

JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

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Based on the novel by Jules Verne

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FADE IN:

EXT. CENTER OF THE EARTH - DAY

CLOSE ON: A TRILOBITE FOSSIL embedded in a boulder.

SUDDENLY...

A REAL TRILOBITE skitters across the rock.

It drops onto the ground, LEGS AND ANTENNAE FLICKING WILDLY.

JUST THEN...

A BOOTED FOOT SMASHES THROUGH THE GRASS.

THE WRITHING TRILOBITE LEAPS RIGHT AT THE SCREEN.

A MAN RUSHES FORWARD, in a long-white beard, and a faded, torn suit, circa 1890.

Panting, he steals a glance behind him.

A TERRIFYING ROAR shakes the ground.

The man stumbles away, nearly sliding off a rocky cliff. He hauls himself up, but

WE SHOOT OVER THE CLIFF AND SOAR THROUGH... A MASSIVE MOUNTAIN RANGE, A BREATHTAKING, 3-DIMENSIONAL WORLD.

WE SHOOT BACK DOWN TO FIND...

THE MAN SCRAMBLING ACROSS A ROCK-FILLED VALLEY.

As we close in, we realize these shapes are...

STRANGE, UNIDENTIFIABLE BONES, FANTASTIC SKELETONS SCATTERED ACROSS THE GROUND. TEETH AND CLAWS AND TUSKS LOOM DANGEROUSLY CLOSE.

The man flicks open AN ORNATE, ANTIQUE BRASS COMPASS, checks his bearings...and smiles.

BUT ANOTHER ROAR RIPS THE AIR.

The man spins to see a MENACING SHADOW STREAKING TOWARD HIM.

He flings himself forward just as...

A LEATHERY CLAW SMASHES THE BONES AROUND HIM TO POWDER, THEN WITHDRAWS, REELING TO STRIKE AGAIN -- a terrible BELLOW is heard --

THE MAN FLEES. Stumbling. Exhausted. He races for A RUSHING RIVER...

BUT HIS FOOT CATCHES on a small rib cage, and he tumbles to the ground. His COMPASS flies out of hand and TUMBLES OVER THE GROUND, BOUNCING RIGHT AT US, SETTLING ON THE GROUND IN FRONT OF US. He tries to jerk free, but his leg is tangled in bones.

A MASSIVE SHADOW PASSES OVER HIM, CLOSING IN...

With one last effort, THE MAN REACHES TOWARD US, STRAINING TO GET HIS COMPASS, THEN FLINGS IT TOWARD THE RIVER.

The compass FLIES RIGHT AT US, splashing into the steaming water, and WE DIVE IN AFTER IT...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HIGH-TECH UNIVERSITY SCIENCE LAB - DAY

BUBBLES... THEN A HAND,

Pulling something from the water --

VOICE (O.S.)

C'mon...

The hand comes up with a FISH TANK PUMP.

PROFESSOR DAVE LIDENBROCK,

Late 30's, handsome in an unkempt, scientist sort of way, hurriedly jimmies the pump, pulls a tube out of it, BLOWS into the pump until -- CLICK -- it starts working again. He spits, dunks it back in the tank, then turns to quickly shovel a pile of papers off of his desk and into his briefcase.

VOICE (O.S.)

Dave? DAVE.

Dave turns around to find PROFESSOR DON STROCK behind him. Strock looks as if he has himself ironed, not just his shirts. Dave's arms are full of stuff, clearly in the midst of a speedy exit.

DAVE

Oh. Don. Sorry.

STROCK
(dead serious)
I've been trying to reach you for
at least ten minutes.

DAVE
Oh. Okay. I was just on my way...
what's up?

Strock earnestly holds out a GRAPHED PRINTOUT. Dave takes it,
without putting anything down.

DAVE
Nice. Lotta tectonic movement.

STROCK
That's correct. It's a readout
from --

Dave looks up at him, distracted.

DAVE
Don, you've got kids. What do
you... do with them?

STROCK
What?

DAVE
When you have to, you know, be
around them. Take *care* of them.
Things like that.

STROCK
It depends on which kid. Gender.
Age. Interests.
(re: the printout)
This is --

DAVE
What about a 13-year-old. A boy.

STROCK
Whose 13-year-old boy do you have
to spend time with?

DAVE
Mine.

Strock is shocked.

STROCK
You have a *son*? You? Dave?

DAVE
You didn't know that?

STROCK
Uh, NO. You've never mentioned it.

Dave turns a picture on his desk around. There is a boy, but he looks about ten.

STROCK
That kid looks like he's ten.

DAVE
I haven't been supplied with a fresh picture of him very recently.

Dave starts to pace, nervous, opening up.

DAVE
I don't see him much. My ex-wife remarried, and his stepfather's kind of, "hey! I'm fatherly!" and they moved up to Vermont, and he usually finds a way to get out of visits with me.

Don stares at Dave like he's an alien being.

STROCK
That's too bad. Really --

DAVE
When I talk to him on the phone he just mumbles. Or grunts. "How's it going, Alex?" "Mmmphh." Like that. Then he gets off the phone. I don't know. I don't think I'm *good* at it.

He looks at his watch. Gets embarrassed.

DAVE
Well. Okay. Thanks for the chat. I gotta go.

Dave heads for the door. Strock remembers --

STROCK
Dave. Hold on. I have to discuss something that's --

Strock goes after him --

INT. HALLWAY

Dave heads down the hall, Don catching up. STUDENTS make their way past us.

DAVE
Oh. Right. What did you want to talk about?

STROCK
This readout is from your Mount Sneffels sensors in Iceland.

Dave stops walking, looks more closely.

DAVE
Sneffels is completely stable now. Must be a sensor malfunction.

STROCK
Well, whatever is going on over there, we have to find out immediately. And we can't really trust it to anyone else.

DAVE
I don't like where this is going.

STROCK
You get to go, Dave. Tomorrow. You get to go to Iceland.

Dave starts walking again. Strock follows along.

DAVE
No way. I can't.

STROCK
Two days. That's it. In and out.

DAVE
In and out of Iceland?

STROCK
You set those sensors. Nobody else can determine if they're faulty.

DAVE
That was eight years ago.

STROCK
Well, if you --

DAVE

Don. The reason I asked you about the kid stuff is... my son is coming to my house. Right now.

STROCK

This second?

DAVE

I'm late, in fact. I mean, even if I did go, what would you suggest I do with my 13-year-old son while I'm gone?

STROCK

Thirteen? Get him an X-Box on your way home, stock up the fridge, you'll be back before he misses you, if he ever does.

DAVE

I don't know him very well, but I can be pretty sure no son of mine is exactly the X-Box type. And his mother would kill me if I did that. I'm sorry. I have to stay.

Strock takes Dave by the elbow and stops.

STROCK

Dave. The grant that covers your salary was awarded for keeping up on those sensors and their data. You may not be interested in Mount Sneffels anymore, but you have to go. As in, it's your job if you don't. Okay?

STROCK

If you want me to send somebody else, they're going to have your job when they get back.

The clamp on Dave's head just got a lot tighter.

DAVE

FINE. I'll go. I'll go.

STROCK

Thanks, Dave.

He continues out the double doors...

EXT. STREET - DAY

The front stoop of a nice old townhouse. A RUBBER BALL comes FLYING AT US, from a bounce off the steps, and a HAND enters frame, catching it just before it socks us in the nose. The ball sails back into frame, BOUNCING AGAIN off of the stairs and back at us, the HAND entering once again to grab it. PULL BACK TO REVEAL

ALEX -- 13 years old and bored, bouncing the ball off of the stairs of house. His mother, PAM, stands off to the side, leaning on a BLACK TOWN CAR, next to a MAN IN A SUIT. She doesn't look happy.

DAVE (O.S.)

Hello!

They all turn to see Dave's car, old and beat-down, at the curb. Dave jumps out and approaches them. He has the nervous smile of a man about to try and charm his own firing squad.

DAVE (cont'd)

Hey, Alex. Pam. Nice to see you again, Doug.

He shakes the Man in the suit's hand.

PAM

That's the livery driver, Dave. My husband's in the back seat of the car.

LIVERY DRIVER

Nice to meet you.

DOUG, Pam's new husband, emerges from the back seat, having retrieved Alex's backpack. He smiles good-naturedly at Dave, shakes his hand and hands him the backpack.

DOUG

Hey there, Dave.

DAVE

Hi, Doug.

DAVE

Well. How's everybody doing?

PAM

Everybody's doing a little late, Dave. We'll see you in six days.

She begins to open the door, and Dave turns to Alex: there sits a sullen 13-year-old with a look that may in fact kill. In fear, Dave swings back around --

DAVE
Pam? Pam? Can I talk to you?

She gets back out of the car, and he guides her to the other side for some privacy.

DAVE
Listen --

PAM
Dave, don't even try it.

DAVE
Pam. Something's come up. I have to go to Iceland.

She just stares at him.

DAVE
Seriously.

She starts laughing and gives him a good-natured punch on the shoulder --

PAM
Iceland. That's a good one, Dave.
No, that's a great one.

-- and gets back in. The car takes off. Dave turns to Alex, who blankly stares back at him. Dave has no idea what he's doing.

DAVE
Hey, there. Alex. Look at you.
You're... big.

He hefts the backpack and heads up the stairs, Alex behind him.

DAVE (cont'd)
Whoah. This thing's heavy.

ALEX
It's just my clothes. And my X-Box.

DAVE
Oh. Well. How was the drive?

ALEX
It took forever. I hate traveling.

Dave rubs a temple.

INT. PROFESSOR LIDENBROCK'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

Alex and Dave enter a dusty entrance hall. Alex sets down his backpack.

DAVE
So. Alex. How --

ALEX
You got anything to eat?

DAVE
Sure. In the kitchen --

INT. KITCHEN

Dave stands in the doorway, watching as Alex goes through the cabinets and fridge, alternately sighing and grunting disappointment.

ALEX
This is all, like, nuts and grains
and soy stuff. Can we go out for
some actual *food*?

Alex heads for the door. The fridge hangs open behind him. Dave shuts the fridge. He looks like he's about to melt down.

We follow Dave out of the kitchen and to the hall, where Alex is waiting by the door.

DAVE
Alex. Let's go into my office for a
second.

Alex rolls his eyes and marches toward Dave's office. Dave follows.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE

FOSSILS, GLITTERING GEODES, ROCKS and scholarly journals crowd the shelves. Dave leans on his desk, Alex sits in a big chair, jaw open.

ALEX
This is a joke, right?

DAVE
I'm really sorry. We'll be gone
three days, tops.

ALEX
No. No way.

DAVE
(trying to sell it)
I'll bet you've never been to
Iceland.

ALEX
No one's ever been to Iceland.

DAVE
Well they should because it's
really... I *have* to go.

ALEX
So go. I can take care of myself
here for three days.

Alex is playing it tough, but we can see disappointment in
his eyes.

DAVE
Yeah, I don't think so. You're
mother would kill me.

ALEX
Oh. *That's* why you want me to go.

DAVE
No! No, that's --

ALEX
Fine. I won't tell her.

DAVE
That's not what I'm saying.

ALEX
Mom said you'd be at work, and I
could just hang out and read and
play games. That's the only reason
I agreed to get dropped off with
you, dude.

Dave is stung.

DAVE

That sounds like a great arrangement to me. We'll do just that when we get back from Iceland. Dude.

ALEX

You're too old to say "dude."

DAVE

I think you might have some fun on a trip like this.

ALEX

Really? Huh. Tell me what kinds of things you think I think are fun.

Alex has got him. Dave wracks his brain...

ALEX

(smirking a little)

C'mon. Tell me one thing you know I like.

DAVE

You like dinosaurs.

ALEX

(outraged)

Oh my God! No! No I don't!

DAVE

You did!

ALEX

Yeah, when I was ten!

DAVE

Okay --

ALEX

I hate dinosaurs. And I know I'd hate Iceland.

DAVE

Well we're going there. And that's it.

Alex walks to the door.

DAVE

Where are you going?

ALEX
To the guest bedroom.

DAVE
You can just say your room.

Alex slams the door behind him. Dave slumps into his chair in exhaustion and frustration.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM

Alex lays on the bed, looking at the wall next to him. It's covered with framed PICTURES:

A younger version of Dave in remote, exotic locales, surrounded by groups of students and other professors. In some they smile at the camera with indigenous people of far-off lands, in some Dave proudly holds an artifact or geode of one kind or another. But in each photo, he is smiling.

ALEX
Dork.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE

Dave looks across the room to a dusty bureau. After a beat he walks to it and opens it. Inside there's a shelf labeled "ICELAND," and on it a beat-up old leather bag. Dave hefts it, and puts it by the door.

He looks up at a big PHOTO OF ALEX, smiling, on the wall, revealed by the shut door...

CUT TO:

INT. COMMERCIAL JET - NIGHT

THE LEATHER BAG. PULL BACK to reveal it sitting in Dave's lap. Alex sits next to him, immersed in GAMEBOY that BEEPS and BEEPS. Dave watches Alex.

DAVE
So. Alex.

Alex just keeps playing. Consumed.

DAVE
Can you turn that thing down for a second?

ALEX
I could put on the headphones. But
I thought you wanted to talk.

DAVE
I do. So why don't you --

ALEX
(re: game boy)
-- Ooh. Top Blaster. Yes.
(to Dave, without looking
up)
What do you want to talk about.

DAVE
I don't know... I guess...

ALEX
I'm doing great in school. Friends:
same. Mom: same.

Dave kind of sighs.

DAVE
I guess just put on the headphones.

Dave reaches into the bag for something to read. Under some
files, he sees

A LEATHERBOUND BOOK

Old, disused, barely holding together. On the cover there's a
19th century etching of a STATELY MAN WITH A MONOCLE. IT'S
THE MAN WE SAW IN THE OPENING. He takes it out, turns it
over.

ALEX (cont'd)
(re: the book in Dave's
lap)
Who's that guy?

DAVE
Arne Saknussen.

ALEX
The guy they wouldn't let you write
the book about.

DAVE
Oh, I wrote it. They just wouldn't
publish it.

ALEX
Which is why you quit Princeton.
Plasma Cannon, and -- YES.

DAVE
How do you remember this stuff? You
were six.

ALEX
Duh. That's all you would talk
about.

DAVE
Well, I'm over it now.

Alex decides to test him out on that one.

ALEX
(re: book)
Good. Because they don't mention
Arne Saknussemm in my science class.

