

"HUNTER"

Written by

James Thomas and John Thomas

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The 'Hunter' in this screenplay possesses two highly developed adaptations (skills) that make him a formidable, very deadly adversary: the ability to completely camouflage himself in his surroundings, and the ability to detect his prey from the heat emitted from their bodies.

Throughout the screenplay references are made 1) to the Hunter's point-of-view, which must be imagined as seeing in the spectrum of infra-red or other altered, heat-highlighted modes, and 2) the Hunter's presence itself, which must be imagined as seeing the traces of his camouflaged movements, his eyes, sensing him but never actually viewing him as totally identifiable. Even when the Hunter is finally revealed, it must be imagined that his body continues to attempt to camouflage itself to its surroundings, rendering the concept of the Hunter as a dizzying, subliminal experience; an intensely visual, highly emotional confrontation for the viewer.

"HUNTER"

FADE IN:

EXT. JUNGLE HORIZON - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

Through a collage of shimmering HEAT-WAVES, a dark, OTHER-WORLDLY OBJECT drops into view, heading slowly towards us, floating, as if suspended by the rising heat of the jungle.

Continuing to approach, the shimmering object resolves, assuming the form of a MILITARY ASSAULT HELICOPTER, its rotors strobing in the fading sunlight. Drawing closer, the SOUND of powerful TURBINES, throbbing in the heavy air, becomes dominant, overpowering.

Looming hard into view, the helicopter pitches forward and settles to the ground, kicking up a maelstrom of dust and vegetation.

Even before the skids have touched down, the first of the MEN, dressed in camouflage fatigues and carrying full combat gear, alight gracefully from the chopper, double-timing in close order to one side, the orders SHOUTED by one man lost in the ROAR of the chopper.

In the b.g., three other HELICOPTERS are barely visible, hidden in camouflage netting, adjacent to several low, THATCHWORK BUILDINGS, a secret command post disguised as a peasant farm.

LIEUTENANT ALAN MATHENY, the team leader, 32, an intelligent and intense man, steps to the ground and moves purposefully towards a grass PALAPA at the edge of the clearing.

In the doorway TWO MEN, solemnly watch as he approaches. Informally saluting, COLONEL H.L. PHILIPS, 45, hardened, close-cropped graying hair, his nameplate and insignia identifying him as a member of an elite commando unit of the U.S. Army, touches Matheny briefly on the shoulder, as if an old friend.

MATHENY

It's been a long time, Colonel.

They enter the palapa, leaving the other man on guard.

INT. PALAPA - DAY

A one room farmhouse, dirt floor, thatched walls and roof. A naked lightbulb hung from the rafters illuminates a bank of compact FIELD RADIO EQUIPMENT, MAPS and AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Across the room a primitive adobe hearth and cooking utensils stand in stark contrast to this high-tech invasion.

Seated in the shadows and smoking a cigarette, a MAN is quietly reading some papers.

Philips and Matheny enter the room.

MATHENY
(continuing)
Con. Op. indicated this was
Priority Red.

PHILIPS
We've got a problem...

As they cross to the center of the room, Matheny notices the man, glances to Philips, who seems to disregard the man's presence altogether.

In the center of the room a folding table is covered with a large TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP of the Central American highland jungle. Philips leans over the table circling a set of COORDINATES and a MARK on the open map.

PHILIPS
(continuing)
Three days ago a Huey on routine surveillance, four men aboard, went down here.
(points to the circled area)
Lieutenant Hopper and a team of five men were sent in to evaluate. They located the chopper by transponder, reporting it shot down.

He looks up at Matheny.

PHILIPS
(continuing)
That's the last we've heard of them.

MATHENY
Ambush?

PHILIPS
I don't know, Lieutenant.
Hopper's team was good, specialists, too good to just disappear without a word.
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHILIPS (Cont'd)
That's why your team was brought
in here on such short notice.
Something's going on in there...

Philips looks hard at Matheny.

PHILIPS
(continuing)
... I want to know what it is.

Matheny glances to the man seated in the shadows.

MATHENY
(quietly)
Who's the 'spook', Colonel?

Philips looks at Matheny uncomfortably.

PHILIPS
The men in that chopper were privy
to highly sensitive information
and may have been taken
prisoner...

A VOICE from across the room.

DIXON (O.S.)
We want them back.

Philips and Matheny turn to SEE the shadow-figure rise from his chair, approaching the table. Wearing pressed fatigues, DIXON, mid-thirties, a cold scheming intelligence in his eyes and exhibiting a quiet ruthlessness, walks into the light.

PHILIPS
Lieutenant Matheny, John Dixon,
from Langly, he'll be going in
with you.

Dixon extends his hand, a cold smile on his face.

DIXON
How do you do, Lieutenant?

Matheny turns to Philips, disregarding Dixon's hand.

MATHENY
Why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIXON

Extraction may not be feasible.
(a look to Philips)
The situation may need
reevaluation.

Matheny looks at Dixon, quizically, then to Philips, he
doesn't like this.

MATHENY

Reevaluation?

DIXON

We can't leave them in there.

MATHENY

You mean, kill them?

Philips, hardening, turns to Matheny.

PHILIPS

We've all got our orders,
Lieutenant, like it or not.

MATHENY

We're an anti-terrorist and rescue
unit, Colonel, we're not
assassins.

Philips looks at him.

PHILIPS

Then just get in there, find them
and then... get them out.

EXT. TWO ASSAULT HELICOPTERS - NIGHT

burst over the top of a ridge. Rising up in silhouette they
perform a radical left bank turn and descend rapidly into
an adjoining valley, racing over the jungle at treetop
level.

As the helicopters perform dizzying, high-speed maneuvers
through the winding canyon, the PILOT'S VOICES can be HEARD,
coordinating their operations.

PILOT ONE (V.O.)

Redbird Two, Two. Bearing south,
three, five, zero, one o'clock
on the saddle ridge. Over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PILOT TWO (V.O.)
 Roger, Blue Leader. Three, five,
 zero, on your move. Over.

The helicopters rise in perfect coordination over another ridge and bank sharply into the next valley, leveling out as they go.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

Illuminated by the eerie red glow of NIGHT LIGHTS, are NINE MEN, dressed in jungle camouflage, soft hats and camouflage face-makeup. They wear no identity badges or insignias. The men are checking their WEAPONS, making last minute adjustments to their GEAR.

Seated by an M-60 MACHINE GUN, mounted at the forward edge of one door, is HAWKINS, lean, rawboned, early 20's. He stares into the night, at the rush of jungle passing by.

The compartment reverberates with the NOISE of the THUMPING ROTORS and the ROAR of air from the open doors.

SERGEANT BLAIN, weapons and ordinance specialist, a frightening bull of a man, a 240 pound killer, removes from his shirtpocket a thick PLUG OF TOBACCO. Holding the plug between his teeth he yanks free from his shoulder scabbard a wicked, ten inch COMBAT KNIFE. Placing the razor sharp blade next to his lips he slices through the plug as if it were butter. He chews thoughtfully.

Seated by the open doorway is RAMIREZ, a slight, angular man, an East L.A. streetwise Chicano. Adding a final piece of camouflage TAPE to his pack HARNESS, he looks up and smiles, faking a throw and then bulleting the tape to:

DILLON, the radioman and medic, reading a rolled-up science magazine, as if he were a rush hour commuter. He snags the tape with an instinctual snap of the wrist, continuing to read for a moment before looking up, grinning at Ramirez, his boyish, eager face belying the rugged professional beneath. He turns his gaze to the man next to him:

MIGUEL, the Kit Carson Scout, a Central American Indian, proud, stoic, a man of quiet strength and simplicity, carefully replacing the FIRING MECHANISM of his M-16, working its action several times. He looks up with a smile at

MURPHY, 25, Irish, a firey-eyed streetfighter from the Bronx, placing a camouflaged BANDANA over his hair, tying it behind. He looks up at Miguel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MURPHY
(shouting)
Hey, Miguel, you know how the
elephant fucked the cat?

Miguel looks back, shaking his head, uncomprehending.

MURPHY
(continuing)
He stood on him.

Murphy laughs heartily at his joke.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Clearing another ridge, the helicopters plunge into a steep descent, turning quickly into a DEEP-WALLED CANYON, the force of the turn accentuated by the changing PITCH of the screaming turbines and the biting of rotors into the air.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

The men, suspended in RESTRAINING HARNESES from the bulkheads, lean forward, nearly upside down in response to the radical maneuver, handling the situation with ease...

Except for Dixon, the obvious outsider, drawing a hard look from Blain.

Blain's massive jaws roll as he masticates the chew. He pauses, eyes moving downward, spotting his target. He hocks a thick, vile stream of TOBACCO JUICE directly between Dixon's legs and onto the floor, a gelatinous skein lacing across the toe of one boot.

Blain looks up at Dixon as if to say, 'sorry 'bout that.' Dixon, cold and expressionless, turns away.

Blain looks across at WILLIAMS, black, an even bigger man than Blain, a wide grin breaking across his huge face. Cradled in his arms, as if it were a part of his body, is the deadly M-60 MACHINE GUN. With a quick jerk he opens the breech of the heavy gun, letting it close with an authoritative SNAP.

Blain holds out the tobacco to Williams who refuses with a gentle shake of the head, a knowing smile, and then to Ramirez, who swats at the offending object as if it were alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAMIREZ

(shouting)

Man, get that stinkin' thing out
of my face, Blain!

Grinning, Blain proffers the plug to each man, each one refusing; they've done it a thousand times. It's an old gag but they obviously care for the man in a big way.

BLAIN

(heavy southern accent)

... bunch of slack-jawed faggots
around here...

(holds up plug)

... this stuff will put hair on
your hogleg... gaurenteed...

(chewing)

... make you a gawd-damned sexual
ty-ran-toe-sore-ass... just like
me.

This brings a chorus of HOOTS and SHOUTS from the others.

The helicopter makes another radical turn.

Matheny and Philips, seated near the cockpit, communicate through HEADSETS, also linked to the pilot. They consult a TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP by RED PENLIGHTS.

PHILIPS

(pointing to the map)

Your rendezvous points and radio
freqs. are indicated and fixed.
AWACS contact on four hour
intervals.

(pause)

After insertion Lieutenant, you're
on your own until you reach the
border. Got it?

MATHENY

(cooly)

It's locked in, Colonel.

PHILIPS

Then that's it. Good luck,
Lieutenant.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

The PILOT and CO-PILOT are surrounded by an array of dimly lit GAUGES and SWITCHES.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Before the co-pilot is a RADAR SCREEN and an INFRA-RED DISPLAY TERMINAL on which the TWO HELICOPTERS appear as HEAT SOURCES.

PILOT NUMBER ONE
... roger Bird Two, Two.
Reconfirm insertion at Tango,
Charlie, Delta One, zero, niner
on the grid at zero, two, two,
mark four by zero. Over.

PILOT NUMBER TWO (V.O.)
Two, Two, leader. Roger your
insert co-ord. Over.

PILOT NUMBER ONE
Leader to Bird Two Two. I bear
two minutes to LZ.

The pilot throws a SWITCH on the panel before him.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

A BLUE LIGHT appears on the forward bulkhead. Colonel Philips is speaking over a RADIO TELEPHONE. The co-pilot turns and hands him a clipboard. Philips reads, notes his approval and hands it back.

EXT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

flares up into position over the jungle and hovers, as the SUPPORT HELICOPTER holds in a protective position above.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

The pilot's VOICE breaks in over Matheny's headset.

PILOT NUMBER ONE (V.O.)
Deployment site in 30 seconds.
Stand by the rappel lines.

Looking up, Matheny gives a hand signal to the nearest man who nods and in return, passes the signal down the line.

Hawkins and Williams pick up heavy, METAL CONICAL DEVICES, attached to canvas bags filled with rope.

EXT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

From the open doors the RAPPELLING LINES hurtle into space, CRASHING through the double canopy of the trees and to the jungle floor below.

INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT

The blue light changes to GREEN. Matheny nods. RAPPELLING DEVICES SNAP into place. Gloved hands grab onto rope. Combat boots move into position. Men leap from the chopper.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The men crash through the trees and are swallowed up by the darkness below.

The helicopters depart, THUMPING their way into the night.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY (DAWN)

A light shower passes through the trees. The sky clears, revealing a lush and exotic foliage. Birds are beginning to SING but otherwise, all is SILENT.

The dense growth seems impenetrable, but from a solid wall of undergrowth, a HAND appears and signals in a downward motion.

As if by magic, the assault team materializes, quietly, cautiously. Matheny makes another gesture and the team moves forward in perfect harmony in POINT-LOCK step, taking their cue from Ramirez, the pointman.

Matheny, highly focused and alert to every sound and movement, follows Ramirez, as if organically connected.

EXT. JUNGLE HILLSIDE - DAY

Descending the steep mountain slope, the team encounters an even denser growth of jungle, at times moving by instinct, as they are often visually separated.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY

Williams, in a defensive position, sweeps the jungle slowly with the M-60. He steps back and turns, checking, revealing in the b.g. the WRECKAGE OF A U.S. ARMY UH-1H HELICOPTER, entangled in the heavy vines of the hillside, badly damaged, rotors bent, its tail section blown away.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Ramirez moves cautiously, searching for trip wires, using his knife to check the edges of the seats and the doorframes. Grimly he glances at the TWO BODIES slumped over the controls and then exits, giving an all clear signal.

He joins Matheny standing in the f.g. They watch as Dixon enters the helicopter, moving through the cockpit, searching through pockets and compartments.

Matheny turns his back to the helicopter.

RAMIREZ
It's full of surveillance
equipment. They must have gotten
close to something.

Matheny studies the clearing, eyes always moving, wary. He turns back, looking at the the chopper.

MATHENY
Took 'em out with a heat seeking
missile. Not their usual
ordinance. They were waiting for
them.

RAMIREZ
Just the two bodies. The other
two could have walked away.

He points to the TRAMPLED GRASSES and FOOTPRINTS in the clearing.

RAMIREZ
(continuing)
Guerrillas. Weren't too concerned
about covering their tracks.
Miguel's on their trail now.

Dixon leaves the cockpit and approaches, lighting up a cigarette.

DIXON
There's nothing here, let's go.

Matheny turns to Dixon, removing the cigarette from his mouth.

MATHENY
Dixon, when I'm ready to turn the
command of this unit over to you,
you'll be the first to know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He digs a small hole with his boot tip and drops the cigarette into it, burying it.

Dixon stares hard at Matheny as Miguel approaches from the b.g.

MIGUEL

Lieutenant, there's one set of tracks, three days old, I think twenty people. They took two men from the helicopter.

(pause)

Then other tracks, one day.

MATHENY

Hopper?

MIGUEL

There were six men, U.S. jungle boots.

Matheny nods.

MATHENY

Hopper. Let's go.

Miguel takes up the trail, disappearing into the jungle. Ramirez signals, the team moves out.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

The oppressive heat of mid-day.

Ramirez's HAND emerges from the green and signals. The outline of the next man in the column, Matheny, turns and signals, moves on.

Williams follows and then Blain and Dixon, spaced no more than five meters apart, yet nearly invisible in the dense undergrowth. Murphy and Hawkins follow.

Dillon, sweating profusely, cautiously parts the undergrowth, starting as he catches SIGHT of a movement in the branches just above his head. He watches, fascinated as a powerful CONSTRUCTOR extends the gulf between two branches, slithering quietly into the jungle.

EXT. DENSE UNDERGROWTH - DAY

The hillside of a steep valley, dark and foreboding.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Miguel passes by and halts, removing his KNIFE. With his other hand he pulls down from overhead a THICK VINE, severing it. A thin stream of WATER emerges which he drinks.

Suddenly he stops, letting the water drip to the ground. He quietly releases the vine and brings his M-16 to bear, listening intently.

Something seems wrong. He brings his eyes upward and stares, hard into the treeline of the opposing hillside.

As his eyes strain to penetrate the dense, intertwined canopy, he is engulfed by the rising SOUNDS of the JUNGLE, a cacophony of BUZZING and CLICKING, amplified in the sweltering heat of the day.

Unable to locate a source to account for his anxiety, he relaxes, moving on, resuming the track.

MIGUEL (MINUTES LATER)

examines the ground as he moves, growing confused and puzzled by what he sees before him. He stops, scrutinizing the jungle, probing the world around him with his keen senses.

HEARING a faint RUSTLING SOUND he looks up SEEING a curtain of MOSS several feet away. He takes a cautious step forward, extending his weapon.

He reaches forward with his free hand, touching the moss.

Behind the curtain a slight shifting of DARK FORMS occurs. He pauses and then with a sudden movement, sweeps the moss aside.

A BLACK EXPLOSION of FLUTTERING WINGS as carrion-eating BIRDS rush past Miguel's body.

Miguel's face seizes into a mask of horror, his expression descending into a state of complete, primitive shock, his eyes staring transfixed, inches away from the leering death-grin of a HUMAN FACE, upside down, completely stripped of skin.

Reeling, his body numbed by the sight before him, he stumbles backwards and stops.

Vines threaded through their achilles tendons, the BODIES OF THREE MEN, skinned and gutted, hang suspended in the thick, suffocating air, BUZZING with insects.

Miguel turns away, revulsed as Ramirez moves quietly into view, Matheny directly behind him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ramirez stares at the bodies, now seen to be in the first stages of deterioration, strips of flesh torn away by the birds and other scavengers.

In an almost child-like manner, he crosses himself.

RAMIREZ
(hoarse whisper)
Holy Mother...

Dixon moves into the clearing, kneeling beside a bloody pile of CLOTHING and ENTRAILS. He rises, holding a DOG TAG on a broken chain. He reads the tag with difficulty, trying not to touch the blood.

DIXON
(to himself)
Mathews. The radioman.
(to Matheny)
One of Hopper's men.

Matheny's eyes move from the bloody dog tag in Dixon's hand to the bodies.

MATHENY
(coldly)
Blain, cut them down.

Blain moves forward, withdrawing his COMBAT KNIFE. The blade flashes, cutting the vine as the first body THUDS to the ground.

RAMIREZ
(seething)
Fucking animals.

Blain steps out of the clearing, sheathing his knife with a violent gesture.

BLAIN
(spits)
Ain't no way for a soldier to die.

Williams draws back slightly on the bolt of the M-60, letting it SNAP. He looks up at Blain, his eyes cold, his face taut with anger.

EXT. MIGUEL - DAY

Kneels at the side of the original trail examining the ground. He rises, holding a spent CARTRIDGE. Matheny approaches, THREE DOG TAGS in his hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATHENY

What happened here, Miguel?

Miguel looks at him, puzzled.

MIGUEL

Muy rado, Lieutenant, strange.
Lots of shooting in many
directions.

(looks around him)

Movement everywhere. Much
confusion.

MATHENY

Guerrillas must have doubled back
on them. What about Hopper and
the rest of his men?

Miguel shakes his head.

MIGUEL

They went in different directions,
Lieutenant. Perhaps to regroup
somewhere else.

MATHENY

The guerrillas?

Miguel shrugs, points.

MIGUEL

The old trail goes on.

MATHENY

Still with the two prisoners from
the chopper?

Miguel nods.

MIGUEL

Yes. But...

MATHENY

What, Miguel?

Miguel glances around at the jungle. He looks back at
Matheny.

MIGUEL

(uncomfortably)

There are no signs of the ambush.

MATHENY

None?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Miguel shakes his head. Matheny ponders the situation a moment, looking around him. Dixon approaches. Matheny turns to Miguel.

MATHENY

Stay with the old trail. Get ahead, see what you can find.

EXT. JUNGLE HILLSIDE - DAY

Blain appears suddenly, materializing out of the undergrowth, pausing cautiously, his senses alert, intense, almost nervous. He moves on, his huge body barely making a sound as he weaves through the heavy undergrowth.

Dixon appears. Although professional, Dixon seems out of sync with the others. As he moves on, he crosses over a fallen TREE. Stepping down, his foot breaks through a rotten portion, a CHUNK of the log breaking free and rolling down the hill.

Dixon at once goes into a defensive position, listening. The jungle is SILENT. He stands and starts to move forward.

Suddenly Blain appears within inches of Dixon's face. He grabs Dixon by the shirt and yanks him even closer. Blain's face is menacing, angry.

