

THE BLACK WAY

screenplay by

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based on "A Resection of Time" by

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FADE IN

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

SUPER: 5th century B.C.

Magnificent Mayan pyramids rise above the steaming jungle canopy. The eerie roar of howler monkeys floats across the treetops.

INT. MAYAN TEMPLE - DAY

Carved murals, brightly painted cover the walls of this cramped room.

An especially remarkable mural occupies much of one wall -- a towering figure facing left, a head at his feet, surrounded by Mayan glyphs.

On one side of the room is a narrow pit. A bizarre polyphonic BUZZING sound rises up from it.

A Mayan SHAMAN, resplendent in his jade jewelry, approaches a blood-stained altar stone which sports a carving of a hog-tied captive awaiting sacrifice.

In a niche in the altar stone, the Shaman sets a large shiny metal cylinder. Engraved into its side are three strange glyphs.

The cylinder is thousands of years out of place.

The Shaman cuts into his ear with an obsidian blade and drips a bit of the blood onto the cylinder.

SHAMAN

(in classical Mayan)

Grandfather, I beseech you, receive  
this sacrifice and intercede for us  
with the buzzing gods, so they will  
continue to protect us.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

As years rush by, the jungle reclaims the pyramids, closing in around them, growing up their sides, until they are merely bumps in the canopy.

EXT. JUNGLE PATH – DAY

SUPER: Five years ago.

A narrow muddy track snakes its way through the thick foliage toward the same profile of bumps in the canopy. Insects, birds, and monkeys fill the air with noise.

MERIDA (O.S.)

Look, cocoa pods. So that's why  
it's called El Cacao.

Tree trunks along the path are laden with big orange pods.

MACHA (O.S.)

Don't change the subject.

MERIDA and MACHA ZAMORA trudge side by side through the mud. Merida, early 20s, Latina, smart, responsible, and curvy, and a guard dog at heart. Macha is a perky People Magazine version of her older sister.

MACHA (CONT'D)

Give me one good reason why you  
don't just march up to Kyle and  
kiss him.

Up ahead are a black guide and two men arguing loudly: KYLE WOODSON, late 20s, equal parts a librarian's quiet studiousness and an activist's passion, and DR. HUGHBANKS, 50s, pompous professor, all the bravado of Indiana Jones with none of the charm.

Merida studies Kyle with tender concern.

MERIDA

I want him to think of me as a  
colleague.

Macha laughs dismissively.

MACHA

(in Spanish)

But that's exactly your problem!

(in English)

He does.

MERIDA

Better than thinking of me as a  
piece of tail,  
(in Spanish)  
like Joel probably thinks of you.

Kyle grabs Dr. Hughbanks's arm and stops him.

KYLE

You're risking all our reputations!

DR. HUGHBANKS

If this site is half what I think it is,  
we'll get off with a slap on the wrist --  
they'll be so thrilled to have another  
Mayan temple to attract tourists with.

Fuming, Kyle takes off his glasses to clean them, but is so agitated he drops them.

He bends over, but a woman's hand reaches the

TORTOISE-SHELL BROWLINE GLASSES

before his does.

Merida hands Kyle his glasses, just a little too slowly, her hand lingering in contact with his.

KYLE

(absently)

Thanks, Merida.

Nearby, Macha latches onto JOEL STATLER, early 20s, his clean cut looks and bad boy vibe mostly mask the fact that he's a geek.

As he wipes off his glasses, Kyle watches Dr. Hughbanks march off, and shakes his head.

MERIDA

(in Quiche Mayan)

Merely he desired greatness,  
transcendence.

Kyle turns to Merida and smiles, impressed.

KYLE

You read the Popol Vuh?

MERIDA

It's like, the bible of my  
ancestors.

Kyle's eyes widen with realization.

KYLE

Oh of course! I should've-- I'm  
sorry--

MERIDA

It's okay.

Macha and Joel stroll by, arm in arm. Joel pulls his arm  
out of his pocket, and Macha grabs his hand.

Bzzt! She snaps her hand away. Joel cackles and reveals  
a joy buzzer on his hand.

JOEL

I've got to hand it to you--

Macha slugs him in the arm playfully, then laughs and  
takes his arm again.

Eyeing the retreating Dr. Hughbanks, Merida makes a  
decision.

MERIDA

(yelling)

Doctor Hughbanks!

She jogs off as Dr. Hughbanks turns. He sees it's her and  
looks pre-emptively annoyed.

MERIDA

Is it true you heard about this  
site from some guy in an alley in  
Orange Walk?

Dr. Hughbanks looks down at her in every sense.

DR. HUGHBANKS

Are you in charge of this field season?

Merida's taken aback.

DR. HUGHBANKS

I didn't think so. Maybe in thirty years you can presume to know what's best here. If I'm right, this site will completely change how we think about the origin of Mayan civilization.

Dr. Hughbanks glares at Kyle, who watches them keenly.

DR. HUGHBANKS (CONT'D)

Something I would expect him of all people to support.

Merida regains her equilibrium.

MERIDA

If it's this important, why not do it right and wait for a permit?

DR. HUGHBANKS

By the time the government processes the application, the season will be over. I am not waiting another year.

He resumes his march.

Merida lets out an exasperated sigh as Kyle approaches.

KYLE

It's okay. I've never known anyone less inclined to consider other opinions.

Beat.

MERIDA

We don't have to keep going.

DR. HEMPFIELD (O.S.)

Oh yes you do.

DR. LUCILLE HEMPFIELD hikes by, early 30s, a black woman with a ponytail and no patience for intellectualism, she saves her amiable bedside manner for her patients.

DR. HEMPFIELD

So far no one's poked the wrong bug, or forgotten their anti-malaria pills, or come down with diarrhea. I'm having a great time and you are not spoiling it. And hey, maybe I'll discover some miracle jungle plant, and finally be able to open my own clinic.

The cry "we're here" passes down the trail. Everyone perks up, and Kyle dashes off.

As Merida takes off after Kyle, the sky opens up and rain fills the air.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY

Merida jogs up behind Kyle and finds people milling about. She pushes through to see what's going on.

An assortment of tents fills an opening in the jungle, at the foot of tall overgrown mounds. Several guards watch sternly, their scarred cruel faces enough to frighten a hardened criminal.

DR. HUGHBANKS

Dammit, someone got here before us!

THEO

Guards make a lovely welcoming committee.

DR. THEO GLADSTONE, early 30s, is a tall graceful man with fine clothes and a wry smile who often looks like he's gotten a joke no one told.

Standing close to Theo is DR. SOPHIA GLADSTONE, early 30s, athletic, energetic, and even-tempered, she's a straight shooter. She nudges Theo.

SOPHIE

Something's wrong here.

The guards start shouting in Spanish.

MERIDA

Those don't look like any  
archeologists I've ever seen.

SOPHIE

I think we should leave.

Dr. Hughbanks beckons to the guide.

DR. HUGHBANKS

Tell them we are archeologists and  
have come to explore the ruins.

DR. ROBERTSON

A moment, Dr. Hughbanks. I believe  
more circumspection is in order.

DR. CARL ROBERTSON is a stout older man walking with a  
cane, a tweedy intellectual with a soft heart.

The guide nods nervously and slowly approaches the guards.

Sophie pulls Theo back toward the path.

When Dr. Hughbanks ignores Dr. Robertson, the guards pull  
out assault rifles and point them at the group.

In a flash: while Dr. Hughbanks stands frozen in  
incomprehension, everyone else scatters -- screaming --  
pushing -- panic -- desperation -- and then the shooting.

An insane blizzard of bullets flies across the clearing.

Dr. Hughbanks topples like a tree.

Merida sees Kyle and Macha dash off in different  
directions. Her eyes follow Kyle for an agonized second,  
then she sprints after Macha.

Theo and Sophie, at the back of the dispersing crowd,  
swivel around to see what's happening.

Joel hurtles past them.

Sophie pushes Theo into the bushes -- and she's riddled with bullets.

Dr. Robertson puffs desperately into the jungle, bullets splintering the trees next to him.

Despite the terror on her face, Dr. Hempfield starts to drag Sophie's body toward cover, but a bullet nicks her arm. She cries out and retreats.

Merida catches up with Macha just as Macha ducks behind a tree.

She holds her younger sister tight, then pulls back to look at her as bullets whiz past.

Macha's expression is hazy, and she slumps in Merida's arms. Merida lowers her to the ground, panicking.

MERIDA

Macha!

Now she sees the holes in the front of Macha's blue and green raincoat, and the blood leaking from them.

MERIDA

No!

Macha's body goes slack, and as the rat-tat-tat of gunfire rages, her eyes go blank.

INT. ZAMORA HOUSE, BEDROOM - NIGHT

Merida's eyes open wide as she awakens suddenly, gasping for air.

MERIDA

Macha!

SUPER: Present day.

A small bedroom with a mix of childhood and adult decorations, lit by a night-light on a dresser.

Merida lies on one of two beds. Hanging on the wall above the head of the empty bed is a large framed picture of Macha. Merida pulls a pillow over her head, and sobs.

INT. ZAMORA HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

The room is clean, but old and worn. Decorating the walls are replicas of Mayan artifacts and photos of Mayan people.

Seated around a small table are Merida's late 40s parents, MR. and MRS. ZAMORA, and her teenage brother HERNANDO.

Merida totters in, still in her pajamas.

MRS. ZAMORA

(in Spanish)

Merida, you look awful! Come here.

Mrs. Zamora holds her arms out, and Merida submits to a fierce hug.

HERNANDO

You having nightmares again?

Merida extricates herself from her mother's embrace and wearily drops herself into an empty chair.

MERIDA

No. I mean,

(in Spanish)

just the same one.

EXT. ZAMORA HOUSE - DAY

A poor neighborhood, on the edge of trashy. Merida jogs up in her sweats, and stops to grab the mail from the mailbox.

She flips through the envelopes, then pulls one out and stares at it.

INT. ZAMORA HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

HERNANDO (O.S.)

Merida got a job offer!

Merida stands in the kitchen, her face glowing. Hernando looks over her shoulder as she reads a letter.

The letter is printed on fancy vellum with fancy letterhead, including the acronym AFAR in large letters.

Footsteps approach hurriedly. Mr. and Mrs. Zamora enter.

MRS. ZAMORA

(in Spanish)

What's this?

MERIDA

It's from Kyle Woodson.

HERNANDO

Ooh, your Belize boyfriend!

Merida shoots him an annoyed look.

Mr. Zamora puts his hand on Merida's shoulder.

MR. ZAMORA

Merida, you need to move on, leave that horrible time in the past. Stop torturing yourself.

Merida pulls away from him.

MERIDA

Papa, I've been trying to move on for five years! Nobody wants me. I'm tainted.

MRS. ZAMORA

(in Spanish)

Don't be ridiculous.

(in English)

There has to be a graduate program that will take you.

HERNANDO

What's the job?

MERIDA

Kyle works for a place in San Francisco, and he needs people to help him get his new book ready for publication.

Mrs. Zamora snatches the letter from Merida.

MRS. ZAMORA

Help? You want to be some research assistant?

(in Spanish)

No, you are not giving up. I'll help you find more schools--

Merida snatches the letter back.

MERIDA

(in Spanish)

There aren't any!

(in English)

Maybe in five more years they'll forget I was on an illegal expedition that ran into a drug gang, but I am not waiting!

MR. ZAMORA

(to Mrs. Zamora)

I can't believe you're encouraging her. She'd make a great court reporter.

(in Spanish)

My sister has a friend--

Mrs. Zamora turns on her husband, eyes narrowed.

MRS. ZAMORA

(in Spanish)

What kind of father won't support his daughter--

MR. ZAMORA

(in Spanish)

What? Don't you start with me--

MRS. ZAMORA

(in Spanish)

Why start with you when I can finish with you?

Hernando pulls Merida away.

HERNANDO

Just go, before they notice.

Merida hugs Hernando gratefully.

TRAVEL - MONTAGE

Dr. Robertson, now haggard and unshaven, reads the same letter Merida received. He tosses it onto his desk -- next to a photo of him with his arm slung jovially around a young man who resembles him -- and flips through a Rolodex. Stopping at a travel agency, he picks up the phone and dials.

Joel, now an aspiring punk with tattoos, black clothes, and a sullen expression, boards a bus to Sea-Tac airport.

Theo, now a bit chubby with gray in his hair, checks his baggage at a first class airline counter in Logan airport.

Dr. Hempfield, now gaunt with bloodshot eyes, sits in a cramped airplane seat as people board. She sends a text to "Adam" with the cell phone in her right hand while chewing gum and tapping nervously with her left hand.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

People stream in and out of the terminal doors.

MERIDA (O.S.)

Yeah, it's a little weird that we need to meet him at the airport when he's the reason we're here.

A public transit bus pulls up.

MERIDA (O.S.)

Okay, I'm here. You're all at the baggage claim?

Merida gets off the bus holding worn, mismatched bags. She looks around.

DR. HEMPFIELD (V.O.)

You work where?

INT. AIRPORT – DAY

At a baggage claim carousel, Merida, Theo, Dr. Hempfield, and Dr. Robertson stand around awkwardly, while Joel slouches in a nearby chair.

Theo, being the tallest, scans the passersby for Kyle.

MERIDA

Let's just say I've got a "Hi My Name Is" badge.

THEO

You deserve better than that.

DR. HEMPFIELD

We all deserve better.

JOEL

Hey, I get by.

MERIDA

Started that computer company you were always going on about?

Joel looks away, containing his irritation.

DR. ROBERTSON

I myself am reduced to tutoring rich little brats who don't deserve to spit on the ivy league colleges their families require them to attend. None of us has exactly prospered. A pentennium of being regarded as a pariah by the field is bound to have such an effect.

