

FADE IN:

EXT. YOSEMITE WILDERNESS TRAIL - DAY

The last remaining rays of sunlight fades the forest to darkness. JOHN and MATT, two burly hikers who live for the outdoors, walk along a narrow trail. Carrying full packs, both men are tired and dust covered from several days hiking.

JOHN

Man, What I wouldn't do for a big, fat, blood dripping slab of prime rib right now.

MATT

Its gotta have a baked potato, sour cream and horseradish.

JOHN

With a thick piece of Apple pie a la mode. French vanilla.

MATT

Is it me or do you smell coffee?

Through the thick trees they see a thin flicker of flame. Both men double-time toward a campsite.

EXT. CAMPSITE - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON a coffee pot sitting on rocks near an open fire. PULL BACK TO REVEAL Matt and John emerging from the woods and walking into a small clearing.

MATT

Looks like nobodys home.

VOICE(O.S.)

What do you want?

Materializing from the shadows RUIZ BROTHER CARDOZA, an imposing, black man dressed in camouflage fatigues, steps forward. A small crucifix dangles from a chain around his neck.

He is flanked by STOSS, a tall blond man with a muscular build, and TOLBERT, a square jawed marine type. The two hikers step back, spooked.

JOHN

Whoa, I didn't see you there.

BROTHER
What do you want?

MATT
We smelled the coffee and were
kinda hoping to get a cup.

BROTHER
We dont have any coffee.

MATT
But you have some right...

Brother takes a step toward the two hikers.

BROTHER
I said, we dont have any coffee.

While Matt talks, John glances around the camp and sees automatic weapons with laser scopes and numerous crates marked NAPALM. John backs away.

JOHN
Come on, Matt. Lets get back on the trail.

MATT
I just wanted some coffee.

John tugs at Matts arm.

JOHN
I said lets go.

John pulls Matt out of the clearing and they quick step back to the trail. Brother, Stoss and Tolbert watch them leave.

EXT. TRAIL - NIGHT

The two hikers walk quickly along the trial.

JOHN
I think those guys were poachers.

MATT
We should report them to the rangers when we get...

CRACK.

A red dot appears between Matts eyes and blood spurts out. John turns as Matts bloodied body slumps forward.

JOHN

Oh, shit!

John looks back to see a glint of steel as Stoss sights his automatic for a second shot. He pushes Matt away and takes off running. Stoss opens fire, but John moves too quickly.

ANGLE ON BROTHER

BROTHER

Deploy. Parallel formation.

STOSS

Thisll be easy.

BROTHER

Dont play with him. Take him out.

They snap in fresh clips and move in separate directions.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - NIGHT

John run-stumbles through the darkness breathing hard. He hurdles branches as he sheds his heavy pack.

CRACK. CRACK. CRACK.

Bullets whiz past Johns head. Diving for a huge log, he buries himself on the other side, unsheathes a hunting knife and waits.

Tolbert cautiously steps over Johns downed log when a hand grabs his leg. John lunges with his knife and it gouges into the log. Tolbert swings the gun stock into Johns gut and the two men wrestle for the weapon. The guns clip breaks free as John elbows Tolbert in the head.

John disappears into the darkness of the woods. Tolbert scrambles to his feet, reloads his weapon and takes off.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - NIGHT

Running full bore, John pulls up, stopped by a cliff and a 300 foot drop. Hes trapped.

EXT. TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Tolbert moves along the trail, walks out to the cliffside and is met by Brother and Stoss. John is nowhere to be seen.

BROTHER

Status?

STOSS

Hes close. Heading...south.

PAN DOWN THE CLIFFSIDE TO REVEAL John, clinging to the cliff face, his fingers wedged into tiny cracks. His muscular arms bulge under the strain as his body hangs free.

He waits what seems an eternity, then begins the hand-over-hand climb to the top. As he clears the edge he sees...

...three sets of boots. Stoss steps forward crushing the hikers fingers. Brother puts the rifles muzzle against Johns temple.

BROTHER

As I see, I judge. And my judgment
is just, because I seek not mine
own will, but the will of the
father which has sent me.

Brother then mercilessly blows John off the cliff.

Johns SCREAMS echo off the canyon walls as he plummets.
CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

SLAM. A heavy textbook hits the floor. A SLEEPING STUDENT is jarred awake to the amusement of THREE CLASSMATES. The rest of the students are bored and bleary eyed. Several talk amongst themselves, some doodle in notebooks, three are engaged in an eraser war, another snores on his desk as students build a notebook tower on the side of his face.

At the chalkboard is RANDY MULLER, Westcott's French teacher. About 36, quiet and unassuming, he is dressed in oversized and slightly out of style clothing exhibiting his lack of fashion sense. He is visibly uncomfortable standing in front of a class.

Randy speaks in a standard teacher monotone

RANDY

Quand l'herbe est pas coupee dedans
la cour. Quand je vais a la peche
avant le jour. Laissez moi
tranquille.

Two A students respond eagerly.

TWO STUDENTS
(in unison)
Chaque jour une batille. Chaque
soir une juerre.

Another KID raises his hand.

FAT KID
Je gotta go to le toilet.

Randy is about to respond when there is a slight KNOCK at the door and MEG McCARTHY pushes in. Meg is a young, single, English teacher with an athletic build and an outdoorsy look. Her high-energy disposition resonates throughout her personality.

MEG
Mr. Muller. Hi. Howre ya doing? Can
I bother you for a second?

Randy gives Meg an unsettled look.

RANDY
What can I do for you Ms. McCarthy?

MEG
Im sorry to interrupt your class,
but this completely slipped my
mind. Im taking some students on a
camping trip to Yosemite this
weekend. Two of them, Lucia Carter
and Chris Paige, are in your French
3 class.

RANDY
I know them.

MEG
Right. Well they tell me you
scheduled an exam on Monday. I was
hoping you might postpone it a few
days so they can prepare for it.

This gets the kids attention.

KID #1
Hey, cancel my test too. Im gonna
be bonin all weekend.

KID #2
Tell your mom to take her teeth out
this time.

Kid #1 throws a book at kid #2 and the classroom erupts in chaos. Randy ignores it. It happens all the time.

RANDY

This is kind of last minute. Maybe
if youd asked earlier...

MEG

Im sorry, I know. I meant too, but
I guess I got sidetracked preparing
for the trip and all. This is going
to be a rough trip and theyre not
going to have time to study.

RANDY

Its not fair to the other students
who have prepared for the test.

MEG

Mr. Muller, Can we step outside
please?

Meg pulls Randy out into the hall.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Losing patience, Meg steps closer getting into Mr. Mullers
space.

MEG

I think youre being unreasonable
here. It's just a test. It could be
postponed.

RANDY

People have to live up to their
responsibilities. I expect them
ready to take the test on Monday.

MEG

(getting in his face)
So thats it? You wont listen? Why
do you have to be such a hard-ass?

Meg charges off down the hall leaving Randy aghast.
CUT TO:

EXT. WESTCOTT ADMINISTRATION BUILDING - DAY

This is the Westcott Academy, a sprawling private school
located an hour outside of San Francisco.

Westcott is considered to be the most prestigious and expensive prep school west of the Mississippi. The facility is reminiscent of east coast academies with ivy covered buildings and well-manicured lawns.

INT. ADMINISTRATION BUILDING HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

From down the long hall comes KYLE DUNNOCK, 16, the school hunk, with a metal frame backpack slung over his shoulder. Kyle pulls GREG JARRIT, a romantic eight-year-old, completely lacking in common sense, but deceptively perceptive in matters of the heart. Kyle lifts the boy by his shirt.

KYLE

I told you to stay away from her.

GREG

You just cant stand the competition. Me and her in...

KYLE

The woods? Where the rats and wild dogs and bears and blood bats and the werewolf live?

Greg pauses and thinks.

GREG

Yeah?

KYLE

Screw off, youre not going.

Kyle stomps off and Greg follows.

GREG

You don't understand I have to go.
I need to tell her something.

Kyle stops in front of an open showcase, picks Greg up and puts him in the case. He slides the door shut and CLICKS the lock. Greg pounds the glass.

KYLE

I said youre not going.

Students rush by oblivious. Meg charges down the hall. She runs past Kyle, then stops.

MEG

Kyle!

KYLE
I didn't do it.

Meg is oblivious to the showcase. Greg has his face pressed up against the glass like a lizard in a mason jar.

MEG
Have you seen Coach Palla?

KYLE
Uhhhh. No?

MEG
What else can go wrong today?

Kyle starts to speak but Meg starts moving.

MEG (CONT'D)
This trip is never going to get started. Now get out to the bus, load up your gear and get that kid out of the showcase. Okay? Thanks.

Meg dashes off down the hall.

INT. HEADMASTER SCHREEVES OFFICE - DAY

Heavy bookshelves filled with scholarly journals stand behind an old mahogany desk. Grumbling, Meg pushes open the door, plops behind the desk and dials the phone.

While hanging on the phone, she finds a book on Yosemite and begins flipping through it.

MEG
Come on, come on...

SCHREEVE(O.S.)
Meg? I've been looking all over for you.

ARTHUR SCHREEVE is an imposing man with a large chest and square jaw. As headmaster, his authoritarian manner belies his compassion for the students. Entering the room, his relaxed smile puts Meg at ease.

MEG
Oh, Mr. Schreeve. Im glad youre here. Weve got problems.

SCHREEVE
Its Palla, right?

MEG

Yeah. He hasn't shown up yet. How did you know?

SCHREEVE

He called Claudia last night. Seems he has a fever of 102 and can't get out of bed.

MEG

Well that's just great. We'll have to find someone to take his place. I don't want to cancel this trip.

Schreeve sits at his desk and pulls out his rolodex.

SCHREEVE

That's not going to be easy. You're talking about seven of Westcott's more incorrigible students. I tried most of the faculty and there were no takers.

MEG

But without two chaperones I'll have to cancel the trip.

SCHREEVE

Now hold on, Meg. If it's me you're concerned about, I'm sure you can handle this bunch.

MEG

I'm just a little uneasy supervising them alone. How about you? Can you come?

SCHREEVE

The board meeting is on Monday and I've got a weekend full of work here. Listen, it'll be fine. Think of the rejection for those kids if you cancel the trip.

Meg's look betrays her disappointment.

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)

Come on. We'll find you another chaperone.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Schreeve steers Meg down the hall.

SCHREEVE

Im afraid Judy was our last shot.

MEG

How about Joe Ackerman?

They stand outside Randys door as he leads his class.

SCHREEVE

Theres no one left unless...

Schreeve glances in Randys room.

MEG

Absolutely not! Dont even think about it. He is not an option.

SCHREEVE

You said you needed another chaperone. Mullers a good guy.

MEG

Oh, come on. Look at him. Hes not exactly the outdoor type. And look at his class. Ill spend more time worrying about him than the kids.

Schreeve TAPS on the window and motions Randy to the door. Randy steps out into the hall.

RANDY

(to Meg)

Radio in for backup?

SCHREEVE

Mr. Muller, Ms. McCarthy here is taking a few of our better students on a camping trip to Yosemite.

RANDY

Yes, Im well aware of it.

SCHREEVE

Shed like to know if youd care to come along?

RANDY

(looking at Meg)

Shed like to know if Id like to come?

MEG

It was Mr. Schreeves idea.

RANDY

Sorry, I cant. Im preparing a test for Monday and cant spare the time.

MEG

Oh, well. Too bad. Lets keep looking.

SCHREEVE

Now wait. You can postpone that test for a few days.

MEG

(facetious)

Oh, no. Mr. Muller never postpones tests.

RANDY

Well, I really...I mean I've got three classes this afternoon.

SCHREEVE

Dont worry about that. Well cancel them.

MEG

He said he couldn't go. We shouldn't pressure him.

RANDY

Well...I...Its just...

SCHREEVE

Its settled then. Dismiss your class and get ready to go.

RANDY

(resigned)

Ill get a couple of things together.

Randy steps back into his classroom. Megs face falls.

MEG

Mr. Schreeve, I've got seven of the schools better students going on this trip. These kids need someone they respect not someone theyll walk all over.

SCHREEVE

We saved the trip and Mullers better than canceling.

(MORE)

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)

Now, I confirmed your reservation with the forest service and gave a map to Gordy when I came in. You're going to have fun.

MEG

Yeah, I'm having fun already.

EXT. WESTCOTT ACADEMY/STREET - DAY

A yellow school bus is parked by the curb.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Seated near the back of the bus are BRADY MATTHEWS, 15, very attractive, looking like a Malibu Barbie, and Kyle. They're in the middle of a heated make-out session as Meg steps onto the bus and snaps her fingers for attention.

MEG

Hey, hormone break. Where are the other kids?

BRADY

I don't know, Meg.

MEG

Uh, Brady. That's Ms. McCarthy. Kyle?

KYLE

Haven't seen them.

Meg hears a loud RAUCOUS and runs off the bus to...

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

...the other side of the bus. She spots three of the kids gathered around two who are on the ground fighting.

MEG

What's going on here?

Two students roll around in the dirt pulling hair and throwing punches. Meg pulls LUCIA CARTER, a 14-year-old aggressive tomboy and self-appointed patron saint of lost causes, off CHRIS PAGE, an obnoxious, wealthy 15-year-old who thinks he's three cuts above the rest.

MEG (CONT'D)
You two again? What is it this time?

CHRIS
She attacked me. I was minding my own business and she jumped me.

Meg looks at Lucia who remains silent and angry. KATIE PRESTON, a short-haired 13-year-old, chimes in.

KATIE
He was all, Your brothers a retard and she went way off crazy and punched him.

CHRIS
Why am I even here? I should just go to Maui and be with my dad.

LUCIA
Your dad doesn't need another asshole. The one he has works just fine.

MEG
Lucia! Chris! Enough! Do us all a favor and stay away from each other for the rest of your lives.

Meg turns to the group.

MEG (CONT'D)
I've got some bad news, guys. Coach Palla's not coming.

CHRIS
Try using your tongue more.

Meg rolls her eyes as the kids ad lib their regrets. Coach Palla is obviously well liked.

MEG
Mr. Muller, the French teacher, is com...going with us instead.

The kids stop what they're doing and groan.

KATIE
But he's a maximum zoom remo.

MEG
I'm sorry, but it's either the maximum zoom remo or no trip.

CHRIS
I vote for no trip.

As the kids climb aboard the bus Greg appears and grabs Bradys hand.

GREG
Brady, I need to speak with
you...ALONE.

Kyle grabs the boy by his shirt.

KYLE
You wanna be alone? How about alone
with me?

Kyle begins to drag Greg away.

MEG
KYLE!

KYLE
Dont worry, his death was going to
be painless.

MEG
(to Greg)
Who are you?

KYLE
Hes Greg the pest.

The kids continue onto the bus as Meg impatiently checks her watch.

MEG
Well, nice to meet you Greg the
pest, but were running late
already. Kyle, get on the bus.

Randy walks up with a weekend-size suitcase.

MEG (CONT'D)
Perhaps you didn't understand me,
were not staying at a Hilton. Were
camping.

RANDY
This trip wasn't my idea.

MEG
Get something straight, Muller. Im
responsible for seven kids. I dont
want to worry about you.

RANDY

I'll try to stay out of your way.

The kids are all in the bus. SCREAMS of pain alert the two teachers and they run aboard.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Inside they see Lucia pulling Chris hair. Kyle is trying to pull her off while the other kids laugh.

MEG

Stop it! Cut it out.

Nobody listens.

MEG (CONT'D)

Knock this shit off, NOW!

KATIE

You heard her. Knock this shit off now!

Meg glares at Katie as Lucia lets go of Chris hair.

MEG

(to Chris)

You sit back there. Lucia, up here next to Eric. Now come on guys, we're gonna be together for three days. Can't we at least try to get along?

(no response)

All right, Gordy let's go.

Meg signals to GORDY, the sleepy old bus driver.
CUT TO:

EXT. YOSEMITE PARK, DEEP WOODS - DAY

We've been here before. The campsite where we met the three deadly campers. A faint high pitched BEEPING is heard in the background. A column of flames erupts from within the woods. The flickering yellow light behind the massive trees creates an eerie silhouette effect.

We HOLD tight on the flames yellow dance.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

CLOSE ON a flame. PULL BACK TO REVEAL a rolled up piece of paper burning at one end. The make-shift torch is being held by Chris, who is burning the letters F-U-C...into the wall of the bus as the group cruises down the highway.

JEFF(O.S.)
What're you writing?

Chris shadow, JEFF WESSEL, an awkward 14-year-old sidekick, stands guard.

CHRIS
Your mothers name, schmendrick.

ANGLE ON

Brady and Kyle who sit snuggled in a back seat. Brady pulls back and reaches into her fanny pack.

BRADY
Here, I got you something.

Brady holds a small gift wrapped box in the palm of her hand.

KYLE
A present?

BRADY
Its sorta for both of us. Open it.

Kyle eagerly unwraps the tiny box, opens the top and pulls out...a bright orange, foil wrapped, condom. Kyle stares dumbfounded.

KYLE
Its a...Its a

BRADY
Its a rubber.

Kyle nervously examines it.

BRADY (CONT'D)
Weve been going together six months. And...well, were adults now.

KYLE
Did you buy it?

BRADY

Yeah, right. I think Id rather die than do that. Laura Garrett shoplifted it. Hey, why are you looking so weird?

KYLE

Ummm, Its just that...umm, well...this isn't the brand I usually use. It might be too small.

Brady takes the orange package from Kyles trembling hands and seductively places it in his front pocket.

BRADY

(sexy)

Now guard that with your life.

KYLE

You bet. I mean...sure.

ANGLE ON

ERIC DOWDELL, a 14-year-old with a macabre side, sits next to Lucia while Katie hangs over the back of her seat. Katie opens her mouth revealing a huge wad of gum.

