

**CLIFFHANGER**

screenplay by

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[NOTE: THE PRINTED TEXT OF THIS SCRIPT CONTAINED SCENE  
NUMBERS. THEY HAVE NOT BEEN RETAINED FOR THIS SOFT COPY.]

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - HELICOPTER SHOT - DAY

An unparalleled set of sheer mountains -- part of the Colorado Rockies. The peaks rise a challenging half mile and more out of the valley -- wind-whipped snow mists over the mountains like a low fog. The tranquility is broken as a helicopter BLASTS into view, fighting the wind as it heads for the center of it all.

Our CREDITS fly us past and through this magnificent range. There are sky-piercing peaks that slope up to a narrow, high pinnacle -- and others that are steel, straight-up approaches to large plateaus. One of the mountains has a crystal lake on top -- with a waterfall that drains from it and exits from the middle of a mountain wall. Nearby, an abandoned cable ladder is bolted into the same wall, leading to the top.

BACK IN THE HELICOPTER

We can see a man sitting in its doorway, looking out --

INT/EXT HELICOPTER - BINOCULAR POV

The glasses scan systematically, slowly -- to us, it looks like nothing more than a field of gray and white.

FRANK (O.S.)

Nothing yet.

EXT. THE MOUNTAINS - LONG SHOT

The helicopter now circles this tallest mountain -- "The Tower", separated from a lower but equally formidable peak by a chasm of two hundred feet -- that drops 3,500 feet below.

INSIDE HELICOPTER - FRANK AND MAGGIE

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

FRANK

Wait a minute -- there's Hal.

(beat)

And his date.

BINOCULAR POV - A LEDGE

that's part of the smaller peak. HAL TUCKER (30s) and his "date", SUSAN COLLINS (20s), are decked out in climbing gear.

Hal's aplomb suggests he's a veteran climber -- Susan's worried look shows she isn't. Hal and Susan huddle together, both cold, but okay. Hal has a makeshift 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 SUSAN

Hal, now aware of the copter, looks towards it, smiling -- and starts jerking off the flare.

FRANK (O.S.)

He's signalling "okay."

MAGGIE (O.S.)

Where's Gabe?

The POV dips down -- there's somebody climbing below, in an orange rescue jacket.

FRANK (O.S.)

Right where he's supposed to be.

CLOSER ON THE CLIMBER

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

ON THE LEDGE

Gabe, almost there, finds a fingertip-width handhold at arm's length -- grabbing it, he pulls himself up on the ledge with a move that's just a little tougher than chinning yourself on a doorjamb. Winded, Gabe slumps down next to the couple, and tries to light a cigarette. The lighter only sparks.

HAL

Excuse me -- 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. We know in a glance they've been friends for years.

GABE

Maybe you could tell me why I am rescuing you.

HAL

Basically -- I've fallen down, and I can't get up...

GABE

(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 there. Frank lowers a rescue wire to

GABE

who precariously swings out from the ledge to grab it -- the wire is just out of reach. Hal grabs the radio.

HAL

Rescue One -- please remind me to tell you about the time I hauled your hero here down Mt. Huntington on my back, over --

MAGGIE (O.S.)

(through radio)

Hal, if I hear that story one more time, I'm making you limp down the entire three thousand feet, over --

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

GABE

(to Susan)

This guy showing you a good time?

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 -- there's now a lifeline spanning the chasm.

ON THE LEDGE

Gabe finishes anchoring the line in the rock -- he extinguishes his cigarette in the snow, and naturally, pockets the butt. Hal, propped up against the wall, expertly rigs a seat harness around his legs -- Susan helps him get part of it around his splint, and Gabe clips it to the line.

GABE

Now, 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 makes a point of looking down --

HAL'S POV -- THE DROP

is vertigo defined. Thirty five hundred feet straight down. You could stack the World Trade Center towers on top of each other and they'd still be shorter than this mountain is high. However --

HAL

lets go of the overhead line and claps his hands to his face in mock horror -- he quickly whizzes down the last thirty feet of the line, where Frank catches him and pulls him out. Hal gets out of the harness, checks every stitch of it, signals thumbs-up, and sends it back.

THE LEDGE

Gabe, retrieves the harness on a small attachment line, and gives Susan a reassuring smile, but she's still, sensibly, very scared. Gabe recovers the harness, rigs Susan into it, and meticulously re-checks it.

GABE

Ready?  
(sees she's afraid)  
Did he tell you about the time he almost made it up Everest?

SUSAN

He said you gave him a bad oxygen mask  
--

GABE

Well, if he's bored you with that bullshit, then this has to be the best part of a bad date. Right?

Susan nervously laughs.

GABE

Ready?

SUSAN

(scared but tough)

Okay --

Gabe starts to push her out on the line, but she grabs his arm in a panic.

SUSAN

I can't --

Susan starts to tilt her head down -- Gabe gently takes hold of her chin, turning her view up to face him.

GABE

Yes you can.

(reassuring)

You can do it. Don't look down. The whole way across, don't look down. Look at me. Just keep looking at me -- and you'll be okay.

Susan looks at Gabe -- trying to be confident -- nods.

GABE

Sure?

SUSAN

Yeah.

(beat)

I have always depended on the kindness of Rangers.

Gabe grins and gently pushes her out. Susan tentatively pulls herself across -- then develops a rhythm, building speed --

GABE'S POV - SUSAN

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

SUSAN'S POV - GABE

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

SUSAN - ANOTHER ANGLE

thirty feet out, going fine --

INSERT -- A HARNESS CLIP

holding the strap under Susan'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, Susan falls but grabs the harness strand --

HAL

is helpless, and can only watch as

SUSAN

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 Susan'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

(loud, in control)

Hold on. I'm coming out to get you.

Gabe gently pulls himself up on the line, crosses his ankles on it, and clips himself on with a three foot safety line. Gabe starts smoothly, quickly pulling himself out, but --

SUSAN

is in trouble -- the bobbing of the line from Gabe's weight and the winds are making her lose her grip even more --

GABE

urgently pulls himself along the line faster, trying not to shake the line. As he gets closer and closer to a terrified

Susan, his eyes lock on hers --

GABE

Keep looking at me. Hold on --

WIDER ANGLE

Gabe is only ten feet away from --

SUSAN

who stares at Gabe, petrified -- this focus is helping, but her strength is just about gone --

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, a little faster, almost bridging the gap --

ON SUSAN

staring desperately at Gabe, holding on --

INSERT - THE TOP CLIP

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

SUSAN

falls --

GABE

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

THEIR HANDS

miss --

ANGLE ON BOTH

Gabe's three foot safety line pulls taut, testing the limits of the line above as it yanks him back --

GABE'S POV - SUSAN

is just out of reach -- her hand is still stretched out, her eyes still locked on

GABE

who can only look down, swaying helplessly on the wire as Susan's SCREAM starts --

ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE

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

LONG SHOT - SUSAN

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

SUSAN'S POV - FALLING

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

GABE

twists from his safety line, spinning helplessly -- he wants to, but can't, shut his eyes --

GABE'S POV - THE CHASM

Susan is gone. Her SCREAM, cut short, echoes -- the "safety" harness spirals down after her like a carefree bird --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT/EXT SMALL AIRLINER - GABE'S POV OUT WINDOW - DAY

As the plane dips to land, Gabe can see a bird circling far below, over the same mountainous terrain.

INT. SMALL AIRLINER - GABE

sweating, panting, awake. It hasn't been that long since the accident -- a year, to be exact -- but he looks older. He looks as if he's watched Susan Collins drop at least one hundred times. Gabe reels himself in as a STEWARDESS hands him a glass of water.

STEWARDESS

Take this.

(Gabe does)  
Afraid of flying?

Gabe shakes his head.

GABE  
Falling.

INT. TERMINAL - DAY

Gabe, with no luggage, is at the small airport's only car rental counter, doing the paperwork for a RENTAL AGENT.

RENTAL AGENT  
Midsize?

GABE  
Any size, any color, any model.

RENTAL AGENT  
How long will you be needing it?

GABE  
(flat)  
Just under six hours.

MAGGIE (O.S.)  
You aren't wasting any time, are you?

Gabe turns and looks at

MAGGIE

who is standing off to the side.

MAGGIE  
I knew you'd be coming by. Today.

Gabe's happy to see her -- but at the same time, he isn't. She looks too good -- and she brings up quite a mixed bag of memories. Maggie carves on a smile.

MAGGIE  
If you're in that much of a hurry, why don't you ride with me?

INT. RESCUE HELICOPTER - DAY

Maggie pilots the copter, heading out toward the mountain range. Gabe fiddles with some of the equipment inside. Both grope for a way to start the conversation.

GABE

This is new...

MAGGIE

It's a thermal scope -- picks up body  
heat of lost hikers --

Gabe flicks it on, looks at the total absence of heat as they  
fly over the snow.

GABE

Still find the dead ones the old  
fashioned way, I guess.

So much for small talk. Gabe is clearly uneasy watching these  
mountains go by. Maggie breaks an awkward silence --

MAGGIE

You could have said goodbye.

GABE

(shakes head)

If I did, I'd have to listen to you  
tell me one more time that it wasn't  
my fault.

MAGGIE

(angry)

Today -- especially today -- you get  
to hear it again. The harness clip  
broke. Cold stress -- one in a  
million equipment failure. You and  
Hal could have checked it from then  
till now and it still would have  
happened.

(beat)

You did everything right --

GABE

-- If I did everything right, Susan  
Collins would still be alive.

THE HELICOPTER

whizzes on to the Ranger station -- a small building by an old  
country road. Not much activity outside of some ROOKIE  
CLIMBERS working out on a CLIMBING PRACTICE WALL. Maggie  
starts to land the copter, and as she does --

INSIDE THE COPTER

GABE

Do you really believe all that? That  
it wasn't our fault?

Maggie slows the rotor, her eyes on the controls. Gabe's eyes  
are locked on her.

MAGGIE

(turns to Gabe)

Yes. Yes, I do.

But she answered a half beat too slow. The helicopter touches  
ground.

GABE

I'm not sure what I wish more, Maggie.  
That you meant what you said, just now  
-- or that it were really true then.

EXT. RANGER STATION

Hal, wearing Sheriff's garb, storms towards Maggie's side of  
the copter as the engine shuts off and the rotor dies.

HAL

Maggie, where the hell have you been?  
I've got two climbers out --

Gabe gets out of the copter, and Hal sees him for the first  
time. Unlike the last time we saw them, neither man is glad to  
see the other. Hal turns on Maggie.

HAL

Brett and Evan are up there again to  
jump off the spur. Their wives called  
twice. I want you in the air and I  
want them found before the storm  
system moves in.

(Maggie hesitates)

Now.

Maggie takes off as Gabe and Hal step away from the copter.  
Gabe eyes Hal's uniform and almost -- not quite but almost --  
laughs.

GABE

Christ. You're in charge of Rescue  
now?

HAL

There was a vacancy. Maybe you heard  
about it. The last guy lost his nerve  
and lit out of town.

GABE

Well, you're a better man than I am,  
Hal. Nothing rattles you.

The rookie climbers get off the practice wall to watch this faceoff. Gabe and Hal are one crack away from beating hell out of each other. Frank heads over to defuse the confrontation.

FRANK

(steering Gabe away)

Gabe! Long time, son -- why don't you  
come meet some of the new guys --

GABE

Good idea. Say, Hal?

(beat)

Why don't you come with me so we can  
show these rookies how to death-rig a  
woman properly?

That tears it -- Hal rushes Gabe and they pummel each other until Frank and the others pull them apart, panting and bleeding. Hal throws off the men holding him back -- but instead of going at Gabe again, Hal throws Gabe a set of car keys.

HAL

Take the Bronco to where you're going.  
I've already been. Then go back to  
wherever it is you like to hide. And  
stay there.

Hal heads back into the office -- Gabe heads for the Bronco.

CUT TO:

EXT. DENVER MINT - HIGH ANGLE - DAY

The Southwest regional center for printing and distributing currency. Hundreds of troops stand guard over the impressive U.S. Treasury complex.

INT. TREASURY COMPOUND - A HUGE PRINTING PRESS

is at work -- the ROAR of its parts is deafening as it stamps out a plate design on huge sheets of paper -- we move in on

THE PAPER

which is moved by mechanical arm to a SLICER that razors the bills apart -- it's moving too fast for us to see the

denomination -- the cut bills are separated by --

FOUR SEPARATION CHUTES

that fire the bills down to a mechanical COUNTER that serializes, counts, bands and stacks them faster than any human could -- a HAND reaches to pick up a band --

THE BILLS

are something a banker could work a lifetime without seeing, but are real nonetheless -- \$5,000 bills, banded here in hundreds. The band is put back in the growing stack by

RICHARD TRAVERS

mid-thirties, a tough, imposing Treasury agent -- he regards the fortune piling up in front of him with only cold, professional interest. Travers is flanked by a trio of equally tough TREASURY AGENTS -- he turns to flunky DAVIS (20s). It's clear who's in charge of protecting the money here, and who's in charge of counting it.

TRAVERS

Tell Wright the San Francisco shipment is ready.

DAVID

(phone already out)  
Right away, Mr. Travers.

As Davis dials we move to --

THE OFFICE

of WALTER WRIGHT (50s), comptroller of currency -- his demeanor suggests he's in control, and used to keeping it that way.

WRIGHT

(into phone)  
Good -- good. I'll be right down.

As Wright gets up from his desk, though, we hear in the outer office --

SECRETARY (O.S.)

You can't go in there --

MATHESON (O.S.)

Watch me.

KURT MATHESON (30s) bursts into the office, trailed by Wright's flustered SECRETARY.

MATHESON

Walter Wright?  
(flashes badge)  
Matheson. FBI. We need to talk.

PRINTING COMPOUND - THE MONEY

has now been packed into a trio of metal briefcases -- ten thousand \$5,000 bills. Travers shuts the cases in turn, and locks each with an electronic key card, triggering a FLASHING RED LIGHT on the locks as he does. A uniformed PILOT shows up behind Travers as he cuffs the cases to the hands of the three other agents.

PILOT

We'll be fueled and ready in ten minutes, Mr. Travers.

TRAVERS

(an order)  
Be ready in five.

MATHESON (O.S.)

Go ahead and take ten. We'll need the time.

Travers looks up at Matheson, who has just arrived with Wright. Travers is instantly furious at the challenge to his authority.

MATHESON

(flashes badge)  
Matheson. FBI.

TRAVERS

(looking down at it)  
Your parents must be proud.  
(to Wright)  
What the fuck is this about?

WRIGHT

Small problem with the shipment, Travers.  
(to Matheson)  
Tell him what you just told me.

Matheson draws out a file and hands it to Travers.

MATHESON

We got word that somebody's been observing your currency shipments -- this load, the \$5,000s -- over the last three deliveries.

TRAVERS

(laughs)

There isn't a hell of a lot anyone can do but observe.

(beat)

This is the most protected shipment we've got -- and the most useless for a thief. Those bills aren't in circulation. You think five thousand dollar bills are easy to pass? Who the fuck would try?

Matheson hands Travers a folder.

MATHESON

This guy might.

We look over Travers' shoulder at the photos, which are all blurry, all blown up from different surveillance pictures -- and all of them show ERIC QUALEN.

TRAVERS

Who is he?

MATHERS

(patient)

His name's Eric Qualen. One of the East German spies who got shut out by the reunification. The CIA issued an inter-agency warning about him right after the wall came down. He's got nowhere to go and nothing to lose. He's also got the international connections to get rid of bills like these -- and he's probably desperate enough to try for them. Fifty million bucks buys a lot of sanctuary.

TRAVERS

Could you get to the part where I'm supposed to care?

MATHESON

(shows him more photos)

We had two agents monitoring him. These two -- Gleason and Quinones. Their last report said he was going to

try to take this shipment.

TRAVERS

(turning away)

Thanks for the tip. But I've got work to do.

MATHESON

(stopping him)

Did I say "last" report? I think I did. I mean last fucking report. These guys have vanished.

TRAVERS

You have my sympathy, but --  
(exasperated)

There's a reason we do things this way, all right? Armored cars can be hijacked. Trains can be derailed. But nobody can get to us in flight. The only time this is on the ground is at the mint, or on the Presidio runway in San Francisco. Either way, someone would have to shoot his way past a couple of thousand guards.

Matheson still isn't convinced.

TRAVERS

If you're worried about an inside job, forget it. I checked the plane from top to bottom an hour ago. And these three are my best against. Even if one of them did go skydiving, they wouldn't get far. Each case has an electronic tracer with a range of one hundred miles.

Travers pulls a tracking device about the size of a watchman out of his jacket pocket. The small screen shows three red blips at rest -- matching the three currency cases.

TRAVERS

(facing down Matheson)

I haven't lost a bill in eight years. And I'm not scrubbing this shipment because you scare easily.

MATHESON

(an easy smile)

Who said anything about stopping the shipment?

(beat)

I've been tracking Qualen for almost a year. If he pulls something, I want to be in on the party.

Travers, angry, turns to Wright. Wright clearly doesn't like this either, but is resigned to it.

WRIGHT

This is cleared from the top, Travers. Matheson will accompany you on the flight to San Francisco.

(beat)

Show him every professional courtesy.

Travers turns back to a smiling Matheson, looking like he'd rather kill him instead, as we --

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGE - MAGGIE'S HELICOPTER

is being buffeted by storm winds and a light snow -- Maggie struggles hard with the controls, but --

INSIDE HELICOPTER

Visibility is near zero. Maggie keys the radio.

MAGGIE

Rescue One to base, over.

HAL (O.S.)

Rescue One -- have you sighted them?  
Over --

MAGGIE

Negative, Hal -- storm's already moving in -- I can't see them, and winds are too strong to stay up here -- over --

HAL (O.S.)

Rescue One -- abort. They'll be all right. Brett and Evan are dumb enough not to log in, but they're smart enough to have storm gear. Head back to base.

(not unkindly)

Maybe you can catch Gabe before he leaves. Over.

MAGGIE

I don't think he's planning a long visit, Hal.

(back to business)

Rescue One heading back to base, over and out.

THE HELICOPTER

banks a 180 to fly back -- we can see over the horizon that the storm is moving in fast.

INT. CAVE - DAY

We can hear Maggie's helicopter flying off overhead -- camped inside the cave are BRETT and EVAN, both 20s, both shivering, amid their gear -- backpacks, cooking stuff -- and parachutes. These are Colorado rock jocks -- thrillseekers who'll try anything if the odds are strong enough they'll die in the process.

EVAN

(freezing)

Way to check the weather, Brett.

