

APEX

by

Jeremy Robbins

UTA // Charlie Ferraro

Fourth Wall Management // Jon Huddle & Russell Hollander

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one most adaptable to change."

- Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*

OVER BLACK...

We hear a symphony of SOUND performed by PLANET EARTH.

Thunder rumbles. Rain falls. Waves crash.

Wind whips. Rivers rush. Trees shiver.

A chorus of birds and insects join together and somewhere far away an animal howls.

This is the world as it was for billions of years. And what it will be long after we're gone.

Majestic. Awe-inspiring. *Unyielding*.

And as the sounds CRESCENDO --

FADE UP:

APEX

INT. CAMPING TENT - DAWN

SUNLIGHT seeps through the nylon walls of a CAMPING TENT.

CLOSE ON: a pair of HANDS as strips of ATHLETIC TAPE are unwound. Revealing FINGERS that look like they've been fed through a meat grinder. The skin is shredded and split.

These belong to SASHA (30).

Her face is wind-burned, her nose raw and runny, every inch of her body aches. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

Out here, she's home. Even as --

SCHRRRRRRRRRRRRIP

-- she uses a RAZORBLADE to shave off dead skin from her fingertips, applying SUPERGLUE to seal up the cuts. Re-wrapping them with TAPE that isn't red with dried blood.

Like a bare-knuckled boxer ready to go another round, she rehearses a sequence of moves in the air. Gripping a succession of *invisible*, microscopic finger-holds.

SASHA

(whispering to herself)

Right hand on dime crimp. Left
fingers up to pinch. Right hand
crimp -- left hand pinch.

She checks her NOTEBOOK, where she's written down an entire sequence of moves. Filling the page with repetitions.

She commits the sequence to memory. Then her watch BEEPS.
6AM. Time to go.

Spread out all around her is CAMPING GEAR: propane stove, portable lantern, packets of dehydrated food.

She grabs a Thermos and POKES THE SLEEPING MASS BESIDE HER. Now we see that the tent sleeps TWO PEOPLE.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Rise and shine, sleepyhead. It's
time to boogie.

Inside the second sleeping bag is TOMMY (30s). A SF GIANTS BANDANA is wrapped over his face, a makeshift eye-mask. He removes it, revealing a mane of messy hair.

TOMMY
(groggy)
...I can't believe you set an
alarm...

SASHA
I want to stay on schedule. C'mon,
let's get going while the wall's
still cold.

TOMMY
I promise it'll be cold in an hour.
Come back to bed, I need you to
warm me up.

SASHA
No can do. There's someone else
that needs my undivided attention.

Tommy nods, then leans in and gives her a loving kiss.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Woof, Tommy. That breath is ripe.

TOMMY
You love the smell of napalm in the
morning.

On that, Sasha UNZIPS the tent and lets in a blast of COLD.

And now we realize that the TENT -- and its occupants -- are
SUSPENDED 250 FEET IN THE AIR.

STRAPPED TO THE FACE OF A MOUNTAIN.

EXT. MOUNTAIN/TENT - SAME MOMENT

Sasha and Tommy are inside their PORT-A-LEDGE -- a portable aluminum platform with nylon walls, secured to the rock with suspension ropes. Allowing big wall climbers to camp overnight during an ascent.

They're a third of the way up the Leaning Tower, a 700-FOOT slab of sheer rock in Yosemite National Park.

The valley floor stretches out below like a toy train set, treetops dusted with snow, as a winter dawn breaks in shades of purple and orange.

Sasha stares up the wall. Ready for Round 1.

EXT. YOSEMITE VALLEY - THE LEANING TOWER - LATER

GEAR hangs from harnesses. HAUL BAGS from rope lines.

PERCHED HIGH UP ON THE WALL

Sasha has the lead, working the pitch. Tommy is on belay fifty feet below her, feeding rope through his safety gear.

SASHA
(to herself)
Right hand -- left hand...

She reaches for a hold, fingers *pinching* a nub of rock. Her toes curl, quads stretching, propelling her up the mountain.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Right foot hooks...and push...

Her body executes the moves just as she rehearsed, enabling her to defy gravity as she climbs into the sky.

Tommy stares up at Sasha silhouetted against the mountain.

TOMMY
Beautiful, Sash.

Digging deep, she reaches the next safety bolt and anchors in, crying out with relief, wrecked from the pitch.

She shakes out her hands, cracks the knuckles to loosen them. Then notices a few dots of fresh blood on the TAPE.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
(calling up)
How are the fingers?

SASHA
(calling down)
I think only one still works.

She flips him a middle finger. Tommy grins.

TOMMY
Remind me why we aren't on a beach
in Kauai?

SASHA
Skin cancer.
(then)
If that's what you want, you
married the wrong girl.

TOMMY
I do love the beach.

He looks out and breathes. Taking everything in.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
But you can't beat the view.
(looking up at Sasha)
Or the company.

With that, he starts to climb. Moving like a spider up the
water spout. He pivots, pinches, propels.

Natural, graceful, and powerful, it's like he's *part* of the
mountain.

Every joint, tendon, and muscle is in perfect harmony, making
the hardest thing in the world...look *effortless*.

And beautiful.

He WHOOPS and HOLLERS -- like a wolf -- his voice bouncing
off the rock and echoing out through the canyon.

Leaving Sasha to marvel as the love of her life climbs
towards her.

EXT. PORTALEDDGE - NIGHT

A LANTERN shines inside the tent as a WINTER STORM rages.
SNOW swirls and wind whips. *Pulling* on the suspension ropes.

If you weren't a big-wall climber, you'd swear the tent was
going to be ripped off the mountain any second.

INSIDE THE TENT:

The nylon walls flap furiously. Sasha and Tommy huddle inside a sleeping bag, tangled in each other's arms to keep warm.

TOMMY

You know what sucks?

SASHA

Having to go Number 2 in a Ziplock bag?

TOMMY

Very true, good call. I would've also accepted -- "what is having to go back to work next week?"

SASHA

Don't remind me. I want to stay right here and never move.

TOMMY

Me too.

She nuzzles close. He holds her tight. After a moment --

SASHA

What if we...*didn't*?

TOMMY

Didn't what?

SASHA

You know.

Tommy looks at her. Trying to see if she's serious.

TOMMY

You're not serious.

SASHA

What if I am -- and we didn't go back? What if we just stayed gone?

TOMMY

And the plan would be what exactly...?

SASHA

I don't know, we'd figure it out. But think about it, we'd be completely....untethered.

TOMMY

This coming from the person who
made an itinerary for our
honeymoon?

SASHA

Don't make fun of me.

TOMMY

I'm not making fun of you, Sash, I
love that about you. But I lived
that life for like ten years, I
don't want to do it anymore.

(then)

And trust me, I know you. You'd
hate it.

HOLD ON: Sasha, restless, wondering if he's right.

EXT. YOSEMITE VALLEY - LEANING TOWER WALL - DAWN

SLABS OF ICE line the top of the mountain like salt along the
rim of a margarita glass.

THREE HUNDRED FEET BELOW THE SUMMIT...

The PORTALEGE is covered in FRESH SNOW.

BACK ON THE WALL

Sasha holds onto a granite lip the size of a shelled peanut.
Her fingers tense. Her knuckles turning white.

She scans the rock face above her...searching for the next
hold...but she can't find it. She's stuck. And slipping.

Her muscles quiver as she hugs the mountain 450 feet in the
air. She fights to stay upright, but she's losing her grip.

SASHA

I can't hold it!!

TOMMY

Just breathe...

SASHA

I can't -- fucking -- hold -- !!

Muscles at their breaking point, her body finally gives out.
The sky comes rushing up and Sasha takes a nasty whipper.

Helicoptering off the rock and FALLING --

....THIRTY FEET.

Before the safety system engages. Just like it's supposed to.

Tommy is on belay, pulled upwards to counterbalance her fall.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Goddamnit! It's that same spot
every time. I can't hold on.

Swinging like a pendulum, she finally steadies herself and
plants her feet against the mountain.

SASHA (CONT'D)
We're gonna be here all day.

TOMMY
You have some place you'd rather
be?

SASHA
A beach in Kauai.

TOMMY
Sasha --

SASHA
Don't.
(off his look)
You're gonna give me some
motivational sports metaphor, like
"clear eyes full hearts" or some
shit and I'm not in the mood.

On Tommy, guilty as charged.

TOMMY
Touché.
(then)
You want to switch, I can take the
lead for a bit?

Sasha shoots him a look. *You always say that.*

SASHA
Nope. I got this.

Tommy meets her gaze. *You always say that too.*

As Sasha steels herself to prove Tommy wrong...

WE CUT TO A RAPID MONTAGE:

Of Sasha very much not proving him wrong. She falls again and
again. Whipper after whipper. All afternoon.

And getting more and more frustrated every time.

This is a woman locked in battle with a mountain and she's
getting her ass kicked. But she's determined not to give up.

She reaches for a ridge the width of an eyebrow...but her hands are shredded and her muscles shot. She can't hold on.

And she FALLS for what feels like the thousandth time today. Yelling in frustration, sucking wind as she drops.

SASHA (CONT'D)
GODDAMNIT!!!

Her hands are throbbing. The tape on her fingers dotted red.

Tommy checks his watch. Sasha's been at this for hours. The sun is starting to set. It's getting colder.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Okay. Fine. Let's hear it.

TOMMY
You sure?

SASHA
Permission granted.

TOMMY
Call an audible.

Sasha looks at him.

SASHA
That's it, that's all you got?

A slight ripple of tension between them.

TOMMY
My point is -- it's not gonna work like we mapped it in the gym, so stop expecting it to. Get out of your head, change the play on the fly, zig instead of zag. Because up here it's just you and the mountain. And the mountain's not changing.

Sasha stares up the rock wall, trying to summon the strength to heed Tommy's advice and try again. She exhales. Deflated.

She doesn't have the fight to go another round.

SASHA
(defeated)
I can't, T. I'm tapping out.

Tommy is about to say something but decides against it. He nods, throwing in the proverbial towel too.

EXT. LEANING TOWER - MOMENTS LATER

It's getting dark.

They rappel by HEADLAMP now, heading back to their portaledge a hundred feet below.

Their faces are lit by tiny slivers of light, which slice the darkness and ricochet off sheer, frosted granite.

They move in tandem, the BELAY ROPE still connected to their harnesses.

SASHA

I'm sorry.

TOMMY

Don't be. You'll get 'em tomorrow.
You always do.

Sasha forces a smile.

And as they make their way back to camp...

...they hear a CRAAAAAACK several hundred feet above their heads.

They snap to the sound, staring straight up the wall.

A SLAB OF ICE IS BREAKING OFF THE SUMMIT.

ABOUT TO DROP STRAIGHT DOWN.

RIGHT ON THEM.

There's nothing but DARKNESS all around, but we hear an ICE SHOWER rain down.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Shit...

Frozen shards DROP like missiles in the night.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Heads -- !

Sasha and Tommy press their bodies to the rock -- WHOOSH -- as an ICE SLAB goes sailing by. Hitting the wall below and breaking into jagged pieces on its way to the valley floor.

SASHA

Tommy.....

TOMMY

It's okay. We're okay.

They wait in silence to see if another is on its way. But it's quiet. Tommy turns to Sasha, fear flooding in.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Go.

With that, they start moving for their portaledge. Trying to outrace the ice.

EXT. THE LEANING TOWER WALL - SAME MOMENT

FROM FAR AWAY: TWO BEAMS OF LIGHT rappel down the matte-black mountain. With their portaledge in sight...

TOMMY

We're close, Sash. Just --

And then it happens in a flash. A CRACK --

WHOOOOSH

-- and Tommy GRUNTS -- as an ICE CHUNK SLAMS INTO HIM AND PULLS HIM OFF THE WALL.

SASHA

Tommy!!!

The BELAY ROPE *extennnnnnnnnds* as he falls.

Plummeting a hundred feet until the safety gear ENGAGES -- PULLING THE SAFETY LINE COMPLETELY TAUT.

Tommy grunts as his body whiplashes. In the light of his headlamp, we see his nose is twisted, mouth leaking blood.

Sasha clutches a *tiny lip of rock* as he swings below her, his weight PULLING the BELAY ROPE attached to her harness.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Hold on, hold on okay? I got you!

Tommy desperately tries to get a grip on the wall -- to relieve the weight that's pulling Sasha off -- but he can't.

His collarbone is shattered. He swings helplessly in the air.

And because they're still connected by the safety line, Tommy is yanking Sasha off the mountain.

Her feet begin to slip. Particles of rock *grinding* away under the rubber of her climbing shoes.

SASHA (CONT'D)
It's okay I got you, okay I got
you...

But she's losing her grip. Her fingers dig into the rock, the skin of her fingertips shredding apart.

She can't hold all this weight.

Tommy knows what's about to happen. So he reaches down --

SASHA (CONT'D)
No no no -- Tommy -- don't you
fucking dare -- !

-- and UNCLIPS HIS SAFETY GEAR.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I can hold it -- I can hold it!!

But she can't. And he knows it.

TOMMY
Go...

Then he lets go.

Falling away into nothingness.

Saving her life by sacrificing his own.

SASHA
TOMMY!!!!!!

She screams into the void as the light from Tommy's headlamp vanishes in the dark.

FROM FAR AWAY:

A single beam of light is suspended five hundred feet in the sky, desperately searching for its partner.

SMASH TO BLACK.

EXT. DESERT CLIFFS - DAY (ONE YEAR LATER)

CLIFFS of RED ROCK bake in the late-afternoon sun.

