

H A L O

FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

For a brief moment, stars fill the empty and black void of space...

Then, without notice, they begin to bend. Their shape warps into a circle of bright light and then a hole.

A DEEP BOOMING SOUND RESONATES AS...

...A MASSIVE WARSHIP emerges at the center of the hole. It is a broad and truncated gray vessel, with a square bow composed of several protruding box-like extensions. Underneath the lengthy prow lies the bridge, an enclosed viewport embedded in the "mouth" of the craft.

This is the PILLAR OF AUTUMN.

A warship designed and built by the United Nations Space Command long ago. The vessel is clearly old and battered by decades of war.

It plows forward toward us...

WE PULL TO THE LEFT...

...allowing the ship to advance on its starboard side -- moving by us as though we are watching from a dock as an ocean liner passes by. We take in the ship's amazing scale at close range.

COMING ABOUT THE SHIP'S STERN, WE PIVOT...

...where we find the brilliantly-lit propulsion system, burning like a pair of blue suns, one atop the other, nestled in amongst smaller variations of the same luminous machine.

NOW WE ACCELERATE, COMING ABOUT THE PORT SIDE OF THE SHIP...

...we closely skim the side, dragging along the outer hull of the vessel. We pass portholes, windows and large architectural panels composing the ship's surface.

WE HALT AT A SINGLE WINDOW, STARING FOR JUST A MOMENT BEFORE THE CAMERA PUSHES IN... ENTERING THE ROOM.

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, CRYOSTORAGE

This is CRYOSTORAGE.

The room is large but cramped. Throughout, we find crates, containers, forklifts and heavy machines -- all unquestionably from the future, the 26th century.

At the center of the room, a LARGE MACHINE is seen extending from the ceiling down into the floor -- its lowest point becomes a cradle. This machine appears to be purposed with the moving of containers which are found embedded along the room's walls.

These steel containers are each the size of a large CASKET with a glass covering on its face.

WE PASS THROUGH THE ROOM AND COME FROM BEHIND THE CRADLE...

...just as a new container is dropped into it, resting at an angle in front of...

TWO ENGINEERS, who are standing on the second level of the room, looking out through a glass-enclosed observation deck down onto the cradle's new contents -- this mysterious container.

WE CONTINUE TO PRESS FORWARD into the observation deck and TURN ABOUT to see that the two engineers are frantically keying information into terminals in front of them.

On one of the terminals, it says:

PRIORITY ALPHA // UNSEAL THE HUSHED CASKET

Then without warning...

BOOM! -- the MUTED BELLOW of an explosion in the distance -- the Pillar of Autumn has been hit.

ENGINEER 01

That sounded close. Did she say where we are?

ENGINEER 02

No. It was a blind jump. They must have followed us.

The large container at the center is FROSTED across what would normally be translucent glass. Its contents remain mysteriously unknown.

ENGINEER 02 (CONT'D)

Shields first. Bring them online nice and easy. Don't know how the armor will respond. We've skipped half the damn protocol.

ENGINEER 01

It'll be fine.

Then there's another...

BOOM! -- it's heavier and louder -- it's CLOSER.

ENGINEER 01  
We'd better speed this up.

AIR HISSES around the base of the casket as he presses a key.

ENGINEER 01 (CONT'D)  
Crack the case on my mark... Now.

ENGINEER 02  
Blowing pins. Case open.

The glass slides upward, opening the container completely.

ENGINEER 01  
Vitals are up. Armor's online... He's ready.

ENGINEER 02  
(into the COM)  
Chief, do you read me?

Gas and mist ebb outward from the interior of the container, covering its contents in a shroud of mist.

PUSH ON -- AN ARMORED HAND.

At first frozen, the hand begins to STIR, breaking off a coat of icy frost as it CLENCHES into a fist and then unclenches.

ENGINEER 01  
Sorry for the quick thaw, Chief. The captain needs you on the bridge ASAP.

The figure emerges from the container, dropping onto the ground with a heavy THUD. He is a SPARTAN -- a cyborg which stands seven feet tall and is covered in a BATTERED AND WAR-BEATEN GREEN ARMOR from head to toe.

This is the MASTER CHIEF.

Sheets of ice crack and splinter off, dropping from his armor's plating. His visor begins to heat up, reflecting the observation deck above.

BOOM! -- ENTIRE BAY SHAKES, SMALL MACHINES TIP OVER AND TOOLS RATTLE IN THEIR CHESTS.

ENGINEER 02  
Shit. That one was too close.

Then again...

BOOM! -- for a second, all is still and silent, the engineers trade concerned looks -- and then, without warning a MASSIVE HOLE OPENS UP on the far side of the bay.

The hull has been breached.

The entire room becomes a VORTEX OF SCREAMING AIR as the breach begins to violently pull everything from it...

Machines and crates go first, tumbling end over end through the breach. Then the observation deck is SHATTERED into a thousand pieces and the two engineers, along with their equipment are pulled free from their enclosure and hurled into the black of space.

ONE THING REMAINS...

The Master Chief.

Miraculously, he is able to grab the edge of the container he had just emerged from, UTTERLY DETERMINED to hold on as the wind WHIPS around him viciously.

After a few moments, even the machine cradle he clings to begins to tear free from the room's floor. The large machine pulls out in a BURST OF SPARKS, revealing hydraulic tubes and cables.

As the cradle separates fully, it is thrown outward into the hole...

The Chief grabs onto a nearby cable and holds tight, his armored body FLAILING in the brutal torrents of air.

A klaxon sounds and red lights flash at both ends of the room, as a LARGE STEEL DOOR begins to shut in its center, severing the area between the Chief and the ship's interior.

EXT. SPACE

The Master Chief holds the cable as the door closes. The wind subsides and with the door shut, the quiet of space is all that remains.

The Spartan floats against the exterior hull of the Autumn.

It is completely silent.

With the cable still in hand to keep himself tethered to the ship, the Chief turns about, looking away from the Autumn and staring out into space.

In the distance, there are HUNDREDS OF ALIEN SHIPS, ranging in all shapes and sizes. Although too far to see clearly, their designs are curved and elongated, as opposed to the rough edges and truncated shape of Autumn.

These are COVENANT and it is evident that they are headed toward the human ship.

The Chief turns his head further left, craning his neck to see something off to his side. Something large.

WE PULL BACK, TAKING IN A WIDE SHOT BEHIND THE CHIEF...

...beyond the Spartan, as he floats in the hull's open cavity, he sees a HUGE RING THE SIZE OF A MOON stationary in front of a LOOMING GAS GIANT.

AS WE PULL BACK IT APPEARS THAT THE CHIEF'S BODY IS FLOATING IN THE CENTER OF THE RING...

Everything fades to black except for the ring and the Spartan.

MAIN TILE...

H A L O

The main theme plays as we...

FADE TO BLACK.

BEAT.

A male and female voice are all that is heard.

MALE (O.C.)  
(shouting)  
What happened? Report!

FEMALE (O.C.)  
We had three direct hits. One in Engineering and two in Weapons. Our offensive options have been neutralized at this point, sir.

FADE IN:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, BRIDGE

OPEN ON:

The male's gray and weary eyes. It is apparent that he has not slept for days.

WE PULL BACK SLOWLY...

We see the grizzled and weathered face of CAPTAIN JACOB KEYES.

He is the seasoned captain of the Pillar of Autumn. His face is lined with the wrinkles and his teeth are clenched tightly around a pipe.

WE PULL BACK FURTHER...

We're on the bridge of the Pillar of Autumn -- a small, compartmentalized command deck with a single large viewport jutting outward from just below the ship's prow.

Through the viewport, one can see the cluster of a hundred Covenant ships.

There are several stations throughout the bridge with various NAVAL CREWMEMBERS manning them. On the station immediately in front of Keyes is a holographic blue shape of a woman.

This is CORTANA, the shipboard AI of the Pillar of Autumn.

She is slender and naked, her body is composed a collection of holographic blue data streams coalescing upward from a pedestal.

KEYES

And we followed protocol?

CORTANA

To the letter. A random jump from Reach... and they still beat us here. They've always been faster.

Keyes stares at the enemy ships in the distance. His eyes are intense and his face is rigid.

KEYES

What are they waiting for? Why haven't they finished us off yet?

CORTANA

I don't know, but it could have something to do with that...

They both turn their attention to the giant ring off their port side.

KEYES

And there's nothing on that? Nothing in the our databanks or archives?

CORTANA

No, sir. Nothing I have classification for at least.

(she turns to him)

I don't know what the hell it is...

Cortana suddenly moves her hand to her mouth in response to something unseen.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Oh no...

KEYES

What is it?

CORTANA

Cryo was hit. A direct hit... There was a hull breach.

KEYES

And the Chief?

CORTANA

His IFF went online for a moment, but now it's gone.

Keyes' eyes are now firmly locked onto the approaching enemy fleet. He moves closer to the viewport.

KEYES

(concerned)

If he's gone... if they killed him. Well... he's all we had left.

CORTANA

Wait. I'm getting a reading on him... This can't be right.

Cortana turns to Keyes.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

You're not going to believe this.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, VEHICLE BAY

The immense vehicle bay of the Autumn is bustling with activity.

This structure is comparatively HUGE -- hundreds of feet in length. It is divided into large corridors, garages and bays, stretching upward along the walls with four different tiers.

Klaxons sound and radio chatter can be heard across an intercom system -- as the crew within moves frenetically about.

Here we also find dozens of UNSC vehicles: WARTHOGS, SCORPION TANKS and PELICAN DROPSHIPS -- clearly readying for a departure. Some vehicles are set on large red squares throughout the bay floor and others are being taxied from clefts within the bay's walls.

In an open room nearby is a gathering of MARINES.



This room has a LARGE BAY DOOR which is composed entirely of a thick glass-like substance. Through it, one can now see the Covenant fleet, the gas giant and the ring superstructure.

The gathering is composed of a SQUAD OF MARINES, standing in a rigid line while holding their rifles -- with their CO, SERGEANT AVERY JOHNSON, pacing back and forth in front of them.

He is a stout and muscular black man with a thick mustache and a large cigar in the corner of his mouth. He walks with a stiff air of bravado one can only acquire through firsthand combat experience.

His voice booms across the room. He's done this before. Many times.

JOHNSON  
I can't hear you, Marines!

MARINES  
(in unison)  
Yes sir!

JOHNSON  
We've just been given our orders.  
(shouting)  
We're going groundside and there's not a god damn thing these alien bastards are going to do about it... We're gonna beat those damn bugs into a pulp and then drown their sorry asses in their own god damn blood if that's what it takes...

He pauses long for effect. The Marines look to him expectantly.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Are you with me?

MARINES  
(in unison)  
Sir, yes sir!

JOHNSON  
Alright, that's what I like to hear -

BANG! BANG!

The sound of STEEL SLAMMING AGAINST STEEL interrupts the sergeant.

The noise echoes across the vehicle bay. All personnel nearby look to their point of origin -- the bay door.

In front of Johnson, the squad of Marines appears to be alarmed. There we find JENKINS, CARTER, WILLIAMS, MENDOZA and BISENTI.

They are all young-faced soldiers. Anxious. Angry. Ready.

BANG! BANG!

Again, two rhythmic sounds -- almost like someone was knocking.

The Marines raise their rifles.

WILLIAMS

The Covenant.

JOHNSON

It ain't the Covenant... Not yet.

Johnson continues to far side of the bay door where a small airlock chamber exists for maintenance space walks.

He examines it briefly and then flips the switch.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

How the hell did he get out there?

The small airlock chamber is quickly filled with atmosphere via large vents on both sides. A smoky mist rises for just a moment. Once the gas dissipates, we see the MASTER CHIEF.

The door opens and the Spartan moves steadily across the bay without giving notice to Johnson or the Marines. The sergeant grabs his cigar from his mouth and smirks.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Fine day for a walk, huh?

The Chief ignores the comment, walking toward a weapon rack near an exit. He grabs an ASSAULT RIFLE and PISTOL, checking their ammunition briefly before stowing them on his person through a magnetic system built into his armor.

There's a BRIEF HUM and then CLINK as the weapon draws tightly to the armor.

He turns back toward Johnson.

CHIEF

Tell Cortana... I'm on my way.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, BRIDGE

Cortana and Keyes continue to discuss matters on the bridge. They both stare out at the ring floating in space, while Cortana examines several fields of holographic numbers which shift in front of her.

CORTANA

My preliminary tests are all positive. It's a strange structure, completely artificial but with all of the various environments and ecosystems you would expect from habitable planet. Everything checks out. Oxygen, nitrogen... everything.

(turns to Keyes)

But are you sure about this, sir?

KEYES

We won't be able to take their shots forever. Not against an entire fleet.

The Master Chief enters the bridge. Crewmembers stop what they're doing for a moment, staring up at the giant Spartan as he moves across the deck to Keyes.

CHIEF

Captain Keyes...

They salute each other and then extend hands to shake.

KEYES

You had us worried...

CHIEF

I wanted a closer look.

The three turn their attention to the ring which is now just off their port side bow. The ring's interior looks identical to what one would expect from the surface of a planet.

KEYES

Well, you're going to get a lot closer than that. Cole Protocol is crystal clear. A shipboard AI cannot be captured by the Covenant at any cost. If they did, they would have everything: force deployment, weapons... the location of Earth.

The Chief nods.

KEYES (CONT'D)

Your mission is simple. Get Cortana off this ship and onto the surface of the ring... keep her out of the Covenant's hands. There, we'll rendezvous and find a way to get her and the rest of us back to Earth.

CORTANA

And you, sir?

KEYES

Once all of the lifeboats are out, I'm going to land on it.

CORTANA

(concerned)

With all due respect, sir, this war has had enough dead heroes.

KEYES

If the Covenant want this vessel, they're going to have to work for it. There has to be a reason we're still alive. They didn't come all the way out here to play cat and mouse...

BEAT.

KEYES (CONT'D)

Good luck, Master Chief.

CHIEF

You too, sir.

The Chief turns to Cortana.

CORTANA

(to the captain)

I hope you know what you're doing.

(to the Chief)

Yank me.

The Spartan pulls a chip from the pedestal station Cortana was on and her image disappears. He inserts the chip into the back of his helmet.

CORTANA (O.S.)

I'm in.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, COMMAND DECK

Darkness shrouds the interior of the SEEKER OF TRUTH's COMMAND DECK. This is the flagship of the FLEET OF PARTICULAR JUSTICE, the leading assault carrier for the COVENANT FLEET.

The Covenant are a war-bred conglomeration of several distinct alien species. While their core motives are suspect, their efforts have led them to destroy dozens of human worlds.

This command deck is considerably larger and ornate than the Autumn's bridge. At its center lies a large table which has holographic readouts, at one end is the doorway and the other is a large view screen showing space.

Huddled around the view screen we find...

THREE LARGE ALIENS and a SMALLER FRAIL ONE, peering out into space through the display. Right now it shows the ring.

The larger aliens are ELITES, the strongest element of the Covenant military. The Elites are large, leathery creatures with animalistic haunches for hind legs, shark-like eyes and flat, serpentine heads. Their mouths are gated by mandibles and they walk with an air of elegance and ruthless determination -- like that of a seasoned warrior.

Two Elites are white-armored pilots and the third Elite is the SUPREME COMMANDER, adorned in purple armor and a rich cape. He is the leader of Particular Justice and has no authoritative equal within the fleet.

The smaller alien is a PROPHET, the species which maintains the religious leadership of the Covenant. They are a bony and thinly creature with a long adornment of robes and a large head carrying bulbous eyes. Their kind is restricted to hovering chairs for all locomotive movement.

This Prophet is known as the MINISTER OF ABSOLUTION. He is the religious authority of the entire fleet.

The Supreme Commander speaks, his baritone voice booming...

COMMANDER

Their firing systems have been eliminated, correct? They have no counter-offense?

FLIGHT ELITE 01

Yes, Commander.

COMMANDER

Surround them on all sides, but do not fire any further. We will siege their vessel from within. We must find their leader and their construct.

His gaze turns from the Autumn to the ring, approaching their starboard side...

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

I want to know what they know. How they found it... why they chose to come here now.

The Minister of Absolution speaks up, interjecting into the conversation...

ABSOLUTION

Commander, we musn't allow these animals to land on the Sacred Ring... to desecrate its air with their vile and putrid breath.

COMMANDER

Know your place, Minister. The pact of our ancestors gives the Elites the burden of war, not the Prophets. Honor it on my ship.

(focusing)

Strategically, we cannot worry about the artifact until we've resolved the human threat. I did not follow them to the opposite end of the galaxy for nothing.

Absolution casts a cold stare of defiance, but it goes unnoticed.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

They must know something about the ring which we do not... a problem we will soon remedy.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

For the first time we see the Covenant fleet up close...

The vessels are purple and slender, contoured in an amphibious manner. They have several ASSAULT CRUISERS, like Seeker of Truth, which are immense vessels with a long, teardrop prow that bends downward and back toward the center of the ship.

The smaller BATTLE CRUISERS are similar in design, but their bow is rounded and flat with a series of fins underneath. The fleet maintains a collage of short-range vessels as well -- FIGHTERS, DROPSHIPS AND MIDSHIPS.

In unison, the cruisers fire hundreds of BOARDING PODS, long narrow, squid-like crafts which jettison toward the Autumn at a breakneck speed.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, CORRIDOR

The Chief moves warily down a corridor within the belly of the Autumn as the LIGHTS FLICKER and ALARMS BLARE in the background.

The Chief's assault rifle is raised.

CRASH!

A loud collision seizes the corridor. It's coming from outside.

CHIEF

The Covenant.

CORTANA

(smirking)

What... you feeling a little rusty?

The Master Chief posts up against the corner of a junction, peaking down a short stunted hallway. At the end, a CIRCLE OF LIGHT forms on the far wall, as though something is boring a hole into the ship. The circle is quickly completed and the hole is kicked in.

From the darkness within the boarding craft's interior, a trio of GRUNTS, small and ape-like creatures, emerge. They waddle in an effort to move quickly while balancing their heavy arms.

As they move, they spout chirpy, high-pitched noises. In their small claws are PLASMA PISTOLS, a one-handed firearm which winds around the hand to a glowing tip. The Grunts are jumpy and peculiar, wearing an oversized breathing apparatus on their faces and backs.

Behind them comes an ELITE in blue armor carrying the contoured mid-range Covenant energy weapon -- the PLASMA RIFLE.

It barks an indiscernible order.

The Grunts pause momentarily and then raise their weapons, beginning to head down the corridor toward the Spartan's position. The Chief presses two fingers to the side of his helmet. This activates a passive translation system. He can now understand the aliens.

ELITE

Do not hesitate to fire on anything, lest  
it be the ship's captain.

The Elite stops and holds up his hand, his four slender fingers bind tightly into the shape of a fist. The Grunts halt immediately and become completely silent.

The Elite lowers his head and parts his mandibles as though he had tasted something in the air.

Without skipping a beat, the Chief SPINS around the corner, launches into a DEAD SPRINT and leaps over the Grunts. Before he has landed, he is already unloading his automatic rifle's ammunition into the Elite's armor. The creature's energy shield begins to light up as it is pummeled by bullets.

When the Spartan lands, he SLAMS his elbow into the Elite's face. The alien reels backward and lands on the ground.

The Spartan removes his pistol with his left hand, turning to fire at the Grunts as they charge him from behind. The furthest two are taken out by the pistol almost immediately, but the third is too close.

The Chief raises his right boot high into the air and brings it down HARD onto the Grunt's head, CRUSHING the creature instantly.

CORTANA

Okay. Maybe "rusty" wasn't the right word.

The Spartan turns his attention to the Elite, who is still alive but disabled by the attack. He crouches above him, pulling his face up by one of the creature's mandibles so that they face each other.

He places his pistol's barrel between the Elite's eyes -- they grow wide.

HARD CUT TO BACK:

BANG! -- the weapon FIRES and then we...

FADE IN:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, BRIDGE

Keyes paces across the bridge. He stops, stares at the Covenant vessels which have hedged in their ship, dangerously close now only a few hundred yards in every direction.

He turns to his crew.

KEYES

The Autumn is the only craft we have capable of returning to UNSC space. I think it's safe to assume that if we do get back home, she won't be taking us.

Keyes pauses, taking a long drag from his pipe.

KEYES (CONT'D)

That said, I'm ordering the rest of you to the ground. There should be enough lifeboats for the entire crew. I'll take the Autumn down on my own.

The crew remains seated for a moment and then one of them stands up. This is COMMANDER ECKHART. He has a short stature, blue eyes and a determined face. He looks experienced but young.

ECKHART

Permission to speak, sir.

KEYES

By all means.

ECKHART

The Marines have enough certified pilots groundside to handle an exit strategy if we don't make landfall.

(looks across the deck)

I think I speak for all of us when I say that there's no way in hell we're going to leave you up here alone.

Keyes looks around the room carefully and everyone's eyes meet his.



He graciously nods.

KEYES

Very well...

Eckhart takes his seat.

ECKHART

Landing solution, sir?

KEYES

We'll drop free from their fence on my mark.

WE PUSH IN ON THE CAPTAIN'S FACE...

KEYES (CONT'D)

They'll never see it coming.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, CORRIDOR

The Chief turns a corner with his gun raised and his pace steady.

A Marine lies on the floor, only a few yards away from the entrance to a lifeboat. His leg is injured.

CORTANA

Now would be a very good time to leave!

The Chief snatches up the Marine, enters the lifeboat and the door SLAMS shut.

INT. LIFEBOAT

He tosses the injured Marine into a chair, who quickly straps himself in. The Chief grabs onto a railing which lines the craft's small cabin, calling out to the LIFEBOAT PILOT.

CHIEF

Punch it.

PILOT

Aye aye, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

The lifeboat is launched from the side of the Autumn -- soon joined by others. They fall from the ship's underbelly toward the ring's azure

atmosphere. Several Pelicans flank the lifeboats, most of them carrying a vehicle tightly girded underneath.

The UNSC crafts, like a flock of birds, descend toward the ring's surface. But they are not alone.

CUT TO:

INT. LIFEBOAT

The pilot can see that some of the other lifeboats and UNSC dropships are being destroyed by Covenant fighters -- small, clam-shaped crafts called SERAPHS.

The lifeboats begin to explode one by one, as they're targeted by the enemies -- their debris clatters against the boats following in their wake.

PILOT

Seraphs! Let's hope they don't spot us.

CORTANA

If I had fingers, they'd be crossed.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, COMMAND DECK

The Supreme Commander, Absolution and the flight crew attentively watch the view screen which shows the Seraphs attempting to mop up the human lifeboats before they reach the ring.

Then they see it. The Autumn's body begins to MOVE in front of them.

COMMANDER

What manner of insanity -

FLIGHT ELITE 01

They're moving. We have them enclosed on all sides yet they still move. They're going to hit us!

COMMANDER

Hold your fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

Then the Autumn drops sharply, falling below the fence of Covenant ships and scraping the Seeker of Truth's bow in the process. It moves toward the ring.

CUT TO:

INT. LIFEBOAT

The Chief stands firmly within the lifeboat as their pod and others begin to breach the ring's upper-atmosphere.

PILOT  
What is this place?

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, ATMOSPHERE

Then, above the flock of lifeboats the Autumn barrels overhead charging toward the ring's surface.

CUT TO:

INT. LIFEBOAT

CORTANA  
Unbelievable! The Autumn... Keyes is taking her in!

The lifeboat shudders violently in the wake of the cruiser's after burn.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
Are you sure you don't want to take a seat?

CHIEF  
We'll be fine.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, VALLEY - DAY

The lifeboats cascade down into a verdant canyon within a pristine range of mountains. The environment is stunning and vivid -- almost heavenly.

As they pass just above the landscape at lightning speed, it becomes clear that something is wrong -- they're not slowing down...