KATIE

...and she was all, You cant chew gum in my class. And I was like, Yeah, right. I dont think so. Ive been chewing this wad for three months.

LUCIA

What about when you sleep?

KATIE

I stick it behind my ear, but the next morning its right back in my mouth.

ERIC

You must be a very lonely girl.

ANGLE ON

Meg sitting across the aisle from Randy who looks out the window. Meg sniffs the air. She gets up and moves toward the rear of the bus. She walks down the aisle and sees puffs of smoke coming from Chris and Jeffs seat.

MEG

What are you guys doing?

Meg yanks the two away and inspects the blackened wall.

MEG (CONT'D)
What did you do, Chris?

CHRIS
Me? Why are you blaming me?

MEG
Because I know you. Now, give me
the matches.

Meg gives him a hard stare. Chris waits, then hands over the matchbook.

MEG (CONT'D)
Were going to deal with this later.

CHRIS
Oooh is this going on my permanent
record?

Megs face betrays her anger.

MEG
Theres no more room on your
permanent record. Now, open a
window and air the bus out.

Meg turns and moves back toward her seat. Chris waits a moment, reaches into his pack and pulls out a six inch Bowie knife. He scratches a bold K into the bus completing his handiwork.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - LATER

The Westcott school bus is stopped at a gas station. Randy remains on the bus, his eyes closed. Several kids are gathered around a nearby candy machine. Chris, hunched down, has his left arm extended into the machine.

JEFF
Get me a Butterfingers.

KATIE
I want gum.

LUCIA
Mr. Muller sure is quiet.

BRADY

Yeah, I mean look at him. Hes so melvin. That shirt is totally Goodwill.

CHRIS

Most serial killers try to blend in.

ERIC

I heard he killed three of his students last year and they never found the bodies. Hes stalking his next victim right now.

BRADY

No way.

CHRIS

You remember Beth Elliott? They said she transferred, but I heard he killed her.

BRADY

Stop, youre scaring me.

KYLE

Knock it off, guys.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Randy cracks a smile as he can hear every word the kids say.

A muffled RUSTLING from the rear of the bus causes Randys muscles to tense. He hears the noise again, moves to the back of the bus and pulls away several backpacks to reveal...

...Greg Jarrit frozen in fear.

RANDY

Who are you?

Greg looks at Randy, searches for a great lie, then bursts into a flood of tears.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

JEFF

I had him for French. Hes real boring.

CHRIS
Like youre the King of Fun.

LUCIA
Why are you such a peckerbutt?

CHRIS
Because I can afford to be.

Meg comes back to the group holding two six packs of soda.
Chris still has his hand inside the machine.

MEG
Chris. Why is it always you? Get
your arm out of there.

KATIE
Cant we ditch Mr. Muller here?

JEFF
He isn't fun like Coach Palla.

MEG
Hes just quiet, thats all.

Randy steps off the bus holding Greg by the shirt collar.
Greg quietly sobs.

RANDY
Anyone know who this is? He wont
stop crying.

KYLE
You little shit. How did you get
here?

GREG
I stowed away.

CHRIS
Cant we legally kill stowaways?

Greg cries full force. Meg takes the boy from Randys hard
grip and pulls him close.

GREG
Please dont kill me. Please.

MEG
Thanks a lot, Chris. Hey, Greg. No
ones gonna kill you. Its okay. Stop
crying.

Greg sniffs back the tears.

MEG (CONT'D)

All right. Dont worry. Gordy can take you back after he drops us off. Lets go guys, everyone aboard.

The kids climb in the bus as Meg signals to Gordy.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The kids all take their seats. Greg slides in next to Brady

BRADY

Uh, Greg. Kyle is sitting there.

GREG

Brady, Ive got something to tell you...

As the bus pulls away, Kyle returns to his seat.

KYLE

Move it, wipe.

MEG

Kyle! Greg, go sit with Mr. Muller and leave Brady alone.

Greg looks at Brady who rolls her eyes, then at Kyle who balls a fist. He moves out of the seat and slides in next to Randy.

CUT TO:

EXT. BUS, ENTERING YOSEMITE - LATER

The bus ambles down a heavily pitted dirt road. A smoky haze hangs in the air.

INT. BUS - SAME

Everyone is getting jostled about. Meg sits near the front reading Les Miserables. Randy slips in next to her.

RANDY

How much longer?

Meg peers over her book.

MEG

You should have gone before we left.

RANDY
Schreeve said these were Westcott's
better students.

MEG
Better didn't mean best.

RANDY
Isn't Chris the one who nearly
burned down Nottingham Hall?

MEG
Give them a chance. They grow on
you.

Megs attention shifts ahead where two green Chevy Suburbans
are parked alongside the road. Four rangers stand around
drinking coffee. A Ranger steps into the road and waves.

GORDY
The rangers are waving us over,
Miss McCarthy.

Gordy stops the bus next to the ranger cars. Meg moves to the
door of the bus as RANGER AUDEN steps inside.

AUDEN
Hey, there. You from Westcott?

MEG
Thats us.

AUDEN
Well, we've got a small wildfire
down by Tamarack Flats. Its really
nothing to worry about. So, were
going to take you to another site
up near the Toulumne River.

Randy comes up to Megs side.

RANDY
You guys a welcoming party?

Auden spins to see Randy.

AUDEN
Who are you?

RANDY
Randy Muller.

MEG
(extending a hand)
I'm Meg McCarthy.

AUDEN
Charley Auden.

MEG
It was nice of you to meet us.

AUDEN
Oh, no problem. This is a pretty
remote campground so Ill stay on
the bus to give you directions.

Randy heads back to his seat as Auden signals to the others.
A Ranger vehicle pulls out in front and Gordy follows. The
second ranger vehicle trails them.

Meg and Auden hit it off and begin talking as the bus rolls
along. Randy plops into his seat next to Greg.

GREG
You like her dont you?

RANDY
Her?

GREG
Miss McCarthy. You like her?

RANDY
Shes...nice.

GREG
I think she likes the ranger.

RANDY
Look! Is that a polar bear?

Greg jumps to the window and looks.

GREG
Polar bear? Where? Where?

Brady leans over the seat.

BRADY
You know, Mr. Muller. You've got
really pale skin.

RANDY
I dont get out much.

BRADY

Well, my advice to you is plenty of
sunscreen. Id go with an SPF of
about 35 or 40.

RANDY

Thank you.

BRADY

Have you ever thought about a henna
treatment for your hair?

Randy turns and watches the lush forest roll by.
CUT TO:

INT. BUS - LATER

Randy is jarred awake by a jolt and his concentration shifts
outside as the bus turns down a difficult dirt road. He
watches the vehicle following them, walks to the front and
takes a seat across from Meg.

RANDY

Just where is this campsite?

AUDEN

Ahead.

The area is very desolate and thick with trees. Its obvious
this is the path less traveled.

MEG

Well, I hope it has a bathroom.

EXT. MINE SHAFT - DAY

The bus comes around a bend to find the Ranger vehicle
stopped outside an old mine shaft.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Gordy slams the brakes sending camping gear flying.

MEG

Oh, great. Were lost arent we?

Standing in the center of the road is Stoss and TWO MEN, guns
drawn.

Stoss steps into the bus and Auden stands next to him.

AUDEN

No, I know right where we are.

Randy backs away from the gun and the kids go into panic mode. Stoss fires a shot into the ceiling. Silence.

Greg, unnoticed, slinks to the floor as Randy returns to his seat. Randy slips a jacket over the boy.

STOSS

All right, listen up. We dont want
to hurt anyone, so dont try
anything stupid.

Gordy is frozen to the steering wheel, but his left hand begins to drop imperceptibly to his side. He grabs a fire ax and in a quick move brings it up...

...too late. Stoss spins and fires a bullet between Gordys eyes. He slams against the side window and then slumps to the floor.

MEG

Gordy!

STOSS

That was stupid.

Auden reaches over and pulls Gordy into the aisle. He motions to Meg whose face has drained of color.

MEG

I...cant drive a stick.

AUDEN

(to Randy)

You drive. Follow them inside.

RANDY

Okay. Well do whatever you say.
Just please dont hurt anyone.

Randy slips into the drivers seat, starts the bus and GRINDS the gears as he pulls into the shaft entrance.

EXT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The ranger vehicle rolls into the mine followed by the bus and the second ranger vehicle.

INT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The convoy moves down the narrow hole for about a quarter mile. The shaft opens up into a cavern about 20 yards across and 40 yards deep. The first ranger vehicle stops, followed by the bus and the second ranger vehicle.

The walls are a smooth chiseled granite and the room is well-lit by a generator and portable lights. Backpacks, high-powered automatic weapons and fire fighting equipment are stacked in neat piles.

Brother approaches the bus.

BROTHER

All eight aboard?

STOSS

Nine. There must have been a last minute addition.

BROTHER

That wasn't part of the plan.
Unload them.

Meg stands to confront the two men.

MEG

What do you want with us?

BROTHER

Get them off the bus.

Brother leaves and Stoss motions with his gun toward the children.

STOSS

Single file. No talking. Hands
where I can see them.

Randy hesitates for a second and then follows. As the kids file by her, Meg turns to Randy a bit confused.

MEG

What about Gre...

RANDY

Everyones off, Meg. Everyone.

Meg gives Randy a questioning look and follows him off the bus. As the kids step off Auden motions to three henchmen, TOM, DICK AND HARRY.

AUDEN

Go through their packs. Look for
radios, weapons, anything.

Boarding the bus, the men begin their search. The kids are
shoved into a single line.

MEG

Take it easy.

Auden ignores the plea and shoves Meg into the line.

STOSS

Hold this near your head.

Stoss hands the first kid a newspaper, takes a picture then
hands the paper to the next kid.

The children obey and hold the newspaper under their chins.
Stoss comes to Lucia.

STOSS (CONT'D)

Hold the paper up.

LUCIA

How about if I hold it up your ass?

As the words leave her mouth, Stoss reels back and slaps the
young girl. Randy reacts by lunging at Stoss. The kidnapper
spins and intercepts Randys charge. In a flash the French
teacher is sprawled out on the ground.

STOSS drops the paper at Lucias feet and Brother smiles
broadly.

STOSS

Hold the paper up.

Lucia complies.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Tom, Dick and Harry search through the packs dropping clothes
and camping equipment on the floor. As they finish and walk
toward the front, we see Greg hunched in a tiny crawl space
behind a spare tire.

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The kidnappers finish snapping the pictures as the three
henchmen exit the bus with confiscated equipment including
Chris bowie knife, a few pocket knives and a wrist slingshot.

Meg looks at Chris and rolls her eyes.

Tolbert brings a manila envelope to Auden who drops the Polaroids and a short typed message inside.

BROTHER

Deliver this and make the calls.

Tolbert turns to leave.

BROTHER (CONT'D)

Put them back on the bus.

(to Tom)

Youll take the first shift.

MEG

Please, just let the kids go. Ill stay here.

BROTHER

Though thou walks in the midst of trouble, God will revive thee. Were not going to hurt anyone. In a few hours thisll be over and well let you go. Just keep your kids quiet.

The children wearily trudge back on the bus.

MEG

Kyle, help me with Mr. Muller.

Randy waves them off, but Meg helps him up regardless.

RANDY

Im okay. I can make it.

MEG

(quietly)

Dont be a hero. Youll only get us killed.

Randy clutches his stomach and is the last to board the bus.

EXT. YOSEMITE/FIRE SCENE - EVENING

A yellow chopper buzzes overhead and drops a shower of red fire retardant. Several soot-caked FIREMEN work fallen trees with chain saws.

A pot-bellied CREW CHIEF, ZEISE, holds a topographical map while yelling instructions to the smoke eaters.

A FIREMAN runs up to the crew Chief holding a shovel filled with a sticky black goo.

FIREMAN
Captain, we found this near the
fires zero point.

ZEISE
Jesus Christ. Its fucking Napalm. I
want every campsite south of the
140 closed.

FIREMAN
Some asshole really wants this
place to burn.

ZEISE
Well they got their wish. This
sonofabitch is out of control.

A helicopter SIREN blares as a water drop hits the ground.
CUT TO:

INT. HEADMASTER SCHREEVES HOUSE - NIGHT

Schreeve is in a deep sleep when the phone RINGS. He pulls
the receiver off the cradle.

SCHREEVE
Hello?

TOLBERT(O.S.)
Schreeve, Arthur Schreeve?

SCHREEVE
Whos this?

TOLBERT(VO)
Theres a package for you at your
front door.

SCHREEVE
A package?

TOLBERT(O.S.)
Go to your front door. We have the
children.

The line goes dead and Schreeve CLICKS on a light.

EXT. SCHREEVES FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

The front door slowly opens and Schreeve steps out. He scans the area, picks up the envelope and backs inside.

INT. SCHREEVES DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Schreeve tears open the corner of the envelope and spills the photographs onto the dining table.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHREEVES DINING ROOM - DAY

CLOSE ON the photographs on the table as we PULL BACK TO REVEAL Schreeves dining room full of POLICEMEN and MEN IN SUITS. Some of the men dust the photos for fingerprints while others examine the envelope. Schreeve, still in a robe, is questioned by TWO DETECTIVES.

DETECTIVE #1

Did he say anything else? Anything you can remember?

SCHREEVE

No, nothing. The parents. Ive got to call the parents.

DETECTIVE #2

The FBIs coming in. They want to set up a command post at the school.

SCHREEVE

They can use my office. I just pray the kids are all right.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

The children are littered about the bus in awkward positions attempting to sleep. Randy sits wide awake. His eyes study the kidnappers and their equipment.

Tom sits in the drivers seat clutching a semi-automatic. His eyes watch the prisoners via the rear-view mirror.

Randy slides over to Meg and wakes her up. She startles.

MEG

What? Who...whats going on?

RANDY

Shhhh.

MEG

What are you doing? Get back to your seat.

RANDY

We need to get out of here.

MEG

What do you mean? They said theyll let us go.

RANDY

Theyre not going to let us go. They plan to kill us.

MEG

Keep it down, youll scare the kids.

RANDY

Theyve made no attempt to hide their identities, were miles from nowhere, and this mine shaft is lined with explosives. Didnt you see how easily they killed Gordy?

MEG

Weve got no reason to doubt them. Dont do anything to get us in deeper.

Randy slides back to his seat and continues to stare out the window.

EXT. WESTCOTT SCHOOL - DAY

Dozens of police cars are parked outside the administration building.

INT. ADMINISTRATION HALLWAY - DAY

FBI AGENT LIBBEY, an anxious young agent guides AGENT CHARLES TURNER, mid-fifties with a homespun sensibility, down the hall. Turner wears a gray suit with a pair of comfortable well-worn cowboy boots.

LIBBEY

We've already checked with the ranger stations on the parks perimeter and none of them reported seeing the bus.

Turner walks through the halls seemingly ignoring Libbey and concentrating on his surroundings.

TURNER

Did you see the floor when we walked in? That's real Vermont marble. You couldn't build a floor like that today.

LIBBEY

Uh, no, sir. We're still trying to reach some of the parents. These children all come from wealthy families. This could be terrorists.

TURNER

They've got a great football program here. You know, I've been thinking of taking Charley Jr. out of St. Xavier's. They've got no kind of defense there. Defense wins games.

LIBBEY

No prints came off the letter or the photos. I've sent Macmillan up to Yosemite to follow up with some of the rangers. Apparently they've got a few wildfires up there.

Turner stops and turns to Libbey with a puzzled look.

TURNER

Fires?

INT. WESTCOTT SCHOOL/SCHREEVES OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Libbey and Turner stride into the office and assume command. The office is filled with FBI AGENTS and POLICE as Schreeve sits behind his desk on the phone. CLAUDIA ALVEZ, his secretary stands by his side.

LIBBEY

Agent Turner, this is Arthur Schreeve.

TURNER
Youre the headmaster here?

SCHREEVE
Yes...for the past ten years.

TURNER
So youre the one who received the
ransom demands?

SCHREEVE
Last night, about three AM. They
left a package at my door and said
theyd contact me later.

Turner looks to Libbey.

LIBBEY
Were running a tap now. Here and
back at Mr. Schreeve's home.

Libbey hands Turner a folder.

LIBBEY (CONT'D)
Heres their ransom demands.

Turner studies the file.

TURNER
Two million a kid! Now, thats one
for the record books.

SCHREEVE
Im sure two million is no problem
for most of their parents.

Turner continues to peruse the file.

TURNER
Ill need school records for all the
kids, personnel records for the
chaperones and a cup of decaf.

SCHREEVE
Claudia, would you please?

CLAUDIA
Right away.

TURNER
Was there anything odd about this
trip? Anything unusual?

SCHREEVE

No, nothing.

CLAUDIA

Well, yeah. Coach Palla called you the night before the trip and canceled? Thats really not like him.

TURNER

Is Palla the football coach?

SCHREEVE

Yes. He canceled so I found our French teacher, Mr. Muller, as a last minute replacement.

TURNER

How last minute?

SCHREEVE

Just before the trip. We were lucky to get him.

TURNER

Ill need to see Muller's personnel file. Libbey, get Musante to bring Coach Palla in. And when he gets here I want to question him about his pass option defense.

Claudia hurries out and Schreeve begins calling parents.
CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

The kids sit quietly in their seats. Jeff leans forward holding his crotch and squeezing his legs together. He taps Randy lightly on the shoulder.

JEFF

Mr. Muller. Ive gotta go.

RANDY

Cant you hold it in?

JEFF

Im about to bust a kidney.

RANDY

Okay. Come with me.

Randy stands and begins walking to the front of the bus with Jeff close behind. Tom puts a foot out to block their path.

TOM

And where are we going?

RANDY

This boy has to use the bathroom.

Several of the other kids ad-lib pleas to use the bathroom.

TOM

Back to your seat.

RANDY

We've been on this bus all night.
They really need to use the
bathroom. Give em a break.