From a HELMET GO-PRO: we careen at a breakneck speed, like a bat out of hell, atop a DUAL-SUSPENSION MOUNTAIN BIKE.

Barreling over dirt and rock, leaving plumes of dust in our wake, this is an adrenaline-junkie out for a sunset ride.

Our daredevil RIDER wears a helmet, UV goggles, and an old SF GIANTS BANDANA.

Swooping down a steep slope...

...hugging a NARROW LEDGE two hundred feet above the ground.

WHOOOOOSH

We GO AIRBORNE -- over a crevasse -- before the rubber tires SLAM back down into cracked earth. Upon impact...

The BACK TIRE KICKS OUT -- we swwwwerve to the edge, teetering precariously over nothingness for an instant...

...GRAVITY THREATENING TO PULL US INTO THE ABYSS BELOW...

...before the RIDER regains control --

VROOOOOOOM

-- and races down the mountain.

EXT. CAMPSITE - MOMENTS LATER

Our RIDER speeds into a campsite. Biking past --

RVs and CAMPERS parked all over. Where FAMILIES barbecue. CHILDREN scamper. COUPLES drink.

In a far corner of camp, hidden beneath a copse of trees, is a lone SPRINTER VAN.

Our RIDER dismounts and removes a helmet -- revealing Sasha. Hair shorter, eyes grayer, this is not the same woman from the opening.

Time has passed and taken its toll. A woman who's retreated from the world into one all her own.

Completely untethered. Pushing the limits because it's the only way to feel alive.

EXT. PARKING LOT/SPRINTER VAN - SAME MOMENT

Sasha SLIIIIIDES OPEN the door to her SPRINTER VAN. Hoists her bike onto the rack, securing it beside a TWO-PERSON CANOE.

She pops below and ducks --

INSIDE her tiny home on wheels.

A bunk has been built into the back wall, and next to it a small kitchenette, mini-fridge, and sink.

All 352 square inches of space are meticulously organized. With hidden compartments to maximize every nook and cranny, filled with everything you need for life on the road.

Camping gear. Canned fruit. Ramen noodles.

As Sasha changes out of her biking gear, we see her chiseled frame. Hardened and tough. Like a coat of armor.

Then a CLAP OF CHALK DUST brings us to --

INT. SPRINTER VAN - DUSK

Sasha uses a HANGBOARD mounted above the sliding door. The mold has grooves and indents, used for training on-the-go.

She wears her old climbing harness, which holds a 25LB WEIGHT from its straps.

With TWO FINGERS in place on the board, Sasha keeps her entire body -- and the kettle bell -- suspended in the air.

Doing pull-ups.

On two fingers.

Which are as excruciating as they sound, every muscle tensed, the bones in her fingers looking like they're going to crack.

She grits her teeth and fights through searing pain. Arms quivering, she refuses to give in.

She's making her hands stronger. Tougher. Harder to break.

But there's also something almost ritualistic about it. Somewhere between training...and punishment.

And just before her fingers *snap off* --

SMASH TO:

INT. CAMPSITE SHOWER - LATER

Sasha takes a freezing cold shower, eyes glassy. As if on the other side of a cathartic cry.

EXT. SPRINTER VAN - NIGHT

Sasha microwaves a cup of noodles.

Steam rising from the bowl, she eats alone under the stars.

LATER

She pops an Ambien and climbs into her bunk. Scrolling through PHOTOS on her phone.

She's flooded with memories of:

- Tommy and Sasha skiing in Jackson. Biking in Moab. Climbing in Zion. Canoeing in Kings Canyon.

- Scrolling further, we see WEDDING PHOTOS taken on their garage climbing wall, where they wear harnesses over their wedding outfits, perched high on the colorful holds.

- Then she lands on a VIDEO. Shot from a cell phone.

- Sasha and Tommy are surrounded by their family and friends. Sweaty, drunk, newlyweds. The camera swings around as --

Everyone dances and sings along to "I Want it That Way" by the Backstreet Boys, which blasts from a speaker.

The crowd parts and Tommy and Sasha step into the center.

TOMMY

You are my fire...

SASHA

The one desire...

TOMMY

You are...

SASHA

You are you are you are!

TOMMY

Don't wanna hear you say -- !

SASHA (CONT'D)

Aiiiiiin't nothing but a heartache!

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Aiiiiiin't nothing but a mistake.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Don't wanna hear you say -- !

EVERYONE

I never wanna hear you say, I want it that --

It's a lights out performance.

Then the screen goes dark. The battery's dead.

Sasha has passed out, phone cradled in her hand.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

FROM HIGH ABOVE:

The SPRINTER VAN snakes through an endless body of sand, the strip of asphalt like a single manmade artery.

Massive prehistoric rock formations blanket the landscape. Ancient domes, mesas, and hoodoos.

Out here, the earth really looks like another planet. With Sasha the only evidence of human life for miles.

INT. SPRINTER VAN (DRIVING) - SAME MOMENT

Sasha's eyes are bloodshot from a shitty night's sleep.

As she continues north, the sun lowers over a vista of pine and evergreen. She's heading into the MOUNTAINS.

Scanning the radio, she catches snippets of a bluegrass jam, a weather report, Christian talk radio, and local news --

LOCAL NEWS (V.O.)
-- until a neighbor reported her
missing late last month. And while
authorities continue to search --

BZZZZZZT. She clicks it off. Because she spots --

-- the FUEL GAUGE SENSOR on the dash. It's empty.

She drives down the main drag of a MOUNTAIN TOWN. Post office. Diner. Bar. Sheriff. Fire department.

Then pulls into the GAS STATION / GENERAL STORE.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - NIGHT

Locking her van after fueling up, she walks across the lot. Pulls the door open -- *ding* -- and as it CLOSES BEHIND HER...

HOLD ON: a FLYER taped to the glass.

A WOMAN IS MISSING.

Last seen THREE WEEKS AGO. In BEAR RIVER STATE PARK.

There is a PHOTOGRAPH of the WOMAN along with a REWARD for providing any information to the SHERIFF'S OFFICE.

And off the WOMAN'S PHOTO --

INT. GENERAL STORE - SAME MOMENT

Sasha has her headphones on, blasting music while she shops.

As she places items in her basket -- hot dogs, energy bars, dark chocolate, water --

WE TRACK HER FROM ANOTHER AISLE.

SOMEONE IS FOLLOWING HER.

Hovering. Out of sight. Like a ghost.

Or a predator eyeing its prey.

BACK WITH SASHA

She senses something lurking and spins around. Casting a furtive glance all around.

But there's no one there.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

She hustles to her car, groceries in hand, still a little creeped out. And as she crosses the lot...

...a PICK-UP TRUCK idles nearby, double barrels spitting exhaust.

LED LIGHTS are perched on the roof. TIRES caked in dirt. Several CANVAS GAME BAGS are strapped to the rear bed, wrapped in black tarps.

The DRIVER (male, 50s) wears full CAMO GEAR. Beard, broad-shouldered, clearly a big-game HUNTER.

He stares at Sasha as she passes. And something about his look sends a shiver down her spine.

Then he peels out, tires screaming into the night.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

In RAPID SUCCESSION:

A bottle pops --

-- and Sasha swallows a pill.

A lighter flicks --

-- and cannabis ignites.

Sasha speeds down the highway, smoking a joint to relax.

INT. SPRINTER VAN - LATER

Asleep in her bunk, she turns over and hears a WHISPER in the bed beside her.

VOICE (O.S.)

Sasha...

She opens her eyes and sees TOMMY IN BED NEXT TO HER.

And before she knows what's happening, he's YANKED BACKWARDS.

As if being PULLED BY A POWERFUL FORCE. He reaches out to try and hold onto her -- but she's too far away.

The rear windows BURST IN A SHOWER OF GLASS, metal *twisting*, as Tommy is RIPPED OUT THE BACK OF THE VAN.

PULLED -- *sideways* -- to his death.

Sasha SCREAMS --

-- and that's when HER EYES SNAP OPEN.

EXT. SPRINTER VAN - NIGHT

Sasha is slumped against the driver's side window, disoriented, still in the throes of the nightmare.

Her VAN is parked on the shoulder of the highway.

A HAND raps on the glass beside her, as a PARK RANGER shines his FLASHLIGHT inside.

PARK RANGER

Whoa, easy. Didn't mean to frighten you. I come in peace.

BEN TREVINO (40s) stands outside the van door. Kind eyes and a warm smile, he wears a Kings Canyon cap and a standard-issue field jacket. Gun at his hip and flashlight in hand.

His TRUCK idles behind, SPOTLIGHT perched on its roof.

OFFICER TREVINO

I saw your car as I passed, I just wanted to make sure you're okay.

(then)

Are you?

It takes a moment for Sasha to get her bearings. She steals a look at the bunk behind her.

It's empty. Because of course it is.

Officer Trevino clocks it.

OFFICER TREVINO (CONT'D)

Ma'am, is there someone back there I should know about?

SASHA

Of course not.

OFFICER TREVINO

It's just you keep acting like you're expecting to see someone.

SASHA

I -- bad dream that's all.

Officer Trevino shines his light in the back to make sure.

OFFICER TREVINO

The side of the road's no place to camp.

SASHA

I'm sorry. I pulled over, I must have passed out.

OFFICER TREVINO

Have you had anything to drink tonight?

SASHA

No sir. Absolutely not.

OFFICER TREVINO

Any drugs or prescription medication?

Sasha debates. Then goes with the truth.

SASHA
I took something to help me sleep.
(then)
And I smoked a joint earlier.

OFFICER TREVINO
License and registration.

SASHA
Officer --

OFFICER TREVINO
License and registration.

Sasha roots around in the glovebox. Hands the papers over.

SASHA
I have a prescription.

OFFICER TREVINO
Not in this state you don't.
(reading her license)
So Sasha Barnes. What brings you
all the way from West Bend
Wisconsin?

SASHA
Kings River.

OFFICER TREVINO
Is that right?

He looks up at the TWO-PERSON CANOE strapped to the roof.

OFFICER TREVINO (CONT'D)
(impressed)
That's a twenty-three mile
gauntlet. Most people do it in
teams.

SASHA
I'm not most people.

Officer Trevino grins.

OFFICER TREVINO
You know it's a little late in the
season for a river cruise. It gets
pretty nasty out there as it gets
cold.

SASHA

I know, my husband and I, we --
used to do this trip every year.
Right around this time.

OFFICER TREVINO

I take it he's not joining you.

Sasha shakes her head. Wistful.

SASHA

No. I'm doing this one in his
honor.

Officer Trevino nods in sympathy. Debating.

OFFICER TREVINO

My advice -- camp at Mulholland
Point. About sixteen miles up.
That's the spot to load in, water's
shallow. And it's a hell of a view
at sunrise.

SASHA

Thanks.

OFFICER TREVINO

And when you get to Bellows Falls,
ask for Leslie. She'll arrange a
ride back to your car.

On that, he returns her license and registration.

OFFICER TREVINO (CONT'D)

Godspeed.

Sasha nods, starts the engine and pulls onto the road.

HOLD ON: Officer Trevino as he WATCHES HER drive off.

SMASH TO:

EXT. SLOT CANYONS - DAWN

The sun is suspended below the horizon, in that no man's land
before dark gives way to dawn.

EXT. MULHOLLAND POINT - SAME MOMENT

Water laps at the shoreline.

Sasha's VAN is the only car in the dirt lot.

INSIDE THE CABIN:

CAMPING GEAR is spread out all over.

Sasha completes a mental checklist as she packs her bag: food, camping stove, binoculars, lantern, satellite phone.

From a compartment above the sink -- she removes a pack of all-weather matches, stuffing them in the folds of her sock.

A CAMPING KNIFE is zipped into a windbreaker.

And an old can of BEAR SPRAY goes into a dry bag.

OUTSIDE:

She unloads the CANOE and lugs it down to the water.

Returning to grab PADDLES, LIFE VEST, TENT, SLEEPING BAG, and BACKPACK. Before she departs...

She SLIDES OPEN the bottom drawer of her bunk.

Staring at all her old CLIMBING GEAR: coils of rope. Carabiners and quickdraws. Harnesses and chalk bags.

All of it untouched since Tommy's death.

SASHA

Fuck it.

She grabs her CLIMBING SHOES, then SLAMS the drawer shut.

EXT. SHORELINE - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha checks her watch.

Right on schedule.

She zips up her life jacket and buckles her helmet. Wades into the shallows and climbs into the canoe.

With one last look behind her, she swings her paddle into place, then the current picks up and carries her onward.

She digs the oar into the river. With each dip and pull, she moves further from civilization. Deeper into the wild.

EXT. KINGS RIVER - SAME MOMENT

From HIGH ABOVE:

Kings River pumps through miles of slot canyons like blood through a vein, its towering rock walls sculpted by eons of wind and water, awash in radiant shades of amber and honey.

Sasha's CANOE is a tiny dot in the middle of the winding tributary, surrounded on either side by sheer canyon cliffs.

Like a mouse in a maze, there's only one way out. Twenty-three-and-a-half miles downriver.

As she paddles, something catches her eye above.

A tiny speck that seems to *vibrate* and *buzz* in the sky.

But before she can get a good look, the river picks up and pulls her downstream.

WE CUT HIGH ABOVE

And realize that a DRONE is watching her from several hundred feet in the air. After a moment, it flies off.

EXT. KINGS RIVER - LATER

Sasha approaches her first set of rapids. She grits her teeth and hunkers down.

WHOOOOOOOOSH

The carbon-fiber hull is pummeled as water sprays over the sides, drenching her to the bone. Sheets of whitewater smashing into her like battering rams.

