

Louis L'Amour's
THE DIAMOND OF JERU
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9-26-09

The Diamond of Jeru

British Protectorate of Sarawak, Island of Borneo, 1955

FADE IN:

INT. KARDEC'S BUNGALOW - BED - MORNING

MIKE KARDEC lays on the bed, sheets strewn around him. Patched mosquito netting hangs from the ceiling. The house is dark but daylight blasts in from beyond the blinds. MOVE IN. The man is in his mid thirties and solidly built. He wears nothing but boxer shorts, he is sheathed in sweat; the heat of the tropics at it's worst.

CLOSER - He moves in his sleep, twisting the sheets. Behind his eyelids his eyes twitch, they are partly open but he is unaware of the world, in a dream.

THE WINDOW - A breeze moves the blind slightly, it taps against the wall, causing the light in the room to pulse and flicker.

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVER - RAPIDS - DAY

Towering trees lean out over the wide river. Sunlight dapples the water, dots and beams of brilliant light. Close by, the river drops into a series of rapids, a vast eroded staircase of rocks and whirlpools.

KARDEC'S POV - as spray blasts over the bow of his canoe, the sunlight on the white water is dazzling.

KARDEC - is drenched as he digs his paddle into the powerful current, maneuvering the boat. As he tops a thick flow of water the entire rapid is revealed.

It is a hillside of roaring water. More spray flashes up obscuring the view.

TRANSITION BACK:

INT. KARDEC'S BUNGALOW - BED - MORNING

The window shade taps back against the wall, the flare of light collapsing into the natural dimness of the shuttered room. Kardec moves his head, breathing faster ...

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVER - RAPIDS - DAY

KARDEC'S POV - Dark water. The canoe coming down, putting it's bows under, water pouring in. Suddenly the boat is back in the white spray and blinding sun. It is sucked sideways toward the rocks.

Kardec paddles, trying with all his might to turn the canoe before it can hit the rocks. A wreck is inevitable and he lurches forward, grabbing his pack and tearing the top open. He pulls out a small tin.

With a shuddering crash the log canoe hits the rocks, water comes up, Kardec tumbles in the thick rushing green and white. The sky flashes through his vision, the rocky bottom beckons ... his view of the world around him goes black.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVER - SAND BANK - DAY

Water swirls around belongings strewn on the beach. His broken canoe, a shovel, prospecting pan, canned food. Laying partly in the swiftly moving water is Kardec, unconscious, bleeding from scrapes and cuts.

In his outstretched hand we see an old Dutch cigarette tin, it's cover open, the water swirling his diamonds, washing over them, washing them away, returning them to the river from which they had come.

A shadow falls on his hand.

An old Kelabit tribesman, INGHAJ, looks down at Kardec. Nothing shows on his face.

CUT TO:

EXT. INGHAJ'S LONGHOUSE - DAY

Several tribesmen carry a litter bearing Kardec through fields toward the huge structure, a thatched building easily a hundred yards long with a wide verandah set on log pilings taller than a man. TILT TO THE SUN ...

CUT TO:

INT. INGHAJ'S LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Lanterns light a pallet where Kardec lies. One wrist is splinted. Around the mat are stationed smudge pots that are putting out a thin veil of smoke. Sitting to one side is a pile of ancient human skulls.

Inghai dips a needle in a pot of ink then lowers it to Kardec's chest where a tattoo is half finished. He goes to work with a tapping stick. Kardec looks blearily around him. Inghai leans forward and puts a calming hand on his shoulder. RAJ, Inghai's grandson approaches.

KARDEC
(makes noises in his delirium)

RAJ
(Malay)
Datuk ..?
Dia bagaimana?

RAJ
Grandfather ..?
He how?

Inghai exhales on the needle, breathing his life into the tattoo.

INGHAI

I cannot save him, Raj ... but luck will follow this path ...

He touched the spiral path he was marking over Kardec's heart.

INGHAI

Long time ... it has been long time since I make magic ... obat.

(to Kardec)

... If the Atoh are willing, English man, your soul, it will come back.

*

Kardec relaxes back to the mat. The tattooing continues. MOVE TO COVER another tattoo, this one on Kardec's right shoulder, a blur of fading blue ink: "Semper Fidelis."

Kardec's dream changes, the tapping of the needle becomes the hammering of a machine gun and then in the distance there is the heavy booming of artillery.

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. KOREAN FARM VILLAGE - DAY

Mud. Snow. Artillery shells fall from the leaden sky. Explosions. People crying and calling for help in Korean. Small arms fire. A dream logic war, events compressed by memory.

KOREAN TWO

(Korean)

Heo teun jit mal go, jeo ee ga
ha ra neun dae ro hae.

KOREAN TWO

Stay here and do as he says!

KOREAN TWO

(to Kardec)

Help us ... you must help us.

KARDEC

Just stay below the ridge line,
understand? I'm going back for the rest.

MARINE OFFICER

(on radio, distant)

... Captain Kardec you are *ordered* to
return to your position! *Damn it,*
Captain!

SOLDIER ONE

(distant)

Captain! *Captain Kardec!* Come Back!

Ignoring the order, Kardec moves back along a line of refugees.

KARDEC
Get started. Go!
(as they go by)
Stay down! Stay down!

In the distance Russian tanks maneuver, fire ... machine guns open up. Over a radio we can hear ...

MARINE OFFICER
(on radio)
... Fox. Dog. Charlie. I want artillery
on those tanks. Now! I don't care *who's*
up there.

FIRE DIRECTION CENTER
(on radio)
Affirmative. Resuming fire. Report
impact, Able 2.

Distant cannons fire, shells soar overhead.

SOLDIER TWO
(distant)
Incoming!

The sounds build to a ringing intensity that rises like a cymbal roll to a sudden clap ...

CUT TO:

INT. KARDEC'S BUNGALOW - BED - MORNING

... and Kardec is awake. No machine guns, someone is knocking on the door. He rolls over in the sweat soaked bed and we can clearly see the completed tattoo that Inghai was working on. He swings his feet to the floor.

KARDEC
Ungh.

Kardec clears his throat.

KARDEC
What?!

Truck horn honks. Raj is outside ... a Raj partially dressed in western clothing.

RAJ
Come Mike. Wake up, we have to go.

RIGGER
(distant)
Kardec! Come on, bludger. Up and out.

KARDEC

All right!

(lower)

Jeeze Raj, just gimme a stinkin' minute.

A glance out the blinds shows him a stake bed truck loaded with men in hard hats is waiting in the road.

He turns his head and winces ... he reaches for a bottle of whisky on the night stand pours himself a shot and knocks it back. He pulls his pants on ...

CUT TO:

EXT. OIL RIG - OUTSIDE MARUDI - DAY

Behind the towering frame of the rig, forested mountains rise in the distance. Nearby, the Baram River flows on it's way to the coast.

The RIGGERS are backing pipes out of a well preparatory to replacing the drilling bit. A long section of pipe is hanging from a hoist. MADDOX, the Australian foreman approaches, motioning to a Rigger.

AUSSIE RIGGER

(distant)

Round trip started,

The man checks a clipboard hanging from the rig.

AUSSIE RIGGER

(distant)

Uh ... 23:15.

MADDOX

(distant)

Alright. Carry on.

Kardec helps swing the pipe away. He rests for a moment when he is done, wiping his forehead with a bandanna. He shakes his head and grins at Raj.

KARDEC

Alright, let's have another.

The driller brings the hoist to a stop. Raj and Mike move in, opening a joint in the pipe. Maddox climbs to the stage, checking the operation.

MADDOX

Hey, Mike! How many sections you got there?

KARDEC

Thirty-three.

Hey, you, ahh, got any second shifts this week?

MADDOX
'might have one.

Kardec starts to object but the Aussie raises his hand ...

MADDOX
Mate, you get hurt, I lose production.
One shift. Right?

Maddox starts back down ...

KARDEC
Right, right.
(under his breath)
Stingy, S.O.B.

MADDOX
I heard that ... Look, take it tonight
... there's pumps going in at Mountain
Camp.
(heading away)
And they need two; so bring the Dyak kid.

Kardec looks at Raj, who grins. The winch grinds to a halt.
Kardec claps his hands and indicates that the hoist operator
should swing him another pipe.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD TO MOUNTAIN CAMP - SUNSET

The truck full of men including Kardec and Raj, winds up a
narrow road into the mountains. The rays of the setting sun cut
across the forested slopes. At the top of the slope the truck
turns into a dimly lit slot between the huge trees.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAMP - EVENING

Bulldozers are clearing trees for a new well, in the distance
flares are burning off escaping gas from towers already
standing.

The truck makes a circle in the foreground and comes to a stop.
Some of the men jump down including Kardec and Raj. The truck
roars off.

As they start forward, they pass a line of standing stones
partly buried in the jungle growth. Faintly visible on the rock
faces are ancient pictographs. A snake, a pig, a bat -- Raj
hesitates.

Kardec turns to look at him.

KARDEC
Come on. Let's go.

Raj turns to Kardec.

RAJ
No, Mike. No. Not to work here.

KARDEC
What's wrong?

RAJ
This bad place. Atoh.

KARDEC
Toh? What's Toh?

RAJ
A-toh. Spirits live in mountains,
jungle, place where nobody go.

Raj gestures to a big vine covered rock

RAJ
This longhouse, turned to rock ... Balio.
See ...

Raj points to a rounded area bulging from the rock face some ten feet off the ground.

RAJ
You put dragon jar in door. Try to stop
elmu hitam ... curse.

KARDEC
You're telling me this is where a whole
village was turned to stone?

RAJ
Yes. See, these ... these mans caught
outside when all became stone.

Trailing off into the night is a series of much smaller boulders.

KARDEC
Look, Raj. We're not working here, we're
working down there.

It'll be okay ... look at that crap; this
is a white man's place.

He starts off. Raj does not ...

KARDEC
Come on.

... Raj runs to join him.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN CAMP - GRASSHOPPER PUMP - NIGHT

Using a chain hoist Kardec works to position the pump arm on it's steel frame. On ladders, Raj and a QUEENSLAND RIGGER adjust it until it matches the bolt holes in the uprights. The Rigger is holding one side of the heavy beam up and Raj starts to bolt it into place. There is a crash of falling metal from near the derrick. Raj jumps and looks around.

In the darkness the firelight causes the shadows to move strangely.

QUEENSLAND RIGGER

Hey! Hey! Eyes on the job here!

Raj turns back and starts to thread the bolt ... but from out of the night comes a scream of pain. He drops the bolt in the mud.

QUEENSLAND RIGGER

Aw come on, you wog, I can't hold this all night.

Move it!

KARDEC

Simmer down. I'll take it from you.

QUEENSLAND RIGGER

I don't need any God Damn help! Just keep the natives here from getting restless.

Climbing down, Raj finds the bolt.

TWO ROUGHNECKS carry a man by at the edge of the light. The man's hand is bloody and he is groaning in pain.

Raj looks quickly around at Kardec, checking to see if he is alarmed. Kardec is not but the Rigger is pissed. Raj bends and picks up the bolt.

RAJ

I found ...

QUEENSLAND RIGGER

What the bloody hell's wrong with you, boy? When I tell you to pay attention ...

The Rigger drops the beam, which swings at the end of the chain, clanging into the uprights and causing Kardec to have to jump out of the way.

KARDEC

(under his breath)
Crap.
(to the Rigger)
Hey, hold off!

Rigger grabs Raj and pushes him toward the ladder, Raj stumbles and falls.

RIGGER
Now get up there!

The Rigger grabs Raj by his hair and jerks him to his feet. Raj cries out.

Kardec steps in, putting a hand to the man's chest.

KARDEC
I said, *Stop it!*

The Rigger turns slowly to face Kardec. Then he hauls off and swings a heavy, calloused, fist. It is a mistake. Kardec shifts right, letting the punch sail ineffectively by and stabs a short left to the heart. The Rigger takes a stunned step backwards and sits down.

KARDEC
A piece of advice. Never lead with a right.

The Australian rolls to his feet and charges. Kardec catches one of his hands, ducks, shifts his grip, turns and straightens. The Rigger flies through the air and smashes against the motor that will eventually power the pump.

The man struggles to get up ...

RIGGER
Aaagh.

MADDOX
(distant)
Oy!

... but his left arm is useless. He rolls over to face Kardec and Raj.

RIGGER
You watch... yourselves. Both of you.
There's accidents up here ... all the time.

Suddenly, Raj steps forward, drawing a primitive knife from his belt he steps behind the man and puts the point to the Rigger's neck.

MADDOX
(closer)
OY!!

RAJ
You want accident? I *make* accident! He is my friend.

KARDEC

Raj. Put it down.

Maddox comes striding up.

MADDOX

Put that knife away, boy! I've already got a fitter with a crook hand.

Raj backs down.

KARDEC

Look, Maddox, this was a misunderstanding.

MADDOX

Shut up! You're fired. All of you. Draw your time and get lost.

He stomps off, leaving the three of them there in the firelight.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CLAUDTOWN SALOON - NEXT AFTERNOON

The saloon is a long low room, open to the street. Ceiling fans turn slowly, keeping the flies away. A couple of men shoot billiards in the shadows.

Kardec sits at the bar nursing a drink. The door opens and CLIFTON VANDOVER, the District Officer comes in. He is an older man, elegantly grey, wearing a white linen suit and looks very much the colonial Brit. Stopping inside the door he takes a moment to speak to FAIRCHILD, a retired military officer before crossing to Kardec.

VANDOVER

Mike, 'been looking for you.

KARDEC

Yeah?

Vandover glances at the BARTENDER.

VANDOVER

Two G and Ts, yes?

KARDEC

A beer, actually.

Kardec pushes his stool back and follows Vandover to a table. They sit.

VANDOVER

Heard you had a fight.

KARDEC

Yeah.

VANDOVER

And that you broke a man's arm.

I'm afraid I'll have to take your
passport until we have this cleared up.

Vandover extends his hand and Kardec digs the passport out of
his shirt pocket. Vandover slips the document into his jacket.

VANDOVER

Not to worry about it. A formality
really.

The Bartender approaches.

BARTENDER ONE

Here you are, sir.

VANDOVER

Bless you, my son.
(to Kardec)
Cheers.

KARDEC

Selamat.

VANDOVER

Still headed for home?

KARDEC

Slowly.

Am I going to be asked to leave?

OH, VANDOVER

I shouldn't think so. We just have to
keep you from becoming one of these ...
disaffected types the tropics seem to
attract.

Vandover toys with his glass for a moment.

VANDOVER

When were you up river last?

KARDEC

A year, maybe more.

Kardec examines Vandover wondering what he has up his sleeve.

KARDEC

Why, what's on your mind?

VANDOVER

Well, there's a guide job.

The man's an American named John Lacklan.
He's physicist with some sort of think-
tank in California. *Atom* bombs;

that sort of thing. He's got it in his head to go looking for a diamond.

KARDEC

Uhh. I don't think so.

Vandover taps Kardec's passport.

VANDOVER

It might give me some ammunition with the magistrate ...

KARDEC

I'd like to help you out, but ...

VANDOVER

He'll pay good money.

KARDEC

(amused)

Now you're hitting me with both the carrot *and* the stick.

VANDOVER

Whatever it takes, old man.

KARDEC

You know I appreciate it ...

I don't want to end up playing commanding officer again.

A moment passes ...

VANDOVER

Well. I understand.

Do me another kind of favor then ...

KARDEC

Sure.

VANDOVER

See that he gets whatever advice he needs. Make sure that he's kitted out correctly and find a guide that's reliable.

It would be rather embarrassing if we misplace this gent.

KARDEC

Alright. Sure.

VANDOVER

You can meet him day after tomorrow, at the Singapore boat.

Picking up his hat Vandover stands.

VANDOVER

Oh, and come around next Thursday in the evening ... the Missus is having a *fete*.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MARUDI RIVERFRONT - DAY

A grubby coaster appears in the distance. The riverfront people and businesses slowly come to life, moving to meet the boat, or opening their stalls for business. The boat eases up to the dock.

Kardec, who has been standing near an official Land Rover, walks out and waits while the boat ties up. The gangplank settles and JOHN LACKLAN steps off. He is in his late forties, thin, and wearing round metal framed sunglasses with almost black lenses. A panama hat is pulled down over his forehead. He looks around.

KARDEC

Dr. Lacklan?

I'm Mike Kardec.

JOHN

Ahh, Excellent. I was afraid they were going to assign me a native. One moment

...

(to a porter)

No! The tan bags, bring them on over here.

Kardec's eyes slip from John to a woman who has just stepped onto the pier some distance behind him. She is tall and slender, possessing great natural beauty and an air of quiet competence. Noticing his look John turns to look also. The woman spots them and comes forward, smiling.

HELEN

Hello.

JOHN

Mr. Kardec, my wife, Helen.

Kardec and HELEN LACKLAN shake hands.

KARDEC

My pleasure... Welcome to Sarawak.

CUT TO:

INT. STRAITS HOTEL - LACKLAN'S SUITE - DAY

An upper room with a veranda looking out over tile roofs and narrow streets of the town. Several suitcases await unpacking. Somewhere, in another room, there is the distant sound of the Lacklans talking.

Kardec waits for his clients. Beside him on the table is Helen's purse, her white gloves, and a book. He picks it up.

It is a copy of Somerset Maugham's "The Moon and Sixpence." He leafs through it.

HELEN

It's good. Have you read it?