PILOT  
(frantic)  
We're coming in too fast! Air brakes are shot! Brace yourself!

CUT TO:

WE ARE STARING AT GROUND LEVEL OVER CALM MEADOW AS THE WIND GENTLY SWAYS GRASS AND FLOWERS. THE FIELD IS A PERFECT PICTURE OF SERENITY.

THEN, WITHOUT WARNING...

The lifeboat COLLIDES HEAD ON into the ground and immediately goes into a series of VIOLENT AND BRUTAL TUMBLES, finally coming to a stop -- now a few mangled pieces of debris near the edge of a cliff.

There is no movement.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, HANGAR BAY

The hanger bay of the Seeker of Truth is considerably larger than the Autumn's vehicle bay -- possibly FIFTY TIMES its size. It is an immense corridor stretching several thousand feet in length, punctuated periodically with columns.

One side holds a series of walkways and platforms leading from the ship's interior to the vast main floor while the other is the MASSIVE ENERGY BARRIER -- acting as a window looking out into space -- it is invisible save for a light-reddish glow.

Within the bay are hundreds of vehicles: SPIRIT DROPSHIPS, PHANTOMS, SERAPH FIGHTERS, WRAITHS and GHOSTS.

The Supreme Commander moves down onto the main floor and is met by two Elites, one in black armor, SUB-COMMANDER RTAS 'VADUMEE, and the other in silver armor, SHIPMASTER TVIN 'RAELAMEE.

Before talking, they all turn their attention to a large shadow being cast against the ring, just outside the energy barrier. The shadow's shape becomes clear -- it is a Covenant battle cruiser.

This is TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION.

As the cruiser approaches just outside the bay, large sections of damage along the bow and port side of the craft can be seen.

COMMANDER

Sustained during the human ship's scuttle? Can it be repaired?

SHIPMASTER

Yes, but we will have to bring it to the ring's surface.

COMMANDER

So be it, Shipmaster. This vessel should serve our purposes there well.

The shipmaster nods and departs.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Sub-Commander 'Vadumee... what is your team's status?

'VADUMEE

On stand-by and ready to depart when you are, Commander.

COMMANDER

Then let us go now before the humans are given any more time.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. HALO, VALLEY - DAY

CORTANA

(concerned)

Chief! Chief! Can you hear me?

FADE TO:

WE SEE THROUGH THE CHIEF'S EYES -- AT FIRST, OUR VISION IS BLURRED.

The Chief's head is on the ground, looking straight out across the lifeboat's shrapnel and a peaceful waterfall in the distance.

AS HE STANDS TO HIS FEET, HIS VISION BEGINS TO RETURN...

He steadies himself against a large piece of the lifeboat. For a moment, he looks around for the others who were in the boat with him. All that remains are lifeless bodies.

They are all dead.

CORTANA

The impact... there's nothing we could have done.

WE PULL BACK FROM THE SHOT, WINDING AROUND THE CHIEF AS HE EXAMINES THE NEW ENVIRONMENT. LOW TO THE GROUND, WE MOVE AROUND HIM...

Finally standing upright, the Spartan stares out over the landscape of a majestic valley set into the surrounding mountains -- towering evergreens and large boulders mottle the vast green landscape. A narrow waterfall in the distance creates a small river which winds toward his left and underneath a slender bridge.

WE STOP BEHIND HIM AS HE LOOKS OUT ACROSS...

...a cresting precipice which stares over a sheer drop. He sees the sprawling landscape of the ring world stretched out in front of him and arching upward deep into the blue sky.

WE PULL BACK AND FOR THE FIRST TIME CAN TRULY CAPTURE THE IMMENSE SIZE OF THE RING'S SURFACE.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

This ring. It's incredible...

CHIEF

What is it supposed to be?

CORTANA

Hold on... Chief, I'm detecting an inbound Covenant dropship. It must be looking for survivors. I recommend immediate evasion.

The Master Chief moves across the narrow bridge and underneath the shadow of the canyon's wall. There he waits as the dropship makes its pass.

It is a SPIRIT DROPSHIP -- composed of two large armatures which extend from a box-like cockpit under-girded by a heavy PLASMA CANNON.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

There are some survivors in the canyon next to this one. If the Covenant find them, they won't stand a chance.

CHIEF

Then we'll just have to find them first.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, CRASH SITE - DAY

In a dry and barren wasteland several miles wide and bordered in on all sides by a steep mountain range, the Pillar of Autumn has crashed.

Its enormous shape is buried into the dirt as though it had PLOWED into the ground before coming to a halt. Smoke still curls upward from various sections. The ship is badly damaged.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, BRIDGE

The bridge is empty and silent. There is no sign of Keyes or his crew.

CUT TO:

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, OUTER HULL - DAY

WE LOOK OUT OVER THE LENGTH OF THE WARSHIP. AT THE NEAREST PART OF THE HULL, WE SEE A BOX RISE UP FROM THE SHIP'S ARMORED SURFACE. THIS IS A MAINTENANCE LIFT AND IT IS CARRYING...

Half a dozen naval officers, including Keyes and Eckhart. They step out onto the armored shell, taking in the acrid air of the valley they find themselves in.

Keyes moves forward and speaks.

KEYES

With most of the conveyance and security systems in disarray, the only chance we have of abandoning the Autumn would be through the stern's fighter bay. There should be something we can use to get out of here...

LORENZO, the ship's navigation officer is noticeably concerned.

LORENZO

And where to then?

KEYES

We have to get to Cortana and find a way to get her back home... to get all of us back home.

Then, in the distance above the mountain range, dark shapes can be seen. As they approach, it becomes very clear...

They are Covenant.

A pair of SPIRIT DROPSHIPS sidle a single COMMAND SHUTTLE, soaring across the open, arid landscape toward the Autumn.

Less utilitarian than a dropship, the command shuttle has a small, triangular body with two curved wings that extend outward at a 45° angle from its chassis and a single stabilizing fin, identical to the wings but rising completely vertical from the same carriage.

LORENZO

Oh, shit. We're done for...

ECKHART

(turns to Keyes)

Evasion, sir?

KEYES

Negative. They've already seen us...

LORENZO

(frantic)

They're gonna kill us... I just know it!

KEYES

Stow it, Lorenzo. If they were going to kill us, they would have done it already. They wanted something before... hopefully they still want it. Whatever it is.

The three vessels approach and their noses tilt upward as they draw back their speed. One Spirit hovers close, turning about and slowly circling the humans while the other veers off, flanking the Autumn -- seemingly looking for other survivors.

The command shuttle stops and spins around, opening its rear bay hatch which quickly becomes a ramp leading down onto the Autumn's hull. From within, four Elites emerge wearing black armor.

They are followed by the Supreme Commander and Sub-Commander 'Vadumee. The Elites waste no time, moving immediately to Keyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, CRYOSTORAGE - DAY

The flanking Spirit dropship is scanning the wreckage like a fly over a carcass. It stops at the hull breach in cryostorage, closely examining what little is left of the cradle system.

After a few seconds, it leaves and continues scanning other sections of the ship.

CUT TO:

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, OUTER HULL - DAY

The commander approaches Keyes, staring him in the eye.

COMMANDER

Why have you come here? What do you know of this place?

The captain remains silent. BEAT.

COMMANDER

(agitated)

Bring them all to our cruiser's brig. They will talk or they will die.

The Elites begin herding the Autumn's crew members into a nearby Spirit, locking them into place with shackles made of energy. The commander stares intently at Keyes, trying to read him.



Then the Elites begin boarding their own shuttle, but before the Spirit's hatch is closed, the Autumn's crew hears an Elite pilot speak over their COM.

SPIRIT PILOT

Commander, this ship... It appears to have carried a demon.

The commander gazes out at the mountainside in the distance. Then he looks directly at Keyes, as though he is trying to perceive what the human is thinking.

COMMANDER

(turns to 'Vadumee)

Very well, find the demon and bring its corpse to me.

Keyes' face becomes grim as the hatch closes.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, VALLEY - DAY

In a valley adjacent to the Chief's crash site...

Several Marines have banded together atop a large platform -- a structure which is built about twenty feet above the ground but unlike any human or Covenant architecture we've seen.

It is composed of a gray stone material conjoining with a simple series of ramps and walkways. Rising from the center of the platform is an angular spire which climbs a hundred feet into the air. The platform is located near the mouth of a large valley, its furthest end gradually dropping down into a rock-strewn quarry.

Below the platform, the Covenant have already amassed. Here, two Elites and a handful of Grunts have gathered, firing up at the trapped Marines.

In addition to those, there is a pair of JACKALS -- sinewy-fleshed and bird-faced aliens. These Covenant scouts carry CIRCULAR ENERGY SHIELDS on one arm, holding a plasma pistol in their other hand. They are swift and nimble, albeit frail.

The Marines are scattered across this side of the platform, attempting to use their elevated position to push the Covenant back. WILLIAMS and CARTER are here, shouting over the weapon fire and tucked behind a small series of knee walls which gird the rim of platform.

CARTER

Any word from the Sarge?

WILLIAMS

No. He's gotta be in as deep as we are though...

They rise briefly, blind firing and lobbing grenades at the Covenant soldiers.

Carter is looking at a small box sitting nearby -- a MOTION SENSOR OVERLAY of their position which pans out in all directions for miles. It is tracking both friendlies and enemies.

He notices several clusters of enemy units moving quickly toward their position.

CARTER

Shit!

WILLIAMS

What?

CARTER

We've got Covenant dropships. They're coming in fast.

WILLIAMS

Damn it.

CARTER

We should fall back. Maybe we can start moving some of these guys out of here, through the back...

CORTANA

(over the COM)

Hold your position, Marines, reinforcements are on the way.

WILLIAMS

Cortana?

The two Marines look up.

A few hundred feet beyond the Covenant they see a hulking green-armored body running at a DEAD SPRINT across a grassy plain. The Master Chief is BLITZING through the field LIKE A FREIGHT TRAIN. He pulls his assault rifle from his back mid-stride and begins to FIRE.

Without slowing, the Spartan lowers his shoulder and COLLIDES with one of the Elites, sending it to the ground HARD. The Chief pours the remainder of his rifle's ammunition into the fallen alien's chest. The beast ROARS in agony with its final breath.

The Spartan retrieves a PLASMA GRENADE from the ground -- a small, multi-colored sphere. As he depresses its side, it primes with a high-pitched BEEP -- becoming engulfed in a WHITE FLAME slithering into the air.

He hurls the grenade upward in the direction of a pack of enemies -- it arcs across the air and lands onto the head of a Grunt. The small alien SQUEALS out in terror, running with its arms FLAILING ABOUT.

GRUNT

Get it off! Get it off!

It runs right into the second Elite, just in time for him to turn around.

BOOM!

Both the Grunt and the Elite are BLOWN AWAY by the blast.

CORTANA

Chief, Jackals!

The Chief turns from his victims to a cluster of trees on his left where a pair of Jackals emerge.

The Jackals each fire CHARGED PLASMA BURSTS from their weapons -- large shards of green energy which sail through the air toward the Chief. The Spartan narrowly dodges both, and then RUSHES the two aliens.

He SHATTERS the nearest one's energy shield with his shoulder, knocking the creature back and allowing him to fire into it. The second tries to fire again, but the Chief grabs the creature's arm and BREAKS it, forcing the Jackal to the ground with a SHRIEK. He empties the remainder of his clip into its chest.

A handful of other Grunts attempt to escape the slaughter, but the Marines mop them up quickly from above -- neutralizing the remainder of the Covenant threat.

The Master Chief walks up a ramp and onto the platform, while reloading his weapon. The Marines huddle around him as he approaches. Cortana speaks through the Chief's COM unit to the others.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

Where's your CO?

CARTER

Sergeant Johnson and the rest of our squad were on a separate lifeboat. They touched ground on the other side of this ridge. We've been pinned here since we landed.

CORTANA

Chief, I'm going to radio for air support. We need to get these Marines out of here.

Two Covenant dropships appear over the canyon's rim, dropping low and moving quickly toward the valley's center. The Chief pushes through the group of Marines and then launches into a full sprint toward the dropships' inbound vector, hefting himself over the sidewall of the platform and onto the ground below.

The Marines look on in amazement.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, ABSOLUTION'S SUITE

Absolution approaches a LARGE MACHINE embedded into the floor of his private suite. He presses a variety of keys on its face and after a brief HUMMING SOUND, a holographic image of three Prophets appears above it -- the trio sitting atop their hovering thrones.

These three are the PROPHET OF TRUTH, PROPHET OF REGRET and PROPHET OF MERCY. They are the political and religious leaders of the Covenant and they are known as HIERARCHS. They wear large headdresses and dramatic robes, clearly a representation of status.

TRUTH

Ah, the Minister of Absolution. What tidings do you bring?

REGRET

Hopefully news of their planet's destruction.

ABSOLUTION

To be certain, Hierarchs. Their world melted like the face of a sun. I witnessed it myself.

MERCY

We are blessed.

ABSOLUTION

There is more to rejoice about, my Excellency. Look...

He submits a visual schematic of the ring world. The holographic representation floats in between the two parties. The hierarchs are ASTONISHED by the sight of the structure -- Truth is the first to recover. He hovers forward auspiciously grinning, clearly representing the leader of the three.

TRUTH

A Sacred Ring. Where did you find this Absolution?

ABSOLUTION

I've submitted the coordinates. Come as soon as you are able.

TRUTH

Without question... You must locate and prepare the Consecration Chamber so that the Council may begin the process of ushering in the Great Journey when they arrive.

Truth is on the edge of his hovering chair -- almost giddy.

ABSOLUTION

Assuredly.

REGRET

Do not folly, Absolution. Our passage into the divine beyond has never been as close. If the promise is fettered by incompetence, we will not be pleased.

ABSOLUTION

I will not allow anyone to muddle the clarity of our calling, your Holiness.

Absolution bows and silence fills the air as the holographic projection fades away.

Within seconds, an Elite approaches. This is the EMISSARY, an Elite zealot specifically dedicated to the service of Absolution.

This particular Elite stands taller than the others. His skin is bleached white with specs of orange which mottle his back and neck. Long scars from lacerations cross jaggedly over his ribs on both sides of his torso.

His armor is older, a gold-coloration and scarce. He only wears gold-plated greaves from his knee to his combat boots and pauldrons, which heavily rest across his shoulders -- dangling behind it is a gathering of human skulls.

EMISSARY

You mentioned nothing of the humans to the Hierarchs.

ABSOLUTION

That is not our problem, Emissary. Soon all unbelievers will be ash, both human and Covenant. The commander's heathen curiosity has allowed the humans to infest this perfect ring. I can't imagine that the Lords will grant him or those who follow him passage on the Great Journey for such foolishness...

(determined)

Come, we seek the Silent Cartographer. Only with its secrets can we light the ring.

EMISSARY

And this demon?

He lifts his three slender fingers and points toward the skulls.

ABSOLUTION

(smiling)

You'll have your trophy soon enough, my friend.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, VALLEY - DAY

At the top of a hill only a few hundred feet from the platform...

The Master Chief and the Marines are taking cover behind a slew of rocks. They issue SUPPRESSIVE FIRE from their position as a nearby Spirit dropship opens its hatches to release Covenant infantry.

The Marines hurl FRAGMENTATION GRENADES at the Covenant's direction creating a chain reaction of EXPLOSIONS. An Elite and Jackal are killed and the dropship shudders against the concussive force of the blast. One of its extended armatures drops dangerously close to the ground, evidently damaged.

The Spartan doesn't hesitate.

As the dropship falters, the Chief CHARGES from his covered position and LEAPS ATOP the vessel's damaged armature, scaling the metallic purple column before the Covenant can take notice.

At first the dropship attempts to rise, but its damaged propulsion system QUAKES, and the Chief soon reaches the back of the chassis, immediately above the cockpit of the craft. Without mercy, he WALLS into it with his fists -- repeatedly until a hole appears.

The dropship begins to SPIN ABOUT, its pilot recognizing the urgency of the threat and trying desperately to shake it free. Its lowered armature SLAMS into a pair of Jackals, BURYING them into the ground as it spirals out of control.

Reaching into the vehicle, the Chief pulls out a fistful of cable and RIPS them from the ship's chassis. The act causes the entire vessel to COLLAPSE onto the ground, crushing the Covenant below it in a grizzly display.

The Marines move out from cover to meet the Chief, as he climbs down from the wreckage.

FOEHAMMER

Echo Four-Nineteen on approach. Cortana, you copy?

Overhead, a PELICAN comes into view. FOEHAMMER is a female pilot with a confident and seasoned tone of voice.

This dropship is a heavy-looking bird with a narrow cockpit, arrow-like shape and a slender tail. Underneath the tail, a hatch opens revealing the Pelican's rear hold. Dangling close behind the hatch is a WARTHOG.

CORTANA

We copy, Foehammer. We have some Marines who need evac back to the Autumn.

FOEHAMMER

That's a negative, Cortana. The Autumn's been compromised.

The Marines trade concerned glances as the Pelican drops lower.

FOEHAMMER (CONT'D)

Lost contact with the captain about an hour ago. We don't even know if he made it.

CORTANA

I'm going to use the Chief's armor to latch onto the Covenant battlenet... See if we can get a trace on the captain's CNI transponder.

Several Marines start piling into the back of the Pelican. Carter and Williams stay near the Chief.

CARTER

What about Sergeant Johnson, Foehammer? His lifeboat crashed on the other side of the ridge.

FOEHAMMER

Sorry. There's no room for me to set down over there, soldier... too tight.

The Marines exchange looks of concern.

CORTANA

Detach your Warthog, Foehammer. The Chief will take these two to find their squad. Bring the others to safety. We'll rendezvous after we've located Johnson.

FOEHAMMER

Ten-four, Cortana. Good luck.

The WARTHOG drops onto the ground, bouncing slightly on its shocks. It is a LIGHT RECON VEHICLE with large wheels, two-seats buried underneath a roll cage and a fifty caliber turret mounted on its rear deck.

The Chief climbs into the driver's seat, firing up its engine with a ROAR. Carter takes the turret while Williams rides shotgun. As the Pelican rises into the air, the Chief PEELS OUT, kicking up dirt and gravel. He drives toward the rock-laden valley below their position.

WE SAIL OVERHEAD TAKING IN A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE WARTHOG AS IT WINDS THROUGH THE LARGE STONES AND BOULDERS SCATTERED ACROSS THE VALLEY FLOOR.

CHIEF

There's a cave ahead.

The Warthog rolls toward the cave's mouth, slowing down to a stop. The Chief activates the vehicle's headlights, boring a hole into the darkness.

CORTANA

I'm using your armor's power to generate a seismic readout... This cave is not a natural formation. Let's keep moving...

INT. HALO, CAVE

The Warthog PUSHES its way into the dark interior, shining its beams of light across the cave's inner walls. Although at first the structure appears to be a natural composition of stone, eventually the walls become flat and the architecture becomes clearly artificial, resembling the material used on the previous structure.

CORTANA

Someone built this passageway, so it must lead somewhere.

INT. HALO, CAVERN

The Warthog turns down a sharp corridor into a large dark room with a ceiling that stretches HUNDREDS OF FEET INTO THE AIR -- similar in scale to the canyon they had come from but starkly different in shape.

It looks both ancient and advanced.

The Warthog comes to stop at the end of a steep precipice looking out across a MASSIVE CHASM. On the other side is another pathway and corridor, indicating that there is a way to cross.

The three pile out of the Warthog, peering down into blackness below. The Chief kicks a stone off the edge.

No sound returns.

CARTER

There's got to be a way across.

The Marines look around briefly until the Chief approaches a nearby wall. There, a panel opens suddenly revealing a holographic keypad which is FLASHING. At first surprised, the Chief hesitantly presses the key and turns toward the chasm to see...

A pair of long metallic apparatuses extend from both sides of the abyss and a LARGE BAND OF LIGHT illuminates in between them, bridging the center of the room.

WILLIAMS



Looks like the tech the Covenant have on their ships.

Carter tosses a stone atop it, and it stays.

CARTER

It's solid.

The Chief and the others pile back into the Hog and begin roll across the bridge slowly.

WILLIAMS

So this ring... it was built by the Covenant?

CORTANA

No. This technology. Everything here. It's far more advanced than anything we've encountered with the Covenant.

The Warthog picks up speed as it close in on the other side.

WILLIAMS

But why build a bridge like this? Why a draw bridge?

CARTER

To stop people from breaking in... right?

BEAT.

CHIEF

Or to keep something from breaking out.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, RAVINE - DAY

The Covenant cruiser, Truth and Reconciliation, is hovering, several hundred feet above a narrow ravine...

Apart from the gnarled tree trunks, patches of brambles and various rock formations, the valley is barren. The perimeter is composed of a steep ridge line on all sides save for one, which simply drops off into an enormous crevice.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, BRIG

Within a cell block of cruiser's brig are the crewmembers of the Autumn...

The cell block is a simple room, by Covenant standards: a truncated corridor with an entrance on one end and a terminal control station on the other. Flanking the perimeter, are the cells themselves, guarded by a solid barrier of red light.

In one cell, Keyes and Eckhart discuss their predicament as calmly as they can manage.

ECKHART

What do you think they want?

KEYES

I don't know... it has something to do with this place. This ring.

ECKHART

But it was protocol... a random escape trajectory from Reach.

KEYES

Tell that to the Covenant.

ECKHART

What's going to happen when they find out the truth?

Keyes gives Eckhart a cold stare, as though he wished he had something comforting to say but can't muster the words.

Then they are interrupted by a break of light is seen at the doorway on the front end of the cell block. The door opens and the humans preparedly stand to their feet.

Four Elites move into the room. Two are standard blue-armored guards, one is the shipmaster and the other is the Supreme Commander of the fleet.

SHIPMASTER

I despise their disgusting stench.

The Supreme Commander's head turns about briskly, looking at each cell while ignoring the shipmaster's retort.

COMMANDER

(pointing to Keyes' cell)

This cell. Take them both out.

One of the guards opens the cell at the terminal while the other, his plasma rifle raised, escorts the two to the center of the room. There, the guard forces them onto their knees.

The shipmaster approaches and reveals a HUMAN PISTOL. He holds it up, briefly examining it in an awkward way in his large hand.

SHIPMASTER

Such a vile implement... crude and primitive, yet... fitting.

He forces it into the hand of Eckhart and raises his arm so that the weapon is pointing directly at Keyes' head. The captain turns briefly to see this, but then returns his gaze forward, stoically swallowing his breath.

An Elite FORCES the plasma rifle's tip to the back of Eckhart's head, as a reminder that they are in control.

SHIPMASTER (CONT'D)

Come now, human. He is your captain and he has ordered you to be silent. If he is dead, his order is null. Kill him and tell us what you know.

Eckhart begins to SHAKE, his eyes water. He is trying to talk, but can't.

SHIPMASTER (CONT'D)

Pathetic swine, how did you find Halo? What do you know about it?

Eckhart and Keyes both look surprisingly at the Elite, as though they have been caught completely off guard. He begins to sweat and stutter as he tries to form words.

ECKHART

H-H-Halo? What are you -

SHIPMASTER

Putrid vermin. Let me show you how it's done.

The shipmaster grabs the weapon, puts it at Keyes' forehead and cocks the chamber back. Eckhart begins to talk, stuttering and stammering even more now.

ECKHART

W-W-Wait. H-H-Halo? Is that what you call this place?

Without warning, the shipmaster turns the gun on Eckhart and FIRES INTO HIS HEAD, killing him instantly and spraying blood across Keyes' face. The human's lifeless body slumps to the floor, spilling blood.

The shipmaster steps away, unloading the weapon and dropping it onto the floor, while the commander moves forward and leans into the Keyes' face.

