

Weapon Squad Zero

Fade In:

EXT. AFTERBURNER HONKY TONK NIGHT

The American desert cools off surprisingly quickly in the summer. The heat of the day dissipates into the black night sky. The two lane blacktop road stretching way away in the darkness holds the heat longer than the desert landscape and the insects flutter and fly in this narrow corridor of warm air.

The insects also batter themselves against the neon sign at the edge of the dirt parking lot that surrounds the honky-tonk. Every couple of seconds the flame part at the end of the sign lights up and the words, The Afterburner, cast a red and gold light across the motorcycles, pick-ups, and muscle cars parked around the building. Psycho-billy music screams out every time someone opens the door. Along with the music comes cigarette smoke, the white noise of a bar on a Friday night: yells, conversation, glass breaking.

INT. AFTERBURNER HONKY TONK

Inside, the air is smoky and the music is so loud it almost sends waves through thick air. There seem to be minimum height requirements for guys and minimum breast requirements for women. Long, greasy hair, leathers, and tats are optional but popular extras.

The clutter of bottles and pitchers almost obscures LAURA and NATHAN who are seated with a group of other men and women (SARAH, CESAR, MIKE, SITA) at a long table against the left wall. Laura is a very fit woman in her early 30s, active military, ethnically indeterminate. Nathan is also in his early 30s, white guy who's spent a lot of time outdoors in different environments, well traveled intellectual who can handle himself in a lot of different situations. The group is yelling, smoking, drinking, just like the others at the bar. They seem to have passed on the optional extras, though. It's short hair and very fit bodies on both the men and women at the table, except for Sita. She's clearly a civilian, as is Nathan.

The current song playing on the juke ends and Rob Zombie's "Living Dead Girl" comes on.

LAURA

Fuck yeah! My favorite song! Gonna dance!

LAURA slams back her shot and gets up and bops to the open area in front of the jukebox.

NATHAN lets his head fall to the table, it lands in one of the many puddles of beer.

NATHAN

Oh, shit, here we go.

SARAH

(Sarah's teeth flash white against her black skin.)
Bullshit, Doc. I know you like to watch Laura kick ass. Gets you fuckin' hot.

NATHAN

(Nathan's voice is muffled because he still has his head against the table.)
Now, you know that's not true, Lieutenant. Well, not much true. Well, ok, yeah, you can use my dick for a crowbar.

The table breaks up laughing. Mike snorts beer out of his nose.

Laura starts twisting and gyrating in front of the juke box in the small cleared area there. She's getting into it; Rob Zombie and the hammering beat is turning her on. More and more eyes turn towards her and conversations between guys get more and more disjointed. Laura certainly draws their attention: a buff, sexy woman slamming to speed thrash.

The door opens and a group of women, mainly Latina, come through. They're loud profane dyke bikers. All their leathers are marked in some way with their name. Whether they're embroidered, painted, sewn, or marked out with electrical tape, the words, Las Locas, are clear. The weakest of them, the one dressed in leather jeans and nipple piercings, looks like she could put her fist through some guy's head without thinking and the toughest... Well, they so clearly want to hurt someone, someone male. They head to a couple of tables that clear out quickly at their approach. They sit down.

CHAVA

That's right, fuckin' move out, ya cocks.

A waitress hesitantly approaches. She glares back at the bar where the bartender makes a shooing motion at her, encouraging her to take the orders. She's pretty and she doesn't really deserve this.

WAITRESS

What can I get you, ladies?

LUPA

Mmm, I know what I can get you,
sweetcheeks.

A hand covered in a spider tattoo slides down her ass. She twitches away.

ROCKY

JD and a coke. Tequila.

And a hand runs up her thigh. Finally she gets all the orders and leaves without getting bent over the table and fisted. Deprived of easy game, the rowdy crew slowly become aware of Laura's moves by the juke box.

ZANZA

Holy shit. I'll bet she tastes
sweeter than she dances.

CHAVA

Now that, girls, is a major piece
of ass.

ROSIE

I hope she fucks as good as she
dances, cuz I'm gonna be wearin'
those thighs as earmuffs tonight.

LUPA

Yeah, right, Rosie, she doesn't
look like she's blind.

General hilarity ensues.

However, while the Locas are drooling into their beer and shots, DUANE, a guy in a Kyuss t-shirt, raggedy jeans, and boots gets up from his table near the dance area and swaggers to her.

DUANE

You do private dances, babe? I bet
you an me could party mighty fine
by ourselves.

CHAVA

Hey, Rosie, some cock is makin'
moves on your muffin.

Rosie, six feet of drunk belligerence, starts to stagger to her feet.

ROSIE
He's fuckin' dead.

Laura says nothing, consumed by the music, dancing. The dude gets more aggressive; moves closer, grabs her ass.

DUANE
Whatcha say, good lookin'? Why
don't we go find ourselves some
private space so you can find out
how good 9 inches of

Right on the beat, Laura breaks his nose with her elbow.

He stares unbelievably over his hands cupping his crushed nose.

DUANE (CONT'D)
You fuddin' bidch!! You brode by

Laura spins, once again to the music, and breaks his kneecap with a kick.

By this time, Rosie has stumbled halfway to the dance area. Two of the now crippled guy's friends run into her while trying to get to Laura. Rosie grabs one by the shoulders and drives him to the floor with a headbutt.

The other one spins towards her and pulls a knife.

DUANE'S FRIEND
Cunt bitch.

ROSIE
Come and get it, shit stain.

LUPA comes up behind him and slams her cupped palms over his ears. His eyes roll up in his head and he drops.

A guy stumbles back into a table. The dudes at the table take violent exception to their drinks being spilled; the guy's friends take violent exception to their friend getting the shit kicked out of him. That side of the bar turns into a free for all. SITA, a grin on her face, scoots back to the wall, drink in one hand, phone in the other, she's filming the mayhem. NATHAN, CESAR, SARAH, and MIKE move in a disciplined group to the dance area, dealing out mayhem and pain to anyone who moves on them. SARAH lays a foot up alongside the head of a biker dude coming at her with a knife in one meaty fist; a spray of teeth from his mouth hit the floor at the same time he does. A big fat guy decks CESAR and MIKE when he belly flops onto them from a table. NATHAN rolls across a table, bottles ZANZA, and ends up back

to back with LAURA. She finishes the guy coming at her: armlock, break, foot sweep, boot to the head.

NATHAN

You know, it's getting so that I can't take you anywhere. Larry said that he wouldn't let you in after the last fight you started here.

LAURA

Fuck Larry. That shithead grabbed my ass.

NATHAN

I've got a better idea. Fuck me instead of Larry.

