

CLIFFHANGER

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FIRST DRAFT

2nd Revision 3/30/92

[NOTE: THE HARD COPY OF THIS SCRIPT CONTAINED SCENE

NUMBERS. THESE HAVE BEEN OMITTED FOR THIS SOFT COPY.]

FADE IN:

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - HELICOPTER POV - DAY

We are flying -- soaring, wheeling, diving through a range of magnificent mountains. They are the Colorado Rockies and, right now -- in early spring -- it's one of the finest sights on earth: the lush greenery of the valleys gives way to cliffs of sheer rock and towering peaks crowned by snow.

As the CREDITS ROLL, we wheel past a mountain wall -- an abandoned cable ladder is bolted into it -- and soar over the top. A breathtaking place -- a frozen lake, deep and blue like some rare crystal. We sweep across it and now we realize this is the POV from --

A HELICOPTER

as it soars up to circle the tallest mountain: "The Tower". It rises thousands of feet from the ground below, so high that its summit is wreathed in cloud...

INSIDE HELICOPTER - FRANK AND MAGGIE

Spotter FRANK NEWELL (50s) scans the mountain wall. MAGGIE DEIGHAN (30s) expertly pilots the helicopter. Both wear jackets identifying themselves as members of the Rocky Mountain Park Rescue Team.

FRANK

Got 'em.

BINOCULAR POV - A LEDGE

that's part of a lower but equally formidable peak separated from The Tower by a chasm two hundred feet wide. HAL TUCKER (30s) and his girlfriend, SARAH COLLINS (20's), are decked out in warm-weather climbing gear. Hal's aplomb suggests he's a veteran climber -- Sarah's worried look confirms she isn't. Hal has a splint wrapped around his lower leg, and a slow burning flare in one hand.

INSIDE HELICOPTER

Frank lowers his glasses -- Maggie struggles with the wind.

MAGGIE
How do they look?

BINOCULAR POV - HAL AND SARAH

Hal, aware of the copter starts jerking off the flare.

FRANK (O.S.)
He's signalling "okay."

MAGGIE (O.S.)
Where's Gabe?

The POV dips down -- there's someone climbing below.

FRANK (O.S.)
Right where he's supposed to be.

CLOSER ON THE CLIMBER

This is GABE WALKER (30s) -- he's fearlessly, swiftly scaling the tower without safety lines, as if he's done it a hundred times. That's because he has. This is what Gabe lives for.

Almost there, he finds a finger hold at arm's length -- grabbing it, he pulls himself up on the ledge. Winded, he slumps down next to the couple, and tries to light a cigarette. The lighter only sparks.

HAL
I know you're my salvation, and all
-- do you think you could rescue us
before your smoke break?

Hal pulls out a box of wooden matches and lights one Bogart style, one-handed with a thumbnail, cupping a hand to shield it against the wind, Gabe bends down for it -- a familiar routine: they've been friends for years.

GABE
(to Sarah;

indicating Hal)
A twenty dollar haircut on a two
dollar head. After three years he
finally gets you to go on a climb,
and he cracks his ankle --
(into radio)
Rescue One -- have located helpless
climber, please prepare idiot line
for transport, over --

The helicopter dips down towards the ledge -- no way can
it land here. Frank lowers a rescue wire to Gabe who
swings precariously out from the ledge to grab it -- the
wire is just out of reach.

GABE
(making grab)
Sarah -- we could take off and
leave this guy behind --

Sarah smiles as if she's considering it. Hal grabs the radio.

HAL
Rescue One -- please be advised
Ranger Walker is making advances toward
my girl that are liable to get his
ass kicked right off this ledge, over --

MAGGIE (O.S.)
(through radio)
Copy, Hal -- tell Gabe he makes
advances to me and no-one else.
Otherwise he's walking down the
entire three thousand feet, over...

Gabe secures the line to a heavy piton, and hammers it
into the wall.

THE HELICOPTER

swings over across to the facing mountain -- Maggie lands
the copter, in spite of the winds, on a small plateau. Frank
gets out to secure the wire -- now a lifeline spans the chasm.

ON THE LEDGE

Gabe finishes anchoring the line in the rock. Hal rigs a
seat harness around his legs and Gabe clips it to the line.

GABE
Remember -- keep your arms and legs
within the vehicle at all times --

HAL
(laughing)
Fuck you --

With that, Hal pulls himself hand-over-hand across the sloping line --

HAL'S POV -- THE DROP

is vertigo defined. 3,500 feet straight down. However --

HAL

lets go of the overhead line and claps his hands to his face in mock horror -- he quickly whizzes the last thirty feet of the line. Frank grabs him.

Hal gets out of the harness, signals thumbs-up, and sends it back...

THE LEDGE

Gabe uses a small attachment line to wind in the harness. Sarah watches as it swings across the yawning chasm. Gabe steals a glance at her -- realizes how frightened she is...

GABE
Tell me something - when I'm not around, does he still whine about the time he almost made it up Everest?

Sarah smiles, trying to mask her nerves...

SARAH
Not really -- three, four times a week, that's all.

GABE
Glad it's nothing serious...

He catches hold of the harness and starts to rig her into it...

SARAH
He said you 86'ed his oxygen mask.

GABE
You don't believe that bullshit, do you?

SARAH
I'm pretty gullible, Gabe. I mean I believed him when he told

me this was fun.

GABE

Sure it is - it's the best ride
in the park.

(finishes rigging)

Ready?

SARAH

What happens if I'm not?

GABE

(smiling)

We send you anyway.

SARAH

(scared but tough)

Okay.

Gabe starts to push her out on the line, but at the last moment her nerve fails her. She grabs his arm, dropping her head to look down... Gabe takes hold of her chin, stopping her, making her face him.

GABE

Just keep looking at me. Only
think about this distance across.
Count it as you go: one, two --
by eight you'll be there.

SARAH

Can I count as fast as I like?

GABE

Sure you can.
(smiling)
One other thing...

SARAH

I know - keep your arms...

SARAH/GABE

...and legs within the vehicle
at all times.

Gabe pushes her out -- as he does, he nods across the abyss to Hal who nods back, confident but concerned -- he can't forget that everything that matters to him is suspended by a thread over a 3,500 foot drop.

GABE'S POV - SARAH

inching away in the harness, looking more confident now --

SARAH'S POV - GABE

signalling "OK" -- "you're doing fine" --

SARAH - ANOTHER ANGLE

thirty feet out, going fine -- Hal watches, his tension easing -- but --

INSERT -- A HARNESS CLIP

holding the strap under Sarah's left leg breaks --

GABE'S POV - SUSAN

The harness completely unravels all at once, its strands shoot through the clips -- what was a seat has become a trap door in half a second -- as the harness shoots out from under her, Sarah falls but grabs the harness strand --

Hal's very worst fears are being realized as Sarah, too scared to breathe, dangles on the remaining strand of what used to be the harness -- she sways from the wind and the jerk of her own weight, her grip loosens --

INSERT - THE TOP CLIP

that is supporting all of Sarah's weight is being seriously tested -- a single knot in the harness has caught there, but it clearly won't last long --

GABE moves back from the ledge.

GABE
(in control)
I'm coming out.

HAL
No! You'll break her loose!

GABE
The clip's not gonna hold!

Gabe gently pulls himself up on the line, crosses his ankles on it, and clips himself on with a three foot safety line. He starts smoothly, quickly pulling himself out. Hal can barely watch.

HAL
(anguished)
Jesus...

Sarah is in trouble -- the bobbing of the line from Gabe's weight and the winds are making her lose her grip even more -- Gabe pulls himself along the line faster, trying not to shake the line -- he looks across at Hal who has dug in to brace the line -- it's not meant for this much weight --

Sarah starts to look down in to the abyss.

GABE

No! Keep looking at me... Sarah!

Her eyes slide up to him...

WIDER ANGLE

He is only ten feet away --

INSERT - THE CLIP

The knot has worked itself halfway through -- it doesn't make any difference how tight she holds on to the harness, the harness itself is letting go --

ON GABE

who knows it and pulls himself the rest of the way, faster, almost bridging the gap --

ON SARAH

staring desperately at Gabe, holding on --

INSERT - THE TOP CLIP

that's keeping Sarah alive surrenders the knot -- it passes through, and

SARAH

falls --

GABE

deliberately lets go of the main line and launches himself at Sarah --

THEIR HANDS

catch -- Gabe's got a tenuous grip on Sarah's upper arm --

ANGLE ON BOTH

Gabe's three foot safety line pulls taut, testing the limits

of the line above as it yanks him and Sarah back. They start swinging like a pendulum over the abyss -- with each swing.

Sarah's hand slips further down Gabe's arm -- he frantically tries to tighten his grip on Sarah's arm, but his grip and hers are slipping. Gabe reaches up with his free arm to grab the main line and stabilize them, but their swinging keeps it out of reach --

GABE

Use your other hand - grab it!

Sarah is too scared to comply, her other arm flailing as if that might stop the swinging -- with the next arc.

Their grip slides to wrist level and keeps slipping. Gabe's hand digs into Sarah's climbing glove and holds!

Gabe's face is a mask of strained concentration as he tries to grab the main line and maintain his grip on Sarah -- he finally snags the main line, but he can't stabilize them -- with the next swing --

Sarah's hand slides out of her glove! She falls -- her eyes still locked on Gabe who can only look down, swaying helplessly on the wire as Sarah SCREAMS --

ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE

Frank and Maggie look down in horror, but neither look as anguished as Hal --

LONG SHOT - SARAH

falling -- falling -- falling -- looking very small against the vast mountain range --

SARAH'S POV - FALLING

from this height takes the longest nineteen seconds you can imagine --

GABE

twists from his safety line, clutching Sarah's glove -- he wants to, but can't, shut his eyes -- he locks eyes with

HAL

whose horror and grief are even greater than Gabe's --

GABE'S POV - THE CHASM

Sarah is gone. The "safety" harness spirals down after her like a carefree bird. Her scream echoes off the cliffs and through the canyons... fainter, fainter -- until it's almost a memory -- carrying across to:

INT. GABE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Tight on Sarah's glove. Tilt up to reveal that Gabe is holding it in his hand. He's sitting alone in his cabin, lost in thought, just staring at it...

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

A large sign:

SAN FRANCISCO AIRPORT

Tilt down from it to a web of overpasses in front of the terminal. Speeding down it, a prison van surrounded by police cars and unmarked vehicles.

The convoy veers down a ramp, through a service entrance marked:

AUTHORIZED ENTRY ONLY

In to the bowels of the terminal...

EXT. TERMINAL ROOF - DAY

Members of a SWAT team -- marksmen -- stand on the roof of the terminal, weapons aimed at the open doors of a large hangar. Parked just inside is the prison van.

INT. HANGAR - DAY

Behind a cordon of cops and police cars, the doors of the prison van are open. We catch a glimpse of seven men and two women -- all handcuffed and shackled -- as they are hustled towards the doors of the hangar...

EXT. TERMINAL - OBSERVATION DECK - DAY

A television news crew stands on an observation deck, scanning the terrace and outbuildings...

The reporter turns -- she sees the line of prisoners being led out of the hangar...

REPORTER

There!

The cameraman spins, swinging the camera onto his shoulder, grabbing a shot of the prisoners as the cops

lead them across the asphalt...

EXT. HANGAR - NIGHT

An FBI car is parked outside the hangar, close to a chartered executive jet. Standing next to the car is a distinguished man in his 50's. This is WALTER WRIGHT. He watches as the prisoners are escorted towards the steps leading up into the jet...

A voice behind him --

PILOT (O.S.)

They said it was a special charter --

Wright turns: the pilot walks up next to him, waiting to board...

PILOT

I didn't realize it was this special.
(indicating the last
of the prisoners)
That's Eric Qualen, isn't it -- the
drug dealer?

WRIGHT

That's right.

PILOT

You work on the case?

WRIGHT

You could say that --
(smiles)
I'm Regional Director of the FBI.

PILOT

So -- how come I'm taking him to
New York?

WRIGHT

Extradition. Him and his friends
have a date with the District Court.

As the prisoners mount the steps into the jet, Qualen -- the last in line -- turns. For the first time we see his face clearly: aged about 35, he's handsome, English, very cool! He looks straight at Wright, a moment of acknowledgement between them -- then he turns and goes up the steps.

EXT. JET - NIGHT

Men in overalls are loading the last of the luggage into

the jet: three metal boxes, completely sealed, each one carrying a warning:

FBI: DO NOT OPEN

They disappear into the darkness of the cargo section. The door slams shut.

INT. COCKPIT - NIGHT

The Pilot and CO-PILOT enter the cockpit, settling into their seats.

PILOT

It was on the news last week -- they found about a ton of heroin at a Manhattan car dealership. Not just any cars -- Rolls Royces. You didn't see it?

Together they start to go through the routine of pre-flight checks...

CO-PILOT

I've been in Jamaica -- a repair job...

PILOT

He's a former member of MI-5 -- the British version of the CIA. They picked him up about ten miles off-shore. Guess what they found on his yacht.

CO-PILOT

Elvis Presley.

PILOT

Ninety-seven million dollars -- in cash.

The two men look at each other.

INT. JET - NIGHT

An FBI agent stows two large kit bags in a storage bin at the back of the plane. Aged in his mid-forties -- a tough, imposing man -- he's the senior agent in charge. His name is RICHARD TRAVERS.

Slam! He turns as members of the SWAT team push the last of the prisoners -- Eric Qualen -- into a seat. Qualen ignores them, smiling at the FBI agent waiting to handcuff him. This is Travers' younger brother -- Junior.

QUALEN

At first I thought you and Travers
looked alike because you were
brothers -- now I know the secret.

JUNIOR

What secret?

QUALEN

You're not people at all. The FBI
clones you.

JUNIOR

That's right -- just shows how
smart we are.

QUALEN

Not exactly. If the Bureau was smart
it would have cloned someone intelligent.

Snap! Junior closes the 'cuffs hard around Qualen's wrists
-- securing him to the seat.

EXT. AIRPORT - NIGHT

In extreme long shot we see the executive jet speed down
the runway and take off. As it climbs towards the clouds,
we rack focus to reveal the TV reporter on the observation
deck, doing a stand-up to camera:

REPORTER (V.O.)

Federal agents recovered over \$97
million hidden in a pair of false
fuel tanks. When asked about the
money, Qualen told Federal officials,
"Cash is like the American Express
card -- don't leave home without it."

INT. GABE'S CABIN - NIGHT

REPORTER (V.O.)

This is Talia Tornquist...

Pull back from the newsreport to reveal it's playing
on a television set in the corner of Gabe's kitchen...

REPORTER (V/O)

... reporting from San Francisco...

The room is deserted but we tilt up to see through the
window --

EXT. GABE'S CABIN - NIGHT

Gabe stands on a bridge outside the cabin, the river roaring and tumbling underneath, throwing spray into the moonlight. But he pays no mind to it -- he's staring up at the mountain: hard and beautiful against the backdrop of a million stars...

The sound of a footfall. He turns: it's Maggie, coming 'round the side of the cabin.

MAGGIE

I tried phoning you -- I guess
you didn't hear it...

She kisses him "hello"...

GABE

(softly)
I heard it.

Once again, he glances up at the mountain.

MAGGIE

It was an equipment failure,
Gabe. A harness clip broke --
it's a million-to-one chance --

GABE

That's all it takes -- that's why you
check and double check everything, you
have safety lines and fail-safe plans;
all the things I never bothered about.
If you don't -- one mistake, that single
million-to-one chance, and someone dies.

MAGGIE

I've lived here all my life -- not
a year's gone by when someone hasn't
died. Accidents happen...

GABE

Accidents are avalanches. Face it,
Maggie -- this was a mistake.

MAGGIE

Then it was a mistake made by
all of us.

HAL (O.S.)

But only one of us decided to go
out on the wire.

They both turn: Hal is approaching through the shadows,

limping onto the bridge.

GABE
(gently)
What are you saying, Hal?

HAL
It was the weight that did it --

GABE
I made a mistake -- I should have checked her harness. But once it happened -- I'm telling you, that clip was never gonna hold.

HAL
I think it would have. You should have thrown her a line.

GABE
(certain)
There wasn't time.

HAL
'Course there wasn't -- your hands were itching for it! Another chance to play the hero --

Gabe feels his temper flare, but he douses it down.

GABE
(turning away)
It's a bad time, Hal -- a bad time for everyone.

HAL
Yeah, but you didn't love her.

GABE
(turning back, angry)
And you didn't have her by the hand! You weren't looking in her eyes -- now drop it!

HAL
(really bitter)
Oh no, buddy -- it was you that dropped it.

Gabe, barely controlling his anger, turns away again but Hal grabs him by the shoulder, turning him back... Gabe, very rough, throws his hand aside. It's the excuse Hal's been waiting for -- he launches himself at Gabe, fists flying!

Ordinarily, no match for a man of Gabe's strength, all the pent-up anger and anguish carry Hal forward... One! Two! He drives his fists into his body... Gabe backs away, blocking, parrying... BAM! Hal drives one through -- straight into Gabe's face... he reels back, then -- WHAM! Collects Hal on the jaw. But still he comes on --

Gabe draws his fist back, ready to knock him into Utah, when -- SLAP! A hand strikes his face very hard: it's Maggie. She grabs Hal's shirt and drags him aside.

GABE
What did you hit me for?

MAGGIE
You're both stupid -- you just happened to be closest.

She turns to Hal --

MAGGIE
Get in the truck, Hal -- I'll give you a ride.

HAL
(to Gabe)
It's not just me --
-- ask Frank what he thinks of the Head of Rescue.

He and Maggie exchange a glance. Gabe catches it --

MAGGIE
Just go, Hal!

He turns and limps off -- toward Maggie's pick-up.

GABE
(quietly)
What does Frank think?

A beat. He and Maggie look at each other --

MAGGIE
He thinks we all panicked.

