

BY FIRE AND WATER

By Jan Fredric Dalby

1174 West 900 South, Mapleton UT 84664
801-520-3294
Jfdalby1@gmail.com

WGA #2265814

FADE IN

EXT. HIGH IN THE SKY - DAY

Through the eyes of CADE MALLORY, 52, rugged, hairy and trim, we see the earth appear, then disappear, as he falls and spins. Again he sees sky and clouds, mountains, sky, clouds - round and round. Earth, sky, clouds.

EXT. BIG CITY AIRPORT - DAY

A passenger jet takes off into a cloudy, hazy sky.

SUPER: "30 HOURS AGO"

INT. BIG CITY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

The security entrance is busy. PASSENGERS hustle to line up. They tote pull-luggage and shoulder bags.

FRANK CARLTON, 72, strong and stout, grey hair, jeans and a cowboy shirt, sits studying a map. Next to him is SOPHIE PRICE, 27, pretty, dressed for a tropical vacation, a large colorful purse on her lap.

Sophie stares through the passing crowd at her boss, BLAKE CARLTON, 48, slightly pudgy in a cute way, sport coat, no tie, fancy shoulder bag dangling at his side.

In the distance, Blake gestures and talks seriously, his hand on the shoulder of his son, TYLER CARLTON, 14, wiry, ear buds around his neck, smart phone in his hand, eyes fixed at the floor.

SOPHIE

Looks like he's giving Tyler the business.

Frank looks up from his map.

FRANK

What? Who?

SOPHIE

Blake. It looks like he's giving Tyler his Daddy-lecture number twelve.

Frank leans side-to-side and spots Blake and Tyler in the crowd.

He shakes his head.

FRANK

No. More like he's selling another
condo.

Sophie smiles and pats Frank's leg. He recoils slightly.

SOPHIE

You know your son too well, Mister
Carlton.

The hustling airport crowd parts near Blake and Tyler.
Standing behind them chatting excitedly on her cell phone is
BROOKE CARLTON, 16, tall and lanky, in a stylish short skirt.

She gestures wildly, smirks, and points at Frank. Their eyes
meet. She pulls down her hand and turns away.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

So. I understand you're taking
Tyler and Brooke - where? Hiking or
camping or... Something out in
nature?

FRANK

Sure. They need away from their
gadgets. Get close to God's
wonders.

SOPHIE

Blake would never...

Sophie rolls her eyes.

FRANK

Excuse me?

SOPHIE

I mean. Blake would never think of
doing something that crazy...

Sophie's voice trails off when she sees Blake wave them over.
Frank and Sophie gather their stuff, dodge scurrying crowds,
and eventually reach Blake, Tyler, and Brooke.

BLAKE

Okay, Dad. You sure you wanna do
this? You could just hang out at
our place. They'd be fine.

BROOKE

(looks up from her phone)
Yeah, Grandpa.

(MORE)

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Like, we'd be okay with that. I'd
work on my strokes in our pool.

Brooke goes back to her phone.

FRANK
I don't think so. You'll have fun.

BLAKE
Okay. Your call.

Blake shrugs. Sophie rolls her eyes. Tyler looks away.

BROOKE
(to her phone)
Sure. See ya in, like, a few days.
Bye.

Brooke ends her call.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Dad, can I go with mom so I can
hang with my friends while you're
gone?

BLAKE
No, she's at her retreat. It's her
alone time. You know that.

BROOKE
But Dad. Camping?

FRANK
Come on guys. It's beautiful up
there. It'll only be a few days.
Your grandma and I used to go...

TYLER
(interrupting, still
staring down)
They got internet?

FRANK
Well, no. And no electricity. No
traffic. No people... No bathrooms.

Brooke recoils.

BROOKE
What! No bathrooms...

FRANK
Just God's own creations.

BROOKE
Oh lovely. Like, out in the middle
of nowhere.

FRANK
Not quite the middle. Maybe the
edge... But still beautiful!

BLAKE
(cutting in, to Brooke)
You'll be fine. Dad'll take care of
you. Be good. Okay? And have fun!

Blake checks the time on his smart phone.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
We've gotta run. Ready Sophie?

SOPHIE
(faking seriousness)
Yes, sir. All set.

Blake hugs Tyler and Brooke. He shakes Frank's hand.

BLAKE
Thanks Dad. You're a real life-
saver.

FRANK
No problem. Happy to help.

Blake and Sophie rush toward the VIP security line. Sophie
waves and smiles at Tyler and Brooke. She winks at Frank.

SOPHIE
Good luck. Enjoy.

Frank stands with Brooke, already on her phone again. Tyler's
ear buds are in and he's playing a game on his phone.

Frank gently ushers Brooke and Tyler to the exit.

FRANK
Come on guys. Nature calls!

A middle-aged WOMAN hears Frank and recoils as she passes.

FRANK (CONT'D)
No, not that...

But the woman rushes away, Frank smiles to himself as he,
Tyler, and Brooke move through hustling travelers.

Brooke and Tyler, their heads down in their phones, run into two harried PEOPLE.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Excuse us. Sorry.

Frank looks back through the crowd and sees Sophie put her arm on Blake's shoulder.

Blake gently pulls her arm down and makes some sort of comment. She laughs and retreats her arm to herself.

Frank hurries Brooke and Tyler to the exit. He scowls.

INT. SWANKY SPA RETREAT - DAY

A cell phone's cheery ring tone SOUNDS. ELLEN CARLTON, 38, garishly attired for a workout, slightly overweight and heavily made up, picks her phone up from the stair-stepper stand.

ELLEN
(huffing and puffing)
Yes? - Oh, hi Brooke. Having fun?

EXT. MOUNTAIN DIRT ROAD - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Frank's old pickup jostles along, dust cloud rising behind.

INT. FRANK'S OLD PICKUP - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Brooke holds a cell phone to her ear. She sits by the window on a bench seat next to Tyler, who sits in the middle next to Frank. They are buckled in as the truck bumps along a dirt road in a forest.

BROOKE
Like, seriously, Mom. Really? -
Yes, grandpa made us change into
our grubbies.

Actually, Brooke and Tyler both wear fairly new name-brand outfits.

INT. SWANKY SPA RETREAT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Ellen continues stair-stepping.

ELLEN
(huffing and puffing)
Well, good. You don't want to ruin
your nice things.

A spa ATTENDANT enters, taps her watch, and waves Ellen on.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Look, dear. I've got to move to the
yoga room now. You have fun and be
nice to Frank. He's had it tough
lately. Without grandma.

Ellen begins her dismount from the stair-stepper.

INT. FRANK'S OLD PICKUP - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

BROOKE
Okay, Mom. I love you. Like, don't
hurt yourself... Hello?... Mom?

Brooke looks at her phone and sees that the line is
disconnected.

She puts it to her ear again. Nothing. Then she looks at her
phone.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
No bars. Like, where are we?

EXT. FRANK'S OLD PICKUP - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The pickup bounces and slides around a corner. High canyon
walls hide smoke rising in the distance. Dust floats into the
sky behind the truck.

EXT. HIGH IN THE SKY - DAY

Through Cade's eyes we again see mountains, sky, and clouds
as he spins and falls. His arms flail in front of him now.

He holds a packed parachute by one strap. It flaps in the
sky, clouds, and, now, a glimpse of smoke rising from nearby
mountains.

Round and round, over and over, the view appears and
reappears in front of him.

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAKE - NIGHT

From across the small lake the glow of a tiny campfire casts shadows of three people surrounding the light.

Smoke from the forest fire on the other side of the ridge blows away from the lake revealing a star-studded sky.

SUPER: "16 HOURS AGO"

EXT. LAKE-SIDE CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Tyler pokes the fire with a stick. It catches on fire. He blows it out and inserts it in the fire again. Sparks rise.

Frank stares at the fire, lost in thoughts. Brooke sits close.

BROOKE

Grandpa, did you and grandma ever take dad camping?

FRANK

(without looking up)

Sure. Most of our family vacations were camping trips. I wasn't making much money at first. That's all we could afford.

BROOKE

I wonder why dad, like, never takes us camping.

TYLER

(without looking up)

He's too busy. And mom hates bugs. So do I.

Silence for a while. Brooke fidgets.

BROOKE

Grandpa?

Frank is buried in thought, still, staring at the fire.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Grandpa?

FRANK

(still stares at the fire)

Oh, sorry. What, Brooke?

BROOKE

Is dad having an affair with Miss Price?

FRANK

(looks up, startled)
What? Who?

BROOKE

Dad and his secretary. Like, messing around. You saw them, didn't you.

FRANK

Well, uh...

TYLER

Dumb question, Brooke. It's obvious. She goes on all of dad's business trips.

Silence again.

FRANK

Well, your mom and dad love you. And I'm sure they love each other. Just remember that. And we all have challenges. They do. I do. You do.

BROOKE

But mom - she probably doesn't know.

FRANK

And we don't know either, Brooke. So don't assume that you do. Okay?

BROOKE

Yeah. Sure.

FRANK

Good. Your mom is a lot smarter than she comes across sometimes. And so is your dad. Just every so often he does things that look fishy.

BROOKE

I know. But it's, like, kinda sad.

FRANK

Could be, but we don't know. If it's an issue, they have to work it out, not us.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

(beat)

If there's anything to work out.
When we have problems, well, we
have to solve them by ourselves.
Maybe with a little help from
others. Maybe from God.

Brooke starts to say something but hesitates. Tyler stirs the fire with a stick. Sparks rise. Silence.

Frank leans back and stares at the night sky.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Just look at the beautiful sky. - I
wish Betty were still here to enjoy
it... again....

Frank's voice tapers off. He gets up and walks slowly into the darkness. Brooke and Tyler glance at each other, sadness on their faces.

Brooke gets up and follows Frank. When she reaches him, she puts her arm around him.

BROOKE

It is, like, really kinda nice here
grandpa.

FRANK

Yeah. Peaceful. Quiet. God's
country. We... uh...

(choked up)

I... love it here.

(Brooke hugs Frank)

Glad you came with me.

EXT. HIGH IN THE SKY - DAY

Through Cade's eyes we again see mountains, sky, clouds, and smoke rising over the mountains a ways off. Everything rotates as he falls and spins.

He fights to put on the parachute that flaps in front of him. One arm is through the strap. The ripcord flaps in the wind. He struggles to get his arm through the other shoulder strap. The earth gets closer.

Sky, clouds, smoky mountains. Flapping parachute, flailing arms. Sky, clouds, mountains.

EXT. MALLORY HOUSE - NIGHT

A very early morning's hazy sky looks down on a small suburban house. A mid-sized SUV pulls out of the driveway, its headlights paint the house, then the road ahead.

A pinkish hue rests on the smoky mountains in the distance.

SUPER: "8 HOURS AGO"

INT. MALLORY SUV - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Cade sits in the driver's seat. He squints through the windshield.

Next to him is KRISTA MALLORY, 49, hair frazzled in the early hour, arms wrapped around herself. She stares out the side window.

They drive toward the edge of town.

CADE

You be all right? You seem
preoccupied with something.

Krista looks at Cade.

KRISTA

What?

CADE

I can get Brad to drive me in.

KRISTA

No, I'll be okay. My pills will
take effect soon. Again, MS stinks.
- Did the fire grow much last
night?

CADE

Yeah. Gotta drop the guys in, way
behind the front. Almost to the
timber line. Gonna be a bit tricky.

Krista reaches over and strokes Cade's beard.

KRISTA

Be careful, honey. You know I
always worry.

CADE

Yeah. I know. For almost thirty
years you've worried.

KRISTA
And prayed.

CADE
And prayed. And I've always come
home. Thanks to you.

KRISTA
And God.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The sun peeks over distant mountains where a large plume of smoke rises into a colorful cloudy morning sky. The SUV meanders toward the county airport.

EXT. HIGH IN THE SKY - DAY

Through Cade's eyes we again see smoky mountains, sky, and clouds rotate as he falls and spins.

He forces the second shoulder strap on and fights to fasten the parachute chest strap in front of him. The earth gets closer.

Sky, clouds, smoky mountains. Flaying, struggling arms.

EXT. LAKE-SIDE CAMPSITE. - DAY

A fire crackles in a small fire-pit a few yards from two small tents and another sleeping bag rolled out on the ground.

Nearby trees cast long, morning shadows across the campsite.

SUPER: "4 HOURS AGO"

Frank squats near the fire-pit. He monitors pancakes and rotates bacon sizzling in a skillet balanced on rocks over the fire.

A disheveled Brooke pokes her head from one of the tents.

BROOKE
What's that smell?

FRANK
Bacon and pancakes. Best smell ever
on a campout.

BROOKE

No, the smoke. Smells like a house
burned down. With bacon in it.

FRANK

Oh. A forest fire is burning on the
other side of those mountains.

Frank gestures to a ridge across a small lake near the
campsite.

White smoke blankets the sky past the ridge.

BROOKE

We're camping in a forest fire?

FRANK

No, it's a ways off, blocked by
those mountains. I heard some
planes yesterday when we hiked in.
Probably dropping water and
retardant.

BROOKE

That's what it was. Like, it seemed
like the airport followed us to the
mountains.

Frank flips a pancake.

FRANK

I guess the wind shifted in the
night. So we get a little smoke
pollution mixing with bacon smell.
It's still beautiful here.

A sudden SHRIEK from Tyler's tent startles Frank and Brooke.
Tyler bounds from the tent wearing only his skivvies. He
slaps at his hair and arms.

TYLER

Ahhh! I'm being attacked! Get 'em
off me! Something bit me!

Frank moves the skillet from the fire and hurries to Tyler.
He finds a few ants crawling on him and brushes them off. He
inspects Tyler's hair and finds a few more as he talks.

FRANK

They're harmless little black ants,
Tyler. We're in their home.

TYLER

I don't care! They're attacking me!

FRANK

Well, when we settled in last night, you probably ended up on an ant hill.

Brooke laughs.

BROOKE

Uh, Tyler. Like, maybe you should get dressed.

Tyler turns his back to Brooke.

TYLER

I'm not going back in there.

BROOKE

So you gonna prance around in your undies, like, all day?... Cute.

