

PREDATORS

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BLACK.

Ragged BREATHING over it, rising in intensity and volume. Heart POUNDING, POUNDING, POUNDING, like a jackhammer, threatening to tear itself out of the rib cage.

And a voice, calm, measured, eerily juxtaposed against the rest of the soundtrack.

VOICE (V.O.)

The jungle creed says the strongest
feed on any prey they can. And I
was branded beast at every feast
before I ever became a man.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS - NIGHT

WHAM, the first shot of the movie assaults us in the form of a man EXPLODING into frame -- powerful, dangerous, the kind of cat who can kill you with a hard look. But now he's scared, running as if hell itself was behind him.

Around him a nameless city towers like a concrete jungle.

With the fugitive, moving, handheld, frenetic, jarring, echoing his state of mind.

PREDATOR POV: The prey in infrared, seen from above.

The man glances back, sees nothing -- redoubles his already punishing pace.

Turns the corner -- left or right, split second to decide -- he goes left -- powers along the street, arms pumping like pistons, shoes SLAPPING the shit out of the pavement, a staccato rhythm -- trips, falls -- staggers back on his feet, using a chainlink fence for purchase.

SOMETHING LUNGES AT HIM FROM THE SHADOWS ON THE OTHER SIDE!

A leashed pitbull -- its jaws SNAP a few inches away from our guy's face.

He reels, gun up -- the hound SNARLS, trying to get at the intruder -- but whatever is chasing him is much worse -- he recovers, rushes away, an adrenaline-powered juggernaut, the dog's BARK chasing him like a stream of obscenities.

Alley, alley, dead end, shit! He spins, scanning for exits, there are none, double shit, about to backtrack--

In the distance the dog abruptly SHUTS UP.

He freezes. Back against the wall. Pistol pointed at the mouth of the alley, held in a shaky grip. The look of a man about to face a six foot spider with a toothpick.

Street light BUZZES, flickering in and out of existence. An unsettling strobing effect.

The man waits, sucking air, finger on the trigger... waits... waits...

Nothing.

He relaxes just a bit.

WHAM, he's JERKED upward as if plucked by an invisible hand.

Make it a noose. He dangles from it, losing the gun in the process, tips of his toes scraping the ground. A liquid, brown and viscous, SPLASHES from above, drenching him.

He chokes. FOOTSTEPS. The hunter approaches. We fully expect to see Predator...

Guess again. Or rather it is a predator of a different kind.

Call him ROYCE. A Steve McQueen face, hard but not unhandsome. Barely broke a sweat. Takes off Raptor infrared goggles.

The man stares at him, eyes wide with terror. GURGLING. Mouth trying to form words that never come.

It doesn't matter. Royce's heard it all before. The voice from the opening shot:

ROYCE

This is not how I would do it. But
it's how they wanted it done.

He lights a match against his finger. Tosses it into the spreading puddle. Walks away without looking back.

WHOOSH! The man lights up like a bonfire. SCREAMS as he burns alive.

Royce keeps walking.

SUDDENLY

An electric wind SWEEPS along the street.

POP, POP, POP, lights BLOW out in quick succession.

Royce spins, sensing something coming up from behind a split second before--

IMPACT. SMASH TO BLACK. Blood red letters.

PREDATORS

FADE IN.

An ocean of white. A body PLUMMETS toward it, almost peaceful, a fallen angel...

TEARS through the clouds.

ROYCE

Eyes snap open, disoriented, panicked. Mind behind them races, coming back online, trying to regain its bearings. Discovering that he is--

IN FREEFALL

That's right. He's plummeting through the void at 160 mph, an earthbound missile dressed in the same clothes he wore a moment ago, twisting, tumbling, SCREAMING, wind HOWLING, whipping mercilessly at his hair and flesh.

Just like the nightmare we've all had.

Except this. IS. FUCKING. HAPPENING.

Reality is a washer/dryer in a spin cycle. With each rotation we catch a glimpse of blue above, a vast expanse of green below, the latter closing fast.

An altimeter of foreign design is hooked to a harness crossing Royce's chest. LED flashes in a degrading sequence... a countdown... and then the thing cracks!

Parachute deploys with a POP. Much like the altimeter that triggered its release, its design is unfamiliar to us.

Royce goes from terminal velocity to 30 in less than a second, deceleration jerking him up. Jungle looms. IMPACT.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Royce CRASHES through the double canopy at a 45 degree angle, BASHING against trunks, CLIPPING branches, before finally--

Hitting the ground. HARD.

Beat. Royce climbs to his feet. Tries to steady his ragged breathing. Uncouples the chute's harness with shaky fingers. Takes in his surroundings.

He's in a small clearing framed by monstrous tropical trees, plants and bushes, obscuring vision in all directions. Shafts of light stream from openings in the foliage a hundred feet above. The steady BUZZ of insects, punctuated by occasional CRIES of birds and monkeys, breaks the eerie silence.

It's haunting. Humid. And hot as hell.

Royce stares in a state of shock. One question:

ROYCE
What the fuck?

CRASH! A chute-laden figure duplicates Royce's descent.

VOICE
(in Spanish)
Fuck! FUCK! FUCCCCCCCCCCKKKKKK!!!!

Royce watches. All he can do is watch.

The man lands a few feet away. Twin Uzis are strapped to his back. An intricate webwork of scars and tattoos covers his torso. His age unplaceable. His real name immaterial. But in places like Juárez and Tijuana he's known as--

CUCHILLO
(Spanish)
Who the hell are you?!

CRASH! A body SMASHES on the ground like a cannon ball, stealing their attention. This one won't be getting up.

CUCHILLO
(Spanish)
Who the hell is he?!

POP, the dead man's chute unfurls. Too little too late.

ROYCE

The guy whose chute didn't work.

He hears muted voices. Moves, confusion pushing up against something harder on the inside.

CUCHILLO

(switches to English)

Hey! Hey! Where the fuck are you going? Hey!!!

He tries to follow, gets tangled in the chute lines. They jerk him back. Curses some more. We leave him to it.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

With Royce, slicing through thick vegetation toward voices, panicked, SHOUTING in languages we don't understand.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Parachutes strewn about. NIKOLAI, a frightening bear of a man in VDV fatigues with no identity badges or insignias, armed with GShG-7.62 -- a four barreled gas powered rotary machine gun, its barrel still smoking -- is yelling in Russian at--

ISABELLE, jeans and button down shirt, pretty if she ever bothered to smile, her own Heckler & Koch PSG1 sniper rifle pointed at the big man, as she yells back in French.

What we have here is a failure to communicate.

Heads and weapons turn to Royce, as he appears. Both yell at him for a change.

He raises his hands, indicating intention rather than surrender.

ROYCE

Easy.

Branches CRACK. Leaves rain down. All spin toward the source.

Fifteen feet above STANS -- shaved head, scorpion tattoo on his neck, orange jumpsuit with the faded words "San Quentin" stenciled into the fabric -- is cutting through the lines of his chute with a prison shiv.

Drops. Lands on his feet like a cat. Backs away from the others, feral, stabbing at the air.

STANS

I'm gonna cut you! I'm gonna
fucking cut you!

And stops, hand wrapped around his mouth, blade pressed firmly against his carotid artery.

Their owner, MOMBASA, materializes behind Stans with the silent swiftness of a ghost. Black. Early 20's. But in the part of the world he comes from, he's considered old.

MOMBASA

(African accent; cold)
Put down your weapons. Or he dies.

The confused group take one another in with weary eyes. Paranoia. Panic. A hairline away from a trigger pull.

Nikolai is about to say something. Royce motions for him to keep quiet.

Royce doesn't talk. He listens.

And then he's moving again.

Cuchillo emerges out of the bushes. Surveys the new arrivals.

CUCHILLO

Can someone fucking tell me what
the fuck is going on?

ISABELLE

(keying on the same thing
Royce did)
Water.

She starts after Royce.

MOMBASA

I said I'm going to cut his throat.

Nikolai ignores him, follows. Cuchillo is not far behind.

Mombasa looks after. Realizes the futility of his threat. Shoves Stans aside.

Mombasa. Stans. Looks exchanged. The kind that promise "this isn't over".

Mombasa strides off in the same direction. Stans backstabs him with a glare. Weighs his options. Trails after.

We linger on the now empty clearing.

A figure steps out of the bushes. Has been there the entire time. Name's HANZO. Japanese, slender, dark suit, white shirt, Beretta 92FS in a worn shoulder holster. Look closer, and you'll see he's missing two finger tips on his left hand.

Considers. Walks after the others.

SQUISH, his dress shoes sink into mud.

Hanzo -- utterly undeterred -- takes them off. Then the socks. Lays down the items neatly on the ground. Resumes the journey.

We stay on the shoes.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Royce pushes through the foliage. Stops.

A shallow creek runs in front of him. To the right, sitting on a rock, his back toward Royce, is a small unassuming man. Caucasian, glasses, beige slacks, white T.

This is EDWIN.

He stares at the water with the wonder and innocence of a child. Turns, taking in Royce and the others.

A trickle of blood travels slowly along the side of his face.

EDWIN

This is not where I was before.

ISABELLE

You're bleeding.

Edwin's fingers come away red and wet. He studies them absentmindedly.

EDWIN

Oh that. It's not mine.

"Creepy" doesn't even begin to scratch the surface.

Royce takes the reigns. To all:

ROYCE
Last thing you remember?

NIKOLAI
War.

Mombasa nods. Same here.

CUCHILLO
I was... working. And then
everything just...

STANS
Stopped.

We pan across their faces.

ISABELLE
...What the hell happened to us?

On Stans. A thought forming. Doesn't happen often.

STANS
Waaait. You don't mean... we could
be... dead?

That gives everyone pause. Obviously a possibility they haven't considered. Stans begins to freak out.

STANS
Holy shit! I'm dead, aren't I?! I'm
dead, and this is hell!

ISABELLE
Last I checked, you didn't need a
parachute to get there.

Good point. Still,

NIKOLAI
Why put us here?

ISABELLE

How do I even know "here" exists?
 Maybe I'm lying in a hospital, in a
 coma. And this, all this, is just
 some bad dream.

MOMBASA

(with conviction)
 I'm real. That fall was real.
 (clutching his AK-47)
 This is real.

CUCHILLO

Maybe we pissed off the wrong
 people. Maybe this is punishment.

STANS

Where I come from, you piss someone
 off, they stick a shiv in your
 back. Not dump you in the middle of
 a jungle.

NIKOLAI

A test then. See how we do under
 pressure. That's why they armed us.

Royce's attention is elsewhere.

A leaf in his hand. Water in it. A small sliver of metal
 floats on a smaller leaf. A makeshift compass.

The metal-bearing leaf spins madly, refusing to settle.

EDWIN

Some kind of psychotropic compound.

Hanzo drifts out of the bushes. Sidelines. A silent nod.

They take him in. That dreaded question again:

CUCHILLO

What the hell happened to us?

On Royce. He's heard enough.

ROYCE

It doesn't matter. It happened.

They look toward him, eager for solutions, for answers, for
 something, anything, to make sense again. Brass tacks:

ROYCE

Water means life. There might be a camp or a village down stream.

They move down the creek. Together. For the moment.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Sun beats down without mercy. The stream -- wider now -- runs to the left, as Royce, on point, hacks a path through lush vegetation with even, surgeon-like strokes.

The rest of the crew is spread out behind him.

All around them a jungle labyrinth, towering and vast, SOUNDS, shadows, the sense of something just outside of our field of vision.

Something dangerous.

Stans keeps glancing up, hunched over, uncomfortable, as if feeling the weight of the open space on his shoulders.

STANS

(to Royce)

So where's this village?

No response.

STANS

Hey! I'm talking to you! Where's the fucking village?

Royce waves toward the jungle.

ROYCE

That way. Twenty klicks. You should start now.

Stans bristles, stalks away.

NIKOLAI

What's up with him?

CUCHILLO

Freedom.

Off Nikolai's puzzled look, speaking from experience:

CUCHILLO

Take a monkey out of the cage,
it'll miss the bars.

Close on a blooming plant. Others pass it. Isabelle pauses for a look, taken by its structure.

