

Entity

By

Alex Quinn

INT. HELICOPTER. DAY

Three mercenaries sit in the cabin. BOWMAN (mid 30s, male, lean, wiry, a weathered face) is sat alone, across from the other two, eyes closed, arms crossed. His two fellow passengers - LANGLEY (early 30s, female, statuesque, hair cropped and slicked back) and AUSTIN (early 40s, male, a mountain of a man, head like an Easter Island statue) - are engaged in a childish game of slapping each others hands.

A jolt wakes Bowman. He surveys this scene in front of him; two special forces operatives, trained killers... acting like under-stimulated children in a schoolyard. Langley flinches from a feint, allowing Austin a free shot, per the rules of this highly sophisticated game; he rears back his hand, forms it into a fist and throws it forward with all the force of a shotgun blast towards Langley's face.

BOWMAN

Really?

Austin's hand freezes in mid-air as both he and Langley look to Bowman like a cat and dog just caught mid-fight. Austin grins a sleazy grin, as he settles back into his seat and firmly grasps the machine gun on his lap.

AUSTIN

Just killin' time, Bow.

BOWMAN

(wearily)

Sure.

Bowman glances out of the cabin window, surveying the vast forest below. The colours of the trees appear to have been picked at random, clusters of reds, yellows and blacks are dotted throughout with seemingly no rhyme or reason.

LANGLEY

Okay kids, we need to go over the mission one last time.

AUSTIN

Ah, no need for that shit! It's the same as it ever was; bust in, raise hell, pick up what we need, leave. Like the good ol' days.

Langley and Bowman share a brief look of exasperation

LANGLEY

I think this might require a little more tact and finesse than that, Austin. This is a scalpel job, not a sledgehammer one.

(smirking)

Are you up to that challenge?

Austin dismisses her with a grunt and a wave of his hand, and looks out of the cabin window.

BOWMAN

Do we have any further information on where the asset might be?

LANGLEY

"Entity 434" was all our sources could ascertain. About as much help as a chocolate coffee cup. All our subterranean scans show is just how deep this place is; whatever they've built it out of is impenetrable to...

The crackle of the helicopter's radio interrupts Langley before she can finish.

PILOT

Entering landing zone.

In the near distance we see a large meadow filled with tall white lilies containing a wide, low glass pyramid. This is the team's target, the CONTAINMENT FACILITY.

As the helicopter descends into a clearing in the forest, Langley and Bowman begin their last-minute preparations; pistols holstered, ammunition loaded, assault rifles strapped to their backs, communication systems tuned, laces tied, various supplies attached or zipped up across their hi-tech stealth suits.

The helicopter touches down with a thud and the mercs disembark. Except Austin. The other two turn with a look of confusion to find the man mountain swinging his feet up onto the seat next to him.

LANGLEY

You lazy son of a bitch.

BOWMAN

The hell?!

AUSTIN

Oh, I'm sorry? Am I inconveniencing you? I thought y'all said y'all didn't need the sledgehammer for this?

As Austin says the word "sledgehammer", he grabs his crotch, making any unspoken metaphors very clear. Bowman reacts in disgust. Langley rubs the bridge of her nose in exasperation.

AUSTIN

Thought not. If you don't mind, I've got some beauty sleep to be catchin' up on. Call me if you find any nails.

With this, Austin pulls the cabin door shut, and lies back down across the two seats, a look of satisfaction on his face and his arms behind his head in exaggerated comfort. Langley bangs on the window with her fist before pressing an extended middle finger up against the glass. Austin doesn't notice and if he did, he wouldn't care

LANGLEY

(resigned)
...fuck it.

EXT. FOREST. DAY

Bowman and Langley make their way through the dense forest between the landing zone. Both have their guns drawn. Their stealth suits have now changed their appearance from a default black to a brown and green camouflage pattern, blending them almost perfectly into their surroundings. Their footsteps are slow and considered, dampening as much noise as possible.

BOWMAN

I don't even know why they assigned that jackass to this mission. They know exactly what he's like.

LANGLEY

I find it best not to question The Foundation's decision-making. Madness is what lies at the end of that path.

As the pair approach the end of the forest and the edge of the meadow, they crouch and begin to survey the area.

BOWMAN

I was about to ask "how does someone like Austin even get employed by The

Foundation?" but I suppose it's safer for the world that he's not roaming free.

Langley lifts a finger to her lips. She puts a pair of binoculars to her eyes.

A few hundred metres from the tree line, an elevator pod rises from the ground and stands tall above the lilies. Two heavily armoured guards exit the pod, their faces covered by dark masks. Langley follows the path of guards as they walk the perimeter of the pyramid.