A pair of Locas, LUPA and ROSIE, reduce to a heap of meat a fat biker wearing a "Cat lovers eat more pussy" t-shirt.

EXT. AFTERBURNER HONKY TONK NIGHT

Out in the parking lot the brawl is clearly audible. A bottle, then a chair, then a biker fly through a window. The door bursts open and NATHAN and LAURA come reeling through; stumbling into the dirt parking lot. They run laughing towards a line of motorcycles.

Each of them vaults onto a low-slung Japanese racing bike.

LAURA

Race you home!

NATHAN

You're on!

They roar off down the blacktop.

EXT. DESERT ROAD NIGHT

LAURA and NATHAN skillfully blast their bikes through the night, weaving in and out of each other's headlight tunnel, laughing, blowing kisses at each other, reveling in the moment.

EXT. MILITARY BASE NIGHT

Chain link fences topped with barbed wire appear off to each side of the road. No Trespassing. Warning. Restricted Zone. US Military Personnel Only.

A road up ahead leads to the entrance of a military base.

LAURA and NATHAN lean their bikes into the curve and barely slow down. A soldier stands guard next to an entrance hut. He stiffens when he hears the approaching roar of the bikes. Then he recognizes the bikes and raises the barrier, shaking his head ruefully, admiringly as they race by.

INT. MILITARY BASE NIGHT

The rumble of their bikes precedes them as they speed down a street lined with small clapboard houses. NATHAN and LAURA skid to a stop outside a residence. They kiss, wet mouth tongue-fu. They are all over each other as they stagger inside.

INT. MILITARY HOUSING NIGHT

They make it to the bedroom, shedding clothes along the way.

There's the usual pause as they both deal with the problem of getting their boots off. Their pants land on a pair of packed kitbags on one side of the room. And then they're on the bed. Each of them knows what the other likes. They take the loving care to give the greatest amount of pleasure possible to each other. They fall asleep twined around each other.

An alarm clock goes off, 5:30. Laura swats it off.

LAURA

Fuck. Here we go again. Scrub my back?

NATHAN

Anytime. Anywhere.

INT. SHOWER

Under the pounding water they hug, tightly. Nathan cups her face in his hands.

NATHAN

Come back to me in one piece, ok?

LAURA

You too. Be careful.

INT. MILITARY HOUSING MORNING

They get out of the shower and towel each other off. None of the sex of last night. NATHAN acts as LAURA'S squire; helping her into battledress and combat webbing. She has the shoulder patch of Weapon Squad Zero: JSOC Monster Hunter Squad, the Nightcrawlers. She checks her weapons and watches him dress. He dresses in civilian clothes, outdoor clothes

that can take abuse. His jacket sports the insignia of the UN group that he works for. As the final act, each of them lifts a necklace, thin silver chain supporting a small yin yang symbol, from the dresser top. They kiss the necklace and then drape it around the other's neck. They shoulder their kitbags and leave the house.

EXT. MILITARY HOUSING DAY

They pause out in front and hug each other wordlessly, staring at each other, storing the image of the other to use as a talisman to get them through the mad and the bad. They simultaneously break the hug and go off in separate directions.

EXT. MILITARY CARGO PLANE - DAY

Establishing shot.

CAPTION

Weapon Squad Zero en route to
Kurdistan Theater.

INT. MILITARY TRANSPORT PLANE

LAURA and her team are gathered around a table that's been set up towards the front of the plane.

Laura's Team: CESAR, SARAH, and MIKE from the bar. LANGSTON is a new face, a stocky black guy. A sniper, he holds himself still, not much unnecessary movement or words.

Towards the back of the plane are the piles of their gear. The table is one big display, currently showing the graphic that's their unit patch: Nightcrawlers, a fist gripping a stake.

Laura presents an entirely different face from the night before, she even holds herself differently. There is no trace of the party girl. She is a commanding officer and a highly skilled killer.

LAURA

(tone dryly amused)

Glad to see that you all managed
to successfully exfiltrate the bar
last night.

CESAR

I got out of there pretty much
right after you and Nathan made
your exit. What about you, Sarah?

SARAH

(she's having a hard time
keeping her eyes open but
has a very self satisfied
grin on her face)

Turns out a Special Forces dyke is
what one of those biker bitches
had been waiting for all her life.
Kind of grubby under those
leathers, but real sweet, like
honey on the tongue.

MIKE

(laughing)

You are such a slut! You get more
pussy than the rest of us
combined!

SARAH

Just applyin' what we all learned
in boot, givin' it a full 110
percent. It makes me sad that
you've come so far as a spec ops
badass and still haven't learned
that lesson. tsk tsk.

MIKE

I try to live up to your example,
I'll probably end up dead or
crippled.

LAURA

And we wouldn't want that, would
we? You good to go, Sarah, head in
the game?

SARAH

(straightens up in her
chair, the tiredness and
humor turned off)

Yes, ma'am! Good to go!

LAURA

That's what I like to hear.

She hits a couple of keys on an embedded virtual keyboard on
the table in front of her and the graphic disappears to show
a satellite map of Iraq and northern Syria. The picture
zooms in as Laura talks.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Yep, as you can see, we're headed
back to the sandbox. Mount Sinjar,
in the north, up by Kurdistan. US
military elements, operating in

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

that area, cleaning out ISIS
remnants and dealing with the
spill over from the Syrian civil
war, have reports attacks from,
and I quote -

After action report comes up on the display table with
embedded video clip from a soldier's debriefing, Sgt
TUNGAWA, 10th Mountain Division. He's visible from the waist
up, sitting propped up in a medical bed, MASH unit tent in
the background. He's patched up, claw marks visible running
down the side of his neck to disappear underneath bandages
on his shoulder.

TUNGAWA

-and then that night we got hit.
And we had the night scopes
deployed! Whatever it, they, were,
they didn't show up on the scopes.
The first warning we had was when
one of the perimeter claymores
went off. And then it was hand to
hand. They, they were people,
looked like people, it was really
dark, but they fought with claws
and teeth, no guns, not even
knives. Except maybe one or two. I
think I heard some AK fire. They
all ran when somebody finally
popped a flare. And they took all
the dead! Even ours! Did you find
Mitch? Did you find his body?

Laura freezes the video.

LAURA

Let me tell you the most troubling
part of what we just heard.

MIKE

The fact that the dead bodies are
all missing? Cuz we all know what
that means.

CESAR

Ghouls.

SARAH

Damn. Those sonsabitches are
nasty.

LAURA

You guys are partially right. Yes,
the fact that this soldier's unit
(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

was attacked by ghouls is bad. But it's not why we're in the air. We're in the air because Sergeant Tungawa heard AK fire. We're in the air because that nest of ghouls has learned how to use weapons.

LANGSTON

Only AKs?

