

THE LOST CITY OF Z

WHITE LETTERS ON A BLACK SCREEN:

A TRUE STORY. Then we FADE IN ON:

THE CLOUDS.

We move down through the gray skies, toward lush green ground... We SETTLE ON: A MAN, on a GALLOPING HORSE.

PERCY HARRISON FAWCETT.

Late thirties and handsome. Strikes us as cheerful. A gentle voice, an even manner. Despite his cheer and charm, however, there is something steely about him, resolved, committed. His eyes reveal a far more complex person than the exterior might first allow; behind their twinkle there lurks a capacity for furious wrath and implacable resolution, the more dangerous because they are held in leash...

SUPERIMPOSE: "IRELAND, MARCH 1905".

EXT. CORK HARBOR, IRELAND - LATE DAY

A Fort: large and foreboding. A Church in the foreground.

SILHOUETTED, the sun behind: MOUNTED SOLDIERS ON HORSES, galloping in circles. PERCY FAWCETT is dressed impeccably atop his horse; he wears a crisp white uniform with gold buttons and a spiked helmet strapped under his chin. The mounted troops heckle one another; a YOUNG COCKNEY OFFICER rides by Fawcett, yelling:

YOUNG COCKNEY OFFICER
Hey, old man--lookin' a bit slow on
that horse!

Fawcett turns, confidently but gently swatting the opponent's horse's ass. He moves closer. Sotto; with intensity:

PERCY FAWCETT
Prepare for a proper beating, boy.

ANGLE ON: a BRITISH ARMY OFFICER. He is surrounded by the mounted soldiers, ready for a big moment. LOUDLY:

BRITISH ARMY OFFICER
Gentlemen! Honor, duty, and good
sportsmanship are the cornerstones
of our proud civilization!
(MORE)

BRITISH ARMY OFFICER (CONT'D)
 You are to behave accordingly on
 this hunt--the deer will be
 delivered to the Archduke at
 tomorrow's gala...

NEAR A WALL AT THE CHURCH: a GROUP OF WOMEN, seated. With
 umbrellas above their heads, fans in hand. One is holding a
 toddler: NINA FAWCETT, Fawcett's wife; JACK, 3, is his son.

*Nina Fawcett, thirty, is bubbly and flighty, but also highly
 cultured. Brash at times, she is a woman of independent
 curiosity.*

Fawcett sees them in the distance. He explodes in warmth,
 waves. Shouts, from afar, gesturing to the other troops:

PERCY FAWCETT
 They'll all be my gunbearers by
 evening!

NINA FAWCETT
 (into the child's ear)
 Wave, to your father--

She and the child wave enthusiastically back to Fawcett.

BRITISH ARMY OFFICER
 Gentlemen! Good luck and godspeed--

ANOTHER SOLIDER BLOWS a HORN:

BRITISH ARMY OFFICER (CONT'D)
 Begin!

Fawcett and the REST OF THE MEN ON HORSEBACK break out with
 great determination. Fawcett YELLS at, KICKS, his horse...

EXT. CORK HARBOR - FIELDS

A WILD DEER, a buck with big antlers, speeds through the
 grass. Dogs BARK CONSTANTLY, running through the terrain...

The PACK OF HORSES, FAWCETT AMONG THEM, chases behind. We
 HEAR the distant WHOOPS, the CHEERS, the HORNS, the
 EXULTATION of the MOUNTED TROOPS charging in pursuit of the
 deer...

PERCY FAWCETT is on his horse, HOOTING, as are the others...

THE DOGS run as though their lives depend on it, BARKING
 rabidly in pursuit... THE DEER is running because its life
 DOES depend on it... The horses are kicked until bloody...

FAWCETT'S HORSE tries to leap over a shrub; BUMPED BY ANOTHER MAN ON A HORSE. FAWCETT is thrown from his horse, his face bloodied. HE has LOST TWO TEETH. Without skipping a beat, he gets back on the saddle and continues the pursuit.

HORSE after HORSE tumbles from rough terrain, and many of the MEN--UNLIKE FAWCETT--are not able to continue...

FAWCETT kicks/whips his horse with astonishing drive, and does an end-run around many of his competitors, cutting them off. A PAUSE. Fawcett STOPS.

There is no path, only low-hanging trees and difficult terrain. Fawcett is ready to head into it. A COMPETING SOLDIER yells to Fawcett, concerned for his welfare:

COMPETING SOLDIER
Major! There's no path there!

PERCY FAWCETT
There will be!

COMPETING SOLDIER
MAJOR!

Fawcett turns into the rough shrubbery, with low-hanging trees that swat his face and chest. A brutal ride.

The deer, meanwhile, enters a nearby area of dense, tall grass. It runs in a circle, entangled by the weeds. The other troops are approaching the animal, far behind...

FAWCETT comes from the rough shrubbery, circles the area, and, with DOGS BARKING in the distance, SPOTS THE DEER.

The deer spots Fawcett. The animal feels cornered. Stares at Fawcett for a beat. THE ANIMAL BEGINS TO CHARGE.

THEN: Fawcett takes out his RIFLE... HE FIRES. The deer stumbles to the ground. JUST THEN, YOUNG SOLDIERS ARRIVE AT THE SCENE, dogs too. Fawcett watches the animal die, announces to the soldiers:

PERCY FAWCETT
You may bring it back yourselves.
You've my permission.

T.C. FISHER
You won't come with us, Major? The
Grande'es'd be mightily impressed!

PERCY FAWCETT
I've outgrown that sort of party,
Mr. Fisher.

One of the soldiers, examining the deer, calls out, "DEAD!".
Right before Fawcett departs, he looks at the deer.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
To death, then--the best sauce to
life... I'm off to my home...

And he rides off.

INT. FAWCETT CORK HARBOR HOME - ARMY BARRACKS - LATER

Music up: Luigi Boccherini's LA MUSICA NOTTURNA DI MADRID, a
warm and bright string quintet piece.

Lit mostly by candlelight, the space is dark and yet
tremendously inviting. A TERRIER paws about...

NINA FAWCETT is seated at a desk. WRITING. We SEE: around
her desk, posted, are LEAFLETS proclaiming, in bold: "THE
VOTE FOR WOMEN--NOW!"

Mementos from Percy's past lives surround the desk: A ROYAL
GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY DIPLOMA; the accumulated ITEMS and
PHOTOS from travels to Morocco and Hong Kong and CEYLON and
elsewhere. AND A BUDDHA, perched on the mantle...

FAWCETT ENTERS, still covered with a bit of dried blood.
THERE IS SINGING OUTSIDE, FROM THE TROOPS. We can hear it
clearly. With faux regality, he salutes, mouth now swollen.

PERCY FAWCETT
I have returned!

NINA FAWCETT
Good God, what's happened to your
mouth?

PERCY FAWCETT
I lost two of my teeth. It's all
right, they're in the back. I did
get the deer.

NINA FAWCETT
(ironic)
That's splendid.
(more serious, as she
takes his coat)
(MORE)

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)
I wish you'd take just a bit more
care, for once in your life.

Fawcett walks to the mantle, unceremoniously KISSES HIS INDEX
AND MIDDLE FINGERS and places his fingers on the small Buddha
statue's head.

PERCY FAWCETT
How's the child?

NINA FAWCETT
Asleep. Which you should be. He
was very excited to see you on your
horse.

PERCY FAWCETT
[It was] sweet of you to bring
him...

Fawcett sits on the couch; he rolls a cigarette and looks to
the NOISE from outside: the REGIMENT, still celebrating.
Back to his wife. With some reluctance:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
I must confess to you, I felt my
years catching up to me on the hunt
today.

NINA FAWCETT
That can't possibly concern you.
You outdid the youngest of them.

PERCY FAWCETT
I'm not concerned with the men--
I've nothing in common with them.
They're Young Turks, vying for
promotion--and they've never been
outside the gates of this fort.
(beat)
It's just...you and I've been
around the world and tasted the
exotic--thanks to the army, oddly
enough. It's left me wanting more.

NINA FAWCETT
(joking)
No doubt the boys here do look at
us and see a pair of old dreamers.

PERCY FAWCETT
They don't know how right they are.

He smiles, revealing missing teeth:

NINA FAWCETT
Try not to smile, please.

He then moves to her; she touches his cheek, at a whisper:

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)
You're still beautiful...

Nina puts her head in his chest. He strokes her hair.

Music up: "Che e cio," from Giuseppe Verdi's LA TRAVIATA, a forceful and upbeat waltz:

INT. FAWCETT HOME - ARMY BARRACKS - BEDROOM - DAY

PERCY FAWCETT, half-dressed up but still in undershirt, balancing a TOY TRAIN on his forehead. Son JACK is THRILLED, playing with him. We then GO TO:

NINA, who laughs as she gets into a VERY restrictive gown; TWO SERVANTS HELP HER SQUEEZE INTO THE DRESS.

INT. FORT - BALLROOM - NIGHT

The MUSIC CONTINUES. The camera BEGINS on a CLOSE SHOT of a WALTZING COUPLE, then PULLS BACK TO REVEAL:

A GALA for FRANZ FERDINAND, Archduke of Austria-Este and heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian throne. An enormous ballroom, with tens of couples dancing in seeming unison, twirling around and around, almost like dolls.

CLOSE SHOT: THE DEER. Laid out... THE ARCHDUKE STANDS in a receiving line with OFFICERS. SHAKES HANDS, SMILING.

ACROSS THE ROOM: PERCY AND NINA FAWCETT ENTER, their image reflected on a wall of mirrors. Fawcett nods greetings to his fellow officers; Nina SPEAKS GREETINGS in GERMAN to an officer from Austria.

Fawcett and Nina move to the center of the floor. Many recognize them; random PARTYGOERS pass by, say hello:

PARTYGOER #1
Good evening, Madame Nina...
Major...

The two acknowledge the hellos and then start dancing to the rhythm of the Verdi. Fawcett and Nina are fine dancers, blessed with grace but also training.

ANGLE BACK ON THE COMMANDING OFFICER of the Fort, here at the head of a receiving line. TROOPS ready the deer to present to the Archduke.

OFFICER

Colonel, may I introduce Franz Ferdinand, Archduke of Austria-Este.

COMMANDING OFFICER

Your majesty--I present to you this fine animal, a gift from our government to yours, and a recognition of our shared history and mutual interests.

The ARCHDUKE BOWS IN GRATITUDE, ACCEPTS THE DEER.

COMMANDING OFFICER (CONT'D)

Please--come--

The Commanding Officer ushers the Archduke toward an antechamber. As he does, the C.O. turns to a BRITISH ARMY OFFICER. Privately:

COMMANDING OFFICER (CONT'D)

Who got the kill yesterday, Lieutenant?

BRITISH ARMY OFFICER

(pointing)

That would be Major Fawcett, sir.

COMMANDING OFFICER

Well, invite him in!

BRITISH ARMY OFFICER

Sir--I'm not certain it's appropriate.

(moves closer)

He's not entirely...*fortunate* in his choice of ancestors.

COMMANDING OFFICER

Come again?

ANOTHER OFFICER peeks his head in, too:

ANOTHER OFFICER

Mother and father, sir. Trampled the family name, with drink and gaming.

BRITISH ARMY OFFICER
And his wife's a most frightful
suffragette--liable to start
preaching at the drop of a hat.

COMMANDING OFFICER
Good heavens.

FAWCETT AND NINA DANCE

Around and around. Fawcett SEES the receiving line and the officers entering a smaller antechamber. They are toasting each other. Nina sees the line too as they dance and turn:

NINA FAWCETT
They're giving over the deer
without you...

PERCY FAWCETT
It's all right. I'm dancing here
with you, so I've got the better of
that bargain.
(into her ear)
I'm going to request reassignment,
Cheeky. From the War Office. If
we stay here, we'll end up no
different than they.

NINA FAWCETT
What will you want?

PERCY FAWCETT
I'm not certain... I know only
it's not the monotony of the home
station.

A RANKING OFFICER, short and homely, cuts in:

RANKING OFFICER
May I, Major?

As is the custom, Fawcett bows gracefully, nods his assent, gives his wife to the Ranking Officer. Off they go.

Percy Fawcett backs into a darkened corner. Stands against the wall for a moment. Smiles at his wife as she dances with some unknown official. Then surveys the large room, the absurd rituals (hand-kissing, women waving fans, men bowing, etc.); he seems removed. Lights a cigar as NINA LOOKS AT HIM, dancing with a much shorter man and laughing about the awkwardness of it:

PERCY FAWCETT
 (under his breath)
 No more of this for you either, my
 dear...

The WALTZ CONTINUES...

EXT. NEAR FORT - MUDDY STREAM - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE: "APRIL, 1906".

Troops build a small bridge across a stream, standing knee-deep in the muddy water. Fawcett is SURVEYING, directing with his hand. Supervising is an OFFICER:

PERCY FAWCETT
 One and one-half yards, left...

OFFICER
 (to the grunts)
 Come on! Put your backs into it!

The OFFICER WHIPS A GRUNT. Fawcett sees this, cannot hide his distaste. Turning his back to the troops, in the Officer's face, he forcefully grabs the stick:

PERCY FAWCETT
 We lead the men--we don't beat them
 into submission.

OFFICER
 (ashamed)
 Yes, sir...

Then an OFFICER BARKS from near the Fort:

BARKING OFFICER
 Fawcett!

EXT. GATE

Fawcett approaches the BARKING OFFICER, salutes:

PERCY FAWCETT
 Sir!

BARKING OFFICER
 Your application for transfer's
 come through--you're off to London
 tomorrow. Royal Geographical
 Society's been asking for you.

PERCY FAWCETT
 (brightens)
 Right, thank you, sir!

The Barking Officer turns and leaves an excited Fawcett standing there. A SEATED OLDER OFFICER, surrounded by other higher-ups, all smoking their pipes:

SEATED OFFICER
 Best bring your long johns. You might be off to the North Pole.

ANGLE ON FAWCETT as we GO TO:

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

London, 1906. Busy, cluttered, noisy, dirty. We PAN TO REVEAL a TOWNHOUSE in CENTRAL LONDON, with a sign in front: "ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY". Fawcett approaches, enters.

INT. RGS OFFICE - DAY

A big wooden space. Regal. Standing behind his desk: SIR GEORGE GOLDIE. Goldie is near sixty, with intense blue eyes and a keen intelligence. Fawcett enters. Goldie does not look up from his notes. After an awkward beat, he KNOCKS:

PERCY FAWCETT
 Sir? I'm Major Fawcett--the War Office sent me?

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
 Yes yes. Please come in.

Fawcett does, across from Goldie, who sits behind a desk. Goldie sticks out his hand to be shaken.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (CONT'D)
 Sir George Goldie. President of the RGS.
 (as they shake)
 Our paths did not cross during your work here some years back, did they?

PERCY FAWCETT
 No sir. I was quite consumed with my studies at the time. I do apologize.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Oh, it's all right... The War Office forwarded us a request you made some time ago, for a mission. You've gone on several in the past, I see...

PERCY FAWCETT

I have, sir. I've served in the artillery in Ceylon, and in Hong Kong as well--

Goldie looks down at a stack of papers. Interrupting:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Yes yes, I have all that. It also says here you were a spy, in Morocco?

PERCY FAWCETT

I was. Looked after the Sultan-- not a particularly reliable character, if I may say so.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Mmm...I've heard a good deal about you. Word is you're quite capable, but tend to have your head in the clouds. I've also heard rumors you went Buddhist in Ceylon--such an act would of course be seditious.

PERCY FAWCETT

Sir, no one should question my commitment to King and country. My experience in the Orient has taught me always to pursue what is different. But I've always accomplished my goals. And I make no apologies for opening my eyes to the rest of the world.

Goldie eyes Fawcett for a moment, and seems to warm. Then:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Well, good then. We've a mission, and it's an important one. What do you know about Bolivia?

PERCY FAWCETT

(surprised)

Bolivia? You mean South America? Just what I've read.

Goldie chuckles. An atlas is put in front of Fawcett.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Then you can't know very much.
This's about as good a map of
Bolivia as we have.

The map literally says "UNEXPLORED". Referring to the map:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (CONT'D)

Most of it's blank, as you can see.
Nothing's really known of it at
all. The rivers are all guesswork.
These are rubber centers here--very
profitable. Some are even
apparently quite lavish and under
the control of civilized people.

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes, I was aware the rubber trade
was crucial in that part of the
world.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Indeed it is. And there is now
considerable argument between
Bolivia and Brazil, over what
constitutes their borders. So
fantastically high is the price of
rubber that war could arise. Do
you follow?

PERCY FAWCETT

I do, but--with respect, I'm not
sure what this has to do with me.
Sir.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

I'm getting to that.

Goldie moves closer to Fawcett, to the edge of the desk:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (CONT'D)

Neither country will accept mapping
done by the other, so they've
requested *us* to act--as referee.
As you completed your courses in
mapping here with distinction, you
came under our consideration.

PERCY FAWCETT

I see...

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
What is it?

PERCY FAWCETT
To be honest sir, I was hoping for
more than just survey work.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
(moves still closer)
This is far more than just survey
work, Major. It's exploration.
The environment will be brutally
difficult. There's terrible
disease, and the savages there have
quite a bad reputation. It's going
to be dangerous; it may well mean
your life. But should you succeed,
such an undertaking could mean
great renown for both you and your
family.
(leans back)
You know, I knew your father.

PERCY FAWCETT
Did you. I did not.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
I'm aware of your circumstances.
Success in this venture could go a
considerable distance in reclaiming
your family's reputation. You're
getting on in years now...you're
not likely to get another chance.

Fawcett looks back down at the map. "UNEXPLORED".

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (CONT'D)
Well, Fawcett? What's it going to
be? Are you interested?

ANGLE ON FAWCETT as he looks up. A smile, and we CUT TO:

EXT. FAWCETT HOME - ARMY BARRACKS - DAY

It's the back of the house. Hanging bedsheets billow in the
soft wind as servants do the cleaning. A housekeeper is
tending to the elaborate and beautiful garden with Fawcett's
son, Jack. She places plants in his hand, and he pushes them
into the dirt.

We HEAR:

PERCY FAWCETT (O.S.)
They've come to me with a mission.

EXT. IRELAND - NEARBY BLUFFS - LATE DAY

Fawcett and Nina are on the bluffs.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
To go to the Bolivian jungle and
map the borders. It'll be a long
time--years, I think. And I'm to
go alone.

Nina seems CRUSHED and CANNOT HIDE IT DESPITE ALL ATTEMPTS:

NINA FAWCETT
Years...?

PERCY FAWCETT
Yes. But we knew we might have to
be apart--it's the way things are.

NINA FAWCETT
Of course... One expects it...

He senses she is remote:

PERCY FAWCETT
Cheeky, you do understand--if we're
ever to escape life in the fort,
this is our last opportunity.
(beat; slightly sheepish)
And...it might also help restore
the family name--for the sake of
our son.
(beat)
Cheeky? What is it?

NINA FAWCETT
I believe I'm carrying another
child.

He is frozen. Almost under his breath:

PERCY FAWCETT
That's...wonderful...

NINA FAWCETT
I know you can't refuse them--you
must go.

She brightens, approaches him. Grabs his hands.

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 I'm an independent woman. I'll
 merely have the baby in your
 absence.

He kisses her hand, touches her abdomen. Sotto voce:

PERCY FAWCETT
 I'll miss all of you, so very
 much...

INT. FAWCETT HOME - ARMY BARRACKS - BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Still dark. Fawcett is packed and ready to go. A SHOT OF HIS SUITCASES. Fawcett stands just outside Jack's bedroom. Turns around to see his wife. Nina's back is to us; she is about to put Fawcett's coat over his suitcase, but instead chooses to caress the coat with enormous tenderness. As though the coat were a living thing, a beautiful child...

He comes up behind her, touches her shoulders. She turns, and, matter-of-factly, without self-pity:

NINA FAWCETT
 One more kiss, please. We may
 never meet again.

But A VOICE interrupts:

JACK FAWCETT (O.C.)
 Papa?

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM

Fawcett enters the bedroom, stands over his son. Whispered:

PERCY FAWCETT
 It's still very early, my boy. You
 should go back to sleep.

JACK FAWCETT
 Where are you going?

PERCY FAWCETT
 Far away, I'm afraid. You're to
 look after your mother.

JACK FAWCETT
 I want to come.

Fawcett sits at the edge of the bed:

PERCY FAWCETT
Darling, it's no place for
children.

JACK FAWCETT
But I want to come with you, papa--

PERCY FAWCETT
Perhaps someday you will.

Nina enters from behind them.

NINA FAWCETT
Jack, give your father his present.

Jack grins, reaches under his pillow, gives his father a small box. Inside: a gold ring. It's all Fawcett can do to not burst into tears. He begins to get choked up:

PERCY FAWCETT
It's--it's lovely.

An inscription is on it: NEC ASPERA TERRENT.

JACK FAWCETT
What do the words say, Papa?

PERCY FAWCETT
It means, "difficulties be damned".
(beat)
Thank you so much for my beautiful
gift. When I see you next, you'll
be ready to sit a horse.

NINA FAWCETT
Now give your father a proper kiss
so that he may be on his way...

They boy sits up; Fawcett hugs, kisses him tightly as Nina looks on. TEARS BEGIN TO STREAM DOWN FAWCETT'S CHEEKS, but he SMILES TO THE CHILD THROUGH THE TEARS. A SHIP HORN:

EXT. OCEAN - OCEAN LINER - DUSK

A ship steams on the ocean. The S.S. PANAMA.

INT. OCEAN LINER - HOLD

Fawcett sits in the cramped, dirty hold, which is filled with toughs and scoundrels.

Meanwhile, he looks prim and clean-cut in a starched white collar, focused intently on a SPANISH LANGUAGE BOOK. Passengers drink whiskey, spit tobacco, play dice. And sing in a drunken stupor.

A PICKPOCKET is reaching around, attempting to filch something out of Fawcett's hanging coat.

Fawcett SEES this in the REFLECTION of a CHROME BAR on the side of the CHAIR; he wraps his hands around a handkerchief, and with great speed, he pulls it around the neck of the Pickpocket and yanks him forward. Pulls out his REVOLVER.

PERCY FAWCETT

I should think twice if I were you.

The PICKPOCKET simply withdraws his hand. ANOTHER MAN, clutching a rifle, catches Fawcett's eye. Fawcett goes back to his reading...

EXT. OCEAN LINER - DECK - BRIGHT DAY

Fawcett, smoking on the deck. Looks out at the ocean. It's chilly but beautiful. A BIG FIGHT breaks out between two DRUNKS. Fawcett turns to look.