BOWMAN

That's odd.

LANGLEY

Hmm?

BOWMAN

The elevator's still up. And I don't see any other sentries... or even any security cameras anywhere.

Langley shifts her view back to the elevator.

LANGLEY

Shit, you're right... feeling risky?

BOWMAN

What?!

Before Bowman can even turn his head to his partner, Langley has tossed him the binoculars and is making her way to the pod as fast as one can while crouching. Bowman looks in a mixture of anxiety and horror. The fact that she reaches the pod with ease doesn't lessen this look.

Langley waves Bowman over, but he hesitates. Using the binoculars he looks for the guards on patrol. He finds them still walking along the closest side of the pyramid. As soon as they turn the corner, he darts towards Langley. Bowman reaches the elevator and exhales as if he hasn't taken a breath in fifteen minutes. Langley pats him on the back and presses the down button on the elevator. The doors slide shut.

INT. ELEVATOR

BOWMAN

(still slightly breathless)

This doesn't feel right.

LANGLEY

What was our other option? Swan dive through that ceiling? You don't look a gift horse in the mouth, even if it is a Trojan one.

INT. FACILITY

The elevator comes to a stop and its doors glide open. As they step out along a short corridor, Bowman and Langley find themselves at the top of what can only be described as a vast, cavernous inverted skyscraper stretching down into the earth for what seems miles. Steel platforms and walkways line each side of the structure, with stairways between each level. There's a sheer drop in the middle. An orchestra of noises echoes throughout; it feels like a city in miniature

Along each side and on every level of the facility are cells, ten foot by ten foot by ten foot, each with one glass wall to allow viewing. Behind them lie the "entities".

As the pair survey the cavernous structure, a figure makes its way up a stairway to this inaugural level. They duck back into cover, anticipating the figure's path. Bowman and Langley ready their pistols. The footsteps get closer to their position...

In one swift movement, Bowman grabs the figure, restraining them and covering their mouth, his firearm digging into the temple of this person.

BOWMAN

(whispering through gritted teeth)

Unit 01, where is it?!

No answer.

In fact, there's no movement or resistance at all from the figure. Bowman relinquishes them, pushing them up against the wall, pistol in their face as he holds them in place with a hand. Langley circles around to face them too.

The figure before them is a man in a red jumpsuit with a shaved head. His face is sunken, his mouth hangs open, eyes rolled back into his head. He barely breathes. A small

toolbag is clasped in his hand.

Bowman takes his hand away from the man as he and Langley glance at each other in puzzlement.

LANGLEY
(whispering)
What in hell is going on here?

She pokes the man in the chest with the barrel of her gun, attempting to get some form of reaction.

Nothing.

CUT TO:

The man is slumped in the elevator in just a t-shirt and underwear. Bowman's rifle is leant against the elevator's wall. We see Bowman putting on the man's jumpsuit over his own stealth suit.

LANGLEY
(whispering)
This is a stealth mission, Bowman. Not a damn dress-up one. How is this going to help?!

BOWMAN
(whispering)
If something happens here - god forbid, we fuck up - who are they gonna come looking for? The supersoldier or some catatonic handyman?

He zips the jumpsuit up fully, stuffs his pistol into the man's toolbag and makes his way to the stairs.

LANGLEY
(whisper-shouting)
We've taken enough risks already,
Bowman!

He pays her no attention.

Langley watches from the top level as Bowman proceed to make his way down through the facility. He passes by dozens of people, just like the one they encountered, all in red jumpsuits, all in complete dazes. Some carry boxes, some push mops and buckets, some merely wander the halls. None pay Bowman any attention. Guards seem thin on the ground. Bowman

glimpses a few congregating in corridors that lead off from the main structure, but including the two seen exiting the elevator above ground, he's counted less than a dozen.

Bowman grows increasingly baffled as passes by the cells. He takes note of the codes assigned to each, looking for 434, but they don't run in any sort of logical order. Some don't even use any discernible language.

The cells contain things that run from the bizarrely mundane to the near indescribable. An old CRT television playing a short loop of a family party, which changes slightly with every loop. A man and woman sat across each other at a table, staring at each other but never talking. Some sort of reptilian creature, covered in moss, algae, and sewage; it paces the cell like the caged animal it is, but it appears to be muttering to itself in Latin. An old wooden chair which appears to throw itself at the glass wall, desperately trying to escape. A huge human head lacking eyes and a mouth fills one cell, its facial structure constantly reshaping and reforming itself.