Dave takes the bait.

DAVE
That's because what they teach you
is the product of ignorance and
close-mindedness.

ALEX
I think it's time for the
headphones.

As Alex reaches for his headphones, Dave picks up a plastic-
wrapped HOSTESS SNO-BALL, one of two on Alex's tray, and
holds it up in the air.

DAVE
They teach you that the earth is
made up of four parts: the crust,
the mantle and the outer and inner
cores.

ALEX
Okay, okay, I believe you --

DAVE
But that's just a theory.

Dave sticks a pencil into the middle of the Sno-Ball.

ALEX
Hey! That's my --

Dave is getting a little revved up. He pulls it out of the Sno-Ball until just the tip is in.

DAVE

The deepest anyone has ever drilled into the earth is eight miles. Deeper than that, nobody really knows what's going on.

ALEX

My Sno-Ball.

DAVE

Arne Saknussemm theorized that our planet is riddled with natural passageways... Chutes...

Dave pokes the pencil all the way through the Sno-Ball over and over again.

DAVE (cont'd)

...running back and forth and, more importantly, up and down. He proposed that we could navigate these tunnels, insulated from the heat. That we could find who-knows-what down there, plant life, maybe even unknown species...

ALEX

That's my --

DAVE

Even Wellbeck over at Oxford thought it could...

He notices Alex's deadpan look. Dave collects himself, and puts the riddled Sno-Ball back on the tray.

DAVE (cont'd)

But that's behind me now.

ALEX

Yeah. I can tell.

He opens his book again.

DAVE

We have a long day tomorrow. Go to sleep.

Dave turns Alex's overhead light out.

DAVE

Sleep.

Alex rolls over, and continues to play his Gameboy in the dark. Dave picks up the Sno-Ball and ponders it, idly looking through one of the holes...

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. COMMERCIAL JET - LATER

DAVE'S OPEN MOUTH as he leans back in his seat, SNORING LOUDLY. Alex sits next to him, gaming away, until --

ALEX

What?

-- his batteries run out. He pops out the battery, stands, and goes to the

OVERHEAD COMPARTMENT

We are INSIDE LOOKING OUT at Alex as he reaches in TOWARDS US, digging through his bag... He pulls out a battery, then turns toward Dave's bag where he sees a corner of a CELLOPHANE BAG poking out.

ALEX (cont'd)

Food.

ALEX, IN THE AISLE

reaches in and pulls the bag out --

CLOSE-UP: A BAG OF OATS, straight from a health-food store.

ALEX (cont'd)

Not food.

He shoves the oats back in Dave's bag, but in doing so knocks some old tarnished BRASS OBJECT OUT OF THE BAG --

ALEX

OH --

HE GRABS FOR IT, BUT MISSES, AND IT FALLS ALL THE WAY TO THE FLOOR WITH A BANG.

ALEX

Oh no.

He takes it in hand, examining it.

It's battered and antique, festooned with worn-down engraving. The lid of it is open, as is a bottom hatch. It is THE BRASS COMPASS WE SAW IN THE OPENING. The glass is cracked, THE NEEDLE SPINS ROUND AND ROUND.

Alex shuts the top, and turns it over to inspect the bottom hatch... AND OUT DROPS

A PIECE OF PARCHMENT

Yellowed with age. Alex picks it up and examines it.

ALEX

A... Ab... Abyssus --

Dave stirs -- Alex quickly stretches up to the overhead --

ALEX

shoves the compass back into the bag, shuts the compartment in a rush and jumps down. He notices the paper still in his hand, and Dave's eyes fluttering open -- he stuffs the paper into his pants pocket as--

Dave's eyes finally open. He looks up to Alex.

DAVE

What's up?

ALEX

Getting a battery.

DAVE

Can't sleep, huh?

ALEX

Huh uh.

DAVE

Well you should be able to catch some shut-eye on the next flight.

ALEX

Okay.

Dave rolls over and goes back to sleep. Alex sits, looks up at the overhead and sighs, then pops the battery back in the Gameboy...

EXT. BLUE SKY - DAY

A TWIN-ENGINE PROPELLER PLANE PASSES RIGHT OVER OUR HEADS. IT ARCS TOWARD AN ICE-COVERED MOUNTAIN RANGE.

ALEX (O.S.)
Oh my God.

INT. PROPELLER PLANE - DAY

Alex, wide-eyed, glares at Dave as they bump up and down in a rattle-trap plane. Dave eats PEANUTS from a bag, until a BIG BUMP sends them FLYING EVERYWHERE, INCLUDING RIGHT AT US.

DAVE
Whoa. Look out. So this plane's pretty cool, huh?

Alex looks green with nausea.

ALEX
Not really.

DAVE
You look a little... here. Have some club soda.

Dave hands him a CUP. Alex raises it toward his mouth, but another BIG BUMP SENDS THE SODA SPILLING OUT OF THE CUP AND RIGHT IN OUR FACE.

Alex is now trying hard not to barf.

DAVE
Well, we're gonna land in a few minutes. Ooh! Look out the window there. You see those bluffs and --

TURBULENCE HITS THE PLANE AGAIN. Alex claps his hand over his mouth and spins... ABOUT TO PUKE RIGHT AT US.

But at the last moment, WE CUT.

EXT. WINDSWEPT ICELANDIC ROAD - NIGHT

We are IN THE MIDDLE OF A STAND OF TREES, looking out onto the rural, semi-paved road. HEADLIGHTS APPEAR, and as they get closer they PLAY OFF OF THE TREE TRUNKS. The vehicle approaches, takes the turn in front of us --

DAVE (O.S.)
Right here!

--and stops.

TAXI

Well, an ancient rusted-out van on which someone has painted the word "TAXI." The door opens and Dave and Alex get out. The van takes off. Alex shivers.

ALEX
Is this the guide's house?

DAVE
I think so.

ALEX
You need a guide to find the guide's house. Man. I think it was actually colder in that stupid van.

DAVE
There it is. That's Johannes' house.

Dave goes off the road and THROUGH THE TREES. Alex follows. Dave walks past a battered Landcruiser and up the front porch of a modest, ancient wooden house. He knocks on the door.

CUT TO:

SFX: KNOCK KNOCK! A BULGING EYE, sticking out right in our faces. PULL BACK -- we're looking through a peep hole in a door. Dave's face pulls back from the hole so we can see his face. He KNOCKS AGAIN.

DAVE (cont'd)
(muffled, in Icelandic)
Hello?

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Dave and Alex stand shivering on the porch.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
(in Icelandic, subtitled)
Yes? What do you want?

DAVE
 (in Icelandic)
 I'm looking for Johannes Sigrun.
 I'm a friend of his.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 (Icelandic)
 He's not here. He's on vacation.

ALEX
 What did she say?

DAVE
 Quiet.
 (in Icelandic)
 Where for to find Johannes --
 (struggling, in Icelandic)
 I am for Johannes to find me all
 day long in a mountain.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 (in Icelandic)
 You don't make any sense.

Dave scrambles in his bag.

DAVE
 (in Icelandic)
 Bless me? For I am living to look
 for Johannes?

ALEX
 (to the door)
 Hey, do you speak any English?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
 (in English, Icelandic
 accent)
 Yes.

Alex steps in front of Dave.

ALEX
 'Scuse me.
 (to the door)
 We're looking for Johannes Sigrun?

The door opens to reveal a blonde woman, around 30. She's...
 well, she's kind of beautiful, and she holds a ROLLING PIN.

DAVE (cont'd)
 (re: rolling pin)
 Oh. Don't be scared.

WOMAN
I'm not scared. I'm making pizza.

ALEX
I love pizza.

DAVE
Alex.
(to the woman)
I'm Professor Lidenbrock from
Hollings University in the United
States. I'm looking for --

WOMAN
You're looking for my father,
Johannes.

DAVE
Your father? Are you...?

HANNAH
I'm Hannah. I was much younger and
more of a heavier person when you
were last here.

He squints at her, taking her in.

DAVE
True. I mean, not heavier. Uh. Call
me Dave. This is my son, Alex.

HANNAH
Come in.

INT. KITCHEN

Alex and Dave sit at the table. Hannah cuts the pizza and
slides a piece onto Alex's plate.

ALEX
I didn't know they have pizza in
Iceland.

HANNAH
They don't around here. That's why
I made this. I live in New York.
I'm here for summer vacation.

ALEX
Pfft. Yeah. Me too.

Alex shoots Dave a look.

DAVE
So when is your father getting
back?

HANNAH
In two weeks.

DAVE
Is there any way I could get in
touch with him?

HANNAH
He's on a yoga retreat.

Dave looks at a PHOTO of JOHANNES SIGRUN on the wall:
Johannes looks like he'd be more at home carrying barbells
through a war zone than on a yoga retreat.

DAVE
Johannes is on a yoga retreat?

HANNAH
It's become his passion. So, you
need a guide to where?

DAVE
The top of Mount Sneffels. Just for
the day.

HANNAH
I could take you.

DAVE
No offense, but I need a
professional.

HANNAH
Well. If you're paying me, then
technically I am a professional.

DAVE
Do you know your way up there?

HANNAH
The first time I went up Sneffels
was on my father's back. I was two.
The last time I went up with him we
got caught in a storm. *I* led *him*
back down.

DAVE
Well. Okay. How much do you want?

HANNAH
30,000 Krona for the day.

DAVE
That's... that's like \$500. Your
father would charge half that.

HANNAH
He doesn't have a masters degree.
And he's not here.

DAVE
Fine.

ALEX
How much do I get?

Dave stares him down.

HANNAH
Do you have lodgings for the night?

Alex looks to Dave. Dave clearly hasn't thought this through.

DAVE
We'll go into town. They'll have
room at the hotel.

HANNAH
The hotel is gone. Replaced by a
sleigh dealer.

She stands.

HANNAH (cont'd)
You can stay here for the night.
I'm staying in my father's room,
you two can have my old room.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

The door creaks open, letting in light, and a GIANT FIGURE COMES THROUGH THE DOOR, RIGHT AT US. It looks right, then left, PAWING THE AIR ON EITHER SIDE OF US until it finds a string, and pulls it. The room is illuminated by a light bulb.

Turns out the figure is Hannah, who only looks huge because the door is tiny and the room is little more than a closet.

HANNAH
Here you are.

Behind her are Alex and Dave. They cram into the room with her.

HANNAH (cont'd)
This is your bed. Breakfast in the morning at six, then we go up the mountain. The outhouse is out back, on the other side of the frozen pond.

She exits.

DAVE
Well this is --

ALEX
-- Do not say it's *cozy*.

It's clear that this is what Dave was about to say. Alex tosses his backpack on the bed, which triggers a CLOUD OF DUST. They both cough.

Dave and Alex take in the room. There are posters of NORDIC HEAVY METAL BANDS on the walls, and a cot about three feet wide. That's it.

ALEX (cont'd)
I'm not swapping music with her.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Dave is stretched out on the cot, snoring again. Alex has about nine inches of the bed, and is pinched against the wall, wide awake. He stares at the corny posters.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ICELANDIC COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A beat-up TOYOTA LANDCRUISER rumbles over a dirt road.

On either side lie FIELDS OF VOLCANIC ROCKS, dotted with tiny ICELANDIC HUTS. HEAVY METAL MUSIC can be heard, flowing out of the Landcruiser and over the otherwise silent landscape.

INT. LANDCRUISER - DAY

Hannah drives. She looks in the rearview mirror to see Dave, in back, watches the readout on a HOMING DEVICE. Alex holds his ears and stares out the window.

DAVE

Hannah? Could you turn that down a notch?

She rolls her eyes and kills it.

DAVE (cont'd)

Thanks. So Hannah. What's your masters in?

HANNAH

I have two. Icelandic History and Psychology.

DAVE

Really? Have you ever heard of Arne Saknussemm?

HANNAH

Of course. He intersects with both my degrees. He was Icelandic as well as a nutroll.

Alex laughs, and turns to enjoy the look on Dave's face. Dave glares at him.

DAVE

So what do you do for a living?

HANNAH

Nothing. Yet. I just got my second masters, and I guess I'll get a teaching job.

ALEX

You sound thrilled.

Dave elbows Alex.

HANNAH

I don't really know what I want to do but I have to do something. I dunno. It could be fun.

ALEX

Beware when people tell you something *could* be fun.

HANNAH

Man, is *that* true. Is that what your father told you about coming to Iceland?

Hannah smiles back at them. Dave and Alex look at each other.

DAVE

Well. What if something *could* be
fun, legitimately, and someone
tells you that, does that mean that
there's no way it could...

...but Alex and Hannah are already shaking their heads. She
TURNS THE MUSIC BACK UP...

EXT. ICELANDIC COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The Landcruiser rounds a bend. The volcanic landscape gives
way to...

A LONE, SNOW-DUSTED PEAK RISING IN THE DISTANCE... MT.
SNEFFELS.

EXT. MT. SNEFFELS - DAY

Hannah leads them up the mountain, their boots crunching in
the snow.

All around, TINY VENTS BLOW STEAM RIGHT AT THE SCREEN.

Dave scans the peak with binoculars.

DAVE

Man, is that cool.

Unconsciously, he hands the binoculars to Alex, and keeps
staring up. Alex takes them from him in a way that would make
you think they smelled bad. But he takes a look:

ALEX'S POV - THE PEAK

Veins of ancient rock rise up, striped with snow and ice...
It really is beautiful.

Alex puts down the binoculars. He knows it's beautiful,
but...

ALEX

Yeah, it's alright, I guess.

A SNOWBALL ZINGS PAST THEM, AND US. They look up to see
Hannah, smiling.

HANNAH
(loudly, over the wind)
Come on, you guys! We have to get
going.

They fall in after her, moving toward the peak...

EXT. MT. SNEFFELS, UPPER RIDGE - DAY

THE SAME PEAK, BUT NOW CLOSER, WITH OMINOUS DARK CLOUDS
MOVING IN TOWARD IT.

Dave and Alex stare up at it, winded.

HANNAH
(re: clouds)
That doesn't look good. How close
are we to your sensor?

DAVE
Close. Real close.

He charges onward. Alex looks to Hannah.

ALEX
Hannah. I'll give you 20 bucks to
pull the plug on this.

She smiles, and pats his back.

HANNAH
We'll be down the hill in no time.

She passes him, and he falls in behind her.

EXT. MT. SNEFFELS, CRATER - DAY

Major altitude. Around them are patches of snow and ice.

DAVE
Man. This takes me back.

