

THE PROTECTOR

By David Morrell / Adapted by Tony Mosher | 4.8.20

Act I

1. Ticker establishes our location: *Camp Rudder, FL*. U.S. Army squad (6-8 soldiers) moving through swamp on night-time training exercise become agitated, then paranoid, then terrified, eventually murdering each other.

The swamp prologue from the book is great and makes for a really scary, cinematic opening. The prologue with the protestors in St. Louis is interesting too – let's discuss if there's a place later in the film to use that as well, or if it's worth saving for the climax.

We should also consider keeping a version of the scene where the military analysts discuss what just happened. It sets up a cool mystery right away for the audience, ending on their line *"There always has to be a conspiracy theory. But in this case, they happen to be correct. It's just not the conspiracy they imagine"*. If we decide to keep any version of the "Grace" character from the book (i.e. a face for the government people chasing them), we could establish her here.

2. VOICE-OVER BEGINS. Two men, PRESCOTT (agitated, scared) and an as yet unidentified LAWYER (calm, reassuring). We sweep over NYC, settling in behind JAMIE TRAVERS (female 30s), well-appointed, professional, as she moves through crowded streets. She heads toward a restaurant in the Meat-Packing district as we hear the lawyer convince Prescott that he should hire a protection service operated by a husband and wife team. The lawyer's giving Prescott the details of their unparalleled credentials...

Let's also consider if we want to try for something more visual with a little more tension – perhaps opening on Prescott fleeing his lab in a nervous fury; wiping down doorknobs, avoiding cameras, clutching a canister of what we later learn is the fear toxin, etc. The voice-over doesn't really give us enough sense of the trouble that Prescott is in.

When it comes to meeting Cavanaugh, there are a few ways to take it. We could build something super tense, showing off his skills as he helps someone out of a sticky situation. But that might be better saved for when he first extracts Prescott. A version of the scene in the book, where Cavanaugh humorously breaks up some minor threat, has potential and could add some early levity. It also gives us an opportunity to introduce the world of GPS through his boss Duncan, who we should consider keeping.

- 3..... continuing from above, Jamie enters the RESTAURANT, walks through, sits down across from CAVANAUGH just as the lawyer's voice over finishes describing his background. Despite what we've just heard, what we see before us is a broken couple.
 - a. **They are set to divorce**
 - b. They are dissolving their company
 - c. A large cash infusion from the "Prescott Job" will let them provide the severance packages to their beloved team that they deserve

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- d. Cavanaugh doesn't want to do it because it breaks several of their cardinal rules (first and foremost not knowing enough about their client's situation), but...
- e. Jamie wants to do it because it's a disappearance-- what they do best-- and therefore easy (relatively) AND because it's high dollar, so will allow C above
- f. Cavanaugh relents

Having re-read the book, we think their relationship is working better when Jamie isn't already a part of his team. We like the idea that Jamie is a former client; it sets up an interesting dynamic and allows us to play with her inexperience in this world. Perhaps in our story they aren't yet married; it feels like protector/client relationships would be a clear violation of the GPS code. Maybe it's a secret relationship and one of the only times Cavanaugh decided to break the rules of GPS. Not sure yet where it goes, but this could set up some conflict somewhere down the line.

One of the things the book does well is utilize Jamie's lack of skills to give Cavanaugh an opportunity to keep teaching her (and us) more tradecraft. Obviously we'd like these to become more cinematic and not feel overly expository. And we definitely don't want Jamie to appear weak; maybe some personality tweaks or providing her with her own area of expertise could keep her feeling active and strong.

What we like most about keeping Jamie foreign to this protector world is that it provides more opportunity to build conflict when she's inevitably put in harm's way. Perhaps when we first meet Jamie, Cavanaugh makes a big deal about not wanting to involve her in his work. Since she's a former client, it makes sense that he would be a bit over-protective. This will make it even harder for him to ask her for help later.

Cavanaugh's arc could be that he is over-protective of Jamie and needs to accept that she's her own person and he can't protect her from everything. Externally, he's chasing Prescott and dealing with the fear toxin, which only intensifies his internal dilemma (keeping Jamie safe). He has to learn the hard way that his misplaced desire for revenge is further endangering the love of his life.

- 4. Cavanaugh shows up to Prescott's warehouse bunker, meets PRESCOTT (40s, doughy, unformed, terrified scientist type). Cavanaugh presses Prescott for the information he needs, but Prescott is cagey because he doesn't yet trust Cav. Tensions mount as Cav struggles to figure out if Prescott's fear is justified or mere paranoia. Just as Cav's about to bolt, not liking the situation, a hit squad shows up for Prescott.

This works and is executed pretty well in the book. We like the setting of Prescott hiding out near the crackheads - the scene where they keep inspecting Cavanaugh's car and he keeps fucking with them is great and could be really funny. We also love the idea of setting up here that Cavanaugh hates elevators and that he hates being called a bodyguard; these are great personality quirks that we can call back to later.