TOM

They can shit their pants for all I
care as long as they do it in their
seats.

Randy fixes a stare on the guard for a beat.

Tom stands and positions himself in the center of the aisle, inches from the teachers face. Randy turns to guide Jeff back to his seat. Jeff continues walking, but Randy pauses in the aisle, his back to Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)

You got three choices. A; You can
sit down. B; I kick your ass and
sit you down or C; I kill you.

In a quick motion, Randy grabs the high seatbacks on either side of the aisle and kicks out backwards. His two feet impact Toms chest propelling him backward.

Toms body obliterates the windshield, rolls out over the hood and falls to the ground. His neck SNAPS with a sickening crack.

Randy jumps to the drivers seat and starts the bus.

RANDY

D; none of the above.

Meg jumps up and runs to the front of the bus.

MEG

Are you crazy? Why did you do that?

RANDY
He pissed me off.

Randy slams the bus into reverse and slaps his foot on the accelerator. In a cloud of dirt the bus rockets backward.

The kids freak out. Meg grabs a seat for dear life.

KYLE
Theres a truck in the way!

INT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The bus tail end plows into the ranger Suburban crushing it while bulldozing it along. Smoke and sparks illuminate the tunnel as metal scrapes rock. The bus keeps plowing along.

Brother and the men run a few yards down the tunnel after the bus, letting loose a hail of gunfire. Auden fires up the other ranger Suburban and the men pile in. Unable to turn around, they begin an all out chase in reverse.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Mayhem. The kids duck under the seats for cover. Kyles face is pressed against the rear emergency door.

ERIC
Were all gonna die. Right here.
Right now.

KYLE
I see the opening!

INT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

The bus continues pushing the mass of twisted metal which was once the ranger Suburban. The opening draws ever nearer.

EXT. MINE SHAFT OPENING - CONTINUOUS

The forests silence is shattered as several tons of twisted steel come belching out of the dark opening. It is quickly followed by the yellow school bus.

As the school bus continues in reverse careening down the dirt road, it pushes the destroyed ranger vehicle off to the side.

Brothers truck shoots out of the shaft, does a quick 180 and continues forward after the bus.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Kyle holds his post at the emergency door. The kids climb over and under seats.

KYLE

The road goes left. Go left.

Randy turns the wheel and the bus nearly veers off the road.

KYLE (CONT'D)

No! Right, right! My left your right.

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The bus weaves all over the road. The windshield explodes as bullets tear into the bus interior.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Randy watches the road in the rearview mirror. His foot hits the brakes and he spins the wheel hard to the right.

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

At a widened section of the road, the bus, without losing momentum, spins in a near perfect smugglers turn and continues forward down the twisting mountain road.

Ahead the road forks into an upper and lower road.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Meg crawls to the front of the bus and takes the seat behind Randy. He tosses her a map.

RANDY

Which way?

MEG

Go up.

RANDY

Are you sure?

MEG

No. Go left. Down there.

Randy turns the wheel and the bus veers to the left. Suddenly the rear windows are shattered by bullets and Kyle ducks behind his seat.

RANDY

Toss everything out the back.

Kyle and Lucia begin tossing backpacks, sleeping bags, and coolers out the rear of the bus.

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Brothers truck swerves to avoid the camping debris, but continues to stay tight with the bus.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

To his side, Randy sees a box of propane mini-canisters.

RANDY

Hand me one of those propane canisters.

Meg opens the box and pulls out a canister.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Take these to the back, puncture the seal and light the escaping gas.

MEG

Are you crazy? It'll explode.

RANDY

Not until it hits something. Do you have matches?

MEG

Shit. No, wait

Meg fishes Chris confiscated matches out of her pocket, grabs the box of canisters and crawls to the back.

Kneeling down, Meg tears open the canisters seal. The gas HISSES loudly as it escapes. She fumbles with the matches for a moment, finally strikes one and ignites the escaping gas. A foot long plume of flame flares from the opening. Meg cocks her arm to toss the grenade when the bus hits a massive bump.

The flaming grenade slips from her hand, drops to a seat, then rolls to the floor. Meg lunges for the canister, but it escapes her grasp and begins rolling to the front of the bus.

Meg begins crawling after the rolling canister which comes to a stop halfway down the aisle. She reaches for it when the bus swerves to the left and the canister resumes its roll.

Meg takes off after the canister when Katie reaches down and stops its movement.

MEG (CONT'D)
Get away from there!

Katie jumps back and the flaming grenade continues on.

Suddenly a heavy foot stops the canister.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Randy, his right foot holding the flaming propane grenade as he drives. He reaches down and tosses the canister to the side through the shattered front windshield.

The canister hits a huge pine tree and explodes in a fireball. The tree falls just missing the back of the pursuing suburban.

RANDY
Try throwing the next one outside
the bus.

Meg hurries to the back and tears open the seal on a second canister. She lights the gas and tosses it out the open rear emergency exit.

The canister explodes inches from Brothers truck sending up a mushroom cloud of flame. Auden swerves and avoids destruction.

KYLE
You missed.

MEG
I dont need the play-by-play.

Meg rips the seal on the third canister and lights the gas. She waits a beat then throws.

KYLE
Youre throwing like a girl.

MEG
I am a girl.

Meg rips another seal and lights the last canister.

ANGLE ON

Brothers truck as it advances ever closer to the school bus. Stoss lines up his sights on Meg.

Stoss finger squeezes the trigger as Meg lofts the last grenade. The primitive bomb lands just in front of the Suburban and detonates. Stoss fires, the truck pops up to its side and drops back down with a shudder. The shot goes wild.

Auden fights to control the truck which goes off the road and into dense brush.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Meg dashes down the aisle as the bus sways violently.

MEG

They went off the road.

RANDY

Grab on to something.

SLAM.

The bus is jolted violently upward then lands with a wallop. Meg is thrown into the stairwell.

The road is steep and littered with football sized rocks. The bus SLAMS and BOUNCES down the rocky road.

Randy fights to control the bus wildly pumping the brakes and down shifting to no avail. The pounding continues and the sound of RIPPING METAL fills the air.

MEG

Was that the steering?

RANDY

Steerings fine. That was the brakes.

MEG

Were in deep shit.

Meg looks out the front windshield.

EXT. FRONT OF BUS - CONTINUOUS

The road ahead angles steeply downhill and banks left just before a rushing river.

The boulders and rocks continue to tear apart the underside of the bus as it races toward the bend.

RANDY

No. Now were in deep shit.

The road shifts sharply left. The bus leaves the short embankment, becomes momentarily airborne then hits the raging river with a momentous SPLASH.

The powerful current keeps the bus afloat and pushes it downstream, banging it against boulders and fallen trees.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The bus is rapidly filling with freezing water as the kids scramble onto the seats. The bus pitches wildly as it rises and falls over the rapids.

SLAM. Branches crash through the windows sending shattered glass everywhere.

EXT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

The bus has wedged itself against a fallen tree on the lip of a waterfall. White water rushes around the bus and tree then plunges ninety feet into a dark gorge.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Mass chaos. Foaming white water rushes through open windows and out the other side. Meg counts the kids.

MEG

Wheres Greg? GREG!

LUCIA

He was sitting under the seat.

Randy wades to Gregs hiding place and thrusts his arms into the water reaching blindly for the child. He feels a foot with his hand and pulls, but nothing gives. Randy then disappears under the freezing water.

UNDERWATER

Randy works furiously to free Greg, but a torn piece of metal pins the boy to the floor. Bracing an arm against the wall, he bends the metal away from the boys body.

Randy thrusts Greg above the water and Meg pulls him away.
Randy surfaces gasping for air.

ERIC
Hes dead, isn't he?

Greg contorts and coughs up a lung full of water. Hes okay.

The bus shifts again and Randy examines the situation.

RANDY
This tree wont hold us much longer.
Get me some rope and a tent pole.

Kyle fishes though the remaining pile of packs, pulls out a nylon rope and throws it to Randy. He wades to the front of the bus and climbs onto the engine hood.

The rivers edge is only fifteen feet away. The rush of water and the lip of the falls make wading the distance out of the question. Randy ties one end of the rope to the roof rack and the other to his waist.

Meg sticks her head out the windshield.

MEG
Where are you going?

RANDY
Ill get to the side and tie the
rope off. The kids can climb over.
Kyle, get some bungee cords.

Randy assembles the tent pole and looks back at the kids.

MEG
These kids cant make it across.

Kyle hands the cords to Randy who wraps one around his wrists.

RANDY
Wrap the two ends around their
wrists, then have them slide
across.

MEG
Theres gotta be a better way.

RANDY
Think of one and tell me later.

Randy grabs the tent pole, plunges it into the water and vaults for the other side.

As he glides across river, the aluminum pole buckles and Randy plunges into the water falling short of the far bank. He grabs a loose root and pulls himself on shore.

Randy unties the rope from his waist and fastens it around a trees base.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Send them over.

Several of the kids are on the hood. Meg grabs Greg, wraps a cord to his hands and sends him out. The boy screams as he quickly slides into Randys arms.

In quick succession, Meg sends Katie, Brady, Eric, Lucia, Chris, Jeff and Kyle.

The tree bracing the bus CRACKS sending a large section of branches over the falls.

The bus pivots violently causing the rope to slacken. On shore Randy looks at Meg who remains trapped on the bus hood.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Dont move. Let me take in the
slack.

Meg moves to the edge of the bus and prepares to cross when...

...the bus shifts up on its side and Meg tumbles overboard. As she falls she grabs the rope and holds tight. Submerged up to her neck, Meg fights to hold on as the water pushes her toward the falls.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Pull yourself across.

Meg begins an arduous hand over hand climb.

With an earsplitting CRACK, the remaining portion of the tree goes over the falls with the bus following in its path.

Meg is swept out and over the edge. The rope goes taut.

The luggage rack breaks free as the bus plunges to the jagged rocks below. Meg hangs onto the rope several feet over the falls fighting to catch a breath amidst the rushing water.

ANGLE ON

Randy and the kids as they all pull on the rope against the force of the mighty river. After several pulls Meg appears over the lip of the falls. Randy bears down and pulls harder.

Meg slips as the current begins pulling her back over the edge.

Randy wades in the roiling water and pulls the winded and weary Meg to safety. With both hands he lifts her from the water and sets her down.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

ERIC

Shes dead.

GREG

She needs mouth-to-mouth
reservations.

MEG

(coughing)

Im fine. Im fine.

Still a bit waterlogged Meg fixes her gaze on Randy and slowly brings him into focus. Gone are the glasses, the stiff hair, and the baggy white shirt. As he kneels before her, she focuses on his dark curly hair, his deep blue eyes and well defined torso. She sits up a bit confused.

MEG (CONT'D)

Where is...where is Mr. Muller?

CHRIS

Good driving, Muller. I lost a \$200
backpack.

LUCIA

Bite me, Chris. He saved your
ungrateful life.

KATIE

Youre not just a regular French
teacher, are you Mr. Muller?

ERIC

Ill bet youre like a Mafia hit man
or something.

Randy helps Meg sit up as she continues to stare at him transfixed. The moment is broken by several loud POPPING sounds. Randy jumps up to see two men, Dick and Harry, with automatic weapons firing at them from across the river.

RANDY

Quick, behind those rocks.

The kids drop to the ground and begin moving toward a large granite outcropping. Bullets ricochet wildly all around them.

Meg and Lucia cower behind a rock as Randy crawls to them.

RANDY (CONT'D)
(pointing)
Take the kids to the top of that ridge.

MEG
Where are you going?

RANDY
Hunting. Break some branches along the way so I can follow your trail.

Meg gets moving, but Lucia stares at Randy.

RANDY (CONT'D)
What are you waiting for? Get moving.

Randy scrambles out from behind his rock and begins moving up the shore. Popping up behind boulders along the river bank, Dick and Harry chase him up river. He darts into the dense foliage losing the two killers.

The men search the shore for their prey and spot an ancient rope monkey bridge stretching across the river. They both make for it.

The bridge is a river crossing consisting of three ropes pulled taut across the river. Two parallel ropes, at chest level, are hand guides while the lower third rope is the actual foot bridge. A person walks across the lower rope heel-to-toe while holding the upper ropes for balance.

Dick and Harry are halfway across, when Randy springs out of the woods and moves out onto the bridge to meet them.

Harry goes for his gun and wavers wildly off balance. He reaches out and clutches the rope to steady himself.

Gripping the left rope with both hands, Randy swings out over the river and impacts Harry in the side. Harry rocks off balance, drops his gun and dangles from the right hand rope trying to regain his footing.

Swinging a knife, Dick charges forward. Randy drop-kicks Dick's hand sending the knife flying into the air. He deftly catches the knife with one hand while delivering a violent kick to Dick's head. The man drops into the violent river and is carried away.

A massive fist smashes Randy in the back of the head. He loses his balance and plummets toward the river, but manages to grab the foot rope with his left hand.

Harrys black combat boot smashes against Randys hand.

Randy swings with his right hand and buries the knife into Harrys calf. Harry howls in pain and Randy swings around knocking the killer into the water.

Harry is washed down river fighting furiously against the current. His flailing body is swept over the waterfall and crushed on the rocks and bus below.

Pulling himself up on the bridge, Randy eases across and disappears into the bushes.
CUT TO:

INT. PALLAS HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE ON MUSANTE dialing a telephone as he speaks to a police PHOTOGRAPHER. PULL BACK TO REVEAL the body of a muscle bound tank of a man drenched with coagulated blood. His throat is slit from ear-to-ear.

MUSANTE

Dont touch anything until the boys
from crime lab get here.

(into the phone)

Oh, Turner? Musante. Bad news.
Palla is dead...murdered. Id say
hes been dead 12 to 15 hours. Well
know more when the white coats are
done.

INT. SCHREEVES OFFICE - DAY

The office is humming with activity. Turner, sitting across from Schreeve, clicks his cel-phone closed. He turns to the headmaster.

TURNER

Im sorry to be the one to tell you
this, but we just found Jim Palla
murdered.

Schreeve looks stunned.

SCHREEVE

It doesn't make sense. Coach Palla
was so well liked. He got along
with everyone.

Agent Libbey interrupts Turner and hands him a file.

LIBBEY

Excuse me, Agent Turner. We found some conflicting information on Randy Muller. According to his resume the last place he taught was the Loomis-Chaffee school in Connecticut.

TURNER

And?

LIBBEY

Heres where it gets complicated. Randy Mullers taking the big dirt nap.

SCHREEVE

The dirt nap?

LIBBEY

Hes dead. Been dead for three years. Suicide. Blew his brains out.

Turner thinks a moment and then flips through a file.

TURNER

First down, Libbey. Our Mr. Muller has been at Westcott about three years.

Schreeve slumps back in his chair stunned.

SCHREEVE

I cant believe Randy Muller could be involved.

TURNER

Lets get a set of the living Mr. Mullers prints and run em through the lab. Im gonna drop by his apartment and poke around.

CUT TO:

EXT. YOSEMITE HILLTOP - DAY

Surrounded by a dense forest on a hillside high above the river, Meg and the kids stumble into a huge meadow. They look tired and washed out.

CHRIS

This is a huge mistake. My dad probably paid my ransom. I shouldn't follow you idiots.

LUCIA

Then maybe we should have left you back in the cave, dillhole.

KATIE

Is Mr. Muller coming back?

BRADY

The Rangers are looking for us, right Ms. McCarthy?

ERIC

Yeah, right. Why look for us? Were not missing.

MEG

Im sure theyre looking for us right now. Well be found soon.

ERIC

Yeah, but by who?

RANDY(O.S.)

By me.

Randy steps into the clearing his shirt open and his pants torn. The kids react with surprise.

CHRIS

Well, look whos still alive.

ERIC

Did you kill those guys?

JEFF

Youre some kinda psycho, arent you?

MEG

Is there something about you you want to tell me?

RANDY

Yeah. We need to get moving and put some distance on those guys. Were going north.

MEG

Slow down. Theres nothing up there but wilderness.

(MORE)

MEG (CONT'D)

Theres a ranger station to the west. That's where we should go.

RANDY

Theres a chance Charley Auden and his pals will have dinner waiting for us.

MEG

Theres a chance they could be anywhere in the woods. How long do you think these kids are going to last if we drag them through that wilderness? We dont have any food, any equipment, nothing. We need to get to a phone.

RANDY

Going to that Ranger station gives me a very bad feeling.

MEG

At this point I dont see how we have any other choice. So, if youre done channeling lets get moving.

Meg turns and heads off into the woods. The kids all look to Randy and then follow after Meg.

Randy hesitates undecided whether to follow or go north. He then begins kicking at the grass, covering any signs of where they stopped.

RANDY

Walk lightly, dont break any branches and stay to the group.

As he heads out he notices Greg sitting on a rock, his head buried in his arms, sobbing quietly.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Come on Greg, we really need to get going.

Greg doesn't move, but continues to sob.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Greg, lets go. Whats the problem?

Greg looks up and speaks between sobs.

GREG

I peed my pants.

RANDY
Why didn't you go behind those
trees?

GREG
Cause I didn't want those men to
get me.

RANDY
Nobodys going to get you. Its not
going to happen.

GREG
But Im afraid...

RANDY
(strident)
Theres no time to be afraid. Stay
with the group and youll be okay.

Randy prods Greg along and they catch up with the group.

EXT. TOP OF THE FALLS - DAY

CLOSE on the mangled body of Dick. Rushing water keeps his
torso wedged between two boulders.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL Auden and Brother on the shore staring at
the lifeless body with disregard. Stoss checks the riverbank.
Brother wets his hand in the river and anoints his forehead
in the motion of cross.

BROTHER
(sotto)
I have found grace in thy sight, oh
lord. Take me for thine
inheritance.
(to Auden and Stoss)
Shit. Were making errors here.
Stoss, can we track them?

