

THE NIGHTMARE HALLS

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Both of them hear the faint buzzing of an approaching plane. Jones flicks his cigarette to the ground.

Davis looks up, spots the intruder.

DAVIS

Here goes.

At the extremity of the landing strip, a twin-engine Cessna descends, all lights off.

The Cessna lands, taxis to the end of the runway and stops beside the fuel pump.

The rear door opens, THREE MEN jump out. The PILOT follows.

The group, minus the pilot, staying behind to refuel the plane, walks up to Davis and Jones.

Jones tenses a bit, grabs an automatic rifle from the Jeep's backseat.

Grinning, one the men, VOLKER ANDER, mid 30s, hip, a butterfly tattoo on the left side of the neck, raises both hands in mock surrender as he walks toward the pair, the others remaining a few steps behind.

ANDER

My, I'm so moved by the motion of trust.

Davis chuckles.

DAVIS

Come on, Volker. You know we always take precautions in the company of new friends. Introduce us, if you will.

Volker motions for the others to get closer.

ANDER

Guys, meet our favorite associate. Mr. Peter Davis, from the almighty CIA.

Davis smiles a humorless smile.

DAVIS

Gentlemen.

Volker faces his comrades.

ANDER

So... This is Raul. Lares. He helped secure the package. Forcefully, shall we say, Raul?

RAUL LARES, late 30s, average height but stocky and muscular, nods and raises a hand.

A large Bowie knife hangs by his thigh in a sheath, which doesn't go unnoticed by Davis, who eyes it warily.

Lares' voice sounds like it's tired of taking abuse from alcohol and other questionable substances.

LARES

Howdy.

Davis nods, impassible.

DAVIS

I heard about you.

Lares smirks, but Davis already moves on to the next one.

Ander points to ALVARO, 18, skinny and awkward, who nods shyly. Davis sizes him up.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

So, Ander. Who's the unexpected guest?

ANDER

That's Alvaro. He, ah... Helped us watch over the competition, and screw them over in the process. His price was to tag along, he was uncomfortable with the idea of staying behind.

He mimics a gun pointing to the youth's head and shooting.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Reprisals and all that.

DAVIS

(staring at Alvaro,
but addressing Ander)

I don't like this.

Davis slides past Alvaro, his eyes still fixed on him, then walks to the pilot.

BY THE PLANE

RICHARD MARSHALL, late 50s with a gruff way about him, is just done refueling the plane as Davis reaches him.

DAVIS

The legendary Richard Marshall himself.

Marshall grins, and the pair embraces warmly.

MARSHALL

Pete, nice to see you. Been a while.

Disengaging himself from his friend's token of affection, Davis smiles back.

DAVIS

I'll say. You good?

MARSHALL

Not getting too rusty, I guess. So, suppose I am. You?

DAVIS

I make do. Getting tired of this crap though.

MARSHALL

I hear ya. Don't fret it. Soon enough you'll be sufficiently ancient so that the CIA has you pushing pencils at Langley anyway.

DAVIS

Flattery will get you everywhere.

MARSHALL

My pleasure.

Marshall presses on one side of his nose and blows a thick gob on the ground.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)

Wanna see the cargo, yeah?

Davis nods. They walk to the back of the plane and Marshall opens the rear door.

In the cargo bay, neatly stacked upon one another, dozens of transparent plastic bags filled with cocaine pack up the space.

DAVIS

Neat.

MARSHALL

Oh yeah. Nice slice of black budget
in there.

Marshall closes the door, Davis walks back to the others.

CLEARING

He signals to Jones. The soldier nods and salutes, climbs into the car, and departs the way they came.

ANDER

Shall we?

Davis extends his arm toward the plane and all of them start walking in its direction.

ANDER (CONT'D)

And all the way up to Arizona. Oh
wow.

EXT. ARCHULETA MESA - DAY

SUPER: "Archuleta Mesa, near Dulce, New Mexico, USA"

A battered pick-up truck bumps along a dirt road, leaving a trail of dust behind it.

On the left of the truck, the greenish valley sprawls while on its right, the arid hills make for a steep rise.

The truck parks in what little space there is on the side of the road, near the base of the hill. A man steps out.

JOHN CORIZ, an Apache Native American, 64 years old, is a tall, still fit man, with long gray hair tied up in a ponytail.

He pulls out a huge backpack from the truck, closes and locks its door, puts the keys in his jacket pocket.

He puts the backpack on his back, and starts on a barely visible path up the mountain.

He pauses, hums the air, reaches into one of his jacket's pockets, removes a pouch and rolls a cigarette.

Lighting it, he resumes the ascent.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

SUPER: "Over the Gulf of Mexico"

Marshall checks his instruments, while Davis, as his co-pilot, reads a flight chart.

LARES
So... Where are we?

DAVIS
Again?

Lares shrugs and holds his hands up.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Very close to the Texas coast. East
of Houston. Any minute now.

Lares nods, stretches.

MARSHALL
Nice sense of timing, bwana.

He points in front of him.

Though far away, a mass detaches itself on the horizon.

LARES
Was wondering... How are you folks
able to enter the US just like that?
Ain't we prone to be chased or
something?

Ander eyes him in mockingly. Davis merely smiles.

LARES (CONT'D)
(looking around at
them)
What?... It's true. Not looking
forward to being shot down and shit.

ANDER
Relax, pal. We've done this before.
Although the first time was by boat.
This is faster and safer, trust me.

LARES
Yeah. Right.

As if on cue, the radio crackles and comes to life.

RADIO (O.S.)

Ah, attention Cessna, this is ATC 56 over in Galveston. You've entered US airspace, identify yourself. Your transponder seems to be off, Cessna. Repeat, you crossed into US airspace, identify yourself.

Davis reaches over, grabs the radio mike.

DAVIS

Hi Galveston, this is Cessna. Clearance code X3-763-DOD14. Repeat, X3-763-DOD14. Acknowledge.

RADIO (O.S.)

Copy Cessna. Hold.

Behind him, everyone remains silent.

RADIO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Cessna, this is ATC 56. Have a safe flight, Godspeed.

DAVIS

Thanks 56. Over.

He turns around, smirks at Lares.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Yeah?

Lares shakes his head, laughing in amazement.

EXT. ARCHULETA MESA - NIGHT

A remote, barren, desolate piece of the world. Just dirt and scrubs and rocks.

Coriz sits cross-legged beside a small blue tent, in front of a fire bordered by small stones.

The moon sheds a bluish light over the already unusual landscape.

He opens a plastic box, containing a couple of sandwiches. He takes one and starts munching on it.

He stops mid bite. A faint, far away sound floats in the distance. Halfway between throbbing and humming.

Frowning, he looks up and around.

But the sound drifts away, and disappears.

Everything is silent again, save for the occasional gust of wind and the whisper-like background wild nature produces.

He shakes his head, and resumes eating.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Lares rubs his eyes, the flight is dulling him big time. He yawns loudly.

LARES

So... How much we have back there?

ANDER

Drop it...

DAVIS

No, it's fine. That cargo is a lot of good stuff, it's understandable it excites curiosity.

Ander gets up from his seat, walks to the front of the plane.

ANDER

Yeah, I'll say.

He reaches down to his feet, and removes a small gun he had concealed against his ankle.

Standing up, he points it directly at Davis, its barrel touching his head.

LARES

(half muttering)

And... Action!

MARSHALL

What the fucking fuck?

ANDER

(to Lares)

It's between 15 and 20, hombre. Million, that is.

Lares rubs his hands together greedily.

DAVIS

What the hell do you think you're doing, exactly?

ANDER

Exactly, I'm ready to blow your brains out if you and pilot dude here don't do as I tell you. This plane is officially high-jacked.

DAVIS

You've got to be kidding me...

ANDER

Eh, no, man. Close to 20 million bucks is sort of hard to resist, you see. I swear I tried. Okay, not very hard.

DAVIS

So... You're all in on it, yeah?
(moves around to look
back at them)

Yeah.

ANDER

Careful with the movements, Davis.

DAVIS

So. Let's have it straight. You're going to steal from, of all people, the CIA? That's a grand idea. No matter what you do, no matter how black this op is, they'll chase you down to the ends of Patagonia if they have to.

ANDER

You think? Ah, me I think all that cash can buy you a lot of silence from a lot of people if needed, know what I mean?

DAVIS

Nah, I wouldn't bet on it. Make the smart choice, drop the piece and we'll forget about that. Hmm?

ANDER

Getting desperate, huh? Enough jokes. Utah is where we wanna be. I'll give you a set of coordinates once we're in Utah proper.

MARSHALL

The hell you will.

ANDER
(whispering playfully
in Davis' ear)
Your buddy here don't like you too
much, don't you think? Seems he wants
you shot.

He straightens.

ANDER (CONT'D)
You'll shut the fuck up and comply,
lest you want half your buddy's head
as brain soup all over your shirt.
What word do you not understand in
the sentence?

Marshall just shakes his head.

ANDER (CONT'D)
And turn that radio off, while you're
at it. And no tricks, or I'll know.

Marshall turns the radio off.

DAVIS
Play along, Rich... We know they'll
live to regret it, even if they
don't. Yet.

All along, Alvaro remained petrified, not daring to speak or
interfere, or anything. He's way out of his league.

EXT. ARCHULETA MESA - NIGHT

The fire has dimmed. Coriz is still seated in the same
cross-legged position, a small, wooden box by his side.

He opens it and takes a handful of photos out of it.

Brooding and doleful, he scrolls slowly through the pack of
photos, showing him in much younger days, in company of a
short but pretty woman.

He reaches the end of the pack and lingers on a picture of
the woman, much older, sickly and thin but smiling, in a
wheelchair and with an IV line by her side.

"AUG. '79" is stamped over the photo in pale orange
characters.

The whole scene is suddenly illuminated in a bright, almost
blinding white light, for something like half a second.

He blinks rapidly and looks up. He can't make anything out. Perhaps some vague dark shape vanishing over the horizon...

The weather being cold but dry, there's no thunder. There wasn't even any noise.

He's been taken out of his private moment. He puts the photos back into their box, closes it and gets up.

He scans the sky, squinting.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Ander sits back down, with the gun still pointed at Davis.

Lares is dozing in his seat.

ANDER
Where are we at, aces?

Marshall ignores him, clicking his tongue.

ANDER (CONT'D)
(standing up and
bending over to him)
Well?

MARSHALL
New Mexico. Northwest corner.

ANDER
Nice... So not too long now.

Marshall grunts and shrugs.

DAVIS
Feel like sharing where we're going
now?

ANDER
Hmm, nah... Not yet. I know you for
being a treacherous bastard. No
offense.

Marshall's blood starts to boil. He turns around swiftly.

MARSHALL
Look here, moron, you may hold the
gun but you're way out of your
element, a landing takes a special
approach, depending on where it
happens, and --

A large, very powerful white light appears right in front of the plane, silencing him and all but blinding the two men in the front seats.

The white light is interspersed with colorful, short and shifting motifs.

MARSHALL (CONT'D)
What the fucking hell is this?

He shields his eyes with one hand and turns his head sideways.

The plane's engines stall.

Alvaro crosses himself, terrified. Panic is building up, he's drenched in sweat.

He darts forward, to the side door of the plane.

ALVARO
I want to get out! Let me out!

Lares jumps up from his seat after him.

LARES
What the hell is with him now?

Alvaro turns back and pushes him off, Lares stumbles back into the seat.

ALVARO
I can't stay in here! I have to get out!

Lares gets back up.

LARES
For fuck's sake, sit down!

Alvaro is near the door, his hand grabbing the opening mechanism.

Lares has no choice, and punches him in the neck from behind.

Alvaro falls over, tripping and hitting Marshall in the process, who in turn hits the yoke hard. Hard enough to make the plane veer and dive.

Lares grips Alvaro by the collar, turns him around and punches him in the face.

Alvaro is out like a fly, and Lares yanks him toward the back into one of the seats.

Marshall struggles to stabilize the plane, but the blinding light prevents him from getting any bearings from outside, and the instruments have gone crazy.

Ander grips Davis' seat tightly, the gun right to his head, trying not to be balloted by the plane's turbulence.

ANDER

Don't do anything you won't have time to regret.

Davis nods.

DAVIS

You just be careful with that trigger.

As suddenly as it came, the light vanishes. Marshall rubs his eyes. It's difficult to see anything outside after having been blinded by the harsh light.

ANDER

Any of your colleagues already after us?

DAVIS

No... No, we're basically dark, they wouldn't know where to find us.

Marshall yells.

MARSHALL

Jesus fucking Christ!

The plane stubbornly refuses to level, and its nose is still angled downwards, barely above the ground which is no more than 30 feet below them.

DAVIS

God... We can't make it, just try to land it.

MARSHALL

No shit!

Marshall tries with all his might to level up, and almost succeeds, but the landscape is looming speedily.

The plane hits the ground way too fast.

In a sound of tearing metal, the landing gear detaches itself from the plane.

EXT. ARCHULETA MESA - NIGHT

Coriz douses the dying fire with some water from a bottle.

As he makes to enter his tent, the horizon on his left brightens.

Coriz stands up, trying to make out what is producing the light, but sees nothing. Nothing but a bright, bright halo.

A few seconds later, though, the light just turns off, vanishing.

As the halo disappears, the buzzing from a small plane, close and low, takes over the silence in the distance.

It changes its tune as Coriz hears a shift in the engines' buzzing, as if it was nose-diving.

Moments later, a loud metal crash fills the air.

Coriz still can't spot the plane in the darkness.

Rushing to his backpack, he rummages inside it and takes a flashlight out.

He turns back hesitantly and looks in the direction the mayhem came from.

INT. PLANE - NIGHT

Marshall fights the commands, the plane almost out of control.

It bounces once, twice, before skidding on the harsh ground below, bumping into rocks this way and that, lurching forward, and finally coming to a stop.

Ander comes to himself first, realizing he's lost the gun in the turmoil.

He searches frantically around him as Davis wriggles to extract himself from his seat and belt.

As he moves his feet around, he kicks the gun back from under his seat in Ander's direction, who promptly grabs it and hits the side of Davis' head with it.

Davis groans and raises his arms in protection.

DAVIS
Stop... Dammit!

Ander shoves the gun's barrel against his neck and turns around.

ANDER
Who's still alive?

Lares coughs but gets up.

LARES
I'm good. The kid's gonna live, too,
I reckon.

Alvaro appears to be stoned, but alive and blinking if not kicking. His nose is bleeding.

Davis looks sideways at Marshall. And that's another story...

He's unconscious, his area of the plane having banged against something during the crash.

