

WRIT LARGE

ROAD TO COLD VALLEY

Written by

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EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Night sky. Stars framed between snowcapped mountains. GRUNT. SCRAPE. Metal on stone. The THUD of shoveled dirt--

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT

In the middle of the desert lies a cemetery surrounded by barbed wire. Some graves marked by simple wooden crosses. Tombstones inscribed in English or Japanese *kanji* or both.

At the cemetery's edge, far from the nearest grave, a man digs a hole by the light of the moon and an oil lamp.

DANISHI. Japanese. 50s. Strong, calloused hands. He sweats through his shabby flannel, despite the cold wind.

Next to the growing hole, the lantern's weak light illuminates a SUITCASE. Boiled leather. Metal rivets.

Danishi stops digging. Wipes his brow. Looks at a distant--

WATCHTOWER

A shed on stilts. On the watchtower roof, a SPOTLIGHT rotates like a lighthouse, casting its beam around the--

INCARCERATION CENTER

Rows of BARRACKS. It's a Japanese American incarceration center--aka, an internment camp. But this is no "camp": it's a village-prison of 20,000 souls guarded by military police, wire fence, and miles of desert.

TITLES: COLD VALLEY WAR RELOCATION CENTER, CALIFORNIA, 1943

The watchtower spotlight sweeps over a United States flag, flapping in the wind, before landing on the--

CEMETERY

--where Danishi crouches in his hole. The light moves on. Danishi rises. *He's not supposed to be here.*

Danishi shines his lamp into the hole. Only a few feet deep. Good enough. He drops the suitcase into the earth.

As he buries the suitcase, the watchtower makes another sweep. It beams straight at us, filling the frame with--

WHITE LIGHT

TAP TAP. Letters in Times New Roman font spawn from left to right. We're looking at a DOCUMENT on a computer screen.

PULL BACK:

INT. ASA'S BEDROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

ASA IDEKO-SMITH types on his laptop. Mid-20s. Mixed-race: White/Japanese. Grad student chic: a humble button-down shirt and chinos. Big headphones. A scholar at work.

Asa gazes through glasses at his manuscript, which is loaded with footnotes and words like "intersectionality" and "postcolonial." A dry, heady, humanities essay.

In this sparsely furnished bedroom, the primary decorations are books. The window affords a view of SAN FRANCISCO.

TITLES: SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, 2020

On Asa's computer screen, a calendar notification CHIMES and pops up: "DISSERTATION FEEDBACK - 5 minutes"

MOMENTS LATER

Still at his desk, Asa is now on a **ZOOM CALL** with MARTIN TURNER, Ph.D. (50s), his academic advisor. On-screen, Turner scrolls through Asa's annotated dissertation.

TURNER (SCREEN)
Well researched as always, Asa.
Chapter 2 is particularly strong.

ASA
Thank you. Should I go ahead with
the next chapter?

TURNER (SCREEN)
No.

Asa: dismayed. Turner leans back. Stipples his fingers.

TURNER (SCREEN) (CONT'D)
When you pitched the subject of the
Japanese American incarceration,
you were to introduce a new primary
source into the conversation. But
the interviews with your
grandmother are barely in here.

ASA

Yeah, my grandma's health has
really gone downhill.

TURNER (SCREEN)

I'm sorry to hear that. But I
encourage you to showcase your
connection to the material. Anybody
can look up what happened to the
Japanese during World War II. But
your family was incarcerated. You
are an outcome of that history.
What does that mean for you, today?

ASA

Respectfully, it's a research
dissertation, not a personal essay.

TURNER (SCREEN)

Maybe not. But publications want
writers who can speak from their
experience, who can make us feel
the urgency and relevance of the
subject matter. History isn't
something that happened once and
now exists only in boring books--

Turner gestures at his screen and Asa's boring essay.

TURNER (SCREEN) (CONT'D)

History is alive in us. An event
like this doesn't go away. It's
passed down. From your grandparents
to your mother to you--

ASA

I know. I agree.

TURNER (SCREEN)

Show me.

INT. ASA'S ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY, LATER

Zoom call over, Asa lies on his bed staring at his laptop.
The caret blinks in the middle of his paper's title:

**Heuristics of Hapa Identity: The Reconstitution of Japanese
American Life During World War II**

After a contemplative moment, Asa tabs into his browser and
searches the news for "Asian American." Headlines jump out:

"Hate Crimes against Asians on the Rise" and "Elderly Woman Hospitalized after Racially Motivated Assault" and "Driver Hits Korean American Man While Yelling 'Go Back to China'"

With renewed purpose, Asa snaps the laptop shut.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

In the corner of the living room, Asa's mother SUE (50s) works on her computer at a formidable home office setup.

In the kitchen, Asa pulls leftovers from the fridge. As he prepares a plate, Sue looks over the top of her monitor.

ASA
I'm bringing grandma lunch.

Asa slides a bowl of food into the microwave.

SUE
Don't bother her with questions.

Asa says nothing, just watches the bowl spin.

INT. HALLWAY, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

Now wearing an N95 mask, Asa heads down the hall, carrying a tray of food: a bowl of bland rice and vegetables.

JUNE (O.S.)
Asa.

Asa's cousin JUNE (20s, Japanese) peeks out from her room.

JUNE
Are you giving Obaachan lunch?

Unlike Asa and Sue, June speaks with a thick accent.

ASA
What does it look like?

June takes too long to process the rhetorical question.

ASA (CONT'D)
Yes, I am.

JUNE
It's my job.

ASA
I want to talk to her alone.

JUNE

Why?

Annoyed, Asa continues down the hall without answering.

INT. HEIDI'S BEDROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

Fans and air purifiers HUM. Asa enters with food tray, approaching the bed, where lies--

His grandmother, HEIDI. 90s. Full name: Heideko Ikeda, sometimes affectionately called *Obaachan*. Currently asleep.

ASA

Grandma?

Heidi's eyes flick open. Her pinprick pupils find Asa through a haze of opioids and Alzheimer's.

GRANDMA

Da? Dada?

ASA

It's Asa. Your grandson.

Asa glances at the door: the coast is clear. He removes his mask so Heidi can see his face. She smiles with recognition.

HEIDI

Asa.

-- MOMENTS LATER, Heidi eats rice with chopsticks.

HEIDI (CONT'D)

No good. Needs *shoyu*.

ASA

The doctor says no salt.

HEIDI

(chuckles darkly)

What's it matter?

ASA

Grandma. I need some help.

Asa surreptitiously takes out his phone and opens a voice recorder app. Starts recording. Heidi doesn't notice.

ASA (CONT'D)

I need to ask some questions about when you were in Cold Valley.

Heidi drops a chopstick.

HEIDI

Why you always want to talk about
the camp so much?

ASA

It's for my dissertation, remember?
(off her blank stare)
It's about the Japanese American
incarceration during World War II.

HEIDI

So long ago. Who wants to read
about internment camps now?

ASA

We don't call them "camps" anymore,
grandma. You were prisoners.

Heidi waves her hand dismissively, the politics of word
choice irrelevant to her lived experience.

HEIDI

No point talking about it.

ASA

You're one of the last people who
can talk about it.

It's not clear if Heidi heard him. She chews.

ASA (CONT'D)

When you were there, were you able
to work? Did you have a job?
(waits, gets nothing)
Okay. I'll let you eat.

Disappointed, Asa gets up. As he prepares to leave, a
strange look passes over Heidi's face.

HEIDI

Asa.

ASA

(turns around, hopeful)
Yeah?

HEIDI

I need some help.

Asa looks at Heidi, puzzled. She doesn't meet his eye. Then
he notices the growing WET SPOT on the bed sheets.

INT. HALLWAY, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

Asa KNOCKS on June's bedroom door.

ASA
Obaachan needs you.

By the time June opens her door, Asa has already retreated to his own bedroom. June glares at his closed door.

INT. BATHROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

Wearing a mask, June helps Heidi into the bathtub.

HEIDI
Thank you, Sue. Thank you.

JUNE
I'm June.

June sponges Heidi down and switches to {Japanese}.

JUNE (CONT'D)
{It's me, June, grandma. Michelle's daughter. Remember?}

HEIDI
Michelle. One of my girls is named Michelle. My youngest daughter.

June stares off sadly at the mention of her mother.

JUNE
I know, grandma.

HEIDI
She died. Michelle died.

JUNE
I know, grandma.

HEIDI
No good.

Heidi shakes her head. June wrings the sponge.

INT. HEIDI'S BEDROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

June helps Heidi back into the freshly made bed. Leaning back on her pillows, Heidi gazes out the window. A view of San Francisco. The city she has lived in all her life--except for a few years in the 1940s.

HEIDI
Office. I worked at an office.

JUNE
(confused)
You worked... at office?

HEIDI
You asked where I worked. At the
camp. For your book.

JUNE
(realizing Heidi's mistake)
Asa is writing the book, Obaachan--

HEIDI
I worked at an office.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING, COLD VALLEY - DAY (1943)

Desks arranged inside a barracks: it's like an office in a barn. YOUNG HEIDI (14) sorts mail at a rickety table.

HEIDI (V.O.)
After school, couple hours a day.

-- Young Heidi hands mail to the WHITE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF.

HEIDI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Bad pay. But still something.

-- A CLERK hands an envelope to Heidi where she sits at her rickety table. Heidi licks it, stamps it.

HEIDI (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sorting mail. Licking envelopes. I
was 14, 15 years old.

INT. HEIDI'S BEDROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY (PRESENT)

June stands with the food tray, waiting for Heidi to go on.

HEIDI
I went back, you know. 15, 20 years
ago. Back to Cold Valley. Went to
the old office building. Nothing
left but the foundation now.

