Aleksander Mosingiewicz



Shadow of the veil First draft

Darkness. We hear quier humming of the chopper engine and conversations, apparently conducted in spanish. Slowly, we FADE IN to...

INT. INSIDE OF A FLYING CHOPPER

... panorama of wild mountains, seen from the chopper's cockpit. The PILOT – and his CO-PILOT – are talking. We don't understand the words, but from their light-hearted tone and brief laughter we can reason that the discussion's subject is not necessarily a relevant one.

Suddenly, the CO-PILOT points his finger to the ground. The pilot's gaze follows it and sees a GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE waving their hands. The two men exchange some remarks and steer their vehicle towards the group to investigate.

EXT. HUSCARAN NATIONAL PARK, PERU

We can see the landing chopper from behind the young people's backs. The group is composed of three men and one woman, all in their early or middle twenties. Their clothing is rugged, and their faces express nothing but fatigue, as if they spent a considerable time in the wilderness.

The woman – RUTH – advances towards the chopper's crew, shouting, but her words are lost in the noise produced by the vehicle. She seems nervous, almost histerical. A young, bearded man – MIKE – catches up with her as soon as the chopper's engine comes to a halt. A nervous exchange of words between two parties ensues:

RUTH

Can you please tell us where we are?

PILOT

Io – io non habla ingles. Americans?

MIKE

No. Not Americans. We're british. Can any of you speak english?

The third man, HAL, thin and even more wore down than his companions joins them. MARTIN, his slightly overweight colleague wearing dirty glasses follows.

HAL

What are they saying?

MIKE

Damn me if I know.

(to the PILOT)

Can you please tell me where are we?

Both hispanic men exchange puzzled looks.

MIKE

France, Spain, Germany?... America?...

They smile in recognition. "America, America!", they exclaim.

RUTH

This is States?

HAL

I'm not so sure.

MIKE

America where? Where in America? USA? Mexico?...

"Huscaran!", the two men exlaim in unison, "Huscaran! Peru!"

Hal turns to BETH.

HAL

Did you hear that?

The woman is speechless.

RUTH

It's impossible! It's bloody impossible!

Hal bursts into hysterical laughter. His companions just shake their heads.

INT. INSIDE OF THE FLYING CHOPPER

The young people are huddled in the back of the helicopter, too tired and too astonished to even talk. Mike is the first to break the silence:

MIKE

So, what do you make out of it?

They look at each other, troubled. A shadow of smile creeps onto Hal's lips.

HAL

I don't think we're out yet.

His companions don't even relply.

HAL

Hey, remember those... cubes, or whatever they were? They could have...

MIKE

Shut up, Hal.

RUTH

Mike's right, Hal. We don't need your hysteria.

MIKE

Martin? I thought you're the expert on these matters.

MARTIN

Well... It could have been anything. Literally anything. Let's stick to the facts, okay?

The others nod in agreement.

MARTIN

And the facts are:

(he sticks out his thumb)

Steven's dead. We don't know what killed him. And why did it spare us.

(he sticks out his forefinger)

Two. We made it from one hemisphere to another in less than five minutes.

(he sticks out his middle finger)

Three. What had happened down there was so bloody weird that nobody's ever going to believe us. Literally. And once they find out who we are they are going to ask questions. Like, for example, how did we make it from French Alps to Peru in such a short period of time, and what had happened to Steven. And if we tell them what had actually happened they... Hal has another outburst of hysterical laugher. The CO-PILOT turns back, obviously startled.

MIKE

It's ok, ok.
CO-PILOT
(grins)
Ok?
MIKE
Ok!

He lifts his thumb and bares his teeth in a forced smile. The pilot imitates his gesture, also smiling, and turns back.

MIKE

Ok then. We have to ways out of this situation. Either we tell them the truth, risking the riducule at best, or...

RUTH

We make something up. But if we do, we better do it quick.

MARTIN

Jeez...

RUTH

What?

MARTIN

(sticks out another finger)

Four. We don't really know what we have seen down there. Even if we decide to tell them the truth, we might... We might have some troubles describing what we have encountered.

RUTH

Five. Hal's completely wrecked. Just look at his face.

Hal's still wearing his mocking smile, that's in stark contrast with his eyes, which express sadness and fright. His face looks as if it belonged to two people at once, and that's what gives it insane

appearance.

MIKE

Obviously he couldn't stand what he've seen. We all barely did. Right, Hal?

HAL

You get me all wrong. See, you don't exist. Neither does this copter. We're still inside. That is, I am still inside holding one of those things, and you are trying to wake me up. That is, it's not you who are trying to wake me up, but...

RUTH

Shut up, Hal.

Their journey continues in silence.

INT. BRITISH EMBASSY, LIMA, PERU

Classy interior. An elderly gentleman sists behind the mahony desk. His attitude is one of reservation, which manifests in such a small details even as the way he sips his tea.

The group looks a bit different now – less wasted – obviously they've both bathed and eaten before the meeting.

MIKE

... no visas, no passports. We left them – well, we have left them in the french Alps.

AMBASSADOR

In the french Alps, you say?

They nod. All of them but for Hal, who seems strangely remote.

MIKE

We have to get back to France to recover our possessions. But, in the first place, we have to get out of Peru.

The AMBASSADOR says nothing, just eyes the group.

MIKE

(slowly)

We can't get out of Peru without your help. That's why we need your assistance.

AMBASSADOR

That's obvious. What troubles me, however, is the question of both HOW and WHY did you came to Peru in the first place, ommiting all the means of transport which require the possession of documents you say you don't posses. Are you victims of kidnapping?

Mike looks at his colleagues, then sighs.

MIKE

I think we should start from the beginning.

AMBASSADOR nods and looks at him intently, willing to listen.

MIKE

Well, up to now we were – well, we were a group of rather typical guys with typical jobs and one untypical hobby: we used to meet several times in a year, just to climb down some hole for adrenaline and to gather energy for another months of dullness. This year we picked up the French part of Alps. We set up the shop in Flumet, and...

INT. ROOM, ST. NICHOLAS LA CHAPELLE, FLUMET, FRANCE

Bare, spartan room in the old French monastery. Heaps of mountaineering equipment are gathered in the corners and by walls. The group's there, complete with lean, clean-shaved and bald Steven, the oldest of them – he looks he's in early thirties, but without Martin. The howling of wind can be heard outside.

Martin walks in, slamming the door behind him.

MARTIN

Fuck.

He sits on the bed and leans down, angered.

STEVEN

(gins)

No swearing. It's a holy place.

Hal quietly laughts.

MIKE

So, what are the prospects?

MARTIN

Uncertain. The weather will be going nuts, with brief, but occasional storms. Venturing far from the town would be risky. So it seems we can either take our chances, or just get our asses back home.

He walks up to his backpack, produces a book, sits on the bed and starts reading.

RUTH

Mike? Steven?

MIKE

Don't ask me. I'm not a Sybil. Steven's a different thing.

The group looks at Steven.

STEVEN

I think that if we give it up now it will be a waste of money. I guess we should wait at least a day or two.

HAL

You'd go there even now, wouldn't you?