The bent and dented metal to his left is pinning half of him right into place. The cockpit glass has shattered on his side.

His left leg is twisted at a real awkward angle. His face is bleeding profusely.

ANDER
We have to get out. Raul, check the
rear door.

Lares tries the handle. The door swings a bit, but doesn't open. Several vicious kicks into it do the job.

LARES
We're good here.

ANDER
Right. Everybody out, right now.

Davis motions to Marshall.

DAVIS
What about him? We can't leave him
there.

Ander presses the barrel harder at the back of Davis' head.

ANDER

Out. We'll deal with him later.

Davis stands up, squeezes between the front seats, and walks to the rear, Ander right behind him with the gun to his head.

The others have exited the plane, waiting for them to step out.

EXT. ARCHULETA MESA - NIGHT

Coriz ambles down the hill, stepping around protruding stones that are as many ankle traps on the way.

The flashlight's beam helps negotiating the path before him.

Halfway down, as he stands squinting to try and spot the plane, a dull throbbing grows louder by the second.

Thinking fast and sensing trouble, Coriz crouches in hiding behind some scrubs, turning the flashlight off.

Against the almost black sky and moonlight, three choppers detach themselves, approaching in the distance, flying toward the source of the noise he heard.

EXT. NIGHT - OUTSIDE THE PLANE

LARES

Shit, man... That was something. What do we do with the nose candy?

Nobody feels like answering.

LARES (CONT'D)

Fucking shit.

ANDER

Shut up!

He puts his finger to his lips, motioning for everyone to be quiet.

He frowns, concentrating, then turns quickly to his left, shoving Davis in that direction as well, the gun still on him.

Approaching rapidly, a low throbbing makes them all react.

He stares in front of him at the light. It's quite different from what got to them earlier.

EXT. SLOPE - NIGHT

They observe the chopper hovering in front of the plane's cockpit. The other two circle the rest of the carcass.

The light beam goes off.

The chopper descends and hovers 7 feet above ground, its side door opening.

THREE MEN, black-clad, wearing unusual looking apparatus and goggles over ski-masks, all sporting automatic rifles, jump out and approach the plane.

They don't have any insignia or rank visible.

EXT. NEAR THE PLANE - NIGHT

One of them looks through the cockpit, trains his rifle on the pilot.

Marshall signals to him through the half-shattered glass, saying something that's drowned by the noise.

The other two men inspect the plane's carcass and what's inside, opening the rear door.

One of them enters the plane, exits, then motions to the closest helicopter. He raises his fingers one by one, counting to four.

The three men then go back to the chopper they came from, climbing back up into it.

EXT. SLOPE - NIGHT

LARES

What the fuck are they doing?

The three choppers gain altitude simultaneously, then hover again 60 feet above the crashed plane.

The side door of the one directly above it opens, and a MAN, dressed up like the others, takes something from inside.

ANDER

Oh... Man.

It's a rotund device, looking like it can hold approximately a gallon. The man drops it directly onto the plane, which it hits in a metallic clang.

An enormous flame engulfs the plane as soon as the device hits it. It has a strange color, between orange and blue.

Hair-rising screams erupt from the plane, getting higher in intensity and pitch as Marshall is cooked alive within the carcass.

Disturbed but wary, Lares puts his hand firmly over Alvaro's mouth.

The wailing from the plane finally gets weaker and stops.

LARES

Fuck, man... The Blanca... Seems no one's getting rich tonight.

ANDER

Shut up.

Ander sees the choppers separate.

One flies away from the plane's burning remains in the direction immediately opposite from them, another to the left of the carcass, and the last one to its right.

They all cruise at low speed.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Who the hell are these guys?

(he frowns and
squints)

They're in a search pattern...

DAVIS

Yeah...

LARES

How? They're flying dark.

Davis looks down, lost in thoughts. He looks up sharply.

DAVIS

The counting... How could they know Richard wasn't alone?

(he pauses)

Their gear! They have heat sensors. We've got to move!

ANDER

The heat from the seats... You're right. Up. Up! All of you run.

They all get up and trot along the slope in an up and right direction.

Lares, the last in the queue, looks back as he runs, watching for the choppers' return.

The flight patterns begun as wide circles of the area are now getting narrower.

LARES

Guys, move. Really, move. They're coming back in not too long.

He places a hand in Alvaro's back and shoves him forward.

ALVARO

Yes, okay, okay. I'm moving!

Alvaro sweats profusely, being not quite far from panic again.

ANDER

Both of you shut up! Run.

Their way gets blocked by some large boulders, and they climb further up to go around them.

EXT. NEAR THE TENT - NIGHT

They run in a sort of flat clearing, where an empty, small tent has been erected, with the remnants of a recent fire in front of it.

Their level of alertness goes up a few notches.

ANDER

Raul, look around. This belongs to someone not too far away.

Lares runs off in a direction, as Ander presses the gun's barrel into Davis' neck.

ANDER (CONT'D)

On the ground.

Davis sits down. Without being asked, Alvaro does the same.

EXT. ARCHULETA MESA - NIGHT.

From his hiding place behind a rock, Coriz sees the men near his tent.

He searches his trousers' pockets, silently curses as the keys to his car aren't there.

He sees his jacket right at the entrance of his tent. That's where he has to get.

Crab-like, he stealthily moves sideways to try and circle around the group.

He gets closer, unnoticed. He's close enough to actually make a run for it.

That's before a iron grip seizes his neck, and a large, cold knife is pressed hard against his throat.

He hears a coarse laugh from behind him.

LARES
Hey there, Geronimo.

EXT. NEAR THE TENT - NIGHT

Davis turns around, in the direction of the helicopters' sound. Though not yet in the area, they sound dangerously close.

DAVIS
We don't have much time. They'll be around here soon.

ANDER
I know.

From behind him, Ander hears footsteps.

LARES (O.S.)
Yahoo!

At first Ander sees a man he doesn't know, a tall, elderly Native American, sporting one arm around his neck terminated by a knife.

Lares beams a stupid smile right behind him.

LARES
Look what I found.

Ander takes a step back from Davis, so as to cover more ground with the gun.

Lares shoves the man before him until he stands by the tent. He brandishes Coriz' flashlight, taking it out of his back pocket.

LARES (CONT'D)

That can come in handy as well.

Ander takes the flashlight and puts it in his own pocket.

ANDER

Nice catch.

Coriz doesn't move, just stares at him.

ANDER (CONT'D)

What are you doing in here?

Coriz doesn't say a word.

LARES

You'll fucking answer him.

He makes to deliver a punch to the man's face, but Coriz darts at the last moment, and the vicious blow hits his shoulder, hard enough to make him fall.

Lares immediately goes down and straddles him.

As he prepares to deliver another punishing blow to the man's face, he's yanked backward, Ander seizing his shirt's collar, making him land on his back beside Coriz.

Ander stands still above him, contempt and cold anger in his eyes.

ANDER

Enough.

They stare at each other. Lares seems to make up his mind, and knows better than to pick this fight and lose it.

LARES

Yeah well... Whatever.

He gets up and brushes some dirt off his pants.

Ander bends down to the older man, extending a hand. Instinctively, Coriz crosses his arms above his head in protection.

ANDER
It's okay, I won't hit you.

He grabs one of the man's arms, pulls him up and helps him to his feet, until he's facing him.

ANDER (CONT'D)
So. What's your name, pops?

Coriz hesitates a couple of seconds.

CORIZ
I am John Coriz.

ANDER
John Coriz, you understand that the last thing I need is to hurt you?

Coriz nods cautiously.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Good... So I beg of you, do not force my hand and make me do it. Okay? I'd truly hate it.

CORIZ
Yes... Okay.

Ander slaps him lightly on the shoulder, smiling.

ANDER
Share with me where we are, John Coriz. We just crashed here, didn't have time to tour the tourist spots, which I'm sure are numerous.

CORIZ
The nearest town is Dulce. Where I live. It's on our land, Jicarilla reserve...

ANDER
Middle of nowhere... Great. No offense.

CORIZ
It's fine.

ANDER
You alone in here?

Coriz nods.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Okay. We have to move now.

Coriz seems hesitant.

ANDER (CONT'D)
If you didn't get that yet, the men
in these choppers, they will not
discriminate. They'll mince some old
redskin to meat just as they will
chop up pale faces to pieces.

The man looks troubled, nods.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Alright, we have to move up, and
quickly. The bastards are closing in.

Ander considers the scene.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Alvaro, roll up the tent and hide it.
Hurry.

Alvaro goes to the tent and clumsily dismantles it. He picks up the wooden box and shoves it inside. He then rolls up the whole package.

He looks around, shrugs, then hides it in the midst of dense wild scrubs nearby.

ANDER (CONT'D)
We go up.

He points upward, to the higher, rockier parts of the hills. The others start in that direction.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Davis, you wait for me. Don't you
fucking move.

He turns to Coriz and extends his arm toward the rest of them.

ANDER (CONT'D)
If you please.

CORIZ
I need my jacket... Cold at night
around here.

Ander, wearing only a shirt, appreciates his point.

ANDER
I get you. Grab it and let's go. Not
before I take a look though.

Coriz fetches the leather jacket from the ground, lets Ander pat it for any weapon, then puts it on. He proceeds in the direction of the other men, up ahead.

Ander motions to Davis to get up and walk.

EXT. ARCHULETA MESA - NIGHT

As they progress up the rocky hill, the sound of helicopters seems to grow fainter.

The respite is short lived.

Seconds later they make out one of the choppers approaching the vicinity, the throbbing from the engines swelling fast.

The beam of light from the copter appears, illuminating the remnants of the fire.

The machine lowers its altitude, and the side door opens.

FOUR MEN, dressed exactly like their colleagues from a moment ago, jump out, and disperse around the makeshift fire and clearing.

ANDER
(whispering)
Up! Up! Up!

He presses Davis' back who in turn pushes Coriz immediately in front of him.

They all break into a trot up the hill, until they meet a very vertical, hard rock cliff. A narrow dirt path borders it, in a straight horizontal line following the rock face.

LARES
Crap... There's nowhere to go from
here!

ANDER
Keep walking. To your right. Move.

Lares shakes his head but proceeds along the path.

They speed up, but the terrain is quite treacherous, and the path precarious, bordered by a steep ravine.

The sound of the helicopter recedes in the distance.

As he half walks, half trots forward, Lares registers something from the corner of his eye.

Some part of the rock did look darker than the rest of it.

LARES

Wait.

He motions for the others to stop, backtracks a few steps.

He waves to Ander.

LARES (CONT'D)

Give me the flashlight.

ANDER

You nuts? You turn that on half a second, we're dead the next minute.

LARES

There's something there.

He points vaguely at the rocky cliff.

LARES (CONT'D)

It looked like an opening. Cave or something.

ANDER

Where?

Lares scans the wall.

LARES

(pointing)

There! Look...

Ander comes closer to the spot, runs his hand alongside it, finding out it isn't met by rock, but emptiness at least as far as his arm can go.

ANDER

Damn, you're right... Everybody stay put.

He reaches to his back pocket, takes the flashlight out, looking behind him a second, as a reflex.

He looks back at Lares.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Cover it with your hand, entirely,
and then only switch it on.

Lares takes the flashlight, presses it hard against his left palm, then pushes the switch.

His hand glows unnaturally in the dark, as he gets closer to what he thinks he saw.

Deliberately slowly, he lets a tiny sliver of light escape, revealing a narrow aperture in the rock, barely 4 feet in width, and about 6 feet in height.

A cave's entrance.

LARES
See? Told ya.

ANDER
Nice find. That's where we wanna be.

LARES
Not too sure about that. So we go in there and become trapped like fucking rabbits? I say we run for it and go on.

ANDER
If they do spot us, we make a perfect target out there in the open on that cliff. And spot us they will. Did you see these guys? Professionals. Deadly fucks. They won't miss.

LARES
That's the whole fucking point! We have to get going. Now.

Ander grinds his teeth.

ANDER
You go inside and check it out, tell us what's in there, exit or such. You have one minute.

After the briefest of hesitations, Lares enters the space, turns on the flashlight and disappears inside.

DAVIS
Now what?...

Coriz cautiously speaks up.

CORIZ

I believe we should get away from there. This cave is no good... I have my truck not too far. On the other side of the Mesa.

ANDER

Interesting tidbit of information, John Coriz. Where exactly is it? We're kind of lost, you see.

CORIZ

I am not. This --

Davis silences him with a brusque gesture of the hand.

DAVIS

(whispering)

Shut up!

For a handful of seconds, the wind has abated, and in the near quiet, they hear voices drifting in their direction.

They sound way too close for comfort.

Ander puts a finger to his lips, silencing everyone, and motions urgently to the entrance of the cave. They all slip inside in a hurry.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

It is pitch dark.

A tiny dot of light dances at the far back of the cave.

The dot grows larger, and Lares calls out.

LARES

I heard noise. I didn't expect you'd enter here yet.

ANDER

Change of plans. They're getting close. Found another exit? Anything?

LARES

Hell, no. I barely was in here.

ANDER

Okay, go, take the lead and light the way.

LARES

Alright.

Ander looks around. The shape of the cavern is surprisingly regular, almost perfectly cylindrical. Unusual geology.

They follow Lares deeper in the cave, the only sound being their collective shuffling.

After a short distance, the cavern veers to the left. Lares turns and disappears behind the corner.

They stop as they hear him react in surprise.

ANDER

Raul. Talk to me.

From behind the corner, Lares calls out.

LARES

Hey... Well, there's... It's strange.
Come over and see.

ANDER

Dangerous?

Lares barks a short laugh.

LARES

No, dude, just weird. As in
unexpected.

Ander motions to the others.

ANDER

Move forward. I'll feel safer behind
that wall where they can't spot us
from the entrance.

He grabs Davis' sleeve.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Walk on.

NEAR THE MESH

They both go past the others and find Lares standing before a black metallic wire mesh, with gaps spaced an inch apart, roughly 8 feet high and 6 feet wide.

It's screwed into a metal frame, embedded in the rock around it.

Behind the mesh, a single, large fan about 10 feet in diameter, set in a perfectly flat, spotless concrete slab, rotates lazily.

ANDER

Fuck me...

He takes a step back, rips on a loose stone on the floor and almost falls.

As he tries to stabilize, he shoves his right hand, and its gun prolongation, right into Davis' chest.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Oopsie.

Davis pushes the gun away.

DAVIS

Look... We're screwed. All of us. The stuff is in ashes out there. There's no money to be made anymore. So why don't you give it a rest, and put that away for the moment? Hmm?