ALEX
I wish someone would take me back.
What's your thingy say?

A field of inverted chimneys spreads before them: A HUNDRED
HOLES.

DAVE
It's right between two of those.

THE HEAVY DARK CLOUDS PUSH IN FAST.

ALEX
I'll be right in there.

Alex heads toward a the mouth of a CAVERN, not far off, to escape the wind and cold.

DAVE
Fine. Watch the ice. Hannah, why don't you go in there with him. I'll be right back.

HANNAH
(calling after Dave)
Hurry. The weather's turning fast.

Dave frowns from the darkening sky to the field of holes.

DAVE
Two seconds. Like changing a light bulb.

Hannah and Alex head into the shelter of the cavern.

HANNAH
(to Alex)
How many geologists does it take to change a light bulb...?

Alex smiles.

ALEX
How many?

DAVE

paces out into the chimney field. His gadget is going crazy, the beeps closing into one solid tone.

BOOM! THE SKY EXPLODES. STORM CLOUDS SWEEP BACK IN. RAIN POUNDS THE GROUND.

Dave comes to a stop.

DAVE (cont'd)
I got it!

He pulls a white TUBE with an ANTENNA from the ground. He holds it above his head to show them. He unscrews the top, and looks it over...

DAVE
This thing is fine. This isn't
broken at all...

CRACK! LIGHTNING FORKS THE SKY, ONE TINE STRIKING FEET FROM
DAVE.

Hannah's eyes go wide.

HANNAH
(re: the tube)
Dave!! Get rid of that!!

ANOTHER BOLT OF LIGHTNING SINGES THE GROUND NEXT TO DAVE --
HE GETS THE IDEA.

But he won't let go. Instead, he runs for the cavern
entrance.

HANNAH (cont'd)
That tube. It's acting like...

ALEX
A lighting rod!

HANNAH
DAVE! DROP IT!

But he just keeps running toward them, stuffing the sensor
into his bag --

THUNDER SHAKES THE MOUNTAINTOP.

DAVE
Get inside!

Alex and Hannah yank Dave inside, just as...

LIGHTNING ZEROES IN ON THE GEAR.

CRACK! BOOM!

THE ENTRANCEWAY COMPLETELY COLLAPSES.

INT. ENTRANCE CAVERN - DAY

DARKNESS.

ALEX (O.S.)
Hello?

DAVE (O.S.)

Alex?

Suddenly, A LIGHT FLASHES ON, revealing...

HANNAH wearing a HELMET WITH A HEADLAMP.

ALEX SEES SOMETHING OVER HER SHOULDER, THROUGH THE SETTLING DUST.

ALEX

(whispers)

Oh, no.

Dave and Hannah turn to see...

THE CAVED-IN ENTRANCE.

MASSIVE ROCKS BLOCK THE WAY.

They scramble to their feet.

ALEX CLAWS AT THE SMALL STONES. DAVE SHOVES AGAINST THE BOULDERS. HANNAH SWINGS WITH A PICK.

Finally, she steps back.

HANNAH (cont'd)

No dice.

ALEX

What do you mean?

Dave sags against the rocks, sweating.

DAVE

She's right. There must be six tons of rock here. It would take weeks to dig ourselves out.

ALEX

Someone will notice when we don't come back.

HANNAH

Like... who?

ALEX

Oh God. Nobody --

DAVE

It's okay, Alex.

ALEX
No it's not.

Dave puts on his hiking HEAD LAMP. Alex follows suit.

DAVE
Hannah, what do you have in your bag?

She digs in her bag.

HANNAH
Not much. Some rope. Some climbing gear. Some flares. Spare socks. A snack. A snack for me.

Dave turns and walks slowly around the space, finding its limits, looking for anything to help or guide him. Dave swings his light around so that it illuminates...

A TUNNEL...

Narrow, tight and endless...

Hannah walks to Dave's side. Alex follows.

ALEX
That looks like it goes down.

DAVE
(trying to be optimistic)
Here it does. But we don't know what it does further along. It could wind up going to the surface.

Alex looks to Hannah.

HANNAH
Maybe. Maybe not. But we're not making it back through
(indicating the cave-in)
that.

Alex looks up at his dad, visibly scared.

DAVE
I'll get us out of here. Okay?

ALEX
Okay.

Hannah walks past them and heads down the tunnel. They follow.

INT. CAVERN TUNNEL - DAY

Tiny flickers of light illuminate a NARROW, OMINOUS PASSAGEWAY. Sweating and dirty, Dave, Alex and Hannah squeeze past STALACTITES, STALAGMITES, AND OTHER MISSHAPEN CRAGS, APPEARING IN FRONT OF THEM IN THE SHALLOW LAMPLIGHT. ICE PATCHES HERE AND THERE, SOME MELTING WATER THAT GLISTENS.

DEEPER INTO THE CAVERN.

ALEX
I'm still freezing. What kind of volcano is this?

DAVE
A dead one. You want my coat, too?

ALEX
(looking at his coat)
I'm not that cold.

HANNAH
What are we looking for?

DAVE
Tunnels. Tunnels that could intersect with tunnels.

Dave dusts off the compass and looks at it. The needle spins uselessly.

ALEX
That's not gonna help. I broke it.

Dave looks up at him.

ALEX (cont'd)
I was looking for food in your bag on the plane and it fell out. The glass cracked and the back fell off. I put it back on but --

DAVE
What back?

ALEX
The panel on the back of that thing.

Alex reaches into his pants pocket and pulls out the slip of PARCHMENT.

ALEX

Here. This was in there. Maybe it's operating instructions or something.

Dave takes the parchment.

DAVE

You found this in the compass?

Alex nods. Alex and Hannah watch Dave, his intensity filling the space. Dave opens the parchment in his lamplight and reads.

DAVE

It's in Latin. "Abyssus carus amicus--"

ALEX

Great. What does it say in English?

DAVE

"Greetings, dear friend. My name is Arne Saknussemm..."

ALEX

Oh no.

DAVE

"...and I am writing these words to you..."

Davis looks up at Alex. After a beat...

ALEX

What?

DAVE (cont'd)

"I am writing these words to you from the center of the earth."

Dave leans against a wall, rubs his face, his mind spinning.

ALEX

That's what it says?

HANNAH

Are you serious? Where did you get that thing?

DAVE

Another geologist I know found it next to a geyser pool in Yosemite.

(MORE)

DAVE (cont'd)
It said "A.S." on it. As in Arne Saknussemm. He gave it to me as a joke.

ALEX
I don't get it.

Dave's head begins to wag, and a thin smile breaks.

DAVE
My buddy must've planted it. Nice.
Ha ha. Center of the Earth. Very
funny. Okay. Let's just keep going.
We gotta keep going.

He distractedly hands the compass to Alex, and starts off again, but with more intensity in gait. Hannah follows Dave. Alex, mouth agape, falls in behind them.

INT. TUNNELS AND GALLERIES - DAY

WE TWIST AND TURN WITH THE HIKERS THROUGH THE TIGHT, ROCKY TERRAIN.

WE STEP OVER A GAUNTLET OF CROOKED STALAGMITES.

WE MOVE AROUND MINI-MOUNTAINS OF ICE.

WE DUCK UNDER A CURTAIN OF RAZOR SHARP STALACTITES.

SPIKES STICK RIGHT OUT INTO THE AUDIENCE AS WE MOVE THROUGH THE DARK PASSAGE.

INT. CAVERN TUNNEL - DAY

Headlamps cast wild shadows. Hannah leads now, nimbly picking her way down the rocks. Dave ambles after her. Alex trails sullenly down the descending path.

Dave peers closely at the wall.

DAVE (cont'd)
(to himself)
Look at this schist.

Alex raises an eyebrow.

ALEX
Excuse me?

DAVE
Schist. It's a metamorphic rock.

He walks on, STARING AT THE CEILING.

DAVE (cont'd)
And these crystalline striations. I
wouldn't have expected to see
anything like this...

SUDDENLY, HANNAH SNAGS DAVE BY THE SHOULDER, STOPPING HIM
DEAD IN HIS TRACKS.

Dave looks down. His feet are poised at...

THE CRUMBLING EDGE OF A DEEP CHASM.

DAVE
Thanks.

Hannah looks down into the deep nothingness.

HANNAH
Well. I guess we can double back
and --

Dave gets an idea --

DAVE
Hannah, can I have one of your
emergency flares?

She gives him one. He bangs the tip of it across the surface
of the ground, and it SPARKS TO LIFE, adding a fiery red
light to the room. He leans back against the wall, flare in
hand.

DAVE
Okay. I'm going to drop this down
there. Alex, look at your watch and
tell me how many seconds pass
before we see it stop.

ALEX
Okay.

DAVE
What I'm thinking is --

The wall behind him IGNITES IN A BLAZE OF WHITE FIRE! They
all hit the dirt -- Dave looks at the flare in his hand, then
back at the wall -- it's sizzling, burning white... then it's
out.

ALEX
What was that?!

Dave gets to his feet and examines the smoking wall. There's a deep channel burrowed out. He touches the sides.

DAVE
Magnesium. There're magnesium veins running all over these walls. Kinda flammable.

HANNAH
Yeah. Kinda.

DAVE
I think the flares are not an option down here.

Hannah reaches into her jacket, pulls out a GLOW-STICK and cracks it. It lights up.

HANNAH
Here.

Dave takes it.

DAVE
Ready, Alex?

Dave chucks it... time passes...

FROM BELOW,

Looking up at them in the dim illumination of their headlights, as the GLOW-STICK COMES STRAIGHT AT US, AND WHIZZES BY --

DAVE, HANNAH, AND ALEX

Look down the tunnel... a distant CLUNK is heard.

ALEX
About eight seconds.

DAVE
That's about... 300 feet.

ALEX
Yeah, that's... okay, NO.

Dave just turns to Hannah.

DAVE
Can we make it?

Hannah expertly surveys the shaft.

HANNAH
I could.

DAVE
Then let's do it.

Alex grabs his arm.

ALEX
NO.

Dave sees a touch of real fear in his son's eyes.

DAVE
I know it's scary. But we can't get
out the way we came in. We have to
try this. Okay?

Alex looks into the abyss.

DAVE
I'll be right there with you.

Alex looks up at him... then to Hannah.

ALEX
(to Hannah)
Can I stick with you?

HANNAH
Of course.

Hannah tosses a length of rope over the side.

INT. THE CHASM - DAY

Roped together, Dave, Hannah and Alex cautiously descend.

Rocks crumble under Alex's feet, dropping into the chasm,
CLICKING and ECHOING to the bottom.

ALEX
(under his breath)
We're in the schist now.

DAVE
Alex...

THE CHASM WALLS SURROUND US. ROCKS AND LEDGES JUT OUT, CLOSE
ENOUGH TO TOUCH.

They use the rocky outcroppings as a natural ladder. One handhold, one foothold at a time.

Suddenly, CRUNCH! A STONE BREAKS UNDER DAVE' FOOT AND...

HE FREE-FALLS BACKWARDS!

HE SHOOTS STRAIGHT DOWN UNTIL...SNAP, THE LINE JERKS TIGHT.

Alex and Hannah strain under the weight. Dave is nowhere in sight.

Hannah grits her teeth and plants her feet.

DAVE

Dangling at the end of the rope, facing up, his back arched.

HANNAH (O.S.)

Dave! Get to the wall! I can't hold
you much longer!

DAVE

Save yourselves! Cut the rope!

Hannah looks down at him, her light revealing THE FLOOR of the chasm, about two feet below dangling Dave.

DAVE

Do it!

HANNAH

Dave. Put your feet down.

DAVE

Huh?!

HANNAH

Put your feet on the ground. It's
right below you.

Dave tilts upright, and finds his feet easily touch the ground. The rope goes slack.

DAVE

Oh. Huh. Great.

HANNAH

Still want me to cut the rope?

DAVE
No. No, that's okay.

CUT TO:

INT. LOWER CAVERN - DAY

Alex, Dave and Hannah on the cave floor, exhausted.

SEVERAL PIECES OF SCIENCE EQUIPMENT rest on an outcropping.

Dave makes notes by the light of his head lamp.

DAVE
Barometer at 1743 millibars.
Pressure is 24.8 psi...

ALEX
And at least it's warmer. You can
write that down.

Suddenly, A LONG, LOW GROWL cuts the silence.

ALEX
Did you hear that?!

DAVE
I don't know what that is. Can't be
anything... you know... living down
here.

Everyone freezes.

ANOTHER EERIE SCREECH ECHOES OFF THE CAVERN WALLS.

Hannah pulls THE HUNTING KNIFE from her belt. Dave notices,
and grabs whatever he can... which turns out to be a rather
small rock hammer. She looks at it witheringly and creeps
away into the darkness. He stands to follow her.

DAVE
(to Alex)
You stay here.

ALEX
Yeah, right.

Another growl echoes off the walls.

THEY SCRAMBLE AFTER HANNAH.

INT. DARK GALLERY - DAY

Hannah creeps forward, knife at the ready.

Dave and Alex follow tentatively. Ahead, sparkling out of the darkness...

TWO EYES STARE THEM DOWN.

The creature GROANS again.

Hannah gestures for Dave to flank the creature.

Dave and Hannah approach the creature from either side.

As they move forward, we can make out more...

THE CREATURE'S LONG HORN PROTRUDES INTO THE AIR, LIKE A GIANT TUSK...RIGHT OFF THE SCREEN.

HANNAH AND DAVE JUMP OUT, WEAPONS RAISED...

Only to find themselves staring at...

AN OLD MINING CAR.

TWO QUARTZITE CRYSTALS BLINK atop the rock-filled car, shining like eyes.

A RUSTY HANDLE sticks up from the middle like a animal horn.

Dave moves it back and forth. IT GROANS.

DAVE (cont'd)
Rust plus wind equals frightening
noise.

Hannah shoots him a look, and sweeps dirt away from the mining car, uncovering A STRETCH OF TRACK.

HANNAH
This is the Hofskgaard Mine. Shut
down after a cave-in.

She follows the track further down the tunnel, disappearing. Alex and Dave look at each other, worried.

INT. MINE CAR CAVERN - DAY

Dave and Alex find Hannah standing at A BANK OF LEVERS attached to a GENERATOR.

DAVE
What are you doing?

She leans down to the generator.

HANNAH (cont'd)
The gas has got to be ancient, but
I'll give it a shot.

She plunges the PRIMER a couple of times.

DAVE
You gotta...

She shoots him a look.