LAURA

That's a good question. I want all of you combing through all the surviving soldiers' debriefs as well as any drone or satellite footage of the incident. Go forward and back 6 hours on the footage. See if we can spot the ghouls setting up and any signs of anything heavier than rifles.

EXT. BULGARIAN MINISTRY BUILDING NIGHT

Establishing shot. Rain pours down the facade of a decaying governmental building. Ugly Stalinist architecture. Grim and dark and depressing. A few lights show in a couple of the windows.

CAPTION

Sofia, Bulgaria. Ministry of the Interior. Professor Nathan Simons and team from UN Environmental Anomalies Investigations on site.

INT. BULGARIAN MINISTRY CONFERENCE ROOM

NATHAN and his team are seated around one end of a conference table. His team are scientists from all over the world used to working in the field, trained and capable. They've worked with Nathan for a couple of years now. AGATHA (Iceland. Genetics), JUN (South Korea. Epideminolgy with a side of Nuclear Physics with an emphasis on how nuclear waste can cause changes in the environment), SITA (India. Tech: computers, comms, drones, sensing equipment), DESMOND (Nigeria. Chemistry, Biochemistry, Environmental Science).

The room is grey and depressing, flickering florescent lamps. Broken tattered office chairs pushed off into the corners. Peeling laminate on the table and the lectern at the front of the room.

The group contrasts with the decay of the room, ruggedized tablets and laptops, an air of serious intelligence and

competence. Sita has set up her laptop, a satellite router, her phone, and is getting as much data as she can.

SITA

Just so you know, Doc, your wife's fight vid is trending hard on YouTube.

NATHAN

Great.

DESMOND

Let me see!
 (Sita passes him her phone,
 he looks at the video.)
 Ouch! That's going to leave a mark! Why do I never get invited to these bar crawling sessions of yours?

AGATHA

Oh, I don't know, could it be because of ... Osaka in '14, shantytown bar in '12, that mescal place down in Chiapas in '10? Should I go on?

DESMOND

Curse your memory! You don't need these toys of Sita, do you, Agatha? Your perfect memory stores it all. And I deny all your charges. It was some incredibly handsome scientist who looks just like me who did all those damages in all those places.

JUN

(is looking over Desmond's shoulder)
 Nathan, as insanely entertaining it is to watch your wife beat up white people, why are we here in deepest darkest Bulgaria?

NATHAN

48 hours ago, the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior contacted the UN and invoked Section 5. And in turn, the Security Council Environment Division tasked us.

JUN

Section 5? How bad is it?

The door opens and RADKO ZHELOV enters, followed by two aides weighed down by folders and binders.

RADKO

Perhaps I should answer that, Dr Simons.

NATHAN

Dr. Zhelov! Good to see you again. Folks, this is Dr. Radko Zhelov, he's the number two at the Bulgarian Interior Ministry and the guy who gets things done in this building. Doctor, allow me to introduce my people. Doctor Agatha Gudrunsdottir, Doctor Jun Park, Sita Bachaan, and Doctor Desmond Okonye.

JUN

Are you the one who invoked Section 5, Dr. Zhelov?

Radko shakes Nathan's hand and then goes to the lectern. His two aides sit at the head of the table and spread out the folders and binders that they were carrying. Radko puts on his glasses and opens the folder he was carrying. While he's doing this, Nathan's team comes to order as well. Desmond returns Sita's phone, she starts bringing up various maps of Bulgaria on her screens, the others set their tablets to note taking modes.

RADKO

Yes, Dr. Park. I was.

AGATHA

What triggered this action, Dr. Zhelov?

RADKO

Monsters. Now before you start to disbelieve, please hear me out.

DESMOND

You'll find no unbelievers in this room, Doctor. We've all seen too much.

RADKO

(heartened by this response,
he continues)

The information that I'm about to
pass on to you came to me from a
very strange source. The Bulgarian
government is very corrupt.

TEXT CAPTION

Bulgaria most corrupt EU country -
Transparency.org

And because of that corruption,
the mafias control everything.
Everyone is paid to look the other
way. BUT I am just a minor
bureaucrat in an unimportant
ministry. So you can imagine my
surprise when I was called into my
superior's office.

INT. WAITING ROOM OF THE OFFICE OF RADKO'S BOSS

RECEPTIONIST behind a desk, chosen for her attractiveness
rather than her typing skills. RADKO sits, nervously eyeing
the two THUGS who are leaning on the receptionist's desk,
flirting with her. Her phone buzzes, she lifts it up without
breaking flirtatious eye contact with one of the thugs,
listens, puts it back down.

RECEPTIONIST

Dr. Bustari will see you now. You
can go in.

Radko gets up, edges past the thugs, who cordially ignore
him, completely engrossed with the receptionist's cleavage.

INT. RADKO'S BOSS'S OFFICE

RADKO enters, and pauses, puzzled, looking at the man behind
the desk. The office is decorated in gaudy post-communist
bureaucrat - big desk, fake diplomas, lots of photos of the
boss with other governmental figures, the biggest photo, the
one given the most attention is of BUSTARI with Vladimir
Putin, the two of them crouched over a wild pig that Putin
has killed with his bare hands. The Photoshopping is sadly
apparent.

RADKO

Dr. Bustari?

At that, man gets up from where he was sitting in front of
the desk and comes towards Radko.

BUSTARI

Ah, Dr. Zhelov!

BUSTARI is a paunchy, mustachioed guy in a good suit. But Radko is still clearly confused about why Bustari isn't sitting behind his own desk.

BUSTARI (CONT'D)

I was just telling our good friend here,

(heavy hinting emphasis on 'our good friend')

Mr. Ilescu, that you were the very person who could handle his small difficulty.

ILESCU

Not so small, Dr. Bustari.

ILESCU is clearly the boss of the two thugs out in the waiting room. Clean-shaven, MUCH better suit than Bustari, has a self assured air of authority about him, and the glint in his eye that tells any observant person that he's killed a lot of people to get where he is. Not stupid, not a thug.

BUSTARI

Well, no, of course not, I didn't mean to imply.

ILESCU

Please, Dr. Zhelov, be seated and let me tell you about my problem and you can tell me how you can help me.

RADKO

(seating himself nervously)

I will be glad to help in any small way that I can.

ILESCU

I am having some difficulties at a production facility that I own. It's some distance out in the country, an old Soviet factory that I acquired during the privatization days. Starting recently, production falls off. Manager says that workers are leaving but he can handle it. Production continues to drop. I send men to investigate, good men, skilled men, you understand, men who can get me answers and results. One of them makes it back

(MORE)

ILESCU (CONT'D)

to me here in Sofia. And he is sick, poisoned, insane, raving. He says factory is empty, he says monsters. He screams and dies, sores all over his body, bleeding out everywhere. I know when it is other boss trying to move in on me. This is something different. And since he says poison, since he looks so bad, I am thinking maybe something to do with factory. Makes me wonder why those Russian fuckers sold it so cheap.