Do we think Cavanaugh is exposed to the fear toxin here, or are we waiting until the attack at the compound?

- 5. CONTINUED FROM ABOVE... Cav barely manages to get Prescott out of the

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warehouse alive and into a car. [Details TBD]

6. CONTINUED FROM ABOVE... Car chase ensues with hitters hot on their tail. Prescott hunkers down and prays (and cries) while Cav exhibits superhuman calm despite being rammed, shot at, and at one point, cornered. Pursuit ends when Cav stops car on upper level of Queensboro Bridge, pursuers closing in, drags a whimpering Prescott across two lanes of active traffic, then over the rail, sliding down the girders 300 feet above the river to the lower level where he commandeers a car at gun-point heading the other way.

Definitely excited to open up the action here, though sliding down the girders may be a tad over the top. If we want to buy Cavanaugh is the best protector, we have to be careful that he isn't putting Prescott in overly dangerous situations. Let's try to make things bigger without losing too much realism.

We should also be on the lookout for setups/payoffs here - things Cavanaugh teaches Prescott that can show up again later. One example from the book is the stunt Cavanaugh uses to spin the car ahead of him, which Prescott copies and uses against him later.

The book does a great job with their banter; Prescott asking why Cavanaugh doesn't have a nicer car, Cavanaugh having to basically "interview" his way into the warehouse and slowly earn Prescott's trust, etc. A lot of these lines could be lifted right from the book:

"I can't protect someone who won't take orders, That's the paradox of being a protector. Someone hires me. In theory, that person's the boss. But when it comes to protection, I'm the one who gives the orders. The employer has to react to me as if I'm the boss. Are you willing to be compliant?"

Another element from this section that we like is Cavanaugh's adrenaline addiction. Seeing his withdrawals is cool visually and can be used to set up later how the fear toxin affects him.

7. Arrival at GPS Catskills compound, shaken and furious. We meet the TEAM (5 or so in total, differing in skills, one of them pregnant) as they aid Cav and Prescott following the chase, etc. Prescott finally shares full details of who's pursuing him and why, (dramatically upping the stakes). He created a cure for addiction and is being pursued by a cartel out of their desire to control it. The team considers the sudden gravity of their new situation. They'd better get to work...
8. **Training / GPS team bonding sequence.** Series of scenes taking place over two to three days wherein...
A). the team instructs Prescott on how to disappear (see below). These scenes should also present the GPS team characters as main characters, as if they're going to be around for a while now that they've been introduced.

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- B).** These scenes should also reinforce readers' belief that Prescott is the harmless victim here, that the enemy he's facing is the enemy our heroes will be facing for the rest of the film, and...
- C).** The GPS team bonds, knowing it's their last job together (because Jamie and Cavanaugh are shutting the company down).

During the above they instruct Prescott on:

- a. That his new identity is being constructed by their specialist-- the best in the world-- just outside Chicago.
- b. How to identify pursuers (or "ticks" as they're known in intelligence circles)
- c. What to do to shake and / or avoid ticks once found
- d. How to change your appearance permanently both superficially and more deeply
- e. Plastic surgery comes up in a brief, subtle mention
- f. The "existential"/ psychological aspects of transforming oneself completely not just for the near term, but for the long run, and...

There should be a moment near the end of this where Prescott-- a guy who doesn't strike anyone as having had many friends through life-- is invited into the GPS family. Asked to join around their fire, or a meal at their table, or to help with a common chore not associated with his training and he throws in and is a part of the work and the team.

Love focusing on the lessons that Prescott learns from our team. The idea that Prescott bonds with the GPS family is also great. We like the element from the book where Cavanaugh points out how to spot a threat by their watches; perhaps there could be a scenario where Cavanaugh gifts Prescott a Rolex at the dinner – a token of friendship. And then later Cavanaugh finds it pawned and uses that as a thread to track him down.

There are some other things mentioned but not utilized in the book that we could consider using. For example, there is a section on family and how the most common way someone gets caught is when they become too tempted to reach out to loved ones. Prescott has no family in the book, but what if he did? Cavanaugh could theoretically use this as a backdoor way to find him.

Or another idea: in the book, Prescott is already wealthy from his science career and doesn't have to worry about money. But what if he wasn't rich? What if he misleads GPS into thinking he has cash, but in reality he's broke. Upon learning that rule number three of disappearing is having enough money, he could decide that he needs to sell this toxin to the foreigners.

We also like the discussions they have over bravery. As Cavanaugh mentions, bravery is not something he feels/experiences because he's trained himself not to be afraid of anything:

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"I was trained to welcome adrenaline, to appreciate what it does to help keep me alive. I was also trained to think of gun-fights and car fights and all the rest of what happened today as being ... not exactly normal, but I know what to expect. I know how to react. I can honestly say that not once today did I feel what's conventionally called fear."

"You can't be brave unless you're frightened to begin with. What you survived today was violent enough to unsettle even some experienced operators. I can only guess at the strength of character you had to muster to overcome the fear raging through you."