INT. GARAGE, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

June examines shelves lined with bins. She pulls down a cardboard box labeled "MOM STUFF" and starts rummaging.

Books. Records. Bags of buttons and paperclips. A PHOTO ALBUM. June cracks it open.

Photos of YOUNGER SUE (30s), CHILD ASA (5-10), and ASA'S FATHER (30s, White). June flips the page, lands on--

PHOTOS TAKEN AT COLD VALLEY

Pictures from the 2000s. What remains of the Cold Valley War Relocation Center has been converted into a **historic site**.

A museum in the desert. Reconstructions of barracks and a watchtower. A visitor's center. A mostly empty parking lot.

June examines a **PHOTO OF SUE AND HEIDI**:

Sue: late 30s. Heidi: 70s. The women pose in a CEMETERY between a stone monument and old graves. Sue gazes somberly at the camera. Heidi looks somewhere else.

June is about to turn the page--but notices the corner of ANOTHER PICTURE hidden behind the cemetery picture.

June picks at the HIDDEN PHOTOGRAPH with her fingernails, sliding it free from the plastic. She examines it with a frown, then turns it over.

INT. ASA'S ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

Sitting with books strewn around him, Asa thinks deeply. An idea comes to him: he starts typing on his laptop--

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Somebody at the bedroom door. Frustrated, Asa rubs his face. How can a genius work in this chaos?

ASA
I'm working!

The door opens. June enters with the photo album.

JUNE
Did you know Obaachan went back to Cold Valley?

ASA
Yeah. There's a museum there now.
I've seen all those.

Asa waves dismissively at the album as June cracks it open.

JUNE
Have you seen this?

June holds out the hidden photograph. Asa takes it, frowns.

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE COLD VALLEY CEMETERY:

Nobody is in this picture. Just some tombstones. But somebody has drawn on it with Sharpie marker.

An INK LINE extends from one grave, labeled: "8 FEET." At the end of the line, an X marks a spot on the ground. A map.

Asa flips the photo over. Reads the handwriting scrawled on the back. His expression puzzled as he reads aloud:

ASA
"8 feet south of dad. 3 feet down."

JUNE
What does it mean?

Asa shakes his head, unsure.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Should we ask your mom?

ASA
No. My mom shits a brick every time I bring up the incarceration.

JUNE
"Shits a brick"?

ASA (PRE-LAP)
Hey, grandma. Wake up.

INT. HEIDI'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Lying in bed, Heidi blinks awake. Asa and June come into focus. Asa holds up THE PHOTOGRAPH.

ASA
Grandma, what's this?

Heidi says nothing. Her eyes darken. She looks away. Asa flips the photograph over, reads the back.

ASA (CONT'D)
"8 feet south, 3 feet down." You wrote that, didn't you?

Heidi tosses. Incoherent, but clearly uncomfortable.

JUNE HEIDI
Is something buried there? Sue...

ASA
No, grandma, it's Asa. What's
buried there?--

HEIDI
SUE!!!

Heidi's SCREAM summons footsteps from the hall. Asa HIDES THE PHOTOGRAPH just as Sue throws open the door.

Sue sees Heidi thrashing, clawing at the air--no longer calling Sue's name but making vague moaning noises.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

June anxiously straightens books and cushions. Asa sits on the couch, reading to pass the time, tapping his foot.

Finally, Sue enters the living room. Asa shuts his book, closing the pages on the photograph like a bookmark.

SUE
I got her settled. She was pretty confused. It's getting worse.
(glares at Asa)
I told you not to ask her about the camps anymore.

Before June can answer, Asa quickly cuts her off with a lie:

ASA
She brought it up.

Sue raises an eyebrow. *Really?*

ASA (CONT'D)
Sometimes she wants to talk, you know. This is her chance to tell her story. To process it.

SUE
{June, please go to your room.}

June exits for the hall, leaving Sue and Asa alone.

SUE (CONT'D)

She's 92. She's "processed" it. You can finish your project without exploiting her anymore.

ASA

"Exploiting"? It's American history. It's our story--

SUE

It's not *my* story.

ASA

Mom. Our family lost everything. It affected your entire life--

SUE

No, it didn't. My parents made sure of that. I made sure you never had to worry about a goddamn thing. And what are you doing with that? Making a career out of dredging up the past. The internment was a long time ago. It's over.

Asa straightens his back. With gravitas and dignity:

ASA

No, it's not. History doesn't just happen once. My job is to explore how it lives on in us--

SUE

"Explore" that without *Obachan*. It's not worth it. I don't want to hear about the internment again.

Asa glares but says nothing. Her tone brooks no argument.

SUE (CONT'D)

I'm late for a call. For *my* job. The job that pays the bills.

Sue brusquely pushes past Asa, heading for her desk.

INT. ASA'S BEDROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

With phone to his head, Asa browses the website of the Cold Valley historic site. His phone RINGS until--

VOICEMAIL (PHONE)
Hello! The Cold Valley War
Relocation Center historic site is
currently closed due to the
coronavirus pandemic. For updates--

Asa hangs up.

-- LATER, Asa browses the National Parks Service website,
now on the phone with a PARKS REP.

PARKS REP (PHONE)
If you lost something, you should
contact the park directly--

ASA
No, it's not a lost-and-found
situation. It's more of a... Buried
treasure situation.

-- Asa paces his room, listening to HOLD MUSIC as he studies
the photograph: 8 feet south, 3 feet down...

-- Now lying in bed, Asa has somebody on the phone again.

ASA (CONT'D)
No, not in a grave. It's buried
somewhere in the graveyard.
(beat)
That's the thing, I don't know what
it is.
(beat)
Could you transfer me?

-- Asa sits at his desk again, the phone ringing until:

VOICE (PHONE) ASA
Hello! Hi--

VOICEMAIL (PHONE)
The Cold Valley War Relocation
Center historic site is currently--

The same voicemail as before. Dang. Asa hangs up. Looks at
the photo on his desk.

MATCH TO:

KEITH'S PHONE SCREEN

The photo pops up in the text messages on someone's phone.

PULL BACK:

INT. LIVING ROOM, KEITH'S APARTMENT - DAY, CONTINUOUS

KEITH (20s, Chinese American, tech bro jacked), wearing gym clothes and earbuds, holds his phone with one hand and does bicep curls with the other.

KEITH

But the historic site is closed.

INT. ASA'S BEDROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY, SAME TIME

On the other end of the call, Asa Google maps a route on his computer. San Francisco to Cold Valley: a 7 hour drive.

ASA

So what? We drive down there--

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY, SAME TIME

June sits on her bed, pressing her ear to the wall, listening to Asa's half of the conversation.

ASA (O.S.)

--and check the place out. When it gets dark, we dig it up.

INTERCUT WITH:

Keith lies back on a bench and starts doing presses.

KEITH

So you want to go do an illegal excavation on government property.

ASA

Nobody cares if we dig a hole in the desert. It'll be fine.

KEITH

What if nothing's there?

ASA

I need to go there anyway for my research.

KEITH

That's what this is about. You want a treasure hunt in your paper.

ASA

Can you give me a ride or not?

KEITH

Nope. No car.

ASA

What? What happened to it?

KEITH

I didn't renew my lease. What's the point? Everything's closed. But I'm honored you're willing to put all those miles on my car.

Asa curses under his breath. Keith strains as he lifts.

ASA

What are you doing?

KEITH

Working out. You should try it.

ASA

I run.

KEITH

Running eats your muscle mass--

ASA

If I rent a car, would you come?

KEITH

You're really serious about this.

ASA

I need to take big swings. Now's the time. My grandma's still hanging in there. Anti-Asian racism is in the news. If my dissertation tells a fresh story, I could get published somewhere big, you know? This is my chance to speak out.

END INTERCUT ON:

Keith absorbs the earnestness of Asa's words, then puts down the weights and calls down his apartment hallway:

KEITH

Elliot!

The doorway at the end of the hall opens, revealing Keith's roommate ELLIOT (20s, not Asian).

KEITH (CONT'D)

You want to be a getaway driver?

INT. LIVING ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO - NIGHT

Sue works at her desk. She looks up over the top of her monitor at Asa, who stands in the living room.

ASA
I'm going camping this weekend.

SUE
Camping? Where?

ASA
Big Bear. With Keith and Elliot.
We're all sick of being cooped up.

Sue looks down the hallway at her mother's room.

SUE
We're cooped up for a reason. How
are you going to feel if you come
back and get her sick?

ASA
I'll be safe. We'll be outside.
I'll get tested once I'm back.

SUE
Okay.

ASA
So you're cool with it?

SUE
I'm not your keeper. I trust you to
make decisions that are good for
you and the people you care about.

ASA
(turns to go)
Okay. Thanks.

SUE
Wear masks when you go into stores.

ASA
Always do.

SUE
Make sure your friends do too.

ASA
(hides annoyance)
Sure.

Asa almost makes it to the hall but--

SUE
Take June.

ASA
What?

SUE
Take your cousin. Her first year in
the States hasn't exactly been fun.

ASA
What about grandma?

SUE
I'll handle it.

ASA
It was going to be a guy's thing--

SUE
Asa. Please invite your cousin.

Sue turns back to her computer. End of discussion.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY

June lies on her bed, watching American sitcoms on her phone, eyebrows furrowed in studious concentration. A knock at the door. Asa enters. June takes off her headphones.

ASA
So, I'm going camping this weekend.
My mom wants me to bring you.

JUNE
Okay!

ASA
Here's the thing though. It was
supposed to be just us guys.
(as June processes)
Will you tell my mom I invited you
if she asks? Just tell her you
don't like camping--

JUNE
But I want to go.

