

THE LINE

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**TEASER**

FADE IN:

INT. BRANDON'S TENT - MORNING

Dust shimmers heavily through a shaft of sunlight from the entrance. Along one wall of the tent metal containers lie, bearing names and designations: food, medical, etc.

BRANDON MILLS (35), a fit and handsome man wearing olive military fatigues, lies still, face pallid. He has a metal wristband, akin to a handcuff.

It beeps on, mimicking a heartbeat. Brandon's eyes open and he looks around wildly, disoriented.

BRANDON

Where the hell is this? Why am I-

He feels the manacle around his wrist, discomfoted, and moves his legs over the bed while rubbing his temples.

He spots the cylinders and wipes a hand over a dusty nameplate. Doing so, he notices a temporary tattoo on his hand, reading: "DON'T CROSS THE LINE".

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Don't cross the line?

He stumbles outside.

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - MORNING

Brandon emerges into a circular camp; simple, spartan living.

BRANDON

Hello? Anyone? Hey!

Nobody answers. He rushes into a nearby tent.

INT. JEREMY'S TENT - DAY

Brandon finds JEREMY DOVER (27), a sallow-cheeked corpse of a human, lying still and blue. Brandon shakes the man, talking to the unmoving face with desperation.

BRANDON

Wake up, buddy! C'mon, c'mon...

He stops. The man won't move.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
He's dead? Was I dead? A-am I...

Brandon turns and rushes out. Seconds later, Jeremy's own wristband (smaller variant) beeps, lights flashing on..

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

Brandon whirls; the camp is still empty. He rushes through the circle, beyond.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Strange, grassy plants crunch under Brandon's feet as he walks toward a huge, open expanse of desert.

He glances back: his circle of tents makes the last link in a huge chain of circles hugging a long cliffside. Each camp appears similar: about twenty tents around a larger one.

Brandon stops before a BLACK, ASPHALT LINE in the sand. To his left it curls around to meet the cliffside. To his right, it runs parallel with the camps.

He hears movement.

A SCRAGGLY MAN sneaks out of the neighboring camp and rushes toward the desert. Brandon thinks too slowly:

BRANDON  
Don't cross the line...HEY, WAIT!

The man crosses the line and a GUNSHOT blares out; the man's head disappears. No warning or ceremony. Brandon stares open-mouthed and falls to his knees in horror.

Voices rise. Tents fly open. Emerging people back away from each other in terror, lurch away looking for escape. Many spot the imposing cliff and turn to the open desert.

Brandon stands back up, now facing an oncoming horde.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
STOP, DON'T CROSS THE LINE! DON'T-!

**END TEASER**

ACT 1

EXT. DESERT - DAY

BOOM! BOOM! Gunshots ring out: it's a full-blown shitshow and bodies fall left and right. Anybody who crosses the black line takes a bullet instantly. People push and fight with each other for the right to get shot first.

Brandon stands as a snag in the current, screaming:

BRANDON  
STOP! YOU'LL DIE! DON'T LEAVE -

RAHUL SURESH (45), an Indian man with imposing eyebrows, slams into Brandon and they fall. Rahul looks at Brandon, eyes wide, and begins crawling away.

Brandon snatches his heel. They struggle at the line! Rahul nearly makes it. Another person crosses and dies.

RAHUL  
What the-!

BRANDON  
They're shooting from the cliffs,  
we have to get everyone back!

RAHUL  
I-I am a doctor! I can help the  
wounded, if there are any-

They spot ANASTASIA MCLELLAN (27), crawling her way feverishly back toward the line with a bleeding hole in her arm. Together, they rush over and grab her outstretched hand.

SARAH (O.S.)  
Oh god - let me help!

Brandon turns to SARAH OLSON (34), a level-headed blonde, who ducks down, moving carefully. She comes up to them.

SARAH (CONT'D)  
What the hell is happening?!

BRANDON  
They're shooting from the cliffs,  
we need to get everyone back and  
stop people from running across!

Brandon turns to the oncoming people; already, they're thinning out. Most stay back, some still panic.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
WAIT, LISTEN-!

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

Jeremy Dover, the corpse man, stands at the door of his tent and notices a WOMAN emerging nearby in alarm. She looks at him, a pillar of calm in the storm.

WOMAN  
Wh-what's going on?!

JEREMY  
Look like everyone ran that way.

He points her off with a bored look and watches her run.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Brandon, Sarah, and Rahul barely notice the final woman before she runs across the line.

BRANDON  
No, wait-!

BOOM!

The final gunshot goes off as the body falls to the ground. Brandon closes his eyes, then helps Rahul lift Anastasia back toward the tents. Sarah joins them.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
In here, in here!

INT. BRANDON'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Inside, RODNEY SHEETS (19), long greasy hair, goes through the medical bin. Other cylinders lie open and numerous items bulge from Rodney's pockets.

SARAH  
Hey, get out of there!

Brandon takes the medical cylinder from his hands. Rodney unashamedly lingers as Rahul removes Anastasia's sleeve. Brandon squares up to Rodney.

BRANDON  
Hey, punk, I know everything that was in those cylinders, alright?  
(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

It all better be there when I get back.

RODNEY

Whatever, man-

Rodney spots the blood gushing from Anastasia's arm and suddenly gets queasy. He exits with a cough.

RODNEY (CONT'D)

Oh god.

Brandon turns to Rahul and Sarah. Shakes his head.

SARAH

The shooters have stopped. Is there anyone else we should bring in?

BRANDON

Nobody that I could find.

Anastasia looks over, eyelids sweaty, feverish in pain.

ANASTASIA

I'm the only one who made it? I-I just tripped, my foot hit the line. I'm so sorry, I must've just been lucky, or, or maybe-

RAHUL

Hey, it is not your fault. I know where that line of thinking goes and you have to cut it off there. We're going to get this patched up, that's all there is to it. You're safe and that's good, alright?

ANASTASIA

Yeah...yeah. Okay. You're right.

BRANDON

Do you have this?

RAHUL

Yes, you two may go. Thanks.  
(to Anastasia)  
Tell me, what is your name?

ANASTASIA

It's Anastasia.

RAHUL

Ah, what a lovely name. I'm Rahul.  
Now, there's going to be some pain  
in a moment, bite down on this.

He gives her a roll of clean sleeve fabric, and she obeys,  
taking quick breaths. Brandon and Sarah step out.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

They emerge as Anastasia emits a bloodcurdling scream. Both  
move a faster, glad to be away from the sight of surgery. A  
large group of people stands under the cliffs ahead.

SARAH

Hey, my name's Sarah. It's a good  
thing you did back there. Rahul was  
right, you know? We couldn't have  
done anything more.