"People are brave when they're terrified but force themselves to risk their lives for somebody else."

This sets up an interesting question for the rest of the film: what happens when a man who never has to be brave finally has to be?

9. Following the above comes a devastating low. **Strike on Catskills compound.** Two Apache style combat helicopters sweep in silently at night and obliterate the compound in a targeted raid. Following the rockets, a team of fully tac'd out professional hitters line to the ground and systematically take out those GPS team members still alive. After watching his team get mercilessly wiped out, Cav searches for Prescott amidst the carnage of the burning house; maybe he can at least save him. He finds him through a haze of smoke in a half collapsed hallway. Prescott turns, inexplicably wearing a gas mask, and suddenly FIRES ON CAV. Cav barely gets away and only by falling through a burning, half collapsed floor before escaping into the woods.

The attack at the compound is done really well in the book. We particularly like the tension that builds when our team sees the three helicopters are heading their way and they start to run through escape scenarios. Once the shit hits the fan, we're open to ideas on how to elevate the action and make it a little bigger. But generally we like the bits where Prescott kills Duncan and Cavanaugh uses the fire to hide his heat signature.

10. Cav runs and slowly the woods start to "come alive" (1st effects of toxin-- subtle, but definitely unnerving). He hears the screams of the hit squad murdering each other back at the house, though he obviously doesn't know what it means at this point. Knowing his pursuers will use thermals he finds a creek, buries himself in mud, waits until sunrise.

Let's continue to discuss the effect of the fear toxin and how to make it cinematic. We like the idea that it starts more subtle, almost like a panic attack (the movie *Midsommar* did this very well). And obviously his fear should intensify as the film goes on, causing Cav's skills to deteriorate. We want to keep this relatively grounded and not veer too close to the Scarecrow stuff from *Batman Begins*.

One thing that should be clear: Cavanaugh's fear over Jamie's safety needs to be

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crippling. As the story and the danger starts to escalate, she needs to be pushing harder to be involved, and he needs to be pushing harder for her to go home.

11. Next morning he peels up from the creek shivering and badly wounded. He does his best to wash off, then continues his flight through the woods following the sun.
12. Cav watches a rural gas station from the treeline until a work truck with an open bed pulls in. The driver gets out, goes into the station. Cav runs from the trees, climbs into the bed. We establish here that he's losing blood.
13. Small town roadside motel. A couple, including a guy roughly Cavanaugh's size, are loading their car to leave. Seizing an opportunity Cav walks past their SUV, casually grabs one of their suitcases from the open back.
14. LATER. Cav appears, mostly cleaned up, wearing ill-fitting clothes as he presents himself at the motel counter. He struggles to hide the blood he's losing and the still lingering effects of the toxin. He says he forgot his wallet, but could he put his laptop (found in the suitcase) up for collateral on a room until his wife gets there?
15. MOTEL ROOM. Cav stumbles in, done in by his injuries and all the pretending to be okay. He collapses on the bed, struggles to reach the land-line phone, makes a call. He gets Jamie's voicemail. He leaves a mundane sounding message that is clearly code. He hangs up and immediately passes out.
16. LATER. Cav wakes to find Jamie in the chair near the door. His wounds have been tended. He tries to explain what happened, but she cuts him off, asking about the team. *All gone*. She's gutted. Cav talks through the aspects that don't make sense: that Prescott was wearing a gas mask. That he fired on him. *"If they were there for Prescott why would he try to kill you?"* The screaming Cav thinks he heard as he ran. He has to force himself, but he tries to explain what he felt in the woods. The strange feelings, the weird images. The fear. Jamie reminds him that Prescott was a biochemist...

Generally we feel like the book does a good job with Cavanaugh's call to Jamie, the "code words" they use, etc. We get the idea of making him more active, but there's also something kind of interesting about his vulnerability in this situation, and how his desperation leads him to call and involve the one person he wants to shield from this world.

As you mention, this section is also a good time for Cavanaugh to realize that the men from the warehouse are different from the men at the hideaway. We're not sure Cavanaugh would confide yet in Jamie about his panicked experiences in the compound. We think he would keep this closer to the vest (for now). Let's also decide when we want Cavanaugh to find out about the fear toxin. We can use it raise the stakes and set a ticking clock if we emphasize the progressive nature of the hormone and Cav's need to find a neutralizer.

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Cav: “This was a different crew than at the warehouse... Very deep pockets.” “Did they get him? Was Prescott killed?” Cav doesn’t know and it goes quiet between them. When he finally speaks again he looks at her, “Thank you. I know you didn’t have to come. If you want to go--” **“They killed our team...”** The implied, *‘I’m not doing this for you’* received loud and clear. But despite all that has stood between them personally, emotionally, at this very moment there’s one thing they agree on completely...

“If Prescott’s alive, he knows why.”