BRETT

(shivering yet macho)

Hey. If it were easy, it wouldn't be worth d-doing.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREASURY JET (DC-9) - DAY

The DC-9 cruises over increasingly mountainous, remote terrain.

INT. JET - CLOSE ON TRAVERS

who looks tense -- we MOVE AROUND the cabin and find two more relaxed Treasury agents are dozing on the opposite side of the plane, their arms chained to the currency cases. Matheson is edgy. Another AGENT offers some condescending reassurance.

AGENT

Just enjoy the view, huh?

(Matheson says nothing)

Relax. I mean, what could happen in the air?

Matheson turns back to his window and looks down --

WINDOW POV - THE GROUND BELOW

is covered with snow -- the jet's shadow moves sleekly and plainly over it. But after a moment we see -- -- another jet's shadow on the ground, coming up fast!

INSIDE THE DC-9 - MATHESON

reacts this and shifts his look upward to --

WINDOW POV - ANOTHER PLANE (GULFSTREAM)

is flying a parallel course to the Treasury jet, and is just one hundred yards away. Close enough to see Eric Qualen's face in one of the windows.

INSIDE THE PLANE

Matheson stands -- Travers has noticed the plane by now too, and gets out of his seat as the other agents react.

TRIVERS

(to other agents)

Stay put! Don't panic, goddammit!

Travers moves into

THE COCKPIT

where the pilot seems nervous, but oddly, not frightened.

PILOT

He's coming in too slow.

TRIVERS

(cool)

No -- we're going too fast, and we're too high up. Push flaps forward twenty degrees and drop to five thousand feet.

THE CABIN

Matheson is out of his seat, pistol drawn. Seems a little puny under the circumstances.

MATHESON

(to agent)

You got any rifles?

AGENT

Forward compartment -- left side --

Matheson rushes through a curtain to the area between the cabin and the cockpit and pulls open a closet door. To his horror, he finds inside not rifles, but

TWO DEAD BODIES

who we'll recognize as the missing FBI agents from the photos Matheson showed Travers.

MATHESON

backs up in horror -- and he sees Travers calmly coming out of the cockpit. Rattled, Matheson pulls his gun on Travers. Travers looks dumbfounded -- then angry.

TRIVERS

What the hell are you doing --

MATHESON

Checked the plane from top to bottom, huh? You fucker --

(clicks hammer back)

Put your hands behind your head! It's over!

Travers puts his hands out and walks forward -- slowly, backing Matheson into the cabin. Not in surrender, but as if he's calming a nutcase. The other agents see this and don't know which way to jump.

TRIVERS

Calm down -- give the gun to me --

MATHESON

(to other agents)

There's a couple of dead bodies in the front compartment -- they're FBI agents --

TRIVERS

He's losing it --

They now think Matheson is crazy too -- he looks nuts -- the other agents move behind him. Matheson gets even more frantic and point his gun at them.

MATHESON

Goddamn it! Don't you see what he's doing! He's hijacking the fucking shipment!

(back to Travers)

Don't make me shoot you!

The other two agents get behind Matheson and rapidly disarm him. Travers pulls out his gun with a slow, leisurely move.

TRIVERS

Don't make me laugh.

Travers FIRES his gun three times, one for each agent's chest -- the agents are cut down, realizing too late what's happened. A fourth SHOT knocks Matheson over a seat as if he'd been kicked. Travers puts his gun away and puts on a radio headset as he goes to a window.

TRIVERS

(to mouthpiece)

Move into position.

EXT. QUALEN'S JET - GULFSTREAM

maneuvers over the DC-9 -- and holds steady above it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CEMETERY MARKER - COLORADO - DAY

The stone reads "Susan Collins -- 1965 - 1991". It's surrounded by wreaths -- one of which has an old snapshot of her attached to it. Mementos sent on the first anniversary of her death.

GABE

brushes some of the falling snow away from the marker. He lays down his flowers and pauses for a moment -- then gets into the Bronco and drives away.

INT. FORD BRONCO - DAY

Gabe looks out the window at the countryside he used to belong in. He's wondering if he still does.

CUT TO:

EXT. TREASURY JET/QUALEN'S JET - FLYING

Qualen's jet is now flying parallel to, and slightly above, the Treasury jet. The door in Qualen's jet is open, and we get our first good look at --

INT/EXT. QUALEN'S JET

-- Qualen, who is also wearing a headset radio and is wired to a safety line in the jet. He's lowering a thick steel cable down to the Treasury jet.

Qualen is as deadly as advertised -- 150 mph winds are tearing at him through the open door, but he is unfazed and unfrightened.

TRIVERS

is also wired to a safety line by his own jet's open door.

TRIVERS

(into radio)

More -- more -- keep it coming --

THE TWO PLANES

Qualen's jet lowers the cable into the Treasury jet -- it looks like an Air Force midair refuelling -- difficult and dangerous. After about thirty feet of line is lowered --

TRIVERS

-- takes it in and clips it to a ring at the top of the jet's doorway.

TRIVERS

(into radio)

Locked on. Move into lateral position.

INSIDE QUALEN'S PLANE

The pilot, KRISTEL, is a woman. Her skill, like her hard beauty, can be measured in a glance: she's a lot calmer than her counterpart in the Treasury plane.

KRISTEL

Moving into lateral position.

ON THE TWO PLANES

Qualen's jet lowers itself, banking to the side -- the Treasury jet raises itself. Both are now flying side by side, with the cable serving as a thirty foot bridge.

TREASURY JET CABIN

Travers, unclipped from his safety line, cautiously goes to the cockpit. The pilot, nervous, struggles with the controls.

PILOT

We're right on the edge of the storm -- let's move it.

Travers pulls the two dead FBI agents out of the compartment -- one is dressed in a flying suit like the pilot, one in a suit like Travers.

PILOT

This isn't going to work -- Wright will suspect something.

TRAVERS

So what. He'll sift through a plane that went down in a storm --  
(gestures to bodies)  
-- find enough pulverized bone for six men heroically killed in the line of duty --  
(finds three suitcases)  
-- and just enough of the right kind of ash.

Travers opens one of the cases, which is identical to the others -- except that it's full of one dollar bills. He's thought of everything.

TRAVERS

We get twenty-one gun funerals and they write off fifty million. It's perfect, as long as you hold the plane steady -- so concentrate.

Travers moves back into the cabin.

INSIDE QUALEN'S JET

We can now see four other passengers. All are fit and armed -- HELDON and RYAN are seated, while KYNETTE and DELMER, ready to help with the transfer, are on the opposite side of the door from a very impatient Qualen.

QUALEN

(into radio)  
Travers -- hurry it up.

INSIDE TREASURY JET

Travers, now in a harness like the one seen earlier -- uncuffs the money cases from the agents.

TRAVERS

(into radio)

On my way.

Travers steps back into the cockpit and flips a toggle switch over and LED --

THE LED

starts counting down from 2:00 -- 1:59 -- 1:58 --

IN THE COCKPIT

Even in the last minute, the storm's gotten worse -- the plane is flying right into the blackest center of it. The pilot looks more panicked than ever.

TRAVERS

That charge is going to blow both engines -- the plane'll go down like a rock, so clip yourself on to the end of the cable with the money as soon as I get over.

(an afterthought)

And make sure you bring the right cases.

Travers heads back into the cabin and hooks his harness to the cable between the planes.

TRAVERS

(into the headset)

Dip the plane. I'm coming over.

THE JETS - LONG SHOT

Qualen's jet dips down so there's a sharp incline -- Travers starts the slide down, zipping in seconds across into

QUALEN'S JET

where he's pulled in and unclipped by Qualen.

QUALEN

(shouting over the wind)

Why didn't you send the money over?

TRAVERS

(shouting too)

Somehow, I didn't think you'd have waited for me if I'd sent it first.

Qualen smiles in reply. No. Maybe he wouldn't.

IN THE TREASURY PLANE COCKPIT

The pilot locks the controls and rushes back to the cabin.

THE LED

counts down -- 0:38 -- 0:37 -- 0:38 --

IN THE TREASURY PLANE CABIN

The pilot gathers the cases and uses their cuffs to attach them to the cable -- but as he steps past the bodies of --

THE AGENTS

Matheson's eyes open -- he's not dead yet.

IN THE CABIN

The pilot clicks the last of the three cases onto the cable and is about to put his harness on -- but behind him, Matheson shakily crawls to his feet, draws his gun, and SHOOTs the pilot in the back twice.

THE PILOT

drops out of the plane, flailing -- if he's screaming, we can't hear it over the HOWLING of the storm --

IN QUALEN'S JET

Qualen and Travers are watching the whole plan unravel --

TRIVERS

(shouting to cockpit)

Get underneath the jet! The cases will slide over!

THE JETS - LONG SHOT

Qualen's jet sharply dips down and the cases start to slide over -- but at the same time --

INSIDE THE TREASURY JET

Matheson, groggy, holds onto the doorway and FIRES a full clip from his automatic at Qualen's jet -- and

THE LED

counts down -- 0:02 -- 0:01 -- 0:00 -- and

THE TREASURY JET'S ENGINES

are destroyed as the charge DETONATES --

THE JETS - LONG SHOT

As promised, the Treasury jet is now plummeting as if it had no wings at all, levelling the angle between the planes -- the cases dangle precariously on the wire --

INSIDE QUALEN'S JET

TRAVERS

(shouting)

Lower! Get underneath it!

INSIDE TREASURY JET

Matheson struggles to the cockpit and gets behind the controls -- as if that's going to do any good --

THE JETS - LONG SHOT

Qualen's jet is deliberately racing the disabled Treasury jet down, but it's hopeless -- there's no way to get underneath the falling jet long enough for the cases to slide over.

INSIDE QUALEN'S JET - KRISTEL

isn't quite panicked. Yet.

KRISTEL

It's dragging us down! Disconnect the cable!

INT. QUALEN'S JET - CABIN

Heldon and Ryan try to do just that, but the cable is taut -- there's no way to loosen the clip on the door --

BOTH JETS

dive down faster at an ever steeper angle, over the edge of the Colorado mountain range --

INSIDE THE TREASURY JET

-- the clip on the door finally breaks --

BOTH JETS - LONG SHOT

-- the Treasury jet drops as Qualen's jet, trailing the cable

and the money, sharply shoots upward --

THE TREASURY JET

makes a one point landing nose first into the wilderness,  
cartwheeling into a FIREBALL!

INT./EXT. RANGER STATION

The sound of the EXPLOSION, muffled in the wind, far-off, but  
audible, drives Hal outside -- he's alert, but can't see  
anything in the murk of the storm --

INT. QUALEN'S JET - THE COCKPIT - KRISTEL

levels off the plane, but it's still in trouble --

CABIN - QUALEN AND TRAVERS

struggle to reel in the cable, because --

CLOSE ON THE CABLE

The money cases are still, barely, holding on, the cuffs  
caught on the broken clip at the end --

QUALEN AND TRAVERS

aren't even bothering with the electric winch, they're  
dragging it in hand over hand -- but --

CLOSE ON THE CABLE

-- the cases, torn by the wind, work their way loose one at a  
time and drop -- one -- two -- three -- into the snowy  
mountains below!

IN THE CABIN

Heldon and Ryan clamp the door shut as Qualen angrily attacks  
Travers --

THE COCKPIT - KRISTEL

tries to bring the plane up, but can't -- the fuel gauge  
needle is dropping fast --

INSERT - THE WING

is pouring out fuel through a dozen bullet holes -- one of two  
engines sputters to a stop.

THE COCKPIT - KRISTEL POV

The plane is now just skirting the mountain tops, and is still being battered by storm winds -- Kristel aims it for what looks like the flattest, longest mountain top --

THE CABIN

Kynette and Ryan grab Qualen and Travers to separate them -- all strap in, because

THE PLANE

is going down -- it just tops the edge of a precipice and hits the ground level --

THE MOUNTAIN TOP - LONG SHOT

-- the problem is, the ground itself isn't level, it tilts down towards another edge five hundred yards distant -- if the plane keeps skidding, it'll go over the edge --

THE PLANE

sleds down at an angle, skipping over rocks -- -- through trees --

-- tearing off a wing --

THE COCKPIT

Kristel rides the stick only out of habit -- nothing she does is going to matter now --

INSIDE THE CABIN

The men are jolted around -- windows IMplode as Kynette tries to protect a bag of what is obviously explosives --

THE PLANE

rips downhill through a wooded area like a runaway train --

-- the second wing is sheared off by trees --

COCKPIT POV - THE OPPOSITE EDGE

is coming up fast -- but

THE PLANE

wrenches to a sudden halt, the fuselage intact.

WIDER VIEW - THE PLANE

or what's left of it has stopped several feet short of the edge -- we can see why: the steel cable, trailing from the cargo door, has lashed itself around a half dozen trees, acting as a tripwire to stop the plane.

INSIDE THE PLANE

Quiet. All are dazed but, outside of superficial cuts, unhurt. Kristel moves out of the cockpit, looking around.

KRISTEL

So much for phase one.  
(to Travers)  
Now what?

She speaks for all of them -- especially a still-seething Qualen. Travers pulls out the tracer monitor for the cases. The tracer screen shows three distinct blips -- the tracers have survived the fall.

TRAVERS

Now -- we call the police.

INT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Hal, agitated, paces in the main office -- Frank, unconcerned, puts a coat hanger and some aluminum foil on a little TV to drag in the fading signal of a Broncos game.

HAL

Look -- I know there's a storm, but that wasn't thunder.

FRANK

(unconcerned)  
Hal, when you've been in this line as long as I have --

The station's scanner radio barks to life.

KRISTEL (O.S.)

(panicky)  
Mayday -- mayday -- downed DC-3 --  
mayday --

Hal runs to the radio and keys the mike.

HAL

Rocky Mountain Rescue -- come in,

mayday --

INT. COCKPIT

Kristel is on the radio, as Travers and Qualen hang back. Kristel's voice is panicked but she can't suppress a grin.

KRISTEL

Downed charter flight  
alpha-charlie-niner--  
(keys mike to "garble"  
transmission)  
-- dead, seven seriously wounded,  
acknowledge --

INT. RANGER STATION

HAL

Acknowledged, mayday. What's your  
position?

KRISTEL (O.S.)

("panicked")  
Don't know -- position unknown --  
landed on top of some mountain -- only  
visual bearing is a facing  
cylinder-type formation -- over --

HAL

Got to be Comb Bluff.  
(keys mike)  
Acknowledged, mayday. Winds are too  
strong for us to get a copter up there  
-- can you and your passengers make it  
through the storm? Over --

KRISTEL (O.S.)

Negative -- cockpit is on fire --  
fuselage broken into three sep--  
("garble")  
--ed in shock. Need medical supplies,  
including insulin, repeat, insulin, as  
soon as po --

Dead silence. The transmission cuts off/

HAL

Mayday -- come in, mayday --

INT. COCKPIT

Kristel hangs up the radio and smiles, Travers and Qualen

standing behind her. Qualen lightly applauds.

QUALEN

Not bad. The insulin was a nice touch.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The Bronco wends through a winding country road, coming finally to a cabin settled in a clearing.

GABE

pulls into the driveway and puts the Bronco in park. He doesn't cut the engine, because he's not sure whether he's going in or not. Finally -- he cuts the ignition.

INT. CABIN - DAY

A knock on the door brings no response -- no one inside. Gabe opens the unlocked door -- and steps inside.

GABE

Maggie?

No answer. Gabe takes a look around the living room. His face tells us, without a doubt, this used to be his home. Gabe moves inside, pausing at a mantle. Two framed photos -- Gabe and Maggie sleeping together in a hammock, bolted to a sheer wall over a 2,000 foot drop. Gabe, Hal and Maggie, all younger, all sporting drunken grins, in a mountain cave. Gabe smiles for the first time today at this memory -- a BANGING at the back of the cabin shakes him out of it.

EXT. CABIN - DAY - THE BACK DOOR

has come open and swings in the wind. Gabe steps outside and pulls it shut. Gabe looks down and sees tracks that lead to a small but sturdy shed a few yards away. Gabe heads over to it.

INT. SHED - DAY

Not a storage shed at all -- it's a small workspace that offers solid protection from the elements, is well-lit, and whistle-clean. Maggie, in front of a table, pulls a cover off.

A LARGE PLASTIC CAGE

-- inside is a bald eagle. One of maybe 2,000 left in the country. Its uneven feathering and small, gawky size tells us it isn't nearly full grown. A bandage on its side tells us it's been injured. Maggie's smile tells us it's healing.

MAGGIE

Hey there --

The door to the shed opens -- Gabe steps in, and shuts the door behind him. Maggie looks surprised to see him. Gabe just looks awkward.

GABE

Hi.

(beat)

Could you introduce us?

MAGGIE

Sure. Gabe Walker -- this is A27.  
A27 -- Gabe.

GABE

Not the tag -- what do you call  
him?

MAGGIE

Her. I call her Lucky.

GABE

(bends down, eyes wound)

Poachers?

(Maggie nods)

Bastards...

MAGGIE

They got the mother -- and left this  
one behind. Too small to make a decent  
trophy, I guess.

GABE

About four months, right?

(Maggie nods)

Christ -- it must have been just about  
his -- I mean her -- first flight --

MAGGIE

Time to change the dressing.

Maggie pulls on a pair of pair of cowhide gloves.

GABE

You can't do that alone --

MAGGIE

I've had to learn. She trust me --

Maggie reaches into the cage, but the eagle starts thrashing.

GABE

I'm making her nervous --

(beat)

You hold her, I'll do the dressing.

Gabe finds another pair of gloves, sterile cotton pads and alcohol in a drawer -- Maggie reaches in and grabs the eagle's beak and talons quickly but gently, and takes it out of the cage, holding it firm. This is clearly something they've done many times before. They move together, tight -- Gabe and Maggie both react to this bit of close contact as they bandage the eagle. It's getting warmer in here. Gabe reaches down and yanks off the patch. The eagle thrashes as Gabe cleans the wound.

GABE

Got some fight in her -- that's good.

(beat)

What happened to Dave?

MAGGIE

The usual. Flew off -- never calls,  
never writes --

Gabe winces at this one as he carefully tapes the small patch and sticks it on the eagle's side. Maggie puts the eagle back in the cage and closes the top door. Gabe and Maggie don't move any further apart as they pull their gloves off. Gabe tentatively reaches for Maggie's face -- but she pushes him hand away.

MAGGIE

I'm glad to see you, Gabe. But I kind  
of wish you hadn't come. I was almost  
used to you being gone.

(beat, quiet)

Why are you here?

GABE

(pauses)

I thought I came back to see if I'd  
learned to live with it. Well, big  
surprise. Coming back just tore me  
open all over again, like it all  
happened yesterday instead of a year  
ago. Nothing's changed. Including the  
way I feel about you.

