

100 Sunset: An Excerpt and Q and A with Kunsang Kyirong

Kunsang Kyirong

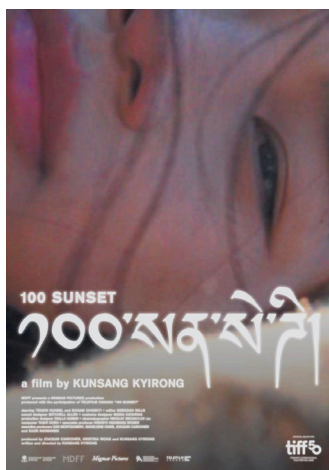
Abstract: Debuted at the 2025 Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF), *100 Sunset* directed and written by Kunsang Kyirong, was recently screened in international film festivals in São Paulo, Tokyo, and Dharamsala. This article carries an excerpt from the film's script, giving the readers a glimpse into the tender friendship between two immigrant Tibetan girls, besides a short Q and A with Kunsang Kyirong.

Keywords: friendship, migration, casting, production, visual language

Excerpt from *100 Sunset*

Kunsang Kyirong

(Translated from Tibetan by Tenzin Nyinje, Lobsang Tenzin, Soepa)



Poster credit Migmar Pictures Inc.

63 INT. ESL OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Through the doorway students work at their desks.

At the edge of the classroom a few students exit.

Kunsel and Passang stand near the photo copy machine, scanning pages from Kunsel's notebook.

PASSANG

Hold still.

PASSANG

Gulchok ma tong ah

PASSANG

འགྲུལ་གྱི་མ་གཏོང་ཅ།

Passang grabs the notebook and presses Kunsel's hands on the scanner. Keeping them from rising.

Kunsel looks at Passang and laughs, the light from the scanner illuminating her fingers.

Multiple sheets of paper print out of the scanner.

Passang goes through the printed sheets of paper. On one paper is a poster for an upcoming fashion show, the next is the scanned image of Kunsel's hands.

64 INT. BLOOR-YONGE STATION SUBWAY - DAY, LATER

The subway station is busy, packed with people. People listening to headphones, people holding briefcases, they move quickly, eager to reach their destination.

KUNSEL and Passang are in the midst of the crowd walking through.

PASSANG

(O/S)

Do you like it here?

PASSANG

Kheyraṅg dheyla kyi-po dhug
wai.

PASSANG

ཁྱེད་རང་འདི་ལ་སྤྱིད་པོ་འདུག་པས།

Kunsel looks over at Passang, shaking her head.

The two girls can barely be seen, they walk down the stairs to the platform.

They enter the subway amongst the large crowd, cramming into the subway train.

PASSANG

(O/S)

Yeah, I know, it always takes a
while, to get use to a new place.
But, you'll adjust. You just have
to give it time.

PASSANG

Ray ngay hago ghe yod. Sacha
sarpa la gomya dutsoe tok-
tsam gorkyi ray. Yinay
kheyrang samtral majay ah,
galar gom drokyi ray.

PASSANG

རེད། ངས་ཏུ་གོ་གི་ཡོད། ས་ཆ་
གསར་བ་ལ་གོམས་ལ་དུས་ཚོད་ཉོག་
ཅམ་འགོར་གི་རེད། ཡིན་ནས་
ཁྱེད་རང་སེམས་བྲལ་མ་བྱེད་ཨ།
ག་ལེར་གོམས་འགོ་གི་རེད།

INSERT DV IMAGE: SUBWAY/TRAIN

**65 INT. DV FOOTAGE, CASTLE FRANK-BROADVIEW
SUBWAY/TTC - MOMENTS LATER**

PASSANG

(O/S)

Where did you get that camera?

PASSANG

Kheyrang the parchay dhe
gawa nay raging.

PASSANG

ཁྱེད་རང་གི་དབར་ཆས་འདི་
ག་བ་ནས་རགས་སོང་།

TONS of people are standing in the subway, silently riding,
holding the metal rails above their heads to maintain balance.

From the window the train emerges from below to above ground.
Outside buildings pass by quickly.

KUNSEL

(lying) (O/S)

I bought it.

KUNSEL

Ngay nyod yin

KUNSEL

ངས་ཉེས་ཡིན།

INSERT DV IMAGE OF PASSANG SITTING IN THE TRAIN NEXT TO KUNSEL.

PASSANG

(O/S)(CHEEKILY)

You sure you didn't steal it!

PASSANG

Ngonay kheyrang ghe kue may

wa

PASSANG

དངོས་གནས་ཁྱེད་རང་
གི་རྒྱས་མེད་བ།

Through the window the scenery continues to flutter by.

**66 INT./EXT. CASTLE FRANK-BROADVIEW SUBWAY/TTC
SUBWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

Outside the landscape passes by quickly; trees; buildings; parking lots. The train enters below ground as quick as it emerged.

PASSANG

(O/S)

I have no photographs from when I
was younger. I don't even know

what I looked like when I was a kid.

PASSANG

Ngarang la chungdue kabkyi
par may. Chungdue kab su
nga-rang gha-dra yod mey ha
gokey may.