Theo glances at Dr. Robertson, amused.

THEO

Pentennium?

JOEL

(staring at Theo)

I'll bet Mr. Wealthypants is just fine.

Dr. Robertson looks sharply at Joel.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Mr. Wealthypants lost his wife, you  
ass.

Joel glances at Theo, who continues watching the crowd and does not respond. Joel looks away.

THEO

Slings and arrows for all!

MERIDA

At least now we have a chance to  
change that.

THEO

Kyle! Hey Kyle!

Kyle glances over with a blank expression as he strides along carrying a duffel bag. He's not wearing glasses.

His pace quickens, and he continues forward.

Her face aglow, Merida threads her way hastily through the passersby; the others follow.

MERIDA

Kyle, wait up!

Merida reaches him and goes to hug him, but changes her mind when he ignores her. She looks hurt and confused. Still Kyle strides forward in silence.

MERIDA

Are you in a hurry?

(beat)

Here, let me carry that.

Merida grabs the handle of his duffel bag to take it from him. Kyle resists, and increases his pace.

MERIDA

Did you get contacts?

He ignores her and strides on. Everyone's bewildered as they struggle to keep up with him.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

The others still in tow, Kyle reaches the curb across the street from a parking garage.

JOEL

What the hell, Kyle!

Without checking for oncoming traffic, Kyle strides right out into the street.

An old sedan which was slowly cruising along abruptly roars forward -- heading straight at him. The driver is a woman with short brown hair.

The others yell in horror at Kyle. He doesn't respond.

SMACK! The car sends him and his duffel bag flying through the air. ROAR! It zooms off in a cloud of exhaust.

CRUNCH! Kyle hits a wall, leaving a smear of blood. He drops to the ground in a pile, unmoving.

Distraught, Merida whips out her cell phone and dials 911.

A crowd starts to gather around Kyle, but no one gets near him, all looking stunned and horrified.

DR. HEMPFIELD (O.S.)

Out of my way!

A grim look on her face, Dr. Hempfield fights her way through the crowd. She kneels beside Kyle.

His left arm and leg are at entirely the wrong angles, and his face is a pulpy mess.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Damn it!

EXT. POLICE STATION - DAY

A few feeble rays of the sun break through the fog overhead, only to be swallowed up by the swirling mass.

Looking subdued, the group files out the front doors of the San Mateo County Police station.

MERIDA

That was not the Kyle I knew!

DR. HEMPFIELD

What, you think it was his  
doppelganger?

Theo stares off in the distance, perplexed.

JOEL

Something was up with him, walking out  
into the street like that. Damn.

Merida's face quivers at the thought.

DR. HEMPFIELD

So he's changed! We all have.

THEO

But none of us has changed in nature.

Merida glances skeptically at Joel.

MERIDA

One of us might have. But Kyle's the  
politest person I know. He would  
never just ignore me like that.

DR. ROBERTSON

The alteration is remarkable. But  
what does it mean?

Dr. Hempfield takes a phone call. They watch anxiously.

DR. HEMPFIELD

(into phone)

That's okay, just say it.

(beat)

Oh. No, I understand. It's your job.

Dr. Hempfield hangs up.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Kyle didn't make it.

Merida chokes back a sob and grabs Theo's arm.

Beat.

JOEL

So, I'm gonna miss Kyle and all, but  
do we still have jobs?

INT. AFAR OFFICE - DAY

The group waits quietly in a spacious office, the skyline of San Francisco visible through a large window. They do not interact, staring moodily off in different directions.

A poster logo for the American Foundation for Antiquarian Research dominates one wall.

LAURA BRAMBURY enters the room. A smartly dressed woman of indeterminate age, she moves with a brisk, no-nonsense energy.

She sits down across the large desk from them, a fancy sign identifying her as "LAURA H. BRAMBURY, Director."

MS. BRAMBURY

Thank you all for coming. I regret that we have to meet under these circumstances. Unfortunately, however, the senseless tragedy of yesterday does not appear to be the end of this affair.

Their sense of distraction disappears.

MS. BRAMBURY

A woman identifying herself as Felice Woodson somehow removed Kyle's body from the morgue.

Merida looks puzzled.

DR. HEMPFIELD

He had a sister?

MS. BRAMBURY

She IDed herself as Kyle's wife.

Merida leans forward, a mix of anger and fear rising.

MERIDA

But that's-- I don't--

MS. BRAMBURY

He wasn't married. The hospital can't explain how she was able to procure the body against all normal procedure.

Dr. Hempfield leans back and crosses her arms.

DR. HEMPFIELD

That's crazy! Do you have any idea how much paperwork a death creates?

MS. BRAMBURY

The police are investigating, of course, but I thought you should know.  
(beat)

Now, I imagine you're all concerned about the state of your employment.

JOEL

That's an understatement.

MS. BRAMBURY

And the opportunity stands. I intend for Kyle's book to be published, no less for its academic merit than for its value as a memorial to him. You'll be the primary researchers now, rather than assisting him. Do that, and then we'll talk about the future.

Ms. Brambury lays a key on the table. On the middle finger of her hand is a

YELLOW AGATE RING

MERIDA

Nice ring.

MS. BRAMBURY

Thank you. This is a spare house key Kyle kept in the office. I suggest you start by reviewing his research.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO STREET - DAY

As dark fog rolls by overhead, a maroon mini-van makes its way past lines of row houses.

JOEL (V.O.)

There's no way that car hitting Kyle was an accident.

INT. MINI-VAN - DAY

Theo is driving.

DR. ROBERTSON

Hark! The plaintive cry of the conspiracy nut.

JOEL

If stolen corpses are a normal part of your life, you need help.

Dr. Robertson grows annoyed.

DR. ROBERTSON

My mind, apparently unlike yours, is capable of containing an array of challenging facts without the need to slap them together in the first arrangement which springs to mind!

DR. HEMPFIELD

That woman prevented Kyle's body from being autopsied. Sure seems suspicious to me.

MERIDA

I keep telling you that wasn't Kyle.  
(beat)  
We need to find out what happened to him, because the police sure won't.

THEO

Whatever happened to him, it happened in Belize.

Dr. Hempfield shudders.

DR. HEMPFIELD

I don't understand how he could ever  
have gone back there.

EXT. WOODSON HOUSE - DAY

An unseen observer sits in a car across the street from  
Kyle's tidy Victorian era row-house. The observer's hand  
rests on the open window, the middle finger sporting a

YELLOW AGATE RING

The group goes up the steps to Kyle's front door.

From somewhere nearby, a hedge trimmer fills the  
neighborhood with a BUZZING SOUND. Looking pained, Dr.  
Hempfield puts her hands over her ears.

INT. STUDY - DAY

A cozy room dominated by shelves on each wall, overflowing  
with old books. An overstuffed armchair, a small wooden  
desk, and a cabinet with a potted plant on top complete  
the picture of academic comfort.

An INTRUDER enters. The same woman with short brown hair  
who was driving the sedan that hit Kyle, she now wears the  
uniform of a meter reader for a utility company. Her  
movements are powerful, confident.

An envelope protrudes from her shirt pocket.

The Intruder gazes searchingly around the room. Moving  
purposefully to the cabinet, she opens the doors.

The cabinet is a ruse, concealing a safe. The Intruder  
lifts the cabinet off the safe and sets it aside, then  
easily lifts up the safe and moves it out several feet  
into the room.

A square pattern of dust on the carpet marks where the  
cabinet used to be.

She pulls something out of her pocket and dashes it  
against the front of the safe. Glass shatters, followed  
by a solid cracking sound.

From downstairs comes the sound of the front door opening. The Intruder, face impassive, darts out of the room.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - DAY

A kitchen and a modest combination dining/living room are sparsely but tastefully decorated.

The front door opens, and the group enters. They gaze around briefly.

Merida wanders toward the dining/living room. The others head straight up the stairs, passing right by the unopened mail lying underneath the mail slot.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - DAY

A small landing, with a bookcase, two doorways and a set of stairs leading up.

Theo and the doctors go off into different rooms, while Joel continues up the stairs.

From behind the bookcase, the Intruder darts down the stairs.

INT. STUDY - DAY

The safe sits in the middle of the floor.

THEO (O.S.)

Strange place to leave a safe.

He and Dr. Robertson approach the safe. Dr. Robertson points his cane at the dust where the cabinet was.

DR. ROBERTSON

It's been moved.

Dr. Robertson crouches slowly down to examine shards of crystal on the floor along one side of the safe.

His breath hits the safe, and a pattern of ice crystals forms instantly. His eyes widen.

Impulsively, Dr. Robertson takes up his cane and smacks the safe. A pattern of cracks radiates from the point of impact.

Thoughtfully now, he moves to the front of the safe, and aims a blow at the lock mechanism.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - DAY

Merida stands with her back to the stairs, lost in a dozen photos of Kyle that cover one wall.

All the photos look aged, and his parents' hair is greying. There is no sign of any siblings.

Behind Merida, the Intruder peers around the corner from the bottom of the stairs. She watches Merida for a moment. Moving soundlessly, the Intruder stalks slowly across the landing, then goes down the stairs.

Hearing a stair squeak, Merida turns around just in time to glimpse the Intruder.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Theo's cell phone chimes. He glances at it, looks puzzled, and flips it open to read a text message.

Dr. Robertson looks over at Theo as Joel enters.

JOEL

What's up, docs?

Joel's self-amused smirk is unfazed by their lack of reaction.

THEO

Merida says there's an intruder in the garage. Call the police, would you?

INT. GARAGE - DAY

A Volvo occupies most of the open space in this dimly lit one-car garage.

The door to the stairway swings open and Merida's head peers out. Nothing stirs. Merida creeps into the room, while Theo flips on the light.

The Intruder jumps out from behind the car and hits a button on the wall.

MERIDA

Hey!

The garage door starts to open, and the Intruder dashes toward it.

Merida sprints after her, with Theo following.

Joel spots the garage door button and makes for it.

THEO

We just want to talk.

Joel reaches the button and hits it twice. The garage door reverses course.

As the Intruder reaches the garage door and dives for the narrow opening, Merida gets a hand on her arm.

With a powerful jerk, the Intruder pulls free, but her dive fails to take her under the descending door, and she rolls to avoid being pinned. The envelope in her shirt pocket falls out.

Outside, a siren approaches.

The Intruder jumps up as Theo and Joel approach warily.

JOEL

So what's the deal? What do you want?

Merida gets up and together the trio corners the Intruder.

Footsteps and voices approach outside. Hearing them, the Intruder speaks with a strange DRONING BUZZ.

INTRUDER

Back off. Now.

Their faces glaze over, and they find themselves stepping back.

POLICE OFFICER

This is the police. Open up!

Hearing the Police Officer's voice, the Intruder closes her eyes, slumps to the floor, and begins convulsing.

Snapping out of it, Merida runs over and gets the garage door opening again.

MERIDA

Help! Convulsing woman here!

Theo and Joel look at the Intruder with alarm, but don't approach her. Joel notices the Intruder's envelope on the floor and grabs it, stuffing it in his back pocket.

The POLICE OFFICER ducks under the garage door and enters, with Dr. Hempfield right behind.

The Intruder stops convulsing, dead. When Dr. Hempfield sees the Intruder's body, she brushes quickly past the Police Officer.

POLICE OFFICER

What happened here?

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

All but Merida wait in uncomfortable chairs for their statements to be taken.

The Police Officer lets Merida back in the holding room. She slumps down in a chair, looking tired and unhappy.

The Police Officer beckons to Joel, and he leaves sullenly.

DR. ROBERTSON

(to Merida)

I'm sure this is entirely routine. We were present at the scene of a death, after all.

MERIDA

Police encounters are never routine in my neighborhood.

THEO

They'll let us go. We haven't done anything.

Dr. Hempfield shoots Theo a dubious look.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Spoken with the optimism of a rich white man.

Theo is amused.

THEO

I confess, I'll always speak like a rich white man. Is there some other person you'd prefer me to imitate?

DR. HEMPFIELD

I don't know, would you be any good at it?

(beat)

Say, shouldn't you have a high-powered lawyer at your beck and call?

Theo laughs, genuinely amused.

THEO

I'll have my butler ring him up.

Merida fidgets uncomfortably.

MERIDA

What was that woman after?

DR. ROBERTSON

The contents of a safe.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Were they worth dying for? She sure didn't want to get caught.

EXT. PUB - NIGHT

A taxi van pulls up to the curb at an upscale pub.

DR. ROBERTSON (O.S.)

The safe contained mostly research: a master's thesis, several file folders, and a thumb drive.

The group slowly climbs out of the van looking worn and tired. Dr. Hempfield's cell phone rings, and she steps away to answer.

JOEL

What the hell was he researching?

MERIDA

We'll have to go through it tomorrow  
and find out.

Dr. Hempfield returns.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Not so fast. Adam got us an  
appointment with the medical examiner  
for tomorrow morning.

JOEL

Us? For what, a group date?

DR. HEMPFIELD

(annoyed)

To get the inside scoop on that  
woman's autopsy.

JOEL

I'll pass on the biology lesson.

Dr. Hempfield steps toward Joel, angry now.

MERIDA

Shut up, Joel, let her talk.

DR. HEMPFIELD

People don't just decide to die  
suddenly! If we know what caused her  
death, it might give us a clue to  
what's going on.

DR. ROBERTSON

I prefer the company of paper to that  
of corpses, and ink to that of blood.

They head into the pub.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

The group, minus Dr. Robertson, enters the autopsy room,  
where the Intruder's body lies on the examining table --  
covered except for the head.

The top of the skull has been sawn off, and the sight disturbs everyone.

The pathologist DR. WENDERBAUM is a sanguine, wheezing man in his late 40s.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Thanks again, Dr. Wenderbaum.