IN THE DISTANCE, ON THE DECK: he SPOTS the MAN with the rifle again, now slung on his back. Stocky. About 5' 8". And the man is staring back at him. Odd. Slightly suspicious.

Fawcett walks around, to the other side of the ship. And the MAN APPEARS AGAIN. AGAIN, staring at him.

Fawcett walks up the stairs, to an observation deck. Waits a beat. TURNS. ACROSS THE WAY, on another deck: THE MAN. LOOKING AT HIM.

INT. OCEAN LINER - FRONT DECK

Inside now, Fawcett walks around the windowed front deck. Through the glass, he SEES the MAN.

INT. OCEAN LINER - PANTRY

Fawcett walks around the deck and opens a door. He ducks into a pantry. Dark. Pulls out his weapon. Through the frosted glass window in the door, we see a SILHOUETTE approach. A beat, as the silhouette looks inside.

The DOORKNOB moves. Fawcett pulls out his revolver. Aims it, HEAD-HIGH.

The door opens and the man comes in. Instantly, Fawcett presses the gun against the man's temple. Fawcett turns on the light, a solitary bulb that is turned on or off by a string. The light SWINGS, back and forth.

PERCY FAWCETT

Don't move. Who are you?

He is CORPORAL HENRY COSTIN, twenties. Short and stocky, with a bold Kiplingesque mustache and heavily-hooded eyes. Exceptionally fit, having been a gymnastics instructor in the Army. Costin's hands go up.

HENRY COSTIN

Corporal Henry Costin, sir--I'll be your aide-de-camp on the mission.

PERCY FAWCETT

We've been at sea a whole week--why've you not revealed yourself until now?

HENRY COSTIN

Had to make certain you were up to the task, sir. I'm not looking to get killed because you're too long in the tooth.

PERCY FAWCETT

And if I were?

HENRY COSTIN

Then I would assume command. Sir. I, I wasn't planning to hurt you.

PERCY FAWCETT

I assumed as much. You're carrying that ridiculous rifle.

Fawcett backs up, faces Costin. Said as a command:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Your paperwork.

Costin reaches into his coat, pulls out a stack of paper, along with a small whiskey flask. And a small, tarnished medal with a ribbon. Fawcett looks at it:

HENRY COSTIN

It's a medal. For bravery, against the Boer.

(beat)

(MORE)

HENRY COSTIN (CONT'D)
I'm skilled, with both pistol and
rifle, as you can see.

Fawcett reaches to his left, takes a dish towel off a shelf.
Wraps it around the gun, leaving the tip exposed. He hands
it to Costin:

PERCY FAWCETT
The cup there, on that shelf--do
you see it?

Costin turns, FIRES THE GUN. The CUP SHATTERS. He gives the
gun back to Fawcett.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
You've a family, Mr. Costin?

HENRY COSTIN
Not close.

PERCY FAWCETT
Good. Nothing to shed.

HENRY COSTIN
You do, I take it then?

PERCY FAWCETT
A wife and one child, with another
on the way. You may sit down now.

HENRY COSTIN
I must say, I'm quite excited for
our mission, sir. Should be a real
adventure!

PERCY FAWCETT
After a week in the jungle your
enthusiasm may not last. You're
not going to go all wobbly on me,
are you?

HENRY COSTIN
Not me, sir. I'm a tough bugger
who hates bullshit.

PERCY FAWCETT
Very well. Because once we're
there, we'll not let up for a
moment. You'll need every last bit
of fortitude you've got.

Fawcett takes Costin's whiskey flask.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
And you'll need no more Dutch
courage.

As Fawcett pours it into a nearby sink in the pantry, sotto:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
It's destroyed many a fine man...

The alcohol runs along the sink bottom. We MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. BOLIVIAN PLAIN - NIGHT

A TRAIN rockets through the area.

INT. TRAIN

A crummy and cramped and loud interior. Filled with Bolivian and indigenous peoples. Fawcett talks inaudibly with a Bolivian briefly, then walks toward a seat, holding a map in his hand. Costin is seated, READING A NEWSPAPER. THE HEADLINE: "SHACKLETON, MURRAY TO SOUTH POLE". Fawcett joins him in the empty seat. Opens the map:

PERCY FAWCETT
Our first stop in the jungle is a rubber center, called Santa Cruz. It's a river town, meant to be quite civilized and enchanting. A Corporal Manley will be waiting for us there. We'll meet up with our Indian guide and hire the rest of our crew. After that, we're to map the Verde River and find its source. It forms the border between Brazil and Bolivia. Now-- there are two potential routes into the jungle. The first is longer but safer. The other is far shorter but involves crossing the Andes at a higher and more perilous point.

(as he folds the map)
I would remind you, time is of the essence.

HENRY COSTIN
Never been shy of danger myself, sir. The short route for me.

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes, it's the one I chose for us two weeks ago. You and I are going to have to depend on each other. Neither of us will survive this alone.

(beat)

Are you game?

HENRY COSTIN

Indeed I am, Major.

PERCY FAWCETT

One more thing: you should be prepared. It's liable to be brutally hot.

EXT. THE ANDES MOUNTAINS - DAY

It's FREEZING. Snowing, a blizzard. Fawcett and Costin, over the Andes.

A BLIZZARD. The men can see only a few yards ahead of themselves. Rocks slip under their feet to reveal a precipitous drop, down the gorges. They each have a mule, and each man holds the mule's straps. Another mule, with many supplies for the men, lags behind:

PERCY FAWCETT

We've got to reach the river by June--don't fall behind!

HENRY COSTIN

Where is this goddamned jungle, anyway?

Fawcett stops, looks at his map. He proclaims the goal, pointing over the mountains:

PERCY FAWCETT

Approximately 240 miles, north-northeast.

Fawcett turns and starts walking again. Continually kidding with Fawcett, almost singing his dialog:

HENRY COSTIN

On our way to our Santa Cruz paradise... But this is no easy trip is it, granddad! And you're a little past it now...

(MORE)

HENRY COSTIN (CONT'D)

I see you getting a little heavy-footed there...

AND THEN COSTIN SLIPS. FINDS HIMSELF HANGING OFF A DEEP DEEP CLIFF. A drop of hundreds of feet.

BUT: he has had the presence of mind to hold onto the mule's head strap. Incredibly, the mule braces itself uneasily on the ledge and doesn't fall. Still, beyond precarious, and the dirt and snow on the edge are crumbling...

As Costin hangs in the balance, over the cliff, he looks down. It is beyond horrifying, the drop.

UP AHEAD: Fawcett is using a piece of surveying equipment as the wind howls around him. Charting a map and taking a barometric reading. After a beat, he turns around because the insults have stopped. Nothing. No sign of Costin.

PERCY FAWCETT

Mr. Costin? Costin!

Fawcett stares into the WHITENESS. It's all he can see. He walks directly INTO IT, DISAPPEARING before our eyes...

BACK TO COSTIN.

The strap is beginning to give. The mule is struggling with Costin's weight. The HOOFS of the mule are on the edge of the cliff now, and the animal is beginning to slide, the earth beneath it giving way.

Costin's grip on the strap is loosening... AND THEN we HEAR FAWCETT'S VOICE, obscured by the WHITE.

PERCY FAWCETT'S VOICE

Give me your hand!

HENRY COSTIN

I can't see!

Costin reaches up, misses Fawcett's outstretched arm.

PERCY FAWCETT VOICE

Try again! I'll get you!

Tries again, and Fawcett's hand comes out of the white and grabs him. The dirt is giving way under Fawcett's feet. Fawcett pushes back, hard. Pulls Costin up, onto the ledge. The MULE, HOWEVER, slides off the edge of the ledge.

It falls off the cliff. IN SILENCE. Plunges far and deep... FALLING...for many seconds...TUMBLING... TO ITS DEATH...

However, Costin has been saved. Panting, still at the edge of the cliff but safely sitting next to Fawcett now, he has the look of a SHATTERED INDIVIDUAL. Fawcett, however, seems controlled, even-tempered.

PERCY FAWCETT

At least you've still got your rifle. If we're to make it to the river, we'll have to split my supplies--you may take half.

HENRY COSTIN

Much obliged, sir.

(badly shaken)

Thank God for that mule...

Terrible accident--I'm sorry.

PERCY FAWCETT

(a brief warm smile)

Apologize to the mule, Mr. Costin.

Fawcett stands, brushes himself off. Helps up Mr. Costin...

EXT. THE ANDES - SMALL CLUSTER OF HUTS - DAY

No more blizzard, a blue sky. An enormous plateau. But snow on the ground and lots of wind. Fawcett and Costin approach a small hut near a large pool of water. An outpost of some kind. As they approach, two BOLIVIAN OFFICERS exits the hut.

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)

(broken Spanish)

Good morning...

(after the officers nod)

We're here from the International Boundary Commission, to chart the borders.

Fawcett hands the officer some papers.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

You're to have expected us.

Then, after the Officer takes a look at them, he turns to Officer #2, who spins around and retreats to the hut.

BOLIVIAN OFFICER #1 (SUBTITLE)

You're going down to the Amazon?

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)

Yes. We're mapping the Verde River.

(MORE)

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
 We'd like to use your telegraph
 machine, if we could--our
 government and families await news.

BOLIVIAN OFFICER #1 (SUBTITLE)
 The telegraph isn't working.

Then Bolivian Officer #2 reappears, holding a BURLAP SACK.
 Costin takes the sack, hands it to Fawcett.

BOLIVIAN OFFICER #2 (SUBTITLE)
 Mail. For you.

BOLIVIAN OFFICER #1 (SUBTITLE)
 There are savages in the jungle.
 Do you know this?

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)
 We do. But we'll have an Indian
 guide to help us.

BOLIVIAN OFFICER #2 (SUBTITLE)
 Guides are tame Indians. The
 jungle has the beasts. And there
 are so many of them they even dare
 to attack us when we have our guns.
 To go up into the middle of them is
 madness.

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)
 Well, if we do not, you may find
 yourself at war with the Brazilian.

Officer #2 LETS OUT A LAUGH. Then Officer #1 STARTS TO LAUGH
 AS WELL. Through hearty LAUGHTER:

BOLIVIAN OFFICER #2 (SUBTITLE)
 Out here it makes no difference!

Costin is appalled by their insouciance.

HENRY COSTIN
That's the bridge to the great
 Santa Cruz?

In the distance, Fawcett sees a ramshackle bridge. Betrays
 no fear. Back to the Officers:

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)
 Thank you for our mail.

Unceremoniously, the Bolivians reenter the hut. The camera
 PANS OVER to REVEAL: A FOOTBRIDGE, high up in the mountains.

EXT. CHASM - FOOTBRIDGE - LATER

The bridge is pathetic. Strung together with palmetto slats and rotten wood and cables, stretched a hundred yards over a gorge and swinging wildly in the wind, it moves like a shredded flag. There appears no chance of making it. Costin tries to lead his mule, meeting Fawcett who has arrived moments earlier. COSTIN'S MULE REFUSES to move toward the bridge, bucking and crying. Fawcett has a letter in his hand. He is looking down.

Costin seems petrified. Fawcett is reading his mail. In his own world, totally poker-faced...

HENRY COSTIN

Sir? SIR?

PERCY FAWCETT

(finally; calmly:)

My wife's had a baby. A boy, named Brian.

HENRY COSTIN

Sir, congratulations, but--

Fawcett folds up the letter. Puts it in his pocket. Without missing a beat, turns to Costin, re the mules:

PERCY FAWCETT

Blindfold the animals, please.

Costin is frozen. A beat. Then:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? Blindfold them and they'll cross.

(no answer)

What is it, Coporal...?

HENRY COSTIN

You've got a whole family, Major. There's no use in deserting them for an end like this. If you want to turn around now, I'll stand by you. We'll take the other route--

PERCY FAWCETT

(interrupting him)

The natives have used this bridge for years!

HENRY COSTIN

Major--

Fawcett charges up to him:

PERCY FAWCETT

You've been in battle, haven't you--
you're so very young and fit! And
here you are, weak in the knees?

(points to the bridge)

You and I are going to do our duty
and get to the jungle! Now shut
your bloody mouth and blindfold
that animal!

Fawcett spins around and grabs a small blanket that was
mounted on one of the mules. He blindfolds the mule, then
boldly, fearlessly, starts to walk on the bridge. It is
beyond horrifying. SWAYING TO AND FRO, HUNDREDS OF FEET OVER
A GORGE.

As FAWCETT STEPS on one plank to the next, many snap beneath
his feet. He walks on every third plank, assuring Costin and
the mules they will have their own planks to break. The
broken shards of wood travel down, hundreds of feet down...

The bridge sways in the wind.

And then the rope that holds each end of the bridge to each
side begins to strain. CREAK.

Fawcett and his mule are almost to the other side. He turns
back to Costin, who has yet to approach the bridge.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Costin, the faster we get across,
the faster we may return home!

Henry Costin starts to breathe heavily. He sends the mule
FIRST, slapping it forward.

The mule bucks a bit. Not being led, it stops on the bridge.
It's really ready to fall... Fawcett comes back on the
bridge and leads the mule. Now, it's FAWCETT and BOTH OF THE
MULES over the bridge.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Together we can make it!

(beat)

If you stay there we'll both die!

Fawcett's right. Costin looks behind him. Looks down at the drop. Sees both Fawcett AND the animals have made it. He steels himself:

HENRY COSTIN
(to himself)
Fuck it.

Costin grabs the rope "guardrail" and closes his eyes. HE WALKS ONTO THE BRIDGE. The bridge is not secure; the rope is now unraveling...

HE runs across now, wood breaking beneath his feet. The BRIDGE SEEMS READY TO COLLAPSE...

TWENTY YARDS LEFT, the WOOD SNAPPING BENEATH HIS FEET... TEN YARDS LEFT, FIVE YARDS LEFT...

Costin just makes it as the BRIDGE, certainly the worse for wear, DOES NOT COLLAPSE... He GRABS ONTO A TREE, panting. Looks up at Fawcett, who takes out his machete. Fawcett eyes Costin, who is ecstatic.

HENRY COSTIN (CONT'D)
We made it... *We made it--*

PERCY FAWCETT
Course you did. You're carrying
all our maps.

HENRY COSTIN
(stands; in awe of F)
Chief, I'm with you now--come what
may!

PERCY FAWCETT
Good man. Here.

Fawcett throws Costin a machete and then turns to the brush. He starts hacking away branches that block the trail... Costin joins Fawcett...

EXT. MOUNTAINS - LATER

Around boulders and cliffs. Looking down, Fawcett spots a different kind of vegetation--GREEN. The SOUNDS begin to change, too--much less wind, much more active with insects...

Fawcett is sweating a little. It is starting to get hot. There are rivulets that all seem to be flowing downhill and gaining steam.

Percy Fawcett's EYES WIDEN AT THE SIGHT OF THE RIVER, and he charges down the path with fervor, Costin far behind:

PERCY FAWCETT

Mr. Costin! We've reached the river!

The Amazon river, a mere TRICKLE, is a stream right now, nothing big--yet. Still a dribble, as the men run and slide alongside of it.

THERE IS OVERGROWN VEGETATION BLOCKING THE VIEW on the path.

Fawcett starts to HACK AWAY with his machete. With an astonishing furor. WE PAN WITH HIM with each BLOW. Finally, a clearing.

REVEALING: AMAZONIA.

A VAST GREEN. The JUNGLE, which engulfs the riverbanks of the magnificent AMAZON RIVER. It is beautiful and beguiling, and so enormous it fills one with awe.

Costin comes up behind him, looking over Fawcett's shoulder.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

It's even grander than one could imagine...

HENRY COSTIN

'Tis indeed, sir.

Fawcett goes right back to putting up a steely front. He starts going through his things. But he cannot hide his excitement.

PERCY FAWCETT

We'll follow its course by land. Past Santa Cruz, we go by water. As we discussed, we keep only the essentials--your hammock, your mosquito net, and the survey equipment. And of course, your beloved rifle.

HENRY COSTIN

What about food, sir?

Fawcett thinks for a moment, then:

PERCY FAWCETT

We'll live off the land, as best we can...

INT. JUNGLE

The camera MOVES THROUGH THE GROWTH, the POINT-OF-VIEW of our characters...

The SOUNDS of the jungle are loud and yet oddly soothing. It should be clear to us from the noises that nature has taken over. BUZZING of unidentifiable creatures...

SERIES OF SHOTS

Of monkeys and birds and snakes and spiders and frogs...

Fawcett, Costin ENTER THE JUNGLE in SILENCE... ONLY THE RUMBLE OF THUNDER... THUNDER, but no RAIN. YET.

INT. JUNGLE - LATER

Fawcett and Costin's feet sink in mud...

Sweat pours off their faces; terrible HEAT... SWARMING INSECTS... SAUBA ANTS... TICKS... CHIGGERS...

Percy Fawcett BREATHEs heavily but HACKS away with his machete, leading the way. Occasionally, he stops to check a map, takes out his surveying equipment. He calls out:

PERCY FAWCETT

Twenty-nine degrees, 16 minutes,
south of the equator--

SMACK. Fawcett hits his own neck. BUGS, which force the men constantly to be swatting their arms and necks.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

I shouldn't be killing them--I
should be taking bloody notes.

HENRY COSTIN

Chief?

PERCY FAWCETT

(preoccupied)

It's part of the mission; any
discovery of a scientific nature--

HENRY COSTIN

Chief--

PERCY FAWCETT
 (brought back to reality)
 Yes, Mr. Costin. What is it?

Costin points down. Fawcett SEES a track of FOOTPRINTS.
 Looking around, they SPOT:

THROUGH THE TREES AND THE BRANCHES AND THE SHRUBS: INDIANS.
 STILL. SILENTLY WATCHING THEM.

Fawcett stares STRAIGHT INTO THE EYES of ONE OF THE INDIANS.
 He then gestures to Costin to KEEP MOVING. He and Costin
 both put their hands on their guns as they begin to plod ever
 slower through the greenery.

THE INDIANS OBSERVE FAWCETT AND COSTIN with an astonishing
 stillness; almost like statues.

Fawcett SEES A SEA OF SHRUNKEN HEADS, hanging from trees.

HENRY COSTIN
 (whispered)
[Are] They cannibals?

Fawcett shakes his head just a touch, as if to say, "I do not
 know." A bright YELLOW SNAKE slithers around Fawcett's feet.
 Fawcett steps over it with grace, and signals to Costin to
 keep walking...

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

A TORRENT OF BATS OVERHEAD... THEN SILENT AGAIN.

AND THEN FAWCETT AND COSTIN HEAR IT: OPERA MUSIC.

At first, it is distant. Then, less faint, and as they
 progress, one can even tell the piece: from Gaetano
Donizetti's DON PASQUALE. Both men wonder if they're crazy.

They reach a clearing, slowly but surely making their way
 through the gauntlet of Indians. And what do they see but...

EXT. CLEARING

A SMALL OPERA HOUSE. Here, in the middle of the jungle.
 Positively surreal. Fawcett turns to the Indians, who are
 surrounding the two men. In Spanish:

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)
 This is Santa Cruz, is it not?
 (beat)
 Do you understand?

They don't answer. Instead, they back up, melting away back into the jungle. Fawcett enters the:

INT. OPERA HOUSE - AUDITORIUM

Fawcett surveys the scene. MAGNIFICENTLY APPOINTED. Italian marble, Bohemian glass, chandeliers, murals.

Poorly attended, but you'd never know it listening to the singers and the full orchestra. A smattering of people dressed to the nines in the audience.

In the back rows, Indians sit, quietly, listening to the music. A bizarre sight indeed. A DIMINUTIVE LATINO MAN dressed in a tuxedo approaches Fawcett. In Spanish:

DIMINUTIVE LATINO MAN (SUBTITLE)
 (cheerful, almost like an advertisement)
 Welcome to the Grand Opera House of beautiful Santa Cruz--thanks to our great Col. Ramalles and the Inca Mining Company. Do you have your ticket?

Fawcett looks at him amidst the madness and turns to Costin, cheered by the fact they've gotten to Santa Cruz:

PERCY FAWCETT
 I think it's time we found our guide.

EXT. SANTA CRUZ - RAINY AND THUNDERING NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: "SANTA CRUZ, BOLIVIA. JUNE, 1906".

The RAIN begins to FALL. HARD. FAR FROM THE ELEGANT PLACE THEY'D EXPECTED. Fawcett enters this nightmare of a rubber town, with Costin right behind.

Fawcett sees that this is not much more than a strip of mud with bamboo huts with two notable exceptions: the opera house and a RUBBER BARON'S LARGE HOME, which sits higher on a hill overlooking the city. Shockingly miserable. FIRES all over--in cans, campfires, fires incinerating garbage and remains...

The presence of the Inca Mining Company is clear, with their corporate logo painted on several of the huts.

Fawcett turns, eyes: RAILROAD TRACKS that lead to nowhere. BOLIVIAN ARMY OFFICERS line the fronts of the huts, "on the nod," drunk, all of it. Costin speaks up:

HENRY COSTIN

This can't be the bloody city--*can it?!*

Then, running down the "road," comes: BRITISH OFFICER ARTHUR MANLEY, early twenties, young and cheery but slightly frail. Fawcett is still stunned by the misery as Manley begins:

ARTHUR MANLEY

Major Fawcett! We received word a white man was on the way and I guessed it was you!

(introducing himself)

Lance Corporal Manley, sir.

PERCY FAWCETT

How do you do... This is Corporal Costin...

ARTHUR MANLEY

Good evening... We just got your mail, but you weren't expected for another fortnight!

As Fawcett looks at Costin, as if to say, "My God, this is a terrible place," Fawcett says:

PERCY FAWCETT

There's no time to waste, Corporal...

(back directly to Manley)

Where are the government offices?

ARTHUR MANLEY

Sir, I'm afraid you've left government behind a long time ago.

Fawcett starts to ride through the town. The others follow.

ARTHUR MANLEY (CONT'D)

Looks like I'm going with you to chart the Verde River, eh? I've assembled a team of men from here in the village. They're desperados, but reliable--exiles mostly, from our part of the world.

PERCY FAWCETT

I received a cable some weeks ago
about an Indian guide--goes by the
name Tadjui. Is he here?

ANGLE ON MANLEY as he stops. He turns stone-faced.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Did you hear me, Corporal? Is he
here?

A VOICE, in Spanish, then English:

A VOICE (O.S.)

Cattle! Coming through!

EXT. HUT - OPEN VERANDA - NEAR THE BANKS OF THE RIVER

A LONG LINE of YOUNG MEN, INDIANS, lumbering, HEADS DOWN, in
CHAINS, through the TOWN. Getting off a RIVERBOAT that's
beached. Our men are here: Fawcett, Costin, Manley.
Whispered to Fawcett:

ARTHUR MANLEY

I think he's one of them now, sir.
I can't be sure.

