

(Name of Project)

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FADE IN:

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT - CANYON TRAIL - DAY**

A wide, sweeping aerial shot reveals an ocean of hostile, sun-baked earth. Towering walls of ancient red granite rise like jagged teeth against a sky so blue it looks artificial.

The heat waves ripple off the ground, warping the horizon.

Moving single file along a razor-thin mountain ridge are three magnificent, dark-coated Andalusian horses.

The riders look like they stepped out of a luxury travel magazine—pristine, expensive, completely insulated by wealth.

Leading is--

GEORGINA CARSON (50). Striking, elegant, in incredible shape. She wears a tailored, cream-colored linen riding shirt and immaculate tan breeches.

Designer sunglasses reflect the harsh landscape. A diamond horse-bit bracelet glitters on her wrist.

She laughs, a sound too light for this heavy terrain.

Trailing behind her is---

JERRY (40s), a handsome son-of-a-bitch with graying temples. He's sweating through designer safari gear— a tan utility shirt with epaulets, and shading his eyes under a custom, dust-free Stetson.

Bringing up the rear --

SIENNA (40). Fiercely intelligent and stunning, wearing a form-fitting, dark slate equestrian top unzipped to flash cleavage.

She looks unbothered by the heat. Immovable.

Her eyes are not on the view; they are fixed forward, tracking the narrow movement of Georgina's horse.

Georgina guides her horse to a halt at a massive rocky overlook. Below them, a sheer forty-foot drop descends into a dry, jagged boulder wash.

A physical graveyard of stone.

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GEORGINA

(calling back,  
satisfied)

Look at that grid, Jerry. Another two miles and the valley opens up entirely. The private resort is going to look spectacular from this ridge.

JERRY

(smiling, playful)  
If you say so, darling.

GEORGINA

(chuckling)

Consider it bought. Sienna, did the county developers finalize the zoning for this northern parcel?

SIENNA

All signed, sealed, and filed this morning, Georgina. The land is legally yours. No one else even knows this trail exists.

Georgina nods, pleased with herself.

She dismounts, her polished mahogany riding boots crunching on the gravel.

Holding the reins, she steps a few inches closer to the crumbling lip of the canyon, turning her back to them to soak in the scene.

GEORGINA

It really is breathtaking.

Sienna looks back at Jerry. A beat. There's electricity between the two.

Sienna's eyes turn dead, cold, and transactional.

Jerry nods once. No words. He reaches calmly into his saddlebag and pulls out a compact, heavy metal canister—a high-powered air-horn.

Jerry aims it at the ear of Georgina's horse. And slams the button.

A DEAFENING, PIERCING BLAST echoes through the canyon walls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Georgina's horse instantly PANICS. It rears up wildly on its hind legs, its front hooves striking out in pure terror.

One heavy iron shoe slams directly into Georgina's shoulder.

GEORGINA

Hey! Whoa—!

Georgina loses her footing on the shifting gravel. She tumbles backward over the lip of the canyon.

Georgina crashes down the steep, rocky ravine, her body smashing against jagged boulders before slamming into a dry creek bed forty feet below.

Silence returns to the desert, save for the panting horses.

**EXT. CANYON FLOOR - CONTINUOUS**

Georgina lies in the dirt, gasping for air. Her pristine cream shirt is torn, shredded, and staining fast with blood.

She tries to move, but shrieks in agony. Her right trouser leg is ripped open, the jagged white edge of her tibia has pierced the skin.

A horrific compound fracture against the white fabric.

She clutches her leg, sweating, staring up at the sky.

**EXT. CANYON OVERLOOK - DAY**

Up on the ridge, Jerry and Sienna calmly dismount.

They stand side-by-side at the edge, looking down at her. There is no panic. No screaming for help.

Sienna pulls out a pack of cigarettes, and lights one. She takes a slow drag, watching her friend bleed in the dirt.

Jerry walks over to Georgina's panicked horse, calming it expertly.

Slowly, methodically, Jerry takes the dangling leather straps and loops the reins over the saddle horn—tying them into a neat, secure bowtie.

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CONTINUED:

He pats the horse's flank, letting it wander off down the trail.

Jerry returns to the cliff's edge.

JERRY

(dead calm)

We need to ride back before the  
wind covers our tracks.

Sienna nods, taking one last look down at Georgina. She drops her lit cigarette over the edge.

SIENNA

Goodbye, Georgina. Enjoy the view.

They swing back into their saddles, turn their horses around, and gallop away, leaving Georgina's fading screams to be swallowed by the desert.

**EXT. ZABRISKIE POINT OVERLOOK - DEATH VALLEY - DAY**

The alien, deeply wrinkled yellow badlands of Death Valley stretch out for miles, looking like a landscape from another planet.

A luxury black, pristine pick-up hauls an expensive three-horse trailer as it blasts down the highway.

**INT. JERRY'S TRUCK - DAY**

The digital dash reads 123°F outside.

Jerry drives, its V8 engine purring under the strain of the maxed-out air conditioning.

His Stetson sits on the back seat. Sweat has ruined the collar of his safari shirt, but not from the heat.

Sienna rides shotgun. She uses a makeup wipe to smudge a layer of desert dust across her collarbone, covering her exposed cleavage.

SIENNA

We crested the ridge at 11:15.  
Georgina wanted to check the  
northern marker. A rattlesnake  
buzzed in the shrub. The gelding  
reared.

JERRY

No. No rattlesnakes.

(CONTINUED)

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SIENNA  
(looks at him)  
Why?

JERRY  
Because if a cop goes up there with a hound or a local tracker and they don't find a nest, it's a variable. Keep it unverifiable. A gust of wind. A shadow. The horse just spooked.

Sienna nods, tossing the makeup wipe into the door bin. She stares out at the passing Joshua trees.

SIENNA  
The horse spooked. She lost her footing. She went over.

JERRY  
And what did we do?

SIENNA  
We tried to climb down. The red granite was loose, crumbling. You almost fell yourself. We realized we had no cell service in the canyon, so we had to make the forty-minute ride back to the trailer to get to the car and drive straight to the station.

JERRY  
Good. Keep the timeline tight. We didn't look at our phones. We didn't check the time. We were panicking.

Sienna reaches over, her hand sliding onto Jerry's thigh. Her fingers dig into his riding trousers, leaving sharp creases.

SIENNA  
Are you panicking, Jerry?

Jerry looks at her hand, then up at the road. A muscle twitches in his jaw.

JERRY  
I'm driving forty miles over the speed limit to save my wife.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIENNA  
 (a dark, sharp smile)  
 Perfect.

She pulls her hand back, looks in the vanity mirror, and viciously pinches her own cheeks to bring a flushed, frantic redness to her face.

She takes a deep breath, forcing her breathing to become shallow and ragged.

The green highway sign appears ahead: *\*SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY SHERIFF - BAKER SUBSTATION - 1 MILE.\**

Jerry steers off the exit ramp.

