

TEARS OF THE SUN

by Ron Bass

revisions by Chris Gerolmo

Robert Lawrence Productions
Twentieth Century Fox
June 30, 1994

EXT: GOLD MINE: DAY

Whack! Brown hands swing pickaxes covered in grey mud, smashing stone. Freeze frame.

Other hands scabble in the moist sludge, grabbing up the rock fragments and tossing them into silt-soaked canvas sacks. Freeze again.

Bent like octagenarians, a score of Indians in once-white pajamas carry the bags up steep steps slick with sediment. They slip and slide in the mud that covers everything. One falls, and like dominoes, others fall with him. Freeze again.

Yet other Indians stand exhausted at the washstands on the rim of the crater, pouring water over themselves, trying to get the mud off their faces and arms. No way. They'll never be anything but dirty after this. They'll never be anything but tired. Freeze once more.

They work at the world's largest open-pit gold mine, thousands of them, breaking rock the same way men have done for centuries. A fresh faced 20 year old American in work clothes that could only have come from K-Mart, Peter Fallowers, photographs them.

He raises his camera to his face again, then hears a shouted,

SUB-FOREMAN (O.S.)

New guys, Jesse. You asked for 'em, I got 'em. An even dozen.

Peter turns and suddenly sees through his lens a tanned and weathered cowboy in his late 20's, pistol at his side; Jesse Winder. He lowers his camera, startled. Jesse grins.

A Brazillian with a rifle over his shoulder, the Sub-Foreman, joins him, also grinning.

SUB-FOREMAN

I knew you'd get a kick out of this one.

Jesse turns, shaking his head, looking over the other 11 workers. They're all wizened Indians with prehistoric faces and the uniform dirty white pajamas. He turns back to the white boy.

JESSE

You're no day laborer.

PETER

Sure I am...Why do you say that?

JESSE

Lemme see your hands.

Peter puts the camera under his arm and holds out his hands, palm up. Jesse looks them over.

JESSE
You've never done a day's work in your life.

PETER
How can you tell?

Jesse holds out his own hands; so caloused and leathery, they make Peter's look like a newborn's.

JESSE
Shit, I can tell you beat off righty.

The sub-foreman chuckles.

JESSE
Don't worry about it. Stick close to me. We'll find you somethin' to do.

Jesse says something in Portugese. Then adds, for the benefit of the North American,

JESSE
That means Let's go.

He turns away. The group trudges after him.

CUT TO:

EXT: GOLD MINE: DAY

Jesse walks along the rim of the bustling mine, picking his way amongst the stone-smashers and bag-bearers. He looks back at his charges. They're right behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT: TUNNEL: DAY

Near the river that borders the huge excavation, they stop outside the mouth of a half-finished tunnel through a mountain. Jesse delivers the Indian laborers to a Brazillian supervisor, then nods to Peter to follow him.

CUT TO:

INT: TUNNEL: DAY

He leads the kid through the tunnel, as dozens of earth-moving vehicles and oversized dumptrucks rumble past. He shouts over the dull roar,

JESSE

They brought us in to open a road
to the next valley where there's
supposed to be a real good vein.

Peter looks around, fascinated. The tunnel's teeming with Indians, too- hundreds of them- most of them carrying pickaxes or pushing wheelbarrows alongside the vehicles.

The rest hunker down whenever they can and sift furtively through the rock dust at the edges of the tunnel, sneaking glances at their supervisors. Jesse notices Peter watching their surreptitious scratching.

JESSE

They think there's gold in here,
too, but there's not. First thing
the company did was assay it.
There's not 2 ounces of gold in
the whole damn mountain.

Jesse shrugs.

JESSE

Can't tell that to these boys,
though. Far as they're concerned,
they're not building a tunnel.
They're prospecting.

Peter looks around at the vast construction project; half lined and tiled already, half still rubble.

PETER

I'd never seen gold lust till
today. It's just as powerful
as...any other desire. Isn't it?

JESSE

I guess.

As they approach the far wall of the tunnel they hear a shouted,

DEDAN

Jesus christ!

Peter's head turns. He spots a black man in his 30's, DeDan Sampson, who rubs his arm, muttering,

DEDAN

Mosquito the size of a goddamn
Mercedes.

He goes back to connecting color-coded wires to several dozen holes in the rock face packed with water gel explosive. Peter squints at him.

He's wearing a white collarless shirt, Armani slacks, Oliver Peoples glasses and a maroon silk handkerchief tied around one wrist. He'd look less at home on the massive construction site if he were wearing a sequined glove, but only slightly.

JESSE

You 'bout ready to blast, Sampson?

He pulls the handkerchief away, revealing a massive Rolex.

DEDAN

Fifteen minutes.

Peter raises his camera and takes DeDan's photograph. Jesse turns away, peering through the bustling darkness of the tunnel.

JESSE

Be right back.

DeDan connects the other ends of the wires to an electronic detonator, then types in a 16 digit number and checks it on the readout. He moves to an Apple Powerbook he's set up on a flat rock and types in the same long number. He slaps his arm again.

DEDAN

Christ of the culicidae.

Aware of Peter's stare, he pulls his shirt away from his skin.

DEDAN

Didn't think hell'd be humid, did you? Most people fancy it dry.

PETER

We haven't been introduced. I'm Peter Follower.

DEDAN

DeDan Sampson.

PETER

How you doing, Dan?

DEDAN

It's DeDan.

Peter hesitates. He didn't get that, quite.

PETER
I'm sorry. You said Dan, didn't you?

DEDAN
I said DeDan, for Christ's sake.
What do you think I'm stuttering?

PETER
I'm sorry. Anyway, I wonder if I could ask you to try not to take the Lord's name in vain.

DEDAN
Oh, Jesus.

PETER
Like that. Could you...

DEDAN
(shouting)
Jesse!

PETER
...try and resist the temptation to do that?

DEDAN
Jesse! New guy's a Mor-mon!

He pronounces it the way you pronounce moron. Peter smiles.

PETER
How'd you know that?

DEDAN
How'd you know I was black?

Peter squints.

PETER
You're from New York, aren't you?

DeDan turns to the kid, momentarily puzzled. Was that like, wit? Or just disingenous accent recognition? He decides: Accent.

DEDAN
I live in Paris.

PETER
Like an ex-patriot?

DeDan frowns. Now he's taking the ingenous thing too far. Just then Jesse returns and takes Peter by the arm, saying,

JESSE

Alright. 15 minutes it is Sampson.
Let's stick to the schedule, this
time.

Jesse walks away with Peter in tow, muttering,

JESSE

Always avoid the blasters, okay?
90% of all blasters are crazy.

Peter looks over his shoulder at DeDan, then asks Jesse quietly,

PETER

What's a culicidae?

JESSE

How the hell should I know?

Jesse spots his Brazillian counterpart, the local foreman, a swarthy man also wearing a pistol, surrounded by 6 assistants. He shouts in Portugese and claps his hands. The foreman nods and starts shouting instructions in various Indian dialects.

A siren starts whooping, filling the tunnel with sound. Jesse himself starts slapping his much-travelled cowboy hat against his thigh and shouting,

JESSE

Let's go, folks! Let's move! This
is gonna be a real unhealthy
environment in a couple minutes!

A truck passes, revealing a man in his 50's, Leon Sugarman, his Brooks Brothers short sleeves and conservative tie making the pistol on his hip look doubly incongruous. He studies a set of architectural drawings. Jesse frowns.

PETER

What? What's the matter with him?

JESSE

Nothin'. He's a genius.

Jesse dons his hat again and starts towards him.

JESSE

Mr. Sugarman, this is a new man.
Peter Follower.

PETER

Good afternoon.

Leon nods, without looking up from his elaborate plans.

JESSE
We're about 14 minutes away.

LEON
This should be the last blast.

JESSE
Well, theoretically.

That makes him look up.

LEON
Meaning what?

JESSE
That blasting is not an exact science. No matter what they tell you back at the office. Sir.

Leon grins. The gauntlet is laid down.

LEON
Well let's get everyone out of here and see if I'm right. Okay?

JESSE
Yes, sir.

He nods to Peter and they walk off together. Jesse shouts,

JESSE
Let's go folks! You wanna wind up in a can of chili, stick around while we rock the joint. You wanna live? Haul ass!

CUT TO:

EXT: BUNKER: DAY

In a bunker built of sandbags about 100 yards from the mouth of the tunnel, Jesse ticks items off a long checklist one by one with a pencil. One makes him frown.

JESSE
Where's my Doctor?

He looks up over the sandbag wall at the hundreds of Indians and dozens of vehicles streaming out of the tunnel into the clearing they've carved out of the rainforest and asks,

JESSE
Where's my damn doctor who's always busy somewhere?

He looks back at a good-sized tent thirty yards away, and moves towards it.

CUT TO:

INT: TENT: DAY

He pulls aside the canvas flap of the tent and stops. Behind him, Peter covers his mouth with one hand.

JESSE

I wondered what was keepin' you.

Dr. Allison Holmes stands up over a groaning Indian on a folding cot. His shoulder's dislocated. She's beautiful. It's hard to tell which is more remarkable to Peter.

ALLISON

Will you help me?

Jesse nods. He steps over to the cot. Allison murmurs a few words to the injured Indian. Jesse takes his wrist in both hands, then grins a big fake grin at Allison.

She nods, and puts all her weight on his chest and smiles such a breathtaking smile that the Indian can't help but smile back. Peter steps in and puts a tiny Bible between the Indian's teeth.

ALLISON

Thank you.

Jesse abruptly wrenches the Indian's arm back into place. The Indian's screams are, happily, muffled by the Bible. Seconds later, he's still in pain but he's able to move his arm.

JESSE

Let's get back to the countdown,
alright? They'll be waitin' on us.

Allison nods. She hands the Bible back to Peter who stares. It has a neat ring of teeth marks punched right through its cover.

CUT TO:

EXT: BUNKER: DAY

Jesse arrives at the now-crowded bunker with Peter and Allison right behind him.

LEON

Where were you?

JESSE

Helpin' the doc.

LEON

You're the foreman. You're supposed to be...

ALLISON

(interrupting)

Helping me. Everyone's always allowed to stop whatever their doing to help me.

She smiles again. The jungle birds stop chattering when she does so, out of respect for the fragility and impermanence of beauty.

ALLISON

I know it doesn't make for the most efficient system in the world Mr. Sugarman, but I like it.

LEON

Doctor Holmes, may I remind you...

ALLISON

Yes of course. But first let's get this blasting over with, shall we?

Leon frowns. Peter's a little wide-eyed at her handling of the boss. Jesse grins and turns to watch more workers streaming out of the tunnel, lining up behind a rope about 50 yards past the bunker, near the tent.

50 yards past that is DeDan, with his Powerbook set up on a folding table in the shade of a 200 foot tall tree. Jesse looks back at him, shaking his head. He reaches for a walkie talkie.

JESSE

Sampson. Come in, Sampson.

DEDAN (O.S.)

Right here.

JESSE

You sure you're far enough away?

DEDAN (O.S.)

No reason to take chances, now is there?

CUT TO:

INT: TUNNEL: DAY

Inside the tunnel, there are still two score Indians gathering their things. The Brazilian foreman shouts at them continuously.

He doesn't see two dark-skinned kids who crouch behind a rocky ledge deep in the tunnel. Their rags are light enough to be mistaken for the standard-issue white pajamas, but they're not the same. They look gaunt enough to be starving.

The older one whispers to the younger in a dialect that doesn't sound anything like the one the foreman's using, and together they move further into the darkness of the tunnel. They sift through the loose dirt, hurriedly searching for gold.

CUT TO:

EXT: BUNKER: DAY

The Brazilian foreman joins Jesse, Peter, Leon and Allison at the forward bunker, saying something to Jesse in Portugese and hunkering down behind the sandbags. Jesse turns to Leon to say,

JESSE

All clear inside.

Leon leans towards him to ask quietly,

LEON

You let him do the final inspection?

Jesse frowns.

JESSE

This is the way we've done it every time since you been here, Mr. Sugarman. He says it's clear. You want me to stop the countdown?

LEON

How much time left?

JESSE

90 seconds.

Leon sighs. He looks up at darkening sky and shakes his head.

LEON

Let's do it before the rain comes.

CUT TO:

INT: TUNNEL: DAY

Back inside, the two kids sift through rock dust as rapidly as they can. The younger one looks around and stops. He's a little spooked to find that they're completely alone in the tunnel.

He stands and walks a few paces towards the center of the tunnel, squinting as he looks out into the light. When he sees all the people behind the ropes squinting back in his direction, his eyes go wide. He scurries back towards his brother.

CUT TO:

EXT: BEHIND THE ROPES: DAY

Behind the ropes, an old Indian says something to the man next to him, who shrugs. Ten feet away, another Indian responds to the first. They start chattering and nodding to each other, clearly agreeing that they've seen something in the tunnel.

CUT TO:

EXT: BUNKER: DAY

In the bunker, Jesse closes his folder on the checklist, then looks up when he hears a shout. The two Indians are waving their arms and pointing at the tunnel. Jesse turns to the Brazilian.

JESSE

What are they saying?

FOREMAN

Nothing. They're ignorant peasants.

Jesse glances at Leon who hasn't noticed the Indians yet, then takes his counterpart by the elbow and whispers to him.

JESSE

Tell me what they're saying. Now.
Or I'll bite your goddamn ear off.

The Brazilian turns to him, coloring. From behind Allison says,

ALLISON

They say there's someone still in the tunnel.

FOREMAN

They're fools.

Jesse spins to gaze into the tunnel. He sees nothing. He reaches for the binoculars in Peter's hands without a word, and studies the tunnel through them. Still nothing.

PETER

What's up?

JESSE

Shh.

But keeping it quiet's not going to work. The shouting from behind them has trebled now, as other Indians take up the call. Finally, Jesse hears what he didn't want to hear.

LEON

Jesse?

JESSE

Yes, sir.

LEON

You want to tell me what's going on?

CUT TO:

EXT: BEHIND THE ROPES: DAY

Now there are a dozen Indians shouting, angry at the lack of response. They wave fists in the air, and point at the tunnel.

CUT TO:

INT: TUNNEL: DAY

Inside the tunnel, the two kids hear the shouting outside. They stop their sifting and look at each other. Then start backing further into the darkness of the tunnel.

CUT TO:

EXT: BEHIND THE ROPES: DAY

A score of Indians duck under the ropes and run towards the bunker.

CUT TO:

EXT: BUNKER: DAY

When the Brazilian foreman sees them, he pulls out a .38 and levels it at the chest of the first one. They stop.

CUT TO:

INT: TUNNEL: DAY

At the back of the tunnel, the two kids stop, too. They're terrified, sure that everyone's screaming at them. They start along the back wall, the wall with the explosives in it.

CUT TO:

EXT: DEDAN'S POSITION: DAY

Several dozen Indians run shouting towards DeDan. He's surrounded by the time he looks up, thoroughly alarmed. He hops up off his folding chair.

DEDAN

What the hell?

They continue to press themselves around him, grabbing at his arms, at his clothing, jabbering words he doesn't understand. He backs away, trying to hold them off.

DEDAN

What the hell are you doing?!

Half a dozen hands reach for his walkie talkie as several Indians try to work it, pressing both the Listen and Talk buttons at the same time, producing only a feedback shriek.

DeDan looks towards the bunker well ahead, hands up. They appear to be overrun as well. He looks back at the Indians who won't stop shouting and clutching at him, sweeping him away from his PowerBook and automatic detonator which are now 15 feet away.

CUT TO:

INT: TUNNEL: DAY

The older boy stops, staring at the holes drilled into the wall and the wires protruding from them. He suddenly grabs his little brother by the arm, and runs towards the mouth of the tunnel.

CUT TO:

EXT: BUNKER: DAY

Jesse finally sees them through the binoculars. He grabs his walkie talkie and shouts,

JESSE

Stop the countdown! Stop the...!

His turns and his face falls. DeDan's not anywhere near the detonator. He murmurs.

JESSE

Oh lord. They're gonna die.

Peter climbs the sandbag wall and runs towards the kids he's just now spotted, still deep inside the tunnel. Jesse sees him and takes off himself, catching him and tackling him, bringing him down in a sliding shower of rocks and dirt.

They look up in time to see the panicked faces of the two boys 100 yards away, as the tunnel blows!

A stultifying blast that seems to lift the mountain a foot into the air! A blast that sends a shower of rocks and dirt well past Jesse and Peter, half-burying them! A blast that leaves a cloud of dust so huge and dense that the day is darkened.

In its aftermath, the silence of the mausoleum. Jesse holds his nose and blows, trying to get his eardrums to work again. Peter sees him and does the same thing himself. They stand, gazing through the dust at the spot where they'd last seen the two kids. They can't see 30 feet.

All of a sudden it starts to rain. Peter looks up at the first heavy drops, mouth open, surprised somehow that the world still works the way it used to before the explosion.

CUT TO:

EXT: BUNKER: DAY

Within seconds it's a downpour. Leon's soaked to the skin. DeDan clambers into the bunker with him and says with some excitement,

DEDAN

Look at that, Mr. Sugarman.

He points. The heavy rain's knocking down the dust by the second and not only does the mouth of the tunnel gradually take shape before them, but soon they can see clear through to other side where it isn't yet raining and there's still sunshine. It's an extraordinarily beautiful and peaceful sight. DeDan murmurs,

DEDAN

My god. Just to see a thing like that is a privilege.

Allison holds both hands over her face, her eyes haunted. Leon Sugarman turns, drenched, appalled by DeDan's enthusiasm.

LEON

If I thought you had any idea what you'd done, I'd slap your face.

CUT TO:

EXT: CONSTRUCTION SITE: DAY

Jesse watches from 20 yards away, grim. When he turns, his expression goes yet grimmer.

JESSE

Jury's in.

The Indian laborers- hundreds of them- walk slowly towards the bunker, staring, their white pajamas soaked gray, their faces dark, dripping, dangerous.

CUT TO:

EXT: BUNKER: DAY

Jesse climbs into the bunker again with Peter right behind him, both moving carefully, both watching the Indians all the while. Many of them still hold their pickaxes down by their thighs.

Jesse glances at the Brazilian foreman and his men. They all have their pistols out. A perilous standoff in the rain.

JESSE

Let's not do anything dumb, okay?

The Indians continue to advance, the ones in the back pressing forward even though there's no more room. They back the armed guards right up against the sandbags. Jesse murmurs,

JESSE

Come on, everybody. Stay cool.

But one guard's jammed right up against the bunker, face to face with a dozen Indians. When someone in the back pushes ahead, he grunts and barks at them. He's getting crushed. He tries to raise his arms but can't. He starts to grimace and shout!

Suddenly, he fires his pistol! Everyone starts to move! The Indians drag him into their midst. The Brazilian foreman hops over the bunker, followed closely by Jesse and Peter. But the guard disappears from view before they get to him.

Which leaves them grappling with the Indians, trying to get to the downed guard, trying to clear a space near the bunker, trying to keep anyone else from firing or swinging a pickaxe.

Allison appears, having climbed the bunker as well. None of the Indians touch her. They struggle around her while she speaks, steadily and quietly, in some native dialect. Then suddenly the Indian whose shoulder she and Jesse had relocated is beside her, also speaking quietly to everyone, also separating combatants.

And suddenly it's over. The Indians stand their ground, chests heaving, a wall of them. But well away from Jesse and Peter and Allison and the Brazilian Foreman.

The guard's dead on the ground between them. The space around him defines a DMZ that'll either last or evaporate. The Brazilian foreman stares down at him. Then grimaces and raises his pistol! Jesse rips it out of his hand! The foreman turns to snarl at him, but stops when Leon says harshly,

LEON

Stop it, goddammit! Stop it before
this turns into a bloodbath!

He stands atop the bunker and looks out over the crowd at the seaplane waiting at the edge of the river. He waves a finger in a circle in the air, and its engines sputter into life.

LEON

I want my people out. Now.

He climbs down from the bunker, then turns to say sharply,

LEON

Sampson!

DeDan climbs over the bunker to join the little group.

LEON

Get us to that plane. Right now.

The Brazillian foreman looks around, unsure how to proceed. Allison says a few words to the Indian with the dislocated arm. Together, they lead the group through the silent, hostile crowd.

FADE OUT:

EXT: CESSNA OVER JUNGLE: DAY

The drone of twin engines, as the seaplane flies through blue sky high above the jungle canopy. A title reads:

NEAR THE ABACAXIS RIVER, BRAZIL.

CUT TO:

INT: CESSNA OVER JUNGLE: DAY

In the 6-seater, Peter sits next to the Brazilian pilot. Behind him DeDan and Jesse stare straight ahead. Allison's in back with Leon. They're all still soaked from the rain. Leon has the only towel and he's vigorously rubbing his head. He stops to say,

LEON

You should come with a warning
label. Danger. We're known to the
Surgeon General to cause
disasters.

DeDan looks out the window at the vast unbroken jungle canopy below, stretching for hundreds of miles in every direction.

LEON

Quitting working with us now will
greatly reduce risks to your
health.

DEDAN

Mr. Sugarman, I don't think it's fair you tar us all with the same brush.