He turns, Helen is standing in the doorway.

KARDEC

No, ma'am.

She comes on into the room.

HELEN

Take it with you. This is my second time through. I can live without it for a few days.

KARDEC

I don't think I should. I'll find my own copy sometime.

John enters.

JOHN

Go ahead, Mr. Kardec. My wife never errs on the subject of light reading.

Kardec turns. John Lacklan smiles briefly.

JOHN

She brought a case load of them. Like some women pack clothes, but heavier, of course.

KARDEC

Alright, I do promise to return it.

JOHN

Now ... I understand you are the authority on diamonds.

John puts a file folder on the coffee table and they all sit.

KARDEC

Well, *authority* might be putting it too strongly.

JOHN

Mr. Vandover seems to think you know a thing or two. I hope he's right.

Fill us in, what are we up against?

KARDEC

Ahh ... I don't want to misunderstand you ... Is Mrs. Lacklan going too?

HELEN
Yes ...

JOHN
Certainly.

HELEN
It's our project.

Helen shows him a chain hanging from her neck, on it is an empty wedding ring, it's socket waiting for a stone.

HELEN
John gave me this ring five years ago. Rather than buying a stone, he thought we should find one together.

KARDEC
I don't want to offend, Mrs. Lacklan, but it's no country for a woman. To get into the mountains - and that's where the diamonds are - is quite an undertaking ... for anyone.

There'll be snakes and leeches. We'll be on the water every day, you probably won't get truly dry until we return.

HELEN
It sounds perfect. We want to really see Borneo. The mountains, forests ... the leeches, everything.

JOHN
What would the difference be, between where an average woman could go and ... more difficult circumstances.

HELEN
John?

KARDEC
Significant. No doubt there are diamonds in the lower elevations but the rivers are deep and they'd be buried under tons of mud.

HELEN
John ...

JOHN
I just want to hear the man out.

HELEN
... we made a deal.

JOHN
If *possible*, Helen. But I'd also like to succeed.

HELEN

Together, John ... remember what brought us here.

A flicker of something quickly hidden crosses John's features ...

JOHN

You must realize, Mr. Kardec, my wife was a top athlete, she's probably as capable as I am.

HELEN

I'm sure I can manage. This is our first vacation in years, a honeymoon really, it's supposed to be an adventure.

JOHN

Yes ... I, however, want a diamond, that's truly what we came for.

Look, the first thing we'll need to discuss is where the best prospects are, and how we'll find a guide.

KARDEC

Yeah. About that ...

Kardec glances from one to the other and shifts his feet.

KARDEC

Would you excuse me for a moment. I have a telephone call I have to make.

JOHN

All right. How about we meet in the bar in ten minutes, will that give you enough time?

CUT TO:

INT. STRAITS HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

Kardec stands at the desk and dials an old fashioned, candlestick style phone.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

Division 4, Resident's office.

KARDEC

Is Cliff in, it's Mike Kardec.

Kardec watches John and Helen cross the lobby and enter the bar.

SECRETARY (V.O.)

I'm sorry, Mr. Kardec. Mr. Vandover is out for the afternoon. Can I leave him a message.

KARDEC

Yeah. Ask him if he knew Lacklan was bringing -- no.

Just tell him ... Tell him I'm taking the job.

Kardec cuts the connection.

CUT TO:

INT. STRAITS HOTEL - BAR - DAY

Kardec pulls out a chair and sits at a table with the Lacklan's.

KARDEC

Okay, Mr. Lacklan, I'll do it.

JOHN

Really?

I understood that you wouldn't be available.

KARDEC

I've reconsidered. When it comes down to it, I don't know who to recommend. And I believe you have a more serious expedition in mind than I'd realized.

HELEN

And you'll take us to the interior, the mountains?

KARDEC

Sure. Wherever you'd like to go.

JOHN

(to Helen)

Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

(to Kardec)

We were told that we'd do well to get you, but frankly, you don't appear the prosperous diamond hunter.

KARDEC

The fortunes of war, I'm afraid. I had a wreck.

HELEN

A wreck?

KARDEC

I ran out of luck, lost my boat, the diamonds ... everything.

JOHN

And now we're your ticket back up river.

Kardec and John examine each other for a moment.

KARDEC

Mr. Lacklan ... if you pick me to be your guide, then perhaps we'd be ... each other's ticket.

Helen smiles slightly.

JOHN

So how would you propose to locate these diamonds?

KARDEC

You have to find the right terrain. The last stones I found were washed out of a creek below a dried up waterfall. You use a pan, like panning for gold. They're alluvial --

JOHN

-- alluvial. Yes, I realize that.

John gets out file.

JOHN

This is a War Office Resource Survey ... Although Borneo has produced quite a number of stones, there has never been a Kimberlite or Lamproite deposit found on this island ... nothing proven as the source.

I just want to be sure we're not wasting our time.

KARDEC

No one knows the source, but there *is* terrain that's a good bet, there are certain things, like garnets, that you begin to pan out when you're close.

I've found diamonds. With luck, I can find more. Whether they are bort or gem quality will be anyone's guess.

JOHN

I suppose some samples would be too much to ask for.

Kardec smiles ...

KARDEC

Actually, no. You asked if I was an authority. I am not, but tonight I can take you to one.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MARUDI SOUK - NIGHT

Kardec leads John and Helen through the crowds. The Bazaar is a square in the center in the old part of town, low tile roofed buildings surround it and a riot of shops and stalls fills the building porticos and the center of the square.

An IBAN WOMAN moves through the crowd, her earlobes elongated to her shoulders with brass weights. John avoids her as much as possible in the crowd. Merchants offer their wares.

JOHN

No. No, thank you -- excuse me.

HELEN

This is fantastic ... look.

They gaze at a large black and white bird in a wooden cage.

JOHN

Berenicornis comatus; a White Crested
Hornbill.

They pass stalls selling fancy *parangs*, the combination machete, head hunting sword of the Borneo natives, men sitting cross-legged working silver into boxes and jewelry, and huge stacks of rattan mats and furniture.

HELEN

This is wonderful.

Ahead two men were selling deer horn carvings, both had teeth and chins stained from chewing Betel nut and the legs of one of them were infested with scabies.

JOHN

Be careful, Helen.
(lower)
Don't touch anything.

They push on until Kardec spots someone in the crowd ...

KARDEC

Here he is.

John and Helen peer over Kardec's shoulder at the man.

JOHN

(to himself)
You've got to be kidding ...

Sitting in a small bistro under a rusting tin is ISHAN PATEL a sweating Punjabi dressed in a suit that, while elegant, has definitely seen better days

PATEL

Ahh, Mike Kardec.

KARDEC

Ishan ... Good evening.

John and Helen Lacklan, meet Ishan Patel.

PATEL

Yes, yes, how do you do? Come, sit ...

Patel gives a bit of a bow and they all sit down.

KARDEC

Dr. Lacklan is going to be prospecting for diamonds. He needs a better education than I can give him.

PATEL

So? An education then ...

He reaches into the breast pocket of his coat and pulls out a black square of velvet. He places it on the table. From an inside pocket comes a small folded square of paper. He opens this on the velvet. Out fall three, beautifully cut, three to four carat diamonds.

PATEL

In the end, this is what is sold. These are quality gemstones, three to four carats ... this one is three. All are nearly flawless.

Here ...

He opens another packet.

PATEL

... is how it begins. Raw, uncut. These are from the Sarawak River and, this and this, the Baram. Some are rough and some are smooth.

He looks up and smiles.

PATEL

As Mr. Kardec knows, that will tell you how far you are from the source. Find a smooth diamond, you may or may not find more ... but a rough stone is lucky.

Helen reaches to touch the largest of the uncut stones.

HELEN

May I?

PATEL

Certainly.

HELEN

They are bigger than I expected.

PATEL

Yes. That stone is eight carats. But it will give up more than half it's weight to the cut.

He takes a jewelers forceps and picks the stone out of her hand. He stirs it around in a glass of water, then lifts it out and hands it back.

PATEL

A diamond is unwettable. It emerges from the water absolutely dry.

Helen holds the eight sided crystal up to the light.

HELEN

Plato thought that diamonds were living spirits ...

She hands it to John.

JOHN

Better than that, it's the purest element in existence, the hardest element in existence.

PATEL

You are both more than correct. Look at the way they focus the light. Perhaps inside, spirit and science are one.

HELEN

Oh John, this is going to be fun.

She turns to Kardec.

HELEN

When can we go?

CUT TO:

I/E. PIER WAREHOUSE - DAY

A big wooden building built out over the river. Kardec has two large but aging canoes up on saw horses and on a table are all the parts of a Johnson outboard spread out on a sheet. He is trying to compare the parts to the exploded diagram in a manual when he hears a familiar voice ...

RAJ

Hey, Mike.

You take American to look for diamond?

Raj leans against the doorway of the warehouse, a half finished bottle of Neptune Lime in his hand.

KARDEC

And what if I am?

RAJ

I worry.

Maybe I have to pull you out of river again?

KARDEC

(laughs)

You know where to find a prop pin for this thing?

CUT TO:

INT. PIER WAREHOUSE - DAY

Kardec and Raj have most of their kit spread out on the floor. The canoes are looking better and clamped in old fuel drums full of water two functional outboards.

The Lacklan's arrive in the hotel's Land Rover, it stops just outside. John and Helen step out of the blasting sunlight into the dimness of the warehouse. They look around trying to get their bearings ...

KARDEC

Here! Down here, Mr. Lacklan.

A group of DYAKS is gathered around a grinder near the door taking turns sharpening their *parangs*. One of them is KEBIR, a young man in his late teens. He is an Iban but without the tattoos and other exotic accoutrements. He wears a loud Hawaiian shirt, and has a set of aviator style sunglasses. They all examine the newcomers with interest.

Their driver began to unload the bags from the vehicle and the Lacklans join them near the boats.

HELEN

It looks like we're ready to go.

KARDEC

I think we're almost there.

This is Raj. There'll be several other men who'll crew our boats but, after me, he's the person to go to.

HELEN

Hello.

RAJ

Miss.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PIER WAREHOUSE - DAY

John is running down the checklist, a Winchester hunting rifle laid out on a case beside him along with several boxes of ammunition. Kardec is stacking boxes of shotgun shells for trade. Helen sits on a big crate nearby. Raj is stacking and organizing their equipment.

KARDEC

... Each boat will carry ten extra gallons of fuel. We'll need very little coming back down so, with what we can buy, it should be enough.

Shotgun shells and salt are the equivalent of money in the ulu, the interior ... these will be our trade goods for the next few weeks.

JOHN

Hmm. It looks like there's not enough food here.

KARDEC

Well, there's plenty of rice and some emergency supplies but it's always better to live off the land when you can.

Helen turns to Raj.

HELEN

I'd love to learn how to make a fish trap. Can you show me?

Raj nods, a bit embarrassed.

JOHN

Our ship leaves Hong Kong on the thirty-first. So the less time spent foraging the better.

HELEN

But that's weeks from now.

KARDEC

Well, canned stuff is going to be heavy. There's times when we'll have to portage around rapids and waterfalls ... we're already carrying more than I'd like.

JOHN

We have to maximize the time that we're panning for diamonds. Now ...

He takes a map from his pocket.

HELEN

Do you think there be a longhouse we can visit?

KARDEC

Sure. The village where Raj's grandfather lives would throw you a party like you've never seen.

Kebir leaves the group at the sander and wanders over to watch the discussion.

HELEN

Will we need gifts? Something to give in return for ...

JOHN

Helen, please ...

John spreads out a map on the top of a packing case.

JOHN

These are potential campsites. I've calculated the miles between each ...

Kebir goes to where John's rifle is laid out on some boxes. He looks it over carefully.

KARDEC

(in Malay)
Hey! Apa yang awak buat?
Jalan, pergi!

KARDEC

Hey! What are you doing? Go!
Get lost!

Kebir shrugs.

KEBIR

Ah. Jus' looking, yeah?

Kardec turns back to the Lacklans.

KARDEC

Look, once we get above Long Lama the maps aren't much good.

JOHN

The Ministry of Defence issued this. The British are very reliable.

KARDEC

I agree. But the British administration wasn't here before the war.

The Brooke family -- the men who ruled Sarawak -- they didn't encourage much exploration. They left the Dyaks, the local natives, alone as much as possible.

Kardec bends over the map, looking at the bottom right corner.

KARDEC

Here; 1945. This is considered a good map but it was guesswork even then.

JOHN
Guesswork?

KARDEC
See, "Map sources irreconcilable",
"Relief data incomplete" ...

HELEN
It's Terra Incognita ... Here There be
Dragons ...

KARDEC
Exactly.

JOHN
Then how the hell are we supposed to know
where we are?

KARDEC
For the most part, you don't. But if you
know where to find the river you won't
get lost, if that's what you're afraid
of?

JOHN
Mr. Kardec, I'm not *afraid*. I just want
a clear picture of where we're going.

HELEN
John, it's an opportunity to take a risk.
I mean we'll see when we get there, won't
we?

JOHN
Take a risk? Helen, for god's sake! Do
you know what this being gone will cost
me at work?

KARDEC
Would it help if I purchased military
rations for ten more days?

John doesn't seem appeased.

KARDEC
Look, I'll add the details that I
remember to the map and then we can make
corrections as we go. I'm sure Mr.
Vandover could forward the results to the
appropriate officials on our return.

John stands over the map for another moment, then nods. He puts
his rifle in it's case and prepares to go.

KARDEC
It's going to mean another boat ...

JOHN

(draws a long breath)
Well, I'm not made of money ... but we
don't like surprises.

The Lacklan's head for the entrance.

A SIKH MERCHANT - approaches Kardec, he is carrying a wooden
box.

SIKH

Ahh, There you are, Sir. I have found
it.

He removes a pressurized gas stove and several aluminium
bottles.

SIKH

One Handi Works stove for camping and ...
... three bottles fuel.

JOHN AND HELEN - walk to the Land Rover. Although the Driver
gets the door for Helen it is the Kebir who opens the rear door
for John.

KEBIR

(very distant)
You want diamond, Mister? Big diamond?
Yeah? You send me message. Here ...

KARDEC - hands the Sikh some bills.

KARDEC

Alright, Mr. Bidasha, you've got a deal.

In the background the door to the Land Rover closes and the
engine starts.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARUDI RIVERFRONT - DAY

Helen peers down into the viewfinder of her Rolliflex, capturing
a row of brilliantly colored birds standing along the rail of a
launch trapped and rotting in the Baram mud.

She scans the river, looking for another shot. Nothing. She
strolls up the bank. Composing shots she doesn't take ... She
scans around and is suddenly surprised to see Mike Kardec
through her lens.

KARDEC

Hello.

HELEN

(looking up)
Oh ... sorry.

When I take pictures the rest of the world just goes away.

Kardec stifles a smile.

HELEN

How go the preparations?

KARDEC

As well as can be expected ... You can tell your husband not to worry, we're just about ready.

HELEN

John always wants to know where he's going before he gets there. He has to be ... mentally prepared.

KARDEC

I guess. How about you?

HELEN

I like a challenge.

KARDEC

Good.

I don't mind a careful plan, but you'll find Borneo rarely cooperates.

HELEN

That's alright, I've been trapped in a world where nothing *unplanned* ever happens.

She advances the film in her camera.

HELEN

Pose for me.

KARDEC

What?

HELEN

Let me take your picture.

KARDEC

Memories of Borneo? I think there are better subjects ...

HELEN

Mr. Kardec, you are certainly as much local color as the natives. My girlfriends would insist on at least one picture.

He stands there awkwardly. She takes the picture. Then, walks over to him, advancing the film. A pair of native canoes drift by in the background with colorfully dressed IBAN MEN paddling.

HELEN

A close-up now. Stand here.

He adjusts his position. She takes out her light meter, holds it by his face looking at it intently. They are very close. She gets a reading. Then indicates the canoe on the river.

HELEN

Do they still take heads? My guidebook is full of severed heads and Dyak pirates.

KARDEC

"If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs?"

HELEN

Kipling.

"If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster and treat those two imposters just the same." Something like that.

KARDEC

That's right.

There's not much headhunting anymore. They used to say that a freshly severed skull had powerful magic. But the newest heads I've seen were Japanese, taken during the war. Away from the coast, there's almost no crime in Sarawak.

She eyes him carefully ... some stray hair has fallen across his forehead she starts to reach for it then stops.

HELEN

Your hair -- brush your hair back.

KARDEC

Like that?

He fixes his hair. She backs up, composing the shot.

KARDEC

Anyway, if we're careful ... we won't have to worry about losing our heads.

She glances up from the viewfinder, pulling herself away from the image momentarily.

HELEN

No, you're right. I should hope not.

THROUGH THE CAMERA - Kardec, as she shoots the picture.

FREEZE FRAME AND CUT TO:

EXT. DISTRICT OFFICER'S RESIDENCE - VERANDAH - EVENING

A large Victorian that is both the home and the office of the District Officer. It is fully lit and well dressed men and women drift in and out.

Music plays on a Hi-Fi phonograph. GUESTS mingle in various parts of the house, there are *hors-d' oeuvres* and cocktails.

Vandover passes by a group of men and women, shaking a man's hand and kissing a woman on the cheek. He steps out on the veranda and looks for ...

Mike Kardec, who is seated in a chair by himself.

VANDOVER

Ahh. Jenny told me you'd be out here.

KARDEC

Listening to a party from a distance ...
it's good for thinking.

