moving train.

Saroo runs alongside, terrified and at the same time loving the thrill. His bare feet hurting on the rough ground.

Guddu effortlessly swings himself onto the open coal car.

GUDDU

Keep up! Keep up!

Guddu starts throwing coal off the train, into the makeshift net of Saroo's shirt - mostly missing.

At any moment Saroo could go under those giant wheels.

Along the tracks: THREE MEN (SECURITY) give chase, shouting.

Guddu clambers down. The boys scramble for stray lumps of coal. But they don't have much time; the men are gaining.

They peel off into the dense scrub, giggling as they sprint well-trodden short-cuts; the men begin to recede, B/G.

EXT. KHANDWA STREETS - AFTERNOON

Bustling Khandwa. Colors, street stalls, people everywhere.

Saroo and Guddu stride confidently through all this, holding their pregnant coal bellies in place. They know this routine.

EXT. KHANDWA MARKETS - SOON AFTER (AFTERNOON)

They dump the coal into a STREET VENDOR's bucket.

As the vendor ladles out a small plastic bag of warm milk from a bubbling vat, Saroo notices something to his side -

POV, as in a dream: in another vat, rich, deep-orange Jalebis sizzle - an unattainable feast that makes Saroo salivate.

SAROO

(nudges Guddu)

Guddu ... Jalebis ...

Guddu looks at them too; for a beat we see beyond the boys' deep hunger - they're just kids, yearning for a sweet.

EXT. ROAD HOME TO GANESH TALAI - SOON AFTER (DUSK)

They run along the road home. Joyful, free. A job well done.

Turning into the final alley, they pass a house with a lurid aqua wall, and a hedge of overflowing bougainvillea.

All the while we keep our eye on that little plastic bag.

INT. ONE-ROOM HOME - SOON AFTER (EVENING)

Home is a dirt-floor shack. Kerosene lamp. Bare walls. Coal fire in the corner. Plastic dish tub. Subsistence living.

Saroo's MOTHER (KAMLA, 30 - beautiful, but lined by life) ladles dhal onto plates for Saroo, Guddu, and SHEKILA (2).

KALLU (a boy, 9 - Saroo and Guddu's brother, cheeky, flighty) enters, sits, unwrapping a cloth containing scraps of bread.

KALLU
I got the bread!

SAROO
(it's competitive)
We got the milk!

They devour the meal in silence. We study each person.

Kamla unties the plastic bag, pours the milk into a bowl. She dips a crust of bread and gives it to Shekila to suckle on.

Guddu, Kallu, and Saroo take a sip each and pass the bowl.

Saroo offers the bowl to his mother. She smiles a gentle No.

Saroo grins at Guddu. So proud of their milk escapade.

Kallu ups and leaves as fast as he came.

INT. ONE-ROOM HOME - SOON AFTER (EVENING)

Saroo lies with Shekila on her little "cot" - barely a scrap of mattress - on the floor. Soothing her, stroking her head.

SAROO
Shhh. Shhh.

Saroo lifts his head, looks at Kamla as she drapes her head with a silk sari and begins to head out.

She looks back at his questioning little face.

KAMLA
You know I have to work.

INT. ONE-ROOM HOME - SOON AFTER (EVENING)

Stillness of the night outside. Shekila sleeps; Saroo nearly there. But when Guddu slips out the door, Saroo sees him go.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND ONE-ROOM HOME - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

Guddu wrestles his rickety bicycle from its hiding place.

SAROO (O.S.)
How long this time?

Guddu turns to see Saroo standing there.

GUDDU
You did good today, Saroo.

SAROO
I want to come with you. How long?

GUDDU
A week. You have to mind Shekila.

SAROO
Kallu will be back.

GUDDU
You're too little to carry sacks.
It's very hard work.

SAROO
I can carry anything!

Guddu smiles, amused. *Really?*

With great effort, Saroo lifts up the bicycle, holds it aloft above his head, like a weight-lifter. Straining.

GUDDU
Okay. Put it down.

Guddu laughs at the absurdity and sheer balls.

EXT. UNDERPASS AND BUSY STREETS - SOON AFTER (NIGHT)

Travelling at breakneck speed - Saroo joyfully perched on the handlebars - the boys emerge from the underpass.

The busy streets whizzing past. Guddu the daredevil.

A YOUNG MAN
Go, Guddu!

On Saroo: so proud of his big brother. This is living!

INT. TRAIN TO BURHANPUR - LATER (NIGHT)

Saroo and Guddu standing on a crowded night train. Hemmed in.

INT. SAME TRAIN - LATER (NIGHT)

The majority of the crowd are disembarking at a station.

In a deftly-practised move, Saroo and Guddu scurry like monkeys under the seats, scavenging for scraps.

On Guddu: he finds a peso. (It's about 1/100th of a Rupee.)

GUDDU

Peso!

On Saroo: he grabs something. A peanut. He cracks the shell -

SAROO

Guddu!

He splits the single peanut in two, and they eat it.

INT. SAME TRAIN - LATER (NIGHT)

The train is moving again. Plenty of seats now.

Saroo looks totally exhausted, his head resting on Guddu.

Guddu strokes Saroo, dreamily staring out into the blackness.

EXT. BURHANPUR PLATFORM - LATER (NIGHT)

The train pulls into Burhanpur Station. The PASSENGERS disembark. Last off is Guddu, carrying sleeping Saroo.

Guddu sits Saroo down on a bench.

GUDDU

Saroo - wake up!

Saroo simply groans, and curls up sideways.

GUDDU (CONT'D)

You have to walk.

SAROO

(whiny)

I'm asleep ...

GUDDU

You're too little for late nights!

SAROO

I'm asleep ... Don't bother me.

Guddu looks around. Annoyed with himself. Back to Saroo:

GUDDU

I'll go sort things for tomorrow.
Then we can find a place to sleep.

SAROO

Bring back a thousand jalebis.

GUDDU
Very funny. Wait here. You don't
move, okay?

Guddu leaps off the end of the platform. Familiar with it.

ON Saroo: deep asleep in an instant.

ON Guddu: tiny figure, hopping his way along the tracks.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. BURHANPUR PLATFORM - LATER (VERY LATE NIGHT)

FADE UP: Saroo wakes. The platform now all but deserted - empty, haunted. A few scattered, shadowy MEN in the distance.

Saroo looks around. Coming to consciousness. *Where is Guddu?*

SAROO
Guddu?

Those shadowy MEN in the distance, huddled, smoking.

We feel Saroo's total vulnerability to this weird open space.

A big empty train, standing in front of him.

SAROO (CONT'D)
Guddu?

He looks up at the giant WATER TOWER behind the platform. Looming, almost alive - like some brooding iron monster.

What to do? Where on earth is Guddu? One of the shadowy men gives Saroo one of those stares that never break.

A moment of decision. CLOSE on Saroo.

And just like that - *step!* - Saroo steps up onto the train.

INT. CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Little Saroo just stands there. The carriage is dark, empty.

SAROO
Guddu?

He walks down the aisle to the end of the carriage. He tries the connecting door. It's locked.

He stands in the doorway, looking out. Still no Guddu.

He retreats back inside. Safer here.

He sits. Knees drawn. Taking in the measure of this new empty space. His lids heavy. He lies there. Spooked, but fading.

He curls up. Fighting sleep so hard. Then his lids fall shut.

HARD CUT:

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

Daylight. CLOSE on Saroo, eyelids flickering in sleep, head rocking gently, as a sunbeam creeps across his face.

AUDIO: the distant, soothing *clickety-clack* of the train.

POV: we're in a sun-drenched, empty train carriage. (And suddenly that *clickety-clack* is pretty damn loud.)

ON Saroo: as he lurches awake. His catastrophe has begun.

As he stands up, taking in his surroundings, sheer terror -
- he's like a feral animal, realizing it's trapped.

He slaps his hands to the window, looks out.

Panicking, he jumps across the aisle. Looks out.

He runs up the aisle. Tries the lock of the connecting door.

The main door: locked. Distraught, he looks out the window.

POV (REVERSE): an endless expanse of ochre plains racing by.

SAROO

(through the bars)

Guddu! Ammi!* [*Mummy] Shekila!

He sits back, mind racing. Frozen, mute.

HIGH AERIAL - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

The train hurtles across the land. [We note the rest of the train is crowded. Only the last carriage, Saroo's, is empty.]

INT. CARRIAGE - LATER (AFTERNOON)

Time has passed. Saroo is staring numbly at the ceiling.

The train lurches, slows. Saroo tenses. Jumps up, hopeful.

Out the window (POV): we've entered a mid-sized TOWN.

The train comes to a stop at last. But where is the platform?

Saroo cranes his neck at the window bars once again.

POV (REVERSE): oblique angle, partial view, we catch a GLIMPSE of the human activity on the platform further along.

EXT. TRAIN ON SMALL-TOWN PLATFORM (ESTABLISHING) - CONTINUOUS

WIDE EXTERIOR, we now see what's actually going on: Saroo's carriage, the last one, hangs over the end of the platform.

Little Saroo, craning at the bars of a window.

INT. CARRIAGE - SECONDS LATER (AFTERNOON)

Saroo is back at the carriage door, trying the handle, on tip-toes trying to get a glimpse out the window.

(His POV): just near him, legs dangling over the end of the platform, sits a single STREET URCHIN (10), black with grime.

Saroo bangs on the door window.

SAROO

Help me!

EXT. PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS (AFTERNOON)

From the urchin's POV: Saroo, trapped behind the dirty pane.

SAROO

Help me!

The urchin stares blankly at Saroo. In his own desolation, he can't find the energy to even engage, let alone help.

SAROO (CONT'D)

Please! Help me!

But the train begins to pull out. Gathering speed.

The urchin turns his head, and gazes at Saroo, receding.

INT. CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS (AFTERNOON)

As the train continues to gather speed we see, over Saroo's shoulder, all the people on the crowded platform flashing by.

SAROO

(flailing, screaming)

Help! Help!

But not a soul notices him - and then the station is gone.

HIGH AERIAL - AFTERNOON

The train continues across the vast landscape, whose colors have shifted now - less ochre, more verdant.

INT. CARRIAGE - LATER (LATE AFTERNOON)

Saroo, just sitting. Weeping forlorn, hopeless tears.

INT. CARRIAGE - LATER (NIGHT)

NIGHT. Saroo on all fours under the seats again, scavenging.

He lunges for a peach stone. Well and truly eaten. He gnaws and sucks on it ravenously, getting at the last strands.

INT. CARRIAGE, SLOWING INTO CALCUTTA - LATER (NIGHT)

Saroo watches out the window a dark, unfamiliar CITY streaming past. A vast SHANTY TOWN at night. And such NOISE!

The train begins to slow, noticeably. Saroo, pressed to the window, wide-eyed. Scared. But desperate to get off!

INT. CARRIAGE, ARRIVING AT HOWRAH STATION - LATER (NIGHT)

As the train lurches to a stop, Saroo is poised at the door, tensed, wary, alert. PEOPLE crowd the door.

To Saroo, they seem frightening, ugly: a Boschean nightmare of faces, all crowding at the door.

How's this going to work? His hand tight on the handle.

AUDIO: a HYDRAULIC AIR RELEASE SOUND, and the door unlocks.

It slides OPEN, and instantly the CROWDS are PILING IN.

Saroo, caught off-guard, pushes forward. THROWS himself into the crowd, like a stage diver. No way he isn't getting off.

EXT. HOWRAH PLATFORM - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

The HORDES push on board as tiny Saroo fights his way out.

Desperate. Lunging. Swimming his way through them.

He pops clear. Free. But then, before him: the chaos of Howrah, Calcutta's main terminus - 26 platforms. WIDE, the place is indescribably vast. The size of a small town.

He turns in a circle - every direction equally hopeless.

He steps up to a WOMAN.

SAROO
Ganestlay?

WOMAN
(waving him off)
I have no money.

To a MAN IN RAILWAY UNIFORM walking by:

SAROO
Ganestlay?

But the man keeps walking.

Saroo sees ANOTHER OFFICIAL. He tugs on the man's trousers. But the man just BATS Saroo away - a real clip on the ears.

Turning in a bewildered circle, Saroo spots a STREET KID (5) drinking from a water fountain then walking off.

Saroo steps up, tippy-toes, and drinks. And drinks. Two days without food or water. This is the Fountain of Life.

Then his eyes search for that street kid.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - MOMENTS LATER (NIGHT)

Up the far end of the platform, the kid sits down with a bunch of STREET KIDS, all of them so blackened with grime.

CLOSER: some rowdy, some quiet. Some already asleep.

ON SAROO: studying them. Cautiously approaching.

He sits, twenty metres away, eyeing them warily.

ON THE CHILDREN: a wild, dangerous energy.

A WIRY BOY, 10, returns Saroo's stare. No invitation here. He's not being accepted. Eyes at ten paces.

LATER. Saroo sleeps - sitting up, knees drawn, head drooping.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER THE BLACKNESS (PRE-LAP): a SHRIEKING STATION WHISTLE -

EXT. HOWRAH PLATFORM - MORNING

Saroo, standing in front of a packed train about to leave, on the platform where he arrived yesterday.

That WHISTLE blows again. The train lurches into movement.

Saroo's mind ticking. Here it is. The chance to go home.

At the last possible moment Saroo leaps on the moving train.

INT. CROWDED TRAIN - CONTINUOUS (MORNING)

Saroo pushes inside, stands there holding the pole.

Taking everyone in. He tugs on a LADY's sari.

SAROO
Ganestlay?

The woman grunts - *huh?* - and looks away.

Saroo pushes through. Asks a MAN.

SAROO (CONT'D)
Ganestlay?

Nothing. The man just looks away.

On Saroo: the invisible boy. Looking up at all these ADULTS.

EXT. TRAIN (ESTABLISHING) - NIGHT

The train hurtles along, now through the night.

EXT. UNNAMED STATION - MORNING

The train pulls into a TERMINUS, where EVERYONE alights.

Saroo jumps up from under that seat. Instantly awake, he runs for the door. Excited. This should be Ganestlay.

He stands in the doorway - lost, looking up the platform, the carriage behind him now empty. This is not Ganestlay.

A STATION GUARD
(*re: the empty train*)
This one terminates here.

Saroo doesn't understand a word he says.

SAROO
Ganestlay?

STATION GUARD
(*gesturing*)
Go! Shoo!

SAROO
(*confused*)
Ganestlay?

The guard points to the crowded train on the other platform.

STATION GUARD
Two minutes. Go!

To Saroo, that's a Yes to the Ganestlay question.

As he sprints up the overpass to the train on the opposite platform, we feel his rush of hope.

INT. TRAIN - MOMENTS LATER (MORNING)

Saroo jumps on, squeezes through the crush. So tiny.

He perches himself at a window - on the edge of his seat - looking out - ahead. Could this really be it?

He catches a LADY looking at him.

SAROO
(pleased with himself)
 Ganestlay.

She smiles. Whatever he's saying, the little kid is sweet.
 He points out the window, as the train starts to move.

SAROO (CONT'D)
 Ganestlay.

The lady doesn't understand. But perhaps she can be helpful.

LADY
 Calcutta.

SAROO
(trying the word)
 Cal-cutta.

It dents his optimism a little. He's so easily confused.
 "Calcutta". What the hell is she talking about?

He notices a SCHOOL GIRL staring at him. His filthy clothes.
 He's already beginning to look like those street kids.

I/E. (TRAVELLING) TRAIN TO CALCUTTA - AFTERNOON

Saroo, leaning out the open doorway - calm, content. In his bones: soon home will reappear.

CLOSER on Saroo as confusion sets in. Then a sinking feeling:

WIDE (Saroo's POV): we're slowing, coming into ... Calcutta!
 The SHANTY TOWN again. Howrah ahead in the distance. Oh, no.

EXT. HOWRAH STATION - SOON AFTER

We FOLLOW forlorn Saroo as he walks through the CROWDS across
 the Howrah Station CONCOURSE and goes up to a TICKET BOOTH.

On tiptoes, his head barely appears at the window.

SAROO
 Ganestlay?

The MAN shoos him away, as people are piling up behind him.

SAROO (CONT'D)
(more insistent)
 Ganestlay?

The man is now impatient and shouts at Saroo; the PASSENGERS
 push and slap him out of the way.

INT. HOWRAH SUBWAY PASSAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Saroo, so tiny, as he walks along the VAST, CROWDED subway passage (SINGLE SHOT, WIDE) - a subterranean nightmare.

EXT. TRACKS LEADING OUT FROM HOWRAH - DUSK

CLOSE: Saroo stands bathed in the late afternoon light - gazing out at something. A gentle breeze on his face.

He looks left. Looks right. Looks ahead. Then with a resigned slump, he turns and walks off.

WIDE: he's walking back (towards the station) across an ENORMOUS COBWEB of entangled train tracks - an IMPENETRABLE WEAVE that really shows just how impossible getting home is.

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM, HOWRAH STATION - NIGHT

LATE; the lost children are curled up, entangled, asleep.

Forlorn Saroo sits down - same wary distance as the other night. His eyes tired and red. His grimy face tear-stained. He now looks just like them - the transformation is complete.

Eye contact with Wiry Boy, who's lying on a bed of cardboard.

Wiry Boy shifts, nods to Saroo - slides out one of the layers of cardboard that make up his bed. Slides it over to Saroo.

Saroo - *I can?* An offer of extraordinary generosity.

Saroo walks over, takes it, lies down. A luxury.

Saroo nods *Thank-you*, smiles shyly. Wiry Boy nods solemnly.

As Saroo closes his eyes, we

FADE TO BLACK.

SILENCE.

HARD CUT INTO:

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM, HOWRAH STATION - LATE NIGHT

- Saroo is woken by screaming and sudden pandemonium.

SHADOWY ADULTS are grabbing at the children - it is terrifying and aggressive and chaotic -

ADULTS

Come here! Hey! You!

- and the children are screaming in terror and scattering.

A STATION OFFICIAL casually lights a cigarette. (In his nonchalance, a sense of the machinery of corruption.)

Springing into survival mode, Saroo runs for his life - straight up the end of the platform, and leaps straight off -

INT. TRAIN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS (LATE NIGHT)

- and into the tunnel. The last thing he sees, as he turns for one last glance, is Wiry Boy being violently taken away.

Saroo sprints along the tunnel. A MAN chases.

ON Saroo: a heart-pounding chase. Rats scurrying everywhere.