RADKO

What happened to this man's body? I would very much like to examine it. I can tell you more after that.

ILESCU

I burned it. I burned the house where he died. It was my favorite villa and I burned it without thinking twice after I saw how he died. After I saw what came out of him. So, Dr. Zhelov, is Dr. Bustari correct? Are you the man who can help me with this?

INT. BULGARIAN MINISTRY CONFERENCE ROOM

DESMOND

And you said yes. Completely understandable. Any intelligent person would have done the same.

NATHAN

And what did you find out that made you call the UN and invoke Section 5?

RADKO

Even though the Soviet Union disappeared decades ago, we here in Bulgaria are still uncovering the crimes that were done when the Russians ruled here. Map one.

(he gestures to his aids who unroll a map on the middle of the table. Sita brings up the same map and sends it to the teams' tablets)

I am an environmentalist. And one of my jobs, here in the Ministry, is to monitor public health with an eye to seeing if there any health trends, negative health trends, that might have environmental reasons.

DESMOND

And I take it that you found some?

RADKO

Yes, Dr.Okonye, I did. When I looked at the location that I had been given, I found some very disturbing things indeed.

(he gestures to a spot on the map)

Here, in this remote section of northern Bulgaria. The records show abnormally high rates birth defects, still births. And the life expectancy is very low, low even for Bulgaria.

AGATHA

Were you able to find any environmental factors?

RADKO

Yes, and this brings us back to the Russians. There is, rather, was, it's abandoned now, a very large factory, a factory complex, really, in the main valley, here. It provided employment for most of the population in a 50 kilometer radius. It was built and run by the Soviets. When I found out about that, I sent in a team to investigate, to get any sort of data that would back up the story that I got from the Ministry "associate".

Sita brings up satellite footage onto the team's tablets and computers, overlays them with various topographical and instrumental maps - heat, soil acidity, radiological.

DESMOND

Look, those bastards put it right
in the watershed. Whatever drains
from it, will spread throughout
the water system.

NATHAN

Dr. Zhelov, Radko, what made you
invoke Section 5? This is bad, but
nothing new and nothing so bad
that deserves a Section 5 call.

RADKO

That's what I thought at first.
And then the lone survivor of the
team I sent there made it back
here.

INT. BULGARIAN HOSPITAL CORRIDOR FLASHBACK

RADKO is running down a hospital corridor towards a set of
double doors labeled EMERGENCY. Hospital aesthetics but
grimy, flickering flourescents.

INT. BULGARIAN HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM FLASHBACK

RADKO burst through the double doors. A DOCTOR and two
ASSISTANTS are frantically working on a body on a gurney.
For now, the body can't be seen.

DOCTOR

Get a fucking mask on!

RADKO

(grabs a mask from a nearby
table and holds it over his
face)

You said it's Nico?

DOCTOR

(to his assisstants)

Get him sedated! Do it now! Then
into the oxygen chamber! Start him
on chemo, stem cells,
antibiotics... Fuck, give him
everything!

The assistants spring into action. Radko pushes his way in
between them and sees NICO. Radko's eyes widen over his
mask.

Nico's a mess. Hair falling out, chemical burns, large pus
filled blisters, one eye blind and rotting, losing
fingernails and teeth.

RADKO

Nico, what in the Virgin's name happened to you?

Doctor pulls Radko aside.

DOCTOR

He barely made it here. Crashed his car right out in front of the hospital. Where did you send him? What the fuck's wrong with him? And, Radko, this is the most important question. Is he contagious?

EXT. KURDISH AIRBASE - DAY

LAURA and her TEAM, carrying kitbags and weapons, are walking across the tarmac. Behind them is the plane that they arrived in. The sun beats down. They are approached by CAPTAIN RASHID, a Kurdish woman in the YPJ, Kurdish Women's Army. She's dressed in dusty desert camo and carrying a well-used AK-47.

RASHID

Captain Rodriguez? I am Captain Rashid. I've been assigned as your liason while you're here in Kurdistan. If there's anything that you need, I can get it for you.

LAURA

My team and I need to get in the field as soon as possible. Could you please arrange transport?

RASHID

Where will you be going?

LAURA

I have a couple of ideas and I'd like to run them past you. Are you familiar with the Mount Sinjar?

RASHID

Very. My family has lived there for the last 5 generations.

LAURA

That's very good news. I need you to look at some satellite images. Is there a place where we can talk

(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)
while transportation is being
arranged?

RASHID
Of course. Please follow me.

LAURA
(to Cesar)
Go find Tungawa and bring him to
me. Make sure he's ready to head
out with us. I need his eyes on
site.

CESAR
Roger that.

Cesar heads off, Rashid talks to a subordinate and sends him
to get transport while Laura and the rest of them follow
Rashid through the busy military camp.

INT. MILITARY TENT - DAY

RASHID enters, followed by LAURA, SARAH, LANGSTON, MIKE. The
tent is set up as a rough office/planning space: tables
covered in maps, a white board, a couple of ruggedized
laptops.

RASHID
Will this do, Captain?

LAURA
Just what I was hoping for,
Captain. Thank you very much.

Mike pulls a laptop from his gear, boots it up. Rashid finds
a laminated card on the table and hands it to him.

RASHID
Here are the permissions for our
local network, Sergeant.

MIKE
Thank you, ma'am.

LAURA
(pointing to an area on a
map that Mike's brought up
and zooming in on)
Here's where the incident
occurred. Can you think of
anyplace that the attackers might
have come from? And, this is
(MORE)

LAURA (CONT'D)

important, please don't discount any places that might be unusual.

RASHID

Let me look. Sergeant, please zoom out a little. Yes, there. The brighter spaces, there. Those are the ruins of ancient Zoroastrian temple. Very little is left of it, it's millenia old. But that's the only place in the area where the attackers could be coming from.

LAURA

Can you give me a description of what it's like?

RASHID

I don't know much, never been there myself. I think that it's just an open ruined building, some pillars.

MIKE

You said it was Zoroastrian. Do you know if the flame is still burning? A lot of these types of temples were sited on top of old open sources of oil.

RASHID

I'm afraid that I don't know. But I think I know how to find out.

She sits down at another laptop, logs in, and brings up drone footage.

RASHID (CONT'D)

Let's see. Who the hell invented this filing system? Sergeant, what's the GPS of that temple?

Mike looks at his screen and rattles off some numbers.

RASHID (CONT'D)

OK. Found it. Here's footage from a couple of different overflights in that area. Lemme call up the IR footage.

