

E N D A N G E R E D

by

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Paradigm / Zero Gravity Management

DARKNESS.

Then, emerging from the shadows:

A MONSTROUS FACE. Geodesic eyes. Venomous, snapping fangs.

The beast skitters from its lair out onto an alien world of green where a billion years of evolution prove no match for--

A BOOT

Crunching the bug's exoskeleton and carrying away 100 little legs worth of grimy guts on its black rubber soul...

EXT. JUNGLE - EVENING

Twelve men, army fatigues. A patrol, lost. Lost, because:

1967

Is the year. Says so, ONSCREEN. SERGEANT halts the retreat.

SERGEANT
Best guess, Welks?

CORP WELKS
Prob'ly crashed ova in'a Cambodia
'bout ten klicks from the border.

FRIGHTENED SOLDIER
Then why they still on our ass!?

Rest of the men, out of breath, bruised, bloody and scared, grumble wearily. They've already seen friends die today.

SERGEANT
Still their jungle. Gonna need to
hunker down. No extract tonight.
Private Cook, your ears ringing?

PVT COOK, radio tucked in his green, BULLET-RIDDLED backpack:

PVT COOK
Sounds of silence, sir. Radio
works. But the speaker's shot.

PFC (O.S.)
--Sir! Take a look at this shit.

Sarge turns. PRIVATE FIRST CLASS overlooks an embankment.
CORP WELKS ambles over, eyes gettin' wider than a hooker's...

CORP WELKS
Lordy mercy!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Down below, swamped stone pillars. An entrance to a massive--

FLOODED ANCIENT CITY

Riddled by vines and carvings of man and myth. ANGKOR WATT meets *Swiss Family Robinson*. Webs of fog enshroud its scope.

PVT COOK
What is this place?

SERGEANT
Our hotel for the night.

Down the embankment. Easy enough, 'cept for Cook's backpack puts him off balance. HE TUMBLES DOWN...

Throws his hands out. SPLASHES to a stop. Soldiers laugh.

Cook pulls himself from a patch of AQUATIC FLORA, colorful stems fanning out of the water. His left hand is bleeding.

SOLDIER
Now the radio's definitely
worthless.

Cook rises, embarrassed. Sarge sees his palm:

SERGEANT	PVT. COOK
Jones!	--I'll be fine.

MEDIC JONES comes over anyhow. He pulls out the first aid.

MEDIC JONES
Hold still, it's deep.

Wipes the blood. Notices the surrounding plants. Like a strange REEF OF FLOWERING PETALS. Thick and exotic.

Jones snaps off a bud but the stem is HARD. Takes some real effort. Examined close, the petals have ever-so-tiny thorns.

MEDIC JONES (CONT'D)
I think you cut yourself on this.

Medic Jones wraps the cut, helps Private Cook up to rejoin:

THE MEN, scouring the water-riddled ruins. Untouched for millennia. Welks rubs his hand over an imposing STATUE of

A REPTILIAN CREATURE

Jurassic with an Asian twist. It guards the algae-encrusted entryway. Welks studies it keenly, fanged mouth inches away--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

PFC

Boo!

Welks jumps. PFC points and cackles. Welks shoves him.

A few feet away, Sergeant heads up the sodden stone steps to the sealed portal leading inside the ruins. Like an ornate TEMPLE ENTRANCE, it is at once enticing yet somehow sinister.

Sergeant can just see stars coming out to play through the DENSE TREETOPS. He stops at the giant, locked STONE DOORWAY.

SERGEANT

Marks and Peterson, set a watch.
Everyone else, try and figure out
how we open this damn door.

PVT COOK

Do we want to do that, sir? We
don't know what's in there.

SERGEANT

I'd sure feel safer with walls on
four sides than be sitting ducks.
That okay with you, Private Cook?

MEANWHILE:

EXT. ATOP THE EMBANKMENT - NIGHT

Charlie at their six. VIETCONG SOLDIERS hide among the trees.

Their LEADER holds binoculars. Sees the lost city, besieged by the massive swampy moat of mosquitos and mist. He gasps:

LEADER

Burana!?

EXT. FLOODED CITY OF BURANA - NIGHT

Two soldiers stand watch atop crumbled pillars to stay dry. Moonlight flitters through shafts in the high-up kapok trees.

The rest of the men scan around the blockaded entrance with flashlights. Jones notices the floor stones are all SQUARE--

EXCEPT FOR TWO

Which are CIRCULAR, on each side of the door. Sentry points.

MEDIC JONES

Think I found something!

Sergeant comes over. Jones alights the out of place masonry.

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CONTINUED:

MEDIC JONES (CONT'D)

All the stones are square except these two. This is where the guards might have stood, right?

He stands on the pedestal stone. Sarge adds up two-and-two:

SERGEANT

Abrams, stand on that circular stone over there.

The closest soldier, a little guy, steps up... Nothing.

MEDIC JONES

Cook, you're bigger. Switch.

Pvt Cook does. The stones both instantly LOWER two inches. Pressure sensitive. Sergeant steps into the archway as the--

STONE DOORWAY RUMBLES OPEN

Revealing a dark tunnel into the city. And safety.

SERGEANT

Men. Tonight we rest. And we survive. Tomorrow, we head home. I promise you I will get you there safe and sound and once I do, I see a medal in each of your futures'. I stake my life on it.
(then, turning inside)
Now follow me.

He walks in. Cook follows, STEPPING OFF his sentry stone--
TRIGGERING THE DOOR

And its security mechanism. The stone slab ROCKETS CLOSED...

Crunching Sergeant like a bug.

His men stare shell-shocked at the booby trapped doorway:

MEDIC JONES

What the fu--

Ckkk as a bullet explodes his forehead. Vietcong open fire.

Our boys aim back at the BURSTS OF LIGHT in the treeline.

PopPop--

Welks takes two in the chest... COLLAPSES into the fanged reptile statue, now saturated with his BLOOD.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Cook and PFC dive behind a BROKEN DOWN WALL. Hidden from the rest of the men. Quick breaths. Cook gets the radio.

PVT COOK (INTO RADIO)
10-7 to base! 10-7 to base! Sure
as shit hope you can hear this...

OVER THE WALL

Another grunt down, hit in the shoulder. Water runs red.

PVT COOK (CONT'D)
We are under attack and way off
course! Our chopper crashed in a
big swamp just south of here...
Current location is unknown but
we're near these ancient, uh, ruins?

The remaining soldiers take cover, popping up to return fire. A blaze of light in the trees dies out. One bad guy down.

PVT COOK (CONT'D)
Shit... SHIT... We are taking heavy
fire! Repeat, we are at-- it's like
an abandoned... city, do you copy!?

A noise. Overtakes the gunfire: INHUMAN, GUTTURAL & HUNGRY.

Cook drops the radio backpack. Turns to a cowering PFC.

PVT COOK (CONT'D)
What was that?

CRIES-- Erupt from the treeline. Forget Wilhelm, these screams hurt. Enemy gunfire turns AWAY from the Americans.

More carnal NOISES. This time the U.S. soldiers *cry out*.

Cook peeks over wall, sees a trail of Vietcong muzzle flash--

RISING UPWARD... Pulled high into the treetop.

BURSTS OF GUNFIRE

From our side illuminate... a tail... maybe... SOMETHING green and scaled and almost reflective whipping around the flooded ruins, skin mottled with shimmering algae, clawing--

ABRAMS... into the somber night. Cook drops back down.

PFC
What's happening!? What do we do!?

Cook doesn't know. He's just a kid. It shows, in his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

PVT COOK

Run!

They take off, bolting from the macabre noise and endless gunfire and jungle beasts picking off both sides one-by-

PFC SCREAMS

As his feet no longer splash the ground. He disappears with a definitive *crunch*.

COOK KEEPS RUNNING

Fast as he can through the muddy water until he TRIPS...

Almost ironically into a patch of the same AQUATIC FLORA.

Almost. Because this time, when Pvt Cook gets up...

He's greeted by the nightmare that is his attacking death.

His hollow cry for mercy echoes us...

INTO BLACK.

A MODERN HELICOPTER shoots above the PRESENT DAY...

EXT. VEANG KHAN RIVER DAM - VIETNAM/CAMBODIA BORDER - MORNING

A concrete/steel behemoth holding back millions of tons of water, the dam is surrounded by the most dense, lush jungle.

The kind of jungle that can still hold secrets.

INT. HELICOPTER - SAME

DR. ALBERT BRANSKY (56), beard trimmed, giddy like a kid.

DR. BRANSKY

Get a shot of this! Third largest
dam in the world!

A young associate grabs a CAMERA, zooms in and *Click*...

EXT. ROCKY CLIFF - DAY

The aircraft sets down on a rock outcropping. This used to be a WATERFALL. Now dried up, a perfect landing site.

Bransky and five members of his TEAM exit. Chopper leaves. Turning to his ASIAN GUIDE over the wind and blades:

BRANSKY

Is this the deepest we could get?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASIAN GUIDE

Nowhere to land, Dr. Bransky! All
jungle, all trees!

Bransky shields eyes, looks at the metal bird escaping...

CUT TO:

AN UNKNOWN P.O.V.

OF THE COPTER flying high through the blue sky. REVERSE TO:
AN ORANGUTANG. It watches, climbs a limb deep in the...

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

It swings to a neighboring tualang tree, jumping past the--

SKELETON OF A SOLDIER

Hanging 30 feet up, wedged grotesquely in the branches.

Dead. Circa 1967.

CUT TO:

HANDHELD HI-DEF VIDEO: **EXT. HIMALAYAN VILLAGE - DAY**

*They call it the "roof of the world." Wood shanties somehow
keep out the flurries as Buddhist prayer flags flap wildly.*

FEMALE FIGURE

How much further!?

*PAN TO -- A woman (34), dressed for K2, talks with a GUIDE...
old, covered in the thinnest of coats. He smiles dark teeth.*

GUIDE

Skoo, skoo!

*Points to a tangled, leafless tree. DR. ALICE WADE removes
her goggles. Were this a bar, you'd buy her a stiff drink.*

RAJ (O.S. HOLDING CAMERA)

I think my face is frozen.

Alice says something in Nepali. Guide responds.

ALICE (TO CAMERA)

*He says this is it. The "Tree of
Nirvana." Give me the camera...*

TIME CUT TO:

TREE OF NIRVANA, as the Guide slices off bark. Chews it, then hands the gnarled pulp to a sniffing RAJ IYENGAR (29), Indian.

ALICE (V.O.)

It has been estimated that one-quarter of the world's plants...

PULL BACK OFF PROJECTION:

INT. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO - LECTURE HALL - AFTERNOON

Alice gives her presentation to a committee of academics. *VIDEO FOOTAGE from the Himalayas plays behind her, dissolving to shots of her in the AMAZON, diving the GREAT BARRIER REEF--*

ALICE

...Have yet to be discovered. And despite DNA mapping and genetic therapies getting all the press, over 84-percent of drugs used today are still derived from organic compounds. This, when only one-tenth of research budgets are spent finding and cataloguing these unknown biological treasures.

The UNIVERSITY DEAN watches with only mild interest until his phone vibrates. He rudely peruses an email. Alice notices:

ALICE (CONT'D)

Um... Take, uh, the Kulaanu Tree of Nepal for example. Extraordinarily rare, it grows only above 12,000 feet. The indigenous people use it as a sort of... hallucinogenic.

VIDEO BEHIND her of the Tree of Nirvana: Raj is tripping out.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Its bark contains a never-before-seen compound that, with further study, may slow the progress of neuromuscular diseases such as Parkinson's, MS...

UNIVERSITY DEAN

--We've read your report, Dr. Wade.

Alice stops. Even Raj, busy running the presentation from a laptop off-stage, looks up. The Dean pockets his cell phone.

UNIVERSITY DEAN (CONT'D)

The Kulaanu Bark, the Chesapeake Canalus... this root from South
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

UNIVERSITY DEAN (CONT'D)
 America that supposedly stops
 hangovers--
 (laughter)
 But in the laboratory, you've
 failed to reproduce any of the
 results you claim to have witnessed
 on your very expensive travels.

Alice internalizes the interruption. Sets her notes aside.

ALICE
 Thousands of years ago, the world's
 most precious commodity wasn't gold
 or diamonds, it was a plant...
 called Silphium. Sore throat?
 Take Silphium. Fever? Silphium.
 When your kids draw you a heart,
 they're not drawing a real heart,
 they're drawing the ancient symbol
 for, you guessed it, Silphium.
 It's demand as a cure-all was so
 great -- so widespread -- Rome
 literally farmed it to extinction.
 (beat)
 So let me ask you this: What if, in
 the farthest corners of the earth,
 hidden away... Silphium still
 existed? Wouldn't that be worth
 searching for?

A momentary quiet. She holds for an answer, then--

UNIVERSITY DEAN
 You said that last year.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO - DR. ALICE WADE'S OFFICE - LATER

Diagrams & maps are TORN OFF THE WALL... Alice shoves all her
 work in a trash can. Raj helplessly looks on.

ALICE
 Three years, gone. Just like that!

RAJ
 Alice, we'll find another grant!

Alice shakes her head, drops into a chair. Defeated. Raj
 wants nothing more than to walk over and comfort her.

ALICE
 Dean Wasserman wasn't even paying
 attention! Did you see him check
 his email? It's like someone told
 him to pull the grant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAJ
Come on, let's go get a drink.
We'll figure it out. Together.

ALICE
Not tonight. I'd rather sit and
wallow in my own misery.

RAJ
That's definitely a better idea.

Alice realizes Raj is just as devastated as she is.

ALICE
I'm sorry. Thanks, Raj, for always
sticking with me. It means a lot.

Raj nods, wants to say something. Maybe confess his true
feelings. But instead, he leaves. Alice stares at the wall:

DEVOID OF WORK. She holds up a vial of Kulaanu Bark. Light
from the lamp catches the plant's tiny hairs. She sighs...

Then throws it away too. Takes a look at her messy office.
No wonder she likes to be outside. She stands, walks over--

HER LEGS COLLAPSE

And she FALLS. Papers everywhere. Pulling herself up, she
grabs a PILL BOTTLE off the desk. Dumps out...

LITTLE YELLOW PILLS. Swallows two, dry. Alice holds up her
shaking hand. Tries to keep it steady. A KNOCK ON THE DOOR--

ALICE (CONT'D)
Raj, I said go home!

Not Raj. It's richly dressed good ol' boy RALPH LYDON (70).

ALICE (CONT'D)
Can I help you?

LYDON
I hope so. My name is Ralph Lydon.

He extends a hand... her eyes pop open:

ALICE
As in Lydon Library?

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO - LYDON LIBRARY - EVENING

A sleek, glass dome hides the campus book depository. At
night, it's lit up blue. Alice and Lydon stroll past...

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CONTINUED:

LYDON

Know how much it costs bringin' a drug to market, Dr. Wade? The years of clinical trials, the FDA approval, the inevitable lawsuits when someone stubs their toe 'cause they think our pill made them woozy? It's not like the old days. Now, nobody cares unless your drug does something big and bold to justify all those billions.

ALICE

I care. We can't just stop searching for cures because they're not lucrative.

LYDON

We treat people, Alice. We're not in the business of curing 'em.

ALICE

So why are we out here?

Lydon smiles, genteelly.

LYDON

PharmaGen's patent on Kritonex expires next year. When that happens, my company loses its most profitable drug. Profits which allow us to finance research like yours.

She stops. Looks at the library bearing this man's name.

ALICE

Are you the reason I lost my grant?

LYDON

(chortling)

Dr. Wade, I've got a lead on something better than your little hangover cure. Something'll make Lipitor and Viagra look like M&M's. A blockbuster drug that could fund your research well into retirement. You'd never have to worry about fightin' for grants ever again.

Alice chokes back angry words. Furious... but curious.

LYDON (CONT'D)

Let me show you somethin'.

EXT. DOWNTOWN CHICAGO - PHARMAGEN HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

A towncar pulls into underground parking. Above, 59-stories of glass paid for by back pain and cholesterol.

INT. PHARMAGEN LOBBY - NIGHT

A ramp from the executive garage leads into the massive marble atrium. Commissioned art. Fountain. Imposing.

The night WATCHMAN nods to Lydon. Alice takes it all in.

ALICE

Don't you already have a bio-pathologist on the payroll you can send to find this blockbuster drug?

They're buzzed through to the ELEVATOR BANK.

LYDON

That would be Dr. Bransky.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Alice looks at the numbers: G - 60.

ALICE

Albert Bransky? I read his paper on telomere regeneration. It was brilliant... If he's your head of bio-path, why am I here?

LYDON

Dr. Bransky... recently retired.
(selling it)
Palm Springs, I think.

Lydon steps over, hits floor: 9. Then 18, 42, 27, 3.

ALICE

Where are we going?

LYDON

Down.

Elevator goes into override mode, heads BELOW G. Beep.

AS THEY DESCEND:

LYDON (CONT'D)

Approximately six months ago, we received several Rhesus Macaques from Southeast Asia. I'm sad to report most did not survive our
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LYDON (CONT'D)
tests. On the plus side, we were
two weeks away from human trials.

ALICE
Most?

LYDON
One monkey lived. We named him
Dorian.

DOORS OPEN:

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - NIGHT

High-tech. White, clean, sleek. And LOUD. Clear acrylic
CAGES line the walkway. Night technicians scurry.

LYDON
We do all our animal research here.
Eight stories underground.
(then)
Less protestors.

Alice looks into a darkened aquarium as-- WHAM!

A wide-mouth and angry MORAY EEL bangs into the Plexiglas,
fangs bared. Alice startles back.

LYDON (CONT'D)
This way.