BODY SNATCHER

Hey! You come here! You come back!

Suddenly, danger: a train hurtling towards him.

Blinded, Saroo flattens himself against the wall, terrified. The train barely misses him, as it blares past.

As Saroo stands there, pinned against the wall amid all the electrical cables, head turned sideways, he sees -

- along there, the body snatcher, also pressed to the wall.

Now the train is gone - and here comes the body snatcher -

- nowhere to go but forward - Saroo keeps sprinting - at last the body snatcher gives up -

EXT. BETWEEN STATION AND RIVER - MOMENTS LATER (LATE NIGHT)

- Saroo emerges into the world outside the station - and sees for the first time what he's just been inside:

- the great red brick edifice that is Howrah - and beyond it, huge HOWRAH BRIDGE. An eerie, haunting 3:00 a.m. Stillness.

From INSIDE comes a child's SCREAM - which propels Saroo to keep sprinting - away from the station - along the road -

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS (LATE NIGHT)

- straight up the stairs to a vast forbidding bridge - his tiny legs struggling to keep going upwards, upwards ...

He reaches the top of the stairs. He looks ahead.

This bridge, stretching into the distance, is the biggest thing he's ever seen in his life.

Few cars on the road. Few PEOPLE on the footpath. Pollution haze like a ghostly fog. It feels haunted.

Ahead: a couple of Calcutta's WILD DOGS potter about. They own this bridge at night.

Saroo inches backwards, scared and wary.

He looks back down the stairs. No sign of the body snatcher. But ahead, beyond those dogs: it's too daunting. Too haunted. Through the rails, down by the river bank, he sees: - CANDLES, flickering. That looks the safer option.

EXT. RIVERBANK & KALI SHRINE - MINUTES LATER (LATE NIGHT)

We follow Saroo from blackness - to those candles flickering. 15 BABAS (HOLY MEN) sleep: dirty robes, matted beards, dreadlocks, red ochre faces. Peaceful.

They sleep facing a small platform shrine to goddess Kali (the Destroyer). Bright painted Kali statue 4 feet high - fierce, frightening, astride her lion.

Carefully, Saroo moves through the holy men, toward Kali.

Four arms, garland of skulls, riding a lion. Spooky.

At Kali's feet, offerings: coconut shavings, pesos, nuts.

Saroo looks at the men again; no one seems to be stirring.

He bows quickly to Kali, and sneaks some of the offerings. Spies a sliver of unpopulated ground.

He clambers in behind the small platform, lies down. Out of trouble, out of sight. His own corner of this metropolis.

His eyes getting sleepy. Watching the sleeping holy men - and beyond them, the dark, wide river, flowing by.

FADE TO BLACK.

Silence - a beat - then the sound of men murmuring, chanting.

FADE UP TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK & KALI SHRINE - MORNING

The chanting grows louder. Saroo's eyes, dreamy, open - lost in the chanting. [It will act as a strange breathing space.]

He stands. He comes out from behind the Kali shrine.

The Babas face him, meditating, chanting. As if Saroo, there beside Kali on her lion, were a tiny god himself.

Saroo walks through the holy men, down to the river's edge. No real purpose. The chanting is haunting, extraordinary.

All the PEOPLE going through their morning rituals: bathing, brushing their teeth, scrubbing pots. Saroo separate. Lost. Observing everyone. They all seem to know what they're doing.

JUMP CUT:

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM, HOWRAH STATION - A WHILE LATER (DAY)

The chanting continues, as Saroo wanders, back at that place from where he fled last night. It's empty and desolate now.

He doesn't look terrified. Just lost. He sees what he wants:

- on the ground, the cardboard that Wiry Boy gave him.

He picks it up. His "bed". Planning ahead. He drags it away.

EXT. ALONG THE RAILWAY TRACKS, HOWRAH STATION - AFTERNOON

Saroo wanders by the side of the tracks, with his cardboard sheet. Past the BLACK METAL POOLS where MEN and BOYS sift for metals from construction waste. Then up a tiny path.

He comes across a WOMAN (NOOR, 40) carrying tin lunch boxes. She turns as they pass. Watches him.

NOOR

It's dangerous walking here.

Saroo stops. Stands there, quietly, innocently.

NOOR (CONT'D)

You speak Bengali?

Saroo doesn't seem to understand the question.

NOOR (CONT'D)

(in Hindi)

You speak Hindi?

A beat. Saroo nods, *Yes*.

SAROO

I got lost.

NOOR

Where are you from?

SAROO

Ganestlay.

NOOR

Where is that?

SAROO

Home.

NOOR
I don't know where that is.

A beat. She seems concerned. Saroo, so vulnerable.

NOOR (CONT'D)
What is your name?

SAROO
Saroo.

NOOR
I am Noor.
(beat)
Are you hungry?

She motions with the lunch boxes. Saroo nods, follows.

INT. STAIRWELL, APARTMENT BLOCK - SOON AFTER (AFTERNOON)

Saroo follows Noor up the stairs of her building -

EXT. ROOFTOP - MOMENTS LATER (AFTERNOON)

- they come out onto the amazing rooftop - Saroo has never been anywhere high before - Calcutta stretches before him -

(POV): the view reveals KIDS playing on LOWER ROOFTOPS - kites - a sense of community - the sounds of kids playing -

NOOR
- Come -

She *lives* up here! He follows her into her rooftop shack -

INT. NOOR'S ROOFTOP HOME - CONTINUOUS (AFTERNOON)

Saroo, wide-eyed, walks across to the windows -

(POV): amazing views across the RAILWAY YARDS; HOWRAH BRIDGE in the distance; everywhere, golden afternoon light.

INT. NOOR'S ROOFTOP HOME - LATER (LATE AFTERNOON)

Saroo sits at a small table with Noor, shovelling lentils into his mouth from a plastic plate. To him, a feast.

It's as if he relaxes, a tiny notch. This woman feels safe.

NOOR
(*ironic*)
Looks like you hate it!

Saroo looks up, mouth full, smiles at the humour.

NOOR (CONT'D)

I make the lunches for all the men.

(beat)

You have to make a living.

SAROO

I help my brother carry bales.

NOOR

You do?

SAROO

I help my mother carry rocks.

NOOR

She works in a quarry?

Saroo nods *Yes*. His mouth still full, going full throttle.

Noor gazes at him. Sadness. Compassion.

From a TINY FRIDGE, she takes out an ORANGE SODA in a bottle. She opens it and hands it to him.

Saroo looks down astonished at the bottle in his hands. He's never had one of these. He looks up at her. She nods, *Go on*.

He puts the bottle to his lips. Drinks. Winces at the bubbles. Looks up at her, and smiles.

Another sip. Amazing. Amazing. Suddenly: an enormous burp.

Saroo could cry, he's so amazed. Instead, they laugh.

INT. NOOR'S ROOFTOP HOME - LATER (NIGHT)

Naked Saroo, head to toe in soap suds, stands in a plastic tub in the corner, as Noor SCRUBS him vigorously.

His body being pummeled. It's not at all unpleasant.

Noor ladles water, pours it over Saroo's head. As the water cascades and the suds wash away, he closes his eyes.

INT. ONE-ROOM HOME, KHANDWA - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

- and opens them, the water cascading off his face.

REVERSE: he's looking at Kamla, bathing him.

Saroo blinks, looking at:

Kamla's face, as she concentrates on washing him.

INT. NOOR'S ROOFTOP HOME - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Saroo blinks, looking at:

Noor's face - as she concentrates on washing him.

She takes his cheeks in her hand -

NOOR
Open your mouth.

She moves his lips, inspects his teeth and gums.

INT. BEDROOM, NOOR'S ROOFTOP HOME - LATER (NIGHT)

Saroo, curled up on the tiny bed in the corner. Noor pads a blanket down on top of him. Luxury.

NOOR
(her voice soothing)
I know a man who is a very special man. His name is Rama. He knows many people. He will come tomorrow, to help you.

SAROO
To find Ammi?

NOOR
Yes, Ammi. You sleep now.

The day couldn't get any better. Saroo smiles, eyes heavy. Then, surrendering to his tiredness, he's out like a light.

HARD CUT:

INT. BEDROOM, NOOR'S ROOFTOP HOME - MORNING

Saroo opens his eyes. The light is blinding, almost heavenly. He raises his head, looks through to the other room:

- where a handsome, impeccably dressed MAN (RAMA, 40) sits with Noor at the table, finishing a small meal.

RAMA
Oh, he is awake.

Rama walks into the bedroom. Perches on the bed.

RAMA (CONT'D)
I wonder what worlds you have travelled in. That was such a sleep, young man.

SAROO
(sitting up)
You are Rama?

RAMA
(smiles)
Yes, but not the god. And I have been told you are lost.

Saroo nods meekly, yes.

RAMA (CONT'D)
I need to ask you some questions.
And you need to tell me all that
you can - so I can help you ...
What is your name?

SAROO
Saroo.

RAMA
Saroo. And you are from...?

SAROO
Ganestlay.

RAMA
It's not a name that is familiar to
me. But we may be able to find it.
What is your family name?

Saroo looks up at the man, almost shameful. He doesn't know.

RAMA (CONT'D)
It's all right, it's not important.

Rama starts to lie down, and gestures Saroo to lie back down.

RAMA (CONT'D)
Come lie down, I have come so far
to see you.

Saroo blinks twice. Is that a "no thanks" kind of question?

He lies down, tentatively. Rama pulls him in. A tiny bed.

RAMA (CONT'D)
Tell me how you got here, Saroo.

SAROO
I went to the station with my
brother -

RAMA
- and your brother is? -

SAROO
- Guddu. And he went away. And he
didn't come back -

- as Saroo talks, Rama casually strokes his hair - CLOSE, in
Saroo's eyes: surely that's not right -

SAROO (CONT'D)
- so I rested on the train. But I
fell asleep. Then I couldn't get
off. And the train came here.

- Rama nods, murmurs encouragement, keeps stroking -

- Noor watches, blankly, from across the room -

SAROO (CONT'D)

But I can't find the train to get back.

RAMA

Saroo, you're a good boy. Are you a good boy?

Saroo nods earnestly. But also subtly shifts his head.

Rama sits up. Ruffles Saroo's hair.

RAMA (CONT'D)

I'll tell you what. I'll be back tonight, and I'll take you somewhere good.

SAROO

To my mother?

RAMA

Somewhere good. And from there we'll try to find your mother. These things are not always easy.

Saroo nods, confused, hopeful. Rama stands.

RAMA (CONT'D)

Stand up for me. Let me see you.

Saroo stands on the bed. Rama admires him, pulls his arms - like a man admiring strength or beauty in a son. Or inspecting a horse. Saroo, passive, lets it happen.

Rama holds out his hand. Saroo, clearly not practiced in the art of hand-shaking, offers his tiny hand.

NOOR

Say thank you to Rama.

SAROO

Thank you.

Rama leaves the bedroom, crosses the main room, kisses Noor goodbye - slight sexual overtone - and passes out the door.

Saroo stands there on the bed, closely observing all this. It's all so strange. And not quite right.

The faint sound of children playing, O/S.

INT. NOOR'S ROOFTOP HOME - LATER (DUSK)

Saroo sits, eating, as Noor stirs dhal in a pot.

Another bottle of orange soda in front of him. Untouched.

He stares at the bottle. Then at Noor.

Busy with cooking, she half-sings along to some Bollywood song on the radio. She looks over to Saroo and smiles.

He looks at the soda again. At Noor. Something stirring inside him -

- and suddenly he simply ups from the table and makes a break for it - straight out the door.

Noor SCREAMS - revealing the true animal she is.

INT. STAIRWELL, APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS (DUSK)

- Saroo takes the stairs at lightning speed, Noor screaming and chasing O/S behind him -

- around one landing, a MAN lurches at him - misses -

- Saroo taking those steps faster than he's ever run before -

EXT. PATHWAY OUTSIDE APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS (DUSK)

Saroo BURSTS OUT onto the pathway outside the apartment building and scrambles away, up towards the city lights -

EXT. STREETS NEAR HOWRAH STATION - CONTINUOUS (DUSK)

- and into the busy dusk streets. He runs.

And runs, and runs, and runs -

EXT. BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS (DUSK)

- right up those stairs to the Howrah Bridge. (This time: trucks, cars, horns blaring, countless PEOPLE. No wild dogs.)

And this time, Saroo keeps right on running - zigzagging his way through the CROWDS, a bundle of pure determination.

His little fists clenched. Glancing back, still fearful.

A marathon runner. And now we hear only his breath.

EXT. CALCUTTA STREETS - SOON AFTER (MONTAGE)

We TRACK him in PROFILE: framing consistency, fluid fades and consistency of tracking speed mean it all looks like one shot, even though B/G changes and it's many different shots. As if he's running through all of India.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER the blackness, the sound of RAIN. It pours. It pours.

A SUPER: **TWO MONTHS LATER**

Then a tiny voice, coming up over the rain:

SAROO (V.O., PRE-LAP)
Sorry. Sorry.

FADE UP TO:

INT. CONCRETE HIDEY-HOLE - DAY

TIGHT on Saroo's face - DARK, in the shadows - we've no idea where it is - his face ever grimier.

It's raining heavily. In the shadowy recess, he's whispering:

SAROO
Sorry. Sorry. I'll come back. I'm
sorry, Ammi ...

EXT. DREAM QUARRY, KHANDWA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUDDEN contrast from the darkness to brilliant white light.

A surreal landscape: mythological, prehistoric - rocky, barren - white dust swirling like a fine talcum mist.

Saroo, scrambling over the rocks, like the first human ever.

SAROO
Ammi! Ammi!

We're in a quarry - and there in the distance is Kamla, the hot winds flapping her sari about - she turns as he nears -

KAMLA
Good boy.

Saroo starts helping - lifts a rock far too heavy for him.

KAMLA (CONT'D)
(laughing as he struggles)
Not this one, Saroo. Get those
little ones.

He gathers a couple of rocks, drops them into her wooden hod.

KAMLA (CONT'D)
Small ones at the back. That's it.
Look at your muscles!

Saroo grins, flexes his muscles like a bodybuilder.

KAMLA (CONT'D)
(laughs)
Good boy. Good boy.

INT. CONCRETE HIDEY-HOLE - DAY

Heart-wrenching - Saroo's attempts at a nest, at belongings. A filthy blanket; water bottle; broken toy car; mussel shell.

And another cardboard sheet. Which he's lying on now, on his belly, a torn Indian *Vogue* propped against the wall.

Saroo parks the toy car at the base of the Swiss mountain in a Breitling watch ad. He loads the seashell onto the roof of the car and drives it away, making little-child NOISES.

He fills the mussel shell with dirt and tiny pebbles, pushes it to the corner, tips the contents out. Like Kamla's hod.

SAROO

Good boy. Good boy. That's a good boy. Good boy.

AUDIO: the rain easing.

EXT. CONCRETE HIDEY-HOLE - SOON AFTER (DAY)

The sun's out, everything dripping. Saroo clammers down. (We see how ingenious his nest is: a 4-foot-cubed concrete recess between two pylons, 8 feet off the ground, hidden from view.)

The crows look down on him from the telegraph wires.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Saroo fossicks by the shore, where the garbage ebbs and bobs. His little "scavenger bag" slung over his shoulder.

A DEAD BODY - a crippled beggar, lips blue, eyes lifeless - stares at the sky in a death grimace. Saroo stares for a moment. And then steps over it.

He finds a bent spoon. Inspects it. It looks like some rusted relic from the Raj - an English serving spoon.

Pleased, he puts it in the scavenger bag.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Saroo sits in a narrow traffic island in the middle of a crazy busy street - buses and trucks in all directions.

He takes out the spoon, studies it again, straightens it.

Reaching back into the scavenge bag, he places a few grains of rice and corn on the spoon.

Across the road at a cafe table, a MAN (pleasant-looking, a student, 22, a book and cup of chai in front of him) watches - fascinated.

Saroo feeds himself off the spoon, imagining a HUGE mouthful.

To the man it's heartbreaking - he's drawn in by Saroo's "play". At that moment their eyes meet. The man smiles.

JUMP CUT:

INT. OFFICE, POLICE COMPLEX - SOON AFTER (DAY)

Saroo sits at a desk, tiny and bewildered in "officialdom", as the café man speaks to a POLICE OFFICIAL (50).

CAFÉ MAN

He speaks Hindi - not a word of Bengali - so he must be a long way from home. When I ask where he's from, he keeps saying "Ganestlay". It means nothing to me.

The official nods, walks over to an old WALL MAP of India.

POLICE OFFICIAL

(to Saroo)

Now this ... "Ganestlay" -

(pointing to all of India)

Do you think you might have a rough idea where it is?

Saroo - the little prince of cluelessness.

POLICE OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Do you know which province? It would help us a lot if you knew the province.

Even as the words come out of his mouth, he understands the stupidity of the question. But he hovers there, in hope.

Saroo stares at the map - that distinct triangle of India - then the official, as if they're both enormous blank walls.

The official sits. Glances at the café man.

POLICE OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Let's try something else. Do you know your family name?

INT. OFFICE, POLICE COMPLEX - SOON AFTER (DAY)

FLASH! Saroo's photo is taken.

INT. FRONT COUNTER, POLICE COMPLEX - SOON AFTER (DAY)

The official at a counter (Saroo on a bench, B/G, with the café man) as a hardened OFFICER (he's seen it all) takes approximately five seconds to read Saroo's two-page FILE.

STAMP! He stamps the file "LOST". Staples the PHOTO to the cover. Pulls out a separate page, Indian-bureaucracy-style.

HARDENED OFFICER
(hands official the file)
 That's for ISSA.
(hands him the page)
 That's for Liluah.

POLICE OFFICIAL
(slight frown)
 Really?

HARDENED OFFICER
(shrugs; not my problem)
 While they process him.

ON THE POLICE OFFICIAL: he knows this is not great. He composes himself, turns, smiles to Saroo and Café Man.

POLICE OFFICIAL
 They've found him a home - while they look.

The man smiles, relieved. Ruffles Saroo's hair.

EXT. POLICE VAN, STREET TO LILUAH GATE - AFTERNOON

We FOLLOW a dirty van down a narrow road along a high wall topped with barbed wire and embedded broken glass.

INT. LILUAH VAN - CONTINUOUS (AFTERNOON)

In the back of the van, Saroo and four sullen STREET KIDS sit, spooked, silent, tense, waiting - a haunting vigil of expectation as the van rattles along.