Its pedals are bright, delicate, almost hypnotic in their appearance. She reaches out to touch them...

Edwin's hand intercepts hers.

EDWIN

I wouldn't do that.

She recoils from his touch.

Edwin smiles, used to the effect. Flicks out a surgical scalpel. Gingerly extends it toward--

SNAP, the pedals close around the blade like a bear trap.

EDWIN

(a hint of admiration)

Archaeofructus liaoningensis. Very
poisonous.

He withdraws the scalpel. Yellow pus drips off the steel.

EDWIN

Very deadly. All it would take is
one scratch.

A clarification:

EDWIN

I read a lot. (beat) Strange
though.

ISABELLE

How's that?

EDWIN

They have been extinct since the
early Cretaceous period. 125
million years ago.

Another mystery. They shake it off. Keep walking.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

It becomes a river. They follow its course.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

From high above our guys look like ants crawling along a thin blue thread. Nothing but jungle in all directions.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

Royce appears in the distance, heading toward us. Suddenly stops, eyes on the ground. Isabelle notes his concern.

ISABELLE

What is it?

ROYCE

Tracks.

Faint outlines you and I would miss. Royce kneels by them.

CUCHILLO

So?

ROYCE

So I've never seen them before.

He touches the ground, trying to determine what creature could have made them. Almost to himself:

ROYCE

...Fresh.

CUCHILLO

What are you? Some kind of hunter?

ROYCE

Some kind.

CUCHILLO

Like lions, tigers and shit?

Royce rises. Looks him square in the eye.

ROYCE

No. Like you.

He resumes the trek.

Hanzo is last. Leans over the current. Splashes some H2O on his face.

HIS POV, obscured by the dripping water: Jungle across the river. Something moves. Quick. Like a spectre. And then it's gone.

Hanzo stares. Off his expression,

EXT. RIVER BANK - AFTERNOON

Light's dimmer now. Sounds seem louder and closer. And more malevolent.

Aching muscles. Sweat stains. The journey is taking its toll, and it shows. The crew is taking a brief respite.

Cuchillo eyes the muddy stream.

CUCHILLO

Think it's safe to drink?

NIKOLAI

You find out. You let me know.

Mombasa pulls down a thick vine. THWACK, severs it with his knife. A trickle of water emerges. He drinks.

Beat. They rush to follow his example, guzzle greedily.

Stans watches Isabelle. The predatory gleam in his gaze promises nothing but trouble.

She feels his eyes on her. Turns.

Stans grins.

She doesn't. If looks could kill, Stans would be a dead man.

Gradually Stans's smirk curdles like milk. He looks away.

Isabelle settles down next to Royce. PUSH IN on them, forsaking the others.

ISABELLE

You got a name?

Royce looks at her for a beat.

ROYCE

...Royce.

ISABELLE

Isabelle. So. What do you think?

He shrugs. In his POV, panning over the faces of their companions, reading them like a coloring book:

ROYCE

Spetsnaz, Alpha Group. Los Zeta,
cartel enforcer. RUF, Sierra Leone
death squad. Yakuza, Inagawa-kai.
Former FBI's Most Wanted.

Settling on Edwin, who's raptly examining a beautiful monarch butterfly that's landed on his arm:

ROYCE

That.

Finally returning to Isabelle. A nod toward the sniper rifle:

ROYCE

And you. (beat) I'd say we were
chosen.

Silence. It hangs there. Like a noose.

ISABELLE

Chosen for what?

BOO!!!

Sonic boom CRASHES over the clearing like a tsunami.

Something large streaks overhead, too fast to make out.

Earth SHAKES. Bushes compress. Our crew is knocked down, ass over teacups.

And then it's gone, just as suddenly as it appeared, a path of destruction visible through the jungle.

The tumult fades. They dust themselves off. Shaken but unharmed.

MOMBASA

Aircraft?

NIKOLAI

Had to be military. And that low,
it would be landing someplace
close.

They trade glances. For the first time there's something new in their eyes, shining through grime and exhaustion. Hope.

No words are exchanged. They move into the jungle, following the trail.

We linger on the now empty campsite.

The monarch butterfly writhes in the dirt, trying to take flight. In vain. Its wings have been pulled off.

EXT. JUNGLE - AFTERNOON

On the road again. The jungle seems denser, more impenetrable, as if it's determined to stop our heroes.

EXT. RAVINE - AFTERNOON

View from the trees, looking down as the crew approaches.

They descend into a ravine. Slow, treacherous going.

Mombasa's foot snags something. He trips, falls.

Stans brushes past. Grins.

STANS

Looking good there, boss.

A massive tree trunk, suspended by vines, SWINGS toward him like a fist of God!

He rolls out of the way, barely.

The others scatter, tripping more wires in the process.

WHOOSH, WHOOSH, WHOOSH, three makeshift spears spin toward them from as many directions, pincushioning foliage and earth.

Cuchillo dodges one, only to trigger the next trap -- a branch, adorned with carved spikes. It LASHES OUT!

They duck, the thing passing INCHES above their heads.

Isabelle rushes forward, trying to get out of the kill zone. Inexplicably PLUNGES straight through the ground--

Into a camouflaged pit. Catches its edge. Hangs there, literally clinging to life by her fingernails.

A row of razor sharp Punji sticks await at the bottom.

Battling gravity. Losing. Her hold... gives!

Royce catches her. Reels her back in.

They freeze, eyes and barrels searching for targets. Await the next attack.

Silence. None seems forthcoming.

Isabelle raises the rifle, trying to control her breathing.

HER POV: Scanning... scanning... snapping back toward--

A glint of something.

ISABELLE

Three o'clock. 110 yards.

Royce is already in motion. Vanishes into the bushes.

The rest spread out, follow.

EXT. JUNGLE

With Royce, moving, fast, soundless, light. He's at his best now -- alone.

EXT. RIDGE

He crests a small ridge. Stops. Stares. We spin around, using Royce as a pivot, revealing the object of his attention.

A CORPSE

Desert fatigues, dirty and torn to shreds. Chest cavity like an inward implosion, fused, cauterized, a gaping wound. Eyes open. Staring upward. Into nothingness.

The rest of the crew converge, breathing ragged, still jacked up on adrenaline. Take in the eerie sight.

MOMBASA

We tripped a dead man's trap.

ROYCE

Two days. Maybe three.

Cuchillo crosses himself, a reflex.

Nikolai leans over the body. Sizes him up in a glance.

NIKOLAI

Navy SEAL.

Checks his pockets, quick, efficient, a pro. Maps. Foreign currency. Papers. His face registers confusion.

NIKOLAI

He's supposed to be deployed in Afghanistan.

STANS

Just doesn't make sense. What was he doing setting traps for us?

ROYCE

He wasn't. He was hunting something else. Something a lot bigger.

All eyes on him.

ROYCE

The trunk was a deadfall trap. Rule of thumb, the weight is at least five times heavier than that of the target animal.

STANS

So what's the animal?

ROYCE

No idea. But whatever it was, it came through the trip wires. And did this to him.

He points to the SEAL's decimated chest.

EDWIN

What kind of a weapon does this?

This time there's no answer.

CUCHILLO

We should bury him.

ROYCE

(cold)

Why? He's dead.

He strides away.

Nikolai takes off his jacket. Covers the corpse. Soldier to soldier.

One by one, they trail off. Mombasa is last. Suddenly stops.

Slowly he turns back. Freezes, staring into the jungle. As if sensing something within its depths.

Something he can't name or see. Watching. Waiting...

A shimmer in the foreground. Like a heat wave dancing off the pavement of a desert highway.

A branch sways. Except there's no wind.

ROYCE (O.S.)

What is it?

Mombasa is jerked back to reality. Eyes on Royce, pupils dilated, a man snapping out of a trance.

ROYCE

What did you see?

MOMBASA

...Nothing.

He moves on. Royce looks after. Then follows.

EXT. JUNGLE - AFTERNOON

The crew is on edge, alert, aware of every sound, every step, every second. Jungle envelops them from all directions, prehistoric, stark, keeping its secrets.

Isabelle sidelines Royce.

ISABELLE

Back there. Thank you.

ROYCE

(simple and direct)

You're wrong about me.

ISABELLE

How's that?

ROYCE

You think I'm a decent guy who'll be there for you when push comes to shove. I'm not. And I won't be. I didn't save you. I just needed another gun.

She nods, accepting the terms. They keep moving. Drift off them to--

Cuchillo clutches a rosary, lips moving in a silent prayer.

NIKOLAI

You're wasting your breath.

CUCHILLO

We all have to believe in something. Even the worst of us. Perhaps the worst most of all.

Motion in the bushes. They react--

SOMETHING takes flight, swoops over their heads, SCREECHES, vanishes in the distance. Whew...

Stans begins to unravel.

STANS

The fuck was that?

Looking around, panic building:

STANS

I want a gun! Someone give me a
fucking gun!

No volunteers.

Abruptly Stans lunges. Shiv at Mombasa's throat, drawing
blood.

STANS

Gun. Now.

He might as well be holding a feather duster.

MOMBASA

I'm ready to die. Are you?

CLICK. That was Mombasa's 45. Hammer cocked. Pointed at
Stans's heart.

A standoff.

SUDDENLY--

An eerie SILENCE descends like a fast falling curtain. Even
the BUZZING and CLICKING of insects have CEASED.

They read it. Weapons snap up. Stans and Mombasa disengage.
Trade glares. Another time.

White knuckle tension. Seconds feel like an eternity.

They hear it before they see it. A low, growling SOUND. The
kind that makes your skin crawl.

EXT. JUNGLE - ELSEWHERE

A POV of something CRASHING through jungle at speed, SNAPPING
branches like twigs. Deep, heavy panting. Whatever it is,
it's fast. Powerful. And lethal.

EXT. JUNGLE

Royce CLICKS off the safety on his AA-12 shotgun.

Isabelle RACKS the bolt of her rifle.

Cuchillo PULLS the slides of his Uzis.

Nikolai's chaingun begins to WHIR.

They wait. Louder. Closer...

EXT. JUNGLE - ELSEWHERE

The thing's POV again. Human forms ahead.

EXT. JUNGLE

Closer...

A blur of motion to the left! A shape -- large, lean, four legs, leathery skin -- LAUNCHES out of bushes, changing colors, chameleon-like.

A cross between a tiger, a boar and your worst nightmare.

Royce OPENS UP. Short, accurate bursts. Mombasa UNLEASHES with the AK. Hanzo -- three point stance, steady rate of fire, as if he was at a pistol range. Cuchillo's Uzis BLAZE.

All of the above is muted by the ROAR of Nikolai's chaingun. Its barrel spits out a foot of flame. Stream of high velocity rounds -- every fifth a tracer -- digs into the creature.

It SQUEALS as bullets tear it apart. A geyser of black blood. Still, it crawls toward them, barbed tail lashing spastically.

Nikolai - fuck me -- keeps firing.

Finally the monstrosity halts. Marks its killers with crimson eyes, as the light in them dims... and expires.

More are coming. Could be three, could be six. Hard to tell. They are swift, vicious, closing in from three directions.

Our crew -- fight or flee -- flee it is -- retreat toward the only avenue of the escape, laying cover fire, re-painting green with black.

Still, they come.

Stans's had enough, breaks, vanishes into the jungle.

A thing LUNGES for Isabelle, baring rows of jagged teeth.

She tracks it, taking her time... and...

BAM! A 30. Magnum hollow point BLOWS its head apart mid-air.
Black mist.

It lands, digging a furrow that ends at her feet.

ISABELLE

Run!

She moves, pulling Edwin. Another hellhound gives chase.

The rest of the crew spread out. Every man for himself.

EXT. JUNGLE

With Hanzo, running, pushing through thick foliage.

Movement ahead.

He swings at--

Royce, his own gun lined on Hanzo.

Split second relief.

Instantly they shift aim, as one of the beasts appears.

Both FIRE. CLICK, Royce runs dry.

It hears the sound, knows what it means, heads for Royce,
even though Hanzo is closer.

10 feet. Royce dumps the gun.

5. He draws a machete.

Almost on top of him. Leaps--

Royce drops under its attack, blade held high.

The monster sails over him. WHACK, its momentum splits it
open from stem to sternum.

