

# The Girl on the Roof of the World

based on true events





# Logline

A tale of loss and relentless determination, of rising from the ashes and the transformative power of love, set on Mt. Everest, in Kathmandu, and in Connecticut, inspired by the screenwriter's family experience.

This is the true adventures of a spirited six-year-old Himalayan girl, almost murdered by her stepmother, who flees, survives alone on Mt. Everest, is kidnapped by a sex trafficker, escapes, and ultimately captures the hearts of an unconventional, loving American family. The family itself endures a dramatic whirlwind.

**Format:** Feature film, biography

**Genre:** Drama

**References:** Lion, Instant Family, Curly Sue

**Status:** In development, script available.  
Looking for a director

# Characters

**BRINDA (6)**, spirited, resilient, musically talented, and wildly mischievous, has a well of anger from her mother's death, her father's callousness, and her stepmother's abuse. She tests and twice runs away from the American family who love her. However, the tough emotional shield she has built dissolves as she slowly comes to trust them.

**DANIEL (40'S)** is a successful psychotherapist whose perfect life has come apart with his son's death, his failing marriage, and his daughter's disappointment with his parenting. Focused on a spiritual path rather than accepting his wife's need for another child and Brinda's need for a family, he risks losing both. Until he has a major turn-around.

**JUDITH (40'S)**, a devoted mother and doctor, is burdened by a broken heart and a shattered sense of self, not only losing her son, but unfairly blaming herself. Angry at Daniel for refusing to adopt, she almost divorces him. Brinda's arrival in their life rescues both her sense of motherhood and her marriage.

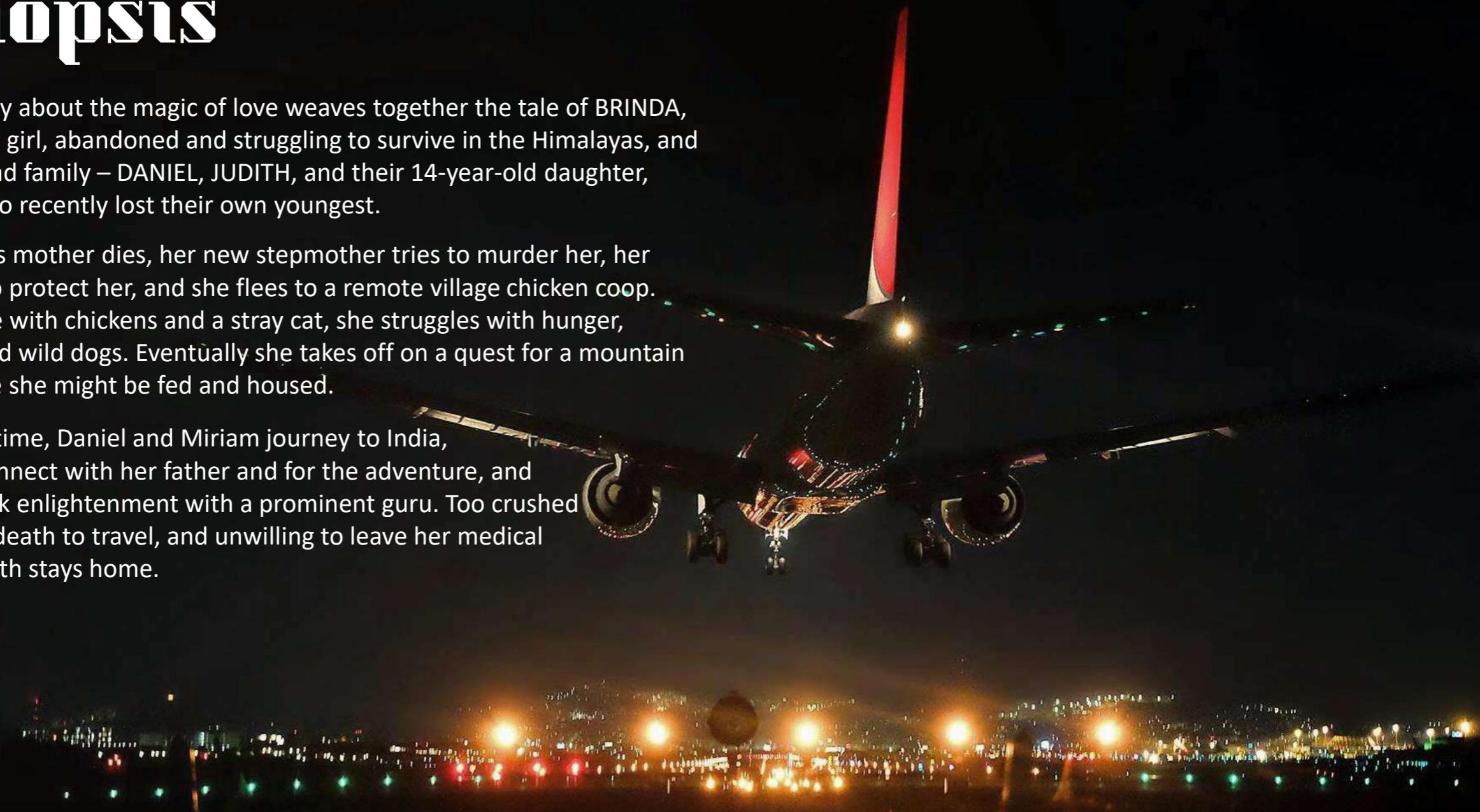
**MIRIAM (14)**, is an uncommonly bright, witty, musical prodigy grappling with her family's seeming collapse, her mother's need for her, and her readiness to spread her wings, leave home, and perform professionally. She journeys to India and Nepal to escape the darkness at home, to heal her relationship with her father, and to enjoy the adventure. She is the first to urge Brinda's adoption.