Fawcett steps out to observe. Guards with whips motivate the
line of men. A CUSTOMS OFFICER is here.

PERCY FAWCETT

Who are they?

ARTHUR MANLEY

Slaves. Kidnapped from the jungle
and brought here for the rubber
company.

Fawcett is appalled, his face souring instantly. He points
to a SILHOUETTE OF A MAN on HORSEBACK, 100 yards up the hill:

PERCY FAWCETT

What about him?

CUSTOMS OFFICER

It is Colonel Ramalles, from the
Inca Mining company.

Fawcett begins to walk toward Ramalles. Costin runs up to
Fawcett. In his ear:

HENRY COSTIN
Chief--where're you going?

PERCY FAWCETT
He's got men we're going to hire.

HENRY COSTIN
But--they're *slaves*!

PERCY FAWCETT
Yes. We'll save as many as we can
and set them free when we're done.

HENRY COSTIN
As many as we can?!?

PERCY FAWCETT
It's the most we can do under these
circumstances.

HENRY COSTIN
But we've got to report it--

PERCY FAWCETT
(loses a bit of patience)
To whom, Corporal? To whom? Have
you taken a look around?
(beat)
We're the only hope they've got,
meager as it is!

Costin realizes Fawcett is right. Fawcett takes several
steps out, into the rain:

EXT. RIVERBANK

COLONEL RAMALLES, forty, a stocky and imperious sort, remains
mounted on his horse, several yards away. The Bolivian
Infantry is here, surrounding (guarding?) him. Fawcett moves
to him.

Ramalles is an imposing figure, to be sure. He has a pet
JAGUAR, who stands alongside the horse.

PERCY FAWCETT
Colonel, we're from the British
Army. We're going to be venturing
down the Rio Verde as peacekeepers
and we're in need of some of your
men.

No response from Ramalles' silhouette through the rain.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
In exchange, I'm prepared to tell
my government of your cooperation.

Still no answer from the imposing silhouette on the horse.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
I'm looking for one named Tadjui--

Ramalles CLAPS his HANDS TWICE, yells out some Spanish. An Indian, TADJUI, twenties, in chains, is BUTTED, HARD, by a rifle. He does not react. He then steps out from the huge line as though it were voluntary. Finally:

COLONEL RAMALLES (SUBTITLE)
He is rebellious. He's been beaten
and will be again.

PERCY FAWCETT
All the better I should take him
off your hands, then.

Tadjui, Fawcett exchange glares. Fawcett approaches Tadjui:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
You speak English?

TADJUI
I am speaking little.

PERCY FAWCETT
And you know the river?

TADJUI
Si.

PERCY FAWCETT
(to Ramalles)
What will you take for him and any
four men he chooses?

A BOLIVIAN INFANTRYMAN speaks up:

BOLIVIAN INFANTRYMAN
You have money?

PERCY FAWCETT
Yes, I have some. But as I say, I
also promise highly favorable
treatment from my country.

COLONEL RAMALLES (SUBTITLE)
Your country is not what it used to
be.

Then Ramalles notices something. Points to Costin's rifle:

COLONEL RAMALLES (CONT'D)
What is that?

Costin seems reluctant. Fawcett looks to Costin. Costin is impatient, and then whispers to Fawcett:

HENRY COSTIN
It's a family heirloom, sir. It's
a Henry--my father used it against
the Zulu.

PERCY FAWCETT
Consider it your gift to the King.

HENRY COSTIN
(frowns, then)
Lord knows I've given him enough.

As Costin steps forward, and swallowing his pride, he
unslings his rifle. Muttering:

HENRY COSTIN (CONT'D)
One group gets the sugar, the other
one gets the shit.
(holding up the rifle)
Handmade. A Martini-Henry.

Ramalles takes the rifle, looks at it, aims it. Looks to
Costin, Fawcett, then:

EXT. BANKS OF THE RIVER - CAMPFIRE - DAWN - CLEAR SKY

Fawcett stands by the river. Ties a rope for a boat. WIDEN
TO REVEAL: THE INDIAN TADJUI, and he has brought FOUR OTHER
LEJO INDIANS with him. They work on the rafts. TADJUI,
shirtless, has SCARS on his BACK.

A SACK OF MAIL is dropped at Fawcett's feet by a local. He
sifts through it, finding a letter from his WIFE. He stares
at it, frozen, his eyes widening slightly as though it were
something catastrophic. He is about to open it, but decides
instead to pocket it...

He then walks over to Tadjui, shows Tadjui a map--which has
part of the river mapped and then goes blank.

PERCY FAWCETT
Can you show me where we'll pitch
camp tonight?

Tadjui traces his finger along the river, then stops several inches into a blank area:

TADJUI
Many time on the river each day
before stop.

We then SEE: A GROUP OF SCRUFFY MEN, building rafts with sticks and twine. Costin is working with the group, but MANLEY SEEMS TO KNOW THEM ALL:

HENRY COSTIN
Ugly lot...

ARTHUR MANLEY
They're as dependable as can be
found here. I'm the only one
who'll pay them.

The MEN: DAN, a flamboyant drunk, does a dance as he loads the raft. WILLIS, a capable Jamaican cook, loads the FOOD, in large baskets. Arthur Manley has loaded an ACCORDION onto the boat. Fawcett steps near the men, securing a parcel loaded improperly. He interrupts Manley trying to tighten:

PERCY FAWCETT
That won't do--
(as he tightens the rope)
The river will be our home for the
next two years and we cannot turn
back. We do twelve hours a day and
no less.

MUSIC UP: A SWEET AND MELANCHOLY SONG, PLAYED BY INDIANS.

EXT. EDGE OF THE RIVER - MIDDAY

Fawcett, Costin, Manley, Willis, Dan, Tadjui and the 4 LEJO INDIANS push off on TWO LARGE RAFTS. Three SMALL HOUNDS ACCOMPANY THE MEN.

A CROWD has assembled around the group as they depart. The Indians sing a local folk song as they shove off. MANY OF THE BOLIVIAN INFANTRY from Santa Cruz set off their Winchesters into the air to celebrate. The INDIAN WOMEN wave their goodbyes...

Fawcett looks down at his MAP. We TILT DOWN to SEE THE WORD: "UNEXPLORED". The river is READY TO BE CHARTED.

EXT. RICARDO FRANCO HILLS

The group drifts on their rafts through a cavernous space, with eerie plateaus of the Ricardo Franco Hills on both sides of the rafts. FAWCETT'S MEN push with the bamboo poles through the water as FAWCETT SURVEYS. The camera PANS PAST his notes on flora and fauna and temperature and barometric readings, all painstakingly done. His attention, however, begins to be divided between his surveying and the astonishing scenery around him.

BEAUTIFUL RAINBOW-COLORED FISH swim in the river next to enormous EELS. DAN turns to COSTIN, re the eels:

DAN

They'll shock you to death, those things. There're other fish, they swim right up your johnson--so don't never be letting loose in the river.

Costin reflexively touches his crotch. It is SILENT, so Fawcett turns to Manley, and, half-jokingly:

PERCY FAWCETT

We don't want to be driven mad by this silence, do we? You can play [can you not]?

Fawcett points to Manley's accordion case.

ARTHUR MANLEY

Right, sir.

Manley takes out his ACCORDION. Tadjui plays a ZAMPONA (the Incan PAN FLUTE). The sounds ECHO, all over the space. MANLEY PLAYS a BRITISH WAR SONG. The accordion sounds like a full orchestra here...

EXT. THE AMAZON JUNGLE - THE RIVER - DAY

EERIE QUIET. SURVEYING BOOKS: THE MAP IS BEING FILLED IN, slowly but surely. TILT UP: Fawcett is taking photographs. The Indians are assembled in one corner of one of the rafts.

The two RAFTS travel one right behind the other, as the overgrowth gets lower and lower over the banks of this narrowing AMAZON TRIBUTARY...

They approach an abandoned steamer on the river: a German ship, the ANTONIA. From Hamburg, painted on its back. Fawcett gets up from behind his materials:

PERCY FAWCETT

Mr. Costin, try and get closer please. Maybe they'll have news, or food for us.

HENRY COSTIN

Right, chief.

ARTHUR MANLEY

What on earth's she doing here?

DAN

Came to load rubber, no doubt.

(as they get closer,
seeing "HAMBURG")

It's German! I say we go aboard and have a beer--I bet they have real German beer, fresh from the cask!

But, as they get closer, they see something macabre: A LONE MAN, maybe dead, maybe not, sits on the top of the boat, still. Nude. Staring at them. The hull's riddled with arrows.

Then, behind the nude man, we SEE an INDIAN.

TADJWI

(spins to Fawcett)

Is deadly tribe!

ALL OF A SUDDEN: FLYING ARROWS. FEROCIOUS. AND SPEARS.
Coming from the trees. We can't SEE any other INDIANS yet, but they're there, in the forest.

The flurry does not stop. All the men duck for cover. PANIC. The arrows come with tremendous and frightening force, some of them penetrating inches deep into the rafts' wood. To Costin:

PERCY FAWCETT

To the rapids!

Fawcett and Costin both push with their long BAMBOO poles. The rafts begin to drift in an altogether different direction, away from the arrows but towards: THE RAPIDS.

EXT. CENTER OF THE RIVER

The group hits rough water. They are secured by ROPES to the raft. Fawcett WRAPS his leg around a ROPE.

But it gets ROUGH, becomes WHITEWATER RAFTING. The RAFTS DIP AND RISE with shocking force. The WATER SPLASHES FURIOUSLY around them. The arrows continue to fly.

An arrow hits an INDIAN IN THE LEG. He screams in pain.

He falls off the raft, PULLING FAWCETT, who has tied his ankle along the same ROPE, with him. The RAFT TILTS DANGEROUSLY.

Costin tumbles as well, but stays aboard, making sure THE MAPBOOKS survive. He loses his JOURNAL book and other personal items in the mayhem, however, as the bag of photographs falls overboard.

INT. UNDERWATER

Fawcett is underwater, with the Indian atop him as the two struggle with the rope. FAWCETT untangles his feet from the rope and pulls himself up, attempting to grab the Indian as he rises to the surface. One thing gets in the way:

PIRANHAS.

Piranhas start nipping at the men. The piranhas focus on the Indian, who was cut by the arrow--the blood is attracting them. The feeding has begun to turn into a FRENZY.

Getting pinched by the fish as well--though with nowhere near the ferocity, for he has no open wound--Fawcett is forced to abandon the man and PULLS HIMSELF ALONG THE ROPE.

EXT. RAFT

Fawcett gets aboard the spinning raft with more than a couple of piranhas still attached to his arms and legs. Fawcett swats away the piranhas and, courageously braving the still-constant stream of arrows, tries to get the Indian aboard:

PERCY FAWCETT

Pull! Come on, pull!

The others help. Fawcett finally succeeds in pulling the Indian up, onto the raft.

And the Indian is DEAD. His lower half has been completely devoured by the piranhas...

The RAFTS FINALLY PASS THE FLURRY OF ARROWS AND SPEARS, REACH A CALMER PART OF THE WATER. The last FLURRY OF SPEARS hit near the raft without incident...

Then Tadjui moves to look at the Indian. He takes a personal item off the corpse--a necklace.

ANGLE ON FAWCETT. Out of breath and spent beyond words. He SEES his PERSONAL EFFECTS--LETTERS, many UNOPENED, FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS, etc., strewn all over the raft. They'd been spilled during the chaos.

COSTIN NOTICES that the LETTERS ARE UNOPENED, and HELPS FAWCETT COLLECT THEM CAREFULLY...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE RIVER - ENCLOSED BY TREES AND VINES

Overgrowth on both sides has made the forest into a tunnel over the water. The men, thinner and more worn, chop with machetes any branches or logs that are in their way.

Costin has begun shivering terribly and sweating. Fawcett crouches near Costin.

PERCY FAWCETT

How ill are you?

HENRY COSTIN

(absurd understatement)

I'm, I'm not quite myself, sir.

At the front of the raft, Willis spots a fallen log in the water that blocks their path. Pointing out:

WILLIS

Tree! Big tree, up ahead!

HENRY COSTIN

Least you're holding up well. I promise, I won't slow us down none.

PERCY FAWCETT

(comforting)

Don't worry, my friend--just rest, get your strength back. We'll need you soon enough.

WILLIS
Major! The tree!

Fawcett looks up, walks to the front of the raft. Takes out his MACHETE. Raises his arm to hack at it as the raft is about to touch it.

BUT IT IS NOT A TREE. As Fawcett is about to hack at it, IT JUMPS UP.

AN ANACONDA. Utterly enormous.

The men scream, dissemble. The raft begins to tip. They hack at the snake in desperation. Fawcett quickly reaches for his rifle as:

THE ANACONDA LURCHES. LEFT. THEN RIGHT. The men scurry...

THE ANACONDA LEAPS. FORWARD. UP. AT FAWCETT.

Fawcett FIRES with the snake right up in his face. MISSES.

But the RAFT TILTS, moving him away from the giant snake. Men SLIDE ON THE RAFT. Fawcett attempts to RE-AIM as the ANACONDA MAKES ITS MOVE.

AGAIN: HE FIRES MULTIPLE TIMES. This time, it falls dead.

DAN
Good Lord, look at that! Must be
thirty feet long!

WILLIS
Is it dead?

Fawcett moves to the side of the raft, right up to the dead snake. Ready to touch it.

DAN
No one back home'd believe this
one!

ARTHUR MANLEY
Major, what on earth are you
doing?!?

Fawcett takes out a LARGE KNIFE. Turns away from the snake:

PERCY FAWCETT
I'm going to get a piece of it...
...For study...

Fawcett picks up a SPECIMEN JAR, then turns back to cut it. As he places the blade on the SNAKE'S SKIN, it JUMPS toward him; all the men SCREAM.

YET AGAIN: they fire ALL their weapons, pumping bullets into it with ferocity. Finally, after untold amounts of ammo, it seems dead at last...

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
I'm sure we'd all agree--it's best
to leave it alone now.

MUMBLED AGREEMENT as the anaconda's carcass drifts away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE AMAZON JUNGLE - ON THE RIVER - DUSK

Rain. Silence. Gloom. Fear. The rafts spin in the flow of the current. All sit, quietly, in some form of repose. FAWCETT stares out, at the river. He is filthy and his hair and beard are long and messy, but he is still alert. DRAWS a SUPERB RENDITION of THE ANACONDA in his notebook. The MAPBOOKS are getting more and more completed...

Virtually no more food in the containers. The hounds rummage around the raft, sniffing at anything they can lick or chew.

MORE BUGS: flies, mosquitos, spiders, maggots in the skin.

Costin, who has now grown very sick indeed with fever, shivers in the rain. Manley has contracted yellow fever; he VOMITS black fluid. Hunched by the edge of the raft, Dan is hallucinating; he mutters about his hallucinations aloud:

DAN
Months on the river! And the boats-
-all in a row...beautiful roses.
For you, my beautiful darling...

PERCY FAWCETT
(to Tadjui)
Are we...close?

TADJUI
Weeks to go. Water is not deep but
the flow is still strong.

Fawcett looks at his men, then back to Tadjui:

PERCY FAWCETT

We won't survive another attack.
Are there more dangerous tribes
ahead?

TADJUI

There is no more.

(beat)

But many people live in the jungle
once. Beautiful city of gold, and
corn--even older than English.
With roads and bridges.

PERCY FAWCETT

(as if Tadjui is crazy)

What...?

TADJUI

Deep, in the forest. All made of
gold.

Fawcett turns away, devastated by the prospect that Tadjui is
also going mad. Muttered under his breath, almost angry:

PERCY FAWCETT

Christ...

Fawcett gets up, and as he moves to Costin:

TADJUI

Conquistadors try to find it, many
try. But the white man never find
it...

PERCY FAWCETT

(to Costin)

Even the Indian's gone mad now. We
should be prepared for anything.

Reaching for his RIFLE, he LOADS IT. POCKETS SPARE SHELLS.

TADJUI

I feel sorry for you, English. I
am free soon. But for the Espanol
and you, there is no escape from
the jungle...

WILLIS

Riverbank! Riverbank up ahead,
pitching camp!

UP AHEAD: A COMPOUND, ABANDONED BY INDIANS. Skulls on posts.

EXT. BY THE CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

The members of the group sit with their rifles aimed into the darkness, the SKULLS ALL AROUND THEM. They see the TWINKLES from the eyes of the ANACONDAS and other animals out into that dark. The noises of the jungle frighten them beyond belief. Then the jungle goes SILENT. Then the noises pick up again. Terrifying. Even the hounds are petrified.

Fawcett sits near the fire, rifle aimed outward into the dark. Costin, without his Martini-Henry rifle, is covered in blankets. HUSHED:

HENRY COSTIN

Bloody giant snakes are out there,
aren't they--just staring at us.
Ain't no fucking meat left on our
bones anyway...

PERCY FAWCETT

If we die soon Mr. Costin, at least
it won't be behind a pair of desks.

Fawcett reaches into his pocket. Takes out many envelopes. Sifts through the letters. Hands one to Costin:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

It's from my wife. I'd like you to
read it to me. If you can.

(beat; smiles, though
anguished)

I'm afraid even seeing her
handwriting's proven to be
unbearable.

HENRY COSTIN

Yes, Chief. Certainly.

Costin composes himself as he opens it, reads:

HENRY COSTIN (CONT'D)

It--appears rather private, sir.

PERCY FAWCETT

Feel free to summarize, then.

HENRY COSTIN

Your wife has moved the family to
London. Your son Jack is
excelling, in all ways...your new
son Brian is now one year old and
doing well.

(MORE)

HENRY COSTIN (CONT'D)
 In your absence, your wife says
 she's promoting your name and
 reputation--

Fawcett is devastated hearing about all this. TEARS RUN DOWN HIS CHEEKS. Then a hallucinating DAN speaks up:

DAN
 It's his lady love. Your love!
 She's, she's on the boat! I saw
 her!

Fawcett hears this, then gently takes the LETTER from Costin's hand. HE PUTS THE LETTER IN THE FIRE.

HENRY COSTIN
 There was quite a bit more.

Fawcett WATCHES IT BURN FOR A MOMENT. We SEE the SCRIBBLED WORDS ON THE PAPER as they get CONSUMED BY THE FIRE. Fawcett watches the letter burn. As he wipes tears from his face:

PERCY FAWCETT
 I cannot allow my heart to be
 broken now, Mr. Costin.
 Concentration on survival is our
 only hope.
 (checks his chronometer)
 Six hours rest. Dawn is
 approaching.

Dan, collapsed at the base of a tree nearby, begs Fawcett:

DAN
 Please, Mr. Fawcett--I'm not *fit*.
 I, I think I might be near my end
 in this bloody hell.

PERCY FAWCETT
 You can walk, can you not?

Dan can, but does not answer. Fawcett takes out his BIG KNIFE. Moves up to Dan, puts his blade to Dan's throat:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 If we die, we'll die on our feet.
 Respected as men.

EXT. RIVER - ON THE RAFT - NARROW CAVERNS

DRIZZLING RAIN. CLOSE SHOT ON FAWCETT. HIS BEARD HAS GROWN TO AN ABSURD LENGTH, and he is EMACIATED. HE'S GOT A WIDE-EYED STARE, with DARK and DEEP-SET EYES.

Fawcett may be frail, but he is at least mentally in control of himself--unlike the others. Costin is still sweaty, but can function. He seems to be recovering slowly.

Tadjui prays aloud... Manley is shivering terribly and covered with maggots; HE IS STICKING HIS TONGUE OUT, TO CATCH THE RAIN AS IT FALLS FOR HYDRATION. Dan is muttering to himself, aloud; he also sticks out his tongue for the rain's water. Even the dogs have gone totally lethargic, and the carcass of one of them slides into the river.

Willis rummages through the food baskets. Nothing but a couple of rotten fruit. He begins to cry:

WILLIS

No more food! Ain't nothing left--

ONLY A ROTTEN BANANA REMAINS. Willis charges for it; Dan and he FIGHT OVER IT BRIEFLY. SEEING this: Fawcett gets up, approaches the men. POINTS HIS RIFLE AT THEM:

PERCY FAWCETT

Give me your guns.

Everyone freezes; Fawcett reaches out to collect the weapons:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Starvation blunts one's finer feelings. There'll be no cannibalism--we're not savages.

Tadjui stops playing the zampona. He stands.

DAN

We're leaving our bones here,
Major! And for what?!? A map???
We're not even looking for gold!

Fawcett grasps his gun as Dan approaches, dangerously close:

DAN (CONT'D)

There could be war *already* and we
wouldn't even know it! Have you
ever considered that?!

Dan turns to the others. He is ready to CHARGE. MUTINY?!?

DAN (CONT'D)

Even if we get there, we ain't
makin' it back with nothing in our
bellies!

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)
 (turning back to Fawcett,
 still directed to others)
 Let's have at him!

Fawcett looks at the others. With the exception of Costin and Manley, they all SEEM READY TO CHARGE AT HIM. Fawcett seems to steel himself.

Dan TAKES A STEP FORWARD, and almost instantly, Fawcett takes his rifle and WHACKS DAN IN THE CHEST with it, knocking him backward. Then:

PERCY FAWCETT
 I will not hesitate to shoot if I
 must. *I'm still in command.*

AND THEN: wordlessly, TADJUI POINTS. The others turn to look, one by one.

EMERGING: THE SOURCE OF THE VERDE RIVER. The men are frozen in awe.

EXT. LAND NEAR THE SOURCE OF THE VERDE RIVER

The water dribbles from a small cliff, down into the base of the river. It is a beautiful sight. Fawcett slowly takes out his surveying equipment and the camera.

HENRY COSTIN
 (proud, almost giddy)
 We did it! No one's ever been here
 before, Chief!

PERCY FAWCETT
 Prepare for the group photograph,
 Mr. Costin...

Costin takes the camera and plants it on a TRIPOD for THE GROUP PHOTO, but he is so depleted he can barely move his limbs. The others weakly get into position for the photo. Dan weeps as he slides into his position. Costin looks around, then calls out:

HENRY COSTIN
 Major... We've lost the Indian--

FAWCETT SPINS AROUND. TADJUI IS INDEED GONE. Fawcett sees footprints, leading off into the jungle. Costin seems primed to track the footprints when Fawcett stops him.

PERCY FAWCETT
 He got us here, didn't he...?

Fawcett hears a subtle CRUNCHING NOISE in the brush. ALL ARE STARTLED. Takes a quiet step forward.

FAWCETT ducks into the brush. Dan approaches, sees something, or at least thinks he does. Turns to Manley, who is standing next to him. Whispering:

DAN
Am I dreaming?