JERRY  
 Cry when we get through the doors.  
 Not before.

SIENNA  
 Just drive, darling.

**INT. JERRY'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS**

Jerry slows the truck as the blocky, sun-faded concrete of the Sheriff's substation looms ahead.

He pulls into a turn-out under a lonely telephone pole, idling the engine.

JERRY  
 The Black Hills.

Sienna turns her head sharply to look at him.

SIENNA  
 What?

JERRY  
 We tell them it happened on the trail by the Black Hills. It's twenty miles west of where we actually were.

SIENNA  
 (processing fast)  
 The terrain is identical. Red granite, steep drop-offs. But the road back from the Black Hills is completely unpaved.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY

Exactly. It justifies why it took us so long to reach civilization. It buys us at least twenty-four hours while the choppers search the wrong ridge line.

Sienna's eyes gleam with dark admiration. She looks down at her boots, then up at Jerry.

SIENNA

By tomorrow afternoon, the heat index hits 120. Without water... she won't even have a pulse by the time they correct the coordinates.

JERRY

(nods, cold)

It's a tragic accident in a vast desert. People get lost every year.

Jerry shifts the truck back into drive, tires crunching over the gravel as he pulls into the Sheriff's station parking lot.

JERRY

Now shake. Look like you just rode out of hell.

Sienna lets out a sharp, ragged breath, instantly transforming her posture.

She yanks the handle and bursts out of the passenger door before the car even fully stops.

**INT. SHERIFF'S SUBSTATION - LOBBY - DAY**

The door flies open, slamming against the wall.

Sienna stumbles inside. Her hair is wild, her face flushed and tear-streaked.

She catches herself on the laminate front counter, hyperventilating.

SIENNA

(screaming,  
hysterical)

Help! Please! Oh my god, someone help us!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jerry bursts in right behind her. He plays the frantic, grief-stricken husband perfectly. His designer shirt is soaked through with sweat;

He grabs Sienna, pretending to hold her up.

JERRY

We need Search and Rescue! Right now! My wife went over the ridge!

SHERIFF MILLER (50s), a weathered desert cop with a permanent squint, snaps out of his chair behind the bulletproof glass.

He buzzes himself through the security door into the lobby.

SHERIFF MILLER

Whoa, folks, calm down. Take a breath. Where? Where's your wife?

JERRY

The Black Hills. The old mining trail off Route 127.

Sienna, burying her face in her hands. Her shoulders shake with faux-sobs.

SIENNA

The horse... it just exploded. It reared up and kicked her... she went right over the canyon lip. There was so much blood...

Miller grabs Jerry by the arm, steering him toward a large topographical map pinned to the wall.

SHERIFF MILLER

Show me exactly where on the ridge, sir.

Jerry's hand shakes as he points to the map.

He deliberately places his finger twenty miles west of their actual location, smudging a wet sweat-mark over the words *\*BLACK HILLS MINING TRAIL\**.

JERRY

Right here. We tried to climb down, but the shale was sliding out from under us. I almost went over myself.

Miller studies the map, his expression darkening.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHERIFF MILLER

That's rugged country. No cell tower reaches out there. How long ago did she fall?

JERRY

An hour? Maybe an hour and a half? We rode the horses back to the trailer like hell, threw them in, and drove straight here.

Miller is already unclipping his radio from his belt.

SHERIFF MILLER

(into radio)

Dispatch, this is Unit 4. We got an unresponsive female, forty-foot fall off the Black Hills ridge line. Launch Air Rescue 5 immediately. Ground units need to mobilize at the 127 trailhead.

SIENNA

Is the helicopter going now? Please tell me they're going now!

SHERIFF MILLER

Bird's spinning up out of Barstow, ma'am. But it's a thirty-minute flight time, and the sun's dropping.

Miller turns back to Jerry, looking him up and down.

His eyes linger on Jerry's pristine, expensive boots and the clean, un-scuffed leather gloves sticking out of his pocket.

SHERIFF MILLER

You said you tried to climb down after her?

Jerry doesn't flinch. He holds Miller's gaze, offering a gutted, broken nod.

JERRY

I tried. I couldn't get a foothold. I had to make the call to leave her to get help. God, I should have tried harder.

Jerry covers his face, faking a choke-up. Miller pats his shoulder—a heavy, sympathetic thud.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Miller stands over the topographical map, his hand still on his radio.

A static burst cuts through the speaker. DISPATCH (V.O.) crackles in, loud and metallic.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

(over radio)

Unit 4, cancel the bird out of Barstow. Air Rescue 5 is grounded.

Miller frowns, leaning closer to his shoulder mic.

SHERIFF MILLER

(into radio)

Dispatch, did you copy my last? We have a traumatic compound fracture on a cliff- face. Ground transit to the Black Hills is going to take over three hours.

DISPATCH (V.O.)

Copy that, Miller, but the digital gauge at the Baker station just registered 123 degrees. Air density is too low. Command says nothing is spinning up until the mercury drops below 120. Air support is a no-go.

Jerry turns his head slightly, hiding his eyes from the deputy. Under his breath, he lets out a slow, controlled exhale. It worked.

Sienna lets out a sharp, theatrical wail, burying her face into Jerry's damp safari shirt.

SIENNA

(screaming)

No! No, you can't just leave her out there! She's bleeding to death!

Miller looks gutted. He kills the radio transmission and addresses the panicked couple.

SHERIFF MILLER

Ma'am, I am truly sorry. When it gets this hot, the rotors can't catch the air. The helicopter literally cannot fly. We have to dispatch the regional ground SAR team from Barstow.

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CONTINUED: (4)

JERRY  
 (voice cracking,  
 acting)  
 How long? How long for a truck to  
 get up that mining road?

SHERIFF MILLER  
 With the heat, the engines will be  
 redlining. Best case scenario?  
 Four, maybe five hours before we  
 even reach the trailhead. And then  
 we search on foot.

Jerry looks up at the ceiling, pretending to pray, but  
 his jaw is locked tight to keep from smiling.

JERRY  
 Can we go with you? We can show  
 you the ridge—

SHERIFF MILLER  
 Absolutely not, sir. You two are  
 severely dehydrated as it is. Look  
 at you. You stay right here in the  
 AC. We're going to go get your  
 wife.

Miller bolts through the side door, barking orders to two  
 off-duty deputies down the hall.

The security door clicks shut. Silence returns to the  
 lobby.

Sienna slowly lifts her face from Jerry's chest. The  
 tears instantly stop. Her expression goes entirely cold.

She reaches into her pocket, pulls out sunglasses, and  
 slides them over her eyes, blocking out the harsh glare  
 of the station lights.

SIENNA  
 (whispering, deadpan)  
 I need a glass of water.

JERRY  
 I'll get you one, darling.

