

GO DARK

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BLACK SKIES

The dead of night. Clouds veil the moon. Concealing all light.

SUPER: 35,000 FEET. HONDURAN AIRSPACE.

A C-17 military plane emerges from the darkness. Soaring fast across the skyline. Its rear cargo door opens...

ON THE RAMP

Three SHADOWS tread out toward the edge. Wearing unmarked black fatigues. Sniper rifles strapped to their vests. Tinted oxygen masks.

They study the darkness rippling below. There is no bombast between them. No false bravado. Just the low sound of measured breathing. Steadying their nerves...

These men are dynamic and thoughtful. With faces and names most will never know. They are DELTA FORCE OPERATORS. And officially... They don't exist.

Beside them, a light switches from YELLOW to GREEN.

The Deltas meet eyes. Share two quiet words in unison:

DELTAS
Nemo resideo.

They leap off the edge. Spilling into the darkness like wraiths...

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE ROAD - NIGHT

A utility VAN putters up a dirt road. A peeling energy logo on its door reads: Empresa Nacional de Energía Eléctrica.

The van snakes around a bend...

Revealing a hidden LUXURY COMPOUND ahead. Nestled up into the mountainside. High concrete walls. Iron gate.

INSIDE THE COMPOUND

Manicured grass surrounds a serene MANSION. Marble statues border a crystalline pool. Private helicopter.

Three SUITED GUARDS patrol the inner grounds. SR-2 submachine guns gleam in their hands.

OUTSIDE THE COMPOUND

The utility van crawls up along the concrete walls. Stops beside an ELECTRICAL TRANSFORMER BOX.

The van idles. Humming quiet tension.

INSIDE THE COMPOUND

A GUARD studies a security feed on his phone. Sees the van parked outside the perimeter.

ANOTHER GUARD
(Spanish)
Problem?

GUARD
(dismissing)
Power company.

IN THE VAN

Callused hands smooth out an energy uniform.

EDGAR MEDRANO (45) checks his reflection. Subtle pockmarked scars surround sage eyes -- eyes carrying oceans of weight. In another life he may have been a poet. But that wasn't to be...

MOUNTAINSIDE ROAD

Medrano steps out with a TOOLKIT. His flowing black hair and dense beard shimmer in the dark.

He notices motion sensors atop the compound's walls. Security cameras scan like vultures. An impenetrable fortress.

Medrano sets his toolkit onto the roadside energy box. Withdraws air-measuring devices: A wind vane. Anemometer. Barometer.

He assembles them. Whispers into a concealed microphone.

MEDRANO
South-southwest.

NIGHT SKY

The three Deltas FLOAT DOWN through the darkness. Black parachutes deployed above.

MEDRANO (V.O.)
Four point two miles per hour.

The Deltas draw their SNIPER RIFLES. Listen to Medrano through earpieces. Adjust their windage knobs accordingly...

MEDRANO (V.O.)
Air density low. Ninety-eight point
three kilopascal. Compound Coriolis
effect.

INSIDE THE COMPOUND

The armed Guards roam the manicured grass. Make quiet small talk in Spanish.

THOOP -- THOOP -- THOOP!

The Guards drop like they've been unplugged. Clouds of atomized blood linger where they stood.

Silence...

The Deltas softly touch down inside the high walls.
Parachutes bloom to rest around them.

LUCAS HARTFIELD (40) removes his tinted mask. Revealing a deep, dimpled chin and noble eyes. He is as true and unwavering as the North Star. A light guiding his team in a world of darkness.

HARTFIELD
(whispers into microphone)
Camelot, we have touchdown.

OUTSIDE THE COMPOUND

Medrano repacks his toolkit. Slides off his energy uniform...
Revealing black spec-ops fatigues. He climbs back in the van.

INSIDE THE COMPOUND

TRISTAN KEYS (27) darts across the yard. He has a crisp haircut and manicured goatee. A rising spec-ops star, precision is his trademark. Perfection his religion.

Keys drops down beside a DEAD GUARD. Removes a piece of fingerprint tape...

IRON ENTRY GATE

Keys raises the FRESHLY LIFTED FINGERPRINT. Carefully rolls it across the gate scanner. No detail too small.

BEEP: the gate opens...

The utility van drives through, lights off. Keys opens the passenger door and jumps in.

IN THE VAN

Keys looks over at Medrano. Fights a grin.

MEDRANO

Well?

KEYS

Two inches off the frontal lobe.

MEDRANO

Not bad.

KEYS

You were right -- bit more spin
drift on that bullet than I
anticipated. How'd you know?

MEDRANO

Young man, wisdom comes at a hell
of an hour. When youth is gone, the
storm's over, and the girls have
gone home.

Medrano punches the gas.

BACKYARD

The van speeds across the grass. Weaves around the pool and statues.

AT THE BASE OF THE MANSION

IAN JASPER (38) lurks in the shadows. The final member of the formidable Delta team. Mercurial as a stick of TNT oozing nitroglycerin. Self-buzzed hair. Unkempt beard.

His eyes gleam with a strange curiosity... Hinting at his ever-churning imagination.

The utility van skids to a stop before Jasper. He throws open the rear doors to reveal: canisters of ACETYLENE and OXYGEN. A coiled hose leads to a torch.

Jasper twists gauges. Gas HISSES.

Hartfield appears beside him. Unfurling the hose, they sneak toward a BARRED WINDOW. Steel beams glitter in the night.

HARTFIELD

(quietly)

Someone's made quite the climb from
the Rio favelas...

JASPER

A lurid imagination will take you
places.

HARTFIELD

Six years later, bet he thinks he's
slipped through the cracks... That
we'd forgotten.

Jasper raises the torch.

JASPER

It's always the knife you don't see
coming.

Sparks CRACKLE in the reflection of his welding goggles. The
metal bars begin melting like butter...

INSIDE THE MANSION

Boots cautiously touch down onto marble flooring. The team
pours one-by-one into a lavish living room:

Looming ceilings. Italian leather furniture. Ominous gothic
art hangs on the walls -- is that a stolen Rembrandt?

The team gathers into formation behind Hartfield. They place
hands onto the backs of the operator before them. An unspoken
bond of brotherhood.

Hartfield leads the team past a TV. A black-and-white film
plays in silence. Splashing light onto a glass coffee table.
Where an SR-2 sits next to a STILL-STEAMING plate of beans...

The team meet eyes. Grips tighten around their carbines.

They creep deeper into the abode. A grandfather clock TICKS
somewhere in the darkness...

Tick... Tick...

Hartfield motions to the BLACK MOUTH of a HALLWAY. Medrano,
Keys and Jasper rally beside it. They all swivel down it...

HALLWAY

Claustrophobic. Like a hidden passageway.

Eyes curiously rise in unison...

Sliced LEMONS hang from the ceiling. Dangling eerily above the penetrating Deltas. Homemade air fresheners. Hundreds of them -- maybe more.

The team refocuses. Notices PADLOCKED DOORS ahead. Lining each side of the hall. Tiny windows cut into their frames.

They slide past the first. Catching glimpses of SQUALID COTS. Packed together like sardines.

Stomach churning, Hartfield approaches the next door. Steals a glance through its window:

CAGES shimmer in the shadows. Filled with pools of HUMAN FECES. Chains attach to the wrists of two EMACIATED BODIES. Maybe a FATHER and DAUGHTER -- too tough to tell. Dehydrated skin sticks to their bones. Collateral damage of human trafficking.

Suddenly -- noise echoes from down the hall.

The Deltas spin. Advance behind their night-vision scopes. Toward a spiral staircase...

SPIRAL STAIRCASE

A barrel-chested GUARD descends, oblivious. Scrolling through his phone --

THOOP!

A dime-sized hole opens his forehead. His muscular frame folds forward.

Hartfield and Jasper RUSH out of the shadows. Slide across the marble floor and catch the GUARD inches before he impacts the ground -- *silence unbroken*.

Medrano and Keys push past them. Discreetly ascend the spiral staircase.

SECOND FLOOR LANDING

Medrano and Keys scan the area. Train their laser sights on a set of massive double doors: the MASTER BEDROOM...

Hartfield and Jasper slip by them. Quiet as death.

Sweat shimmers on foreheads. The team fans out around the double doors. Shares a nod.

Hartfield's glove reaches for the golden doorknob. Fingertips extend --

TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA! Bullets SHRED through the door. Shrapnel sprays everywhere. Hartfield retracts. The Deltas hit the deck.

Jasper thinks fast. Pulls a FLASH GRENADE. Hurls it through the minced door -- BAM! Searing white light knives through the bedroom.

HARTFIELD
MOVING!

The Deltas BURST into the --

MASTER BEDROOM

A DARK FIGURE fires wildly atop his four-poster bed. Spraying bullets from his Bizon 9mm submachine gun.

DARK FIGURE
VETE A LA MIERDA! VETE A LA MI --

THOOP-THOOP. THOOP-THOOP.

The figure freezes unnaturally. Then falls to the carpet. Chaos becomes silence...

The Deltas emerge from the shadows. Converge over the body.

HARTFIELD
Clear.

The Deltas raise their night-vision goggles. LIGHTS come up around the room, illuminating --

A gaunt kingpin -- GARZA (48) -- twisted on the floor. His dead eyes look fiendish. Like he long fed off human suffering, not food. Blood leaks down his hollowed-out cheeks.

For a moment the team just stands there. Burning adrenaline.

HARTFIELD
Alright, fellas. Five mikes for SSE. Bag everything you can and we're in the wind.

The team disperses around the room. Removes Sensitive Site Exploitation kits.

Keys crouches over Garza's corpse. Trains a camera over his face. Snaps precise photos.

KEYS
(into microphone)
Camelot, stand by for a visual confirm.

Keys uploads the pictures. Hartfield watches him with a hint of pride.

HARTFIELD

Better watch yourself, Keys. Keep rolling like this and JSOC will yank you from the field and stick you with a promotion.

KEYS

(grins)

Sorry, Lucas -- more mistakes. Got it.

Across the room, Medrano searches a mahogany desk. Uncovers something hidden: a worn LEATHER BOOKLET. Opens the first page... And stops.

Medrano's eyes slide down a list of trafficked victims. Handwritten NAMES and corresponding PRICES. Something about seeing these dollar values... Hits him where he lives.

Hartfield appears beside Medrano. Notices the ledger.

MEDRANO

Sara Rodriguez Robledo... Twenty-three thousand dollars. Hugo Abreu. Eighteen thousand, five hundred... And they say you can't put a price on life.

Hartfield places a hand on Medrano's shoulder.

HARTFIELD

His empire's over, Medrano... We got him.

BEHIND A FALSE BEDROOM WALL

Hartfield's voice filters through...

The REAL GARZA (48) grins to himself. Looming in the confines of a hidden recess. He looks nearly identical to his dead body double. Down to the Bizon submachine gun in his grip...

MASTER BEDROOM

Hartfield collects evidence bags.

HARTFIELD

Last call. Train leaves in two.

KEYS

Copy that.

MEDRANO

Copy.

Jasper quietly scans the room alone. Probing through the lens of his curious, strange eyes. Hartfield falls in beside him.

HARTFIELD

And JSOC's models said your air insertion idea was "likely to fail..."

JASPER

That's why imagination still wins wars.

HARTFIELD

They were thrilled when I said I trusted you more than some computer.

JASPER

Oh I believe it.

HARTFIELD

By the way, your sister texted this morning.

JASPER

Still putting up with you, huh?

HARTFIELD

(grins)

She mentioned Theo scored the game-winner last night, used that crazy deke you showed him. Wanted his Uncle Jasper to know...

Jasper returns only half a smile. Hartfield notices. Traces his gaze...

HARTFIELD

What is it?

Jasper eyes Garza twisted on the carpet. Slowly steps toward the corpse.

HARTFIELD

Jasper?

Jasper straightens Garza's thin legs. Medrano and Keys glance over. Intrigued.

MEDRANO

Something wrong?

JASPER

Keys, how tall was he...

KEYS

What?

JASPER

How tall was he exactly?

BEHIND FALSE WALL

The Real Garza listens intently. Raises his submachine gun...

KEYS (O.S.)

A hundred and eighty-five
centimeters. Six foot one.

MASTER BEDROOM

The color drains from Jasper's face. A sickening realization.

JASPER

(soft)

He's too short...

The Deltas lock eyes. Jasper reaches for his gun. Spins
around as --

A SECTION OF DRYWALL DROPS LIKE A GATE. Revealing the Real
Garza in silk boxers, eyes crazed. Before he can unload --

THOOP-THOOP!

Jasper PASTES Garza back into the recess. His Bizon sprays
errant ammo into the ceiling -- TA-TA-TA! And then he slides
downward. Dead.

But something drops from his limp hand. It rolls toward the
exposed Deltas...

A GRENADE.

Everyone's eyes go wide. Feet stuck in concrete.

Then Hartfield surges forward -- dives over it -- B O O M !

Hartfield STOMACHS THE EXPLOSIVE BLOW.

OUTSIDE THE MANSION

VR0000M -- Keys drives the van straight through landscaping.
Whips around a corner -- and SCREECHES to a stop outside the
front doors.

Jasper and Medrano rush out of the mansion. Carrying
Hartfield in their arms.

Blood POURS through the crevices of his tactical armor. He sucks in wheezing breaths, eyes wide in shock. Skin and tissue hang loose from his stomach.

KEYS

Come on! Come on!

Keys throws open the van's side door.

MOUNTAINSIDE ROAD

The van RACES down the steep cliffs.

INSIDE THE VAN

Jasper and Medrano desperately hold Hartfield together. He saws off breaths, pale as a ghost.

JASPER

Hold still! You gotta hold still,
okay?!

HARTFIELD

(gasping)

Jasper...

Medrano reaches for a pair of MEDICAL SCISSORS. Starts cutting at Hartfield's fatigues to assess the wound. But it's impossible to tell where the fabric ends... And flesh begins.

MEDRANO

Keys, where are we with that
medevac?!

KEYS

Three mikes!

Hartfield coughs up blood. It splatters over his face. Jasper wipes it off.

HARTFIELD

Jasper... Tell Emma and Theo --

JASPER

Fuck that! Remember Raqqa? This
isn't even half as bad! You pulled
through then, you'll pull through
now!

Medrano is almost elbow-deep in Hartfield's abdomen. Trying to stop the pulsing liquid. He looks to Jasper... They know.

HARTFIELD

How's it looking?

JASPER
Good... real good.

Hartfield sees the truth in their faces...

HARTFIELD
We're all fireflies... aren't we?

KEYS (O.S.)
Two minutes to medevac!

JASPER
Fireflies?

HARTFIELD
We only shine for a day... But
think it's forever.

Jasper and Medrano catch on the unexpected words. Together,
they lock hands with Hartfield.

JASPER
Listen, you just hold on... Hold on
to us...

But the light in Hartfield's eyes is already gone.

Jasper and Medrano fall quiet. Keys glances back and realizes
too...

The van speeds ahead in silence...

EXT. SKY - MORNING

A C-17 cargo plane glitters in the sun. Soaring across clear,
blue morning skies.

Peaceful ocean waters stretch for miles below.

INSIDE THE C-17

Engines faintly hum in the cargo bay.

Jasper, Medrano and Keys sit around a BODYBAG. Lost...

Keys wipes his eyes. Shakes his head. Unwilling to believe
their North Star has somehow gone dark.

Medrano whispers indiscernibly to himself. The words provide
no solace.

Jasper sits paralyzed, eyes swirling with emotion. He is the
only one still wearing his tactical vest. Hartfield's blood
now rusted across it...

JASPER
(distant)
If I would've realized five seconds
sooner...

MEDRANO
Don't drink that poison.

JASPER
You know it's true...

MEDRANO
If you didn't act when you did,
there's a chance none of us leaves
that bedroom...

Jasper fights the crushing weight in his chest.

JASPER
Wasn't his time, Medrano... Can't
be the end...

MEDRANO
Looking at death as the end of life
is like seeing the horizon as the
end of the ocean.

KEYS
After twenty years of black ops,
you still believe that?

MEDRANO
I know it.

JASPER
Wish I could believe that too...
But I worry there's only one thing
after death.

MEDRANO
What's that?

JASPER
Darkness.

Tears finally fall. Medrano puts a hand on both Jasper and
Keys. Enduring it all together...

Suddenly, the plane BANKS. Tipping to a 30 degree angle.
Everything rattles and slides.

The Deltas grab onto their seats. Snapping back.

The men exchange glances... Don their HEADSETS.

KEYS
 (into mic)
 Hey man, can we get a sit-rep back
 here?

The PILOT's voice crackles through...

PILOT (V.O.)
 JSOC just threw us a curveball --
 we're being re-routed.

MEDRANO
 Re-routed?

PILOT (V.O.)
 Sorry, gentlemen. Out of my hands.

KEYS
 Where they sending us?

PILOT (V.O.)
 All I got was a set of coordinates.
 Not civilian or military. Fifteen
 years at the helm and I've never
 seen 'em...

The Deltas meet eyes.

EXT. DESERT - MORNING

Desolate, baked-out plains. Crevices divide the soil into an
 endless jigsaw. Nothing on the horizon but HEATWAVES...

The C-17 descends like a mirage. Wheels kiss down onto a
 makeshift DIRT RUNWAY.

INSIDE THE C-17

Rumbling engines cycle down.

The cargo ramp groans open. Daylight pours in. Jasper, Keys
 and Medrano shield their faces. Climb down into the sun...

DESERT

The Deltas scan the barren wasteland. Nothing but a few
 haggard CACTI. Far as the eye can see...

A pack of VULTURES circles high above. Waiting for their next
 meals.

Wheels turn in Jasper's mind as he drinks in the landscape.
 Keys falls in beside Medrano, uneasy.

KEYS

... Ever hear of anything like this before?

MEDRANO

No.

Jasper glances sideways at Medrano.

JASPER

You said there were some politically sensitive buyers on that ledger.

MEDRANO

Few third-world dignitaries. A prominent oil baron. A particularly influential oligarch...

JASPER

If JSOC wanted containment, this is one way to do it.

A chilling thought...

Keys raises a set of binoculars. Surveys the ocean of dirt.

KEYS

Signs of life. Ten o'clock.

A cyclone of DUST kicks up on the horizon. Something heads straight toward them. Fast.

A BLACK SUV comes into focus through the shimmer. Caked in a thick layer of sand.

The Deltas subtly fan out. Eyes glued to the approaching vehicle. Hands lingering by their sidearms...

The black SUV slows down. Rolls to a stop before them.

Wind whispers. No one moves.

A tinted window rolls down... Revealing the strange MALE DRIVER (50). Face coated with too much sunblock. Eyes concealed behind glasses. Sweat stained Nirvana t-shirt.

DRIVER

Just gonna stand there?

Jasper holds the man's eyes for a moment...

Then the Deltas all step toward the SUV. Peering around as they climb inside.

Doors slam shut. The SUV makes a sharp U-turn. ROARS OFF.