ARTHUR MANLEY
No, I see it too.

LONG-LENS CLOSE SHOT on a DEER.

SEVERAL YARDS AWAY, about 30, deeper into the forest. The deer is oblivious. Fawcett has his gun trained on it.

The men now surround Fawcett with the gun. Fawcett is silently getting ready to fire. The deer is chewing grass. Manley is praying to himself. Dan, also praying but aloud, is still panicking:

DAN
Please... Lord... It's our only
chance!

WILLIS
(whispered)
Shut up!

CLOSE SHOT ON FAWCETT'S EYE as he readies the shot. CLOSE SHOT ON THE DEER—which seems to spot FAWCETT.

THE DEER GALLOPS AWAY JUST AS FAWCETT FIRES THE GUN. A TUFT OF SMOKE. The deer is gone.

DAN
(breaking down)
God damn you, you missed! We'll
starve for sure!

Without answering, Fawcett charges up to where the deer was.

EXT. FOREST

The deer is here. On the ground.

DEAD. Fawcett hit it square in the head. The others have now joined him around the animal.

DAN
You bloody did it!

The men drag the deer to the riverbank.

PERCY FAWCETT
Start a fire. We'll skin it when--

Then FAWCETT FREEZES. He has SEEN SOMETHING. WHITE AS A GHOST. Costin approaches, sees it too.

WE CUT TO REVEAL: COVERED WITH MOSS, unmistakably: a SMALL STATUE, perched atop a ROCK.

FAWCETT WALKS TO IT. REACHES OUT. TOUCHES IT.

THEN TAKES SEVERAL STEPS FORWARD, as if to continue the MISSION DEEPER INTO THE JUNGLE.

HE SEES: PAINTINGS, on ROCKS. He looks to the ground, SPOTTING SHARDS OF POTTERY, STATUES. He SEEMS ALMOST LIKE A RABID DOG. Under his breath:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
Good Christ--

HE SPINS AROUND TO THE OTHERS:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
There's...pottery--right beneath our feet--

Fawcett pockets it, starts to dig.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
It's all over--deep, in the ground...

Then he takes a few more steps. Fawcett runs his fingers along a ROCK PAINTING.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
(sotto)
God, he was right--
(beat)
The Indian was right--

He starts putting all the pottery in his pockets...

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
(to the others)
The Indian spoke of this!

A HOUND FOLLOWS HIM. Through some vines, he SEES a carving in stone--or so he thinks. About to reach out to it. The hound leads the way a bit--

WHEN--A VICIOUS, ENORMOUS BLACK PANTHER CHARGES OUT OF THE JUNGLE AND TEARS THE HOUND TO PIECES.

Fawcett and the men BOLT, some yelling in fear, away from the panther.

EXT. RIVER

The men, on their rafts, backing away from the source of the river. Ready to eat the deer to be eaten. Fawcett, meanwhile, stares at the river's source as it recedes.

PERCY FAWCETT

Mr. Costin, you said no one'd ever been here before.

HENRY COSTIN

I did, Chief.

PERCY FAWCETT

I believe you meant no white man had...

(though to Costin, sotto;
as he is looking at
pottery)

If we ever do make it home, I
promise you... We'll no longer be
mapmakers...

The source of the river disappears from his view...

EXT. BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT BUILDING - BRITISH EMBASSY - DAY

A magnificent building in busy downtown La Paz. BUSTLING.

INT. BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT BUILDING - DAY

A group of very comfortable British soldiers are at work at their desks as one BRITISH SECRETARY types at the front desk.

Percy Fawcett walks into the building. He looks and smells like hell, filthy and unshaven and emaciated and shaking like a leaf from malnutrition. Hair completely out of control, his beard at epic length.

He approaches an official at the front desk. The official, whose nose crinkles up--presumably at the stench of Fawcett--seems bewildered. Fawcett SHAKES LIKE A LEAF; is he mad?

BRITISH SECRETARY

Can I help you, sir?

PERCY FAWCETT

Tell me please--is there war, between Bolivia and Brazil? I'll fight if I'm needed.

BRITISH OFFICIAL

(baffled)

No, sir--there's no war. Is there something we can do for you?

PERCY FAWCETT

My name is Major Percy Fawcett. If you could, please contact my family in London.

SLAM! Fawcett DUMPS a series of frayed map notebooks on the desk. He also EMPTIES HIS POCKETS OF POTTERY SHARDS. A BRITISH OFFICIAL with his back to us overhears this. He seems interested, turns. Approaches. Meanwhile, Fawcett is hurriedly throwing everything on the desk:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

I've the maps here, they're completed... But, but I found these, these bits of pottery, and statues, in the jungle--a discovery...to be pursued...

BRITISH OFFICIAL

Major Fawcett?

Fawcett struggles even to nod. ENTERING, almost crawling in now, behind Fawcett: COSTIN, MANLEY, an INDIAN.

BRITISH OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

I believe I got your orders on my desk just last week. You were supposed to arrive here in July 1908?

Fawcett looks up, sees a calendar on the wall: "AUGUST."

PERCY FAWCETT

(devastated)

Yes.

(MORE)

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
I'm very sorry, it's August... We
did the best we could.

BRITISH OFFICIAL
Major, it's August 1907. You're
eleven months *early*. You've mapped
the entire Verde tributary in just
over a year!

HE AND THE OTHER OFFICERS ARE ASTONISHED. Another British
Officer, seeing how frail Fawcett looks, runs to get a chair
and positions it right behind Fawcett:

PERCY FAWCETT
I can *stand*, thank you.

A whole host of officers now seem to realize what's going on
and begin to gather around Fawcett.

BRITISH SECRETARY
Sir, should you like a bed? Some
food, or a bath perhaps?

PERCY FAWCETT
Yes. For all of my men.

He points to the THREE MEN REMAINING, behind him.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
And send a telegram to the Royal
Geographical Society--HELL VERDE
CONQUERED.

FAWCETT'S EYES ROLL BACK INTO HIS HEAD. He COLLAPSES.
Others charge to his aid as he comes to, sits up...

MUSIC UP: A TRIUMPHAL MARCH, as we GO TO:

EXT. LONDON PORT - DAY

A big SHIP, at the dock. Cheering crowds. Percy Fawcett
gets off the boat to a flurry of PRESS and a MARCHING BAND
playing a piece by Ralph Vaughn-Williams.

Fawcett pushes through to SEE NINA and his two boys: JACK AND
BRIAN. Jack is now a young boy and no longer a toddler;
Brian is a baby. Nina WAVES, and Fawcett finally gets to
her. A beat of silence as they look at each other, then:

PERCY FAWCETT
You look very well.

Nina is about to say something, does not. His smile stays.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

I don't, do I.

NINA FAWCETT

No, you--you look wonderful.

(beat)

You're different and yet the same.

Fawcett looks down. Standing below are the kids:

PERCY FAWCETT

This is my little Brian...? Hello,
little Brian... Jack...

Then the PRESS SURROUND THEM, all but CRUSH THEM. Here is Sir GEORGE GOLDIE, and SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE, forties, the secretary of the RGS.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE

Major! Sir John Scott Keltie,
Secretary of the RGS. Welcome
home! We've so many people who
wish to meet you, there's a
reception set, next week at the
Society--

PERCY FAWCETT

(buoyed)

We shall attend.

Fawcett takes Nina's arm and walks her through the crowd, FORMALLY, without sentimentality. The crowd closes in around them as Fawcett is blown away by the reception...

INT. FAWCETT LONDON HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A CLOSE SHOT: PERCY AND NINA. The room is dark. They are naked and in bed, KISSING. Nina stops, and running her hands through his enormous beard, she looks into his eyes. They both give smiles at its absurd length, as we GO TO:

INT. FAWCETT LONDON HOME - BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Nina is SHAVING PERCY'S BEARD. She does it lovingly, tenderly. A post-coital mood. HIS HUGE BEARD is being removed, and so, it would seem, is the jungle. Civilization is coming back to his face...

NINA FAWCETT

You should have seen your children
today--they were so happy...

(MORE)

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Jack awoke early this morning and covered your bed with leaves. He said it would make you feel more at home, like the jungle.

Fawcett lets out a laugh.

PERCY FAWCETT

I missed them terribly... It was all for them--everything I did.

NINA FAWCETT

(flirtatious)

And for me.

PERCY FAWCETT

And for you. Yes.

NINA FAWCETT

(re: his hair)

There. Most of it's gone now. Much better...

PERCY FAWCETT

Cheeky, they've requested a presentation on my journey--I'd very much appreciate it if you'll help me with my research.

NINA FAWCETT

Of course. It would make me very happy to be part of your work.

Fawcett smiles, then grows sober, quiet. Confidentially, halting, as though a touch embarrassed by the outlandishness:

PERCY FAWCETT

I...I believe I may have made truly remarkable discoveries there--perhaps evidence of--of a lost world of some kind...

NINA FAWCETT

(Fawcett has changed)

I see...

PERCY FAWCETT

...It may well be my true calling.

NINA FAWCETT

Then we shall do what we can to prove your case...

He kisses her. Then he turns, looks toward the POTTERY SHARDS that sit on his desk. The CAMERA MOVES into a CLOSE SHOT on the shards. Then:

A CLOSE SHOT on FAWCETT as we HEAR THE SOUNDS OF THE ROOM GET REPLACED BY THE JUNGLE...THE JUNGLE CREEPS ONTO THE SOUNDTRACK, SLOWLY OVERWHELMING EVERYTHING ELSE. LOUDER AND LOUDER as we:

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. RGS MANSION - LONDON - NIGHT

A beautiful structure. A PARTY, with MUSIC.

INT. RGS MANSION - FOYER

Two receiving lines: one for women, one for men. PERCY AND NINA FAWCETT enter and immediately are greeted by members of their own gender, but extremely WARMLY. (This should be in marked contrast to the film's opening gala.) Fawcett is THE TOAST OF THE TOWN...

SOCIALITE WOMAN

Ladies, you're to go to the garden-- there is an astrologer there for your education; the men are to withdraw to the library...

INT. RGS MANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A magnificent room, with long tables and sofas and beautiful paintings on the walls. ALL MEN, dressed in black tie. The top brass of the RGS: Sir John Scott Keltie, Sir George Goldie, others--including Mr. GEORGE CURZON, a middle-aged and Conservative statesman.

Also here: JAMES MURRAY, forty-six and wizened with graying hair and a well-trimmed mustache. Remember him.

Cigars are smoked. The air is thick with wealth and decorum. It could not be further from the jungle here, as SERVANTS PLACE CUPS with SAUCERS DOWN IN PERFECT SYNCHRONIZED RHYTHM.

Percy Fawcett stands by the window, SEES this. Looking down, through the glass, OUTSIDE:

EXT. RGS MANSION YARD

An ASTROLOGIST is reading off a chart as WIVES OF THE MEMBERS appear thrilled. The women fan themselves, involved in inaudible conversation. NINA FAWCETT is here...

INT. LIVING ROOM

Fawcett spots Nina, standing near the others, participating and yet...somehow...she is different.

NINA looks up, at Fawcett, through the glass. She waves, and the two exchange broad smiles. All of a sudden, we HEAR:

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE

Major--

Fawcett turns away from the window. Keltie is here; up close:

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE (CONT'D)

Everyone's talking about your mission. I must say, none of us believed one could map that entire region in just a year's time. I shouldn't be surprised if you won our gold medal this year.

PERCY FAWCETT

That would be a great honor, sir. But I've only just scratched the surface. There's much more to be learned in Amazonia.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE

Plenty of time for all that. Come--

As Keltie walks Fawcett to a group of men, including JAMES MURRAY, and as many "CONGRATULATIONS" are spoken to Fawcett:

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE (CONT'D)

There's someone we'd like you to meet. He's a man of considerable...resources. And I do assure you, he's the sort of person about whom there can be no question.

(louder, as they meet)

Major, this is Mr. James Murray.

PERCY FAWCETT

How do you do.

JAMES MURRAY

Major... Read your editorial in the Times this morning--about the slave trade in the Americas. Truly enlightened. Poor savages.

PERCY FAWCETT

(smiling; bows slightly)
I'm honored by your esteem.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE

Mr. Murray was second-in-command to Mr. Shackelton on his Antartica expedition. Distinguished himself with great bravery--we here hold him in the highest regard.

JAMES MURRAY

Oh come now...

PERCY FAWCETT

No--I've heard much about that expedition--congratulations. Quite heroic.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE

Mr. Murray has made a direct request to be part of another mission to Amazonia.

This surprises Fawcett, and leads to a degree of skepticism which Fawcett does his best to hide:

PERCY FAWCETT

Is that so.

JAMES MURRAY

(slightly sheepish)
I know it's a bit forward, but I suppose my enthusiasm has got the better of me. Surveying the Amazon's always been a great goal of mine.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

What do you say, Fawcett?
Antarctica meets Amazonia?
(beat)

Wonderful way to add even more lustre to your team!

Fawcett's stung, thinking he's all the "lustre" that's needed, but after a momentary beat, he lets it slide:

PERCY FAWCETT

Well...I'm afraid we're quite early in the research stages of any new mission. But I'll be sure to pass along word of any developments.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Remarkable--what a pair you'd make, just remarkable!

The men TOAST...

INT. BRITISH MUSEUM - ARCHIVES

It is the dark and vast archives of the famed museum. Fawcett is in the stacks, looking through materials.

SUPERIMPOSE: "FEBRUARY 1909."

He takes out some FOLDERS, walks over to the big table where Nina sits, her hands full of ancient paper. Fawcett sits down across from her, begins to look through the items in his own folders.

Nina, who had been sifting through another set of old and frayed documents, letters, writings, SEEMS TO HAVE STOPPED. Staring at one YELLOWED PIECE OF PAPER, for seconds on end. Fawcett whispers, library-style, to Nina as his eyes are still focused on the documents:

PERCY FAWCETT

Some of these arrow drawings are meant to represent fractional distances...advanced mathematics...
(still buried)
I do believe it would be wise to engage the Indians more directly-- they may have things to teach us.

No response from Nina. Looks up:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

What've you found...?

Nina does not look over at Fawcett. She does not move, just stares at that paper. At last, Nina looks at Fawcett. At that moment, the CAMERA TILTS DOWN to REVEAL THE YELLOWED DOCUMENT. Then we HEAR:

PERCY FAWCETT'S VOICE (O.S.)
 My wife uncovered it earlier this week, in the archives of the British Museum. Untouched for centuries--it's of signal value.

AN IMAGE, A LANTERN SLIDE: A DOCUMENT, IN PORTUGUESE.

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)
 Written by a Portugese soldier. It reads, "Historical account, large, hidden ancient city, 1753. We reached the highest chain of mountains. Found a path cut asunder by man, not nature. Came upon ruins of an ancient city, bedecked with gold. Stone archways, roads, a temple, ancient symbols."

INT. LIBRARY BASEMENT - DAY

Fawcett reads off a notebook as he replaces slides on the LANTERN SLIDE PROJECTOR. HENRY COSTIN sits, eyes the slides and mapbooks, which are laid out on a desk. He picks up a shard of pottery as Fawcett speaks:

PERCY FAWCETT
 The symbols are identical to the ones on our pottery.

Fawcett turns off the lantern, spreads out the map:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 (directly to Costin)
 It's no myth. It's there, and it's on a far greater scale than we had imagined--the Verde River was just a foretaste. The Indian claimed it was older than England... According to the notes, its location's in this area here, in uncharted Brazil. The last frontier for us--I'm calling it "Z".

Fawcett points to the map, circling a fairly small area.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 It's my intention to go next year, after rainy season.
 (MORE)

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

I'll publish my theory in the journal and announce the trip at the next RGS meeting.

HENRY COSTIN

You'll get a fair bit of skepticism from them about lost cities in the jungle, Chief. They'll be wanting you to stick with the maps--that's what puts the gold in their pockets.

PERCY FAWCETT

I'm prepared for that--I'm not concerned. Are you game?

HENRY COSTIN

(beat; smiles)

I'd like to see what's there, myself. That jungle's hell, but...one kind of likes it.

PERCY FAWCETT

I thought you'd feel that way.

HENRY COSTIN

I guess the only question left is how--the RGS's got no money. And there's competition too--unlike the Society, the Americans are believers. They've got their dollars to examine every inch of that bloody jungle.

PERCY FAWCETT

Which is why we'll tell no one else the details of the location we've discussed here.

(beat)

As for finding the money--I believe we may have a patron.

INT. FAWCETT LONDON HOME - FAWCETT'S OFFICE - NIGHT

It is FILLED with artifacts--from Amazonia, from Ceylon, from other exotic locations: spears, Indian blankets, pottery, Incan attire. And the Buddha. The TICK-TOCK and GONG of a grandfather clock...

Young JACK excitedly leafs through his father's SCRAPBOOK, wearing a piece of Amazonian Indian headgear. He is fascinated. Toddler Brian pulls out some Indian necklaces. We PAN OVER TO REVEAL, through an open door:

INT. FAWCETT LONDON HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Nina is here, at dinner. It is raining outside; Percy Fawcett is now sitting at the opposite side of a long table. As Fawcett puts his napkin on his lap. Two servants deliver them soup--a consomme.

NINA FAWCETT

There's another setting for
dessert, I see.

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes. I've invited a Mr. James
Murray here later this evening--the
Antarctic explorer. He's an
admirable man, very well-connected.
We're to discuss the new journey to
Amazonia.

NINA FAWCETT

I believe I am quite ready to
accompany you on your next journey.

Fawcett looks up from his dinner. Surprised and flummoxed.

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)

The children will be off to school
by the time it would begin. And
I've learned to read the stars and
navigate, and become very well-
versed in the history of the
region.

(beat)

After all, it was I who found the
document.

PERCY FAWCETT

(dumbfounded; stuttering)

Cheeky... That, that would be--
impossible. It's not a place at
all for a woman.

NINA FAWCETT

Not a place for a woman? I believe
firmly in the equality between us.

PERCY FAWCETT

Equality, yes--of course. But in
mind, not in body. The rigors of
such a trip would be beyond your
imagination.

NINA FAWCETT

I believe it is generally acknowledged that the pain a woman experiences in childbirth far exceeds anything a man must endure.

PERCY FAWCETT

This is not about childbirth.

NINA FAWCETT

I ask only that you take my request seriously.

PERCY FAWCETT

But this is not about childbirth! It's about years of hard work and experience in the art of soldiering. It's about maggots in your skin, and deadly snakes, and disease. I love you and I could not bear that.

NINA FAWCETT

Somehow I was able to bear the dangers you faced, the years you were gone.

PERCY FAWCETT

You're not being reasonable. You're my wife. I need you here, not as a tentmate in need of constant care. Be reasonable.

NINA FAWCETT

You will throw "reasonable" in my face?

PERCY FAWCETT (SIMULTANEOUS)

I'm simply speaking the truth--

NINA FAWCETT

Was it reasonable to stay here and struggle to provide for the children while you wandered the jungle? Was it reasonable to support your every endeavor and follow you around the world while you have given no thought to my aspirations?

PERCY FAWCETT

There are roles that men and women have played, since time immemorial.
(MORE)

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

A man does not take his wife into
the most dangerous place in the
world on a whim.

A BEAT as she stares at him. Furious, then gathers herself.

NINA FAWCETT

We shared the teachings of the
Buddha together. I did expect more
understanding from you.

(tears well, but she does
not break down)

You've wounded me terribly.

He does not make eye contact. Seems about to say something,
even lifts his arm, almost about to comfort her, when:

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Perhaps it's that medal they're
holding in front of your eyes
that's clouded your vision.

Then young JACK enters. He stares at the quarreling couple.
Jack walks to Fawcett, takes his hand and buries his head in
Fawcett's leg. Nina approaches Jack.

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Come. It's your bedtime.

Jack does not move. GRABS HIS FATHER'S LEG EVEN TIGHTER.

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Jack Fawcett, did you hear what I
just said?

PERCY FAWCETT

(softly)

Go with your mother, it's time for
bed.

The boy reluctantly separates himself from his father, moves
to his mother. Nina takes Jack's hand and walks out with the
child. ANGLE ON PERCY FAWCETT as we HEAR A DOORBELL RING:

INT. FAWCETT LONDON HOME - FOYER

A SERVANT opens the front door. Fawcett is right behind him.
JAMES MURRAY AND TWO OTHER MEN. Fawcett greets them. JACK
WATCHES FROM THE TOP OF THE STEPS:

PERCY FAWCETT

Mr. Murray--

JAMES MURRAY
 Major Fawcett, good evening!
 (beat)
 I've thought about your proposal,
 and well, I'm always up for an
 adventure. I've decided to accept--
 phantom cities and all!

Fawcett nods, reaches out to shake Murray's hand. JACK remains on the steps as the men disappear out of frame...

INT. BEDROOM

Nina is folding laundry and putting it away. Fawcett enters. She looks up at him, then continues folding. After silence:

PERCY FAWCETT
 I--I'm sorry if I was harsh. I
 just want you to be safe.
 (beat)
 I want you safe, that's all. I
 love you.

Nina stops, eyes him. A beat, then embraces him. We HEAR:
 BANG BANG BANG!

INT. ROYAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY - AUDITORIUM

The room is PACKED with dozens of scientists and explorers from across Europe. CIVILIANS line the BALCONIES. In the first level, we NOTICE that MEN sit with each other, and what few WOMEN there are sit in a separate section, fanning themselves.

PERCY FAWCETT is in front of the room, near JAMES MURRAY; NINA is seated in the WOMEN'S SECTION.

HENRY COSTIN and ARTHUR MANLEY are here, all smiles, in their seats. SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE, forties, the secretary of the RGS; and SIR GEORGE GOLDIE are next to Fawcett. Goldie has stepped up to the podium and is banging on the hammer:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
 Gentlemen and ladies, good
 afternoon. I should like to
 announce the winner of our
 Founders' gold medal...

ANGLE ON PERCY FAWCETT. He sits placidly, expecting to hear his name, when:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (CONT'D)

The winner will be our American friend, Dr. Hamilton Rice! Whose exploration of the Orinoco and the Northern tributaries of the Amazon thrilled the civilized world!

HOOTS, HOLLERS, CHEERS. WILD APPLAUSE.

DR. HAMILTON RICE stands. Rice, late thirties, is dashing and tall and well-dressed, with a barrel chest and bushy mustache. An American. RICE WAVES. (The MEETING IS LIKE A ROWDY BRITISH PARLIAMENT MEETING, with interruptions and yelling par for the course.)

