

DESERT RUN

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FADE IN:

**EXT. JEEP - NIGHT**

A series of dreamlike images, surreal, shadowy, hallucinatory. So vivid and intense...

A DESERT GAS STATION, speeding past, panicked breathing. REFLECTED IN A JEEP'S WINDOW, A WOMAN IN THE BACK LEANS FORWARD--

There are thin slivers of light - spaces between her BLINDFOLD and her skin that she can see through.

A roadside BILLBOARD reads: "Last Chance for gas, 200 MILES." Beyond the sign... endless dark desert.

THE IMAGES COME MORE RAPIDLY; jumbled, disjointed - her hands tied - she wriggles free - grabs a BACKPACK - pries open the door.

REVERSE-- the PASSENGER, too tight to see a face. FIRES A COMPACT SEMI-AUTOMATIC PISTOL.

**EXT. DESERT - NIGHT**

She runs, her arms flailing wildly. Follow her as she kicks up sand and dirt and awkwardly navigates through thick brush.

She's panting, not because she's out of shape, yoga slim, triathlon fit, she's out of time. One more thing --

This is JENNA, 30, she's- COYOTE UGLY TYPE, belly button pierced, shorts, hiking boots, essentially naked.

Camera's closing in. Close enough to tell that Jenna's panting only partially covers her sobbing.

Jenna trips and we're on top of her. She crawls, tries in vain to get her feet under her.

JENNA

Jesus, no, don't--

She crawls a few more feet then turns onto her back, her terror-filled eyes staring death in the face.

Jenna kicks and pushes through the sand as if she could backstroke her way through a hundred of miles of desert.

Tonight the world desert backstroke record will be safe.

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*The GUNMAN stands there, but we don't see their face.*

*JENNA*

*Don't! DON'T!*

*Finally we HEAR it, a shotgun BLAST.*

**EXT. DESERT - DAY**

THE SUN, so intense and near to us over the empty horizon that the edges seem to ripple with fire.

A high mountain valley dry, but lush with mesquite and chaparral.

A CONE of VULTURES, some fly low just off a desert side trail.

Jenna's sprawled facedown on the sand. If it weren't for the THUMPING beat of her heart, you'd think she was dead.

Suddenly, she JOLTS awake for a *FEVER DREAM*; sweaty, feverish, her eyes *raccooned by blurry mascara*.

Jenna props herself up against a boulder in abject pain.

The gunshot to the leg has severed the femoral artery, some blood lost. Jenna tries vainly to stanch the flow, re-tightening a bandanna.

A LOW RUMBLE emanates from behind the mountains. Like a storm approaching. It gets LOUDER. She looks to the sky, a chopper reverberates overhead.

She grabs her makeshift walking stick nearby, utilizes it for support. Struggles to her feet, waves her hands as if they were semaphore flags.

The chopper doesn't see Jenna, who hangs her head.

She lifts a bottle of water - there's barely a drop left.

Jenna blinks the water out of her eyes. Of frustration, of betrayal. An idea strikes.

She grabs her phone, which is OFF. It's a nice phone, would get an excellent price on the black market.

Fingers crossed, POWERS UP the phone to be sure it's working. It LIGHTS UP. Checks her watch, POWERS OFF.

She digs through her rucksack, retrieves a pocket knife, an extra shirt -- finds what she was looking for: a GUN.

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The beginning of a smile on Jenna's face, then we --

**EXT. DESERT - DAY**

Boulders offer shade.

Jenna approaches a grove of cactus plants. RED BULBS sprout from thistly leaves.

She slips the backpack off, pulls out her pocket knife and gently cuts a bulb from the leaf.

JENNA  
(under her breath)  
Prickly pear figs. They're  
delicious right off the plant.

Jenna slips the fig into her backpack. Picks another.

**EXT. DESERT - DUSK**

DUSK is turning to inky NIGHT.

A FIRE is lit to keep the animals away.

The light plays off Jenna's face as she chats on the phone with a BANK MANAGER with a French Caribbean accent.

JENNA  
8-6-7. Uh huh. 5-3-0-9. Yes.

BANK MANAGER (V.O.)  
You should see a box at the top.  
Go ahead and type your secure  
password in there to check the  
balance.

Jenna types a code. On screen: Account balance:  
\$20,000,000.00. Jenna smiles, satisfied.