Bowman is disturbed, bordering on terrified. He has no idea what the hell this place is. What could his paymasters want from this building? How could his team possibly begin to transport any of these things?

At a loss, Bowman checks his surroundings for any oncoming guards and leans over the railing of his level to look up to Langley. He gives her hand signals to let her know it's safe and he needs back-up. Langley takes a rope from her waist, ties it to the railing in front of her, throwing the end into the bowels of the facility. She affixes it to an apparatus on the waist of her suit. She leaps over the railing and begins to abseil down the centre of the facility.

As she descends, Langley catches glimpses of the entities, and, just like Bowman, becomes bewildered by what she is seeing. She continues drifting down into the facility, forgetting her mission, caught up by the menagerie of strangeness before her.

Suddenly, glass shatters. Bowman's gaze shoots up. It's Austin, assault rifle in hand, laughing maniacally, rappelling down from the helicopter above through the hole he's just smashed in the facility's pyramid roof.

LANGLEY
(screaming over the noise)
Austin?!

Lights flash, a siren sounds and the trudge of boots echoes through the facility. Masked guards rush forth into the facility. Austin's aim has no rhyme or reason. He mows down a wave of troops before they can even raise their weapons. Langley has no choice but to save her own skin by also opening fire.

BOWMAN

(also screaming)

What are you doing?

AUSTIN

(exalted)

Got bored waiting on y'all! Needed some excitement!

He spins around on his rope, peppering half a dozen troops with lead. He continues to laugh like a madman.

Panic sets in inside Bowman. The mission has gone to hell. His eyes dart around for some form of safety. He finds a grimy old elevator opening behind him. Was it always there? Wasn't there a cell there previously? Bowman doesn't take the time to question it. He rushes into the elevator and presses the only button inside, marked "X".

The elevator's doors creak shut on the massacre happening before them, and it begins to descend.

INT. FACILITY BASEMENT

The elevator doors judder open onto a vast expanse of concrete. Bowman's gun is cocked and pointed forward, held with both hands, belying his nerves. He cautiously steps out, anticipating some hurdle to overcome.

Nothing.

This floor of the facility is completely empty. It is impossibly wide, to the point where the far ends to Bowman's left and right are unable to be seen, and its ceiling seems far higher than one would think possible for the structure of this building. A breeze blows through the space, but there's no indication of where it could be coming from.

Something catches Bowman's attention. A long dark hallway stretches into the wall opposite the elevator doors. A faint white glow lights the end of it, wherever that might be. Bowman feels drawn into the passage, but not quite of his own

will. He takes a few tentative steps forward, the chaos above fading from his mind, focused solely on that one, dim light..

The further he ventures, the more the hallway changes. The walls narrow and widen at seemingly random intervals. The ceiling dips to uncomfortable levels. Strange markings begin to line every surface; are they decoration? A language? Some look like claw marks. Bowman notices these, but the look on his face does not change, he is focused solely on that one, dim light...

That one dim light which has started to change in hue. A deep green fades to a strong pink, which gives way blue, then yellow. The colours continue to cycle, slowly at first but getting faster and faster with every step Bowman takes. This development still does not faze him; his face only grows more determined. He is possessed by the need to reach this light, despite the fact that it doesn't seem to be getting any closer to him. He has to reach it. He has to see it with his own eyes, feel its warmth on his face. Right now it's as vital to him as his next breath.

That is until the colours of the light hit a near imperceptible speed, blending back into their original white. The light becomes so bright it starts to envelop the entire hallway, filling up Bowman's entire vision. He tries to cover his eyes, as if he were staring at the sun in the height of summer, but still can't tear his attention away from it.

The light switches to red, and Bowman suddenly finds himself at its source. We're in an extreme close-up on his face and we do not move from this view. Behind him, the wall of this room is covered in what appear to be giant roots or... are they veins? Are they moving?

Bowman's mouth falls agape and his eyes bulge in disbelief. Disbelief that becomes fear. Whatever he is seeing, his mind cannot comprehend. His face begins to distort and morph, his eyes roll back into his head, his mouth forms a bizarre grin, but suddenly, his face drops, as if a switch has flicked. Bowman is a completely empty husk.

CUT TO:

An identical close-up of Bowman's face, but his location has changed. The camera begins to pull out and we see his head has been shaved, and he is surrounded by numerous similarly stuporous people, all wearing that same red jumpsuit; these are the workers we've seen populating the facility.

We pull out further to see this is some kind of holding cell,

as barred doors are slammed shut in front of this throng by a pair of guards. A further heavy-duty security door is closed over this cell. Bowman's fate is literally sealed.