They turn a corner. Lydon scans his keycard to:

CENTRAL LAB

A cylindrical glass enclosure. Tire swing. Tropical plants.
A SCIENTIST inside the vivarium finishes taking blood from:

DORIAN THE MONKEY

Old, very old, for a primate. And a cleverness in its eyes.
Dorian waves to the scientist and--

LEAPS to the tire. Springs up a jungle gym. Surprisingly
spry for an old guy.

LYDON
Alice, meet Dorian.

Alice gets close. Watches Dorian play. The monkey spots
her, climbs down a rope and hops right to the glass.

She can make out wrinkles, the scars of years in the jungle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

What were you testing on him?

LYDON

Stroke inhibitor. Had the opposite effect on primates as on rats... Then two kinds of retro-virals. An amino acid cocktail. And I think, just for fun, someone here infected him with the plague.

ALICE

Why would you do that?

The scientist enters with Dorian's blood on a GLASS SLIDE.

LYDON

How old would you say Dorian looks?

ALICE

Uh... I don't-- Early fifties?

Lydon motions to a MICROSCOPE. Alice leans in, squints...

LYDON

That's what we thought. The oldest living simian on record is 71. Most don't live past their forties.

Alice's head pops up. Confused by Dorian's blood sample.

ALICE

This can't be right.

Lydon smiles. Exactly.

LYDON

I assure you, we've done every test.

Dorian is already back at play in his private jungle.

LYDON (CONT'D)

That's why we named him after Dorian Gray. 'Cause best we can tell, he's over two-hundred years old.

INT. LYDON'S OFFICE - LATER

Dorian climbs on Alice's shoulder as she feeds him fruit.

ALICE

Let me just make sure I understand--
You want me to go find...

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (CONT'D)
...The Fountain of Youth?

Lydon sits on the edge of his desk. A touchscreen remote in his hand for a CURVED VIDEO WALL displaying: *Maps, 3D DNA.*

LYDON
Well we don't think it's actually a fountain. Could be the water, a plant, don't know. All genetic markers in this little guy's blood just point to somethin' environmental. 'Problem's whatever the hell it is, we can't isolate or reverse engineer it. Seems we require the original source.

ALICE
Where exactly is this original source?

PETER (O.S.)
The Kingdom of Cambodia.

PETER MUELLER (47)

Wears no white coat. No scientific wonder in his hunter's eyes. Has a nasty habit of flicking his METAL LIGHTER.

Dorian hops off Alice's shoulder and HIDES behind the desk.

LYDON
This is Peter Mueller, he's in charge of animal procurement for all of PharmaGen. Our game warden.

Lydon hands the remote to Peter. He nods to Alice.

PETER
Dorian came in a large shipment out of the capital, Phnom Penh. A real shit hole. We believe he was originally caught...

--On the VIDEO WALL the map zeroes in--

PETER (CONT'D)
...Here, in the north-eastern state of Mondulkiri, near the border of our good friend, Vietnam. It's one of the densest and least explored jungles on Earth. So much so it doesn't even have a name.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LYDON

Whaddya say, Dr. Wade?

She quietly thinks, still angry over the situation. But--

ALICE

You haven't left me much choice.
I'll have my things brought over,
start setting up-- If I put a team
together right away we'll be ready
in two, three months...

LYDON

We've already assembled your team.

ONSCREEN: Photos. Quickly flip by. A digital dossier of:

EXCURSION 1447B - EASTERN CAMBODIA - CODE "FOUNTAIN"

*We see Alice (Lead Research), Raj (Asst. Research), Peter
Mueller (Game Warden), CHOW SU (Security), JOE COOK (Guide)--*

LYDON (CONT'D)

You, Dr. Alice Wade, will be in
charge of determining the source,
be it animal, vegetable or mineral.
As usual, Raj Iyengar will join as
your number two. Peter here will
represent the company. Chow Su Non
will run your security. He's been
hired by our local contact: Joseph
Cook. Not exactly a licensed field
guide, but he knows the country
inside and out and he speaks our
language. Plus, he has the
connections we need to move fast.

(beat)

You leave in twelve hours.

ALICE

Twelve... you're joking, right? I
can't be ready that quickly!

LYDON

This is a race, Alice. If our
rivals get the drug first, we are
done for. Think about it. The
ability to stave off old age.
Disease. And all the while, people
need us if they want to stay young.
How much will they pay? A thousand
dollars a pill? Ten-thousand?

(clicks the remote)

How much would you pay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ONSCREEN: Video of a MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN in a hospital bed. Near death and completely paralyzed. Date Stamp: 8/22/93.

Alice reacts. She *knows* this woman. Her hand rushes to a burnished PENDANT NECKLACE around her neck.

LYDON (CONT'D)
Myotonia Atrophica, type 1. It's incredibly rare. You had a fifty-fifty shot at inheritin' it from your momma and you drew the short end of that stick, didn't you?

ONSCREEN: The CHROMOSOMAL ABNORMALITY viewed through an electron scope. Even at the micro level, the DNA is sickly.

LYDON (CONT'D)
It's also why you've gone to the ends of the Earth lookin' for a cure. My guess is you've already noticed the occasional and unexpected loss of motor function.

ALICE
(after a beat)
How the hell did you find out?

PETER
Who do you think manufactures those little yellow pills?

LYDON
This plant might slow down your disease. Heck, might even stop it altogether. Who knows?

Alice's eyes bore into Lydon as the MAP OF CAMBODIA reappears:

LYDON (CONT'D)
The holy grail of medicine, Alice.
(points to the screen)
And it's somewhere in that jungle.

CUT TO:

AN ASIAN COBRA

SNAPPING at a dangling rat. Yanked away last minute: A taunt.

INT. BACK ROOM - SOMEWHERE IN PHNOM PENH

Sounds of a bar. Asian rock music. A SNAKE-HANDLER shuts the aquarium lid with the black and orange and angry reptile.

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CONTINUED:

Men, Khmer, Vietnamese, Malay, stand over a PENTAGONAL TABLE, protective plastic molding along the edge creates a tabletop:

ARENA

Money changes hands. Loud shouting. Betting. A lot of it being handled by a native boy, TRAN, wearing a METS t-shirt.

The yelling quiets as a strong, sinewy ASIAN THUG sits at the "arena." He lights a cigarette. It dangles from his mouth.

He takes his right arm, sets it flush to table, through an open, U-SHAPED SLAT at the elbow. As he lays it out, show--

A DRAGON, tattooed in a spiral from knuckles to elbow.

Dragon Thug smurks, puffs, glares at his opponent:

JOE COOK

Who reflects daggers right back. Arm already on the table, through an open slat. Looks about 35 and needing a thrill. Fancies himself indestructible. Or he just doesn't care.

Joe and Thug are joined by THREE OTHER MEN, arms at ready.

TRAN

Last call for action!

One more bet. Tran calls for the Snake-Handler...

Who uses a long SNAKE TONG to collar the venomous head. He swings the cobra around, prodding it at the galley of men--

In a WAVE they all move back, frightened. Dragon Thug eyes the creature, a bead of sweat building. His opponent Joe:

Steel. The snake is held over the arena, whipping around.

To recap: One snake. Five men. Last in wins.

TRAN (CONT'D)

Three! Two! ONE!

The snake is loosed, dropping to the table. It slithers up to the barrier and tries to strike. Bounces off.

One PUSSY immediately pulls his arm up. First out.

The snake turns. Slithers around the arena. Heads for--

THE THUG

Ash builds on his cig from quick, nervous puffs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Spectators hoot encouragement. The cobra pauses inches from:

DRAGON THUG'S WRIST, shaking as Thug tries to hold his nerves in check. Slowly... the snake approaches... so slowly...

And slithers OVER his tattooed arm, heading for the two other men. Dragon Thug heaves a sigh of relief.

GIRLY-GIRLS 2 & 3 try to hold out as the cobra prowls over, regards their flesh... but they're chicken. Both withdraw.

Leaving just Joe and Thug and THE SNAKE, now heading for Joe.

Dragon Thug smirks. Joe smirks back, uses his free arm to...

DRINK A BEER

All-hell-yeah-American. Thug's smirk vanishes.

Snake approaches Cook's arm, actually FLICKS SKIN with its tongue. Tran starts getting nervous. Snake slowly backs up.

Coils... And STRIKES--

THE THUG!

Thug screams, pulls his arm up, snake dangling as he lashes and flails, jaw like a vice 'til Handler comes with a machete

SLICING THROUGH AIR

Severing the cobra's head. Crowd cheers: "*Joe, Joe, Joe!*"

The Thug painfully pulls the snake head off, tosses it aside and quickly SUCKS and SPITS the poison from his forearm.

Tran hands out money. Crowd is riled. Joe calmly watches.

Thug finishes sucking poison. Waits a moment. His GANG OF MEN (all with similar tattoos) hold their breath...

After a moment, the Thug LAUGHS. He lost, but he lived. Friends slap him on the back. Huge weight lifted.

Back at his seat he reaches out to shake Joe's-- *What the...*

Thug sees his hand TURN BLACK. His eyes go wide, meet Joe's

HE FACEPLANTS

Dead, right on the arena. Men holler and grow rowdy.

One of the dead Thug's UNDERLINGS punches someone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THE FIGHT quickly spreads. Joe looks to Tran, motions for him to split. Tran snatches the scattered money and bolts--

But a dragon festooned hand grabs Tran's shoulder. Tries to get the money. Joe punches the GOON square in the temple.

TRAN (CONT'D)

Thanks, boss!

JOE

Get the car!

Goon recovers, throws a hook, Joe leans back. Knuckles clip his chin. Joe kicks out, getting Goon good in the stomach.

Another BASTARD (tattooed as well) comes with a chair, breaks it over Joe's spine. Joe stumbles, flails out, grabs...

THE SNAKE TONGS

Which he swings around, jabs into the Bastard's NECK--

Not big enough to go around, but they get a good grip. Cook squeezes the handle, CRUSHING the Bastard's windpipe.

Bastard goes down, reveals SCREW YU coming straight for Joe, swinging a chain. Chain snags tongs. Yu disarms Joe.

Joe drops, avoids the chain's lash. Rolls behind Yu, grabs

THE SEVERED SNAKE HEAD

Springs up-- SLAMS the dead fangs into Yu's cheek. Yu screams, flails. RIPS the head and his own skin out.

Joe flees through a door into--

INT. STRIP CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Asian women gyrate. Men drink, whistle. Joe runs past...

EXT. STREET 51 - CONTINUOUS

Nighttime is the right time. Mopeds and hawker stalls. Hookers and street food. Lights, lights and more.

Members of the DRAGON GANG flow from the nearby alley-- spot Joe darting away. They follow as...

Joe avoids the dangerously weaving scooters and TUK-TUKS. Tran at the wheel of one. HONKS.

TRAN

Joe Cook! Get in!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tran speeds up, cutting off two Gang Members. One totters--
 Into the path of a TAXI. Gets flipped onto the hood. Splat.
 Joe grabs Tran's tuk-tuk, swings inside. They take off...

CUT TO:

EXT. CHICAGO EXECUTIVE AIRPORT - HANGAR 57-8 - MORNING

Sun rises through open hangar doors. A BOEING BBJ aircraft --
 "PharmaGen" painted on the tail -- is loaded with crates.

Peter Mueller oversees cargo. Alice nears with a MANIFEST.

ALICE

Do we really need all these guns?

PETER

Better safe than sorry.

ALICE

And what's an... Active Denial Sys--

A black TOWNCAR pulls up. The DRIVER hops out:

RAJ (THROUGH OPEN DOOR)

--why are we at an airpo--

Door closes. Driver comes around, opens the back door:

RAJ (CONT'D)

--this is NOT how you treat...

Okay, okay, I'm going!

Raj pops out with a small duffel bag. Sees Alice.

RAJ (CONT'D)

Are you okay, Alice!? Did they
 hurt you? I will get us out of...

ALICE

--It's okay, Raj. They didn't
 kidnap us. We have a job.

RAJ

Who's "they"? What job? Because I
 didn't pack any equipment and I'm
 on my last pair of under...

PETER

--We've taken care of everything.

Driver walks past carrying a suitcase.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAJ

Hey... is that my suitcase? What's going on? Who is this guy?

ALICE

This is Peter Mueller, he works for PharmaGen, that's their plane, those are their guns and they've hired us to go to Cambodia to find the Fountain of Youth.

A moment, then Raj bursts into LAUGHTER. Alice doesn't.

RAJ

Oh god... You're serious.

INT. PRIVATE JET - AIRBORN - DAY

VIP. Open seating. Bar. Peter sits at the fore. A wall-mounted TELEVISION plays BBC WORLD NEWS softly as he works...

NEWS ANCHOR (ONSCREEN)

Protests continue across Southeast Asia over the region's seemingly unstoppable energy demands.

B-ROLL of protestors in the street. Police hold them back.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

At issue is the environmental impact caused by such recent projects as China's Three Gorges Dam and the newer Veang Khan Dam on the border of Vietnam and Cambodia.

Peter glances over at the mention of the Veang Khan Dam, goes back to studying IMAGES of legendary animals from Asian lore.

We see articles with titles like: "Animal Legends of Asia" and "The Dragon Myth." He picks up one: "The Lizard King"

SEVERAL ROWS BACK, Alice works at a table with a built-in TOUCHSCREEN, swiping through Dorian's DNA DATA. Raj appears:

RAJ

Before I say anything. I'd like to make it clear that in all our years together, I have never doubted you. And I will follow you anywhere. So if I seem a little reluctant to believe in a 200-year old monkey or anything I'm about to show you... It's only because it's really, really crazy, okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She smiles, amused. Raj sits across from her holding an iPad that instantly SYNCs IMAGERY with the touchscreen table.

RAJ (CONT'D)

So. I looked into what you asked.
Local mythologies, historical
accounts. Anything relating to the
"Fountain of Youth" or immortality
in ancient Asian culture. And one
word keeps popping up...

(beat)

Burana.

ALICE

Burana?

Raj brings up a WEBSITE on his tablet, mirrored on the table:

*Filled with imaginative DRAWINGS of the lost city of
BURANA... A ruined civilization we have glimpsed before.*

RAJ

Like the opera.

(reading)

"A once grand city lost to the
jungle." And as the story goes, its
inhabitants were -- are you ready
for this? -- immortal.

ALICE

Because they had the Fountain of
Youth?

ON PETER -- Head turned, now trying to eavesdrop.

RAJ

Exactly. Ponce De León was only
about nine-thousand miles off.

TURBULENCE HITS, knocking Peter's briefcase to the floor.
Alice and Raj glance over as he retrieves its spilt contents.

RAJ (CONT'D)

And he wasn't the only one.
Genghis Khan sent an army looking
for Burana... Of a thousand men,
only one returned; blinded and
crazy and screaming of *dragons*.
Marco Polo even wrote of the city's
mystical healing powers. So did
this Moroccan fellow with an
unpronounceable name...

He pulls up an image from the BRITISH MUSEUM archives:

(CONTINUED)

I could not... it is so...
The Great Khan presented the Old Man,
purloined from the jungles of his vast empire
and aged a thousand winters.

From a state of disbelief, I inquired from
whence he was borne. His reply...
"Burana."

Ibn Battuta - *The Rihla* (1355)

Translated & Printed c. 1754

Asia MO 170.3-25.1-2 Property of the British Museum

CONTINUED: (2)

RAJ (CONT'D)
But then, for hundreds of years...
Nothing. No mention in literature
or history. Until 1967.

He diminishes the ancient parchment and clicks on a new page:

*"THE LOST PATROL" -- A B&W PICTURE of some recognizable
soldiers from 1967 (Sarge, Welks, etc.) staring across time.*

RAJ (CONT'D)
This platoon -- "The Lost Patrol" --
it went missing during Vietnam when
their helicopter crashed in
Cambodia. They were attacked and
this... was their last broadcast.

Raj hits play on a familiar STATIC-FILLED RECORDING:

RADIO RECORDING (V.O.)
10-7 to ba-- as shit-- off course--
chopper crashed-- just south of--
location-- unknown-- near-- ancient
ruins?-- SHIT-- heavy fire! Repeat--
it's-- an abandoned... city, do you--

A NOISE: Inhuman, guttural & hungry... and then it ends.

ALICE
"Ancient ruins"?

RAJ
Yeah. So some people think the
Lost Patrol found Burana then got,
I don't know, eaten, 'cause that's
the most rationally sane assumption.

Alice taps her fingers on the desk, deep in thought.

RAJ (CONT'D)
Oh, don't, no. Don't tap-- Please.

ALICE
Dorian... this platoon... both were
in the same region of Cambodia,
right? Raj, what if this is our
Silphium? And it's just waiting in
that jungle for us to find it!?

RAJ
Alice. In 5000 years, nobody has
found Burana. And if they have?
(taps Lost Patrol image)
They didn't make it back alive.

INT. JOE COOK'S APARTMENT - DAY

A decent apartment in an old building. Out the window, far enough below for the smell to stay, the slums belch life.

The place is filled with KNICKKNACKS acquired over many, many years. Papers everywhere. Maps. Invoices. Worn out books:

One such BOOK is open to a painting of a REPTILIAN CREATURE. *Jurassic with an Asian twist.* Like the statue at Burana--

A LOUD KNOCK

But Joe doesn't stir from bed. He's out. On the nightstand:

A framed picture of a WOMAN (20). Kodachrome colors faded from the tropics. She has features not dissimilar to Alice.

ANOTHER BANG

Rattles the frame off the edge. Joe sits up. Rubs his eyes.

HALLWAY

Tran holds mail, opened. Bangs on the door.

TRAN

Joe Cook! You gonna be late!

Finally-- Joe, groggy, lets Tran enter.

TRAN (CONT'D)

I get mail. You get request from prince in Dubai, he want two more warrior statue. Say two he have not enough.