Ander bites his lower lip, staring at him.

ANDER

Fair enough.

He shoves the gun into his pants.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Though you try anything funny, it comes out in a hurry and you two are going to have a real intimate conversation. Getting my drift?

Davis rolls his eyes and nods.

Ander turns around.

ANDER (CONT'D)

John Coriz, that goes for you too.

He turns to face the mesh again, takes the flashlight from Lares.

He circles the beam around the fan, raises it to the wall in front of them beyond the mesh, then sideways.

The front and left side are pure solid rock. Nothing unusual. And, as it happens, the right one as well.

Or so it appears. At first he takes no notice of it, but he trains the beam again and scans the base of right wall more carefully.

Close to the fan, a roundish aperture opens up on what looks like the beginning of a ladder.

Ander whistles.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Bit of luck there.

Lares and Davis see it too.

LARES
Yeah... But.

He waves at the mesh.

Ander examines the mesh's corners. Large screws maintain it in place.

ANDER
Look here.

He points at them. He then pulls and pushes at the mesh, but the thing barely makes a sound, nor moves. It's quite tough.

LARES
Er... And?

ANDER
And, you've got that Bowie knife of yours.

LARES
Dude, get real. It won't cut through that.

Ander glares at him as if he were retarded.

ANDER
No shit, genius. But just maybe you can have at those screws here and see what happens. Eh?

LARES
Man, you want us to go through there? To where?

ANDER

Anywhere but here. We stay here, our collective life expectancy's going to be drastically shortened.

CORIZ

We should backtrack... Make it to the truck.

DAVIS

Yeah we'd better.

Ander turns around swiftly.

ANDER

I ain't setting up a debate here. Is that clear for everyone?

Everybody shuts up. Alvaro looks longingly at the turn leading to the cave's exit.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Raul, try our luck on those screws. I'll light you up.

LARES

Just can't wait for that.

ANDER

Alvaro... You panic one more time, I'll put a couple of bullets in your brain. You understand me, muchacho?

The youngster starts to sweat, but nods vigorously.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Alright.

He turns back and provides light for Lares to work on the screws.

Lares draws out his knife, crouches, inserts its tip inside the cross of the first screw, grunts, forces it a bit more until the screw starts turning.

LARES

It's giving...

(in a louder voice)

If you're stupid again I'll complete the picture by cutting your balls off, kid. With this here mighty knife. That's before he shoots you.

Alvaro all but stops breathing at that.

Ander bends over to Lares.

ANDER

So?

Lares turns around, a beaming smile on his lips.

He brandishes a large, black screw, holding it with two fingers. He opens them and the screw falls to the ground.

LARES

One down, patron.

Ander slaps him enthusiastically on the shoulder.

ANDER

I'd always known you were good at something. Keep at it.

LARES

Yeah, I love you too, man.

Lares moves over to the other lower screw, and removes it.

He straightens up, letting the second screw fall, and looks up.

LARES (CONT'D)

Davis. Come here.

Davis raises an eyebrow, walks a couple of steps in his direction.

LARES (CONT'D)

Crouch.

DAVIS

What?

LARES

Crouch, for fuck's sake.

Ander nods at Davis, who then crouches.

Lares straddles his shoulders, his groin pressing on the back of Davis' head.

LARES (CONT'D)

Rise.

Davis puffs as he does his best to stand up without falling with the unwanted and heavy weight.

LARES (CONT'D)
Bit to your left.
(Davis steps sideways)
Stop.

Lares proceeds to unfasten the screw, level with it now.

He removes it, directs Davis to the other side, and takes the last screw off, maintaining the mesh in place with his palm as Davis lowers him down.

LARES (CONT'D)
Fuck... It's heavy. Alvaro! Lend a
hand here. Davis, in the middle.

All three press against the mesh and lower it gently on the ground. Lares picks up all four screws and pocket them.

From the cave's entrance, they hear crackling and indistinct voices, both live and coming from a radio or walkie. They seem to be stationary.

They barely dare to take a breath, much less move or speak.

The voices get weaker in volume, moving away from the cave.

Ander exhales loudly, and turns around to the opening.

ON THE PLATFORM

Ander steps on the concrete flat platform, sweeping the beam of light over it.

The fan may spin slowly, but immediately below it is another mesh, of the same kind they just removed. There's no dismantling that one.

Ander examines the round hole at the right of the slab. It is indeed opening on a metal ladder.

Davis approaches from behind, having Ander doing a swift about-face, his hand going instinctively to the gun at his belt.

Davis raises both hands casually, puts them down again.

DAVIS
What's down there?

Ander shakes his head.

ANDER
Was just about to find out.

He points the beam downward through the hole, Davis looking over his shoulder.

The pit appears bottomless. Dozens and dozens of metal rungs shrink as far as the eye can see, or at least as far as the beam will light down.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Wow...

Davis arches his eyebrows. Impressive indeed.

Lares joins them.

LARES
Damn... And here I was believin'
there was no way to go but up.

He spits.

LARES (CONT'D)
No way I'm going down to hell. Bit
too early.

ANDER
We have no choice but down, buddy.
They're still very much out there.

He points in the direction of the cave's entrance.

ANDER (CONT'D)
You can also bet they'll find us in
here. If they didn't this time, then
they will the next.

LARES
Yeah? And what kind of stuff we gonna
find down there? Perhaps it's blowing
out toxic shit and we're breathing it
right now!

ANDER
(seizing him by the
collar)
Lower your voice, dammit. Do you feel
any breeze? It's an intake, you
idiot. It takes air in, not out.

Ander releases him in a brusque gesture.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Down we go.

Coriz and Alvaro are still on the other side of the taken down fence.

Ander motions to them.

ANDER (CONT'D)
You two, come over here.

They join the others. The space's becoming cramped in there.

Ander bends down to examine one of the holes the screws came from. Nods to himself.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Good. You guys.
(pointing at Alvaro
and Davis as he
stands up)
Grab that thing and pull it up. John
Coriz, you help them as well.

He waves to the fallen mesh on the other side.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Pull it up and do your best to align
the screw holes. Quickly.
(he turns sideways)
Raul, wave your magic wand again. We
cover up nicely enough, they'll never
know we were here.

The three men reach out to the metal mesh, and, grunting, pull it back up.

After a brief struggle with the metal piece, they hold it steady enough for Lares to screw it back as it was.

He proceeds, having Davis go through the same motions for the upper screws, leaving the mesh tightly held in place again.

Ander looks back at the hole, hesitates, takes a couple of breath.

ANDER (CONT'D)
OK. I'll go first and light the way.

He looks back at the others.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Raul, you'll go in last, alright?

Lares nods.

Ander sits beside the aperture, puts his feet on the rungs, and starts descending.

INT. LADDER SHAFT - NIGHT

ANDER
Davis next!

He waits for Davis to appear at the top of the hole, and resumes his descent.

The troop follows suit, with Lares closing it as decided.

Soon after Lares begins to descend, he hears a very low, very faint rumbling.

LARES
Volker! Light up here a sec.

ANDER
Everyone stops.

Ander pauses, wraps one arm around the rung next to him, and beams the light up with the other.

Just above Lares, almost noiselessly from the opposite wall, a thick slab of smooth, undefined material slides across the whole area, covering both ladder aperture and fan space.

In a handful of seconds, the space is totally sealed off from the outside.

All at once, the men wow and gasp.

LARES
Shit, what's that?

Lares rapidly climbs up again, tries to press against the slab. It doesn't budge at all.

He grunts and tries again, trying to pull it back somehow, with the same lack of success.

LARES (CONT'D)
Shit... This is locked alright.

Frowning, though, he runs his hand along the surface a couple of time.

LARES (CONT'D)

Damn...

ANDER

What?

LARES

Nothing. I don't know... It feels.. Weird.

ANDER

How do you mean?

LARES

Forget it. Damn thing's here to stay. There's no going back up through here.

Ander lowers the beam of light at his level, looks behind the ladder. A small photoelectric cell shines back at him.

ANDER

Seems I triggered it cutting off a photo cell. Yeah, well... Way I see it, nobody's going through from the other side either, so just as well. Let's move.

LARES

And that's it? That's all?

ANDER

That's all what? You want what? That I start chanting for that to open? We move on.

LARES

What the...?

But Ander isn't listening and is already scaling down again, followed by Davis, Coriz and Alvaro.

Lares follows, grunting unhappily.

The descent is perilous in the semi darkness.

Eventually they reach the bottom of the ladder, stepping onto another concrete platform, large enough so that they can all stand on it with room to spare.

INT. LOWER LADDER PLATFORM - NIGHT

Lares comes in last, sighing loudly.

LARES
Yeah... So, what now?

Ander explores the space with the flashlight.

A wall of concrete 10 feet high seals up the space where the ventilation shaft continues down.

At the end of the platform, a black metal closed door with a handle is the only exit.

Ander goes to the door, tentatively tries the handle.

The door opens with a grating, rusty sound.

Behind it, a neglected, empty tool shack lit with a single weak overhead bulb awaits them. They enter, Ander leading ahead.

INT. TOOL SHACK - NIGHT

Two old wooden benches line up the left and right walls. A dirty rag and a pair of thick black, oily gloves are strewn on the left one.

Another black door, this one solid, clean and sturdy-looking faces them at the other end of the shack.

It has no handle, just a silver-looking round knob to pull it open.

To the door's right side, a black square device with a glowing red LED is fixed to the wall.

Ander tries to pull on the ball-like protuberance, but the door doesn't budge in any way. He examines the nearby device on the wall.

ANDER
Security card reader of some kind.
We're screwed.

Davis walks past him and inspects the reader.

DAVIS
Anyone smoking?

Ander frowns.

ANDER

Huh?

DAVIS

Does any of you smoke?

Coriz steps forward.

CORIZ

I do.

DAVIS

Give me your lighter, please.

Coriz produces a silver Zippo lighter and gives it to Davis.

Davis crouches beneath the device, and holds the lighter a few inches below the base of the component.

He ignites the Zippo, spawning a dancing blue-yellow flame.

A couple of seconds after, the device clicks softly, and the LED goes from red to green.

ANDER

Son of a bitch...

He bursts out laughing and looks at Davis.

ANDER (CONT'D)

What the hell was that trick?

Davis winks, giving the lighter back to Coriz.

DAVIS

Standard card readers, we have those at some CIA facilities. Normally, in case of a fire, they would lock the doors as a security feature, so that it doesn't propagate. The first batch though had that upside down. Unlocked the doors when the reader sensed heat. We complained about that, and eventually they fixed it. I guess they didn't bother to replace the ones in here. It was worth a try.

ANDER

I see... Nice one, agent. Let's just hope we don't find any guys in black behind that door.

He positions himself on the opening side of the door, against the wall, and draws out his gun.

Davis, staying behind the door, grabs the silver-like ball, pulls softly, and the door opens a few inches, without a sound.

Gun in hand, Ander takes a quick glance through the opening, recoiling almost immediately to the safety of the wall.

No reaction or sound of any kind from the other side.

He takes a longer peek this time, surveying the surroundings.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Appears clear.

Davis opens the door of its fullest.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

They step into a wide oval hall illuminated with bright, sun-like light, harsh after the semi-darkness they're coming from.

The place is spotlessly clean, and the floor, walls and ceiling are uniformly white.

LARES
Man... I'll hire whoever does the
cleaning in here.

ANDER
Damn... This is huge. Where the hell
are we?

They all squint as they look around.

Lares freezes, startled.

LARES
Guys!

He points to a camera mounted on one of the walls from a branching corridor, directed at him, angled down.

Everyone tenses, but Davis casually walks up to the camera. He waves in front of it. No optics whirring or such.

DAVIS
It's off. It's not working.

ANDER

You sure?

DAVIS

Yes. There would be a red dot if it was, anyway.

LARES

Damn... I thought we'd had it.

He wanders off, venturing into one of the side corridors that dart out from the place, some as wide as city streets.

Davis, while turning back to the others, stops abruptly.

On the opposite wall from the camera, just before the corridor slightly curves, a large inscription in huge black characters stands out.

"TA-D1 / DSD-3".

Ander notices Davis' expression, and goes up to him.

ANDER

Something the matter?

Davis wants to sound casual.

DAVIS

Hmm, nope. Was just looking at that.

He points to the writing on the wall.

ANDER

TA-D1... What the heck does that mean?

Davis pouts, shrugs.

ANDER (CONT'D)

DSD-3. Very explicit as well. Any clues?

DAVIS

(shaking his head
slowly)

Nope.

He still, however, stares fixedly at the acronyms. He's perspiring and breathing harder than he should.

ANDER

You OK, dude?

The corridor is otherwise spotless.

Davis tries the door. Closed. There's a smear of blood at the bottom of it, in shape of a hand. A complete one.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Whoever this belonged to was trying
to hide, or escape. Not fast
enough...

Ander gives him a stare.

ANDER
Let's go back to the hall.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Alvaro and Coriz wait for them at the edge of the corridor, cautiously looking at the bloody scene from afar.

DAVIS
I suggest we take the opposite
direction of that.

LARES
Hell yes. That was creepy.

Ander points to the corridor facing the one they came from.

ANDER
Let's go. And everybody pays
attention.

Lares snorts.

ANDER (CONT'D)
You too, John Coriz. Watch our backs.

Coriz raises his eyebrows at the incongruity.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

In the passageway, all doors are closed and locked as they try to open them as they go. No labels, no signs, nothing.

The corridor comes to an end, with two others branching from it left and right. Dead cameras are mounted on the walls.

They stop, looking in both directions.

Alvaro looks in the distance and frowns.

ALVARO
Why is the wall black there?

ANDER
Where?

Alvaro points to the left.

At a distance, standing out once spotted them, black stains, like burns, on the wall facing them, contrast with the vivid white.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Let's go see why.

INT. LEFT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Getting close to the spot, they see the stains are immediately adjacent to a door.

It too has some extensive burns-like marks, and is partly caved in as well.

LARES
Same shit, same day.

Ander motions for him to shut up.

He examines the door.

The knob is bent at an awkward angle. There's no repeating that feat of the door-opening tandem this time.

He pauses, then pounds loudly on the door once, having the others tense immediately, ready for anything.

But there isn't any kind of reaction behind it that they can hear.

Davis notices something. He raises an arm.

DAVIS
Wait.

He rubs against the the middle of the door with the sleeve of his jacket. The fabric blackens quickly, revealing a plaque on the door.

"SECURITY ARSENAL / MESS".

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Right. So much for "security",
considering.

Ander gives a hard kick to the knob, which falls to the floor, its metallic clang resonating in the space around them.