DR. WENDERBAUM

Don't thank me yet. You haven't seen what I found.

Theo stands near the table to watch, while Merida and Joel stay at the edge of the room. Merida looks on, but Joel studiously averts his gaze.

DR. WENDERBAUM

My conclusion is that the subject died of a brain embolism. But that's not the real problem.

Dr. Wenderbaum points to the top of the head, which is open to display the brain.

DR. WENDERBAUM

Start with the fact that the brain is too small for the cranium.

Joel makes a noise and swallows uncomfortably.

THEO

Does that ever happen naturally?

DR. WENDERBAUM

A normal skull, a normally shaped brain, no sign of excessive intracranial pressure... no, not like this. But that's not the main thing.

Dr. Wenderbaum moves a swivel lamp over the brain. He looks at Dr. Hempfield.

DR. WENDERBAUM

Go ahead, take a look.

Dr. Hempfield bends down to study the brain.

DR. HEMPFIELD

That is just wrong.

Joel looks up, interested now. He and Merida come over.

Dr. Hempfield's hand points at the back of the brain, where a grey-orange cable connects the brain to the spine.

THEO

Now why would someone want to ruin a perfectly good brain?

DR. WENDERBAUM

There's more.

Dr. Wenderbaum motions them to follow him as he goes over to a computer.

DR. WENDERBAUM (CONT'D)

I took a thin slice of tissue from the brain and had it scanned.

On the monitor is an image of the brain tissue under a microscope. Filaments of the same grey-orange substance permeate the image.

JOEL

Sweet!

DR. WENDERBAUM

Whatever it is, it centers around the nervous system. Which--

DR. HEMPFIELD

Makes a lot of sense. The brain is by far the most complex computer we know.

Dr. Wenderbaum looks uncomfortable, and stares at the floor, then looks up at Dr. Hempfield.

DR. WENDERBAUM

I have requested DNA tests of brain tissue and skin tissue from the hand. It should be done soon.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Oh, no. You are not going to say what I think you are.

THEO

And that would be?

MERIDA (V.O.)

He thinks the brain is from a different body.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

Merida paces to and fro as she talks on her cell phone.

MERIDA

That's right. Some kind of... neuralware, Joel called it. For remote control of the body.

No, he was totally serious.

INT. HOTEL, DR. ROBERTSON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Robertson sits in the chair at the little desk, his back to the room, which is strewn with clothes, papers, and books.

On the bedside table is the same framed photo of him with the young man.

Dr. Robertson leans back in his chair, phone to his ear, distracted. Books and papers surround him.

He closes a notebook in front of him titled, "Early Mayan Glyphs, San Bartolo," and tries to listen.

DR. ROBERTSON

Apologies, I'm not sure what this--

MERIDA (V.O.)

It means something really is going on!

EXT. HOTEL BALCONY - NIGHT

Theo smokes a cigar while reading a plain bound volume whose title is long but ends with "a Particular Emphasis on the Zanthu Tablets."

Inside...

INT. HOTEL, THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT

An elegant suite affords the group plenty of space.

Dr. Hempfield sits at the large desk, a thumb drive plugged into the side of her laptop. She hangs up a cell phone call from "Adam" and disconnects the thumb drive.

Dr. Robertson reclines in one of the armchairs, a glass of wine at his side and a faded booklet in his hands, titled, "The Zanthu Tablets: A Conjectural Translation."

Merida and Joel lie on the floor, poking through the papers and file folders spread out all around them.

DR. HEMPFIELD

The only thing this tells me is, Kyle went off the deep end.

Beat.

MERIDA

It may not make sense to us yet, but--

DR. HEMPFIELD

Sense? Lost continents and freaky eldritch gods will never make sense!

JOEL

You need to get out more. It's a big universe.

Dr. Hempfield waves the thumb drive.

DR. HEMPFIELD

He was supposed to be working on Mayan medical practices.

THEO

I think he got distracted.

INT. LIBRARY [FLASHBACK]

In a dim, windowless room whose walls are lined with musty old books, Kyle holds a worn volume titled, "Lost Worlds of the Jungle."

THEO (V.O.)

It looks like he found a reference to Mayan hieroglyphs in Asia...

Lost in rapt fascination, Kyle flips to the next page. It contains a black-and-white photo captioned, "Professor Eli Davenport."

THEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...and couldn't resist following up.

LATER

Kyle stares at a library computer which displays search results for "Eli Davenport +Maya."

MERIDA (V.O.)

That must've led him to the Zanthu Tablets.

He clicks on an entry for "Linguistic Linkages between Archaic Asian Pictograms and the Hieroglyphs of the Yucatan Maya, with a Particular Emphasis on the Zanthu Tablets" by Eli Davenport, published by Miskatonic University.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DAY [FLASHBACK]

MERIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In 1913, this guy, Harold Copeland, returned from an expedition to southeast Asia with the tablets.

Harold Copeland, an emaciated, bedraggled man in his 40s, stumbles out of the jungle and collapses. He clutches a satchel, from which several black stone tablets protrude.

INT. SANBOURNE INSTITUTE - DAY [FLASHBACK]

MERIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He was the only survivor, and never recovered.

Looking somewhat healthier but nervous and haunted, Copeland stands next to a stack of crates, one labeled "Zanthu Tablets." He signs a form on a clipboard and hands it to a bespectacled academic, then hurries away.

END FLASHBACK

INT. HOTEL, THEO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dr. Robertson stares at the booklet he's holding.

DR. ROBERTSON

What became of the tablets?

MERIDA

This place near L.A. called the Sanbourne Institute has a complete facsimile of them. Kyle studied it.

DR. ROBERTSON

This translation is fantastical, but the real test is reading the original.

THEO

Kyle thought it was legit, so let's check it out.

JOEL

He had a whole file on El Cacao. Two expeditions in the thirties disappeared in that area.

Merida crosses herself.

MERIDA

(in Spanish)

Mary, Blessed Virgin, may I never go back to Belize.

INT. HOTEL BATHROOM - NIGHT

Merida picks up the toothpaste from the counter and reaches for her toothbrush, but fumbles and drops it on the floor. With a noise of frustration, she bends over and grabs the toothbrush, but --

MEMORY FLASH

Merida's hand grabs Kyle's

TORTOISE-SHELL BROWLINE GLASSES

off the ground.

-- her face buckles, and tears well up.

MERIDA

(in Spanish)

Damn it!

She struggles to regain her composure.

Beat.

Merida decisively grabs her jacket and purse and rushes out the door.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A lively business district, the street lined with shops. Tourists stroll by.

As Merida steps out onto the sidewalk, her cell phone rings. She hesitates, decides to ignore it. Taking a deep controlled breath, she looks one way down the street, checking out the shops.

KYLE (O.S.)

Well, well, I was just calling you.

Merida turns the other way to see Kyle -- well-dressed, well-groomed, and wearing

BROWN HORN-RIMMED GLASSES

-- as he puts a cell phone in his pocket.

Merida reflexively takes a step toward him, eyes longing, then thinks about it.

MERIDA

But it's-- you're--

Kyle's face is expressionless, and he speaks with a DRONING BUZZ like the Intruder's.

KYLE

Call the others down.

Merida's face starts to glaze over, but she fights it.

MERIDA

You... changed... glasses?

Kyle just stares for a moment.

KYLE

Call the others. Tell them to come down.

Merida involuntarily takes her phone out of her purse.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

A four-star vibe. A few people on sofas read newspapers.

THEO (O.S.)

I don't know what she wants, she just said it was important!

The elevator doors open.

JOEL

This is weird.

Joel looks around suspiciously. The others head for the front doors.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

Merida stares vacantly at Kyle. Her face flickers, and her mouth starts to open.

KYLE

Hold on, now. Just another moment.

DR. HEMPFIELD (O.S.)

There you a--

The other four arrive. They spot Kyle, and are stunned.

KYLE

Oh good, you're here. Follow me, and  
I'll explain everything.

Kyle's DRONING VOICE compels them as he starts to walk  
away.

They look confused, but find themselves following him. His  
gait is intensely purposeful, like Kyle at the airport.

MERIDA

(slowly, struggling)

But... we... saw you--

KYLE

Yes, yes, it's all very confusing,  
isn't it? This way.

Kyle turns right and continues walking.

KYLE

I really am sorry to have caused all  
this trouble.

He turns into...

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

They follow Kyle down the narrow alley, which is lit only  
by one dim bulb.

KYLE (CONT'D)

Our cosmos is but one of many, and all  
contain marvels which my ignorance and  
parochial attitudes led me to fear.

Awaiting them down the alley is a black delivery truck,  
its rear doors wide open and its license plate holder  
empty. Inside is an unnatural blackness, but with a hint  
of disquieting motion.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I fell prey, as so many do, to  
humanity's eternal tendency to hate  
and fear and shrink from the utterly  
different.

Kyle motions for them to ascend the ramp which leads into  
the back of the truck, into the blackness. A soft BUZZING  
SOUND becomes audible.

KYLE (CONT'D)

There are beings who would teach us--

Just as Merida starts up the ramp, something in the truck,  
inside the blackness, goes THUMP.

BANG! A door in the alley wall flies opens. Two  
MAINTENANCE MEN rush out, dragging a maintenance cart.

The following all happens in a moment:

Kyle lets out a yelp.

Maintenance Man #2 yanks Merida off the ramp and away from  
the blackness.

Maintenance Man #1, a large tough guy, picks up what looks  
like a small bazooka from the cart.

BUZZING and CLATTERING sounds come from inside the truck.  
A jet of white mist streams out of it-- FSSSST! The mist  
hits Maintenance Man #2, instantly covering him in frost  
and icicles.

Maintenance Man #1 aims his device at the truck.

Maintenance Man #2 topples. SMASH! He shatters into tiny  
pieces when he hits the ground.

Pressing a button on the device, with a

YELLOW AGATE RING

glinting on his hand, Maintenance Man #1 fires a small  
metal ball into the truck.

FOOMP! There is a contained percussive explosion accompanied by an intense burst of light that fills the van. The light bulb flickers out, and darkness descends.

All manner of noise breaks out -- thumps, BUZZING shrieks, crashes, a few screams, gunshots, glass breaking.

Beat to silence.

EXT. ALLEY - LATER

The light flickers on again. Kyle, the two men, the cart, and the truck are gone.

Clouds of condensation puff from the mouths of the five people lying unconscious on the ground. They begin to stir, groaning.

Merida props herself up on her elbows, shivering.

Joel rolls over onto his side, then gags and covers his mouth and nose with his sleeve.

JOEL

Aaaghh, it's like bad milk that died.

Theo tries to sit up and winces, then lays back down.

Dr. Hempfield comes to with a start and claps a hand to her forehead.

DR. HEMPFIELD

No-- you can't-- keep that away--

(snapping out of it)

What? What the hell happened?

Joel sits up, looking nauseated.

JOEL

Man, I can't take it anymore. This whole thing is ridiculous. How many Kyles are there?

Holding his stomach, Joel gets up and stumbles away. He bends over, gagging, then spots something on the ground and yells in fright.

Theo and Dr. Hempfield get up slowly. Merida jumps up and runs over to Joel, who backs away. She steps cautiously toward the spot he's staring at. She holds her nose.

Dr. Hempfield staggers over, while Theo helps Dr. Robertson up.

Off to the side, Joel vomits.

MERIDA

¡Díos mio! What was in that truck?

The others join her. Dr. Hempfield whistles.

Two mounds of slimy greenish-brown goo lie on the ground near where the truck was, with ribbons, tendrils, and bits of the goo splattered all over.

JOEL (O.S.)

I quit!

Joel walks back toward the street.

DR. HEMPFIELD

That was quick.

MERIDA

Don't you dare run away again--

Joel whirls around.

JOEL

Give it a fucking rest, I know what you think of me! Like I need a reminder of what happened.

Joel points at the mounds of goo.

JOEL

What the hell was that?

THEO

A sign we're finally getting somewhere--

JOEL

Yeah, getting nearly kidnapped--

BANG! Dr. Robertson holds his cane against a garbage bin.

DR. ROBERTSON

Let him go. I wouldn't blame any of us for wanting to throw in the towel, considering we've now strayed into X-Files territory.

Joel laughs scoffingly.

MERIDA

I think, whatever just happened, it means we're on to something.

Joel's expression turns thoughtful.

JOEL

Yeah, those guys were kind of on our side, weren't they?

DR. HEMPFIELD

If we quit, the other side wins.

INT. HOTEL, MERIDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

A modest room, so tidy you can barely tell someone's staying here.

Merida sits on the edge of her bed in her pajamas, holding something up in front of her mouth.

MERIDA

(whispering)

...and I just don't think my parents would understand any of this. So I'm telling you.

She lowers her hand to reveal a worry doll, a tiny, brightly-colored handmade figure.

A heavy, uncertain look occupies her face. Sighing, she folds her hands in her lap, then closes her eyes.

MERIDA

(reciting slowly in  
Spanish)

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is  
with you. Blessed are you among  
women, and blessed is--

Abruptly she stops and opens her eyes.

MERIDA

God, I don't know how to do this. I  
don't know where Kyle is, if he could  
hear me or not.

(beat)

But I guess you know, so whether he's  
in Purgatory, or alive somewhere down  
here, please be with him, and grant  
him your grace.

(beat)

Amen.

INT. DORM BATHROOM

Merida's POV: She pushes open a door marked "MUJERES," to  
reveal the kind of plain bathroom you might find at a  
camp.

Macha is wrapped in a towel, hair damp, one leg up on a  
bench, shaving it with an electric shaver which BUZZES  
intensely.

MERIDA

Can I pick your brain about  
something?

Macha, now dressed in a classic white lab coat, turns off  
the shaver, but the BUZZING continues.