BLAIN

(hissing; barely audible)

Mothafok! Mothaafokk!

(gripping harder; spitting words and sweat)

You ghostin' on me, motha fokaaa!... I don't care who you are back in the world... right now, you are nothin', got it, nothin'...

Dixon's eyes are wide, staring back in cold hatred at this humiliation.

BLAIN

(continuing)

... you breathe loud, fart, anything. Give away your position again and I'll bleed you quiet and leave your fuckin' ass right here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Not waiting for a response, Blain turns and vanishes into the jungle.

Seething with anger at being treated as an amateur, Dixon focuses on a still moving LEAF and STEM, indicating Blain's exit point.

DIXON
(mimicking Blain's
accent)
I can wait, cunt-ry boy.

He moves on.

EXT. WILLIAMS - DAY

crouches under heavy foliage, waiting. He is joined by Blain. They glance briefly at each other, scanning in opposite directions for movement and sounds. They speak in whispers.

WILLIAMS
Say, Bull. What's goin' down?
We got movement?

BLAIN
No. Shithead with his trenchcoat
and dee-code-da ring was makin'
enough noise to get us all waxed.

WILLIAMS
(tense)
I heah yo, Bullman. Dat motherfok
been wearin' snowshoes, ever since
we dropped into the LZ, man.

Blain, sweating heavily, wipes the moisture from his brow with his finger. Williams pats his M-60 affectionately.

WILLIAMS
(continuing)
... but don't you worry, you know
who's watchin the front door...
me an' ol' 'painless' here.

BLAIN
As always, bro...

They do a gentle fist dap and smile warmly at each other. Two men who have seen it all, through a dozen no-win situations, and have lived to tell about them.

Blain advances a few meters and signals slowly.

EXT. KNOLL - DAY

The assault team moving up the hill, barely visible in the heavy foliage. A PISTOL SHOT rings out. The team moves quickly into defensive positions. Holding. A moment later they continue up the hill, crawling.

On their stomachs, Matheny and Ramirez clear the edge of the knoll, SEEING below, 20 MEN, dressed in jungle fatigues, armed with AK-47 ASSAULT RIFLES. A heavy MACHINE GUN emplacement guards the entrance to the camp. TWO MEN sit in the camouflaged emplacement.

MATHENY

Sweeping the camp with BINOCULARS, SEES a GUARD above the camp. Panning down he sees several men packing away equipment as if preparing to leave. One of the men picks up a hand-held ROCKET LAUNCHER, placing it beside a bandolier of ROCKETS and a RADIO SET taken from the helicopter.

Matheny puts down the glasses, looking at Ramirez who nods in acknowledgment. A sudden MUFFLED CRY brings Matheny's attention to one end of the camp, where a heavily thatched DOOR covers an opening to a CAVE. A GUARD stands at the door.

The door flies open as an AMERICAN, shirtless, hands tied behind his back, staggers through the door as if kicked from behind.

The man falls to the ground, feebly trying to regain his footing. His battered face and welt-covered back indicate he has been severely tortured.

Emerging from the cave, a GUERRILLA LEADER, moustached and wearing a SIDEARM, approaches the beaten man, kicking him viciously in the stomach, rolling him to his side, next to another BODY, his hands also tied behind his back, deep bloodstains on the ground.

Kneeling beside the man he withdraws an AUTOMATIC from his holster and cocks the hammer. Grabbing the man by the hair he jams the muzzle into the man's ear and with a violent twist, pulls the trigger.

The guerrilla leader stands and strides quickly back to the cave, still holding the pistol, closing the door behind him.

MATHENY

Lowes his glasses, a look of cold determination on his face. Quickly he and Ramirez ease down the escarpment, joining the other team members.

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CONTINUED:

Matheny makes a circling motion with his thumb and the team members gather in close, huddle formation.

MATHENY

(whispering)

They're moving. Killed two
prisoners. There may be more.
We can't wait. We take them now.

EXT. WILLIAMS AND BLAIN - DAY

crawl silently through the underbrush. Blain holds up his hand and Williams stops. Using a BLADE OF GRASS, Blain points out a metal TRIP WIRE attached to a CLAYMORE MINE. Carefully he detaches the LEAD WIRES. Directing the mine towards the camp, he reattaches the wires, nodding at Williams.

EXT. RAMIREZ - DAY

belly crawls silently through the tall grass just outside the main entrance to the camp. Disturbing several BUTTERFLIES he freezes and then takes up a position affording a clear view of the cave. He moves his weapon into position and switches the SAFETY to FIRE.

He sights in on the GUERRILLA guarding the cave entrance.

EXT. JUNGLE - OVERHEAD - DAY

As Ramirez settles into position below, a BUTTERFLY lands on what appears to be the BRANCH of a TREE. It fans its wings and then flies on.

The impression of the butterfly remains in PERFECT RELIEF, as if imprinted on the bark. The image fades. The bark moves, changing COLORS, like a chameleon, settling into a new position.

TWO EYES, faintly glowing yellow, appear in the foliage. They blink, disappearing, and then return.

EXT. ALTERED POV - DAY

seen through HEAT-SEEKING VISION, focused on Ramirez, lying in the grass below, his body outlined in a LUMINOUS AUREOLE, in contrast to the jungle foliage.

EXT. MACHINE GUN EMPLACEMENT - DAY

While one GUERRILLA packs away his equipment, the other attentively watches the approaches to the camp. He is momentarily distracted by a BUZZING FLY, which he annoyingly swats at with his hand.

He hears something to his side. Turning to investigate, the huge, hammock fist of Blain smashes into his throat.

Simultaneously, Williams rises up behind the other man, grabs him by the hair, pulling him down, his COMBAT KNIFE driving downward.

EXT. MATHENY - DAY

watches the camp. Before him are two FRAGMENTATION GRENADES. He looks at his watch, and then to Dixon and Dillon, their weapons ready. He picks up his binoculars, focusing on the machine gun emplacement, seeing a MAN, his face covered by a HAT. The head rises, revealing the face of Williams, who looks above the camp and slightly nods.

Following his motion, Matheny swings the binoculars, SEEING Miguel rising up from the foliage behind the GUARD, on lookout.

Miguel reaches up and pulls the guard to him, covering his mouth with his hand, jerking him backwards and to the side, knocking him off balance with a sweeping motion of his left leg, killing him with his COMBAT KNIFE.

Putting his glasses down, Matheny motions to Dillon and Dixon as he picks up a grenade. He pulls the pin and hurls the grenade towards the camp.

EXT. ALTERED POV - DAY

of the Observer, following the arc of the grenade as it spirals dead-center into the camp, bouncing twice before EXPLODING.

The expanding FIREBALL released from the explosion is to the observer like an erupting sun, momentarily blinding him.

As the Observer regains its vision an eerie, surreal experience of sight and sound unfolds:

The radio EXPLODES in slow-motion from M-203 rounds.

BULLETS streak through the air, leaving blood-red trails of HEAT, like laser blasts. As they impact into the guerrillas, we HEAR the enhanced SLAPPING of BULLETS, SEEING tiny blossoms of HEAT mushroom out from their bodies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We HEAR the horrific, deformed CRIES and SCREAMS of the dying men.

Another searing, blinding EXPLOSION sends pieces of SHRAPNEL ripping through the air, some of them ROARING past the Observer's position, like tiny meteors.

EXT. KNOLL - DAY

Matheny, Dillon and Dixon still firing. Matheny jumps to his feet.

MATHENY
(shouting)
Cover us, we're going in!!!

Matheny races down the hillside, followed by Dixon, leaving Dillon to cover them.

Bullets burst around their feet as they overtake HAWKINS, running low, firing short bursts to his left and right.

Williams and Blain fire the heavy machineguns, laying down a withering curtain of lead, shredding the camp, taking out five guerrillas at once.

A GUERRILLA, hidden in a tree, fires at Hawkins and Matheny, hitting Hawkins in the head, killing him instantly. Matheny dives to the ground, rolls and continues to charge the camp.

Spotting the sniper, Blain snatches up the M-203, firing on full auto while letting loose a 40MM grenade. The treetop and sniper explode in a fireball and a hail of debris.

Ramirez throws a grenade into the camp, the explosion hurling men into the air.

Miguel FIRES into the camp from above as the guerrillas shout and run in panic and are cut down in the deadly CROSSFIRE.

A MAN runs from camp, hits the TRIP WIRE and is blown backwards by the exploding CLAYMORE MINE.

A guerrilla emerges from a foxhole, throwing a grenade at Ramirez and Murphy who are charging forward. Ramirez dives to the ground just as the grenade explodes, killing Murphy.

As the guerrilla rises with another grenade, Ramirez rolls to his feet, cutting him down with a quick burst. The guerrilla falls back into the foxhole. The grenade explodes, blowing him and his COMPANION into the air.

The firefight rages on. Foliage is cut to pieces by the HAIL OF BULLETS. Men are falling everywhere as others FIRE BACK in total panic and confusion, devastated by the overwhelming firepower and skill of the rescue team.

EXT. GUERRILLA CAMP - DAY

as Matheny races into view, spraying M-16 fire. He is joined by Ramirez and together they run towards the cave entrance, side by side, firing as they go.

They reach the cave. Matheny takes out an ATTACKING GUERRILLA. Ramirez grabs the side of the door, shoots a look to Matheny and throws it open. With Matheny covering him, Ramirez takes a quick peek inside and then rushes the cave.

INT. CAVE - DAY

At one end is a LADDER, leading to an OPEN TRAP DOOR. A GUERRILLA, seen from the waist down, scrambles up through the hole.

At the base of the ladder, a GUERRILLA, holding an AK-47 on his hip, turns and starts to fire.

Matheny and Ramirez respond with full AUTO BURSTS which rip into the guerrilla, spinning him around, knocking over a crude WOODEN TABLE, scattering a BRIEF CASE with burning PAPERS, FOOD CANS, and LIQUOR BOTTLES. As he spins he FIRES the weapon, an arcing line of SLUGS slamming into the roof, sending down a shower of dirt. He falls to the ground. Dead.

Ramirez charges through the DUST and thick SMOKE to cover the fallen man; Matheny following close behind, jerking a new CLIP out of his cargo pocket.

Suddenly, ANOTHER GUERRILLA erupts from behind some ammunition crates, drawing down on Ramirez with a machine pistol.

MATHENY
(shouting)
Down!!!

As the guerrilla fires, Matheny smashes the butt of his empty weapon into the guerrilla's shoulder, knocking the gun aside, the SLUGS thudding into the earthen wall harmlessly.

He hits the guerrilla with a vicious glancing blow to the head with the barrel of his weapon. The guerrilla is hurled backward, crashing into the wooden crates and to the floor.

Ramirez, recovering quickly, climbs the ladder with catlike agility, disappearing through the top.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matheny crouches and spins, jamming a new clip into the rifle, scanning the cave for any other movement. Satisfied he turns back to the unconscious guerrilla, racking a round into the chamber, lowering the weapon to fire.

He stops, staring into the FACE of a WOMAN, ANNA, dark, late twenties. Despite her blood and dirt-smeared face, she is beautiful.

MATHENY
(closes his eyes)
Shit...

Frozen, he stares at the woman, absorbed in the details of her face. Slowly he bends to pick up her PISTOL, ejecting the clip.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Ramirez, at a crouch, runs through the jungle, following the obvious signs of the guerrilla's retreat.

EXT. GUERRILLA CAMP - DAY

Matheny emerges from the cave. In the b.g. the team moves rapidly around the camp, checking bodies, looking for hiding places. We HEAR sporadic GUNFIRE in the background as the remaining guerrillas are taken out. Dixon is checking the bodies of the two slain Americans.

DIXON
(shouting)
These two are from the chopper,
that's it!

MATHENY
(shouting)
What about Hopper?!

DIXON
(shouting)
Hopper's not important. The job's
finished, let's clean up and get
the hell out of here!

Matheny turns, looking for Blain.

MATHENY
(to Blain)
Blain! Check the area, quick.
Hopper's still missing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blain gives rapid orders to Miguel and Williams.

BLAIN

Sweep pattern and double back.
Fifty meters. Move it! Look for
blood trails.

MATHENY

Dillon, get Con. Op. on the hook.
Give 'em our position. Tell them
the situation.

DILLON

You got it, L.T.

Matheny looks at the high ridge surrounding the camp, and
then turns to SEE Dixon striding towards the cave.

EXT. RIDGELINE NEAR CAMP - DAY

Ramirez emerges from the trees into an opening, leading to
a sheer rock cliff, towering fifty feet above the ground.

Scanning the wall, he SEES movement and quickly takes cover,
as automatic FIRE rips up the ground before him.

EXT. ROCK WALL - DAY

near the center of which a narrow cut, two feet wide, leads
to the top of the cliff, giving access to the adjoining
ridge.

Two GUERRILLAS scramble up through the chimney, assisted
by a ROPE, which they withdraw as they reach the top.
Ramirez takes out one man, the other taking cover, returning
fire.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Matheny enters, SEEING Dixon, stamping out the BURNING
PAPERS.

Anna, regaining consciousness, GROANS, a heavy flow of blood
running down her face from her head wound.

Dixon glances at Anna.

DIXON

That one's still alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He goes back to examining the papers. Matheny drops to one knee, giving her a cursory search, looking for weapons. Dixon looks up again.

DIXON
(coldly)
You going to play with her, or
kill her?

Matheny rises, giving him a cold, hard look. Dixon rises, charred papers in his hand. He approaches.

DIXON
What's the matter, Lieutenant?
Your job getting to you?

Matheny grabs Dixon by the shirt, yanking him forward, off his feet, bringing the two men nose to nose.

MATHENY
(seething)
Don't fuck with me, Dixon. This
is your line of work, not mine.
Your people got us into this shit,
you clean it up. Shoot her
yourself.

With a lunge, he smashes Dixon against the wall, knocking the breath from him. The two men stare at each other, glaring.

DIXON
(shaken)
Take a look past your fucking
nose, Matheny. Not hard to figure
out the stakes, even for a grunt
like you. We're fighting 'them'
in a dozen countries... global
war. We're too close to the
edge... we can't lose this one.

MATHENY
(bitterly)
Spare me the good guy shit, I've
seen enough of your 'global' war
today, Dixon. It stinks.

Matheny turns and walks out the door.

DIXON
(quietly; insidiously)
It's a dirty world, Lieutenant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He glances down at the paper he is holding. Although badly burned, he SEES a few handwritten WORDS in RUSSIAN. He looks down at the woman with growing interest. She is beginning to sit up, groggily. Taking a chance he kneels beside her.

DIXON
(quietly; in Russian)
Are you all right?

EXT. BASE OF ROCK WALL - DAY

Blain has joined Ramirez, behind cover at the foot of the cliff. On a signal, they both clear cover and fire LONG BURSTS from their weapons up the cliff.

The smoke is hardly cleared when they are answered by withering FIRE. They duck down as a grenade EXPLODES nearby. Blain quickly loads a 40MM grenade into the M-203.

BLAIN
That som'bitch's dug in like a
Alabama tick...
(spits)
... bastard could jack us around
all day.
(pause)
'Cept we don't have all day,
Poncho.

He fires the grenade into the rocks, blowing the guerrilla into the air.

EXT. GUERRILLA CAMP - DAY

Dixon SLAPS Anna's face viciously, shouting a stream of abuse at her in RUSSIAN.

In a fury of anger she leaps at Dixon, clawing at his face, SCREAMING in SPANISH. Fighting off most of her blows, he sweeps her arms aside, delivering a heavy blow to the side of her head, knocking her off her feet and to the ground.

Williams lifts her to her feet with one arm, restraining her. He looks at Dixon, at the scratch marks on his face.

WILLIAMS
Don't worry, Spook-man, I got her.
I won't let her get ya.

Dixon turns to Matheny. Blain and Ramirez are in the b.g. Dixon points his finger at Anna.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIXON

She's lying. She's a Soviet operative.

Ramirez turns to Blain.

RAMIREZ

(aside)

If that's Russian, I'm a fuckin' Chinaman. What are we wastin' our time for?

Blain steps forward, maneuvering into position, his weapon ready at his hip, swinging it slowly in Anna's direction.

DIXON

(continuing)

... she spoke Russian in the cave. She'd been burning these papers... look at this.

He hands Matheny the piece of charred paper with the RUSSIAN HANDWRITING. Dixon continues.

DIXON

(intense)

These fuckers have no more right to be here than we have. These papers indicate a major build-up. Advisors, heavy weapons. God only knows what. If we can get her out we've hit the fucking jackpot. We've been waiting for a break like this for months.

Matheny looks up from the paper and then to Anna. Dillon and Miguel approach. Dillon steps forward.

DILLON

L.T., Con. Op. says forward observers indicate movement all around us. Too hot for a pick-up. We're on our own until Sector 3000. They're ready for a pickup at LZ 49.

DIXON

We have to take her.

Matheny turns to Dixon, handing back the papers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATHENY

(shaking his head)

We drag her through this bush to that LZ, there's a good chance none of us will make it. She'll be giving our position away every chance she gets.

Blain levels the weapon, pointing it directly at Anna.

BLAIN

Lieutenant?

Blain and Dixon exchange poisoned looks. Matheny looks at Anna, staring back at him defiantly.

Dixon grabs the handset from Dillon's radio. He shoves it at Matheny.

DIXON

(pushing)

Who's going to make the call, you or me?

Matheny looks at the handset. Then at Dixon, he knows Dixon's won.

MATHENY

(wryly)

I guess that makes you babysitter, Dixon.

Dixon gives the handset back to Dillon.

Matheny turns to Miguel, pointing to the map, LZ 49 indicated.

MATHENY

Miguel?

MIGUEL

Malo, Lieutenant. Muy peligroso. Very heavy jungle. Many dangers...

Matheny turns to Dixon.

MATHENY

Just what we need...

He turns back to Miguel.

EXT. OBSERVER'S ALTERED POV - DAY

watching intently as Miguel speaks.

MIGUEL
(continuing)
If we follow the river, there is
a trail. Muy malo. But...

Miguel looks to the sky, turning back to Matheny.

The Observer's auditory reception SLOWS NOTICEABLY, Miguel's words spoken in slow motion but perfectly understandable, as if they were being carefully analyzed.

MIGUEL
(continuing)
Lieutenant... we must hurry, this
way.

EXT. MIGUEL - DAY

Miguel is pointing to a gap in the jungle, leading to a high ridge line.

Matheny turns to Blain, Dillon standing close by.

MATHENY
(decisively)
Blain! We move in five minutes.
Clear the area. No casings,
anything. Tend to the bodies of
Murphy and Hawkins and the two
from the chopper...
(to Dillon)
Update Con. Op. Confirm dustoff
at LZ 49. Coordinates for the
bodies here... and for those poor
bastards we found in the trees.

EXT. GUERRILLA CAMP (LATER)

The camp has been dismantled, the bodies of the Americans hidden, fires in the b.g., indicating evidence and papers having been destroyed. The team is leaving the camp. As they pass by, Matheny catches up with Ramirez. The two men walk on, through the death and destruction around them, Dillon following close behind.

Williams hurriedly stuffs the last of a chocolate bar into his mouth, slinging the M-60 over his shoulder as he goes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blain, giving the camp a last look, turns to SEE Dixon, pushing ANNA onward, her hands tied in front of her. She spins, hurling a string of insults to Dixon in SPANISH. Dixon grins, he's enjoying this.

DIXON
(sneering; Spanish)
Muy bien, puta...
(in English)
... but your act doesn't cut any
shit with me...
(prods her with the gun)
... move it, or I'll tape your
mouth shut. Comprende?

She spits at him, turning forward with a haughty twist of her head.

ANNA
Cavrone...

They move on.

EXT. CAMP PERIMETER - DAY

Miguel, guarding the rear, glances furtively around the clearing. He moves a step forward and stops, freezing.

Slowly he turns back, his eyes riveted upon the treeline above the camp. His eyes strain, his senses registering a fear he cannot name or see.

Something is out there, in the trees, waiting, watching.

Miguel turns and walks into the jungle, pausing one last time to look behind him before he too disappears from sight.

EXT. OBSERVER'S ALTERED POV - DAY

looking down from his vantage point to the treeline below, terraced like stepping stones, focusing on a TREE, fifty feet away.