DAVE (cont'd)
Yeah. There you go. Exactly.

The generator ROARS TO LIFE.

Hannah pulls the levers.

THUNK. A FEW FLOOD LIGHTS SPUTTER TO LIFE, BUT MOST ARE
BROKEN. THE FEW THAT WORK FLICKER, CASTING AN EERIE, SPARSE
ILLUMINATION OVER THE ENORMOUS ROOM FILLED WITH MINING CARS.
AN AMAZING ARRAY OF STALAGMITES AND STALACTITES ARE REVEALED,
WATER DRIPPING OFF OF THEIR TIPS.

Alex gazes at the CRISSCROSSING TRACKS running off into
DOZENS OF TUNNELS.

ALEX (cont'd)
Maybe one of these leads back to
the surface.

DAVE
We'll walk the tracks and see where
they go.

HANNAH
That would take forever.

Dave and Alex look over to see Hannah inside a mining car,
studying the mechanism.

HANNAH
We can use these cars.

DAVE
Those don't look particularly
sound.

Hannah continues inspecting the car.

HANNAH
I don't know about that. They look
okay to me.

DAVE
I think it's a bad idea.

HANNAH
It's the only idea.

INT. MINE TUNNEL - DAY

Train wheels squeak against the track.

A MINE CAR rumbles slowly along.

ALEX sits inside, slightly apprehensive.

Dave sits in another car behind him, examining the rocky
walls as he passes...

HANNAH follows in a PUMP CAR, the engine for the group.

THE WOODEN SCAFFOLDING CREAKS OMINOUSLY.

INT. THE BIG MINE - DAY

The passengers look out over a tremendous MINING CAVERN.

We swoon with Alex as he peers over the 3-DIMENSIONAL
LANDSCAPE.

TRAIN TRACKS BRANCH OUT IN EVERY DIRECTION, RUNNING ON STEEL
SUPPORTS, SUSPENDED IN MIDAIR.

The cars lurch forward toward a SHEER DROP.

Alex looks around his car.

ALEX
They really should have put seat
belts in these things.

And then the car...

HURTLES DOWN THE TRACKS LIKE A ROLLER COASTER.

ALEX (cont'd)
(terror and joy)
AHHHHH!!!!!!

WE SOAR WITH THE CARS, snaking around curves and rolling down straightaways. Hannah's face is a wide open smile...

We roll past a COLLAPSED SECTION OF THE CAVERN.

MINING CARS LIE CRUSHED AND BROKEN. HUMAN SKELETONS STARE OUT FROM THE RUBBLE, FROZEN WHERE THEY DIED.

The travelers hold their breath in horror.

We whip around another curve, only to find...

A GAP IN THE TRACKS AHEAD. Jagged rocks stab below the washed-out rails.

HANNAH
Hang on.

Hannah pumps as hard as she can, going for broke as we speed toward the GAP... There's kind of a mad glint in her eye -- she's into it --

HANNAH PUMPS THE LEVER, SHOOTING THE CARS EVEN FASTER TOWARD THE BROKEN TRACKS.

THEY HIT THE GAP.

THE CARS SOAR THROUGH THE AIR...

AND LAND SAFELY ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE.

They clatter on, unharmed.

ALEX WHOOPS. Dave gives Hannah a nod, impressed.

They approach A THREE-WAY FORK. A LOUD CLICK shakes the cars.

ALEX'S CAR SPLITS OFF ONTO ITS OWN TRACK.

ALEX
Hey --!

ANOTHER CLICK. Dave's car splits off.

NOW, ALL THREE CARS HEAD FOR THREE SEPARATE TUNNELS.

DAVE
Just sit tight and don't touch anything.

ALEX
What am I going to touch?

The three cars roll inside their own tunnels.

INT. GEM TUNNELS - DAY

IN TUNNEL #1, ALEX rolls through a glittering world of RED CRYSTALS.

ALEX
Rubies!

IN TUNNEL #2, HANNAH finds herself bathed in a DEEP GREEN LIGHT.

HANNAH
Emeralds!

IN TUNNEL #3, Dave rolls along, fascinated by a world of DULL BROWN AND GRAY.

DAVE
Feldspar!

INT. DIAMOND GALLERY - DAY

The three cars shoot out of their tunnels onto parallel tracks.

Everyone gapes: THE ENTIRE CHAMBER IS COVERED IN --

ALEX
Diamonds?

DIAMOND SPIKES SHOOT UP FROM THE GROUND.

DAVE
Diamonds!!

DIAMOND STALACTITES HANG FROM ABOVE, LIKE ROCK CANDY.

HANNAH
Duck, right now.

Alex looks up to see a row of LOW HANGING SPIKES zooming toward him.

He drops back down into his car, KNOCKING OUT THE SIDE PANEL.

It swings and dangles wildly until...

CHUNK CHUNK CHUNK! IT SLICES INTO A SET OF DIAMOND PILLARS.
They shatter one by one, chunks of diamond flying everywhere.

DIAMONDS PELT THE SCREEN.

SUDDENLY, A TEARING SOUND SCREAMS BEHIND THEM.

Alex looks back at the smashed pillars, where...

CRACKS FORM IN THE CEILING, SHOOTING AHEAD OF THEM LIKE
LIGHTNING.

ALEX

Hey --

Diamonds and rock rain from above. Then...

BOOM! THE CEILING OVER DAVE'S TRACK CAVES IN, DROPPING A WALL
OF DIAMOND RUBBLE IN HIS WAY, AND A GOOD DEAL ON TOP OF HIM.

Dave grabs his brake. IT SNAPS OFF IN HIS HAND.

He looks around for a safe place to jump.

HANNAH

No!

Hannah yanks off her own STEEL BRAKE HANDLE.

She eyes Dave' car. Waiting. Judging.

ROWS OF DIAMOND SPIKES FLASH PAST.

At just the right moment...HANNAH JUMPS!

She SAILS across the tracks...and BAM...

LANDS RIGHT IN DAVE' CAR. Dave stares in awe.

DAVE

That was --

HANNAH

Give me that rope!

Dave scrambles the rope off of the floor and into her hands --
she ties it to one end of the mine car, knots the other end
to the STEEL BAR, then SHE HURLS THE BAR INTO A DENSE STAND
OF STALAGMITES.

It catches. The rope goes taught like an anchor, jerking the
mine car...

RIPPING THE CARGO HOLD RIGHT OFF THE WHEELS.

DAVE AND HANNAH FALL TO THE TRACKS WITH A THUD.

THE WHEEL CHASSIS HURTLES FORWARD...PLOWING INTO THE RUBBLE.
THE OTHER WALL SHAKES WITH IMPACT, AND MORE RUBBLE FALLS FROM
THE CEILING.

Dave and Hannah stand up, winded, but unhurt. Hannah is
trying to control a wide smile.

DAVE
What?! You had a good time?!

HANNAH
No. Of course not.

They turn as ALEX'S MINE CAR rolls around the bend and
squeaks to a stop.

DAVE
(to Alex)
You okay?

Alex, jaw slack, looks behind him, then back at Dave.

ALEX
That was beyond E ticket. That was
like M ticket.

HANNAH
Do you see any of these tunnels
we're looking for?

DAVE
Uh. No. Not yet.

ALEX
Great. And we just went lower, not
higher.

Dave rubs his face...

DAVE
You guys have a seat. I'll look
around.

INT. DARK GROTTO - LATER

Alex and Hannah sit together. Their headlamps make A SMALL
POOL OF LIGHT in the darkness.

HANNAH

Do you go with your father on field trips very often?

ALEX

Pfft. No. He only took me on this trip because he had to.

HANNAH

Really. I had to beg my father to go on expeditions.

ALEX

Why'd you want to go so bad?

HANNAH

Because that's where he was.

Alex thinks about this for a second.

HANNAH

Whether he planned to bring you or not, your dad seems to be pretty happy you're here. I know this hasn't been the easiest day hike up a mountain, seeing how we fell into it, but isn't it kind of fun to be with him?

ALEX

(grudgingly)

Yeah. Maybe.

Hannah rummages through her pack. She glumly hands Alex a Baggie filled with...SOMETHING.

HANNAH

This is the last of my food.

Alex opens his bag suspiciously.

ALEX

What is it?

HANNAH

Dried squid. With berry yogurt. A local favorite.

Alex hesitates. He tries the squid...

HIS FACE GOES GREEN.

ALEX
Is all the food in Iceland like
this?

HANNAH
No. Most stuff is gross.

Dave enters.

DAVE
I, uh, couldn't find any upward
tunnels.

ALEX
(to Dave)
You got any oats left?

Dave shuts off his headlamp.

DAVE
No. Let's save our batteries.

The others nod morosely and switch off their lights.

For a moment, the screen goes dark.

ALL WE HEAR IS CHEWING.

And then...THE GROTTA BEGINS TO BRIGHTEN.

ALEX
Is it getting lighter in here?

DAVE
It's your eyes adjusting.

Then, slowly, a RUSTLING SOUND rises, followed by...CHIRPING.

ALEX
What about my ears?

All three of them look up.

And there, on the grotto ceiling...

POINTS OF LIGHT SPARKLE LIKE LITTLE STARS. And then the
points of light seem to MOVE.

ALEX
Whoa. Ceiling's moving --

WHOOSH! THE ENTIRE CEILING FALLS APART IN SPARKLING,
PSYCHEDELIC FRAGMENTS.

SUDDENLY, THE LIGHTS STOP IN MIDAIR...SPREADING OUT INTO A GLOWING, FLUTTERING MASS.

ALEX
Birds!

THOUSANDS OF BIRDS HOVER ABOVE THEM, GLOWING LIKE FIREFLIES.

HANNAH
Electric birds.

They dart, stop on a dime, then whiz off...INTO THE AUDIENCE.
Our travelers gaze in awe at the living fireworks display.

DAVE
They're bioluminescent. Like
fireflies. Or glow worms... It's
crazy.

ALEX
Cool. Glowbirds.

DAVE
They're like really small
archeopteryx! But... but glowing!

HANNAH
So you've seen something like this
before?

DAVE
150-million-year-old birds? No. 150-
million-year-old *glowing* birds? I'm
going to say no again.

ONE OF THE BIRDS DROPS DOWN, HOVERING JUST A FEW FEET AWAY.

It closes in and pecks at a piece of squid in Alex's hand.
The bird chirps. Dave smiles.

WITH A WHOOSH, THE BIRDS KNOT TOGETHER AND STREAM AWAY IN A
GLOWING MASS THROUGH THE FRESH HOLE IN WALL, KNOCKED OPEN BY
THE MINE CARS.

DAVE
Follow them! Maybe they know a way
out! Come on!

They take off.

ALEX
So no one's ever seen a glowing
bird before?

Sensing his son's enthusiasm --

DAVE
Nope. I'm pretty sure we're the
first...

ALEX
Except maybe for Arne Saknussemm.

DAVE
Funny.

And they emerge into another

INT. CAVE CHAMBER - DAY

Sprawling and large. Dave stops in his tracks, Hannah and
Alex almost running into him from behind.

ALEX
What? Why are we stopping?

HE POINTS AT A STACK OF ROCKS.

ALEX
A pile of rocks. Who cares?

DAVE
Well who piled the rocks?

ALEX
Bigfoot.

HANNAH
(to Alex)
He's right, Alex. This is weird.

He turns to them, his excitement building as he speaks.

DAVE
Okay, look. I've stayed skeptical.
Sneffels being the last place
Saknussemm was ever seen? Maybe a
coincidence. Glowing *extinct birds*?
Maybe they weren't one of the
ancient species he thought could
exist deep in the earth. A *cairn*?
(MORE)

DAVE (cont'd)
A man-made pile of rocks? Enough
already! Look at this!

DAVE BLOWS THE DUST FROM THE TOP ROCK, REVEALING A CARVING...

"A.S."

Dave takes out the parchment from his pocket and holds it up--

DAVE
It's the same handwriting! He was
here. This note is real, and he was
here. He was here!!

Alex gapes. He looks up at Dave, who starts to move down the tunnel, examining the walls and floor, his excitement building. Hannah and Alex keep up with him.

DAVE
Saknussem would only have left
markers at the most important
points. Near water sources, or
forks in the trail, or--

They step around a bend...AND STOP SHORT.

ALEX
Dead ends?

They all gape.

ROCK WALLS TOWER ON ALL SIDES. NO EXIT.

HANNAH
Maybe we missed a turn.

Dave crouches at the base of the wall, studying the rock. HIS BOOTS CRUNCH THE SOIL. A CRACK APPEARS IN THE GROUND, but Dave doesn't notice.

DAVE
No... no, there's gotta be a reason
we're here. Let's see. Maybe
there's a passage of some kind
behind this --

HANNAH
-- Quiet.

THE ROCK CRACKS EVEN MORE.

Hannah listens intently for a moment. Then they all hear it...A CRACKING SOUND.

THEY LOOK DOWN...JAGGED FRACTURES SPIDER BENEATH THEIR BOOTS.

DAVE
Nobody move.

Alex bites his lip. Hannah swallows. Dave eyes the ground.

DAVE (cont'd)
Muscovite. Easily fractured.
Susceptible to the slightest change
in weight or pressure.

THEY FREEZE. THE CRACKING SEEMS TO...SLOW.

Alex lets out his breath.

And then...

GLOWBIRD FLIES OUT OF THE TUNNEL AND RIGHT UP TO ALEX'S FACE.

ALEX
(whispering)
Shoo.

DAVE
Shut off your lights. Maybe it'll
go away...

They do... DARKNESS, EXCEPT THE BIRD. We hear an awful,
groaning CRACK.

ALL THREE OF THEM REMAIN ABSOLUTELY FROZEN.

The bird hovers another moment. Then he starts a slow flight
around them.

They follow with their eyes, as he circles them...

ONCE...TWICE...THREE TIMES...

AND FINALLY LANDS RIGHT ON ALEX'S SHOULDER.

ALEX (cont'd)
Crud.

CRACK!

THE EARTH FALLS OUT FROM UNDER THEM --

INT. VERTICAL TUNNEL - DAY

DARKNESS.

ALEX (O.S.)
 AHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

DAVE (O.S.)
 AHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

HANNAH (O.S.)
 AH!

Their lungs run out of air -- We hear a whistling sound, like air flowing.

DAVE (O.S.)
 (amazed)
 We're still falling!

ALEX (O.S.)
 AHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

DAVE (O.S.)
 AHHHHHHHHH!!!!