Another kick has the door creaking open on its deformed hinges.

They all put their hands to their noses and mouths, groaning.

LARES
Hell, what's that smell?

Davis makes a face, removes his hand from his face.

DAVIS
Death.

He peers inside the room.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Doesn't seem to be anybody in there.

He steps inside, Ander and Lares following.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - NIGHT

The room has lockers on three sides; the fourth, on the left wall, is an armory shelf, full of shotguns.

On closer inspection, the shotguns are in a strange shape.

ANDER
Look... How did they end up that way?

DAVIS
Dunno... It's as if the barrels
were... Melted?

The barrels of the shotguns are all bizarrely warped.

Davis and Ander look at each other in incomprehension.

INT. LEFT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Alvaro looks at Coriz nervously, hesitant to address the senior man.

ALVARO
We should follow them?

Coriz looks at the door with a somber expression, frowning, then back at Alvaro.

CORIZ
There's no reason why you should.
There's nothing for you to see
inside. They brought us here, let
them deal with the downsides.

Alvaro isn't too sure whether he should respond or not.

CORIZ (CONT'D)
But there's something I have to find
out. You will stay here.

ALVARO
Ah... Alone?

Coriz puts a hand on the young man's shoulder and looks around.

CORIZ
Don't worry. I think there is no one
but us around here.

Alvaro nods, but swallows hard.

INT. SECURITY ROOM - NIGHT

They pace the room, looking around. Ander tries a couple of lockers, but they're locked.

Beyond the lockers on the right side, Davis notices a door, marked "Mess".

He pads to it, the others in tow.

LARES
Yuck... Smell's stronger over here.

Ander has a silent conversation with Davis, who nods.

Ander actions the knob, gun in hand.

They step inside as soon as the door open.

INT. MESS - NIGHT

All three freeze as one.

They stare transfixed at the middle of the room.

In the empty space, what looks like 20 or 30 corpses have been thrown one atop the other.

They all wear the same clothes: dark orange/red coveralls, with black combat boots.

The coveralls all sport the same insignia, an inverted triangle, with a capital "T", in flowery font, inside it.

They are already reddish and blistering from the decomposition process.

All present the same sort of trauma, a specific head wound.

Each of them has had a chunk of the face and skull carved out, leaving the wound cauterized. There's no sign of blood anywhere near them.

The wounds have deformed the heads at various places; some having the upper part of the cranium destroyed, others at the base of the neck upwards.

At last Davis bends down and takes a closer look.

DAVIS

They have been melted as well.
Literally...

LARES

Man, there's been some serious head-butting in here.

Davis gingerly fingers the border of one of the wounds, on the closest corpse.

DAVIS

It's hardened. Burned solid.

Lares spits as Coriz appears behind him, peering inside the room.

Davis removes a plastic holder, with a card inside, from the corpse he was examining, then stands up.

He looks at the card, showing a photo of the man, plus the insignia present on his coverall uniform.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
"R.W. Wiley, Section D, Umbra 7".

ANDER
And that is?

DAVIS
(pauses briefly)
Never heard of it.

He seems to collect himself.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
(quietly, still
looking at the card)
We have to get out of here at our
earliest convenience.

ANDER
You're very perceptive.

Ander stares at him, then turns around and leaves. Davis
nods absently to himself.

He pockets the card and leaves the room as well.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Ander is pacing back and forth, his hands joined behind his
head.

He stops in front of Lares, seated on the floor.

Lares takes a small metal box from his trousers' pocket,
opens it. It's brimming with cocaine.

He forms a long line on the floor, bends over, absorbs it in
one huge sniff.

ANDER
Really? You're really doing that now,
here?

LARES
(snorting loudly)
Shut up. Just, shut up. Leave me
alone.

Lares puts the box back in his pocket.

Davis steps out of the room. Ander looks at him from head to
toe, as if appraising him.

ANDER
Found something else, agent?

Davis shakes his head, his expression unreadable.

Ander bites his lower lips, makes a smacking sound.

ANDER (CONT'D)
We have to have a plan. We can't just wander around.

DAVIS
Agreed.

A pause.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
We're at the edge of this place, I believe. Where we came from. And it looks to be concentric-designed.

ANDER
Right... The point being?

DAVIS
Chances are that the closest we get to the center, or the hub maybe, the more we might find something useful, perhaps even an exit. Or a map. Anything.

Ander considers it.

ANDER
Possibly... It sort of makes sense. But, what if not?

DAVIS
Time for plan B, I suppose.

ANDER
Which is what?

DAVIS
I don't have the slightest idea.

Ander laughs a short dry laugh.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
But maybe we can also find more about what happened in here on the way.

ANDER
Maybe... Let's get going.

They walk further down the corridor, the tension palpable in each of their steps.

A smaller passage opens to their left.

DAVIS
We turn here. It'll take us closer to the center. If there is one.

Nobody says anything, and they turn left.

INT. SMALL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

They pass by several open doors, leading to rooms that look like regular offices, all deserted.

A few of them look like work was interrupted in a hurry and left as is, some even with full coffee cups on their desks.

The corridor narrows down further and veers slightly to the right. They're entering a new section.

INT. DNA CORRIDOR - NIGHT

There's a bio-hazard sign on the wall, as well as a black writing under it, "DNA LABS".

In that part of the complex, all doors have card readers, without knobs nor handles, and all of them are closed.

LARES
Er... What's "DNA"?

ANDER
(without turning back)
"Do Not Ask".

LARES
Really? How about "Dumb Northern American"?

Ander stops, without turning around.

ANDER
Maybe you should sniff less, moron.
Know what I'm sayin'?

Lares is agitated.

LARES

Yeah, whatever, let's go, let's go.

Davis stares in the direction they're going.

DAVIS

It seems there's another hall at the end of this.

Ander squints, looks ahead.

ANDER

Seems brighter somehow.

DAVIS

Precisely. Because it's a larger space.

They speed up to it, and indeed walk into the same sort of oval hall as the first one, though quite a bit larger. This one's almost as large as football field.

INT. LARGE HALL - NIGHT

At its center, what first looks like a wide support column has a door breaking its regularity.

Above it, "SECURITY HUB" is written in big black bold letters.

From the hall, in addition to the modestly sized passageway they're coming from, three wide corridors go off in different directions.

The central column has labels and directional arrows to each of the corridors.

They read "SHUTTLES -> LOS ALAMOS", "MCC", "XFER 1 - XFER 2", and "DNA LABS", pointing to where they came from.

On the floor of the "shuttles" corridor, fat drops of dried blood lead up to the hall and then the security hub's door.

Ander's eyes go back and forth between that corridor and the door.

ANDER

Let's try to open that door.

LARES

Yeah. Not sure a kick will do it this time. Boss.

Ander ignores him.

Davis walks up to the reader beside the door.

This model looks quite different than the first one they encountered, and there's no fire-tricking this one.

Davis waves the card he retrieved from the dead man in front of the reader. Nothing happens.

He frowns. What?

He tries again, this time pressing the card against the device.

The door slides open in silence.

Davis notices the blood drops continuing inside.

The door starts closing again, and he puts a hand against it as a reflex, making it slide back.

DAVIS

Are you all stoned or what?

Ander snaps out of it.

ANDER

You heard the man. Let's go.

Looking nervously around them as they proceed, they enter the room, Davis last as he releases the door, which shuts behind them.

INT. SECURITY HUB - NIGHT

It's a spacious room, furnished with several wide desks with video monitors on them, all off.

File cabinets line up the walls.

A large, open cupboard contains personal communication gear, some binders, as well as other, unfamiliar devices.

Papers are strewn on the floor, chairs are tumbled over. It's a mess.

Davis follows the blood stains with his eyes, leading to a desk at the back of the room.

As he cranes his head to get a better look, he sees a foot sticking out from behind the desk. A huge bloodstain spoils the wall behind the desk.

He walks up to it and peers behind.

DAVIS
I'll be damned.

Ander joins him.

Behind the desk, the body of a MAN, in a suit and tie, lies on the floor. Alvaro, peering from behind, gasps audibly.

The top third of the man's skull is missing, his lower jaw is also shattered. Entry and exit wounds from a bullet.

He holds a large gun in his right hand. The floor around him is a dried pool of blood, brain matter and bones.

ANDER
This one offed himself...

Davis nods. He frowns.

DAVIS
Look at his leg.

The right thigh of the man, apparent through his torn trousers, looks like it's been ripped through almost to the bone, the muscles apparent.

The tissue the man tied around it is all blackened with dried blood, and has fallen off beside the leg.

ANDER
He was a big honcho, that one, all suited up and all.

DAVIS
Yep... Yet he ended up here. Thinking he was safe, apparently.

ANDER
He was, for all we know... After all he didn't end up like the others we found.

DAVIS
Good point.

Davis looks at the desk. He starts searching through various paper stacks left on it.

He notices a pad, and a pen beside it. The first page is filled up almost entirely. He tears it away and reads it.

ANDER
So? That his will?

DAVIS
Wait...
(he scans the text
some more)
Damn. Listen to that.

All gather around him.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
"Protocol breach on 9/14, 1908 hours.
Armed personnel in off-limits Level 5
triggered hostile response
immediately. Collaboration halted."

LARES
9/14? That's a week ago.

ANDER
Continue.

DAVIS
"Evacuation through shuttles. Last
count was 237 evacuated. 66 dead, 21
missing, not including me."

LARES
66?... We didn't see that many. Where
are the others?

ANDER
Just let him finish.

Davis looks up at them in turn, then back at the sheet.

DAVIS
"Not all specimens terminated, event
too sudden for proper disposal,
Maximum Containment Corridor off-
limits. Security system disrupted.
All communications down as well.
Tried to reach the shuttles, but was
too late, they're now compromised.
While retreating, encountered
opponents and think I disposed of
them, but can't be sure. Lower
facility now quarantined and sealed
off."

The silence is heavy for a few seconds.

ANDER
...anything else?

DAVIS
"Good luck to next shift team, if
there ever is one, for cleaning up
the mess. William Glass."

Ander takes this in, looking at Davis. Who, in the meantime,
has resumed trying to find more clues on the desk.

He pays no attention as Ander crouches beside the corpse,
and searches it.

Davis gets frustrated... Mutteres to himself.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
There should be more in there
somewhere...

He's yanked back brutally by Ander, who slams him against
the wall.

ANDER
And you would know, wouldn't you? Eh?

His right hand grabbing Davis' collar, he waves his left
hand in front of Davis' eyes. It's holding the dead man's
ID.

ANDER (CONT'D)
See? What it says here? That's right,
asshole. William Glass. CIA.

DAVIS
(struggling to get
free)
So?

ANDER
So you know what's going on here.
Where the fuck are we, spook?

DAVIS
I don't know.

ANDER
The hell you don't! I swear, talk to
me, right now.

(MORE)

ANDER (CONT'D)
Or else you're gonna end up just as
dead as him, and even worse if I can
help it. What the fuck is this place?

Davis sighs, shakes his head.

Ander butt-heads him, slamming Davis' head against the wall,
lets go of the ID card and draws out his gun, the barrel of
which he presses hard against the other man's temple.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Blurt it out!

DAVIS
Calm down! Damn...

He coughs once. Blood is running from his nose.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
I don't know. Not precisely.

ANDER
Enlighten us not precisely. Pronto.

DAVIS
Understand something. Yeah maybe he's
CIA. And that's the most
compartmentalized place in the world.
What he knows, I don't have a need to
know. And reciprocally.

ANDER
Bullshit! You have three seconds to
start talking.

He presses the gun even harder on Davis' temple.

DAVIS
Alright, alright...
(he takes a deep
breath)
Look, I don't know, for real. But I
heard things, yeah. Rumors...

ANDER
What kind of rumors?

DAVIS
Of a... Facility. Lab. Whatever. In
this area. Northwest New Mexico.

ANDER
That's all? Don't give me shit. You
know something.

DAVIS
Not me. But some guys back at the
shop did... At least they mentioned
it, referred to it.

ANDER
What did they say?

DAVIS
Nothing.

ANDER
What the fuck did they say??

DAVIS
(shouting)
Nothing!
(normal tone)
They said nothing... They didn't have
to.

ANDER
Yeah? Why's that?

Davis stares at him.

DAVIS
Because just the mention of the place
would scare them shitless. Okay?
Understand? No one was talking about
that place. It's a black hole. God
knows what they do in here, but I've
known guys who have toppled
governments and who would go pale and
break into a sweat at the mere
mention of this place. Alright?

Ander stares at him for an instant.

ANDER
What's the name?

DAVIS
No one knows for sure outside of
those who really know... DSD-3.
Section D. I can't tell. I don't know
the official designation. It's
classified way beyond my level.

(MORE)

DAVIS (CONT'D)

(pause)

The nickname stayed, though.

ANDER

Nickname? What nickname?

Davis sighs. Hesitates.

DAVIS

A couple of guys I worked with in the past did work here. Briefly, as I understood. They couldn't take it, no one could. They're all on very short shifts here, two, three months. They would never, ever talk about it in any detail. But both said that, internally, they call the place "the nightmare halls"...

Everybody falls silent at that. Soon though, Ander hisses at him.

ANDER

What do they do here?

Davis loses patience.

DAVIS

I don't fucking know! Do you get that? But I'll tell you something else, my friend.

ANDER

What's that?

DAVIS

Whatever happens, we'd better not find out what's going on here.

With that, he slaps Ander's hands away from him, and arranges his collar.

He gives Ander a stare, and walks away from him, wiping his nose.

ANDER

You're bullshitting us...

Coriz, who followed the exchange closely, chimes in.

CORIZ

(motioning to Davis)

The agent man is right.

ANDER

What? What do you mean, he's right?

CORIZ

We live here... We see things. Strange things. A lot of us in the town, we've seen things... That shouldn't happen.

ANDER

Like what?

CORIZ

Most of all we see lots of vehicles at times. Coming and going, from up on the Mesa, and around. No marks, sometimes even trucks. At times like that there are guards around the mountains, hard and rough like criminals. They are dressed like the dead in the other room. They never let anyone come close.

ANDER

So what?

CORIZ

Some of our people, sometimes they get curious, and try to know more. We never see them again. Also, many of our cattle, they would end up dead, mutilated. Very bizarre deaths, not by animals, or predators. No one found what it is that does this to them.

Ander clenches his jaw, breathing rapidly through parted lips, eyes fixated on nothing in front of him. He's rattled.

ANDER

Yeah. I heard about that before.

He nods, dismissing Coriz.