VANDOVER

Something on your mind?

KARDEC

Not that I could make sense out of.

VANDOVER

The curse of the tropics, I'm afraid.
Want a drink?

KARDEC

Lead on.

Kardec gets up and follows Vandover into the house.

CUT TO:

INT. DISTRICT OFFICER'S RESIDENCE - JOHN'S GROUP - EVENING

John holds forth to a group that includes Fairchild. Partway across the room Helen is in conversation with JENNY VANDOVER and another WOMAN.

BRITISH WOMAN

But you don't *make* the bombs?

JOHN

Hardly. We do modeling and analysis on warfare scenarios. Estimating losses, developing ways to objectively quantify suffering. We try to learn how to fight this new kind of war.

The intellectual challenge is staggering.
We have to carefully envision what we fear most.

Teller-Ulam weapons have created completely new universe of policy requirements ...

DENTON
Teller-Ulam?

JOHN
H-bombs ... we're still catching up with how they will alter strategy. The possibilities that arise in an Atomic war would terrify the average person.

DENTON
Such as?

Vandover shoots Fairchild a look, the ex-officer is on the periphery of John's circle.

VANDOVER
William, doing well this evening?

JOHN
Well, in an extreme situations triage would be carried out, contaminated food could be given to old people; people who wouldn't live long enough to get cancer.

FAIRCHILD
Yes, yes, well enough.

BRITISH WOMAN
What a horrible way of thinking. I don't see how you can stand it.

VANDOVER
Have you met our guest of honor? His lovely wife is just there, talking with my Jenny.

JOHN
You develop a certain kind fatalism. After all, *someone* has to make a dispassionate analysis. You see, more than anything the enemy is surprise.

FAIRCHILD
We did meet. I was just listening to him go on about this Atomic War stuff. Makes the blitz seem like a picnic.

JOHN
Uncertainty becomes the monster under the bed, so we use our imaginations, prepare ourselves for the outcome in our heads ... where it's theoretical, where it's safe.

DENTON
It sounds like you're a professional paranoid.

Vandover steps forward, ready to smooth any disagreements ...

VANDOVER
Ahh, Denton, asked Dr. Lacklan any questions about physics have you?

You should, he's quite the expert in explaining the unexplainable.

DENTON
(to himself)
And I thought he was just at it.

VANDOVER
Mike, you know everyone ...

FAIRCHILD
Yes. Hello. What did you make of all that?

KARDEC
Not my kind of war, Mr. Fairchild.

I'm, ahh ...

Kardec gestures with his empty glass towards the bar and heads off.

CUT TO:

INT. DISTRICT OFFICER'S RESIDENCE - HELEN'S GROUP - EVENING

As Kardec passes the group of women Jenny reaches out and touches his arm.

JENNY
We thought you'd left.

KARDEC
No ma'am. Not without saying good night.

Helen turns, beautiful in a black Chinese dress.

HELEN
Oh ... Mr. Kardec, our 'Passport to the Wilds of Borneo.'

KARDEC
Hello again, Mrs. Lacklan.

JENNY
Helen was just telling us how John decided to take her on this vacation. It's all terribly romantic and adventuresome, don't you think?

KARDEC
Well, it will be something more than your typical trip to Acapulco. I think we can guarantee that.

I'm headed to the bar, anyone want another? Jen?

JENNY
No, thank you.

Helen toasts him, showing a nearly full glass. Kardec moves off.

BARTENDER TWO
Good evening, Sir.

KARDEC
A stengah.

BARTENDER TWO
Thank you, Sir.

JENNY
(distant)
Now, how did you decide on Sarawak.
Cliff and I have been married twenty
years. Half the secret is doing
everything together ...

As Kardec gets his drink Fairchild comes up.

FAIRCHILD
Mike, I almost forgot.

Fairchild writes a name and address on a piece of paper, folds it and hands it to Kardec.

FAIRCHILD
There's another possibility for you. The
old canal, out south of town? Freers
wants it open again. I told him you
could do it, bossing a native crew.
They'll take whoever can start
immediately.

We'll have you out of here yet.

Kardec glances at it and stuffs it in his pocket.

KARDEC
I may be coming down with an
embarrassment of riches ... Cliff's got
me guiding the Lacklan's.

FAIRCHILD
I thought you turned that down.

Across the room Helen laughs at something one of the women has said.

KARDEC
Changed my mind ... but thanks.

He claps Fairchild on the arm and, taking his drink, strolls out onto the verandah.

CUT TO:

INT. DISTRICT OFFICER'S RESIDENCE - JOHN'S GROUP - EVENING

Across the room John, Fairchild, and Vandover are still talking.

VANDOVER

... so, as I was just telling your wife
... they had pulled back and the North
Korean troops were advancing. Artillery
was shelling the town. But Mike, against
orders it seems, went back to evacuate
some civilians. He was wounded rather
severely.

His superiors were a bit uncertain how to
handle it, you see ... he was demoted,
the end of his career, certainly, but
they also gave him a medal.

JOHN

A medal?

VANDOVER

One of several, I understand.

CUT TO:

EXT. DISTRICT OFFICER'S RESIDENCE - VERANDAH - EVENING

Kardec is again sitting in the seat we first saw him in.

In the room behind him, Helen disengages herself from the women.
She walks out onto the veranda, goes to the rail and looks off
across the lawn to the river. She takes a cigarette and lighter
out of her purse and lights up.

KARDEC

Another refugee? Welcome.

She turns, seeing him in the shadows.

HELEN

Oh, hello.

KARDEC

I didn't realize you smoked.

HELEN

I don't ... much.

(she sighs)

I don't care for parties. I find myself
saying things just because they sound
right.

KARDEC

Yeah. I might have overheard some of
that ...

She sighs and leans back on the rail to the veranda. He's
caught her.

KARDEC

... sorry. I just assumed this trip was more your idea than John's.

HELEN

Guilty as charged. It was John's, years ago. I just thought we should try it ... while we still had the chance.

Don't think my husband doesn't know how to be romantic, He probably had someone from Stanford Research brief him on it.

Kardec laughs.

HELEN

John's organization works with the Defense Department, did he tell you?

KARDEC

I may have overheard that too.

It's her turn to laugh, maybe with a touch of bitterness.

HELEN

It is an all consuming job. Lots of secrets. Lots of pressure. Sometimes he's afraid he'll talk in his sleep ...

You know I envy him; having something big enough to be worth losing yourself in.

She turns away from him, looking off into the night.

HELEN

I had that once. When I look at myself now ... I feel sort of ...

He stands, joining her at the edge of the verandah.

KARDEC

Adrift.

HELEN

Yes.

You were in army ... they told me you won a lot of medals ...

KARDEC

If you're lucky, you survive. Then maybe they give you one. Whether you deserve it or not.

He drops his eyes, changes the subject a bit.

KARDEC

On the other hand, I've never been so alive.

HELEN

Is that why you came out here?

KARDEC

Maybe.

HELEN

Adrift?

KARDEC

Guilty as charged.

They are quiet for a moment.

HELEN

I envy you. You made the choice to come here ... to be your own man.

She stubs out her cigarette.

HELEN

The last few years I've felt more and more like a piece in someone else's puzzle.

Through the door to the veranda, unseen by Helen or Kardec, John appears. He stands there looking at them then, after a moment, he turns and goes back to the party.

CUT TO:

INT. KARDEC'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Kardec sits at his desk by a hissing pressure lamp. He opens Helen's book.

KARDEC

The Moon and Sixpence by W. Somerset Maugham.

He turns to an inner page, chosen at random ...

KARDEC

"I do not know how he had come upon the notion of going to the South Seas, though I remember that his imagination had long been haunted by an island, all green and sunny, encircled by a sea more blue than is found in Northern latitudes."

As he leafs through the book he reaches a place where a photograph has been used as a page marker. He picks it up and looks at it.

It is of Helen, she is sitting in a big chair with her leg up in a cast, holding a German Shepard puppy. Propped on one side of the chair is a pair of skis.

He turns over the photo.

KARDEC AND HELEN

Here you are with Max, the consolation prize. We will write from St. Moritz. Wish us gold, silver, or bronze. Gretchen.

Kardec looks at the picture again ... on the table beside her are several skiing trophies.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARUDI SOUK - DAY

John Lacklan waits nervously in the entrance to the souk. He looks in one direction and then the other, occasionally checking his watch. Then he sees whoever it is that he has been waiting for ... it is Kebir, the young Dyak from the warehouse.

JOHN

There you are.

KEBIR

Yes, Tuan. Very good to see you. You smart man, right? Smart ... ahh ...

JOHN

A scientist, yes.

KEBIR

I must be respect, yeah? You know everything.

Come ... come. I have what you want.

JOHN

Say, what's your name ... what do I call you?

KEBIR

Kebir. You call me Kebir. You from 'merica, yeah? That number one.

He turns away into the crowd and John Lacklan starts after him.

KEBIR

You like movie?

JOHN

No, no, I don't see many movies.

KEBIR

I see both of them. Cat People, The House of Wax ... both.

As Kebir turns into a narrow alley that ran between two of the buildings John hesitates ...

KEBIR

Come ... Come ...

JOHN

No ... I don't think so, Ace. If you've got something to show me, do it here.

Kebir motions John forward and digs around in the pocket of his shorts.

JOHN

Ahhhh ...

In the dim light of the alley, stars dance in John Lacklan's dark lenses.

CUT TO:

INT. STRAITS HOTEL - LOBBY - DAY

John starts up the stairs. After a moment a CLERK starts up behind him.

CLERK

Dr. Lacklan?

John turns.

CLERK

Your photos came back, Sir.

John takes the envelope from him.

JOHN

My wife's ... but thank you.

He starts up the stairs, thumbing through the shots until he sees something that brings him to a stop. He has come to the photos Helen took of Mike Kardec.

John looks up toward the door to their room, haunted.

CUT TO:

INT. STRAITS HOTEL - LACKLAN'S SUITE - DAY

Helen has been reading on the couch, now the photos are splayed on the coffee table.

HELEN

You're wrong, John. It's just a picture. Part of our trip like everything else.

JOHN

And last night, on the veranda?

HELEN

... please don't do this.

Don't do this again.

She walks out of the room, slamming the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. KARDEC'S BUNGALOW - DAWN

The sky lightens, reflecting in the water. Bats fly by overhead heading back to their caves.

CUT TO:

INT. KARDEC'S BUNGALOW - BATH - DAWN

Kardec is shaving with a safty razor.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARUDI RIVERFRONT - MORNING

Kardec, Raj, and the BOAT CREW wait by the canoes. From their relaxed, even bored postures, it is obvious they have been waiting for some time. Off down the road a Land Rover approaches. Raj and Kardec stand and gather their stuff.

John and Helen Lacklan pull up. When they get out to walk down to the boats it is obvious that they are not wearing traveling clothes.

JOHN

(off)

Helen, stay in the car ...

HELEN

(off)

I will not ...

KARDEC

Something's wrong.

John and Helen stop in front of them.

JOHN

Mr. Kardec. We've come to tell you that your services will no longer be needed.

KARDEC

I don't understand.

JOHN

We've made other arrangements.

KARDEC

You're still going? Mind telling me how?

JOHN

Yes, we are. But that doesn't really matter, now does it?

KARDEC

It damn well does matter! If you go back in there with somebody you don't know you're a fool!

JOHN

You'd be well advised to keep a civil tongue in your head!

HELEN

Mr. Kardec, I apologize for all the trouble we've put you through ... it's not ...

She glances at John and stops.

HELEN

(to KARDEC)
I'm sorry.

She turns and walks back up to the car. The men watch her go. Kardec takes a deep breath, getting control.

KARDEC

Look, is it a native? Did he show you a diamond? About twenty carats?

JOHN

And what if he did?

KARDEC

This could be the same one who's taken people up the Baram before. None of them ever came back.

JOHN

You're implying they were killed? For what? The diamonds they found?

KARDEC

No. They just use this one stone to lure foreigners into the bush where they can murder them for their possessions.

To a native, an outboard motor is worth a year's work on the coast, a shotgun shell buys a day's labor in the interior. Where you're going, what you have is worth a fortune.

JOHN

This is pitiful. You're just trying to scare us to keep our business.

KARDEC

He was an old man, wasn't he? With a scar on one cheek?

JOHN
No. A boy. No older than that one
there.

Lacklan points at Raj.

KARDEC
Then they've switched, that's all. The
stone is the same, that's how you can
tell.

JOHN
Nonsense!

KARDEC
Have it your own way, Lacklan. But if I
were you, I'd do a lot of thinking before
I risked my wife's life too!

John draws himself up ...

JOHN
Mr. Kardec, I believe that my wife is
none of your affair.

John turns, stalks back to the Land Rover, and with a grinding
of gears the vehicle drives off.

CUT TO:

INT. CLAUDTOWN SALOON - AFTERNOON

Kardec has found Vandover talking with Fairchild. In the
distance thunder rumbles and the wind whistles around the door.

VANDOVER
The man's a fool ... taking off with a
complete stranger.
(shakes his head)
Unbelievable.

KARDEC
You heard about that tourist from Hong
Kong, right?

FAIRCHILD
What's this?

VANDOVER
You mean, Carter? The disappearance?

KARDEC
He met some native on the coast who had a
big diamond and was going to show him
where there were others like it ...
nobody ever heard from him again.

VANDOVER

You're right. Same thing happened years ago at Kuching and Sibu.

FAIRCHILD

Good Lord, that certainly puts it all in a different light, doesn't it?

VANDOVER

That was Jeru. Word has it, he's dead.

KARDEC

What do you know about him?

VANDOVER

If you believe the stories, Jeru's an old pirate who escaped from the Brooke militia and went up country. He is, or was, the leader of a band of renegades. Fought the Japanese but a nasty piece of work nonetheless.

FAIRCHILD

It's true. He did lure diamond hunters with a stone that he had. Fabulous thing. Huge, high quality, all that.

KARDEC

Could he be using this kid?

FAIRCHILD

The blighter would be ancient. There were stories, years ago, that he was cursed or some rubbish.

KARDEC

If it's not Jeru, it could be someone else playing the same game.

VANDOVER

Whatever it is, it's not good. Christ, I wish you'd locked the warehouse.

KARDEC

They were Lacklan's supplies ... He paid for them.

VANDOVER

Right, right ... not your fault. Damn mess though, isn't it?

FAIRCHILD

Just our luck, you know. The Yanks send out their top bomb man and now he's gone up river to get his head chopped off.

Kardec gets up.

KARDEC

Let's hope not. Get on the radio, Cliff,
before this weather closes in.

I'll be out at my place.

Kardec starts out.

CUT TO:

I/E. KARDEC'S BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Kardec peels off his shirt and stands in the doorway and stares out into the night. In the distance lightning flares and then thunder rumbles. On a beaten Zenith Trans-Oceanic the weather report is playing ...

LOCAL RADIO

... Winds are at force 7 and all stations south report decreasing pressure. Aircraft are grounded at Kuching, Singapore, Saigon, and Kuala Lumpur and an advisory has been released for all coastal vessels.

Kardec turns to the radio, tuning it across the shortwave dial finding static and more of the same. He snaps it off. He rubs the old tattoo on his shoulder. Shoving his hands in his pockets he pauses then comes up with the piece of paper Fairchild gave him. He looks at it and tosses it onto the bureau, where the note, "J. Freers, 40 Moresby Rd. -- Contact for job," comes to rest beside Helen's book with the picture of her on top.

He looks up into the mirror and touches the tattoo again ... a decision has been made.

KARDEC

Semper *Fi*-delis, buddy.

Crap!

It might be he thunder but in the distance we also hear the pounding of artillery, the scream of shells, and ...

CUT TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVERFRONT - NIGHT

Headlights appear on the road leading down to the river pier. The car stops, a door is flung open, and Vandover bolts through the rain for the tin awning at the end of the pier. He is carrying a long leather case.

In the yellowish light of a single caged bulb Kardec and Raj are loading a canoe that is mounted with a Seagull outboard.

Raj jumps down into the boat. Kardec turns to Vandover as he comes under the awning. The sound of the rain is deafening.

KARDEC

With luck I can catch them in a couple of days.

VANDOVER

You don't have to do this, Mike.

KARDEC

You called the post at Kuching? What did they say?

VANDOVER

This is only the edge of the storm ...
Three days, at the earliest.

KARDEC

It wouldn't be fast enough, even if there was a plane.

I'll find them, talk them into coming back ... somehow.

A moment goes by with the two men locked, eye to eye.

VANDOVER

Here.

Vandover hands the case to Kardec. Kardec opens it and slides out a beautiful Mannlicher-Schonauer carbine. Vandover hands him a box of ammunition.

VANDOVER

Take care of it, and it will take care of you.

KARDEC

I don't want any more *medals*, Cliff. I just want to go home.

Kardec jumps down into the boat.

VANDOVER

God's Speed, old man.

Kardec nods, to himself. He glances up at Vandover.

KARDEC

Salamat.

Kardec fires the motor and he and Raj pull away.

VANDOVER

(softly)
Salamat jalan.

Vandover and the dock disappear into the night.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVER - DAY

Kardec's narrow boat cuts across the wide current as the water reflects the trees and sky.

The boat motors past fields and forests, villages and other boats.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVER - NIGHT

Kardec and Raj huddle under a tarp, pulled up to the bank in their canoe. They suffer through a thundering down-pour of rain.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVER - DAY

Kardec and Raj make their way up river. Raj sleeps in the front of the canoe.