INSIDE THE SUV

Jasper, Medrano and Keys sit on edge. Scrutinizing their sunburnt chauffeur. He chews gum.

JASPER

Takes some pull to divert a flight
that doesn't exist...

The Driver doesn't react.

KEYS

What is this? CTC? Special
Activities?

The Driver just keeps chewing. Silence burns.

Medrano's sage eyes notice something through the windshield.
Something stranded in the middle of nowhere...

A TINY SHED

Rusted into the environment. Standing on its last legs.

Its dented GARAGE DOOR grinds open. Metal scrapes like nails
on a chalkboard. Grinding out tension...

INSIDE THE SUV

The Deltas crane their necks. Positioning for a view.

The SUV crawls forward. BARELY fitting into the cramped shed.

Jasper, Medrano and Keys look around. Notice a lawn chair
open in front of a TV. Half-eaten cheese sandwich. Water jug.

The garage door CLANGS shut behind them. Enclosing the SUV in
total DARKNESS.

The Driver doesn't move. Uncomfortable silence.

The Deltas meet eyes... What the hell?

Sweat rises on their foreheads. Jasper slowly wraps his hand
around his gun. Medrano and Keys follow suit. But then --

Pressure HISSES. The entire garage RATTLES. The Deltas snap
around as the SUV begins to SINK. Lowering deeper and deeper
underground...

DRIVER

At ease, guys. Sorry for the cloak
and dagger. Communication's
forbidden topside...

Jasper, Medrano and Keys look out the windows. The darkness transforms into a...

STRANGE BUNKER

Water drips from low concrete ceilings. Faded WARNING SIGNS peel from walls. Like a 1960s era nuclear facility. Oddly empty.

Dim hallways branch off from the main chamber. Stretching like fingers into the unknown.

INSIDE THE SUV

The Driver unbuckles his seatbelt. Turns to the Deltas.

DRIVER

We're all fans of your work.
Somalia, Bahrain -- I heard you
drove an SDV through a pipeline?
Shit's wild, man.

The Driver chuckles to himself. Steps out of the SUV.

BUNKER

Jasper, Medrano and Keys do too. Look around their strange new environment. Fear transforming into curiosity...

DRIVER

Come on. The Director's keen to
meet you.

DARK HALLWAY

Motion-activated lights flicker on overhead. Old steel power cables criss-cross along the floor. Around puddles of standing water. Into corroded hatches.

The Deltas follow the Driver.

JASPER

Interesting decor.

KEYS

Love the bleak accents...

JASPER

What would you call it. "KGB-chic?"

Medrano glances back over his shoulder. Glimpses a woman in a WHITE LAB COAT crossing the hallway behind. And out of sight...

MEDRANO

This facility... What is it?

DRIVER

The bleeding edge.

The Driver pushes through an IRON DOOR --

EMPTY OFFICE

Nothing on the walls. Only one high table in the room.

DIRECTOR BLOOM (57) stands waiting. His tall and slim figure grants him a quiet authority. Tailored suit. No tie. There is an inner resilience to him... Like the only building left standing after a hurricane.

Bloom looks up as the Deltas file in. He nods a warm welcome.

DRIVER

I'll be right outside, sir.

The Driver closes the door: CLANG. Bloom studies the Deltas. Silence hangs.

JASPER

So... This is the end of the yellow brick road.

BLOOM

No. The beginning.

Bloom opens a manilla folder.

BLOOM

Fifteen years ago I was stationed in Bangladesh. I'm walking home one night and a bag is pulled over my head. When I opened my eyes I was standing where you're standing now.

Bloom slides forward three NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENTS.

BLOOM

If I read you into this program, your perception of the world will be forever changed... I have to warn you, some are ready to face the truth. Others can't grapple with their new reality.

Jasper, Medrano and Keys share a look.

KEYS

... New reality?

BLOOM

Now you're welcome to turn around
the way you came. Get back on your
plane. None of this ever happened.

Bloom removes a PEN from his suit.

BLOOM

Or? Together we walk through this
door...

He motions to a LOCKED DOOR behind him.

BLOOM

And change the rules of the world.

Bloom offers out his pen. The Deltas stare it down...

SNAKING CORRIDOR

A door UNLOCKS.

Bloom leads the Deltas through. Into a dark, zig-zagging
passage. They slip beneath the teeth of a THICK BLAST
BARRIER. It booms closed behind them.

Red lights dimly glow. The Deltas notice C-4 wired along the
walls. Whatever this place is... It's armed to blow.

JASPER

So, Mr. Wizard... What are we
hiding behind the curtain?

BLOOM

Answers.

KEYS

Answers to what?

Bloom leads the Deltas into an elevator cage.

BLOOM

To the mystery at the core of all
our lives. To the most simple,
primal question. Since humans first
evolved, we have fantasized about
it. Feared it. Even fought wars
over it...

MEDRANO

Which is?

BLOOM

Where do we go when we die?

The Deltas go still.

BLOOM

The Lilac program was formed to access that very place. To build a machine that could allow physical travel between our dimension -- and the next.

KEYS

Wait... Say that again?

Bloom presses a button and the elevator cage descends.

BLOOM

You heard me.

JASPER

You're fucking with us...

BLOOM

I warned you not everyone's ready.

Jasper, Keys and Medrano meet eyes...

BLOOM

(grins)

Believe me, when I was first briefed, I had a similar reaction. But the truth is, since the '60s our scientists have experimented with different technologies. Built machines based on the latest ideas surrounding string theory, Einstein-Rosen bridges, quantum entanglement...

Jasper looks to Keys and Medrano, growing serious.

BLOOM

For decades they studied anomalies in brain activity moments after death. Unravelled the riddles of high-order consciousness. But still, the door to the next dimension remained locked. Many thought the answer would never come...

The Deltas brace as the elevator shifts direction. Pulled backward through a horizontal shaft.

BLOOM

And then, like most great discoveries, we stumbled upon the key by pure accident.

(MORE)

BLOOM (CONT'D)

One night my predecessor sliced his finger on a steak knife, and the answer bled out before his eyes... There are 1.5 gigabytes of information in a single strand of our DNA. 92 strands in a single cell. And 37.2 trillion cells in our body. He realized our genetic code is not just a complex sequence of nucleotides...

The elevator stops.

BLOOM

It is the passcode into the next dimension.

Doors open into a hangar. For a moment, no one moves.

Bloom nods for the Deltas to enter...

HANGAR

They step out and look up. Unthinkably high concrete ceiling. Arcing out like a massive amphitheater. The men seem tiny in the vast space.

Their eyes tilt down. And then they see it. Looming in the center of the empty hangar. The machine...

Known simply as THE BOX. It takes the form of an imposing ten-foot cube. Pure, matte black exterior. There are no laser lights. No fancy buttons. No screens. Just an unsettling low HUM emanating steadily from its bowels...

The Deltas slowly approach. Bloom quietly follows behind. A hint of unease in his eyes.

BLOOM

When we connect a dead body to the box, it uses nanotechnology to mimic the deceased's genetic code. The box essentially becomes an extension of that person. That way, operators hidden inside can be smuggled across the threshold into the next dimension.

Keys inches closer to the imposing box. Studying the precision of its perfect black edges. Trying to comprehend the strange piece of architecture.

KEYS

You're talking about a trojan horse...

BLOOM

Exactly.

Jasper circles the machine, imagination running wild. He notices its sides are coated in a thin organic MUCUS. The substance almost appears to be moving... Like bacteria under a microscope.

JASPER

(stops and swallows)

So you're telling me... You're saying your people have actually been there...

BLOOM

Yes.

JASPER

To the afterlife...

BLOOM

Boots on the ground.

JASPER

C'mon. You're fucking with us.

BLOOM

You already said that.

KEYS

You make it sound like it's a tangible place?

BLOOM

I assure you, the next dimension is just as real as the one you're standing in right now.

Medrano stands farthest back. Wisely contemplating the strange machine.

MEDRANO

If what you're saying about this device is true... What's waiting... On the other side?

All eyes gravitate back to Bloom.

BLOOM

A sea stretching farther than you can possibly imagine... When we die, we each awaken on the shore of our own private island.

The Deltas take in the words. Share a look filled with terror. And wonderment.

MEDRANO

Our own private island...

BLOOM

More beautiful than you could believe.

KEYS

So... Rock and sand? Gravity? Breathable air?

BLOOM

All those things and more. At first glance, it might seem like somewhere you'd escape for a tropical vacation --

WOMAN (O.S.)

Don't be fooled.

Footsteps quietly echo from the shadows. The Deltas watch SASHA LIMAN (40) approach. High cheekbones frame her black turtleneck and dark jeans. She is elegant but unpretentious.

SASHA

It's not all sunshine and rainbows.

BLOOM

Gentlemen... Sasha Liman. Lilac's resident expert on the new frontier.

Sasha nods her greeting. She has the raw aura of a career intelligence officer. Someone who has spent their entire life wearing a mask... And finally taken it off.

BLOOM

Sasha's spent more time in the next dimension than anyone else. She's the last surviving member of the reconnaissance team who gathered the intelligence we're able to share with you now.

MEDRANO

What happened to everyone else?

BLOOM

They were... killed in action.

JASPER

By whom?

Bloom and Sasha share a heavy glance.

SASHA

We call them EXOs.

JASPER

EXOs?

SASHA

Extra-dimensional Operatives. They guard the next dimension from intrusion...

The Deltas meet eyes. Blood runs cold.

SASHA

Follow me. I have something to show you.

LABORATORY

Bright and sterile. Instruments that demand a PhD to comprehend. A team of SCIENTISTS quietly work. Hypothesize.

A glass case sits under a spotlight...

Housing a single BULLET-LIKE PROJECTILE inside. Its cratered surface gives it the appearance of a SHARD OF MOON ROCK. Ammunition of nonhuman design.

BEHIND A WINDOW

The Deltas scrutinize the bizarre bullet.

SASHA

Pulled that outta my leg last time I returned. Our researchers say there's elements in that bullet not on the periodic table...

Sasha and Bloom linger behind the unnerved Deltas.

They all watch a SCIENTIST carefully reach into the case with crucible tongs. He lifts the bizarre bullet and transports it toward a nearby BIOLOGIST, who holds a beaker filled with dark red liquid.

SASHA

We've also discovered it has a strange relationship with our blood.

The Scientist places the bullet into the beaker. Laying it to rest in the blood. Nothing happens...

KEYS

What are we looking --

SASHA

Just watch.

Very slowly, the Biologist lowers the beaker, "unsheathing" the liquid from the container --

-- AND THE BLOOD FLOATS IN PLACE. Somehow hanging there in mid-air. The bizarre bullet glistening inside the column of crimson.

The Deltas blink in disbelief.

SASHA

Take it from me... Not ideal when
your wounds go "zero-g."

The Deltas inch up to the window... Awed by the suspended column of blood.

The Biologist carefully slides the beaker back up, "re-encapsulating" the floating liquid...

He removes the bullet from the beaker and pours the blood out into a sink -- its physical properties now returned to normal.

A moment of disturbed silence.

JASPER

Well... Newton fucked up. Didn't he?

SASHA

You have no idea.

The Deltas swallow. Peel their gaze back to Sasha and Bloom.

MEDRANO

The beings shooting these bullets...
The "EXOs" as you called them... What
kind of intel do you have on them?

SASHA

Limited. We know they're roughly
seven feet tall. Decked head to toe
in strange stealth armor. And their
weapons? Let's just say they're a
step beyond humanity's.

MEDRANO

Do you have any visuals?

SASHA

Image capture, night-vision,
thermal -- all useless on the other
side. Something to do with the way
the light scatters.

Sasha nods to GIANT DISTORTED PHOTOS hanging in the lab. No discernible images. Strange grain.

JASPER

Lovely...

KEYS

Can you tell us anything about their numbers? Standard operating procedures? Tactical protocols?

SASHA

Well, we've discerned a few things. We know that on each island in the next dimension, there's a small team of EXOs. And they act almost like a Secret Service security detail for the dead -- normally, they patrol the island while the dead person roams free. But as soon as they detect outside presence, the EXOs crash on the deceased, move them to a secure location while they hunt down intruders... Think of how the Secret Service crashes on the President, brings him to the bunker, while they kill the attacking terrorists.

The Deltas digest this unsettling intel.

MEDRANO

And their motives? Do we know why the EXOs are so intent on guarding the dead?

SASHA

I'm afraid that's a secret we still haven't uncovered...

Silence hangs.

JASPER

So... I'm guessing you didn't bring us here just for the tour.

Bloom smirks. He rounds on the Deltas. They've come to it...

BLOOM

Gentlemen, the Lilac program has long held an impossible dream... What if our country's most valuable assets no longer had to perish in the field? What if they could be rescued -- *after* they died?

Realization washes over Jasper, Keys and Medrano.

BLOOM

I'm asking you to attempt a completely new type of rescue mission. The very first of its kind. Instead of sneaking into Iran or North Korea, I'm asking you to infiltrate the next dimension. Locate Lucas Hartfield on his island. And bring him back home.

The Deltas stand frozen. Absorbing the magnitude of the moment. No one says a word, until:

SASHA

You wouldn't be going in alone -- I'd come with you.

JASPER

How long... How long do we have to decide?

BLOOM

Time is one thing you don't have. The link between the corpse and the box shutters 14 hours after time of death.

MEDRANO

... What happens then?

SASHA

If you're still in the next dimension, you won't be able to come back.

Keys swallows.

KEYS

Right. Perfect.

JASPER

Why fourteen hours... Not thirteen? Fifteen?

BLOOM

Our bio-techs believe it has something to do with the degradation of a few key strands of DNA. We're pushing the box's technology as far as it can go, upgrading it every day. But right now, 14 hours, 6 minutes, and 22 seconds after time of death is our window of opportunity.

Bloom checks his watch.

BLOOM

Hartfield passed just after 1am,
which leaves you about seven hours
to save him... Whatever you decide?
Decide fast.

CONFERENCE ROOM

A clock ticks. Ticks. Ticks.

Keys paces anxiously. Medrano sits contemplating at a long
table. Jasper's electric eyes watch the clock. Emotions
brewing like a hurricane.

BEHIND DOUBLE-SIDED GLASS

Sasha eyes the Deltas, on edge.

SASHA

You sure this is the right team? Of
all the tier-1 units we've been
tracking?

Bloom makes coffee behind her. Drops in mints and stirs...

BLOOM

The Pentagon's been doing
somersaults to keep them off our
radar -- which means they think
this is the best team they have. My
sources say Tristan Keys is the
future of special operations. Kid's
got a fetish for the smallest
details. Helped him make the SEAL
Teams before becoming a Delta --
one of the very few to ever achieve
that feat. Then there's Edgar
Medrano -- as old and wise as any
active operator. True warrior-poet.
Teaches night classes in literature
at the local Y when he's not on
mission. I've heard JSOC calls him
"Shakespeare with a sniper rifle."

Bloom turns and studies Jasper through the tinted glass.

BLOOM

Which leaves Ian Jasper...
Unconventional would be putting it
mildly. Man dropped out of high
school and spent four years totally
off-grid. Legend is, he scrounged
and stole his way around the globe
before his path led him back home.

(MORE)

BLOOM (CONT'D)

Brass says he's unpredictable, dangerous, averse to authority. But his imagination for covert warfare is unparalleled... He's the crème de la crème.

SASHA

So you're certain about them...

BLOOM

This place has taught me the only certainty is that there are no certainties. But when I mentioned Hartfield's name, there was a look in their faces...

Bloom steps up beside Sasha and offers her a coffee.

SASHA

And what did it tell you?

CONFERENCE ROOM

Keys shakes his head, mid thought --

KEYS

No plan. Limited intel. Some kind of advanced cosmic enemy just waiting on the other side --

JASPER

We've pulled off the impossible before.

KEYS

Impossible? Were you listening in there? Did you see that bullet? I think this goes a few steps past impossible...

JASPER

Keys, I know it's hard for you, but you need to start summoning a little imagination --

KEYS

And you need to start summoning a little sanity.

JASPER

What about Emma -- Theo? You gonna tell them we had a chance to save Hartfield and didn't take it?

KEYS

Jasper, you know I love them man.
And Hartfield meant just as much to
me as he did to y --

JASPER

Then what are we even talking about?!

KEYS

We're talking about meddling with
things way beyond us! Has it
crossed your mind that maybe it was
just his time?

At an impasse, they turn to Medrano. Seeking wisdom...

MEDRANO

Setting the unknowns aside -- and
there are a lot of them. There's
something else we need to
consider... Lucas just laid down
his life so we could live. The
question is, if we take this op and
die... Will he have sacrificed for
nothing?

The thought hangs heavy.

JASPER

You're right... It's crazy. There's
a thousand good reasons not to take
this op. Each one more valid than
the next.

Jasper removes a battle-worn pocketbook from his vest... Its
cover reads: Maps of the World.

JASPER

But on this team, we've always had an
unbreakable rule. Doesn't matter if
we're in Honduras or Somalia or some
place where there are no maps...

Jasper lays the book down. Searches the faces of Keys and
Medrano. Something stirs in their eyes, as if remembering...

MEDRANO

Nemo resideo.

KEYS

Nemo resideo...

The Deltas share a subtle nod. They know what they must do...

JASPER

Leave no one behind.

WEAPONS VAULT

Concrete doors rumble open.

Sasha leads the Deltas inside an armory. Ultraviolet floor lights stretch out like a runway. Illuminating walls filled with cutting-edge equipment:

MCX Rattlers. Graphene body armor. Dräger LAR V closed-circuit rebreathers.

SASHA

Stealth is the name of the game so pack light. Ideally, we locate Hartfield and extract him before the EXOs even know we're there. In and out like shadows.

The Deltas take in the treasure trove of war tools. Spot weaponry even they haven't seen.

KEYS

And if we're not so lucky? What's the recommended hardware?

SASHA

I'd start with the graphene body armor. Thanks to our pals at DARPA, it's light as a feather and twice as strong as kevlar... Also wouldn't leave home without one of these --

Sasha motions to a glistening weapon on the wall.

SASHA

NXD amphibious assault rifles. Prototype. More powerful than your typical ADS underwater guns, more accurate on land than an M82...

Medrano marvels at the gun.

SASHA

The rest I leave to your professional discretion. But whatever you do, just don't forget this --

Sasha tosses Jasper something small. A RUDIMENTARY COMPASS.

JASPER

Take it there's more to this than meets the eye?

SASHA

(smirks)
Wheels up in five.

HANGAR

Gurney wheels spin. SCIENTISTS hurriedly cart a BODYBAG across the vast hangar toward a carbon fiber BATHTUB.

ENGINEERS unfurl cables from the looming BLACK BOX. A nervous buzz fills the air...

LOCKER ROOM

CH-CH! Keys meticulously examines his new NXD rifle. Packs it into his organized rucksack. It's filled to the brim with back-up supplies. Contingency tools. No detail too small.