**EXT. CANYON FLOOR - MOJAVE DESERT - DAY**

Georgina's face is caked in dried blood and alkaline  
 dust. Her eyes snap open.

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The sun has shifted, beating down directly into the narrow trench of the dry creek bed.

The heat is a physical weight, pressing the air right out of her lungs.

She tries to sit up. A blinding, white-hot bolt of agony shouts through her central nervous system.

GEORGINA

(a choked, dry  
rattle)

Ah... God... Jerry...?

She looks down. Her right leg is a nightmare. The white splinter of her tibia glints under the brutal desert sun, surrounded by a pool of purple, sticky blood that has already begun to attract black desert flies.

Her shirt is shredded, exposing her bruised shoulder where the horse shoe struck her.

She reaches for her waist. Her pockets are empty. No phone. She looks around. Nothing but jagged red granite walls.

Georgina realizes the truth. The silence of the canyon settles over her like a shroud. They aren't coming back.

High above, THREE VULTURES cut wide, lazy circles into the cloudless sky.

GEORGINA (V.O.)

(weak, raspy)

*The vultures are already  
circling... Sorry to disappoint,  
boys. I ain't dead yet.*

Georgina digs her fingernails into the dirt and drags her body forward, one grueling inch at a time, toward the pathetic sliver of shade beneath a boulder.

**EXT. DESERT SUNSET MOTEL - DAY**

Just off a rural roadway, a barely-occupied MOTEL. A relic from yesteryear. A sputtering neon sign: DESERT SUNSET MOTEL.

A couple of road-punished travel vehicles - dusty autos with luggage carriers and out-of-state plates.

**EXT. DESERT SUNSET MOTEL - ROOM 14 - DAY**

Sienna in a sexy summer dress that clings uncomfortably to her body in the heat, leans against her late-model Corvette, its top down.

Beat. Jerry pulls alongside in his truck. He climbs out, they unload suitcases.

**INT. DESERT SUNSET MOTEL - ROOM 14 - DAY**

The wall-unit air conditioner RATTLES and groans violently, blowing weak, lukewarm air into the cramped room.

Hair wet, fresh face -- Sienna, wrapped in a towel, stands by the window, peering through the curtains. Sweat glints on her collarbone.

She holds a glass of melting ice, pressing it against the side of her neck.

The LOUD, HISSING SOUND of a shower echoes against the thin walls. Steam billows out into the bedroom.

Calling out, frustrated -

SIENNA

It's like an oven in here. The weather channel says the asphalt outside is hitting one-forty. Even the local power grid is failing.

Jerry exits, wet, a towel around his waist, but he looks unbothered by the squalor.

JERRY

The water wasn't even cold. The cold tap comes out boiling.

He lights a cigarette, then -

JERRY

Sixty-dollars a night to stay in this dump. How do you get a refund?

(beat)

I say we head back to the resort. Wait it out there.

SIENNA

No. The optics would look bad. A few more days wont kill us.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JERRY

A few more days? Georgina is forty feet down a ravine with a compound fracture in one-hundred-and-twenty-degree heat. She doesn't have water. She doesn't have a phone. By tomorrow morning, the sun will finish what we started.

Sienna paces. A crack in her resolve.

A pause - Jerry throws her arms around Sienna. Sienna doesn't push him away.

SIENNA

The human body can do strange things when it's cornered, Jerry. I've seen men survive worse for spite.

JERRY

She is a pampered billionaire who screams if her steak isn't medium-rare. She's going to bake out there, Sienna. And when she dies, that trust reverts to me. Which means you get your five-million-dollar legal fee.

He kisses Sienna. They stand there a moment, Sienna frozen in place. Finally Jerry steps away.

JERRY

So stop pacing. Stop sweating. Just pray the weather stays exactly this hot.

Sienna grabs Jerry. And just like that, they're making out and she's already got a hand inside his boxers.

**EXT. CANYON FLOOR - MOJAVE DESERT - LATE AFTERNOON**

The sun has sunk low enough to turn the canyon walls into deep, bloody crimson shadows.

Georgina lies beneath the thin, pathetic shadow of a granite boulder. Her breathing is shallow, a rhythmic, dry clicking in her throat.

She stares down at her right leg.

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CONTINUED:

The white spear of her tibia bone stands out in sickening, sharp relief against her blood-soaked cream riding trousers.

Flies buzz in a dark cloud over the sticky pool forming around her calf.

GEORGINA  
(guttural whisper, to  
herself)  
Fix it... you have to fix it...

She reaches down, her fingers trembling. Her diamond horse-bit bracelet, scuffed and caked in dirt, clinks against her wrist.

She grips the hem of her linen shirt and yanks. The fabric resists. She screams—a raw, animalistic sound that echoes off the canyon walls—and pulls with everything she has.

The fabric yields. A jagged strip of cream linen rips free.

She folds the linen strip over and forces it between her teeth, biting down hard until her gums bleed.

She looks back down at the fracture. Her vision blurs, dots of black dancing across her eyes.

GEORGINA  
(through the cloth)  
One... two...

She reaches out and grabs her ankle with both hands. Her expensive french-manicured nails dig deep into the bloodied leather of her polished riding boot.

She takes a ragged breath. Screams into the linen cloth.

AND PULLS.

She yanks her ankle down and out, fighting the involuntary, violent spasm of her own thigh muscles.

The bone grinds against rock. The white tip of the tibia slips, scrapes along the skin, and shifts back beneath the bloody, torn muscle of her calf with a wet, THUD.

Georgina's head snaps back against the granite boulder.

Her eyes roll into her head. She blacks out from the sheer, blinding magnitude of the agony.

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CONTINUED: (2)

The linen strip drops from her loose jaw into the dust.

Silence returns to the canyon floor. The flies settle back over the freshly closed wound.

A sudden, sharp gust of wind kicks up, whistling through the rock, burying her boot in a fine layer of white alkaline dust.

**EXT. CANYON FLOOR - MOJAVE DESERT - NIGHT**

The transition is brutal. The 123-degree kiln has vanished, replaced by a piercing, sub-50-degree desert chill.

Georgina's eyes snap open. She shivers. Her pristine cream shirt is now a tattered rag, offering zero insulation against the wind.

She looks at her right leg. The bone is under the skin, but the calf is swollen to twice its size, purple and hot to the touch.

She cannot crawl out of this forty-foot grave. She has to stand.

Georgina scans the moonlit graveyard of stone. Shadows stretch like black fingers across the canyon floor.

Ten feet away, sticking out from a pile of dried flood debris, is a thick, sun-bleached branch of a dead ironwood tree.

It is sturdy, jagged, and forks perfectly at the top into a rough 'Y' shape.

GEORGINA

(voice a raspy, dry rasp)

Come on... come on...

She drags her dead-weight lower body across the sharp gravel. Every inch sends a sickening tremor up her spine.

She reaches the ironwood branch. She wraps her fingers around the rough, splintered bark and hauls it closer.