She fights through the churning swell until the rapids slow and the river calms.

EXT. RIVERBED/ShORELINE - LATER

The CANOE sits in the shallows while Sasha rests on a rocky beach, devouring a power bar.

As she eats, she watches a VIDEO on her PHONE. Reliving another memory:

- *Filmed from this exact spot, Tommy raps to an Eminem song, which blasts from a Bluetooth speaker in his hand.*

TOMMY (ON PHONE)
*...baby mama drama, screaming on
 her, too much for me to wanna stay
 in one spot -
 (MORE)*

TOMMY (ON PHONE) (CONT'D)
 - another day of monotony's gotten
 me to the point, I'm like a snail
 I've got to formulate a plot or end
 up in jail or shot. Success is my
 only motherfucking option,
 failure's not...

*Tommy is absolutely crushing it. Fist pumping as he spits
 rhymes into his makeshift Bluetooth mic.*

TOMMY (CONT'D)
 ...Sash, I love you but this
 trailer's got to go, I cannot grow
 old in Salem's Lot. So here I go,
 this's my shot. Feet fail me not,
 this may be the only opportunity
 that I got. You better --

TOMMY (CONT'D)
 -- lose yourself in the
 music, the moment. You own
 it, you better never let it
 go --

SASHA
 -- lose yourself in the
 music, the moment. You own
 it, you better never let it
 go --

Tommy looks at Sasha. Smiles.

Then the video ends.

*Sasha stares at the freeze-frame of Tommy, his eyes full of
 life, looking directly into camera. Directly at her.*

She takes a moment, fighting back emotions.

Then she's on her feet, ready to press on --

-- when something catches her eye.

A piece of -- is that metal??? -- glinting in the sun.

*On the other side of a patch of grass...ROCK and SAND HAS
 BEEN KICKED UP. The earth trampled.*

And there on the ground, half-buried along the shore...

*Is an OLD STAINLESS-STEEL COMBINATION LOCK. Rusted, dented,
 forgotten.*

*She reaches down and inspects it. Turns it over in her hand.
 Weird. This isn't something you usually find out here...*

EXT. KINGS RIVER - LATER

CLOSE ON: the combo lock secured to her pack.

Sasha portages around a particularly gnarly set of rapids. Which requires hauling her canoe through the woods, the boat resting on her shoulders as she hoofs it.

Once she's clear, she lets the boat slide down the bank and back into the river.

SPLASH

ON THE RIVER AGAIN

She stares behind her at the rapids she bypassed. Sheets of whitewater crash violently. Then she's paddling onward.

EXT. SHORELINE - DUSK

Sasha sets up camp for the night as the canyons burst in shades of orange and guava.

Finding a suitable tree --

She slings ROPE over a branch, then hoists her BACKPACK into the air to keep animals from getting into it.

CLOSE ON: her CANTEEN, stuffed in a side pocket.

LATER

Several grocery-store hot dogs char on a propane stove.

Sasha eats dinner alone under the stars.

EXT. SHORELINE/WOODS - NIGHT

From FAR AWAY, a single LANTERN shines inside her tent, casting a faint orange glow. Then the LIGHT CLICKS OFF.

INT. SASHA'S TENT - LATER

Sasha is passed out in her sleeping bag.

Through the thrum of rushing water...we hear a SOUND.

GHRRRRRRRR.

It's high-pitched. Like a muffled, mechanized *whir*. Completely out of place here.

GHRRR. GHRRRR. GHRRRRRR.

Sasha's eyes snap open.

She flips on her headlamp --
 -- sits up in her sleeping bag.
 -- and strains to hear the sound again.

The water rushes. The wind whistles.

Did she imagine that...?

And just when she's sure she did, she hears it again.

GHRRRRRRRR. GHRRRRRRRRRRRR.

It sounds *mechanical*. Like STEEL grinding through BONE.

DRILLING DEEP.

She grabs the BEAR SPRAY and unzips the tent door, peering into the night.

SASHA

Hello??

No answer.

She scans the area with her flashlight.

Back....and forth.

But there's nothing but darkness.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Get outta here!!

She takes another step forward...

WHEN THE BEAM CATCHES A GLIMPSE OF A DARK SHAPE.

HIDDEN IN THE WOODS. Slipping behind a tree.

Was that an animal? Or a person?

Sasha stumbles back --

-- her flashlight flickers. Then it shuts off.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Shit -- !

She SMACKS the flashlight and it SNAPS BACK ON.

She shines the flashlight frantically, the beam slicing darkness.

BUT THE FIGURE IS GONE. If it was ever there at all.

And just when Sasha is about to relax --

SOMETHING CRASHES RIGHT BESIDE HER.

CRAAAAAAAAAAAAAACK.

Sasha SCREAMS -- spins around -- to see that a BRANCH JUST BROKE. Sending her BACKPACK to the ground in a heap.

Her CANTEEN pops out of the pocket, rolling to a stop beside her. She tries to steady herself, slowing her breath.

Convinced her mind is playing tricks on her, she gathers her gear and crawls back into her tent.

AND FROM DEEP INSIDE THE WOODS

We see Sasha's LANTERN shining through nylon walls.

And that's when a DARK SILHOUETTE SLASHES THROUGH FRAME.

Something is out here. Watching. Tracking.

Hunting.

EXT. KINGS RIVER - DAWN

Day breaks over the canyons.

EXT. CAMPSITE - SAME MOMENT

Bleary-eyed, Sasha brews coffee on the stove, foot shaking nervously. Impatiently. Unable to wait, she guzzles it cold.

MOMENTS LATER

She breaks down camp, stuffing her gear back into the canoe, then sliding the boat into the water.

DOWNRIVER

She paddles hard, the canyon walls closing in. Forcing the water into a serious set of rapids.

She braces herself for the fight, then looks down at her feet. *What the...?*

Her shoes are wet.

Because water is coming up through the bottom of the canoe.

She tries to plug the hole, but the rapids are upon her, twisting and turning the vessel through the swell, forcing her to deftly maneuver around ROCKS and BOULDERS.

She curses and cries out as she steers through the whirlpools, navigating nature's powerful hydraulics.

The river DIPS and DROPS, pulling the boat violently, spinning it through a gauntlet of boiling eddies.

Sasha paddles as hard as she can.

All the while, WATER CONTINUES TO FILL HER CANOE.

She's running a Class III gauntlet in a boat that's threatening to capsize.

She looks for a place to pull to shore...

...but the water swells and rolls.

And just before the BOAT FLIPS --

SASHA
C'mon...!

-- the river spits her into a SHALLOW LAGOON.

EXT. LAGOON - SAME MOMENT

Sasha drags the water-logged canoe onto the rocks, then flips it on its side, dumping river-water onto the shore.

She runs her fingers along the bottom, searching, inspecting for damage. And that's when she finds...

A HALF-DOZEN PUNCTURES STRAIGHT THROUGH THE HULL.

All perfect circles. And identical sizes. 1 inch in diameter.

As if they were made with a POWER DRILL.

Sasha looks up, eyes wide. Terror flooding in. Connecting the sound she heard last night to the DAMAGE.

This wasn't an accident.

Someone tampered with her boat.

FROM FAR AWAY

Sasha stands on the shore. Stranded in the middle of the river. With a damaged canoe. Miles from help.

EXT. LAGOON - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha lifts BINOCULARS to her eyes and scans the river. Searching the canyons.

She tries to fight the feeling that something -- or someone -- is following her.

But she doesn't see anyone else out here. It's just river and rock and woods as far as the eye can see.

EXT. LAGOON - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha slices the liner out of her life jacket with a knife, using the stuffing to plug the holes in the canoe.

From her pack, she removes ROOFING TAPE.

MOMENTS LATER

The canoe sits in the shallows, punctures patched.

Sasha tests the strength of her makeshift plugs, but water immediately seeps through.

LATER

She cooks a thick paste in her portable stove.

Then spreads the SEALANT over the holes in the hull.

While it dries in the sun, she wolfs down an energy bar. Then DRINKS WATER FROM HER CANTEEN.

EXT. KINGS RIVER/SHALLOWS - LATER

The canoe sits in the shallows. She checks for leaks...and finds that it holds. *Bingo.*

EXT. KINGS RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha is back on the river, paddling as hard as she can.

She's trying not to freak out, but every sound causes her to seek out its source. Scanning ahead. Looking behind.

Al the while, she navigates fierce rapids and swells, using every ounce of energy to propel her downstream.

Then her stomach churns.

She winces in pain. Clutching her gut.

SMASH TO:

EXT. SHORELINE - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha doubled over on the ground, body wracked with spasms. In agony as she VOMITS.

Trying to steady herself, she reaches for her CANTEEN to replenish.

Then her eyes go wide.

She opens the top and dumps the water. Runs a finger around the inside.

She sniffs it and recoils. The stench is awful.

Someone spiked her water supply.

MOMENTS LATER

Sasha GAGS HERSELF. Throwing up everything she has in her system. Flushing out the contaminated water.

EXT. SHORELINE - NIGHT

Sasha huddles against a rock, shivering and sweating. Clutching her knife and bear spray in her hands.

Tense, on guard, and feverish...she braces herself.

CUT TO:

DAWN

As soon as it's light enough, she's back on the water. It's time to get the hell out of here.

EXT. KINGS RIVER - LATER

Sasha frantically approaches another set of rapids. Huge CASCADES of whitewater CRASH to form a serious gauntlet.

She slows her boat, digging her oar against the current, giving her time to decide what to do.

She scans the woods above her, but there's no place to portage. It'll be faster to stay on the river.

SASHA

Clear eyes. Full hearts.

On that, she digs her paddle into the water. Making a beeline for the churning, whitewater rapids ahead.

WHOOOOOOOOOSH

She fights her way through the nasty chop. The bow rises out of the water as chutes funnel together one after another.

CRRRRRRRRRRRAAAAASSSSSHHHHHHHH

The river's SWELLS batter the tiny boat, spinning it sideways, then around and around.

Forcing Sasha to paddle backwards through the vortex.

The river PUSHES her towards the ROCKY BLUFFS -- and she cuts her paddle hard to maneuver around them.

But the current is too powerful.

She's heading right for the ROCKS.

She yells with effort as she leans to the side, hoping her weight will counteract the swell.

But that just forces her boat up onto its edge.

The hull *scrapes* against the ROCKS...

...then gravity takes over and the CANOE FLIPS OVER.

Sending Sasha -- and all her GEAR -- into the river.

EXT. KINGS RIVER - SAME MOMENT

UNDERWATER

Sasha is sucked below the chop. Desperately clawing her way to the surface, she comes up for air.

Grabbing onto her CANOE and clinging to the hull as they're sent *spinning* downstream.

She looks all around her -- spots her PACK bobbing up and down in the rapids.

She reaches out for it -- arms outstretched -- and just manages to snag a strap with her fingers.

Then the RIVER DIPS. PULLING HER BELOW. In the melee --
She loses her grip on the canoe.

It SLAMS into her -- KNOCKING HER UNDERWATER --
-- on its topsy-turvy journey further downstream.

UNDERWATER

Sasha's bleeding -- but has her arms wrapped around her PACK, fighting and kicking her way to the surface.

Just in time to see --

CRRRRRRRRRAAAAAAACCKKKKKKK

-- her CANOE SPLINTER ON THE ROCKS AHEAD.

She watches in horror as the wreckage is swallowed up.

Her only remaining lifeline is her water-logged PACK. It's a lead weight in her arms, but she holds onto it for dear life.

She scans the shoreline. Looking for a place to escape.

She knows she has to get out of the swell.

MOMENTS LATER

The rapids finally slow and she scrambles to shore.

EXT. SHORELINE - SAME MOMENT

She rips open her bag to find all her gear SOAKING WET.

She removes the satellite phone. It won't turn on.

SASHA

Fuck -- !

Deeper in her bag, she removes an OLD GUIDE BOOK. Thumbs through the soaked pages -- trying not to let the pages disintegrate -- until she lands on a MAP.

There are pencil markings all over the page, dates and notes from the trips that Sasha and Tommy took together.

She runs a finger along the path and estimates her position.

She's only halfway down the river.

Mind racing, wheels turning...she zips open a pocket of her life vest and removes a DRY BAG. Inside: her cell phone.

SASHA (CONT'D)

C'mon...

It takes a moment for the battery to turn on.

But it works!

She holds the phone high, praying for a signal, but there's no service this deep in the backcountry.

She looks up at the cliffs rising above her.

She has to get to higher ground.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha digs her feet into the earth as she bushwhacks, PACK heavy on her shoulders. Hiking as fast as she can.

ALONG A CANYON RIDGE

She can see the RIVER raging below.

She checks her phone, but there's still no service.

And just as she's about to press on...

...something catches her eye.

SOMEONE IS PADDLING DOWN THE RIVER IN A KAYAK.

SASHA

(screaming)

Help!!! Here!!! Help!!!

ON THE RIVER

The PERSON steers for shore.

HIGH ABOVE

Sasha drops her pack and removes her BINOCULARS.

Scans the river...

...and spots a MAN PULLING HIS KAYAK ONTO THE ROCKS.

UNLOADING GEAR FROM INSIDE.

Her eyes go wide as she recognizes OFFICER BEN TREVINO.

But he's is no longer in his park ranger uniform. He's wearing a wetsuit, life jacket, and tactical HUNTING GEAR.

From inside the sea kayak, he removes a CROSSBOW.

And in that moment, everything snaps into focus.

He's coming for me.

Sasha watches in terror as he BEELINES FOR THE WOODS.