Black blood drips off cold steel.

EXT. JUNGLE - ELSEWHERE

Stans sprints, branches SLASHING his face and hands. Way past giving a shit. Glances back.

Foliage RIPPLES behind him. A shape, closing fast.

ITS POV: Stans. Breathing, amplified, distorted.

Stans pours everything he's got left in the tank into a hundred yard dash. Checks his tail again.

Nothing there.

He has a split second to contemplate his luck before--

WHAM, the thing hits him bodily from the front.

They roll, kicking up leaves and dirt.

Jaws SNAP. He pushes against the beast's neck with one hand, keeping fangs at bay. Drives the shiv into its side with the other. Over and over again. With every stab:

STANS

Fuck you! Fuck you! FUCK YOU!!!

Black blood spatters his jumpsuit.

He SCREAMS, as the creature digs its claws into his shoulder, ripping flesh. Keeps stabbing.

Primal. Brutal. Two animals. The only question, who'll kill the other first.

The thing finally overpowers Stans. Angles for his throat.

WHAM, a boot SMASHES against its head, forcing it to the ground. Barrel to the ear. BOOM!

Silence. The monstrosity twitches, colors shifting, fearsome even near death.

Stans looks up. Mombasa looms over.

MOMBASA

Looking good there, boss.

EXT. TREE

Isabelle slings the rifle, push-pulls Edwin toward a tree.

ISABELLE

Climb!!!

He does. She's a step behind. And not a moment too soon...

A hellhound EXPLODES into view, as if born out of the jungle itself. Tears off a piece of her boot.

She grabs a branch. UNLOADS with the handgun. Full clip.

Slugs tear into the thing's head, bounce off the skull, leaving bloody grooves. Don't improve its looks. Nor do they stop it.

EXT. JUNGLE

Two more beeline toward Royce and Hanzo.

EXT. TREE

The monster coils. Vertical leap. Yanks Isabelle off.

She falls. Lies there, dazed.

Slowly the demon approaches. Teeth dripping saliva. Death incarnate.

EXT. JUNGLE

Royce grips the machete tighter. Hanzo DRIVES in a fresh clip. Last stand.

EXT. TREE

Isabelle reaches for her fallen pistol.

The beast lets her. Just keeps advancing. We're close enough to smell its wet carnivore stink, feel its hot breath...

She considers. Points the gun at her own head. About to pull the trigger...

A WHISTLE

High pitched, piercing, inhuman, washes over them.

The result is immediate and dramatic.

The creature slides to a stop, claws digging into dirt.
Stares at Isabelle, muscles quivering.

And then, just like that, it turns and vanishes into the
jungle, as swiftly as it appeared.

EXT. JUNGLE

The other two facing Royce and Hanzo retreat as well.

EXT. JUNGLE - ELSEWHERE

Nikolai -- breathing heavy -- his chain gun sweeps the area,
seeking targets. There are none.

EXT. JUNGLE - ELSEWHERE

Stans clutches his bleeding shoulder, locks eyes with
Mombasa. Unspoken question.

MOMBASA

Any other day, any other place.

Pause.

MOMBASA

But, bad as you're, those things,
whatever they are... are worse.

EXT. JUNGLE - ELSEWHERE

Isabelle lowers the gun. Her hand shakes. It takes her a
supreme effort of will to steady it.

SOUND. She draws--

Then Mombasa and Stans.

Royce and Hanzo approach from the other side.

Finally, Nikolai, dragging a chewed up carcass behind them. Drops it. THUD.

Everyone's too drained to speak. Finally,

MOMBASA

What the hell are these things?

NIKOLAI

Mutants maybe. Like after Chernobyl.

ISABELLE

They just... left.

ROYCE

(grim)

No. The whistle. They were called.

They digest, minds reeling. Refusing to comprehend.

STANS

What the hell are you saying? Are you saying these... these things are someone's...

ROYCE

Pets. Bloodhounds, maybe.

Beat. What comes next is a chilling observation, even more disturbing than the previous discovery.

EDWIN

There are seven of us.

Heads turn. Indeed, they seem to be one short. Namely--

CUCHILLO (V.O.)

...Help me!

They react.

EXT. CLEARING - AFTERNOON

The crew emerge. Stop at the edge of a clearing.

Cuchillo, his back toward them, head lolling to the side, sits slumped in the center of a barren swath of dead earth.

NIKOLAI
Hey! HEY!!! You OK?

CUCHILLO
(without turning)
Help me!

Isabelle steps forward. Royce's hand stops her.

ROYCE
It's a trap.

ISABELLE
You don't know that.

Royce picks up a rock. Tosses it out into the field.

It bounces once. Twice.

A SUDDEN blur of steel, as something lashes out from beneath the ground. DICES THE STONE TO SMITHEREENS.

A chilling, bottomless beat. Like standing on the edge of an abyss. And looking down.

NIKOLAI
(quiet)
Wound one man. Make him bleed. Make him suffer. Make him call out for help. Then set a trap and kill those who come.

Disgusted with himself, with the world, a confession:

NIKOLAI
I've done this.

MOMBASA
...We all have.

Pause.

STANS
So we leave him, right?

Off their looks,

STANS

I mean, he's done. There's nothing we can do. And whoever sent those dog things, he's out there. Right?

For once Stans is right. A confirmation:

ROYCE

We leave him.

He turns.

ISABELLE

...I can't.

Royce weighs the moment and her mettle.

ROYCE

Then it's on you.

Angles back into the jungle. One by one, the others pull away, follow in silent agreement. A decision they all have to live with.

We stay on Isabelle. Her eyes. Something welling behind them.

Her entire being is wrecked with silent tension.

Until,

CUCHILLO (V.O.)

Help me!

She snaps up the rifle, aims, FIRES, all in one liquid move.

EXT. JUNGLE

The GUNSHOT washes over them. A few react. Royce doesn't. Just puts one foot in front of the other.

EXT. CLEARING

Isabelle lowers the barrel.

Cuchillo's body is now on its side.

She turns to leave.

CUCHILLO (V.O.)

Help me.

She SPINS back toward--

CUCHILLO (V.O.)

(almost a taunt)

Help me.

On Isabelle. She's seen and dealt death on many occasions. She's rarely been afraid.

She is now.

Hurries after the others.

PREDATOR POV: A view from above. Everything in infrared, but sharper, more focused than we've ever seen. Isabelle recedes in the distance.

Panning to Cuchillo. A pool of blood glows around the body, becoming more faint, as it cools.

And then a RATTLE. Like rats scampering over broken glass.

This is not your father's Predator.

EXT. JUNGLE - AFTERNOON

Royce in the lead, the rest trailing. Isabelle at the rear.

They push out of jungle. Ten meters above, a barren, rocky ridge line looms.

They head toward it.

EXT. RIDGE - AFTERNOON

Slowly, as if clawing his way out of the ground after being buried alive, Royce appears over the horizon.

The others step up next to him. All stare out at the view before them, silent, their expressions unreadable.

THEIR POV: Sky as far as the eye can see. Below it, jungle stretches out for miles in every direction.

Beyond it, visible in the great distance, are massive, angular chunks of an alien planet, floating in space. A dying, shattered world.

Kansas it ain't.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLEARING - AFTERNOON

On Cuchillo, jerking upright. His head swings around, dead eyes staring at us.

A blade -- long, sharp, covered in strange runes -- touches the crown of his head, about to scalp him. Off that,

EXT. RIDGE - AFTERNOON

The crew are spread out on the ridge, exactly where we left them.

Only Stans faces us, looking away from the alien landscape, as though by ignoring it, it might somehow go away, rocking slowly back and forth, muttering:

STANS

This is not happening. This is not happening. This is not happening.

Edwin takes in the strangeness, the grandeur of it all, the slightest hint of a smile creasing his features.

Mombasa, a few paces away, Nikolai next to him, both lost in thought.

Hanzo reloads his gun.

Isabelle stares back in the direction of Cuchillo, still living the moment, the kill, the voice.

And Royce, alone, apart, an outcast among outcasts.

STANS (CONT'D)

...What is this place?
 (loud now, an explosion of
 emotion fueled by fear)
What the hell is this place!?

No one answers. Then,

ROYCE

The dogs were flushing us. He is
bait. We're being hunted.

A grim beat, as they process their probable fate. Finally,

MOMBASA

Now what?

In response, Royce points to a jungle matted hillock in the distance.

In its center, breaking the tree line, something vertical and tall. Something... unnatural.

ROYCE

There.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - SUNSET

Deep shadows. Dying sun -- burnt orange -- peeks through the heavy jungle canopy. Decides to stay out.

The crew advances, cautious, ready to rumble, ready for anything. Or so they think.

CREAKING, soft and steady. Growing stronger as they approach.

And then they see...

HELL

A half dozen creatures, skinned, rotting, all large, all alien, and, judging by their looks, all dangerous, hang by their feet from a long horizontal pole, CREAKING, as they sway in the breeze.

On the ground next to the carcasses, a flock of birds -- monstrous, otherworldly, carrion eaters -- feast on offal -- guts, brains, eyes, organs. There's plenty of chow for everyone, but they fight anyway, just for the hell of it.

Hides are strung over rough wooden frames, curing.

A fire smolders, sending up thin wisps of gray smoke.

A collection of polished skulls -- many with spinal cords still intact -- is displayed on tree stumps and stakes.

These are hard, dangerous men who've seen and done more than their share of evil. Still, they stare, transfixed, their faces descending into a state of abject horror and revulsion.

All except one.

Edwin's gaze is akin to that of a man looking up at the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

ISABELLE

(a whisper)

What is this place?

NIKOLAI

Hell.

Edwin's fingers run along a row of skinning knives, crusted with multi-colored blood. Feeling their sharp edges.

They pass a large pit, its bottom lost to the shadows.

Something big, fast, gunmetal grey SWOOPS by Nikolai, making the same SCREECHING sound they heard earlier in the jungle.

They advance further.

In the center of the camp, a 150 feet high METALLIC TOTEM POLE, all barbs and blades, covered in arcane hieroglyphics, rises out of the earth like an exclamation point.

We can see that there is something attached to the other side. Just not what.

With our crew. Coming around for a look. Then stopping cold. Pan off their stunned, speechless faces toward--

Stretched out on the totem is a PREDATOR. **CRUCIFIED**.

It hangs helplessly, head slumped, making no sound, past any threshold of pain a man could endure. Florescent green blood, glowing in the gathering twilight, covers its many wounds. Its helmet is off, armor stripped, shoulder mount smashed and dangling loosely off the shoulder.

It's dead. Or close to it.

At the base of the monument is a pile of discarded Predator armor, shattered weapons and cleaved skulls.

Shock and awe without the bombs.

STANS

What. The. Fuck?

Mombasa mutters something in his native tongue. No translation required.

Hanzo shakes his head, incredulous, unable to process.

EDWIN

(softly)

Monsters are real.

Isabelle takes a step back.

Bumps into Royce. Their eyes meet. In them, he sees something. Fear? Confusion? No. Recognition.

The Russian steps forward, chaingun held out. Slowly, carefully he pushes Predator's head upward with its barrel, trying to get a better look.

SUDDENLY

The thing's bloodshot eyes snap open. Mandibles flare. It ROARS! Nikolai and everyone else jump back.

STANS

Let's get the fuck out of here.

Nobody needs to be told twice. They start backing away.

The carrion birds EXPLODE into the sky.

Guns swivel in their direction.

Tense. Sweat beading. Hearts POUNDING. Terror building.

They see...

MOMBASA (V.O.)

...Nothing.

They relax.

Mombasa doesn't. Eyes wide with confusion.

MOMBASA

...That wasn't me.

With no warning--

A CLOAKED SPEAR -- visible only thanks to the red chalk outline of Mombasa's blood -- BURSTS out of his chest, driven right through him from behind.

His blood paints Stans's face.

Mombasa's finger depresses the trigger, a dying reflex. His AK BELCHES lead on full auto.

The other react, panic FIRE.

The fury of their weapons surges in the direction of the attack, riddling the camp and the jungle.

Crucified Predator adds its ROAR to the CACOPHONY.

There's nothing to shoot at. Not even the classic Predator shape. Just a faint shimmer.

