

THE RETURN

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FADE IN:

EXT. RED MOUNTAIN TRAIL / LOOKOUT - DAY

NORA, 26, eases to the mountain's edge -- layers of red rock spires ripple out under thick, dark clouds.

She takes in the view...

Distant thunder RUMBLES.

Nora takes off her pack. Unzips. Pulls out a cell phone with a floral-patterned case.

She looks back toward the trail. She holds her gaze...

Shakes her head with a curious smile.

Her eyes shift to her phone. Poses for a selfie.

EXT. PARKING LOT, RANGER STATION - DAY

Parking lot with a few old trucks and a Cadillac DeVille.

SUPER: SAN LUIS VALLEY, COLORADO 2018.

INT. OFFICE, RANGER STATION - DAY

DOROTHY -- 50, National Forest Service uniform, seasoned from the outdoors -- takes her attention off of a packet of papers and looks across her desk.

DOROTHY

Got a driver's license with you?

DON -- 59, flannel and a vest that both look straight off the rack -- sits across from Dorothy. His flannel is unbuttoned a bit too low, revealing a white tank top and gold chain. A folded piece of **PURPLE PAPER** peeks out of his chest pocket.

He takes out a money clip. Hands over his license.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Long way comin' from Illinois.

Dorothy takes a closer look at the license.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Quite the D.O.B. here...

DON
(annoyed)
What?

DOROTHY
D.O.B. stands for --

DON
Date Of Birth, I know. I'm not a --

DOROTHY
Dumb old bastard?

Dorothy studies Don -- clean-shaven, combed hair, no ring.
She smiles.

DOROTHY
It's a joke.

DON
Hysterical. I, ugh, got the gig or
what?

DOROTHY
Usually don't hire mid-season, but
we have a couple trails in back of
Crestone need checkin'. Six days
on, four off. Move some brush, get
a few water samples, chat with
visitors -- which seems right up
your alley. It's easy work if you
can hack the backcountry.

DON
Believe me, I can hack it.

DOROTHY
All aboard the fast track then.
Choo choo.

She BANGS on the wall behind her --

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Scott's gonna run through some
videos and gear with you.

SCOTT (O.S.)
(through wall)
What?

INT. MEETING ROOM, RANGER STATION - DAY

Half of Don's gear is on the table, half in a bin next to it.

SCOTT -- 35, decked out in outdoor brands and wearing toe shoes -- holds out a handheld radio.

Don disapprovingly stares at Scott's shoes.

SCOTT
Just got these in. New C.M.D.'s.

Don reaches for the radio, but Scott pulls it back. From his other hand, Scott holds out a thick binder.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
Manual. Read it. This puppy is expensive. Anything happens, you're responsible. Seriously, this --

DON
Do I look like some kind of asshole to you? Like I'm gonna throw this thing off a hill?

Scott cowers a bit.

Don takes only the radio from Scott's hands.

Scott puts the binder on the table. Grabs a small bag with rope attached to it from the bin. Hands it to Don.

SCOTT
Bear bag.

Don peeks inside the bag.

Scott notices Don's confusion.

SCOTT (CONT'D)
To hang your food.

Don holds up the rope like a clothesline.

DON
I got it.

Don puts the bag on the table as Scott's face scrunches in confusion.

LATER

Don, sitting backwards on a folding chair, watches a Forest Service training video on a

BOXY TV SCREEN

FEMALE RANGER stands on a mountain trail.

FEMALE RANGER
Every year, trails take a beating
from the elements, and from heavy
or improper use --

BACK TO:

Scott leaves the back of the room.

INT. OFFICE, RANGER STATION - DAY

Scott pops into Dorothy's office.

SCOTT
Hey, so, this guy --

DOROTHY
(grinning)
Eddie Bauer?

SCOTT
Yeah. What the hell?

DOROTHY
He's cute, right?

SCOTT
Jesus, Dorothy.

I/E. DON'S CAR, RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Phone to his ear, Don drives his Cadillac DeVille through the picturesque San Luis Valley of southern Colorado. The distant and green San Juan mountains to the east, the snow-capped Sangre de Cristo's to the west.

NORA (V.O.)
... this is my new number. My
reception is pretty terrible, but I
really hope to hear from you soon.

An old jeep zips by with a quick WHOOSH OF RAP MUSIC. We stay with the

JEEP -- "FREEK-A-LEEK" by Petey Pablo ** or any other FUCKING BANGER of a rap song.

ALI -- 29, light brown skin, sweeping black hair -- eats a gas station burrito while driving and rapping along to the music. He's got swag... kind of. He's either so confident or so out of touch you either want to be his best friend or hope to god your sister isn't really going to marry him.

ALI
(rapping)
Twenty-four, thirty-four, forty-six
good and thick and what you give
her she'll work wit' it.
Pretty face and some cute lips,
Earing in her tongue and she know
what to do with it.

Some goop drops out of the bottom of his burrito onto a road atlas from like 1978 that's spread out on his lap. He tries to brush off the mess, but it just smears more. Fuck it, back to hot beat --

ALI (CONT'D)
(rapping)
And she know why she came here
And she know where clothes suppose
to be --
(shouts)
Off and over there!

Ali uses his non-burrito hand to rhythmically refer to his passenger seat with a SLAP --

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOTEL - DAY

CADILLAC DOOR SLAMS SHUT. Nothing else around off the rural highway.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - DAY

MOTEL ATTENDANT, 65, returns to a counter. Hands Don a key.

MOTEL ATTENDANT
You said how long?

DON
Let's keep this open-ended.

INT. METAPHYSICAL JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

Door swings open. Ali awkwardly stumbles in while trying to carry a large bin with one arm.

MARGARET -- 25, gorgeous granola, sporting Chacos with a pedicure -- stops rearranging jewelry.

MARGARET

Hi there.

ALI

Hey! Let's get it! I'm Ali. I talked to... --

Margaret brightens to match Ali's infectious energy.

MARGARET

My mom, yeah! Let me give you a hand.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Boxes clutter the dated room. Handheld radio, maps, and manuals on a table.

Don takes a motel painting off the wall. Hangs a **FRAMED MAP** in its place -- we don't get a clear look at it. He then tucks the folded **PURPLE PAPER** from his pocket into the frame.

Don turns toward the bed. Takes a phone charger off the comforter and scans the room...

He peeks behind the headboard to see a hard-to-reach outlet.

Don gets on his knees. Squeezes his arm between the wall and headboard. He boils as he blindly tries getting the charger in the outlet. It THWACKS against the wall a few times.

DON

Cocksucking, mother--

Slides into place.

Satisfied, Don sits on the bed. Plugs in his phone -- the screen doesn't light up. Unplugs. Replugs -- nothing.

INT. BATHROOM, MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Charger in the bathroom outlet, Don plugs his phone in -- the screen lights up revealing a background picture of Nora's selfie at the Red Mountain lookout.

Don leaves the bathroom...

Returns with another phone charger. Plugs it into the second outlet.

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOTEL - DAY

Don tries setting up a tent -- clearly never done it before.

Motel Attendant comes out of the office.

MOTEL ATTENDANT
You want some help with that?

INT. METAPHYSICAL JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

Margaret watches as Ali strolls through the store alongside A JEWELRY CUSTOMER, 65. They're engaged in meaningful, animated conversation.

INT. DINER - DAY

Don reads from a

FOREST SERVICE MANUAL

There's a diagram showing how to properly secure food over a tree branch using a bear bag -- looks nothing like a clothesline.

BACK TO:

In the background, Ali and Jewelry Customer stand at the diner counter. Still chatting.

INT. METAPHYSICAL JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

Ali enters the shop with Jewelry Customer. He carries two take-out coffees, Jewelry Customer holds her own.

ALI
... and I tell people about the
collection and about him.

JEWELRY CUSTOMER
(looking at the bracelet
on her wrist)
Beautiful, just beautiful.

Ali quickly swings up to the counter and drops a coffee off for Margaret -- but his attention stays solely on Jewelry Customer.

The coffee a surprise, Margaret gives an appreciative smile.

INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Map resting on a washing machine, Don highlights a trail. He stops at a blue oval labeled "LILY LAKE" at the base of the 13,680 foot Mount Lily.

INT. METAPHYSICAL JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

Back of the shop, hanging **sign** above the table -- "HOROSCOPE READINGS".

Margaret pulls a circular birth chart from a stack of papers.

Sitting across from her, Ali spots a pack on the floor with a chalk bag, climbing shoes and carabineers attached.

MARGARET

... pretty good climber. He should be up here in a little bit.

ALI

Well, your boy over here has been known to scale a stone or two. The mountains back there...

MARGARET

The Sangres?

ALI

Yeah. I've heard some things --

Ali puts his hands on the table palms up, right next to Margaret's. So close they brush against. She looks up.

ALI (CONT'D)

Don't you need to read my lifelines? The grooves of my wandering --

MARGARET

No, that's nonsense.

ALI

Oh, but all this --
(motions to the charts)
This is scientific method?

They both laugh. She playfully pushes his hands away.

MARGARET
Let's start with your birth year.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Don crams a jacket into his backpacking pack -- no room left.
His phone is on speaker, emitting from the nearby table --

NORA (V.O.)
You're not a coward. You're not
selfish...

He looks at the table -- plenty of gear still on it.

NORA (V.O.)
You are still stubborn as ever.

I/E. DON'S CAR, MOTEL PARKING LOT - DAY

Don, in a khaki uniform, starts the Caddy. He looks around,
checks his pockets --

DON
Son of a bitch.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Don enters. Goes straight to the bathroom...
Comes out with phone in-hand.

I/E. DON'S CAR, RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Don cruises toward a

Billboard

Picture of a flying saucer with vibrant text -- "RIDE THE
COSMIC HIGHWAY TO THE UFO WATCHTOWER. 1/2 MILE."

BACK TO:

Past the billboard, a cop car has a truck pulled over.

EXT. ROADSIDE, RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

OFFICER ALVAREZ, 38, exits his cop car. He walks up to the back of the truck. Looks in the truck's bed -- three backpacking packs.

I/E. DON'S CAR, CRESTONE MAIN STREET - DAY

Don eases through the eclectic, mountain village. All kinds of unusual shops with strange architecture -- "MOTHER EARTH HERBALS", "CONSCIOUS HARMONICS", "METAPHYSICAL JEWELRY".

Don abruptly brakes due to a group of slow-walking HIPPY BACKPACKERS hogging the road.

DON

What's this, A fuckin' parade?

HONKS his horn.

I/E. DON'S CAR, ROUGH MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Don's big-ass Caddy shakes as it passes over the uneven dirt road. The bottom of it SCRAPES over some rocks.

EXT. PARKING LOT, LILY LAKE TRAILHEAD - DAY

Empty dirt lot. Don staples **signage** to the trail board -- "RECENT BEAR SIGHTINGS". It continues on to list cautionary tips for bear safety.

EXT. LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Lush forest surrounds the narrow trail. Don reaches for his water bottle.

He looks at the winding switchbacks ahead...

EXT. LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Halfway up the switchbacks, Don PANTS while lying on his back.

An elk BUGLES in the distance -- startling Don to his feet.

EXT. STREAM, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Don gingerly bends down to collect a water sample. He cringes as his left hand touches the muddy bank for stability.

EXT. CAMPSITE, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Tent set up with sleeping bag inside.

Don looks over a checklist. He sets it down. Pulls a smashed sandwich out of his pack.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Don finishes tying the rope of the bear bag to a rock.

He tries lobbing the rock (rope along with it) over a horizontal tree branch 30 feet above him.

The rock flies off and the rope goes nowhere.

DON
That's just perfect.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Lit by headlamp. Don sits cross-legged inside.

He inhales deeply... Exhales...

He references an

OPEN BOOK

Meditation instructions on one page. The other has a sketch of Nora sitting cross-legged in a forest, both eyes closed, but she has an opened third eye on her forehead.

BACK TO:

Turns off the headlamp.

INHALE. With his next EXHALE --

DON
(vibrating the sounds)
AAAAAAUUUUUUMMMMMM.

INHALES. EXHALE --

DON (CONT'D)
 AAAAAAUUUUUUMMMMM.

INHALE. EXHALE --

DON (CONT'D)
 AAAUUUUUU IIIIII I don't fuckin'
 get this.

EXT. CAMPSITE, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Don pours some water on his hair. Slicks it back with a comb.

EXT. MEADOW, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Pack on the ground. Bear spray next to it.

Don clears some brush from the trail.

He spots a mountain goat munching on grass.

Mesmerized, Don watches...

