

BACKCOUNTRY

Written by

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Star Thrower.

During the winter of 2021, The United States  
recorded thirty-seven avalanche fatalities.  
The highest number ever on record.

"You know, the mountains are full of dangers,  
and they swallow you up. But mostly, they give."

- Doug Coombs

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Video footage, circa late 90s, of --

ALDER MOUNTAIN.

Its snow covered peak juts up like a broken shark's tooth, vertical walls like never ending dead drops into hell.

For a skier, this is the most terrifying run on earth.

- Indiscriminate RADIO CHATTER rises up...

- Along with the whomping of rotor-blades, as the shadows of two HELICOPTERS now dance against the mountain face.

- Quick cuts of: PHOTOGRAPHERS, HELI GUIDES, TEAM MEMBERS, VIDEOGRAPHERS - all stationed at the bottom of the mountain.

And at very top of the peak stands a SOLITARY SKIER. As insignificant as a pebble alongside a stony shore.

INSERT OVER BLACK: Brooks Provence. Alder Mountain. 1999.

VARIOUS RADIO CHATTER  
*Camera one, ready... Camera two,  
ready --*

Our video suddenly PAUSES, as we pull back to reveal --

INT. BROOKS' HOME - GARAGE - NIGHT

We're playing on an old laptop, before which --

BROOKS PROVENCE, 40s, face tempered from years of exposure to the elements, sits atop a storage bin wearing a worn Carhartt jacket. His gentle gaze betrays a life once filled with athletic promise, now many, many years derailed.

And he just sits there, staring at this laptop screen, like he's done so many times before.

His calloused finger hits play, video resuming, as we focus on our solitary skier, or "Younger Brooks," just before he --

Drops down a run so damn steep, and technical, and unforgiving no human should ever attempt to ski it.

His skis and poles acting like tentacles, somehow connecting him to this unbearably vertical slope.

He vaults from cliff to cliff, each like pillars hanging over an open sky. He zig-zags through a minefield of rock - his line inconceivable - the slope's pitch near sixty degrees.

THE VIDEO PAUSES.

On Brooks - He's seen this video so, so many times before. He knows how this plays out. *But even still...*

HE PRESSES PLAY.

On screen - Younger Brooks carves an arc, picking up speed. A Baryshnikov with wooden slates connected to his feet.

THE VIDEO PAUSES.

On Brooks - Turning away from the screen. Eyeing the mess that is his garage. The leaking roof...

HE PRESSES PLAY.

On screen - Video fast-forwarding to where younger Brooks now passes down a couloir, or rather a FROZEN WATERFALL OF ICE.

Skis grating, Younger Brooks catches an edge, and begins to tumble... all the way down the mountain.

And it's like watching someone fall helplessly from the top of a sixty story sky scraper.

We hear audible screams from those watching as --

Younger Brooks collides with rock, is sent careening over cliff face... His body pummeled and battered, spun and flung.

Until a motionless Younger Brooks finally slides to a stop at the bottom of Alder Mountain. His limbs bent in horrifically impossible ways. Blood pooling onto snow...

THE VIDEO PAUSES.

On Brooks - Gaze detached. His finger hits a key and... the video once again plays from the start.

Over and over and over Brooks watches himself crash, until -

HE CLOSES THE LAPTOP SHUT.

And Brooks just sits there. In his lived-in melancholy.

He ejects a DVD from the laptop, turning towards three forgotten cardboard boxes jammed full with relics of his former life. There's dozens of ski DVDS, piles of old ski magazines with Brooks on the cover, countless trophies...

Brooks stashes away the DVD and the laptop, tucking the three cardboard boxes behind a stack of storage bins.

He rises, grabbing his coffee mug, sighting --

LILY PROVENCE - 12, introspective, sweet, whip smart - standing at the door. She rubs the sleep from her eyes.

LILY  
Whatcha doin'?

Brooks foots his way towards a large pot positioned underneath that leak in the roof. *Drip, drip, drip...*

BROOKS  
Changin' pots.

Brooks takes hold of a pot filled with water. Replaces it with an empty one. He shuffles his way past all the clutter.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
One of these days you and me are gonna clean all this junk out.

Brooks kisses his daughter's forehead.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Let's get you back to bed, sweetie.

Brooks hits a switch, the garage plunging into darkness.

TITLE CARD: BACKCOUNTRY

FADE IN.

EXT. COSTCO PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Mostly empty at this hour, save for Brooks' beat-to-shit Chevy. Headlights turn off revealing Brooks behind the wheel.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - NIGHT

BROOKS pops a couple Advil, slugging it back with the last dregs of his coffee. He steps out onto --

EXT. COSTCO - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The snow dusted asphalt, breath frosting. He straps a metallic brace onto his right knee. Then comes the back brace. And as he lumbers his way towards a loading dock...

BROOKS (PRELAP)  
Listen up, everybody...

INT. COSTCO - LOADING FACILITY - NIGHT

Brooks stands before ten sleep deprived, hard scrabbled COSTCO EMPLOYEES. Brooks fidgets, avoiding eye contact. It's like a part Brooks, deep down, doesn't want to be seen.

BROOKS

We got stuck with a late one. And we all hate late ones. I'm countin' six trucks coming our way. We work smart, we can be out of here by --

And that's when two COSTCO EMPLOYEES approach Brooks with a cupcake lit with candles. The gang whistles in cheer.

COSTCO EMPLOYEE #1

Happy twentieth.

They hand Brooks a gift bag. He reaches inside and pulls out a massive tub of Icy Hot. Laughter all around.

BROOKS

Icy Hot. That's... thank you, guys.

Brooks blows out his candles, waving the others off.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Alright, let's get to work.

INT. / EXT. COSTCO - LOADING DOCKS - QUICK CUTS

Brooks, double-times-it, carrying heavy load after heavy load. His endurance and stamina are on another level.

Brooks pauses, glancing up to an interior office window.

MAN'S VOICE (PRELAP)

How's Kara? How's Lily?

INT. COSTCO - SECOND FLOOR - OFFICE

Brooks stands before his boss, JAMES, 50s, avuncular.

BROOKS

She's good. They're good.

JAMES

The Icy Hot was Ed's idea.

BROOKS

Funny stuff.

(then)

(MORE)

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Those guys down there, they really bust their asses off.

JAMES

They do. We got a good team.

BROOKS

Twenty years.

JAMES

Yeah.

BROOKS

That's a long time to work at one place.

Beat.

JAMES

How can I help you?

BROOKS

We'd talked about upward mobility. A raise. *Twenty years...*

JAMES

I know, I know. And you deserve it. But it's a tough time right now. Corporate's been -

BROOKS

*Corporate's been...*

James takes a moment, processing Brooks' frustration.

JAMES

Hang in there.

Brooks nods, a tough pill to swallow. And as he closes the door behind him, we match cut to --

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - PRE DAWN

Brooks slamming his car door shut.

He takes a moment, stewing in his anger. In his self loathing. He swallows those feelings, keying the ignition.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - EARLY MORNING

Lost in thought, Brooks drives down a stretch of highway. Seems like every car on the road is a luxury SUV...

And then there's Brooks' rust speckled relic. He drifts towards an exit for Crested Butte, his mind still dwelling on his crash we witnessed this morn, as we intercut with --

BROOKS' POV SKIING ALDER MOUNTAIN.

As he flies down this perilous wall of white. We hear nothing but his labored breath, the grunts, skis crunching on snow...

BACK ON - Brooks heading towards an exit for Crested Butte.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Brooks drives through Crested Butte. If you're looking for luxury, look elsewhere. The storefronts on Main Street practically unchanged since its days as a coal mining town.

And Brooks is still up in his head, mentally replaying that awful crash. Dissecting it over and over...

BROOKS POV SKIING ALDER MOUNTAIN.

Pole vaulting from cliff to cliff. *Grunt, woomph. Grunt, woomph.* A rhythm found. Like dancing atop clouds.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - EARLY MORNING

Brooks pulls up the driveway of a small home that could use a facelift... or three. He parks, stepping out --

INT. BROOKS' HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Brooks enters, quick to sight his wife KARA, late 30s, prepping two lunches in the kitchen. Don't let Kara's gentle and easy demeanor fool you, she can be lioness when need be.

The two kiss, Brooks handing over the tub of Icy Hot.

BROOKS

Once upon a time these were  
flowers.

KARA

I'll take a tub of Icy Hot any day.

Brooks pilfers a slice of turkey.

KARA (CONT'D)

Washing machine's --

BROOKS

I'll look at it tonight. And we got  
the roofer guy --

KARA

I'll be here.

Lily hustles into the kitchen. She's lugging all her ski gear, thrilled for a day on the mountain with dad.

BROOKS

You ready to get after it?

Lily nods. Daddy's girl through and through.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Let's go pick up the calvary.

Last kisses, lunches handed out, and Brooks and Lily are off.

INT. TEDDY AND ANNIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Black and white photography adorns the walls. Landscapes, action shots of skiers... each their own work of art.

Sitting before a MAC desktop is TEDDY, 40s. The yin to Brooks' yang, you could drop Teddy off at a village in Mongolia, and two hours later he'd have fifty new best friends. He's touching up a photo, immersed in his work.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

I had the craziest dream last  
night...

TEDDY

Oh yeah?

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

We were sitting at this cute,  
little cafe...

Out of the bathroom steps ANNIE, Brooks' sister, her blonde locks water-falling over her Crested Butte ski instructor jacket. Pragmatic bordering on cautious, Kara adores Teddy for all his quirks. She wraps her arms around Teddy.

ANNIE

... drinking red wine. And then we  
strolled by a river. Went to a  
museum. Ate a croissant.

TEDDY

Were we wearing berets?

ANNIE

*Oui, oui...*

TEDDY

That's crazy.

ANNIE

Even crazier? Our ten year anniversary is coming up.

TEDDY

Is it now...

Teddy smiles, the two about to kiss, when he spots two missed calls from Brooks on his phone.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

Shit. Your brother's here.

Teddy quickly rises, gathering his gear.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

(searching)

My goggles --

ANNIE

*Teddy...*

*This happens all the time.*

EXT. TEDDY AND ANNIE'S HOUSE - LATER

Annie and Teddy hustle towards Brooks' truck. Annie carries her skis, Teddy gripping his snowboard.

TEDDY

Was waiting on your sister.

ANNIE

Don't believe a word he says.

Annie and Teddy load their gear in the flatbed. Lily scoots over, Teddy taking shotgun, as Annie hops in the backseat.

TEDDY

Egg McMuffins. I'm buy--

BROOKS

Nope. We don't have time.

TEDDY

What do ya mean we don't have -

BROOKS  
You had all morning to eat  
breakfast.

TEDDY  
*It'll take two minutes...*

Lily hands Teddy an old Cliff Bar. It's not an Egg McMuffin.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Brooks drives, Teddy tearing off strips of duct-tape, and wrapping it around his antiquated ski boot. *Krikkkk...*

TEDDY  
What do you think about The Cliffs?

BROOKS  
Wind came in from the south.

LILY  
Bowls should be good.

TEDDY  
*Yeah...* I don't know about that.

ANNIE  
Upper Peel. Then head down to  
Forest. Hands.

Everyone sticks out their hands. Annie shoots a glob of suntan lotion into their palms. *Krikkkk...* Teddy wraps another strip of duct tape around his boot.

BROOKS  
It's time.

TEDDY  
For what?

BROOKS  
New boots.

TEDDY  
Boots are fine.

LILY  
Oh my god, Uncle Teddy... Your  
boots are not fine.

An old 4Runner pulls up next to Brooks. Behind the wheel is DALE, 40s. Look up mountaineering in the dictionary and you'll see Dale's photo. He yells out to Brooks.

DALE  
Bowls should be good.

Before Brooks can respond, Teddy leans out the window.

TEDDY  
Was just sayin that.

DALE  
We got a storm comin'.

TEDDY  
What storm?

Dale pulls up ahead, but Teddy hollers out anyways.

TEDDY (CONT'D)  
*WHAT STORM???*

Lily and Annie share a smirk in the rearview.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE MOUNTAIN - MORNING

Brooks, Annie, Teddy, and Lily march their way towards a double chair lift, when --

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)  
Excuse me, but could I --

The four turn to see a SKIER, 20s, respectfully stepping towards Brooks already with his cell phone out.

Every fiber in Brooks' being tenses, Lily clocking her father's discomfort. Nonetheless --

BROOKS  
Of course.

Brooks poses for a picture - *click* - as Annie skis off towards her class, and Teddy makes way towards Dale.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE - SKI LIFT - MORNING

Brooks and Lily ride a double chair lift.

LILY  
... Samantha made a list...

BROOKS  
Of colleges.

LILY

Her top ten - with her mom and dad.

BROOKS

Samantha's twelve. Samantha's not even in high school yet.

LILY

Her first choice is Yale, but she'd go to Stanford if she got in.

BROOKS

Are all your friends talking about colleges already?

Lily shrugs. *That's a yes...*

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Listen, don't think about colleges. Just be a kid. All that can wait.

LILY

I don't even want to go to college.

A beat.

BROOKS

You don't?

LILY

No.

BROOKS

You've never had a "B" in your life. You could go to any college --

LILY

Why do you freak out?

BROOKS

Hm?

LILY

When people recognize you, it's like you wanna run away.

Brooks smiles.

BROOKS

You're deflecting.

LILY

So are you.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE MOUNTAIN - SKI RUN - MORNING

Brooks and Lily slide down a cat track.

LILY  
Teach me something.

BROOKS  
What's to teach?

LILY  
I want a lesson.

BROOKS  
Are you having fun?

LILY  
Yes.

BROOKS  
That's it. That's my lesson.

Brooks smiles mischievously at Lily, cutting ahead of her and down a corduroy groomed run. Lily's quick to follow.

And we rise up, witnessing this special moment of father / daughter bonding, as we pre-lap a Tom Petty cover.

EXT. DOGWOOD'S - NIGHT

A rollicking pizza joint packed with locals, a RAG-TAG BAND playing on a small stage. Brooks, Annie, Teddy, Kara, and Lily make their entrance. And our gang knows everyone here.

MOMENTS LATER.

It's game night. Pizza, beer... soda for Lily. The five, along with Dale and his wife RHIDI, 30s -- and a few other LOCALS we'll meet later, are in the midst of a heated game of charades. All eyes on Kara as she --

Pantomimes dancing. Everyone shouts out their answers, all vying to be heard... Whereas Brooks *tellingly* sits on the far edges of the group, whispering his guesses into Lily's ear.

BROOKS (TO LILY)  
*Break a leg... Fancy feet...*

LILY (TO BROOKS)  
Four words.

BROOKS (TO LILY) (CONT'D)  
*Shake your money --*

Lily rises to her feet.

LILY (CONT'D)  
Dance the night away!

KARA  
(exasperated)  
Yes, baby... Thank you.

Brooks wraps an arm around Lily, just as his gaze falls upon RICK SCHAFER, late 40s, walking through the front door. Rick's a maverick both on the mountain and in the business world. His Aspen sensibilities stick out like a sore thumb in this very blue collar joint.

Brooks furrows his brow in recognition, Lily paying notice.

LILY  
(re: Rick)  
Who's that?

BROOKS  
That's Rick Schafer. We used to  
race against each other growing up.

Brooks rises to his feet, Rick finally sighting Brooks.

BROOKS (PRELAP) (CONT'D)  
Jesus, Rick. How long has it --

INT. DOGWOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Brooks and Rick sit at a table alone, beers in hand.

RICK  
Years.

BROOKS  
And then some. Still in Denver?

RICK  
Aspen.

Brooks tips his beer. *Good for you...*

RICK (CONT'D)  
I see Teddy, Annie, Kara... is that  
your daughter?

BROOKS  
Lily. Kids?

RICK  
A son. Zack. He's sixteen.