BRANDON

Of course. I know that, I just...  
yeah. It's good to meet you, Sarah.  
My name's-

MEI ZHOU (42), an Asian woman with a tense appearance, keeps  
everyone toward the cliffs. She spots Brandon and Sarah.

MEI

What is going on in there?! What's  
all the screaming for?

BRANDON

There was one survivor, she had a  
bullet in her arm. Our doctor,  
Rahul, he's working on it.

OBADIAH CLARKSON (30), a handsome ginger who appears cool as  
a cucumber, steps over and joins them.

OBADIAH

Look on the bright side; sounds  
like the fire's stopped. There's  
that to be thankful for at least,  
isn't there?

They look up toward the top of the cliff, but can't spot  
anything other than hanging plants and a few bushes near the  
top. It's unnerving, eerie...

MEI

I still can't wrap my head around the idea that someone would just shoot unarmed people-

SARAH

Look at that!

Everyone ducks, scanning the cliffs for another gun.

BRANDON

Where? A shooter?

SARAH

No, over there! The desert!

She points away from the cliffs. A plume of dust rises - an approaching vehicle.

OBADIAH

This day just doesn't let up!

Brandon turns and beckons them into a quick huddle, whispering fast and quiet.

BRANDON

Alright. Worst-case scenario? Those are friends of the gunmen. We need everyone in the camp hidden and ready to fight if it comes to it, but we can't let everyone know and cause more panic. This may be our one chance.

MEI

Do we actually have something for weapons?

BRANDON

Not really, no. There are metal storage containers in my tent, I don't see anything else you could use in a fight.

SARAH

Hey, I'm going to sneak up to the front and get a better look, alright?

BRANDON

That's not a bad idea at all, I'll come with. Can you two take care of the rest?

(MORE)



BRANDON (CONT'D)

You may want to bring the containers out of my tent yourselves, keep everyone away from the, ah, operation...

OBADIAH

Count on it. Name's Obadiah Clarkson. Terrible circumstances, but good to meet you.

MEI

And I'm Mei, Mei Zhou. We'll keep everyone away from the surgery, much as possible.

SARAH

Thanks. I'm Sarah Olson.

BRANDON

And I'm Brandon. Brandon Mills.

Break! Sarah leads the duo until JACKSON WALLSWORTH (42), a muscly man of action, approaches them.

JACKSON

Hey, hey! I'm coming too.

BRANDON

Okay. Did you hear what we're doing?

JACKSON

Not a bit, but as long as someone's doing something, I want to be part of it.

Brandon and Sarah make eye contact, and he shrugs.

BRANDON

Fine. Just keep your head down, and stay quiet, okay? We don't want to let them know we're awake.

JACKSON

Who? Of course. My name's Jackson, by the way, anyone cared to know.

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

The trio sneaks through the tents to the farthest edge. Anastasia's cries have subsided to moans.

INT. TENT - DAY

Brandon, Sarah, and Jackson peer out, shifting for space.

A military vehicle approaches silently on an electric motor, sliding through the sands with two gun-wielding soldiers hanging onto the sides. Jackson shifts.

JACKSON

Of course. They're back for more.

BRANDON

We don't know what they're here for yet, let's ease up for a sec.

JACKSON

It's time to move.

He grabs the cot inside and begins pulling one metal leg, trying to rip the bar off. He can't.

BRANDON

Stop! That's too loud!

JACKSON

Shut - up!

Brandon looks back: the car turns like a boat broadsiding.

BRANDON

They're here...

EXT. DESERT - DAY

DANIELLE (21), an ever-happy, pretentious kid, steps from the vehicle in a fitted, cutting-edge power suit. She has a pearl-handled pistol on each hip of her utility belt.

She steps onto a body, lifting her arms as if hopping a log.

DANIELLE

Whoah! Haha!

The soldiers follow behind her, fanning out. They approach the asphalt line and stop short at the edge, weapons ready.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Hello? Hellooooo?! I know you're back there. Cowering, or something. It's safe to come out now, you only die if you cross this line. Should have just checked your hands.

INT. TENT - DAY

Jackson looks out the back of their tent: other campers rush into position, holding the metal canisters.

JACKSON  
Everyone's ready.

SARAH  
Yeah, so be quiet.

JACKSON  
This is our chance.

BRANDON  
It's - what? No, I said we're going to wait and hear what she says before we do anything crazy. The shooters are still on the cliffs.

JACKSON  
Yeah, and that's their leader. We grab that little prick, we have a hostage!

BRANDON  
You think she isn't prepared for that? Why would she just stand right there in plain sight?

JACKSON  
Maybe she expects cowards like you. Not me.

He heads out the back.

SARAH  
No, come back - Jackson!

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

Jackson steps out, and waves his hands.

JACKSON  
Let's go, go, GO!

The others step out, surprised, but following his bravado. They make a full-speed rush towards Danielle, who waits for them with arms crossed over her chest. Utterly impassive.

Her soldiers wait for guidance.

Jackson looks like a stampeding rhino, muscles taut, running at top speed like a human battering ram, yelling.

He halts just before the line, heaving. Majestic charge over.

DANIELLE  
You done, big boy?

JACKSON  
Don't call me big boy, you b-!

She pulls out both guns faster than his eyes can follow and fires two shots beside his feet.

JACKSON (CONT'D)  
Son of a bitch!

DANIELLE  
Classic.

Brandon and Sarah come to the front.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)  
Good morning, everyone, my name is Danielle. Please, don't worry about introducing yourselves. I know all of your names already.  
(looks at a body)  
Knew. If you're all done acting foolish, I want to talk business like adults, okay?

BRANDON  
You've had your fun already, tell us what's going on! Where the hell are we? And can you please have some respect for the dead?

Danielle smiles.

DANIELLE  
It would be my pleasure, Mr. Brandon Mills.

**END ACT 1**

ACT 2

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Danielle stands before the group across the asphalt line, her hands on her hips in a powerful stance.

DANIELLE

Listen up, suckers! We're going to do this like a good, old-fashioned high school introduction. I.E., I know you have questions but since I'm probably going to answer a few of them anyway, hold your thoughts until the end when I'm finished. Everybody understand? Great! First things first, I think it should be no surprise to any of you that you're in a death camp.

They stare at her, surrounded by bodies. She shrugs.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Yeah, obvious, right? But you are wondering: "Why can't I remember anything? Where are we? What's going on here? How could we do something like this?"

SARAH

Why did you kill these people!

DANIELLE

Well, clearly they weren't ready. And it was a little more beyond my control than you might imagine. Like natural selection or something! Speaking of which...