Firing stops. They back away -- more of a herd than a unit.

STANS

Where is it? Where the fuck is it?!

Royce's eyes pan, looking for movement, motion, anything.

Isabelle, rifle up, searching.

Nikolai sweeps the chaingun in a wide arc, back and forth.

Nothing.

Slowly Royce's hand drops to one of the grenades clipped to Mombasa's harness.

CLICK.

That was the pin. Royce heaves the explosive into space. Rapid throws three more, spacing them around the camp ground at regular intervals.

Split second of calm before the storm.

Then BOOM! BOOMBOOMBOOM!!!

A cloud of dirt and shrapnel tears through the air in a concussive wave--

Washing over a fast moving form, making it visible for a brief moment.

We don't see much. But we do see this.

It. Is. Fucking. Big. Think Predator on steroids.

Nikolai sees it, UNLOADS on the thing with the chaingun, the ROAR of the weapon matched by his BATTLECRY.

PREDATOR POV: Bullets stream toward us in ghastly slow motion. Targeting system tracks each projectile, reads their telemetry, locks on.

And then the creature OPENS UP with a chaingun of its own.

An ERUPTION of flame. The thing is a monster. Makes Nikolai's BFG look like a child's toy.

Human and Predator rounds COLLIDE mid-air, CLATTER on the ground. Chaingun vs. chaingun.

Everyone else retreats, seeking cover and distance.

Nikolai stands his ground, still ROARING, barrel white hot and smoking.

CLICK, he runs dry. Hauls ass after the others.

Predator keeps FIRING.

They scatter, as rounds tear by. "Black Hawk Down" time.

Isabelle aims at the muzzle flashes, puts a round above them. It ricochets off some unseen metal.

Bullets arc towards her. Only the grace of God and a dead tree save her. She dives, as branches and bark get PULVERIZED. Pinned down.

Royce -- still in motion -- sees it -- shotgun on full auto.

The monster reels from the barrage.

A single drop of blood lands on the ground.

Royce sees it.

And then the thing turns its undivided attention toward him.

He cuts behind a row of hanging carcasses. Depleted uranium slugs turn meat into charnel in his wake.

Hands grab Isabelle. Edwin's. He pulls her up, hauls her toward the tree line.

EXT. JUNGLE - SUNSET

With Royce, sprinting, as if hell itself was on his heels -- which, in many ways, it is -- others doing same, as the jungle's literally SHREDDED behind them, bushes disintegrating, leaves turning to pulp, wood into splinters.

To Royce's left, seen only in silhouette and for the briefest of moments, we catch a glimpse of an alien ship -- burnished angular steel, lethal, sleek and intimidating.

Everyone else is running blind, stumbling, falling, picking themselves up, living from one breath to the next.

RAT TAT TAT TAT TAT, the slugs cut through the base of a massive tree trunk like a scythe. Timber!...

Its falling shadow eclipses our guys -- the arc of the bullets swings toward them -- crushed or shot, pick your poison -- OH SHIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIII--

The ground before them disappears, and they

EXT. CLIFF - SUNSET

DROP!

Six bodies TUMBLE down a steep slope, an avalanche of flailing arms and legs, SMASHING into stones and roots, weapons CLATTERING away, a long painful way down.

With Royce, the world spinning. An outcropping looms. He bounces off it, goes airborne.

Which is where the ride gets interesting.

He's falling... falling... something dark and foreboding below, coming up fast.

IMPACT!

EXT. RIVER - SUNSET

Royce PLUNGES underwater. Comes up in time to see Isabelle and Edwin SPLASH behind him. Stans careens in, SCREAMING.

All washed away, fast.

Nikolai descends. Disappears. Doesn't come back up.

EXT. UNDERWATER

HITS bottom. Current pulls him along, raking over rocks.

The weight of the chaingun holds him down, drowning him.

He thrashes, trying to ditch the thing. An exercise in futility. Lungs screaming for oxygen, getting none.

Suddenly a form appears out of the murk.

HANZO

His knife slices through the chaingun's harness. Both men shoot for the surface.

EXT. RIVER - SUNSET

Break it, sucking air, only to get swept away toward rapids. From the frying pan...

EXT. RAPIDS - SUNSET

Six heads bob in the river's fury. Still water ahead.

They hit it. Sucked down, out of frame.

EXT. UNDERWATER

Edwin is pulled through some unseen vortex, Isabelle behind him.

HER POV: Edwin jerked to the left, disappears. Beat, and she sees where.

An underwater tunnel, dark and slimy, like a path to hell.

And she's tumbling through it, walls rotating around her, jagged rocks, sand, plants, fish, all a blur.

An underwater rollercoaster -- nightmarish, dizzying, claustrophobic. Abruptly--

EXT. RIVER - SUNSET

She pops back up. Royce. Hanzo. The others.

PREDATOR POV: The crew -- glowing thermal shapes in churning black water -- glide toward us. And then, inexplicably--

We are airborne, circle over the prey, then accelerate away. That same SCREECHING sound.

That's because we are seeing through the eyes of--

PREDATOR FALCON

Segmented wings, barbed alloy, a biomechanical meld of machine and organic tissue. Death from above.

EXT. RAVINE - SUNSET

Predator Falcon descends toward the ridge overlooking the river. Wings extend, braking. Settles... on nothing. Wings retract. Just sits there, perched in mid air.

Light distorts. The air undulates, shifts. A form SHIMMERS into view.

We don't get the money shot. There'll be time for that later. Just a few glimpses, from the back. The rest, mercifully, is covered in shadows. One thing for sure...

If Predators were frightening, this thing is TERRIFYING.

A familiar RATTLE.

Meet BLACK SUPER PREDATOR.

Twenty yards to his left a SECOND SUPER PREDATOR de-cloaks.

Across the river and fifty yards downstream, a THIRD.

This is the hunting party.

BLACK SUPER PREDATOR turns toward us.

Under a ferocious, almost tribal mask, red eyes, like a pair of blood rubies, burn with cold malevolence.

EXT. BEACH - SUNSET

Nikolai drags himself out of the current. Collapses in a shallow pool set by a white sand beach.

Hanzo's next. Edwin. Stans. Heaving. Drenched. Alive.

Isabelle's fingers grasp rocks, find purchase. She pulls herself in. Suddenly a shadow looms over.

ROYCE

Yanks her to her feet. Hand on her throat. Cold fury.

ROYCE

You knew.

ISABELLE

I don't know what you're--

ROYCE

Yes, you do. In that camp, the way you looked at that thing. You knew.

Others approach. Stare.

Her eyes search for support. Find none.

ROYCE

What the hell are they?

Beat. A long one.

ISABELLE

We don't have a name for what they are. Just a spook story you hear around the campfire. An urban legend. Alien Bogeyman.

Trying to make sense of it herself:

ISABELLE

'87, Guatemala. A rescue team went into the jungle. Spec ops.

(MORE)

ISABELLE(cont'd)

High end. Six men plus a CIA liaison. One made it out. In his debrief he said they came in contact with... something not of this world. He gave a detailed description.

ROYCE

(re: her earlier reaction)
The thing on the totem.

ISABELLE

Yes.

ROYCE

What else?

ISABELLE

It could see in infra red. Heat signatures. He used mud to block his. That's how he was able to beat it. It wore some kind of camouflage that adjusted to ambient light. Made it nearly invisible in our spectrum.

ROYCE

What happened to the survivor?

ISABELLE

No one believed him. And then he just... disappeared.

Morale of the story:

ISABELLE

It hunted and killed his team. One by one.

Everybody thinking the same thing:

NIKOLAI

So what hunted it?

They can feel hairs on the backs of their necks standing up.

The sun -- a blood red orb -- sinks below the horizon. Tidal wave of shadows washes over, drowning them.

STANS

We should get going. Now. Right fucking now.

ROYCE

It wants you to run.

Lets them process this.

ROYCE

We wait here. Survive the night. Tomorrow we go back.

STANS

Back?! For what?! To save it the walk?

ROYCE

It had a ship.

STANS

A ship? A ship?! What are you gonna do with that ship, man? Push the start button? Throw it in gear and drive home?

Becoming unglued:

STANS

That thing fucked us seven ways to Sunday! You saw what it was doing back there? We're gonna end up as rugs and ashtrays! We're dead meat! We don't have a fucking chance!

ROYCE

(stone cold)

It bleeds.

STANS

So what?! Look at us, man, we're bleeding too!

Nail on the head.

ROYCE

If it bleeds, we can kill it.

Beat.

ISABELLE

What makes you think you can fly
the ship?

ROYCE

I can't. But that thing hanging on
the pole might.

Looks exchanged. The kind that say "you are fucking nuts".

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Seen from afar. Still. A cliff wall, peppered with small
caves, looms in the distance.

Moon and stars illuminate the jungle landscape, muting its
hard edges.

A SHRIEK in the distance. We don't even want to guess what
creature could have made it, let alone meet it in person.

An insect scurries along. A leathery tongue shoots into
frame, grabs it, snaps back like a rubber band inside the
mouth of something resembling an oversized tree frog.

It chews on the catch. A bird swoops, devours the amphibian
whole mid-meal.

Survival of the fittest.

We travel upward. Toward the tree tops. Different predators.
Different prey.

EXT. TREES

A form manifests in the foliage. Hanzo, twenty feet off the
ground, rests in the crook formed by trunk and limb.

Stans is perched on another tree.

Edwin, across from him, scrapes moss off the tree onto a
leaf. Waiting for dawn.

Isabelle clutches the stock of her rifle. Stares out into the
alien jungle beyond. Her mind elsewhere.

Royce. Eyes closed. Asleep. Or so we think.

ROYCE
Cuchillo. You did the right thing.
But you wasted a bullet.

She incinerates him with a glare.

ISABELLE
I won't make the same mistake with
you.

Beat.

ROYCE
What was his name? The man you left
behind?

She doesn't answer. He doesn't expect her to. Then,

ISABELLE
What happened to you, Royce? What
made you so fucked up?

He finally opens his eyes. Every word, every syllable of the
following bought and paid for in full:

ROYCE
It's always a jungle. You're either
predator. Or prey.

A hanging beat. Neither one looks at the other. Off that,

EXT. TREES - NIGHT - LATER

Isabelle nods off. Snaps back to consciousness.

HER POV: A breeze sweeps through the jungle. Branches RIPPLE,
like the surface of a lake after a stone throw, the effect
spreading into the distance. Until it reaches--

One particular branch, 250 yards out. It doesn't move.

She reacts, startled, opens her mouth--

Royce's hand wraps around it. Shakes his head. Lets go.

Isabelle snaps up the rifle.

HER POV: Night vision. The branch is already gone.

She shakes her head. Royce points.

Deep in jungle, the faintest sense of motion.

She tracks it.

HER POV: A glimmer. There one moment, gone the next.

CLICK, she drops the safety. Others hear it, react, tensing.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Something fast and agile cuts into frame, arcing left.
Circling our guys.

EXT. TREES - NIGHT - LATER

In the trees, everyone's alert, looking out in different
directions, waiting for an attack.

A bug lands on Stans's neck. He crushes it, eyes never
leaving the jungle.

Isabelle. Glued to the scope. A whisper:

ISABELLE
Why isn't it coming?

ROYCE
...It's waiting.

She glances at him. Shakes her head. She doesn't have a shot.
And they can't sit here forever.

Beat.

Slowly Royce puts down his weapon. Ammo. Side arm. Lightening
the load.

Isabelle. Royce. Reading one another.

ROYCE
Don't miss.

SMASH TO:

EXT. JUNGLE/EXT TREE - NIGHT - INTERCUT

On Royce -- running.

Fifty yards to his left, a blur, moving parallel, matching pace.

Royce keeps running, leaping logs, ducking low branches.

ISABELLE'S POV: Royce, sprinting. Rapid shifts to his pursuer. Now forty yards out and closing. Two trains on a collision course.

Back to Royce. He angles left.

The hunter adjusts accordingly.

ISABELLE'S POV: Its form -- still largely unseen -- strobes through the bushes. Too fast to draw a bead on.

Royce -- he can hear it approaching -- still, he never looks back, never skips a beat -- just hauls ass.