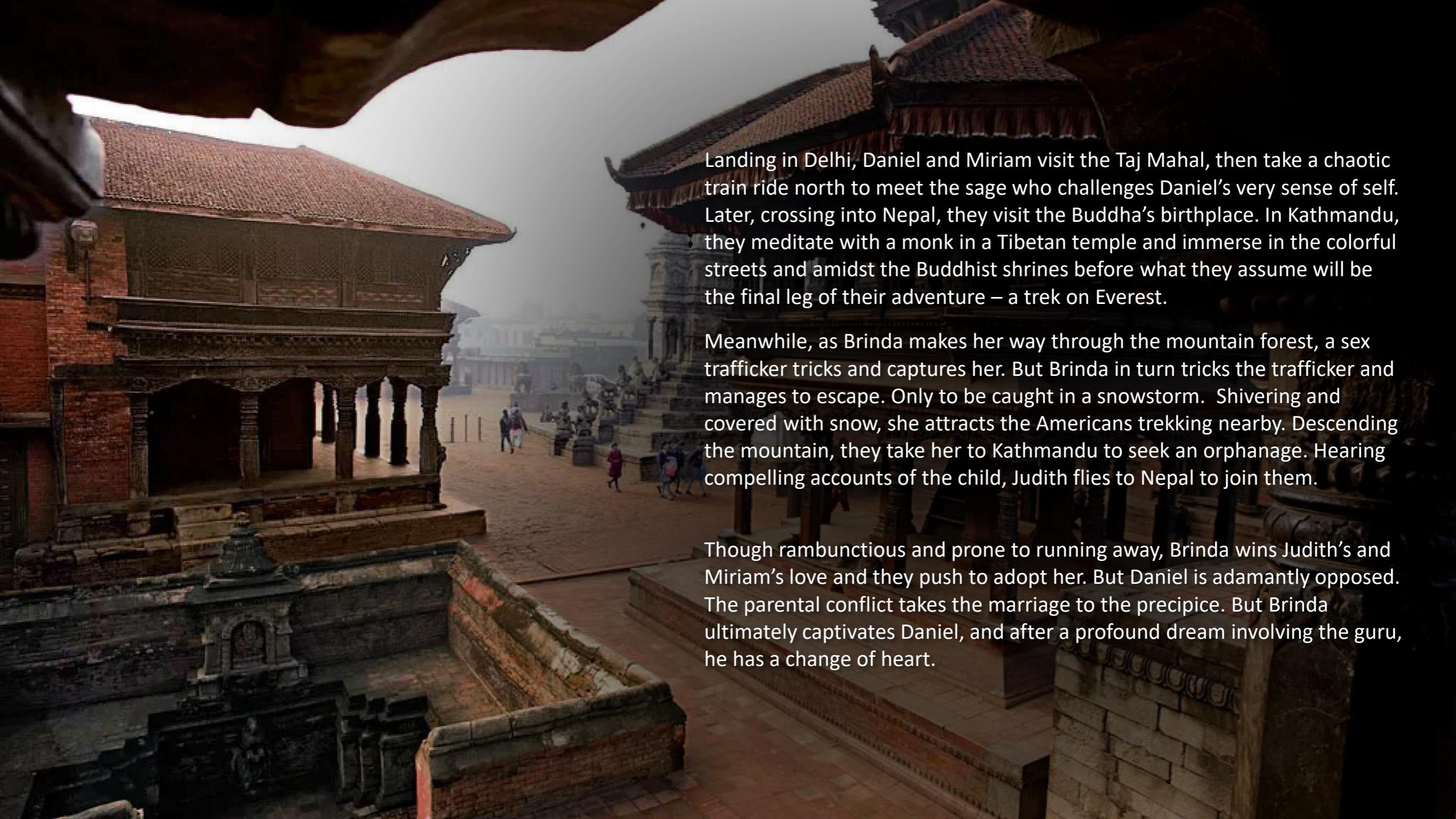
# Synopsis

This true story about the magic of love weaves together the tale of BRINDA, a six-year-old girl, abandoned and struggling to survive in the Himalayas, and a New England family – DANIEL, JUDITH, and their 14-year-old daughter, MIRIAM - who recently lost their own youngest.

After Brinda's mother dies, her new stepmother tries to murder her, her father fails to protect her, and she flees to a remote village chicken coop. Taking refuge with chickens and a stray cat, she struggles with hunger, exposure, and wild dogs. Eventually she takes off on a quest for a mountain village where she might be fed and housed.

At the same time, Daniel and Miriam journey to India, Miriam to connect with her father and for the adventure, and Daniel to seek enlightenment with a prominent guru. Too crushed by her son's death to travel, and unwilling to leave her medical practice, Judith stays home.