(she pulls out a phone)

I had a little story I wanted to tell. A bit of an illustration. Let's see, here we are! So: a long time ago, in a little mansion far, far away, there was a young girl with too much time on her hands, and too many brains to waste doing boring things like playing with dolls or other real girls. So what did this plucky, gilded gal do? Well, she bought three hundred gold fish of course!

(MORE)

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Stored them in a single tank in her garage, watched them die off one by one! Oh, and did they die. She gave them way too little food, let the tank get far too hot, cleaned much less than she should've, and soon - as you can imagine - there were only a few left. But those final fish? They could survive anything! They were indomitable, insuperable, incredible, indelible- and, uh, it looks like I tried listing a bunch of synonyms from there.

She puts the phone away, noticing their dumbstruck faces.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

Come on, I think the point is clear: you're one groups of many we're going to whittle down though a series of death games! It's like Saw meets The Maze Runner. You'll love it.

JACKSON

Why are you doing this to us?

DANIELLE

To you? Ha! I wish you could remember; you all chose this! You were begging, clamoring to jump into my hands.

JACKSON

Bullshit! None of us would choose this, this is psychotic.

DANIELLE

Look in my eyes, Mr. Muscles: every single one of you little guppies decided to be here of their own accord. And now you're mine. So get ready! Tomorrow you begin your first feat of strength; there's a base straight ahead, through the desert, one hundred miles straight west of your current position. Right now this line has twenty-four separate camps, but we'll only provide food, water, and shelter to the first sixteen that arrive. Everyone else...well, they'll just have to figure out desert survival on your own, won't they?

BRANDON

How can we compete with them? We have a wounded girl in our camp.

She takes a hissed breath in.

DANIELLE

Ooh, tough decision, right? Try to bring her with you, she'll almost certainly slow you down, but how will your conscience feel about putting her out of their misery?

BRANDON

Excuse me? Out of her misery?

DANIELLE

The girl who got shot was Anastasia, right? She's going to be in for a slow and painful death if you just leave her here to bleed out, or - I don't know - let her wound get infected and succumb to a roaring fever or something? No, she'd probably just starve alone. Why not make it quick and just-

She mimes snapping her own neck. Brandon trembles with rage.

BRANDON

We're not going to leave her or kill her.

Danielle smiles and points fondly.

DANIELLE

And that's why you're the leader.

JACKSON

Excuse me?

DANIELLE

Oh! Thank you, Jackson. See Brandon's "special" wristband? And the big tent he got? We looked through your personality profiles for people marked for natural leaders. Brandon qualified, so he's in charge of the supplies and the master tracker wristband. That's your ticket into the door of our desert facility! We won't accept teams under seven, over twenty four, and without a leader.

(MORE)

DANIELLE (CONT'D)  
Feel free to trade your other  
members all you like, but keep that  
in mind! Now, the last thing...

She taps her chin a moment. One of the soldiers leans in.

SOLDIER #1  
Team fighting.

DANIELLE  
Right! Go ahead and kill people.

The group reacts: horror and surprise, apart from Jackson.

JACKSON  
Well, isn't that a twist.

DANIELLE  
Calm down! There's a 24-hour grace  
period. We'll disqualify any group  
that fights before the starting gun  
tomorrow at 9 in the morning, but  
after the bell rings, you can hack,  
slash, and murder all you like! So  
maybe this is also like The Purge?  
Anyway, if you have any questions,  
feel free to ask now.

JACKSON  
Why is this guy the leader?

DANIELLE  
I feel like we're getting  
repetitive. Unless you mean, "what  
about Brandon is so special"? If  
that's the case...why don't you  
tell 'em, head honcho?

All eyes go to Brandon. He tries to remember, his face  
scrunching. He frowns. Everyone's spirits fall.

BRANDON  
I...I can't remember.

DANIELLE  
Ooh, tough break. The memory  
inhibitor did a number on you,  
didn't it?

BRANDON  
Can't I give this to someone else?



DANIELLE

No. But you also don't have to actually lead. Be a waste, though. You'd basically be like a king in chess! Barely more useful than a pawn but somehow the most important piece in the game.

JACKSON

The hell are we supposed to do with a guy like this?

DANIELLE

Have a spine, Jackson! Stick with your leader through thick or thin! Pull your considerable muscly weight and get through it together, what else?

(she grins)

Oh, right: you could leave and join another group. What do I care? Just make sure it's interesting.

She turns around.

SARAH

Wait, we have more questions!

DANIELLE

Eh, I'm bored. There are other groups I want to talk to. And hey, Brandon? You'd better sort you shit out soon. *Your group depends on it! Their fate rests on your shoulders!*

(serious)

Give it your all, okay? I was excited about you.

She whips around and hops over the body like she did last time, going the opposite way. When she enters the vehicle, it rolls off toward the next group of victims.

Brandon becomes the focus of fear, anger, and disappointment.

JACKSON

So. Chief... What's next?

**END ACT 1**

ACT 2

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Down the line from Brandon's camp, two groups comes together in a circle of tents.

EXT. CHRIS'S CAMP - DAY

CHRIS WHEELER (28), a muscle-bound meathead, welcomes HELEN SALAZAR (30), a short but intimidating woman, into his camp. They each trail followers. Helen looks at Chris's wristband.

HELEN

Interesting choice for leader.

CHRIS

I could say the same. Would you be any use in a fight?

HELEN

Can you brain real good?

CHRIS

Brains aren't any help in a fight.

HELEN

Yes, well, that notion's clearly been proven historically inaccurate on a number of occasions.

(pushes glasses up)

My name is Helen Salazar, I'm the leader of the group which, unfortunately for you, has been placed beside this one.

CHRIS

Ooh, I'm shivering. Please, do tell: what are you planning to do with me, Little Woman?

HELEN

Nothing, if you say "yes". There are twenty-four groups here and sixteen spots in the facility, which means there's easily enough for two strong groups such as our own, working together, to make it through to the next round.

CHRIS  
So you're asking my help?

HELEN  
Please, I can get help from  
anywhere. If it's from you, we can  
worry about offing each other  
another time, but if it's someone  
else, we'll crush you. Simple as  
that, I'm afraid.

CHRIS  
What? You think I can't get my own  
teammates?

HELEN  
With your stellar personality you'd  
be hard pressed to coax a blind  
troll into bed.

CHRIS  
That troll sure as hell wouldn't be  
you.

HELEN  
My loss...

She turns away with a curt eye roll. Chris blinks.

CHRIS  
Hey! We're not done here-

HELEN  
Oh, we are.

CHRIS  
Listen: you walk out of here and  
I'm going to take your people out  
first, hear me? You? All of you?  
First to die.

HELEN  
Maybe spend you energy getting  
teammates rather than running your  
mouth? There's a thought.