Lares goes up to the metal cupboard, takes one of the communication devices, and turns it on.

A loud barrage of static and white noise bursts out of the talkie, startling everyone.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Turn that off. We won't be needing those anyway.

Lares turns the device off.

LARES
Maybe there are others using them?

ANDER
Apparently not. You heard what we heard. The guy wrote there's no one left, and comms are dead.

Lares puts the walkie back, and examines an unusual device on the lower shelf.

The thing looks like a strange flashlight. Its extremity appears to be made of black, polished glass.

The surface presents three buttons, each one larger than the one below it.

LARES
What's this?

ANDER
Beats me. Let me see.

LARES
Wait.

Lares takes a binder next to the device, opens it.

LARES (CONT'D)
Wait, maybe there's some explanation in there.

Lares flips through the pages, focuses on one, reads, his lips moving silently.

LARES (CONT'D)
(out loud)
"Armlux defensive weapon prototype."

DAVIS
Never heard of it.

Lares reads again, raises his eyebrows, and looks back at them, putting the binder aside.

LARES
Move over.

He aims at the dead man's legs with the device. Ander, in the way, moves swiftly aside.

Lares presses the lowest button. A faint thin ray of pale green light hits Glass' right leg.

Nothing happens.

LARES (CONT'D)
Wait... Yeah, I think the biggest
button gives the biggest fun.

He aims again, pressing the highest, largest button.

The greenish beam from the device is still thin but much denser, lasting for about a second.

As it hits the CIA man's legs again, noiselessly, everything around 7 inches of the ray's impact dissolves and melts, clothes included, effectively severing both legs in half.

A light odorless smoke wafts briefly in the air.

LARES (CONT'D)
Wow, cool.

ANDER
What in God's name is that thing?

LARES
(beaming)
Alien tech.

DAVIS
What?

LARES
It's written in here.
(taking the binder)
"Armlux prototype is of alien design,
produced at LANL by joint NSA/CIA/
LANL efforts from plans and
technology already provided." No
kidding.

He giggles like a kid with a new toy, frowns and stop. He looks up.

LARES (CONT'D)
Huh, what's LANL?

DAVIS
Los Alamos National Laboratory.
Classified hi-tech and bio-tech
stuff. Big weapons that go "boom" as
well.

Lares gives him a scolding look.

LARES
Don't baby-talk me, shitkicker.
(looks at the weapon)
Alien stuff. Oh yeah.

ANDER
Can you spell "bullshit"?
Disinformation, dimwit. Drown the
info within lies. Nobody finds out
the truth. Gullible cunt. You're
dense.

LARES
Laugh it up, it's still way cool. My
new best friend.

DAVIS
At least now we know what killed
these men back there. I suggest you
be quite careful with that, Raul.

Lares shrugs.

LARES
Hey, yeah... Okay.

ANDER
Time to move.

DAVIS
Absolutely.

LARES
Guys, just where to?

Lares has a point, giving them pause.

LARES (CONT'D)
I'd say we make for these shuttles.
Seems like it's the way to escape
from here.

DAVIS
You heard it... They're compromised.
Whatever that means.

ANDER
True. Maybe they were a week ago, but
since then? I'd say it's worth a try.

Davis shakes his head.

DAVIS

I'd recommend against it. What if it's booby-trapped, or we face an ambush? By whoever killed these people.

ANDER

Doubtful they'd still be around a week after killing everyone here. They're not exactly expecting us.

DAVIS

Are you ready to make that bet? Feels like a very risky proposition.

ANDER

Because the other options are not?

Davis nods... Ander's right.

DAVIS

Okay... But first sign of trouble we double back and try something else. For the record I still think it's a bad idea.

ANDER

Noted. Let's go.

DAVIS

I'm taking that, as well.

He bends behind the desk, and retrieves the dead man's gun.

Ander stares for a second, then nods.

Lares makes the strange device bounce twice in his palm, smiles at it, and puts it in his pocket.

Ander presses a button beside the door to open it, and all exit the room and go back to the hall.

INT. LARGE HALL - NIGHT

They walk to the threshold of the "shuttles" corridor, pause there, hesitant, then go on.

LARES

In case of doubt, follow the blood.

Ander shoots him an annoyed glance. Lares mockingly looks down at his shoes, in a sheepish obedience attitude.

As they go deeper into the corridor, it angles down ever so slightly.

They come to a point where there's a small pool of blood on the floor, and bullet impacts on the walls.

ANDER

I guess that's where Agent Glass met his new friends.

As they resume the march, an extremely loud sound fills the space all around them, surrounding them, making them jump.

The sound is as otherworldly as it is chilling.

The cries and howls of what sounds like women and children are intercut with very rapid successions of clicks, clucks, and suites of hard consonants, lasting perhaps a half second between the shouts of pain and terror.

It stops after ten seconds, as suddenly as it started.

No one says anything, nor moves. Except Alvaro, who crosses himself. Twice.

After five seconds, the sound starts again, resonating loudly in the corridor, although these are different screams and cries than the ones in the first cycle.

Possibly even more terrible-sounding.

The sequence ends with a longer series of the bizarre clicks and strange strings of consonants. It sounds... angry, for lack of a better reference, so bizarre it sounds.

ANDER (CONT'D)

We don't want to be here... Fall back. Fall back now. To the hall.

He's having no protest from the rest of the men.

They double time it to the hall in record time.

INT. LARGE HALL - NIGHT

They regroup in front of the security hub.

DAVIS

Told you so.

ANDER

Yeah yeah yeah...

He grimaces in anger and frustration, examines the surroundings anew, the corridors markings once more.

ANDER (CONT'D)
MCC... XFER... Shit. The fuck are those?

DAVIS
XFER. Transfer. Transfer to somewhere else?

ANDER
Yeah maybe... Maybe.

DAVIS
It does look like a better prospect than MCC, considering what Glass wrote. Which is enough to make me want to avoid it.

ANDER
True enough. XFER is the only remaining option. Let's go.

Filled with a new-found sense of urgency after the horror sounds that still resonate in their minds, the troop runs to the XFER corridor and enters it.

INT. XFER CORRIDOR - NIGHT

LARES
Guys!

He points in front of them. A golf cart-like vehicle, empty, stands in the way.

ANDER
Let's hope it works.

As they get close, they see a gun on the floor, away from the vehicle.

It's grossly misshapen, in the same way the shotguns were. Its barrel is almost a lump, and its original owner is nowhere in sight.

DAVIS
We can all fit. Climb. We have to move.

All squeeze aboard the cart, Ander in the driver's seat.

ANDER
Raul, watch our backs.

LARES
You got it.

He takes the device out of his pocket, and positions himself at the rear.

ANDER
Let's see if this thing works.

From behind them, in the distance, the otherworldly sound triggers again, the echo making it even more sinister.

Ander presses the pedal, and the electric cart starts rolling smoothly.

Pretty soon the floor angles down steeply, making the cart roll faster.

On both walls, the same writing in stern black capital letters appears.

"XFER AREA - ACCESS FORBIDDEN - UMBRA 7 ONLY.

UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL WITHOUT PROPER CLEARANCE WILL BE SHOT."

A dozen feet past the signs, bright orange rotating lights mounted on the walls pulsate.

The floor levels up and becomes flat again. However, the change in scenery is drastic.

Without transition, the pure white of the floors, ceiling and walls, the almost sun-like quality of the light, give way to perfectly smooth, mirror-like, black material resembling glass.

The muted light is of a dark purple-pinkish color.

It seems to emanate from the floor and ceiling, though no light bulbs or any other apparatus are apparent.

INT. HANGAR - NIGHT

The corridor runs into a large, roundish empty hangar, save for two Benz trucks, without any identifying marks, that are parked on the right.

At the hangar's extremity are two large doors of a dull silver color, oval in shape. A capital "X" is written in white between them.

Ander makes straight for them with the cart.

The cart stops in front of the doors. Ander steps down, cautiously at first as the surface looks slippery.

The others exit the cart in their turn, all staring in awe at the place.

ANDER

What do they need something so large for?... What's with the trucks?

LARES

Who cares. I wanna out of here.

Ander nods.

ANDER

I hear you. I guess XFER, whatever it is, is through these doors here.

LARES

"Sesame..." Shit, forgot the rest.

ANDER

"Open up". Won't work.

Ander approaches the "X" between the door. It's just a mark on the wall. Nothing special about it.

He lets his hand run along the right side door. No gap, no nothing, the thing appears to be hermetically closed.

As he reaches its end, a panel on its side illuminates softly.

It reads "X1", as well as another sign he cannot make anything out of. A sort of hieroglyphic inscription.

He moves away from it and the panel goes back to being virtually indistinguishable from the wall. He gets close again, and the panel lights up anew.

LARES

That's nifty... Lemme try that one.

He goes to the edge of the left door, and, sure enough, a panel reveals itself, reading "X2", as well as a different strange sign.

DAVIS
Let's try something...

He goes up to Lares, and presses the card against the panel.
Nothing happens.

He strides over to Ander, who steps away, and Davis repeats the motion.

Without a sound, the door slides open sideways, revealing what looks like a wide elevator, with the same sort of oval shape as its door, spacious enough even for the two trucks.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Make or break, gentlemen. Let's get out of here.

ANDER
Yeah... Let's.

They enter the lift.

INT. X1 ELEVATOR - NIGHT

The elevator's walls are as smooth as the hangar's.

On the right one, a panel is readily visible.

More like a pulsating soft white light, really, as there are no buttons to push, or numbers to read, anywhere in sight.

After waiting a few seconds for something to happen, Ander gets impatient.

ANDER
One would think you need to wave the trump card at this point as well?

Davis touches the panel with the card.

The door slides shut, and the panel then displays two lines. One seems to indicate their depth, and currently shows "-674 feet".

The other line is undecipherable gibberish-like writing.

The tiniest of tremors startles the men, but the elevator's floor remains perfectly still and stable after that.

CORIZ
Oh... Look!

He points at the panel.

On its screen, the depth's digits are barely readable, so fast they change. They're not going up, but down, at extremely high speed.

In seconds they've passed 1000 feet.

DAVIS

We should be crushed by now, at this velocity.

The descent goes on.

Without warning, the counting on the panel stops abruptly, displaying "-3430 feet", accompanied by the same slight tremor.

LARES

That thing must be going south, no way --

Before he can finish, the door slides open, silencing everyone.

Davis, though, looks at the panel again. The writing on it has changed.

It now reads "Level 6 - Gen. experiments / Zoo", once again doubled by the same sort of unreadable characters underneath.

ANDER

(to Davis)

Do you think we should? I expected it'd go up.

DAVIS

So did I.

What awaits them outside the elevator is the same sort of material on the walls and floors and ceiling, only the lighting is much dimmer than in the hangar they came from.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Dark in here... You'll handle the firepower, I'll light up the way. Give me the flashlight.

Ander nods, hands over the flashlight.

He hears a snort and turns around, catching Lares putting his small metal box in his pocket.

ANDER
Didn't you have enough of that
already?

LARES
Man, forget about me. 'Kay? Mind your
own damn business.

ANDER
It very much becomes my business if
you're out of it in here. Get that?

LARES
Piss off.

Davis taps Ander on the shoulder lightly.

DAVIS
Let's go. The sooner the better.

Ander looks back at him, nods. Davis turns on the flashlight
and steps out of the elevator.

INT. LEVEL 6 PLATFORM - NIGHT

They find themselves on a wide, empty platform, with a 50
feet high ceiling overhead.

Several apertures in the front and left walls, without
doors, let out faint glows of different colors.

On the floor, strange patterns, in the color of the glows
coming from the openings, form and disappear regularly, none
of them directly recognizable.

CORIZ
We should not go there... This place
is strange. It's another world. Evil.

ANDER
I'm afraid we don't have an
alternative, pops. Hang in there.

As if to confirm Ander's words, the elevator door slides
shut behind them in silence.

LARES
Is it just me, or it's unbearably hot
in here?

DAVIS
It is... Hot, and humid as hell as well.

He looks over at Coriz.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
If I were you, I'd loose that, Mr. Coriz.

He motions to his thick jacket. Coriz is sweating hard by now. Coriz nods, removes the jacket and puts it on the floor.

He goes through one of the pockets, before he stands up.

He shoves a small wallet and a set of keys in his jeans pocket.

ANDER
(to Coriz)
Good thinking, John Coriz.
(turning around)
Let's get going.

Various sounds filter up to them, soft hissing and whooshing sounds, like machines working, maybe. Some others still evoke liquids being tempered with, or stirred.

They reach the openings in the front wall, and stop.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Eh... Green, or purple? Or dark blue there, on the left?

LARES
There's red too. Sort of. It's a fucking carnival here.

Nobody's feeling humorous, though. No one peeps a word.

ANDER
I vote green.

He looks at Davis, who just shrugs and walks to the opening directly in front of them, where the green glow comes from, Ander in tow, reluctantly followed by the others.

INT. LEVEL 6 GREEN ROOM - NIGHT

On the threshold, all pause to comprehend the sight before them.

Sprawling as far as the eye can see, for what seems like hundreds of yards, large cylindrical vats, from which the greenish glow comes, spread to countless rows.

There are hundreds if not thousands.

The cavern-like space is enormous, far larger than anything they could see upstairs, and dwarfs the platform they just came from.

LARES

We want to go in there?

In the distance, at the edge of hearing, some rapid fire clicking and clucking sound reaches them.

Ander tenses immediately.

ANDER

Shh!

He motions everyone quiet, looks ahead intently.

They wait for a few seconds, but nothing more can be heard except for the machine-like, environmental sounds.

Lares takes a few steps ahead of the others, peering into the first couple of vats as he goes.

LARES

What the hellish fuck is that?

The first vat is full of greenish fluid, empty.

The others step up to him and the second vat.

Floating inside, a 6 feet long piece of what looks like raw flesh, perhaps once a limb, floats leisurely.

The thing's texture alternates between pinkish soft skin-like material, and raw, red abrasions and growths.

Alvaro gasps audibly, pointing to something.

The extremity of the limb-like thing ends with what could pass for fingers, although badly deformed.

ANDER

What on earth does that even belong to?

He wanders away, to the following vat.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Oh FUCK!

He recoils and almost trips over.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Fuck, fuck, fuck...

No bravado in this man at that moment.

The others look at him uncomprehending, then at the vat.

A collective clamor.

Inside the vat, what maybe was once a man -or woman, one can't tell- bobs gently.

The head and features are human-like alright, though the head is entirely bald.

A thick double tube goes into the mouth from above, amber-colored fluid slowly circulating through one of them.