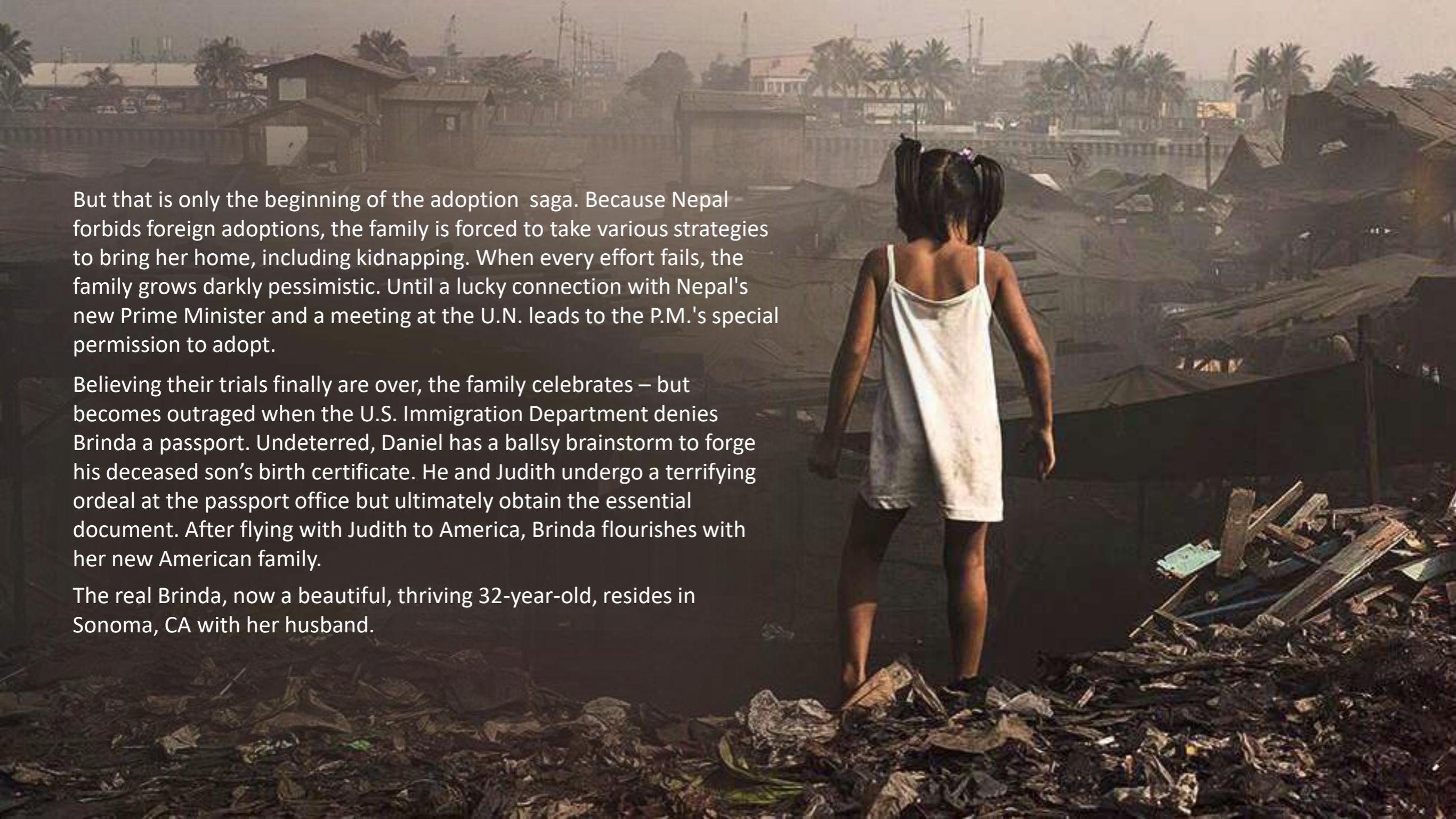




Landing in Delhi, Daniel and Miriam visit the Taj Mahal, then take a chaotic train ride north to meet the sage who challenges Daniel's very sense of self. Later, crossing into Nepal, they visit the Buddha's birthplace. In Kathmandu, they meditate with a monk in a Tibetan temple and immerse in the colorful streets and amidst the Buddhist shrines before what they assume will be the final leg of their adventure – a trek on Everest.

Meanwhile, as Brinda makes her way through the mountain forest, a sex trafficker tricks and captures her. But Brinda in turn tricks the trafficker and manages to escape. Only to be caught in a snowstorm. Shivering and covered with snow, she attracts the Americans trekking nearby. Descending the mountain, they take her to Kathmandu to seek an orphanage. Hearing compelling accounts of the child, Judith flies to Nepal to join them.

Though rambunctious and prone to running away, Brinda wins Judith's and Miriam's love and they push to adopt her. But Daniel is adamantly opposed. The parental conflict takes the marriage to the precipice. But Brinda ultimately captivates Daniel, and after a profound dream involving the guru, he has a change of heart.