STOSS
Theyve got two hours on us, maybe
more. We should move before the
trail gets cold.

AUDEN
Why bother? The moneys practically
here. We dont need them.

STOSS

What if they find a ranger or meet hikers on the trail? If anyone finds them there is no money.

AUDEN

How far do you really think seven kids and two teachers can get?

BROTHER

Nobodys going to find them. Auden, get the others. Were going after them.

CUT TO:

INT. SCHREEVES OFFICE - NIGHT

The office has quieted some as the sun sets. Turner, his sleeves rolled up, looking a bit worn, sits at Schreeves desk as Libbey bends over his shoulder.

LIBBEY

We just finished the wide net credit check on Meg McCarthys card. They stopped for gas at Mckiernans Mini-Mart outside of Knights Ferry.

Turner steps around to a larger bulletin board behind the desk. He makes a mark on a map pinned to the wall.

TURNER

Send Mitchell up to check it out. Have him canvass the area and see if anyone saw anything unusual. Have his team do a grid search of every shop, restaurant, rest area and restroom between there and Yosemite.

Turner idly picks up a brass spyglass from the credenza behind Schreeves desk and looks through it.

TURNER (CONT'D)

Have we heard anything back from the tree police up at Yosemite?

LIBBEY

The fires are still out of control and the rangers are short handed.

Schreeve enters and sets a stack of folders on the desk.

TURNER

Keep on em. I need to know if the bus made it to the park. Hey, Schreeve whats tuition at this place like? Real steep?

CUT TO:

EXT. YOSEMITE TRAIL - DAY

The kids are gathered around Katie who nurses a bruised knee. Randy catches up to Meg.

RANDY

Whats the hold-up?

MEG

I thought wed stop here for the night.

ERIC

Were going to sleep here?

JEFF

Outside?

BRADY

I cant sleep without a tent. Therere bugs on the ground. Gross.

CHRIS

This sucks. Im not staying here. Theres gotta be something better than this.

KATIE

Isn't there a cabin or campground or something around here.

RANDY

(snapping)

There are no cabins out here. Do any of you realize whats going on? There are men out there who trying to kill us. If were going to make it out of here you all need to grow up.

The group falls silent as Randy walks off to calm down.

MEG

I want you to pair off and collect as much of wood as you can carry.

CHRIS

Listen, babe. My tuition pays your salary so you work for me. You get the wood.

Randy angrily strides toward Chris and jerks him up by the shirt collar.

RANDY

Everyone gets the wood, so I dont want any shit from you.

Randy drops a scared Chris. The kids pair off and walk into the woods. Greg grabs Bradys hand to go with her, but is yanked back by Kyle. Meg moves in close to Randy.

MEG

(low to Randy)

Why dont you just break his arm next time?

Randy cant win for trying.

RANDY

What is it with you? That kid gives you shit and you take it?

MEG

Its not worth it. Two years ago Chris and I went head-to-head. I wanted him suspended, but daddy stepped in and the school got a new gymnasium.

Randy grabs Gregs hand and leads him off in search of wood. Meg watches them go.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Jeff walks beside Lucia picking up bark and sticks.

JEFF

Is your brother really a retard?

LUCIA

Hes not a retard. Hes deaf. He just needs more attention thats all.

JEFF

Why do people call him a retard?

LUCIA
They dont when Im around.

JEFF
How do you talk to him?

LUCIA
Sign language.

JEFF
Cool. Could you teach me that?

LUCIA
Sure.

JEFF
How do you say eat shit and die?

Jeff smiles and helps her with some sticks.

ANGLE ON

Kyle and Brady, in another part of the woods, sitting with their backs to a log.

BRADY
I cant believe whats happening. Im
so totally scared.

Kyle hears his cue and pulls Brady close to him.

BRADY (CONT'D)
You know, we could die like
tomorrow?
(beat)
Do you still have it?

KYLE
Have what?

BRADY
The cure for cancer. The rubber,
silly.

Kyle fishes the foiled condom out of his front pocket. It seems to glow in his hand. Brady leans into him.

BRADY (CONT'D)
This could be the last night of our
lives. Im glad Im sharing it with
you.
(moving closer)
I want to share everything with
you.

Brady kisses Kyle and the kiss becomes more passionate.

BRADY (CONT'D)
Oh, Kyle. I want you.

KYLE
You want me to what?

BRADY
Make love to me.

Kyle breaks away and gives Brady a look.

KYLE
Did you have to say that, make
love? My parents make love.

BRADY
Soooooooooooo?

KYLE
Couldn't you call it something else
like screwing or boinking or
humping or even fu.....

SLAP. Kyle gets Bradys hand across his face.

BRADY
You are so cro-magnon.

Brady turns and disappears into the darkness.

KYLE
What? What did I do?

ANGLE ON

Randy walks through the woods, his arms loaded with branches.
Greg dawdles behind holding one stick.

GREG
Mr. Muller, are you married?

RANDY
No.

GREG
Mr. Muller, do you have a
girlfriend?

RANDY
No, I dont have a girlfriend

GREG
Married to your work, huh?

RANDY
Something like that.

GREG
Theres this girl...shes not
here...shes back at school. I
really like her...and I wanna tell
her, but I, I, I, dont know how.

Randy stops and turns, a bit frustrated.

RANDY
Look, just go up to her, face to
face, and tell her the truth. Let
her know how you feel. Now, how
about less questions and more wood.

Randy keeps walking, Greg ponders the advice, then catches
up.

GREG
Do you think I should give her
flowers?

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

On the flat rocks next to the campfire, Meg has laid out the
makings of a survival dinner. Several dozen dark green leaves
are rolled like burritos in a pile.

The kids come into the campsite each bearing armloads of
wood. When the first sight of food hits them, they drop the
wood, dash for the feast and stuff their mouths.

CHRIS
Oh, man. This tastes great.

BRADY
I am so famished.

Randy picks up a rolled leaf, examines it, sniffs the
contents and tentatively takes a bite. He likes what he
tastes and takes another. By now the entire group is chewing
on their second or third stuffed leaf.

ERIC
Is this chicken? Cause it tastes
like chicken.

CHRIS
Its pork, you moron.

LUCIA
Its probably mountain goat

KYLE
Its good. A little gooey though.
What is it?

Randy unfolds his burrito and studies it.

RANDY
Looks like banana slugs, dender
grubs and archer beetles.

Absolute silence.

LUCIA
Slugs...

KATIE
Grubs...

BRADY
Beetles?

The group is frozen in mid-chew waiting. Randy chews thoughtfully searching for that one last ingredient.

RANDY
And mealworms.

The food falls from the kids mouths. Several turn and spit out what they have left.

BRADY
Oh, rank!

Meg stomps to Randys side and pulls him away from the group.

MEG
Why did you tell them?

RANDY
They asked.

MEG
Do you think they really wanted to
know? Weve got a long day ahead and
this may be the last meal they eat
for a long time.

RANDY
Im sorry. I didnt realize...

MEG
You may be good at killing people,
but youve got a lot to learn about
these kids.

Randy has no reply as Meg scrapes the last of the burritos
into the fire and raises a small plume of sparks.
DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CAMPFIRE - LATER

Sparks fly as a log hits the fires waning embers. A flame
flares and we see Randy stoking the fire. The kids sleep
around the campfire. Meg stares intently at Randy.

RANDY
You really should try to get some
sleep. Were going to move with
first light.

MEG
Who are you?

RANDY
Randy Muller.

MEG
I mean really.

Randy stares into the fire poking at it with a stick.

RANDY
Im really Randy Muller.

MEG
My dad says, never trust a man who
cant look you in the eye.

RANDY
Good advice.

MEG
Hes full of good advice.

RANDY
Is he a teacher, too?

MEG

No. He writes editorials for a newspaper. When hes not telling the world what to do, he tells me.

RANDY

That explains why you feel the need to be in charge.

MEG

Thats not true. Its just that if you want something done right you have to do it yourself.

RANDY

And sometimes you have to let someone with more experience do it for you.

MEG

And where did a French teacher get this experience?

She stares at him for a moment. Randy lies down and rolls with his back to Meg.

MEG (CONT'D)

Im going to find out who are you are, Randy Muller.

RANDY

And Im going to sleep.

Meg continues to stare at Randy for a moment and then lies down closing her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. RANDYS APARTMENT - DAY

The door opens as an ELDERLY APARTMENT MANAGER lets Turner and Libbey enter.

MANAGER

Hes a loner this one is. Whatd he do?

LIBBEY

Hes missing.

MANAGER

Its so hard to tell when hes here, howd you know if he was missing?

TURNER

Thank you. Well find you if we need anything.

The one bedroom apartment is spartanly decorated. The furnishings are cheap rentals. No plants, no posters, no photographs, nothing to hint at Randys personality.

LIBBEY

Not much here is there?

TURNER

Youre lookin at it all wrong. Ya gotta look at what you cant see. Everything in here tells us about this guy. Furniture came with the apartment. No photographs, no plants, he doesn't even have an answering machine.

Libbey picks up a few pieces of mail and flips through them.

LIBBEY

All addressed to occupant. Nothing with his name on it. None of this tells us anything.

TURNER

It says this guy has gone through a lot of trouble to conceal his past. Whatever hes hiding Ill bet its right in front of us.

Turner spots the fridge and opens the door. He smiles.

TURNER (CONT'D)

Here it is.

LIBBEY

What is it! Whatd you find?

TURNER

Cokes! Want one?

Turner comes up with two cans of Coke. Libbey frowns.

TURNER (CONT'D)

Libbey, youre not going to make it to forty if you dont learn to loosen up. Tell a joke now and then. Drop your pants. It isn't gonna kill ya.

He pops open a Coke and hands it to Libbey, but it slips through his fingers landing on the counter top soaking the telephone and yellow pages.

LIBBEY

Oh, shit! Im sorry.

Libbey sets the spilled can upright and begins mopping up the mess. Turner grabs some paper towels, picks the yellow pages up and wipes it off. He notices a loose page and plucks it out.

The initials HL followed by a seven digit number is hand written at the top of the page which has been torn from the Miami Yellow Pages.

TURNER

Sometimes I think I can piss gold.

LIBBEY

What?

TURNER

This is a page from a Miami phone book. Call this number and see if you can find out what the HL stands for. And find out when Muller was in Miami.

EXT. WOODS/TREELINE- DAY

A rotting log rests against a large boulder near the edge of the tree line. Randys head rises over the log as he surveys...

...a large circular clearing with a small wooden Rangers cabin on one side and a small dirt road leading away into the woods. An 80 foot tall steel-girdered lookout tower with an adjoining metal stairway stands a few feet from the cabin. Next to the tower is a barn housing a bulldozer and fire fighting equipment.

In the distance, smoke clouds a pristine blue sky.

Randy turns to Meg and the kids.

RANDY

Give me two minutes to check it out and talk to the ranger.

Randy steps into the clearing, the brilliant morning sun obscuring his view of the watchtower. He cautiously makes his way toward the rangers cabin.

He glances up and the bright glint of sunlight on glass catches his attention. Shielding his eyes against the sun he looks toward the tower when...

CRACK, CRACK, CRACK.

Bullets pepper the ground around Randy who dashes for the small cabin. In a fluid motion Randys body is airborne crashing through a wood-framed glass window.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

In a hail of glass and wood Randy rolls across the cabin floor coming to a stop on a soft object. He clears bits of glass from his face and turns to see...

...A dead park ranger, his throat silt.

The cabin is a one large room sparsely decorated. An armoire adorns a wall near a single bed, a small gas stove is on another wall across from a kitchen table. A steamer trunk sits next to a stone hearth on the opposite wall.

EXT. TREELINE - CONTINUOUS

Meg shoves the kids away from the clearing herding them down a slight embankment.

MEG

Come on, get moving. Go! Go! Go!

GREG

Theyre shooting at us again.

CHRIS

No shit, Sherlock.

Meg hustles the kids down behind several rocks.

MEG

Stay low and out of sight. Im going to go help Mr. Muller.

ANGLE ON

The gleaming tower as, BUD, a muscular guy carrying a small automatic weapon, climbs down to the ground. He glances back at the second sniper, LOU, who waits in the tower.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Bud kicks open the cabin door and sprays the room with gunfire. Lamps, canisters, furniture, and books disintegrate from bullet impacts. He stops to survey the room.

No French teacher.

EXT. TREELINE - CONTINUOUS

Meg hesitates on the edge of the woods noticing a Jeep with a radio antenna. She circles around the clearing toward the Jeep.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Gun drawn, Bud advances toward the armoire. In a burst of gunfire, he splinters the doors which fall to reveal... Nothing.

He moves to the simple oak bed squatting down to look beneath it. Nothing.

Moving to the steamer trunk, ready to fire, he kicks it open. Nothing.

Bud glances at the stone fireplace and smiles.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Meg dashes for the jeep. Kneeling beside it she picks up a rock and smashes the window. PING. PING. PING. The jeep is peppered with bullets from the tower. Meg is pinned down.

EXT. TREELINE - CONTINUOUS

The kids gasp in horror at Megs predicament.

BRADY

Shes trapped. Kyle, youve got to help her.

KYLE

But theyve got guns. I dont want to get shot.

ERIC

Oh, man! Shes gonna get nailed.

GREG
Ill go. Okay, Brady?

LUCIA
You guys are pathetic.

Lucia is up and running toward the barn. Kyle jumps to his feet, dashes across the clearing after Lucia and disappears into the barn behind her.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Bud crouches low as he peers up into the fireplaces flue. Suddenly his gun is yanked from his hands and disappears into the darkness. A moment later the gun stock SLAMS into his face shattering his nose and loosening a river of blood.

Swifter than old Saint Nick, a soot covered Randy drops out of the flue and dives on the man.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Lucia jumps behind the controls of the bulldozer.

KYLE
Let me drive. Im taking drivers Ed
next semester.

Climbing into the bulldozer, Kyle is confused by the levers and controls. Twisting the starter, the tractor roars to life. He pushes all the controls forward and the bulldozer jolts ahead. The massive blade begins to rise as...

EXT. TOWER - CONTINUOUS

...the loud RUMBLE of the bulldozer grabs Lous attention and he glances toward the barn.

The barn doors shatter as the massive bulldozer roars out, Kyle at the controls and Lucia behind the seat holding on tightly.

ANGLE ON

Meg hiding behind the jeep as she sees the bulldozer rumble out of the barn.

ANGLE ON

The tower. The bulldozers blade is three quarters raised obscuring Lous view. He opens fire, but his bullets bounce harmlessly off the bulldozers thick steel blade.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Randy sends Bud crashing into the stone hearth. He picks up a fireplace poker and begins swinging. Randy holds up a chair, but the poker shatters it to splinters.

Outside we hear GRINDING gears and the ROAR of the bulldozer.

Bud lands a hard blow to the side of Randys head knocking him to the stove. Blood gushes from a three inch gash on his cheek.

Bud turns on the stove and blue flames dance on the burner. He grabs Randy and forces his face toward the hot fire.

Randy puts an arm out and stops himself inches from the flames. Bringing his other arm up under the stovetop, Randy shoves with all his energy and topples the small stove.

The thick gas cable snaps free and snakes wildly releasing invisible propane into the room.

EXT. TREELINE - CONTINUOUS

Kyle pulls levers wildly on the bulldozer. Lou leans over the guardrail waiting for a clean shot.

Greg scrambles to the edge of the woods and flings a rock at the tower. The others join in as the rocks CLANK off the towers steel frame.

Lou draws a bead on Kyle and prepares to fire when an errant rock smacks him in the back of the neck. His shot goes wild and Lou jumps to the other side and sprays the treeline with gunfire. The kids dive into the protective safety of the forest.

The bulldozer blade smashes into one of the four steel pole legs of the tower crumpling it like tinfoil.

Kyle and Lucia attempt to push the tower over. They look up to see it violently swaying and then begin a slow fall toward them.

INT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Randy places a firm kick to Buds chest sending him across the room. Bud is quick to his feet and both men pause.

Randy sees Buds automatic near the fireplace and both men dive for it. Bud grabs the gun and aims it at Randy who freezes.

Out the window Randy can see Kyle, Lucia and Meg madly running from the bulldozer to the woods. Behind them the lookout tower is teetering and falling.

BUD
Not quick enough.

RANDY
Right.

Randy looks left and jumps right. He crashes out a second window and rolls around in the dirt.

Bud turns to fire at Randy when...

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The falling watchtower SMASHES into the small cabin decimating the small structure. A fireball erupts from the demolished buildings sending a mushroom cloud of flame high in the air.

The blast catapults Randy away from the building.

Meg runs to Randy and drags him away from the intense heat of the flames. At a safe distance, she stops and turns Randy over. The kids gather in a circle.

Randy is covered in black soot, his cheek gashed and bloody.

ERIC
Hes dead. Hes dead and were
screwed.

The children share a look of shock.

MEG
Dont do this to us now, Randy.

Randy groans then moves his hands to rub his head.

JEFF
Hes alive!

RANDY

Barely.

Randy sits up slowly. Meg tries to keep him down.

MEG

Hey, slow down. Dont move.

RANDY

We have to keep moving.

MEG

The rangers must have seen the fireball. Theyre probably on their way here now.

Randy struggles to stand.

RANDY

If the rangers saw it, so did the men following us. We need to move north, across the park to Bridgeport Valley.

MEG

North? Thats impossible terrain.

RANDY

Exactly. I know what these guys are like. I know what theyre capable of and its time we stop thinking like they expect us to.

MEG

Thats a good plan for you and me, but what about the kids? They cant cover that kind of wilderness.

KYLE

We can try, Ms. McCarthy. Maybe we should go north.

MEG

Im sure you could, but what about the others?

LUCIA

We can do it.

Meg looks to the groups determined faces.

RANDY

Were wasting time.

The decision has already been made. As the group heads into the woods Brady pulls Kyle aside.