FRANK

I'll get your stuff.

Frank crawls into Tyler's tent.

From inside he reports.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Yup. You squashed their home. No wonder they got mad at you.

Frank exits the tent, stomps his feet, and slaps a few ants from his arms. He shakes Tyler's pants, shirt, shoes, and socks vigorously. Little ants carom here and there.

He hands the clothes to Tyler.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Go put these on. I'll finish making breakfast. Then we'll eat.

Tyler takes the clothing. He carefully inspects them and flicks off an ant. He turns away and starts dressing.

Brooke laughs and sits down on a log by the fire.

BROOKE

Baby. Afraid of a little ant?

A chipmunk darts from under the log where Brooke sits. Brooke SCREAMS.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Ahhh!

Brooke jumps. Tyler and Frank laugh.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY

From the ridge, the encampment is barely visible except for a tiny waft of smoke that rises from the campfire.

The three campers mill about.

On the other side of the ridge a forest fire rages far below. Smoke billows high in the sky.

A retardant carrying aircraft passes low over the fire, and red-orange retardant billows from its belly and blankets the blazing forest below.

The aircraft banks and flies away.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

The Mallory SUV drives onto the airport tarmac and stops behind a smoke jumper aircraft, a small twin engine plane.

Several PEOPLE busily refuel the plane, load supplies, and enter the aircraft with heavy backpacks and parachutes.

INT. MALLORY SUV - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Cade turns off the ignition and hands the keys to Krista. A few of the crew members outside wave to him. He nods.

CADE

I can have one of the ground crew
guys drive you home.

Krista looks at him with a sly smile.

KRISTA

Not necessary. God will protect me.
Just like he will you. Remember.
God is your...

CADE

(interrupting)
My copilot. I know. But I prefer
Marty. He's a better flyer.

KRISTA

Cade. That's sacrilege. You know
with God all things are possible.

CADE
Then why doesn't he take away your
MS? - Sorry. That wasn't nice.

KRISTA
No it wasn't. We all have our tests
in life. That's mine.

CADE
And I have mine.

Cade lifts his pant slightly and reveals a prosthetic foot.

CADE (CONT'D)
Fortunately the forest service
isn't as strict as the air force,
especially if they don't know. And
science can do what God can't.

KRISTA
(irritated)
Cade. You know better.

CADE
You're right. Well. I gotta go.

Cade leans over and kisses Krista.

CADE (CONT'D)
You take care. I love you.

KRISTA
You'd better.

EXT. MALLORY SUV - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Cade gets out, retrieves his duffle bag from the back. Krista
opens her door and gets out too. She leans against the SUV
and soaks in the morning sun.

As Cade heads to the plane, Krista waves. She walks slowly to
the driver's side and gets in.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - DAY

Cade's plane lifts off from the runway and passes over the
Mallory SUV motoring along the county road.

INT. MALLORY SUV - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Krista hears the airplane noise overhead and looks up through the windshield.

Cade's plane disappears over the trees.

The SUV hits a pothole and a cross hanging from a chain on the rearview mirror swings wildly.

Krista grabs it and stops its swinging. She refocuses on driving.

EXT. HIGH IN THE SKY - DAY

Cade rotates. He sees sky, clouds, smoky mountains - and a small lake. Sky, clouds, mountain, lake again.

The chest and waist lock clips still flap around. He can't fasten them. He sees the lake closing in and pulls the rip cord and squeezes the shoulder straps tightly.

The spin stops. The unravelling parachute jerks one shoulder strap off. He grabs and hugs the other tightly. The lake closes in.

EXT. BEYOND MOUNTAIN RIDGE - DAY

Cade's plane flies high, past the forest fire below. A trail of 10 parachutes flutters away from the aircraft. Eight smoke jumpers and 2 supply chutes float down gracefully.

SUPER: "10 MINUTES AGO"

The plane passes over the ridge and turns toward the airport.

EXT. LAKE-SIDE CAMPSITE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Frank shows Tyler how to skip rocks.

SUPER: "3 Minutes ago"

Brooke sits on a log and tosses tiny pebbles into the lake. She's bored.

A BOOM breaks the silence and echoes through the valley.

BROOKE
What was that?

Frank stops Tyler mid-throw. He squints and searches the sky.

FRANK
Up there. Look.

Frank points at a small twin-engine plane with smoke trailing from one engine. The plane comes from the direction of the ridge. It's spinning.

FRANK (CONT'D)
It's in trouble, kids.

A flash comes from the smoking engine. Seconds later another BOOM and POP echo.

TYLER
What happened Grandpa?

BROOKE
It's, like, in big trouble, dummy.

FRANK
And it's headed our way.

The plane goes into a flat spin. A spiral of smoke and flame trails behind.

BROOKE
Should we, like, run, Grandpa?

FRANK
No. Stay put. For now.

Frank huddles with Brooke and Tyler on the shore of the small lake. Their eyes follow the descending plane.

TYLER
What's that?

Tyler points to a small object falling away from the spinning plane.

FRANK
It looks like a person.

BROOKE
That's good, right?

They watch the falling, spinning person tumble down toward them.

FRANK
Come on guy. Where's your chute?

TYLER
He's getting closer.

FRANK

So is the plane. But it'll miss us.
It's heading toward the trail we
used to get here, beyond our camp..

Frank and Tyler's eyes follow the burning plane. Brooke's eyes are fixed on the falling person.

BROOKE

He's gonna, like, hit the lake.

Frank turns back. He searches the sky for the person.

FRANK

Where is he?

Brooke points.

BROOKE

There.

He's very low and falls fast. A parachute begins trailing from the person.

FRANK

Come on. Open. Open!

A loud CRASH and EXPLOSION shocks all of them. They turn and see a fireball rise above the forest just over a hill behind their camp. Frank turns back and watches the man descend.

TYLER

(amazed at the fireball)
Wow! Cool!

Brooke and Tyler stare at the explosion. Frank sees the person's parachute open half way. The person slows slightly.

EXT. LOW IN THE SKY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

From Cade's eyes we see the lake very close. He swings wildly in the loose parachute harness and sees the mountains, the ridge, the explosion, the half-open chute. Then water.

EXT. LAKE-SIDE CAMPSITE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Cade SPLASHES in the lake two hundred feet from shore.

FRANK

Thank heaven! Guys! He's down!

Tyler and Brooke refocus on the lake. They see the parachute splayed over the water. An arm flails underneath it. They glance back at the smoke and flames from the crash.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That guy needs help. Or he's gonna drown.

Tyler and Brooke look at the parachute and struggling person.

TYLER
What'll we do, grandpa?

FRANK
We've gotta go get him.

Frank looks around for something, anything he can use to get out to the struggling person.

BROOKE
With what, grandpa?

Frank drags a small log to the shore.

FRANK
Tyler, help me with this.

Tyler helps Frank tug the log to the water. They chuck it in and it floats nicely.

BROOKE
Like, now what?

Cade still struggles in the lake in the distance.

FRANK
I haven't been swimming in thirty years. Tyler is too small. But we've got a champion swimmer here.

BROOKE
No. Not me. The water's cold and there's fish in it.

FRANK
So you're gonna let the man die? Cuz it's a lake?

BROOKE
But grandpa. I can't. I race in a pool...

FRANK

Yes you can. Now take off those
sweats. You'll sink in them. And
hurry. He can't last much longer.

Brooke hesitates but removes her sweatshirt.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You can save a life today, Brooke.

BROOKE

(stares at man in lake)
Really? Like, you think so?

FRANK

I know so. You're strong. A great
swimmer. When you get in the water
push the log out to him. You'll get
warm as you go.

BROOKE

(takes off sweatpants)
What about when I get there?

TYLER

Now look who's in skivvies.

Brooke wraps her arms around her sports bra. She wears shorts
under her sweatpants.

FRANK

Quiet Tyler. Go gather more wood.
They'll be cold when they get back.

TYLER

(whining)
Okay.

Brooke steps into the water as Tyler gathers wood.

BROOKE

Ahh! It's so cold!

Brooke wades in up to her waist. She slips and splashes in
completely.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Oh man!

FRANK

Go for it!

She dives ahead, swims to the log, pushes it in front of her,
and kick-paddles toward the parachute.

BROOKE
(loudly)
It's so-o-o cold!

Brooke's legs pump furiously, rhythmically. The log plows through the water in front of her.

FRANK
(yelling)
When you get to him, don't let him
grab you. Or you'll both go under.

Brooke yells back.

BROOKE
Got it!

Tyler, with an arm-load of sticks, approaches and stands next to Frank.

TYLER
Will she be okay?

FRANK
You bet. She's a good swimmer. See
how far she's gone already.

Brooke is fifty feet from the shoreline.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(loudly)
You're doing great, Brooke!

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAKE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

A V-shaped wake forms behind the rapidly kicking Brooke and the small log she pushes.

She slowly approaches the floating parachute and sees Cade still struggling.

He's close to the edge of the parachute but still under it.

BROOKE
Hey! I'm coming. Over here! This
way!

Cade turns and thrashes toward the sound of Brooke's voice.

CADE
Thank god! I'm hurt and can't, I
can't...

Cade's voice tapers off. His arm dips below the parachute.

Brooke paddles forward more quickly. The log plows into and pushes the floating parachute toward Cade's last position.

BROOKE

Where are you? I'm here.

Brooke stops paddling. She listens. Silence.

Smoke from the plane crash explosion and fire drifts over the lake and looks down on Brooke, a log, and a floating parachute.

We see Cade struggle a little below the surface.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

I'm coming!

Brooke takes a big breath and surface dives under the log and parachute toward Cade.

Under the water she spots Cade who struggles with only one arm and one leg to get back to the surface. She sees one arm uselessly dragging behind him. And only one leg kicking. She sees no foot extending from the other pant leg.

She swims up behind him, grabs his footless leg, and dolphin-kicks hard toward the log.

On the placid surface Cade's head slowly emerges above water. He gasps for air. He sees the log and senses his body being pushed toward it.

He reaches out for the log and hugs it with one arm.

Below the surface, Brooke sees that Cade is above water and hugs the log. She releases her grip on his leg.

She swims back and strokes around Cade to the other side of the log.

Cade breathes hard and hugs the log with one arm.

In front of him, on the other side of the log, Brooke emerges like a tiny mermaid, takes a deep breath, and shakes her head, her hair spraying droplets of water everywhere.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

(her teeth chattering)

Hello. I'm B-B-Brooke.

CADE

No, you're an angel.

BROOKE
Not quite. But, like, it's c-cold.
You look hurt. Let's g-g-get to
shore.

Cade's forehead bleeds.

CADE
(shivering)
Okay. I'm C-cade Ma-Mallory. Sorry,
I c-can't help much.

BROOKE
That's okay. Just hang on.

CADE
Wait! What about Marty?

BROOKE
Who?

CADE
Marty, my copilot. He said he'd
follow me out. But then I felt him
push me...

BROOKE
We only saw one chute. Yours. He
must have stayed with the plane.

CADE
But that means...

Cade stares toward the crash site. He's stunned.

BROOKE
But I've got you. So let's go.
Let's get you - us - out of this
cold lake.

Brooke dips into the water and swims to the back of the log
and kick-paddles hard.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
I can get us there.

CADE
Thank you. You are an angel.

Drifting smoke from the plane crash wafts over the little
flotilla that moves slowly toward the shore where Frank
paces.

Cade clings to the log and kicks occasionally with one leg. Brooke's legs paddle in a strong cadence.

EXT. MALLORY HOUSE - DAY

The sky is hazy and smoke billows from distant mountains, in two spots now.

INT. MALLORY HOUSE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Krista reclines on a sofa, looks up from a self-help book, and stares out a window at the smoky distant sky.

Her thumb gently strokes a Jesus book mark in her hand.

The RING from her cell phone startles her, and she reaches into her purse next to the sofa. She taps the phone and puts it to her ear.

KRISTA

Hello?

The expression on Krista's face suddenly changes to shock. She abruptly sits up.

KRISTA (CONT'D)

No! That's not possible. - God
wouldn't let that happen.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - DAY

A retardant carrying plane lands in the early afternoon haze.

The Mallory SUV races along the county highway near the airport and passes under the loud, landing multi-engine retardant dumper.

INT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

OPS CENTER

SANDY BLEDSOE, 52, slacks and blouse, all business, seriously in charge, stands and holds a microphone at a long work desk on a raised platform covered with communications equipment, manuals, maps, and remnants of lunch.

The desk faces a big window overlooking the flightline. A two-man FLIGHT CREW studies a map on a nearby table.

SANDY
(into the microphone)
Right, Nepty 2, park in position 3
to refuel and fill up. Ground crew
is waiting. Over.

BOB (O.S.)
Roger, Sandy. Thanks.

Sandy puts the microphone down.

The door on the opposite side of the room bursts open. Krista barges in.

KRISTA
Who's in charge? What happened to
Cade? Where's his plane?

The flight crew members look up, but return to their maps.

A walkie-talkie buzzes. Sandy turns around and holds up a "just a minute" finger, the walkie-talkie in her other hand. She presses the "talk" button.

SANDY
Yeah, Bob. What'd you see? Over.

BOB (V.O.)
Lots of smoke. A new fire. Probably
the crash site. Over.

Krista collapses in a chair next to the table by the flight crew.

SANDY
You sure? No chutes or...

Sandy glances at Krista and turns away.

SANDY (CONT'D)
(quietly in the mike)
Not anything, Bob? Over.

BOB (V.O.)
Roger. Got hotshots on radio. They
got out. But, well, we can do a fly-
over again on our next run. Over.

SANDY
Please do that. Thanks. Sandy out.

Sandy turns to Krista. Their eyes meet. Krista's face reflects anger and sadness.

SANDY (CONT'D)

You must be Krista Mallory. How did you know?

KRISTA

(choking back emotion)

Brad, Cade's ground crew chief, called me. Said Cade's plane hadn't returned. But I'm sure...

Krista can't speak.

Sandy bends over in front of Krista. She puts a hand on her shoulder.

SANDY

Look, honey, we'll do another fly-over to find out more. You're welcome to wait here if you want. There's a crew lounge in the next room.