JOE

I'll let you handle it.

Tran's eyes get big. *Really!?*

TRAN

Okay, yeah, okay! Question: I get commission too?

JOE

All yours. You're ready.

Joe splashes water on his tired face. Grabs a towel.

TRAN

You need coffee. I make you some.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
No point. I'll power through.

TRAN
You picking up Americans at airport
in hour. Question for you: What
they coming to buy?

JOE
Tran, you don't need to say
"question" every time you ask me
something. And they're not buying
anything. I'm taking them into the
jungle.

TRAN
You do import, export. You not a
guide. Ques--
(stops himself)
Why you take them?

JOE
Because...

Joe takes that book with the odd, artistically embellished
reptilian drawing and flips it closed. Hands it to Tran.

JOE (CONT'D)
They're looking for the ultimate
export.

Tran rubs the cover, intrigued by the book's title...

BURANA: THE SEARCH FOR ETERNAL YOUTH

EXT. PHNOM PENH AIRPORT - TARMAC - DAY

Like the country itself, the airport is still attempting to
crawl into the 21st century. The PharmaGen jet is unloaded.

Cabin door opens. Peter and Raj disembark down a STAIRCAR,
humidity hitting like a punch. Raj spots Joe on the tarmac:

RAJ
Who's that?

PETER
That... was not my first choice.

INT. PRIVATE JET - LAVATORY - SAME

Alice drinks down a yellow pill. She stares into the mirror.

This is it. Her last chance.

EXT. TARMAC - SAME

Peter shakes hands with Joe, forced smiles all around:

PETER
Dr. Wade will be down shortly.
This is her associate, Dr. Raj
Iyengar.

JOE
Nice to meet you. Is that what we
discussed?

Joe points to a LEATHER BAG in Peter's hand.

PETER
It's all here--

Joe's cellphone rings: "TRAN CALLING." He answers.

JOE
What's up...? Tran, what did I
tell you about asking questions?
(adjusts phone)
Yes, I'm still at the airport.

He listens-- Immediately turns behind him, concerned...

TWO BEAT UP TRUCKS

Full of DRAGON GANG THUGS tear ass across the TARMAC.

JOE (CONT'D)
WELL DID YOU TELL THEM WE DIDN'T
CHEAT!?

INT. PRIVATE JET - SAME

OCCUPIED snaps to VACANT as Alice steps from the lavatory.
She grabs her bag, looks down the boarding ramp to see--

THE STAIRS ARE BACKING AWAY

The staircar turns and speeds off. Without her.

Her eyes dart to the incoming trucks, confused:

ALICE
Who are they...?

The Thugs in the pickup bed OPEN FIRE, missing the staircar
and pocketing the side of the plane with BULLET HOLES.

ALICE DROPS TO THE FLOOR

EXT. TARMAC - SAME

Baggage handlers dive out of the way of the derelict trucks--

A CRATE

Tumbles down off the belt loader, cracks open as one truck

SLAMS THROUGH IT

Scattering wood and plowing over a rolled, uninflated RAFT.

INT. PRIVATE JET - SAME

HEAD DOWN on the floor, Alice finds a SATELLITE PHOTO wedged under Peter's seat... *from when he dropped his briefcase.*

The glossy pic shows a swarth of GREEN, nothing but green. The MAP has longitude/latitude overlaid and a RED DOT with:

"LAST SIGNAL BROADCAST 6/16 -- DR. ALBERT BRANSKY"

Alice gasps... not from that but from the ENGINES ROARING...

She rushes past the open cabin door into the

COCKPIT

WHERE TWO BULLET HOLES

Match one in the chest of the slumped forward PILOT... and one in the still smoking INSTRUMENT PANEL.

Alice pushes the pilot back, grabs the wedged THROTTLE and pulls hard with both arms. The engines start to slow but--

The console SPARKS... the plane does not stop.

ALICE

Seriously!?

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, she sees the rickety staircar slalom around a refueling tanker, drawing the trucks away from the--

CONTROL TOWER

Which Alice is accelerating straight toward. As this dawns--

HER PHONE RINGS

And like her, it's classical... BEETHOVEN'S NINTH:

ALICE (CONT'D)

Hello?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (V.O.)
 Hey, Alice. This is Joe Cook. Raj
 gave me your number. We haven't
 met yet but-- you know what, hold
 on one second...

Alice hears GUNFIRE from the phone syncing with the chase:

She watches the gang truck -- its driver shot -- *swerve* into
 a passing BAGGAGE CART. Luggage and gang members go FLYING.

PETER (SOFT V.O.)
 Tell her that's why we bring the
 guns!

JOE (V.O.)	ALICE
Peter says, "That's why..."	--I heard him! What the hell is going on here?

JOE (V.O.)
 Just a... little misunderstanding.
 But we need you to stop the plane.
 It's moving.

ALICE
 I know... the throttle's shot! It
 won't slow down.

The INSTRUMENT PANEL shows her speed *increasing*. From the
 radio around the dead pilot's neck she can hear YELLING.

JOE (V.O.)
 Well, I guess we'll come get you.

ALICE
 What does that even mean? Hello?

But he's hung up. Alice looks out the right side, sees the
 staircar drawing the second gang truck across a runway as...

A CARGO PROP JET

Comes in for a landing. Alice's eyes grow wide--

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

The staircar blasts across the runway with *seconds to spare*.
 The Dragon Gang truck isn't so lucky as the...

CARGO JET TOUCHES DOWN

And its PROPELLER BLADE comes straight for the truck bed...

BLENDING THE GANG

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Into a spray of red and shrapnel. The blades from the serrated PROP ENGINE land like giant spears and one--

SPINS INTO THE REFUELING TANKER

Cutting metal like a shuriken and releasing jet fuel as the PharmaGen jet passes, its wing clipping the tanker.

INT/EXT. PRIVATE JET - SAME

Alice is 30 seconds from impact with the conning tower. She hears *HONKING* from the port side and leaves the cockpit...

BY THE CABIN DOOR

Alice pokes her head outside. The STAIRCAR keeps pace with the jet. Standing at the top, hair blowing in the wind...

JOE
HEY! I'M JOE! WE JUST SPOKE ON
THE PHONE. CAN YOU JUMP?

Alice can't believe his nonchalance. It's a ten foot jump at 40mph out of a plane trailing jet fuel towards a building--

JOE (CONT'D)
LIKE RIGHT NOW!

Alice looks ahead. They're seconds away. A deep breath and--

SHE JUMPS

Across the expanse, crashing onto the flight of stairs and into Joe's arms. The staircar hooks away last second as...

THE PLANE CRASHES

Into the control tower, SPARKING the line of leaked gasoline-- Spiraling flames back to the tanker and... *BOOOOM...*

A MASSIVE FIREBALL ERUPTS

Joe and Alice turn back at the explosion. Beat.

JOE (CONT'D)
So how was your flight?

INT. HOTEL SUITE - DAY

A bamboo fan lazily spins. Joe opens the wood blinds to peer outside. Alice SLAPS down the incriminating satellite photo:

ALICE
How dare you not tell me!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Peter fidgets with his lighter while a company LAPTOP boots.

PETER

Lydon didn't want you to know we're the second expedition. His orders.

ALICE

What was the plan? Get us here, make it so we didn't have a choice and then tell us we're not just looking for a drug, or hell, an ancient mythical city... we're looking for your missing team too? (oh yeah...) And then THIS guy almost gets us killed over a bad bet?

PETER

There's a reason he was our second choice.

Raj hits an old TV showing their recent airport chaos.

RAJ

I'd hate to see the third.

Joe glances over. Kind of agrees.

ALICE

Do you even know what happened to the first team? Are they alive?

Peter debates how much to reveal. Sighs.

PETER

We lost contact with them six days ago. Three scientists, a guide and two gunmen. All led by Dr. Albert Bransky.

(points to red dot on map)
He was here when he made his last satellite uplink.

He pulls up a proprietary PharmaGen software link and plays:

A WEBCAM VIDEO: INT. CAVE - EVENING

Shot from a laptop DEEP IN THE JUNGLE. Dr. Albert Bransky, from the first trip, addresses us from the MOUTH OF A CAVE:

DR. BRANSKY

We've just captured our fifth animal with the 6-P centisomal genetic marker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Webcam pans over to a LEOPARD, sedated on a tarp. Bransky takes a syringe and draws blood.

DR. BRANSKY (CONT'D)
I'm uploading the results now.

He removes the needle, puts the syringe into a portable, computerized centrifuge (GENOME SEQUENCER) and turns it on.

DR. BRANSKY (CONT'D)
As you can see, Mr. Lydon, this cat has the same quantity of 6-P mutations as our very own Dorian. Which means we're close to the Fountain. I've also noticed...

AN ANIMAL NOISE -- Loud and shrieking. Bransky looks off:

DR. BRANSKY (CONT'D)
Chang, get the tranquilizer! I wanna test whatever that thing is.
(into camera)
We'll call you back.

The footage digitally freezes and the connection is LOST.

Alice stares at the frozen, pixilated image of Bransky.

PETER
 Bransky figured out a way to trace the Fountain of Youth by the number of mutations on the 6th chromosome. The more mutations in captured wildlife meant they were heading in the right direction, like a genetic Geiger counter. So if we track Bransky to his last known location, we should be near the source.

RAJ
Burana.

PETER
 Maybe.

KNOCK - KNOCK. It startles everyone but Joe.

JOE
 Relax. It's my assistant.
(beat)
 I think.

He grabs a gun just to be safe and goes to the door--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRAN
(barging in)
Police looking for you. They think
you some terrorist 'cause of thing
at airport. You gotta go.

Tran carries a greasy PAPER BAG. Something inside MOVES.

RAJ
What's that?

TRAN
This. This lunch.
(beat)
It's good. You eat in car.

ALICE
Where are we going?

JOE
Just need to run one quick errand.

EXT. PHNOM PENH - DAY

A RANGE ROVER drives through the heart of the city. Past
timeworn temples, past trashy tenements. Arriving at...

EXT. PALATIAL MANSION - DAY

A heavily armored gate.

ALICE
This is your quick errand? You're
taking us right to the people
chasing you!

JOE
Alice, don't be racist. This is a
different gang. Far more dangerous.

Joe rolls down the window, speaks to the GUARD. Gate opens.

EXT. MANSION GROUNDS - DAY

Peter pulls the leather bag out of the trunk. The guard
checks the delivery while other gatekeepers pat them down.

RAJ
Is this a drug deal?

PETER
You could say that.

The guard escorts them past KOI PONDS and GUARD TOWERS...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE
Look at this place.

JOE
Cambodia is the doorway for all
opium and ecstasy into China. And
Mr. Shin is the doorman.

INT. MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Every ornate oriental object is the best money can buy. The walls are covered in gilded murals, many depicting ANCIENT CREATURES, mythical beasts in battle. One, in particular--

A REPTILIAN CREATURE. *Jurassic with an Asian twist.* It catches Peter's attention, like he's seen it before.

A silver-haired man, MR. SHIN (50s), enters with two BODYGUARDS. Speaks perfect English.

MR. SHIN
Joe Cook... I hear you're the
reason our airport is now closed.

JOE
Your rivals don't like to lose.

MR. SHIN
Show me a man who does. Now tell
me, to what do I owe this visit?

JOE
Mr. Shin, this is Peter Mueller.
He's from an American drug company.
He wishes permission to enter your
jungle.

MR. SHIN
For what reason?

Peter hates asking this man for help.

PETER
We sent in a research team and
haven't heard from them in a week.

MR. SHIN
And this time you wish to do things
properly. Well. None of my men
have reported... *interference...*
from Westerners. But the jungle is
unkind, Mr. Mueller. Especially to
women and--

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MR. SHIN (CONT'D)
(to Raj)
Weak looking men.

ALICE
With all due respect, this is what
we do. We're not afraid of getting
a little muddy.

Cook shoots her a nervous look. Mr. Shin steps closer.

MR. SHIN
Our rain forest is the oldest on
Earth. Its secrets are the oldest
on Earth. Are you truly prepared?
Are you prepared to never return?

ALICE
I have no choice.

Shin sizes her up. Likes what he sees.

MR. SHIN
Let's get on to business. What can
you offer in exchange?

Joe snaps his fingers. Peter glares, hands over his leather
bag. BODYGUARD unzips it, confused. It's not money, but...

MEDICINE. Inside, two dozen caramel-colored IV BAGS. Mr.
Shin looks surprised. He immediately softens:

MR. SHIN (CONT'D)
Will... will this help?

PETER
The drug is highly experimental.
It may help.
(unsympathetic)
It may not.

Mr. Shin nods. Puts the IV back in the leather bag.

MR. SHIN
More time. The one thing money
can't buy. But I'll still try.

Shin motions to the Bodyguard to bring over a folio filled
with stationery. Shin removes a pen. Writes.

Hands the NOTE to Cook. Then gazes genuinely at Alice:

MR. SHIN (CONT'D)
I hope you find what you are
looking for.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

As the group is ushered out, Alice glances back. Mr. Shin opens a sunlit door to a state-of-the-art HOSPITAL ROOM:

Where a YOUNG GIRL sleeps, penned in by medical equipment. A woman Shin's age holds vigil. The drug lord joins his WIFE.

Alice's heart breaks as Shin hangs the IV for their daughter.

EXT. DOCKS - EVENING

A chartered SHIP, the *Amatta*, tied to the pier. 60-foot, twin engine. Fits 15 comfortably. Men load crates. Tran yells at a MERCENARY (SCAR) just standing there, smoking.

TRAN

Just 'cause you soldier no mean you
don't help! *Nhan Rang, lodit! Dit!*

Watching all this silently is CHOW SU (48). Wears a black vest full of ammunition. All business, for a price.

SIRENS. POLICE CARS swarm. Tran curses, grabs phone.

INT. RANGE ROVER - EVENING

Joe's phone rings. He answers.

JOE

Hey.

(beat)

Just ask the god damn question!

He listens. Alice, Peter and Raj all wait...

JOE (CONT'D)

Yes. Plan B.

Joe hangs up and immediately SWINGS THE WHEEL...

The Range Rover U-TURNS, barreling across the divide.

EXT. DOCKS - SAME

Officers examine the PharmaGen crates still on the pier.

Tran hangs up and comes down the gangway. A warranted DETECTIVE and his men yell in Khmer. To the Dick:

TRAN

Question for you...

Tran reels back and --*POW!*-- punches the detective.

ON BOARD THE:

INT. ÂMATTA - BRIDGE

Chow Su sees Tran's BRAWL. He turns to the CAPTAIN, nodding for him to rev the engine. Captain shakes his head: *No!*

Chow Su raises a MACHETE. Captain revs engine *full throttle*.

EXT. DOCKS - SAME

Officers try to restrain Tran as the Âmatta clamors to life, pulling away from the dock, snapping ropes tied to the pier.

Police swarm UP THE GANGWAY but the boat is already moving...

The first officer reaches the ship... as the gangway drops off the deck, sending the uniforms TUMBLING INTO THE WATER.

INT. RANGE ROVER - SAME

The SUV speeds past cargo containers along the waterfront.

PETER

What's plan B?

Joe reaches into his pocket and pulls out a stick of GUM...

JOE

Similar to plan A, but we get wet.

Starts chewing as the car barrels through a CHAIN-LINK FENCE--

EXT. OLD FISHING PIER

Fisherman dive out of the way as the SUV clunks across the wood, taking out the moorings of colorful cigar boats...

The SUV reaches the rickety end. Joe hops out, spots the Âmatta speeding their direction down the Mekong River.

INT. ÂMATTA - BRIDGE

Chow Su brings down binoculars. Shouts an order to Captain.

EXT. MEKONG RIVER

The Âmatta adjusts course toward the pier. The COP CARS have left the docks, in pursuit of the ship along the shoreline.

EXT. OLD FISHING PIER

The Âmatta is fifty yards away.

JOE

Start swimming!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Everyone looks at him like he's crazy. Joe shrugs, pushes Raj into the water. Peter gives a dirty look then dives in.

In the back of the SUV, Alice is scrambling through bags.

JOE (CONT'D)
Let's go Doctor Wade!

ALICE
--I need... Where are they?

EXT. ÂMATTA - STERN

Chow Su grabs an INFLATABLE RAFT with a tire mark stamped in the yellow from when the Dragon Gang truck rolled over it.

He hooks the raft with a rope anchored to the deck, pulls its CORD... chucks the dinghy overboard as it chemically INFLATES.

EXT. OLD FISHING PIER

Cops reach the pier. Joe rushes to Alice...

JOE
We gotta go!

ALICE
I can't find my pills!

Joe throws bags out of the van, dumping their contents on the pier. No pills. He grabs another, throws it aside--

UNDER THE SEAT... she spots the pill bottle.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Got it!

JOE
They better be important!

He pushes her to the ground as GUNFIRE pelts their bags...

Using the car as a shield, they DIVE into the Mekong.

EXT. ÂMATTA - STERN

Chow Su watches Peter and Raj pull themselves onto the raft. He gazes down... the attached rope is almost out of SLACK...

EXT. MEKONG RIVER

Joe and Alice swim like wild. Behind them, cops swell past the Range Rover and continue to OPEN FIRE...

BULLETS break the water just as they reach the raft--

AND THE ROPE GOES TAUT

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Pulling the inflatable, skipping over the river, WATER SKIING at 20 knots up the Mekong as the cops fade into the distance.

They're all out of breath. Wet. Someone's even WHEEZING--

PETER

Getting on the boat was supposed to be the easy part.

JOE

Oh, it'll get harder.

--WHEEZING is actually the raft. Air escaping a bullet hole. Joe takes BUBBLE GUM from his mouth, covers the tear. Winks.