ASA
Well, you're not invited. Sorry.

JUNE

I know what you are doing. I'm not stupid. I hear you.

June taps on the wall connecting her room to Asa's.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I found the photo. I want to come.

ASA

Look, what we're doing is illegal.

JUNE

"Nobody cares if we dig a hole in the desert." That's what you say to your friends.

ASA

If we get in trouble, you could lose your visa.

JUNE

It's my history too. My mom never told me about this. Now she's gone.

Asa is starting to feel sympathetic but--

JUNE (CONT'D)

Whatever is buried--is mine too.

ASA

(laughs)

Whatever is buried there, I promise you it's not valuable.

JUNE

You don't know.

ASA

(turns to go)

If it's a chest of gold coins, I'll give you half.

JUNE

Take me or I'll tell your mom.

Asa stops. Closes his eyes. Checkmate.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

High noon. The sun fries the earth. Skeletal bushes scratch the wind with dry twig fingers. The only signs of civilization: power lines sagging between metal towers and--

HIGHWAY

A double lane. Rocky shoulder. The only traffic is a new, sleek sedan. Sporty-but-affordable. A stupidly high spoiler.

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR - DAY (DRIVING)

MUSIC bumps. In the backseat, Asa jots down notes in a small notebook. The old photo bookmarks the pages.

Also in the back, June watches the passing desert landscape. She records a video of a rolling tumbleweed with her phone.

Riding shotgun, Keith taps buttons on the car's display.

KEITH

I can't find it.

Elliot drives wearing aviators and gloves. He swipes the car's tablet and launches the "RadarScan" app.

ELLIOT

There.

The car's GPS displays a map with an alert: "No radars in area." A radar detector is mounted to the car's dashboard.

ASA

Hey, Elliot. Do you want to keep your eyes on the road?

ELLIOT

It's fine. I got lane detection.

Elliot lifts his hands. The car steers itself.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Just like a Tesla.

KEITH

If the dollar store sold Teslas that run on fossil fuels.

ELLIOT

You want an electric car out here?

As Elliot gestures at the desolation around them, the CAR'S ROBOTIC VOICE speaks up:

CAR

Return hands to wheel.

Elliot taps something on the screen before returning his hands to the wheel. Static HUMS from the car speakers.

KEITH
What's that?

ELLIOT
Local police radio.

ASA
I don't hear anything.

Elliot grins. Exactly. Elliot brakes. The car slows down-- and comes to a complete stop on the empty highway.

ELLIOT
We can do 0 to 60 in almost 3 seconds. Want to see?

JUNE KEITH
Yeah! Go for it.

Asa says nothing.

KEITH (CONT'D)
Uh-oh, Asa's uncomfortable.

ASA
I didn't say anything.

ELLIOT
Dude, if you're legit uncomfortable, then forget it--

ASA JUNE
(waves hand, annoyed) Go!
Go for it.

Elliot grins. Unstraps the velcro on his driving glove, then re-tightens it. Revs the engine. Revs. REVS--

The car SHOOTS FORWARD.

Everybody--even Asa--WHOOPS like they're on a rollercoaster as the speedometer clears 70, 80, 90--

SOMETHING darts across the highway in front of them. SHIT!

Elliot brakes, downshifts, SWERVES--

On the highway shoulder, a JAGGED ROCK waits--

BAM. The car JOLTS, SCREECHES--

And finally halts in a whirl of dust. Silence. They stare out the window at the cause of their abrupt stop:

A TUMBLEWEED innocently rolls across the highway.

EXT. HIGHWAY SHOULDER, DESERT - DAY

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot examine the FLAT tire.

KEITH

At least we didn't hit the tumbleweed.

Too soon. Elliot glares at Keith and pops the trunk.

-- Asa helps Elliot jack the car up. / Elliot unscrews the old flat tire. / Elliot screws the spare tire on.

Finally, Elliot jacks the car down. The car lowers onto its wheels. And then goes lower. And lower.

KEITH (CONT'D)

Your spare tire is flat, bro.

-- Asa and June stare across the desert. In the background, Keith mills around while Elliot talks on the phone.

ASA

Still glad you came?

Glaring with defiance, June SNAPS a picture of a bullet-pierced road sign that reads: "FORT LIBERTY CITY LIMIT"

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Okay!

June and Asa turn around. Elliot waves them back.

BACK AT THE CAR

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot reconvene around the car.

ELLIOT

The tow truck guy says it's going to be an hour. Maybe two.

KEITH

Two hours? There's not a single truck closer than that?

ELLIOT

Not according to my insurance.

KEITH
Dude, call a tow company.

ELLIOT
If you want to look one up and pay
for it, be my guest.

Keith pulls out his phone. His web browser loads... And loads.

ASA
Voice works but I don't have data.

KEITH
Dammit.

Elliot opens the car door and plops into the driver's seat.

Keith fiddles with his phone. The wind blows. Asa zips up his sale-rack jacket. Looks up the road. Nobody.

JUNE
Excuse me, where is the restroom?

June's English is best when she's using travel phrases.

ELLIOT
Pick a spot.

Elliot gestures around the desert. Giggling, June covers her mouth and shakes her head, No. She's not that kind of girl.

KEITH
(re: his phone)
How can there not be a cell tower?
There's a town right there.

Asa looks up the highway--north, the direction they were heading. His gaze lingers on the "FORT LIBERTY" sign.

ASA
Let's just walk to town. They'll have a mechanic.

KEITH
Let's do it. I'm thirsty.

Elliot scoffs and shakes his head, No way.

ELLIOT
I'm not leaving a brand-new RKK on the side of the road.

KEITH
Nobody's gonna steal your car, man.

ELLIOT

We've got supply-chain issues.
Somebody could rip off the rest of
the tires. Or the catalytic
converter, or the stereo--

KEITH

All right, all right. We'll go.

Keith starts walking, holding his phone high. June follows.
Elliot remains in the driver's seat, reclining the chair.

ASA

Are you cool if I go with them?

ELLIOT

Make sure the mechanic knows it's a
brand-new RKK. Limited trim.

EXT. HIGHWAY, DESERT - DAY

Asa, June, and Keith trudge along the highway. When Keith
sees an oncoming truck, he immediately sticks out his thumb.

ASA

We're almost there.

Keith shrugs and keeps his thumb raised. June also sticks
out her thumb and smiles. Asa crosses his arms. Waits.

The truck approaches--and THUNDERS past. Keith and June
lower their thumbs as the truck's GOD BLESS AMERICA bumper
sticker shrinks into the distance. Asa keeps walking.

EXT. STREET, FORT LIBERTY - DAY

Asa, June, and Keith arrive in town--if you can call it
that. Gas station. Bar. A general store. One stoplight.

The restaurant proclaims itself THE SKILLET. A handwritten
sign taped to the door reads: "OPEN FOR INDOOR DINING!"

Asa points past the diner at an auto repair shop.

EXT. AUTO REPAIR SHOP, FORT LIBERTY - DAY

Asa pulls the office door. Locked--despite the OPEN sign. He
knocks. Nothing. Keith bangs on the garage. It rattles.

June taps her feet. She needs to pee, stat. Looking down the
street, Keith's eyes latch onto the--

RESTAURANT, where a WAITRESS (40s) has come out to smoke.

KEITH
Let's ask her.

ASA
Keith. Mask?

Asa and June pull out face masks. But Keith is dismissive:

KEITH
We're outside.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The Waitress blows a cloud of smoke as she watches the friends approach, Keith waving.

KEITH
Hello there! How's it going?

WAITRESS
Can't complain.

The Waitress looks like she wouldn't mind complaining about a few things. Before Keith can go on--

JUNE
Excuse me, may I use the restroom?

WAITRESS
Are you hungry?

The Waitress points with her cigarette to the "BATHROOM FOR CUSTOMERS ONLY" sign on the door.

KEITH
We actually had some car trouble.

The Waitress points her cigarette at the auto repair shop.

ASA
Yeah, nobody's there.

WAITRESS
If he ain't there--he's there.

The Waitress points at a dive bar: The Silver Nickel.

EXT. BAR, FORT LIBERTY - DAY

Asa, June, and Keith stand at the bar door. The sounds of Southern rock and laughter. Keith reaches for the handle--

ASA

Keith. Will you put on a mask? Our grandmother. Please.

INT. BAR - DAY

Now masked up, Keith, June, and Asa enter. The PATRONS look over from the bar. For a moment, there's no sound except the Lynyrd Skynyrd knockoff playing from the jukebox--until:

BOB

Lose the masks, this is America.

BOB. 40s. White. Cruel laughter. Rough hands. Bulky jacket.

Bob's friend CLINT (40s) and the bartender LIZ (60s) laugh good-naturedly.

SAM (30s, long hair, a nerd among fools), on the other hand, rolls his eyes and keeps typing on his chunky gaming laptop.

JUNE

Excuse me, may I use the restroom?

Liz points to the hall.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Thank you!

June scurries off. Liz drops three coasters on the bar. Looks at Asa and Keith expectantly as they approach.

ASA

Can I have water? I'll pay for it.

BOB

How are you going to drink it?

LIZ

Don't mind him.

Bob snickers. Liz fills a glass. Asa quickly lowers his mask and drains the water. As Liz turns to Keith--

BOB

I'll have a TsingTao.

Bob mispronounces it "Sing-Toe." Clint snorts. Sam eyerolls.

BOB (CONT'D)
What? I feel like a "Sing-Toe."

Asa frowns. They're being mocked. Keith, suddenly serious:

KEITH
That's not how you say it.

The song ends. Silence. Bob swivels his stool to face Keith.