HANNAH (O.S.)
 AHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!

The lungs run out again, leaving only darkness and the whistling of terminal velocity.

ALEX (O.S.)
 Dad?

DAVE (O.S.)
 Right here. Hannah, where are you?

With a click, she turns on her headlamp, revealing all three travelers, terrified --

FREE-FALLING DOWN A VERTICAL TUNNEL.

They float, weightless, like astronauts in space -- The dark walls speed past, ROCKS FLOAT OUT AT US, AS DOES THE OCCASIONAL LIMB OF ONE OF OUR THREE AS WE HURTLE DOWNWARD IN 3D!

Dave and Alex turn their lights on too.

ALEX
 Oh God. Oh God.

Alex instinctively reaches for Dave. He takes his hand. With his other he takes Hannah's. They brace themselves --

ALEX
We keep not splatting into the
bottom.

DAVE
I know!

HANNAH
Why?

Hannah grabs him by the collar.

DAVE
Because... We're falling really,
really far?

Off of Dave's face, we CUT TO

POV: FROM BELOW THEM... LOOKING UP --

Nothingness... then a speck of LIGHT, growing larger... They
appear above tiny and a mile away, then larger, LARGER, then
THEY ROCKET RIGHT BY US!!! We TILT DOWN and watch them recede
again, their lights getting smaller, smaller, then they are
GONE, and we are again in DARKNESS --

INT. VERTICAL TUNNEL

WITH THEM AGAIN, still in free-fall. Hannah holds onto Dave's
jacket, Dave holds Alex's backpack...

HANNAH
What's at the bottom?

DAVE
Of this tunnel?

ALEX
YES, of this tunnel!!

DAVE
Well, according to Saknussem, these tunnels could go hundreds,
maybe thousands of miles.

ALEX
So we could come out the other
side, like in China or something?

DAVE
Are you seriously asking me that?

ALEX

It's just a question!

He looks to Hannah, who shrugs.

DAVE

Well the answer is no. This'll probably end in either... a sort of hard... bottom...

ALEX

Or?

DAVE

Or it'll gently slope, eroded away at its sides by water, which would conceivably still run through that portion of the tunnel providing a gradual breaking of our fall by something not unlike a water slide.

ALEX

(as if in prayer)

Water slide. Water slide.

DAVE

Or there could be a group of stalagmites, sort of spear-like columns pointing straight up at us. That we would sort of... be speared on, at about 180 miles per hour.

ALEX

Dad!

HANNAH

Dave!

DAVE

Right! Sorry! Just -- hope for the water slide!

INT. VERTICAL TUNNEL - LATER

... and still falling, seemingly forever -- the walls keep rushing past them, and it's dizzying. Their jackets are off, and they're arms are crossed, and they stare straight down, frozen in fear... when are they going to hit? It's the longest moment of terror ever... Then --

HANNAH

AHHHHHHHH!!!!!!!

DAVE
Hannah! It's okay! It's okay!

ALEX
It is? Did I miss something?

DAVE
Okay, it's not. But she was kind of taking a step backwards with the screaming thing.

HANNAH
How long have we been falling?

DAVE
About... six hours.

ALEX
I'm bored of being terrified.

JUST THEN, SOMETHING SPLASHES ON ALEX'S FACE, FROM BELOW.

They look down to see HUNDREDS OF GLOBULES OF WATER SHOOTING UP AT THEM.

THE GLOBULES FLOAT RIGHT OFF THE SCREEN, contracting and expanding.

ALEX
Water!
(to Dave)
Water *slide*?

DAVE
Yes. Or the water that leaves the deposits that form the stalagmites. One or the other. I'd guess water slide.

The tunnel fills with the thunderous sound of RUSHING WATER. They all grab hands...

AND THEN SPLASH!

The tunnel catches our travelers like a WATER SLIDE and scoops them into a horizontal shaft.

WATER SPRAYS AS THEY TUMBLE TOWARD A GLOWING OPENING.

And then SPLOOSH! EVERYTHING GOES BLUE.

INT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Alex, Dave and Hannah shoot out into deep water.

EXT. LAGOON CAVE - DAY

They burst to the surface of A LAGOON --

ALEX

YES!

... and swim to the shore.

They flop down, exhausted, EYES CLOSED. A LONG MOMENT PASSES.

Finally, Alex opens his eyes, and goes to the edge of the cave...

ALEX

You guys. You might want to see
this.

Dave and Hannah stand and join him, looking out onto

AN UNDERGROUND PARADISE.

A WATERFALL. FERNS AS TALL AS PINES SWAY ABOVE GIANT, MULTI-COLORED FLOWERS.

MOUNTAINS REACH TO A STRANGELY GLOWING, ELECTRIC SKY. HUGE ORBS OF GAS GLOW HIGH IN THE SKY, UNDULATING...

We swoop back down to find...

TIME HAS PASSED.

Wet shirts and shoes dry on a rock. Hannah coils her ropes.

Dave studies his barometer.

DAVE

According to these readings, we
just fell thirty-two hundred miles.

Alex peers over his father's shoulder as he checks his instruments.

DAVE (cont'd)

Atmosphere is oxygen-nitrogen. The
same as on the surface.

HANNAH
(pointing upward)
And what is that?

He looks up at the bright sky.

DAVE (cont'd)
I... don't know. Some kind of
luminescent gas combination. It
isn't sunlight, but it's certainly
capable of producing
photosynthesis...

HANNAH
Kind of like a big terrarium.

DAVE
Okay. If we started at the peak of
Sneffels... and we've fallen
approximately thirty-two, thirty-
three hundred miles...

Alex and Hannah listen.

DAVE
That means we're actually at... the
center of the earth.

They all take this in for a moment... And then he heads off.

INT. JUNGLE PATH - DAY

A MACHETE HACKS THROUGH THE BRUSH...RIGHT AT US.

Hannah forges through the jungle of GIANT FERNS, an
occasional branch coming RIGHT AT US. Dave and Alex follow
behind. Dave is excited.

DAVE
I've never seen anything like this
plant life. Well, actually that's
not true. I've seen *fossils* of this
kind of plant life.

Dave turns to find Alex holding A SNAIL AS BIG AS A
GRAPEFRUIT. He holds the snail out to Dave. ITS ANTENNAE
PROBE AT THE AUDIENCE.

ALEX
Ever seen anything like this?

EXT. DANDELION FIELD - DAY

The adventurers wade through a sea of WAIST-HIGH DANDELIONS. YELLOW FLOWERS AND WHITE PUFFBALLS SWAY IN THE BREEZE, SENDING FLUFFY SEEDLINGS ALL OVER DAVE AND OUT INTO THE AUDIENCE.

HANNAH

Let's rest for a minute. Under those trees.

She points to a forest of THICK TRUNKS.

Dave's eyes widen.

DAVE

Those aren't trees...

He cranes his neck upward to see...

GIANT MOTTLED CAPS HANGING FIFTY FEET IN THE AIR.

DAVE (cont'd)

They're mushrooms.

EXT. GIANT MUSHROOM GROVE - DAY

Alex, Dave and Hannah wander in the shadows of the MAMMOTH FUNGI.

ALEX

I wonder if there's a giant pizza anywhere we could put these on.

Dave bangs on one -- hard as a rock.

DAVE

That wouldn't work so well. They're fossilized.

Hannah peers at the ground.

HANNAH

Look.

FLAT ROCKS have been laid between the mushrooms... it looks like a deliberately laid trail. Dave looks to Alex and Hannah, then takes the lead down the trail. Alex and Hannah share a look, then take off after him.

WE PLUNGE WILDLY THROUGH THE 3-D FOREST, narrowly avoiding collisions with the giant trunks.

They burst out to find...

EXT. MUSHROOM HOUSE - DAY

Dave stands stock-still in the middle of a clearing. In front of him is a porch made of rough, hand-hewn planks, in ghost-town-like disrepair, the stairs leading up to a DOORWAY INTO A MUSHROOM TRUNK. Its door warps from wooden pin hinges.

DAVE
This could be his place.

Dave walks toward the porch.

HANNAH
(to Alex)
So we're counting on a theory by a
guy who decided to live in a
mushroom.

ALEX
Yup. And that's not even the most
messed-up thing to happen to us
today.

INT. MUSHROOM HOUSE - DAY

Dave, Alex and Hannah step inside, gaping at...

A FANTASTIC 3-D LABORATORY.

Dusty and disused, almost everything is made of wood and dried vines. Tables support all manner of HOMEMADE SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS, WOODEN DOOHICKEYS DRIVEN BY WEIGHTS AND SPRINGS.

Dave picks up a tool, and looks it over. Alex stares at a wall.

ALEX
Check this out.

Dave goes to him. On the wall hangs a HAND-DRAWN MAP featuring waterfalls, mushrooms, and A GIANT OCEAN.

In flowing script, it reads: " TERRESTRIS INTERNUS."

DAVE
"Terrestris Internus." Internal
Earth. Amazing.

Dave just stares. Crudely drawn, there are NETWORKS OF
TUNNELS running through the entire cross-section of the
planet...

ALEX
The tunnels.

DAVE
(smiling)
Yeah.

ALEX
You were right. Aren't you happy?

DAVE
I am. I am. But it's not worth much
if it doesn't help us get out of
here.

Dave goes to a side table and finds a STACK OF PAPER. The
sheets are homemade and irregular, made from huge dried
leaves. He scans through them.

Hannah goes to a table with a HOMEMADE STILL. Under it is a
carved wooden mug with some of the HOMEMADE BREW--

DAVE
Hannah, I wouldn't do that--

TOO LATE. SHE SIPS...THEN COUGHS.

HANNAH
Ooh. That's *nasty*.

She clears her throat, then polishes off the rest of the mug.
FROM FLOOR LEVEL, WE WATCH DAVE WALK OVER.

ALEX
Hey, let me have a sip.

OUR P.O.V. SCUTTLES ALONG.

DAVE
Alex --

OUR P.O.V. DUCKS UNDER A TABLE.

ALEX
Aw, come on --

OUR P.O.V. DARTS OUT FROM UNDER THE TABLE.

Alex looks down...AND JUMPS, KNOCKING OVER THE TABLE, SENDING OBJECTS FLYING.

REVERSE: A TRILOBITE SKITTERS ACROSS THE FLOOR, DOZENS OF LEGS CLICKING IN FORMATION. IT FREEZES BETWEEN THE THREE --

DAVE
Nobody move!

Dave studies the creature, fascinated.

DAVE (cont'd)
(grappling with what he
sees)
Okay. Okay. *That's* a Metacanthina
trilobite. That thing right there
has been extinct for 400 million
years!

IT SKITTERS TOWARD HANNAH, MAKING A BREAK FOR THE DOOR WHEN
KLANG! OUT OF NOWHERE, HANNAH COMES DOWN UPON THE CREATURE,
PINNING IT TO THE FLOOR WITH A KNIFE. DAVE GASPS.

HANNAH (cont'd)
Then it's okay if we eat it? I
don't know about you, but my blood
sugar's in the basement.

Dave and Alex cringe, look at each other.

EXT. SHACK - DAY

A CAMPFIRE GLOWS RED. Trilobite shells lie scattered. Alex
and Hannah sit back, sated. Dave distractedly pore over some
of the papers from the desk inside.

ALEX
I have to say, it's not that bad.

HANNAH
(earnestly)
Tastes like chicken.

Suddenly, they hear CHIRPING. Alex turns to see...

GLOWBIRD hovering nearby, waiting for a handout.

ALEX (cont'd)
Hey, buddy. Back for dinner?

He holds out some trilobite. Glowbird gobbles it up.

ALEX
(to the glowbird, re:
Hannah)
I'd keep clear of her or you could
wind up dinner yourself.

Dave holds up two sheets of paper, side by side, studying them. Over his face creeps deep concern... He reaches to his bag and draws out a THERMOMETER. He looks at it, then back to the pages.

ALEX
What?

DAVE
Gimme a second here, Alex...

He traces his finger down the chart, and the series of arcane numbers. Dave exhales slowly, stands and walks back into the house.

ALEX
What? What is it?

But Dave is gone. Alex and Hannah follow him inside.

INT. SHACK - DAY

Inside they find Dave, running his finger over a faded diagram on the wall.

DAVE
He tried to get out.

ALEX
Cool. So --

HANNAH
Your father said "tried."

He points to a DIAGRAM ON THE WALL: THE ORB OF THE EARTH, SPLIT OPEN, IT'S STRATA, AND VARIOUS TUBES RUNNING THROUGH IT.

DAVE

This here, this area in the center of the outer core is where we are. This big terrarium.

He turns to them.

DAVE

You notice how hot it is down here?

HANNAH

Yes.

DAVE

It's not always. In fact, according to Saknussem's data, sometimes it's downright chilly. But when the magma deposits under us build up, this space we're in turns into a sort of... oven.

ALEX

How hot?

DAVE

Well, when Saknussem's data drops off, which was when he probably tried to get out of here, it was around 130 degrees.

HANNAH

We could handle that.

DAVE

He could have, too. But the reason he didn't hang out for it was because it was headed toward something more like 260 degrees. This pocket we're in is fine now, until it gets surrounded by lava.

ALEX

How can all of these plants and delicious extinct species handle that? It makes no sense.

DAVE

They've adapted, just like life at the bottom of the sea has adapted to the intense pressure. Everything down here simply has a wider range of tolerance than we do.

HANNAH

That thing did take a long time to cook.

Dave shows them the DIAGRAM ON THE WALL, and takes us through what he has discovered.

DAVE

This is us, in this pocket here. The magma deposit under us is an ocean of lava about 750 degrees Celsius. Seismic activity increases, the magma flows upwards, heating this chamber. Eventually, it blows upward through these tunnels which surround the chamber and the temperature goes up.

Hannah narrows her eyes.

HANNAH

When does this happen?

DAVE

Soon.

HANNAH

Dave, in your field soon could mean millions of --

Dave goes back to the diagram.

DAVE

No, "soon" soon.

He rifles through the papers.

DAVE

When it gets to about 120 degrees, and quakes are running intervals of four minutes, that's when it's too late. When we got down here it was 98 degrees. We're at about 101 now...

Dave pulls his Mt. Sneffels sensor from his bag, looks at the screen and fusses with some buttons.

DAVE

And seismic intervals of nine minutes. We're cutting it real, real close.

ALEX
So what do we do?

DAVE
What Saknussem did, but we do it
faster. We have to get in those
tubes and get topside, and do it
before they fill with lava. Because
we cannot stay here.