The Observer utters a LOW TRILL and springs outward into space, hurtling downward towards his landing point, the canopy of the trees approaching in a staccato rush of green.

The SOUNDS of the FOREST are altered and enhanced with an electric, STATIC-LIKE quality:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The RUSTLING of BRANCHES and LEAVES sound as if merely inches away; INSECTS streak by, the SOUND of their BUZZING WINGS growing louder on approach and fading as they turn. The CRIES of BIRDS and the SHRILL SCREAMS of MONKEYS in the background are HEARD as haunting, ECHOING DISTORTIONS.

The Observer descends fluidly through the trees and to the ground.

He enters the camp, surveying the terrible destruction and carnage. He SEES the dead guerrillas, the dissipating heat from their bodies leaving them pale and GHOST-LIKE, as if fading lights about to extinguish. He sees their weapons, the cold hard steel of the barrels registering ICE BLUE in his vision.

He turns and focuses on the area where the team left camp.

As he glides forward, the jungle grows suddenly quiet, as if aware, sensing that the HUNTER is now stalking, no longer observing!!!

EXT. JUNGLE VALLEY - DAY

The twilight world of a PREHISTORIC FOREST, filled with gigantic plants and towering trees, overgrown with vines and creepers.

The team, with Miguel at point, walk alongside a wandering STREAM BED, weirdly illuminated by SHAFTS OF LIGHT, streaming through openings in the trees, as if from spotlights, a hundred feet above.

It is midday, hot and humid, the air BUZZING with the sounds of insects, the CRYING of birds and monkeys. The men are sweating, quietly slapping at biting insects.

EXT. GIANT HARDWOOD TREE - DAY

lies across their path. As the men climb over a rotted section, Blain stops to assist Williams with his M-60.

BLAIN

I've seen some badass bush before,
but nothin' like this, man.

Williams pauses to rest, looking around him.

WILLIAMS

I hear you bro, this is some shit.
Make Cambodia look like Kansas.
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILLIAMS (Cont'd)

Lose your way in here, man, you
be in some kinda hurt.

They quietly laugh, do their hand dap.

EXT. ANNA AND DIXON - JUNGLE - DAY

Anna trips on a root falling to the ground. She lies there, motionless. Dixon looks at her, appraising the situation. He steps forward, prodding her with his foot. She doesn't move.

DIXON

(sighs)

Come on...

He picks up a small branch and viciously wacks her on the butt. She still doesn't move. Dixon cautiously leans down, reaching out with one hand to turn her by the shoulder.

Like an uncoiled spring, Anna turns, flinging a handful of DIRT into his face, momentarily blinding him. She lunges for his rifle with her bound hands.

Suddenly the BARREL of an M-16 is thrust into her face.

Looking up she SEES Ramirez, calmly holding the weapon on her, the look in his eyes indicating he'd have no trouble shooting her.

RAMIREZ

(in Spanish)

Don't try it.

She looks back at Dixon, wiping the dirt from his eyes. She moves on. Ramirez gives him a cold look as Dixon hurries past.

RAMIREZ

(cooly)

You should put her on a leash,
Dixon. She gets away from you
for a second... she's dead.

Dixon moves on, ignoring Ramirez, who turns, scanning the jungle behind him before moving on.

Dixon catches up with Anna, turning her sharply by the chin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIXON
(insidious)
Did you hear the man, 'puta'?
He means it.

She looks at him contemptuously, undaunted. She will try it again. She breaks away from his grasp and moves on, Dixon seething with anger.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

as he travels, directly overhead, timing his movements with those of the team. He moves lower, closer to the slowly moving humans.

EXT. RIVER BED - DAY

The team moves cautiously through the winding stream bed, their sweat-soaked fatigues clinging to their bodies.

Miguel, in the lead, picks his way along the riverbank, his concentration rapt, aboriginal. His face a trance-like mask of expectation.

Williams, cradling the heavy M-60 as if it were a toy, swings the muzzle relentlessly across his field of view. He pauses to adjust the hanging, belted loop of cartridges trailing from the drum magazine at his side.

Blain follows, holding the M-203 high across his chest. An INSECT lands on his face and is trapped in the grease paint near his lips. He draws the hapless bug into his mouth with his tongue and quietly spits it out, his concentration unbroken.

Matheny, bent, cautious, his feet moving aside the dry leaves on the ground, heel to toe and on foot edges. He glances around, checking the team's position and progress.

Dillon follows, his mouth open, breathing deeply, exhausted, the radio a 25 pound demon.

Anna, struggling to climb a section of the stream bank, slips on some loose dirt. Unable to assist herself with her hands tied, she nearly falls. Dixon prods her with his rifle, forcing her to her feet. She scrambles up the bank, Dixon following.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

As Miguel enters a small clearing, bordered on one side by the towering trees, carpeting the mountainside.

High above in the thick, impenetrable treeline, brightly colored birds SQUAWK loudly, chasing each other from branch to branch.

Suddenly Miguel stops. Matheny holds up his hand and the team freezes in position.

An eerie SILENCE, like a slowly falling curtain, descends over the jungle until even the BUZZING and CLICKING of insects have ceased.

EXT. TEAM MEMBERS - DAY

Sensing an ambush, move quietly into the foliage. Dixon moves into the undergrowth, dragging Anna with him. He slings his M-16 over his shoulder and withdraws his PISTOL. Grasping Anna by her shirt collar he holds the weapon to her head.

DIXON

(whispering)

You make a word, one fucking word.

He draws back the hammer with a loud CLICK.

EXT. MIGUEL - AT THE RIVER BED - DAY

remains frozen and transfixed, staring into the treeline. Something is moving, fluid, silently and downward, into the forest.

Miguel remains rooted to the spot, lost in concentration.

MATHENY

Sensing something very wrong with Miguel, moves alongside Blain.

MATHENY

What the hell's got Miguel so spooked?

BLAIN

Cain't say, L.T... been squirrely all mornin'... fuckin' weird... sometimes I think that nose of his is too good... smells things that ain't there.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matheny signals for Blain to cover him and then moves low and quiet towards Miguel.

Miguel, his eyes riveted to the canopy above, unconsciously reaches to his throat, grasping a LEATHER POUCH, secured to his neck by a thong. He fingers the talisman.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

as he slowly descends through the trees, moving towards Miguel, who's eyes search the treeline for movement.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

approaches Miguel, gripping his shoulders and in a hoarse whisper, speaks his name.

MATHENY

Miguel! What is it ...?

Miguel, rigid, does not respond. Matheny forcefully jerks him around to face him.

MATHENY

Miguel, what is it? What the hell's wrong with you?

MIGUEL

(low)

Something ... in the trees ...

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

still closing in on Miguel. Miguel turns back, looking high into the trees, puzzled and frightened. He's lost sense of the Hunter's presence. He lowers his vision, looking towards the Hunter, now on the ground, 30 yards across the clearing from Miguel. The Hunter pauses.

BACK TO SCENE/MIGUEL AND MATHENY

MIGUEL

(whispers)

Can you see anything ...

(he points)

... there?

Matheny stares hard at the jungle.

MATHENY

I ... nothing ...

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

moves behind a broad fern, skirting around Miguel and Matheny, heading away from the column.

BACK TO SCENE/MIGUEL AND MATHENY

Matheny shakes his head, continuing to stare into the jungle. He turns to Miguel.

MATHENY

What do you think... ?

Miguel turns, a puzzled look in his eyes. He nods in agreement.

MIGUEL

Nothing...

EXT. ANNA AND DIXON - DAY

Sensing the danger has passed, Dixon releases his grip on Anna. As they start to rise, Dixon holsters his pistol and unslings his M-16; Anna still stares hard into the jungle.

Suddenly, without even looking, Anna drives her elbow hard into Dixon's solar plexus while digging into his shin with the heel of her boot. Spinning around she knees him brutally in the groin. Dixon goes down, doubled over in pain, Anna running for the jungle.

Dixon CRIES out.

EXT. MATHENY AND RAMIREZ

HEARING Dixon's cry, Matheny signals to Ramirez to move. They both go into a crouch, heading towards Dixon.

EXT. DILLON - DAY

hearing the commotion, spins and SEEING the fleeing Anna, gives chase.

Anna, although bound, is light and fit and runs fast, hurdling fallen logs and branches, charging through the undergrowth. She has a good start.

Dillon, hampered by the radio and weapon but in tremendous shape, thunders after her, closing the distance.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

as he passes from behind a large tree, surrounded by dense foliage, SEEING the fleeing Anna. He watches her and then begins to move parallel with her, only faster, the green of the jungle rushing by in a blur.

EXT. ANNA AND DILLON - CHASE - DAY

Anna, bursting through a grove of ferns, drives on, breathing hard with the exertion.

Dillon, ten yards behind, closing the distance, taking advantage of any hesitation Anna makes, struggling with the dense jungle.

Anna hits a small clearing, an alleyway through the trees. She sprints hard across the clear ground.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

Moving through the jungle. As he steps clear of the foliage he SEES Anna driving hard into the alleyway, running directly towards him. Twenty yards away, Dillon, closes in.

BACK TO SCENE/DILLON

Only a few feet behind Anna, lunges forward, knocking her to the ground. In a second he's on her, his weapon ready. She struggles to her feet, fighting, gasping for breath. Dillon holds the M-16 on her, looking at her, almost pleading. He doesn't want to shoot her, but he will if he has to.

DILLON

Please...

She looks at the weapon, to Dillon and then, hopefully, to the jungle. She stops, staring hard down the alleyway.

Something...

Dillon, sensing her attention, turns his eyes down the alleyway, SEEING:

The Hunter's EYES, flaring yellow in the dense foliage. They rush forward, towards:

EXT. DILLON AND ANNA'S POV - DAY

SEEING the MOTTLED OUTLINE of the Hunter's body, racing towards them, as if the entire wall of the jungle were rushing in. The Hunter's WEAPON FLASHES with energy.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - ANNA AND DILLON - DAY

as he hurtles towards them, their faces frozen in surprise.

BACK TO SCENE/ANNA AND DILLON

A splitting THUD as Dillon is hurtled backwards into the undergrowth, the Hunter's hand and WEAPON flashing through the air.

BLOOD splashes on Anna's face.

She SCREAMS as Dillon's M-16 FIRES a short burst into the air.

EXT.. RIVER BED - DAY

HEARING the GUNFIRE, Matheny WHISTLES low and sharp. Ramirez immediately swings into action, moving in a coordinated defensive/offensive pattern into the jungle.

DILLON/BACK TO SCENE

The Hunter's ARM and SPUR hook into Dillon's leg, and he is dragged into the jungle.

EXT. RAMIREZ - DAY

Ramirez runs forward ten paces, drops to a crouch, scanning to each side. Immediately Matheny runs forward twenty paces. As he passes Ramirez, Ramirez turns and scans the rear and flanks.

Blain and Williams repeat the maneuver, leap-frogging forward, canvassing the jungle, providing areas of intersecting cover.

EXT. RAMIREZ - DAY

Entering the alleyway where Dillon was killed he SEES Anna, cowering in the bushes, her blood splattered face glazed with terror, her eyes vacant. He approaches, looking at her. He SEES the trail of BLOOD and CRUSHED GRASSES leading into the jungle. He gives a LOW WHISTLE and then moves on, the rest of the team assuming defensive positions around the clearing.

He follows the trail, finding first Dillon's blood-covered weapon, and then, a few yards later, the radio.

Ramirez cautiously parts the brush before him. A look of puzzlement and then revulsion comes to his face.

EXT. ALLEY WAY - DAY.

Williams and Blain at either end, cautiously searching the jungle; Miguel covering their flanks.

Matheny and Dixon approach Anna. She seems unaware of their presence, staring dumbly ahead. Matheny checks her out, looking for wounds.

MATHENY

She hasn't been hit. It's not her blood.

DIXON

What the fuck did she do to him?

Ramirez emerges from the jungle carrying Dillon's M-16 and radio. He approaches, dumping the equipment on the ground.

RAMIREZ

L.T. You'd better take a look at this.

MATHENY

Dillon?

RAMIREZ

(oddly)

I don't know.

(pause)

I can't tell.

EXT. MATHENY AND RAMIREZ - DAY

Dixon in the b.g., as Ramirez parts the brush with his weapon. Before them, covered with dirt and leaves, are Dillon's ENTRAILS. There is no body.

MATHENY

(shocked)

Where's the body, for Christ's sake?

RAMIREZ

There's no sign of it. Just this.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

The entire team is gathered, still holding defensive positions. Anna, still stunned, is beginning to come around. She looks up at Matheny. He turns to Miguel.

MATHENY

Miguel, ask her what happened.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Miguel drops to one knee and talks softly to her in SPANISH. She mutters incoherently in Spanish, still dazed, shaking her head. Ramirez listens closely to her response. Miguel turns to Matheny. He seems confused.

MIGUEL

She says ... the jungle took him...

RAMIREZ

That's not what she said... she said...

(pondering; to Miguel)

... she doesn't make sense.

Miguel nods in agreement.

MIGUEL

The jungle... that's all she saw.

MATHENY

(angry; to Miguel)

Just get it straight... ask her what the fuck's going on!!!

DIXON

It's fucking obvious what's going on, she lured him out here, so they could kill him, mutilate him like the others...

(points at her)

... this is all part of her act. She's been at it all day.

Matheny turns and looks at him, coldly.

MATHENY

(quietly)

Then where's the body? Why didn't she escape?

He looks at Dillon's bloodstained equipment, lying at her feet.

MATHENY

(continuing)

Why didn't they take the radio?

(pause)

Whoever it was they couldn't have gotten far.

(pause)

His body's got to be around here somewhere... find him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They move out. Matheny moves into the jungle, searching. He crouches at the base of a huge MAHOGANY TREE, covered with vines, studying the jungle. He moves away from the tree and into the forest, looking for signs on the ground.

Where he was sitting, a DROP OF BLOOD falls. Another drop falls, dripping from a leaf and above that, from another leaf. Above that, high in the top of the tree, SUSPENDED from vines from his ankles, is DILLON'S BODY, his chest a gaping wound.

He hangs there as if he were an animal, field dressed.

EXT.. WILLIAMS - DAY

crouched in the undergrowth. There is a movement in the brush before him. He wipes the sweat from his eyes and clicks his safety on the M-60 to fire.

The SOUND is growing closer. Williams levels the weapon. A smile crosses his face.

WILLIAMS
(whispers)
Come on you fuckers... 'ol
'painless' just be waitin...

The movement in the brush is GROWING LOUDER. Williams' finger moves closer to the trigger.

Suddenly a small TAPIR bursts through the leaves, startling Williams.

A smile crosses his face as he watches the animal scurrying from sight. He stands, shaking his head, grinning, relaxing.

The HUNTER'S WEAPON slams into his throat. As he CRIES OUT he sees before him something terrifying and bewildering, something beyond his worst nightmare. He drops the M-60 as he falls to the ground, clutching his throat.

The Hunter's weapon flashes again, a terrible POPPING SOUND, as Williams' body cavity, BURSTS open.

BLAIN

Has heard Williams' cry. He moves fast through the brush. He HEARS a RUSTLING in the bushes. A wet SUCKING SOUND.

Blain charges into the clearing. In the instant before the Hunter disappears into the forest, Blain SEES a vision so brief and fantastic that it seems like a hallucination.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Hunter's EYES flare momentarily from the green before they vanish.

Blain sees his friend, lying on the ground, his chest open, the powerful man, dead.

BLAIN
(shouting)
Contact, 30 Right!!!
(firing)
Motherfucker!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

He OPENS FIRE with his M-203, belted shells slamming into the weapon from the magazine at his waist, expending it in one LONG BURST.

EXT. THE OTHER TEAM MEMBERS - DAY

Flying through the jungle, weapons ready, eyes searching for movement.

EXT. BLAIN - DAY

He throws down the weapon and with a cry of rage, lunges forward, grabbing the M-60. As he stands, the CARTRIDGE BELT, attached to Williams, strings out between them.

He opens FIRE and the foliage before him EXPLODES with the fury of the terrible weapon.

Blain sweeps the M-60 from left to right, like a man possessed, mowing down the jungle.

The other team members race into sight and begin firing with Blain.

Ramirez throws a GRENADE. An EXPLOSION rocks the jungle.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

A piece of SHRAPNEL cuts his shoulder. A splash of ORANGE BLOOD spatters across the LEAVES of a nearby tree, bullet holes ripping through the surrounding foliage.

BACK TO SCENE/BLAIN

More FIRING. Blain, his weapon expended, continues to thrust the M-60 forward, still squeezing the trigger.

Suddenly, as quickly as it started, THE FIRING STOPS. The men move catlike into the jungle, reloading, searching.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blain is frozen, eyes wide, unblinking, his breath coming in rapid gasps as he stares into the jungle, still squeezing the trigger of the weapon, its breech locked open, GUNSMOKE wafting from the chamber and barrel.

Matheny moves in front of Blain, still staring into the jungle.

MATHENY

Blain. What happened?

BLAIN

(confused)

I... saw it.

MATHENY

You saw what?

BLAIN

(still dazed)

I saw it.

Matheny turns quickly to Williams' body and kneels. Dixon, in charge of Anna, approaches. Anna, still dazed, stares, dumbfounded at the sight of Williams' body. She looks at Blain, stunned, her moments as if in slow motion.

MATHENY

at Williams' side, shocked at the sight of the mutilated body. He is joined by Dixon.

MATHENY

(to himself)

Williams, not you, my God...

(examining the wound)

Jesus, what the hell is this?

What did this? A knife?

Dixon kneels and examines the body, exploring the wound.

DIXON

(puzzled)

Just like the others... surgical.

It's cut through the thoracic cavity, like a scalpel; muscle, sternum, tendon, bone; in one stroke.

MATHENY

Machete? Who the hell could do that to man like Williams?

Dixon glances up at Matheny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIXON
(nonplussed)
Too clean for a machete...
impossible. Looks like... laser
surgery... it cut and cauterized
all at once.

Matheny stands, looking at the body. In the b.g. Anna
drifts away from the group.

MATHENY
I can't believe it... Williams...
(to Blain)
... Blain!

Blain stares ahead, dumbly, not hearing.

Matheny wrenches the M-60 from Blain, flinging it to the
ground. He grabs Blain by his shoulders, shaking him
violently back to awareness.

MATHENY
Blain! Blain! Look at me!

Blain turns to face Matheny, a shocked, vacant expression
on his face.

MATHENY
Blain, how many? Who was it?
What did you see?

Blain is dumbfounded. He strains to speak.

BLAIN
I don't know. Something... I saw
something.

Blain looks down at the gruesome sight of his friend. He
drops to one knee. With a trembling hand he closes
Williams' eyes.

BLAIN
It's okay, Bro... it's okay.

Ramirez runs from the jungle, breathing hard, shaking his
head.

RAMIREZ
Nothing. Not a fucking thing.
No bodies, blood, no trace of
anything. They skied, L.T....
disappeared.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matheny looks intently at Ramirez. He turns hard, hauling Blain to his feet. He looks upward at the darkening sky.

MATHENY

Sergeant Blain! God damnit!
Sergeant... It's nearly dark.
I want you to set up an NDP fifty
meters above the stream. I want
everybody dug in and the area
mined with everything we've got.

Blain, with a last look at Williams, tries to pull himself together, the hardened professional starting to take over.

BLAIN

Yessir.

ANNA

as she approaches the brush, her attention focused on something clinging to the leaves, well off to the side of where Blain saw the Hunter. She draws closer. She reaches out, hesitant, as if drawn magnetically to the leaves.

EXT. DETAIL - HUNTER'S BLOOD - DAY

clinging to the leaves, thick, viscous, pale-orange, almost like the sap of an exotic plant. Her fingers hover above it, hesitantly and then touch it.

ANNA

as she examines the blood, transfixed. Dixon appears at her shoulder, startling her. He motions for her to return. She turns, wiping the blood onto her pants leg.

MATHENY

turns to Ramirez and Miguel.

MATHENY

Put him in a body bag and carry
him back. We'll bury him in the
morning.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY (EVENING)

The team is dug into the foxholes in a dense grove of trees, a solid wall to their backs. The men are barely visible they blend in so well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nearby, Blain is stringing a TRIP WIRE, low to the ground, covering it with leaves and grass. He moves into camp and reports to Matheny. Blain is now more of the hardened professional, yet still he seems displaced.