Steven grins in response. It's obvious from this smile that his love for spelunking obliterates his reason.

HAL

Hey, I can bet all my money that Steven's not really a human being. What he really is is some fucking cthluloid monster from underground. You know, some fucking shoggoth who assumed human form to lure us down there. It was him who started all this after all.

Ruth laughts, genuinely amused with Hal's words, and so does Steven, whose love for spelunking obviously haven't obliterated his sense of humour. Mike allows himself only for a grin, as self-controlled and tense as ever. Martin seems more occupied with the book he's reading than Hal's jokes.

MIKE

What's the time, Hal?

Hal stops laughting and produces his most prized posession, an old mechanical watch. He holds it by the chain, and reads:

HAL

Two o'clock. I guess it's feeding time.

The group gets up to leave the room, one by one. Martin leaves the book he's been reading, cover-side up. It's Valee's "Passport to Magonia".

A simple, spartan hall, filled with both monks and sports enthusiast from all the European countries. The group eats their meals, casting mournful gazes at the window. Another group sit next to them. They start talking.

Mike listens intently to their conversation, while the others eat.

MIKE

Pardon... Est-ce que vous... err...

Steven, obviously better french speaker than Mike, intervenes to help his friend.

STEVEN

(in French)

Excuse-moi, est-ce que vous avez dire quelque chose de cavernes?

The person sitting closest to Steven, Michel, nods affitmatively.

MICHEL

Oui, nous avons decouverts la caverne, jusqu a demain, pres d'ici. Et je dois dire, c'est magnifique.

Michels companion, Jacques, excitedly nods.

JACQUES

Oui, c'est tres beau. Nous pouvez vous montrer, parce que la caverne n'est pas en la carte. Je comprends que vous-etez speleologues?

STEVEN

C'est a dire vous'etez speleologuez, vous aussi?

MICHEL

Et vous aussi?

STEVEN

We just met a group of French cave spelunkers.

These words rouse his friends from their apathy.

STEVEN

And they say they have something to show us.

EXT. STREETS OF FLUMET, NEXT DAY

The group is waiting on the corner of a street of a bustling tourist resort. Martin's walking around impatiently. Ruth's scanning the environment for someone or something.

The sky managed to clear since last day.

MIKE

So what did they say?

Steven sighs.

STEVEN

They have found entrance to a cave complex, obviously one that wasn't discovered before.

HAL

How deep it is?

STEVEN

They say it's quite shallow, but picturesque.

MARTIN

And we're going to be the first people who see it?

STEVEN

The frenchmen got there first. We're going to be the second. What's your take on the weather, Martin?

Martin looks up to the sky.

MARTIN

I'd find it easier to estimate if I had a satellite picture... But I think it's going to be clear for about five-six hours. How far is this place?

STEVEN

Four hours of walk, but off the tourist trails.

RUTH

They like to take risks, don't they?

They smile nervously.

It's at the very moment that the frenchmen show up. The two groups exchange greetings and set off.

EXT. LEDGE (FRENCH ALPS)

We now see both groups climbing up a fairly steep mountain slope. The englishmen seem tired.

RUTH

(panting)

Steven? Ask them how the hell far is their bloody cave.

Steven utters some question in French. "Pres d'ici", is the brief answer from the French side.

RUTH

Fuck. We've been walking and climbing for six hours already. We'll be fucking lucky if we make it before the storm.

Just as she said that the wind starts to gain on strenght. The parties reach a ledge and stop to recuperate.

MARTIN

I'm afraid that tonight we'll have to camp out inside.

Both parties reach into their packs for canned food and water. Ruth seems most tired and unhappy person in both of them. Steven sits next to her.

STEVEN

What's up, Ruth?

She just shakes her head in response.

RUTH

I'm simply worried about the storm, that's all. What if we'll have to camp out for a week before it ends?

Martin joins them.

MARTIN

I can assure you it won't.

RUTH Oh, here comes a professional.

STEVEN

If I'd be you I'd trust Martin. He's really accurate when it comes to these matters.

Steven pats Ruth on the back. She smiles, but they can both see her smile is not quite sincere.

STEVEN

Come on, Ruth, such an opportunity comes once for a long time. How often do you discover a new hole, such as this?

Ruth nods, looking all about the picturesque panorama of Alps.

RUTH

Call me crazy, but I feel... I simply feel weird. It's not even about the storm. There's something... not right about this place. I can't explain it.

Steven and Martin look at each other, troubled.

MICHEL, leader of the French group, gives the signal that it's time to resume their march.

MICHEL

Allons, allons!

(to Ruth)

Pres d'ici, c'est vraiment pres d'ici.

The parties pick up their things and set off.

EXT. BEFORE THE CAVE'S ENTRANCE

The parties stop before the opening in the rocky wall, leading into the bowels of the Earth.

MICHEL

Jusque j'ai dire, c'avait pres, n'est pas?

The englishmen look at each other.

STEVEN

Bien, nous allons.

MICHEL

Oui, mais c'est vous qui vont aller explorer ca caverne.

STEVEN

Ce que?

Ruth and Martin look at each other, while Steven argues with the frenchmen. Finally he turns back to his troubled companions.

STEVEN

They won't accompany us inside.

RUTH

What?

HAL

Fuck.

STEVEN

They said they've seen enough of it, and are going to try their luck futher along this ledge or somewhere else.

MARTIN

Well, it was kind enough of them they led us here, isn't it?

STEVE

Oui. Oui, oui, oui.

(he turns to the French party)

Merci beacoup!

The frenchmen wave and walk away, leaving the english explorers alone before the entrance.

RUTH

Well...

MARTIN

Well...

HAL

We came here to visit the caves, right? So let's get do it before we're forced to get back to our nineto-five routine.

MIKE

Hal's right. We have nothing to wait for.

The group walks into the open mouth of cave entrance. MATRIN, the last to be swallowed by it, looks at the dark clouds that gather for imminent storm, before entering.

INT. INSIDE THE CAVE'S

A beam of light emanating from Steven's flashlight illuminates the rocky interior. His friends, bend, like him, beneath the low ceiling of the cave, look around with disappointment.

RUTH

Yeah, big deal.

Hal reaches for a miniature pick-axe and and strikes one of the stalagmites.

MARTIN

When they said the cave's shallow they really meant it.

HAL

What about these side corridors?

MARTIN

Frenchmen had them checked. They are dead ends.

MIKE

What do you have here, Hal?

HAL

I don't know – can't see in this light.

He's almost done with extracting the piece of rock, and – in the next instance – looking it all around.

HAL

Steve, could you lend me some light?

Steven directs his flashlight at the piece of mineral Hal's holding. Mike heads out towards the cave's exit.

STEVEN

Nice. Could you fetch another one for me?

HAL

Sure.

Hal begins working around another stalagmite, while Mike returns wearing rather grim expression.

RUTH

How is it? Just don't tell me the storm's already begun.

Mike sits down, saying nothing.

RUTH

Shit.

MARTIN

How is it?

MIKE

Substitute snow with fire, and you have inferno.

Steven doesn't look at all troubled.