RAJ

Were you chewing gum the entire time?

The raft and the Âmatta head off into the SUNSET.

EXT. MEKONG RIVER - NIGHT

City gives way to shacks, dirt roads and jungle. The ship chugs under a full moon. A MERCENARY (TATS) patrols on deck.

Alice comes outside. Freshly showered, she wears PharmaGen sweatpants. From now on, PharmaGen swag is her wardrobe.

She leans on the bow, listening to the loud squawking of birds and insects. She extends her hand, spreads her fingers. It remains steady. She sighs. Always a relief.

JOE (O.S.)

Someone told me...

Cook surprises her, joining her at the rail.

JOE (CONT'D)

That in New York people buy these noise machines to drown out the city. And that one of the options is "jungle." Who the hell would want to listen to this?

ALICE

I think the idea is it's more relaxing than, say, sirens... or gunfire.

JOE

Sorry about that. You really should have come yesterday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

Why? What happened yesterday?

JOE

Blissfully nothing.

Alice laughs. They watch the dark, loud jungle pass by.

JOE (CONT'D)

So how serious is it?

(off her look)

Your pills.

ALICE

Is that any of your business?

JOE

Your safety is my business. You have an attack out here, there's no hospital for a hundred miles.

She takes the pill bottle from her pocket.

ALICE

The disease is different for everyone.

JOE

That why you do this? Search the world for cures? Trying to hold the sword of Damocles at bay?

ALICE

(a beat)

It starts small. Hand tremors, usually. Then you have trouble getting out of bed. Eventually, you can't go to the bathroom on your own. Or eat. In the last stages, you have to blink responses because your body becomes a prison.

(then)

No one's kid should have to watch their mother die like that. And no mother should die knowing they gave the same death sentence to their daughter. That's why I do this.

Joe exhales. Points to her pendant necklace.

JOE

That a picture of her?

Alice unlatches the necklace. Hands it to him. INSIDE:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

A PHOTO of young Alice with her vibrant mother. Pre-illness. Joe really takes a moment with the necklace. Weighs it.

JOE (CONT'D)

My dad died young too. I never
knew him. At least you had that.

His hand lingers on hers as he gives the necklace back.

JOE (CONT'D)

Makes you realize most people can go
at any moment. Yet they still put
things off, delay their lives... But
you can't, can you? You're out here
trying to save the world because you
have to live your life like every
moment could be your last.

Alice takes this in, touched by Joe's philosophical side.

ALICE

From what I've seen you do too.

Joe turns to the rainforest, shakes his head.

JOE

No... it's just not in my blood.

INT. PETER'S CABIN - NIGHT

Confined, two bunks. Fold up desk unlatched by the porthole. Peter VIDEO CHATS with Chicago via his hard-shelled laptop:

LYDON (ONSCREEN)

So she knows about Bransky and
Burana?

PETER

'Was bound to find out eventually.

LYDON

But she didn't quit, just like I
thought. She's got too much to
lose. That being said... I don't
want her knowing 'bout the rest of
Bransky's last message.

PETER

Have you finished analyzing it?

Lydon motions to someone off screen.

LYDON

Send it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The BRANSKY VIDEO opens, diminishing Lydon to a small screen:

WEBCAM VIDEO: EXT. CAVE - EVENING (PART 2)

AN ANIMAL NOISE -- Loud and shrieking. Bransky looks off:

DR. BRANSKY
*Chang, get the tranquilizer! I
 wanna test whatever that thing is.
 (into camera)
 We'll call you back.*

Unlike last time, the footage does not freeze and terminate.

IT CONTINUES

Bransky, CHANG and two others grab TRANQ GUNS and head out of the cave. Suddenly, one man SCREAMS and violently flies--

THROUGH FRAME... landing -- IMPALED -- on a sharp STALAGMITE.

DR. BRANSKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
What in God's name!?

More noises, guns firing, then SOMETHING hits the webcam, sends it toppling to the ground, still broadcasting.

LYDON (SMALL WINDOW)
*We started by analyzing the animal
 calls. Closest thing in
 Northwestern's database is the
 Asian Crocodile. But the
 intonation's modulated like a
 mammal's vocal cords.*

PETER
What does that mean?

LYDON
*It means we think it's
 communicating.*

A figure -- looks like Chang -- tries to crawl back into the cavern but collapses, dying, at the edge when--

A BLURRY CREATURE

Flies into frame, hits the ground, grabs Chang and...

JUMPS OUT OF VIEW

LYDON (CONT'D)
*Thing's moving too quick. Even
 when we slow it down.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE LAST TWO SECONDS REPEAT

And slow as the computer digitally extrapolates new frames.

LYDON (CONT'D)
Best we can tell... it's a species
unlike anything anyone's ever seen.

*The footage is rotated 90-degrees. Right side up again.
Then the blurriness disintegrates away until after four or
five "scans" we are left with a brief shot of a--*

*REPTILIAN ANIMAL. Jurassic with an Asian twist. What little
of this prehistoric beast we can see is enough to prove...*

This thing should be EXTINCT. Instead, here it is... EVOLVED.

LYDON (CONT'D)
This thing exists from another
time, Mueller. And the only
explanation we can come up with is
it's survived by feedin' on the
same thing as our Dorian.

PETER
We've got twice the men, twice the
guns, not to mention the A.D.S.
We'll find the Fountain. Whatever
this thing is, won't be a problem.

LYDON
It better not be.

The connection with Chicago terminates. Leaving just the
image of the CREATURE, frozen, reflecting in Peter's eyes.

EXT. MEKONG RIVER - SUNRISE

Here, in the East, the sun begins its workday. In the red
rising light, a family of ELEPHANTS take their first drink.

INT. ÂMATTA - BRIDGE - SAME

Radar shows the ship's location as it approaches a FORK in
the river. Captain spins the wheel east and the Âmatte--

EXT. MEKONG RIVER FORK

...Turns up the VEANG KHAN TRIBUTARY as the width condenses.

ON THE SHIP'S BOW

Chow Su takes a long smoke as they pass a rusty, HALF-SUNKEN
BOAT. Bullet holes riddle the baptized frame.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Seated on the rudder, a VULTURE follows Chow Su with its beak. Then takes off into flight...

AS DO WE:

The Âmatta, the sun and a flock of birds soaring up the Veang Khan river to the far off border with Vietnam where the...

EXT/EST. VEANG KHAN RIVER DAM - MORNING

...Towers over the tributary. Massive amounts of spray and foam cascade from the spillway's hydroelectric turbines.

INT. DAM - GENERATOR ROOM - MORNING

Men in hard hats, sound of clanging. Walls of electronics regulate the harnessing of energy.

ONE MAN

In a WINDBREAKER walks toward his station, sweating. Security badge clipped to his BACKPACK is in Vietnamese.

Mr. Windbreaker nervously waves to a coworker. He reaches his station, waits a beat for someone to pass, then--

Sneaks into an alcove and drops his backpack in the shadows.

Quickly, he walks out. Anxiously returns to his job.

INT. SMALL VILLAGE - DAY

The Âmatta is tied to a tiny dock on the jungle's edge. Both hired hands and villagers unload boxes of equipment.

Raj and Alice are flocked by curious children. Raj takes TIC TACS from his vest. Pours them into outstretched hands.

RAJ

Here. These are wintergreen, okay?

The kids quickly spit out the strange "candy." Alice laughs.

ALICE

I don't think they like them!

JOE (O.S.)

I brought this just in case.

Alice turns. Joe holds a BAG OF CANDY. She's touched as they hand out fun size chocolate to the grateful children.

ALICE

This town seems abandoned.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joe reflexively glances at the tin shanties.

JOE
Used to be a fishing village. When
they built the Veang Khan Dam
upstream in Vietnam, the fish died
off. It lowered the river, too.
This area would flood three, four
times a year. Not anymore.

Alice takes in the dried-up and neglected RICE PADDIES.

RAJ
I thought floods were bad.

JOE
Not here. Here, they're necessary.

Peter comes over, motioning for the kids to leave--

PETER
Shoo... get...

--Alice glares. The kids run off and tear into the candy.

PETER (CONT'D)
The ship's unloaded. Turns out we
lost two crates back on the dock at
Phnom Penh.

ALICE
Anything important?

PETER
Your Genome Sequencer.

Her face falls.

RAJ
We can't determine the genesis of
mutation without that!

JOE
What was in the other crate?

PETER
Half our guns.

THE ENGINE revs up behind them as the Amatta pulls away.

PETER (CONT'D)
And money for the boat ride home.

CUT TO:

A DIGITAL MAP OF THE JUNGLE

Red light blinking in the middle of the lush green.

EXT. EDGE OF THE JUNGLE - DAY

GPS TRACKER in hand, Peter waits at a line of untamed trees encroaching upon the village. He turns to the others...

PETER

Bransky's last broadcast came from
28 kilometers north-northeast.

...Alice, Raj, Joe, Chow Su and his four Mercenaries, plus five local PORTERS. Makes fourteen silent souls--

A flash of fear in each of their eyes. Even...

JOE

Let's go.

Through the trees, THEY ENTER:

INT. JUNGLE - VARIOUS

--The caravan treks through the unceasing foliage. The brightest, most colorful plant life on planet earth.

--Chow Su and Joe at the front, hacking away at vines.

--A GIBBON swings along with the group, keeping pace.

--Alice looks up at the treetops over ONE HUNDRED FEET high.

--A rabble of colorful MONARCH BUTTERFLIES swoop between them, their beauty a sharp contrast to the:

--Rotting carcass of *something*. Now just a haven for flies.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

BREAK TIME. The porters and mercs smoke, drink water. Nearby, Raj naps with his head against a rock as a...

TARANTULA

Crawls onto his face. Raj unconsciously brushes it off.

NEARBY, Alice studies a dewy, burgundy-tinged plant. She snaps pictures then uses a POCKET KNIFE to cut samples.

Chow Su walks over, hands her a freeze dried package of food.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE
(trying)
Ow-kohn.

CHOW SU
You... are welcome.

A few feet away, in a bath of sunlight, Peter has his rugged, hard-shell laptop open. A small SAT-DISH pointed skyward.

PETER
...still on time and on target.
End report. AH117, confirm.

FROM THE TREES

Joe contentedly walks out holding a roll of TOILET PAPER. He tosses it to a porter, then slaps him on the back...

EXT. JUNGLE VALLEY - LATER

The convoy leaves the cover of trees, bound by green hills and striated laccoliths on both sides. A formidable, lush landscape. Light beads of rain sparkle in the low sun.

The mercenaries flank the civilians, surveying for danger as the men invade this, the home of leeches and mosquitos...

Raj unleashes a can of BUG SPRAY over his face. Tattooed Merc -- Tats -- offers Raj a crudely rolled cigarette.

RAJ
I don't smoke.

Tats waves his hand in front of his face, goes: *Bzzzzz Bzzzz.*

ALICE
He's saying the mosquitos don't
like the smoke.

RAJ
Oh. I need a light.

Peter takes out his silver lighter. Raj inhales.

RAJ (CONT'D)
It's not bad...

He violently coughs. The Cambodians laugh at the newbie.

EXT. RAVINE - EVENING

The sky grows fiery red and yellow as the valley constricts, funneling the travelers over a RIDGE and out above a muddy...

EXT. KILLING FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Football fields of fallow earth filled with the SKULLS and SCATTERED BONES of hundreds of dead men and women.

CHOW SU

Jhop!

The men stop. Joe steps out to the edge and immediately throws his arm out to block Alice and Raj.

ALICE

Oh my god...

RAJ

Are those...? They're human...

Forty-years of rain, scavengers and floods have channeled the bodies into natural mounds. A waking nightmare.

The third Merc (DITH) argues with Chow Su as a porter brings over a case. Inside, a deconstructed METAL DETECTOR.

Dith keeps yelling and pointing at the field as Chow Su screws the pieces together. Peter walks over to the fight:

PETER

What's going on--

Ratfaced Merc (RAT) manhandles Peter by his collar. Points to Peter's foot: INCHES OVER A LAND MINE. His eyes go wide:

PETER (CONT'D)

Whoa...

He brushes his shirt, steps back. Nods a thank you, while--

Chow-Su completes the metal detector. Stands. He speaks defiantly to Dith... ON JOE, translating for Alice:

JOE

Dith is saying he will not continue. Not through here.

(...)

Chow Su is telling him he can go back, then.

RAJ

What's the problem?

JOE

The man's parents were killed during the Khmer Rouge. He says he won't trample the graves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE

So this... this is a killing field?

JOE

One of thousands.

Chow Su angrily waves off his subordinate. He turns, scans the ground with the metal detector, stepping out and

CLEARING A PATHWAY THROUGH THE MINEFIELD

JOE (CONT'D)

Follow his footsteps exactly.

As they carefully walk in a zigzag pattern, Chow Su's metal detector BEEPS off and on. The SOUNDTRACK to:

ALICE

How could something like this happen?

Beep. Beep. They turn, past a pile of long dead bodies.

JOE

The eyes of the world were on Vietnam. Nobody noticed this place going to shit.

BeepBeepBeep. Dith stays back at the ravine's edge. He watches as the others leave him behind, then kneels to PRAY.

JOE (CONT'D)

Civil war, U.S. bombings and a crazy monarch all led to the rise of the Khmer Rouge. Pol Pot declared 1975 'Year Zero' and decided to wipe the past clean. That meant rounding up millions who disagreed and marching them into the jungle.

Beep Beep. Alice sees another uncovered land mine astride the muddy footsteps of safe passage.

JOE (CONT'D)

One in five countrymen, murdered in a genocide nobody outside Cambodia even seemed to notice.

ALICE

Why the land mines?

BeepBeep BeepBeep. Chow Su backtracks, heads to the right...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE

To kill any family who tried to
properly bury their loved ones.

RAJ

Jesus.

BEEP BEEP BEEP. Chow Su swings the metal detector as they reach
the halfway point of the mine-riddled graveyard.

ON DITH

At the front edge, rising from prayer. He turns to head back
the way they came when... out of the brush--

SOMETHING GROWLS

Dith's eyes go wide and he bolts, SCREAMING...

OUT INTO THE KILLING FIELD

Inadvertently stepping on a LAND MINE...

KABOOM. Instantly, the ground erupts and Dith is no more.

ON THE CARAVAN

Turning back at the sound. Through the smoky debris of earth
and Dith comes a'CHARGING...

AN ASIAN TIGER

Before anyone can get their gun trained the tiger LEAPS...

PORTER

OT TEEEEEE!

...And slams into the PORTER at the tail of the caravan.
Claws tear skin, mouth snaps bone.

Rat Merc -- the nearest gun -- tries to square the squirming
tiger in his sights. Can't get a clean shot. He fires--

MISSES

Hits the ground a few feet behind the tiger, triggering:

ANOTHER MINE

Which provokes the tiger to spin, ANGRY. The striped tiger
leaves the INJURED PORTER and charges the ratfaced Merc...

FROZEN IN FRIGHT-- *BANG*-- TIGER DROPS, bullet in the eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ON PETER, lowering his gun. Ratface nods a thank you, while--
The others rush to the injured porter.

ALICE
Put pressure there. Raj, find the
heparin and five cc's of...

MORE GROWLING

This time, in surround sound, as THREE MORE TIGERS emerge,
pissed from all the noise and their dead friend.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Grab him!

The others ignore her and back away, saving themselves.
Alice throws the injured man's arm over her neck and lifts--

NEAR THE FRONT

Peter looks at his gun, at the metal detector. They'll have
to run. Chow Su has the same idea, drops the machine as they

PAINT THE GROUND WITH GUNFIRE

Using the bullets to clear the land mines as *KABLAM, KABLAM*--
They detonate ahead of Peter and Chow Su one-by-one.

THE CARAVAN FLEES...

Dropping things, trampling bones, but they're human and these
are evolutionary perfect predators and they're gaining...

JOE, near the rear, fires over his shoulder, trying to hit
the tigers or at least detonate a land mine but he's running
and this is really hard stuff and he's gotta look where he's
going because he's surrounded by dead bodies and mines and...

Alice struggles to carry the injured porter, not that he's
heavy, but she can't move that fast in the mire and...

The tigers are coming.

ON RAJ, reaching the safety of the treeline. He looks back:

At Joe, bringing up the rear, still firing when he sees Alice
and the injured porter. He rushes over, PULLS ALICE AWAY...

ALICE (CONT'D)
No!

JOE
You have to leave him!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

She angrily, reluctantly, does. They run-- fast as they can, no looking back, straight for the trees as the animals...

POUNCE ON THE MERCIFULLY UNCONSCIOUS PORTER

Satisfied with this sacrifice. Alice and Peter TUMBLE into the jungle -- to safety -- holding each other. Alice, on top, stares into Joe's eyes as the tigers continue to feast.

MATCH CUT TO:

A NATURE DOCUMENTARY

On an old, tiny television. Reception is spotty, so a SECURITY GUARD leans in and adjusts the rabbit ears...

EXT. VEANG KHAN RIVER DAM - WORKER HOUSING - EVENING

Workers trudge to concrete dorms as the NEXT SHIFT heads out.

BY THE GUARD BOOTH: Mr. Windbreaker (sans his backpack) pauses to watch a tiger attack a gazelle on the tube TV.

SECURITY GUARD (SUBTITLED)
Where's your backpack?

WINDBREAKER (SUBTITLED)
I must have left it at my station.

INT. GENERATOR ROOM - SAME

The night shift. CAMERA DRIFTS into the shadows behind Windbreaker's station to the beeping backpack as it--

EXPLODES... consuming the silo in instant hellfire, rocketing down the enclosed deathtrap -- The concussive force BUILDS...