BRADY

You are like so brave. Wait till I get you alone.

KYLE

Maybe you shouldn't forgive me so fast. I was really rude last night.

Brady seductively gives his butt a squeeze and walks after the group. Kyle rolls his eyes and follows.

Greg lags behind, hesitating to follow the group. Randy comes to his side.

RANDY

Hey, buddy. Whats the matter?

GREG

I dont...I dont wanna go back into the woods. Cant I just stay here?

RANDY

Dont be ridiculous, you cant stay here.

Gregs look betrays his fear. Randy kneels to Gregs level.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Its okay to be afraid. Even I was a little scared.

GREG

Im not afraid...but those guys are in the woods.

RANDY

I knew a little kid like you once. He would tell me how scared he was so I made a deal with him. We became partners. If I needed help I would call him and if he needed help he would call me.

GREG

What happened to him?

RANDY

Hes with his mother now.

Greg still seems tentative.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Why dont we be partners? If you
need help just call me and if I
need help, Ill call you. Deal?

Greg considers the proposal.

GREG
Okay.

RANDY
All right partner. Lets catch up
with the group.

The two stand and begin walking after the group.

EXT. FOREST/FIRE LINE - DAY

On a short ridge several firefighters dig a trench along the
tree line. Crew Chief Zeise stands watching a water drop
through binoculars. A MAN dashes to his side.

MAN
We got a call from the FBI. They
want us to do a search of the park
for some missing kids.

ZEISE
I dont have the manpower to piss
away searching for lost hikers.

MAN
You want me to tell them we cant?

ZEISE
Aw, shit. Send Coyne and Crouse in
chopper three. Have them start a
sectional search north of Sonora
Pass. But if we lose anymore ground
here Im calling em off.

CUT TO:

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Brother, Auden, Stoss and TAYLOR, a muscular man with a tight
buzz cut, enter the clearing and see the smoldering remains
of the cabin and lookout tower. Brother walks to a body
impaled on piece of twisted metal. He bends down to look at
the man.

AUDEN

Who are these kids, Junior-fucking-Rambos?

BROTHER

He hath seen the light, oh Lord,
and crossed the threshold of thy
precious covenant.

Auden moves to Stoss standing over a trail.

AUDEN

What is it with that religious
shit? Hes not a fucking priest
anymore.

STOSS

You tell him.

Brother walks over to Stoss who kicks though the rubble.

BROTHER

That French teacher has to be
stopped.

Stoss is crouched and studying the tree line. He kicks the
dirt.

STOSS

Theyre going north.

AUDEN

Why go north? Thats complete
wilderness.

BROTHER

Let me see the map. Shit its thirty
miles to Bridgeport Valley. They
have no fucking idea what theyre
doing.

STOSS

He knows exactly what hes doing.
North is his only chance.

BROTHER

Call Scripa and Boone. Tell em to
bring the equipment and get here in
fifteen minutes.

CUT TO:

EXT. ALONG A RIVER GORGE - DAY

Randy, Meg and the kids walk along the precipice of a gorge which is about 40 feet across. Kyle and Brady hold hands and Greg walks right on Megs heels. Lucia hikes next to Jeff shaping his fingers.

LUCIA

Wait. Your fingers crossed makes an
r. Together is an s.

CHRIS

Man, thats a long way down. Hey
Weasel, take a look.

He notices Jeff steering clear of the ravine.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Ahh, Whats the matter, afraid of
heights?

JEFF

No.

CHRIS

I dare you to take just one look.
Go ahead wuss.

JEFF

Leave me alone.

CHRIS

Do it...wuss.

Jeff steps close to the edge, still averting his eyes from the gorge. He looks down. Fear fills his body as he waivers on the edge. A hand grabs him back.

MEG

Stay away from the edge.

Chris laughs as Jeff humbly gets back in line.

MEG (CONT'D)

Dont push your luck, Chris.

CHRIS

Why? What are you gonna have me
expelled...again.

Meg grits her teeth and walks on.

ANGLE ON

Randy stopped at a stand of young saplings next to the narrow gorge. Dead end. Meg moves to the front of the group.

MEG

What now?

RANDY

The trail ends here.

MEG

Should we go back?

RANDY

They're right behind us. We need to cross this ravine.

Meg studies the trees along the side of the cliff.

MEG

I have an idea. It's something I used to do as a kid.

DISSOLVE TO:

Lucia and Jeff shinny up a thin sapling as the group watches carefully.

RANDY (V.O.)

Higher. About ten more feet.

The two keep climbing until the thin trunk waivers under their weight. The upper portion of the tree begins to bend earthward.

LUCIA

(panicked)

Now what?

RANDY (O.S.)

Just hold on tight and lean out.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL, Randy and Kyle across the divide coaching the others. Near Lucia and Jeff, we see another bent sapling.

Lucia and Jeff lean out, their weight causes the tree to bend and they slowly vault/parachute across the twenty foot split.

LUCIA/JEFF

Oh, shiiiiiiiiiiiiit!

They land with a THUD, let go of the tree and it snaps back to the other side, bent at the trunk

Katie, Greg and Eric climb a tree and all go at once.

RANDY

Meg, you and Chris use that maple tree.

Meg turns around to see Chris three quarters up the wrong tree.

MEG

Chris, get down here.

CHRIS

Bite me. I can do it alone.

MEG

CHRIS. Get down!

Too late. Chris tree bends toward the ravine. It arcs slowly then faster. Suddenly...CRACK. The trees base splinters and breaks. The tree drops violently brushing past the ravines far lip.

Chris holds on for dear life as the tree slams into the wall of stone twenty feet below Megs position. He slides five feet downward.

Looking down Chris can see the rushing water and sharp boulders. Looking up he can see Meg peering over the side at him.

CHRIS

Help! Get me up. Get me up.

RANDY

Hold on, Chris.

Chris kicks out with his legs as everyone watches helplessly. Randy takes the remaining rope and throws it to Meg.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Get a line down to him.

Meg drops the rope, but cant get it past the tangle of branches. The thin tendons of wood holding the tree to the splintered trunk begin to snap dropping the sapling a few more feet.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Climb down to him.

Meg looks at Chris with a panic.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Meg. It has to be you. You have to take the rope down.

Meg looks down at Chris, then at the rushing river below him. Vertigo kicks in.

The tree CREAKS and slips a bit down the cliff. Chris wails.

CHRIS

Oh, God! Please, Ms. McCarthy help me, please.

RANDY

You can do it Meg, I know you can. You have to.

Meg jumps to action. She loops the rope around a tree, ties the middle to herself and leaves some slack for Chris.

Meg begins the slow climb downward.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Just dont look down.

Meg has her eyes locked on the tree and the ravine wall. Below her she sees Chris fighting to keep hold. She waivers a bit then clamps on tight.

The kids yell words of encouragement.

CHRIS

Give me the rope.

The base cracks and the tree slips a few more feet.

Meg waits till the movement stops then hands the rope off. Chris takes it with one hand and loops it around his right wrist.

RANDY

Hes got it. Meg, climb up.

Meg braces herself to climb, but a loud CRACK echoes and the sapling completely breaks way from its base and tumbles into the river.

Meg and Chris SLAM against the rock face then begin a slow hand over hand climb upward. In what seems like an eternity, the two finally pull over the top. Meg grabs Chris in a bear hug.

RANDY (CONT'D)

No time for that. Get on that tree and go.

Meg and Chris move to the last tree.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Meg, you first.

Meg begins to climb, when she is ten feet up Chris follows.

They climb past twenty feet, then thirty.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Higher.

Meg rocks slowly, then faster. The tree begins swaying finally bending out toward the ravine. The two quickly arc across the canyon.

SLAM. The pair are deposited on the opposite side. Meg releases the tree which shoots back upright.

The kids all gather round to welcome them. Randy steps closer to Meg.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Good work, Meg. I know that was tough.

MEG
Thanks and thanks for your help.
(beat)
I mean with everything.

Randy smiles and heads off down the trail.
CUT TO:

INT. WESTCOTT TEACHERS LOUNGE - DAY

Schreeve, Libbey and Turner stand before a group of angry and concerned parents who yell over each other to be heard. DON MATTHEWS, a burly man with a dignified look, stands up.

DON
Im holding this school personally responsible.
(to Schreeve)
If anything happens to my Brady, anything, I will sue.

LILA PRESTON, a thin woman waves her hand.

LILA
Could someone get me a cup of coffee please? Someone. Black, two sugars.

A short man with thinning hair, DAVID BLUMIN, calls from his seat.

DAVID

You're just sitting here. Are you even doing anything to find my son?

JUDY CARTER, an aggressive middle aged woman points at Schreeve.

JUDY

I enrolled my daughter in this school so this kind of thing wouldn't happen.

SCHREEVE

Please, please. Take a seat and Agent Turner from the FBI will fill you in on what we know.

Everyone sits and Turner clears his throat.

TURNER

Thank you. About two hours ago we received instructions from the kidnappers on when and where to drop the money. They want Mr. Schreeve to place \$18 million in a duffel bag and deliver it to the Cliff House in San Francisco at 10 AM tomorrow. The kidnappers have assured us the children are fine.

An AGENT passes a note to Turner. He scans it quickly.

TURNER (CONT'D)

(to agent)

Great. Get me a chopper. I want to go in ten minutes.

The parents open with a chorus of What is it?

TURNER (CONT'D)

It looks like the Westcott school bus has been found.

Several parents GASP and ad lib their concerns.

TURNER (CONT'D)

From what we know the children weren't with it. This is a big break and I'd put my bets on the home team to find your children safe and sound.

Turner gathers up his folders and steps out into the...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As he walks he is approached by a business-like man, US
MARSHAL RAY COLE.

COLE
Agent Turner?

TURNER
Yeah?

COLE
Im Ray Cole, with the Federal
Marshals office.

TURNER
Sorry, but I dont really have the
time...

COLE
You ran a print check on a man
named Randy Muller in connection
with a kidnapping. The request was
forwarded to me.

Turner suddenly gives his full attention as Cole hands him a
set of folded papers.

COLE (CONT'D)
The mans real name is Paul Gorman.
Hes an ex-Marshal. I have a federal
warrant authorizing me to return
him to Florida for prosecution.

TURNER
I guess he wasnt stealing office
supplies?

Cole continues on humorless.

COLE
The mans a killer; he murdered two
of our protected witnesses. My
partner, James Seeberg, lost his
life trying to stop him. You can
understand why Im anxious to get
Gorman back.

TURNER
Well, my men will keep you posted.

Cole gives Turner a hard look.

COLE

Im authorized to help any way I can.

TURNER

Im sure my men can contain him.

COLE

Gorman isn't just some beat cop on the take. Hes from the SOG - Special Operations Group. Hes trained for deep cover, evasion, mortal combat. Dont underestimate him.

TURNER

Were moving shop to Yosemite. Why dont you come along. Maybe you can give me some insight into what were dealing with.

Turner begins walking and Cole follows close behind.
CUT TO:

EXT. CAVE OPENING - NIGHT

A small fire cuts through the darkness. Meg sits near the fire while nearly every kid is sacked out. Randy returns with an armload of wood. Meg stares hard at Randy.

RANDY

This should last the night.

MEG

Do you realize youve worked at Westcott for two years and I only learned your first name yesterday.

RANDY

Its been three years.

MEG

Exactly! I dont the first thing about you. Are you married, do you have kids, do you drink coffee, does it taste great, is it less filling? I dont know anything about you.

RANDY

I keep to myself.

MEG

Ill tell you what. You tell me something personal about you then Ill tell you something personal about me.

RANDY

(considers)

I dont drink coffee.

MEG

Wait. Okay, Ill go first.

(searching)

I havent had a date in almost a year. Well, there was a blind date, but that doesn't count.

RANDY

I cant believe that. You seem like youd be a great date to me.

MEG

I think so, too. But maybe Im trying too hard. Maybe I scare men off because Im too independent. I dont know. It just seems like all the guys Ive dated have been immature jerks

RANDY

(smiling)

Maybe you need to date a different kind of guy.

Meg considers Randys advice. Randy realizes hes said too much. Blush moment.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Ummmmmm, you really should try to get some sleep. Ill stay up.

MEG

(yawning)

Really. Im not tired.

Randy stands to go.

MEG (CONT'D)

Hey, its your turn. Where are you going?

RANDY

Dont worry, Im coming back.

Randy steps into the darkness as Meg curls by the fire.
DISSOLVE TO

EXT. CAVE OPENING - LATER

The fire has burned down to a few remaining embers. Meg wakes with a start. She looks around and sees the kids, but no Randy. She tosses a few branches on the fire and heads into the woods.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Meg stumbles through the moonlit forest groping along the close-set trees.

MEG
(whispering)
Randy?

Suddenly, a hand jerks around her mouth. Meg struggles, but is subdued. The grip releases and Meg falls gasping for air. Randy steps out of the shadows and offers her a hand.

RANDY
Shhh. Youll wake the neighbors.

He helps Meg up and then begins tying a vine to a tree.

MEG
Its okay. Next time you want to get
close just ask.
(beat)
I was worried about you. Where have
you been?

RANDY
Improving our chances. Theyre
getting closer.

They step onto a small ledge above a dark valley. A full moon casts an eerie blue glow over the forest below.

RANDY (CONT'D)
(pointing)
Over there. Youll see a campfire.

Meg strains, but sees nothing.

Randy steps behind her and puts an arm around her waist. He pulls her tight and uses his arm as a sight over her shoulder.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Follow my arm. Just to the right.

A dim flickering light is barely visible through the trees.

MEG
I see it. Who is it?

RANDY
Its not Girl Scouts. Theyll catch
up to us tomorrow.

There is an awkward moment and Randy finally releases Meg.

MEG
Back at the fire tower you said you
knew what these guys are like. How
do you know?

RANDY
I did some work for the government
dealing with people like this.

MEG
What happened?

RANDY
Things...turned out badly. I had to
take off for a while.

MEG
So, how did you end up at Westcott?

RANDY
I learned enough French in college
to get by and teaching French was
the only job Westcott had open.

There is a pause as Meg looks into Randys eyes.

MEG
Im sorry I got you into this mess.

RANDY
Are you kidding? You saved me from
a weekend of sorting my socks.

Randy grabs Megs hand and leads her into the darkness.
CUT TO:

EXT. LOWER WATERFALL - DAY

The ROAR of the waterfall cuts through the early morning silence. Sunlight streams through the smoky haze in the air. White ash drifts out of the sky like snowflakes.

The wreckage of the Westcott bus is strewn over several enormous granite boulders at the bottom of the waterfall. The area is alive with activity as FBI AGENTS and RANGERS comb through the wreckage.

Turner and Cole, looking worn from the hike into the remote area, walk to RANGER FROST the man in charge.

TURNER

Ranger Frost? Im Special Agent
Turner. This is Ray Cole with the
Marshals office.
What do you got here?

FROST

Looks like the bus was out of
control when it hit the water.
Current carried it over the falls.

TURNER

Anyone on the bus? Any sign of
bodies?

FROST

We found this one guy nearby, but
there could be someone under it. I
have a couple of patrols out
searching. Mostly up north. But
with the fires we dont have the
manpower to do much more.

The trio walk to the water-logged dead body of Harry.

TURNER

Hes a big one, a regular
linebacker.

COLE

It looks like Gormans handiwork.

Turner waves an AGENT over.

TURNER

Lets get some Polaroids of him and
run his prints. I want to know if
this guys a kidnapper or just a
camper who couldn't swim.

(to Frost)

(MORE)

TURNER (CONT'D)

I want to start a grid search by
chopper ASAP. Cole, you come along
and help us ID Gorman.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODS/TRAIL - DAY

The sun is barely above the horizon. Stoss stops to check the trail. Auden, Brother and Taylor move quickly behind.

STOSS

Theyre just a few hours ahead. Well
catch up today.

Suddenly Taylor stops, his foot tangled in a vine.

TAYLOR

Hey, hold up. Im caught.

Brother thinks for a moment, turns to say something, but too late.

Taylor snaps the vine. An enormous gnarled log plummets down through the thick canopy of limbs above pile-driving Taylor to the ground.

AUDEN

Holy shit! Holy shit!

Brother looks at the crushed man with silent devotion. He traces a cross on Taylors forehead

BROTHER

Repent on thy wickedness and the
thought of Gods heart may forgive
thee.

AUDEN

Do you gotta keep doing that? Its
fucking creepy.

Brother ignores Auden. Stoss steps over to Taylors twisted body and fingers the vine tracing it up the trees trunk.

BROTHER

Hes costing us time.

STOSS

Thats his idea.

Stoss drops the vine and returns to the trail. The men move on leaving Taylor, his head crushed.

CUT TO:

INT. CAVE - DAY

Randys eyes shoot open and he sits up.

Everyone sleeps quietly on the floor as the suns first rays stream into the cave. The low DRONE of a helicopter is barely audible. He cocks his head to listen and then quickly wakes everyone.

RANDY

Lets go. Get up. I hear a
helicopter. Come on.

Everyone springs to life and races out of the cave.
CUT TO:

EXT. TREETOPS - CONTINUOUS

The chopper pilot hovers above the treetops as Turner, his back to us, holds himself steady in the open doorway and urinates.

PILOT

Youre wanted on the radio.

The pilot hands his headset to Turner who zips his pants and climbs back inside.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHOPPER - CONTINUOUS

Randy, Meg and the kids are moving as fast as they can to get to the chopper. The ROAR of the blades fills the woods. The kids and Meg fall behind as Randy attempts to stop the chopper from leaving.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

The chopper is rising slowly...20...30...50...

TURNER

Turner...The fire isn't my problem.
I want three choppers in the air by
this afternoon...Not two, three.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Randy bursts from the woods on Coles side of the chopper waving his arms wildly.

BAM, BAM, BAM.