STEVEN

It seems we're going to spend this night in the company of rocks.

Ruth shivers at the thought.

FADE OUT.

INT. INSIDE THE CAVE, LATER

Close up on the sleeping face of Ruth. She wakes up with a start, and reaches for a flashlight. Seeing that all her companions are safe, sound and asleep, she's about to make a relieved sight, when all of a sudden she realises that ...

RUTH

Steven? Steven!?

She grabs sleeping Mike and shakes him.

MIKE

(drowsily)

Huh?

RUTH

Mike, I can't see Steven.

Mike stands up and looks around.

MIKE

I'll check outside.

Mike walks towards the exit, behind which the ice storm still holds sway.

MIKE

Steven!?

Mike makes it back to the cave.

MIKE

He's not there. He didn't have any reason to leave in such a weather, anyway.

(to the rest of his group)

Wake up, everybody! Steve's gone.

Hal and Martin slowly rise to consciousness.

RUTH

I know it sounds strange, but I knew it'll happen... The dream... I've had a dream that...

MIKE

Ruth, it's okay. I don't know what happened to Steven, but your dream didn't have anything to do with it.

HAL

What happened?

RUTH

Steve's gone.

HAL

What do you mean gone!?

MIKE

Well, he disappeared.

MARTIN

Poof – like that!?

RUTH

I woke up and he wasn't here.

Troubled silence falls upon the group. Suddenly...

MARTIN

Hush... Did you hear that?

They listen.

MIKE

Like footsteps...

RUTH

From where?

The footsteps grow louder and louder. Apparently out of nowhere, a tired, but happy face of Steven appears.

RUTH

STEVE!

MIKE

Steven, where the hell were you been!?

STEVEN

Whew. That was something.

MARTIN

Where did you... what...

STEVEN

I couldn't sleep, so I started exploring the side corridors.

RUTH

According to frenchmen, they are all dead ends.

STEVEN

All but one. A very low crawlspace, definitely too low for these wimps. If they went farther they'd discover it leads to another complex. A vast complex. It seems we've had plenty of luck.

HAL

You mean like we might make it to newspaper?

STEVEN

(excited)

Don't think about the fame, Hal. Think about the thrill. The thrill, Hal!

(to the rest of the group)

I don't know how you, but I can't wait to get in there. What do you say?

They exchange looks.

MIKE

(with a smile)

We're with you, Steve. Aren't we?

HAL

We've been from the beginning.

RUTH

Sure.

MARTIN

Definitely.

STEVEN

Ok then, let's go. We won't venture too far in, so we don't get lost. We might set up a base here and make one or two short trips.

MIKE

We might run out of supplies before tommorow.

STEVEN

One of us could go and fetch them in Flumet.

They are not convinced.

STEVEN

(impatient)

Ok, let's get going. There's no time to waste.

INT. CRAWLSPACE

The explorers crawl through a very tight crawlspace, Steven's leading. He's the first to make it out. Ruth follows him.

STEVEN

(from outside)

Just watch out – and try keep your breath.

Ruth climbs out of the crawlspace.

RUTH

(startled)

Oh my!...

INT. THE HALL OF THE BRIDGE

Mike emerges from the crawlspace and – instantly – his face loses his usual, reserved look. Just for a moment. For the same moment he stops breathing, and as soon as he resumes his breath he starts walking towards the camera. Hal and Martin are the last to leave the crawlspace, and their

faces assume the same startled look.

HAL

Whoah. Tolkien.

In the next take we see what had startled the explorers. As improbable as it seems, they are facing a wide chasm crossed by a stone, bridge-like arch.

MARTIN

Yeah. Like the Bridge of Moria.

They stop by the edge of the chasm, looking at the awesome sight. Steven'S the first to break the silence.

STEVEN

So, who's the first to cross?

Ruth chuckles.

RUTH

Are you crazy? I don't think it would support our weight.

STEVEN

(with a grin)

Chickening? Very well then. I'll go first.

RUTH

Steve, no!

MIKE

Come on, Ruth, you won't stop him. You know how he is.

Steven enters the bridge and makes a few steps.

STEVEN

See? It doesn't collapse.

It's not until Steven had managed to walk a considerable distance that the rest of the group begins to reluctantly walk in his footsteps.

STEVEN

One good piece of advice: don't look down!

MARTIN

I wonder...

MIKE

What?

MARTIN

I know it sounds silly, but this bridge doesn't look all too natural.

MIKE

You mean it was built by some merry little gnomes or something?

MARTIN

Well... I've read of theories... of some kind of underground civilisation. According to ancient myths, men were born under the Earth's surface, and only later...

Suddenly Ruth bursts into laughter.

MARTIN

What's so funny!?

RUTH

(still laughing)

No, it's not...

(laughs)

... not what you think. It's just....

(laughs)

... I've just came with an idea. To test whether or not we are in a movie.

Mike and Martin look at each other, puzzled.

RUTH

Well, in the movies – when you have a situation like this one – you know, stone bridge, or something – the bridge usually collapses, trapping the protagonists inside. So if it does collapse, then we are in a movie.

MIKE

Ruth, you've never ceased to suprise me.

STEVEN

And so it ends!

HAL

What's there!?

STEVEN

Entrance to another corridor, this one's quite narrow.

The rest of the group makes it to the end of the bridge. As soon as they do, Ruth turns back, almost expecting it to collapse.

STEVEN

What is she doing?

MIKE

Reality check of sorts.

Ruth turns her gaze away from the structure.

RUTH

The bridge's intact, so I guess it's not a movie.

STEVEN

What is she talking about?

MARTIN

Nevermind. We'll tell you later.

The group enters the narrow passage.

INT.PASSAGE

The party's now moving in silence, quiet and focused. The corridor is very long, and the ceiling at times very low, forcing the explorers to bend down as they walk onward.

The only audible sound is a quiet, distant dripping of water.

Finally, the corridor widens, opening up to ...

INT. CHASM

... a wide hall, cut in half by wide and impassable chasm.

The party stops to catch breath and consider their situation. Ruth reaches down for a water container, takes one or two sips, then passes it on to Hal. Soon the container is circulating among all the tired members of the party.

Hal takes a few steps and looks down.

HAL

Guess it's over.

Steven walks up to the edge, and ponders.

STEVEN

Not at all.

Mike stand beside Steven and casts another look at the chasm.

MIKE

There's no way to climb down there.

Steven gives him one of his "look-how-sure-I-am-of-myself" smiles.

STEVEN

Wanna bet?

Ruth joins the men.

RUTH

(looking down)

There's no fucking way I'm going down there.

(more quietly, to herself)

No fucking way.

CUT TO...

INT. CHASM, A FEW MINUTES LATER

... the sight of the party cautiously climbing down the wall of the chasm.

RUTH

This time you've gone fucking insane, Stevie. You've gone fucking insane!

STEVEN

Du calme!

RUTH

I'll give you... Oh, shit!

Ruth slips on the rock, losing her balance, and startling the rest of the group. She regains it, only to slip once more, which – this time – results in her slipping down a few steps, before she finally grasps a piece of rock standing out of the wall, and finds support for both her legs.