One arm is way shorter than the other, but larger, as well, terminated by the embryo of a hand, never properly formed.

The torso is asymmetrical, with the right side bulging, the skin cracking and parting in places.

Below it, an ensemble of limbs, looking like small, grotesquely deformed legs, protrude from the waist.

Davis can count eight of them, all going off at aberrant angles.

Coriz gasps.

CORIZ

Oh, no... It can't be...

Davis looks in his direction.

CORIZ (CONT'D)

The eyes...

All of them look at the terrible face, and realize the eyes dart from one of them to the other and then the next.

It's looking at them. It's alive.

With a dull and smacking sound, several of the repulsive limbs bump softly against the thick glass-like material of the vat.

They all but jump.

The face of the creature inside contorts, as if out of severe pain. Or anger. Or both.

ANDER

We get out, right now. Everyone out.

He starts shoving them out, first Coriz, then Davis, the others already going back to the entrance.

INT. LEVEL 6 PLATFORM - NIGHT

Once outside, they look back frightfully toward where they just came from.

LARES

Man... Talk about being liquidated.

Before anyone can address that or quip another comment, the clucking sound resumes, closer to them.

DAVIS

Hurry, in here.

He points to the last entrance on the right, where dark purple light comes from.

INT. LEVEL 6 PURPLE ROOM -NIGHT

They stumble into a much smaller, seemingly empty room, roughly 50 feet on a side.

ALVARO

I don't want to see what makes that noise.

The young man is panting, sweating and pale.

ANDER

None of us do, kid. Take my word for it.

As they enter the room, some sort of equipment, looking like screens, comes alive on the right and left walls.

The screens look like nothing they've seen before, entirely flat, transparent when not active, and quite precise.

Against a dark background, various drawings and undecipherable writing scroll rapidly on them.

DAVIS

Further inside. To the end wall.

From there, they can still hear the thing inside the vat, hitting against the glass with its legs, more forcefully as it goes on.

Above the noise, though, some thumping and the clucking sound reach them as well, seemingly coming closer.

LARES

Hey, look... The wall...

Getting close to the end wall, the texture progressively changes to reveal that it's in fact a transparent panel, overlooking what looks like a darkly lit medical or operation room.

TWO FIGURES, one a normal-sized man, the other a really tall, thin, bizarrely shaped individual with abnormally long arms and an oversized head, are hunched over something on a black slab.

They're both wearing what looks like bio-hazard protection gear.

The smaller figure steps aside, revealing a monstrous, impossible sight on the operating table.

A malformed calf body is completed upward by what could have originally been a human head, complete with features, how repulsive they might be.

The glass appears to be soundproof, as it looks like the chimera is howling.

Purulent tumor-like growths are scattered all over the ungodly body.

Coriz recoils in surprise and horror, and bumps into the right wall.

As soon as he does, a panel near the taller figure illuminates, and the individual spins around in an unnaturally fast, fluid motion.

The Plexiglas-like material of the helmet it's wearing is completely dark, but the message is clear. Their presence is no longer a secret.

ANDER

Jesus fuck!

He's facing the opening they came through.

They all turn around at his outburst.

Standing in the middle of the opening and staring at them is a HUMANOID ALIEN, looking exactly like the one they just observed in the room below.

It's around 7 feet tall, quite thin, with arms descending down to its knees, terminated by an elongated hand with three long fingers and an similarly extended thumb.

Grayish-blue skin, large, recessed ink-black eyes, thin mouth, no ears, two pin holes for a nose.

It's wearing dark gray coveralls, up to its neck.

It's not moving, barely rotating its head to look at them in turn.

DAVIS

Raul... The beam device. Now.

But Lares remains trance-like in front of the creature.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Lares!

Lares snaps out of it, digs into his pocket and produces the Armlux weapon.

At the sight of it, the alien emits a long, strident suite of clicks and clucks, not exactly sounding friendly, and with a hint of fear in it as well.

For all that, though, it remains in place, as if challenging them.

ANDER

Do him in, Raul.

Lares smiles a demented smile, aims and presses the upper button of the device.

The aim is haphazard, but does the job.

The green pulse almost separates the head from the very thin neck of the creature, which crumbles to the floor, its head hanging sideways.

No blood, just some jelly-like yellowish goo. But the thing appears to be dead alright.

Davis, sensing something, turns around to the wall/glass separation.

The man in the bio-hazard suit and helmet is staring right back at him, even though his face can't be seen under the dark visor. His arms are folded.

The suit sports the same insignia that the dead security forces wore, and an American flag beside it.

The taller figure is gone.

DAVIS

We have to move. I think its
colleague is none too pleased, and is
coming after us.

Ander starts in the direction of the exit, but spots Alvaro flat against one of the screens, paralyzed with terror. His eyes are fixated on the crumbled form on the floor.

Ander seizes him harshly by the arm, throws him out of the room onto the platform outside.

He motions urgently to Coriz, who is rather eager to leave, Davis following him. He steps out, followed by Lares.

INT. LEVEL 6 PLATFORM - NIGHT

ANDER

What now? We go back?

DAVIS

Seems like the only option. Hanging
around doesn't strike me as holding a
promising future.

The distance to the elevator has never seemed so far.

From behind the threshold of the vat room, loud and angry clicking reaches them.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

Run! Stay close to the wall, that's
where it's the darkest.

They scuttle away, almost hugging the left wall as they do.

Coming closer to the elevator's wall and facing it for the first time, a slight change of color is noticeable to the left of the cabin.

A door.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Volker, see that? To the left.

Ander looks ahead. He sees it.

ANDER
Yeah. Methinks elevator's faster.

DAVIS
It would, if there was something to
open its door. I don't see anything.

ANDER
I don't either... Dammit!

Heavy steps and speed-inducing clucking resonates in the vast chamber.

DAVIS
I'm making for the door.

He runs ahead, and reaches the change in color which is indeed a door, if an unusual one.

No handle, just a dark gray button. He presses it, and the door unlocks in a click.

He bangs against the door to open it, which it does with a loud clang as it swings back and hits the wall inside.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Everyone inside, on the double.

Coriz and Alvaro rush in, followed by Ander.

Lares is close behind, but a tall dark shape behind him shoves him forward, causing him to stumble and fall sideways.

The beam device clatters away in the distance.

In the weak light, Ander and Davis watch from the door's threshold as the alien bends over the other man.

Lares, however, quickly rolls aside, and gets up, facing the creature.

LARES
Yeah? You want some, you skinny cunt?
Bring it on.

Ander shouts from the door.

ANDER

Raul! In here. Come on!

DAVIS

You're wasting your time. He's pumped full of coke. He's gone.

Lares is indeed far gone. He's oblivious to the others, just grinning madly, sweating profusely and taunting the alien.

LARES

Come on, fucker! I'll kick your ass alright.

The alien gets closer in an almost graceful, swift movement, and makes to claw at him.

The impact doesn't reach Lares' face as he jumps back, but leaves bloody tracks on his thigh as it rips through cloth and skin, tearing away the sheath of the Bowie knife as well, which the alien throws away.

The knife skids on the floor several feet away.

Lares looks down at his leg, oblivious to the pain, his anger rising, then back up at the alien.

LARES (CONT'D)

That was mine, fuckface.

Lares throws a powerful punch with his right fist to the alien's face, whose head jerks sideways from the shock.

The skin on its left cheek becomes discolored from the blow, turning from gray-blue to pale beige.

The alien slowly turns his head back to the left. Clicks and clucks.

LARES (CONT'D)

What the fuck you lookin' at? You wanna kiss my ass? You wanna lick my balls?

Lares delivers a second punch. The alien's head jerks noticeably less this time, though the discoloration accentuates.

The alien utters a string of clicks and consonants in a higher pitch than before.

LARES (CONT'D)
Alien expletives! That's the spirit!
Fuck you too. I'm so gonna break your
face, you ugly piece of shit...

As he launches yet another shot, in an impossibly fast motion, the alien's left hand blocks the blow, and wraps its fingers around Lares' fist.

Lares' eyes start bulging, as the alien's grip begins to crush his hand.

He starts screaming, among sickly noises of crunching bones and flesh tearing apart, some of both falling to the floor, as blood drips down from between the alien's fingers.

The alien goes on for a moment, as Lares howls at the top of his voice.

The creature finally releases Lares' hand, or what's left of it in a soup of fluids, bones, and flesh.

The hand looks like it's one fourth the size it originally was, it's utterly destroyed.

Lares falls to his knees.

The alien slowly seizes Lares' neck, having blood from its hand oozing down on the man's shirt, hauls him up, and stares at him.

Keeping its long thumb under Lares' chin to keep him up, it places its other fingers behind his head, almost wrapping them around it.

It pulls its right arm back, its fingers curling into the semblance of a fist, then tightening.

It seems to hesitate, as if the whole gesture was a new, unnatural thing to do.

Lares' eyes are their widest as he screams, in terror this time.

The fist goes off and lands directly in the middle of his face.

Even though the demeanor was clumsy, the effect is devastating.

Raul's face caves in with a sound of cracking and collapsing bones.

His nose disappears inside his face, the right cheekbone piercing the flesh and jutting out.

The features are wiped out, the front of his skull a concave mess between forehead and lower jaw.

Lares starts jerking and convulsing.

The alien seems to have gotten the hang -or fun- of it, as it aims and delivers a second blow, as powerful as the first one.

Lares' lower jaw is torn apart and away on the left side, making it hang hideously.

The alien inclines its head slightly to the side, as if curious. It barks a short string of furious clicks.

It yanks the jaw completely off the face in an angry gesture, tearing apart skin, muscles, nerves and part of the tongue, and breaking the other bone socket in a nasty crunch.

Some blood spurts on the alien. Flaps of skin hang from Lares' face and neck.

The creature looks at the jaw in its hand, then tosses it angrily on the floor, where it clatters away.

The stub of Lares' tongue, still attached to the skull, flutters wildly as he cannot scream anymore, nothing but a gurgle escaping the demolished face.

The alien's head turns slowly to its left. To the others.

But stops halfway.

It looks back at Lares, seizes him by the neck, and walks away, dragging the still jerking Lares in its tow, leaving smears of blood on the surface.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Ander looks to the floor, absently pushes the door close, and leans against the wall. As does Davis.

ANDER
We're in deep shit...

DAVIS
Agreed.

They are in a narrow stairway, going up and down from here.

Coriz has paled noticeably but is still dignified; Alvaro seems to have vacated his mind. He doesn't peep a word, just cries.

ANDER
Why didn't you shoot?

DAVIS
Why didn't you?

Ander is taken aback.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
Same reason as you, friend. Shock and awe.

Ander just nods.

ANDER
So. Up or down?

Davis looks up.

DAVIS
Up. Maybe there's a good reason why it's so bright up there, and so dark in here. It's possible they don't take to the light that well.

ANDER
Good thinking... Up it is.

Ander motions to the stairway to Davis, a "lead the way" gesture.

DAVIS
Okay.

He starts climbing up the stairs.

ANDER
John Coriz, you follow, then you, Alvaro.

The youth nods.

Everyone proceeds silently.

They trot as fast as they can up the stairs, sometimes slowing owing to Coriz seniority.

ALVARO (CONT'D)
Wait for me! Oh my God!
(looking at Coriz)
Mister, please! Help me!

Ander bends over him, gives him a vicious hit to the head with the butt of the gun.

Alvaro loses consciousness.

He waves to Davis.

ANDER
Move. We go on.

Davis seizes his sleeve.

DAVIS
Ander, what the fuck is that?

Ander jerks himself free. Points to the bleeding Alvaro.

ANDER
That? It's bait, my friend.

Davis is speechless.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Now move. You'll thank me later.

Ander still has his gun drawn out. Davis looks down at it, shakes his head, but resumes climbing up the steps.

CORIZ
Agent... We cannot leave the youth here?

Davis walks on, answers without turning back.

DAVIS
Feel free to carry him, Mr. Coriz.

Coriz looks down in sorrow and shame. But shuffles upward.

Ander follows behind.

INT. LEVEL 6 "OPERATING" ROOM - NIGHT

The thing on the black slab has been removed, and the human-looking figure is turned sideways, watching the entrance.

His alien colleague returns, carrying Lares on a stretcher that floats in the air as the creature pushes it along.

It positions the stretcher alongside the slab, then pulls Lares onto it. Straps automatically wrap around his naked body.

The stretcher moves away on its own.

The alien and human figures face each other. They both nod after a brief moment. How they communicate is unclear.

They turn to the table, where Lares is still breathing. A jerk here and there, but no real coordinated movement.

The alien doc selects a small metal instrument from a nearby tray, pokes the exploded right cheek, removing some fragments of broken bone.

Lares twitches, his stub of tongue still agitating.

The creature puts the thing back, then retrieves another, thin instrument. As it switches on, the device emits a narrow short beam of intense blue light.

The alien bends over Lares, and proceeds to amputate the destroyed remains of the hand. The beam cauterizes the flesh as it cuts.

Lares' head jerks left and right at regular intervals as the crushed hand gets separated from the arm.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

As Ander, Davis and Coriz turn to climb the next flight of stairs, at the end of their tether, panting and sweating, the lighting dims noticeably.

Ander looks up. Pauses.

Despite the weariness, he climbs the steps two at a time to the next deck.

Where the stairs should have continued up, there's only a block of raw concrete from floor to ceiling, blocking any further progress. They're walled in.

ANDER
(shouting)
You can't be serious!

Davis catches up to him, contemplates the concrete block.

He closes his eyes, suddenly very tired. Coriz, just behind him, just stands dumbfounded.

Ander smacks the blocking material with the flat of his hand. It responds with a dull, flat sound, not even resonating.

ANDER (CONT'D)

We're screwed, man... We're so fucking screwed.

Davis looks at the concrete, touches it.

DAVIS

This is recent. Very recent. It's not even fully dry yet. And it looks like it was poured in a hurry.

ANDER

To prevent further intrusions, like Glass wrote about?

DAVIS

I suspect it's more to prevent anything from going up.

A metallic sounding clang from far below makes them react.

Nothing more follows. Until --

Heavy thuds, in very rapid succession.

At first they don't comprehend what produces the noise.

Ander reacts.

ANDER

It's climbing up!

DAVIS

At this speed? I don't think so...

Still, though, the sound gets imperceptibly louder and keeps its pace. An ungodly fast pace.

All three freeze, tensing.

The rapid thuds do get louder. No question. Something heavy and powerful, not to mention furious, is coming after them fast.

ANDER

That's it... We have nowhere to run.