(AUDIO, EXT:) The van's horn HONKS; an iron gate creaks open.

CUT TO BLACK -

OVER THE BLACKNESS:

A GUARD (O.S.)
 MOVE! MOVE!

Shuffling sounds, as the children move - and outside, the various noises and echoes of a world we are about to reveal.

BURST INTO BRIGHTNESS:

EXT. LILUAH DETENTION CENTER - CONTINUOUS (AFTERNOON)

We emerge from the darkness, following the terrified children following the barking guard into the bleak, sun-drenched courtyard of the high-walled complex.

A shiver-up-the-spine wrongness about this decrepit, fortress-like place - no sense of a connection to the outside world.

Lonely chairs and rubbish lie on top of the wire-mesh "roof".

They pass rows of cells; children's EYES stare from the dark.

On Saroo: what *is* this nightmare? He was desperate in Calcutta; but there's nothing but sorrow and suffering here.

INT. YOUNGER DORM, LILUAH - LATER (LATE AFTERNOON)

Saroo sits frozen, wary, on what passes for a bed.

Five other CHILDREN on beds, like spectres in the gloom.

Everyone looks traumatized; nobody speaks.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER THE BLACKNESS we hear: the sounds of LOCKS OPENING, CHAINS CLANGING, the big IRON FRONT GATE CREAKING OPEN -

FOOTSTEPS across the courtyard - two MEN talking - coming closer, closer - and downstairs, into the quiet building -

INT. YOUNGER DORM, LILUAH - LATER (NIGHT)

FADE UP: a sweet 5-YEAR-OLD GIRL (AMITA) lies in bed in the stillness, staring over at Saroo with huge unblinking eyes.

Saroo stares back. The sounds come closer.

Saroo turns and watches as the two men - one a GUARD, the other a well-dressed OUTSIDER - stride past the open door.

A door opens (O/S, AUDIO). Whimpering - a scuffle - shouts.

Then Saroo catches a glimpse of a HAUNTED BOY (8) being dragged past the door by the men. Terror in the boy's eyes.

Saroo so wide-eyed and wide awake in the dark night.

AUDITORY SEQUENCE (while on Saroo): a confusing auditory nightmare. Beatings. Cries of anguish. Rape.

Amita simply stares across to Saroo.

Then after a time, she closes her eyes.

Saroo stares at the ceiling, eyes wide. The noises continue.

INT. MESS HALL, LILUAH - MORNING

Saroo shovels the thin gruel into his mouth in cowed silence.

Amita by his side, doing the same.

SAROO

What is your name?

SWEET GIRL

Amita.

Saroo notices a GUARD escorting a kindly-looking lady (MRS SOOD, 45) with files in hand, who seems to be pointing and talking about particular kids with the guard.

SAROO
Does anybody ever leave here,
Amita?

AMITA
I've seen it.

SAROO
What will you do when you leave?

Pause.

AMITA
I'd like to own a watch one day.

Long pause.

INT. CLASSROOM, LILUAH - DAY

Fifteen CHILDREN, nerves on edge, straining to get it right.

A SEVERE TEACHER barks the Sanskrit alphabet, pointing to the letters on the blackboard as these illiterate kids repeat:

TEACHER	CHILDREN
Kaa ... Gaa ... Naa ... Daa	Kaa ... Gaa ... Naa ... [etc]

Saroo is *earnestly* trying to learn. He spots the haunted boy from last night. A wild look in the boy's eyes: blank, angry.

All the children except for Haunted Boy are duly repeating the alphabet. Saroo looking sideways, fascinated by him.

Haunted Boy swaying back and forwards, rubbing his hair and forehead, looking like a pressure cooker about to explode.

He upturns his desk, WAILS a primal howl of pure distress.

TEACHER
What is this?

The teacher starts raining blows upon Haunted Boy.

At first Haunted Boy just takes it, through clenched teeth -
- then he goes completely crazy, and fights back.

The teacher fights back even harder, screaming for help.

All the kids back away in a wide circle, scared, horrified.

Saroo, trying to shrink within himself.

As the horrible struggle continues and two MALE TEACHERS rush in and help beat down Haunted Boy - Saroo watching wide-eyed -

- LIVE SOUND FADES, and a beautiful, haunting little Hindi folk song rises - Amita's voice in PRE-LAP -

INT. YOUNGER DORM, LILUAH - NIGHT

Saroo lies listening, soothed, as Amita softly sings. The song becomes the AUDIO "BED" as we travel over the landscape of the various CHILDREN in this holding room of lost souls: hands covered in scabs, eyes all staring. Listening.

Not a child in this room has any idea of their fate. The song holds it all together: for this one moment, all are soothed.

ON SAROO: gradually, his eyes close.

FADE TO BLACK.

Over the black, a SUPER: **THREE MONTHS LATER**

HARD CUT INTO:

INT. YOUNGER DORM, LILUAH - MORNING

JOLTING AWAKE out of the dreamy song is Saroo, being shaken -

STAFF MEMBER

You. You have to come.

Sleepy Saroo is confused: what on earth could this mean?

INT. RECEPTION ROOM, LILUAH - SOON AFTER

We travel BEHIND Saroo as he's led into an outer room balcony. Kindly Mrs Sood stands as he enters.

MRS SOOD

Good morning, Saroo.

He takes her in. Angel of Mercy or Angel of Death? She's that woman he briefly noticed on that first day in the mess hall.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)

My name is Mrs Sood. Sit. Sit.

(he sits, warily)

I run an organization called ISSA.

(in English:)

The "Indian Society for Sponsorship and Adoption."

(then says it in Hindi -)

Saroo listens, brow furrowed, a little astonished that this woman is talking to him as if he's an adult.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)

This place is a home for the deformed. For the mentally ill. For juvenile delinquents. Or where parents who cannot cope leave their children. But you are none of those. You are lost. I like to make sure there's no one here who should be - elsewhere. That's why I'm here. Annoying them. Helping you.

(beat; opening his file)

I've been investigating your case for a while now - we even placed this ad in all the Calcutta newspapers when you arrived here -

She shows him a cutting of a small classified ad in Sanskrit, with that photo of Saroo we recognize from the police station and, in English, "Indian Society for Sponsorship and Adoption, 1 Kyd Street, Calcutta".

Saroo stares at the photo of himself. Fascinated.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)

Fifteen million people read this. That's many, many people.

(beat)

Not one reply, I'm afraid.

SAROO

I came from far away.

MRS SOOD

Not one reply.

It's a harsh truth and she doesn't hide it. Saroo, desperate.

SAROO

Ammi? [Mummy]

MRS SOOD

No ... no Ammi.

Saroo just sits there. Shocked. Silence. A long beat.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)

Saroo, do you know where Australia is?

Saroo looks confused.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)

We found a family there who could look after you.

As Saroo pulls back - What? - Mrs Sood gets that he understands this means the search is over.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)
Come. Sit here.

Saroo says nothing. Falls deeper into numbness.

Mrs Sood pulls him onto her lap. Shows him a little FLIP BOOK of photos, sent by the prospective parents.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)
Would you like to see them?
(flipping through)
Look. That's "John". That's "Sue".
This is the house. [etc.]

Saroo studies them, intensely. ON THE PHOTOS: John and Sue, white, smiling. Saroo's room. The living room. The garden.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)
They live on a little island called
Tasmania. Full of very nice people.
(beat)
They look nice, don't they?

Saroo shakes his head meekly, *No*.

Mrs Sood strokes his hair gently, once. Gets serious.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)
Saroo. You cannot stay here.

A tear rolls down Saroo's face.

SAROO
I want Ammi.

MRS SOOD
I know you do. It's hard.

She sets him down. Takes out the photo of John and Sue.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)
Will you take this? Look after it,
until the next time I see you?

Saroo nods bravely. Takes the photo in his tiny hand.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)
Don't lose it.

Saroo nods, slips it into his little back pocket. He walks to the door, head down, dejected. He turns.

A *huge* question - you can see it in every fibre of his being.

SAROO
Did you really look your hardest?

She nods solemnly.

MRS SOOD
Under every rock.

Saroo stands there. Hanging onto her gaze like a lifeboat.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)
You can hold them in your heart,
always. But now you have a new
home, if you want it.

Saroo looks away. A deep breath, almost a sigh.

EXT. LILUAH COURTYARD - DAY

Two KIDS play a joyless game - others pace the yard and lurk, B/G - while Saroo sits against a decayed wall at the yard edge. Amita beside him - holding that photo of Sue and John.

ON THE PHOTO: already, it's battered and frayed and folded.

Amita studies it, with the fiercest interest. Saying nothing - but knowing everything. Nodding. Knowing he's going. Knowing how lucky he is.

She looks up at the clouds through the wire mesh open roof. Saroo looks up there too. A silent communion between the two.

Then - almost formally - Amita takes the tiny Ganesh medallion from around her neck. Puts it around Saroo's neck.

Not cheap and touristy, but ancient-looking, and worn - almost like something dug up from an archeological dig.

AMITA
Ganesh will look after you. He's
the god of new beginnings.

Saroo takes her hand in his. They sit there, side by side.

INT. SIMPLE HOTEL SUITE, DINING TABLE - SOON AFTER (NIGHT)

We TRACK through a pleasant, simply furnished hotel suite to find Saroo and two other orphans sitting, a little stiffly, at a table set in western style: knife, fork, spoon in the proper order, butter dish, salt and pepper shakers, etc.

As they eat, Mrs Sood is giving them a last-minute lesson.

MRS SOOD
(*in English*)
"Fork".

Saroo proudly holds up his fork, grinning.

MRS SOOD (CONT'D)
Good. "Knife"?

The orphan boy holds up the knife.

Mrs Sood points to the salt shaker.

ORPHAN GIRL
(tentative)
 "Salt..."

MRS SOOD
(in English)
 Salt. Good.

She points to the pepper. Orphan Girl racks her brains.

SAROO
(jumping in)
 "Peppa..."

It's the funniest word they've ever heard. The three children giggle, repeating the word.

INT. QANTAS JUMBO JET - DAY

CLOSE with Saroo as he steps into the enormous interior of a Qantas jet. Awestruck. Everything so gleaming and new - just like Saroo himself, wearing that hilarious "Tasmania and its territories" tee-shirt from the *Long Way Home* book cover.

His minder settles him and sits beside him.

On Saroo: what a world. The seat. The seatbelt. The magazine pocket. The window shade. The overhead light.

QANTAS ATTENDANT
 Would he like a Kids' Kit?

MINDER
 Thank you.

She hands the kit to the minder. Then an extra surprise:

QANTAS ATTENDANT
 Would you like a Cadbury bar,
 little man?

SAROO
(taking it from her)
 Cadbury.

He looks at the minder, who nods *Yes, you can open it.*

Saroo opens the purple wrapper. Blown away by what chocolate looks like up close. He bites into it.

INT. QANTAS JUMBO JET - SOON AFTER (DAY)

TAKE-OFF. We study this tiny 5-year-old, glued to the window as the plane lifts off.

INT. QANTAS JUMBO JET - SOON AFTER (DAY)

POV from window: all of Calcutta. So tiny down there.

INT. QANTAS JUMBO JET - LATER (DAY)

The astonishing view from 30,000 feet. Saroo's been glued to that window for hours. The earth is vast.

Saroo pulls down the window blind. Pulls it up again.

Saroo turns, looks at his sleeping minder. Looks back at the window. Blind down, blind up. Looks back out the window.

INT. CORRIDOR, HOBART AIRPORT - DAY

We're CLOSE behind Saroo's shoulder as the minder guides him along a corridor, flanked by an AIRPORT OFFICIAL.

We round the corner of the corridor and enter -

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, HOBART AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

- where JOHN (32) and SUE (29) BRIERLEY stand up anxiously -

Everyone just stands there for a moment - so tentative -

MINDER

Hello. I'm Swarmina.

JOHN

(softly)

I'm John. This is Sue.

Saroo has retreated behind Swarmina's leg - he holds on for dear life and peers out shyly. Wide-eyed. First boy on Mars.

Sue kneels gently. A lifetime of waiting brims in her eyes. She looks down on Saroo with as much astonishment as he her.

SUE

Hi there.

Saroo still clutches the half-eaten Cadbury bar from earlier.

SAROO

(deadpan)

Cadbury.

It doesn't get more awkward. Or beautiful.

SUE

It's a Cadbury, John.

I/E. CAR / THE BRIERLEY'S STREET - DAY

We're in the car with our new nuclear family, in the back seat with Saroo (POV). He looks at the passing rows of brown suburban homes - neat lawns - sprinklers. So unlike India.

Sue watches Saroo in the central mirror: his curiosity and his amazement.

INT. BRIERLEY HOME - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

We're behind Saroo as he enters the house, awed, alert, curious. Sue and John gently prod -

JOHN

That's okay - have a look around -

Saroo is goggle-eyed. Sue gives running commentary wherever he goes. Whatever he looks at.

SUE

This is the living room. That's the television. [etc...]

The clean white benches. The shiny refrigerator.

Saroo steps up to the fridge. He looks back to Sue: *May I?*

He opens the door. The colourful glory of western groceries.

Stands there, mouth open, simply stunned. Shuts it gently.

INT. SAROO'S BEDROOM, BRIERLEY HOME - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Saroo's bedroom. A box of toys. Saroo looks up at Sue and John, not quite believing his eyes: *Can I touch these?*

SUE

They're yours.

JOHN

You can play with them.

But Saroo just stands there, lost in a moment of fully taking in his parents. John Brierley. Sue Brierley. White Martians.

Saroo blinks twice.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(kneeling)

Here you go.

(pushing a truck)

You have a go, son.

Saroo picks it up. Simply studies its wheels. Spins one.

He's too overwhelmed, too shy, to play immediately. Looks up at his parents again.

JOHN (CONT'D)

See how the doors open. Look. Like this.

John demonstrates the truck doors. Saroo likes that. He opens and closes the tiny doors.

He puts the truck on the ground - pushes it along. Gets lost in the activity.

Then he looks up. As he takes in the room once more, something on the wall catches his attention:

- a detailed MAP OF INDIA. Saroo recognizes the triangle, all that dense information, though he can no more understand written English than he could the Bengali on that map in the police station back in Calcutta -

SUE

That's right. That's where you came from. Look. This is India. This is Calcutta, here.

SAROO

(one word he recognizes)
Cal-cutta.

He stares politely at the incomprehensible map.

INT. DINING ROOM, BRIERLEY HOME - NIGHT

Dinner time: Saroo nervous, polite, calm, as they eat. Head barely above the table. Taking in the place settings.

As Saroo chews, he looks up at his new parents. Grins.

SAROO

(pointing)
Peppa.

Sue and John share a proud smile.

SUE

That's right. That's the pepper.

INT. BATHROOM, BRIERLEY HOME - NIGHT

Sue ladles water over Saroo. He's fascinated with everything: the water, the warmth, this gentle woman, these bath toys.

SUE

Close your eyes.

She motions to him: *close your eyes*.

For an instant, he looks at her warily. Remembering Noor.

SUE (CONT'D)
Go on. It's okay.

He looks into her eyes. He has to trust. He can trust.

He closes his eyes.

Sue pours a saucepan of water SLOWLY over his head. The STEAM comes off him. It's like some exotic baptism. You can see his whole body - his whole being - relax.

He opens his eyes.

SUE (CONT'D)
(eager, encouraging)
Good?

Saroo smiles.

SUE (CONT'D)
You've come so far. Haven't you? My little one.

He stares up at her with those huge dark eyes.

SUE (CONT'D)
I don't imagine it's been easy. One day, you make sure to tell me all about it. Tell me everything. Who you are. I'll always listen.

He squeezes the alligator. It SQUEAKS. He pulls back, amused.

Sue notices John at the door - he has been quietly standing there the whole time - and a beautiful warmth spreads between the three. So this is what it feels like - to be a family.

HIGH AERIAL - WINEGLASS BAY - DAY

Down there, a small YACHT races towards a sheltered bay.

Over this, a SUPER: **ONE YEAR LATER.**

EXT. THE SUZIE / WINEGLASS BAY - DAY

The modest boat - lovingly maintained - skips across the water. Her name - SUZIE - painted on the side. John teaches Saroo how to sail.

Saroo is deeply absorbed - his little face earnest. Sue - the wind in her hair - watches them with unconcealed delight.

EXT. BEACH, WINEGLASS BAY - DAY

CUT IN HARD on little Saroo diving into frame, making an overdramatic lunge, catching a ball on the soft sand.

JOHN (O.S.)

Howzat!

The Brierleys play cricket on a curve of white sand, at the extraordinarily beautiful Wineglass Bay. The small family boat is moored nearby, in the azure water.

With a child's wooden cricket bat, Sue hits the ball high in the air in a graceful arc that forces Saroo to really sprint.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(excited commentator)

It's going for six! No, young Saroo's under it! -

Saroo leaps for the ball again - dives into the water's edge as he catches it -

SAROO

Howzat!

SUE

Bravo!

JOHN

(commentator)

Ohhhh! Saroo Brierley has done the impossible! Australia wins on the final ball of the day! Let's look at the slow motion replay!

SAROO

Mum! Mum, look at me!

Saroo's victory dance. His English comes naturally now. Laughing, Sue gets her camera - Saroo poses - a miniature hero - for a victory pic.

INT. HOBART AIRPORT - DAY

CLOSE on a child's drawing - a house, a tree, the sun, two adults, a brown child - and another brown face, looking out from an airplane window high above.

WIDER: Saroo holding up the drawing like a banner - a kind of "Welcome" offering. Pointing at the figures -

SAROO

Mum. Dad. Me. Mantosh.

Sue and John, expectant. But not as nervous as last year.

MANTOSH (8) enters with the same minder from last year.

MINDER

Hello again! Saroo - my goodness!

(beat)

This is Mantosh.

Mantosh looks wild and feral - something not quite right.
Saroo sees it instantly: sees it before John and Sue.

JOHN

Mantosh - I'm John. This is Sue.
And this is your brother Saroo. Say
hello, Saroo.

Saroo says nothing; gently hands the drawing to Mantosh.

Mantosh doesn't even take it, doesn't even look at it.

Saroo, perplexed, glances at Sue.

The minder smiles at Sue. But you can see she's had a tough
24 hours, and knows there's something's wrong with this kid.