Dave consults his equations.

HANNAH
So how long do we have?

DAVE (cont'd)
At the most three days.

They take this in...

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN'S EDGE - DAY

CLOSE ON: SAKNUSSEMM'S MAP.

DAVE
All right, this is us right here.
Saknussem indicates he found an
upward-flowing water tunnel due
north...
(indicates)
...right here.

HANNAH
What does "due north" mean down
here?

DAVE
It means... the top of this map. I
don't know. We don't have any
reference other than the way he
drew this map.

Dave points to a drawing of a RIVER on the far side of the
map.

DAVE (cont'd)
If we can get to that, I think we
can get out.

ALEX
We'd have to cross this.

Alex points to THE BLUE OCEAN on the map.

DAVE
Yes. Correct. And part this desert.

HANNAH
Part of a *desert*?

DAVE
I think it sounds harder than it
is.

They look at him skeptically, but this plan is all they've got. Dave lowers the map, revealing...

THE ACTUAL OCEAN SPREADING OUT ENDLESSLY BEFORE THEM.

The three travellers stand on the sand, looking very small.

ALEX
(re: the sea)
But how do we get across that?

MONTAGE:

Hannah swings an ancient axe at a GIANT tree. She steps out of the way as it falls RIGHT AT US.

Alex pulls down VINES. He yanks on a stubborn one...sending down A RAIN OF GIANT COCONUTS, ONE OR TWO BOUNCING AT US, PAST US.

In the lab, Dave stuffs Saknussem's NOTEBOOKS into his pockets.

Alex gathers the SHEETS off Saknussem's bed -- they are hand-woven of plant fiber. He peeks underneath the mattress: A TRILOBITE SKITTERS RIGHT AT US, COVERED IN DUST-BUNNIES.

Hannah enters behind him.

HANNAH
How's it going?

ALEX
You were right.

HANNAH
About what?

ALEX
I guess I am glad I came with him.

HANNAH
Well. Maybe tell him.

ALEX
Maybe I will. When we get out.

Alex rolls the sheets up and heads for the door.

ALEX
Better get going.

THE MAIN ROOM

Dave yanks a big HAND-CRANKED FAN from the rafters.

EXT. UNDERGROUND OCEAN'S SHORE - SERIES OF SHOTS

Alex lashes the trunks together with vines.

Hannah attaches a rudder made from the fan blades.

Dave packs his GREEN NYLON BAG with samples.

EXT. UNDERGROUND OCEAN'S SHORE - DAY

Dave, Hannah, and Alex stand next to the water, each holding handfuls of rough-hewn, lashed-together fabric, ropes leading away behind them.

DAVE
The wind's behind us. Ready?

They nod, and on Dave's signal they TOSS THE FABRIC INTO THE AIR...

REVERSE: IT BILLOWS OUT STRAIGHT AT US, A HUGE KITE UNFURLING IN THE WIND!

DAVE, HANNAH, AND ALEX

Look up at it smiling, but realize that behind them --

THEIR RAMSHACKLE CRAFT IS SLIDING FAST, RIGHT AT THEM.

DAVE
Get on!

They leap onto the raft as it skims out onto the sea...

EXT. UNDERGROUND OCEAN - DAY

A SAIL RISES TOWARD US IN 3-D...

The kite, 25 FEET WIDE AND TETHERED AT ITS FOUR CORNERS, SPINNAKER-STYLE, TO THE TWO SHORT MASTS AT THE END OF THE RAFT. Hannah works its lines. It flies high above the craft, catching upper gusts.

The wind flutters Alex's hair as he scans the horizon with Dave's binoculars.

Dave grips the rudder.

The GLOWBIRD swoops above them, chirping happily.

Hannah nervously eyes the sea. A STORM is brewing on the horizon...

Alex watches his father at the rudder. He takes a breath and shimmies over to Dave, who concentrates hard on guiding the craft.

DAVE

What's up?

ALEX

I was just thinking, you know, when we get back? We could maybe --

DAVE

Alex, if you don't keep an eye on the horizon and I don't steer this thing, we're not going to get back.

Alex recoils a little at Dave's harshness.

DAVE

Now go back up there. Come on.

Alex looks toward Hannah, who's been watching. He rolls his eyes and moves toward his position again.

Hannah catches Dave's eye, and she indicates mutely toward Alex -- he realizes he just blew it.

DAVE

(to himself)

Damn.

(then)

Alex --

HANNAH

HEY.

They look to Hannah. Her eyes are fixed on the surface of the sea...

HANNAH'S POV

Moving PHOSPHORESCENT SHAPES underwater in the distance.

HANNAH

There's some kind of... movement going on.

DAVE

Don't worry. I think this thing is solid. Solid enough.

HANNAH

It's not the boat I'm worried about. It's what's under it.

Dave and Alex, picking up on her intensity, go still and follow her eyes.

A RIPPLE. THEN ANOTHER. Alex looks down, over the side...

ALEX

What are those?

No one answers. MORE MOVING PHOSPHORESCENT SHAPES. They seem to angle toward the boat... Dave and Alex bend down close to the water's surface to get a good look...

The wind starts PICKING UP...

SUDDENLY, BURSTING OUT OF THE WATER INCHES FROM HIS FACE IS A TREMENDOUS, PREHISTORIC FISH! IT LEAPS FROM THE SEA RIGHT AT US! IT'S ABOUT THE UGLIEST THING YOU'VE EVER SEEN, AND IT'S TEETH ARE HUGE GNASHING RAZORS, A HELLISH CROSS BETWEEN A FLYING FISH AND A PIRANHA

IT FLIES RIGHT AT ALEX'S HEAD. HE DODGES IT AND IT SPLASHES DOWN ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE RAFT. DAVE, STILL PEERING INTO THE WATER, DOESN'T SEE IT -- AND THEN A SECOND ONE LEAPS UP RIGHT INTO HIS FACE. HE FALLS BACK, THROWING OUT HIS ARMS TO BLOCK IT AND WINDS UP HOLDING IT -- IT'S SNAPPING JAWS INCHES FROM HIS FACE! FREAKED, HE THROWS IT INTO THE WATER. THEY LOOK AROUND THEM AND SEE MANY MORE COMING TOWARD THEM, FAST. DAVE GRABS ONE OF THE LARGE SHELLS TO USE AS A SHIELD.

HANNAH PICKS UP AN OAR AND STANDS READY TO DEFEND THEM AGAINST MORE. AND HERE COMES...

ALEX

OH MAN!

SUDDENLY THE WATER EXPLODES WITH FIVE OR SIX OF THEM, LEAPING IN ARCS OVER THE BOAT, TRYING TO GET A BITE OF OUR CREW, SNAPPING THEIR TEETH IN THE AIR --

WHILE DAVE FENDS THEM OFF WITH HIS SHELL/SHIELD, HANNAH HAS THE OAR KNOCKED FROM HER HANDS AS ONE HITS HER FROM BEHIND.

Alex crawls to their pile of salvaged gear and digs out an old handmade AXE HANDLE. Alex STANDS, TURNS, WINDS UP THE AXE HANDLE AND WHAM! KNOCKS ONE OFF COURSE, RIGHT AT US --

They keep coming, and ALEX KEEPS SWINGING, getting the hang of it. HE SWINGS THE BAT AND WHAM takes out another, then another -- It's working --

They all smile at each other, and relax a little. BUT THE WIND IS PICKING UP, AND WE HEAR THUNDER...

DAVE

Those are called *duncleosteus* -- do you know what that means?

ALEX

Psycho-killer fish?!

NOW ONLY ONE OR TWO MORE PHOSPHORESCENT SHAPES ARE APPROACHING. ALEX WINDS UP AS ONE SHAPE NEARS HIM, BUT THIS ONE'S DIFFERENT. ALEX TURNS... AND FREEZES. BEFORE HIM...

EYES. HUGE EYES. YELLOW AND MENACING, THEY BREAK THE SURFACE

RISING FROM THE WAVES, BEAMING FROM A SCALY HEAD. JAGGED TEETH JUT FROM A GAPING MOUTH. NESSIE ON STEROIDS, AND VERY HUNGRY.

...IT'S A PREHISTORIC SEA MONSTER, RISING UP AND UP AS IT COMES CLOSER AND CLOSER.

ALEX STANDS FROZEN IN FEAR AS A FISH JUMPS UP PAST HIM, TRYING TO FLEE THE GIANT CREATURE, AND, INCHES FROM ALEX, THE CREATURE'S JAWS SNAP SHUT ON THE FISH -- IT'S ACTUAL QUARRY.

From out of the sea behind the monster erupt THREE MORE, breaking the surface and moving after the first, hungrily chasing the fish, seemingly oblivious to the raft.

LIGHTNING FLASHES. THE SEA PITCHES LIKE A BATHTUB WITH THE MOVEMENT OF THE BEAST. ONE OF THE SERPENTS NECKS SMASHES INTO ONE OF THE MASTS HOLDING THE KITE LINES.

THE KITE RIGGINGS START TO LOOSEN AND ONE SIDE GOES SLACK...

DAVE
(to Hannah)
Grab the line!

THE KITE IS DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO FALLING OUT OF THE SKY.
HANNAH DIVES FOR THE LINES.

LIGHTNING STRIKES THE WATER, SENDING A BUZZ OF ELECTRICITY
RIGHT OFF THE SCREEN.

DAVE
KEEP THE KITE UP!

Dave jumps to tie the loose end of Hannah's line to the mast,
but the now-luffing kite-sail catches a BLAST OF WIND,
JERKING THE CRAFT --

THEIR CHANGE OF COURSE PULLS THEM OUT OF THE POD OF SERPENTS--
SEEMINGLY OUT OF DANGER --

DAVE
We're pulling clear of them!

The boat, comes about, and a HUGE GUST FILLS THE KITE -- THE
BOAT TAKES OFF --

DAVE
WHOAH! LET IT OUT SLOWLY!

Hannah tries, but the line zips through her hands, pulling
fully taught and burning her hands --

HANNAH
AHH.

Dave rushes over to help -- One side of the rigging flies in
the wind, the other side is about to tear free as well,
losing the kite-sail to the storm. Alex moves up the boat and
grabs the lose end --

DAVE
(to Alex)
Sit down!

ALEX
I got it!

He goes with his other hand to grab the other side, wrapping
it around himself --

HANNAH

Alex! No!

-- just a it TEARS FREE FROM THE BOAT --

DAVE

ALEX!!

AND PULLS ALEX STRAIGHT UP INTO THE AIR!!

DAVE

ALEX!!

Dave dives to catch him but misses, and Alex shoots skyward into the gale, struggling to free himself... and DISAPPEARS.

DAVE

NO! NO!

A massive wave catches the raft, tossing it across the sea --

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. UNDERGROUND BEACH - DAY

The darkness slowly lightens, until we see...

A GIANT EYEBALL.

Alex thrashes to full consciousness, and he finds he's sprawled out alone on...

AN ENDLESS UNDERGROUND BEACH.

A GIANT SERPENT EYEBALL lies half-buried in the sand next to his sodden backpack. The lines of the kite-sail are still wrapped around him, and lead to the tattered sheet, gnarled on the rocks and in the shrubs.

Alex rubs his hand over his DRY, CRACKED LIPS.

He spots a shell, half full of WATER. He takes a desperate sip...THEN SPITS IT OUT, GAGGING.

Finally, Alex looks inland...

TO THE GREEN JUNGLE BEYOND THE BEACH.

ALEX

HELLO?! DAD?! HANNAH?!

...but hears nothing in return. He wipes his brow.

ALEX
It's getting hot...

He realizes what this means: time is running out. He takes off.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

BIZARRE PLANTS AND PURPLE IVY WIND OVER AND AROUND US.

Alex pushes through the dense jungle. He cuts A FAT STALK with his pen knife.

A GOOEY WHITE OOZE SEEPS OUT.

Alex sags and puts his knife away.

He starts to move on, but then he hears...

A SNAPPING SOUND. Like a deck of cards being shuffled.

He whips around to see...

ONE LITTLE LEAF WAVERING ON ITS STEM.

Alex goes to it and kneels, taking a closer look at the strange beachball-sized head of the plant.

ALEX'S POV

Of the plant, which quivers a little, then -- SNAPS OPEN AND COMES STRAIGHT AT US, A WIDE CARNIVOROUS MOUTH GAPING AND DRIPPING!!

Alex jumps back, just out of range of the Venus Flytrap, and lands on his behind.

ALEX
OhmyGod. OhmyGod.

The plant recedes to its original form, oozing saliva... Alex hears a CREAKING SOUND, like a branch bending... A SHADOW PASSES OVER HIM FROM BEHIND... He turns slowly, dread across his face, to see

A HUGE VENUS FLYTRAP, DWARFING THE LAST ONE, AND ARCHING DOWN AFTER HIM! He dodges and rolls, and it gets a mouthful of earth.

Alex scrambles for safety but THE WHOLE JUNGLE COMES TO LIFE!

PURPLE LEAF-MOUTHS SNAP AT THE AIR ALL AROUND US...SNAPPING CLOSER AND CLOSER... TRYING TO BITE ALEX. AND US.

Alex backs up. The plants twist and jab, knocking him down.

DOZENS OF PURPLE MOUTHS MOVE IN, SNAPPING, SNAPPING, SNAPPING...

Alex shuts his eyes, done for... When suddenly, above the snapping, he hears...

A CHIRP.

Alex opens his eyes to see...

THE GLOWBIRD HOVERING IN THE JUNGLE A FEW YARDS AWAY. It begins flying up to the flytraps, taunting them.

ALL THE SNAPPING MOUTHS TURN FOR THE BIRD, biting at him, trying to swallow him whole.

Alex fights his way to his feet and breaks through the snapping plants, following the Glowbird through out of fray --

EXT. EDGE OF THE JUNGLE - DAY

Alex emerges and slumps against A SHEER ROCK WALL at the jungle's edge. He's tired and parched, choking on his dry tongue

Glowbird hovers in front of him.

ALEX
Thanks. Next chunk of squid's all
yours.

The Glowbird CHIRPS and flutters along the rock wall He stops a few yards away, turns to Alex and CHIRPS again, insistent, beckoning.

Alex stands. The Glowbird CHIRPS again and keeps moving. Alex follows...

EXT. NARROW CANYONS - DAY

Alex weaves his way through a narrow canyon in the rocks.

Ahead, Glowbird chirps, impatient.

ALEX
You better know where you're going.