BOB
I've always called it "Sing-Toe."

Keith pulls off his mask. Stares hard at Bob.

KEITH
Then you've always said it wrong.

ASA
Keith, come on.

Nervous, Asa reaches his hand into his jacket pocket, ready to pull something out at the drop of a hat.

BOB
Okay, friend, enlighten me. How do you pronounce it?

KEITH
The true, ancient pronunciation is...
CHING TAOOOO!!!

He shouts the word like a martial arts *kiai* with a choppy, Mandarin inflection. At the same time, he punches the air in a mockery of a kung fu monk.

It's cringy as fuck. Twitter is offended. So is Asa.

But Bob and Clint burst out LAUGHING. Keith grins, having successfully diffused the tension for the low price of turning his heritage into a joke.

June returns just in time to catch all the laughter.

ASA
Hey! Listen, we got a flat tire. Do any of you work at that garage?

BOB
That mechanic is never there.

SAM
Probably in the drunk tank.

CLINT
His parole officer will love that.

LIZ
Never closed his tab.

The locals are clearly fucking around. Asa, out of patience:

ASA
Let's go--

BOB
Hold on, friend. I'll be back in
the shop after one more beer.

Bob the mechanic grins and raises his near-empty beer in
mock cheers.

CLINT
None of you can change a tire?

ASA
The spare is flat. We might need a
new tire.

SAM
What make is it?

June speaks up, glad to have something to say:

JUNE
Brand new RKK, limited trim!

BOB
We only have American tires.

Bob shakes his head in faux-disappointment. Asa stares.

SAM
We've got something that'll fit.

BOB
(suddenly angry)
Are you working today?

SAM
Are you?

Bob SMACKS Sam's laptop shut. Angry silence fills the bar.

Asa, June, and Keith stare as Sam snatches his laptop and
walks out. The door bangs shut behind him.

LIZ
You're closing his tab.

Clint chuckles. Bob drains his beer. Weird vibes.

KEITH
So... Where did we land on the tire?

BOB
Yeah, yeah, I'll help you out.

ASA
You know what, I think we're good.
Sorry to bother you.

Despite Keith's look--Come on man--Asa heads for the exit.

BOB
Hey!

Bob's aggressive tone halts Asa in his tracks.

BOB (CONT'D)
You need help. I can help. What's
the problem?

KEITH
There's no problem.

BOB
So have a drink with us and then
I'll fix you up.

KEITH
Thanks, man.
(to Liz)
TsingTaos all around.

BOB

CLINT

Ayyy!

Keith catches Asa's look.

KEITH
We've been in the car all day.

JUNE
I would like a drink.

Liz cracks open TsingTaos. Keith and June reach for theirs.
Bob and Clint glance at June as she removes her mask.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Thank you very much!

CLINT
(re: June's accent)
Where you all from?

KEITH
San Francisco.

BOB
Where are you from originally?

JUNE
I'm from Japan. Where are you from?

CLINT
Around here.

LIZ
Speak for yourself. North Carolina.

BOB
Hundred years ago, you were.

LIZ
I'm about to cut you off.

CLINT
You'd go out of business.

The locals laugh. Bob notices Asa's mask is still on.

BOB
Lose the mask. Have a drink.

ASA
We live with our grandmother. We
need to be careful.

BOB
You need to be careful? We should
be scared of you.

ASA
Why's that?

BOB
Why do you think?

Asa exchanges a glance with Keith and June. *Is he for real?*

BOB (CONT'D)
You came from San Francisco. Big
city. Lots of germs.

Keith laughs. Asa relaxes. But not much.

ASA

I better keep the mask on then. To protect you.

BOB

Very honorable of you. But here's the deal: you want your tire? Have a drink. Just one sip.

Asa looks from Bob (smiling) to Keith and June (bewildered). This is weird.

BOB (CONT'D)

Go ahead. One little sip of "Sing-toe" for a 200 dollar repair.

KEITH

Dude, just drink it.

Asa finally pulls down his mask. Sips the beer. Bob and Clint burst into applause.

BOB

That wasn't so bad, was it?

Putting down his beer, Asa heads for the door, muttering:

ASA

I'm going to call Elliot.

EXT. BAR, STREET - DAY

Asa walks out of the bar and comes face-to-face with--

Sam, smoking a cigarette with his laptop bag slung over his shoulder. Asa looks at him warily.

SAM

So? Is Bob gonna help you?

ASA

After one more drink.

SAM

(laughs, shakes head)
He's not going anywhere. He's fucking with you.

ASA

I was getting that feeling.

Sam looks around. Crushes his cigarette.

SAM
I can fix you up.

ASA
Yeah?

SAM
Sure. You probably only need a
patch. I'll grab some tools from
the shop. Meet out here in 5?

INT. BAR - DAY

Keith, June, Bob, Clint, and Liz at the bar. Bob has finished his own beer and started on Asa's.

BOB
Your friend's a sensitive guy, huh?

JUNE
Asa takes things seriously.

BOB
A man should be able to laugh at
himself.

KEITH
Cheers to that.

Keith and Bob clink bottles.

BOB
You know any redneck jokes?

KEITH
(laughing, surprised)
What?

BOB
Everybody knows a redneck joke.

JUNE
Sorry, but what is "redneck"?

LIZ
You're looking at two of the
biggest ones you'll ever meet.

CLINT
I got one. What do you call 32
rednecks smiling?
(beat)
A full set of teeth.

Everybody laughs--although June's is delayed.

BOB
How about an Asian joke?

Keith looks at Bob. *Seriously?*

CLINT
Oh, come on. Don't make it weird.
We're all friends here.

Keith looks between Bob and Clint's eager faces, deciding whether or not to go with the flow. Finally, he yields.

KEITH
All right: what's the Chinese word
for dental floss?
(beat)
Blindfold.

Bob and Clint howl with laughter. Keith joins in. June doesn't. Liz says nothing; rinses glasses with a frown.

The bar door opens: Asa returns. The men suppress giggles.

CLINT
Here's our man!

ASA
(lies)
Elliot said the tow truck is almost
there.

BOB
Thought it was hours out.

ASA
Yeah, well. We better get going.

Keith drains his bottle and stands.

KEITH
How do you circumcise a redneck?

Asa looks at Keith, bewildered.

KEITH (CONT'D)
Kick his sister in the jaw.

Bob, Clint, and Liz ROAR with laughter. Even Asa smiles.

JUNE
Sorry--I don't understand?

BOB
Come to the back and I'll give you
a demonstration.

Bob and Clint laugh--but now they're the only ones.

BOB (CONT'D)
Come on. You know:
(bad Asian accent)
"Sucky sucky five dollar, love you
long time?"

This time, not even Clint laughs. June might not catch the reference but she gets the drift. She scoots back her stool.

KEITH
That's uncalled for.

BOB
Oh, redneck jokes are cool but I
can't quote a fucking movie?

ASA
Keith. Let's go.

BOB
I'm almost done with this piss
water. I'll give you a ride.

KEITH
I think we're good.

As Keith rises--Bob places his hand on Keith's shoulder and tries to press him back down to the stool.

BOB
I told you I'd give you a
Goddamn ride--

KEITH
Get your hand off me!

Keith STRIKES Bob's hand off his shoulder. Bob half-stumbles back, knocking over his beer. Steadying himself, he glares at Keith. A line has been crossed.

LIZ
Whoa!

CLINT
Bob, easy.

Keith glares, holding ground, fists clenched. June has started filming with her phone. Clint notices. He turns away from the camera, hiding his face.

LIZ
Hey. You're out of here. Go.

ASA
Keith, let's go!

Asa's hand goes back into his pocket, clutching something. Swallowing anger, Keith turns and walks toward the door.

BOB
That's right. Walk away. You don't want none of this.

Bob chops his hands through the air, making MONKEY-LIKE MARTIAL ARTS NOISES. A shitty Bruce Lee impression.

As Keith whirls around--

Bob JABS at Keith's chest with a karate chop.

Keith steps back, almost tripping--

Asa PEPPER SPRAYS Bob.

A direct hit: the orange fluid squirts all over Bob's eyes.

BOB (CONT'D)
You little bitch!--

Bob splutters as Asa SPRAYS him again.

LIZ
Oh hell no--

The bar explodes into action:

As June continues to film--

Liz runs out from behind the bar while--

Clint tries to restrain Bob as--

Bob REACHES INTO HIS JACKET for a holstered REVOLVER.

BOB KEITH
Squint ass little bitch, He's got a gun!
I'll fucking kill you--

June, Asa, and Keith RUN as Bob draws his firearm--

CLINT
Drop it, you stupid son of a bitch!

Clint has Bob in a headlock while Liz grabs Bob's gun hand. The six-shooter waves around in the air--

EXT. BAR - DAY

The door BANGS open. Asa, June, and Keith pour outside.

KEITH
What the hell--

ASA
Come on. Go. Go, go--

Asa's hand trembles as he clutches the pepper spray and jogs down the street. June and Keith follow--

The bar door opens again: Bob stumbles out, coughing and crying. Clint and Liz emerge as well, also coughing.

LIZ
It's all right. It was empty!

Liz holds the gun up, showing its disassembled cylinder.

BOB
My fucking eyes!

Squinting through tears, Bob spots Asa and lunges--but Clint grabs him again.

CLINT
Cool it, dumbass--

BOB
Fucking kill them!

As June keeps filming with her phone, a black PICKUP TRUCK pulls up alongside them. Sam at the wheel.

SAM
Hop in.

Asa looks at Sam dubiously, then glances back at the bar, where Bob rants and takes blind swings at his friends.

I/E. SAM'S TRUCK/DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY (DRIVING)

Sam's pickup cruises south. A pump and spare tires roll around in the open truck bed.