Leon pulls the towel off his head.

LEON

What?!

Jesse turns to gaze rather coolly at DeDan.

LEON

You have any idea how seriously you fucked up, Sampson?

DeDan frowns, but says nothing.

LEON

Christ, in reparations and bribes alone, this'll cost the company a million dollars! You think they're gonna like that back in Hartford?

DEDAN

I didn't do anything wrong.

At that, Peter turns to stare at him, as well.

LEON

No. Except for causing two or three minor deaths.

DEDAN

I'm not in charge of clearing the site.

Jesse murmurs, looking suddenly quite cold,

JESSE

You son of a bitch.

DEDAN

I'm just the blaster.

LEON

You abandoned your position.

DEDAN

The Indians attacked me.

PETER

Nobody attacked you.

DEDAN

What the hell would you know about
it? You're a goddamn missionary!

ALLISON

Please. Please. Please!

The men fall silent, glancing back at Allison. Her eyes are
moist. She says quietly,

ALLISON

A little respect for the dead.

Leon sighs. He hands her his towel, then looks back at the rest
of them, shaking his head.

LEON

Save your excuses for the Board of
Inquiry in Manaus.

In the ensuing silence, the pilot asks quietly,

PILOT

Mister Sugarman?

LEON

What do you want?

PILOT

Gasoline. We need gasoline such
much. We take off quickly, we make
no preparations.

Leon nods, as in: That's typical.

LEON

Where can we stop?

PILOT

A village on the river. Onca de
Preta. Eyes of the Jaguar.
Upcoming.

LEON

Okay. Go ahead.

PILOT

Do we have guns?

LEON

What?

PILOT

Do we have guns? Armaments? For
pitching battle? Bang bang?

JESSE

We have a couple pistols.

The pilot turns to glance at Jesse; at his holstered pistol and his angry eyes. The pilot nods.

PILOT

Okay.

He banks the little plane into a steep turn. Down below appears a break in the jungle canopy and a thin little ribbon of river.

CUT TO:

EXT: ABACAXIS RIVER: DAY

The Cessna lands in the middle of the river and taxis towards a wooden jetty with 2 ancient Sinclair pumps on it, the long-extinct Dinosaur logo still visible.

CUT TO:

EXT: JETTY: DAY

The 5 Americans and the pilot get down from the plane. Leon glances down at the pilot's machete.

LEON

Why'd he ask about guns, anyway?

DEDAN

Look around, Mr. Sugarman.

Leon follows DeDan's gaze towards the village. Of the 6 or 7 structures one's an open air bar in which a score of armed men-pistols on their hips and rifles over their shoulders- hold their drinks suspended in mid-air, staring at the newcomers.

PILOT

Wild west. No sheriff. Many people
die. Lagrimas del Sol.

Leon squints at him. The pilot explains,

PILOT

Tears of the sun. Indians' name
for gold. They kill each other for
the gold. Biggest gold rush in
history. Right here and now. Ah!

An Indian walks up the jetty, and the pilot starts chattering at him in some incomprehensible dialect.

CUT TO:

EXT: NEAR THE JETTY: DAY

Minutes later, Leon joins the others on the riverbank. He looks back at the Indian who's pumping gas into the Cessna under the pilot's watchful eye.

LEON

He says it'll be 20 minutes. It's not the most modern fuel delivery system he's ever seen. You want to get something to drink?

DEDAN

No thanks.

Jesse turns to gaze at him from under lowered lids. He answered that question a little fast. DeDan looks back, then away.

JESSE

I'll get it.

PETER

I'll go with you. Something for you, Mr. Sugarman? Doctor?

CUT TO:

INT/EXT: OUTDOOR BAR: DAY

Jesse and Peter step up to the outdoor bar. Jesse says a few words in Portugese. The bartender casts him a sidelong glance and starts opening beers. The two young men look around.

The structure's no more than a thatched roof on poles with a dozen cheap chairs and tables. The people are fascinating though, particularly to Peter. He's open-mouthed, gazing at these South American toughs; all kinds of Indians, descendants of various European invaders, mixtures of the two.

Close up, it's also clear how poor they are. Their guns are in shape, but their clothes and shoes are falling apart. Except for one older Indian alone at a corner table who looks prosperous, albeit rail thin. Peter raises his camera to take a photograph.

JESSE

Don't do it.

Peter lowers it as the bartender sets down beers and says a few words in Portugese. Jesse nods and drops coins on the bar.

JESSE

Dang tootin'.

CUT TO:

EXT: VILLAGE: DAY

They walk back towards the others, carrying the beers.

PETER

What'd he say?

JESSE

He said we had big balls coming here. He's right.

PETER

How come I can't take a picture?

Jesse looks up at the sound of a motorboat, coming fast. Six swarthy men sit in it, all armed, while an Indian kid handles the motor. The boat rides low in the water as it sideslips up to the jetty next to the airplane.

PETER

They're in a hurry.

The swarthy men climb out of the boat, each holding a knapsack. The Indian gas jockey backs away. The motorboat revs again as the Indian kid steers it away as abruptly as it had arrived.

Jesse starts jogging towards the jetty, when suddenly he's passed by 4 of the armed men from the bar, at full run.

The pilot looks up at the swarthy men just as one raises a shotgun and blasts him, opening a hole in his chest the size of the afterlife and knocking him right off the dock into the river!

By now Jesse's running full speed too, raising his pistol to fire at the swarthy men! He knocks one into the river just before he reaches his friends beside the jetty and pushes Allison down onto the riverbank, out of the line of fire.

JESSE

Get down, the rest of you!

DeDan dives out of the way. Leon turns around, looking puzzled, as another shotgun blast rips the air! DeDan reaches up with one hand and grabs his belt, pulling him to the ground as well.

Meanwhile Jesse keeps running, past them and past the jetty, trying to draw their fire away from his friends.

Peter still stands where Jesse'd left him, halfway between the bar and the jetty, staring at the swarthy men. He finally shakes his head clear, and raises his camera to his face.

One of the swarthy men notices this movement, and turns his shotgun towards Peter. Before he can fire, Jesse shoots him. He too goes over into the water, a bullethole in his forehead.

Jesse dives into the reeds on the far side of the jetty, still firing, as the rest of the swarthy men clamber into the Cessna and start it. He picks the last one off just as he steps up onto the struts.

The wounded man tries to haul himself up into the cabin as the plane taxis away from the jetty, but Jesse's now up again and running down the jetty towards them, and he shoots the wounded man again, who falls into the river as the plane takes off!

Jesse empties his automatic and stops, chest heaving, watching the plane gather speed in the middle of the river, watching the last shotgun be pulled back into the dark interior of the plane.

He roars helplessly as the Cessna takes off. Within seconds it's gone. He turns to look back at his open-mouthed companions. In his face, we can see how he feels about Leon, struggling up out of the reeds, pistol still in its holster, unfired.

Jesse looks upriver in the direction the motorboat had taken, and starts pulling off his boots and his shirt. He's about to dive off the dock when Peter grabs the back of his belt.

JESSE

What in hell're you doing?!

PETER

Look!

He nods to the water on the other side of the jetty where the pilot's body fell in. It's boiling like the 3 witches' cauldron, only the frothing bubbles are pink.

The pilot's arm brushes the surface, rolling under the rabid attack of hundreds of piranha. Then his head breaks the surface. There's no flesh left on his face. Jesse shivers.

There are three other roiling spots of turbulence near the jetty. He picks up his shirt and boots and walks quickly away.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT: OUTDOOR BAR: DAY

Jesse swallows a shot of some vile liquid that makes his eyes water. He growls and looks around at the other patrons. This time no one looks back. His lips come back from his teeth.

JESSE

Guys here in the bar set us up.
Radioed the others the second we
got here.

Beside him, Peter looks around and swallows. He doesn't like the sound of that. Allison doesn't look too happy, either.

JESSE

Then they waited till the plane
was gassed up before they came and
took it, the sons of bitches.

Leon stands on the other side of Jesse with DeDan right behind him, looking around at the rest of the patrons as well.

LEON

We have to find somebody who'll
get us out of here.

Jesse's gaze settles on the man Peter'd been staring at before, the lean old man alone at a corner table. The old man gazes evenly back at him. Long enough that Jesse grimaces.

JESSE

I bet that bastard's in with them.

He steps away. Leon stops him with a hand on his arm.

LEON

We're looking for someone to get
us out of here. Not for revenge.

Jesse looks down at the hand, not liking it.

LEON

Ask if one of them will take us
down the river to Manaus. Someone
must have a boat.

Jesse looks up again, at all the hardened faces in the bar, but most especially at the lean old man. He says a few words in Portugese to the room at large.

Once again, the only person in the place who looks back at him is the old man. Jesse looks around and repeats his request. Then looks at the old man again, who seems to smile. Jesse squints. Then walks right to his table and says something in Portugese.

OTACILIO

I prefer English if you don't
mind. For privacy. In this place,
it's like speaking Navajo.

He smiles and gestures to Jesse to sit. Jesse doesn't.

JESSE

You have a boat or don't you?

OTACILIO

You're not a patient man. Patience is important in a leader.

LEON

I'm the leader.

Leon steps up next to Jesse. The old man gazes at him, not sure after watching the gun battle that he agrees. He finally shrugs.

OTACILIO

Won't you sit down, then? My name is Otacilio.

CUT TO:

EXT: VILLAGE: DAY

At a little distance from the open-air bar, the 5 Americans hold a hurried conference.

LEON

Well, he's not going to take us anywhere for promises.

PETER

Which is an interesting way to describe the entire system of credit cards and personal checks.

DEDAN

500 dollars a person is a joke.

LEON

It's supply and demand.

DEDAN

Well, we're the only ones who want to go to Manaus.

ALLISON

But he's the only one with a boat.

DEDAN

It's still a joke.

JESSE

How can you people not have any goddamn cash?...How can you be working in the goddamn jungle and not keep a few dollars on you?

That stops the chatter. That and Jesse's bitter expression. He shakes his head, while pulling a money belt off his waist. He peels 5 moist 100 dollar bills from each other, muttering,

JESSE

You think you're in goddamn
Minneola? You run low you go to
the cash machine?

LEON

Maybe he'll take your cash for all
of us.

Jesse ignores him, looking instead at DeDan.

JESSE

You know what he wants.

ALLISON

If he looked at it once, he looked
at it 15 times.

DEDAN

What're you talking about?

JESSE

The Rolex.

DeDan covers it with his right hand, saying,

DEDAN

You're crazy. This is an '84 with
Arabic numerals. They don't make
these anymore. This watch is worth
4500 dollars in New York City. In
Manaus, I'd get 8 grand for it.

This little speech stops everyone, again. It does sound too
valuable to trade for passage. Jesse watches the guy coolly.

JESSE

You probably know what everything
you're wearing's worth, don't you?

DEDAN

That's right.

JESSE

In all the international markets.

DEDAN

Damn right, motherfucker! Cause
it's worth more than the 10
dollars your shit...

He stops abruptly, as Jesse takes his throat in his right hand. DeDan grabs his wrist with both hands, standing on his toes.

JESSE

Let's understand each other right now. Call me motherfucker again you're dead. Fish food. Got it?

DeDan makes a gurgling sound. Like a brook.

LEON

Jesse? Come on. He gets the idea.

Jesse turns a dark gaze to Leon. Then lets DeDan go, saying,

JESSE

As far as I'm concerned, you put us here. Now you want to put up your watch to get us out, we'll make sure you get one just like it when we get back to the States. Won't we, Mr. Sugarman?

LEON

Absolutely. I'll write a note to the comptroller mys...

JESSE

(interrupting)

I'll keep the cash for the next asshole we have to grease. Now you want to take the deal? Or you want to stay here?

CUT TO:

INT/EXT: OUTDOOR BAR: DAY

The Rolex lands on the table in front of Otacilio, who smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT: ABACAXIS RIVER: DAY

He steers his 20 foot boat along the river, still beaming. His new Rolex is so big for him he wears it up above his elbow. He's the only one that looks happy, though. The Americans lounge under the canvas awning in hostile silence. DeDan mutters,

DEDAN

I'm pissed. I lost my Rolex. No one else lost a goddamn thing.

Allison looks around. No one even glances at him. She frowns.

ALLISON

There's a dead pilot back there
who might disagree with you.

DEDAN

I'm not talking about him.

ALLISON

So I notice.

DEDAN

He knew where he was taking us.

ALLISON

So?

DEDAN

So he drops us in goddamn Beirut
on the Hudson and gets killed,
it's my fault?

PETER

Nobody said it was your fault.

DEDAN

Well, that's a first on this trip.
Something went wrong and nobody
said it was my fault! Hallelujah!

LEON

Sampson, for your sake I hope they
perfect the total personality
transplant soon.

Peter grins at that. Leon sees it, and grins himself.

LEON

In fact, I don't think you should
wait till they perfect it. As soon
as they start to experiment, I
think you should volunteer.

DeDan stares at his boss, helpless, unable to speak. Jesse
watches him, contempt all over his face like some kind of skin
creme. He finally mutters,

JESSE

How'd I not see you were a coward?

There's silence, broken only by some splashing from downriver.
DeDan slowly turns to Jesse; the speed of a gun-turret rotating.

DEDAN

Say what?

JESSE

I said it's part of my job to know
if somebody on my crew's yellow.
Before they get people killed.

He shakes his head.

JESSE

I can't believe I didn't see it
before.

DeDan looks around the craft, at Allison, at Peter, at Leon. And finally back at Jesse.

DEDAN

You must be talking about some
other body. Am I right?

Jesse gazes evenly at him. Nope. DeDan takes off his \$250 sunglasses for the first time and folds them carefully before putting them in his pocket.

He rises to his feet and stands above Jesse, hands at his sides. Otacilio sees this and turns the boat towards the splashing sound, downriver.

DEDAN

You gonna look down at me, you
can't do it from there.

JESSE

Shit, I could look down at you
from under Jimmy Hoffa.

DeDan reaches down and grabs Jesse's collar. Jesse hops to his feet, slapping his hand away. DeDan swings wildly at Jesse's head. Jesse ducks and punches him in the stomach, one, two, three times.

Allison intervenes, grabbing Jesse's arms, inadvertently allowing DeDan to hit him flush in the face. Jesse shakes himself free and scowls at her, but by then Leon and Peter have hold of DeDan, and Otacilio is shouting at the top of his lungs,

OTACILIO

Help! Help me!

He runs to the gunwale of the boat and leans over it. The Americans surround him immediately, and see that he's trying to grab a huge fish with his hands that's thrashing wildly on the surface of the river.

They squint at him. As far as they can tell, he doesn't have a chance of success. And none of the Americans wants to touch the 6 foot long black monster, anyway.

When all of a sudden its struggles cease abruptly. A last feeble slap of its tail and it lies motionless. Otacilio still needs all his strength just to haul the fish aboard.

OTACILIO

Piraiba. Very tough fish. Great fighter. I saw one swallow a man, once.

He opens the jaws of the thing to reveal several rows of razor sharp teeth. The Americans are suitably impressed.

PETER

What killed it?

Otacilio pulls out his peixeira- a curved knife- and slashes the fish open. As the Americans recoil in revulsion, we see inside the huge fish six smaller ones- inches long, with rigid spines- alive and voraciously eating the entrails of the Piraiba.

OTACILIO

Candiru. You swallow them, they eat you from the inside out.

He smiles up at his American passengers.

OTACILIO

Like anger.

They gaze down at Otacilio.

OTACILIO

You're not just passengers. You're the crew. If you fight amongst yourselves, we all die.

He looks from face to face, lingering on DeDan and Jesse.

OTACILIO

A hard rain's coming. I need your help to prepare the boat. Okay?

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

The sky darkens as Leon, DeDan, Jesse and Allison hurriedly fold the canvas canopy. Otacilio shows Peter how to tie off the wheel so it can only move within a tiny radius.

All the while, they look over their shoulders at the dark raincloud racing towards them above the treetops. The wind's already up. They hear the hiss of driven rain against the towering forest canopy.

Suddenly the boat lurches as waves rise and the air becomes a wind tunnel. The Americans scramble to find handholds as the rain advances in a solid sheet. Otacilio stands at the wheel and shouts at the top of his lungs. We can't hear a word.

It hits with a force that throws DeDan and Allison to the deck. Otacilio fights the wheel, taking one wave that lifts them clear of the water, then another that spans them broadside, swamping the deck and nearly tipping them over!

The next wave does tip the craft over on its side, dumping DeDan, Peter and Allison into the river! Jesse and Leon dive in after them while Otacilio hangs onto the rail, pulling life vests out of a locker and tossing them towards the swimmers.

Suddenly the rain passes, and the river becomes only rolling swells in bright sun. The Americans tread water, watching the storm move on downriver and across the forest.

PETER

Wow.

Otacilio furiously lashes a line in place on the capsized boat, ties the other end around his middle and swims hard for shore. The Americans swim towards the same bank he's headed for.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBANK: DAY

Otacilio pulls the line taught around a tree trunk as the others straggle up, still waist deep in the water. He says with a grin,

OTACILIO

Don't pee in the river, okay? The Candiru are attracted to warmth.

The Americans splash out of the water so fast he has to laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT: ABACAXIS: NIGHT

That night, Otacilio steers the boat by the light of the moon. He looks happy. For the first time his passengers aren't at each other's throats. Instead, they lie around the deck looking up at the stars, the only sound the purring of the engines. Leon asks,

LEON

What's your name again?

PETER
Peter Follower.

LEON
Jesus, Peter. You've had a hell of
a first day.

A couple of the others chuckle. Peter smiles ruefully.

PETER
I bring good luck wherever I go.

Allison squints at him, having heard something odd- something
self-effacing or self-hating- in his voice. She turns to Jesse.

ALLISON
Isn't he the one who tried to run
right into the blast to save the
two kids?

JESSE
Yup.

ALLISON
Last I heard, that's nothing to be
ashamed of.

JESSE
Hell, no. In the old days, that'd
make him an honorary Texan. Even
if he is from goddamn Utah.

Peter looks over at Jesse, grinning at the approval.

PETER
You're from Texas?

JESSE
Yup.

PETER
What's it like?

Jesse looks away and frowns. He's not much of a talker, but this
is a subject that means something to him.

JESSE
It's like anywhere else in
America. 100 years ago it meant
something. Something about
independence...Now it don't mean
shit. Now it's all dude ranches
and discount snakeskin boot
outlets.

He looks back at the kid.

JESSE
You know what killed the cowboy?

DeDan suggests, under his breath,

DEDAN
AIDS?

JESSE
Barbed wire. Once the plains were
fenced you didn't need brands or
round ups or any of that.

He shrugs.

JESSE
I've been looking for a place with
no barbed wire most of my life.

There's a momentary silence while people think about that.

ALLISON
You have any family, Jesse?

Jesse shakes his head. Allison looks suddenly sad.

JESSE
You alright?

ALLISON
I just...I suddenly thought of my
parents. Would the company have
people out looking for us yet?

LEON
Definitely. The second our plane
was late landing in Manaus the
signal would have gone out.

ALLISON
Then they'll have let our families
know we're missing, too.

That silences everyone, again.

ALLISON
If we could just get to a radio...

OTACILIO
Two days. Maybe two and a half.
Just long enough that they'll be
thrilled to hear from you.

He smiles. They lapse into a pensive silence again. Till there's a rustling of leaves from the river's edge. Otacilio whispers,

OTACILIO

Peter.

He nods to the searchlight at the bow. Peter moves towards it.

OTACILIO

Aim it first. Then turn it on.

The others are immediately alert, rising from their positions on the deck and standing behind the searchlight.

OTACILIO

Now.

He turns it on and a blinding light pierces the night, freezing a huge hairy pig in its glow. Otacilio chuckles.

OTACILIO

Catitu. If you're on land and you see one, climb a tree tout suite.

Peter turns to grin at him.

PETER

You speak French, too?

OTACILIO

That's about the extent of it.

PETER

What's a culicidae?

OTACILIO

That's Latin.

PETER

I know. For what?

OTACILIO

Mosquito.

Otacilio steers the boat away from the bank again and towards the center of the river when suddenly they hit something in the water! The force of the bump swings the searchlight forwards, revealing a disembodied human head!

Otacilio slams the engine into reverse, causing his passengers to lose their balance, all except for Peter, who regains control of the searchlight and swings it back across the river. There are 10 human heads on poles at intervals across the water!

Otacilio shouts, spins the boat into a turn and takes off back upstream again. Jesse and Peter move up to stand beside him.

JESSE

Hey relax. Come on. Stop the boat.

Otacilio finally does stop the engines, but he doesn't relax. Instead, he stares downriver into the darkness, then at the surface of the water, knowing that if they're not powering away from the heads, they're floating inexorably towards them.

LEON

What was that all about?

OTACILIO

Not to go on.

LEON

What? Say again?

OTACILIO

It's a warning not to go past that line.

JESSE

We have to go past it.

Otacilio glances at him, then at the rest of them.

OTACILIO

I'd heard about trouble downriver- Indians disappearing from their villages, a labor camp run by a Columbian killer. I thought it was a fiction designed to keep the Indians away from the big claims.