INT. LOWER STAIRS - NIGHT

Alvaro moans. Blinks. He's waking up, grimacing from the pain both in his hip and head.

He becomes alert as a loud thumping is approaching fast.

He tried to look down the stairs as best he can to see what's coming, panic in his eyes, but can't move easily.

He doesn't have to wait long to find out.

The alien appears with such suddenness that Alvaro lets out a cry of surprise, before terror sets in.

The alien stops, towering over him.

The large black, unfathomable eyes stare him down.

Alvaro pisses himself, and starts crying.

The creature slowly bends over, then crouches in front of him.

It puts its left hand against Alvaro's right side of the head, almost gently, wrapping its overtly long fingers around the skull.

Its head gets closer until it almost touches Alvaro's.

It turns the youth's head left, then right. Out of the blue, it sniffs loudly.

And again. Assessing him in its own way.

It brings Alvaro's face and head level with its own. Eye to eye.

Alvaro lets out a blood-curling wail of terror.

The alien seems to frown, its features contracting, and clicks once or twice.

The wail gains in intensity.

In a motion that is almost a blur, so fast it is, the alien smashes Alvaro's head against the wall.

A resonating crunch. The cry ceases instantly.

Pulling the head back at a leisurely pace, the creature inspects it.

The left side is grossly misshapen, the eye hanging out on the cheek, held by its optical nerve.

A couple of bone fragments fall on the stairs, revealing parts of the brain inside the skull.

A large smack of blood tarnish the whitish-gray plaster wall, which the impact has creased. Two teeth are embedded in it.

Still crouching, the alien looks up. Pauses. Clucks once.

INT. LEVEL 6 "OPERATING" ROOM - NIGHT

On the black glass slab, Lares' skin has turned a sickly yellow-gray, while some sort of viscous stuff is being pumped through his neck. His body has also swollen.

The macabre duet's alien is bent over him, poking through the gaping in Lares' face.

It stops, straightens up, immobile. It eventually clucks once, followed by a few of the strange consonants.

It moves to a side panel, its left hand hovering over it until a strange symbol appears, then resumes its work.

It selects a thin instrument, barely thicker than a needle, and plunges it into the crevasse that is Lares' lower face.

As it does, Lares bangs repeatedly on the slab with the hand he has left.

INT. LOWER STAIRS - NIGHT

The alien grabs Alvaro by the hair, unfolds itself as it stands up, and climbs down to where it came from, dragging the young man's body behind it.

INT. STAIRCASE - NIGHT

The three men listen intently as the heavy thuds fade in the distance, before vanishing. They can't believe their luck.

ANDER
(whispering)
It's going away!

DAVIS
Seems like it...

Coriz just looks at his feet, stunned. Lost.

ANDER
I trust no one will mention poor
Alvaro again.

The other two keep an uncomfortable silence.

ANDER (CONT'D)
So. What now?

DAVIS
Back down. We could have missed
something.

ANDER
You're mad.

DAVIS
Do you see any other point of egress?

Ander squints.

On the lower deck, on the wall, a "5" is inscribed in pale gray. Below the digit, a strange symbol.

The same symbol the alien produced on its screen moments earlier, on Level 6.

Both are barely distinguishable from the wall itself owing to the muted light.

ANDER
Look at the wall.

The other two notice it.

As if on cue, beside the number, a part of the wall retreats, and slides to the right, revealing a very narrow, very dimly lit corridor, going straight ahead for a long stretch.

Davis looks past the aperture. Nothing moves.

DAVIS
That's a trap if I ever saw one.

ANDER
No question. We're being led by the
nose. But the only alternative is
back down. With that thing...

Davis doesn't reply.

ANDER (CONT'D)
(to Coriz)
Chief, we're on the move.

Coriz reluctantly walks to the entrance, steps in with Ander beside him.

Ander looks back to Davis.

ANDER (CONT'D)
You coming?

Davis, doubt written all over his face, joins them.

INT. LEVEL 5 CORRIDOR - NIGHT

As soon as all three are inside, the panel slides back almost instantly.

Ander reacts and tries to push against it, but it's now an integral part of the wall behind them.

ANDER
What a surprise.

DAVIS
(darting his eyes
around)
Yeah. Didn't see that one coming.

At a distance, the corridor branches out left and right before continuing on, in similarly proportioned side passageways.

Ander and Davis look at each other, nod, and both draw their weapons.

ANDER
John Coriz, stay behind us, alright?

CORIZ
I will.

They proceed along the corridor, quite cautiously, almost one step at a time, ready for anything.

As well they should. In the distance, three tall, all-too-familiar silhouettes appear from a side space. Soon the forbidding alien language fills the silence.

ANDER
No way, Jose...

Another ray passes just above Ander's head as he crouches at the last moment.

ANDER
Almost there!

They at last reach the corner and run head first into the right corridor.

INT. LEVEL 5 RIGHT CORRIDOR - NIGHT

It's empty.

Soon after they turn into it, one of the aliens is right behind them, and gaining fast. It starts aiming with its weapon.

Ander, still running, turns around and fires three times in a row, eventually lodging a bullet in the creature's cheek. It drops in a weird sounding complaint.

The passageway is terminated by a small, roundish aperture.

They're about halfway to it when three more aliens make the turn at the beginning of the corridor.

DAVIS
In there! Run faster...

All three tap into their last reserves of strength to sprint even faster to the small opening.

Davis turns back to shoot at the closest foe. He drops the creature as another ray misses his upper torso by mere inches, to the right.

He makes to fire at another creature behind it, but the gun just clicks.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
I'm out.

He ditches the gun.

At last they come crashing into the small aperture. Which is a dead end.

As they take position to establish a last line of defense, the small cabin-like space rotates, taking them away from their pursuers.

A short, feeble tremor tells them what they need to know, but don't want to.

ANDER
We're dropping! We're going down
again. Motherfucking piece of shit...

Davis slides down the wall, puts his head between his knees and his right arm over his head. His left arm is still useless.

Coriz is panting heavily, the escape having taken its toll on the older man. He looks up, then down.

CORIZ
This feels like a really long drop.

DAVIS
(in a whisper)
Shut up...

CORIZ
Let me look at your arm.

DAVIS
Forget about it.

CORIZ
It could be serious.

DAVIS
Just drop it.

ANDER
Look --

Before he can complete his sentence, a subtle bump shakes the cabin, just before the side opposite the one they entered through slides away.

They have arrived.

They tense, expecting either another assault, or something equally unpleasant.

However, everything is eerily quiet. Or almost. There's a constant whisper-like background noise, some organic static, as it were.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Out. We don't want to go back where
we just came from.

DAVIS

I guess not.

He clumsily gets up, still in a bit of shock, but manages and steps outside the cabin, Coriz and Ander following.

INT. LEVEL 7 - NIGHT

They step out into a gigantic cavern-like space, with a ceiling 50 feet high as in Level 6.

The place is so vast that they cannot see its end, from where they are. It seems even larger than Level 6.

There's almost no lighting to speak of, only a dark, purplish glow coming from the left side, in irregular patterns.

What looks like hundreds of oval pods seems to be the origin of the faint light.

The right side is plunged into almost complete darkness.

They stand in some sort of alley dividing the two sides of the space.

DAVIS

(grimacing)

Christ, what stench... I can hardly breathe.

Ander holds his hand in front of his nose.

ANDER

You said it. What the heck stinks like that?

He coughs.

ANDER (CONT'D)

Straight ahead... There must be something at the end of this.

DAVIS

Not sure I want to find it.

ANDER

We stay here, we're done for. No doubt they'll come soon.

Davis waves ahead.

DAVIS

Let's go.

They walk forward, each step taken in fear.

Almost as soon as they start, the same dark purple sort of lighting they're now used to bathes the right side in its eerie semi-darkness.

They turn in the direction of the light, and react.

About 50 feet away from them, on the whole length of the cavern, rows upon rows of small, narrow cages, stacked one atop the other, loom over them.

They walk over to the cages, hearing some shuffling, wet sounds and what resembles moans, sighs and wheezing, and various other telltale sounds of agony.

Their getting closer gives them a better idea what's inside the lower cages, as far as the dimness will allow.

Some of them are empty, with bits of organic material and caked blood on their bare floors and on the walls.

Some contain undefined shapes, most of them still, but some moving awkwardly. Unnatural visions. Hellish ones. Chimeras, incomplete humanoid shapes, anything goes.

Still more, the larger ones, harbor cows and calves. All apparently dead, some are complete, but many others are not, rotting away, missing either limbs, skin, cut open, or cut in half.

ANDER

I can't believe this...

As they continue along the cages, a sound startles them.

VOICE (O.S.)

P... People.

The trio stops as if Medusa had touched them. At first they think they've hallucinated it.

DAVIS

Did...

VOICE (O.S.)

(in coarse whisper)

People!

The voice comes from higher up, in one of the cages approximately 10 feet above them.

They look up in disbelief.

DAVIS
Anyone up there?

VOICE (O.S.)
Yes... Yes. You're soldiers?

A chest-raking cough accompanies the words. The voice sounds hollow, unnatural.

DAVIS
No, we... We're trying to get out of here. Who are you?

Another cough.

GEORGE (O.S.)
My name's George. George Stanton... I remember... It's my name.

ANDER
How did you get here, George?

GEORGE (O.S.)
I... My memory is fried. I was just on this road, in Wisconsin. And, I don't know... A light, it came over my car. And after that I was here.

He lets out a long string of pitiful coughs.

DAVIS
What happened to you? What did they do to you?

George catches his breath audibly.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Sometimes they take us. Several of us, or one by one. They bring us to this place with black... tables. Lots of strange equipment, medical. And they test us...

ANDER
What do you mean, "us"? Are there other people like you in here?

A pause.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Yeah. Yeah... Other people. There are
hundreds here. Though most are gone
now. Somewhere else.

DAVIS
What?

GEORGE (O.S.)
Or maybe more. I don't know... I've
seen a lot. Some people from here
told us there are thousands at times.

Davis reacts in surprise.

DAVIS
People from here? You mean working
here?

GEORGE (O.S.)
Yes... The men from... Upstairs. A
lot are dead now.

He coughs again.

GEORGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I think.

A heavy silence descends on them.

ANDER
George, do you know why they're dead?
Do you know what really happened?

GEORGE (O.S.)
The creatures killed them. There was
a row... A war. So I heard.

DAVIS
From whom?

GEORGE (O.S.)
A few people stayed. To work with the
creatures. I've seen them. Sometimes
they come to us. To check on us.

A wheezing sound as George's labored breathing fills the
silence.

Davis gets curious, takes the flashlight out of his pocket,
turns it on and points it upwards, in the direction of
George's voice.

A small commotion in the cage above.

GEORGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
The light hurts... It's always in the
dark in here.

They hear George shuffle to the bars of his cage, though.

GEORGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Down it a little... To your left.
There. That's my hand.

They find the cage, and spot George's hand, feebly agitating outside the bars. It's pale, very thin, and full of scars.

Above the hand, George's face materializes.

Despite themselves, the trio gasps.

George is quite emaciated, the cheeks hollow, the eyes dead and half-lidded.

Part of his skull has been removed, and crudely patched up with some sort of metal plate. His head is entirely bald.

Several puncture wounds festering with pus are prominent on his throat and upper chest. He appears to be naked.

ANDER
My God...

Davis does his best to get over it.

DAVIS
Have you been here long, George? Do
you know?

George is silent a while.

GEORGE
I... can't remember. Here a minute is
very long, you know. When I try to
remember, I think I've been --

A loud grunt followed by a low groan break the silence to their right. Unearthly sounds of sobbing and sniffing follow.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
That's someone else... Few cages
away. Never knew his name. He never
could tell. Suffers a lot. He'd be
better off as food.

DAVIS

Food?

GEORGE

Yes... In the reservoirs. They --

Interrupting him again, an anguished scream follows, at the edge of human concept of what such a scream is supposed to sound like.

Whoever wailed calms down... Groans once more, and falls back into silence.

A sort of shuffling sound, in the distance, seems to have been triggered by the impromptu conversation and wailing.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

A warden... One of the wardens. It's coming. That's its step.

Ander turns to Davis.

ANDER

(motions to the
flashlight)

Turn that off. We have to move,
quickly.

Davis turns off the light.

GEORGE

Take me with you! I will die in here,
and before that it'll get worse. Open
this up!

Davis pauses. Looks up.

DAVIS

George... We can't. We just don't
know how.

GEORGE

Take me away!

George's voice is getting dangerously loud.

DAVIS

Calm down! Lower your voice... We
can't free you!

GEORGE

(screaming)

Take me! Take me! Take me! Don't
leave me here!

George has become semi-delirious and won't back down.

The trio trots away from the cages, looking around for potential shelter and hiding place from whoever -whatever- is coming. The light on the cages' side dims again.

George's voice swells, and he has started to bang the metal part of his skull against the bars, in loud resonating clangs.

The trio hastens. They reach the seemingly unending rows of oval pods, neatly aligned one after the other.

The shuffling sound has grown in presence. Something is nearby. Looking for them. They hear George stop screaming and start sobbing.

Further along, the rows are interrupted by a large, wide pool of pinkish, almost fluorescent liquid. The surface is poked with some darker shapes. A copper colored mechanical arm, immersed into the fluid, stirs it slowly.

ANDER

Shit, it stinks so much in here I'll
die of asphyxiation before anything
else.

DAVIS

Shh!

The shuffling sound now seems to come from right behind them somewhere. Closing in. But in the near darkness they can't make anything out.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Nowhere to hide...

Ander stares at the pool.

ANDER

Yes.

Coming to a decision, he swings his leg over the pool's glass-like low wall, and sinks in to his neck.

Davis swallows hard and imitates him.

Coriz just walks past them, eyeing the pool with disgust.

DAVIS
(urgent whisper)
John! Coriz! Hide with us.

But Coriz will have none of it, and continues on among the rows of pods.

A click. A cluck.

The warden is just yards away.

Both Ander and Davis do their best to disappear into the liquid, and still be able to breath.

Something wafts in their direction, lazily going this way and that, pushed by the motion from the copper arm.

It's roundish, its surface shining from the concoction.

As it gets past them, mere inches from their faces, a wave has it bobbing sideways. It's a human head, a woman's, missing the eyes and lips.

It takes a supreme effort from both men not to scream.

Davis risks a look around, very slowly.

Bits and pieces of what looks like flesh, skin, organic agglomerates, fat and body parts both human and animal, float around them.

ANDER
(whispering)
Reservoir...

Davis forces his eyes shut, frowns hard. Swallows. He's that close to puking.