Gabe turns away -- he's lost the confidence of them all. All except -- Maggie. She puts her hand on his shoulder.

MAGGIE
I'll drop Hal off -- you want me to come back?

But he doesn't answer. She stares at his back for a moment -- then she goes. Gabe just stands there, staring up at the mountain -- towering, eerie in the moonlight.

EXT. CLOUDS - MORNING

A spectacular sight: great, rolling thunderclouds backlit by the sun.

The sound of an engine -- then a plane appears through the clouds: the FBI's executive jet.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT - MORNING

Overhead lights flash on:

FASTEN SEAT BELTS/NO SMOKING

An FBI agent -- MILLS -- moves down the aisle, making sure the prisoners have their belts on, cigarettes out. He reaches Qualen's seat.

MILLS

Put your seat up, Mr. Qualen.

QUALEN

Why -- you're not allowed to be comfortable when you crash?

But Mills isn't listening -- he's looking at the door into the cargo section, swinging on its hinge.

INT. COCKPIT - MORNING

Travers is looking through the windshield -- nothing but cloud.

TRAVERS

We passed Denver yet?

PILOT

Couple of minutes back. Better put your belt on -- this could get a little rough.

Travers sits on a jump set, just behind the Pilot.

TRAVERS

Still on auto-pilot?

PILOT

Yeah.

TRAVERS

Amazing, isn't it? Almost don't
need you guys anymore.

CO-PILOT

(laughing)

That's what the airlines say.

TRAVERS

Me too, I'm afraid.

The pilot turns -- straight into the silencer on the end
of Travers' gun.

We doesn't even have time to scream. BANG! Blood sprays
across the windshield...

BANG! The next bullet kills the co-pilot.

Travers pushes the stick forward -- the plane starts to
slowly lose altitude -- then flicks two switches marked:

FUEL

EXT. FBI JET - MORNING

The tanks on each wing dump gasoline into the clouds as
the plan goes into a long, slow descent...

INT. CARGO HOLD

Junior, dressed in his shirt-sleeves, sweating hard,
manhandles the three sealed metal boxes out of the piles
of cargo and into the center of the hold.

Out of his pocket, Junior takes a flat metal disc, rips
off the backing tape and fixes it to the side of the first
box. Blip! A red LED light on the front of the disc starts
to flash...

MILLS (O.S.)

What are you doing?

Junior turns: Mills is standing at the far end of the
hold, half-observed by cargo, watching him.

JUNIOR

(smiling)

What's it look like -- stealing
the cargo.

Casually, he reaches for his jacket...

MILLS
(laughing)
Seriously.

Junior opens! The muzzle of an Uzi appears from under his jacket.

Bam! Bam! Two bullets hit Mills, sending him reeling, crashing into the shadows.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

The prisoners turn, reacting to the sound of the gunshots. Another agent -- BOONE -- scrambles to his feet, drawing his gun, moving down the aisle...

INT. CARGO HOLD

Junior moves through stacks of cargo, eyes roaming, searching for Mills... a flicker of movement! Junior turns...

Bang! Mills, badly wounded, fires... Junior dives... the bullet slams into a crate, splintering it... Mills is on his feet, zig-zagging through the cargo, running for the door...

Junior rolls onto his stomach, firing...

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bullets rip into the bulkhead...

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

They tears through the storage locker -- into the passenger compartment... Boone ducks... Qualen can't -- he's held by the handcuffs... SMASH! A window shatters, but holds... Wham! Wham! More slugs tear into the fuselage...

The lights go out. A siren sounds. Oxygen masks fall from the overhead lockers...

INT. CARGO HOLD

Mills scrambles to the door, tearing it open... Bam! Bam! Junior nails him with a blast of gunfire. Mills drops to the floor, dead...

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

Boone, running down the dimly-lit aisle, sees Mills fall. A voice behind him.

TRIVERS (O.S.)
Boone!

BOONE

Sir?

He turns -- Travers is standing in a doorway, backlit by lights from the cockpit, pistol raised... BANG! BANG! The first shot hits Boone in the chest, the second in his head...

The prisoners just stare as Travers walks down the aisle, stepping over Boone's body, heading towards the rear of the plane. Only Qualen maintains his cool:

QUALEN

Back home, the police are in the pay of the criminals. In America things seem much simpler: the police are the criminals.

TRAVERS

Keep talking, Qualen --
(looks at watch)
Another six minutes, I'd say,
and you'll be eating rock.

Travers grabs the plane's emergency exit, twists the handle which seals it and forces it open.

WHOOSH! A mighty blast of air roars through the compartment...

INT. CARGO HOLD

Barely any light at all -- just three red LED lights flashing: one from each of the metal boxes as Junior drags them towards the passenger compartment...

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

The doors of the storage compartment swing open -- Travers reaches in and grabs the kit bags he stowed there at the beginning of the flight... Junior manhandles the metal boxes into position in front of the emergency exit... working fast, Travers rips open the kit bags, dragging out what looks like backpacks. Except they're not -- they're parachutes.

He and Junior -- working like clockwork -- rig the metal boxes into the harnesses... Qualen, watching them, turns and looks out the window: the plane is plunging through clouds, losing altitude fast...

QUALEN

What's the pilot doing?

TRAVERS

Not much, I shouldn't think.

Qualen turns and looks at him.

QUALEN

What did you do -- offer him
early retirement?

The boxes are done. Travers and Junior are rigging
themselves into 'chutes.

TRAVERS

He couldn't help you anyway...
(looks at watch again)
You've now got four minutes of
fuel left.

He and Junior heave the boxes through the door...

EXT. FBI JET

The metal boxes tumble out of the plane -- turning,
twisting, falling into the cloud...

INT. COCKPIT

The bloodied bodies of the pilot and co-pilot lay slumped
over the controls. The plane -- driverless -- spears
through the sky...

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

Junior stands in the doorway, the wind tearing at his
clothing. He turns, smiling...

JUNIOR

Happy landings, Qualen!

Then he jumps...

Qualen looks out: the last of the boxes disappearing, Junior
-- his chute not open yet -- following them down... Travers
is at the door now -- about to leap. He looks at Qualen:

TRAVERS

I'd like to say I'm sorry --
but you're a drug dealer,
Qualen. You're about to get
what you deserve.

QUALEN

Guess you're right, Mr. Travers --

Junior, too, I think --

Travers -- suddenly worried -- turns, looking down.

EXT. MID-AIR

Junior -- falling through space -- hits the trigger that releases the chute.

BOOM! The rucksack bursts open -- the chute streams out. For a moment the canopy billows and fills -- just long enough for us to see it's been shot full of holes! It collapses in on itself, twirling into a useless length of fabric, wrapping itself around the ropes like a shroud...

Junior screams as he realizes -- plunging down towards his death.

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

Travers looks down -- horror on his face.

QUALEN

Of course, when the bullets hit the storage compartment, they may not have destroyed all the parachutes. Still, it's a helluva way to find out.

Travers rips off his 'chute -- looking at it: two large bullet holes. Panic in his eyes...

QUALEN

How much fuel did you say?

TRAVERS

Three minutes.

Qualen turns to another prisoner -- a woman sitting across the aisle. This is KRISTEL -- like her name, beautiful in a hard way --

QUALEN

Kristel's quite a pilot -- one hundred and seven successful runs for me. Any ideas, darling?

KRISTEL

Three minutes of fuel, in the middle of the Rockies? What do you expect me to do?

QUALEN

What I'd expect of anyone in the
circumstances -- a miracle.

He smiles at her, cool as ice.

EXT. GABE'S CABIN - MORNING

Maggie comes 'round the veranda, opens the back door and
steps through...

INT. KITCHEN

The television is still playing to itself...

MAGGIE

Gabe?

No reply.

She opens the door into the living room...

INT. LIVING ROOM

All the shutters are closed, the room in darkness except
for the soft glow of embers in the fireplace. Something
catches Maggie's eye. She turns -- it's Gabe, sitting in
the shadows by the fireplace. He has barely slept, his
eyes are tired, his face haggard and drawn.

GABE

Let's get out of here.

Maggie goes to him, ready to offer comfort --

MAGGIE

What do you want to do? We can
take the horses down the back ninety --

GABE

Permanently, I mean.

MAGGIE

(sitting down)
Permanently?

GABE

A lot of things fell apart up
there, Maggie -- a harness was
just one of them.

MAGGIE

Go away together -- is that what
you're saying?

GABE

That's right.

MAGGIE

Three years, Gabe, and we don't even live with each other -- that's how much of a commitment you've made. Of course I'd go with you -- but not like this.

GABE

Listen, Maggie -- maybe Frank was right, maybe I did panic.

She gets to her feet, an edge to her voice, not willing to tolerate this much longer --

MAGGIE

You don't have to carry it all, Gabe -- there's enough guilt to go 'round for everyone.

GABE

I don't think so, I was Head of Rescue --

MAGGIE

(turning, angry)

And what about, Hal? He's your assistant -- what the hell was he doing up on The Tower with a girl that could barely climb?

GABE

(rising)

Every weekend in summer that happens --

MAGGIE

But we don't pack up and leave because of it!

GABE

Nobody's packing up, I'm talking about starting over --

MAGGIE

Running, more like it.

He ignores the interruption, trying to be conciliatory --

GABE

We can head west, Maggie --
some place like Tahoe. You know,
short slopes and fat tourists...

But she's not buying it -- no way.

MAGGIE

Believe it or not, I've had dreams
of a life together. I've seen a lot
of things in them, but I can tell
you one place I haven't -- Tahoe.

GABE

(angry)

Forget Tahoe! We can find somewhere --

MAGGIE

(angry back)

What are you saying -- we drive
'round in a trailer and audition
towns 'til we find someplace you
feel comfortable?

GABE

I'm not talking about a town --
I'm talking about a home.

MAGGIE

This is home!

GABE

Aren't you listening?! I'm not
staying -- I can't.

MAGGIE

I'm hearing you. Now you listen:
I'm not leaving. Okay?

They stare at one another. A beat -- then Gabe senses
something. He turns and looks... Maggie follows his gaze --

Frank is standing at the door.

GABE

Hi, Frank.

FRANK

Gabe. Sorry to barge in. I
thought I'd find you here, Maggie
-- Brett and Evan are up on the spur.

MAGGIE

Why are you telling me -- Gabe's

Head of Rescue.

Frank and Gabe exchange a look...

GABE

(quietly)

Not anymore, Maggie. I handed in my notice this morning. Hal's Head of Rescue.

Maggie just looks at him. A beat -- then.

MAGGIE

That's a real loss.

FRANK

That's what I said.

MAGGIE

Not for the Park Service, Frank --
(keeps looking at Gabe)
I meant for us.

Now she turns away, putting aside her personal concerns, ignoring Gabe, talking to Frank.

MAGGIE

What's the story with Brett and Evan?

FRANK

Their wives called -- twice. Hal wants you in the air to find the idiots before the weather closes in.

MAGGIE

There's a storm coming?

FRANK

So the weather service says...

MAGGIE

Screw the weather service -- what do you say?

FRANK

(rubbing his foot)

Big one. My metatarsals are humming like a high tension wire.

MAGGIE

I'll grab my jacket...

She turns and goes.

Gabe and Frank walk out onto the veranda.

EXT. CABIN VERANDA - MORNING

A high wind is whipping down the valley, dark clouds start to wreath the mountain tops: the storm is moving in...

FRANK

When do you leave?

GABE

The sooner, the better I guess.

(changing subject)

Where'd you say Brett and Evan were?

FRANK

On the spur.

GABE

Jumping?

FRANK

In this weather -- falling,
more likely.

EXT. SPUR - DAY

Two men -- both in their 20's -- are falling, tumbling through space. This is Brett and Evan.

We pull back to reveal they are plunging, arms flailing, down a huge chasm. The rock wall behind them speeds past, the ground far below races to meet them. Thirty seconds -- maybe less -- and they're dead! First Brett -- then Evan -- punches a metal clasp on his chest. Karwhoosh! Their back-packs burst open -- parachutes stream out and billow into canopies.

Hollering with delight, riding the updrafts like a rollercoaster, the two rock-jocks soar and plunge -- over the lip of another spur and out of sight.

A shadow falls across the chasm as the storm clouds roll in...

EXT. CLOUDS - DAY

A low ceiling of clouds. Suddenly the FBI jet drops through it, heading down...

INT. COCKPIT

The bodies of the pilot and co-pilot are dumped in the

doorway. Kristel sits at the controls, her face a mask of concentration. Travers and Qualen are next to her, watching every move. She taps the fuel gauges: both are on empty -- the needles don't budge... she checks the altimeter -- they're dropping fast; looks at the horizontal profile -- they're flying level... only now does she look through the windshield --

A plateau, high above the snow line, races to meet them...

KRISTEL

This is it. Strap 'em in!

Qualen turns and takes a microphone off its hook...

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

All the prisoners are free now -- a couple are praying, several just stare out the windows...

QUALEN (O.S.)

(mimicking a stewardess)

All seats and tray-backs in the upright position, please.

The prisoners fasten seat belts, crouch forward, heads down...

INT. COCKPIT

Travers and Qualen slide into their seats, clasping their seat-belts tight... Kristel and Qualen smile at one another -- then she cuts the engines, kills the power. All the dials -- the cockpit -- go dark...

Just Kristel's face visible as she looks ahead: the snow-covered ground racing down, closer, closer... Faster... faster...

EXT. PLATEAU - DAY

The jet plunges down -- straight and level... WHOOSH! A great plume of snow erupts as it hits the ground...

The plane screams across the plateau on its belly, kicking up a storm of ice and slush. Somehow, it stays level -- the problem is the ground itself tilts down towards the edge of a cliff several hundred yards distant. The plane is heading straight for it...

Suddenly one wing dips -- into a bank of snow...

Rip! It's torn to pieces... but the plane keeps sledding -- closer to the edge!

INT. PASSENGER COMPARTMENT

The occupants are hurled around, seats fly through the air, windows implode...

EXT. PLATEAU

The fuselage rips downhill through a wooded area like a runaway train...

INT. COCKPIT

There's nothing Kristel can do except hang-on. She looks ahead: the precipice races to meet them...

EXT. PLATEAU

Smash! The second wing hits a tree, shattering into a thousand pieces, severing off at the fuselage... the force of the impact spins what's left of the body of the plane, sending it broadsiding into the snow, slowing it down... it slides toward the edge... closer... closer... then wrenches to a halt -- several feet short of the edge. A pall of snow, ice and smoke hang over the wrecked fuselage.

From inside -- a single scream: at least somebody's alive. The high-pitched cry becomes the scream of an aircraft engine --

EXT. CLOUDS - DAY

Closer it comes, closer -- through a mass of swirling storm clouds. Then it swoops out, almost on top of us: Maggie's helicopter, searching for Brett and Evan.

INT. HELICOPTER

Maggie struggles hard with the controls. She pushes the stick forward -- the chopper swings lower. We see the peaks and valleys of the Rockies in all their glory -- thunderclouds overhead, shafts of sunlight streaming through...

FRANK (O.S.)

Rescue One -- have you sighted them?

MAGGIE

Negative. Storm's already moving in, the winds are too strong to stay up. Over.

FRANK (O.S.)

Abort, Maggie. Brett and Evan are

dumb enough not to log in, but
they're smart enough to pack storm
gear. Head back to base. Over.

Maggie adjusts the rudder, banking the craft into a turn...

INT. CAVE - DAY

Brett and Evan are holed up in a cave, surrounded by their cooking gear, backpacks, parachutes. They both turn at the sound of an engine. They move fast to the mouth of the cave... just in time to see the helicopter whirl past, spiral down into the canyon and disappear from sight...

EXT. MAGGIE'S CABIN - DAY

Gabe is carrying boxes containing his possessions out of Maggie's cabin and stowing them in the back of his pick-up. As good as his word -- he's leaving...

A great clap of thunder makes him turn and look: the mountain where he lost Sarah looms overhead, partly obscured by clouds, eerie in the darkening shadow of the storm...

EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

The plane is perched precariously on the edge of the precipice -- all silent now, just the howl of a rising wind... Suddenly the front door is kicked open and two near-naked bodies are thrown out into the snow: the pilot and the co-pilot...

INT. WRECKED PLANE

Two of the prisoners -- RYAN and KYNETTE -- are crouched near the cockpit pulling on the pilot's uniforms, doing whatever they can to protect themselves from the bitter cold.

Deeper inside the wrecked fuselage another survivor -- an overweight prisoner called DELMAR -- is making sure he won't starve to death. He's emptying the contents of the cocktail cabinet into a flight bag: jars of nuts, packets of candy, tiny bottles of liquor.

All around him, a jumble of seats and twisted metal. From somewhere farther back in the plane, we hear the sound of a man moaning...

We track toward it, past the bodies of at least two dead prisoners, to find Qualen and Kristel crouched over a young man moaning amid the wreckage. This is MATHERS -- he's semi-conscious, his knee twisted at a right angle, an arm broken, his forehead badly gashed...

QUALEN
(calling)
Kynette? Delmer? Someone
find the first aid kit!

With surprising gentleness Qualen lifts Mathers and lays him on the cabin floor, putting a loose cushion under his head, wrapping him in blankets...

Smash! A prisoner, bloodied and bruised but otherwise uninjured, rips aside the wreckage, making his way up to Qualen from the rear of the plane. This is FRANK HELDON -- in his hand he carries the first aid kit. He looks down at Mathers, bleeding hard, moaning on the floor...

HELDON
Jesus... We can't take him
with us, 'Ric. He'll just
slow us down.

Qualen has the first aid kit open, breaking open a syringe and a vial of morphine. He pulls up Mathers' sleeve, looking up at Heldon -- serious now...

QUALEN
How long we known each other,
Frank -- ten years?

Heldon nods -- yes.

QUALEN
Ever known me to turn my back
on one of my people?

HELDON
Never.

Qualen slides the needle into Mathers' arm...