SMASH TO:

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha sprints through the trees, her heavy pack slamming into her body with every step.

FURTHER ON

She stumbles into a CLEARING, out of breath. Phone in hand, searching for service...

When she finds a single bar. *Thank fucking Christ.*

She dials 9-1-1 --

-- keeping her eyes peeled, scanning the trees, straining to hear the sound of her pursuer.

OPERATOR (V.O.)
-- at's--- your -- gency -- ??

A VOICE ON THE LINE.

SASHA
Hello??

OPERATOR (V.O.)
---what's -- gency -- ??

But the call is jumbled. They can't hear her.

SASHA
Shit -- !

OPERATOR (V.O.)
911 -- what's your emer -----

SASHA
No no no - -!!

She tries to find a better spot.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Please -- my name is Sasha Barnes --
I'm in Kings River Canyon. 12 and a
half miles from Mulholland Point.
There's someone after me. Please
send --

SNAAAAAAAAAAP

SASHA (CONT'D)
...help...

She lowers her phone.

He's here.

Sasha's feet crunch over branches and brush. Every crackle
and pop ringing out in the sticky-hot air.

She ducks behind a tree and STOPS ON A DIME, body pressed
against the trunk. Hiding. Silently.

She holds her breath.

And HOLDS IT.

.....AND.....HOLDS.....IT.....

Then she HEARS SOMETHING WHISTLING THROUGH THE AIR.

THWWWWIPPPPPP

She TURNS --

-- just as an ARROW WHIZZES BY.

SLAMMING INTO HER BACKPACK.

Sasha managed to turn at the last second, her PACK absorbing
the shot like a shield.

She cries out as the force of the shot sends her to the
ground. And before she can even process what's happening --

THWWWWIPPPPPP

Another ARROW lodges into a tree right above her head.

Fear floods her eyes.

She scrambles to her feet and takes off through the woods.

Running for her life.

EXT. WOODS - SAME MOMENT

From a SCOPE POV: we track Sasha as she darts through the trees. Lining up the CROSSHAIRS --

THWWWWIPPPPPP

And this time, she goes down.

The arrow slices her thigh -- tearing clean through muscle -- and she goes falling down the hill like Jill tumbling after.

CLOSE ON:

Ben lowering his crossbow. His eyes are menacing, set deep into hollow sockets.

EXT. WOODS - SAME MOMENT

Sasha lands at the bottom of the ridge in a heap. Her leg is bleeding and her arms and face are lacerated from the fall.

She groans in pain, then looks up at the slope above her.

EXT. WOODS - SAME MOMENT

Ben moves through the woods with ease. He lives for this.

BEN
(calling out)
I'll give you a head start. Keep
things interesting.

He checks a HANDHELD RECEIVER on his belt. It shows a topographical MAP of the area.

And a BLUE ARROW on the move.

EXT. WOODS/CANYON - SAME MOMENT

Sasha hobbles down the shoreline, ripping off her BANDANA and wrapping it around her thigh to staunch the blood.

She muffles a scream as she pulls it tight.

Trying to gather herself, refusing to let her body go into shock, she presses on.

Heading deeper into the SLOT CANYONS. Hoping to disappear inside its twisting river-maze.

EXT. SLOT CANYONS - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha moves into one of the many tributaries splitting off from the river. Splashing through knee-deep water as the craggy canyon walls close in.

She scans the ridges above and behind her, looking for signs of movement, straining to hear evidence of her pursuer.

As she winds her way deeper...

...the water continues to rise.

It's up to her waist now -- the walls narrowing to just a few feet, her backpack *scraping* against them.

FURTHER ON

She stops.

The water is up to her NECK. Any deeper and she'll be submerged. If the walls close in, she'll be trapped.

And drown.

She stares back out the way she came. Too risky to double back. So she stares up. Gauging the distance to the top.

SASHA
Piece of cake...

She flexes her fingers then plants her palms on either side of the wall. Bracing herself.

Pressing her feet to the wall, she wedges her hands against opposite sides of the tunnel.

Then she begins to shimmy her way up.

Every muscle in her body is engaged in order to keep her body anchored.

She lifts one hand, fingers locked around nubs of rock, her toes pushing against the cramped canyon chimney.

Then doing the exact same on the opposite side. Pushing half her body in one direction, the other half in the other.

Keeping herself suspended between the narrow walls.

Jammed inside the rock thirty feet off the ground and climbing higher.

She's almost there...and with one last PUSH...

...she pulls herself out of the canyon.

Back onto solid ground. She takes a huge breath. Then another. Feeling the adrenaline coursing through her body.

That's the first thing she's climbed since Tommy's death.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Sasha opens her FIRST AID KIT, wincing as she removes the SF Giants tourniquet. Muffling a scream as she splashes the wound with disinfectant.

Then she wraps her leg in a COMPRESSION BANDAGE.

Back on her feet, she shuffles off into the woods, putting as much distance between herself and her attacker.

FURTHER AHEAD

Her pack is completely soaked and rides heavy on her back. The straps digging and cutting into her skin.

But she does not slow down.

As she continues to hike, the sun drops.

So does the temperature.

MOMENTS LATER

She scrambles up a slope until the TREES GIVE WAY TO A STEEP DROP-OFF.

She peers over the ledge and sees the RIVER churning 300 FEET below. It's a long...loooong way down over JAGGED ROCKS.

She looks across the crevasse -- but the opposite CANYON is too far to jump. She's trapped.

EXT. RIDGE - MOMENTS LATER

Sasha drops to her stomach and peers through BINOCULARS.

From this vantage, she can make out a SMALL CAMP on the canyon floor. But there is no sight of Ben anywhere.

She scans up and down the shoreline. It's empty.

Except for -- Ben's KAYAK chained to a tree. Secured with a STAINLESS-STEEL COMBO LOCK. Just like the one she found.

SASHA
You're my ride home.

As she lowers her binoculars --

SMASH TO:

Another PAIR OF EYES staring through field lenses.

EXT. CANYON RIDGE - SAME MOMENT

Ben is hidden up in the canyons, PEERING THROUGH A THERMAL NIGHTVISION SCOPE.

Watching Sasha from 400 yards away.

He tracks her as she moves from the ridge back into the trees, vanishing from sight.

He lowers the SCOPE.

Then he checks his GPS. Got ya.

EXT. ROCK OUTCROPPING - NIGHT

Beneath the rocks, Sasha rests. In the light of her HEADLAMP, she changes the dressing, replacing it with a fresh bandage.

She checks her watch, then measures the water level in her canteen.

She takes a sip, then a small bite of an energy bar. Rationing the rest.

She takes stock of her gear, rolls her shoulders, wincing in pain at the thought of carrying this any further.

SASHA
...it's too much...

She needs to be able to move quickly. Conserve her energy. That means trimming down to the essentials.

Which is exactly what she does.

She removes items one by one, placing them in piles of importance. Knife, bear spray, canteen, first aid kit.

Then everything else: stove, hot dogs, lantern, life vest.

And at the very bottom -- her CLIMBING SHOES.

HOLD ON: Sasha, wheels turning. Forming a plan.

SMASH TO:

A WILD RABBIT CAUGHT IN A SNARE.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Ben approaches his catch and untangles it from the line.

ALONG THE SHORE

A fire crackles.

Spread out on the rocks is his crossbow and arrows. Next to it, a WAXED-CANVAS FIELD DRESSING KIT (more on that later).

And finally, a HAUL BAG filled with CARABINERS, QUICKDRAWS, HARNESSSES, CLIMBING SHOES, and COILS OF ROPE.

Ben came prepared for anything.

As he roasts his kill over the flame --

EXT. ROCK LEDGE - SAME MOMENT

Sasha zips up her (much lighter) pack, then clips on her CLIMBING SHOES. Ready to head out.

She's about to sling it onto her shoulders, when her thumb catches on something *inside* the strap.

She leans closer, headlamp shining bright. She flips the bag over, pressing the stitching. *Something's in there.*

SASHA
...the hell...?

She digs her fingers into the fabric and removes a TINY CAPSULE. Smooth and silver, with a BLINKING RED LIGHT.

A GPS TRANSPONDER.

He's been tracking me this whole time.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Ben is on the move.

He grips the GPS RECEIVER in his fist.

Following the BLUE ARROW.

MOMENTS LATER

He scrambles up a slope until the TREES GIVE WAY TO the STEEP DROP-OFF. He can hear the RIVER churning 300 feet below.

He checks the RECEIVER.

Furrows his brow. The ARROW hasn't moved at all.

And as he moves off --

We PUSH IN ON THE LEDGE OF THE CANYON.

And just before we head over the EDGE --

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS - SAME MOMENT

Ben stops. Stares at his GPS. He's getting close now.

He lifts his bow and loads an arrow.

Gearing up for the kill-shot.

Stepping through the trees...he moves towards the OVERHANGING ROCKS. This is where Sasha camped last night.

But she isn't here.

All the gear she left behind is scattered in a pile.

And right on top: the GPS TRANSPONDER.

Ben crouches down and grabs the CAPSULE.

And off his narrowing gaze, wondering where he lost her --

EXT. ROCK LEDGE/CREVASSE - SAME MOMENT

We PUSH IN on that same CANYON LEDGE...

Traveling FIFTEEN FEET BELOW...

Where SASHA HANGS ONTO AN OUTCROPPING OF ROCK.

SAFELY HIDDEN FROM VIEW.

Her muscles quiver as her fingers grip the knife-edged holds.
Her toes pressed into microscopic cracks in the canyon.

She's like an insect clinging to the underbelly of a beast.

These tiny nubs and dents in the rock are the only things
holding her up. Literally keeping her alive.

Her fingers and toes dig in. They will not let her fall.

With her muscles on fire, she begins to climb.

One hold to the next.

Inching her way up the top.

Just a few feet from the rim, she braces herself, praying
that her attacker isn't waiting above with an arrow.

She peers over. *The coast is clear.*

She claws at the earth, pulling herself back onto the ledge.

It worked.

MOMENTS LATER

Branches lash her face as Sasha doubles back to BEN'S CAMP.

Scampering down embankments, sprinting as fast as she can for
the water.

UP AHEAD

The TREES give way to the ROCKY SHORELINE and the RIVER
behind it. Then she spots her ticket home.

The KAYAK. Chained up on the shore.

And she's so relieved to think she might actually make it out
of here, she doesn't realize it's a trap.

Literally.

As she rushes for the KAYAK --

THWWWWIIIIIIIPPPPPPPPP

-- a SELF-LOCKING SNARE -- hidden on the ground, constructed
from TITANIUM CABLE -- SNAPS around her leg.

It's like she just triggered a landmine.

The CABLE GOES TAUT, pulling her leg out from under her.

Sasha CRIES OUT as she hits the ground HARD.

She twists and writhes -- trying to pry the cable off --

-- but Ben's homemade snare is LOCKED TIGHT around her ankle.

She pulls on the line, but the other end is PADLOCKED to the trunk of a tree fifty feet off.

As she fights desperately to get out of the trap --

BRANCHES CRUNCH

.....FROM FOOTSTEPS

.....APPROACHING.

The hair on the back of her neck stands up.

Her eyes dart right and left.

Trying to locate her attacker.

As the air around her seems to cool by several degrees --

-- she slings off her backpack and removes the can of BEAR SPRAY. Keeping it hidden by her side.

AFTER A MOMENT

A FIGURE appears through the trees.

Ben eyes his wounded and whimpering prey, struggling and flailing to free herself.

BEN

Poor thing. Didn't mean to frighten
you.

On that, he GRABS the other end of the cable and begins
PULLING SASHA towards him.

SASHA

What are you -- stop, lemme go -- !

She SCREAMS as a terrifying game of tug-of-war begins.

She claws at the earth, digging her feet in as hard as she can, trying to stop Ben from *dragging* her towards him.

He grits his teeth through the pain. It hurts like hell, but he's endured worse. He dunks his head underwater.

BEHIND HIM

Sasha still can't get the cable to break.

SASHA

C'mon...!

Ben screams and curses and douses his eyes...

...while Sasha races across the SHORE to his GEAR. Praying she can find the key before he regains his vision.

Ben hears movement. Through blurry eyes, he sees Sasha rummaging through his pack. He screams in anger.

Sasha tears open his HAUL BAG and is stunned by the sight of all his CLIMBING GEAR. It's an impressive haul.

SASHA (CONT'D)

...Jesus...

She pushes it aside, digging and rooting around.

Then she finds KEYS. Dozens and dozens of them. Like a jailer's keyring.

Sasha tries one. Nothing. Then another. And another. Fumbling with the PADLOCK. Desperately trying to find the right key.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Shit...!

Then a SEETHING VOICE calls out behind her.

BEN

DROP 'EM RIGHT THERE.

She turns to see Ben holding his CROSSBOW. In a rage, struggling to keep his eyes open through the pain.

BEN (CONT'D)

Toss the can. Move the fuck away.

Sasha hesitates, weighing her options.

BEN (CONT'D)

DO IT NOW.

She tosses the BEAR SPRAY to the ground.

BEN (CONT'D)
Hands where I can see 'em.

She lifts her arms.

Ben motions to the WOODS.

BEN (CONT'D)
Now get.

Sasha shuffles across the rocks, arms in the air, ankle still caught in the SNARE LINE.

As the cable *strrrrrrrretches* from her ankle to the tree it's shackled to...

...Ben keeps his bow trained on her every step of the way.

BEN (CONT'D)
Good girl.
(then)
Now sit.

Sasha kneels on the ground, terrified.