KRISTA

Thanks, but can I go up in the next flight? I can be a spotter.

SANDY

Sorry, dear. Regs don't allow that. We'll add another crew member. I'm sure Brad would be willing to go.

KRISTA

That would be nice. Thank you.

Krista gets up. Sandy gives her a brief hug. The two crew men nod, smile faintly, and return to their maps.

Krista fumbles in her purse and slowly walks to the crew lounge. She clutches a cross.

Sandy and the crew members exchange a knowing glance and turn their heads away. They go back to work.

EXT. LAKE-SIDE CAMPSITE - DAY

The small lake is barely visible from high in the sky. Smoke from the plane crash fire mixes with campfire smoke and hides the campsite in the trees.

Around the campfire, Brooke wraps herself in a sleeping bag and shivers.

Nearby, Cade lies on a sleeping bag, covered by another.

Frank wraps a sling made from tent fabric around Cade's neck. Cade grimaces when his arm is moved into place.

CADE

Ahh! Oh yeah. - Ahh. - It's broken.
For sure.

FRANK

This'll keep it stable until we can
get help.

CADE

Thanks. It's Frank, right?

FRANK

Correct, Cade.

Tyler sits by Brooke with a pile of wood he collected. He
COUGHS and SNEEZES.

Smoke wafts all around.

TYLER

More wood on the fire grandpa?

FRANK

Sure Tyler. A couple of those
medium-sized branches.

Tyler adds wood to the fire while Frank slips over and sits
next to Brooke.

FRANK (CONT'D)

How you doing Brooke. Warming up?

Brooke clutches the sleeping bag tighter. She's quiet and
shivers, snuffles, and rubs her eyes.

Frank puts his arm around her.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You did a brave thing today,
Brooke. You saved Cade's life.

Cade lifts his head.

CADE

She's my angel, Frank. I was about
to give up. Too bad...

Brooke smiles. Cade lowers his head. Tyler stands up and
scans the sky.

CADE (CONT'D)
About Marty.

TYLER
What's that?

The faint, low DRONE of a multi-engine plane drifts through the valley.

FRANK
What Tyler?

TYLER
I hear an airplane.

With effort Cade sits up and looks up into the sky.

CADE
I hear it too. Probably a Neptune.
But I can't see it. Too much smoke.

BROOKE
What's a Neptune?

CADE
It was a navy bomber sixty years ago, but a few that were left were converted into fire bombers. They drop retardant on forest fires.

Frank and Brooke get up. Both try to see the airplane.

FRANK
You think it'll drop retardant on the crash site?

CADE
I don't think so. They're fighting the big fire on the other side of the ridge. That's where my smoke jumper team bailed before my plane fell apart. But we should try to signal it.

FRANK
Tyler. Pull that branch out of the fire and take it down by the lake. Wave it around.

Tyler pulls a burning branch from the campfire.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's it! Hurry down to the water's edge.

Tyler holds the branch high and runs. Sparks fly. He reaches the shore of the lake.

Tyler looks up. He listens. He hears the drone of an overhead plane, but it's faint.

Tyler lifts the burning branch and slowly waves it side to side. Few flames remain, but a lot of smoke floats up in a zigzag formation. It mixes with the rest of the smoke.

Tyler closes his eyes; they smart.

Back and forth, back and forth - eyes closed, Tyler sweeps the smoking branch side to side. The smoke diminishes.

Tyler feels a hand on his shoulder.

FRANK (CONT'D)
That's enough, Tyler. You did great.

Tyler lowers the branch into the lake. Steam FIZZLES slightly.

Tyler turns to Frank. He can barely open his moist eyes.

TYLER
Did he see us grandpa?

Frank looks up. No droning engine sounds.

FRANK
I don't know. He didn't circle back. But maybe he's heading for help.

TYLER
Now what?

Frank looks back at the campsite where Cade lies near the campfire and Brooke stands and shrugs with her hands upright.

Behind them he sees even more smoke from the plane crash. But now he also sees flames rising from across the hillside in the same place.

FRANK
Hurry Tyler. We're in big trouble!

Frank guides Tyler in a slow trot toward the campsite.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - DAY

A retardant-carrying plane taxis into a parking slot to refuel and load retardant. Service trucks and ground crew members are busy.

A pickup pulls up and stops near the nose of the plane.

Sandy gets out and approaches the plane's pilot, DAREN TORGESON, 58, beanpole thin, weathered face, as he descends the cockpit ladder.

He approaches Sandy.

SANDY

Cade's wife is in the ops center. I need your report, private like. Be straight, Daren.

Daren lowers his head and looks up sideways.

DAREN

It ain't good, Sandy. Crash site's a mess. Hardly recognize it as an airplane.

SANDY

Dang. What'll I tell Misses Mallory?

DAREN

It's worse. It started another fire. It's spreading toward a little lake and up the other side of the ridge. Maybe toward the highway too.

SANDY

That's all we need. Any structures up there? Ya think we need to attack it right away?

DAREN

Nah, not yet. We gotta knock down this side first. Maybe tomorrow.

SANDY

Okay. How many more sorties can you get in today? Maybe three?

DAREN

No, probably just one. That old work horse needs to cool down.

Sandy looks back at the ops center. Krista stands outside and blocks the sun with her hand and scans the sky.

SANDY

I don't want to go back there.

DAREN

Ya have to. She needs to know.

SANDY

But we're not absolutely sure,
right?

DAREN

No, but it's your call, Sandy.

Daren heads back to his plane and leaves Sandy alone.

She scans the sky, shakes her head, and begins a slow walk to the ops center.

Two giant columns of smoke rise from the distant mountains.

EXT. LAKE-SIDE CAMPSITE - DAY

From high in the sky, the campsite is barely visible as smoke pours from the crash site.

At ground-level, Frank pulls an improvised litter made of two long tree branches and a tent. Cade lies on the litter.

Tyler wears Frank's large backpack and teeters with the load. His eyes are red and swollen.

Brooke leads the way, her arms full of a wadded-up tent and a few supplies that dangle loosely. She coughs.

They march toward the lake. Behind them flames from the crash site lick the top of the hill.

TYLER

Grandpa! What'll we do when we get
to the water?

Frank huffs and puffs. He struggles to pull Cade.

FRANK

What?

Frank stumbles.

TYLER

Are we going around the lake?

Frank stops. Tyler passes him, turns, and squints into Frank's eyes.

Brooke doesn't see that others stopped. She continues toward the lake.

TYLER (CONT'D)
You okay, grandpa?

FRANK
I guess. I'm not sure. We shouldn't
have come up here. I'm so stupid.

Cade lifts up from the litter, with effort.

CADE
Not to me. You guys saved my life.

Brooke plods ahead and reaches the water. She drops everything, turns around and shouts.

BROOKE
Hey guys! What's up?

She sees Frank bent over, hands on his knees. He breathes hard.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Grandpa! Are you okay?

Frank crumples to his knees.

TYLER
Brooke! Come here!

Brooke runs back to Frank, Tyler, and Cade.

Tyler takes off the big backpack and kneels next to Frank.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Grandpa, what's wrong?

Frank is on his hands and knees.

FRANK
Pills. Need. Pills. Backpack.
Outside pocket.

Tyler fumbles through the backpack as Brooke arrives.

BROOKE
Grandpa! - Tyler, what are you
looking for?

TYLER

Pills. Grandpa needs some pills. I
can't find them.

Cade tries to get up. He groans and crumples back to the make-shift litter.

CADE

Pills may be in a tiny bottle.
Glycerin. Frank probably has
angina. A heart condition. My mom
had it.

Brooke helps Tyler go through backpack pockets. She finds a little bottle and holds it up.

BROOKE

You're right. It says glycerin.

She unscrews the lid and takes out a tiny pill.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Here grandpa.

Brooke tries to hand Frank the pill. He doesn't lift his hand.

Brooke kneels and puts the pill in Frank's mouth.

Frank sucks on the pill as he lies down. He rolls over on his back, holds his chest, and breathes hard.

CADE

He should be okay in a few minutes.

TYLER

Are you sure? He doesn't look so
good.

Frank lifts his head. His voice is weak.

FRANK

Cade's right. It just takes a while
to take effect.

Brooke looks up. She sees the forest on fire over the hill. Smoke blocks the sun and casts an eerie shadow over the huddled group.

BROOKE

We may not have a while.

FRANK

Whada ya mean?

TYLER

Look.

Tyler points to the crash-caused forest fire, now spreading wider and higher, creeping toward them and the lake, almost to the campsite.

FRANK

Oh geez!

Frank tries to get up but stumbles and falls to a sitting position. Tyler comes to his aid.

CADE

Whoa there. You can't do anything for a while.

FRANK

But we gotta get around the lake.

CADE

Not in your condition. - Or mine.

They stare at each other. And then blank, scared faces turn and watch the flames and smoke rise from the crash site and creep closer to the stranded group. Frank sees more danger.

Across the lake, the main fire breeches the mountain and whips down through dry, dead pines toward the lake.

FRANK

Uh, guys? We're trapped.

CADE

What do you mean?

Cade turns and catches a glimpse of what Frank points to... the fire coming over the ridge and down toward the other side of the lake.

CADE (CONT'D)

Oh no!

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - DAY

All the planes are on the tarmac. Crews are servicing them. The Terminal looks empty. But it isn't.

INT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

CREW LOUNGE

Krista sits on the sofa. She holds a cross; its chain dangles in her lap. Her head is bowed. She looks asleep, but her lips move silently.

Sandy peers around the corner. She sees Krista in repose and slowly backs away.

Krista looks up just as Sandy's head moves back from the room.

KRISTA

Wait. Did they reach Cade? Is he back?

SANDY

Well...

Sandy's face tells the bad news.

KRISTA

Is he dead? Are all the hotshots dead too?... You can tell me.

Sandy enters to room and sits next to Krista.

SANDY

Darren spotted plane wreckage on the other side of the ridge.

Krista refuses to break down.

KRISTA

But they all got out, right?

SANDY

The hotshots reported in. They all jumped, above the big fire. They're working it now.

KRISTA

But what happened to their plane... to Cade? And Marty? Did they jump too?

SANDY

Well, they're not with the guys, and they... well, they didn't report any problem.

KRISTA

So they may have gotten out, right?

SANDY

We don't know. The plane crashed. The wreckage started another fire that we'll get to tomorrow. If they somehow got out and are on the other side of the ridge, we'll do what we can. Attack the new fire... and somehow look for Cade and Marty.

Sandy puts her arm on Krista's shoulder.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Okay? That's about all we can do. For now. Can I get you anything? Do you need a ride home?

KRISTA

No. Can I stay here, sleep on the sofa? I need to be close by. I have a feeling that... well, that Cade is okay. That God is watching out for him. Somehow.

SANDY

I hope so too. And sure, you can stay as long as you want. There's coffee and snacks over there. Help yourself. I'll get you a blanket.

Sandy rises and goes to a nearby closet to retrieve a blanket.

KRISTA

Thank you.
(beat)
And he just joked about it.

SANDY

What, honey?

KRISTA

I actually believe God is his copilot. Cade laughs at that. Says he'd rather have Marty. Now look what happens. Joke's on me.

SANDY

Now listen, we don't know what happened, or where Cade and Marty are. Nothing. Don't give up because we don't know. Okay?

Krista just moves her head side-to-side.

KRISTA

Sure. Easy to say. God's been pretty good to us. Not great. We've had our trials. But this... this is... well, let's just say it stretches my faith pretty far.

Sandy spreads the blanket and helps cover Krista.

KRISTA (CONT'D)

Thank you. Again.

SANDY

Sure. Look. Just because we don't know doesn't mean we've given up. We'll send another plane over. Maybe the hotshots can wrap up their assignment and go over the ridge to check things out, maybe help with the other fire. They've got a better chance on the ground... to find Cade and Marty, or...

KRISTA

I know. I. Just. Can't. Help...

SANDY

You're right. We are helpless, you and me. But while fires are vicious creatures, Cade's a good, smart man who's been battling those monsters for years. And you've stood by him with love and faith. All the while. So let's keep hoping for a miracle. And let's keep praying. That's about all we can do. For now.

KRISTA

You're right. I hate not knowing, but I still have this gut feeling that he's got a guardian angel somewhere watching over him. Maybe Marty too.

SANDY

I hope you're right. I've seen pilots get out of some pretty bad situations. This could be another one.

KRISTA

Really? I sure hope so.

SANDY
Me too, dear. Me too.

EXT. LAKE-SIDE PATH - DAY

Through the smoke and fire from the crash site on the hill above the campsite we see a small band of misfits struggling toward the lake.

Brooke strains and leans forward in the rope attached to the makeshift litter holding Cade. She makes slow progress.

Frank rests an arm on Tyler's shoulder as they plod behind Brooke and Cade, almost to the lake shore.

Brooke stops a few feet from the water's edge, drops the rope and sits down exhausted on a nearby boulder. She pants heavily.

BROOKE
Now what?

Tyler and Frank arrive and plop down as well.

FRANK
(breathing heavily)
I don't know. I was so dumb. Coming up here with you kids.

Frank hangs his head.

Tyler looks back at the campsite.

TYLER
My tent's on fire, grandpa.

Everyone else looks back and sees the fire broaching the campsite.

CADE
The safest place now is out on the water.

BROOKE
How are we gonna do that? No boats. No logs big enough to build a raft. Like, no nothing.

CADE
There's a small inflatable life raft attached to the parachute I used. It's out there.

Cade points to the gray parachute still floating on the surface of the lake out where he landed.

Frank eyes Brooke.

BROOKE
No, not again.

FRANK
(apologetically)
I think so, Brooke. Who else can go
get it? (To Cade) How big is it?
Will it hold all of us?

CADE
It's a two-man raft, but it'll have
to do. And it has a big C-O-2
cartridge that'll fill it up. If
you can retrieve the parachute too,
it can cover us and filter out the
smoke.

BROOKE
(whining)
Isn't there something else we can
do? Someplace else we can go...

FRANK
(interrupting)
No Brooke. You're all we have.
You're the only one who can swim
out there and bring back the raft
and parachute.