A beat passes. Even after all these years there's still a palatable friction between these two.

RICK (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

BROOKS

For what?

RICK

How I treated you when we were younger. I was jealous.

BROOKS

You were a dick.

RICK

I was a seventeen year old kid who was getting his ass kicked in races by someone three years his younger.

(then)

Can I tell you a story?

BROOKS

Sure.

RICK

First race of the season. Snowbird. I was eighteen, you were fifteen. That whole summer I was a machine. Just dedicated. Trainers twice a day. Was running ten miles... Chicken and broccoli, in bed by nine. Night before the race, I'm walking to my room at the hotel, and your door's open. And there's you... *with Annie and Teddy...* eating pizza and drinking beers.

Rick smiles in remembrance.

RICK (CONT'D)

I keep on walking, thinkin'... *I got him.* This is the year I kick Brook Provence's ass. Next morning, I ski the race of my life. Just flawless. *And then you come down the mountain...* Probably a little hungover, and beat my time by three seconds. *Three seconds...* That night I called it quits. Two weeks later I was applying to colleges --

BROOKS

From what I hear you did just fine for yourself. Real estate, yeah?

RICK

I got lucky on a couple deals. Right place, right time. But I never had what you did. *That thing...*

(beat)

But my son does. And he idolizes you, Brooks. Every single movie of yours, every single run you've skied on film... he knows by heart. He even skis like you.

The smallest of beats.

BROOKS

Downhill racing or extreme skiing?

RICK

Both. Just like you. He's got offers from K2, Salomon, Rossi - all for downhill. Only he wants to be the best extreme skier in the world. Ski with him tomorrow. Just the two of you. That way it'd be --

BROOKS

I got work.

RICK

Take a day off. I'm asking as a favor. He's a good kid.

Brooks studies Rick. Sees a father, just like him, who would do anything and everything for his son.

BROOKS

Meet me tomorrow at the Exxon on Butte. I'll text you when.

KARA (PRELAP)

Rick Schafer. Haven't heard that name in a while...

INT. BROOKS' HOME - LAUNDRY ROOM - NIGHT

Brooks fixes the washing machine, second hand parts splayed out. Kara leaning against the wall sipping a tea.

BROOKS  
He wants me to ski with his son  
tomorrow. Says he's good.

KARA  
You gonna do it?

Brooks nods, grunting as he wrenches a bolt off.

BROOKS  
What did the roofer say?

Kara makes a face. A not good face.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Christ. The whole thing?

Kara makes another face. Yup.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Hand me that tube.

KARA  
Which one?

BROOKS  
Doesn't matter.

Kara hands Brooks a tube, Brooks grabbing a clamp.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
You know, we get a good snow, that  
roof isn't safe. Just isn't.

KARA  
We'll figure it out.

BROOKS  
The whole god damn thing could --

KARA  
We'll figure it out.

Brooks "mhms". He steps back, hits a button, and the washing  
machine's up and running again.

KARA (CONT'D)  
How'd you do it?

BROOKS  
Lil bit of this, lil bit of that.

Kara pulls her husband in for a kiss.

INT. BROOKS' HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Brooks sits on the edge of the bed, Kara rubbing Icy Hot onto Brooks' shoulders, as we pay notice to --

A litany of scars scattered all over his body like macabre zippers. On his neck, his legs, his arm, his back... *A permanent reminder of his crash at Alder Creek.*

Brooks eyes the corner of his ceiling - stained and warping.

KARA

Stop.

BROOKS

What?

KARA

Looking at the ceiling.

BROOKS

Know what Lily said to me today?  
That she didn't want to go to  
college. Wanna know why? She thinks  
we can't afford it. *That's why...*

Kara hits a sore spot. Brooks jerking his shoulder away, startling Kara. For a moment, she sits there. Processing.

KARA

Do you know how many people out  
there have it worse? You got all  
the blessings in the world - *but*  
*for the life of you* - you just  
can't bring yourself to see em.

BROOKS

Kara --

KARA

Because then... Well, then it  
wouldn't be all about you.

INT. BROOKS' HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kara sleeps, Brooks stares at the roof like it could cave in at any minute. The faintest of drips heard from that leak in the garage. He sits up, careful not to wake Kara.

INT. BROOKS' HOME - GARAGE - NIGHT

Brooks watches his crash at Alder Mountain. All alone in his mess of a garage, a quiet study in self-inflicted torment.

FADE OUT.

INT. / EXT. BROOKS' TRUCK - PRE DAWN

Brooks drives, pulling into a gas station where Rick stands near a brand new Range Rover. Brooks parks, Rick approaching.

RICK  
Thanks for doing this.

BROOKS  
Course.

RICK  
(calls out)  
Hey Zack.

Stepping out from behind the tailgate is ZACK SCHAFER, 16. Strikingly handsome, Zack's built more like a collegiate tight end than skier. He humbly approaches Brooks.

ZACK  
Very nice to meet you, Mr.  
Provence.

Brooks half chuckles. Not used to the formalities.

BROOKS  
Hop in. Let's go for a ski.

MOMENTS LATER.

As Brooks and Zack drive off, a somber expression washing over Rick's face, we prelap the sublime whoosh of --

EXT. NEEDLE ROCK MOUNTAIN - MONTAGE

Brooks and Zack lay siege to the steep. *Big airs, precipitous slopes, chest deep powder...*

This may all seem like thrill-seekers brazenly toeing the lines of death. Getting their fix. It isn't.

This is a religious experience. Two beings fully realized, communing with something greater than themselves.

And on slopes where other professional skiers might pale...

Zack is good. Really, really good.

EXT. NEEDLE ROCK MOUNTAIN - MORNING

Brooks and Zack pause for a water break, the solitude, the scenery... this is why you backcountry ski.

ZACK

Any tips?

Brooks scoffs.

BROOKS

I should be the one asking you.  
Who's been coaching you?

ZACK

Couple people. But really my dad.

BROOKS

And what about downhill racing?  
That's where the real money is.  
Play your cards right, you'll never  
work a day in your life.

Zack grimaces, spotting piece of trash all the way out here.

ZACK

Yeah and ski the same run over and  
over and over. Solden, Bormio,  
Beaver Creek - it's all just an icy  
track with gates and a clock. But  
doing this, extreme skiing, I can  
ski the mountain how I want to ski  
it. No gates, no clock.

Zack grabs the piece of trash, pocketing it. Brooks clocks  
the whole thing - *a fellow steward of the mountain.*

ZACK (CONT'D)

First time my dad took me skiing  
backcountry, I was hooked. When my  
friends were playing video games, I  
was looking at Google Earth for  
mountains to ski.

BROOKS

We didn't have Google Earth... but  
same.

ZACK

You still love it?

BROOKS

I got a kid and a wife now... but  
yeah. That hasn't gone away.

Zack nods.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

What about school?

ZACK

I'm homeschooled. That way I can  
ski everyday.

There's more there. Brooks choosing not to press.

BROOKS

Follow me. I gotta run you'll dig.

As Brooks pushes off, Zack quick to follow, we cut to --

EXT. BACKCOUNTRY RUN - LATER

Brooks flies down a SHIT-YOUR-PANTS RUN. Snow rooster tailing  
off his skis. His every move effortless. Graceful.

He rockets off a forty foot cliff, disappearing in a volcanic  
burst of white and then...

Reappears forty yards down the mountain, Zack hooting his  
praise from the top of the slope.

MOMENTS LATER.

Brooks leans over his poles, sucking in air, turning gaze  
back up the mountain. And that's because --

Zack has begun his descent.

On two skis, Zack is an illumination. A freak of nature. He  
carves a turn, and begins to -- deviate from Brooks' tracks.

BROOKS

*Where are you going...*

ON ZACK.

Dancing down an entirely separate cliff face. Deep in flow  
state. Vaulting from snow patch to snow patch.

And every time it seems like Zack has hit the end of his  
line, and will soon tumble to his death...

He finds a continuation to his route. One Brooks, or we for that matter, never even saw coming.

MOMENTS LATER.

Zack skis up to Brooks. Catches his breath. Finally noticing Brooks' stare.

ZACK  
What's up?

BROOKS  
I've never seen anyone ski that line before.

Beat.

ZACK  
Really?

BROOKS  
Yeah.

ZACK  
Well... it's there now.

A smile unfolds across Brooks' face.

ZACK (CONT'D)  
My best friend, he's a huge fan of yours... Do you think you can sign a dvd I brought for him?

Brooks chuckles.

BROOKS  
Sure, Zack.

EXT. RICK'S SKI RENTAL - DAY

A palatial ski chateau. Brooks' truck pulls up to a stop.

INT. RICK'S SKI RENTAL - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Close on - An old ski movie in a DVD case, Brooks on the cover, as a hand enters frame, inscribing a personalized autograph to "Scotty."

Reveal - Brooks as he finishes autographing the dvd, Zack and Rick standing near. He hands the DVD over to Zack.

BROOKS  
(re: DVD)  
This one's a classic.

ZACK  
Scotty's gonna lose his mind. I  
gotta call him now.

Zack bounds his way up the stairs.

RICK  
You just made his year.

BROOKS  
He's got a gift, Rick. Not only  
that, he's a good kid.

Rick nods.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
I took him on a run today, one I've  
skied probably a hundred times, and  
he found a line I've never even  
knew existed.

Beat.

RICK  
When his mother passed, I didn't  
know what to do with him. So, we  
skied. Morning, noon, night. I  
think it's how we grieved.  
(then)  
If he wanted to, he could win more  
gold downhill racing than Michael  
Phelps. But deep down, he's an  
extreme skier. Just like you were.  
That's where he's happiest.

BROOKS  
What's this about, Rick? I know you  
didn't come out here just so I  
could ski with your kid.

Rick nods. Brooks cutting to the chase.

RICK  
Zack wants to ski Alder Mountain...

Brooks' jaw lowers just so.

RICK (CONT'D)  
... with you.

A silence descends, then --

BROOKS

That mountain has a body count. One bad fall and he could --

RICK

I know.

BROOKS

And you'd let him ski it?

RICK

Short of chaining him to his bed, I have tried, done, said everything I possibly could to get him not to ski that mountain. But it's all he ever thinks about, and he's gonna ski it no matter what. You can't stop someone from doing what they were born to do. I think you, of all people, can understand that.

BROOKS

Has he seen the video of me --

RICK

I've made him watch that thing a dozen times. *But he's also seen the video of the first time you skied it...* And what you did that day was unparalleled.

Beat.

RICK (CONT'D)

No one knows that run better than you. No one's skied it better than you. You are the only person I trust taking my son up that mountain. It has to be you, Brooks. Otherwise...

There is no otherwise.

RICK (CONT'D)

Zack wants Alder Mountain to be his coming out party. And he wants that to happen with you by his side. After that, he signs with Red Bull. I can pay you fifty grand.

BROOKS

No, Rick.

RICK  
Seventy-five.

BROOKS  
When Lily was born, I promised my  
wife I'd never ski it again.

RICK  
What if you didn't ski it, what if  
you just --

BROOKS  
There's no way I'm setting foot on  
that summit without skiing down it.

Rick nods, understanding. He pulls out an envelope.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
What's this?

RICK  
For your time.

BROOKS  
Today was a favor.

Brooks turns to leave, stops, pivots back to Rick.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
He's better than me.

RICK  
I know.  
(then)  
All the ways you could be making a  
buck, and you're working on a  
loading dock. Why is that, Brooks?

BROOKS  
What's it matter to you?

RICK  
It doesn't.

Beat.

BROOKS  
Your son has my number.

INT. TEDDY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Brooks is under the sink, tools splayed out. Annie and Teddy  
stand near with stunned expressions on their faces.

TEDDY  
Seventy-five grand.

ANNIE  
Oh my god.

BROOKS  
Yup.

ANNIE  
When was the last time somebody --

TEDDY  
Five years ago. Casper Eriksson.

A beat passes. Whatever happened to Casper wasn't good.

ANNIE  
Kara would kill you.

BROOKS  
She would.

Beat.

ANNIE  
But if you did ski it, I'd understand why.

Brooks rises out from under the sink. He glances at Annie, then over to Teddy. Teddy nods, feeling the same way. *Brooks was not expecting this reaction from them...*

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
How often do you think about it?

BROOKS  
Alder? Every day.

TEDDY  
And do you think skiing it again --

BROOKS  
Maybe, maybe not. Maybe this time I'm not so lucky. Maybe I stop sitting in the god damn garage every night watching video of myself crash...

Beat.

ANNIE  
Rick's kid... is he as good as --

BROOKS

Better.

Brooks flips a switch, the garbage disposal's working again.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

And he'll ski it. Just not with me.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - EARLY MORNING

We're back in the Costco parking lot. Brooks looks out the window, to the contours of a storm brewing in the distance.

His cell vibrates with a text from Rick: *How about a hundred and fifty grand?* Brooks pockets his cell phone, and as a wind kicks up outside, we cut to --

BROOKS' POV SKIING ALDER MOUNTAIN.

Charging down that frozen waterfall of ice. Terror inducing. Skis screeching and cawing, when, in the blink of an eye --

The world is completely upended... and we begin to tumble.

INT. COSTCO - LOADING DOCKS - EARLY MORNING

Brooks shoulders two heavy containers, as we cut to --

BROOKS' POV SKIING ALDER MOUNTAIN.

Faster and faster we hurl downwards. Everything a sickening blur. Like we're in it. And it's our flesh and bone colliding with rock. And there's nothing we can do to stop it.

INT. COSTCO - AISLES - EARLY MORNING

Brooks stocks the shelves, really sweating. And as a gust of wind rattles a nearby window, we cut to --

BROOKS' POV SKIING ALDER MOUNTAIN.

We skid to a stop, blood now smearing the lens. We hear a sickening rasp, lungs punctured, as a --

Helicopter enters frame. And as it makes its descent, we turn camera towards Younger Brooks, resting on the snow.

And his eyes are filled with the crippling terror of a young man who knows he's about to die. We hear that awful rasp, and as a gurgle of blood trickles over his lips, we cut back to --

EXT. COSTCO - PARKING LOT - DAY

Brooks stands still. Haunted. He glances upwards, feathers of snow falling from a slate grey sky.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - LATER

Brooks keys the ignition, sighting Zack approaching.

MOMENTS LATER.

Brooks and Zack sit inside Brooks' idle truck.

ZACK

What's Snowtel forecasting?

BROOKS

Twelve inches tonight. Going clear in the morning.

Beat.

ZACK

How much did he offer you?

BROOKS

A hundred and fifty grand.

ZACK

I knew you'd say no.

BROOKS

You understand why?

Zack nods, sighting a scar on Brooks' neckline.

ZACK

How bad was it?

Brooks pauses. *How to answer this...*

BROOKS

I was in a coma for a month.  
Couldn't walk for six.

INSERT: We see quick cuts of Brooks in the operating Room. Scalpel and drill meet Brooks' neck and skull.

BACK ON: Zack digesting it all. This could be his fate.

ZACK

Were you scared?

BROOKS  
I'm always scared.

ZACK  
So am I.

Brooks turns to Zack. *He likes this kid...*

BROOKS  
Are you gonna still ski it?

ZACK  
I have to.

A beat passes. Brooks reaches into the back seat, retrieving two DVDS in a plastic grocery bag. Hands them to Zack.

BROOKS  
Raw footage. From the two times I  
skied it. Maybe they help ya.

A grateful Zack takes hold of the DVDs.

ZACK  
Thanks, Brooks.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - EVENING

Brooks drives home, still chewing on what Zack said. He hits a red light. *Tick, tick, tick, tick...* Brooks glances upwards, to the tapestry of snow falling down from above.

INTERCUT WITH: Video footage of the first time Brooks skied Alder Mountain. Time stamped, sans sound. And it's a feat of absolute brilliance. Younger Brooks flows down the face of the mountain. Absolutely no resistance. Like water.