MARGARET(O.S.)
 Hey! Sir!

Don turns up trail to see Margaret running. She looks exhausted with a t-shirt tied around her arm. She's carrying a water bottle but no pack.

Don hurries toward Margaret --

DON
 Easy hun, you okay?

Margaret hunkers over, catching her breath.

MARGARET
 I'm fine, I'm fine.

Closer now, Margaret does a double take on Don -- white tank top and gold chain showing under his uniform -- he just doesn't look the part.

MARGARET (CONT'D)
 Do you have a radio?

EXT. MEADOW, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Don's backpack is on the ground with an open first aid kit next to it. Sitting on a rock, Margaret cleans a gash on her arm with an alcohol wipe.

Don stands by.

MARGARET

We started up yesterday morning.
Me, my boyfriend Jackson and our
friend Ali. We were hoping to
summit Lily in one day, but by the
time we got above the lake the sun
was comin' down.

Margaret grabs gauze and a roll of tape. Tapes and talks --

MARGARET (CONT'D)

We made camp last night and planned
to summit today and pack out. When
Jackson and I got up this morning,
Ali was gone.

DON

Gone?

EXT. MEADOW, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Don fidgets with a volume knob while transmitting on radio --

DON

... haven't seen him since last
night.

SCOTT (V.O.)

We'll contact Saguache County
Sheriff's Office. They'll get a
hasty team up there in a few hours.
Radio back if anything changes.

DON

Will do. Over and out... or
whatever the fu--

SCOTT (V.O.)

What?

Margaret stands up from the rock. A beanie hides her hair and extends to the top of her emaciated face.

DON
Listen, I can help you down. Give
you a ride to the hospital.

MARGARET
It's just a few more miles. I can
drive. You should go up and help
Jackson.

EXT. LILY LAKE - DAY

Don reaches the shore of the beautiful alpine lake.

DON
(shouting)
Ali!

A signpost has an arrow pointing up the trail -- "LILY PEAK".

EXT. ABOVE TREE LINE, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

With the lake and treeline well below, the terrain flattens.

Don WHEEZES.

A green tent flaps in the wind 30 yards ahead.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Don approaches from behind the green tent -- it suddenly
tightens down from the relentless wind.

Don moves to the front. JACKSON -- 26, beard, muscular --
pushes a stake deep into the ground.

DON
(out of breath)
You Jackson?

Startled, Jackson looks up.

JACKSON
Yeah.

DON
Your girl told me about Ali. He
show?

JACKSON
No.

Jackson stands up next to the empty, green tent.

Don points to a smaller, blue tent.

DON
That his?

JACKSON
Yeah.

They walk to the blue tent.

Don waits for Jackson to say more... Jackson doesn't.

Don peeks inside to see a rustled sleeping bag and a pack.

DON
Well, shit.

EXT. ROCK FIELD - DAY

Don takes it slow over exposed rock with the occasional speckling of moss.

DON
(shouting)
Ali! Ali!

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Don snacks on some jerky as Jackson organizes his pack. The glacier-patched Mount Lily looms above them.

Five men on horseback arrive -- SHERIFF BECKER, 45, Officer Alvarez and three SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) MEMBERS. Sheriff and Alvarez are in uniform, the others in hiking gear.

SHERIFF
Jackson, any changes to the situation?

JACKSON
No.

The men dismount. SAR MEMBERS huddle up as Alvarez pulls out a map and a red marker.

SAR #1
(surprised)
Ya'll made camp up here?

Jackson joins the men.

JACKSON
(trailing off)
We were hoping to summit but...

Sheriff walks toward Don. He stops 10 feet away, turns his back to Don. Unzips his pants.

SHERIFF
(over his shoulder)
Don?

DON
Yeah.

SHERIFF
(urinating)
Sheriff Becker from Saguache
County. We sure appreciate your
help up here.

Sheriff finishes his short piss and zips up. He approaches Don with his dick-hand out for a shake.

Don doesn't shake -- grimaces at the hand instead.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
Sorry 'bout that. Darn prostate.
Put me on horseback, and I'm
pissin' every ten minutes.

DON
You know, I'm new to this, but I
can help. Not doing much else.

SHERIFF
Nah. We'll do a sweep and get air
support on here early tomorrow.
Hopefully he just got turned around
and ends up back in town.

DON
I got legs and eyes, and I yell
pretty good.

SHERIFF
Best if you get back to your Forest
Service responsibilities. We got it
from here.

Sheriff turns away.

DON
(under his breath but not)
Fuckin' clown bull--

Sheriff turns back --

SHERIFF
What's that?

DON
(walking away)
I'm gonna go tro' some fuckin'
sticks off a trail.

EXT. ABOVE TREELINE, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DUSK

With the sun coming down, Don descends toward the lake.

EXT. CAMPSITES, LILY LAKE - DAY

Don checks out a few empty campsites. He marks a form on a clipboard as the WHINING of an engine and the BUZZING of helicopter blades get closer.

He looks up -- a low-flying helicopter glides above.

EXT. LILY LAKE - DAY

Sheriff, Alvarez, SAR Members and Jackson head away from the high flat. Jackson rides one of the horses as SAR #1 hikes ahead of them.

DON (O.S.)
Sheriff!

Sheriff motions for the group to continue on. He turns his horse to face Don coming from a nearby campsite.

DON (CONT'D)
You's find something?

SHERIFF
Nah.

DON
No one stayin' up there?

SHERIFF
'Bout the only place we know he's
not. I'll have Forest Service radio
you when he turns up.

Sheriff dismounts his horse. Shields himself behind a tree.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)
 (urinating)
 When you're back in town, go ahead
 and stop by the station and log an
 official report.

EXT. CAMPSITE, LILY LAKE - DAY

Don stands in the middle of his campsite. Looks at his tent
 then at the afternoon sun.

Starts taking the tent down.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Ambient sunlight from behind the mountains vanishing quickly.
 The green tent and blue tent are gone. The only sign of
 recent visitors is a few piles of horse shit.

Exhausted, Don drops his pack to the ground.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

RUSTLING outside.

Don wakes. Sits up. Turns on his headlamp.

A wheezy SNORT from outside the tent.

Don freezes...

A shape presses against the tent, touching Don's back.

Spooked, Don slides to the other side of the tent...

Another SNORT right next to him.

Don scoots to the center of the tent.

SILENCE...

TENSE.....

The wind WHIPS...

Don grabs his bear spray.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

Darkness except for the orange tent that glows from the inside like a jack-o'-lantern.

Light turns off.

Front slip slowly zips open from the inside.

Just Don's hand comes out, holding the bear spray --

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Don zips the flap down a bit more.

Waits...

RUSTLING behind him --

Don shoots out a MIST of bear spray -- but a slash of wind pushes most of it back into the tent.

Don recoils -- closing his eyes and mouth.

After a few unbearable seconds, Don yanks the zipper down and rolls out into the darkness --

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

On all fours, Don COUGHS and SPITS.

Nearby HUFF.

Don quiets...

Turns on his headlamp --

A MOUNTAIN GOAT stares back at Don from 10 feet away. Don initially flinches, but the goat turns away from the light and calmly grazes out of view.

Don eases to his feet. Slowly turns 360 degrees -- beam of light shows 12 mountain goats surrounding his tent, none of which pay any attention to him.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

With the mountain goats gone and a full pack, Don looks out over the lonely, rocky terrain.

EXT. LILY LAKE - DAY

Don wets an undershirt in the lake.

He kneels to the ground and wipes down the sprawled-out tent.

He sniffs the part he just wiped -- winces and GROANS.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Patter of rain against the tent. Don gnaws on summer sausage and reads from a **book** titled "DREAMWORK".

EXT. LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Don plods along the trail.

BURLY (O.S.)
(distant)
Ali!

SLIM (O.S.)
Ali!

Don peeps up and heads toward the voices.

EXT. LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Officer Alvarez walks up the trail. Eight VOLUNTEERS spaced out every 20 yards flank Alvarez on both sides.

BURLY VOLUNTEER, 40, on the left --

BURLY
Ali!

Alvarez stops at Don --

ALVAREZ
You out of here?

DON
Yeah. You's going back?

SLIM VOLUNTEER, 35, on the right turns to see why they stopped but continues his shout right at Alvarez --

SLIM

Ali!

Alvarez motions for Slim to simmer down.

ALVAREZ

Just volunteers doing a comb. Enjoy your rest.

Don nods. Moves on. Gets a few feet down trail --

HERMAN (O.S.)

Hold up, there.

HERMAN -- 47, thick mustache -- hustles over from the ranks of the search party.

HERMAN (CONT'D)

(to Alvarez)

I'll catch up.

Herman extends a hand for Don.

HERMAN (CONT'D)

Don, right?

DON

Yeah.

They shake.

HERMAN

Herman. I'm Jackson's dad.

DON

Oh, how's he doin'?

HERMAN

Little shaken up... Hey, I know you got up there first, and I can't thank you enough.

DON

I didn't do much.

HERMAN

Being there was plenty. The kids were probably terrified. You're new to the Valley, right?

DON
That's right.

HERMAN
My wife and I would love to have
you over for dinner, show our
appreciation.

DON
No, that's not --

HERMAN
Please, I've got some steaks in
from Pagosa. We're talkin' life-
changing cuts.

DON
It's a classy move. I admire that,
but I've been out here in this
fucking jungle for days. I need
some real sleep --

HERMAN
And a real meal. Saturday, seven?

Catches Don off guard --

DON
Sure.

Don tries to walk off --

HERMAN
Do you have a pen?

EXT. PARKING LOT, LILY LAKE TRAIL HEAD - DAY

Don pops the trunk and heaves his pack inside. He spots new
signage on the trail board. Approaches the

POSTER

MISSING

ALI ZAMAN.

AGE - 29.

LAST SEEN - SEPTEMBER 6, 2018.

The poster continues with a picture, physical description and contact information for the Sheriff's office.

BACK TO:

Don looks at the stern-faced picture of Ali.

INT. HALLWAY / OFFICE, RANGER STATION - DAY

Don, carrying a sampling kit and folder, peeks into Dorothy's office -- empty.

SCOTT (O.S.)
Any problems with the gear?

Don rolls his eyes.

DON
You hear anything about the kid?

Scott enters the hallway from his office.

SCOTT
No. You can leave the kit and reports. Dorothy said she'll call to check in later.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Don gingerly removes his boots while talking on the phone --

DON
... was probably about your age.
Looked like absolute hell, but a tough girl, you know? She was with her --

INCOMING CALL NOTIFICATION --

DON (CONT'D)
Hold on a sec --

Clicks over --

DON (CONT'D)
Who's this? ... Oh... yeah, where's that?

INT. BAR - NIGHT

An eclectic mix of COWBOYS, REGULARS, and HIPPIES. A large horseshoe bar resides in the middle with a dance floor to the left and pool tables to the right.

Dorothy and Don at a table. Dorothy's rocking some makeup and big feathered hair. Don nurses a beer while Dorothy is halfway through her second.

DOROTHY

... Margaret is a good kid. She did an internship with us a few years back. I don't know Jackson, but his dad's a swingin' dick in the Valley.

DON

He was part of some kind of search party. Guy wouldn't let me leave without a dinner reservation.

DOROTHY

Always politician'. He'll be going for county commissioner, no doubt.

Don looks out at people line dancing to COUNTRY MUSIC.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

All kinds of wild, wouldn't you say? Showin' up here when you did. Synchronicity, you ever heard of that?

Don could give a shit --

DON

Look, you got any trails in the same area?

The music transitions to a DISCO TUNE.

Dorothy seems slightly defeated by the subject change.

DOROTHY

A mining company has an inholding on everything north of Lily. There is a trail south. Been on the backlog a while. A real skunk of --

DON

I can hack it.

Dorothy stands.

DOROTHY
Just need one thing.

Don waits for it, holds annoyed eye contact.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
A dance.

DON
Lady, I don't --

DOROTHY
Come on. If you can hack it.

Don reluctantly follows Dorothy. A COWBOY leaving the dance floor spots her --

COWBOY
(shouting)
Watch out! Here comes Dorothy!

As he passes by, Cowboy slaps Don on the back --

COWBOY (CONT'D)
Good luck, partner!

INT. DANCE FLOOR, BAR -- CONTINUOUS

Don and Dorothy get to the center of the floor.

Dorothy gets in a groove immediately. She's fluid and fantastic -- creatively drifting to all corners of the floor and eventually back to Don.

DON
You can really move. I'll give you that.

Dorothy takes Don's hand and has him spin her.