Medrano sits at an adjacent locker, reading from a well-thumbed Bukowski novel. An old companion through countless missions. His callused fingers trace a highlighted passage.

KEYS

Any pearls of wisdom for me today?
Cause I could certainly use one.

MEDRANO

"Find what you love and let it kill
you."

KEYS

Think my team's got that one
covered...

MEDRANO

Till death do us part, young man.
And maybe not even then.

Medrano stows the novel beside a folded, HANDWRITTEN NOTE.

KEYS

What's that?

MEDRANO

Just a fool trying to tell his ex-
wife how she saved him...

Keys goes quiet for a moment. Then tries to lighten the mood:

KEYS

Well if you're thinking of
refreshing your will, I'll take the
horse ranch... Always loved Texas.

MEDRANO

Keys, you'll be lucky to get the
book collection.

Medrano pats Keys on the shoulder.

Across the room, Jasper stares uneasily at a HARDLINE PHONE. He picks it up and dials. It rings...

EMMA (V.O.)

Hi, you've reached Emma, Lucas, and Theo Hartfield! Please leave a message!

The recording beeps. Jasper searches for the right words.

JASPER

Hey, sis... This is the Zodiac speaking.

(half-grins)

Was just thinkin' about you and Theo. Heard the little rascal scored a beauty last night. Tell him to go easy on those net-minders or his dad and I'll have to --

Jasper catches himself. Swallows the lump in his throat...

JASPER

Anyway. Just called to say something came up and... It's gonna be a little longer out here than expected. But, uh... We'll all be home soon.

Jasper hesitates. Then gently hangs up the receiver. The weight of his last words echoing in his mind...

KNOCK-KNOCK. Sasha appears in the doorway. Wearing sleek graphene-plated fatigues. Fire in her eyes.

SASHA

Greenlight.

HANGAR

Boots tread forward. Sasha and the Deltas advance. NXD weapons in hand. Rucks on backs. Hearts in throats.

They pass by teams of scrambling SCIENTISTS. Performing last minute diagnostics on their laptops.

The imposing BLACK BOX looms ahead. Humming ominously. Thick cables run out of its base...

Into the carbon fiber BATHTUB nearby. Where HARTFIELD'S PALE CORPSE rests on shards of DRY ICE. His body embalmed in reflective thermal blankets.

Cables all funnel into a single ENDOSCOPIC WIRE that slithers into his left ear canal... Like some nightmarish experiment.

The Deltas slow down. Taken by the staggering sight.

They gaze at their fallen leader's face. Sasha watches as they crouch down. Gently place their hands on the edge of the tub... A silent promise to bring him back.

BLOOM (O.S.)
Gentlemen... Clock's ticking.

Bloom hovers at the base of the box. Shirt sleeves rolled up.

BLOOM
Ready?

SASHA
No, but here we are anyway.

Bloom smirks. Puts a steady hand on her shoulder.

He nods toward a group of engineers -- they roll a massive airplane STAIRCASE next to the box. It locks in place: CLANG.

Bloom leads the team up the stairs. Onto the top of the matte black cube. A thick CIRCULAR HATCH DOOR is forged into its center. Swung open wide. Dangerously inviting.

The team glances around. The scientists have all gone still...

You could hear a pin fall.

Sasha creeps toward the open hatch. Stares down into the machine's dark innards... Then descends via a ladder built into the box.

Medrano and Keys share a glance. Tentatively follow.

Jasper steals one last look at Hartfield's body in the tub. Turns to Bloom. Holds his gaze.

JASPER
Whatever happens. Thank you.

Bloom searches Jasper's electric eyes. Slightly caught off guard. Jasper climbs down into --

THE BOX

Dark and eerie. Strangely claustrophobic.

Again no signs of recognizable tech. The organic mucus coats the walls. Moving like bacteria under a microscope. But faster in here -- festering...

Jasper hits bottom. Peers around. It feels like they're sharing a coffin.

Sasha straps herself into a harness. Locking her limbs against a slimy wall. Teeth grit as she tightens the straps.

SASHA

Buckle up. And say a prayer for our stomachs.

The Deltas swallow hard. Tighten their bodies against the walls. Securing their thighs. Trunks. Heads.

KEYS

I gather this is gonna be a little more intense than your usual haunted hay ride.

JASPER

Sasha, you're frightening Keys.

SASHA

Don't worry. You can all hold my hand if it gets too scary.

The Deltas nervously grin.

MEDRANO

How many times have you ventured in?

SASHA

Hopefully not one too many.

MEDRANO

Amen.

Bloom appears over the hole above.

BLOOM

Watches synced?

The team checks their watches: 6 hrs, 41 mins. Tense nods.

BLOOM

Marcus Aurelius said death smiles at us all, all we can do is smile back... What do you say we prove him wrong?

Bloom searches their faces. All their lives leading to this...

The team watches him swing the hatch door closed: BOOM. Silence takes hold. The temperature rapidly drops. Revealing four cloudy white breaths.

A dim LIGHTBULB glows. Splashing across cold, sweaty faces. The team meets eyes. One last confirmation. Jasper nods to Sasha...

JASPER
Let's go dark.

Sasha reaches for a set of strange mounted LEVERS. Pulls them down -- over -- across -- a shifting puzzle --

ENGINES THUNDER TO LIFE. LIKE A ROCKETSHIP BLASTING OFF BEDROCK.

The team jolts. Decibels nearly splitting their eardrums. The sound WARPS and WRENCHES. As if ripping the fabric of space and time. The noise grows louder. Rising like a TIDAL WAVE OF SOUND.

The team claws at their ears. Eyes creased...

GRAVITY VIOLENTLY SHIFTS:

Thrashing their strapped bodies in DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS. Yanking them UPWARD -- suddenly BACK -- FORWARD --

The lightbulb strobes. Illuminating the team WHIPLASHING like rag dolls. Jasper strains against the incredible g-force. Keys and Medrano turn sickly, veins bulging. Sasha white-knuckles her harness...

Ba-boom-ba-boom-ba-boom! Hearts pound. Ready to explode --

EVERYTHING FALLS STILL. ENGINES HUSH.

GRAVITY RE-STABILIZES. BODIES GO LIMP IN RESTRAINTS.

The Deltas gasp. Keel over and dry heave... *Minds spinning.*

Sasha peels herself from the slimy wall.

SASHA
Not like riding a bike... You guys good?

JASPER
(swallows hard)
Peaches.

All eyes rise in unison... TO THE CIRCULAR HATCH DOOR.

Sasha wipes sweat from her face. Slings on her rucksack. Climbs the ladder and spins a crank. PISHHHH. The airlock releases...

Sasha pushes up the lid. The heavy door groans open...

Revealing a pitch-black sky above. Warm air whispers eerily into the box. An ocean breeze kisses their clammy faces.

Sasha raises herself through the hole. Peers around...

SASHA

Come on.

She crawls onto the top of the box, disappearing from view. The Deltas meet eyes. Jasper unstraps himself from the wall. Reaches toward the ladder. Ascends toward the opening...

ATOP THE BOX

He emerges to discover...

The box is three-quarters submerged in smooth BLACK WATERS. The liquid glistens like untarnished glass. Gently rippling against the box.

Jasper swallows. Scans 180 degrees. Tracing along the horizon. Hard to see anything...

Until his eyes find something: A STRANGE ISLAND SILHOUETTE looms before him. Peaks cresting the night sky. Like jagged teeth.

He stands a few hundred feet offshore. An explorer on the brink of an unknown world.

Medrano and Keys climb up beside him. Look out at the island in silent awe. Darkness cloaks the mainland. Shrouding its secrets...

Jasper reaches down and scoops up a handful of glassy water. Lets the liquid run through his fingers...

SASHA

Incredible... Isn't it?

The Deltas can't bring themselves to answer. Sasha produces her NXD amphibious rifle. Secures her ruck. Steels herself.

SASHA

Alright, in and out like shadows...

She slips into the water. Swimming toward the ominous island. The Deltas produce their weapons. Cautiously follow her in...

THE WATER

The team gently blades forward. Heads barely above the surface. Careful not to disturb the liquid.

SASHA

Keep your eyes peeled -- the EXOs love to set alarms along the perimeter. And they're different every time.

The Deltas swim forward, on edge.

They pass BIZARRE TREES growing UPSIDE DOWN in the ocean. Exposed trunks jut into the night like knives. Roots invading the sky...

Jasper curiously eyes the sight. Medrano does too, unsettled.

JASPER

You were right... There's a bit more than just darkness.

MEDRANO

My friend, I think we've all been looking at things through a tiny keyhole... Haven't we?

JASPER

Nothing like a brave new world to get the imagination firing.

MEDRANO

That's what has me worried...

Boots find the ocean floor. The team wades through the neck-deep water. Rifles sweep side to side over the black surface.

KEYS

Got something.

Keys freezes ahead. Eyes level with a near-invisible TRIP WIRE. It floats eerily atop the water. Sasha creeps up beside Keys. Sees the wire stretching parallel to the island...

SASHA

Drägers out.

UNDERWATER

The team quietly submerges. Faces covered in prototype DRÄGER rebreathers: angular masks with O2 cartridges along the jaw.

Sasha clicks on a UV flashlight. Its neon beam fingers the darkness ahead. Scanning the abyss...

A BARBARIC WEB OF TRIP WIRES GLIMMERS.

Suddenly visible in the ultraviolet light, the spiked wires are corroded by rust and lichen. They sway dangerously in the gentle current. Rigged at different depths and angles.

The team meets eyes. Any volunteers?

Jasper inches forward. Coolly studies the ebb and flow of the barbaric alarm system. He spots a split-second window --

Jasper PROPELS forward -- EELING his muscular body into the maze of spiked wires. He contorts and TWISTS through the corroded web. Then slips between the final layer of rippling barbs -- his boots barely missing the wires.

Sasha can't help but grin. Impressed by his nerve.

Jasper looks back from the other side. Motions for them to follow.

BEACH

Shadows rise from the water one-by-one. The team sneaks up onto the shore. Removes their Drägers. Shares brief glances of relief.

KEYS

(whispering)

At least we made the beach...

The Deltas scan up and down the dark shoreline. Untouched white sand stretches for miles in the dim starlight.

MEDRANO

The scale of this place...

JASPER

Lot of hostile ground to canvass in six hours.

SASHA

Not necessarily.

Sasha produces her COMPASS.

SASHA

First few times we came in, we couldn't understand why our compasses kept shifting... Turns out True North in here isn't a direction. It's a person.

The Deltas look down at the compass, fascinated. Its arrow stabilizes, pointing inland...

SASHA

Hartfield's that way.

All eyes tilt up into a towering bamboo forest. It almost seems to stare back at them.

EXT. BAMBOO FOREST - NIGHT

Otherworldly silence. Claustrophobic green shoots loom.

Jasper, Keys, Medrano and Sasha creep through the bamboo.
Eyes behind their scopes. Controlled breathing.

Foliage softly crackles under their boots. Keys glances at a
GAUGE looped on his vest.

KEYS

101.2 kilopascal. 27.3 degrees
Celsius. A hair over 82 percent
humidity...

MEDRANO

Young man, only you could set foot
in the next dimension and marvel at
the relative humidity.

KEYS

I mean... These atmospherics read
like somewhere in Indonesia or the
Galapagos.

Medrano gently touches a passing spire of bamboo.

KEYS

Feels eerily close to our world...
Doesn't it?

SASHA

Let's see what you guys say in an
hour.

Keys and Medrano share a look.

MEDRANO

Care to elaborate?

Suddenly, Jasper raises a fist -- everyone STOPS mid-stride.

The team stands like statues. Eyes dart around... *What is it?*

Jasper trains his scope toward their one o'clock. The others
trace his sightline...

Toward a MASSIVE SHADOW in the bamboo ahead. Something
STRANGE lurking among the spires.

Tension hangs. No one moves. No one breathes.

As Jasper studies the shadow, his eyes flicker with an odd
curiosity.

Amazingly, he inches forward.

KEYS

(whispering)

Jasper? What are you doing?!

JASPER
(whispering)
On me...

Keys, Medrano and Sasha steal a glance. Grips tighten around their guns.

They reluctantly sneak forward behind Jasper. Treading through the claustrophobic trees. Ahead, the shadow grows bigger. And bigger.

MEDRANO
Is that...

The silhouette comes into focus...

Revealing a STEALTH ATTACK NUCLEAR SUBMARINE. Laying on its side like a sleeping monster. Somehow marooned amid the spires of bamboo.

KEYS
(softly)
Holy shit.

Jasper flicks on his scope torch. The others do too.

Lights beam across the submarine. Illuminating its smooth black nose. The torches slowly trace forward. Down the war machine's stealth hull. Revealing its 250-foot body. And black conning tower.

The tower juts horizontally from the sub. A giant, ominous monolith in the night.

KEYS
How the hell...

SASHA
It's a memory station.

KEYS
A what?

SASHA
We're gonna find key locations from Hartfield's life all over this island. Monuments from his memory. Often in the strangest places...

Jasper creeps up to the stealth belly. Imagination swirling.

SASHA
Lilac's spent countless hours theorizing how and why they exist. Trying to decipher some kind of pattern between them...

Sasha steals a glance at the Deltas.

SASHA
You guys take this on an op?

MEDRANO
Looks like an older class...
Seawolf. Tullibee maybe. Before our
time...

Keys looks up at the war machine. Eyes glazed with fear and amazement. The scale is incredible.

Jasper traces his flashlight over an insignia. A US Navy serial number glistens: 585. Eyes narrow in recognition.

SASHA
Jasper? What is it?

JASPER
Lucas, he grew up in a rough part
of Detroit... Told me his old man
swept broken windshields off the
line at Ford for years, just to
give them one vacation... San
Diego. Turned out, his father had a
Navy friend down there who gave
them a special tour of the sub he
was deployed on. USS Skipjack. SSN
585.

Jasper slowly runs a hand across the hull's insignia.

JASPER
Lucas said it was like the day he
was born.

SASHA
Funny how tiny acts can echo across
dimensions...

The thought hangs.

Medrano explores further down the submarine. Keys quietly follows behind. Flashlights roving...

KEYS
Memory stations... Didn't have that
one on the bingo card...

They approach the conning tower. Lights find its IRON DOOR. Medrano curiously reaches out a glove. It groans open...

Revealing the SHADOWY BOWELS of the nuclear beast. Their torch beams dance in the dark. Tracing old instrumentation at rest. The attack periscope looms, glimmering dangerously.

KEYS

I don't suppose your old book collection could help make sense of this...

MEDRANO

Well... Plato wondered if we were all prisoners, trapped in a cave. Whose perceptions were skewed by the confines of our reality... And if we could only escape our cavern walls, we would discover the truth. That the universe was beyond our reckoning...

Medrano studies the submarine with his sage eyes.

MEDRANO

I think it's safe to say... We're out of the cave now.

Keys steels himself. Draws back from the hatch door. Scans the surrounding bamboo.

He checks his COMPASS. The arrow points away from the sub.

KEYS

Hey Jasper, man. What do you say we keep moving --

THWACK! A bullet SLAMS into Keys' chest plate. He drops like an anchor.

Stunned silence.

Medrano wheels around. Blindly sprays ammo into the forest. Shredding apart the stalks of bamboo: TA-TA-TA-TA-TA!

Jasper darts for Keys. Sasha does too. They hook on his arms.

Medrano keeps firing cover: TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA!

Jasper and Sasha desperately drag Keys back. They all retreat around the giant nose of the submarine -- and out of sight.

Just as fast as the chaos came, it stops. Leaving only the hum of silence...

ACROSS THE BAMBOO FOREST

Smoke rises from minced bamboo stems. Everything else remains painfully still. Until the vegetation shivers. Something stirs from the foliage.

A dark SILHOUETTE rises up like it owns the night...

Angular plates conceal its neck. Pneumatic gears line a ballistics vest. Coiled tubes snake over its broad shoulders... Into a welded black helmet. Its dark visor is marred by the scars of innumerable wars. As if forged at the dawn of time.

The EXO SCOUT stalks through the spires of bamboo. Stealth black cloak trailing behind. In complete control.

It approaches the submarine. Raises its weapon...

Revealing a bizarre THREE-PRONGED rail gun. Almost looks like it was cast from obsidian stone. Terrifyingly advanced. Yet primitive.

CLACK-CRACK. The EXO Scout racks the breathtaking weapon. Sweeps around the nose of the submarine. Ready to end life --

But no one is there. Only silence.

The EXO Scout's barbaric welded helmet rotates. Scarred black visor scanning the night. It moves with horrifying, deliberate authority... The assuredness of never knowing defeat.

ACROSS THE BAMBOO FOREST

The team DESPERATELY SPRINTS through the bamboo shoots -- Jasper and Medrano pull Keys forward. He saws off breaths.

JASPER

Anyone get eyes on the shooter?!

MEDRANO

Negative!

Sasha breaks through the tree-line, arriving at a --

NECK-HIGH FIELD OF WHEAT

The team slips away into the tall agriculture.

THEN DROPS DOWN. HIDDEN.

Jasper and Medrano lay Keys back. The bizarre EXO BULLET is plugged in his chest plate at an oblique angle. Its cratered surface gleams like a shard of MOON ROCK.

JASPER

Punch through?!

Keys gasps, feeling his chest for blood.

KEYS

No, no, don't think so.

Very carefully, Sasha extracts the bizarre bullet from the graphene armor. She looks to Keys. Sweat glistens as they catch their breath.

SASHA

This even nicked your skin...

The Deltas fall back. Breathe deep sighs of relief. They watch Sasha seal the bullet away into an evidence jar.

JASPER

Lady Luck must have a crush on you,
Keys.

MEDRANO

Indeed.

Keys shakily cleans WHITE PASTE off his graphene vest. Sasha notices out of the corner of her eye...

SASHA

What's that?

Keys fishes a crumpled tube from a SMUSHED POCKET.

KEYS

Arm and Hammer ProNamel.

SASHA

... You brought toothpaste?

KEYS

The war on tartar never ends.

Medrano pats Keys on the shoulder. Everyone shares a grin.

But then -- a spine-chilling SONIC PULSE echoes around the island. Its acoustic pattern is arrhythmic. Unpredictable.

MEDRANO

I'd wager that doesn't bode well
for us.

The Deltas look to Sasha. Fear rises in her eyes.

SASHA

Island alarm... The EXOs are going
into lockdown.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - NIGHT

Across the island, jagged peaks stretch into the sky. As they rise higher, the chilling alarm fades and fades...

Until it's lost on the breeze.

ROCKY CLIFFSIDE

A lone FIGURE climbs the mountainside...

Starlight splashes across his sweaty face. Revealing a deep, dimpled chin. And noble eyes...

HARTFIELD.

Very much alive. Still wearing his gear from Honduras. But there is no blood on his vest. No sign of the grenade trauma on his stomach.

Hartfield hikes past giant boulders, curiously EXPLORING this new world. Trying to make sense of this strange place. He climbs toward a rocky clifftop. Searching for a better vantage point.