EXT. VEANG KHAN RIVER DAM - SAME

...TOPPLING upper portions of the dam and shaking the entire foundation as lights blink out along the concrete behemoth.

EXT. GUARD BOOTH - SAME

The Security Guard's TV dies. He exits the vibrating booth, stands beside Windbreaker and several workers, gazing at:

A CRACK

Shooting through the center of the colossal Veang Khan Dam.

SLAM TO:

FIRE. In the middle of a...

EXT. JUNGLE CAMP - NIGHT

Tents encircle a freshly killed HOG DEER roasting over the campfire. The antlers slowly rotate near Raj's face...

One of the porters offers him some meat. Raj declines:

RAJ
I'm a vegetarian.

ALICE
You really should eat something.

Alice stitches up a porter hit by mine shrapnel.

RAJ
All this green, you'd think they
could scrounge up a salad.

In her bag, Alice finds a SNICKERS from Joe's candy stash.

ALICE
Here. Skip to dessert.

She tosses the bar, then finishes sowing her patient's arm. Gets medical scissors to cut the thread; her hand shakes. Not from nerves, either. She carefully cuts the thread.

ALICE (CONT'D)
You'll be fine.

Porter smiles, bows slightly to her. She smiles back then quickly finds her bottle of pills in the bag. Raj notices.

ALICE (CONT'D)
I'll be fine, too.

IN THE CENTER OF CAMP

Peter expands a TELESCOPING POLE. At its top:

A LARGE ORB

Top half mirrored, bottom lined with holes. Very technical.

Peter holds a touch-screen CONTROLLER. Chow Su beside him.

PETER
So after you raise it, you take
this controller and touch here.
Understand?

Chow Su nods. Peter presses on the bottom of the screen and--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A 360-DEGREE SCAN

Of the campground appears on the remote.

PETER (CONT'D)
Now you set a perimeter distance,
let's say the max, thirty feet.

Peter sets the distance and the globe LIGHTS UP; activated.

JOE (O.S.)
What the hell does it do?

Joe holds a tin plate of deer meat. Checks the strange orb.

PETER
Active Denial System, or A.D.S...
Developed by the Saudi's for crowd
control. This model sets up a live
perimeter around, say, a mosque's
entrance or in our case, a camp;
anyone attempting to cross the
perimeter gets hit with high-
frequency microwaves.

JOE
Microwaves?

PETER
Much more effective than gun
turrets, right? Bullets are so
'90s. Watch...

Peter grabs a LEG OF MEAT from Joe's tin and FLINGS IT...

Out of the camp. As it passes over the INVISIBLE PERIMETER--

THE A.D.S. ORB CRACKLES

And the deer meat instantly BLACKENS, falls to the ground.
Peter taps the controls and the A.D.S. powers down.

He walks to the edge of camp and grabs the microwaved meat.

PETER (CONT'D)
Non-lethal... to humans, at least.
But it hurts like a bitch.

Peter hands Joe back his dinner. Chow Su speaks in Khmer.

PETER (CONT'D)
Too bad we didn't have this during
the war, right? He'd be speaking
English right now. What's he want?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE
He asked: what about the animals?

PETER
Oh. It'll keep them out too.

INT. RAJ'S TENT - NIGHT

Raj is wide awake, swiping forlornly through IMAGES on his phone: *Pictures of Alice and him on their many adventures...*

Outside, the A.D.S. device *CRACKLES*, its perimeter breached.

EXT. JUNGLE CAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Raj emerges from his tent to find Alice already watching as--

Zzzzzzz... Something again triggers the Orb, flooding the sky with a millisecond burst of pink-hued energy. Zzzzzzzz...

Alice looks a little scared of the darkness beyond. Raj searches her for a sign she desires company, or maybe even...

ALICE
Goodnight, Raj.

She returns to her tent. Raj stands alone. *Zzzzzzzz...*

EXT. JUNGLE CAMP - MORNING

A light mist of morning fog. The porters are done packing except for ONE TENT... Peter approaches--

PETER
Can somebody please wake up sleeping beauty?

ALICE
I'll do it.

INT. JOE'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Joe is in a deep, deep sleep. Alice kneels down:

ALICE
Joe... Joe...

JOE (ASLEEP)
Emma.

Alice shakes him awake. Joe instantly has a gun to her head.

ALICE
Jesus!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
Sorry. Sorry. I'm a deep sleeper.

ALICE
Right. Well, we're ready to go.

JOE
Okay.

ALICE
Can you put the gun down?

JOE
Okay.

EXT. JUNGLE CAMP - MORNING

Joe is offered a thermos of coffee by Chow Su, turns it down.
Peter checks his GPS Navigator and points...

PETER
This way.

Along the edge of camp are SEVERAL DEAD BIRDS in an ominous,
curved line... exactly matching the A.D.S. Orb's perimeter.

Joe counts them silently as he passes.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

CHOP. Voices singing. CHOP. Singing in Khmer as--

The Porters' machetes cut passage to...

A GROVE OF RED FLOWERS

Beautiful and bright. In the center of the veld:

A STORAGE HUT overgrown with moss and camouflage netting.

RAJ
This is not how I pictured the lost
city of Burana.

PETER
Alice, could this be the mutation
agent?

Alice kneels down in front of the flowers. A sticky fluid
coats the stem. She rubs her fingers together, tastes it.

ALICE
No. It's opium.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joe slowly approaches the hut, carefully pushing open the latched door to find several empty STORAGE BINS. Turns to--

Chow Su, crouching, touching footprints in the dirt.

JOE
Looks like we just missed them.

ALICE
Drug runners?

Joe nods. Out of the blue, Raj laughs. They turn to him.

PETER
What's so funny?

RAJ
Aren't we drug runners too?

JOE
Let's just move around and hope...

A BULLET

Splits the tree bark beside Joe. He throws his hands up.

Six DRUG RUNNERS have them surrounded. Waiting, hiding.
Chow Su and his three Mercs aim back. Both sides YELLING.

RAJ
What's happening!?

PETER
Quiet. We planned for this.

JOE (IN KHMER)
Lower your weapons!

The Mercs, momentarily confused, do so only after Chow Su repeats the order. Joe reaches into his pocket, slowly...

--A drug runner, the BOSS, turns his gun on Joe and BARKS an order in Khmer. Joe responds, calmly. Boss approaches--

...Reaches into Joe's pocket. Pulls out: MR. SHIN'S NOTE.

Boss reads the note, calls to his men to lower their weapons.

ALICE
That was the note from Mr. Shin.

PETER
Our get-out-of-being-murdered-free card.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The Boss speaks quietly to Joe. Joe points NORTH.

ON SCAR

The Merc trades with a drug runner. The runner hands a small bag of heroin over in exchange for--

CHOW SU'S HAND

Clamps down on the Merc's wrist. Makes him hand over:

A SILVER LIGHTER

Stolen from Peter in the middle of the night. Chow Su quietly scolds Scar and trudges over to the Americans:

CHOW SU
You... dropped.

Peter looks down, taps his pockets. Surprised.

PETER
Huh. Good catch.

Chow Su glares back at Scar. Peter notices. Understands.

JOE & THE BOSS

Shake hands. Joe returns to his still on-edge group.

JOE
We can refill our water and take
some food, courtesy of Mr. Shin.
(beat)
I told him where we're headed. He
said there's a swamp north of here,
even they won't go past it. He
called the area *Naraka*.

RAJ
So we're heading to the place that
even drug runners won't go?

ALICE
We're not turning around for some
silly superstition.

Peter nods agreement. Joe smiles at Alice's fortitude.

RAJ
Fine... I'm outvoted. At least
tell me what *Naraka* means.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JOE
"Hell." It means "hell."

RAJ
Sorry I asked.

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE JUNGLE - DAY

Green. Far as the eye can see. Until a flock of BIRDS shoot skyward from a hidden nest, scared off by...

EXT. JUNGLE - SAME

...The passing caravan. A porter taps a smoking Merc (Tats). Tats hands over his cigarette. Porter rubs the lit end onto

A LEECH, dangling from his leg. The bloodsucker falls off. Porter hands the cig back. It goes right in Tat's mouth.

Raj, marching directly behind, retches at the sight.

EXT. JUNGLE - LATER THAT DAY

A GIANT TREE, toppled along the path. Alice climbs over, the vibration of her leg mysteriously causing the tree bark...

TO MOVE

Revealing a trail of tree bark colored STICK BUGS.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Peter is near the tail, trudging through the humidity when his backpack *BEEPS*. He swings the pack around--

PETER
Hold up, everyone!

The group stops. Peter pulls out his rugged laptop, finds a rock to set it on. Pulls out his headset, sets the sat-dish.

ON THE LAPTOP: *Lydon appears onscreen in a video window.*

LYDON (ONSCREEN)
We have a problem...

ALICE & JOE watch Peter adjust his headphones for privacy.

JOE
What do you think they're talking about?

ALICE
The weather.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ON PETER'S LAPTOP:

*HELICOPTER IMAGES via a Chinese News Report of the cracked and leaking and heavily damaged **VEANG KHAN DAM**.*

LYDON (SMALL WINDOW)
...some kind of environmental terrorist. Didn't have enough explosives, turns out, to take the dam down straight-away, but the crack is growin' bigger and my contact in the Vietnamese consulate's sayin' the thing could crumble at any moment.

NEWS IMAGES: Body bags full of victims, the charred and battered Generator Room, the suspect known as "Windbreaker".

PETER
Do we need to abort?

LYDON
Absolutely not. But you need to move quick. Bransky's last message came from the lowest area in that region, an area known for floods before they built that dam. Dam does burst? All the water's headin' right toward you and it's comin' all at once.

MEANWHILE:

ALICE & JOE listen as the one-sided conversation wraps up...

ALICE
Who's Emma?

JOE
...Where'd you hear that name?

ALICE
You said it in your sleep.

JOE
She was an old girlfriend. She left me after I came over here.

ALICE
I'm sorry.

JOE
I was never planning on staying in Asia... but I had to come. While I
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE (CONT'D)
 was here Emma got engaged to someone
 else, so I figured: why go back?
 (then)
 At least the food's pretty good.

ALICE
 I didn't mean to pry.

JOE
 Yeah you did.
 (beat)
 It was a long time ago. You remind
 me a lot of her.

Alice glances over, surprised. Call ended, Peter approaches.

PETER
 We have to move quickly.

ALICE
 What's going on?

PETER
 It's nothing.

Joe, still raw from the mention of Emma, grabs Peter.

JOE
 She asked you a question!

Stare down. Peter breaks first, lies through his teeth:

PETER
 There's a storm coming. I sure as
 hell don't want to be caught out
 here when it hits.

Peter pushes Joe's hands off him. Walks away. Joe glances
 at Alice, sensing Peter may not be telling the whole truth...

CUT TO:

EXT. NARAKA SWAMP - DAY

Joe hands BINOCULARS to Peter. They stand on the opposite
 edge of a large, green, five foot deep quagmire. MANGROVE
 TREES push out of the water, trapping in the boiling miasma.

PETER
 How do we get across with our raft
 destroyed?

Peter eyes the gloomy bog. Bugs dance across the surface.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
No choice. We walk.

RAJ
(double-take)
Wait. What?

INTERCUT BACK & FORTH:

IN THE WATER

Bags and guns over heads, they slog the neck high swamp.

JOE (V.O.)
Anything we don't need going
forward, leave here.

THE SWAMP BANK - MOMENTS EARLIER

Joe is rallying the troupes before they get in the muck.

JOE
Keep your bags above your head.

IN THE WATER: They all scan the surface for telltale ripples.

JOE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Stay together, try to keep a steady
rhythm and don't speak.

ON THE BANK: Raj -- like it's algebra class -- raises a hand.

JOE (CONT'D)
Yes, Raj.

RAJ
What is staying together, keeping a
steady rhythm and not speaking
gonna do if there are crocodiles?

JOE
It's so we don't disturb them.

ALICE
Does that work?

JOE
Absolutely.

Joe turns away and his face says the exact opposite.

EXT. MIDDLE OF THE SWAMP - DAY

Raj strains under his bag's weight and the assaulting bugs...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He slips in the muck, dunking half the bag in the water.

RAJ

Ugh, I got some in my mouth.

Near the back of the convoy, Peter glares at the neck of the Merc (Scar) who stole his lighter. Leaning forward, quietly:

PETER

Hey, Charlie. You know that was my Daddy's lighter? Had it on him, too, when he killed a bunch of your uncles.

Scar peeks back at Peter's Cheshire grin. Scar smiles too:

PETER (CONT'D)

You have no idea what I'm saying, do you, you piece of shit?

ON ALICE

Bringing up the rear. All of a sudden, she can't move. Pulls at her foot. It won't budge. She whimpers...

ALICE

Joe.

The group keeps walking. Louder now:

ALICE (CONT'D)

Joe!

Everyone stops. In one of those loud whispers:

ALICE (CONT'D)

I can't move my foot.

Joe nods. Motions for the group to continue. Raj seems reluctant to leave Alice...

RAJ

What can I do?

JOE

I need you to take my backpack.
(to Alice)
You okay holding yours?

ALICE

Yes.

Joe drops his bag on top of Raj's, adding even more weight. Alice smiles at Raj, grateful, as he tries to be strong.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE
We'll be right behind you.

Raj nods. Rejoins the group. The others continue on.

JOE (CONT'D)
Your foot's probably just caught on
a vine, I'm gonna check it out.

Joe takes a breath and drops...

UNDERWATER

It's not deep, but visibility is murky at best. Joe grabs at Alice's foot, tangled by recently displaced swampbed debris.

EXT. SWAMP - CONTINUOUS

Alice FEELS something in the water. She looks left as--

TWO LARGE EYES

Lead a trail of ripples. It's an alpha male:

CROCODILE

Alice holds her breath, stays strong and reaches down...

Tapping Joe on the back as he unhooks her foot. He pops up--

Looks Alice in the eye. Wipes water off his face.

JOE
What?

And then he feels it... the fifteen-foot long crocodile...

66 RAZOR SHARP TEETH

Fully out of the water, nostrils against Joe's veiny neck.

JOE (CONT'D)
Calm your heartbeat. Be as relaxed
as possible.

Quietly, he twists around, BLOCKING the croc from Alice.

WE HEAR the beast inhale, blowing out trenchant air. It opens its mouth, displaying a dizzying array of teeth before--

ANGRILY JERKING AWAY

As if something about this meal was suddenly unappealing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE
Guess he didn't like the way you
smell.

Now, they may breathe.

EXT. THE FAR BANK - DAY

Chow Su helps Alice and Joe out of the swamp.

RAJ
You alright?

ALICE
Yeah. Thanks for helping.

RAJ
It was nothing.

But then Raj notices Joe... the real hero, slapped on the back by a few of the Mercs. Raj's demeanor turns jealous.

Peter has the GPS UNIT out. It *fritz*es, dripping WATER:

PETER
No! Damn it.
(to nearest porter)
You soaked the damn thing! I have
no idea which way we're going!

But Joe is *already* walking into the overgrowth...

JOE
This way.

RAJ
Oh, great. Now we're guessing.

Still, he follows. Heading from the swamp, nobody notices--

ALICE'S PILL BOTTLE. Bobbing atop the surface as we SINK...

UNDERWATER

Revealing the broken and rusted remnants of a 50 year-old

HELICOPTER

Rotors crumpled, the shell sunken halfway in the mud. On its side, still faintly visible in block white letters, it reads:

U.S. ARMY

CUT TO:

A BUCKET of cold water splashed over the face of WINDBREAKER.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM

Beaten and bloody, the Bomber snaps back to consciousness. His INTERROGATOR sets the bucket down, pulls over a chair.

INTERROGATOR (SUBTITLED)
Are you ready to tell us who you
work for?

Windbreaker tries to move his arms but they're zip-tied to the chair. He is in tremendous pain. But still defiant.

WINDBREAKER (SUBTITLED)
I work for the lives you ruined and
the forests you have destroyed.

Interrogator looks to the corner. A Vietnamese CONSUL in the shadows nods approval. Interrogator rolls back his sleeves.

Pulls out a gun. Puts it to Windbreaker's head. And...

INT. LYDON MANSION - DINING ROOM - MORNING

Ralph Lydon and his WIFE have breakfast. He reads the paper.

WIFE
...and it was such an extravagance!

LYDON
Uh huh.

His cellphone RINGS. Lydon looks at the caller.

WIFE
Haven't I asked you not to bring
that to the table?

LYDON
I know, honey, I'm sorry. It's
real important. Give me a sec.

He kisses her forehead, takes the phone and steps outside...

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

A team of gardeners tend to the immaculate grounds.

LYDON (INTO PHONE)
What in the H - E - double hockey
sticks is happening over there!?

INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - SAME

Through the ONE-WAY GLASS, the Vietnamese Consul observes a team of janitors cleaning blood from the interrogation room.

CONSUL (INTO PHONE)
Leng Poi has been taken care of.

LYDON (V.O.)
I don't give a flyin' fig about that little napalm sniffer. The bomb wasn't supposed to go off until after we found the drug!

CONSUL
After your first team went missing we were unable to communicate the delay.

EXT. BACKYARD - SAME

Lydon almost throws the phone, livid. His wife watches from inside, concerned. He forces a smile, holds up one finger.

CONSUL (V.O.)
Understand, Mr. Lydon we built many levels of security into this plan to protect you. To make sure that once you had the drug, nobody else would.

EXT. VEANG KHAN RIVER DAM - DAY

EMERGENCY WORKERS hang from long cables down the side, scrambling to weld metal plates to a dangerously long CRACK.

LYDON (V.O.)
How long before the dam goes?

CONSUL (V.O.)
A day at most.

A jagged CHUNK OF CEMENT breaks from the face, crashing down as one UNLUCKY WELDER fails to scramble out of its way...