INSERT DRONE CAM FOOTAGE

In a variety of filters, the footage shows the ariel view of an old ruined stone structure.

RASHID

Switching filters now. IR on...
Yeah, look at that, getting a definite glow. You were right, Sergeant, the flame seems to still be on. But I'm not seeing any heat signatures from bodies. Doesn't look like this is the place.

INT. MILITARY TENT - DAY

LAURA

That's because what we're hunting doesn't give off a heat signature.

RASHID

I'm afraid that I don't understand.

CESAR comes into the tent with TUNGAWA. He's kitted out and ready to go. Bandages show from underneath his uniform, covering the wounds on his neck and shoulders.

CESAR

I've got Corporal Tungawa, Captain. He's ready to go.

TUNGAWA

Yes, Ma'am! Good to go! Ready to get some payback!
(looking around, spots their patches)
Holy shit! You guys are the Monster Hunters!

LAURA

Corporal Tungawa will explain on the way. Let's go, people. We've got a target.

INT. HUMVEE - DAY

TUNGAWA and RASHID up front, LAURA and MIKE in the back. There's another Humvee behind them, carrying the rest of Laura's team. The two vehicles are traveling up a dusty winding desert mountain road. Tungawa is driving and talking to Rashid.

TUNGAWA

I never thought that my report would bring them in. Fuck, we're in the shit now.

RASHID

I don't understand. I was told that they were a team from your Joint Special Operations Command. I've worked with several such teams in the past. They don't seem to be any different.

(over her shoulder to Laura)
No offense meant, Captain Rodriguez.

LAURA

None taken. You're not wrong, Captain Rashid, we're not any different.

TUNGAWA

Beg to differ, Ma'am. I seen your patch, you're Night Crawlers, the monster hunters!

RASHID

Excuse me, monster hunters? Are you serious?

TUNGAWA

They're as serious as death, ma'am! I saw what came at us, that night, what took out my friends, and they weren't no jihadis, nothin' like that.

LAURA

Captain, our mission, this squad's mission is to deal with non-standard threats. Sometimes those threats are EXTREMELY non-standard and so we've gotten the nickname of Monster Hunters.

RASHID

So, what we're heading towards, how "non-standard" is it?

LAURA

At least they're bipedal, so they're somewhat standard.

RASHID

I... see...

LAURA

And, actually, Captain Rashid, you might know what we're going up against, if you know your mythology.

RASHID

A little?

LAURA

Ghuls.

RASHID

Ghuls? Ghuls. Captain, I'm starting to think, that for some reason, this is all some sort of elaborate practical joke.

TUNGAWA

No, Ma'am. The Monster Hunters, they don't joke around. And I know what I saw, I know what took chunks outta me and killed off all the other guys in my unit, that wasn't human. So, if Captain Rodriguez says ghuls, I just ask, how do we kill 'em?

EXT. DECAYING BULGARIAN FACTORY COMPLEX - DAY

Two battered SUVs pull up outside the sagging chainlink fence that stretches in front of a huge factory complex. The complex is a mix of closed buildings and open industrial infrastructure of pipes, holding tanks, catwalks, conveyor belts, monitoring stations, etc. The space beyond the chainlink is an empty parking lot. The gate is secured with a locked chain.

The theme is decay. The complex is empty and abandoned. Rust. Weeds. Curtains and ventians blinds flapping in broken windows. Silence except for noises made by the wind.

NATHAN, JUN, and SITA get out of the first SUV and DESMOND and AGATHA get out of the second. They start pulling gear out of the vehicles. They put on white protective suits over their clothes. As Nathan is zipping up his protective suit, he pauses and kisses the yin yang necklace before tucking it away underneath his clothes. Sita opens a laptop and while it's booting up, takes a quad-rotor drone out of its case and turns it on.

SITA

Beginning arial coverage in five,
Nathan.

NATHAN

Standard grid pattern. And make
sure that the entire sensor
package is operational.

SITA

Got it. All data will be going to
your tablets. Setting up the
network now.

NATHAN

Everybody take their extra large
medical kit. I know what Radko's
mafia buddy said, but I think that
we'll be finding people in need,
rather than monsters. After all,
isn't that what we usually find
when Section 5 is invoked?

JUN

But in case the maphia guy's
right, Nathan? After all, yeah,
usually it's people in need, but
remember that time in Cambodia?

Nathan looks at Jun for a minute, thinking, and then nods,
reluctantly.

NATHAN

Yeah, ok. I hear you. Everybody! I
am authorizing small arms! But
they go in your packs, not
displayed. They are absolutely
last resort.

They all look at Nathan and nod. They go to the SUVs and
pull out 9mm pistols. Except Agatha. She shakes her head.

AGATHA

No, not for me. You all know how I
am. I will not harm another being.

DESMOND

Agatha, please! It's for your
protection. We are not going in
like cowboys, we are still
scientists! But Jun makes a very
good point, sometimes we have to
protect ourselves.

AGATHA

I won't betray my beliefs,
Desmond. Thank you for your
concern, though.

NATHAN

It's ok.

As Sita sets up her communication station on the hood of one of the SUVs, a couple of laptops, and Desmond and Jun put their guns into their packs, Agatha takes a sensor probe and walks to the edge of the road. She sticks the probe into the dirt and reads the data off its screen.

AGATHA

No birds. No insects. This isn't
good, Nathan. Even in Pripyat,
after the meltdown, there were
birds and insects. And, Desmond,
come here and look at these
readings.

Desmond walks over, still fastening his protective suit, and takes the probe from Agatha. His face becomes very serious as he looks at the data.

DESMOND

There is an insanely high level of
PCBs and other dioxins in the
soil. No wonder everything is
either dead or dying. These levels
are analogous to the worst
Superfund sites back in the States
back in the 70s. I would recommend
most seriously that we, at the
very least, use our best filter
masks at all times while we are on
site. The dust is poisonous.

Matching action to words, he pulls up his mask. The rest of the team does likewise. Jun walks over to the gate and tugs on the chain.

JUN

We going in this way, Nathan?

DESMOND

Now, now, don't rush me. This is a
delicate operation and I will need
the proper tools.

JUN

Bolt cutters?

DESMOND

Bolt cutters.

Jun hands Desmond the bolt cutters and he quickly severs the chain keeping the gate closed.

Sita enters a final few commands on her laptop and the two drones rise up, front and back, covering the group as they move through the gate and into the complex.

EXT. RUINED TEMPLE - DAY

By time LAURA and her TEAM get to the temple, it's late afternoon/early evening. The temple is on a ridge of a mountain, overlooking the plain far below. The two Humvees stop out of sight of the temple, on the other side of a hill that has a vantage point on the temple. Everyone gets out, goes to the cargo areas and begins to unload gear and weapon up.