WE MOVE WITH HIM, THE CANYON WALLS CLOSE ENOUGH TO TOUCH, AS IF THEY COULD FOLD IN AND CRUSH US.

Suddenly, A LOW RUMBLE rocks the canyon. Glowbird chirps worriedly, and darts ahead.

THE CANYON SHAKES, KNOCKING ALEX TO THE GROUND.

Alex looks straight up: THE CANYON WALLS SWAY. He swallows, and hurries after the bird.

EXT. CANYON POOLS - DAY

Glowbird leads Alex around a corner to...

A TINY TRICKLE OF CLEAR WATER RUNNING DOWN A ROCK, INTO A SMALL POOL.

ALEX

Yes.

Alex drops to his knees, to drink, his bag flopping open on the ground beside him, spilling out his pen knife, his extra underwear...

AND ARNE SAKNUSSEMM'S COMPASS.

It rolls on the rocks...and pops open.

As Alex finishes drinking, he looks down at the compass.

ALEX (cont'd)

Nah...

Still, tentatively, he reaches for it. He stares...and starts to laugh.

Where once the needle spun aimlessly, now it points...

DUE NORTH. STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW. ALEX SMILES.

ALEX

I get it. I get it! It only works down here!

He orients himself, according to the needle...

ALEX

Dad said due north. Due north.

Lines up the compass again, drags himself to his feet and follows the compass intently.... So intently that he almost walks off of a ledge and into a DEPTHLESS CREVASSE...

ALEX

Ahhhhh!

Alex teeters on the edge, swinging his arms wildly to regain his balance. When he does, he sees before him:

A SERIES OF FLOATING STONES, SPANNING THE CREVASSE. THEY SWAY SLIGHTLY, MAGNETICALLY SUSPENDED AT SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT LEVELS...

He looks across to the opposite side, where Glowbird is perched on a floating stone by the other edge.

ALEX

No way.

He looks down again at the compass -- DUE NORTH is directly across the crevasse.

ALEX

Magnetic...

Then he looks again at the rocks...

ALEX

Magnetic.

He walks to the edge, and tentatively reaches a foot out to one of the floating stones. He warily puts some weight on it... it descends a little, but holds. A little more weight. It holds. Tentatively, Alex puts more weight on it until... he steps off of the ledge. The floating stone dips and Alex gasps, but it rises again.

Alex looks across the chasm, and makes a step onto the next stone, then the next, getting the hang of it... but the stones are getting further away from one another, greater distance between them. Alex sizes up the next span, and JUMPS --

ALEX

UNGH.

-- he makes it... Then the next... he JUMPS, and barely makes it...

ALEX

OhmyGod.

He faces the last floating rock, a seemingly impossible distance. He summons himself, steps to the back of the rock he is on... and LEAPS, SAILING THROUGH THE AIR... AND MISSES! All but his fingertips, that his.

Alex hangs there, struggling, the rock tilting back with his weight -- he looks downward into the endless abyss... And begins to pull himself up... But just as he gets himself halfway onto the rock, it FLIPS in the air under his weight! He scrambles up again, like trying to mount a beach ball in the water. Finally, he gets himself spread-eagle atop the rock.

Alex catches his breath, stands, and jumps the last small distance to the other side.

Consulting the compass, he heads up an INCLINE... the Glowbird follows, swooping around and above him....

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Glowbird floats to the crest of a hill. After a moment...

Alex, dirty and sweaty, hauls himself to the top.

He shakes off the dust and looks out.

His face drops. All around him...

A GIGANTIC DESERT STRETCHES IN EVERY DIRECTION.

No ocean. No landmarks. No signposts. No Dad. Alex sighs, then keeps following the compass....

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Alex trudges through the barren landscape, his lips dry and cracked.

ALEX STUDIES THE COMPASS, ADJUSTS HIS COURSE.

Glowbird sits on his shoulder.

EXT. PLATEAU - DAY

Alex climbs a high cliff at the edge of the desert.

He grits his teeth, straining.

Suddenly, HIS FOOT SLIPS. Tiny pebbles rain off the edge and down into the next valley.

WE SHOOT DOWN WITH THEM, bouncing and tumbling into...

THE SAME VOID ARNE SAKNUSSEMM SAW AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MOVIE.

At the top, ALEX CHECKS SAKNUSSEMM'S COMPASS AGAINST THE LANDSCAPE.

He presses on.

EXT. VALLEY OF BONES - DAY

Alex staggers out into a field of BLEACHED WHITE ROCKS. Glowbird flits around him.

The stones crunch under Alex's feet. He looks down and realizes he's walking on...BONES. He bends down and picks up a MASSIVE TOOTH.

ALEX TURNS IN A SLOW CIRCLE, staring in silence at...

THE VALLEY OF DINOSAUR SKELETONS.

Alex grins.

A SCREECHING ROAR DESTROYS THE SILENCE.

Alex's smile vanishes. He spins.

And there on the rise stands...

The largest predatory dinosaur that ever lived:

GIGANTASAURUS.

ALEX
(whispering)
I really *do* hate dinosaurs.

SPIKED RIDGES RIPPLE DOWN THE DINOSAUR'S BACK. RAZOR TEETH SNAP AND BITE.

ALEX (cont'd)
I wish Dad wasn't right.

THE GIANT REPTILE SCANS HIS VALLEY, BUT DOESN'T SEE ALEX...

Until Alex takes one tiny step...

AND LANDS ON GLOWBIRD'S SHIMMERING TAIL.

GLOWBIRD

PEEP.

THE GIGANTASAURUS ZEROES IN ON ALEX, FLICKING ITS TAIL,
SENDING A RAIN OF BONES AND ROCK THROUGH THE AIR.

ALEX BREAKS INTO A DEAD RUN, TERRIFIED, SCRAMBLING BLIND.

THE DINOSAUR POUNDS AFTER HIM, 8 TONS OF FORCE IN EVERY STEP.

Alex zig-zags through the skeletons. He spots a GIANT RIB
CAGE.

THE GIGANTASAUR SCREAMS AND LEAPS...

JUST AS ALEX ROLLS INSIDE --

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Dave and Hannah sit at the bottom of a canyon, a craggy hill
behind them leading to a wall of stone above. Before them
stretches a flat plain. It looks like a frozen lake, but of
dark, dull glass-like crystal, dotted with islands of rock.
Dave points to the opposite side, where A CLOUD OF STEAM
rises...

DAVE

That's the way out. Temperature's
122 degrees. Seismic tremors every
eighteen minutes and increasing.

He looks at her, the worst moment of his life.

DAVE

Time's almost up. Go ahead, Hannah.

HANNAH

Let's keep looking.

DAVE

Go ahead, Hannah. I'm staying.

They sit there for a long minute. Hannah stands, and reaches
her hand down to Dave.

HANNAH

Dave, if you stay here you're going
to die.

DAVE
It wouldn't be as bad as making it
out without him.

He looks out on the flat, glassy plain.

After a beat, Hannah bends down, kisses Dave on the cheek.

HANNAH
I have to go.

DAVE
I hope you make it, Hannah.

HANNAH
Me too.

Hannah turns, tears forming in her eyes, and heads across the glassy expanse toward the steam. Dave watches her go...

CUT TO:

EXT. THE VALLEY OF BONES

Alex cowers in the huge rib cage as the gigantasaurus tries to get its front teeth inside. The rib cage rolls back and forth crazily. Glowbird flies around it, attacking it in vain. Glowbird chirps in terror and ducks into Alex's shirt pocket.

THE ENRAGED BEAST BANGS AGAINST THE BARS OF BONE. A RIB CRACKS INTO PIECES -- THEN ANOTHER -- THIS WON'T LAST LONG --

Alex spies AN OPENING IN THE VALLEY. It's a small hole in the side of a wall-like rock formation, just big enough for him to make it through. He takes a breath and MAKES A BREAK FOR IT, JUST AS --

THE REPTILE'S GIANT CLAW SMASHES THE RIB CAGE TO DUST.

Alex tears off for the hole... almost there. His strides are no match for the gigantasaur, who gains on him quickly, ROARING... SNAP goes its jaws, inches from Alex's back -- Alex DIVES FOR THE HOLE, TUCKS AND ROLLS...

EXT. DESERT

Dave just sits there watching Hannah recede into the distance... Until he hears RUSTLING -- and spins around to see

ALEX!

Up the slope from him, pulling his last leg out of a small hole in the rock wall. Gasping, Alex turns to see the SNOUT of the beast, vainly trying to squeeze into the hole, just a foot behind the thin wall.

DAVE

DAVE

ALEX!!!

ALEX

Up the slope. He turns to see Dave below him.

ALEX

DAD!!

They run to each other, Dave scrambling up the hill, Alex sliding down. They meet on the slope.

DAVE

Thank God. Thank God. Oh Alex...

ALEX

Dad...

DAVE AND ALEX

With the last few feet between them they approach each other awkwardly, then embrace. They hold each other tight. Dave holds him out at arm's length, looking him over.

DAVE

Are you okay? Did you --

ALEX

I'm fine now. You?

DAVE

Yeah. Yeah. How did you --

ALEX

The compass worked! I just headed toward north, and -- where's Hannah?

DAVE

I told her to go without us --

THUD. They both turn to the sound.

THE WALL

From which Alex has just emerged SHAKES WITH ANOTHER THUD.
THEN ANOTHER...

DAVE
Uh, Alex...

ALEX
It's a gigantasaur.

Dave looks at the wall in awe, which Alex takes for confusion.

ALEX
A gigantasaur is a really big,
carnivorous --

DAVE
-- I know what it is. How big?

BOOM -- A PIECE OF THE THIN WALL BLOWS OUT, REVEALING THE
GIGANTASAUR'S SNOUT.

Dave and Alex dodge the debris.

DAVE
Nevermind --

Dave grabs Alex by the shirt and they hustle, stumbling, down
the slope and away from the ever-widening hole in the wall.
CHUNKS OF ROCK, smashed out of the wall by the gigantasaur,
FLY PAST THEM AND BESIDE THEM, BOUNCING DOWN THE HILL --

THE HOLE IN THE WALL IS GETTING BIGGER AND BIGGER WITH EACH
SMASH, ROCKS AND DEBRIS FLY STRAIGHT AT US REVEALING MORE OF
AN AWFULLY ANGRY GIGANTASAUR --

Dave and Alex head down the hill, fast as they can. They all
look back at

THE WALL -- DISINTEGRATING, REVEALING THE GIGANTASAURUS,
ABOUT TO BREAK COMPLETELY THROUGH --

Alex points across the plain at a distant GEYSER OF STEAM--

ALEX
That steam! Is that it?

DAVE
Yeah. But we have to outrun that
thing.

Alex looks at the glassy, mottled surface of the plain --

ALEX
Isn't that the stuff we fell
through before? Isn't that
muscovite?

Dave looks down.

DAVE
Yeah. Yeah, It is.

ALEX
It's like a thin sheet of ice,
right?

DAVE
There's probably nothing under it
for hundreds of feet.

Alex looks back as the gigantasaurus BLASTS THROUGH THE LAST
OF THE WALL AND STARTS LEAPING DOWN THE HILL --

ALEX
It won't hold him.
(up at the gigantasaur)
HEY! HEY!

Alex takes off down the hill, waving his arms and screaming
at the gigantasaur --

DAVE
ALEX! WHAT ARE YOU DOING!

ALEX
I'm lighter than you!

Alex gets to the muscovite, and takes off.

DAVE
ALEX!

The gigantasaur gets to the bottom of the hill, pauses, and
looks at Dave.

DAVE
(waving his arms)
ME! ME! PICK ME!

But the giant looks after Alex, and likes what he sees. THE
CHASE IS ON.

ALEX TAKES OFF ACROSS THE MUSCOVITE PLAIN.

ALEX
OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD --

THE GIGANTASAURUS IS IN PURSUIT, ROARING --

Dave chases after them --

DAVE
OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD --

Alex ZIG-ZAGS, looking over his shoulder at the monster and at his feet --

DAVE
Alex! Wide striations! Go for the wide striations!

ALEX
Wide what?!

The beast is almost upon him -- but he PIVOTS around a large rock, and heads for another one, all the time looking at the ground --

ALEX
Gimme a weak spot... Please!

The gigantasaurs keeps coming, keeps gaining -- Alex loops around another large rock, and sees up ahead -- the thin lines that rub through the muscovite WIDEN, BECOMING LESS DENSE --

DAVE
YES! THERE!

Alex bee-lines for the pattern --

ALEX
Come on!

THE BEAST PICKS UP THE PACE, FOLLOWING ALEX, BENDING FORWARD TO PLUCK HIM BY THE HEAD WHEN

CRAAAAACCKK! THE MUSCOVITE GIVES UNDER THE GIGANTASAURUS! IT SHRIEKS, STUMBLES, AND BEGINS TO GO THROUGH THE FLOOR! THE FLOOR BUCKLES, THE CRACKS CHASING ALEX. HE'S RUNNING FLAT OUT, THE GROUND DISAPPEARING BEHIND HIS FEET -- HE SEES THE EDGE OF THE EMERGING HOLE AND LEAPS FOR IT ---!!

-- AND CATCHES IT! BEHIND HIM THE GIGANTASAUR SHRIEKS AND SCRAMBLES TO GET THE LEDGE TOO, RIGHT NEXT TO ALEX, SCRAMBLING AT HIM WITH ITS TEETH -- THEN GOES PLUMMETING INTO THE ABYSS, ITS ROAR RECEDING --

Alex hangs there... Dave scrambles for Alex, pulling him up onto safe ground. Or Muscovite.

DAVE
Was that a plan?!

ALEX
Yeah. And I'd say it was pure
Lidenbrock.

Alex looks down into the abyss, panting.

ALEX
I was like, running that way and
then it came up right behind me and
I just, VROOM, turned that way
behind the rock, and then took off
and --

He feels a TREMOR, and not a small one. It shakes them, and some of the nearby ledge falls away.

DAVE
Let's do the recap later. Come on.

They take off across the plain toward the other side.

DAVE
Follow me.

Dave serpentines, sticking to the tightly-formed muscovite spots.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE OTHER SIDE

As Alex and Dave approach. They step off of the muscovite plain and walk up toward opposite wall, where the steam is coming from a cave. Dave leads them toward it. At the mouth, Dave sees something and stops.

Dave and Alex look down at...

A HUMAN SKELETON LEANING AGAINST THE WALL, WEARING A TATTERED OLD SUIT.