RUTH

If I die, it's your fault, Stevie!

STEVEN

You didn't have to come with us.

MIKE

Steve's right. We'll find a time for feud once we've made it down. How long is it, Steve?

STEVEN

According to my estimations we're almost there.

RUTH

Fuck you and your estimations.

Steven ignores her comment. The group continues their way down in silence. Ruth, already having made it before the rest of the group because of slipping, is the first to touch the ground.

STEVEN

It wasn't that bad, wasn't it?

RUTH

(quietly)

No, it wasn't.

Mike drops besides Steven and Ruth.

MIKE

Tell you, always trust good ol' Stevie. He might be a bit obsessed, but he surely knows what he's doing. Isn't that true, Steve?

STEVEN

Yeah. Thanks for support.

Hal is the third to land.

HAL

And don't forget to mention that once we make it to the newspaper.

The party bursts into relaxed laughter, including Martin, who is the last to descend.

STEVEN

Good news for you Ruth is that we've came a long way already, and I'm not going to venture anywhere futher. We'll take a look at the bottom of this swimming pool and get back to the camp.

MIKE

And the weather should have improved by now, right, Mart?

MARTIN

Yeah, I guess it should have.

HAL

Overall, this was an exciting trip. The most exciting one since we started hiking together.

MIKE

Don't say "it was" - it's not over yet. I've got a feeling that it might get even more exciting.

RUTH

I hope it doesn't.

Steven stretches his arm in a broad gesture that encompasses the dark interior of a huge hall.

STEVEN

This, ladies and gentlemen, is the ancient tourist resort of our forebears... When ordinary folk got munched by the tyrannosaurus rex and his band, the elite spent their spare time splashing merrily in the water that once flown there, oblivious to their concerns... This

(he points at a ledge sticking out of the chasm's wall)

... was probably the bar, or, like our french brothers use to say, the buffet, where they sold some local beverages, like, for example, the juice of Lepidostrobus Variabilis, an extremely rare speciality at the time, or...

MARTIN

I don't quite like it.

STEVEN

You mean Lepidostrobus Variabilis?

MARTIN

No, I mean THAT.

Martin points to the ground, to what appears to be a print, pressed in the rocky ground.

MIKE

Dinosaur's footprint?

RUTH

I just recalled the movies where they descended into the caves only to be munched by some kind of grue lurking in the dark and feeding on flesh of the innocent trespassers...

HAL

You're watching too much movies, Ruth.

He approaches the print and starts to examine it.

HAL

By no chance a footprint.

MIKE

Then what?

HAL

Display of mother's nature ability to impress us human beings. It's not even a print, it's a regular pattern that was created by accident.

MARTIN

The second such a pattern we have encountered since we entered the cave.

HAL

What do you mean?

MARTIN

The bridge. It was too thin to support our weight, but at the same time wide enough to allow us to pass through. Almost as if it was created on purpose.

HAL

And this guy reads too much von Daniken. Where's your sense of reality people?

STEVEN

You're insinuating some kind of malevolent force had drawn us here for equally malevolent purpose? Or even that I am this force?

RUTH

I wouldn't be surprised.

STEVEN

Come on, let's get going. Lest we get munched by those albino monsters that lurk in the dark and feed – oh, I'll spare you the description, it wouldn't match the one Ruth gave us anyway.

Martin stubbornly ignores Hal's words, spellbound by the pattern. He quietly reaches for it, wiping out the dust, only to reveal that the thing wasn't exactly a print, or even a footstep, but rather – some kind of ceramic object, buried in the rocky ground.

MARTIN

Oh my God.

STEVEN

What?...

Just in the same moment that Martin's palm moves over the artifact, an OMNIOUS, HOLLOW SOUND can be heard coming from the other side of the hall.

RUTH

Martin?

Martin just shakes his head in response, admitting to his own ignorance.

The spelunkers remain motionless, dazed and unsure as to what to do, as the sound draws NEARER and NEARER...

STEVEN

Jesus.

A giant WAVE OF WATER arrives from the opposite part of the hall, flooding the chasm and forcing the spelunkers to break from their daze and flee.

STEVEN

It's impossible! There can't be any...

The end of the sentence is flooded by the omnipresent sound of water that begins to fill up the chasm.

HAL

There!

He points to the opening in chasm's wall and hops in. Seeing no other options, his colleagues follow him inside.

INT. PASSAGE FROM THE CHASM

The group ankwardly moves down the low and narrow passage; thankfully, it seems that it's bend vertically, so that the futher the group flees, the higher they climb and concomitantly – the safer they are from the incoming wave.

STEVEN

Go, go, go!

The group's good mood have evaporated for good; Hal and Ruth seems to be in especially bad condition. Their faces express nothing but fear and fatigue.

At the end of the passage there's a steep ledge, hard to climb up to, but nonetheless providing the fleeing party with what they're needing most at the moment: refuge from the water. One by one, they climb it – Steven first, then Mike. Martin, Hal and Ruth follow them..

INT. GUARDED ENTRANCE

Once on the ledge, the group lets out a collective sigh of relief. What they do not know is that they are now in even greater danger than they were moment before.

STEVEN

Everyone's okay?

They nod, too shocked by what have just happened to even say a word.

HAL

The passage's closed now, isn't it? We can't go back?

STEVEN

We certainly can't return via the same road arrived here.

RUTH

There's no other.

MIKE

Ruth's right. This time the shit we're in is really deep.

RUTH

Martin? What did you... What was that you...

STEVEN

(panicked)

Oh, fuck. OH, FUCK!

The group looks at their leader, even more surprised by his reaction that losing control is definitely not his style. But the only answer he can offer them is a blank and terrified stare towards the dark, beyond the thin line of light emitted by Ruth's still intact flashlight.

They follow it.

MIKE

What is it, Steve?

Steven points out to the darkness, his mouth agape.

MIKE

Oh, shit.

Now he can see that too.

Futher down the corridor, they can make out shapes of two HUMANOID CREATURES. The two are slightly bent down and completely motionless, and appear to be observing the spelunkers with keen interest.

MIKE

We have company.

Now rest of the group is aware of the creatures presence. What's especially unnerving is that – instead of reacting to the people's actions they remain completely still. After a moment of silence, the spelunkers dare to rise their voices to faint whisper:

HAL

What the fuck is it?

RUTH

Remember the movies?

MIKE

Those of underground creatures?

RUTH

Yeah. Those where the spelunkers end up as monster fodder.

MARTIN

But this time it's not a movie.

Another period of strained silence follows. The creatures stubbornly refuse to react to the presence of humans.

MIKE

What are they doing?

MARTIN

Nothing.

MIKE

I think we should make the first move. Ruth, hand me the flashlight.

Ruth obeys. Mike grabs the flashlight and directs its light at the creature standing on the right side of the corridor. Its glow reveals the details hitherto concealed by darkness.

The thing is considerably tall, and seems to be growing a brown fur. A set of spines grows up from its back; its head is eerily reminiscent of that seen on covers of UFO magazines – big, with thin mouth and big, bug-like eyes. It also seems in a way comatose – it remains completely docile even as the beam of light reaches its face.