They fill the tank from one of their Jerry cans of gasoline and a tin of oil.

WIDE - the little boat passes several river mouths and swampland. Birds leave the trees to greet the day.

CLOSER - along the bank crocodiles are dozing, one of them slips into the water. -- Kardec reaches down and lays the rifle closer to hand. -- They motor on, leaving the crocodiles behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVER - DAY

Raj is driving the boat, Kardec leaning back on their pile of supplies. Raj points out a set of distinctive cliffs buried in the jungle ...

RAJ

Look, we get to home soon. My home.

KARDEC

Yeah ... best place to get information, I figure. But it's going to take *all* night.

RAJ

(laughs)

Yes. I think so.

The canoe motors on.

CUT TO:

INT. GIANT CAVE - DAY

Light pours through holes in the roof. Swiftlets flash through the dark air, coming and going from the arching mouth to their nests high against the walls.

HELEN

It says their saliva is what gives Chinese Bird's Nest soup it's flavor.

JOHN

Yàn wo; it mean's 'swallow's nest.'

HELEN

Here ... "Swiftlets are known to share caves with bats, the mammals sleeping in the caves by day and the birds at night. They are one of a very few species of bird to use echolocation and can navigate in total darkness."

JOHN

Well, we need to be moving on. We haven't made half the miles today that I planned.

She slides her arm around his waist.

JOHN

Helen ...

HELEN

Relax, please? This is why we came.

CUT TO:

EXT. INGHAI'S LONGHOUSE - EVENING

Raj and Kardec walk though lush green fields towards a large, well kept longhouse.

CUT TO:

INT. INGHAI'S LONGHOUSE - EVENING

Drums, pipes, and a hardwood xylophone, play. A crowd of people gathers to welcome the travelers.

INGHAI

Mike. Mike and our Raj ... come, sit, we must *celebrate!*

KARDEC

Inghai ... greetings.

Pots of rice are placed on the fires and pigs and chickens are slaughtered. On the outer verandah of the longhouse more and more villagers gather.

Inghai takes Kardec to meet the pengulu or HEADMAN of the village. Mike bows his head and makes a present of a pack of cigarettes and a box of 12 gage ammunition.

Large porcelain "dragon" jars are brought forth and soon there is a nearly constant flow of arak. An offering of food was made in a sanctuary at one end of the longhouse and the pengulu cavorts among the guests and villagers waving a fluttering chicken overhead.

The dancing starts, the women singing a song welcoming Kardec and Raj to the village.

CUT TO:

I/E. INGHAİ'S LONGHOUSE - VERANDAH - NIGHT

Inghai comes to stand at the rail by Kardec. He offers Kardec a bottle.

INGHAI
You don't drink?

KARDEC
Inghai, Tuak just about the wickedest
booze on earth. It will make you do
things you do *not* remember ... I have to
be headed up river in the morning.

INGHAI
Something has changed in you. Balaik
untung ... your soul is returning. I can
see it in your eyes.

Inghai taps Kardec on the chest. Through the doors the KELABIT WOMEN begin to dance.

INGHAI
Let me see it.

Kardec opens his shirt.

INGHAI
You know, I make magic for you.

He looks at the pattern on Kardec's chest with a practiced eye.

INGHAI
When I found you, you were very sick.
Sick enough to die. I try everything,
finally *obat*.

This is for *luck*. I think it works very
well.

Kardec laughs.

KARDEC

Inghai, you're my friend. But I'm afraid all of *my* luck has been bad. I have no money, I've lost two jobs ...

INGHAI

No, no. Magic doesn't work that way, Mike. *Luck* doesn't work that way. You will not have the luck you *want* -- you will have the luck you *need*. There is no choice in the matter.

KARDEC

Well, I can use whatever I can get, that's for sure.

INGHAI

Ahh, I know you will doubt. But these forces *do* surround us, like the wind ... though less easily seen.

KARDEC

Your hospitality is appreciated more than you know. If that is luck, I accept it with gratitude.

INGHAI

So why have you come?

A PRETTY KELABIT GIRL sits down beside Raj. For a moment they smile shyly at each other, then he breaks eye contact. The girl dishes out some rice onto a bowl-like leaf.

INGHAI

So why do you come?

KARDEC

There's two Americans I think are headed into trouble.

Kardec turns to face Inghai.

KARDEC

Have you seen anyone on the river? A white man and a woman with native guides?

INGHAI

No, but I can ask. How are they in trouble?

KARDEC

The pirate Jeru, is he still alive?

Inghai makes a hissing noise and pulls back slightly.

KARDEC

Do you know?

Inghai examines Kardec for a moment.

INGHAI

It was said that *Tuan Jeru* is *bali saleng*, a black ghost, that all men with him are *sakit hati*; they are killers and rapists and no village would have them.

*

In the days when I knew him, Jeru still took heads to make his magic.

KARDEC

Well, I'll have to take my chances with the magic ...

Kardec indicates Inghai tattooed hands, the sign of veteran headhunter.

KARDEC

... and even you may've taken a few heads in your time.

INGHAI

(chuckles)

Well, maybe someone I really didn't like

...

(sighs)

I will find out what I can.

Mike I am happy ... you no longer fight who you are. But Jeru? Be careful, my friend.

The pretty Kelabit girl is back, she sits down close to Raj. She has cups of arak, one for him, one for her.

Kardec and Inghai watch with amusement. The festivities continue.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAINFOREST - LACKLAN CAMP - NIGHT

John and Helen sit together by the fire as the Kebir crouches before them and tells a story. Behind him, on the edge of the firelight sit the other DYAK CREWMEN.

KEBIR

In old time, all Sarawak given to Englang man by old Rajah.

HELEN

To James Brooke?

KEBIR

Yes. Yes. You know. Very smart.

My father's, brother. He is a fighter, yeah? Warrior. Take many head. Fight with Ason against Rajah Brook, Japan man, everyone.

John looks to Helen. She taps the guide book sticking out of her bag.

HELEN

Ason was a rebel in the thirties ... not very popular.

Kebir glowers at both of them. When he sees that their attention is back on him he smiles a slightly fake grin and continues.

KEBIR

My uncle, no one ever catch him. He make obat, no one see him.

One day he hiding in river. Army mans look ...

(Kebir gestures all around.)
... all 'round. But they don't find. When they gone, he find diamonds in water, lots diamonds, but he only take ... this one.

The Kebir reaches inside his shirt and takes something from around his neck. He holds his hand out then lets the diamond drop ... to swing from a woven thong of leather.

CLOSE - A huge, uncut, diamond. It is a natural eight sided crystal of over twenty carats. Firelight makes it glow.

John reaches out to touch it, tilting it in the light.

KEBIR

He show me one time. I take more diamond to Marudi, yeah? Buy motorcycle, outboard motor. Very good!

JOHN

And now you take us.

KEBIR

Yes. Yes. You have big diamond. Lots diamond. Everyone say, look at you ...

Tomorrow we climb. Go to other river. Sleep now, okay?

He gets up and moves off to join the crewmen.

John turns to Helen.

JOHN

Huge thing, isn't it?

CUT TO:

EXT. BARAM RIVER - NEAR INGHAI'S ENCAMPMENT - DAWN

Kardec puts his pack and the rifle back into the canoe. Inghai and a SMALL KELABIT join him at the water.

INGHAI

Mike ... I have learned things. This man, he see your people near falling water. There is trail ... they would not go up before morning.

Kardec straightens ...

KARDEC

Where is that? Where are they going?

INGHAI

Another river. This river start in high mountains. Goes to sea, east of the Baram.

I am also told that Kebir, the nephew of Jeru, may be is with them.

Raj has come to the edge of the forest with the Girl from the previous night.

Kardec throws the last of their supplies into the canoe.

KARDEC

Come on, Raj! Let's go!
(to Inghai)
So, where do I find this trail?

INGHAI

I will come with you.

Kardec suddenly realizes that Inghai has come prepared. There is a basket pack, shotgun and blowgun with a spear blade lashed to one end at his feet.

KARDEC

No ... No. I'm going alone. You stay here. Hell, Raj should stay here.

INGHAI

Mike, we make this choice.

KARDEC

Inghai ...

INGHAI

This, it is not for you to say.

If Jeru still lives, I must see him. If I go, Raj will go ... there will be things for him to learn.

He picks up his pack, looks Kardec dead in the eye ...

INGHAI

Let us go.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - DAY

John and Helen stop to rest on a steep slope. She carries a small pack and he carries his rifle. To their right are the moss shrouded cascades of a waterfall. The sound of pounding stakes echoes across the hillside.

Helen looks higher on the hill ... quite a ways ahead of them the boat crews are struggling along, winching the long canoes up the slope with heavy ropes and stakes which are removed from the earth then carried forward and driven back into the hillside with mallets.

KEBIR
(off Malay)
Dua, tiga! Empat!... semua
bersama. Gerak! Jom! Ke Atas!

KEBIR
Two, three! Four!... all
together. Move! Let's go! To
top!

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - RIM - DAY

John and Helen arrive at the top of the mountain and pause for a moment to admire the view. They watch as a pair of the Dyak Crewmen carries their cases past them and off toward the trees. Another pair appears with the first of their canoes.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - BASE - DAY

Near the base of the waterfall. Kardec has the Seagull outboard lashed to his pack and Raj has the jerry can of gas strapped to a packboard, Inghai has his basket pack and the Mannlicher carbine.

KARDEC
We'll gather the stakes they made and use
them when we move the boat. Be careful,
we don't know how close we are.

They start up the trail, Raj going first. From the ground near their feet two colorful birds suddenly explode from the foliage. Suddenly, they turn and fly back past the men, just over their heads. Raj comes to a sudden stop. He quickly looks from Kardec to Inghai.

KARDEC
What?

Raj is shaking his head ...

RAJ
This way not ... is not good for us. It
is a sign.

KARDEC
I don't think we have much of a choice.

Raj turns and sits down, he is shaken.

RAJ
Maybe Atoh, they say not to go.

KARDEC
(to himself)
Oh nuts ...

Inghai steps up to Raj and puts his hand on Raj's shoulder.

INGHAI
You are right. The birds can give us signs, just as the bat tells of the magic of darkness. Atoh everywhere but they are not a threat: it is only men who carry darkness in us.

I must make this journey. See my own darkness one more time.

RAJ
What do you mean?

INGHAI
In time I will tell you. For now, know this, birds do not say 'we can not go,' only 'be careful.'

Inghai takes Raj by the hand and helped him to his feet. They move off ...

INGHAI
(going off)
You remember when I gave Mike the luck?
Well, *he* does not believe either but you will see.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN MEADOW - LATER DAY

John and Helen walk down the hill until they come to a clearing. Helen puts her hand on John's arm.

Kebir and a couple of his Dyak Crewmen are going through one of the Lacklan's cases.

HELEN
What are they ...?

JOHN
Hey! What's going on here?

The Dyaks look up, not caring all that much that they have been caught. One, who seems like he is about to pocket John's shaving kit, drops it back into the case.

JOHN
Get out of our things! Put that down!

KEBIR

Your basket falls open.

John stalks over and snaps closed the heavy latches.

JOHN

Oh it does, does it? Not very likely.

KEBIR

We very sorry, Tuan. Most apologies.

You Pukka Sahib, you know? Very much number one.

JOHN

Yeah, well ... alright. Let's go.

John eyes them carefully as they pick up the cases and move on.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - AFTERNOON

Kardec draws up the boat up a steep rock slope with a pulley and a long rope as Raj and Inghai help it along.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - LACKLAN CAMP - AFTERNOON

The Dyak Boatmen are making camp. John and Kebir, have a map spread out on a downed tree.

JOHN

Aaagh! Get off!

John wipes away a scattering of ants creeping across the map.

JOHN

Now, show me where we're headed ...

KEBIR

Go down river more day, then up, pass rock and fast water ...

Behind them Helen hangs out the clothes they wore in the boats on a rack to dry.

JOHN

You mean this set of rapids here ...

KEBIR

Yea -- no. Don't know. There big tree, many. River not so deep. Soon you have what you want, Tuan. Very good, understand? Very good.

Helen pokes at the fire.

JOHN

No. I *don't* understand. Where did your Uncle find the diamond?

KEBIR

In river, yeah? He find in river.

JOHN

Obviously. But this river? Look, here we are.

John points to a spot on the map.

JOHN

Up river from here? How many miles? How many days travel?

Kebir pushes away.

KEBIR

This just *paper!*

John closes his eyes, trying to keep it all together.

JOHN

So, where did he find them? Was it up a tributary, in a gravel bank?

KEBIR

Yes. Gravel bank. Gravel Bank.

JOHN

All right. Now which side? This side or that side? This side or ...

(winces)

Christ, he's got me doing it.

Kebir just looks at him.

KEBIR

That side. Okay?

John takes a long breath, gets up, and walks over and drops down beside Helen.

HELEN

(She nods toward the Kebir)

What's wrong with our stalwart guide?

JOHN

I don't think he knows where we're going. Sometimes he seems able to read the map, sometimes not.

(he shakes his head)

I don't know if he's an idiot or he's pulling our leg.

They both look over at the Kebir, with his "movie punk" demeanor, he is a somewhat comical sight.

HELEN

Is it possible he's both?

John snorts, it's funny but he's worried.

HELEN

Well, we're getting to see Borneo and we might find diamonds in another place. We always knew it was a chance.

JOHN

I'm just trying to stick to the plan.

HELEN

Actually, I don't like them.

She indicates the Dyaks, who are engaged in fixing dinner.

HELEN

They're not like the natives around Marudi. Everyone was so nice.

JOHN

Well, I'm not crazy about them either but they've all been doing their jobs so far.

John slaps at a flying insect.

JOHN

This place has more insects than anywhere on earth. I could start a collection.

HELEN

I'd like to just let them go and see what we can do on our own. We don't even know they can find the place again.

JOHN

Do you want to try to get back on our own? Do you think we could find this diamond without help?

HELEN

No. No, of course not. I just hoped we'd have more time to ourselves.

JOHN

You pushed for this, Helen ... don't forget, we came here for a reason.

They sit there looking out across the river with very different things on their minds.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Kardec, Raj and Inghai have rigged their hammocks along a rocky creek barely deep enough to float their canoe.

Kardec lies beneath the mosquito netting listening to the sounds of the night.

INGHAI
Are you awake, Mike.

KARDEC
Yeah.

INGHAI
Do you hear it? Atoh. There is a spirit in the trees.

KARDEC
I hear branches rubbing together ...

INGHAI
Yes, that too.

This is a good place. It is good we are awake to enjoy it.

After a moment ...

KARDEC
Inghai? When you say magic, what do you mean?

INGHAI
Magic? It is not miracle, not sudden, not big. It is always difficult and balance. This is real obat and very rare.

Magic can be many things. And many things can seem to be magic.

Kardec turns toward the spot in the darkness where Inghai's voice is coming from.

KARDEC
'Seem to be magic' ... but you believe in it?

INGHAI
Some magic, it *is* belief. If you believe a thing real, then it is, for time or forever. If some one, they think they are sick, get sick. If they think they are afraid, they afraid. If you make someone believe; they will find away to make it real ... If you believe, you will make it real.

KARDEC
So, you just *inspire* belief? That's all it is?

INGHAI

Not all. But sometimes, yes. I think so. Belief is what *I* must have. That is most important.

I say you are lucky; you don't believe ... But you will.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - LACKLAN CAMP - TENT - NIGHT

There is a shifting noise, then a struggling sound and the creaking of a wood and canvass cot. The sound again, she sits up slightly ...

HELEN

John . . ?

JOHN

(growls)

HELEN

John, are you alright?

JOHN

No! Get off ... Aargh!

More floundering. Something tears and a body falls to the ground.

JOHN

Damn It!

Helen shines her flashlight on a blinded John who is doing a kind of strange dance by the torn remains of his cot.

JOHN

Turn that *off!*

HELEN

What's happening?

JOHN

My bed is full of ants!

She switches off the light. After a moment we can hear her stifled laughter.

JOHN

What?

What's so funny?

HELEN

Oh come on dear ...

She gulps back another guffaw.

HELEN

... it wouldn't be a picnic without ants.

She lets loose and belts out a full fledged laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - SAND BAR - MORNING

Kardec and Inghai are getting ready to launch the canoe in this new river. Raj is securing their provisions.

KARDEC

I can't see Lacklan lugging boats up that damn mountain. How many do you figure they've got with them?

RAJ

Nine.

Kardec straightens, peering at Raj.

KARDEC

What?

RAJ

Three boats. Three mans for boat, like us.

One man he fish, one cook rice. Two, three put up, take down, tent.

KARDEC

Now how the hell do you know that?

Raj turns to Kardec and suddenly grins.

RAJ

I can see them!

He points upriver. Far off there are two big canoes pulled up on the shore. Kardec squints up river at the distant activity.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - OPPOSITE LACKLAN CAMP - MORNING

Kardec eases into a hiding place behind a log. He looks through a pair of binoculars, adjusting their focus.

KARDEC'S POV - Two tattooed Dyaks are packing up the camp. John Lacklan sits, leaning back on some supplies and writes in a journal. Beyond him, in the trees, Helen is helping break camp. Kardec scans the camp, identifying each of the Dyaks and noting all the visible weapons. He focuses particularly on Kebir, reclining in a similar manner to John as the others load the canoes. Helen goes to where John is sitting.