(beat)

I didn't realize it till I saw you at  
the airport. But I came back for you,  
Maggie.

MAGGIE

Does that mean you're going to stay?

GABE

No. Not here.

(beat)

I want you come with me. Start over,  
somewhere else.

MAGGIE

(incredulous)

You come back after being gone a year,  
and you expect me to --

(beat)

You don't live here any more, Gabe.  
Your choice, remember? But this is  
my home. I'm not leaving. You can  
stay with me, or you can go alone.  
It's still your choice.

HAL (O.S.)

Now there's an easy call.

Standing in the shed's doorway is Hal. Stone faced. Grim.

OUTSIDE SHED

Furious, Gabe heads out after Hal.

GABE

What the hell do you want?

HAL

(beat)

I need your help. A plane's gone down  
on Comb Bluff. This storm would blow  
a copter all over the place -- but we  
can climb up to it.

GABE

"We"?

(beat)

Talk to somebody who's still on the  
payroll. You've got a half dozen new  
guys --

HAL

-- who couldn't climb that wall now if  
there were stairs cut into it. But  
you've soloed it.

GABE

During the summer. On a bet.

HAL

This is a little more important than a bet. Just a few injured people with no first aid or shelter, camping in a zero degree blizzard. They'll be ice sculptures by tomorrow morning.

GABE

(shakes his head)

Maybe you missed the headlines -- but I don't do rescues any more. They're bad for my conscience.

(beat)

Fuck this one up on your own.

Gabe walks past Hal. Furious, Hal spins Gabe around.

HAL

Play it again, Gabe, about how we killed her. I was there too, remember?

GABE

(hot)

Not like I was, pal -- her fingers brushed mine on the way down --

HAL

(right back)

-- and I was the one who had to deal with her family when you fucking tore out of town.

(takes a breath)

We lost her. Whatever anybody says about cold stress and the clip, you and I have to live with that. But right now, there are some more people who need our help, and they shouldn't die too just because you've got a problem keeping the past in the past.

Gabe knows he's right. But he's hesitant. And scared.

GABE

I don't want the responsibility.

HAL

Walk away and you are responsible. They'll die. I can't do this alone.

(Gabe slows but doesn't

stop)

You know what else, Gabe? You can go anywhere you want, but if you don't do this, now, you're going to be stuck on that goddamn ledge for the rest of your life.

Gabe turns. Sees Maggie in the doorway. She's heard every word. Gabe turns to Hal -- hesitates -- and nods.

EXT. COMB BLUFF TRAILHEAD - WIDE SHOT - DAY

Relative to the other mountains, Comb Bluff is smaller -- about 2,500 feet high. But that's like saying the Empire State Building is smaller than the Sears Tower. It's still a long way up if you're climbing the stairs.

ON THE GROUND - GABE AND HAL

with full packs of mountaineering gear on. They've got to climb up this beast. Gabe -- now back in his orange Sheriff's jacket -- scrambles with Hal up the base of the mountain, the last few yards before it turns into a sloping wall. Gabe takes a bolt gun -- which fires rope-fastened bolts into rock -- and hangs it from a strap on his chest.

HAL

(indicating gun)

That thing's dead weight. Completely useless for an ice climb.

GABE

Just backup.

Gabe readies a coil of rope and starts up the wall.

GABE

(not a challenge)

I'll lead. I left a few bolts last time I climbed this -- I think I can find some of them.

Hal starts up after Gabe, easily keeping pace with him.

HAL

Save the rope for when it gets tough.

(beat, realizing)

That bet was for you to free climb the wall.

GABE

(further up)

Tell you what, Hal -- if we're still alive tomorrow morning, I'll give you the twenty bucks back, okay?

COMB BLUFF - LONG SHOT

Two orange specks move their way up the mountain -- it's definitely going to be a long trip.

DISSOLVE TO:

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

are now visibly 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 -- and coated with ice. Rough, irregular ice ledges are all Gabe and Hal can grip -- it's a matter of grabbing what you can for a handhold, and kicking the spikes of the steel crampons on their boots into the ice for footholds. Gabe leads, planting pitons into the ice, threading the rope through them as he goes. Three steel pins between Gabe and Hal. Their only safety net. Gabe, trailing rope behind him, goes up a difficult slab of ice and climbs under a ledge, where he anchors the rope in the ice with another piton.

GABE

(shouting down)

Anchored!

HAL

is beside and slightly below Gabe -- at the other end of the fifty foot rope. Hal cautiously pulls himself along the line to the first piton -- as is standard for a climb, he pulls out the piton, then moves on to the second -- but up above

HIGHER ON THE MOUNTAIN

Ice, building in a small crevasse, builds and CRACKS the adjoining rock -- several ten-pound boulders fall, causing a chain reaction

ROCKSLIDE

that bounces down the wall --

GABE

hugs the ice wall, making himself as flat as possible --

GABE

(shouting down)

Rockslide!

HAL

flattens too as rocks bounce past -- the second anchoring piton LOOSENS as it is struck by a falling rock -- Hal nervously eyes the last piton between him and Gabe --

THE PITON - CLOSE

also has been clipped by the still falling boulders and droops at half mast -- no way are these going to hold in the unreliable ice --

HAL

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

WIDER - HAL FALLING

In falling, Hal's weight on the rope yanks out the nearest anchor piton -- Hal tumbles in space, keeping pace with the boulders, as --

GABE

who's seen everything we have, 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 --

GABE

lashes the rope to his shoulder, bracing for the coming impact

by lodging his feet in the ice --

THE JOLT - WIDER SHOT

The line pulls taut, leaving Hal suspended, the wind knocked out of him from the impact --

GABE

is almost dragged down by the jolt -- he painfully takes most of the impact in his shoulders -- the shock forces his feet through an ice ledge -- 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 --

Hal climbs up the rope, finally reaching another ledge slightly below Gabe's. Hal leans against the wall, gasping, as Gabe clips the gun to his pack.

HAL

(looking up at gun)

Don't say it --

GABE

(wheezing too)

It's kind of hard to resist --

GABE

It's not dead  
weight -- you  
are.

HAL

It's not dead  
weight -- I am.

Hal and Gabe start howling -- that hysterical, giddy laugh that only comes from just missing a violent end.

WIDE SHOT ON MOUNTAIN - THE TWO LEDGES

Hal and Gabe's friendship is starting to resurface -- their LAUGHTER is nearly louder than the wind, as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PRECIPICE EDGE - DAY - BINOCULAR POV

From the top of the bluff, someone is looking down through binoculars -- Gabe and Hal's orange jackets are plainly visible a few hundred yards below.

RYAN

lowers the binoculars, and keys an ear button on the headset radio he's wearing, sending a beep.

INSIDE THE PLANE

Travers is wearing another headset -- the others are just resting in the seats

TRAVERS

(into mouthpiece)

Have they arrived?

(two beeps in response)

Good. Return to the plane and cover your tracks.

QUALEN

(to others)

Get ready.

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/CRASH SITE

and helps Hal up. From here, the rest of the range looms large. Even in the continuing snowstorm, it's a spectacular sight -- but Gabe and Hal don't pause to enjoy it. This isn't a trip for sport. Hal looks off into the trees, and sees the torn tree stumps from the plane crash.

HAL

(grim)

That's it.

Hal and Gabe run into the wooded area and follow the wreckage -- felled trees, a smashed wing -- and reach

THE FUSELAGE

which sits intact by the other edge of the precipice.

GABE

I thought the fuselage was broken.  
That looks pretty cozy.

HAL

(puzzled too)  
The pilot was hysterical.

GABE

Something's wrong here --

HAL

Does this look like a prank to you?  
Come on --

Hal pulls open the passenger door and goes in -- Gabe, wary, takes a look around the plane.

INSIDE THE FUSELAGE

It's comparatively dark in here -- Hal starts in, shining a light -- the beam finds

HAL'S POV - TRAVERS

slumped down on the cabin floor, a blanket wrapped around him -- he's shaking and is generally giving a good impression of a shock victim. Hal rushes to him.

HAL

Relax -- we're here to help --

"Weak", Travers whispers as Hal gives him some water.

HAL

Don't try to talk --

Travers won't quit -- Hal leans down to hear.

TRAVERS

(hoarse whisper)  
Where?

HAL

-- Where? What are you --

A gun barrel moves INTO VIEW as it presses against Hal's neck. Heldon and Ryan are right behind him. Travers instantly drops his act.

TRAVERS

You said "we". Where are the rest?

GABE - OUTSIDE THE FUSELAGE

notes footprints in the snow -- fresh ones -- and kneels down to look at the cable wrapped around the tree. No ordinary accident. But before he can think about this, he gets an earful of gun barrel from Qualen, who is behind him.

INSIDE THE FUSELAGE

Qualen hustles Gabe inside the plane -- his hands are on his head, and his pack has been removed. Qualen throws the pack to Ryan and Delmer, who rifle through it, removing anything that could be a weapon -- they quickly confiscate Gabe's bolt gun and ice axe.

TRAVERS

What's for dinner?

(Kynette tosses packet)

Ugh. "Dried Beef Slices With Barbeque Sauce."

(tosses it back)

Try and make this edible.

Travis looks at Hal's park ranger badge.

TRAVERS

Hal Tucker.

(to Gabe)

Where's yours?

QUALEN

He doesn't have one. Just a wallet.

Qualen tosses it to Travers, who glances through it.

TRAVERS

Gabe Walker...

(notes photo of Maggie)

Very attractive.

GABE

My ex.

TRAVERS

Too bad. Let me tell you what's on for today. We'd like you to help settle a wager. You see, we lost some luggage --

Travers motions to Ryan and Qualen, who shove Gabe and Hal forward in the cabin. Travers takes out the tracer monitor.

TRAVERS

(showing them the blips)

See these? Now I've bet the gentlemen behind you that you know enough about this mountain range to lead us to each of these, quickly, and that you'd be happy to do so. They bet me you couldn't and wouldn't.

(guns are clicked)

Now tell me -- who wins?

Gabe and Hal eye each other -- no choice. Gabe nods.

TRAVERS

Good dog. Now let's get this expedition started.

EXT. FACING MOUNTAIN - WIDE SHOT

Hal and Gabe lead the "expedition" down a steep, but passable, descent, leading to --

A NATURAL STONE BRIDGE

that links Comb Bluff with the next mountain. Travers stops Gabe and pulls out the monitor.

TRAVERS

Okay. Connect the dots.

Gabe pauses as he holds the monitor up against the mountainscape.

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 his gun. Gabe hands the monitor back to Travers.

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. Wide enough even for an amateur. The others follow Gabe and Hal's example.

DISSOLVE TO:

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. Hal and Gabe lead them by jumping to the next ledge.

CLOSER ON HAL AND GABE

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

GABE

(sotto)

We don't have to do this. We know these mountains -- they don't. If we can get ahead --

HAL

Can you climb faster than they can shoot?

GABE

We've got to try something. Think we'll get a finder's fee after they get all their "luggage"?

HAL

Sure. All the bullets we can eat.

GABE

That's not what really worries me.

HAL

There's something else to worry about?

GABE

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

HAL

(realizing)

Maggie.

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

#### THE WALL

The climbers have reached a point of comparative comfort on the wall -- the ledge is now two feet wide. Travers takes out the tracer monitor -- the monitor shows that the first case is just above them.

TRAVERS

Hold it.  
(beat)  
It's up there.

#### "UP THERE" - AN OVERHANG

juts out of the wall fifty feet above their position. As the rest of the wall above is completely sheer, it's obvious that the case, if it is above, has landed on top of a ledge.

But this isn't easily accessible -- we MOVE DOWN from the overhang and can see there are only the smallest of handholds to get up there, and those are slick with ice and snow. Worse, the rest of the mountain bulges outward in a curve, making climbing almost impossible.

#### ON THE LEDGE

Travers holds his gun on Gabe, and motions up

TRAVERS

Fetch.

GABE

I'll need the ice axe.

TRAVERS

(laughs)  
You've got to be kidding.

GABE

(sighs)  
Okay. How about some tape?

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

GABE

Crampons too.

Travers hesitates, but nods -- Kynette throws him the iron

spikes. Gabe fastens them to his boots.

Gabe looks up -- this is going to be tough, even for him. In spite of the cold, he takes off his gloves -- that's how small these holds are -- and he meticulously tapes up his hands and his fingers.

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 painfully wedge his fingers into small cracks, essentially supporting his weight only by several fingerholds at any given moment. We can see from the angle that Gabe is at least 3,000 feet from solid ground. We can see from his face that he's trying not to think about it.

ON THE LEDGE - TRAVERS AND QUALEN

watch Gabe's slow progress.

QUALEN

I don't trust him.

TRAVERS

(indicating wall)

Where could he go?

QUALEN

I'd rather he didn't show us.

(beat)

We don't need two guides.

TRAVERS

(shrugs)

You win. Kill him when he gets down.

GABE ON THE WALL - CLOSE

Make that "if he comes down". Gabe is now in one of the worst positions possible for a free climb. He is moving up the underside of the overhang and 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 forcing fingers into ice and rock again and again. Gabe keeps his hold with one hand and slides the other up, hammering it into a crack wedge 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 pulls himself prone across the top. Something hard is underneath him -- Gabe recovers and brushes the snow off the money case that's underneath. It's battered from the fall, but is still barely holding together. Gabe manages to force open the trashed locks -- he looks inside the case, and fingers a band of \$5000s.

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 - GAB

has no intention of doing this -- he snaps the case shut and 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. They can't. Until --

GABE (O.S.)

(shouting down)

I've got a better idea. Why don't you come up and get it?

With the case, Gabe moves, back against the wall, on a ledge that skirts off the overhang -- 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)

Get him!

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, but not much --

HAL

looks up, worried --

HAL'S POV - ICE AND SNOW

piled by the ton from the storm, lie further above -- the ice holding it back already, already weakened by the sun, is being chiselled away by bullets --

ON THE LOWER LEDGE - QUALEN

grabs Hal and puts the gun to his head.

QUALEN

(shouting)

Bring the money down, or we kill your friend!

Travers pushes the barrel away from Hal, shaking his head.

TRAVERS

We can't.

(frowning)

And he knows it.

WIDER ANGLE ON MOUNTAIN - THE PARALLEL LEDGES

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 finally give way, dropping an avalanche on

GABE

who drops the case and hugs the wall --

THE AVALANCHE - WIDE VIEW 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 uselessly as he's swallowed in an explosion of white -- as well as a flurry of green as the bills scatter amid the snow --

-- then: quiet. The avalanche ends as abruptly as it started. The rumble dies down to complete silence.

TRAVERS

apoplectic, stares at seventeen 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. Travers FIRES an entire clip at where Gabe used to be. The snow FALLS AWAY, revealing nothing but stark rock. Gabe has been swept away.

HAL

reacts and attacks Travers.

HAL

You son of a bitch --

Travers turns and pins Hal against the wall with the gun, ready to kill him too. But he's stopped by Qualen.

QUALEN

No. We need him to get the rest of the

money.

(he isn't backing down)

If he dies we lose everything

Travers, furious, takes the gun out of Hal's face.

TRAVERS

(to Hal)

Get us out of here.

Hal stares at Travers with absolute fury -- but he leads the gang back along the ledge in retreat.

EXT. FURTHER DOWN THE MOUNTAIN - DAY

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

EVAN

What the hell --

Evan takes a pair of overpriced 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 an orange-jacketed figure.

EVAN

lowers the binoculars.

EVAN

Brett -- you're not going to believe this -- but a couple of guys are holding a gun on Hal and forcing him up the bluff --

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, amazed.

EVAN

What the fuck is going on here?

Brett picks up the gun -- this is more an adventure than he

ever dreamed of.

BRETT

Let's catch up and find 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, there's some 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 with some difficulty, he digs himself out, gasping and coughing. Gabe, coated with snow, leans against the wall and rests. Alive.

INT. RANGER STATION - DAY

Maggie is on the phone, 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

(keying mike)

Rescue Unit -- what's going on,  
Hall? -- over --

EXT. MOUNTAIN - WOODED AREA - DAY

Travers has his gun pressed to Hal's temple.

TRAVERS

No tricks, no procedural codes, no  
personal messages -- just tell them  
everything's under control and you're  
taking care of the wounded.

HAL

(keys it)

We've reached the wreckage -- top of  
Comb Bluff -- six injured, but they're

responding to treatment. Everything  
A-OK. Over.

MAGGIE (O.S.)  
Everything isn't okay, Hal -- I'm  
coming up after you -- over --

HAL  
Negative, Maggie. Winds are too  
high, and the passengers' injuries are  
all superficial. We're going to ride  
out the storm here -- over --

Travers yanks away the radio.

TRAVERS  
Have her come up.

HAL  
Forget it -- downdrafts would wipe her  
all over the peaks --  
(Travers starts to argue)  
-- Not that I expect you to give a  
shit, but it's our only copter.  
You'll be stuck.

Travers relents and hands the radio back.

MAGGIE (O.S.)  
I can handle the winds --

HAL  
(breaking in)  
Forget about it, Maggie, that's an  
order -- acknowledge --

INT. RANGER STATION

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

MAGGIE  
Acknowledged. Let me talk to Gabe --  
over --

HAL (O.S.)  
(hesitates)  
You can't. He's taking care of  
passengers. Just like I should be.  
Over and out.

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

tries not to worry. She fails miserably.

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 takes 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. This'll be long, but easy -- more like a hike than a climb.

TRAVERS

(suspicious)

It looks like a winding route.

HAL

There's a more direct route. The East Face. But it's the wall on the other side, and 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 snowstorm.

Travers digests this, and motions Hal to move on as we --

CUT TO:

CLOSE SHOT - GABE'S FACE

is torn in pain. In spite of the cold and wind, he's drenched in sweat, half exertion, half fear. We pull back to take in

THE EAST WALL - LONG SHOT

Envision a wall. A really big wall. A really, really big wall. A wall that's as wide as it is high -- five thousand feet by five thousand feet -- narrowing to a domed peak at the summit.

Now picture the same wall, checkered with ice. If this were horizontal, you or I couldn't walk on it without falling.

Now picture the same wall with an orange dot, two-thirds of the way up it. The orange dot is

GABE

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

He's improvised gear -- he's tied a crampon to one hand. But it's as awkward as it sounds. Gabe 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.

CUT TO;

INT. DENVER MINT - WRIGHT'S OFFICE - DAY

Wright's pacing around, trying to figure out what in his office he should break first. Davis shows up at the door.