Seconds after, the shuffling comes from their right, passes right in front of them, and clumsily goes off to the left. Past the pool.

Both men risk a look, raising their heads ever so slowly, and see one of the aliens, the warden, as it were, of this section, with its back to them.

It's a bit different from the others. Either quite older, or sick, or both. Its color is a dull gray bordering on green, and it does shuffle. Its right leg is twisted.

They wait until it's a safe distance away, and with infinite precautions, exit the pool, dripping.

In the distance, they can make out the warden going right, back to the cages.

Only now do they look at the pods and their actual contents.

The first one keeps captive a human being, a young woman, apparently intact. They notice for the first time the frost on the glass cover.

She has been frozen through cryogenics. Her expression is one of surprise and fear.

They walk to the next one, into which there's only a pair of human legs attached to a waist.

The one beside it contains the hindquarters and lower belly of a cow. The last one they take a look at shows a young boy inside, no more than 10. This one as well is intact.

They've seen enough.

They look around for Coriz. Ander calls to him, in a whisper he hopes to be loud enough, and quiet enough.

ANDER (CONT'D)

John Coriz!

Nothing.

As Ander's about to call again, Coriz emerges from behind a pod, behind which he hid.

He joins the others.

DAVIS

It's behind us now, we should move forward. Quick!

ANDER

Do you think it saw us?

DAVIS

No, I think we made it.

They make to rejoin the central alley, between the cages and the pods.

Further on the alley divides into two smaller lanes. Between them, a ramp goes down.

They stop, catching their breath.

ANDER
So. Ahead, or down?

Davis shakes his head in ignorance.

He sighs, looks around.

DAVIS
(motioning to the
alleys)
This can continue for God knows how
long.
(pause)
Down.

ANDER
Light it. Briefly.

Davis looks nervously around. Listens. So far so good.

He directs the beam of light down the ramp. It goes down for roughly 100 feet, then angles to the right.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Good enough. Let's go see.

INT. LEVEL 7 RAMP - NIGHT

They engage down the ramp, running down and turning right as it curves.

Another 100 feet away they see the ramp terminates with sliding doors parting in the middle.

As they get close to the doors and slow down, they take a step back in surprise as the doors silently slide open.

DAVIS
This is getting long in the tooth.

ANDER
Don't tell me about it. I can already
see those closing behind us as soon
as we're on the other side.

They all look at each other, hesitate.

ANDER (CONT'D)
The hell with it.

He purposefully strides forward and goes past the doors, soon imitated by the other two.

A few feet inside, they stop, waiting for what's inevitably to come.

And doesn't.

The doors remain open.

INT. LEVEL 7 SHAFT - NIGHT

ANDER
These creeps are full of surprises.

The surface on which they stand is strangely curved, as if on the top of a dome.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Pete, light around.

Davis waves the beam around.

They stand in a large, perfectly round chamber, the walls smooth and black as is usual in these parts.

There is no sign of any exit whatsoever, and it doesn't even seem to have a ceiling.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Shit... Damn. Fuck!

The floor however is different. It seems to be dull gray, and metallic in texture.

Davis, discouraged beyond words, switches the light off, sits down on the curvy floor, and looks down, prostrated.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Shall we go back, do you think?

Davis waves him away. An "I'm past caring" gesture.

As he fixes the floor in front of him in the obscurity, he spots the tiniest reflection of something on the metal-like matter. Something from above. It wasn't there before.

He blinks. Again. Are his eyes tricking him, or...

He looks up.

ANDER
(looking up)
Look... Look closer! We're going up.
We've moving up, for Christ's sake!

He's right. Either that, or the walls are going down.

DAVIS
The light. It's larger.

He motions above him.

The tiniest speck of light that they saw at first now has the size of a quarter. And it does look like an opening to the outside. Clouds can be made out.

ANDER
We're on a lift of some kind.

Davis examines the floor in its entirety actually for the first time, moving the light all around it.

CORIZ
It's not a lift...

DAVIS
No it's not... It's a craft. It's a frigging flying saucer.

ANDER
You've got to be kidding me.

He laughs a nervous laugh, bordering on hysterical.

ANDER (CONT'D)
Davis, I quit. I want out.

Davis looks up, fixing the above overture getting larger.

DAVIS
Just calm down... It may be the end of this.

Ander just shakes his head.

Davis lights up the rotating walls again.

DAVIS (CONT'D)
And the walls are not moving... We're spinning.

As if on cue, they begin to feel the pull of gravity as the surface they're on spins faster and faster.

Coriz has trouble maintaining his balance, and at first crouches, then lies flat against the surface, imitated by the two others.

Soon the spinning gains traction enough that they're pinned against the glass-smooth walls, the G force from the rotation making them dizzy and close to passing out.

Both flashlight and gun escape the grasp of their holders, clattering away and sticking to the walls as well.

In a semi-conscious state, Davis sees the opening above fill his field of vision almost entirely, which offers the view of blue, sunny early morning sky, with a few clouds drifting.

He smiles.

EXT. MESA - DAY

A circular hole in the ground. Incongruous in the middle of dirt and scrubs and rocks.

The scrubs shudder. The dirt spawns puffs of dust at the periphery of the hole.

A low humming sound shortly precedes the apparition of a round, spinning UFO slowly rising from the opening.

As soon as it emerges from the hole, three bodies are forcefully ejected away from the craft's surface, each in a different direction, accompanied by a couple of surprised cries.

The UFO then glides away, over the crest of the mountain, and a smooth surface slides from one side to cover the hole.

EXT. MESA - DAY

Ander has been projected away from the craft over a steeply angled slope.

He lands roughly on his side and starts rolling over and over on the dirt, at great speed, until one of his legs collides with a protruding rock.

A loud crack. A cry.

He slides down some more, at much slower speed, until he comes to a rest, groaning and panting.

He looks down at his legs.

The right one shows an open fracture, the bone apparent and emerging through the skin and muscle, at the thigh level.

He hits the ground with his fist, out of sheer pain, groaning loudly. He takes several deep breaths, and calms down.

He looks around, sees nothing but this deserted slope, and sparse vegetation a bit farther down below, on flat terrain.

He tries to move, cries out, but forces himself after a couple of attempts.

His voice comes out as a hoarse croak.

ANDER
Davis... Davis?

Only the wind answers him.

Half crawling, half crouching, dragging the injured leg, he makes for the plain below.

EXT. MESA - DAY

Coriz lies in an awkward position among thick, dense scrubs.

He's unconscious, with a gaping, bleeding wound on his forehead. Two fingers of his left hand stick out at an awkward angle.

He coughs a couple of times, opens his eyes, but can't sustain it. He faints again and remains sprawled among the scrubs.

EXT. MESA - DAY

Davis lies face down in the dirt, his lower lip split and his left hand swollen, with no serious injuries apparent.

He blinks, comes to his senses, blows the dirt away.

He stretches with a groan, flips on his back, cradling his hand.

Squinting against the sun, he looks around him, in search of the others.

EXT. MESA - DAY

Ander managed to crawl down to the bottom of the slope. Ahead of him, the scrubbed desert stretches way too far for comfort.

He tries to stand up on one leg, but the pain is such that he stumbles and trips over as soon as he reaches a vertical position.

In the distance, he hears what sounds like helicopter rotor blades.

He looks at the vast expanse before him, clenches his jaw, and attempts another try.

The pale, peaceful morning light suddenly gets brighter and harsher, paradoxically as a shadow passes over him and remains stationary.

Ander looks up. The UFO has him encircled within a powerful light beam.

EXT. MESA - DAY

Davis shakes his head to try and clear the torpor. He raises himself on the right elbow, surveying his surroundings and getting a sense of where he is.

A distant throbbing is getting closer fast, and in seconds Davis spots one of the black helicopters heading his way.

He squints in the sunlight, and the chopper lands about 100 feet from him.

Davis watches it with a hint of relief.

THREE FIGURES in black unmarked uniforms, armed with assault rifles, wearing ski-masks, trot up to him. They all mark him.

DAVIS

Guys, wait! Wait... I'm CIA, okay?

He tries a smile, surely they're on the same side. Fellow human brothers, after all.

None of the men reacts.

DAVIS (CONT'D)

I'm gonna reach slowly in my jacket pocket... Take out my ID. Okay?

He manages to get on all fours, when he notices black smoke in the distance.

He frowns and shakes his head to clear it up, and tentatively tries to stand.

He wobbles for a short moment, but he makes it. He looks around to get his bearings.

He starts walking in a direction.

INT. ABOARD THE CRAFT - DAY

Ander is roughly slammed on a black slab, unconscious. His clothes have been removed. His fracture is bleeding.

An alien's hand, holding some sort of canister, moves close to his head, and sprays a white mist around it.

In a few seconds, the skin color changes to bright pink, and all of Ander's hair fall off from his head, collecting below and around it.

EXT. MESA - DAY

From where he is, crouching behind a large boulder, Coriz sees the wrapped bundle of his tent and effects, shoved deep into the scrubs.

In the distance, he hears the chopper's rotors throbbing receding, then fading away into silence. He's alone.

He steps from behind the boulder and ambles down to the scrubs, rummages inside the nylon roll-up of the tent and withdraws the small wooden box.

Cradling it, he makes for the rest of the way down.

INT. LEVEL 7 CELL - DAY

Volker Ander's bald head is held in place by a thin circle of metal wrapped around his forehead, pressing firmly against it and holding the head against the wall behind.

His eyes are gone. The wounds around them are blackened by cauterization.

The left part of both lips and part of the cheek have also been removed and cauterized, revealing teeth and gum.

Both arms are extended horizontally from the body, resting on metal supporters, held fast onto them by tight metal straps. Still more wrap around his torso.

His right leg has been amputated, the stump black and burned.

Ander is shivering and whimpering, breathing rapidly. The whimper raises in intensity as a tube, crudely inserted into his neck, starts pumping in a viscous amber fluid.

A desolate, guttural cry escapes from his throat.

On his left, an alien selects the cutting instrument encountered earlier from a nearby tray.

It looks at Ander's left forearm, afflicted by purulent necrosis of a greenish, sick color, the skin scaling. It's changing shades fast.

The instrument cuts into the skin around the bizarre wound.

Ander screams a powerful, desperate howl of anguish and pain, and another, and another.

The alien clicks in annoyance, jerks its head up. It puts the cutter back, selects another long, thin instrument from the tray, terminated by small narrow pincers.

It takes Ander's chin in its left hand, forces it down, making the mouth wide open. It then inserts the oblong instrument down Ander's throat.

Ander's scream gains in pitch, higher and higher and higher, the same way a violin's string would if one would tighten and tighten the tuning screw up, until --

The string snaps.

The scream stops in a yelp.

The alien pulls out the instrument, and at its tip, something tiny and bloody is stuck in its pincers. Ander's vocal cords.

The subject is still screaming, silently, save for a wet gurgle.

The alien scientist resumes the cutting away of the forearm's skin. At last the scaly patch is freed.

The alien tears it away from the muscle then places it on a small transparent, thick glass-like appliance.

The glass changes from transparent to light red.

The creature clicks in frustration once or twice, tosses the skin patch to the ground, and leaves the cell.

Ander's hands curl into fists, making the palms bleed.

EXT. MESA - DAY

Emerging from behind some bushes, Coriz looks around. No one in sight.

He strides as fast as he can to his truck, opens the driver's door, climbs in and puts the box on the passenger seat.

Taking the keys from his jeans pocket, he starts the truck, makes a half turn, then drives away.

INT. LEVEL 7 - DAY

The warden shuffles near one of reservoirs, the slow stirring of the liquid breaking the silence.

It puts its left hand in it, stirring it faster, creating disturbances in the pink soup.

It removes its hand, sniffs it, smears some of the liquid on its neck's skin, clucks approvingly, and limps away.

As the disturbance evens out, Alvaro's bald, crushed and severed head bobs gently on the surface.

EXT. NEAR DULCE - DAY

Coriz can make out the small town from where he is. Close now. He even allows himself the hint of a smile.

Two black sedan cars appear in front of him, surging from the sides directly on the small road before him at great speed, sending clouds of dust behind them.

Coriz brakes roughly, screeching on the dirt and going a bit sideways.

He switches to reverse gear, looking behind to roll back, when he sees two other, identical cars blocking any retreat.

The cars in front stop a couple of dozen feet from him.

THREE MEN, in dark suits and sunglasses, step out of one of the cars. One of them walks in his direction.

Coriz closes his eyes, extends his right arm and gently pats the wooden box beside him, the hint of a smile still on his lips.

EXT. MESA - DAY

A vulture feasts on a dead raccoon, flapping its wings, and plunging its beak into the flesh.

As the dry sound of two gunshots in rapid succession fills the air, the volatile cackles angrily and takes flight, high in the sky.

FADE TO BLACK.

CARD:

Since the early 1980s, insistent rumors have spread of an underground secret facility under and around the Archuleta Mesa, and Mount Archuleta, near Dulce, New Mexico, USA.

The Jicarilla Apache tribe has routinely reported strange lights in the sky and unusual goings-on around Dulce, NM, for decades.

Northwestern New Mexico also concentrates the highest numbers of cattle mutilations in all of the US.

Those are facts.

CARD:

Although their stories have been put into doubt or debunked by various people, two so-called whistle blowers have come forward since the 1979 alleged incident within the Dulce facility.

One is reported as missing.

The other died in ambiguous circumstances less than two years after having started talking publicly about his experiences regarding the Dulce facility.

CARD:

The rumors persist to this day.

FADE IN:

INT. LEVEL 6 GREEN ROOM - DAY

The empty vat's glow produces a green halo-like haze around it.

Mechanical whirring coming from above disturbs the quiet. It gets closer to the vat, stops above it.

A different sounding, different kind of machinery gets in motion.

A pair of feet, then legs, the right one scarred, then a full body are gradually lowered into the liquid.

The bloated, puffed body stirs the green solution, producing small bubbles.

A blackened stump where the right hand should have been.

A thick double tube has been inserted in Raul Lares' half face, held in place by a thick, beige clay-like paste, taking the place of and covering for the face's missing parts.

An amber fluid drains through one of the twin tubes.

A thinner tube descends, terminated by a thick, long needle.

It reaches Lares' lower torso, stops, then penetrates it full length, just below the ribs, on his right side.

Lares' skullcap has been removed, leaving almost the whole brain apparent.

Two short and thin, curved metal rods protrude from it in different places.

The eyes are wide open.

At last, Lares' body stabilizes in the thick liquid, and disturbances stop.

Bubbles fade away.

Nothing moves anymore.

The eyes blink once and look sideways.

THE END.