Eight yards out... Six...

Isabelle's finger tenses on the trigger.

HER POV: Four yards... Two...

Royce -- the creature almost upon him.

Talons -- long, black, jagged -- SLASH!

BANG! Thing's blown off to the side and out of frame.

Royce drops to the ground, exhausted.

Isabelle lowers the rifle, her expression unreadable.

EXT. JUNGLE - MOMENTS LATER

Royce stands over the slain monster, doubled over, sucking wind. The others approach.

STANS

Is it dead?

Royce manages a nod.

STANS

When why the fuck aren't you
smiling?!

Royce motions over his shoulder toward the body.

We finally get a good look.

The creature resembles a stick bug, multi-jointed limbs protruding from its exoskeleton, carapace covered in sharp bone blades. Definitely not a Predator. More importantly,

A harness stretches over its chest. In the center, a broken altimeter.

STANS

(fuck me)
...It's one of us.

Isabelle approaches.

ROYCE

Good shot, anyway.

She ignores him. Checks the tree trunk next to the corpse.

A ragged hole in it. The confirmation she needed.

ISABELLE

I missed.

OH SHIT!!

They react -- sitting ducks -- can practically feel another incoming round screaming toward them...

Instead, a low, quiet rasp:

VOICE

Over here.

They spin toward it.

Nothing.

Behind them now:

VOICE

Over here.

Everyone, save Royce, reflexively swings that way.

Royce -- fool me once -- stays put, eyes panning slowly...

The tip of a burnished barrel brushes his ear.

He turns. Finds himself facing the business end of a long rifle. Only alien and much more badass.

At its terminus, jungle. And two eyes.

VOICE

What are you?

ROYCE

Fucked. How about you?

Beat.

The barrel pulls away.

Jungle seems to shift. A camouflaged form, composed of leaves and vines, steps forward. The ultimate Ghillie suit. The kind that hunters wear to blend into their surroundings.

Its hood is pulled back to reveal--

NOLAND. 60's. Hard open face, battered by elements and age. Scars. Burn marks. It's not the years, it's the mileage.

NOLAND

Alive.

Takes in our crew. Doesn't like what he sees. His voice has the cadence of a man who hasn't used it in a very long time.

NOLAND

And you're sloppy. I've been hearing you for six hours. Smelling you for eight. And if I can, so can they.

(beat)

It's going to rain soon.

Starts to walk away.

ISABELLE

Wait.

Off his look,

ISABELLE

Who are you?

The sound of his own name seems almost unfamiliar to him:

NOLAND

My name is... Noland.

He strides back into the jungle. Our crew trade glances. Wisely decide to follow.

EXT. CLIFF - NIGHT

High stone walls loom. Noland heads for them, moving with the practiced precision of a seasoned hunter.

An odd sight ahead stops them in their tracks.

Three Predator skeletons -- ancient, bones bleached, rib cages pulverized, skulls shattered -- lie on the ground.

The forth is fused with a Super Predator skeleton, blades -- not even a speck of rust, even after all these centuries -- driven into one another, locked in an eternal struggle.

They take in the eerie tableau, staggered by it.

Noland just brushes past it. He's seen it all before.

THUNDER CLAPS in the distance.

Plants begin to close up. Bulbs retract, as thick, fibrous leaves wrap around them protectively. Soon we'll know why.

Noland picks up the pace. To our crew:

NOLAND

Hurry.

Drops start to fall. Sizzle on the skeletons.

One hits Stans's shoulder, burns through fabric. He YELPS.

STANS

What the fuck?!

Make that acid rain. Figures.

Dead end ahead. Noland marches toward it, undeterred. Rounds an outcropping. Pulls back a heavy camouflage net.

Cave entrance behind it. He disappears inside. Our heroes trail. All save--

Edwin. Frozen. Something in his expression we haven't seen since we've met him. Terror.

EDWIN

I have... an issue... with small spaces.

ROYCE

Deal with it.

Edwin tries. Can't.

Shaking, on the verge of hyperventilating -- his creepy calm veneer cracking like ice -- at the moment he's nothing but a stranger in a strange land, stranded, scared, pathetic.

More drops fall. The ground smolders. If Edwin stays outside, he's toast.

Isabelle takes pity. Steps back out.

ISABELLE

Look at me. Look at me.

He does. Deer in the headlights.

ISABELLE

We're going to do this together.
Take my hand. Keep moving. One foot
in front of the other.

Slowly and with supreme effort, Edwin complies.

ISABELLE

Good. You're doing good.

They enter--

INT. PASSAGE - NIGHT

Nikolai pulls a Claymore from his pack. Plants it, about to string a trip wire.

NOLAND

Don't. They're smart. Too smart for that.

He moves off into darkness. Clearly knows every inch of this place. The passage continues ahead, curving to the left.

Noland pushes up against a wall. A hatch opens up.

INT. NOLAND'S CAVE

Isabelle and Edwin are last to arrive. Noland pulls a heavy trap door closed behind them, secures it with alloy rods.

Turns up a dial on some strange device. Light washes over, illuminating--

The space is large and spartan. Thee hatch. A cot next to it. Makeshift table and bench. Hard living.

Everywhere, bits and pieces of gear, some man made, most alien. A scavenger's den.

Noland puts down the rifle. As he peels off his Ghillie suit:

NOLAND

They drop you in?

Royce nods.

NOLAND

Hell of a rush, huh?

An armored plate beneath it. Think alien Kevlar. Stans eyes it, greedy, envious. KNOCKS on it, liking the sound.

STANS

Where did you get that?

NOLAND

Off the guy who didn't need it anymore. Don't touch my stuff.

Another suit under the plate, this one made out of the hide of some creature. Off their looks,

NOLAND

Blocks the body heat. Can't hunt what you can't see.

ISABELLE

How long have you been here?

Noland motions to a wall.

Thousands of lines carved into stone. Thousands of days.

NIKOLAI

Jesus...

NOLAND

Don't see much of him around here.
We win the war?

NIKOLAI

Iraq?

NOLAND

Vietnam.

Nikolai shakes his head.

NOLAND

Figured we wouldn't. Victory's in
the mind. We lost before we even
went in.

EDWIN

How did you survive this long?

NOLAND

Being smart. Keeping my head down.
Salvaging what I can, when I can,
from whatever I can. Making sure
they don't know where I am. You
want food?

EDWIN

I could eat.

Noland nods to an earthen bowl. Edwin peeks inside. Looses
his appetite very quickly.

NOLAND

I'd tell you it tastes like
chicken. Except I don't remember
what chicken tastes like. But you
can live on it.

NIKOLAI
What is this place?

NOLAND
Far as I can tell, a game preserve.
And you and I are the game.

ROYCE
They stock it.

NOLAND
That's right. You're lucky. Most
humans don't make it this far.

ISABELLE
So all this is just for sport?

NOLAND
I didn't say that.

All ears.

NOLAND
Every year they bring in the fresh
meat. Shit you wouldn't even
believe. They hunt 'em. Kill 'em.
But every so often one of us kills
one of them. That's when they get
real interested. Slice the poor son
of a bitch up. See what makes him
tick. Next season, when they are
back, maybe their weapons have
changed, or maybe their armor.
Maybe even them.

They trade glances.

ROYCE
How do we stop them?

NOLAND
You don't.

ROYCE
They've got to have a weakness.

NOLAND
Some ones we got. 'cept what kills
us just hurts them.

(MORE)

NOLAND(cont'd)

(shakes his head)

I'm going to bed. No loud noises.
They're out there.

EDWIN

How do you know?

NOLAND

(matter of fact)

Because they're always out there.

INT. NOLAND'S CAVE - LATER

Time's passed. Lights are low. Noland's asleep on his cot. The crew is arrayed around the cave. Nowhere to go. Nothing to do. Just time to kill. And ponder.

Hanzo's eyes take in a pile of weapons in the corner. Some we recognize -- a pump action ten gauge, a katana, a CAR-15, a flare gun, Dirty Harry's Magnum. Some whose origins we can only imagine.

Hanzo picks up the katana. Studies it with reverence. Pulls the blade half way out of the scabbard.

His eyes are reflected in the steel.

HANZO

This is old. Very old.

They react, both to the statement and the fact that he's finally broken his silence.

ROYCE

They've been doing this for a long time.

NIKOLAI

You speak English.

HANZO

Yes.

STANS

So why didn't you say something?

Hanzo lifts up his diminished hand.

HANZO
(indicating the missing
fingers)
Because I talked too much.

Nikolai laughs. Not a sound you hear often in this place.

Stans chuckles as well. To Edwin:

STANS
So what's your story, white bread?

EDWIN
I don't have one.

STANS
Everybody's got a story.

EDWIN
I sell life insurance.

STANS
Yeah? How about you write me a
policy?

He chuckles. Edwin doesn't.

EDWIN
I'm afraid that would be a poor
investment.

STANS
Why is that?

EDWIN
(same flat monotone)
Because we're all going to die.

Stans's smile fades.

Isabelle and Royce, in the far corner, apart from the rest.

ISABELLE
He's right.

ROYCE
Not me. I'm going home.

ISABEL
What's that?

ROYCE

Earth.

ISABEL

Anyone waiting for you there?
Anyone who was sad to see you go in
the first place? Anyone at all?

He doesn't respond. She doesn't expect him. A reversal.

ISABELLE

Do you know what I was doing when I
was taken? The things I have done?
Do you have any idea?

ROYCE

You did what you had to do.

ISABELLE

I used to believe that. I used to
believe a lot of things. (beat)
The trouble with the end justifying
the means is that sometimes you get
to the end and wonder if it was
worth it. And what it was all for.

Eyes full of pain.

ISABELLE

You said we were chosen. I asked
for what. I should have asked why.

Midnight of the soul:

ISABELLE

It's because we are predators,
Royce. Just like them. And going
home isn't going to change that.

Beat. Hollow. Crushing. It hangs there. Until,

ROYCE

Where's Noland?

Heads turn to the cot. Empty.

Royce moves to the hatch, tries to pull it open. No dice,
it's sealed from the other side.

ROYCE
Noland! NOLAND!

No response.

STANS
What the hell is he doing?

EDWIN
Collecting.

Off their reactions,

EDWIN
He's a scavenger. What he can, when
he can, from whatever he can. Or
whomever. He wants what we have.

As a confirmation, smoke -- grey-green and thick -- begins to
pour in through holes in the floor. FUBAR.

They react. Some try to cover their mouths. Others attempt to
plug the vents. Both plans appear futile.

Royce -- spur of the movement -- JACKS in a green shell into
his shotgun.

ROYCE
Get down.

ISABEL
What are you--?

Royce levels the weapon toward the far wall.

ROYCE
NOW!

Everyone dives for cover.

BOOOM! That was a Frag-12 round. Effectively turning the
shotgun into a rocket launcher.

EXT. CLIFF

Muffled concussion. A few rocks slide. Otherwise it's quiet.

EXT. JUNGLE - SAME TIME

SUPER PREDATOR POV: Keying in on falling rocks. Tracking them back to the source. Detecting a hot spot on the cliff face, radiating from the inside.

INT. NOLAND'S CAVE

Our guys pick themselves up, ears ringing, dust and debris covering their bodies.

STANS

What the fuck was that?

ROYCE

Calling in the cavalry.

INT. PASSAGE

Noland stands outside, stoking a fire, smoke wafting upward, into his cave. Hears. Knows.

NOLAND

(under his breath)

You crazy fucker.

Books for the exit.

Too late.

Framed at the mouth of the cave, the outline of a monster.

Noland takes a step back... and raises his hands. Calmly:

NOLAND

I'm unarmed.

BLAM, a plasma round PLASTERS him all over the wall.

The Super moves past the charbroiled corpse.

INT. NOLAND'S CAVE

Royce and the others crouch by the hatch. Smoke still billows, then shifts, as something approaches from the other side.

Wait for it... Wait for it...

WHAM, WHAM, WHAM, the Super RAMS the door. Hatch BUCKLES inward. Rivets POP. The thing barely hangs in its hinges.

They back away, guns trained on the entrance.

And then the attack ceases, as abruptly as it began.

They trade glances.

HANZO

We stay here, we die. We run, we die.