LEON

What changed your mind?

Otacilio stops, staring at the Americans. He shakes his head.

OTACILIO

You think it's just a sign meant to scare off primitive souls.

JESSE

Of course it is.

OTACILIO

Well it works.

JESSE

Sure it does.

OTACILIO
Because 10 men died to make the
sign.

Jesse doesn't have a quick answer for that one.

DEDAN
I'd say the man's got a point.

LEON
We have to go on, Otacilio.

OTACILIO
Even at the risk of death?

Again, no one answers for a long second.

DEDAN
Another point. That's 2 so far.

Jesse leans over to whisper in Otacilio's ear.

JESSE
This guy Leon makes over a million
dollars a year. He's one of the
200 highest paid salaried
employees in the United States.
You think they're gonna let
anything happen to him?

He stands back, looking at the old Indian with an open face.

JESSE
Hell, there's 50 people out there
looking for him right now. You
think they're gonna let him wind
up in your labor camp? Come on.

By now he's grinning.

JESSE
C'mon, Oat. We gotta keep moving.
It's our best chance.

Otacilio sighs. He looks at the others. They all want to go on.
Except maybe DeDan, but he knows where DeDan stands in this
group. He finally shakes his head and starts the engines again.

He steers downstream. When they pass between two of the staked
heads, he looks unwaveringly straight ahead, grim as a ghost.

CUT TO:

EXT: ABACAXIS: LATE NIGHT

Late that night, Otacilio's still at the tiller. Everyone's asleep but Leon who walks over to stand beside him, staring into the darkness ahead, riverfog having clouded over the moon.

LEON

How can you see where you're going?

OTACILIO

I can't.

Leon frowns. That's not exactly what he wanted to hear.

OTACILIO

That's why I'm going so slowly. So you're rich, huh?

LEON

Who told you that?

OTACILIO

Your employee.

LEON

They're all my employees.

OTACILIO

Well, you're rich, alright. You have a wife?

LEON

Yes.

OTACILIO

Children?

LEON

A little girl. In Connecticut. Which is in the northeast corner of the...

OTACILIO

I know where it is. I went to Bridgeport State Teachers College.

LEON

You what? Why the hell aren't you teaching somewhere, then?

Otacilio turns to stare at him, not offended precisely. But let's say rising to his full height.

OTACILIO

I am. I teach the river.

LEON

Okay. I'm sorry. Let me see if I can rephrase that. How'd you wind up here after Bridgeport State?

OTACILIO

I graduated and came home. Why do you work on the other side of the world from your family?

Leon looks away into the blackness of the night.

LEON

I don't know. I was a relatively happy bachelor. Then I got this gal pregnant and got...kind of guilted into marrying her. Since then I've taken just about every overseas assignment that's come up in the company. There are substantial bonuses if you're willing to take the shit jobs... It's expensive to raise a child these days. In Connecticut anyway.

He turns to look at Otacilio, a look that almost dares him to read between the lines and challenge this version of the story. Otacilio just looks down the river with a smile.

OTACILIO

It's expensive everywhere.

CUT TO:

EXT: ABACAXIS: DAWN

At dawn Otacilio's still awake, steering the boat along the edge of the river through the thickest kind of fog. He can't even see the front of the little craft. The only reason we know he's travelling along the river's edge is that he's passing under the dense overhanging foliage of the bank.

It's unnaturally quiet and we realize two more things; that there's no motor sound anymore- he's poling the boat along- and that for some reason the jungle birds are silent too.

Otacilio leaves his station at the stern of the boat to kneel above Leon, who awakens with a start. Otacilio whispers,

OTACILIO

Shh!..You still consider yourself the leader?

Leon blinks at him. With the fog and the silence and the guy kneeling over him, he's spooked immediately. But he says,

LEON

Sure. Why?

OTACILIO

Then take out your gun and stand at the bow.

LEON

What?

OTACILIO

Shh!

He scuttles back to the stern and takes up the pole once again. Leon stands and walks over to him, whispering,

LEON

Otacilio. What's happening?

Otacilio waves a finger; Don't speak! Then indicates give me the gun. Leon hands it over. Otacilio racks a shell into the chamber as quietly as he can, clicks the safety off, and hands it back.

OTACILIO

There's a boat in the middle of the river. A big one.

LEON

Good. Maybe they've come for us.

OTACILIO

They've come for us, alright.

He continues to pole, as Jesse walks up, whispering,

JESSE

The Columbian?

Otacilio nods, still peering into the fog. Allison walks up.

ALLISON

You heard them?

JESSE

Are they approaching, or passed?

OTACILIO

I think they heard us too. They're stopped in the middle of the river.

Peter and DeDan walk up. DeDan says, far too loudly,

DEDAN
S'up?

JESSE
Shh.

DEDAN
Fuck you. What's goin' on?

OTACILIO
(hissing)
Shut up!

DeDan stares at him, then at Leon. Is everybody allowed to treat me like shit, now? Allison whispers,

ALLISON
There's a boat stopped in the river. It might be this Columbian he was talking about last night.

Otacilio whispers to Leon, still intensely agitated,

OTACILIO
Get to the bow! Wave if you see anything! The rest of you spread out and keep watch. Jesse, get out your gun!

Jesse shakes his head and murmurs,

JESSE
I emptied the clip at the pier.

Otacilio frowns and recommences poling. Jesse moves off towards Allison in the stern. Leon takes the bow, looking at his pistol as though he'd accidentally caught the bouquet. Peter stands beside him. DeDan stands in the middle of the boat.

They drift in silence, as Otacilio corrects their course with the pole. They slip in under some particularly dense flora and the sound of it scraping along the canvas awning persuades Otacilio to pole a little further out into the waterway.

DeDan watches him, then turns to gaze out at the river. Through a fissure in the fog appears the bow of a huge Swift, a Vietnam-era river patrol boat with a shallow draft and powerful engines designed for pursuit. It towers above DeDan not 15 feet away.

He stands stock still staring at it. He doesn't raise a hand or say a word. He just watches. When it's gone he turns to Otacilio and it's only his expression that galvanizes the Indian.

He starts poling vigorously for the shore, sliding the little craft in under the overhanging trees as far as he can. By now, everyone's aware that something's happened but too scared to risk asking what.

Leon's breathless, holding his pitsol in one hand. With the other he brushes aside the tree limbs and hanging vines they pass beneath. Until one separates itself from the others and wraps itself around his neck and shoulders!

A huge anaconda slithers over him, trapping his arms to his body! He starts to moan. Peter turns and his eyes go wide. He tries to grab the trunk of the massive reptile, but it slithers through his hands.

Jesse and Allison rush up to join the silent struggle. Between the three of them, they're able to get a grip on the monster, but its face is only inches away from Leon's with jaws stretched wide and it's far stronger than they.

Leon's mewling now, terrified, face to face with the beast as it moves inexorably towards him. Jesse turns to hiss at DeDan,

JESSE

Help us!

DeDan doesn't move, standing on the far side of the boat with one hand on the gunwale, watching. He purses his lips: Sh.

A machete swings by in a great looping arc and suddenly the snake's head is gone! Otacilio lowers the machete, then scurries to the back of the boat to take up the pole again, breathless. Jesse and the others struggle to pull the snake's inert body away from Leon.

Leon's alive, but he's lost control of himself. The machete's very slightly cut his own throat, leaving a thin line of blood. Leon touches it with one hand and stares. He's making strange noises, and when his friends finally free him of the reptile's coils, he empties the clip of the automatic into it!

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

For a long second afterwards, the other five members of the expedition stare at him in stupefied silence.

Then drop to the deck as a withering barrage of automatic fire rakes the boat, splintering the gunwales, ripping the canvas off and into the jungle, tearing the wheel off the stanchion and sending it rolling across the deck! The barrage goes on for long seconds, then stops as abruptly as it had begun.

The six travelers uncover their heads and look around. The deck is awash in wood chips and splinters and the boat's listing so

heavily to one side it's taking water. They hear an amplified voice shout in Portuguese. Jesse mutters,

JESSE

Prepare to be boarded. That's a joke. 'Less they feel like a swim.

CUT TO:

EXT: DECK OF THE SWIFT: MORNING

On the deck of the Swift the five men and Allison are shackled to each other with leg-irons that must be 100 years old, then searched quite roughly by four heavily armed Indians.

Through it all, Otacilio looks calmly straight ahead, even when one of them slides his Rolex down his arm and hands it to the handsome young Columbian in charge, Raul, who pockets it. DeDan doesn't stare straight ahead. He knows which pocket it's in.

Leon doesn't see any of it. He hangs his head so low the only things he sees are the tips of his soggy Brooks Brothers shoes.

When another Indian reaches out to take his camera out of his hands, Peter starts to tremble. Beside him, Allison murmurs,

ALLISON

Hang on. We'll be okay.

When he hears the woman speak, Raul walks over to stand in front of her, gazing at her. She goes silent. These eyes are scary. They don't look out at the world. They just suck light from it, making everything around them darker.

Raul looks down and sees the Doctor's bag at her feet. With one booted toe he slides it away from her. When one of his henchmen looks down at the bag and says,

HENCHMAN

She's a doctor. Shouldn't we tell your fath...

Raul slaps him, backhand, across the face. He lapses into silence. Raul turns back to gaze evenly at Allison, then reaches for her crotch. She winces. Jesse asks,

JESSE

So where you takin' us there boss?

Raul turns to gaze at him, now. Jesse doesn't meet his eye, but he keeps talking all the same.

JESSE

Hope there's a U.S. Embassy.

Raul steps over the Indian who's locking them in place to stand directly in front of Jesse. He holds an AK-47 across his chest, and a whip in his left hand. His expression doesn't change, and he doesn't say a word. Which is a little disconcerting.

JESSE

I do believe we're lost.

Raul finally grins at this. He says quietly, in perfect English,

RAUL

You're right, there.

He whacks Jesse in the jaw with the butt of his machine pistol. Jesse goes down in a heap.

FADE OUT:

INT: BARRACKS: EVENING

He wakes up that evening eye to eye with a bright red lizard. He shakes his head and the lizard scuttles away. With an effort he sits up to find himself against the wall of a barracks of rotting wood and ancient metal cots.

His jaw is swollen and caked with blood. He's chained hand and foot to his companions. Otacilio still stares straight ahead. Peter's still crying quietly. Leon hangs his head so low his chin's worn a depression in his heart. DeDan, sitting next to him, is the only one who seems to notice that he's conscious.

Jesse looks around. Two guards stand above him. Through the door- a hole in the wall really- he can see the other shabby structures that make up the quiet camp, and more armed guards. He turns to the darkness of the barracks and his eyes harden.

Allison's on a nearby cot, shirt open, held down by four armed Indians while Raul unbuttons her fatigue pants with the muzzle of his AK-47; a laborious method, but amusing to him. She doesn't struggle. She just stares up at him. DeDan whispers,

DEDAN

Be cool, cowboy. Survive.

Jesse looks dully at his companions. They're downcast, defeated. Especially Leon. Jesse's lips come back from his teeth. He lurches to his feet. One of the guards hears him and turns, saying something in Portugese. Raul turns away from Allison.

He stands before Jesse, grinning at this guy who can't stand up straight without swaying and yet wishes to intervene. He hands his whip and his AK-47 to a guard and looks back at Jesse.

He punches Jesse in the mouth! Not as hard as he can, but almost experimentally, as though to see if a punch only this hard could put the man down again.

Jesse almost goes over backwards. But he straightens, eyes wide, tasting blood. He stares at Raul. Raul stares right back at him. Jesse finally grimaces and spits in his face!

Raul punches him in the mouth again! Jesse almost goes down one more time but manages to shake his head clear. He looks evenly at Raul once more. He spits in the man's face again!

Raul punches him as hard as he can! This time it takes Jesse a lot longer to recover. When he gazes at Raul now, it's with eyes that are cloudy. When he spits at Raul this time, it's 90% blood.

Raul punches him again. Jesse sags to the floor and blacks out.

Raul turns to look at his other prisoners. DeDan, linked by chain to Jesse, leans in to try to sit him up straight but Raul kicks his hand away. DeDan sits back and looks up at him, getting the message. Raul glares at them all, and walks away.

As soon as he does so, DeDan straightens Jesse up anyway. He leans the inert cowboy against the wall and wipes blood off his chin. Then leans back against the wall himself.

In time to see Raul lean down over Allison, unbuttoning his pants. He drags hers down over her hips and climbs on the cot. He's just about to get into her when he gets smacked in the side of the head with an open palm the size of a porterhouse steak!

He rolls into a sitting position on the floor and looks up. There's a big Colombian in a white linen suit standing above him, wicked pissed. He drops the doctor's bag from the Swift on the rusty metal cot and shouts,

SANTOS

Do you wish to kill your brother?
Is that it?

Raul doesn't say a word. He just rubs his face where he was hit and gazes up at the henchman he'd slapped on the Swift, who looks off into space as though he'd seen none of this.

SANTOS

I asked you a question, goddammit!
Did you know she was a doctor?

Raul finally shakes his head. Santos scowls at him.

SANTOS

Pull up your pants and spare us
the sight of your miserable tool.

He turns to look around at the other prisoners, including Jesse, inert and bloody against the wall.

SANTOS

My God. This is a disaster.

He looks down at DeDan.

SANTOS

Tell your friend I apologize for my miscreant son. I don't know how to make it up to him.

He turns back to the guards. They've let go of Allison. She's pulled up her own pants and is sitting up straight.

SANTOS

I'm terrilby sorry, Doctor. But please come with me. I need your help. It's a matter of life and death.

She looks up at him, a little puzzled by this turn of events, then at the guards. She stands. They escort her out the door. Santos picks up her bag and follows them. Raul stands as well. He looks darkly at his other prisoners. No one meets his gaze.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: EVENING:

Santos and Allison walk along a cleared path through the jungle. Four guards carry torches to light their way.

SANTOS

Again, I apologize for this monster I call my son. I can't control him anymore. I'm sorry.

He shakes his head. Allison glances back, right into the eyes of Raul, who's only a few steps behind them. She looks away.

SANTOS

I have one monster and one saint.

They round a turn in the path and Allison's eyes widen. At the edge of a clearing under the towering jungle canopy sits a beautiful old Spanish mission, white against the forest green, every window lit. Santos smiles for the first time.

SANTOS

I'm Santos Ferleger. This is my plantation. 350,000 acres. I used

to have an even larger one in
Columbia.

CUT TO:

INT: BARRACKS: NIGHT

Two guards now stand outside the door. Without a word, DeDan gets up and starts half-dragging and half-carrying Jesse towards the far wall of the dark barracks. Otacilio and Peter help him.

As they're all still chained together, Leon has to move as well, but he doesn't help. He just shuffles along, watching them get Jesse up onto a corner cot, knowing as the rest do that this is a ritual anointment of the new leader, knowing that his own non-performance under pressure has rendered him irrelevant.

He picks a cot in the far corner, lies down on the rusty springs, gets into the fetal position, and closes his eyes.

CUT TO:

INT: MISSION: NIGHT

Santos opens an interior door in the mission and ushers Allison into a bedroom. On an antique four-poster lies a pale 10 year old, sweating profusely, rolling his head from side to side.

Next to the bed stands an 8 year old Indian kid, a moist rag in his hand. Allison walks over and smiles at him. He smiles back and offers the rag. She takes the 10 year old's head in her hands to stop it rocking and wipes his forehead. She murmurs,

ALLISON

He has a fever. May I have my bag?

Santos nods and one of the guards brings the bag. Allison pulls out an electric thermometer and inserts it in the boy's ear.

ALLISON

104. What are his other symptoms?

Santos steps up to the bed and pulls down the covers. Allison inhales audibly. The boy's right leg is a network of dark green veins and just above his knee is a blackened pustule the size of a softball. Allison dons a plastic glove and touches it gently. His only response is to roll his head back and forth some more.

ALLISON

Hold him.

Santos translates, and two guards come to the bedside to hold the boy still. Allison takes out an instrument and makes a quick incision in the pustule and all hell breaks loose as a thousand baby spiders come racing out of it onto the sheets!

Santos and the guards and the Indian kid all leap into action, slapping them off the bed, stepping on them, killing spiders by the hundreds. Until suddenly the room is calm again. His huge chest heaving, Santos looks up at Raul in the doorway. Raul is the only one who never moved. Santos hisses,

SANTOS

Get out!

Raul walks away. Santos glances at Allison, who stares at him.

SANTOS

What is it?

ALLISON

Why haven't you had a doctor here before this?

Santos turns back to gaze at his younger son.

SANTOS

Circumstances prevented it...You have to save him. You have to.

ALLISON

Or you'll kill me?

He turns to her, grimacing.

SANTOS

What an absurd thing to say.

ALLISON

We heard about you on the river, about the Columbian killer.

SANTOS

That's my son, for God's sake!
That's Raul! Didn't you understand what I was saying before? He's insane! We had to flee our homeland on his account!

She watches the man, thinking about that. He murmurs,

SANTOS

I should have let them take him.
Instead, I come to the jungle to hide him and the Lord reaches out to take the good one.

Allison turns back to the 10 year old, still rolling his head from side to side. She makes a decision and reaches for her bag.

ALLISON
I'll have to take off the leg.

Santos stiffens.

ALLISON
I can't do it while he's this weak though. I'm going to start him on antibiotics. We'll wait and see how he responds.

SANTOS
How long?

ALLISON
A few days. I'm not sure. Right now, all I can do is clean up the wound. Then I want to go back to my friends. Alright?

She looks at him. He nods.

CUT TO:

EXT: BARRACKS: LATE NIGHT

Late that night, she's escorted back through the silent camp.

CUT TO:

INT: BARRACKS: LATE NIGHT

Inside the barracks, she moves slowly in the darkness until her eyes adjust. She finds the nearest empty cot to the others and lies down. As soon as the guards leave, she hears a whispered,

PETER
What happened?

OTACILIO
Where did he take you?

JESSE
Are you alright?

ALLISON
Yes. I'm okay.

She gets up off her cot and moves from one to the other, peering at each one, as she says,

ALLISON
His younger son got bit by a bug. He'll die if his leg doesn't come off. The older one Raul's the

killer we heard about. His father brought him here to hide him from the Columbian authorities.

She pauses above Leon's cot. Leon still faces the wall.

ALLISON

What's the matter with Mr. Sugarman?

OTACILIO

He regrets his lapse in judgement.

She frowns, then finally stops above Jesse in the corner. He rolls up onto one elbow, his face passing through a shaft of moonlight. We hear her sharp intake of breath. His face is a Halloween mask; raw and puffed up to twice its normal size.

ALLISON

Lie down.

He frowns but does so. She opens her bag and breaks out some alcohol, bathing his skin as gently as she can.

ALLISON

You look like borscht with lips.

He watches her attend to him through eyes swollen almost closed.

JESSE

Allison Holmes. What do you know about borscht?

She smiles tenderly and shakes her head, meaning; Nothing.

ALLISON

Thanks for...distracting him.

JESSE

You're 100 % WASP, aren't you?

Allison sighs. She whispers,

ALLISON

Just say You're welcome, okay?

JESSE

What?

ALLISON

I'm trying to say thank you. Say you're welcome.

Jesse looks up at her, serious now. He clearly doesn't take direction too well. He murmurs,

JESSE
I'd do it again. And more.

CUT TO:

EXT: BARRACKS: DAWN

At dawn, everything's still. Even the jungle's quiet.

CUT TO:

INT: BARRACKS: DAWN

Until Santos walks in with two guards who grab Allison off her cot and stand her up. She's startled. He says,

SANTOS
Time to check on your patient.

By the time the others start to stir, they're gone. DeDan sits up just as Raul sticks his head in the door.

RAUL
Rise up, my brothers, and earn the
right to live another day.

He waves in the guards, who start rousting the travelers out of their torpor.

CUT TO:

EXT: MINING COMPOUND: MORNING

Minutes later, the 5 men walk single file down a wide jungle trail, no longer chained together. 4 armed Indians escort them. Raul brings up the rear.

Jesse's lucky there aren't any mirrors around. His face is the size of a basketball. Black and blue don't begin to cover the range of colors represented.

Leon still watches his shoes as he shuffles along. As they round a turn in the trail and come upon a large cleared area beneath the lush green forest canopy, DeDan stops.

DEDAN
Jesus Lord of the white man.

The rest of the procession stops to stare, as well, at a conical mine crater the size of the Greek Theatre. Several hundred ragged Indians walk the jagged tiers, hauling ore to milling conveyors, sluice troughs, and rock crushers.

They cut rock from the crater wall and mine more than a hundred feet into the earth. Worn equipment, jerry-rigged from old truck engines, churns ceaselessly. In treehouse guard platforms up above, armed men maintain a constant vigil.

It's a more primitive and much more dangerous version of the mine they'd been working at in the opening scene. And it's hard to say who's more amazed to see whom; the Americans these ragged stoop-shouldered serfs, or the Indians these well-dressed Americans under guard.

A whip cracks next to DeDan's ear! He turns to see Raul jerking his head: Move. He starts walking, again.