COMMANDER

Do not think us ignorant. We will kill you last, but each one of your crew will die before you, just as this one has. Tell us what you know about this ring or

give us your ship's intelligence  
construct so we may get the information  
from it.

SHIPMASTER

It won't talk. It's as daft as the other.

Keyes expression remains HARDENED despite the Eckhart's blood splattered across his own face. The commander pulls back just as the shipmaster moves in and BELTS Keyes across his face, knocking him out and dropping him to the floor.

The Supreme Commander is clearly agitated by the shipmaster's lack of control.

COMMANDER

Guards...

The guards heft up Keyes and bring the human back to his cell, sealing it shut.

The Supreme Commander leaves, closely followed by the shipmaster. When the door closes, the commander turns to the shipmaster sternly.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

You are far too brash for your post...  
something which can be easily remedied if  
I see fit.

The shipmaster is embarrassed by this open berating on his own vessel. He lowers his face in shame.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Keep him here. Keep them all here. Double  
your sentries.

BEAT.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

The demon may try to retrieve its captain.

SHIPMASTER

And if it does, its head will be given to  
you as an apology for my actions,  
Commander.

COMMANDER

Do not underestimate it. The demon has  
survived thus far.

SHIPMASTER

Nevertheless, its life will come to an  
end if it sets foot on my ship. I will  
see to it myself.

The shipmaster bows and the Supreme Commander leaves, the guards trailing behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, VALLEY - DAY

There are four Marines atop a large rock formation at the end of a long and winding gorge set into sheer cliffs. This gorge is similar to the other verdant canyons in color and fauna, but is considerably more narrow and enclosed.

At the base of the rock formation are the Covenant. They have the Marines TRAPPED and continue to level heavy fire at them from the ground below.

WE PUSH IN ON THE MARINES TO FIND...

...Sergeant Johnson and the remainder of his squad: Jenkins, Bisenti and Mendoza. They fire down at the Covenant whenever they're afforded a chance, but they are running out of ammunition.

JENKINS

I don't know how much longer they're going to take this, Sarge.

JOHNSON

Stop your belly-aching, Jenkins. They'll take it as long as we god damn want them to!

Johnson looks over a boulder he's using for cover and shouts down to the Covenant troops below.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(yelling)

You hear me you ugly sons of bitches. You're gonna take my gun up your ass all day long. We ain't goin nowhere till you surrender. You hear me!

He returns to his cover behind the rock, reloading his weapon as he continues to mutter profanities under his breath.

BISENTI

Seriously, Sarge. We only have ammo for a few more minutes. When we run out, they're coming up here.

JOHNSON

We won't need it.

BEAT.

BISENTI

What... why not?

Johnson nods to the mouth of gorge about half a mile away.

In the distance a single Warthog is racing along the gorge's floor at top speed to their position. The Master Chief is at the wheel.

JOHNSON

Because he is here.

Before firing a single round from its turret, the Warthog BARRELS head on into the unsuspecting Covenant, CRUSHING the bones of Jackals and Grunts against its air dam and underneath its heavy wheels.

The Chief pulls the Warthog around tightly, kicking up clumps of dirt while sliding sideways across the grass. Then Carter opens up the rear turret. The echo from the weapon CRACKS across the valley, as Carter finishes the remainder of the Covenant.

Johnson and the other Marines have already moved down the backside and come to the front of the rocks, as the Chief rolls to a stop. Johnson fires his rifle indiscriminately at the Covenant corpses, unloading the remainder of his clip into them.

He hands his rifle to Bisenti with a dry stare.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You were right. I ran out.

The Chief climbs out of the Warthog and the two shake hands.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Good to see you again.

CHIEF

Likewise.

JOHNSON

Cortana?

CORTANA

I'm here, Sergeant... I have good news and bad news.

The Chief kneels down to grab a pair of plasma grenades from the dead Covenant. The Marines begin following suit, collecting weapons and loading them into the Warthog.

JOHNSON

Shoot.

CORTANA

The good news is that Echo Four-Nineteen is still up and running. We've got a good number of units that survived the drop.

JOHNSON  
And the bad news?

CORTANA  
They've captured the Autumn. Keyes and his crew are being held in a Covenant ship roughly three hundred kilometers up spin.

BEAT.

JOHNSON  
Well, get Foehammer on the phone for evac. Keyes ain't gonna rescue himself.

CORTANA  
And the Chief and I?

He cocks his eyebrow up.

JOHNSON  
You didn't think I was going in empty handed did you?

CORTANA  
We'll gladly tag along. The captain might not be too pleased though.

Johnson climbs into the Warthog's driver seat and shoots the approaching Master Chief a glance, while lighting up a new cigar.

JOHNSON  
You didn't think I was going to let you drive, did you?

The Chief takes the passenger seat while the rest of the Marines pile on the back, clinging to the Hog as it moves off to the gorge's mouth.

JOHNSON (O.S.)  
I can't ride worth a shit. Great driver though.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, COMMAND DECK

Sub-Commander 'Vadumee stands at the center of the Seeker of Truth's command deck directly across from Absolution and his personal guard, Emissary.

He is arguing with Absolution.

ABSOLUTION

So you see with what importance our hierarchs place this task. Even your commander does not have power to overrule their judgment.

'VADUMEE

This is my battle group, Absolution. I will not endeavor any spiritual tasks until the human threat is quelled. Strategic concerns are a Sangheili matter.

BEAT.

ABSOLUTION

Very well, contact your commander. Put an end to my belaboring with one question.

'Vadumee reluctantly complies, hailing the Supreme Commander on the communication channel at the deck's viewscreen.

COMMANDER

Speak.

'VADUMEE

Commander, I had hoped not to bother you, but this Proph -

ABSOLUTION

(interrupting)

Supreme Commander, your Excellency, might I offer you but one question on behalf of the hierarchs and those members of the High Council.

'Vadumee shoots Absolution a COLD GLARE.

COMMANDER

You contacted the hierarchs without notifying me?

BEAT.

ABSOLUTION

Only to update them on your quick victory against the humans.

COMMANDER

Our victory is not yet complete, Absolution. You know this as well as I do. What have you told them?

ABSOLUTION

Their interest was not with the humans, but with the Sacred Ring. They demanded



that I search for the Consecration Chamber.

COMMANDER

Very well, take a vessel and conduct your search.

ABSOLUTION

If only it were so easy. There are two precise locations which I believe the Chamber could be found. For this, I need time or resources. Since the humans could be on their way to the Chamber at this very moment, we have no time. I simply ask for manpower.

COMMANDER

I have no Elites to spare for some ecclesiastical mission, Absolution. Take your Emissary and go on your own.

ABSOLUTION

If the humans discover the Chamber first, then it will become a matter of security, not faith. I ask for but two ships to search two likely locations. One for myself and one for the Sub-Commander and his special operations unit.

`VADUMEE

Absolutely not! I have hundreds here to command, thousands by way of ship -

ABSOLUTION

(defiant)

Let the commander speak!

The Supreme Commander ponders for a brief moment. Absolution CLUTCHES his three-fingered hands together in excited anticipation.

COMMANDER

Sub-Commander, mount up your team. This will be brief, I assure you.

(turns to Absolution)

He will be used for one operation and one only. When his team has completed this task, he will be returned to his station. Till then, I will instruct the local shipmasters to operate independently.

BEAT.

`VADUMEE

(through gritted teeth)

Yes, Commander.

COMMANDER

Absolution, do not abuse your power by contacting the hierarchs without my permission. If I hear of it again, I will remove your hands at the arm. Is that understood?

ABSOLUTION

With the greatest of deference,  
Excellency.

COMMANDER

Report to me when your inquiries have been satisfied.

The transmission ends.

'VADUMEE

(bitter)

Give me the coordinates so that I may return to my business.

ABSOLUTION

Emissary...

The Emissary hands the Sub-Commander a data pad -- a small, glass-like substance which carries information. 'Vadumee examines the data pad while the other two are leaving the deck.

ABSOLUTION (CONT'D)

(looking away)

There are two likely places. One which is located at the edge of a tepid sea, a beautiful beach swallowed by the warm sunlight. The other in the darkest of marshlands, with the stench of bog and swamp rising like fumes in a coffin.

'Vadumee looks toward Absolution.

ABSOLUTION (CONT'D)

(grinning sinisterly)

You can guess which one I gave you.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, RIDGE LINE - NIGHT

WE FOLLOW TWO LOW-FLYING PELICANS, AS THEY MOVE QUICKLY ACROSS A DESERT... UNDER THE COVER OF NIGHT.

The massive gas giant Threshold LOOMS in the black sky, softly lighting what would otherwise be complete darkness. Both the Chief and Johnson

cling to the ramp struts as their birds come to a stop near the edge of steep basin -- surrounded by the same ridge they approached under.

FOEHAMMER (O.C.)

We're gonna to try to stay out of sight  
until you're ready for evac.

JOHNSON

Roger, Foehammer.

AS THE PELICANS SHOVE OFF, WE BOOM UPWARD, PEERING OVER THE RIDGE AND TAKING IN THE VALLEY BELOW... THIS IS THE SAME VALLEY WE SAW UNDERNEATH TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION EARLIER.

The Marines drop onto their stomachs at the edge of the ridge, overlooking what lies below...

The valley below is now teeming with Covenant. Most of the units are Jackals and Grunts stationed on immobile turret tripods called SHADES.

A handful of Elites pace around what is shown to be the Marines' objective -- a GRAVITY LIFT.

At the center of the basin-like valley is the lift's base, a large circular platform of corrugated steel, punctuated by short grips around its perimeter.

WE PAN UPWARD TO SEE...

...a wide column of purple energy sizzling from the platform and rising into an open bay of a Covenant cruiser high above.

CORTANA

This is Truth and Reconciliation. It was  
damaged by the Autumn earlier. Looks like  
they're trying to repair it.

The vessel is ENORMOUS at this angle, hanging over their position like a dark cloud.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

They use this gravity lift to ferry  
supplies between ring and the ship. From  
what I can tell, they appear to want the  
captain alive for now. That could change,  
so let's make this quick.

The Chief and Johnson set their sniper rifles down alongside the other Marines, dropping prone and examining their enemies through their scopes.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

18 Jackals, 15 Grunts with five manning  
Shades and there are four Elites  
positioned near the lift.

Two other Elites emerge from behind the canyon wall; both of them are driving GHOSTS -- the single-manned, tube-like recon vehicles with broad flat stabilizing wings on both sides. In unison, they move in circular patterns, hovering across the valley like VULTURES over carrion.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
Oh, did I mention the Ghosts?

All of the Marines ready their weapons, staring down their sights at the enemies below.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
Do not engage the enemy until the Chief  
and Johnson have. Once we have a numeric  
advantage, the sergeant will clear you to  
move down the ravine.

The Chief, still looking through his sniper rifle's scope, speaks to Johnson...

CHIEF  
I've got 9, 11 and noon. You get 14, 15  
and 17 hundred.

JOHNSON  
What about the Ghosts?

CHIEF  
Leave them to me.

JOHNSON  
(under his breath)  
Cocky bastard.

Johnson takes a deep breath and holds it.

CRACK! CRACK! CRACK! CRACK!

The fire of several sniper rounds is heard and the bodies of Elites and turret-manning Grunts fall lifeless to the ground. Some of the remaining Covenant, alarmed by what just took place, scurry about the dead bodies -- Jackals covering their heads with their energy shields while running away.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
(mocking)  
Yeah, you dumb bugs. What the hell  
happened? Turn around, look stupid. Run.

The Marines chuckle.

EXT. HALO, RAVINE - NIGHT

By the time the other Marines have fired their own weapons, the Chief is already CHARGING down the side of the ravine into the Covenant fortified valley.

He moves at a BLISTERING PACE, kicking up dirt and rocks as he darts in and out of boulders quickly descending into the ravine.

EXT. HALO, RIDGE LINE - NIGHT

Jenkins fires his sniper rifle and takes down a Grunt who was making a run for an empty turret. As the Covenant begin to fire at the Spartan, the Marines stand up and continue to suppress the remainder of the Covenant forces.

JOHNSON

(shouting)

Bisenti, Mendoza and Jenkins, you three charge those turrets lining that bulwark to the left. Carter and Williams, follow me to the lift.

The Marines form up, readying their weapons quickly.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Keep your head down, shoot for the chest and whatever you do, don't stop running.

He stands to his feet, shouting loudly through his cigar-clenched teeth...

JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Go! Go! Go!

The Marines plunge down into the valley alongside their sergeant.

EXT. HALO, RAVINE - NIGHT

The Chief now runs with his pistol out, taking shots at enemies as he bobs in and out of large boulders for cover. He continues to plow into the Covenant defenses, breaking through a pair of Jackals with his shoulder -- diffusing their energy shields and leveling them with pure brute force.

The two Elites manning Ghosts take notice, strafing their vehicles into position -- like SHARKS attempting to surround the prey. One Elite waves his FIST forward, signaling the start of their attack. They both fire WHITE BOLTS OF PLASMA ENERGY in the Spartan's direction.

The Chief, however, doesn't stop.

He only quickens his pace and CHARGES the nearest one, LAUNCHING himself into the air as a stream of plasma fire trails up behind him.

The Ghost attempts to evade the Spartan's fall, but is too late. The Chief CRASHES DOWN HARD on the front end of the vehicle, sending the craft REARING BACKWARDS.

He swings from the side of the Ghost, bringing his boot into the Elite's face and KNOCKING the beast onto the ground. As the creature begins to stand up, dazed and bewildered, the Chief has already turned the vehicle about and accelerated.

The Ghost HITS the Elite head on.

The alien's body is INSTANTLY LEVELED by the curved nose of the craft, flipping upward into the air and falling back to the ground in its wake.

Turning again, the Chief quickly finds the second Ghost.

The two enemies now trade fire while strafing back and forth. After a few seconds of this dance, they both grow impatient and RUSH each other, boosting toward their opponent at full speed.

BOOM!

The force of the collision DESTROYS both Ghosts, creating an explosion which throws the drivers into the ground. The Chief stands up, shaking it off quickly while searching for the Elite.

He finds the creature nearby struggling to get up and kicks him in the side, turning him over with his foot. The Spartan fires three rounds with his pistol into the Elite's chest and the alien stops moving.

He turns to the lift, looking for the other Marines. Johnson, Carter and Williams have taken out the remainder of Covenant near the base of the structure.

JOHNSON

You kids clear up there?

The other three Marines wave from the ridge fifty yards away.

BISENTI

(over the COM)

Clear, sir.

The Chief approaches Johnson at the lift's base.

CORTANA

We're clear here as well, Sergeant, but I'm detecting something large coming down the lift...

Jenkins uses his sniper rifle to track the object.

JENKINS

(over the COM)

Yes, ma'am. We've got Hunters.

The Master Chief moves onto the platform, looking straight up into the cruiser's belly. He sees a pair of GIANT ALIENS quickly descend through a cascade of energy.

The HUNTER is the largest of Covenant infantry, a lumbering five ton biped which stands at twelve feet. Underneath the heavy armor, the Hunter is composed of fleshy orange slugs. One arm carries an eight foot shield of solid steel and the other a heavy fuel rod cannon. Its back maintains a cluster of thick protruding barbs, each a yard long.

JOHNSON

Eyes on the lift! Fire as soon as they  
hit bottom!

At the base of the platform, there's a small terminal station which appears to control the lift's directional flow.

CORTANA

Chief, put me down on that terminal. I'll  
try to reverse the energy's conveyance.

The Chief quickly removes Cortana's chip from the back of his helmet and she jumps into the lift's system. He takes cover behind one of the jutting pieces of architecture grooved around the lift's rim.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

Oh those clever... this is going to take  
a while. They've done a number on the  
lift's security encryption.

The Chief stows his sniper and reloads his pistol, gazing upward at the armored Hunters coming down the lift. As soon as the beasts touch the ground, there is an ONSLAUGHT OF FIRE from human-operated Covenant turrets and stationed snipers.

After a moment, the Marines stop.

The smoke and cinders fade away yet the Hunters remain behind their massive arm-shields, seemingly UNTOUCHED.

They launch their counterattack, firing SHIMMERING GREEN MORTARS at the human's position. The explosions take out one of the stationary turrets, tossing Bisenti into the air like a rag doll.

The Chief immediately springs out of cover, running headlong into the pair of Hunters and successfully getting their attention.

WE FOLLOW HIM LOW TO THE GROUND, RUNNING ACROSS THE LIFT PLATFORM... HE PUSHES IN BETWEEN THE THUNDERING GIANTS AS THOUGH THEY WERE COLUMNS OF A LARGE BUILDING...

The nearest one attempts to CRUSH him with its shield, but narrowly misses, SLAMMING it into the platform with RESONATING BOOM. The other tries to do the same, but the Chief dodges it as well, rolling toward the opposite end of the platform.

The two Hunters follow him aggressively, pushing toward the edge of the valley where it drops off suddenly into an immense crevice.

WE FOLLOW THE BATTLE OVERHEAD... WATCHING THE MASTER CHIEF DIVERT THE HUNTERS TOWARD THE LEDGE...

A fall from this height would mean certain death.

The Hunters charge back and forth against the Chief, trying to pound him like an insect, but he's far too quick. He deftly moves in between and around them -- every step he takes, the three come closer to the edge of the cliff.

Then it happens.

A single move too slow and one of the two Hunters is able to SWEEP its arm shield into his chest, sending the Spartan's body up into the air like a child's toy.

The Chief hits the ground hard about fifteen yards away and he rolls onto his back -- the wind knocked out of him, he struggles to catch his breath.

The two Hunters bear down in his direction.

CHIEF  
(over the COM)  
You gonna take a shot?

JOHNSON  
Nah, I like to see you running away from something for once.

WE FOLLOW JOHNSON, ZOOMING IN ON THE HUNTERS WITH HIS SCOPE...

...he takes aim on the fleshy back of the nearest one, who has just now reached the Chief. The beast lifts its arm shield high into the air about to send it onto the Spartan's inert body.

Johnson FIRES.

The crack echoes across the valley and the Hunter's giant frame tips over and collapses with a DEEP BELLOW, just as the Chief narrowly rolls to the side.

The other Hunter turns to see its brother killed and ROARS at the Marines above, raising and priming its fuel rod cannon. Before it has chance to enact any revenge, the Master Chief has climbed atop the large barbs on its back and begins PUMMELING its face with his fists.



The Hunter THRASHES its arms violently about, trying to tear the Master Chief free. Its movements become more erratic and volatile, twirling around very near to the cliff's edge.

JOHNSON (CONT'D)  
Easy, Chief. You're getting close.

CHIEF  
(gritting his teeth)  
I know.

One final FLAIL sends the Hunter's weight toward the edge and over it. The Chief jumps off the creature at the last moment, grabbing the cliff ledge as the Hunter falls below.

He pulls himself onto the safety of the ground and moves toward the lift.

JOHNSON  
(shouting)  
Form up!

The Marines and Johnson aggregate on the platform. Bisenti has only suffered minor injuries.

CORTANA  
Done here, Chief. Yank me.

The Chief retrieves Cortana, joining Johnson and the Marines on the lift.

JOHNSON  
(to the Chief)  
One day you're gonna run into something  
that's tougher than you.

The Chief and Johnson look up toward Truth and Reconciliation.

CHIEF  
Maybe today.

The Marines begin to float upward into the air, climbing into the night sky and toward the gigantic cruiser above.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

WE VIEW THE COVENANT FLEET FROM A DISTANCE JUST ABOVE THE RING'S CURVING VISAGE. FROM THEIR FLAGSHIP, SEEKER OF TRUTH, A SINGLE, LONE PHANTOM EMERGES...

This dropship, considerably different from the rigid profile of the Spirit, has graceful and elegant curves forming an outer shell of

purple armor over the chassis. On both sides are doorways into the craft's rear hold, now sealed as it travels through the vacuum of space.

WE FOLLOW AS IT MOVES UNDERNEATH AND BETWEEN THE LARGE CARRIERS AND CRUISERS, FINALLY BREAKING FREE OF THE FLEET AND PUSHING OUT TOWARD THE RING'S SURFACE...

In the distance is a MIDSHIP, a spherical and intermediate support vessel typically used for storage and leisure. This one remains in a holding pattern several miles above the ring's surface.

INT. PHANTOM, REAR HOLD

Sub-Commander `Vadumee contacts the Supreme Commander from the dark interior of the Phantom dropship. A holographic representation of the commander appears in front of him.

He bows briefly before rising to speak.

`VADUMEE

Commander, know that I fully accept your authority, as I have in all of the campaigns which we've served together. But this Minister... there is something afoul here.

COMMANDER

I cannot argue with you, brother. I too feel that his motives are treacherous and self-serving. But what would you have me do... disobey the hierarchs?

`Vadumee drops his head.

`VADUMEE

No, Commander. I would not.

COMMANDER

If Absolution's actions prove foolhardy and cost the lives of any in your detachment, know that I will not only order his execution but I will proudly help you carry the sword to his neck.

BEAT.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Have faith in my word, brother. You will either unlock the secrets of Halo safely or Absolution will pay.

The Sub-Commander, clearly disheartened, bows loyally. The Supreme Commander nods and the image fades into the cold air of the dropship.

EXT. SPACE

The Phantom attaches to a docking tether which connects the dropship directly to the midship.

INT. MIDSHIP

The Sub-Commander moves through the corridor and into the midship where there are six other Elites, all in unique black armor which is only donned by the SPECIAL OPERATIONS TEAM or SPEC-OPS.

He approaches them...

'VADUMEE

Today, my brothers, we go about our  
Lords' work.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, CORRIDOR

Within the narrow confines of the cruiser's service corridors we find the Spartan and the Marines trading fire with enemies, as they move deeper into the detention block.

They battle Elites and Jackals, bounding from one point of cover to another. Finally, they reach a dimly-lit hallway with doorways on each side. The Chief looks to his left and finds a control pedestal.

CORTANA

The captain's transponder... he's in this  
cell block... Drop me onto that pedestal  
so I can open this door. You can pick me  
up on the other side.

The Spartan lowers Cortana onto the pedestal and she moves into their system.

JOHNSON

(shouting)

Jenkins, Williams, Bisenti. I need you to  
cover! Mendoza, Carter, keep your eyes on  
our six!

The Marines move into position, covering all lines of sight. Cortana speaks from the INSIDE of the cell block.

CORTANA (O.S.)

Chief...

CHIEF

Yeah?

CORTANA (O.S.)

Captain's here but it won't be easy. He's got company...

The Chief turns to Johnson and the Marines.

CHIEF  
Stay behind me.

The door opens.

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, BRIG

Light from the corridor BLEEDS INTO the dark cell block, casting itself over the body of a dead man -- Commander Eckhart.

The room is lined with the dim red light of the cells' energy barriers. The Chief moves in and immediately recognizes the distorted shapes of THREE ELITES -- they've enabled active camouflage on their armor, making them VIRTUALLY INVISIBLE.

The two furthest Elites ignite energy swords-- long, double-bladed weapons composed entirely of energy. They are powerful enough to cleave a man in two.

The Spartan wastes no time.

He leaps forward, charging the first Elite who is carrying a plasma rifle. Several shots are fired before the Chief's shoulder connects with the alien's stomach, knocking them both onto the ground and into an immediate STRUGGLE for position.

Johnson, Williams and Mendoza BURST INTO THE ROOM behind the Chief, firing at the nearest Elite on their side. The beast LUNGES FORWARD moving his blade with lethal speed. The sword swings hard against the humans' line and by the time they realize what has happened, it's too late.

Williams' body is lifted high into the air.

The energy sword has fully penetrated his abdomen, protruding out of his back. With a SWIFT turn of the alien's wrist, the Marine's body hits the floor.

Williams is dead.