ROYCE

You talk too much.

He grabs a flare gun. Sticks it into the breach. Pulls the trigger.

INT. PASSAGE

WHOOSH, the projectile steaks down the passage.

SUPER'S POV: A glowing globe heads toward us, its heat accentuated by the infra red. EXPLODES. A mini supernova.

Super's momentarily blind. Reflexively grabs its eyes. Ten second window.

All the time our heroes need. They dash past.

INT. PASSAGE

And we're running again. Twisting and turning corridors of jagged rock, illuminated only by the tactical flashlight mounted on Royce's shotgun.

INT. CAVE

SUPER PREDATOR POV: Filters kick in to compensate. Vision returns. It chases after our crew.

INT. PASSAGE

With the crew, sprinting like their lives depend on speed. At the moment, they do.

FOOTFALLS behind them.

Royce and Nikolai, at the rear, lay cover fire. Muzzles flash. Slugs spark and ricochet off stone.

They run some more. Spread out. Tighten up. Always in motion. Stop and you die.

Walls glisten with condensation. Close in.

So does the demon behind them.

Ahead, the passage drops down into darkness.

They keep going, blind, slipping down the slime covered incline, into--

INT. CAVERN

A cathedral of stone. Something black and alive undulates on the ceiling like some enormous organism.

No cover. No exit. End of the line.

They cast about, frantic, searching for options. Finding none.

The sound of water SLOSHING in the distance, drawing near.

Guns swing in its direction.

ISABELLE

Can't say it's been a pleasure.

They gets ready.

Closer... Closer... Inside the cave.

Which is when Royce rotates his weapon, FIRES!

Not at the Super. At the ceiling. We might have a split second to ponder what he has against it. Maybe not. Cause--

Hundreds, nay, thousands of bats EXPLODE from it in all directions. A screeching maelstrom of motion and wings CRASHES over the Super, veering around it, framing its outline, making it visible once again.

SUPER PREDATOR POV: A CACOPHONY of high pitched SQUEALS. It practically RIPS APART its ear drums. Targeting system goes berserk, locking in on everything and nothing.

Super HOWLS in pain, claws at its skull, FIRES blindly.

In a word, pandemonium.

Amidst all this Royce moves, low and fast, others trailing.

Some of the bats escape upward. We track their flight path.

A natural chimney rises up at a 45 degree angle, previously obscured by the nesting bats. A way out. They rush toward it.

Super recovers. Targets our crew. BAM!

Plasma round SCORCHES Nikolai, sends him sprawling.

Isabelle spins toward him.

Nikolai -- on the ground, hurt bad -- eye contact.

ROYCE
(to Isabelle)
Come on!

Nikolai simply shakes his head. Then looks away.

Royce grabs her. She doesn't move. A thousand miles away.

ROYCE
Come on, damn it!

She snaps back to reality. Shoves Royce aside.

ISABELLE
Don't. Fucking. Touch me.

Resumes running. Royce follows. Into the chimney they go.

Nikolai remains. Props himself up against the wall. Clutches his chest. Waits...

Super de-cloaks into view.

They keep climbing. We rise above them, through the chimney, over the exit, as--

Something STREAKS past the camera. A familiar SCREECH.

EXT. PLATEAU - NIGHT

Royce reaches the surface. Collapses.

A barren plateau stretches out like an island of stone, surrounded by jungle on all sides.

Almost in disbelief:

STANS
We... killed it.
(realization dawning)
We fucking killed it!!!

He peers down the chute. Practically dancing a jig:

STANS
Fuck you, ET! How do you like us
now, motherfucker?! Huh?! Huh?!
Hunt this!

He grabs his package.

BOOM! Plasma caster NAILS Stans in the back, blowing him out of frame. Revealing--

Black Super Predator. Finally unveiled in his full glory.

Heavy jet black armor -- a hellish mix of medieval knight and samurai -- envelops its hulking frame like the Grim Reaper's shroud.

Desiccated remains of its victims hang around its neck and belt.

A triple headed plasma caster rests on its mount. Cruelly curved blades at the elbows. Spikes on shoulders, knees and heels. Even its dreadlocks are weapons, each strand ending with a razor-sharp tip weaved into the hair.

That same chilling RATTLE again.

Laser sight extends, painting Royce's forehead.

On Royce. Resigned. Ready. No sign of fear.

BLACK'S POV: Royce, in infrared. A mass of color. Keying in on his beating heart. Measuring its steady rate.

ROYCE'S POV: Nothing so fancy. Taking in the monstrosity before him. Giving it nothing. An eye fuck.

Game over in 3-2-

WHAM, Stans -- not quite as dead as we figured -- LEAPS on it from behind. PLUNGES his shiv into the thing's neck.

Black's turn to suffer. Round intended for Royce goes wild.

Stans -- his back a scorched, bloody mess, Noland's alien Kevlar exposed under the shredded fabric of his prison jumpsuit -- a hole through the armored plate, but it bought him the next few precious seconds of life -- hangs on to Black like a pitbull, stabbing, punching, slashing, ROARING!

We finally see why he was chosen. He's a fucking animal.

STANS

(to the others)

Go! GO!!!

They run for it.

Black -- its own ROAR drowns Stans's -- DRIVES a bladed elbow into his side, WHAM, WHAM. Its plasma caster SWIVELS, tracking the fugitives.

Stans -- bleeding, dying, fuck you, he eats that for breakfast -- grabs the shoulder mount, twists it the other way, pointing the barrel toward the fucker's head.

Black -- can't fire without blowing its own brains -- re-focuses his attention on Stans. WHAM! WHAM! WHAM!

Finally Stans expires, still clinging on to his opponent, even in death.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

What's left of our crew -- Royce, Isabelle, Hanzo, Edwin -- keep moving.

EXT. PLATEAU - NIGHT

Stans's body HITS the ground.

Black Super Predator looms over. Levels its heavy gaze on the jungle.

Another Super SHIMMERS into view alongside him. Locks in on the same direction.

Black BELLOWS!

It's the cry of a hunter. Stirring fear in the heart of its prey.

And then the two creatures move, fast, efficient strides, heading after their prey, fading to invisibility.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The screen is a microcosm of leaf, crystal drops of precipitation refracting the moonlight, stone and emerald green moss. We hear the JUNGLE. Some distant BIRDS. HUM of insects. The whisper of the WIND.

Royce -- a flash -- streaks into frame. Disturbing no leaves, breaking no branches, making no sound. Isabelle and Edwin behind him, Hanzo trailing.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Same spot. Distant RUSTLING. It gets closer and louder.

We don't see Black Super Predator. We can only feel its passage by the vibration of the drops. As they fall--

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

A forty yard sheet of rocks. Royce leaps onto it, keeps running.

EXT. JUNGLE - MOMENTS LATER

Black Super Predator SHIMMERS into view. Scans the area with the clinical detachment of a crime scene forensic. Shifts its gaze toward the ground.

BLACK SUPER PREDATOR'S POV: Tracks end at the stretch of rock. Exponential magnification in rapid snaps. Times 4. 8. 16. 32. Depressions in the stone. Deviations in topography. "Enemy Of The State" time.

But no good track. Which is exactly what Royce intended.

Undeterred, Black CYCLES through different vision modes, like a camera changing lenses. Ultraviolet. Terahertz. Gamma. Finally settles on--

Chemical sensor. Our heroes' scent still lingers in the air in the form of their distorted silhouettes. It's like looking back in time and seeing a pheromone imprint left by the person who occupied the space minutes ago.

Black follows it, fading back to invisibility, certain as death and taxes.

We understand the game being played. A duel of hunters. Technology against survival skills. Terminator vs. Rambo.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - NIGHT

The totem rises over the jungle canopy in the distance.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Royce emerges out of bushes. Swamp to the left. Solid ground to the right.

Others stumble behind. Sucking air. Suffering the effects of the run.

Royce puts his ear to the ground. The thing might be invisible. But it's not immaterial. And it is heavy.

He can sense their pursuer approaching in the distance.

Into the swamp they go. Brackish, foul smelling water rises up to meet them.

EXT. SWAMP - MOMENTS LATER

BLACK'S POV: Moving. The pheromone trail lies before us like an illuminated path. Then... nothing. It just gets abruptly erased mid-air, overwhelmed by the stench of the swamp.

Black RATTLES in frustration.

ITS POV cycles back to infrared.

Revealing the second Super, standing a few feet away, invisible in the previous spectrum.

A look between them. Something passes.

Second Super cuts into the swamp.

Black skirts around it, trying to outflank our guys. A vise.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Royce and the others push through knee deep water, going on fumes and desperation.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

SECOND SUPER'S POV: Moving, stopping. Panning around. Cycling modes. Nothing.

As any hunter knows, it's impossible to track over water.

Or is it?....

MACRO CLOSE on the surface of the swamp. Detecting INFINITESIMAL RIPPLES, reverberating from our heroes' fading footsteps. Calculating the distance from the source.

And then we are moving again.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

With our crew, running, their feet SLASHING rhythmically against the water.

EXT. SWAMP - SAME TIME

In Super's POV, following their wake.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Royce, still on the move, grabs a passing tree limb.

EXT. SWAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Splash! Splash! The Super, seen only via the afore-mentioned effect, rushes through the same spot, glued to the trail.

Which is why it doesn't see the vine stretched an inch above the bottom. An improvised trip wire. Snags it--

WHAM, the tree limb uncoils, WHIPLASHES it into next week.

SPLASH!!! Something heavy tumbles into the swamp.

Beat. The creature climbs back on its feet, blue sparks coursing around its flickering form. Cloak is on the fritz. Then gives out completely.

Super PUSHES control panel buttons on its gauntlet. No joy. Tries the vision modes. Same.

And then it HISSSES like a pissed off cat.

EXT. EDGE OF THE SWAMP - NIGHT

Royce climbs out onto a muddy embankment, others in tow.

Ten yards out, an ocean of tall grass. Savannah. They head for it.

EXT. TALL GRASS - NIGHT

Everyone collapses, exhausted beyond words. For a while the only sounds we hear are the wind and their ragged breathing. Then,

ISABELLE

...They're running us down.

HANZO

The more they chase us, the weaker we get.

ROYCE

Persistence hunting. Driving us to exhaustion.

Break's over.

EXT. TALL GRASS

Star splattered sky. Grass sways in the breeze.

Four silhouettes, seen from afar, move through it.

One STOPS.

Royce glances back.

Hanzo stands in the center of the clearing. Tired of running.

Looks at the survivors. A simple nod.

All they can do is keep going.

Slowly, meticulously Hanzo removes his shirt. Folds it neatly. Lays down on the ground. Just like the shoes.

The body beneath covered in irezumi. Full body Yakuza tattoos. Dragon. Tiger. Images of violence made somehow beautiful through art.

He unsheathes the katana. Holds it loosely, blade pointed downward, Takakura Ken style.

He waits.

Over his shoulder, as Second Super approaches.

Targeting beam triangulates Hanzo's face. Then drops downward toward the tattoos.

SUPER'S POV: Data, first on the man -- vital organs, musculoskeletal structure, nervous system -- then on the blade -- measurements, chemical composition -- scrolls.

Hanzo waits.

The beam disappears.

Slowly the Super unstraps its caster. It THUDS on the ground.

Walks towards Hanzo, picking up pace, as he goes.

SNAP. SNAP. Twin WRIST BLADES -- acid etched alien steel covered by glyphs and kill notches -- extend.

Two master swordsmen from different sides of the galaxy.

Super charges. A freight train.

Hanzo stands his ground.

IMPACT. Steel on steel. Sparks fly. A flurry of moves -- slashes, stabs, blocks and counterattacks -- too dazzling to comprehend -- a dance of death, a duel of equals.

They disengage. Circle. Looking for openings.

Suddenly lunge. CLASH. Swords LOCK, GRIND along each other.

The eyes of their owners are linked as well.

Slivers of metal SHEER. A shower of sparks.

Super flexes its massive arms, driving Hanzo back. SLASH!

A line of red wells across Hanzo's shoulder.

Super flicks off its opponent's blood.

Hanzo nods. Switches his stance. High guard.

Super considers. His own blade hangs low.

Hanzo adjusts his grip. Shifts his balance. A coiled spring.