A loud EXPLOSION and ball of flame from the crash site
interrupts the exchange.

CADE
Probably fuel from the aux tank...
Brooke, the raft is hooked to the
parachute, kind of in a bundle.
Find it and unhook it and then
float it back to us.

BROOKE
(while taking off her top
and slapping her body to
warm up)
Okay. I don't like this, but here I
go. Again.

Brooke tosses her top and sweat pants to Frank and steps into
the lake.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
Oh God, it's still cold.

FRANK
(to Cade, tongue-in-cheek)
She's very religious.

Cade smiles.

CADE
And brave.

Brooke completely immerses herself in the water.

BROOKE
(She surfaces and screams)
EKE! ARRGH!

Brooke then rapidly begins a strong freestyle stroke toward the floating parachute.

Frank, Cade, and Tyler watch Brooke smoothly and quickly paddle away.

Behind them the angry fire begins to consume the trees around the campsite.

FRANK
Tyler, can you go get that wadded-up tent and put it together?

TYLER
Huh? Are we gonna set up camp here?

FRANK
No. Don't use the pegs. I want it free-standing. To put over us on the raft.

CADE
Good idea. It'll give us shade and filter out most of the smoke.

Tyler jogs back to where Brooke dropped the tent she carried, gathers it up, and returns.

Then he wrestles with the tent and its components and begins to make it look like a tent.

CADE (CONT'D)
Nice job!

Frank eyes Brooke as she nears the floating parachute.

Frank cups his hands and yells.

FRANK
Brooke! Brooke!

Brooke stops and looks back.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(He yells to Brooke.)
The raft is near the harness!
Floating. Find it! Unhook it!

EXT. BROOKE IN THE LAKE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Brooke treads water and looks around. She sees the gray parachute, how the lines from it converge on the harness, and nearby, a small green bag that bobs on the surface.

She breathes hard. Takes a big breath. Swims toward the bag. But it's difficult.

Parachute lines and fabric tangle her arms and legs. She struggles briefly, then stops and floats. She rests. The lines seem to fall away.

Gracefully she drops below the surface. She sees all the lines and fabric floating above her. She pops up, gets a bead on the floating bag, takes a deep breath, and drops below the surface.

Now she's a dolphin. She scissor-kicks under the floating mess of fabric and parachute cables, free of entanglement.

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

Tyler struggles with the tent, but makes good progress.

Cade and Frank scan the lake. They see Brooke struggle and then disappear.

FRANK
Where is she?

CADE
It looks like she's in trouble. I
can't see her any more.

FRANK
(cupping his hands)
Brooke! Are you okay?

No response.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Oh dear God. Did I ask too much?

The water is calm.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Brooke! Brooke!

CADE
What's that?

Cade points to a bobbing bag by the parachute. And... Brooke surfaces next to it. She grabs the bag and waves.

BROOKE
(From way out on the lake,
she yells.)
I got it!

FRANK
Good girl!

CADE
Unhook it and bring it back!
Carefully! Forget the chute.

EXT. BROOKE IN THE LAKE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

BROOKE
Okay!

Brooke examines the bag and sees a clip that holds the bag to the harness. She unclips it and uses it as a flotation device.

She kicks and points herself back toward shore. Occasionally she stops and untangles herself from lines and fabric, but she makes steady progress away from the parachute.

INT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

CREW LOUNGE

A bright orange sunset, caused by the fire's smoke, filters through the window onto Krista, prone on the couch. The main florescent lights are out. She's alone. Asleep.

The door to the Ops Center opens slightly. A little stream of light trickles in and reflects on Krista's cross that dangles from her hand.

Sandy peeks in and then backs out. The door closes quietly.

OPS CENTER

Sandy returns to her Ops desk where Daren enters and approaches the Ops desk where Bob is waiting.

SANDY

Okay guys. Gimme a sit-rep. No bull. No guesses.

BOB

You go first, Daren. You flew over last.

DAREN

Okay. Things aren't good. The crash started a fire that's wiping out everything in the valley around a little lake over the ridge. It'll probably meet up with the big one that got even bigger. But if the wind shifts, the crash fire will head the other direction down a forest road where there's some camp sites, hiking trails, and cabins further on toward the highway. We thought we saw a pickup truck at one of the trail-head parking lots.

SANDY

Any sign of Cade or Marty?

DAREN

No. But Jerry said he saw something kinda weird.

SANDY

What was that?

DAREN

After we dumped retardant around the hotshots so they'd be safe for the night, we passed over that lake. When we did, Jerry thought he saw a tent floating out there. He wasn't sure. It was so smoky. But he said it looked like a tent out in the lake. Maybe blown out there from a campsite.

BOB

And my guys earlier thought they saw a small fire by the lake, separate from the crash site.

(MORE)

BOB (CONT'D)

We just thought it was crash debris. Coulda been a camper though.

SANDY

Well, it's too late to check it out tonight. It's getting dark, and the fire is still moving who knows where. Let's get some sleep and attack it early tomorrow. Forecast says we may have some rain too. That'll help a lot. Sun-up, Bob, you're first takeoff. Okay?

BOB

You bet. I'll let my crew know and get the bird all ready tonight.

DAREN

Me too. We'll follow right after.

SANDY

And, Bob, do a fly-over of that lake. See if there's something, or somebody, there. And if you can, do a dump past the crash site so it doesn't spread past the highway.

BOB

Will do.

SANDY

And Daren, contact the hotshots. If they've finished on this side, see if they have enough supplies to go over the ridge to attack the crash site fire. And check for campers.

DAREN

Can do. Let's get some rest.

Bob and Daren leave, and Sandy sits at her desk. She examines a map, takes a drink from her water bottle, and puts her head down on the desk.

Soon she sleeps. It's quiet.

The break room door opens. Krista peers out. She's clearly still upset. And sad.

She closes the door.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Lights are on in the terminal. A few flood lamps dot the flightline where ground crews are still at work.

The headlights of a few vehicles come on, and several leave the airport.

In the distance, the glow of the forest fires paints the clouded sky an eerie dark reddish-orange.

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAKE - DAY

Grey-white smoke hangs over the little lake where rings of lightly falling rain dot the surface.

Flames line the ridge above and still pump smoke into the sky in spite of the light precipitation.

It's barely light, no sun visible through the cloudy sky and drifting smoke.

Blackened trees surrounding the campsite are slightly aflame, almost burned out, but still smoldering. The bulk of the fire moved on and began to dissipate with the rain. Anything left on the ground is smoldering.

EXT. RAFT IN THE LAKE - DAY

It looks like a tent is set up on the shimmering water.

But hanging out one side of the tent are four unmoving legs, one pair much larger than the other.

On the other side of the floating tent, another four legs protrude, one pair smaller than the other, but the larger set is missing a foot.

No light comes from the floating tent. No one paddles. It's calm, except for small clouds of smoke and mist wafting by, and the plunking of a few raindrops.

An odd sight, especially in the midst of a mountain lake, in the middle of a burned-out forest.

INT. RAFT IN THE LAKE - DAY

The dim morning light burns through the haze and clouds of smoke onto the tent wall of the make-shift boat.

It looks like four sausage banditos squashed together. The faces of Cade, Tyler, Brooke, and Frank are covered with masks made from clothing, ripped into strips to filter out the smoke.

Someone coughs. Then another. It's hard to tell who.

Cade is on one end. His broken arm is still in the temporary sling across his chest. His other arm rests on the end of the raft. He groans between coughs.

Next to him, lying in the opposite direction is Tyler. He's all bunched up twisted almost sideways, chin resting on his arm, but he snores softly.

He jerks slightly, apparently dreaming, and softly knees Cade on the side of his head. Cade moans.

Brooke lies on her back, arms crossed on her chest, between Tyler and Frank, her legs the opposite direction from Tyler's.

Her bloodshot eyes are open, her damp hair stuck to her forehead. She shivers.

Frank, his feet the opposite way, puts his arm over Brooke's legs.

[NOTE: Everyone's voices are muffled by their cloth masks.]

FRANK

Brooke, honey, want an 'arm blanket'?

BROOKE

No. I'm okay.

Frank lifts his arm from her wet sweats.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

But... Your arm is warm. And I'm very c-cold.

Frank again comforts Brooke with his arm across her legs.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Thank you. That's nice. I just can't get warm.

FRANK

That happens when you take a swim in a cold mountain lake.

Brooke manages a smile and faint laugh.

FRANK (CONT'D)
But you saved us all by retrieving
this life raft. Even if it is a bit
snuggly.

They lie there silently for a while when suddenly the sound
of an airplane interrupts the still morning hush.

Cade is the first to lift his head and comment.

CADE
Sounds like an Orion. But it's
above the clouds.

BROOKE
An Orion?

CADE
Another name for the Neptune, the
plane that drops retardant. The big
one. Four props.

FRANK
Should we try to signal it?

Cade plops his head down.

CADE
Nah. He couldn't see us.

FRANK
So why is he out this early, with
clouds, a little rain, the fire
almost burned out?

CADE
My guess is the fire spread down
toward the highway last night. He's
headed that direction I think.

Frank lets out a sigh.

FRANK
Oh no. That's where we parked. -
Under a tree. About a mile from
here.

Tyler wriggles and slowly wakes up, a little dazed. He sees
Brooke next to him.

TYLER
Brooke's touching me!

FRANK

Tyler. You're in a tiny life raft
on a lake. We're all stuck here.
Remember?

Tyler looks around more. He recognizes their predicament.

TYLER

Yes, Grandpa. Can we go home now?

Cade chuckles.

CADE

Remember me? I'm the guy that fell
out of the sky, the one your angel
sister saved in the lake.

TYLER

Yeah. Broken arm. No foot.

FRANK

Tyler!

Frank lifts the tent a bit and peers out over the lake.

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAKE - DAY

The desolation, bleakness, and utter dreariness of the
landscape is war-zone-like. Smoke rises from glowing embers
that once were trees. All is black, grey, and ghostly white.

The grey-black clouds reflect in the lake. It too appears ink-
black and still.

The little life raft topped by a tent is all that seems out-
of-place, especially with four legs protruding from each
side.

One pair of legs slowly begins kicking. The splashing
ruptures the silence. The raft gradually begins to move.

INT. RAFT IN THE LAKE - DAY

Frank continues to gaze out of the tent.

FRANK

That's right, Brooke. You've got us
headed back toward the campsite. Or
what is left of it.

TYLER

But why are we going back? Isn't it all burned up? Or still on fire?

FRANK

No, Tyler. The fire's burned over. It's just smoldering a little here. The rain doused most of the remaining fire.

CADE

Yeah, and we've got to find a way out of here. My arm's killing me. Couldn't sleep most of the night.

Brooke keeps pumping.

BROOKE

How am I doing, grandpa?

FRANK

Well, it sort of looks like we're starting to go in circles.

CADE

Lemme see if I can help. With both of my legs.

Cade, his legs protruding on the same side as Brooke's, starts paddling too.

Cade groans in pain at times, but keeps helping.

EXT. MOUNTAIN LAKE - DAY

The raft now moves slowly but steadily toward shore. Brooke's strong legs pump rhythmically, while Cade's large man-legs struggle intermittently, one leg footless.

SPLASH, SPLASH, SPLASH... The strange craft slowly glides toward the shore, bumps into a clump of burned-out brush, and stops.

Paddling stops. The only sound is the PLINK, PLINK, PLINK of little raindrops that still hit the lake surface.

For a moment, the raft bobs and rocks slowly, a strange sight on a cold, mountain lake surrounded by a burned forest.

INT. RAFT IN THE LAKE - DAY

Brooke and Cade breathe hard, the only sound in the tent-raft. Tyler breaks the eerie silence.

TYLER

Now what?

They look around at each other, perplexed. All of them.

BROOKE

Well?

The voice of experience and reason speaks.

FRANK

It's too uncomfortable, and cold,
to stay in the raft.

TYLER

And I'm hungry.

FRANK

We all are. But I doubt if any of
our supplies are still available.

BROOKE

How do we get out of this boat? It
was a pain getting us all in this
thing.

CADE

But it saved our lives. You saved
our lives, Brooke.

FRANK

I hate to say this - again - but
you and Tyler will probably have to
do the most to get us back on dry
land.

TYLER

But we're kids! You're supposed to
take over and get us home.

FRANK

You're right. But with my heart
condition and Cade's broken arm
and, how do I put this?...

CADE

Footless-ness?

FRANK

Well, yeah, that. You kids will have to...

BROOKE

Not swim again?

FRANK

No, but you might get wet. Helping us outta here.

Brooke and Tyler lock eyes. They SIGH.

Tyler tries to sit up. He struggles and falls on Cade's arm, in the make-shift sling.

CADE

Ahh! Careful, please.

TYLER

Sorry. I can't. Get. Up!

He tries again.

BROOKE

Here. Take my hands. Pull.

Since they're sitting face-to-face, Brooke reaches out. Tyler takes her hands.

They both pull. Hard.

Suddenly both are sitting straight up facing each other, butts on the bottom of the raft, way too close. They release their hand-hold. Embarrassed.

TYLER

(overlapping)

Now what?

BROOKE

(overlapping)

Now what?

FRANK

Brooke, don't worry about accidentally bumping Cade's arm cuz you're next to me. So pull your feet in, put your hands behind you on the edge of the raft and lift yourself up, back, and out. I'll untie and lift up the tent first. Then you can go under it.

Frank unties some of the tent lines from the raft's loops and lifts. Cade does the same at his end. One-handed.

When the tent is free, Frank, Cade, and Tyler lift up the tent.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Okay Brook. Go!

Brooke scoots her dripping feet into the raft and under herself, on the soft floor of the life raft, puts her hands behind her and on the edge of the raft, and pushes up and out.

SPLASH! Brooke falls on her back into the lake and burnt-out bog near the shoreline, feet flailing on the raft's edge.

BROOKE
Ah! Not again!

Brooke back-strokes and kicks the raft away as she uprights herself to free her feet and wade out of the water.

Tyler muffles a laugh, and Frank and Cade drop the tent back onto the raft where it side-slips into the lake opposite Brooke's struggle.

FRANK
You okay Brooke? Brooke?