WRIGHT

(furious)

Okay -- I know it's not in San Francisco. I know it's not here. I know it's not in any fucking airport from here to Montana. Where it's not - we got that covered. Now, do you have any ideas on where it is?

DAVIS

(walking to a map)

There's no radio contact, sir. At all. We're not receiving the tracer signal from the cockpit's flight recorder. Radar lost it after it went low here.

He points to a huge part of Colorado. Hundreds of square miles.

DAVIS

We have to assume it went down in the storm.

WRIGHT

Air search?

DAVIS

(shakes head)

That storm hasn't quit yet. Weather service says we've got it until tomorrow morning at least. Even if we could get a plane up now, it'd be impossible to see anything on the ground. And --

Wright slumps into a chair.

WRIGHT

-- The roads are shut down, right?

DAVIS

Most of this area doesn't even have roads.

WRIGHT

(rubs his eyes)

Keep two copters on full standby. And let me know the second that storm starts to wind down.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE EAST FACE - WIDE SHOT - DAY - GABE

is clearly exhausted and freezing -- his lips are blue, his eyebrows encrusted with snow. Wind still 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.

(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.

WIDER ON MOUNTAIN

Gabe finally reaches the top of the wall, where it meets an enormous overhang of ice.

GABE

is right underneath where the ice flows over the wall. Gabe takes his handheld crampon and hammers it into the ice overhead with more force than usual. This one is going to have to hold.

Gabe steels himself for a tough move -- with one hand gripping that crampon, he swings out, away from the wall.

Only the crampon spikes jammed into the ice above his hand are keeping Gabe from falling. Gabe needs the second crampon to make the move up -- but that's not going to be easy to get. It's attached to his boot.

As Gabe clings to the upper crampon, his body swaying, he reaches down with his free hand to loosen the other crampon.

GABE'S POV - DOWN

The ground is one slip and five thousand feet away. Gabe fumbles desperately with the buckles on the crampons -- but both his fingers, and the buckles, are frozen stiff --

GABE'S FACE

shows real, solid terror for the first time --

GABE'S POV - DOWN

Gabe gets the first buckle off -- then the second. The crampon is off his boot.

GABE

still swinging from one hand, takes the now-freed crampon and slams it into the ice. It doesn't hold -- but the force of Gabe's swing, pushing him away, has loosened the other crampon. Gabe only gets one more shot at this -- he swings the free crampon up with all his might -- it catches in the same split second as the other dislodges.

But the hard part is over -- with the two crampons, Gabe quickly manages to climb up over the lip of

THE ICE OVERHANG

This is a field of ice sloping up to the top. Gabe pulls himself a few feet away from the edge, and puts the crampons back on his feet where they belong. It's now pretty simple for Gabe to run up the ice slope three hundred yards to

THE SUMMIT

which is a rocky, wooded area. Gabe seems to have a second wind now -- he runs to the other side of the summit. The other side is obviously the route Hal and the others will be taking -- beneath the summit is a winding, well-beaten path. Gabe finally arrives at a small shack with a sign nearby

commemorating the "DOUGLAS EXPEDITION - 1933".

INT. THE SHACK

is just a small "point of interest" shed for hardy tourists who have hiked up this far -- there is a corny photo stand, where you stick your head through a hole, so your face is put on top of a cartoon climber hacking up a mountain. Gabe rushes past this to a glass display case on the wall.

THE GORDON DOUGLAS DISPLAY

has black and white photos of 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, other odds and ends. Gabe prepares to smash the glass -- and hesitates. Respect.

GABE

(sighing)

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

Gabe SMASHES the glass as we move to --

EXT. THE TRAIL - DAY

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. Ryan is huffing and puffing -- the altitude and exertion are getting to him. Hal allows himself a smile at his discomfort.

HAL

Come on -- tourists take this trail.

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

EXT. THE SUMMIT - DUSK

It's getting dark rapidly -- Gabe has scaled a rock formation so he has a view of the rest of the summit --

GABE'S POV - SCANNING THE TREELINE

Gabe slowly looks along the trees of the summit -- looks pretty ordinary to us, but something must have caught Gabe's eye, because he swings back to look at one tree. With broken branches on top.

GABE

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

EXT. SUMMIT TRAIL - NIGHT

This "expedition" reaches the top -- Hal is in the lead, with Qualen just inches behind. Qualen shoves Hal forward.

TRAVERS

Is this it?

HAL

Yeah. This is it.

TRAVERS

Good. Get out of the way.

Travers takes out the tracer and starts following the blip.

ELSEWHERE ON THE SUMMIT - GABE

frantically rushes around, looking for the case -- he spots a crater of snow, rushes to it and starts digging. Even below the snow, the tracer's blinking red light is glowing and 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.

TRAVERS

(smiling)

This way.

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

TRAVERS

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

THE MONITOR

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

TRAVERS

shoves his way through some small pines -- he can see the blinking of the red tracer light ahead through the branches.

TRAVERS

(calling behind)

It's 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

cute, if hastily constructed, stands with a five-pebble smile, as well as Douglas' cap, in a clearing. The still blinking, still operable tracer is now the nose of the snowman. The case is leaned up against it.

Travers runs over to the case, furious, and opens it. It's empty -- except for a single \$5000 bill. Travers picks it up -- scrawled on the margin is "LET'S TRADE."

TRAVERS

(incredulous)

He's still alive.

(furious)

He's still alive!

(to Qualen and the  
others)

He can't be far away -- spread out!

Qualen, Kynette, Delmer and Krystel fan out into the woods, each with a flashlight and a fun. Ryan, however, straps on nightfinder goggles and runs out without a flashlight.

TRAVERS

(to Hal, brandishing gun)

Put your hands on your head.

ELSEWHERE ON THE SUMMIT - GABE

watches the chaos with a grin from a slightly 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 -- before he can get far --

"NIGHTFINDER" POV - RYAN

looks up, and can clearly see Gabe climbing down the small rock, twenty yards distant --

RYAN

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

GABE

is startled as the bullets impact inches over his head -- he jumps the last ten feet to the ground 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 too, trying to dodge Ryan's continuing fusillades -- Gabe knows this territory, but to him, it's still pitch dark -- he stumbles, and rams against trees --

RYAN

keeps coming up behind, closing the gap, Gabe's bright form just ahead --

GABE

comes out of the trees and finds he is on another part of the summit. All that's beneath him is

GABE'S POV

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

GABE

is driven forward by a fresh burst of bullets -- he dives to the edge of the ice field and ducks behind a boulder -- the sole source of cover.

ELSEWHERE ON THE SUMMIT

Kristel, Qualen and Kynette, having heard the gunshots, are now rushing to Gabe's position --

RYAN

almost casually 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. Gabe pulls out his lighter and tries to light it -- it resists and looks like a dud, but finally it catches, and 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, putting one hand over the goggles, trying to rip them off --

GABE

bolts out from behind the boulder to rush him --

RYAN

instantly aware of what Gabe's doing, blindly shoots, fanning out in a semi-circle as he gets the goggles off --

GABE

just runs straight ahead to Ryan, getting to him before the machine gun field of fire can intersect his path -- Gabe tackles Ryan as he manages to get the goggles off -- both men fall to the ground, and --

The machine gun CLATTERS away, landing on the edge of the ice, just out of reach -- Ryan, now recovered from the blinding flash, pulls an ice axe out of a pack sheath and swings it at Gabe -- Gabe rolls away in time, 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 -- but the momentum of Ryan's hit also carries

both Gabe and Ryan over the edge, onto --

THE ICE SLOPE

Gabe and Ryan both tumble over the edge and 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, irregular ridges, both large and small, that slice through clothing and shred skin as they pick up speed --

GABE'S UPSIDE-DOWN POV - THE ICE FIELD

The edge and a five thousand foot drop are less than a hundred yards away --

GABE AND RYAN SLIDING

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

GABE'S POV - END OF THE ICE SLOPS

is coming up too fast --

GABE

tries to maintain his perch on Ryan, who is SCREAMING and not yet used to the idea of being a human sled -- he isn't remaining still enough to provide a smooth ride -- Gabe frantically reaches behind to Ryan's wrist 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, and look down, incredulous --

QUALEN POV - GABE RIDING RYAN

Gabe and Ryan, accelerating, have almost reached the edge --

GABE

finally grabs the ice axe, pulling it off Ryan's wrist -- just as they reach the precipice edge, Gabe loops the axe to his

wrist and swings 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. Gabe uses the axe to climb further down the ice to some rock -- finding easier hand holds, he quickly disappears into the darkness.

QUALEN, KRISTEL AND KYNETTE

look down -- Ryan's death scream is still echoing. Qualen is furious -- Gabe has escaped with the second case.

QUALEN

(to Kynette)

Follow him!

Kynette shines his flashlight below, illuminating the long, frozen streak of blood on the ice.

KYNETTE

(gestures with light)

After you.

INT. DOUGLAS TOURIST SHACK - NIGHT

The expedition has holed up here for the night -- Travers and Qualen look upset. Things aren't going as well as they'd hoped. 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. Delmer guards Hal, who is bound, and seated by the souvenir photo stand.

HAL

Well -- look at the bright side.

(beat)

At least you've only got to make the split five ways now.

EXT. MOUNTAIN LEDGE - NIGHT

Gabe confidently drops down onto a large 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. 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 we should also recognize this from the photo seen earlier as Gabe, Maggie and Hal's hangout.

GABE

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

GABE

Please still be there -- oh,  
please --

Gabe 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. Gabe smiles and leans against the wall, closing his eyes -- but he's startled instantly by a SCREECH -- Gabe's eyes shoot open --

An aggressive rat scurries toward him on the floor.

Gabe grabs a rock and CLOBBERS the rat off-screen, ending the screeches with one blow. Gabe's face first registers disgust -- then an idea. Then real disgust. Sighing, Gabe pulls out a pocket knife and opens the blade.

CUT TO:

INT. THE CAVE - A LITTLE LATER - CLOSE ON GABE

Gabe takes the now cooked rat carcass -- properly skinned and butchered -- off his knife blade. We can see from flickering shadows that a small fire is now burning in a cave -- we pull back to see

THE FIRE

which is built out of small bundles of \$5,000 bills. It's safe to say that something like \$500,000 is going up in smoke, and the fire's dying down. Gabe tosses a fresh band of bills on the flame. Gabe cools the knife in some snow, saws off a rat leg, and chews unhappily.

GABE

(mouth full)  
Mmm. Just like -- chicken.

Gabe sparingly washes the bite down with a taste of Jack

Daniel. It's going to have to last him. He has an entire rat to get through.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WIDE MOUNTAIN VIEW - DAWN

The first rays of the sun start to poke through the mountains. It's stopped snowing -- the storm seems to be letting up.

INT. RANGER STATION

Very quiet in here. Frank is snoring, slumped over the radio. Maggie is wide awake and obviously hasn't slept -- her attention is fixed out the window.

MAGGIE'S POV - WINDSPEED GAUGE

The gauge is still flying around, but clearly shows that the winds are slowing.

INT. DENVER MINT - WRIGHT'S OFFICE

Wright is coiled at his desk, tense. Ten empty styrofoam coffee cups -- and dark rings under Wright's eyes -- make clear he hasn't slept. Wright's assistant bursts in.

DAVIS

We've got a fix on the plane, sir --  
we're getting a reading on the flight  
recorder tracer --

WRIGHT

Any visual? Any radio contact?

DAVIS

Not yet --

WRIGHT

(heading to the door)  
Get the copters ready. We take off in  
three minutes.

DAVIS

The winds are still too strong --

WRIGHT

Sorry to hear it. We're still going.  
The plane might be intact.

Wright drags the protesting Davis out the door.

DAVIS

Sir --

WRIGHT

Shut up. That fifty million isn't coming out of my pension.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP - DOUGLAS TOURIST SHACK - DAY

Travers, Qualen and the rest of the expedition head out of the shack, a little groggy. Odds are no one got much sleep.

Travers shoves Hal toward a sketchy "YOU ARE HERE" map of the mountain range, and hands him the tracer monitor.

TRAVERS

Still interested in staying alive?

Hal matches the monitor to the map -- the blip is higher up.

HAL

(pointing to map)

It's up here. Somewhere on the Tower. There's a way to cross over to the top in about half a day.

TRAVERS

Show me.

Travers shoves Hal forward -- the others follow.

ELSEWHERE ON THE MOUNTAIN/SUMMIT - BINOCULAR POV

From about fifty yards off, someone watches Hal lead the gang away from the shack.

BRETT (O.S.)

They're heading toward the opposite edge. An easy way down.

BRETT AND EVAN

are crouched in the woods. Brett, gun in hand, has no idea how far out of his league he is. Evan looks like he's having second thoughts, but he can't hack down now.

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 lopes off toward his assignment.

BELOW - GABE'S CAVE

Gabe pulls his jacket on -- reversed, with the grey lining  
out, so the orange won't make him so easy to spot -- and  
starts out towards the facing Tower -- his route, clearly, is  
going to be along the rock wall. It's relatively sheer, but  
there are shelves cut into it to make walking easy.

MOUNTAIN TOP/SUMMIT - BRETT

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

HAL'S POV - ON BRETT

hiding 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, Delmer, Kristel and Kynette are startled, but don't  
immediately comply. This throws Brett off his stride.

BRETT

(nervous now)

You heard me! Drop the guns!

Travers smiles and steps closer to Brett. The others walk up  
in front of Hal. Travers actually laughs.

TRAVERS

"End of the line"? That's classic.

(beat)

You've got style. So, 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 Travers' 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 --

BRETT

Hey -- where's the other guy --

HAL

(shouting)

Brett, behind you!

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

QUALEN

easily 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 steaming in the reddening snow, and kicks it over.

BELOW ON THE WALLSIDE

Gabe, reacting to the sound of the machine gun fire, climbs up, but there's nothing he can do --

TRAVERS AND QUALEN

and the others pick up their guns.

TRAVERS

(turning to face Hal)

Time to --

Travers sees that 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 are we going to do --

HAL  
You came up here to jump the spur --  
(pulls Evan's chute out  
of his pack)  
This'd be a great time to do it.

EVAN  
(panicked)  
But --

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

EVAN  
I don't -- I -- uh --

HAL  
(exasperated, grabs  
chute)  
Unless you want to do it the other way  
around?

Evan snatches the parachute and runs off. Hal, wasting no time, runs in the opposite direction, deliberately making as much noise as he can, slapping branches, stomping on rocks.

EXT. WOODS - THE BANG

runs into the woods -- Qualen and Kristel, hearing Hal's noisy retreat, run after him. But Travers stops for a second -- he has spotted

EVAN'S FOOTPRINTS

in the snow -- not unlike a neon arrow.

TRAVERS

runs in the direction of the footprints and quickly closes the gap between him and

EVAN

who tries to pull on the chute and run at the same time -- it's not easy. Evan closes one of the three buckles -- but

TRAVERS

bursts out of the woods and runs up right behind him --

QUALEN AND KRISTEL

in the meantime, get behind Hal in a clearing -- Kristel FIRES over his head.

KRISTEL

Stop!

Hal, caught again, freezes in his tracks.

EVAN

is still up and running -- he dodges Travers' fire, weaving through trees, getting the second buckle closed -- he sees the edge, just ahead, and puts on an extra burst of speed --

TRAVERS

does likewise, still firing -- his clip runs out, but this only buys Evan an extra few seconds --

THE SPUR

is a rock formation that just out like a diving board -- Evan runs like hell to the edge of it --

TRAVERS

is right behind him, and has slapped a fresh clip in place, but before he can shoot --

EVAN

dives off the edge and clasps the third buckle --

ON THE LEDGE - GABE

is directly below a few hundred feet -- looking up, he thinks Evan has made it -- but

ON THE SPUR EDGE - TRAVERS

throws himself down, aims quickly but carefully, and FIRES twenty rounds towards Evan's falling figure --

EVAN - FALLING

Evan LAUGHS -- he hasn't been hit --

GABE - WATCHING

GABE

Come on -- wait till you're out of  
range -- don't pull it yet --

LONG SHOT - EVAN FALLING

Several seconds pass -- Evan is now several hundred feet down  
and apparently out of firing range --

TRAVERS

stops firing -- but doesn't seem unhappy at all.

EVAN

LAUGHS more and pulls the D-ring -- the parachute billows  
open, inflating --

CLOSE ON THE PARACHUTE

which has been shredded by bullets that hit the pack -- as  
quickly as it inflates, it deflates through dozens of  
holes -- whatever resistance is left vanishes as the canopy  
collapses.

EVAN'S

exhilaration turns to panic as he frantically pulls on the  
chute's guide lines -- but the more he does this, the faster  
the chute caves in -- he SCREAMS as the chute finally gives  
way and plummets right past

GABE ON THE LEDGE

who is powerless to do anything but watch --

EVAN

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

GABE

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

TRAVERS

who doesn't see Gabe -- he's laughing at Evan's desperation, which ends as his death scream is cut off.

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

QUALEN

Was that Walker?

TRIVERS

No such luck.

(to Hal, smiling)

Cheer up. Everyone should die in a spot this beautiful.

ON THE LEDGE BELOW - CLOSE ON GABE

who has heard this and is shaking with fury.

GABE

(quietly)

Don't worry. You will.

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, rushes out of the station.

FRANK

Maggie -- what are you doing --

MAGGIE

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

FRANK

Still a little breezy out, Mag --

Maggie gets into the helicopter and starts the rotor.

MAGGIE

(over engine's whine)

You coming?

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

EXT. MOUNTAIN - AERIAL SHOT - DAY

The next obstacle Hal is leading the gang through is 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. This is lower down from the summit -- it's solid and treeless.

Hal and the rest of the expedition is totally exposed as they climb in single file up to the top. Terrain is flat enough that the climb amount 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 notices this.

TRAVERS

Forget about it. He's smart, but he's not invisible.

Hal looks back. 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. No, he can't follow them up the bluff's side without being seen. But Gabe moves closer to the bluff's base -- Gabe shoves through some trees to the beginning of

THE "CHIMNEY"

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

GABE

pulls out his ancient binoculars, and scans the crack.

GABE'S POV - THE CHIMNEY

Starting with an outside view, we can see that the crevice runs all the way up, and through, the bluff -- but it's a zig-zag, not a straight line.

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. There's no telling what the interior is like.

Gabe turns the binoculars to the inside of the crack. It's hard to see much -- it's very, very dark. But it looks as if the crack goes all the way through the bluff, as well as all the way up it. 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 formation.

EXT. COLORADO WILDERNESS - PLANE CRASH SITE - DAY

A frenzy of activity, as several dozen Treasury agents sift through the snow for the wreckage of the CT-39, some taking photos, some taking videotapes, some putting the pieces into bags for analysis. Many bags. Many small bags.