Don maintains the excitement of a 20 year-old being dragged to his girlfriend's senior prom.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Don's report on a desk between him and Sheriff.

DON
(not impressed)
That's it?

SHERIFF

These kinds of things happen 'round here from time to time. Crestone attracts a certain population. Drifters, druggies, people claiming they see things -- what is it they say? *They've been touched by the Sangres*. I've lived here my whole life, never seen nothin' but god's natural, green earth. But, hey, maybe I'm not special.

DON

Yeah, maybe not, Sheriff. But this kid --

SHERIFF

What kid? He's almost thirty. This isn't a schoolboy lost on a field trip.

Don's expression stays blank.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

We put a couple things out there. Got his mom up here from Phoenix. She gave us nothin'. Jackson and Margaret, they barely knew him, and you can find their praises from here to La Jara. Hell, Alvarez even pulled 'em over mornin' before. Story checks out. You're the only other person who was on there that night... another out-of-towner I know nothin' about.

Sheriff takes a hard look at Don.

DON

(with a laugh)

You think I had something to do with this?

SHERIFF

No. I don't. I think a man got lost, had an accident, or hell, maybe he doesn't want to be found. And I'm confident in that because I ain't new to the Valley or my job. This department put a week on this... there isn't much more we can do.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

On the bed, Don flips through a

SKETCH PAD

Sketch of a massive mechanical device, like a pile of gears somehow intricately connected.

Flips the page --

Sketch of a vast ocean with dozens of rafts floating on its surface.

Flips the page --

I/E. DON'S CAR, RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Don drives past a **sign** -- "GREAT SAND DUNES NATIONAL PARK".

EXT. PARKING LOT, VISITOR'S CENTER - DAY

Don walks toward the entrance while talking on the phone --

DON
... seems like the kind of thing
you'd be into. Guy who owns the
motel, he says they're full-on
mountains of sand.

Don notices a flyer outside the entrance.

DON (CONT'D)
Just a sec...

MISSING PERSON FLYER

It's for Ali -- but it's different than the one at the trailhead. This is handwritten and has several pictures on it showing Ali smiling. The contact information at the bottom has the Sheriff's Office and a number for "ZULFIA ZAMAN".

INT. DINER - DAY

ZULFIA, 50, scarfs on a muffin.

ZULFIA
(mouthful)
Two summers ago he was in
Indonesia. Then on a boat to New
Zealand.
(MORE)

ZULFIA (CONT'D)

I did not hear from him for months.
What did I do to deserve this?
Always going... What is he looking
for?

Zulfia's tone is more annoyed than concerned.

DON

Was Ali --

Zulfia corrects his pronunciation --

ZULFIA

Ali.

DON

Was he okay, you know... mentally?

Zulfia laughs.

ZULFIA

You've been talking to the Sheriff?
Yes, he thinks Ali is some...
suicidal. He is plenty happy.
Plenty successful. He was selling
his jewelry out of a shop up in the
Crestone town.

Zulfia sips coffee. Don studies her.

ZULFIA (CONT'D)

What is it?

DON

You don't seem that worried.

ZULFIA

He is the most capable person I
know.

Don hesitates...

ZULFIA (CONT'D)

Ali is a part of me. If he were not
alive, I would feel it. Can you
understand that?

EXT. STREET, CRESTONE - DAY

Don ambles through the bohemian town. He stops at a

WOODEN BILLBOARD

"CRESTONE'S SPIRITUAL CENTERS". Below the heading are over 20 different centers with directional arrows, including ASHRAMS, STUPAS and ZEN RETREATS.

INT. METAPHYSICAL JEWELRY SHOP - DAY

Don looks at a collection of pendants. He goes down the line, picks up a rustic cross with a scythe at the bottom.

MARGARET(O.S.)
Saturn's Sickle.

Don turns then smiles at Margaret -- now healthy and radiant.

MARGARET(CONT'D)
A symbol of harvest and time. And
it's composed of Saturn's
astrological metal.

Don compares it to the more polished pendants of gold, silver, and copper --

DON
Sorta looks like shit, don't it?

MARGARET
It may not shine, but, long ago,
lead was revered by alchemists.

DON
(putting pendant back)
Never been much of a drinker.

Margaret smiles at the bad joke.

DON (CONT'D)
How's the arm?

MARGARET
Slight fracture, but it's healing
up. Any word on Ali?

DON
Not yet. He ugh... worked here,
too?

MARGARET
He was just passing through. My mom
let him sell some of his pieces out
of the store. We have a few left.

Margaret leads Don to a counter.

There's a picture of a middle-aged Indian man next to a small **sign** "ZAMAN COLLECTION". Atop a silk cloth are a few necklaces and bracelets all of the same style -- several tiny pieces of rock all stranded together.

Don picks up a bracelet. He inspects the small shards of rock on the bracelet -- each is unique and magnificent.

DON

You know anything about him?

MARGARET

Not really. He was only in here a few days. We started talking about climbing --

Don glances at the price tag -- **\$375.**

DON

That's a fuckin' price.

MARGARET

He makes each piece by hand. I wish he was here to tell you -- there's a story to 'em.

Don looks up, notices Margaret is wearing a necklace surely made by Ali.

DON

You been through a lot, and I'm not trying to bring all this shit up, but the Sheriff and them are done looking for the kid. I'll be working some trails in the area... If anything comes to mind about Ali, give me a call or something.

Don hands Margaret a slip of paper.

DON (CONT'D)

My address is on there, too -- the motel off one-sixty. I don't get the best reception.

MARGARET

It's probably nothing useful --

DON

What?

MARGARET

We were hiking pretty fast. Ali somehow was still talking, telling all these stories. I was cashed, so I only got every other word, but he kept bringing up this guy named Cliff. Apparently, he lives in a treehouse in the Baca.

DON

Baca?

MARGARET

The Baca Grande. The rich side of Crestone.

(laughs)

I know it sounds crazy.

Don glances back down at the bracelets. Picks one up.

MARGARET(CONT'D)

You still having dinner with Herman and my mom tonight?

DON

Jasckson's dad? He said it was just him and his wife. How'd you know about that?

MARGARET

Herman's married to my mom.

Don tries to process...

DON

Wait, how's that?

INT. DINING ROOM, HOUSE - NIGHT

Don sits across from Herman and KIM -- 45, low-cut sweater displaying a healthy amount of cleavage. Each has a glass of wine with hearty plates of steak, taters and veggies.

HERMAN

... sounds weirder than it is. Jackson and Margaret started dating way back when they were in high school. I'm a widower, Kim was never married. As the kids saw more of each other, our paths crossed more often, and it just... happened.

KIM

Are you married? Have any children?

DON

Divorced. A daughter, she --

HERMAN

So, you get it. Raising a chidd,
getting older -- it's hard finding
someone.

Kim puts her hand on Herman's.

DON

Sure.

Don takes a sip of wine -- he's wearing one of **Ali's
bracelets** on his wrist.

HERMAN

How's trail life in the Sangres? I
get back their for work from time
to time. Those mountains, man...

DON

Surprise to me, but I hack it
pretty good. Only thing is my feet,
stuck in those fuckin' boots all
day.

Herman and Kim laugh.

HERMAN

I fought that battle. She knows.
Honey, let's break out the
bubblers.

INT. LIVING ROOM, HOUSE - NIGHT

Don sitting on a love seat across from Herman -- who's on a
large couch and in the process of removing his shoes and
socks. Each of them have a foot spa filled with water in
front of them.

Two large oil diffusers pump vapor into the room.

HERMAN

Best purchase we've ever made. Come
on now.

Don hesitates to take off his loafers.

Herman presses a button on his foot spa -- BUBBLES.

HERMAN (CONT'D)
This does it every time.

Don looks down at the buttons on his.

KIM (O.S.)
I'll set you up.

Kim crouches between Don's legs. She uses his knee for balance -- Don is hyper aware of the touch. He looks away from cleavage difficult to escape.

LATER

Don and Herman -- eyes closed -- as the foot spas BUBBLE.

Kim carries a bath towel and a bottle of oil. She sits next to Don on the small love seat.

Don opens his eyes -- confused as there's more spacious seating available next to her husband.

She drapes the towel over her lap then lightly slaps it --

KIM (CONT'D)
Put 'em up.

Don hesitates...

Herman's eyes open --

HERMAN
Kim's a pro. She'll have those
hoofs feelin' brand new.

Herman shuts his eyes. Sinks deeper into the couch.

DON
Look, I'm not trying to come off
rude here --

KIM
Then don't.

Don reluctantly turns his body to lay across the love seat, stretching his feet onto Kim's lap.

Kim dries Don's feet with a towel...

KIM (CONT'D)
Relax.

Kim squirts out some oil. Goes to work.

She lightly rubs down each foot...

Don relaxes...

Closes his eyes...

She focuses on the left foot, releasing pressure points along the instep with impressive technique.

DON

Wow.

Herman releases a sleepy CHUCKLE.

Kim switches to Don's right foot -- the foot closest to her body. She lifts it off her lap with her right hand. Using her left hand, she runs her pointer finger up his Achilles tendon.

She leans closer -- her breast presses against his foot.

Don tenses -- eyes open.

He repositions back to sitting.

DON (CONT'D)

Any more and you'll put me to
sleep. It's about that time for me.

Don slides his oily feet straight into his loafers.

Herman sits up.

HERMAN

Stay with us tonight. There's
plenty of space here.

KIM

Yeah, it'll be fun.

Don stuffs his socks into his pockets.

DON

You know what, I've got some
medication I take back at --

HERMAN

I might have you covered.

Herman takes a blue pill from his chest pocket. Swallows it.

Kim moves closer to Don --

DON

Okay --

KIM

Don, there's a whole other side of
life calling out to you and --

DON

You know what, I think I'm good
with just this side.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

An open **notebook** next to Don in bed. The page has "9/14"
written at the top.

Taps a pen on the otherwise blank page...

Gives up.

Takes out his

PHONE

Types into a web browser -- "CLIFF, TREEHOUSE, BACA GRANDE".

Taps "SEARCH".

Scrolls through listings until coming across a 2014 headline
from the SALIDA COURIER -- "84 YEAR-OLD MINER REVEALS HEALING
POWER OF TREEHOUSE".

Taps on the headline.

I/E. DON'S CAR, MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

The winding road has luxurious homes tucked into the trees.

Don sneaks a peek at directions on his phone.

EXT. FOOTBRIDGE / TREEHOUSE, FOREST - DAY

Don walks across a footbridge -- 20 feet above the forest
floor -- to reach a massive two-story treehouse.

He KNOCKS at the front door.

The door opens. CLIFF, 80s -- groomed white beard, perfect teeth -- wears a hemp tank top revealing arms with lean muscle definition. His deep voice matches his virility --

CLIFF

Welcome.

INT. TREEHOUSE - DAY

The rustic exterior contrasts sharply to the psychedelic elegance of the interior. Statues, paintings and artifacts adorn the completely open first floor. A narrow stairwell through a hole in the ceiling leads to the second.

Cliff is at a countertop covered in roots, bark and diced plants. He takes a large knife out of a leather holster at his waist. He cuts up a few pieces of bark and puts them into a steaming pot on a wood-burning stove.

CLIFF

Tea?

DON

(distracted)

No thanks.

Don, looking at **old pictures** of miners in the mountains, moves on to the westward wall to find a

MURAL

A naked man meditates among the rubble of a launch station for a space rocket. The sky above him ripples into the cosmos and strange psychedelic worlds.

BACK TO:

Cliff approaches, holding what appears to be a mason jar filled with chunky, green water.

CLIFF

Do you meditate?

DON

The whole breathing thing? It's not for me.

CLIFF

Sit. I'll guide you --

DON

No, no. I'm not looking to take too much of your time --

CLIFF
(forceful)
Sit.

Don stands his ground.

DON
So, this kid goes missing.
Apparently, he --

CLIFF
Do you know why you're looking for
Ali?

DON
As I said, he's missing.

Cliff and Don linger in an awkward moment...

CLIFF
You both came. Both searching --

Cliff sits at a coffee table.

DON
And what was Ali searching for?

CLIFF
I can give you a glimpse.

Cliff opens a wooden box on the table revealing a tiny,
ornate jar filled with dark, yellowish powder and a pipe.

DON
Drugs. He came to you looking for
drugs. Makes sense.

Cliff shakes his head. Packs the pipe with yellow powder.

CLIFF
Ascension.

Cliff holds the pipe out to Don.

DON
Look, you got any idea where the
kid might be?