The difference between the different soldiers is clear. RASHID has no armor, just a helmet and knee and elbow pads, ammo pouches. Her battered, functional AK doesn't even have a scope. TUNGAWA has the standard US Army kit, full battle rattle. But LAURA and her team, they're fully strapped.

LAURA

Tungawa, you're with Cesar.
Captain Rashid, with me. No
communication, vocal or radio,
unless an emergency. What we're
hunting are fast and quiet. Shoot
first, no hesitation. Don't be
surprised by how they look, just
shoot.

CESAR rummages in a kit bag, comes up with several assault rifle clips. He hands them to Tungawa.

CESAR

Here. Ghul stoppers. What we're
going up against don't go down
easy.

TUNGAWA

Yeah, I found that out the hard
way. What're these?

CESAR

Hollowpoint variant with a mercury
tip. Similar to a Glaser round.

TUNGAWA

Outstanding!

While Tungawa is swapping out clips, Cesar comes up with some clips for Rashid as well as a communication headset, matching what the rest of them have.

CESAR

Got some of the same for you, Captain, in 7.62. And the headset will get you into our comms network.

RASHID

Thank you, Sergeant.

LAURA

Here's the plan. Ghuls nest underground, there's usually some sort of tunnel complex with a large chamber in the middle. We go in, fight our way to the big chamber, the larger tunnels will all lead to it. Go in the opposite direction of small tunnels. Once we reach the big chamber, Mike and Sarah will lay the charges that they're carrying, and we fight our way out and blow everything to fuck. Langston will remain outside, find a spot with good lines of sight and cover us. Clear? We're all good to go? Comms are green?

Answering nods all around. Mike and Sarah lift their packs to show that the explosives are ready to go.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Then let's head out and get this done. Let's move with a purpose, people! We're racing the sun, we don't want to face this fuckers in the dark!

They all move away from the SUVs and down the hill and the CAMERA FOLLOWS them, CRANES UP to reveal the ruined temple. one large central building with no roof and two rows of broken pillars running its length inside, walls in a variety of tumble down states

It's all very quiet, just the sounds of their boots on the stony ground. They communicate by gestures.

LANGSTON follows them for a bit down the hill, then sees a group of boulders that do for cover. He sets up there, prone

behind his rifle, eye to the scope, covering the team, watching them as they go

INT. RUINED TEMPLE - DAY

into the temple itself. With just the slightest scuff of boot on the stone floor, CESAR and SARAH ghost into the ruined temple. Hand gestures and LAURA and MIKE follow them in.

It's an open space, an altar broken into a pile of rubble at one end. In front of the altar is a large hole. It's meant to be there, it's tiled around the edge and enough of the original mosaics remain to show that the mosaic depicted flames radiated out from the hole. The sunlight slanting down lights the floor but leaves deep puddles of shadows along the walls.

Sarah stiffens and gestures. Laying half in and out of one of the pools of shadow along the wall is a corpse of an American soldier. His uniform is tattered and he's been gnawed on, arm ends in bone picked clean. TUNGAWA, coming in through the door, sees the body and his face breaks in recognition. His mouth shapes a name and he starts towards the body. Sarah's hand is just a second too late to grab him.

Tungawa gets to the body and kneels beside it, reaches out to touch it. Which is when it starts to be dragged back into the shadows.

EXT. DECAYING BULGARIAN FACTORY COMPLEX - DAY

NATHAN, AGATHA, DESMOND, and JUN move through a maze of rusting chemical plant machinery. Intermittently visible through the pipes and catwalks running above them is the quadrotor drone that Sita's running from back at the vehicles.

They are bright white in their protective outfits, bright and clean against the rusted decay of the machinery. Their voices, muffled behind their filter masks, are loud in the quiet.

JUN

(squatting to get a readout from a probe stuck into the dirt that attached to his laptop)

This is some ugly shit, Nathan. Dioxin count is even higher here than out in the parking lot. But while this is bad, I don't see how it could create the kind of

(MORE)

JUN (CONT'D)
effects that Doctor Zhelov
described back in Sofia.

DESMOND
I agree.

SITA
(V/O)
Hey, guys? There's a large
building up ahead, maybe three
stories. Looks like some sort of
processing facility. And I'm
pretty sure that I just spotted
movement in the upper windows.
Looking at playback now.
Yeahhhh... okayyyyy... You guys
need to see this.

All their tablets ping simultaneously. They all bring up the
file Sita just uploaded.

EXT. DECAYING BULGARIAN FACTORY COMPLEX - DAY - VFX

DRONE CAMERA FOOTAGE. There's a large bulding at the center
of the complex, 3 stories, square, a control center. The
first two stories are blank walls, stained with toxic fogs
and rain. The top level appears to have been office space,
there are windows. On the side facing the drone, a lot of
the windows have been broken.

A quick furtive movement in one of the broken windows, a
fast pixelated zoom in by the camera, video on loop as Sita
cleans it up, still unclear and grainy, but it's clearly a
person, wrapped in rags and scruffy beat up and torn
clothes, face obscured by a breather mask, gender
indeterminate. But the figure is hunched and one arm is
wrapped against its chest. And whoever it is, doesn't so
much as a walk as lurch. But that might be a factor of the
low video quality. It's just a couple of frames, and Sita
can't squeeze much meaning from it.

INT. BULGARIAN FACTORY BUILDING - DAY

NATHAN, JUN, DESMOND, AGATHA cautiously moving into the
building. Pipes feeding into machines, lots of monitoring
stations. Once again, vivid contrast between the clean white
protective suits and the rust and the grime around them.
Even the light is diseased. Drone can't fit, SITA trying to
get it in though the broken windows above.

NATHAN

(loudly, clearly, unafraid)
Hello? We mean you no harm. We're
here to help you. Please don't be
afraid.

AGATHA

(repeats that in Russian,
the closest that any of them
have to Bulgarian)

There's no response. They move forward, Nathan and Agatha
repeating their reassurances.

They move in deeper into the building. Light starts to
become sparse. Shapes begin to move behind machinery, pipes,
shadowing them. They're aware of this and draw closer
together. Nathan doesn't let his nervousness into his voice
as he repeats his reassurances of harmlessness.

DESMOND

Sita, are you getting any of this?

SITA

(v/o)

Afraid not. Haven't managed to get
the drone into to the building
yet. Go to camera on your tablet,
give me a 360.

Desmond does as instructed, bringing up the camera function
of his tablet, then holding it out in front of him, turning
in a circle.

SITA (CONT'D)

(v/o)

Is that a light up ahead?

DESMOND

Looks like it. We're approaching
it now.