And as Ben moves towards her --

SMASH TO:

EXT. WOODS - SAME MOMENT

From HIGH ABOVE:

An ENDLESS EXPANSE OF WILDERNESS.

Untouched, untamed, unhinged.

And somewhere lost in the void...

EXT. WOODS - LATER

A makeshift LEAN-TO has been fashioned out of tree limbs and a small campfire burns next to it.

We can hear the rush of the river from this deep in the woods, but it's faint. More like a hum than a scream.

Ben drags his KAYAK into the woods and hides it beneath the brush.

AT THE SHORELINE

He checks to make sure everything is wiped clean. With the rest of his GEAR on his back and the coast literally clear...

HE RETURNS TO THE WOODS

Gathering thistles, needles and wild mushrooms.

He knows how to live off the land. What's edible and how to find it. As he forages, he douses his eyes with a compress.

ALL THE WHILE --

-- SASHA remains slumped against a tree.

She tries to sit up. But she can't. Can barely turn her head.

And that's because her arms are RAISED and SHACKLED BEHIND HER HEAD. TIED around the trunk of the tree with PARACORD.

Beside her, a fire crackles.

Ben approaches with all her GEAR in his hands. He holds up the PACK OF HOT DOGS that she left behind.

BEN

Don't you know the rule? Pack it in, pack it out. Leave it better than you found it.

He slices the plastic open with a knife and adds them to the pot. Then he looks at the label.

BEN (CONT'D)

I've never heard of half the shit in here.

(reading)

Maltodextrin. Sodium Erythorbate. Natural flavor. Mechanically separated chicken.

(pauses; considers)

I think it tastes better when it's separated by hand.

He stuffs the wrapper in his bag, then moves to Sasha.

Who braces herself for another attack.

SASHA

Don't fucking touch me -- !

Ben leans down -- she twists from side to side --

SASHA (CONT'D)

Get off me -- !

BEN

-- quit squirming -- !

He GRABS HER HAND...

...removing Sasha's CELL PHONE from his pocket.

THEN PRESSES HER THUMB TO THE KEYPAD.

UNLOCKING HER PHONE.

BEN (CONT'D)

That wasn't so hard now was it.

SASHA

What the fuck is wrong with you?!

He scrolls through her CALL HISTORY. Sees the last one she placed: 9-1-1.

BEN

You got lucky getting that call out. But they won't come looking. Not today.

He looks up at the sky. *Inhales.*

BEN (CONT'D)

It's gonna rain.

SASHA

...why are you doing this...?

Ben takes a moment. Really considers the question.

BEN

Because that's the order of things.

SMASH TO:

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Thunder. Lightning. Torrential sheets of RAIN and SLEET batter the forest. Any colder and this would be snow.

Sasha is DRENCHED TO THE BONE, raw and ragged, her arms pinned above her head. Shivering in the storm.

She stares at Ben, propped beneath his TENT, shards of hail pelting the plastic tarp in sharp bursts.

He's wrapped up in a wool blanket, SCROLLING THROUGH HER PHONE. Looking at PHOTOS.

Enjoying a predatory glimpse into her life.

He sees images of Sasha and Tommy. Biking. Skiing. Climbing.

He watches a VIDEO SHOT ON THE APPROACH TO MONTE FITZ ROY IN PATAGONIA. One of the most jaw-dropping vistas on earth.

And one of the gnarliest climbs.

He looks up from the phone to Sasha. Admiring his prey. Impressed with her skill.

BEN
(calling out)
You climbed the Fitz Roy?

Sasha takes a moment. Then she nods.

BEN (CONT'D)
Always wanted to do that.
(then)
When the rain's done, we'll get moving.

Sasha shakes and shivers. Terrified of what's to come.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Raindrops cling to leaves like tiny crystal orbs.

EXT. BEN'S CAMPSITE - SAME MOMENT

CLOSE ON: Ben's waxed-canvas FIELD DRESSING KIT.

Inside is a variety of sharp, stainless-steel BLADES. Everything you need to skin an animal in the wild:

Serrated bone-saw. Gut-hook skinner. Rib spreader.

Ben cooks a stew over a fire, adding moss to the already-steaming pot. Preparing a small forest feast.

Sasha squirms and thrashes and pulls on her restraints.

SCREAMING. CURSING. Trying to get free.

BEN
You put up a good fight. Better than most. You should be proud.

Sasha stares at him coldly, defiantly.

SASHA
Fuck you.

It's so cold we can see their breath hang in the air. Ben picks up a CANTEEN and moves towards Sasha.

BEN
You need fluids. I can't have you
dying on me.
(then)
Not yet.

But Sasha keeps her mouth clenched tight.

BEN (CONT'D)
Drink.
(then)
I won't ask again.

He tips the canteen towards her -- dumping water -- and Sasha leans back to drink.

It's a terrifyingly tender moment. Ben keeping Sasha hydrated long enough for whatever he has planned.

Then the wail of a HARMONICA brings us to...

EXT. BEN'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Ben plays by the fire.

Sasha stares at him, eyes seething with hatred. Revulsion.

He meets her gaze with a vacant stare.

BEN
I'm not a monster. I'm not even a
freak.

SASHA
Keep telling yourself that.

He slips the harmonica back in a pocket.

BEN
We like to think that millions of
years of evolution led to us. That
we're somehow the epitome of life
on earth. Bullshit. There were once
several species of human. We
survived because we wiped the
others out. Which means that
killing is in our DNA. It's what
makes us human.
(then)
I'm just doing what comes natural.

Sasha strains against her shackles. Tries to wriggle free from her paracord bonds.

SASHA
LET ME GOOOOOO!!!!

He watches her struggle against her shackles.

After several moments, she's out of breath. Out of fight.

Ben throws another log on the fire.

BEN
You're going to die out here. No
one will find your body. And that's
assuming anyone even cares to look.

On that, he stands, the fire crackling below him.

BEN (CONT'D)
Get some sleep. We're heading out
first thing.

EXT. NIGHT SKY - NIGHT

A galaxy of stars shine brightly. And millions of miles below...

EXT. BEN'S CAMPSITE - NIGHT

It's even colder now. Below freezing.

Ben is asleep under his tent, wrapped in a sleeping bag.

Sasha is wide-awake, trying to shred her paracord handcuffs along the back of the tree. Shivering.

While also trying to build up enough friction to sever the corded cuffs.

SCHRRRRRIIP. SCHRRRRRRRRRIP. SCHRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRIP.

Ben stirs.

Sasha stops.

After a moment of silence, she resumes her escape.

EXT. CANYONS/WOODS - DAWN

Dawn breaks. The sky purple and mottled like a bruise.

EXT. WOODS - SAME MOMENT

Sasha JOLTS AWAKE. Not realizing she's fallen asleep. She tries to resume her work, but now she can't move her arms.

At some point in the night, her paracord shackles were replaced with STEEL HANDCUFFS.

Then she looks down at her waist and sees that she's wearing a CLIMBING HARNESS. *What the fuck...?*

BEN
Who's Tommy?

Sasha snaps to Ben. A flash of recognition in her eyes.

Ben has broken down camp, bags packed, knives stored.

BEN (CONT'D)
You were calling for him most of
the night.

He kicks the earth with his boot, removing all trace of his fire and campsite.

BEN (CONT'D)
He's the one in all the photos.
(then)
Shame he can't help you now.

He begins to whistle "Tommy Can You Hear Me" by The Who -- while removing the TITANIUM SNARE from his pack, unspooling FIFTY FEET OF CABLE.

BEN (CONT'D)
(humming)
*Tommy can you hear me? Can you feel
me near you?*

He takes one end of the CABLE --

BEN (CONT'D)
*Tommy can you see me? Can I help to
cheer you?*

-- and loops it through Sasha's HARNESS, SECURING IT TIGHT with another STAINLESS-STEEL COMBO LOCK.

BEN (CONT'D)
Just in case you think about
running.

On that, he clips the other end of the cable TO HIS BELT.

With Sasha SHACKLED TO HIM, he unlocks the handcuffs. Her arms fall limply to her side.

Then he grabs them again and replaces the CUFFS.

BEN (CONT'D)
On your feet.

SASHA
...where are you taking me...?

Ben takes a moment.

BEN
My favorite place on earth.

He pulls on the TITANIUM CABLE, hauling Sasha deeper into the woods.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Fifty feet of TITANIUM CABLE spool out between them.

Ben carries all his GEAR and what's left of Sasha's on his back, coils of rope hanging from the sides like a pack mule.

As they walk, a SOUND registers through the thrum.

IIIIIIIIIRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

It's another high-pitched, mechanical *WHIR*.

Ben snaps to the sound.

BEN
Get down.

Then Sasha hears it too.

HIIIIIIRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

BEN (CONT'D)
Now! On the fucking ground.

HIIIIIIIRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR

And as Sasha looks up to the canopy --

SMASH TO:

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF KINGS RIVER CANYON.

As a RESCUE DRONE scans the area from the sky.

DOWN BELOW

SASHA
(screaming)
HELP!!!!

But Ben is on her in an instant --

BEN
SHUT YOUR TRAP!

-- forcing her to the ground at knifepoint.

They huddle under the trees as Ben frantically tries to pinpoint which direction the DRONE is coming from.

Staring up through the branches...

CUT TO:

THE SEARCH AND RESCUE DRONE CIRCLES HIGH ABOVE.

BUT FROM THIS EXTREME VANTAGE, THE DRONE CAN'T SEE THEM.

As it ARCS TO MAKE ANOTHER PASS...

BEN (CONT'D)
Move.

Ben pulls Sasha to her feet and they're off.

EXT. KINGS CANYON WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Ben weaves through the woods at a quick clip, pulling Sasha along behind him. He clearly knows his way around.

Sasha struggles to keep up at his pace.

BEN
Faster.

SASHA
...I can't...

He yanks on the cable to keep Sasha moving at his pace.

BEN
Up -- !

Ben PULLS HARDER.

She scrambles to her feet. But collapses.

She scans the canopy for a sign of the DRONE...

SASHA
(screaming)
HELLPPPPPP!!!!

BEN
What did I say?!

He drags her along a NARROW RIDGE where the RIVER rushes a hundred feet below.

They're EXPOSED and OUT IN THE OPEN. Until...

Ben reaches a NARROW CRACK HIDDEN IN THE WALL. You'd never see it unless you knew it was there.

Ben drags Sasha through the opening and inside the CANYON.

Up a STEEP SLOPE where the walls close to a few feet.

Soon, Sasha can't hear the DRONE.

Then the light vanishes. Getting darker and darker.

As if they're burrowing into the middle of the earth.

EXT. CANYON TUNNEL - SAME MOMENT

Ben PULLS her through the TUNNEL, Sasha's legs and arms scraping against the sides of the canyon.

She stumbles as Ben moves ahead.

Finally, the path spills into a SMALL CAVERN. Tucked inside the canyon. Completely hidden from the world.

There is a shallow LAGOON of sandy beach. And a COVE created by overhanging rock. It's peaceful. Serene. Edenic.

And etched onto the rock are hundreds of CAVE PAINTINGS. Handprints and carvings. Thousands of years old.

Ben checks his watch, then stares up at the rocks above.

BEN
Any second now.

Then the ritual begins.

He starts to undress. And as he does, we see how ripped he is. Not an ounce of fat anywhere.

Muscles sinewy and strong, it's as if his skin -- bronze and sun-kissed -- was stretched over a chiseled skeleton.

He places gear around him in a meticulously-ordered manner...

...while The sun pokes through the high craggy walls, painting the rotunda in splashes of amber and honey.

NOW TIME SEEMS TO SLOW.

As the SUN HITS THE CANYON at *just* the right angle.

Creating BEAMS OF LIGHT that waft down from the sky like spectral spotlights.

Bouncing off cracks and through fissures, the cavern fills with SHAFTS OF LIGHT. It's magical. Otherworldly.

Plumes of dust and debris float inside the light like galaxies. And Sasha can't help but marvel at the display.

It is equally breathtaking and bloodcurdling as Ben steps into the light.

He closes his eyes as he feels the sun on his skin. As if harnessing its power. Summoning something deep and ancient and buried below.

Sasha watches him, knows that if she doesn't do something now, this is it.

She stares back down the TUNNEL, where she can hear the river rushing in the distance.

She looks back at Ben.

Realizing that he's distracted.

And that's when she MAKES HER MOVE.

Summoning every last ounce of strength...

SHE TAKES OFF.

Gritting her teeth through the pain, she BOLTS for the TUNNEL.

At full fucking throttle.

Ben turns -- sees Sasha running -- his eyes going wide as the LENGTH OF CABLE UNSPOOLS IN FRONT OF HIM.

THWWWWIIIIIPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPPP.

But Sasha moves with such force...

...that cable PULLS TAUT BEHIND HER.

And a split second later --

BEN IS YANKED OFF HIS FEET.

He grabs his PACK -- just as he's PULLED OUT OF THE CAVERN --
DOWN THE STEEP SLOPE -- DRAGGING HIS PACK BEHIND HIM --

EXT. CANYON LEDGE - SAME MOMENT

As Sasha bursts through the OPENING in the canyon wall.

And DOES NOT STOP. She heads straight for the EDGE --

LEAPS -- goes AIRBORNE -- and can hear the RUSH OF THE WATER
coming to meet her. And then she lets GRAVITY take over.

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-- INTO THE RIVER.

SPLAAAAAAAAASH.

Above her...

...the cable PULLS TAUT.

And a moment later BEN tumbles after her. Pulled over the edge -- through the air -- and SLAMMING INTO THE RIVER.