MIKE

Martin? Come here. You have to see that.

Martin anxiously moves to the side of Mike; the rest of party moves forward with both interest and anxiety.

HAL

Oh shit.

RUTH

I don't like it.

(pause)

Not at all.

The group looks at the creature, spellbound. The silence lasts for as long as Mike decides to take a look at the other one.

The other monster is completely identical to his colleague in terms of appearance; what makes the difference is that it actually reacts to the light – when caught up in its beam, its eyes light blood red, and the fingers begin to move to and fro. All in complete silence.

The group freezes in place as it beholds the creature waking up from its apparent coma. Taking advantage of the fact, the thing LEAPS towards them with unexpected speed. Steven emits a SHRIEK of terror; his colleagues turn to see that the thing embraces him with both its "arms" and "legs", and that what appears to be a sting reaches from its mouth deep into the skull of their friend.

Steven's shouting gives way to maniacal laughter.

Creature's eyes turn blank once again, and it collapses to the floor along with now-dead Steven, emitting a METALLIC SOUND as it hits the ground. Both are still connected with the sting-like organ that the creature produced from its mouth; they almost resemble a strange pair of lovers, connected for eternity with one, deadly kiss.

First there is a short period of mute silence; Ruth is the first to break it with a hysterical yell, loud enough to shake the foundations of mountain they're trapped under.

RUTH

Jee-EEE-EEEEZUUUS!!!

MARTIN

Ruth, shut the fuck up!!! Shut the fuck up, if you don't want to!...

MIKE

Run, for God's sake! Run before the other one wakes up!

Their way back blocked with water, the spelunkers make it past the other creature. Ever as they run by we see its face, blank and apparently oblivious to all that's going on around.

INT. TWISTED TUNNEL

Their way of escape leads down a twisting tunnel. Ruth curses as her flashlight breaks, pluging them all in complete darkness. Having no other way, they feel their way down. After a while, a faint glow appears at the end of corridor.

INT. BEFORE THE SIDE ENTRANCE TO COMHAN

The corridor ends with a sudden drop. Terrified spelunkers fall down. A sheet of metal that covers the floor resonates with impact.

The chamber they have found themselves in is by no means a work of nature. A faint glow illuminates the entire place, even though it's hard to determine its source. The stone walls are completely smooth, and just few steps from where the spelunkers have fallen a rectangular doorway stands closed, a symbol of reversed triangle adorning the metal door. Quiet hum of the ancient machinery can be heard in the background.

The spelunkers slowly come to. All of them seem fairly well, save for Ruth, who eyes her open hands with a desperate expression.

HAL

(groggily)

What about Steve? Is he – dead?...

There is no response.

MARTIN

Do you feel it too?

They consider his question for a while.

MIKE

Yeah. Like if someone was watching over my shoulder. Eerie.

HAL

(points towards the doorway)

But not as eerie as THAT. What the fuck is this place?

Ruth laughts softly, raises her hands, palms outward, and presents them to her friends, as if there was something extraordinary about them.

RUTH

See?

MIKE

See what?

RUTH

I can't even feel the pain.

They fall back into silence.

RUTH

I can't even remember where I lost them.

(pauses)

And it's eerie, because... When you lost your hands you should feel pain, don't you?

HAL

I don't know what it is, but it's fucking killing me.

MIKE

It has something to do... Do you hear this hum?

They nod. All save for Ruth, who continues to study her palms.

MIKE

It's with the frequency. We must move on if we don't want to go crazy.

They slowly rise to their feet. All but Ruth. Mike comes up to her and shakes her shoulders.

MIKE

Get the fuck up. Your hands are okay, OKAY, do you fucking understand?

She stands up, but still holds her hands up to her face.

MARTIN

Where to, chief?

MIKE

Let's try the restroom.

He approaches the doorway, and as he does, the doors open silently.

HAL

Are you sure about that?

MIKE

Have any other ideas?

Hal shakes his head in response. They slowly and anxiously move towards what seems to be the entrance to a long corridor.

INT. CORRIDOR (COMHAN)

The doors close as soon as the group steps in. As soon as they do, the hum from outside is shut out. The silence that ensues is deafening.

RUTH

M-my hands!... They... They are... I thought that...

MIKE

No, you didn't. If you did think you'd realise something's wrong with it.

The rectangular corridor is filled with pale, ghostly light. The group walks a few steps, when suddenly Hal speaks:

HAL

I don't like it.

MIKE

What do you mean?

HAL

Shouldn't we hear our footsteps?

It's only then that they realise the all-pervading silence that fills the place. Mike stomps on the ground several times, only to find that no matter how hard he tries, he's unable to produce a faintest sound. Hal tries to bang on the walls – with same result.

MIKE

Echo!!!!

His shout disappears, as if swallowed by silence. Ruth shrudders.

MIKE

Ok, so the place has weird acoustics. Let us better hope we don't run up against a thing like the one in the cave. Cause that was serious.

They nod in agreement and continue onward.

INT. FORK IN THE CORRIDOR (COMHAN)

The group comes to a halt when the corridor they have been following splits in three.

RUTH

Now where?

MIKE

Don't have a faintest clue. Perhaps we should ask the real expert.

(to Martin)

Hey, Martin, you've spent almost all your spare time reading about alien civilisations. Did your books say anything about picking the right path when you come up to a crossroad like this one?

HAL

Stop laughting at Martin. He's no John Keel. Right, Mart?

MARTIN

These books were primarily about...

MIKE

He doesn't know. All right, listen up now. There are three possibilities: one that the whole bloody place is abandoned, and we just blocked the only way out of this shit, the other – that it has more motherfuckers like the one that killed Steve, and they are just lurking around ready to leap on us when we least expect it, and third is that if we go down one of these corridors we'll come upon some

wise E.T.s who'll feed us some bullshit about God, spirituality and love, pat us on our backs, and send us back whence we came so we can spread their message. Now, which possibility seems most likely? Remember, that bad answer means...

(he presses his palm against his throat and makes a move that imitates slicing it with a knife)

So now what?

RUTH

They killed Steve. They fucking killed him. It could have been any of us.

HAL

And still can be.

MARTIN

Ruth is right. Out situation doesn't look good. The thing we have encountered in the cave was aggressive. The others might be too.

RUTH

There's a thing that bothers me. One of the creatures was indeed aggressive, but the other – it didn't stir, even when we...

MARTIN

That's good point, Ruth. What we are dealing here with are neither humans nor animals.And whetever they are, they follow patterns of behaviour that we cannot decipher. At least so it appears from the initial encounter.

MIKE

Excuse me for interrupting your academic discussion, but can we please arrive to some conclusion before we starve here to death?

MARTIN

You're the boss here, Mike.

MIKE

All right. Listen then, everybody. In the present situation every choice means potential death. I know you won't like it, but we have to...

RUTH

Split?

MIKE

That's right. There are three corridors going out of this intersection, and there are four of us left
alive. One should remain here, while the others will explore corridors. At least if nobody has any better idea.

MARTIN

I will stay here.