AUDIO (B/G, faint): John and Sue make small-talk with the
minder, along the lines of "You have a nice flight?" etc.

But down here at kid level, all of Saroo's focus is on this
wired boy whose eyes dart crazily, whose hands are scarred
and scabbed. Saroo is basically thinking, "What the hell have
we got here?"

[In Mantosh, we get the visual and behavioral echoes with
Haunted Boy in Liluah too.]

INT. SAROO'S BEDROOM, BRIERLEY HOME - DAY

Saroo stands frozen and freaked out in his own bedroom, eyes
wide open - listening to a great commotion along the hall.

Saroo leans to his open door - peeks out -

INT. HALLWAY LEADING TO LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

REVERSE of that: a sliver of the chaos in the living room -

- (Saroo's POV) Sue in silhouette, frozen - as beyond her,
Mantosh screams like a banshee for no apparent reason. A
child's cricket bat flies across the room, clattering against
the china cabinet - as John lunges to protect it -

JOHN

Woh woh woh woh! Hang on, sunshine -

Mantosh ransacking his own new toys - Tasmanian devil style.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Careful with the furniture, mate.

Mantosh starts to hit himself, screaming. Losing breath.

Sue and John try to calm him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

C'mon. Breathe. Deep breaths.

BACK ON SAROO: in his sliver of doorway, watching the scene up the hallway, he simply CLOSES HIS EYES.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DARK HALLWAY, INTO KITCHEN, BRIERLEY HOME - NIGHT

We TRACK OUT OF THE BLACKNESS along the hall, into the dark living room - and the OPEN KITCHEN over there.

A night light in the kitchen illuminates Sue, standing at the sink. Still. Her arms hanging limp. Exhausted. Mute.

Saroo stands behind her, watching. (She hasn't heard him.)

He steps beside her. Reaches up, takes her hand.

She snaps out of it, looks down on him. *It's all right*, says the look on his face.

A private communion. The son comforting the mother. Then, as if remembering her duty to look after him, Sue pulls Saroo close, cradles his head. They stand there, a silent tableau.

MUSIC (PRE-LAP into next scene) rises over end of this, into -

EXT. WINEGLASS BAY - DAY (2010)

Deep blue water, infused with glints of sunlight.

Saroo (now 26) breaks the surface.

Contented. Relaxed. Completely at home in the water, he floats onto his back, at one with the sea and the sun.

This is paradise...

Super: **25 YEARS LATER**

He swims smoothly to the shore. Hauls his sailboard upright.

AERIAL - HOBART STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON/DUSK

We track high above a car as it glides down the freeway -

INT. HOBART WATERSIDE RESTAURANT - DAY

Saroo, John and Sue sit in a busy restaurant - glass walls, wine glasses tinkling, sunlight bouncing off the harbour. There's a fourth place-setting, untouched. Clearly this is a huge moment - their son is leaving. John pours the champagne. Saroo, observing the ritual. Sue, her eyes sparkling, to Saroo, re: the champagne - *isn't this exciting?*

SAROO

It's only Melbourne...

JOHN
(jokes)
 It's across the water.

They hold their glasses up. Respect and care in this family.

SUE
 Saroo. Beautiful boy. May this
 bring you all you can wish for.

JOHN
 And then some.

SAROO
 Thanks Mum. Thanks Dad.

SUE
 You came into our lives.

SAROO
 - Mum! -

SUE
 I'm not finished. You were more
 than we ever hoped for.

On Saroo: *Okay, Mum's getting serious.* Head down -
 embarrassed, but touched.

SUE (CONT'D)
 More work, that's for sure.

They laugh.

SUE (CONT'D)
 From the moment we first saw you -

She takes John's hand.

JOHN
 Those great big eyes -

Sue and John smile at each other.

SUE
 And now look at you - just look at
 you...

JOHN
 You're a good lad, Saroo.

SUE
 We're proud of you, and excited for
 you, for this new chapter.

JOHN
(toasts)
 To success.

At this moment the WAITER comes up.

WAITER
(on the unused setting)
 Are you still waiting on someone?
 Or can I take this away?

SAROO
 You can take it away.

SUE
 You can leave it, thanks.

SAROO
 No, take it.

The waiter, uncertain.

SUE
(tight)
 I'd like to keep it, thanks.

Beat. Well, *that* decides it.

SAROO
 You don't really think he'll turn
 up, do you?

JOHN
 Just let it be, son.

Sue puts on her brave smile. Takes another sip of champagne.

SUE
(to John)
 This is a nice one, love.

John puts his hand on her hand.

Saroo looks lovingly at Sue. She's brave and beautiful.

I/E. MAZDA / RUN-DOWN HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Saroo pulls up at a run-down shack that sits alone in a huge eucalyptus forest by the sea - an isolationist's dream.

EXT. (THROUGH TO INT.) RUN-DOWN HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

We follow Saroo as he steps through the open front door into Mantosh's forlorn home.

SAROO
 Mantosh?

As Saroo walks straight through to the back door - it's not a big house - we take in the bare-bones, rundown interior -

- Saroo notes, in passing, all the messy drug paraphernalia on the "coffee table" (an old door on two milk crates) -

EXT. BACKYARD, RUN-DOWN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (AFTERNOON)

- through to the back - and there, in a patch of sunlight in the unkempt, scrappy yard, sits ADULT MANTOSH on a log.

Smoking a hand-rolled cigarette, drinking instant coffee.

Saroo comes over. Wariness between the two. Mantosh: wiry, edgy, nervy. Static electricity comes off this guy.

MANTOSH

Yeah, sorry I didn't make lunch.

Beat. Saroo, edgy.

MANTOSH (CONT'D)

What's the course again?

SAROO

Hotel management.

MANTOSH

So you're gonna learn to, what - manage a hotel?

(beat)

Well, have fun.

Saroo doesn't answer.

SAROO

Any bills you need to pay?

MANTOSH

Some cash'd be good.

This is not even taken seriously.

SAROO

You're on your own now.

MANTOSH

I'm good at that.

(beat)

Hey, you can give me a job when you come back.

SAROO

Cut the shit. Just - please, could you not do anything while I'm gone -

MANTOSH

- yeah, yeah -

SAROO
 - that's going to make mum even
 more unhappy.

MANTOSH
(incredulous)
 Mate. Why do you think I stay away?

AERIAL - HOBART AIRPORT - AFTERNOON

MUSIC. CLEAN POV of a TARMAC, falling away as we lift off.

HIGHER AERIAL - TASMANIA - AFTERNOON

High above this luscious island. The green wilderness of Tasmania. The ocean, coming into view.

INT. QANTAS DOMESTIC FLIGHT - AFTERNOON

CLOSE on Saroo: at his window, looking down over that ocean.

Reflective. The nomad, off again. He pulls the window blind down. Then up. Down. Up. Didn't he do that once long ago?

FADE TO BLACK

SUPER: MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

INT. RMSHM AUDITORIUM - DAY

Well-lit stage. An impressive, modern feel. Mid-address, the PROVOST welcomes 100 NEW STUDENTS to an elite course at the Royal Melbourne College of Hotel Management.

PROVOST
 You've been selected from around
 the world. A world that's opening
 up faster than we could ever have
 imagined.

ON Saroo: he scans the room. Students of all races. He spots a CLUSTER OF INDIAN STUDENTS.

PROVOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 We see ourselves as the United
 Nations of hospitality schools, and
 we like to think we teach a
 balanced and global perspective. -

Saroo studies the Indian students. We feel ever so slightly his intrigue - as memories awaken from the deep.

PROVOST (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 You're here because you have a
 dream. We're here to help you make
 that dream a reality.

INT. RMSHM AUDITORIUM, AISLE - LATER

Induction over. The aisle between the seats is crowded.

Saroo shuffles along shoulder to shoulder with other students of many races.

He hears fragments of Hindi - it strikes him how many Indian students there are.

He nods neutral hellos to them. Saroo eavesdrops as an INDIAN STUDENT on her cell phone excitedly calls her Ammi.

Saroo is stuck at the end of a row. Opposite him - also stuck - is a beautiful young woman - LUCY (late 20's). She meets his eye. They step forward together. A mirror-moment.

INT. RMSHM CLASSROOM - DAY

Open MID on Lucy - we're in a round-robin discussion in a tutorial of about fifteen STUDENTS, assorted ages and backgrounds. A non-Anglo TUTOR.

LUCY

- so I saw first-hand how the hospitality industry brings infrastructure to communities that really need it. But I also saw the problems that causes. Which is why community groups really need to be involved, every step of the way. And taken seriously. And I thought - I could help give them a voice.

Saroo, watching, listening, entranced by this beautiful, idealistic woman.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Not try to prevent progress, but convince developers there are benefits to being sustainable and community oriented.

TUTOR

(amused, encouraging)
Why not think big?

LUCY

(laughs)
Absolutely. In return, the labour force would be more consistent and better trained and more motivated. Win-win.

TUTOR

So you want to be ...

The tutor considers.

TUTOR (CONT'D)
- a community liaison consultant?

LUCY
That sounds good!

Done. She looks to Saroo: his turn next.

SAROO
I want to run hotels that put all
the profits into my pocket.

Some laughter. Some frowns. Saroo was only joking.

Lucy grins at him. A tickle of chemistry.

TUTOR
Let's start with where you're from.

SAROO
Tassie.

PRAMA
"Tazzy"?

SAROO
Tasmania. Across the water.

TUTOR
So born in Australia.

SAROO
(*resistant*)
Umm ... Kolkata.

PRAMA
I have cousins that live there.
They're quite mad.

BHARAT
Which part?

Saroo's sudden discomfort. It's been a long time, and even talking about it is stirring up memories.

SAROO
I'm adopted. I'm not really Indian.

He inadvertently comes across as a little rude - as if he wouldn't want to be Indian. Bharat and Prama feel it. Lucy dispels the growing tension.

LUCY
You love cricket though, right?

SAROO
Of course.

BHARAT
You don't support the Aussies, do you?

SAROO
Only the Aussies, mate.

Bharat and Prama look alarmed.

BHARAT
This is going to be interesting!

They all smile.

TUTOR
(getting it back on track)
And why are you doing this course, Saroo? What do you hope to get out of it?

Saroo refocuses, ponders the question. He smiles at the tutor - trying to find the elusive answer.

EXT. FLINDER'S STREET, MELBOURNE - DAY

Saroo walking in the afternoon light. A metropolis strangely like Howrah. The hum and energy, the traffic, distant train sounds.

INT. SAROO'S STUDENT APARTMENT - DAY

Silence. A sudden sense of isolation. Saroo goes to the window.

Ten stories down, the busy city with its enticing energy.

EXT. INDIAN SHARED FLAT - DUSK

Beers in hand, Saroo climbs the exterior stairs of a 70's block, where a long balcony leads along the third floor.

As he reaches the landing, he sees Lucy at the far end - coming up the opposite identical stairs. Like mirrors again.

Struck by the serendipity again - and Saroo struck by Lucy's beauty - they burst into smiles.

As they arrive at the door, Bollywood music can be heard.

They can't resist the "mirror" temptation - they knock on the door in unison, cracking up.

INT. INDIAN SHARED FLAT, LIVING ROOM - DUSK

Prama opens the front door to Saroo and Lucy -

PRAMA
Hi! Come in, come in -

Inside, Bharat greets them and introduces some fellow students. Make sure we hear Lucy's name here, as she hasn't been introduced anywhere else. SAMI (24) and ANNIKA (30). A Bollywood movie plays B/G. A GREAT SPREAD of Indian food already on the table.

LUCY
Wow, something smells amazing!

BHARAT
Ah - Saroo - Lucy - this is Sami -
and Annika.

Everyone shakes hands, says "Hi".

PRAMA
(challenges Saroo)
You do eat Indian food...?

LATER

The food served Indian-style. Saroo watches Lucy - and the others - eat with their hands. He looks lost.

Lucy's no expert, but she's giving it a go. She raises her eyebrows at Saroo, amused at his inaction.

Bharat slides a fork across the table to Saroo.

BHARAT
(to Lucy)
So why was it called Taxi to
Tomorrow?

PRAMA
(to Saroo)
It's easy, come on try it.
(eating with her hands)

On Saroo: he puts down his cutlery.

LUCY
Okay, I say flashlight -
(to Annika)
- you say -

ANNIKA
Lampe de poche.

LUCY
(to Saroo)
You say -

SAROO
Torch.

PRAMA
 (to Saroo)
 Do you speak Hindi?

BHARAT
 Why would he, he's from Tazzie.
 Flashlight is ...

Bharat says flashlight, in Hindi. On Saroo: a flash of recognition, that feeling he hasn't felt in so many years. Tries eating with his hands. A mirror of the "Peppa" scene.

LUCY
 And what's "taxi"?

BHARAT
 Taxi.

ANNIKA
 Taxi.

LUCY
 See? It's the same in every
 language.

SAROO
 (jokes)
 Unless you take a cab.

Lucy gives him a "thanks very much" look.

SAMI
 (to Lucy)
 I still think you're crazy. I'd be
 terrified to live anywhere in
 Africa.

LUCY
 (to Saroo)
 Have you travelled much?

Saroo shakes his head.

SAROO
 Who wants another beer?

Saroo escapes into a role he's familiar with.

INT. INDIAN SHARED FLAT, HALLWAY & KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

We follow Saroo along the hallway, past the homely decorations the Indians have put up in a short space of time -
 - and through to the kitchen. As Saroo moves to the fridge he sees a tray of jalebis - those deep golden-orange spirals from the far recesses of his memory.

He stares at them. His mind spinning. Retrieving the memories.

He's not just struck. He's thunderstruck.

SLAM CUT:

MEMORY, KHANDWA MARKET

Back on that day more than 20 years earlier when Saroo and Guddu swapped the stolen coal for warm milk.

The jalebis sizzling in the vat - an unattainable feast.

SAROO
(nudges Guddu)
 Guddu ... Jalebis ...

Guddu looks at them too; for a beat we see beyond the boys' deep hunger - they're just kids, yearning for a sweet.

Then Guddu makes light of it - with bravado:

GUDDU
 One day, I'm going to buy you one!

SAROO
(playful, cheeky)
 One day, let's buy the whole vat!

Guddu laughs at this ... but both boys steal another glance, salivating at this sizzling utopia.

INT. INDIAN SHARED FLAT, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Staring intensely at the orange spiral sweets, Saroo slowly reaches his hand forward - reaches back in time - towards this unattainable thing he never got to taste.

He picks one up, studies it. As if it's some mystical communion wafer.

He puts it to his mouth. Bites into it. The significance of the moment hits him hard - he is eating for Guddu too.

Just then Lucy enters. Something not right here...

SAROO
(barely a whisper)
 ... jalebis ...

Lucy looks concerned.

LUCY
 Saroo?

We are TIGHT on the two.

SAROO
(like a confession)
 I'm not from Kolkata.

She moves closer. Gentle. Careful.

SAROO (CONT'D)
 I'm lost.

They notice Bharat has entered.

INT. INDIAN SHARED FLAT, LIVING ROOM - LATER SAME NIGHT

The mood is completely different. Respectful and intrigued.

PRAMA
 You must have been freaking. Howrah Station's enormous! I went through on pilgrimage to Puri - I missed my connection *twice*.

LUCY
 And you couldn't speak Bengali?

SAROO
 I didn't even know it was called that.

BHARAT
 How long were you on the train?

SAROO
 A couple of days.

Some squabbling and cross-referencing in Hindi - and through it, as they throw in their two cents worth, some MOMENTS in Saroo's eyes. The long-forgotten music of the language.

BHARAT
 What was your home town again?

SAROO
 "Ganestlay". But I must have had it wrong, it doesn't exist.

BHARAT
 You must remember something about it.

SAROO
 The platform I fell asleep on had a big rain tank.

SAMI
 There are thousands of stations...

Saroo has never spoken about this before. He's starting to tense up. Lucy is aware of his discomfort.

SAROO

Yeah. Look, that's all in the past.

BHARAT

No, no. We find out how fast passenger trains went back then. We take the speed and multiply it by the hours you were on the train, and create a search radius.

PRAMA

Totally. And have you heard of this new program, Google Earth? It's incredible - you can see anywhere in the world.

SAMI

It would take three lifetimes to search all the stations in India.

BHARAT

Not *all* the stations -

SAMI

Okay, half the stations.

Saroo, squirming with all this focus on his past.

SAROO

Really guys, it was a long time ago.

SAMI

Do you think your parents tried to find you?

PRAMA

Of course they did!

SAMI

No, I just mean, if his family looked for him, maybe they left, like, a paper trail.

BHARAT

He doesn't even know his surname.

SAROO

And my mum couldn't read or write.

A small silence. Lucy moves closer to Saroo. They share a smile.

SAMI

What did she do?

SAROO
(more to Lucy)
 She was like - a labourer.

It doesn't exactly compute - for these modernized Indian kids with money to study abroad.

SAMI
 Your mum?

Sami's naivety has crossed a line. Saroo fights back.

SAROO
(blunt; as if Sami is the thick one)
 Yeah. She carried rocks.

Bharat glares at Sami - shut up.

BHARAT
 That's cool.

PRAMA
(weakly)
 Yeah. Cool.

EXT. MELBOURNE STREET - LATER, SAME NIGHT

Saroo and Lucy walk in the streets. Silence.

LUCY
 My mom died four years ago. Cancer.

SAROO
 I'm sorry.

She glances at him. He's sincere, not just being polite. She opens up further -

LUCY
 My dad still blames her. Not for getting sick, obviously. For refusing chemo.

SAROO
 Wow.

LUCY
 She knew herself. She knew her terms. How she wanted to live.
(beat - morbid humour:)
 Dad's attitude was, there's only so much a juice cleanse can do.

Saroo smiles at it.

SAROO
 And what was your attitude?

A pause, as Lucy considers the question, and comes up finally with the only possible answer - here in the present:

LUCY
I miss her.

You can see in her eyes how deeply this is true. Then she glances up at him, changes direction, deflects it:

LUCY (CONT'D)
You miss yours?

But Saroo himself has about eleven force-fields around him.

SAROO
I guess.

LUCY
What about your dad?

SAROO
He walked out on us. Took another wife.

Lucy shakes her head - crazy world.

LUCY
Any brothers or sisters?

SAROO
Two brothers and a sister. It was a long time ago. All a bit vague.