No answer. Brooke GAGS and SPUTTERS as she fights her entanglement with the raft and tent, through the burnt shrubs near the shore, in the goopy lake water.

Her feet are finally free, and she stands in about three feet of cold water.

Brooke grabs the raft/tent and pulls, trudges, and sloshes the whole assembly through the water toward the nearby shore.

She exits the water and scowls, drips, and sluffs mud from her shoes and legs.

She slips in a mud puddle and falls into charcoal-black grass. She's a mess.

She gazes back at the quiet, gently rocking raft.

BROOKE
You guys still with me?

It's quiet. Brooke tugs on the tent rope she was pulling. The tent, still partially tied to the raft, slips off the raft toward the murky lake.

A pair of hands gives the tent a shove and it tumbles over onto the blackened shoreline.

Frank looks around, then stares at Brooke.

FRANK
You did it again, Brooke.

BROOKE
(irked)
What? Like I just took another dip
in that cold, yucky lake.

Frank laughs. Just a little. Tyler looks scared, embarrassed.

TYLER
Uh, can you help us get out.
Without getting us all gross-
looking and wet - like you?

FRANK
We gotta decide what to do next.

Frank lifts himself up and rolls over the edge of the raft onto the mucky shore. Brooke tries to help, but Frank is a big guy.

Frank crawls to the burnt grass. He gets wet and very muddy.

With more room in the raft, Tyler tries to stand to jump to the shore, but the raft sways. Tyler loses his balance and SPLASHES into the lake.

BROOKE
Here, take my hand.

Tyler takes Brooke's hand, and she helps him wade to shore.

They both collapse in the ashes next to Frank.

CADE
Uh, guys?

The raft begins to float back onto the lake, with only one passenger: Cade.

Brooke gets up and catches the one rope hooked to the tent, now slowly sinking in the water.

Cade grabs the tent with his one good hand as Brooke reels him in with effort.

Frank and Tyler get up to help. All three tug the tent followed by the raft to shore. Everyone's in the muck and working hard.

FRANK

Let's keep pulling. Maybe we can get him all the way on dry land.

When they get the tent all the way out of the water, they grab the raft and start tugging it, with Cade on board, onto the charred brush. It's difficult.

CADE

Thank you guys. I thought I'd end up back in the drink again.

The raft and Cade settle on the charred shoreline.

TYLER

The drink?

CADE

Yeah. That's what pilots refer to as your basic water landing. Into the drink.

BROOKE

Okay, but...

CADE

Well, a crash landing. In water. Not quite what I did, but close.

Frank, Brooke, and Tyler drop down, exhausted, on the wet, charred ground next to the mucky raft where Cade sits. The soggy tent is crumpled beside them.

CADE (CONT'D)

I kinda plopped. Not crashed.

FRANK

I'll say. Can't say the same for your plane, though.

CADE

No. It's a goner. With Marty. Probably.

The mood changes. Everyone looks at each other, the crash site, and then at the ground.

A few small fires still burn in the nearby forest. Most trees are smoking stumps. An eerie, smoky mist hangs over the lake and mountains.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - DAY

Light, misty rain falls. The morning sun hides behind gray clouds and the smoke of the wildfires in the mountain forests in the distance.

Krista leans on her SUV, hands in her pockets, and stares at the flightline.

She sees a big plane taxiing toward the end of the runway.

Sandy leaves the terminal Ops Center and approaches Krista.

SANDY

Good morning. Again.

KRISTA

Hello. Is that Bob's plane?

SANDY

No. Bob left about fifteen minutes ago. That's Daren's crew.

Sandy hands Krista coffee in a airport logo cup.

KRISTA

Thank you. Any news? From Bob? Or the Hot Shots? Or anyone?

SANDY

No, Bob's plane had to fly above the clouds. They'll be lucky to get below that cloud bank to drop their retardant. We hope it's clearer over the ridge where the crash fire is marching. Maybe he can drop his load there. We're awaiting word about how that fire fight is going.

KRISTA

Maybe the rain put it out.

SANDY

No such luck. The fire fighters reported that it was just a light mist over there last night. That the fire had almost reached the highway. They're trying to set back fires to prevent it from crossing. But it's hard with the moisture. And good at the same time.

The propellers on Daren's plane WIND UP loudly at the end of the runway.

Sandy and Krista watch, silently.

The plane releases its brakes and starts its takeoff roll.

It lifts off and ZOOMS past Sandy and Krista. The plane rises and climbs towards the clouds.

KRISTA
(with emotion)
Just watching that gives me goose
bumps. Makes me understand why Cade
loves flying so much.

SANDY
(slightly moved too)
Yeah. Pilots are a different breed.
Special. Talented.

Krista notices that Sandy is touched as well.

KRISTA
Do you fly too?

SANDY
No. No. I married a pilot. Way
back.

KRISTA
Oh. Does he still fly?

There's a silence and a long pause.

KRISTA (CONT'D)
Sorry. I didn't mean to pry.

SANDY
That's okay. Ron went down in
Afghanistan.

KRISTA
Oh. I'm so sorry.

SANDY
Don't worry. That was years ago.
Funny thing, though. He wasn't shot
down. A sand storm chewed up his
chopper's engine.

Krista doesn't reply. Instead they both stand there and watch the plane disappear into the clouds.

Krista puts her hand on Sandy's shoulder. Sandy smiles.

SANDY (CONT'D)
But God left me with a great
reminder of my husband: my son
Ronnie.

KRISTA
You are blessed.

SANDY
He's a great kid. Doesn't fly - I
won't let him - but he just started
college and does volunteer work in
the summer. - Fighting forest
fires.

Krista registers surprise.

SANDY (CONT'D)
He got called out last night to set
back-fires along the highway for
the spreading crash fire.

KRISTA
I hope he's all right. Sounds like
you're both doing wonderful work.

The big plane's distant droning diminishes.

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

It's still overcast, gloomy. Misty and smoky.

Frank, Cade, Brooke, and Tyler rest near the raft and
crumpled tent.

The muffled PROPELLER DRONE of a multi-engine plane breaks
the silence.

Cade looks up into the clouds.

CADE
That's the second Neptune that's
passed over since we were in the
lake.

TYLER
You can tell by their sound?

CADE
Yup. I've been working along side
them for years.

FRANK

I'd guess both are headed to the crash-caused fire that seems to be moving away from us. Hopefully it can descend low enough to put some retardant on the blaze.

CADE

Weather is so unpredictable. Probably that's where they're going. I don't think the rain was enough to douse the everything.

BROOKE

You think they saw us?

CADE

(a little slurred)
I don't know. The smoke, the clouds, the fires... blanketed us pretty well. - Probably not.

Frank notices Cade's wooziness and trouble speaking.

FRANK

You okay, Cade? You seem to be fading some.

CADE

(slurred)
Don't know. I feel a little weak. Maybe my help with paddling. - But my arm still...

Cade's voice tapers off. He fades more... looks like he fainted.

FRANK

Cade? Cade?

BROOKE

What's wrong with him, Grandpa?

Frank crawls closer to Cade and feels his forehead, pinches open and looks into his eyes.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Grandpa! Did he faint?

Frank then examines Cade's arm and looks up, puzzled..

FRANK

No. Well, maybe. I think he's in shock. The broken arm. The pain.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
The loss of his friend. The
terrible night, lack of sleep, the
kick-paddling, all that moving
around.

Frank examines Cade's broken arm more closely.

FRANK (CONT'D)
This is much worse than I thought,
maybe a compound fracture. It's
swelling up badly. And it feels
very warm. We gotta get help. Find
a way to carry him outta here.

TYLER
But how?

BROOKE
You can't lift him, or pull him,
Grandpa. You've got heart problems.

TYLER
And we're too small.

FRANK
Listen. We've got to get him to a
hospital. But here's a possibility.
You guys need go back and see if I
still have a truck.

TYLER
You mean walk back there... in the
fire?

FRANK
I think the fire has mostly burned
past us, and probably toasted the
truck too. But we don't know if the
truck survived. If it did, we'll
figure a way for the three of us to
get Cade there... and for all of us
to get outta here.

Cade moves slightly, lifts his head.

BROOKE
And we, like, left our phones
there. We might be able to hike
down a little farther and get a
signal.

TYLER
If they didn't burn up.

FRANK

Of course, but it's good idea.
Here's the keys. Just in case. You
can drive, right?

BROOKE

Sure, but maybe not a truck... very
well.

Frank retrieves the keys from his pocket and tosses them to
Brooke. Tyler intercepts them.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Hey!

TYLER

I wanna do something. Can I carry
the keys?

FRANK

Sure Tyler. Now, both of you get
going. I need to stay here and see
if I can calm Cade.

CADE

(still groggy)
I'm calm.

Cade flops back into the raft.

FRANK

Perhaps I can build another litter
we can use to take Cade to the
truck, or the road, for help.

(beat)

Be careful. If the fire's still
going strong, don't take chances.
Come straight back. Got it?

BROOKE

Yeah. You gonna be okay Grandpa?
You don't have any more pills.

Frank taps his other pocket.

FRANK

Got a few right here. Grabbed 'em
from the backpack before we got in
the life raft. If I feel woozy,
I'll take one. Promise.

BROOKE

Okay. You'd better.

FRANK

The path is pretty tramped down, so be careful to stay on it. Remember: it's only about a mile and a half or two, less than forty-five minutes, all downhill.

CADE

(revived a bit)
And wear those homemade bandanas to filter the smoke. Okay?

BROOKE

Right. Got em'.

Brooke picks up the bandanas they wore on the raft. She and Tyler head out.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Don't worry grandpa. We'll watch out for each other, right Tyler?

TYLER

Of course. Unless there's a bear. Then you're on your own and I'm outta there.

Frank calls after them.

FRANK

No messing around. Stay together. We're relying on you two. Be safe!

CADE

Great kids, Frank.

Brooke and Tyler trudge into the bleak, still slightly smoking forest.

Ashes rise in ghostly clouds while soot sticks to their shoes from the rainy mist that mixes with smoke.

BROOKE

Got it Grandpa!

Frank and Cade see a trail of ashes rise from Tyler's and Brooke's footstep as they disappear over the hill.

Frank now focuses his attention on Cade.

A gray-haired old man tends a weak, disabled, semi-conscious pilot.

The two young chances of help are now gone.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - DAY

From high above the naked tree line we see the two youngsters trek by the smoldering plane wreckage on the path down to the forest road.

Now, down near the crash, Tyler tugs on Brook's arm.

TYLER
(muffled through the
bandana)
You think the copilot's body is in
there, all crisp and spooky-
lookin'?

BROOKE
(muffled as well)
What?

Tyler pulls down the bandana covering his nose and mouth.

TYLER
The copilot? He was in the burned
up plane, right?

Brooke pulls down her bandana

BROOKE
Probably. But I'm not going to
check it out. Like, it won't be
pretty.

TYLER
Yeah, but shouldn't we check? Maybe
he's still alive.

Behind them a piece of the plane SNAPS off and falls in a cloud of ash, smoke, and a small flame.

Together they turn, see, and hear the POP of a small burst in the crash site.

BROOKE
Uh, I don't think anything is alive
in that wreck. Like, let's hurry.

TYLER
Good idea.

They continue the hike down the trail as they pull bandanas up over their noses and mouths.

A cloud of ash follows their footsteps.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - DAY

An large retardant plane is on its landing approach. Smoke in the distance is visible in two different areas, but not as heavy as the day before.

INT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

BREAK ROOM

Krista paces. Out the window she sees the plane land, and she pauses.

OPS CENTER

Sandy is at her desk on the microphone.

SANDY

Roger, Nepty 2. Park in position 3 again.

The break room door bursts open. Krista enters.

KRISTA

Any news?

Sandy holds up a "wait-a-minute" hand.

BOB (O.C.)

(muffled radio voice)

Roger, control. Position 3. Out.

Sandy putts the microphone down and turns to Krista.

SANDY

Good morning. And no, not a word from anyone. Bob's back now. He may have something to report. Let's give him time to park and come in.

KRISTA

Okay. Sorry.

SANDY

I understand. Well, so far, no news is... well, no news.

KRISTA

It's so hard not knowing. One minute I have this feeling, kind of like an answer to prayer, that Cade is okay. The next, I have this fear that something is dreadfully wrong.

SANDY
God is testing you.
(beat)
Or you're just paranoid.

Sandy manages a smile and small chuckle. So does Krista.

KRISTA
Sometimes it seems like my whole
life has been a series of tests. It
doesn't seem fair.

Krista softly taps the ops desk.

SANDY
Since when did God say life would
be fair? Or easy? At church last
week the pastor said, "Remember:
Somebody's always worse off than
you."

KRISTA
I know, but this... this is so
hard.

SANDY
Then he said, "Think of Jesus. He
had it harder than all of us put
together."

KRISTA
I know. But...

Krista paces again.

SANDY
And His pains lift our pains. So
lay yours on Him. Okay?

KRISTA
You're right. My faith is so weak
right now.

Krista wipes away a tear.

SANDY
Whatever happens, you'll see Cade
again. Either here... or up there.

Sandy points toward the heavens.

KRISTA
Here would be nice.

SANDY

Yes it would. We still don't know.
And don't ignore that feeling you
have. It may be God speaking to you
through His Spirit. So keep up
those prayers. Okay?

Krista nods.

KRISTA

Oh thank you, Sandy. I will. I
sure will.

The Ops Center door opens. Bob sails in.

BOB

Hello you two.

KRISTA

Did you find Cade? And Marty?

Sandy gives Krista an impatient look.

SANDY

Welcome back Bob. Gimme a sit-rep
on the fires, please.

Sandy nods at Krista.

BOB

Hardly any flames from the big fire
poking through the overcast. Looks
like the rain helped the hotshots a
lot. And they report making great
progress.

SANDY

Nice.

BOB

But that's just a radio report. We
couldn't see much through the
clouds.

KRISTA

But what about the crash fire? The
tent on the lake? Any word from
Cade or Marty?

Sandy raises a "just-a-minute" hand at Krista.

SANDY

Go on, Bob.