But suddenly, Hartfield stops. He stares ahead, stunned...

A two-story SUBURBAN HOME shimmers in shadow. Oddly situated atop a nearby peak. Hockey net in the driveway. Frayed from seasons of use. The driveway hangs HALF-OVER the cliff. Crumbling into the valley far below...

INSIDE THE HOME

Darkness cloaks the kitchen. A REPORT CARD hangs proudly on the fridge. The name barely visible: THEO H.

Hartfield inches into view... Staring at his son's report card. Chest rising and falling. Emotions swirling.

HALLWAY

Hartfield cautiously roams his old home. Peers into a passing bedroom...

Messy dinosaur bedsheets and hockey sticks form a makeshift FORT. Three SPECIAL FORCES ACTION FIGURES hang off a bedside table. Rescuing another from the ground...

Hartfield swallows hard. Continues down the hall toward stairs.

UPSTAIRS LOFT

A private art studio. Camel hair brushes. Paint canisters.

Hartfield enters, eyes glassed with amazement. And disbelief.

Starlight spills through a sprawling window. Illuminating impressionist paintings along the walls. All signed "Emma" in the corner.

Hartfield lets out a short breath. Fraying at his edges. He moves toward an EASEL. It houses a half-finished CHARCOAL SKETCH: Emma, Lucas and Theo laugh together. Licking ice cream cones.

Hartfield stares at the half-finished family portrait. A portrait he will never see finished...

His eyes start to fill. He shakily reaches for it --

SMASH -- SMASH -- SMASH!

The adjacent windows EXPLODE into a million pieces.

A stream of HORRIFYING EXO SILHOUETTES swing through the openings. Converge on him from all directions --

WHAM! The EXOs tackle Hartfield, pinning him down and covering his mouth. They form a PROTECTIVE SHELL around him. Spin their formidable obsidian guns outward. Securing the room like black lightning.

DOWNSTAIRS

Charged silence. Everything is motionless. Until footsteps approach:

Boom... Boom...

Photos hanging on the walls quiver. Smiling faces tremble behind their glass frames.

Boom... Boom... Boom...

The air itself almost seems to oscillate, as if some master of the universe were approaching...

Floorboards bow under immense weight. Two ARMORED BLACK BOOTS slowly ascend the stairs. Glistening with lesions and scars. Radiating chilling authority.

They reach a landing. A door swivels open, revealing...

UPSTAIRS LOFT

Hartfield bound at the wrists, thrashing, soaked in sweat.

HARTFIELD

G-Get off me! What the fuck's going on?! Who are --

The protective shell of EXOs parts like the sea, suddenly bowing their heads in reverence to the mysterious figure that has arrived in the doorway...

Hartfield goes still too, sensing the presence. His eyes rise. And his blood runs cold...

The seven-foot EXO CAPTAIN looms over Hartfield like some cosmic obelisk of power. Angular neck plates glimmer dangerously, decorated with strange symbols.

The EXO Captain's welded helmet is unlike the others, lined with BRONZE DETAIL. Its shaded visor stares down at Hartfield, studying him with superiority. Maybe even a hint of curiosity.

EXT. NECK-HIGH WHEAT FIELD - NIGHT

A compass arrow subtly turns...

Jasper, Keys, Medrano and Sasha huddle over it. Eyeing the shifting needle.

MEDRANO

They're moving him?

SASHA

Like I said, they'll take Hartfield some place on the island where they have the tactical advantage. Hold him there while the rest of their unit hunts us down...

KEYS

Awesome.

JASPER

So much for in and out like shadows.

Uncomfortable silence. The team spies through the wheat.

SASHA

I won't sugarcoat it... Now that we're burned, our chances just went from one in a thousand to pretty much zero.

The Deltas share a loaded look...

JASPER

Call me romantic, but I always love those odds.

KEYS

Medrano?

MEDRANO

What matters most is how you walk through the fire...

KEYS
 (steeling himself)
 What do you say, Sasha? We crazy?

SASHA
 Certified.

She snap-cocks her rifle.

SASHA
 But lead on...

Jasper grins. Checks his compass. Re-routes through the wheat accordingly. The others follow one by one...

EXT. ISLAND - DAWN

The black night breaks. A red sun peers over the island. Staining the horizon the color of blood.

NECK-HIGH WHEAT FIELD

Tendrils shimmer in the morning light. Swaying in a gentle breeze... The team sneaks through them, on alert.

SASHA
 You must really love this guy.

JASPER
 What gave it away? Following him into another dimension?

SASHA
 Letting your sister marry him.

JASPER
 If you knew my sister, you'd know no one has ever LET her do anything.

KEYS
 Imagine a female Jasper. Only smarter. Funnier. Better looking.

SASHA
 Huh, I like her already.

JASPER
 I have a sick feeling you two'd get along perf...

Jasper notices something ahead. A giant statue lays TOPPLED in the field: the suited figure of HAFEZ AL-ASSAD. His authoritarian face is painted in gold. POCKED by the throws of a hundred sledgehammers. His nose CHISELED OFF.

The hewn statue glows in the dawn light. For some reason, the war relic almost looks... Beautiful.

Guns lower as the team approaches.

SASHA

Raqqa? That wasn't in your files.

JASPER

It wouldn't be...

A moment of silence. Medrano and Keys quietly continue past. Some long-forgotten nightmare resurfacing behind their eyes...

Jasper lingers with Sasha.

SASHA

Some of us have to live in the shadows... to keep everyone else in the light.

Jasper meets her gaze. A subtle nod of understanding... They continue together through the tall wheat. Jasper glances down at his watch: 4 hours, 27 minutes remain...

JASPER

Takes some guts to come back here after what you've been through. Especially to save someone you don't know...

SASHA

I spent my career playing whack-a-mole with dictators and warlords. Three years in Belarus. Longer in Uganda. You guys know how it goes: pull out a weed, two more spring up in its place... So when Bloom approached me, I jumped at the chance to join a program that wasn't just concerned with treading water. With Lilac, we're talking about tipping the scales of covert war -- forever. Rescuing special operators killed in action? Spies who were assassinated before they could share key intel? Shit, we could even kill foreign agents, then bring them back -- providing a rock-solid cover for defection. The possible applications are endless... My colleagues who died in this dimension believed the same thing I do -- that the Lilac program is more important than any single life. Even if that life is our own.

The thought hangs.

MEDRANO

There's this question we used to get asked in O.T.C. Psych eval. Presented to every Delta who came through.

SASHA

Okay... Hit me.

MEDRANO

You're at a train station. And there's a runaway train barreling down the tracks. Toward five people tied to the rails... Beside you is a lever. If you pull this lever, the train will switch to a different set of tracks. Where your teammate is tied to the rails... So you have two options. Do you do nothing -- allow the train to kill the five people on the main track? Or do you pull the lever -- save the five strangers, but kill your friend?

Sasha considers for a moment. All eyes on her.

SASHA

You pull the lever. Sacrifice one to save five...

Jasper and Medrano meet eyes.

SASHA

What did you say?

JASPER

Fuck the lever. Find a way to stop the train.

Sasha looks to Jasper. The corner of her mouth fights a grin.

SASHA

Sure that isn't a little naïve?

JASPER

I'd call it asymmetric thinking.

SASHA

JSOC warned you were a stick of TNT.

JASPER

Oh, the brass loves me.

KEYS (O.S.)

Guys...

They notice Keys has fallen back. Peering through BINOCULARS.

KEYS

Two clicks out. Take a look...

Jasper, Medrano and Sasha curiously produce their BINOS.

BINO POV

Crosshairs scan the rolling field. Sharpen on a distant hill:

The HONDURAN LUXURY COMPOUND shimmers in the morning sun.
High concrete walls and crystalline pool. Private helicopter.
Iron gate. Everything just as it was.

NECK-HIGH WHEAT FIELD

Jasper lowers his binos. Taken somewhat off guard too. A twinge of guilt surfaces in his eyes. He stands frozen for a moment as the others look out...

But then his expression changes. He re-raises his binos.

BINO POV

Crosshairs tilt away from the Honduran compound, into the sea of neck-high wheat. Tendrils WHIP side to side unnaturally. Something speeds straight toward them -- fast.

JASPER (O.S.)

Fuck...

NECK-HIGH WHEAT FIELD

The others spot it too. Meet eyes and -- DUCK DOWN.

A strange SOUND snarls toward them. Some kind of engine.
Growing louder.

Jasper SPINS and darts off. The others follow on his heels.
Guns choked in their grips. Keeping low.

That strange engine SNARL grows LOUDER. But the team doesn't dare look back. They sprint through the thickets, blinded by the agriculture --

Jasper STOPS. The others pile into him.

A dark RIVER flows through the wheat field before them.
Peacefully snaking across the plains. Forty feet wide.

Jasper turns to his teammates, imagination churning.

JASPER
Wild idea...

IN THE FIELD BEHIND

Golden wheat stalks tremble. And then, they're bowled over --

Crushed by two colossal SPHERES of solid black chrome. Caged in a skeletal steel frame. An EXO SNIPER stands on a platform between the wheels. Driving the irregular ATV. Visor peering around.

It pulls back on a lever. Whirring engines cycle down. The omni-directional wheels roll to a stop...

The EXO Sniper gracefully leaps off the ATV. Black cloak billowing in the wind. It produces a three-pronged rail gun from its back. Stalks forward through the field. Until --

It spots something.

The EXO Sniper methodically crouches. Studying impressions in the trampled wheat...

Another SKELETAL ATV breaks through the field behind. Colossal black chrome wheels swivel to a halt. A second EXO SNIPER dismounts. Appears over its crouched partner.

Spots the subtle footprints too...

CLACK-CRACK. The EXOs rack their weapons. Their dark visors track the impressions forward. Toward the dirt embankment of:

THE RIVER

Water quietly ripples.

The EXO Snipers gaze over the snaking river. Scouring the landscape with lethal focus. Gloves wrapped around their obsidian rifles...

UNDERWATER

Jasper, Keys, Medrano and Sasha hang in limbo. Clenched still. They stare up at the silhouettes of the EXO Snipers. Looming on the embankment above only feet away...

EMBANKMENT

The EXO Snipers peer around. Painful moments of tension... Until one turns back into the wheat. The other follows. Gone.

UNDERWATER

The team meets eyes...

RIVER

Pale faces resurface. Quietly gulp for air... Jasper nods to the others. Starts paddling across the river. Keys, Medrano and Sasha carve after him.

But as Jasper reaches mid-river, he's redirected. Drawn sideways by an invisible UNDERCURRENT...

JASPER

Shit.

Sasha, Keys and Medrano notice Jasper struggling.

SASHA

Oh fuck...

The strange UNDERCURRENT hits them too. Siphoning them downstream like dominoes.

Eyes widen. The current gains power. Accelerating unnaturally fast. Rushing the team into a maze of otherworldly rapids.

MEDRANO

Big breaths, big --

Jasper gets SUCKED under. Waves crash over where he was. Foam spits. Gurgles.

And then -- Jasper resurfaces nearby. Vomits up a throat full of water. Steals a RASPING BREATH.

KEYS

Jasper?!

Suddenly, the others are SUCKED UNDER TOO. Swallowed by the sinister surf.

Heads reappear sporadically. Dunking. Resurfacing. Dunking.

Keys thinks fast. Reaches over his shoulder as he tumbles. Yanks an inflatable RAFT from his ruck: PSSHHHH! The raft SPRINGS TO LIFE.

Keys desperately claws aboard. Scans for his teammates.

Medrano struggles to keep his mouth above water. Keys reaches out for him. Hands slip. Lock.

KEYS

Got you!

Keys reels Medrano aboard. Then looks around for Sasha and Jasper. Spots their flailing limbs. Latches on and heaves them up to safety.

Everyone slumps back. Gasping for air...

MEDRANO

In case of drowning... Always keep
an ex-SEAL handy.

SASHA

Wise words.

Jasper peels his face up toward Keys:

JASPER

And here they gave you shit for
overpacking.

KEYS

Hey, if you're not prepared, you're
prepared to fail...

The team grins. A moment of relief.

THOOP! A bullet PIERCES the raft's thick rubber frame. Heads
spin back --

The two EXO SNIPERS loom on the river's edge. Staring
directly at them. Obsidian guns raised.

Oh fuck.

Air HISSES from the bullet hole. Jasper tries to seal it.

THOOP! Another bullet rips past Jasper -- SHREDDING his ruck.

JASPER

SHIT!

Medrano snatches up his rifle. Spins and furiously unloads on
the EXOs: TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA--

EMBANKMENT

The EXOs stand fearless behind their three-pronged guns.
Outer prongs deploy automatic COUNTERMEASURES -- INTERCEPTING
Medrano's onslaught of bullets... Creating a dazzling wall of
sparks.

RAFT

Medrano pales. Stunned by the incredible defensive display.

Sasha produces two phosphorescent SMOKE GRENADES. Rips the pins -- purple SMOKE BILLOWS, swirling around the raft. Concealing the team as they're swept away.

EMBANKMENT

The EXO Snipers lower their terrifying obsidian weapons. Losing sight of the raft in the thick purple smoke.

RAFT

The team meets eyes. Breathless beyond words...

A deep, unsettling rumble echoes ahead. The deflating raft whips around a bend in the river.

Everyone's eyes rise... Faces drop.

A towering REVERSE WATERFALL materializes before them. Two hundred feet of liquid rushing IMPOSSIBLY SKYWARD. RISING along a staggering marble cliff face. And up over its precipice.

One of the mind-bending WONDERS of this NEW WORLD.

JASPER

Brace, BRACE, BRACE!!!

The raft speeds straight toward it. Gloves latch onto rope handles. Bracing for a death ride.

WHOOSH!

The team hits the INVERTED GRAVITY -- RIPPING them UP into the slipstream of water, tearing them from the raft --

Eyes shoot wide. Arms and legs scissor wildly. Like astronauts HURTLING THROUGH SPACE.

HIGHER! HIGHER! HIGHER!

The slipstream bends. Rocketing the team over the marble peak. Flinging them like rag dolls --

WHAM -- WHAM -- they hydroplane onto the UPPER LEVEL. Across a muddy collection pool. Barrel-rolling to a STOP.

Silence...

COLLECTION POOL

Jasper winces in pain. Keys and Medrano choke up water, nearly coughing out lungs.

Torn bits of raft lay scattered. Along with the soaked remains of their rucks.

A glove claws into a mudbank. Sasha muscles herself up. Collapses.

SASHA

Fuck...

She rolls over. Sees they've arrived at the edge of a FOGGY SWAMP. Riddled with twisting trees and brackish quagmires.

KEYS

I take it back... Not exactly the Galapagos...

Keys wipes muck off his face. Looks to his teammates. Shook.

MEDRANO

Their weapons... They can block...

SASHA

Yeah.

Foreboding silence.

KEYS

I know I'm a stickler for details, but for future reference... Might wanna mix that into the briefing...

SASHA

Shrinks recommended we leave it out.

JASPER

Probably best...

Jasper crawls toward his torn ruck. Reaches for it, but it SLIPS his grip.

JASPER

Son of a --

Jasper looks down: two of his fingers JUT FREAKISHLY SIDEWAYS.

He stares at his mangled hand, incredulous. The adrenaline masking the pain.

SASHA

Whoa, hey... You okay?

Jasper collects his dislocated fingers with a strange kind of wonderment. Then slowly twists...

A sickening CRACK. He felt that. Jasper doubles over, almost vomits.

SASHA

Jasper?

KEYS

Give him a minute. Should've seen
his ankle in Morocco...

Jasper raises his realigned hand. Still works, but turning
purple. He shakily digs a roll of TAPE from his vest.

JASPER

Guess I didn't quite stick the
landing, huh...

Sasha half-grins, crawling over beside Jasper.

SASHA

Here, let me help you.

Jasper relents. Sasha gently begins taping his fingers
together.

JASPER

Smooth move with the smoke back
there...

SASHA

Spies can win wars without firing a
gun.

Eyes meet. Jasper looks at her with a hint of admiration.

JASPER

So... Anything else the shrinks
wanted to keep from us?

SASHA

Well, not the shrinks per se... But
there is one thing I left off my
last after-action report. Something
I didn't even read Bloom in on...

JASPER

I'm all ears.

Sasha hesitates. Senses Medrano and Keys listening too.

SASHA

You guys sure you want to hear this?

The Deltas just hold her gaze. Sasha measures her words...

SASHA

My team and I had just been spotted.
We were racing back to the box. The
EXOs breathing down our necks...

FLASHBACK - BEACH - NIGHT

Thunder booms. Rain slashes sideways.

Inhale! Exhale! Inhale! Frantic breaths in the dark. Sasha bursts out onto a strange PINK SAND BEACH -- clearly not Hartfield's island.

Four members of her LILAC RECON TEAM sprint alongside her. Rucks packed with biological samples and research equipment.

SASHA (V.O.)
I thought we could make it. But
they move so fast... I can still
taste the blood mixing with the
rain.

SKULLS SHATTER around Sasha. Bullets AERATE the bodies of her colleagues. One goes down. Then another. Dropping like flies in the dark.

Muzzle flashes dot the beach behind --

Revealing a row of EXO SILHOUETTES freight-training forward. Lightning illuminates their three-pronged obsidian guns and barbaric, welded helmets.

They cut down the Recon Team with nightmarish brutality.

Reaching the ocean, Sasha DIVES forward -- as a bullet DARTS into her thigh. She screams. Plunges under. Resurfacing, she frantically carves toward the BOX.

SASHA (V.O.)
Suddenly, they stopped firing.

The curtain of EXO gunfire strangely ceases.

SASHA (V.O.)
And that's when I heard it. A cold
voice behind me on the beach. It
spoke. Three words...

Through the swirling storm, a SINGLE EXO SILHOUETTE steps forward.

EXT. COLLECTION POOL - PRESENT

Sasha sits frozen. The Deltas hang on her words.

JASPER
It spoke? What did it say?

SASHA
"Never come back."

For a moment no one moves.

JASPER
Well that's...

KEYS
Our cue to keep moving?

MEDRANO
Young man, that might be the wisest
thing you've ever said.

Keys and Medrano stagger up. Start collecting soggy gear.
Piece by piece.

KEYS
Alright... I'm down half my ammo.
Some C4. All my grenades... What's
your status, Medrano?

But Medrano isn't listening. He's noticed something along the
embankment...

He crouches over SETS OF BOOT PRINTS. Large EXO impressions
in the mud. Flanking a single set of HUMAN TRACKS.

MEDRANO
Hartfield... He was here.

Everyone looks up. Medrano's sage eyes trace the prints into...

FOGGY SWAMPLAND

Mist hangs heavy. Gnarled mangrove trees loom like gargoyles.
The sun retreats behind their dense crowns. Even it dares not
venture here...

Quiet splashes break the silence. The team sneaks through the
shin-deep muck. Guns raised. Re-energized.