On Brooks - turning focus back to the road, to that blinking red light. Wind gusts rocking his truck on its struts, when --

Brooks' gaze steels and he veers right onto the cross street.

EXT. RICK'S SKI RENTAL - NIGHT

Brooks knocks. A blustering wind sends flurries of snow twirling into the air. Rick swings open the front door.

RICK  
Brooks...

BROOKS

You really want your son to do this?

RICK

No, Brooks. But he's gonna ski it. And the only thing that would make me feel better about it, is if you were there with him.

Beat.

BROOKS

I'll need the money transferred into my bank account by tomorrow.

RICK

I can make that happen.

BROOKS

All I ask is that I ski it first, and no one knows about this until it's done. After that, anything else you need from me, interviews, I'll make it happen.

RICK

How much?

BROOKS

Two hundred and fifty grand.

This might make other men pause. Not Rick.

RICK

Okay.

BROOKS

What's your avalanche training?

RICK

Level two, both of us.

Brooks nods.

BROOKS

I need talk to Zack first.

INT. RICK'S SKI RENTAL - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Brooks, Rick, and Zack stand over a laptop, before which is a high res photograph of Alder Mountain. Even in photograph there's something sinister about it.

BROOKS

If we do this, everything has to be done right. Not only is this run fucking dangerous, the whole area is like the Bermuda Triangle of avalanches. And when it cracks, it cracks scary big.

Brooks points to a map of Alder Mountain.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

We ski tour up the ridge line to the base of the peak. There we dig a pit, makes sure the ski out's safe. Alder's so steep it auto-sluffs so there's barely any snow hanging anyways. If the pit's solid, Zack and I will hike up the back side and cut the cornice to get in line.

The house shakes and tremors from the storm outside.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

If either me or Zack aren't feeling it, or there's any signs of avy danger, we call it off. On the ski out, we go one at a time. It's a perfect avalanche slope - thirty-five degrees - so that means everyone follows my line. Absolutely no deviation.

RICK

I'm on board with that.

ZACK

Me too.

BROOKS

(to Zack)

What's your route?

ZACK

Same one you skied.

Zack rises. He doesn't need to look at the photograph. *He has it memorized by heart...*

Note: We insert quick, heart-pounding clips that coincide with each part of the run Zack mentions.

ZACK (CONT'D)

Hop off the cornice, get on the main spine. Hit the three cliffs, maybe I trick the last cliff.

BROOKS

Stomp that bottom cliff you'll be going sixty into that chute.

Zack nods.

ZACK

Shut my speed down, into the chute.

BROOKS

Middle section is gonna be pure ice. No mistakes or you'll crash like I did.

Brooks studies Zack.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

I hiked that summit three times before I had the balls to ski it. If you want to back out at anytime - I won't think any less of you.

Zack nods.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

I'm not trying to scare you, Zack, but one mistake and you can die.

Zack nods.

ZACK

When do we go?

BROOKS

Tomorrow morning.

The suddenness causes Rick and Zack to both pause.

RICK

Why so soon?

BROOKS

This storm's coming in wet and then it's gonna get cold. The snow'll bond better and make the steeper aspects.

RICK

Who can we get to shoot this thing?  
Red Bull's gonna want these photos.

ZACK

What about Teddy?

Off Brooks, considering.

INT. DOGWOOD'S - NIGHT

Teddy and Annie are at the bar mid meal, the two sharing a laugh with the bartender, when Teddy spots Brooks slip in through the glass door, a flurry of snow gusting in.

Teddy is quick to read his best friend's mood, sighting the pensive expression on Brooks' face.

MOMENTS LATER.

Brooks, Teddy, and Annie are huddled at a table tucked in the corner. A gust of wind rattles the windows, a few BAR PATRONS cheering on. For a long moment it's quiet, then...

ANNIE

When?

BROOKS

Tomorrow. It's the last good storm of the year. And I don't want Zack sitting around for months, getting all up in his head.

Annie nods. Brooks turns to Teddy.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

We're gonna need a photographer.

TEDDY

Of course.

ANNIE

You gonna tell Kara?

BROOKS

Not until it's done. I don't want her to worry.

ANNIE

Then I have to be there.

BROOKS

Annie...

ANNIE

Don't fight me on this. I always  
knew you were gonna ski it again,  
it was just a matter of when.

BROOKS

(to Teddy)

What do you think?

TEDDY

I think a part of you has been  
stuck up on that mountain ever  
since you crashed.

Brooks nods.

TEDDY (CONT'D)

I hope you bring him all back.

Annie rises from her chair, fighting back emotions.

ANNIE

I need a water. You two want  
anything?

Brooks and Teddy shakes their heads. Annie walks off.

BROOKS

If anything happens to me --

TEDDY

Don't. Don't --

BROOKS

If anything happens to me, the  
money'll be in my personal checking  
account.

Teddy nods, Brooks rising from his chair.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

I'll pick you both up at three AM.

INT. BROOKS' HOME - NIGHT

Brooks, dusted in snow, foots his way through the door. Kara  
greeting him with a kiss.

BROOKS

How was the hill?

KARA

Paradise was closed. But fun.

BROOKS  
I'm gonna head out tomorrow with  
Zack, Rick, Annie, and Teddy.

KARA  
Where?

BROOKS  
Elroy's.

Brooks finally notices Kara's giddy demeanor.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
What?

KARA  
Just been having fun.

BROOKS  
Doin what?

KARA  
(calls out)  
Lily...

Lily timidly steps into the living room. She's wearing a nice dress, her hair styled, with a lil bit of makeup on. *A twelve year old girl with so much life ahead of her...*

LILY  
(nervously)  
What do you think?

Brooks rises, taking his daughter's hands in his.

BROOKS  
You look... beautiful. Stunning.

LILY  
Dad...

BROOKS  
(to Kara)  
Blink and she's a teenager.

INT. BROOKS' HOME - NIGHT

Brooks sleeps, Kara curled up in his arms. Winds howl, beams creaking. Brooks stirs awake, eyes opening, as we cut to --

INT. RICK'S SKI RENTAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Rick walks down the hall. Peaks into a bedroom paying sight to Zack sleeping soundly. *He loves this kid so damn much...*

Rick lingers, scared and anxious over what tomorrow may bring, as we pan over to a window, the storm raging outside.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE - NIGHT

We're high up in the storm now over Crested Butte. Baleful swirls of razor sharp ice crystals churning chaotically. Faster and faster they twist and coil, until we cut to --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

A geological monster lit by a veiled moon. And in the presence of a storm... a monster awakened.

Snow falls in curtains of white, spin drifting like phantoms in the night.

Up close - A haunting play of shadows and light. Winds blast and howl. But what's really important is --

The conveyor belt of snow blowing up and over the peak, settling down on the leeward side of the mountain.

INT. BROOKS' HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Quick cuts of Brooks dialing in his pack. Avy beacon, avy probe, sat phone, skins, shovel, a snow saw, duct tape...

DING. Brooks glances to his phone. The money's been wired.

Brooks turns gaze down the hall.

LILY'S ROOM.

Brooks silently opens the door to Lily's room. Takes one last look at his daughter sleeping peacefully.

BROOKS AND KARA'S ROOM.

Brooks foots his way towards Kara. She stirs awake.

KARA

You off?

BROOKS

Yeah.

KARA  
Call me on your way back.

He kisses her goodbye, Kara curling back under the blanket.

EXT. EXXON GAS STATION - NIGHT

Rick nervously paces near his Escalade. Zack, sits shotgun. Headphones on, eyes closed, nodding to the music.

Brooks' truck pulls up. Teddy sitting shotgun, Annie in the back. Rick is quick to approach.

BROOKS  
How'd you sleep?

RICK  
I didn't.

BROOKS  
And Zack?

RICK  
Out by nine. He even stretched  
before we left.

Zack steps out of the Escalade.

BROOKS  
(to Zack)  
You ready?

ZACK  
Yeah.

BROOKS  
Let's get moving.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - PRE DAWN - VIGNETTE

Quick shots of -- Brooks' truck and Rick's Escalade motoring up a winding mountain road. Headlights cutting through the charcoal blackness ahead.

RICK'S ESCALADE.

Rick sneaks an anxious glance Zack's way. His son is one hundred percent in the zone. Not an ounce of fear on his youthful face.

BROOKS' TRUCK.

It's deathly quiet. The weight of where they are going resting heavy on all of their minds.

Brooks' flips on his signal, catching sight of Rick's car doing the same in the rear view mirror, the two cars soon turning down an UNMARKED FIRE ROAD, disappearing through --

A VEIL OF DARKNESS. *Prelap -- Beep. Beep. Beep....*

EXT. FIRE ROAD - DEAD END - PRE DAWN

Doors slam closed - *beep* - packs attached to backs - *beep* - radios turned on - *beep* - skins attached - *beep...*

Our five gear up, their headlamps the only source of light.

BROOKS  
Everyone beeping?

Brooks passes by, finishing the avy beacon check -- failing to see Zack tuck his avy beacon in his avalanche pack.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
When we go up the skin track, let's space it out just in case. It's a bitch of hike, so hydrate often.

Brooks pushes off through the trees, the rest soon following, as their headlamps ominously saw through the darkness.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - RIDGE - LATE MORNING

Aerial shot of our five now hoofing it up a thin mountain ridge. A sea of pine, dusted in snow, extends out for miles.

ON RICK AND ZACK.

Rick, huffing and puffing, turns to Zack.

RICK  
A heli sounds nice right about now.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - BASE OF PEAK - DAY

Brooks stops, reaching the base of the peak. He pulls out his shovel, turning to the others, all sucking in air.

BROOKS  
Let's dig a pit before we separate.  
Make sure that storm snow is bonded  
and settled.

(MORE)

BROOKS (CONT'D)

If it steps down to a weak layer,  
this whole area could slide big.

They all pull out their shovels and begin to dig.

LATER.

Brooks stands in a snow pit, performing an extended column test. He lightly taps on an isolated column of snow, everyone watching along closely. The snow pack holds.

Even still, something still irks Brooks.

TEDDY

Seeing that weak layer from  
December?

BROOKS

Yeah. Hard to get it to move.

RICK

Then it's bonded.

BROOKS

Not exactly.

Brooks steps out of the pit.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

... But it would take a lot. I feel  
comfortable with this pit, but it's  
a group call now.

"I'm good." "Me too..." Everyone speaks up. All in.

ZACK

So, it's on?

Brooks nods.

BROOKS

This is where we split up. Everyone  
buckle in your avalanche packs.

They all buckle up their avalanche packs, and --

For a second, not a single person moves. Then Annie approaches Brooks, hugging him tight. Next up is Teddy.

TEDDY

See you at the bottom.

Rick embraces his son.

RICK  
I'm proud of you. You know that  
right?

ZACK  
Yeah, Dad.

RICK  
Love you.

MOMENTS LATER.

Rick, Teddy, and Annie skin their way through the trees, Zack left gazing up at the peak of Alder Mountain. This next leg of the hike is gonna be a real bitch.

BROOKS  
Gotta earn it.

Zack nods, and as the two march forward, we cut to --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SUMMIT - DAY

Brooks and Zack reach the peak of Alder Mountain. Both exhausted. Lungs screaming, gulping in that thin air.

ZACK  
Jesus Christ...

They fall to their asses, catching their breaths, when --

BROOKS  
Take a look, Zack.

Zack lifts his gaze, sighting 360 degree, jetliner views.  
*Like standing on top of the world...*

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Let's get our triggers out.

Both Brooks and Zack unzip triggers to their avalanche airbag deployment. Brooks reaches for a radio affixed to his jacket.

BROOKS (INTO RADIO) (CONT'D)  
Checking in. We're at the top.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SKI OUT - CONTINUOUS

Teddy's getting his camera ready, affixing a telescoping lens. Rick has his binoculars out, offers em up to Annie.

ANNIE (INTO RADIO)

I see you.

BROOKS (OVER RADIO)

Heads up. We're gonna cut that cornice.

Rick checks his watch, warily glancing upwards.

RICK (INTO RADIO)

It's getting late, Brooks. Not trying to rush you guys, but if gets any hotter, those cornices could be a problem.

BROOKS (OVER RADIO)

Copy that.

ON BROOKS AND ZACK.

Brooks pulls out some rope from his pack, as we cut to --

LATER.

Brooks is roped in, Zack tied off to a stable point, belaying Brooks forward as Brooks jabs the snow pack with his shovel.

Further Brooks steps out, jabbing the snowpack, when --

BOOOOOOM. The entire cornice in front of him collapses, Brooks left dangling off the edge --

Staring straight down the face of the mountain.

Brooks safely takes a step back, then another. And another.

He glances back to Zack, the two snapping on their skis.

Zack works his way to edge, looks down the run, catching his first glimpse. He swallows his fear, muttering --

ZACK

Holy shit.

BROOKS

If I had any doubts about you, I would've never brought you up here.

It's simple and sincere and just what Zack needs to hear.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SKI OUT - MOMENTS LATER

Teddy gazes up at the peak.

TEDDY (INTO RADIO)  
How you guys doing up there?

                  BROOKS (OVER RADIO)  
Two minutes out. Just doing our  
boots up.

                  TEDDY (INTO RADIO)  
Ready when you are.

And as Teddy positions himself behind his camera, we get our first dead on view of the beast that is Alder Mountain.

- A dead drop entry gives way to a series of snowy cliffs hanging off the side of the mountain. Below that... menacing rock, the passageway through seemingly nonexistent.

- Only way down now is hard left through a vertical chute between two exposed mountain faces. One more hard turn, and there's a ridge leading to an icy couloir.

If this means nothing to you, that's okay. Just know that this is a run no human being should ever attempt to ski.

Which is exactly what Brooks is about to do.

ON BROOKS.

Inhaling deeply, slapping his helmet. He offers up a silent prayer to whatever gods may be listening, then --

Plummets right off the side of the mountain.

He lands on the first cliff - like a pillar hanging over an open sky. A two hundred foot, vomit inducing fall below.

Second cliff, third cliff, fourth cliff... Brooks poll plants and vaults his way onto each precarious hanging snowfield. We hear nothing but skis crunching on snow, breaths, and grunts.

The snowpack trembling and fracturing underneath his skis. *As if it could give way at any moment...*

And as he bounds off the final ledge, we cut to --

ON RICK, ANNIE, AND TEDDY.

All three breathless. Eyes glued onto Brooks.

ON BROOKS.

Zig-zagging through a maze of rock, The slope near vertical. His line indecipherable.

He carves a hard arc, picking up speed, 30mph, 40mph... Legs trembling underneath his skis, unable to perform another turn, and just as he's about to sail off the mountain --

Brooks disappears through the thinnest of chutes, Like a bullet passing through the chamber of gun.

Out of the chute he passes, 50mph, 60mph... Brooks checks his speed, *or at least tries to.* He negotiates one last turn, skis beneath his feet kissing the ridge, and --

Drops down into the couloir -- A FROZEN WATERFALL OF ICE.

His skis SCREAMING and SHRILLING, the ice beneath offering up zero coherence. Brooks is about to crash right into the side of the mountain face, tumbling to his death, when he --

Jump cuts. Turns. Jump cuts again...

ON RICK, ANNIE, TEDDY.

Frozen in observance, dialed into Brooks' every move.

ON BROOKS.

As he passes out of the couloir, carving into a deep turn, and lets loose. Skis vibrating underneath his feet, flying down the rest of the mountain's face...

Hockey-stopping before Rick, Annie, and Teddy. Annie and Teddy running towards. Brooks is shaking - pumped.

He's just slayed the beast that upended his entire life.

The two embrace Brooks in a hug. Brooks smiles. Grateful to be alive. Grateful to have friends like Annie and Teddy.

But then that smiles fades away, the moment ever so subtle.