He casually shrugs it away, as if the length of time is sufficient explanation for the vagueness. And then:

SAROO (CONT'D)
But there's Mantosh. In Tassie. He's adopted too.

They walk.

LUCY (CONT'D)
So what do you think of Bharat's search radius idea?

SAROO
I don't know.

LUCY
(ironic enthusiasm)
I think it sounds promising.

Saroo nods, but it's noncommittal, a little distant.

LUCY (CONT'D)
You all right?

Saroo looks vulnerable; then suddenly he grins, and head-bobbles to her - Indian Style.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh my god. You are so wrong!

And suddenly, shaking himself out of the past - playing to Lucy - flirting with her - Saroo pulls a few dance moves, mock-Bollywood style.

Lucy laughs, embarrassed but impressed. And even though it's momentarily playful, they both know that something deep has connected them.

INT. SAROO'S STUDENT APARTMENT - LATER, SAME NIGHT

Saroo, alone in the dark - despite the spark with Lucy, still rattled by whatever it is the jalebis have opened up in him.

EXT. INDIAN DREAM QUARRY (FLASHBACK)

We're in that mythic, prehistoric, dust-shrouded landscape.

WORKERS all around load rocks into old wooden hods.

Saroo is running across the rubble, white with dust himself. Everything heightened and surreal.

SAROO

Ammi! Ammi! [Mummy! Mummy!]

Kamla comes into focus, as she stands, and turns.

But before we get to her, we -

HARD CUT BACK INTO:

INT. SAROO'S STUDENT APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

We can just make out Saroo's face, as he sits in the dark.

SAROO

(whispers)

Ammi ... Ammi ...

The pain of memory. A sudden intense expulsion of breath.

INT. LIVE MUSIC GIG - NIGHT

A wall of music. The BAND, sweating, pulsing, lost in the frenzy of instruments. A CROWD of dancing people.

Saroo and Lucy, sweaty, tranced, deep ... their eyes locked - a different kind of connection - visceral - almost alarming.

They ride the music.

Now a change of mood - the music shifts - haunting.

Saroo and Lucy hold each other up, enjoying the public intimacy.

Their eyes meet - they hesitate -

- this is real, the connection between them -

- to surrender or not, that's the question -

- they go for it.

Hand to hand, forehead to forehead -

- again, a mirror - physically connected this time.

A transformative moment -

- their senses, so alive -

- so close, blurring into one.

INT. SAROO'S STUDENT APARTMENT - NIGHT

E/C/U: Saroo runs his finger slowly along the lines on Lucy's marble white arm and palm.

WIDER: We're in a tender post-coital darkness.

Lucy drifting into sleep.

MEMORY, FOREST, KHANDWA

Sounds of the forest. Laughing children. CLOSE on 5-year-old Saroo, facing a tree, his hands covering his face, but grinning through his fingers.

SAROO

Here I come! ...

He turns. Beaming. Pretending to look here and there.

SAROO (CONT'D)

Where is she? Where could she be?

HIDING, Shekila tries not to squeal with anticipation.

Suddenly Saroo SWOOPS DOWN and discovers her -

SAROO (CONT'D)

(like a lion)

Roargh!!

- and Shekila shrieks her delighted lungs out too. Such a beautiful release of energy.

Then another ROAR from behind, and it's Kamla, playfully catching the two of them off-guard.

They all tumble and wrestle, squealing, laughing. Sound of the leaves crunching, the wind in the trees...

Shekila notices on her arm - a ladybird.

The tiny delicate insect. Sound of a bird call, clear, in the forest canopy.

She and Saroo watch the ladybird, entranced...

INT. SAROO'S STUDENT APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The sounds of play and forest trail into Saroo, now sitting up on the edge of the bed. Staring into the darkness. His head racing, his heart pounding. He breathes.

JUMP CUT: Saroo is standing now. In the dark. Just standing there. He stares over at his laptop. Something's calling him.

He sits at his desk. A haunted look. Hits ENTER. The screen-saver opens to his default page, Google. ON SCREEN:

- he types "Indian train station water tanks" as a search.

A hodgepodge of results, as you'd expect. Assorted images of water towers.

He clicks on a couple. It's not that none look like the one in his memory. It's that they all look fairly similar.

In the search bar he types "Dams India".

Again, a mixed bag of random results. IMAGES of giant hydro-electric works. He clicks on an aerial shot of one.

In the bottom corner of the image, he notices:

- a logo. "Copyright Google Earth".

Curious, he clicks on it.

Google Earth opens. The address bar: www.google.com/earth.

ON SCREEN: that now-so-familiar Google glow - our Earth - beautiful blue sphere suspended in pure black space.

To either side of it, the menus and controls.

Saroo stares at it all. How does *this* work?

Using his track pad, he clicks the arrows. The globe "spins".

Slowly at first. Working out how it works. Then around the curve of the planet comes India - that familiar triangle that was on his wall all of his childhood.

He stares at it. As if it might give him some information.

[Note: during all such scenes we're INTERCUTTING BACK AND FORTH between Saroo and screen.]

He hits the "plus" symbol and starts to zoom inwards again.

At a certain point he spots Calcutta (or "Kolkata", by 2010).

Down, down. Closer. The Earth coming closer.

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": 1 - WATER TOWER (NIGHT)

The looming WATER TOWER, that night on Burhanpur platform.

[NOTE: these memory maps are Saroo's vivid, clear memories - the landmarks that will act as his geographical "locators".]

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": 2 - DAM (DAY)

WIDE: the DAM, the long dam wall. Two little silhouettes (Guddu, Saroo, distant, frolicking) emerging from the water.

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": 3 - UNDERPASS (DAY)

WIDE: Little Saroo runs into the distinctive UNDERPASS near Khandwa Station.

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": 4 - ALLEYWAY TO HOME (DAY)

We FOLLOW over little Saroo's shoulder, sprinting down the narrow alley to home, past the house with the lurid aqua wall, past the overflowing bougainvillea.

SAROO

Ammi! Ammi!

INT. SAROO'S STUDENT APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

On the screen - Saroo sees the great river - the Hooghly, we can see it's called - that slices Calcutta in half, much like Paris or London.

The river, closer. We can make out crowded city blocks now.

SAROO

The bridge ...

There it is. The Hooghly Bridge. And there: Howrah Station.

SAROO (CONT'D)

No way.

His emotions up in his throat.

ON SCREEN: the floating label says "Howrah Station". There it is. All the platforms. All the tracks leading out.

Saroo, in awe, devouring all this visual information.

Now, inches from the screen.

TINY JUMP CUTS: Saroo squinting at the specks on the platforms: each speck a person, but LO-RES, GRAINY, COARSE.

Something hypnotic about it - the graininess, the little circle spinning as the pixels clarify and sharpen.

Saroo hunched over, rapidly mastering these controls. Learning how to scroll and "track".

He scrolls along the tracks leading out from Howrah Station.

But now - remembering - he imagines what it must have been like for his brother - to find him missing -

IMAGINED MEMORY, PLATFORM, BURHANPUR STATION

The out-of-focus stretch of the empty Burhanpur platform, four in the morning.

C/U Guddu walks up into frame, into focus. The moment that he sees that Saroo is not there. His panic surges.

GUDDU
Saroo?! SAROO?!

His panic rising, he runs, searching, continuing to scream.

INT. SAROO'S STUDENT APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Guddu's SCREAM (AUDIO) trails into the beginning of this scene, as we find Saroo overcome by those screams. His head racing. His heart pounding. His breath catching in his chest.

LUCY (O.S.)
Are you okay?

He nods. Switches off the computer. This is too hard.

She's sitting up in bed, watching him. Her great, dark eyes. Her tangle of dark hair. She's a goddess.

He dives back into bed, back into the sensuality, the physical warmth, the miraculous present moment.

SAROO
I am now.

AERIAL - HIGH ABOVE HOBART - DAY

Gliding HIGH above beautiful Hobart: across the waters of the wide Derwent River, as we come across the city itself.

SUPER: ONE YEAR LATER

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - DAY

An old-fashioned beach house right on the sand. Outdoor stairs lead up to the front door, which is on the first floor.

INT. BATHROOM & BEDROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUED

Saroo's in the shower. Singing to himself.

Saroo and Lucy's home - nothing expensive but evidence everywhere of care, taste, and a nesting impulse.

Saroo dries himself. Towel around his waist. Walks into the bedroom. Starts up his laptop.

ON SCREEN: India.

He scrolls randomly along a railway track; then stops at a STATION.

The laptop struggles to render the image - the rotating hour-glass spins and spins...

Saroo looks frustrated - his old laptop is crap.

Lucy hurries in. All dressed up. Corporate. Sparkling.

SAROO

Wow. Look at you.

She does a spin.

SAROO (CONT'D)

Your hem's down...

LUCY

(panics)

Oh God. It's so long since I wore this.

(beat)

Have you got a stapler?

He gets one. Staples her hem for her. She notices the computer struggling to render. Says nothing.

SAROO

(reassures her)

They'll love you.

He starts kissing her neck.

LUCY

I haven't got time...

Saroo keeps kissing her, nuzzling - Lucy reciprocates.

LATER

Saroo's alone - eating toast - dressed in his Assistant Manager's suit - name-pin on his lapel.

He returns to the laptop - the hourglass is still spinning!

He's incredulous - shakes his head in disbelief.

INT. CONVENTION ROOM, HOBART GRAND HOTEL - DAY

We follow Saroo (in a suit) into a large convention room which is at this moment bursting with activity.

The space is filled with STAFF setting big round tables with perfectly starched table cloths, vases, table numbers etc.

SAROO

Peter - have you got the individual place cards too?

PETER

I'm on it.

SAROO

(to another worker)

Michael - take three people with you to the loading dock. The flowers have arrived.

Michael heads off. Saroo stands there surveying his domain.

CLOSE: he shifts his tie, stretches his neck. We suddenly see how uncomfortable he looks. Something not quite right.

He starts striding FAST out of the convention room -

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE ONE-ROOM HOME, KHANDWA (FLASHBACK)

- and suddenly we're behind LITTLE Saroo (same camera angle) as he follows a scene of utter CHAOS as three POLICEMEN drag screaming Guddu to a paddy wagon -

- Shekila wailing in Saroo's arms, Guddu kicking and screaming, Kamla grabbing at the policemen -

- as they spill from inside the home to the alley outside -

GUDDU

Ammi! Ammi! [Mummy!]

SAROO

Guddu!

KAMLA

You can't arrest him!

Kamla lashes at the policemen - we follow behind Saroo as they drag Guddu up the street to the waiting wagon -

INT. HALLWAY, HOBART GRAND HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER (DAY)

- and now ("REVERSE" of previous shot) we LEAD, tracking backwards, as Saroo picks up speed - striding towards us -

- and STOPS. Panting. Looks around. Generic hotel doors.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, HOBART GRAND HOTEL - MOMENTS LATER (DAY)

STILL LIFE: an empty high-end hotel room. The door knocks.

SAROO (O.S.)
Housekeeping.
(beat)
Housekeeping.

The door opens. Saroo enters using his swipe card.

He sits on the sofa. Still breathing hard.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE ONE-ROOM HOME, KHANDWA (FLASHBACK)

Neighbors are gathering at their doors and windows, watching the commotion, as the police drag Guddu from the door to a paddy wagon, Guddu resisting, Saroo and Shekila distressed -

KAMLA
Guddu!

GUDDU
Ammi!

SLAM! They bundle him, struggling, into the paddy wagon. His fingers through the grille, his terrified eyes looking out.

KAMLA
He hasn't done anything wrong -

HEAD POLICEMAN
- he was caught stealing eggs -

Kamla starts screaming, Saroo, still holding Shekila, steps to the paddy wagon door.

GUDDU
Saroo!

Saroo is shell-shocked, his big brother being taken away. He is numb, trying to process it. But Kamla is positively feral.

As she screams and keeps kicking up a fuss, we're CLOSER with Guddu and Saroo:

GUDDU (CONT'D)
Saroo! Listen to me. Pay attention!

Saroo crying, focuses on Guddu, nods bravely *Okay*.

GUDDU (CONT'D)
 Whatever happens, you need to be
 strong - nothing can break us if we
 stick together -

Kamla rattles the paddy wagon door, fearless, feral.

KAMLA
 Arrrrggghh! ...

GUDDU
 I'm talking about Ammi. You
 understand?

Saroo nods, Yes.

GUDDU (CONT'D)
 Look after her, Saroo! Don't let me
 down. This is all we have. We stick
 together -

SLAM CUT:

INT. HOTEL ROOM, HOBART GRAND HOTEL - CONTINUOUS (DAY)

Saroo walking it off, pacing. He shakes it out of himself.
Get a grip. Time to get back to work.

INT. KHANDWA PRISON - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Outside the prison, in the shadows, Saroo sidles up to a
 barred window:

SAROO
(whispers)
 Guddu! Guddu! -

- he whistles a short coded whistle.

The coded whistle comes back, from ten feet further along.
 There's Guddu, at the next bars along. Beaming.

GUDDU
 Brother -

Little Saroo proudly gives Guddu some tomatoes he has stolen.

Guddu devours them, ravenously, urgently - keeping his back
 to the MEN in the cell (B/G).

GUDDU (CONT'D)
 Where did you get these?

Saroo merely grins.

GUDDU (CONT'D)
 You're my hero.

Saroo couldn't be prouder.

GUDDU (CONT'D)

But you have to go! They will catch you! I'll be out soon! Go! Go to Ammi! Go quickly!

Saroo nods, runs. He is his brother's hero.

We follow little Saroo for a time. Sprinting his heart out. Gliding through the dark Indian night.

Running. Running.

INT. SAROO & LUCY'S LIVING ROOM - VERY LATE NIGHT

Saroo is now lying on the couch - laptop on his belly - the SOUNDS of his running fading from the previous scene.

An ever-so-slight smile on his face.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. EMPTY STREETS OF HOBART - DAWN (ESTABLISHING)

Music hovers. Empty dawn streets, eerily interesting. And so still. Not even the birds are up yet.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

In the dawn light, Lucy walks into the living room, dressed for a run.

She finds Saroo, passed out on the couch, laptop still open on his belly. The neatly piled list of stations and other search paraphernalia on the floor.

For a moment she looks concerned. Then she moves the laptop off him - without looking at the screen. Wiggles onto the couch, next to him. He groans.

LUCY

Time for a run...

Saroo's eyes open - his face says "You must be kidding me!"

EXT. CRADLE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Saroo and Lucy run up a steep mountain track. Both hung-over, for different reasons. But a combination of natural beauty, fresh air and endorphins is kicking in.

Lucy pulls ahead - Saroo grabs the back of her T-shirt to hold her back - she's laughing.

LUCY

Oh my god - you are such a bad loser!

Saroo manages to race past her. Claims victory - we can see in him the same little kid from Wineglass Bay.

LATER

We're BEHIND Saroo and Lucy, who are perched on a viewing spot. Stretching in front of them:

Spectacular, expansive, glorious GREEN. And OCEAN beyond.

They're so HIGH UP, it's like a Google Earth view.

Lucy looks utterly content. Closes and opens her big blue eyes - we see this panorama through her eyes in all its expansive glory.

Saroo's eyes are wide open too - focussing -

- it's the same view as Lucy's - but not uninhabited -

Saroo's POV: in the distance, the tiny figure of Guddu.

What's Guddu doing here, on Mount Wellington? In the land of the living?

Guddu's silent stare calls to Saroo...

Lucy - smiles at Saroo - realizes he's not here, with her, in the present moment.

She looks disappointed. Worried.

INT. BEDROOM, BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Saroo is in the bedroom. He's having a panic attack. Tries to slow his breathing.

MEMORY, KHANDWA QUARRY

Kamla stands in the moonscape. She seems to be staring straight at Saroo...

INT. BEDROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lucy comes in.

LUCY

Sweetheart? It's after six...

Saroo squeezes his eyes shut. As if he could somehow block out the present.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

SAROO

Fine.

INT. SUE'S ART STUDIO, BRIERLEY HOME - NIGHT

CLOSE on small, beautiful watercolors - ethereal landscapes, horizons - stacked around, as Sue and Lucy step into the downstairs sun-room/studio.

SUE

I don't usually show anyone these -

LUCY

They're beautiful ...

SUE

I do have fun. My secret hobby.

Lucy notices, on a shelf, a jumble of trophies. At a glance, there seem to be about ten different sports here, from soccer to windsurfing to cricket.

SUE (CONT'D)

Saroo's. He was good at everything.

LUCY

I had no idea.

SUE

He was such a happy boy.

Lucy looks away. Spots a framed family photo, picks it up gently.

LUCY

Wow, look at Mantosh.

ON PHOTO: Saroo, Mantosh, Sue and John laughing on the boat.

SUE

Yep. He was a cheeky little thing...

Lucy gazes closer at the snapshot of a lost, happy era.

SUE (CONT'D)

Pure energy. Impossible to control. But incredible. If he could ever learn to control it, he could do anything. Saroo's very protective of him.

Lucy's finding this conversation a little difficult. She has so many questions she'd like to ask Sue, about Saroo's childhood.

SUE (CONT'D)

I've been blessed...

EXT. UPSTAIRS DECK, BRIERLEY HOME - SAME TIME

Saroo on the deck with John, who's just stacked some freshly cooked chops on a plate. Sausages sizzling away on the grill.

JOHN
Not partying too hard?

Saroo, amused by that.

SAROO
Not partying at all!

JOHN
You look a bit tired.

SAROO
It's just work.

JOHN
How's it with Lucy?

SAROO
Great.

JOHN
We love Lucy.

SAROO
*(entranced by the
sausages)*
Yep. It's hard not to. She's great.

Pause.

SAROO (CONT'D)
I'll get us another beer.

Saroo turns inside. John nods. *Okay.* Prods the meat.

INT. KITCHEN, BRIERLEY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Saroo steps inside. And Mantosh is there, back turned, rolling a cigarette as he props the fridge door open with his leg, inspecting the contents.

He turns as he hears the sliding door.

MANTOSH
(nervously)
Was wondering where everyone was.

His eyes are BLAZING STONED. Saroo takes him in.

SAROO
Jesus. You couldn't be a little more wasted?

Mantosh shrugs, grins. Aloof bravado, but fragile underneath. Just holding on: clearly it's a big effort just to come here.

At that moment Sue comes up the stairs with Lucy. Is very happy to see Mantosh.