CHRIS  
You can't stop this mouth! I'm  
Chris Wheeler, baby, and you better  
be ready 'cause we'll be stronger  
than the rest of the line by  
tomorrow. Then...you're first!

Helen stops and turns. She smiles: assured and chilling.

HELEN

I do look forward to the morning,  
Chris. Sleep tight.

Her people turn around and disappear, moving onto the next group. Chris clenches his fists repeatedly, fuming with impotent rage. He kicks a desiccated plant, tossing up dirt.

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

People rush to and fro on various errands. Brandon walks through, looking around. AMBER (19), a raven-haired girl, sees Brandon and re-checks a clipboard, tallying numbers.

AMBER

Brandon?! Brandon!

BRANDON

Yeah? Hey.

AMBER

We're at eighteen people right now,  
it seems like everyone else is  
doing well. For now.

BRANDON

That's good to hear...?

AMBER

Amber.

BRANDON

Right. Can you get some people  
together, figure out how to move  
these tents? We need to bring our  
shelter with us, I'm pretty sure we  
won't find much out in the desert.

AMBER

Of course! On it.

Sarah walks over from a cot-turned-stretcher she designed.

SARAH

Hey, there's that leadership we  
were hoping for.

He turns to her, speaking quietly.

BRANDON

Sarah, I'm pulling this all out of my ears, I'm just trying to keep people busy. We're treading water here and that's about it.

SARAH

Well, as long as we're staying afloat, right?

BRANDON

Huh. Sure. You need help with that?

SARAH

Let's take it inside and give it a test run.

INT. BRANDON'S TENT - DAY

Rahul looks through the medical kit, doing his own counts and tallies, while Anastasia lies back, sweating through her shirt and drinking an orange pack.

She tries sitting up when Brandon enters.

RAHUL

No, no, no. You're recovering. Don't move if you don't need to.

SARAH

Actually, we're gonna help you over to this stretcher, okay? I made it just for you.

ANASTASIA

You...you're gonna carry me?

SARAH

Yeah. Easy, nothing to it.

Anastasia looks like she's about to cry.

ANASTASIA

I heard. I heard what that girl said, about killing me.

BRANDON

Why would you worry about her? Don't worry about her, she doesn't control what we do.

Anastasia laser focuses onto him.

ANASTASIA

I've heard, you know. That it's some kind of death game. That we're here to kill each other off, like sheep. If sheep were made to kill each other, or whatever.

(tearing up)

I'm sorry. I'm so, so sorry. I didn't know what was happening this morning, and I just thought-

BRANDON

No, it's not your fault-

SARAH

You can't let yourself think like that!

RAHUL

I've talked to you about this, that's survivor's guilt speaking. You need to tell yourself - you need to remind yourself - it's a lie. You are alive and that is good. It's not your fault.

Anastasia nods, then makes direct eye contact with Brandon, tears flooding, fear in every aspect of her person.

ANASTASIA

Please don't leave me here to die. Please. I don't want to die here.

BRANDON

We're not going to leave you alone.

Sarah squints, glancing sideways at him.

SARAH

Alright, rest up, okay, Anastasia?

ANASTASIA

Okay...

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Brandon and Sarah step out the back of Brandon's tent.

SARAH

You're not actually considering what Danielle said?

BRANDON

I don't know. Do you really think we can take Anastasia?

SARAH

Why - why would you even go down that road, Brandon?

BRANDON

Because apparently I'm the leader, right? I'm trying to put myself in the position of a leader and right now that means thinking about group survival. She's not going anywhere fast and this is a race where speed means survival.

SARAH

I can't believe this! You're playing her game, that girl Danielle. This is what she wants.

BRANDON

We don't have a choice, we're in this game now whether we like it or not!

SARAH

She's a sadist! Come on! Doesn't knowing you're helping a sadist get off make you rethink that decision in the slightest?

BRANDON

Of course, but objectively I'm starting to think we can't expect to live if we try to help everyone get through this.

SARAH

Objectively? You're dealing with her life, there's no such thing as objectivity, we're talking about humanity now.

He groans.

BRANDON

Yeah, yeah. I mean, you're right. Of course you're right. But every time I tell myself that, I'm reminded that seconds are ticking away...the game only keeps going.

She grits her teeth, ready for a fight, but they hear FOOTSTEPS from the tents, too many for their camp.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
You hear that?

SARAH  
Yeah. Someone's here.

INT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

Chris Wheeler waits in the middle of camp, looking around for the leader. Obadiah tries to wave him off, Chris watches the ginger derisively.

OBADIAH  
I told you before, we're not interested, now get out of here!

CHRIS  
Are you some kind of retard?

Brandon and Sarah run in. Chris sizes him up instantly, liking what he sees: smaller physique, unsure expression.

BRANDON  
Obadiah, stand down. Let's just talk to this guy.

CHRIS  
"This Guy"'s name is Chris, Chris Wheeler.

BRANDON  
Brandon Mills, I'm the leader here. What do you want?

CHRIS  
(a la Helen Salazar)  
Long and short of it is, I'm looking for another team to engage in some cooperation. The first challenge here should be a cinch for any two groups that join together. All you have to say is "yes", and we're in the clear.

Obadiah approaches Brandon.

OBADIAH  
I've got a bad feeling about this guy, he radiates toxic.  
(MORE)



OBADIAH (CONT'D)

Let him down nicely, but we have to get him out of here-

CHRIS

Hey, Wyatt Earp, I'm talking! How about you stop passing notes?

BRANDON

Can we get a second to think about this?

CHRIS

A second-? What does it matter? What do we need to talk about? Just say "yes", how much do you have to think about this? You're the last group in the line, we're already bigger than you. If I wanted, I could edge you out first thing tomorrow and make short work of one more pitiful group.

SARAH

Sorry, we're not interesting in teaming up with people just because they make threats-

BRANDON

(hissed whisper)

Sarah! This could be it. This could be our chance to get Anastasia out of here.

SARAH

Obadiah's right, Brandon, this guy's gonna stab us in the back first chance he gets. I've never been more sure of anything.

BRANDON

Well, I'm not. And we need this. The group needs this.

(to Chris)

We have a deal. We'll work with you.

Chris's people cheer and Chris smiles broadly, arms crossed across his chest, victory assured.

CHRIS

Good! I'm glad to see there's someone here with half a brain-

Rahul exits the tent, looking for the cause of commotion. In one instant, Christ notices Anastasia's legs on the tarp. Brandon's eyes go huge. Chris's eyes light up, he grins.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Wait a minute...

OBADIAH

Hey now!

Chris beelines for the tent and Obadiah tries stopping him but gets shoved to the ground with ease. Chris whips open the flap and stares at Anastasia, cowering below him.