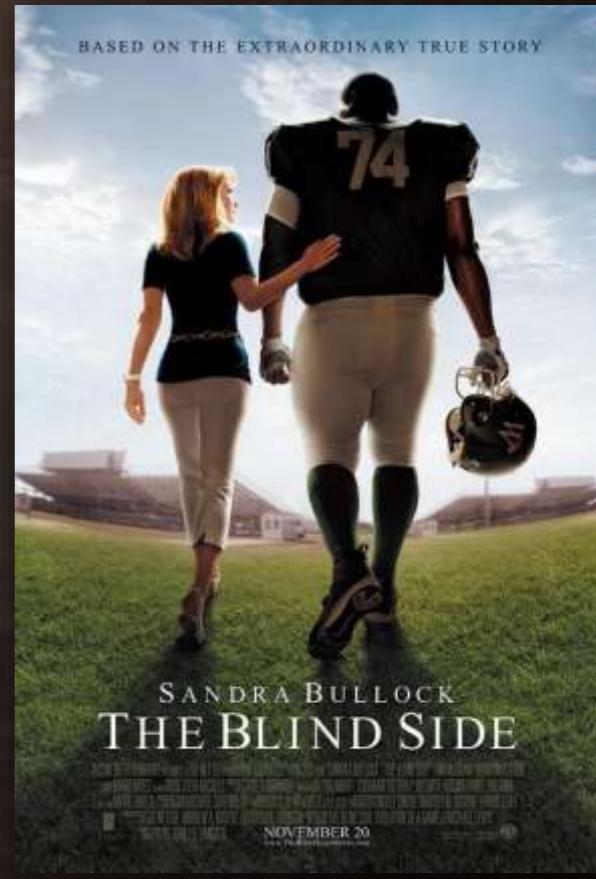
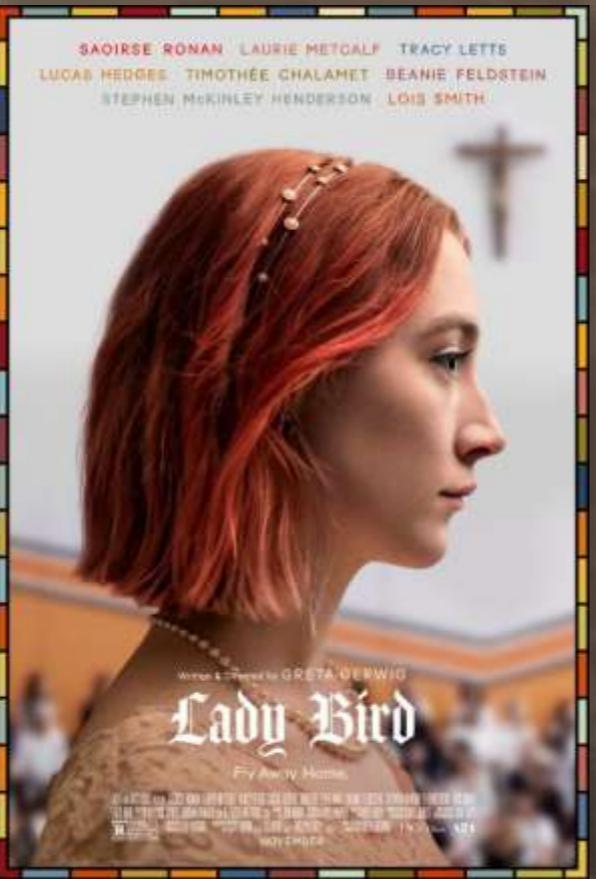
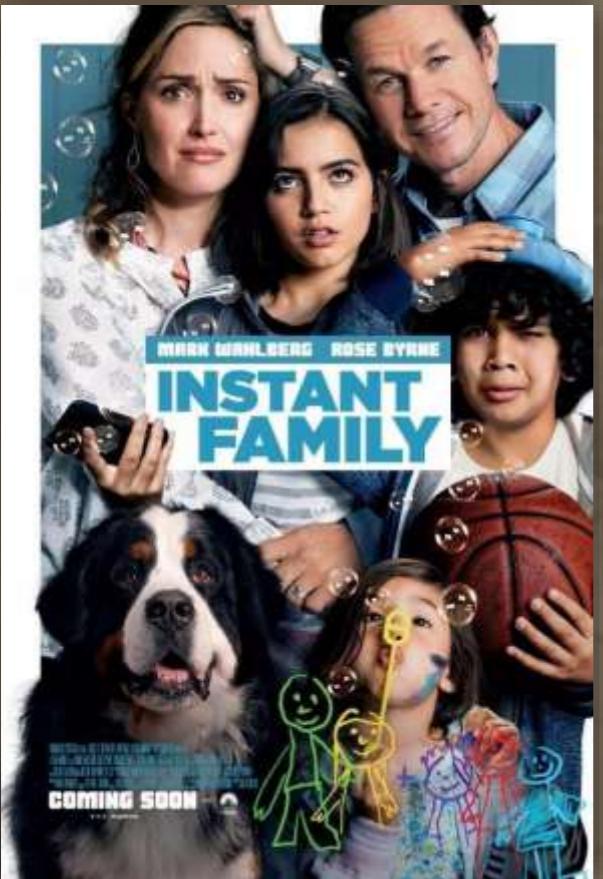


But that is only the beginning of the adoption saga. Because Nepal forbids foreign adoptions, the family is forced to take various strategies to bring her home, including kidnapping. When every effort fails, the family grows darkly pessimistic. Until a lucky connection with Nepal's new Prime Minister and a meeting at the U.N. leads to the P.M.'s special permission to adopt.