WIDER ON CRASH SITE

The Treasury plane has been completely pulverized by the crash and its subsequent explosion -- there are few pieces here that aren't charred, and fewer still that are any larger than a paperback book.

WRIGHT

unhappily walks through the carnage and past agents gathering up the plane, to a harried crash specialist from the FAA -- ROSS STUART (40s) -- who is organizing the debris.

WRIGHT

What can you confirm?

STUART

Well, sir -- it crashed. That, I can confirm.

(condescending)

We've been here just about one hour. These events take months to analyze. So if you'll excuse me --

He walks away -- but Wright, pissed, spins him around.

WRIGHT

No, I don't think I will. The reason the FAA pays you is to exercise your vast, amazing knowledge of these "events". So I expect you to come up with some stunning insights, something

a slow-witted fuck like me hasn't already observed.

(gesturing to wreckage)

One: it didn't blow up in mid-air, because the debris isn't widely dispersed. But was there a bomb on board that could have disabled it? I wonder.

(pointing back)

Two: There wasn't an attempted landing. Otherwise, there'd be debris to the east of the wreckage, where the plane was coming from. Did it come straight down? That's got me scratching my head too.

(gesturing back to wreckage)

And three: the flight recorder's tracer led us here in the first place. So where is the goddamn thing? That one's got me all aflush with curiosity.

STUART

(a little cowed)

You'll be the first to know.

WRIGHT

Oh, I believe you.

Wright storms off as agents delicately handle debris.

EXT. TOP OF THE BLUFF/VISTA - DAY

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

Hal has led the rest of the gang up to the edge. Travers approaches him, furious.

TRAVERS

I thought you said there was an easy way across.

HAL

There is. You might not like it much.

Hal points

FURTHER DOWN

A steep two hundred yard downhill climb leads to a wire that bridges the two mountains. The same wire we saw at the beginning -- left behind from Susan Collins' botched rescue.

TOP OF BLUFF - HAL AND TRAVERS

HAL

Of course -- we'll have to do it hand over hand. Seems I forgot my harness. Sorry.

TRAVERS

Don't be. Lead on.

Hal is surprised to see Kynette pull a harness out of his pack -- the one Travers used earlier. Disappointed, Hal leads the downward climb, looking several hundred yards to

THE CRACK

running up, and through, the bluff, coming out on this side.

HAL'S FACE

registers a thought -- will he? -- then dismissal. Nah. He couldn't.

INT. THE CRACK/CHIMNEY - CLOSE ON GABE'S FACE

Gabe is sweating, straining in the dark, climbing up -- this'd be a good spot to pull back and take in the view, except --

THE CHIMNEY

-- there's nowhere to pull back to. There's about two inches of clearance between Gabe's chest and the rock, and about the same between his back and the rock. To the right, there is no light. At all. To the left, there's no light. Even above, there is no light, because the crack isn't straight -- nature isn't that obliging -- 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 - INSIDE THE CRACK AROUND HIM

even this dim light reveals scores of bats hanging on the wall, surrounding him, up and down, left and right --

GABE'S FACE

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

GABE

I didn't need to see that. I really didn't.

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. But a BUZZER goes off --

MAGGIE AND FRANK

turn their attention to the helicopter's heat scope, which shows something alive beneath them.

FRANK

Got 'em -- they're under the trees --

Maggie smiles and slows the copter over a clearing --

EXT. WOODS/THE COPTER

touches down. Maggie is out of it before the rotor has stopped turning, running into the trees.

MAGGIE

Hal! Gabe!

Maggie runs into the trees, headlong into

A PACK OF WOLVES

that are preying on -- a body. A pair of legs are gruesomely sticking out from the feast. One wolf turns to SNARL at Maggie -- but Frank runs up and pulls a gun from a holster.

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

TIGHT ON MAGGIE

as she examines the body --

MAGGIE

It's Evan.

(she stands, looks up)

Parachute failed.

FRANK

(not unkindly)

Damn fool. Why would anybody try that  
in the middle of a storm.

MAGGIE

Why would anybody try at all.

(sighs)

Get the bag.

INT. BLUFF CRACK/CHIMNEY

Gabe has a quick climbing rhythm now. He pulls himself up with his hands, then braces his body with his back, and pulls himself up again -- he's not looking up, because he can't see anything yet anyway -- naturally, this leads to --

A head and rock collision. Gabe's head crashes against a new part of the crack, as the passage thins out. He gropes up. The passage is narrowing to the point that he can't get through it. Dead end.

GABE

Should've taken that left turn at  
Albuquerque.

Gabe backs down, and starts to slide across the side. With his back wedged against the rear wall, he uses his feet to push against the forward wall.

GABE'S POV - BLACK

Zero visibility -- Gabe can't see what he's shoving toward. There has never been light of any kind in here.

GABE

blindly pushes to the side, rattled by the difficulty of doing this in the dark.

GABE

It's just like any other side move --  
you can't see where the fuck you're  
going, that's all --

Gabe stops and fishes out his penlight. Turning it on, it's clear those batteries haven't gotten any more potent in the

last few hours. Gabe shines it to the side.

GABE'S POV - THE LIGHT

is fading fast. A match's last gasp is brighter.

GABE

exasperated, puts the penlight in his mouth and moves on.

GABE

(garbled)

Much better.

Gabe inches on to the side. Looks up to see if the crack has gotten wider. It hasn't. Gabe mumbles something phonetically near "motherfucker" around the flashlight, aiming it up --

GABE'S POV - UP

No opening larger than a mail slot --

GABE

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. It's now five feet wide as he painfully brakes himself --

GABE'S POV - THE PENLIGHT

falls out of Gabe's mouth and tumbles down, ping-ponging from one side of the crack to the other as it tumbles a long, long way down -- even after the light is gone, we can still hear the penlight's receding clattering against the walls --

GABE

is now, literally, in a jam. There are no handholds, no ledges, and the walls are slick. All he can do is remain braced against the crack's walls until his already sore arms and legs give out.

EXT. RESCUE HELICOPTER - NEAR BLUFF'S BASE - DAY

Frank is now flying the helicopter -- a body bag is stashed in

the back, and Maggie is in the passenger seat.

MAGGIE

(motioning down)

Bring it down here.

FRANK

Maggie --

MAGGIE

Just do it, Frank.

EXT. BLUFF BASE

The copter touches down -- Frank doesn't turn it off. Maggie jumps out with a walkie talkie. Frank makes another try.

FRANK

Maggie, this is dumb --

MAGGIE

No it isn't. I'm going to find Brett -- I don't want to have to talk to his widow too. Fly Evan's body back to base -- I'll call you when I've found Brett. Or Hal. Or Gabe. Or anybody.

Maggie runs off into the snow as Frank lifts off. Maggie moves quickly through the snow, and it isn't long before she spots multiple tracks in the snow -- they lead toward, and up, the buttress. Now she's really confused. But with nothing left to do, she starts climbing up the side.

EXT. WIRE CROSSING - HAL'S POV

As we've caught Hal in mid-crossing, he's looking from whence he came -- the opposite side of the buttress, where Travers has a gun trained on him --

HAL

unhappily hangs high above the ground from the harness kindly provided by Travers --

HAL'S POV - ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WIRE

Kristel is waiting, also with a gun trained on him. Hal arrives and disengages -- the harness is pulled back.

BUTTRESS SIDE OF WIRE

Kynette pulls the harness back and hands it to Qualen, who's standing next to Travers.

KYNETTE

(motioning up)

I'm going back.

TRAVERS

Look -- this part is nothing,  
believe me --

KYNETTE

Walker should be coming up by now.

Kynette, automatic strapped to his chest, rushes back to the buttress' summit.

INT. BUTTRESS CRACK/CHIMNEY

Gabe is just as we left him. Face down, arms and legs pressing against the five-foot gap of the tunnel walls.

Carefully, Gabe 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, pockets it, and readies himself.

Gabe steadily "walks" up the vertical passage by bracing himself with one leg and one arm -- then moving the other leg and arm up.

Gabe repeats this until he has his hands on the curved edge where the crack snakes 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)

So much for the easy part.

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, and he springs from that all into

THE DIAGONAL PASSAGE

Gabe lands hard but flat on the passage and immediately starts backsliding into the drop, but he digs in with his boots and his hands. Safe at last. Gabe carefully stands in a crouch -- and starts heading up.

EXT. BUTTRESS TOP

Kynette moves to the edge, lies flat, and looks down --

KYNETTE'S POV - ON THE BUTTRESS SIDE

Maggie is climbing up, but she's still some way down -- and the hood of her parka has been pulled over her head. All Kynette can see is what she's wearing: an orange parka.

KYNETTE

smiles and hits his headset radio.

KYNETTE

He's on the way up. I could hear that jacket before I could see it.

TRAVERS (O.S.)

(over radio)

Then get the money, kill him and get back here. Now.

KYNETTE

(into radio)

I'll wait till he comes to me.

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

INT. MOUNTAIN CRACK/CHIMNEY

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 up there.

GABE

knows the top is twenty feet away. Gabe starts up the easy

segment, his back braced against one wall.

EXT. TOP OF BUTTRESS - KYNETTE

is staring down intently at the climber below --

KYNETTE'S POV - MAGGIE

is now almost to the top -- sweating with exertion, she throws her hood back.

KYNETTE

keys his headset radio again.

KYNETTE

(into radio)

Bulletin. The climber isn't Walker --  
it's a woman.

INT. MOUNTAIN CRACK/CHIMNEY

Gabe, wedged near the top of the crack, is ready to dig through the snow -- but he hears the sound, muffled and distant, of Kynette talking. Gabe strains to hear -- a bad time to come up? Might be.

EXT. BUTTRESS SIDE

Maggie, tired, gets near the top and collapses, resting for a moment, her arms on the edge -- Maggie looks up and is very surprised to see Kynette, standing over her, smiling, his gun aimed down at her.

KYNETTE

Rotten weather for a climb, huh?

(aims barrel)

I have two questions I'd like to  
trouble you with. Ready?

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

KYNETTE

This first one's easy. Do you know a  
man named Gabe Walker?

MAGGIE

Yes.

(breathless, scared)

Where is he?

KYNETTE

You don't know either? I am sorry.  
That was question number two.  
(lowers barrel)  
Thanks for your time.

As Kynette tightens his finger around the trigger --

GABE

appears -- he completes his run toward Kynette's back and kicks him over the edge --

KYNETTE

goes flying over Maggie, his shots going wild -- but he catches himself on the rock and comes to a painful but safe halt after skidding down ten feet --

GABE

yanks Maggie to her feet and onto the top. Maggie gets a good look at Gabe -- his clothes are slashed, he's covered with cuts, and coated with slime and dirt from the crack. He looks like he's just spent a week in Hell. Gabe doesn't react to her reaction -- he just grabs her hand and runs.

QUALEN

chooses this moment to show up at the opposite edge -- he fires and automatic BURST at Gabe and Maggie.

GABE

Come on --

MAGGIE

Where? --

GABE

Here.

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

THE CRACK - MAGGIE'S POV

Gabe has grabbed, and is hanging from, a rope anchored to a piton on the edge of the rock. He's also glowering up at Maggie a little impatiently.

GABE

Today, goddamit!

Gabe rappels down the rope into the darkness.

MAGGIE

hesitates -- she's still getting used to the idea of being shot at --

KYNETTE

woozy but recovered, has climbed up -- he runs toward the opening, FIRING his gun --

MAGGIE

drops into the relative safety of the crack and rappels downward.

Maggie reaches rope's end thirty feet down, as the vertical passage again becomes diagonal. Gabe is there waiting.

KYNETTE

reaches the edge of the crack and FIRES down into it --

GABE AND MAGGIE - FURTHER DOWN

-- bullets are RICOCHETING all over -- Gabe throws himself over Maggie to shield her.

KYNETTE

can't see what he's shooting at, so he mercifully stops. Seeing the rope, he bends down to climb after them --

GABE AND MAGGIE - FURTHER DOWN

Gabe reaches up and tugs gently on the rope twice --

KYNETTE - REACHING FOR THE ROPE

-- which is tied in a standard climber's slipknot and comes undone with a final tug -- the rope, freed of the piton, falls down, but Kynette firmly grabs hold of the end --

GABE

feels the rope go taut -- he yanks the rope down hard --

KYNETTE

gets more pull than he counted on and takes a head first fall

into the crack, disappearing with a scream -- Qualen has just arrived in time to see this --

GABE

looks over as Kynette bounces past him, a few feet away -- the rope goes slack in his hand as Kynette falls below.

UP ABOVE - QUALEN

in frustration, FIRES a burst straight down into the crack --

GABE AND MAGGIE - IN THE CRACK/CHIMNEY

Gabe and Maggie move laterally through the crack -- now about thirty feet from where they started, so ricochets are a serious but decreasing problem.

The crack narrows from five to three feet. Gabe edges Maggie down into it, and along a ledge moving to the side.

GABE

This way.

(off Maggie's look)

I like the outside of the mountain better too, but --

Gabe and Maggie move along the ledge --

QUALEN

is still at the edge of the crack -- stymied. He's definitely not climbing down after them -- he pulls back from the edge.

IN THE CRACK/CHIMNEY - GABE AND MAGGIE

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

GABE

Stop.

MAGGIE

We can't --

GABE

I need to stop.

Exhausted, Gabe braces himself against the wall.

GABE

(looks at Maggie)

I'm glad to see you -- but Christ, I wish you hadn't come.

EXT. WIRE CROSSING - TOWER SIDE - DAY

Qualen whizzes across the wire on the harness, easily making it to where Hal, Travers and Kristel are waiting.

TRAVERS

Don't tell me --

QUALEN

(disengaging)

He's still alive.

Travers takes a couple of heavy swings at the connecting bolt with Hal's axe. Qualen grabs his arm before he can take a third swing -- and looks at his watch.

QUALEN

For another two minutes.

IN THE CRACK/CHIMNEY - GABE AND MAGGIE

Gabe catches his breath. All this is taking its toll on him.

MAGGIE

It hurts just looking at you.

GABE

(still panting)

Try it from this side. Do you still have your radio?

MAGGIE

It's not going to work in here.

GABE

Let's give it a try.

(she hands it to him)

I'm in bad need of a ride.

(keys it)

Come in, Rescue Unit --

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 --

Travers stares daggers at Qualen. Qualen looks to his watch.

QUALEN

Patience.

INT. RESCUE STATION

The radio is reading Gabe loud, if not clear -- the interference of solid rock is garbling it. 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/CHIMNEY

Gabe, exasperated, stops for a moment.

GABE

Is there anybody else on the radio?

Maggie shakes her head no.

GABE

I take a year off and the department goes to hell.

(keys it)

-- Come in, Rescue Unit --

TOP OF BUTTRESS - HIGH ANGLE

We can see there are three holes punched in the snow along the crack's top --

CLOSER ON ONE OF THE HOLES

Recognizably the part of the crack Gabe and Maggie dove into -- but perched on the edge is a block of plastic explosive -- the detonator LED races down -- 0:20 -- 0:19 --

A SECOND HOLE

has been punched in the snow at the center point of the crevice's top -- another bomb has been planted there --

A THIRD HOLE

at the opposite end of the crevice has a third timer tied to

a third pack of plastics --

EXT. TOWER FACE

Qualen is staring at his watch, but pointing the others toward the buttress.

GABE (O.S.)

(via radio)

Come in, Frank -- over --

QUALEN

Try to get thirty million in entertainment out of this, because he is definitely in for thirty million worth of pain.

Gabe's radio calls continue as Qualen extends his arm towards the buttress and starts a silent hand countdown, stage manager style -- five -- four -- three --

INSERT - TIMER

The LED runs down -- 0:02 -- 0:01 --

THE BUTTRESS TOP

is shattered by a huge blast as the first bomb detonates --

INSIDE THE CRACK/CHIMNEY

The walls are pulverized near the top and cave in, raining rocks further down towards --

GABE AND MAGGIE

who are hit by a blast of air booming down through the confined space -- Gabe drops the radio -- Maggie slips, but Gabe grabs her -- both slide down the crack, out of control, until it narrows to a three foot width -- and they stop -- Gabe shoves Maggie against the wall and tries to protect her with his body as the rocks start to rain down --

TOWER FACE

Hal lunges at Qualen, but is held back by Travers.

HAL

You sick fuck --

QUALEN

Don't worry. They may still be alive.

That was the small one.

RESCUE STATION

Frank stops wheeling the gurney and looks up at the far-off blast, and the smoke, amazed.

FRANK

Jesus -- that's some flare.

INSIDE THE CRACK

Rocks tumble down it, filling it in and sealing it off --

FURTHER DOWN - GABE

is braced over Maggie, protecting her from the first round of falling rocks, but rolling THUNDER in the crack announces that more is coming -- Gabe looks up as the noise gets closer --

ABOVE IN THE CRACK

The rockslide arrives -- the crack is filled in seconds with rocks and dirt, packing it in -- Gabe tries to hold on, but is shoved down by the falling rocks -- Maggie, however, is buried in the crack as it fills --

GABE

is knocked down to a point where the crack narrows -- he stops himself by jamming his body against the sides. Suddenly, it's quiet. A little dirt whistles through, but that's all.

The cave-in has stopped, as it's filled in the crack above.

And Maggie is in the middle of it. Gabe unsheaths his ice axe and starts hacking up to get at Maggie. Dirt and rocks fall in his face as he digs --

BOMB NUMBER TWO - INSERT

Another LED is counting down from 3:00 -- 2:59 -- 2:58 --

INSIDE THE CRACK

Gabe frantically hacks at the ceiling of dirt -- rock and soil tumble down, but no sign of Maggie. Gabe uncovers one of Maggie's feet. Is it too late? Gabe digs up around her --

Maggie realizes Gabe is there -- she starts kicking.

Finally Maggie tumbles out of the cave-in -- gasping and

coughing, but alive. Gabe catches her and brushes the dirt off her face.

GABE

Are you all right?

MAGGIE

(terrified, coughing)

Why are they doing this?

RESCUE STATION

Frank, having lain Evan's body to rest, runs back to the helicopter, starts it up and takes off.

INSIDE THE CRACK/CHIMNEY

Gabe is leading Maggie horizontally through the crack, fast and furious --

MAGGIE

(looks up)

We might be able to get up that way --  
there's an opening --

GABE

No -- there could be another bomb up  
there -- even if there isn't, we could  
get another cave-in. The only sure way  
out is through the side.

EXT. TREASURY PLANE CRASH SITE - DAY

Treasury agents sift debris as Davis runs up to Stuart.

DAVIS

I've got something here.

STUART

Let's have it.