Cole fires at Randy who dives to the ground for cover. All around him dirt explodes from bullet impacts. BAM, a bullet digs a channel across his arm.

Randy is on his feet retreating headfirst into the woods.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Turner rips off his headset.

TURNER

Who is it? What the hells down there?

COLE

It was Gorman. I saw him.

TURNER

I want this boy alive.

COLE

He killed my partner!

TURNER

I dont care if he killed your grandmother and wore her tits for a party hat. You shoot on my call.

(to pilot)

Put us down in that clearing. Now!

PILOT

Theres not enough space. Cant clear those trees.

TURNER

Shit.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Inside the safety of the trees, Randy watches the helicopter veer off and fly away. Meg and the kids reach his side.

ERIC

Jesus! They killed Mr. Muller.

RANDY

Im all right. Im okay. Get back.

Meg rips a section of her shirt and makes a crude bandage.

MEG

Why in hell would rangers be shooting at you?

KATIE

Were those bad guys, too?

RANDY

Could be. I dont want to stick around for their return.

Meg still attends to the wound. She speaks quietly to Randy.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Thanks. Its okay now.

MEG
You didnt answer my question. Why
would the rangers shoot at you?

RANDY
Maybe they confused me with someone
else.

MEG
Maybe you are someone else.

Meg finishes the dressing, studies Randy, then turns to the
kids.

MEG (CONT'D)
Lets get going, gang. Single file,
no talking. Greg, stay where I can
see you. Brady, single file means
no hand holding.

Randy watches Meg as the group heads down the wooded
hillside. He follows.
CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE, BINOCULAR VIEW - CONTINUOUS

The chopper is seen circling then peeling off. PULL BACK TO
REVEAL Stoss holding the binoculars while Auden and Brother
stand behind him.

BROTHER
Did they find them?

STOSS
I dont think so. Looks like they
were shooting at something.

AUDEN
Who would shoot at a bunch of kids?

BROTHER
We would.

STOSS
(reading a compass)
Thirteen degrees north. Id say were
only an hour behind them.

The three men begin to move quickly down the hill towards the helicopter site.
CUT TO:

EXT. UPPER LOGGING LAKE - DAY

Randy, Meg and the kids walk past a small dark lake clogged with felled trees and rotting debris.

At one end a ten foot high cement dam blocks a wooden log flume which drops down a steep wooded hillside.

JEFF

Hey, whats that cement wall for?

MEG

This is an old logging lake. Thats the flume over there.

RANDY

Maybe it leads down to another lake or a river. There could be campsites nearby.

They walk past the lake and begin down the steep slope under the log flume.

INT. RANGER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Turner sits at a desk as Frost hands him a phone.

FROST

Call for you.

TURNER

Yeah?

LIBBEY(O.S.)

Turner, we followed up on that number, but it wasnt a phone number. It was a prison ID. HL is Howard Lavick. Hes doing 5-10 in San Quentin.

TURNER

San Quentin?

LIBBEY(O.S.)

And get this. Hes in for assault, but hes suspected of being a hitter for the mob.

TURNER

Looks like Mullers hanging out with
all the right people.

Cole steps into the room and signals to Turner.

COLE

The choppers ready to go.

Cole leaves.

TURNER

Make sure the ransom drop goes
down, then get up to San Quentin
and see what Lavick knows about
Muller or Gorman or whoever the
hell this guy is. Ive gotta go.
Coles bitin at my shorts.

LIBBEY(O.S.)

Hows the tag-along doin?

TURNER

That nut job? As if I dont have
enough to worry about. Call me when
you get something.

Turner hangs up the phone and looks outside to Cole who is
loading an extended clip into a pistol.

EXT. UPPER LOGGING LAKE - DAY

Weapons drawn, Auden and Brother pace the shore. Stoss checks
the ground for signs of his quarry. Brother carefully studies
the cement wall at the lakes end. He kicks the rusted iron
wheel embedded in the cement.

STOSS

Theyre still moving, paralleling
the flume.

BROTHER

Shit! Were a trained unit. How can
one guy drag seven rich assholes
though the woods and still elude
us?

AUDEN

Well for one he...

BROTHER

That was a rhetorical question.

EXT. HILLSIDE UNDER LOG FLUME - CONTINUOUS

The group comes to a forty-foot wide ravine. The log flume continues across via an antiquated wooden trestle.

ERIC

End of the line. Were screwed.

Randy studies the ravine.

BRADY

What now Mr. Muller? Mr. Muller?

MEG

Maybe we can climb across on this.

LUCIA

Cross on that? No way. Its a rickety piece of crap.

KATIE

It doesn't look so safe.

RANDY

Neither is getting a bullet in the head.

MEG

Any volunteers? All right, fine. Ill go first.

Randy hoists Meg up and she begins climbing the ancient wooden beams. The flume is a wooden channel with boards for sides and bottom.

Meg is followed by Chris, Eric, Jeff and Lucia.

BRADY

I cant do it. I am like totally afraid of heights. Ill freak.

GREG

Dont worry. Im here for you.

Brady rolls her eyes.

RANDY

Once youre up there just crawl on all fours. You wont even see over the sides.

Kyle starts climbing. Brady is right behind him then Greg and finally Randy.

EXT. UPPER LOGGING LAKE - CONTINUOUS

Stoss is surveying the hillside with his binoculars. Through the thick trees he can intermittently see the log flume cutting a winding path downward. His gaze stops midway.

STOSS
I dont believe it.

BROTHER
What? Whatcha got?

Stoss hands the binoculars to Brother who scans, stops and smiles.

AUDEN
What? Lemme look!

Brother hands the binoculars to Auden and walks to the cement wall. He begins to turn the rusty iron wheel. Too much for one man. Auden and Stoss join in and slowly it turns.

BROTHER
Forsake me not, oh Lord. Stray not
far from me.
(into radio)
Boone. Take Scripa with you to
(he examines a map)
...where is this? Slide Canyon
River, just below Saddle Horse
Lake. Well be delivering the goods
to you there.

BOONE(O.S.)
Got it. Were near it now.

The three continue to turn the metal wheel. The cement wall slowly rises. Water rushes through the narrow opening which gets larger with each turn of the wheel.

ANGLE ON

The log flume as a small rush of water begins to increase. Fallen branches, rotted planks and other debris are swept up in the growing torrent.

EXT. LOG FLUME AT RANDYS POSITION - CONTINUOUS

The group is crawling hand and foot along the ancient wooden trestle. The three-foot wooden walls hide the two hundred foot drop to the ravine floor. Meg is almost across.

MEG
(not looking back)
Chris quit shaking this thing.

CHRIS
The only thing shaking are my
knees.

MEG
Whoever's doing it, knock it off.

The trestle continues to shake. Brady crawls hand over hand with her eyes shut. She puts a hand down and CRACK. The board breaks free and drops.

RANDY
Brady. Brady! Its all right. Dont
stop here. Keep moving.

Brady turns to see Randys reassuring look. She smiles then her eyes open wide in fear.

BRADY
(whisper)
Water.

RANDY
Sure. When we get down.

The loud RUMBLE increases, then...

Water. Tons of it. A tidal wave of water and debris SLAMS into the crawling students sweeping them away.

Meg looks back, but gets a face full of water. She tries to hold on, but is bowled over as they all get swept downward.

TRACKING SHOT

Of the kids and the log flume. The water rushes down the flume, across the ravine and through the woods ever downward. Everyone fights to keep their head above the water.
CUT TO:

EXT. SADDLE HORSE RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

The river is slow, and quiet. Thick trees line the banks creating a cloak of darkness. One hundred yards down river, a massive beaver dam choked with debris, crosses the river.

From the steep hillside which comes down to the waters edge, the ancient log flume stands unnoticed.

A RUMBLE then...

...Water erupts from the end of the log flume and falls twenty feet into the river. As we watch the hypnotizing sight, a body, then two, now more, come shooting out.

SPLASH.

Meg lands in a painful belly flop. SPLASH, SPLASH, SPLASH. Eric, Chris, and Lucia arrive. The students spit out of the flume like corks from a pop gun. Five, six, seven, finally Randy clutching Greg. KERSPLASH.

The kids swim against the current to reach the rivers edge. Brady flounders, splashing the water violently. Greg lets go of Randy and does an expert crawl stroke toward her. He grabs her arm and keeps her head above water.

Water continues to blast from the flume.

Ancient trees come jetting out of the flume and hit the water barely missing the kids. Water explodes all around.

The strong current pulls the kids down river until they hit the beaver dam. Randy pulls himself onto a solid part of the old dam. He helps the kids clamber out of the water.

The soaked kids climb onto the crude dam, scrambling to avoid the massive logs which drift like battering rams.

SLAM.

The first log impacts the dam. It holds. SLAM, SLAM, SLAM, three more impact. The dam CREAKS from the added weight of the kids and pressure of the new logs. SLAM, another.

Meg leads the kids to the far river bank. Randy helps an unsteady Brady maneuver over the creaky dam.

BRADY

Are there like animals living in
this thing?

The logs continue to jam up against the dam. The impacts send shudders through the crumbling barrier. The weight of the jammed logs pressing against the dam stress it.

KABOOM. Ten feet from Randy the dam explodes in a shower of rotting wood and flames. A four-foot section breaks away creating a rush of water.

Standing on the far river bank, BOONE, a lean hunter-type, and SCRIPA, a darker, thin man, watch the group. Scripa pulls the pin on another grenade and throws.

The second grenade goes long exploding harmlessly in the river. Randy shoves Brady away as the two killers charge onto the dam.

The pile-up continues and the CREAKING grows louder. SNAP, SNAP, SNAP. Branches and logs within the beaver dam begin to give away.

The two men carefully watch their step as they move closer.

SCRIPA

This boys mine.

CRACK. A section of the dam gives away on the rivers far side. The entire dam shakes and sways. Boone and Scripa brace their footing and Randy...

...is gone. An explosion of water betrays his exit. Boone and Scripa begin firing madly into the water which erupts in wild geysers.

The shooting stops. The two men stare at the water with anticipation.

BOONE

You get him? You get him?

Scripa tries to look though the jam of logs into the dark river.

SCRIPA

Of course I got him.

Famous last words. From a small gap between the logs and dam, a hand comes up and grabs Scripa. SPLASH. Hes gone.

EXT. UNDER RIVER/LOG JAM - CONTINUOUS

Randy pulls Scripa downward. The two men lock in mortal combat ten feet below the jammed surface.

Scripa gets his arm around Randys neck. Randy uses a free hand to pull the pin out of a grenade in Scripas belt. He jabs an elbow into Scripas gut and swims upward.

Scripa flails his arms wildly trying to get rid of the grenade.

EXT. BEAVER DAM - CONTINUOUS

Everything is quiet again. Then...

...KABOOM.

Another section of the beaver dam is torn open by the exploding Scripa. Boone readies his gun and steps onto one of the many jammed logs. The beaver dam CREAKS loudly.

He balances himself carefully as he inches along the log. He looks into the water, then spins about to find Randy climbing out of the water onto the same log. Boone aims the weapon.

BOONE

You're dead.

As he pulls the trigger to fire, Randy begins rolling the log like a pro. The rounded pole spins sending Boone off kilter and his shot wild. Boone ends up in the water as logs slam together inches from his head.

CRACK. The pressure is too much. The beaver dam bursts in the center providing relief from the massive log jam. Randy runs off the dam as the ramming logs begin tearing it apart.

Boone flounders in the water. He grasps anything in desperation. The water rushes through the broken dam. Logs bounce off each other vying for a first crack at the opening. A wave of water washes over him, he turns and CRUNCH.

Two logs impact, crushing him.

INT. WESTCOTT/SCHREEVES OFFICE - DAY

A long gray duffel bag with the Westcott logo is placed on Schreeves desk. PULL BACK TO REVEAL TWO BRINKS DRIVERS holding several sealed boxes. Schreeve and Libbey watch.

SCHREEVE

Are you sure giving into these bastards is the way to handle this situation?

LIBBEY

Leave that problem to us.

BRINKS #1

Eighteen million. Non sequential.

SCHREEVE

Even if we pay them, how can we be sure the kids will be safe?

LIBBEY

We deal with these types everyday.
Theyll be walking into a trap and
the money will never be out of our
sight. Now, well need your
cooperation Mr. Schreeve.

SCHREEVE

Well, of course. Id do anything for
those children.

LIBBEY

All you do is drop off the duffel
bag. Well wire you for sound.

Libbey holds up a thin black radio transmitter.

SCHREEVE

What if they find me wearing it?

LIBBEY

Our agents will with be you, in
hiding.

SCHREEVE

Youve thought of everything.

LIBBEY

Exactly, Mr. Schreeve.

CUT TO:

EXT. BENSON LAKE - AFTERNOON

The lake is long and silent. The group trudges along the sand
and rock shore as Brady moves beside Greg.

BRADY

I just wanted to thank you for
saving me back there. That was a
totally brave thing to do.

GREG

You really think Im brave?

BRADY

Absolutely!

GREG

Ummm, Ive been trying to tell you
this for weeks now... Brady...I
love you.

Greg blushes and Brady smiles.

BRADY

Thats sweet, but Im a woman and
youre just a bo...

GREG

You think...that maybe...we could
go out sometime? Like on a date?

BRADY

Well, maybe when youre a
little...older.

GREG

Next week?

BRADY

(smiling)
Maybe next year.

Brady gives Greg a peck on the cheek and walks on. Greg turns
to Randy, floating.

GREG

Were dating.

Randy catches up to Meg as the fire road cuts out of the
wilderness

RANDY

Meg.

(beat)

Last night, when we were talking. I
never told you something personal
about myself.

MEG

You dont have to. I pushed.

RANDY

No, I want to. I am, was, a federal
marshal. About four years ago I was
assigned to protect a woman and her
son who were going to testify
against a drug cartel. I made a
mistake, they were murdered and my
partners set me up to take the
fall.

MEG

What happened?

RANDY

I had been with them for a couple
of months.

(MORE)

RANDY (CONT'D)

They were scared and I was their only connection to the world. I became too comfortable, too close to them. I let my guard down.

MEG

You blame yourself for that?

RANDY

I cost those people their lives. I shouldve been more aware. I shouldve know there was a hit going down.

MEG

Youre not Superman. Youre just human.

RANDY

I just dont want anything to happen to these kids. I wont let anything happen.

What happened.ke, nd tng happen

Parked on the fire road by the lake is a forestry service Jeep. Lucia sees it first.

LUCIA

A car! Theres a car! Were rescued.

The small girl breaks into a run. The other kids follow.

RANDY

Wait! Let me check it out before we ask for help. Lay low and wait for my signal.

Meg hustles the kids off the fire road and into the tall grass. Randy climbs over a large boulder and disappears.

ANGLE ON

A young RANGER, RITCHIE, sitting in the jeep. He speaks into a radio.

RANGER RITCHIE

This is ground unit Four-Two-Seven. Come in alpha tango six-three-one.

RADIO VOICE(O.S.)

Roger. This is alpha tango six-three-one.

The DRONE of an airplane engine is heard getting closer.

RANGER RITCHIE

Come on already. Alice has my dinner on the table and Ive been waiting here at Benson lake all afternoon. Where the hell are you guys?

PILOT RANGER(O.S.)

Maybe you better look up.

A sea plane tops a stand of tall pines and flies over the jeep.

Ritchie waves overhead. Suddenly a hand grabs him and pulls him hard against the Jeep. Ritchie goes for his sidearm.

Randy has the door open and the Ranger up against the hood, his arm twisted behind his back.

RANDY

Im not going to hurt you. Just listen to me.

RANGER RITCHIE

Jesus Christ! What the fu...

Ranger Ritchie turns to see Randys face and goes white.

RANGER RITCHIE (CONT'D)

You...Please dont hurt me. I...Ive got a wife. Please.

Randy tosses Ritchies gun to Meg as she and the kids run to the Jeep. In the distance the sea plane banks across the face of a tall cliff and drops toward the lake.

RANDY

I said Im not going to hurt you. Meg, get on the radio and see if you can raise someone.

Randy holds the ranger against the jeep trying to keep him still. Meg jumps inside the jeep and...

INT. JEEP - CONTINUOUS

...picks up the radio. Before she speaks her attention is caught by a piece of fax paper with the picture of a mans face - a wanted poster. Its a photo of Randy.

EXT. JEEP - CONTINUOUS

RANGER RITCHIE
Just let me go, please.

RANDY
Take it easy. How do I know youre a
real ranger? How are you doin, Meg?

Randy looks around to see Meg holding the FAX with Randys
photo centered on it.

MEG
Let him go. He is a real ranger.

Randy loosens his grip on the Ranger. He looks at the fax and
locks eyes with Meg.

MEG (CONT'D)
By now everyone in the state is
looking for you. Listen, Randy.
Maybe you better take off. Well be
fine.

RANDY
Meg, remember what I told you,
that's the truth.

Ranger Ritchie pulls free of Randys grip and grabs the gun
from Meg. He holds it to Randys head while kicking his legs
out from under him.

RANGER RITCHIE
Down. Down. Get down. NOW! Everyone
get back. Get away from him.

The seaplane taxis across the smooth lake to the beach, spins
around and cuts its engines. The kids look around in
confusion as RANGER BOB gets out.

RANDY
Just do as he says. Its all right.

GREG
Mr. Muller isn't a bad guy.

MEG
(to ranger)
He didn't do anything.

A second older ranger, GUS, joins Bob. The two wade ashore.

GUS
What the hell we got going on here?
Hey, are you kids from the Westcott
academy?

KATIE
Thats us! Are you looking for us?

GUS
Damn near the entire state is.

Gus takes the fax from Meg.

GUS (CONT'D)
(to Randy)
Next time you go to kidnap somebody
you need to have a better plan,
son.

KATIE
But he didnt kidnap us.

BOB
Thats not the way the FBI sees it.
Hes a wanted man.