CUT TO:

EXT: MINE: DAY

The 5 of them are grouped in one area of the mine, a little apart from the others, breaking rock with pickaxes and pushing wheelbarrows to the sluice. Directly above them stands Raul, automatic pistol across his chest, whip in hand.

When one of the Indian mine-workers winds up near him, Otacilio looks up and smiles. The Indian smiles back. Otacilio says a few words in some strange dialect, and the man shrugs. He starts to answer when out of the blue the whip cracks! He looks up.

Raul barks out a sentence and the Indian drops to his knees, begging. Raul shouts at two guards, who scramble down the slope and drag the Indian back up, pleading all the way. After that, every Indian anywhere near our group moves away. Peter whispers,

PETER

What was that about?

OTACILIO

His punishment is that he has to work on the barge.

PETER

Why's he so afraid of that?

Otacilio doesn't answer that one. Jesse finally does.

JESSE

He says no one who works on the barge comes back.

He glances up at Raul again just as Allison appears, escorted by two guards and Santos, who's furious. He starts shouting at Raul in Portuguese, who shouts back, and abruptly gets slapped in the face by his father again.

Santos glares down at the Americans below, then bellows at Raul again. Raul spits, and turns to wave at the Americans to come up the slope. They start moving. Santos bellows again,

SANTOS

Stay there!

They stop abruptly. Santos takes Raul by the ear and starts hissing at him, quietly enough that the five men down below can no longer hear him. Peter asks again,

PETER

What's going on now?

DEDAN

Santos doesn't like it that his son showed us the mine. Now we know where it is, he can't afford to let us go.

Jesse turns to him, surprised.

JESSE

How'd you know that? You don't speak Portugese.

DEDAN

I'm right though, aren't I?

Jesse doesn't say.

DEDAN

I knew it.

JESSE

How?

DEDAN

You grow up in a shithole like I did, you develop a real good sense of when people are thinking about killing you.

PETER

Is it true? Is he right that they won't let us go?

OTACILIO

Shh.

They look up as Allison scrambles down the steep slope, carrying a shovel, sliding to a stop. Jesse helps her to her feet and she starts shovelling ore into a wheelbarrow like the rest of them.

JESSE

How'd it go?

ALLISON

He's looking a little better. I could probably operate day after tomorrow, although I haven't told Santos yet. I said I'd only do it if he promises to get us to Manaus.

JESSE

What'd he say to that?

ALLISON

He said of course.

Jesse gazes at Dedan, who turns to glance at Otacilio, then Peter. Then goes back to swinging his pick. Peter murmurs,

PETER

Thank God.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE CLEARING: EVENING

In a clearing near the river, the Indian workers are sprawled everywhere, mopping up a thin stew with pieces of bread, eating in silence. At the edge of the clearing, our group waits separately under guard. Allison murmurs,

ALLISON

My god, just the idea of getting back to civilization gives me the chills.

No one else in the groups says a word to that. Which suddenly strikes her as odd. She looks from one to the other. No one meets her gaze.

Dedan finally senses it and turns to smile at her. Before he can say a word though, he hears the crack of the whip again and grabs his ear! He glares at Raul.

The last of the Indians has been served and it's time for them to walk up to the cauldron and present their own tin bowls. DeDan checks his hand- no blood- and starts walking.

The old Indian who serves them doesn't so much as glance up, but the 8 year old kid who'd been at the sick boy's bedside and is pouring water from a gourd, takes one look at DeDan and immediately hides a grin with one hand. DeDan scowls.

DEDAN
S'matter, boy? You never seen a
nigger before?

OTACILIO
He's never seen sunglasses.

DeDan touches his shades. He'd forgotten they were there.

CUT TO:

INT: BARRACKS: NIGHT

Later on, Leon's asleep facing the wall. The rest of them lie
awake, staring at the ceiling. Allison says quietly,

ALLISON
Alright, who's gonna tell me
what's going on?

No one answers. She leans up on one elbow.

ALLISON
Come on. You've been walking on
eggshells around me all day.
Jesse?

Jesse turns to gaze at her in the darkness. Then he decides.

JESSE
Santos can't afford to have a
bunch of Americans running around
Manaus talking about slave-labor
and where his gold-mine's at.

ALLISON
Meaning what?

DEDAN
Meaning we live till you save the
kid. Then we die.

She turns to gaze at DeDan in the terrible silence that follows.

JESSE
I'm afraid he's right.

OTACILIO
He is.

DEDAN
If I were you I'd be thinking up
ways to postpone the operation.

ALLISON
For how long?

This time, everyone turns to gaze at DeDan. Everyone but Leon.

DEDAN
Well...How long you want to live?

In walks the 8 year old Indian kid with his water gourd. Everyone stares. He walks to the back and offers DeDan a drink. DeDan looks at him, puzzled, then sits up and takes the gourd. Suddenly everyone whispers at once.

JESSE
Ask him what he's doing here.

PETER
And why he can move around when no one else can.

OTACILIO
And why he doesn't run away.

JESSE
Ask if he knows which way to run.

ALLISON
He can't talk.

They all go silent. Their eyes fade dramatically.

DEDAN
What?

ALLISON
He's deaf and dumb. That's why he's given the run of the place.

DeDan lowers the gourd. When the kid sees how gravely he's disappointed them, his easy smile fades, too. DeDan watches it happen, and sighs.

DEDAN
Oh, shit. I was thirsty anyway.

He drinks. The kid grins, again.

CUT TO:

INT: BARRACKS: DAWN

At dawn, Santos walks in with the two guards again. This time Allison's wide awake. He says,

SANTOS

Time to...

ALLISON

I'm ready.

She stands. Santos looks around. The others look back. Except for Leon, who remains huddled in the corner staring at the wall. Santos walks over and rolls him onto his back. He sees the dirty bandage on his neck where the machete had cut him.

SANTOS

Shouldn't you change this bandage?

ALLISON

There's no infection. It'll keep.

SANTOS

Change it. I insist.

Allison watches him. Then sits on the edge of Leon's cot and starts to do as she's told. Santos smiles.

SANTOS

I have to keep you all healthy. I don't want you saying terrible things about me when you get back to America.

Allison turns to gaze at Jesse, eyelids at half mast.

CUT TO:

INT: MISSION: MORNING

Allison stands at the 10 year old's bedside. The boy's still pale, but much better. The 8 year old Indian's there again, too. They both beam up at Allison. She can't help but smile back.

She lifts the covers. The pustule's down, but the leg's streaked with even darker green than before. When she puts a hand on the boy's forehead again, her smile is gone.

CUT TO:

EXT: MINE: DAY

By the time she gets to the mine, it's raining heavily enough to keep the entire work area a slippery bog. She half-walks and half-slides down the slope to where the rest of them're working. This time no one asks her a thing. They just wait till she says,

ALLISON

I operate tomorrow. I have to.

DeDan slams his pickaxe down onto a rock that explodes into a thousand pieces. Allison turns to him.

ALLISON

I can't let the boy die. I'm a doctor. And it's not his fault we're here, anyway.

JESSE

Shh.

He looks up from under lowered lids at Raul, who gazes steadily down at the Americans from the rim of the crater.

JESSE

We'll talk about it later.

CUT TO:

INT: BARRACKS: NIGHT

Late that night in the barracks, Allison's awake, staring at the rotting wood of the ceiling, eyes tired.

ALLISON

I know you think I'm signing our death warrants. I know that.

Jesse sits hunched on the edge of her cot. He shakes his head.

JESSE

Don't think like that. It's nobody's fault...Well, maybe DeDan's.

He smiles down at her. Then turns when he hears,

PETER

It's my fault.

JESSE

Peter? That's crazy. What are you talking about?

PETER

The wages of sin.

That stops him. He doesn't think about sin much anymore.

JESSE

I understand they've gone up a lot in the last 20 years.

Allison holds up a hand in the darkness. Jesse stops talking.

ALLISON

Did somebody say you were a missionary?

PETER

Yeah. I was at BYU. I came to Brazil on my 2 year mission. Which is...sort of mandatory.

ALLISON

And that's all done?

PETER

No, I...dropped out.

ALLISON

Didn't like preaching, huh?

PETER

I loved it.

Allison nods, suddenly feeling that she's prying.

ALLISON

You don't have to...

PETER

I got caught having an affair with another of the missionaries.

She's silent for a moment. Jesse can't help but grin again.

JESSE

It was my understanding that the Mormons were fairly liberal about such things. With bigamy and all.

PETER

She was the wife of our mission President. He's much older. He called my father, who's...He's a Bishop and not a tolerant man.

Jesse nods. His grin slowly fades. Peter looks over at him, looking for something in his face. Forgiveness. Or grace.

PETER

I couldn't stay with the mission and I can't go home, so...When I heard about the mine, I headed for the jungle.

Jesse and Allison watch him for a while, thinking about that.

ALLISON
You really can't go home?

Peter shakes his head.

PETER
I'm the cause of all this trouble.
I know it. It started the day I
got here.

JESSE
Peter, if I hadn't picked you out
of the crowd you'd be back there
relaxin' right now.

OTACILIO
And if I'd turned the boat around
when I knew I should we'd be fine.

Otacilio rolls over on his cot.

JESSE
I persuaded you not to.

DEDAN
I was all for going back.

That, from the darkness of the corner. Allison frowns.

ALLISON
DeDan, I'm not sure you've grasped
the spirit of the moment, here.

DEDAN
Hell, I haven't been wrong yet.

LEON
Jesus Christ!

That gets everyone's attention. Leon sits up on his cot and
glares at the rest of them.

LEON
I'm the reason we got caught and
everybody knows it. Okay? Let's
just say it and move on. Okay?!

No one says a word. Leon stares from one face to another.

LEON
Does it have to be tomorrow,
Allison?

ALLISON
What?

LEON

Does tomorrow have to be the day?

ALLISON

Yes. Or I risk killing him.

LEON

Then that's that. Tomorrow's the day. Tell him you'll do it but you need the rest of us to assist you. Then we'll work out a deal with him face to face. Okay?

Allison looks at Jesse, who gazes at DeDan. The two men shrug.

CUT TO:

INT: BARRACKS: DAWN

The next morning, Allison's up and dressed by the time Santos arrives. He doesn't say a word. She just walks out with him.

CUT TO:

EXT: GOLD MINE: DAY

At the mine that morning, the rest of them smash and shovel as always, but more watchfully today, more aware of arrivals and departures at the top of the hill.

When two guards stop and talk to Raul, glancing at them several times, they watch the conversation surreptitiously until the guards start down the slope. By the time they reach our group and beckon, Come with us, they've already set down their tools.

CUT TO:

INT: MISSION KITCHEN: DAY

In a kitchen any small hotel would be proud of the five men scrub up under the watchful eyes of the guards and Allison.

CUT TO:

INT: DINING ROOM: DAY

They're escorted into the elegant dining room of the mission, now set up as an operating theatre, with sheets on the dining table, extra lighting and a rolling bar as an instrument tray.

But the thing that stops them, the thing that their eyes stick to whether they like it or not, is the saw; a little black hand saw from Sears that should be out cutting saplings. Not in here.

CUT TO:

INT: DINING ROOM: DAY

An hour later, the quiet tension in the room is overwhelming. The boy's unconscious on the table, surrounded by the Americans and Otacilio. Outside that tight ring stand four armed guards. In the doorway, arms folded across his chest, is Santos.

ALLISON

Hand me that knife, would you?

Otacilio hands her a fine German steak knife. She draws it across the little boy's thigh just below the tourniquet and a thin line of bright blood appears behind it. The boy sighs.

DeDan doesn't even watch. He's gazing at Leon. So intently that Leon finally mutters,

LEON

Afterwards.

DeDan shakes his head, deeply disappointed. Allison murmurs,

ALLISON

Saw.

Otacilio lifts it off the makeshift instrument table.

ALLISON

Alright. Hold him, now.

CUT TO:

INT: LIVING ROOM: EVENING

Afterwards, in the living room, Allison pours herself a shot of bourbon and downs it. She looks up at the others. They're all holding wine glasses and watching Leon, who exhales and says,

LEON

Mr. Ferleger, it's time to talk
about how we're getting to Manaus.

Santos doesn't turn. He just gazes thoughtfully out the window.

SANTOS

Of course.

Leon waits but Santos says nothing further.

LEON

Well, how are we getting...?

SANTOS

When there's enough ore to warrant a trip, you can go along on my boat. As my guests.

LEON

Thank you.

SANTOS

Thank you. At least I have one son who won't humiliate me. Even if he will be a cripple.

Leon looks from Santos to Raul, who stands well away from his father, gaze fixed on the Americans. He turns back to Santos.

LEON

When will that be?

SANTOS

Within a week, certainly.

He turns to murmur a few quiet words to Raul, then says aloud,

SANTOS

Until then you work on the barge.

Everyone freezes. Jesse's eyes harden. Santos sips his red wine.

SANTOS

Forgive me, but we have to keep you busy while you're here or the others will be confused.

LEON

We heard the barge was dangerous.

SANTOS

Not at all. It's light work.

LEON

Mr. Ferleger, I get the distinct impression you don't know who you're dealing with.

Santos turns to him, vaguely interested. So does Jesse.

LEON

I'm Leon Sugarman. Of The Hartford Associates. I was a student of LeCorbusier. I'm one of the top 3 designer-builders in this hemisphere. If you think you can intimidate me with your pistoleros you're thoroughly mistaken.

Santos expression goes from vaguely interested to vaguely amused.

SANTOS

I'm sorry. Was I behaving in an intimidating fashion?

LEON

Never mind that for the moment. The fact is we heard that no one who goes to work on the barge comes back.

SANTOS

What an absurd thing to say!

LEON

That's what we heard. Now, if you don't intend to keep your end of the bargain, you might try to summon the courage to tell us now.

Santos smiles. Then his smile fades. Jesse's eyes go dull as he and the others watch Santos decide how much to be offended. They all breathe a sigh of relief when he turns back to the window.

SANTOS

I've just told you what the arrangements will be. Have some more wine.

Leon glances at the bottle on the table next to him. Then he throws it into the fireplace! In an instant, Raul's before him.

LEON

What do you want, you deficient?

Raul thumbs the safety and raises his 47 to Leon's nose. Jesse takes one step towards Leon and Raul trains the weapon on him.

JESSE

Ease up, Mr. Sugarman.

RAUL

Shut up, cowboy.

LEON

Mr. Ferleger, I won't be ignored. I insist that we be taken to Manaus right now. We held up our end of the bargain.

DEDAN

He's right, Mr. Sugarman. Ease up.

RAUL
I told you shut up!

Raul swings the 47 towards DeDan. His father roars,

SANTOS
Stop waving that thing around,
dolt!

Raul colors and lowers his weapon.

SANTOS
And if you must kill a man kill
the right one.

He pulls a .44 Magnum from under his white jacket and shoots Leon in the the forehead! Leon falls over the arm of the sofa into Peter's startled arms.

SANTOS
I daresay they'll accept the
arrangements now.

Santos puts his pistol away and turns back to the window. The others stare down at Leon's body in stunned silence. Peter's covered with blood and brain matter. He starts to murmur a prayer.

FADE OUT:

EXT: RIVER: MORNING

With a heavy splash, Jesse crashes into the water and sinks slowly into crystal blue twilight, wearing a battered WWII diving helmet. From above, an Indian joins him, floating down the 20 feet to the river floor. They're each chained at the ankle to the edge of the platform above.

Jesse lands badly and starts to tumble, but rights himself. He looks around slowly at the alien environment. Huge catfish roam the bottom as weedy vegetation sways with the current.

A black shape drifts by overhead. Jesse jerks his head upwards and sees a manatee, a gigantic, fleshy walrus-like creature, which notices him and dives at him like some flying elephant!

It swoops by and disappears but Jesse's startled enough that he backs away and sits abruptly on a large vacuum pump. The Indian beside him grins through his face-plate and indicates that he shouldn't sit on the thing. He should pick it up.

Jesse grabs its steel handles, and the Indian directs him to the mining cut in the river bottom. He begins to dredge, while the

Indian picks up a waterhammer and breaks ore from the cut's leading edge, causing gravel and sand to billow into suspension.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Up above, the others sit around on the 20 by 30 foot dredging platform in silence amongst the air compressors and water pumps and motors for the sluice, watching the two guards Raul and his men had replaced pull themselves back to shore on the wide flat-bottomed boat attached to the riverbank securing rope.

When they haul it onto shore and disappear down the path, Raul turns from the edge of the platform to survey his charges; Otacilio and DeDan, Peter and Allison, and three other emaciated Indian workers. He doesn't look happy to be here.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

Underwater again, we hear gravel being sucked up as Jesse works the mining cut. A few feet ahead of him, the Indian hammers away at the leading edge of the cut, hunched over, concentrating.

Jesse on the other hand spends most of his time looking around. The second he sets the vacuum pump where the Indian wants it, he goes back to watching the tiny darting neon-bright fish that make up the largest segment of the river's population.

They're beautiful. Jesse turns to his left and grins. A school of tiny fish that seem to glow blue has stopped to inspect him. In a flash, they're gone, and Jesse whirls, in time to see two shapes moving rapidly towards him through the murk. He squints, and sees that they're eels, two eels undulating like huge black ribbons on edge. One darts right for him and he ducks!

It passes and he whips around to see it grab its real prey; a fat green bottom fish that it grasps in its powerful jaws and stuns with a massive electric shock, then carries away as it disappears down a dark hole in the river bed.

Jesse mouths the word Whoa, and shakes his head. He turns just as the other eel attacks his companion, whipping its deadly tail in a frenzy that just misses Jesse!

The Indian sees the eel and drops his hammer. He starts flailing away at the creature! The eel stays after him, circling him, as he tries desperately to backpedal away from the thing.

Jesse picks up the hammer and goes after them, swinging it in a long slow arc at the monster, which seems to know exactly when it's coming. It moves deftly out of the way of the blow, and turns on Jesse.

He starts backpedalling too, trying to lure it away, but it's interested only for a moment. It returns to the pursuit of the Indian and- tiring of the dance- strikes him full in the chest!

Jesse watches with a grimace as the Indian convulses with the jolt of electricity flowing through him. The eel strikes him again! He straightens abruptly- we can see his face through the glass, eyes wide, mouth open in a silent scream- then starts a long slow fall to the river floor.

The eel takes off, disappearing down the same hole as the other one. Jesse moves over to the fallen Indian, lying next to the barge's much-barnacled anchor chain. He picks the Indian up, and starts kicking for the surface.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

He breaks through into daylight and pulls off his helmet.

JESSE

Eel got him!

The others rush to the edge of the platform to pull the Indian on deck. They huddle over him. Allison checks his pulse.

ALLISON

He's alive. Barely.

She starts giving him mouth to mouth resuscitation. She says,

ALLISON

We have to get him to a hospital.

Raul pulls her away by the hair and looks down at the Indian; his pallor, his fluttering eyelids, his shallow breathing. He tears open the man's shirt and sees the two ugly bite marks.

OTACILIO

Time is of the essence.

PETER

Is there a radio?

JESSE

Don't you understand what she said? He has to get to a hospital!

Bang! Raul shoots the Indian once in the forehead- just as his father had shot Leon- making everyone else start in terror and fall away from the dead man. He says quietly,

RAUL

Rest is all he needs. Rest and a lot of fluids.

He nods to his men, who come quickly up to remove the Indian's ankle chain and kick his body into the water on the down river side. It drifts with the current. Raul looks at the Americans, still stunned, staring, then back at the body.

He cocks his AK-47 and opens fire, riddling the corpse. The other guards do the same, whooping as they blast it to pieces. They stop when the piranha come; the perverse energy of the deadly fish impressing even these thumbheads.

When the body stops rolling in the water under this second assault, they finally turn away. Raul says a few words to one of them, who nods and rounds up the 3 remaining Indian workers who'd been on the platform before our group arrived. They haul in the flat-bottomed boat and take off for shore.

When they're gone it's just our group, Raul, and two guards. Raul smiles. He likes it like this. He picks up the dead man's helmet and hands it to DeDan, who's aghast. Allison murmurs,

ALLISON

The piranha only attack if you're bleeding.

DEDAN

Yeah? What about the eels?

He dons the helmet. Raul takes the other one from Jesse and hands it to Peter.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

Splash! DeDan arrives in the dark blue world. Splash! Peter joins him, floating down through the mysterious haze.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

Minutes later, working the vacuum pump, DeDan stares at Peter's back as he works the cut with the water hammer, refusing to look around. If something's coming for him, he doesn't want to know.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERSIDE CLEARING: SUNSET

That evening, a guard ties Jesse's ankle shackles to a tree. The others are spread out as far as their 30 foot long shackles will

allow; Peter off by himself, DeDan and Otacilio already in hammocks hung between trees a few yards from the river.

Jesse drags his chain towards the spot where Allison's seated near the water's edge. He hunkers down next to her, but looks off towards Peter, who's trying to wash the huge stain of Leon's blood out of his shirt. Jesse murmurs,

JESSE
He's suffering, isn't he?

Allison nods.

JESSE
I don't think he's too much used to the brutal side of things.

ALLISON
Are you?