If we set up Cavanaugh and Prescott’s relationship right, there will be a great sense of betrayal felt by Cavanaugh once he starts to piece all this shit together. In particular, the revelation that Prescott lied to him will open up a lot of great questions for our hero and the audience. When Cavanaugh starts to realize that Prescott was playing him the whole time, it really works:

“Hell, he manipulated me. What makes me feel especially foolish is I kind of liked him. At the warehouse, he was scared to death, but he never allowed himself to lose control. He did everything I told him to. At the bunker, he wouldn’t have started the fire unless he felt absolutely cornered. It’s difficult to imagine the amount of courage he needed to try to kill us.”

That last line is great because it shows you Cavanaugh hates this fucking guy but also has this weird respect for his bravery. The more personal we make this, the more the audience will be invested in Cavanaugh’s journey to capture him.

Act II

Sequence 1

17.... begins with another stunning set-back. A cursory search of the news reveals what appears to be a high-level cover-up of the “fire” at the compound-- a reported fuel oil explosion. No mention of any fatalities. “It was scorched earth. Leave no strings.” Cav & Jamie realize they too are now likely among the hunted.

Per Cav’s coded distress call, Jamie knew to show up prepared; with clothes, cash, alternate ID’s, burner phones, a pair of .9mm’s, etc. Together they hash out a course of action: if Prescott is alive there’s a good chance he assumes Cavanaugh died in the fire. So his likely next stop, considering he’s still very much on the run, would be the GPS document forger outside Chicago. “He can’t go anywhere or do anything without an identity.” “He tried to kill you. He’ll do it again if he thinks she’s standing in his way.”

Even though Prescott can’t fly given his lack of ID, he still has a whole day’s jump on them. Cavanaugh decides to roll the dice and fly out of Albany on one of the fakes in an effort to catch up. Jamie will head back to NYC to pay a visit to the lawyer who put them in touch with Prescott in the first place. [GPS knows this guy. He’d referred business to them in the past, but that doesn’t mean they like him. Or trust him, entirely.]

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18. NYC. Jamie gains access to the lawyer's Central Park apartment and surprises him when he arrives home. She demands background on Prescott. He makes the expected threats and big talk, but when he surprises her by suddenly taking a swing at her, Jamie's forced to embarrass him. He finally gives up what he's been reluctant to share. He doesn't know much about Prescott. He was hired to look into some drug patent stuff for him, but shortly after referring him to GPS, the CIA showed up at his door.
19. Deeply troubled by the revelation Jamie hurries across Central Park South, burner phone at her ear. A voice answers on the other end, "Agent Garza." "Hey, it's Travers. I'm not making a mistake with this call, am I?" "I don't know. What are you into?" "I need to know everything the Agency's got on a Daniel Prescott and I need to know now. I'll be there in four hours. Answer your phone. Oh, and don't spread it around. This one's delicate." She drops the phone into a garbage on her way into the subway.
20. Jamie makes contact with AGENT GARZA (40s, Hispanic). He's an old, trusted friend and former GPS colleague, but she still has to be sure he's alone and the circumstances are safe. [Specifics TBD]

Let's discuss if and when to separate Cavanaugh and Jamie. We like when they're together and exploiting the dynamic between the experienced protector and the inexperienced civilian. And we'd like to see how her escalating involvement in the missions causes his fear to spiral out of control.

21. Meanwhile, Cavanaugh arrives in the Chicago neighborhood of their documents expert. He parks a block away from a huge, crumbling Italianate mansion and settles in for the obligatory observation period. The effects he first felt in the woods running from the burning compound start to creep back in, though very subtle at this point.
22. D.C. Jamie liaises with Garza. He did some digging and found that Prescott was on government payroll at an extraordinarily high security level until just recently when his contract was terminated. Shortly thereafter it was discovered that he'd made contact with known terrorist associates, but by the time they went looking for him he'd gone AWOL. When they got wind that he was talking to GPS they realized they had to eliminate him immediately before he dropped off their radar forever.

"Wait a second-- Are you telling me the CIA killed my team?"

23. BACK WITH Cavanaugh. Having seen no sign of Prescott, no signs of life at all at the house, Cav gets out of his car and approaches.
24. Garza deflects personal blame, he had no idea any of this was happening, but: "...the forensic accounting guys found his payment to you. GPS was working for him, and for a hell of a lot of money." "Did they get him? In the Catskills-- Is Prescott alive?" "The bodies are still being ID'ed, but if he did survive there hasn't been so much as a blip on

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our radar.”

But the details don't make sense, “My crew didn't have to die. GPS is practically on agency speed-dial for Chrissake.” “It's because Prescott got away with something. Something that had to be contained no matter what.” “An addiction cure, he told us--”

“A *what?*”

25. Cavanaugh, watching his surroundings, rings the doorbell again, waits, then circles around to the back. He's feeling the effects of the toxin, but forces himself to break into the house.
26. Garza: “Look, I don't know what you're talking about, but Prescott's *extremely* dangerous. You have to be for the CIA to want to eliminate you with extreme prejudice on domestic soil.” Jamie: “I don't understand. What did he have?” Garza hesitates, about to put himself very much at risk...