Believing their trials finally are over, the family celebrates – but becomes outraged when the U.S. Immigration Department denies Brinda a passport. Undeterred, Daniel has a ballsy brainstorm to forge his deceased son's birth certificate. He and Judith undergo a terrifying ordeal at the passport office but ultimately obtain the essential document. After flying with Judith to America, Brinda flourishes with her new American family.

The real Brinda, now a beautiful, thriving 32-year-old, resides in Sonoma, CA with her husband.

# Comparable



# Primary Locations

Westport, CT; Kathmandu; A remote Himalayan Village



# Real Characters



**Jonathan & Pearlyn**



**Brinda**



**Sher Bahadur Deuba**  
Prime Minister of Nepal

# Suggested Actors

DANIEL



Casey  
Affleck



Matt  
Damon

JUDITH



Natalie  
Portman

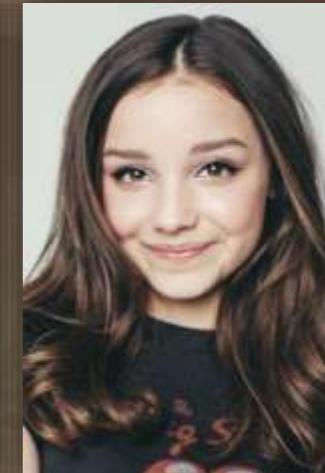


Francis  
McDormand

MIRIAM



Siena  
Agudong



Mackenzie  
Aladjem

*The Newspaper with a Difference*

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■ FAMILY TIES BRING TOT FROM NEPAL TO WESTON

## Child's ball bounces through red tape

By MIKE PATRICK  
Staff writer

When Laura Cahill opened the package and found a brightly colored children's ball inside, she knew this wasn't going to be one of her routine immigration cases.

And when she looked at the picture

that came with it, of a tiny, sickly orphan from Nepal and read the letter from the Weston couple that wanted to make the child their daughter, she became part of a nearly yearlong effort to bring them together.

This week, the crusade ended joyously, as the little girl arrived in her new home in Connecticut.

ahill, director of constituent services for US. Sen. Joseph Lieberman, D-Conn. was the fifth in a long chain of officials to be won over by the story of 3½-year-old Binda and the couple who wanted to adopt her (Jonathan and Carolyn Goodman). -Herrick of Weston.