BLAIN

We've got most of the flares,
frags. and two claymores just
outside the NDP. All we've got--
but nothin's comin' within fifty
clicks of this place without
trippin' on somethin'.

MATHENY

Good. Thank-you Sergeant.

Blain walks through the camp, stopping beside a DARK OBJECT on the ground. He kneels beside the BODY BAG containing the remains of his friend. He pulls back the zipper revealing Williams' face, looking peaceful in death, as if lying in state.

Blain removes something from his pocket, holding it in his hand, studying it.

DETAIL OF OBJECT IN BLAIN'S HAND

A worn ZIPPO LIGHTER, the chrome rubbed away in places revealing the brass beneath and a MEDALLION depicting the crossed muskets and parachute of the 101 1ST AIRBORNE DIVISION.

BLAIN

Lifts the flap on Williams' shirt pocket, placing the lighter inside. He lingers on the face and then closes the zipper.

BLAIN

(softly)
Good-bye, Bro.

ANNA

huddled into a foxhole, her hands still tied in front of her. She looks down at her pants leg. The Hunter's BLOOD STAIN glows with a faint luminosity. She places her finger's near the stain.

EXT. HUNTER'S CAMP - NIGHT

Suspended above the ground, a horizontal SLASH of intense BLUE LIGHT appears, cutting upward into the trees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The light widens as two vertical lines appear, outlining a small DOORWAY, seemingly cut into the foliage.

From within the compartment a PLATFORM slides silently forward, its edges lit by a phosphorescent RING of soft blue light. Nestled within the shelf are an array of OTHERWORLDLY OBJECTS, some looking like weapons.

The Hunter's hand extends, removing a small BLUE STONE followed by a GREEN STONE. He presses the two stones together. With a PULSE OF ENERGY they flare, fusing. Holding the pulsing mass in one hand, he places the edge against the FAINTLY GLOWING WOUND on his shoulder, cauterizing it.

The Hunter's EYES glow with increased intensity as he winces and SCREAMS in pain, an unearthly TRILLING CRY, piercing into the night.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

A momentary HUSH falls over the symphony of night sounds. Anna and Miguel turn towards the trees with a growing look of wariness. The others, setting up the RADIO, show no response.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

as he removes the glowing stones, the WOUND, puckered and scarred, fades slowly; the broken innerconnecting gridwork of the Hunter's BIO-ENERGETIC SUIT draws together, mending itself.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Dixon is tuning in the lightweight FIELD RADIO, equipped with a CRYPTO-PHONE device. Matheny holds the handset, listening.

BLAZER ONE (V.O.)

Red Fox, repeat and confirm last transmission.

MATHENY

(to phone)

Blazer One. Repeat. Sapper.
attack at 1630. Lost two
additional men, AW man Williams
KIA and Com. Spec. Dillon, KIA.
Prisoner, taken, suspected OCR.
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATHENY (Cont'd)
AO may be compromised; suggest
additional support. Over.

Long pause as STATIC CRACKLES over the radio.

BLAZER ONE (V.O.)
Red Fox. Insulate and extract
OCR prisoner, Priority Able.
Contact at 1030 hours for extract
details at LZ 49. Over.

MATHENY
(to phone)
Roger, Blazer One. Contact at
1030 hours. Out.

He turns to the group, huddled together in a tight circle,
Ramirez and Miguel facing outward in defensive positions,
Anna, silent, watching.

MATHENY
(continuing)
We're still on our own.
(to Blain)
Okay. What was it you saw out
there today?

BLAIN
(hesitant)
Don't know exactly, sir... it
was... like a face.

MATHENY
A guerrilla? Someone from the
camp? An indian?

BLAIN
(blocked; uncomfortable)
Only one... some sort of
camouflage. It was there... the
eyes... and then they...

MATHENY
(abruptly; pushing)
What, Sergeant?

BLAIN
They were gone... disappeared.
But I know one thing,
Lieutenant...
(pause)

...

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLAIN (Cont'd)

I drew down and fired right at it. Capped-off two hundred rounds and then the M-60; a full belt. Nothin'... nothin' on this earth could have lived... not at that range.

Matheny ponders this for a moment, staring hard at Blain.

MATHENY

All right, Sergeant. You take the first watch, and then get some rest.

Blain departs. Matheny turns to Miguel.

MATHENY

Miguel, ask her again. Who hit us today? What happened to Dillon?

Miguel turns to Anna. They talk quietly in Spanish, Dixon watching, listening carefully. Miguel turns back to Matheny.

MIGUEL

(interpreting)

She says the same thing... it was the jungle...

DIXON

Bullshit. She's lying. She knows all about it. You can't believe anything she says.

RAMIREZ

Somebody's workin' a number on us, L.T. Psych-job... that's all. Tryin' to scare shit out of us. Hackin' them open like that, skinning them. They're animals.

MATHENY

Then why didn't they take the radio, or his weapon?

RAMIREZ

... they didn't have time. I must have surprised them.

MATHENY

But they had time to take the body?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Ramirez seems puzzled. He can't answer. Matheny turns to Miguel.

MATHENY

Miguel?

Miguel looks up at Matheny and shrugs. Matheny studies him for a moment.

MATHENY

What is it? Something's been bugging you ever since we found those first bodies.

MIGUEL

I don't know...

(pause)

Lieutenant, we shouldn't be here.

RAMIREZ

Come on Miguel, don't start with the spiritual jive. Whoever hit us was real.

Miguel turns and looks at Ramirez.

MIGUEL

(softly)

Can't you feel it?

They all look at each other and then to the jungle. They do feel it.

MATHENY

Whoever they are they're damned fast... strong... silent... move like they're part of the jungle.

He turns and looks at Anna, staring back at him.

EXT. HUNTER'S CAMP - NIGHT

An OPEN DOORWAY, suspended above the ground as if leading from another dimension, floods the camp with an eerie aqua-marine light.

Nearby is an OVAL FRAME strung with fine wire. Over the frame is stretched the SKIN of DILLON. Strangely this is not horrifying; inhuman and chilling, but not horrifying, or no more so than seeing any other animal skins or hides so displayed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Hunter's hands, shadowy, nearly translucent, move towards the skin. He touches it gently, as a man might stroke the hide of a leopard. To the Hunter, these skins are a thing of beauty.

He removes the skin from the frame and turns to the ship, approaching an open COMPARTMENT.

Lit from within, the compartment contains dozens of HIDES AND SKINS; exotic, ALIEN CREATURES from other planets and solar systems, some covered with THORNS and ARMOR PLATE, while others are soft, delicate looking.

Dillon's skin is placed on the top of the pile. The compartment closes.

EXT. BLAIN - NIGHT

Hunched down in a foxhole, the M-60 on a tripod before him. It's nearly a FULL MOON, the jungle a montage of SHADOWS AND REFLECTIONS. He scans the jungle before him with a STARLIGHT SCOPE.

EXT. DETAIL - STARLIGHT SCOPE - NIGHT

The jungle passes by in eerie relief, as if overexposed, the highlights and shadows merging together. A light MIST is starting to form.

BLAIN

lowers the nightscope and continues to scan the jungle, his eyes always moving. He is talking to himself.

BLAIN

(distant; whispering)

Same kinda' jungle, same moon...
everything...

(pause)

... a real numba' ten night.
Remember Bro? Only you and me,
the only one's out of the whole
fuckin' platoon who made it out.

His eyes probe the darkness, remembering.

BLAIN

(continuing)

... we walked out on top of 'em.
Not a scratch, not a fuckin'
scratch.

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLAIN (Cont'd)
(spits into the night)
No fuckin' chili-choker with a
machete got to you, Bro... you
were just too good...

He ponders this a moment.

BLAIN
(continuing)
... I promise you this, Bro...
whoever he is, I hope he's
plannin' to hit us again...
(pause; spits)
... 'cause he's got my name on
'em.

EXT. HUNTER'S CAMP - NIGHT

The Hunter's EYES glowing faintly in the darkness.

The door closes into the dark wall of forest. The Hunter
turns and moves into the night.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

The mist has thickened, the night alive with a million
sounds. The team members sleep uneasily, if at all.

Blain, although weary, stares hard into the night, waiting,
each small sound a potential enemy. A LULL spreads over
the jungle, animals and insects quieting. Blain tightens
his grip on the M-60.

Miguel awakens, peering into the night. Nothing.

Suddenly, a metallic CLICK, a POP, the SOUND of a warning
flare rocketing into the canopy. A moment later a brilliant
FLASH as the flare burns, illuminating the camp.

An echoing eerie SCREAM fills the night as a DARK SHAPE in
the mist rockets through the undergrowth towards Blain.

Blain spins, hauling the heavy gun around, just as something
crashes into his upper body, driving the huge man into the
foxhole.

A desperate battle for life ensues, illuminated with the
strobing light of the descending flare. Blain's enraged
SHOUTS and ROARS mingled with horrific SCREAMS fill the
night.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Blain's razor-edged KNIFE flashes in the light; BLOOD spatters his face as he attacks fiercely.

Matheny and Ramirez rush at a crouching run towards the foxhole, their weapons ready.

A tremendous climatic SCREAM from the foxhole AND THEN, SILENCE. Matheny and Ramirez approach, cautiously. Blain stands, his face and clothes drenched in blood, some of it his, his breath coming in rapid gasps. He looks at Matheny, whispering hoarsely.

BLAIN

Got the motherfucker...

As the flare breaks through the canopy, dying out in great flickering bursts, the men stare down into the foxhole.

A huge, jungle BOAR lies mutilated in a pool of blood, still quivering in the final throes of death. The flare dies out.

Blain, shaking from adrenalin, breathing heavily, looks down at the dying animal.

BLAIN

(incredulous)

A pig... just a fucking pig...

Matheny shines his Tekna-light onto the boar, playing the light along its massive hulk, its razor edged tusks gleaming in the light. Ramirez appears by his side, looking down at the carcass.

RAMIREZ

(wry)

It's Dixon.

Dixon appears, looking into the hole. Ramirez does a slight double-take. As Blain climbs out he looks at Dixon, sheathing his knife.

BLAIN

(deadpan)

Smells the same... but the hog's better lookin'.

Matheny looks at Blain, at the huge gash across his chest.

MATHENY

(continuing)

Get a field dressing on that right away.

(to Miguel)

Miguel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From the darkness nearby, Miguel's VOICE answers.

MIGUEL (O.S.)
(urgently)
Over here, Lieutenant. You must
see this.

Matheny stands, apprehensive, something in Miguel's voice.

He walks over to Miguel, standing with a FLASHLIGHT pointing to the ground. They see Williams' BODY BAG slashed open, covered in blood. Ramirez appears.

MIGUEL
The body... it's gone.

RAMIREZ
Came in through the trip wires,
took it right out from under our
noses...

Matheny looks at the empty bag and then into the night.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY (MORNING)

A patchy ground fog covers the area. Matheny, Miguel and Ramirez are examining the ground near the trip wire to the flare. Miguel stands, turns to Matheny.

MIGUEL
There was just the boar,
Lieutenant, nothing else. No other
tracks.

Matheny kneels and examines the thin, well hidden wire. He stands, looking around the camp.

MATHENY
Hard enough to see in daylight...
impossible at night. How the hell
could anyone get past this, grab
the body of a 260 pound man, right
under the flare... and leave
without a fucking trace.

He turns and looks at Ramirez who's puzzled eyes scan the camp, searching for an answer. He looks up at the canopy, a maze of interlocking branches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAMIREZ

(wryly)

Unless... he went straight up.

Matheny looks at him, hard. At this stage he's even prepared to consider this.

Blain wearing a field dressing across his chest, moves through the heavy MIST, holding a claymore mine, wrapping up the lead wires.

BLAIN

(harshly)

The fucker could be sittin' right next to us. You couldn't find your ass with a bloodhound in this shit.

MATHENY

(to Ramirez)

I want you on rear guard. You sense anything, hear anything, don't take any chances, waste it, hard. We've really got to hump it. We're going to make that LZ with everyone we've got left.

EXT. ENCAMPMENT - DAY

The fog has nearly lifted. The team is ready to depart. Blain slings his heavy RUCKSACK to his back, picking up the M-60. He looks at Dixon, who is starting to leave, his back to Blain.

BLAIN

(quietly)

Dixon, over here.

Dixon turns and approaches, warily.

DIXON

Yeah, what is it, Sergeant?

Blain unsheathes his knife. He gives Dixon a cold look and turns him by the shoulders.

Crawling across the heavy RADIO UNIT on Dixon's back is a huge SCORPION. Blain skewers the scorpion with the tip of his blade, holding the writhing, stinging insect before the wincing Dixon.

DIXON

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLAIN
(cooly)
Anytime.

Blain flings the scorpion to the ground, crushing it with his boot. He looks up at Dixon, walks away. Dixon follows.

The jungle GROWS SILENT.

As the team passes a thick tangle of vines clustered with brilliant YELLOW FLOWERS, the Hunter's EYES appear.

He moves out of the jungle and into the camp.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV OF HIS HAND - DAY

as it appears, pulsing in a pale magenta heat, low to the ground, holding his weapon. He lays down the weapon, picking up the SCORPION, turning it slowly in his fingers, examining it. It looks like an exotic flower, its color fading from sight, turning to BLACK.

A low SOUND is uttered, something vaguely familiar about it: A NEARLY HUMAN VOICE, a distorted imitation of Blain.

HUNTER (O.S.)
(filtered)
Dixon, over here.

Again the phrase is uttered, improving, closer to Blain's inflection and accent.

HUNTER (O.S.)
Dixon, over here.

The Hunter lowers the pitch.

HUNTER (O.S.)
Dixon, over here.

The last effort is a chilling simulation of Blain's voice.

EXT. HUNTER'S HAND - DAY

drops the scorpion and picks up the weapon which changes instantly back to the Hunter's skin tones.

EXT. CANYON RIM - DAY

The team, moving along the edge of a STEEP VERTICAL WALL, descending 100 feet into a RIVER GORGE. Visibility is at times obscured by the rising low clouds, the ground overgrown with ROOTS AND VINES, making progress slow and difficult.

Miguel stops, peering ahead anxiously. Matheny comes to his side.

MATHENY

What's the hold-up, Miguel?

Miguel points out a section of the rim that has slipped, leaving a HUGE CUT in the side of the canyon, partially obscured by heavy undergrowth.

MIGUEL

We must go very slowly,
Lieutenant, the ground is 'muy
peligroso.'

MATHENY

We've got to make that LZ. They
won't wait. Keep moving.

Miguel skirts the cave-in, the men eyeing it with respect as they pass by. Anna, more conscious of her safety because of her bound hands, moves warily past the cave in. She looks over the steep bank, at the swiftly moving water and jagged rocks, thirty feet below.

They continue on, ascending the path.

EXT. CANYON RIM - DAY (NEARBY)

Some distance ahead of the team. As the mist clears, the Hunter watches the forward progress of the team from a low vantage point.

The Hunter slips into the jungle, moving quickly to the base of a tree, nearly two hundred feet high, the nearest branches ten feet from the ground.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - TREE - DAY

as he crouches and springs to the lower branches, grasping them with his clawed, three-fingered hands, pulling himself up and through the branches with astounding speed and simian-like dexterity; his spurred prehensile feet, grasping and thrusting him to a vantage point, fifty feet above the ground. He peers down at the advancing team, far below on the canyon's rim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUNTER (O.S.)
(improving)
Dixon, over here.

EXT. CANYON RIM - DAY (LATER)

Dixon, following Ramirez, walking over an area that the others have safely passed. Suddenly the ground COLLAPSES under his feet. A WHIRLPOOL of dirt and vegetation, vines and roots pulls him under as he desperately struggles for support.

The earth continues to be eaten up, more of the trail disappearing, the vines and other vegetation becoming deadly, grasping tentacles, pulling downward to the rocks below.

DIXON

as he scrambles over the collapsing earth towards safety. With a CRACKING ROAR the earth beneath him falls away and Dixon, arms outstretched, LEAPS for safety.

The heavy pack and radio weigh him down and he falls short. In desperation he grabs one of Ramirez's ankles, as Ramirez, who has found a solidly rooted vine, is pulling himself to safety.

Dixon's body twists as he falls, severely wrenching Ramirez's leg. A LOUD CRACK is HEARD.

RAMIREZ

His face contorts in pain as his ankle breaks.

RAMIREZ
Ahhhhhhhheeeaa!!!!!!

DIXON

as he frantically holds onto Ramirez's ankle. The ground gives way again and Ramirez falls but the roots hold and he comes to a sudden halt.

The shock breaks Dixon's grasp and he FALLS down the canyon wall, fifty feet, into a trailing mass of vines. Grabbing desperately for support, the vines imprison his body, arresting his fall. He comes to a sudden, slamming halt, suspended upside down, the jagged rocks of the raging river, waiting, a hundred feet below.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA

The ground gives way beneath her feet. She falls to the ground, grasping a loose tangle of roots. Matheny dives, grabbing her rope-bound wrists. She grimaces in pain, clutching with all her strength onto Matheny's forearm.

More of the bank collapses. She begins to slide forward, towards the edge.

DIXON

A shower of SCREE kicked free by Anna's feet descends the wall, a LARGE STONE hitting him in the head, knocking him unconscious.

BLAIN

throws the M-60 to the ground, diving to grab Matheny's legs. The forward slide stops.

RAMIREZ

Losing his grip on the vines, frantically grabs onto Anna's legs.

MIGUEL

With one arm crooked around a tree, he holds onto Blain's feet with the other, forming a human chain extending from the cave-in to solid ground.

MATHENY

(to Blain)

All right, Sergeant. Let's go!

Blain begins to move backwards on his elbows and knees. Matheny repeats the motion. Slowly they pull Anna and Ramirez, now nearly over the cliff, to safety. As he is pulled over the top, Ramirez cries out in pain.

RAMIREZ

Oh, Jesus, my ankle, my ankle.

Ramirez rolls to his side, holding his ankle and grimacing in pain. Anna doubles up, almost to the fetal position, groaning softly. Raw, exposed skin can be seen where the rope has burned into her wrists.

RAMIREZ

(continuing)

My ankle. I think it's busted!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Blain attends to Ramirez, Matheny slides across the treacherous ground, Miguel standing by, ready to grab his feet. Matheny peers over the side anxiously searching for the missing Dixon.

He SEES the unconscious Dixon below, hanging suspended by the vines, upside down, gently swaying above the river.

Matheny signals to Miguel who pulls him back from the edge.

MATHENY

Sergeant! He looks like he's
still alive. The climbing rope,
quick!

Blain removes the RAPPELLING ROPE and a pair of GLOVES from his pack. Matheny scrambles to his feet, whipping out his knife.

Matheny cuts off a length of rope and quickly makes an improvised SWISS SEAT.

MATHENY

He's hung up half way down the
cliff. I'm going after him.

Blain hands him a CARABINER which he snaps into the knot of the seat, taking two wraps into the carabiner with the rope. He puts on the gloves as Blain takes a belay around the trunk of a stout tree, anchoring the rope around his body.

BLAIN

On belay!

MATHENY

(to Miguel)
Miguel, cover us!

Miguel picks up the M-60. Matheny goes over the side.

MATHENY

as he rapells down the canyon wall, cautiously avoiding the vines that are supporting Dixon.

DIXON

regains consciousness. Realizing his situation he tries to pull himself upright.

The vines begin to break and he falls a few feet before coming to a jerking halt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATHENY

moves beneath Dixon, still several feet away.

MATHENY

Dixon, don't move. Don't do anything. I'm coming in just below you.

Dixon stares upside down at the HUGE BOULDERS and the RAGING RIVER below.

DIXON

Don't let me fall, Lieutenant.
Don't let me fall.

MATHENY

slowly works his way alongside the cliff to a position several feet below Dixon. He then begins to inch his way across so that he will be directly under Dixon.

MATHENY

I'm coming up now. When I'm alongside, I want you to grab my back.

The vines begin to SNAP and Dixon slips a few more inches.

DIXON

I can't. If I move I'll fall!

MATHENY

Fuck it, Dixon, you'll fall anyway.

Dixon gathers his reserves; unsteady but in control.

DIXON

Okay, let's do it.

Matheny moves upward, just below Dixon. He ties off the rope to his harness, braces his feet against the cliff.