QUALEN
(smiling)
Well -- there's a first time
for everything.
(sliding plunger down)
Like I always say -- it's not drugs
that kill people, it's the overdose.
Where's the FBI's Man of the Year?

Heldon motions with his head, indicating the exterior of the plane...

EXT. CRASH SITE - DAY

Travers has a large tarpaulin laid out on the ground, emptying out the contents of the kit bags: a selection of weapons, climbing equipment, binoculars, warm clothing...

He starts to pull on a parka and ski boots.

QUALEN (O.S.)

Phase one seems to have gone off pretty well -- apart from your brother dying, the plane crashing and losing all the money, of course. What's next in the master plan?

Qualen starts to look through the supplies, picking things up, examining them. Travers ignores him...

QUALEN

It is the money in the boxes, isn't it? My money?

TRAVERS

My money, Qualen. And it's certainly not lost.

Qualen picks up a pair of "nightfinder" goggles, adjusting the luminescence, looking at Travers through them -- a weird, almost surreal figure...

QUALEN

I never thought it was. I bet you know exactly where those boxes are. My guess is each one carries a VHF beacon -- that's what Junior was doing in the hold -- and you've got the tracking device. Am I right?

Travers pulls on his rucksack, almost ready to go. Qualen picks up a pack of detonators and a carton -- it could be take-out food but it's not, it's plastic explosive.

QUALEN

(admiringly)

Cemetek -- now that's a quality product. More bang for your buck than any other explosive. What were you thinking of blowing?

TRAVERS

Anything I had to. How the hell did I know what I was gonna run into?

QUALEN

You're a real Boy Scout, aren't you?

TRAVERS

That's me -- Be Prepared -- for anything.

QUALEN

It must have seemed so easy --
sitting in your little suburban
house, planning it all.

Travers takes the Cemetek out of Qualen's hand and stuffs
it in his pack...

QUALEN

Three boxes, three separate
frequencies -- just dial 'em in,
follow the bouncing ball -- and
bingo! Home for Christmas. The
only trouble is -- it could take
you a month to get from this side
of the chasm to the other.

TRAVERS

That's a risk I'll just have
to take.

QUALEN

Not really -- what you need
is a guide.

TRAVERS

Sure I do. What do you suggest --
we find a phone and I call one?

QUALEN

(smiling)
Exactly.

Travers just looks at him trying to work it out. Finally:

TRAVERS

You must have hit your head, Qualen.

QUALEN

Three-way cut. One third to you,
one third to me -- the others split
the rest.

TRAVERS

What do I get in return?

QUALEN

We provide the guide.

INT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Hal is working through a pile of paperwork, trying to concentrate as Frank attaches aluminum foil to a little TV to drag in the fading signal of a Broncos game.

The COMMENTATOR'S VOICE is drowned out as the scanner radio barks to life.

KRISTEL (O.S.)
(panicky)
Can anyone hear me --
please answer --

Hal turns to the radio and keys the mike.

HAL
Rocky Mountain Rescue --
come in --

INT. COCKPIT

Kristel is sitting on the floor of the cockpit. She's ripped the guys out of the plane's radios and avionics to jury-rig a system of wires, transistors and dials.

Qualen and Travers watch as she starts to "cry".

KRISTEL
We need help -- three of us...
it just collapsed on us --
(keys mike to garble
transmission)
-- leg is broken, head bleeding...

INT. RANGER STATION

Hal turns to Frank.

HAL
Rockslide.
(into radio)
Where are you?

KRISTEL (O.S.)
("panicked")
I don't know -- we were heading
up... it looks like needles on top --

HAL
Comb Bluff.
(keys mike)

Do you have food, a first aid
kit? Over --

KRISTEL (O.S.)
("panicked")
No -- Nick and Dave told me we'd
be down by tonight --
("garble")
-- please -- get here as soon as --

Dead silence.

INT. COCKPIT

Kristel disconnects a couple of wires from the battery.
Travers watches as Qualen leans down and kisses her.

QUALEN
You never disappoint me.

EXT. RANGER STATION/INT. STORAGE ROOM

Hal, running, crosses from the Ranger Station to the
equipment storage room where back packs full of equipment
-- pre-packed for fast response to emergencies -- are
stashed in lockers.

Frank enters as Hal shoves extra supplies into a pack...

HAL
(fast)
Comb Bluff's above the snow-line.
They're gonna be ice sculptures by
morning.
I'll need tents, thermal clothes,
sleeping bags. With a bit of luck
I'll be able to keep them warm
enough. This weather can't last
more than 24 hours...

Frank lays a hand on his shoulder, stopping him...

FRANK
That's a hairy climb at the best
of times --

HAL
There's no alternative, Frank.
You heard Maggie -- the winds are
way too strong for the chopper.

FRANK
I'm not saying you shouldn't

climb it -- I'm saying you
shouldn't climb it alone.

Hal misunderstands -- he thinks Frank is volunteering.

HAL

Jesus, Frank -- you've broken
52 bones in your body; one for
every year. I've seen an x-ray
of your coccyx, it looks like a
bag of marbles.

FRANK

(smiling)

Any of those things I could have
handled -- it was getting struck
by lightning that did me in...

HAL

I'm not taking someone up there
I'll have to bring down in a bag.

FRANK

I wasn't thinking about myself --
I was thinking about someone who's
done every climb in the park a
dozen times -- someone with
emergency medical training --

HAL

(quiet, angry)

Like someone who's gonna leaving
town? You don't do a climb like
this with someone unless you can
trust him with your life. And
I don't trust Gabe Walker.

He turns and strides out the door...

EXT. STORAGE ROOM

The mountains loom huge overhead, the sky dark and full
of foreboding...

Frank comes to the doorway, standing there, watching Hal
hurrying away. He seems very small, dwarfed by the
enormity of the mountains and the sky...

INT. WRECKED PLANE

It's freezing cold: everyone wrapped in blankets, bundled
up against the cold.

Qualen has Kristel folded in his arms, keeping her warm. Delmer -- the fat guy -- is washing down peanuts and candy with miniature bottles of liquor...

Travers is the only one on his feet -- he's standing at a rip in the fuselage, looking out across the plateau, waiting for their guide...

EXT. RANGER STATION

The chopper has landed almost next to the Ranger Station but its engine's still idling, the rotor turning.

Maggie, laden down with equipment from the storage shed, loads packs and gear into the passenger seat. She turns at the sound of a car engine: it's Gabe in his Bronco, the back loaded down with his belongings. He gets out and walks towards her. She's so busy, though, she pays him no mind...

GABE

I came to say goodbye...

MAGGIE

Very considerate of you, Gabe --

GABE

This morning didn't go the way
I meant...

She doesn't respond...

GABE

Maggie?

MAGGIE

(masking her tears)
I really don't have time --
we've got a distress call.

GABE

Where?

MAGGIE

Comb Bluff.

GABE

You're not going up there --
not in this weather?

MAGGIE

It's an emergency, Gabe --
(turning away)
I'm sorry, I keep forgetting --

those don't concern you now.

Gabe grabs her shoulder and spins her 'round.

GABE

(angry)

Just drop it, Maggie! Who's on the blitz team?

MAGGIE

There is no team -- Hal went alone.

GABE

Alone! In this weather?

She slams shut the cargo door, getting ready to swing herself aboard...

MAGGIE

There was no choice -- he couldn't go with you, could he? I'm gonna try and pick him up, take him at least part of the way.

GABE

One bad decision after another --

MAGGIE

I thought you were leaving!

She starts to climb into the pilot's seat but Gabe grabs her, pulling her out --

GABE

I'm ditching the job, not my mind -- you can't fly in this!

MAGGIE

What's the alternative! We get in the Bronco and drive to Tahoe?

Eyes flashing, they stare at one another. Then Gabe turns away, yelling:

GABE

Frank! Frank!

Frank comes to the door of the rescue station. Gabe is at the back of the Bronco, hauling boxes containing his belongings off the back...

GABE

(to Frank)

Which way did Hal go? Fortitude
Valley, then the north wall?

Now we see what he's been looking for in the boxes: his
climbing gear.

FRANK

He's twenty minutes ahead --
you'll never catch him.

GABE

I will if I go up the south face.

FRANK

The south face...?

MAGGIE

You're crazier than I am.

GABE

I'm going to help him, not
track him.

He starts to pull on his parka, boots -- suiting himself
up for the journey that lies ahead.

EXT. FBI BUILDING - SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

A large, imposing building. In the forecourt, a sign:

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
SAN FRANCISCO

INT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

Walter Wright is on the telephone. Right now he's a very
worried man...

WRIGHT

(into phone)

Area code 415-555-1287. That's
the direct line into my office.
I'll be here -- the moment you
hear anything... Thank you.

He hangs up the phone and swings around in his seat: his
executive assistant, PETE DAVIS, and two SECRETARIES are
standing in the doorway, listening...

WRIGHT

As you heard, that was the
FAA -- it's the New York flight...

One of the Secretaries starts to cry...

DAVIS
Survivors?

WRIGHT
Nothing yet. The weather's closed in -- they're going to have to wait to get a ground crew started.

DAVIS
What are they saying -- they know for sure it was an accident?

Wright interrupts, speaking to the women...

WRIGHT
Will you excuse us, ladies?

They turn and go, closing the door behind them, leaving Wright and Davis alone.

WRIGHT
There was no radio contact, no Mayday. One minute it was on the screen, the next it wasn't. They say it doesn't happen like that, not accidents anyway.

DAVIS
Qualen?

WRIGHT
I guess it must be. Even so, assume he crashed the plane -- it's one helluva way to escape. How could you know who'd like and who'd die?

DAVIS
If it wasn't him -- what else is there?

WRIGHT
I don't know, Pete. Maybe it's the normal paranoia but after 30 years in this business you get a feeling -- and this is feeling weird. Check everything -- take whoever you need -- check all the files, the history of the plane, the cargo manifests... everything.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WALL - DAY - HIGH ANGLE ON HAL

who's now a good way up the wall -- at least 500 feet off

the ground. But this part of the wall is sheer and slick. His only foothold is about a half-inch of ledge -- a larger ledge is above him, tantalizingly just out of reach.

He gropes up, stretching, trying to get that extra half-inch reach -- he gets it, and painfully chins himself over

THE TOP OF THE LEDGE

Gabe is sitting on the ledge.

GABE

What took you so long?

Surprised, Hal starts to slip back -- Gabe grabs his hand and pulls him the rest of the way up. Panting from this last effort, he leans against the wall next to Gabe.

HAL

If you came to prove something --

GABE

I'm here for the same reason
you are.

Hal looks at him for a beat -- then turns and moves off. Gabe gets to his feet and grabs his pack, taking out a bolt gun -- which fires rope-fastened bolts into rock -- and slings it from a strap on his chest.

EXT. COMB BLUFF - LONG SHOT - DAY - GABE AND HAL

are now visible two-thirds of the way up.

CLOSER ON GABE AND HAL - THE MOUNTAIN FACE

is not only higher, it's a lot tougher to climb. Instead of being angular, the wall is now completely vertical. Rough, irregular ledges are all Gabe and Hal can grip. Gabe leads, planting pitons into the rock and threading the rope through them. These steel pins between Gabe and Hal are their only safety net.

Gabe, trailing rope behind him, goes up a sheer face and climbs under a ledge, anchoring the rope with another piton.

GABE

(shouting down)
Anchored!

HIGHER ON THE MOUNTAIN

The hammering of the piton below causes a rock to CRACK loose.

Several ten-pound boulders fall, starting a chain reaction --
Gabe hears the falling rocks and flattens against the wall --

GABE
(shouting down)
Rockslide!

HAL DOWN BELOW

Hal tries to stay flat, but one boulder painfully CLIPS him on the shoulder, knocking him from his perch --

WIDER - HAL FALLING

As Hal falls, his weight on the rope yanks out the nearest anchor piton -- Hal tumbles in space, keeping pace with the boulders, as --

Gabe quickly reaches to the piton he's just anchored, and removes the carabiner clip --

HAL - FALLING

The rope draws taut, yanking out the last piton between he and Gabe -- nothing but a few yards of slack rope now --

GABE

has the bolt gun out. He rapidly hooks the rope's carabiner clip to the chambered bolt, and FIRES it at a solid rock ledge above him --

INSERT - THE BOLT

imbeds solidly in the rock.

THE JOLT - WIDER SHOT

The line between Gabe and Hal pulls taut, knocking the wind out of Hal and leaving him suspended while -- Gabe is almost dragged down by the jolt -- he painfully takes most of the impact in his shoulders -- but the rope, bolted to the rock above, has held. Barely.

GABE
(shaken, voice gone)
Anchored --
(shouts this time)
Anchored!

Hal, now somewhat recovered, steadies himself.

HAL
(breathless too)
You're sure this time --

GABE
(mock nonchalance)
Not exactly. Climb up and check
for yourself.

Hal grabs the rope and starts to climb...

EXT. PRECIPICE EDGE - DAY - BINOCULAR POV

From the top of the bluff, someone is looking down through
binoculars -- Gabe and Hal are a few hundred yards below.

Ryan lowers the binoculars, and keys a headset radio.

RYAN
They're here.

INSIDE THE PLANE

Qualen is wearing another headset. He disentangles himself
from Kristel.

QUALEN
(to others)
Let's go.

ON THE MOUNTAIN BELOW

Hal and Gabe are tired, but get a second wind from the
excitement of being almost on top. Gabe stops, breathless
for a second, then goes on. Hal lags a little behind.

GABE
Come on -- the hard part's over.

Gabe heads up and over

THE MOUNTAIN'S EDGE

and helps Hal up. From here, the rest of the range looms
large. The storm raging above makes this a spectacular
sight -- but Gabe and Hal don't pause to enjoy it. Gabe
sees the trees torn from the ground by the plane crash.

GABE
(surprised)
Holy shit -- some hikers.

Gabe and Hal run into the wooded area, following the

wreckage -- felled trees, a smashed wing -- and reach

THE FUSELAGE

which sits intact by the edge of the precipice. They stare at it -- then Hal raises his radio, but before he can key it, he gets an earful of gun barrel from Qualen, standing behind him.

QUALEN

Welcome to the party.
I'm sure you understand --
(grabs radio)
-- it's by invitation only.

He motions to Gabe -- signalling for him to hand over his radio. Gabe has no choice but to comply...

INSIDE THE FUSELAGE

Qualen hustles Hal and Gabe inside the plane. Qualen throws Gabe's pack to Ryan and Delmar. Ryan quickly confiscates Gabe's bolt gun and ice axe.

Delmar rifles through Gabe's pack, grabbing his emergency rations and a couple of candy bars -- adding them to his stash of cocktail nuts and miniature liquor bottles. Travers looks at Hal's park ranger badge.

TRAVERS

Hal Tucker.
(to Gabe)
Where's yours?

QUALEN

Smoky hasn't got one. Just
a wallet.

He starts to leaf through it --

QUALEN

Gabe Walker.
(notes photo of Maggie)
Very attractive. Listen -- you
know the airlines, always screwing
up. We lost some luggage...
Now, I've bet the guys behind
you that you'd lead us to it.
But they bet me you wouldn't.

Guns are clicked. Gabe and Hal eye each other -- no choice. Qualen grins, mocking himself and the English --

QUALEN

Good show! I love winning...
Anyway, what we're looking for
is three bags.

GABE
What's in them?

QUALEN
Suits, underwear, 97 million
dollars -- the usual stuff.
Fortunately Mr. Travers here
has a tracking device. Pay
attention while he shows us
where they're located.

He turns to Travers -- who just laughs at him!

TRAVERS
As much as I admire this new
partnership -- I'm not totally
stupid. I'd hate you to get the
idea I might be dispensable.

QUALEN
(smiling; totally
insincere)
Dispensable? The idea never
crossed my mind.

Travers glares at him then turns to Gabe, motioning him
forward with his gun --

TRAVERS
You. In there.

Smack! Delmar shoves Hal hard in the chest, tipping him
backwards into an uprooted chair, keeping him out of the way.

Gabe, shepherded by Travers, steps into the privacy of what
is left of the cockpit...

Ryan, Kynette and the others start to gather their equipment
together... Unseen by any of them, Hal's hand slides into
his discarded pack. Silently. Surreptitiously, he finds
what he's searching for...

As he slips it into a pocket on his trouser leg, we see
what it is: two distress flares.

INT. COCKPIT - DAY

Tight on a set of maps spread out on the plane's wrecked
instrument panel.

Tilt up to Travers keying a set of numbers -- the frequency of a beacon -- into the tracking device...

TRAVERS

That's the third one --

Gabe looks at the monitor, then at the maps...

GABE

Looks like The Tower. It's the closest -- a terrible fucking climb.

TRAVERS

Forget the distance -- what's the quickest? Go for that one first.

GABE

The second one. Here --

He points at the map...

EXT. FACING MOUNTAIN - WIDE SHOT

Hal and Gabe lead the expedition down a steep, but passable, descent that links Comb Bluff with the next mountain. Gabe stops and holds out his hand to Travers --

GABE

The monitor.

He checks the it up against the mountainscape and the map.

MOUNTAIN AND MONITOR

The first blip is up a thousand feet -- it's a wall, and obviously not something for a novice. Gabe pauses a little too long -- Qualen nudges him with a gun.

GABE

This way.

Gabe, with Hal right behind, leads them up the wall -- it's not a straight climb, but there's a series of zig-zagging natural ledges that cut up the wall. The others follow Gabe and Hal's example.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WALL - WIDE SHOT - DAY - HAL AND GABE

have led the gang further up the wall, using pitons and carabiner clips to create a guide rope. it's still just a matter of climbing relatively easy ascending ledges...

CLOSER ON HAL AND GABE

As Gabe hammers in a new piton, he turns to Hal.

GABE

(sotto)

We know these mountains -- they don't. If we can get ahead --

HAL

Can you climb faster than they can shoot?

GABE

You think we'll get a finder's fee after they get their "luggage"?