HELEN

(distant)
I'm going to clean up and take a swim
before we leave.

JOHN

(distant)
Don't be long, they're nearly ready.

HELEN

(distant)
Don't worry ...

She picks up a small pack and heads down river.

Kardec pulls back from the log and follows her, occasionally
stopping to scan the bank, trying to catch sight of her.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - ACROSS FROM BACKWATER - MORNING

Kardec moves closer to the water and stops amid some brush,
lifting the binoculars.

KARDEC'S POV - across a calm backwater. There is no one in
sight. Kardec scans back and forth ... Then a fluttering of
cloth Helen's khaki blouse hanging from a branch ... then there
is a burst of spray as Helen breaks the surface and shakes the
water from her hair.

Kardec stands and is about to step from concealment, he might
just be able to shout over the noise of the river ...

Helen swims for the bank and climbs out.

Kardec pauses. Helen is naked and it makes him pause, thinking
of how to attract her attention in some way that he can explain.

In the distance he hears an outboard start. When he looks back
Helen is hastening to dress.

KARDEC

(to himself)
Shit. You just lost your chance to make
this easy.

Kardec then sees something else, one of the Dyak Boatmen is
watching her from the trees. When she heads back, the man
lingers behind so as not to follow her too closely into camp.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - KARDEC'S BOAT - AFTERNOON

Kardec and Inghai are poling the canoe through a shallow part of
the river.

KARDEC

Inghai? Does anyone know where Jeru's hideout -- his camp, is?

INGHAI

I have heard that it is high in the mountains. A longhouse abandoned to sickness.

Inghai turns, looks out at the overgrown riverbanks before he continues.

INGHAI

I will tell you of Jeru: In the Japanese war he and I fought together. English men, they came from the air, brought many guns and supplies ... wealth. At least wealth for us.

Jeru, he is Iban. A brave warrior but something was bad in him. Since before the time of my father, the Rajah Brooke has taught us head hunting is bad. In old days you take the head of an enemy in war and that is magic ... but then we need more and more obat. We think we need obat for everything.

Soon we *make* enemy; just to take his head. Soon, maybe we don't care if he is enemy, we take head anyway ... now everything need magic, we never have enough. There is a word for this ...

KARDEC

Sounds like inflation.

INGHAI

I think it is greed. Maybe stupidity. All our young man dying, but then Rajah Brooke he says, no more head hunting, and after many years it stops. He is right, our lives are better.

But when the war comes, English man they now say, 'take heads' like in old days. Many do this. I am one of them.

Inghai shows Kardec his tattooed hands.

INGHAI

But *I* know it is just a thing for war, like for my grandfather. It *is* magic ... all magic both good and bad. Can be like man who cannot stop drinking or smoking opium.

One day Jeru killed our English officer and many of the Kelabit tribe. He did this ...

Inghai points to a deep scar that stretches across Inghai's back.

INGHAI

His men took many heads and everything of value in the camp.

He escaped east ... this direction.

The boat continues on.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERTED LONGHOUSE - DAY

A longhouse surrounded by dried out fields, there is no movement in any direction.

Kardec, Inghai and Raj are hunkered down in the grass covering a small hill. Kardec chews a salt tablet and examines the area with his binoculars.

KARDEC

I don't think this is it.

INGHAI

No. No one lives here. When alang-alang comes ...

He indicates the tall, sharp edged grass around them.

INGHAI

... no rice will grow.

RAJ

We go back to river?

KARDEC

Let's see what's down there, as long as we're out of the boat.

He stands. As they move in Inghai hands Raj his old brass bound shotgun and readies his blowgun-spear. As they approach the building they spread out.

RAJ

(whispering)
Mike. Come look ...

The rib cage of a man and a pelvis still wrapped in brittle cloth lays at the foot of the ladder to the verandah.

KARDEC

(whispering)
Cover me.

Raj moves back to cover the building with the shotgun and Kardec goes up rotten ladder.

Kardec motions Inghai and then Raj up, while holding his rifle on the doors to the deserted verandah. He pointed Raj to the corner of the building.

KARDEC

Take cover here. Watch our backs until I signal.

CUT TO:

INT. DESERTED LONGHOUSE - DAY

The floor is scattered with debris, pieces of the thatch roof, pages from catalogues and old military manuals tacked up on the walls like pieces of art. There were also bones, bones everywhere. The floor has collapsed in several places, as has the roof.

Kardec whistles for Raj. The building creaks around them as he enters.

RAJ

(whisper)

What has happened here?

KARDEC

I don't know but it's not good.

INGHAI

This was a raid. There are no heads. The dragon jars are gone.

KARDEC

Do you think it was Jeru?

Sticking from a post is the remains of a blow gun dart, in other places buckshot has scarred the walls.

INGHAI

Never in one hundred years has there been a raid like this ...

KARDEC

It didn't happen that long ago. I'd say four or five years at the most.

INGHAI

(makes a sound)

KARDEC

You, okay?

INGHAI

Raj?

RAJ

(in Malay)
#15- Datuk?

RAJ

#15- Grandfather?

INGHAI

You remember! This is why I want you to come!

RAJ

I don't understand ...

INGHAI

You just *remember!*

He looks sick, and suddenly more frail.

KARDEC

Let's get out of here. This place is about to come down around our ears.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - SIDE CHANNEL - AFTERNOON

Kebir calls out something in Malay and the boat crews turn in behind an island.

KEBIR

(Malay)
Belok di sini, kami akan mendarat di sini

KEBIR

Turn here, we will land here.

JOHN

What are we doing.

Kebir calls out more orders, then turns to John.

KEBIR

(Malay)
Gunakan sungai. Kami akan tinggalkan sampan untuk pakcik.

KEBIR

Use river. We will leave sampan for uncle.

KEBIR

We camp ... good place.

JOHN

There's hours of daylight left!

KEBIR

No, Tuan. Good place, you'll see ...

He waves his hand up river.

KEBIR

... no good.

They are in a scum covered backwater just off the main river, dank and gloomy and surrounded by huge dead trees. Near them is the hull of an ancient dugout, half full of sand and eaten by termites.

JOHN

It looks like a patch of sand to me.
Let's chance it.

KEBIR

No. No. This is good. Tomorrow you get
diamond.

Helen walks around, sees a dim trail that leads back through the
trees into the deep jungle ...

JOHN

No. Don't unpack that. We're not sure
we're staying yet.

Don't go far, Helen.

HELEN

(to herself)
That's interesting ...

She walks down the trail a few yards waving the mosquitos away
from her face.

JOHN

(distant)
Now hold on, I don't want to waste a
whole day if I don't have to ... listen
to me.

She examines a burgundy and green pitcher plant that grows from
a gap in a tree trunk. It's fanged hood over-hanging a sack
half full of digestive fluid, and swarming with dead and dying
insects.

HELEN

Yuk.

KEBIR

(distant)
I do listen. Relax. Take picture.

She looks around, ahead of her is a clearing and then the trail
goes on from there. In the clearing are several longboats, much
older than the ones they had come up river in and roughly
repaired. They are supported by little piles of rock to keep
them away from termites and rot. Behind her there is movement,
a twig breaking ...

DYAK TWO

No, Missy. Dangerous.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - BENDS - AFTERNOON

Kardec's party motors along, coming around a deep bend to see a
long expanse of water ahead of them. Kardec slows down and hugs
the bank.

KARDEC
You see them?

RAJ
I can't see anything.

KARDEC
I didn't think we were that far behind.

RAJ
Sorry, Mike.

They turn farther out into the current and scan the banks ahead. Nothing.

Kardec grips the throttle opening up the little engine and sending the canoe shooting forward.

The boat sends up a healthy wake as they move down river. Soon they are near the next bend and Kardec slows down hugging the bank again. They ease around the bend. Again, there is nothing to be seen.

KARDEC
We missed them. Somehow ...

The canoe turns and heads back up river.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - SIDE CHANNEL - AFTERNOON

Helen and Dyak Two are squared off ... The Dyak grins at her, his front two teeth are capped in gold. The smile is not reassuring.

DYAK TWO
Dangerous!

HELEN
Okay ... okay. I'll go back.

JOHN
(distant)
It makes no sense. There hasn't been a shortage of camp sites so far. We'll go up river for another hour, if we don't find anything we can come back.

KEBIR
No. Too far. Too far.

Kebir is pacing, almost circling John.

JOHN
Damn it, you can do better than that!
How far?

KEBIR

Too far! You wait tomorrow, Mr. Lacklan!

The two of them stand there, each staring at the reflection of the other in the lenses of their dark glasses. After a moment Kebir reaches out and pushes John back, opening some space between them.

JOHN

Ungh!

HELEN

John? Be careful.

KEBIR

You be happy! Tomorrow you get diamond.

You got nice wife, you get nice diamond.
You just ... be happy.

The Lacklans look at each other in shock ... suddenly it's not much of a vacation.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - ACROSS FROM SIDE CHANNEL - NIGHT

Rain and distant thunder. Through the trees a pin prick of light can be seen ... a fire.

KARDEC

They must have stopped early. The camp's all set up and it looks like some of them are asleep.

Kardec hands the binoculars to Raj. Inghai strains to hold the canoe with his pole.

KARDEC

We'll go in first thing in the morning. With luck we can keep anything from happening long enough to convince them they're in trouble.

INGHAI

If they are Jeru's men, they will fight.

KARDEC

Well, Lacklan is armed and he'll be on our side if things go bad.

He may be a jerk, but he's not stupid.

Inghai lets the canoe drift back down river.

CUT TO:

INT. KAPUAS RIVER - SIDE CHANNEL CAMP - TENT - NIGHT

Thunder rumbles. Helen gazes out at the mosquitos clutching the netting of their tent. John sits frowning at the map spread out on the top of one of their cases. Outside, in the shadows beyond the fire one of the Dyaks keeps an eye on them while the others sleep.

JOHN

Helen, come away from there. Don't watch them.

She turns to him.

HELEN

John? We're in trouble, aren't we?

JOHN

No ... We're going to be all right.

HELEN

Don't do that. We're only going to be all right if we're very careful.

John gets up and looks out at their one time guides.

JOHN

I wonder what they want.
(to himself)
Maybe Kardec was right.

HELEN

What? Right about what?

JOHN

Nothing. We have to deal with *this* now.
It doesn't matter.

HELEN

John, I think we're in a very serious situation.

JOHN

He said some people were lured up river, by a native with a big diamond. They never came back.

HELEN

You didn't tell me.

JOHN

If it was true why didn't they just steal our things days ago.

He said it was an old man, an old man with a scar.

HELEN

Why didn't you tell me?

JOHN

I thought he was just trying to scare us because ...

HELEN

Yes?

JOHN

Because we took the job away.

HELEN

God, you're suspicious. Suspicious of me, of him, of everybody but them.

JOHN

Don't start on me.

He starts rummaging through their baggage. Pulling his rifle from it's case and then a box of cartridges. He begins to load the rifle.

HELEN

What are you going to do?

JOHN

We can't wait for whatever is going to happen.

I'm going to tell them if they don't put a boat in the water and let us leave, I'll kill them all. I'll show them a god damn thing or two ...

HELEN

A confrontation will just make everything worse.

He dumps the rest of the cartridges into his breast pocket.

JOHN

Get it over with. They'll back down. No one wants to die.

HELEN

We don't know anything. Are you ready to kill one of them?

JOHN

If I have to.

HELEN

Well, they're armed too. There's nine of them.

JOHN

Then what? Have you got an idea?

HELEN

What if we slip away? If we're lucky they'll just take our things and go.

We saw a village. In those dry fields,
just before we came up this river. The
guide book has a Malay dictionary, maybe
...

JOHN

The guide book! That's for tourists!
God Helen, if we don't *do* something we're
going to be killed!

Suddenly he sits on the cot facing away from her, out of
options. She leans her head on his back.

HELEN

I'm sorry. Oh god, I'm so sorry. I
don't care about the ring. I never did.

He turns to her.

JOHN

What?

HELEN

I thought we needed some time together.
Things to share. The *diamond*? I wanted
to save *us*.

After a moment he gathers himself.

JOHN

You'll be all right, Helen ... I'll make
sure of it.

You were right. When they go to sleep
we'll try to get away.

I redrew the map and I have notes in my
journal.

(fading out)

Someone will find us. Maybe the rain
will wipe out our tracks.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - KARDEC'S CAMP - NIGHT

Inghai, Raj and Kardec are taking cover from the rain under the
limited protection of Kardec's shelter-half. Raj has been
flipping through Helen's book and he comes to the spot where
Kardec has used her picture to mark his place. He looks
carefully at the snapshot.

RAJ

This woman. She is not your woman?

KARDEC

No.

RAJ
Does she want to be?

That's a better question the Kardec was prepared for.

KARDEC
She's probably never thought about it.

Raj looks at Kardec seriously.

RAJ
When they are bad, Kelabit mother tell children, 'be good or *Tuan Jeru* will get you.' Story say he is Bali Salang.

You know what this is?

Inghai turns frowning toward Raj ...

KARDEC
It's a monster, a vampire or something.

RAJ
Yes. He sell your blood to the oil company. He take your head ...

(Malay)
Diam.

INGHAI

Quiet.

INGHAI

INGHAI
Raj, there is more to this story than you know!

RAJ
Then tell us, Grandfather.

Inghai just shakes his head. Raj looks at him narrowly, then turns to Kardec.

RAJ
I am not afraid of any *man*. I just want to know why we do what we are doing.

CUT TO:

I/E. KAPUAS RIVER - SIDE CHANNEL CAMP - TENT - NIGHT

The fire has died down but the watching Dyak is still there.

John, is now sitting with the rifle across his knees. Behind him Helen is curled up asleep. John's eyelids flutter, he tries to stay awake but, in the end, he cannot.

FADE OUT:

INT. KAPUAS RIVER - SIDE CHANNEL CAMP - TENT - NIGHT

Something moves in the night. John comes awake. The fire is still there, burning even lower ... John squints ...

JOHN
(whisper)
Helen. Helen ...

Helen starts awake.

HELEN
(whisper)
What?

JOHN
(whisper)
Quiet. Something happened, they all went somewhere.

Helen sits up.

JOHN
Come on.

She takes the small pack that John hands her. He slips the sling of his rifle over his shoulder then turning to the back of the tent, opens his clasp knife ... he cuts the canvass and they step through into darkness.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - SIDE CHANNEL CAMP - NIGHT

JOHN
(whisper)
Put your feet down slowly, try not to make any noise.

They move a few yards along the sand toward the depths of the jungle. Ahead of them something moves through the brush ...

HELEN
(whisper)
What is it?

JOHN
(whisper)
Shh. I don't know ...

A line of Dyaks materializes out of the darkness all are carrying basket packs ... they mill about as they reach the clearing. Then, suddenly Kebir is there ...

NEW DYAK
(in Malay)
Itu pun kamu! Kami telah duduk di pinggir bukit..

NEW DYAK
There you are! We've been sitting up on that hillside ...

He motions them to be quiet and to look around ...

KEBIR
(in Malay)
Shh! Tahanan sudah lari.
Selerak. Semua orang!

KEBIR
Shh! The prisoners have
escaped. Spread out, all of
you ...

John pulls Helen closer to the spreading roots of a tree and they crouch, hiding. Footsteps move around and away ...

Suddenly, they are pinned in the beam of a flashlight. Surrounding them were at least a dozen tribesman.

KEBIR
Oh look! Mr., Miss, Lacklan.

Kebir steps out from behind the glare of the light.

KEBIR
Now where you go? You go walk at night?

John straightens and raises his Winchester.

JOHN
Take our things. Take what you want and
leave us alone.

KEBIR
Okay. Sure. *'betcha.*

No one does anything ...

HELEN
So ... go. Get what you want ...

KEBIR
We take all, okay? Take you too.

JOHN
Ransom? Is that what you mean?

KEBIR
Ransom? No, no, I don't care ransom. I
care head.

JOHN
Oh Christ ... Helen, run.
(to Kebir)
Get back! I'll shoot ...

KEBIR
(in Malay)
Selerak. Ke belakang dia.

KEBIR
Spread-out. To behind him.

Dyaks flank them.

HELEN
John ...?

JOHN
Go Helen! *Go Now!*

Helen steps back, then powerful hands grab her from behind.

HELEN
(screams into Dyak's hand)

JOHN
No! No, Damn You!

In that moment of distraction a Dyak steps in hits John with the butt of his shotgun. John's rifle goes off ...

CUT TO:

EXT. HILL NEAR KOREAN FARM VILLAGE - DAY

... and mixes with the sound of cannon fire.

A young SOLDIER runs up and slips, sliding, into a deep and crowded foxhole. Captain Mike Kardec USMC and several others are managing a retreat.

SOLDIER ONE
Captain. Those civilians ...
there's still more up there!

FORWARD OBSERVER
(off)
Fox. Oboe. Able 2. Fire
Mission.

Kardec turns toward the Soldier.

FIRE DIRECTION CENTER
(radio voice)
Go, Able.

FORWARD OBSERVER
(off)
Azimuth: Two. Eight. Zero.
Zero. coordinates two five
four through three five six.
Spread sheaf 500 yards. Enemy
armor and infantry in attack.
Request all available fire!

KARDEC
The tanks?

The young man crawls over past the FORWARD OBSERVER, closer to Kardec. There is the distant sound of artillery pieces firing - 1, 2 ...