MATHENY

All right... slow now... reach out.

DIXON

I... don't think these vines... are going to...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a sickening SNAP the vines collapse, but as Dixon falls, Matheny lunges out, grabbing him with one hand by the shirt. Dixon clings to Matheny's arm, his body swinging free into space.

MATHENY
(straining)
I... can't hold you...

He looks down at the dizzying sight below, at the radio on Dixon's back.

MATHENY
(continuing)
... the radio, dump the fucking
radio...

With one hand, Dixon fumbles for the CATCH, holding the heavy radio strapped to his back.

MATHENY
(continuing)
... hurry! Drop it... !

Dixon finds the catch and the radio plummets to the rocks below, shattering into pieces.

MATHENY
(continuing)
... now, swing around, grab onto
my back.

Dixon grabs onto Matheny's back as Matheny holds onto the rope with all his strength.

MATHENY
(shouting above)
NOW!! BRING US UP!! BRING US
UP!!

EXT. CANYON RIM - DAY

Blain is lying on his stomach, looking over the edge, Miguel holding on to his ankles. They back up, taking up their positions. Together they pull up on the heavy load.

Blain is a powerful man, but when he tries to take up the slack in the belay, he has to take one arm off the rope. The strain becomes too much and the rope slips, losing what little they've gained.

EXT. CANYON WALL - DAY

Slowly, inch by painful inch, the two men are pulled up, only to drop again as Blain loses his grip.

EXT. CANYON RIM - DAY

The two men strain, sweat pouring down their faces, their arms and legs trembling. Anna, recovering, rises to her feet.

BLAIN
They're too much... we're not
going to make it!

Easing up on the tension on the belay, Miguel and Blain pause to regain their strength.

BLAIN
(spits)
Should have dumped the fuckin'
'spook' and kept the radio.

Unnoticed by the men, Anna stoops, picking up an M-16 from the ground. She turns, looking for an avenue of escape.

But the forest looks foreboding and sinister. Staring at the hellish world of green, the jungle seems to rush in at her. For a brief second she almost imagines she can see the Hunter's eyes, crashing towards her.

She freezes, paralyzed by fear, her memories of the attack.

She turns slowly back to the men on the cliff. Suddenly, she SEES Blain, a wall of menace moving towards her, his knife drawn, inches from her face.

Their eyes meet. Her M-16 CLATTERS to the ground.

Blain strikes, flashing the lethal blade upward.

Anna, with a CRY, jerks backward. She looks down, the bonds between her wrists severed cleanly.

BLAIN
(to himself)
I've seen it too...

Blain returns to the rope. Anna follows, rubbing the circulation back into her wrists. She quickly takes up a position on the belay rope, freeing Blain to use all of his massive strength. With a renewed effort, Blain attacks the rope, his eggplant-like biceps bulging. He spits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLAIN
(growling)
Let's get it... NOW!!!

Miguel and Blain haul up on the rope, Anna taking up the slack hand over hand, working hard. As they all strain Matheny's head slowly appears. A few more inches and Dixon is able to scramble over the top of Matheny to safety. He assists on the rope, pulling Matheny free.

They all collapse on the ground but Matheny is to his feet, stumbling, picking up his M-16.

MATHENY
(exhausted)
Move it! Get away from this bank.
Get into the jungle. Blain,
Dixon, grab the rest of the
gear... cover us, stay on 260
North.

They all scramble to their feet, picking up their equipment. Ramirez, in obvious agony, is helped to his feet by Matheny, Anna coming to his side to assist. With Miguel leading on point, Matheny and Anna help Ramirez to limp into the forest.

Blain recovers the rope and is the last to leave, catching up with Dixon, providing cover.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY

Matheny, Anna and Miguel lower Ramirez carefully to the ground. He groans, his face bathed in sweat, his eyes glazed over in pain. Having released him, they collapse, heaving for breath in the humid air. The jungle BUZZES noisily around them.

EXT. BLAIN AND DIXON - DAY

Moving through the thick undergrowth, laden with the M-60, Ramirez' pack and the extra weapons. Blain's field dressing is sodden with blood, the wound open from his strain on the rope. Dixon is still stunned from the blow to his head. They pause, catching their breath, scanning the jungle for movement.

BLAIN
(seething)
You're a fuckin' green stick,
Dixon... good for nothin'...
(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BLAIN (Cont'd)
should have stayed in Spooksville,
where you belong. Been me, I
never'd bothered, cut the vine
and let you drop.

Blain spits. Dixon massages his temples, still groggy.

DIXON
I can do without the country wit,
Blain. Let's get on with it.

Blain moves in close to Dixon.

BLAIN
This way. Do exactly what I tell
you.

Blain checks his compass. Points. They move on.

Suddenly an insular SILENCE sweeps over the jungle. They
freeze.

Blain and Dixon split up, each disappearing into the dense
growth, quietly putting their equipment on the ground, their
eyes straining, their senses alert for the slightest
movement.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY

Miguel sitting bolt upright, his weapon ready. He glances
at the others, also aware of the silence.

DIXON

He HEARS a slight RUSTLING in the undergrowth. Blain? He
strains to locate the source of the movement.

He HEARS A SOUND, too faint at first to identify. He
listens. Silence. He hears it again, the SOUND of a VOICE,
barely audible, A VERY QUIET WHISPER.

VOICE (O.S.)
Dixon, over here.

Dixon locates the direction of the voice and moves towards
it.

VOICE (O.S.)
(barely audible)
Dixon, over here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dixon moves a few feet into the undergrowth. He carefully parts the thick leaves and vines and enters a tiny opening. He looks around, seeing nothing.

DIXON
(whispering)
Blain?

Suddenly a HAND appears and covers Dixon's mouth. Dixon gasps as Blain pulls him down to where he is hiding.

BLAIN
(whispering; close)
Sh! Out there. By the big tree...
can you see it?

DIXON
(whispering)
Where? I can't see anything.

Something seems to MOVE in the direction Blain is pointing.

DIXON
(whispering)
I see it!

BLAIN
Been closing in... I'm going to
take the fucker... cover me...

Dixon, still wide-eyed, starts to speak. Blain covers his mouth with his hand. He points to an OUTCROPPING OF ROCKS, covered with VINES.

BLAIN
(continuing)
Take a position over there. I'll
work around towards you. If I
flush him, you nail him...
(a mean look)
... I got a score to settle for
the Bro... so don't fuck it up.

Blain silently disappears into the jungle.

Dixon makes his way toward the rock outcropping, working his way between the rocks and the vines. He takes up a position and scans the jungle before him.

BLAIN

moving quietly, his face intense, determined. He stops and listens.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DIXON/ROCK OUTCROPPING

straining to hear VAGUE SOUNDS coming from the jungle. He reaches out and grabs a VINE and carefully pulls himself forward into a better position.

BACK TO SCENE/BLAIN

moving, searching. He goes into a crouch.

DIXON/ROCK OUTCROPPING

There is MOVEMENT in the undergrowth. He begins to sweat. He moves the safety to fire; reaches out and grabs another vine to pull himself forward. Dixon reacts in shock.

The vine is alive! Before he can move, the Hunter's HAND appears from the vines, grabbing Dixon by the wrist, his skin changing color from green and brown to FLESH.

In the moment before he is killed, Dixon turns and SEES the Hunter's glowing EYES.

A FLASH as the Hunter's other hand, holding the WEAPON, moves with blinding speed.

Dixon's face contorts in pain as the weapon drives deep into his throat. He falls forward into the leaves.

BLAIN

He HEARS the faint disturbance in the leaves. He pauses, turning in Dixon's direction, listening. Hearing no further sound he relaxes, moving on.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Matheny turns from the jungle to Miguel.

MIGUEL
(whispering)
Do you want me to go back?

Matheny shakes his head.

MATHENY
No. Blain can handle it. We
stick together.

BLAIN

He stalks through a narrow corridor of tangled vines and moss, leading to the rock outcropping on the other side, his face alert, showing no signs of fear, his weapon ready.

EXT. VINES AND MOSS - DETAIL - DAY

through the thick tangle of undergrowth, there is MOVEMENT, a slight, undulating distortion, drifting through the hanging vegetation, as if cast by a passing shadow.

BLAIN

as he stops and crouches slightly, listening behind him. Did he hear something? He moves on.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

Behind Blain and to the side of the corridor. The Hunter syncopates his movements precisely with those of Blain.

Blain stops. The Hunter freezes in position.

BACK TO SCENE/BLAIN

He does sense something behind him. He crouches and spins, leveling the weapon.

The corridor behind him is empty, quiet and undisturbed.

Blain studies the trail intently.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

Peering out through the vines. Blain is looking directly at him. Blain turns, moves on, as the Hunter resumes his stalk, timing his movements perfectly with those of Blain.

BACK TO SCENE/BLAIN

As he approaches the rock outcropping. He signals. Receiving no response he moves closer, turning cautiously to right and left.

BLAIN
(whispering)
Dixon... Dixon.

He moves closer to the rocks, eyes probing. Through a gap in the rocks he SEES Dixon's face, staring up at him, eyes frozen wide in death.

Blain spins hard. He stares at the solid wall of undergrowth. He looks from one side of the corridor to the other. Something is out there. Where?

Something in the vines has caught his attention. He stares hard at a section of moss.

EXT. MOSS - DETAIL - DAY

Suddenly the right combination of light and shadow prevail and Blain SEES in an instant, the HUNTER'S EYES materialize and then disappear.

BACK TO SCENE/BLAIN

With a growl and exhalation of breath, charges, bringing the weapon to bear. A short BURST OF GUNFIRE erupts from the barrel.

EXT. THE HUNTER - DAY

in an indiscernible blur of camouflage strikes as:

BLAIN

SCREAMS, his arm instantly severed half-way between his shoulder and elbow. The weapon drops to the ground, the forearm still attached, still FIRING.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The BULLETS thud into the trees above the group's head, as Blain's SCREAM echoes through the jungle.

BLAIN

With his left hand he jerks the razor-sharp combat knife free. SHOUTING INSANELY he slashes out violently at his unseen attacker, striking nothing.

The Hunter grabs his WEAPON from the ground and slashes upward.

Blain's unprotected abdomen, as if hit by a samurai sword, bursts open. Blain CRIES OUT as the huge man hits the ground.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The horrified faces of the group stare into the jungle. They know that Blain is dead.

MATHENY

(shocked)

Blain...

BACK TO SCENE/BLAIN

The Hunter's leg lashes out, the long curving spur hooking deeply into his calf.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The waxen, lifeless face of Blain, blood dripping from his mouth, disappears as he is dragged into the jungle.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The jungle is still deathly SILENT. Matheny rises slowly to his feet, eyes darting, his face ashen with shock.

MATHENY
(disbelief)
Blain... My God, no.

He turns to the others, still huddled on the ground. They look at him, too shocked to move.

MATHENY
(urgently)
That thing's still out there...
we've got to move. Everybody,
up, move it, let's go, let's go.
I'll cover... hurry!

Anna and Miguel quickly drag Ramirez to his feet. He gasps in pain as they hurriedly move him out of the clearing and into the forest, Matheny backing out, weapon at the ready, sweeping the jungle.

They crash through the underbrush at a shambling run, Matheny back-pedaling, trying to keep up, covering their retreat.

EXT. BURNT CLEARING - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

Anna, Ramirez and Miguel burst from the jungle, stopping abruptly. Before them they SEE:

the eerie, forbidding sight of a lightning strike, two or three months old, fifty yards in diameter, the ground charred and blackened, covered with ash, the first traces of vegetation beginning to show. At the center of the clearing, the site of the strike, stands the remains of a HUGE TREE, a burned out hulk, ragged, charred and split, standing defiantly against the ravages of nature.

MIGUEL
Lightning.

Matheny on rear guard emerges from the forest. He pauses, examining the unprotected clearing. He glances up to the jungle canopy, still SILENT. He urges them on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATHENY
(quietly)
Keep moving.

They move on, leaving deep footprints in the thick ash.

EXT. JUNGLE CAMP - DAY

A towering outcropping of rocks, terminating the spine of a steep ascending ridge, spreading outward like two protective arms, merging with the jungle.

Moving into the rocks, Anna and Miguel hastily lower Ramirez to the ground, hiding him. They scramble to join Matheny, taking up defensive positions.

They stare intently, listening to the slowly RETURNING SOUNDS of the jungle. A BIRD flutters back to its nest; a CHAMELEON emerging onto a leaf, directly above Anna's head; MONKEYS begin to forage again, their noisy CHATTERING and SCHREECHING filling the air.

MATHENY
(quietly)
He's gone.

He looks to Miguel who nods in agreement.

RAMIREZ
(in pain)
How could anyone get close enough to a boonirat like Blain, without making a sound, in broad daylight?

Anna has extended her arm, allowing the lizard to crawl onto her, watching the creature.

Miguel moves beside Ramirez, examining his leg.

MIGUEL
The swelling is worse. I think he bleeds inside.

MATHENY
(concerned)
It must be broken. I'm not pulling his boot off to find out. We can splint it but he's not going to be able to walk.
(pause)
One of us has got to get to Sector 3000 and wait for the chopper; fire off some smoke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Anna carefully places the chameleon back on the leaf, which changes color, becoming nearly invisible. Matheny, watching this exchange turns back and scans the jungle, worried.

MATHENY

He's killing us... one by one.
We've got no radio, just one
pistol and two M-16's...

(pause)

... and he's coming back.

ANNA (O.S.)

(quietly)

This place is not right.

Miguel and Ramirez turn quickly to look at her.

RAMIREZ

(stunned)

She speaks English. The bitch's
been holding out on us.

Matheny, ignoring Ramirez's comment, turns slowly and looks at her questioningly, he suspected as much. She returns his look.

MATHENY

What's wrong with it?

She looks up at the trees surrounding them.

ANNA

It's not safe...

MATHENY

Safe from what?

Anna pauses, looking uncertain.

ANNA

I've seen it. It's nearly
invisible. It uses the jungle
as if it were part of it. It
changes color, like the chameleon.

(pause)

It's not human.

Ramirez, through clenched teeth, his breath short.

RAMIREZ

(derisively)

Shit, you're tellin' us we've been
hit by a fuckin' lizard?

(more)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAMIREZ (Cont'd)
(grimacing)
Bullshit!!!

Matheny stares at her, hard.

MATHENY
An animal, a big cat or something?

Miguel shakes his head.

MIGUEL
It's not an animal...

He looks up.

MIGUEL
(continuing)
It comes down from the trees...
It saw our trip wires, at night.
(pause)
It does not see like us.

They all look upward, uneasily. The trees, which once seemed to provide protection from their enemy, have now taken on a sinister aspect.

ANNA
(quietly)
It bleeds... when you fired into
the jungle where the black man
was killed, you must have hit it.
(pause)
It's blood was on the leaves.
I didn't realize what it was then.
I wiped some on my pants... it
glows in the dark...

She touches her pant leg, the stain is faded but still there.

MIGUEL
I heard it scream in pain, in the
night.

Anna nods in agreement. She heard it too. Matheny looks at Anna and Miguel.

MATHENY
If it bleeds, we can kill it.

He looks up at the trees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATHENY
(continuing)
Open space, defensive position...
make him play our rules.

He looks out into the distance, thinking. He turns to them.

MATHENY
(continuing)
The lightning strike.

EXT. BURNT CLEARING - DAY

In the gathering dusk, a pile of charred logs and grotesque trees in the center look like an ISLAND FORTRESS, the ash covered ground surrounding it almost like a moat. A light scrub and leaf covered strip leads to the 'island', like a causeway leading to safety.

Matheny's voice cries out.

MATHENY
HEAVE!

Matheny, Anna and Miguel pull on a vine, attached to a tree. The tree bends willingly at first, Ramirez taking up the slack, but soon it resists and the three strain and yank on the vine like a tug-of-war rope, Ramirez taking up the slack, inches at a time.

MATHENY
(straining)
Come on, a little more; a little
more...

With a final effort they pull the treetop a foot nearer, a gigantic, 40 foot bow, arcing towards the ground.

MATHENY
(continuing)
... tie it off!!

Ramirez adds another wrap to the tree and then quickly ties off the vine.

They all rest. They look down at their feet to SEE a NET, woven of vines, still covered with leaves.

RAMIREZ
Think he'll see it?

MIGUEL
No wires this time.

EXT. MATHENY AND MIGUEL - NIGHT (MAGIC HOUR)

crouch in the dense foliage near the bent, hardwood sapling, finishing a delicately balanced TREADLE SPRING TRIGGER. Matheny sets the trigger bar against the restraining stick, while Miguel applies tension on the line.

Matheny steps lightly on the treadle, it depresses, releasing the trigger stick with a SNAP. Satisfied with the test, they attach the vine holding the tree in tension to the trigger.

MIGUEL

That's it.

Matheny releases the main vine, now hooked to the net, the full force of its straining tension brought to bear on the framework of the trigger.

The men slowly step back as the vine creaks and vibrates with tension. The vine holds.

Carefully they finish the job by camouflaging the net. When finished the ground looks as if nothing has disturbed it. Matheny surveys the area, SEEING Anna and Ramirez amongst the logs at the base of the split tree, surrounded by the clear area of ash.

MATHENY

We've got him. If he crosses the clearing, we'll see him.

EXT. 'ISLAND' FORTRESS - NIGHT

The four sit huddled in the darkness, barely illuminated by the waxing moon, now nearly full.

Matheny is consulting the MAP with a RED PEN LIGHT, cupped in his hand. He clicks off the light and folds the map. He looks at Ramirez, sweating and feverish, his leg propped up. Obviously his condition has grown worse.

MATHENY

We're probably six hours away from our vector at 3000, maybe less.

(to Miguel)

Could you find your way there at night?

Miguel ponders this a moment. He stands and starts to gather his equipment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MIGUEL

I can try. The crossing is dangerous and will have to be made at dawn. Do you need my weapon?

Matheny hands Miguel the MAP and a FLARE GUN.

MATHENY

He's never hit at night, but I can't take that chance. Just be at that ridge by morning. There should be a recon ship. Our position is marked. We'll wait here.

MIGUEL

And if he comes?

MATHENY

We take him.

Miguel silently nods and picks up his pack and weapon. He puts the flare gun and map into a fatigue pocket and moves to the edge of the 'island'. He turns back to look at Matheny, their eyes meeting for a moment before he turns and disappears into the night.

EXT. 'ISLAND' FORTRESS - NIGHT

Ramirez is slumped over, asleep, his M-16 across his chest. His ankle seems enormously swollen. His fatigues are sweat-soaked and rivulets of perspiration run through his camouflage face paint. He utters a low, feverish MOAN and begins to toss, restlessly.

Nearby, Matheny, his face dimly lit by the moonlight, sits, wedged into a crevice between two logs, nearly invisible in the darkness.

Ramirez moans again, louder. Matheny moves to his side.

RAMIREZ

(strained)

Time for my watch, L.T.?

Matheny plays off the macho style of his good friend.

MATHENY

(softly)

No way, pancho. You stay down. We're going to need your strength if this mother comes tomorrow. It ain't gonna be easy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAMIREZ
We'll make it.

MATHENY
(warmly)
We'll make it.

EXT. MIGUEL - NIGHT

carefully picks his way through a huge grove of mangrove-like trees, their root systems partially exposed and shrouded in GROUND FOG, looking like weird, gnarled creatures, rising up from the earth.

He kneels beside a tree, checking his compass, his face illuminated by the brilliant light of the moon. The FOG moves through the foliage, shimmering and glowing, phosphorescent, wraith-like.

Miguel's fingers go to the TALISMAN around his neck, touching the leather pouch before he pushes on through the trees, the ground fog closing in around him.

EXT. 'ISLAND' FORTRESS - NIGHT (LATER)

The moon is at its apex, flooding the jungle with light. While Ramirez fitfully sleeps, Matheny stands guard, staring into the darkness. The jungle is quiet except for the MUFFLED ROAR of the RIVER, far below.

Anna awakens, looking around her, anxiously. She SEES Ramirez, sleeping beside her, Matheny's PISTOL in his lap. Looking up she sees Matheny, standing guard, his back to her.

Carefully, not disturbing him, she removes the pistol from Ramirez's lap, and quietly moves towards Matheny.