HAL

Sure. All the bullets we can eat.

GABE

That's not what worries me.

(beat)

Once they've got what they're after -- they'll need a copter to get out of here.

HAL

(realizing)

Maggie.

Gabe nods and keeps moving up. The rest keep pace.

THE WALL

The climbers have reached an easier section of the wall -- the ledge is now two feet wide. Travers takes out the tracer monitor -- it shows the first case is just above them.

Travers and Gabe look up --

AN OVERHANG

juts out of the wall fifty feet above their position. As the rest of the wall above is completely sheer, the case must have landed on top of a ledge. But this isn't easily accessible -- we MOVE DOWN from the overhang to see there are only the smallest of handholds and those are slick with ice. Worse, the wall bulges outward in a curve, making climbing almost impossible.

ON THE LEDGE

Qualen holds his gun on Gabe, and motions up.

QUALEN
(like he's talking
to a dog)
Go on -- fetch it, boy.

GABE
I need the ice axe.

QUALEN
(laughs)
I bet you do.

GABE
How about some tape?

QUALEN
Throw the dog a bone.

Kynette pulls a roll of tape out of Gabe's confiscated pack and throws it to him.

GABE
Crampons, too.

Qualen nods. Kynette throws him the iron spikes. Hal bends and starts to help Gabe fasten them to his boots. Gabe looks up -- this is going to be tough, even for him.

HAL
The snow's the danger...

GABE
What do you mean?

Hal looks up the wall. Gabe follows his gaze --

GABE'S POV - ICE AND SNOW

piled by the ton from the winter storms, lie further above, held back by a great "girder" of ice...

HAL
An avalanche'd carry everything away.

Gabe looks at him -- what the hell is he talking about?

GABE
Later in the spring maybe,
not now...

He takes off his gloves -- that's how small the holds are.

Hal helps him tape up his hands and fingers --

HAL

I don't know -- that ice could
heat up real fast.

Gabe stares at him -- then looks down. Hal is slipping him
one of the flares, sliding it inside the sleeve of his jacket.

HIGH ANGLE - GABE

moves up the wall with some ease at first -- there are
hand-sized handholds, and decent footholds -- but twenty
feet up, there's nothing. To keep going, Gabe has to wedge
his fingers into small cracks, supporting his weight only
by several fingerholds at any given moment.

ON THE LEDGE - TRAVERS AND QUALEN

watch Gabe's slow progress.

GABE ON THE WALL - CLOSE

He is now in one of the worse positions possible for a
free climb. Moving up the underside of the overhang he
is essentially hanging upside down, knifing his fingers
into tiny cracks for support. It's excruciating -- both
in terms of muscular effort, and the abrasions that come
from continually forcing fingers into ice and rock.

Gabe keeps his hold with one hand and slides the other up,
hammering it into a crack wedged with ice -- some of the
ice chips whistle past and down -- finally, Gabe gropes
one hand over the edge, and pulls himself onto

THE OVERHANG

Exhausted, Gabe slumps prone across the top. Something
hard is underneath him -- Gabe recovers and brushes the
snow away, revealing the money case.

It's battered from the fall, but is still holding
together. Gabe manages to force open the trashed locks --
he looks inside the case, and fingers a band of \$100's.

GABE

Jesus.

ON THE LEDGE - TRAVERS AND QUALEN

look up. They can see Gabe has made it -- but they can't
see him, or the case.

TRAVERS
(impatient, shouting)
Lower it down -- now!

ON THE OVERHANG - GABE

looks over at a ledge that moves off from it -- and at the ice and snow above.

ON THE LEDGE - TRAVERS AND QUALEN'S POV

try to look up and locate Gabe.

GABE (O.S.)
(shouting down)
I've got a better idea. Come
up and get it.

With the case, Gabe scrambles up the wall, towards the girder of ice. From Travers and Qualen's point of view, Gabe can hardly be seen -- since the mountain bulges out as it goes up, Gabe's got a slight edge of cover.

TRAVERS
(shouts to Heldon)
Shoot!

Heldon runs along the lower ledge, FIRING up at --

GABE

who has to flatten against the upper ledge -- bullets howl past at twenty per second, SPARKING against the lip of the rock. It's cover, not much, but enough to allow Gabe to reach the ice girder.

He drives the flare into a crack, rips open the tab that triggers it and moves off fast...

HAL

tense, looks up. Suddenly -- a burst of bright orange light as the flare starts to burn.

TRAVERS AND QUALEN

turn and look, perplexed --

WIDER ANGLE ON THE MOUNTAIN - THE PARALLEL LEDGES

The flare is burning bright, melting the ice. Gabe moves across his thin ledge as Heldon runs across his -- Gabe ducks back and has to flatten even more against the wall,

because his ledge is getting smaller --

HELDON

smiles, seeing Gabe's cover is gone -- Heldon's ledge is getting wider, so it's easier for him to fire up. Heldon moves out to the edge --

GABE'S POV DOWN

There's now nothing between Heldon and Gabe -- Heldon takes dead aim --

GABE

looks up, sweating it --

GABE

Come on --

THE ICE AND SNOW

above give way, dropping an avalanche on

GABE

who drops the case and hugs the wall --

THE AVALANCHE - WIDE ON MOUNTAIN

Only now can we see how much snow and ice had been penned up on the mountain top -- tons of ice and snow sweep down the mountainside -- it SHATTERS the case against the wall as it easily swipes a SCREAMING Heldon off the ledge --

TRAVERS, QUALEN AND HAL

are safe at their vantage, but stunned at the sight of the avalanche. Heldon's machine gun FIRES useless as he's swallowed in an explosion of white and a flurry of green as the bills scatter amid the snow --

TRAVERS

stares at thirty-two million dollars worth of snow settling far below. He takes his gun, furious, and fires at

THE UPPER LEDGE

where Gabe was hugging the wall -- it's now blanketed with snow. The burst of gunfire causes the snow to fall away, revealing nothing but stark rock.

TRAVERS

Where'd he get the flare?

HAL

Had it with him, I guess.
Dangerous place, these mountains.

Smack! Travers smashes the butt of his gun into the side of Hal's face, knocking him down...

Ryan and Kynette run their hands over his pockets. They find the other flare... Travers -- real rough -- yanks Hal to his feet...

TRAVERS

Get us out of here.

Hal, bleeding hard from the head, leads the gang back along the ledge.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

Powdery snow is settling from the avalanche. From the cave in the rocks, Brett and Evan crawl out a little timidly.

CRASH! From way above, another small rockslide...

Evan takes a pair of binoculars and looks up --

BINOCULAR POV - FAR UP ON LEDGE

The figures are small, but it's clear that one is pointing a gun at another figure.

EVAN

lowers the binoculars.

EVAN

Brett -- you're not going
to believe this --

BRETT (O.S.)

I believe it.

Evan turns to Brett who has found both Heldon's broken body, and his gun, half buried in snow. Evan walks over...

Brett picks up the gun -- this is more of an adventure than he ever dreamed of.

BRETT

Let's check it out.

Brett and Evan grab their packs, and hurry onto a trail,
as we return to --

THE UPPER LEDGE

where Gabe was. Nothing is stirring. Until a movement
ten feet from where Gabe was hugging the wall.

It's a crevice in the mountain, about two feet wide --
a climber would call this a "chimney" -- and it's packed
with ice and snow. It's also packed with

GABE

his hand gropes out -- and he digs himself out, gasping
and coughing. Coated with snow, he leans against the
wall. Alive.

INT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Maggie is pacing, as Frank is slumped in front of the
radio scanner. Suddenly the radio comes to life.

HAL (O.S.)

-- Come in, Rescue Unit --
over --

Maggie bolts over to the radio before Frank can react.

MAGGIE

Rescue Unit -- what's going
on, Hal? Did Gabe find you?
-- over --

EXT. MOUNTAIN - WOODED AREA - DAY

Qualen presses his gun to Hal's temple

QUALEN

No tricks, no procedural codes,
no personal messages -- just
tell them everything's under
control.

HAL

(keys it)

Maggie -- Gabe found me halfway
up the wall -- we've reached
the top of Comb Bluff. So far,
no sign of anyone. Looks like
a phony call. Over.

INT. RANGER STATION

Maggie looks at Frank --

MAGGIE

Do you want me to come up after
you? Over.

HAL (O.S.)

Negative, Maggie. Winds are too
high. We're going to ride out
the storm here. Over.

Maggie looks out the window. The station's windspeed gauge
is flying around so fast it looks like it might take off.

MAGGIE

Okay. Let me talk to Gabe --
over --

HAL (O.S.)

(hesitates)

You can't. He's checking around
the bluff to see if there's anyone
on the other side. I'll check in
later -- over and out.

Maggie leans back in the chair and looks out at the storm.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - WOODED AREA - TRAVERS AND HAL

TRAVERS

(snatching radio away)

Good. You might live longer
than your friend. Now --

(takes out monitor)

-- what?

Hal checks the monitor -- the next blip is above, almost
straight up. Hal motions to the wooded area ahead.

HAL

The next one's on top of
the peak.

TRAVERS

(suspicious)

It looks like a winding route --
give me something more direct.

HAL

The only faster way up is the
East Face. It's smooth as glass.

Maybe a dozen guys in the world
could do it in good weather. Only
a psycho would try it in a storm.

CLOSE SHOT - GABE'S FACE

is torn in pain. He's freezing and he's making the
toughest climb of his life.

THE EAST WALL - LONG SHOT

This wall is as wide as it is high -- five thousand feet
by five thousand feet -- narrowing to a domed peak at the
summit. Worse, it's checkered with ice. Visible on the
massive wall is a small dot, moving two-thirds of the way
up it. The dot is

GABE

and he barely has the strength to hold on, much less go
up. He holds himself steady with one hand, gets a foothold,
and swings another hand up to SLAM it against the wall.

He's tied a crampon to one hand, but it's as awkward as
it sounds. He moves up only a foot or so -- then pulls
out the crampon, reaches up, and SLAMS it into the wall,
starting the painful process over again.

INT. FBI OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Wright is sitting at his desk, poring over an array of
maps of the Rockies. He looks up as Pete Davis enters.

WRIGHT

Any news?

DAVIS

Not from the FAA -- they're not
receiving any tracer signal
from the flight recorder.

WRIGHT

Is that unusual?

DAVIS

(shrugs)

It happens sometimes.

Wright looks closely at his assistant -- something's
worrying him --

WRIGHT

What is it, Pete?

DAVIS

We're still checking -- but it seems all the evidence in the Qualen case was on board the plane.

WRIGHT

(heart sinking)

What sort of evidence?

DAVIS

Ninety-seven million dollars.

WRIGHT

That never happens! Money like that goes on a Treasury jet. Who authorized it?

DAVIS

Dick Travers.

WRIGHT

He was running escort -- he hasn't got anything to do with evidence.

DAVIS

Exactly.

The two men look at each other...

WRIGHT

(softly)

Jesus...

He seems to slump lower in his seat --

WRIGHT

How much start has he got on us?

DAVIS

Four hours.

WRIGHT

Take a memo -- FBI internal: the officer in charge, every district. I want a photograph and detailed description of Travers. Mark it, "priority", make sure you scramble it...

He interrupts himself, turning to his intercom.

WRIGHT

(into intercom)
Get me Washington, Margaret --
the Director-General.

He turns and looks at Davis --

WRIGHT
He gets away with this -- we're
going to be the laughing stock of
the country...

DAVIS
(shaking his head)
The world, Walt -- the world.

EXT. MOUNTAIN

Hal leads the rest of the gang up a narrow path chiselled
into the side of the mountain. Travers looks at the
monitor, checks their position and motions them forward.

As they clear frame we rack focus to:

EXT. EAST FACE - WIDE SHOT - DUSK

The sheer wall of the East Face rises, seemingly forever,
into the sky above.

Gabe is clearly exhausted and freezing. The wind threatens
to knock him off the wall -- but he forces himself on.

GABE
(teeth chattering)
A steambath.
(spikes himself up)
A steambath -- and a bottle
of whiskey.
(new foothold)
A steambath with a bottle
of Glenlivet. And a fire.

He climbs higher -- into a "chandelier" of hanging
icicles. It's an incredible formation, part of a --

FROZEN WATERFALL

-- a sheer overhang of ice, curling over the top of the
East Face.

Gabe climbs past the icicles onto a sheet of pure ice...

GABE
(new handhold)

A steambath -- with a bottle
of Glenlivet -- and a steak.
(new foothold)
A steak soaked with Glenlivet,
cooking over a steambath on fire.

He slows to a stop -- the ice overhang curves out, away from the wall. The ground is one slip and five thousand feet away as Gabe draws back his gloved fist and -- KA-POW! Punches the sheet of ice. His fist bounces off, his face screw up in pain.

Once again, he tries. SMASH! His fist blasts through the ice. WHOOSH! A jet of water rockets out of the hole and into Gabe's face: beneath the ice-sheet, the waterfall isn't completely frozen.

Gabe clings one-handed to the overhang. He holds his other hand in front of the streaming water and when it's soaked he slams it onto the ice. It freezes there! Allowing him to haul himself up the sheet.

He lets go of the wall with his other hand, runs it through the water and slams it higher up the ice-sheet. The glove holds fast to the ice -- but his hand doesn't.

It slips out of the glove!

Gabe's face shows real terror for the first time. He swings from the ice sheet, held only by one gloved hand, frozen to the ice above his head. His legs kick out, trying to find some support...

HUGE ICICLES break off and fall away...his naked hand stretches for the glove. He can't reach it... his spiked boot smashes into another icicle -- and holds!

SLAM! He digs his other boot in and hauls himself up. His hand slips back into the glove. Stabilized now, he wrenches one gloved hand free, reaches up and finds a hand-hold. The hard part is over. He manages to climb up over the lip of the Ice Overhang.

GABE'S POV --

A small shack with a sign nearby commemorating the "Douglas Expedition -- 1933".

INT. SHACK - DUSK

It's just a small "point of interest" shed for hardy tourists who have hiked up this far -- there's a corny photo stand where you stick your head through a hole,

so your face is on top of a cartoon climber hacking up a mountain.

The door swings open. Gabe enters, ignoring the photo stand, going straight for a glass display case on the wall --

THE GORDON DOUGLAS DISPLAY

has black and white photos of the a square-jawed 1930s climber with his expedition -- more important is what's beneath it. Douglas' original climbing equipment -- a coil of rope, some pitons, a hat, a cloth backpack, small binoculars, a parka, and other odds and ends. Gabe prepares to smash the glass -- and hesitates. Respect.

GABE

Sorry, Gordon -- I promise I'll have it back tomorrow.

Gabe SMASHES the glass.

EXT. THE TRAIL - DUSK

Hal is leading Qualen, Travers and the others upward -- this is a comparatively easy route, but still tiring. The sun goes down beyond a facing, taller mountain. Delmar is huffing and puffing -- a combination of the altitude and too many cookies are getting to him. Hal allows himself a smile at his discomfort.

HAL

Come on -- tourists take this trail.

Qualen pokes Hal with his gun -- he moves on ahead.

EXT. THE SUMMIT - DUSK

It's getting dark fast -- Gabe has scaled a rock formation to get a view of the rest of the summit. He raises the binoculars:

GABE'S POV - SCANNING THE TREELINE

Gabe slowly looks along the trees of the summit -- something catches his eye -- he swing back to look at one tree: broken branches on top!

GABE

climbs down from his rock perch and rushes toward the tree.

EXT. SUMMIT TRAIL - NIGHT

The "expedition" reaches the top -- Hal is in the lead, with Qualen just inches behind. Travers takes out the tracer and pushes to the head of the group.

TRIVERS
Out of the way.

EXT. ELSEWHERE ON THE SUMMIT - GABE

spots a crater of snow and rushes to it. Even though the case is covered by snow, the tracer's blinking red light is visible. Gabe laughs as he digs it out.

NEARBY ON THE SUMMIT - TRAVERS

has his eyes glued to the tracer monitor, which shows the case is nearby.

TRIVERS
(smiling)
This way.

Qualen shines a light -- all of them push through the trees.

TRIVERS

is excited now -- he can't even wait for Qualen's flashlight, he races through the trees, dividing his attention between his surroundings and

THE MONITOR

which shows he's practically on top of the case -- finally

TRIVERS

can see the blinking of the red tracer light ahead through the branches.

TRIVERS
(calling behind)
Over here!

Travers shoves his way through the branches, and heads for the light -- but something's wrong -- Qualen comes up behind Travers and shines the light on

A SNOWMAN --

hastily constructed -- stands with a five-pebble smile, as well as Douglas' cap. The tracer, still blinking, is its nose. The case is propped up against it. Travers

runs to the case and opens it: empty -- except for a single \$20 bill. Travers picks it up -- scrawled on the margin is, "LET'S TRADE."

TRAVERS
(incredulous)
He's alive!

QUALEN
This plan of yours keeps getting
better --
(to the others)
He can't be far away...

Qualen, Kynette, Delmar and Kristel fan out, each with a flashlight and a gun. Ryan straps on the nightfinder goggles.

ELSEWHERE ON THE SUMMIT - GABE

watches the chaos from an elevated vantage point -- he can see the flashlight beams, all headed in the wrong direction. But he doesn't see

RYAN - "NIGHTFINDER" POV

With these goggles, light is amplified a thousandfold -- this isn't one of those infra-red, thermo-blob jobs -- it looks more like day for night photography. Even starlight is enough for Ryan to run easily through the thick woods -- and he's going in the right direction.

GABE

begins climbing down to level ground so he can circle closer to where Travers is holding Hal.