Bob points his gun at Randy and motions to Ranger Ritchie.

RANGER BOB
Tie his hands.

Meg looks at Randy unsure what to say.

Ritchie begins tying Randys hands. Randy winces from the
pain. Gus fires up the planes engine.

MEG
Hey, take it easy.

BOB
Not with this kind. Were gonna fly
him up to Bridgeport where the feds
can pick him up.

Greg bursts into tears and runs to Randy throwing his arms
around the man.

GREG
They cant take you away. You saved
us.

RANDY
Its okay, Greg. Im just going to go
with these men for a while.

Meg pulls Greg back trying to comfort him.

MEG

Shhhh, Greg. Mr. Muller will be fine.

Meg and Randys eyes lock with a look of uncertain futures. Bob shoves Randy toward the seaplane.

RANGER BOB

Ill call your location in, so therell be a plane or a chopper within the hour. You campers just sit tight.

CRACK, CRACK, CRACK.

Shots ring out from the woods and Ritchie is cut down in a burp of machine gun fire. Ranger Bob turns to see whats happening.

INT. SEAPLANE - CONTINUOUS

Gus sees Ritchie go down, looks back to see Auden, Stoss and Brother charging out of the woods armed to the teeth. In a panic he throttles the plane forward.

The kids drop to the ground for cover and Lucia dives into a thick stand of bulrushes.

EXT. BENSON LAKE SHORE - CONTINUOUS

As the seaplane taxis across the placid lake Randy runs into the water. Bob turns to Randy, raises his gun -- BAM -- Bobs head explodes in a shower blood.

Auden, Stoss and Brother charge the group.

ANGLE ON

Randy as he dives to the planes pontoon throwing his bound wrists around its tapered end. Randy is violently towed across the water as the plane picks up speed and begins to lift.

ANGLE ON

The kids, who scream in terror. Brother stands over Ritchies body.

BROTHER

Mercy on those that stray from the
path of the righteous. Auden,
secure the children. Stoss, can you
take it out?

Stoss puts a high caliber sighted rifle to his shoulder. In the scope he follows the bright yellow seaplane as it begins to rise.

Stoss waits then pulls the trigger. The automatic fires a stream of bullets.

EXT. SEAPLANE - CONTINUOUS

The small plane rises. Twenty...thirty...forty... Bullets rip across the fuselage and shatter the windows. Randy dangles by his wrists off the pontoons end. He swings his body up and over then crawls to the pilots door.

RANDY

Open up.

Gus head turns as bullets shatter the windows and drill into his skull. His body slumps against the controls.

EXT. BENSON LAKE SHORE- CONTINUOUS

Auden, Stoss, Brother and the group all watch.

BROTHER

Well?

STOSS

Wait.

Everyone watches the seaplane. Its obvious it wont clear the cliffs.

EXT. SEAPLANE - CONTINUOUS

Randy sees the granite cliff face rushing at him. The plane is rising too slowly. He tries the door once more - jammed. With only one choice left he drops 100 feet into the water below seconds before...

EXT. BENSON LAKE CLIFF - CONTINUOUS

...The plane impacts the cliff and explodes in a mass of flames and steel.

EXT. BENSON LAKE - CONTINUOUS

The kids all watch in horror.

BROTHER

And the Lord shall deliver them
from the wicked because he is ever
merciful. Auden, get the kids
together. We need to get out of
here.

AUDEN

We dont have time to get them back
to the mine.

STOSS

Kill them here.

BROTHER

No man shall be called before the
Lord hath summoned him so no one
gets killed until we see the money.

Brother studies a map and traces his finger along a line.

BROTHER (CONT'D)

Theres an abandoned hunting lodge
over the next ridge.

STOSS

Its too close to the fire line.
What if were seen?

BROTHER

We wont be there long enough.
Auden, radio back to Tolbert at the
mine and inform him of the change.

Brother folds up the map and moves the group out.

ANGLE ON

Lucia as she watches from the stand of bulrushes. As the
kidnappers move up the trail, she slips out of her hiding
place and follows behind them. As she goes she breaks
branches along the trail.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLIFF HOUSE - DAY

Schreeve pulls up in front of the Cliff House, a square
cement restaurant looking over the Pacific Ocean.
As he steps out of the Westcott van he dashes toward a
RINGING phone booth. Schreeve grabs the phone.

SCHREEVE

(into phone)

Hello? Yes its Schreeve. No, Im not
being followed.

Schreeve looks about nervously, the pressure getting to him. Listening intently, he looks to his right. The ruins of the old San Francisco Health Spa stand between himself and a large stone tunnel in the cliff face.

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)

(into the phone)

I see it. Are the children okay?

Hello? Okay, Im going.

Schreeve pulls the duffel bag out of the back of the van and slowly moves down the ruins of the Spa. Talking into his shirt as he approaches the stone tunnel entrance, he can see light coming from the other side.

He emerges into the sunlight at the opposite end of the tunnel. Waves slap against the rocks, gulls circle, but no one is there.

Schreeve places the duffel down and cautiously retreats backwards, waiting for someone to pounce out of the shadows. No one does. Without moving his lips, Schreeve speaks into a small microphone.

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)

I dropped the money where they told
me. Im getting out of here.

Once inside the darkness of the tunnel, Schreeve walks briskly back the way he came.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROOF OF CLIFF HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

THREE FLACK-JACKETED FBI AGENTS watch Schreeve as he weaves across the bath house ruins heading back towards his van.

AGENT 1

(into radio)

He made the drop. Were in good
position.

ANGLE ON

Schreeve watching the FBI agents watching the money. He climbs into his van and quickly drives off.

EXT. CLIFF HOUSE ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The three agents continue to watch through their binoculars.

AGENT 2

We got em now! Those stupid sons-of-
bitches got themselves into a
gauntlet.

AGENT 3
A duck shoot.

AGENT 1
(into mic)
Unit 2, you in position?

ANGLE ON
TWO MEN in FBI jackets crawling along the rocks, with weapons over their shoulders. They get into position and watch the duffel bag through spy glasses.

UNIT TWO LEADER
Roger that. Weve got eyes on the bag. No movement.

AGENT 1(O.S.)
Hold position.

CUT TO:

EXT. YOSEMITE/HUNTING LODGE - DAY

The dilapidated lodge is a simple two-story structure abandoned years ago. Stoss, followed by the kids and Meg, walk up the heavily rutted drive toward the front door.

BRADY
Whats gonna happen to us?

ERIC
Before or after they kill us?

MEG
Im sure well be fine. Just do what they tell you.

Stoss stops at the rotted steps of the lodge and turns.

STOSS
End of the line.

BROTHER
Auden, take this bunch inside and lock em upstairs.
(checking his watch)
The ransom should have been picked up an hour ago. We wont be keeping em much longer.

Meg and the kids file past the huge oak doors and Auden follows.
Lucia slips behind a tree and settles in to watch the lodge.
CUT TO:

EXT. CLIFF HOUSE - DAY

The agents continue to watch the duffel bag undaunted. Suddenly theres movement. A large figure climbs up the rocks from the waters edge. Sensing confrontation, the agents ready their weapons. The unit leader peers through the scope of his high powered rifle. Then he sees him...

...A huge BULL SEA LION ambles roughly over the rocks and flops down next to the duffel bag. The sea creature rolls on its side and begins barking at the top of its aquatic lungs.

UNIT LEADER
(into the radio)
Trouble. We've got trouble!

AGENT 1(VO)
Movement?

UNIT LEADER
Theres a fucking sea lion here.

AGENT 1(O.S.)
Well, get rid of it. Shoot it.

UNIT LEADER
Shoot it?
The unit leaders stone cold ASSISTANT looks to him. His icy demeanor breaks and we see big eyes.

ASSISTANT
You wouldn't shoot him, would you?

UNIT LEADER
(into mic)
I am NOT going to kill an innocent sea lion.

AGENT 1(O.S)
Well then, get him out of there!
The unit leader picks up several small rocks and begins hurling them at the sea lion. The stones bounce harmlessly off the animals leathery skin. He continues to bark wildly. The assistant stands in full view and begins waving his arms.

ASSISTANT
Shoo, git, git out of there.
The sea lion rolls about, oblivious. He swats the duffel bag, which crashes against the rocks and smashes open. The agents cringe in anticipation of the money spilling out, but there is none. Pausing a second to assimilate the facts, the unit leader flicks on his radio,

UNIT LEADER
The moneys gone.

EXT. CLIFF HOUSE ROOF TOP - CONTINUOUS

AGENT 1
(into radio)
What do you mean the moneys gone?
Where did it go?

UNIT LEADER(O.S.)
It didn't go anywhere. The duffel
bag is empty.

AGENT 1
How the fuck did they get the money
out of there?

CUT TO:

INT. HUNTING LODGE - DAY

The ground floor of the lodge is a large bare room. Along one wall is a massive hearth and a ladder leading to an attic trap door. Brother, Auden and Stoss dressed in state fire-fighting uniforms, sit around the table in the cabins center.

STOSS
Hell be here any minute.

AUDEN
What if its a double-cross?

BROTHER
Nobody double-crosses Brother.

AUDEN
Do we still gotta kill the kids
when the money shows? I mean, why
not just let them go?

BROTHER
Why not do ten to twenty? Things
got off track, but were back on
schedule and well follow the plan.

AUDEN
I dont recall the plan including
eight dead on our team.

BROTHER
Are you second guessing me? Dont
fucking second guess me.

AUDEN
Fuck you, you religious psycho-
case.

Brother rushes Auden. Amidst the commotion, they fail to see the cabin door open.

A powerful man wearing an identical fire-fighting jumpsuit walks in and grabs both men with a vice-like grip, pulling them apart.

MAN

Is this the way you were trained?
Were a unit.

We recognize the man as Mr. Schreeve.

SCHREEVE

Look at yourselves. Acting like
worthless grunts.

He shoves both men to opposite corners.

STOSS

Did you get the cash?

SCHREEVE

Its safe. But who authorized this
change in the plan?

Brother hangs his head slightly.

AUDEN

The kids had this guy with them. He
was a fucking killing machine. He
blew up Scripa and Boone. Taylor
got nailed in a trap.

SCHREEVE

The French teacher. Mullers a
federal marshal. Rather, ex-
marshal. Has he been suppressed?

STOSS

I killed him.

SCHREEVE

And the kids?

BROTHER

Theyre all in the attic.

SCHREEVE

Whats the fire situation?

BROTHER

40,000 acres are burning. Winds are
high with no containment in sight.

SCHREEVE

(irritated)

I asked for a diversion, not a
national-fucking-disaster.

BROTHER

Thisll be diversion enough. Last I
checked the flames were about three
miles from our position and moving
fast.

Schreeve climbs the ladder to the attic. He swings open the
door and pulls himself through.

INT. ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Schreeve pulls himself into the attic. The room is strewn
with the mounted heads of deer, boar and bear.

Meg and the kids look at Schreeve slightly confused. Relieved
at seeing a friendly face, Meg runs up and hugs him.

MEG

Mr. Schreeve! Thank god youre here.
Some of the kids didnt think the
ransom would be paid...

Meg realizes Schreeve is not returning her emotional hug.

MEG (CONT'D)

(trailing off)

...but I told them, you can...

Schreeve grabs Megs hands with his own and pushes her back.
He slaps her hard with his left hand sending her down.

SCHREEVE

Thats for being such a pain-in-my-
ass.

Brady and Katie go to her side. Chris steps forward to
confront Schreeve.

CHRIS

What the hell did you do that for?

Chris stops in his tracks when he sees Schreeve cock his AR-
15 pistol.

SCHREEVE

One more step. Please.

Chris remains motionless.

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)

Quit looking at me with your pathetic faces. I've had it with you rich brats and your obnoxious parents. Do any of you little shits know the first thing about discipline? Do you? You're just seven little pimples on the world's ass.

CHRIS

When my father finds out about this you'll wish you were dead.

Schreeve grabs Chris and jams the gun to his head.

SCHREEVE

When your father finds out about this you will be dead.

The children cower. Meg tries to be brave.

MEG

Is that what's it's about? You're just going to kill us?

SCHREEVE

What it's all about is money. \$18 million. Money well deserved on my part. Ten years of spoiled rich assholes and their kids is finally paying off.

MEG

How can you do this to these kids? How can you do this to their families?

SCHREEVE

Do you think their parents were even concerned? Do you think any of them cared? The only thing they're going to miss is the money.

GREG

That's not true. My mom loves me.

Schreeve looks alarmed and confused.

SCHREEVE

Greg Jarrit? What the hell are you doing here?

Schreeve quickly scans the kids faces doing a quick head count.

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)
Lucia. Wheres Lucia Carter?

Brother pokes his head through the trap door.

BROTHER
Fires moving in. Its jumped the road near Elbow Ridge.

SCHREEVE
One of the kids is missing.

BROTHER
What? Therere seven of em.

Schreeve roughly grabs Greg by the shirt.

SCHREEVE
This is an extra one. Lucia, the redhead, is missing.

BROTHER
What are you talking about?

SCHREEVE
I dont know where this kid came from, but we need to go find the girl. You come with me. Stoss and Auden stay here. Tolbert keep an eye on them.

BROTHER
How will we move with the kids when the fire gets here?

SCHREEVE
They wont be moving.

Schreeve gives the group a glance then climbs down.

INT. HUNTING LODGE - CONTINUOUS

Schreeve and Brother sling their weapons and head out. Through the open door we see them get in a Jeep and drive off.

CUT TO:

INT. HUNTING LODGE ATTIC - DAY

The kids sit against one side of the attic while Tolbert stands guard. Jeff stands near a large window and Brady cries softly while Kyle consoles her.

KYLE

Its okay, Brady. I promise you were going to get out of here.

BRADY

You heard what Mr. Schreeve said.

GREG

Mr. Muller will save us. He always saves us.

KYLE

Mullers dead and even if he was around he wouldn't be saving us, hed be saving his own ass.

ERIC

You saw him run to that plane. He didn't even try to protect us.

CHRIS

Screw him. We can do it ourselves.

EXT. HUNTING LODGE - CONTINUOUS

Lucia stands in the woods near the cabin. Suddenly a hands is slapped over her mouth and as the girl struggles we PULL BACK TO REVEAL...Randy alive and well.

RANDY

Lucia, its me.

LUCIA

Mr. Muller! How...You were on the plane...

RANDY

I didnt like the in-flight movie.

LUCIA

How did you find me?

RANDY

You left a trail a blind man could follow.

LUCIA

I broke branches so someone could find us. I didnt expect it to be you.

RANDY

You did a good...great job. Wheres everyone else?

LUCIA

Theyre all in the attic.

RANDY

How many are guarding them?

LUCIA

I dont know. I think thats Jeff in the window up there. If I could get his attention I could ask him. I taught him how to finger spell.

Randy looks around and picks up a few pebbles.

INT. HUNTING LODGE ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

A CLICKING on the window is heard

TOLBERT

What was that?

The CLINKING is heard again and Jeff looks out the window to see Lucia and Mr. Muller. He is about to wave when Tolbert comes to his side.

TOLBERT (CONT'D)

Did you hear that?

JEFF

Squirrels. Big squirrels.

TOLBERT

Shut up. Shhhhhhhhh.

He listens some more. No noise.

TOLBERT (CONT'D)

Stoss, Auden, that you?

AUDEN(O.S.)

(from below)

Is that me what?

TOLBERT
I heard a noise.

STOSS(O.S.)
Were in the fucking woods. Its
probably a squirrel or a bird.

TOLBERT
Yeah, a squirrel.

Tolbert smiles and watches the group. He sits down and Jeff looks out the window.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Lucia and Randy see Jeff.

RANDY
Ask how many guards there are.

Lucia slowly spells out the words and waits for a reply.

INT. ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Jeff thinks about Lucias question, seems confused, then apprehensively replies.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

LUCIA
One beer two does stain.

RANDY
Beer does stain? What does that mean?

LUCIA
Downstairs. One here, two downstairs.

RANDY
Okay. Tell him to get the guard near the window.

INT. ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Jeff receives the message, seems puzzled, then smiles.

JEFF

Hey! Theres a naked lady right
outside!

The kids all jump up and run toward the window.

TOLBERT

Get away from there. Let me see.

Tolbert slides up the window and peers outside. Nothing.

TOLBERT (CONT'D)

I dont see anyone.

He leans out a bit to get a better view. The kids all watch a
bit confused. Then...

Tolbert is yanked out the window by some unseen force. We
hear a little rolling around on the roof, then nothing. The
kids look at the ceiling confused.

Back at the window, a bruised Randy drops into the room.

MEG

Randy!

The kids ad-lib their excitement and rush to him. Meg gets to
him first and gives him a huge hug.

GREG

Did you see the naked lady?

Randy puts his finger to his lips and hushes the group.
Everyone speaks in whispers.

RANDY

Shhhh. All right. All right. Im
glad to see you guys, too.

MEG

Youre not going to believe it, but
Schreeve's behind this. He
kidnapped the kids for ransom and
now that hes got his money he plans
to kill us.

RANDY

He didn't plan on me. Wheres
Schreeve now?

ERIC

He and another guy just left.
Theyre going to kill Lucia.

RANDY

Shes safe. I've got her. Meg, get the kids on the roof.

MEG

What are you going to do?

RANDY

Build a better mousetrap.

Randy goes to the corner and pulls a set of twelve point antlers from one of the rotting deer heads. He wedges them in a cracked floorboard. Using thread from his frayed pants he runs a thin line near the closed trap door. Breaking a piece of wood off an old chair he rigs it under the antlers. He studies the device for a moment then looks to Katie.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Give me your gum.

KATIE

But I've been chewing it for three months.

RANDY

Ill buy you another pack.

KATIE

Okay, but it better be sugarless.

Randy takes the wad of gum and attaches it to the thread. Moments later, he finishes the Rube-Goldberg device.