She positions the 'Y' crook of the branch right under her left armpit. It fits, but the jagged wood bites brutally into her flesh.

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To cushion it, she unclasps her diamond horse-bit bracelet around the wood, using the platinum links to bind a remaining scrap of her torn linen sleeve over the splinters.

A makeshift crutch. Luxury turned into survival utility.

GEORGINA  
(breath wheezing)  
Up. Get up.

Using the granite boulder behind her for leverage, she pushes down on the ironwood branch with her left arm and drives her healthy left leg into the dirt.

Her body elevates. Her shattered right foot dangles an inch off the ground, trembling.

For a second, she hovers, perfectly balanced on one leg and a dead tree branch. The wind howls through the canyon, threatening to topple her.

She leans her weight forward onto the crutch. The wood groans, but holds.

Georgina takes her first, agonizing step forward into the dark, swinging her broken body toward the steep ravine path. She isn't waiting to die.

**INT. DESERT SUNSET MOTEL - ROOM 14 - NIGHT**

Jerry and Sienna tangled in the sheets post sex. Sienna holds up her hands, turning them this way and that.

Sienna snuggles into Jerry's chest. Gets serious for a moment.

**EXT. RAVINE PATH - CANYON WALL - NIGHT**

The full moon casts a stark, skeletal light over the sheer, forty-foot incline. It's a vertical wall of loose shale, crumbling red granite, and prickling catclaw brier.

Georgina stands at the base, looking up. The crutch is wedged tight under her arm, the diamond bracelet glinting in the moonlight.

She plants the base of the crutch into a narrow ledge. Pushes.

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                                  GEORGINA (V.O.)  
                                  (calm, measured, a  
                                  boardroom tone)  
                                  In any hostile acquisition, your  
                                  greatest asset isn't your capital.  
                                  It's your predictability.

Georgina drives her good left boot into the gravel,  
hoisting her weight up a measly six inches.

The shale slides out from under her. She barely catches  
herself, her fingers clawing into the raw dirt.

                                  GEORGINA (V.O.)  
                                  You find out exactly what your  
                                  opponent expects you to do... and  
                                  you do the absolute opposite.

She jams the crutch upward, wedging it into the root  
system of a stubborn desert shrub. She pulls her body up  
again.

The jagged catclaw thorns slash across her exposed arms  
and neck. Blood beads on her skin, black in the  
moonlight.

She doesn't even blink. The pain in her leg has entirely  
numbed her to everything else.

                                  GEORGINA (V.O.)  
                                  Jerry thinks I'm a creature of  
                                  comfort. He thinks because I buy  
                                  five-thousand-dollar saddles and  
                                  sleep in five-star resorts, that I  
                                  am soft. He thinks the desert will  
                                  do his dirty work for him.

She takes another agonizing step. The ironwood branch  
groans under the pressure.

A sharp rock cuts right through her left riding boot, but  
she keeps moving.

She is ten feet up now. Thirty more to go.

                                  GEORGINA (V.O.)  
                                  He forgot who built the company.  
                                  He forgot who negotiated the  
                                  northern parcels. He forgot that  
                                  before I had the money... I had  
                                  the teeth.

Georgina stops, gasping for air, her forehead pressed  
against the cold granite wall.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

She drags herself over the final crest, collapsing onto the flat desert plateau. Her breathing is ragged, but her eyes are dead and hyper-focused.

The socialite is officially gone.

**EXT. DESERT PLATEAU - NIGHT**

The wind across the open plateau cuts through her torn linen shirt like a blade. Her body shakes violently.

Hypothermia is setting in.

She pulls the crutch from under her arm and crawls forward on her elbows. Her eyes hunt the barren earth.

She finds a low, skeletal thicket of dead creosote bush and dry sage. Perfect tinder.

Georgina rips the brittle, dry twigs from the roots, stacking them methodically into a small, tight teepee shape on the dirt.

She creates a fire break by clearing a flat circle in the dust around the wood.

Georgina reaches down and unzips the hidden, high-end utility pocket on the thigh of her expensive riding trousers.

She pulls out her only remaining tool: a heavy, brushed-platinum Cartier cigarette lighter. A gift from Jerry.

She flicks the wheel. A clean, wind-resistant blue flame flares to life, casting a warm glow over her caked-on blood and dirt.

**EXT. DESERT PLATEAU - NIGHT**

Georgina doesn't light the wood yet.

She looks up at the western horizon. Twenty miles away, the faint, pulsing blue and red lights of the Sheriff's rescue trucks are visibly crawling along the wrong mountain range.

GEORGINA (V.O.)

(quiet, analytical)

If I build a signal fire, they'll see it. The ground team will redirect.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGINA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The radio traffic will trigger.  
And Jerry will know the desert  
failed him.

She looks down at the tinder stacked in the dirt. She flicks the luxury lighter off, plunging her face back into shadow.

GEORGINA (V.O.)

He'll have time to clear the bank  
accounts. He'll have time to run.

Using the sharp, broken end of her ironwood branch, she digs into the hard desert crust, excavating a tight, ten-inch hole in the dirt.

Beside it, she digs a second, angled tunnel connecting to the bottom for airflow.

GEORGINA (V.O.)

Never give your target a warning  
shot. You hide the smoke. You hide  
the fire. You wait until you're  
close enough to cut the throat.

She transfers the twigs into the hidden pit.

*Instead of a beacon, she needs a "Dakota fire hole"—a hidden, subterranean fire chamber used by military scouts to mask light and smoke.*

Flick. The Cartier flame meets the dry creosote.

The wood catches. The fire burns entirely underground, venting its heat upward through the main hole without throwing a single spark or visible glow across the flat desert territory.

Georgina hovers her trembling, dirt-caked hands directly over the warm, invisible thermal vent. The heat floods her chest.

She stares into the darkness, completely hidden from the world, waiting out the freezing night.

**EXT. CANYON FLOOR - DAWN**

The morning air is crisp, but the horizon promises another day of executioner heat.

Georgina drags her leg, using a smaller branch as a crutch. She is shivering, her stomach GROWLS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She scans the barren ground. Nothing but rock and sand.

Then, she spots it.

A cluster of PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS growing against the canyon wall. Hanging from the green pads are plump, purple-red cactus fruits.

Georgina collapses next to the cactus, her mouth watering. She reaches out to grab a fruit.

She pulls her hand back—his fingers are instantly pierced by dozens of microscopic, hair-like needles.

She groans in frustration.

Georgina grabs a flat, sharp stone. She scraps the skin of the purple fruit, grinding the needles off against the rock.

Georgina smashes the fruit open with the stone. The interior is a vibrant, bleeding crimson, packed with seeds and wet pulp.

Georgina shoves the pulp into her mouth.

She chews frantically, swallowing the sweet, sticky juice. Needles prick the inside of her lips, but she doesn't care.