"NIGHTFINDER" POV - RYAN

looks up, and sees Gabe climbing down the small rock, twenty yards distant --

Ryan smiles, looking macabre under the goggles, and opens fire

GABE

reacts as the bullets impact inches over his head -- he jumps the last ten feet and is running even as he hits the ground. More bullets hit where Gabe was a split second ago --

Ryan chases Gabe, easily maneuvering through the trees --

Gabe runs, dodging Ryan's fusillades. Gabe knows this

territory, but to him, it's still pitch dark -- he stumbles, and rams against trees --

ELSEWHERE ON THE SUMMIT

Kristel, Qualen and Kynette, having heard the gunshots, turn and run toward them.

RYAN

is closing the gap, Gabe's bright form just ahead -- Gabe bursts out of the trees and finds all that's beneath him is

GABE'S POV

-- a sudden, sloping plunge down a field of ice. No escape here -- anything that goes down this slide is going all the way to the ground far below.

A fresh burst of bullets forces Gabe to dive behind a boulder -- the sole source of cover.

RYAN

emerges from the woods. He can see there is nowhere for Gabe to have gone -- except behind the boulder. He walks toward it as if he had all the time in the world...

Gabe fumbles in his backpack and pulls out something from the Douglas exhibit -- an ancient flare that looks like a can of sterno. He pulls out his lighter and tries to light it -- finally it catches. As it ignites Gabe heaves it over the boulder at Ryan --

RYAN - "NIGHTFINDER" POV - THE FLARE

arcs over the boulder to fully ignite, turning everything into a blinding, agonizing flash of white --

RYAN

SCREAMS, blinded. As he tries to rip the goggles off --

Gabe bolts out from behind the boulder and rushes him -- Ryan shoots blind, fanning out in a semi-circle as he gets the goggles off --

Gabe charges straight for Ryan, just getting to him before the machine gun field of fire can intersect his path. He tackles him, both men falling to the ground --

The machine gun CLATTERS away, landing on the edge of the

ice, just out of reach -- Ryan, recovers from the blinding flash, pulls an ice axe out of a pack sheath and swings it at Gabe. Gabe rolls away and gets to the machine gun, grabbing it -- But Ryan dives for Gabe, slamming into him -- the force of it knocks the machine gun loose -- it skips down the ice slope. The momentum of Ryan's hit also carries both Gabe and Ryan over the edge, onto --

THE ICE SLOPE

Gabe and Ryan both start sliding down, Ryan face first on his stomach, Gabe head first and on his back -- both are in immediate agony, because

CLOSE ON THE ICE

-- it's covered with razor sharp ridges, both large and small, that slice through clothing and shred skin.

GABE'S UPSIDE-DOWN POV - THE ICE FIELD

The edge and a 5,000 foot drop are a hundred yards away --

GABE AND RYAN SLIDING

Ryan flails and SCREAMS as the ice gashes him from underneath -- Gabe manages to flip over on top of Ryan and rides him down like a bobsled --

Gabe tries to maintain his perch on Ryan, who is SCREAMING and not yet used to the idea of being a human sled. Gabe frantically reaches behind to get the ice axe, trailing from a wrist strap, but Ryan's arm is thrashing away, threatening to toss off the axe --

ON SUMMIT

Qualen, Kristel and Kynette arrive at the lip -- Qualen snatches up the nightfinder goggles and sees --

QUALEN'S "NIGHTFINDER" POV

Gabe and Ryan, accelerating, have almost reached the edge -- Gabe grabs the ice axe, pulling it off Ryan's wrist -- just as they reach the precipice edge. Gabe swings it toward the ice with everything he's got. The axe's scythe-like blade catches on the ice, right at the lip of the precipice -- Gabe is wrenched to a painful halt, suspended over the drop, as what's left of Ryan, still SCREAMING, shoots over the edge -- Gabe unhooks the axe and gets another handhold. He climbs down the ice to a narrow ledge and disappears into the darkness.

QUALEN, KRISTEL AND KYNETTE

look down -- Ryan's death scream still echoing. Kynette shines his flashlight below, illuminating the long, frozen streak of blood on the ice.

QUALEN

There goes another \$30 million.
It's not the money that matters,
it's the principle --
I thought these Rangers were
supposed to help people.

EXT. MOUNTAIN LEDGE - NIGHT

Gabe confidently drops down onto another, larger ledge that juts out from the wall -- obviously familiar territory for him. The ledge leads to a small, enclosed cave. Gabe takes out his penlight and shines it -- but the light looks dim: the batteries are low. Gabe pockets it, flicks his lighter and goes in --

THE CAVE

in the flickering light, we can see that no one has been in here for a while -- snow, dust, rocks -- but the weathered "Chez Walker" sign identifies this as Gabe and Maggie's hangout.

Gabe smiles with the memories -- then his face brightens with one memory in particular. He rushes to a corner of the cave and opens a rock-lid to a hiding place.

GABE

Please still be there -- please --

He reaches in the stash and finds an ancient half-full pint of Jack Daniels. The first thing to go right all day. Gabe uncaps it and gratefully gulps down a double shot. Peace, at last. He smiles and leans against the wall, closing his eyes.

INT./EXT. DOUGLAS TOURIST SHACK - NIGHT

Qualen, Travers and the team have paused here for a meal -- Kristel tries to get some candy out of a vending machine that's obviously empty. Kynette saws at some camp food with a distinctive knife -- the handle is a set of brass knuckles. It's only Delmar though who is going to have a real meal -- he's spreading the food he salvaged from the plane and Gabe's pack out on a picnic table: packets of nuts, tiny wedges of cheese, mini-packs of crackers, candy bars, a stack of miniature bottles of liquor.

Travers points Hal towards a sketchy "YOU ARE HERE" map of

the mountain range and hands him the tracer monitor.

TRAVERS

Still interested in living?

Hal matches the monitor to the map...

HAL

(pointing to map)

It's up here. Somewhere on
The Tower.

TRAVERS

How far?

Hal walks to the door. The great bulk of The Tower --
visible in the moonlight -- rises above them...

HAL

There's a way to cross over
to the top -- it'll take about
half a day.

TRAVERS

What's it like -- compared to
where we've been?

HAL

(laughing)

That was a cross-country walk. This
is a mountain. People die on it --
(turns; walks back
inside hut)
-- I just hope tomorrow's no exception.

INT. THE CAVE - CLOSE ON GABE

We can see from the flickering shadows that a small fire
is now burning in the cave -- we pull back to see

THE FIRE

which is built out of bundles of \$100 bills. It's safe
to say that something like \$500,000 is going up in smoke,
and the fire's dying down. Gabe takes a fresh bundle of
notes out of the pack he "borrowed" from the Douglas
exhibit and tosses them on the flames...

EXT. WIDE MOUNTAIN VIEW - DAWN

The first rays of the sun poke through the mountains.
The storm seems to be letting up.

INT. RANGER STATION

Frank is snoring, slumped over the radio. Maggie obviously hasn't slept -- her attention is fixed out the window, on the windspeed gauge: the winds are slowing.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - DAY

Travers and Hal are in the lead -- the expedition moving further ahead on the mountain top.

ELSEWHERE ON THE MOUNTAIN - BINOCULAR POV

From about fifty yards off, someone is watching --

BRETT (O.S.)
They're heading toward The Tower.

BRETT AND EVAN

are crouched in the woods. Brett, gun in hand, has no idea how far out of his league he is:

BRETT
I'll cut around this side, and
wind up in front. You come up
behind them -- quietly. And
we've got 'em.

EVAN
Brett -- they've got five guns --

BRETT
And you can collect them all
after I get the drop on 'em.
Let's get moving.

Brett, automatic held high, circles off through the woods. Evan reluctantly lopez off toward his assignment.

MOUNTAIN TOP - BRETT

races quietly through the woods in a parallel path with Hal, who's guiding the gang. Brett circles around ahead of them, waiting. Before he can jump out --

HAL'S POV - ON BRETT

ahead in the trees and rocks.

Hal makes eye contact with Brett, realizes what he's doing, and shakes his head as violently as he dares -- no, don't --

Brett gives Hal a confident wink in response, then pounces in front of the gang, gun held high.

BRETT
End of the line!

Travers, Delmar, Kristel and Kynette are startled, but don't immediately comply.

QUALEN
"End of the line" -- that's classic.

Qualen catches Delmar's eye -- a knowing look, an acknowledgement between them.

BRETT
(nervous now)
Drop the guns!

Qualen smiles and steps closer to Brett. The others walk up in front of Hal.

QUALEN
I'm going to give you a
three-count to figure out
how to turn the safety off.

Brett doesn't even look down -- he responds by FIRING a short burst over Qualen's head.

BRETT
Nice try. I've got one of
these at home. Now drop 'em.

All drop their guns -- Brett, unfortunately, realizes at the same time we do --

HAL
(shouting)
Behind you!

Too late -- Brett can only twist around half way before --

DELMAR

mows down Brett with his machine gun, riddling him with at least thirty rounds at close range. Brett falls dead into the snow. Qualen walks up to Brett's corpse, blood streaming in the reddening snow, and kicks it over.

BELOW ON THE WALLSIDE

Gabe -- moving along the rock wall -- reacts to the sound of

the gun-fire. But there's nothing he can do, just move ahead -- the wall is relatively sheer, but there are shelves cut in that make progress easier. He goes as fast as he can.

QUALEN AND TRAVERS

and the others pick up their guns.

TRAVERS
(turns to Hal)
Time to move on --

But Hal is gone -- he's escaped in the confusion.

IN THE WOODS - HAL

runs like his ass is on fire and practically collides with Evan, who is more panicked than ever.

EVAN
What do we do --

HAL
You came up here to jump the
Spur --
(pulls Evan's chute
out of his pack)
Now's the time to do it.

EVAN
(panicked)
But --

HAL
(quick)
Listen -- they don't know you're
up here -- I'll draw their fire.
Make the jump and get help.

Evan snatches the parachute and runs. Hal, wasting no time, goes in the opposite direction, deliberately making as much noise as he can.

THE GANG

runs into the woods -- Travers, hearing Hal's noisy retreat, leads Kristel and Delmar in pursuit.

Kynette sees Qualen stop -- he's spotted Evan's footprints in the snow, going the other way.

QUALEN AND KYNETTE

take off, fast as they can, following the footprints...

EVAN

tries to pull on the chute and run at the same time -- it's not easy, but he succeeds in closing the first of the three buckles...

TRAVERS AND KRISTEL

overtake Hal in a clearing. Travers fires over his head. Hal, caught again, freezes in his tracks.

EVAN

is still up and running, weaving through the trees, getting the second buckle closed. He sees the edge, just ahead, and puts on an extra burst of speed...

THE SPUR

is a rock formation that juts off like a diving board. Evan runs like hell down it --

QUALEN AND KYNETTE

emerge from out of the trees. They see Evan launching himself down the Spur... Qualen raises his pistol. Kynette lifts his rifle. Before they can shoot --

Evan dives off the edge and closes the third buckle --

GABE

is several hundred feet below -- looking up. He thinks Evan has made it -- but

ON THE SPUR EDGE - QUALEN

grabs the rifle from Kynette and throws himself down...

EVAN

is falling, falling...

GABE - WATCHING

GABE

Don't pull it --
wait 'til you're out of range.

EVAN

pulls the D-ring -- the parachute billows open, inflating --

QUALEN

sights down the rifle.

KYNETTE

Like shooting fish in a bucket.

QUALEN

The canopy's easy. It's the
guide-lines that are hard...

Bang! He fires...

CLOSE ON THE PARACHUTE

Perfect! One of the guide-lines parts...

EVAN

-- exhilaration turns to panic as he frantically tries
to control the distorted chute. Bang! Bang! Two more
guide-lines part...

QUALEN

adjusts his aim slightly. Evan is now -- literally --
hanging by a couple of threads. The chute ripples and
billows, but still it holds... Bang!

EVAN

hand gripped tight around one of the remaining guide-
lines. Suddenly the rope parts as the bullet shreds it.
He screams -- looking up: the whole chute caves in!

GABE ON THE LEDGE

is powerless to do anything but watch --

EVAN

falls the long, full five thousand feet -- desperately,
uselessly, pulling in the lines of the chute until he's
tangled in it like a shroud --

GABE

turns away -- he can't watch Evan hit bottom. He looks
up with absolute hate at

QUALEN

who doesn't see Gabe -- he's handing the rifle back to Kynette.

QUALEN

It could catch on -- it's much more fun than trap and skeet.

Hal is led over to the Spur, with the other gang members behind him. Hal looks as angry as Gabe.

TRAVERS

Was that Walker?

QUALEN

(smiling)
No such luck.

ON THE LEDGE BELOW - CLOSE ON GABE

who is still shaking with fury.

LONG SHOT OF MOUNTAIN

On top, Hal reluctantly leads the gang away -- below, we can see Gabe start out on a parallel path along the ledges.

EXT. RANGER STATION - HELIPAD - DAY

Winds or not, Maggie is untying the helicopter's rotor from the bolts on the helipad. Frank, who has obviously just awakened, steps out of the station.

FRANK

Maggie?

MAGGIE

I'm going to go nuts if I sit here one more hour.

FRANK

Still a little breezy --

She gets into the helicopter and starts the rotor.

MAGGIE

(over engine's whine)
You coming?

Frank hesitates -- then climbs in the other side. The helicopter lifts off and heads toward the mountain range.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

Hal leads the gang through a buttress -- a large, stark boulder formation -- that lays between the mountain they've just come from, and the nearest mountain to it: The Tower.

Hal and the rest of the expedition are totally exposed as they climb in single file up to the top. The terrain is flat enough that the climb amounts to an uphill run on all fours.

CLOSER ON HAL AND GANG

Hal leads the gang forward -- and keeps casting anxious glances back at them. And beyond them.

TRAVERS

Forget it. He's smart,
not invisible.

Travers is right. There's absolutely no way Gabe can come up behind them without being seen.

LOWER DOWN ON BLUFF

where the bluff meets a tree-lined plain. Gabe, in hiding, watches Hal and the others go up. He knows he can't follow them without being seen. But, moving closer to the bluff's base, he shoves through a screen of brush to the beginning of

THE CRACK

A crevice runs the entire length and breath of the bluff.

Gabe pulls out his ancient binoculars, and scans the crack.

GABE'S POV - THE CRACK

Picture a mine shaft designed by a madman. The crack moves upward, then erratically to the side, then straight up again. The width of the crack is uneven, ranging from six inches to six feet. And that's just how it looks on the outside.

Gabe turns the binoculars to the inside of the crack. It looks as if the crack goes all the way through the bluff. On this route, Gabe can tunnel through the mountain instead of going up the side.

Gabe puts away the binoculars and wedges himself into the crack, starting the long process of going up -- and

through -- the mountain.

EXT. TOP OF THE BLUFF - DAY

A vista. From this point, you can see everything else in the mountain range. The only thing that's taller is The Tower. Between the two mountains lies a drop of a mere four thousand feet.

TRAVERS

I thought you said there was
a way across.

HAL

There is...

Hal points further down -- the sides of the two mountains converge. At one point, they're only about fifteen feet apart -- it's here that a rope and timber bridge spans the drop.

Travers pokes the gun in Hal's neck.

TRAVERS

Go.

Hal leads them off the lip of the mountain -- down a steep two-hundred yard trail toward the bridge.

INT. THE CRACK - CLOSE ON GABE'S FACE

Gabe is sweating, straining in the dark, climbing up -- there's about two inches of clearance between his chest and the rock, and about the same between his back and the rock. There is no light inside -- not even above, because the crack doesn't go straight, it zig-zags up. Gabe is well within the mountain rock. Nothing could be closer to being buried alive.

Gabe snakes through a spot where the crack goes straight up -- he takes out his penlight and turns it on --

GABE'S POV

scores of bats hang on the wall, surrounding him, up and down, left and right --

GABE'S FACE

is somewhere between nausea and the realization that he's made a big mistake.

GABE

I didn't need to see that.

Gabe cuts the light and slithers up through the dark.

EXT. RESCUE HELICOPTER - DAY

Maggie and Frank are flying low and fast -- over treetops and snow -- both are intently staring down -- their view is nothing but empty wilderness. A BUZZER goes off -- Frank looks at an infra-red screen mounted on the dash --

FRANK

Heat scope! They're under
the trees --

Maggie sends the copter into a tight roll, bringing it over a clearing --

EXT. WOODS

The copter touches down. Maggie is out of it before the rotor has stopped turning.

MAGGIE

Gabe! Hal!

She runs into the trees, headlong into -- a pack of wolves tearing at a body. They turn and SNARL at Maggie -- but Frank, close behind, pulls a gun from a holster.

He aims high and FIRES twice to scare the pack -- the wolves run off. Frank tries to hold Maggie back, but she goes ahead anyway, worried it might be Gabe --

TIGHT ON MAGGIE

as she looks at the body -- a mess of broken bones wrapped in the tangled shroud of the parachute.

MAGGIE

It's Evan.
(she examines chute)
Parachute failed...

FRANK

(not unkindly)
Damn fool. Why would anybody
try that in the middle of a storm?

MAGGIE

(standing)
Why would anybody try it at all?

INT. BLUFF CRACK

Gabe has a quick climbing rhythm now -- he's not looking up, because he can't see anything anyway. This leads to --

Gabe's head crashes against a new part of the crack, as the passage thins out. He gropes up. The passage narrows to the point that he can't get through it.

He stops and uses his penlight to look for a way out -- the dim light reveals he can only move to the side. Exasperated, he puts the light in his mouth and moves on. He looks up to see if the crack has gotten wider. It hasn't.

Mumbling something phonetically near "motherfucker" around the flashlight, he aims it up -- no opening larger than a mail slot. Still cursing, still looking up, still moving to the side, he gets the opening he wants, but not where he wants it --

The crack suddenly, drastically widens as he moves to the side -- since he's been bracing his back against the wall, Gabe falls out of control, twisting around, face down --

Gabe bounces down the walls for several yards and catches himself by bracing his arms and legs against the crack. As he brakes himself the penlight falls out of his mouth and tumbles down, ping-ponging from one side of the crack to the other -- even after the light is gone, we can still hear it clattering against the walls.