Fawcett is surprised and very disappointed, but without self-pity. He IMMEDIATELY LOOKS OVER AT NINA, who eyes him back with SYMPATHY AND LOVE. Gives her a gentle smile as if to say, "it's all right". HER LOOK, ONE OF FORGIVENESS.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (CONT'D)

The honor will be bestowed on the first of the year in Holland Park. Now I should like to introduce one of our brothers, whose own achievements are not inconsiderable--Major Percy Harrison Fawcett!

As Fawcett stands, amidst cheers, Costin overhears a whisper:

A RANDOM RGS MAN

Time for fairy tales!

PERCY FAWCETT

My esteemed colleagues, as you may have read in our journal, I have decided to leave the Army and propose a return to Amazonia. Not for mapmaking or commerce, but to find a hidden civilization--one that may well predate our own.

MURMURS.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

It is my firm belief that Amazonia is far more than the green desert many of us had supposed.

SKEPTICISM. The room is RESTLESS, though not yet noisy.

RANDOM SCIENTIST

Are you insisting on mythical kingdoms of gold, Major? Those fantasies lured the Conquistadors to destruction--

PERCY FAWCETT

SIR--it was the Conquistadors and WE who have been destroying the native peoples of Amazonia without regard for their history. This is a crime that must be stopped. I have seen with my own eyes evidence of their civilization and I assure you it is real--

RANDOM SCIENTIST #2

What is your point, Major?

PERCY FAWCETT

Perhaps it is too difficult for some of you to admit. We, who have been steeped in the bigotry of the Church for so long, cannot give much credence to an "older civilization"--particularly one created by a race the white man has so brutally condemned to slavery and death. YET I INTEND TO ENGAGE WITH THIS RACE, TO COME TO KNOW THEM AND LEARN FROM THEM, UNDERSTAND THEIR CUSTOMS AND LANGUAGES--

RANDOM SCIENTIST #3

Savages, in Westminster Abbey!

LAUGHTER. Shouting the first word:

PERCY FAWCETT

HENCE your disrespect--but I ask you, what is at stake? If I may prove the existence of a city where one was considered impossible to exist, it might well write a whole new chapter in human history. Man would be shown as a conqueror of his environment and not a slave to it!

Outright BOOING now. Fawcett shouts over the boos:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 CONSIDER MY EVIDENCE! My sightings
 of statues and archeological finds!

Fawcett HOLDS UP A PIECE OF POTTERY:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 Antiquities as sophisticated as any
 in Asia or Europe, in the middle of
 the jungle!

RANDOM SCIENTIST #2
 Pots and pans, pots and pans!

Many in the ROOM begin to chant, "POTS AND PANS!"

PERCY FAWCETT
 (yelling above the crowd)
 AND after my return from the
 jungle, I have examined ancient
 texts, one of which is a document
 dating from the Conquistadors. It
 states explicitly the discovery of
 a lost city in Amazonia!

RANDOM SCIENTIST #4
 El Dorado!

PERCY FAWCETT
 Mr. Henry Costin, Mr. Arthur
 Manley, and myself--joined by the
 distinguished Mr. James Murray--
 will go. And we will find it!

NINA stands, CLAPPING. ANGLE ON HENRY COSTIN and ARTHUR
 MANLEY, here too, as they stand on their feet, applauding.
 JAMES MURRAY is basking. Others JEER, however. Percy
 Fawcett remains standing at the podium, determined, now even
 somewhat amused by the insanity he's caused...

EXT. THE AMAZON JUNGLE - RAINING

SUPERIMPOSE: "MATO GROSSO REGION, BRAZIL. 1911".

The party hacks away. Fawcett, Costin, Manley, two Indian
 men, and James Murray, bringing up the rear. Two MULES, two
 HORSES, three DOGS. Fawcett leads and is ferocious, hacking
 as if he were swatting bees, with a giant machete in one hand
 and a map in the other. (Fawcett is looking slightly native,
 shirtless, and the long beard is back again.)

PERCY FAWCETT
 (calling out)
 Approaching the river! One hundred
 twenty-one miles until Oviedo's
 last marking!

Costin has stopped, is examining himself. FAWCETT PAUSES.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 No stopping, Mr. Costin--it'll be
 dark in a matter of hours--you know
 that.

Fawcett then looks down at Costin's arm. He's got MAGGOTS eating his flesh. But Costin does not panic; calmly asks:

HENRY COSTIN
 I've never had them this bad
 before. I'm not sure I'll make it.

PERCY FAWCETT
 Keep moving. Don't let it destroy
 your will.

Fawcett is immediately on the move again, slides down a muddy path toward the RIVER. Way behind him: Murray. The weight of the backpack gets to Murray. Calls out:

JAMES MURRAY
 Major Fawcett!

PERCY FAWCETT
 Yes?

JAMES MURRAY
 My pack's getting quite heavy! I'm
 going to leave some of my
 accoutrements behind!

Fawcett pauses when he hears this. A bad idea. Then:

PERCY FAWCETT
 You don't want to be ill-equipped
 for the journey ahead! You'll need
 all you can carry!

JAMES MURRAY
 It's slowing me down a touch,
 that's all! Without this pack I
 would be as speedy as any of you--
 up in front, no doubt!

Fawcett looks back at Murray, who is lagging way behind:

PERCY FAWCETT
 Very well--after we get to the
 river, you need keep only a change
 of clothes and your mattress mat!

Fawcett continues to chop away. The group reaches the riverbank.

EXT. THE AMAZON RIVER - CLOUDY DAY

The Group is in canoes. Quiet, except for Manley, who doodles on his accordion.

Then, ARROWS! Arrows and spears rain down on the men. MURRAY jumps into the water and starts to swim to the opposite bank. All the other men--save Fawcett--take out their RIFLES and FIRE INTO THE AIR. Fawcett sees the Indians through the trees--no red masks. Costin looks up and down:

HENRY COSTIN
 We're surrounded!

Fawcett thinks for a moment, then:

PERCY FAWCETT
 Hold your fire! HOLD YOUR FIRE!

The canoes halt on the bank and the men get out, moving through the water to the:

EXT. OPPOSITE RIVERBANK

MURRAY is still in the river, holding onto a rock near the the riverbank, hiding from the arrows under tree branches. Fawcett instructs Arthur Manley to:

PERCY FAWCETT
 Mr. Manley! Play your accordion!

ARTHUR MANLEY
 My accordion--?

PERCY FAWCETT
 "Soldiers of the Queen," come on!
 It'll calm them!

ARTHUR MANLEY
 All due respect sir, they seem more
 likely to skin us alive!

PERCY FAWCETT
 Mr. Manley! Do as I say!
 (to everyone)
 Everyone--"Soldiers of the Queen"!

A "YES, SIR," could be heard. Manley begins to play, and the whole party begins to sing:

THE ENTIRE PARTY
*In the fight for England's glory,
 lads, of its worldwide glory let us
 sing!*

Fawcett then unties the handkerchief around his neck and waves it above his head at the Indians. No effect.

EXT. RIVER

Fawcett enters the water again. Waving his handkerchief. The river gets deeper. He stops somewhere near the middle, with the river around his armpits. THE ARROWS AND SPEARS DO NOT STOP COMING.

He wades directly INTO the fusillade of arrows. He repeats, over and over, in Portuguese and other dialects:

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)
 Friend! Friend! Friend!

The arrows keep coming, FASTER THAN EVER. Several come INCREDIBLY CLOSE, zooming right by his head. We can even hear a ZIPPING SOUND. But Fawcett braves it nonetheless.

He stands there, a man between two sides of the river, between two worlds maybe, and closes his eyes. The sound FADES. SILENCE.

Music up: from LAKME, by Delibes. A lone woman's voice, no instruments. A haunting soprano, as we:

FLASH CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS

A MEDIUM SHOT - A VERY YOUNG FAWCETT on the beach in Ceylon, WITH A VERY YOUNG NINA. Newlyweds, looks like... A CLOSE SHOT - The camera DOLLIES INTO an IMAGE OF THE BUDDHA... A CLOSE SHOT - Fawcett is crouched at the BUDDHA, with the HIGH PRIEST SUMANGALA behind him. Nina is with the High Priest, and she holds an INFANT: JACK. Over this, we HEAR a whisper:

HIGH PRIEST SUMANGALA (V.O.)
 You vow--not to take life. You
 will not take what is not given;
 deceive, or misuse the senses; you
 will refrain from self-
 intoxication...

EXT. RIVERBANK

The water surrounds Fawcett's armpits; no one moves. Then:
THE ARROWS AND SPEARS STOP. Fawcett opens his eyes. The
 sound returns--except that it's gone quiet. A GUARAYO INDIAN
 peers out from the forest.

EXT. RIVER

Paddling out toward Fawcett in a raft, the GUARAYO takes the
 handkerchief from Fawcett; Fawcett motions to be taken
 across, and the two go to the Indian side with Fawcett
 kneeling humbly on the flimsy float.

The whole group waits in silence for Fawcett, who disappears
 into the forest...

EXT. RIVERBANK - MOMENTS LATER

MOMENTS LATER: the Indian emerges, CHEERFULLY wearing
 Fawcett's Stetson. Fawcett emerges too, smiling. He waves
 to his men.

The group, including Murray, all venture across the river.

EXT. GUARAYOS CAMPFIRE AREA

The men slowly approach the area. Human skulls abound. A
 HUMAN BEING'S BODY is BEING COOKED on a SPIT. The troops are
 spooked. Murray, in particular, seems appalled.

PERCY FAWCETT
 I recognize a bit of the chief's
 language--it's safe for us.

JAMES MURRAY
 Safe?! Are you mad, Fawcett!?
 They're *cannibals*!

PERCY FAWCETT

It's a dead member of the tribe--
his spirit will enter them if they
eat it. It's their custom.

(to the whole group)

They may have information about our
destination.

JAMES MURRAY

(incredulous)

They've cooked a body, for
chrissakes! Have you gone insane?

(to the others)

They'll kill us, these savages!

Manley, Costin, and the others look at Fawcett as though he
is insane as well. Fawcett doesn't respond, instead walks to:

INT. GUARAYOS TENT

The other men eventually follow Fawcett into the tent--though
conspicuously missing is MURRAY. Packed with both our guys
and the Guarayos now. A beat of silence, then, to Costin:

PERCY FAWCETT

Can you give them something?

HENRY COSTIN

Yes. Yes, of course.

Costin stupidly strikes a match, and though panicked, the
Indians calm quickly when Fawcett takes out a necklace:

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)

No no--gift! A gift!

One of the GUARAYOS takes the necklace. Then SEES SOMETHING.
He reaches for Costin's ARM. At first, Costin has
trepidation, then allows the man to grab his forearm.

THE GUARAYO WHISTLES LOUDLY, in a STRANGE PITCH. And the
MAGGOTS in Costin's arm STAND UP. The Guarayo simply
squeezes gently and the maggots fall on the ground. Costin's
arm is cured of the maggots--!

Costin TRIES TO WHISTLE like the GUARAYO but cannot:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Not sure we have the touch.

(back to the Guarayo;

SUBTITLE)

(MORE)

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
We're looking for old houses, many
houses, many many people, deep into
the forest. Do you know of this?

The Guarayo speaks in his native tongue. Then, to Costin:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
He's heard rumors, but is
uncertain. Further down the river,
he believes there'll be others who
can help us.

Then the Guarayo motions to his mouth. Food.

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE) (CONT'D)
Food--yes--thank you!

ANGLE ON THE CHIEF as we GO TO:

EXT. RIVERBANK

A Guarayo crushes a plant with a stone and lets the juice
spill into the water. A milky cloud forms. After a moment,
DOZENS OF FISH RISE TO THE SURFACE, gasping. A Guarayo boy
wades into the water and pulls out the biggest. Fawcett's
stunned, bows his head in thanks as he takes the fish.

HENRY COSTIN
Chief!

Costin points. Fawcett turns and looks at the water.

HENRY COSTIN (CONT'D)
It's only stunned them! They don't
kill any more than they absolutely
have to!

The other fish that the boy didn't withdraw from the water
swim away.

EXT. GUARAYOS TENT - CLEARING

A thunderstorm is coming. Fawcett walks into the clearing,
and in front of him he sees that here are THOUSANDS of
Indians living about. An astonishing discovery. And they
are not just savages. They have advanced methods of farming;
MAIZE GROWS AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE. Costin approaches:

HENRY COSTIN
Chief, we seem to have lost Mr.
Murray.

PERCY FAWCETT

They've made the jungle into farmland. Incredible... It's truly humbling.

HENRY COSTIN

Did you hear me about Mr. Murray?
He's gone off--

PERCY FAWCETT

I heard you, Mr. Costin.
(back to the field)
Look how it's all designed--at right angles, almost mathematical in its precision. Confirms so much of what we believed...
(to Costin)
Can you imagine what Z must be like...?

Fawcett walks into the field of MAIZE. The wind blows the plants, and Fawcett is an incongruous figure amidst the Guarayos, who tend to the crops. Fawcett finally addresses Costin directly, calling from the middle of the maize:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

We'll find Mr. Murray--he can't have gone very far. Tell the men I've designed new rafts--the canoes are riddled with arrows and useless now. We'll be off on foot in the morning...

Costin watches as Fawcett approaches the LEADER OF THE GUARAYOS and teaches him to HANDSHAKE. A GOODBYE OF SORTS...

EXT. JUNGLE - MORNING

Murray is asleep on the ground. He has gotten lost. Strewn nearby: his machete, all the photos of his family. Sitting in the mud. Food eaten, the wrappings all over. Turkish cigarette butts...

He awakens to see FAWCETT AND THE REST OF THE GROUP, approaching him. Fawcett sees all the food's been eaten.

JAMES MURRAY

Thank God, you've *found* me--I--I got lost. I didn't think we'd survive in the presence of those savages.

Fawcett reaches down, finds: AN EMPTY BOX OF CARAMELS.
 INSIDE THE LID: "For your journey, darling, I love you.
 Nina". A FAWCETT FAMILY PHOTO IS INCLUDED. This seems to
 bring Fawcett to a barely-contained boil.

PERCY FAWCETT

This was from my wife. For all of
 us.

JAMES MURRAY

I know--I, I got hungry. It was
 supposed to be just a short rest.
 The scrub's fearfully dense and I
 fell. I think I've a terrible
 fever--

Fawcett looks down: Murray's leg has a gash. Fawcett bends
 down, looks at the wound. The other men surround Murray.
 Murray's things have scattered all over the jungle.

PERCY FAWCETT

Get up.

Fawcett turns, ferociously hacks a branch with a machete.

JAMES MURRAY

Mr. Fawcett--just one more moment
 of rest, please... I'm very tired--

Fawcett FREEZES. SPINS BACK AROUND. Seething:

PERCY FAWCETT

You're tired?

He collects himself, bends down again. Privately:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

You stole from the group and
 violated our trust. I won't have
 this again from you.

(Fawcett stands)

Your wound's not yet infected, but
 if blood poisoning should set in,
 you'll be a dead man. If you'd
 stayed with the group and trusted
 the Indian, you'd be fed--and
 cured. As it is, we've got to hope
 for the best.

EXT. THE RIVER

They are rafting. Dizzying. Murray is SHIVERING, a mess. Maggots have overwhelmed his legs.

BUMP! The rafts shift with the river's flow, which TURNS VIOLENT. Murray and Costin fall off the raft.

PERCY FAWCETT
Swim to shore! There's no
piranhas!

Costin starts swimming to shore. Instead, Murray attempts to hold onto the raft and threatens to capsize it.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
No--swim to shore!

The raft starts to shift. Fawcett is enraged:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
Let go! You pink-eyed weakling--
LET GO!

The raft tips, and Manley falls in the river. TWO CRATES OF SUPPLIES GO TUMBLING OVERBOARD.

EXT. SHORE

Fawcett directs the raft to the shore using a bamboo pole. The raft bumps up against the riverbank. Everyone has congregated. All are out of breath. Fawcett eyes Murray with utter contempt.

PERCY FAWCETT
We've lost a third of our rations.

JAMES MURRAY
I was drowning--

PERCY FAWCETT
There was no chance of that! And
this after you took our food!

JAMES MURRAY
I suppose the honorable course of
action would be for me to starve?
Is that it? Is that what you wish
for, my death?

Fawcett, to Costin:

PERCY FAWCETT

Where are we now, do we know? Are we behind our schedule?

JAMES MURRAY

Fawcett, you're entirely without mercy! You could at least slow down to give a lame man a chance for his life!

Still not paying attention to Murray, Fawcett remains fixed on Costin. Seeing a couple of ABANDONED HUTS behind Costin:

PERCY FAWCETT

Pitch camp here for the night, we'll determine our progress.

EXT. CAMP

One of the HORSES starts to collapse. Looks very ill. A CREWMEMBER turns to the others, shouting:

CREWMEMBER

Horse down!

The Crewmember takes out his gun, SHOTS THE HORSE.

ACROSS THE FIRE:

Murray has a fever. Truly sick: swollen, distended, in terrible shape--covered with maggots. He moans over and over, shivering. To a noncomprehending Indian:

JAMES MURRAY

I'm going to die too, just like that horse. I'm worth as much as that horse...

SEVERAL YARDS AWAY

Costin comes over to Fawcett, who is standing near the fire. Pondering...*something*. Manley is here, too.

HENRY COSTIN

We're about two weeks behind our planned pace. That's my best guess.

(beat)

Also, Chief--at your request, I've read the latest of your wife's letters. She's with child again.

PERCY FAWCETT
(barely reacts)
Very good...

ARTHUR MANLEY
It appears our Mr. Murray's got
blood poisoning now.

PERCY FAWCETT
Yes... That's clear.

HENRY COSTIN
So much for his good bloodline.

Fawcett moves closer. Sotto voce, looking at Murray:

PERCY FAWCETT
There's no use pretending to each
other--this man is a cancer. If we
keep him with us we won't survive,
much less reach Z.

HENRY COSTIN
I say we ditch him, leave him to
rot. His Lordship's a coward and a
thief.

ARTHUR MANLEY
I'm in agreement, Major--there
aren't two sets of rules, one for
the high, one for the low.

Fawcett eyes Murray. Then gets up, walks over:

TO MURRAY,

Around whom flies swarm. Murray eyes him suspiciously.
Fawcett speaks deliberately, almost as if proving a case in a
courtroom. In measured and careful tones, like a speech he
has prepared:

PERCY FAWCETT
When traveling in the jungle
without other resources, every man
must realize that if he falls sick
and cannot move with the others
that there must be consequences.
The others cannot wait and die with
him.
(beat)
Do you understand?

Murray seems to get it. An awkward beat, then: Murray starts to grip his revolver.

JAMES MURRAY

You're only here--all of you--
because of the funds I provided!

Fawcett whips his shotgun out, points it directly at Murray. Pushes the shotgun up against his cheek. A tense moment. Then:

PERCY FAWCETT

I cannot allow you to jeopardize
the welfare of our entire party.
(to Costin)
Mr. Costin!

As Costin takes Murray's revolver from him:

JAMES MURRAY

You don't care one whit about me or
the rest of our party, Mr. Fawcett.
You only care about finding your
bloody city!

PERCY FAWCETT

There are some in our group that
would have me abandon you here and
leave you to die. I'm inclined to
agree with them. However, there
are mining encampments south of us,
along the river. In the morning
you'll be on your way to them.
I'll give you our last horse with
what supplies we can spare and an
Indian to guide you.

JAMES MURRAY

You'll pack me off with a swamp
wog, will you?

(beat)

This calm willingness to abandon me
is a queer thing to hear from an
Englishman. But it does not
surprise me, as I have now gauged
your character.

EXT. JUNGLE - MORNING

Murray is placed atop a mule. Manley and Costin have trained their guns on him. Fawcett helps pack:

PERCY FAWCETT

Stay along the banks of the river.
You'll come upon gold miners, and
they'll take you out of the jungle.
Give them this--

Fawcett gives Murray money, drops it into a pouch. Notices
MURRAY'S INFECTED KNEE.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

I would hope that any harsh words
we have exchanged in the heat of
the jungle would be forgotten--

JAMES MURRAY

(interrupting, with rage)
Let's just hope our paths don't
cross again, Mr. Fawcett. For your
sake.

With that, Murray rides off. Fawcett and the others watch as
the mule disappears into the jungle.

HENRY COSTIN

Any chance for him?

PERCY FAWCETT

Slim, to be sure. But it's the
best we could do.
(aloud, to all)
We'll proceed east, to the
territory researched!

EXT. CANYON - DUSK

Fawcett leads the men as they slide down a steep canyon. The
RAIN comes, first drops.

THEN IT IS FEROCIOUS. MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF WATER, A TORRENT.

LIGHTNING. THE RUMBLE OF THUNDER.

Fawcett looks up, through heavy downpour: SEES what he thinks
is a MASSIVE STONE FACE CARVED INTO THE WALL OF THE CANYON.
A GODLIKE VISION.

Then, A ROAR. BUILDING AND BUILDING, LOUDER AND LOUDER.
Fawcett spins behind: A FLASH FLOOD. A WALL OF WATER COMES
CHARGING TOWARD THEM--!

The group's DOGS GET WASHED AWAY. THE MEN ARE LIFTED RIGHT OFF THEIR FEET. They MOVE, GRABBING ONTO THE ROCKS ON THE SIDE. THE MULES STRUGGLE TO STAY ALIVE.

One of the ROCKS that Manley is holding onto COMES LOOSE. HE IS THROWN BACK INTO THE FLOOD. But COSTIN GRABS HIM, pulls him back to the side. Saves his life.

THE FLASH FLOOD ENDS almost as suddenly as it began. Fawcett turns back. The AREA with the STONE CARVING has been COMPLETELY WASHED AWAY...

The men are SOAKED, without supplies, their clothes beyond tattered. Costin yells to Fawcett, up ahead:

HENRY COSTIN

Chief, our reserve is lost! We've got to turn back now!

Fawcett half-turns to Costin, does not look at him. HE SEEMS TO BE SPEAKING FOR HIMSELF:

PERCY FAWCETT

We can't let it stop us! There's only a bit more to go!

HENRY COSTIN

Sir, with what little we've got on our backs, death would be certain within days! If we'd still had the horse you gave Murray and all it could carry, we might have a fighting chance!

Fawcett ponders. Under his breath, through gritted teeth:

PERCY FAWCETT

God damn me for a fool to bring that man...

Then: he EXPLODES, bashing the side of a rock ferociously with his machete. Pure frustration over the whole situation. Over this, we HEAR:

PERCY FAWCETT (O.S.) (CONT'D)

To be sent to the R.G.S.: our group has had to return to La Paz. Mr. James Murray was forced to separate from our expedition to seek medical attention. His location is currently unknown.