*GEORGINA (V.O.)*

*God, it's sweet. Spite tastes  
good, but staying alive tastes  
better.*

She wipes her mouth with the back of her hand, leaving a smear of red juice and blood that looks like war paint.

Georgina looks up at the canyon wall.

The sun is just starting to peak over the top, hitting her face with a sudden, warning heat.

She has food. She has a splint. Now, she needs shade before he bakes.

**INT. DESERT SUNSET MOTEL - ROOM 14 - DAY**

The wall-unit air conditioner is silent, having died during the night. The room is already sticky.

Sienna and Jerry are spooned up together, sound asleep. Just then... A loud pounding on the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHERIFF MILLER (O.S.)  
(muffled, booming)  
Mr. Carson? It's Sheriff Miller.

Sienna and Jerry exchange concerned looks.

SHERIFF MILLER (O.S.)  
Mr. Carson? I saw your truck out  
front. You in there?

SIENNA  
Just a moment, Sheriff!

Jerry rolls out of bed, finds his boxers and throws it on.

Sienna throws on her silky nightgown, and messes up the other bed. She smokes a cigarette.

Jerry clicks the deadbolt open, and swings it wide.

Miller stands there, his Stetson in hand, sweating through his uniform.

JERRY  
Sheriff. Good morning. We were  
just about to call. Come in.

SHERIFF MILLER  
Morning. Sorry to drop in on you  
unannounced. The front desk clerk  
over at the resort said you  
checked out yesterday afternoon  
and moved here.

He looks around, seeing, wine glasses. His eyes lingering for a fraction of a second on Sienna. Sweat running down between her succulent breasts.

SHERIFF MILLER  
Counselor.

JERRY  
Have your teams found anything?

Miller sighs, running a hand over his weathered face.

He pulls a folded-up topographic map from his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHERIFF MILLER

We got the birds up at five AM.  
Cleared the entire northern ridge  
of Black Canyon where you said she  
went. Nothing. Not a footprint,  
not a clothing scrap.

Jerry lets out a sharp, theatrical sob.

JERRY

Oh god... nothing?

SHERIFF MILLER

But... we did find something else.  
About twenty minutes ago. One of  
my ground units found Georgina's  
horse.

Sienna and Jerry both hold their breath.

SHERIFF MILLER

It wasn't anywhere near the Black  
Hills. It was twenty miles east,  
near the old dry creek beds by the  
granite cliffs. And the saddlebags  
were still attached.

Sienna doesn't flinch, her posture shifting from  
cooperative to combative. A cold, condescending smile  
touches her lips.

SIENNA

A horse wandered twenty miles  
east, Sheriff? And that surprises  
you?

SHERIFF MILLER

Well, yes, counselor. In this  
heat, a riderless animal usually  
heads down-canyon toward the—

SIENNA

Toward the nearest water source.  
Exactly. Basic equine survival  
instinct.

Sienna taps a finger on the map in Miller's hand,  
pointing decisively away from the granite cliffs.

SIENNA

Georgina was thrown on the  
northern ridge of Black Hills.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SIENNA (CONT'D)

The horse panics, catches a scent of moisture from the east, and gallops off. A panicked animal can easily cover twenty miles in an afternoon. Are you suggesting a horse's flight path dictates where a human with a broken leg is crawling?

Miller blinks, caught off guard by her aggressive, clinical tone. He looks from Sienna to the map.

SHERIFF MILLER

No, I'm just saying it's a physical clue. Protocol dictates we shift a ground team over to--

SIENNA

-- Protocol? Or laziness?  
(then)

If you pull your teams off the northern ridge now, you are abandoning Georgina where she actually fell. You are wasting precious daylight because your men found an easier grid to search.

JERRY

Oh god, Sheriff, please don't stop looking where he fell... she's out of water...

Sienna, looking down her nose at Miller. She is in absolute control, enjoying her intellectual dominance.

SIENNA

My client's wife is a billionaire, Sheriff. If your 'protocol' causes her death because you followed a stray animal, the civil lawsuit will bankrupt this county.

(beat)

Keep your men on the northern ridge. That is where she is.

Miller stares at Sienna for a long, heavy beat.

The easygoing demeanor fades. He measures her - absorbing the threat, the arrogance, and the sheer intensity of her pushback.

He nods, slipping the map back into his uniform pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

SHERIFF MILLER

(low, measured)

I see your point, counselor. You certainly know your way around a legal brief. And horse psychology, apparently.

SIENNA

I'm paid to look at facts, Sheriff. Not shadows.

SHERIFF MILLER

Right. Well... I'll tell the boys to double down on Black Hills. We'll leave the horse where it is for now.

Miller places his Stetson back on his head, adjusting the brim. He steps toward the door, then pauses, looking back at the two women.

SHERIFF MILLER

Just one thing bothers me, though.

SIENNA

And what's that?

SHERIFF MILLER

The reins on that horse. They weren't dragging. They were looped neat and tidy over the saddle horn. Like someone tied 'em up before the beast took off.

A suffocating silence fills the room.

SHERIFF MILLER

But like you said... animals do strange things in the heat.

Miller turns and walks out. The door latch clicks shut.

For three agonizing seconds, the room is dead silent.

The only sound is the rumble of Miller's truck engine cranking to life in the gravel lot outside.

Jerry's composure cracks a little as he gazes into Sienna's eyes.

JERRY

The reins, Sienna! The reins were tied over the horn! You told me you took care of the horse!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

SIENNA

I did take care of it. I tied them so the beast wouldn't trip and break its neck before it got away from the canyon.

JERRY

But he noticed! Miller noticed! He knows a panicked horse doesn't tie its own reins!

Sienna lets out a short, arrogant laugh.

SIENNA

Miller doesn't know a damn thing, Sienna. He's a small-town cop with a high school diploma and a pension to protect. He noted a detail. That's what they do to feel useful.

Jerry stares at Sienna, wanting desperately to believe this.

JERRY

He looked right at us. He knew we were lying.

SIENNA

He knew he was being threatened with a lawsuit by a senior partner from a top-tier firm. Did you see his face? He folded.

SIENNA

The entire search is staying exactly where I pointed them. twenty miles away from your wife.

Beat. The financial spreadsheets glow against her face.

SIENNA

By the time they realize Black Hills is a dead end, it will be too late. By then, Georgina will be a biological statistic.

(tense beat)

The reins won't matter. The only thing that will matter is your signature on the probate filing.

Jerry looks at her, trying to absorb her cold confidence. His panic subsides, but it doesn't disappear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

JERRY

What if Miller checks the security cameras at the resort?

SIENNA

Let him. We told the desk we were driving to Reno, then we slipped back here on the back roads. Why do you think I had you avoid every toll booth? There is no paper trail. No cameras at this dump.

Sienna pressing her forehead against Jerry's. A desperate attempt to ground them both.

SIENNA

Look at me. We are in this together. No turning back.