JESSE
I've seen my share.

ALLISON
Is that why you ran away to the jungle?

Jesse turns to look at her but he doesn't answer. She smiles.

ALLISON
Or are you sticking to your story about looking for the last open range?

Jesse still doesn't answer. Allison finally shrugs.

ALLISON
I'm sorry. Far be it for me to suggest that a cowboy might be complicated.

She sighs and looks off down the river.

ALLISON
I just...My father's...a pretty famous writer. Out of his mind, though. And a drunk. So's my mom. With two little brothers, I feel like I've been picking through the wreckage left by the passing hurricane ever since I was 5. I think that's why I ended up doing medicine in the 3rd world. Show me a disaster, I feel right at home.

JESSE
I've never felt at home in my
life.

She looks back at the water. That affects her.

JESSE
And if I started to I'd move on.

ALLISON
Why's that?

JESSE
I don't know. When all home is
is...wherever your mom takes men
to it's...She never stayed with
any of them more than a few days.

ALLISON
She stayed with you, though.
Didn't she?

Jesse turns to gaze at her again. She murmurs,

ALLISON
This may not be the perfect moment
but...if we ever get out of here
and...if you ever started to feel
at home with me, would you have to
move on then?

He watches her a long second.

JESSE
If I felt I had to, would you come
with me?

She blinks.

ALLISON
This's getting to be kind of a
complicated question, isn't it?

He nods. She asks,

ALLISON
If I just say yes, am I gonna get
all fucked up here? Or am I gonna
be okay?

JESSE
You're gonna be okay.

ALLISON
Then yes.

JESSE
Good. I'll be back

He starts up the bank.

ALLISON
Jesse?

JESSE
Yeah?

ALLISON
Ask him. Don't tell him. Okay?

Jesse gazes at her. Then finally nods and continues up the bank, one eye on Raul and the guards who sit around a crackling fire a dozen yards away grilling a catfish. When he reaches the hammocks he stops at DeDan's, who opens one eye to look at him.

DEDAN
Filet mignon medium rare and the
house salad with Roquefort.

JESSE
You got any ideas about how we can
get out of here?

He opens the other eye.

DEDAN
Me?

JESSE
Yeah. You're the one from the
shithole who knows how to avoid
getting killed.

DEDAN
I didn't say I know how to avoid
it. I just said I can sense when
people are talking about...

JESSE
Yeah, yeah, yeah. What shithole
was that, anyway?

DEDAN
What?

JESSE
Where you from?

DEDAN
Bed-Stuy.

JESSE
How'd you get out?

DEDAN
Army. Where I learned my D&E. Then
CalTech on the GI Bill. Then I
left the country. Why?

JESSE
They treat you better in Paris?

DEDAN
Yeah. Why're you asking?

Jesse shrugs.

JESSE
I'm from a shithole called east
Fort Worth. Didn't go to CalTech.

He looks over at Otacilio, hands behind his head, eyes closed.
He says quietly,

JESSE
Listen, no one's coming to save
us. We gotta get these folks out
of here on our own. You and me. Or
they'll just use us up till we die
one by one.

The young black man stares up at Jesse. He finally says,

DEDAN
You can be the hero, Jesse. I'm
exhausted just trying to keep the
candiru from swimming up my ass.

Jesse watches him without speaking. DeDan finally sighs,

DEDAN
You gotta watch out about trying
to save people, cowboy.

JESSE
Yeah?

DEDAN
Yeah. And I know what I'm talking
about too. I was on an off-shore
oilrig in Dubai one night visiting
friends and a fire broke out. We
were a hundred feet in the air.
Everybody started jumping into the

ocean. I was the only one without a life-jacket.

He rolls his head on his neck, remembering.

DEDAN

I jumped. I was splashing around looking for somebody with a life-jacket I could hang onto and I found a guy I knew, tied to two other guys who were unconscious, said he couldn't move his arms. Didn't know why. I grabbed him and started swimming. I swam three miles to shore. Took...I don't know. All night. At dawn I got us up on the rocks and passed out. When I woke up I realized I'd saved two dead guys and one who was paralyzed from the neck down. All three broke their necks when they hit the water because of their life-jackets. The one I knew could still talk, though. He talked all day while we watched the rig fires burn and waited for someone to rescue us. He died the next morning, two hours before the chopper came. At a dinner a week later they gave me this watch.

He raises his wrist, then realizes once again that he doesn't have the watch anymore.

DEDAN

Shit.

He falls silent. Jesse asks,

JESSE

Because you saved them?

DEDAN

Because I lived, man. Because I lived. The other three, they didn't get shit.

He turns to Jesse once again.

DEDAN

So just beware, man. Sometimes all you end up with is the watch.

He rolls over in the hammock and closes his eyes.

DEDAN
Sometimes they take that away too.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERSIDE CLEARING: SUNSET

Back at the river, Peter sits against a tree, elbows on his knees, head in his hands, looking miserable, when he notices something. A subtle movement in the soft dirt under a rock near his foot. He reaches out to overturn the rock.

A half-dozen butterflies flutter into the air, spectacularly colored and five times the size of any insect in North America. Peter stands, blinking, letting the butterflies flutter around him. With the setting sun in his face, he closes his eyes and grins. He turns at the sound of Allison's arrival.

PETER
Did you see that?

ALLISON
They're beautiful.

PETER
They're a sign. I'm sure of it. A sign that we're gonna live. We're gonna get out of this.

Allison nods, looking up the bank at Jesse and DeDan.

ALLISON
Well, that's good. We need a good sign right about now.

CUT TO

EXT: RIVERSIDE CLEARING: NIGHT

Later on, when it's fully dark and everyone's in their hammocks, there's a rustling in the undergrowth nearby. DeDan's eyes pop open. He looks around warily. He hears it again- something sizable moving along the jungle floor.

He reaches for the nearest hammock and finds that he can't reach it. Not without getting down out of his. He looks back at the jungle darkness and hears the rustling again. He whispers,

DEDAN
Jesse!

PETER
Shh. Don't move. It's coming this way.

In the dark, he can just make out Peter's form, as he unties one of his workboots and raises it above his head. Not much of a weapon, but something. The rustling comes again, this time all in a rush, as whatever it is makes a run for the clearing.

Peter raises his boot as high as he can! Then lowers it as the kid breaks through the undergrowth and walks over to DeDan's hammock. Peter smiles. DeDan shakes his head.

DEDAN

What the hell are you doing here?

The kid offers his water gourd. DeDan gets out of his hammock and squats across from him, trying to get down to his height.

DEDAN

You scared the shit out of me.
What are you doing coming down
here? It's dangerous down here.

The kid squats just like DeDan, grinning. DeDan sighs.

DEDAN

I see we're not gettin' anywhere
like this.

He slaps at a mosquito on his arm. The kid duplicates his gesture precisely. DeDan shakes his head. So does the kid.

DEDAN

Alright, alright. I get it.

A twig snaps nearby and DeDan turns. All in rush he grabs the kid by his shirt and hops up into his hammock with the kid under his arm. Before it stops swinging a burst of automatic fire rakes the ground where they'd been squatting, followed by one shouted word in Portuguese.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

The next day, Jesse dredges the river cut, kneeling in the fog of churned mud and gravel. A shadow passes overhead. He turns to watch a large ray swim upstream, towards the anchor chain in the dim distance.

He turns back to see that Otacilio watched its progress, too, and is still gazing into the distance. Jesse looks back again, and his face changes...The anchor chain.

He turns back to Otacilio and indicates: Keep pounding. Otacilio nods and does so. When he's broken off a big enough chunk of the cut, Jesse waves to him to stand. He replaces Jesse at the vacuum pump and starts dredging what he's broken off.

Jesse moves away towards the anchor chain that stretches upstream from the dredging platform out into the watery blue dusk. The chain's links are twined with river moss and tendrils of algae. Small colorful fish feed along its length.

Jesse moves along it as it slopes towards the bottom, having to reach back and drag his heavy ankle shackle leash along with him to get enough slack.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Up above, the bolt where the ankle shackle is attached to the downriver edge of the platform squeaks as it turns. Peter turns his head at the sound. Then notices the breathing tube, snaking along the edge of the platform towards the upstream end, far from the dredging tubes and the other breather.

Peter glances at DeDan and Allison, who're watching the same thing. He turns to glance at Raul, who hasn't noticed. He goes back to watching the tube slide along the platform's edge. When it hangs up on an extruded bolt, it stops.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

Jesse looks back up at the shadow that is the platform above him, and tugs at the breathing tube.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

It pops past the bolt and snaps against the wood frame of the platform. Raul turns his head. Peter stands and asks,

PETER

There isn't any more of that fruit
from breakfast left, is there?

Raul grimaces, appalled by the question. From his seat he swings his machine pistol and tags Peter on the side of the knee! Peter sits down heavily on the deck. Allison starts to get up to go to him, until Raul aims the 47 at her, and she sits again, too.

DeDan watches Peter, rocking back and forth, holding his knee, face twisted up in pain. He respects the kid's sacrifice.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERSIDE CLEARING: NIGHT

Late that night, they all lie in their hammocks, awake but silent. Even the kid, lying awake on the ground below DeDan, senses the tension in the group. Jesse whispers,

JESSE

Anyway it'd take teamwork and luck. And we won't be able to predict when it's going to happen, so...We'd each have to be ready to play any of the different roles.

He thinks about how to say this next for a second.

JESSE

Meaning that anyone happened to be topside might have to kill a man.

He glances over at Allison. She says firmly,

ALLISON

Out of the question. It's against everything I've ever believed in.

Jesse nods. He murmurs,

JESSE

I thought you'd say that. Well, maybe we could work around you.

His gaze finally rests on Peter.

JESSE

And you? What does your religion say about this, Peter?

Peter thinks about that for a second. He finally says,

PETER

I've been excommunicated.

JESSE

Otacilio?

OTACILIO

I wish to survive.

JESSE

DeDan?

DEDAN

I wish to stick Raul's bullwhip up his ass.

At that, everyone glances at DeDan, eyebrows raised. Peter asks,

PETER
Can I change my answer?

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

The next day, DeDan and Peter and Allison are topside, leaning against the coiled ropes, waiting while the others work. They're also watching Raul and the other two guards with a new rigor.

When one of them moves, to stretch his legs or change positions or walk to the edge of the platform and peer into the murky depths, Peter moves a tiny chunk of ore in a box he's drawn in the rock dust; a tiny map of the platform.

DeDan, for his part, examines the sleepy guards as thoroughly as he can without attracting their attention. When one scratches his leg, revealing a dagger in his worn boot, DeDan rubs his nose, having seen it. When another adjusts the machete he carries under his right arm, DeDan closes his eyes.

Allison studies the thick ropes that extend from the upstream corners of the platform to either bank of the river, where they're secured to the trunks of massive trees. At the platform corners, they're tied in elaborate knots to steel cleats.

When the breather tubes and the dredging hose start to creep towards the upstream end of the platform, Peter gets to his feet and starts pacing up and down the far side of the platform.

Raul raises the AK-47. Peter notices the movement out of the corner of his eye, but ignores it. He just paces back and forth as though the boredom were finally starting to drive him crazy. After a few seconds, Raul lowers the machine pistol.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

Down below, Jesse and Otacilio arrive at the spot where the anchor's embedded in the river bottom, carrying the waterhammer and dragging the dredge. Jesse hunkers down and starts breaking rock around the anchor. He frowns. It's clearly been here for some time. There's no telling how deeply embedded it is.

Otacilio starts the dredge sucking up the gravel and mud. He glances up at the shadow of the platform high above them, hoping they're getting away with this.

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Up above, Peter lies against the coiled ropes, eyes closed. He hears a guard move on the other side of the platform. With his left hand he moves one of his tiny chunks of ore. Then opens his

eyes and looks down at the chunks; one in the center of the square, and two at either downstream corner.

He looks up. Raul's in the middle of the platform, sitting on the edge of a sluice facing the sun. The other two guards are at either downstream corner of the platform. Peter smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBOTTOM: DAY

Down below, Jesse signals to Otacilio that it's time to go back. They move downstream with the dredge and the waterhammer.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

As the tubes slide along the side of the platform, Allison sits on the upstream edge, stretching. All three guards watch her.

At a sound from behind him, Raul turns. He doesn't notice the odd position of the tubes, instead gazing at the sluice for a long moment, where the material Jesse and Otacilio are dredging up down below spills out and is washed across various moving surfaces designed to crush and separate its various components.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

Moments later, Jesse and Otacilio are back where they're supposed to be, working the cut. Jesse looks up when he feels a tug on his breather tube, then another. He gets Otacilio's attention and points topside. They leave the dredge and the waterhammer, and start kicking slowly for the surface.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

The moment they break through and hand up their helmets, Raul slaps Jesse in the head, hard! He shouts in Portugese. As Jesse climbs on board, Raul smacks him again. Jesse stands and takes it. Raul turns and kicks Otacilio, who responds in a few words.

PETER

What's happening?

OTACILIO

He says we're bringing up nothing but mud. Are we trying to sabotage his father? He says we have to stay at the downstream edge of the cut. Everything above that's been

mined already...I told him we're
just not that good at it, yet.

Peter turns to Raul.

PETER

We're much better. Much more gold.
Her and me. We're the best.

Peter indicates Allison and himself. Raul watches him, wary.
Then he shrugs and nods; Get into the helmets.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBOTTOM: DAY

Down below, Peter works the waterhammer. He's pounding like crazy, raising a cloud of rock and sediment all around him, to the point that Allison has to tug his arm and indicate that the vacuum pump can't keep up. Peter nods.

He waves to her to take hold of his helmet, then ducks out from under its air-bubble, and, waterhammer in hand, swims the rest of the way to the end of the anchor chain. He starts hammering there just as vigorously as he'd been working here.

Allison sets the helmet down. She takes up the dredge and starts sucking up the schmutz that Peter's hard work had generated.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

On the platform, Raul's on his feet, staring at the residue in the sluices, listening to the changing note of the dredge. His fellow guard points out a few chunks of promising ore to him, and he shrugs, satisfied. He goes back to sit down in his favorite spot on the edge of the sluice.

At the front of the platform, eyes closed, listening, Jesse moves a tiny clod of dried rivermud into the center of his own little box drawn in the dust. He turns, looking over his shoulder at Raul. In the center of the raft. Bingo.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

Down below again, Peter swims as fast as he can back to the edge of the cut, and scrambles in underneath the helmet, desperately sucking air, chest heaving. He's pushing himself to the limit.

All the same, after only 10 or 15 seconds, he turns to the edge of the cut, and starts in pounding as hard as he can once again. Allison watches him, shaking her head. The guy's intense.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Allison and Peter burst through to the surface and take off their helmets, passing them up to Otacilio and Jesse on the platform. Peter whispers quickly.

PETER

We broke a lot of rock. Still
needs the dredge, though. We'll
cover for you.

Jesse and Otacilio nod discreetly, as Peter and Allison pull themselves onto the platform and lie where they land, exhausted.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Minutes later, Peter, Allison, and DeDan lie against the coiled ropes. They turn as the kid arrives at the river's edge with the old Indian and lunch. They stand as the kid and the old man pull themselves out to the platform on the flat-bottomed boat.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

With the luncheon stew set up on a cleared bin, Raul serves himself first, his two men waiting behind him. DeDan and Peter sit nearby waiting their turn. The old man looks off in the distance. The kid sneaks an opportunity to grin at DeDan.

DeDan grins back, then hears a scraping sound behind him. His grin fades. He glances at Raul, who's sitting in a perfect position to look right at the dredge line and the breather tube that've started their creep up the far side of the platform.

He turns to glance at Peter and Allison but they're so beat they're out where they sit. He glances at the tubes again. Still moving. When he looks up again he sees the kid, looking right at him, then at the tubes, then back. They stare at each other.

DeDan sighs and rises to his feet. He goes to the stew, picks up a bowl and steps in front of the last guard to serve himself, to the wide-eyed amazement of everyone else on the platform.

He doesn't get more than a spoonful of the grey gruel into his tin bowl before Raul hits him in the back of the neck with his AK-47, knocking him to the deck.

He kicks DeDan after he's down, in the back, in the kidneys, in the ribs. The other two guards watch intently, as fascinated by viciousness as any American child watching cartoons.

The kid watches the tubes creeping along the edge of the platform. He looks up at Peter, who's looking right back at him.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERSIDE CLEARING: NIGHT

That night, DeDan moves around in his hammock, groaning softly, trying to get comfortable. Jesse murmurs,

JESSE

Thanks for taking one for the team, DeDan.

Dedan nods. He doesn't turn to face the others, though.

JESSE

We make our break tomorrow.

That gets him. He rolls over, his left eye once again puffed up.

JESSE

We'll try and time it for when the rains come in the afternoon...We all know what we have to do?

They all nod. They hear that same rustling in the undergrowth. A few seconds later, the kid appears. He stops at the edge of the clearing, aware that everyone's watching him, then takes up his position under DeDan's hammock.

But he doesn't curl up to go to sleep, this time. He just sits and looks back at all the faces looking down at him. Peter says,

PETER

He knows.

JESSE

Any chance he'll give us up?

DEDAN

No.

JESSE

You sure?

DEDAN

On the one hand, he loves me. And on the other, he can't talk. That makes him a pretty goddamn good risk, don't you think?

ALLISON
I would say so.

OTACILIO
It wouldn't hurt to have a guide
who knows this part of the jungle,
either. Why don't you ask him to
come with us?

Everyone turns to stare at Otacilio. Even DeDan.

DEDAN
How'm I supposed to do that?

OTACILIO
I'll do it.

Otacilio gets out of his hammock, holding his ankle chain in one hand, making as little noise as possible. He hunkers down in front of the kid. Once there, he doesn't move, or say a word.

After a while, the kid finally signals with his hands for You, the group. Then with his fingers in the air, Walking. Otacilio nods, gravely. He pantomimes Sleep, then Walking. The kid nods.

After a few seconds, he pats his chest for Me, then points for you and clasps his hands for Together? He raises his eyebrows. Otacilio nods. The kid smiles like a light.

Otacilio raises his hand above his head then lowers it, wiggling his fingers, trying to indicate Rain. He frowns and does it again. The kid nods and spits, arcing a goober high in the air. Otacilio grins. He gets the idea.

The kid smiles again and stands to clasp DeDan around the waist. DeDan groans but the kid can't hear it, so he doesn't stop.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

The next afternoon, DeDan lies against the coiled ropes on the platform, wet and exhausted. He glances downriver, and sees thunderclouds in the distance. He closes his eyes.

When he opens them again, he stands and stretches. All the guards look at him warily, but he's so dinged up that they give him a break. He takes a flat rock from the pocket of his once-beautiful Armani pants and whips it along the river's surface!

It skips 6 or 7 times before sinking. Peter grins. So does Allison. DeDan takes out another flat rock and prepares to throw it. One of the guards takes a step closer to watch. DeDan slings it out across the water. This one dances even farther.

Peter turns to glance at Raul, who looks steadily back at him, studying him. Peter's grin doesn't change in the slightest.

Satisfied, Raul finally turns to watch DeDan, too. At which point, Peter reaches behind him for a fist-sized rock he'd placed there and slips it off the side and into the water.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

Down below, Jesse and Otacilio watch it sink slowly past them, then look at each other. Otacilio makes the sign of the cross.

Jesse looks up, watching the calm surface of the river high above. When it starts to dance downstream, when it's all broken up and less light comes through, when he knows it's started raining heavily he looks down again.

He grabs the dredge and makes his way upstream. Otacilio follows him with the hammer.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

On the platform, DeDan huddles under an oil-cloth with Allison, vainly trying to stay dry in the downpour. Peter only has to watch their eyes to keep track of the progress the breather lines are making up the side of the platform.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

When they get up to the hole they've dug around the anchor chain- deep enough now that they can see the top half of the anchor itself- they start working to free it.

Within seconds, it's almost clear. Jesse and Otacilio lean down together and yank it free! It scrapes along the rock as it slides up and out of its shallow crater!

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Topside, DeDan's still under the oil-cloth but he's moved closer to the guard who'd been interested in his rock-skipping. He's showing the man how to hold the flat rock with one curved finger when the platform lurches underneath them!

The guard loses his balance for a moment and DeDan whips the rock at his forehead as hard as he can, stunning him. He grabs

the guard's machete and knees him in the groin, tossing the machete to Allison.

Without turning to look, Peter takes two steps backwards and kicks the other guard right off the platform into the river! He grins, proud of himself, then drops to all fours as Raul sprays a burst of automatic fire in his direction!

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: DAY

Hundreds of brightly colored birds take off, soaring into the blue sky above the jungle canopy.

CUT TO:

EXT: GOLD MINE: DAY

The guards at the mine turn at the sound of automatic fire. At the sound of the next burst, half of them take off towards the river. Down below, the Indian workers watch them go.

CUT TO:

EXT: BARGE: DAY

As the platform rocks forward and strains against the two securing lines Allison swings the machete and whacks the taut rope on the right side of the platform until it splinters and finally breaks loose!