MERIDA

Do you think mom would freak out if  
I got dreadlocks?

MACHA

I don't know, let me think.

The overhead light is now green.

Macha scratches her forehead and a thin red line becomes visible straight across it. In fact, the top half of her head looks like it's slightly offset from the bottom half.

END DREAM

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Fog-shrouded redwood-covered hills stream by out the windows.

THEO (O.S.)

Where is this Institute exactly?

The group occupies a set of seats facing each other, with Merida and Joel in the backward seats.

MERIDA

It's in the Santa Ana Mountains, south of L.A. Hopefully the director will remember Kyle and help us out.

She pops a couple of aspirin and rubs her forehead.

JOEL

What if Kyle was on the right track?

He remembers something, and rummages in his backpack.

DR. HEMPFIELD

You mean what if it's only going to get weirder from here?

MERIDA

Hey, Copeland and two curators of his collection all went mad. I think we're doing pretty well.

JOEL

So, don't jump down my throat, because I just forgot about it till this morning, but I think I have something of Kyle's.

Joel presents a key. Dr. Robertson grabs it, examines it.

JOEL

It was in an envelope on the garage floor, after we confronted that woman. I think she dropped it.

MERIDA

It did kind of look like someone had gone through Kyle's mail.

DR. ROBERTSON

It's a safe deposit box key.

Joel holds up the key's envelope.

JOEL

Kyle mailed it to himself from Silverado, California.

MERIDA

That's where the Sanbourne Institute is.

THEO

He mailed it to himself? I guess he wasn't planning on going home.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The train pulls into the LA terminal.

EXT. KATE'S LAGOON, DORM BUILDING - NIGHT [DREAM]

A table is set up between two plain one-story buildings, a long building labeled "DORMITORY and a squarer building labeled "DINING HALL." The table is covered in barbecue fixings, tropical style.

Theo's POV: He leans over the table, putting a veggie burger patty on a bun. Sophie saunters up wearing a one piece bathing suit with shorts over it.

THEO (O.S.)

Hey, I was just making you a veggie burger.

She grins.

SOPHIE

I'll take lettuce and pineapple.

No lettuce or tomato in sight. Theo matter-of-factly picks up a bluish-purple little squid, cuts off the tentacles, and puts them on the burger.

Now Sophie wears a white bathrobe.

A fly lands on the burger, and BUZZING replaces the usual jungle noises. Theo shoos the fly away but the BUZZING continues unabated.

The moonlight is replaced by a green light shining overhead. Theo spots a cell phone on the table, vibrating. Agitated, he turns it off, but the BUZZING continues.

Now Sophie wears a white lab coat as she uses an electric knife to open a shiny metal can. The can bleeds as the blade slices easily through it.

END DREAM

EXT. SANTA ANA MOUNTAINS - DAY

A light blue mini-van climbs up a steep, winding road, the haze of Orange County spreading out behind it.

INT. MINI-VAN - DAY

Sitting in the front passenger's seat, Theo massages his temples while Merida drives.

MERIDA

Headache?

THEO

My head just doesn't feel right. I had this weird dream...

MERIDA

Mine's been bothering me since yesterday morning.

THEO

The worst part, actually, is that it seems familiar somehow, like I've forgotten something but I have no idea what.

EXT. SANBOURNE INSTITUTE - DAY

Up in the Santa Ana mountains, the mini-van reaches a sign for "Sanbourne Institute for Pacific Studies," and turns into the driveway.

The Institute is a majestic Spanish colonial mansion, four stories high with several wings. The grounds are not well-kept.

Theo, Merida, and Dr. Robertson clamber out of the van, then it drives off.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Faded art-deco long neglected. The doors are all closed, and only a few have signs. Dr. Robertson, Theo, and Merida meander along.

The sign on one door says "David Cox, Assistant Director." From behind the door comes the muted sound of one end of an argument.

COX (O.S.)

You'll just have trust me! They're doing fine.

Dr. Robertson knocks.

COX (O.S.)

Come in.

INT. COX'S OFFICE

DAVID COX, an uptight man in his 30s, wears nondescript modern office attire. The room is excessively organized.

Hanging up the phone, he looks up as the group enters and trains his intense blue eyes on them.

COX

You must be the group from AFAR.

There's something strange about the way Cox talks. It almost sounds a bit rehearsed.

MERIDA

A friend of ours, Kyle Woodson, came here for some of his research. Well, he... he's missing, and we're trying to follow his trail.

Cox doesn't seem disturbed by this.

COX

The name is familiar. I was away at the time, so I never met him, but paperwork sees all, you know.

He flashes a faint smile.

THEO

Like him, we're here for the Zanthu Tablet archives.

COX

Ah, the Zanthu Tablets. Fascinating material. The tablets themselves were lost in the early thirties -- such a pity -- but Copeland made a decent facsimile of most of the inscriptions.

INT. MANUSCRIPT ROOM - DAY

The room is full of crates, boxes, and file cabinets, most covered in a layer of dust.

Cox pushes an old-style button to turn on the light. A few seconds later the yellowish fluorescent lights flicker on, bringing with them an annoying BUZZING SOUND.

Theo and Merida jump at the noise. Dr. Robertson claps his hands over his ears.

Cox notices their reaction, but seems more amused than surprised. He walks to a file cabinet, pulls out a drawer, and pokes through the unlabeled hanging file folders.

COX

Here you are -- the facsimile and accompanying notes.

Cox hands Dr. Robertson a thick yellowed folder -- on the middle finger of one hand is a

YELLOW AGATE RING

The papers inside the folder stick out chaotically.

THEO

You and Brambury in the same club?

This catches Cox off guard.

COX

Yes, we... both eat lots of Cracker Jack. You may stay as long as you like, but we are not a library; the material must remain here.

Cox turns and walks out. Theo gazes curiously after him.

DR. ROBERTSON

These notes are an utter jumble. One could squander an hour simply organizing them.

MERIDA

I'll help you with that.

Dr. Robertson hands Theo a wad of papers from the folder.

Merida spots a cluttered desk and heads over to clear it off. She picks up a small box labeled "Lemuria expedition notes, 1897" and sets it on the floor.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Dr. Hempfield and Joel exit the mini-van and walk toward a small local bank.

JOEL

Adam got us access to someone else's safety deposit box? What is he, some kind of spy?

DR. HEMPFIELD

If he is, I don't want to know.

JOEL

This key had better lead us to something.

DR. HEMPFIELD

I just hope whatever we find isn't too eggheady.

INT. BANK VAULT

Dr. Hempfield unlocks a box and pulls it out, opens it. Surprised, she takes out a small voice recorder.

She hits play.

KYLE (V.O.)

--ther nightmare, oh God, the horrible things. Can still feel the pain in my forehead where the knife--

Dr. Hempfield stops the playback.

JOEL

Holy crap!

INT. MANUSCRIPT ROOM - DAY

Theo slouches at a desk, absently rubbing his forehead.

At another desk, Dr. Robertson leans back in his chair, utterly absorbed in the papers he's holding.

Sitting cross-legged on the floor, Merida puts down a piece of paper. She checks her watch and stretches.

Dr. Robertson leans forward, looks in a notebook, and jots several words. He looks puzzled.

DR. ROBERTSON

What do you make of this? "Wi-ni-ki  
e-k'e u-wa-ya."

Merida goes over to see what he's talking about.

MERIDA

People from the black room?

Theo looks up, interested.

DR. ROBERTSON

That was my first thought too, but it  
makes no sense in any of the contexts  
in which it occurs.

He hands Merida a piece of paper covered in Mayan glyphs.  
She studies it.

MERIDA

I don't recognize most of these.

DR. ROBERTSON

They are remarkably like the San  
Bartolo glyphs, but even so there are  
some I can't make out.

Theo stands up and stretches.

MERIDA

San Bartolo, that's the recent  
discovery in Guatemala, right? I  
thought we couldn't read them.

DR. ROBERTSON

My devotion to this field is none the  
weaker for my recent ostracism from  
it.

(beat)

Someone has to decipher them; why not  
me?

Theo joins them.

MERIDA

"E-k'e" could be sky instead of black.

THEO

People from the sky room makes even less sense.

DR. ROBERTSON

Of course, "wa-ya" could also mean hole or entrance or portal or spirit, but none of it adds up.

THEO

A word's different meanings are rarely unrelated. Holes and rooms have entrances, and a portal is a type of entrance. Spirits tend to live in other dimensions and have to come through a portal into ours.

Beat.

MERIDA

People from the sky portal.

DR. ROBERTSON

A portal into another dimension.

INT. BANK VAULT

Joel and Dr. Hempfield slouch over the table in the center of the room, slightly dazed as the recording goes on.

KYLE (V.O.)

--while I'm awake now, unspeakable nightmares. Or worse. Memorie--

JOEL

If I have to listen to much more of this, I'll shoot myself.

Dr. Hempfield stops the playback and squints at the tiny display.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Buck up, kiddo, we're almost done.

She presses play.

KYLE (V.O.)

--voices from beyond the stars will  
speak in the darkness to the people,  
turning them to the darkness.

Joel looks at her like Kyle's gone off the deep end now.

KYLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The people will build a great place of  
terror called Shi-ball-bah...

EXT. SANBOURNE INSTITUTE - NIGHT

Moonlit tendrils of fog reach inland toward the mountains.

The group lingers outside the Institute, under the harsh  
glare and faint BUZZING of the floodlights. All five of  
them look strained and worn.

KYLE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...where he who rules as god-king will  
converse with the Mighty Messenger  
Nyarlathotep--

Dr. Hempfield hits stop.

MERIDA

So this is it, this is the answer!

Joel shakes his head incredulously.

JOEL

This is what got Kyle in trouble.

THEO

The proof of the theory is in the  
persecuting.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Sure, no one ever got persecuted just  
for being crazy. What exactly are we  
talking about here?

Dr. Robertson takes a deep breath.

DR. ROBERTSON

An alternate history of our world, in which beings from another dimension have worked behind the scenes for thousands of years to exploit, manipulate, and prepare us for their ancient deities.

MERIDA

In Belize they corrupted a Mayan village to their service.

JOEL

Since no one else is saying it, I will. Aliens. They must've been the ones in the truck in the alley.

Dr. Hempfield heads for the van.

DR. HEMPFIELD

I can't take these damn lights buzzing at me anymore. It's hard enough talking about aliens with a straight face.

INT. MINI-VAN - NIGHT

Dr. Hempfield drives, with Theo in the passenger seat.

THEO

Aliens. Aliens, aliens, aliens. Am I supposed to just accept that?

DR. HEMPFIELD

A crazy recording and some old inscription doesn't make it real. What happened to us in that alley, that makes it real.

DR. ROBERTSON

Joel did say it's a big universe.

Surprised, Joel glances briefly at Dr. Robertson, without making eye contact, and sort of grins.

MERIDA

At least we're going through it  
together.

Merida crosses herself.

MERIDA

Poor Kyle was all by himself.

She hugs her arms tightly around her.

DR. HEMPFIELD

About that...

JOEL

He was having crazy nightmares about  
his head being sliced open, and  
feeling persecuted by shadowy figures.

DR. HEMPFIELD

This is the conclusion he came to.

Dr. Hempfield hits play on the recorder.

INT. DIMLY LIT MOTEL ROOM [FLASHBACK]

Kyle huddles on the floor in the narrow space between the  
bed and the wall. Visible around the corner is the door  
to the room, a chair wedged under the doorknob.

He clenches a voice recorder.

KYLE

I... must go back--

Kyle freezes and listens intently.

Beat to silence.

He holds up the recorder again.

KYLE

Whether I return alive or not, this...  
blasphemous secret, these obscene,  
monstrous fragments of an...  
inconceivable past-- I have to know if  
it's true.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. HOTEL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The van pulls into a parking space.

THEO (O.S.)

El Cacao, here we come.

The driver's side door opens, but Dr. Hempfield lingers.

INT. MINI-VAN - NIGHT

DR. HEMPFIELD

Is it too late to go home? Forget  
that everything I know is wrong,  
sleep without nightmares, go back  
to my normal life?

MERIDA

And when you lie awake at night  
wondering what happened to Kyle?

Pulling out a silver flask, Dr. Hempfield gives Merida a  
look and shakes it.

MERIDA

And when you lie in bed the following  
morning feeling like crap, but still  
wondering what happened to Kyle?

EXT. MINI-VAN - NIGHT

Dr. Hempfield slides out of the van. The side door opens,  
and the others pile out.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Not everyone is obsessed with Kyle.

Dr. Hempfield walks away.

JOEL

Who's chickening out now?

MERIDA

Fine, go home! If you think that black truck won't keep coming back for you, if you think the world will ever feel safe and normal again, then go!

Dr. Hempfield stops, and turns slowly around.

MERIDA (CONT'D)

This is about all of us now.

JOEL

If aliens are coming after me, I want to know why.

THEO

Why stop now? My sense of reality is still partly intact.

Theo looks at Dr. Robertson.

DR. ROBERTSON

I find it difficult to imagine a satisfactory resolution predicated on ignorance.

JOEL

Geez, doc, why can't you just say you agree? Do you have something against words with less than three syllables?

Dr. Robertson looks at Joel defiantly.

DR. ROBERTSON

Oligosyllabic bigotry is next to impossible in English.

THEO

Let it rest, Joel.

DR. HEMPFIELD

(to Joel)

You know, you used to be a nice guy. What happened?

Joel goes red and glares at Dr. Hempfield.

DR. ROBERTSON

Leave him alone. He's been through enough.

Joel turns his glare on Dr. Robertson.

DR. ROBERTSON

You may not recall, Joel, but you did think well of me once. You even told me how your father--

JOEL

I regretted that as soon as I said it.