The pipes and machinery stop and there's a clear area in the
center of the building. Looks like things have been removed
to make room. The area is lit by barrel fires and dim
flickering lights which reveal the expression on Nathan and
the rest of them: shock, horror, compassion.

INT. RUINED TEMPLE - DAY

GHULS come out of the shadows, come out of the hole. Ghuls
were never human. Underground carrion feeders, corpse eaters
with long underslung jaws filled with teeth, hands with long
fingers tipped with broad claws, good for digging. Skin is
white and pink and wrinkled. There's a good bit of naked

mole rat in their DNA. They carry AKs and communicate in a high pitched chittering.

LAURA, CESAR, SARAH, MIKE in action. Laura and her people move forward to confront the ghuls the minute they appear, no hesitation, no shock. Accurate three round bursts sweep the ghuls off their feet. The ghuls never even get close, never even get shots off. They were used to their prey being in shock, being afraid. Not this time. Killing monsters is what Weapon Squad Zero does. RASHID and TUNGAWA don't even have time to get a shot off.

MIKE doesn't even pause, but goes down the hole in the front of the altar, right after the ghul body.

INT. GHUL TUNNELS

MIKE lands right on the ghul body that he'd just shot. He spins, getting a quick 360, the light slung underneath the barrel of his rifle illuminating the scene. Ancient tiles on the floor and walls. A circle of raised bricks around the vent where the eternal flame burned back when this was a Zorastrian Temple, 2000 years ago. The ghuls have burrowed in from the side of this pit, bricks and tiles tossed aside into piles. Mike moves to the tunnel entrance as SARAH and CESAR leap down through the hole. They also move up to the tunnel entrance. They're waiting there for LAURA, RASHID, and TUNGAWA, who are at the edge of the hole, ready to come down, when shots, spaced shots, are audible from outside the ruined temple.

LAURA

Langston.

She doesn't say anything else, just gestures to Mike, Cesar, and Sarah to continue on into the tunnels. She gestures to Rashid and Tungawa to follow her. The three of them move away from the edge of the hole, out of sight. Mike goes into the tunnel first, followed by Sarah, then Cesar.

EXT. RUINED TEMPLE - DAY

LANGSTON is in his sniper nest, shooting at, killing ghuls that have come up from the dirt, hidden tunnels outside the temple. The ghuls were planning on sneaking up on the squad from behind in the temple but Langston's shooting has ended that plan. The ghuls are carrying AK-47s.

Langston squeezes off another shot and another ghul falls. The rest scatter to cover, behind fallen columns and boulders. They start to fire up at where they think Langston might be.

LAURA, RASHID, and TUNGAWA burst out of the ruined temple,

firing, covering each other, attacking the ghuls on the flank while they were preoccupied with dealing with Langston's shooting.

Langston lines up another shot. Behind him, on the hillside above him, sand shifts. Cautiously, quietly, a ghul emerges from the dirt. It carries no weapon but flexes its claws and bares its teeth as it creeps towards Langston who's concentrating on his shot.

INT. GHUL TUNNELS

MIKE, SARAH, and CESAR are being swarmed. Chaotic visuals as the only light is from their lights slung under their gun barrels and muzzle flashes or through night vision goggles.

GHULS are firing on them from around a bend in the tunnel. Mike and Sarah are returning fire. Cesar is keeping back a couple of ghuls who are trying to attack them from behind. Sarah throws a grenade up into the one attacking them and as soon as it explodes, she's running up to press the advantage. Mike gets up to follow her and a ghul bursts out from the side of the tunnel and grabs him. It's fierce hand to hand between them. Mike's weapon is torn from his grip before he gets a shot off. The ghul shreds Mike's armor and gear with its claws before Mike's able to pull his sidearm and put two bullets in the side of the ghul's head.

CAMERA FREEZE on the ghul's shattered monstrous face and
CROSSFADE TO

INT. BULGARIAN FACTORY BUILDING - DAY

The face of someone suffering from severe genetic damage, similar to the Elephant Man. The person with that face is in a crowd in the open area in the factory complex. The crowd is a group of people between 10 and 20 people, a mixture of children and adults. They're all very deformed. The area is draped in tattered plastic and tarps, giving some protection from the elements in this open area. There are a couple of barrel fires providing a bit of heat. There are beds, cots, piles of carpeting scavenged from the front building providing places for the people to sleep.

Most of the people are cowering back from NATHAN and his team but some of the larger people are moving forward in a threatening and protective manner. They carry a mix of knives and clubs. The firelight from the barrels and the sunbeams coming down through gaps in the plastic light the faces and deformities with a flickering indistinct light, highlighting the deformities, making them more monstrous.

The quadcopter drone comes down through one of the holes in the plastic.

INT. SUV - DAY

SITA has two laptops open and a tablet running the quadcopter drone controls. One of the laptops is collating environmental data. The other one is showing footage from the drone of the area with the people.

Sita reacts with shock and sorrow.

INT. BULGARIAN FACTORY BUILDING - DAY

DESMOND, panicked, starts to bring his pack around to get his gun out. JUN grabs his arm and shakes his head.

JUN

Stop that. You're a scientist, not some soldier. Follow Nathan's lead. He knows what he's doing.

NATHAN pulls off his breather mask and holds his hands out to show peaceful intent. AGATHA does the same thing.

NATHAN

Please. We're here to help. We're doctors. Scientists. We mean you no harm. Please. Do you speak English?

AGATHA

saying the same things in Russian

The deformed get closer, still threatening. They get close enough to start shoving the team around, who are offering no resistance. Nathan isn't afraid, only compassionate. He can see that these are people who have been poisoned, people whose genetics have been damaged, people who are not monsters, people who are deserving of sympathy.

NATHAN

Please don't be afraid. We can help you.

The shoving gets a little more violent, both Desmond and Jun start to look worried. Then a woman shoves her way into the crowd, starts pulling the deformed off the team. This is MARYA TERMICIA. She's a weathered middle aged woman, wearing well worn clothes, fringes of close cropped grey hair peaking out from underneath a cap. Her glasses are held together with tape.

MARYA

(Bulgarian)

What have I told you? Leave these people be! They say that they're doctors! They're here to help!

The deformed begin to pull back. They look embarrassed. Hands with too few fingers or hands that are flippers clumsily try to straighten the team's clothes. Desmond carefully takes his glasses from a young woman with a tumor hanging off her face. She'd picked the glasses up from the ground where they'd fallen. She wipes them clean before handing them to Desmond. Her smile, the half of it not obscured by the tumor, is heartbreaking in its sweetness.

DESMOND

Th-thank you. That's very kind of you.

MARYA

(English)

Are you all right? I apologize for this. You startled them and they're not used to peaceful visitors.