EXT. JUNGLE - AFTERNOON

Joe pushes past a curtain of vines onto...

NOTHING

The ground disappears. Joe grabs a branch, a split-second away from falling two-stories down the side of a...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLIFF FACE

Below, around the yawning black mouth of a WIDE CAVERN:

DR. BRANSKY'S CAMP SITE. Or what little remains of it.

INT. CAVE - BRANSKY'S CAMP - AFTERNOON

The catacombs could go on forever. The umbra of encroaching sunset quickly meets and merges with the gloom from within.

A stark contrast to the lively, colorful jungle. **INSIDE:**

Equipment, destroyed. Tents, ravaged. An animal, attacked.

	RAJ	ALICE
Hello!		Doctor Bransky!

PETER
I don't think anyone's going to
answer.

Peter picks up a broken PharmaGen laptop... just like his.

RAJ
What happened here?

Avoiding a stagnant puddle, a porter (HAI) trips over...

A ROTTING ARM

Hai screams out and stumbles, turning to Chow Su--

HAI
Yo naw biddy bow!

Frightened, Hai drops his bag and runs back into the jungle.

PETER
I guess he quit.

Peter calmly steps over to the arm. Picks it up...

ALICE
Is that...?

PETER
No wedding ring. It's not Bransky.
But he had a journal. We need to
find it, see which direction he was
heading before they were killed.

Peter kicks at broken detritus, stepping past...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAJ, lifting a ripped tarp. Beneath it: A GENOME SEQUENCER. Like the one left on the dock in Phnom Penh. Raj brightens:

RAJ
Yes! Alice... they had a portable
Genome Sequencer too!

Alice eyes the machine. It shows signs of damage.

ALICE
Will it even turn on?
(it does)
Let's test it, make sure it still
calibrates properly.

Raj pulls a slide and sealed needle from a case on the side. Alice pricks her finger, puts a drop of blood on the slide.

Raj plates the sample into the analyzing chamber. The centrifuge whirs, the machine purring with energy.

DEEPER IN THE CAVE

Joe steps to the edge of darkness, around craggy rocks and dripping stalactites until a GLINT OF WHITE catches his eye.

He kneels down, brushing dirt away from a TRIBAL NECKLACE--
MADE. ENTIRELY. OF. HUMAN. TEETH.

Nervously, he pockets the necklace, looks up and *gasps*...

NEAR THE CAVE ENTRANCE:

PETER RUMMAGES through a tattered tent in complete disarray. Between bloodstained papers, he finds...

A MOLESKIN JOURNAL

Opens it. It's BRANSKY'S JOURNAL, scrawled with notes and...

A ROUGH MAP of the first team's journey, detailing the level of chromosomal mutations as they progressed. It ends at their current location with a note: 2KM --> POSSIBLE SOURCE.

CUT TO:

AN UNKNOWN P.O.V.

Hidden deep beyond the boulders. It comes for Joe as he...

IGNITES A FLARE

Fully illuminating a wall covered by an ANCIENT CAVE DRAWING:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:



Joe's face glows in the arc of the flare. So captivated by the painting, he does not notice the silently stalking--

CHILD

Naked, drawn in tribal paints, standing inches behind him.

A WHISTLE

From the earth's core causes Joe to spin around. But there's nothing behind him. The child is gone. So too is the wind.

ON RAJ & ALICE

Watching as DNA results scroll down the GENOME SEQUENCER:

*/DNA BREAKDOWN/
/Human, Female/
/No 6-P Mutation(s)/
/WARNING: Chromosomal Abnormality: Possible presence of
dominant gene for Myotonia Atrophica./*

ALICE

It works.

She reaches down, retracts the monitor--

THE NATIVE CHILD

Stands only feet away. Alice cries out in surprise.

INT. CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Joe scrambles back to the front of the cave. Everyone now surrounds Raj and Alice, staring at the mysterious child.

PETER

I thought this area was uninhabited.

SHADOWS

Fall across the cave entrance. A porter looks behind and...

PORTER

YA NOI!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THIRTY PAINTED TRIBESMAN HOLDING SPEARS

Flank the exit. The child was simple misdirection.

No chance of escape. And around each of the soldier's necks:

A NECKLACE OF TEETH

RAJ

Oh my God, they're cannibals!

CHOW SU

Ut'a nong go Khmer?

No response from the tribe. Stone still.

Joe stares at the war paint. Perhaps familiar with it--

ALICE STEPS FORWARD

Joe tries to stop her but she brushes him off as

THIRTY SPEARS

Snap forward, angled death pointed straight at her heart.

ALICE

You guys like chocolate?

She slowly takes leftover CANDY from a pocket and tosses some at their feet. Demonstrating, she unwraps a Hershey's Kiss:

ALICE (CONT'D)

Yummy.

She pats her belly. The tribesmen seem to understand. One SPEARS a bar with his stick, then licks the chocolatey blade.

TRIBESMAN

Li li op su da!

The spears immediately retract as the men reach for the candy. Alice slowly steps back toward Joe.

JOE

How'd you know that would work?

ALICE

This isn't my first native rodeo.

Joe smirks, impressed by her mettle.

ELDER (O.S.)

Ni so po pa!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The tribesmen scramble from the candy as their ELDER steps forth, sizing up the intruders... but most INTRIGUED by Joe.

The Elder approaches and reaches out, touching Joe's face. Speaks more gibberish. Nods with years of certainty.

RAJ

We get it. He's handsome.

Elder notices Joe's pocket and instantly grows IRRITATED--

ELDER

Ka se dooana!

His hand snaps out and pulls the TOOTH NECKLACE hanging limply from Joe's pocket. Elder examines it, annoyed...

THEN PUTS IT AROUND HIS NECK

It was his necklace. He pats it, happily. And then SMILES.

ALL HIS TEETH ARE MISSING

He turns back to his men. He found his necklace!

The tribesman happily smile... not a tooth among them.

EXT. TRIBAL VILLAGE - EVENING

Lit by torches, huts are built precariously IN THE TREES, many meters up. Thick bridges of vine intersect the homes.

Raj videotapes himself with his cellphone:

RAJ

We are in the middle of absolutely nowhere. Captured, sort of, by an undiscovered, toothless tribe.

Dozens of ROPES hang from above. Men and women climb them with Olympian agility. Nothing-- nothing touches the ground.

RAJ (CONT'D)

Wish I had a signal. YouTube would go apeshit over this.

A CRUDE ELEVATOR

Sits at the base of the central TREE HOUSE. The group and equipment are HOISTED up by a system of ropes and branches.

EXT. TREE HOUSE - NIGHT

A deep bass note from somewhere in the camp SIGNALS...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dozens of men to pull in the hanging ropes for the night.

Raj surveys their only means of escape wrapped away into tight bundles. Now nothing gets down.

Elder comes outside the MAIN HUT, the entrance blocked by old women covered in powder praying around a ring of fire.

ELDER
Motato ta ba ging.

He points at Joe, Alice and Peter. Then he touches his face.

ALICE
White people...? He wants us.

Joe, Peter and Alice follow Elder into the stupa of vines.

RAJ
Okay. I'll just, stay out here.

INT. TREE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

On a rough bed of wood in the center of the room:

DR. ALBERT BRANSKY

Unconscious. Face brutally mauled. A bandage of banana leaf is wrapped around his neck. They rush to examine him.

ALICE
Jesus, it's a miracle he's still alive.

PETER
We need to wake him up. Find out which direction he was heading.

ALICE
We have to get him out of here!

PETER
Not until we find the drug. Sacrifices must be made for the greater good. Bransky knew that.

Joe puts his hand on Alice's shoulder--

JOE
There's no way he'll make it out of the jungle. Not with these injuries.

Alice sighs, resigned. Replaces the banana leaf bandage. She reaches into her medical bag, pulls out a needle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER

Do it.

Joe hands the JOURNAL to Peter. Alice finds a vein...

INJECTS ADRENALINE

Bransky snaps awake. He looks around, crazed. *SCARED.*

ALICE

Calm down, Albert. We're here to help. Calm down.

DR. BRANSKY

DRAGON! Get them out of here! The dragons are here!

ALICE

He's hallucinating.

Peter holds Bransky's journal open to the MAP PAGE...

PETER

Bransky, I need you to look at this map. Which way is the Fountain?

DR. BRANSKY

Leave! Burana is real, it is filled with the devil!

He writhes in shock. Back arching dangerously.

PETER

Albert, which way? Which way do we go?

DR. BRANSKY

Don't go west, don't go west, don't, don't, dragons. They killed them all, the dragons.

Peter flips the page to a sketch of the REPTILIAN CREATURE drawn -- unmistakably -- from the cave wall painting...

PETER

Dragons? Like these?

He shows Bransky the sketch of the "DRAGON"...

DR. BRANSKY

No! NO! No!

Bransky tries to scramble out of bed -- away from the drawing -- but the exertion is too much. He YELLS, collapses. Dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ALICE
What the hell did you do?

PETER
I just showed him a drawing!

Alice takes the journal, studies the reptilian creature.

ALICE
What is this?

Joe looks over, recognizes the monster...

JOE
This was drawn on the cave walls.
According to legend, these
creatures were said to guard the
city of Burana.

ALICE
That's ridiculous. Bransky was
hallucinating!

Peter stares at Bransky's dead body.

PETER
Maybe he wasn't.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Hai, the porter who defiantly quit at Bransky's camp,
stumbles through the forest mumbling in Khmer.

HAI
Conoi nao nhunha, conoi nao nhunha.

He hits his flashlight to keep the light from dying. A
RUSTLE in the nearby branches causes Hai to spin as

DOZENS OF BATS

Swoop out of the darkness. He covers his face as they pass.

With a sigh of relief, Hai shines his light onto a compass,
REFLECTING the glow up and into the glinting eyes of a--

CREATURE. Hidden in the shadows. Though we can only see its
eyes, the beast's evolved SNARL tells us Hai's a goner...

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE JUNGLE - NIGHT

HAI'S SCREAM is muzzled by the dense canopy of trees.

TILT DOWN AND DESCEND TO:

EXT. TRIBAL VILLAGE - TREE HOUSE PLATFORM - NIGHT

Hammocks of gossamer fronds have been stretched for the guests, crisscrossing across multi-leveled platforms.

Joe's hammock hangs angled above Alice's. Neither sleeps.

ALICE

I thought you were a deep sleeper.

JOE

Quality over quantity.

ALICE

I'd take either right about now.

She wipes sweat off her neck. Even at night, it's baking.

ALICE (CONT'D)

I keep thinking of this story Raj told me. About these soldiers that might have found Burana fifty years ago... but never returned.

Joe stares into the leaves, sparkling from starry backlight.

JOE

The Lost Patrol.

Alice turns, pleased Joe has heard of them.

ALICE

Maybe we'll finally find them.
Maybe they won't be lost anymore.

Something about this idea moves Joe. He rolls over:

JOE

How do you think it works? The Fountain of Youth. Or whatever it is.

ALICE

Bransky was the real expert on this stuff. But... well... Every chromosome in every cell has something called a telomere protecting it. Each time the cell reproduces, the telomere gets a little shorter. The shorter the telomere, the less protection against a duplication error. Age is essentially just a buildup of mistakes in the body. If you could

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (CONT'D)
keep the telomere from breaking
down, in theory, it'd be possible
to live forever.

JOE
And money would finally be able to
buy more time.
(beat)
I don't know if that's such a good
thing.

ALICE
Of course it is. More time with
loved ones, more lives saved.

She rubs her mother's pendant necklace.

JOE
I get saving lives. I understand.
But who decides who lives and dies
when people are already starving?
It's just another dividing line
between the rich and the poor.

ALICE
Why are you here if you don't
believe in what we're looking for?

JOE
Oh, I believe in it. I believe it
exists. But I wonder... is eternal
youth a blessing or a curse?
(then)
Tomorrow, I want you to stay here.
I'll take Peter, Chow Su and a
gunman and we'll find the samples
you need. We'll bring them back.

ALICE
Absolutely not!

JOE
The animal that killed Bransky is
out there. Whatever it is.

Alice scoffs, swings out of the hammock. Stands before him.

ALICE
If you think I came all this way to
stop just before the finish line,
you're out of your mind. Mythical
beast or no mythical beast. It's
the holy grail of medicine, nobody
said it would be easy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She's close to his hammock, his face. Eyes locked. Beat.

JOE
I just... I don't want anything to
happen to you.

ALICE
Because it's your job?

JOE
(not because it's his job)
Because it's my job.

In the silence, the smoldering heat-- she tries to read him.

ALICE
Now answer my question. If it's
not the money, why are you here?

Joe tentatively hands her a folded photo -- *Emma, perhaps?* --
Alice opens the well-worn picture, at first confused...

JOE
You're here because you lost your
mother. I'm here because I lost
something too.

THE PICTURE: THE MEN OF "THE LOST PATROL"

B&W, just like on the Burana website. Sarge, Medic Jones,
Welks, Abrams, Marks, Peterson, PFC and, of course...

PVT COOK

Her eyes dart to Joe as she spots the family resemblance.

EXT. TRIBAL VILLAGE - UPPER PLATFORM - MORNING

On the uppermost terrace, a TRIBAL PRIEST holds a wooden
vuvuzela and blares a wake-up call for--

TRIBESMAN to descend the vines, raining down as the men above
help to transport the team's equipment back to the ground.

Joe sets a bag on a lowering platform, their primitive
elevator. Chow Su hops on and drops down with the gear.

Raj walks by, peeks over the edge at the diminishing Chow Su.

JOE
Where's Alice?

RAJ
She's getting her hair done.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Joe goes to ask what that means when he hears GIGGLING--

Alice comes out of a hut, trailed by three teenage girls.
Her hair has been spun in a more "tribal" fashion.

ALICE
How do I look?

JOE
Good.

RAJ
Good.

The two suitors eye each other wearily. Alice notices.

ALICE
I just need to grab my bag.

The now cleared lift rises back for a return trip.

JOE
We'll hold the elevator.

ALICE
That's okay, I'll get the next one.

She grabs onto a LADDER. Climbs to a higher level...

HER FOOT SLIPS

She glances at her leg. It's SHAKING. She takes a deep
breath, finishes climbing and carefully walks to her bag.

Alice kneels down, her quivering hand unzipping--

NO PILLS

She panics. Scrambles through the bag's contents.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Shit... shit....

She leans back against the sky-high tree trunk. Tries to
breathe. Deep, yoga breaths. Eyes closed. 1... 2... 3...

Opens her eyes, holds up her hand. It's still shaking.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Shit.

EXT. TRIBAL VILLAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Alice is helped off the "elevator" by a tribesman. She flips
her bag on a shoulder with a forced calm...

But Joe notices something's off as she rejoins the group.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE ENTIRE TRIBE

Has assembled to watch them off. It's a surprisingly somber moment. A young child even cries. Then, from the brush...

THE ELDER

Emerges, *chanting*. The priest trumpeter follows, shaking a long rain stick. A SHAMAN tosses powder on the ground--

FORMING A PATH into the jungle. The powder ends at Peter.

PETER

We don't have time for this.

ALICE

Shut up, Peter.

Elder walks over, dips his thumb into a BOWL OF BLOOD and marks Peter's forehead. He works down the line...

Chow Su, Raj, Alice, each porter and mercenary. At the end:

JOE. Elder stops. Instead of marking Joe, he MARKS HIMSELF.

Then leans in so his forehead touches Joe's. Elder reaches out, faces inches apart, and grabs Joe's hand...

PLACING SOMETHING IN IT

Elder leans back, speaks in his secret language:

ELDER

Me me nop pulang.

Joe slowly looks down, loosens his fist to verify what he's feeling in it is real, not a figment of his imagination.

But we do not see it.

We stay on the toothless grin of Elder instead. With effort:

ELDER (CONT'D)

Joe.

Yeah, that's his name...

JOE

Joe.

Joe pockets Elder's profound -- and still unseen -- GIFT.

DISSOLVE TO:

DARKNESS. Then, emerging from the shadows:

A MONSTROUS FACE. Big black eyes. Two serrated mandibles.

The beast crawls out of its hole in the ground, spindly legs flickering over dense jungle foliage until--

A SNEAKER

Crunches the cockroach's body, proving they may survive nuclear winter... but they won't survive a Nike.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Eleven remaining pairs of legs trudge the same ground as the Lost Patrol, heads swiveling as they look for signs of...

PORTER

Trang nuoh!

Alice follows the porter's outstretched finger to a treetop.

A SKELETON wedged between branches clutches a rusted rifle.

JOE

We're here.

They make their way over a ridge to a familiar...

EMBANKMENT

Leading down a steep slope to a caldera scooped like a bowl from the jungle floor, in which grows the walls and trees of

THE LOST CITY OF BURANA

Surrounded on all sides by high, chiseled bulwarks. Unlike that night in 1967, when everything was dark and flooded...

The ground is now dry. And in daylight, we may finally take in Burana's wonder-of-the-world scope and complexity.

For this is a city that time forgot, a modern window into the thousand year aftermath of a localized apocalypse. Vines and roots and old forestation have merged with stone, as if the Hanging Gardens of Babylon somehow existed here, built around the tall trees by a highly advanced culture. A lost culture.

RAJ

Holy shit, it's real!

PETER

We did it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

You can see the dollar signs flashing in his eyes.

Chow Su, in a lone moment of exaltation, wipes away a tear as the porters and mercs slap each other cheerfully on the back.

Raj has his phone out, filming the discovery.

Alice approaches Joe... Unlike the others, he seems unnerved.

ALICE

Look what you found.

He turns to her. Can't even fake a smile.

JOE

I never thought I'd miss the noise.

ALICE

What do you...?

She quickly realizes that the sounds of the jungle have...