CLIFF
(motioning to the pipe)
Let's take a glimpse.

Don stands over Cliff as if fantasizing about driving his knee into this weird, old-timers face. Instead, he walks out while talking shit --

DON
You're a real fuckin help with your
nasty swamp drink and stu --

Door SHUTS.

Cliff, alone, puts down the pipe.

Takes an inquisitive whiff of his tea.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

Through the window, we watch Don pack up his gear while talking on the phone...

He looks up.

Out the window.

Almost as if he is looking right at us.

EXT. DOUGLAS PASS TRAILHEAD, ROADSIDE - DAY

No parking lot or trail board, just a sad trail post. His car parked on the roadside, Don pulls his pack from the trunk.

EXT. DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - DAY

Pile of rocks on the trail from a small rock slide.

Don GROANS.

LATER

Half the pile off the trail. Don chucks another rock away.

He looks up at the sky while wiping sweat from his forehead --

A white **orb** of light hovers above a mountain peak.

Don looks to the sun in a different part of the sky.

Back to the mountain peak -- no orb.

EXT. CAMPSITE, DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - DAY

Don sets up his tent while stealing glances at the clear sky above him.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

Low CHIRPING of insects...

Push in on the tent...

The entrance flap is only half-zipped.

CLACK!

GIANT FOREST (DON'S POV)

Massive, black trees with 30-foot diameters surround us. Their sprawling branches and vibrantly-colored leaves create a canopy above.

Speckled, white grass and fallen leaves cover the ground of this strange world.

There's a CLACK behind us --

We turn around to see THREE HUNTERS -- human in shape, but their features are covered in large leaves fastened to their bodies by vines. Each of them hold a long, curved spear.

They look toward us with curious posture...

Hunter #1 hits Hunter #2's spear with his own -- CLACK!

END DREAM

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Don wakes. Turns on his side.

Headlamp turns on --

Chilled, he zips the tent flap closed.

Checks his watch then grabs an open **notebook** with a GROAN.

Nothing is written under "9/14" or "9/15".

Groggy, he writes "2:28 AM" under "9/16" then continues to write.

EXT. FOREST, DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - DAY

Don unties rope from around a tree. He uses the untied end to lower his bear bag from a branch above.

Takes a quick glance at the sky behind him.

EXT. DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - DAY

Don rounds a corner -- there's a yellow tent 20 yards off-trail.

EXT. OFF TRAIL / OVERLOOK / CLEARING - DAY

Don approaches the yellow tent, carrying a "VISITOR'S SURVEY" on a clipboard.

DON

Hello?

The tent is open with just a beat-up pack inside.

Don eases past the tent to an overlook. He looks down --

GWEN -- 38, naked -- walks around a gold, circular blanket with sensual grace.

Don darts behind a tree.

Waits...

He peeks out --

Gwen completes the full circumference of the blanket then stops.

Don watches -- he's curious not creepy.

She tilts her head up toward the sky.

Don turns with his back to the tree...

Peeks again --

Gwen is lying on the blanket. She pushes her pelvis up into the air. Brings it back down.

She straightens her legs. Slightly spreads them.

She slides her hand starting at her neck.

Between her breasts.

Above her navel.

Below her navel...

Shocked expression, Don sneaks back to the trail.

EXT. CAMPSITE, DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - DAY

Don sits on a boulder, notebook on his lap. His tent set up behind him.

He taps a pen to the almost full page... trying to remember.

He stops tapping.

Uneasy.

Looks behind him --

Gwen, clothed, is leaning against a tree watching him.

GWEN

Amazing how we can feel people
watching us.

Don stands. He offers a confused look, but Gwen -- with a firm stance and blank expression -- clearly won't buy any bullshit.

DON

(defensive)

I'm Forest Service. I saw your
tent. Just trying to see if you'd
fill out some fuckin' survey thing.
I didn't, I didn't know you were...
umm...

Gwen lets Don stew in abashment then motions to his notebook.

GWEN
You have your transcendence, I have
mine.

A moment of tension comes... then goes with Gwen's smile.

GWEN (CONT'D)
So, where's this fuckin' survey?

EXT. STREAM, DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - EVENING

Gwen and Don use filter pumps to get water into their bottles.

GWEN
... heard about that in town. No
sign of him on this trail. I've
been coming out here for a few
years. Haven't seen a soul 'til
you.

Loud HUFF --

Gwen and Don look over --

A huge BLACK BEAR moseys over to the stream just 10 yards
away from them.

Don watches in terror. Gwen, behind him, watches in
amazement.

The bear laps water out of the stream. It turns its head --
seeing Don and Gwen.

Gwen gently pulls on the back of Don's pack, guiding them
backwards slowly.

GWEN (CONT'D)
(softly)
Hey, bear. Hey, bear.

The bear takes a hop step and runs off into the woods.

DON
Holy shit... ho...ly shit.

LAUGHING, Gwen puts her hands on Don's shoulders.

EXT. CAMPSITE, DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - NIGHT

Gwen and Don sit next to a campfire. Don holds a thin stick
with marshmallows punctured all over it.

GWEN

First time ever out of Chicago?

Don moves the marshmallows closer to the fire.

DON

Pretty much. This too close? I don't want these burning or --

GWEN

That's perfect. What made you come out here?

DON

Change of scenery. You know, seemed like the right time.

Chocolate pieces and graham crackers in front of Gwen. She roots through her pack. Pulls out a jar. Takes a knife from her pocket.

GWEN

As Saturn returns.

She opens the jar. Starts stirring the oily --

DON

The fuck's that?

GWEN

Every twenty-nine and a half years or so Saturn completes its orbit around the sun, returning to the location it was in when you were born -- if we ever get a clear enough sky, you can see it coming. As it returns, an overload of cosmic energy builds, bringing the potential for change and growth.

(spreading it on the
grahams)

You experienced it when you were twenty-nine, and now, what... fifty-eight? Fifty-nine? Stay healthy, you might have one more in ya.

DON

I meant what's that you're stirring? And I ain't that old.

GWEN

You are. I felt your energy half a mile away.

Gwen motions for the marshmallows and holds out the knife.

GWEN (CONT'D)
It's cashew butter. Try it.

Don trades the marshmallow stick for the knife.

He watches the fire while savoring some cashew butter. He takes another bite while nodding his head in approval.

DON
This planet-math-equation
bullshit...

Don playfully runs a hand through his hair.

DON (CONT'D)
Just sayin', you could have guessed
I was twenty-nine.

Gwen hands him a cashew butter s'more.

GWEN
(with a smile)
I could have guessed eighty-seven.

LATER

Gwen LAUGHS hysterically --

DON
(animated)
... so I fall out of the tent.
Coughin', snottin', the whole
thing. Eventually, I get up and...
no fuckin' joke, there had to be at
least fifteen of these goat
creatures surrounding me.

Both LAUGH... Gwen's LAUGH evolves into a YAWN.

DON (CONT'D)
We should probably get that tent of
yours set up.

GWEN
Let's just double up.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Don and Gwen lay side by side in sleeping bags.

DON
I hope that fuckin' bear isn't out there.

GWEN
I'm more worried about your creepy goats finding us.

INT. TENT - DAY

Don and Gwen sleep with a bit of space between them -- no evidence of funny business.

EXT. CAMPSITE, DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - DAY

Don eats oatmeal while Gwen heaves her pack onto her back.

GWEN
When you come out, you should visit me at Olano's cafe down in Monte Vista.

DON
I'll do that.

Gwen marches off, but gives a quick shout back.

GWEN
I left a present in your boot.

Don moseys to his tent. Crouches down to find the jar of cashew butter snuggled into the ankle of his boot.

He smiles.

EXT. VALLEY OVERLOOK, DOUGLAS PASS TRAIL - DAY

Don walks to the edge of an overlook.

He's confident, comfortable, broken-in.

Looks out on the vast, open valley with Ali's bracelet still on his wrist.

INT. TENT - DAY

Don -- few days of facial scruff -- leans on his side to write in his **notebook** under "9/19 - 5:40 AM". The rest of the page and back of the previous page is covered in dream journal entries from the week.

I/E. DON'S CAR, DIRT ROAD - DAY

Don taps "NORA" from "RECENT CONTACTS" on his **phone**.

DIALING...

AUTOMATED VOICEMAIL (V.O.)
The mailbox is full and cannot
receive any messages at this time.
Goodbye.

I/E. DON'S CAR, RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Don drives past a **billboard** -- "UFO WATCHTOWER NEXT RIGHT".

He continues on to pass by a wooden cutout of a green alien pointing right at a crossing dirt road.

Don slows. Checks the rear view mirror. Does a U-turn on the empty highway.

EXT. PARKING LOT, UFO WATCHTOWER - DAY

Don walks toward a concrete hut with a viewing deck built above it. Behind him, a few tents and an RV reside in a camping space with a **sign** -- "\$10 A NIGHT".

INT. UFO WATCHTOWER - DAY

Small gift shop with alien t-shirts, posters and souvenirs.

KATHY, 75, scoots two dogs out the front door.

KATHY
Get, get.

Don, a bit sullen, enters through the back.

KATHY (CONT'D)
Afternoon.

DON
A few days back, I saw something
strange in the sky up in the
Sangres.

KATHY
Seen plenty of strange. But nothin'
in the last ten days. You should
take a flip through the binders.

EXT. VIEWING DECK, UFO WATCHTOWER - DAY

Sitting on old patio furniture, Don slowly flips through a

BINDER

Hundreds of laminated pages -- handwritten accounts, sketches of aliens and spacecraft, printed out e-mails.

BACK TO:

Kathy eases up the stairs and offers Don a soft drink.

DON

Thanks.

KATHY

You should come back at night. No light pollution this far out. We've had one hundred and twenty-seven sightings right here.

DON

Sightings of what?

KATHY

Lot of people think it's military 'round here, and they're right for some of it. I've seen a C-One-Thirty fly right into Mount Blanca. Straight into it.

Kathy points to the distant Mount Blanca. Though part of the Sangres, the Blanca Massif is south of the main range.

KATHY (CONT'D)

Military base in there, no doubt. Come down a minute, I'll show you the garden.

EXT. ROCK GARDEN, UFO WATCH TOWER - DAY

Don and Kathy walk through the rock garden -- hundreds of rocks aesthetically placed. Among the rocks are countless items: keys, pictures, shoes, stuffed animals.

KATHY

I've had six psychics separately come here over the years. Two of them told me there's a spaceship buried seventy feet below us. Both said it was about a mile long and covered in moss.

DON
I'll be honest, I don't really buy
the whole psychic thing.

KATHY
Initially, me neither.

Kathy leads Don to the center of the garden. She points to a pile of rocks that's surrounded by personal trinkets.

KATHY (CONT'D)
But all six of 'em said there's a
vortex right here.

Don politely nods along. He motions to the trinkets --

DON
And all this?

KATHY
Things visitors leave behind. Sort
of became a tradition. What's
amazing is, the stuff never moves.
There's love letters and birthday
cards that have stayed right here
in the garden during spring wind.

LATER

Alone, Don slowly walks around the garden...

He looks at a few items -- a dog collar, a watch, an old
Christmas ornament...

Getting back to the vortex pile, Don takes Ali's bracelet off
his wrist. He bends down and sets it on the pile.

He starts to stand up --

Stops.

He reaches into his pocket. Pulls out a cell phone with a
flower-patterned case and a cracked screen.

Sets the phone on the pile.

INT. MOTEL - DAY

Bright daylight pushes in through the closed blinds. Don
still asleep.

INT. MOTEL - DAY

Don looks through food on his table -- old banana, few sad pieces of bread left in the loaf, empty cashew butter jar.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Don -- well-dressed and clean shaven -- sits at a table. A few scattered PATRONS but no workers in sight.

Hopeful, he watches the door back to the kitchen.

Door swings open -- male SERVER carrying two dishes.

Don's eyes shift down to his table.

Server drops off the dishes at another table then hands Don a **menu** -- "OLANO'S CAFE".

INT. MOTEL ROOM - EVENING

TV on, but Don isn't watching. Phone RINGS from the bathroom.

Don gets up, rounds the corner into the bathroom --

DON (O.S.)
Hello... shit, I forgot. I can
bring it by... oh, yeah that works.

I/E. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Don opens the door -- he's holding a water testing kit and folder for a quick handoff -- but Dorothy strides inside.

Don takes a second look outside.

DON
Where'd you park?

DOROTHY
Yonder. Don't need these yucks
chirpin' on Dorothy Winters
shackin' up at the inn.