RANDY

I need something thatll stretch to make a trigger.

GREG

You want my underwear?

RANDY

Something more elastic.

KYLE

Like a condom?

RANDY

Yeah, like a condom.

(beat)

Do you have a condom?

All eyes turns to Kyle. He turns beat red. Meg looks at him with a matter-of-fact stare.

MEG

Kyle, give me the condom.

Kyle looks around embarrassed. Brady gives him the look of death. The kids all snicker. Kyle reaches into his front pocket and pulls out the foil wrapped beauty.

KYLE

Its Bradys.

BRADY

Is not.

MEG

All right! This isn't the time or place.

Kyle and Brady mutter under their breath.

Randy unwraps the condom and ties it off on the device. He pulls the condom back and locks it off on the antlers.

MEG (CONT'D)

Will it work?

RANDY

Better than a sharp stick in the eye.

Meg hustles the kids out the dormer window until only Randy remains. He checks his invention making last minute adjustments, then hops out the window.

EXT. HUNTING LODGE ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The kids huddle around the roof waiting. Randy scrambles out of the window. He silently leads the group to the roofs edge where a towering aspen adjoins the roof.

RANDY

Climb down. No noise.

INT. HUNTING LODGE - CONTINUOUS

Stoss and Auden hear a noise from the fireplace. The two look over to see several crumbs of soot falling into the massive hearth.

Grabbing an Uzi, Auden sneaks to the hearth and pokes the gun up. More soot falls. He fires several rounds upward then waits. Blood rains down from the black hole then...

...a lifeless body, head twisted to an impossible position and full of fresh bullet holes, drops to the ground. Auden jumps back in disgust.

STOSS

Who is it?

Auden kicks the body over to reveal Tolbert.

AUDEN

Well it aint Santa Claus.

Their eyes look upward and they jump to the attic ladder. Auden is first up the ladder and pushes open the trap door...

INT. HUNTING LODGE ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

He pokes the gun through first, then his head. The door is still propped on his left arm as he focuses on the empty room. He flings the door open all the way as he gets a first and last look at Randys device.

The trap door pulls the thread which activates the device, snapping the condom, catapulting the antlers forward.

THUNK SPLAT.

The antlers impale Auden like a sharp stick in the eye.

EXT. HUNTING LODGE - CONTINUOUS

Randy helps the last of the kids out of the tree when Audens anguished cry rings out.

MEG

Sounds like you bagged a mouse.

Randy leads the kids around the corner of the building coming upon Schreeve's van.

The kids pile into the van as the lodge door bursts open. Stoss comes out, guns blazing.

Randy attacks the heavily armed man full out and Stoss gun goes down. The two fight hand-to-hand.

Meg hops into the drivers seat and fires the engine.

Stoss lands one on Randys jaw sending him to the ground stunned. Stoss, picks up his gun, aims to fire when...

...Meg jams the van into reverse. Randy flattens his body and the vans wheels rush by on either side of him. Stoss looks up to see the vehicle approaching him. He cant move.

SLAM.

Stoss is sandwiched between the lodge and the Van. Heavy redwood poles supporting the porch roof buckle. The roof collapses on the van and Stoss, crunching the man.

Meg looks up to see Schreeve and Brother returning.

INT. SCHREEVES JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Schreeve sees Meg plastering Stoss against the wall.

BROTHER
Jesus fucking Christ.

SCHREEVE
My moneys in that van.

Brother leans out the window and fires wildly.

Under the van Randy grabs the drive shaft with his arms and legs. Meg slams it in gear. The vans wheels spin wildlly, find traction and rocket away.

Brother and Schreeve fire at the van.

Meg holds the wheel steady. The kids get low.

Under the van Randy is buffeted by rocks and branches.

Meg and Brother drive directly at each other. Its a game of chicken. Meg pulls hard to the right and goes up the ridge road.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

The kids scream in victory as they pass the Jeep.

CHRIS
Hey! Look at this.

He holds up Schreeves duffel bag of money. The kids look inside at the piles of cash.

GREG
There must be more than a hundred dollars in there!

MEG

Leave it alone. Eric, did we lose them yet?

ERIC

I dont see anyone.

EXT. VAN/THICK WOODS - NIGHT

Meg pulls the van to a stop and jumps out. The thick orange smoke to the south betrays the massive forest fire.

Meg looks under the van to see Randy still holding on tight.

He releases his grip and drops to the ground in pain, he catches his breath and crawls out.

MEG

Are you all right?

RANDY

Ill live. You took a big risk back there.

Meg hustles Randy to the van door.

MEG

He pissed me off.

In the distance a Jeep revs up the hill. Randy sees the Jeep approaching. Meg climbs into the drivers seat. Randy jumps inside. The van peels out in an explosion of dust.

AERIAL VIEW

The van roars along the narrow dirt road with the Jeep close behind. Ahead, flames of the raging fire come into view.

On the right the thick pine forest; in front the ever narrowing fire break road; on the left a four hundred foot drop into Matterhorne Canyon.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Randy looks left as the Jeep pulls along side. Brother fires. The windows explode. Meg swerves into the Jeep. Brother aims at the kids.

EXT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Scrambling out the passenger window, Randy steadies himself on the roof rack. He leaps to the hood of Schreeves Jeep.

Trees and brush burn wildly on both sides of the road. Thick black smoke obscures the view.

EXT. JEEP - CONTINUOUS

Schreeve tries to grab Randy who kicks out with his left foot hitting Schreeve in the face.

Randy reaches in and pulls the wheel. The Jeep veers wildly, then leaves the road. Randy is thrown clear. He watches as the Jeep impacts against a flaming tree.

Meg brakes and Randy wastes no time running back to the road. Hes about to enter the van when Brother grabs him from behind and puts him in a choke hold.

BROTHER

Deliver his soul from my sword.

LUCIA

Deliver this, puckernut.

Lucia leans out the van window and unloads a fire extinguisher into Brothers face. He releases Randy who collapses on the ground gasping for air.

Covered with white dust, Brother is momentarily blinded. Eric leans out an open window and flips a short rope over Brothers head yanking the dazed man back against the van.

Katie leans out another window and smacks Brother in the head with a tire iron. He staggers away from the van and turns back toward the kids.

BROTHER

Im gonna kill you little assholes!

Brother pulls a Bowie knife and lunges, but Randy picks up a burning branch. Using it as a sword he keeps Brother at bay. Brother makes one last attack. Randy bats the knife into the air then catches it as it falls. He brings it up into Brothers gut.

Before the dead man falls, Randys behind the wheel and rolling.

Overhead a C-140 tanker drops a load of red Phos-chek across the fire. The red goo covers the windshield blacking out Randys view.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

When the wipers clear the goo away, Randy swerves to the right to avoid the 400 foot cliff.

The van plows up and over several burning logs. Thick black smoke comes from the front tires and flames melt the front grill.

With a jolt, the van pulls away from the logs and shudders to a stop near the edge of the cliff.

The doors open and everyone piles out. The front tires blow and the van hits the ground with a THUD.

ANGLE ON

A yellow chopper as it breaks over the fire line.

PILOT (O.S.)

Christ! We got kids down there.
Riley, hit the ridge with the Phos-
check and radio this in.
(on loudspeaker)
Move to the edge of the cliff. A
rescue chopper is on its way.

ANGLE ON

The van. Everyone sees the chopper and begins waving for help.

RANDY

He cant land here until they beat
back some of these flames. My guess
is water drops are coming.

Everyone moves to the edge of the cliff.
CUT TO:

EXT. BENSON LAKE SHORE - CONTINUOUS

THREE RANGERS comb the lakeside, stepping over the bodies of the two dead rangers. Turner talks on a cellular phone. Cole paces nearby.

TURNER
...Are you sure?
(checking a map)
Matterhorne. Yeah, Im on it.

Turner closes the phone and turns to the anxious federal marshal.

TURNER (CONT'D)
A helicopter spotted the kids on a
fire road near Matterhorne Ridge.
Looks like your boy is with them.

COLE
Lets go.

Turner turns and begins walking toward a jeep. Cole surreptitiously checks his gun and follows close behind. A ranger calls after Turner.

RANGER
One of your agents called from San
Quentin. Hes going to try you in
about ten minutes.

Alarm rolls across Coles face, but he plays it cool.

COLE
San Quentin? Whats he doing there?

TURNER
Following up on a connection
between Gorman and a mob hitter.

COLE
Howard Lavick? I talked to that guy
years ago. Hes a dead end.

TURNER
How did you know about Lavick?

COLE
(pausing)
Its...in the report.

TURNER
No. Ive read all the reports and
theres no Lavick mentioned.

Cole leans into Turner with an intimidating glare.

COLE
Gorman killed a federal officer. He
killed my partner.
(MORE)

COLE (CONT'D)
I wouldnt stand in your way. Dont
stand in mine. This guys not
getting away from me.

Turner takes a step back toward the jeep.

TURNER
You know, Cole Im gonna ask you to
stay here with the rangers.

COLE
(genial)
Hey, whats the problem? Were both
after the same man.

TURNER
Are we?

Turner slowly reaches into his jacket for his gun. Cole
reacts quickly and rushes Turner. The FBI agent is bowled
over the hood of the jeep and ends up sprawled on the ground.

Cole jumps into the jeep and takes off. Turner pulls his gun
and fires off several quick shots at the retreating jeep. He
then sees several fire vehicles moving down the narrow road
and waves to flag one down.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLIFF/FIREROAD - CONTINUOUS

Dense smoke pours out of the forest beside the road. The kids
are huddled away from the cliff.

MEG
You should get going. Theyll be
here soon.

Randy stands motionless. In the distance, fire choppers sound
loud SIRENS then drop water on their targets.

MEG (CONT'D)
GO! What are you waiting for?

RANDY
I cant run this time.

MEG
Dont waste this chance.

RANDY
Ive been looking over my shoulder
too long. Im through running.

SCHREEVE(O.S.)

You're not going anywhere until I
get my fucking money.

They both turn to see Schreeve, gun in hand, standing in the road. Smoke and flames stream from the woods making him more apparition than man.

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)

Where's my money?

JEFF

It's in the van.

SCHREEVE

Now there's a good kid.

Schreeve motions to Meg.

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)

Get it, Meg.

Meg moves to the van and opens the rear door. She struggles to lift the heavy duffel bag out.

SCHREEVE (CONT'D)

Bring it here.

The kids remain huddled together as Meg drags the heavy load.

CRACK.

All eyes turn to the burning forest to see a flaming pine hurtling toward Meg. Chris jumps toward the trapped teacher.

CHRIS

Look out!

Schreeve sees the boy charging and fires. BAM. A bullet catches Chris in the leg the same moment his body slams into Meg.

They both tumble toward Schreeve. The blazing tree smashes into the ground where Meg once stood and tumbles over the cliff carrying the duffel bag with it. Schreeve jumps to the edge.

ANGLE ON

The duffel bag of money, now precariously perched above a small rock ledge six feet down. The flaming tree falls into the cauldron of fire in the canyon below.

ANGLE ON

Schreeve - thinking. He motions to Randy.

SCHREEVE

Get over here.

Meg clutches the bleeding and sobbing Chris.

MEG

Was it worth all this?

Schreeve glares at her and then turns back to Randy and Greg.

SCHREEVE

It will be. Lower a kid over the side and pull up that duffel.

RANDY

Its too far. They cant reach.

Schreeve cocks the gun against Randys head.

SCHREEVE

I think they can.

Greg steps forward.

GREG

Ill do it.

RANDY

No. Its too dangerous.

GREG

You helped me, I help you. Partner.

Laying down on his stomach, Greg begins easing himself over the side. Randy tightly grabs Gregs ankles and lowers him.

RANDY

Youre doing fine. Almost there.

Greg moves down the cliffs rocky surface slowly. Randys muscles tense as he holds the boy steady. Winds from the firestorm drop red-hot embers onto Randys arms and back. He doesn't flinch.

The young boy bites his lip in fear and strains to reach for the duffel bag.

The bags draw strings wave in the wind. Greg reaches. Hes close. Reaching. He grabs it.

SCHREEVE

Pull it up!

Greg pulls, but the weight of the bag is too much. He struggles.

RANDY

Put the draw string around your
hand. Get it tight.

Greg loops the thin cord around his hand and Randy pulls him up. The cord unwinds and the bag starts slipping.

Schreeve drops to his stomach and grabs Gregs shirt. Madly pulling at the boy he reaches for the duffel.

RANDY (CONT'D)

Let him go. Im losing my grip.

His finger tips touching the bag, Schreeve struggles to hold on. He loses his grip and the money tumbles back down to the ledge.

Randy hoists Greg up and rushes Schreeve. Schreeve recovers and clocks Randy with a heavy right. Randy hits the ground.

Schreeve kicks the fallen mans ribs with his steel-toed boots bringing blood to Randys mouth. Schreeve picks up his gun, bends down over Randy and jams the barrel into his mouth.

SCHREEVE

Soit pret a mourir espece
denculeur.

The hammer clicks back.

A PULSING SIREN sounds from above.

Schreeve looks up as a fire helicopter crests the trees and blindly drops 2,000 gallons on the ridge. The deluge lands like a watery explosion sending Randy and Schreeve over the edge.

The two land on the rocky outcropping which crumbles from the waters impact.

Meg looks over the side at the men and the money.

RANDY

Get the kids out of here. The fires
too close.

MEG

But what about you? I cant leave
you.

RANDY

Ill be right behind you.

Randy wedges his hands in the rock face of the cliff and begins to climb. He turns to Schreeve.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Can you pull yourself up?

Schreeve steadies himself and looks at the heavy money bag.

RANDY (CONT'D)
Forget the money.

Randy reaches a hand down. Schreeve ignores it and reaches for the duffel bag.

RANDY (CONT'D)
I cant pull you up with the bag.

SCHREEVE
I wont leave it.

Reaching, Schreeve grabs the bag, but the ledge is going.

The rock and soil shelf separates from the cliff face and tumbles into the flaming canyon. Randy watches as Schreeve and the money are engulfed in flames.

RANDY
Shit.

Randy climbs the last few feet. Meg reaches over and helps him up. She pulls him into a tight hug.

INT. FIRE CREW TRANSPORT TRUCK - DAY

Turner is squeezed in the back with several soot-caked fire-eaters. Turners cel-phone beeps and he flips it open.

TURNER
Turner.

LIBBEY(O.S.)
Its Libbey. Im at San Quentin
and...

TURNER
Libbey, I dont have time.

LIBBEY(O.S)
Well, youre gonna want to hear
this. Lavick implicated himself in
killing that woman and her son.
(MORE)

LIBBEY(O.S) (CONT'D)

He said he was working with the Marshals, but it wasnt Gorman. It was Seeberg and Ray Cole.

TURNER

Youre about five minutes behind me, Libbey, but its good work. Get that statement wrapped up tight and Ill call you later.

CUT TO:

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Randy stands as Meg attends to Chris wounded leg.

MEG

Thanks for looking out for me.

CHRIS

I know this is a bad time, but I just wanted to tell you how sorry I am for being such an asshole. Can you forgive me before I die?

MEG

Sure, Chris, but you were shot in the leg. I dont think youre going to die.

RANDY

Hang in there, helps on the way.

BLAM.

Randys right arm explodes in blood and bone as he drops to the ground in pain.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

Cole, gun drawn is running toward Randy and Meg.

Turner appears just behind Cole and raises his weapon.

TURNER

Drop it, Cole.

Cole spins to Turner and pumps two slugs into his chest. The FBI agent drops in a heap.

Randy is attempting to get up as Meg and the kids watch in fear. Cole strolls to Randy and puts the gun against his head.

COLE
Prepare to die motherfucker.

BLAM

Coles head explodes in a mass of blood and tissue. His body rocks from a bullets impact, then drops.

ANGLE ON

Agent Turner who has pulled himself up. His smoking automatic drops from his hand as he collapses into a pool of blood.

Randy and Meg run to Turner and attend to his wounds.

RANDY
I didn't kidnap the kids.

TURNER
I know.

Firefighters use hoses to clear a path across the burning debris.
CUT TO:

EXT. WESTCOTT ACADEMY - MONTHS LATER

The bright sunlight streams through the trees. The campus is empty as the fall semester is ending.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christmas decorations line the room as Meg moves around straightening and getting ready to leave. Across the room the door CREAKS open. Meg looks up as Greg pokes his head in.

GREG
Miss McCarthy, you busy?

MEG
Just finishing up for break. Hey,
when are you heading home for
Christmas?

Greg pushes in followed by the rest of the kids. Chris hobbles in on crutches. Meg reacts with surprise and delight.

MEG (CONT'D)
Youre all still here.

BRADY
We all wanted to see you. Together.

KATIE
We brought you something!

MEG
You guys didn't have to get me anything.

CHRIS
We wanted to.

GREG
I get to bring it in.

Greg runs out of the room and returns a moment later holding Randy's hand. Megs eyes light up.

MEG
I must have been a very good girl this year.

Randy walks to the front of the room and hands her a small wrapped gift.

RANDY
Merry Christmas.

MEG
For me?

Meg unwraps the gift revealing a gold compass on a fine gold chain.

MEG (CONT'D)
It's beautiful. Thank you.

RANDY
It's in case you get lost and Im not with you..

An awkward silence passes between them.

MEG
So where are they sending you next?

RANDY
They arent sending me anywhere.
This marshals riding off into the sunset. Too many tough guys.

MEG
Whatre you going to do?

RANDY

I heard Westcott needed a new
French teacher. I start next term.

His news is met with a chorus of cheers.

MEG

(formal)

Well, Mr. Mull...Mr. Gorman on
behalf of the faculty, staff and
trustees here at Westcott Id like
to welcome you and present you with
this.

Meg throws her arm around him and gives him a huge kiss. We
hold on the kiss.

FADE OUT