MEDRANO
(whispering)
Twelve o'clock...

Scopes rise to discover:

A FIFTY-STORY SKYSCRAPER juts up from the swamp, dissecting
the vapor. It leans at an architecturally-impossible 45
DEGREE ANGLE. Like a giant CHROME RAZOR.

KEYS
... Whoa.

The team stands stricken.

Jasper motions to the others. They spread into a semi-circle and check their compasses. The needles all point to the sleek superstructure. Hope surges --

JASPER

Found you.

TREETOPS

Branches creak. The team scales the thick tree limbs. Scouting the windows of the skyscraper.

Jasper lowers his binos. A private moment of recognition.

MEDRANO

You know this place?

JASPER

Remember when Hartfield and I took that fishing trip last year?

KEYS

Anchorage, right?

JASPER

JSOC actually sent us to Shenzhen. Snatch and grab. Rogue arms dealer was holed up in his penthouse. 49th floor.

Keys traces back to the modernist Shenzhen skyscraper.

JASPER

After we secured him, we did a quick sweep of his apartment. Found the baseboards were hiding a line of gold bullion that could cross the South China Sea... Lucas and I made a judgment call. "Misplaced" a few bricks. Dubbed it a parachute for all our families... Medrano, your ex-wife and kids? Keys, your girlfriend? If anything ever happened to us, they'd be taken care of...

Keys and Medrano look over at Jasper, shocked.

JASPER

Lucas and I never spoke about it. But I could see it sometimes... Gnawing behind his eyes. Wondering if what we did was right.

Jasper stares up at the leaning tower. As if weighing their choice.

SASHA

When you work in the gray edges of the world... And you're worried you're losing your soul? That's a good sign... Means you've still got one to lose.

INSIDE THE LEANING SKYSCRAPER

Haunting silence.

Light filters through vast windows. Revealing rows of chic cubicles. Frosted glass dividers.

An APPLE sits on a desk -- but somehow it hasn't rolled off. As if gravity works different in here. *Its force counteracting the skyscraper's 45 degree tilt.*

Hartfield sits TIED to the desk, chest and wrists bound with rope. Eyes lost in an endless stare. As if ruminating on all his Earthly regrets.

Three EXO GUARDS patrol the aisles of the vogue office. Guns ready. They cross by Hartfield. See he's still secure, head bowed. Surrounded by scattered stacks of mail.

The EXOs continue onward. As they disappear from view --

Something shifts in Hartfield's eyes. His sunken head rises.

Dropping the act.

He jostles his hands and a sharp LETTER OPENER slides down his sleeve. He continues sawing at his HALF-FRAYED bindings.

HARTFIELD

C'mon... C'mon...

Teeth grit as Hartfield saws harder, contorting his hands...

Snap. Wrists come free. Hartfield lights up.

He HACKS at the ropes around his chest. Cuts himself loose.

Hartfield darts into action. Sneaks down the aisle. Turns a corner. Staying low...

Hartfield spots a patrolling EXO ahead. Sharply re-directs.

He rushes toward FLOOR-TO-CEILING WINDOWS. Sees the gnarled mangrove trees all around. Foggy swamp hundreds of feet below. Too far to jump.

SWAMP TREETOPS

Binoculars drop.

KEYS

Oh fuck... There he is!

The team traces his gaze... To Hartfield's *TILTED FIGURE* in a 33rd floor window.

INSIDE THE SKYSCRAPER

Hartfield starts turning away from the window. But stops...

A green LASER POINT appears on his chest.

Hartfield's eyes narrow. The dot disappears... What the hell?

The green LASER POINT blinks again.

Hartfield raises his hand to the laser. Studies the dot. It blinks. Blinks. Something shifts in Hartfield's eyes. A moment of understanding:

Morse code.

Hartfield traces the GREEN LASER out through the window... Into the fog...

Where he spots FOUR CAMOUFLAGED FIGURES in the trees. Hartfield stands stunned. The laser keeps blinking in morse. His lips softly translate the message. Two little words...

HARTFIELD

Nemo... resideo.

Hartfield puts the pieces together. Recognizing his team --

WHAM! An OBSIDIAN RIFLE crashes over his back. He drops.

HARTFIELD

AHH!

The three EXO GUARDS appear over Hartfield. Latch onto him.

HARTFIELD

No! Wait! WAIT!

They haul him across the office...

Toward an ovular BLACK JAIL-POD. Six feet tall. Bizarre nodes and ridges cover its exterior. A hatch DOOR swung open on its side. It looks like a strange MOBILE PRISON CELL.

Hartfield turns ashen.

SWAMP TREETOPS

The team tracks Hartfield through the windows. Watching the EXOs drag him toward the JAIL-POD.

SASHA
The hell is that?

CH-CH! Keys racks his rifle. Crosshairs home in on an EXO.

MEDRANO
Hold your fire --

KEYS
What?!

MEDRANO
What's history teach us? Tower sieges only work if you have the element of surprise.

KEYS
I've got the shot --

MEDRANO
If we reveal ourselves now, the EXOs will entrench -- and we'll never get to Hartfield!

Keys hesitates, torn.

JASPER
Medrano's right.

Keys takes one last look. Then peels his eye from his scope.

KEYS
Shit.

The team watches Hartfield get THRUST into the jail-pod. The EXOs close the hatch door, spin a wheel. Locking him inside.

SASHA
You can bet they've secured every entrance, elevator shaft, emergency stairwell... How do you figure we get up there unseen?

JASPER
I might remember a way.

BASE OF SKYSCRAPER

Four FIGURES sneak through fog.

Jasper runs along the glass foundation. Peering through tilted windows. Searching for something...

Keys and Medrano scan around, providing cover.

Sasha gazes up. The skyscraper **LEANS RIGHT OVERTOP OF THEM**. Like a **FALLING CITADEL** frozen in time. She swallows at the stomach-churning sight, feeling like an ant about to be crushed.

JASPER

Over here.

Jasper crouches beside a half-submerged window. Sparks a handheld **PLASMA CUTTER** --

DARK MECHANICAL ROOM

The team drops through a **NEW HOLE** in the window --

Boots land on *TILTED* concrete. The team shares a look -- now standing at 45 degrees. The building's plane of gravity.

MEDRANO

Keys... You pack any Gravel?

KEYS

(nauseous)

Knew I forgot something...

Jasper cracks a **BLUE CHEMLIGHT**. Claws past Mandarin warning signs. Around pipes, pumps and valves.

JASPER

Back in Shenzhen, Lucas and I spent a week trying to scheme a way to get up the penthouse undetected. But this guy had thought of everything. Anti-aircraft guns on the rooftop, undercover mercenaries on every other floor, state of the art surveillance... He had all the angles covered.

Jasper spots a **STEEL GARBAGE CHUTE DOOR IN THE WALL...**

JASPER

(grins)

Except one.

GARBAGE CHUTE

Sweat drips. Bodies squeeze.

The team spiders up the grimy, cramped shaft. As if climbing up the throat of some Lovecraftian beast.

Jasper halts. His chemlight illuminates a CHUTE DOOR before him. He glances down and whispers:

JASPER
33rd, right?

Three tense nods back. Keys produces a DENTAL MIRROR. Hands it up to Medrano. Who relays it to Jasper.

Jasper gently pushes open the CHUTE DOOR and slides the mirror through the crack. Turns it side to side. *Coast clear.* He pretzels his muscular body through the opening...

CHIC SKYRISE OFFICE

Eerie stillness.

Jasper slips behind a CUBICLE. Medrano and Keys follow like shadows.

But Sasha freezes -- half-out of the garbage chute.

Footsteps echo from down the hall. They grow louder...

Sasha retreats back into the chute.

Jasper, Keys and Medrano crouch under a desk. Lower their eyes to the floor. Pale at what they see:

Two ARMORED BOOTS creep past. Glistening with lesions and scars. Radiating authority. A stealth cloak trails behind, moving with horrifying grace.

Boom... Boom...

No one dares breathe. The EXO Captain's boots slowly fade...

Silence returns.

Sasha peeks out from the GARBAGE CHUTE. Jasper, Keys and Medrano inch out from under the desk and meet her gaze.

Sweat drips from their faces.

DEEPER IN THE OFFICE

The team weaves forward through aisles of CUBICLES. Each passing desk a new island of cover...

Jasper slides up against an OFFICE DIVIDER. Sasha, Keys, and Medrano gather behind him.

Jasper extends the dental mirror, giving him a tiny glimpse across the room -- where the strange BLACK JAIL-POD shimmers in the far corner of the office. Momentarily unguarded.

Jasper draws back the mirror. The others see his excitement. He raises his hand: Three. Two.

Jasper surges up -- leading the team from their hiding place.

They quietly rush forward. Heads spinning.

Jasper reaches the BLACK JAIL-POD. The team fans out around him in a protective semicircle. Eyeing the surrounding cubicles.

Jasper grips the pod's HATCH WHEEL. Goes to spin it --

But it doesn't budge.

Medrano slings his rifle over his shoulder. Wraps his gloves around the wheel too. They reef as hard as they can...

JASPER

Fuck.

The team shares a sickening look.

MEDRANO

Don't suppose that's fitting down
the chute...

Sasha catches movement in her periphery:

SASHA

DOWN!

The team drops as -- TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA!

EXO bullets SHRED through the office. Two EXOs emerge from the shadows across the floor.

The team clenches behind a cubicle. They watch surrounding computers EXPLODE. Papers SWIRL UP like tornados.

Panic knifes into their chests. The world shrinks around them as they realize they've been baited into the corner of the office...

And now they're trapped.

SASHA

Could use some of that Jasper magic!

Jasper racks his brain. Eyes a nearby TILTED WINDOW. Raises his gun: TA-TA-TA-TA!

The glass SHATTERS. Wind rushes in.

JASPER
Abacadabra.

The others look at him like he's crazy.

JASPER
Trust me!

EXO bullets RIVER over their heads. Sasha eyes the window...

Fuck it. She runs low -- and DIVES OUT.

Keys and Medrano brace themselves. Nod to Jasper.

He springs up and unloads at the APPROACHING EXOS: TA-TA-TA!

But the bullets are BLOCKED in waves of sparks. The EXOs advance behind their three-pronged rifles: outer prongs deploy countermeasures. Center prongs fire offensively.

They close the gap with unwavering purpose.

Keys and Medrano lift up the BLACK JAIL-POD. Rush toward the open window -- and LEAP OUT.

Jasper drops a grenade at his feet. Spins and JUMPS TOO --

SIDE OF SKYSCRAPER

-- he SLIDES DOWN the leaning skyscraper. Using its sleek glass frame LIKE A FIFTY-STORY RAMP.

Wind whips as Jasper accelerates downward -- he spots Sasha sliding far below. Rocketing from view into the FOG LAYER. Keys and Medrano disappear next. Jail-pod in hand.

Jasper glances up: the window they leapt from EXPLODES.

The shrapnel vanishes as Jasper reaches the fog. He slides blindly through the thick vapor --

PLOOSH! Splashes to a gut-wrenching stop. Plugged chest-deep in MUD at the base of the skyscraper.

JASPER
Arghh...

Sasha quickly crawls toward Jasper. Helps dig him out.

Keys and Medrano reel up the jail-pod. Tap its locked door.

KEYS
Hang tight, Lucas! We got you!

Together, they hurry off into the hazy swamp...

SKYSCRAPER HIGH ABOVE

A giant chunk of glass is missing.

The two EXOs loom at the blown-out precipice. Stealth cloaks dancing in the wind. They peer down the angled building. But it's impossible to see anything in the swamp below.

Dark visors slowly turn toward each other. Meeting eyes...

FOGGY SWAMP

The team ducks behind mangroves. Sawing off breaths. Elated.

SASHA

How'd you know we'd survive the landing?

JASPER

Didn't. That's why I had you jump first.

Sasha and Jasper share a grin. Keys and Medrano set the jail-pod on its side. Huddle over its locked wheel.

KEYS

What are we thinking, plasma cutter?

MEDRANO

Might burn through and clip him.

KEYS

Lucas, you hear us in there? You good?!

A pain-laced MOAN faintly echoes from within.

JASPER

Just hang on, we'll fish you out!

Jasper pulls a STEALTH NEMO POWER DRILL from his ruck.

BZZZZ! He drills into the hatch wheel. Driving into its center-point. The drill whines and squeals. Gnaws deeper.

JASPER

C'mon motherfucker...

The drill punctures the wheel: PSHHHH! Pressure releases.

The team meets eyes, lighting up. Medrano spins the hatch wheel. Faster. Faster. The jail-pod clangs UNLOCKED.

Medrano swings open its door... His smile drops.

BECAUSE HARTFIELD IS NOT INSIDE. A SEVEN-FOOT EXO STARES BACK INSTEAD.

BANG!

The EXO fires straight into Medrano's stomach. He crumples backward.

The EXO LEAPS OUT -- spins its obsidian rifle toward a stunned Keys --

But Sasha BLINDSIDES it -- knocking the gun from its grasp.

The EXO wheels on Sasha, hacking her aside. She goes FLYING.

Jasper and Keys UNLOAD a barrage of bullets. A lethal curtain that would cut through an armored tank.

But the EXO moves like liquid lightning. Darting and whirling with hypnotizing speed. Evading the streams of gunfire with inhuman grace.

Reaching Keys, it unleashes a LEFT CROSS --

WHAM! Keys EJECTS back. Splashing into the bog.

Jasper charges at the EXO, unloading -- TA-TA-TA-TA-TA!

Bullets ricochet off its angular, pneumatic vest. The EXO bolts into a HORRIFYING DEATH SPRINT toward Jasper and lowers its helmet like a ram --

CRUNCH!

-- it SPEARS JASPER back into the swamp -- KNOCKING him unconscious.

Sasha staggers up behind the EXO. Aims her gun at the back of its welded helmet --

But the EXO whirls its stealth CLOAK -- its SERRATED EDGE severs Sasha's graphene armor -- cutting her to the ground.

The EXO pounces. Seizing Sasha by the throat. Pressing her into the mud. Her eyes go wide...

Keys rushes toward them. Raises a tactical knife and rips it down toward the EXO --

An armored hand simply catches the blade. The EXO breaks the knife. Snatches Keys by his windpipe and slams him down beside Sasha --

PLOOSH! The EXO hovers overtop of them. Inches from their faces. CHOKING them into the muddy water. Eerily calm.

Jasper blinks awake nearby, oblivious...

Sasha and Keys WRITHE under the EXO's grip. DESPERATELY HAMMER up at its dark visor --

The EXO just takes the punishment. It SQUEEZES their necks harder, suffocating them into oblivion. Keys and Sasha turn purple. Swamp water SLOPS over their sinking faces. They gulp involuntarily, asphyxiating.

Their eyes slowly lose focus...

SHUNK!

SOMETHING SKEWERS INTO THE EXO'S NECK FROM BEHIND.

Jasper drives the ROARING DRILL into its jugular -- metal bores into flesh. Viscous black tar-blood GUSHES OUT.

The EXO somehow reaches up toward Jasper. Jasper's eyes go wide, incredulous...

But then the EXO topples sideways. Collapsing into the bog between Sasha and Keys. Thick tar-blood pooling around...

DEAD.

Sasha and Keys WHEEZE. Clutch their bruised windpipes.

JASPER
You two good?

SASHA
Peaches...

Their faces regain their color with each new breath...

KEYS
Where's Medrano?

Jasper spins and scans around. What he discovers stops him in his tracks...

MEDRANO LAYS IN SHOCK -- A STREAM OF BLOOD FLOATS VERTICALLY OUT OF HIS STOMACH WOUND.

The blood column glides skyward in ZERO-G. Like a slow-motion blowout at an oil well. It climbs higher and higher with each beat of his heart.

Medrano's slick hands struggle to cover the bullet hole.

MEDRANO
(faint)
Jasper...

Jasper rushes to Medrano. Tries to somehow stop the vertical stream of blood.

JASPER
Fuck, fuck, fuck...

SASHA
The bullet! Gotta remove the bullet!

Keys grabs his MED-KIT and scrambles over. Medrano's eyes are wide in panic. Face turning more ghostly each passing second.

SASHA
Just close your eyes! Try not to look!

The team tries to assess the bullet hole. But can't see amid the rising column of blood. Medrano's legs inch off the ground. His back arches. As if his entire body was starting to LEVITATE.

KEYS
Whoa, whoa --

SASHA
It's affecting his whole circulatory system!

Jasper and Keys frantically pin Medrano's limbs. Sasha lowers forceps into his stomach, struggling to work around the pluming blood. Medrano TWISTS.

JASPER
Don't move! Don't move!

Sasha fishes around under Medrano's skin...

She delicately extracts the shard-like EXO BULLET -- the vertical column of blood INSTANTLY SLOSHES DOWN. Medrano sinks in the mud. Strings cut.

JASPER
Keys -- XStat.

Keys tosses Jasper an XSTAT COMBAT SYRINGE. Jasper plunges it into Medrano's bullet hole, releasing dozens of tiny circular SPONGES. They rapidly EXPAND to plug the wound and stem the bleeding...

JASPER
Medrano... you with us?

Medrano swallows hard. Sweating profusely. He nods.

MEDRANO
The sun still rises...

Jasper, Keys, and Sasha slump down in relief. All eyes gravitate to the empty jail-pod beside them...

OUTSKIRTS OF SWAMP

An identical black jail-pod jostles. Carried by SIX EXOs.

The EXO CAPTAIN coolly trails his squad. Strange symbols shimmer on angular neck plates. His bronze-lined helmet raised in superiority.

The leaning skyscraper fades behind him, minuscule compared to his soaring figure...

SWAMP

Clug, clug, clug. Medrano CHUGS from a canteen. Water spills down his thick beard.

JASPER

Keep drinking. Really sprang a leak there.

Jasper hands Medrano his canteen too. He chugs again. Keys meticulously wraps a compression bandage around his torso.

MEDRANO

Got ahead of myself... Foolish...

KEYS

Just stay still.

MEDRANO

Should've thought for second before I opened that hatch...

JASPER

Hey. We were right there with you.

Medrano meets his eyes.

Jasper helps Keys wrap another layer of compression bandaging around Medrano.

SASHA

The EXOs must've made the switch when we were in the chute...

Sasha studies her COMPASS. It points away from the team.

SASHA

We're just rats in their maze.

Her gaze drifts across the swamp...

And catches on something sticking out of the quagmire. Sasha curiously rises. Steps toward the object.

THE DEAD EXO'S OBSIDIAN RIFLE GLISTENS IN MUD.

Sasha lifts the magnetic rail gun in awe. Eyes trace its carved, black stone frame. The three-pronged barrel gleams. Terrifying and beautiful.

A weapon beyond humanity.

Jasper tapes the last compression bandage. Keys injects morphine into Medrano.

KEYS

Patched you up for now, but you'll need to be careful. Doctor's orders, old man.

Medrano inspects his bandages.

JASPER

Thought you were headed to an island of your own there for a second.