The others charge forward in his stead, UNLEASHING HELLFIRE into the Elite until he too collapses. Carter appears in the corridor doorway, pulling Williams' body off to the corner of the room.

The Chief still has his hands full.

Although he has pinned the first Elite, the second rushes him with the sword - bearing no hesitation in THRUSTING IT FORWARD even at the risk of fratricide.

The Spartan spins about, THROWING the body of the first Elite in front of himself as a shield -- into the outstretched weapon. This "shield" CRIES OUT IN AGONY, as the blade pushes through him. At first the second Elite is shocked, but then he becomes furious. He yanks his wrist to the side, SEVERING his fellow Elite into two -- the disemboweled parts spill onto the ground.

With the camouflaged Elite still reeling from the Spartan's actions, the Chief SWINGS HIS OWN WEAPON, the sniper rifle, CRACKING the Elite in the face and pushing the creature backwards.

The Elite's sword comes free, hits the ground and slides out of reach. The beast's active camouflage fades and dies, revealing that this Elite, unlike the others, is important...

He is the SHIPMASTER.

The Chief sees his opportunity and seizes it, TACKLING THE ELITE to the ground and forcing his hands around the creature's neck. The beast bucks, trying to free itself, but it's too late. The Spartan has already wrapped his gauntlets around the Elite's throat, suffocating the shipmaster.

After a few moments of thrashing the Elite is dead.

Standing up, the Chief turns to the Marines huddled around Williams' body and then to Keyes, behind the cell's energy barriers.

Cortana opens the cells and appears on a pedestal near room's rear terminal station.

At first, Keyes ignores everyone, walking solemnly over to the body of Eckhart -- kneeling by him. He grabs his dog tag and yanks it free, holding it in his hand for a moment.

KEYES

I'm sorry.

He rises and then his attention shifts to the Chief -- giving the Spartan a disagreeable look.

KEYES (CONT'D)

(stern)

Coming here was reckless and a huge liability...

He places his hand on the Spartan's shoulder.

KEYES (CONT'D)

Thank you.

The Chief nods to the captain and they both turn to Cortana.

KEYES (CONT'D)

When they saw fit to kill Eckhart, they showed a few of their cards. This

place... this ring, it's important to them... very important. They called it Halo.

BEAT.

CORTANA

(thinking)

I see. Accessing the Covenant battlenet now... Yes, they believe this ring has some sort of religious significance. In fact, they speak of it as though it's some sort of a weapon.

JOHNSON

That ain't good...

CORTANA

What's more is that they've already sent reconnaissance teams to find its control room. If we don't hurry, our situation might get a whole lot worse.

KEYES

That's all I need to hear. We're getting the hell out of here and we're going to find that control room.

(to everyone)

If Halo is a weapon and we can turn it against the Covenant, it could mean the end of the war...

FADE TO:

INT. HALO, MAP ROOM

In a SMALL DARK ROOM, conjoining a series of hallways at a central lectern-like station, Absolution and the Emissary stand in front of a holographic representation of the installation -- the FULL RING hovering in front of them.

An indicator flashes at a specific juncture on the ring's surface.

EMISSARY

The Chamber of Consecration?

ABSOLUTION

Indeed. And that is where we must go.

EMISSARY

And if the humans follow?

ABSOLUTION

I will contact the commander. Have him localize his forces. Now that we've

discovered the location of the Chamber, there will be little argument about its importance. If the humans want a victory of any significance, they would need to get to the Chamber. The commander won't allow that to happen...

EMISSARY

And Sub-Commander 'Vadumee?

ABSOLUTION

A small price to pay for sacrilege, don't you think?

EMISSARY

I do not follow.

ABSOLUTION

When he arrives at his location, he'll find something quite different than the Chamber of Consecration.

The minister hovers out of the map room, pushing into one of its narrow corridors with the Emissary in tow.

ABSOLUTION (CONT'D)

He'll find death.

FADE TO:

EXT. HALO, SWAMP - DAY

A boggy swamp with large moss-laden trees and a thick gaseous mist gives way to...

The Sub-Commander and his special operations task force, as they are lowered by a beam of energy from the rear hold of a hovering Phantom. The Elites are armed with COVENANT CARBINES -- a long-barreled, mid-range Covenant rifle.

ELITE

Why would the Lords build such a horrid place?

'VADUMEE

This swamp? Perhaps to keep the weak away, my brother.

The Elites move swiftly as one unit, covering ground quickly and strategically like a WELL-OILED COMBAT MACHINE. They bound forward in two-unit groups, providing line of sight cover as they move from one tree to another.

Soon, they approach a patch of ground which isn't natural -- it's a concrete structure similar to that of Halo's other constructs. Atop the

structure is a hatch-like panel with a keypad mechanism on its side. The keypad has lights, but they appear to be dim and inactive.

'VADUMEE (CONT'D)

We will use this alternate passage to mask our approach.

ELITE

From what, Commander?

The Sub-Commander looks around. Clearly he is unsettled by this place.

'VADUMEE

A precaution... nothing more.

One of the Elites adept at ancient technology -- the TECH ELITE -- places a small tool over the keypad. The previously dim panel LIGHTS UP and after pressing a few keys, the hatch SLIDES OPEN.

The Tech Elite stands back and the others, with their weapons ready, begin to pile in -- dropping down to a hidden floor below.

INT. HALO, UNDERGROUND STRUCTURE

Inside, they find themselves in a dark room with no light source save for the lone beam STREAMING DOWN from their access point. The Elites activate their "night vision" apparatuses, their eyes turning a BRIGHT GREEN.

After a few moments, they secure the room.

'VADUMEE

The air is stale. Nothing has stirred in this place for quite some time.

ELITE

And our objective?

'VADUMEE

Through this corridor.

The group moves quickly and swiftly down the hallway. At the end of it, they find themselves in...

ANOTHER ROOM, THIS ONE IS LONG AND NARROW LIKE THE NAVE OF A CATHEDRAL...

...with thick columns and buttresses filing down both sides and girding up ancillary structures high above. Dim blue light CASCADES TO THE FLOOR through ancient sconces set into the ceiling and walls.

The Elites quickly move to the opposite end of this room where they find an altar. At first, it appears to be an elaborate station of prayer, but instead, it is revealed to be a terminal.



`Vadumee runs his hands across its keys...

`VADUMEE

I believe this is it...

TECH ELITE

Absolution provided these instructions?

`VADUMEE

And I warily accepted them. Use caution,  
my brother.

The Sub-Commander watches the Tech Elite step forward, accessing the terminal while the others position themselves around the room -- their weapons trained and ready to fire.

The Tech Elite places the same tool he used before on this terminal, pressing a number of keys on its face. The terminal COMES TO LIFE, humming with activity as Absolution's device communicates with it.

TECH ELITE

This ancient machine is demanding an  
unusually high volume of security  
prerequisites. Hopefully Absolution's  
tool knows what it is doing.

`Vadumee paces down the length of the room, examining some of the contours and images left by the facility's architects -- etchings carved on the columns and walls.

After a few moments, he notices SOMETHING which catches his eye and he begins to study it closely.

PUSH IN ON AN ETCHING OF AN EGG-LIKE SACK. THEN FOLLOWING IT AN ETCHING OF A SPIDER-LIKE CREATURE...

He steps back confused, but his confusion slowly turns to HORROR as he sees that there is not one, spider-like creature but millions of them drawn elaborately across the interior of the entire room.

He turns to Tech Elite.

`VADUMEE

(frantic)

Remove the tool at once!

TECH ELITE

It's too late. The doorway has been  
unlocked.

`VADUMEE

Then lock it again!

TECH ELITE

Commander, that is not possible. The tool  
Absolution provided... it can only remove  
these ancient locks. It cannot rebuild  
them.

The Sub-Commander quickly moves to the Tech Elite and examines the  
terminal which now FLASHES VIBRANTLY WITH RED LIGHTS.

'VADUMEE  
(deeply concerned)  
By the Gods, what have we done?

ELITE  
This is not the Consecration Chamber,  
Commander?

The 'Vadumee pauses, before answering. He grabs his weapon and gives a  
swift look down the sight to check its ammunition.

'VADUMEE  
No. There's nothing holy within these  
walls... Come. We must hurry if we are to  
stop what we have now set in motion.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, SKY - DAY

Two Pelicans fly side by side over a vast blue sea underneath the sun.

Both have their rear hatches open. Standing on one is the Chief and on  
the other are both Keyes and Johnson. As wind whips by, the three  
listen to Cortana...

CORTANA  
Seismic scans done by the Covenant  
indicate a high concentration of  
technology in this region. We're heading  
to an island they call the Silent  
Cartographer... it contains a map room  
that should lead us to Halo's control  
center.

KEYES  
And that is your objective. Keep her  
safe, Chief.

The Chief nods.

KEYES  
After we touch down at the other lead,  
we'll contact you for a rendezvous point.

Keyes' Pelican rises high into the air, veering off the formation and  
out of sight.

The Chief moves into the rear cabin of his Pelican and grabs an assault rifle from a rack. Among a slew of Marines is Carter, who sits sullenly in the corner -- clearly preoccupied with Williams' death.

Cortana speaks over the COM...

CORTANA

Alright, Marines. We have word from Fire Team Zulu that they'll be offering infantry and vehicle support, but we're not going to wait for them.

The Marines stand up and begin to prepare for the insertion.

EXT. HALO, BEACH - DAY

The Pelican is quickly joined by another. The two SWING ACROSS the edge of the beach, SPINNING ABOUT and unloading the Marines from their rear holds.

Entrenched Covenant -- about two dozen Elites, Jackals and Grunts -- defend the high point of the beach at the foot of a gigantic structure -- an archway, which curves from the water's edge, hundreds of feet into the air, disappearing as it moves toward the center of the island.

The Spartan and Marines CHARGE the beachhead and the battle breaks WIDE OPEN. Grenades EXPLODE kicking up plumes of dirt and weapon fire crisscrosses through the air in brief and sudden FLASHES.

Flanking from the far side, the Chief is able to dispatch an Elite with his pistol and then turns to see a pair of Grunts with NEEDLERS -- a small, shell-like weapon which is covered in spikes.

The Grunts fire at a trio of Marines, releasing pink shards of energy that home in on the human's heat signatures. The men shriek in agony as their bodies are impaled by the razor sharp crystals.

BOOM!

The explosion sends whatever is left of their bodies into the air amidst a pink cloud of smoke.

The Chief fires two rounds at the Grunts, throwing them onto their backs dead. He moves for the two needlers, retrieving and reloading the weapons with a loud metallic CLINK.

For a moment, the Marines and Covenant are at a deadlock, both firing from cover amidst a maelstrom of carnage. Another Marine is taken down by the last remaining Elite...

Then, a pair of Warthogs plow down the beach and hit a small ridge of sand which sends them VAULTING into the Covenant lines with their turrets BLAZING. This is Fire Team Zulu.

The Marines use the diversion to press forward, mopping up straggling Grunts and Jackals.

One Warthog is tagged by the Elite's plasma grenade -- it STICKS to the wheel, twirling around excitedly before exploding and sending the vehicle flying end over end through the air. Only the Warthog's charred frame lands. Its occupants are nowhere to be found.

The Chief rushes the last Elite with his pair of needlers, unloading a slew of explosive shards into the beast before they violently detonate.

Two Jackals rush from the side, but he dispatches them with the equal success, finishing off the last one by SLAMMING the bottom of the needler into its face.

The Covenant threat is now gone.

The Marine infantry fires rounds into the fallen enemies, ensuring that they are dead. The smoke from the battle clears and the Chief takes a brief look at their environment.

WE PULL BACK TO A DISTANCE, TAKING IN THE IMPRESSIVE BEAUTY OF THE BEACH, AS WELL AS THE IMPOSING ARCHWAY LOOMING HIGH ABOVE THEM...

FOEHAMMER (O.S.)

Echo Four-Nineteen inbound. Somebody order a Warthog?

CORTANA

That'd be us, Foehammer. If I didn't know any better I'd think you liked us.

The Pelican swings low with a Warthog hanging from its tail. The heavy vehicle detaches, hitting the beach with A METALLIC CRUNCH from its shocks.

FOEHAMMER (CONT'D)

You know our motto: We deliver!

CORTANA

Be on standby, Four-Nineteen. This shouldn't take long.

The Chief climbs into the driver's seat and Carter onto the turret. The Chief looks back -- the Marine's melancholy has now become rage.

CHIEF

You good?

CARTER

Fine, sir. I'm ready to hit these sons of bitches whenever you are.

CHIEF

That'll work.

The Chief floors the Warthog, kicking up sand and speeding off around the rim of the island.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, CONTROL ROOM CANYON - DAY

WE NOW SEE A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT. AS SNOW FALLS AROUND US, WE FIND OURSELVES IN A VAST AND ICY CANYON WHERE WE FOLLOW...

A single Phantom as it drops gently from a thick cloud line, hovering just above a LARGE VAULTED BRIDGE. The structure connects the two sides of the expansive frostbitten landscape.

The bridge has two levels: its top is an arching walkway with perimeter ramps that lead to the lower level, an under-girding catwalk made of the same stone-like material. The bridge rests high above the canyon floor, suspended by the STEADY HISS of energy cables on both sides.

The Emissary emerges from the side of the craft, dropping onto the bridge only ten feet below. He looks up toward the Phantom's hold where Absolution hovers in his seat.

ABSOLUTION

Are you prepared?

EMISSARY

For the demon? Without question.

ABSOLUTION

I will venture to the Chamber of  
Consecration to prepare for the holy work  
of our Councilors.

The two both turn toward the opposite end of the canyon, gazing through the drizzling snow from the low-lying clouds.

WE PULL UP FROM BEHIND THEM MOVING FORWARD... WE PASS HIGH ABOVE THE CANYON FLOOR, A COLLECTION OF ROLLING SNOW BANKS, HILLS AND ICE PATCHES, WINDING LEFT AND RIGHT AGAINST THE CANYON WALLS... PUNCTUATED OCCASIONALLY BY CLUSTERS OF SNOW-DOUSED EVERGREENS.

WE CONTINUE TO THE FAR END OF THE CANYON WHERE WE FIND AN ENORMOUS STRUCTURE...

This is the CONTROL CENTER, the Covenant's Chamber of Consecration.

Its external facade, embedded into the canyon wall, is a large, multi-tiered ziggurat. The structure's peak is composed of a flat platform and a wide spire. At the spire's zenith, a single, massive buttress rises and then drops, guiding itself down the face of the ziggurat and dividing one side of the structure from the other.

ABSOLUTION (CONT'D)

It is as majestic as I have dreamed.

EMISSARY

And the commander? Will he send his reinforcements?

Just as he asks the question, a PARADE OF COVENANT DROPSHIPS appear, dropping from the murky clouds which hover over the canyon.

Spirit and Phantom alike, the crafts slowly descend to the canyon floor. Some are hauling ground vehicles -- both Ghosts and WRAITHS, the broad, purple-armored mortar tanks of the Covenant front lines.

And in the sky, SWARMING LIKE INSECTS, are a handful of BANSHEES -- the Covenant's single-manned combat fliers. Although they share the same tube-like design of Ghosts, their wings are composed of struts connecting to a propulsion system at each tip.

As the Covenant army slowly falls from the sky, Absolution speaks with resolve in his voice.

ABSOLUTION

Not even a foolish commander can stand in the way of our salvation, Emissary.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, BEACH - DAY

WE FOLLOW A WARTHOG LOW TO THE GROUND, IMMEDIATELY BEHIND IT AS THOUGH WE ARE HANGING ON BY A ROPE. WE SWING BACK AND FORTH AS THE WARTHOG DOES, DARTING IN BETWEEN ROCK AND DEBRIS ON THE BEACH.

Carter unloads a FULL BEVY OF FIREPOWER against the patches of Jackals and Grunts which have collected around the island's rim.

WE PULL UP AND STEADY, TAKING IN THIS PART OF THE ISLAND. BOOMING HIGH, WE NOW WATCH THE WARTHOG AS IT APPROACHES ANOTHER LARGE ALIEN STRUCTURE...

Here we find a platform inset into a large rock formation which looks out over the island's beach. Atop the platform is a doorway leading into the rock wall that forms the structure's face.

The Chief pushes the Warthog up a narrow pathway, winding through a cluster of trees and onto the platform itself. He stops the Hog and climbs out, stowing his rifle on his back.

Carter drops off the back of the Warthog.

CORTANA

(to Carter)

Private, stay here and contact Foehammer on the Warthog's COM. We'll need her for extraction once we've located the map room.

The Marine nods and Chief enters the structure with his weapon raised cautiously...

INT. HALO, STRUCTURE

He finds himself in an elaborate series of dimly-lit corridors which lead further into the island.

CHIEF  
I expected more Covenant.

CORTANA  
They must have already come and gone. All the more reason for us to hurry.

The Spartan moves quickly through a central hallway until he reaches what appears to be a dead end.

CHIEF  
What are we looking for exactly...

The Chief begins to turn around and head back the way he came.

CORTANA  
Wait. Go back.

The Chief reverses his step and looks to his right to see a recess in the wall near the dead end. As the Chief approaches, the recess is revealed to be a door.

As he approaches the door, it opens with a HISS.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
Interesting... I can't tell if the technology on the ring is responding to your armor... or to you. Either way, it is quite strange.

INT. HALO, MAP ROOM

Here, the Master Chief finds a small dark room -- the MAP ROOM. In its center, there is a console. The Chief drops Cortana onto it and she appears almost immediately.

As she takes shape, so does the layout of Halo -- its large circular body hovering around them in holographic form.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
Halo. A fortress world built by an ancient race... the Forerunners.

The map begins to shift and zoom in on one section of the ring, pulling itself into what appears to be the control room's canyon.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

The Covenant have already reached the canyon adjacent to the control center, but they have yet to enter it.

CHIEF

Why is that?

CORTANA

My data is sketchy, but I believe that they're having trouble with the lock on front door. Looks like the Forerunners weren't big on guests.

CHIEF

Then let's get moving.

CUT TO:

INT. PELICAN, COCKPIT

Foehammer is keying in information at the Pelican's helm as the Chief enters the cockpit and removes Cortana. She manifests above the Pelican's controls.

CORTANA

We need to get word to the captain. He's not headed in the right direction.

FOEHAMMER

They dropped out of range not long ago. I'll keep trying him, but I think we're on our own. Fire Team Zulu has a few more birds and some heavy equipment if we need them... Where to next?

Cortana triggers something on Foehammer's display. The pilot examines it, but is clearly surprised.

FOEHAMMER (CONT'D)

Cortana, these coordinates are underground.

CORTANA

I triggered an aperture at the center of the island when we were accessing the map. Don't know how long it'll be open, so let's get moving.

EXT. HALO, ISLAND - DAY



The Pelican flies to the middle of the island where there's a large mechanical cavity opening up. Foehammer gently drops the bird down into the darkness -- the Pelican's floodlights turn on automatically as it gracefully falls into the dark shaft.

FOEHAMMER

I hope your analysis is on the money, Cortana. This Pelican won't turn on a dime.

CORTANA

Look on the bright side, Foehammer. The last thing the Covenant will expect is an aerial insertion... from underground.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, COMMAND DECK

The Supreme Commander SLAMS his fist into a nearby view screen, CRACKING it at the center.

COMMANDER

That overconfident fool! I should have handled their security myself.

BEAT.

COMMANDER

(to the Elite crew)

Any news of Absolution's progress? Has he accessed the Chamber yet?

FLIGHT ELITE 01

No, Commander. Per your orders, however, we've routed the active infantry units to the minister's location. They are fortifying the canyon as we speak.

FLIGHT ELITE 02

According to the information gleaned by our surveys, there are no other ways into the Chamber. Anyone attempting to gain access to it will have to pass through our lines.

The Supreme Commander pulls back, crossing his arms and taking in a DEEP BREATH.

COMMANDER

Perhaps the shipmaster's failure will work in our favor. A small victory for the humans may draw the demon out into the open.

One of the Elite crewmembers sees a FLASHING LIGHT on a nearby display. He presses a key and stares at it quizzically before announcing it...

FLIGHT ELITE 01

We have an incoming Phantom... the Sub-Commander's craft, but he is not responding to our approach beacon.

Without hesitation, the commander leaves bridge...

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, BAY

...and he arrives in the Seeker's immense hangar bay. He spots the drifting Phantom and moves toward it across the vast deck of ships.

It appears to be unmanned.

COMMANDER

Lock that ship into place.

A Grunt deckhand pulls a lever on a nearby column and the ship FREEZES in place, slowly dropping closer to the ground. A ramp lowers automatically as it approaches the floor.

The commander steps inside, moving straight to the cockpit. He presses a keypad on the side of the door, opening it.

Then a SEVERELY-WOUNDED ELITE falls out onto the floor -- the body is limp and motionless. It is the SUB-COMMANDER 'VADUMEE.

The commander immediately reaches down and pulls the Elite from the dropship's cockpit into the rear hold. The Sub-Commander's armor and body show SERIOUS TRAUMA. The entire left side of his face is MANGLED and two of his mandibles have been TORN AWAY.

He is in GRAVE CONDITION.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Brother, what has happened? Who has done this to you? Where is your team?

'Vadumee remains still and silent.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, SWAMP - DAY

A Pelican flies just above a dark tree line in a familiar swampland. As it drops, the light is overtaken by darkness.

Keyes and Johnson sit in the back of the bird with Jenkins, Bisenti and Mendoza. Keyes grabs a pistol, stares at it for a moment as his mind plays back the execution of Eckhart.

WE SEE A FEW QUICK FRAMES OF THE MUZZLE FLASH AND BLOOD SPLATTERING ACROSS KEYES' FACE IN THE COVENANT BRIG...

Closing his eyes tightly, he winces.

JOHNSON

You can't bring him back.

KEYES

He was my daughter's age. Just like her too... a good kid who wanted to serve like his father.

JOHNSON

And I'm sure your daughter wants to see her father again, so let's focus on that. Work on getting off this god damn ring.

Keyes nods, stowing the pistol and moving to the Pelican cockpit, where he finds the pilot, DIGGS.

KEYES

Still can't get a hold of the Cortana?

DIGGS

No, sir. There must be some sort of interference coming from this part of the ring.

The Pelican hovers to the ground at the edge of a swamp and the Marines pile out into a boggy pool of water and reeds.

DIGGS (CONT'D)

The site is about a klick off my bird's nose... I'd get closer, but the foliage is too dense.

KEYES

No matter. We can hike it the rest of the way. Stay close, Diggs.

DIGGS

Ten-four. Good luck, gentlemen.

The Pelican rises upward, above the tree line and then out of sight. Johnson climbs a nearby fallen tree trunk, scanning the area.

JOHNSON

Place smells like shit.

MENDOZA

More like a trap, Sarge. A Covenant trap.

JENKINS

I've got a bad feeling about this.

Johnson steps down, takes a long drag of his cigar and exhales it.

JOHNSON

You've always got a bad feeling, Jenkins.  
Give it a rest. The Corps ain't payin us  
by the hour, so let's move out.

The Marines begin to push through the heavy undergrowth in single file with Johnson and Keyes at front.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, CONTROL ROOM PLATFORM - DAY

Atop the control room platform, Absolution is frantically moving toward his Phantom parked on its far side.

He is clearly agitated.

Another Phantom drops down nearby, hovering just at the edge of the landing. A pair of red-armored Elites step out. They are part of the Supreme Commander's guards.

One calls out to the Prophet.

GUARD 01

Minister of Absolution...

ABSOLUTION

(annoyed)

What it is it? Can't you see that I am  
busy! I must speak with the hierarchs at  
once. The doorway to the Chamber will not  
open.

GUARD 02

The Supreme Commander requests a word  
with you.

Absolution stops and turns, looking suspiciously at the pair. Then he continues to his Phantom -- ignoring them.