“He was employed by the U.S. military in the weapons division. He created a bio weapon. **A fear toxin.**”

However we introduce the Garza/Rutherford character, it's important that he doesn't just dump a ton of answers into our hero's lap. Instead, let's let him provide the puzzle pieces so Cavanaugh can put them together.

27. Cavanaugh enters the house. It's exactly what you'd imagine from the looks of things outside; cavernous, with wall to wall tchotchkes and junk. Their documents expert is obviously an eccentric and a bit of a hoarder. The effects amplify as he surveys his surroundings [though still subtle, he's not outright tripping. Details TBD]. He moves quickly and quietly through, listening. This is definitely a house that would creak. After a stretch of hearing nothing, he calls out, “Lynn?”
28. Garza: “...like an atomized bad acid-trip. It turns off the flight instinct and doubles down on the fight, driving the inflicted into relentless frenzies of fear-driven violence. They gave it to rats and they ripped each other apart and when there wasn't anything left to kill, they turned on themselves-- *anything* to make it stop.” “...*weaponized terror.*”
- “There must be a neutralizer?” Garza doesn't know. “*Find out.*” Said as she pulls out her phone to warn Cavanaugh...
29. Having been all through the house, Cavanaugh comes to the basement door. It's metal and stands open despite the heavy gauge keycode pad near the doorknob. Cavanaugh gingerly pushes it on open, moves down the dark steps. “Lynn?” In his pocket the signal on his burner fades to zero. He flips the lightswitch in the basement but it does nothing. Moving around in the dark he bumps into Lynn's desk moving her mouse and bringing her huge computer screen to life showing a blown up portion of Prescott's new

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passport including his new name.

That's when Cav notices a human form outlined in the dark. "Lynn?" He turns the computer monitor toward it and the light reveals HER DEAD IN HER WHEELCHAIR, shot through the face. PRESCOTT materializes from the shadows behind him, swinging a jerry-can, cracking Cavanaugh across the head.

30. CONTINUED. A battle ensues as gas spills from the can, covering the basement. The fight ranges through the entirety of the house as FIRE consumes the place, one level at a time [details TBD, but...]:
- During the melee Prescott appears transformed and not just by the toxin in Cavanaugh's blood. The schlubby, unformed man-boy he presented at the warehouse and Catskills compound is gone, replaced by a hulking, well trained and formidable foe.
 - As the battle rages the psychotropic effects Cav is suffering amplify. [Details TBD, but Prescott and the surroundings take on monstrous features]
 - At one point Cavanaugh rakes his nails down the sides of Prescott's face seemingly simply as a defense move.
 - Cavanaugh only survives when he's thrown within reach of one of Lynn's wheelchairs. He knows she always keeps a gun clipped underneath and using it he's able to keep Prescott at bay until SIRENS prompt him to flee.

Some things to consider for this sequence:

- Do we want to incorporate the elevator at all here (or somewhere later)? We like the runner that Cavanaugh hates them. If we set it up, we should pay it off somewhere.
 - Will the fire in the house feel like a redundant set-piece, given we just had an even bigger fire at the compound?
 - Do we want to open up this set piece more? Make it bigger? Or perhaps create a scenario where the toxin accidentally gets exposed to the public on a small scale, giving us a taste of what might happen later?
31. Cavanaugh escapes and limps back to his car, the effects of the toxin still pummeling his mind, SIRENS bearing down on the now FULLY ENGULFED HOUSE behind him. Hands shaking, he texts Jamie... *He's JOHN PHILLIPS now*

This might be a bit too easy for Cavanaugh if he finds out Prescott's new name already. It also makes Prescott look a little sloppy. The subsequent sequences where Cav follows a series of forgers starts to feel a bit redundant. Let's discuss other ideas for clues that Cav can find here.

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Sequence 2

32. Cavanaugh hurries into a gas station, struggling to keep himself together as he grabs miscellaneous sundries, pays the freaked out cashier. Near hyperventilating he rushes into the restroom, breathes deep, thinks about calling Jamie, but doesn't. Slowly the toxin effects dissipate. When he can he scrapes the underside of his fingernails-- it wasn't just a defense move-- and puts what he collects in a just purchased ziplock bag. He washes his face, changes clothes as a text comes through from Jamie: "...*Phillips departed O'Hare hour ago for **Buenos Aires.***"

Let's have a larger conversation about where we want to set (and shoot) some of these sequences.

33. Jamie in D.C. booking the next flight to BA. Checking her phone for a call from Cav.

34. Cav waiting at O'Hare gate for his flight to BA. Still struggling. He forces himself to type a text: *Always wanted to go to BA with you.* But then deletes it, typing instead: *Waiting for flight. See you there.* His phone rings. It's Jamie. "Are you okay?" "I don't know. Something's happening to me..." "It's a toxin." Jamie tells him what Garza told her about stress and fear amplifying its effects and that they don't know yet about an antidote. Cav tells her that Prescott "...knows I saw his new name. He won't keep using it for long. If we lose him here, it's over."