A heavy BEAT. Jerry falls into her arms.

**EXT. CANYON FLOOR - DAY**

The pale morning light burns away, replaced by a blinding, white glare.

Georgina hobbles along the base of the canyon wall.

She looks back. Her tracks are a jagged, chaotic line of dragged dirt.

Georgina looks up. The shadows at the base of the cliff are shrinking by the minute. Soon, there will be nowhere to hide.

Georgina trips on a loose stone. She crashes hard onto her side. She screams, clutching her leg.

She lies there, panting. If she doesn't get up, she will cook right here on the rocks.

Whispering, delirious...

GEORGINA

Get up... Get up...

Through the shimmering heat waves, she looks thirty yards ahead.

At the base of the granite cliff face, a dark, jagged fissure splits the rock—a narrow, shallow cave recess.

It looks completely black inside. Cold.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

She looks up at the sky, then toward a nearby ravine.

Ten feet away sits a dead, skeletal shrub. Hanging from its branches are thousands of DESERT CICADAS.

Their bodies vibrate in unison, creating a shrill, mechanical hum that perfectly mimics a distant, idling engine.

The sound isn't a rescue. It's nature laughing at her.

The realization hits Georgina, hard. The adrenaline fades, leaving only the crushing weight of her exhaustion.

She loses her balance. The crutch slips, and Georgina crashes hard into the dirt, her leg twisting beneath her.

She screams, but only a raspy hiss escapes her throat.

A tear wells in her eye, but the desert heat evaporates it before it can track down his cheek.

Propped up on one elbow, she stares at the vibrating insects. Her despair hardens into rage.

Georgina swipes her crutch through the air, smashing the gnarled branch down into the dead shrub.

The cicadas scatter in a frantic explosion of wings, leaving her in absolute, terrifying silence.

Georgina lies in the dust, staring at the endless blue sky.

She drags herself back up, using the crutch.

Georgina takes one agonizing step forward. Away from the mirage. Deep into the rocks.

**EXT. ROCK CAVE - DAY**

Georgina reaches the mouth of the fissure. She shoves her upper body inside the dark opening.

**INT. ROCK CAVE - DAY**

Instantly, the temperature drops. The air is cool, smelling of ancient dust and dry earth. It feels like heaven.

She lets out a sob of relief, collapses onto the floor.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Suddenly-- a sharp, dry, buzzing rattle echoes from the back of the cave.

Georgina freezes.

In the dim light, three feet away from her face, a coiled MOJAVE GREEN RATTLESNAKE raises its triangular head. Its tongue darts out, tasting his sweat.

It is defending its shade.

Georgina holds her breath, paralyzed.

She looks at the blazing, lethal sun outside the cave, then looks at the deadly predator inside.

Slowly, deliberately, Georgina slides her hand down to her belt. She grips a sharp, heavy stone she used to smash the cactus fruit.

A low, lethal whisper -

GEORGINA

My spot.

With a burst of survival adrenaline, Georgina slams the stone down just as the snake strikes with a wet, heavy THUD.

The dry, frantic rattling suddenly stops.

Georgina lies gasping. Her knuckles are scraped and bleeding.

The snake is severed in two. It's head lies a foot away, its jaws reflexively snapping open and shut in the dark dirt.

Georgina stares, her heart pounding.

**INT. YACHT CABIN - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

*High-end luxury. Air conditioning hums. On a flat-screen TV, a host holds up a dead viper.*

DOCUMENTARY NARRATOR (V.O.)

*...even hours after death, a snake's reflex can still deliver a lethal bite.*

**RESUME SCENE**

Georgina blinks. Sweat stings her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The snake's jaws suddenly snap open.

Using the tip of her crutch, Georgina drags the snapping head toward the mouth of the cave.

She digs a quick, shallow hole in the sand with her boot heel, shoves the head inside, and buries it, stomping the earth flat.

She returns to the back of the cave, looking down at the remaining three feet of thick, muscular snake body.

It is still writhing with post-mortem nerve spasms.

Her stomach growls. Shock and the sheer physical exertion of setting her leg have drained Georgina.

Georgina uses the sharp edge of the stone to slit the tough, scaled skin down the center of the belly.

She peels the skin back like a sleeve, exposing the pale, tight ribbon of white meat underneath.

Georgina hesitates for a fraction of a second - the civilized corporate mogul recoiling at the horror of what she's about to do.

Then, remembers--

QUICK FLASH: *On the CLIFF, Georgina staring up and them. Jerry's cold smile. That lit cigarette falling towards her.*

Georgina rips a chunk of the raw, stringy meat away from the spine with her teeth.

She chews, swallowing the tough, metallic-tasting meat. It is pure protein. Raw fuel.

As she eats, she looks out through the narrow mouth of the cave.

Outside, the canyon is blinding, shimmering under a brutal, midday sun. The air looks thick with white heat.

Georgina wipes the snake blood from her mouth.

The panic is gone from her eyes. Her pupils are sharp, dark, and focused.

Georgina leans back against the cold granite wall, watching the entrance like a predator waiting for prey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She closes her eyes, drifting into a deep, tactical sleep.

**EXT. DESERT SUNSET MOTEL - POOL - DAY**

An old, cracked turquoise swimming pool sits in the center of this gritty roadside motel.

Jerry lies on a chaise lounge, sunglasses.

Next to her, Sienna, wearing a sexy bikini and sarong, sits under a faded umbrella. She's on her laptop, typing.

Between them on the table: a heavy, leather-bound folder embossed with \*THE CARSON FAMILY TRUST\*.

Jerry takes a slow sip of iced tea.

JERRY

Any word from our friend the Sheriff?

SIENNA

(Without looking up)  
Nothing. Still setting up base camp sixty miles out. They won't move the trucks until dusk.

JERRY

A bullet would have been simpler.

SIENNA

A bullet leaves a lead signature, Jerry. And twenty million dollars goes to a dog shelter.

JERRY

I'm just saying. The heat is making me antsy.

SIENNA

Georgina was a city mogul who thought she could conquer the Mojave without a map.

A moment between them, finding common ground.

SIENNA

The desert is doing the work for us. No lawyers, no forensics, no Reno trail. Just tragic, wealthy stupidity.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sienna's phone DINGS. It's an incoming e-mail.

SIENNA

The board is already asking questions about his sudden absence. We need to be careful, Jerry. Awomanlike Georgina doesn't just vanish without a paper trail.

JERRY

Let them ask.

Beat. Sienna tapping the keys of her laptop.

SIENNA

I'm logged into her secure corporate cloud server right here. I've already begun seeding the narrative through his synchronized desktop apps. A few vague messages to her inner circle about "needing space" and "clearing her head."

JERRY

And the location data? If the police look at his digital footprint?

SIENNA

I routed the connection through a spoofed VPN network. As far as his board is concerned, she sent those messages from a roadside diner on the edge of the county line. When the heat finally does its job, the coroner will look at his empty canteen, look at the digital trail, and call it a tragic, foolish accident.