JENNA  
Alright. Perfect. And would it be  
possible to move the money back to  
the account it came from?

BANK MANAGER (V.O.)  
You can transfer it anywhere you  
like Miss.

***A SHORT TIME LATER...***

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CONTINUED:

Jenna digs into her backpack, pulls out a prickly pear fig. She peels the skin, bites into it.

Jenna cuts off the spines of a cactus, wraps the sticky cucumber in a bandanna. Wrings it out. Thirstily drinks. Her lips quivers.

**EXT. ON THE ENDLESS DESERT - DAY**

The morning clouds choke the horizon, until --

-- THE BLOOD RED SUN breaks through.

Jenna leans against that boulder, purses her dry lips, her sun-leathered face still feverish.

Her breathing slows. And slows. And slowly, her vision start to blur. She fights it, struggles to stay awake.

A long beat. A anxious Jenna chews on her fingernails.

A NOISE -- breaks the morning stillness, echoing in the distance.

BEAT. Grabs binoculars. Sun bakes the craggy landscape. A Jeep barrels towards her without doors. All from HER POV.

Jenna lowers the binocs - pumps her fist triumphantly.

**INT. JEEP WRANGLER - DAY**

Miles of desert ahead. Eating up brush and rock.

AUTUMN, 30, drives like a woman possessed. Scruffy gear, cap, suitable for hiking. She's pretty without trying, a no-bullshit demeanor.

STUART, 30s, as relaxed as Autumn isn't. Trucker hat, a CRYSTAL-METH FACE, and as Irish as a Guinness at 10AM.

AUTUMN

Dammit, Stuart.

STUART

Blood hell! I'm sure I got an artery. It's been two days, no food, or drink. No way she's kickin'. She bleed out by now.

She pulls a gun from her waistband and hands it to him.

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AUTUMN

Just in case.

**EXT. DESERT - DAY**

Out in the desert flats, Stuart kneels, traces his hand along the rough, blood-stained sand soil that stretches for yards. Nearby, Jenna hides in a desert brush.

STUART

*Shit. Shit. Shit.*

Both silent for a beat, weighing the gravity of all this.

STUART

Master Oogway once said "*One often meets his destiny on the path he takes to avoid it.*"

Beat. She doesn't respond. Instead, she studies Stuart. It's A DEEP, PIERCING GAZE. And it's almost frightening.

AUTUMN

The only mistake we made -- you made was not shooting her in the head.

STUART

I couldn't do it. I thought this way was better. Jenna is too nice.

WHAMP: Autumn HEAD-BUTTS STUART--! CRUSHING HIS NOSE INTO A BLOODY PULP!

His primal scream, somewhere between a Charlie Brown "ARGH!" and a Tarantino "FUCK!" Either way, it's an attention-grabber.

AUTUMN

So are you, Stuart. Much too nice to spend the rest of your life in prison.

She chucks Stuart a handkerchief, who covers his nose.

STUART

Well she couldn't have gone far --

Autumn doesn't want to hear it - cuts him off.

AUTUMN

A god damn shit show. C'mon, let's find her. Get the phone.

**EXT/INT. DESERT/JEEP - DAY**

They pile back into the jeep.

BANG! The windshield SPIDERWEBS - Stuart's body slams into the seat. A bullet to his face, done for.

Autumn freezes. Her world stops as she gapes at his lifeless body.

BANG! She jolts as the rear window SHATTERS.

Autumn snaps back to reality -- she reaches over Stuart. BANG! She recoils -- crouches behind her seat.

She kicks Stuart out of the jeep, scrambles into the driver's seat and FLOORS IT. Breathing fast. Total panic.

She looks over her shoulder -- the glass is totally blown out behind her.

Autumn eye-fucks Jenna, who steps out from behind a thorny brush.

Pissed, Autumn angles the wheel and the jeep, floors it, closes in on Jenna, who raises her pistol. Aims. Fires.

The jeep's front tire EXPLODES. SHARDS of rubber fly. SPARKS fly off the rim as it bounces off the rocks --

Jenna swings the gun around. Resets her aim. Fires again.

Autumn's back tire EXPLODES. She loses control.

CRASH! She's sideswiped the passenger's side up against the boulder. Sprayed with SHATTERED GLASS as her body's rocked by the intentional collision.

Her eyes flicker. She fights it.