SOLDIER ONE
Yeah ... yeah! We just got
out.

FIRE DIRECTION CENTER
(radio voice)
Able 2. Battalion in initial
fire, requesting support from
Corps. Report impact.

Kardec lunges past Soldier One, toward the man with the radio ...

KARDEC
Move over.
(to Forward Observer)
Artillery! Abort mission!

More artillery - 3, 4, 5, 6.

FORWARD OBSERVER
No can do, Sir. Rounds in the air.

KARDEC
Oh Hell ... gimme that carbine!

He grabs the M1 from the Soldier and bails out of the foxhole, running ...

SOLDIER ONE
Captain? Captain, come *back!*

FORWARD OBSERVER
(distant)
Fox Oboe, Able 2. Cease fire!
Cease fire! Captain Kardec
has ...

SOLDIER TWO
Incoming!

Kardec runs through a hail of red hot metal and geysers of freezing mud. He falls, images swirl -- refugees tramping by -- Inghai in his longhouse a pile of skulls nearby -- a KOREAN GIRL WITH A BICYCLE sobbing -- the diamonds slipping back into the river -- Helen ...

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - KARDEC'S CAMP - DAWN

Kardec starts awake, not knowing where he is. Slowly the jungle comes to life around him ...

KARDEC
Unh. Damn!

Inghai stands watching him, a spirit in the wood.

INGHAI
Your soul still wanders ...

KARDEC
A dream.

INGHAI
Perhaps I have not yet healed you.

KARDEC
A *bad* dream.

Raj. Get up.

RAJ
What? What is it?

KARDEC
We're going. Now!

Kardec rubs the tattoo over his heart.

KARDEC
Alright Inghai ... let's see if this
thing works.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - SIDE CHANNEL CAMP - MORNING

They hit the beach at the Lacklan's camp. As they climb out of the canoe, they see that the camp site is deserted.

KARDEC
Damn!

Inghai feels the heat of the remaining coals. He pokes it with a stick and uncovers some glowing embers.

INGHAI
They are gone. One hour, maybe two.

KARDEC
Raj, gas up the motor.

Raj unscrews the gas cap and starts to fill the motor. Kardec moves toward the trail, his eyes narrow ...

Hidden back in the trees Kardec can make out the Lacklan's canoes. Stripped of everything including the outboards.

KARDEC
Forget it.

Raj stops pouring and looks over.

KARDEC
No, forget it. They're going over land.

At a spot where the ground is disturbed by a scuffle Kardec finds a rifle shell. He picks it up, holds it to his nose ... we hear again the strange sounding crack of thunder that woke him up.

KARDEC
I think our friends are in a lot of
trouble.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - BELOW RIDGE CREST - MORNING

In the middle of a line of Dyaks, hauling what was once their possessions, John and Helen are pushed along the trail. Both have their hands tied.

KEBIR
You think you smart man? I call you Too-
an. Act like idiot, say everything two
time. "Gravel bank, gravel bank."

One of the tribesmen nurses a bullet burn across his left shoulder but Kebir now proudly carries John's Winchester.

KEBIR

You pay money for diamond? There no diamond ... just this one, yeah?

What do I get? I get longboat, food, shotgun shell, outboard motor ... I think you *stupid!*

'Okay. Okay. Sure. 'betcha.' I sound 'merica?

There is tree. There is other tree. Snake. I be tour guide 'merica.

Yeah. Maybe I go 'merica, see televisia. You don't like, eh? I go 'merica but not you?

JOHN

A-merica. You'd be right at home some places I can think of. Miserable punk.

Kebir pushes John, sending John staggering to the top of a bank entwined with debris that slid down the side of the hill.

HELEN

Stop that!

John is pushed again, this time he catches his toe on a root and falls heavily.

HELEN

Wait. John, let me help you.

He tries to get to his feet but the sudden pain stops him.

JOHN

Arrgh! Oh, no ...

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - SIDE CHANNEL CAMP - MORNING

Kardec, Inghai and Raj quickly prepare to follow. Raj fills their packs with supplies. Behind him Kardec belts on a *parang*. They shoulder their packs, Kardec slings his rifle and, grimly, they head off into the forest.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - BELOW RIDGE CREST - DAY

The line of Dyaks has begun to gather around John and Helen as John tries to assess the damage to his leg.

KEBIR

Get up!

John manages to get into a sitting position, breathing heavily.

HELEN
Yes ... we'll get up. Just give him a
minute.

Come on, John.

JOHN
I'm *trying!*

KEBIR
Go!

Kebir kicks Helen.

HELEN
Aagh!

JOHN
You bastard!

Kebir walks down the slope until he can look John right in the
eyes

KEBIR
You like fight, husband, wife? I see
you, you fight too much!

So ... I take one head, keep one slave.
You decide which, which. Fight 'bout
that, yeah?

HELEN
(whispering)
Oh no, oh no ...

KEBIR
Now go!

With his arm over Helen's shoulders, John gets up and limps down
the muddy trail.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - RIDGE CREST AND SLIDE - DAY

Kardec and Raj make their way along a ridge. In the dim light
the ground slopes sharply on either side of the trail. In one
place the earth has fallen away, taking the trees with it. It
reveals a vista of forest covered mountains drenched in blinding
sunlight. They start down, around the slide.

Inghai comes to a stop while making his way through the maze of
fallen timber and boulders from the old landslide. He shows Raj
a place where the tracks indicate someone was pulled to their
feet.

INGHAI

The man has fallen.

He moves on a bit farther.

KARDEC

Lacklan's limping pretty badly.

RAJ

Maybe we catch up.

KARDEC

Sure. Catch up, get ahead, set up an ambush ... nothing to it.

Raj looks at the ground. Inghai scowls at Kardec.

KARDEC

Hey. You're right ... you're right. I'm just trying to make it work.

Kardec starts off along the trail.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RAIN FOREST - SWAMP - DAY

The trail gets wetter and wetter. Then, suddenly they are walking in water. The flooded landscape spreads out ahead of them and to both sides. The trail is gone.

KARDEC

This is not getting any easier!

Kardec checks his compass.

KARDEC

We'll never find them if we don't get out of this before dark. Spread out but stay in shouting distance.

The three head off.

Kardec pushes forward until an immense wall of rock rises out of the swamp.

RAJ

(distant)
Here!

Raj sloshes nearer ...

RAJ

Come look!

The tracks emerge from the swamp and disappear into a crack in the wall ahead of them. The cleft is narrow and about fifty yards in the passage disappears into a slowly roiling mist.

RAJ

Mike ...

On one side of the gap, is an otherworldly construction. A central pole, stripped of bark, held twisting, serpent-like crosspieces. Once brightly colored, they were hung with vine nets holding jawless human skulls ...

KARDEC

What is it?

INGHAI

This is symbol of Kenyah people ... but not. Wrong, not Kenyah.

Jeru is cursed, you must know that.

KARDEC

Cursed?

INGHAI

Yes. This ... he thinks to protect himself, his people ...

INGHAI

(whisper)

I was never brave enough. Never.

Kardec frowns, worried about Inghai, something is going.

They move forward. In the distance faint music can be heard ...

RAJ

Listen ...

They stop.

KARDEC

Stay here, when I signal ...

(Kardec hoots like an owl)

... you two come on. Alright?

Kardec stops behind a boulder and peers into the fog. From among the wet and loosely piled leaves, from the roots and scales of rock appear a swarm of leeches, slowly the inch their way toward him.

KARDEC

(to himself)

Yuck ...

Kardec moves forward into the fog. The mists part and the trail dips steeply downward revealing a small valley. In it can be seen a longhouse beside a shallow stream. Up the valley the slopes become steeper and steeper until, miles away, they end in a long, bare ridge mostly hidden in the drifting clouds.

Kardec does the owl call ... after a moment Inghai and Raj joined him.

RAJ
(whisper)
Look!

Coming out of the brush and into the nearest field is a line of figures ... the Lacklans and their captors.

KARDEC
Come on.

They move off

CUT TO:

EXT. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - OVERVIEW - EVENING

Closer to the longhouse Raj, Inghai, and Kardec, slide into cover behind some brush.

KARDEC
How many do you think are down there?

INGHAI
If stories are true, twenty, maybe thirty men. Some women ...

KARDEC
Do you know what's going to happen?

Inghai turns away.

RAJ
I think they have big *arak* party. Everyone get very drunk. They have new thing for trade; shotgun shell, fancy rifle.

KARDEC
Yeah? What about the Lacklans?

Raj shoots a glance at Inghai in the waning light.

RAJ
I don't know, Mike.

I think maybe they cut off man's head. Woman, I don't know ... these people, they not Iban, not Kenyah, not Kelabit. They something different ... outlaws, you know?

I bet they get drunk like Iban though.

INGHAI
They will cut off their heads. Sooner, later, they cut both.

I have caused this.

KARDEC

You caused it? What are you talking about?

RAJ

(in Malay)
Datuk, tak benar!

RAJ

Grandfather, not true!

INGHAI

(in Malay)
Kamu salah! Aku di sana, aku bersalah.

INGHAI

You're wrong! I was there, I at-fault.

INGHAI

(in English)

I am the one. I make elmu hitam; black magic. I cursed Jeru and all his people.

Time ago I saw him. In marketplace at Miri. The war, it was over, soldiers going home.

For what he had done, I cursed him. I cursed them all. Balio, it turns all to stone, the longhouse, everyone.

KARDEC

I may not appreciate the situation, but that place down there doesn't look like stone to me.

RAJ

Balio. It is bad. Big rocks along Baram, once each a longhouse. They cursed or offended Atoh. They turned to rock.

KARDEC

You believe that?
(neither comments)
Look, in the end everything may become stone but that's just not how it happens.

INGHAI

It does not matter! Jeru believes. You remember what I tell you? He *believes*.

Now he takes head, many head, to save himself, for obat to stay alive.

Kardec turns back to look at the longhouse.

KARDEC

An arms race with heads ... wait 'til Lacklan figures *that* out.

INGHAI

Balio for gods to decide, not man.

I say, to you, 'do not fight who you are.' I must remember who I am, what I have done. I must end it.

KARDEC

Well, we're not gonna to do *anything* unless we can get in there.

We'll give it an hour, let the *arak* do some work for us.

CUT TO:

INT. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

John and Helen are pushed along and forced to sit near one of the fireplaces. Their guard hits John with the shaft of his spear and he falls to the floor.

JOHN

Damn you!

DYAK ONE

(in Malay)

Duduk, anjing bodoh.

DYAK ONE

Sit, dog stupid.

John and Helen watch as activity swirls around them. Boxes of shotgun shells are broken open and distributed. An OLD WOMAN works a spinning wheel, some CHILDREN doze nearby. Bottles of *arak* are passed around. A night of debauchery begins.

Their guard abandons his post for a moment, going to get himself something to drink. John uses this opportunity to pull several items from his pockets.

He slides something across the floor toward Helen ... until she can hide it with her body.

HELEN

What is that?

JOHN

Put these in your pockets.

HELEN

What ..?

He shows her ...

JOHN

It's my compass and my journal. I noted every time we changed our heading. You can backtrack our route.

HELEN

Me? What are you talking about?

JOHN

You can get away, they won't always be watching.

HELEN

John, we'll both get away ...

JOHN

You heard them; we have to choose.

HELEN

Don't say that! We don't know what's going to happen.

JOHN

It's ... triage.

HELEN

This is not some exercise of yours! We don't have to choose anything! We'll make a run for it ... right now.

JOHN

I *can't* run.

HELEN

Then we'll *limp* and if they shoot us in the back so be it. Get up, John. Come on, they don't get to tell us what to do!

He stares at her then, as their Guard returns with a bottle of arak, turns away.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - OVERVIEW - NIGHT

From the sounds, the celebration is in full swing. More music, sounds of dancing, cheers and wild shouts. A woman screams ... Kardec stiffens ... but the sound devolves into laughter.

KARDEC

We've got to get a look. Let's go.

They move in.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - UNDERNEATH/BACK - NIGHT

Kardec, Raj and Inghai pass under the longhouse and work their way to the back.

Occasionally they can get a surreal glimpse of feet and buttocks, dancing and movement through cracks in the floor.

Moving past the area where the floor has collapsed they get to a place where they can reach the veranda. Kardec swings up onto the longhouse porch.

CUT TO:

I/E. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - VERANDA - NIGHT

As soon as Kardec gains his feet he bumps into something hanging from the thatch awning above him. There is a moment of confusion before light from a nearby window shows that he is bumping into hanging bundles of human skulls!

KARDEC
(under his breath)
Oh, Christ!

Inghai and Raj follow him up.

They crouch low and sneak along the wall looking for a place where they can peek in. This end of the longhouse is in bad repair and seems deserted. They press on.

Light leaks from around a door but the view is limited. They move to a place where Kardec can make a hole in the thatch with his finger tips. Inghai looks too while Raj, wisely, watches their backs.

INSIDE - The long room is smoky with torch light, before a crowd of seated people a man is dancing. As Kardec scans the room he picks out John and Helen. They look filthy and frightened.

There is a commotion in the crowd. Something is about to happen that they appreciate.

Helen and John twist around to see what is going on. Dyaks move to either side and through the gap an old man appears. He walks slowly between the ranks of his followers. He wears a cape of hornbill feathers and around his waist is a belt of silver coins and ancient bronze tiger bells. On one cheek is a darkly twisted mass of scar tissue.

OUTSIDE - Kardec looks at Inghai.

KARDEC
Is that him?

Inghai nods.

INGHAI
(in Malay) Bastard!
Jantan sial!

Inghai pulls away, Raj steps into his place.

INSIDE - Kebir steps away from his group of followers and kneels briefly in front of the JERU.

KEBIR
(under Malay)
Terima kasih, Pakcik. Kami telah membawa banyak barang berharga, dan tahanan.

KEBIR
Thank you, Uncle. We have brought many valuables, and prisoners.

Standing, he takes something from around his neck and ceremonially hands it to his Uncle.

JERU
(in Malay) Saya berterima kasih.
JERU
I thankful.

The old man holds it up to the light. It's the diamond, milky and uncut.

KARDEC - seeing the diamond for the first time.

KARDEC
Well, look at that. No wonder people go for it.

INSIDE - with another bow Kebir gestures ... and all eyes turn to ... John and Helen.

Jeru steps forward and John draws his legs under him to rise ...

HELEN
(whisper)
John? What are you *doing*?

He stands, trembling, but his chin held high.

JOHN
We've decided.

HELEN
(to Dyaks)
No, we haven't.
(to John)
Stop it, John. Stop!

Two burly Dyaks stepped up behind them.

JOHN
(imploring Helen)
It's logical. ... all I can do ...

HELEN
It's not over, don't *help* them do this.

JOHN
I won't be powerless, Helen!
Take ... take me. Leave her alone.

Jeru Claps his hands and a child scurries forward with a roll of cloth and lays it on the split bamboo floor in front of John. It is stained with dried blood.

KEBIR
Good, Mr. Lacklan. Maybe you smart after all.

Kebir pulls John forward, then kicks the back of John's knee. John falls to a kneeling position on the mat.

KARDEC - pushes Raj to one side, raises the muzzle of the Mannlicher into the hole and lays the sights on Jeru's head.

KARDEC

If we go in, Raj you cover our left from the door.

JERU - whirls his *parang* around his head like a batter warming up. He tests it's edge with his thumb, drawing the moment out.

HELEN

Are you crazy? It won't even work ... you'll die and they'll kill me anyway!

Kebir steps forward and jabs at her with the barrel of John's rifle.

KEBIR

Sit, missy! You sit or *yes*, I *will* kill you!

Everybody die, you don't sit down!

JOHN

Helen ..!

KARDEC - moves slightly and the wood of the veranda creaks.

A DYAK INSIDE - starts to turn, to see what caused the noise ... but the drama inside recaptures his attention.

Helen speaks directly to Jeru.

HELEN

You can't kill him. We're Americans! They'll come looking for us.

KEBIR

We kill England, Dutch ... America? Who cares.

(he repeats this in Malay)
Kami bunuh Orang Inggeris, Belanda, Amerika, siapa peduli.

The crowd laughs. One of the Dyaks grabs Helen's arm but she pulls away.

HELEN

He's a scholar. What are you going to say? There are the heads of Japanese soldiers, we fought their machine-guns with knives but we won. Here is the head of the man who reads books, aren't we brave!

John looks at her, he struggles to turn, to shut her up.

KARDEC - relaxes, easing off with the rifle.

JOHN

Be quiet, Helen! Let me do what I can!

You take me ... just leave her! Leave her!

HELEN

I heard Dyak tribes men only took the heads of honorable enemies; of warriors. Did John walk here? You nearly had to carry him. The head of a strong man is magic. But a weak man? A weak man is nothing.

JOHN

I've harnessed the powers of the atom -- the power of the sun -- I control the power of the gods! I *destroyed* the Japanese ...

KEBIR

Stop!

We cut off head; see what happen. No magic, we throw out!

John turns to Jeru ...

JOHN

... ready. I'm ready, just leave her alone.

DYAK CROWD

(in Malay)
Potong! Potong!

DYAK CROWD

Cut! Cut!

Helen forces herself between John and Jeru.

HELEN

God Damn it, John.

The Dyak grabs her again, this time twisting her arm behind her back to control her.

HELEN

I am *not* going to let you die for me!

John struggles to stand and for a moment they are face to face ...

HELEN

... I don't love you enough for that!