IN THE CAB, Keith and June occupy the back seat. Asa rides shotgun, his hand shaking. Sam drives.

SAM
Sorry about him.

KEITH
It's not your fault.

SAM

We're cousins. I feel responsible
for my own, you know what I mean?

ASA

What's his problem?

SAM

He's had a rough year. Baby mama
took the kid. He got in trouble,
did some time, then when he got out
in March... You know. The slopes were
closed. Nobody's been driving
through. Business has been bad.
Lockdown got everybody stir-crazy.

ASA

That's not an excuse.

SAM

If you say so. Is that you?

Sam points ahead to Elliot's car on the side of the road.

EXT. ROADSIDE, HIGHWAY - DAY

The pump HUMS as Sam fills a tire. June waits in the car.
Asa and Keith hover in the background. Elliot watches the
tire closely, like surgery's being performed on his child.

Finally, Sam flicks the pump off.

SAM

That should do it. Good-looking
car. What year?

ELLIOT

(ready to talk about it)

Next year--

ASA

(interrupts)

What do we owe you?

SAM

250.

ELLIOT

250? To patch a tire?

SAM

I drove out here. Gave you a ride
when you needed it. Didn't I?

ASA
(to Elliot)
Don't worry about it, I got this.

ELLIOT
Hell no. We're getting hosed. This
should be 50 bucks.

Tense silence. The scratch of a tumbleweed on asphalt.

SAM
Tell you what. I'll knock it down
to 50, but you're going to do me a
favor. What happened back there--

Sam nods down the highway, toward town.

SAM (CONT'D)
Keep it to yourself. You'll be
better off.

ASA
What's that supposed to mean?

SAM
It means my cousin's on probation
and sending him to prison won't do
anybody any good.

KEITH
What did he do?--

SAM
Nothing--look it's a small town.
We'll make sure it doesn't happen
again. You got my word.

KEITH
Sure. We got you. It's fine.

Sam turns to Asa who thinks--then pulls out his wallet and
slaps a few bills into Sam's hand.

ASA
Yeah. Fine. Handle him.

SAM
Thanks.
(counts money)
So. Where you all headed?

As Asa hesitates--

KEITH
Cold Valley.

SAM
The Japanese internment camp?

ASA
Incarceration center.

KEITH
Have you been?

SAM
Sure. My place is right around
there. Hate to break it to you, but
the museum is closed.

ASA
Yeah, we know. We were just going
to walk around.

SAM
Were you all--were your people
locked up in there?

ASA
Our grandmother.

Asa gestures to June, who has been listening from the car.

SAM
You know--my great-grandfather was
stationed there.

ASA
Really?

SAM
Yeah. Military police. It's how our
family ended up casting roots here.

Sam looks across the desert. Home sweet home.

ELLIOT
Yo, open the trunk.

Elliot has rolled the old, flat tire toward the back of the car. As Asa lifts the trunk lid--

Sam glances into the trunk and sees an assortment of DIGGING TOOLS. A pickax, shovels, headlamps.

Asa slams the lid shut as soon as Elliot gets the tire in.

SAM

Well. I hope you all have a
powerful experience.

Sam lugs his pump to his truck. Uneasy, Asa watches him go.

I/E. ELLIOT'S CAR/HIGHWAY - DAY (DRIVING)

Back on the road. Elliot/Keith up front. Asa/June in back.

ELLIOT

So does somebody want to tell me
what happened?

KEITH

We got in a bar fight.

Asa stops paying attention to the conversation. He looks
over at June. She gazes out the window, clutching her arms.

ASA

Hey. Are you okay?

JUNE

(hesitates, nods)
I thought people in California did
not have so many guns.

ASA

(chuckles darkly)

They do. And this is barely
California.

ELLIOT (O.S.)

Asa?

Asa tunes back into Elliot and Keith's conversation.

ELLIOT

Are you seriously not going to
report that? The guy's a psycho.

ASA

Oh, I'm reporting him.

Surprised, Keith twists around in his seat.

KEITH

We promised we wouldn't.

ASA

We can't let him get away with
that.

KEITH

The gun was empty.

ASA

According to his friend.

KEITH

Is it really worth sending the guy
back to jail? He's got a kid.

Asa says nothing. Sensing weakness, Keith presses:

KEITH (CONT'D)

He wouldn't have pulled a gun if
you hadn't maced him.

ASA

He assaulted you.

KEITH

He tapped me.

Asa is pissed. Says nothing. They drive in silence. Car
engine. Open desert. Ethical impasse.

ELLIOT

June? What do you think? Should we
tell the police?

JUNE

(maybe)

He said he would kill us.

KEITH

Big talk. He was drunk and pissed.

ASA

Drunk, pissed-off people kill
people. Why do you keep looking for
reasons to let him off the hook?

KEITH

Why do you keep looking for reasons
to talk to the police? We came here
as grave robbers, dude.

ELLIOT

We're not "robbing a grave."

KEITH

Call it what you want. I'm just not
trying to deal with cops this
weekend. Are you?

That point carries weight. Asa catches Elliot's gaze in the rearview mirror, then he exchanges a glance with June. Everybody wants to let it go.

ASA

Okay. Let's just forget about it.

KEITH

Thank you.

EXT. HIGHWAY, DESERT - DAY

Cruising north, Elliot's car passes a sign: "COLD VALLEY HISTORIC SITE NEXT RIGHT." The car turns off the highway.

EXT. PARKING LOT, HISTORIC SITE, DESERT - DAY

The lot is empty except for Elliot's car. Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot pile out, the wind whipping at their hair. Asa looks around. Flat desert. You can see for miles.

-- THE VISITOR'S CENTER. A small museum. The sign on the door reads, "CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE DUE TO COVID-19"

-- A WATCHTOWER. The sign reads "HISTORICAL RE-CREATION"

-- A BARRACKS. A rectangular wooden structure.

-- THE HIGHWAY. No cars. No neighboring buildings.

CUT TO:

MAP OF COLD VALLEY

The map depicts the incarceration center as it was in the 1940s. The blocks of barracks where the Japanese Americans lived. The mess halls. The military police compound. The hospital. The churches. The administration buildings...

PULL BACK:

EXT. VISITOR CENTER, HISTORIC SITE - DAY

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot stand before an informational kiosk outside the visitor center, examining the map.

JUNE

There. That's where Obaachan was.

June points at the section labeled "Block 14." But Asa is looking at the northern part of the map labeled CEMETERY.

EXT. CEMETERY, HISTORIC SITE - DAY

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot in the graveyard. A dozen headstones surround a MONUMENT: a column of heavy stone adorned with Japanese *kanji* and a bronze placard in English.

KEITH
Jesus Christ.

Asa, June, and Elliot follow Keith's gaze. On the monument's base, a graffiti vandal has scrawled: "RICE NIGGERS GO HOME"

Keith tries to scratch it off. It does not come off. The friends stare. Wind blows. An upsetting silence.

CLICK. The snap of June's phone as she takes a picture.

ASA
Park services will take care of it.

Asa walks away from the monument, down the row of headstones. He crouches at the last grave, which reads: "Danishi Yamamoto, 1887 - 1943"

ASA (CONT'D)
It's our grandmother's dad.

JUNE
{Great-grandfather.}

ELLIOT
Damn. Nobody wanted to move him?

ASA
My mom looked into it once but our grandmother was weird about it. Our family lets sleeping dogs lie.

June SNAPS a picture. Asa pulls out his notebook and looks at the annotated PHOTOGRAPH. 8 feet south, 3 feet down.

-- Holding a COMPASS, Asa aligns himself south, then unspools a TAPE MEASURE and hands the loose end to June.

ASA (CONT'D)
Hold this. Right here.

June holds the tape measure's tip to the edge of their ancestor's tombstone. Asa walks away from the grave, trailing the tape measure behind him.

Keith and Elliot watch. The tape measure scratches against its housing as it measures out 5 feet. 6 feet. 7 feet--

8 feet south of the grave, Asa stops. Looks down. Picks up a nearby rock. Drops it between his feet, marking the spot.

June releases her end of the tape measure. The tape slithers home with a CLICK. A cold wind blows.

Everybody looks at the rock at Asa's feet. Keith looks around. Not a single car has passed on the highway.

KEITH

You know, we could probably dig now. There's nobody out here.

ELLIOT

You sure about that?

They follow Elliot's pointed finger down the highway. A TRUCK has pulled over. Asa shields his eyes, trying to get a good look. It's too far to make out any details but there's something ominous about the truck just sitting there.

ASA

Let's stick to the plan. We'll come back tonight.

Asa walks out of the graveyard, leading Keith and Elliot. June snaps a final picture before following.

EXT. PARKING LOT, HISTORIC SITE - DAY

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot head back toward Elliot's car.

KEITH

What should we do for... Five hours?

JUNE

I want to see more.

June gestures around at the grounds of the historic site.

ASA

Might not be a good idea to hang around here too much.

Asa glances down the highway. The faraway truck.

KEITH

Why? We're allowed to be here. It's not like they blocked off the roads. Come on, let's do a loop.

Asa silently submits. They pile into the car.

-- Elliot's car turns out of the parking lot and onto a gravel road running around the perimeter of the--

EXT. HISTORIC SITE - DAY, CONTINUOUS

FROM OVERHEAD, the car is tiny. The historic site huge.

Divided into grid-like sectors by the ghosts of fences. Over 800 acres of desert now overtaken by scraggly trees.

Elliot's car cruises the perimeter road--a track for a guided tour.

They pass crumbling concrete foundations of buildings long gone. They pass an overgrown baseball diamond, the wire fence still standing. They draw near a barracks.