BOB

When we got past the crash site and little lake, both below the clouds, we found an opening in the clouds where the fire had spread toward the highway and rising smoke didn't obscure an approach. So we flew low and dropped retardant.

SANDY

Excellent. Any report on how it helped?

BOB

Yeah. Firefighters below radioed us and thanked us. They said we helped keep the fire from crossing the highway.

KRISTA

Any word about Cade or Marty?

BOB

No. Nothing.

Krista sighs and turns away.

SANDY

Well, good job. When can you go up again?

BOB

We'll be ready in about an hour. Hope the skies clear up a little. I'd like to get one hundred percent containment. Of both fires. Today.

SANDY

Agreed. Thanks, Bob.

BOB

Oh, and Ronnie said hello. He's with that ground crew along the highway.

SANDY

Great, thanks.

Bob leaves. Sandy watches Krista close the door behind her as she returns to the Crew Lounge.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - DAY

From high above, we see Brooke and Tyler shuffle through clouds of ashes along the trail, their noses covered with bandanas like bandits. Whiffs of smoke linger from smoldering tree-trunks nearby.

Their shoes are coated in white and grey, their legs too, up to their knees. They don't talk. Occasionally one of them trips; the other reaches out and helps.

On they trek, around a bend with a slight drop-off. Then down a straight path through the grey burnt-over wasteland.

In the distance, they see the top of Frank's pickup truck. They increase their pace.

TYLER

Hey! There's Grandpa's truck!

BROOKE

Yeah, like, it doesn't look the same. At all.

Black smoke and small red flames rise from the truck's melted tires as the two youngsters approach. The truck is totally burned up.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Stay back. The gas tank probably already exploded, but who knows.

They stop a ways off and survey the sad scene.

TYLER

Grandpa will be so mad. He's had that pickup for years. He loves it.

BROOKE

Well, like, now we know driving out isn't an option.

TYLER

And our phones! We put them in the glove box. Now they're cooked too.

Brooke and Tyler just stand there, perplexed. They stare at the destroyed truck, the ugly burned-over forest, and then each other.

TYLER (CONT'D)

So now we gotta hike back and tell Grandpa that his truck is toast. That we... what? Failed.

BROOKE

No. We didn't fail. The fire won.

Brooke looks back up the trail and then down the dirt road

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Maybe there's another option.

TYLER

What? How can we do anything? No truck. No phones, no...

BROOKE

(looks Tyler straight in the face)

Listen. Grandpa said don't split up. But I, like, I have this feeling that the best choice is for me to head down that dirt road and...

TYLER

You can't do that, Grandpa will be mad. And what will I do? Not a good idea.

BROOKE

(more insistent)

You have to go back on your own. You can do it. Tell them that I'm going down the dirt road, toward the highway, for help. If I run into the fire, I'll come back. But if I can make the highway, I can flag down a car and get help.

TYLER

But I... you...

BROOKE

Don't complain. Just do it, okay?

TYLER

Well...

BROOKE

You can hike back alone. You're strong. The fire is gone. Mostly. And they need to know that I've gone for help.

TYLER

Okay. At least you don't have to swim this time.

Brooke smiles at that.

BROOKE

And I'm glad, too. So let's go.
Okay?

TYLER

Sure. Be careful. Come back if you
run into the forest fire. Please.

BROOKE

Right. No risks. Now get going.

Brooke watches Tyler tromp up the trail back toward the lake.
He turns and waves. Brooke waves too.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

Good luck! Be careful!

Tyler pulls on his bandana.

TYLER

(muffled)

I will! You too!

Brook re-fastens her bandana and heads down the dirt road.

From high above we see the two kids heading in different
directions, scuffing up clouds of ash. A slight mist mixed
with smoke lingers and hugs the mountain road and trail.

EXT. MOUNTAIN DIRT ROAD - DAY

A bandana-covered Brooke strides purposefully down the ash-
trashed dirt road. In the distance, smoke still rises from
the crash-caused fire ahead of her.

In the woods around her, trees burned raw stand at naked,
smoldering attention.

But Brooke treks on and disappears into the haze.

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

Frank sits on the collapsed tent along side the murky lake.
Cade still lies in the life raft.

Frank gives Cade a small drink of water from a piece of
cloth.

CADE

Thanks. That's nice. A little carbony. But smooth.

FRANK

Sorry. That's all I could catch from the slight drizzle.

CADE

Still, thanks. A lot.

Cade looks relaxed, reflective.

CADE (CONT'D)

My wife, Krista, thinks God is my copilot. I told her I liked Marty more. Now he's dead. And where's God?

FRANK

Personally, I think God is everywhere. Even in this mess.

Cade shakes his head.

CADE

In all these fires? My busted plane? Your heart problems? My wife's MS? I don't think so. Sometimes God's on vacation.

FRANK

Here's what I think. God puts us here with our freedom to choose whatever we want to do. However we want to behave. No matter where we live. Though some places on Earth make it harder.

CADE

Got that right.

FRANK

Anyway, I probably made a bad choice bringing Brooke and Tyler up here... when there's a big fire sorta nearby.

CADE

Maybe. But for me...

FRANK

That's right. What are the chances you'd get out of your busted plane still alive? Land in water? Have a champion swimmer close enough the rescue you?

CADE

Well...

FRANK

God didn't make your plane blow up. And he didn't start these fires. But for some reason we're here. And now you are too.

CADE

That's true. But we still don't know how this'll turn out.

FRANK

I know. But with a little more faith, and some divine help, maybe a miracle, we'll get out of here.

Their discussion is interrupted by a voice calling through the smoky mist from the path on the hill.

TYLER (O.S.)

Grandpa! Mister Cade! I'm back!

Frank and Cade perk up and strain their eyes to see... one lone boy plowing down the path, ashes flying, waving his arms.

CADE

I think it's Tyler. Hey Tyler! Over here!

FRANK

Tyler, come on! Careful! This way! Down here. Where's Brooke?

Tyler scuffles closer, out of breath, and removes his bandana.

TYLER

That took longer coming back. All up hill.

FRANK

But where's Brooke? I thought you were supposed to stay together.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)
Is she right behind you? Or hurt?
Or...

TYLER
(interrupting)
I told her to come back, but she...
well, she kept going.

FRANK
What do you mean 'kept going'? Is
she in the truck?

TYLER
No, grandpa. The truck burned up.
It's a wreck.

FRANK
Then where's Brooke?

Tyler hesitates confessing to Frank.

TYLER
Well... she said she 'had this
feeling.' That she should go down
the dirt road toward the highway to
get help.

CADE
The fire moved that way, all night.
Did you see if it was very bad down
below?

TYLER
No, it was too smoky. I just saw
her disappear in it down the road.

Frank sighs big.

FRANK
Come here Tyler. I caught some rain
water. You look tired and thirsty.

Frank gives Tyler a small drink. Tyler wrinkles his face but
chugs it anyway.

CADE
So that feeling Brooke had... God
working again?

FRANK
I think so. Brooke is a pretty
sensitive girl.
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

She may grumble about lots of things, but she's always been like Betty, my wife, close to the Spirit.

CADE

You mean God speaks to her?

FRANK

No, she just feels and senses things better than most of us. And yes, maybe that's how God speaks to her, through feelings and, well, urges to act somehow.

TYLER

She really pushed me to break your rule about splitting up, Grandpa. It was all her idea.

FRANK

I understand. Let's just hope - and pray - that she is safe and gets the help we need.

CADE

Yeah. We're pretty stranded now. It's all up to her now. May God be with her.

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

The three sit quietly. Cade and Frank bow their heads.

EXT. MOUNTAIN DIRT ROAD - DAY

From Brooke's blurry eyes we see her scan the dirt road, barely, smoke wafting by, a few fires from burning stumps of trees visible through her teary vision that bounces with each step.

We hear the CRUNCH, CRUNCH, CRUNCH of her footsteps in the ashes and rocky dirt road, and her breathing, her wheezing, WOO, HOO, WOO, HOO through the bandana that filters her difficult panting.

From above we see her march down the road, around one bend, then another. She presses onward, strongly, obviously a girl with a mission.

We see her feet accumulating ashes and a little mud from the light rain. And then... she glops, GLUP, GLUP, GLUP, in a reddish-orange goo that sticks to her shoes.

All fires are out. A little smoke floats in the air. She stops briefly, looks around, sees everything covered in the goo, then continues through the slop.

Through Brooke's eyes we see the red goo gradually end and the dirt road reappear, without much ash accumulation. She continues and sees ahead small grass fires and through the haze... the outline of a person chopping away at the dry grass and dirt. Then another person. She steps up her trek.

Through her bandana we hear a muffled...

BROOKE

Hey! Guys! Hello! Hey!

The ghostly outlines of persons ahead stop and look up.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL

OPS DESK

Sandy scans a map and talks on the radio.

BOB (O.S.)

(radio voice)

We dropped along the highway again
and will head back now.

SANDY

Roger, Nepty 3, I've marked your
discharge spot for the crash fire
on my map.

BOB (O.S.)

(radio voice)

Nepty 2 can make a pass over the
ridge fire. Sky's pretty clear now.

SANDY

Roger. Good news. Thanks. See you
soon. Sandy out.

Sandy's cell phone RINGS in her pocket. She pulls it out and looks at the caller I.D. It's her son Ronnie.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Hi, Ronnie. Out on the line workin'
hard?

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Brooke, matted hair and dirty, grungy clothes, sits on a post of a highway guardrail. She holds a bottled water and chugs most of it.

Standing next to her is RONNIE BLEDSOE, 20, scruffy faced and lean, wearing protective goggles and a reflective overcoat too big for him.

He holds a rogue hoe in one hand and his cell phone pressed to his ear in the other. His clothes are as dirty as Brooke's.

RONNIE

Yeah, Mom. I got called out last night.

(listens)

Right. I'm near the highway keeping that fire from crossing.

(listens)

And thank those air-droppers for the retardant. It save us lots of work. And thank God for the rain.

INT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OPS CENTER

SANDY

(on cell phone)

So how do I merit a call from you in the middle of a fire fight?

(listens)

What? Say that again.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

Ronnie glances at Brooke. She nods.

RONNIE

(into his phone)

That's why the boss told me to call you, Mom. There's a girl here, probably from the city. Just walked in from the trail-head road saying she needs help for her brother, grandpa, and, get this, a pilot. Mom, I know a plane went down, started this blaze, but I didn't hear about anyone surviving.

Brooke interrupts.

BROOKE
(to Ronnie)
Tell 'em he's injured. And that
grandpa has heart problems.

RONNIE
(into the phone)
And that the pilot is hurt and her
grandpa has heart problems.

Ronnie waits for Sandy to reply.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Mom? You still there?

INT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

OPS CENTER

SANDY
Hello? Ronnie? The girl says
there's a pilot? Ronnie? Ronnie?

Sandy receives a radio call from Daren:

DAREN (V.O.)
(radio voice)
Sandy, this is Nepty 2, you there?

SANDY
(to Ronnie on her cell)
If you can hear me, Ronnie, hang on
a minute? Okay? Hello?

Sandy lowers her cell phone.

SANDY (CONT'D)
(to Daren on the radio)
Roger, Nepty 2. You get through to
the main fire? Over.

DAREN (V.O.)
(radio voice)
Roger. Hotshots report nearly one
hundred percent containment. But
they've got an injured man. They've
gotta heft him out by hand. Any
choppers available? Over.

SANDY

No, Nepty 2. Still none. They're fighting the Redstone fire way up north, where you'll probably have to fly later today.

DAREN

(radio voice)

Roger, Sandy. We'll head back to reload. See ya in fifteen. Out.

Sandy ends the radio call with Daren and picks up her cell phone. The line is dead. She dials Ronnie. No response. She tries again.

SANDY

Ronnie? Hello? Ronnie?

EXT. MOUNTAIN DIRT ROAD - DAY

A Honda Pioneer 700 two-passenger utility terrain vehicle (UTV) with a small flatbed in the back motors up the dirt road. A cloud of ashes rises behind it through light smoke that wafts by from what used to be a forest.

Ronnie drives and Brooke holds onto the roll bar tightly, even though she's belted in. She is scared and apprehensive. The UTV jostles its riders up the dirt and ash-covered road.

It crosses a section of the forest completely void of fire and splatters the red-muck retardant all over the UTV and its passengers.

Then it noisily disappears around cliff canyon walls and its motor echoes in the smoky, misty stillness. Then all is hushed as the PUTT-PUTT-PUTT diminishes in the gloominess.

INT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

OPS CENTER

Mid-afternoon and all is running smoothly. Through the window a large, four-engine plane is seen as it taxis to a refilling parking spot. A ground-crew member guides it into place.

At her desk, Sandy studies maps and makes entries in a log. She scratches her head and is interrupted by Krista peeking in from the crew lounge.

KRISTA

Excuse me, Sandy. But I heard you on your phone a while ago. Some news. Maybe?

Sandy puts down her pencil.

SANDY

Well, maybe. I don't have details, and I couldn't confirm what I thought my son Ronnie told me.

KRISTA

That's okay. Anything is better than nothing. Especially when it comes from someone you love. What did Ronnie tell you?

Sandy hesitates.

SANDY

I just heard it once, kinda garbled like. Then Daren radioed me and I had to put down my cell phone...

KRISTA

(impatiently)

So what did Ronnie say?

Sandy takes Krista's hand.

SANDY

He said a young girl moseyed in from the forest road and found the fire crew working along the highway road with a story about her grandfather and brother stuck up at a lake...

KRISTA

(interrupting)

And, and?

SANDY

And an injured pilot was with them, needing help.

Krista brightens up, shocked, happy, and excited.

KRISTA

That's gotta be Cade! He's alive!

SANDY

Now don't get your hopes up.
Ronnie's line was dead when I
called back for confirmation.

KRISTA

But what else could it be?

SANDY

Maybe a misunderstanding. Maybe a
tall tale to get help. Maybe some
crazy teenagers that got stuck in
the mountains. Who knows?

KRISTA

But what if it's true? What if Cade
or maybe Marty got out? What if
some campers found them? What if...

SANDY

(interrupting)
What if... what if? Lot's of 'what
if's'.