GUARD 02 (CONT'D)

(stern)

Perhaps, I was not clear. The Supreme  
Commander demands your presence  
immediately.

ABSOLUTION

I will go to him in my own ship.

BEAT.

GUARD 01

No. You will not. You will come with us.

The two Elites move forward, grasping their holstered plasma rifles.

ABSOLUTION

(turning to the guards)

You dare arrest a minister of the hierarchs as he performs his holy duties?

GUARD 02

Do not force our hands, Absolution.

They raise and point their weapons directly at the Prophet, who finally relents -- he reluctantly boards their Phantom.

ABSOLUTION

(angry)

This is heresy! The hierarchs will hear of this! I assure you! They will have your heads!

Their Phantom lifts off.

CUT TO:

INT. HALO, LANDING

Foehammer's Pelican drops gracefully down the dark tunnel to a well-lit landing with a doorway on the far end. The Chief steps out of the hatch and examines his surroundings as Carter peers from the Pelican's hold.

FOEHAMMER

Once you have the exact surface coordinates to the control room, I'll pass them to Zulu. Maybe they can drop in from topside.

CORTANA

Roger that. Bring Private Carter to rendezvous with the sergeant's squad when they return. The Chief and I will see how far we can get on our own.

FOEHAMMER

Ten-four.

The Pelican rises from the landing, disappearing into the upper reaches of the tunnel system.

CORTANA

Alright. Time to work.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, CONTROL ROOM CANYON - DAY

On the same bridge we saw earlier...

WE FIND TWO JACKALS CASUALLY CROSSING IT. SURROUNDING THEM ARE HALF A DOZEN GRUNTS, ALL OF WHO ARE HUDDLED TOGETHER AND SLEEPING...

One Jackal looks to its fellow ally and ignites its energy shield, nodding that the other should follow. The second Jackal lets out a SHARP HISS in defiance but follows suit, engaging his arm shield with a FLAT HUM.

The first Jackal moves beyond a central barrier, proceeding down the other end of the bridge's arch. The second Jackal disengages his shield in rebellion, CASTING A BITTER EYE in the direction of the other.

WE CLOSE IN BEHIND THE JACKAL AS HE GAZES DOWN THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE CANYON TOWARD THE CONTROL ROOM...

SNATCH!

The Jackal is SEIZED by a pair of green-armored arms that dwarf its frail frame. He is HOISTED up, a large gauntlet over its beak-like mouth.

WE PULL BACK TO REVEAL HIS ATTACKER...

...the Master Chief, who has silently snuck through the sleeping Grunts. With a SWIFT JERK of his hand the creature's neck SNAPS.

CUT TO:

WE COME TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE, WHERE THE OTHER JACKAL HEARS THE "SNAP"... IT TURNS AROUND, STARING IN THE DIRECTION OF ITS ALLY...

CUT TO:

WE RETURN TO THE CHIEF AS...

He tosses the dead Jackal over the edge of the bridge. Its lifeless body tumbles like dead weight as it falls several hundred feet to the snow-swept canyon floors.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, CANYON FLOOR

TUFT!

The Jackal's body hits the ground, dropping through a large patch of thick snow and completely out of sight.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, BRIDGE

WE RETURN TO THE MASTER CHIEF WHO IS...

Leaning over the edge, gazing down at the sheer drop.

He turns back to the center of the bridge to continue his trek, but his eyes are met by the now WIDE AWAKE half dozen Grunts, another pair of Jackals and a large, savage-looking Elite who appears to be their leader.

It is the gold-armored EMISSARY. He ignites the two-curved blades of an ENERGY SWORD with a FLASH of white light from the weapon's grip.

CHIEF

Great.

The Chief leaps from the side of the bridge onto a ramp which leads to the under-girding lower level -- a corridor-like catwalk with barriers periodically lining the side of the bridge.

This same ramp system exists on both sides of the bridge, punctuating the arching walkway at various points throughout its entire length.

As the Spartan stands to his feet, we see the Covenant soldiers descending those same ramps. They begin to surround him. The Chief removes his pistol with one hand and arms a plasma grenade with the other...

CUT TO:

INT. HALO, BUNKER

The small detachment of Marines led by Keyes and Johnson slowly move into a bunker structure at the edge of the swamp...

The Marines drop down a ramp into a large dimly-lit room with a circular lift platform at its center. Moving in formation, they remain silent and keep their weapons raised.

Johnson holds up a fist telling them to stop. He points to Bisenti and Mendoza, motioning for them to secure the lift's control station -- a short pedestal at the rim of the platform.

JOHNSON

Clear?

MENDOZA

Yes, sir. Clear.

KEYES

Alright. Let's have a look.

Keyes steps on the lift platform first and moves to the pedestal. The Marines follow suit. He presses a button on the holographic set of controls.

They begin to drop down.

The lift makes a loud humming sound as it lowers the platform. Soon, the ceiling of the room is out of sight and after a matter of seconds they reach the bottom.

JOHNSON

Look alive. If they didn't know we were here before, they do now.

They reach a room not too dissimilar from the one they entered, but there is no ramp in sight. Instead, a single doorway is located on the opposite wall.

BISENTI

(whispers)

Something isn't right, Sarge. If this was the control room, we'd have already run into the Covenant by now.

The Marines form up on both sides of the door as Keyes uses a keypad to access it. The door opens and the Marines push into it, their lines of sight scouring what is revealed to be yet another empty room.

At the center of this room, however, are a series of large clear tubes and containers. Inside, there is a PALE MEMBRANOUS SUBSTANCE, with pulsating sacks which resemble a BEATING HEART.

It looks ALIVE.

JENKINS (CONT'D)

What the hell is that?

The door behind the Marines SUDDENLY CLOSES, sealing them within the room.

MENDOZA

Shit.

At first, there is a HISSING sound. It is slight, but it quickly becomes louder and louder. The Marines, on alert, raise their weapons -- their eyes dart back and forth at flitting shadows.

After a few seconds, the room is filled with horrifying sounds. Shriill screams and deep, resonating growls-- the sound of a monster. MANY of them.



Keyes and Johnson exchange a concerned look and then raise their weapons. The sounds reach a crescendo, almost unbearably loud before a...

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, BRIDGE - DAY

WE FOLLOW THE CHIEF ON THE UNDERCARRIAGE OF THE BRIDGE AS HE ENGAGES THE COVENANT...

The Spartan is running while firing his pistol. His shots slam into the Grunts' faces, knocking them over END OVER END with deadly accuracy.

He lobs a frag grenade. A contrail of smoke follows it toward the Jackals' position.

BOOM!

One of the two Jackals is thrown off the side of the bridge's undercarriage. The other dodges the grenade and fires his plasma pistol. The charged green bolt of energy NAILS into the Chief's chest, knocking him back onto the ground.

The Spartan pulls behind cover and reloads his pistol. The Jackal begins to move toward the Chief, but without warning, he is SWATTED out of the way from behind by something much larger... THE EMISSARY.

As the Jackal's body flies off the side of the bridge -- the Emissary approaches the Chief with heavy footsteps...

EMISSARY

(roars)

Demon!

WE WATCH FROM JUST BEHIND THE CHIEF'S COVER AS THE EMISSARY SLOWLY MOVES THROUGH THE CORRIDOR UNDERNEATH THE BRIDGE...

...to the right is the edge of the bridge and a drop to CERTAIN DEATH. To the left is the approaching Elite. The Emissary's voice booms as he slowly and methodically approaches the cornered Spartan.

EMISSARY

For far too long have you and your kind stood in the way of our salvation. Soon, humanity will be at an end... but for you, Demon. I will pry open the mouth of your grave today.

WE NOW SEE A PROFILE OF THE SPARTAN, LEANING AGAINST COVER...

SHINK!

The energy sword PLUNGES through the concrete-like barrier right by the Chief's head, SPOUTING dust and rubble onto the ground. The Chief sharply turns to see the sword as it pulls back through the way it came.

WE NOW SEE FROM THE EMISSARY'S PERSPECTIVE AS HE TURNS THE CORNER TO CATCH HIS PREY...

...but the Spartan is GONE. The Elite looks around quizzically, wondering what might have happened. He moves closer to the edge to take a better look.

THE VANTAGE HAS CHANGED LOOKING TOWARD THE BRIDGE AND WE SEE THE MASTER CHIEF HANGING FROM IT OUT OF THE ELITE'S SIGHT, PULLING HIMSELF UP ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE BARRIER HE HAD PREVIOUSLY USED FOR COVER.

The Chief quickly moves behind the Elite to slam the butt of his pistol into the back of the beast's head, but his move does not go unnoticed.

SLAM!

Spinning about, the Elite throws his arm out, NAILING the Chief across the chest and sending the Spartan reeling -- sliding across the floor, nearly the full length of the corridor.

The Chief is IMMOBILE.

WE LOOK FROM THE SPARTAN'S INERT BODY AS THE EMISSARY RUSHES FORWARD TO HIM, HIS SWORD OUT AND READY TO CLAIM THE KILL...

The giant body of the Elite leaps forward, landing atop the Spartan. He moves his face closer to the Spartan's helmet, believing that his prey has been fully incapacitated.

WE PUSH IN ON THE EMISSARY AS HE LEANS IN...

His mandibles part curiously, as though he is smelling the Spartan -- like a predator would to savor their prey before dinner.

BEEP!

WE LOOK OFF TO THE SPARTAN'S RIGHT AS THE EMISSARY'S HEAD FOLLOWS... WE'RE LOOKING AT THE CHIEF'S HAND AND ITS CONTENTS...

AN ARMED PLASMA GRENADE.

The explosive glows with a white flame for just a second before the Elite turns back to look at the Spartan and...

SLAM!

The Chief HEAD BUTTS the Emissary, STUNNING him momentarily which gives the Spartan enough time to shove the grenade in its mouth. In the same movement, he CLAMPS the Elite's jaws shut and issues a HEAVY KICK as he rolls to the opposite side of the bridge.

The Emissary's giant frame is sent CAREENING off the ledge of the bridge's undercarriage...

EXT. HALO, CANYON - DAY

FROM A DISTANCE WE WATCH THE WARRIOR ELITE FALL, SQUIRMING AGAINST THE PLASMA GRENADE... WE PUSH IN ON THE ELITE, WATCHING HIM FINALLY PULL THE GRENADE FREE AND TOSS IT AWAY...

THUNK!

His body comes to a sudden and gruesome halt, as he is IMPALED by a jagged tree trunk.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, BRIDGE - DAY

The Master Chief cautiously emerges from the undercarriage and walks to the edge of the bridge's top level, gazing across the length of the canyon...

CHIEF

That it?

WE ARE LOOKING FROM BEHIND THE SPARTAN, TAKING IN THE ENTIRE SCOPE OF THE CANYON AND ITS FURTHEST POINT, WHERE WE FIND THE CONTROL CENTER...

CORTANA

That's it.

The Master Chief looks down now at the canyon floor - roughly two miles in length from one side to the other. Against the white snow are the speckles of Covenant infantry and heavy vehicles.

They litter the floor like ants.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

And I was hoping for a nice quiet stroll.

Banshees are SOARING through the air in the distance, scouring the ground for enemies. Four of them take notice of the Chief and begin to BOOST in his direction.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

We're going to need a bigger gun.

Then a voice spills through the COM.

PILOT

I think I can make that happen, Cortana.

High above the bridge and through the smog of the sky come five Pelicans, three carrying Warthogs, and two carrying SCORPIONS -- large armored tanks, which have a 90mm cannon resting atop a versatile stinger-like appendage.

As they drop, the Pelicans fire MISSILES from below their wings -- the missile contrails swirl like SLITHERING SNAKES -- hitting the targets and sending their crumpled remains to the canyon floor.

CORTANA

Just in time, Zulu. Can we catch a ride down?

The five human dropships steadily pass the bridge on the way down. The Chief leaps atop the nearest one, crouching low on its back -- turning to face the far end of the canyon.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

It's a straight shot to the control room from here.

EXT. HALO, CANYON FLOOR - DAY

The Pelicans touch ground, unloading several squads of Marines and vehicles. The Chief jumps to the snowy canyon floor, landing aside the rear hold's hatch just below the Pelican's tail.

He grabs a BATTLE RIFLE -- a mid-range rifle with a long barrel and scope -- and an SSM ROCKET LAUNCHER -- a gray steel, double-barreled explosive projectile weapon. He checks the ammo quickly for both, stowing the rifle on his back and then hefting the rocket launcher onto his shoulder.

A Warthog pulls up in front of the Chief. Carter is on gunner. The two exchange a brief glance.

Carter looks prepared, albeit exhausted.

CHIEF

Good luck.

CARTER

You too.

The Warthog pulls out, fishtailing around the Pelican. The birds begin to lift off the ground. The Chief turns to see the canyon floor spread out before him.

WE COME ABOUT THE CHIEF, TAKING IN A WIDE SHOT OF THE CANYON'S SCALE AND THE LONG CORRIDOR OF STONE AND ICE IN FRONT OF HIM...

In between him and the control room is a Covenant army -- a hundred yards away their infantry is marching over a cresting snow bank and their vehicles readying for combat not much further beyond.

WE PUSH IN ON THE CHIEF'S VISOR, STARING AT THE REFLECTION OF THE COVENANT'S IMPOSING GROUND FORCES AS THEY APPROACH...

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, COMMANDER'S QUARTERS

Absolution moves into the Supreme Commander's quarters, a long narrow room sidled by columns on both sides and with light emitting from the floor, shooting upward onto the ceiling.

There, a mural artistically depicts the HISTORY OF THE ELITES, from their early beginnings to their rise as military leaders of the Covenant.

At the end of the room is the Supreme Commander, gazing out of a large viewport at Halo -- his back to Absolution.

The commander is silent.

ABSOLUTION

Nothing has worked. Absolutely nothing.  
The Consecration Chamber will not respond  
to my touch and there is no oracle to  
guide my hands.

The commander REMAINS silent.

ABSOLUTION (CONT'D)

I must speak to the hierarchs...

COMMANDER

There will be none of that now,  
Absolution.

BEAT.

ABSOLUTION

What? Do you not wish to be granted  
access to the Great Journey? The mere  
thought is heresy!

COMMANDER

Where was it that you sent the Sub-  
Commander and his team?

Absolution falters. He is clearly taken aback.

ABSOLUTION

(nervous)

To a likely location of the Chamber. Why is that?

The commander remains silent again.

ABSOLUTION (CONT'D)

(raising his voice)

Has he not returned yet?

From the shadows an Elite hand appears and grabs Absolution's neck, YANKING him from his chair and onto the floor.

The frail body is jerked upward, dangling above ground as the hand is revealed to be that of 'Vadumee's. Although severely injured, the Elite's grip is EVER DEADLY. His face is badly scared, but it does not conceal his RAGE.

Absolution squirms but is unable to speak.

'VADUMEE

No more lies! You would send us to our deaths! For what? To what end?

He raises Absolution up higher, further CUTTING OFF OXYGEN. Then he drops the Prophet on the ground. Absolution struggles to recover, GRASPING at his throat.

ABSOLUTION

(wheezing)

It has always been this way with your kind... the Elites. My forefathers were fools to form this union!

COMMANDER

And so it is revealed. You wish to break the Covenant between Prophet and Elite, even in this final hour of glory. Dispose of this interloper, Sub-Commander.

Absolution raises his hand in front of 'Vadumee, trying to stay the inevitable.

ABSOLUTION

The doorway is open now. The horror has been released. We must ignite Halo's fire if we are to cleanse its infestation.

'Vadumee leans in close to Absolution's face, showing his ghastly scars.

'VADUMEE

(shouting)

Tell me that I have not seen it first  
hand you slithering devil!

ABSOLUTION

You need me! I know the secrets of Halo...

The Sub-Commander reaches down to pick up Absolution.

ABSOLUTION (CONT'D)

(shouting)

You fools! When the Great Journey's gates  
are opened, your kind will be laid to  
waste by Halo's glory!

'Vadumee lifts Absolution by his long neck once again, CRUSHING the  
Prophet's throat without mercy. Absolution squirms, violently THRASING  
about.

COMMANDER

Whether or not we are offered the Great  
Journey is the will of the Forerunners.

Absolution's eyes begin to BULGE and the Sub-Commander squeezes even  
TIGHTER, binding the muscles of his hand around the CONVULSING  
Prophet's throat.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

But you, Minister... You will never see  
it come to pass.

With that, Absolution's body stops moving. The Prophet's arms and legs  
go limp, slightly swaying in the tightly-clenched fist of the Elite.

The commander approaches as 'Vadumee drops the dead Prophet.

'VADUMEE

This was for my fallen brothers. For the  
Covenant. Not for you.

BEAT.

COMMANDER

(bowing his head)

And I shamefully bear the blame. Come,  
brother. If what he says is true, we have  
much work to do.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. HALO, BUNKER

A man is breathing HEAVILY. He's struggling to catch his breath.

A match is LIT...

WE SEE AN ORANGE LIGHT, SLOWING BURNING FROM A CIGAR TIP...

FADE IN:

WE SEE A MAN'S EYES WITH THE CIGAR'S LIGHT TWINKLING IN THEM... THEY ARE WIDE AND ANXIOUS. WE PULL BACK FURTHER REVEALING THE FACE OF THIS MAN...

It is SERGEANT JOHNSON.

He's sweating heavily and his eyes are DARTING back and forth in a nervous fashion. He CHOMPS down hard on a cigar and takes a big swig of the smoke, letting it push through his lungs and then back out his nose and throat.

WE PULL BACK FURTHER TO REVEAL HIS BODY...

He checks his shotgun quickly, ensuring that it is fully loaded. He slowly LOCKS his weapon's chamber in place and takes one last breath, closing his eyes tightly.

WE DRAW BACK, TAKING IN THE FULL VIEW OF HIS LOCATION.

His back is against a column and there is MOVEMENT behind him.

WHAT WE SEE IS BLURRED DUE TO DEPTH OF FIELD, BUT IT IS ENOUGH TO MAKE OUT... A DARK ROOM CORNER... A RED FLASHING LIGHT... LARGE SHADOWY SHAPES...

There is a hissing sound, a wailing noise and a deep growl. The sounds are almost DEMONIC. Then Johnson pivots and EXPLODES into a run...

There's movement behind him. Something -- SOME THINGS -- are coming after him. He ducks into a hallway and slams his fist against a keypad, shutting the door.

WE SEE SOMETHING LARGE HIT THE DOOR... A DENT JARS THE SOLID STEEL AND JOHNSON STARES AT IT FOR JUST A MOMENT...

Then he DASHES forward, coming about a few corners and finally into the original lift room.

CUT TO:

WE RETURN TO THE DENTED DOOR...

CRASH!



The heavy door is kicked wide open -- SLAMMING against the opposite wall as though it weighed next to nothing...

CUT TO:

WE RETURN TO JOHNSON WHO IS NOW ON THE LIFT, KEYING SOMETHING INTO THE CONTROLS...

He hears the sound of the door being kicked in and looks up nervously for just a moment and then back down to the controls.

The lift begins to move.

CUT TO:

WE NOW TAKE THE VANTAGE POINT OF THE PURSUER... FOLLOWING ITS MOVEMENT IN FIRST PERSON PERSPECTIVE AS IT ENTERS THE LIFT ROOM AND LEERS ACROSS AT JOHNSON...

The lift is already too high. The pursuer turns to the right and begins to climb the shaft wall with incredible agility. It starts to scale FASTER and FASTER.

It begins to catch up.

CUT TO:

THE LIFT HAS RISEN ALL THE WAY UP, SEALING OFF THE LOWER PORTION OF THE STRUCTURE...

At the top of the lift, Johnson takes a deep breath. He begins to move from the platform, casually slinging his shotgun over his shoulder as though his problems are over.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

He turns around quickly to see the lift being repeatedly BEATEN IN from below. A narrow slit appears at the seam of the lift and the floor. The wails and screaming are now heard, howling up from the shaft and through the break in the seam.

JOHNSON

Shit.

BANG!

Another hit and the lift's platform buckles, bending its solid shape upward and prying opening like the top of a tin can.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, SWAMP - DAY

WE FOLLOW BEHIND, LOW TO THE GROUND AS JOHNSON BOLTS FROM THE STRUCTURE AND INTO THE DENSE JUNGLE...

He slips and falls for a moment, quickly recovering and continuing to sprint through the dense trees. He hears something heavy behind him. Whatever is chasing him is not far off...

He comes to a boggy pool of swamp water. Hefting the shotgun over his head, he quickly enters. The water soon rises around him as he moves further into it.

He is now waist deep.

WE ARE HOVERING JUST ABOVE THE WATER, STARING AT JOHNSON'S BACK. NOTHING IS BEHIND HIM EXCEPT FOR HIS OWN WAKE.

Everything is quiet and still. His pursuer is gone.

Then the surface of the water BREAKS.

It is his pursuer, rising from the bog -- A BLURRED INHUMAN ARM -- in the foreground of our view.

Johnson slowly turns around, drawing his shotgun at the hip.

JOHNSON  
(angry and desperate)  
C'mon, let's do this!

CUT TO BLACK:

AFTER A BRIEF MOMENT, THE BLACK SILENCE GIVES WAY TO THE DISTANT SOUND OF CRACKING GUNFIRE AND BOOMING EXPLOSIONS...

FADE IN:

EXT. HALO, CANYON FLOOR - DAY

WE ARE AT GROUND LEVEL OF THE CANYON FLOOR AND STARING ACROSS THE SNOW-COVERED BATTLEFIELD... AFTER TAKING IN THE SCOPE OF THE ENVIRONMENT, WE BEGIN TO FOLLOW A STREAM OF SKIRMISHES ON THE GROUND...

The infantry on both sides engage at the front lines, firing weapons and lobbing grenades across snow embankments and amongst the clusters of boulders and trees which gird the canyon floor's perimeter.

A squad of Covenant infantry charge a human entrenchment, their plasma weapons engulfing the Marine's position with fire. The humans fall,

save for a few. As the enemy approaches the remaining Marines, a Warthog TEARS through their line, crushing several Grunts and flipping the Elite leader up and over the vehicle.

A nearby pair of Ghosts engage this same Warthog, boosting quickly over a berm of snow in pursuit. They plow through the wake of ice it kicks up, only slowing to assault it with their dual plasma cannons.

The Warthog's turret turns to deal with the Ghosts, one of its rounds clip the small alien craft's energy core creating an explosion of bright light. The machine spirals out of control and crashes into a large tree, knocking a fresh coat of snow from its branches.

The other Ghost doesn't stop, but continues to attack the Warthog until a nearby Scorpion tank belts it with a 90mm round, instantly disintegrating the Covenant vehicle and operator. A Banshee swings low, dropping a fuel rod mortar atop the same Scorpion tank, destroying the vehicle in a gleaming ball of fire.

A second Scorpion fires at the attacking Banshee, immediately halting its flight path and sending whatever debris which remained hard up against the canyon wall only to be carried back to the ground by gravity.

Two Wraiths move forward on the Scorpion's position, both simultaneously LOBBING mortars.

WE FOLLOW A SERIES OF BRIEF INTERCUT SHOTS...

CUT TO:

WE LOOK TOWARD THE MOVING GROUND, IMMEDIATELY IN FRONT OF SOMEONE WHO IS RUNNING IN THE SNOW...

CUT TO:

THE WRAITHS PUSH FORWARD TOWARD THE SCORPION TANK, LOBBING MORTARS AGGRESSIVELY... THE TANK IS BADLY DAMAGED.

CUT TO:

WE RETURNS TO THE SNOW, THE PERSON'S STEPS ARE EVEN QUICKER YET THEY REMAIN OUT OF SIGHT.