MEDRANO

Old stallions don't die easy...

They share a subtle grin.

Jasper looks up at Sasha. Notices her scrutinizing the obsidian EXO weapon. Something shifts in her eyes... A decision crystalizing.

SASHA

We have to go back to the box.

The Deltas go still.

KEYS

... What?

SASHA

You've seen how outmatched we are in here. But if we bring this gun home... study its technology, replicate it? This could be the breakthrough Lilac needs. Just think if every operator on future missions was armed with this kind of weapon. We might actually have a chance against the EXOs. Rescue hundreds, maybe thousands...

JASPER

And what about Hartfield? What about using it to save him right now?

SASHA

The EXOs are just waiting for us to follow them into their next trap --

JASPER

We underestimated them. That won't happen again --

SASHA

If we press forward and die, this technology will be lost -- and no one will be saved!

Sasha takes a breath.

SASHA

I'm sorry about Hartfield. I really am... but I meant what I said before. Lilac's mission is more important than any one life. It has to be.

Tense silence. Jasper holds her gaze. Not willing to let go.

JASPER

We can do this, Sasha. I know we can.

Sasha just shakes her head.

SASHA

You don't even know what you don't know.

JASPER

What's that supposed to mean?

SASHA

It means you can't pull this off!

JASPER

How can you say that when no one's ever even tried --

SASHA

Because they have!

Silence...

JASPER

What?

KEYS

You said... You said this was the first rescue operation. That no one had attempted anything like this before.

SASHA

Yeah... That's what we said.

The Deltas meet eyes. Jasper rises up toward Sasha.

JASPER

How many?

No response.

JASPER

How many rescue teams have you sent in?

Sasha doesn't blink.

JASPER

Sasha?! How --

SASHA

Nineteen.

Jasper stops in his tracks. As if absorbing a blow.

JASPER

Nineteen...

SASHA

Cherry-picked from all across the military. DEVGRU, Rangers, MARSOC Raiders. Doesn't matter who we send in. Who they try to save... No one ever comes back.

Deathly silence. The Deltas look up at Sasha, gutted.

KEYS

Why not just tell us the truth?

MEDRANO

Because if she did... she knew we never would have come.

Sasha diverts her gaze.

JASPER

Nineteen rescue ops. But you chose to join this one. Why come back in now?

SASHA

Cause my leg just cleared medical a week ago. And I wasn't about to let the sacrifice of my colleagues be for nothing... Which is why we have to let Hartfield go -- and take this technology back now.

Clutching the formidable EXO gun, Sasha meets eyes with Jasper. Her cards now all on the table.

KEYS

Jasper... We have another problem.

Keys stares down at his WRISTWATCH.

KEYS

Less than two hours till the box disconnects. We were cutting it close before, but now? There's no way we can track down the EXOs, rescue Hartfield, and make it back to the box in time... We have to turn around.

The words land hard. Jasper turns to Medrano. Grasping at straws...

MEDRANO

My friend, we did everything we could... Lucas would be proud.

Jasper sinks. Knows they're right...

The Deltas sit in the mud. A moment of painful silence.

SASHA

(softly)

It's decided then... We pull the plug. Leave anything we don't need behind. We're out of here ASAP.

Keys wipes his eyes. He begins sorting through his gear. Repacking his ruck for the return journey...

JASPER

Wait... Just wait.

Everyone looks back at Jasper.

JASPER

There might be another option.

KEYS

Another option? We're outta time, man --

JASPER

So we create some more...

Something flickers in Jasper's imaginative eyes.

MEDRANO

What are you suggesting?

JASPER

The Honduran compound. Garza's private helicopter. What if one of us circles back to get it, while the rest of us press on? An air extraction could buy the time we need...

Wheels turn in Medrano's mind...

MEDRANO

I could do it.

He looks down at his bandaged stomach.

MEDRANO

If we go forward, I'd only slow us down.

JASPER

(nods)

The rest of us can hunt down Hartfield. Find a way to steal him back from the EXOs --

KEYS

Medrano grabs the helo, follows the compass straight to Lucas --

JASPER

And we all fly back to the box in time.

The Deltas meet eyes. A flicker of hope.

SASHA

And just what gives you the idea you'll be able to overcome the EXOs. Succeed where everyone else has failed?

JASPER

Because we'll have something no one else had...

Jasper eyes the EXO weapon in Sasha's hands. She glances down at the obsidian rifle too. Weighing the moral risk... Hartfield's life against potentially many.

SASHA

I'm sorry, guys... You have your code. I have mine. I'll wait for you at the box as long as I can.

She slings on her ruck. Grips the obsidian EXO gun close. Turns and walks away...

Jasper rises after her, calling out:

JASPER

You say Lilac's mission is more important than any one life... I disagree. Lilac's mission is one life.

Sasha stops.

JASPER

Otherwise, what are we even fighting for?

She looks back...

INT. BLACK JAIL-POD - DAY

Strange black lights glow. Illuminating the cramped space.

Hartfield jostles inside the moving jail-pod, soaked in sweat. He presses his hands in all directions. Searching for a structural weakness...

Suddenly, the pod comes to a stop. Hits ground.

CLANG! The hatch door swings open. Armored EXO gloves dart inside and reef Hartfield out --

INT. DARK CAVE TUNNEL

Hartfield spills onto rock.

The EXO Captain looms over him. He lifts a glove to his barbaric helmet -- the lining opens like a jigsaw, splitting his shaded visor in two.

Hartfield watches the EXO Captain slowly remove his headgear: strange FOSSILIZED SKIN envelops a cratered, noble face. Smooth yet aged. As if sculpted by the hands of time.

Penetrating, platinum-colored eyes gleam from deep recesses. His angular jaw does not lead to a mouth -- instead, the EXO Captain speaks through irregular perforations in his ossified dermis. And when he does, his words are hushed and deep. As if the depths of space were given a voice.

THE EXO CAPTAIN
Come... I have something to show you.

Hartfield just stares up in awe.

EXT. SWAMP - DAY

Boots splash forward -- Jasper and Keys double-time it through the fog. Following their compasses. Game faces on. Sasha hurries alongside them. Gripping the OBSIDIAN EXO GUN.

SASHA
Jasper, if we all die, I'm gonna
kill you.

KEYS
Welcome to the club.

Jasper fights a grin. Removes a pouch from his vest.

JASPER
Here, take one of these for a spin.

SASHA
Guessing those aren't vitamins.

KEYS
Team secret. Sour keeps your edges
sharp.

Jasper offers a handful of HOMEMADE CANDIES.

JASPER
Make 'em myself. Once kept us awake
for four days straight while we were
camped in a Lithuanian landfill.
Shit's better than amphetamine.

Keys takes a candy. Sasha tentatively pops one in too. Her mouth twists at the taste.

KEYS
Well?

SASHA
(coughs)
Tastes like battery acid.

JASPER
That's why they work.

The three gain speed. Rucks stuffed with the DEAD EXO'S BODY ARMOR. They race through the hot swamp, until the gnarled mangrove trees break --

A cold wind hits their sweaty faces.

Jasper, Keys and Sasha stagger -- gazing out at SNOW DUNES. Undulating across the landscape as far as the eye can see. Like the Arctic tundra.

Snowflakes fall around the team. A moment of tranquility.

SASHA

Thin line, isn't it? Between one world and the next...

Jasper curiously eyes the boundary between the swamp and snow. A bizarre incongruity of green and ice. Life and death.

JASPER

I'm starting to get that sense.

EXT. REVERSE WATERFALL - DAY

Medrano limps back through the mist, cradling his stomach. He re-approaches the REVERSE WATERFALL...

Reaching the precipice, he cranes his neck over the edge: water rockets up toward him. Thundering with hypnotic power.

MEDRANO

Once more into the breach, dear friends...

CLIFF FACE

Bones rattling, Medrano RAPPELS ON A ROPE BESIDE the falls. Boots kiss the slick marble. Carefully touching down, down...

EXT. SNOW DUNES - DAY

Wind kicks up cyclones of snow.

Jasper, Keys and Sasha trek through the whiteout. As they climb a frozen hill, their eyes gravitate to an adjacent dune. Something comes into focus...

An OLD PHONE BOOTH.

Standing silently in the storm. Covered in urban graffiti. Its receiver dangles eerily in the wind... A mysterious tableaux in the whirling snow.

KEYS

Know what that's from?

Jasper shakes his head.

They all eye it for a moment. Reflecting on its possible significance...

They push onward. The phone booth fades from view. Until it disappears back into the swirling snow, remaining a mystery.

KEYS

Crazy loop... Our lives are filled with thoughts of death. And our deaths are filled with thoughts of life...

Jasper and Sasha quietly continue. Absorbing his words.

JASPER

Ever think about what memory stations will be on your island?

SASHA

... Now and then.

JASPER

Yeah?

SASHA

When you spend years under different aliases, the memories can pile up quick. Each skin you shed leaves a full life in its wake. Friends you made. People you could've saved. A charming schoolteacher you might've...

Jasper glances sideways at Sasha. Sees a flash of emotion in her eyes. She hides it with a grin.

SASHA

But I've learned the best way to survive is to focus on what's ahead... What about you?

JASPER

Well, believe it or not, first time I tried to pass the Delta course I didn't make the cut...

SASHA

No shit.

JASPER

I was shattered. I'd searched the world for my calling, and just when I'd finally found it, it was gone. So I shut myself in my apartment. Stopped eating. Bought a ticket home to Anchorage...

(MORE)

JASPER (CONT'D)

Then one day, one of the new Delta grads knocks on my door. Tells me to pack my shit, I'm coming to train with him... I drag myself into his beat-up Chevy and Lucas Hartfield says to me, "the best operators can last 40 days without food, 96 hours without water and about 8 minutes without air... But it's hard to survive a second without hope."

Sasha takes Jasper in.

JASPER

He was my compass long before I came to this place. And if there's one thing that'll be on my island, it's that rusted old truck...

KEYS

Hold up!

Keys stares at his compass. The arrow has strangely FLIPPED AROUND. Pointing back the way they came... *What the hell?*

Sasha and Jasper notice. Remove their compasses too: same reading. The team turns and retraces their steps...

BUT THEIR COMPASS ARROWS FLIP AGAIN.

They drop their rucks. Quickly circle the area. Arrows all spin in an arc. As if they were atop the North Pole...

KEYS

Fuck's this?

SASHA

He should be right here...

They scour around. Nothing but dunes and lashing wind.

JASPER

He is here... They have him underground.

INT. CAVE TUNNEL

Jagged ICE glimmers. Coating the walls of a twisting tunnel. Ultraviolet ore glows within, emitting a sapphire hue...

The EXO Captain ushers Hartfield deeper into the labyrinth. Platinum eyes gleam from the recesses of his fossilized skin. His titanic figure looms with terrifying power. Somehow making Hartfield appear small.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

I must admit, I envy you... Dying
is an art, like everything else.
And yours was a masterpiece.

Hartfield swallows. Eyeing the icy tunnel walls. He glances
over his shoulder. The vanguard of EXOs trails behind.

HARTFIELD

W-What is this place -- this island?

The Captain doesn't respond. Hartfield grows more anxious.

HARTFIELD

Are you -- are you listening to me?

THE EXO CAPTAIN

This dimension is many things... But
in the end, you might call it a test.

HARTFIELD

A test?

The Captain's otherworldly eyes almost seem to grin.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Let me ask you this... The monuments
from your life scattered across the
island. Have you noticed any pattern
in what they symbolize?

Hartfield thinks.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Whether it's a humble father
working for years to give his son a
single vacation. Or two brothers in
arms never giving up on a seemingly
impossible mission... Or a soldier
and his wife sticking together
through the storms of life despite
the thousands of miles between
them. Each monument is meant to
remind you of the most important
quality any lifeform can possess...

HARTFIELD

And that is?

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Perseverance.

The EXO Captain allows Hartfield to digest the revelation.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

This dimension was designed to test that trait. To challenge your perseverance. You see, there is only one way off your island -- a secret door hidden somewhere amid the vast landscape. And under normal circumstances, your challenge would be to find it.

HARTFIELD

This secret door... Where does it lead?

The Captain turns into a secluded chamber.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Come. See for yourself...

WELL ROOM

Ice glows dimmer. Funneling into pure darkness.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

(calling back)

Unless the answer isn't of any interest.

Hartfield tentatively follows.

A circular WELL appears in the black rock ahead. As if a natural endpoint to the cave maze. Maybe the entire island...

Iridescent flowers bloom around it. *Life in the darkness.*

The EXO Captain looms at the brittle edge. Staring down the shaft. Fascinated.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

I give you the doorway. To a further dimension.

A chill runs through Hartfield. He cranes his neck over...

Strange BLACK SAND churns far below. Billions of grains knead together. As if forming the opening to an unusual WORMHOLE. A low-octave whisper emanates up the well.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Only the most perseverant ever find it. And when they take the leap, their journey continues on. To a new world. To the next chapter in the story of their lives.

HARTFIELD

Next chapter?

THE EXO CAPTAIN

That's correct...

Hartfield's mind races.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

The chapters of life are supposed to flow in one direction -- forward. But every few million years, somewhere in the universe an intelligent species rises up. Develops the technological and tactical ability to bring someone back.

Emotion floods into Hartfield's eyes.

HARTFIELD

My team... So they really are here then.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Indeed they are. And it's my duty to stop them.

The Captain circles the well with lethal grace.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Since the first stars flickered in the dark, my kind has existed as the built-in defense system of the universe. Our mission? To uphold its natural order: life must always move forward... Never back.

HARTFIELD

And why is that so important?

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Because if you went back, if you cheated death, the value of life would depreciate. The beauty of this journey is you don't get second chances. You only get to experience each world once... That's what makes it extraordinary.

The EXO Captain stops. His platinum eyes radiate conviction.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

The value of life is what we defend.

EXT. BEHIND A SNOW DUNE - DAY

A RIFLESCOPE peeks over a ridge. Keys lies prone in the snow.

SCOPE POV

Crosshairs focus on the JAGGED MOUTH OF AN ICE CAVE.

The crosshairs pan sideways... Blurring across monstrous dunes... Landing on a SECOND ICY CAVE MOUTH. Facing the opposite direction.

KEYS (V.O.)

Two access points. No way to decipher the layout inside. Or how many EXOs are holding him...

SNOW DUNE

Keys lowers his scope. Jasper and Sasha lie prone beside him.

JASPER

So good news all around then?

KEYS

Just a Sunday stroll into a deathtrap, man.

SASHA

Jasper if you've got one last rabbit in your hat, now would be the time to pull it out...

JASPER

This time, actually, I'm fresh out.

Sasha glances sideways. Not what she expected.

KEYS

You don't have a rabbit... But I might have a carrot.

SASHA

A carrot?

JASPER

Well, at least we won't starve to --

Realization stops him. He sees Keys staring at their RUCKS.

KEYS

Jasper, I know it's hard for you, but you need to start summoning a little imagination...

JASPER

Oh this is gonna be good.

INT. WELL ROOM

Hartfield peers down at the churning black crystals.

HARTFIELD

If this island is a test, a challenge
for me to find this door... Why have
you shown it to me?

THE EXO CAPTAIN

You and I both know what it means to
lead soldiers into battle. That a
true leader doesn't fight because he
hates what's in front of him. He
fights because he loves what's behind
him. So I'd like to propose a deal...

The EXO Captain looms over Hartfield's shoulder. Each hushed
word a seduction.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

Take the leap. Help me fulfill my
duty... If you do, I will allow your
teammates to peacefully return home.
But if you refuse, and hold out for
rescue? I'm afraid I'll be forced to
eliminate every one of them... Either
way, on your island I can't decide
your fate. The choice must be yours.

Sweat rises on Hartfield's face. He looks back down into the
mesmerizing abyss. Torn.

HARTFIELD

You said you defend the value of
life... That if I go back to Earth,
life will be diminished... But
sometimes, don't we have to lose
something to realize its true
worth? What if going back didn't
diminish life... but amplified our
appreciation of it?

Hartfield's eyes flicker up.

HARTFIELD

What if we had to die before we
could really live?

The EXO Captain holds his gaze. Almost impressed by his
words... A subtle moment of respect, as if between two
warring Generals.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

If all lifeforms were altruistic,
maybe that would be the order of
things... But a black ops soldier
knows better. Doesn't he?

EXT. CAVE MOUTH - DAY

Jasper rushes toward an ICY CAVE MOUTH. Removes bricks of C-4 from his ruck. Keys meticulously wires them around the entry.

KEYS

We pull this off, I'd put us up
there with Houdini...

JASPER

Even he wasn't crazy enough to try
this.

Sasha eyes her daunting EXO weapon. Gauges its strange stone mechanisms.

SASHA

All set?

Keys glances back across the dunes. Checks his watch: 27 MINS.

KEYS

Medrano's cutting it close.

JASPER

He'll be here... He will be here.

They share a tense look.

Sasha racks the terrifying obsidian weapon: CRACK-CLACK. Together, they enter the black mouth of the cave. Descending into the unknown...

EXT. NECK-HIGH WHEAT FIELD - DAY

Medrano STUMBLES through the golden wheat. Pale as a sheet.

The HONDURAN LUXURY COMPOUND shimmers up ahead like a mirage.

Medrano limps to a stop, relieved by the sight. *He made it.*

Dripping sweat, he glances down at his injured stomach. Blood oozes through the compression bandages.

He grits his teeth. Goes to continue forward -- when something catches his periphery. Tendrils quiver across the field.

What was that?

Medrano stands frozen, staring at the wheat. The golden sea innocently sways in the wind. But his sage eyes harden. *He knows...*

Medrano spins and sneaks off. Struggling to keep under the cover of the wheat. Suddenly, he breaks through the thickets. Bursting through the OPEN IRON GATE of the --

HONDURAN COMPOUND

Manicured green grass sprawls before him. Blemished only by the swerving tire tracks of the utility van.

Medrano spots the PRIVATE HELICOPTER across the yard. Then glances back into the wheat field -- no time for takeoff.

He grips his gun tighter. Looks for a hiding place.

BEHIND

The wheat bends before the IRON GATE...

An EXO slips through. Black pneumatic vest and shoulder tubing gleam in the sun. It scans across the manicured lawn.

No sign of Medrano...

But then it glances down. Notices drops of FRESH BLOOD. They lead up the grand driveway... And disappear into the mansion.

INSIDE THE MANSION

Sliced LEMONS dangle eerily.

A welded helmet pushes through them. The EXO glides down the claustrophobic corridor. Three-pronged obsidian rifle choked in its grip.

It passes padlocked doors. Eyes squalid cots and human cages.

The EXO tracks a trail of blood along the floor. Toward the spiral staircase ahead...

SPIRAL STAIRCASE

The EXO discretely ascends. Spots the master bedroom's soaring DOUBLE DOORS. Shredded from the Delta raid.

Faint bloody FINGERPRINTS shimmer on its knob.

MASTER BEDROOM

Doors inch open...