SARAH

Get out of there, NOW!

CHRIS

You're carrying a girl on a stretcher? Ha! And what's this-

He eyes the tower of supplies greedily.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Oh, we're not teaming up.

BRANDON

Please, she'll die-

Chris chuckles, turning from the tent.

CHRIS

Not just her, I can tell you that.

(to Brandon's camp)

Did you all know about this? Did you have any idea your leaders have a wounded girl on a freakin' stretcher, half dead? You're not winning this race following him, no matter what. So here's the deal: if you want to live and think you have what it takes, join my team. Tomorrow, morning, all of those supplies belong to me, understand? Who here wants to live?

Rodney crosses sides almost immediately. A few more quickly follow, then a torrent.

BRANDON

Hey, come on! It isn't that bad! Why are you - stop! We can talk about this, please-

He looks at Jackson. Jackson sighs.

CHRIS

How about you, strong man? When I leave, this opportunity leaves with me. No take-backs.

BRANDON

Jackson, this is ridiculous-

JACKSON

Sorry. This just makes sense.

SARAH

Well, isn't that a twist. Thought you'd be one of the first.

JACKSON

Shut up, Sarah. You'd join too, if you were smart. Brandon's already run this team into the dust.

Chris smiles as Jackson steps over. Brandon looks at all of the people there, not a one of whom other than Jackson can bear to look him in the eye.

BRANDON

So that's it, then? You're all just-  
(bites his lip)  
Alright. I wish you all the best. I really do. Someone has to survive.

CHRIS

Good day to you, *Brandon*. I have to thank you, tomorrow just got a lot brighter for us!

They turn away, leaving the skeleton crew behind in Brandon's camp. Brandon, Sarah, Rahul, Jeremy, Amber, Obadiah, Anastasia, and Mei remain.

AMBER

We're so screwed.

**END ACT 2**

ACT 3

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The sun begins its descent in the sky as Brandon walks toward the asphalt line. To his surprise, Jeremy sits with his feet against the line, wiggling his toes.

BRANDON  
It's Jeremy, right?

JEREMY  
That's right. How are you, Brandon?

BRANDON  
How am I? Do you need to ask?

JEREMY  
Yeah. I mean, I don't need to know how the camp is. We lost ten people down to just eight. We still have to deal with Anastasia, we've got Chris's group gunning for us, and morale's running at an all-time low, which is impressive for the very first day.

BRANDON  
Well, I'm bad, Jeremy. I'd hope that's clear. What I want to know is why you stayed. I understand Sarah and a few of the others, they probably chose to stay because it's just who they are. Why didn't you leave, you seem able-bodied.

JEREMY  
Nice assumption.

Brandon rubs his eyes.

BRANDON  
Sorry, I'm just-

JEREMY  
No, no, it's actually a good question. I don't have any hidden impairments. At least...nothing I know that's been kept from you.

BRANDON  
So...then why are you here?

JEREMY

Ever played a video game?

BRANDON

Once or twice, I'm pretty sure.  
They weren't exactly for me, from  
what I can tell.

JEREMY

Pity. Sounds like you didn't search  
hard enough: there are an infinite  
variety of games out there, really  
something for everyone. But you  
wanna know something interesting?  
They're all, every one of them,  
judged by a single common factor:  
difficulty. Some people like to  
play easy mode and relax.  
Others...well.

BRANDON

I get it. Our game is hard mode.  
Nice. That's real nice, Jeremy.

He feels much worse, but then brightens.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

So, you probably support helping  
Anastasia get through, right?

JEREMY

No, I think you should kill her.  
I'll do it, if you like. Bop.

Brandon's face contorts as he tries to decide whether  
Jeremy's kidding or just stone cold heartless.

BRANDON

No, we're not doing that.

JEREMY

Why? Why not?

BRANDON

For one, I don't kill people and I  
won't let it happen. And haven't  
you heard Sarah? I agree with her:  
if we think about killing our own  
people to survive, we're giving  
Danielle what she wants.

JEREMY

Ugh, so? So what? Why break your back trying to stoop under the bar she set? Hell, why even rise to it? She clearly didn't put this here as a warning, it's a challenge! I say we go even farther than the bar, give her more than she was hoping for, see if she really has the stomach for what she started.

BRANDON

I'm not concerned about her lines, we already drew ours. I'm getting pretty tired of this line metaphor.

JEREMY

Sure you are. But see, this is the fun of real-life "hard mode". Life all seems black and white on paper, but when rubber hits the road, your lines can blur real fast.

BRANDON

Know what? Why don't you get to work and do something useful, huh? We're on hard mode, right? Everyone else is trying hard to get ready for tomorrow, not slacking.

JEREMY

Are you made at me, or yourself? Because it feels like slacking is all you've been doing so far.

BRANDON

Me?! I've been holding everything together by the seams-

JEREMY

Good job of it, too.

BRANDON

I'm trying my best!

JEREMY

Then why have we already lost?

A beat. That hits home. Brandon doesn't have anything better:

BRANDON

We haven't lost. Not yet. I can't accept that.

JEREMY

Yeah? There's no way to stop Chris taking our supplies, that's the end of things. Unless we had a weapon-

BRANDON

Oh, sure. And do you have one? Because the only weapons I know of killed a ton of people this morning, and now-

Brandon pauses. He has an idea. Without saying anything more, he turns and rushes back to camp. Jeremy chuckles, a hollow and eerie sound.

JEREMY

Godspeed, Brandon.

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

Amber looks at a cot: it has zippers in odd places and strange, revolving joints in the frame. She placed another one nearby, already contorted into odd shapes.

She looks up as Brandon pounds through the camp.

AMBER

Brandon?

Amber looks at Obadiah and Mei, who are tag-teaming the re-sorting of supply canisters. They watch Brandon pass, then stand and follow.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Rahul steps out of the main tent as Brandon hits the side of the cliffs and begins climbing up, hand over hand, foot over foot. He's not the most experienced, but he's determined.

RAHUL

What is going on?

OBADIAH

Hell is he thinking?

Mei gets the idea as Sarah joins them.

MEI

He's trying to get a gun.

SARAH

A gun? He's going to fight one of the shooters? That's stupid, he shouldn't go alone-

She rushes to the cliffs before anyone can stop her.

MEI

Be careful, Sarah!

Sarah starts after Brandon, moving quickly. Halfway up, Brandon looks down and notices her approaching. He tries to wave her back down.

BRANDON

(whisper yell)  
Get out of here, Sarah!

SARAH

No, Brandon, you're our team leader. We can't risk losing you, why don't you let someone else take care of this?