EXT. BLUFF BASE

The copter -- Evan's covered body attached to a "cradle" on the skid -- touches down. Frank is flying the copter, but doesn't turn it off -- Maggie jumps out.

FRANK

Maggie -- I'm not happy about this --

She doesn't give him a chance to finish --

MAGGIE

Get going, Frank. Call the Sheriff's office and put together a local team. Let's get some back-up out here. I'll call you when I've found Brett. Or Hal. Or Gabe. Or anybody.

Maggie grabs her pack, rope and other equipment and runs off into the snow. Frank lifts off.

EXT. BRIDGE

The bridge, narrow and dilapidated, is only wide enough for one person at a time. Hal is half way across, swaying above the massive drop, the wind whistling through the chasm...

HAL'S POV

Kristel waits on the other side of the bridge, a gun trained on him...

HAL

turns and looks back the way he's come at Qualen who has a gun pointed at him. He turns to Kynette --

QUALEN

Smoky should be coming up by
now -- go back and kill him.

INT. BUTTRESS CRACK

Gabe is face down, arms and legs pressing against the five-foot gap of the tunnel walls. Carefully, he takes one hand off the wall, gets out his lighter with the other, and ignites it for a look --

GABE'S POV - UPWARD

Just as the crack has widened below him -- it's wider above him. More important, it slants at an easy enough angle to allow him to walk up. If only he can get up there.

GABE

snaps the lighter shut, and braces himself with one leg and one arm -- then moves the other leg and arm up, until he has his hands on the curved edge where the crack shakes into a sideways passage. But there are no handholds that will allow Gabe to get a grip and simply swing over and climb up.

GABE

(winded)

I've never met a mountain I
didn't like -- until now.

OVERHEAD ANGLE - THE CRACK

Gabe takes a deep breath, readies himself, and shoves himself away from the wall with his arms, pushes himself into a squat against the opposite wall, hanging for a

second with no support at all, then springs from that wall into the diagonal passage. Gabe lands hard but flat on the passage and starts backsliding, but he digs in with his boots and his hands -- and starts heading up.

EXT. BUTTRESS TOP

Kynette lies flat, and looks down --

KYNETTE'S POV - ON THE BUTTRESS SIDE

Maggie is climbing up, but she's still some way down -- the hood of her parka pulled over her head. All Kynette can see is a figure moving up.

Kynette smiles and hits his headset radio.

KYNETTE
(into radio)
He's on his way up.

Kynette flattens out to wait -- Maggie is coming up fast.

INT. MOUNTAIN CRACK

Gabe moves up through the diagonal section -- the crack is starting to go directly upward. Gabe looks up --

GABE'S POV - TOP OF THE CRACK

It's coated with snow, but not too much -- Gabe can faintly make out light shining through.

Using the rope and pitons he borrowed from the Douglas exhibit, Gabe starts up the easy segment, his back braced against one wall...

EXT. BUTTRESS SIDE

Maggie, tired, gets near the top and rests for a moment, her arms on the edge --

Kynette looms over her, his gun aimed down... she looks up -- Kynette reacts with surprise -- he thought it was Gabe -- but he takes it in stride.

KYNETTE
Rotten weather for a climb, huh?

Maggie stares up, frozen -- whatever she was expecting, it wasn't this.

KYNETTE

(aims barrel)
You know a man named Gabe Walker?

MAGGIE
Yes.
(breathless, scared)
Where is he?

KYNETTE
You don't know? Too bad.
That was question number two.
(lowers barrel)
Thanks for your time.

As Kynette tightens his finger around the trigger --

Gabe appears -- running towards Kynette's back. He kicks him over the edge -- Kynette goes flying over Maggie, his shots going wild -- but he catches himself on the rock, coming to a painful halt after skidding down ten feet -- Gabe yanks Maggie to her feet and onto the top. She looks at him -- his clothes are slashed, he's covered with cuts, and coated with slime and dirt from the crack. Gabe grabs her hand and runs.

Qualen appears at the opposite edge -- he fires an automatic BURST at Gabe and Maggie.

MAGGIE
What the hell? --

GABE
I'll explain when someone
isn't shooting.

He jumps on a spot in the snow over the crack, caving it in, falling two feet into --

THE CRACK - MAGGIE'S POV

Gabe is hanging from the rope he anchored to a piton on the edge of the rock.

GABE
Come on!

He rappels down the rope into the darkness. Kynette woozy but recovered, has climbed up -- he runs toward the opening, FIRING --

Maggie drops into the safety of the crack and rappels down. She reaches rope's end thirty feet down, as the vertical passage again becomes diagonal. Gabe is waiting

as Kynette reaches the edge of the crack and FIRES down at --

Gabe and Maggie -- bullets RICOCHET all over -- Gabe throws himself over Maggie, shielding her. Kynette, seeing the rope, bends down to climb after them -- Gabe and Maggie are further down -- he reaches up and tugs gently on the rope twice --

Kynette reaches for the rope which is tied in a standard climber's slipknot. It comes undone with a final tug. As it falls Kynette grabs hold of the end -- Gabe feels the rope go taut -- he yanks down hard -- Qualen arrives in time to see --

Kynette getting more pull than he counted on, takes a head-first fall into the crack. He disappears with a scream. Gabe watches as Kynette bounces past. The rope goes slack in his hand as Kynette falls below.

Up above, Qualen FIRES a burst straight down into the crack -- Gabe and Maggie, moving laterally through the crack -- flatten themselves against the walls. The bullets ricochet past...

The crack narrows from five to three feet. Gabe edges Maggie down into it and along a ledge moving to the side. Qualen is still at the edge of the crack. He's definitely not climbing down after them. Instead, he kneels down on the edge and empties out his pack...

IN THE CRACK - GABE AND MAGGIE

find a comparative point of comfort -- a toe-sized ledge. Maggie is moving ahead of Gabe.

GABE
(exhausted)
I need to... rest.

He braces himself against the wall.

GABE
(looks at Maggie)
I'm glad to see you -- but
Christ, I wish you hadn't come.

EXT. BRIDGE - TOWER SIDE - DAY

Qualen scrambles across the rope and timber bridge to where Hal, Travers and Kristel are waiting.

QUALEN
He's still alive...

Travers uses Hal's axe to take a couple of heavy swings at the bolts which tie the bridge to the rock. Qualen grabs his arm before he can take a third swing.

QUALEN
(looking at watch)
For another four minutes.

IN THE CRACK - GABE AND MAGGIE

Gabe is still catching his breath.

MAGGIE
It hurts just to look at you.

GABE
I've felt better. Do you still
have your radio?

MAGGIE
It's not going to work in here.

GABE
Let's give it a try.

EXT. TOWER FACE - DAY

Hal is leading the expedition upward along a ledge -- the radio, in Travers' pack, comes to life.

GABE (O.S.)
(over radio)
-- Come in, Rescue One --

INT. RESCUE STATION

The radio is reading Gabe loud, if not entirely clear -- but we can see out the window that Frank is now between radios, carefully hauling Evan's body from the helicopter to the station on a collapsible gurney. No one else is in the station.

GABE (O.S.)
(over radio, broken up)
-- Come in, Frank --

INT. BUTTRESS CRACK

GABE
Frank, pick up the goddamn radio --
(keys it)
-- Come in, Rescue Unit --

TOP OF BUTTRESS

Push in on a HOLE punched in the snow along the crack's top, near the edge. Shoved inside is a packet of plastique -- the detonator LED races down -- 3:01 -- 3:00 -- 2:59 --

EXT. TOWER FACE

Qualen gestures toward the mountain with the radio --

QUALEN

Hope you like the seats -- any closer and we'd be on the stage.

(smiling to Hal)

That charge is primed to go off right over his head.

Hal explodes! He throws himself at Qualen, grabbing for the radio -- Qualen lets him take it!

QUALEN

Why not? There's nothing he can do -- he might as well feel the moment.

HAL

(keying it)

Gabe, there's a bomb --
get the fuck out!

Delmar puts a gun to Hal's head. Qualen takes the radio back --

EXT. RESCUE STATION - DAY

Frank, wheeling the gurney outside, is away from the radio --

GABE (O.S.)

(over radio)

-- Hal -- where are you --

INSIDE THE CRACK

QUALEN (O.S.)

(over radio)

With us, Mr. Walker -- waiting for your burial. Over -- and out.

Gabe leads Maggie horizontally through the crack, fast and furious --

MAGGIE

(pointing)
Up that way -- there's an opening --

GABE
If it blows before we can get
up, the whole damn crevice'll
slam shut. The fastest way is
through the side.

They scrambles along a single ledge. The crack narrows --
Gabe straddles it, putting his feet on the opposite edge
to walk faster.

A hand grabs one of Gabe's ankles from below and yanks
him down -- he drops the radio as he tumbles, braking
himself in front of Kynette -- bruised and bloody from
the earlier fall.

KYNETTE
Miss me?

He smashes Gabe's face with a brass-knuckled punch --
Gabe falls back, grabbing at the walls to stop himself
from going all the way down -- Kynette opens his knife,
re-laces his fingers into its brass-knuckle handle...

EXT. RESCUE STATION - DAY

Frank -- who completely missed the radio exchanges --
climbs into the helicopter and takes off.

IN THE CRACK - MAGGIE

can only look down helplessly as Kynette slashes at Gabe
with his knife, forcing Gabe to back up. The crack is
getting wider.

Gabe's in a bad position -- he has to spread his feet out
wider as he backs up. He throws a punch at Kynette's
stomach, but there's no power to it. Kynette slams Gabe
with a knuckle-duster punch -- Gabe flies back several feet,
managing to straddle the crack walls, now four feet apart.
Kynette moves in for the kill! He swings down with the
knife -- but Gabe grabs his knife hand and, adding his own
force to the swing, imbeds the knife to the hilt in the rock
wall, trapping Kynette's hand in the brass-knuckle handle.

Now Gabe gets a little payback -- three solid punches to
Kynette's face -- then he climbs up his pinned opponent,
stepping on Kynette's stuck hand as if it were a piton.

TOWER FACE

Everyone is staring at the wall. Qualen looks at his watch: the second hand sweeps around...

HAL

You fucked up, Qualen -- you left him enough time to get out.

QUALEN

Why -- you think he's gonna come out the side of that tunnel?

(smiling)

I rather thought he would too -- with a little coaxing.

(lowers his voice --
a stage whisper)

That's why I put the charge there.

Hal realizes what Qualen has done -- by letting him give the warning, Gabe is now heading toward the bomb, not away from it.

QUALEN

(claps Hal on the back)

I want to thank you -- I couldn't have killed him without you.

GABE AND MAGGIE - ON THE WALL

Gabe takes a piton and hammer from his belt and hands it to Maggie, along with the rope.

GABE

Make it firm!

Maggie hammers the piton into the rock as Gabe takes the binoculars up to the top edge of the wall.

GABE'S POV - UP THE WALL

He swings the binoculars up to the top edge of the wall. He racks focus and sees -- the bomb! The LED counts down, but it's partly obscured. All Gabe can see is the seconds, not the minutes, that remain -- :42 -- :41 --

GABE (O.S.)

It's right over us!

He rapidly scans the rock below. All smooth. Until -- he swings the binoculars back -- there's a lip ninety feet below, leading into the wall. A cave.

GABE (O.S.)

Drop the rope!

Gabe turns back to Maggie. She lets the length of rope drop: it's thirty feet long. Not even almost long enough to get to the shelter. Gabe leans against the crack wall, drained. Now what?

INT. CRACK

Kynette having recovered from Gabe's pounding, struggles with the knife and pulls it out -- he heads out of the crack, murder in his eyes --

HELICOPTER - MOVING OVER MOUNTAINS

Frank is in the air, heading out toward the range, frantically working the radio.

FRANK

Maggie -- come in, Maggie,
this is Rescue One --

TOWER FACE

Qualen smiles.

QUALEN

Haven't I always said you can
rely on the Ranger Service?
Here comes our ride out of here.
(hands Kristel radio)
Time to play dead.

Travers grabs Hal -- they all scramble out of sight.

INSERT - THE BOMB

We now see what Gabe couldn't -- the timer has about two minutes left -- 1:59 -- 1:58 --

GABE AND MAGGIE - AT THE CRACK'S EDGE

Gabe looks completely defeated: no options left.

GABE

Sorry, Maggie -- sorry you
got into this.

They fuse together in a tight embrace -- a final embrace. But Gabe opens his eyes as the rope, still in Maggie's hand, brushes his cheek. The end is frayed. His eyes light up. He breaks off the embrace, snatches the rope from her and then pulls at the end, furiously unravelling it.

EXT. HELICOPTER - FLYING OVER THE MOUNTAINS

Frank is practically at the buttress and the facing Tower.

FRANK
(over radio)
Come in, Maggie, over --

KRISTEL (O.S.)
(over radio; "weak")
-- please -- help --

Frank recognizes the voice from the "distress call".

FRANK
Where are you -- over --

An aerial flare fires up, leaving a clear marker.

FRANK
Two minutes, ma'am -- I'm on
my way.

GABE AND MAGGIE - AT THE CRACK'S EDGE

Gabe is still unravelling the rope fiber -- it's three different strands wound together.

GABE
(hands Maggie rope)
Tie these together. Tight.

MAGGIE
(realizing)
Are you out of your mind --

GABE
It's from the Gordon exhibit.
They way guys climbed then,
they'd tie on three at a time --

MAGGIE
Gabe -- it's sixty years old!

GABE
(mock serious)
I know -- you can't get rope
like this today. They made
things better then -- believe me.

Gabe ties the rope to the piton -- Maggie works on the third connecting knot.

MAGGIE
(dazed)
Will it hold?

GABE
How the hell do I know?

He takes the line from her and lets it drop. Ninety feet of what looks like twine.

Maggie clearly not convinced -- but there's no choice. She starts the rappel down, Gabe close behind.

INSERT - THE BOMB

is ready to blow -- 0:42 -- 0:41 --

MAGGIE AND GABE - RAPPELLING DOWN

have to swing over to the side about fifteen feet to get to the cave. It means pendulum type swings that put even more pressure on the rope. Worse yet --

KYNETTE

emerges from the crack, knife poised to cut the rope --

MAGGIE AND GABE - RAPPELLING

swing down lower -- twenty feet to the cave, four thousand to the ground --

INSERT - THE BOMB

-- 0:34 -- 0:33 --

MAGGIE AND GABE - RAPPELLING

They reach the end of the rope -- six feet above the cave and fifteen feet away laterally.

GABE
(shouting)
Swing towards it -- and drop!

They start the swing -- as they get over the cave's lip --

Kynette grabs the rope and cuts it -- Maggie and Gabe fall onto the cave's narrow lip. Gabe lands -- sprawled on the rock -- but Maggie tumbles and slides... over the edge! Reaching up, she drops! Gabe's hand flashes out -- their hands catch. He's got a tenuous grip on her upper

arm... Maggie swings like a pendulum over the abyss, with each swing -- her hand slips further down Gabe's arm... their grip slides to wrist level. Gabe's hand digs into Maggie's glove and holds...

FLASHBACK - GABE'S POV

Sarah's hand slides out of her glove. She falls -- her eyes still locked on

GABE

his grip on Maggie's hand unconsciously relaxes -- but his eyes jolt open -- his other hand flashes out, grabbing hold of her, hauling her up...

THE BOMB -- 0:04 -- 0:03 --

GABE AND MAGGIE

throw themselves across the cave's narrow lip --

ABOVE ON THE WALL

the bomb detonates, raining debris, triggering a massive rock slide.

KYNETTE

turns -- a storm of rock sweeps him to his death...

MAGGIE AND GABE

lunge into the small cave as the rockslide tumbles past. Safe. For now.

THE HELICOPTER - OVER THE TOWER

Frank reacts to the explosion --

FRANK

What the hell --

But he sees Kristel in a clearing, face down in the snow --

EXT. CLEARING

Delmar, in hiding, watches as the 'copter lands next to her...

Frank, carrying a first aid kit, swings out of the 'copter and hurries to her side. He turns her over and breaks a capsule under her nose. She "wakes up" with a start and

looks "terrified".

KRISTEL

What -- who are --

FRANK

Don't worry...

Kristel sees the snap is off Frank's holster -- she grabs it, spins it around, and pulls the trigger. CLICK.

Frank grabs her wrist with a move faster than you'd expect from him, and he yanks the pistol back.

FRANK

Jailhouse load. First chamber's empty --
(aims gun)
-- the rest aren't.

Delmar steps out of hiding, firing his automatic --

The fusillade blasts into Frank, hurling him against the pilot side door of the 'copter. Delmar keeps firing -- Frank staggers away, dying as the ruined door falls slowly to the ground. Silence.

INT. CAVE - GABE AND MAGGIE

Dust from the rockslide drifts past the cave opening, but the worst is over. Gabe rolls Maggie over carefully.

MAGGIE

What's going on?

GABE

They were smart enough to steal a fortune, but dumb enough to drop it all over the range. They've got Hal as a bird dog -- -- and they're heading for the rest of it.

MAGGIE

Where?

GABE

Close to the lake.
(stiffly gets up)
I can get there first -- all I have to do is make it to the Bitker ladder --

MAGGIE

"All?" Jesus, Gabe --
(beat)
I'm going with you.

GABE
No way. You're going back
down -- get to the station or
find some help.

MAGGIE
I'm as good a climber as you
are. Right now, I'm definitely
in better shape.

Maggie stares him down. Guess who won all the arguments
when they were together? A beat -- then Gabe moves out of
the cave, favoring one foot.

GABE
The second you slow me down,
I'm leaving --
(slips on sore leg,
Maggie catches him)
-- I'm leaving you behind.
Understood?

MAGGIE
(helping him out)
Anything you say, Gabe.

EXT. HELICOPTER - DAY

The gauges and panel lights in the helicopter cockpit
spring to life. Pull back to reveal Kristel sitting in
the pilot's seat. Travers is watching her...