DON
Shacking?

DOROTHY
Donnie, I'm buzzin' like a bee
right now. Let me rest this off
before I head up to Moffat.

Dorothy holds out a Styrofoam cup with a thick straw while sipping a shake of her own.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
From Fritz's. Best shakes in the
Valley.

Don sets the testing kit and folder down. Accepts the shake.

Dorothy drifts over to the wall and looks at the hung-up

MAP / CITY LIST

There's a few scattered push pins all over the United States. Dorothy's finger drags to southern Colorado -- no pin.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Looks like you need a pin.

There's a piece of **PURPLE PAPER** pinched between the map and its frame. It's covered in creases as if it's been folded up. On it is a list of cities written in elegant calligraphy, including "CRESTONE, COLORADO" at the top. "SPRINGDALE, UTAH" has a decorative check mark next to it near the bottom.

BACK TO:

Don sips the shake -- cringes with a COUGH.

Dorothy pulls a small bottle of rum from her back pocket.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Gave ya a little spice.

She slips off her shoes and plops on the bed.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
What are we watching?

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Sitting up on the bed, Don looks over at Dorothy -- sprawled out on top of the covers.

He closes his eyes.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Three loud KNOCKS on the door.

Don comes to. Checks the **clock** -- 4:04 a.m.

Two more KNOCKS.

Dorothy GROANS.

Don gets up. Cracks the door --

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

It's Margaret -- decked out in warm outerwear. She's holding the slip of paper Don gave to her.

MARGARET
Sorry, I tried calling --

Don slips out into the cold and closes the door.

DON
No, no it's fine. What's going on?

MARGARET
It's about Ali... I'm going back up.

DON
I was on that trail the whole week.
The Sheriff's office did a full --

MARGARET
That's not where we were.

Door opens behind them --

DOROTHY
The hell is going on -- Margaret?

MARGARET
Dorothy?

DON
(to Margaret)
This isn't what it looks like --

DOROTHY
It isn't what?

MARGARET
I can come back --

DOROTHY
No. Everybody inside.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Dorothy, on the bed -- hair a mess -- rubs her eyes.

Don stands with Margaret as she delivers --

MARGARET

Ali invited Jackson and I to check
out some weird place in the Sangres
he heard about.

FLASH INSERT -- On the side of the RURAL HIGHWAY, Alvarez
approaches the truck with three backpacking packs in the bed.
He continues along the side to find Jackson in the driver's
seat, with Ali and Margaret as passengers.

MARGARET (V.O.)

On the way out there, we got pulled
over.

BACK TO:

MARGARET

Jackson told the cop we were in a
hurry to summit Lily, and he let us
off.

FLASH INSERT -- Jackson, Margaret and Ali hike the MINING
TRAIL.

MARGARET(V.O.)

The real hike was off an old farm
road. It took us all day and into
the night.

BACK TO:

MARGARET

Finally, we made it up to a
clearing. I can't explain it, but
something felt off. We hung out
there for a while but then --

FLASH INSERT -- Ali (no pack) walks out into the darkness...

He looks back...

MARGARET (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Ali went into the clearing, and...

BACK TO:

DOROTHY

And what?

MARGARET

He vanished. And I'm telling you,
he was right in front us.

Don's expression doesn't change. He waits for Margaret to continue.

MARGARET(CONT'D)

Jackson and I freaked out. We were outside the National Forest, so technically trespassing. That cop already saw Ali with us and heard a different story. We were scared and paranoid. We thought we had to be at Lily.

FLASH INSERT -- Margaret holds the back of Ali's pack while Jackson holds the front. They hike through the dark, unblazed wilderness.

MARGARET(V.O.)

So, Jackson and I took all of Ali's gear and hiked the entire night -- probably another ten miles over the ridge. He didn't set up the Lily camp until the next morning when I was already heading down.

BACK TO:

DON

That's why you looked so rough.

Margaret nods.

MARGARET

We told Herman and my mom the truth. They said to keep quiet and let it pass. Jackson now denies to me that it even happened. I already lied to the police... I'm going up there. Today. I'll go alone, but I'd rather not.

Margaret looks to Don then to Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Thirty years working in the Sangres. I've heard things, and I've seen things. It's not that I don't believe you.

(MORE)

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

But Margaret, it's been weeks. He's not gonna be up there.

MARGARET

I know. But, it's all I think about. I --

DON

I'll go.

Don sits on the bed close to Dorothy -- shoulder to shoulder.

He looks over at her...

Dorothy SIGHS.

I/E. DON'S CAR, RURAL HIGHWAY - SUNRISE

Don driving. Dorothy shotgun. In back, Margaret points to the right.

MARGARET

Up here.

The car slows. They turn onto an unmarked, dirt road.

EXT. DON'S CAR, MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Caddy pulls off to the side of a rough, mountain road.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD / MINING TRAIL - DAY

Road narrows into a trail. Don inspects old **signs** -- one barely standing, another he lifts off the ground: "RESTRICTED AREA" and "LOXTON MINING".

EXT. MINING TRAIL - DAY

Don, Dorothy and Margaret hike up an overgrown trail.

EXT. STREAM, MINING TRAIL - DAY

Don and Margaret filter water into their bottles. Dorothy dunks her bottle straight into the stream.

EXT. MINING TRAIL / TUNNEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Don, Margaret and Dorothy stand in front of a towering rock face. Their headlamps illuminate a crude tunnel cutting through it.

Margaret takes a shirt out of her pack. She gracefully swaddles it around her face.

DON
We're going in that?

MARGARET
It's not long.

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT

Margaret leads -- her headlamp shines through the tunnel, showing no end in sight. Flying insects cross in and out of the beam. Behind her, Dorothy wears a balaclava and Don has the crotch of a pair of pants covering his face with the pant legs tied behind his head.

They creep through...

The soft SHUFFLING of rock...

EXT. TUNNEL EXIT / MINE TRAIL - NIGHT

Margaret, Dorothy and Don emerge from the tunnel to find a dense forest bisected by a narrow trail.

EXT. FOREST / CLEARING - NIGHT

The trail ends. Margaret continues into the forest's foliage.

Branches THWACK into Don after brushing against Dorothy.

A light shines directly into Don's face --

It's Margaret's headlamp.

MARGARET
This is it.

Don and Dorothy push even with Margaret to find a clearing in the middle of the forest 30 yards in diameter.

Dorothy's beam of light follows the border of the clearing.

Don sets down his pack.

DON
Should we set up here?

MARGARET
Yeah. My tent can hold us all.

Dorothy scans the ground of the clearing -- a minefield of tree stumps.

DOORTHY
Great, 'cause I'm not sleeping
alone up here.

A rhythmic PERCUSSION begins. Multiple orchestrated sources --

CLANG... CLANG... CLANG-CLANG-CLANG-CLANG. CLANG... CLANG...

Dorothy looks in every direction trying to find the source.
The CLANGS ring out like pots and pans colliding.

DON
What the fuck is that?

CLANG-CLANG-CLANG-CLANG.

MARGARET
Oh god...

Margaret turns off her headlamp.

Don and Dorothy instinctively do the same.

Slightly louder -- CLANG... CLANG...

DOROTHY
Margaret, what is that?

MARGARET
(forced whisper)
Come on.

She scurries to a nearby fallen tree. Dorothy takes hold of Don's coat and they follow.

They get low, hiding behind the tree with their backs to the forest.

CLANG-CLANG-CLANG-CLANG.

DON
Margaret --

MARGARET

Ssshhh...

Closer, louder, from all directions -- CLANG... CLANG...

RUSTLING of leaves and CRACKING of branches as the percussion closes in -- CLANG-CLANG-CLANG-CLANG.

The percussion pulls even with them. One source to the left, another to the right.

CLANG... CLANG...

Don sinks as low as possible to the ground.

Two FIGURES, barely visible in the darkness, march past -- one ten yards to the left of the fallen tree, the other ten yards to the right. Each of them hit two, short pipes together --

CLANG-CLANG-CLANG-CLANG.

The Figures continue into the clearing, out of visibility.

Silence...

CLANG!

Silence again...

Don leans his neck forward trying to see further.

DOROTHY

I need you to stand up slowly and
listen to what I say.

Don turns to Dorothy --

A pistol points right at him.

Don freezes. Can't find words.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Don't talk. Just listen.

MARGARET

Don, I promise everything is going
to be okay. This is exactly where
you are supposed to be.

Margaret walks ahead into the clearing's darkness.

Dorothy stands up, keeping the pistol on Don.

DON
The fuck is this?

DOROTHY
Where are your car keys?

DON
In my pack. Dorothy, what the --

DOROTHY
No more talking. Stand up.

Don stands.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
We're going to walk nice and easy.

She motions her pistol towards the clearing.

Don takes the direction.

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

After a few paces, Don steps over a large trench that surrounds the entire clearing.

There's a still FIGURE 10 yards to his right and another FIGURE a few yards to his left along the trench's perimeter.

DOROTHY
Sorry, I'm not trying to be a
hardass with you. I'm a bundle of
nerves, here.

Don keeps his head down. With the ground barely visible, he steps over a small tree stump.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Few feet ahead, there's going to be
a small patch of grass. Sit on top
of it.

Don takes a few steps. Bends down. Drags his hand across dirt... his fingers find long blades of grass.

He sits.

DOROTHY (CONT'D)
Don't move. Don't make a sound, and
you'll be perfect.

Keeping the gun on Don, Dorothy moves behind him, backpedaling into the darkness.

Don sits, waits...

Everything is still...

And silent...

Don turns his head, trying to see anything -- it's only darkness...

CLANG!

Don's body jerks. The many sources of the unison sound completely surround him.

Don's breathing intensifies --

RUSTLING all around -- CRUNCHING leaves.

The sounds soften... move further away...

A hand lands on Don's shoulder --

BURLY

Let's go.

EXT. TRAIL - NIGHT

Burly and Slim guide Don. Both with headlamps, Slim is in front of Don while Burly trails -- holding a 10-foot rope that's tied around Don's waist.

BURLY

You want some water, Don? We have a ways to go.

Don turns to Burly's light --

DON

Don't fuckin' talk like you know me. You fucking animals...

Burly takes a sip of water. Hands the bottle out toward Don.

SLIM (O.S.)

Can I get a sip of that?

Don glares at Burly's kind face.

He takes the bottle.

SLIM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I got mud in mine.

EXT. TRAIL / SHELTER ENTRANCE - DAY

Sun just starting to rise.

Slim, Burly and Don come out of the forest onto a gravel drive. An off-road vehicle (four-seat RZR Side by Side) is parked next to a storm shelter built into the ground.

INT. SHELTER STAIRWELL - DAY

Don follows Slim down, getting 15 feet underground. At the bottom of the stairs, a door to the left and a door to the right flank a small landing.

Slim unlocks the door to the right.

INT. BETWEEN ROOM, SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Don enters a tiny room. There's a tray on the floor and another locked door.

Slim picks up the tray. Unlocks the next door.

Don follows Slim into the next room --

INT. SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Huge open space. Rugs and animal skins cover the concrete floor. Psychedelic and sexual artwork adorns the walls.

A couch, two beds, loaded bookcases, two mountain bikes on stationary stands, two rowing machines.

And then there's Ali reading a book while eating a hearty breakfast.

Ali looks up from his book.

A door SHUTS --

Don turns around to see Cliff walking into the room.

DON

Of course, this fucking guy. What's this about?

CLIFF

It's about you... and me and Ali.

Burly enters, pistol on Don.

Cliff motions to Burly to lower his gun.

CLIFF (CONT'D)

I always knew you would find me,
the two of you. The time though...
I thought we'd have years. Me, the
others -- we didn't have long
enough to bring you in the right
way. This isn't how --

Cliff turns to Burly --

CLIFF (CONT'D)

(Burly)

Think about everything you had to
see. Everything you had to feel.

Burly nods.

CLIFF (CONT'D)

(to Don and Ali)

You're not a prisoner. If you
listen I can --

ALI

(mouthful)

Let me stop you there, Cliff. This
has all felt very prisoner on my
end.

Cliff looks exhausted, exasperated -- as if he's been hostage
to Ali's snark for a few weeks.

CLIFF

There's work for the three of us.
Each day, sunrise and sunset. Get
nourished. Rest. I'll see you both
this evening.

Slim, Burly and Cliff leave the room. Lock TURNS from the
outside.

Don walks over to the table. Ali still eating --

ALI
The food here is outstanding.

INT. SHELTER

Don devours eggs, bacon and toast across from Ali.