RUTH

(takes a deep breath)

I take the one to the right.

HAL

What the bloody hell do you think we'll find down one of these bloody corridors, Mike?

MIKE

I don't know, Hal, honestly. But if we all stay here we die for sure.

HAL

(resigned)

I pick the left one.

MIKE

The one in the middle is mine, it seems. Does anyone have an intact radio or a cellular? We'd have some mean of coordinating our actions.

RUTH

Sorry.

HAL

Seems I've lost my own when we were running from the wave.

MARTIN

I always leave my cell at home when we go spelunking, so...

MIKE

Splendind. What about your watches?

RUTH

(looks at her wrist)

Mine seems to be intact.

HAL

Mine too.

MARTIN

Mine not.

MIKE

Whatever happens, try to make it back here in half an hour. Then we'll decide what to do next. Should you come upon anything that seems even remotely dangerous, run back to Martin. And try not to get lost. Is that clear?

HAL

Yeah.

RUTH

Yep.

MIKE

Ok then. Off we go.

Martin leans cautiously by the wall, while each of his friends go into one of the corridors.

INT. RIGHT CORRIDOR (COMHAN)

We follow Ruth as she makes her way down the corridor she herself chose to follow. It starts straight, then bends slowly to the left, only to end with a rectangular doorway similar to that they have passed through when entering the complex, though this one is smaller. The doorway has the same symbol of upside-down triangle painted on it, and some lettering below. It opens – silently – as soon as Ruth stands in its vicinity. Ruth steps through, and the door closes behind her.

INT. FORK IN THE CORRIDOR (COMHAN)

Close up on the face of Martin, seen from profile. He's staring blankly at the opposite wall. Suddenly, a colour disturbs the all-pervading blankness of the environment. It's faintly visible in the background up to the moment when Martin turns in its direction. Then it comes in focus.

It's Ruth. Vomit's smeared all about her clothes. She appears to be shouting, but her cries can't be heard, as the exotic material the corridor is built of absorbs all sounds. At the same moment Martin abandons his post and rushes towards her.

INT. RIGHT CORRIDOR (COMHAN)

They meet in the corridor. Ruth falls to her knees, crying. Martin kneels before her, allowing Ruth to lean against his shoulder. She's too terrified to be even ashamed of the vomit that covers both her clothes and part of her face.

RUTH

Oh, my God!...

MARTIN

Ok, Ruth, it's okay.

He looks up, almost expecting for something to rush from the other end of the corridor, but nothing does.

MARTIN

What happened?

RUTH

(weeping)

I – it's a cr-crime. A-a-gainst God, if there is any. B-but there can't be. Not in a world where there are such things.

MARTIN

Somebody – or something – tried to harm you?

RUTH

(hysterical laughter)

Oh God, oh God, no. Such things - they simply shouldn't exist.

MARTIN

What things?

Ruth vomits once again, this time staining Martin's clothes. She laughts softly.

RUTH

Sorry.

(tries to smile)

Don't even let me think about them, ok? Or I'll vomit again. I – don't – want – to think – what – I have seen – ok?

MARTIN

Ok.

He tries to wipe out the stains with his hands, but only succeeds in smearing them all over his

jacket.

RUTH

Martin - step - aside - I - have to vomit - vomit - aga ... - a...

Martin steps aside just in time to avoid another wave of vomit. Following it, Ruth collapses on the floor, crying. Martin snaps out.

MARTIN

FUCK! What the fuck is wrong with you! What the - you fucking crazy bitch!

Ruth gets up and starts running on towards the forking.

MARTIN

RUTH!!!

His cry drowns in the omnipresent silence.

MARTIN

Ruth, I didn't mean to!...

She fades away behind the forking.

MARTIN

Fuck.

He leans against the wall, crossing his arms in front of his chest. His eyes are wide open, and his brow sweaty with perspiration. He softly bangs the back his head against the wall. After a while he snaps out of this state and starts walking towards the door Ruth passed through before. The doors open for him, as they did for her, and Martin enters.

INT. CHAMBER OF SPECIMENS (COMHAN)

The hall is darker than the corridor, and the walls also appear to be made of darker material. What do they have in common is the silence, which is as deafening in the chamber as it was in the corridor.

Glass containers are placed regularily against both walls of the chamber, filling it with greenish glow. Each of them contains a green liquid – and a specimen. Each specimen is a creature, often a grotesque hybrid of human and an animal. Some of them seem to be crossbreds between humans and a creature resembling the one that attacked the spelunkers in the cave. Examples include: a creature with a body of nude human female and overgrown head of a cat, its mouth open, as if frozen in surprise; a nude human male with bug-like legs where arms should be, and a saurian head; other one could as well be an angel with his beautiful build and wings of a bird, if not for a deformed face that defies all description.

At the sight of the creatures Martin freezes in astonishment; then he obscures his mouth with his hand, as if he was about to vomit, just like Ruth did; but all he does is to laught; he emits a maniacal

laughter that would resonate and vibrate all over the chamber of not for the sound-absorbing properties of material it is made of.

He stops suddenly and turns around. The door has opened, letting in a human figure, whose features are unrecognizable at first, as he's illuminated from behind. Martin freezes with a goofy expression on his face. The figure speaks:

MIKE

Jeee-zuus.

Ruth follows him, her face still red with tears. Hal's there too, and he seems as terrified with the discovery as his colleagues.

MARTIN

Mike!? I thought... I thought that...

MIKE

Step aside, you moron.

Martin obeys. Mike walks all about the chamber with his hands crossed behind his back.. Exhibiting no signs of shock, he almost resembles a japanese toruist on holiday.

MIKE

Well, well, well.

Hal doesn't even try to conceal his terror.

HAL

They won't rush out of these coffins, will they, Mike?

MIKE

(in a matter of fact, nonchalant voice)

I don't know. Hey, I like this one!

(he grins, pointing to a hybrid that bears distinctively female features)

Martin walks up to Ruth.

MARTIN

I – I'm sorry.

RUTH

Don't be. I – I am too. This place... this situation... It's okay as long as you read about it, and watch it, like in the movie, or in a book, but when it happens to you it's... different.

MARTIN

What did they find?

RUTH

Well, Hal came upon a chamber filled with rectangular boxes... A shelves with small metal boxes, if I got it right.

MARTIN

Boxes?

RUTH

Yeah. And Mike... I don't know, he didn't want to tell.

MARTIN

Did they encounter anything... alive?

RUTH

Nope. At least if you don't count...

MIKE

Ok, ladies and gentlemen! Two things seem to be certain. One – that this place is almost completely abandoned. It's constructors left it long ago, but how long is hard to tell, as it didn't fall into mess, as human complex would do, which brings us to our second certitude – that this place wasn't built by humans.

MARTIN

Did you find any way out of here?

MIKE

Well, yes or no. To pass through you'd have to break some kind of bulletproof, axeproof, and generally shitproof glass wall, but even if you'd somehow manage to achieve this unlikely feat, the things that move behind it would transform you into a pancake. So it seems that our lives have just reached a very exciting conclusion.

HAL

Things?