He stalks off.

MERIDA

I think it was a big deal for him to let my sister get close.

THEO

Ouch.

Theo's face flickers.

Beat.

Dr. Hempfield shrugs.

DR. HEMPFIELD

I guess someone's got to keep an eye on you when you go all egghead and lose track of reality.

INT. AIRPLANE - DAY

An international flight with three sections of seats in each row. Joel sits by himself, playing a game on a tablet computer. The others sit together.

Dr. Hempfield sleeps with an eyeshade on. Dr. Robertson watches the in-flight movie. Merida reads a book by Rigoberta Menchú, with Theo next to her in the aisle seat.

The passenger behind Theo has her hand on the aisle armrest, on one finger of which is a

YELLOW AGATE RING

Merida looks over to see Theo holding a photo of Sophie and staring at it.

The following conversation takes place in Spanish.

THEO

We would have been married fifteen years next spring.

Beat.

MERIDA

How did you meet?

Theo smiles wistfully.

THEO

From opposite sides of a protest. I'd never met anyone I could argue with and come away feeling closer to.

MERIDA

I kind of know what you mean. For all that Macha and I argued, I could always tell she loved me.

THEO

Do you feel responsible? You know--

Merida looks away.

MERIDA

Don't get me started!

THEO

You're not alone, for what it's worth.

(beat)

But, you know, Hamlet was right: there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in my philosophy.

MERIDA

So far they're all awful! This is so much worse than anything I could ever have imagined.

THEO

If it's any consolation, I found a silver lining in the dissipating cloud of my world-view.

Merida smiles faintly at the metaphor.

THEO (CONT'D)

If all these demented things we've seen and learned are possible, then maybe something fantastic is possible.

Theo looks back down at Sophie.

THEO (CONT'D)

Like seeing her again.

EXT. BELIZE CITY - NIGHT

Series of shots of the city in moonlight:

- cruise ships at anchor in the harbor
- the three bridges over Belize River
- canals running through the poor south side of the city

EXT. NEW ORLEANS, BOURBON STREET - NIGHT [DREAM]

A bright, lively scene on a hot summer night.

Dr. Hempfield's POV: Strolling up to a homey Cajun restaurant with live jazz music, she greets ADAM CASSINI, a middle-aged black-haired biker clad in red leather, as he exits.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Hey, Adam. What's good tonight?

Adam grins widely, glad to see her.

ADAM

What's shaking? The lobster fricassee is to live for.

They high five.

INT. NOVELTY SHOP - NIGHT

The overhead light in here is green. Dr. Hempfield checks out a large lobster tank as she closes the door behind her. The lobsters are all lined up against the glass, facing her and waving their feelers.

Turning, she sees shelves overflowing with weird knick-knacks and kitschy souvenirs. A nearby shelf is full of large shiny metal cans. In the corner, a gray-haired saxophone player on a stool sways to and fro as though playing soulfully, but a BUZZING sound is all that comes out.

As Dr. Hempfield turns back to the lobster tank, the shop walls become industrial metal. The lobster tank is now embedded into the wall.

She sticks her hand into the tank and the BUZZING intensifies. Her eyes glaze over and she stops moving.

A blue lobster crawls up her arm toward her head, all its antennae, antennules, mandibles, maxillae, and maxillopedes waving furiously at her, getting closer and closer.

END DREAM

INT. HOTEL RESTAURANT - MORNING

A colorful, friendly place full of tourists.

Dr. Hempfield ambles up to the table where the others are already eating. She sets a bottle of ibuprofen down, then notices the two bottles already present.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Don't tell me we've all got headaches.

Still in his bathrobe and looking haggard, Dr. Robertson rubs his forehead and blinks wearily at her.

JOEL

You look bad as I feel.

Merida glances at Theo.

MERIDA

Did you have a nightmare?

Dr. Hempfield laughs uneasily.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Nightmares usually involve someone trying to kill me. This was just a dream, but it felt different, more real somehow.

THEO

Maybe it was. Maybe we've all been visiting the astral plane.

Dr. Robertson puts down his fork, thoughtful.

DR. ROBERTSON

Doctor Hempfield, I seem to recall reading once that dreams can contain elements of repressed memory.

JOEL

Woah, doc, what are you saying?

Bam! Dr. Robertson pounds the table with a fist.

DR. ROBERTSON

Can we please for once just explore a line of reasoning without making a hundred premature inferences along the way?

JOEL

Fine, I'll shut up as usual!

DR. HEMPFIELD

Settle down, boys! Yes, dreams can serve that function.

MERIDA

There's only one thing we've all shared that's worth repressing.

Beat.

JOEL

But what would we have repressed?  
I remember... more than I want to.

THEO

The same thing that usually gets repressed -- the truth. And you know, something's always felt wrong about El Cacao, what I remember anyway. When I think about Sophie pushing me into the bushes, I feel mad at her, selfishly mad for depriving me of her. But what I remember feeling at the time is grateful. Doesn't make sense.

DR. HEMPFIELD

That would be awfully damned convenient! All our guilt and anguish at the choices we made, gone!

MERIDA

If there's any chance I didn't hesitate choosing Macha over Kyle, if there's any chance Joel didn't just run off, we have to know.

JOEL

But what's the alternative, that what happened to us at El Cacao is worse than we remember?

EXT. BELIZE HOTEL - DAY

A cheerfully painted local establishment.

Merida and Joel load luggage into the back of a Jeep.

Joel drops a duffel bag and eyes her, vulnerable for once.

MERIDA

That's Kyle's bag.

JOEL

When he got hit, all I could think was, his bag might tell us why.

He unzips the bag.

JOEL

But all I really found was this.

He pulls out the blue and green raincoat and hands it to Merida. She feels the fabric, right where there should be bullet holes.

EXT. KATE'S LAGOON - DAY [FLASHBACK]

Merida and Macha sit on a log under dark clouds, looking out at a lagoon fringed with leggy mangrove trees.

Crack-boom! The sisters jump at the lightning and thunder. Rain suddenly pours down.

Merida opens an umbrella, while Macha pulls the blue and green raincoat from a backpack and puts it on.

Merida stares, agape, at the raincoat.

MERIDA

I thought I'd lost that! You took it?

Macha laughs mischievously.

MACHA

(in Spanish)

You should thank me for being a good sister -- it looks much better on me.

Merida socks Macha in the shoulder.

MERIDA

No, you're the evil sister!

MACHA

Details! The point is, everyone needs a nemesis.

(beat, then in Spanish)

Now come on or we'll be late.

Macha grabs Merida's hand and they run off toward the dining hall.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. BELIZE HOTEL - DAY

MERIDA

(to herself)

We were both the good sister.

(to Joel)

Maybe what really happened to us  
wasn't worse.

JOEL

Sorry I didn't tell you sooner, but--

MERIDA

Thank you.

She hugs him, a long, tight hug of shared pain.

DR. HEMPFIELD (O.S.)

All right, this one's full.  
Everything else goes in the Jeep.Theo and Dr. Hempfield stand behind a Land Rover. Theo  
closes the hatch.

Dr. Robertson walks up with a few more bags.

DR. ROBERTSON

Where Kyle went, so must we; to what  
end I dare not wonder.

THEO

I dare wonder. Maybe we'll find more  
than Kyle.

DR. ROBERTSON

You're thinking about Sophie.

JOEL

Maybe she's at El Cacao with Kyle.  
Maybe we'll find all the people we  
thought died there.

DR. HEMPFIELD

As long as we don't join them.

## DRIVING THROUGH BELIZE - MONTAGE

The two vehicles pass by two-story houses with distinctive red and blue roofs.

And then through sparsely populated areas with scattered fields of sugarcane and bananas.

And then through mangrove swamps and palmetto swamps.

And then through rainforest.

## EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A torrent of rain reduces visibility to a few feet as the mud-splattered vehicles drive slowly along a rutted road.

## EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The rain has stopped.

The Rover's headlights illuminate a gate to the right, and a sign which contains a large "PFB" logo and the words "Programme For Belize at Kate's Lagoon".

The Rover lurches to a halt, and Joel jumps out to open the gate.

## EXT. KATE'S LAGOON - NIGHT

The vehicles pull into an overgrown gravel parking lot.

Everyone steps out into the waist-tall grass, and stares at the scene lit up by the headlights.

The camp's buildings are now heaps of rubble -- burnt, twisted, crumbled, rotten, and overgrown.

JOEL

What the hell happened?

MERIDA

Why would someone do this?

They gaze around at the place where it all started.

## FLASHBACKS - MONTAGE

Theo and Sophie lounge in the dorm kitchen, tossing bits of food up for each other to catch by mouth.

Merida and Macha pillow fighting in their dorm room.

Dr. Robertson studies in the lab building. When no one's looking, he pulls out the framed photo.

Merida sets a glass of water down by Kyle as a kindly looking Dr. Hempfield gently bandages his elbow.

Joel lays on his side under a desk, working inside a computer. Macha playfully tries to pull him out from under the desk, but he pushes her away, his body language saying "I'm working." But as she leaves angry, he watches her go, conflicted.

END FLASHBACK

## INT. TENT - NIGHT

Dr. Robertson sets up his bedding, when an unfamiliar figure walks past outside.

## EXT. KATE'S LAGOON - NIGHT

Theo squats on a log at the shore of the lagoon, gazing up at the moonlit clouds. He hears footsteps.

Turning, he sees JENS ANDRESEN, a gaunt old man in worn overalls. Andresen aims a shotgun at Theo.

## EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Merida and Dr. Hempfield squat on a log by a fire, staring subdued at it.

THEO (O.S.)

(loudly)

Woah there, easy with the gun!

They jump up.

MERIDA

Theo!

Merida starts to run toward Theo's voice, followed by Dr. Hempfield. Merida rounds a corner and bumps into Dr. Robertson. He looks worried, and clutches a handgun.

MERIDA

(hushed)

What are you doing? Put that away!

EXT. KATE'S LAGOON - NIGHT

The others arrive to find Andresen and Theo facing off.

Dr. Robertson has his hand in his bulging coat pocket.

ANDRESEN

(in a thick Dutch-  
like accent)

This is my land.

JOEL

Yeah, you got a shotgun, and I don't  
got one.

MERIDA

I'm sorry, we didn't know. A friend  
of ours is missing and we think he may  
have come here. Have you seen anyone  
else here in the last week or two?

Andresen sizes them up, then lowers his gun.

ANDRESEN

My neighbor this morning told me that  
there were tracks by the road. I have  
found drug dealers here before.

(beat)

But you look not like drug dealers, I  
think. I am Jens Andresen, welcome.  
I bought this land for the lagoon two  
years ago.

Theo steps forward and extends a hand.

THEO

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Andresen.

MERIDA

I'm sorry if we alarmed you.

ANDRESEN

It is no bother. I must be careful,  
that is all. Drug dealers, you know,  
they are everywhere these days.

(beat)

You must all come with me to my home  
and let me feed you. These ruins are  
no good.

Dr. Robertson brightens.

DR. ROBERTSON

That's kind of you.

The others look around at the desolate moonlit scene.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

They hike down a trail behind Andresen, each wearing a  
backpack.

ANDRESEN

I have had dealings with outsiders, so  
I can abide them somewhat. The rest  
of the village, no, not so much.

THEO

How long've you folks lived here?

EXT. MENNONITE VILLAGE - NIGHT

They round a corner, and come to a hamlet of ragged  
shanties, shacks, and lean-tos.

ANDRESEN

We came in 1949. My grandfather, he  
led the whole group from Friesland, in  
northern Holland. There are now other  
Mennonite groups in Belize, but we, we  
were first.

(beat)

Your friend, when he was here, he was  
very interested in Belize Mennonites.

Closer up, these buildings look bad. The paint has mostly  
flaked off, and few panes of glass are intact.

Dr. Hempfield and Joel glance around nervously.

MERIDA

What, you saw Kyle? But I asked and you--

ANDRESEN

That was before I could see you are good people. I found your friend nine days ago, wandering with a terrible fever, raving about being chased.

Oil lanterns and candles cast ghostly light on the villagers whose sallow faces stare out from windows.

ANDRESEN (CONT'D)

We cared for him until the fever broke. He babbled about devils from the sky. It was sad to see a young man so troubled. But he healed, and the fever left him, and he went home.

Andresen leads the group to his cottage, which is bigger and better cared for than the others.

ANDRESEN

Wait inside, if you would. I must tell the others what I have done so they are not surprised.

INT. ANDRESEN HOME - NIGHT

The group sits awkwardly around a large wooden table in a large room cluttered with old wooden furniture.

DR. HEMPFIELD

That story he told about Kyle was a bit too pat for my taste.

Arguing voices rise outside, babbling in a language that is not quite German or Dutch -- it is Frisian.

Merida gets up and walks around nervously, eyes downcast.

JOEL

I gotta say, my grandparents were Mennonites, and their village was clean and well-kept.

Merida spots something on the floor.

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

If these people were ever Mennonites,  
something has gone seriously wrong.

Reaching under a hutch, Merida finds a cracked pair of  
TORTOISE-SHELL BROWLINE EYEGLASSES

DR. ROBERTSON

What an alarming idea. We know locals  
here were corrupted by the aliens once  
before. What if--

MERIDA (O.S.)

Hey guys!

The others turn to see Merida holding up the eyeglasses.

MERIDA

They're Kyle's.

Her face falls as she realizes what this means.

MERIDA

(softly)

Kyle, what happened to you?

There is a thud on the roof, followed by a CLATTERING  
sound like a lot of wooden shoes. All five are paralyzed  
as flashes of memory return --

MEMORY FLASHES

Clawlike appendages CLATTERING on a metal roof.

Large wings flapping.

A horrible BUZZING sound while people in bunk beds are  
seized and bound.