Sienna raises her glass in a silent toast.

SIENNA

And you walk away a very wealthy, grieving widower.

JERRY

I couldn't do this without you.

**EXT. CANYON - GRANITE CLIFFS - DAY**

The brutal midday glare has faded into a deep, bruised purple and orange twilight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The canyon shadows stretch out like long, black fingers across the desert floor.

Suddenly-- a distant, rhythmic THUD-THUD-THUD shatters the silence.

The sound rapidly builds into an earsplitting roar.

A Sheriff's BELL 429 HELICOPTER cuts over the lip of the canyon. Its twin engines scream as it hovers low, kicking up a massive, blinding storm of dust.

A high-powered, high-intensity NIGHTSUN SEARCHLIGHT ignites from the belly, casting a brilliant, blinding white beam of light across the rugged terrain.

**INT. HELICOPTER - NIGHT**

The cockpit is washed in the green glow of instrument panels.

DEPUTY PILOT STEVENS (30s) grips the flight controls, fights the turbulent desert wind currents bouncing off the canyon walls.

In the observer seat, Miller stares out the window, holding a pair of binoculars.

His eyes scan the circle of light on the canyon floor.

PILOT STEVENS

(Over intercom)

Sheriff, we're burning fuel fast.  
Air temp just hit one-nineteen,  
which is right on our safety  
margin. The lawyer said he went  
missing sixty miles west at Black  
Canyon. Why are we sweeping the  
granite cliffs?

Still staring through binoculars -

SHERIFF MILLER

(over intercom )

Because that lawyer is too smart  
for her own good, Stevens. She was  
working too hard to keep me away  
from this grid. Look down there.  
That's where we found the horse.  
An animal doesn't run thirty miles  
through a heatwave across open  
desert. It walked down into these  
shadows to survive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beat. He lowers the binoculars.

SHERIFF MILLER

And I bet Mr. Carson did the same.  
Sweep the base of that ridge.

**INT. ROCK CAVE - NIGHT**

Inside the narrow fissure, the darkness is shattered by a strobing, blinding white searchlight passing outside.

The roar of helicopter blades is deafening, vibrating the ancient rock walls. Loose dust rains down.

Georgina snaps awake. She looks out the cave entrance. Through the whipping dust storm, the chopper hovers fifty yards away.

She frantically grabs her crutch, dragging her leg violently toward the cave mouth.

GEORGINA

(screams over the  
roar)

Here! Down here!

She reaches the razor edge of the searchlight beam. She raises her arm, waving her crutch wildly into the air.

GEORGINA

Look down! Look at the ridge!

The blinding beam sweeps inches from her fingertips, then abruptly pivots away, illuminating a distant canyon wall.

Georgina's face drops. She stops screaming. The crushing reality settles in.

We no longer hear her spoken voice. Only the DEAFENING, rhythmic thrum of the blades, and the raw, desperate echo of his thoughts:

GEORGINA (V.O.)

They can't see you. The dust...  
the shadows are too deep.

She lunges forward, trying to push her body further out onto the ledge, but her leg gives out.

She collapses onto her stomach, burying her face in the dirt as loose gravel spills over the edge.

Georgina pushes herself, staring helplessly into the sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GEORGINA (V.O.)  
Shine it back. Just one more pass.  
Look at the cave.

The chopper begins to tilt, nose dipping as it prepares to sweep a different sector.

The light leaves the ridge entirely, plunging the cave mouth back into total darkness.

GEORGINA (V.O.)  
(cold, hollow)  
They're leaving.

The deafening roar begins to fade, pulling away into the vast night sky.

Georgina lies flat in the pitch black, her fingers clawing into the sand. The desperation slowly burns away, leaving nothing but fury.

**EXT. CANYON - NIGHT**

The helicopter tilts its nose forward, its searchlight tracking away down the dry creek bed.

PILOT STEVENS (V.O.)  
(over radio)  
Nothing but rocks and  
rattlesnakes, Sheriff. Fuel  
warning is chiming. We have to  
head back to base.

SHERIFF MILLER (V.O.)  
(frustrated)  
Copy that. Turn us around.

The chopper roars away over the mountain ridge, its thumping blades fading back into the vast desert silence.

**EXT. ROCK CAVE - NIGHT**

Georgina crawls back to the edge of the cave mouth.

Georgina watches the blinking tail lights of the helicopter disappear over the jagged horizon.

Georgina looks down at her dirt-caked hands, then out at the black expanse. A sharp, icy wind whistles through the canyon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Georgina tightens her grip on her crutch and pulls herself upright. The prey is gone.

She looks out into the dark. A quiet whisper -

GEORGINA

Time to hunt.

She steps out of the cave shadow and into the moonlight.

**INT. ROCK CAVE - NIGHT**

Georgina collapses inside the cave mouth, escaping the freezing wind. She lays her crutch aside.

Her face is streaked with dried sweat and snake blood. Her breath is shallow.

Georgina stares deep into the dark recess of the cave, where the moon cannot reach.

Something catches her eye: a straight, unnaturally geometric shape sticking out from a pile of loose shale.

Nature doesn't make straight lines.

Georgina shifts, dragging herself over the gravel. She digs her fingers into the loose rock pile. She pulls.

Georgina digs it out: a heavy, rusted, eight-inch IRON MINING SPIKE. Left behind by prospectors decades ago.

She runs her thumb along the jagged, lethal tip. A weapon.

A dark, grim smile cuts through her blistered lips.

She slams the tip of the spike into the dirt. It holds her full weight effortlessly.

She looks up at the low ceiling above the shale pile.

A pale white vein of QUARTZ cuts through the dark granite. Along the edge of the quartz, the rock is slick. Dark.

A single, pristine drop of moisture forms on the stone. It hangs for a beat—then falls, disappearing into the dry sand. Water.

Georgina uses the sharp, rusted tip of the spike to hollow out a small, bowl-shaped crater in a flat piece of shale.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She slides the stone bowl underneath the quartz vein.

DRIP. A drop of cool mountain water hits the stone.

*GEORGINA (V.O.)*

*They say spite doesn't find water  
in the dark... They don't know me.*

But the desert cold is setting in fast.

Georgina is shivering.

She rips a loose strand of fabric from her filthy leg splint and shreds a handful of dry desert grass into a nest, placing it right beneath the exposed quartz vein.

Georgina raises the iron mining spike. She strikes the heavy iron edge against the glassy quartz ridge.

SPARKS fly into the dark.

Georgina strikes again. And again. Harder. Showering the dry grass with brilliant orange sparks until a tiny wisp of smoke curls upward from the nest.

She leans down, inches from the stone bowl, and blows a soft, steady stream of air into the tinder.

FLAME erupts, casting dancing shadows on the cave walls.