The EXO slips through behind its gun. Coolly scans the floor.

The trail of Medrano's blood runs across the carpet. Hooks out of sight around the FOUR-POSTER BED. A desperate attempt at hideout.

The EXO advances forward. Its heavy boots tread across the rug. An executioner come to call...

THE EXO WHEELS AROUND THE BED, RIFLE RAISED --

But the blood trail ends. The EXO stares down. Perplexed.

Behind him, *a section of false wall silently slides open...*

Revealing MEDRANO in Garza's hidden recess. He rolls something out across the carpet...

A GRENADE.

Grinning, Medrano slides the reinforced wall closed.

The EXO senses something. Turns around to find the explosive. Realizes it's been fooled --

INT. CAVE TUNNEL

Wind softly screams through the tunnel.

Sasha, Jasper and Keys creep forward behind the three-pronged obsidian rifle.

Icy stalactites and stalagmites protrude like GIANT BAYONETS. Some even branch out horizontally from the walls. Ore glows sapphire within them.

SASHA

... Do you feel that?

Behind her, Jasper and Keys share a glance, intrigued.

KEYS

Feel what?

Sasha picks up a pebble of GLOWING ICE. Studies it for a moment. Then bowls it forward. The pebble tumbles ahead...

Until it's gradually drawn sideways, rolling RIGHT UP THE WALL -- ACROSS the ceiling -- DOWN the opposite wall -- BACK onto the ground --

The loop repeats as the pebble rattles deeper. As if the tunnel were a continuous CORKSCREW OF GRAVITY.

KEYS

Holy fuck.

Sasha swallows hard...

She cautiously leads the team UP THE WALL. Eyes widen as they begin arcing through the tunnel. Traversing the gravity corkscrew.

Jasper and Keys rainbow their guns. Now aware their enemies could pop out from ANY DIRECTION...

Sweat drips from their faces. Hearts pound.

Jasper peers over Sasha's shoulder. Notices a strange horizontal stalactite ahead in the dark. Ever so slightly, it moves. Because it's not a stalactite...

JASPER

CONTACT!

An EXO "stands" on the wall at a 90-DEGREE ANGLE, gun raised:

TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA!

But Sasha swings her EXO weapon toward it just in time. The bullets are INTERCEPTED in front of her, lighting up her face in a wall of sparks.

The EXO hesitates -- stunned. It spots the obsidian gun in Sasha's grip. She grins.

Jasper and Keys LEAP OUT from behind her. The team all unloads on the EXO from DIFFERENT directions.

TA-TA-TA! TA-TA-TA! TA-TA-TA!

The EXO steps back, overwhelmed. It swings its three-pronged weapon side-to-side. Struggling to block all directions at once. Bullets RAKE across its helmet. SHATTERING its visor.

The EXO "drops" sideways against the icy wall -- dead.

WELL ROOM

An EXO SCOUT marches into the chamber, cutting through a circle of FIVE EXO GUARDS. Speaks in an unknowable tongue:

EXO SCOUT

(subtitled)

They're here.

The EXO Captain and Hartfield look up from the well...

TUNNEL

Jasper snatches up the dead EXO's gun and continues forward with Sasha and Keys. They step back onto "even ground." Leaving the gravity corkscrew behind.

But a multitude of icy tunnels branch out before them.

SASHA

Which one?

Keys snaps open his compass.

WELL ROOM

The EXO Captain turns to Hartfield.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

I've guarded countless islands through the eons. Protected lifeforms much more powerful and advanced than humans. But I'm not sure I've ever witnessed the reckless loyalty of your teammates... Be a shame for their lives to go to waste.

CLACK-CRACK! Hartfield blanches as the EXOs rack their guns. Assemble around the Captain like a rising hurricane.

The Scout offers his leader an ANCIENT OBSIDIAN RIFLE. Hewn in some forgotten epoch. It appears hand-carved. Raw. Cruder than the other EXO weapons, but dwarfs them in size and majesty: its barrel branches into FIVE glimmering PRONGS. Black stone FLECKED with bronze.

The Captain accepts his daunting gun. Glances at Hartfield.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

(nods to well)

Leap quickly if you want your friends to live.

Before Hartfield can respond, the Captain is gone. His squad runs out into the tunnel behind him -- charging into battle.

TUNNEL

Jasper, Sasha and Keys race forward. Descending deeper into the tunnel. Unaware of what lies ahead.

Ba-boom! Ba-boom! Hearts rattle in their chests.

TUNNEL

The EXO Captain storms forward, leading his terrifying squad. His cloak slashes in his slipstream. The very fabric of space seems to bend around him.

He raises his gun. Just as we think he's about to crash into our team --

Daylight breaks. A cave mouth appears ahead. The Captain bursts out into the snow --

SNOW DUNES

Sleet swirls around his titanic figure.

We notice no signs of C-4 planted along this cave mouth.

THE EXO CAPTAIN
(subtitled)
Where?

The EXO Scout draws up beside him. Unhinges a GEARED MONOCULAR from its vest. Motions out toward a blue chemlight glowing in the distance...

The Captain takes the monocular. Glasses the scope.

MONOCULAR POV

The distant chemlight glows beside an EXO HELD HOSTAGE. Its broad torso tied up in the snow. A sniper rifle peeks out from behind a nearby dune -- aimed straight at its welded helmet.

CAVE MOUTH

The Captain lowers the monocular, taken aback.

EXO SCOUT
(subtitled)
Looks like they want a prisoner
exchange...

The EXOs turn to their Captain. Unsure of their next move.

BEHIND THE DISTANT DUNE

The sniper rifle secretly sits unmanned.

It's rigged to point at the "Hostage" -- which is actually the DEAD EXO'S BODY ARMOR from Jasper, Sasha, and Keys' rucksacks. Carefully staged...

INT. CAVE TUNNEL

All is quiet. Two remaining EXO Guards patrol outside the well room.

CRACK! Bullets rupture visors. Their massive frames slam down.

Jasper and Sasha dart out from the darkness. Advancing behind their obsidian weapons. Keys swoops toward a dead EXO and steals its three-pronged gun.

Jasper and Sasha converge over the second fallen EXO Guard. Still alive, it hacks off gurgling breaths. Claws for its gun.

Jasper plants his boot into the EXO's chest...

WELL ROOM

Hartfield lingers at the well. BULLET FIRE echoes from the tunnels behind: TA-TA-TA!

He glances over his shoulder. Swallows hard. Are his friends dying needlessly?

Hartfield turns back to the well, torn. He rises up onto the ledge. Peers down at the churning crystals. Sweat drips down his face --

BEHIND HIM

-- Just as Jasper, Sasha and Keys dash into the room behind.

JASPER

Lucas!

Hartfield spins around at the voice -- but the brittle ledge CRUMBLES under his boots. He plummets down into the shaft.

Oh fuck.

Jasper, Sasha and Keys dart to the well. Look down:

Hartfield stares up at them in HORROR. Thrashing in the churning sand twenty feet below. His torso SINKS into the black vortex. As if being devoured --

HARTFIELD

Jasper!

The black sand snakes up his chest. Up his neck.

WHOOSH -- Jasper throws down a ROPE -- Hartfield desperately reaches for it. Struggling to keep his mouth above the sand. His fingertips kiss the rope. Latch on.

JASPER

PULL!

Hartfield fights with everything he has. Sucked down by the black sand vortex. Pulled up by the team --

Caught in a TUG-OF-WAR for his life.

EXT. SNOW DUNES - DAY

The EXO Captain scrutinizes the hostage scene. Platinum eyes narrow.

EXO SCOUT

(subtitled)

Captain? What is it?

The Captain raises his weapon. Unlocks a hidden compartment along the barrel. A JAGGED SCOPE rises from obsidian rock, glimmering like an uncut gem.

SCOPE POV

Peculiar crosshairs aim through the swirling snow. Homing on the distant EXO Hostage.

CRACK! A bullet streaks through the storm --

And rips into the arm of the "Hostage." No flinch.

SNOW DUNES

The EXO Captain's face twists in realization. He spins back into the cave with his horrifying squad -- on a mission.

WELL ROOM

Jasper, Keys and Sasha FIGHT TO REEL IN THE ROPE.

JASPER

C'mon... C'mon...

Suddenly, Hartfield's HAND appears over the edge of the well.

JASPER

I got you!

Keys and Sasha grab Hartfield too. Together, they haul him up onto solid ground. Their bodies collapse...

Jasper and Hartfield meet eyes. A moment of disbelief.

HARTFIELD
You -- you guys came...

JASPER
Someone taught us a code worth
keeping.

Hartfield looks to Keys. Emotions rising behind his eyes.

KEYS
Yes he did.

The distant THUNDER OF BOOTS cuts through the moment.

SASHA
Gotta move.

TUNNEL

The team rushes out into the main tunnel. Glances left:
Rumbling boots crescendo in the dark -- louder each second.

JASPER
On me!

Jasper darts right. Leading them back the way they came.

The team forms an escort around Hartfield. Weaves through a
maze of giant ice stalagmites. Sapphire ore illuminates
sweaty faces.

Rumbling boots strengthen behind. Like a rising stampede.

The team rounds a bend. Arrives at the final straight away.
Sprints forward --

Until they're suddenly drawn sideways. Re-entering the
CORKSCREW OF GRAVITY.

Sasha races right up the wall.

Hartfield staggers at the sight, EYES WIDE -- but Jasper and
Keys instantly pull him forward. Together they rush up the
wall. Across the ceiling.

TA-TA-TA-TA! Bullets JACKHAMMER the ice around them.

The team looks back -- the EXO Captain charges like a freight
train. His horrifying EXO squad in his wake. Weapons blaze:

TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA-TA!

Jasper, Sasha and Keys raise their stolen obsidian guns.
Nullify the incoming bullets. Return fire --

But the EXOs deploy countermeasures too. The Captain closes the gap with unthinkable speed. Chasing the team through the mind-bending CORKSCREW:

UP the wall. ACROSS the ceiling. DOWN the opposite wall. Back ACROSS the ground.

Bullets RICOCHET around the tunnel. Ice shatters into a million pieces. Spraying in their respective gravitational directions --

An epic cyclone of war.

Upside down, Jasper spots the cave mouth ahead. Daylight swords through. Growing brighter. Brighter.

He looks to Hartfield --

JASPER
GO! GO!

Jasper turns and unloads a river of COVER FIRE. Hartfield surges for the daylight. Sasha and Keys do too. They race by the BRICKS OF C4. Duck around the lip of the cave mouth --

CAVE MOUTH

-- And collapse in the snow. Keys removes a DETONATOR from his vest. Peers back into the tunnel --

TUNNEL

The EXO Captain charges at Jasper. Unloading merciless fire.

Jasper returns countermeasures. But the Captain's five-pronged gun is OVERPOWERING. Pushing Jasper's "shield" back toward his face...

Through the chaos, Jasper meets eyes with the EXO Captain. Platinum eyes knife into his soul...

KEYS
JASPER, NOW!

Jasper snaps around. Runs and dives out into the snow --

CAVE MOUTH

-- As Keys presses the detonator: BOOOOOOOOM!

The C-4 erupts in a BLINDING FLASH. A curtain of force spikes outward --

The tunnel splinters -- stalactites crash down -- shattering like giant blades! They CRUSH the EXO Captain and his squad. Burying them in a cascade of rock and ice.

Snow MUSHROOMS like dust after a bomb. Leaving something like peace...

SIDE OF DUNE

Two eyes flicker open...

Jasper is encased in PURE WHITE. Submerged in a heavy blanket of snow. Twisted from the impact. He spits up powder. Clears out his windpipe. Then claws up toward the daylight --

Jasper spots a TINY SILHOUETTE in the grey sky above. It circles down like a bird. Growing bigger...

Jasper blinks. Wipes his eyes. A small PRIVATE HELICOPTER comes into focus. Rotor blades roaring through the blizzard. Descending toward him...

HARTFIELD (O.S.)

Here -- he's over here!

Hartfield, Keys and Sasha race down to Jasper. Reel him up.

SASHA

Come on!

Wind LASHES their hair. They dart for the helicopter. As it touches down nearby, its door opens to reveal MEDRANO. EXO blood is crusted across his vest. His eyes zero in on Hartfield --

MEDRANO

My friend -- don't you ever fucking die on us again!

Hartfield grins.

The Deltas all lock in a brotherly embrace. *Reunited at last.*

FROM HIGH ABOVE

The helicopter LIFTS OFF into the white maelstrom...

INSIDE THE HELO

The team pulls on headsets. Hartfield looks across at Jasper. A thousand questions swirling in his mind.

HARTFIELD

... How?

JASPER
Special Access Program in the
desert. Experimental tech. After
you died, they gave us a chance to
be the guinea pigs.

Hartfield shakes his head in disbelief.

JASPER
This is --

SASHA
Sasha Liman. CIA.

Sasha studies Hartfield with the discerning eyes of a spy.

SASHA
Been quite a ride getting to know
about you.

She curiously extends a glove. Hartfield hesitates, then
shakes it.

HARTFIELD
Sounds like I'm in your debt...
Hope these characters didn't give
you too hard a time.

SASHA
(smirks)
They sure are relentless. I'll tell
you that.

Hartfield glances around at his team.

HARTFIELD
Don't I know it...

Sasha checks her watch. 13 minutes until the box disconnects.
Jasper meets her eyes as the helicopter ascends. They share a
private look... *They might just do this.*

Keys climbs into the cockpit. Settles beside Medrano.

MEDRANO
So... You going to tell me how you
managed to extract him?

KEYS
Used the armor to stage a hostage
scene.

MEDRANO
Turned their own tactics against
them... Poetic.

KEYS

"Study the past, battles won and lost, and you can predict the future."

MEDRANO

You have been listening all these years...

Keys leans back, kicking his feet up.

KEYS

Old man, wisdom comes at a hell of an hour. When youth is gone, the storm's over, and the girls have gone home.

MEDRANO

Is that so? Then tell me if you've seen anything like this --

Medrano draws back on the stick. The helo rises through the snowstorm. Bursting up into blue skies --

Keys leans forward. Jasper, Hartfield and Sasha do too. Their faces subtly drop.

COUNTLESS STRANGE ISLANDS dot the horizon. Stretching out across the infinite ocean. Their unique outlines barely visible. Their secrets endless.

Each representing a single life.

The team stares out in awe. For a moment they can't help but feel... Incredibly small.

MEDRANO

There is more in heaven and Earth,
Horatio, than dreamt of in our
philosophy.

The chopper soars. A moment of profound silence.

EXT. COLLAPSED CAVE MOUTH - DAY

Ice trembles...

Rubble cascades off a dark silhouette. The EXO Captain claws out of the ruins. Black blood leaks down his mouthless jaw...

The Captain rises up. Platinum eyes flooding with rage.

He turns to the snowy horizon. Unhinges his geared monocular. Searches the sky...

Until he LOCATES SOMETHING in the far distance.

The Captain sets his jaw. Leans down and pries something from the rubble: his FIVE-PRONGED OBSIDIAN RIFLE emerges. Its jagged scope dangles by a thread.

The Captain just snaps it off. Steps up onto a CHUNK OF ROCK. Surveys the howling wind. And coolly homes in on the horizon...

PRIVATE HELICOPTER

The chopper soars across clear blue skies.

It peacefully advances over the foggy swamp. Past the spire of the leaning skyscraper. Toward the golden wheat beyond --

THWACK!

INSIDE THE HELO

Alarms wail. Red lights flash as Medrano wrestles the stick.

MEDRANO

Shit-shit-shit...

Jasper and Hartfield open the side door -- INKY SMOKE billows from the chopper. Fluid gushes from a gaping bullet hole.

JASPER

Nicked an artery back here!

Medrano scans the seizing dashboard. Fuel gauges plummet. Keys looks out at the beach on the horizon...

KEYS

We're not gonna make it.

The engines start to putter. Choking out dying breaths.

MEDRANO

I'm setting her down! Hold on!

Sasha presses herself against the window. Sees the golden wheat field ahead. They sink toward it. Medrano pulls back on the cyclic stick, desperately trying to level out --

MEDRANO

Cold nose!

The chopper dips further. Everyone braces as the golden field RUSHES UP toward them. Eyes crease --

WHEAT FIELD

-- the nose of the helo SKIDS across the field. WHAM! WHAM!

The tail of the chopper CATCHES the wheat. Rotor blades SNAP off -- sending the cabin into a fishtail --

It tumbles onto its side. And groans to an ungraceful STOP.

SNOW DUNES

Black chrome SPHERES spin in a BLUR.

The EXO Captain stands atop his irregular ATV. Forcing down the steering LEVER. He hurtles across the white dunes like a BLACK METEOR. A cosmic inevitability.

HELICOPTER

A knife SAWS through twisted seat belts.

HARTFIELD

Medrano, give me your hand!

Hartfield helps Medrano and Keys worm out of the cockpit.

JASPER

This way --

Jasper kicks out a fractured window. They climb free.

Sasha crawls around the upturned cabin. Collects their five obsidian EXO rifles.

WHEAT FIELD

The team huddles up, gasping. Sasha tosses everyone a gun.

KEYS

Eight minutes.

HARTFIELD

Till what?

SASHA

If we're not at our exit point in eight minutes, we're never leaving this dimension.

Hartfield glances at Jasper, startled.

JASPER

Like I said. Guinea pigs.

The team looks to the bamboo forest, 100 yards ahead --

BAMBOO FOREST

Boots hammer the ground. The team sprints through the stalks. Hartfield and Jasper help Medrano forward. He cradles his injured torso.

HARTFIELD

We get back, barbecue at Medrano's ranch. Jump on the stallions. Do a little racing.

KEYS

Now you're talking. Be nice to pad the piggy bank.

MEDRANO

Ah, I don't let cheaters on my property any more. Strict policy.

Breathless grins.

JASPER

Cheaters? Says the guy who rides the horse who placed in the...

Jasper glances back over his shoulder. Hearing something echo across the landscape --

WHEAT FIELD

Engines cycle into a SNARL.

Omni-directional wheels lacerate the wheat. Revealing the EXO Captain standing tall on his ATV.

He spots the bamboo forest ahead. Twists a DIAL on his steering lever -- two exhaust pipes FOLD UP over his broad shoulders like mechanical arms. Angled forward at 45 degrees.

WHOOM-WHOOM-WHOOM! The exhaust pipes KICK as they FIRE MORTARS.

BAMBOO FOREST

Jasper goes pale at the sound.

JASPER

Drägers out -- everything else behind!

The team bolts for their lives.

Stripping off all gear except for their DRÄGER rebreathers and EXO guns. They break through the bamboo onto --

THE BEACH

Flawless white sand. Dazzling turquoise water.

The team scans the endless ocean before them. Tracing past the INVERTED TREES growing in the water. Their exposed roots strangely reaching into the sky.

SASHA

There!

Sasha points to the BLACK BOX hidden beyond. Three-quarters submerged in the crashing surf.