PASSANG

ང་རང་ལ་ཚུང་དུས་སྐབས་ཀྱི་
པར་མེད། ཚུང་དུས་སྐབས་སུ
ང་རང་ག་འདྲ་ཡོད་མེད་ཏེ་
གོ་གི་མེད།

PASSANG

(O/S)

It's no big deal. It's probably
more trouble than what it's worth.

PASSANG

Naygak chenpo dhedra gal
maray. Phalchar dheer tse-
thong lay nyokthra chewazz
yodkyi ray.

PASSANG

གནད་འགག་ཆེན་པོ་འདི་འདྲ་གང་
མ་རེད། སལ་ཆེར་བཅི་
མཐོང་ལས་སྟོན་པ་ཆེ་བ་
ཡོད་ཀྱི་རེད།

PASSANG

(O/S)

Let's go eat something.

PASSANG

Dha chig zaka droko.

PASSANG

ང་ཆོ་ཅིག་ཟ་ག་འགྲོ།

People start to shuffle out of the train. Passang pulls Kunsel
through, getting lost in the crowd.

**67 INT. DV FOOTAGE, KOREAN RESTAURANT - DAY,
MOMENTS
LATER**

Passang shoves food into her mouth.

She grabs the camera from Kunsel and turns it around.

Kunsel takes a bite of the long slippery noodles at the end of her fork.



Left to right: Lead actresses Tenzin Kunsel who plays ‘Kunsel’ and Sonam Choeyki who plays ‘Passang’. Photo credit Migmar Pictures Inc.

Q and A with Kunsang Kyirong

Q Your debut film *100 Sunset* is outstanding for its humanizing tendency, for how the viewers are left feeling for both the victim and the victimizer, their roles flipping in between. How do you achieve that?

A I don't look at any of the characters in *100 Sunset* strictly as a victim or a victimizer. What was most important to me during the writing stage was resisting judgment and, hopefully, finding something human in both the so-called "victim" and "victimizer." The shifting identification isn't a trick. It's, hopefully, a reflection of how people actually are: contradictory, flawed, and sometimes both hurting and causing hurt at the same time. I like Kunsel because of this complexity. She embodies both sides of these binaries, and that tension is what I think makes her interesting.

Q Your film is also unusual for having Tibetan women in lead roles, and rather intriguing roles characterized by Kunsel's voyeuristic habits and Passang's betrayal of her husband. Tell us your motivation and the story behind women protagonism in *100 Sunset*.

A I'm drawn to complicated women and the messy, often contradictory relationships they experience. I like their contradictions, the choices they make, the secrets they keep, and the ways they repress certain feelings, which then surface in their actions and decisions.



100 Sunset crew filming in Parkdale on a winter day.

Photo credit Jamyang Kunga Tenzin

Q The film’s directional minimalism, with its observational storytelling, is striking. Could you talk about your approach to the film’s visual language, especially the use of banal as well as buddhist objects for nonverbal dialogues?

A Cinematographer Nikolay Michaylov and I began shaping the film’s visual language early in the process. From the start, we knew we wanted to create a sense of observation, almost like the viewer is quietly looking in. To achieve this, we often framed shots through objects, over people’s shoulders, or from behind doorways, windows, and mirrors. This approach gave the film an observational and voyeuristic quality.

Regarding the Buddhist objects, all of the interiors were real homes belonging to Tibetan families in the West Lodge apartment

complex. Many of the Buddhist items you see on screen were already part of these homes, and we kept them in place as an essential part of the production design. Their presence naturally contributed to the film's sense of lived-in authenticity.

Q Let's talk about casting and your preparation of the first-time actors for the film. Did you exercise restraint or allow improvisations to achieve such great intimacy between the characters and their performance?

A The casting process was one of my favourite parts of pre-production. We held auditions at a local Tibetan cultural center with the support of my friends Chemi Lhamo and Associate Producer and Buddhist monk Khenpo Ngawang Woser. Through these auditions, we found our secondary cast. The film's two leads, Kunsel and Passang, were cast through a more serendipitous process. Kunsel is the daughter of a friend of Khenpo Ngawang Woser, and Passang was a server at a Parkdale Tibetan restaurant I visited often.

I worked with each girl separately for some time before introducing them to each other. For a full year, I spent one day every weekend with them. We watched movies together, explored the city, and rehearsed scenes as I slowly got to know them. The development of the characters drew on qualities they already possessed. Kunsel, for example, naturally brought a sense of restraint due to her shyness. During production we occasionally improvised dialogue when something felt stiff, but the film remained fully scripted.

Q In one of your interviews, you mention the Tibetan community

money-lending circle, *dhukuti*, as the scaffolding of the film. What a strong scaffolding! How did you tap into this financial practice for your cinematic storytelling without making it look expository?

A I wanted *dhukuti* to exist in the background, much like the building itself blends into the environment, allowing the relationship between the two young women to take center stage. It serves as the system they enter, but it was never meant to be the main focus of the film. By keeping it as a structural element rather than an exposition point, I think it supports the story without drawing too much attention away from the characters.



Left to right: Director Kunsang Kyirong with actor Tenzin Kunsel
Photo credit Jamyang Kunga Tenzin