INT. LA PAZ TELEGRAPH OUTLET - DAY

Fawcett has arrived in La Paz, Bolivia. He is in a telegraph outlet. He is writing on a notepad a message to the RGS:

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)
The British Minister should get his case in hand and his family should not be communicated with unless there is definitive news of some kind.

INT. LA PAZ - HOTEL HALLWAY - DAY

Fawcett walks down the hall, bags in hand. He pauses in front of his door. Picks up a newspaper. The headline, in Spanish, is all about the ASSASSINATION OF THE ARCHDUKE FERDINAND and TENSIONS IN EUROPE. Opens his hotel door.

INT. HOTEL ROOM

He is startled. NINA, who stands from the desk, smiling.

PERCY FAWCETT
(stunned)
My God, how long have you been here?

NINA FAWCETT
Around seventy days. Ambassador Paget said they'd stopped hearing from you, so they sent for me. They were worried you might be ill.

PERCY FAWCETT
No... No, I'm fine. Everyone else is quite sick--but I'm in good condition.

NINA FAWCETT
Thank heavens...

They embrace.

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)
You've a daughter now. Her name's Joan. She's apparently in good spirits.

Fawcett comes close to breaking down.

PERCY FAWCETT

Joan. It's a beautiful name.

They separate. A beat. Fawcett then sits at the desk, comes out with it:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

I...I came close, Cheeky. I had to turn back, for the good of the men.

(beat)

I did everything I could not to return a failure to you and the children. But I had to turn back...

He begins to cry.

NINA FAWCETT

We're wanted back in England--there've been many telegrams.

Perhaps it's best we go--you can see Joan and the boys.

(beat)

It's all right, you'll try again... You'll keep trying...

We then HEAR a MAN'S VOICE:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (O.S.)

I'm afraid I have some rather bad news.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - ROYAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY - DAY

Back in London. An enormous and elegant space. Crowded, a big table, with Sir George Goldie, Sir John Scott Keltie, George Curzon, and two other OLDER MEN we've not met. And, of course, Percy Fawcett, who is seated across from Goldie. Nina is here, too. The others surround Fawcett; a trial-like atmosphere in the room, tense. A silent beat, then:

PERCY FAWCETT

I would like to know what it is so that I may get back to my work.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (CONT'D)

I'm not so certain it should be discussed in mixed company.

PERCY FAWCETT

As you know, my wife is privy to all my affairs.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
 Very well then. Your friend Mr.
 Murray has survived.

Fawcett is shocked, but shows it only momentarily.

PERCY FAWCETT
 That's...most fortunate.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
 He's here in London and has
 retained counsel.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE
 He claims he was abandoned by you--
 is this true?

PERCY FAWCETT
 It is not. I sent him back, with
 both food and money. It was
 necessary, in order to save lives.

George Curzon speaks up from the side:

GEORGE CURZON
 The man also claims you tried to
 kill him.

PERCY FAWCETT
 That's absurd. We almost killed
ourselves giving him what rations
 we could. He was the reason we
 didn't reach our destination!

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
 Well, whatever the case, there's
 the very real possibility that this
 matter may be put in the hands of a
 court. Mr. Murray has some very
 powerful friends behind him.

PERCY FAWCETT
 Mr. President, I did everything
 that could be done for Mr. Murray.

NINA FAWCETT
 Why don't you ask the others on the
 journey? The man clearly owed his
 condition to unsanitary habits and
 his own gluttony--

PERCY FAWCETT
 (quieting her)
 Nina, please. It's all right.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
 That's not truly the issue here
 anyway--the RGS must operate in the
real world. And a lawsuit for us
 would be deadly.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE
 Percy, I've been informed that if
 you are willing to apologize--in
 the company of the entire Society--
 that Mr. Murray will be inclined to
 drop any and all claims against you
 and the RGS.
 (beat)
 Will you apologize?

PERCY FAWCETT
 Apologize?!? I saved the man's
 bloody life! The very fact that
 he's alive proves I did the right
 thing! Now I have important work
 to do and I do not have time to
 waste on Mr. Murray's absurd
 claims!

The men are frustrated by Fawcett's intransigence.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE
 Do you know what *this* is, Major?

Goldie puts LARGE PHOTOGRAPHS in front of FAWCETT. They are
 PHOTOS OF ANCIENT RUINS.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (CONT'D)
 Mr. Hiram Bingham of America has
 discovered a lost city in the Andes--
 Machu Picchu. And Dr. Hamilton
 Rice is mounting another
 expedition.
 (beat)
 Where is your promised
 breakthrough?

PERCY FAWCETT
 Machu Picchu is merely a taste of
 what's to come. I'll return to
 Amazonia and I will lead the way.

GEORGE CURZON

Let's hope you have that chance.
That Serbian war may not be only
Serbian very much longer. The
Central Powers issued a war
declaration against the Entente
this morning. Seems only a matter
of time before we're involved as
well.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Secretary Baldwin tells me the
whole thing's likely to be over in
a couple of months--if it happens
at all.

(to Fawcett)

I suggest you deal with Mr. Murray.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE

Apologize, Percy. And all will be
forgotten. Mr. Murray will be at
next month's meeting. We know
you'll do what is proper.

ANGLE ON FAWCETT as the men get up to leave. Just Fawcett
and Nina now. FAWCETT eyes the PHOTOS OF MACHU PICCHU. HE
runs his fingers across the images...

INT. FAWCETT HOME - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Fawcett comes up the stairs (with Nina a few steps ahead),
sees BRIAN AND JACK, at their desks from the hall.
Presumably doing homework. Jack is now a TEENAGER and Brian
a boy. Fawcett stands near the doorway, looking at them. A
warm expression on his face as the boys remaining seated:

PERCY FAWCETT

Hello, boys. Good to see your
noses to the grindstone.

JACK FAWCETT

Hello, father... I've been adding
to your scrapbook. Editorials, in
the newspapers this week--all
supporting you.

PERCY FAWCETT

Thank you, dear. But you should
focus on your studies. Goodnight.

INT. BEDROOM

Fawcett and Nina, in bed. Baby JOAN is in a cradle right next to the bed. Whispered:

NINA FAWCETT

It's no surprise to me about Mr. Murray. He struck me as far too full of himself ever to be an equal of yours. Whatever you decide, I do hope you stand your ground.

PERCY FAWCETT

I've already made up my mind ...

(beat)

But none of this will matter anyway, if Mr. Curzon is correct and war comes. We'll all have no choice but to re-enlist and Z will have to wait.

NINA FAWCETT

Perhaps Mr. Curzon is wrong.

PERCY FAWCETT

Mr. Curzon has many connections in government--he's not likely to be mistaken.

(beat)

And mark my words, it won't be the romp many are predicting.

We then HEAR SIR GEORGE GOLDIE'S VOICE:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (O.S.)

Gentlemen, hostilities commenced on the continent this morning. The King has announced that our army has mobilized and will be joining the fight.

INT. ROYAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY - AUDITORIUM - LATER

A BIG CHEER. At the RGS auditorium. PACKED. Everyone who is anyone is here, seated in jacket and tie. Fawcett is seated about midway up the room, next to Costin; Costin tilts his head to Fawcett when JAMES MURRAY ENTERS THE ROOM, SITS DOWN.

HENRY COSTIN

Bloody bastard...

Fawcett looks at Murray...

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE (SIMULTANEOUS)

We shall do our best to continue the operations of the RGS, however; for victory at the front depends of course upon our steadfastness at home... Today, we are joined by Mr. James Murray. Mr. Murray should like to address the RGS and has prepared some words for the purpose. Mr. Murray?

James Murray stands.

JAMES MURRAY

As many of you know, I am leaving within weeks on an expedition to the Antarctic. But it is in fact a miracle I am here today at all. Because, as you are no doubt aware, my journey to Amazonia did not complete its stated goals. On this journey, Mr. Percy Fawcett all but attempted my murder. And his assaults on my character were unforgivable. This matter cannot go unaddressed before I depart.

(beat)

But...should Major Fawcett choose to so reach out his hand in contrition...for the benefit of all involved, I would consider the matter honorably settled.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Mr. Fawcett?

Percy Fawcett stands from his place in the crowd, looks at Costin, and sees Manley, too. He acknowledges them, then looks over the heads of the members of the RGS. Steps down, toward Murray.

MURMURING FROM THE CROWD.

He approaches Murray, stops. Eyes him, then the room:

PERCY FAWCETT

When I last saw you, Mr. Murray, I was putting you on our only remaining horse and giving you more than your share of our food.

(MORE)

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

This, despite the fact you had stolen from us. At that time, the rest of my men urged me to leave you where you lay. I could not bring myself to do so, and as a consequence I saved your life. A life, may I add, that you endangered through your own ignorance. You have now asked for an apology. I will apologize--to my crew. My friends, I apologize that I ever believed Mr. Murray was worthy to be in your company.

The room ERUPTS, in both CHEERS and BOOS.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

And it is with men like you that I'd be honored to serve in defense of our country. As a consequence, I intend to enlist this afternoon.

ARTHUR MANLEY

Hear him! HEAR HIM!

Many men CHEER, others BOO. Murray turns, enraged, to Sir George Goldie, as CHAOS breaks out:

JAMES MURRAY

Mr. Secretary, this is OUTRAGEOUS--this disgraceful man owes me an apology!

(to the whole room)

This man owes this ENTIRE CHAMBER an apology!

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

Young men are running around, looking thrilled. Singing songs. War has broken out, but the men seem oddly HAPPY. Rows of MEN, arm in arm, DANCE DOWN THE STREET, ready for battle...

INT. ENLISTMENT OFFICE

An army enlistment center. It is bustling, and people are delighted, as if they are going off to a party. The CAMERA DOLLIES PAST MANY RECRUITING DESKS; we STOP AT FAWCETT, speaking with an ARMY PRIVATE seated behind a desk:

ARMY PRIVATE

Name?

PERCY FAWCETT
Percy Fawcett.

The man's mouth drops open. Fawcett is a god to him.

ARMY PRIVATE
Percy Fawcett...? The explorer?

PERCY FAWCETT
That's right.

ARMY PRIVATE
It's an honor, sir! You handled
the jungle--war will not beat that
challenge!

PERCY FAWCETT
Let's hope to God you're right.

A CHUBBY OFFICER PIPES UP:

CHUBBY OFFICER
About time we had ourselves a
proper war, I say! Make quick work
of the Jerries--be over in a
fortnight, you'll see!

A BIG CHEER FROM THE WHOLE ROOM, as Percy Fawcett remains
silent, observing. He is much more circumspect than they...

EXT. WESTERN BELGIUM - THE FRONT - CLOUDY DAY

A battle-scarred scene. Total devastation. The camera pans
past a field scorched by destruction, as far as the eye can
see. No vegetation at all. The area is EERILY QUIET, only
occasionally punctuated by a RAT-A-TAT-TAT or a distant
explosion.

SUPERIMPOSE THE LEGEND: "THE FRONT, WESTERN BELGIUM. TWO
YEARS LATER".

We SEE a TRENCH LINE.

INT. TRENCH

The trench itself is filled with weary and shattered troops,
and also rotting corpses. Blood and fumes. Bogs of urine
and shit and bones and lice and maggots and rats. A dead man
has drowned in the slime, only part of his head exposed.
HELL ON EARTH.

A MAN is LED DOWN the TRENCHES. HE is is GEORGE LYNCH, late forties, a WAR CORRESPONDENT. We SEE him moving through the trench, asking TROOPS a question we cannot yet hear. But it should be clear he's LOOKING FOR SOMEONE...

LYNCH MOVES, and THE CAMERA DOLLIES, PAST PHOTOS and ART of AMAZONIA, awkwardly TACKED to the side of the TRENCH. We SETTLE ON: A MAN, WALKING, from BEHIND. FAWCETT'S BACK. FAWCETT CALLS OUT A NAME as he looks down at a corpse, eyeing dog tags.

PERCY FAWCETT
Lance Corporal George Mulgrew...

GEORGE LYNCH
Major Fawcett?

PERCY FAWCETT turns. Looking battle-weary and older. He walks through the trench, holding one of TADJUI'S BROTHER'S NECKLACES, wrapped around his hand. His SECOND LIEUTENANT, CECIL ERIC LEWIS LYNE, follows him, as does LIEUTENANT HEMMING. Lyne is JITTERY, seems SLIGHTLY CRAZED from battle, writing down the names of the dead soldiers as Fawcett calls them out:

PERCY FAWCETT
Private Thomas Craven...

Lynch sticks out his hand to be shaken:

GEORGE LYNCH
I'm Mr. George Lynch, correspondent for the London Times. You've won this year's Founders' gold medal, from the RGS--congratulations!

Percy is HALTED. SHOCKED:

PERCY FAWCETT
What--? What did you say your name was?

GEORGE LYNCH
George Lynch, from the London Times--the press has been making your case relentlessly these past months.

Fawcett pauses, but so briefly. As he walks over and touches a SOLDIER who looks to be sleeping but is really DEAD:

GEORGE LYNCH (CONT'D)

It appears your Mr. Murray has gone missing in Antarctica after attempting mutiny and the RGS feels they've wronged you.

PERCY FAWCETT

Do they indeed.

Fawcett turns to Lieutenant Hemming:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Alert the priest please, for Corporal Geoffrey Emerick.

GEORGE LYNCH

(as he follows F. around)

My friends in the American press are quite astonished by your feats as well. I suppose if you should ever find yourself needing support, you might try them.

PERCY FAWCETT

I'll try to remember that, Mr. Lynch. Please forgive me--I have duties to attend to right now, as you can see.

Lynch notices Fawcett rubbing the necklace:

GEORGE LYNCH

What about the jungle, Major? Will you return after all this is over?

Fawcett looks at Lynch like he's crazy.

PERCY FAWCETT

After this is over? This is Armageddon...

THEN A WHOLE BATTERY OF TROOPS BEGINS TO STAND. Someone is coming. A COLONEL HADDOW makes his way to the trench, accompanied by others, including a short man whom we shall meet in a moment. Fawcett stands as they approach; he salutes. Hadow looks around at a number of young troops.

COLONEL HADDOW

Major... How are we holding up?

PERCY FAWCETT

(they aren't)

Exceptionally well, sir.

COLONEL HADDOW

(virtually ignoring F.)

Good. Now Major, I am viewing, without correction, unbuttoned pocket flaps. I have also noticed men here with their hands in their pockets. A smart regiment is a good regiment.

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes sir. Of course.

Haddow gestures with his finger to the men behind him:
INSIDE, PLEASE. Lynch stays outside.

INT. BUNKER

A table, a phone, a lantern, not much else. Fawcett enters the space behind the Colonel. The Colonel is with a short, odd-looking man: WINSTON CHURCHILL. Churchill immediately begins to observe the surroundings by walking around the room. Fawcett is flanked by Lt. LYNE and Lt. HEMMING.

COLONEL HADDOW

Major, this is Mr. Winston Churchill, who has volunteered to command a battalion on the front.

PERCY FAWCETT

Good afternoon, Mr. Churchill.

Churchill nods, without making eye contact. Continues to observe the space.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Colonel, I've examined the area, and we've three routes for an assault--

COLONEL HADDOW

Retreat, Major.

PERCY FAWCETT

Pardon me, sir?

COLONEL HADDOW

I said retreat. We're planning an assault with our very best troops-- we wouldn't want your men in the way.

PERCY FAWCETT

Sir--given the chance, we will be as good as any. I can lead them.

COLONEL HADDOW

Major, I've spoken to General Haig--you and your men are ordered to retreat.

Fawcett is in disbelief and is impatient with the disrespect. Haddow walks over to a small desk, stands over Churchill's shoulder. MORE PHOTOS, ARTICLES, BOOKS of AMAZONIA.

COLONEL HADDOW (CONT'D)

Your family, Major?

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes.

COLONEL HADDOW

You'll want to remove it, weakens the resolve.

PERCY FAWCETT

I prefer to leave it up, sir.

COLONEL HADDOW

Suit yourself... You'll be evacuating these quarters tomorrow anyway.

Haddow and Churchill leave the bunker. Fawcett turns to LIEUTENANT LYNE. With disgust and mad determination:

PERCY FAWCETT

Mr. Lyne, we'll take the Germans, at Ploegsteert.

LIEUTENANT HEMMING

Sir, the Colonel said--

PERCY FAWCETT

We've seven hundred men left, and the two Indian brigades on horseback. We'll hit the Boche with our infantry to the north flank, and our cavalry brigades will push through the center.

LIEUTENANT HEMMING

Our orders are to retreat!

PERCY FAWCETT

Retreat and we might all die if the
Germans attack. Is that what you
prefer? Get everyone together.
We're going to take the front, at
dawn.

Hemming eyes Fawcett, then:

LIEUTENANT HEMMING

Yes sir.

Hemming turns away, to carry out the orders but furious
nonetheless. Fawcett begins to move to the phone.

EXT. TRENCH - OUTSIDE THE BUNKER - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Fires illuminate the space. Fawcett checks his watch, then
walks through the trench, eyeing many frightened soldiers.
Then he moves toward the bunker, where he hears an oddly
CHEERFUL COMMOTION.

INT. BUNKER

HE ENTERS THE BUNKER, where his AMAZON ARTWORK is all over
the walls.

The troops--about sixty--sit around a table, packed into the
cavernous room. Seated at the table is MADAME KUMEL, a
mystic. The soldiers see Fawcett; one of them, A SOLDIER,
shouts out:

A SOLDIER

C'mon, sir! Join us! We're havin'
a bit of a mysticism here! She's a
local, from Amentiere.

ANOTHER SOLDIER

A madame of fine spiritualist
skills!

LIEUTENANT LYNE

(sotto)

She'll bless us, she will. With a
bit of the occult--part of the
world that isn't right in front of
our face, if you know what I mean.

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes... We should all thank her for letting us remember that there's a life beyond the one we can see here.

A SOLDIER

Madame, how 'bout you read the Major?

The whole group CHEERS the idea. Fawcett ponders for a moment, then turns to the Madame:

PERCY FAWCETT

We're in battle soon. Any spiritual aid we can get--I think we'd all very much like your blessing.

Madame Kumel motions for Fawcett to sit down:

MADAME KUMEL

Please.

Fawcett sits and the men CHEER WILDLY.

MADAME KUMEL (CONT'D)

You are the explorer, they tell me?

Fawcett nods once. She reaches over, takes the Indian NECKLACE that Fawcett has wrapped around his hand like a bracelet. She slips it off.

She looks up at the WALL, SEES THE JUNGLE ARTWORK. She begins to HYPNOTIZE THE ROOM. She holds the object and with her other hand holds Fawcett's:

MADAME KUMEL (CONT'D)

Feel my hand... Listen to my voice. Only my voice... Only my voice. Empty your mind, the only thing is my voice...

Fawcett stares at the mesmerizing Madame.

MADAME KUMEL (CONT'D)

You have loved ones at home?

PERCY FAWCETT

I do...

MADAME KUMEL

But you are not home.

(beat)

Can you take me where you are...?

(beat)

Can you take me to where you dream
to be?

PERCY FAWCETT

It's far away...

MADAME KUMEL

Is it the forest?

(beat)

You wish to be in the forest?

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes.

MADAME KUMEL

Can you see yourself there, now...?

Try to picture it, in your mind.

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes. I can. I can see the jungle.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

We SEE Kumel and Fawcett, at the table--which is now situated in the middle of the jungle. We still HEAR ONLY the SOUND FROM THE BUNKER, however, and the sounds of the WAR. KUMEL CONTINUES:

MADAME KUMEL

Your place is beyond the jungle. A
timeless place.

EXT. RUINS

We are in what looks like a more extensive Machu Picchu. There are GOLD STATUES, ENORMOUS, everywhere. Still, we HEAR ONLY THE SOUND FROM THAT BUNKER. And yes, now Kumel and Fawcett are around the table in the middle of the ruins:

MADAME KUMEL

I see a valley... A valley and a
great city, full of jewels.

(beat)

A wealth of real jewels and gold.
But also jewels of the spirit...

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes...

THE EXPLOSIONS GET LOUDER. AND LOUDER.

THEN, a BEAUTIFUL RAIN OF FLAKES OF GOLD COMES DOWN, NOT TOUCHING OUR PROTAGONISTS BUT SEEMINGLY COVERING THE GROUND LIKE SNOW... Kumel continues:

MADAME KUMEL

Your soul is not quiet until you look for this world. And only you can find it--it is your destiny. If you believe it to be so, then it IS so. Your power is in your belief. You must not give in.

PERCY FAWCETT

I will not. I will find it.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, A DEAFENING EXPLOSION SHATTERS THE MOMENT and we are BACK IN:

INT. THE BUNKER

Which has been hit by a shell. The men all scatter, in panicked chaos... Fawcett covers his head from the falling debris... A close call... The rain of gold flakes was actually falling dirt...

Fawcett exits the bunker, into:

EXT. TRENCH - JUST BEFORE DAWN

The troops, looking weary and beyond battle-scarred, stare at CAMERA as we DOLLY PAST THEM. They cower from the shells. We're in Fawcett's POV. FAWCETT PATROLS THE TRENCH, speaking over the loud explosions and chaos.

PERCY FAWCETT

Every man must do only one thing today, and that is the best he can-- for King and Country, for honor, for family.

As Fawcett speaks, we SEE: ROWS OF HORSES, getting GAS MASKS put on their heads. INDIAN TROOPS are getting ready to mount them, and are adorned in the most elaborate and absurd manner...

Fawcett then looks over to SEE a LOW PRIVATE, shaking like a leaf. The Private has vomited all over his uniform. Fawcett then charges through the trench, YELLING HIS SPEECH:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

In my travels, I have seen men do the most remarkable things, with dignity. And I have seen others crumble out of cowardice. Fear-- fear is the motive power of all evil. Fear is the one thing to exclude humanity from the Garden of Eden. I have faith in you, in your courage. This will make us all men in the end.

(beat)

Good luck and godspeed.

The men separate, begin to line the trenches. Cleaning their rifles, making sure the bayonets are screwed on tightly. Readyng the charge. Many men start throwing up; others kiss small bibles; others look at family photos which they kiss and place in their breastpockets. Others are merely still, awaiting almost certain death.

Fawcett takes a small drawing of AMAZONIA JUNGLE, holds it to his head. Almost like he's praying to it. Then pockets it.

EXT. TRENCH - BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Fawcett takes several steps near the top of the trench. Places a whistle in his mouth. Looks at his men, who are donning GAS MASKS. Raises his arm and BLOWS THE WHISTLE.

Upon blowing the whistle, an army of men charge out of the trench with a collective BATTLE CRY. Among them, the Low Private.

ALMOST INSTANTLY, so many of the men are RIDDLED WITH MACHINE GUN FIRE. Others are SET AFIRE with FLAMETHROWERS.