Suddenly Matheny is aware that Anna is beside him. He looks down, SEEING the pistol in her hand. She looks at him, smiles, putting the gun down before her, ready for use if they are attacked.

ANNA
Funny, isn't it... we're meant
to be killing each other.

Matheny turns to her, nodding in agreement.

MATHENY
If we beat this thing tomorrow...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNA

When we beat this thing.

He studies the jungle, quietly.

MATHENY

(continuing)

Can you find your way back?

She looks at him quizically, then nods.

ANNA

Yes, but how will you explain that away?

MATHENY

(smiles)

How will we explain any of this?

ANNA

(smiles)

It won't be easy... imagine the reports... in triplicate.

Matheny turns to her.

MATHENY

What's your name?

ANNA

Anna.

After a long silence she places her hand on top of his. For an instant, the great struggle, the enormous power play seems like a childish squabble.

MATHENY

(warmly)

We'll be lucky, Anna, if they don't lock us up.

Ramirez wakes with a start. He gasps, sweating. Matheny goes to his side, reaching out to feel his feverish face. Removing his canteen he wets a FOLDED DRESSING, cooling the brow and neck of his friend. Putting his arm around him he helps him to sit up, giving him a drink from the canteen.

RAMIREZ

(half-sleep)

I was dreamin' I was being hunted by the vattos... on the streets of East L.A... Jesus, what a nightmare.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matheny stares intently at Ramirez's face.

MATHENY

You were being hunted?

Ramirez nods. Matheny turns away, thinking.

MATHENY

(to Anna)

Why didn't it take you when it
took Dillon? You were right
beside him.

ANNA

(assuredly)

I was unarmed... too easy.

Matheny nods, pondering this.

MATHENY

He has to give us our chance
before he kills us. We're being
hunted. For sport.

RAMIREZ

(remembering)

Those bodies, hanging in the
trees... what the fuck on earth
could be doing this?

Matheny ponders this, also remembering.

ANNA

(wryly)

And if you throw away your
weapons...? Are you safe then?

Matheny looks at her.

MATHENY

Perhaps...

He glances down at his M-16 and then looks away to the
jungle for a long while.

MATHENY

(accepting the
challenge)

... But I'll be damned if I will.

EXT. 'ISLAND' FORTRESS - DAY (DAWN)

Light from the rising sun bursts through openings in the trees, reflecting off the ground fog, casting an ETHEREAL GLOW over the jungle.

Morning passes. The fog lifts as the heat from the sun creeps into the jungle. Insects swarm and are fed upon by birds and other predators.

MATHENY

watches the jungle with sleep-filled eyes, sweat glistening on his face, seemingly hypnotized by the BUZZING din around him. He nods, catches himself, nods again.

Suddenly he lifts his head. Like a shadow, an EERIE SILENCE moves over the jungle. He scans the forest, looking for movement, listening for a sound.

From high in the trees, a MOMENTARY RUSTLING. Matheny strains to hear. Another movement. He gently shakes Anna and then Ramirez, who wakes with a start. Motioning for silence, Matheny points to the jungle.

MATHENY

(whispering)

Something... in the trees.

Ramirez leans forward, painfully adjusting his leg, bringing his pistol to bear.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

descends through the branches of a tree, his feet and hands gripping the limbs with tremendous strength, moving with the grace and stealth of a big cat.

Moving through the differing PATTERNS and COLORS of foliage, the Hunter appears to be nearly invisible, his body changing instantly to match his surroundings, a vague OUTLINE rippling through leaves and vines.

MATHENY

His eyes are frozen, intense, sweat trickling down his face. He moves his finger closer to the trigger on his M-16.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

moves through the undergrowth toward the blackened clearing, skirting the ash covered ground, keeping to the treeline. His feet step gently through the forest floor, sliding under dead leaves, disturbing nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATHENY, ANNA AND RAMIREZ

Ramirez sights down the barrel of the pistol, moving across the tree line.

RAMIREZ

I don't see any movement.

Matheny raises his binoculars and sweeps the forest wall. He lowers the glasses.

RAMIREZ

(continuing)

Can you get a fix on him?

MATHENY

No, somewhere on the ground now.
I know it, I can feel him.

RAMIREZ

Let's open up, good chance for
a hit.

MATHENY

No, let him come in. Closer.
We've got to be sure.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

closing in, nearing the causeway leading to the 'island.' He looks directly at the net and treadle-spring trap, but as they are of organic material, he sees no distinction between the trap and the jungle.

He looks up at the 'island' fortress, the FACES AND WEAPONS standing out in glowing relief.

He grows closer, his movements slowing. Stalking.

MATHENY, ANNA AND RAMIREZ

Ramirez's eyes move quickly towards Matheny, who slowly shakes his head.

MATHENY

Nothing.

Matheny stares into the DARK PASSAGEWAY of the jungle causeway, where the trap is hidden.

EXT. HUNTER'S EYE - DETAIL - DAY

Yellow and glowing, analyzing the jungle before him.

EXT. HUNTER'S FOOT - DAY

descending slowly, stepping between a square of the TREADLE, missing the sticks completely.

Step by step he places his feet through two more grids of the framework. He raises a foot, earth clinging to the angular toes and spur, freezes and then lowers it.

A toe touches one of the sticks of the FRAMEWORK, depressing it.

EXT. TREADLE SPRING TRIGGER - DAY

Beneath the leaves the heavy stake and bow trigger moves, a fraction of an inch from releasing.

EXT. HUNTER'S FOOT - DAY

freezes, the toe touching the framework lifting, curling inward, the rear spur retracting up as the foot swings forward and descends through another square.

One foot clears the framework, touching solid ground. The other follows, clears and touches the ground. He's through, but:

As his foot presses into the earth, the PREHENSILE SPUR swings down, catching the edge of the treadle, depressing it.

EXT. TREADLE SPRING TRIGGER - DAY

With a resounding SWISH and SNAP, explodes off the floor of the jungle in a hail of leaves and sticks, the tree groaning, springing upward as terrified BIRDS and SCREAMING MONKEYS race through the trees.

MATHENY, ANNA AND RAMIREZ

as they see the NET rocket into the sky, a large struggling bulge trapped within, leaves and debris raining down. As a long, unearthly TRILLING SCREAM ECHOES through the jungle, something within the net turns, momentarily, bright crimson.

The net disappears into the dense, protective canopy of trees.

MATHENY
(shouting)
Let's go!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matheny is up and running at full speed, his M-16 ready. Ramirez follows, stumbles and falls but struggles to his feet, helped along by Anna.

MATHENY

skirting around the net, taking up a position on the other side, bringing his weapon to his shoulder.

EXT. THE NET - DAY

swings in a slowly diminishing pendular arc, a large pouch of interwoven vegetation. Nothing discernible can be seen inside the net.

RAMIREZ AND ANNA

move into position on the other side of the net.

RAMIREZ

Can you see it?

MATHENY

Something in there. Waste it!

An instant before they FIRE, the entire net EXPLODES into a flurry of leaves, twigs, vines, and dirt, the bullets slicing into the remnants of the net as it hurdles skyward, relieved of its weight.

Ramirez fires the pistol into the net, six shots in rapid order, as Anna dives to the ground.

Suddenly, he SEES the Hunter's face, rearing up a foot away, still in camouflage, a montage of organic textures and colors, his yellow eyes burning. The Hunter snarls and strikes, his weapon flashing.

Matheny SEES Ramirez hurtling backwards from the impact of the blow, his neck gushing blood, his pistol flying through the air, landing in front of Anna, lying on the ground.

Matheny desperately spins looking for his target, his M-16 already firing, the bullets arcing towards the Hunter in a deadly barrage.

In a blur the Hunter hurls his weapon which slices through the wooden stock of the rifle, SPARKS FLYING as it severs the trigger guard and steel breech.

The M-16 flies out of Matheny's hands as the Hunter's weapon cuts deeply into his left shoulder, laying open the flesh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The weapon deflects upward, embedding itself deep into the trunk of a tree. The M-16 hits the ground, where it lies broken in half, useless.

Matheny hits the ground and is rolling.

Anna, dives for the pistol, just out of reach.

The Hunter, with unearthly speed, races to the tree to recover his weapon.

Anna grabs the pistol and begins to FIRE as Matheny scrambles to his feet. BULLETS rip into the tree as the Hunter retrieves his weapon, feinting to the side and then attacking.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

In a sidelong rush, focused on Anna as she fires, tracer-like BULLETS whizzing past, releases the weapon which arcs towards her with blinding speed.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

SEEING the Hunter's weapon as it strikes Anna, driving her to the ground with a spray of blood, SCREAMING.

MATHENY
(shouting)
ANNA!!!

Matheny SEES the broken M-16 lying useless on the ground, the lifeless form of Anna, the blurr of the Hunter, leaping for his weapon.

In an instant, Matheny is running for his life.

MATHENY

crashes headlong through the jungle. He leaps a fallen log, stumbles, struggles to his feet, running on pure adrenalin, his shoulder pulsing blood, his eyes filled with terror.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV -DAY

A quick glance at Ramirez, lying dead and BLACK on the ground. In a rush he looms over Anna, her life aura rapidly dissipating, her face turning BLACK in his vision.

He grabs his weapon and spins, SEEING Matheny's diminishing HEAT TRAIL leading into the jungle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As if catapulted, the Hunter moves forward at an incredible speed, crashing through the jungle, moving across the ground.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

Behind him he can hear the Hunter in pursuit, closing.

Matheny spins to look behind him, a wild desperate look on his face; he turns back, ducks an overhanging limb and lunges on.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV OF MATHENY - DAY

closing rapidly... another few yards...

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

runs like a madman, the SOUND of the Hunter's FOOTSTEPS close behind.. He's losing ground. He knows he's going to die.

Matheny SHOUTS. Suddenly the ground before him COLLAPSES and he disappears from sight.

EXT. CANYON WALL - DAY

In a shower of leaves, flailing arms and legs, Matheny crashes through the trees at the canyon's edge, free falling into space.

With a sickening IMPACT, he hits the branches of the first trees lining the canyon and falls, a hundred feet, through one canopy after another, desperately grabbing for limbs and branches to break his fall.

He hits the bottom branches of the last line of trees, impacting crosschest on a large BRANCH, knocking his wind out.

Semi-conscious, he hangs momentarily before he slides off, fingers digging into the bark, falling another ten feet into the swiftly moving

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Weighted down by his boots and clothing, Matheny struggles to stay afloat. Gasping for air he ducks underwater, untying one of his boots. He surfaces, fills his lungs and dives again, releasing the other boot. He surfaces, strips off his shirt and begins to swim towards shore, stroking with one arm.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

as he nears the edge of the precipice from which Matheny has fallen. The Hunter in close pursuit does not hesitate but LAUNCHES himself off the cliff in a spectacular LEAP, streaking downward towards the tops of the trees that grow out from the canyon wall.

The Hunter tears through the canopy of the first tree, the branches and leaves rushing past in a KALEIDOSCOPIC BLUR.

The Hunter bounds off of one branch after another, moving through the trees as an expert skier might negotiate a series of downhill gates.

The Hunter leaps free of one tree, bounds across twenty feet of open space to a large branch of a huge tree, affording a good view of the river below. He impacts the branch, sticking to it like glue, his taloned feet digging deep while his powerful legs bend to absorb the shock of the landing. From his vantage point, looking down at the widening, slowing expanse of river, Matheny is nowhere to be seen.

EXT. MATHENY - DAY

is swept into a still FASTER CURRENT and is carried helplessly downstream. Boiling WHITEWATER appears. Out of control he is swept through a series of rapids, pulling him further and further downstream until he is finally sucked into the undertow and hurled over the top of a six foot falls, driven deep underwater by the pounding force of the water.

EXT. POOL AT BASE OF FALLS - DAY

There is no sign of Matheny. Precious seconds pass. Slowly, looking like a drowned rat, he surfaces, taking a feeble breath. He is nearly finished, his energy sapped. But the water is calm and a few strokes are enough to carry him near the shore. His feet hit bottom.

He tries to stand but pitches headfirst into the thick MUD SLURRY at the river bank. With his last ounce of strength, he crawls, panting and gasping into a sheltered MUD OVERHANG, collapsing beside the exposed ROOT-SYSTEM OF A DEAD TREE, his body completely covered in thick, gray MUD.

Nearly unconscious, he raises his head and looks to the opposite side of the river, scanning the bank. There is no sign of the Hunter. He collapses in relief. He's escaped.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly, the Hunter impacts the water, throwing up a huge SPLASH. He stands up in the waist deep water. As the water streams off of his body, his chameleon effect rapidly changes, struggling to match the shifting color patterns of the shimmering water.

His glaring yellow orbs stare directly at the spot where Matheny lies helplessly trapped.

The Hunter surges forward, relentlessly closing in on his prey.

MATHENY

is frozen in terror, paralyzed with fear, his eyes locked onto the incredible creature that is about to kill him.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

closing rapidly, another ten feet. He leaves the water and walks through the mud, stopping, towering over Matheny.

EXT. MATHENY'S POV - DAY

as the Hunter's feet surge through the mud and stop, three feet away.

EXT. MATHENY - DAY

realizing his life is about to end, closes his eyes, awaiting the Hunter's killing blow.

EXT. HUNTER'S EYES - DAY

The fierce yellow orbs look downward.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

looking directly at Matheny, EXCEPT HE CAN'T SEE HIM.

He can clearly see the EXPOSED ROOT-SYSTEM, but because of the heavy mud blocking Matheny's body heat, Matheny registers in the Hunter's vision as merely an indistinct lump of clay, unrecognizable to the Hunter as a human being.

He scans the bank, searching, looking for heat sources, focusing on a nearby log, detecting the telltale trace of a living HEAT SOURCE. He moves forward.

EXT. ROTTED LOG - DAY

As the Hunter rips it apart a SMALL ANIMAL breaks cover and

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

scurries into the undergrowth, leaving a trail of HEAT. The Hunter watches the animal disappear. He looks back to where Matheny lies in the mud. He still can't see him. He turns away, sounding a questioning TRILL several times.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

disbelieving that he's still alive, opens one eye, SEEING the Hunter's feet move away, his prehensile spurs dragging in the mud. He rounds a bend and disappears, heading for the undergrowth.

Astonished, he tries to raise up on his hands but a sudden jabbing pain in his shoulder causes him to collapse, falling onto his side, unconscious in the mud.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

as a HUEY ATTACK HELICOPTER breaks over the top of the ridge, diving forward, moving down the canyon. The chopper flares up into a holding pattern.

In the open doorway, Miguel searches desperately for some sign of life, scanning the river. At his side, another SOLDIER searches the top of the canyon with binoculars. In the b.g., Colonel Philips looks on, tense and anxious. He looks at his watch, turns into the cockpit, gesticulating urgently several times.

The helicopter noses down, accelerating and disappears over the top of the canyon.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV OF THE HELICOPTER - DAY

appearing like a huge dragonfly, surrounded in a comet-like envelope of swirling eddies of heated air, the turbine's center glowing like a forge, its deep pulsing THROB sounding like a magnificent mechanical symphony. The Hunter watches as the incredibly beautiful visage rolls over and streaks away, leaving a widening swath of heat contrails in its wake.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

lies unconscious in the mud, the SOUND of the helicopter THRUMPING into the distance.

EXT. THE CANYON - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

as the fading light departs, the evening SOUNDS of the jungle rise, finding Matheny, still lying unconscious.

Struggling up through the levels of consciousness, his face twitches and jerks. He MOANS and then SCREAMS as RAPID-FIRE IMPRESSIONS flash through his mind, the SOUND of the SCREAM carrying over these impressions. It is the scream of a man falling down a cliff and is the only sound we hear until Matheny hits the water.

IMPRESSIONS - EXT. MONTAGE - DAY

- A) Matheny bursts over the cliff; the river rushing upwards.
- B) The Hunter charges from the brush.
- C) The Hunter hurls his weapon.
- D) Matheny continues through the void, falling.
- E) Ramirez hit by the weapon, eyes frozen in terror.
- F) Anna, screams, firing the pistol.
- G) Matheny falling, falling; crashing through the trees.
- H) Matheny running; the Hunter strikes him down.
- I) Matheny still falling; hits the water.

The SOUND of Matheny hitting the water explodes him back into consciousness.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

He GASPS, as his eyes bolt open in stark terror. As if the Hunter were attacking, Matheny rolls to his feet and runs, slogging through the THICK MUD, stumbling, lunging forward, gasping for breath.

EXT. POOL AND WATERFALL - NIGHT (DUSK)

An EXPLOSION OF GREEN erupts with a SCREAM from the undergrowth and hurtles directly at Matheny. He cries out in panic.

MATHENY

No!!!!

The startled PARROT, lifts and pulls, barely missing Matheny's head. Matheny spins and staggers backwards into the pool, swinging blindly in defense.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He loses his balance and falls hard onto his back in the shallow water.

Scuttling, crab-like into the chest deep water, Matheny backs into the moss-covered wall by the waterfall, cowering in fear.

As the water settles, he SEES the image of himself, reflected in the pool; the face of a MADMAN, bruised and bleeding, his hair and face covered in THICK CLAY. He stares, mesmerized at the image.

He takes a deep, painful breath, shuddering in exhaustion.

MATHENY

(low)

Why didn't you kill me? You could have just...

He smashes his arm into the water, shattering his reflection into a million pieces. He lifts his arm from the water, mesmerized by the slurry of clay running from his skin. With the fingers of his other hand he clears an area of flesh. He stares at it, a wave of realization rushing through his mind.

He looks up, his eyes unfocused, looking into the distance, recalling Miguel's words.

MATHENY

... 'He sees differently from us.'

He looks back at the water, to the image of his face slowly reconstructing itself, still covered in mud.

MATHENY

You couldn't see me through the mud, you bastard. You were looking at me, and you couldn't see me.

(he laughs at the irony;
yells)

Right there in front of you and you couldn't see me!!

He looks up, out into the night, a man slightly crazed, brought to the threshold of certain death, now realizing that fate has given him a fighting chance.

EXT. CLAY BANK - NIGHT

Using his POCKET KNIFE he carves MAGNESIUM SHAVINGS from a fire block into a pile of KINDLING. He removes a match from his WATERPROOF CASE, also containing a coil of PIANO WIRE, GREEN TAPE and MEDICAL SUPPLIES. He lights the shavings which burn with a brilliant white light. Matheny shelters the fire with a banana leaf until the flame dies down. He feeds the fire with more kindling, fanning it with a leaf.

MATHENY - BOW AND ARROW MONTAGE - NIGHT (LATER)

He chars a three foot section of HARDWOOD SAPLING in the GLOWING EMBERS of the fire.

Holding the sapling between his feet and shoulder, he scrapes the char from the seasoned wood.

He bends the bow and attaches a long piece of PIANO WIRE to one end, carefully wrapping it for strength.

Using strips of green tape, he covers the sides of the wire where the nock of the arrow will fit.

MATHENY

Just one chance, that's all.

In the glowing coals he chars the ends of the arrows, sharpened into a series of barbs, rubbing them to a polished hardness against a smooth stone.

He attaches split quilled FEATHERS with fishing line. When finished he places the arrow on the ground next to three other identical arrows.

EXT. CLAY BANK - NIGHT

A sharpened STICK lies next to a pile of dirt-covered ROOTS.

Matheny is pounding a peeled root between two stones. He pauses to drool saliva into the pulpy mass.

He scrapes the milky substance from the flat stone onto a BANANA LEAF, mixing it with a sticky SAP, holding it over the coals until the mixture steams.

Matheny coats the arrow tips with the sticky poison, holding them over the coals until the sap bubbles and smokes. He spins the arrows in his hands, blowing on the tips to cool and harden the mixture.

EXT. RIVER'S EDGE - NIGHT

Matheny appears, he has covered his entire body with a variety of CLAYS and OCHERS, creating a mottled, EARTHEN CAMOUFLAGE pattern.

Selecting an arrow he draws back on the bowstring of the powerful pigmy-like bow. Grimacing, he takes aim. The arrow releases with a quiet SNAP, wobbling but accurate, embedding itself several inches into the clay riverbank.

A tiny weapon, but deadly.

He raises the bow to the moon, stretching his wound. From the depths of his soul, a SOUND emerges; primitive and visceral, as if from an animal in pain.

He throws back his head and SHOUTS.