DAVIS

There's an unconfirmed report of a  
distress call made from a plane that  
crashed.

STUART

That's really, really interesting, but  
--

(gestures around)

-- kind of old news, don't you think?

DAVIS

This call was supposedly made from a plane that crash landed. After it landed.

STUART

(waves it off)

Sounds like they got it wrong. Next time you interrupt my work make sure it's something I can use.

INT. MOUNTAIN CRACK/CHIMNEY

Gabe and Maggie cautiously move along a single ledge -- finally, some light can be seen, thirty feet ahead, as they round a corner.

GABE

(smiling)

Come on -- we're almost out.

The crack narrows, and Gabe straddles it, putting his feet on the opposite edge to walk faster. But before he can go on --

A HAND

grabs one of Gabe's ankles from below and yanks him down -- Gabe tumbles painfully, braking himself in front of

KYNETTE

bruised and bloody, who has survived the earlier fall and made his way out. His look is not a forgiving one.

KYNETTE

Miss me?

Kynette smashes Gabe's face with a devastating, brass-knuckled punch --

GABE

falls back, desperately grabbing at the walls to stop himself from going all the way down -- as he weakly tries to get up --

KYNETTE

calmly opens his knife, and re-laces his fingers into its brass-knuckle handle.

TOWER FACE

The gang and Hal watch the mountain top, with very different expectations and hopes -- their vantage point keeps them from seeing where the crack actually comes out.

QUALEN

(looks to Hal)

You might say a few words for your friends -- this is the one that will bury them.

BOMB NUMBER TWO - INSERT

Ready to blow -- 0:10 -- 0:09 --

IN THE CRACK - MAGGIE

can only look down helplessly at

GABE AND KYNETTE

fighting -- Gabe is on his feet, but Kynette, slashing at him with his knife, is forcing Gabe to back up -- the crack is getting wider, and finding footholds while crab-walking backwards in the dark isn't easy.

Gabe's in a rotten fighting position -- as he has to spread his feet out wider as he backs up, he's always lower than Kynette.

Gabe throws a punch at Kynette's stomach, but there's no power to it. Kynette hits Gabe with a brutal knuckle-duster punch -- Gabe flies back several feet, somehow managing to straddle the crack walls -- which are now four feet apart. Kynette moves in for the kill.

BOMB NUMBER TWO - INSERT

The LED counts down -- 0:02 -- 0:01 -- 0:00 -- but doesn't detonate. A green light starts flashing, but the bomb hasn't gone off.

IN THE CRACK/CHIMNEY

Kynette moves in over Gabe and 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.

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

TOWER FACE

Qualen's smirk is wiped off his face. The bomb didn't work?

TRAVERS

What happened?

QUALEN

I'm not sure -- I set the timer --

Qualen gestures helplessly, putting the radio in Hal's reach. Hal takes advantage of this, throws off Travers, and grabs the radio.

HAL

(keying radio)

Gabe, it's a dud --

But the second Hal transmits --

BOMB NUMBER TWO

detonates over the central part of the crevice, and as promised, it's even bigger than the first --

INSIDE THE CRACK

The bomb instantly blasts tons of rock down the crevice --

GABE AND MAGGIE

The RUMBLE of the approaching rockslide is unmistakable -- Gabe shoves Maggie forward --

GABE

Move!

Maggie doesn't have to be told twice -- she and Gabe move out the narrowed crack quickly, but under the circumstances, this "running" looks damn slow --

KYNETTE

struggles with the stuck knife as the cave-in knocks him off the wall and buries him instantly --

GABE AND MAGGIE

cover the last ten feet, shoved forward by an airburst from the giant explosion -- they make it to the crack's edge at last, but on the

OUTSIDE OF THE MOUNTAIN

Gabe and Maggie still have to cling desperately to the sheer wall -- the airburst has turned the crack into a wind tunnel -- it's as if the mountain were trying to blow them out.

TOWER FACE

Hal, shocked, stares at the enormity of the explosion. Qualen looks serenely satisfied.

QUALEN

When I was seventeen, I was a sentry on the East Berlin boundary. There was a problem, then -- too many defectors were managing to sneak through the wilderness to the west. A man would take them through, every night of every week -- a man like your friend.

(beat)

He had quite a sense of humor. Every time he got someone through, he'd radio us at midnight to let us know how many. "Five tonight." "Eight more have been freed tonight." No one could find the route. It made me look bad.

(beat)

I looked day and night and finally I found it. A tunnel. I didn't tell me superiors. I put a charge there, with a timer to trigger a radio receiver on the detonator. At midnight. Our friend made his radio report, and I heard him say "seven" before the explosion.

(beat)

They pulled eight bodies out of the tunnel, and I was promoted to intelligence the next day.

Hal, stunned, looks at the radio, realizing Qualen tricked him into detonating the bomb. Travers, grinning, takes the radio from Hal and pats him on the back.

TRAVERS

Thanks. We couldn't have killed him without you.

GABE AND MAGGIE - ON THE WALL

The force of the airburst, as brief as it is strong, is over. Dust slowly swirls out -- Gabe and Maggie raise their heads. Gabe looks back -- the crack is now sealed off. Gabe takes a piton and hammer from his belt and hands it to Maggie along with the rope.

GABE

Knock this in the side. Make it firm.

Maggie does as Gabe takes the binoculars out, and climbs out on a slim toehold so he can look up the wall.

GABE'S POV - UP THE WALL

Gabe whips the binoculars up to the top edge of the wall. It's blurry -- Gabe focuses the binoculars on -- the third bomb, visible on the mountain's edge. 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.)

Bad news. There's another bomb up there. We've got to move quick.

Gabe scans methodically but rapidly down the rock below. All smooth. Until -- Gabe swings the binoculars back. There's a lip ninety feet below, leading into the wall. A cave.

GABE (O.S.)

Good news. There's a cave down there.

GABE

puts away the binoculars and swings 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?

HELICOPTER - MOVING OVER MOUNTAINS

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

FRANK

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

TOWER FACE

Frank's call is heard on the radio. Travers takes it, and takes charge.

TRAVERS

There's our ride out of here. Everyone  
out of sight -- except you, Kristel.

(hands her radio)

Make the distress call. You're so good  
at it.

All scramble up towards the clearing.

INSERT - THE THIRD BOMB

We can 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. Can't go up. Can't go back in.  
Can't go down.

MAGGIE

(frantic)

What are we going to do?

GABE

(defeated)

Die. I'm sorry, Maggie. I'm sorry you  
got into this.

Gabe and Maggie 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.

Gabe's eyes light up. Inspiration. Gabe breaks off the embrace  
and snatches the rope from her -- he pulls at the end and  
furiously starts unravelling it.

MAGGIE

What are you doing?

EXT. TREASURY PLANE CRASH SITE - DAY

Davis has just filled in Wright on the "unconfirmed" distress  
call. Wright looks furious.

WRIGHT

He didn't think a distress call from a  
crashed plane was "important"?

(Davis nods)

Get me a fucking radio! Now!

EXT. HELICOPTER

flying over the mountains.

INT. HELICOPTER

Frank is practically there, heading toward the buttress and the facing Tower.

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

KRISTEL (O.S.)  
(over radio -- "weak")  
Alpha Charlie Niner -- please --  
help --

Frank recognizes the pilot's voice from the "distress call".

FRANK  
(over radio)  
I copy, Charlie Niner -- what's your  
position -- over --

An aerial flare fires up, leaving a clear marker.

FRANK  
(over radio)  
Sit tight, Charlie Niner -- I'm right  
on top of you.

GABE AND MAGGIE - AT THE CRACK'S EDGE

Gabe is still unravelling the rope fiber -- it's three different segments wound together. The helicopter flies overhead -- and past.

MAGGIE  
(shouting, waving)  
Frank! Down here! Frank!

GABE  
Forget about it. He can't hear you.  
(hands Maggie some rope)  
Tie these together. Tight.

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

GABE  
This is rope from the Gordon exhibit.

The way guys climbed then, they'd tie on three at a time -- this rope'll take around nine hundred pounds.

MAGGIE

Gabe -- this rope is sixty years old --

GABE

(misses the point)

Yeah, they made it pretty good then. Each of these strands ought to hold about 300 pounds before snapping.

Gabe rapidly ties the rope to the piton -- Maggie works on the third connecting knot as she does the mental calculation of what she and Gabe weigh together.

MAGGIE

(dazed)

Ought to. About.

(beat)

Will it hold?

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

GABE

Depends on how big a breakfast you had. You want to go first?

Maggie's stunned -- but there's no choice. She starts the rappel down, and Gabe is close behind.

INSERT - THE THIRD BOMB

is ready to blow -- 0:12 -- 0:11 --

MAGGIE AND GABE - RAPPELLING DOWN

To make this even trickier, they have to swing over to the side about fifteen feet to get to the cave -- meaning they have to move down in pendulum type swings that put even more pressure on

THE ROPE

which looks sorely tested at one knot -- it's coming undone --

MAGGIE AND GABE - RAPPELLING

They swing down lower -- twenty feet to the cave, four

thousand to the ground --

INSERT - THE BOMB

-- 0:04 -- 0:03 --

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!

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

THE ROPE

snaps --

MAGGIE AND GABE

fall, landing roughly on the cave's narrow lip -- Gabe starts to slip over, but Maggie pulls him back as --

ABOVE ON THE WALL

The bomb detonates and starts raining debris -- an instant, massive rockslide --

MAGGIE AND GABE

dive into the small cave as the rockslide tumbles past -- exhausted, they collapse on the cave floor.

THE HELICOPTER - OVER THE TOWER

Frank, obviously, is surprised by the nearby explosion.

FRANK

What the fuck --

But he sees Kristel in a clearing. Face down in the snow. First things first.

EXT. TOWER/CLEARING

Frank lands near her, and rushes over to her. Frank 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. I'm here to help.

KRISTEL

(recovered)

Glad to hear it.

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. Forgive me, but things have been a little strange this morning.

Nearby, the helicopter radio crackles to life. Frank backs toward the helicopter, keeping the gun trained on Kristel.

But Frank only gets to the helicopter door before --

DELMER

comes out of hiding and empties a clip from his automatic into Frank. Frank is pinned to the door by the fusillade before he can even get a shot off. Travers runs over to Delmer and shoves the barrel up.

TRAVER

Stop!

(explaining)

You'll damage the helicopter.

As if to punctuate this, Frank -- and the now ruined pilot side door -- fall to the ground. The radio continues to squawk as Travers grabs Frank's discarded gun.

TRAVERS

(to Kristel)

Answer that.

Kristel brushes the snow off her and goes over to the radio.

STUART (O.S.)

(over radio)  
Calling Rocky Mountain Rescue -- come  
in, Rocky Mountain Rescue -- over --

KRISTEL  
(keying radio)  
Rocky Mountain Rescue One, over --

EXT. TREASURY PLANE CRASH SITE - DAY

Wright, davis, and an irritated Stuart huddle over a radio.

STUART  
This is Ross Stuart, Federal Aviation  
Administration -- please identify --  
over --

EXT. HELICOPTER - DAY

By now, the others have come out of hiding and up to the  
helicopter. Kristel grabs some papers from a plastic packet on  
the helicopter seat -- and keys the mike.

KRISTEL  
Copy, FAA. This is Margaret Deighan,  
Rocky Mountain Rescue. Over --

STUART (O.S.)  
We have an unconfirmed report of an  
air crash in your area, and a distress  
call on this frequency -- can you  
confirm -- over --

KRISTEL  
(keying mike)  
Copy, FAA. Distress call came at  
approximately eleven hundred hours  
yesterday. I investigated -- the call  
turned out to be a false alarm. Over.

EXT. TREASURY PLANE CRASH SITE - DAY

Stuart gestures with exasperated triumph.

STUART  
Please repeat, Rocky Mountain  
Rescue -- distress call was a false  
alarm? -- over --

KRISTEL (O.S.)  
(over radio)  
Repeat, distress call was a definite

false alarm -- we've had several here.  
Somebody's sick idea of a joke. Do you  
require further assistance -- over --

STUART

Not from you. Thanks, Rocky Mountain  
Rescue -- over and out --

Stuart shuts off the radio with finality.

STUART

I don't want to say I told you so. But  
I did. Can I go back to work now?

EXT. HELICOPTER/TOWER CLEARING - DAY

Kristel smiles and puts the radio mike back into its bracket.

TRAVERS

I almost believed you myself.

Travers smiles and turns, looking at

HAL

trembling with fury and grief, bent over Frank's body as the  
last trace of vapor -- his breath -- trails from his lips.  
He's gone. Hal gently closes the eyes of his friend.

HAL

(quiet)

Goodbye, Frank.

Travers moves up behind Hal and kicks him.

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 face, knocking him into the snow.

HAL

I think I'll wait here. You just  
murdered three of my friends. Sooner  
or later, whoever's chasing you is  
going to show up and return the favor,  
and I'd love to watch.

Travers puts his gun at Hal's forehead and shrugs.

TRAVERS

Suit yourself. You see, we just had a little interface with several branches of the federal government -- one of whose members I know has zero imagination -- and I can tell you, the cavalry just isn't going to make it by this week.

(beat)

No, you're taking us where we want to go. Because you want to return that favor and you want to do more than watch. You want to kill me -- more than anything, even more than you want to keep on breathing, and with a little more time you pray you'll get that chance.

(tightens trigger)

Am I right?

Hal's answer is a stony, loathing stare. He gets up. But --

INSERT - HAL'S HAND

-- we can see Hal has palmed something from Frank's body.

INT. CAVE - GABE AND MAGGIE

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

GABE

Are you okay?

MAGGIE

My ears are ringing -- but I'm all right. Gabe, what's going on?

GABE

(shows money in his pack)

This. That plane crash -- it's a half dozen guys who were smart enough to steal fifty million bucks, but dumb enough to drop it all over the range. They've got Hal as a bird dog -- and right now they're heading for the rest of it.

MAGGIE

Where?

GABE

It's close to the lake -- Hal's probably leading them on the slowest possible route down to it.

(stiffly gets up)

I can get there first -- all I have to do is make it along the north wall to the Bitker ladder --

MAGGIE

"All?" Jesus, Gabe -- what do you expect to do then?

GABE

(aching)

Something -- subtle.

Gabe lurches towards the cave opening, looking more like Quasimodo than a champion climber. Maggie stops him.

MAGGIE

I'm going with you.

GABE

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

MAGGIE

I'm just as good a climber as you are -- and right now, I'm definitely in better shape.

GABE

(hard)

And you're definitely not going --

Maggie stares Gabe down. Guess who won all the arguments when they were together. Gabe's face is a portrait of familiar exasperation.

GABE

Okay. Come on --

As they move out of the cave together, Gabe favors one foot.

GABE

-- but the second you slow me down, I'm leaving --  
(slips on sore leg,

Maggie catches him)  
-- I'm leaving you behind. Understood?

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

EXT. TREASURY PLANE CRASH SITE - ON CHUNK OF WRECKAGE

If you have a good imagination, this corner of charcoal looks like it could have been --

WRIGHT (O.S.)  
One of the currency cases.

WRIGHT AND DAVIS

are standing over some of the wreckage. One of the suits bags and tags the "briefcase".

DAVIS  
We've tested the ash inside -- it's the right paper.

WRIGHT  
What about the men?

DAVIS  
It's -- hard to tell. But forensics says yes. All of them were in the plane.

WRIGHT  
(sags with the news)  
Everything's accounted for, then -- time to head back and start making excuses.  
(beat)  
Fifty million bucks up in smoke, and I just don't give a shit. It's one more run of the press. But we lost five good men and they aren't so easily replaced.  
(beat)  
Especially a guy like Travers.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP/TOWER - HELICOPTER - DAY

Dedicated agent Travers leans in reasonable comfort against the helicopter and keys his headset mike.

TRAVERS

Qualen. How far along are you?

QUALEN (O.S.)

(over radio)

Not as far as we'd be with the  
helicopter.

FURTHER DOWN ON MOUNTAIN/TOWER

Qualen, Kristel and Delmer follow Hal's lead down the side --  
it's not too steep a grade, but it's solid rock and it's  
covered with ice and fresh snow -- all have to brace  
themselves with their hands to keep from slipping down.

TRAVERS (O.S.)

(over radio)

We have less than half a tank of fuel,  
Eric -- if we burn it up treasure  
hunting we'll never get off this rock.  
Now -- how far away are you?

QUALEN

(keys radio)

It looks like two miles, but --

Qualen's foot slides out from under him -- he catches himself.

QUALEN

-- it'll take some time.

TRAVERS (O.S.)

(over radio)

Time we have -- Walker's dead,  
Wright's an idiot. And our guide --

QUALEN

(keys radio)

What about him?

TRAVERS (O.S.)

(over radio)

As soon as he becomes a convenience  
instead of a necessity -- kill him.

QUALEN

(keys radio)

Agreed.

HAL

can only hear Qualen's end of the conversation -- but his face  
shows he can guess what they're talking about.

CUT TO:

GABE'S FACE - CLOSE

Gabe's rattled too -- but for a brand new reason -- we PULL BACK to see Gabe at

THE WIRE'S EDGE

where the wire -- that wire -- links the buttress with the facing Tower. Whipping in the wind, it looks risky -- but that's not the problem.

Gabe stares at the other edge for a moment. Immobile. Remembering Susan's death. Gabe shakes out of it when --

MAGGIE

Gabe?  
(beat)  
I'll go first.

GABE

(shakes his head)  
If I don't go first, I might not go at all.

Gabe hooks his ankles over the wire and starts dragging himself, hand over hand, across the abyss -- no safety line this time. As his weight pulls the line taut, the wind rocks him back and forth. Gabe steadily drags himself out --

GABE ON WIRE - LONG SHOT

Fatigue stops Gabe in the middle -- a half mile up, strung between two gigantic mountains, he looks as insignificant and alone as a man possibly can be --

CLOSER ON GABE

Panting with exertion, frozen -- he can barely hold his grip and has an elbow crooked around the wire for support. Gabe's eyes are shut -- he looks near collapse --

FLASHBACK - GABE'S POV

Gabe is falling from the wire in slow motion, trailing Susan -- she spirals out of reach as his line SNAPS him back --

GABE'S

grip unconsciously relaxes -- but his eyes jolt open and he clamps both hands shut on the wire. Gabe, drawing on some inner fury, drags himself with long, sharp yanks --

MAGGIE

tensely watches Gabe's crossing --

OVERVIEW - GABE

is about ten feet away from the end --

GABE'S UPSIDE-DOWN POV - THE END OF THE WIRE

looks a lot further away than that --

GABE

pulls faster -- and reaches the other side. Gabe maintains his hand grip and swings his feet onto the ledge, leaning back against the wall to catch his breath.