EXPLOSIONS ALL AROUND. Mines. Shells. Brutally loud. THEN: THE TWO INDIAN CAVALRY REGIMENTS GALLOP out of the TRENCHES; the HORSES HAVE GAS MASKS OF THEIR OWN. Absurd.

They charge toward the German position, but are SET ON FIRE by FLAMETHROWERS and HIT BY THE HAIL OF BULLETS.

Huge numbers of new troops leap from the trenches, many to be met with a similar fate.

Wounded infantrymen crawl into shell holes. Fawcett himself emerges from the trench. Sees the Low Private, shrieking. Then the Low Private gets his FACE BLOWN OFF.

Fawcett whips off the gas mask and starts to yell. Screams to his soldiers, often inaudible from the devastating sounds of war, we can nonetheless tell what he's saying either by reading his lips or by the occasional word peaking through:

PERCY FAWCETT
Come on! Come on! Crush the
German! Come on!

FLASH CUT TO:

FAWCETT, URGING ON FELLOW EXPLORERS IN THE JUNGLE; HIS MOTION IS PRECISELY THE SAME AS THE ONE ON THE BATTLEFIELD...

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD

A GONG sound. CHEMICAL WEAPONS are coming. A RANDOM PRIVATE SCREAMS FROM HIS POSITION ATOP THE EDGE OF THE TRENCH:

RANDOM PRIVATE
Incoming! Gas!

Fawcett stands in the middle of the battlefield, seemingly a man on his own. And in his own world. Men shrink and charge forward around him; men die around him; men courageously stand their ground.

BULLETS and FLAMES seem mysteriously to avoid him; he seems impervious... SMOKE seems to envelop Fawcett in his crazed, dazed state. He holds up his rifle with its bayonet into the air. He has a THOUSAND-YARD STARE NOW...

AND THEN WE HEAR IT: A GONG SOUND.

A nearby explosion. Fawcett falls to his knees. His mouth opens in lockjaw and his eyes roll back into his head. He falls...

WE PAN OFF HIM TO REVEAL: bits of letters and photos that the men carry into battle flutter over the corpses like snow. The CAMERA MOVES through the battlefield, littered with the papers and blood and parts of bodies.

The camera settles, finally, on a piece of BARBED WIRE. Attached to it: the DRAWING BY FAWCETT of AMAZONIA. Stained with blood, moving gently in the wind...

INT. MILITARY HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Fawcett, in the hospital. In bed, somewhere in England. Here is: a GENERAL HAIG; MANY of Haig's LACKEYS; and a DOCTOR. Fawcett awakens, dazed, shocked by the crowded room. He starts to speak, but only in a whisper:

PERCY FAWCETT
What's happened to me...?

DOCTOR
You've inhaled chlorine gas. Your lungs are badly scarred.

Fawcett lifts his head a bit.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)
Your endurance will be diminished, and you'll have a devil of a cough-- but...you're very lucky to have survived.

Fawcett sees NINA FAWCETT, with the three children behind her. She approaches the bedside. Fawcett warms at the sight of her. She, however, seems beyond DEVASTATED at the sight of her infirm husband. She TEARS UP. Fighting the tears, she puts on a brave face:

NINA FAWCETT
Darling, the children are all here.

The children walk to Fawcett's side, all muttering "HELLO". Jack is now a young adult; Brian, a young teen; and young daughter JOAN a toddler. Fawcett says to his son Jack, stunned:

PERCY FAWCETT
You've become a man...
(to the toddler)
You're Joan, aren't you. I'm your father.

Nina lifts the toddler Joan, and Fawcett kisses her. Fawcett strokes the top of Brian's head tenderly. Stepping forward:

GENERAL HAIG

Mr. Fawcett, I'm General Haig. You should know that, because of your bravery, the Germans have retreated all along the front.

The General motions to one of his officers, who brings forth a small box. The General opens the box. It is a DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL.

GENERAL HAIG (CONT'D)

As a result of your astonishing efforts, you've been awarded our distinguished service medal--

He places the medal on Fawcett's bedsheet.

GENERAL HAIG (CONT'D)

--and we're raising your rank to Lieutenant Colonel.

Jack cannot help himself, but, appalled, he blurts out:

JACK FAWCETT

Lieutenant Colonel? After all he's done?!!?

PERCY FAWCETT

(as a reprimand)

Jack.

Everyone turns to the young man, who takes several steps backward and sits on a bench.

GENERAL HAIG

Mr. Fawcett, your courage makes you truly a model soldier. Our nation depends on men such as you.

PERCY FAWCETT

Thank you, General. Thank you.

The General nods, spins around, leaves the room with the rest of his army men.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Doctor?

DOCTOR

Yes?

PERCY FAWCETT

What...about my travels? To Amazonia?

DOCTOR

In your current condition, obviously not. I...must tell you: you may never be able to return to your jungle.

Percy Fawcett shuts his eyes in quiet disappointment and turns away. The Doctor attempts to cheer him:

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

However, you can take comfort in the fact that here we'll be able to offer you the very best care in the civilized world.

Fawcett turns back to the Doctor when he hears this:

PERCY FAWCETT

You say "civilized"--the word is an obscenity, Doctor. I've spent many years in the jungle, often with so-called savages--and none would ever bring such wanton destruction on his fellow creatures.

(beat)

I would like a word alone with my son Jack, please.

EVERYONE seems to mutter a "course" or a "yes," and the room is empty save for Fawcett and his son, Jack. He WAVES HIM OVER. Jack walks to his bedside. Fawcett grabs his wrist.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

A man of your age doesn't speak until spoken to outside the family.

JACK FAWCETT

I'm sorry, Father.

PERCY FAWCETT

It's all right--you needn't concern yourself with their judgment in any case. They're technicians, not men of vision.

JACK FAWCETT

But you can't even walk. The least they could do with your rank--

PERCY FAWCETT

It doesn't matter. I've already
walked in places they could never
imagine. Go be with your mother in
the meantime, she needs you.

Jack kisses his father. Exits. Fawcett watches him go.

EXT. FAWCETT HOME - DEVON

A small house, a big step down, but not a dump. Still has a
humanity about it.

SUPERIMPOSE: "DEVON, ENGLAND. 1919".

A motorcar drives up and out steps: Percy Fawcett and Nina.
Neighbors have come out of their homes to see the two; they
CLAP and CHEER as the Fawcetts wave happily to them. Shouts
of "WELCOME HOME" ring out...

INT. FAWCETT HOME - DEVON - MOMENTS LATER

Fawcett and Nina enter the house. It is filled with people,
old friends, neighbors. Two LOCALS are playing music on
guitar and accordion. Too crowded for Fawcett, who begins to
feel SUFFOCATED. HENRY COSTIN, in army uniform, approaches:

HENRY COSTIN

Chief! Thank God you pulled
through! We both made it home
alive!

PERCY FAWCETT

Yes, Mr. Costin. I'm relieved for
your safety... Our Mr. Manley did
not return, I'm told.

HENRY COSTIN

No, bless his soul...
(beat; brighter)
But would you believe it? I'm
married now! With a child on the
way. No more trenches and jungles
for me!

PERCY FAWCETT

Congratulations, Corporal. I'm so
very happy for you. I truly am.

INT. FAWCETT HOME - DEVON - BEDROOM

Fawcett goes up to the house bedroom, with Nina behind him. He moves to the window, pulling away a curtain. He watches his children playing FOOTBALL outside. Fawcett sees RALEIGH RIMELL, twenty, join them, looking ebullient. Nina, meanwhile, starts unpacking.

PERCY FAWCETT

The children look wonderful--it's a tribute to you. Jack's all grown.

NINA FAWCETT

Yes--he's quite an inch taller than you. He's certainly his father's son--he always wants to know about your journeys.

PERCY FAWCETT

(with a smile)

A pity he was never old enough to go with me... Who's the young man's just joined the game?

NINA FAWCETT

(not looking)

'S probably Raleigh Rimell--he's Jack's best friend. I think they both imagine themselves to be future explorers.

Fawcett turns from the window, looks around the room.

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)

It's small, I know. Truth be told, I had to sell some of our things last month just to keep it.

(with a laugh)

It's rather a fall from dreams.

PERCY FAWCETT

It's perfectly fine, Cheeky. Possessions mean nothing at all.

Fawcett notices his GOLD MEDAL and WAR MEDALS on the DRESSER. Walks to them, looks at his Founders' medal for a moment:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

I'd like you to put these away, please.

NINA FAWCETT

But we're all tremendously proud of you. I've put them out so--

PERCY FAWCETT

Please. Cheeky.

NINA FAWCETT

I will. But it would pain me to see you abandon your dreams of exploration, more than I ever could have imagined just a few years ago.

PERCY FAWCETT

Well...things are different now.

NINA FAWCETT

It's only our world that's different. It's why I feel more than ever your search is so meaningful.

Fawcett EYES a MAP OF AMAZONIA that is FRAMED and ON THE WALL. Staring at it, Nina speaks up again:

NINA FAWCETT (CONT'D)

It's all you could think about in the hospital, I know that. And I know you were filled with regret.

(beat; as Fawcett sits on the bed)

Should you choose to pursue further exploration, I would encourage it.

Fawcett looks at his wife and brightens tremendously. He reaches out for Nina's hand. She takes his hand. He pulls her over to him gently, and they embrace, with Nina standing and Fawcett sitting on the edge of the bed.

His HEAD is against her abdomen. We THEN HEAR:

PERCY FAWCETT (O.S.)

The war did not dampen my enthusiasm.

EXT. ROYAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY - LARGE OFFICE - DAY

Fawcett, at the RGS. Seated around a large desk, are familiar players: SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE; SIR GEORGE GOLDIE; and other recognizable figures, including GEORGE CURZON.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

To the contrary. Now that I've regained my health, I feel as though I simply must return--it's a job undone.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Most of our monies are going to Antarctic expeditions these days, Percy. If you could afford to wait--

PERCY FAWCETT

Sir George, I'm getting older and impatient of lost years. Knowing what these journeys mean to men a good deal younger than I...I cannot delay action any longer.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE

Colonel, the Americans have all the technology now. They have aeroplanes.

PERCY FAWCETT

Aeroplanes mean nothing when the jungle is so very thick, you know that.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE

Percy, you're absolutely fearless, utterly deserving of our medal. But...your sympathy for the savage frankly seems rather oddly misplaced.

PERCY FAWCETT

I daresay the savages to whom you refer have a level of intelligence of which you could only dream. Now that our continent has destroyed itself, I have learned humility--when will you?

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Percy, please.

GEORGE CURZON

Mr. Fawcett, no one would even go with you on such a mission--NO ONE. You don't seem aware that your experience with Mr. Murray has made others fear your obsessions.

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

Obsessions, I fear, you've now passed to your son. One sees him constantly in our libraries, and if I may be so bold, I would advise you to disabuse him at once of his fantasies.

PERCY FAWCETT

I will never destroy my son's passion. It will make him a great man.

The RGS men all look at each other. Not good news, and Goldie appears genuinely hurt to deliver it:

SIR GEORGE GOLDIE

I'm afraid the RGS must refuse your request for funds.

(beat)

I'm very sorry.

ANGLE ON FAWCETT as he rages silently for a moment. He then spins around. As he leaves:

PERCY FAWCETT

Good day, gentlemen.

EXT. LARGE FIELD - CLOUDY DAY

We HEAR distant GUN SHOTS. The wind howls. Then we SEE, emerging from over a hill, Percy Fawcett and Jack Fawcett, both holding RIFLES. A RABBIT runs through the grass.

Jack raises his rifle, FIRES again. He hits the RABBIT.

JACK FAWCETT

I got him!

PERCY FAWCETT

Superb! You've become quite expert with that rifle!

Jack then runs ahead of Fawcett as Fawcett has a brief coughing spell. After he recovers, he WATCHES HIS SON RUN to GET THE RABBIT. JACK PROUDLY HOLDS UP THE CARCASS as FAWCETT WAVES. Father stares at son, something on his mind...

EXT. TOP OF A HILL - LATER

The RABBIT hangs from a tree. Fawcett and Jack are settled here, atop a hill, overlooking the field. Fawcett stands, lighting a small cigar; Jack sits, pensive, cleaning his gun.

PERCY FAWCETT

Jack?

JACK FAWCETT

Yes...?

PERCY FAWCETT

I consider myself very lucky to be here with you. That I came back from the war. I feel now we...finally have a chance to know each other.

JACK FAWCETT

Yes, father. We will.

Jack smiles, goes back to cleaning his rifle. Fawcett PETS THE HANGING CARCASS of the rabbit, then lowers it from the string and begins to prep it for eating. After a beat:

PERCY FAWCETT

I've something for you.

Fawcett pulls something out of his bag: TADJUI'S NECKLACE. He gives it to Jack:

PERCY FAWCETT (O.C.) (CONT'D)

It was from a Guarani Indian. It's yours now.

JACK FAWCETT

(moved)

Thank you... It's extraordinary...

Fawcett SEES his son LIGHT UP as he stares at the necklace.

PERCY FAWCETT

Jack, I--I'm going to try and mount an expedition to Amazonia. To find the lost city, once and for all. I don't have the capital yet, but--should it come together--

(beat)

Would you like to accompany me?

JACK FAWCETT
 (surprised but excited)
 To the jungle?

PERCY FAWCETT
 It would demand a great deal of
 preparation, and if you should say
 no, you'll not be a disappointment
 to me.

JACK FAWCETT
 No--father--I want to go.
 (beat; he smiles)
 I want to go so much, I want
 nothing more.

Fawcett gives his son a gentle smile. In a joking fashion:

PERCY FAWCETT
 Very well. Let us seek the
 approval of a higher authority,
 then...

INT. FAWCETT HOME - EARLY MORNING

Fawcett and Jack, silhouetted in the unlit office of Percy Fawcett. Only the coming daylight illuminates the room. They face NINA.

JACK FAWCETT
 Please, Mother. I know it would be
 dangerous. But you've said
 yourself with all that's happened
 in Europe--it's not possible to
 choose a safe passage through life.
 (beat)
 Look how many men my own age did
 not return from the war--and who is
 to say it will not happen again?

NINA FAWCETT
 (sotto; almost for
 herself)
 Yes...it's true...

JACK FAWCETT
 Then we have your permission?

She brightens; louder:

NINA FAWCETT

There's no doubt I would worry night and day about my two boys in the jungle. But...your father and I have never let fear determine our future.

Jack gets up and excitedly kisses his mother.

JACK FAWCETT

Thank you, Mum. Thank you!

PERCY FAWCETT

All right, Jack. But we're not there yet. As I say, these journeys require a great deal of money and training.

JACK FAWCETT

Of course, father... Might it be only us on the trip?

PERCY FAWCETT

I think so, yes. Always best in small numbers. Why?

JACK FAWCETT

Well, my friend Raleigh Rimell-- he's fit as can be and ready for an adventure. And I believe he'd be a capable member.

PERCY FAWCETT

Jack, one does not enter into this lightly. You should know that if he were to fall sick, or could not keep up--

JACK FAWCETT

I know. He realizes that--

PERCY FAWCETT

He does not. Even you must take great pains to ready yourself.

JACK FAWCETT

But it's the adventure of a lifetime, and we'd spoken of it quite often. He's never backed down from a challenge.

NINA FAWCETT

Yes, it's only he and his mother,
and he has supported her with great
strength.

JACK FAWCETT

May I bring him 'round, and you may
see if he's worthy or not?

Percy Fawcett studies his son for a moment, then:

PERCY FAWCETT

You may. But I make no promises.

Jack claps his hands.

JACK FAWCETT

That's wonderful! I'm going to go
tell him!

Jack leaves the room. Fawcett turns to maps on his desk,
starts collecting them:

NINA FAWCETT

I think you'll find Mr. Rimell to
be of good character.

PERCY FAWCETT

We'll see. I've learned from the
past that character is more
important than experience. I
suppose we've the time to make
certain the boy has what it takes.

The CAMERA PANS to the WINDOW, to SEE JACK RUNNING. OUTSIDE
IS YOUNG JOAN, playing. Fawcett watches them both, then:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

After all, I've only just begun to
arrange the finances.

NINA FAWCETT

With whom?

INT. THE LONDON TIMES OFFICES - DAY

We SEE the insides of the newsroom. We SEE PERCY FAWCETT
MEETING GEORGE LYNCH, the REPORTER FROM THE TRENCHES and a
lot older now, shaking his hand. We STILL HEAR FAWCETT from
the PREVIOUS SCENE:

PERCY FAWCETT (O.S.)
 The American newspapers've always
 been an ally. I'll offer to sell
 them the rights to our dispatches.
 I've an old army connection, he
 might help...

CUT TO:

A BLACK SCREEN. THEN FADE IN: "THREE YEARS LATER".

Music up: Wojciech Kilar's EXODUS, a propulsive piece that
 builds over many minutes...

CUT TO:

INT. DORCHESTER HOTEL LOBBY - PRESS CONFERENCE - DAY

Percy Fawcett tells his story to a syndicate of newspapers.
 A press conference. REPORTERS and PHOTOGRAPHERS pack the
 room. Jack Fawcett and Raleigh Rimell and Nina are here,
 too, by Fawcett's side. So is George Lynch and a host of
 cigar-smoking financiers...

PERCY FAWCETT
 This will be no pampered
 expedition. Top-heavy missions get
 nowhere; they linger on the fringe
 of civilization and bask in
 publicity. We will not. Our
 journey will last three years. A
 tribesman will take our messages to
 bring them to you as often as we
 can, for you to publish.

REPORTER #1
 Who is financing this latest
 journey of yours?

GEORGE LYNCH
 The money is generously being
 supplied by a consortium of
 American newspapers and Mr. John D.
 Rockefeller, Jr. The Royal
 Geographical Society has also just
 offered to help with a portion of
 the financing.

Percy Fawcett is surprised by this news.

REPORTER #2

What about America's own explorers?
They're in South America now, with
great technology--

PERCY FAWCETT

I'm not concerned with them--we
have our own plans. I would like
to introduce to you now my son, Mr.
Jack Fawcett.

ANGLE ON JACK, who is beaming. RALEIGH RIMELL is here, too.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

He and his colleague, Mr. Raleigh
Rimell here, will be my companions
on this historic expedition.

(Fawcett looks at his son)

Both men are strong as horses and
keen as mustard.

FLASH! go the cameras. Then we HEAR:

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE (O.S.)

Well, we could not very well be
shamed by the Americans, now could
we.

INT. ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY - CONFERENCE ROOM

Fawcett and Jack, inside a large conference room. A LINE OF
PEOPLE is standing there, getting ready to SAY GOODBYE to
PERCY FAWCETT: GOLDIE, KELTIE, others. And HENRY COSTIN.

SIR JOHN SCOTT KELTIE (CONT'D)

I'm proud to say, we did finally
meet them halfway. No hard
feelings, one hopes?

PERCY FAWCETT

None, Mr. Keltie. To say otherwise
would be petty of me--our
differences were always honorable.
Mr. Goldie...

GOLDIE/KELTIE

Goodbye, Percy. And godspeed.

PERCY FAWCETT

My son and I will rejoice in
telling you the whole story in
three years time.

Fawcett grabs both men's arms, squeezes. Walks to Costin:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
You still won't come with me, on
this journey we're to make?

HENRY COSTIN
'Fraid I can't, Chief. I'm...I've
my young family now.

PERCY FAWCETT
Yes, I'm fortunate my son is old
enough to come with me and see Z
for himself.

Costin is somehow cheered. A smile breaks out on his face:

HENRY COSTIN
God bless you, Colonel--you've not
lost your fire.

Fawcett smiles, shakes Costin's hand.

PERCY FAWCETT
Mr. Costin, it was always an honor
to serve with you. If my son lives
up to your example, I should be
very proud of him indeed.

HENRY COSTIN
Thank you, sir...

A NEARBY CHURCH BELL RINGS in the now-quiet room. Fawcett
smiles, nods to all of his friends. Champagne is served, and
the men toast--in SILENCE.

EXT. LONDON PORT - DUSK

A large ship: the AQUITANIA. Percy and Jack Fawcett walk
toward the ship. Alongside them are the rest of the family:
Nina, Brian, Joan. Large numbers of PRESS and PHOTOGRAPHERS
and MOVIE CAMERAS are being kept at bay. As they walk toward
the SHIP:

NINA FAWCETT
All the arrangements are completed--
we're off to Portugal on the 7th
and then it's Brazil.

PERCY FAWCETT

Good. Now remember: the code--a copy is in my desk and another is in safekeeping, with Mr. Costin. I'll relay more information on the coordinates of Z as I get closer.

They stop walking, having arrived at the ship's entrance.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

All right. No one will trump us now.

VOOOOOOM! The ship's horn.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Well, I suppose that's all. I'll send you the dispatches to be published in the newspapers.

NINA FAWCETT

Jack--

She gestures to his suit coat handkerchief, which is falling out. Fawcett, meanwhile, moves close to her, out of earshot of anyone else:

PERCY FAWCETT

Cheeky, if I should not come back-- don't send anyone to look for me.

NINA FAWCETT

(as though insane)

I've complete faith in you. You'd better get going, it's about ready to leave.

Fawcett moves to Brian, who is quiet.

PERCY FAWCETT

You're a man now, responsible for your mother and sister's care. It's a fine calling, no less and perhaps more virtuous than ours.

No response. Percy Fawcett takes out a sealed LETTER.

NINA FAWCETT

Brian? Say goodbye to your father. And tell him how much you'll miss him.

BRIAN FAWCETT
Goodbye, father.

PERCY FAWCETT
I've written something for you.

Brian takes it. Then: VOOOOOOM! Fawcett kisses Joan:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
Dear Joan. Take care of your
mother.

JOAN FAWCETT
Goodbye, daddy.

PERCY FAWCETT
On to Z, then. And a new history.

Fawcett then leans over, kisses Nina briefly, and unsentimentally boards the ship. Jack hugs Nina, who then turns and approaches THE MEDIA.

Brian watches as his father and brother board the ship. He looks down at the ENVELOPE FROM HIS FATHER. FAWCETT AND JACK AND RALEIGH WAVE as the SHIP SHOVES OFF...

INT. FAWCETT HOME - DEVON - NIGHT

Brian opens the envelope in his room: a poem. Starts reading.