We hear an AWFUL CRACK -- Ben SCREAMS -- as his LEG SNAPS on the rocks while the rest of him lands in the water.

His PACK SPILLS OPEN and his GEAR EMPTIES into the river.

EXT. KINGS RIVER - SAME MOMENT

WHOOOOOOOOSH

The river swallows Ben and Sasha whole. Spinning and spitting them through the slot canyons like pebbles in a maelstrom.

Ben struggles to breathe -- fighting to remain above the surface. His lungs flood with water and so does his PACK, turning into a heavy weight *pulling* him under.

FIFTY FEET AHEAD...

...SECURED TO THE OTHER END OF THE TITANIUM CABLE...

Sasha is swept downriver as massive funnels of water pummel her. Lungs filling. She chokes.

Her WRISTS ARE STILL SHACKLED -- but she *claws* at the water, propelling herself above the surface to breathe.

BEHIND HER

Ben GRABS AT THE CABLE, but he can't get a grip. The line is too slick and the current too strong.

UP AHEAD

Sasha lifts her head to the sky, fills her lungs with air, then dives back underwater.

YANKING on the cable as hard as she can.

Trying to drown him.

BEHIND HER

Ben is PULLED UNDER. Slamming into the rocks below.

Battered and bleeding, he kicks to the surface, lungs begging for air. But the river clogs them.

As they twist and turn through the winding canyon...sling-shotting around rocks and boulders...

...the RIVER PICKS UP EVEN MORE SPEED.

EXT. KINGS RIVER - SAME MOMENT

Rapids pile up one after another, gauntlets of cascading water combining together. Breaking and crashing and then disappearing into nothing.

They're heading straight for a WATERFALL.

Sasha breaks the waterline and sees the SKY OPEN UP BEFORE HER. She TAKES A HUGE GULP OF AIR --

...as she GOES CAREENING OVER...

KINGS RIVER GORGE.

Sheets of white water batter them as gravity pulls them through space in the blink of an eye.

Sending them CRASHING THROUGH THE FALLS into a POOL BELOW.

Sasha LANDS IN THE WATER -- fights to open her eyes -- then looks up just in time to see...

A BODY SLAMMING INTO THE WATER ABOVE HER.

Ben PASSES OUT ON IMPACT.

And as he starts to SINK...Sasha starts to SWIM. Clawing her way UP as Ben makes his way DOWN.

They pass each other in the water, the TITANIUM CABLE floating between them like a horrible umbilical cord.

Sasha is almost to the surface...

...reaching for sunlight and air...

AND A MOMENT LATER

She BURSTS TO THE TOP -- FILLING HER LUNGS WITH OXYGEN --
SUNLIGHT WARMING HER FACE.

She made it.

And that's when the TITANIUM CABLE PULLS TAUT BELOW HER.

DRAGGING HER BACK UNDER.

Ben is STILL SINKING. Which means now so is she.

EXT. UNDERWATER - SAME MOMENT

The weight of his BODY and PACK drags Sasha deeper. She yanks on the cable, trying to keep Ben from drowning her.

Her lungs constrict. Air bubbles escape her lips.

Her knuckles turn white as the cable *digs* into her hands. The metal of the handcuffs slicing her skin.

But her FINGERS grip the titanium and LOCK ON TIGHT.

And when the line goes TAUT...

Ben stops sinking. Suspended in the water like a marionette.

Now Sasha STARTS PULLING HIM BACK UP.

Still HOLDING HER BREATH, her lungs threatening to flood with water, she pulls and pulls --

-- and when there's enough SLACK IN THE LINE...

...she breaks for the surface.

EXT. WATERFALL/POOL - SAME MOMENT

Sasha bursts above, gasping for air.

She scans her surroundings.

There's a ROCKY BEACH to her right and starts paddling towards it.

As she swims, she PULLS ON THE CABLE, dragging an unconscious Ben in the water behind her.

EXT. SHORE - SAME MOMENT

When it's shallow enough, she claws her way onto the rocks and scrambles to her feet.

The TITANIUM CABLE unspools behind her, but she has enough slack to reach the SHORELINE.

THIRTY FEET BEHIND HER

Ben lies facedown in the water, unconscious.

EXT. SHORELINE/ROCKY BEACH - SAME MOMENT

Sasha scours the ground for something heavy. She finds a ROCK, curved like a cannonball.

And begins BASHING the COMBO LOCK with the stone -- trying desperately to break it apart.

But it's hard to build up enough force -- and to hit at the right angle -- with her wrists handcuffed.

She continues to SMASH the LOCK and the CABLE --

SASHA
FUUUCK...!!!

-- but they will not break.

She turns and stares at Ben in the water. Time for Plan B.

She rushes towards him, splashing, wading, trying to reach Ben and BASH HIS FUCKING HEAD IN.

But the ground slopes down fast. And soon, she's waist-deep in water. It'll be too deep by the time she reaches him.

Sasha DRAGS THE CABLE, *pulling* Ben close enough to attack.

But as she drags him through the water...WE CUT:

UNDERWATER

Where Ben's eyes SNAP OPEN. He's alive.

He coughs and chokes up water, then pulls on his end of the CABLE to stop his progress.

ON THE SHORELINE

Sasha screams, arms giving out, legs buckling.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Fucking die!!!!

Both Predator and Prey are wounded.

And still shackled to one another.

EXT. SHORELINE - SAME MOMENT

Sopping wet and bleeding, Ben rises out of the water, his leg nearly *snapping* as he steps onto the shore.

BEN
Get on the ground.

Sasha scrambles back, moving as far away as the CABLE will allow. She grips the rock in her fist.

Ben removes a KNIFE from his ankle holster.

BEN (CONT'D)
GET. ON THE FUCKING GROUND. NOW!

But Sasha doesn't budge.

Ben moves forward in a rage, wincing as he puts weight on his broken leg.

Sasha HURLS the ROCK at him.

Ben GRABS the cable, PULLING her to the ground.

Sasha claws away...trying to escape...

...but Ben is too strong.

And when she's close enough...

...he's UPON HER. Kneeling over her body.

Sasha grabs a ROCK and SWINGS IT AT HIM --

-- but BEN SWATS HER ARM AWAY.

He pins her handcuffed wrists over her head.

Sasha's eyes flood with fear.

He *presses* the KNIFE to her throat --

HE SCREAMS

-- as his arm begins to shake.

It's as if he's trying to summon the strength to finish this...but he can't.

Something is holding him back.

He screams, deep and primal. Then lowers the knife.

BEN (CONT'D)
FUUUUUUUUCK -- !!!

He moves off, stabbing the air with the blade.

He's in a manic, all-consuming rage. Furious that Sasha fucked everything up.

She watches him fume like a wild animal. Completely unhinged.

SASHA
You won't kill me...
(then)
...because you can't get out of
here alive.

Ben spins around to face her.

BEN
(seething)
NOT ONE MORE FUCKING WORD!!!

But she's right. And he knows it.

She motions to his broken leg.

SASHA
Good luck getting anywhere on *that*.

Ben curses in anger.

He stares all around. They're at the base of a gorge. With towering canyon walls rising up all around them.

They have no boat. No radio. No chance at escape.

All they have is each other.

BEN
Here's what's gonna happen. There's
an access road, south of us. The
fastest way there...is up.
(MORE)

BEN (CONT'D)

(then)

And you're gonna get me there.

Sasha stares at him.

SASHA

Why the fuck would I do that?

BEN

Because if you do...I let you go.

Sasha stares at him.

SASHA

Bullshit.

BEN

Then Door Number 2 is I kill you
right here and take my chances.

(then)

Your call.

Off Sasha --

CUT TO:

EXT. WATERFALL/POOL - LATER

An AX strapped to Ben's leg. He uses paracord to tie off a makeshift splint.

His HAUL BAG and FIELD DRESSING KIT are propped next to him. Closely guarded.

Sasha is still SHACKLED to the other end of the TITANIUM CABLE. Eyeing Ben's GEAR.

AT THE BASE OF THE FALLS

COILS OF CLIMBING ROPE float on the surface of the water.

Scattered all around are other items that survived the river cruise: climbing shoes, chalk bag, sleeping mat.

BEN

Get the rope.

SASHA

Get these off.

Sasha holds up her WRISTS.

Ben considers, then fishes into his pocket and tosses her the KEYS.

BEN
The blue one.

Sasha locates a key the color of faded sky and slides it into the lock. *CLICK*. She pops off her HANDCUFFS.

Then she motions to the TITANIUM CABLE.

SASHA
This too.

Ben stares at her, eyes vacant.

BEN
Nice try.

EXT. SHORELINE/WATERFALL - MOMENTS LATER

Ben stands on the shore...

...the CABLE *strrrrrrrretching* between them...

...as Sasha wades into the water. Moving deeper as the ground begins to slope.

She stretches for the CLIMBING ROPE...

...when the TITANIUM CABLE PULLS TAUT.

She can't reach it.

She moves deeper, which *pulls* Ben forward. He lurches, his leg buckling.

Then he shuffles into the shallows, creating more slack.

Enabling Sasha to grab the CLIMBING ROPE and return to shore.

EXT. SLOT CANYONS/RIVER - LATER

FROM HIGH ABOVE:

Ben leads Sasha through the slot canyons.

Behind them, we see STORM CLOUDS taking shape. The first winter storm is brewing.

FAR BELOW:

A makeshift CRUTCH is tucked under Ben's armpit, heavy HAUL BAG on his back, KNIFE gripped tight in his fist.

Sasha follows behind. Still connected by fifty feet of TITANIUM.

She eyes the HAUL BAG on his back. And the knife in his hand.

Ben is moving slowly, gingerly. Fighting through the pain.

Sasha clocks it.

As they press on, she moves a little closer to him --

-- creating slack in the line.

Then she leans down into the water and grabs a --

-- when Ben spins around.

LOCKING EYES WITH SASHA.

BEN

Hands.

Sasha raises them. They're empty.

BEN (CONT'D)

Move back.

Sasha takes several steps away.

Ben eyes her. She gives nothing away.

BEN (CONT'D)

More.

She does.

After a moment, he turns and continues on.

And now we CUT BEHIND SASHA'S BACK...

To see a ROCK tucked into her harness.

EXT. SLOT CANYONS - DUSK

A CLIFF WALL rises 350 FEET into the sky.

Ben and Sasha approach, standing at the base. Staring up.

HIGH ABOVE THE CANYON WALL

A STRIP OF PAVEMENT. Winding its way along the summit.

The park access road.

BEN
We go at first light.

EXT. SLOT CANYONS/SHORELINE - NIGHT

Ben drops a batch of wood on the ground, snapping twigs and breaking branches for a fire.

Sasha sits nearby, clocking Ben's FIELD DRESSING KIT, which rests on the rocks next to him.

He blows into his palms to warm them.

Then he removes a FLINT and kneels over the kindling.
STRIKING the edge with the steel hammer.

SCHHRRRRRRRRIPPPPPPP

He strikes it again and again, scraping and shaving off microscopic particles of metal each time.

And once enough shavings oxidize in the air, they become molten SPARKS, hitting the tinder...and *igniting*.

And just like that -- Ben has made fire.

EXT. SHORELINE - LATER

Sasha stares at Ben through the flames.

SASHA
You're not a ranger.

Ben doesn't respond.

SASHA (CONT'D)
But you know this place like one.

Unable to help himself --

BEN
I know this place *better* than
anyone on earth. I grew up on --

Then he catches himself.

SASHA
How many women have you done this
to?

Ben flinches.

BEN
I don't keep count.

SASHA
Bullshit. You know exactly how
many.

Ben considers. Finally...

BEN
You'd have made thirteen.
(then)
Who knows, maybe you still will.
Especially if you try something
with that pebble you're hiding.

He motions to her harness.

Caught red-handed, Sasha removes the ROCK and tosses it away.

BEN (CONT'D)
It all depends on you, Sasha
Barnes. And getting us up that
wall.

Resolve hardening, Sasha turns her HANDS palm-up.

Tracing the old callouses. The spots where the skin has
scarred, healed, hardened.

She curls them into fists. Feeling their power.

Her power.

EXT. THE WILD - DAY

Dawn breaks. But you'd never know it because a thick rolling
fog blankets the mountains.

A sign of the impending storm.

EXT. CAMPSITE - LATER

Ben peers through his OPTICAL SCOPE. Scanning the access
road. There are no cars in sight.

As he MOVES DOWN THE CANYON...he lands on:

A NARROW SLAB OF ROCK ABOUT HALFWAY UP THE WALL. Jutting out of the canyon, forming a small platform in the sky.

A natural portaledge.

He hands the specs to Sasha.

BEN

There's a slab halfway up. We can rest. Finish tomorrow.

(then)

The storm should hold off until then.

Sasha looks through them. Spots the SLAB Ben's talking about. It's a strip of rock no bigger than a twin bed.

She lowers the binoculars and nods.

MOMENTS LATER

She ducks behind a rock and squats to pee. She looks down and sees BLOOD in her urine.

LATER

She surveys their CLIMBING GEAR.

Counting coils of rope, doing math in her head.

She racks all the GEAR they could salvage. Carabiners and quickdraws. She feels the weight of it in her hands.

And back on her waist.

AT THE OTHER END OF THE TITANIUM CABLE

Ben is UNCOILING a 6-STEP ROPE LADDER. That's what he's going to use to climb.

He attaches TWO ASCENDERS to the rope, which move up the safety line to secure the ladder in place.

Sasha motions to the TITANIUM CABLE connecting them.

SASHA

Take this off.

BEN

No.

SASHA
Are you serious?