ALI
... no, no, these scoundrels. Store owner lets me post up in-shop for a few days. Margaret's there and starts chattin' me up. Girl was coming at me a bit parched.

DON
Parched?

ALI
Thirst status. Thirsty. She was --

DON
I got it.

ALI
Her brother comes in --

DON
Step-brother... and boyfriend.

ALI
Jackson?

DON
Yeah.

ALI
(disgusted)
Oh... she was... wow.
(refocuses)
Anyway, Jackson comes to the shop and tells us about --
(motions toward door)
father-time and his tree-fort. We check it out. Cliff starts getting spiritual and being super Cliff-like. Then he breaks out some DMT. Margaret and Jackson seemed down-- I'm not usually a mood-killer, but: stranger, treehouse, knife holster, an offering of drugs -- that's a pass.

Ali twists shards of rock on his bracelet as he continues --

ALI (CONT'D)

Point of all this is, before we leave, Cliff tells us about land he owns back in the mountains. He buried some stuff back in the day, didn't think he'd be able to get it down. So, he asked us to get it in exchange for healthy compensation. Next morning we head out, and by about midnight I'm surrounded by a bunch of goofballs banging pipes together.

Don's focus is entirely on Ali's bracelet.

ALI (CONT'D)

How'd they get you up here?

Don looks up at the young, hopeful Ali.

DON

Story's about the same. Down to the thirsty women.

ALI

They're out here.

Don surveys the room.

DON

There's gotta be some way out.

ALI

I spent my first four days looking. It's airtight.

INT. BATHROOM, SHELTER - DAY

Don stands outside a rudimentary shower with a towel around his waist.

He opens a plastic container to find a toothbrush, toothpaste and other toiletries.

INT. SHELTER

Don, wearing brand new sweats, sleeps on a bed.

The shelter door OPENS -- waking Don.

Cliff enters with Burly then eases himself down to a rug.

CLIFF

Come.

Burly stands by, pistol in-hand.

Don and Ali make their way over.

DON

What's this?

CLIFF

What I tried to teach you before
without the gun and locks. Now,
sit.

Don looks to Burly --

DON

Or what?

(looks to Burly)

Guy, are you really going to shoot
me?

BURLY

I wouldn't want to, but...

(earnest)

Yeah, at this point, I would.

Don and Ali sit.

CLIFF

Make a triangle with a few feet
between us. Cross your legs.
Forearms on your thighs, wrists on
your knees, palms open.

Slim enters carrying a large hula hoop.

SLIM

Found it.

Don and Ali trade confused glances.

INT. DOROTHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff sits across from Dorothy.

DOROTHY

Had a meeting for all the trail
workers yesterday. He didn't show
up. No answer on his phone. Waited
a day, same thing.

(MORE)

DOROTHY (CONT'D)

Nothin' I'm worried about. It was Scott that phoned it. He gets a little worked up when gear goes missing.

SHERIFF

Think he skipped town?

DOROTHY

(scrolling her phone)

Don't know. I checked in with him a few days ago. He brought up the Lily trail incident a bunch -- yeah, it was Saturday. That was the last time I spoke to him.

(brings her head up)

Weird guy.

EXT. TRAIL / SHELTER ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Don and Ali -- blindfolded, hands zip-tied behind their backs, rope leashes -- emerge from the shelter behind Cliff.

Cliff opens the door of the off-road vehicle.

CLIFF

Ten paces towards me.

Don and Ali cautiously stumble forwards as Burly exits the shelter holding the end of their leashes.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sheriff KNOCKS on the door.

SHERIFF

Don, it's Sheriff Becker, you there?

EXT. OFF-ROAD VEHICLE - NIGHT (**DON'S BLINDFOLDED POV**)

WHIRRING of the engine. We bounce as the vehicle shakes from the terrain. Darkness but for a smidge of dim light at the bottom of the blindfold.

In an instant, the bouncing stops. The ride becomes smooth as if driving across a flat beach.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - NIGHT

Sheriff at a counter with Motel Attendant behind it.

SHERIFF
... know anything about him? Think
he's staying in room eight.

MOTEL ATTENDANT
He pays. That's 'bout all I know.

SHERIFF
Can I get a key?

EXT. OFF-ROAD VEHICLE - NIGHT (**DON'S BLINDFOLDED POV**)

DARKNESS

Engine STOPS. Vehicle doors OPEN. Suspension SQUEAKS. Doors
CLOSE.

CLIFF
Wait here.

FOOTSTEPS trudging through sand get further away...

ALI
(concerned)
Don?

DON
I'm here.

ALI
What are they going to do to us?

DON
I don't know.

Ali's breath is audible, panicked.

DON (CONT'D)
Stay calm. We'll be fine. Just...
talk to me, kid. Your bracelet --
you made that?

ALI
Yeah, I sell them.

DON
I think I saw one at the shop goin'
for like four hundred bucks.
(MORE)

DON (CONT'D)
I heard there's a story behind
them, tell me that.

ALI
I don't think --

DON
Just tell me the story.

Ali works to bring his breath down.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Lock turns.

Sheriff enters. Finds some Forest Service maps and handbooks
along with Don's radio on a table.

ALI (V.O.)
(voice a bit shaky)
When I was real young, my dad would
come home from work. We'd do a
quiet dinner with my mom. After,
he'd always go downstairs... I
wouldn't see much of him.

Sheriff quickly checks drawers -- full of clothes. Moves on
to a large box next to the bed.

ALI (V.O.)
(voice stabilizes)
One night, I hear him rush up the
stairs calling my name.

Sheriff lifts the **box** -- "Nora" written on its side -- onto
the bed. He sifts through a stack of books and a few sketch
pads. Finds a small photo album.

Ali (V.O.)
He was acting funny, kind of
frazzled. He tells me he wants
to show me something.

Sheriff flips through a few

PICTURES

-- Young Don holding a swaddled baby.

-- Young Don steering a small delivery truck with Toddler
Nora sitting on his lap.

-- Don standing between Nora and her Prom Date making a not-thrilled face.

-- Nora in a cap and gown holding a diploma.

ALI (V.O.)

He opens up the locked part of the basement and introduces me to his massive workshop and mineral collection. From then on, I'd finish my homework each night then go downstairs with him. We'd talk while polishing and sorting. On weekends, we'd look for new specimens up in the mountains, at flea markets, quarries. It's what we did until he died when I was fourteen.

Sheriff puts back the photo album. Grabs Don's notebook from the night stand. He flips to an empty page. Scribbles a note. Rips it out. Leaves the note on the bed.

ALI (V.O.)

About ten years later, my mom wants to move into a smaller house and she lets me decide what to do with the collection. I wasn't really into minerals, it was never about that. Sitting in that workshop one night, looking at hundreds of pounds of incredible rocks, the idea just came to me.

Notebook in hand, Sheriff studies the room. Sees the framed **map** on the wall.

ALI (V.O.)

I moved them all to a storage unit, got a hammer, a drill, some beading wire and figured it out.

EXT. OFF-ROAD VEHICLE - NIGHT (**DON'S BLINDFOLDED POV**)

DARKNESS

ALI

I've been taking them all over, near and far. I tell people about him and how --

DOOR CLICKS OPEN.

CLIFF
You can take a step out now.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sheriff turns away from the map. He tucks the notebook under his armpit and heads for the

BATHROOM

Sheriff unbuckles.

Cringes as he urinates...

Looks over at the sink to see Don's phone charging.

EXT. SAND DUNES - NIGHT (DON'S BLINDFOLDED POV)

DARKNESS

SHIFTING SAND. LABORED BREATH.

CLIFF
Sit here.

JOSTLING FABRIC as they struggle to the ground.

CLIFF (CONT'D)
Breathe. Deep and slow --

EXT. SAND DUNES / SKY - NIGHT (DON'S POV)

Blindfold yanks off --

The stunning rift of the Milky Way stretches across the starlit sky.

EXT. SAND DUNES - NIGHT

Ali and Don sit atop a massive sand dune -- Cliff and Burly stand behind them.

Both Ali and Don shift their gaze to the right of the cosmic streak. They focus on a part of the sky with a few isolated bright specks.

CLIFF
It's coming.

Ali and Don continue to stare...

Cliff picks up a handful of sand. Looks at the same part of the sky.

Burly holds out a lead bowl -- Cliff drops his sand inside.

CLIFF (CONT'D)

Take some sand. When you feel the bowl beneath your hand, release it.

Don and Ali pick up sand behind their backs --

DON'S POV

Focuses on a single golden light, low in the sky.

RUSTLING of Burly crouching behind him.

SOFT SPLASH of sand.

The single golden light --

SKY BRIDGE (DON'S POV)

We're on a narrow, open, sky bridge. We can see one end of it that attaches to a massive, rectangular structure floating in the hazy, gray sky 200 hundred yards away.

We move towards the structure --

END DREAM

INT. SHELTER

Don wakes. Rolls on his side. Shuffles, looking for something...

Realizes where he is. Rolls back over.

INT. BETWEEN ROOM / SHELTER

Don picks up a tray of food off the ground. Shuts the door behind him. Walks over to the table where Ali waits.

Don WINCES as he sets the tray on the table then sits.

ALI

You good?

DON
My back's sore from that shit-heap
bed.

Ali and Don grab plates of ham steak and eggs from the tray.

Don watches as Ali saws into the thick ham with plastic
cutlery, bracelet swinging on his wrist.

DON (CONT'D)
You know, I was thinking about that
story and your bracelets.

ALI
Yeah?

DON
Touching stuff.

Don takes a bite --

DON (CONT'D)
I still think they're overpriced.

Ali cracks a smile.

INT. SHELTER

Don and Ali in the Cobra yoga position. Don adjusts to mirror
Ali's form.

DON
We were new to the area. No family
or friends around -- just easy
targets.

ALI
You really think that's it? Last
night, on the Dunes... I felt
something, a focus --

Ali moves to his knees and stretches on all fours (tabletop).

DON
(to Ali's new position)
Not doin' that.

Don sits up.

DON (CONT'D)
Look, whatever they have planned
ends with us dead or back in this
room.

ALI

I'm hip, but what do we do?

DON

Keep playing nice. All we know is what we're practicing. Hopefully we're doing this bullshit back outside. Let them get into it, lull 'em down. I'm gonna reach out and touch you. You feel that, count to five then bolt. Don't stick together. You go as fast as you can.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Sheriff reads from Don's notebook. Alvarez comes in --

SHERIFF

Listen to this -- "I'm in some room made completely of like blue clay. The floor, the walls, the ceiling, all of it; and it all has patterned grooves cut into it" --

Alvarez takes Don's phone out of his pocket.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You get in?

ALVAREZ

Pretty easy when you don't use a passcode. The call from Dorothy checks out. Then it gets a little weird. He made several calls to a Salt Lake number, Nora --

SHERIFF

I think that's his daughter. You call it?

Alvarez nods.

ALVAREZ

No answer and the voicemail was full. But, he had a saved message on his phone --

Alvarez taps the phone's screen. Puts the phone on the desk.

AUTOMATED VOICEMAIL --
 First saved message sent Thursday,
 May Thirtieth at Eight Thirty-Four
 p.m. --

NORA (V.O.)
 Hey, Dad. Ma said she called and
 gave you the basics.

MONTAGE -- NORA'S VOICEMAIL PLAYS OVER THE FOLLOWING

-- Don, Ali and Cliff meditate on the rug with Burly watching. In a triangular formation, together they balance a hula hoop on their hands.

-- Don and Ali using the row machines. Both in a full sweat. Ali pushes the pace. Don tries to match.

-- Ali reads on the couch. Don takes two bananas off a tray. Tosses one to Ali. Picks a book off the shelf.

-- Don studies a mural on the wall: a naked man and naked woman in a dark, decaying forest. A large, vibrant apple hangs from a withered branch. The apple's exterior is bright red but gradually transitions to look like the cosmos at its interior.

-- Don sitting on the rug alone. Not meditating, his eyes are open. The voicemail he's listened to so many times plays in his head.

NORA (V.O.)
 I said some pretty terrible things
 when I left... I think about it
 everyday. You're not a coward.
 You're not selfish. You are still
 stubborn as ever --
 (slight chuckle)
 Chicago will always be home, but I
 needed something different. I want
 to see more, and I think you should
 too. Here we go, us always thinking
 we know what's best for the other.
 Sorry, that's not what this is
 about. I was finishing a trail
 today -- the picture I sent. I got
 near the top and... Dad, it was
 like you were there. And, for a
 second, I was so scared. I
 thought... I don't know, but right
 then I felt everything you had for
 me, and it was all love. No anger,
 no disappointment --
 (MORE)

NORA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(sniffle from crying)
Just talk to me again. Please, Dad.
Please call me back. This is my new
number. My reception is pretty
terrible, but I really hope to hear
from you soon.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Alvarez reaches for the phone --

AUTOMATED VOICEMAIL
End of message. To --

ALVAREZ
She was a wilderness monitor in
Springdale, Utah -- just outside
Zion. Died in a car wreck the day
after she left this.