DISAPPEARED

Replaced by the slight whir of wind through the trees. Joe steps in front of the group, silencing the celebration.

JOE

Let's find the Fountain. In and out. Stay together, eyes open.

They carefully make their way down the embankment -- crab walking sideways -- except for one porter who loses balance

AND TUMBLES

Down to the ground, landing with a thump in the muck.

Joe watches, gets a shiver down his spine. Turns to see--

A GIANT STONE HEAD

Toppled from its guardian post high above the city walls. The reptilian stone face stares at us through a film of burnt yellow LICHEN. Joe rubs his finger over the dried algae.

JOE

Huh...

NEAR THE ENTRANCE

Alice collects various samples from the dirt. Raj sets up the Genome Sequencer on the raised stone platform, where...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHOW SU and the Mercs study the booby trapped portal blocking their way in. Dried red stains the doorjamb, like peeling paint. Chow Su scrapes the red with a knife. It's Sarge's--

CHOW SU (SUBTITLED)
Blood.

CUT TO:

THE GENOME SEQUENCER flashes: *"Sample Complete"...*

EXT. ENTRANCE PLATFORM - MOMENTS LATER

Half-a-century after the Lost Patrol, the only change is the ancient, fitted steps no longer disappear into boggy water.

Alice stands over the Sequencer, while Raj clicks. The Mercs patrol the area, aiming at the slightest clarion call.

ALICE
We're definitely in the right spot.
The ground here has massive traces
of the 6-P marker but the enzyme
itself isn't complete. We're
seeing a residue, an excretion,
left over from the original source.

ONSCREEN: A MOLECULE, highly complex, forms in 3D space. But portions of it are missing, the binds flashing RED.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Turns out the Fountain isn't, as we
suspected, a plant at all. It
probably just looks like one. It's
actually, we think, Animalia...
Like a deep sea coral.

JOE
How does it keep someone young?

RAJ
When you cut yourself on coral, it
takes forever to heal... right?
That's because part of the animal
gets inside you.

ALICE
Which forces your immune system to
attack the foreign body. This
enzyme must turbocharge our T
cells, maybe the whole lymphatic
system. Strengthening it, probably
even mutating our immune response
so it'll attack illness and aging
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (CONT'D)
on an intercellular level.
(beat)
But that's just a guess.

JOE
So it mutates us?

Peter nervously flicks his silver lighter.

PETER
I got a better question: Where is
it? 'Cause I don't see any goddamn
coral.

ALICE
That's the problem. We may be too
late.

MEANWHILE:

BENEATH THE ENTRANCE PLATFORM

Ratfaced Merc snubs out his cigarette, adjusts the gunstrap
around his neck. Heads along the wall in a bid for privacy.

He passes a broken down ruin of stone, shrugging off the
tattered and aged ARMY BACKPACK propped up against the wall.

EXT. ENTRANCE PLATFORM - RESUME

PETER
You're saying this coral thing is
dead? Extinct? That's not an
acceptable answer, Dr. Wade.

ALICE
I'm saying it's not here. It could
be inside, it could be somewhere
nearby, or yes, it could be...

JOE
--Coral's aquatic, right? Well
this is the lowest point in the
valley and all this used to be
flooded with water...
(beat; realizing)
Before they built the Veang Khan
Dam!

SLAM TO:

A WARNING KLAXON blares as emergency personnel flee the...

EXT. VEANG KHAN RIVER DAM - DAY

A TECTONIC CRACK rips through the dam's thick concrete...
Chunks of masonry break off, tumbling down to the river.

Complete collapse imminent as a stream of water SPURTS OUT--

EXT. BURANA - RAMPART - DAY

...from Ratfaced Merc as he urinates on the ancient wall.

Nearby BRANCHES rustle in the wind. Rat glances over--
Thinks nothing of it. Keeps peeing. Until a...

GUTTURAL GROWL makes him look up at--

CLAWED ARMS

Swiping down, pulling Ratface headfirst out of frame.

EXT. ENTRANCE PLATFORM - SAME

PETER

...So if it may be inside, we go
inside.

JOE

We don't know what's inside. The
thing that killed Bransky could--

A BURST OF GUNFIRE

From around the corner mixes with a strange, inhuman *BELLOW*.

PETER

What was that?

Joe immediately takes control:

JOE

Chow Su, come with me. Peter, set
up that device thing--

PETER

The A.D.S.

JOE

--Whatever, yes.

RAJ

I want to come.

Raj puffs his chest. Makes a show for Alice. Joe debates:

And slaps a gun into Raj's hand.

EXT. RAMPART - MOMENTS LATER

Joe and Chow Su take the corner, guns drawn. Raj follows.

The peeing Merc has disappeared. Nobody's there. Joe scans the trees, looks to Chow Su. Worried.

RAJ
Look at this.

By the crumbled wall, Raj holds up the decayed Army backpack.

RAJ (CONT'D)
The Lost Patrol. They were here.

Joe stares at the backpack, reflecting on--

A BRANCH crashes beside them. They aim to the treetops, sunlight streaming, highlighting the GHASTLY SILHOUETTE OF...

AN ANIMAL

Seven feet long with a short, flailing tail. It LEAPS to the fortification, hidden, and CALLS -- *KRaawwkk!* -- FOR BACKUP.

JOE
Run.

EXT. ENTRANCE PLATFORM - SAME

Alice stops pacing, the beastly cries echoing down from the bulwerks like a reptilian call to prayer.

ALICE
Where are they?

Peter finishes setting up the A.D.S. The orb powers on.

PETER
They better hurry.

From the foliage, Joe and Chow Su burst out as fast as they--

ALICE
WHERE'S RAJ!?

The two men stop, look at each other, turn around...

And run back the way they came.

WE HOLD

A snake slithers along a branch, unconcerned with the war that has just erupted as GUNFIRE resounds from the forest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Alice stares, waiting, worried... As a drop of RAIN settles on her hair. Peter glances at the splattered stone floor.

Drip. Drip. His attention turns to the A.D.S. orb.

PETER

Uh oh.

More shots fired from the SHADOWS of the jungle as--

CHOW SU RUNS OUT carrying a severely injured Raj on his back.

Joe flanks, the sliced up Army backpack slung over his shoulder as he -- *BANG, BANG* -- fires and retreats...

A PAINFUL CRY

From the concealed creature rises above the caldera, bouncing off the stone and causing a flurry of LIZARDLY REPLIES.

JOE

TURN IT ON!

Joe and Chow Su bound up the wide, temple-like steps. Rain drips down the remote's TOUCH SCREEN as Peter presses "ON":

THE A.D.S. BURSTS AT FULL POWER

A pink-hued dome protectively explodes like a RETINAL GHOST, 180-degrees of cover in front, the entrance to Burana behind.

Alice rushes to Raj. His left arm crushed, back lacerated. He's barely conscious. Chow Su sets him down on one of those circular stones... one of two pressure sensitive triggers...

ALICE

What happened out there?

JOE

We met the locals!

The rest of the men -- three porters, two mercs, Chow Su and Peter -- stand around the A.D.S. perimeter, weapons ready--

EYES SCANNING THE JUNGLE

Waiting for those *things* -- now silent -- to emerge.

In that silence, the loud...

CRACKLE

Of the A.D.S. causes one porter to open fire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOE (CONT'D)

Stop!

Then another Zzzzz from the machine. Zzzz. Each burst of energy, each strange blast from the electric dome timed--

TO A DROP OF RAIN

Blasting the water with microwaves, instantly turning liquid to gas... as *plop, Zzzzzz, plop, Zzzzzz*, grows into a SYMPHONY OF WATER, *Zzzzzz*, electricity, *Zzzzzz*, and mist...

JOE (CONT'D)

What's going on?

PETER

The machine...

JOE

--The A.D.S.--

PETER

...Right. It has one design flaw.

JOE

Yes?

PETER

It doesn't work well in the rain.

JOE

So you brought it to a rainforest?

PETER

It was built in Saudi Arabia!

The rhythmic fall of rain has increased. Half the drops hit the floor, half turn to STEAM as the orb constantly whines...

Causing the PROTECTIVE DOME to literally appear in outline as mist clouds everything above the spherical perimeter.

Unable to see past twenty feet, the men with their guns stare out into the bright white aerosol created by microwaved rain.

AND THAT'S WHEN THE **ATTACK** BEGINS

Zzzzz...

KRAAWwwwck...

Zzzzz...

KRAAWwwwck...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

With each attempt to breach the perimeter, a flash of BEAST permeates fog, glistening grey scales amongst a sea of white.

Chow Su, Joe and Peter FIRE as best they can, the rare successful shot echoing back with a loud and angry *KRAAWCK...*

ON ALICE & RAJ

She's trying to staunch the bleeding. His eyes flutter...

RAJ
It's okay, I'm okay.

Alice wipes his brow. Her hand uncontrollably shaking.

A FLASH

Arms and face -- elongated, like a crocodile's snout -- turn blistering black as the A.D.S. chars the invader.

Peter FIRES at the retreating creature as it dissolves back into the ether. He holds up the A.D.S. remote screen:

42% POWER

The near constant *crackle* of pattering rain is quickly draining the Orb's battery. 37%... *That fast...*

PETER
We're losing power!

Joe fires two shots at a snapping tail, which doesn't seem affected by the radiation like the animal's other appendages.

THE TAIL SWEEPS IN, swipes a porter onto his back, legs flying out from under him and breeching the perimeter. He--

SCREAMS foul Khmer words as his feet are microwaved in their shoes. Suddenly, he is YANKED out into the mist...

Joe lunges, grabs the man's hand and pulls him in a tug-of-war with the animal outside... He tugs as hard as...

HALF THE MAN

Snaps back into the dome. The cloaked animals outside the radius *KRAWWWKKK* around the lower torso of fresh meat.

SMOKE begins wafting from the A.D.S. orb: 21% POWER.

PETER (CONT'D)
We're running out of time!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Everyone is shooting, even the porters, in a half-moon circle along the edge of the protective bubble... Near the citywall--

Scar is OUT OF AMMO. He inspects his gun, until a foot...

KICKS HIM

Out of the A.D.S. dome. He cries out as his scarred skin BLISTERS before he is swiftly enveloped in the foggy shroud.

REVEAL PETER

Glaring out at the wails of pain as the animals desecrate the Merc who stole his lighter. Payback. That only Alice saw:

ALICE

You just killed him!

PETER

We needed a distraction! This thing won't hold much longer.

(turns)

Joe, we have to open this door!

Joe stops firing. Glances at the circular stone beneath Raj.

JOE

Raj... buddy, can you get up?

Raj nods, gets on his hands and knees as best he can.

JOE (CONT'D)

Stay on this stone. That's good...

Joe YELLS for Chow Su in Khmer... Chow Su looks back, steps sideways three feet until he's standing on the other--

CIRCULAR STONE

IT DEPRESSES and the thick portal into Burana lunges open.

JOE (CONT'D)

Everyone inside!

Peter rushes the shadowy entrance as Chow Su steps back...

MOVING OFF THE TRIGGER

Causing the stone door to slam shut just as Peter is--

YANKED BACK

By Joe, saved with an inch to spare. Joe calls to Chow Su:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JOE (CONT'D)
Din no whaa won se!

Chow Su nods. Steps back on the stone. Door re-opens.

The animals have finished with the body of Scar and are back--

ATTACKING THE DOME

Visibly growing weaker as the A.D.S. reads: 11%.

The PORTAL RUMBLES OPEN and Peter, the remaining two porters and the last Merc (Tats) retreat. Joe rushes over to Alice.

JOE (CONT'D)
 I need you to go inside.

ALICE
 I'm not leaving Raj.

The tail of a creature *crackles* through the perimeter and roundhouses the Genome Sequencer, sending cartons flying.

RAJ
 I'll be right behind you. Please!

Alice knows he's lying. Sees him implore her with his eyes.

ALICE
 You better be.

Raj smiles. He finally gets to be the hero. Alice kisses him, gratefully. She wipes a tear and runs to the entrance.

JOE
 Raj... The door won't stay open unless two people are out here. Do you understand?

RAJ
 (nods, holds up gun)
 I'll be fine.

JOE
 I know you will.

Joe backs into the entrance to Burana, picking up the green Lost Patrol-era ARMY BACKPACK on his way inside...

JOE (CONT'D)
Pen tow!

Chow Su glances back, steps off the stone, causing the door to WIPE SHUT with Joe and the others safe behind it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

CLOSE ON -- THE A.D.S. POWER SCREEN as the battery drops to:
3%... Zzzzzzz... 2%... WARNING... WARNING...

With a CRASH the power fails, the pink-hued electromagnetic perimeter REVERSING, sucked back into the dying A.D.S. orb.

With the perimeter down, the thick fog is no longer excluded.

It quickly creeps in on Chow Su and Raj. Raj shuts his eyes.

They come for him first.

Chow Su fires at the snapping arms and mouths that fleetingly betray the wall of mist. There is a single GUNSHOT from Raj.

No screams.

Chow Su spins as something whips past him, first in front--

Then behind, surrounding him, but he can't SEE through the veil of heavenly bright fog so he fires randomly as the calls of the creatures toy with his sense of direction 'til finally

A REPTILE

Lunges at us -- at him -- to finish the job, giving us:

OUR FIRST GOOD LOOK AT **THE GUARDIANS**

Clawed front arms. Skin almost metallic, plated in a strange tone of rust and moss, as if algae were ingrained in the scales. Head, long and pointed... like a dragon.

It's clearly Jurassic with a frightening Asian twist... but something about its movement is also oddly familiar.

WE DRIFT BACK

As Chow Su's screams dissipate, until the attack is hidden, nothing more than the sounds of death in a FADE TO WHITE fog.

BECOMING:

THE WHITE CAPS of water crashing through the...

EXT. VEANG KHAN RIVER DAM - DAY

The crest of the dam buckles into the spillway, collapsing story-upon-story of concrete as the water pushes through--

A TSUNAMI of backed-up basin water gushes forth, cresting the Veang Khan River and sweeping away...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE ABANDONED WORKER HOUSING

Chunks of dormitory surf the wave into the JUNGLE...

INT. BURANA - ENTRY TUNNEL - SAME

Alice leans back against the stone wall. Her shaking hand wipes TEARS from her eyes. Daylight shoots through cracks.

ALICE
Christ. What were those things?

PETER
There were so many more than we
thought...

Alice slowly looks over, awareness dawning:

ALICE
Did you know about them?

With nothing to lose, Peter nods affirmative. Alice strikes--

ALICE (CONT'D)
They killed Raj! You god-damn
motherf...

Joe grabs her hand. Holds her back.

JOE
There's nothing we can do about it
now. Is there anything else you
need to tell us, Peter?

PETER
...No.

Joe lets go of Alice's hand. Notices it's shaking. They lock eyes. He realizes she doesn't have her pills...

So he grabs her hand again, tenderly, and leads her out to:

EXT. BURANA - CITY PROPER - CONTINUOUS

ANOTHER WORLD... Hundreds of structures packed inside the walls. Trees like giant's feet stomped permanently into the colonnade walls. Roots break through the stone floor.

Vined tendrils snake up the primal Asian facades, arched openings marking hundreds of decayed homes.

Peter momentarily lowers his gun. Alice steps across...

A DITCH

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Churning with rainwater. Dozens of raised AQUEDUCTS funnel water in a complicated maze toward the city's center.

PETER

Now how do we find the Fountain?

ALICE

Follow the water. Aqueducts,
everywhere, all heading there...

She points to the highest building... not so much stone as a forged alliance of tree-trunks cresting into a temple mount.

Joe nods. Checks the area, takes the lead as they march...

Single file through the urban jungle transformed into real jungle. Guns angle from canopy to ground, around a corner--

A GUARDIAN

Skitters across a rooftop. Tattooed Merc opens fire. Shots ricochet off the stone. The creature disappears.

Joe heads down broken steps into a once grand, wide open:

AGORA

Evidence here, even thousands of years later, of a BATTLE.

ALICE (CONT'D)

What happened to these people?

JOE

Isn't it obvious? Take a finite
resource and unquenchable demand,
you get war every time.

(beat)

Keep moving. We're too exposed out
here in the open.

They rush through the timeworn marketplace, past a SINKHOLE where a tree has COLLAPSED, opening up a view to:

THE UNDERGROUND CISTERN

Beneath the stone streets. A complex, ancient sewer system. Alice is astounded, unaware that directly above...

SOMETHING WATCHES THEM

EXT. BURANA - MOMENTS LATER

They exit around a crumbled building dotted with tiny rooms. Most have been ravaged by time...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BUT ONE LOOKS LIVED IN

Almost... cleaner. One of the porters hears DRIPPING WATER--

Steps in, notices an intricate series of ducts and wooden pipes -- pipes that must be serviced -- filling a stone sink.

He rushes out to rejoin the group as--

A GUARDIAN

Turns to say hello. The thick claws of the silently stalking predator rip up into the screaming man as Peter and Joe spin--

OPENING FIRE

The Guardian tosses the dead porter like a ragdoll and rushes ahead, immune to the bullets pelting its thick scales.

As the beast closes, Joe, Alice, Peter and the remaining porter HEAD RIGHT... while Tats stumbles and trips his way--

LEFT

Scrambling from the creature, losing himself in the labyrinth of buildings and broken walls. He fires behind-- KRAaawkk...

Another Guardian drops down, swings its tale and topples a column of stones. Tats flees in the other direction.

The Guardians TOY WITH TATS, blocking all but one path and forcing him down a ramp of busted masonry into an...

INT. UNDERGROUND TOMB - CONTINUOUS

Tats comes to a DARKENED DEAD-END, surrounded on all sides by bones. Some fresher than others... those are BRANSKY'S CREW.