ALEX
Is it...?

DAVE
Saknussem. Yeah.

ALEX
He must have tried to get out...
the same way we are. Is that a good
sign?

SUDDENLY, THE EARTH SHAKES BENEATH THEIR FEET.

DAVE
Yes it is. Time to go.

Dave heads into the cave --

INT. CAVE

Steam fills the cave. As their eyes adapt, they see

A RUSHING RIVER, ABOUT EIGHT FEET WIDE,

Passing through the cave, and into the darkness of a
tunnel... It BUBBLES AND BOILS.

DAVE
That's it. Saknussem's exit.

Dave looks concerned.

ALEX
What?

DAVE
It's been boiling off. See the
watermark up there on the wall?
That's where the level was a few
hours ago.
(turns to them)
We're late.

ALEX
Too late?

DAVE
I don't know.

He looks around.

DAVE
We need a boat.

ALEX
Yeah -- don't we have a boat?

DAVE
We *had* a boat.

HANNAH (O.S.)
Am I your ride?!

Dave and Alex look up the tunnel to see

HANNAH

barreling downstream toward them in a HUGE DINOSAUR SKULL,
upside-down and acting quite nicely as a boat.

HANNAH
Jump!

Dave and Alex dive into the skull as it passes by, and they
disappear downstream into the tunnel...

THE EARTH SHUDDERS VIOLENTLY, THE CEILING OF THE CAVE
BEGINNING TO RAIN SMALL ROCKS BEHIND THEM --

INT. TUNNEL

As the skull flies down the chute of water, rotating,
bouncing off of the sides of the tunnel.

DAVE
(re: the skull)
This is...

HANNAH
It floats. That's all I needed to
know.

ALEX
It's so hot in here!

DAVE
Stay low, out of the steam.

The skull gets a BUMP from below --

ALEX
What was that?!

DAVE
It's the bottom of the river! It's
getting shallower! We're running
out of water...

As the light from behind them recedes, Dave switches on his headlamp and looks forward -- THE TUNNEL IS ENDING, RIGHT INTO ANOTHER, VERTICAL TUNNEL -- THE WATER CAN BE SEEN ROLLING RIGHT OFF AN EDGE AND DISAPPEARING --

DAVE

Dammit--!

AND OVER THE FALLS THEY GO. . . FREE-FALL INTO THE VERTICAL TUNNEL. . .

DAVE

Hold on tight! Brace your--!

THEN WHAM! THEY STOP, ALL KNOCKED TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SKULL.

They grunt from the impact.

HANNAH

Everybody okay?

They nod. Upward, pitch-black. They look over the side and downward... They are lodged in a bottomless shaft... at the very bottom, there's a tiny bright-orange SPOT OF LIGHT...

ALEX

Look at that. What's that light?

HANNAH

It's getting bigger.

DAVE

It's lava.

Hannah and Alex look to Dave.

ALEX

I thought there was supposed to be water in here! Water shooting up the tunnel!

DAVE

We're too late.

They look to Dave... who slumps a little, broken.

DAVE

The water's all gone over the edge and burned off down there. We missed the geyser.

ALEX

So what do we do?!

Dave says nothing.

HANNAH

Dave?

He looks them in the eyes.

DAVE

We could climb back up where we came from.

HANNAH

And sit there waiting to get baked?

DAVE

Or... we can sit here and wait for the lava.

ALEX

Okay. I want a third option.

DAVE

There isn't one. Not without any water in here. We probably missed it by an hour. Let me think here.

ALEX

That wall is still wet.

DAVE

These walls are not wet, Alex. It's 100 degrees in here.

HANNAH

Look behind you. That wall is wet.

Dave turns to see a LARGE WET SPOT ON THE WALL, RUNNING DOWNWARD, SEEPING WATER...

ALEX

(looking down, terrified)
The lava's coming up!

Dave runs his fingers over the wet wall... thinking, thinking...

DAVE

It's cold. In all this heat, it's cold... Yes! There's water behind there. A lot of water...

He looks closer still, poring over it...

HANNAH
What are you doing?!

DAVE'S FINGERS

As he runs them over a two-inch wide MINERAL VEIN IN THE WALL
-- A MAGNESIUM VEIN.

DAVE
Magnesium --

HIS FINGERS FOLLOW AS IT RUNS DOWN INTO THE WET SPOT..., AND
DOWN BELOW THE SKULL...

DAVE
(to himself)
Okay. Okay...

Dave sits back and scrambles through Hannah's bag...

THE LAVA IS REALLY COMING NOW, UP, UP... IT'S OMINOUS LIGHT
STARTING TO BRIGHTEN THE TUNNEL LIKE A TERRIBLE SUNRISE --

THE WALLS SHUDDER WITH VIBRATIONS FROM A QUAKE. SMALL ROCKS
FALL FROM ABOVE --

ALEX
(in terror)
DAD!

DAVE
Hold on. Just hold on.

Dave pulls a FLARE from the bag and goes to the edge of the
skull. He leans over it, head-first--

DAVE
Hold my feet!

Hannah and Alex each grab a foot, and Dave descends over the
edge... THE WALLS SHUDDER...

DAVE

As he hangs there, upside down, following the magnesium vein
with his hands, as it runs into the wet spot on the wall...

He BANGS THE FLARE ON THE WALL... NOTHING. HE DIGS AT THE
PAPER WITH HIS TEETH, AND LOOKS AT THE FLARE IN HIS HEADLAMP--

DAVE
Wet.

He looks down: THE LAVA IS COMING, AND COMING FAST --

HANNAH AND ALEX STRUGGLE TO HOLD DAVE --

DAVE TURNS THE FLARE OVER AND TEARS AT THE OTHER SIDE -- DRY.
Dave BANGS the flare on the wall. Nothing. BANGS again.
Nothing.

He starts wildly BANGING IT AGAINST THE WALL, OVER AND OVER,
THE LAVA COMING FASTER AND FASTER, 100 FEET, 90 FEET... Hot
air from below BLASTING DAVE'S HAIR BACK --

HANNAH AND ALEX, WINCE FROM THE GUST OF BURNING HOT AIR --

DAVE KEEPS BANGING, TOTAL ABANDON, DESPERATION ON HIS FACE,
UNTIL.... CRACK! THE FLARE FIRES UP!!

DAVE HOLDS IT TO THE MAGNESIUM VEIN, THE AIR BECOMING BURNING
HOT--

THE MAGNESIUM CATCHES FIRE! DAVE RECOILS, WHITE LIGHT
EXPLODES THROUGH THE TUNNEL, THE VEIN HISSING LIKE A GIANT
FUSE --

DAVE
PULL ME UP!

They reel him up by the legs. He sits there, watching the
magnesium crackle and burn, white-hot -- THEN --

BOOOOOM!! The wet wall below them BURSTS OPEN!!
SUPERPRESSURED WATER POURS THROUGH CRACKS AND INTO THE
TUNNEL, TEARING A LARGER HOLE IN THE WALL BY THE SECOND --

ALEX
YEESSSS!!

Like a hundred fire hoses, the water blasts out of the wall
and down the tunnel, hitting the LAVA, BOILING, CHURNING --

THEY LOOK BENEATH THEM TO SEE

A HUGE, THICK BALL OF STEAM, POWERING UPWARD AT THEM!

DAVE
GET BACK FROM THE EDGE.

They dive for the thick floor of the skull, and hold on to
each other --

And then...

SHOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOM!!!!!!!!!!

THE SKULL SHOOTS UPWARD ON A GEYSER OF BOILING WATER AND STEAM!

DROPLETS SHOWER OUT AT US, SIZZLING IN THE AIR.

WE BLAST ALONG ON A HEART-POUNDING THRILL RIDE AWAY FROM THE CENTER OF THE EARTH.

The rock wall passes by at hundreds of miles an hour.

Faster....faster...faster.

DAVE
The water's boiling off! The lava's
coming through it too fast! We're
going to start slowing down!

HANNAH
Look!

She points up. Above them...

A TINY DOT OF BLUE SKY BECKONS.

ALEX
Can we make it?!

Dave checks his watch and smiles weakly.

DAVE
I do not know!

The skull hurtles along at breakneck speed -- SPLASH! SSSSS!
Water boils dangerously close...

The three lay in the bottom of the skull, taking the G-force
and looking upward at

ABOVE THEM, THE BLUE DOT SWELLS.

DAVE (cont'd)
It's going to be close!

He grabs Alex and Hannah and they all hang on together as...

EVERYTHING AROUND THEM TURNS TO STEAM.

LAVA ROARS.

AND THEN...

KABOOM!

EXT. VOLCANO - DAY

THE SKULL BLASTS OUT OF A VOLCANO.

They fly into the air, blown aloft on A GIANT SPUME OF WATER, STEAM AND LAVA.

WE SOAR WITH THEM TOWARD A SUNLIT, 3-D CLOUD...

WHICH SOON SHRINKS AS THE SKULL PLUMMETS BACK DOWN TO EARTH.

DAVE

Hang on!

HANNAH

Stop saying that!

DAVE

Fine! Don't hold on!

She certainly does.

BAM! THE SKULL SMACKS OFF THE SIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN, SKIDDING DOWN THE SLOPE LIKE AN OUT-OF-CONTROL BOBSLED.

Alex glances over his shoulder. Lava pours out of the volcano's cone.

When he turns back around, his eyes go wide as the skull rockets toward...

A HUNDRED ROWS OF GRAPEVINES.

ALEX

Duck!

VINES TEAR. WIRES SNAP. THE SKULL RIPS THROUGH ROW AFTER ROW OF VINEYARD.

GRAPES FLY OFF THE SCREEN.

Alex opens one eye and blanches again as they barrel straight for...

A WOODEN FARM HOUSE.

THEY SHOOT RIGHT AT IT...

AND CERTAIN DEATH.

But slowed by the vines, the skull...

GRADUALLY...COMES...TO A STOP...AT THE FRONT DOOR.

The three passengers just sit there, wide-eyed, covered in smashed grapes.

Then the door opens. AN OLD MAN STEPS OUT.

He looks at them, then up to the DEVASTATED VINEYARD.

OLD MAN
 Il mio gran-nonno ha piantato
 quell'uva.
 (subtitles read)
*My grandfather planted those
 grapes.*

He looks back down at them, eyes full of sorrow.

OLD MAN (cont'd)
 Lo avete rovinato.
 (subtitles read)
You have ruined me.

Dave blinks. He looks over his shoulder at the volcano.

DAVE
 Vesuvius?

The old man nods. Dave smiles.

DAVE (cont'd)
 Alex. If anyone asks you what you
 did this summer, tell them your dad
 took you to Italy.

Alex gapes.

Dave digs in his bag and pulls out A HUGE DIAMOND.

ALEX
 Dad! You --

DAVE
 I took a couple of samples. About
 three pounds of samples.

He hands the diamond to the old man.

DAVE (cont'd)
 Sorry about your grapes.

The old man looks from the diamond...to Dave... AND SMILES.

OLD MAN
(in halting English)
You want to go down other side of
the hill too? Is fine! Go ahead!

As our three grateful travellers climb out of the skull...

WE SOAR INTO THE SKY, looking down at the little house and
the still spewing volcano.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - GEOLOGY BUILDING - DAY

Dave, youthful and happier than we've seen him, walks out
smiling, carrying a box of papers and books. He sets it down
at the curb with several others.

Professor Strock comes through the doors behind him.

STROCK
Dave.

DAVE
Hello, Don.

STROCK
Bridget just told me... she told me
you tendered your resignation.
What's going on?

DAVE
I have a new research grant. Just
came through.

STROCK
What? From who?

DAVE
This trust. They're very new. You
wouldn't have heard of them. They
have deep pockets, though. And
they're very open to my ideas.

Strock goes white.

STROCK
You should have come to me. I could
have, you know, helped you figure
something out.

DAVE

I did come to you, Don. And you figured out that I had to go to Iceland. Or get fired.

STROCK

Maybe I was a little -- Dave, I mean, we really kind of... we kind of need you around here. Why don't you just take a leave of absence, or something? Okay?

DAVE

Well. I am leaving, and I will be absent. So.

STROCK

And hey, about the Iceland thing... I'm sorry. I am. Did it push you over the edge, or...

DAVE

In more ways than one, Don, in more ways than one.

STROCK

Well, I'm really sorry, Dave.

DAVE

Don't be! You did me a favor.

Behind Dave, a brand new TRICKED-OUT HYBRID SUV pulls up. Alex gets out, and so does Hannah... let's just say she cleans up very nicely. They begin loading Dave's stuff into the SUV.

Strock, taking in the scene, is wordless.

DAVE

Oh. That's Alex, my son. And Hannah.

STROCK

Hannah...

DAVE

My new research assistant.

They finish loading and jump in, leaving the driver's seat empty for Dave. He reaches out and takes Strock's limp hand.

DAVE

You take care, Don.

Dave jumps in the car --

DAVE
Oh, and Don? That sensor?
Definitely broken. See ya.

-- and drives off. They all wave to Strock, who just stands there slack-jawed...

EXT. STREETS - DAY

The SUV takes a corner fast, and SHOOTS RIGHT AT US, squealing to a halt in front of...

INT. DAVE'S BROWNSTONE - DAY

They all pile in the door with Dave's boxes.

ALEX
If mom says I can stay for the rest of the summer, can we figure out another place to go?

DAVE
Sure. First stop: the living room.

HANNAH
The living room sounds boring.

Dave looks from one to the other.

DAVE
Not to me. It's where Saknussem's Atlantis papers are. Now *that* always seemed crazy to me, even, but now...

Alex holds up one SAKNUSSEMM'S OLD NOTEBOOKS.

ALEX
I think there's some stuff about Atlantis in this one, too.

HANNAH
Okay, maybe not so boring.

Dave turns toward the living room, and Hannah follows.

ALEX
I'll meet you guys in there in a second...

He turns and heads up the stairs.

INT. ALEX'S BEDROOM - DAY

Alex shuts the door behind him. He goes to the OPEN WINDOW and shuts it, DRAWING THE SHADES.

Then he lays his bag on his bed and carefully undoes the zipper...

ALEX
Hey, little buddy.

GREEN LIGHT BATHES HIS FACE.

ALEX (cont'd)
Welcome to the surface of the
earth.

AND WITH THAT, GLOWBIRD WHOOSHES OUT OF THE BAG...

SWOOPS AROUND THE ROOM, AND...

SHOOTS RIGHT AT US!

FADE OUT.