Georgina collapses back against the rock, cradling her new iron weapon, watching her fire grow as the water drips.

INT. SHERIFF SUBSTATION - BREAK ROOM - DAWN

*The first pale orange rays of the Mojave sunrise cut through the dust-caked window blinds.*

*Jerry lies stretched out across two plastic chairs, his expensive riding boots propped up on a low table. He pretends to sleep, but his eyes are fixed on the ceiling tiles, tracking the rhythm of the fluorescent hum.*

*Sienna sits at the laminate table, a half-empty paper cup of stale coffee between her hands. Her silk wild rag is gone; her sleeveless top looks lived-in, but her composure remains untouched.*

*The heavy break room door clicks open.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Miller steps inside. He looks haggard. His uniform shirt is stained with sweat and white desert dust; his eyes are shot with red veins.

Jerry sits up. He forces a look of panicked anticipation onto his face. Sienna drops her coffee cup, her hands trembling on cue.

JERRY

(voice raspy,  
desperate)

Miller. Tell me you found her.  
Tell me the ground team reached  
the ridge.

Miller removes his Stetson, placing it heavily on the table. He cannot look Jerry in the eye.

SHERIFF MILLER

Mr. Carson... my boys spent the  
entire night combing the Black  
Hills. They cleared the western  
ridge, the boulder wash, and the  
lower basin.

SIENNA

And?

SHERIFF MILLER

Nothing. No sign of the horse, no  
sign of your wife. The wind picked  
up around midnight, wiped out any  
ground tracks. With the heat index  
yesterday, and the plunge in  
temperature last night...

Miller trails off. He doesn't want to say the words.

Jerry covers his face with his hands, letting out a ragged, muffled sob.

Beneath his palms, his lips curve into a tight, victorious grin.

JERRY

She's still out there. She's alone  
in the dark. You have to keep  
looking!

SHERIFF MILLER

We aren't stopping, sir. The  
temperature is dropping back down  
to 118 today, which means the air  
density is clear.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHERIFF MILLER (CONT'D)

Dispatch just authorized the Barstow helicopter. Air Rescue 5 is spinning up right now.

Sienna's eyes freeze. The fake tears in her eyes dry up instantly.

SIENNA

The helicopter?

SHERIFF MILLER

Yes, ma'am. They're going to run a grid search over the entire Black Hills quadrant from above. If she's moving, or if her horse is tied up somewhere, the thermal imaging will pick her up within the hour.

Jerry lowers his hands. His face is pale—this time, the panic isn't acting.

Jerry looks at Sienna. A silent, terrifying realization passes between them in a fraction of a second.

JERRY

Thank god. Can we... can we go out to the trailhead? We can't just sit in this room anymore. We're losing our minds.

SHERIFF MILLER

Alright. Follow my cruiser out. But you stay by the trucks. Let the air team do the tracking.

Miller turns and exits, buzzing himself back through the secure comms door.

The instant the door clicks shut, Jerry turns on Sienna, his voice a harsh, frantic whisper.

EXT. BLACK HILLS TRAILHEAD - DAY

A dust storm of blue and red light illuminates the desert scrub.

Two Sheriff's cruisers and a massive Search and Rescue transport truck sit idling at the mouth of the wrong canyon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

*Jerry's truck is parked right behind them. Jerry and Sienna stand near the hood, their sunglasses shielding their eyes.*

*Miller walks briskly back from the tracking line, a radio crackling to life on his shoulder. His face is hard, completely devoid of the sympathy he had last night.*

*Jerry steps forward, putting on his frantic-husband face.*

JERRY

*Miller! Did the air team spot her?  
What's the word?*

*He doesn't look at Jerry. He looks past him, his eyes locking dead onto Sienna, then back.*

SHERIFF MILLER

*The air team didn't find your wife, Mr. Carson. But a local rancher over in the Canyon Trail system just called in.*

*Sienna's breath hitches. Her hand subtly tightens around the strap of her designer bag.*

SHERIFF MILLER

*He found her dark Andalusian gelding. It was grazing near an old water wash. Completely uninjured.*

*Jerry forces a massive, gasping sigh of relief. He covers his mouth, playing the part.*

JERRY

*Oh, thank God. Thank God. Where is it? Is she near the horse?*

SHERIFF MILLER

*(voice dropping,  
cold)*

*The horse was found twenty-two miles east of here. On the opposite side of the valley.*

*The fake relief instantly drains from Jerry's face. His jaw slackens. Next to him, Sienna goes entirely rigid.*

SIENNA

*(stuttering,  
recovering fast)*

*That... that's impossible. The horse must have wandered.*

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SIENNA (CONT'D)

*It must have run all night through the canyons—*

SHERIFF MILLER

*Horses don't clear twenty miles of rugged, boulder-choked red granite terrain in a straight line overnight, ma'am. Not through a 123-degree heatwave.*

*(beat)*

*But that's not what's bothering me. The rancher said when he caught the animal, the split-leather reins weren't dragging. They weren't snagged on the brush.*

*Jerry's stomach bottoms out. His mind races back to the cliffside.*

SHERIFF MILLER

*Someone took those reins, looped them neatly over the saddle horn, and tied them into a perfect, secure bowtie knot.*

*Miller stares right into Jerry's eyes.*

SHERIFF MILLER

*Now, I've been working this desert for twenty-five years, Mr. Carson. And I've never seen a panicked, runaway horse manage to tie its own reins into a neat little bow before it threw its rider over a cliff.*

INT. DESERT SUNSET MOTEL - ROOM 14 - NIGHT

Jerry sleeps, Sienna curled up next to him. She's awake. A beat, then she eases away from him. Touches his face lovingly, and leaves the room.

**EXT. CANYON FLOOR - NIGHT**

An hour after sunset. The DEAFENING ROAR of the helicopter blades echoes down the narrow canyon walls.

Dust and dead brush whip into a frenzy as the search chopper passes directly overhead. From that altitude, the deep shadow of the ravine obscures everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The helicopter keeps moving, its sound slowly fading away. They missed him.

Georgina gasps-- a sudden, violent lungful of dust. He opens his eyes, squinting against the blinding glare.

He looks up at the sky.

He is shivering despite the heat, his face caked in dried blood and sweat.

He looks down at his leg. The horrific compound fracture barely seen in the dusk.

Georgina lets out a ragged, guttural wheeze. It sounds like a laugh, but dissolves into a cough that brings up blood.

Using his elbows, Georgina digs his fingers into the brutal, rocky dirt. His hand hits something metallic in the sand.

It's his SMARTPHONE. The screen is a spiderweb of shattered black glass. The casing is cracked wide open. Dead.

He tosses the useless piece of plastic into the dirt and reaches for a nearby tree branch to start binding his leg splint.

He drags his broken body forward. One inch. Then another.

GEORGINA  
(under his breath)  
I'm not dying out here...

The words are barely out of his mouth before he COLLAPSES.