He looks at his wristband, and pounds his forehead against the rock, angrily.

BRANDON

No! I'm sorry. I just can't let myself be useless any more.

He continues on.

SARAH

Brandon- dammit!

Brandon and Sarah reach the edge and pause together. He looks at her and she shakes her head: *don't you dare*.

He raises his eyebrows: *it's happening*. Sarah rolls her own, and points between them, then up: *then we're going together*. Brandon sighs and nods, agreeing.

He mimes the countdown and they ready themselves...

3...2...1...

EXT. CLIFFTOP - DAY

They reach over and FREEZE: ahead of them stands an AUTOMATED TURRET, with a sizable magazine of 7.62-millimeter hellfire. When their heads appear, it makes a METALLIC GRINDING.



Sarah ducks backs down and the turret focuses on Brandon like lightning! His eyes widen in the viewfinder as-

BOOM!

**END ACT 3**

ACT 4

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Brandon ducks just in time, but takes a powder blast of red dirt to his mouth and eyes, coating his face and throat. He grabs out and latches onto a wiry plant.

Sarah clings to the edge, petrified. She can't move for fear of falling, but breathes deep, trying to calm down.

Brandon whoops and coughs, holding the dangling plant for dear life while his feet scabble desperately at the rocks for purchase, but every time he nearly gets it he slips.

The roots of the plant begin to fray. Brandon's coughs become laden with cries of panic. Sarah breaks free.

She moves to the side, testing each foot and hand hold, legs extended to the max distance and reaching full extension for better spots. She's still too slow.

SARAH

Brandon, it's okay! Hold on, I'm coming, it's gonna be fine, just-

She gets close and grabs at his outstretched hand, but he's too panicked to make good contact and they swing apart. Sarah checks her feet again, making sure it's solid.

Brandon's plant tears apart at the roots.

Sarah snatches Brandon's arm, yelling in pain, and swings him into the cliff. He coughs, all wind knocked from his lungs, as he latches on and adjusts with shaking hands.

He clears his eyes by rubbing his face on the rocks, too afraid to use his hands. They breathe, take in a moment of calm. Then Brandon groans. Sarah sighs.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Well, we know what's up there now, don't we?

BRANDON

Yeah. Yeah, I guess we do.

He looks down at ant-like spectators.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Now that we're here by ourselves, I think I can tell you this: we're pretty much dead.

SARAH

Really? I think this is good progress. They're automated turrets, who'd have guessed?

BRANDON

We can't really fight with them. From what I could tell, even if we deactivated one, there was no physical trigger to fire one - at least, not that I saw anyway - and we sure as hell can't carry one of those things around the desert. Now I've got dust in my eyes and my arms hurt, and-

SARAH

Brandon?

BRANDON

What?

SARAH

Shut up a second and look.

They stare out over the desert: it's truly beautiful, a mind-bogglingly enormous stretch of flowing dunes and scrub-brush-filled plateaus. Brandon sighs.

BRANDON

Huh. Up here, it's so big that you really do feel small. Almost like I can accept not existing any more.

She moves down to his level.

SARAH

If it comes to that, at least we'll know we tried everything we could, right? This is a setback, but we know there's a gun up there. That has to be useful for something.

BRANDON

Honestly, it's exciting, but the issue is I'm not sure we'll have enough time to figure out.

SARAH

Give us some credit. We know something nobody else does because you followed a batshit crazy plan. I mean, who knows where or what the next one will bring us?

BRANDON

Well, that's our group now, isn't it? We're the ones who try anything and everything.

SARAH

You don't feel a little cool right now?

BRANDON

I would if we weren't so damn high. But...thanks, Sarah. I appreciate that. I really do.  
(looks down)  
Now let's get back.

SARAH

Hell yes. I'm right behind you. Above you, that is.

They start their slow descent, carefully picking the path.

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

Sarah and Brandon touch the bottom and Obadiah rushes to their side.

OBADIAH

Captain, we got a problem!

SARAH

You've got to be kidding me, we just got down!

OBADIAH

There are people here in the camp. Looks like they're rejects, probably hoping for a group to join. This had to happen eventually, right?

SARAH

Brandon, what are you thinking?

BRANDON

I mean, we let anyone who wants to join join, that's pretty clear.

SARAH

Good, then it's simple as that.

BRANDON

Well, no, not really. We will take anyone who wants to stay. But...

His face sets, there's steel in his eyes. Sarah becomes concerned as Brandon powers his way to the circle of tents.

SARAH

Brandon, what are you thinking?  
Brandon-? Here we go...

INT. BRANDON'S CAMP - DAY

Outcasts from other camps stand in a group, shifting restlessly. Brandon looks through their ranks in despair.

SARAH

Hey, Brandon! Let's not get crazy here, these people are desperate to find a home, remember?

BRANDON

You sure? Maybe they're not enough.

SARAH

Not enough? Brandon, what are you talking about? Let's welcome these people in, they need a little hope. You're supposed to be the leader-

Brandon walks in front of the recruits silently. The current camp - Mei, Amber, etc. - gathers around, concerned.

MEI

What is he doing now?

OBADIAH

Honestly, I think all this stress it getting to him. We should stop this. Should we stop it?

MEI

Well, I say let's hear him out.

AMBER

I mean, that's one choice...

Brandon stops.

BRANDON

Hello, everyone! My name's Brandon Mills, and I'm the leader of this group. What can I do for you?

They look between themselves: *isn't it obvious?* EDNA and GEORGE SORENSON (both 80's), stand side by side. She holds his shaking hands protectively and he holds his chin high.

EDNA

We're looking for a group to join.

ANDREW PRICE (21), a lily-white guy with no muscles, slouches beside them.

ANDREW

Nobody else wanted us. We've been to a bunch of other groups.

VOICE (O.S.)

Speak for yourself!

Brandon looks back angrily, but can't find who spoke. Andrew simply hangs his head in shame as Brandon bites his lip.

BRANDON

Alright. Alright...listen, I want to make this clear: we aren't going to turn anyone away, not a single one of you. You're welcome here.

Sighs of relief ring out. One of the loudest comes from Sarah herself. But Brandon's not done.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

However! I want to be honest and upfront with all of you.

SARAH

Shit-

BRANDON

Let me talk, Sarah! This is important, they need to know.

(passionate)

If you stay with us, you're joining the underdog team. Chris Wheeler's group is gunning for our supplies already because we won't let a wounded team member die. We plan to carry her through the desert on a stretcher, starting tomorrow.

The potential members react with surprise. He continues.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

If that's a problem, this isn't the group for you: admittedly, we've lost time that could've been spent preparing for this journey just to make sure she has a chance. That's the kind of decision we're willing to make. Because whoever chooses us, we choose as well. We don't leave members behind.