BEN
You didn't really think I would let
you climb this alone. Wouldn't
trust you not to leave me stranded.

SASHA
You're out of your mind -- you know
that? If I fall, I pull us off!

Ben stares at her.

BEN
So don't fall.

Off Sasha, gearing up for the climb of - and *for* - her life.

EXT. SLOT CANYON - ROCK FACE - LATER

CLOSE ON:

FEET slipping into CLIMBING SHOES.

Sasha does jumping jacks to warm up her muscles.

Flexes her fingers. Rolls her neck. Stretches her quads.

She stands at the base of the canyon wall, staring up.
Mapping her route. Planning her attack.

She turns to look at Ben, who is threading ROPE through his
safety gear, on belay.

SASHA
Good?

BEN
Once more unto the breach.

With that, Sasha steps onto the wall.

EXT. CANYON WALL - SAME MOMENT

She grabs a nub of rock and *hoists* herself off the ground.
Her body presses against the canyon wall.

She's climbing again.

But she's tentative. Thinking and rethinking and re-
rethinking every move before she does it. All the while...

...the TITANIUM CABLE drags below her, scraping against the wall as she climbs.

Ben stares up at Sasha as he feeds rope through his safety gear.

THIRTY FEET UP

The CABLE begins to stretch between them.

Sasha unclips a QUICKDRAW from her harness and JAMS it inside a fissure in the rock. Fixing their first ANCHOR POINT.

Once it's secure, she pulls to check its strength. Satisfied that it won't dislodge --

SASHA
(calling down)
We're set.

Ben nods, steadying himself. He tightens the straps of his HEAVY PACK around his waist.

Then he shuffles to the base of the canyon, reaching for the ROPE LADDER and GRABBING THE ASCENDARS.

Once they're LOCKED ON...

...he lets the makeshift CRUTCH fall away...

...and BEGINS PULLING HIMSELF UP THE ROPE LADDER.

He uses his good leg to step on the first rung, then proceeds to lift his body up one rung at a time.

Using both arms to *pull* -- his one good leg to *push* -- step by step. Again and again.

He reaches the ASCENDARS higher, sliding the ladder up the safety line. And once it's secure, he climbs.

His biceps flex, abs straining under the weight as he hauls himself up to their next anchor point.

FIFTY FEET UP NOW

Sasha sets another ANCHOR POINT while Ben belays from their new perch. He's sweating, wrecked from that first pitch.

Sasha adjusts the TITANIUM CABLE still shackling her to him -- then checks the next ANCHOR POINT.

SASHA (CONT'D)
We're good.

With that, Ben gets the ladder in place, then pulls himself up to the next pitch, rung by rung, inch by grueling inch.

He yells with effort. His shirt is soaked through with sweat. His muscles look like they're going to split.

The ROPE LADDER swings like a pendulum as he fights to keep himself upright. His PACK pulling him to the side. His palms skinned and rope-burned.

And as he fights his way higher and through the pain...

...Sasha watches him struggle. *He's getting weaker.*

HIGHER STILL

Sasha places another round of SAFETY GEAR. But this time she does not set it all the way flush with the rock.

DOWN BELOW

Ben PULLS WITH ALL HIS MIGHT as he climbs the ladder. Exhausted and battered but refusing to give up.

CLOSE ON:

The SAFETY GEAR shivers under the stress of holding all that weight.

EXT. CANYON WALL - SAME MOMENT

Ben's arms are shot. His quads cramping. His back buckling under the weight of his pack.

BEN

Throw down the line. I gotta take this fucking thing off.

From her perch above, Sasha UNCOILS another rope line and tosses it down.

Ben catches the other end, slings off his PACK, and LOOPS THE ROPE AROUND THE STRAPS.

He lets his PACK go and it swings against the canyon wall.

BEN (CONT'D)

I'll drag it up when I get there.

Sasha nods. Then her eyes flare. *Got ya.*

She anchors the BAG to the gear and continues climbing. Adrenaline pumping through her veins.

Ben can move faster without that extra weight on his back.
But Sasha is about to take control.

EXT. CANYON WALL - MOMENTS LATER

HALFWAY UP THE WALL

The ROCK SLAB comes into view.

Sasha places HER FINAL ANCHOR BOLT. And like the last one, it does not go flush with the rock.

But she gives a thumbs up anyway.

SASHA

Good.

And as Ben begins to climb...

... SASHA FINALLY PULLS HERSELF OVER THE LEDGE.

EXT. CANYON WALL/SLAB OF ROCK - SAME MOMENT

Sasha stands on a narrow slab of rock halfway up the canyon.

But she doesn't take a moment to rest. Instead, she begins PULLING on the other rope line...

...dragging Ben's PACK up after her as fast as she can.

DOWN BELOW

BEN

Whoa whoa whoa -- !

He watches as Sasha PULLS HIS PACK UP THE WALL. He tries to grab it -- but he can't reach it in time.

BEN (CONT'D)

Fucking cunt bitch...

UP ON THE SLAB

Sasha tries to drag his BAG to the top before Ben arrives.

We can hear the *scrrrrrrrrrape* of nylon against the rock as she pulls the PACK up to her perch.

DOWN BELOW

BEN YELLS. And begins to CLIMB WITH EVERY OUNCE OF STRENGTH.

Faster and faster. Summoning a RESERVE OF ENERGY. Refusing to go down without a fight.

ABOVE

Sasha hears him yelling and grunting as she continues to PULL BEN'S PACK UP THE WALL.

And when it finally SLIDES onto the SLAB...

...she springs into action, knowing she only has a few moments to pull this off.

She opens the bag and roots around until she finds -- his FIELD DRESSING KIT.

She unwraps the canvas and removes a SHARP SERRATED BLADE.

Then she gets to work.

Desperately trying to CUT HER WAY OUT OF HER HARNESS.

But Ben is getting closer. Climbing right for her.

All the while those final safety BOLTS *loosen* under the stress of holding them both in the air.

It's a race against the clock, and Sasha almost cuts her fingers off as the first LEG STRAP is finally severed.

BELOW HER --

Ben is almost there...taking three rungs at a time.

He screams with EFFORT --

-- as Sasha gets the second leg strap free.

Ben is just FIFTEEN FEET from the SLAB...

WHEN HE SLIPS.

His arms GIVE OUT and he nearly FALLS OFF THE LINE.

All the SLACK IN THE TITANIUM CABLE DISAPPEARS.

Sasha's BODY LURCHES FORWARD -- the CABLE *PULLING* ON HER HARNESS and DRAGGING HER TO THE EDGE OF THE ROCK SLAB.

She CRIES OUT. Any further and she goes over.

She *digs* her heels into the earth to keep from being pulled over the edge.

DOWN BELOW

Ben catches himself on the rope ladder.

Sasha stops at the very edge of the slab.

She looks down.

He looks up.

They LOCK EYES.

Knowing he'll never make it up, he STARTS PULLING ON THE CABLE INSTEAD, determined to KILL THEM BOTH.

He PULLS WITH ALL HIS MIGHT --

BEN (CONT'D)
Fucking die -- !

-- while Sasha frantically cuts her harness.

And with one FINAL SLICE --

She finally SEVERES THE WAIST STRAP.

She twists out of her harness --

-- as Ben FEELS THE TITANIUM CABLE GO SLACK.

He screams in anger. And defeat.

A moment later, her SLASHED HARNESS goes sailing over the side of the canyon, still attached to the COMBO LOCK.

But no longer attached to Sasha.

Ben watches it SAIL BY -- the TITANIUM CABLE lassoing through the air...

...until it STOPS FIFTY FEET BELOW HIM -- tugging on the LOCK still attached to his HARNESS.

He looks up, eyes WIDE --

-- as Sasha leans over the edge, AX in her fist.

BEN (CONT'D)
(seething)
The fuck are you doing -- ?!

SASHA
Changing the order of things.

On that, she RAISES THE AX and SWINGS IT WITH ALL HER MIGHT.

The STEEL EDGE SLICES THROUGH A THOUSAND NYLON STRANDS,
HACKING THE SAFETY ROPE APART.

And as it separates from the bolt, Ben is stranded a hundred
and fifty feet in the air.

He sees the LINE GO SLACK.

Hears the SAFETY BOLTS POP OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN -- one after
another like gunshots.

Then he feels the earth rush up to meet him.

Ben seems to float in space for an instant...

Before gravity kicks in.

Whisking him to the ground at thirty-two feet per second
squared, ripping out the anchor bolts as he plummets.

ON THE ROCK SLAB

Sasha hears the terrible CRUNCH below, echoing out through
the canyons before it's swallowed up forever.

She sits in silence, in shock. Victorious, alive.

EXT. SLOT CANYON/ROCKY SHORELINE - DAY

From HIGH ABOVE:

Ben's BODY is splayed on the rocks.

Neck snapped, legs twisted, blood spilled.

EXT. ROCK SLAB/CANYON LEGDE - SAME MOMENT

A wave of emotion washes over Sasha.

And as it does, SOUND FLOODS BACK IN.

Wind whips and whistles. Tree branches creak and rattle.
Water rushes. Crickets chirp. Insects buzz.

The world around her alive and in concert.

She can even hear her heartbeat.

Babum. Babum. Babum.

She stares up the canyon wall.

Ben is gone, but she's trapped on the ROCK SLAB.

Without any climbing gear.

And now out of rope.

STRANDED TWO HUNDRED FEET IN THE SKY.

EXT. CANYON/ROCK SLAB - LATER

Sasha keeps her eyes on the PARK ACCESS ROAD.

Waiting, hoping, praying that a car appears.

SASHA

C'mon...

But as the SUN LOWERS...none do.

DUSK

The wind barrels like a bullet train.

It's freezing cold. Bitter and raw.

Sasha shivers on the rock.

Completely exposed to the elements.

As she huddles, arms wrapped tight around her body to keep warm --

SMASH TO:

DAY

The sun lights up the canyon wall, bright and blinding.

Sasha hasn't slept.

She does JUMPING JACKS to get her blood pumping.

Then looks out to see STORM CLOUDS DARKENING.

She walks to the CANYON WALL and stares up.

Her body begins to shake. Nerves taking over.

She tries to whisper to herself to calm herself.

SASHA
You gotta go...

But steps back from the wall.

She can't do it.

LATER

Her muscles cramp and she doubles over in pain.

She hasn't had anything to eat or to drink in three days.

She stares at the ACCESS ROAD.

It's empty.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(screaming)
FUCKING MOTHERFUCKING GODDAMN --

SMASH TO:

DAY

She moves to the edge of the SLAB and peers down:

She can just make out Ben's BODY freezing on the rocks.

She moves to the wall and looks up.

She takes several deep breaths. Trying to psych herself up.

She places a HAND on the rock.

Grabbing a microscopic hold. Then another.

Her feet pinned below her, she lifts off from the slab and begins to climb.

Higher and higher.

She's doing it.

She peers down.

The rock slab is twenty-five feet below.

She grips a granite ridge the size of a peanut.

Her fingers tense. Knuckles turning white.

She scans the rock face above her...searching for the next hold...but she can't find it.

She's stuck.

And slipping.

She cries out in terror as her muscles quiver.

She fights to stay upright --

-- but she's losing her grip.

Then her fingertips separate from the rock --

-- and she FALLS.

SCREAMING and HURTLING THROUGH THE AIR. And we --

SMASH TO:

NIGHT

Sasha sits on the slab.

That was all in her head. She was rehearsing the moves.
Mapping every possible route.

All of them ending with her falling to her death.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Fuck...

She shivers. Weak and depleted.

Reality setting in that she's out of options.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(weakly)

...I can't do it...

VOICE (O.S.)

Of course you can.

And that's when a FIGURE appears at the other end of the slab.

Sasha sits up, leans forward. No...

SASHA

Tommy...?

He continues to remain in shadow, so we never get a good look. But the voice is unmistakable.

TOMMY

You're not tapping out. I won't let you.

(then)

Plus I don't think anyone's coming.

SASHA

Real helpful. Thanks.

TOMMY

I'm just saying what you're thinking. That's kinda how this works.

Sasha knows this is all in her head, but she doesn't have the energy to fight it. Especially because Tommy's right.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

You can't spend another night like this.

SASHA

I know...

TOMMY

And the wall won't stay dry for much longer. You gotta keep moving.

SASHA

You're out of your mind.

TOMMY

That makes two of us.

(then)

You've climbed harder stuff than that.

SASHA

With a rope.

(then)

With you.

TOMMY

You don't need me. But you can't plan this one from down here. You just gotta put one hand in front of the other, one move at a time.

Sasha leans her head against the rock. Taking it all in.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Life exists in centimeters. All we can do is hold on for the ride.

She begins to well up.

SASHA
And what if I can't...?

She trails off, fighting back tears.

TOMMY
Then you'll know when to let go.

On that, he STEPS AWAY, VANISHING FROM SIGHT.

Because he was never really there at all.

EXT. CANYON/RIVER - DAWN

A gray dawn breaks over Kings Canyon. The storm is here.
Ready to unleash hell any moment.

EXT. ROCK SLAB/CANYON WALL - SAME MOMENT

Sasha is on her feet, stretching, warming up. Gathering herself.

She grabs several PEBBLES and hits them with a ROCK, churning them into POWDER so she can chalk her hands.

She ties the laces of her climbing shoes.

Coats her hands in white chalk.

Then she steps up to the CANYON WALL.

It's time to go home.

She places her hand on the rock. Feeling the grooves and textures. The temperature too. It's cold.

Just the way she likes it.

SASHA
Let's boogie.