Raul stands in the middle of the platform and turns his AK-47 on her just as the platform swings rapidly towards the left-side shore! He stumbles, firing wildly! When he gets to his knees he sees Allison whacking the other rope and raises the 47 again.

Peter dives on top of him, taking him down with both arms around his shoulders, rolling across the platform! The machine pistol spits savagely!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERSIDE CLEARING: DAY

The guards from the mine arrive at the riverside and kneel to fire at the barge.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING BARGE: DAY

DeDan stares. There's a bullethole in his collarless shirt just below his armpit. He leans down to help Allison whack at the rope till it snaps!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER BOTTOM: DAY

Swimming for the surface, Jesse and Otacilio are suddenly jerked sideways by their ankle shackles as the platform starts to move with the current. Jesse quickly contorts himself and grabs the chain, using it as a rope, climbing towards the platform. Otacilio does the same.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

In the heavy rain up above, DeDan hovers above the roiling struggle between Peter and Raul, looking for a way in. When Raul finally rolls up into a sitting position on Peter's chest, DeDan swings the machete at him.

Raul senses it and turns, raising an arm to protect himself. He takes the blow in the shoulder and roars, landing on the deck again, bleeding all over the place.

CUT TO:

EXT: MINE: DAY

The rest of the guards but two join the general rush towards the river. At which point a handful of the workers at the far side of the mine make a break for the edge of the rainforest. The two remaining guards spray the area with automatic fire.

One starts jogging around the rim of the crater towards a far guard tower but en route he slips and falls in the slick mud of the mine and within seconds he's dragged over the edge by the Indians and disappears!

His partner's eyes go wide as the rain pours down over him in sheets. He starts edging towards a guard tower himself when directly in front of him, dozens of the Indian mineworkers start climbing slowly over the rim towards him.

He levels his automatic pistol at them but they don't stop coming. Soon there are 75 of them, eyes cold, dripping wet, determined. The guard bolts!

The Indians take off in all directions, some towards the barracks, where soon enough flames can be seen through the doors in spite of the rain, and others towards the river.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Jesse hauls himself up onto the platform in time to see the guard DeDan had temporarily incapacitated struggle to his feet and raise his machine pistol. He shouts,

JESSE

DeDan!

DeDan looks up, then dives into the river just as the guard fires! Jesse slams into him from the side and they go down on the deck, struggling for control of the weapon, which finally skitters across the deck and into the water.

Jesse gets a hand free and starts throwing punches, hitting the guard in the face 15 times in as many seconds; a savage barrage that leaves the guard's face a pulpy mess! Jesse turns, chest heaving, and his face drains of all expression.

The guard Peter had kicked into the river is back on the platform, soaking wet. His lips come back from his teeth. He mutters one word in Portugese and raises his machine pistol!

He shouts as Allison slings a double handful of wet ore from the sluice into his face! DeDan then takes his feet out from under him with one swing of his ankle chain.

Otacilio, treading water right next to him, swings his own chain in a high arc and brings it down on the guard's head. The two men pull themselves out of the water and jump on the guy.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERSIDE CLEARING: DAY

The guards firing at the barge from the edge of the river are suddenly overrun by mineworkers, scores of them, who wrap their chains around the necks of the guards and seize their weapons. The mineworkers then look downriver at the barge and cheer!

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Where Jesse sees Peter and Raul, both covered in blood, struggling over the AK-47. He hurries over to join the fray, but before he can, Raul rips his gun hand free.

He ignores Peter, who's still trying to strangle him, and swings the 47 towards Jesse, who has to dive behind the sluice trough to avoid being riddled by the burst of automatic fire!

Peter lets go of his throat and tries to dive on his gun hand which gives Raul enough leverage to throw him off altogether.

Peter rolls to a stop in time to see Raul swing the 47 at him. He does the wise thing and rolls once more, into the river.

Raul swings the weapon towards the spot where Otacilio and DeDan had been just a moment ago, but they've slipped into the water, too. He gets up to examine the guard they'd ganged up on. Dead.

He walks over to the other guard, whose face is a wreck. He stands and looks upstream in the downpour. The unattached platform's a raft now, moving pretty swiftly. They've left the riverside clearing some 75 behind already.

Raul grimaces, and starts firing, raking the water behind the platform where the still-chained prisoners have to be.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

Out in the river, being dragged along by the platform, Otacilio, Peter, DeDan and Allison stay underwater as bullets rip across the surface!

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

Raul watches the surface of the river intently but between the rain and the swiftness of the current he sees no sign of them. He takes a moment to pull up the torn fabric of his shirtsleeve and examine the deep gash in his arm. He scowls and fires one more burst at the water.

Just as Jesse swings a steel ore-sifting rod at him, hitting him high in the shoulder where he'd been cut and knocking him to the deck. Raul screams in pain and Jesse's on him in an instant.

The two men clutch at each other's throats, rolling over and over across the platform. They knock over the sluice trough, and roll to the front end of the platform just as it lurches and water swamps over the leading edge. A wave slams across them!

Jesse rolls free. Raul kicks him in the face and shoves him back against the dredging rig. Raul grins and brings the 47 around juts as Jesse throws the sluice trough down onto his chest! The AK-47 flies out of his hands.

Jesse rushes forward but Raul lunges aside, then grabs hold of Jesse's leg leash and snatches it up short. Jesse lands on his face then rolls away as Raul dives, screaming.

Raul's knife drives right into the wet deck an inch from Jesse's face. Jesse elbows the big Columbian aside and lurches towards the ore-sifting rod he'd originally hit him with. Raul tackles him as he reaches it and knocks him onto his back.

Raul snatches the rod up and lays it across Jesse's throat, putting all his weight on his hands on either end of the bar. Jesse puts everything he has into holding the bar up but he has no leverage. The rod starts to bend under Raul's weight. Jesse gags. Raul's grin widens, as rain drips down his face.

When the machete hits him in the side of the head- swung hard enough to cut right through his right eyeball and embed itself halfway into his brain- his surprise is so profound that, even dead, he murmurs,

RAUL

I don't believe it.

He falls. Jesse rolls out from underneath him, and looks up to see Peter standing there, pale and wet, holding one hand over his side. Peter starts to gag, himself, and walks to the edge of the platform. He kneels and vomits into the river.

Otacilio drags Allison up out of the water, and leaves her hunkered down, coughing, at the edge of the platform. He glances at Peter, then walks over to stand above Jesse, smiling, and offers him a hand. Jesse shakes his head.

JESSE

Too tired. Tomorrow I'll stand.

DeDan walks over to hunker down beside Peter. He pulls out the tail of his shirt and tears off a strip of it. He balls it up against the back of Peter's neck. Peter turns and nods: Thanks.

The sun comes out. The five of them look up and grin. Even Peter summons a smile. Suddenly DeDan asks,

DEDAN

Where's the kid? Did we take off without the kid?!

Once again the platform lurches and a wave washes heavily across the deck. When it's gone, so too is the guard Jesse'd knocked out with his hands. Jesse mutters,

JESSE

Shit. He was still alive.

Otacilio ignores him, looking intently downriver, listening to the dull roar in the distance. Suddenly, he starts moving around the deck, looking for something.

Another wave crashes across the deck, this one taking most of the loose equipment and Raul's body with it as well.

Almost immediately, the platform slams into a series of rocks, then crashes into a jagged boulder that splinters the front of the platform and cleaves a gash halfway down its middle!

When the platform tilts up 40 degrees then smashes back down onto the river's surface, Jesse's thrown to the far end. He looks up to see Peter and DeDan, barely hanging onto the side.

DEDAN

Look!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBANK: DAY

The kid races along the overgrown bank alongside the platform!

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

In spite of the fact that he's hanging on for his life to a platform that's gradually disintegrating in a river that's getting whiter by the minute, DeDan laughs out loud.

Otacilio's still on his feet, moving from handhold to handhold, looking through all the equipment that remains on the deck. When they hit another rock, Allison loses her grip and ends up being dragged by the ankle again through the rapidly whitening water.

Jesse and DeDan crawl to the edge of the platform and start hauling her in. As he does so, DeDan shouts at the kid,

DEDAN

Come on, son! Come on!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBANK: DAY

The kid grins as he runs.

CUT TO:

EXT: DREDGING PLATFORM: DAY

When they finally haul Allison in close enough, Jesse reaches out and grabs her leg and hauls her onto the platform. A moment later, it starts to rotate violently as they enter a section of rapids, then it drops 8 feet over a boulder!

DEDAN

Shitfire!

Scabbling through the tools in the tool-bin, Otacilio shouts,

OTACILIO

The platform's too heavy! Get rid
of everything you can move!

The others start throwing overboard everything that hasn't
already jumped; the dredging sluice, sacks of ore, steel rods,
supplies. Anything not nailed down goes into the river.

The platform smashes over a low cataract and swamps. Jesse grabs
Peter before he can be swept over the side and holds him as they
ram a jagged boulder that shears away a third of the platform!
The force of the river and its obstacles is awesome.

DEDAN

Maybe we should be the ones going
overboard.

JESSE

Yeah...If we could.

DeDan suddenly looks down at his ankle shackles. Then at the
bolts the long steel leashes are secured to along the platform's
damaged edge. He looks back up at Jesse, grim.

The platform hits another boulder and wooden planks splinter
into kindling. The 4 Americans are rocked off their feet!
Otacilio races over to them with a steel piston joint from the
sluice motor. He's found what he's been looking for.

He hunkers down and starts prying open the shackle links from
DeDan's ankles. The steel joint works as a spreader as he forces
the links apart. He frees Allison's ankle next. Then Peter's.

Another jagged rock rips through the platform which spins out of
control as the river throws huge waves across it.

Otacilio gets the shackles apart on Jesse's ankle just as the
platform slams into a massive boulder and disintegrates! All 5
of its passengers are thrown into the river's churning rapids!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBANK: DAY

The kid watches the platform disappear. He sprints out along a
huge log hanging over the river and dives in. His head pops up
and he swims with all his strength. Up ahead, the rapids lead to
the deafening roar of a huge narrow falls.

CUT TO:

EXT: WATERFALL- AERIAL- DAY

The waterfall is narrow but several hundred feet high.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

DeDan washes up against a tree-trunk that rests partly above the surface. He gets a handhold and sees the kid being rushed towards him by the river. He lunges and grabs the kid by a forearm before he's flushed over the falls. He shouts,

DEDAN

Hang on!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

Going down a wider chute, Jesse gets wedged into a gap between boulders and holds on. He turns to look over his shoulder, then wrenches his body to stick out a hand and grab Peter's as the young man's nearly washed towards the falls. He shouts,

JESSE

Work your way up my arm and get a handhold!

Peter's looking a little woozy, though, and he doesn't respond quickly. Jesse shouts again,

JESSE

Work your way up my arm and grab a handhold! Now!

Peter shakes his head as though to clear it, and starts doing as he's told.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

Back on his side of the river, DeDan sees Allison coming fast, and his face falls. He turns quickly downstream. There's nothing else for her to grab onto. He's the last chance. He's holding the tree with one hand and he has the kid in the other.

Now the kid sees her too, and starts scrambling, twisting, trying to loosen DeDan's iron grip.

DEDAN

What the hell're you doing?!

By the time he gets the question out, the kid's broken his grip and clambered up to plant a foot on his shoulder and jump for a higher branch on the tree. He makes it, lifting himself further into the foliage and leaving DeDan free.

DeDan looks terrified, though, but at the last moment, when it look as though Allison's already passed him on her way to certain death, he gathers himself to lunge one more time and grab her wrist. He makes it, and grins.

They're both still trapped in the stiff pull of the river, and water's flowing over Allison's face even as she hangs on, but when she smiles back at DeDan he's so proud of himself he starts to laugh out loud.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

Jesse turns to look upstream again, and sees Otacilio plunging through the rapids only about 20 feet away. He's on a line to come right past Jesse. Only at the last moment he plunges away towards the other side of the chute!

The second Peter gets his own firm hold on the rock Jesse's been holding, he leaps away from it and grabs Otacilio's shoulder! With his other hand he reaches for a branch but it cracks under their combined weight and they continue towards the falls!

Until the raging power of the river slams Jesse full force into another boulder! His eyes very nearly close with the impact, but he shakes them open again and hugs the boulder with one arm, hanging onto Otacilio's wrist with his other hand!

Until he notices that Otacilio's hand is limp. He's not trying to hold on at all.

JESSE

Come on, Oat! Grab onto me! I got
a good hold! We'll stay right here
till somebody comes!

Through the rush of white water, Otacilio smiles at him with the most terrible sympathy. He shouts,

OTACILIO

I'm sorry this had to happen to
you.

JESSE

Grab my arm for god's sake!

Otacilio shakes his head and looks down at his leg. Jesse follows his gaze, and sees the ankle shackle and the long leash still attached to it. The chain rises slowly out of the water as it becomes taut, still connected to the last chunk of platform.

Jesse watches the piece of platform wash slowly over the waterfall. He turns back to Otacilio, stunned. Otacilio smiles sadly.

OTACILIO

You're a better leader than I
thought...Let go.

JESSE

What?

OTACILIO

Let go.

Jesse's expression hardens.

JESSE

That'll be the day.

Instead, when the chain goes suddenly ringingly taut, when the raging power of the river tries to pull his shoulder out of its socket, Jesse just roars as loud as the waterfall and hangs on.

When Otacilio sees that he's not going to let go and that instead his hold on the boulder is slipping, he makes a fist with his free hand and swings it high in the air, bringing it down as hard as he can on the back of Jesse's wrist.

Jesse loses his grip. Otacilio rides over the falls and is gone from view in an instant. Jesse continues to roar like a wounded lion.

FADE OUT:

EXT: RIVERBANK: DAY

Peter drags himself onto the muddy soil just shy of the falls, next to where Allison's curled up, wet and gasping. He still holds a hand to his side. DeDan shouts over the river's roar,

DEDAN

You alright?

Peter nods.

DEDAN

What're you holding your side for?

Before he can answer, DeDan's distracted by the arrival of the kid, scampering across a tree branch low above the white water, then running straight down the trunk to jump into his arms. He laughs out loud one more time.

Moments later, Jesse leaps from a boulder in the river to the edge of the riverbank. He doesn't quite make it. He grabs for

roots in the mud with his hands, but his legs are still in the heavy pull of the current, and he's starting to slip away. When he starts to make struggling noises, DeDan hears him and turns.

He scrambles down the bank, clamping a hand over each of Jesse's wrists and letting the force of the river do the work, pushing his legs up and out and onto the bank, until DeDan can drag him to higher ground.

DEDAN

You okay, cowboy?

JESSE

Otacilio's dead.

DeDan looks up at the wild white river.

JESSE

He was holding my hand! My fucking hand! Jesus Christ! I had to watch him die!

DEDAN

I been there. Remember?

Jesse stares up at him, chest heaving. Then he looks down at their own hands, still intertwined. DeDan hauls him up onto his knees, then lets go off his wrists.

DEDAN

Stop thinking about yourself now.
We gotta take care of the others.
You said it yourself. They're depending on us.

Jesse remains silent in the face of DeDan's quiet authority.

DEDAN

You can think about yourself when
you get back to the States. You'll
fit right in.

The kid races up and slides to a stop on his knees right next to DeDan, grinning like a light.

DEDAN

I pulled him and the Doc out. Now
ask him which way do we go?

Jesse stares up at DeDan, then turns to the kid.

JESSE

Where to, chief? You're our guide
now, God help us.

He indicates the jungle and shrugs. The kid understands right away and gets up. He stares at the undergrowth and within a few seconds parts some huge leaves to find a tiny trail alongside the river. He nods to Jesse; This way. Jesse looks at DeDan.

JESSE

We ready?

DeDan looks at him. Then nods.

CUT TO:

EXT: TRAIL: DAY

Rounding the first turn in the trail, they stop. Through what foliage remains between them and the falls precipitous drop, they see for the first time the great expanse of the rain forest spread out below them- spread out for hundreds of miles.

CUT TO:

EXT: CLIFF FACE BESIDE WATERFALL: DAY

The kid leads them on a path down the near-vertical wall of rock beside the waterfall, moving carefully along steps hewn centuries ago, the cascading water so close that they're constantly enveloped in spray and mist.

CUT TO:

EXT: GOLDMINE: DUSK

Santos stands over the dead bodies of 6 of his guards, laid out on pallets on the ground between the burned-out ruins of the barracks and his empty goldmine. Two more guards stand nearby, sweating, staying out of his way. They turn at the sound of an approaching party.

Four more guards walk up a path from the river, carrying another pallet, this one covered by a blood soaked tarpulin. Santos watches them set it on the ground next to the others, then jerks his head. A guard pulls off the tarp. Santos starts to groan.

It's clear that the piranha found his son before his men did. Parts of the body are intact, but others are eaten to the bone. Including most of Raul's face.

Santos bites down on the first finger of his right hand so hard that blood starts to trickle down his wrist. He mutters,

SANTOS

I'll take their faces, too. I
swear to god. I'll bring their
faces back to you.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: NIGHT

The patrol Swift that had originally picked them up rounds a bend in the river. Its spotlight finds the clearing with the hammocks, then the tree to which the platform had been tied.

The Swift pulls over and two heavily armed men jump off the bow with tie-lines. Four more follow, then turn, offering to help Santos and an old Indian in primitive attire down. The old Indian takes their hands, but Santos jumps just as they had.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: NIGHT

With high-powered flashlights shining everywhere, Santos and his armed party follow the old Indian through the jungle.

He arrives at the clearing near the waterfall and walks down to examine the riverbank where DeDan had wrestled Jesse out of the water. He holds up a hand: Wait, and disappears into the jungle.

When he returns, he murmurs a few words to Santos, who barks at his men. They take off their gear and unroll hammocks.

CUT TO:

EXT: CLIFF FACE BESIDE WATERFALL: DAWN

The next day at dawn the old Indian leads Santos and his men down the same near-vertical path.

He stops, squinting out over the unbroken jungle canopy. He waves to one of the armed men to bring over his machine pistol. He fires a burst over the canopy, then stands and watches. The jungle's only reaction is that all the birds go silent.

CUT TO:

EXT: RAIN FOREST: DAWN

Down below though, a few miles from the waterfall, the four Americans sit up abruptly on their beds of leaves. The kid senses their alarm and sits up as well. He starts to signal them to remain calm, but DeDan get up and takes off along the jungle floor. The kid frowns and follows him. So do the rest of them.

CUT TO:

EXT: CLIFF FACE BESIDE WATERFALL: DAWN

Still squinting out over the jungle canopy, the old Indian smiles. He points as several brightly colored birds flutter up into the clear air, about three miles straight ahead. Santos waves to his party to start down the path again.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: MORNING

Later on, the kid runs along the jungle floor with DeDan close behind, cutting through vines with a heavy stick and trying not to lose sight of him.

Jesse jogs alongside Allison, looking back at Peter who brings up the rear. In the distance, he can hear the shouts of Santos' men. He slows down to let Peter catch up, and says with a grin,

JESSE

Not much for jogging, huh?

Peter shakes his head. Jesse looks the younger man over as he jogs along and his grin fades. Peter's deathly pale and his shirt's soaked through with sweat. He's still holding a hand to his side. Jesse reaches out to pull it away.

There a small black hole in his shirt surrounded by a ring of dried blood. Jesse lets go of his hand. Peter puts it back over the wound without breaking stride. Jesse looks up at his face.

JESSE

You're shot.

Peter nods without looking back at him. He concentrates on the figure of the kid up ahead, leaping along with animal deftness, splashing through a stagnant pool without missing a step.

PETER

Kids are intense, huh? So much energy.

JESSE

How come you didn't tell anybody?

PETER

What difference would it have made?

He splashes through the stagnant pool the kid had run through, losing his footing momentarily but righting himself.

PETER

She lost her bag. Otacilio had the only knife.

Jesse looks ahead at Allison. Peter's right about the bag. Suddenly a shot rings out and they hear a whistling through the leaves just above their heads. Peter looks up.

PETER

Lucky we're not any taller.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: MORNING

Santos runs along behind his men, his face an implacable mask.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: AFTERNOON

Later that day, the kid and DeDan are racing along but Jesse and Allison are staying with Peter's pace, so they've dropped way back. Finally the kid stops, waiting for them to catch up.

When they do the kid looks Peter over; his pallor, the bloodstain he can no longer cover with his hand. He gets the picture. Allison murmurs,

ALLISON

There's nothing I can do. Bullet's still in him. Must've been slowed down by the water.

PETER

Go on without me or we'll all die.

That silences everyone. Jesse glances at DeDan, who almost imperceptibly shakes his head. Jesse says,

JESSE

No. We go down, we go down together.

He just turns to find the kid scanning the jungle floor, looking for some cover, some place to hide. The kid doesn't look encouraged. He looks grim.

In the silence that overcomes the four Americans, they hear the sounds of the search party behind them; people shouting and crashing through the undergrowth. They could be killed at any minute. But they don't bitch. They don't whine. They just look around at each other, a little sheepishly, and wait.

And soon enough, their silent prayers are answered. With a peal of thunder it starts to rain. Almost instantly it's a downpour. The forest floor is swept by sheets of rain.