It's as if whatever internal peace Brooks had hoped to gain in skiing this mountain again... he's failed in achieving.

Even so, it's Zack his thoughts turn to. Reaching for his shoulder radio as he turns gaze back up to the summit.

ON ZACK.

All alone as he stands on the precipice of the run. Brooks' voice, calm and assuring, echoes out of his shoulder radio.

BROOKS (OVER RADIO)  
The coulie's a sheet of ice. Just gotta point it.

ZACK (INTO RADIO)  
Copy that.

BROOKS (OVER RADIO)  
Ski out's perfect. You can shut  
your speed down there.

Zack powers on the GoPro attached to his helmet.

TEDDY (OVER RADIO)  
It's on you, Zack. Call your drop.

Zack inhales. In and out. Sneaks a glance over the edge,  
paling in color. Staving off feelings of absolute terror.

ZACK (INTO RADIO)  
Ten, nine, eight, seven...

ON BROOKS, RICK, ANNIE, TEDDY.

ZACK (OVER RADIO) (CONT'D)  
Six, five, four --

And then nothing. Silence. A long beat passes.

BROOKS  
Teddy?

TEDDY  
He's just standing there.

Another long beat passes. This is bad. Really bad. Then --

RICK  
He's lost his head. We gotta get  
him off of there.

BROOKS  
Not yet.

RICK (INTO RADIO)  
Zack. Zack....

BROOKS  
Stay off the radio.

RICK  
Don't tell me how to deal with my  
kid.  
(into radio)  
Hey, Zack. Let's call it off.

Brooks steals away Rick's radio.

BROOKS  
Give him a minute.

Thirty seconds of silence. Brooks glances to Teddy.

TEDDY  
(re: Zack)  
Hasn't moved.

BROOKS (INTO RADIO)  
On your count, Zack.

More silence. Rick's about ready to fly off the handle.

RICK  
*Jesus, fucking --*

BROOKS  
Stay off the radio.

ON ZACK.

Pushing back from the ledge. Head down, over poles. Breath sawing in and out, when he glances up, and --

ZACK (INTO RADIO)  
Three, two, one.

Zack drops in.

ON BROOKS, RICK, ANNIE, TEDDY.

All eyes on Zack, Rick's heart hammering in his chest.

ON ZACK.

Lunging from cliff to cliff, the last of which he --

Throws in a backflip.

He stomps his landing, but barely.

ON BROOKS, RICK, ANNIE, AND TEDDY.

Annie turns away. Can't watch anymore.

ON ZACK.

Snaking through the treacherous crag. Sluffs of snow now rushing behind him -- *could this become an avalanche?*

He passes through the chute, carves a hard turn, that sluff of snow growing larger and larger...

He passes through the couloir, skis grating against ice --  
 That raging sluff of snow gaining ground, when it --  
Entirely envelopes Zack in a billow of white smoke.

For a split second, Zack disappears. Until he reemerges from the sluff like a ghost, firing out of that couloir.

ON BROOKS, RICK, ANNIE, AND TEDDY.

All three hooting and hollering. *The kid did it...*

ON ZACK.

Skiing to a stop before Rick, quick to embrace him in a hug. Both overcome with a flood of emotions.

Zack turns to Brooks, and hugs him so damn tight it's like we could hear Brooks' ribs cracking.

On Rick, watching his son hug Brooks. That smile fading, feeling like an ass. He almost pulled the plug.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SKI OUT - EARLY MORNING

The five gather round Teddy's camera, all hydrating up for the next leg, reviewing shots taken from Zack's run.

ZACK  
 (re: photos)  
 Almost over rotated.

BROOKS  
 You stomped it tough.

ZACK  
 The couloir?

BROOKS  
 Middle section was bullet proof.

ZACK  
 Felt like I was shot out of a gun.

Brooks points to another photo of Zack.

BROOKS  
 That's Doug Coombs right there.

ZACK  
 You ever ski with him?

TEDDY

Brooks spent two winters with Doug  
at La Grave.

ZACK

*You skied La Grave with Doug  
Coombs?!?!*

We might not know who Doug Coombs is, but Zack sure does.

On Rick - painfully aware of his misstep earlier. He looks up  
at Brooks and Zack, palling around like they're best friends.

ANNIE

How do ya feel, Zack?

Zack mulls over the question.

ZACK

Like I just walked on the moon.  
Like I could lie down right now and  
sleep for two weeks.

BROOKS

The adrenaline's wearing off.

ANNIE

Brooks? How do you feel?

Brooks forces a smile. Covering well.

BROOKS

Like it's time to get moving.

And just like that, it gets very serious. All turning gaze  
down to the second half of Alder Mountain. It may not be the  
first leg, but it's still not for the faint of heart.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Teddy, wanna get some shots of  
everyone coming down individually?

Teddy reaches for his snowboard. Everyone follows suit.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

We still got that weak layer so  
stay right of Teddy's tracks. At  
the end of the run there's a higher  
spot skier's right we can all meet  
up at.

Everyone nods. And off goes Teddy --

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
 (to Zack)  
 Didn't think you'd trick it.

ZACK  
 Didn't think I was gonna ski it.

And then goes Brooks --

Zack glances to Rick, seeing his father stewing in his feelings. Goes to say something, but chooses otherwise.

And off skis Zack --

It's just Rick and Annie now. Skis off, she adjusts her boot.

ANNIE  
 You okay?

RICK  
 Yeah. I'm great.

Beat.

ANNIE  
 After today, everything's gonna change for Zack. I saw it with Brooks.

Rick glances over to Annie, her words sincere.

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
 I saw it with Brooks.

RICK  
 Train's moving now...

Rick pushes off, Annie taking seat. That damn boot buckle still not clicking in, Annie failing to witness Rick --

Drifting further and further left of Teddy's tracks.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SIDE RUN - DAY

Rick floats through the chest deep powder, his inner world a messy swirl. Deep, deep in his own feelings.

He comes to, realizing he's drifted off course. Rick cuts right, catching a bit of air, but when he lands --

His skis impact the snowpack with a CRUNCH. And beneath the evening's freshly fallen snow...

Below two distinct layers of snowpack...

We pay witness to a --

A CRACK FORMING.

ONE THAT LIGHTNING BOLTS ALL THE WAY UP THE MOUNTAIN.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SKI OUT - SECONDS LATER

Annie strains, finally getting her boot buckle to lock up. She sighs, gazing up at that easter blue sky, when --

BROOKS (O.S.)  
(over shoulder mic)  
Where's Rick?

Annie sits up - *he's not down yet?* She rises to her feet when, six hundred feet behind her --

The mountain fractures like a pain of glass.

WHOOMPH-BOOM!!!

The snow beneath her ski boots fractures like a spiderweb. Annie pales like a ghost, putting two and two together --

ANNIE  
AVALANCHE!!!

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SECOND SKI OUT - CONTINUOUS

All is quiet, Brooks turning to Zack.

BROOKS  
Hear that?

Brooks glances back up the mountain, when he hears it again, only this time over his shoulder radio.

ANNIE (OVER RADIO)  
AVALANCHE!!!

Brooks locks eyes with Zack.

BROOKS  
GO!!!!

The two scramble to escape the table top, both wearing expressions of pure dread on their faces.

Brooks sees Teddy running for his snowboard. His stomach bottoms out, knowing his friend is done for.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
 (to Teddy)  
 Pull your trigger!!!

Woomph!!! Teddy pulls on his trigger, popping his avalanche airbag - a large, orange halo inflating behind his head.

And that's when Brooks hears what's coming.

Faint at first. Then louder. *Much, much louder.*

And it sounds like a hundred thousand lost souls calling out from beyond the grave.

Upslope, treetops bend like they were leaves of grass, that roar, *that wailing shriek*, growing louder, when --

Rick emerges through the trees with the look of a man who's just sent them all to their graves.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
 (to Rick)  
 GO LEFT! POP YOUR --

Woomph! Rick deploys his avalanche airbag, hightailing it left, as Brooks and Zack break loose onto a downward slope.

ON ANNIE.

Bulleting down the mountain face, desperate to escape the slide track toward a ridge-line of trees, as we reveal --

A massive tsunami of white racing behind her.

Ten feet high. Churning with an unholy malevolence.

Slabs of concrete, the size of small cars, SNAPPING trees. The sound akin to repetitive SHOTGUN BLASTS.

And then there's Annie.

*Knowing she's done for...*

A tidal wave of fear comes over her. She reaches for the avalanche bag trigger on her shoulder strap, only it's --

Still zipped up. Her fingers fumble with the zipper, when --

The blast from the powder cloud knocks her sideways.

Like a gust from a hurricane. WHOOOOSH.

She crashes, body twisting and contorting. Her right arm SNAPS, Annie SCREAMS, just as the --

Avalanche SMASHES into her, BULL-DOZING Annie forward. Like a herd of stampeding buffalo, flinging her --

*Upwards, sideways, down...* Annie thrashed, bashed, clobbered, and assaulted from every which direction. And still...

Annie desperately attempts to unzip her airbag trigger.

Only each time Annie's fingers graze the zipper, her arm is ripped away. Skis acting as anchors, pulling her down.

With her last breath, Annie cries out in fear, just as she is sucked underneath an abominable sea of white.

ON RICK.

Frantically skiing past pine and geology. Straining to gain speed. He can't see the avalanche but, he can hear it.

The RUMBLE, the SHRIEKS, the CLACKS, the CRACKS...

Growing louder and louder... when --

The edge of his left ski clips some unseen rock.

Rick skids, losing balance, fighting to stay upright.

The tip of his ski nicks a tree root, and Rick --

Pirouettes, crashing down hard onto his left shoulder.

Arm bone dislocates from socket. His face a rictus of pain. And as he slide-tumbles down the mountain --

Pin-balling against tree and rock, the avalanche raging behind him...

RICK SUDDENLY FALLS.

Arms flailing, his fingers CLASP ahold of a rock. A forty-foot drop beneath him as a waterfall of frozen water cascades over his head. Rick loses grip and --

PLUMMETS YET AGAIN.

But this time he jams his left hand...

Inside a small fissure in the cliff face. He SCREAMS.

Face betraying utter agony as the bones in his hand SHATTER as if they were caught in a vice.

Rick digs his other hand into that same fissure, holding on for dear life, cause --

*It's not the four story fall that would kill him...*

It's all the tons of snow rushing overhead that would entomb him in a snowy grave. Rick dying of asphyxiation.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

We travel above the dragon fully awakened.

Never has the color white carried with it such a feeling of dread. Only it's not so much white, more... grey.

A nightmarish river of snow littered with rocks, ice slabs, broken tree limbs, chunks of earth...

Mature trees snap in two - CRACK-CRACK-CRACK-CRACK!

The sound like intermittent machine gunfire on a battlefield.

Annie materializes in the avalanche's flow.

She GASPS, *alive*, gulping out for oxygen like a dying fish brought to deck.

The slide funnels her through a gully as she reaches out one last time for her avy bag trigger to no avail.

And just like that... she disappears underneath the avalanche's current -

Her skis pulling her down below the surface.

She rises again, eyes bulging, sighting Teddy thirty feet away. The two lock eyes just as --

CRACK!!! Teddy is whipped sideways into a pine tree, avalanche bag ripping open with a pop.

His wail swallowed up by the slide's ear-splitting concerto.

ANNIE

TEDDY! TE--

Only her second cry is cut abruptly short. And we follow Annie as she is sucked again...

BELOW THE SURFACE.

Spinning inside this tornado of white. The snow like the devil's sawdust, filling her lungs, her nostrils...

Deeper and deeper she is sucked down, choking on snow, struggling to keep her arms in front of her face...

Until only darkness prevails, and we SMASH CUT TO --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SECOND LEG - CONTINUOUS

Brooks ripping down the mountain, Zack trailing.

Brooks and Zack deploy their avalanche packs. Woomph! Woomph!

Behind the two, the avalanche closes the distance, swallowing up everything in its path. Growing in size --

Brooks screams out to Zack, only Zack, *and we for that matter*, can't make out a word he's said. Words drowned out in the wash. Moving tighter on Brooks, his words become clear.

BROOKS  
COVER-YOUR-FACE. COVER-YOUR--

KA-BOOM! Zack covers his face just as he is engulfed in an explosion of white. Not a half a second later...

Brooks succumbs to the same fate. And it's Brooks we stay with, body spun furiously every which way.

FROM A DISTANCE.

It's like the entire mountain has been dynamited. Brooks just a speck of a thing lost in a wrathful sea of white.

ON BROOKS.

As he narrowly misses colliding with a tree. His goggles are torn from his head, fractures of ice pelting his face like broken glass, then...

He spins again, missing one tree, grazing another... Kicking hard, fighting, rising above the surface, when --

Brooks latches around a TREE BRANCH, holding on for dear life as the river of snow tries to suck him back down.

His right ski pant is now torn and jagged, boot broken in half, socked foot exposed to the elements.

Struggling, in pain, Brooks raises his chest above the tree limb, searching for Annie, for Teddy, for Zack...

When the tree he has taken refuge on is COMPLETELY UPROOTED, Brooks flung back into the washing machine.

Rocks, ice chunks, wood fragments supplanting detergent.

Brooks once again spinning so violently inside this beastly blur of white that we can hardly tell up from down.

He's raked over rocks. Crying out in pain, eyes gaping wide from some unknown injury, when his head --

CRACKS against... *something*. Hard to tell what in this maelstrom. His helmet instantly split in two.

His pupils dilate. Concussed, vision blurry, Brooks catches the briefest glimpse of an unconscious Annie as --

Time seems to slow.

And Annie seems peaceful, ethereal...

But this vision of his sister is so fleeting we wonder if it was just something manufactured in Brooks' concussed brain.

And as Brooks is sucked further and further below the surface of the slide, images just a blur of shadow and light. We...

RISE UP.

And up. *And up...* and out of the avalanche's flow. A frozen river of bedlam traveling eighty MPH down slope.

Sucking up and destroying everything in its path, until the avalanche reaches the RUNOUT ZONE --

Snow compiling like a massive car wreck on the Grapevine.

And we hold. *And hold...* Until the last bit of snow settles.

COMPACTING LIKE CEMENT.

The sound akin to a zipper fastening tight.

*And then silence. Awful, awful silence.*

Not a single bird chirping or wind whispering through treetop.

And what we glimpse down below is almost unrecognizable. Like looking down onto the surface of some inhospitable planet.

INSERT: A digital clock over black. It starts. 00:00:00, 00:00:01... And as it tick, tick, ticks away as, we see:

THE RUNOUT ZONE -- A morbid pile of snow and organic matter rising nearly three stories high.

THE AVALANCHE PATH -- Hundreds and hundreds of tree trunks, snapped in half. What remains akin to a field of jagged stalagmites rising up from the floor of a cave.

Traveling up and over the entirety of the avalanche's wreckage, we pay witness to the convex walls of the avalanche's track. To the flotsam and jetsam...

*To a single, flayed GLOVE resting on the snow...*

And just when it seems like the avalanche's path will never end, we finally come to a stop at --

THE START ZONE -- Our lens settling on the CROWN, as marble-sized bits of snow trickle down over its lip. Behind the crown - thirty percent of the slope's snowpack still intact.

Another sleeping dragon that could awaken at any moment.

SMASH TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. ATHLETE'S TENT - TOP OF THE RUN - VIDEO FOOTAGE

Close on -- Younger Brooks. The footage antiquated. A look of resolve burning across his youthful face. He may still look like a kid, but we can see in his eyes that something deep inside him has shifted dramatically. For better or worse.

We pull back as Younger Brooks straps a heavy brace onto his knee. He skinnies himself into a racing suit, fresh surgical scars scattered across his body.

MALE COMMENTATOR (O.S.)

Eighteen months ago, Brooks  
Provence was told he'd never ski  
again. In just a few moments, he  
will be making his dramatic return.