END MEMORY  
FLASHES

-- while the CLATTERING moves toward the front of the  
house.

Coming back around, Theo looks out a window, while Merida and Dr. Robertson move to either side of the door.

A moment later, the door opens to reveal Andresen and five villagers, all holding old weapons. Dr. Robertson hides behind the door.

MERIDA

What's going on?

Ignoring her, Andresen points the shotgun inside.

ANDRESEN

(in Frisian)

Grab them!

VILLAGER #1 and VILLAGER #2 move into the room, making to grab the nearest people -- Joel and Theo.

A gunshot echoes outside.

VILLAGER #1

(in Frisian)

What the devil?

ANDRESEN

(in Frisian)

That's not one of our guns.

(beat)

Go check it out!

Andresen keeps his shotgun pointed at the group as the villagers leave.

Another gunshot outside is followed immediately by a cry of pain, and Dr. Hempfield moves for the door.

Andresen blocks her path with the gun, but Dr. Robertson steps out from behind the door with his handgun pointed at Andresen's head.

Dr. Robertson cocks the handgun.

THEO

(in Dutch to  
Andresen)

Drop it!

Andresen sets down the shotgun carefully -- and Dr. Hempfield rushes out the door.

Joel looks at Dr. Robertson with appreciation.

JOEL

Doc, I can't believe you're packing!  
That rocks!

Dr. Robertson tries to suppress his pleasure at Joel's approval.

Looking desperately around for some way to escape, Andresen notices Dr. Robertson's distraction.

As Theo bends over for the shotgun, Andresen does too.

BANG! Dr. Robertson's involuntary reaction is to fire his handgun, which misses everyone. Joel cowers behind the table.

Theo and Andresen grapple, both getting a hand on the shotgun.

THUMP! Merida kicks Andresen in the side, and he yelps in pain.

Andresen's grip on the shotgun loosens, and Theo rips it away from him.

SMACK! Dr. Robertson hits Andresen in the head with the handgun handle.

Andresen lies unmoving on the floor, his shirt torn and one of its black buttons lying near him.

JOEL

Rope! We need to tie him up!

THEO

You plan on staying in here?

Dr. Robertson looks into the next room.

DR. ROBERTSON

The house appears to be empty. I suggest we vacate the premises.

JOEL

The hell I'm leaving! Can't you hear  
what's going on out there?

THEO

Fine, stay and get cornered.

All but Joel head out the door.

EXT. MENNONITE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Dr. Hempfield runs out the front door of the cottage and looks around. She hears more gunshots, and sees a crowd of villagers running away.

Spotting a body on the ground, she runs over to it.

In the distance, David Cox from the Sanbourne Institute comes around the corner of a nearby building. Even in a black uniform at night, his intense blue eyes are unmistakable.

He moves menacingly toward Dr. Hempfield, a gun at the ready, but his eyes widen as he recognizes her, and he darts away.

Dr. Hempfield kneels and examines the body, but is disappointed -- it is already dead.

Behind her, the others emerge from the cottage. Joel comes last, but he hears a gunshot and ducks inside again.

Merida starts to head toward Dr. Hempfield. Theo puts his hand on her shoulder to stop her, but she shakes it off.

JOEL (O.S.)

I'm getting out of here.

Dr. Hempfield is just standing up when Merida reaches her. Merida stares at the body.

DR. HEMPFIELD

I hate being too late.

Joel dashes off.

THEO

What the hell is going on here?

A loud gunshot goes off nearby, and they all flinch.

MERIDA

I don't know, but we've got to leave.

They follow Joel.

EXT. SHACK - NIGHT

Theo ducks around the corner of a shack and flattens himself against the wall.

A ghostly face appears in the window next to him, staring in wonder -- Sophie. But Theo does not see, and runs off.

A figure comes up behind Sophie.

INT. SHACK - NIGHT

Sophie spins around to look behind her.

David Cox approaches her, and she raises her arms defensively, revealing that she's chained up.

Other prisoners huddle nearby.

EXT. MENNONITE VILLAGE - NIGHT

The group makes their way through the village, darting from building to building -- although the gunshots grow fewer with time.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The moon disappears behind a cloud.

The Rover is right where they left it, but the hood is up. Joel runs up, turns and leans back on the Rover, panting.

Merida sprints up, but stops short, her face frozen in disbelief. The other three jog up behind Merida, and react similarly.

A now familiar BUZZING sound starts abruptly -- the same one coming from the alley.

DR. ROBERTSON

Joel!

Joel is immobilized by the terrible BUZZING.

Four bizarre clawlike appendages descend on Joel. They latch onto him and jerk him upward, followed by the slow flapping of large wings.

The remaining four stare in dumb horror, their gazes rising into the sky as the flapping recedes. Now they remember --

#### MONTAGE OF MEMORIES

Being immobilized by BUZZING, while armed Mennonite villagers capture them.

Being marched toward a partially restored Mayan temple on a cleared platform.

A luminescent green ceiling.

Shiny metal instruments piercing foreheads, slicing away at the top of the skull.

END MONTAGE

#### EXT. JUNGLE CANOPY - NIGHT

The jungle seems tranquil from above.

A chorus of human screams arouses the jungle animals, inducing a cacophony of bird calls and monkey cries.

#### EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Chaotic snatches of people running desperately through the jungle: pounding feet, fearful backward glances, menacing shapes in the trees above, cheeks slashed by branches, sweat-soaked clothing, bodies dodging between trees.

Then more clearly: Merida slipping on muddy leaves; Dr. Hempfield stuck in thorny vines; Theo tripping on roots; Dr. Robertson limping and nearly collapsing with exhaustion.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The group has taken refuge under a huge tree. Several flashlights wedged into vegetation provide the only light. Everyone's faces and arms have cuts and bruises.

Dr. Hempfield tends to Dr. Robertson's leg.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Okay, I'm all out of antiseptic.  
Nobody else get hurt.

THEO

No, wouldn't want to hurt myself.  
Aliens cut open my head and messed  
with my brain, but I wouldn't want  
to scratch myself.

Theo slouches morosely with his head in his hands.

THEO

How do we even know we're the right  
people? Maybe they switched our  
brains around. Maybe I'm really you.

MERIDA

That's just dumb, Theo.

Merida notices one of the flashlights is dim, and goes to change the batteries.

THEO

Maybe. Maybe I got a dumb brain.

DR. ROBERTSON

(muttering)

That stupid punk, why couldn't he be  
more careful?

MERIDA

What is your problem?

DR. ROBERTSON

Oh, Sister Merida, have I been bad?  
Are you going to punish me?

Merida stares at Dr. Robertson in disbelief.

DR. ROBERTSON

My son, I was talking about my stupid  
punk of a son! He was just about  
Joel's age, and now they're both...  
gone.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Hold it together, folks. We're so  
close I can smell it.

MERIDA

Close to where? El Cacao? Great  
idea! Let's go back to the place  
where aliens opened our skulls and did  
God knows what to us!

DR. HEMPFIELD

You think I want to be here? I want  
to be home getting wasted so I can  
block out all this crap! But Kyle and  
Joel are our people and I'm not  
leaving them there.

(beat)

Besides, you're the one who's been  
pushing us to finish this.

MERIDA

Finish what? Deliver ourselves to  
those things so they can finish what  
they started?

The others stare at Merida. They've never seen her like  
this before -- angry.

Theo looks around at the dark, forbidding jungle.

THEO

You picked a great time to give up.

MERIDA

(yelling)

Did you not see what just happened?  
There's no way in hell I'm giving them  
the satisfaction of taking me again!  
It's bad enough that--

Merida stops abruptly. Her face softens.

DR. ROBERTSON

That they took your dear sister.

Merida nods, tears starting down her cheeks.

MERIDA

And Sophie. And Kyle. And now...

She looks at Theo.

He is misty-eyed too. He goes to Merida and hugs her.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Beams of light flicker around the jungle floor. Noises from insects and monkeys fill the air.

THEO (O.S.)

I found a path!

Theo stands with his flashlight pointed at the ground. The others join him, Dr. Robertson limping and wheezing.

A discernible path wends its way through the foliage. Dr. Hempfield points her beam off to one side.

DR. HEMPFIELD

It's that way, isn't it.

MERIDA

(to herself)

Here we come, guys.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - NIGHT

The jungle noises are gone. The air is still and oppressive. One by one, dirty, scratched, and exhausted, the four of them emerge into a clearing and stop, stunned.

The familiar profile of green hills confronts them. They have reached El Cacao.

A knee-jerk flash of ecstasy -- they've finally achieved their goal.

DR. ROBERTSON

Dear God.

But the moment passes.

Merida walks slowly toward the opposite side of the clearing. The others follow one by one. Single file, the group enters another path heading toward a rise visible in the distance.

They know with deadly certainty where they're going.

EXT. MAYAN PLATFORM - NIGHT

Emerging at the top of a platform, they find themselves in a cleared area whose features have been partially restored. The ground is flat and covered in short grass.

The path continues between two ruined stone buildings. Though ruined, they have been completely cleaned up, their stone walls a bright white in the moonlight.

As the group continues forward, an imposing temple looms into view.

Merida's pace quickens as she approaches the temple.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

A hand wearing a

YELLOW AGATE RING

pushes a branch aside -- it's David Cox, passing stealthily by.

All through this section of the jungle, figures in uniforms bearing strange weapons stalk toward El Cacao.

Maintenance Man #1 creeps behind him. Cox turns to Maintenance Man #1 and nods commandingly. They split off in different directions, each leading half the group.

INT. MAYAN TEMPLE - NIGHT

Merida strides in.

Her flashlight beam flits around the small, cramped room, revealing walls blackened with soot and age. Traces of paint are barely visible underneath.

But there's one exception -- a large, well preserved, magnificent mural on the left wall. The same temple room as in the beginning.

Dr. Robertson enters, breathing heavily. He leans on his cane and regards the mural with awe.

DR. ROBERTSON

Oh my.

Theo joins them as they move closer to examine the mural.

Dr. Hempfield wanders in. She glances at the mural and its admirers. Shaking her head, she shines her flashlight around the rest of the room.

THEO

Classic. Apparently nothing says victory like having your enemy's head at your feet.

Theo shines his light on the lower part of the mural.

Dr. Hempfield's flashlight lights up the cylindrical stone with the carving of a hog-tied captive. She walks over to it.

DR. ROBERTSON

This does fit the pattern for a victory inscription. Although...

Dr. Robertson indicates a cluster of glyphs to the right of the standing figure.

Dr. Hempfield examines the stone, which is covered with Mayan glyphs, and encrusted with something dark and flaky.

MERIDA

That should indicate the victor's ancestor.

DR. ROBERTSON

Look closer at the glyphs.

Merida gets as close as she can.

MERIDA

Voices... from the... sky--

Dr. Hempfield rubs a finger on the crusty surface, then sniffs it. A look of recognition crosses her face.

THEO (O.S.)

This guy's daddy was an alien?

DR. ROBERTSON (O.S.)

This is unprecedented... I have... no idea...

Dr. Hempfield turns to face the others.

DR. HEMPFIELD

We got ourselves a bona-fide altar here, folks, complete with day-old dried blood.

THEO

We'll be right there.

Dr. Hempfield shrugs, and shines her flashlight around some more. She discovers a pit off to the side.

Merida looks back down at the subjugated captive's head.

MERIDA

Why are the blood scrolls yellow?

Dr. Hempfield goes over to the pit and peers down into darkness. She covers her nose at a strange odor.

THEO (O.S.)

Any idea who the loser is here?

DR. ROBERTSON (O.S.)

The glyphs by the captive's head read... "the yellow sign."

MERIDA

(muttering)

Everyone needs a nemesis.

(aloud)

There are two groups of aliens, just like in the alley.

Dr. Hempfield leans over and points her flashlight into the darkness.

The beam illuminates an uneven, somewhat glistening surface below.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Hey eggheads! Do Mayan temples usually have pits in them?

The others look over with interest.

INT. PIT

A small space with rough-hewn rock walls, and some sort of opening at one end.

Theo and Merida help Dr. Robertson climb down the last portion of the pit wall. Dr. Robertson leans on the wall, breathing heavily, as the others shine flashlights around.

The ground is sticky and crunches underfoot. Dr. Hempfield kneels and looks-- bones and drying blood.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Must be a ritual sacrifice pit.

Dr. Robertson makes a sound and holds his handkerchief to his nose.

THEO

And my list of things I wish I'd never seen grows yet longer.

Merida moves closer to the opening. Her flashlight reveals a stone archway intricately carved with Mayan glyphs and two protrusions which resemble fangs.

Merida and Theo examine the glyphs.

MERIDA

"The jaws of the underworld."

DR. HEMPFIELD

This just gets better and better.

THEO

And so the heroes returned to Xibalba.

Merida steps through the archway and into the darkness beyond...

INT. CENTRAL CHAMBER

The ceiling lights up with a dim green glow as Merida enters.

She sees a large chamber of angled stone walls, smooth and polished. The angles and corners are precise, with circular doorways at regular distances around the outside.

The other three enter, stowing their flashlights. They gaze around at the room in grim recognition.

For a moment, no one speaks. Dr. Hempfield looks up at the glowing ceiling.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Bioluminescent lichens. Bet there's money in that.

Dr. Robertson notices glyphs above each of the doorways. he studies one.

Dr. Hempfield leaps up and scratches off a piece, then puts it in a small sample bag in her backpack.

Dr. Robertson mouths "moon," then shakes his head like he must have it wrong.

MERIDA

Let's find our people.

INT. CAGE ROOM

Dr. Hempfield steps in, activating the green glow.

The walls are lined three high with what look like large grey filing cabinets.