The kid grins. Rain runs off his hair. His clothes are soaked. He smiles. His suddenly good humor reanimates the group in seconds. They sense that their fortunes have changed.

The kid waves to them to follow, and runs towards a clearing far from the path, in which the forest floor is covered with giant leaves, six and seven feet across.

He shows them a place to curl up together under the leaves, looks around at the traces of their movements that are rapidly disappearing in the downpour, then quickly joins them and pulls the leaves back over his head.

CUT TO:

EXT: RAIN FOREST: DAY

Behind them, the search party pulls up. The old Indian tracker looks down at a footprint in the soft earth as it fills with water and disappears. He shakes his head.

Santos comes up behind him and starts shouting. The search party moves out again at a trot, trail or no trail.

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDER THE LEAVES: DAY

Under the leaves, they huddle together, listening. The thrum of the rain on their leaf roof makes it difficult to distinguish other sounds, but they remain intent, all the same. Finally they hear the muffled shouts of the search party. DeDan whispers,

DEDAN

They're close.

CUT TO:

EXT: RAIN FOREST: DAY

On the path, the search party continues to jog along, Santos in the lead, soaked to the skin. He rounds a turn in the path and sees it stretch out in front of him for several hundred yards. Empty. He stops, sensing something. He turns to look back at the ground they'd just covered.

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDER THE LEAVES: DAY

Under the leaves, DeDan whispers into Allison's ear,

DEDAN

You say the bullet's still in him?

ALLISON

Yeah.

DEDAN

Can't you die from that?

She nods. DeDan looks over at Peter, lying on his back on the soft moist earth, lips moving in some silent litany. They all stiffen at a burst of automatic fire. Jesse lifts up the edge of the leaf he's closest to and peers out into the wet dark day.

DeDan crawls right up his back and peeks out too. The search party's no more than 100 yards away, criss-crossing the jungle floor, hacking away with their machetes at the oversized leaves and firing into promising hiding places.

DEDAN

Shit.

The kid crawls over and sees what the search party's doing, too. Then Allison. When Peter comes up behind her and sees what's happening, he closes his eyes. DeDan mutters,

DEDAN

If we wait'll the last second and jump the fuckers, we could take a couple with us.

Jesse turns to look at him, a little surprised.

JESSE

You're ready to do that?

DeDan thinks about that for a second, looking a little surprised himself. He finally says,

DEDAN

Hell yes.

He turns.

DEDAN

What do you say? You wanna...?

He stops abruptly. Peter's gone. The kid rolls to the far side of the leaf, lifts it and peers out. Peter's running through the rain-soaked woods.

Jesse starts to go after him but DeDan jerks him back down, using his weight to pin him to the ground. When Allison starts to rise, he grabs her arm too and hisses,

DEDAN

He's gonna die anyway! You just told me that!

ALLISON

So what?

DEDAN

So he figures this way we'll live!

She stops. Jesse stops struggling too.

DEDAN

It's our only chance. He's giving us that gift.

They all look past the kid at Peter. The search party hasn't spotted him yet. He's just jogging along in a wide circle, putting distance between himself and his friends, preparing to take the search party in the opposite direction.

When the first shots ring out DeDan winces. He says quickly,

DEDAN

Accept the gift, alright? Accept the goddamn gift.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: DAY

Peter makes his way through the misty rain, crossing a shallow tributary as the eyes of drowsy alligators follow him. He rushes through the undergrowth on the far bank and crests a low ridge.

A guard yells and a pair of gunshots clip leaves close to his head. He drops down the other side, momentarily out of sight of the pursuing party.

He scrambles down the shallow grade and almost runs right into a towering earth mound in his path. Instead, he dives to the side, landing in a stagnant algae pool. He stares at the earth mound. It appears to be moving; a constant roil of subtle activity.

He gets out of the pool and waits behind a tree. When the first of Santos' party comes over the ridge, slipping and sliding down the wet slope, Peter waits till he's abreast of the tree, then steps out and shoves him towards the earthen mound!

The armed man spins, stumbling backwards in spite of himself, and lands on the mound with a thud! It looks as though a layer of dust settles over him immediately. But it's not dust. Not in this rain.

It's thousands of fire ants. Even while he tries to level his rifle at Peter, he starts to scream as the fast-crawling red insects attack his flesh! He fires several wild shots!

Hitting the next man to come over the ridge in the thigh, who falls and slides down the hill, scrambling to avoid the mound and the same fate as his colleague.

Peter takes off again, running through the downpour, making noise enough for four as he crashes through the undergrowth.

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDER THE LEAVES: DAY

The rest of them watch the last of the search party disappear over the ridge. The kid immediately scrambles out from beneath the leaves and takes off in the opposite direction.

The others follow, but they can't help looking back over their shoulders as they run, faces twisted up with pain and guilt.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: DAY

Peter runs between two trees and falls down hard. He drags himself up, grimacing, holding his side. Hurried footsteps approach him from behind. He turns and his features are washed out by a blinding light.

He takes off again as a gunshot rings out! He goes down again, but gets up without missing a beat and continues, this time with a new little hole high in his right shoulder.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: DAY

Still well behind him, Santos shouts at his men as they race along. They spread out into a line, and continue the chase.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: DAY

Up ahead, Peter slides into a hiding place behind another 200 foot tall tree. He can't go any farther with his two gunshot wounds. His breathing is ragged and his eyes are closing.

He spots a broken branch on the ground, lifts it, and waits, lips moving again in some rapid prayer.

When the first of his pursuers comes around the tree he swings the branch with all his weight behind it and brains the guy! The man's out before he hits the jungle floor!

The second man around the tree shoots Peter in the stomach. He sits down against the trunk, wide-eyed. The second man raises his weapon again, then holds his fire at a shout from Santos!

Who appears a moment later, and looks down at the wounded kid. He kneels and examines the hole in his shoulder and the one in his belly. Both fresh. Then he pulls Peter's hand away from the wound in his side and sees how old it is. He frowns.

SANTOS

Your friends sacrificed you to
save themselves.

Peter shakes his head.

SANTOS

You're a fool. They used you and
you don't know it. Where are they?

Peter smiles. He whispers,

PETER

Do you know the story of David?
Who discovered the golden plates?

Santos squints at him. Has pain driven the boy crazy?

PETER

It's one of the greatest stories
in the world. You want to hear it?
It might change your life.

Santos' puzzlement gives way to anger. He growls,

SANTOS

The dog who killed my son dares
preach to me?

He pulls a long Bowie knife out of his belt.

SANTOS

Where are they?

Peter gazes at the shining blade, then up at Santos' cold eyes. He smiles a beatific smile.

PETER

David was a searcher, too. He was
lost, just like you.

Santos grimaces. He steps and cuts Peter across the forehead, down to the bone, then reaches into the cut, preparing to pull his face off.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: DAY

Running through the jungle the others hear Peter scream. Allison puts her hands over her ears as tears run down her cheeks. The rest of them hear Santos' distant bellow.

SANTOS (O.S.)

I'll kill you all! I swear to God!

Only the kid looks untroubled as he races along; one of those moments when it's better not to hear.

CUT TO:

EXT: RAIN FOREST: NIGHT

That night, DeDan lies on a bunch of leaves. The kid approaches with a gourd full of water from a nearby stream. DeDan sits up and drinks, then offers the gourd back to the kid.

A few yards away, Jesse sits awake against a tree, scanning the undergrowth in what moonlight makes it through the misty haze of the forest canopy. He glances down at Allison lying with her head in his lap and sees that she's watching him. She murmurs,

ALLISON

You thinking about Peter?

He picks up a clod of earth and rolls it between his fingers.

JESSE

I'm not used to people making sacrifices for me. Let alone...

He slings it into the dark forest and falls silent.

ALLISON

He looked up to you enormously, didn't he?

Jesse shakes his head. His eyes glisten.

ALLISON

Lie down here with me. Come on.

Jesse lies down beside her, hands behind his head. Allison snuggles up close to him. She whispers,

ALLISON

It's hard to accept, isn't it?
Being loved...When you know you
don't deserve it.

He turns to look at her, almost bumping her, nose to nose.

ALLISON

You're wrong though, baby. You do.

She closes her eyes and smiles.

ALLISON

We ever get out of here I'll prove it to you. In a long series of experiments.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: DAY

The next day, they jog through the humid jungle again, soaked in sweat. Jesse and DeDan've stripped to the waist. There's hardly any difference anymore between their styles of dress.

They look back at Allison. She's beat. They fall out at the edge of the path. The kid goes on a few steps before he notices, then comes back towards the adults.

He moves to a large vine and waves to them to watch. He uses a sharp stone to cut away a section of the vine, one end then the other, with swift precision.

He tips up the vine section and drinks its juice, then offers it to Allison. She takes the liana vine and sips. She smiles and offers it to DeDan. He takes a long pull, not stopping till it's drained.

The kid steps to another vine, and offers the stone to DeDan. He points at the exact spots where DeDan should make the cuts. DeDan gets up and follows his silent instructions.

When he's cut the piece free, he tips up the end of the vine and liana juice splashes all over his face. The kid bursts into silent laughter. The three Americans watch him, grinning. He's never seemed so much like a regular kid as in this moment.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBANK: DAY

Later that day, they break out of the rain forest to find themselves on the banks of yet another tributary of the Amazon. After two days of running through the jungle, just having open sky above them makes them smile.

They splash their faces with riverwater and fall out on the bank. The kid finds a sharp stick in the forest and comes back to stand in the shallows, staring into the water, waiting. DeDan raises his head to watch, then lowers it again.

DEDAN

Fish'd have to be suicidal.

Seconds later, the kid runs up the bank with a golden scaled fish over a foot in length. He sets it on a rock and cuts off the head and tail with his sharp stone. He guts and cleans the fish with practised precision.

The Americans stare at him throughout, amazed. When he's done, he offers each of them cut sections of the fish. They accept it without hesitation and eat.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBANK: AFTERNOON

Later on, they get up and start along the bank, downriver. The kid's immediately unhappy. He gestures to DeDan to cross the river and head into the jungle again. DeDan shakes his head.

DEDAN

I don't wanna go in there again.
It's dark in there.

He continues walking along the bank. But the kid grabs his hand and tries to pull him towards the water. DeDan stops again. He looks at the river. There are alligators huddled like submerged logs on either bank. A dozen of them.

DEDAN

I don't wanna go in the water
again either. Not ever. From now
on I'm gonna bathe with Wet-Naps.

But the kid digs in his heels. He's determined to get them to go back into the jungle. DeDan looks up at Jesse and Allison for help. Allison grins.

ALLISON

Thing about relationships, DeDan,
is that you sometimes have to do
things you didn't want to do.

DEDAN

Yeah. That'll be the day.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: AFTERNOON

Doing as gentle a breast stroke as he can, DeDan swims across the river. Six feet on either side of him, like escorts, are two alligators. He stares only at the far bank, ignoring them.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: DUSK

Once again, they jog through the rainforest. At dusk the light is dappled and mysterious under the canopy. They come up to a circular clearing and stop, squinting into the gathering gloom.

DEDAN
Honky Mother of God.

On the other side of the clearing, they can just make out figures in the shadows between the trees. Remarkable figures.

Little Stone Age men, dressed in loin-clothes and thin white body paint, carrying spears taller than they are, and blow-guns longer than that. Jesse murmurs,

JESSE
After all this, to die by blowgun.

The kid starts towards the primitive Indians. DeDan whispers,

DEDAN
Where the hell you going?

The kid doesn't look back. He just walks towards the warriors, who pull back their arrows and level their blowguns. Jesse closes his eyes. When he opens them, he starts forward, too.

DEDAN
Now what are you doing?

He watches Jesse walk away, and shakes his head.

DEDAN
Following a 9 year old to your death is what you're doing. I don't know why I bothered to ask.

Allison starts forward as well. DeDan hisses,

DEDAN
Goddammit!

He starts forward, too. They walk across the clearing, closer and closer to the fearsome tribe, until the kid stops only a few paces away. DeDan and Jesse and Allison stop beside him.

By now, all 40 of the weapons in the trees before them are trained on their chests. But no one's fired. No one's made a sound. Jesse finally exhales.

JESSE
Anybody speak English?

DeDan commences to chuckle quietly. Much as she tries to resist the impulse, Allison does, too. The strain and the absurdity of the question have finally gotten to them.

DEDAN

Why don't you just ask if they know a good Chinese restaurant in the neigh...?

He stops abruptly when an undersized 10 year old girl says from the shadows,

10 YEAR OLD GIRL

I do.

CUT TO:

EXT: VILLAGE: NIGHT

They sit around the glowing embers of a cook fire. There are palm fronds in front of each of them with the scraps of a substantial meal still visible.

Above them is open sky and a full moon. They're in the center of a huge clearing, surrounded by the tribe's primitive dwellings. Across the fire are the three elders; ancient men with wizened faces and placid eyes. Next to them is the 10 year old girl.

10 YEAR OLD GIRL

I learned at the regional school downriver. I was supposed to stay 2 more years, but my teacher was too nervous. I didn't want to grow up to be nervous so I came home.

Jesse smiles at this. He says softly,

JESSE

I wish I'd been thinking that clearly about role-models when I was a kid.

DEDAN

I wish I was thinking that clearly now.

The 10 year old translates as best she can, although the tribal elders seem only puzzled in the end. Allison whispers,

ALLISON

I'm not sure there's a word for role-model in Yanamamo.

Jesse nods. He rephrases his remark.

JESSE

Even the youngest of your tribe
are wise.

The three old men hear the translation and smile. That's more like it. They peer across the fire at their guests. The one in the middle finally murmurs a few words.

10 YEAR OLD GIRL

He'd like to know your intentions
for your own young one.

DeDan looks down into the fire. The elder goes on speaking.

10 YEAR OLD GIRL

He says if you think he'll be
happy on the long island, take
him. But if you want to leave him
here, we'll raise him as our own.

Jesse and Allison remain silent, glancing at DeDan, clearly deferring to him in the matter of the kid. Even the kid glances at DeDan. He may be deaf, but he knows when he's the topic of conversation.

DeDan stares into the fire for a while. Then turns to gaze out at the Indians who sit quietly at the edges of the firelight, watching the encounter.

Finally he turns to the kid, who smiles. DeDan stands and reaches for his hand, then walks him around the fire and gestures to him to sit between the little girl and the elders. The kid looks up at him, clearly sad. But he sits.

DeDan walks back to sit between Jesse and Allison, eyes full.

DEDAN

I have to tell you a couple of
things about him first.

The little girl translates this, and the elders nod.

DEDAN

He was a prince among his own
people. His father was a chief.

Jesse and Allison slowly turn to gaze at the side of DeDan's face, puzzled as to how could he know this.

DEDAN

He was stolen away by the evil men
we told you about. They took him
and turned him into a slave.
That's when he stopped speaking.

Now they know he's making it up. The little girl translates.

DEDAN

He learned to think like a slave.
He learned to think that he had no
tribe. That he owed loyalty to no
one but himself. That he would be
forever alone, forever a castaway.

He stops when he realizes that he's describing himself. He turns to Jesse, eyes glistening, puzzled. Jesse murmurs,

JESSE

Go on, man. You're doin' great.

DeDan watches him, lip quivering. From the other side, Allison puts a hand on his hand. He turns back to the elders.

DEDAN

Teach him to be a prince again.
Maybe his voice will come back.

The little girl translates this last, and the elders nod. The way they look at DeDan, the way they smile sadly when tears run down his cheeks, it's clear that they know he's talking about himself, too. The one in the middle finally speaks.

10 YEAR OLD GIRL

He says slaves are everywhere.

DeDan nods. The old man goes on.

10 YEAR OLD GIRL

He says a tribe can never have too
many princes.

DeDan smiles in spite of his tears. The kid smiles back at him. Suddenly the tribesmen all get to their feet. Jesse and Allison do too. DeDan wipes his face and joins them. There's a low rumbling coming from somewhere above the trees.

The warriors all dash for their weapons at once, as the women and children of the village disappear into the jungle. The little girl grabs the kid's hand and beckons to DeDan and Jesse and Allison to follow her. They do so, moving rapidly away from the fire towards the dark edge of the rainforest.

As a Black-Hawke attack helicopter comes screaming over the tops of the trees, its Night-Sun spotlights making the jungle clearing look like Shea lit up for a night game! Its twin mini-guns spit thunder at the few Indians still in the clearing!

The big bird hovers over the center of the clearing, blasting the cook fire into a million pieces with its downdraft as it touches down right where they'd been sitting.

Santos and six armed men pile out of the chopper, machine pistols chattering. Santos shouts and they split up, two chasing Indians into the jungle on either side of the chopper, and two more following Santos in the direction the Americans had taken.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: NIGHT

From the darkness 50 yards into the jungle, Jesse looks back at the brightly lit clearing.

JESSE

Shouldn't we stay and help?

ALLISON

I don't think they need us.

CUT TO:

EXT: CLEARING: NIGHT

She's right. Santos' men are heavily armed, but they're shooting at nothing, at ghosts. The Indians have melted into the jungle, and the first two armed men to reach the tree line immediately take more arrows than St. Anthony ever did.

The two on the other side of the chopper have the sense to stop 10 yards from the tree-line and lay down a barrage of automatic fire. But within seconds, they too go down, feathered darts sticking out of their faces and necks.

When one of the two men with Santos takes a spear through the neck, the other one stops, panicked. Santos looks around at the four other men down in the clearing and grimaces.

He starts backing towards the chopper again. When he boards it, we can see him inside screaming at the co-pilots. The Black-Hawke rises into the air.

It hovers long enough to fire two rockets at the largest structure in the clearing- completely demolishing the bamboo and thatch building- before it races away.

CUT TO:

EXT: JUNGLE: NIGHT

The little girl and the kid lead the three Americans through the jungle, running by what moonlight filters through the canopy.

DeDan looks up. He can hear the Black-Hawke somewhere above them, but it's no longer a threat with the canopy as cover. He

looks ahead again, just as he has to crash through a heavy thicket of vines to follow the others.

He stops, dumbstruck. He's on the edge of an 80 foot cliff overlooking a river as wide as the Mississippi. In the distance, a riverboat rounds the bend and comes towards them, brightly lit and bustling with activity.

He looks up as the Black Hawke roars by, searchlights narrowly missing them. The kid takes the opportunity to hug him then takes off with the girl back into the jungle. For DeDan, that all happened too fast. He looks a little bewildered.

JESSE

DeDan, you've done this before.
Anything we should know?

He looks down at the water again, far below. He murmurs,

DEDAN

Throw your life jacket in
separately.

Jesse nods. He says quietly,

JESSE

Maybe that was a stupid question.

He takes Allison's hand and they jump, falling 80 feet and hitting the river like meteorites, splashing water 30 feet back into the air! Then they're gone. The river returns to normal, having swallowed the three Americans like Aspirin.

With another set of splashes, they surface again, sucking air and roaring. They commence to wave and shout hysterically at the Amazon Princess as it chugs towards them.

When the first passengers notice them and come to the rail, they redouble their hollering. When the riverboat actually starts to slow down, they cheer.

Then they go silent, as the Black Hawke helicopter appears over the edge of the cliff. It hangs in the air for a long moment. When it swings away they start to cheer again.

CUT TO:

INT: CAPTAIN'S MESS: MORNING

The next morning, at the buffet at the Captain's mess, Jesse piles his plate so high with pancakes and eggs and bacon and potatoes that when he sits down DeDan blanches.

DEDAN

Jesus. You ever heard the word cholesterol?

Jesse chuckles, mouth full.

DEDAN

How about arteriosclerosis?

Jesse chuckles again.

DEDAN

What're you laughing about, man?
It's not a joke.

ALLISON

I think he's just glad to be back in a world in which the risk of heart attack is his most serious health concern.

Jesse nods. That's it. He finally turns to DeDan and swallows, smiling like a kid.

JESSE

Cute outfit, by the way.

DeDan scowls. He's wearing the same white pyjamas the crew at the construction site wore. So are Jesse and Allison. The cabin door opens and the Captain enters; an elegant 50ish Brazilian.

CAPTAIN

Good morning, gentlemen. Miss.

His crew and his guests all nod. He moves to the buffet and says over his shoulder to the Americans,

CAPTAIN

I've radioed ahead. You'll be met by representatives of your company when we dock in an hour.

JESSE

Thank you.

CAPTAIN

The police are also most interested in your Mr. Ferleger. They too say they'll meet us, but they're not often prompt.

JESSE

Yeah, they kind of get there when they get there in the States, too.

The Captain nods. He sits at the head of the table and sets his plate in front of him; a dry English muffin and a sliced mango. He glances at the still-staggering amount of food in front of Jesse and says, drily,

CAPTAIN

I see you're from Texas, Mr. Winder. What part?

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBOAT: DAY

An hour later the three Americans are up on deck, arms on the rail, watching the river ahead, grinning. Their grins fade simultaneously.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

Around the next bend, alongside a dozen fishing boats and speed boats moored at a wooden bridge a quarter of a mile upriver from the little town that's their destination, the Black Hawke rests on pontoons in the water.