INT. CAR - DAY, CONTINUOUS (DRIVING)

Elliot nods at the rectangular barracks building.

ELLIOT

People lived in that chicken coop?

ASA

That's a reconstruction. But yeah.

Keith squints at a sign outside the barracks.

KEITH

It says there's an exhibit inside.

ASA

I'm sure it's closed.

All the same, Elliot pulls the car up to the barracks.

EXT. BARRACKS - DAY, MOMENTS LATER

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot stand before the brown building. The barrack is lifted off the ground, on stilts, forming a generous crawlspace beneath.

JUNE

Group picture?

-- While June fixes her phone to a tripod, Asa, Keith, and Elliot stand against the barracks wall, waiting.

ELLIOT

Do we smile?

KEITH

What?

ELLIOT

I don't know. Like, I wouldn't smile in a photo at the Holocaust Museum, you know?

KEITH

The internment was nothing like the Holocaust.

(walks it back)

I mean although, obviously, it wasn't great. Definitely not good.

ELLIOT

(to Asa)

Are you going to smile?

ASA

No.

ELLIOT

(to June)

Should we smile?

June looks at Asa. Asa looks back at her blankly. Shrugs. He would rather not be taking a picture at all.

-- Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot stand lined up against the building. They stare at the camera, unsmiling. The wind lifts their hair. The camera CLICKS.

-- While June folds up her tripod, Keith walks up the steps to the barracks door. He tests the door handle--it opens.

KEITH

Somebody forgot to lock up.

INT. BARRACKS - DAY

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot enter the barracks and look around the walls lined with MUSEUM DISPLAYS.

PANELS OF PHOTOGRAPHS: Japanese Americans boarding trains, disembarking buses, carrying suitcases into the desert. In most photos, the families smile, putting on brave faces.

BLOWN UP NEWSPAPERS. Headlines jump out. Pearl Harbor. Washington declares war on Tokyo. Executive Order 9066.

June peers across a velvet rope barrier at a--

DIORAMA

A life-sized recreation of a barracks living space. Narrow metal beds. Small stove. Old-timey chests. Flannel shirts draped over hangers. A rack of shoes. Wooden sandals.

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot gaze at the sad little beds. A gust of wind rustles the sheets.

ASA
C'mon. We shouldn't be here.

Asa turns and exits the barracks.

EXT. BARRACKS, DESERT - DAY

Asa descends the steps. As he turns the corner of the barracks, heading back to Elliot's car--

He comes face-to-face with BOB.

ASA
Whoa!

Asa jumps. Reaches for his keychain and pepper spray--

BOB
Easy there Tex.

Bob steps back raising his hands in a gesture of peace. Asa takes in Bob's red eyes and fresh change of clothes.

June, Keith, and Elliot turn the barracks corner and startle at the sight of Bob. His truck now parked by Elliot's car.

KEITH
What the hell?

June whips out her phone. Starts filming again. Bob notices.

KEITH (CONT'D)
Get the hell out of here, man.

BOB
We need to talk.

ASA
About what?

Bob strolls around Elliot's car. Peers inside. Adjusts a wing mirror. Elliot swallows.

BOB

Things got a little out of hand.

Bob sits on the hood of Elliot's car. Crosses his arms.

BOB (CONT'D)

I'd say sorry. But, fact of the matter is, you assaulted me.

KEITH

Your cousin told us your hardluck country song sob story. We aren't going to report you.

ASA

We let it go. Just get out of here.

BOB

The thing is...

Bob nods at June. Straight at her phone camera.

BOB (CONT'D)

I'm not comfortable with videos of me floating around.

ASA

You're not comfortable?

BOB

Could get me in trouble.

ASA

Whose fault is that?

BOB

Whose fault?

(chuckles)

You know why I'm on parole? I got into a disagreement. Was it my fault? His fault? I don't know. But I know this: the other guy ended up in the hospital. Last I heard, he still wasn't talking right.

The wind moans. Tumbleweeds roll. Asa shivers.

BOB (CONT'D)

You want to let it go? Delete that video. You'll never see me again.

ASA
How do we know that?

BOB
You'll have to trust me.

Everybody looks at June as she continues to film.

ELLIOT
Just delete it.

ASA
No way. Don't let him bully you.

KEITH
You can't sit on a car and make us
delete shit from our phones, dude.
If you don't get out of here in two
seconds I'm going to call the cops.

As Keith whips out his phone, Bob shifts his hands around
inside his jacket pockets.

BOB
You got service?

Keith lowers his phone.

ELLIOT
June. Just give him what he wants.

Bob waits. Watches. All eyes on June.

JUNE
How much?

Bob blinks. Laughs. Everybody looks at her, surprised.

JUNE (CONT'D)
How much will you pay?

ASA
You don't need his money--

BOB
20 bucks.

June smirks. Shakes her head. Not enough.

Bob glares. He rises from the hood of the car. Takes a few
steps toward them. Everybody cringes as he pulls out--

His wallet. He counts a mess of crumpled bills.

BOB (CONT'D)
93 bucks. That's what I got.

Bob holds up the cash wad. The bills flap in the wind.

JUNE
Okay.

ASA
Are you serious?

JUNE
Give me the money, please.

BOB
Get rid of the video first.

JUNE
I would like half the dollars now.

Bob nods. June steps forward. Extends her hand. Bob slaps half the bills into her palm.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Okay.

Asa, Keith, and Elliot tense up as June steps close to Bob. She shows him her phone as she scrolls through her gallery.

JUNE (CONT'D)
Video. Right here. You see?
(presses delete)
And this one too.

BOB
Okay then.

Bob tries to hand her the rest of the money--

JUNE
Wait. Cloud.

BOB
What?

June navigates to her cloud storage, shows him the backup copy of the video, pending upload.

JUNE
Look. See? Deleted from backup too.

BOB
Didn't think of that.
(ruminates)
How do I know you didn't put this
on TikTok or something?

JUNE
"You'll have to trust me."

Bob nods. Hands June the rest of the money. She steps back.

BOB
All right then.

Bob heads to his truck. Climbs in. Everybody flinches as he SLAMS the door. The truck rumbles off. The friends relax--except Elliot, who rushes to check his car for scratches.

I/E. ELLIOT'S CAR/HIGHWAY - DAY (DRIVING)

Elliot drives. Keith rides shotgun. In the backseat, Asa glances judgmentally at June as she counts her money.

ASA
Can't believe you did that.

JUNE
He wanted something. I wanted
something. Fair trade.

KEITH
Gotta respect the hustle.

ASA
You don't need his money.

JUNE
Everybody needs money. I don't live
off student loans.

KEITH
Burn.

ASA
No, you live off my mom.

JUNE
I work. I clean up after Obaachan.
I take care of her.

ASA
My mom and I were taking care of
grandma fine on our own.

JUNE

You never help--unless you want to pry. Nosy. Disrespectful.

KEITH

Settle down, children.

ASA

You think my mom needs you to take care of grandma? She paid for your ticket over here to be nice. Because you had nowhere else to go.

June looks at Asa, shocked and hurt, before turning to look out the window. Asa immediately feels bad.

KEITH

Jesus Christ, dude.

ASA

June--sorry. I just don't think you should've deleted that video.

They drive. Elliot turns on music to fill the awkward silence. Asa reaches into his jacket pocket--but comes up empty-handed. He checks all of his pockets. His backpack.

ASA (CONT'D)

Crap. I lost my notebook.

KEITH

You had it at the graveyard. Is it in your backpack?

ASA

No. All my notes are in there.

ELLIOT

That sucks.

The car settles into silence again. Asa continues to root around in his backpack.

DING. Everybody's phones suddenly ping with alerts as they drive back into service.

Asa checks his phone: he has a message from June. *It's the video of Bob from the bar.* She sent it to him as backup.

Asa looks over at her. June sticks out her tongue.

EXT. HIGHWAY, DESERT - DAY, LATER

Other cars now fill the road. Up ahead: gas stations and stores. They pass a sign: "WELCOME TO SILVER RIDGE"

EXT. MOTEL, SILVER RIDGE - DAY

June, Keith, and Elliot unload bags from the parked car. Asa walks out of the motel front office with keycards.

Elliot touches his car's door handle; the car flashes but doesn't lock. Frowning, Elliot tries again. Still no.

KEITH

Is your key inside?

ELLIOT

Oh shit. The spare.

Elliot reaches into the glove box and grabs the spare key.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Asa, June, and Keith take off their shoes by the door. Elliot, on the other hand, flops onto a bed, shoes and all.

Asa looks at the painting above the TV: a sentimental desert landscape, evocative of the wild west. June, meanwhile, has pulled toiletries from her backpack.

JUNE

I will take a shower.

June exits to the bathroom. Elliot examines his phone.

ELLIOT

Anybody want to guess our average miles per hour on that trip?

KEITH

No.

ASA

30 miles a gallon?

ELLIOT

Thirty? It's a 3.5 liter engine, man. It's a performance car. 22 miles per gallon.

KEITH

That's shit mileage. You should get a Prius.

ELLIOT
You should get your own ride back.

While Keith and Elliot's banter fades into the background, Asa checks the weather on his phone. Sunset: 7:22 PM. The predicted temperature for the night plummets into the 40s.

In the background, Elliot gets up.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)
I want to get the car washed before
we eat. Anybody want to come?

LATER

Elliot gone. From the bathroom, the shower HISSES. Asa lies on one bed, Keith on the other, looking at his phone.

ASA
Hey.

KEITH
Here it comes.

ASA
What?

KEITH
Nothing. What's up?

ASA
What you were doing at the bar
wasn't cool. Laughing along.
Encouraging it. What's that about?