INT. CAGE [FLASHBACK]

Dr. Hempfield is crouched in a cramped enclosure illuminated by a dim green glow. One side of the enclosure has small holes in it. She peers through one of the holes.

She can barely make out a "Felice Woodson" figure carrying Macha's inert body out of the room.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CAGE ROOM

DR. HEMPFIELD

Oh hell no.

She hastily backs out of the room.

INT. MEDICAL LAB

The dim green light comes on as Merida enters.

MERIDA

¡Ay dios mío!

(loudly)

I think I found it.

In the middle of the room is a seven foot square table. Directly over the table is a huge cluster of tendrils, tubes, and armlike... growths. The whole apparatus grows down like a twisted, inverted fungus.

One side wall is a series of transparent tanks in which human bodies float, unmoving.

The opposite wall is covered in tubes and bizarre machines, some of which are studded with lights. Running underneath all that is a narrow metal table, on which sit several shiny metal cylinders.

The others join her. Theo whistles.

Merida and Theo are drawn to the tanks. They go from body to body, half hoping, half dreading what they might find.

The first three bodies are identical copies of the Intruder.

The fourth is Joel.

THEO

My God they work fast.

MERIDA

Oh Joel.

Merida sadly puts her hand against the tank wall, then spots the fifth body and shrieks.

MERIDA

Macha!

Merida pounds on the tank.

The fifth body is indeed Macha. One tube runs from the wall to her mouth, and another from her rear to the wall. A familiar grey-orange cable runs from the back of her head to the wall.

MERIDA

Macha! Macha!

Merida whirls around, looking desperately for something heavy. She spots the cylinders and heads for them.

Hastily grabbing the nearest one, she fails to notice it's connected by cables to one of a number of odd-looking devices protruding from the wall.

A loud, lifeless, mechanical voice begins to speak.

MECHANICAL VOICE

Don't Hurt Me I Will Tell You  
Anything.

Merida almost drops the cylinder in surprise, then sets it back down.

MERIDA

Who are you?

MECHANICAL VOICE

You're Not A Mi-go I Must Be Dreaming.

DR. HEMPFIELD

No, we're all humans here.

MECHANICAL VOICE

I Remember Your Voices.

THEO

I'm here too, whoever you are.

MECHANICAL VOICE

Familiar Human Voices It Is Soothing.

Terrible comprehension creeps over Merida.

MERIDA

(softly)

Kyle, is that you?

KYLE

Yes I Am Kyle Timothy Woodson.

MERIDA

It's me, Merida. We've been looking for you.

KYLE

If You Are Really Here Then Hook Up  
The Sight Machine The Sight Machine.

They examine the devices on the table. Theo finds a cable whose end looks like it would fit into one of the sockets on the cylinder.

Merida lays a hand on the cylinder.

MERIDA

We know what you went through. We remember everything.

Theo plugs in the cable, and two red orbs light up on the device the cylinder is now connected to.

KYLE

You Came All The Way Here For Me.

MERIDA

We followed your trail when you  
disappeared.

Beat.

KYLE

Merida I See It Now You Have Always  
Been There For Me But I Never Noticed.

Merida hesitates.

MERIDA

It's not your fault, I never told you.

Tears well up in her eyes.

Beat.

KYLE

So You Know They Implanted Memories To  
Keep Us Away To Keep Everyone Away  
With Lies But The Books The Tablets  
They Started My Dreams In The Dreams I  
Remembered I Just Had To Know But They  
Were Waiting For Me.

MERIDA

I'm so sorry.

KYLE

Why Do I Need Machines To See To Hear  
They Turn Off My Senses And Leave Me  
So Alone You Cannot Imagine.

MERIDA

We're here now. You don't have to be  
alone any more.

KYLE

I Want To See Myself Turn The Sight  
Machine Turn The Sight Machine.

Merida panics.

MERIDA

No Kyle, I don't think that's--

KYLE

I Must See Why Don't You Want Me To.

Dr. Hempfield finds a movable arm on the device Theo connected, and swivels it around to point at Kyle's cylinder.

KYLE

Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah!

Horrified at Kyle's monotone howl, everyone steps back.

KYLE

Where Is My Body Oh God They Have Done  
Such Terrible Things They Were Here  
Before The Maya Our Theories Are All  
Wrong Our Science I Wanted The Truth  
So Badly And They Tell Me Blasphemous  
Things That Hideous Buzzing Voice In  
The Darkness But Some Truths Are Not  
Meant To Be Known.

(beat)

Disconnect Me I Don't Want To Live  
Like This Not Like This Not A Brain In  
A Can Please Destroy Me Disconnect Me  
And Smash Me Smash Me Smash Me--

Tears streaming down her face, Merida pulls out all three cables connected to Kyle's cylinder.

DR. HEMPFIELD

We went through all that to get here  
and now we have to kill him?

Preoccupied, Theo goes to another cylinder and connects the cables.

Engraved into the side of the cylinder are the same three glyphs as on the cylinder carried by the Mayan Shaman in the beginning.

THEO

C'mon, Sophie, talk to me.

Merida picks up a cylinder and heads for the tank.

The cylinder Theo connected speaks in the same monotone.

CYLINDER

(in classical Mayan)

Please, talk to me. You told me I  
would live forever, but I am so  
alone.

THEO

Sorry, ancient Mayan person.

Theo connects the cables to another cylinder. It emits a  
ululating sound which could not possibly be produced by  
human vocal cords.

He winces, and disconnects the cables. Looking at the  
other cylinders, he notices something on the wall. He  
reaches over and presses a panel.

A section of the wall opens to reveal a whole bank of  
cylinders on the right, with rows of small tanks  
containing the orange-grey neuralware brain replacements  
on the left.

Theo sags as Dr. Hempfield and Dr. Robertson approach.

With a yell of rage, Merida takes aim at the tank holding  
Macha's body and hurls the cylinder at it. The glass  
shatters and the fluid inside pours out and all over the  
lab floor.

The cylinder rolls across the floor. Dr. Hempfield lifts  
it up -- not a scratch on the shiny metal surface.

Merida climbs up into the tank and yanks out the cables  
and tubes connected to Macha, then lowers her to the  
floor.

She does the same for Joel.

A faint BUZZING sound starts, but no one notices.

Pulling the green and blue rain jacket from her pack,  
Merida covers Macha with it, then looks at her sister and  
collapses onto her, sobbing uncontrollably.

THEO (O.S.)

An acidic compound? That's how you propose putting Kyle out of his misery?

DR. HEMPFIELD

Brute force is clearly not the answer here -- we need to apply a little intelligence.

Dr. Robertson gets in Dr. Hempfield's face.

DR. ROBERTSON

Says one doctor to the other two! Let me point out the obvious lack of chemical apparatus you might use to synthesize such a compound.

DR. HEMPFIELD

It doesn't take much to make acid, boys. Good thing our survival doesn't depend on your creativity.

THEO

So it's to be insults now, is it?

As the BUZZING grows louder, Dr. Hempfield raises her arm to hit Theo, then stops. Speaking grows harder.

DR. HEMPFIELD

I ought to--

Dr. Robertson wobbles slightly, looking drowsy.

THEO

Ought to... what?

In the background, Merida's sobbing has stopped.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Ought to what, what?

DR. ROBERTSON

Now... you're... just... gibbering.

All four of them slump to the floor, now an inch deep in fluid. A CLATTERING sound enters the room.

INT. CAGE ROOM

Four of the cage doors are now black.

INT. MERIDA'S CAGE

As in Dr. Hempfield's flashback, the cage is barely tall enough for Merida to crouch. She pounds on the door, the side with the holes.

MERIDA

You leave her body alone!

She screams, a cry of both rage and terror. She sits back, head between her knees, and rocks back and forth.

INT. THEO'S CAGE

Theo can barely hear Merida. His tall body is compressed in the confined space, and his face is pained.

He practices making buzzing sounds.

INT. DR. HEMPFIELD'S CAGE

Laying on her side, Dr. Hempfield holds her lighter up against the door for a few seconds. Touching the spot where the flame had been, she groans and slumps down.

INT. CAGE ROOM

Outside in the central chamber, a familiar woman steps into view, facing off to the side. She is a MI-GO AGENT, another clone of the Intruder.

She listens to high-pitched BUZZING sounds which lack the intensity of the one that knocked out our heroes.

DRONING in response, she enters the room and goes to a cage. She unlatches it and reaches in.

DR. ROBERTSON

(feebly)

No, no, you can't...

The Mi-go Agent begins to pull out his limp body.

As she effortlessly hefts Dr. Robertson over her shoulder, he stirs. Suddenly he squirms and flails around. The Mi-go Agent loses her grip and he slides to the floor.

Leaning over, she DRONES wordlessly at Dr. Robertson. He slumps into unconsciousness. She picks him up and leaves the room.

INT. DR. HEMPFIELD'S CAGE

Dr. Hempfield gets out a little flask of tequila and takes a sip. Then another. Another.

She shakes it next to her ear and sighs. She sets the flask down in front of her next to her lighter.

INT. CAGE ROOM

Faint popping sounds grow louder till they sound like gunfire. Out in the central chamber, the Mi-go Agent moves quickly past.

Following close behind her, and only briefly visible through the doorway, are two Mi-go. In the dim green light they seem to be a mass of legs and glowing tentacles.

Suddenly the gunfire is much closer. Then it's outside.

INT. MERIDA'S CAGE

Merida tries desperately to peer through the air holes.

MERIDA

What's going on?

INT. CAGE ROOM

A SOLDIER in camouflage garb stops just outside the doorway, silhouetted against the ghastly green light.

She fires her gun at an unseen opponent.

Soldier turns toward the cage room, but FSSSST! A stream of white mist like the one in the hotel alley hits her from behind. It keeps coming and she's quickly covered in frost and ice, unable to move.

Mi-go #1, visible as a long puce-colored body with a lumpy mass of waving tendrils at one end, leaps at Soldier and knocks her over. SMASH! She shatters on impact.

FOOMP! A small metal ball shoots into the room and hits Mi-go #1. There is a contained percussive explosion accompanied by an intense burst of light that fills the room.

When the light fades, all that's left of Mi-go #1 are trails of goo like those in the hotel alley.

Maintenance Man #1 comes over to the doorway and peers in. A pair of claws grab him from behind.

They pick him up and shake him like a cat would a mouse, flinging him out into the central chamber.

Rat-tat-tat! A stray round of bullets hits the cages.

Silence.

INT. DR. HEMPFIELD'S CAGE

Dr. Hempfield hears a faint BUZZING sound.

Quickly she twists around to face the door, takes a sip of tequila, and flicks on her lighter.

The door opens to reveal--

Dr. Hempfield spews the liquor through the flame to create a spurt of fire.

-- Maintenance Man #1, who dodges the blast.

MAINTENANCE MAN #1

Whoa there, I'm on your side!

Dr. Hempfield looks dubiously at the man, but lowers the lighter.

MAINTENANCE MAN #1

You're the medical doctor, Hempfield?  
I need help.

He extends a hand and...

INT. CAGE ROOM

...helps Dr. Hempfield out of her cage. A patch on his uniform proclaims the name "DROOSON."

Both grimace in pain: Dr. Hempfield as she tries to straighten her back, and Drooson from obvious wounds.

Drooson lowers himself gingerly to the floor.

His breath is ragged, and his clothing is stained with a yellow fluid. He holds his left arm tightly against his side.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Let my friends out, then I help you.

DROOSON

We don't have time for this.

Dr. Hempfield notices his yellow agate ring. She flushes with anger.

DR. HEMPFIELD

You people set us up!

Drooson pulls out a softball-sized metal globe.

DROOSON

It'll be remotely detonated in fifteen minutes. We're taking this whole place out.

Dr. Hempfield kneels and gets right in his face.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Set my friends free, or we all go out together.

Drooson stares into her eyes.

He pulls out a small white orb and hands it to her.

DROOSON

Hold it up to one of the black doors and squeeze.

Dr. Hempfield picks a black door and does that. A BUZZING sound emanates from the device and the door turns gray and opens.

It's Merida's cage. She climbs down and hugs Dr. Hempfield.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Same to you. Know where my stuff is?

Dr. Hempfield goes to the other black door and opens it. Theo's legs spill out, and she helps him down.

Merida goes over to a panel in the wall and, hesitating, pushes gently on it. The panel slides open to reveal a storage space. Merida pulls out their backpacks.

MERIDA

I remember this place way too well.

Merida hands Dr. Hempfield her medical kit.

DROOSON

Okay, now patch me up quick.

Dr. Hempfield sits down beside Drooson and opens her kit.

DR. HEMPFIELD

(to the others)

Check out his ring.

Merida and Theo come closer. Drooson grimaces and holds out his hand.

MERIDA

You're... you people saved us in the alley.

Dr. Hempfield begins bandaging Drooson's arm.

DR. HEMPFIELD

He says they're here to blow this place up.

THEO

What's yourbeef with those things?

Dr. Hempfield discovers that the yellow fluid which stains patches of Drooson's clothing is his blood. She stops and pokes at it in fascination.

DROOSON (O.S.)

We are the Yellow Sign, they are the Mi-go, and we have been doing this for thousands of years. Ask me later when we're not about to blow up.

The yellow blood oozes onto Dr. Hempfield's finger, quickly enveloping her fingertip. She hastily wipes it off on his sleeve, then grabs some gauze.

MERIDA

Let us help you. After what those... Mee-go have done to us, we're not about to let them keep running around.

Drooson grins slightly, amused.

DROOSON

Sure, you can help.

He picks up the metal globe and hands it to Merida.

Dr. Hempfield wraps gauze several times around Drooson's arm.

DROOSON

Take that to the cenote, the cav--

MERIDA

I know what a cenote is.

DROOSON

Just leave it there.