(the deal)

Now, frankly, I hope that all of you will stick around, but I'm pretty sure you won't because we're not going to stop risking our lives to make sure everyone can live. So, if you've changed your minds, I'll understand. But I hope you won't.

He waits. TRUMAN (46), at the back, turns. His voice marks him as the one who spoke after Andrew.

TRUMAN

Pfft. Lost cause.

He leaves, and many follow. Soon, just five are left.

Edna, George, and Andrew remain. JACKIE ROSENFELD (28), holds onto her son MARCUS (7) with one hand and his inhaler with the other.

Brandon watches the others leaves, and counts his new recruits, shoulders falling as the short tally adds up.

BRANDON

Only five? Well...it's good to have you. Feel free to take a tent. Most of them are empty.

He walks toward the desert. The leftover people look around in surprise. Sarah follows after Brandon.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The line of shadow created by the cliffside reaches toward the asphalt line, almost touching. Brandon pauses in shadow, watching the light run away, out of reach.

SARAH

What the hell were you thinking back there?

Brandon turns to Sarah, who fumes steps behind him.

BRANDON

I was being honest, they deserve to know where we stand. If we're committed to helping Anastasia, we should tell people ahead of time.

SARAH

Tell people, yes! But that doesn't excuse what you just did! If you want to help Anastasia, we could have brought those new people in without scaring the hell out of them and we'd have more people to carry the stretcher and help with supplies. Oh! And how about this: we still need people to fend off other groups! Did you think about that for even a second? Did you? Because now we have five people joining, and the odds we'll be able to keep our supplies has dropped to just about zero.

BRANDON

You shouldn't yell at me about how I "apply" anything! You should've thought more about what it means to leave no one behind. This is it.

SARAH

What?! It means pushing people away for no good reason?

BRANDON

No: it's being clear about our beliefs to people who - clearly - don't support them.

SARAH

We needed them! Maybe they wouldn't have liked it, but if we brought them in easy, they might have accepted it eventually. Look, I've stood by you this whole time, and even I considered leaving after that whole speech.

BRANDON

You...you didn't before?

SARAH

What? When?



BRANDON

You didn't consider leaving when  
Chris came through?

SARAH

I mean...sure. A little. I'm sure  
everyone did, they'd have to be  
insane not to.

BRANDON

Why did you stay, Sarah?

She sighs, thinking.

SARAH

For one, if I were to join anyone's  
group it wouldn't be Chris's. I'll  
tell you that right now. But  
honestly, I couldn't leave you guys  
behind, for better or worse. If I  
left and survived, I'd hate myself.  
I'd see the faces of everyone and  
lose sleep over it. I do understand  
everyone who left though, and I  
can't blame them for it. Especially  
all those people who walked out  
just now!

BRANDON

Well, trust me, in the long run  
this was the right decision. I've  
seen it before: eventually they'd  
turn on us. If we're not leaving  
anyone behind today - of all days -  
that policy isn't going to change  
in the future. We'd have problems,  
only a matter of time. But those  
five people who stayed know the  
deal. They're not going to cut and  
run when the going gets rough. This  
is their home now.

SARAH

Are you remembering something?

BRANDON

Sorry?

SARAH

You said you've "seen it before",  
did that mean something?

BRANDON

Uh...no, I must've just slipped.  
All I meant is: in the short run we  
may have been better off, but down  
the road we'd have lost for sure.

Sarah looks deep into his eyes, searching. He tries to hold her gaze, but looks away.

SARAH

Well, Danielle was right: you are a  
leader. You held onto my own vision  
when I wouldn't have. We'll just  
have to see if it was the right  
choice in the end.

BRANDON

I guess so.

They look out to the desert again, watching shadows grow.

SARAH

Not as pretty from down here, huh?

BRANDON

Not quite. You can see everything  
from up there. Almost makes me want  
to climb back up just for the  
vantage point. If my arms weren't  
so sore from the first go...

He trails off.

SARAH

You sound like you're thinking.  
What's on your mind?

BRANDON

Perspective. I have another idea,  
Sarah, this is good!

SARAH

What?

BRANDON

We need to get everyone together!  
Have them meet in the middle of  
camp in five, team meeting.

SARAH

Okay, I'll help round everyone up.  
Do you have a plan?

BRANDON

Just an idea, not a plan in the slightest. If anything, I have a plan to have a plan. But this time, it's going to help us survive!

He rushes toward the camp. Sarah follows.

**END ACT 4**

ACT 5

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - NIGHT

The group gathers around a fire pit that Obadiah struggles to light. He re-arranges the logs, stuffs kindling underneath, but nothing works for him. He curses quietly.

Brandon looks around at their group.

BRANDON

First things first, before we begin, I want to address the new people to our group: Andrew, Edna, George, Jackie, and Marcus: why are you here?

JACKIE

You already heard. We didn't have anywhere else to go.

BRANDON

No, that's why you left. Why are you here?

They nod, starting to get it.

EDNA

We want to survive.

BRANDON

Good! What else?

ANDREW

We want somewhere to belong.

BRANDON

Excellent, that's even better.

JACKIE

We want to protect the people we love.

BRANDON

Great! Earlier today, I tried to make sure everyone understood the gravity of what we're doing here, because honestly? All our lives are in danger. We chose a hard path.

He looks at Jeremy, who raises an eyebrow. Meanwhile, Mei takes over for Obadiah and lights the fire with no problem.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

But we didn't take it just because we're running from something, did we? We're running to something; I don't want us to keep looking at the people next to us or our camp behind us, we need to look ahead. Admittedly, there are some things that have held us back, but there are things we have going for us! We have a great team, every one of us is dedicated to the others here. We already discovered that there are automated turrets on top of the cliff, there has to be time to use that to our advantage. No we've all exhausted our other options, which means we're going to try whatever we can. Something tells me that's got to be enough. So...tell me: what are your ideas?

A beat.

JACKIE

You...you don't have a plan for what to do next?

BRANDON

Sort of. But it's about time we came together to brainstorm as a team. Look at us, how many different people there are here?! Can't we figure something out together?

EDNA

Sure. I might have an idea.

BRANDON

Perfect, what is it?

EDNA

Well, it's more of a question: you went up the cliffs, right? That was what caused the gunshot we heard? If you were up there, you must've seen the desert.

BRANDON

Yeah, Sarah might remember better.

George speaks up, voice quavering.

GEORGE

Edna and I love to hike, we go everywhere. But with my condition as it is, we have to pick out easy trails. We've gotten pretty good at finding the best path through tough places.

SARAH

That could be useful. It's mostly sand dunes out west, though I did see a rocky plateau to the south.