John is frozen gaping at her ... and then Jeru smashes the butt of his parang across the back of John's head, knocking him unconscious.

JERU
(in Malay)
Gila! Tak siuman!

JERU
Crazy! Insane!

Jeru picks up a bottle of arak and turns away.

KARDEC - releases a breath ... one held far too long.

INGHAI
What happens?

KARDEC
She a ... I have no idea.

We've got a minute, come on.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - BACK - MOMENTS LATER

Back at the spot where they climbed up, Kardec sheds his back pack and rummages through it. Raj breaks open the shotgun, checking it's load ...

INGHAI
No, Raj. You will stay here.

RAJ
(in Malay)
Datuk, tidak.

RAJ
Grandfather, no.

RAJ
(in English)
I am not a boy! I will go with you to fight.

INGHAI
I had one chance to kill Jeru. But I cursed him ... I was instead a coward. Now, one must die, him or me. Only that can end his curse ... this curse on us both.

Mike is not a part. You not a part. Only me! You must help Mike. You must help Mike or I can not do what I have to.

RAJ
(in Malay)
Tapi aku tidak akan jumpa datuk lagi.

RAJ
But I'll never see Grandpa again.

Inghai wraps Raj in a fierce embrace.

INGHAI
Be a good boy, my Rajah. Do as I have taught you.

INGHAI
(in Malay)
Jaga Mike baik baik, faham?
Hati Hati. Selamat tinggal.

INGHAI
Take good care of Mike,
understand? Careful. Good
bye (living).

KARDEC
(to Raj)
You help them get to the ground and go
straight up the hill whether we're here
or not, understand?

Kardec closes the backpack and hands it to Raj.

KARDEC
Keep this with you. Anyone comes around
...

Raj grips the hilt of his parang.

RAJ
I know. What you going to do?

Kardec glances up an evil grin on his face.

KARDEC
Get their attention.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - VERANDA - NIGHT

Kardec pumps the Handi Works stove. He fires it with a match then wedges it into the thatch wall at the far end of the longhouse ... the thatch sputters then begins to catch fire.

KARDEC
Come on ...

They run back to the door and pause, waiting ...

KARDEC
You give me covering fire from here.

I don't want to be at cross purposes. I
need to get the Lacklan's out.

INGHAI
Yes. Then I will find Jeru. Do not wait
for me ... Understand, Mike? Do not.

Kardec nods. Inghai cocks the shotgun and sets it just outside the door then carefully takes a poisoned dart from the bamboo canister at his waist.

There is a cry of alarm from inside, running feet, the sound of flames ...

INGHAI

Let's go!

CUT TO:

INT. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Kardec comes through the side door with the rifle up. Inghai right behind him with the blowgun.

The long room is filling with smoke. At one end of the main gallery a crowd has gathered just back from where flames are racing up the wall. TWO MEN work on the fire with blankets. Part of the floor gives way, taking a Dyak with it. A WOMAN runs toward the front of the longhouse screaming. She passes Kardec without even registering that he is a stranger.

Across the gallery, the Lacklans are huddled in a corner.

A Dyak stands between Kardec and the Lacklans, watching the activity, half drunk, a bottle of arak in his hand. Kardec hits him with the butt of the rifle as he goes by.

Kardec drops beside the Lacklans and pulls his knife ... John twists in panic when he feels Kardec's hand on his ankle, he kicks out ... Helen looks up and realizes who it is.

HELEN

John, stop! It's help.

Kardec grabs one of the kicking feet and cuts through the ropes - Helen extends her arms and he cuts away her bindings. He hands her the knife to cut her feet free. But she's looking beyond him.

HELEN

Look out!

Kardec looks up.

A heavily TATTOOED DYAK fires an old shotgun at Kardec. -- Just as Inghai fires a dart from his blow gun -- bird shot rips up the floor and peppers Kardec's boot and ankle. The dart hits the TATTOOED DYAK in the throat and he drops the gun and charges Inghai, screaming -- Behind him OTHERS are coming, one of them has an old Japanese rifle -- Kardec snatches up the rifle and, still kneeling, fires as his sights cross the DYAK WITH THE RIFLE. People scream, hit the floor, the flames are taking the ceiling now.

KARDEC

Go! To that man there!

The Lacklan's head for the door but now most of the Dyaks who were fighting the fire have turned toward the gunshots. Kardec and Jeru stare at one and other for a moment ...

JERU

(in Malay)
#34- Bunuh mereka!

JERU

#34- Kill them!

Dyaks rush with bared parangs and the wall behind them goes up in a sheet of flame -- a shotgun fires, a geyser of white smoke -- Inghai fires his shotgun then, tossing it away charges using the spear blade attached to his blowpipe. -- Kardec fires and fires again and the two of them back toward the door. -- Inghai goes down blood welling from his shoulder and Kardec grabs him, pulling him back, he dodges a cut from Inghai's attacker and lashes out with the butt of his rifle.

Across the fireplace area Kebir fires John's Winchester -- Kardec shoots through the fire area, the bullet smashing through a pottery jug forcing Kebir under cover. Kardec fires again Inghai whacks a Dyak with the shaft of his blowgun then spears the Dyak with the blade. A man comes at Kardec with a parang. Kardec shoots him down from the hip.-- A big piece of the ceiling falls in. Sparks and smoke everywhere. -- Kardec and Inghai retreat out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. JERU'S LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Outside, John Lacklan is on the deck grappling with a Dyak. Helen has stopped partway down the veranda and is starting back. Without pausing in his stride Kardec kicks the Dyak in the temple knocking him unconscious.

KARDEC
That way! Find Raj!

The Lacklans run down the veranda and Kardec, about to follow, glances back. Three more Dyaks appear out of the smoke. Kardec fires then parries with the carbine, Inghai stabs with his spear and the man carries it away over the side of the veranda, he draws his parang as more men close in.

The smoke clears for a moment and Kardec can see Jeru striding toward them. He throws the rifle to his shoulder but the gun clicks on an empty chamber.

Inghai yells a battle cry and charges. The first Dyak in his way goes down and Inghai runs on toward Jeru. -- Kardec looks over his shoulder -- the veranda is clear, he could follow the Lacklans ... but Inghai is surrounded.

Kardec slams into the men flanking him -- Inghai's parang is covered in blood -- Kardec swings the carbine, is cut, knocked to the bamboo planking, he punches out leaps to his feet to see ...

... the rifle tipping over the edge of the veranda.

ANOTHER TRIBESMAN rams him backwards through the flaming wall of the longhouse -- They crash through, scorched and stunned Kardec hits the floor inside the longhouse. The Dyak strikes out -- Kardec throws the tribesman off and tries to stand -- Yanking the parang from the man's belt Kardec covers his face with his arms and dives back through the hole, to find himself at Inghai's side ... surrounded by a circle of men with spears.

And just beyond, Kebir peering over the sights of Lacklan's rifle.

INGHAI
(breathing hard)
Mike. You not too good following orders

The spearmen push forward, herding them to the edge of the verandah.

KARDEC
(coughs/laughs)
Yeah? And no good deed goes unpunished.

Jeru steps past his nephew.

JERU
So, the magician has become fat and old.

INGHAI
And you, traitor. You take heads to protect from my curse.

I have come to end it.

JERU
End it? End it how?

INGHAI
One of us dies. Fight me. It will end when one of us dies.

JERU
(laughs)
Fight? Why?

JERU
(in Malay)
Kebir. Datang sini!

JERU
Kebir. Come here!

JERU
My sister's son will take your heads.
You die, no more curse. He take your obat ...

Kebir hands off the rifle and draws his parang. Inghai steps back beside Kardec ...

INGHAI
It will do him no good. My obat escapes with the smoke ... look!

He gestured toward the sky and as everyone looks ...

INGHAI
Is this not luck, my friend?

Inghai turns and pushes Kardec off the veranda

Kardec hits the ground. He rolls, staggers to his feet, the rifle is laying about five yards away. He throws himself forward, snatches it up and dives under the longhouse as Jeru's men send a fusillade of darts and shotgun pellets after him.

INGHAI - is dragged forward and thrown to his knees. Kebir grabbed the old man's hair and his parang flashed downward ... Inghai's severed head hits the boards.

KARDEC - reloads and glances back to see -- Dyaks coming down the ladders after him. Suddenly, there is a terrible cracking of wood, and the whole longhouse starts to come crashing down around him.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - TIMBERLINE - NIGHT

The moon illuminates the jungle and the ridge of mountains running into the distance. Raj and the Lacklans head up hill away from the distant tower of flame that is the longhouse. They reach a flat spot in the lee of a rock and they pause, wheezing and puffing ...

RAJ
Rest. We rest.

They are resting when a slight sound comes from the night. Raj sits forward and looks around but there is nothing to be seen. John starts to get up but Raj reaches out to stop him.

RAJ
(whispering)
Shh.

Raj draws his parang. John turns out his flashlight.

JOHN
(whispering)
What?

The sound comes again and now they all hear it. Raj draws them back into the shadow of the rocks, out of sight. There is a crunch of gravel and Raj takes the flashlight from John.

Holding the light out in front of him Raj steps around the rock and raising the parang, he flips on the light.

KARDEC
Ahhgh! Crap!

There stands Mike Kardec, blackened with soot and bleeding from many scrapes and cuts.

KARDEC
Damn! Douse the light!

RAJ
Sorry, Mike.

JOHN

Kardec ... I thought you were dead.

KARDEC

We have to keep going. Can everybody keep going?

HELEN

I don't know. John hurt his leg before we got to that village.

KARDEC

Let me see. We have to get out of here.

Kardec kneels beside him. John pulls away from him.

JOHN

I can make it! I don't need help.
(almost to himself)
I don't need your help.

KARDEC

Then let's go.

John struggles to his feet.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - WALKING - NIGHT

The Lacklans go first, Raj and Kardec follow. John stumbles and Helen tries to help him. He fends her off. Kardec looks over at Raj.

KARDEC

Inghai ... I didn't get him out.

RAJ

He did what he want. His curse, it is end.

KARDEC

He saved me ... he saved me again.

RAJ

When I pull you out of river, that first time since he curse Jeru, first time that Inghai make magic. He say to me, 'this man sick, hurt, his soul it lost. Only magic may help find it.'

I know, war take your soul. His too. His curse take his soul. So he help you, you help him ... help him know what he needed to do, be brave to do it.

You could not save him, Mike. You already did.

Raj puts his hand on Kardec's shoulder ...

RAJ

He told me, take care of you ... that's what he said.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAVE ENTRANCE - DAWN

The ridge rises up again. Kardec skirts the slope, staying a hundred feet above the forest.

HELEN

Give us ... give us a minute.

Ahead he saw a dark opening in the limestone ridge.

KARDEC

Up here ... we'll stop for awhile.

They come to a place where there is a rocky outcropping and, in it, the entrance to a cave. Helen climbs to the opening.

HELEN

It goes in pretty far. My flashlight is dying.

KARDEC

Rest, if you can, we can't stop for long.

He takes off his pack and gently shakes it's contents out. Then, taking it with him, he starts off into the dark.

JOHN

Where are you going?

KARDEC

To get some wood. I'll have to go down into the forest a ways.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - SLOPE BELOW CAVE - DAWN

Kardec makes his way down the rocky slope toward the forest. Off to one side there is the deep hollow of another cave mouth.

Kardec gathers firewood along the upper edge of the forest, he picks up several branches that are lying around the base of a tree, cuts them down to size with his *parang*. He stuffs all this into the mouth of his pack.

He hears a noise and looks around ...

A bat flies by, very close to him. Further off against a lightening sky, thousands of bats can be seen funneling down to the mouth of the lower cave.

Suddenly, he hears Helen scream in the distance.

Kardec whirls, looking back toward where he left the others. Then, quickly pulling the pack onto his back, he heads up the hillside as fast as he can go.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAVE ENTRANCE - DAWN

Kardec arrives panting, he looks around wild eyed, trying to find the threat. A small tornado of bats are finding their way into the upper cave. The Lacklans are standing well away from the cave mouth looking back at the bats in shock.

HELEN
Sorry, sorry ...

KARDEC
Everybody all right?

Helen laughs, shaking her head.

HELEN
Yes. Definitely. Smallest scare of the whole day.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAMP FIRE - DAWN

Helen is finishing off a can of soup that she is sharing with Raj. Kardec is cleaning the bird-shot wounds in his leg with peroxide.

Kardec takes the canteen from his belt. He offers it around then pours the last drops into his hand and sucks them up. He puts the canteen back in his pack.

KARDEC
That's it for the food and water ...

Kardec takes a deep breath.

KARDEC
We've only got one chance; get back to the river and ride it down to the sea. We can rest for a half hour, then we'd better get going.

John indicates his leg, peppered with a number of pellets, his boot has some holes in it too.

JOHN
That's going to get infected, it's just a matter of how long.

HELEN
Are you going to be all right?

KARDEC

Maybe. With luck.

HELEN

Are we still in danger?

KARDEC

I expect they'll be after us.

JOHN

(mumbling)

And they'll find us too.

HELEN

I read that many of the tribes feel that there are spirits in the mountains, and never go there.

KARDEC

Atoh. You could be right.

HELEN

So, maybe this place is safe. At least that's what I read.

JOHN

You and that confounded guidebook! We don't know that will work!

KARDEC

If that guidebook is where she learned about headhunting customs, it probably saved your life. Jeru wasn't even going to sharpen his *parang*.

JOHN

Well, I'm glad you enjoyed that at my expense.

KARDEC

Mr. Lacklan, I don't know if you are suicidal or what your problem is.

Be happy Helen tried. If she hadn't, *more* of us might have died trying to save your God Damn life!

JOHN

Really? Wouldn't you have waited?

Why *did* you follow us? Because you are the good Samaritan? Or because you are after my wife?

HELEN

John!

KARDEC

I don't know. But this late in the game you'd be a fool to try to figure it out.

Kardec gets up.

KARDEC
Put out that fire. It's light enough to
see our smoke.

He moves off to keep watch on their back trail.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - ROCKS - MORNING

Kardec glasses the ridge trail. There is nothing to be seen.
After a moment Helen slips up beside him.

HELEN
Anything?

Kardec shakes his head.

HELEN
You lost a friend tonight.

KARDEC
Raj told you?

She nods.

HELEN
He died ... and I never even met him.

KARDEC
He thought he saved me once. He saved me
back there ... that's for sure.

They sit quiet for a moment.

HELEN
(after a moment)
I'm sorry about John.

He thinks I cheated on him -- he's
frightened I might cheat on him. I don't
know.

He shouldn't have said those things.

KARDEC
We've all been under a lot of pressure
... he'll be better when you get him
home.

HELEN
I don't know what we'll do.

They are quiet for a moment.

HELEN

Mr. Vandover told me, when you saved those people in Korea. That was what hurt ... your career.

KARDEC

Yeah. Van likes that story.

HELEN

I thought we were going to die.

KARDEC

You know ... He never tells the other part ... about the people I didn't save ... trapped up there when the shells came in.

She almost touches reaches out to touch his back. He doesn't notice, something has caught his attention and he raises the binoculars ...

KARDEC

Go. Get everybody up.

Kardec waves Helen away, back toward the fire.

KARDEC'S POV - Skirting the pinnacle at the base of the ridge are the oncoming figures of men.

KARDEC

Damn it, Inghai ... The luck ain't workin'.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAMP FIRE - MORNING

Helen rushes back into camp.

HELEN

John ... come on. Get up.

JOHN

Helen?

Kardec is close behind her.

KARDEC

Raj! Get up!

RAJ

What ..?

KARDEC

Jeru.

Raj scrambles to reload the backpack, John stumbles to his feet with Helen's help.

HELEN

(she's ready to get started)
What are we going to do?

Kardec shrugs, there are no good choices.

KARDEC

I start a fight and retreat along the ridge. You hide in the cave and wait for them to chase me. I believe there's a way out down below.

JOHN

You believe?

Kardec takes a breath through gritted teeth.

KARDEC

You climb down, get away into the jungle. With any luck they'll be busy with me and they won't know where to pick up your tracks.

HELEN

You'll be killed.

KARDEC

Maybe. Maybe I'll get away and meet you at the boats.

JOHN

How much ammunition have you got?

Kardec doesn't like thinking about this.

KARDEC

Nine rounds.

JOHN

She's right, you'll be killed.

KARDEC

You got a better idea?

Nobody speaks up.

KARDEC

Let's start by getting out of sight.

Kardec rips off the remains of his shirt sleeves and raps them around a stick from the fire.

CUT TO:

INT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAVE - MORNING

Kardec moves into the cave, torch smoking. On the ceiling he notices the bats moving nervously.

He comes to a place where, instead of the cave going on straight it spirals downward. Kardec notices the flame of the torch blowing in the breeze from the lower opening

KARDEC

Well, there *is* another opening ...

KARDEC

Raj. Get me the rope.

There is no movement. He turns.

No one is behind him. The Lacklans are peering in from the mouth of the cave, Raj is not to be seen.

KARDEC

Raj? Oh, hell ...

He tosses the torch down the hole and turns back.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAVE ENTRANCE - MORNING

Raj is standing there with the coil of rope in his hands.

KARDEC

Come on!

RAJ

I stay with you, Mike.

There is some kind of problem brewing.

KARDEC

Raj, if you stay you'll die and *they'll* never find the boats.

RAJ

Okay, but you think *Atoh* big joke. I hope you right.

KARDEC

Is it the *cave*? You don't want to go in the damn *cave*?