TRAVERS
You can fly it?

QUALEN (O.S.)
She can fly anything.

Travers turns to see Qualen walking up behind him...

TRAVERS
Things are looking up --

He takes the monitor and keys in a series of numbers --
the frequency of the tracer on case three. Blip! A
location pops up on screen...

TRAVERS
Ten minutes we can be there,

maybe less...

KRISTEL

No we can't -- there's half a tank of fuel and we're gonna need it to get off this rock.

TRAVERS

(exasperated)

Shit!

Qualen is lifting up the helicopter door, trying to see if it can be repaired.

QUALEN

You're right though, Dick -- things are looking up.

Travers, struck by Qualen's friendly tone, turns to face him -- suspicious:

TRAVERS

How do you figure that?

QUALEN

Out of nowhere, someone comes along and gives me a get-out-of-jail-free card. Not only that, we're about to pass Go and we collect \$30 million. There's only one thing wrong --

CLICK! The sound of a gun being cocked -- Travers spins: Kristel, sitting in the pilot's seat, has a pistol pointed straight at his head.

TRAVERS

(oddly nonchalant)

Gee -- and I thought we were friends.

QUALEN

(warm and caring)

We are, Dick. This is just business --

He lifts the door up, trying to fit it back on its hinge...

QUALEN

That's a subject I know something about. You and I have what's called a limited liability partnership.

TRAVERS

We do?

QUALEN

That's right. The time's limited
and you're a liability.

Unsuccessful with the door, he drops it into the snow. He
faces Travers --

QUALEN

Time to dissolve it, I'm afraid.
Not upset are you?

TRAVERS

(shrugging)
I had exactly the same thing in
mind -- you just beat me to it.
I guess I should hand over my
share of the assets...

QUALEN

(to Kristel)
What did I tell you?
(turns to Travers)
I was just saying to Kristel back
there in the woods -- "Dick won't be
any trouble -- he's a professional."

TRAVERS

(modestly)
That means a lot, Eric -- I've
always prided myself on that.

He hands Qualen the tracer monitor. Qualen's smile is
wiped away as --

THE MONITOR

goes completely blank.

Qualen punches in commands, trying to reactivate it.

TRAVERS

It works in thirty-second
intervals. But don't worry --
-- a man of your intelligence,
you'll get it sooner or later.
There's only about fifty thousand
possible combinations.

Qualen stares at it for a moment -- then looks up, smiling --

QUALEN

Believe me, Dick --
(he hands back

the monitor)
-- the old firm just wouldn't
be the same without you.

Hal, filled with fury and grief, is kneeling next to Frank's body. A shadow falls over him. He looks up -- Travers.

TRAVERS
Time for number three.
Unless you want to have a longer
conversation with him elsewhere.

HAL
(low)
Fuck off.

Travers kicks him in the head, knocking him into the snow. As Hal struggles up we --

INSERT -- HAL'S HAND

He has palmed something from Frank's body.

Qualen and Kristel come round the side of the 'copter.

QUALEN
Ready?

TRAVERS
I've been thinking -- I'd rather
be looking for the case than
watching my back. You and Amelia
Earhardt stay with the 'copter.

QUALEN
I'd hate you to get lost --
especially with all that money.

TRAVERS
I'll take Delmar -- that should
keep everyone happy.

He pushes Hal forward.

TRAVERS
You're on, bird-dog.

He and Delmar follow...

EXT. BRIDGE

Gabe and Maggie scramble down a steep slope -- up to the rope and timber bridge that spans the chasm. Maggie's

about to cross it when Gabe pulls her back. He steps out on the timber slats, grabs hold of the rope "rails" and swings it hard --

THE BOLTS

on the far side which tie the bridge to the rock -- weakened earlier by Travers -- still hold...

GABE

takes another step out across the chasm... the bolts still hold. Gabe swings the bridge again, testing it -- KA-BANG! One of the bolts springs out of the rock.

THE BRIDGE

One side of it anyway, sags. The wind howls through the chasm... Gabe scrambles back towards safety. The ground, several thousand feet below, suddenly seems much nearer --

The last bolt forced to take all the strain, inches out of the rock. Bang! It breaks free --

The bridge collapses -- swinging down, spilling wooden slats and debris into the chasm. The rope and timber completely unravels -- Gabe jumps! Off the disintegrating bridge, onto the --

ROCK SPUR

Maggie grabs him, steadying him. Accidentally, they're in each other's arms. They look at one another --

GABE
(smiling)
Lucky I tested it.

MAGGIE
Or unlucky you're so heavy --

GABE
I hope you're not saying I'm fat --

Maggie disengages herself.

MAGGIE
Lean as a greyhound. Or you will be soon --
(indicates the drop)
-- it's two hours down and three back up -- just to get to the other side.

GABE

There's no time -- they've almost found the last of the money. As soon as they do, Hal's dead.

Maggie turns, looking around, as if somewhere she'll see a solution --

MAGGIE

Back to the station -- get help. There's no other way.

GABE

That's exactly what I want you to do.

MAGGIE

What about you?

GABE

I'm going to jump.

MAGGIE

WHAT?!

He turns her around, pointing across the chasm.

GABE

Nobody could reach the ledge -- you have to realize you're going to fall.

MAGGIE

Oh, good -- for a minute I thought you'd lost your mind. At least you accept you're going to die.

GABE

points to a series of tiny ledges just below where the bridge was anchored.

GABE

I can hit those hand-holds, though -- then it's just a straight climb up.

MAGGIE

Are you crazy?

GABE

It's a difficult maneuver
but it's not impossible.
It's called the King's Leap.

MAGGIE

I've never heard of it.

GABE

I'm not surprised -- I just
made it up.

He walks back, preparing himself, getting ready to jump...

MAGGIE

If you fall, scream, will you?

GABE

Why?

MAGGIE

'Cos I won't be watching.

She turns and goes. Gabe doesn't look after her: all of his senses are focused on the gap -- and the hand-holds beyond it. Push in on his face -- a moment of meditation as he centers himself. Then he's off! A few powerful strides and he leaps!

ACROSS THE GAP

Nothing but air for four thousand feet... his whole body wound like a spring... the wind rushing past. His arms firing out, reaching --

THE ROCK

racing to meet us. His hands stretching... stretching... his fingers touching! Sliding down the rock -- gripping the handholds. Gabe, like a fly on the wall, hangs by nothing more than his fingernails.

MAGGIE

keeps walking, determined not to turn and look. Suddenly -- a scream! She spins and looks -- Gabe is standing on the ledge, grinning.

GABE

Just kidding.

He waves to her, turns and disappears 'round a corner...

EXT. WILDERNESS - CRASH SITE - DAY

Several dozen emergency workers and FAA agents sift through the wreckage of the FBI jet. They take photos and put pieces into bags for analysis. We move to one bag --

CLOSE ON BODY BAG

as the zipper is pulled down -- before we see anything reverse to --

WRIGHT AND DAVIS

are standing near an FBI helicopter. With them is an FAA forensics expert. This is STUART.

STUART

That used to be your pilot.
Thirty years in this job --
I've never seen injuries like it.

WRIGHT

Really?

STUART

Yeah -- he was shot. Single
bullet, straight through the
temple. It wasn't just murder,
Mr. Wright -- it was an execution.

Wright turns away, running his eye over the soaring mountains, the incredible terrain.

WRIGHT

(sotto voce)

Where the hell do you start?

(turning to Davis)

Call the Army -- we need helicopters,
heat-scopes, night-vision goggles.

DAVIS

I'll need authorization. It could
take hours.

WRIGHT

(tired)

I know that, Pete.

STUART

What about the park rangers?

Wright turns and looks at him --

WRIGHT

What are they gonna do --
(indicates the
plane wreckage)
-- arrest 'em for littering?

EXT. MOUNTAIN WALL - GABE MOVING ON A LEDGE

that's extremely narrow. It's got irregular breaks, causing it to go up or down several feet -- and Gabe is jogging it, leaping across the ledge's gaps, leaning toward the wall -- and away from the four thousand foot drop.

He makes the last jump to a section of ledge near the bottom of

THE "BITKER" LADDER

consists of metal rungs woven into loose steel cable bolted into the rock, running two hundred feet to the top -- something left here by a past expedition, now a tourist's toy. The bottom rung is three feet above Gabe's outstretched arms.

GABE
(coiling for jump)
Bitker, you cheap bastard. Would
another four feet have killed you?

Gabe leaps up, grabbing the bottom rung instead of a half mile of air, and he shoots up the ladder as we PULL BACK --

WIDER ANGLE ON MOUNTAIN WALL

A closer look at terrain seen earlier --

As we track Gabe up the ladder, we can see a lake on top of the mountain -- constant motion keeps it from totally freezing, but it is still coated with a solid sheet of ice.

ELSEWHERE ON MOUNTAIN SLOPE - HAL

leads the others down the grade, which is slippery, thanks to the fresh, thick snow -- we can see from their relative position to the lake that Gabe has a lead on them. A very slight one.

TOP OF LADDER - GABE

pulls himself over and starts running into a --

WOODED AREA

where he spots the third case. It took a tough landing on a rock -- it's shattered into halves, and the bands of bank notes are scattered around in the snow.

Gabe rushes down behind a rock and starts gathering the cash -- soaked by the snow, they've frozen into ice bricks. A noise -- something coming over the rock -- he whirls around --

A rabbit has landed in the snow and looks a lot more frightened than Gabe. He leans back, relieved.

EXT. FURTHER UP THE SLOPE - HAL

and the other two crest a rise. Unaccustomed to the altitude and the exercise, Travers and Delmar are fading. They stop, catching their breath. Hal leans against a rock formation and swiftly, subtly wedges something into a crack behind his back.

INSERT - THE OBJECT

is what Hal lifted off Frank's body -- a speed load cylinder from a revolver with six bullets in it.

TRAVERS

checks the monitor. A smile washes across his face. The relative position shows they're --

TRAVERS

Almost there.

Delmar walks over to check the monitor... Hal, at the rock formation, has one hand behind his back.

INSERT - HAL'S HAND

shakes a box of matches from his sleeve. He slides a single wooden match half out of the pack and ignites it with his thumbnail... He leans back, masking what he's doing.

Delmar looks up from the monitor --

DELMAR

(indicating Hal)

Do we need him?

TRAVERS

Not anymore. Time to put the old dog down.

Delmar grins as he raises the gun.

INSERT - THE MATCH

has burned more than halfway down to the rest of the box, which is behind the speed load cylinder...

HAL AND DELMAR

Delmar has the gun pointed straight at Hal --

DELMAR

Tell me -- where would you like the first one?

HAL

(softly)

Do me a favor -- I want to pray.

DELMAR

Why bother with a message? Another minute and you can tell Him in person.

Hal turns his back to Delmar, head bowed as if in prayer but from under hooded eyes, he watches --

THE MATCH

burning down closer to the box...

HAL

is "praying" -- inaudible to Delmar -- but we hear him raging under his breath --

HAL

Come on you motherfucker, burn...

Travers is looking down at the monitor. Suddenly the tracer blip starts to move -- fast -- away from their position.

TRAVERS

Shit!

DELMAR

What?

But Travers doesn't bother to answer -- he's off in pursuit, scrambling over the rocks, out of sight.

HAL

("praying" under breath)

Kill him, Lord. It's not much
to ask, is it?

Delmar turns to Hal --

DELMAR
Time's up. Say "Amen", brother.

Click! The sound of the gun being cocked.

Hal keeps praying --

HAL
Blow his fucking head off...

BAM! Delmar fires -- straight into the back of Hal's leg.
He staggers but manages to stay upright... Delmar laughs.

DELMAR
Was that the answer to your
prayers. Or maybe this is --

CLICK! He cocks the gun again --

HAL
I'm not praying for myself --
I'm praying for you.

INSERT - THE MATCH

burns down to the box, igniting all the matches!

DELMAR
(laughing)
I don't think the Lord's gonna
forgive me.

INSERT - THE MATCH

The flame curls into the cylinder...

HAL
Funny that -- nor do I.

Hal drops to his knees, clutching his shattered, bleeding
knee... Delmar reacts -- for one nano-second he sees the flame
flare in the rock... it blasts the powder in the first
bullet... BANG!

It fires -- straight over Hal's head -- into Delmar's face!

EXT. THE WOODS

Travers turns, reacting to the sound of the gun-shot.
Bang! Bang! Two more. He smiles, yelling into the woods.

TRAVERS
Your friend just died, Walker.
You're next.

He starts running again, eyes fixed on the screen,
following the blip that's zig-zagging ahead of him...
Up a slope, around a tree, down another slope --
Travers breathing hard, the blip moving away from him --

TRAVERS
(tugging headset radio)
Qualen -- get down here. Now.

QUALEN

and Kristel are stripping out the 'copter, making it
lighter, discarding everything except the essentials.

QUALEN
(into radio)
Have you found the money?

TRAVERS (O.S.)
No. Walker has and Jesus --
can he run!

Kristel clambers into the pilot's seat and kicks the
motor over. Qualen swings himself aboard...

TRAVERS

is running, following the monitor's lead -- until he
sees a band of bills in the snow. Sure he's on the right
track, he picks it up and looks down at

THE MONITOR

-- the blip turns around and starts heading back --

TRAVERS

stops his uphill climb, aims his gun and waits. At the
top of the hill --

The rabbit that spooked Gabe sticks its head up for a
curious sniff -- the tracer is fastened to its neck
with a currency band.

Travers throws the useless monitor away. He turns,
looking for some sign of Gabe. Then he sees it:

footprints in the newly fallen snow.

GABE'S FEET

sink into the snow, lying in drifts so thick that it's murderously hard going. As he makes his way towards a thickly-wooded area, we crane up to --

TRAVERS cresting the top of the slope. He sees Gabe wading through the snow...

BULLETS

blast into the ground just behind Gabe. He doesn't even waste time turning to look at Travers -- he just runs. But it's that lead-footed, slow-motion stuff that only happens in nightmares -- with every step Gabe's foot breaks through the icy crust and sinks two feet into the snow. More bullets kick up the snow -- closer... closer... as Travers finds the range...

Gabe runs, stumbles, faster -- staying just ahead of the barrage. He's almost into the safety of the trees when -- SMASH! -- a bullet blasts into his shoulder -- sending him sprawling. He tumbles, rolling, rolling into -- the thickly wooded area and disappears into the shadows.

TRAVERS

plunges into the snow drift, moving as fast as he can along the trail cut by Gabe, heading for the trees.

GABE

bleeding from the shoulder, runs through the woods. The snow is much lighter here and despite his wound he moves fast, out of the trees, bursting onto --

THE SLOPE

that leads down to the lake. It's totally exposed -- just loose rocks and patches of snow. Gabe doesn't hesitate -- he plunges down the slope, his feet kicking up small avalanches of rocks, his boots slipping, sliding, trying to find purchase in the rubble until -- HE TRIPS! -- and falls out of control sliding, tumbling, his hands trying to grab hold of something -- anything! -- but the loose rocks just keep rolling end-over-end with him. Down the slope he goes -- faster than he could have ever run -- straight towards the timber bridge that spans the lake. It's a beautiful sight, but there's no cover here either...

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - MAGGIE

is wending her way down a hiking trail on the opposite side of the mountain. In plain view.

QUALEN IN HELICOPTER

is scanning the terrain through the missing door. Kristel is at the controls, expertly piloting the 'copter through a narrow gap between two rock formations.

As they emerge into clear sky, Qualen points: Maggie.

THE HELICOPTER

swings into a tight, rolling turn --

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Maggie glances back and sees it. She starts to run -- the 'copter swoops in fast and low behind her. Qualen fires at her -- ahead, behind -- not to kill, just to show he's in control. Maggie stops. Kristel lands the 'copter, Qualen keeps his gun trained on Maggie.

QUALEN

Wanna ride? I know someone who'd like to see you again before he dies.

EXT. BRIDGE - DAY

Travers is at the bottom of the slope, bending over, examining the trail of blood. He steps onto the bridge, following it: no sign of Gabe, not anywhere. Gun raised, cautious, Travers moves across the bridge: the wooden planks creak, the side rails sway, icicles hanging from the rope suspension cables crack.

Suddenly, they splinter and fall. Travers spins! He opens fire, blasting them into something more like you'd serve in a cocktail. He turns back, following --

THE TRAIL

it ends half-way along the bridge. Through a crack between the planks we see a pair of eyes, watching -- Gabe is grimacing, shivering, ashen from his wound and exertion. He is hanging under the bridge, waiting -- Travers stops, looking down at the last of the blood on the planks. Through a crack, he sees part of Gabe's vest --

TRAVERS

(smiling)

You've come a long way to die.

Ka-snap! He fits a fresh clip into his gun...

TRAVERS

If you were smart you would have forgotten about your friend. As it is he's dead, anyway.

Gabe, hanging from the cross-beam, reacts to the news...

TRAVERS

Now you're going to join him. Cause of death -- an overdose of heroism.

He pulls the trigger, blasting a fusillade through the planks -- shredding the empty vest.

Gabe is hanging several feet ahead of the decoy -- even so, shrapnel and ricochets are whizzing by too close for comfort. Travers stops firing, swinging the weapon's strap over his shoulder and kicking away the shredded remnants of the planks. He leans down and grabs the vest -- there's nothing in it except the pack Gabe took from the Gordon exhibit --

WHAM!

Gabe launches himself up at Travers, ice-axe swinging. Swish! The blade nicks Travers' chin as it creases past and hooks under the shoulder strap of his gun. Gabe yanks on the axe. Travers pitches forward -- SLAM! his face hits the deck. Gabe yanks again -- Travers is dragged down the hole. As he falls through, he grabs a timber strut.

WHACK! Gabe's fist connects with Travers' bloodied face. Wham! He hits him again but -- Travers hooks his legs around a timber beam and lunges at Gabe -- SMACK! right into Gabe's wounded shoulder. A flood of pain -- the hand holding onto the beam starts to slip -- Smack! Another blow on the shoulder from Travers. Gabe's hand slips! His leg shoots out, hooking 'round a beam. Gabe now hangs upside down -- the bridge above, the frozen lake below...