SUE
Darling -

MANTOSH
Mum!

Sue goes - tentatively - to hug him. Mantosh somehow manages to balance the half-rolled cigarette as she enfolds him. Through the awkwardness, it somehow becomes a warm embrace.

SUE
(private, in his ear)
Well done for coming.

She breaks the embrace -

SUE (CONT'D)
This is Lucy ...

LUCY
(very friendly)
It's nice to finally meet you.

Mantosh continues to roll his ciggie, licking the paper.

SUE
(nervous to confront him)
You have to smoke that outside.

Mantosh lights the cigarette, takes a deep toke.

MANTOSH
No worries.

He heads outside to the deck. Saroo, fuming, can't stand what Mantosh does. He notices Sue, now readying the food in a fussy and manic way.

MANTOSH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Hey, Dad!

JOHN (O.S.)
Son!

ON Lucy. Okay. Right. She feels the world, between them all, in that cigarette smoke. All the spaces in between them.

INT. DINING ROOM, BRIERLEY HOME - LATER SAME NIGHT

Saroo, Lucy, John and Sue at the table, serving up. A dark cloud building over Saroo.

LUCY
 (to Saroo)
 I saw all your trophies...

SAROO
 Oh Mum, you didn't? -

LUCY
 (re: Saroo)
 He never tells me anything about
 growing up -

JOHN
 That's just half. I've got more in
 the garage.

LUCY
 (re: Saroo)
 These days I can't get him off the
 couch.

SAROO
 (warns)
 Luce -

Sue, John and Lucy quite taken aback by his sudden intensity.

LUCY
 Why can't you tell them what you've
 been doing? -

SAROO
 - don't -

SUE
 - what's that, luv? -

Mantosh enters, even more stoned, rubbing hands, big grin.

MANTOSH
 Yum, dinner!

He sits. Notices the tension. And it's not from him!

MANTOSH (CONT'D)
 What? What have I missed?

SAROO
 Nothing.

MANTOSH
 (noticing Lucy)
 She looks upset.

SAROO
 She's not upset.

LUCY
 (to Saroo)
 I can speak for myself. And how do
 you know how I feel?

In his stoned amazement, Mantosh enjoys the spectacle.

MANTOSH
 Saroo knows everything. He's an
 expert. He's a manager.

SAROO
 Why are you here?

SUE
 He's here because he's your
 brother.

SAROO
 No he's not. We're different.

So cold, matter-of-fact. For Sue, a knife in the chest. For John, an alarm-bell - it's never been easy but this open aggression is new. Mantosh goes from stoned amazement to deep hurt. He looks rattled, vulnerable, and five years old. He stares at Saroo, a deep wound opening in him.

SAROO (CONT'D)
 (awkward, but can't stop)
 Every fucking meal you do come to,
 you have to get wasted -

JOHN
 Now, now -

SUE
 (to Saroo)
 How dare you.

Mantosh gets up - not coping - starting to become wild -
 - John stands to soothe him - he knows this routine -

MANTOSH
 (so wounded)
 - I wouldn't want to be your
 brother, mate -

John cradles Mantosh, tries to talk him down. Mantosh lashes out - a verbal lashing too, semi-coherent. John doesn't let go - handles it as he always has - whispering the mantra into Mantosh's face -

JOHN
 C'mon. Breathe. Big breaths. You're
 okay. Shhh. Shh. You're good, luv.
 You're good.

Mantosh continues muttering, distressed. Quite the show for Lucy - 25 years of history in a minute.

SUE

Boys...

Mantosh breaks free, heads out the door - John follows -

JOHN

No - Mantosh - it's all good, shh -

John leaves in pursuit, he throws a glance back at Saroo -

JOHN (CONT'D)

- nice one, mate -

Sue looks to Saroo: if looks could kill.

SUE

What's going on?

SAROO

I hate what he does to you!

Silence. Sue turns to Lucy. Lucy is trapped - she hates lying, but she has to be loyal to Saroo.

Sue looks disappointed in her. Lucy - mortified.

SUE

(to Lucy)

I see.

(to Saroo)

Whatever it is, I'm warning you, I can't do it.

Sue and Saroo - locked together.

O.S, AUDIO: fragments of John pleading ("Come on, mate, come back inside," etc). Mantosh's car starting.

Sue's silence circles Saroo, like a shark.

INT. BEDROOM, BEACH HOUSE - DAWN

It's silent. Lucy's just woken up. She's in bed, alone.

Saroo's pillows - neat. No sign he's been in bed beside her.

Lucy - lost in her thoughts.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Lucy walks into the living room, wearing Saroo's old T-shirt. She opens the curtains. Sunrise floods the room.

Saroo locks eyes with her vulnerable, searching stare.

He shuts the laptop - nothing here he wants to talk about. He holds her gaze. Almost defiant. *Yep. I've been up all night. Yep. This is what I'm doing.*

LUCY

Why don't you want your parents to know?

SAROO

They've got enough to deal with. You saw what Mantosh does to them. It's always about him. Ever since he got off the plane.

LUCY

They'd support you. They'd understand.

SAROO

They'd pretend to. Mum'd keep smiling even if she was dying inside.

LUCY

Because she wouldn't want you hurt. She wants to protect you. She's a mother.

Beat. Saroo, so mad, so sleep-deprived, turning sour on Lucy. Whose side is she on?

SAROO

Wait. Do you even want me to find them?

LUCY

Of course I do. But I'm worried about you.

(beat)

About us.

He walks into the kitchen. Leaving Lucy stranded.

INT. LUKE'S PLACE - NIGHT

Saroo and Lucy arrive at a party in a terrace house. Loud music - a narrow, packed hallway - a crush of PARTY GUESTS.

They greet their FRIENDS, including Luke - the host. Saroo's all smiles. Loud and cheerful - over-playing it.

Lucy's aware of his hyped-up mood - concern in her eyes.

INT. LUKE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A short time later, Lucy is dancing. Saroo's drinking. Looking around. Disconnected.

She beckons to him. He ignores her. Wanders out.

She keeps dancing.

EXT. LUKE'S BACK YARD - NIGHT

Lucy searches out Saroo, who - uncharacteristically - has found a corner to be alone in.

She stands in front of him. He doesn't look at her. How long will he actually ignore her?

She moves closer - takes his hands - places them on her body, under her shirt. He pulls away.

SAROO
I need a beer.

As he starts to move past her, she loses it. Blocks his path.

LUCY
(furious)
"I need another beer." You always do that -

SAROO
Stop it, Luce -

LUCY
- no, you stop it!

There are party guests nearby - Saroo and Lucy keep their voices low, neither of them welcoming a public drama.

But now Saroo disengages, infuriating her more.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Where are you?

He shakes his head.

LUCY (CONT'D)
What does that mean?

SAROO
(on the public setting)
I'm not prepared to argue with you.

LUCY
Talk to me. Be with me.

SAROO
Can this wait till we get home ...

The more he tries to avoid conflict, the angrier she becomes.

LUCY
Home? You mean the place I live,
alone? With you - alone - in the
next room?

SAROO
Luce -

LUCY
I moved here to be with you.

SAROO
- this isn't working.

LUCY
What isn't?

SAROO
Any of it.

He moves past her -

INT. LUKE'S PLACE - CONTINUOUS

- and back into the loud party - and out of here -
- Lucy hot on his heels -

LUCY
Saroo!

Luke, watching them head for the door.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE LUKE'S PLACE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Saroo just wants to get away. Lucy follows.

LUCY
Don't do this.

SAROO
You don't get it.

LUCY
You have to face reality.

SAROO
What do you mean, "reality"?

LUCY
The reality that you're ruining
your life! That you're not even
here!

SAROO

Do you have any idea what it's like, knowing my real brother and mother spend every day of their lives looking for me?

LUCY

(genuinely bewildered)

What?

SAROO

How every day they scream my name.

(beat)

And I feel their touch. I see their faces. Can you imagine the pain they must be in, not knowing where I am? Twenty-five years, Luce. Twenty-five!

LUCY

Why haven't you ever told me this was happening?

SAROO

And we swan about in our privileged lives. Pretending. It makes me sick.

Lucy is speechless.

LUCY

(faint, soft)

I never stopped you ...

It's as if Saroo suddenly sees her pain properly. And is brought back to earth. The air in him deflating.

SAROO

Listen -. Lucy -. I'm sorry -. I can't do this -.

(beat)

You deserve more -

LUCY

- don't! Don't you dare.

Her eyes fill with tears.

LUCY (CONT'D)

This is on you! Not me.

Saroo can't deal with her pain. He takes off. This time, she doesn't follow.

EXT. HOBART STREETS - NIGHT

Saroo walks the streets like a tormented soul.

He can't live in two worlds at once. He has to choose.
 Slowly, his despair becomes defiance.
 He's made his choice.

IMAGINED MEMORY, KHANDWA STREETS

Kamla wanders the streets, distressed.

KAMLA

Saroo!

(JUMP CUTS.) She's beside herself. Searching empty laneways.

KAMLA (CONT'D)

Saroo! Saroo!

Faces everywhere. Kamla looks like a crazy lady.

People peer out from their windows and doorways. She never stops, the camera always moving.

A mother in panic.

EXT. EMPTY SUBURBAN STREETS, HOBART - PRE-DAWN

First hints of light. Saroo just wandering.

He seems drained. All movement, no thought.

EXT. KHANDWA RIVER - DAY (IMAGINED MEMORY)

Kamla is by the river, amongst the prayer, the smoke, the chanting.

Kids in the river, swimming. Washing.

She hunts their faces.

KAMLA

Saroo!

WIDE: she searches in this enormous landscape - strange, poetic, haunting - the PEOPLE like ants ...

KAMLA (CONT'D)

Saroo!

Her voice drowned out by the sound of a train, passing over the river.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - DAY

TWO MONTHS LATER. SOUND of the sea. Bright marine light. We track through the house. It's virtually empty. The atmosphere of a squat.

No sign of homeliness, of warmth - of Lucy.

A mattress on the living room floor. A master map of India on the wall. Piles of print-outs - lists of railway stations - some marked-up - most still pristine. Images of water towers, train platforms, under-passes.

Saroo - long hair, beard - has surrendered to his obsession.

MUSIC starts - continues into a series of HARD CUTS:

- Scrolling; waiting for the pixels to resolve.
 - A blue "train station" symbol.
 - CLOSER IN: a formless, satellite-image town.
 - On Saroo: studying its features. No, that's not it.
- He stands - grabs a blue pin - sticks it into the map.
- leans back into the screen. Reads the next town -
 - enters the name.
 - blue train station symbol.
 - Another town, the surrounds of the train station.
 - He grabs another blue pin - sticks it into the map.
 - Scroll. Symbol. Station. Pin.
 - Scroll. Symbol. Station. Pin.

It becomes a rapid MONTAGE. Sound of someone hammering on the front door.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Mantosh is at the door. He looks nervous, desperate, standing there counting coins in his hand. He bangs harder on the door.

MANTOSH
Saroo, ya bastard!

Silence. Mantosh, listening.

MANTOSH (CONT'D)

Saroo!

(beat)

Mate, can you lend us fifty bucks?

CLOSE on Mantosh, sweating there at the door. He doesn't look good.

Mantosh gives up knocking, leaves.

MANTOSH (CONT'D)

Yeah, whatever, dude.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Saroo spies out of the window.

As Mantosh heads off down the beach, he's joined by a DRUGGIE MATE, who has been lurking somewhere near.

The mate looks to Mantosh, inquisitive, *Well?* Mantosh just shakes his head, *No go.* They walk away.

Saroo turns. Guddu is there, also watching Mantosh.

Saroo and Guddu look at each other.

Saroo returns to his search.

INT. STATIONERY SHOP, MALL - DAY

TWO MONTHS LATER. Saroo - his hair longer, his beard wilder - moves slowly down the aisle of a stationery shop - putting boxes of COLOURED FLAG PINS into a basket.

He's out of place in this vivid Charlie & the Chocolate Factory world.

He stops at the pen section, testing high-lighters. Throws some different-coloured boxes of those in his basket.

At the counter, as the items are scanned, we study Saroo's face. He looks exhausted. Doesn't notice when the CASHIER smiles at him.

CASHIER

Same project?

Saroo nods, with an air of defeat.

EXT. SUBURBAN BEACH - DAY

Saroo walks along the sand with his shopping. Past rows of suburban houses, their blank windows reflecting the sea.

EXT. RAILWAY TRACKS, KHANDWA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Little Saroo on the tracks, proudly holds his pregnant belly of coal. Guddu bustles over to him.

GUDDU
Come on, hurry.

Little Saroo looks so happy, as they trot off together.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Saroo crosses the sand to the house. His face determined now.

I/E. TRAIN CARRIAGE, INDIA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Saroo's POV: the world moves past in a watercolour blur - ochre country, hills, mountains, trees -

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - DAY

ON SCREEN: tracking railway lines, flying above them - station after station.

Saroo ZOOMS in.

His hopes up. He counts the platforms with his finger.

NO: yet again, that's not it.

Disappointed, he zooms back out.

GOOGLE SCREEN JUMP CUTS: train track after train track ...

Platform after platform...

SOUND of a real train, approaching, coming under us:

EXT. TRAIN LINE, INDIA - DAY (IMAGINED MEMORY)

Kamla walks up to the very edge of railway track just as a train rips past very fast.

An endless stream of carriages - the noise and speed violent, crazy, dangerous - but Kamla shows no fear.

KAMLA
Saroo! Saroo!

Her screams drowned out by the racket of the train. She is in hell, but cannot - will not - give up.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Saroo mirrors her desperation. He gets a beer, stares at the map. A new colour being used now, for a new search zone.

About 15% of the search complete.

He's suddenly aware it's the dead of night. He feels like the only soul awake.

INT. FOOD COURT, MALL - DAY

TWO MONTHS LATER. CLOSE on a table filled with leftover Chinese food (where some people have just finished and left the table), when a SMALL INDIAN HAND comes into frame, the fingers scooping up the food -

- we TRACK up the arm to reveal Guddu - wolfing down the food with bare hands, greatly enjoying it - and all the while staring across to -

- Saroo (other side of the food court) - who stares right back, sitting in front of his untouched (western) meal.

EXT. MALL - CONTINUOUS

Saroo steps onto the escalator. The lights and muzak of capitalism definitely not working wonders for him.

As he descends: there is someone ascending. It's Lucy. She looks grounded and somehow resolved.

They approach each other.

Lucy sees him. Alarm in her eyes. He looks like a crazy man.

Saroo swings across, from his escalator to hers.

As always, drawn by her vivid gaze, her intense life-force.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - DAY

Lucy follows Saroo up the stairs. She walks in and stops dead at the sight of Saroo's "Project".

It's mind-blowing. An entire wall is plastered in charts, train-timetables, station-name-lists, grainy images from Google Earth.

On the Master Wall is a big map - surrounded by smaller ones. And all the pins ...

The floor layered in books, notes, clothes, take-away containers.

We go closer to the Master Wall with Lucy, inspecting it.

Dense trails of colored drawing pins on the 400km search radius - different colors for different train lines.

WALL KEY: green pin = Mumbai line, red pin = Nagpur line etc.

But our dominant visual information: in the past 6 months, Saroo has covered a fraction of the search radius. The inner circle only.

Saroo responds to Lucy's look of fascination and alarm.

SAROO
Theoretically it's not infinite.

She just stares at him.

SAROO (CONT'D)
Lucy - I'm sorry.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - SOON AFTER

Saroo and Lucy sit on the beach.

LUCY
What was she like?

SAROO
Beautiful.

He's lost in the memory of it - staring out to the ocean, drawing patterns in the sand.

SAROO (CONT'D)
I've been visiting her.
(beat)
Every night I walk those streets home - home from the dam, home from the station. I know every single step of the way. And I imagine that I'm whispering in her ear. "I'm here. It's all right."

Silence. Lucy knows what he means - she's imagined the same thing with her own mother.

SAROO (CONT'D)
How was New York?

LUCY
Same old, same old.

SAROO
And now?

Lucy grins. There *is* good news.

LUCY
Our funding came through.

SAROO
That's great! See, they know how good you are.

An awkward silence.

Lucy can't resist a moment longer - she reaches out and combs his beard with her fingers. Her touch is like manna from heaven.

SAROO (CONT'D)

I miss you -

A pained beat -

LUCY

I saw your mom. She hasn't been well.

He doesn't want to hear this.

SAROO

She'd freak if she saw me like this.

LUCY

You underestimate her.

A long, sad pause.

LUCY (CONT'D)

She needs you.

EXT. KHANDWA MARKETS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A monsoon day - in the middle of a torrential downpour.

A MERCHANT (55) loads a giant WATERMELON into Saroo's arms -

MERCHANT

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Go!

- the merchant keeping dry, looking for a gap in the traffic, launching Saroo onto the wet road, with his green boulder -

- Saroo, ill-prepared for the task, as traffic whizzes by - almost immediately his feet slide out from under him -

- and a MOTORBIKE blares out of nowhere, careening down upon Saroo - too late - the motorbike brakes, skids, aqua-glides -

- SLAMS into Saroo - who sits up - YOW! - head bleeding, watermelon gloop all around him, as the motorcyclist kick-starts his bike, and drives off.

Saroo touches the blood -

- blood in the puddle where he sits, blood on his hand -

EXT. ROAD HOME TO GANESH TALAI - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Saroo runs home through the rain, his shirt bunched to his head, blood and rain streaming down his tiny torso -

- he runs into the UNDERPASS - we recognize this as one of the "Memory Maps" - and into BLACK -

INT. ONE ROOM HOME, GANESH TALAI - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Kamla tends to Saroo's gash. Saroo's crying. Shekila's wailing. Kamla wipes the wound with a cloth.

Guddu enters, drenched too. It's still pouring outside.

KAMLA

Where were you? You were meant to be looking after him!

Guddu knows he messed up. He looks upset, ashamed. Saroo and Shekila cry and cry.

But now Kamla draws Saroo closer, and ever so gently she kisses his forehead better. His crying begins to subside.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - DAY

But now, it's not Kamla who kisses it better. It's Lucy - gentle, loving - kissing that old scar on Saroo's forehead.

They've just made love - all those endorphins and oxytocin flooding their bodies - on the mattress on the floor.

There's an edge to it all: Saroo's life still looks bachelor-transient and obsessively preoccupied; Lucy is conflicted, knowing she shouldn't really have gone down this path.