Keith drops his phone to his chest. Looks up at the ceiling.

KEITH
Making friends is a good way to get
what you want. Better than pepper
spray, anyway.

ASA
What's that supposed to mean?

KEITH
You were escalating the situation.
You were overreacting to every
little thing he said.

ASA
I should have laughed like you?

KEITH

Dude, he's some asshole in the middle of nowhere. Is it really worth getting mad about what he laughs at?

ASA

So it *doesn't* matter what people laugh at, or say, or think. Is that what you're saying?

KEITH

Yeah, this conversation sucks. I'm not doing it.

Keith goes back to his phone. Asa angrily gets up.

EXT. MAIN DRAG, SILVER RIDGE - DAY

Asa walks. Silver Ridge is mostly gas stations, railway, and road. A train rumbles in the opposite direction. Asa stops: his phone is ringing. Incoming call from "MOM".

ASA

Hi.

SUE (PHONE)

You have service. Are you there?

ASA

Yeah, we made it.

SUE (PHONE)

How's the campsite?

ASA

Good. The lake is really nice.

The train has passed, leaving a view of the desert behind. Asa stares out into the tumbleweeds and the dying sun.

ASA (CONT'D)

How's grandma?

SUE (PHONE)

She woke up confused from her nap.
It's getting worse.

Asa stares at the bloody sunset.

SUE (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Don't tell June. I don't want her to worry.

ASA

Yeah. Sure.

SUE (PHONE)

Thanks. For taking your cousin. And helping out with Obaachan.

(beat)

I've been tough on you. Between my mom and my sister... I haven't been my best.

ASA

(taken aback)

I know. It's okay.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY, SAME TIME

Sue sits at her home office desk. She stares at her reflection in her blank, dark computer monitors.

SUE

Not really. I haven't been supportive of your work.

INTERCUT WITH:

Asa continues to walk as he listens, incredulous, to this outpouring from his mother.

SUE (CONT'D)

When I was a kid, if I asked about the internment, your grandmother would shut down. Get mad. She hit me once. We couldn't talk about it.

ASA

Yeah. I know.

SUE

But you're right. Somebody needs to ask questions and tell the truth. Even if it's uncomfortable. It's the right thing to do.

ASA

I agree. Thank you.

SUE

Do you remember when you were a kid and the clerk at the store gave me a 50 dollar bill instead of a 5?

ASA
Yeah-- SUE
You made me drive all the way back.

ASA
Yeah, mom, I remember.

SUE
My ethical little guy. Always doing the right thing.

END INTERCUT ON:

ASA
(laughs)
You're in a weird mood.

SUE (PHONE)
Seeing my mom like this... makes me think about what's important. The world needs people with principles.

Asa comes to a stop. Up ahead, he sees the POLICE STATION.

SUE (PHONE) (CONT'D)
I'll let you get back to it.

ASA
Yeah. Okay. Bye mom.

SUE (PHONE)
Bye. Say hi to June and Keith.

Asa hangs up. Looks at his text messages. Sees the video from June. Then looks at the police station.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The bathroom door remains closed. The shower has stopped, but June is still in there.

Shirt off, Keith does push-ups on the floor. The motel room door opens. Asa enters. Keith stops. Looks up.

ASA
Hey. It was a shitty situation at the bar earlier. We both played a part in it--but mostly, that guy was an asshole.

As Keith gets up from the floor, Asa raises a fist.

ASA (CONT'D)
Squash it?

KEITH
Of course. Love you to death.

Keith bumps Asa's fist.

ASA
Thanks.

KEITH
(laughing)
"Thanks"? Tell me you love me.

ASA
(laughing)
No.

Keith throws a pillow at Asa.

KEITH
Why don't you love me?

ASA
Grow up.

As Asa tosses the pillow back, Elliot enters.

KEITH
Elliot. I love you, bro.

ELLIOT
(weird but okay)
Love you too, man.

KEITH
See? That's friendship.

Asa rolls his eyes but he's smiling.

EXT. POLICE STATION, SILVER RIDGE - SUNDOWN

Establishing. The sun sets on this bastion of law and order.

INT. RECEPTION, POLICE STATION - SUNDOWN

The police DESK CAPTAIN sits at the front desk, clacking on the computer. He looks up as ANOTHER OFFICER passes through.

DESK CAPTAIN
Hey, Hicks.

The Desk Captain picks up a hand-filled police report.

DESK CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
Got a report from a walk-in you
might want to look at.

The police officer looks over.

It's CLINT, Bob's friend from the bar, now in full police uniform. Clint's expression darkens as he heads toward the Desk Captain and snatches the report.

I/E. ELLIOT'S CAR/HIGHWAY, DESERT - NIGHT (DRIVING)

Elliot's car ROARS down the road. Elliot lets the car steer itself. Asa rides shotgun, staring out the window. Keith and June in the back. Everybody's dressed for the cold.

EXT. FORT LIBERTY - NIGHT

The little highway town is quiet. The bar's sign dark. The restaurant open. No customers.

The Waitress smokes her eternal cigarette. She watches Elliot's car cruise through the only stoplight.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Elliot's car exits toward the historic site.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT

-- The CRANK of the handbrake. Elliot parks.
-- The POP of the trunk opening. Shovels and pickaxes.
-- The CLICK of headlamps. Lights flash as the group trudges toward the monument and tombstones.
-- The THUNK of a shovel tip pressing into the earth next to the marker stone that Asa left on the ground earlier.

Asa's boot stomps on the shovel's blade--which bounces back. Elliot taps his shovel against the ground. Hard as stone.

ELLIOT
How did anybody dig graves in this?

KEITH
I got this.

Keith pulls off his jacket. Makes a show of flexing before snatching up the PICKAX. Keith swings the sharp blade--

LATER

The ground has been loosened. Asa and Keith dig.

June and Elliot stand watch. The highway: a lonely strip of darkness cutting through the greater darkness of night. No cars. Except for their headlamps, the only light is the moon, bearing cold, white witness to the excavation.

JUNE

Car.

June points. A pair of headlights cruise up the highway. They turn off their headlamps. The car zooms toward them--

And keeps going. Soon, its tail lights disappear.

ELLIOT

Dig on.

KEITH

Dig on!

I/E. POLICE CAR/HIGHWAY - NIGHT (DRIVING)

Wearing a grim expression, Clint turns his police car off the highway and down a dusty road, heading toward a junkyard nestled at the foot of the mountains.

EXT. BOB'S TRAILER - NIGHT

The police car pulls up to a trailer surrounded by cars in various states of disrepair. Clint gets out. Looks at the dark trailer. A gust of wind rattles the screen door.

-- Clint BANGS on the door.

CLINT

Bob. It's Clint. We gotta talk.

No answer.

CLINT (CONT'D)

You want to have this conversation with me, not somebody else.

Silence--then the door opens. Bob scowls through the screen.

INT. BOB'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Piled-up beer cans. A workbench of gadgets. An empty gun rack. Bob sits on the couch. Clint stands on the other side of the coffee table, arms crossed.

Bob watches a VIDEO on Clint's phone. Hears his own voice:

BOB (PHONE)
Squint ass little bitch, I'll
fucking kill you--

Bob clicks the phone dark. Tosses it on the coffee table.

CLINT
I thought you took care of it.

Bob says nothing. Rage brews behind his eyes.

CLINT (CONT'D)
It's a Goddamn miracle you can't
see my face in it.

BOB
Lucky you.

CLINT
You are lucky. Lucky I got to this
before your PO did. This is bigger
than a parole violation. Between
the gun and the threat, this could
go down as a hate crime.

BOB
I don't give enough shits to hate
anyone.

CLINT
You know how things are. This video
won't away. It's in our records.

Bob says nothing.

CLINT (CONT'D)
We need to get our story straight.
I can't get implicated in this.

BOB
"Our story."

CLINT
I'll help you all I can. But the
best thing you can do right now is
come in quiet and polite.

BOB
If I come in, I'm not coming out.

CLINT
What other options do you have?

Bob tosses the phone to Clint. Clint catches it.

BOB
You came here to bring me in? Just
say I was already gone. It's as
simple as that.

CLINT
What are you going to do? Run?
Don't make things harder on
yourself. Let's go.

Clint tosses Bob a pair of zip ties. Bob does not catch them. They fall to the floor.

CLINT (CONT'D)
I'm an officer of the law telling
you to put them on. Now.

BOB
Clint.

Clint unclips the button on his service weapon holster.

BOB (CONT'D)
The hell are you doing?

CLINT
My job. You got three seconds--

Bob THRUSTS his hand under the couch cushion--

Clint frantically DRAWS his gun as--

Bob points his REVOLVER straight at Clint--

GUNFIRE fills the trailer as both men FIRE at each other.

Bob rolls off the couch--

Clint staggers. Blood blossoms through his uniform as he collapses to the floor.

From down on the floor, Bob points his weapon at Clint between the coffee table legs.

BOB
Clint.

Clint's dead eyes stare back. Bob exhales slowly.

I/E. BOB'S TRUCK/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Bob drives. A duffel bag, his revolver, and Clint's service weapon rest on the front seat beside him. As Bob punches in the route for Baja, Mexico on his phone--

Suddenly, a flash of light from the desert. Bob looks over. Sees more lights. Headlamps beaming around, reflecting on the white stone monument in the distant graveyard.

Bob frowns as he drives by the sign for Cold Valley.

EXT. HIGHWAY ROADSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

The truck parked, lights off. Bob rummages in the open truck bed and pulls out his HUNTING RIFLE. He peers through the--

RIFLE SCOPE

--and sees Asa and Keith digging a hole.