*Beep. Beep.. Beep...*

EXT. FIS ALPINE SKI EVENT - RACE COURSE - FLASHBACK

Younger Brooks fires down the race course, tearing through the gates. He's linking up his turns...

Headed down a blind right footer, and CATCHES AN EDGE.

He spins out, CRASHING HARD, skis and poles sent flying. And as he slowly rises to his feet, we break into a --

MONTAGE.

Brooks competes in race after race. Crashing again and again. Each one more devastatingly brutal than the next --

Until the camera holds on Younger Brooks after his last crash. He slowly rises to his feet, struggling to fight back tears, knowing that his career is over and done with.

FEMALE COMMENTATOR (O.S.)  
 ... Brooks Provence is not the same skier he once was. He's just not...

We pull back to reveal --

INT. BROOKS' HOME - GARAGE - DAY

We're playing on that old laptop. *Only it's now Lily who's watching...* She takes a moment, processing. Her heart breaking to learn this bit of backstory about her dad.

KARA (O.S.)  
 Hey Lil, still wanna get a few runs in? Mountain closes in an hour...

Lily pauses, then closes the laptop shut.

INT. BROOKS' HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Kara, dressed for the mountain, fires off a text to Brooks: *Hitting up the hill with Lily before it closes. love u.*

Lily approaches, wearing a jacket five sizes too big.

KARA  
 Is that your dad's old jacket?

LILY  
 Yeah...

KARA  
 Looks good on you.

Kara rolls up the extra long sleeves, as we cut to --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - DAY

An arm. A leg. A jawline smeared in blood. Each piece CORPSE-LIKE in its stillness. Pulling back -- We reveal Brooks, half buried in the snow. Orange airbag encircling his head. Body twisted like a pretzel.

The world still. Devoid of sound, of movement, when --

Brooks' eyes snap open. He sucks in air like a drowning victim resuscitated back from the dead.

INSERT: The digital clock. 00:03:24, 00:03:25...

*Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick...*

ON BROOKS.

His face contorts in an aftershock of pain.

Shallow breaths, the pain dissipating. Brooks coming back to consciousness. To the terror of the now.

He wrenches his right arm free, twisting his head.

But his chest, legs, and left arm... they're cemented in place. Hard to tell exactly how deep underneath the snow.

He draws in a breath, then another. Deep and slow.

BROOKS  
 (a whisper)  
 Annie... Teddy... Zack...  
 (a scream)  
 ANNIE!!! TEDDY!!!

Cries that vanish into the wind.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
 ZACK-TEDDY-RICK-ANNIE-ZACK-TEDDY...

Again and again he calls out their names to no response, Brooks staving off feelings of panic.

He pauses, choking back his grief. *They're dead. Have to be.*

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
 No, no, no...

Brooks tries to sit up, pushing morbid thoughts aside. But the snow is like a Buick parked on his chest. Immovable.

He strains to free himself, thrashing, using every ounce of strength he has, but his efforts are all for naught.

Brooks turns focus to his buried arm, using his one free appendage like a fulcrum.

Pushing and heaving, face contorting, but the snow...

*It's like he's been entombed in concrete.*

He catches his breath, expression stilling. The starkness of his circumstances washing over him like a somber fog.

*This is his death. Where it all ends...*

On the side of a mountain, half buried in snow. The thought of that like a thousand pound anchor, pulling him under.

Glove torn off in the slide, Brooks uses his bare fingers to *chip-chip-chip* away at the snow above his buried arm.

Only it's like trying to dig through asphalt.

Soon his finger tips are bloody, painting the snow with streaks of crimson. A half an inch deep, *if even*, concave indentation the only progress he's made in freeing his arm.

But still... Brooks has to try. For Kara. For Lily.

His gaze becomes myopic. Possessed. Carving and chipping with that one free hand. Bloody fingers be damned.

WIDE SHOT.

Brooks just this... minuscule thing. Hardly even noticeable amongst all the wreckage. Nature impartial to the outcome.

ON BROOKS.

Digging with a possessed fervor. That indentation blood soaked. A nail half ripped from his index finger.

He THRASHES again. Jaw flexing, veins in his neck bulging. Trying anything and everything to free his damn arm.

Only it's to no avail...

That arm, it's still trapped. He sucks in air, already winded, breath sawing in and out. Growing still.

Really, really still.

He closes his eyes as a --

Look of surrender washes across his snow flecked face.

But no. *No, no, no. Fuck that.*

And Brooks continues to dig...

With bloody fingers. Unaware of the salty tear carving a path down his blood stained cheek, when --

*Crunch..... Crunch..... Crunch.*

Only Brooks still claws away at the snow. A man possessed.

CRUNCH-CRUNCH....CRUNCH-CRUNCH....CRUNCH-CRUNCH.

And then he hears it. The crunching. Glancing up to see --

A haggard and weary RICK stumbling his way towards him, right arm dangling from his dislocated shoulder.

Brooks' eyes widen in disbelief, as we hard cut to --

MOMENTS LATER.

A metal spade pierces into snow.

Rick shovels away at the snow entombing Brooks, but with his arm dislocated, and his other hand broken...

It's like he's barely scratching away at the surface.

A lightning bolt of pain shoots up Rick's bad arm. He collapses, the pain enough to make him heave.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Breathe. In and out.

Rick breaths. In and out.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Gimme the shovel.

Brooks takes hold of the shovel, chipping away at the snow above his trapped arm. Rick's mind running a mile a minute.

RICK

Where's Zack --

BROOKS

I don't know.

RICK

-- Annie, Teddy --

Face straining, Brooks wrenches his arm free.

BROOKS

Help me.

Brooks plants his elbows onto the snow pack, pushing with all his might, as Rick yanks on Brooks' avalanche pack.

INSERT: Digital clock reads: 00:06:08, 00:06:09....

Grunting, huffing, grimacing, Brooks writhes his way to freedom, immediately tearing open his pack, pulling out --

A SATELLITE PHONE, only it's been so badly smashed Brooks doesn't even make an attempt at powering it on.

Brook pulls out his beacon, turning it to search mode, and --

Decks Rick right in the jaw.

For a moment it's quiet. Brooks looming over Rick.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Follow Teddy's line. No deviation.  
What part didn't you understand???

Rick turns away like a scolded child. It's quiet, then --

RICK  
I'm sorry. I just... spaced.

BROOKS  
You spaced?!? Get up.

RICK  
I'm so, so -

BROOKS  
We don't have time. Get up.

Rick stands.

RICK  
Did you tell anyone where we --

BROOKS  
No. Get your probe and beacon out.

RICK  
An email, a text --

BROOKS  
Get your probe and beacon out.

Rick pulls out his avalanche probe. Fumbles with his beacon.

RICK  
How long do they have?

Brooks steals away his avy beacon. Turns it to search mode.

RICK (CONT'D)  
If they're buried underneath, how  
long do they --

BROOKS

Fifteen minutes. Twenty minutes.  
Depends on if they have an air  
pocket. If they kept their hands in  
front of face.

INSERT: Digital clock. 00:07:48, 00:07:49...

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Gimme your arm.

Rick hesitates.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

We don't have time, Rick. Give me  
your arm.

Rick raises up his busted arm and --

POP! Brooks tugs on his dislocated arm, the ball reset into  
socket. Rick lets out a breathless cry, the pain unbearable.

Only Brooks pays no mind, eyes already turning to --

The debris field ahead of him.

*Seems like it goes on forever.*

Brooks takes a step forward, finally noticing that his right  
ski boot is missing...

His exposed sock nothing but tatters.

We prelap voices. Happy, drunken voices. as we cut to --

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE - PARKING LOT - DAY

It's a madhouse. The parking lot slammed with giddy out-of-  
towners. We find Kara and Lily buckling up their boots.

RHIDI (O.S.)

Hey, girl...

Kara glances up, seeing Rhidi and Dale. She approaches.

KARA

What a zoo.

RHIDI

I know. You just getting here?

Kara nods. The two hug.

RHIDI (CONT'D)

Same.

KARA

Lily had a half day.

DALE

Where's Brooks?

KARA

Skiing Elroy's with --

Rhidi and Dale exchange a glance.

KARA (CONT'D)

What?

RHIDI

We just skied it. Didn't see him.

Dale shrugs.

DALE

He probably called an audible.

KARA

Yeah.

RHIDI

Guy's a wizard. Just knows.

Kara smiles, but something doesn't sit right with her.

MOMENTS LATER.

Kara walks towards the chair lift where Lily has met up with a few of her FRIENDS. She dials Brooks, getting voicemail.

KARA (O.S.)

Brooks, it's me. Call me when you get this.

Kara pockets her cell. Calling out to Lily.

KARA (CONT'D)

You girls go ahead. Have fun.

LILY

What's wrong?

KARA

Nothing's wrong. Just waiting on your dad. I'll pick you up later.

Lily and her friends push off, Kara now dialing Annie.

EXT. ALDER CREEK - AVALANCHE PATH - DAY

Avalanche beacons in hand, Brooks and Rick (his arm now in an improvised sling) trip and stumble over the rotten snow.

It's like walking through a minefield.

Each exhaustive step bringing with it the possibility of a twisted knee or ankle. Close on -- Brooks' foot.

A ski strap and a spare ski jacket now acting as a makeshift boot. Brooks and Rick are running on pure adrenaline.

Thoughts solely focused on saving their loved ones.

RICK  
ZACK!!!

BROOKS  
*Too much...*

RICK  
TEDDY-ANNIE-ZACK!!!

Brooks surveys the avalanche field before him.

INSERT: Digital clock. 00:09:51, 00:09:52...

ON BROOKS AND RICK.

BROOKS  
We can't cover it all. No time.

Rick points towards a pile up of snow across a ravine.

RICK  
That pile up.

BROOKS  
(disagrees)  
All that snow came from the left.

He motions to two spots fifty and eighty yards ahead.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
There. We search em both.

Only Rick has his doubts, still eyeing the pile up.

RICK  
But what if --

BROOKS

They're not. And from here on out  
you do exactly what I say.

We prelap the grumble of a --

EXT. HIGHWAY 734 - AFTERNOON

A two lane highway, mountains rising up on either side. A BIG RIG WOOSHES past as we are transported inside a --

INT. BIG RIG - CAB - CONTINUOUS

Sitting behind the wheel is a dump truck of a man, MURPHY, 50s, navigating his eighteen wheeler down this twisting mountain highway. He sips his coffee, sleep deprived, a bump in the road causing him to spill a lil' on his flannel.

MURPHY

(re: spill)

Sonofa--

He glances up, gaze instantly widening, as --

STREET LEVEL VIEW.

SCREEEEEECH!!!! Tires lock up over black ice, hissing, when --

KA-BOOOOM!!! The metal grill of his big rig SMASHES into fallen rock and trees, instantly crushing like a tin can.

INSIDE THE CAB.

Glass everywhere shatters like confetti, airbags blasting open, as the entire cab is COMPACTED LIKE AN ACCORDION.

ARIEL VIEW.

The end of the TRAILER smashes into the back of the cab. Forty thousand pounds of payload LIFTED OFF THE GROUND, as --

The trailer is VAULTED into the air and WHIPPED sideways...

Tipping over, crashing down, and sliding onto pavement.

Metal grinding against cement with an earsplitting shrill.

The trailer DETACHES from the cab, flung across the two lane highway like an arrow shot from a bow, until...

CRASH-BOOM! The trailer collides with roadside pine --

Cleaving a path through the old growth bordering the highway.

ARIEL VIEW.

Plumes of smoke rise up from the big rig's engine.

The entire highway blocked. A door flings open and --

Miraculously, astonishingly... Murphy stumbles his way out of the cab. Glances back in horror at his wrecked big rig truck.

And just as he's about to let out a scream, we hard cut to --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - AFTERNOON

Silence.

Brooks and Rick crawling and tripping over the two separate sections of debris. And with each second that passes --

Their feeling of panic, of dread, mushroom.

And their beacons? Not. A single. Beep.

INSERT: Digital clock. 00:19:58, 00:19:59...

The clock strikes 00:20:00 - each subsequent time now red in color - as we prelap the boom of a base drum.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE MOUNTAIN - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

Kara stands near her Explorer, cell to ear. Some nearby college students cracking beers, blasting music.

KARA (INTO CELL)

What about in the turnout? Did you see Brooks' car? Any other --

Rhidi approaches.

KARA (INTO CELL) (CONT'D)

If you see him, have him call me.

CLICK.

RHIDI

Anything?

KARA

No one's seen em.

Kara raises up a list she made of skiers / ski spots.

KARA (CONT'D)

(re: list)

Everyone on this list was skiing in the backcountry today, and no one saw Brooks, or Annie, or --

RHIDI

Take a breath.

KARA

He always tells me where he's going. And if he switches it up, he calls.

Kara grabs her keys out of her purse. Remembers --

KARA (CONT'D)

*Lily* - can you pick her up later?

RHIDI

Course.

Kara hops in her car, keying her ignition.

KARA

God damn it, Brooks...

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - DAY

On Brooks -- reads the terrain ahead, hunting for a clue. A piece of clothing, a broken ski... when his gaze falls upon a deer up ahead - cleaved in half.

Nature's fury on full display.

He glances over to Rick, scratching his way up slope.

INSERT: Digital clock. 00:24:39. 00:24:40...

Brooks' plods his way forward, his choked gaze flip flopping between the rubble ahead and the beacon in his hand.

BROOKS

Beep-you-son-of-a-bitch. Be--

CRACK! Brooks slips, his reconstructed knee painfully BASHING down onto a chunk of ice. He rolls over in pain, *that hurt like hell*, when --

beep.

Only that beep didn't come from Brooks' beacon.

beep - beep - beep.

It came from Rick's.

ON RICK.

Frozen. The air impossibly still. Hand trembling. Staring at his avalanche beacon like it could vanish from his hands at any moment. He takes a wide step forward...

And his avalanche beacon goes agonizingly SILENT.

Rick pivots, going the other direction, when --

beeeeeeeep.

Rick turns to Brooks, who's already sprinting his way.

MOMENTS LATER.

An avalanche probe pierces through the snow like a lance. Makes contact. The probe reading --

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Two feet.

SECONDS LATER.

Brooks digs furiously, Rick standing in watch.

Brooks tosses his shovel, clawing away at snow, when...

An avy pack appears, airbag deployed. And it belongs to --

RICK

ZACK!

Brooks yanks on the avalanche pack, only...

It's just that. NO ZACK.

Brooks continues to dig, shoveling harder and harder, until an awful realization sets in that - Zack could be anywhere.

Brooks zips open the pack, turning off Zack's beacon. He reluctantly rises to his feet.

RICK (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Why are you stopping??? Brooks --

BROOKS

We gotta keep searching.

RICK  
He's there! My son is --

BROOKS  
Your son could be anywhere.

RICK  
No, no...

Rick falls to his knees, begins digging with one hand.

RICK (CONT'D)  
That's his pack. He's close, he's  
gotta be --

BROOKS  
He could be five feet away, he  
could be five hundred feet --

RICK  
Help me!

Rick is inconsolable, and Brooks has no time to console him. He pushes forward, beacon in hand, leaving Rick behind.

And we stay on Rick, digging and digging with his one hand, until the futility of his actions hit him like a boulder.

RICK (CONT'D)  
What have I done...

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - LATER

Brooks crawls up white rubble. Avalanche beacon ominously silent. He glances back, seeing Rick now trailing behind.

RICK  
Zack!!!

Silence. This doesn't feel like a rescue mission anymore. It feels more like a search party for the dead.

INSERT: Digital clocks reads 00:30:36. *Tick, tick, tick...*

For a long moment it's quiet, then --

RICK (CONT'D)  
I was jealous. Seeing the way he  
was with you. That's why I --

It's an admission of guilt. Why he spaced. Only Brooks just pushes on forward, no time to offer words of comfort.