INT. SHELTER

Don still sitting on the carpet alone.

Ali approaches --

ALI
You good, boss?

Don snaps to --

DON
Yeah.

Don adjusts to stand.

Ali puts out a hand and pulls Don to his feet.

INT. SHERIFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cozy in a recliner, Sheriff sips a beer while reading Don's
police report on Ali's disappearance.

INT. SHELTER

Lights are out.

Door CREAKS open.

LIGHTS flash on -- Cliff, bundled in outerwear, looks upon Ali and Don as they wake.

SLIM (O.S.)
(shouting)
Where's my other boot?

EXT. PARKING LOT, LILY CREEK TRAILHEAD - DAY

Sheriff pulls up to find one vehicle parked -- Don's Caddy.

Sheriff gets out of his car, breath visible in the early morning cold.

Peeks into Don's Caddy -- empty.

Sheriff takes out his phone. Dials. Waits...

SHERIFF
(on phone)
Call me back. His car is at the
Lily trailhead.

EXT. MINE TRAIL, FOREST - DAY

Leaves changing to yellows and oranges.

Cliff marches through thick forest with trekking poles.

Behind Cliff, Don and Ali -- hands zip-tied behind their backs -- take small steps up the steep trail, each has a rope tied around their waist that leads back to Burly and Slim.

EXT. PARKING LOT, LILY CREEK TRAILHEAD - DAY

Sheriff checks his watch -- 9:12.

Dials with one hand, opens vehicle door with the other.

SHERIFF
(on phone)
Whenever he gets in tell him to
come out here. I'm headin' on.

Pulls a pack from the vehicle.

EXT. MEADOW, MINE TRAIL - DAY

Sunlight cascades down on Don and Ali.

EXT. LILY LAKE TRAIL - DAY

Sheriff starts up the switchbacks.

EXT. MINE TRAIL - DAY

Don and Ali sitting under a tree -- the only tree around with red leaves.

Cliff struggles to catch his breath.

Burly notices.

Cliff forces a smile.

CLIFF
I'm fine.

EXT. LILY LAKE - DUSK

Sheriff walks across the lake's shore --

SHERIFF
(shouting)
Don! Don!

EXT. MINE TRAIL - NIGHT

Don tries to bend over to catch his breath, but his rope-leash pulls taught.

DON
Little slack here?

Burly moves closer to Don, giving him slack.

BURLY
Sorry.

Cliff sits on the ground against a tree. He's completely bundled with no part of him exposed. Slim attends to him.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

Sheriff spots Don's orange tent 30 yards ahead...

EXT. MINING TRAIL - NIGHT

Distant amber FLICKERS between the trees -- the sight rejuvenates Cliff. He presses on with pace.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

Sheriff approaches Don's tent --

SHERIFF

Don? Hey, Don.

Nothing.

Sheriff crouches down and unzips the tent's fly --

Don's pack at one end. His sleeping bag rolled out.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Great.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Cliff, Burly, Don, Slim and Ali come out of the forest into the clearing.

Huge logs burn in the trench surrounding the clearing -- creating a ring of fire with powerful flames. There's a small gateway in the circle with no flames.

They walk through the gateway. Burly hands off his leash to Slim.

Burly picks up a lead bar from the ground and uses it to push flaming logs over the gateway, completing the fire circle.

Six clusters of goat skins are spread out in the circle. With the fire to their backs, nine MEDITATORS sit with their heads down -- forming a perimeter. Half of these Meditators have lead cups sitting in front of them.

Cliff shepherds Ali and Don to the center. A thick, lead wire encircles the central patch of grass -- like a thin hula hoop with a five-foot diameter.

Cliff

Sit here.

Cliff helps both of them down.

Don and Ali align themselves as if they were creating their meditation triangle.

Burly pulls the lead bowl from his pack. Hands it to Cliff.

Cliff tosses sand out of the bowl, spreading it all over the clearing. He sits to complete their triangle.

Burly fills a gap in the Meditators' perimeter. Sets a lead cup in front of himself.

Slim hands Cliff a lead cup, a lead spoon and a bottle of water. With his hands free, Slim removes a pistol from a holster and joins the meditating perimeter in back.

ALI

We need our hands.

CLIFF

Not yet.

Cliff hits the spoon against the cup creating a quiet CLANG.

Meditators' heads come up -- Burly, Dorothy, Herman, Kim, Jackson, Margaret, Alvarez and Gwen.

Don turns his head to see Slim along with one RITUAL MAN and one RITUAL WOMAN completing the circle behind him.

The five women each walk to a separate cluster of goatskins.

They disrobe.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

Sitting on his pack, Sheriff takes a Kelly Kettle off the burner. Pours steaming liquid into a small cup.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Down to panties and sports bra, Dorothy holds sensual eye contact with Don as she pulls her sports bra over her head. Trying to escape her gaze, Don looks to the right only to find Gwen doing the exact same.

The naked women all kneel on their respective goat skins.

Cliff hits the cup with the spoon -- CLANG.

The men pick up their cups. Each approach a different woman: Burly to Dorothy, Herman to Kim, Alvarez to Gwen, Jackson to Margaret, Ritual Man to Ritual Woman. Pistol-toting Slim stands alone on a goat skin.

The men set the cups down next to their partner.

The men disrobe.

DON
(seen enough already)
Okay.

The men take half the time and exhibit half the grace.

The naked men kneel on the skins facing their partner -- Slim kneels alone.

Cliff hits the cup with the spoon -- CLANG.

The couples all shut their eyes and drop their heads.

Ali gives a questioning glance to Don. Don replies with an unyielding nod as if to say, "stay the course."

CLANG!

The women fall to their backs, the men come down on top of them.

Alvarez and Gwen kiss. Burly and Dorothy get straight to it.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

Sheriff blows on his drink a bit.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Ali cringes at all the sex happening around him. He looks behind --

Slim -- kneeling on a goat skin -- goes to town on himself with one hand, pistol in the other.

ALI
Ughh... what?

Dorothy's head is tilted back so she can stare at Don as Burly fucks her.

Don keeps his eyes fixated on the sky above while lightly shaking his head.

Ritual Man, naked, walks around from behind them and sets his cup on the grass patch. Ritual Man returns behind them, where he and Ritual Woman get dressed.

Ali stares at the cup...

Jackson breathes heavily, he thrusts faster and faster then quickly backs off Margaret, grabs his cup, and hunches over it while MOANING --

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

Sheriff sips his steaming beverage.

Glances down at his wristwatch -- hour and minute hands lightly glow in the dark -- 10:10.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Jackson, Margaret, Herman and Kim -- all clothed -- meditate along the fire.

Burly and Alvarez set their cups down on the grass patch, making a total of six. As they and their partners get situated back around the perimeter, Cliff pours a few ounces of water into his empty, lead cup.

He picks up one of the six cups. Using the spoon, Cliff scrapes out the cup's contents into his lead cup of water.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Sheriff unrolls a sleeping bag. Lays it out next to Don's.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Goat skins -- some now lightly stained with blood -- remain scattered across the clearing.

Meditators meditate along the fire. Burly and Slim stay alert nearby with guns in-hand.

Cliff scrapes the last of the six cups clean and stirs it into his lead cup -- Don and Ali watch.

Cliff unceremoniously takes a swig.

Ali grimaces.

Burly takes the cup from Cliff. Approaches Don.

Cliff nods to Don.

CLIFF

Energy.

Don plays along.

Burly puts the cup to Don's lips.

Don tilts his head back. He swallows hard. Lightly GAGS. He looks at the ground trying to keep it down.

Burly moves to Ali.

ALI

No, no...

Ali turns his head from it.

Burly stands. Waits with the cup held out in his right hand. Pistol casually held in his left.

Ali turns back. Puts his lips on the cup. Briefly tilts his head back. Mouth stays closed.

Ali flinches off the cup -- a shine on his lips.

Cliff holds a stare with Ali. Nods back to the cup.

ALI (CONT'D)

Fuck you, man.

Burly keeps the cup waiting for Ali.

ALI (CONT'D)

Fuck you. You crazy, sick fucks.

Burly raises the gun.

ALI (CONT'D)

Fine.

Burly -- forceful, but getting no pleasure from it -- successfully gives Ali a more aggressive drink.

Ali shakes his head back and forth with his tongue out.

ALI (CONT'D)

Uugghhhhh...

Cliff removes his large knife from its leather holster. Trades with Burly for the cup.

Burly crouches behind Don with the knife...

FLICK.

Don stretches his freed arms out in front of him as Burly moves behind Ali.

Cliff picks up the circular wire as does Don then Ali. The wire is rigid, more like a really thin pipe. They bring their forearms onto their thighs, palms outstretched on their knees with the large ring resting on their hands.

Cliff closes his eyes.

Don and Ali nod to each other before doing the same.

CLIFF
(slow and vibrating)
OM... SHAM... SHANICHARAYA NAMAH.

Everyone joins in -- Don, Ali and all the perimeter Meditators --

EVERYONE
OM... SHAM... SHANICHARAYA NAMAH.
OM... SHAM... SHANICHARAYA NAMAH.
OM... SHAM... SHANICHARAYA NAMAH.

Everyone goes silent. They mouth the mantra -- "OM... SHAM... SHANICHARAYA NAMAH. OM... SHAM... SHANICHARAYA NAMAH."

Aloud again --

EVERYONE (CONT'D)
OM... SHAM... SHANICHARAYA NAMAH.

SILENCE. Lips pursed together in group meditation.

5 seconds...

Everyone is completely still...

10 seconds...

Push in close on Don....

15 seconds...

Closer on Don, almost to his eyes --

BLACK SCREEN

Fire CRACKLES...

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Sheriff rustles, takes his arms out of his mummy sleeping bag. Wristwatch shows -- **10:52.**

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Everyone, including Burly and Slim, meditates. The ring balances between Ali, Don, and Cliff.

LATER

Don, eyes closed, eases one hand from under the wire.

He slowly reaches the free hand towards Ali...

FLASHING IMAGE -- Nora looks back at us from the Red Mountain Trail. She shakes her head with a curious smile.

BACK TO:

Don stops...

Brings his second hand back to the wire.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Sheriff is sound asleep. His watch shows -- **11:07.**

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

A low, vibrating HUM fills the air. None of the meditators lose focus -- eyes stay shut, bodies remain still.

An **ORB** of light -- pea-sized -- manifests in the center of the lead ring held by Ali, Cliff and Don.

The floating orb pulsates like a slow-beating heart. With each beat, it gets a tiny bit larger. Concurrently, the HUMMING grows louder, the VIBRATION more present.

The marble of light grows to a golf ball of light.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

The tent's nylon gently vibrates.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

A tennis ball of light -- PULSE...

A softball of light...

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Sheriff puts on a headlamp.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Still none of the Meditators have flinched even with a basketball of light floating in the center of them.

As the orb continues to grow, it illuminates the clearing.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

Sheriff crawls out of Don's tent. Notices the faint HUM.

Tries to pop his ear with his finger.

He walks away from the tent.

Stops.

Unzips his pants.

Urines.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

Giant beach ball of light -- PULSES, getting close to touching the lead wire --

It stops pulsing. The HUM stops. The vibrating stops.

The orb of light floats in silence...

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

With the HUM suddenly gone, Sheriff stops peeing.

He locks in place like he's afraid to move.

EXT. CLEARING - NIGHT

We push in on Don -- light gleaming from his face.

The ball EXPLODES. The light expands all the way out to the fire perimeter, but stops there as if trapped. Everyone is hidden beneath the light.

EXT. HIGH FLAT, LILY LAKE TRAIL - NIGHT

To the north, majestic light illuminates the sky --

Sheriff, awestruck, watches...

EXT. CLEARINNG - NIGHT

In a flash, the shroud of light condenses into its center and vanishes. A seismic wind ripples out from its epicenter above the patch of grass in every direction, extinguishing the perimeter fire in a HUSH.

Everyone is gone...

EXT. SPACE - (DON'S POV)

No sound. We float in a vibrant collection of swirling gas and dust. We have no form, no manifestation -- just perspective.