She presses her foot into a fissure in the canyon...

...then lifts off from the slab.

Continuing for the summit.

Without a rope to catch her if she falls.

EXT. CANYON WALL - SAME MOMENT

Sasha locks onto a small kernel of rock -- moving carefully from one hold to the next.

She's TWENTY FEET ABOVE THE ROCK SLAB NOW.

TWO HUNDRED FEET ABOVE THE CANYON FLOOR.

Moving like a spider up the water spout.

HIGHER STILL

She presses her body to the mountain. Moving from one hold to the next.

And that's when her FOOT SLIPS.

SASHA

Fuck -- !

She nearly SLIPS OFF -- but this time her FINGERS *dig in*.

Keeping her from falling.

She will not let go.

She presses her feet to the wall -- heart pumping harder than the raging river below.

She regains her balance and her breath.

The air around her is still.

The literal calm before the storm.

Which means every other sound is amplified.

Like the *inhale* of breath...

...the *scrape* of her fingers...

...the CRUNCH of her toes on the canyon wall.

Sasha pinches a lip of rock, her fingertips locked like a cobra strangling its prey.

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN FEET ABOVE THE CANYON FLOOR

She is keyed in.

Rose move to gaston -- her fingers *pulling* in opposite directions -- as if she's opening an elevator door built into the mountain.

Then comes a dyno -- her quads propelling her body up high enough so her hands can lock on above.

She *pulls* herself up...*stretching* her arms as far as they go -
- then snagging a twofer-ledge no wider than a dime.

With each movement, each step, each handhold, she can hear her heartbeat vibrating in her chest.

Babum. Babum. Babum.

TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY FEET UP

Everything is in harmony. Mind, body, mountain.

She isn't in her head, overthinking things. She's moving by feeling. By touch. *Instinct* alone.

Completely grounded in each moment, she remains tethered to the mountain. Working in tandem with nature.

Babum. Babum. Babum.

And that's when the SKY OPENS UP.

SNOW FLURRIES whip all around her.

Blanketing the rock wall with wet crystals.

Sasha fights to see through the growing whiteout and spots a THIN CRACK opening up in the crag.

It looks like the wall has a jagged SCAR, splitting its face in two.

But the off-width leaves enough room for someone to climb it.

Which is exactly what she does.

Drying her palms on her shirt --

-- she wedges her fists *inside* the rock --

-- her feet and body *pressed* to the outside.

And the rubber of her shoes creates *juuuuuuust* enough friction to keep her pinned to the slick rock.

Allowing her to remain glued to the wall as she squeezes and shimmies her way up the canyon chimney.

Inch by bone-crunching inch.

Up...and up...

Higher...

and higher...

Tip-toeing her way into the sky.

EXT. CANYON WALL - SAME MOMENT

TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAY TO THE ACCESS ROAD

A SNOWSTORM IS RAGING NOW.

Sasha is a dot in the middle of the canyon, nearly hidden in the churning whiteout.

The ground is small below her, the treetops dusted with snow.

With the summit still far above, Sasha is completely at home. Freer with every step.

Continuing to defy gravity, making the impossible look effortless. And beautiful.

Just like Tommy did.

She blocks out everything else in the world. Focusing only on what she can see in front of her.

Which, thanks to the swirling snow, isn't much.

THREE HUNDRED FEET IN THE AIR

She hooks her heel over a crack, then locks off a 3-finger crimp, the bones in her hands tightening.

All those hours on the hangboard literally keeping her alive.

WITH FIFTY FEET LEFT TO GO...

Sasha performs a solo ballet in the sky. She's never climbed like this. It's cleansing. Cathartic.

Like a great weight is lifting off her shoulders. Allowing her to shed an old skin and forge a new one.

THIRTY FEET FROM THE TOP...

Her heart opens back up to the world.

Pulling herself out of the depths of grief...

...and into something new.

WITH TWENTY-FIVE FEET LEFT...

Eyes stinging with frozen crystals, she looks up and can just make out the ACCESS ROAD coming into view.

And then in the distance -- she can't fucking believe it --

TWO HEADLIGHTS cutting through the whiteout.

A CAR IS COMING.

By now every muscle in her body is engaged and exhausted, stretched and in agony and beyond their breaking point.

But Sasha does not register the pain.

She's on another plane -- of concentration. Exertion. Existence. Everything in her life leading to *this*.

Her toes curl around a slippery pin hold, fingers pinching a snow-kissed ridge of rock. She scales. Pivots. *Ascends*.

TWENTY FEET BELOW THE ROAD...

Sasha looks up and sees a TRUCK SCREAM BY.

SASHA
....STOP -- !!

But it doesn't.

She climbs -- FIFTEEN --

-- THIRTEEN --

TEN --

EIGHT --

JUST FIVE FEET LEFT TO GO --

And finally...

EXT. SUMMIT/ACCESS ROAD - SAME MOMENT

...Sasha claws her way onto the pavement, her clothes and skin and hair dusted in a layer of snow.

She looks up -- to see the TRUCK TWO HUNDRED YARDS DOWN THE ROAD. She SCREAMS, hobbles onto the SHOULDER, WAVES HER ARMS.

SASHA
HELP!!!

She cries out with everything she has left. Until her voice is shot and nothing more than a rasp.

Then she collapses, knees buckling from exhaustion.

From effort.

From everything.

Then the TRUCK SLAMS ON ITS BRAKES. Skidding to a stop.

CLOSE ON:

The insignia on the door. MCCOMB COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPT.

EXT. CANYON ACCESS ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

SHERIFF MARJORY BARNETT (50s) sits behind the wheel of her vehicle. And just spotted SASHA in her mirror.

SHERIFF BARNETT
Jesus Christ....

She throws the truck in reverse, grabs her dashboard RADIO.

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)
(via radio)
Carin, I got a possible 55 --
requesting immediate evac on 2 just
west of the pass. Over.

OUT ON THE ROAD

THROUGH A WALL OF SNOW

Sasha sees the TRUCK coming back for her.

And when it stops --

EXT. ROAD/PARK RANGER TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Sheriff Barnett rushes out of her vehicle with a blanket in hand --

-- as Sasha runs into her arms. Hugging her. Overcome with emotion. Sobbing into the sheriff's shoulder.

SHERIFF BARNETT
Easy, you're okay. I got you.

She wraps Sasha in the blanket and when the adrenaline in her body slows, Sasha goes into shock. Shaking uncontrollably.

Officer Barnett takes in Sasha's injuries: her thigh wrapped in gauze, the cuts and bruises all over her arms and back.

Realizing that this woman just climbed the canyon wall.

Without a rope.

In the middle of a blizzard.

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)
You good to walk with me back to
the truck?

Sasha nods. But she's so weak she's like a newborn calf fresh from the womb. Still trying to get her feet under her.

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)
I got you, here we go.

As Barnett helps Sasha to the truck...

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)
Can you tell me your name?

SASHA
....Sasha....

SHERIFF BARNETT
Good, Sasha. My name's Marjory.
We're gonna get you out of here,
get you inside, okay?

Sheriff Barnett pops the door -- and as Sasha climbs into the passenger seat, still shaking...

INT. SHERIFF BARNETT'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Sheriff Barnett gets in behind the wheel, starts the engine, turning the heat up full blast.

SHERIFF BARNETT
There's water on the dash.

She motions to a thermos.

Sasha grabs it, twists the top, and gulps.

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)
And some buns in the glove box.

Sasha opens the compartment and pulls out a greasy bag.

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)
They're probably stale, but we can
get you something on the way to the
hospital.

Sasha opens the bag and takes a bite. It's the best fucking donut she's ever had in her life.

She savors the sugar as it hits her system.

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)
That was you who called in from the
river?

Sasha nods.

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)
We weren't able to hear anything on
your end. We sent drones up, but
couldn't find you.
(then)
I'm just so glad you're alive.

She looks at Sasha, who nods gratefully. *Me too.*

FROM FAR AWAY

The POLICE TRUCK winds its way along the canyon rim. And as
the snow continues to fall...

INT. SHERIFF BARNETT'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Sheriff Barnett drives through the blizzard, wipers working
overtime to keep the snow from sticking to the glass.

Sasha stares out the window as thick powder begins to cling
to tree boughs.

SASHA
He knew this place.

Barnett shuts off her radio.

SASHA (CONT'D)
The man who followed me. Who hunted
me down the river.

SHERIFF BARNETT
Hunted you?

Sasha nods.

SASHA
When I first saw him...he looked
like a ranger.

Barnett takes a moment, processing everything Sasha's told
her.

SHERIFF BARNETT
Did he have a badge?

Sasha shrugs.

SASHA

I don't know. He had a hat, jacket.
But I never even knew his name.

SHERIFF BARNETT

Jesus Christ.

(then)

Is he still out there, the
sonofabitch who did this?

Sasha looks at Agent Barnett. Shakes her head.

SASHA

He won't hurt anyone again.

Barnett mulls over a gruesome theory.

SHERIFF BARNETT

We've had people go missing.
Christ, he must've been at it for
years.

Then she trails off. Turning to Sasha.

SHERIFF BARNETT (CONT'D)

What happened to you out there?

Sasha's eyes flood with emotion as reality sets in.

SASHA

I won.

HOLD ON Sasha. A warrior heading out of the wild and back
into the world.

AND FROM HIGH ABOVE:

We watch a lone POLICE TRUCK weave through sheets of snow,
winding down the mountain.

And as we PULL BACK EVEN WIDER -- looking down at the canyons
and the river and the wild from high in the clouds --

SMASH TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - LATER

NATURE FROZEN IN TWO DIMENSIONS.

We are staring at a TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP HANGING ON THE WALL of
the police station.

Huge swaths of green (wilderness) cover the page.

NEEDLE DROP: "Lose Yourself." Eminem.

As we PULL BACK FROM THE MAP --

-- we see PHOTOGRAPHS TACKED UP.

OF MISSING WOMEN.

WHO VANISHED INSIDE THE PARK.

Two rows of six. Twelve in total.

Where Sasha would have made thirteen.

INT. SHERIFF'S BARNETT'S OFFICE - SAME MOMENT

Sasha -- bandaged, in a hoodie and wool cap -- sits across from Sheriff Barnett giving a statement.

There is a MAP in front of them, tracing her journey downriver.

Sasha draws a line on the page, then something catches her eye behind Sheriff Barnett.

A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH HANGS ON THE WALL.

Sasha moves for a closer look --

-- as Sheriff Barnett follows her gaze.

CLOSE ON THE PHOTO

MEN and WOMEN, wearing Kings Canyon ball-caps and matching green windbreakers, look directly at the camera. Smiling.

A BANNER BELOW READS:

MCCOMB COUNTY SEARCH AND RESCUE VOLUNTEERS.

Outdoor enthusiasts who know the land so well they risk their lives to save others in need.

Sasha's eyes go wide.

EXTREMELY CLOSE ON:

ONE MAN -- arms around several others -- who we recognize immediately.

BEN TREVINO. Wearing the exact same outfit as when we met him. Smiling. At Sasha.

Who stares at Ben.

And as we PUSH IN ON his FACE --

SMASH TO:

EXT. KINGS CANYON GORGE - DAY

A BODY BAG being airlifted out of the canyon.

Thick TITANIUM CABLES are secured to a STRETCHER, which pull Ben's BODY into a HELICOPTER circling above.

EXT. MULHOLLAND POINT - SAME MOMENT

Sheriff Barnett drops Sasha back at Mulholland Point, which is now covered in the first snow of the season.

The woods have been completely transformed into a winter wonderland. Fresh and empty and blank as a page.

Barnett and Sasha shake hands.

BACK AT HER SPRINTER VAN

Sasha climbs inside. It's just as she left it.

Except it also feels completely *new*.

MOMENTS LATER

She pulls out onto the highway. And as she speeds off...

EXT. KINGS CANYON RIVERBED - DAY

We BOOM DOWN over layers of sediment sculpted by centuries of wind and water.

Into a LAGOON formed by overhanging rock.

We immediately recognize this as the place Ben brought Sasha. The secret cavern hidden deep in the canyon walls.

Barely any snow has made its way all the way down here.

And those beams of natural light have been replaced by the harsh glow of PORTABLE KLEIG LIGHTS.

As the rotunda has been transformed into an EXCAVATION SITE.

FBI TECHS comb the active crime scene, working alongside PARK RANGERS and CADAVER DOGS. Searching for BODIES.

Several FROZEN GRAVES have been unearthed, with more on the way.

BODIES DRAPED IN SHEETS rest under WHITE TENTS while thousand-year-old cave drawings cover the walls.

Photos are snapped. DNA samples swabbed.

Sheriff Barnett surveys Ben's burial ground. Taking in the ghastly sight.

And from the arctic canyons --

SMASH TO:

-- the emerald expanse of the PACIFIC OCEAN.

EXT. KAUAI - DAY

Barrel waves CRASH on the sunlit shores of a secret beach in Kauai. There is nothing but sand, water, and sky.

Birds caw. Crickets chirp. Water laps.

Everything is pristine and prehistoric. *Paradise.*

And as planet earth hurtles through space at 67,000 miles an hour...and the SUN shines from 90 million miles away...

Sasha emerges from the water.

She looks healthy. Rooted. Reborn.

She wears GOGGLES, a SNORKEL, and FLIPPERS. And holds an UNDERWATER CAMERA in her hands.

As she removes her fins and shakes saltwater from her hair, she stares at something -- *someone?* -- on the beach.

We don't see who or what she's looking at.

All we see is her eyes light up.

And as Sasha breaks into a SMILE --

CUT TO BLACK.