RICK (CONT'D)  
You're bleeding.

Rick motions to Brooks' leg, the two soon paying witness to the trail of blood left in Brooks' wake.

Brooks rolls up his pant leg sighting his damaged knee brace. Fractured edges digging deep into the flesh around his leg.

Brooks removes the brace, hearing something.

BROOKS  
Hear that?

Brooks' hawkish gaze scans the forest's edge. Silence. Then Rick hears it too.

A faint clacking coming from a quarter of a mile upslope.

MOMENTS LATER.

Brooks scrambles over an obstacle course of fallen logs, that clacking sound growing louder, *and louder...*

Brooks' gaze zeroing in on --

Teddy pinned underneath the trunks of two massive pines. He's got a broken stick in his hand, banging it against wood.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
TEDDY!

Brooks races to his friend, embracing him.

TEDDY  
What the fuck happened?

INSERT: Digital clock. 00:33:38, 00:33:39...

BROOKS  
Are you okay?

TEDDY  
Annie... Where's --

Teddy sights Rick approaching.

BROOKS  
It's just us.

TEDDY  
Is she --

BROOKS  
We haven't found her yet.

Teddy's face falls, assuming the worst.

TEDDY  
Did I start it?

BROOKS  
What?

TEDDY  
Did I start the avalanche?

Brooks stares at Teddy who's clearly concussed.

BROOKS  
*No, Teddy --*

RICK  
I did.

Brooks studies the two mature pine trees resting on Teddy's stomach. Not a chance in hell they can life it off. No possible way to determine how bad Teddy's injuries are...

TEDDY  
How bad?

BROOKS  
You're breathing.

ZACK (O.S.)  
DAD!!!!!!

All three turn upslope where, amongst the trees --

Zack stands, naked from the waist up, in a state of shock.

Streaks of blood are smeared across his chest like warpaint. Wherever Zack has been this whole time, it's been hell.

RICK  
ZACK!!!!

Brooks and Rick race their way up to Zack, when --

Zack starts bawling. Deep, guttural sobs racking through his entire body. Brooks and Rick stop dead in their tracks.

And they just stand there, at a distance...

Zack shaking and crying uncontrollably like some shellshocked soldier returning from the front lines.

Zack plops down on his ass, holding out his hand, as if to say -- *don't approach...*

ZACK

I thought... I thought everyone was dead and I was --

BROOKS

Annie's still buried, Zack.

INSERT: Digital clock. 00:35:03...

BROOKS (CONT'D)

I need your help.

Zack turns to the slide path. Immediately triggered by the thought of getting back into the danger zone again.

ZACK

*No, no, no...*

BROOKS

She's my sister, Zack. You gotta pull it together for me, bud.

A flicker. Brooks' words resonating.

Brooks slips off his beanie, then... the spare jacket he's been using as a makeshift boot. Offers em up to Zack.

Zack glances to Brooks, his breath evening out. Coming back to the now. He takes hold of the jacket and beanie.

INT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - DAY

Kara pushes her way through glass doors and into a state of absolute chaos. Phones RINGING off the hook, SEARCH AND RESCUE team members bouncing from cubicle to cubicle...

Kara bypasses the RECEPTIONIST table, bee-lining her way towards EILEEN KERRY, 40s. Eileen's a fireball of a woman. Mountaineering, triathlons... she puts the boys to shame.

KARA

Eileen...

Eileen pivots towards Kara. Winces. Already anticipating another problem to deal with on a shit-storm of a day.

EILEEN

Kara --

KARA  
It's Brooks. He's...

Eileen guides Kara to a more "private" section of the floor.

EILEEN  
Where was he skiing?

KARA  
I dunno. But I've called everyone I know who's been out today and no one has seen him.

EILEEN  
He with Teddy?

KARA  
And Annie, plus an old friend and his son.

Eileen takes a breath as two COWORKERS, 30s, signal for her attention.

EILEEN  
Kara, I don't know what the hell is going on. Avy forecast was low to moderate, and we've had three slides today and counting... Not to mention a half a dozen mountain rescues --

KARA  
Eileen --

EILEEN  
Plus a big rig that wrecked off --

An INTERN, 19, listening nearby. Chimes in.

INTERN  
There was that slide...

Eileen and Kara turn to the Intern. He's on the spot now.

INTERN (CONT'D)  
One that deputy radioed in. Off highway seven-twenty-four...

As Eileen turns back to Kara, weighing her options, we pre-lap the THUMPING of rotor-blades.

INT. B-3 RESCUE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

A PILOT, 30s, banks the helicopter right, roaring over an endless sea of green. Weaving perilously close to mountain peaks on either side. Passing over a hillside --

His CO-PILOT, 20s, motions towards avalanche debris ahead.

CO-PILOT  
(over comms)  
I'm seeing it. Three o'clock.

INT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - CONTINUOUS

Kara and Eileen hover over a VHF AIRBAND RADIO on her desk.

EILEEN  
(into radio)  
Anything?

Silence. Then static breaks through the radio.

PILOT (O.S.)  
(over radio)  
Negative so far.

INT. B-3 RESCUE HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

The PILOT guides the chopper up the avalanche path as a RESCUE JUMPER hangs out the open belly door.

RESCUE JUMPER  
(over comms)  
Wait a second...

The Pilot pulls back on the stick, holding position as we follow the Rescue Jumper's line of sight down to a --

Pile of DEBRIS below. Eyes scanning. Shakes his head.

RESCUE JUMPER (CONT'D)  
(over comms)  
Nothing.

INT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - CONTINUOUS

Kara paces, Eileen holding onto the radio.

PILOT (O.S.)  
 (over radio)  
 We got no ski tracks. Looks like a  
 natural slide.

EILEEN  
 (into radio)  
 Copy that.

Eileen sets the radio down, turning to Kara.

KARA  
 Eileen --

EILEEN  
 Go home. For all you know...

Her Coworker pops his head in.

RECEPTIONIST  
 (to Eileen)  
 We need you in the conference room.

Eileen nods to her Coworker, turning back to Kara.

EILEEN  
 If you haven't heard from Brooks in  
 a couple hours, call me.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - DAY

Out the glass door Kara exits, feeling dismissed. Angry. She  
 stops, her fury building. Pivots. Heads back.

INT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - SECONDS LATER

Kara marches her way through the office floor - *a lioness* -  
 stopping before an open door to the CONFERENCE ROOM.

All eyes turn to Kara as she holds up her notepad.

KARA  
 I've got a list of over fifteen  
 places my husband could've been.  
 And not one person saw him. I've  
 left voicemails, called the  
 sheriff's station, called the  
 hospital down in - something  
happened to my husband.

Kara pauses, quaking with emotion.

KARA (CONT'D)

And if you all don't help me, I'll  
put a search party together myself.

Dead silence. All present taken aback by Kara's ferocity.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - AFTERNOON

Brooks, Rick, and Zack fight their way uphill. Avalanche  
beacons out, each spaced equidistant.

Only they're getting zero hits on their avalanche beacons.

INSERT: Digital clock reads: 00:42:36, 00:42:37...

Brooks glances up at the ominous clouds now rolling in, as we  
prelapse the *tick-tick-ticking* of a clock.

INT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - AFTERNOON

Kara, Eileen, along with eight other TEAM MEMBERS hover over  
a map splayed out across the table. Tiny red X's marking  
where Brooks was not, everything else... a possibility.

Eileen sighs, the task before them seemingly unfeasible. She  
steals a glance at a clock ticking away on the wall.

EILEEN

Is there anything, Kara, anything  
else that you can tell us--

KARA

I checked his emails... nothing.  
Brooks hasn't seen Rick in years.  
Said his kid can ski.

Eileen turns to two RECEPTIONISTS.

EILEEN

See if Rick has a secretary you can  
get ahold of. And check online...  
See if anyone posted anything.  
Search all the hashtags. Avalanche,  
Crested Butte, Gunnison Valley...

The Receptionist heads off. Eileen turns to her Team Members.

EILEEN (CONT'D)

So, where'd they go?

TEAM MEMBER #1  
 Fourteen inches last night? I'd say  
 Deane's. Brooks skis it all the  
 time.

Kara marks Deane's down on the map with a black pen...

TEAM MEMBER #2  
 Lake Mary's. Holds the snow real  
 well.

TEAM MEMBER #3  
 Jack Pot.

TEAM MEMBER #4  
 The Splits. Brooks and I skied it  
 last big storm.

TEAM MEMBER #5  
 Hypodermic. If this kid's as good  
 as they say he his.

All those guesses? They're scattered all over the map.

EILEEN  
 What time did he leave?

Kara pauses.

KARA  
*The Exxon station...*

She snatches her purse, making haste for the door.

EILEEN  
 Kara, what time did --

KARA  
 (yelling out)  
 A little after four.

EILEEN  
 (to Coworker)  
 Everyone who's up for the early  
 shift - The Bakery, Gas Cafe,  
 pushing snow... Get their numbers  
 and call them all.  
 (to Team Members)  
 We need to get eyes on every single  
 one of those runs before that next  
 storm hits.

Eileen opens up a live WEATHER MAP on her laptop. That second storm edging closer and closer to Gunnison Valley.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - DAY

Brooks, Rick, and Zack slog their way up jagged terrain. Those storm clouds getting dangerously close.

But it's the absence of sound that's driving Brooks mad.

INSERT: Digital clock reads: 00:52:21. 00:52:22

Brooks is second guessing every choice he's made so far, when he takes a step, his avy beacon chiming out with a loud --

BEEEEEEEEEP.

BROOKS

Annie!

Brooks reads off his avy beacon, calling out --

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Twenty-nine feet.

BEEEEEP. BEEEEEP. Zack and Rick call out their readings.

ZACK

Thirty-seven feet...

RICK

Twenty-two feet...

BROOKS

Eighteen feet...

The three triangulate Annie's location, getting closer. Brooks elongates his avalanche probe. Ditto Rick and Zack.

ZACK

Fourteen feet...

BROOKS

Eleven feet...

Brooks, Rick, and Zack begin jabbing their avalanche probes into the snow. Deeper and deeper, until --

Brooks finally makes contact.

He pales, looking to his sunken probe, because down below Annie is buried at a depth of --

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Seven feet...

Rick and Zack go still. The snow beneath? Like concrete.

The odds that Annie is still alive, one in a million.  
 Even still, Brooks pulls out his shovel. Zack doing the same.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
 Rick, go check on Teddy. Tell him  
 we found Annie. Then grab his pack  
 and bring it back.

Rick takes off, as Brooks and Zack begin plunging their  
 shovels into the snow.

INT. EXXON STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

Kara rushes into the gas station like a gust of wind. The  
 startled ATTENDANT, 20s, glancing up from behind plexiglass.

KARA  
 You got cameras?

ATTENDANT  
 Like to sell?

KARA  
 No. Cameras outside. Videotaping--

ATTENDANT  
 Yeah.

KARA  
 I need to see them.

It's not a question, it's a demand. And the way Kara's  
 asking, this Attendant knows better than to say no.

He pivots towards a back door. Winces.

ATTENDANT  
 I don't have a key.

KARA  
 What do you mean --

ATTENDANT  
 My boss has the key and he's...

Kara turns, eyeing a SMOKE EXTINGUISHER.

SECONDS LATER.

Kara SMASHES the business end of the smoke extinguisher into  
 the door. The lock busts, door swinging open, as we cut to --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - TREELINE - AFTERNOON

Rick pushing his way through brush. He hustles up to Teddy, still trapped under the tree fall.

TEDDY  
Annie? Did you --

RICK  
They're digging her out now.

TEDDY  
How deep?

Rick balks.

TEDDY (CONT'D)  
How deep?

RICK  
Seven feet.

Teddy reels. Knows just how slim her chances are.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - LATE AFTERNOON

Brooks and Zack dig and dig, waist deep in the snow. Not a second spent resting. Rick hurries up with Teddy's pack.

RICK  
He's okay.

BROOKS  
Lay out everything we got to work with. Then find wood. Anything you can use to make two sleds.

Rick turns upslope, when --

WOOSH BOOOM!

HANGFIRE - a slab of snowpack the size of an SUV - thunders down the mountain, whipping past the three, and --

Explodes into a pine with a thunderous crack. All three pause -- *holy shit* -- as Brooks focuses his line of sight upslope.

*To all that snow just waiting to be released...*

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
You two go. Leave now. You don't wanna be out here at night.

Shovel meets snow. Again and again. Brooks showing no sign of exhaustion or let up. His every thought on freeing Annie buried underneath. *Tick, tick, tick...*

BROOKS (CONT'D)

In a couple hours that storm's gonna be dumping.

Brooks looks up to Rick and Zack. They haven't moved an inch. He steps out of the pit, forcibly pushing Rick and Zack.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

God-damn-it-go. It's gonna be a whiteout tonight. Start walking.

Again he pushes Rick and Zack but these two aren't going anywhere. Zack grabs his shovel and starts digging.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE - GRAND LODGE - LATE AFTERNOON

Lily sits with friends, sharing fries, laughing, when --

RHIDI (O.S.)

Lily...

Lily glances up seeing Rhidi. Her smiles fades, intuitively knowing something is wrong, as we cut back to --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - LATE AFTERNOON

Brooks and Zack dig and dig, shoulder deep in a pit of snow. Pushing past limits of total exhaustion.

INSERT: Digital clock. 01:08:42, 01:08:43...

Zack crawls out of the pit. Reeling. His muscles spasming with fatigue, but still Brooks continues to dig...

As the reality settles in that -- soon he will be digging up his sister's corpse. Brooks face contorts --

BROOKS

Ah god, Annie...

Again and again Brooks plunges his shovel into the snow, tears falling down his face --

His bare hand raw and dripping blood, as --

Rick returns with an armful of wood. Zack rises to help dig, but the pit is now only deep enough for one person.

And Rick and Zack just stand there. In witness. Brooks choking back his sobs each time he plunges shovel into snow.

Finally, Zack turns away. Unable to watch any longer, when --

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Annie...

Brooks tosses his shovel, carving away with his fingers.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Annie, I got you... I'm gonna get you out.

An arm breaks loose, Annie's fingers the color of a Robin's egg. Limp. Lifeless. Brooks momentarily takes her hand.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

Come on, Annie...

Brooks now focuses his efforts on the snow compacted around Annie's head. Carefully clawing and brushing away.

An ear. A cheek. A chin. A nose. Annie's nose. And then there's Annie's forearms -- POSITIONED IN FRONT OF HER FACE.

A cavity created in the space between.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

You did good, Annie. You did real, real good...

Rick catches glimpse of Annie as still as a cadaver --

And still Brooks digs. Freeing the snow above her chest.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

We're gonna get you home, Annie. Kara and Lily are gonna be so...

*The girls...* Mention of the two BREAKS him inside. A searing grief knifing through Brooks' heart.

He takes hold of Annie's corpse-like body...

Pulling with all his might. Until finally, Annie is free.

Brooks raises Annie out of the snow hole, her head drooping to the side like a rag doll.

Rick latches onto her arm, pulling her to the surface, as --

Brooks scrambles out, immediately clearing Annie's airways. Fingering out the snow in her throat, her nostrils...

Annie's skin like ice cubes to the touch.

Rick rubs Annie's leg, Zack doing the same, trying to help. To get Annie's body warm again, as --

Brooks pinches Annie's nose, performing rescue breaths. He pulls away, checking her vitals. No breath, no pulse.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Come on, Annie.

Brooks compresses her chest, over and over and over.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Christ, Annie. Come on...

Rick stands, meeting Zack's gaze. The two respectfully step back, giving Brooks space to grieve, when --

A BREATH.

As faint as the rustle of a single leaf of grass.