AUTUMN

Stay awake, Autumn. Run. Run --

Dazed she reaches to climb out when Jenna limps toward Autumn. Gun out. Shit.

Autumn is watching Jenna, like a hunter sizing up the competition.

JENNA

Well, don't act SO surprised.

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AUTUMN

You hacked into my account -- transferred that twenty mill into a foreign bank and only you know which one. You conniving bitch!

JENNA

Uh huh. The pot calling the kettle black. What do you think I am, Autumn, some two bit shareholder. I was your damn VP of operations.

AUTUMN

SHUT. THE. FUCK. UP. You were panicking, you were going to bring this whole thing down on both of us.

Autumn's tenor instantly softens.

AUTUMN

Who's to say you didn't embezzle the twenty million?

JENNA

You're crazy, you know that? Certifiable, but I'm not taking the fall for you this time. You owe me one already for shredding those product safety memos. You're the one who ordered the material changes, remember?

AUTUMN

My job is to make money for the stockholders. Fire retardant fabric for a ten percent net, or recycled fiber for fifteen -- you do the math.

JENNA

Over one hundred people died in fires caused by those products. Just like the safety memos warned.

AUTUMN

People die everyday. Famine, war, earthquakes.

JENNA

It's not quite the same thing, is it?

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AUTUMN

Yes, it's precisely the same.  
People die. Does it matter how?  
They're just as dead. Have a  
famine ever spoiled your  
breakfast? And besides -- you  
shredded all the memos. That was a  
good job.

Jenna's eyes goes MURDEROUSLY DARK.

JENNA

Well let's see how you like being  
hundreds of miles away from  
nothing, but desert. The animals.  
No food. No water. The unbearable  
heat in the day. Frigid cold temps  
at night. Then there's the  
delirium, hallucinations induced  
by fever. Luckily for me I'm a  
survival list, are you?

BAM! Lighting quick, Autumn cold cocks Jenna, knocking  
her to the ground. The gun drops. A scuffle ensues.

Autumn's on her back, fumbles for the closest weapon -  
*fuck it!* She uses her HIKING BOOT - and SLAMS THE HEEL  
into Jenna's' head.

Once. Twice. Scrappy. Messy. Desperate.

Jenna HOLLERS, clutching her skull as Autumn-lee  
scrambles for the gun.

She gets to her feet, shoves the gun into Jenna's face --  
ready to deliver the coup de grâce.

Jenna tries to sit up, More blood has been lost. She is  
in a sticky pool of it... in high-danger of bleeding out.

AUTUMN

Now hand it over.

JENNA

Oh, the phone. Clumsy me. Lost it.  
Out there. Somewhere. Go fetch.

AUTUMN

No, dodo-bird. Since you're still  
here -- I'm going to need the  
bank, account number and password.

Jenna gathers a HANDFUL OF SAND and throws it in Autumn's  
face, who recoils, momentarily blinded.

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CONTINUED: (3)

She takes off, limps on her walking stick at full speed.

Autumn aims the gun and levels it at Jenna, when--

BANG--! Jenna SCREAMS-- BUT IT'S Autumn WHO SEES CRIMSON DRAINING FROM A BULLET HOLE IN HER CHEST.

She wheels around to see STUART, SMOKING GUN IN HAND, half his face gone, not as dead as they had thought, so--

BANG--! Autumn puts a bullet in Stuart's forehead!

STUART FALLS DEAD. But as Autumn turns back to Jenna--

Autumn's knees buckle. She's succumbed to the chest wound Stuart delivered. Autumn FALLS DEAD ONTO JENNA.

And all of it happening in a virtual blink of an eye.

Jenna peels herself out from under Autumn's corpse.

She fishes for her phone to dial 911 - struggles to find a signal. Not happening.

Panic sets in as her control feels like it's slipping away -- drags herself across the desert flats to find a cell reception, but it's dead. *Of course it is...*

Jenna slams her fist into the dirt. *Fuck fuck fuck.*

The SUN overhead, burning down, vultures wheel and turn in the air until...

Day TRANSITIONS to NIGHT, moonlight creeping across...

Jenna is where we left her. Still lying on the ground.

A glaring spotlight washes over her face. She stirs awake, barely alive, shielding her eyes, and sits up.

Sounds like the sky is being torn asunder -- it's a Medi-Vac CHOPPER...

FADE OUT.