Everyone darts for it. Hurrying down the beach when --

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The Captain's mortars RAIN DOWN around them. But these aren't standard explosives -- they are gravity bombs.

Sand ERUPTS in cylindrical columns. Then strangely hangs in MID-AIR. As if trapped in the vacuum of space.

BOOM!

The team staggers at the sight. Another column of sand ERUPTS before them. They run around its ten-foot radius, eyes wide. Approach the surf.

Keys spots another mortar ARCING toward them. Straight down toward Hartfield.

Keys makes a split-second decision. BODYCHECKS Hartfield --

BOOM!

The mortar EXPLODES beside Keys. Shooting him eight feet into the air -- his body SPIRALS from the residual force. Caught in the zero-g column of sand. Spinning like an astronaut without any means of counter-propulsion.

HARTFIELD

Keys!

Hartfield surges back. But Jasper intercepts. Looks to Sasha:

JASPER

Get him to the box!

HARTFIELD

What?!

JASPER
You're the priority -- go!

No time to argue. Sasha pulls Hartfield toward the ocean.

BAMBOO FOREST

Colossal ATV wheels align into SINGLE FILE... Allowing the Captain to WEAVE through the dense stalks like a black chrome snake. He closes toward the beach.

BEACH

Keys spins uncontrollably.

KEYS
Get me the fuck outta here!

Medrano hurries up to the boundary of the blast column.
Unsure what to do.

Jasper quickly checks his watch: 3 MINUTES, 47 SECONDS.

Medrano extends his obsidian gun into the column like an olive branch. Keys reaches for it as he spins -- misses. *Too far.*

Jasper eyes the gulf between Keys and Medrano's gun... He rolls up his sleeves.

JASPER
Medrano, give me the barrel.

MEDRANO
You about to do something foolish
here?

Medrano retracts his gun from the column. Jasper latches onto the tip of the weapon. Locks in his grip --

JASPER
Don't let go.

Suddenly, Jasper takes two hard steps -- and hurls himself up into the zero-g column!

Jasper hangs in limbo: half inside the column, half out. He reaches his free hand toward Keys.

Keys spots it as he continues to SPIN. He extends an arm...

HANDS LOCK TOGETHER. They JOLT at the synergy.

JASPER
Medrano!

Medrano grits his teeth. Reels in the human chain. Jasper and Keys float back toward him. They slip out of the column -- and CRASH to the ground.

MEDRANO

Still with us?!

Keys nods tensely -- deeply rattled.

Jasper helps scrape up his dizzy figure. They all turn for the ocean and don their Drägers. Dive into the surf as --

VROOM!

The cycling ATV bursts onto the beach behind. Colossal black chrome wheels SLASH the sand. The Captain leaps off with lethal grace -- never breaking stride.

At his arrival, the columns of sand simultaneously DROP.

The Captain's black armor glistens under the sun. He raises his formidable obsidian gun and heads for the turquoise surf. A harbinger of doom.

UNDERWATER

Jasper, Medrano and Keys desperately breast-stroke out. Eel through the barbaric TRIP-WIRES --

Toward the dazzling crowns of the INVERTED TREES. Thick pink and white foliage shimmers on giant branches. Reaching down into the descending ocean floor. Forming a LABYRINTH of bizarre cherry blossoms.

The team enters the trees. Glimpses the BLACK BOX beyond --

AT THE BOX

Hartfield and Sasha reach the ominous cube. The box FLOATS atop thirty feet of water. Almost like a black ICEBERG. The device emits an eerie, penetrating HUM.

Hartfield stares at the box in awe.

Sasha taps his shoulder and motions to the surface. Together they kick their feet. Pull themselves up --

ONTO THE BOX

Water RUSHES off their bodies. They peel off their prototype Drägers. Look back over the crashing ocean.

Sasha notices the Captain's ATV parked on the beach.

SASHA
Oh fuck...

UNDERWATER

Jasper, Medrano and Keys furiously carve forward. Navigating through the pillars of cherry blossoms. When suddenly --

Bullets TORPEDO past them. Cutting turquoise into RIBBONS.

The Deltas spin back. Obsidian guns raised -- but there is no sign of the EXO Captain.

The cherry blossoms innocently ebb and flow...

Jasper motions to Medrano and Keys. They quickly disperse, taking cover in the dense inverted trees.

The Deltas peer through the branches. Trying to see through the pink-white foliage. Hearts beat in their throats. Breaths rasp in their masks.

Jasper steals a glance at his watch: 1 MINUTE, 43 SECONDS.

The Deltas strategically kick back toward the box. Keeping their eyes peeled. Sweeping their guns...

Bullets suddenly RIP toward Keys. He spins his obsidian gun: countermeasures intercept the stream just in time --

POOF -- POOF -- POOF -- a wall of sparks erupts before him. Tiny explosions in the turquoise. Silenced by the ocean.

Jasper traces the stream of incoming fire. Searching for the Captain amid the trees. He spots a FLASH OF BLACK -- gone in an instant.

Medrano scans around too. Glimpses another BLACK FLASH amid the pink branches. Fires a stream of bullets -- hits nothing.

The Captain is unthinkably fast.

Jasper swallows hard. His eyes frantically dart around. He can't see the Captain... But he can almost feel him. Like a great white shark in the water. A silent, unmistakable presence.

THOOP!

A bullet CUTS THROUGH MEDRANO from an angle. Blood blooms out of his thigh. He spins in the direction of the bullets --

THOOP! THOOP!

Too late. Medrano gets pierced. His body JOLTS with each impact. *Then goes perfectly still.*

Keys SCREAMS at the sight... Watching Medrano die from behind a nearby branch. He desperately swims over to his limp body. Hooks onto it.

Keys hauls him backward toward the BLACK BOX. Keeping his obsidian gun raised. Head on a swivel.

Keys reaches the box. Sees Hartfield and Sasha's reflections above. Desperately lifts Medrano's limp figure as they corral it. The act leaves Keys momentarily exposed --

THOOP!

A bullet slices through Keys' NECK. *He goes still too.*

Life bleeds out around the box. Staining the water red...

ATOP THE BOX

Hartfield reels Keys up. Blood pours cruelly out of his limp neck.

HARTFIELD

NO-NO-NO!

Sasha staggers. Everything unravelling so fast. She turns to the bloody ocean. Scours the surrounding water.

SASHA

JASPER?! JASPER?!

UNDERWATER

Jasper saws off breaths: Inhale! Exhale! Inhale!

He floats HIDDEN amid the inverted trees. Peering between giant pink blossoms. Desperately looking around... But can't see the Captain.

Jasper checks his watch: 58 SECONDS.

Knows he has no other choice. He bee-lines for the black box. Puncturing through walls of bizarre foliage. Swimming as fast as he can. The tide turns crimson red as he approaches. He bursts through the last veil of blossoms --

And stops dead.

The EXO Captain stares straight into his eyes. They are face to face, feet away. *Both caught off guard.*

A split-second draw. They swing up their guns -- obsidian barrels fork together -- fire --

SHOCKWAVE!

The point-blank blast casts them both back. Their stone guns SHATTER from the blow. Breaking away in underwater silence.

Jasper looks across at his opponent.

After a moment, the Captain SINKS toward the ocean floor. Tar-blood billows from his torso... Spilling like OIL from a behemoth tanker. Fading into the beautiful cherry blossoms.

Jasper's eyes narrow. He checks himself. Blood leaks around a FRAGMENT OF OBSIDIAN SHRAPNEL lodged in his chest...

ATOP THE BOX

Hartfield and Sasha spot the two silhouettes: The Captain disappears down into the foliage. Jasper bobs to the surface.

Hartfield DIVES IN without hesitation. Sasha follows suit.

HARTFIELD

JASPER!

He furiously paddles to Jasper. Grabs his body. Turns him face-up... Blood trickles out of Jasper's mouth.

HARTFIELD

No...

Hartfield shakes his head. Jasper finds his brother's hand...

HARTFIELD

No, you can't...

JASPER

Sure I can... Fireflies, remember?

HARTFIELD

Don't.

JASPER

We shine for a day... think it's forever.

A bittersweet look. Sasha arrives over Jasper too. He gazes up at her.

JASPER

(fading)

Now you know there's a way...

The words blade into Sasha.

HARTFIELD

Jasper! Jasper --

But darkness consumes the light in Jasper's electric eyes. Hartfield holds onto his limp body. Sasha stares down at Jasper's figure.

A moment of stunned silence.

BEEP! BEEP! Sasha looks down at her watch. It beeps out the final countdown.

SASHA

Twenty seconds...

(hooks around Jasper)

Come on, we gotta go!

Hartfield snaps back into the moment. They haul Jasper back toward the box. Swimming furiously.

OCEAN FLOOR

Pieces of a bronze-flecked EXO gun rest amid the trees. But the Captain is nowhere in sight...

ATOP THE BOX

Hartfield and Sasha climb up. Reel up Jasper too.

SASHA

Ten seconds!

Hartfield rushes to the circular HATCH OPENING. Jumps down --

THE BOX

He looks back up. Sasha slides Jasper over the hole -- his limp frame awkwardly tumbles down -- Hartfield catches it. Piles it onto Medrano and Keys.

Beep: five seconds. Beep: four.

Sasha climbs down. Heaves the hatch shut: CLANG! She lunges for the puzzle of LEVERS. Yanks them down, over, across --

ENGINES THUNDER TO LIFE -- JUST AS TIME EXPIRES!

Sasha gasps for air. Slumps against the wall, relieved...

But Hartfield slowly raises his hands. Notices tarry-black blood cobwebbing between his fingers. What the fuck?

The engines BLAST LIKE A ROCKETSHIP OFF BEDROCK...

Hartfield looks back to the ladder. Tar-blood DRIPS between the rungs. Sasha sees it too. Goes pale...

A TOWERING BLACK SILHOUETTE RISES FROM UNDER THE CORPSES:

The EXO CAPTAIN emerges from his hideout. Injured, but far from dead. Platinum eyes shine with rage. He leaps forward --

PINS Hartfield against the wall. Hands squeeze his neck.

Sasha THROWS HERSELF at the Captain. Fights to pry him off.

The sound of the engines WARPS and WRENCHES.

THE EXO CAPTAIN

We're not on your island anymore --

The Captain crushes like a vise. Hartfield chokes for oxygen. His fists hammer the Captain's ossified jaw. But the Captain just endures the blows.

GRAVITY SUDDENLY SHIFTS --

Hartfield, the Captain, and Sasha RIP BACKWARD. SLAM against the opposite wall.

Then are torn STRAIGHT UP -- and CRASH into the ceiling!

The box's lightbulb flickers like a STROBE -- illuminating the outlines of Hartfield, the Captain, and Sasha exchanging wicked blows. Tumbling around with each shift in g-force.

The corpses of Jasper, Medrano and Keys FLY WILDLY among them.

The engines grow LOUDER. Sasha spots an EXO gun amid the chaos. It sits "glued" to the ceiling beside them. Hartfield and the Captain see it too.

They all DIVE FOR IT --

INT. LILAC BUNKER

SILENCE fills the underground hangar.

Director Bloom cautiously creeps toward THE BOX. Scientists slowly follow. Eyes wide.

The black cube shakes and RATTLES. A hurricane of VIOLENCE echoes from its innards. TA-TA-TA! Bullets crack within.

The cacophony of noise abruptly CEASES. Disturbing stillness.

Sweat rivers down Bloom's face. He stands frozen in place.
The scientists do too. *Imaginations running wild.*

Bloom's eyes flicker to his LEAD SCIENTIST...

BLOOM
(quietly)
Evacuate your team. Seal the blast
doors. Now.

The Scientists inch away in horror. Then start to run.

Bloom slides a Glock from his waistline. Nods to a group of
ARMED CIA CONTRACTORS nearby. They raise their automatic
weapons. Hurry forward with lethal efficiency. Encircling the
looming black box. When suddenly --

SCREEEECH! The box's hatch GRINDS OPEN. An EXO GUN emerges.

Everyone staggers back. Looks up in dread...

ATOP THE BOX

... But HARTFIELD and SASHA muscle themselves up. Drenched in
red and black blood.

Alive.

They notice Bloom below. The CIA Contractors all around them.
The Scientists gathered in the distance...

Hartfield watches their faces drop at the sight of him.

You could hear a pin fall.

Hartfield draws himself up to his full height. Turns toward
the massive airplane staircase. Latches onto the rails. He
slowly limps down the stairs...

Bloom meets him at the bottom. Awestruck. Hartfield takes in
the Lilac director. Chest still heaving from battle.

Years of weight seem to melt from Bloom's stoic face. He
looks into Hartfield's noble eyes. His life's work validated.
The world forever changed.

He struggles to find words. Just slowly extends his hand.

BLOOM
Welcome home.

Hartfield's eyes fill. The words hit him unexpectedly hard.

HARTFIELD
... Thank you, sir.

Hartfield notices something in his periphery. Slowly gravitates toward it...

A CARBON FIBER BATHTUB. Connected to the box. Something stretched out inside. Engulfed in dry ice and thermal blankets. Wires protrude from it like some nightmarish experiment.

Hartfield stares down at his OLD BODY. Searching his own pale face. Noble eyes. A mind-bending moment of self-reflection. Transcending time and space and dimensions...

Behind Hartfield, Sasha dismounts the staircase. Bloom embraces her exhausted figure. Helps her upright...

BLOOM

How?

SASHA

You were right... About the look in their faces. They had something no other team had.

Bloom searches her sober eyes.

BLOOM

... Had?

Sasha holds his gaze. Bloom puts an arm on her. Understanding.

They look to Hartfield. Still staring at his old body. Scientists cautiously approach him. Medical devices in hand.

Other scientists climb onto the box. Spot the awe-inspiring EXO gun. Trace its carved stone frame. Three-pronged barrel.

The Scientists meet eyes. Then slowly peer down the hatch...

The EXO CAPTAIN's majestic figure is splayed out below. His strange armor twisted in a heap. Black blood leaks past his chrome-colored eyes. Like otherworldly tears. He lays dead atop Jasper, Medrano and Keys. A *fallen titan*...

The Scientists stare down. Faces full of wonder.

INT. BUNKER, MEDICAL LAB - LATER

LED screens display a collage of diagnostic imaging: X-rays. Ultrasounds. CT scans. MRI results. EKG graphs.

A white-haired female DOCTOR stands before them. Studying a thick dossier of results labelled: L. Hartfield.

DOCTOR

I want to run a few more tests, but other than elevated blood pressure...

Bloom hovers beside her. Chewing on his reading glasses...

DOCTOR

If I didn't know... I wouldn't know.

Bloom turns and looks through a nearby observation window.

BEHIND THE GLASS

Hartfield sits on the edge of a hospital bed. Surrounded by IVs and cold concrete walls. Deep purple bruises cover his bare chest.

He contemplates a HARDLINE PHONE. Picks up the receiver like a motion-triggered bomb. Slowly dials a number. It rings...

EMMA (V.O.)

Hello?

Hartfield nearly breaks at the sound of her voice.

HARTFIELD

... Hey, Em.

EMMA (V.O.)

(playful)

Well look who it is. And here I was just googling good divorce lawyers.

HARTFIELD

Sorry, it's been... Quite a day.

EMMA (V.O.)

Uh huh. I --

(muffled laughing)

Just wait, Theo. Your father's --

THEO (V.O.)

DAD! You gotta see this new stick mom got me. I'm going top shelf from everywhere!

A smile breaks across Hartfield's face.

HARTFIELD

Mom took all the credit, huh... You weren't supposed to open that till your birthday.

THEO (V.O.)

Mom's snickering... When are you gonna be home?!

HARTFIELD

Soon as I can.

EMMA (V.O.)

Lucas, is everything okay with you guys? Jasper left a message this morning -- last time I heard his voice like that, he was stuck in a bear trap when we were kids.

Hartfield swallows hard.

EMMA

... Lucas?

Hartfield's eyes swim. He fights tears. They fall anyway.

EXT. SHED - SUNSET

Sasha sits back against the shoddy shack. Gazing out across the endless desert to the dying sun. It burns brilliantly along the horizon...

She raises a sweating bottle of champagne. Takes a long swig.

Hartfield emerges from the shed behind. Slowly eases himself down into the dirt beside her...

He looks out at the world. Glowing purple and blue and orange. Somehow, it's all more beautiful than he remembered.

HARTFIELD

... Quite a dimension we got here, isn't it?

SASHA

Still can't beat it.

Sasha passes Hartfield the bottle. He takes a slow drink.

HARTFIELD

Have to say. Everything seems twice as sweet the second time around...

Sasha half-smiles. An unspoken bond hangs in the air between them. Two soldiers returned from a distant battlefield.

SASHA

First man delivered from death. An achievement that will last till the sun grows cold and the world fades into oblivion... Everyone's down there toasting one another. Celebrating.

HARTFIELD

... But you're not with them.

SASHA

Doesn't feel right... Does it.

Hartfield looks out at the staggering vista. Lost in thought.

HARTFIELD

When I was first put in charge of this team, I knew we'd need a North Star. A fundamental code to help guide us through all the darkness... So I chose two little words. An ethos as old as warfare itself. But now... Now I've seen the cost of that code...

Hartfield crumbles inside.

HARTFIELD

How can one life -- *my life* -- ever measure up to their sacrifice?

Sasha absorbs his words. Sees the torment in his noble eyes.

SASHA

I've struggled with that question my whole career... How to balance the weight of one life versus many. At Lilac, we've always held that the program is greater than any one of us -- that it's worth risking one life to potentially save multitudes. It's what kept me going after my colleagues fell... And I still know that's right. In my mind, I know that's right. But in my heart... Being part of this mission, seeing how much you meant to your team? It made me realize I'd lost sight of something...

Sasha's eyes begin to swell.

SASHA

That the inverse is also true. That it's worth risking many lives to save just one... Because you could search a universe of dimensions and never find someone who could replace them. So when you get a chance to save a single life, you do what it takes. Whatever it takes... to see it through.

Sasha looks out at the world before them. Tears falling down her face...

She glances down at her watch. Weighing a difficult choice.

SASHA
... What if I told you there was
still a chance to save them?

Hartfield's eyes rise.

SASHA
That they weren't truly gone.

Their eyes connect.

SASHA
Not yet.

INT. LILAC HANGAR

Hartfield and Sasha stride forward together. Past scientists
zipping Jasper, Keys and Medrano into bodybags.

They approach Bloom, crouched at the looming box. He reels in
loose cables.

HARTFIELD
Wait.

Hartfield motions to his fallen teammates.

HARTFIELD
Hook them up, one at a time.

SASHA
And bring us the EXO guns.

BLOOM
... What?

HARTFIELD
I don't know how you do things
around here. But on my team, we
have an unbreakable rule.

Bloom gazes up at Hartfield and Sasha in disbelief. A fire
burns in their eyes.

SASHA
Nemo resideo...

HARTFIELD
Leave no one behind.

THE SCREEN GOES DARK.