Rainfall pools at Tat's feet. He sloshes about, backing away from the DAYLIGHT and the two Guardians blocking his retreat.

THE GUARDIANS STOP

Tats raises his gun. About to fire. When--

TWO EYES

Penetrate the shadows. Tats spins and beholds...

THE EYES RISING

As if the Guardian, partially visible from the faint glow outside, were raising itself onto its hind legs and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STANDING UPRIGHT

Its face moves closer. Inches from Tats. GLEAMING SCALES reflect the dead merc walking as--

The GUARDIAN KING'S mouth opens and descends on his flesh.

EXT. BURANA - SAME

Three more Guardians scamper across the rooftops, jumping back and forth with inhuman agility as...

Joe, Peter, Alice and the last porter fire futilely.

ALICE

What are they, bulletproof!?

Peter runs out of ammo, throws the pistol aside. Reaches behind and pulls a sawed-off SHOTGUN strapped to his back...

A Guardian crawls down the side of a tree, blocking them--

BOOM BOOM

Peter fires both barrels, knocking the creature back.

BLUE COLORED BLOOD

Splatters out. The cold-blooded creature retreats.

Alice's racing footprints trail through the puddle of blue.

EXT. CITY CENTER - TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Concave plant beds layered in concentric rings rise up. Old growth trees guided by rocky trellises have taken over the honeycombed stone, creating a type of ARBOREAL ARCHITECTURE.

Still surrounded, the four survivors unload their rounds--

ALICE

I'm out!

She tosses the gun aside... KRaawwwk... A GUARDIAN lunges from a precipice, crashing down just as Alice...

ROLLS AWAY

The Guardian spins, its tail swiping the last porter, who flails and fires up, bullets hitting a precariously balanced--

STATUE of an Asiatic face pocked with time and grime.

PETER SHOOTS

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blasting into the leg of the Guardian. Injured, it retreats up the facade, trailing its blue blood, the tail slapping...

THE STATUE, toppling it three stories down...

JOE
WATCH OUT!

...CRUSHING the porter and violently cracking a slope down to the underground cistern. Alice glissades along the slippery incline, scrambling unsuccessfully to stop her fall into...

INT. CISTERN - CONTINUOUS

DROPPING fifteen feet, collapsing into a dark pool of water.

EXT. TEMPLE - SAME

Joe and Peter blast at the two Guardians backing them up against the tree trunk walls of the central temple...

Joe turns. Deeply hardened branches claw and wrap around the cracked stone entryway, suffocating their chance of escape.

PETER
There's no way in!

INT. CISTERN - SAME

Alice pulls herself out of the water and leans against a thick stone pillar. As her eyes adjust, she takes in--

THE MASSIVE WATERWORKS. Tunnels run off bringing underground water here, to this immense cavern of symmetrical columns.

Alice maneuvers around a wall of mummified roots, uncovering a pool of light a hundred feet away, HALOING DOWN ON:

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

A chimerical REEF OF LIFE, not quite plant, not quite animal. It drips with water from above. Sort of... like a fountain.

All the city's water, channeled here. To preserve the last of this strange, one-of-a-kind species.

ALICE
The Fountain...

What she has spent her entire life looking for... Alice staggers over, enamored. Reaches for the knife in her belt--

And that's when she hears the splash...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She spins, catches the briefest glimpse of a GUARDIAN as it skitters away from the sinkhole into a pocket of darkness.

Alice shakes, throws her back against a pillar. Hides.

EXT. TEMPLE - SAME

The Lost Patrol backpack slung over Joe's shoulders presses against the temple wall. Joe tosses his gun, no more rounds.

JOE
That's it!

He looks for a way into the arboreal temple... As a Guardian leaps at him and-- BOOM-- Peter blasts the beasts belly...

AND IT CRUMPLES, slicking across the stone. Doesn't move.

PETER
I got one!

JOE
How many rounds do you have left?

PETER
None!

Two more Guardians appear, like ants. They just keep coming.

JOE
Follow me!

Joe climbs a pile of inclined rock burst from the temple by the pressure of expanding branches. A jagged jungle gym...

The Guardians follow as Joe and Peter scale ahead to--

AN AQUEDUCT

Four stories high, routing water through a thin opening into the temple. Joe laces his fingers and boosts Peter up.

Peter reaches down and grabs Joe's hand, hoisting him--

JUST AS A GUARDIAN

Jumps out, MISSES and flails through the arched aqueduct, slamming hard into the wall of the nearest building.

Joe and Peter run along the watery channel. Peter SLIPS-- And glides right through the temple opening, yelling as...

Joe DIVES FORWARD, rocketing along the watery slide face first, arms outstretched as he's funneled into...

INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Aqueducts rain water down onto the topside portion of--

THE FOUNTAIN REEF

Tentacles of cockled polyps, dizzying in their biodiversity, branch out like antenna. Orange and red and green veins of pulsing petals open out to the light like a living rainbow.

Peter spills down an aqueduct toward the dead-end spout and a

40-FOOT WATERFALL

Lubricating the reef below. Peter struggles to stop but the gilded stone carries him over the edge on a deadly collision--

JOE GRABS HIS ARM

And fights not to fall himself as Peter pendulums mid-air. The men stare at the Fountain, its branches beckoning SPIKES.

CRANE DOWN:

Past the rainbow sharp arms of the Fountain Reef, DOWN TO:

THE FLOOR, where a craggy cone of rock excised in a tiered circle allows the reef's trunk to descend into the cistern...

INT. CISTERN - CONTINUOUS

Alice hides as the Guardian sniffs the air, seeking her out. The creature passes nearby, swings its head around--

HER COLUMN

Inches away... on the wrong side. She holds her breath.

The Guardian moves on but ALICE'S LEG SPASMS, splashing water and telling the Guardian her exact location. Shit.

She tries to run but her muscles won't work. She collapses, picks herself up for a quick sprint and collapses again...

The Guardian senses its pray is injured. It does not rush her suffering. Almost as if it finds her... fascinating.

Alice tries crawling backwards but the Guardian leaps right on top of her. Holds her down with its massive arms. Leans its head in close, like it were suddenly aroused by this--

ALICE STABS HER KNIFE

Into the neck of the creature, under its heavily plated head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blood, thick and viscously blue, drips from the wound and the Guardian lurches off her in surprised panic.

Alice stumbles over to the dying animal.

ALICE
What are you?

A wheezy *krreaawk* emerges from the mouth. She bends down.

Touches the skin. But it's not skin. It's...

ALICE (CONT'D)
Armor?

She grabs onto the animals head and pulls, removing...

A COSTUMED HELMET

These aren't animals. They're SCARECROWS. And the dying face beneath -- elongated, veins bulging, skin translucently white and youthful -- might not be human anymore...

BUT IT SURE AS SHIT ONCE WAS

ALICE (CONT'D)
Human. Oh my god!

Kraaaawwwk... KRAAAaaawwwkkk...

Alice tumbles backward as THREE GUARDIANS claw through the sinkhole, angrily approaching. She backs away...

INT. TEMPLE - SAME

Peter dangles as Joe tries to hoist him back onto the aqueduct but the water pressure in the channel is BUILDING. The extra weight and wet surface are dragging them both down.

PETER
Pull me up, goddamnit!

JOE
Hang on!

Peter is slipping. Joe is slipping. But Joe won't let go and--

THEY BOTH FALL

Right over the aqueduct. At the last second, Joe regains his grip on the edge --one handed-- but it's too late for Peter--

HE SLIDES FROM JOE'S GRASP

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Screaming as he CRASHES through branches of the Fountain, slamming into the hard ground far below where--

HIS PRECIOUS LIGHTER

Tumbles from his pocket, skidding across the floor.

Joe, both hands free, pulls himself up through the streaming water. He straddles the slippery stone, steps back and--

LEAPS TO THE NEXT AQUEDUCT. Like a videogame, bit-by-bit... He makes his way down to the hole at the Temple's base where:

INT. CISTERN - SAME

Alice is up against the base of the Fountain Reef as the Guardians stalk ever closer, COMMUNICATING back and forth.

ALICE

I know what you are! You've been feeding on the Fountain!

She lashes out with her knife. But they keep coming.

One of the Guardians -- and it is unmistakable -- LAUGHS. It actually *laughs* as it rushes forward, slashing its taloned claw across Alice's torso, slicing through her shirt.

GUARDIAN KING (O.S.)

Kraaawwwkk kraa KRAAWWK...

The three Guardians retreat reverentially as the Guardian King emerges into the light. Unlike the others, he walks UPRIGHT. Towering seven feet tall, arthritic claws...

REMOVE ITS HELMET

Its face has clearly mutated more reptilian over the millennia but its eyes dance with the intelligence of man.

Alice backs into the reef, shaking. Fear, disease... both...

The Guardian King bares its sickly teeth, calcified into fangs by thousands of years of immortality side-effects...

It brushes its hand through Alice's hair, paws at her chest--

EYES ALIGHTING

As it turns and calls to the others... *KRAAAWWKkkkk...*

ALICE

You're all male. Oh no.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The King snaps back, its forked tongue slipping out and dancing across her neck. Alice cringes as she realizes--

JOE (O.S.)
Hey! Back the fuck off!

JOE VAULTS DOWN

Off the trunk of the Fountain, through the hole in the temple floor. He crashes with supreme agility right in front of...

THE CONFUSED GUARDIAN KING

Joe lifts his arms, defiantly blocks Alice behind him:

JOE (CONT'D)
Calm heartbeat. Relaxed as possible.

The Guardian King raises himself to full height. It hisses down at Joe. Joe reflects daggers back with his patented:

AW' HELL-YEAH-AMERICAN STARE™

And hisses right back. The Guardian King leans in and...

SMELLS JOE

Deeply. AND ITS EYES GROW WIDE. Alice watches as the King reels back, suddenly and inexplicably fearful of Joe.

GUARDIAN KING
Kraawwwwkaaawwwkk...

FROM TOPSIDE: Comes a harsh, painful series of *REPTILIAN CALLS*. Whatever it means, the Guardians hastily RETREAT like scattering lizards, up through the holes in the ceiling...

ALICE
How did you do that? How did you scare him off?

JOE
I didn't. I confused him.

ALICE
What? You confused him?

He turns to her, grabs her shoulders, looks her in the eye.

JOE
I'm one of them.

SLAM TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - SAME

A colorful PARROT sits in a nest. Minding its own business.
A LOUD RUMBLE makes the bird snap its head around, mimicking:

PARROT
Kraaawwwwk!

It flaps off the branch as a...

TIDAL WAVE OF WATER

Destroys the nest on its inevitable collision course with...

EXT. BURANA - TEMPLE - DAY

Alice and Joe rush from the temple, retracing their steps.
The ominous RUMBLE of pounding water grows deeper and closer.

EXT. BURANA - CITY WALL - SAME

A costumed Guardian stands watch over the barricade as the
Guardian King crawls up to join... looks out over the jungle--

AT THE THUNDERING TIDAL WAVE

Uprooting the world in its wake.

EXT. BURANA - ENTRANCE - SAME

Joe digs inside the Army backpack. Alice comes up beside.

ALICE
I don't understand! What the hell
did you mean 'you're one of them'!?

In the pack, next to the rusted radio of Pvt Cook, is a
PLASTIC BAG covered in mold and muck. Inside the bag--

DYNAMITE

Joe pulls it out, along with a PHOTOGRAPH sealed for decades.

JOE
I've been here before.

Joe hands her the faded photo. It's of a nineteen year-old

PVT. COOK AND EMMA

Emma... the same girl we saw on Joe's apartment nightstand.

Alice tries to understand. Joe wedges the dynamite in a
joint between bricks. He flips open PETER'S LIGHTER...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE (CONT'D)

Do you think he'll mind I borrowed this?

ALICE

This picture... It's not your dad! This is you!

JOE

And that's Emma. And this is my backpack and thank god I packed this dynamite.

He lights the stick and grabs Alice, pulling her away...

ALICE

How old are you?

JOE

Sixty-six.

BOOM!

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CITY:

BOOM! as the wall of water OVERFLOWS the ramparts...

EXT. BURANA - SAME

...SWEEPING AWAY the fleeing Guardian King and his army.

The TSUNAMI hurtles through the streets. An UPROOTED TREE surfs the wave, COLLAPSING AN AQUEDUCT and blasting onward...

INT. TEMPLE - DAY

Peter's eyes flutter open. He lifts his head as the uprooted tree slams like a BATTERING RAM into the temple, directly at:

PETER

Son-of-a...

EXT. EMBANKMENT - SAME

Alice and Joe climb up the ridge and turn to witness...

THE DESTRUCTION OF BURANA

Water DECIMATES much of the fragile city sprawled out below them. Cries of drowning Guardians are lost amid the tumult.

Joe turns to Alice. Sees her empty hands... deflates:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOE
You didn't get your sample!

ALICE
Who says I didn't?

She rolls up her pant leg. A tiny, colorful tendril from the Fountain's base penetrates her leg like an undersea thorn.

Alice pulls it out. Holds it to the light. She smiles...

Because her hand is rock steady.

ALICE (CONT'D)
Did you find what you came here
for? Did you get your answers?

Joe nods, reaches into his pocket. Takes out...

A RUSTED DOG TAG. Hands it to Alice. Indented letters read:

COOK
PVT. JOSEPH A.

JOE
My patrol was attacked by those
things. I never understood how I
survived.

He shows his palm. A FAINT SCAR runs across his "life line."
From when Pvt Cook fell down the embankment and cut his hand.

JOE (CONT'D)
I already had the Fountain in my
blood. That's how I lived. And
why I look like this. But after
the attack, I was unconscious for
months. Until one day I just woke
up in a truck on its way to *Poipet*.
(then)
I had to know how I lived. That
tribe we found -- they must have
taken me in -- and saved my life
because the Elder handed me that...

She gives the tag back. Joe weighs it -- the weight of all
those years held in his hand -- then puts it around his neck.

They turn away as nature razes the once great city of Burana.

UNDERWATER

The destruction as seen from below. Flotsam and a dead
Guardian float through a silty blue world. FOCUS ON:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER'S PHARMAGEN LAPTOP, the company logo drifting by...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PHARMAGEN HQ - LYDON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

...THE SAME LOGO, on Lydon's desktop. He tries frantically to connect a VIDEO CALL but the monitor flashes: *ERROR, ERROR*

LYDON

No! NO NO NO!

Behind him, on the curved video wall, NEWS FOOTAGE PLAYS:

HELICOPTER SHOTS of the Veang Khan Dam's complete demolition.

Lydon isn't watching. He's too busy trying to reach Peter...

"CONNECTION ERROR: DEVICE DESTROYED"

LYDON (CONT'D)

God damnit!

He slams a fist on his desk. Fumes.

REPORTER (ON THE VIDEO WALL)

We are just receiving word of a surprise arrest in the terrorist attack that led to the collapse of the Veang Khan Dam.

Lydon spins in his chair, dwarfed by the horrific footage.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

A high ranking member of the Vietnamese Consulate has been charged with conspiracy...

ONSCREEN: The Vietnamese Consul who colluded with Lydon is taken into custody. The Consul looks into the CAMERA LENS...

Like he's staring right at Lydon. Indicting him.

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Excuse me... No, you can't go in there!

The door bursts open and several FBI AGENTS charge in.

FBI LEAD

Ralph Lydon. We have a warrant for your arrest.

SLAM TO:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A HELICOPTER touching down on a...

EXT. ROCKY CLIFF - JUNGLE - AFTERNOON

Water flows again over the falls where Bransky landed only ten days earlier. Joe and Alice wait as the chopper's--

BACK DOOR SWINGS OPEN

Revealing a smiling, slightly beaten-up Tran.

TRAN

Oh, Joe Cook! Why you look like
shit?

JOE

Now that's how you ask a question!

Joe helps Alice into the helicopter as the rotors spin...

EXT. HIGH ABOVE THE JUNGLE - TWILIGHT

The chopper flies over the lush green into the setting sun.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT/EST. NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH - MONTHS LATER

The brown, stoic center of government research in medicine.

ALICE (PRE-LAP)

After several months in the
laboratory...

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

Unlike Alice's earlier presentation, this one is packed.

ALICE

...I am excited to report we have
successfully synthesized the
Corallium rajwan enzyme!

APPLAUSE fills the room.

ALICE (CONT'D)

Aside from mild sleep issues and a
strange immunity to caffeine, we
can safely report no adverse side
effects-- in moderation. For this
reason... we must remain vigilant
and responsible. This drug's
potential for abuse is equaled only
by its incredible power to do good.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALICE (CONT'D)

Repeatedly, nature has given us a choice. When mankind split the atom, we were handed powerful tools to forge a brighter tomorrow.

(beat)

But at the same time, we were also provided with the very means for our destruction. This discovery is no different. Because this... is the power and beauty of nature.

EXT. WASHINGTON MALL - DAY

Joe Cook sits on a bench, the towering majesty of the WASHINGTON MONUMENT rising behind him...

He stares off, lost in thought. An old VETERAN approaches:

VETERAN (O.S.)

You know somebody on that wall, son?

JOE

A few names.

VETERAN

Me too. Never forget what they sacrificed.

JOE

I won't.

The Veteran pats his fellow soldier and walks off, revealing:

ALICE

In a long coat, glowing in the autumn chill. Healthy.

She holds out her hand. Joe takes it. They stroll together along the path of Constitution Gardens. Into their future.

Alice pulls Joe close as a young girl runs past down the sloped sidewalk leading to the angled black wall of the...

VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL

...As tourists lay flowers honoring fallen heroes, we stop on a column of names. One in particular out of the 58,272...

One name. Of a soldier, no longer lost:

† JOSEPH A. COOK †

FADE OUT.