Binda

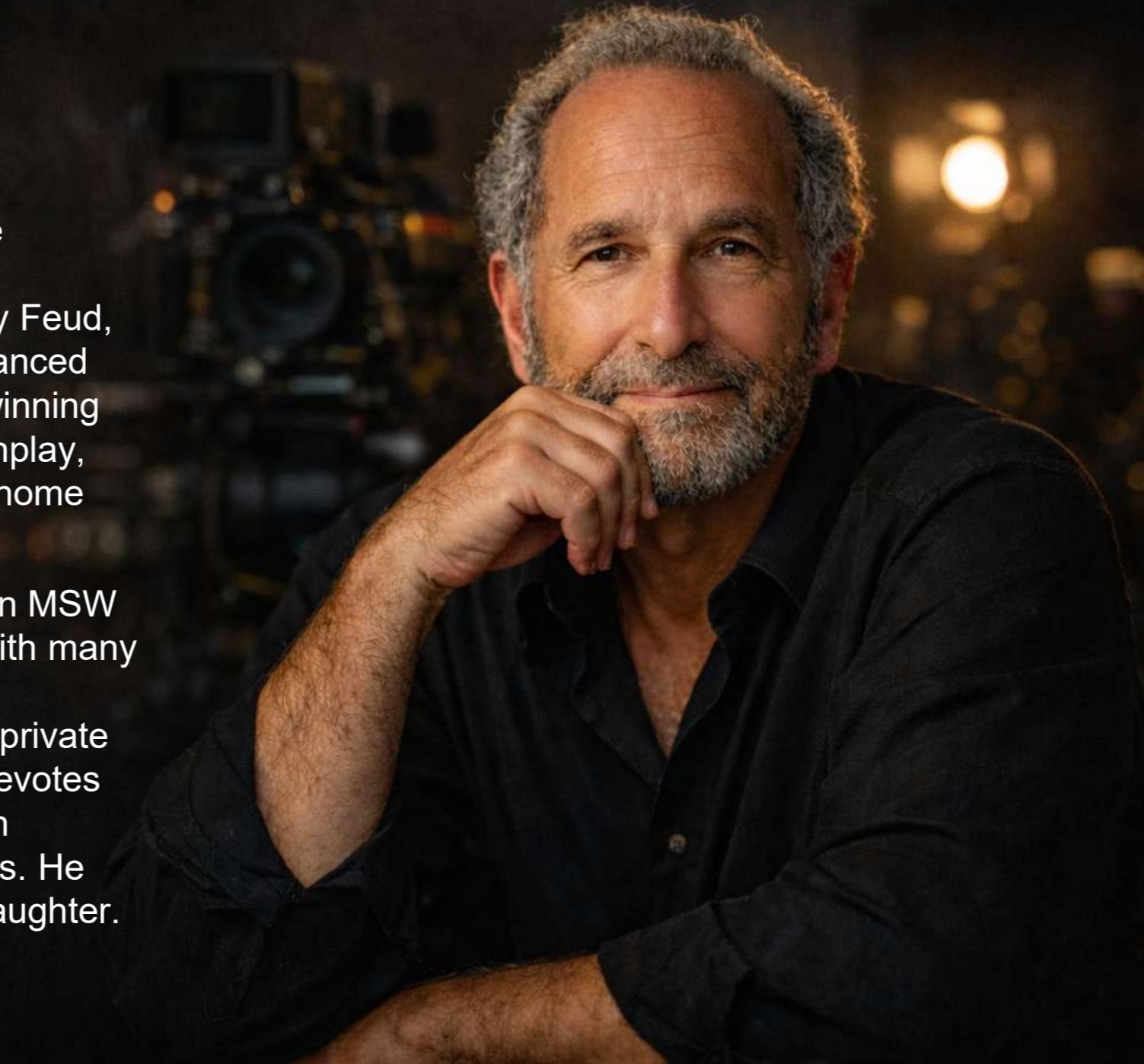
See CONNECTIONS on A8

# Jonathan Eli Herrick

Screenwriter And Producer

After earning a B.A. in Cinema from New York State University and attending USC's Graduate School of Cinema Arts, Jonathan was the first writer for *Family Feud*, a full-time story analyst for Lorimar Television, freelanced for CBS and Dustin Hoffman, and wrote for Oscar-winning director Will Vinton. Disney offered to buy his screenplay, *The Sky's the Limit*, and Pauline Kael called him at home to praise his screenwriting.

After leaving the movie industry, Jonathan earned an MSW from New York University, spent decades training with many of the world's foremost Zen, Tibetan Buddhist, and psychotherapy teachers, and created an extensive, private psychotherapy practice. Returning to film, he now devotes most of his time to screenwriting and enjoying life on Martha's Vineyard and in warm seaside beach towns. He has two wonderful daughters and a delightful stepdaughter.





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# HEARTS & FLOWERS

*Hearts and flowers snapped in pieces...*

*Where is my son who left six years ago?*

*Walked through some strange doorway And  
has not been seen since?*

*Where is my son – blue-eyed,  
robust, joyous?*

*Took a long nap one Saturday  
afternoon  
and has not been seen since, my  
wife screaming, carrying him  
blue as can be in her white arms?  
My heart and love, my son,  
through what doorway did you tumble,  
And do I ever get to see you again?*

*The light in your eyes shines  
across the years  
and yet – your thumb, your voice,  
your chin, your jaunty play –  
are all gone....*

*...And now, my new daughter,  
my heart ablaze with you,  
your little feet and singular smile,  
Your extraordinary sense of order  
and humor,  
your sweet kisses and bright  
questions,  
Your fabulous mimicry,  
where are you?*

*Do you get to come home,  
or do  
You stay  
For all of childhood with strangers?  
Do you get to come home,  
O my little girl?*

*My heart snapped in pieces  
when I left you.*

*-Jonathan Herrick, September, 1995*