CUT TO:

THE TANK FIRES A SHOT WHICH CONNECTS AT THE NEAREST WRAITH, BUT THEY STILL ENCROACH...

CUT TO:

WE THEN PULL UP ONTO THE PERSON WHO IS RUNNING. IT IS THE MASTER CHIEF. HE'S SPRINTING AT FULL TILT, THE ROCKET LAUNCHER HOISTED OVER HIS SHOULDER.

CUT TO:

WE RETURN TO THE WRAITHS, NOW VIEWING THE NEAREST ONE AS IT IS ABOUT TO LAUNCH A FINAL DEATHBLOW TO THE TANK.

CLANK!

The Master Chief lands on its armored hood, grabbing hold of its chassis with one hand while aiming his rocket launcher toward the second Wraith with the other.

FSST! FSST!

A pair of rockets fire, twirling around each other before connecting with the Wraith HEAD ON and destroying it in a blaze of white light.

The Chief drops the weapon and clings now tightly to the first Wraith, which is spinning around in an attempt to THROW the Spartan off. It's too late, however, and the Chief has already started to BLUDGEON the vehicle, TEARING AWAY the hatch to the operator's cab.

An Elite looks up, clearly shocked to see the Spartan above him. Before it has a chance to escape, two primed fragmentation grenades drop onto its lap.

CUT TO:

The Chief leaps away from the Wraith as it explodes into pieces. He picks up a plasma grenade from a fallen Covenant solidier and looks up...

...finding himself on a hill overlooking the mile spread out between him and the control room. The UNSC forces have been able to push back the Covenant and they continue to bore a hole in the aliens' defenses.

On the far side of the canyon, he sees an overturned Warthog where Carter and another Marine are pinned down.

They are in trouble.

CUT TO:

WE IMMEDIATELY FIND OURSELVES AT THE OVERTURNED WARTHOG. CARTER AND THE OTHER MARINE ARE TRAPPED BEHIND A CLUSTER OF TREES AS A TRIO OF ELITES BEGIN TO MOVE ON THEIR POSITION...

The beasts volley a series of shots at the Marines, burning deep holes into the trees with their plasma weapons. Carter rises and levels a few shots, but has no chance of connecting them under the Elites' attack.

The other Marine is on the COM, radioing for help...

MARINE

Alpha Squad, our Hog is down! We're dug  
in here by a patch of trees. We need  
support and we need it now!

BRDAT! BRDAT! BRDAT! BRDAT!

Four quick and successive three-round bursts from a battle rifle off  
screen drops the nearest Elite COLD, its body falling from cover and  
rolling into plain view. The two Marines, surprised, search for the  
gunman responsible.

Trudging swiftly through the snow, it's the Spartan.

A pair of Banshees swing low, firing mortars dangerously close, but he  
skillfully dodges the two explosions, taking out a second Elite with  
another series of shots.

The third Elite, now clearly confused, emerges from cover to get a  
better look.

BRDAT! BRDAT! BRDAT! BRDAT!

The first shot knocks him back, the second and third clear his armor's  
energy shield and the fourth PUSHES THROUGH HIS FOREHEAD.

Carter moves out to meet the Chief who has already arrived and is  
examining the bodies of the three Elites with his rifle -- ensuring  
that they are dead.

The other Marine is still on the radio. He looks up and his JAW SLACKS  
in astonishment.

MARINE (CONT'D)

Cancel that support. We're good.

The Chief reloads his rifle -- smoke TRAILS upward from its barrel.

Carter, still about twenty yards away, nods in the direction of the  
control room as he approaches.

CARTER

(shouting)

That what you're looking for...

Before the Chief has a chance to respond, he turns to see a lone  
Banshee BOOSTING FORWARD just a few feet above the ground -- intent on  
hitting Carter.

Without hesitation, the Chief SPRINTS toward the Marine, knocking him  
away at the very last moment and then VANISHING out of sight as the  
Banshee pulls up.

Carter looks up from the snow to discover that the Chief is gone and  
nowhere to be seen.

The other Marine joins Carter, helping him out of the snow.

MARINE

(excitedly)

Holy shit! Did you see what he just did?

Then he locks eyes with the same Banshee a hundred feet in the air and realizes what has happened -- the Spartan has BOARDED the Covenant flier.

CUT TO:

WE FOLLOW THE CHIEF WHO IS CLINGING TO THE SIDE OF THE BANSHEE AS IT SCREAMS THROUGH THE CANYON HIGH ABOVE THE ENSUING BATTLE...

The Spartan works his way over a canard and onto the main chassis. He reaches into the vehicle and aggressively PRIES out the Elite who is manning it, violently JERKING him from the flier's cockpit and dropping the body toward the canyon floor far below.

Without an operator, the Banshee begins to FREE FALL. The Chief pulls himself inside, as the flier tumbles toward the ground. He recovers the vehicle, YANKING the flier upward and into the air, narrowly missing the canyon floor.

He turns about, gazing down at the battle. There he sees the UNSC troops take the last Wraith out and move to the base of the structure.

CORTANA

Looks like we have the valley.

The remaining Marines and Warthogs begin to clear out the stragglers, as Chief coasts overhead toward the large platform at the top of the control room.

EXT. HALO, CONTROL ROOM PLATFORM

The Chief lands the Banshee on the platform. As he moves across the structure, he casts a glance at the unmanned Phantom nearby.

CHIEF

Did they make it inside?

CORTANA

There's only one way to find out.

The Spartan approaches the same doorway which Absolution could not pry open and as he does, the terminal plate on its side LIGHTS UP.

He presses it and the door opens.

CUT TO:

INT. HALO, CONTROL ROOM

Within the structure a door opens and the Chief appears in a small corridor on the other side, his battle rifle raised.

The Spartan approaches cautiously, but eventually lowers and stows his weapon.

CORTANA

This is it. Halo's control room.

The room is built like a massive cylinder -- hemmed by large vaulted walls which crest in a circular pattern on the ceiling.

The Chief is standing atop a glass-like walkway which shoots straight from the entrance to the center of the room, stopping halfway and branching out into two directions which curve around, eventually forming a perfect circle.

Below the walkway is a steep drop to the bottom of the cylinder and above it is a huge holographic representation of the Halo ring a hundred feet in diameter.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

It's strange that the Covenant could not enter, but we walked right in. This facility's technology seems almost... welcoming.

At the intersection of the entry walkway and the circle is a large terminal. The Master Chief approaches it, removing Cortana and allowing her to jump inside. She appears almost instantly, her arms crossed and looking away from the Chief.

After a few seconds, the Chief inquires...

CHIEF

You good?

CORTANA

(excitedly)

Never been better! You can't imagine the wealth of information here.

The Master Chief looks up at the holographic image of Halo.

CHIEF

What type of weapon is it and how can we use it against the Covenant?

BEAT.

CORTANA

It's not a cudgel, you barbarian. This ring, it was built by the Forerunners for

something incredibly important. They used  
it to...  
(concerned)  
Oh no...

CHIEF

What?

Cortana's demeanor alters, dramatically changing from elation to distress.

CORTANA

(concerned)  
Chief, you need to go. You need to go  
now! Those Covenant fools. They must have  
known...

CHIEF

What is it?

CORTANA

There's no time to explain, Chief. I'll  
secure this facility, but you have to  
find Keyes.

The Chief immediately turns around and runs for the exit.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

Find him before its too late.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

A trio of command shuttles exit the Seeker of Truth's hangar bay and  
move toward the surface of Halo...

WE FOLLOW THE VESSELS AS THEY SWEEP ACROSS THE BLACKNESS OF SPACE AND  
INTO THE BLUE ATMOSPHERE, DROPPING SWIFTLY DOWN TO THE RING'S  
SURFACE...

Within seconds, they are moving across a large and broad mountain  
range, filing through narrow gorges and then rising above an arid  
plateau.

Pressing over the peak of the summit, the shuttles find the Covenant  
cruiser, Truth and Reconciliation. The ship -- still being repaired --  
is perched at the same location it was during the human assault.

Rapidly decelerating, the vessels pull around the giant cruiser and  
enter the port side shuttle bay. They gently touch down, their rear  
hatches sliding open onto the floor as ramps.



INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, SHUTTLE BAY

From within the various holds of the shuttles, the Supreme Commander, Sub-Commander `Vadumee and a dozen red-armored Elites emerge.

A lone Elite approaches the commander. This is the proxy shipmaster, ARS `SURDAMEE, who is operating in the stead of the late shipmaster. He is a young but seasoned Elite.

He moves swiftly to greet the commander with a bow.

`SURDAMEE

For what purpose do we bear the pleasure of this visit, Supreme Commander?

The commander has moved to the side of his shuttle and he's watching an Elite in his entourage remove a large case from the rear hold. They open it to reveal that it is the commander's combat armor -- an older and less ornate version plated in gold.

COMMANDER

There's nothing about this visit which will be pleasant.

`SURDAMEE

Your armor, Commander? Can we expect another attack by the humans? The demon?

The Elites are suiting up and checking their weapons, a collection of energy swords, carbines and plasma rifles. They all appear to be preparing for battle, while the crew of the Truth and Reconciliation look on confused.

COMMANDER

What has its eyes set on this vessel, is far worse than the demon. Take your soldiers - every last one of them - and bring them to Halo's surface. Deal with the human threat at the Chamber of Consecration. I have ordered the remainder of our fleet's infantry to come here. We will defend this ship.

`Surdamee is still confused about the nature of the conversation, but he refrains from further questioning -- he bows respectfully and leaves to obey.

The commander turns away from the shipmaster and looks out the energy barrier as Halo rises up in the distance behind it.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

May the Lords be merciful on both of our missions.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HALO, CONTROL ROOM CANYON - AFTERNOON

In the wake of the brutal assault on the control room, Carter sits alone in the snow, underneath a cluster of evergreen trees -- he holds Williams' dog tag.

In the canyon, the other Marines are fortifying against any potential Covenant assault to reclaim the structure. They are setting up turrets and sandbags, using the remaining debris from the Covenant's vehicles as part of their defenses.

Several Pelicans drop low, hovering at the base of the control center. An officer emerges from one of them. The Marines begin to gather around as the man speaks.

Carter follows suit.

OFFICER

...the Covenant have amassed a large presence at their ship, the Truth and Reconciliation. The good news is that these enemies are holding for the time. The bad news is that the remainder of the ship's crew is en route to this canyon.

The Marines, clearly exhausted, drop their heads. Their weapons lower and they become noticeably crestfallen. This was not the news they wanted to hear.

OFFICER (CONT'D)

We've also lost communication with Captain Keyes and Sergeant Johnson a few hundred clicks up spin. We've been trying to contact them for the last two hours to no avail... Cortana's sent the Spartan.

WE PUSH IN ON CARTER'S FACE. THEN WE MOVE TO HIS HAND... HE TIGHTLY GRIPS WILLIAMS' DOG TAG.

FADE INTO:

EXT. HALO, SWAMP - AFTERNOON

The Pelican touches down in a patch of boggy marsh -- the Chief steps out, dropping into waist-high water. He moves quickly toward the bank and around a cluster of large trees.

Beyond that, he finds the entrance to the bunker. The COM line opens.

FOEHAMMER (O.C.)

I'll be on standby if you need me, Chief.

CHIEF

Ten-four.

At the threshold of the structure, the Chief finds a single shotgun. He stows his battle rifle on his back, picks the shotgun up and examines the ammo. There are a few shots left.

He quickly returns his attention to the bunker's interior which is shrouded in darkness -- pressing forward into it with the shotgun readied.

INT. HALO, BUNKER

After reaching the bottom of a short ramp, the Chief sees a lift platform at the center of the room -- the Spartan's helmet-embedded flashlight turns on.

The machine is SEVERELY MANGLED AND TWISTED -- clearly inoperable.

He approaches the terminal nearby and something moves to his right, catching his attention. He turns to see a LEG pull into the shadow of a dark corner, attempting to conceal itself.

It's a body -- a HUMAN BODY, sitting on the floor.

The Chief raises his shotgun and approaches the corner, his flashlight now pointed in that direction. As he gets closer, it is revealed to be a Marine.

It is JENKINS.

The Marine appears to be in shock. He is missing one arm and his body shows severe signs of trauma and blood loss. Although his eyes are WIDE OPEN, staring off blankly in front of him, his only movement is the steady undulation of his chest while he breaths.

The Chief kneels down and raises the Marine's head to face him.

CHIEF (CONT'D)  
Jenkins? Can you hear me?

There's no response.

The Spartan grabs the Marine's helmet which is resting on the ground next to him. He removes a chip from it, inserting it into his own.

CUT TO:

OUR PERSPECTIVE BECOMES A CAMERA AS IT PLAYS BACK FOOTAGE. ON THE BOTTOM OF THE FOOTAGE, IT SHOWS THAT IT IS FROM, PRIVATE WALLACE JENKINS HELMET-MOUNTED CAMERA... THE CHIEF FAST FORWARDS THROUGH A VARIETY OF SEQUENCES BRINGING US TO JOHNSON AND HIS TEAM WITHIN THE BUNKER.

The Marines are inside a room, their weapons raised. The door behind them slams shut.

MENDOZA

Shit.

At first, there is a hissing sound. It is slight, but it quickly becomes louder and louder. The Marines, on alert, raise their weapons -- scanning the room frantically.

After a few seconds, the place is filled with horrifying and unearthly noises.

From the corner of the room, a handful of small, spider-like creatures emerge, roughly the size of a man's torso. These are INFECTION FORMS. They crawl about and LUNGE for Bisenti's chest, knocking him to the ground.

He shoves the creature away.

KEYES

(shouting)

Stay together, Marines!

BISENTI

(shouting)

There are too many of them! Mendoza!

Jenkins' camera turns about, now seeing Mendoza getting attacked. He has at least half a dozen crawling on top of him. He falls over and cries out in pain.

MENDOZA

(frantic)

Aaahh! Get 'em off me!

The Marine finally gives up and falls back, completely covered by the creatures. His body goes limp.

JOHNSON

(shouting)

He's gone. Stay on task! Fire your god damn weapon, Jenkins!

The camera footage becomes choppy as the Chief sees that Keyes is knocked down and the creature climbs atop him. The captain knocks it off and attempts kill it.

Then the camera goes black.

CUT TO:

WE RETURN TO THE BUNKER WITH THE CHIEF, AS HE REMOVES THE CHIP FROM HIS HELMET...

When the Spartan stands up, however, he sees that Jenkins is GONE.

WE FIND OURSELVES IN FRONT OF SPARTAN, FROM WHERE JENKINS' BODY WAS PREVIOUSLY. WE'RE LOOKING UP AT THE CHIEF.

BEHIND HIM, THERE'S MOVEMENT AROUND THE BROKEN LIFT. A LOT OF MOVEMENT. BUT WE CAN'T MAKE OUT WHAT IT IS...

Then comes a sound which SURROUNDS him. A horrific orchestra of seething hisses and venomous bellows. It is completely UNHINGING.

The Chief carefully turns around, his shotgun raised.

WE NOW SEE THE HORROR THAT WE COULD ONLY HEAR BEFORE...

In front of him are a dozen grotesque creatures -- LITERAL MONSTERS.

They appear to be the remains of Marines and Elites, yet they are ALIVE. Their bodies are a disgusting mess of flesh, some of their heads are twisted about, some of their arms are pulled free and their skin has taken on a thick, leathery membrane.

The creatures move about sporadically -- some scurry along the walls, others lumber about with powerful strides. They appear to be more animal now than sentient...

These are COMBAT FORMS.

For a moment, the creatures lock eyes with the Spartan -- all of them facing in his direction with their throaty sounds. Underneath their legs a wave of smaller creatures, the INFECTION FORMS, make a beeline for the Chief.

The Spartan SLAMS his foot down atop them, crushing several in a single blow. He sweeps his foot against the next wave, kicking them away. Looking back up, he sees the larger creatures now moving toward him -- some with amazing speed...

He raises his shotgun.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

He drops the first three.

The creatures EXPLODE into pieces as they are hit by the full force of the weapon. Their body parts toss around on the floor as other beasts move to continue the assault.

BOOM! BOOM! CLICK!

The Chief is able to clear out two more just before his weapon goes EMPTY.

The next creature SLAMS an arm which was formed into a tentacle of some sort against his chest, knocking him to the ground. Another piles on top of him, holding him down.

He kicks it off, rolling away from the creatures and pulling free his battle rifle from his back.

The Spartan fires at one twice and the creature falls. The Chief tosses a frag grenade into the horde. It explodes, SPRAYING LARGE CHUNKS of flesh and body parts everywhere.

They are all dead, save for THREE. One he clears out with the battle rifle as it scurries against the wall. The other two are able to escape, running across the ground like rodents in an alley -- they DIVE back underneath the lift's contorted platform.

The Chief checks his battle rifle and realizes that it is empty. He stows it, slowly and carefully approaching the lift. Using his helmet's flashlight, he peers down the shaft and sees A HUNDRED OF MONSTERS clinging to the inner walls of the lift's shaft -- all staring right back up at him.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, SWAMP - AFTERNOON

The Master Chief is sprinting out of the bunker and racing as fast as he can into the jungle.

CHIEF  
(shouting)  
Foehammer, do you copy?

FOEHAMMER  
I copy. Getting strange readings down there though. You got company?

The Chief looks over his shoulder, mid-stride, as a HORDE of these beasts pursue him into the swamp's boggy and tree-laden terrain.

CHIEF  
Something like that.

FOEHAMMER  
I can't hear you, Chief. You're breaking up. Some kind of interference here...

The Spartan is silent as he tunnels his way through the foliage at breakneck speed. The creatures begin climbing the trees, jumping from branch to branch above him in an effort to pin him in. He can see them on both sides, flanking his direction as he pushes out of the tree line and into a small gully.

WE ARRIVE IN THE GULLY BEFORE JUST HIM. HERE WE FIND...

...an alien structure, considerably smaller than most of those he has witnessed on the Halo ring. It stands alone at the center.

The Chief can see Foehammer's bird come into view above the canopy of trees.

CHIEF

Foehammer, I'm right below you.

FOEHAMMER

My COM is malfunctioning. I can't -

She cuts off.

Around him, the creatures shore up, staying just inside the tree line roughly twenty feet away on all sides. The Chief looks back up to Foehammer, who has passed overhead, oblivious to the urgency of his situation.

The horde of beasts approach slowly and confidently, seemingly aware that the Spartan is unarmed and defenseless.

Then there is a FLASH!

A brilliant light illuminates the entire gully and the monsters are momentarily STUNNED, recoiling back into the tree line.

Then, almost immediately, there is a bizarre HUMMING sound -- just as though SOMEONE is humming a tune casually. It is coming from...

A metallic object, which slowly descends from the dark canopy above the marshland. It speaks in a high-pitched and dry tone...

VOICE

Oh my, this is a mess! My makers would be quite displeased.

It has what appears to be a single eye set into the spherical chamber which composes its body. As it drops low, it stares directly at the Spartan.

VOICE

Hello, Reclaimer. I am 343 Guilty Spark, the monitor of this installation. Someone has released the Flood.

CHIEF

The Flood?

A cluster of new machines arrive, quickly hovering down to the ground. These are not spherical, but they are composed of various metallic parts, forming a triangular housing with an energy weapon peering out from underneath.

They begin to attack the encroaching creatures -- firing columns of burning energy, SEARING the monsters' flesh and pushing them back into the jungle.

These are SENTINELS.

SPARK

My job is to prevent it from leaving the installation, but I require your assistance. These Sentinels will handle this local infestation, but elsewhere the Flood is spreading... Come with me.

The Chief is lifted into the air by an unseen force and enveloped in several bands of light. Within seconds, he disappears in another luminous flash.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, LOADING BAY

This is the LOADING BAY of the Covenant cruiser, Truth and Reconciliation. It is the large room which the groundside lift reaches.

Typically, it is filled with equipment and supplies, but now it holds HUNDREDS OF COVENANT WARRIORS. They are entrenched around the perimeter of the room, their weapons all pointed at the lift's conveyance mechanism -- a beam of energy being funneled onto a platform at the center of the bay.

The Supreme Commander stands atop this platform -- he is fully-clad in his combat armor save for his helmet -- looking out toward the hundreds of Covenant crowded around him. He holds their attention silently for just a moment.

Then, as he starts to pace back and forth along the Covenant lines, he speaks.

COMMANDER

We have been betrayed, my brothers. Through dark treachery, a captive enemy buried within the ring has been set free. This parasite -- the Flood -- which haunted our Lords' footsteps so long ago has been released from its prison and now stirs about the Sacred Ring.

Sub-Commander 'Vadumee and red-armored Elites look on from the sides.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Their first response to their newfound freedom will be to attack this ship. It is their only way to spread... to infect others. But that will not happen!

The troops ROAR in approval.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

We have all read the ancient text. The Flood waged war against the Forerunners, but were defeated once before. Today,



fellow warriors, their fate will be no different!

They roar again, raising their fists in agreement.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, RAVINE - AFTERNOON

WE SEE THE RAVINE NOW, WHILE HEARING THE COMMANDER CONTINUE HIS SPEECH...

In the shadow of the ship, the masses of Flood SURGE LIKE A RUSHING DELUGE -- their numbers are well into the hundreds as they pass through the empty ravine. Here, both human and Covenant move side by side, their bodies disfigured in gruesome shapes.

COMMANDER (O.S.)

Prepare with me, my brothers. For at this very moment the parasite of legend approaches.

The creatures run and crawl across the valley, pushing toward the lift platform which is still transferring energy upward. The first few combat forms begin to take the gravity lift.

COMMANDER (O.S.)

When we have quelled this abomination, we will set our sights on the humans.

(pauses briefly)

Hold fast, my brothers, for our victory draweth nigh.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, LOADING BAY

WE RETURN TO THE BAY...

The Covenant troops roar their approval, their weapons raised in the air. The commander returns to the side of the room, placing his helmet on his head and grabbing a carbine from another Elite.

He exchanges a BRIEF LOOK with the Sub-Commander. Despite the continued LAUDING by the crowd, 'Vadumee's face appears considerably less enthusiastic about the Supreme Commander's confidence.

It is clear that he doubts his leader.

CUT TO:

INT. HALO, LIBRARY

WE FIND OURSELVES IN AN ENORMOUS HALLWAY, THE CEILING RISING SEVERAL HUNDRED FEET INTO THE AIR. THE CORRIDOR IS COMPLETELY DARK EXCEPT FOR A SERIES OF DIM BLUE LIGHTS WHICH LINE THE WALLS.

The Chief reappears within similar bands of light. He takes in his environment as his body is slowly lowered to the ground by an unseen hand.

The architecture is sparse and considerably less ornate than other structures we've seen, but it is clear that this place was also made by the Forerunners.

He looks up to see the spherical monitor hovering just above his head.

CHIEF

Where are we?

SPARK

The Library, of course. We must collect the Index before we can activate the installation.

Spark guides him down the oversized corridor toward a large door which is sealed. They pause here.

The door is massive. At its center are a series of concentric circles which Spark approaches. He fires a beam of energy at the iris of the circle and they begin to move and seemingly unwind.

The door parts slowly.

CHIEF

What are they... the Flood?

SPARK

The Flood is an extra-galactic parasitic anomaly. It begins when a potential host is infected by their spores. Shortly thereafter, it mutates into one of their many violent and aggressive forms, later individually releasing their own spores for the infection of others. It is insidious and elegant.

The door is opened and the Spartan moves through it.

WE PUSH BEHIND THE CHIEF AND SPARK AS THEY ENTER A VAST CIRCULAR ROOM...

At its center is an interestingly alluring object. It is small enough to be held in a hand and is suspended by an invisible force. Spark moves toward the object and then turns to face the Spartan.