But god it's nice, after sex: even with the floating sadness.

LUCY

That village might not even exist any more. Entire worlds change in twenty-five years. I worry that ...

- but she lets it trail off, and hang.

SAROO

That what?

Long, sad pause.

LUCY

That you're chasing ghosts.

She stands, pulls on her shirt. Smiles that brittle, pained, loving smile at him.

And his own heart is broken, because he knows he can't do anything but keep on with that search.

She opens the door, walks out.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - DAY

It could be later the same day. It could be another day. Time has blended into something amorphous. Saroo lies on his lonely mattress. All is still; even the sea is calm. Then his past silently weaves into his consciousness, all these vignettes and flashbacks united in their stillness, as his eyes flicker closed:

INT. ONE-ROOM HOME, KHANDWA - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

ON KAMLA - unmoving, sensing Saroo;

INT. DORM ROOM, LILUAH - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

ON little AMITA, lying in bed, staring.

EXT. CALCUTTA STREET - DAY (FLASHBACK)

ON CAFE GUY - his kind stare through the cafe window (as Saroo sits on that traffic island, fantasizing non-existent food on his rusty bent spoon -

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM, HOWRAH STATION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

ON WIRY BOY - just moments before he decides to offer the cardboard, dignity and generosity - then:

INT. BEDROOM, NOOR'S ROOFTOP HOME, MORNING (FLASHBACK)

ON RAMA - his slow-moving hand along Saroo's leg ...

RAMA

You're a good boy. Are you a good boy?

(O/S AUDIO) Whimpering - a scuffle - shouts. A confusing auditory nightmare. Beatings. Cries of anguish. Rape. Liluah.

INT. CLASSROOM, LILUAH - DAY (FLASHBACK)

ON HAUNTED BOY, swaying back and forth, rubbing his hair and forehead, a pressure cooker about to explode. He bangs his head against the wall, over and over.

INT. SUBWAY PLATFORM, HOWRAH STATION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The SOUND of Haunted Boy banging his head carries over into screaming and sudden pandemonium, as the CHILD-SNATCHERS arrive and the URCHINS scream and scatter and WIRY BOY is violently grabbed and wrenched away, screaming -

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - LATER

Saroo's eyes, still flickering. Guddu sits in the dark - it's dusk or dark now - watching over Saroo. Keeping his distance. Giving Saroo space. He knows the memories are the search...

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - DAY

A knock at the door. Saroo wakes and goes to the window. Looks down.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - INTERCUT

John, looking up. He has a "care package" from Sue. He puts it by the door. He waits. Nothing.

JOHN

It's the One Day International tomorrow. Come over if you like. We'll get some beer and pizzas.

Nothing from inside the house.

INSIDE: Saroo just stands there, pressed against the wall. Frozen. Conflicted.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I meant to tell you - I fixed the tiller. Why don't we take her out, head up the coast? Maybe see if we can round up Mantosh.

Pause. John, listening.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Saroo, your mum's not -

Whatever he was about to say ("Your mum's not doing so well"), he stops it. Looks down at the care package.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Your mum's made a nice cake for you. Put a few other goodies in here too.

(beat)

I think she'd love a visit.

He stands there, hoping against hope that Saroo will suddenly appear.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Right. Take care, son.

He turns to walk away.

EXT. BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Saroo sits on the beach, a starry night. Watching the water - the ghost-waves marking time like a pulse ...

INT. KITCHEN, BRIERLEY HOME - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A night light in the kitchen illuminates Sue, standing at the sink. Her arms hanging limp. Exhausted. Mute.

Five-year-old Saroo steps beside her. Reaches up, takes her hand.

She snaps out of it, looks down on him. *It's all right*, says the look on his face.

A private communion. The son comforting the mother. Then, as if remembering her duty to look after him, Sue pulls Saroo close, cradles his head.

They stand there, a silent tableau.

INT. SUE'S ART STUDIO, BRIERLEY HOME - AFTERNOON

Concern registers on Saroo's face as he enters the little room. Sue sits in the weak sunlight by the window. She looks pale and unwell, in her dressing gown, nursing a cup of tea. Saroo doesn't look crash-hot either - months of no sleep or exercise have taken their toll. Two lost souls.

But she brightens at the sight of Saroo.

SAROO
(*hugging her*)
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

He sits opposite her. She holds back tears.

SUE
John just heard, he's been out on the boats. Doing the lobster run. They're due back tomorrow.

Saroo looks at her, doesn't want to admit what this means.

SUE (CONT'D)
So he'll be flush for cash. And then back on the hard stuff ...

Saroo can see in her pain how much she loves Mantosh. She smiles bravely, her pale eyes sparkling.

SAROO
I'm sorry you couldn't have your own kids.

ON SUE: a misconception, dawning on her.

SUE
What are you saying?

SAROO
I mean, we weren't blank pages, were we? Like your own would have been. You weren't just adopting us, but our pasts as well.
(*beat*)
And I feel like we're killing you.

Sue smiles - still holding off the tears.

SUE

We could have had children. We chose not to.

ON SAROO: shocked by this new information.

SAROO

Wait. You could have had kids?

SUE

Never made that public. Some things need to stay private. Some people would never understand why you'd start a family like ours. We wanted you two in our lives. We chose that.

Saroo is moved. Listening intently.

SUE (CONT'D)

(smiles, remembering)

I think it's one of the reasons I fell in love with your dad.

(beat)

We both felt the world had more than enough people in it already. Because to have a child - that's no guarantee that's going to make things better. But to take a child who's suffering - like you boys were - and to give him a chance in the world. Well, then. Now there's something.

Saroo looks with wonder at his mother. What she's given up. Without her, where would he have ended up?

SAROO

I bet you never imagined it would be this hard.

SUE

It's not a matter of hard or easy. There was only ever one path. That's how I believe things happen.

(beat)

When I was twelve, I had a vision. Some people would call it a breakdown ...

Saroo, completely intrigued by his mother opening up like this - in such strange ways.

SUE (CONT'D)

You know my father was an alcoholic. Out of control.

(MORE)

SUE (CONT'D)

All wrong. I remember I was weeping. Or I'd wept it all out. There were no more tears. I was standing out the back of the house. Looking out across this field. I literally wanted the earth to swallow me. There wasn't any joy. Life was a nightmare. And I felt this kind of - electric current - electric shock - jolt through me. And there was a little brown-skinned boy across that field. I couldn't even tell if it was just my eyes playing tricks. And then he was beside me. Just standing there. And I sensed it so strongly. I could feel his warmth.

SAROO

Really?

SUE

Literally. The left side of my body started to heat up.

SAROO

Did you try to talk to him?

SUE

It wasn't like that. Anyway, I was doubting my sanity. Even as it happened.

SAROO

It didn't speak?

SUE

It stood beside me. And for once in my bleak life, I felt something good. And I knew it was guiding me. And I knew - in my heart - I'd be fine. It was as if, at that moment, I could suddenly believe in the future.

Saroo sits there, haunted and entranced by her story.

SUE (CONT'D)

And now - I don't know where I'm going. I don't know what anything means any more. I thought I could hold everything together. By an act of will.

SAROO

- oh, Mum -

SUE
 But it's all just splinters.
 Everything splintering off.

Saroo, pained. He shrugs, palms up: *I don't know what to say.*

HIGH AERIAL - MORNING

Way down there, Saroo's car travels along the wild, lush, remote Tasmanian coast.

I/E. CAR / NEAR DOVER LOBSTER PORT - DAY

Saroo winds down towards a wild windswept inlet. Towards Mantosh's shed...

EXT. MANTOSH'S SHED - CONTINUOUS

Saroo pulls up, gets out, bangs on doors. Peers in through the windows.

SAROO
(calls)
 Mantosh!

Wide: the lonely ghost gums echo his call.

INT. SAROO'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He gets back in the car, to wait it out... the trees, the isolation... the quiet... relief almost...

He winds his seat back. Stillness.

KAMLA (V.O., PRE-LAP)
 That one is Makara, the sea monster. You see his long tail?

SAROO (V.O., PRE-LAP)
 Ammi - if he's a sea monster, can he fly?

MEMORY, ROOFTOP, ONE-ROOM HOME, KHANDWA

Looking DOWN on Kamla, Guddu, Kallu and Saroo (Shekila wrapped in swaddling, sound asleep), all lying on their backs on the flat roof, looking up at the stars.

KAMLA
 I don't know. It's as deep as the ocean up there.

Pause. They're all staring straight up, in wonder.

KAMLA (CONT'D)
(gesturing)
 See the bright one, and the line like that? That's Simha. The lion.

SAROO
Will he eat us?

KAMLA
He might. When he gets hungry
enough.

ON Saroo: gazing up. Sheer wonder. Thinking about Simha.

REVERSE - their POV. The incomparable spread of stars.

INT. SAROO'S CAR - DUSK

Saroo, looking up at the ceiling of his car.

A single tear rolls from his eye. Gentle SOUNDS on the roof -
spitting of rain.

BANG on the window - a wet and bedraggled MANTOSH, has just
pulled up in his UTE, waders over his arm, smoking a joint.

MANTOSH
Brother from another mother. Your
hair looks as bad as mine.

Saroo, sits up, gets out. Mantosh offers Saroo the joint.
Saroo shakes his head No.

Mantosh takes a big toke. Flicks the joint away.

INT. MANTOSH'S SHED - CONTINUOUS

Inside, it's barely habitable. A grimy sink. A rickety table.
A single bed with grey blankets that look damp.

Mantosh pours cheap whisky into two grubby glasses. He turns
the RADIO on low.

They sit, clink glasses, take a sip. Mantosh's cheery facade
fails to hide his desolation and desperation.

He holds his hand out, horizontal.

MANTOSH
I'm off the speed, mate.

Perhaps his hand trembles, just a little; Saroo notices.

SAROO
That's good. 'Cos Mum's not well.

MANTOSH
(wary)
Oh yeah? What is it?

SAROO
Stress. She thinks she's gonna lose
you -

(MORE)

SAROO (CONT'D)
(quick adjustment:)
 - us. She's worried about us.

It hangs there. Big thing for Saroo to say. Mantosh, taking it in. His heart shifts, a notch. His big brother just spoke of them as an 'us'.

MANTOSH
 That's no good.

SAROO
 Nah.

MANTOSH
 I should get out to see her.

SAROO
 Yeah.

Long pause.

SAROO (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry for what I said at dinner.

Mantosh shrugs, remembering. A silent, painful *It's nothing*.

SAROO (CONT'D)
 You been all right?

Just the act - the intention - of Saroo trying to connect: it breaks something open in Little Brother. Mantosh heaves a single sudden dry sob - then stops it. All the world's pain in those shoulders.

MANTOSH
 We were the untouchables. You know that, don't you? You know how much our lives were worth. Nothing. Zero.
(remembering: such pain)
 They had no problem touching me.

He looks up at Saroo as if coming out of a trance.

MANTOSH (CONT'D)
 You were one of the lucky ones. I'm not having a go at you. I'm genuinely happy for you.

SAROO
 What do you mean, "luck"? - Mate, I think about my mother in India every day, knowing I'll never see her again. Same as you.

MANTOSH

(smiling, but an edge)

Not the same. I had bad luck being born. You got *LOST!* That's all that happened, bro. And before anything bad even happened, you got whisked off to Australia. Do you know how long I was in Liluah for? Fourteen months.

Silence.

MANTOSH (CONT'D)

Not untouchable in there.

Silence. Saroo, staring at Mantosh. The "lucky ones". He knows he's got a point: at Liluah, Saroo escaped the bogeyman.

SAROO

What happened to you was bad. It was just bad. But this is not how you deal with it, Mantosh. You think I'm lucky; I think I made my own luck. I don't know which one's true. I didn't have choices. When that train took off, I didn't have a choice. You've got to keep going. Sometimes that's all it is.

Mantosh just looks at him. They both seem exhausted.

SAROO (CONT'D)

You've suffered enough.

MANTOSH

I'm persevering, bro. Trust me.

SAROO

I've already lost a brother. I don't want to lose you too.

(beat)

I need you, bro. We gotta keep this family together. You and me.

A light coming back into Mantosh's eyes. Just hearing this. But then, too, the irony:

MANTOSH

We do things differently, you and me. You try to remember. I try to forget.

Saroo is moved by his insight. They sit in silence in this new, fragile camaraderie - the radio still playing low, B/G.

Mantosh stands at a song he likes. Turns up the volume. Kylie Minogue's *I Can't Get You Out Of My Head*.

He takes a large swig of whiskey. A big smile spreads.

He starts to dance to the music. His ridiculousness is infectious, and Saroo smiles too.

MANTOSH (CONT'D)
C'mon, dance with your brother!

Mantosh turns the volume up louder.

MANTOSH (CONT'D)
(over the racket)
C'mon!

Saroo reluctantly gets up. And dances. Two goofy brothers.

And then: they begin to lose themselves.

The scene becomes loud, frenetic, crazy. They can't believe they're doing this. They're laughing like mad.

MANTOSH (CONT'D)
(shouting in Saroo's ear)
I love you, Saroo. I'm gonna get better.

Saroo grins, *Okay, then. Good.*

Mantosh takes a big swig straight from the bottle.

Passes it to Saroo, who does the same. Grinning.

And now, they really do lose themselves. The dance is completely mad. And glorious.

INT. MANTOSH'S SHED - DAWN

DAWN. Saroo, wrapped in a blanket. Staring at his sleeping brother. The scars on Mantosh's hands. The tobacco-stained fingers. The fragility.

CLOSE: gently, carefully, Saroo places the old Ganesh medallion in the palm of Mantosh's hand.

He closes Mantosh's fist around the medallion.

EXT. PEBBLY BEACH NEAR MANTOSH'S SHED - DAWN

Saroo steps outside into the freezing morning. No one about. Not a sound. Not a bird. Just the WILD WIND and the small gnarly steel-grey WAVES hitting the shore.

HARD CUT:

EXT. PEBBLY BEACH, TIDELINE - CONTINUOUS

Saroo, a tiny figure, walks down to the water's edge.

He strips off - and starts to walk into the water... stopping as the pain of the cold kicks in... the endless horizon beyond.

He looks back at the shed - Mantosh will not survive without him.

He spots Guddu, looking vulnerable, worried, is he losing Saroo?...

His locked stare with Guddu. A deep breath from Saroo -

- Guddu looks alarmed, as if he wants to stop Saroo -

- Saroo DIVES.

UNDERWATER - fluid, peaceful, muffled. Saroo's wild hair flowing.

He comes up - roaring - oh, the shock! - his wild wet mane -

SAROO
ROAAAARRRGHHH!

Roaring in pain. Grief. Anger. Knowing he can't go on. Roaring his past away. BIG emotional moment, then in its wake...

Guddu is gone.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - NIGHT

Saroo steps up to the wall. All its madness in front of him.

He reaches for a flag pin. Pulls it out. What's he doing?

He stabs it back into the map - to a totally different part of India. Way outside the search radius.

Then with both hands, he starts pulling out flag pins, stabbing them anywhere. Jumbling them up. Pins everywhere.

There are pins now all over the place. Pakistan. The Himalayas.

He's just deliberately ruined a year or two of painstaking work. Making certain it's over, and there's no turning back.

Casually, he SWIPES at a section of printouts spreading out from the main map, scotch-taped together. In a domino effect, other printouts tear away. More flag pins go flying. A mess.

He leans his head against the wall.

Saroo slumps down on the couch. End of the road. He has to move on too.

Over on the Wall: that mess he's just made.

The laptop sits open on the couch. He leans across, places his finger on the trackpad, follows a train line -

- then starts to flick the track pad, faster. So that before the station has time to reach full resolution -

- he flicks again, carelessly, without method.

And suddenly - it's a kind of goodbye - he veers off the rail line completely - out over land - and more land -

- doing on the SCREEN what he just did on the WALL -

- random shifts, here, there, left, right. Jerky. EVERYTHING starts cascading in his psyche, as his memories make their final fight for life. So we see MAD SNIPPETS and FLASHES:

GUDDU - COAL THEFT - DAM - JOY - UNDERPASS - STREETS - WATERMELON ACCIDENT - HIDE AND SEEK WITH SHEKILA AND KAMLA.

- and on and on it goes - interwoven with the Google Earth search on screen, as Saroo carelessly continues flicking the cursor, saying goodbye to the search as his past and his memories disintegrate into fragments -

He stops. Exhausted. His face perfectly blank. Equally randomly now, he *tap-tap-taps* on that "Zoom Out" minus sign.

He ZOOMS OUT, higher. Higher. We're now staring down on a good chunk of India.

Scrolling, Saroo flicks quite a distance left. Still just random moves. We are now way outside the search perimeter.

Nothing matters. *Flick, flick.* Who cares?

And then: something stops him. He tilts his head -

ON THE SCREEN: an expanse of ochre fields.

He pulls the laptop onto his thighs. Something about that COLOR. Still as the Sphinx, he stares at the screen.

HIGH AERIAL ABOVE FIELDS - (DAY)

- matching the Google Earth, but *real*: we're hovering above a real ochre landscape. STILL. We can hear nature - the tickling of the grass, the whole earth vibrating.

[NOTE: this shot should also recognizably MATCH the landscape of the 4000-feet-above-India shot, those parched ochre fields from the opening AERIALS...] -

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Saroo shivers. The sound of the gentle wind over him. Just staring at that screen.

EXT. FIELD NEAR DAM, KHANDWA - DAY (FLASHBACK)

CLOSE on little Saroo's hand, scavenging through the trash, at that moment the YELLOW BUTTERFLY lands on it.

As he carefully stands, and spreads his arms:

PANORAMIC WIDE of an ochre landscape. Full of yellow butterflies.

The YELLOW is fluttering, fluttering, and starts FILLING THE FRAME.

AUDIO: very faintly a haunting refrain rises: the lullaby little Amita sang that long-ago night in Liluah.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

The lullaby carries over to the present - we're back with Saroo - more ALERT - scrolling on the Google screen -

We scroll over fields. Villages. Then a railway line.

He does what he's always done: trace the tracks to find the next station.

- A FLASH: POV FROM MOVING TRAIN (from when he was trapped) of those WIDE OCHRE FIELDS -

He keeps scrolling, scrolling. And soon enough: the train line enters a mid-sized TOWN.

We're over the centre of the town. He zooms in closer.

The Google Earth blue railway station symbol, hovering.