NATHAN

Please don't apologize. It's I that should. I'm very sorry to scare ... your friends. My name is Nathan. Nathan Simpson and I'm, my team and I, we're from the UN. The Bulgarian government has asked us to help them.

Marya spits at the mention of the Bulgarian government.

MARYA

I apologize. That was rude of me but it's because of those bastards in Sofia that all of this has happened. It's hard for me to control myself when they're mentioned. But where are my manners? I am Marya Termicia. I suppose that you could call me a doctor. I'm the only doctor that these poor souls have ever known, at least.

NATHAN

We have medicines and some equipment. Do you have a place where we can set up?

MARYA

Yes. Over here.

She leads them towards one corner of the area, a couple of beds set up, a sink rigged with a garden hose. Everything is as clean as it can be.

NATHAN

What happened here? At this factory? Do you know what's caused all these abnormalities?

MARYA

The worst of both communism and capitalism. Quotas valued more than safety, valued more than health. What did it matter that we were dying, being poisoned as long as we met our quotas of socialist labor or quarterly projections? And what are we to do? We are too poor to move, too poor to buy protection, too poor to buy justice. So, when people far away in clean offices told us that it was no longer worth their while to keep this factory open, we decided to stay, try for some sort of life. But our poor children - we didn't know just how bad it could get. I was the factory doctor, as was my mother before me - no training, no money, but I do what I can. Not long for me now though. I do have enough training to recognize cancer. I'm actually surprised that I've lived this long.

Agatha, Jun, and Desmond open their packs and start laying out medical supplies and technical gear. The deformed start to gather around and stare in awe and a little distrust at the unfamiliar items and the flashing lights and changing displays of the diagnostic equipment and computers and the scientists purposefully moving in their clean white protective suits. The scientists have quickly taken their gloves off so as to better do their jobs.

NATHAN

Dr. Termicia, I'd like to introduce you to my colleagues. Agatha Gudrunsdottir, Jun Park, Desmond Okonye, and the person operating the drone is Sita Bachaan. We have enough supplies

(MORE)

NATHAN (CONT'D)

here to perform basic care and vaccinations, and we can also do genetic typing to determine if there are germline therapies that might help. Please tell us how we can go about helping these people. They trust you and you know them. You know which one will need care first.

Marya stares at the supplies and machines, clean, sterile, gleaming otherworldly against the dirt and rust and decay, for a minute, her eyes fill with tears. She quickly collects herself, wipes her eyes, and becomes businesslike.

MARYA

I agree. And there's so much to be done. No time to waste!

She starts calling out in Bulgarian, names and orders, she goes out to the people and starts leading them to Nathan and his team.

AGATHA

Sita, bring up both Typer and the full Diagnostic suite. And be sure to maintain a strong wireless signal. It's going to be a lot of data.

SITA

(O/C)

I hear you, Agatha. I'm launching drone 2 now to act as a relay router. Clearing all buffers and all computers are up to speed. Throw the switch, Igor! Throw it!

Agatha spares Sita's jokes a small smile but she's soon fully involved in caring for the people Marya is bringing to her. The same is true for Jun, Desmond, and Nathan. They are all very busy doing what they do best, helping people, making things better for them.

CROSS FADE TO

EXT. LANGSTON'S SNIPER NEST - DAY

face of the GHUL sneaking up behind LANGSTON. It slowly, silently, gathers itself, then POUNCES! Langston rolls to one side. He has his sidearm drawn and puts two in the ghul's head while it's still airborne. He doesn't spare it

another look but rolls back to his rifle, puts his eye to the scope and sees

EXT. RUINED TEMPLE - DAY

GHUL pops its head up over a piece of ruin and gets a bullet in the face. LAURA doesn't lower her weapon but gestures with her free hand to RASHID and TUNGAWA, who move forward, flanking the rest of the ghuls and laying down suppressing fire.

MIKE, CESAR, and SARAH race out of the ruined temple. It's a tactical retreat, not a headlong rush and they're laying down covering and suppressing fire behind them.

CESAR

Charges are set! 30 seconds to go!
Cover! Cover!

LAURA

Rashid! Tungawa! There! That pile
of rock! Go! Get down!

Laura joins her team in retreating from the temple while laying down heavy suppressing fire, keeping the ghuls inside.

Then the explosives blow. The temple shatters in a blast of fire. The soldiers duck or throw themselves to the ground as pieces of rubble streak past their heads.

EXT. LANGSTON'S SNIPER NEST - DAY

LANGSTON has a bird's eye view of the temple exploding. He sees it collapse into a deep hole. He sees fires start to erupt from the ground in jagged patterns running away from the exploding temple as the ghuls' tunnels start to collapse.

EXT. RUINED TEMPLE - DAY

LAURA looks up from where she's taken cover from the blast and sees the shattered temple on fire and collapsing. Smoke and flame and noise and dust and destruction. She nods to herself in satisfaction. Then she sees a rift caused by a collapsing tunnel heading right towards her. She scrambles away.

LAURA

Get back! Get to high ground! Get
back!

A screaming burning GHUL leaps from a collapsing tunnel right in front of RASHID and TUNGAWA. They chop it to pieces with rifle fire. Another one runs from the temple ruins,

also on fire, also screaming, firing blindly, gets three steps before its head explodes as Langston takes the shot.

The team regroups on the slope overlooking the temple. The explosions have cracked the old oil seep that fueled the Zoroastrian flame those millennia ago and now it's a pillar of fire.

MIKE and CESAR are bleeding from scratches and bites, nothing too serious. Both Rashid and Tungawa look amped, they've survived their first monster hunt and neither of them looked like idiots in front of the Night Crawlers.

LANGSTON, carrying his rifle in one hand, comes down the slope from his sniper nest to join the group.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Everyone good? Captain Rashid?
Corporal Tungawa?

RASHID

I'm fine, Captain.

TUNGAWA

Good to go, ma'am. Damn! I've never seen anything like those things!

CESAR

You did good, Corporal. You kept your shit together.

SARAH

(slaps Mike on the shoulder affectionately)
Not like this crazy motherfucker here! What the hell, Mike, going hand to hand with a ghul?

MIKE

(grinning)
What was I supposed to do? It came right at me! Out of the fucking wall!

LAURA

Glad to see that you're all ok. Langston, good work on the lookout, excellent shooting. Come on, let's get the fuck out of here. We're done.

MIKE

Damn right, we're done. Fuck, they
can see how done we are from
orbit!

Amid general laughter and camaraderie, the group heads back to the SUVs. Laura takes the rear, looking back one last time to make sure, seeing the roaring column of fire marking their killzone. She fishes out her necklace with the yin yang symbol on it and rubs it absently.