Brooks stills. Second guessing what he just saw, when --

Annie's lips part sucking in another breath. *She's alive...*

Only, she's choking. Brooks cradles Annie in his arms, rolling her onto her side as she VOMITS bloody liquid (all the snow she must've inhaled while buried underneath).

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
You're all right. You're...

Annie turns to Brooks, her eyes dim and unfocused.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna lay you down.

Brooks wraps her in a space blanket. Eyes turning to the woodpile, then to the setting sun...

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
Rick, stay with Annie. Get her as warm as you can, then start cutting up those airbags. We're gonna use em on the sleds.

Brooks and Zack grab the rest of the gear, taking off.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - TREELINE - LATE AFTERNOON

Brooks and Zack run up to Teddy.

BROOKS

She's alive. We got her.

Teddy fights back tears. Brooks and Zack laying out all the gear they've brought up. Cords of rope, a snow saw...

TEDDY

How is she?

BROOKS

Mad at you over something.

A joke. Teddy half smiles.

TEDDY

How ya gonna pull this one off?

As Brooks studies the massive fallen timber trapping Teddy, we prelap the buzzing of propeller wings.

INT. BIPLANE - LATE AFTERNOON

AN OLDER PILOT, 50s, flies an aging biplane over mountainous terrain. His twenty year old SON to his right, scanning the terrain down below with binoculars. Only it's --

Turbulence city. The kind that rattles dental fillings loose.

The pilot shakes his head defeatedly, as we cut to --

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - CONTINUOUS

VROOOOM! Three SNOWMOBILES haul ass through a dense maze of pine. Blasting up and through snow drifts, circumventing fallen pine, stopping before a precipice of a cliff.

They shield their eyes from the wind, studying every inch of the pristine valley below.

Not a single ski track or sign of an avalanche.

PARKER (O.S.)

I'm not seeing em.

EXT. HIGHWAY - BIG RIG CRASH SITE - CONTINUOUS

It's bedlam, car horns blasting, traffic backed up for miles on either side of the crashed big rig.

Sheriff Deputy PARKER, 40s, stands in observance as -- YOUNG DEPUTIES direct traffic and Department of Transportation EMPLOYEES work in vain to clear the road before nightfall.

Deputy Parker zips up his jacket. It's getting cold.

PARKER  
(into radio)  
Eileen, I just had three deputies  
walk the whole stretch. Twice.

INT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - LATE AFTERNOON

Eileen exhales, raising up the radio.

EILEEN  
(into radio)  
You sure?

PARKER (O.S.)  
(over radio)  
Unless they're out here wearing  
camo gear --

KARA (O.S.)  
They made a left.

Eileen turns back to Kara fast approaching.

KARA (CONT'D)  
I saw it on the cameras, they made  
a left on Whiterock.

Kara grabs a red marker. Crosses out half of the map. The Receptionist is quick to rush up.

RECEPTIONIST  
I just got off the phone with one  
of Zack's friends. He sent me a  
photo of this.

The Receptionist holds up her phone revealing a photo of --  
*the dvd Brooks had signed for Zack's friend...*

Kara furrows her brow, a realization dawning upon her.

KARA  
(to the Intern)  
You know this movie?

INTERN  
(catching on)  
I've seen it a thousand times...

Kara turns to Eileen, explaining.

KARA

All the runs are here in Crested  
Butte.

The Intern takes the pen, marking seven spots on the map, all near each other - all still a possibility.

Eileen's already reaching for her radio, when --

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

What can we do???

Kara turns around, seeing over a dozen FRIENDS filling into the lobby. And there's even more gathering outside.

*Looks like the word around town has spread...* As Kara heart swells with this show of support, we cut to --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - TREELINE - QUICK CUTS

Snow is dug, rocks are heaved, wood is cut, timber wedged. Cordage is woven, knotted, tossed, tightened, and cinched...

MOMENTS LATER.

We pay witness to Brooks' ingenuity. A pulley / fulcrum system. It's far from pretty, *like something you'd find in a rat's nest*, but it's their only shot at freeing Teddy.

Brooks wraps the cordage around his waist, firming his grip, as... Zack stands near a cut piece of timber wedged beneath one of the massive pine trees trapping Teddy.

BROOKS

Ready?

ZACK

Yeah.

And with that... Brooks heaves, yanking on the cordage with every ounce of strength he has, Zack putting all his weight into the fulcrum. *Zinnnnnnng....*

The cordage tightens up over an upright tree like an overstrung guitar string.

Every muscle strained past exertion, Brooks grunts and groans, blood vessels damn near popping in his face, when --

The cordage begins to fray against bark...

Brooks and Zack digging deep into their reserves...

And the fallen trees suddenly dislodge, raising just enough for Teddy to arm scramble his way to freedom.

The cordage rips. Brooks tumbles backwards. Teddy is freed.

MOMENTS LATER.

Brooks tends to Teddy's right leg, cleaning it with antiseptic from the first aid kit. It's gruesome, tibia bone jutting out from skin, but blood loss is minimal.

BROOKS

Just a scratch.

TEDDY

Bullshit.

BROOKS

I ever tell you about the time --

YANK! Brooks tightens a tourniquet around Teddy's broken leg, as Teddy lets out a howling scream.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - DUSK

QUICK SHOTS OF:

-- Two sleds under construction. Wood gathered, laid on the cut up avy bags, and bound together with cordage... Brooks' knee brace and ski poles used as runners.

-- A bed of pine needles is laid across its interior, Annie carefully lifted off the ground and set atop the sled.

-- Brooks secures Annie to the sled with cordage, catching sight of the sun disappearing beneath the mountain ridge.

He turns to Rick and Zack.

BROOKS

(slow and clear)

Head left, away from the slide track. You'll hit the trail we came up on.

RICK

What about Teddy? You gonna drag him all by yourself? No Brooks.

This is not up for debate.

BROOKS

Get Annie off the mountain. There's a hospital in Gunnison. It's gonna get bad tonight. Worse than you think. Don't panic. Just keep following that trail.

Rick takes off his boot, then his sweater.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

What're you doing?

RICK

You're missing a boot. Soaked in sweat...

And before Brooks can protest, Rick is handing over his boot.

MOMENTS LATER.

Brooks leans down to Annie. Her breath paper thin.

BROOKS

I'll see you back at home. Okay?

She musters up the weakest of nods, filling Brooks with hope.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

(to Rick & Zack)

Go.

Zack and Rick push off, pulling Annie's sled off the slide track and towards the tree line.

And we stay with Brooks the entire way, hiking back up towards Teddy as he drags the sled.

As the light fades and foreboding clouds move in...

As a wind picks up to intermittent gusts...

As a look of determined resolve hardens across his face.

*They're gonna make it out of here. All of them. Alive.*

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - TREELINE - TWILIGHT

Brooks approaches, Teddy sighting.

TEDDY

How's Annie...

Brooks smiles, dropping to his knees.

BROOKS  
Halfway home.

Brooks lifts Teddy onto the sled, securing him in place.

TEDDY  
You think she's gonna be okay?

BROOKS  
Annie? Hell yes she is.

TEDDY  
She doesn't know it yet, but I'm taking her to Paris for our anniversary. I bought the tickets last night. Booked the airbnb...

BROOKS  
Where's my invite?

TEDDY  
Get her home safe and I'll fly you out first class.

BROOKS  
Consider it done.

Brooks cinches the cordage tight, Teddy studying Brooks.

BROOKS (CONT'D)  
What?

TEDDY  
You didn't find it up there.

Brooks isn't following.

TEDDY (CONT'D)  
The part of you that you left up on that mountain.

BROOKS  
No.

Teddy nods.

TEDDY  
Maybe you weren't supposed to. But what you're doing right now, no one else could pull this off.

A gust of wind shakes the trees. Brooks looks up to the threatening clouds closing in.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - AVALANCHE PATH - TWILIGHT

Wind swirls, snow falling heavy from above. Like an ox attached to a cart, Brooks pulls and heaves Teddy downslope on the sled. A long beat passes, then...

TEDDY  
Promise me something.

BROOKS  
What's that?

Brooks stops. Huffing. Genuinely can't hear cause the wind.

TEDDY  
When this is all behind us...

BROOKS  
Yeah...

TEDDY  
You quit your job.

Brooks doesn't respond.

TEDDY (CONT'D)  
Promise me.

BROOKS  
I promise. But you gotta promise me something.

TEDDY  
What's that?

BROOKS  
You buy new boots.

TEDDY  
Boots are fine.

Brooks smiles.

BROOKS  
Your boots are not --

WHOOOOSH - KABOOOOM!

Brooks and Teddy are instantly blasted apart by a monstrous wall of white, the former thrown twenty feet from his sled.

The impact - *the violence* - akin to being hit head on by a runaway freight train.

BLACKNESS.

Brooks and Teddy are thrashed forward, bludgeoned and jackhammered, caught in the avalanche's fury.

Gazes thunderstruck... At the mercy of mother nature's wrath.

BLACKNESS.

Battered and spun, trees whip past Brooks like streaks of lightning, avoiding collision by fractions of an inch.

And for a moment, the spinning stops, just long enough for Brooks to sight Teddy only a few feet away.

BLACKNESS.

Brooks instinctively reaches out for his friend. The avalanche's current sending them hurtling at breakneck speeds towards another grove of pine trees.

BLACKNESS.

Fingers clasp around Teddy's sleeve, Brooks pulling Teddy towards him, those trees getting closer. *Closer...*

BLACKNESS.

INT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - NIGHT

Kara stares out the window, as the last remains of day are swallowed up by the night. A few FRIENDS stand near, respectfully giving her space.

In the lobby it seems like half the town has now gathered. Townsfolk huddled up in clusters --

*Hatching up their own rescues plans if need be...*

Kara stands, heading towards the coffee maker, when --

EILEEN (O.S.)

Kara...

Kara turns to Eileen, registering the somber expression on Eileen's face.

KARA

No.

EILEEN

They flew over every run.

KARA  
Have em do it again.

EILEEN  
No avalanche. No ski tracks --

KARA  
Have em search it again.

It's then Eileen notices that every single eyeball is now on her. She reluctantly motions to the storm growing outside.

EILEEN  
We have to shut it down.

KARA  
No, no, no...

Townsfolk immediately begin to voice their displeasure.

DALE  
Eileen, we got snow mobiles --

EILEEN  
And then one of you triggers  
another slide, and now we got --

DALE  
Christ, Eileen... It's --

Eileen erupts.

EILEEN  
We have no idea where they are!

This quiets the mob.

EILEEN (CONT'D)  
Look outside. Take a look. Half an  
hour from now y'all won't be able  
see two feet in front of your face.

She's not wrong. Eileen takes a breath.

EILEEN (CONT'D)  
I know Kara appreciates you all  
coming down here but I will not, *I*  
*will not* jeopardize another life.

Through the glass doors slips Lily.

EILEEN (CONT'D)  
Go home. All of you.

This sends everyone into an uproar.

LILY  
Alder Mountain.

But Lily's words go unheard.

EILEEN  
The moment this storm eases up...

LILY  
Mom!

Hearing her daughter's voice, Kara zeroes in on Lily.

KARA  
Lily...

LILY  
I said --

KARA  
Everyone shut up!!!

LILY  
They skied Alder Mountain.

Words met with a stunned silence. Kara shakes her head, won't believe it. Same with Eileen. Same with everyone else.

KARA  
No, Brooks wouldn't --

LILY  
(growing emotional)  
There's a box in the garage with all his stuff. His two videos of Alder - they're gone. I know my dad. That's where they went.

It's deathly quiet, then Eileen reaches for her radio, as the first of three NEWS trucks arrive outside.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE REGIONAL AIRPORT - TARMAC - NIGHT

Through the windows of a trailer office we see the Heli Pilot and his Crew in what appears to be an --

All out SCREAMING MATCH with two of their SUPERIORS.

Fingers are pointed, voices raised, a phone thrown from one side of the trailer to the other... It nearly comes to blows, the Rescue Jumper needing to be restrained, when --

The door to the trailer is swung open, the Heli Pilot and his Crew marching out into the caustic weather conditions.

Their Superiors soon trail, shouting out words of protest. The intrepid crew pays no mind, pushing towards the heli.

As rotor-blades once again start spinning, we cut back to --

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - MOMENTS LATER

What was three news trucks has now turned into eight. Key lights flash as -- Two CORRESPONDENTS report live for audiences back home.

MALE CORRESPONDENT

... As you can see now, winds are gusting at fifty miles per hour, expected to peak at seventy by midnight...

FEMALE CORRESPONDENT

...Temperatures continue to drop. Even so, Search and Rescue is still actively on the hunt.

INT. B-3 RESCUE HELICOPTER - NIGHT

The Heli Pilot guides the chopper through the inky blackness. Can't see a damn thing through the cockpit, tempestuous winds rocking the chopper like a rattle in a toddler's hands.

No one dares speak. The weight of the task resting heavy on everyone's mind. The heli cuts over jagged peaks, slowing, as the Co-Pilot and Rescue Jumper turn gaze below.

NIGHT VISION POV.

Scanning the terrain. *Scanning...* There's clear evidence of an avalanche, but no survivors to be seen.

RESCUE JUMPER

(over comms)

Can you get lower?

The Heli Pilot lowers into a descent just as a wild gust of wind ROCKS the helicopter nearly on its side.

The Rescue Jumper tumbles, sliding towards the open belly door, fingers scrambling for anything to latch onto, when --

He plummets right out of the belly door of the helicopter.

The B-3 rises to safer altitudes, as the Rescue Jumper is slowly hoisted back into the cabin by his safety rope.

COCKPIT.

Warning lights flash all throughout the cockpit. One by one they turn off. The Pilot takes a breath, that was close...

He edges for a glance back behind him as the Rescue Jumper is pulled safely inside the cabin by two Crewman.

RESCUE JUMPER (CONT'D)  
(yelling out)  
Let's keep pushing.

The Pilot looks to his gauges, running perilously low on fuel. And without an ounce of hesitation in his voice --

RESCUE JUMPER (CONT'D)  
Roger that.

The Pilot guides the chopper over intermittent trees, the B-3 bucking every which way like a wild horse. Crew members scrutinizing the terrain below.

RESCUE JUMPER (CONT'D)  
(over comms)  
STOP.

The Pilot strains to hold position against the storm.

RESCUE JUMPER POV.

Hunting through the trees. *Hunting...* Movement. And it appears to be the -- silhouette of a man waving his arms.

RESCUE JUMPER (CONT'D)  
(over comms)  
GET US DOWN.

The Pilot and his Co-Pilot study the terrain below, looking for any clearing to touch down upon. Clusters of trees and pockets of debris seemingly everywhere.

This won't be easy. Not even close...

ON THE PILOT.

Guiding the B-3 into a descent. Nearby uprooted timber staged like lances all around the landing zone.

The B-3 begins to violently shake.

Snow and debris from the rotor-wash spewing upwards. No way to see out the cockpit, out of the belly doors, when --

KA-THUNK!!!

Helicopter skids hit snowy earth. The Pilot turns to his Co-Pilot, dumbstruck that they actually pulled it off.

ON THE RESCUE JUMPER.

Already jumping out the belly door.

Wind laden snow whipping his face, eyes scanning left to right. He wipes the snow from his night vision goggles, squints... and then his eyes widen.

He pivots, turning back to the helicopter, as we cut to --

INT. CRESTED BUTTE SEARCH AND RESCUE - CONTINUOUS

The entire office is huddled around the radio.

HELI PILOT (OVER RADIO)  
WE GOT EM.

Everyone erupts in cheer. Kara hugs Lily, Correspondents outside peering through the windows. Dale pulls Kara aside.

DALE  
Let's get you down to the tarmac.

Dale glances to Lily nearby.

DALE (CONT'D)  
I can have Rhidi take Lily home.