There's a thin, thread-like light (light-thread) attached to us. It extends a few feet out in front of us then ends.

We slowly push forward through the dust...

Reach the light-thread's end --

EXT. GIANT FOREST - DAY (DON'S POV)

Massive black trees with 30-foot diameters surround us. Their sprawling branches and vibrantly-colored leaves create a canopy above.

Speckled, white grass and fallen leaves cover the ground. Our light-thread continues a few feet in front of us then ends.

There's a CLACK behind us --

We turn around to see the Three Hunters -- human in shape, but their bodies and features are still completely covered in large leaves fastened to their bodies by vines. Each of them holds a long, curved spear.

They look toward us with curious posture...

Hunter #1 hits Hunter #2's spear with his own -- CLACK.

The Hunters resume their trek into the forest, away from us.

We focus back on the light-thread. Move to its end --

INT. CLAY ROOM (DON'S POV)

We're in a room comprised entirely of blue clay -- the floor, the walls, the ceiling. Patterned grooves cover every inch of the surface.

Light-thread illuminates a nearby wall. We move closer...

The elegant grooves are hypnotic and inviting. We move closer taking us to the end of the light-thread --

EXT. PINK OCEAN - DAY (DON'S POV)

We float above the calm, pink water in the orange, sunless sky. Dozens of rafts float on the ocean's surface.

But we quickly follow the light-thread. Getting the hang of this, we move faster --

SERIES OF SHOTS -- FOLLOWING THE LIGHT-THREAD (DON'S POV)

-- INT. CRYSTAL CAVE -- Gems lining the walls and floor of the tight cave shimmer from our light-thread --

-- INT. METAL PLATFORM -- Surrounded by huge gears and mechanical rods firing up and down. Like we're passing through a giant engine --

-- EXT. FIELD - NIGHT -- Hundreds of SPINDLY BEINGS sleep on the ground. The night's sky is streaked with purples and greens and huge jellyfish-like blobs. FASTER --

-- EXT. SKY BRIDGE - DAY -- We barely see that we're on a narrow bridge floating in the sky connected to a huge, rectangular structure --

EXT. LIGHT TUNNEL

We're pushing forward so fast that the worlds we're passing through just blend into a tunnel surrounding us. Instead of a segment of light-thread in front us, the light-thread shoots forward connected and seemingly without end.

We follow the light-thread until --

EXT. RED MOUNTAIN TRAIL / LOOKOUT - DAY (POV)

Nora stops hiking. She looks back at us...

Our light-thread ends at Nora's backpack, which slightly **glows** from the inside.

Nora keeps looking back at us as if she's listening.

She smiles.

A few tear drops fall from her flooded eyes. She stops to wipe them dry.

Nora resumes hiking. We push forward, staying behind her.

Nora stops. Takes in the view -- layers of red rock spires ripple out under thick, dark clouds.

Distant thunder RUMBLES.

Nora sets her pack down. She unzips and takes out the glowing object -- her phone.

She casually holds it as if unaware of the radiating light.

We slowly get pulled toward the phone -- our light-thread shortening -- we're getting reeled in.

She looks at us intently...

We're moving closer...

She shakes her head with a curious smile then holds the phone out to take a selfie -- which yanks us up into the light --

EXT. GARDEN, UFO WATCH TOWER - NIGHT

The brightness vanishes into the air behind Don.

CAMPER# 1 (O.S.)
(distant)
There's another!

Flashlights and headlamps light up from the campground 50 yards away.

ALI (O.S.)
(forced whisper)
Don! Don! Come on!

Don turns around to see Ali crouching 15 yards away.

Don rushes to Ali.

ALI (CONT'D)
Where are we?

Don looks around, getting his bearings...

Campers group up in the distance -- their flashlight beams huddled together. They move forward to investigate.

The starlight allows Don to see the faint outline of the UFO watchtower. He realizes...

DON
Let's get out of here.

Don and Ali stay low, scampering towards the highway.

INT. MEETING ROOM, SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Ali sits across from Sheriff and a FEMALE DETECTIVE, 33. A MUSCULAR OFFICER, 40, hands Ali a can of soda. Ali looks disappointed.

ALI
Was kind of hoping for one of those
glass bottle colas. Pretty sure
they'd have one at the gas station.

Muscular glances to Sheriff -- "seriously?"

Sheriff nods him on.

INT. MEETING ROOM, SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Don -- shirt buttoned up -- sits across from Sheriff and Detective.

Muscular stands in the corner.

MUSCULAR
Want anything to drink?

DON
No, thanks.

INTERCUT BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS OF ALI AND DON

DETECTIVE
Take me through the day of.

DON
Left the shelter at gunpoint. Cliff
and the two guys, don't know their
names, took us up some trail.

Muscular pops the cap off a glass bottle of cola, sets it on the table in front of Ali.

ALI
There's a ring of fire -- like an
actual ring of fire with at least
ten people in that sucker.

Ali takes a swig.

DON
They start taking their clothes
off...

ALI
Next thing you know, it's a sex-
fest. Full-on. This one dude going
solo --
(hand motions)
just gettin' it.

Sheriff looks confused.

Don nods in confirmation --

DON
Yeah...

ALI
They're all in the mating zone so
it's time to make our move.

ALI (CONT'D)
I give a heads up to Don and --

DON
We ran. Eventually we could see
lights from Crestone, and we headed
in that direction.

END INTERCUT.

INT. MEETING ROOM, SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Don still sitting across from Detective and Sheriff as
Muscular paces.

DETECTIVE
Past week, we've been up to the
clearing, found the shelter... we
came across a few things. Does this
mean anything to you?

Detective hands over a

LAMINATED SPREADSHEET (EPHEMERIS)

"January 1959" at the top. The rest is a large spreadsheet
(Ephemeris). Days of the month down the Y-axis and
astrological symbols across the X-axis. Measurements populate
all the intersecting boxes. One **measurement** out of the
hundreds is highlighted -- "2°48" -- at the intersection of
January 31 and --

BACK TO:

DON
That's my birthday.

Detective quickly hands Don a **similar spreadsheet** titled
"DECEMBER 1988".

DETECTIVE
Ali Zaman's birthday highlighted.

She hands over **another spreadsheet** titled "December 1929".

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
Cliff Loxton's birthday. And then --

The **final spreadsheet** is titled "SEPTEMBER 2018".

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 -- the night at the clearing. Each
 of the highlighted dates have the
 same measurement: Two degrees,
 forty-eight minutes under the same
 symbol... Saturn's Sickle.

Don glances back to the **spreadsheets** at the SATURN'S SICKLE
 SYMBOL.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
 Does that mean anything to you?

Don takes a breath...

DON
 No.

Sheriff, oddly quiet, studies Don.

Muscular stops his pacing --

MUSCULAR
 The birthday bologna... if this is
 in play, how would they have even
 known to target you two?

FLASHING IMAGE -- In Dorothy's office, Dorothy looks over
 Don's driver's license. She looks back at Don with his gold
 chain and white tank top showing under his flannel and vest.

FLASHING IMAGE -- In the jewelry shop under the HOROSCOPE
 READINGS SIGN, Ali puts his hands on the table palms up,
 right next to Margaret's. So close they brush against. She
 looks up --

BACK TO:

DON
 I don't know.

Don hands the papers back.

DETECTIVE
 Do you have any idea where these
 twelve individuals could be now?

DON
 No.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE, LOBBY - DAY

Sheriff walking Don out. They stop at the doors.

SHERIFF

They stashed your car at the Lily trail. Even set your tent up near the top. I was on there that night lookin' for ya.

DON

Is that right?

SHERIFF

And I saw somethin'. The kind of thing those people talk about. And by the looks of it, should've been near the clearing you was in.

DON

You feel special now?

SHERIFF.

Maybe. I don't know. Look, you oughta get out of the Valley. This is likely to turn into a circus real quick.

DON

Car's already packed.

EXT. PARKING LOT, SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Don heads toward his Caddy where Ali is waiting.

ALI

How'd it go?

DON

Fine. You been all right?

ALI

Gone through five or six things of mouthwash, but I'm good.

DON

They press you at all?

ALI

Nah, they know not to step. Still though, going through it in there... like insane as this entire thing is... what I don't get is how we ended up back here and they didn't.

DON
You got some time?

I/E. DON'S CAR, RURAL HIGHWAY, UFO WATCHTOWER - DAY

With cars filling the parking lot, Don parks behind a line of cars on the side of the highway. Ali's old Jeep pulls behind.

EXT. UFO WATCHTOWER - DAY

Don and Ali walk through a CROWD. It's like a party. PEOPLE cooking on portable grills, throwing frisbees, selling UFO merchandise.

Don and Ali make their way into the

CONCRETE HUT

Dark blinds cover all the windows. A video is being projected

ON THE WALL

Shaky footage from a cell phone... darkness with a low HUM.

CAMPER #2 (O.S.)
It was over there! Did you see it?

There's a huge flash of light thirty yards ahead.

CAMPER #1 (O.S.)
There's another!

Everything goes dark again. The footage then rewinds and the flash of light is zoomed in on and played in slow-mo frame by frame, revealing a dark humanoid shape in the light.

The footage then starts over at the beginning and continues to play in the background on a loop.

BACK TO:

Ali pats Don on the back --

ALI
You might have the world's most famous shadow.

EXT. GARDEN, UFO WATCH TOWER - DAY

Crowded with visitors moving around the garden of rocks and personal belongings. On the viewing deck above, Kathy gives an interview to three INTERNET REPORTERS. She loves it.

Don leads Ali to a cluster of belongings -- clearly visible among them are Nora's cracked phone and one of Ali's bracelets.

Ali bends down. Looks at the bracelet.

ALI
And you put this here?

Don nods.

Ali picks up the bracelet. He spins it until coming across a piece of navy rock --

ALI (CONT'D)
This one --

FLASHBACK -- ALI'S TRIP (POV) -- BASEMENT WORKSHOP

Shelves filled with rocks and minerals surround us.

We turn around to see JAHAN, 40, holding a huge, navy rock shrouded in light. It has a light-thread leading back to us.

He looks at us intently...

Jahan sets the rock down on the table. Leaves the workshop.

We hear the RUMBLE of feet going up old stairs.

JAHAN (O.S.)
ALI! ALI!

We turn again to look at the hundreds of specimens, big and small, organized on the higher shelves. We're getting pulled backward...

The shelves get further away as we're pulled...

RUMBLING of feet coming down the stairs.

We're sucked into the light of the navy rock --

BACK TO:

EXT. GARDEN, UFO WATCH TOWER - DAY

A few VISITORS walk up behind Ali and Don. Ali drops the bracelet back on the pile.

EXT. JEEP, SIDE OF RURAL HIGHWAY, UFO WATCH TOWER - DUSK

Don and Ali sit on the back of Ali's old Jeep -- the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the east, the sun setting behind the San Juan mountains to the west.

ALI

... when I saw him, we had this unloading of love but it was beyond that. It wasn't restricting or bound, and I felt, I feel... Is any of this making sense?

DON

All of it. I promise.

Goes quiet for a few moments...

A car WHOOSHES by.

ALI

The Sheriff and my mom both told me how you kept searching for me --

DON

It's nothing, I --

ALI

It's not. And had you not put that bracelet there, I'd still be floating around wherever the hell we were.

DON

You ever... sometimes, I... it's like I want to go back.

ALI

All the time. I think we will though, you know?

Don nods. Stands up.

DON

What's next?

ALI
Going back home with my mom for a while.

DON
That's good.

ALI
You?

DON
On the road... not sure where yet.

Ali stands. Gets his keys from his pocket.

ALI
Let me know when you do. I got friends all over that can show you around.

DON
Yeah? Like the friends you made here?

Ali LAUGHS.

Don puts his hand out for a shake.

Ali shakes and goes in for a bro-hug.

ALI
Seriously, call me when you get where you're going.

DON
I will.

Ali gets in his Jeep.

Don gets in his

Cadillac

He turns to the back seat where **NORA'S PUSH-PIN MAP** is packed.

He takes **NORA'S CITY LIST** (Purple Piece of Paper) off the map.

Looks over it...

Grabs a pen from a cupholder.

Turns the list over revealing a blank side. Uses the steering wheel for a writing surface.

He taps his pen in thought...

Begins writing a list of his own.

A sudden blast of RAP MUSIC --

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DUSK

Ali's Jeep pulls onto the road. Getting us on our way out of the San Luis Valley to another FUCKING BANGER of a rap song.

FADE OUT.

THE END