35. BA Airport. Jamie waits for Cav to come off his plane. She sees him and her emotion is obvious. If only for a second she looks as though she's reuniting with a lover. But then she sees Cav's ravaged expression and she sobers. Still, she takes him in an unexpected embrace when they meet.

36. Their first stop is a known BA document forger, a member of the old guard who they've done business with in the past. But she has no knowledge of Prescott.

37. Together Cav and Jamie check into a hotel in BA under assumed names, ignoring for the moment the single bed. Jamie goes to work surveilling dark web access to hotel booking databases as Cav makes calls to old contacts about BA liaisons. Two days go by. [Details TBD, but there are romantic near-misses along the way. Jamie evidently still drawn to Cav, but Cav missing the cues and vice versa.] Finally, Jamie says, "There is one person we can call. Here, in BA." "I know." Cav answers. He's obviously been thinking the same thing. "We're out of other options." "It's risky." "I know. But only because he's a liar and a con. Not because he holds a grudge." "I wouldn't be so sure. He was in love with you..."

38. They meet with BROOKS (30s), a sketchy ex-British intelligence officer and former lover of Jamie's, pre-dating Cavanaugh. Cav meets him solo, much to his chagrin, in a public

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place, and only after surveilling him from afar for some time. Brooks is surly and combative, but ultimately gives them what they need-- the information on the new forger in town, "One of the best in the world and the only game in town now." "Are you still together?" Brooks finally asks, betraying his curiosity. And with Cav knowing that Jamie's listening via the bug he's wearing, he says: "No. We're separated." Jamie reacts where she's waiting, surprisingly stung by what is, after all, the truth. Brooks doesn't much react, but follows with, "So you're here alone. I hope for her sake that's the truth. I didn't tell them, by the way, about the forger. For what that's worth." "Tell who?" "The Agency. They're here, of course. I'm sorry, but what do you expect coming into town as hot as you two are? They called me well before you did." Furious Cav gets up and walks from the table as Jamie, having heard everything, swoops in on a motorcycle and sweeps him up. Brooks has told the truth about one thing; the CIA was watching and they waste little time...

Not sure whether this Brooks character fits if we aren't going to play up the divorce angle. In the book, this is where the trail goes cold and Cavanaugh seeks out Rutherford. Rutherford works a little better than Brooks because he ties in to the larger story and comes back later. Might be more efficient to keep this as one character.

Generally we like the sequence with Rutherford in the book; specifically how Cavanaugh can tell over the phone that Rutherford is in trouble, how he deduces how many men are guarding him, etc. But we can also understand the instinct to open the script up a bit. One bit we definitely shouldn't lose is when Cavanaugh starts using Jamie to help with the operation; this should be a huge decision he makes to knowingly put her in danger, and it only intensifies his fear of losing her.

39. CIA car chase through BA. Cav & Jamie eventually ditch the bike and change to foot, eventually losing the agents, which now include Garza. (spotted during the chase).
40. Realizing now that they have precious little time, Cav and Jamie go straight from the chase to the forger Brooks told them about. They find him at least two days dead, by Cav's estimation, and all his hardware is gone. They search his studio and find a burner phone scattered under a couch. A partial text-- a warning-- was the last thing sent. Jamie flips open her computer and starts working on the number. Then Cav calls it... A guarded male voice answers after a few rings. Cav: "Peter Brooks says you can help me become a new person." The guarded voice replies in stilted English: "I am sorry. I am busy now and unable to help you." There's a tense beat here as Cav chooses tacks... Then: "If he's there, the American, say, 'Okay, bye, bye now.' Another pregnant pause, and then, from the other end of the line... "Okay, bye, bye now." Cav hangs up just as Jamie slaps her notebook closed: "I've got the address."
41. Cav and Jamie approach a townhouse in BA's Palermo when he suddenly stops her. He wants her to hang back. "Prescott's smart. He may have heard what the forger said." In other words, he's worried, about the situation and about having her in harm's way.

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Given their history and her skillset the request is almost absurd, but she gives in because he's never asked her this before and she can see the fear at work. She'll stay nearby and observe. Back up. Cav continues quickly and cautiously, just about to enter when he surprises someone just exiting the building-- a man whose head and face are wrapped in bandages. BURSTING FROM THE VESTIBULE HE ATTACKS Cavanaugh before racing off into the night.

Like we mentioned above, we've got a bit too much forger action happening. Let's decide whether we want to utilize (and elevate) the set pieces from the book, or come up with some other trajectory. The key is that we keep Prescott active and smart. We want to see him using his brain and logic to put things together.