The rail lines. The platform.

Closer in. Closer.

And then, on Saroo: *Huh. What's that?*

ON GOOGLE EARTH SCREEN: it's blurry. But it looks a little like a water tower.

Saroo blinks, looking at it. Zooming in. His head tilts:

- this water tower, getting a little clearer as he zooms.

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": FLASHBACK 1 - WATER TOWER (NIGHT)

Little Saroo alone on the deserted platform. Where's Guddu?

Saroo shivers, holding himself. He looks up. At the tower.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Saroo, sitting up straight. Looking as spooked as that child.

ON SCREEN: it's a WATER TOWER. It's certainly similar.

Saroo leans in closer to the screen. His finger touches the platform. And the water tower. Working out the angles.

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": FLASHBACK 1 - WATER TOWER (NIGHT)

We PUSH IN on little Saroo, standing frightened on that haunted platform, looking up at the water tower off-screen.

REVERSE: we PUSH IN on the water tower.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

ON SCREEN: zooming, closer, closer. The satellite resolution becoming clearer. That's a tower. That's the water tower.

The pixels coarsen and blur as the zoom reaches its limit.

SAROO
(a breath)
 It can't be -

Saroo actually cups his hands over his mouth.

His back is ramrod straight. His nerves on fire -

- and suddenly, frantically, he scrolls, scrolls, scrolls -

AERIAL - OCHRE FIELDS - DAY

High in the air, we RUSH across the Indian landscape -

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

[NOTE: CONTINUE RAPID INTERWEAVING BETWEEN THE HIGH AERIAL GLIDES & THE GOOGLE SCREEN SCROLLING ...]

- ON GOOGLE EARTH SCREEN: as he scrolls, the pointer races across the landscape in jerks: across ochre fields, across rivers, roads ... sometimes the train line is on screen and sometimes not - because Saroo's not following the track now - he *knows* where he's going -

- he's going HERE:

- it's a DAM. Holy shit. It's a dam.

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": FLASHBACK 2 - DAM (DAY)

Guddu's POV: we're spinning in a circle, holding onto Saroo with outstretched arms as he too shrieks with laughter.

WIDE of same: Guddu twirls Saroo around in the shallow water by the dam, tiny Saroo's feet barely skimming the surface.

Guddu lets go, Saroo flies into the water. He jumps up, laughing. Drenched in golden sunlight.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Saroo's hands are shaking. Fingers on the track pad, urgent. This cannot be happening.

He zooms in closer. ON Google Earth screen, more details: the clay shore, the LONG DAM WALL.

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": FLASHBACK 2 - DAM (DAY)

- a beautiful, sun-drenched moment: five-year-old Saroo sprinting homewards, the dam receding behind him (with its LONG DAM WALL). Elation and urgency mixed together.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Saroo keeps scrolling, paying 1000% attention.

ON SCREEN: he stops on the town.

Saroo, scrolling. Eyes attentive to every detail.

ON SCREEN: the name hovering above the town is "Khandwa".

SAROO
(it doesn't ring a bell)
Khandwa?...

But his fingers trace across the screen. There's the STATION -

EXT. STREET NEAR KHANDWA STATION - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Little Saroo continues running home, past Khandwa Station.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Saroo, scrolling along -

- ON GOOGLE EARTH SCREEN: the UNDERPASS -

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": FLASHBACK 3 - UNDERPASS (DAY)

Little Saroo continues running home - into the underpass -

JUMP CUT:

- and pops out the other side -

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

Saroo, scrolling frantically. Nose inches from the screen.

ON GOOGLE EARTH SCREEN: we scroll OVER the underpass - out the other side - following roads -

[NOTE: CONTINUE TO BLEND WITH RAPID FLASHES OF **REAL AERIAL**]

- left, right, right - the roads getting narrower ...

And now, at last: a NAME floats above this part of town.

GANESH TALAI

ON Saroo: *what?? WHAT??!!*

ON SCREEN: there it is. Floating. "Ganesh Talai".

SAROO
Ganesh Talai. Ganesh Talay.
Ganestlay.

He gasps. Then an involuntary LAUGH comes from deep in his belly. A feeling that this can't be happening.

And now he picks up speed, and scrolls, ever faster -

- ON SCREEN: the streets, narrower and narrower -

INT. GANESH TALAI STREETS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Little Saroo, sprinting, lungs bursting, joyful, homewards -

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

- Saroo, glued to the screen. Scrolling. Left, right. The streets getting narrower.

ON SCREEN: a street so narrow it could only be an alleyway.

SAROO'S "MEMORY MAP": FLASHBACK 4 - ALLEYWAY TO HOME (DAY)

We FOLLOW over little Saroo's shoulder as he rounds the final corner to the narrow alley to home: past the house with the lurid aqua walls, past the overflowing bougainvillea -

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NIGHT)

ON SCREEN: We stop. Above a nondescript CLUSTER OF SHACKS.

We ZOOM, closer, closer. Towards a single specific BUILDING.

Closer. Until the pixels coarsen, and the roof is a blur. Saroo, breathing hard. Staring so intently at the screen.

That blurry, pixellated roof fills the entire screen.

On Saroo, brimming with emotion.

SAROO
(*very softly*)
Ammi ...

- that Hindi word, rising up from the deep.

JUMP CUT:

EXT. SHARE HOUSE - SAME NIGHT

Saroo knocks. Lucy comes to the door. They stare at each other. She looks frightened - what's happened...

SAROO

I found home...

Her face - doubt, belief, joy for him. *Did you just say what I think you said?*

Saroo's eyes, wide in amazement. That's a Yes.

Lucy wraps her arms around Saroo. They embrace tightly - - what does this mean for them?

Held in that embrace - rocking gently together - Saroo *breathes*.

INT. LIVING ROOM, BEACH HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Saroo holds the door open as Sue walks into the room.

John, just arrived in his work clothes, stands there, proud as punch - watching his wife.

JOHN

You need to look at this -

Sue enters slowly, mesmerized by something off-screen. Emotions palpably rippling across her face.

REVERSE: we follow her as she walks up to the map - it's still in disarray from Saroo's flag pin destruction, but you can see how amazing and methodical it was.

Sue studies it. The grandeur, the scope, the epic madness - even in its fractured state. Its magnificence.

ON Saroo: watching her, anticipating her response.

SUE

This is where you've been?

He nods.

SAROO

I didn't want you to feel I was ungrateful...

Sue takes it all in, astonished.

SUE

Saroo.

She embraces him, overcome with emotion.

SUE (CONT'D)
 I really hope she's there. She
 needs to see how beautiful you are.

John joins in the embrace.

INT. QANTAS A380 TO INDIA - NIGHT

Saroo in his window seat on the plane. Peering out, down into the dark earth. Most everyone else is asleep, and the lights are dimmed. But Saroo's awake, and deep in thought.

And just like that five-year-old - twenty-five years ago, heading off to the unknown - he pulls the shade down, up. But only once.

EXT. DREAM QUARRY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

We're back in our mythic, prehistoric, dust-shrouded landscape. The washed-out whiteness. The white dust.

And again, Saroo running across the sun-baked rubble, white with dust himself. Everything so heightened and surreal.

SAROO
 Ammi! Ammi!

He's carrying something close to his chest, like a bright orange heart. He's beaming, proud.

SAROO (CONT'D)
 Ammi!

And there in the distance, Kamla turns again. Shading her eyes against the sun. Covered in the white quarry dust.

SAROO (CONT'D)
 Look what I've got!

He reveals his offering: in the middle of all that white - a perfect, bulbous MANGO. Glowing in its perfect orangeness.

She reaches out her hand. Touches his face in thanks. What an unimaginable treat.

JUMP CUT:

Saroo and Kamla sit on the rocky ground, devouring the mango.

The juice streaks their dust-caked faces. Sucking at the flesh, the nectar. A playful delight coursing through them.

SAROO (CONT'D)
 I threw a rock. I knocked it out of
 the tree!

KAMLA
(grinning, nodding)
 Good boy.

I/E. TAXI / ROAD FROM INDOOR TO KHANDWA - DAY

Saroo in the back seat of the taxi. Peering intently out the window at the landscape rolling by.

The fields. The small towns.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, KHANDWA - DAY

We FOLLOW CLOSE behind Saroo as he enters his hotel room and throws the backpack on the bed.

Saroo at the window. Looking down on the bus terminal and - further away - train station from this third floor room.

POV: all the mad activity down there in the streets.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, KHANDWA - TWENTY MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Saroo lies fully clothed, spread on the bed. Shoes still on. Arms spread. Staring up at the ceiling.

He's wide, *wide* awake. The ceiling fan turning. No way he's getting twelve hours' sleep.

SAROO
 All right.

He leaps up.

EXT. STREET, KHANDWA - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Saroo walks along the busy street. Hard to read his face.

Past the busy station. And suddenly now in front of him: the UNDERPASS. He strides ahead. His legs carrying him forward now.

EXT. ROAD HOME TO GANESH TALAI - TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER

Saroo strides along the road. Purposeful.

EXT. STREETS OF GANESH TALAI - MINUTES LATER (DAY)

Saroo knows exactly where he's going. Automatic pilot through those never-forgotten streets. Turning left. Turning right.

Now he RUNS - as he did through these streets as a child.

EXT. ALLEYWAY TO SAROO'S CHILDHOOD HOME - MINUTES LATER

Saroo turns into a narrow alley. Heart positively pounding.

He rounds the next bend and -

- stops dead.

From BEHIND, his view down the ALLEY, past that house with those (now faded) lurid aqua walls, past the overflowing bougainvillea: we recognise that long-ago childhood home.

REVERSE of this: looking at Saroo. Only it's 5-YEAR-OLD-SAROO who's standing there now. Still as a statue. Awed.

Little Saroo starts moving forwards, towards home. We track backwards with him. He's not scared, just calm, amazed. He's been waiting for this moment for a long, long time.

He arrives at the door -

HARD CUT to side angle: now it's ADULT Saroo, peering in through the rotted slats of the door -

And ... it's abandoned in there.

His POV: in there, in the gloom, there's NOTHING. That dirt-floored shack, the rubble of a former life.

He steps back. So that's it. Shit. Stands there, at a loss.

VOICE (O.S.)

(in Hindi)

Can I help you?

Saroo turns. It's a WOMAN, 21, with a BABY in her arms.

SAROO

Hi! Um - I used to live here.

(off her blank look)

You don't speak - ?

(pointing at the shack)

I used to live here.

He unfolds a sheet of paper.

ON THE SHEET: it's an enlarged photocopy of that photo taken at the police station when he was five.

SAROO (CONT'D)

That's me. I used to live here.

The woman nods politely. But can't understand a word he says.

A middle-aged MAN pokes his head out from a doorway.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN

Hello?

SAROO

Hello. You speak English?

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN

Yes. A little.

SAROO
Have you lived here long?

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN
Some time.

SAROO
(pointing at photo)
I'm Saroo. This is me.
(pointing at empty house)
I'm looking for, um. Kamla, Guddu,
Kallu, Shekila.

The man looks from Saroo to the house. To Saroo.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN
Here? You lived here?

SAROO
Here. Yes.

The man takes a long look at Saroo. Squinting.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN
Wait here.

And he simply turns, and walks away.

Saroo: every nerve ending is alive. We CIRCLE him. Everything else a background BLUR - chatter in Hindi, PEOPLE popping out of doorways.

And Saroo staring down the alley to where that man just disappeared around a corner. Where has he gone?

Saroo starts walking, as in a dream, toward the corner.

The people trailing him. But we're CLOSE with Saroo.

Momentarily, the man reappears around the corner.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN (CONT'D)
Come.

SAROO
Come where?

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN
(he's already moving)
Come.

They walk. Saroo in his trance.

Rounding the corner - Saroo, the man, the curious HANGERS-ON.

And fifty metres ahead, there are THREE WOMEN standing there - stunned, uncertain. Two of them flanking the ONE IN THE MIDDLE, lightly holding her by the elbows.

Behind them, their own entourage of curious HANGERS-ON.

On Saroo: brain about to explode. This can't be real. Can it?

As Saroo and entourage move towards the three women, the three women and entourage begin to move towards him.

PUSHING IN towards the women: to that one, CENTRE OF FRAME.

Kamla. A quarter of a century older. Still as beautiful.

REVERSE - PUSHING IN towards Saroo, as he walks towards us.

On Kamla: with immense confusion and reservation, staring up at this giant man, this total stranger.

- and as she gets closer, looking into his eyes -

SAROO

Ammi -

- and she knows it's him.

KAMLA

Sheru!

They embrace each other, tightly.

SAROO

(close, soft)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

They hold the embrace.

Then Kamla starts running her hands over Saroo's face.

SAROO (CONT'D)

It's me -

(showing her the photo)

Look -

The instant Kamla looks at the photo, it ALL comes back, and she weeps. Hugging Saroo, wailing, touching his face.

The commotion growing. PEOPLE appearing. Explanations flying -

JUMP CUT:

The little crowd has grown further. Everyone talking at once. Kamla can't stop hugging Saroo, touching him, squeezing him.

A NEIGHBOR

Are you sure it's him?

KAMLA

(stabbing the photo)

It's him. I know it's him. My son has come back.

She reaches up, parts the hair on his forehead. Sure enough, the scar.

SAROO
The watermelons!

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN
(in Hindi)
Watermelons.

KAMLA
The watermelons!

SAROO
(in Hindi, imitating)
Tarabuja! [Watermelon]
(beat)
And Guddu? Where is Guddu?

KAMLA
(heartbroken)
Guddu. Guddu.

Saroo, not wanting to believe what he thinks she's saying.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MAN
Guddu is no more.
(beat; clarifies)
He is with God.

Amidst all this surreal joy, a knife in the heart. Saroo looks at the man - numb and uncomprehending.

He looks to Kamla: *is it true? Surely it's not true.*

In her eyes: *it's true. It's true.* Such sorrow.

They embrace. She weeps. AUDIO muffles - they're in some private space that sound can't penetrate. They gaze into each other's eyes. Pain, love, joy -

Then: a COMMOTION. The crowd parts for ADULT SHEKILA (27).

KAMLA
(she's nearly hysterical)
Shekila! It's him!
(to Saroo)
This is Shekila! This is your sister!

Saroo, amazed.

SAROO
Shekila?

Kamla nods yes; a howl of joy from Saroo -

SAROO (CONT'D)

Shekila!

He pulls her into the embrace.

The onlookers crowding and touching him, as if he's not real.

Saroo and his mother and sister, locked in the embrace.

EXT. ROAD TO KHANDWA STATION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

That last night together, twenty-five years ago: little Saroo, King of the World, perched on the handlebars as Guddu pedals for all he's worth through the streets of Khandwa.

They're gliding. Banking. Soaring. The world is rushing by.

A YOUNG MAN

Go, Guddu!

It's as if they're being cheered through the very streets.

SMALL FADE.

INT. HOTEL ROOM, KHANDWA - LATE AT NIGHT

Saroo - a profoundly changed man - at the window, looking out over Khandwa and the train station.

The street stalls, the lights, the endless traffic.

SUE'S PHONE MESSAGE (V.O.)

Hello. You've reached Sue Brierley.
I can't get to the phone right now,
please leave a message.

SAROO (V.O.)

Hi Mum. I know you'll be sound
asleep. (MORE ...)

EXT. DAM, KHANDWA - LATE AFTERNOON

The warm late sun floods the air as we come upon adult Saroo walking along the water's edge by the dam, where a new generation of KIDS are splashing and playing - just as Saroo used to do, twenty-five years ago.

The dam wall over there. Out in the water: two BOYS frolicking, shrieking.

Saroo, watching them.

SAROO (V.O., CONT'D, FROM PREVIOUS)

... I just want to say that I'm
safe. I'm safe, and all questions
have been answered. There are no
more dead ends. (MORE ...)

INT. JOHN AND SUE'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Sue, sitting up in bed - holding her mobile, listening to the message on speakerphone, John beside her listening too - as tears well in their eyes.

SAROO'S VOICE ON SPEAKERPHONE

My mother thanks you both for raising me. She understands you're my family. She's happy just knowing I'm alive.

(long beat)

I found Ammi. But that doesn't change us. I love you, Mum. So much. And you, Dad. And Mantosh. We're a family.

EXT. DAM, KHANDWA - LATE AFTERNOON

Saroo stands there by the dam. Taking it all in.

He turns. Up ahead: that ridge where the railway track runs.

Saroo starts walking up the embankment to the track.

EXT. RAILWAY TRACKS, NEAR DAM - MOMENTS LATER

Saroo is walking TOWARDS US along the tracks. Stepping on every second sleeper. The dam over there, B/G.

REVERSE: MATCH SHOT so it feels like a normal reverse, BUT -

ON THE REVERSE: it's twelve-year-old Guddu and five-year-old Saroo, walking AWAY FROM US down that long stretch of track.

Guddu's arm draped over Saroo's shoulder. Saroo dragging a stick behind him, *clack-clack-clack* along the sleepers.

They're literally walking off into the sunset. And we

CUT TO AERIAL:

HIGH AERIAL - KHANDWA AND BEYOND - CONTINUOUS

- We're RISING UP into the air - we're leaving them now - we're going HIGH - HIGHER - we're SOARING UP AND AWAY -

We're very HIGH - they're TINY SPECKS - we're

FADING TO BLACK.

In the blackness, SUPERS come up, one after the other:

Saroo Brierley made it back to Ganesh Talai on February 12, 2012. He'd been lost for over 25 years.

He learned that 25 years earlier, on the same night he stepped up into that carriage, his brother Guddu died - hit by a train not far from the platform.

Saroo's mother, Kamla, had never given up hope of Saroo's return, and had never moved away.

She said she was "surprised with thunder" that her boy had come back, and that the happiness in her heart was "as deep as the ocean."

Saroo learned that all those years ago, as a five-year-old, he had been mispronouncing his own name.

He was "Sheru" -

- "LION"

AND SLAM INTO:

- that police station PHOTO of 5-year-old Saroo - the REAL PHOTO, not our actor -

We PUSH slowly, slowly CLOSER AND CLOSER into the photo -

- into those huge, determined eyes.

CUT TO BLACK.

[NOTE: at some point soon after CREDITS start rolling, they share the screen with the *60 Minutes* footage of Kamla and Sue meeting and embracing, Saroo joining the embrace - and various other real photos etc ...]

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Luke Davies



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