HELEN

Mike, stop. If you want to try and get to the river, we're with you ... but we're *not* going to abandon anybody.

JOHN

God Helen, speak for yourself! He's made his choices and for his own reasons.

HELEN

John shut up! I don't want anyone to sacrifice themselves for me, can't you men think of anything else?

Kardec grabs the rope from Raj and slaps it into John's hands.

KARDEC
I don't care if you have to tie her up
and drag her, just get out of here!

HELEN
I'm not going.

John takes hold of Helen's arm but she jerks away.

HELEN
I'm *not* going!

She gives the men a withering, 'I'm not fooling' look.

KARDEC
Are there any other problems that need
airing? Now is *certainly* the right time!
Bloody Hell!

Kardec looks up at the last few bats making their way into the cave. He takes a breath ... something is coming to him.

KARDEC
... blood-y hell ...

KARDEC
Raj? If you are worried about the
spirits, what about *them*?

He points off in the direction of the approaching Dyaks.

KARDEC
Is Jeru afraid of *Atoh*?

RAJ
Maybe ...

His mans, they afraid, I think. Jeru he
say he make *obat*, but all mans still
afraid.

KARDEC
Are you afraid? Inghai told you about
not fearing the spirits, only men ... do
you believe that?

Raj looks at him uncertainly.

KARDEC
If you can't help me, we're gonna die.

RAJ
Okay, Mike. You show me.

KARDEC
Good. If we're lucky, we've got half an
hour.

JOHN
Lucky? Jesus!

Kardec takes the rope out of John's hands, walks to his pack and picks it up. He signals to Raj.

KARDEC
Come with me.

JOHN
What's going on?

Kardec throws him the rifle.

KARDEC
New plan. If they get within five hundred yards shoot once, I'll be back.

He and Raj head away.

JOHN
Tell me what you're up to, damn it!

KARDEC
Inspire some belief.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - FOREST BELOW CAVE - MORNING

Using their *parangs* Kardec and Raj they cut as many dry branches and sections of bark as they can.

CUT TO:

INT. KAPUAS RIDGE - LOWER CAVE - MORNING

Raj has excavated a trench in the layer of guano that covers the cave floor. As Kardec trims a long branch Raj lays some wood for a fire. -- One of the bottles of stove fuel is attached to the forked branch Kardec was working on and this is arranged over the fire while Raj climbs the wall of the cave with the other bottles ...

RAJ
Here?

KARDEC
Go more. Okay, there!

Raj find a spot just over the fire but higher up and loops rope around them.

KARDEC
Take the stoppers out.

Raj does this and drops back to the ground.

RAJ
Good?

KARDEC
Rube Goldberg would be proud of you.

RAJ
You too, Mike.

Kardec laughs and starts stringing rope to the lower bottle.

KARDEC
Alright. Bat shit, fuel, I doubt it'll
explode but it should burn like the
devil.

From above they hear the distant report of a rifle.

KARDEC
Show time.

Raj! You have to be outside the cave
when you pull the rope, understand?

RAJ
Okay.

KARDEC
Don't do anything until I signal.

He runs out of the cave.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAMP FIRE - MORNING

Kardec comes over the edge of the slope in a roll, gasping for
breath. He crawls through the rocks to where the Lacklans are
hiding. In the distance Jeru is screaming abuse at them.

JERU
(in Malay)
Kami akan bunuh orang Putih!
Mat salleh!
Pancung mereka!
Aku akan gunakan rambut kau
untuk hulu parang aku!
Aku akan gunakan kulit kamu
sebagai baju perang!
Keajaiban aku akan
manghapuskan awak!

JERU
We will kill people foreign!
White men!
Behead them!
I will use hair yours for hilt
parang mine!
I will use skin your as shirt
war!
Magic my will destroy you!

*

Kardec slips up beside John and Helen.

KARDEC
What's happened?

JOHN
They're close. I shot and they went to ground.

What *is* all that, what's it mean?

KARDEC
Well, it ain't 'friend' in Apache.

Kardec stands up.

JOHN
Now what are you going to do?

KARDEC
Try a little 'obat' of my own.
Give me the rifle.

John just looks at him.

KARDEC
John ... If they don't see it on me they'll be sure it's an ambush.

Reluctantly, John hands over the gun.

KARDEC
Can you whistle ... loud?

Lacklan just looks confused.

HELEN
I can.

KARDEC
If anything happens to me, you whistle as loud as you can and try to get away. But don't go in the cave. No cave, okay?

HELEN
Okay.

KARDEC
And if you can, just believe we're going to get out of this. I don't know anything about magic but I think that's a start.

Kardec slips the rifle sling over his head and steps out of the cover of the rocks.

JOHN
He's crazy.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - MORNING

Kardec stops, surveying the places where the Dayks are probably hidden, his attitude intended to draw their attention.

KARDEC

Tuan Jeru! Come out and face me!

Dyak warriors appear from the rocks and brush. Striding up through them is Jeru and, behind him Kebir, his Hawaiian shirt torn and blackened, John's rifle carried ready.

JERU

(in Malay)
Awak telah buat silap, datang ke negeri kami, dan memerangi kampung kami.

JERU

You have made a mistake, coming to our country, making war on our village.

KEBIR

He says you stupid foreigner come here to ...

KARDEC

Hey, Junior. Diam. I know what he's saying. And he speaks enough English to know what I'm saying.

(Kardec pitches his voice to Jeru's followers)

I speak the language of the *Atoh* as well. Inghai gave you a chance, his curse is gone. I'm giving you a warning. Go now or I will bring another, a curse that is more terrible by far.

My obat is as good as his in this place. As good as the greatest sorcerer in Borneo. Go and leave us to ourselves. Uh ...

Kardec is running out of blather but he wants to give Raj as much time as possible.

KARDEC

Though it is daylight I can summon the atoh of the night!

Kardec pinches his fingers together, places them against his teeth and whistles loudly.

KARDEC

I call the gods of darkness ... SHOW. YOUR. POWER!

Jeru blinks and Kebir comes up with the Winchester, pointing it at Kardec's head.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST BELOW CAVE - MORNING

Raj pulls on the rope ... he is watching the cave but nothing happens.

CUT TO:

INT. LOWER CAVE - MORNING

The contraption breaks the first fuel bottle falling to one side of the fire and the rope pulling the higher bottles to the edge of their perch but failing to send them over ...

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - MORNING

Kardec is sweating ...

KARDEC
(to himself)
Come on!

Nothing.

KEBIR
Maybe gods at breakfas' ...

There is a gust of wind, a quiet puff that sounds just a bit like Inghai's laughter ... it is like a weight has been removed from Kardec's shoulders.

KARDEC
You think so?
Well, watch this ...

CUT TO:

INT. LOWER CAVE - MORNING

The wind whistles through the cave. The fuel running under the fire and the extra oxygen causes the flames to flare up and a harder gust tips the bottles over. Spilling fuel they drop toward the fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - MORNING

Kardec smiles as an explosion sounds, deep in the earth.

Then, reflected in the Kebir's glasses, there is a flash of fire. Kebir steps back in shock ...

Behind Kardec a bright ball of flame billows from the cave mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAVE - MORNING

Raj has moved closer to the cave, intending to look inside. He ducks as the fireball erupts.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAVE ENTRANCE - MORNING

Kebir whips up Lacklan's rifle to cover Kardec but Jeru and the others look on in horror as what they are watching changes.

The smoke and flame has turned into a tidal wave of bats. The animals pour from the upper cave in a confused, blinded mass. Unused to the daylight, many of them blunder into Kardec and the watching Dyaks. Jeru's Dyaks react in differing ways, some look on in disbelief, others flee in terror with more and more joining them. The mass of bats blocks out the sun.

Moving quickly, Kardec swats aside Kebir's rifle barrel. The gun goes off, but Kardec is already inside it's length and knees the Kebir in the groin. Kebir goes down shrieking. Kardec comes away with the rifle.

Kardec turns to face Jeru just as the old man draws his *parang*. Jeru takes a swipe at Kardec with the blade and Kardec deflects it with the gun which is knocked out of his hands. Kardec jumps back and pulls out his own *parang*.

Jeru circles and when Kardec takes a cut at him, Jeru thrusts close in along his arm. The Iban's blade leaves a trail of blood from elbow to wrist.

Jeru cuts low and Kardec blocks it, the blades clanging first low then high. In close, Jeru staggers Kardec with a blow with the hilt of his *parang*. Every time Kardec tries to muscle Jeru, the old man fades away using his superior skill. The old man is GOOD at this.

Jeru feints, Kardec moves his guard to cover and Jeru cuts him across the chest. It is a shallow cut but now Kardec is inside.

Kardec tears the blade from Jeru's hand and getting partly behind him breaks his arm.

Jeru falls to the ground. Growling in pain he struggle to turn and rise but Kardec drops to one knee and punches him in the jaw. Jeru goes out and Kardec looks up to see ...

Kebir, pointing John's Winchester at him.

KEBIR
(in Malay)
Aku akan bunuh awak. Atoh
boleh hukuman aku, aku tidak
peduli.

KEBIR
I'll kill you. Atoh can
punish me, I don't care.

RAJ - has just made it to the top of the ridge ...

RAJ
Mike, look out!

Raj's parang swishes past and the impact of the blade carries Kebir off his feet.

Kardec topples, graying out, catching fragments of images - the rock - bats fluttering in the sky - the remaining Dyak's running away - Helen standing over him firing John's rifle - an ejected shell arcing through the air - the rock very close as his head hits the ground.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. KAPUAS RIDGE - CAVE ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

FADE IN: Raj is trying to rouse Kardec ...

RAJ
We have to go, Mike. Maybe they come back.

Kardec nods.

KARDEC
Guess you pulled ... pulled me out of the river again, eh?

Raj starts to help him get to his feet.

KARDEC
Wait ...
(then stronger)
Wait.

His fingers undo the thong holding Raj's knife, he pulls it from it's sheath. He glances at the Lacklans ...

KARDEC
Get them out of here.

Helen and John glance at each other but Raj ushers them away.

Kardec takes a deep breath and moves unsteadily to the body of Jeru with the unsheathed knife. He kneels ... and places the blade on Jeru's throat.

Helen tries to look back over her shoulder. Fearing what she may see ...

From across the top of the ridge we see Kardec limp back to join the others. The wind whistles mournfully around the rocks.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUNGLE TRAILS - DAY

Feet move through the mud. -- Kardec falls. He is picked up by the hands of Helen and Raj, they press on.

-- The group works it's way through dense brush, Raj hacking a path. -- They stumble down a dark corridor of huge trees.

CUT TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER BANK - DAY

Even with Raj's help Kardec staggers.

RAJ
Miss?

Helen comes to help and when she sees his white and sweaty complexion she touches his forehead.

HELEN
Oh ... no. John, wait.
God. He's burning up.
(to Kardec)
Sit for a moment.

KARDEC
No. If we stop they'll either have to cut my foot off or I'll die. There's sulfa in the boat ... might buy me coup'a days.

HELEN
Okay. Come on Raj ... lift!

They push on, along the river.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. KAPUAS RIVER - BOAT - DAY

The boat heads into the rapids.

Water blasts over the front of the canoe. Helen digs her paddle deep in the water, grimly trying to maneuver the boat. They slide past a big rock and Raj turns back from the bow ...

RAJ
Hold on!

He strains against his paddle as the canoe drops down a heavy stream of water and into the hole behind the rock.

Kardec watches, no longer very concerned with such mundane matters. Trees arch over the river creating mottled sunlight. Light that winks bright and dim, on and off.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRUNEI BEACH - DAY

SLOWLY COME TO FOCUS - Looking straight up into the leaves of palm trees. There is the sound of surf.

Kardec, white and drenched in fever sweat, pulls himself up. Sand stretches off in both directions. Nearby a fire burns, sending up greasy smoke and, down toward the water, the canoe has been dragged up on the sand. Raj and Helen are on the lookout for ships headed up the coast. Helen is using Kardec's binoculars.

Closer to Kardec is John ... he is in almost as bad shape and barely able to talk.

JOHN

Look at her ... She'll go home, clean up, and never even have a bad dream.

Kardec slowly turns to look at John and then back to Helen.

JOHN

I always knew this was the last chance to prove what she meant to me.

I ought to thank you ... but I'm not sure for what.

HELEN

(distant)
Look! Look!

RAJ

(distant)
Yes!

RAJ

(in Malay distant)
Terima kasih Yesus,
Insya Allah,
terima kasih semua Atoh.
terima kasih.

RAJ

Thank you Jesus,
praise to Allah,
thank you all Atoh,
thank you!

JOHN

Of all the luck ... Will you look at that!

Low and gray in the distance, a tanker appeared from beyond a point of land ...

HELEN

(distant)
The gun. Raj, get the gun!

Raj fires Kardec's Mannlicher.

HELEN

(distant)
Again!

The gun goes off again and far across the water the ship blasts it's siren.

Kardec leans back and looks up into the bright sky cut by the leaves of the gently blowing palms. Sun light shifts to shadow ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KARDEC'S BUNGALOW - DAY

The blind tapping with the breeze.

Kardec is sleeping in his bed. The sheets are pulled up and he is shaved and more rested looking. From beyond the door to the room there are noises. A car engine. Footsteps on the stairs, the veranda. His eyes flicker.

Through the mosquito netting we see Helen enter, the light from the door behind her. Compared to the last time we saw her she is impossibly clean and rested.

Kardec struggles to sit up.

Helen removes her dark glasses and her hat. She comes over to the bed.

HELEN

Mr. Kardec? We're leaving. I just wanted to thank you.

You saved our lives.

He pulls aside the mosquito netting. She sits in a chair by the bed, her hands in her lap. The empty wedding ring is missing from the chain around her neck.

KARDEC

How's your husband?

HELEN

He has a concussion and a bad sprain. All the walking we did made it worse. He's exhausted ... so am I.

He won't talk to me. It's like I did something unforgivable back there, but I don't see that I really had a choice.

KARDEC

He's alive, you're alive. Whatever he thinks, it's better than the alternative.

HELEN

I guess so.

She is thoughtful for a moment then she straightens up.

HELEN

There's something else ... something I don't really know how to say ...

She doesn't speak, defeated by her own taboos.

KARDEC
It's okay.

Not everything needs to be ... acted on.
Right?

Helen adjusts her seat, uncomfortable.

HELEN
We should pay you.

She opens her purse ... He starts to shake his head.

HELEN
-- at least what we were going to for
guiding us. We owe you that, and more.

He reaches out and stops her.

KARDEC
I don't want any money.

She breaks away from his eyes and nods, she stands. He looks up at her. Then she bends down and kisses him on the lips. Finally, she pulls away and looks at him, her fingers tracing his cheek, his temple, into his hair.

HELEN
Will you be alright?

KARDEC
Yeah.

She touches his face one last time and walks to the door, picking up her hat.

KARDEC
I have your book ... I haven't finished
it.

She turns back.

HELEN
You should.

KARDEC
I'll return it to you

HELEN
I'm sure you will ...

The door closes behind her. The car starts and disappears up the dusty road.

In the distant mountains thunder rumbles but there are no sounds of artillery ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLAUDTOWN SALOON - DAY

Kardec sits at a table reading from Helen's book. A cane leans against the table. After a moment Vandover walks up, sits down beside him.

VANDOVER
Ahh, Mike.

KARDEC
Hello, Cliff.

VANDOVER
How's the leg?

KARDEC
Passing fair and getting better.

Vandover sits.

VANDOVER
Here's this, old man.

Vandover pulls Kardec's passport from his pocket and lays it on the table.

KARDEC
Thanks.

VANDOVER
Not to worry, Mike. We'll find some way of getting you home.

Kardec looks at Vandover, the suggestion of a smile hiding in his eyes. He digs into his pocket and pulls out Jeru's diamond. He puts it on the table in front of Vandover.

VANDOVER
Hello! Is this what I think it is? Good Lord!

Vandover picks it up, examining the stone carefully.

VANDOVER
You really must tell me how you got it.

Kardec leans back in his chair, elaborately casual.

KARDEC
In the end we came to an agreement.

VANDOVER
With Jeru? You're joking!

EXT. KAPUAS FOREST - CAVE - MORNING

... the scene of Kardec's final battle with Jeru. Bats circle in a sky full of smoke. The wind whistles across the exposed ridge. Kardec looms over Jeru with his unsheathed blade.

Jeru stares up at him, at the knife, when Kardec bends down the old Dyak doesn't flinch.

KARDEC (V.O.)

Nope.

Jeru closes his eyes, and Kardec moves the point of the knife.

KARDEC

In the end I believe I had something he wanted even more ...

Instead of killing Jeru he has cut the diamond from it's thong.

KARDEC

... his life.

Then he straightens and dangling from his hand the diamond sparkles in the morning light.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLAUDTOWN SALOON - DAY

Vandover puts the diamond on the table.

VANDOVER

(chuckling)

Old chap ... I don't know how you do it.

Kardec picks it up, and the stone reflects circles of light on his face.

KARDEC

Magic?

I never seem to get the luck I want ...
but somehow I end up with the luck I
need.

Kardec marks a page in his book with the picture of Helen then, laying the passport on top of it, closes the cover.

Vandover toasts Kardec with his drink.

VANDOVER

Cheers!

KARDEC

Salamat!

After a moment they look at each other and chuckle, then the chuckle turns into a hearty laugh for both of them.