SPARK (CONT'D)

Halo was built to study the Flood, as well as provide a solution against it if ever again needed. It appears that the other species currently on the installation is responsible for this outbreak. They seemed most persistent in their attempts to access restricted areas.

CHIEF

And the others who went into that facility? The other humans... were they killed by the Flood?

BEAT.

SPARK

Why no, Reclaimer. They are the Flood.

The Chief looks at Spark for a moment, taking in what the monitor has just said before returning his gaze to the object. It is long and narrow, hovering upright like a sword in its scabbard.

SPARK (CONT'D)

This is the Index. Please retrieve it.

The Chief hesitates at first, but then cautiously reaches for the object. The Index shifts and changes shape seemingly responding to the proximity of his hand -- the sword rises upward from the case it's in -- it is a slender, key-like object.

The Spartan retrieves it, delicately removing the Index from its cradle. Pulling it to his chest, he studies it carefully.

CHIEF

This "Index"... It'll stop the Flood?

SPARK

Just as it has once before.

Involuntarily, the Chief's body again rises into the air, quickly being covered by bands of light. The light expands and both he and Spark vanish in a BURST of energy.

CUT TO:

INT. HALO, CONTROL ROOM

They reappear in the control room, not far from where he left Cortana earlier. The Chief immediately brings the Index to the terminal, but stops for a moment -- in contemplation.

SPARK

Is something wrong?

CHIEF

No.

SPARK

Splendid. We can now perform the reunification of the Index with the core... the activation of Halo. This final step is reserved for you, Reclaimer.

The Chief grabs the Index and slowly inserts it into the terminal. The station lights up initially, as though it is coming online, but then suddenly powers down.

Spark is surprised and examines the terminal closely.

SPARK (CONT'D)

Odd. That wasn't supposed to happen.

CORTANA (O.C.)

Oh really?

Cortana's disembodied voice is heard, as she slowly fades into view with her hands on her hips and her voice rising to a scolding tone.

CHIEF

Cortana...

SPARK

(surprised)

A construct in the core? That is absolutely unacceptable! I shall purge you at once!

Cortana waves a holographic representation of the Index which she now has in her hand.

CORTANA

Are you sure that's a good idea?

SPARK

(angry)

How dare you! I'll -

CORTANA

Do what? I have the Index! You can float and sputter!

CHIEF

Enough! Cortana, the Flood is spreading. If we activate Halo's defenses, we can stop it.

CORTANA

You don't know how this ring works, do you? Why the Forerunners built it? Halo doesn't kill the Flood, it kills their

food: Humans, Covenant... whatever.  
You're all equally edible. The only way  
to stop the Flood is to starve them to  
death. That is what Halo is designed to  
do: Kill all sentient life.

BEAT.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
You don't believe me? Ask him.

The Chief looks over at Spark, clearly confused.

CHIEF  
Is this true?

SPARK  
More or less. Technically, this  
installation's pulse has a maximum  
effective radius of 25,000 light years.  
But, once the others follow suit this  
galaxy will be quite devoid of life... or  
at least any life with sufficient biomass  
to support the Flood.

The Chief looks back at Cortana and the Index.

SPARK (CONT'D)  
But you knew that already. How couldn't  
you?

CORTANA  
He left out that little detail. Didn't he?

SPARK  
We have followed the containment protocol  
to the letter. You were with me each step  
of the way. Why would you hesitate to do  
what you have already done?

CORTANA  
(concerned)  
Chief, I'm picking up movement.

The Spartan steps in front of Cortana. Spark lowers himself to Chief's  
eye level, his voice becoming increasingly HOSTILE.

SPARK  
Last time, you asked me if it was my  
choice, would I do it? Having  
considerable time to ponder your query,  
my answer has not changed. There is no  
choice.  
(determined)  
We must activate the ring.

CORTANA  
(frantic)  
Yank me, Chief!

He removes Cortana and slides the chip back into his helmet.

Five Sentinels rise from the lower depths of the room. They remain behind Spark, momentarily at bay while they train their weapons on the Chief.

SPARK  
If you are unwilling to help, I will simply find another. Still, I must have the Index. Give me your construct or I will be forced to take her from you.

The Chief removes something from his armor -- A PLASMA GRENADE.

CHIEF  
That's not going to happen.

SPARK  
So be it.  
(to the Sentinels)  
Save his head. Dispose of the rest.

Sparks flies upward and out of sight.

The Sentinels begin to move and fire on the Chief's position. He primes the grenade and hurls it at the cluster of machines. It attaches to one, but the concussive blast destroys two others nearby, dropping their smoldering husks of steel to the floor...

As the air clears of smoke, the Chief is already running -- halfway to the doorway. The remaining Sentinels continue to fire their weapons -- burning columns of energy trail immediately behind the Spartan.

CORTANA  
Cracking the door...

The Chief drops to his side, sliding right underneath the door's aperture. Then it SLAMS shut.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
This should buy us a few seconds.

The Chief runs down the short corridor toward the control center's main entrance...

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, CONTROL ROOM PLATFORM - AFTERNOON

Emerging from the control room and onto the platform outside, he sees a war in full effect.

WE RISE HIGH, BOOMING ABOVE THE CANYON FLOOR AS THE CHIEF TAKES IN THE CARNAGE BELOW...

The UNSC forces, new Covenant reinforcements and the Flood are locked in a brutal three-way struggle on the canyon floor.

Infection forms scurry across the ground as though they were ANTS ESCAPING A TRAMPLED NEST. The Chief watches as several dead Marines are taken by these creatures, TRANSFORMED within moments into the Flood. Then he watches as they turn against their fellow soldiers.

CORTANA

If we don't stop the Flood, it'll find a way to leave this ring.

(determined)

We can't let that happen.

Out of large ducts which line the canyon wall, a variety of Sentinels appear. Some are identical to the ones which accompanied Guilty Spark, yet others are considerably larger with huge claw-like arms and energy shields on their protecting their shells.

These are SENTINEL ENFORCERS.

Most of the Sentinels moves toward the Flood in the valley, releasing their salvo on the parasite below. A handful of the smaller ones, however, ignore the Flood and move straight for the Master Chief and Cortana.

The Spartan looks directly down the facade of the platform to see that the Flood has moved past the human and Covenant fortification and begun SCALING the ziggurat.

CHIEF

I'd think fast if I were you.

CORTANA

I've got it, but we need to get out of here.

The Chief turns to his right to see the same stationary Phantom dropship he noticed on his way in.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

That'll do.

The Spartan BOLTS for it just as the Sentinels approach and begin firing. Entering the craft, he tosses Cortana quickly onto the dropship's controls and returns to the Phantom's starboard side, grabbing hold of the mounted plasma cannon.

There, he discharges a TORRENT OF PLASMA at the Sentinels, knocking them down one by one in succession -- their charred shapes collapsing onto the platform's surface.

The Phantom comes to life and lifts quickly into the air, TUNNELING through the canyon's thick cloud cover into the pristine sky above it.

CUT TO:

INT. PHANTOM, CABIN

The Chief moves to the front cabin as Cortana is examining the Index in her hand.

CHIEF

We lost them. What's your plan?

CORTANA

We have to destroy Halo.

CHIEF

How?

CORTANA

The Autumn. If we trigger a detonation on a large scale... a starship's fusion reactors going critical, for example... we might be able to destabilize the ring.

CHIEF

We can't activate the Autumn's self-destruct system without Keyes... his neural interface.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

I'm scanning now... we have to find him wherever he is.

BEAT.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

Okay, I have a... Oh no... that's impossible.

CHIEF

What is it?

CORTANA

He's aboard Truth and Reconciliation. Again.

CHIEF

Well then we go after him. Again.

The Spartan grabs a carbine affixed to the nearby wall, checking the ammunition.

CORTANA



That ship is crawling with Covenant. It's  
a deathtrap.

The Phantom flies off into the distance as the sun begins to "set"  
against the edge of Halo's horizon.

CHIEF (O.S.)  
If Keyes made it onto the ship, then  
Covenant are the least of our problems.

FADE IN:

EXT. HALO, CANYON FLOOR - AFTERNOON

ALONG THE LARGE BUTTRESS, WE SLOWLY DESCEND ONTO THE BATTLE FIELD AT  
THE BASE OF THE CONTROL CENTER...

The Marines, the Covenant, the Flood and the Sentinels all COLLIDE on  
the blood-drenched canyon floor. Both the humans and the Covenant have  
found themselves sectioned off -- on hills and behind cover -- as they  
battle against the TIDE OF FLOOD FORMS rising on all sides.

With every death, the Flood's numbers grow larger.

The Flood now use WEAPONS and VEHICLES -- moving about in a much more  
dangerous and organized state. They fire into the huddled crowds of  
humans and Covenant, knocking over cover and CHIPPING AWAY AT THE LAST  
REMNANT OF THE UNINFECTED.

Overhead, the Sentinels fire down beams of energy, the larger ones  
SWEEPING their broad steel arms at the creatures in an attempt to cut  
them down. They are only partly successful -- whenever they claim a  
Flood creature, two more arise out of the dead bodies of humans and  
Covenant which litter the icy ground.

WE COME TO CARTER WHO IS...

...alone, moving alongside the canyon wall underneath a collection of  
evergreens. He has a sniper rifle, but is simply using the scope to  
watch the battle play out.

He has given up on the fighting, evidently only focusing on SURVIVAL.  
Through his scope, he stares into the lines of Flood forms which crowd  
around the last pockets of human and Covenant resistance.

Then he sees something. He sees SOMEONE in the crowd.

Looking closer, he realizes who he sees...

It is WILLIAMS.

Although injured and moving about with the Flood monsters, he still looks somewhat lucid and normal. Carter slowly emerges from the cover point and sidles a snow bank getting closer to his friend.

BOOM! BOOM!

A pair of Wraith mortars CRASH into the ground nearby, kicking up both snow and dirt into the air -- CREATING A HAZE.

AS THOUGH OUR EARS ARE FAILING, WE NOW ONLY HEAR THE MUFFLED SOUNDS OF EXPLOSIONS IN THE DISTANCE...

Carter continues, undeterred. He gets within twenty feet of Williams and calls out to him.

CARTER

Williams! Williams, it's me! It's Carter!

Almost as though he recognizes him, Williams turns and begins to slowly approach. Carter moves closer carefully as a nearby explosion sends the charred remains of a Warthog to the ground nearby.

When they get within a few feet of each other, Carter smiles at Williams grateful that his friend has seemingly survived. Then Carter looks down at Williams' chest, examining the injuries he received earlier.

Instead of wounds he finds SEVERAL RED-TIPPED TENDRILS SLITHERING ABOUT. In that moment, Carter becomes PETRIFIED with fear.

He looks up and...

BAM!

...he is knocked back twenty feet by Williams' arm which he now realizes has MUTATED into a large BLADE-LIKE APPENDAGE. Williams jumps unnaturally high into the air, landing atop Carter and shoving the end of his RAZOR SHARP ARM into Carter's chest.

A CRUSHING sound is heard as the Marine's chest cavity seems to collapse.

In agony, Carter looks up to see Williams, now realizing that his friend is no longer there. The parasite has claimed him.

Williams doesn't attack any further or move. He raises his head into the air and releases a DISTURBING BELLOW. While his body enters shock, Carter wonders for a moment what is about to happen, but then realizes it...

WE NOW BRIEFLY SEE FROM HIS POSITION, LOOKING ACROSS THE GROUND TO THE SNOW DRIFT WHERE A DOZEN INFECTION FORMS COME SCAMPERING TOWARD HIM...

Carter attempts to pull free, but is unable. His eyes begin to well up with tears and he tries to cry out for help but cannot.

WE PULL UP FROM CARTER'S WIDE OPEN EYES, RISING TO A BIRD'S EYE VIEW, DIRECTLY ABOVE THE MACABRE SCENE. WILLIAMS HOLDS HIS FRIEND DOWN WHILE THE INFECTION FORMS SEIZE THEIR VICTIM...

CUT TO BLACK:

There is a brief and silent pause and then we hear the sound of another battle...

FADE IN:

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, SHUTTLE BAY

WE SLOWLY PASS THROUGH THE CORRIDORS OF THE BATTLE CRUISER, WATCHING THE COVENANT BATTLE THE FLOOD, AS THEY ARE PUSHED BACK FURTHER AND FURTHER... INTO THE LARGE SHUTTLE BAY.

The shuttle bay is in rough shape as well. Its power systems FLICKER off and on, the energy barrier covering the large wall -- the bay door -- is COMPLETELY POWERED OFF.

The Supreme Commander and a handful of red-armored Elites stand back to back as the Flood pour through the doorways, dropping down from the upper level and RUSHING them on all sides. When the creatures arrive, they are met with a MAELSTROM OF ENERGY SWORDS, severing them into pieces.

COMMANDER

Come, my brothers! We will not be undone!

The Elites continue to battle beside him, but 'Vadumee, still at odds with the commander, speaks out as they continue to fight.

'VADUMEE

It has come time for us to accept defeat.  
The parasite has become unstoppable. Let  
us depart from here and salvage what we  
have left.

The commander is at first ALARMED by the Sub-Commander's mutinous comment.

'VADUMEE (CONT'D)

(to the commander)

Do not bring any more folly upon our  
brethren. We must flee and regroup.

The Supreme Commander listens to his plea for a moment, but quickly turns back to the battle at hand as the Flood continue to assault their position.

Without warning the bay doorway is suddenly breached by a reckless Phantom CRASHING into the floor at a BLISTERING SPEED. A number of Flood are CRUSHED as the dropship's inertia GRINDS TO A HALT.

The commander and other Elites take notice, as the MASTER CHIEF emerges from the ship's cockpit and into its rear hold.

COMMANDER  
(under his breath)  
The demon...

The Chief and the Supreme Commander lock eyes for a second.

Then the Spartan turns to the other side of the hold attempting to leave through its open door. His efforts are cut short as he is met by a cluster of combat forms charging toward him. He spins around and leaves through the other door, hoisting himself onto the Phantom's armored plating as the Flood pass below moving on toward the Elites.

Within seconds, the Spartan has disappeared into a doorway on the upper level of the shuttle bay.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, CORRIDOR

WE FOLLOW THE SPARTAN DOWN A HAUNTING CORRIDOR, AS THE SHIP'S LIGHTS FLICKER AROUND HIM...

CORTANA  
The Flood... they're desperate for this ship.

A familiar voice breaks through the COM...

KEYES  
(indiscernible)  
Chief! Don't be a fool! Leave me! Save yourself!

CORTANA  
The captain! He must be nearby!

At the end of the corridor, the Chief finds the ship's command deck...

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, COMMAND DECK

It is a large room with a relatively small circular platform at its center which is in part enclosed by holographic stations and displays.

There are no Covenant to be seen. Across the stations, however, is a LARGE MEMBRANOUS STRUCTURE which is pulsating -- connected almost like a spider's web holding a large sac of tissue and flesh.

It is clearly Flood in origin.

The Spartan approaches it cautiously, sighting all corners of the room with his weapon. He comes closer and sees that it is, in fact, the REMAINS OF KEYES -- the captain has been completely consumed by the Flood.

CORTANA  
Captain Keyes...

He is shaking and gurgling, the vague contours of his face is the only thing which remains even partially human. His head slacks suddenly, as the mouth draws one last breath of air and then collapses.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
(sullen)  
He was a great man, a hero... he'll be missed.

BEAT.

CHIEF  
Focus... the Autumn.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
Right. If we had his neural interface, I might be able to trigger the self destruction sequence myself.

The Chief examines what is left of Keyes closely, putting his hand against the parasitic flesh.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
(concerned)  
We have movement. Lot's of enemy contacts... the Flood.

The Chief sends his fist into the captain's face with a FLESHY CRUNCH, pulling out a chip from the tissue which remains.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
That's it... This is what the captain would have wanted us to do.

The Chief stows the chip in his armor and grips his carbine tightly.

CHIEF  
Let's get the hell out of here.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, CORRIDOR

The Chief enters the series of corridors connecting the shuttle bay to the command deck.

CORTANA

Wait, you're not going back the way you came, are you?

CHIEF

You have a better solution?

CORTANA

I might. The monitor was able to use a teleportation grid embedded in the ring. I might be able to do the same.

CRASH!

Behind the Spartan, a hole breaks through the ceiling of the hallway. Flood begin to POUR out of it and race toward the Chief.

CHIEF

I'd make it quick.

The Spartan arms a frag and rolls it in their direction, blowing apart the first few. Others continue to charge. He turns hard and runs, quickly approaching the shuttle bay.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, SHUTTLE BAY

WE FOLLOW THE CHIEF AS HE HITS THE GROUND...

...pivots and turns into the crashed Phantom.

The Flood begin to move through the same doorway above, dropping down onto the lower floor. Most ignore him, CHARGING into the Elites' battle which still brews on a few hundred feet away.

A few combat forms splinter off and head toward the Chief who has reached the Phantom's interior.

CORTANA

The monitor's trying to stop me from accessing the system, but I think I've found a way around him.

He grabs the plasma cannon lodged in the Phantom's rear hold and RIPS it free with a LOUD SNAPPING SOUND. The weapon sparks as he pulls it from its hoist and aims it at the oncoming Flood forms.

Then he releases HELL, firing a barrage of plasma bolts and obliterating any Flood who approach him. Their bodies disintegrate against the heat, breaking apart like clay.

CUT TO:

WE RETURN TO THE ELITES' BATTLE ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE BAY...

The Sub-Commander and the others have separated themselves from the Supreme Commander. 'Vadumee and his group are slowly moving toward a nearby command shuttle, taking out the Flood as they back their way to the ship.

When the Elites finally make it into the shuttle, they quickly ignite its engine. The large craft hovers above the bay floor.

'Vadumee looks down at the Supreme Commander from the rear hatch of the shuttle. They make eye contact as the vessel rises. Below the Sub-Commander, the shuttle's rear plasma cannon spins around and LIGHTS UP the surrounding Flood, clearing out the area and offering the Supreme Commander one final reprieve.

'VADUMEE

Come with us, Commander. Don't waste your life on this parasite!

The commander looks up at the 'Vadumee and then at the Master Chief who is cornered by the remaining Flood, but holding his own with the turret.

COMMANDER

I have business with this one.

He looks in the direction of the Spartan.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

When you've reached the carrier, lay waste to this cruiser. The Flood will not relent until they've taken this ship as their own.

The Sub-Commander nods affirmatively.

COMMANDER (CONT'D)

Now go, brother.

As the shuttle's hatch closes and the craft pulls away, the commander turns to the Chief who has run out of ammunition. The Spartan lifts the turret and heaves it at the last handful of Flood forms charging him, knocking them down before using the carbine to finish them off.

Without allowing for respite, the commander immediately launches an offensive. He sprints toward the Chief, effortlessly blocking the Spartan's carbine fire as he approaches -- then LUNGING FORWARD with his sword.

The Chief dodges the FIRST BLOW, guiding it away from his chest and into the wall behind him. The Elite jerks the sword free, BELTING the Spartan in the face and KNOCKING him onto the ground. The Chief loses his carbine but is able to grab the commander's leg as he falls, pulling the Elite down with him.

The Spartan SCRAMBLES to get on top of the Elite, lining up a pair of hard right hooks before the commander rebounds by kicking him in the gut with both legs, LAUNCHING the Chief's body across the full length of the shuttle bay.

His back SLAMS into the upper level's rim and he falls down HARD onto the ground. The commander begins to charge with his energy sword out. The Chief, recovering from the kick, grabs an energy sword from a fallen Elite nearby.

The commander jumps forward, lunging at the Spartan once more.

In the space of a second, the Chief ignites his weapon and BLOCKS the blow, sending the commander reeling backward. The two begin to attack back and forth. Their movements are not elegant but rather entirely practical, SLASHING HARD blade after blade down atop the other, only narrowly to be blocked.

After a few moments, the Chief halts their battle by SHOVING his boot into the Elite's chest, FORCING the commander into the ground.

CORTANA

Almost there, just a few more minutes...

CHIEF

Minutes?

The Chief stays his ground and readies his sword, allowing the Elite commander to rise slowly. Clutching his gut, the beast stands up, for the first time pausing to speak.

COMMANDER

It matters not, Demon. In mere moments we will bring this vessel down with the full force of my fleet.

CHIEF

Good. Saves me the trouble.

Suddenly there's a familiar HUMMING coming from the open bay doors. The Elite and Spartan turn to see. It's 343 GUILTY SPARK. He appears in the bay door and nonchalantly enters.

COMMANDER

A holy oracle?

Spark ignores the Elite, focusing on the Chief.

SPARK

Your impertinence has come to an end, Reclaimer.

Behind Spark two Sentinel Enforcers rise above the ship's deck and into view. They move forward slowly, pushing into the shuttle bay.

SPARK (CONT'D)



Your attempt to destroy this installation  
has failed.

COMMANDER

(turns to the Chief)

You wish to destroy Halo? Abomination...

CORTANA

(whispering)

You're going to want to hold onto  
something, Chief...

The Spartan places his hand on a nearby column as though to steady himself.

BOOM! -- THE SHIP IS STRUCK HARD FROM OUTSIDE.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, SKY

Although still in the ring's atmosphere, the Seeker of Truth moves closer while firing on Truth and Reconciliation. The smaller cruiser lurches from the assault -- turning on its side as it BUCKLES under the carrier's firepower.

The vessel is being knocked out of its stationary position above the ravine and pushed over an immense crevice which is incredibly deep.

CUT TO:

INT. TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION, SHUTTLE BAY

With the unnerving sound of STEEL CRUSHING AGAINST STEEL, the entire bay violently shifts at an angle, tilting toward the open doors and causing everything in the room to begin to SLIDE in that direction.

The Chief holds onto the column, clinging tenaciously as vehicles, crates and dead bodies begin to TUMBLE around him. The commander, at first sliding down toward the open bay door, has latched onto a nearby cable -- hanging safely to the side of the CHAOTIC AVALANCHE OF MACHINERY.

The Sentinels were severely damaged by the blast. One is completely out of commission, rolling along the floor before dropping backward and out of the bay door.

WE FOLLOW AS IT PLUMMETS DOWN TOWARD THE FACE OF HALO FAR BELOW...

The other Sentinel, alongside Spark, moves to the Chief. It attempts to reach for him, but he drops to a lower column and evades its grasp.

CHIEF

(anxious)

Cortana...

CORTANA

Get ready.

BOOM! -- The next strike makes the ship spin even further... now turning completely on its side.

The Spartan watches as the entire room turns sideways, the open bay door now replacing the floor. Objects begin to free fall, bouncing along the ship's interior before dropping through the door toward the ring's surface.

SPARK

Stop this impudence, Reclaimer. Why do you resist doing what you have already done?

The Spartan's attention turns upward as he hears the sound of something heavy. Fifty yards above him, a Wraith, precariously pinned against two columns BEGINS TO TEETER.

The Chief briefly returns his gaze to Spark, as the remaining Sentinel Enforcer attempts to apprehend him once more. Before it has a chance, however...

BOOM! -- Another hit lands and this one shakes the Wraith free and sends it CAREENING DOWN through the open bay. The Spartan, the monitor and the Sentinel vanish as it passes through.

The Wraith has swept them all away.

CUT TO:

WE RETURN TO THE SUPREME COMMANDER...

The commander, preoccupied with his own dilemma, looks upward quick enough to notice a BANSHEE SKITTERING DOWN, falling toward the bay door. Using the cable, he swings to it and grabs onto the vehicle as it drops free from the ship's enclosure.

EXT. HALO, SKY - DUSK

The commander quickly moves about the flier, boarding it and RECOVERING from its plunge. He boosts away from the cruiser, looking back only briefly as Truth and Reconciliation finally explodes in a BRILLIANT BLOOM of white light.

CUT TO:

NOW WE ARE FOLLOWING THE CHIEF AS HE FALLS TOWARD THE RING'S SURFACE...