On the bridge above it, surrounded by armed men, stands Santos. He raises a bullhorn to his mouth. His voice comes booming out over the river in Portuguese.

CUT TO:

INT: RIVERBOAT: DAY

The Americans burst into the riverboat's bridge.

DEDAN

That's the guy. That's Santos!

JESSE

What does he mean, he's coming aboard? He can't board us, can he?

The Captain lowers his binoculars, and turns to the Americans.

CAPTAIN

Theoretically, no. But...

ALLISON

But what?

CAPTAIN

They're heavily armed.

Jesse looks through the glass at the half-dozen men with Santos. No doubt about that.

CAPTAIN

This is a riverboat. We have no weapons.

He raises his binoculars to his eyes again, examining the Black Hawke more closely.

CAPTAIN

We're carrying some C-4 for a logging company, but that's all.

He lowers them again, and turns to the Americans.

CAPTAIN

I hope you...

They're gone.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

The riverboat slows to a stop at the middle pylon of the bridge, the Black Hawke interdicting its passage. The passengers along the rail watch the men above them on the bridge with a wary curiosity.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBOAT DECK: DAY

They continue to stare as Santos and half of his armed men climb down rope ladders and appear on the deck. Almost immediately, the Captain appears too, moving quickly through the crowd to stop before Santos, eyes flashing.

CAPTAIN

I must protest this grotesque violation of the rules of the river.

SANTOS

The Americans killed my son. Where are they?

The Captain stops, suddenly aware of his passengers, aware that in a moment Santos has turned the public relations tables. He finally says,

CAPTAIN

I'll turn them over to the
authorities in town, but I won't
turn them over to you.

Santos raises his pistol and shoots the Captain in the face! He
crumples to the deck as the stunned passengers take two steps
back, staring at the body, then at Santos. He turns to the
nearest man to him and asks,

SANTOS

Who are you?

The startled man looks around and says,

PASSENGER

Me? Nothing. Nobody. I'm a
passenger.

Santos touches the barrel of his pistol to the man's forehead.
He turns to the First Mate who stands open-mouthed and says,

SANTOS

You have three minutes to find
them or he dies. Another one every
minute thereafter.

The First Mate nods, breathless, and starts barking at his crew,
as more of Santos' men jump onto the main deck.

CUT TO:

INT: HOLD: DAY

Below decks in the riverboat's storage hold, the three Americans
break open every wooden crate in the place. DeDan gets more and
more agitated, finally smashing the top of the last box.

DEDAN

There's C-4 but there's not one
damn detonator! Not one damn fuse!

ALLISON

Can't you set it off some other
way?

DEDAN

Sure. Just bite down hard on a
wad. If you don't mind having it
in your mouth when it goes off.

JESSE

DeDan.

DeDan turns to look at him. Darkly.

DEDAN

What?

JESSE

Let's figure out a way to get out
of here alive. Okay?

DeDan stares at Jesse a long second.

JESSE

At least we can get the assholes
away from the passengers, save
some lives. Okay?

When he hears the doors of staterooms being banged open above
them, DeDan looks up. He finally nods.

CUT TO:

INT: STATEROOM: DAY

One of Santos men bangs open a stateroom door and levels a
combat shotgun at a Brazilian cowering behind the bureau on the
far side of the bed, holding his wife and daughter. The guard
shouts in Portugese. The family walks out the stateroom door.

CUT TO:

INT: STATEROOM: DAY

Another guard bangs open another door and looks over the sights
of his machine pistol to find the stateroom empty. He kicks open
the closet. It's full of clothes, but that's all.

CUT TO:

INT: STATEROOM: DAY

The first guard kicks open yet another door and levels the
shotgun. He squints. The furniture in this stateroom's all been
piled up behind the door. He starts to turn when out of the
corner of his eye he sees movment against the empty far wall.

In slow-motion we watch him react by firing, even as we see in
his face a sudden horror, as he registers the small packet of C-
4 taped to the mirror he's firing at, which reflects Jesse's arm
as he waves from his hiding place behind the furniture.

The C-4 explodes! Blasting the guard back against the far wall
of the gangway and blowing out a huge section of the hull!

CUT TO:

EXT: DECK: DAY

Santos moves abruptly away from his hostage to the rail, in time to see Allison hit the water below with a splash, then DeDan, then Jesse diving out through the hole in the hull with the dead guard's combat shotgun. He barks at his men.

They race to the rail and commence firing into the water!

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDERWATER: DAY

The three Americans swim deep under the water, watching bullets sink slowly past them right and left, until they see the hulls of the moored boats above them. Jesse waves towards the sharp prow of a speedboat, and they swim to the far side of it.

CUT TO:

EXT: SPEEDBOAT: DAY

They pop up next to a speedboat called The Stingy Fox, even as the fusillade from the deck of the Amazon Princess continues. Jesse tosses the shotgun over the gunwale and gasps,

JESSE

DeDan, you go first, then pull
Allison in. I'll get the bowline.

He ducks under the water again and disappears.

CUT TO:

EXT: DECK OF THE RIVERBOAT: DAY

Up on the riverboat, Santos shouts at his guards to hold their fire.

CUT TO:

EXT: SPEEDBOAT: DAY

DeDan takes advantage of the momentary lull to haul himself into the speedboat and drag Allison in, precipitating another fusillade. Jesse joins them, dripping wet, and shouts to DeDan,

JESSE

Grab the shotgun. I'll see if I
can start this sucker.

At which point he hears the big twin engines roar into life. Allison crawls out from under the dash.

ALLISON

I'll drive. You shoot. DeDan, look around for anything you can use as a detonator.

DeDan nods and pulls a much larger package of C-4- more like 3 pounds- out of his shirt. Jesse stares at Allison. She winks.

ALLISON

We used to borrow each other's boats a lot on the Vineyard.

When she gets up into a kneeling position and slams the engines into reverse, he rolls across the deck. The speedboat backs out of the crowded mooring at a pretty fair clip, then does a clean 180 and takes off between the pylons of the bridge.

CUT TO:

EXT: DECK: DAY

Up on the riverboat, Santos screams at his men. They clamber up the rope ladders again. Santos waves to the pilot of the Black Hawke just as Leon had so long ago. It's engines start up.

CUT TO:

EXT: SPEEDBOAT: DAY

Jesse kneels in the back of the boat cradling the shotgun. He breaks it down and counts his shells. Nine. He looks at the Black Hawke as it revs up. The odds don't look good.

Up front, Allison stays down on her knees where she can just see through the windshield to steer, while DeDean empties the boat's storage bins, frenziedly searching for anything he should use as a detonator for the remaining C-4.

He comes up with 6 life jackets, some packing tape, and a tangled bunch of blue nylon straps with little metal rings on their ends, useful for battening down hatches and the like. He sits in the well of the boat and sighs. Shit.

CUT TO:

EXT: NEAR THE BRIDGE: DAY

The Black Hawke lifts off, streaking down the river at such speed that the Americans will be caught in moments.

CUT TO:

EXT: SPEEDBOAT: DAY

Jesse watches the Black Hawke approach, grim. He raises the combat shotgun to his shoulder. He waits until he can see one of Santos' henchmen leaning out the open doorway of the chopper, until he can see the savage spitting of the automatic pistol, until he can hear the bullets overhead, before he fires.

He sees a puff along the side of the chopper, enough to know he hit something, before the big bird passes overhead. Then he falls abruptly as Allison spins the boat into a high-speed 180.

JESSE

What're you doing?!

ALLISON

Stalling till you have a great idea, baby! Take your time!

She watches over her shoulder as the Black Hawke drops into a heavy turn as well. She waits till they've almost caught her and the automatic pistol is chattering away again, then spins the speedboat into another 180.

This time gunfire dances right across the boat, digging holes across the gunwales and smashing the windshield! DeDan holds his hands in the air, suddenly awash in wood chips and broken glass.

DEDAN

Shit!

ALLISON

You okay?

DEDAN

I think so.

Jesse's down again, though. Not wounded but still unable to anticipate the turns. No his sea legs, as they say. He frowns up at Allison and his expression changes. He looks past her at the low railroad bridge a quarter of a mile downriver.

He looks back at the chopper, turning to come after them, then looks at the bridge again. He shouts,

JESSE

Alright! This is gonna be tricky!
Listen up!

Before he can spit out his instructions, the chopper strafes the boat again right up the middle. DeDan and Allison dive for cover. Jesse fires as it passes overhead, dinging it again, then cakewalks up the center of the boat to take the wheel.

CUT TO:

EXT: BLACK HAWKE: DAY

Santos sits in one of the open cockpit doors, holding a machine pistol. He turns to the pilot in the middle of the chopper and shouts over the roar,

SANTOS

What the hell are you waiting for!
Use the goddamn rockets!

The pilot nods. The gunman on the far side of the chopper hangs on as he banks the chopper into another steep turn just past the railroad bridge. He starts readying the twin rocket launchers, even in the steep bank.

CUT TO:

EXT: SPEEDBOAT: DAY

Jesse races along full throttle right at the chopper that hovers low in the air just past the railroad bridge. Allison sits up to join him at the wheel, noticing his grim visage.

ALLISON

They don't seem to be afraid of
us, do they?

JESSE

Nope. DeDan!

He sits up next to them with the C-4 and and the packing tape and the nylon straps in his hands.

DEDAN

No detonators.

Jesse nods. He says quietly,

JESSE

Maybe we'll find something in the
wreckage.

DEDAN

In the what?

CUT TO:

EXT: CHOPPER: DAY

The Pilot hands the armed control box to Santos, shouting,

PILOT

Left is first! Then the right!
I'll line you up as well as I can.

Santos nods, looking through the trestles of the railroad bridge at the speedboat racing towards them. He shouts back,

SANTOS

Just as they come out from under
the bridge!

CUT TO:

EXT: SPEEDBOAT: DAY

When they're only yards from the bridge, Jesse suddenly throttles back to almost nothing and shouts,

JESSE

Get out! Dive!

Allison and DeDan look at him in amazement. Jesse shouts again,

JESSE

Now! Go!

They go over the side and he slams the throttle forward again.

CUT TO:

EXT: CHOPPER: DAY

Santos squints at his target, having noticed the slowing in their progress, but when he sees the boat through the trestles again, he can easily make out Jesse's face above the broken windshield. He flips the covers off his twin toggle switches.

CUT TO:

EXT: SPEEDBOAT: DAY

Jesse grimaces. He's racing towards the bridge, building speed again. He takes one hand off the wheel to grab the shotgun, and stands fully upright in the boat. Just as he reaches the wooden trestles under the tracks of the railroad bridge, he jumps!

He snags the shotgun between two wooden trestles, letting the boat race out from under him!

CUT TO:

EXT: CHOPPER: DAY

Up above, Santos leans out of the door of the chopper. The moment the speedboat appears this side of the bridge, he fires his first rocket, which screams away from the pod below him and hits the water just past the boat, exploding in a great shower of water. He screams,

SANTOS
Forward 10 degrees!

The pilot nods and the chopper tilts abruptly forwards. Santos hits the other switch and the second rocket screams away, this time hitting the speedboat square and blowing it to smithereens, showering the entire area in the splintered wood and fibreglass!

Santos shouts in triumph!

CUT TO:

EXT: RAILROAD BRIDGE: DAY

The bridge is soaked as water showers down from the explosions.

CUT TO:

EXT: CHOPPER: DAY

Santos squints at the bridge. He can't believe what he sees.

CUT TO:

EXT: BRIDGE: DAY

A form taking shape on the bridge in the downpour; Jesse on the tracks, pointing the shotgun at the chopper. Santos shouts at his henchman, who raises his machine pistol just as Jesse fires!

CUT TO:

EXT: CHOPPER: DAY

The henchman in the door of the chopper is hit! He falls through the air into the river as the chopper starts to rotate on its vertical axis. Santos grabs his machine pistol and turns to fire past the pilot through the far door at Jesse, but the chopper continues to rotate. Santos screams,

SANTOS
Get me a firing line!

CUT TO:

EXT: BRIDGE: DAY

Jesse doesn't have to wait, though. As the chopper rotates and presents its tail to him, he fires again!

CUT TO:

EXT: CHOPPER: DAY

The tail rotor's suddenly gone! Santos finally gets a shot at Jesse but the chopper bucks beneath him as the pilot fights to control it. There's another blast from the bridge, and the pilot's face dissolves in a fine mist of blood and bone!

Santos looks at what's left of him, terrified, then down at the water 30 feet below. Another blast from the bridge and the chopper starts to spin crazily. He jumps!

CUT TO:

EXT: BRIDGE: DAY

Jesse takes careful aim one more time and fires!

CUT TO:

EXT: CHOPPER: DAY

The Black Hawke erupts in an orange fireball!

CUT TO:

EXT: BRIDGE: DAY

The force of the blast knocks Jesse right off the bridge! the fireball reaches right out to the spot where he'd been standing!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

Allison and DeDan, twenty yards away, start swimming as fast as they can towards the bridge where they'd last seen Jesse as the thunderous cloud of flame and debris engulfs them.

The railroad bridge is now a twisted orange and black storm of fire. Burning hunks of wreckage rain from the heavens. Jesse surfaces in the midst of this inferno, gasping for air where there's only smoke. Water continues to fall where the center section of the bridge no longer exists.

He treads water, looking around, amazed at the amount of sheer destructive energy he's unleashed, at the very fact that he's alive. He turns at the bubbling spectacle of the piranha attacking one of the dead from the chopper. He grimaces.

Santos surfaces silently behind him, having lost his machine pistol in the fall. He treads water until he can get his bowie knife out of its sheath, then raises it high above his head and slams it down!

Missing Jesse completely as DeDan arrives in time knock his arm aside. Jesse turns and sees them struggling and swims over to join in, then hesitates when he sees the flashing blade. He turns to hiss at Allison,

JESSE

Get away! There's piranha!

He joins the fight, getting hold of Santos throat and forcing him beneath the surface. Allison doesn't move at all. She continues to tread water amidst the splintered wood of the bridge and the jagged plastic of the chopper's pontoons.

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDERWATER: DAY

Down below, both Jesse and DeDan have hold of him, but Santos is hugely strong and he has the only weapon. They grapple until Santos is able to kick DeDan away. He turns on Jesse.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

DeDan surfaces momentarily, gasping for one long breath, staring at Allison as he does so, then disappears again. Allison remains on the surface, face a cold angry mask. She finally says,

ALLISON

God forgive me.

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDERWATER: DAY

DeDan dives back into the fray, pulling the C-4 out of his shirt as he comes. Jesse holds Santos' knife hand by the wrist, but Santos is able to get several swipes close to Jesse's body.

When DeDan stuffs the C-4 inside the back of Santos' pants the man spins, trying to see what the hell he's done. Jesse can finally hit Santos' knife hand with his fist. The second time he does so- a great slow looping right- the knife comes free!

It seems to fall through the water ever so slowly, but it's too fast for Jesse, diving as fast as he can, to catch up with it. He finally has to turn back towards the surface, lungs burning.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

He bursts through to the surface and inhales an acrid lungful of smoky air. He starts coughing, then looks around, startled. Allison's gone. He dives down again.

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDERWATER: DAY

As he approaches he can just see that Santos has two hands on DeDan's throat. DeDan screams silently through the bubbles that issue from his mouth. Jesse swims as hard as he can, then stops, eyes wide, as Allison appears from the murky depths at the edge of vision and beats him to Santos.

She drags a piece of jagged plastic across Santos' throat, neatly severing the carotid artery and allowing a jet of blood to squirt 20 inches into the dirty water!

Santos abruptly lets go of DeDan and clamps a hand over his own neck, trying to stanch the flow of blood, but another jet seeps out through his fingers.

By then Jesse's on him, but Allison grabs his shirt, signalling with a thumb to get away from the bleeding man. Jesse nods and swims towards DeDan, who's so exhausted he needs help to make for the surface. Santos for his part swims for the surface as fast as he can!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

DeDan surfaces with a fierce gasp. Jesse surfaces beside him, sucking air. When Allison breaks into the daylight, they both turn to gaze at her, but neither says a word. They look towards Santos, swimming for shore as fast as he can with one hand.

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDERWATER: DAY

The first of the piranha hit the hand Santos' is holding over his wound where the most blood's in the water. The next among them slam into any other open skin they can find.

CUT TO:

EXT: BRIDGE.: DAY

The Americans swim hard for the bridge support and climb out of the water. They can hear Santos' scream from 60 feet away. They take positions on the other side of the stone pylon.

CUT TO:

EXT: UNDERWATER: DAY

Hundreds more piranha approach, mouths open, jagged teeth bared. There's no more exposed skin to attack, so the latecomers latch on to anything soft they can find, until nearly every square inch of Santos clothing is covered in roiling scales.

Finally they attack anything at all, hard or soft, including his belt and his shoes and the sheath for his knife and the solid little package in the seat of his pants. One after another, the rabid fish bury their teeth into this same spot, until...

Kaboom!

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVER: DAY

This explosion dwarfs those of the rockets and the chopper! The 3 pounds of plastique rock the earth, making the stone pylon dance like downtown Northridge.

CUT TO:

EXT: RIVERBANK: DAY

A small group of men- the Brazilian police the Captain had promised among them- stop their careful progress down the townside riverbank to stare in amazement at the explosion.

They start chattering in Portugese. It's clear that many of them want to turn back. Until a young American in A-16-wear asks,

AMERICAN

What's the problem now?

A tiny Brazilian in an impeccable suit gathers himself to say,

THE MAYOR

We're afraid your friends may not have survived such a cataclysm.

AMERICAN

Well we're goddamn well gonna go see, I'll tell you that.

He starts forward again. Then stops. When he sees up ahead in the swirling black smoke and steam the three Americans staggering towards him; Jesse and Allison with arms around each other, Allison holding DeDan's hand.

The whole group of them races forward.

CUT TO:

INT: HALLWAY: DAY

Jesse walks through a door marked in Portugese and English, Ministry of Justice, Part 12, into an oak-paneled hallway with marble floors. He's dressed in cowboy finery; black suit, string tie and a silver bolo in the shape of a heart.

He sees a uniformed guard standing beside DeDan and Allison, who sit on a much polished bench. DeDan's dressed to the nines in Armani. He's got a new pair of trendy sunglasses and a Rolex that looks exactly like the old one.

For the first time, we see Allison in the clothes she must've worn growing up; tan linen trousers and a pale silk shirt. Kind of Lauren Bacall in the tropics. DeDan asks,

DEDAN

What'd you tell 'em?

JESSE

That it was my fault. I should've inspected the tunnel myself. Why? What'd you say?

DEDAN

I said it was your fault, too.

Jesse turns to stare at him. DeDan grins.

DEDAN

No. I said if it was anybody's fault it was mine. Any good blaster knows not to walk away from a countdown.

DeDan shrugs.

DEDAN

That was so long ago. I felt like I was trying to remember someone else's life.

Jesse nods.

DEDAN

What do you think they'll do to us?

JESSE

Nothin'. Act of God.

The Clerk of the Court comes through the door and hunkers down in front of Jesse, murmuring something so softly that we can't hear it. When he's done Allison says out loud,

ALLISON
You want a bribe?!

The clerk frowns up at her, then at the uniformed guard who looks off into the distance as though he hadn't heard a word.

CLERK
A contribution. As I said. To the court's private charitable fund. I know it would help the court to think more kindly of your friends' roles in the...accident.

ALLISON
Pardon my ignorance, but isn't soliciting bribes illegal in this country?

Jesse puts a hand on her thigh to silence her. She looks down at the hand. So does the clerk of the court. Jesse starts undoing his money belt.

JESSE
How much of a contribution is this gonna take?

DEDAN
Oh, for Christ sake.

DeDan slips his new Rolex off his wrist and holds it out.

DEDAN
You're just another scumbag with a smooth rap. And you can tell the court for me he's a scumbag, too.

The clerk of the court takes the watch from him and nods.

OFFICER
Thank you.

DEDAN
Fuck you.

The clerk waves to the guard to follow him and they go back through the door. Jesse watches them leave, then turns back to look at Allison. She turns away to say quietly to DeDan,

ALLISON
You gave him your watch.

DEDAN

Fuck it. It has roman numerals.
You can't get the Arabic numerals
anymore. Not with the white face.

He starts rocking back and forth on his hands on the bench.

DEDAN

I hated it.

Jesse grins. Allison finally turns back to gaze at him. Cool.
Cool enough that his grin fades and he asks,

JESSE

What's the matter?

She glances at DeDan, then says as quietly as she can, trying
not to embarrass him but wanting to get the message through,

ALLISON

Don't ever put your hand on my
thigh to shut me up.

JESSE

Oh, come on, Allison.

ALLISON

I'm serious. I don't know where
you think I grew up but it wasn't
in a goddamn tavern.

He turns to DeDan and gazes skyward; a plea for sympathy both
kindred and celestial. DeDan watches him evenly, then turns to
smile at Allison.

DEDAN

You guys're gonna get along great.
I can tell.

ALLISON

Thank you.

DEDAN

You guys hungry, or what?

ALLISON

Yeah. He gets a little cranky when
he needs to be fed.

JESSE

Alright, alright, I get it. Ho ho
ho.

THE END.