EXT. CANYON RIM - NIGHT

A hundred feet below, Matheny stands on the shimmering riverbank, bathed in moonlight; a timeless, prehistoric sight, his long and WAILING CRY, ECHOING endlessly through the canyon.

EXT. HUNTER'S CAMP - NIGHT

Illuminated by the PALE BLUE LIGHT of the open doorway. The drying racks covered with human skins stand in the f.g., ghostly illuminated by fire and moonlight.

The Hunter's head, in three-quarter profile, his eyes gleaming, rears into view, looking up at the sky, as if he has heard Matheny's cry.

Responding with a low HISS, he turns back, raising in one hand his weapon, in the other a U-shaped SHARPENING DEVICE holding the BLUE and GREEN stones on either side. As he passes the weapon through the device, the stones FLASH into life, a deep, HARMONIC HUM emitted as the blade glows with energy, growing hotter, hotter and HOTTER with each stroke.

EXT. MATHENY - NIGHT

He kneels, studying the Hunter's FOOTPRINTS, the distinctive three-toed impression and narrow furrow left by its trailing spur. He looks up, following their direction down the riverbank.

MATHENY

You... or me?

EXT. HUNTER - NIGHT

Draws the blade now WHITE HOT through the device for the last stroke. He lifts it, testing its balance, moving it gracefully, almost ritualistically. It could be an art object, backlit by the moon.

Suddenly, in the instant before the Hunter's hand moves, the edge of the weapon GLOWS, as if energized. He hurls the weapon, which STREAKS across the clearing with blinding speed, cutting through two BANANA STALKS before embedding itself with a loud THUNK into the bark of a tree

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Matheny follows the tracks until they end at a pile of river boulders. He follows them across the river. At the center is an eight foot gap, the water dropping at tremendous force, into a boiling pool of WHITEWATER. There is no other way across.

Holding the bow and arrows in his left hand, he makes a running jump, landing just short of the top. With his right arm he struggles for balance, jamming his fingers into a fissure. Slowly he pulls himself to the top of the boulder. He rests, looking back at the roaring waterfall.

EXT. RIVERBANK - OTHER SIDE - NIGHT

Matheny finds the SLASH MARK left by the Hunter's foot at the base of a monkeypod tree. He climbs into the lower branches, finding the slash mark at regular intervals. He looks up into the maze of branches and leaves, backlit by the moon. He begins to climb.

EXT. CANYON WALL - NIGHT

The tiny figure of a man carrying bow and arrows in perfect silhouette, working his way upward through the labyrinth of branches, a living ladder leading to the canyon rim.

EXT. TREES - CANYON WALL - NIGHT

Using his legs, knees, back and right arm for leverage, Matheny forces his path among the maze of tree limbs, slowly upward.

He pauses on a main branch, squats and leans into the crotch of the tree, catching his breath. He grasps a limb above him, painfully pulling himself upright, discovering another of the Hunter's slash marks. He continues to climb.

EXT. CLEARING - NEAR CANYON - NIGHT (PRE-DAWN)

Matheny, entering the clearing, squats, studying a single footprint of the Hunter, hidden beneath the leaves. He looks up suddenly, anxiously, the SOUNDS of the jungle changing, growing quiet.

An OWL glides across his view and dives into the tall grass in front of him. The owl lifts off, a RODENT between its talons. The sounds of the jungle return, building towards the dawn chorus.

He extends his right arm, aligned with the track's direction, spreading his first two fingers into a 'V', and sights between them. A narrow GAP in the tree line appears between his fingers; the logical place for someone to enter the trees after crossing the open space.

He looks up to the tree line and beyond, to a HIGH PROMONTORY of the ridgeline, lit by the pre-dawn light, jagged and foreboding, covered in dark, dense foliage; appearing as an island, detached and floating in the mist.

MATHENY

Good position... see the valley
for twenty clicks.

(pause)

You're up there.

Matheny continues across the clearing, finding another of the Hunter's footprints closer to the gap between the two large trees, the gateway to the Hunter's lair.

He examines the area, uncomfortably, sensing danger, searching the ground before him. He can find no further trace of the Hunter's passages.

He moves back, examining the bark of several trees. Pulling back a layer of creepers on a massive trunk, he finds what he is looking for:

the SLASH MARK of the Hunter's spur, just above it, another, leading upward in to the canopy.

He looks back at the gap.

MATHENY

Not bad... not bad. You led me
here, but you didn't go through.

He moves forward, cautiously. Several feet into the passageway, a large, intricate SPIDERWEB, four feet across, is suspended between the trees at chest level. DEWDROPS on the symmetrical maze, glitter in the increasing light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matheny cautiously approaches the web; blows gently against the strands, sending a cascade of pearlescent dewdrops into the darkness.

He kneels, extending his bow, gently turning over the leaves, searching for a snare or trip wire. He rises, satisfied, and raises his arm to sweep away the web.

With a sharp intake of breath, he halts, inches from the web. Where he has blown the dew from the net, dewdrops are colliding, condensing with one another, running off the web, exposing not silken threads, but a hard and shiny network of HAIR-FINE WIRE.

A trap.

Marveling at the facsimile, he gently draws the blade of his pocket knife across several strands of the web. A metallic REVERBERATION is HEARD, barely audible, like a miniature stringed instrument.

He retreats, picking up a hefty BRANCH from the ground. He swings the log back and forth, building momentum, clenching his teeth in pain. With a muffled grunt, he releases the log, sending it end over end into the gap.

EXT. THE WEB - NIGHT

The log hurtles through space, impacting the strands. A metallic SNAP is HEARD; a high-pitched WHINE and the log is violently severed, the pieces flying in opposite directions with great speed.

MATHENY

rises and approaches the opening. In place of the net, two nearly invisible VERTICAL WIRES, anchored to the ground and the trees above, quiver at high speed, under great tension.

Matheny picks up a STICK and touches one of the wires. In an instant, it cuts through the wood, continuing to vibrate.

A look of great puzzlement and awe passes over his face.

MATHENY

Who the hell are you?

He cautiously skirts the still quivering wires and disappears into the forest.

EXT. COULEE - DAY (DAWN)

A heavy mist has settled in. Matheny is crouched low in the underbrush where the trees have given way to a steep-walled PROMONTORY, protected by a dense thicket of thorns and underbrush. Midpoint, the coulee is choked with a LOGJAM of gigantic trees, overgrown with vines and moss.

Matheny looks to the ground. Near his right foot is the Hunter's print, leading in the direction of the promontory. He smiles, ready for the challenge.

He moves quietly back into the underbrush.

EXT. HOLLOW - NEAR COULEE - DAY

at the high edge of which, Matheny prepares a trap. Pushing with his legs and right arm, he positions a large TREE STUMP, securing it with a stone attached to a long vine.

Next, he selects a waist level, RADICAL BRANCH of a stout young tree. Gathering his strength, he bends the branch back into a tight, curled arch. Attached to the branch is a LOOPED VINE. An anchor VINE, tied in a slip knot to the ground is draped across a banana leaf.

Straining with his right arm, he grabs the anchor vine, securing the two loops with a SHORT STICK. He eases off the branch; the vines go taut, holding.

Finally he secures to the branch a section of CANE, sharpened to a wicked point.

Matheny crawls beneath the bent limb, hiding in the underbrush, his mud covered camouflage rendering him nearly invisible. He nocks an arrow, placing the others before him, and waits.

The morning spreads its rosy fingers into the jungle, pulling back the veil of night. Matheny smiles, he knows the Hunter will soon be on his way.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

The Hunter traverses the thick maze of deadly, three inch thorns, following a narrow, winding passageway he has cut with his weapon.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - JUNGLE - DAY

Emerging from the thicket, the Hunter swings into the nearby tree line, moving to the uppermost branches. He scans along the coulee and into the adjoining jungle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Using his heel spurs to dig into the soft bark, the Hunter travels silently from tree to tree, approaching the hollow where

MATHENY

lies in hiding. His eyes shift, trance-like from one area of the jungle to another. His senses are alert; his nerves on a wire edge.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

moving from tree to tree, smoothly, almost silently. He sees nothing below him of concern, merely the scurrying HEAT-SHAPES of MONKEYS and BIRDS.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

senses something above in the trees, approaching. He stares, trying to focus on the source.

Suddenly, a SILENCE, like a wave of fear, sweeps through the jungle. Birds STOP their SINGING, monkeys, their CHATTERING CRIES. Only the FAINT, dwindling BUZZING of insects can be HEARD.

The silence grows, ominous and horrible. Matheny's eyes widen in primitive terror and anticipation.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

also sensing something, slows his movements and freezes, midway between two branches, stepping from one, reaching for another; his body half suspended in space, in perfect camouflage, like a tiger in a forest of bamboo.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

His eyes probe the jungle, seeking the telltale outlines of heat. He sees nothing. Still, he is cautious.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

He begins to move, flowing with the fluidity of a snake, making no sound, disturbing nothing.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATHENY

frozen, unblinking, unbreathing. His right arm holding taut the vine securing the log. He closes his eyes, his lips moving soundlessly.

He yanks on the vine, freeing the log, which CRASHES into the hollow. Matheny CRIES OUT, as if in pain.

MATHENY

Ahhhhheeeaaa!!!!!!!

The log bounds into the hollow, burying itself in the vegetation, leaving bushes and leaves bobbing and swinging.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

draws closer to the source of the sound, going lower in the trees towards the ground.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

pulls back on the arrow, an inch at a time, eyes searching the trees for movement.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

remains motionless in the trees overlooking the hollow. His eyes move across the hiding place of Matheny, searching.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

can see no distinction between the ground and Matheny's body. As if in slow-motion, he flows closer to the ground.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

sits motionless against the dirt, his bow drawn to full arch, his wounded shoulder slightly trembling.

A MOSQUITO lands on his cheek, settles and inserts his proboscis. It begins to pump, filling its abdomen with blood. Satiated, the mosquito flies on.

His shoulder is trembling more, the BLOOD beginning to seep through the bandage.

MATHENY

(mouthing the words)

Come on... come on...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He locates a spot. He adjusts the arrow.

Looking up he SEES the Hunter's EYES, glowing in the trees.

MATHENY

Now...

He releases the arrow.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY (OVERHEAD)

The arrow flies into the trees, lodging into a BRANCH, just missing the Hunter's head. In a blur, the Hunter's arm streaks downward, a dull flash of light leaving his fingers.

MATHENY

rolls violently to his right.

EXT. THE WEAPON - DAY

blazes across the opening, embedding itself in the dirt, inches from Matheny's head. Matheny frantically lunges for the SLIPKNOT securing the spring-spear. But the bow interferes; he cannot release the knot without dropping the precious weapon.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

springs from the trees, hurtling directly at Matheny.

EXT. HUNTER - DAY

lands on the bank, recovers his weapon and in a single, horrifying movement, prepares to strike.

MATHENY

With a SCREAM of pain, wrenches his crippled arm forward, tearing open the deep shoulder wound. He grabs the vine and yanks, releasing the branch as the Hunter's killing stroke drives homeward.

The branch slams into the Hunter's chest, the spear point missing by an inch, hurling him backwards, into the hollow.

MATHENY

(in fear)

Shit...!!!

In a flash, Matheny is up and running, clutching his bows and arrows.

EXT. COULEE - DAY

At a dead run, Matheny leaps the rim of the coulee, crashing through the brush, rolling down the soft dirt embankment. He jumps to his feet and runs, lunging and leaping down the bank like an adrenalin crazed animal. He reaches the bottom and races towards the towering LOGJAM, looming up before him.

EXT. LOGJAM - DAY

Huge, HARDWOOD LOGS in a deadlocked jumble, 150 feet deep, overgrown with moss and vines.

Between the rotting carcasses of wood are passageways, dripping with water, illuminated by tiny shafts of light, breaking through from above.

Matheny, his figure dwarfed against the massive pyramid, runs out onto a GIGANTIC HARDWOOD, leading like a bridge into the upper levels of the jam. Crouching, he turns and quickly scans the bank and tree line, his breath drawn sharply through his bared teeth. No sign or sound of the Hunter.

He continues across the log, ducking beneath a pair of crisscrossed trees, forming a cave-like entrance into the interior of the structure.

INT. LOGJAM - ENTRANCE WAY - DAY

Matheny moves cautiously along the slime-covered surface of the log. He slips, regains his footing, digging his toes into the rotting wood for support.

Through openings in the log on either side, he can follow the dust-filled shafts of light, down a hundred feet, illuminating a rat's maze of passageways, choked with broken limbs and vines.

The jam is alive with the SOUND OF DRIPPING WATER, the occasional GROANING of a rotting timber, and deep within, the distant SOUND OF A RIVER, rushing over boulders and logs.

Matheny locates an ALCOVE, formed by an upright timber to one side of the huge log, hidden from view by a mass of vines and moss. A perfect place for an ambush.

Matheny crouches and fits an arrow to the bow, peering through the entrance way, hazy with dust and mist.

MATHENY

Again, you bastard, again...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Seconds pass. It seems like an eternity.

THE HUNTER

Like a giant insect, drops from above, landing fifteen feet behind Matheny, his steel-like spurs and toes digging deep into the slippery surface of the log.

MATHENY

freezes at the SOUND of the Hunter dropping, his eyes wide with fear. To turn and face the Hunter might cause him to slip and lose his footing. But to wait, his back exposed...

THE HUNTER

backlit in silhouette, slowly turns towards Matheny's hiding place. He raises his weapon, his eyes glistening in the dim light, searching. A quiet HISS emerges from his mouth.

MATHENY

his face rigid and unmoving as his eyes blink and move to the left, holding.

He pulls back further on the arrow, its deadly tip slightly quivering.

INT. HUNTER'S POV - ENTRANCE WAY - DAY

His eyes scanning the darkness. He looks directly at Matheny's hiding place... but does he see him?

MATHENY

His bow at full tension, his eyes, cold and determined. He swallows hard, prepares to move, but the

THE HUNTER

failing to see Matheny, lowers his weapon, turns and leaps into the void, dropping to another log, twenty feet below, just as

MATHENY

spins, ready to fire, seeking his target, finding only darkness; HEARING the HOLLOW DRIPPING of water on the empty log.

He rises and moves to the edge of the log, staring into the Stygian labyrinth below.

INT. LOGJAM STAIRWELL - DAY

Matheny, like a tightrope walker, descends a twisted, GIANT LIMB, an angling staircase extending into the gloom, below him a shadow maze of trees and the increasing SOUND of RUSHING WATER.

Matheny freezes in place, eyes probing the darkness.

On a wide, descending LIMB that arches down from the darkness of the log jam, something is moving.

The vague OUTLINES of a shape can be SEEN, moving with the fluid tension of a predator, making utterly no sound.

Matheny moves further out on the limb, seeking the shadows, drawing back on his bow. The limb begins to CREAK and GROAN from his weight.

The flowing, rippling motion stops near the termination of the branch. Matheny strains to see but the shape has now merged with the blackness of the tree and the log jam.

Suddenly it LEAPS, a black streak, twenty feet through the air, landing silently on the tree, leading to the limb on which Matheny is now trapped.

Matheny slowly retreats, the limb beneath him shuddering and CRACKING.

The BLACK SHAPE, huge and menacing, slowly extends, moving into a shaft of light, materializing from the blackness. It moves onto the limb with Matheny.

Matheny pulls back harder on the bow and takes another step.

The deadly FACE of a giant BLACK JAGUAR, eyes glowing with yellow fire, its open mouth a maw of white fangs, moves abruptly into view.

His low GROWL and then SNARL echoes throughout the log jam as the huge cat moves steadily forward, closing in.

Matheny, moving backwards, reaches the end of the limb, suspended in space, the sickening SOUND of SPLINTERING WOOD filling the air as the limb starts to give way.

He looks into space and SEES a long tangle of VINES growing on an adjacent tree, trailing downward into the darkness.

He extends the bow, attempting to snag the vine. He's a foot short. He turns to SEE the jaguar moving closer, in a few seconds...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matheny, desperate, turns and launches into space, grabbing the vine, arcing out wildly into the cavern. The vine CREAKS and slips a few inches but holds. He's made it!

Reaching the end of the arc, he turns, and feels himself swinging back, inexorably towards the waiting jaguar.

The jaguar lashes out at him with his massive paw, SNARLING in anger as he swings past. Realizing that his next encounter will be his last, Matheny releases his grip, sliding down the vine, landing hard at the bottom of

INT. WATERFALL PIT - DAY

a bulwark of overlapping logs forming a deep shaft. At one side of the pit, a WATERFALL cascades over the logs, fed by a small stream running through the ravine. A pile of BOULDERS breaks the falls, filling the shaft with an everconstant MIST.

He struggles to pull his way out of the pit. It's a useless attempt, his bare feet slipping on the slime-covered walls as if they were covered with oil. Exhausted, he drops again to the bottom of the pit, sending a band of WOOD RATS, eyes GLOWING like brimstones, scurrying into the darkness.

He looks up to SEE the growling, DEMON-LIKE face of the huge cat, as if he were the guardian to the very depths of hell itself.

MATHENY

God damnit! There's got to be
another way, somewhere...

It seems an inescapable trap. But approaching the waterfall, Matheny can SEE, ten feet above his head, a LIGHT SOURCE glowing through the water. An opening in the wall.

INT. WATERFALL - WATERFALL PIT - DAY

Moving behind the falls, Matheny finds a vertical timber, wedged deeply into the rocks, extending up and past the narrow opening.

A few remaining branches enable him to climb within a few feet of the opening. Painfully, he wedges himself between the backside of the timber and the bulwark of the pit and chimneys the remaining distance with his back and feet.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Formed by massive, LATERAL LOGS, leading upward, crisscrossed by narrow shafts of light. The tunnel is five feet in height and is intersected by a maze of similar tunnels and shafts.

Gasping for breath, Matheny rolls into the opening of the tunnel. At the end of the eerie corridor, his eyes are drawn to a LIGHT, brighter than the others.

Fitting an arrow to his bow, Matheny makes his way, stoop-shouldered, along the arduous, slippery passageway.

INT. HUNTER - SOMEWHERE IN THE LOGJAM - DAY

in half-light, a shadow form, pauses at the juncture of several passageways. He stands, erect, tilting his head slowly, turning it from side to side, his ears trying to orientate to the diversity of SOUNDS in the labyrinth.

INT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

his vision, accustomed to another spectrum, has little available heat to register vivid images in the inert, decaying environment of the log jam. He SEES instead, a world of soft, ill-defined shapes in a pale MAGENTA field.

His acute sense of HEARING, however, registers too much. Throughout the log jam he apprehends the SOUNDS of water dripping, rats crawling, trees creaking, and somewhere, undefined, the cautious, intermittent FOOTSTEPS of Matheny.

INT. MAIN CHAMBER - DAY

Matheny emerges from the tunnel into a room, fifty feet high, vaulted, like a massive hogan, a brilliant SHAFT OF LIGHT streaming down from above, bathing the room in golden light. The moist humus floor of the chamber is carpeted with mushrooms and clumps of bright green moss.

He stares in awe at the beautiful, cathedral-like sight.

Suddenly, the unbelievable SOUND of a HUMAN VOICE reaches his ears, softly echoing through the chamber.

MIGUEL'S VOICE (O.S.)

(filtered)

Lieutenant... we must hurry, this way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Matheny's blood freezes at the sound of Miguel's voice. Wide-eyed, straining, he waits, hearing only the distant DRIPPING of water, the CREAKING of sagging timbers.

And then again, Miguel's VOICE, soft, haunting.

MIGUEL'S VOICE (O.S.)
... Lieutenant, we must hurry...

MATHENY
(to himself)
Miguel...? How the hell... ?

Trance-like he moves towards the sound.

THE HUNTER

his head canted, throat distended, utters another mimicry.

HUNTER
(Miguel's voice)
... we must hurry...

MATHENY

moving towards a passageway from which the VOICE seems to emanate.

MATHENY
(whispering)
Miguel?

THE HUNTER

his ears now directed towards the SOUND of Matheny's voice, his slowly approaching FOOTSTEPS, raises his weapon.

MATHENY

pauses before the opening of the passageway. All is silent. He hesitates to enter. Listening.

THE HUNTER

waits, poised.