*In case Brooks is in bad shape...* Kara nods.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE REGIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

A caravan of cars screech to a halt outside a fenced gate. Doors to a 4Runner swing open, Kara and Dale met by AIRPORT SECURITY who escort the two onto the tarmac.

The two wait, *and wait...* eyes glued to the seething skies above. The storm raging all around them.

- As three AMBULANCES ARRIVE, pulling onto the tarmac...

- As NEWS VANS and more FRIENDS gather outside the gates. We see all of Brooks' Coworkers from Costco, everyone we met at the bar, and many more... when, finally --

The B-3 heli appears, its belly light burning like a comet fast approaching. Skids touching down onto the LZ.

Rick and Zack are ushered out the door, The press documenting every second from behind the fence.

The Rescue Jumper and a Crewman step out, carefully transporting Annie on a stretcher towards the ambulance.

A somber Eileen steps onto the tarmac, Kara glancing back her way, and it then becomes apparent to Kara that --

Brooks and Teddy did not make it back.

Engines to the helicopter power down, and it's like a gunshot, point blank, right through Kara's heart.

KARA

Where's Brooks? Where's --

She locks eyes with the Pilot approaching.

PILOT

There was a second slide.

KARA

WHERE'S MY HUSBAND.

PILOT

We searched for as long as we --

KARA

No, no, no...

Kara buckles with grief, wailing. Dale reaches out for her, but Kara just shoves him away.

KARA (CONT'D)

He's alive.

Eileen glances to Dale, then to all the cameras filming behind the chainlink.

DALE

Kara, let's get you inside.

As Dale guides Kara into the trailer, we stay with Eileen - *wrestling with the hardest decision of her life...*

And then... A choice is made, for better or worse. Eileen marches forward, intercepting the Rescue Jumper.

Words are traded, of which we cannot hear, the two now walking towards the fence, where all of Brooks' Coworkers have gathered by their 4X4 trucks.

Eileen speaks again, other locals gathering round. Her last words? *Those we make out clearly...*

EILEEN

Find em.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SECOND AVALANCHE PATH - NIGHT

A new runout zone. Winds gusting over this frozen tundra, stirring snow and debris. We hear the faint sound of a bell dinging, as we cut to --

INT. YOUNGER BROOKS' TRUCK - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Younger Brooks sits alone in his truck, his expression hauntingly vacant. His breathing slow and deliberate.

His face goes awash in flashing red light, as a red and white BOOM BARRIER closes up ahead. Through his passenger window --

A FREIGHT TRAIN appears in the distance --

Barreling down tracks that lead directly to Brooks' truck.

BACK ON.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SECOND AVALANCHE PATH - NIGHT

Over fallen trees we pass, wind howling, visibility near zero... When we suddenly DESCEND INTO the snow pack.

Not far. Eighteen inches or so. And there's Brooks. Eyelids drooping, struggling to stay awake, his weak breath --

Repelled off the ice lens formed all around his head.

No fresh air to breath, Brooks' eyelids shutter...

That long sleep beckoning.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

Faster and faster the freight train approaches. Metal wheels tearing over track. A horn BOOMS. Only Younger Brooks' expression remains frighteningly unchanged.

And just before the train pulverizes Younger Brooks' truck --  
 Younger Brooks turns to his right, seeing --  
Kara and Lily now seated next to him.

KARA

Brooks --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - UNDERNEATH SNOWPACK - NIGHT

GASP! Brooks' eyes snap open as if he's been shot with adrenaline. He coughs up bloody snow, regaining his breath.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SECOND AVALANCHE PATH - CONTINUOUS

A patch of snowpack. Beating like a heart.

*Like something is trying to burst through, when --*

The snowpack splinters, Brooks' head breaking through.

He gulps in air. Breath impossible to catch. Mumbles. Eyes dancing left to right, sighting --

Teddy's dead body lying just a few feet away.

BROOKS

Teddy... TEDDY!!!

Only Teddy doesn't move. Brooks stills, realizing his best friend is dead, then... cries out in anguish.

He shifts left to right, trying to free himself.

*Only the snow, the snow is entombing him like concrete...*

A long beat passes. Brooks unable to look away from his best friend, the grief nearly unbearable, when...

Brooks reaches out, arm extended as far as possible...

Fingers latching onto Teddy's boot buckle and Brooks --

YANKS ON IT.

The buckle snaps off, along with a chunk of the boot's hard, plastic exterior. And with that...

BROOKS BEGINS TO DIG.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

It's a white out. Headlights cutting through this blinding storm, coming directly towards us, when --

A procession of trucks, fifteen long - SNOWMOBILES ATTACHED TO TRAILER HITCHES - whip past. Tires skid on icy pavement, sliding to a stop before --

THE CRASHED BIG RIG.

Car doors swing open and closed. The Para Jumper and Brooks' Coworkers surveying the crash site. Eyes hunting for any sort of passage through to the other side. No dice.

MOMENTS LATER.

Heavy chains are run from the big rig to six trucks. The chains pull dangerously taught, engines roaring, wheels skidding on the ice covered roads, when --

The big rig's cab begins to tremble... then inches forward. It's working! Only... SCHLINKKKK. One of the chains SNAPS and a truck SPINS out crashing into two of the other trucks.

Onto the road step the Para Jumper, the Coworkers, et al. They sight the mess of a situation before them, when --

The entire big rig is lit up with blinding flood lights.

The Coworkers and Para Jumper turn to see a heavy duty PLOW-TRUCK rumbling directly towards them...

INSIDE THE PLOW-TRUCK.

Sitting behind the wheel is the Skier we may remember Brooks taking a photograph with.

He navigates the snowplow through the trucks, revving the engine, as he lowers the plow from a raised position.

And just as the Plow-truck is about to smash right into the cab of the big rig, we cut to --

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SECOND AVALANCHE PATH - NIGHT

Brooks chips and chips away at the snow around his chest with Teddy's boot buckle. His hair now completely white with snow, a sheen of ice lacquered onto his face.

Brooks tosses the buckle aside, leaning forward, and latches onto Teddy's leg. Pulling, yanking, crawling forward.

*Using his best friend's corpse as a ladder...*

Until he's finally pulled himself free.

Brooks rests. Near delirium with fatigue. Face to face with Teddy. His eyes are frozen open, corneas glazed with ice.

Brooks takes another breath, his heart breaking, and gently covers up his best friend's face with snow.

He rises to his knees and slowly unbuttons Teddy's jacket.

EXT. ALDER MOUNTAIN - SECOND AVALANCHE PATH - NIGHT

The eye of the storm. Hurricane gusts, winds howling like jumbo jet engines. We catch glimpses of Teddy's bare corpse, just before swirling winds blanket it in snow.

ON FOOTPRINTS.

Following these footprints, the length of a football field. Evidence of stumbles, of disorientation, until we find --

Brooks staggering his way forward wearing Teddy's clothing.

Brooks' skin is blistered and caked in ice. Walking directly into that bitter wind. No effort made to shield his face from the ice particles stinging his face like angry wasps.

His eyes are glazed over. Unfocused. Doesn't matter anyway.

Nothing to see but shadows and a godless white.

Growing weaker, cognitions failing, Brooks' bad knee gives out, buckling. He cries out, the pain excruciating.

And despite it all, the bleakness of his circumstances....

Brooks once again rises to his feet, pushing onwards, stumbling his way through this maelstrom.

His countenance that of a man gone mad.

Brooks face plants once again, but this time, when he rises --

It's as if the raging storm has passed entirely.

No more wind, no more sound, no more snowfall...

Just pristine snowscape. Like something straight out of a Hans Christen Andersen story.

Snow all around Brooks sparkling in the moonlight like billions and billions of diamonds.

Brooks' jaw lowers ever so slightly. Can't believe what he's seeing. He takes a step, then another.

And all that pain he's been feeling, his damaged knee... that's gone. Replaced by an overwhelming sense of well-being.

He takes a big step forward, then another, when --

The snow all around him begins to thaw.

Like some time lapse of winter transitioning to spring.

Brooks eyes widen in disbelief, like he's witnessing some miracle unfolding, as --

The blankets of snow all around him retreat like waves at a beach, budding grasses springing forth from dirt.

Brooks trudges forward, still wearing all those layers.

Sweat now dripping down his brow... OVERHEATING.

He rips off his gloves. Sheds Teddy's jacket, then his own.

He's down to just his thermal, but still too hot. Brooks rips off his sweat soaked long-sleeve, bare chested, sighting --

TWO STROBES LIGHTS AHEAD.

Pulsing and dancing like spirits from another dimension. And, *whatever they are*, they appear to be moving towards him.

Brooks SCREAMS, but what trickles out over his lips is nothing but a faint wheeze, a rasp.

Again Brooks tries to yell out to the glowing orbs of light but his voice is completely shot. And that's when...

The two strobe lights change direction, circling, then --

Move away. Growing smaller.

BROOKS  
(horse whisper)  
No. No, no....

Brooks trudges forward, those strobe lights disappearing.

He trips, falls, but this time when he lifts up his face --

THE WINTER HELLSCAPE HAS RETURNED.

It's as if the storm never left. Frozen tundra everywhere, hurricane like winds, and then there's Brooks...

Naked from the waist up. On death's door.

He pushes himself up to all fours, unable to stand.

Takes a breath as snow flakes begin to collect on his bare skin in mass. Growing weaker and weaker, head drooping.

That freezing cold just sucking the life out of him, when --

Brooks taps into his last reserves - *every last ounce of spirit he's got left* -- and offers up one last death cry.

BROOKS (CONT'D)

AHHHHHHHHH!

And this time his beaten vocal chords catch! Brooks' voice cutting through the gusting wind like a fog horn.

We hold on the darkness ahead. Five seconds. Maybe longer. Praying to a higher power that the lights come back.

Brooks is totally spent, eyelids latching shut, when --

The strobe lights reappear, coming closer, growing in size.

Only Brooks doesn't see it. A peaceful expression washing over his face, like he's watching some movie unfold we are not privy too. Something that gives him comfort.

Brooks collapses, falling forward, and vanishes into white.

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE REGIONAL AIRPORT - NIGHT

Kara stands resolute. Dale and Eileen by her side. The storm rages, but if anything... the nearby crowd of townsfolk has doubled in size. Same goes for the camera crews.

And they wait. And wait... Fighting off a pervasive despair with each moment that ticks on by, when, up ahead --

HEADLIGHTS APPEAR.

A caravan of trucks headed their way.

KARA

Brooks --

Kara steps forward, picking up her pace as the caravan approaches. Hell bent on seeing her husband.

The three trucks pull to a stop just a few feet before Kara, and for a moment... Kara goes still.

Her heart lumped in her throat...

All those watching nearby holding their breaths...

When out of the truck jumps the Rescue Jumper. He swings open the passenger door, and lying in the back, is Brooks.

He looks hellishly awful... but he's alive.

Kara rushes towards him, tears spilling out.

KARA (CONT'D)

*Brooks...*

Her voice draws him back to consciousness.

BROOKS

Kara --

KARA

I love you.

And with that, the ambulance arrives...

Kara forced to step aside as PARAMEDICS intervene.

But nevertheless, she still takes her husband's hand, Brooks lifted onto a gurney --

Sighting all those who came out to show their support. *Who banded together to save him...* He strains to sit up halfway, acknowledging their presence, as --

Everyone nearby cheers out their support.

INT. GUNNISON VALLEY HOSPITAL - HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Brooks lies unconscious in a hospital bed, his appearance telling the tale of hell endured. Blistered and black frost-bitten skin covering his face, his arms, his feet...

Brooks creases one eye open, then the other, sighting --

Kara asleep in a chair next to his bed. He weakly reaches out, placing his hand on her arm, as she stirs awake.

KARA

*Brooks...*

Brooks' chapped lips part, struggling to make words. Can't. Kara intuiting what Brooks wants to know.

KARA (CONT'D)  
 Annie's okay. Same with Rick and Zack. They're already back home.  
 (pauses)  
 They got Teddy this morning.

Brooks' eyes pools with tears, struggling to speak.

KARA (CONT'D)  
 Hey...

BROOKS  
 (barely audible)  
 I'm so...

KARA  
 Just relax.

BROOKS  
 (barely audible)  
 So, sorry.

Brooks trembles and the emotional flood damns burst.

KARA  
 It's okay, Brooks. It's okay.

All those emotions Brooks has had to suppress - *the fear, the sadness, the guilt* - he releases. Deep, cathartic sobs.

We pull back, and back... Brooks feeling it all.

EXT. TEDDY AND ANNIE'S HOUSE - MORNING

Some time has passed, snow thawing on the front lawn. Brooks' truck pulls up to a stop. Car door opening. Brooks makes way up the steps, carrying two grocery bags. His frostbitten skin is healed, but there's a noticeable hitch to his gait.

And it's then we see that --

Brooks is walking with a prosthetic foot.

INT. TEDDY AND ANNIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Brooks stocks up an empty fridge. He turns focus to all the dirty dishes piled up in the sink...

MOMENTS LATER.

Brooks hand washes the tableware, when --

ANNIE (O.S.)  
What do I do now?

Brooks turns back seeing Annie at the doorway. She has tears in her eyes, still grieving the loss of her husband.

BROOKS  
Whatever you want to.

Annie nods, taking a breath. A beat passes then...

She foots her way towards Brooks.

ANNIE  
Scoot over.

Annie nudges Brooks, confiscating the scrub pad. The two wash the dishes, shoulder to shoulder, as we cut to --

EXT. MULLEN HIGH SCHOOL - ESTABLISHING SHOTS

Not a trace of winter remains, nor a single student to be seen. The sprawling lawn an emerald green.

INT. MULLEN HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Alone, Zack foots his way down the empty hallway. Posters for dances and after school activities tacked to the walls.

INT. MULLEN HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Zack sits in the vacant classroom, taking it all in. The remnants of a past lecture still visible on the chalkboard.

RICK (O.S.)  
Pretty nice, huh?

Zack turns his head, seeing his father and a SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR, 30s, standing at the door.

ZACK  
Really nice.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR  
You ski?

Zack nods.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR (CONT'D)  
We gotta club you can join.

Zack pauses, mulling over his response, as we cut to --

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE - EARLY MORNING

Winter has returned. Snow piled up on the sidewalks, blanketing the mountains visible past Main Street. Brooks' truck passes by, all weather tires chewing up the dirty snow.

INT. BROOKS' TRUCK - EARLY MORNING

Brooks pops a few Advil, slugging it back with the last dregs of his coffee. He rubs his tired face, turning gaze to --

Lily, sitting shotgun, dressed for a day on the mountain.

LILY  
You ready?

BROOKS  
I'm ready. Are you ready?

INT. UBER - AFTERNOON

Annie sits in the back, carry on luggage to her right, her gaze transfixed on the charming Parisian architecture visible outside the passenger window. Then... the Eiffel Tower.

ANNIE  
C'est beau.

The UBER DRIVER, 60s, nods with a smile.

EXT. BROOKS' TRUCK - MORNING

Brooks slaps on his knee brace, attaching a prosthetic alpine foot to his leg. He slips on a Crested Butte ski instructor jacket, takes a long breath, sighting --

A dozen YOUNG SKIERS waiting near the ski lift.

BROOKS (PRELAP)  
Listen up everybody...

EXT. CRESTED BUTTE MOUNTAIN - BASE AREA - MORNING

Brooks stands before a dozen or so bleary eyed, bed-headed preteens. Lily, one of the twelve. Brooks is still a bit shy in front of a crowd - avoiding eye contact - but not as much.

BROOKS

I know you'd all like to be in your beds right now... so, thank you for that. We got six inches of fresh powder on the agenda. Today's lesson - having fun. Any objections?

The kids shake their heads, Lily smiling, as we cut to BLACK.

THE END.

AND AS CREDITS ROLL...

We see breathtaking photo after breathtaking photo Teddy shot of Brooks and Zack skiing Alder Creek on that fateful day.