Travers, like an acrobat on the trapeze swings across -- and kicks! Straight into Gabe's knee. Gabe screams. Travers kicks again. But Gabe's anticipated it -- he catches Travers' leg as he falls -- Travers' take all the strain as he clings to the overhead beam. He tries to kick free, but Gabe hangs on grimly...

The two men swing, scramble and kick, neither able to

gain the upper hand. Then -- Travers' fingers spring open, sliding off the beam. Travers and Gabe fall -- they land hard on the ice. A spider-web of cracks crazes out from the point of impact... Gabe disentangles himself first. He gets to his feet, grabs the ice axe and moves in for the kill. Travers, on all fours, scrambles toward his gun, lying on the ice. Slam! One of Gabe's steel-spike boots crushes down on his hand.

Travers screams, his hand pinned, blood pumping onto the ice. He looks up -- Gabe towers overhead. Backlit by the sun, blood staining his shoulder, clothes tattered and torn, his face scratched and bruised -- he looks like the mountaineer from hell. Slowly he raises the ice-axe, swinging it back, ready to split Travers' head. He raises his hands to cover it, trying to protect it. But nothing will save him -- except

THE ICE

just opens up. In a moment the cracks turn to crevices and the crevices to chasms. Water floods through, the ice disintegrates...

Gabe swings wildly with the axe but his foot pinning Travers plunges into the freezing water. Travers wrenches his hand free -- and disappears! Into the lake... the ice under Gabe's other foot shatters. He pitches head-first into the lake.

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Gabe does a forward roll under the water, bringing his head upright, zooming for the surface and the light flooding through the hole in the ice. Up he goes, up... KA-WHAM! From behind, a pair of hands lock around his throat --

TRIVERS! His cheeks bulging with air, eyes popping, lips turning blue, he digs his fingers into Gabe's throat, choking him.

Gabe strikes out, driving his knee upwards. Slam! Into Travers' balls. Pain floods through him. He clings to Gabe as both men shoot to the surface...

EXT. ICE HOLE - DAY

Travers' gun lies on the ice. Just behind it, the jagged hole. Whoosh! Gabe and Travers break the surface of the water. Both of them gasp, dragging in lungfuls of air.

Slam! Travers drives Gabe's head against the side of the hole -- into a jagged piece of ice! Blood pours down Gabe's cheek. He grabs the ice-axe, tethered to his wrist by a length

of rope... Slam! Again Travers rams Gabe's head against the ice. Then he sees -- the ice-axe rising out of the water, arcing down... Travers plunges down into the water...

EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

The ice-axe slices through the water -- ripping through the back of Travers' parka, but missing his flesh. Travers, hooked like a fish, twists 'round and grabs the rope which attaches the axe to Gabe's wrist. He hauls!

EXT. ICE HOLE

Gabe is ripped downwards -- head disappearing under the water...

EXT. UNDERWATER

Travers' hands go for Gabe's throat, but Gabe's fist slams into his chest. A burst of bubbles -- precious oxygen -- erupt out of Travers' mouth. He squirms away -- tangling himself in the rope tethering them together. It tightens...

EXT. ICE

We see their bodies clearly through the ice-cap, ripping and clawing at one another. As they fight, the current is dragging them across the lake, away from the hole and the life-sustaining air...

EXT. UNDERWATER

Travers, cheeks bulging, veins almost bursting has both hands under Gabe's chin. He drives Gabe's head upwards -- SMASH! Into the ice-cap...

EXT. ICE

Looking down, through the slab of pure crystal, we see Gabe's head once again rammed up. SMASH!

EXT. UNDERWATER

Gabe's head lolls, his eyes glaze -- he's almost finished. Travers breaks free of the rope and casts Gabe adrift...

EXT. ICE

Through the ice we see Travers swimming back towards the hole. The current is carrying Gabe away -- in the opposite direction. We hold on them for a beat -- one moving towards life, the other towards death... Suddenly -- wham! Gabe slams the axe into the ice above him.

EXT. UNDERWATER

Tethered by the axe, out of breath and barely conscious, Gabe drags the bolt gun out from under his jacket. BAM! He fires -- up into the ice...

EXT. ICE

The bolt blasts through, opening up a small hole. Travers, still under the ice some distance away, is almost at the hole...

EXT. UNDERWATER

Gabe uses his thumb to slide a catch on the side of the bolt gun. He's field-stripping it: the barrel comes apart. He drives it up the hole cut in the ice by the bolt, wraps his lips around the end and drags down a great gulp of air...

EXT. ICE

Travers is out of the hole, exhausted, stumbling across the ice. We hold on him for a beat, then we crane up: he's being followed! Gabe is moving fast under the ice, gaining on him.

EXT. UNDERWATER

Gabe is using the axe -- burying it in the ice above -- to haul himself along. Ahead, distorted by the water and ice cap, he sees the stumbling figure of Travers... Gabe raises the bolt gun -- its barrel re-attached -- and takes aim...

EXT. ICE

Travers, totally unaware, moves forward... BAM! The bolt smashes out of the ice, heading straight for him...

EXT. UNDERWATER

Gabe -- almost out of breath -- watches as Travers spins 'round and falls... Gabe keeps watching. A beat. Then Travers hauls himself up! Gabe turns and -- once again using the ice axe -- tries to get away. He heads for the hole but he's almost frozen, exhausted. Every yard he travels is slower than the last.

A shadow falls across him. He looks up --

A DARK SHAPE

looms above on the ice. It's backlit by the sun, distorted through a drift of snow, but it's clearly recognizable as a man. Gabe is fading fast. He looks up -- the shape swims in and out of focus...

THE MAN

raises a weapon but Gabe's too far gone now to try to escape. His grip on the axe starts to slip as he weakens... A blast of sound, muffled through the ice, tells him the man has opened fire... Ice shatters. Gabe's hand slides down the axe -- bullets, slowed by the water, glide past. The ice breaks apart... Gabe's hand slips from the axe. He starts to drop! Down into the ice-cold depths... WHOOSH! A hand plunges down into the water. Snap! It grabs Gabe by the collar and hauls him up through --

EXT. ICE - THE HOLE

Gabe's head breaks the surface. His lips burst open and he ducks air into his aching lungs. Now his eyes flick open, focusing. He sees --

HAL

-- his shattered knee roughly bandaged -- is kneeling next to the hole he's cut with Travers' gun. Gabe stares at him, then:

GABE

(sputtering)

Are you alive -- or am I dead?

Hal looks at his friend -- the sunken eyes, bloodied face, blue lips.

HAL

Right on both counts by the look of it.

He helps Gabe up onto the ice. As he slumps there, he looks across. A body lies in a darkening pool of blood: Travers.

GABE

How'd you kill him?

HAL

(shaking his head)

You did. A bolt through the stomach. He bled to death -- must have been agony.

GABE

First thing that's gone right
all day.

INSIDE HELICOPTER - OVER MOUNTAIN

Maggie's hands are cuffed to a bar on the 'copter's roof.
Qualen keys his headset radio --

QUALEN

(into radio)

Travers -- come in...

HAL AND GABE

are scavenging what they can from Travers' body --
waterproof clothes, a knife... Gabe hears a radio
crackling. He opens Travers' jacket and grabs it --

GABE

(weary; into radio)

He can't talk right now, Qualen --
being dead and all.

A moment's silence as Qualen adjusts to the new situation --

GABE

(into radio)

Yeah -- I know it's a surprise. It
was for him, too. You could say it
came like a bolt from the blue.

Hal raises his eyebrows to heaven: that was terrible.

INSIDE 'COPTER

QUALEN

(into radio)

I take it that's some sort
of joke, Mr. Walker. I'm sorry
I can't share it. Have you got
the money?

GABE (O.S.)

I sure do.

QUALEN

(into radio)

You wanted to make a trade
earlier -- still interested?

GABE - ON THE LAKE

is crouched on the lake. Suddenly he's worried --

GABE
(into radio)
Trade for what?

QUALEN
My turn for a joke now.

A beat -- then a voice.

MAGGIE (O.S.)
(through radio)
Gabe!

Gabe and Hal just look at each other. Another beat, then --

QUALEN
(through radio;
like an auctioneer)
Going once! Going twice!
Are you there?

GABE
(somber)
Fly to the lake.

QUALEN
(through radio)
It's all done and all sold!
Thank you, Mr. Walker.

Click! The radio goes dead.

HAL
Now what?

GABE
I have no idea.

He picks up Travers' gun, but before he can even check it --

HAL
I emptied it.

GABE
(sagging)
Why can't anything be easy?

THE HELICOPTER

thunders around the mountain wall, getting closer --

HAL AND GABE

have crossed the bridge, near the mountain edge -- Gabe, now wearing his pack again, nods over to the wooded area.

GABE
Stay over there --

HAL
Look -- let me --

GABE
-- what, throw snowballs at him?
You can barely walk, Hal...

The two men look at each other. A beat.

GABE
Whatever happens -- get Maggie
out of here.

HAL
(relenting)
Count on it.

Gabe heads toward the edge as Hal limps slowly into the woods.

THE HELICOPTER

blasts along the wall towards the lake.

QUALEN IN HELICOPTER - QUALEN'S POV

tops the precipice, revealing Gabe, standing on the end of a narrow spur -- it juts out from the edge like a diving board. Gabe has his pack on one arm -- the money is visible.

GABE
(over radio)
Remember that bet? About
whether I could find the
money or not?
(holds pack
over drop)
You won.

Kristel flies in low, tight circles over Gabe and the spur -- if Qualen shoots Gabe, the money falls too. He turns the gun on Maggie.

QUALEN
(into radio)
I'll kill her --

GABE
(over radio)
You do, and next month's thaw's
going to be worth about thirty
million bucks.

QUALEN
(into radio)
All right. Put the money down.

GABE
(into radio)
When she's safe on the ground.

Qualen gives Maggie the handcuff key and she frees herself
as they fly away from the spur, touching the copter down
on the mountain top.

QUALEN
(to Maggie)
Get out.

Maggie moves out the door and stares uncertainly at Gabe.

GABE
(shouting)
Run!

She doesn't.

GABE
Run!

Maggie runs for the trees. But Gabe keeps the pack
suspended over the edge.

GABE
(into radio)
Now come and get it. My arm's
getting tired.

EXT. SPUR

Kristel flies the copter up and over, until it is five
feet away from Gabe's position on the spur. Gabe is
buffeted by the copter's wind, but stands firm.

Qualen levels his gun at Gabe through the open passenger
door as Gabe heaves the pack in. Qualen doesn't even look
down -- he just stares at Gabe as he prepares to shoot.

GABE

(shouting)

Don't you want to count it?

Puzzled, Qualen rips open the pack. The banknotes are there -- but they've been shredded by Travers' earlier blast of gunfire. Few, if any of the bills are passable. Qualen stares down, incredulous -- as he does -- Gabe rips open his parka and yanks the bolt gun out. Qualen looks up but he's too slow! Gabe fires! At point blank range --

The bolt goes straight through Qualen's shoulder and into -- Kristel's head -- killing her instantly, spraying blood over the windshield.

GABE

Bargain time! Two for
the price of one.

THE HELICOPTER

-- pilotless now -- spins out of control...

QUALEN

-- in the co-pilot's seat -- gasping from the pain of the wound, is thrown almost out of his seat. He drops the gun and lunges for the stick...

THE HELICOPTER

spins around, and Gabe instantly flattens to avoid the tail swinging past him. Gabe looks down as the helicopter quickly begins to spiral down in wide, aimless circles -- Gabe stares down coldly, waiting for the crash -- but --

INSIDE THE COPTER - QUALEN

won't give up -- sweating, bleeding, he grabs the co-pilot's stick, trying to control the helicopter...

GABE'S POV - THE HELICOPTER

stops its descent and -- veering and yawing -- it begins to rise up. Like some rogue beast -- wounded, out of control, charging wildly -- it climbs higher...

CLOSE ON GABE

eyes widening with realization. Gabe gets up from the spur and starts running back towards the woods. Several hundred yards from safety -- before he can get very far --

THE HELICOPTER

tops the precipice edge and -- barely under control -- sweeps low over the snow. Suddenly, violently, it veers between Gabe and the trees, cutting him off --

WOODED AREA - HAL AND MAGGIE

watch, powerless --

QUALEN IN 'COPTER

Ashen, hyper-ventilating, he works the co-pilot's controls. Running on pure adrenalin and fury, he manages to keep the machine aloft. It's zig-zagging, plunging and rearing -- but still he drives the stick forward --

QUALEN'S POV - GABE

is stiff-legging it toward the edge of the mountain -- but he's too banged up to run fast through the thick snow --

THE HELICOPTER

with its skids skipping just over the snow, gains on Gabe.

CLOSE ON THE HELICOPTER'S SKIDS

virtually out of control, they dip and slice through the top of the snow towards --

GABE

as he runs toward the mountain's edge -- it's just feet ahead, but the copter is almost on him. As it overtakes him, dipping even lower into the snow, he dives off the edge -- FALLING. Gabe is at the ladder -- he falls the first twenty feet of the long drop, then grabs a rung on the cable ladder, stopping his fall -- but in the same split second --

THE HELICOPTER

skid dives into the top two runs of the cable ladder --

WIDE SHOT - THE HELICOPTER

-- is caught in the rungs of the cable ladder -- as it keeps flying over the abyss, it pulls the cable ladder, popping out the bolts that hold the ladder in place, rung by rung -- one of the popped bolts shoots like a bullet into the exposed upper engine of the copter -- still going, the copter strains against the ladder -- thirty feet of it tethers the copter to the wall -- and Gabe is dangling from the center of it.

On the ladder -- Gabe has one arm hooked around a rung, hanging on for his life as the copter thrashes the ladder up and down --

INSIDE THE COPTER

Qualen is totally disoriented -- he has no idea what to do.

INSERT - THE ENGINE

as sparks fly and it grinds to a halt --

THE HELICOPTER

still strains against the cable ladder but the rotor blades slow --

GABE ON LADDER

stares at the stalling rotor -- if it were possible for him to grip the ladder tighter, he'd do it now --

ON THE HELICOPTER

-- as the rotor WHOPS to a dead halt the copter arcs down and slams against the mountain wall. The skids are still caught in the ladder, and it holds --

Gabe is shaken off by the massive impact -- he falls -- landing on the helicopter, half in and half out of the cockpit! As Gabe scrambles for a solid hold --

INSERT - THE HELICOPTER SKID

One of the two runs holding the copter bursts --

THE HELICOPTER

slips, now hanging from just a single rung. Qualen scrambles up through the cabin to go after -- Gabe, who is trying to get off the helicopter and onto a solid part of the ladder before the whole thing goes down --

CLOSE ON THE HELICOPTER SKID

-- as the last rung supporting the copter snaps in two -- Gabe jumps for the wall and grabs hold of the ladder as

THE HELICOPTER

plummets down -- but as it starts its fall --

Qualen leaps from the falling copter and grabs Gabe's leg. Gabe struggles to hold onto the ladder -- his wounded shoulder having to bear the strain of not only supporting himself, but Qualen too. He looks down at Qualen -- struggling to "climb" up his leg. The two men look at one another. A beat. Then Gabe raises his other boot. Qualen catches sight of the rows of steel spikes as Gabe drives it down -- into his face! Qualen falls!

THE FALL - LONG SHOT

Qualen SCREAMING, trailing behind the helicopter -- we follow the entire four thousand foot drop -- until the helicopter explodes when it hits the ground far below, and the fireball engulfs Qualen just before he impacts into the explosion!

GABE

looks down at the burning wreck then turns at the sound of another helicopter --

THE FBI HELICOPTER

has shown up, too late to be of any help.

INSIDE THE FBI 'COPTER

Wright, Davis and Stuart -- the FAA inspector -- look down at the billowing flames of the wreck. Wright turns to Stuart --

WRIGHT

You're the expert -- what do you make of that?

STUART

(still staring
at flames)

How the hell would I know?
I just pick up the pieces.

WRIGHT

(very tired)

Yeah. It's that sort of day,
I guess.

He motions to the pilot: put her down...

EXT. SPUR

Gabe turns and looks back at The Wall --

GABE'S POV

The section of ladder above him, of course, is gone -- he has to cover the fifty feet of wall above him by free climbing. There are holds that look easy enough for him, but --

Gabe leans back, gripping the ladder, too tired to move. Just the thought of one more climb drains him.

GABE

(mumbling)

Forget it. No fucking way.
I'm staying right here.
I've spent the night of walls
before -- some of the best
nights of my life have been
spent lashed to walls --

Before Gabe can take this any farther, a loop tied to the end of a rope falls next to him. Gabe looks up --

ON THE EDGE - HAL

has thrown the line down. Maggie is by his side.

HAL

Remember -- keep your arms
and legs in the vehicle at
all times --

Gabe puts the loop around himself and tightens it by rote -- even this action aches.

GABE

(too tired to shouts)

Fuck you --

Hal and Maggie draw Gabe up -- Gabe pulls some of his weight by using hand and foot holds, but when he reaches

THE PRECIPICE EDGE

Hal and Maggie are both winded from the effort as they haul Gabe onto the top. Gabe unties himself, and collapses into Maggie's lap.

HAL

(winded, coiling rope)

Jesus Christ --
-- you think you could have
put a little less effort
into that climb? I mean, what

have you done for me lately?

Hal ends his harangue and looks over -- Gabe has apparently revived, because he and Maggie are locked in the kiss of their lives.

Hal stands and smiles. He heads off towards where the FBI 'copter is landing -- it's obviously going to be a very long explanation.

GABE AND MAGGIE

break off their kiss.

MAGGIE

Does this mean you're staying?

Off Gabe's answering smile, we --

FADE OUT.