MIKE

Well, I can't tell for sure what they are. What I can tell is that they move with quite decent speed down some kind of tube that's behind the aforementioned wall, and always in one direction. Of course, they are as mute as the rest of the place. Guess the constructors weren't exactly fans of

techno music.

MARTIN

What do you think are these?

He points at the glass coffins holding either sleeping or dead bodies of the hybrid creatures.

MIKE

Oh, Martin, come on! It's you who've read all this bullshit! UFOs, Atlantis, Magonia, "Book of the cursed..."

MARTIN

"The book of the damned."

MIKE

Whatever. It's you who should know better, not me, so use your fucking brain and tell me – where the fuck do you think we are !?

MARTIN

All I know of – that might relate to our present situation – is the legend of Shambhala. But Shambhala was meant to be a paradise and this... This place seems like hell.

HAL

"Vathek".

MIKE

What?

HAL

"Palace of Underground Fire." The acronym of Hell in Beckford's novel "Vathek". To me this place resembles the one what Beckford has described in his book.

RUTH

Maybe this IS Hell.

A moment of uneasy silence follows.

MIKE

Metaphysics aside – we'll get close enough to them once we starve – Hal, would you be kind enough to show us your – cubes?

HAL

Ok, if you want. Follow me.

INT. HALL OF RECORDS (COMHAN)

The group enters a place that's quite similar to the hall where the specimens were stored, but here rows of niches in the ceramic/metallic walls taken place of the glass coffins. Within each niche there are four metal cubes. Just as the previous chamber, so this one has perfectly regular layout.

MIKE

Ladies and gentlemen, here comes Hal Braddock and his cubes!

RUTH

(to Hal)

Did you try to examine them?

HAL

You and Mike shown up before I've had a chance.

(he turns towards one of the niches)

But now I'm going to make up for it.

He walks toward the niche.

MARTIN

Be careful, Hal... God knows what they really are.

MIKE

(to Martin)

Ever heard the expression: "a sacrifice in the name of science?"

By time Mike finishes his sentence Hal is standing before one of the niches and reaching for a metal box. The rest of the group gathers around him, looking at the artifact he's holding with a mixture of anxiety and interest.

Hal raises the box to his face, and for a brief moment we see his own hand holding the cube from his point of view. Suddenly, the picture vanishes, only to be replaced by

INT. LABORATORY (HAL'S VISION)

... a sight of container similar to those the group has encountered in the chamber of specimens. The container is empty save for the green, luminous liquid. No sound can be heard for the first fivesix seconds, after which A DISEMBODIED VOICE speaks out in the unknown language. The way he speaks is calm, detached, and somewhat soothing. The vision CUTS then to ...

INT. CELL (HAL'S VISION)

... a sight of a rectangular cell. Its walls are made from the same material the corridor the group passed trough was made of. Inside the cell there is a young woman, clad in the clothes of seventheenth-century French peasant. A band of flowers crowns her head. She's terrified and screaming, but no sound other than the one of disembodied voice, continuing with its dispassionate commentary, can be heard.

INT. LABORATORY (HAL'S VISION)

Now the woman is in the container. Both her clothes, her hair and her skin are gone. Her bare muscles and intestines are now visible to the naked eye. She's bleeding and writhing in agony. The voice continues with its calm, soothing commentary.

CUT TO...

Another container, this one storing a domesticated cat. It seems comatose. The voice speaks a few words before we cut back to the previous container. The woman doesn't move anymore, either asleep or dead. The camera closes up of her head, then cuts back to the close up of cat's face. Then it cuts back to the sight of the woman, who – within a few seconds – is replaced with the cat-headed hybrid, the same the spelunkers have seen in the chamber of specimens. The voice concludes its commentary and the vision fades. As it does, we CUT BACK to

INT. HALL OF RECORDS (COMHAN)

... sight of the metal box held by Hal, as seen through his eyes.

Hal utters a scream similar to those given by people who wake up from nightmares, and drops the box.

RUTH

HAL!!!

MIKE

Hal, are you okay!?

Hal pants with terror.

MARTIN

What happened!?

HAL (panting)

I think I – I was hallucinating.

MIKE Calm down.

He bends to pick up the cube.

HAL

NO!!!

But it's too late. Within a few seconds Mike's eyes go blank. Hal, Ruth and Martin exchange nervous looks.

MIKE (coming out of the visionary state)

Whoah.

HAL

I warned you.

MIKE

(putting the cube back in the niche)

Whathever the thing is, it's a work of pure genius.

The others look at him with puzzled expressions.

MARTIN

What do you mean?

MIKE

It's a medium that feeds its output directly to the brain. Come to think of it, it's light-years ahead of our DVD.

He eyes all the niches in succession while performing some kind of mental calculation.

MIKE

The number of these boxes equals the number of the glass containers in the other room. So, apparently, each box documents the process of creating one of the monsters stored here.

HAL

You're trying to say they were into genetic engineering?

MIKE

Not quite. They seemed to have performed operations on the live subjects.

RUTH

Mike?

MIKE

Uh-uh?

RUTH

This place is scary. I want to get out.

MIKE

Ruth, I told you there's no way out of here.

MARTIN

I don't know how it's with you, but I've got enough. If the place is indeed a work of genius, it's a sick genius.

HAL

I agree with Martin. The intelligence that created this place was definitely – cold... I want to get the fuck out of here.

RUTH

You've said you found an exit.

MIKE

(sighs)

I've only found a place where this complex gives way to another. But there's no way to pass through.

HAL

(his voice rising as he speaks)

I want to fucking get out of here. If those bastards that made all these experiments are still around – I don't fucking want to fall in their hands, DO YOU FUCKING UNDERSTAND!? I DON'T FUCKING WANT TO END UP IN ONE OF THOSE FUCKING COFFINS, OKAY!?

There's a moment of troubled silence.

MIKE

(coldly)

Ok. You wanted to see the exit. Here you go.

INT. RASAVA STATION (COMHAN)

This place has a feel of openess to it that the previous locations lacked. A glass wall Mike told his friends about separates it from a tube-like tunnel. Once in a while a gigantic, bullet-like object passes silently and quickly through it, and past the room. To the right there's a small door.

The group walks in from the central corridor and looks around.

MIKE

And's that's all to it.

RUTH

(poiting at the door)

You didn't tell us about THIS.

MIKE

There was no need. They don't open anyway.

Hal walks up to the glass wall, admiring the giant "bullets" that move behind it. He stares at them for a while, and then bends his head down in resignation.

MARTIN

Where should we set up the camp?

MIKE

I suggest that the video store will be the best place to wait till we die. Any other options?

Martin and Ruth just shake their heads, and – together with Mike – they head for the exit. Hal's still there, with his head bent down, while the "bullets" still fly by.

RUTH

(turning back)

Hal?

MIKE

Leave him alone.

They leave the room.

FADE TO BLACK ...

Pause.

FADE IN...

We don't know how much time has passed. Minutes? Hours? Hal's still there, with his head still bent down, in a kind of trance. Suddenly, one of the "bullets" comes to a halt. Hal raises his head to see that the glass wall parts, and the metal/ceramic shell of the "bullet" slowly opens.