42. Hallucinatory, Fritz Lang-esque midnight foot-chase through BA as Cav and Jamie pursue Prescott from a few blocks apart, trying to keep him contained. *"He's had reconstructive surgery, he has a new identity. If we lose him now, he's gone forever!"* [Details TBD, but...] Scene climaxes with Prescott leading them into the ancient, surreal Recoleta Cemetery where the shadows, mausoleums and statuary come alive in Cav's head and ultimately cripple him so that...

MID-POINT -- ...PRESCOTT GETS AWAY, VANISHING INTO THE NIGHT

Sequence 3

43. AIRPORT, Buenos Aires - Cav books a flight back stateside as Jamie waits nearby carefully watching the crowds for CIA ticks. Cav wraps up, still shaky from the chase and the toxin. At the last second he asks the counter agent, "The flight my wife just booked," gesturing across the way toward Jamie, "Is there room?" The agent checks, then nods, "A few seats. But she's going to Denver. You're going to D.C." Cav nods. He knows... He lets it go, rejoining Jamie.

44. MOMENTS LATER, they arrive at Jamie's gate. Her flight's boarding. They stop and she looks at him: "I don't want it to end." Cav looks at her, suddenly hopeful... "The chase," she continues, crushing those hopes. "Even if I knew we'd never catch him, at least we were doing something," she adds. "Are you going to be okay?" He nods, though it's clear he's unsure. Final boarding call. Cavanaugh's wheels are turning, desperate to keep things going, maybe just to have an excuse to stay with her... "There's one more thing we can try," he suddenly says. "Will you come with me? Just a couple more days." She considers, then nods.

45. Garza pulls under the security boom exiting the parking lot at CIA headquarters, making his way through rush-hour traffic. He's on his phone getting an earful from a superior about the pursuit of Cav and Jamie in BA, about how they got away and why, and it's clear that as a result his job is on the line. "Find them!" screams the voice on the other

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end just as Jamie suddenly steps out in front of his car. Garza SCREECHES to a stop to a volley of horns and Cav jumps into shotgun. "I'm gonna need to call you back."

46. Cav and Jamie press Garza about helping them. If they can't find Prescott directly, they'll focus on who he was in contact with and let *them* lead them to him. "We know this guy better than anyone. We TAUGHT HIM how to do what he's doing. Give us what you have and let's work together." Garza balks initially, he's under heavy pressure to bring Cav and Jamie in, "They'll never go for it. You're second only to Prescott himself on the wanted list since that clusterfuck in BA."

"Then don't tell them."

"Provide two wanted civilians with classified information, is that what you're saying?"

"Yes."

47. DAYS LATER... Another clandestine meeting between Cav, Jamie and Garza wherein Garza hands over what he's been able to find out. "I want you two to understand I wouldn't be doing this unless things were absolutely dire, okay? English communication between two of the factions Prescott was in contact with before he reached out to you has dropped off entirely since he disappeared in BA. *One hasn't*. In fact it's ticked up." "What do we know about them?" Garza: "They're very bad news. They're new, but well organized, extremely well funded and very aggressive. Strong ties to the military faction that was backing Hammad Romeini, who of course the President just blew up and publicly took credit for. Assets have been warning for years that these guys are desperate to announce their arrival and now they have extra incentive. Since the Romeini hit chatter's been through the roof." "And it's showing communication in English?" "Bits and pieces, but yeah. The other weird thing about it is that we're seeing responses sourcing out of the UK, but not from the usual hot-beds."

"From where?"

"From the Isle of Wight."

Let's try to find a stronger way for Cav to discover where Prescott has retired to. The way Cav finds Prescott in the book is admittedly far-fetched, but it does require Cavanaugh to be creative and put things together himself. Ultimately, Prescott made a mistake somewhere along the way, and Cavanaugh uses this to find him.

Sequence 4

48. Cav and Jamie arrive on the Isle of Wight. They set up house and one could almost mistake them for a couple on honeymoon. Days pass as on the surface they idle around the small villages, walk the beaches, take in the sights. But of course, all the while

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they're asking the locals, searching for clues of Prescott's presence, even following a suspect or two matching his general description. They're focused and professional, but here, at this point in the story, they're also falling back in love. The intensity of the last week, the fact that Cav has come to rely on her as much as he has, the fact that he's been tenderized, as it were, by the toxin still flowing through him. Just when we wonder if it wouldn't be better for them if they gave up now; leave the pursuit, mourn the loss of their friends, but have each other... They find someone.

The height is roughly right, or at least it would be if he were to stand up straight. He's large, but hunched and he walks with a limp, relying on a cane to get around; one of the possible ways of altering your gait suggested back at the Catskills compound. They watch him closely, but from afar, careful not to fall victim to all the tricks and tips of the trade they taught Prescott, in case it's actually him.

Ultimately they manage to track him to a beachside manor house on a large cove. Cav sets up a blind and over days of watching and listening to seemingly mundane conversations via a laser microphone, the only thing of note is that he keeps hearing mention of a specific date coming up soon.