Drooson looks at his bandaged arm.

DROOSON

That'll have to do.

He abruptly stands up and staggers toward the doorway. The humans grab their packs and follow. Drooson stops at the doorway and peeks out into the central chamber.

A burst of BUZZING and the ceiling light goes out.

DROOSON

Crap.

Sounds of struggle in the darkness.

MERIDA

Light...

MEMORY FLASH

In the alley, the small metal ball shoots into the black truck, followed by a small percussive explosion and an intense burst of light.

END OF FLASH

A CLATTERING sound approaches.

A lumpy mass of waving tendrils lights up in rapidly changing colors as MI-GO #2 comes into view, BUZZING intensely.

MEMORY FLASH

The moon disappears behind a cloud, and then a Mi-go flies off with Joel.

END OF FLASH

The BUZZING forms into a voice.

MI-GO #2

Iä! Iä! Cthulhu fhtagn!

(beat)

Degenerate life forms, we showed you mercy. Why have you returned?

Everyone backs away in horror.

OUTSIDE

Drooson battles in the dim light with a Mi-go.

MEMORY FLASH

Merida steps through the mouthlike stone archway into the central chamber, and the ceiling glows green.

END OF FLASH

INSIDE

There is a fumbling sound, then a click. A flashlight provides some light.

MERIDA

(enraged)

Mercy? You call that mercy?

The flashlight flicks around and settles on Mi-go #2. Mi-go #2 hisses and CLATTERS toward the flashlight.

MERIDA

We need more light!

Dr. Hempfield and Theo rummage in their packs.

Merida retreats as Mi-go #2 advances. She points her beam at different spots on Mi-go #2. The light hits Mi-go #2's tendrily head, and it hisses.

Two more flashlight beams hit Mi-go #2. It emits a BUZZING SHRIEK and backs up.

After a moment, the beams meet on its head, and that spot changes color, from mauve to brown.

Mi-go #2 turns and clatters out of the room.

Theo glances at his watch.

THEO

T-minus ten minutes.

BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP -- Merida pushes buttons on her watch.

INT. MEDICAL LAB

Merida makes a beeline for Macha's body, but stops and stares at the middle of the room.

A large body lies on the center table -- Dr. Robertson's. His clothes have been removed, he is hooked up to several tubes, and his skull has been cut open. But no sign of his brain.

MERIDA

Oh, Carl, what have they done to you?

Merida walks slowly over to him, staring in fascinated disbelief all the while.

Theo and Dr. Hempfield rush in. They see Merida, and then Dr. Robertson's body.

DR. HEMPFIELD

(to Merida)

Oh, my dear.

Dr. Hempfield puts her arm around Merida and steers her away from Dr. Robertson's body.

DR. HEMPFIELD

There's nothing we can do for him.

You came in here for Macha, remember?

Merida snaps out of it.

MERIDA

Macha!

She darts over to where Macha's body lies stretched out on the floor. Kneeling, she cuts off a lock of hair.

MERIDA

Goodbye, Macha.

Merida kisses her sister on the forehead, then makes the sign of the cross. She does the same for Joel.

Theo comes over carrying a cylinder.

THEO

I've got Kyle. We can leave him right by the bomb.

Theo hands Kyle to Merida. She stares at the cylinder, then looks over at the other cylinders on the side table.

MERIDA

One of them could be Macha.

THEO

Or Sophie. Or Joel.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Or Doctor Robertson.

THEO

There's a vault full of those things,  
and we don't have time.

INT. CENTRAL CHAMBER

The three survivors gaze around. The walls, floor, and ceiling are splattered with ribbons of goo and patches of yellow blood.

MERIDA

Crap, where are we going?

Theo and Dr. Hempfield point at two of the circular doorways.

THEO

That's El Cacao.

DR. HEMPFIELD

And that's the cages.

MERIDA

Then let's see what's behind door  
number three.

INT. CENOTE - NIGHT

Moonlight streams through a large hole in the ceiling of a vast cavern. A pool of water shimmers in the center.

Hanging down from the lip of the hole are ferns and vines. The ceiling curves gradually down to meet the walls, which recede into impenetrable gloom.

The trio enters through the doorway, Theo still carrying Kyle's cylinder.

THEO

Check this out.

He points at tracks on the muddy ground.

THEO

Alien claws and bare human feet all mixed together.

MERIDA

The tracks must mean this cenote is still being used for ritual sacrifices.

Theo spots something and squats down to pick it up -- a black button identical to the ones on Andresen's shirt.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Looks like those vines are our way out.

Dr. Hempfield heads for the pool in the center. Merida and Theo follow.

THEO

This'll do.

Theo sets Kyle's cylinder down at the edge of the pool.

Dr. Hempfield splashes out into the water. She slips and nearly falls over.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Okay, careful it is.

Merida places the metal globe on top of the cylinder.

THEO

I guess this is goodbye to Kyle.

MERIDA

It still feels wrong, Theo.

Merida kneels next to Kyle's cylinder.

THEO

I'm sorry.

Theo squats next to her. She lays a hand on the cylinder.

MERIDA

Goodbye, Kyle.

Beat.

MERIDA

(in Spanish)

I love you.

She kisses the cylinder.

Dr. Hempfield is knee-deep in the water, underneath some of the dangling vines. She leaps up, straining to grab the lowest-hanging vine, but can't reach.

Merida and Theo wade into the pool.

Theo jumps for the vine, and just misses it. When he lands, he falls over and cries out, clutching his ankle.

THEO

Damn it.

Dr. Hempfield checks out his ankle.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Looks like we need another way out.

MERIDA

The humans who made those footprints didn't fly down here.

DR. HEMPFIELD

You're fine, Theo. Just a sprain.

Dr. Hempfield helps Theo up. He leans on her as they follow Merida out of the pool.

Getting a flashlight out of her pack, Merida heads toward the gloomy cavern walls. Straining to see into the darkness beyond, she trips.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Careful there, one gimp is enough.

As Merida picks herself up, she discovers that she landed on a pile of black, wet, fibrous gunk. The pile starts to move!

Bizarre little multi-legged wormlike things with tiny anemone-like heads emerge from the pile. They scurry toward Merida making shrill BUZZING sounds. They are Mi-go larva.

She jumps back with a cry, trips on another pile, and falls backward. Now she notices that piles like this are scattered around the cenote floor.

MERIDA

They're everywhere.

Theo looks down and sees Mi-go larvae crawling on his boots. With a cry of disgust, he flails his feet around wildly to dislodge the larvae.

Merida is up. She starts for the cavern wall again, but with her flashlight on the ground.

MERIDA

Stay away from the piles.

A shrill BUZZING sound fills the cavern, like an approaching swarm of bees.

THEO

(to Dr. Hempfield)

I appreciate the help, but I think I can hobble quicker, and I don't want to be here when these things all wake up.

Theo withdraws his arm from Dr. Hempfield's. She shrugs.

The trio hurries forward.

Just as Merida's beam reaches the cavern wall, she yells. Pulling up her shirt, she finds a Mi-go larva attached to the right side of her torso.

She grabs the larva and tries to pull it off, then yelps as she discovers it's firmly attached to her skin.

Theo offers her a lighter. Merida flicks it on the larva, which drops off.

She steps on it -- pop!

The shrill BUZZING grows louder. Merida breaks into a jog along the wall of the cavern, scanning it with her flashlight.

FZZZ -- something sails past Dr. Hempfield's head. A larva. They are learning to fly!

A larva flies at Merida -- and hits the side of her face. She screams and stops to try to bat it off.

Big mistake! Larvae start crawling up her legs.

She screams again and runs full out. The larva on her cheek flops up and down but hangs on.

BEEP BEEP BEEP as Merida's watch timer goes off.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Shit, please tell me it's time to take my pills.

MERIDA

Sixty seconds.

Dr. Hempfield matches the limping Theo's pace as they follow Merida's flickering flashlight along the cavern wall.

The beam disappears -- an opening. Merida steps into it for a moment, then comes back.

MERIDA

We found it!

She turns around and shines the flashlight back toward the other two. The air and ground behind them are thick with BUZZING larvae.

MERIDA

Run!

She waves them frantically toward the opening.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

The stairs emerge in a clearing, with even, symmetrical, tree-covered hills all around. Dr. Hempfield sprints out, followed a few seconds later by Theo.

And then it happens -- KABOOM! A tremendous roar. The ground shakes. The shockwave topples Dr. Hempfield.

FLASH! A blinding light fills the round cavern opening, accompanied by a staticky crackling sound.

FOOM! Just as Merida makes it out of the stairway, a blast shoots out behind her. She flies through the air and smacks into a tree, while Theo is blown forward onto the ground.

As the roar dies down, the sound of a helicopter approaches.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Blackness. The sound of regular breathing and beeping.

THEO (V.O.)

(weakly)

Sophie? This is my favorite dream...

FADE IN on a bandaged chest, partly nestled under a blanket, in a hospital bed.

A black woman's hand rests on the patient's far arm, while a white woman's hand holds the patient's near hand -- Theo's hand.

The black hand belongs to Dr. Hempfield. She stands across the bed facing Theo, whose neck is in a brace.

DR. HEMPFIELD

If you dream about cracked ribs, you need help.

THEO

Lucy! Welcome to my dream!

Dr. Hempfield grins.

DR. HEMPFIELD

It's no dream, Theo. We're both real.

Looking weary and worn, Sophie leans down to deliver a soft kiss to Theo's forehead.

Theo stares at her in hazy amazement.

THEO

You're not a brain in a jar!

Sophie regards him with a bittersweet expression.

THEO

(suddenly  
remembering)

Where's Merida?

DR. HEMPFIELD

In the next room, in a coma. She got it much worse than you did, but she's stable.

(beat)

I'll leave you two alone now.

Dr. Hempfield squeezes Theo's arm, which she is still holding, then leaves.

A moment passes while Theo and Sophie gaze at each other.

THEO

I went to your funeral.

SOPHIE

No you didn't.

Theo smiles softly. Sophie regards him soberly.

THEO

I saw you die.

SOPHIE

The coffin was empty!

THEO

So was my life.

Sophie looks away, tears in her eyes.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

A bookshelf, displaying titles like "Lemuria and Other Lost Continents," "Lost Worlds of the Jungle," and "They Vanished Under the Sea: Nan Madol and Other Lost Cities."

THEO (V.O.)

The Mi-go have lived among us for ages  
beyond reckoning,

And then, a book titled "The Hidden History of Earth: You Have Been Warned."

THEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

in remote locales, forming alliances  
with unsuspecting communities of  
humans,

A female hand grabs the book and pulls it off the shelf.

THEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

forever intent on their loathsome  
purposes.

The book opens to display the dedication page, which reads "In Memoriam Kyle Woodson, Joel Statler, Dr. Karl F. Robertson, and Macha Zamora, that their sacrifices may not be in vain."

THEO (V.O.) (CONT'D)

How these creatures have influenced  
and guided human history is the  
subject of this volume.

The book snaps shut. A smattering of enthusiastic clapping breaks out.

It comes from a small crowd of people, all facing Theo as he stands behind a podium.

Merida, who is holding the book, turns to Dr. Hempfield.

MERIDA

We did it.

Merida's other arm is in a sling, but cuts and bruises have mostly healed.

DR. HEMPFIELD

After everything we lost, we deserve some success.

ADAM (O.S.)

Not sure I would call a handful of loony fans "success."

Adam strolls up, wearing his red leather jacket over faded street clothes.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Adam!

Dr. Hempfield grins and hugs Adam.

DR. HEMPFIELD

You made it!

(to Merida)

Merida, meet the best executive assistant on, well, this planet.

Merida and Adam shake hands.

MERIDA

And here we thought she'd made you up just to mess with us.

Adam looks over at Theo. Sophie stands next to him now as he talks to a few fans.

ADAM

You said they weren't getting along.

DR. HEMPFIELD

They're working it out. I'm not surprised, but it's good to see.

MERIDA

They work together pretty well at AFAR. Having them there with me is one of the best parts.

Sophie notices them watching, and sends a big smile and wave their way.

DR. HEMPFIELD

Don't really understand why they're invited, though.

Ms. Brambury and David Cox approach.

DR. HEMPFIELD

(loudly)

I don't like being lied to.

Cox doesn't miss a beat.

COX

You did an admirable job of reconstructing Woodson's trail, and proved much easier to track than he did. Taking the lichen sample, however, I did not foresee.

DR. HEMPFIELD

The homeless in New Orleans won't care where the money for my clinic comes from.

Merida and Dr. Hempfield do a fist bump.

Theo and Sophie join the gathering.

MS. BRAMBURY

Are you certain you want to proceed with self-publishing Kyle's book? I still think you humans have more to lose than we or the space devils do by revealing the truth.

SOPHIE

We humans can handle whatever the truth may stir up.

Theo takes Sophie's hand, and she leans into him.

ADAM

That's awfully optimistic of you.  
Aren't there more of those aliens  
running around?

MERIDA

If there are, I'm ready for them.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Cox and Ms. Brambury exit the store engaged in  
conversation, yet their mouths do not move.

MS. BRAMBURY (V.O.)

The depth of their ignorance and  
naivete is almost endearing.

Cox raises his eyebrows.

MS. BRAMBURY (V.O.)

But I attach no sentiment to them.

COX (V.O.)

To do so would be unwise, considering  
their brief lifespans. They are  
replaceable tools, no more.

MS. BRAMBURY (V.O.)

I never thought any human could be  
useful. But you still believe these  
are worth training.

COX (V.O.)

They succeeded where Woodson failed.  
And if they fail, we clean up and try  
again. After all, they make more all  
the time.

They turn a corner into

EXT. BLIND ALLEY - DAY

They make sure no one is looking, then, concentrating  
briefly, they vanish.