CUT TO:

INT. HALL OF RECORDS (COMHAN)

Camera slowly pans over the tired faces of the gathered people. Those of Martin and Ruth express nothing but despair; Mike, on the other hand, looks clear-headed and thoughtful.

Out of a sudden, Hal dashes in. He's obviously agitated.

HAL

We have company.

The spelunkers look at him, surprised. Their apathy seems to vanish, replaced with curiosity.

CUT TO:

MIDDLE CORRIDOR (COMHAN)

They stop before the door leading to the rasava station.

MIKE

Did you see what came out of the thing?

HAL

I told you I didn't; I was...

MIKE

You chickened out. All right.

RUTH

If we gone in now we might end up like Steven.

MIKE

Or like that girl from their recording. But we have no other way.

The doors open, and they step through.

INT. RASAVA STATION (COMHAN)

The "bullet's" still on the station. Both the thing and the glass wall are open, allowing passage between the station and the "bullet's" brightly illuminated interior. The doors to the right are open too, a beam of light is flowing through.

MARTIN

(whispering)

Oh fuck.

RUTH

(whispering)

What's in there?

MIKE

(whispering)

Hell knows.

(after a short pause)

On my command, we set off and grab this thing. It's the only way out of this place.

RUTH

(whispering)

But...

MIKE

(whispering)

One, two, three... NOW!

They start towards the "bullet". As they run past the door, we can see a humanoid figure, grey, bald and draped in some kind of robe, bent over a mechanical/electronic device with no apparent controls. At the same moment when it TURNS BACK we CUT to the sight of the spelunkers running into the craft.

INT. RASHADMIVIL INTERIOR (COMHAN)

Hal turns back to see that the creature left the adjacent room and is running towards them with dazzling speed that blurs it physical features. The sight lasts for a split second before the door SHUTS CLOSED and blends with the wall so perfectly that it becomes literally invisible.

HAL

We must start this fucking thing before he gets in!

MIKE

Yeah, but HOW!?

They look around, but there are no apparent controls. The interior of craft is completely bare – there are no seats, no control devices, and no windows.

MARTIN

Another trap.

They wait for the doors to open, but they don't.

RUTH

(drowsily)

I feel so... heavy...

MIKE

I've got a feeling it's the end.

Ruth and Martin lose fight with the force of gravity pulling them to the ground, Mike is the only one to somehow manage to remain on his feet. Suddenly, the downward pull vanishes, and just as soon as it does, the door opens. The whole thing doesn't last longer than ten to fifteen seconds.

MIKE

Here they come.

But contrary to his words, they don't. The doors remain open, but nothing passes through.

Hal can't stand waiting and walks in their direction.

RUTH

Hal, stop!

MIKE

Quiet!

Hal stops at the door and looks out.

HAL

We're somewhere else now.

MIKE

What's there?

HAL

Another corridor.

MIKE

Great. It starts to feel like Dungeons and Dragons.

(sighs)

Get up, everybody! We've been given a chance, let's not waste it.

INT. EXIT CORRIDOR (COMHAN)

The spelunkers leave the craft and move slowly down the corridor. It's straight for about 8 meters, then takes a 90-degree turn to the right.

A beam of what apears to be sunlight seems to be coming from beyond the turn.

RUTH

(with renewed hope)

See that?

She points to the light. They resume their walk with renewed vigour.

As they reach the breaking point, it becomes obvious that their hope weren't vain. A BLINDINGLY BRIGHT daylight's coming from the end of corridor.

Mike stops.

RUTH

What's wrong?

MIKE

According to my clock, it should be middle of the night.

Martin and Hal stop too.

MARTIN

You're trying to say that it's not the way out?

MIKE

No. I'm trying to say that it's middle of the night, and daylight is rarely seen in the middle of the night.

HAL

Don't fucking listen to this guy! Come on!

They continue towards the exit.

EXT. AT THE FEET OF ANDES (PERU)

After the complete silence of Comhan, such a quiet sounds as chirping of birds and quiet humming of the wind seem deafening. The group walks out of the cave to meet with the exotic landscape of Huscaran.

HAL

What the hell?

Martin looks behind him - the passage they walked through is now gone, replaced by solid rock.

MARTIN

Hey, look!

Now they see it too. Hal walks up to the rock, touches it, bangs at it, but to no avail. The entrance to underground world is now gone.

Hal bursts into maniacal laughter.

RUTH

(to Mike)

What place do you think is this?

MIKE

I don't know, maybe – Spain?

INT. BRITISH EMBASSY IN LIMA, PERU

The ambassador takes a sip of tea, looking at Mike.

MIKE

We resolved to walk forward, which we did – up to when we have been spotted by the rangers. You know the rest.

The ambassador sighs and puts his cup of tea back on the mahony desk.

AMBASSADOR

I admit I'm not qualified to make any judgement in cases such as this. I lack knowledge and qualifications. But the fact that you've found yourself in Huscaran without documents... Well, I assure you that I'll do whatever I can to help you return to Britain.

MIKE

You don't believe us, don't you?

AMBASSADOR

Whether I do or do not is out of question at the moment.

MIKE

(with hesitation)

Well-thanks.

They shake hands. The group departs. As soon as they do, the ambassador grabs old-fashioned phone resting on his desk and turns the number.

AMBASSADOR

(smiling)

Andy?

(he laughs)

Yes. Yes, I'm okay.

(he listens to the voice from the other side of the wire, smiling)

Yes, Andy, there have been a minor problem.

(pause)

There have been a security breach in Europe. A group of kids broken in. The elder race may not be content.

(pause)

No, we're searching for it, but haven't yet found it.

(pause)

Yes, I'd like you to warn the Washington. And the Brotherhood.

(pause)

Yes, and send someone after them. They'll be coming back to France in the couple of days.

(pause)

Naah, Andy. They're just kids. It's very unlikely that they will ever figure out what happened to them. They have only seen the shadows, and remember that even those bastards at the Pentagon have no faintest clue, even though it's them who put their plan in motion. But we must be cautious. By the way, how is the search proceeding in your area?

(pause)

That's bad. The elder race says that there's not much time left. And if we fail to piece the Key together, no one is going to help us – not even the Powers of Earth.

(pause)

And to you too, Andy.

Ambassador hangs up and looks out throught the window, lost in thoughts.

INT. HALL (EMBASSY)

The group walks down the embassys's hall.

MARTIN

So, are we to leave it alone?

MIKE

We might contact the press.

RUTH

Yeah, but who's going to believe us?

EXT. STREET

Street in some random big city – either in America, Britain or Australia. An unkempt and unshaved man walks up to the kiosk, purchasing a pack of cigarettes and a tabloid. A title, written out with big letters on the first page, says: "British cave explorers break into alien base". The photo shows Mike, Ruth, Hal and Martin, and a big picture in the background serves as a crude representation of "grey alien". The man coughs and walks into the hurried crowd. The camera rises, providing us with the panorama of one of the busy street, filled with ignorant people, walking to and fro and oblivious of what happens when they are blissfully asleep.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END.