SUPER'S POV: Computer calculates Hanzo's weight dispersal. Muscle tension. Predicting where he's going to strike next.

They charge toward one another.

A BLUR of steel, as they pass. SWISH! SLASH!

Then stop.

Beat. We can't tell who got whom. Until...

Super gurgles black blood. Slides apart, split from shoulder to thigh.

Hanzo DRIVES his sword into the ground. An echo of Kurosawa.

His hand on the hilt. Blood flows freely down the wrist.

He looks up at the sky. Collapses.

A beautiful death.

EXT. JUNGLE

Royce cuts between leafy plants, pushes into a small clearing. Three miles out, the totem. Nearing home stretch.

A form glides into view. Predator Falcon. That same SCREECHING sound again. Noting Royce's reaction:

EDWIN

It's just a bird, is it?

ROYCE

No, it's not.

The master can't be far behind.

Royce casts about, searching for an out. Cover is sparse. They stay on the ground, they're dead.

His gaze travels upward, toward the jungle canopy. Isabelle tracks it. Reacts. Shit. And she thought running was bad.

ROYCE

Got a better idea?

She doesn't. Edwin pales a bit.

ISABELLE

Let me guess. Heights.

He nods. Then, tapping into some hidden reservoir, a hint of steel beneath his meek exterior:

EDWIN

I know. Deal with it.

They begin to climb, using branches, vines, outcroppings, anything they can for purchase.

The Falcon continues to circle.

We zero in on its eye. Then PULL BACK. Except we're now--

EXT. JUNGLE - SAME TIME

On the eye of its master. Bird's POV reflected in the pupil.

Black can see what the Falcon sees. A biomechanical link.

EXT. TREE

With our guys, no safety lines, pushing themselves upward, fighting for every inch, and now it's a race, cause--

EXT. JUNGLE

BLACK'S POV: Knows exactly where they are, and he's hauling ass!

EXT. TREE

Climbing. The canopy looms above. A shield of green. We draw toward it, slowly but surely.

EXT. RIVER

BLACK'S POV: Going flat out at punishing pace, strong, effortless, a machine.

EXT. TREES

At last they reach the top. Royce looks down.

Bushes RIPPLE, as if a small tornado was passing through them. Closing rapidly on their position.

Isabelle, just below, reacts to his expression.

ISABELLE

Do I want to know?

ROYCE

No. You want to run.

EXT. TREE TOPS

That they do.

A mad dash through an intricate latticework of tree limbs, so thick and intertwined they form a kind of hidden, treacherous catwalk, broken up by gaps and crevices. A vertigo-inducing experience.

As they pass, we descend through the foliage, streak toward the ground below toward--

EXT. JUNGLE

Black -- a shimmer -- fifty feet down and a hundred yards behind -- relentless, gaining.

ITS POV: Leaves obscure the view of the prey. No matter.

EXT. TREE TOPS

The Falcon SWOOPS from above, and we're now in its POV, with our guys again, sprinting, struggling forward, unaware that--

EXT. JUNGLE

Black's plasma caster WHIRS into motion.

BLACK'S POV: Aiming through the bird's eyes. Matching their movements, anticipating where they are going to be in the split second it'll take the rounds to reach their marks.

EXT. TREE TOPS

The Falcon -- ahead of the quarry -- keeps a constant lock.

EXT. JUNGLE

Black Super -- has them dead to rights -- about to fire, as--

EXT. TREE TOPS

BAM, BAM, BAM! Royce OPENS UP on the Falcon.

It's forced to evade. Tracer rounds STREAK by.

EXT. JUNGLE

BOOM! Black's blast -- targeting lock disengaged -- misses, blowing chunks out of a tree.

EXT. TREE TOPS

The bird dips, trying to recover, coming around for another pass.

Royce keeps pouring rounds at it. Keeps missing.

It's ducking, weaving, constantly changing altitude, impossible to hit.

BOOM! Another blast ERUPTS through the canopy, closer now.

The concussion knocks Royce back. He loses the shotgun.

It plummets below.

FALCON'S POV: target lock re-acquired.

CRACK!

Falcon -- a mid-air explosion of feathers and metal -- corkscrews into a tree like a shot down Messerschmitt.

Bullseye.

Isabelle lowers the smoking barrel.

EXT. JUNGLE

BLACK'S POV: The link severed. Everything goes black. BELLOWS in pain and rage!

EXT. TREE TOPS

Royce -- a simple nod to Isabelle -- keeps moving.

EXT. JUNGLE

BLACK'S POV: Vision returning slowly. Panning across the canopy. No sign of the prey.

And then it really RATTLES!

EXT. JUNGLE - OTHER

Royce drops into frame, descending from the tree. Isabelle is next. Then Edwin.

He takes two steps and--

THWACK!

Edwin SCREAMS.

A barbed vice -- an alien bear trap -- is locked onto his ankle, bronze alloy stained red.

Isabelle rushes toward him. Drops to her knees. Strains to pull the jaws open. Can't.

ISABELLE

Help me!

Royce doesn't move.

She glares. Continues to struggle. Eventually they give just enough for Edwin to pull his leg free. He collapses.

She examines the wound. Edwin winces.

ISABELLE

Hurts?

EDWIN

Like hell.

ISABELLE

Good. Means there's still blood flowing. Another quarter of an inch, and it would have hit your femoral artery.

EDWIN

Guess it's my lucky day.

ROYCE

It isn't.

He doesn't even look at the wound. He doesn't have to.

ROYCE
That trap wasn't meant to kill.
Just to maim.

Cold hard truth. Both barrels of it:

ROYCE
Leave him.

ISABELLE
Hang on just a fucking second!

ROYCE
(to Edwin)
No offence. But you're dead weight.

EDWIN
I can still walk!

ROYCE
Not for long. You'll get winded
quickly. You'll say you don't need
any help. But sooner or later
you'll start lagging behind.
Eventually you won't be able to
continue on your own. We'll feel
bad. We'll carry you. And then
you'll drag us down with you.

Beat. Both know he's right.

Royce takes out his handgun. Ejects the clip. Leaving--

ROYCE
One round in the pipe. That's all
you need.

He tosses the pistol to Edwin.

Isabelle explodes, the total tonnage of everything she's been
through in the last 36 hours unleashing like a broken dam.

ISABELLE
We can't do this! This isn't right!
This isn't fucking right! He's one
of us!

Royce's calm matches her fury.

ROYCE

Don't you get it? This is a trick.
Do you think it would stop for one
of its own? It wants your
compassion. Your pity. To feel
something for this man. To be
human.

Beat.

ISABELLE

Then I guess I am. What are you?

ROYCE

(an echo of Noland's line)
Alive.

Brass tacks:

ROYCE

...I'm not dying for him. You want
to carry him, it's on you.

Starts walking away.

ISABELLE

Royce!

He slows. Turns. Meaning every word:

ISABELLE

You don't belong here with us. You
belong back there. With them.

Royce processes this.

And then he's gone, consumed by jungle.

Beat.

EDWIN

You should have gone with him.

ISABELLE

(simply)
I know.

She grabs Edwin's hand, pulls him to his feet.

WHOOSH!

Something knocks them out of frame.

A HEAVY ALLOY MASH NET

They lying on the ground, wrapped in it like a cocoon.

THEIR POV: Black materializes. Looms over. Off that,

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - NIGHT

Moving through it.

Shell casings litter the ground. Trees pocked with bullet holes. Earth marred by grenade blasts. A battle zone.

Three remaining Predator hunting dogs lunge at the bars of their cages, foaming at the mouth, choking on BARK like vomit, trying to get at someone just beyond their reach.

Predator still hangs on the totem. Snaps back to consciousness.

PREDATOR POV: Royce standing before him. Close. Too close.

Picks up an axe from a pile of discarded Predator weapons at the thing's feet. Feels its weight in his hand.

Beat.

ROYCE

You understand me?

Crucified Predator focuses on him with bloodshot eyes.

ROYCE

I want out. Off world. There's a ship here. Can you fly it?

Crucified Predator studies Royce for a long beat.

Then, a nod.

Slowly Royce raises the blade...

THWACK! He cuts the creature's bond. THWACK! THWACK! THWACK!

Predator falls to the ground.

Moment of truth.

Predator rises to his feet. Massive. Imposing, even despite his injuries. Or perhaps because of them.

Royce stares at him, tensing, ready to fight and die.

And then the thing ROARS!

It is a cry ripped from the depths of its soul. Fierce. Primitive. Timeless.

EXT. JUNGLE

Isabelle and Edwin are DRAGGED along the jungle floor. Captives.

The ROAR washes over them. Birds SCREECH. Animals HOWL. It's as if the jungle itself is reacting to the creature's call.

Black's head snaps toward the sound.

INT. SUPER PREDATOR SHIP

The space is dark and dormant as a crypt. Bulkheads. Machinery. Grates. Spartan. Efficient. Lived in.

CLOSE ON a Lexan panel. A gauntlet covered Predator hand glides along

Lights FLICKER on. A WHIR emanates from somewhere deep inside the ship's core. Grows stronger.

Holographic display materializes.

Star charts cycle through. Finally settling on--

A familiar blue planet.

It reflects in Royce's eyes.

Another panel flashes, red, insistent.

A second hologram manifests. Ground proximity sensors. On it, three forms -- one massive, two smaller, entwined -- approaching.

Predator hand reaches down. Picks up the original, old school plasma caster resting on the floor. Lowers it onto his shoulder mount.

Caster CLICKS into place. SWIVELS. GRINDS to a halt.

Predator SLAMS his shoulder against a bulkhead. Caster swivels again, this time clean, even. Malfunction fixed.

Payback time.

Predator -- fully armed, fully armored, a warrior restored to his former glory -- pushes out toward the exit.

Royce looks after.

Predator exits the ship, hitting a panel on his way out.

The hell that is this planet is erased from view, as the bulkhead SEALS SHUT, leaving Royce very much alone.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - SAME TIME

Isabelle and Edwin lie next to the pit, still wrapped in the net. Black's foot pushes them in.

We fall with them into--

EXT. PIT

They land. HARD.

Isabelle cranes her neck, looks up.

The walls of the pit tower above her like a silent scream. Marked by claws, talons and finger tracks of all shapes and sizes -- a rainbow spatter of dried blood -- left by the many pairs of frenzied limbs of those came before her.

The earth RUMBLES. Bits of rock and dirt tumble down.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

A few skulls RATTLE.

Black's eyes snap toward them. Then to the totem.

Predator's gone, bonds cut.

Black swings around in the direction of his ship...

And DIVES, as a plasma bolt WHIPS by.

Instantly fades to invisibility, triple targeting beams searching for the shooter.

Movement. Black UNLOADS, tearing the jungle to pieces.

Return fire scorches ground, Black's form bracketed by debris. Clearly his opponent can see through the cloak.

Black reacts, firing fast, running faster.

Above him, Predator -- a blur -- leaps from tree to tree, BLASTING back.

Rounds COLLIDE, EXPLODING mid air. A fireworks show in the dim pre-dusk light.

With Black, still in motion, as a form CATAPULTS out of the jungle toward him on an intercept course.

IMPACT!

Predator vs. Super Predator. Original vs. Upgrade. Clash of the fucking titans.

We're tight, close quarters, hand to hand. Think snarling pitbulls rolling along, ripping each other apart.

INT. PIT

Isabelle moves one arm. Manages to pull a knife out of her boot. Starts to saw through the mesh.

Metal frays. Sounds of the fight above.

INT. SHIP

Engines spool up. Everything vibrates. Autopilot begins the countdown.

Royce straps himself in. Time to go home.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Two forms BASH each other against cages. Predator and Super Predator sized dents. Cloaks fry.

Gauntlets SMASH into one another. Armored fist against armored fist. Blood SPATTERS.

Predator gets tossed against an empty cage. Steel BUCKLES.

Dogs tear at the bars, trying to get at him.

Black's chaingun whip-draws itself -- locks onto--

Predator, as he leaps, pushing the weapon upward.

It fires aimlessly, swiss cheeseing the sky.

Predator SLICES its barrels off with his wrist blades.

White hot metal falls.