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)
*Never forget us, brave little man
Mother and father trust in you.
Be brave as a lion, yet kind
returning*

EXT. EAST RIVER - THE AQUITANIA - DAY

The large ship is docking in New York. We STILL HEAR:

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)
*Ready to fight and averse to
wrong...
Never forget you're a gentleman
And never a fear you'll do.*

INT. AQUITANIA - SHIP CORRIDOR

Fawcett watches the two young men, Jack and Raleigh, HOLLERING in EXCITEMENT at the sight of New York. He is proud of their joy. We still HEAR, continuing:

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)
*Life is short and the world is
 wide;
 We're just a ripple on life's great
 pond.*

EXT. PASSENGER SHIP - DUSK

The ship, less elegant than the Aquitania, at sea, on its way to South America.

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS of Fawcett's Devon house and old Ireland ARMY BARRACKS:

THE ARMY BARRACKS LIVING ROOM - empty, save the usual post-move detritus. THE DEVON BEDROOM - empty. Dust now. ARMY BACKYARD - empty. Windswept, covered with leaves. DEVON FRONT LAWN - empty. A child's TOY, covered in dirt.

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)
*Enjoy your life to the best you
 can,
 All will help enrich the span,
 But never forget you're a
 gentleman.*

We END with:

INT. NINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A new ROOM, in Madeira. Nina is asleep with a newspaper on her lap. It reads, "EXPLORERS ENTER JUNGLES TO SEEK LOST RACE". Then we HEAR a LOUD TRAIN WHISTLE:

INT. TRAIN - BRAZIL - NIGHT

On the train, out into the jungle, they pass parades for the Carnival. They pass beautiful fields, vistas. Crowds wave to the Fawcetts and Rimell. Jack and Raleigh stand, looking out the window. Fawcett remains seated, eyes a map. WE HEAR:

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)

Dearest Cheeky, there are so many wishing us well on this journey. Perhaps it is the forty million aware of our objective now, because of the newspapers. I do think of you, and Brian and Joan, and wish you could see all of this... As I write, you are no doubt comfortable in your beds...

Fawcett stands, looks out the train. Loses his STETSON HAT. It blows away. THE HAT TWISTS AND SPINS AND FLOATS IN THE WIND, eventually leaving our sight.

Fawcett turns to look at the people waving at the train. ANGLE ON A SLIGHTLY WISTFUL YET ALSO ENTHUSIASTIC PERCY FAWCETT as WE:

CUT TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS as we STILL HEAR the train: The CAMERA DOLLIES PAST a sleeping Nina. Next: the CAMERA DOLLIES PAST a sleeping Brian. Last: the CAMERA DOLLIES PAST a sleeping Joan.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

SUPERIMPOSE THE LEGEND: "ONE MONTH LATER."

As Fawcett hacks away. Jack is right behind him. The Peons (Indian messengers) are near, but Rimell is fading, clearly, bringing up the rear and exhausted. We now HEAR FAWCETT reading from his dispatches again.

MEDIUM SHOT of Fawcett SEALING A LETTER, giving it to an INDIAN CARRIER who bolts into the JUNGLE, missive in HAND...

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)

Dearest Cheeky: we've had the usual delays, but we're now in the forest. It has been abominably hot and very rainy. Jack has acquitted himself marvelously, though I have begun to worry about Raleigh Rimell... We've been taking many photographs on this journey, but it has been difficult to keep them due to the heat...

CLOSE SHOT on PHOTOGRAPHS FLOATING THROUGH THE STREAM, GETTING DEVELOPED, THE IMAGES QUICKLY FADING BEFORE OUR EYES FROM THE HEAT...

CLOSE SHOT: Fawcett in the jungle. He stops. Consults a map. WE ZOOM OUT: DWARFED BY NATURE, THE AWESOME DEPTHS OF THE JUNGLE...

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.; CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 We shall be approaching Santa Cruz
 soon. To see an opera house I
 remember so very well...and then we
 shall be on the river...

MEDIUM SHOT of Fawcett as he clears the vegetation...

EXT. SANTA CRUZ CLEARING

Out of the jungle comes our group. They are close to the opera house...

But it seems abandoned. Fawcett leads the group toward its front doors, which are swinging open...

The old opera house is still in the jungle, but this time it is COVERED WITH VINES, overgrown with weeds and spiders.

INT. OPERA HOUSE

Fawcett cannot believe what he sees. The jungle is swallowing up the structure, with spiderwebs and detritus.

The men stand in the center, stunned. The camera PULLS BACK TO REVEAL A RUIN being OVERRUN BY MONKEYS. PERCY FAWCETT IS LEFT STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DILAPIDATED STRUCTURE as the PRIMATES SWIRL AROUND HIS LEGS.

SWARMS OF VAMPIRE BATS SHRIEK ABOVE THEIR HEADS...

EXT. SANTA CRUZ - DAY

A ghost town. A couple--only a couple--of huts still stand. Abandoned, haunted. Fawcett and the others enter the "center" of the town. Fawcett walks through the rubble of the abandoned city with shocked resignation.

We SEE the men pushing a CANOE out, into the river.

EXT. RIVER

The men in their canoe. They move through the river.

AND THEN: Bodies. Floating.

WHITE MEN, looking EMACIATED. FACE DOWN. NUMBERING AROUND TEN OR SO...

FAWCETT seems to accept it. JACK is thrown. RIMELL is beyond terrified...

THE CANOE MOVES PAST THE CORPSES... ANOTHER SWARM OF BATS SWOOPS PAST THEM...

EXT. THE JUNGLE - DUSK

The men get off the canoe and ENTER THE DEEP JUNGLE. They look thinner now, more worn. Rimell has stopped, his FEET a MESS.

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)

Mr. Rimell's feet have become
ulcerous. I have explained to Jack
it is imperative we keep moving.
He has told me he understands.

(beat)

Our son continues to hold up
superbly...

Percy Fawcett approaches Jack, to speak with him...

INT. ROYAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Sir George Goldie passes a newspaper to Sir John Scott Keltie, who opens it. Putting on his reading glasses and reading, we HEAR:

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)

Our group today reached a tribe of
Bakairi Indians, who told us of a
waterfall entirely unknown to
anyone outside their clan.

EXT. JUNGLE VILLAGE - DAY

A Bakairi village. The men enter the place and speak with the Indians, and we DOLLY to see Raleigh Rimmel bringing up the rear, wounded and shivering...

CLOSE SHOT of PERCY FAWCETT as HE TAKES PICTURES WITH HIS CAMERA, which is mounted on a TRIPOD. Our CAMERA DOLLIES INTO an EXTREME CLOSE SHOT on the camera's LENS...

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.; CONT'D)
 They tell of an enormous rock
 there, covered with painted
 pictures of men and horses. Its
 location is perhaps the gateway to
 Z...

SERIES OF BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOS of the INDIANS:

In the photos, Jack and Fawcett all pose with the "savages". Standing in different positions, some holding arrows, some merely seated. Other photos show the Indians in the middle of ritual, crouched, dancing, upright, with spears, in a circle, etc.

EXT. "DEAD HORSE CAMP" - THE JUNGLE - DAY

The lonely outpost where James Murray's fate was decided. Three huts. The men approach the SKELETON of a HORSE. WHITE BONES, in the ground...

The CAMERA DOLLIES past a writing Fawcett, a hungry Jack, who eats a fruit voraciously, and a miserable Raleigh, who is changing the dressing on his foot wounds...

INT. SAVAGE CLUB

Henry Costin, in a suit and with cigar, regales a friend, holding a LETTER.

HENRY COSTIN
 Good God... It says he's made it
 to Dead Horse Camp already--so deep
 into the jungle!
 (breaks out into a proud
 grin)
 It's excellent progress!

Costin snaps his finger and hits his clenched fist, a muted exultation. He looks down at the letter, and we HEAR:

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)
 This is the last letter you shall
 receive until I reach Z. We're
 sending our peons back today...

And we GO BACK TO:

EXT. THE AMAZON JUNGLE - DAY

Near Dead Horse Camp. Fawcett EYES the INFIRM RALEIGH...

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.)
...I expect to be in touch with the
old civilization within a month,
and to be at the main objective in
August.

INT. FAWCETT HOME

Nina is at her desk, reading the letter:

PERCY FAWCETT (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Thereafter, our fate is in the lap
of the gods.
(beat)
You need have no fear of any
failure.

EXT. JUNGLE

Raleigh doubles over in pain, letting out a cry. His feet
are infected, and he has maggots up his leg. Fawcett looks
to his son Jack, whispers:

PERCY FAWCETT
It must be done, Jack.

Jack nods with sadness. Fawcett approaches Raleigh.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
The guides are turning back now. I
would encourage you to join them.

RALEIGH RIMELL
Join them, sir?

PERCY FAWCETT
Your foot has made you quite ill
now.

Raleigh is silent, seems deflated.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
There's no shame in returning, I
assure you.

RALEIGH RIMELL
But--leave you?

Raleigh looks at Jack, who speaks up:

JACK FAWCETT
We'll be all right, Raleigh. We'll
all share our tales many years from
now.

After a beat, Raleigh, heartbroken, looks at the men...

EXT. CLEARING - LATER

WIDE SHOT of Raleigh as he shakes the hands of Fawcett and then Jack. The Peons and Raleigh wave GOODBYE, and disappear into the jungle.

Our men are alone now. Fawcett and Jack walk off into the jungle in the opposite direction...

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

Fawcett and Jack emerge from the jungle to SEE: an ENORMOUS CASCADE OF WATER. A RAINBOW. BEAUTIFUL. Looking out, over this beautiful vista, Fawcett and Jack, seated on rocks.

JACK FAWCETT
It's a shame Raleigh will miss all
this...

Fawcett coughs.

JACK FAWCETT (CONT'D)
Father? Are you all right?

PERCY FAWCETT
I am... Just a bit of the war
comes back to me every now and then--
-I'll be all right.

JACK FAWCETT
I must tell you--I myself have
never felt so well.
(looking out)
It's incredibly beautiful here...

PERCY FAWCETT
Yes... I've often felt it's our
home, where we belong.

Fawcett gets up, looks at his notebook. Then:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
We're within reach now. Z is right
over those mountains.

JACK FAWCETT
I can't wait. It's everything.

Fawcett is struck by this, turns:

PERCY FAWCETT
Jack--to be here with you, on this
journey... This is everything.
(gets emotional)
I missed so much of you... I cared
so about our family and yet--I fear
I lost all of you.

JACK FAWCETT
But you didn't lose me, father.
You're with me now.

Fawcett tenderly grabs Jack's neck.

EXT. JUNGLE

Raleigh Rimell is walking through the jungle, the peons
several feet in front. Rimell bends down to adjust his foot--
hurting terribly from inflammation--and when he stands again,
THE PEONS are GONE.

RALEIGH RIMELL
Hello? Hello?
(beat)
Are you still out there?

Rimell takes a step forward, immediately concerned that he's
been lost. CHARGING STILL FORWARD, he starts to panic.

ALL OF A SUDDEN: WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP--

A SPINNING CLUB OF WOOD, about three feet in length, comes
seemingly from nowhere.

HITS RALEIGH, RIGHT IN THE CHEST. HE FALLS.

In the brush, he SPOTS one of the PEONS, hiding. Raleigh
whispers:

RALEIGH RIMELL (CONT'D)
 We've got to go back--tell Jack,
 and the Colonel--

Raleigh stands, and WHOOP WHOOP WHOOP--A PUNISHING BLOW TO THE HAND.

Raleigh Rimell, moaning, struggling through the growth, limping with his bad foot.

A WAR CLUB hits Rimell, then another. He is slowed further, then stops.

THWWWAAP! An arrow hits Rimell in the chest.

Then another, in his ARM.

Then another, and another, and another, until he is COVERED in ARROWS. His eyes widen, his mouth opens.

FINALLY, the coup de grace: AN ARROW PIERCES HIS NECK. HE is dead.

EXT. JUNGLE

Fawcett and Jack walk down a muddy path. Fawcett takes notes while walking. Then:

JACK FAWCETT
 Father?

Fawcett looks up from his journal to SEE: RED-MASKED SURI. TENS OF THEM. FAWCETT motions for JACK to stop, then TAKES ONE SINGLE STEP FORWARD.

A SINGLE ARROW WHIZZES BY HIS HEAD.

SURI INDIANS are ABOUT 200 YARDS away. STARING. Sotto:

JACK FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 Are they dangerous?

PERCY FAWCETT
 I've not seen this tribe before...
 (beat)
 Stay calm. I know *precisely* the approach.

Confident, he tries his signature approach with the Suri. He begins to walk toward them, waving his handkerchief:

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLED) (CONT'D)
 Friend! Friend!

AND THEN:

MORE ARROWS COME, FAST AND FURIOUS. FAWCETT WALKS CLOSER.
 THEY DON'T STOP.

THIS TIME, THE SURI INDIANS START CHARGING TERRIFYINGLY
 TOWARD THE MEN. THE INDIANS LET OUT A TERRIFYING WAR CRY...

Realizing his tried-and-true plan will not work, Fawcett
 takes his RIFLE OFF HIS SHOULDER AND FIRES:

He shoots one of the Suris in the stomach. The Indian bleeds
 profusely and falls down, dying...

FAWCETT SEES THIS AND HIS FACE WRINKLES IN ANGUISH:

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)
 Good God...
 (recovering)
 Into the brush!

Fawcett and Jack bolt into the dense jungle, and so do the
 Indians, in pursuit.

EXT. THE JUNGLE

Fawcett and Jack run in different directions. A chase on
 foot has begun.

EXT. THE AMAZON JUNGLE - LATER

THE DENSE JUNGLE. VERTIGINOUS. BACK AND FORTH. TREE
 LEAVES, VEGETATION, MUD, BUGS, HEAT.

The camera is HAND-HELD now, tossing back and forth, our
 characters' POV. DISORIENTED...

A sound: WHIRRING. What is that? CLUBS. CLUBS OF WOOD.
WAR CLUBS.

The Suris are HURLING THEM through the trees, presumably.
 BUT WE CAN'T SEE THEM.

ONLY SPINNING CLUBS OF WOOD--A TORRENT OF SPINNING WOODEN
 STICKS, CUTTING THROUGH THE FOREST.

SPINNING AND MOVING AT INCREDIBLE SPEED. And they are coming
 CLOSE TO US, millimeters from FAWCETT'S HEAD.

Fawcett ducks them as he bolts through the trees.

WHOOSH! Jack, away from Fawcett, is hit in the chest. It knocks him over, but he gets up and continues to run.

ANGLE BACK ON FAWCETT

Who is moving through the forest with great speed, determined to survive. A COUGHING SPELL HITS HIM, but he does his best to SUPPRESS IT. In his POV, the denseness becomes DIZZING, obscuring, difficult. We HEAR the WHIRRING and his HURRIED BREATHING.

Fawcett gets up. He is on the move again as ARROWS DART PAST HIM, PERILOUSLY CLOSE...

EXT. RIVERBANK

Fawcett reaches the riverbank. Jack is here on his knees, with his back to us. Is he dead? He's oddly still.

Fawcett approaches his son. THEN HIS SON TURNS, TERRIFIED. IN SHOCK and SHAKING.

PERCY FAWCETT

They'll keep after us--we've got to keep moving.

Fawcett grabs his son, shakes his head.

PERCY FAWCETT (CONT'D)

Do you hear me?!?

EXT. CLEARING - LATER

Fawcett and Jack are running in tall grass. Then they stop. Surrounded by Indians. They have more PAINT on them, more MUD, than the other group of Indians that were chasing them earlier.

Fawcett and Jack turn around. Indians close in behind them, too. DOOMED?

ONE INDIAN STEPS FORWARD. HE TAKES HIS SPEAR and HURLS IT RIGHT TOWARD FAWCETT. Fawcett thinks this is the END.

Instead, it goes past him, and THWOK! HITS ANOTHER INDIAN, RIGHT BEHIND HIM. KILLS THE MAN. THE OTHER INDIAN, A SURI, was POISED WITH BOW AND ARROW, ready to kill Fawcett.

THIS INDIAN HAS SAVED FAWCETT'S LIFE. WARRING TRIBES. The Indians fire at each other, as Fawcett and Jack duck down into the grass...

THE SURIS RETREAT... THE NEW GROUP OF INDIANS SURROUND FAWCETT AND JACK. Fawcett looks up, raises his hands...

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - LATE DAY

Fawcett and Jack sit in the middle of the Indian tribal village. A RAIN BEGINS TO FALL. LIGHTNING and THUNDER, though in the distance. A low rumble, then nothing but rain... Fawcett whispers to his son:

PERCY FAWCETT

Don't say a word until I do...

Jack nods. A KAYAPO INDIAN plays with a FLASHLIGHT that Fawcett has given him. Fawcett and Jack are seated with the Indians surrounding them. The Indian appears thrilled with the flashlight. Two other Kayapos are in a debate:

KAYAPO INDIAN #2 (SUBTITLE)

He is not one of us.

KAYAPO INDIAN #1 (SUBTITLE)

He is not one of them, either.

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)

We're here to find another place,
an old city in the forest. That is
what we've been sent to do.

(beat)

Do you understand?

KAYAPO INDIAN #1 (SUBTITLE)

Where is this?

PERCY FAWCETT (SUBTITLE)

Over the mountains. That way.

Fawcett points. A spot over the mountains.

KAYAPO INDIAN #1 (SUBTITLE)

There is no city there, only more
danger.

An OLD KAYAPO WOMAN speaks up, out of nowhere. In native tongue:

OLD KAYAPO WOMAN (SUBTITLE)

Past the mountain are buildings
with doors and windows of stone.
The insides are lit by a great
square crystal on a pillar. It
shines so brightly to dazzle the
eyes. But it means death to go
there.

Fawcett turns to his son, to translate:

PERCY FAWCETT

She knows of the city, but says the
trip is deadly. We could try to go
back--you've more years to lose
than I.

JACK FAWCETT

Nothing has changed, father. You'd
always warned of the dangers in
pursuing new ground--to turn back
means only defeat.

PERCY FAWCETT

I once felt as you do. But now
that you're with me, I no longer
believe that.

(beat)

Jack?

Jack simmers, then responds:

JACK FAWCETT

Mother gave me a letter for the
trip--a letter she once wrote to
you. It's given me great strength.
You need to have it now, for
yourself.

Jack withdraws it from his pocket, hands it to Fawcett.
Somewhat reluctantly, Fawcett takes it. CLOSE SHOT ON THE
LETTER, as it is being opened. Then, MUSIC UP: A KAYAPO
DANCE.

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

The Tribe does a ritual dance around Fawcett and Jack. They
then approach the men, who sit, kneeling with their heads
down. A Kayapo then begins to paint Fawcett and his son.
The Indians paint the men's chests too, around their necks
and sterna.

A close shot on Percy Fawcett. He stares at his son, who appears to be at peace.

FAWCETT turns away. Seems to drift off. We PUSH EVER CLOSER ON HIM. He looks over, at his BAG. STICKING OUT OF IT: the LETTER from NINA. Then: all sound from the jungle disappears. We:

CUT TO:

A CLOSE SHOT of NINA, MUCH YOUNGER THAN WHEN WE LAST LEFT HER. SHE IS HOLDING A BABY. WIDEN to REVEAL:

INT. DINING ROOM - INSIDE A FORT - BRIGHT DAY

Inside a stone fort, presumably in England. A hall. A dining table has been set up, covered with food. Crowded with presumably family and friends. A CHEER goes out, echoing through the large space. Nina and Fawcett stand at the head of the table, having just arrived with their newborn: JACK.

(The scene is UNNATURALLY QUIET, almost like a HALLUCINATION. But it's an event that's happened, a FLASHBACK.)

RANDOM WOMAN

So wonderful, little Jack!

(to Nina)

And you--you look so robust, and healthy!

NINA FAWCETT

Thank you... Yes. I do feel better.

Fawcett pulls out a chair for Nina and the baby. Then:

PERCY FAWCETT

A toast--shall we?

NINA FAWCETT

Yes. But--I--I would like, if I could, to read something first.

PERCY FAWCETT

Of course, darling.

NINA FAWCETT

I wrote it. For you. In the event I did not survive the birth.

RANDOM GUY

Oh, but you did, my dear, you
surely did, thank heavens!

LAUGHTER. She begins, reading off a small piece of
stationery as Fawcett eyes her:

NINA FAWCETT

"My Percy, I know your first
instinct will be to grieve, but I
adjure you rather to consider our
son and the love you must show
him--"

(looking at young Jack)

See--? I knew it would be a boy!

(room laughter; back to
letter)

--Always teach him to dream--and
do not forget that for yourself as
well. For as the Buddha teaches,
to seek the unknown, to look for
what is beautiful, is its own
reward. And I beg you to remember
those words so easy to forget,
written by our beloved Browning--
allow me one last time to repeat
them: "a man's reach should exceed
his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"
My dearest love forever, Cheeky."

The women at the table let out a collective "AWWWW" as
Fawcett smiles, kisses his wife's hand. He then looks over
to the baby, reaching out to touch its hand. We

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. THE JUNGLE AGAIN

We're back where we were. Percy touches his son's hand.

PERCY FAWCETT

There's nothing to be afraid of...
Whatever's over that hill--we'll
face it together.

JACK FAWCETT

Yes, Father. We shall.

PERCY FAWCETT

We're close, Jack. We're very
close.

The musicians and dancers circle what looks like a plaza. In the distance are mound-shaped houses in endless rows. The Indians LIFT FAWCETT AND JACK on thatched platforms, CARRYING THEM off into the jungle, into the darkness.

FAWCETT watches the Kayapo camp retreat further and further away. He turns toward the vast dark jungle, goes deeper into the darkness... DEEPER AND DEEPER... We CRANE UP to SEE RED-MASKED INDIANS IN THE TREES, ABOVE THE PROCESSION, WATCHING.

WE CRANE EVEN HIGHER, PAST MONKEYS AND SNAKES AND PANTHERS CRAWLING ON THE BRANCHES OF THE TREES... AND EVER HIGHER, to SEE THE BEAUTIFUL AND MULTI-COLORED BIRDS PERCHED ON THE TOPS OF THE TREES...

AND as they FLY OFF, we PULL BACK TO EXIT THE JUNGLE: A SEA OF GREEN, the tops of the trees... FURTHER STILL TO SEE THE OCEAN OF THE FOREST AND THE AMAZON RIVER... Over all this, WE BEGIN TO HEAR a NARRATOR:

NARRATOR

Percy and Jack Fawcett were never seen again. Many rescue groups were sent to find the men, but none was successful. Nina Fawcett kept hope that they would return up until her death in 1954.

(beat)

Though many recognized Fawcett's attitude toward the peoples of Amazonia to be ahead of its time, his belief in a lost city was ridiculed for almost a hundred years. But early in the 21st century, scientists were astonished to discover key evidence of ancient roads, bridges, and complex agricultural systems spread throughout the jungle: an advanced civilization.

(beat)

The modern age has come to see that, in this way too, Percy Fawcett was correct.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.