KRISTA

Did you try calling Ronnie again?

SANDY

Yes, but still nothing.

KRISTA

Were you able to contact the fire
fighters along the highway? Don't
they have a radio?

SANDY

I left a message with their
dispatcher. But no word back yet.

KRISTA

Can you call 'em back?

SANDY

Listen, I learned long ago that in
a crisis like this, you don't keep
bugging people. They've got enough
on their hands without having to
respond to a bunch of phone calls
over and over. Okay? They'll call
when they can.

KRISTA

I understand. But if...

SANDY
Just be patient.

KRISTA
Easy to say.

Krista stops at the window that looks out over the flightline as she meanders back to the crew lounge. As the door closes. Sandy's phone rings. Krista pops back into the ops center, all hopeful.

SANDY
Yes, Chief Dawkins. Thanks for returning my call.
(listens)
Uh-huh. Really?
(listens)
That's wonderful. Thank you. Keep me posted, okay?
(listens)
Great. Bye.

Sandy ends the call and looks at Krista.

KRISTA
Well? What?

Sandy explains slowly.

SANDY
Chief Dawkins let Ronnie borrow an UTV to go up to that lake with the girl. To see what's there and offer help.

KRISTA
But is a pilot there?

SANDY
(smiling)
Yes. And his name is... Cade.

Krista falls apart emotionally. She weeps and hugs Sandy.

KRISTA
Oh, I knew it. I just knew it.
Thank you Jesus. Thank you!

Sandy returns a hug.

SANDY
But he's hurt. A broken arm, going into shock the girl's grandpa says. So he's not out of the woods.
(MORE)

SANDY (CONT'D)

(beat)

In more ways than one.

KRISTA

I know. Where are they? Can I get to the highway to meet them when they get back? Did someone call an ambulance? Oh my! So many things.

SANDY

Look. Chief Watkins called an ambulance. It'll take a while for the UTV to get up to that lake and back. You probably have time to drive over.

Krista meanwhile quickly goes back to the Crew Lounge and retrieves her purse. She exits and pulls out her keys as Sandy describes where to go.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Exit the airport, turn left and in about 10 miles turn left again on highway 32. The road might be blocked off around 30 miles later if there's still much smoke or the firefighters are still working. You'll see the base camp then. They can direct you to where the UTV will come out... if it's okay. An ambulance might also already be there by then.

Krista is half way out the door as Sandy completes her explanation.

KRISTA

Thank you, Sandy.

SANDY

Be careful. I'll pray for you! And for Cade!

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - DAY

Krista gets in her car.

INT. MALLORY SUV - DAY

Krista takes off a necklace and hangs it, a small cross, on her rear-view mirror. She starts the engine and pulls out.

She turns left as she leaves the airport.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT -DAY

Her car accelerates away from the airport into the distance.

EXT. MOUNTAIN DIRT ROAD - DAY

The UTV rumbles up the dirt road and leaves an ash cloud in its wake. The ENGINE NOISE echoes off canyon walls.

It slows at the site of Frank's destroyed pickup. It stops nearby. And idles.

RONNIE
(loudly)
My gosh! Is that your grandpa's truck?

BROOKE
Yup. Like, pretty sad, huh?

RONNIE
Really! Now what? I don't see any trail from here.

BROOKE
That way.

Brooke points to an opening in the forest, at least what used to be a forest.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
See where we left a trail in the ashes?

RONNIE
Oh, yeah. I see it. But it's not much of an UTV trail.

BROOKE
You mean...

RONNIE
No. We can make it. This baby is a workhorse. Hang on.

Ronnie revs the engine, puts the UTV in gear, and points it up the path.

Brooke grabs the roll bar with one hand and her seat with the other.

The UTV rocks and bounces NOISILY up the trail. Clouds of ash rise and hide the UTV as it rumbles and disappears into the devastation.

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

A ghostly mist, a combination of smoke, fog, and light drizzle, hangs over the lake. Near the shoreline the two-man raft rests next to a crumpled tent.

Frank now sits in the raft with Cade and supports him in his arms. Tyler kneels nearby and holds a swath of cloth that catches a little rain. Occasionally he laps it up like a dog.

Cade sleeps. Frank whispers to Tyler.

FRANK
(quietly)
Hey Tyler.

Frank gives Tyler the shush finger to his lips.

TYLER
(whispers)
Yeah, Grandpa. How's Cade doing?

FRANK
He's sleeping.
(beat)
You have any of that water you can share with me?

TYLER
Yeah. Just a minute. I need to collect a little more.

Tyler widens the cloth between his arms to collect more rainfall. He stretches it out. A few drops of rain fall. A small puddle begins to form.

Cade stirs. He groans as he bumps his arm into the raft rubber wall. Frank puts his arm around him and restrains him.

FRANK
Whoa there, Cade. Hold still.

CADE
Oh man. I hurt so bad. Ahh.

Cade relaxes but grimaces in pain. Frank cradles him in his arms.

Nearby Tyler holds out the fabric to catch more rain.

TYLER
Want a little drink Mister Cade?

Cade lifts his head and smiles. Just a little.

CADE
Sure kid. Why not.

Tyler scoots over and pours some rain water into Cade's mouth from his fabric catch-all.

CADE (CONT'D)
Thanks, Tyler.
(beat)
What's that?

FRANK
What?

CADE
Another plane?

FRANK
I hear it too.

TYLER
Me too.

CADE
Not a plane. A motor... like a
motorcycle. Or ATV.

They're all alert now. They look every direction. What's that sound? Where's it coming from? It echoes around the lake valley.

TYLER
Look! Over there!

Tyler points toward the trail and the plane crash.

TYLER (CONT'D)
It's an ATV. With Brooke!

Ronnie carefully maneuvers the UTV toward the lake's edge and Frank, Cade, and Tyler. Through the ashes. Past the burned up camp site. Right to the stranded group. He shuts down the motor.

RONNIE
Anyone need a ride?

They all smile.

FRANK

Brooke. You did it again! Thank you.

BROOKE

Sorry I disobeyed, Grandpa. But... well, I just had this feeling.

FRANK

That's okay. You found...

RONNIE

I'm Ronnie. Ronnie Bledsoe. Volunteer firefighter.

CADE

You're not?... Sandy's son, are you?

RONNIE

Yes, sir. In the flesh.
(pointing at Cade)
And you must be...

CADE

Cade Mallory. Pilot of that wreck you passed over there.

Cade indicates with his good arm the crash site.

CADE (CONT'D)

Saved from drowning by that angel over there, Brooke.

Cade points at Brooke. She blushes through smeared black ashes and mud all over her face.

BROOKE

And that's my grandpa, Frank Carlton.

Frank nods. Ronnie nods back.

BROOKE (CONT'D)

And my brother Tyler.

Brooke points to Tyler, who still tries to catch rain in the fabric.

TYLER

Are you going to take us all out?
On that?

Tyler points to the UTV with his nose.

RONNIE

Well, that's the plan. But I don't think we'll all fit at once.

FRANK

Cade needs to get out first. And quickly. He's pretty bad off.

They all nod. And then look at each other.

BROOKE

And if he can fit, Grandpa needs to get back soon too.

FRANK

Now wait a minute...

TYLER

It's true, Grandpa. You can't hike back. Not with your heart troubles.

BROOKE

He's right, Grandpa.

RONNIE

While you're debating who goes back first, we're losing daylight, and we need to get Mister Mallory in the UTV. He's gotta get help. And an ambulance is on the way to the highway trail-head road.

FRANK

Good idea. Come and help me.

Ronnie helps Frank get up, and then they both work on getting Cade up from the raft and hopping over and onto the passenger seat of the UTV. Brooke steps in to help too.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Careful. Besides the broken arm, Cade's... well...

CADE

Footless. You can say it.

FRANK

Okay. Footless.

(beat)

Tyler, can you please help me? I feel a little woozy.

TYLER

Sure Grandpa.

Tyler drops his water-catching fabric and gives Frank a hand.

Everyone struggles to move Cade into the UTV. Step-by-step, hop-by-hop, they gradually get him leaning on the side of the UTV.

CADE

Ahh! Careful. Oh, that hurts.
Better.

(beat)

Thanks. Almost there.

Carefully, they maneuver Cade into the passenger seat and lift his footless leg into the UTV. They fasten his seat belt.

RONNIE

Now, I can probably carry one
person in the back...

BROOKE

Grandpa. You go.

Tyler is disappointed.

TYLER

But...

FRANK

No, you guys need to get out of
here. This is all my fault. I'm so
sorry. But I cant...

BROOKE

Just climb up there and sit down
Grandpa! Now do it. Tyler and I can
start walking until Ronnie can get
you both safe and return for us.

FRANK

But...

BROOKE

No buts. Just do it. Like, now.

RONNIE

Listen to the angel-lady Mister
Carlton. Get on.

FRANK

Okay, But...

BROOKE

No buts. We're fine.

She looks at Tyler. He looks not so sure.

Frank climbs up. He too is a little unsteady. Ronnie helps him. Frank sits backwards and hangs his feet off the end.

RONNIE

I'll have to go a lot slower so you don't fall off, but I'm pretty sure we can make it just fine.

FRANK

There's still room up here for one more.

RONNIE

That may weigh us down, but...

FRANK

Tyler, you're the lightest. Climb up.

TYLER

Are you sure?

RONNIE

Yeah, Tyler. Get up there.

BROOKE

Go for it Tyler. It's fine.

Tyler climbs up and sits next to Frank. Now they both sit side-by-side and face backwards.

Frank puts his arm around Tyler and holds on to the edge of the platform.

FRANK

Now hold on Tyler.

Frank looks at Brooke.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Thank you, Brooke. You've saved us again.

Ronnie mounts the driver's seat and starts the engine. The motor REVS loudly. Ronnie turns on the UTV light, puts it in gear, and turns to Brooke who stands alone by the lake next to the life raft and tent.

RONNIE

(yelling)

I'll be back for you! Promise!

BROOKE
(yelling)
Okay! I'll start walking! Be safe!

The UTV slowly starts toward the hill. Frank and Tyler hang on tightly.

Crawling up the trail, the UTV leaves a small cloud of ash lingering in the air as Frank and Tyler rock back and forth, and balance themselves in the back of the UTV.

Then the UTV PUTTS over the hill, and Brooke watches it go out of sight. Its motor-RUMBLE diminishes gradually.

Brooke stands alone by the lake. The ECHO of the UTV motor bounces around the valley, then fades.

She looks around. It's quiet, still. She sees the reflection of the sky in the lake. The clouds part, and a little early evening sunshine pokes through. It sparkles in the lake; a sunset forms.

She sees the parachute that still floats out on the lake. She looks up at the mountain ridge across the lake, almost all of the smoke now gone. Mountain, clouds, lake.

From high above, we look down and see the late afternoon sun stretch Brooke's long shadow across the wasted campsite, and then up the hill as she marches off.

Soon her shadow paints the plane wreckage and reaches down the trail.

We see her vanish through clouds of mist, lingering smoke, and puffy ashes, as she treks toward the trail-head and highway. Alone.

INT. MALLORY SUV - DAY

Through the windshield a stop sign, a crossroad appears. The SUV stops.

The small cross on a gold chain swings back and forth from the rear view mirror.

Krista breathes hard and mumbles to herself.

KRISTA
(whispers)
Turn left onto highway 32.

She sees a sign but it's blurry.

She refocuses, and through her eyes the sign seems to sway and wobble. Finally her vision sharpens and she realizes that it is highway 32.

KRISTA (CONT'D)
(whispers, louder)
Turn left. Turn left.

She cranks the wheel left and as she makes the turn, she runs off the road, her right front tire in the gravel shoulder. She pulls over and stops. She rubs her arms.

KRISTA (CONT'D)
Not now. Not now.

Krista grabs her purse, opens it, and retrieves a small bottle of pills. She opens it, taps out two pills, and tosses them in her mouth. She picks up a water bottle from the dash holder and swigs a few swallows. Then she rests, her head on the steering wheel.

KRISTA (CONT'D)
Dear God, please give me strength
to get to Cade. Thank you for
watching over him. Please bring him
back to me safely. And me to him
safely too.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The Mallory SUV rests by the highway intersection. The sun begins to set.

The shadow of the SUV stretches down the highway. SUV lights come on and it slowly creeps back onto the highway.

EXT. MOUNTAIN DIRT ROAD - DAY

The UTV, lights on, leaves the mountain trail and comes to rest by Frank's burned out truck. It's twilight now, the dirt road and Frank's truck barely visible in the UTV headlights.

RONNIE
Wow! That was hairy! Everybody
okay... and still there.

CADE
I'm here. Not sure if I'm okay
though.

RONNIE
That your truck Mister Carlton?

FRANK
(from the back)
It used to be. Looks like scrap
metal now. I loved that beast.

RONNIE
Not much left now.

FRANK
Nope. And son, good driving. My
buns hurt, but I'm still here too.

RONNIE
How 'bout you, Tyler.

No response.

FRANK
Tyler? You okay?

TYLER
Yeah. Are we there yet?

A few chuckles.

RONNIE
Not quite. Still a little ways to
go, but the road is wider,
straighter, and... well, still
bumpy.
(beat)
But I'll get us there. Just hang on
a little more. Okay?

CADE
Okay. But please hurry. If you can.
I don't feel so good.

RONNIE
Just stay with us.

The UTV headlights point down the dirt road, its engine WINDS
up, a gear CLICKS in place, and it moves out. Everyone
bounces around. They all grab hold tightly.

The UTV lights paint the bleak forest and bounce down the
dirt road.

It rumbles and disappears into the canyon.

EXT. COUNTY AIRPORT - NIGHT

A large four-motor plane takes off. The ramp is empty except for a few private planes.

INT. COUNTY AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

OPS CENTER

Sandy straightens out maps, reports, and office materials. Cade's crew chief, BRAD, 61, weathered but lean and strong, sits nearby. He reads an aviation magazine.

SANDY

Look Brad, I'm going to close up for the night. Everything's gone up north now that we've got one hundred percent containment here.

BRAD

(getting up)

Got it. I should go too. Any more news about Cade?