The Sentinel Enforcer was CRUSHED on impact. Its remnants are embedded in the falling Wraith's armor plating. Both Guilty Spark and the Chief are WEDGED AGAINST the body of the Wraith as well -- the inertia of its fall not allowing either room to break free.

As the ring's surface RUSHES up to meet them, the Spartan holds on tightly to the machine he's PINNED against.

CHIEF  
(through gritted teeth)  
Any time would be great...

CORTANA  
Here we go... Now!

And in a BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT, he disappears just as the Wraith collides with the ground, disintegrating into a thousand pieces.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, BRIDGE

THE MASTER CHIEF HITS HARD...

...some of the inertia from the original fall carries him into the bridge floor. The Chief stands up and shrugs off the shock, as his armor momentarily sparks recoiling from the impact.

CHIEF  
(agitated)  
A little too close, don't you think?

CORTANA  
What, that? I thought you were having fun.

He removes Cortana from his helmet, moving the chip to her pedestal on the bridge. She jumps onto the holographic projector pad and begins to work on the countdown. She uses the neural interface to bring the system online.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
I leave home for a few days, and look what happens.

The Chief briefly scans the damaged bridge, its interior in shambles. He steps to the edge and looks down through the viewport at the landscape surrounding the Autumn.

CHIEF  
How long are we looking at?

CORTANA  
Just a few minutes, they didn't make this process easy for obvious reasons.

CHIEF

Well, we have a slight problem.

Outside the Autumn literally THOUSANDS OF FLOOD COMBAT FORMS have crowded at the base of the crash site like a RAGING SEA. Several clusters have already begun scaling the vessel, looking for cracks and fissures in the outer hull to penetrate.

CORTANA

Oh, I see... Alright, that should do it.  
We have fifteen minutes to find a way off  
this brick.

The Chief returns to the console and picks up Cortana. He locates the nearby maintenance lift and activates it, moving upward.

CUT TO:

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, OUTER HULL - DUSK

Rising from the outer hull, the Spartan takes a quick survey of the land. Looking toward the mountains in the distance, he now sees the last vestige of the Covenant fleet approaching high above the ring's surface.

They are coming for the Autumn.

CORTANA

There's an access hatch to a garage not  
far from here. We might be able to find a  
vehicle that can get us to the bay at the  
ship's stern.

The Chief BOLTS for the hatch.

EXT. HALO, CRASH SITE - DUSK

The Supreme Commander flies the Banshee at its TOP SPEED while the other hulking carriers and cruisers follow close behind. He is communicating to Sub-Commander 'Vadumee aboard the Seeker of Truth.

'VADUMEE (O.S.)

And you are certain the demon is here?

COMMANDER

I could not be more certain. It intends  
to use this ship to destroy Halo.

'VADUMEE (O.S.)

By the Gods.

The Supreme Commander drops down low as he approaches the Autumn, catching a glimpse of the Spartan running along the outer hull.

'VADUMEE (O.S.)

The demon is there, as you have said.  
Shall we destroy the ship?

COMMANDER

No, it is far too risky. Board the  
vessel's command deck to stop their  
efforts. I will handle the demon myself.

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, OUTER HULL - DUSK

The commander takes another pass at the Chief, swooping down low and taking aim. Before he can fire, the Spartan has escaped into an access hatch, sliding just below as the Banshee SCRAPES the ship's hull and pulls up at the last moment.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, GARAGE

The truncated garage is a series of small sectional divisions -- a parking area where the vehicles are loaded into stables for space travel. In front of him, seemingly untouched by the events which have taken place, is a single Warthog.

He climbs aboard and turns it on quickly, pulling it out of its parking slot and fishtailing it around. He moves it to a large aperture which looks out onto the top of the ship -- and in the distance, its stern.

CORTANA

(excited)

Unbelievable! I'm reading a UNSC  
transponder nearby... It's Foehammer! She  
might be our ticket off this ring. Chief,  
gun it! I'm going to get her on the COM...

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, OUTER HULL - DUSK

The Warthog peels out, launching itself down the surface of the ship toward its stern. The hull is a composite of ramps, tunnels and extraneous structures which line a channel atop the ship's external body.

On both sides, the Flood begin to reach the top of the Autumn, MOVING LIKE RUSHING WATER across the ship's armor plating and converging onto the Chief's path.

The Spartan plows through the Flood lines, leaving A WAKE OF BODY PARTS behind him.

CORTANA

Foehammer, do you copy?

FOEHAMMER (O.S.)  
Cortana! Am I glad to hear you!

CORTANA  
Likewise, Four-Nineteen. I'm sending you  
our position. We need evac ASAP.

CUT TO:

INT. PELICAN, COCKPIT

Foehammer looks down the length of the Autumn as the Chief's Warthog  
BARRELS through Flood directly below her. She spots a break in the  
hull's armor ahead of him.

FOEHAMMER  
There's a channel platform about two  
hundred meters in front of you. I'll pick  
you up there.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, CRASH SITE - DUSK

WE RETURN TO THE AIR TO FOLLOW THE SUPREME COMMANDER'S BANSHEE WHICH...

...soars down toward the Autumn, homing in on the Chief's position. He  
lowers the flier close to the ship's surface and accelerates.

'VADUMEE (O.S.)  
Our team is arriving now, but I will warn  
you. My loyalty is with the Covenant,  
Commander. Not you. If there is no  
solution on their bridge, we will glass  
their ship and all that is near it.

The commander sees two Banshees drop down, FLANKING him on both sides.  
They are being manned by flight Elites.

'VADUMEE (O.S.)  
Till then, I have sent you assistance.

The three Banshees boost forward, white contrails of energy streaming  
from their canards.

CUT TO:

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, OUTER HULL - DUSK

WE REJOIN THE MASTER CHIEF AND HIS WARTHOG...

CORTANA

We've got company.

The Spartan looks back to see three Banshees dropping sharply down to the surface of the ship, just a few dozen yards behind him -- trying to keep pace as he weaves back and forth.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

(half laughing)

Unbelievable.

CHIEF

What is it?

CORTANA

The lead flier is your old pal on the ship... the fleet commander.

CHIEF

You've got to be kidding me.

CORTANA

He doesn't like you very much, does he?

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, TUNNEL

The Chief SWERVES the Hog around a bend and drops down into a service tunnel.

CORTANA

Foehammer, hold your position. We're trying to shake some tails.

The three Banshees follow him down into the tunnel, one of the two supporting fliers CLIPS its right canard on the side of the entrance, spinning out of control and crashing violently into the interior wall with a bright explosion.

The commander and the other Elite, stay in tow, clearing the tunnel's mouth. They both nimbly maneuver around various columns, struts and beams, staying close to the Spartan's vehicle.

When they reach a straightaway, the commander begins to unload his Banshee's salvo of plasma energy at the back of the Chief's vehicle, SCORCHING IT. The Spartan tries to pull away, swerving from side to side, but the commander does not relent, staying close to the Warthog at every move.

Up ahead, the Chief sees a POTENTIAL SOLUTION.

Although clearly meant to be a four-way intersection, the tunnel ends at a "T" junction, only allowing passage left or right. The avenue to go straight has been barred by A LARGE STEEL DOOR which is only raised five feet from the ground.

The Chief guns it, accelerating the Warthog toward the low-hanging door.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

(concerned)

You're joking right? That's far too low!

CRASH!

The Warthog SMASHES into it, rending off parts of its windshield, roll cage and the rear turret.

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, PLATFORM - DUSK

On the other side, the Spartan pulls his head back up revealing that despite the damage done to the Hog, he has SURVIVED. He slams his brakes, sliding to a stop on the platform.

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, TUNNEL

The Warthog's twisted turret continues to spin like a top as the two Banshees approach at full speed above.

COMMANDER

Break off!

The commander pulls HARD to the left, scraping the door and walls of the ship's interior but EVADING the collision. Glancing back, he sees that the other Banshee is not as fortunate.

It HITS violently, disintegrating on impact.

CUT TO:

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, PLATFORM - DUSK

The Chief pulls the Warthog through an aperture and out onto a long platform which acts as a bridge between two sections of the Autumn.

This is the CHANNEL PLATFORM.

On the far end of this division is Foehammer's bird, carefully moving in to pick them up. The Spartan steps out of the vehicle and approaches the edge.

FOEHAMMER

I thought I was the only one left.

Then, without warning, the Supreme Commander's Banshee returns.

CORTANA

(yelling)



Four-Nineteen! There's a Banshee on your  
six!

A fuel rod mortar slams into Foehammer's Pelican, breaking its left wing free and sending the dropship FALLING NOSE FIRST into the platform.

The Chief dives to escape the COLLISION, but the Warthog is thrown off the edge. Both it and the bird PLUMMET to Halo's landscape several hundred feet below.

The stress of the impact quickly takes its toll as THE ENTIRE PLATFORM QUAKES. The Chief jumps to his feet and makes a dead run toward the stern side of the bridge, just barely clearing the platform before it collapses in a whirlpool of smoke and debris.

He moves onto the solid end of the division, peering out over the precipice. The Pelican and Warthog are aflame on Halo's surface far below. He turns completely around, staring down a narrow channel toward the stern.

The fighter bay is only a few hundred yards away.

Looking further, he can see the platform and a UNSC LONGSWORD FIGHTER atop it.

CORTANA (CONT'D)  
That's it. Our last chance...  
We have ten minutes.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, BRIDGE

Several Elites move about the Autumn's bridge.

Two are standing near the console which triggered the self destruct sequence, examining it closely while their Phantom hovers just outside the viewport.

They hear something and look toward the dropship, peering through its open hold to the other side of the Phantom.

It is Guilty Spark.

SPARK  
Foolish interlopers. Will you never learn?

He fires a BEVY OF ENERGY, destroying the Phantom, as well as the Elites who occupied the bridge. The monitor moves into the human warship's deck slowly -- he turns to the very same console station.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, SKY - DUSK

The Supreme Commander doubles back in his Banshee, briefly scanning the area where the ship's platform had collapsed. Unable to locate the Spartan, he pulls up and moves toward a nearby cruiser.

As the commander approaches the side of the vessel, a dozen dropships, both human and Covenant, SOAR OVERHEAD, on a direct collision course with the ship's hull.

The explosions are DEAFENING.

Some slam into its armored exterior, IMPALING the cruiser's starboard side in a HEAVY PLUME OF WHITE LIGHT -- others CRASH INSIDE it's various bays. From those THE FLOOD EMERGE in large numbers, attacking any Covenant remaining within the ship.

The commander glances behind and sees three times the amount of dropships on their way. They are all moving at an INCREDIBLE SPEED on a collision course with the remainder of the Covenant fleet.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, COMMAND DECK

The Sub-Commander stares at a display alongside the assault carrier's two Elite crewmembers.

BOOM! BOOM!

The explosion SHAKES the assault carrier's foundation and the entire vessels light system flickers for a moment.

FLIGHT ELITE 01

We've been hit!

FLIGHT ELITE 02

The Flood. They're attacking!

They stare at a view screen of their starboard side as a wave of Flood-controlled ships, both Covenant and human, CRASH into the vessel's hull and hangar bays.

BOOM!

Again, another hit. The carrier begins to VIOLENTLY SHUDDER -- it feels as though it is going to BREAK APART.

FLIGHT ELITE 01

This ship... It will not hold.

`VADUMEE

Then we must leave. Prepare the shuttle.

The two Elites leave the command deck immediately. `Vadumee waits for a moment, staring at a lone Banshee firing at the Flood-operated dropships.

It is the SUPREME COMMANDER. He's still out there -- still fighting.

'VADUMEE

He is as fearless as he is insane.

Then 'Vadumee leaves, moving toward the carrier's hangar bay.

CUT TO:

INT. SEEKER OF TRUTH, HANGAR BAY

The Sub-Commander enters at the upper level of the carrier's massive hangar bay, looking out onto the CARNAGE that lies below. Dropships crash on the bay's floor, each opening up to release a horde of Flood. Any remaining Covenant are quickly consumed by the Flood like flies on a corpse.

About a hundred yards away, the two flight Elites bring a command shuttle to life. He runs along the walkway to meet them, but half a dozen combat forms leap onto it and CHARGE him.

FSST! FSST! FSST! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The Elites in the shuttle launch a TRIO OF FUEL ROD MORTARS against the Flood, disintegrating them on contact.

They turn about and opening up the shuttle's rear hatch near his position. 'Vadumee jumps forward, landing inside the shuttle's hold as it accelerates away from the carrier's bay.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, SKY - DUSK

The shuttle jettisons outward from the carrier as IT BEGINS TO COLLAPSE under the heavy battering of the Flood-controlled dropships. It begins to slowly fall toward Halo's surface, unable to sustain itself against the attack.

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE, REAR HOLD

The Sub-Commander watches in horror from the shuttle's open hatch as the remainder of the Covenant fleet is taken by the Flood.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, SKY - DUSK

The Supreme Commander's Banshee adroitly dodges the incoming crafts, taking shots at them when he can, even though he realizes that it is a futile effort. There are far too many.

During the melee, his Banshee is clipped by an incoming Pelican -- TEARING HIS CANARD completely off and sending him falling toward Halo.

As he falls, he pulls himself free from the Banshee and is dropping on his own -- openly accepting his own fate when...

SLAM!

He lands on the top of a command shuttle, pausing for a moment to get his bearings. He grabs onto its armature tightly, not letting go. The craft is frozen in place, almost as though it had intended to be there to catch him.

He swiftly moves to the side and drops into an open hatch, now seeing...

INT. SHUTTLE, REAR HOLD

SUB-COMMANDER 'VADUMEE.

The Elite lends his hand to the Supreme Commander, pulling him fully aboard. The hatch closes and 'Vadumee looks long at the commander who remains silent and in shock.

'VADUMEE

I have saved your life, but for how long?

The commander turns to watch as they leave the surface of Halo. Through the rear viewport he sees his entire fleet being laid to waste by the Flood.

CUT TO:

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, FIGHTER BAY

The Chief and Cortana arrive at the fighter bay...

There, at the end of a long narrow platform sits a single LONGSWORD FIGHTER -- a large, black angular craft similar to a stealth bomber. It is strapped down and locked into place.

CORTANA

We made it.

The Chief begins to walk toward it.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

(shocked)

Chief, look...

A massive Covenant battle cruiser is descending rapidly on a collision course with the Autumn's stern.

Its huge shape, BILLOWING WITH WHITE FLAMES AND SMOKE, crashes into ground about half a mile off the port side of the Autumn. The sheer size and speed of the Covenant ship DRAG it along the ground until it connects with the Autumn's stern.

BOOM!

THE WHOLE OF THE AUTUMN SHAKES FROM THE IMPACT.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

We've got to go... Now!

The Chief turns around and runs back into the safety of the Autumn's interior as the ENTIRE FIGHTER BAY COLLAPSES under the force of the crash.

Debris and explosions pour through the interior, following the Spartan as he tries to weave his way into a safe area. He runs as far as he can away from the stern, taking a series of service corridors to a walkway along the port side of the hull.

EXT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, PORT SIDE WALKWAY - DUSK

HERE WE SEE THE COVENANT FLEET, THE MAJORITY OF WHICH IS FALLING TO HALO'S SURFACE...

CORTANA

(desperate)

This is UNSC AI CTN 0452-9... Are there any UNSC craft in the vicinity? I repeat, are there any UNSC craft nearby?

For a moment, it's silent. Then a familiar and rough voice spouts through the COM...

JOHNSON

Heh, I thought I was gonna be late to the party?

CORTANA

(shocked)

Johnson? Johnson, is that you?

JOHNSON

Ten-four. I see you... Comin' in hot.

Johnson moves in quickly with a Pelican, backing up to the walkway. The Spartan climbs aboard and the bird takes off immediately.

CUT TO:

INT. PELICAN, COCKPIT

The Chief quickly moves into the cockpit, removing Cortana and dropping her onto its control panel. She appears.

CORTANA

I've initiated the Autumn's self  
destruction sequence, Johnson. We have  
about three minutes before the fusion  
reactors go... wait.

(shocked)

That's impossible.

CHIEF

What is it?

BEAT.

CORTANA

Take us to the front of the ship now!

They wind around the undercarriage of the ship and pull around the its bow. Looking onto the bridge, her concern becomes clear. Spark is interfacing with the ship's control system -- he's trying to PREVENT THE DETONATION.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

He doesn't want us to destroy this ring.  
If he takes the countdown offline...

CHIEF

The Flood will use the Autumn to escape.

CORTANA

Or whatever's left of the Covenant's  
fleet.

The Chief stares at the bridge for a moment.

THEN HE ACTS...

CHIEF

Bring me in.

JOHNSON

What?

CHIEF

Bring me in close. Then get the hell  
away. Far away.

CORTANA

But Chief...

The Chief ignores her and heads to the back of the Pelican.

INT. PELICAN, REAR HOLD

He stands ready at the bird's open hatch as it gets closer to the shattered viewport. The Chief jumps down into the bridge and the Pelican quickly rises out of sight.

INT. PELICAN, COCKPIT

WE PUSH IN TIGHT ON CORTANA'S FACE. SHE IS CRESTFALLEN.

CUT TO:

INT. PILLAR OF AUTUMN, BRIDGE

Inside the damaged bridge, the Chief moves toward the monitor. Spark immediately notices him.

SPARK  
(excited)  
Reclaimer? I knew you would come back!  
Have you returned out of a sense of duty?

The Chief SLAMS HIS FIST into its eye, knocking the monitor to the ground momentarily.

CHIEF  
You could say that.

Spark recovers, rising up from the floor and RUSHING the Spartan. It RAMS its spherical frame into the Chief's gut, doubling him over and pushing him through the viewport and out of the bridge...

EXT. HALO, CRASH SITE - DUSK

The Chief clings onto Spark with one hand and REPEATEDLY PUMMELS the construct with the other. The Spark, evidently immune to the Spartan's attack, rises at an astonishing speed, carrying the Chief high into the air.

SPARK  
Insolence! You dare try to destroy my  
installation!

EXT. HALO, SKY - DUSK

The Chief continues to hold on as they BURST through the clouds rising higher and faster by the second. Soon they breach the atmosphere...

EXT. SPACE

...and find themselves in SPACE.

The details of the ring's surface fade away as they climb further and further from it. Then they stop and Spark fires his weapon at POINT BLANK RANGE, blasting the Spartan out into space.

The Chief no longer moves. His charred body appears to be LIFELESS as the inertia from the blast carries him away from Spark.

The monitor looks for a moment in the direction of the Spartan and then turns back toward Halo.

INT. PELICAN, COCKPIT

Johnson and Cortana watch Halo at a distance when they begin to see several brilliant explosions at the Autumn's crash site.

CORTANA  
Hold onto something.

CUT TO:

EXT. HALO, CRASH SITE - DUSK

The Pillar of Autumn generates a bright, blooming light that saturates everything around it. The ring seems to SHAKE AT ITS CORE -- trembling as though a hundred nuclear weapons were detonating on its face.

CUT TO:

INT. PELICAN, COCKPIT

Cortana's Pelican begins to quiver as the light from the Autumn's explosion floods their cockpit like it was dawn on the horizon. Johnson shields his eyes, but Cortana does not.

She is stares directly into this sun. Her face is BLANK -- EMPTY.

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

WE WATCH AS THE RING PULLS APART IN SPACE...

The explosion severs Halo at a specific point.

Then large sections of it HURL toward each other further damaging the structure -- one section collapses on another, splitting the ring asunder.



Moments later, the superstructure is gone. Only a field of debris and dust remain.

CUT TO:

INT. SHUTTLE, REAR HOLD

The Supreme Commander and `Vadumee watch from a distance as the ring is torn into pieces.

`VADUMEE

When the hierarchs hear of this...

He pauses for a moment, both of them taking in the horror of Halo's destruction.

`VADUMEE (CONT'D)

...there will be a penalty for your sin.

WE PUSH IN ON THE COMMANDER'S FACE, SHROUDED IN SHAME.

EXT. SPACE

WE WATCH HALO'S PIECES FLOAT IN SPACE AS `VADUMEE SPEAKS...

`VADUMEE (O.S.)

Pray that they are merciful.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PELICAN, COCKPIT

Johnson guides his Pelican through the debris field -- as the large sections of the ring move slowly about, LIKE MASSIVE ICEBERGS IN THE OCEAN.

JOHNSON

Going ghost. Feel free to throw out a net... See what you can find.

CORTANA

I am. Nothing's out there... nothing but dust and echoes.

The Pelican passes in between large segments of the ring and various parts of the Covenant fleet. The human dropship is considerably small, compared to these huge objects -- it is easily dwarfed in their presence.

JOHNSON

With an entire fleet, there has to be a Covenant ship somewhere in this mess... one that can get us home.

CORTANA

Hold on, I'm picking up on something...

BEAT.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

It's a UNSC transponder.

They stare out of the viewport together. Cortana's face is filled with HOPE.

CORTANA (CONT'D)

About 400 meters off starboard...

Johnson gently turns the dropship in that direction. When they get within range, they see it.

It's the MASTER CHIEF -- but he's NOT moving.

JOHNSON

Well, son of a bitch.

CUT TO:

INT. PELICAN, REAR HOLD

A large mechanical arm retrieves the Spartan, pulling him into the rear hold of the Pelican. After a brief depressurization, both Cortana and Johnson come to the Spartan's side.

CORTANA

I have no vitals... accessing his armor's medical suite.

The Spartan's armor begins to shake as Cortana works on it. His chest heaves with defibrillation treatment. It stops for a second and then starts up again.

A few moments pass. Nothing happens.

JOHNSON

Is he too far gone, ma'am?

Cortana becomes worried. She pulls back.

CORTANA

(visibly shaken)  
Not like this. Not now.

BEAT.

COUGH! COUGH! -- the rough sound of his voice breaks the silence, as he attempts to catch his breath.

Cortana looks up. Her face is elated.

CORTANA

Chief!

The Chief gasps tenaciously for a moment, trying to compose himself. Then he sits up, steadily regaining consciousness. He breaths in deep and then looks toward Cortana.

CHIEF

Did we win?

CORTANA

I thought we'd lost you.

The Spartan stands up, using the interior wall to prop himself.

JOHNSON

Take it easy.

CHIEF

I'm fine.

He looks out of the rear viewport at the debris field surrounding their vessel. A huge section of Halo still remains in the distance.

CORTANA

We had no other choice... It's finished.

CHIEF

No.

WE PUSH IN ON THE CHIEF'S VISOR. THE SHATTERED REMNANTS OF THE INSTALLATION CAN BE SEEN...

CHIEF

I think we're just getting started.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

AFTER THE CREDITS, WE FOLLOW A BRIEF SEQUENCE IN SPACE...

EXT. SPACE

SUBTITLE: SEVEN DAYS LATER.

A Covenant Phantom pushes through Halo's debris field. Rather than the purple armored variation we saw on Halo, this Phantom is green. It weaves in and out of the large sections of the superstructure which engulf its comparatively minuscule size, slowing down as it approaches something.

INT. PHANTOM, CABIN

On the ship's control panel a red light flashes reading an alien language which is indiscernible. The hand of an Elite presses the light and it cools to a blue coloration.

INT. PHANTOM, REAR HOLD

An Elite appears in the doorway from the dropship's cabin. He has a strange breathing apparatus and is adorned in an odd red and brown armor with spikes emerging from his back.

He looks like an insect.

He walks forward cautiously to the center of the Phantom's sealed rear hold, kneeling down on the ground to lift an object up.

The object is brought slowly into view...

It is 343 GUILTY SPARK.

His frame is scratched and damaged, but he is still intact. His internal circuitry flickers for a few beats until...

...suddenly, he LIGHTS UP.

CUT TO BLACK.