GABE

(winded, shouting across)

Think you can beat my time?

MAGGIE

smiles -- this is more like the Gabe she remembers. She gets on the wire and starts across in a fast, easy rhythm.

GABE

watches her, grinning. Admiration for Maggie is washing away bad memories of Susan.

GABE

(to himself)

Shit -- she is in better shape.

Maggie pulls across fearlessly -- but --

INSERT - THE BOLT

on Gabe's side of the wire is giving where Travers had hacked at it -- just a millimeter, but it's pulling loose --

GABE

doesn't notice and shouts across at Maggie, now half way.

GABE

(enjoying it now)  
Quit sandbagging it -- I haven't got  
all day --

INSERT - THE BOLT

is coming looser -- Maggie's quicker crossing is thrashing the  
wire and straining the bolt's weakened anchoring --

GABE - WATCHING MAGGIE

who is now twenty feet away -- fifteen -- ten -- five --

INSERT - THE BOLT

pops out of the wall as if it were shot --

THE WIRE

which was tight as a bowstring fires out into the chasm --  
Maggie, stunned and without options, lets go two feet short  
of the ledge --

GABE

drops low just as Maggie starts to fall and swings his arm out  
towards hers in one lightning-fast motion --

THEIR HANDS

catch --

GABE

maintains his grip on Maggie's hand, but her weight nearly  
pulls him off the ledge -- Maggie drags him down, the window  
goes out of his chest when it collides with the ledge's  
bottom, but their grip holds.

All of this in a split second. Maggie hangs from Gabe's arm,  
locked in terror -- but skill wins out over fear. She finds a  
handhold with her free arm, and climbs up to the ledge with  
Gabe's help. Maggie collapses into Gabe's arms and they fall  
back against the wall, but Gabe's the one who's really holding  
on tight.

GABE

That -- tears it.

(gasping)

You're not coming any further.

MAGGIE

(just as breathless)  
Gabe -- you're going to get yourself  
killed --

GABE

(breath almost back)  
Maybe. But I'm not getting you  
killed.

(she starts a reply)  
Look, Maggie. I don't know what'll  
happen when I catch up with Hal -- but  
I've got to know one thing for sure --  
that you're making it off this  
mountain. Alive.

Gabe's eyes are pleading. Maggie hesitates. But gives in.

MAGGIE

Okay.

Gabe lightly kisses Maggie -- he doesn't want to turn this  
into a farewell kiss, afraid that that's really what it might  
be. They stand -- and separate. Gabe moves away.

GABE

Get on the trail and stay out of  
sight.

(beat)  
I'll see you on the ground.

Maggie wonders if she will as Gabe vanishes around a corner.

EXT. TREASURY PLANE CRASH SITE - CLOSE ON BODY BAG

as the zipper is pulled down -- before we can see anything we  
mercifully reverse POV to

WRIGHT, DAVIS AND STUART

near a helicopter, look down with disgust. Davis turns away.

WRIGHT

I give up. What was it?

A SEARCH PILOT zips the bag back up.

SEARCH PILOT

ID says this used to be your pilot.

(beat)  
And we found him seven miles east of  
the wreck.

Davis and Wright look at each other, drawing the same conclusion.

WRIGHT

A hijack.

(beat)

The plane was hijacked. Son of a bitch --

STUART

Oh, give me a break. Your pilot lost it when the flight started going south, and he bailed --

SEARCH PILOT

Excuse me -- but there's no parachute there. Check it yourself.

Before this can go on, a FORENSICS AGENT runs up to Stuart carrying a recorder.

FORENSICS AGENT

Sir -- we found the flight recorder -- it was driven twenty feet deep into a crater. It was demolished, but we salvaged the recording --

STUART

(grabbing it away)

I've heard a thousand of these, Wright -- whoever was at the stick is going to begin by screeching the Lord's Prayer and wind up screaming "Oh, shit" at ground zero --

Stuart clicks the recorder on with a flourish, but his smug look melts as the voice of FBI agent Matheson explains --

MATHESON (O.S.)

(shouting, rushed)

-- the money's been stolen -- Travers and the pilot were in on it -- the pilot's dead, but Travers took the cash and made a mid-air transfer to a jet flown by Qualen -- controls won't respond --

(screaming)

shiiiiiii--

Matheson is cut off by the sound of impact, which is followed by silence. Wright gently turns the recorder off.

WRIGHT

Guess we're both right, Stuart. Thanks for your expertise.

(turns to pilot)

Well?

(jerking a thumb back)

You'll be waiting till Groundhog's Day for him to pull his head out of his ass -- let's get it in the air!

Wright, Davis and the pilot scramble into a helicopter -- Stuart pauses, but goes after them.

EXT. MOUNTAIN WALL/TOWER - HIGH ANGLE - GABE MOVING ON A LEDGE

that's a little narrower than your coffee table. 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.

Gabe's gotten his second wind -- he keeps jumping from ledge to ledge with the ease that comes from skill and familiarity, and with renewed purpose. Gabe makes the last jump to a section of ledge near the bottom of

THE "BITKER" LADDER

which consists of metal rungs woven into loose steel cable bolted into the rock, running two hundred feet to the top -- something left behind by a past expedition, now a tourist's toy. And the bottom rung is three feet above Gabe's outstretched arms.

GABE

Hasn't gotten any lower in the last year.

(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 -- fifty yards away from the ladder, a waterfall is spewing out of the wall, giving the appearance that the mountain has sprung a torrential leak.

As we track Gabe up the ladder, we can see where the water's

coming from -- a whirling lake on top of the mountain. Its constant motion keeps it from totally freezing, but the lake is still coated with a veneer of ice, moving in thick chunks through circular currents on the surface.

ELSEWHERE ON MOUNTAIN SLOPE - HAL AND GANG

are negotiating 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 -- as he does, he uproots a big, 3' x 3' park service sign commemorating the "BITKER CLIMB" and takes it with him, moving ahead into a

WOODED AREA

where Gabe replants the sign near the top of another slope. Gabe heads down towards some rocks -- -- and spots the third case, which took a tough landing on one rock -- it's shattered into halves, and the bands of \$5000s 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. As Gabe stuffs them into his pack, he's startled by something coming over the rock -- Gabe whirls around to face

A RABBIT

that's landed in the snow and looks a lot more frightened than Gabe was. Gabe leans back, relieved. For now.

EXT. FURTHER UP ON SLOPE - HAL AND GANG

are closer now -- but as they move down, Hal freezes in place as he sees the "Bitker" sign some distance ahead. The sign is out of place. A signal from Gabe -- he is alive. And here.

Qualen and the others check the monitor. Hal takes the opportunity to back up to a rock formation and swiftly, subtly wedge 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 fresh bullets in it.

QUALEN

checks the monitor -- the relative position shows they're --

QUALEN

Almost there.

-- but Qualen's grin is wiped away as he looks down at --

THE MONITOR

-- the tracer blip is moving -- fast -- away from their position!

QUALEN'S

face shifts from incredulity to realization to rage.

All eyes are on 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 halfway out of the pack -- and ignites it with his thumbnail --

HAL

moves away from the rock, to draw their attention from what he's been doing --

HAL

Oh, no -- you didn't lose another one, did you?

Delmer clicks off his safety and aims at Hal -- Qualen runs into the woods, guided by the monitor -- Kristel follows. Delmer backs Hal up at gunpoint. Hal deliberately moves in a semi-circle, putting Delmer's back to the rocks.

DELMER

What about him?

QUALEN

(over his shoulder)

Kill him! Now!

Delmer grins as he aims at Hal.

DELMER

Tell me -- where would you like the first half dozen shots to go?

INSERT - THE MATCH

has burned more than halfway down to the rest of the box,  
which is behind the speed load cylinder --

HAL AND DELMER

HAL

(hands up)

As long as you're taking requests --  
how about -- the base of your spine?

Delmer smiles and starts to squeeze the trigger -- Hal tenses  
up, it's now or never --

INSERT - THE MATCH

burns down to the box, igniting all the matches --

ON DELMER

as there is the sudden sound of six distinct, consecutive  
gunshots behind him -- the fire's blasted the powder in all  
the bullets. Delmer, startled, spins around and FIRES up,  
FIRES down, FIRES across -- by the time he realizes no one's  
there and he turns back around to find --

-- Hal is gone, vanished into the woods.

FOLLOWING QUALEN

through the woods -- up a slope, around a tree, down another  
slope -- his eyes fixed on the screen and the blip that's  
zig-zagging just ahead of him.

QUALEN

(tagging headset radio)

Travers. Get down here. Now.

TRAVERS

is trying to repair the helicopter door when the call comes.

TRAVERS

Have you found the money?

QUALEN (O.S.)

No. Walker has.

Travers, furious, flings the door aside, jumps into the copter  
and starts the rotor.

QUALEN

is running alone, following the monitor lead -- until he sees a band of \$5000s in the snow. Sure he's on the right track, Qualen picks it up and picks up his pace too. But we can see that behind him and higher up --

GABE

who is on a rise behind a rock, watches Qualen's futile pursuit from a distance, amused. Amused, until --

KRISTEL

You would have lived longer, if you weren't such a smartass.

Gabe spins his head around -- and his temple smacks into Kristel's gun barrel.

KRISTEL

You telegraphed this kind of stunt with that joke snowman. Too bad for you we're not all gullible.

Kristel starts to squeeze the trigger.

GABE

Good thing for Qualen you are.

KRISTEL

(pauses, wary)

What do you mean?

GABE

When he comes back, he's going to shoot you and the other guy, grab the money, and take off with Travers.

KRISTEL

(squeezing trigger again)

No sale. Say "night-night" --

GABE

(talking fast)

He already blew up one of your pals in that crevice. And I've been in that copter. It goes a hell of a lot farther with two people than with four.

(beat)

Am I wrong? Give him a buzz.

Kristel eases back with the gun.

KRISTEL

You've got my attention.

GABE

You've also got all the money. And I can show you how to get off the mountain with it. Right now.

ELSEWHERE ON MOUNTAIN - HAL

tears into a clearing, trying to put some distance between him and Delmer -- as soon as he's out in the open, though,

THE HELICOPTER

thunders over Hal -- Travers FIRES down at Hal through the doorless pilot's side. Bullets kick up tufts of snow at Hal's heels as he runs down into a steep, sloping wooded area. The tree cover is too thick for Travers to take good aim. Looks like temporary refuge -- but

INSIDE THE HELICOPTER

Travers finds a new use for the search copter's heat scope -- using the blip that betrays Hal's body heat as a guide, Travers can still fire down through the trees at

HAL

who's still running down the grade -- he hasn't been hit yet, but there's an awful lot of bad luck in the air --

TRAVERS

banks the helicopter around and up for another pass.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE MOUNTAIN/TOWER WOODS - QUALEN

is slogging uphill after his own tracer blip -- which is turning back around and heading towards him. Qualen aims his gun and waits, but at the top of the hill --

THE RABBIT

that spooked Gabe earlier sticks its head up for a curious sniff. It has the tracer fastened to its neck with a currency band. Furious, Qualen FIRES at the rabbit -- it safely speeds away as Qualen smashes the useless tracer monitor and turns around.

EXT. TRAVERS IN HELICOPTER - TRAVERS POV

On the heat scope. The blip that represents Hal -- vanishes. Delmer, who has caught up, is at the edge of the tree-lined area -- he looks up at Travers.

TRAVERS

(keying headset radio)

He's hiding twenty yards in -- be careful.

EXT. WOODS - DELMER

"replies", beeping twice on the headset's ear button as he moves downhill into the woods, closely following Hal's tracks -- they lead up to the replanted "BITKER" sign. Just big enough to hide behind. Delmer smiles, and advances toward the sign --

-- and looks behind it. Nothing but a mound of snow. Delmer looks again to the tracks, which lead toward

A SMALL ROCK FORMATION

also big enough to conceal Hal. Delmer moves toward it as --

BEHIND THE "BITKER" SIGN

the mound of snow shifts as Hal climbs out, silently shaking off the cover -- the snow hid him not only from Delmer, but from the heat scope as well --

TRAVERS IN HELICOPTER

hovers overhead, watching Delmer's blip on the heat scope -- but Hal's blip returns, rushing ahead --

TRAVERS

(keying headset radio)

He's right behind you!

DELMER

whirls around at the warning, his gun BLAZING, but Hal is too fast -- he swings the sign like a club, knocking Delmer's gun away into the snow. Before Hal can swing again, Delmer brutally punches Hal in the face -- stunned, Hal drops the sign --

IN HELICOPTER - TRAVERS POV

Travers can't do anything now but watch the heat scope as if

it were a video game -- now it's just one big blip --

DELMER AND HAL

thrash around in the snow, pummelling each other -- Hal's getting the worst of it, as Delmer manages to get on top of him and deliver a series of punishing blows to his face. Ready to end it, Delmer tries to get the bolt gun off a clip on his front pack strap -- but he has trouble unfastening it. Hal rallies with a solid punch to Delmer's face. Hal gets Delmer off of him and follows with two more.

Delmer is knocked away, landing on the sign board -- but clear from Hal -- another chance to get the bolt gun off --

Hal quickly moves to the sign and grabs its post -- before Delmer can move off the sign's board, Hal's running forward. shoving the sign ahead of him with Delmer on top -- Hal lets go, and the sign, with Delmer, sleds downhill on the hard packed snow --

TRAVERS IN HELICOPTER - TRAVERS

can now see one blip moving quickly away from the other --

TRAVERS

(into radio)

Something's moving fast down the hill -- is it Tucker?

HAL

has found Delmer's fallen headset radio and put it on.

TRAVERS (O.S.)

(over radio)

Answer me! Is it Tucker?

Hal smiles and beeps twice -- affirmative.

IN HELICOPTER

Happy at last, Travers takes off after the blip, flying down the incline and staying just above the trees, strafing an intense fusillade at

DELMER

who's screaming as a storm of bullets rip through him and the sign and the surrounding snow, keeping pace with his downhill slide --

TRIVERS IN HELICOPTER

FIRES until his clip is empty -- he heads for the end of the tree line as his target comes out, skidding to a stop in the snow. Travers gleefully moves lower down for a closer look but is shocked to see

DELMER - ON "SLED"

Delmer's highly perforated body rolls off the sign as it finally skids to a dead halt.

CLOSE ON TRAVERS

who is apoplectic -- he's just shot one of his own men.

HAL (O.S.)

(over radio)

Thanks loads.

(beat)

I couldn't have killed him without you.

Travers looks down at the heat scope -- blank.

HAL

is hiding his body "heat" under a rock formation.

IN HELICOPTER

Stymied, Travers furiously banks it away from the wooded area and circles around the mountain's other side.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - SLOPING GRADE - GABE AND KRISTEL

Gabe, hands on his head, moves down a slope near a mountain edge, ahead of Kristel, who's aiming her gun at his back.

KRISTEL

How much further?

GABE

(stops)

It's right over there.

Gabe nods ahead, indicating what looks like a

A SHED

that is partially obscured by snow, about twenty feet distant across a snowy plateau.

GABE AND KRISTEL

GABE

It's a storage locker for the rangers.  
Everything you need to get off the  
mountain is in there -- skis, food --  
I'll show you --

Gabe shows a sudden burst of enthusiasm and starts quickly  
moving ahead again -- Kristel suspiciously notices this --

KRISTEL

Don't move.

Kristel gets ahead of Gabe and walks backward, keeping her gun  
trained on him as she crunches through the snow.

KRISTEL

Skis, food -- and maybe guns too,  
right?

(moves backward)

Keep walking. Not too close.

GABE

We'd make better time walking straight  
ahead. Qualen's not going to be  
hopping down the bunny trail too much  
longer.

KRISTEL

(walking backward)

Right. So I'd better have one less  
problem when he arrives.

GABE

(knowing this means him)

Don't fuck up. You still need me to  
show you a route off the mountain.

KRISTEL

You've worn that one out, Walker --

(snaps back bolt)

-- I'll find my own way down.

Kristel solidly plants her feet firmly to shoot Gabe, but her  
feet sink through the crystallized snow cover -- --  
Kristel completely disappears down through the snow as it  
collapses under her -- she's pulling the trigger and SHOTS  
go wild as she sinks and sinks --

ON GABE

who's had to drop flat on his stomach to avoid the same fate -- as he scrambles back to solid land, Kristel's SHOTS arc up through the snow toward him, and the snow crumbles around him -- but he bellies ahead as --

ON THE SNOWDRIFT'S TOP

Kristel's GUNSHOTS slow, and finally, stop, the very last of them loosening the snow around --

THE "SHED"

that was obscured by snow was a tall, three-sided park service sign shouting "WARNING -- SNOWDRIFT -- DO NOT CROSS" in eight different languages. The rest of the snow falls away from it, revealing a cautionary but cheesy illustration -- a stick-figure fatally sinking into the snow.

GABE

bellies ahead, flat on his stomach, testing the snow with the ice axe's staff -- only when he hits something solid with it does he get back up to his feet. But the sound of ice-crusting snow CRUNCHING above Gabe alerts him that --

QUALEN

has just hit the top of the slope and spotted him -- Qualen's gun BLAZES down --

GABE

is on the run, but it's that lead-footed, slow motion stuff that only happens in nightmares -- with every step, a foot breaks through the icy crust and sinks into two feet of snow -- Gabe stays just ahead of the barrage, making it into

A THICK WOODED AREA

which is very temporary refuge -- Qualen will be down in seconds. Gabe looks down the slope. Running is impractical. So he sits down.

QUALEN

arrives where Gabe was and looks down the slope --

QUALEN'S POV - GABE

is whizzing down the slope in a sitting position, using his back and his shoes as gliders, the ice axe as a rudder.

Alpinists call this a "sitting glissade". Colorado climbers call it "butt skiing". Some psychos do this for fun.

GABE'S POV - THE SLIDE

is anything but fun -- Gabe can't control his speed or direction well at all -- Gabe barely manages to steer in and out of trees and boulders in his path --

QUALEN

starts running down the slope -- he doesn't have speed, but he does have the machine gun -- he FIRES short bursts at --

GABE

who tries to steer away from the line of fire -- Gabe is hit in the shoulder -- he slides out of control, and rolls down --

-- to the slope's bottom. Gabe painfully lifts himself up and moves through the woods, coming out of the trees to

THE LAKE

The bridge that spans it is ahead of Gabe -- but there is nothing around but flat terrain. It's a beautiful sight, but no good for hiding. And Qualen is right behind him.