INT. PIT

SNAP, a strand of alloy mesh breaks. Isabelle starts sawing through another.

The walls are shaking, both with the fury of the battle above and the rising ROAR of the engines.

INT. SHIP

Tight on Royce. Last man standing.

He's alive. He made it. Nothing to do now but sit back and enjoy the ride. But victory has a hollow taste...

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Predator -- Black -- wrist blades locked. A contest of strength, neither one willing to back down. WHAM, Black delivers a vicious HEADBUTT that craters the other guy's helmet.

INT. PIT

The hole is now big enough to wiggle out. Metal tears at Isabelle's skin, as she pulls herself free.

Helps Edwin out. He nods, grateful.

INT. SHIP

On Royce. His eyes. He can walk away. He should. He must.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Predator staggers. Black DRIVES the wrist blades into his back, puncturing the skin at the base of the vertebrae.

Wraps its hand around it. Pulls with otherworldly strength.

RIPS out Predator's spinal column.

It's over.

Black -- covered in blood, green and black -- studies his slain opponent. Discards the grizzly object

EXT. SHIP

Boosters FIRE, incinerating the ground below. Liftoff.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Black's head snaps toward the ship in ample time to see it launch into space. Down force kicks up leaves, knocks over skulls. One helluva exit.

Black's eyes track the ascent. Twin points of pure hatred.

EXT. PIT

Isabelle watches as the ship passes overhead. Disappears from view. In seconds, all that's left is a contrail.

Edwin steps up next to her, eyes on the sky.

Hope -- if there was any left -- is gone.

EDWIN

Beautiful, isn't it?

Isabelle shifts her attention toward him.

Edwin's staring directly at her.

INT. HUNTING CAMP

Silence returns.

Black's gaze pans over the camp. Something doesn't feel right. Maybe it's because--

The dogs are no longer barking.

BLACK'S POV: Zooming in on one of the cages. A dog lies there, unmoving, its form rapidly turning blue. Cooling off.

It's dead.

The second cage. Same result.

Black's plasma caster WHIRS to life, as he fades back to invisibility. At least tries to. Blue sparks course around its form, as it SHIMMERS in and out. Cloak is still on the fritz.

INT. PIT

EDWIN

I suppose that's the difference
between you and I. When you look
out there, you see nothing but
death. I see... home.

His hand SHOOTS out, rattle snake fast.

A cloud of the okra-colored powder washes over her.

She steps back, reflexively covering her face. Hands come away, stained with the substance.

ISABEL

What are you...?

And then she feels it.

HER POV: The world distorts just a bit. Edwin's face seems to slide out of focus, becoming more sinister.

Her fingers suddenly feel like sausages. Knife falls to the ground.

EDWIN

A neurotoxin. So many to choose
from around here.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

BLACK'S POV: Tracking. Vision cycling through different
modes.

A thermal shape in the bushes. Gotcha! Targeting system locks
on. Plasma round streaks toward it. Direct hit.

INT. PIT

Isabelle backs away, as Edwin circles slowly, keeping close
to the walls of the pit, face partially obscured by the
shadows, fingers digging a little divot in the earth.

EDWIN

Don't worry. It's not fatal
You'll be able to experience...
everything.

She stumbles back, grabbing the wall for support.

ISABEL

Edwin....

Edwin just watches. He likes to watch.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Black strides through the bushes to check on the kill.

ITS POV: Coming up on...

A dead body of its own dog hangs off a tree. Wrapped in a
hide of some creature. Bottling up the heat. Keeping it warm.

On Black. For the first time in its life, in some deep, dark
recess of its gene-spliced, enhanced heart, it knows fear.

EXT. PIT

Isabelle fumbles for the knife.

Edwin takes it away, gently, like a toy from a child, retreats back into shadow, examining the blade as he moves.

EDWIN

You see, during our time on this planet, I've had something of an epiphany. A revelation, if you will, that I intend to share with you.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Black spins, searching.

ITS POV: Motion behind it. Orange heat signature of a figure, moving low and fast, skirting the edge of the camp. Making a circle.

Targeting systems locks on. About to fire--

Suddenly the heat signature disappears.

That's because--

A WALL OF FIRE spreads out in both directions. In seconds, the dead brush surrounding the camp is BURNING.

Heat on heat. Effectively depriving Black of its thermal vision.

BLACK'S POV: Nothing. Shifting modes. Smoke and ash obscure motion sensors. Hot wind washes away the scent. The sound of crackling wood obscures sound.

Amidst all this, a figure stands tall, backlit by the flames, staring at the confused creature.

ROYCE

EXT. PIT

Firelight flickers over the pit. Edwin, hidden in the shadows, flashes in and out of vision. A surreal image in a surreal setting.

ISABELLE'S POV: The walls shimmer, then ripple, then undulate. Edwin's features twist into a macabre sneer.

Advancing slowly toward her, as she backs away:

EDWIN

Back on our world, I'm a murderer.
A freak. A monster. But in this
place, among other monsters, I
am... normal.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Black fades in and out of invisibility. An eerie echo of Edwin.

ITS POV: Obscured, panning. Drowning in the ocean of thermal red. Knowing something's out there, just not what or where.

A shape lunges! A flaming log SWINGS!

SMASH! Plasma caster is toast.

And then Royce is gone once again. A ghost.

EXT. PIT

She's pressed against the wall now. Nowhere to run.

EDWIN

I like it here. I want to stay.

Her eyes flick about, desperate.

EDWIN

No one is coming. No one's ever
going to come.

Knife catches a flash of firelight, glints.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

BLACK'S POV: Frantically cycles through different modes. Audio sensor kicks in. Filtering out the CRACKLING of the fire, the SNAPPING twigs.

Until only one sound is left.

FOOTSTEPS.

Black spins toward the source.

Royce -- coming up for another strike -- sees it. Stops cold.

A pin dropping moment.

Black peers in Royce's direction.

ITS POV: The audio readout scrolls next to the visual feed.
The line is flat.

Royce stands perfectly still.

BLACK'S POV: Audio sensors shift. Exponential magnification.
Like a super-powerful zoom lens, only for sound. Times ten.
Times a hundred. And then we hear--

Faint BREATHS, desperately held back. A BEATING HEART.

Black fires its wrist blades, like a ballistic knife.

Royce ducks. Two projectiles whip by, missing him by this
much. The third catches him in the shoulder.

He scrambles behind a boulder. Slides against the stone,
painting it red.

INT. PIT

Edwin cups Isabelle's face. Caresses it with a knife.

EDWIN

I was right in front of you.
Watching you. Earning your trust.
Waiting for the right time. But you
couldn't see me. Guess these things
aren't the only ones who can turn
invisible.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Royce, behind a boulder, blade protruding from his shoulder.

Suddenly he's YANKED off the ground.

Black -- inevitable -- SQUEEZES, choking the life out of
Royce.

Royce grabs the bloody blade. RIPS it out of his own body.
RAMS into Black's neck.

The thing roars, tosses Royce off to the side.

He scrambles back on his feet, runs.

BLACK'S POV: Royce's blood trail glows on the ground, leading away.

EXT. PIT

Ash cascades into pit like snow. Edwin doesn't seem to notice or mind. An echo of the cave:

EDWIN

Look at me. Look at me.

Knife tip pushes up just under her right eye, drawing a single drop of blood.

EDWIN

We're going to do this together.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Black -- flickering in and out of view -- follows the trail of Royce's blood, passing by rows of hanging carcasses.

Wood CREAKS under their weight.

The blood trail leads to the base of the totem, stops by a mound of polished skulls. Terminates abruptly.

Black Super turns, head panning, searching.

Unaware that--

Behind it, one of the carcasses SHIFTS--

ROYCE

Emerges from within, as if rejected by death itself, a fierce, primitive warrior--

Black spins toward him--

Royce SWINGS a Predator axe!

WHAM! Black's head snaps back. He staggers backward.

ITS POV: Hazy, distorted. Different modes strobe by, shuffling by themselves, like a deck of cards.

A blur of perspectives. One thing remains constant.

Royce is coming at us, axe held high.

IMPACT!

The thing's helmet flies off, exposing its face for the first time.

Think Predator gone terribly wrong. A mutated version. No nose. Oversized mandibles. Slimy reptilian skin. Red eyes full of venom and hate.

EXT. PIT

EDWIN

I could promise you this wouldn't hurt. But then I would be lying.

Isabelle shakes her head, pleading, desperate.

ISABELLE

You don't want to do this.

EDWIN

I have to.

ISABELLE

No. You don't understand.

And then something... changes in Isabelle's eyes.

Something not quite human. Rippling under the skin. As if some unseen creature is stirring within.

And then Edwin knows terror. Off his scream,

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Black's form careens into frame.

It reaches for its gauntlet. Starts PUNCHING in the self destruct code.

THWACK! The axe severs the arm at the elbow.

The creature HOWLS.

ITS POV: The last thing it'll see on the way to hell is Royce's axe, as it descends toward it.

We stay there for a beat, as Royce, more animal than man now, drives the axe into the monster over and over and over again, long after it's dead.

CUT TO:

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - MORNING

On Black Super's smoking form.

Pull back to Isabelle, staring down at it.

Royce stands to the side in the ash covered camp, looking out over burnt trees and dead jungle, toward the horizon.

ROYCE

First time in my life, I don't have
any idea what to do.

On Isabelle. A long beat.

ISABELLE

I might have a few.

SMASH TO BLACK

*****ALTERNATE ENDING*****

EXT. PIT - NIGHT

EDWIN

I could promise you this wouldn't hurt. But then I would be lying.

She strains to whisper something. Inaudible.

EDWIN

I'm sorry. I didn't quite catch that.

Ear at her mouth. Three tiny word:

ISABELLE

So would I.

Something flashes in her hand, drawn from Edwin's breast pocket.

HIS SCALPEL.

SLASH!

He dodges. Grins.

EDWIN

You missed.

ISABELLE

I didn't.

A thin line of blood wells up on his neck. Nothing more than a paper cut.

In his own words:

ISABELLE

Very poisonous. Very deadly. All it would take is one scratch.

On Edwin, comprehension dawning. And then...

The poison from the plant -- still coating the edge of the scalpel -- hits him like a ton of bricks. His core temperature rising. Neurons firing. Brain boiling inside his own skull. Blood seeps from his eyes, lips, nose.

He SCREAMS. Convulses. Doesn't go gentle into that good night.

All the torment inflicted upon his untold victims is visited upon Edwin ten fold.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP

Black's form careens into frame next to the totem.

It reaches for its gauntlet. Starts PUNCHING in the self destruct code.

THWACK! The axe severs the arm at the elbow.

The creature HOWLS.

ITS POV: The last thing it'll see on the way to hell is Royce's axe, as it descends toward it.

Driving it backward. Into the spikes of the totem.

BLACK.

FADE IN.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - MORNING

A newly born sun peeks over the horizon. The long night -- and the terror it brought - are finally over.

The camp. Or rather what's left of it. Smoldering. Decimated. Post apocalyptic.

The body of the Black Super Predator hangs off the totem, a spike driven through the side of its head. Poleaxed.

Royce and Isabelle sit at the base of the monument. Bleeding. Battered. 12 rounds. Still standing.

Nothing is said. Nothing needs to be said.

Silence.

Cut short by--

Ground begins to vibrate, barely perceptible at first. Growing stronger, rising in intensity and volume.

As if a freight train was coming toward them.

Slowly Royce stands up. Isabelle alongside him.

Ready for whatever comes next.

Dust and ash swirl all around, obscuring vision in all directions.

Then the cloud settles, revealing--

A PREDATOR SHIP

This isn't the Enterprise. Ugly. Battered. Functional.

They stare.

A form SHIMMERS into view. A Predator. Another. More. About a dozen of them.

Royce and Isabelle. No energy to fight. No point to run. They simply wait.

Predators part like the Red Sea. Their leader -- his armor different from the rest, covered in trophies from untold hunts -- approaches.

Surveys up our duo. The devastation. Last but not least, the slain Black Super Predator.

Slowly he removes his helmet.

The face beneath it belongs to--

DUTCH

The man. The myth. The legend.

DUTCH

Not bad, kid. Not bad at all.

SMASH TO BLACK

THE END