In the meantime Garza clears this mystery person as totally legit; a gainfully employed holidaymaker with a long established background, social media presence, etc. Jamie starts to worry that they've lost Prescott entirely, that Cav's obsession is just a means of staying on the hunt. She stays with him, trusting in his instinct even as Garza warns that the CIA is desperate for a break in the case given a massive spike in chatter ("Rivaling pre 9/11 days"). They're ramping up resources in the search for them too. Garza's not going to be able to hold out much longer, he'll have to give them up and soon.

As Jamie sits in a cafe in town waiting for their target to possibly make a move, she sees a news broadcast concerning a massive protest organizing in NYC's Central Park. Said to rival the anti-nuclear proliferation rally of 1982, organizers are expecting a million plus.

On the very date Cav's been hearing out of the manor house.

Their target makes a move. Cav gets in contact with Jamie while following him surreptitiously. With Cav coordinating Jamie's able to get ahead and stage a seemingly random encounter. It's hugely risky-- Prescott may have seen Jamie during the foot chase in BA, but they have little choice and she won't have it any other way. [We (the viewer) can't initially tell if this new target is, in fact, Prescott]. Jamie's trying to get something he touches in order to match the DNA to Cav's fingernail scrapings from earlier. Just when the target turns to go and it looks like she's going to fail, she hands him his cane. "You wouldn't want to forget that." He looks at her, studies her really, then takes the cane and goes on his way.

Jamie calls Garza, tells him what they have and to alert the Agency to everything; that Prescott's here, that he's planning to sell the weapon, and that the likely target is the protest in Central Park. She meets a CIA / MI6 joint task-force and passes off the DNA

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sample as Cav returns to keep tabs on their target. Using the laser mic Cav hears the target move up the date of his “business deal” to THE NEXT NIGHT, having been possibly spooked by the encounter at the cafe.

Let’s flesh this out a bit more. What we like from the book is that Jamie gets kidnapped almost instantly when they get to Carmel – this raises the stakes and causes Cavanaugh to finally confront the fact that his drive for revenge has finally put his wife’s life in danger - his biggest fear. It also gives us a pretty good ticking clock at the end as he has only 24 hours to find Prescott, or Jamie dies.

We also like how Cavanaugh and Prescott have to team up one more time. Their relationship is really interesting and we want as much as we can get.

With Cav and Jamie begging the dual agencies for back-up, the results finally come back... NEGATIVE.

The agencies pull support. All is lost.

We cut into the manor house where all at first appears to be completely mundane, like this guy really is some innocent guy on vacation. He moves through a home that is utterly unlike Prescott. We don’t get great looks at his face, but from what we can tell, he doesn’t look like Prescott. He doesn’t move like him or act like him even here in the privacy of the house. He simply changes his socks, goes to the bathroom and...

PEELS LATEX FILAMENT COVERINGS OFF HIS HANDS

Act III

Sequence 1

What it’s all been leading to. Knowing the hand-off of the toxin is happening that night, knowing the target is a million protestors in NYC’s Central Park, and knowing no one else is going to stop it from happening, Cav and Jamie prep their raid of Prescott’s beachside manor.

[Details TBD] but their night time assault will include the climax of Cavanaugh’s toxic mind-trip as they approach through an incredibly dense fog bank. Following the arrival of Prescott’s heavily armed “business partners” via helicopter onto the property an all out gun battle between all three parties ensues. When Cav becomes debilitated by the horrors in his mind, Jamie goes it alone, learning along the way that Prescott is willing to trade a vial of antidote to save Cavanaugh if they give up arms. Jamie attempts to make the deal to save Cav’s life, but Prescott reneges at the last second and fires on her.

Mortally wounded, Jamie still manages to battle back, grab a vial of antidote, and get back to Cavanaugh where she dies. Cav spikes himself with the vial and with a clear

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head and fueled by the rage of his team's death, Jamie's death-- the destruction of everything he holds dear, he goes full on John Wick on the visiting terrorists, eventually battling his way to the cache of toxin ready for transport.

He kills power to the compound, dons a gas-mask, and detonates a canister inside the manor. He grabs Jamie's body and escapes with her as the night fills with the screams of the horrors transpiring inside that house.

Another little nugget from the book that gets underutilized is how Cavanaugh sometimes uses anger to occasionally help subdue his fear. That might be worth exploring in the climax (or earlier); maybe he's angry at the fact that Jamie has been hurt, or maybe there's an element of anger at himself for putting her in harm's way, and ultimately this helps him overcome the toxin in some critical moment. Something to consider.

Sequence 2

Denouement. Cavanaugh liaises with Agent Garza some months later at the sight of Jamie's grave outside D.C. Garza explains that Prescott was prepared to divulge the U.S. military connection to the fear toxin following its use at the Central Park protest. "Imagine the fall-out. People thinking the U.S. government just murdered a million of its own people, for protesting against them. It would've caused complete anarchy. But it didn't. Because of you two." Garza asks him to come work for them, but Cav balks. As he leaves, walking off through the grave stones, Garza asks him what he's going to do...

"I'm going to disappear for a while."

THE END