EXT. MOUNTAIN SLOPE - HAL

rushes down to Delmer's body -- in the snow, he finds the discarded machine gun and holds it up, but stray bullets from Travers' fusillade have made it inoperable. Hal tosses it aside and checks Delmer's bloody pockets for more weapons. Nothing. Just a couple of machine gun clips, and the bolt gun.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - MAGGIE

is wending her way down a hiking trail on the opposite side of the mountain. In plain view,

TRAVERS IN HELICOPTER

is circling the mountain -- he spots Maggie from on high and moves down after her.

MAGGIE

hears the helicopter, and turns around -- she has no way of knowing it isn't Frank, so she takes off her jacket and waves it as a signal --

MAGGIE

Frank! Down here!

The helicopter moves down until Maggie can see --

TRAVERS

is at the controls.

MAGGIE

starts running, but it's useless. Nowhere to hide. Travers hovers over her, FIRING ahead of her, FIRING behind her, not to kill, just to make a point. He's in charge.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL

Maggie finally stops -- Travers lands the copter and opens the passenger door, keeping his gun trained on her.

TRAVERS

Hop in. I know someone who'd like to see you again before he dies.

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE SLOPE - QUALEN

moves down to the slope's edge, noting with pleasure the blood in the snow. Gabe is wounded, and he's left a trail as a bonus.

Qualen moves out lakeside -- nothing visible but the thick, flat ice chunks circling in the currents. But Gabe's footprints and blood lead straight ahead to the bridge.

Qualen starts to run across the bridge, but stares down --

QUALEN'S POV - THE BRIDGE'S PLANKS

The blood -- and slush from Gabe's boots -- end halfway across.

QUALEN

Smiles and shakes his head. Too obvious. Gabe is hiding underneath the bridge, in the three foot deep network of steel supports. Qualen slows his pace, staring down through the thin, but visible cracks between the planks.

TIGHT CLOSE-UP - GABE'S FACE

grimacing, shivering, ashen from his wound and exertion -- lined shadows on his face confirm he is under the bridge.

QUALEN (O.S.)

You've come a long way to die.

QUALEN

enjoying himself, slams a fresh clip into his machine gun.

QUALEN

If you were smart, you'd have left  
your friend behind. I would have.  
There's no shame in staying alive.

Qualen stops, staring down. Through the gaps, Gabe's parka is visible. Right where the blood trail ends.

QUALEN

(aims down)

But you're not smart. And now you're  
going to die from an overdose of  
heroism.

Qualen BLAZES the gun into the planks --

UNDER THE BRIDGE - GABE

is clinging to the steel supports of the small bridge,  
several feet ahead of where his empty parka is being  
shredded by the FUSILLADE -- without the parka, Gabe is  
freezing, and too many bullets are coming too close for  
comfort as they RICOCHET on the bridge's supports --

QUALEN

stops firing and kicks away the planks, which are a tangle of  
toothpicks at this point -- Qualen bends down --

-- and sees there's nothing in the parka except for Gabe's  
back. Qualen's face registers anger and surprise as -- -- Gabe  
appears at the edge of the hole -- before Qualen can react,  
Gabe swings up with his ice axe, hooking it around the  
shoulder strap of Qualen's machine gun -- Gabe yanks down,  
and Qualen falls head first

UNDER THE BRIDGE

with Gabe -- Qualen catches himself by hooking an arm and a  
leg on one of the steel supports -- but both

THE ICE AXE AND THE GUN

fall, landing on separate chunks of ice floating underneath

the bridge --

#### IN THE SUPPORTS

Gabe pulls himself through the girders to Qualen and punches him with his good arm, but Qualen is unfazed -- neither are in good position, it's like a fistfight on a jungle gym -- -- Qualen steadies himself to savagely punch Gabe in his shoulder wound -- Gabe YELLS in pain and tries to block the next one, but Qualen punches him again, and Gabe lets go of the support, falling -- -- on the way down, Gabe grabs Qualen's leg with his good hand -- too low to grab the bridge, Gabe dangles just over the water, raising his legs above it as Qualen tries to kick him off -- -- Gabe holds onto Qualen's leg, and swings on it like a pendulum -- Gabe twists the leg -- Qualen loses his grip on the icy steel and lets go -- both

#### QUALEN AND GABE

fall -- they land hard, not in the water, but on a raft-sized chunk of ice driven under the bridge by the current. Their weight teeter-totters the ice as they get up -- they're in danger not just from each other, but from

#### THE FAST APPROACHING WHIRLPOOL

where the ice chunks are drawn into the fiercely swirling vortex that drains into the waterfall --

#### ON THE ICE RAFT

Qualen and Gabe circle each other like cautious boxers, as the ice itself swirls in the current -- if either makes the wrong move, they'll both go over. Gabe swings at Qualen, but Qualen throws a leg under Gabe and stiff-arms him down -- Gabe hits the ice hard, his chest hanging over the side -- Qualen moves in to shove him off -- but their combined weight on the same side of the ice starts to tip it over -- Gabe viciously kicks Qualen back, gashing his face with his boot's crampon as Qualen grabs the ice raft's opposite side, levelling it.

QUALEN

(wiping the gash)

Stalemate, isn't it?

GABE

(winded)

Not any more.

Gabe, still prone, reaches out -- the chunk of ice with Qualen's machine gun is floating by. Gabe snatches up the gun

and pulls the trigger. Nothing but an empty CLICK.

QUALEN

Far more intimidating when it's loaded.

The chunk of ice with Gabe's ice axe floats by Gabe -- Gabe grabs for it, but misses -- as the ice raft spins around, Qualen manages to snatch it up -- Qualen scythes it down at Gabe, slamming the blade into the ice as Gabe rolls away --

WIDER VIEW - THE ICE RAFT

is nearing the center of the whirlpool -- the current is faster and stronger here -- if it doesn't swallow the ice raft, it will definitely upend it --

QUALEN AND GABE

stay on opposite sides of the ice raft for balance -- Qualen swings out at Gabe with the axe. Gabe ducks and tries to go low to hit Qualen with the gun, but Qualen swings the axe down again, whizzing right past Gabe as it sinks into --

THE CENTER OF THE ICE RAFT

-- a crack spiderwebs through the ice around the blade --

GABE

quickly reacts, jumping onto another bed-sized chunk of ice floating by, landing on his stomach and braking himself by digging his crampons in -- just as --

QUALEN

realizing what deep shit he's in, looks for another chunk of ice to make the same move -- to see one just out of reach. Qualen pulls the ice axe out of the raft's center to drag the other chunk closer in -- -- as he does, the entire raft disintegrates under him -- Qualen plunges into the water, and tries to maintain a slippery grip on what ice is left --

-- but now at the center of the whirlpool, Qualen is drawn into the vortex --

GABE

struggles to his feet and looks down, wincing --

GABE'S POV - QUALEN GOING DOWN

Qualen's inaudible scream is just a burst of rising bubbles as he shoots down to the bottom of the lake -- and beyond --

QUALLEN'S POV - UNDERWATER

Qualen is shoved with incredible force and speed through the lake's tunnel drain --

ON THE MOUNTAIN WALL - THE WATERFALL

BLASTS OUT full force, hurling a still thrashing Qualen a half a mile to the ground below!

GABE

has no time to celebrate -- the chunk of ice he's on leaves him moments from the same fate. One more time around, and it's down the drain. Gabe takes a deep breath. No choice. He leaps --

WIDER VIEW - THE ICE - GABE LEAPING

-- from one chunk of ice to the other, running the way you would across stones in a stream, zig-zagging to catch the ones big enough to support him -- only his crampons keep him from sliding off, only his momentum keeps him from capsizing the ice chunks, which shoots away from him in his wake --

GABE

lands on an ice raft floating towards the bridge. No choice -- Gabe lunges off the ice raft and reaches for one of the bridge supports -- his hand catches -- but it's slippery and he's weakened -- Gabe slides off, but --

A HAND

reaches down and grabs him --

HAL

pulls Gabe the rest of the way onto the bridge. Gabe's surprise gives way to a grin almost as big as Hal's.

HAL

(eyeing Gabe's ruined shirt)

Nice outfit.

(hands him his parka)

I know you never liked the orange, but --

GABE

Didn't care for the Smokey The Bear hats, either. That's why I quit.

(pulls on parka)

You all right?

HAL

I feel better than you look. I can live with that.

Gabe looks down at the parka -- it's completely full of bullet holes.

GABE

Hardly seems worth zipping, huh?

(serious now)

Frank?

Hal sobers -- shakes his head no. A cloud passes over Gabe's face.

HAL

It's not over, Gabe. Travers took the helicopter.

INSIDE HELICOPTER - FLYING ELSEWHERE OVER MOUNTAIN

Maggie's hands are cuffed to a bar on the helicopter's roof. Travers keys his headset radio while piloting the copter.

TRAVERS

(into radio)

Qualen -- Kristel -- come in --

HAL AND GABE ON BRIDGE

Gabe hears Hal's borrowed headset radio crackling -- he holds his hand out to Hal.

GABE

May I?

(dons it, keys it)

They can't talk right now, Travers.

Kristel's busy making snow angels -- and I'm not sure, but I think Qualen is still falling.

(radio silence)

Any messages?

A moment's silence -- then --

MAGGIE (O.S.)

(over radio)  
Gabe?

GABE  
(keying it)  
Maggie --

INSIDE COPTER - TRAVERS

yanks the radio off Maggie and puts it back on --

TRAVERS  
(into radio)  
You wanted to make a trade earlier,  
Walker -- still interested?

GABE (O.S.)  
(pause)  
I've got the money. Fly to the lake.  
And if you touch her --

Travers cuts off the radio, smiles, and banks the helicopter down around the mountain wall.

GABE AND HAL ON BRIDGE

HAL  
Now what?

GABE  
I have no fucking idea.  
(holds Qualen's gun)  
Empty.

HAL  
(smiling)  
Not for long.

Hal fishes into his pockets and pulls out one of the ammo clips he took from Delmer, Gabe tries to force it into the gun's stock -- but it's the wrong size.

GABE  
(sagging against rail)  
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?  
Just -- whatever happens -- get Maggie  
out of here.

HAL

(relenting)

Count on it.

(beat)

And Gabe? Thanks for tagging along.

GABE

(smiles)

Thanks for asking. I forgot how much I  
enjoyed rescue work.

Gabe limps toward the mountain's edge as Hal runs into the woods.

THE HELICOPTER

blasts along the wall towards the lake -- the waterfall and the ladder are just ahead. The copter radio crackles --

WRIGHT (O.S.)

(from radio)

Come in, Rocky Mountain Rescue --  
urgent -- come in --

Travers recognizes the voice -- frowning, he snaps off the radio and banks the helicopter up over the top --

TRAVERS IN HELICOPTER - TRAVERS POV

tops the precipice, revealing Gabe, standing on the end of a narrow spur -- it just out from the edge like a diving board. Gabe has his pack on one arm -- the money is visible. Gabe levels Qualen's emptied gun on Travers and the copter -- this bluff is all he has left.

GABE

(over radio)

Remember that bet you made? About

whether I could find the money for you  
or not?

(holds pack over drop)

You won.

Travers helplessly flies in low, tight circles over Gabe and the spur -- if he shoots Gabe, the money falls too, Travers presses his gun at Maggie.

TRIVERS

(into radio)

I'll kill her --

GABE

(over radio)

You do, and the spring thaw's going to  
be worth thirty million bucks.

(pause)

No rush. I'm sure you've got lots of  
time.

TRIVERS

(into radio)

All right. Drop the gun first.

GABE

(into radio)

When she's safe on the ground.

EXT. SPUR/COPTER

Travers has no choice but to give in -- he gives Maggie the handcuff key, and she frees herself as he flies away from the spur, touching the copter down on the mountain top.

TRIVERS

(to Maggie)

Get out.

Maggie moves out the door and stares uncertainly at Gabe.

GABE

(shouting)

Run!

(she doesn't)

Run!

Maggie runs for the trees. When Gabe is sure she's safe, he throws the gun away -- but keeps the pack suspended over the edge.

GABE

(into radio)  
Now come and get it. My arm's getting  
tired.

EXT. HELICOPTER

Travers flies the copter up and over, until he and it are five feet away from Gabe's position on the spur. Gabe is buffeted by the copter's wind, but stands firm. Travers levels his gun at Gabe through the open passenger door as Gabe heaves the pack in. Travers doesn't even look down -- he just stares at Gabe with hate as he prepares to shoot.

GABE  
(shouting)  
Don't you want to count it?

Puzzled, Travers takes his gun hand and rips open

THE PACK

The \$5000s are there -- but they've been shredded by Qualen's earlier blast of gunfire. Few, if any, of the bills are passable.

TRIVERS

stares down, incredulous -- as he does --

GABE

rips open a perforated section of parka and yanks his bolt gun from his waist --

Travers looks up and raises his gun at Gabe -- but Gabe fires first -- the bolt imbeds itself high in Travers' chest. Gasping, Travers drops his gun -- it falls over the pack and out the open door -- Travers clutches at his chest --

GABE  
Don't spend it all in one place, you  
son of a bitch.

Travers falls back in his seat and loses control of the helicopter -- it spins around, and Gabe has to instantly flatten to avoid the tail when it swings at him -- Gabe looks down as --

THE HELICOPTER

quickly begins to spiral down in wide, aimless circles -- Travers has clearly lost control --

GABE

stares down coldly, waiting for the crash -- but --

INSIDE THE COPTER - TRAVERS

won't give up -- sweating, bleeding, he sits forward and grabs the stick, seizing control of the helicopter again --

GABE'S POV - THE HELICOPTER

stops its uncontrolled descent and begins to rise up and up -- with clear purpose --

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, sweeping low over the snow, it gets between Gabe and the trees, cutting him off --

WOODED AREA - HAL AND MAGGIE

watch, powerless --

HAL

He's going to run Gabe down --

TRAVERS IN HELICOPTER

Ashen, hyperventilating, he's running on pure adrenalin and fury as he drives the stick forward --

TRAVERS 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 overtakes --

GABE

as he throws himself flat into the snow -- the front of the skid misses Gabe by inches as it blasts over him --

THE HELICOPTER

moves out over the precipice edge -- Travers banks it wide to circle back around for another run --

GABE

gets back up as the helicopter swings back behind him --

IN A WOODED AREA

Hal rips the lining out of one of his pockets and stuffs it into one of the ammo clips -- Maggie stays back as he runs for all he's worth out into the clearing --

THE HELICOPTER

has circled back around, stopping at a hover far back in the clearing -- Travers intends to not just run Gabe over, but to run him off the edge as well --

GABE

lumbers as fast as he can towards the edge --

TRAVERS

knows he has Gabe nailed -- he shoves the stick forward --

THE HELICOPTER

flies forward, skids just inches over the snow --

HAL

runs out to where Travers is heading -- he lights the cloth in the ammo clip -- as

THE HELICOPTER

flies past

IN THE CLEARING

Hal hurls the clip, with its cloth "fuse" burning down, into the doorless side of the copter --

INSIDE THE HELICOPTER

-- the makeshift bomb bounces to the floor of the cockpit -- Travers sees it and looks down, but --

THE "FUZE"

sputters out -- nothing but glowing embers in the cloth --

TRAVERS

smiles -- nothing to worry about -- he speeds ahead --

CLOSE ON THE HELICOPTER'S SKIDS

as they slice through the top of the snow towards --

GABE

as he runs toward the mountain's edge -- it's just a couple of feet ahead, but the copter is a couple of feet behind --

-- as the copter overtakes Gabe, dipping even lower into the snow, he dives off the edge --

FOLLOWING GABE - FALLING

Gabe is at the ladder -- he falls the first twenty feet of the long drop, then grabs a rung on the cable ladder, very painfully stopping his fall -- but in the same split second --

THE HELICOPTER

skid meant to impale Gabe catches the top two rungs of the cable ladder --

WIDE SHOT - THE HELICOPTER

-- caught in the rungs of the cable ladder, the helicopter keeps flying out over the abyss, but as it pulls the cable ladder, it pops out the bolts that hold the ladder in place, rung by rung -- -- still going full tilt, 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

Travers is disoriented by the jolt, and tries to maintain control -- he doesn't see --

-- that the cloth fuse on the ammo clip has reignited -- it

burns down to the clip, and fifty rounds explode like a string of firecrackers --

-- Travers tries to shield himself as he is struck by airborne lead. Shrapnel blasts into the instrument panel --

THE HELICOPTER

still strains against the cable ladder but the engine goes dead -- the rotor blades slow --

GABE ON LADDER

Gabe stares in horror 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 --

INT. HELICOPTER

-- Travers, who has been shaken to the opposite side of the copter, reaches into his jacket and pulls out the pistol he took from Frank -- he aims at Gabe --

INSERT - THE HELICOPTER SKID

One of the two rungs holding the copter up bursts --

THE HELICOPTER

slips, now hanging from just a single rung -- -- and the impact of the slip makes Travers drop the gun -- it falls out the open passenger door. Travers 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 -- Gabe jumps for the wall as Travers scrambles behind him and --

CLOSE ON THE HELICOPTER SKID

-- as the last rung supporting the copter snaps in two --

GABE

grabs hold of the ladder as

THE HELICOPTER

plummets down -- but as it starts its fall --

TRAVERS

leaps from the falling copter and grabs Gabe's leg -- Gabe struggles to support both of them, but Travers, weakened from his wound, loses his grip on Gabe's leg -- he stares up in terror at Gabe as he clutches Gabe's snow-slick boot --

GABE

Cheer up. It's a beautiful spot to die.

Travers slides off and away --

THE FALL - LONG SHOT

Travers SCREAMING as he free falls, 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 Travers just before he impacts into the explosion!

GABE

looks down at the burning wreck and clings to the ladder, closing his eyes for a moment in exhaustion. But the WHOPPING of another helicopter makes him look up --

THE TREASURY HELICOPTER

has shown up, a little too late to be of any help.

INSIDE THE TREASURY COPTER

Wright, Davis and Stuart look at the billowing flames of the wreck -- even from here, the burning money is visible, drifting up in the smoke. Wright turns to Stuart.

WRIGHT

I'm no expert -- but what do you make of that "event"?

GABE

is drained -- from somewhere, he finds the strength to lift his head up --

GABE'S POV - THE WALL

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 on 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 to a stop 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 shout)

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 the  
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 harrangue and looks over -- Gabe has apparently  
revived, because he and Maggie are locked in the kiss of their  
lives. Hal stands, and smiles -- he walks toward the Treasury  
agents, who are scrambling out of the helicopter. Hal starts  
an explanation that's going to take a long, long time as --

GABE AND MAGGIE

break off their kiss.

MAGGIE

Does this mean you're staying?

Off Gabe's answering smile, we --

FADE OUT.