SANDY

Nope. Fire fighters on highway 32 report that an ambulance is waiting and that Ronnie should be there soon. With Cade.

BRAD

That's good. But no Marty.

SANDY

That's bad. But maybe you can go to the hospital and meet Cade there.

BRAD

Good idea. What about Misses Mallory?

SANDY

I think she headed out to highway 32 to meet Ronnie and Cade. Probably there now.

BRAD

Okay. I'll head to the hospital. Not much I can do here. Ain't got no plane to service any more.

(sarcastic chuckle)

Thanks for all your help, Sandy.

SANDY
Any time. You come back, ya hear.
Plenty of work for you.

Brad opens the door.

BRAD
Got it.

SANDY
And give my best to Cade. And
Krista.

BRAD
(as he leaves)
Will do. Night.

The door closes.

Sandy turns off the desk light, grabs small backpack, goes to the door.

She flicks off the main light and closes the door.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - NIGHT

It's dark. Every now and then the moon peeks through the clouds.

We look down from high above and can barely see Brooke trekking through the burned out woods. A few spots of flame from residual fires mark hidden haunts.

Through Brooke's eyes we see darkness, and an occasional small fire and tall moon-lit stands of naked tree-trunks. March-march-march she goes, the UTV tracks marking her way. CRUNCH-CRUNCH-CRUNCH go the ashes beneath her feet.

From above we watch Brooke hike along the UTV tracks. The shadows of the clouds move across the landscape revealing the path. One minute we see her on the UTV tracks path; the next she wanders off into the forest.

She's lost. She stops, looks around. Her own tracks and the UTV tracks are far apart. But she can't see the way to go.

Brooke turns around and follows her own tracks back.

Through her eyes we see her moving forward. Step-by-step she carefully retreats, marching into her own steps.

BROOKE
(whispered)
Dear god, please guide me.

Again, through her eyes, we see her follow her footprints and hear her BREATHING as she treks back to the trail left by the UTV.

From above we see her stumble, fall, and choke in the ashes. She gets up, brushes herself off, and looks around for her foot prints.

She finds them in a shadow from a ray of moonlight. Off she goes again until finally she sees where she left the UTV trail.

Brooke resumes her walk down the path, more carefully, more observantly.

She starts to hum a favorite hymn. Then the lyrics of the chorus come to her and she sings softly in rhythm to her steps.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
"I need thee, O I need thee, every
hour I need thee. O bless me now my
Savior, I come to thee."

She sings the chorus again. Then she remembers only one verse.

BROOKE (CONT'D)
"I need thee, O I need thee, every
hour I need thee. O bless me now my
Savior, I come to thee."
"I need the every hour, in joy or
pain, come quickly and abide, or
life is vain."
"I need thee, O I need thee, every
hour I need thee. O bless me now my
Savior, I come to thee."

The SCRUNCH, SCRUNCH, SCRUNCH of her shoes clapping on the ashes and gravel path keep rhythm with Brooke's tune.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Krista leans against her SUV parked along the highway near the turnoff to the trail-head. An ambulance, its red lights flashing, is backed up and stopped a few feet into the dirt road. Two medical technicians stand nearby talking quietly.

Krista holds her water bottle. Every now and then she paces away and then back to the SUV. She takes a swig.

Off in the distant woods we hear the CHOP, CHOP, CHOP, and SCRAPE, SCRAPE, SCRAPE of fire fighters putting out small blazes and knocking down the vestige of the fire and forest.

We hear what sounds like a outboard motor far away. Then it changes pitch, like a motorcycle. Gradually it's louder.

Krista perks up. She races to the ambulance and joins the med-techs who form at the back of the ambulance. They balance a gurney between them on the rough ground.

MED-TECH 1

I see it! Its lights, that way.

She points up the dirt road. Dancing lights and a loud WHIR in the bleak forest announce the arrival of an UTV.

KRISTA

(out loud)

Come on! Be him! Be Cade!

In front of them, a narrow set of bright lights emerges from the distance and approaches them, gradually slowing down.

It's Ronnie and his passengers.

The UTV stops in a cloud of ash and a splatter of mud.

The two med-techs wheel the bouncy gurney over to the UTV. Krista follows.

RONNIE

The guy up front is in bad shape.
He needs you the most. Broken arm.
Missing his prosthetic foot.
Probably in shock.

Cade is slumped over, his face hidden. The med-techs go to work. They unbuckle him, lift him up, and begin to carefully extract him from the UTV. Cade fights to hold on to the UTV roll bar.

MED-TECH 2

That's okay mister. We've got you.
Let go now.

Suddenly Krista sees that it's Cade.

Frank and Tyler get off the back of the UTV and watch the med-techs at work. Frank supports himself on Tyler.

KRISTA
His name is Cade. He's my husband.

MED-TECH 1
You're gonna be okay, Cade. We'll
take you to the hospital.

Cade releases his grip and relaxes.

MED-TECH 2
That's better.

They continue to move Cade from the UTV seat to the gurney.

CADE
Did I hear Krista?

KRISTA
Yes, dear. I'm here.
(beat)
Where's Marty?

CADE
Didn't make it. Pushed me out. Went
down...

The med-techs lower Cade onto the gurney.

CADE (CONT'D)
Ahh! My arm!

MED-TECH 1
Sorry. We'll work on that in a
minute.

Med-Tech 1 straps Cade down and inserts a needle in Cade's
good arm. Med-tech 2 looks over at Frank.

MED-TECH 1 (CONT'D)
This is for the pain, Mister
Mallory.
(to Frank)
You okay?

No answer.

MED-TECH 2
Sir? You need help too?

TYLER
He's my grandpa, Frank Carlton. Has
a bad heart. Uses glycerin pills.

The med-techs roll Cade toward the ambulance.

MED-TECH 2

He needs to come with us too, then.
Help him over this way, can you,
kid?

TYLER

Sure. Let's go Grandpa.

Tyler helps Frank walk to the back of the ambulance. Krista follows.

FRANK

Look, I'll be okay. I need to wait
for Brooke.

MED-TECH 1

No, you've been through a lot. Come
with us, please.

TYLER

Yeah, Grandpa. You need to be
checked out too. Ronnie will get
Brooke.

RONNIE

I'll get her, sir. You go with
them.

FRANK

Well, okay.
(to Med-Tech 1)
Can Tyler come with us.

KRISTA

Me too. I need to be with Cade.

Everyone wants on board.

MED-TECH 3

(sits in the drivers seat)
We can fit them all in.
(beat)
Come on lady. You're up front with
me. You other guys cram in the
back.

Ronnie watches the whole group board the ambulance. Krista hesitates and runs to Ronnie.

KRISTA

I don't know how to thank you.
But...

Krista hugs Ronnie.

RONNIE

No need. It's that guy's
granddaughter that deserves your
thanks. She hiked down to get me.

KRISTA

But, where is she?

RONNIE

She's walking out. I've gotta go
get her. No room on the UTV.

Krista's jaw drops. She stops the hug.

KRISTA

She's Cade's angel. An answer to...

RONNIE

I don't know about that, but I've
gotta go get her.

KRISTA

Yes, please. Hurry.

(beat)

Oh, and can you have someone take
my car to the airport, or hospital,
or town, or...

Krista hands her keys to Ronnie as she turns and darts to the
running ambulance passenger's side and gets in.

Ronnie stands there with keys in his hand. A small cross
hangs on the key chain.

Krista closes the ambulance door and waves to him.

RONNIE

(waves)

Uh, sure. Good luck!

The ambulance enters the highway, emergency lights still on,
but now the siren whines loudly.

Ronnie mounts the UTV, starts it up, and BLASTS away toward
the mountain road. One more time.

The siren gradually fades, and the UTV motor NOISE diminishes
and ECHOES up the canyon as the UTV gets farther away.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - NIGHT

From high above we watch Brooke trek down the trail in the
center of the UTV tracks.

Every now and then a beam of moonlight reveals her position and penetrates the clouds to light the way and show her that she heads back correctly.

At ground-level we hear her still humming, something different now, more of a marching tune. "Onward Christian Soldiers"? We hear Brooke's feet crunch the ashes and gravel, and we hear her hum through her panting.

The trail suddenly ends at a gravel road. She stops and looks around. It's familiar.

The moon casts a shadow of Frank's burned up truck. Brooke shows relief. She's made it to the dirt road.

Still, small fires burn, the remnants of the big forest fire.

Brooke spots the UTV's tracks meandering down the road in the moonlight, and she continues her march. Ahead toward a light.

It's an intermittent light. She sees it. Then she doesn't. She hurries her pace.

The light disappears. Then there it is. Brooke stops. She stares ahead. The light moves. Then it's gone.

Now she also hears the faint WHINE of an engine. Then sees the light again. The engine NOISE gets louder.

From Ronnie's eyes we see the ashy dirt road, UTV tracks, and headlights pointing and dancing ahead.

We hear the UTV MOTOR, loud, whining. Ronnie's ride is bumpy as he steers the UTV up the dirt road.

Ronnie rounds a corner and ahead the UTV lights reveal Brooke standing in the middle of the UTV tracks, her hand covering her eyes from the brightness.

Ronnie slows, and the UTV engine noise drops to an idle. He stops a few feet in front of Brooke.

RONNIE

You look lost. Can I give you a ride somewhere?

BROOKE

I'm not lost. Like, I know where I am. But I don't want to be here any more.

(beat)

And sure, I would appreciate a ride. Anywhere but here is fine.

RONNIE
No problem. Hop in.

Brooke climbs in beside Ronnie.

He leans over in front of her and reaches around her.

RONNIE (CONT'D)
Sorry. Trying to retrieve the seat
belt.

They're close.

BROOKE
Oh. Okay. Thank you.

Ronnie latches the seat belt and leans back.

RONNIE
Tight enough?

BROOKE
Uh, sure.

RONNIE
Well, hang on anyway.
(REVS the engine)
This isn't a very smooth road.

Ronnie CLICKS the UTV into gear, turns around, and drives
into the night on the dirt road.

From high above we see the lights of the UTV dance down the
canyon, a few fires glitter on each side of the road, the
moon occasionally betrays the massive destruction that
occurred the day before.

The UTV motor gradually dissolves into the ashes and the
moonlit night.

Then it's quiet. Almost peaceful.

EXT. BIG CITY AIRPORT - DAY

The bright blue sky erupts with JET ENGINE NOISE and a large
passenger jet passes overhead and lands on a long runway.

The airport tower and terminal are in view.

INT. BIG CITY AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Frank, Brooke, and Tyler stand near the carousels in the baggage area, peering through the return-flight crowds that mostly race-walk down a long hallway past a security guard.

Brooke is not on a cell phone, and Tyler doesn't play games on his phone either. They stand next to Frank, close. They all smile.

TYLER

Grandpa?

FRANK

Yes, Tyler.

TYLER

Can I come over to your house and camp out in your back yard... with you?

Frank laughs a little.

FRANK

Sure Tyler. Let's do it soon. Okay?

TYLER

Grandpa?

FRANK

Yes, Tyler.

TYLER

Does your yard have ants?

Brooke laughs now with Frank.

FRANK

No, I spray for bugs. Hardly any ants ever.

TYLER

Oh Good.

Brooke tugs on one of Frank's long-sleeves.

BROOKE

When will mom get here? Isn't she coming from the Spa Retreat straight to the airport?

FRANK

Yes, she should get here any minute. Probably bad traffic.

Tyler points down the hallway past the security guard.

TYLER
There's dad!

Blake carries a small bag over his shoulder. He spots Frank and his kids. He waves. He's alone. They wave back.

When Blake is past security, Brooke and Tyler race to him. They hug him tightly. They all reach Frank, who extends his hand.

FRANK
Welcome back, son.

Their short handshake turns into a hug.

BLAKE
Well... glad to be back.

TYLER
Hey, where's Sophie?

BLAKE
Well...

Blake and Frank lock eyes. Frank tilts his head and gives Blake a "what-are-you-gonna-say" look.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
Sophie doesn't work for me any more.

BROOKE
What happened?

BLAKE
Well... she wanted more...

FRANK
(interrupting)
Money?

BLAKE
Uh, dad's right. I can't afford...
(beat)
Anyway, she flew back a couple of days ago. She'll find a good job somewhere.

From a nearby exit a loud voice saves Blake.

ELLEN
Blake, honey! Brooke, Tyler! Dad!

Everyone waves at Ellen who is dressed casually and looks happy.

She dodges travelers and scurries to the family group.

She grabs Blake first and gives him a hug and big kiss.

Brooke and Tyler giggle. Frank looks away.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
Oh honey, I missed you so much.
(beat)
And you too, kids.

Ellen hugs Brooke and Tyler. And then she hugs Frank.

ELLEN (CONT'D)
And Frank. Thank you for taking the
kids. Did they give you a bad time?

Frank, Brooke, and Tyler look at each other, slyly, at a loss of what to say.

FRANK
No, they were angels.

BLAKE
Our kids? Angels? Camping?
(beat)
Oh, there's my suitcase.

Blake lifts his bag off the carousel and pulls out the handle to tote it.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
Maybe you can do this again
sometime. What do you say Dad?
Kids?

A collective intake of breath.

FRANK
Uh, we'll see.

BROOKE
Like, maybe. Huh, grandpa.

TYLER
Let's just practice in your back
yard. Okay Grandpa?

FRANK
Good idea.

They all turn toward the terminal exit, Brooke and Tyler with Blake and Ellen. Frank on his own.

BLAKE
Thanks again, Dad.

As they exit the terminal, we hear...

ELLEN
(to Brooke and Tyler)
Tell us about your 'adventure in the woods' kids. I'm dying to hear about it.

Brooke turns to Frank.

BROOKE
Grandpa? Will you...

FRANK
Oh no, Brooke. You can tell 'em what happened better than I can.
(beat)
Tell 'em about our adventure...
(beat)
Our trial... by fire and water.

Frank winks at Brooke and heads off in a different direction.

Blake looks confused. Ellen too. They shrug and head toward the parking lot.

The terminal exit doors slide shut. Airport travelers scurry away. Everyone anxious to depart. Everyone is in a hurry.

FADE OUT.

THE END