EDNA

Well, we'll go there then, simple.

SARAH

I mean, it was pretty far south.

Edna smiles.

EDNA

That's better: the other groups won't think of it. Have you ever tried hiking through sand?

SARAH

No.

EDNA

Oh! George and I have, it's the most difficult thing ever. Your feet stick, you take ten steps and feel like you've gone a mile. If we can get to the rocks, even George and I will get through the desert faster than those young un's in the other groups.

SARAH

You...you're actually right, that could work. But it looked pretty rough, and we're going to have to move supplies. That could be difficult with the canisters.

MARCUS

We figured it out!

SARAH

Figured what out?

Sarah lifts up a tarp backpack, perfectly sized to hold two storage canisters!

AMBER

We were working on this together! I noticed the cots seemed odd, some of the joints didn't make sense. Jackie and Marcus helped me do some folding, and behold!

JACKIE

There's also a clip on the back that connects to the tents. Of course, that Danielle didn't tell anyone, but these were there the whole time. She must've wanted to see who figured it out.

EDNA

That solves the luggage crisis, doesn't it?

BRANDON

But there's still keeping the other groups off us, that's been a thorn in our side from the start. We don't have any real weapons or training or fighting strength.

They're quiet a moment.

ANDREW

You said there was a turret on the top of the cliffs, right?

BRANDON

Yeah?

ANDREW

If you can get me to it...I can deactivate it.

BRANDON

You can?!

AMBER

How?

ANDREW

Well, I was a mechanical engineering student. It might take a while, but I can definitely figure something out.

BRANDON

Can you climb?

ANDREW

Oh! Uh...yes. I mean, I can try.

The camp looks around each other, finally daring to get its hopes up. Brandon allows the moment to linger a beat.

BRANDON

Alright, Andrew, it's going to be dangerous; the turrets are fast so we'll probably have to have someone - maybe a few - be a distraction while you get up and over. But we can do this.

ANDREW

Whatever it takes at this point, right?

BRANDON

Whatever it takes. Now, we have some things to work on, so...

He puts his hand in the center, over the fire. They join in, putting their hands over his. Brandon takes a hissed breath.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Little hot here, sorry.

JEREMY

Seems like an apt metaphor, though, wouldn't you think?

Brandon makes eye contact with Jeremy. They smile, somewhat.

BRANDON

No, not too bad at all. Break!

They throw their hands up.

SARAH

Alright, I'm set to climb up again, are you coming, Brandon?

BRANDON

Yeah, if need be, I can go once more.

JACKIE

Marcus, Amber, and I will make more backpacks, anyone willing to help? I can show you how to take down the tents as well.



They rush about their respective businesses, the camp once more a hive of activity.

EXT. CLIFFTOP - NIGHT

Sarah, Brandon, Obadiah, and Andrew hang at the top. Brandon takes a few huge breaths and makes eye contact with the others. He nods, and starts the countdown again...

3...2...1...

He peeks his head over: the turret whips toward him, but Brandon pops down as Sarah looks over farther down, then Obadiah in quick succession.

Andrew rolls over the edge, breathing heavily, and rushes in. In a moment, he's underneath the revolving barrels. He unclips the huge ammunition feed.

ANDREW

I did it! I-

It rotates back like lightning and hits him in the head.

Andrew goes sprawling in front of the gun, which now points directly at him. He rolls forward, underneath it again, as the machine FIRES its last bullet!

INT. HELEN SALAR'S CAMP - NIGHT

Helen Salazar sits up, laying beside the campfire.

HELEN

What the hell?

EXT. CLIFFTOP - NIGHT

Andrew rushes around behind as it tries to point at him, clicking rapidly. He finds a wire on the control box and pulls the plug.

The gun POWERS DOWN. Andrew takes a few huge breaths.

ANDREW

Guys? It's done!

Brandon, Sarah, and Obadiah peek over carefully. Then, with a sigh of relief, they come over. A short dance happens.

OBADIAH

You really did it!

ANDREW

Only issue is: look at this!

They follow his pointing: the gun's pedestal is bolted into the concrete. Brandon looks at Sarah, fighting the oncoming despair with practice.

BRANDON

This is okay, we can figure something out.

ANDREW

Yeah! I mean, obviously I can still get it working. It's just...I don't know how we'll get myself and anyone who stays up here back down. Besides, I wouldn't be comfortable shooting and actually killing people. Or climbing down from here.

SARAH

Don't worry, I've been thinking about this, I've got an idea that could solve all those problems. We don't have much time, though...

They huddle around the gun, talking.

FADE TO:

EXT. BRANDON'S CAMP - MORNING

All has fallen silent. Empty lots exist where the tents once stood. All that remains are a few supplies that couldn't be taken, alongside a rope running through the center...

Down the line, an enormous crowd stands down the line.

They look ahead where a plume of dust rises as the electric car pulls forward and spins around. Danielle has replaced tone soldier on the side rail, holding a megaphone.

DANIELLE

Gooooood morning! I assume everybody's all set to go, yes?

THE LINE

Get on with it! - Let's go already!  
- Stop waiting around - Screw you!

Danielle smiles, basking in their hate.

DANIELLE

No need to be so short, we have one minute to go! Everyone sit tight: we'll have a countdown soon enough, and the gunners on the cliff will let you cross-

(turns to the car)

What's that? Oh...how interesting.

(back to the line)

Like I said: one minute notice!

She leans inside, talking with the driver.

Brandon stands with his group and looks up at the cliffs, where he can now see Andrew and Obadiah peeking over the side, the gun disguised by scrub brush at the edge.

He waves. Andrew waves back. Brandon turns to the group.

He scans through their ranks. They're tense as can be, shifting with their packs, checking and re-checking, stretching and looking at others nearby.

Brandon shakes his own fear out. Then-

BRANDON

This is it, everyone! We've got the backpacks, we've got the trail to follow, we've got the gun and we have ourselves. There's one more thing...did everyone remember to use the restroom first?

The group shows blank faces at first, then Marcus laughs. It turns into an infectious laugh that spreads between them. Nearby, other groups look over to see what's so funny.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Seriously: we're ready as can be. And more than that...I think we're prepared for this. I think we've got what it takes. Sarah?

SARAH

Remember: stick together, follow the plan. Nobody gets left behind!

THE GROUP

Nobody gets left behind!

Danielle turns back.

DANIELLE

Go time, guppies! Countdown coming  
in hot: 5...4...3...2...1...

The group tenses at the asphalt line, ready for action.  
Brandon's muscles flex. He breathes deep.

He opens his eyes, staring dead ahead across the desert.

DANIELLE (CONT'D)

GO!!!

CUT TO BLACK.

**THE END**