MATHENY

waiting, not breathing. He starts to move and then hears a NEW VOICE:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUNTER (O.S.)
(Blain's voice)
Dixon, over here...
(pause)
Dixon, over here...

Matheny, an expression of horror spreading over his face, slowly, quietly moving back, staring at the opening where the Hunter must be hiding.

INT. HUNTER - SOMEWHERE IN THE LOGJAM - DAY

His feet moving quietly over a dark, slime-covered surface.

MATHENY

A NEW SOUND reaches his ears, a faint ARRHYTHMICAL SCRAPING; as if something or someone were moving over the logs. The sound ceases; begins again.

Matheny traverses the room, growing closer to the source, hiding, moving, darting among the shadows, his bow, drawn and ready.

INT. ENTRANCE TO DESCENDING PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Adjoining the chamber, a narrow HELIX of contorted tree limbs and branches, spiraling downward into total darkness, the aorta of the logjam.

Matheny kneels beside the passageway. A faint HOWL of wind can be HEARD, carrying with it the occasional, hollow SOUND of SCRAPING, RUSTLING.

Matheny checks behind him, a look of cold determination set in his eyes and features. He turns and eases into the tunnel.

INT. DESCENDING PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Matheny, stairstepping, downward into the tangle of tree roots and branches. He pauses, listening, the SOUND OF MOVEMENT from below growing louder.

INT. HUNTER'S FEET - MAIN CHAMBER - DAY

Barely illuminated, his heel spur making a slight SCRAPING SOUND as it drags across the darkened floor.

INT. DESCENDING PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Matheny pauses at a thick BRANCH, waist high, blocking his progress. He rolls his leg over the log, grabbing for support an OVERHEAD LIMB.

In a shower of rotting wood, the limb breaks off in his hand, cascading thousands of writhing TERMITES over his body. Freezing, Matheny listens for the sounds from the chamber below as the squirming insects clamber over his neck and shoulders.

Silence.

INT. HUNTER'S FEET - MAIN CHAMBER - DAY

stopping, his prehensile spur slowly lowering to the ground, digging into the wood.

INT. DESCENDING PASSAGEWAY - DAY

The silence is broken by the same QUIET RUSTLING as before. Matheny brushes off the termites and moves forward.

INT. CAVERN - DAY

Matheny emerges from the passageway into a blackened room, faintly illuminated by a GLOW from the tunnel opening, and from high above, a narrow shaft of light, reflecting off a pool of WATER. The room echoes with the hollow PLOP of dripping WATER.

INT. DESCENDING PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Baring a razor-sharp, SIX INCH SPUR on his arm, the Hunter slices open the log, spilling more termites onto the floor. He examines the exposed termite nest, the insects crawling over his hands and fingers, leaving GHOSTLY IMAGES in relief on his skin.

INT. CAVERN - MATHENY - DAY

His eyes probe the darkness. He hears something moving, a GENTLE SCRAPE, a RUSTLING and then, silence.

He stands, pulling back on the arrow and moves towards the sound.

He hears movement. It settles.

Matheny takes aim, pushing another step forward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He CRIES OUT, bounding back in shock as his head touches something alive!

INT. LOGJAM - HUNTER'S HEAD - DAY

snaps to attention, his EYES peering into the darkness.

MATHENY

IT rushes towards him out of the darkness, directly at his face.

He swings his arm in defense, a soft THUD as he makes contact.

At once the room EXPLODES into an AWESOME ROAR of BEATING WINGS and SCREECHING VOICES, as thousands of startled BATS fly frantically about the cavern.

Bats become entangled in Matheny's bow and hair, flapping and biting in protective frenzy.

INT. HUNTER'S POV - DESCENDING PASSAGEWAY - DAY

Through his HEAT-SEEKING VISION, the twisted tunnel before him appears in pale magenta.

From the cavern below, the SOUND of the FRENZIED BATS builds to a crescendo, a SHRIEKING ROAR that reverberates through the logjam.

The frightened BATS stream down the long passageway, streaking sources of HEAT and CONTRAILS that dart and dive with dizzying speed past the Hunter.

BACK TO SCENE/MATHENY

In defense, Matheny falls to the floor, desperately fighting to drive away the bats.

The bow and arrows fly out of his hand, hitting the floor.

INT. HUNTER'S POV - BATS - DAY

Even before the bats have disappeared, the Hunter is moving, weaving his way, rapidly, towards the opening to the cavern.

INT. CAVERN - DAY

Matheny lies on the floor, now free from the bats which still circle the room, slowly settling.

INT. DESCENDING PASSAGEWAY - DAY

The Hunter approaching the opening to the cavern, moving fast.

INT. CAVERN - DAY

Matheny, on his hands and knees, is searching the moss slime and pools of water for his bow and arrows.

He finds an ARROW, broken in half. Tossing it aside he continues to search, moving towards the SHAFT OF LIGHT, cast from the opening above. He turns towards the entrance way to the cavern and sees:

INT. CAVERN - HUNTER - DAY

his momentary FORM in backlight, his EYES GLOWING. He enters the cavern, slipping into the darkness.

MATHENY

He can feel the Hunter approaching, HEAR the chilling CLICK-SCRAPE of his heel spurs on the log floor, as the bats dart and weave. He can SEE the Hunter's glowing EYES, approaching in the dark. Another few feet.

Matheny's right hand reaches out, grasping a CHUNK OF WOOD lying near him. His fingers tighten around the wood, his eyes darting from the Hunter's form to the bow and arrows lying so close.

With a sudden heave he flings the wood high into the air, arcing across the room.

Responding instantly to the movement, the Hunter releases his weapon, splitting the wood in half in mid-air.

Matheny lunges across the floor, grabbing the bow and arrows, rolling to his side.

Struggling to his feet, the rotting, water-soaked LOGS beneath him give way and Matheny plummets in a shower of water and debris to the CHAMBER below, landing hard on his back in a pool of water.

THE HUNTER

His weapon raised, moves toward the cave-in.

INT. SUB-CHAMBER - DAY

Dazed, Matheny struggles to fit an arrow on the bow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Hunter's backlit FORM, weapon raised high, looms suddenly over the rim of the cave-in.

In one totally instinctual movement, Matheny draws back the arrow to its very tip and fires.

The arrow streaks upward from the pit and with a deadly thud, penetrates deep into one side of the Hunter's NECK.

THE HUNTER

With a terrifying SCREAM of pain and anger, flushes bright vermillion, clutching frantically at the poison arrow lodged in his neck.

Another bloodcurdling SCREAM OF RAGE and the Hunter is gone.

MATHENY

His arm still extended in the firing position, his eyes frozen in a nearly in-human stare.

He lowers the bow. Anxious seconds pass as he stares at the backlit rim above, listening to the high-pitched SQUEALS of the settling bats.

INT. CAVERN - DAY

As Matheny warily emerges from the pit, rolling into the shadows, he slips. Catching himself he releases the bow. To his horror he watches helplessly as it falls into the space between two logs, CLATTERING into the depths of the logjam.

He looks down at his hand, clutching the last poisoned arrow.

He approaches the rim of the cave-in, passing his fingers along the slick surface of the logs. Holding his fingers near his face he examines the thick, nearly LUMINOUS BLOOD of the Hunter. He looks back at the arrow.

MATHENY

(cold; menacing)

I've got one more for you.

EXT. LOG BRIDGE - DAY

Emerging onto the huge log leading to the rim of the coulee, Matheny pauses several times, finding more traces of the Hunter's blood. He continues across the log and climbs the bank, following the traces into the jungle.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Moving along the rim of the coulee, Matheny follows the thick, orange blobs hanging on leaves and spent on the forest floor.

It's an easy trail to follow. Too weak to move through the trees, the Hunter has left a SWATH of trampled grasses, broken twigs and branches in his headlong retreat from Matheny: the Hunter turned Hunted.

Matheny, his clay and ochre camouflage smeared with blood and sweat, surges through the jungle, oblivious to the searing pain in his shoulder.

He breathes in hot, powerful exchanges, his eyes wide and glowing with vengeance.

MATHENY

Bleed, you bastard.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - CAMP - DAY

Staggering into the clearing, bleeding severely. The Hunter is rapidly losing his camouflage ability, his skin turning a PALE GREEN, flexing and pulsing in shock.

His EYES flare slightly brighter as he emits a high-pitched TONE.

The DOOR-RAMP begins to descend from the foliage, swinging down beside him, the glow of light from within reflecting off the spreading apron of BLOOD flowing from his wound.

With trembling hands he grasps the arrow and breaks it, pulling the shaft from his neck. He screams in pain.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

As his hands move towards his face, covering it. He pulls something away from his face and suddenly his heat-seeking vision is gone. Instead he sees a world bathed in blinding WHITE LIGHT, like an overexposed photograph, obscuring most details, leaving vague shapes and impressions.

He glances about desperately, GASPING for breath, as if struggling for air.

EXT. THICKET - INSIDE - DAY

Matheny threads his way through the treacherous, steel-like thorns, following the narrow, herringbone labyrinth of passageways, cut by the Hunter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He emerges at the edge of the Hunter's camp, the arrow clutched tightly in his hand, his features intense, like steel cord, transfixed at the unbelievable sight before him.

There is no sign of the Hunter.

He SEES the open DOOR-RAMP. He approaches it, wide-eyed, his senses reeling with astonishment and fear. He pauses by the door. Summoning his strength and raising the arrow, he leaps onto the ramp, ready to strike.

Before him he SEES the interior of an invisible space craft, an array of high-tech EQUIPMENT, an ACCELERATION COUCH, the cramped and functional quarters devoted to propulsion and navigation equipment.

The Hunter is not there.

He HEARS a RUSTLING SOUND behind him and spins quickly, his attention drawn to the nearby DRYING RACKS.

Leaving the ramp he approaches the racks.

With a shock he realizes that stretched over the frames are the nearly TRANSLUCENT SKINS of Ramirez and Anna, the hair of the attached scalps moving lightly in the wind.

Enraged, he attacks, smashing aside the racks with his right arm. As the racks fall, he SEES in the b.g. the SURPRISED HUNTER, rise and whirl towards him.

Matheny is already moving; in a bound he closes the distance, savagely kicking the Hunter's arm. The GLOWING, ENERGIZED STONES fly from the Hunter's neck, hitting the ground, breaking apart.

Before he can recover, Matheny follows with a karate kick to the chest, hurling the Hunter to the ground, his back exposed.

In a flash, Matheny is standing over the Hunter, the arrow raised like a dagger, poised, the blood from his open wound dripping onto the Hunter's back.

The Hunter slowly rolls onto his back, revealing his face.

The netted hood of the Hunter's bio-energetic SUIT, the source of his camouflage protection, is drawn back, exposing a strikingly HUMAN-LIKE FACE.

Beneath the smooth, hairless, nearly translucent skin, a delicate network of VEINS and VESSELS can be seen, pulsing rapidly with pale green blood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Hunter's eyes, pink and weak-looking, like an albino, blink, trying to focus in the bright sunlight.

The organic suit, bunched around his neck and still covering his body, ripples out of control, trying desperately to orientate itself to the environment.

To Matheny, the Hunter now looks supplicant, almost sad.

MATHENY
(incredulous)
Who the hell are you...?

EXT. HUNTER'S POV OF MATHENY - DAY

Matheny's body, flaring against the bright sky, looms over him, blood oozing from the shoulder wound, his eyes like black sockets in his almost skull-like face. Seen from this perspective, Matheny is a frightening, horrible visage.

THE HUNTER

shudders, GASPING hungrily for air, struggling to speak. From his throat, Matheny HEARS the feeble, distorted efforts of the Hunter, at first garbled, incomprehensible and then, slowly, chillingly, taking on the timbre and quality of his OWN VOICE.

HUNTER
(electronic; filtered)
Who...
(improving)
the hell...
(nearly perfect)
are...
(perfect)
You?

. The Hunter's strength seems to fade even more.

Then, suddenly, with the last of his diminishing strength, he lashes out with one arm, activating the lethal, razor sharp SPURS on the arms of his suit.

Matheny catches the Hunter's wrist and lunges downward with the arrow.

Twisting, the Hunter dodges the blow, rolling the two combatants over, leaving the Hunter on top. In the violence of the maneuver, Matheny loses his arrow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Hunter's lethal spur, restrained by the last of Matheny's ebbing strength, hovers an inch away from Matheny's face. The Hunter lunges, nicking the flesh just below Matheny's eye.

Matheny, pulling on the Hunter's arm, taking advantage of the movement, rolls them over, now placing Matheny on top.

But the Hunter's coiled leg kicks upward with incredible force, hurling Matheny into the air, flipping him over, sending him crashing to his back, several yards away.

His breath knocked from him, Matheny lies helpless on the ground.

The Hunter rises slowly to his feet, GASPING desperately for breath. With feeble efforts he clutches the lower part of his HOOD, bringing it over his mouth. He inhales deeply, hungrily, gaining strength with each breath.

Recovering, Matheny watches the Hunter, realizing that the hood contains a breathing apparatus.

He has to attack now! He staggers to his feet, lunging at the Hunter, catching him soundly on the side of the head, knocking the hood away from his face. He follows with a punch to the Hunter's body, pulling back as he delivers a savage uppercut.

Connecting he knocks the Hunter backwards. But as the Hunter falls, he lashes out with his leg, his terrible spur ripping into Matheny's thigh.

Nearing their peak of exhaustion, both fighters fall, thrown backwards by the forceful exchange of their blows. Matheny lands on the ground, the Hunter on the door-ramp of the invisible ship.

Matheny looks at the ripped flesh of his thigh, a horrible wound.

The Hunter pulls the breathing apparatus over his mouth, breathing deeply.

Matheny tries to rise but collapses to the ground, spent.

The Hunter, still breathing, regaining his strength, rises to his feet, pulling the hood into place as he goes.

EXT. TWO ATTACK HELICOPTERS - DAY

Powering upward from the canyon, the WATERFALL in the b.g, clear the rim, racing along at treetop height, heading towards the island promontory.

In the open doorway of the lead chopper, Miguel can be seen peering into the jungle.

EXT. THE HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY

Matheny looks up at the Hunter, now towering to full height, his suit SHIMMERING, nearly back to its full powers, his eyes glowing with malevolence. He lifts his arms, showing his deadly fighting spurs, savoring the confrontation with the last of his prey. He steps forward.

Matheny draws back in the face of this indomitable presence. As he pulls away he sweeps his hand through the leaves, touching something solid and foreign.

He SEES the Hunter's inert WEAPON, lying inches away, almost at his fingertips.

The Hunter freezes.

EXT. HUNTER'S POV - DAY

His heat-seeking vision now completely restored, his eyes focus in on his WEAPON, almost within Matheny's grasp.

MATHENY

noting the Hunter's wary response, snatches up the weapon and begins to rise.

He turns and looks at the unfamiliar weapon held loosely in his hand.

Alarmed, the Hunter hurridly steps backward into the doorway of the ship, passing his hand through a light BEAM. The ship instantly responds, as a low, TURBINE-LIKE HOWL is HEARD, building slowly in volume and pitch. Like a developing photograph, the invisible ship begins to appear.

Matheny, in shock, squeezes the handle of the weapon. In a FLASH of blue-white light, the weapon becomes ACTIVATED.

The Hunter backs into the ship and the door begins to close.

Matheny raises the weapon, sensing its power and function.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As rising HEAT WAVES begin to envelope the ship, the Hunter, seated at the CONTROL PANEL, stares out at Matheny through the closing door ramp.

The open panels of the ship fold inward, like the petals of a flower; the heat waves increase as the KEENING WHINE of the ship's drives builds.

In the final seconds before the door-ramp closes, Matheny, with a triumphant SCREAM, hurls the weapon.

The weapon, spinning like a discus, flaring with energy, drops and turns sideways, accelerating through the closing gap of the door-ramp.

INT. SPACECRAFT - DAY

The weapon impacts the Hunter, his head EXPLODING in a fountain of orange blood and pale green tissue.

The weapon continues on, burying itself into the CONTROL PANEL, bolts of plasma-energy

EXT. SPACECRAFT - DAY

light up the interior of the craft as the door seals shut.

Matheny falls forward onto his hands and knees, staring at the Hunter's ship.

The SOUND of the hyper-drive continues to increase, as the ship begins to tremble.

EXT. HELICOPTER COCKPIT - DAY

as suddenly the instrument panel goes wild, gauges spinning, digital read-outs racing out of control. The SOUND of the turbine faltering, changing pitch. The pilot lurches forward with the stick, fighting for control.

EXT. HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY

The multi-harmonic whine of the Hunter's ship is still building as the ground begins to shake.

Matheny, realizing that the ship is going to explode, and ignoring the pain of his shoulder and leg, runs desperately, searching for cover. He sprints for the edge of the clearing, diving over the embankment just as:

A blinding purple FLASH blows the ship to pieces.

EXT. HELICOPTER - COCKPIT - DAY

Enveloped in the flash of intense light. CRIES of surprise fill the ship as the SHOCK-WAVE hits the chopper, heeling it hard over to one side.

Below, the concentric waves of energy race outward from the center of the blast, an unearthly sight, like the miniature birth of a star.

The helicopter suddenly regains control, its power restored.

PILOT

Holy, fuck, what was that...?!!!

PHILIPS

Orbit right... check it out!

The helicopter levels out and heads towards the smoking, devastated site of the blast.

EXT. HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY

The jungle has been completely transformed. No longer lush and verdant, the area is clear-cut, two feet above the ground, covered in FINE WHITE, smoldering ASH. Amongst the shattered stumps, debris from the ship, bright as magnesium flares, burns with exotic colors.

In the f.g., Matheny, a living dead-man, streaked with the alien ash, rises up from a shallow depression, staring dumbfoundly at the site.

Breaking in low over the treetops, the HELICOPTERS flare up into position, one preparing to land. As the chopper descends, Miguel and the crew, standing in the door way, stare transfixed at the devastation, their eyes trying to penetrate the dense white smoke.

As the helicopter slowly descends, its propwash creating a raging storm, Matheny materializes from the SWIRLING SMOKE AND ASH, his features taking form as he approaches, his naked body covered in mud, blood and ash.

EXT. MATHENY'S POV - LANDING HELICOPTER - DAY

as the chopper, emerging from the vortex, settles towards the ground where the spacecraft once stood. Through the distorted veil, the helicopter, bristling with WEAPONS, VISORED and HELMETED MEN, now covered with WHITE ASH, looks like a landing spacecraft.

EXT. HELICOPTER - DAY

The door gunner swings the M-60 into firing position, pointing it at Matheny. He racks the bolt, loading a round.

The crewmen look tense, frightened.

Miguel stares at the strange creature before him, narrowing his eyes, uncertain. Is there something familiar about the figure?

MATHENY

Stands in the clearing, staring at the helicopter and the array of weapons pointed at him.

He looks dazed, like a man making contact with members of an alien race, for the first time.

THE HELICOPTER

Hovers low to the ground, the tension inside building as Matheny approaches.

More weapons swing into position. Fingers tighten on triggers. Suddenly Miguel recognizes the figure. Realizing the danger he holds up his hands, shouting.

MIGUEL
NOOOOOOO!!!!!!

EXT. HELICOPTERS - JUNGLE - DAY

Flash overhead, heading across the trackless jungle, their rotors THUMPING like heavy machinegun fire.

INT. HELICOPTER - DAY

Matheny, a blanket over his shoulders, still in the remains of his mud camouflage, his body laced with deep cuts; his chest and shoulder caked with dried blood, is seated on a bench in the cargo hold, in shock.

Near the cockpit are Colonel Philips, an ARMY MEDIC, two MACHINE GUNNERS. They look at Matheny in awe.

The medic, holding an open FIELD KIT, a syringe and bandages, turns to Philips.

MEDIC
(shaking his head)
Can't get near him...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Seated opposite to Matheny, Miguel stares at him as if he were risen from the dead.

Miguel looks into Matheny's face, Matheny returning his look, recognition passing between the two men. Miguel slowly extends his hand. At first, impassive, Matheny takes Miguel's hand, and then clasps it firmly.

Matheny turns his eyes to stare out the open door, beyond the passing jungle below, out to the heavens. He lifts his head, a faint smile crossing his face.

EXT. TWO HELICOPTERS - JUNGLE - DAY

Pull away and head towards the distant, green horizon.

FADE OUT:

THE END