EXT. CEMETERY, HISTORIC SITE - NIGHT

Asa and Keith dig. Asa sweats through his shirt as he stabs the shovel, tosses soil, repeat--

KEITH (O.S.)
I'm beating you.

Asa looks up. Indeed, Keith's dirt heap is bigger than his.

KEITH
Too much cardio, not enough
strength training.

Asa rolls his eyes. Sets down the shovel. Grabs the tape measure and checks the hole's depth. The others gather to see the result: three feet.

JUNE
It should be here.

ASA
Just a little further.

Keith looks skeptical but keeps digging. And almost immediately--

CLUNK. Keith's shovel hit something.

Suddenly excited, they shine their headlamps down. With small trowels, they root around in the earth, excavating--

A big flat rock. Lame. Keith tosses it aside. The wind blows. June shivers. Steps forward.

JUNE
I would like to shovel.

ASA
Go ahead.

Asa gives June his shovel and climbs out of the hole. As he walks back toward Elliot and his jacket--

Asa's headlamp happens to beam across the--

DESERT

--where Asa catches a fleeting glimpse of a MAN, ducking behind a copse of scrawny trees.

ASA
Hey!

Everybody looks at the trees caught in Asa's headlamp.

ASA (CONT'D)
There's somebody there. Behind
those trees.

Bad silence. Elliot shouts into the wind:

ELLIOT
Hello!

Nothing. Everybody exchanges uneasy glances.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot approach the clump of trees. Keith and June have their shovels raised. Elliot wields the pickax. Asa's pepper spray is back out.

They all exchange glances. Sweaty grips on handles.

Just a few yards away from the trees--more RUSTLING.

ASA
Hello.

Asa steps closer. As he circles around the thicket, his headlamp lands upon a--

TUMBLEWEED. Rustling in the roots of the desert tree. A gust of wind blows the tumbleweed free. Everybody sighs with relief as it bounces away.

Everybody but Asa: he patrols around the trees--

CLICK. He hears the cock of the gun a millisecond before his headlamp lands on--

BOB.

The mechanic crouches in a depression in the desert floor, hidden behind the trees. He carries his six-shooter in one hand. The police handgun holstered at his waist. THE HUNTING RIFLE strapped to his back.

Without thinking, Asa SPRAYS the pepper spray--

But the wind carries the orange goo off into the night.

Bob raises his pistol and FIRES a warning shot at the sky.

On the other side of the tree, June, Keith, and Elliot SHOUT in surprise.

KEITH

Asa!

Asa backpedals to get back to his friends--but trips.

JUNE

{Are you okay?}--

June freezes as Bob comes out into the open and steps on the back of Asa's knee, preventing him from standing.

BOB

Back up.

June, Keith, and Elliot step back.

BOB (CONT'D)

Drop that shit. All of you.

From where he lays pinned, Asa tosses the pepper spray. Keith, Elliot, and June drop the digging tools.

ASA

Whatever you think you're doing here, you don't need to do--

BOB

Shut up. Go ahead and toss your phones. Just right over here.

They all look at each other--

Bob FIRES ANOTHER ROUND into the sky. Everybody flinches.

BOB (CONT'D)

The sound of a gunshot travels a mile, maybe. You know how far you are from the nearest person who gives a shit? Toss your phones.

Still held down, Asa pulls out his phone. Tosses it. June, Keith, and Elliot follow suit.

BOB (CONT'D)

Keys. To me.

Bob nods his headlamp toward Elliot's car, parked at the edge of the graveyard. Trembling, Elliot tosses his keys. Bob snatches them from the air and pockets them.

BOB (CONT'D)

All right. You--

Bob releases his boot from Asa's knee. Asa groans.

BOB (CONT'D)

Get up. Go on. Put those phones in a little stack for me.

ASA

What?

BOB

Stack the phones. Just like you're stacking rocks in a nice little sand garden. Go on.

Asa crawls toward the phones and piles them one on top of the other. When it's done--everybody JUMPS as Bob SHOOTS the stack of phones at point-blank, destroying them all.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot march back to the dig site, shepherded by Bob at gunpoint.

BOB

So what's the story, squint? You robbing a grave?

Still without his jacket, Asa's voice trembles from both fear and the cold.

ASA
We're digging up a family heirloom.

BOB
A family heirloom.

ASA
Yes. My grandmother was
incarcerated here during the war--

BOB
(realizing)
And she buried something. 8 feet
south 3 feet down.

The captives exchange glances. *How does he know?*

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. BARRACKS, HISTORIC SITE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Earlier that day, Bob parks his truck outside the barracks. As he passes Elliot's car, he stops. Stoops. Picks up ASA'S NOTEBOOK. The photograph pokes out from between the pages.

BACK TO:

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT (PRESENT)

BOB
What's buried down there?

ASA
I don't know.

BOB
Is it valuable?

ASA
I don't know.

Silence--until Bob starts laughing.

BOB
So that's how we ended up here.
Because you needed to dig up some
I-don't-know.

KEITH

Look man: we maced you. You scared the shit out of us. We're even. Okay? Let's just walk away.

BOB

Cut the crap. Treacherous fucking cowards. You took my money and ratted me out anyway.

Elliot and Keith look at him with confusion. June looks at Asa. Asa looks nowhere, guilty.

BOB (CONT'D)

We had a deal.

KEITH

We don't know what you're talking about, man.

BOB

Asa does. That's you, isn't it?
"Asa Ikeda-Smith"?

Bob pulls a crumpled copy of the POLICE REPORT from his pocket. Asa's signature on the bottom.

KEITH

(to Asa)

What the hell did you do?

BOB

Take off your shoes.

Everybody stares at him--

And FLINCHES as Bob shoots again and SHOUTS:

BOB (CONT'D)

Do you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth? I don't have shit to lose. When I say something, you do it. Shoes off!

MOMENTS LATER

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot stand in the graveyard without shoes. Four pairs of socks illuminated by lamplight.

The scratch of DUCT TAPE peeling off its roll. Bob walks behind the shivering friends and ties Elliot's wrists behind his back. Then moves on to June.

BOB
All done.

Elliot and June have their hands restrained while Asa and Keith are free. The friends exchange glances, confused.

Bob unholsters his other pistol. With one gun on Elliot and the other on June, Bob addresses Asa and Keith:

BOB (CONT'D)
Well? Keep digging. Let's see what this was all for.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT, LATER

Asa and Keith dig by the headlights from Elliot's car, which Bob has pulled up close to the graveyard.

Bob sits on the car's hood flipping through Asa's notebook. He examines the old photograph.

June and Elliot kneel in front of the car, their wrists taped behind their backs.

AT THE HOLE, while Asa and Keith dig, Keith whispers:

KEITH
Why the hell did you report him?

ASA
I was trying to do the right thing.

KEITH
Great. Look where that got us.

They dig angrily for a beat.

KEITH (CONT'D)
We've got to rush him. There are two of us. We've got shovels.

ASA
He's got three guns.

KEITH
What do you think he's going to do with those guns when he gets bored of watching us dig?--

Suddenly, June SCREAMS.

Keith and Asa whirl around to look at the car, where they see Bob TWISTING a fistful of June's hair.

BOB
No talking! Dig!

Asa and Keith obey. Asa winces as he steps on the shovel with his bare foot. Flings out a pitiful scoop of dirt.

ASA
This would go a lot faster if we had shoes!

Silence. Then, from the haze of headlights, Bob tosses two shoes: first Asa's right shoe, then Keith's right shoe.

LATER

Asa and Keith dig faster, each of them stomping on their shovels with one booted foot, the other foot still shoeless. The hole is almost 4 feet deep when--

A hollow THUD. Asa's shovel strikes something. He brushes away dirt to reveal leather-wrapped wood, eaten away by earth and time. A SUITCASE.

Bob slides off Elliot's car. Walks over. Shines his headlight down into the hole.

BOB
How about that.

I/E. POLICE CAR/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

California Highway Patrol officer RICARDO RUIZ (30s) patrols his California highway. He notices lights in the desert.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT

AT THE HOLE, Bob lords over Keith and Asa as they unearth the suitcase.

BY ELLIOT'S CAR, Elliot--now unsupervised by Bob--strains with his duct-taped hands, reaching into his pocket. Finally, he pulls out his SPARE KEY.

Beside him, June perks up at the sound of a distant engine. She peers around the edge of Elliot's car.

HEADLIGHTS sweep across the graveyard. Tires grind gravel.

AT THE HOLE, as Asa and Bob look up at the approaching car--

Keith BASHES Bob's gun hand with his shovel. The revolver goes flying--

KEITH
Get him--

Keith SWIPES his shovel at Bob again from the hole--but Bob backpedals out of reach.

AT ELLIOT'S CAR, June struggles to her feet. Despite her duct-taped ankles, she manages to pop up and scream--

JUNE
Help!

As the police car's emergency lights fill the night--

AT THE HOLE, Bob draws his extra pistol--

While KEITH clambers out and CHARGES Bob with shovel--

Bob FIRES before Keith can reach him.

Keith drops the shovel. Drops to his knees.

Bob snatches up the other gun and runs into the darkness.

The police car screeches to a stop by Elliot's car. Officer Ruiz emerges, sweeps the scene with his gun and flashlight.

RUIZ
Down!

By Elliot's car, June ducks. In the hole, Asa crouches.

Keith, however, kneels in the car headlights, clutching his abdomen. BLOOD seeps through his fingers.

As Asa tries to rise from the hole--

RUIZ (CONT'D)
Stay where you are--

ASA
He's been shot! There's a gunman!
Over there--

Ruiz aims his gun and flashlight into the center of the graveyard at the--

MONUMENT

--and sees a flash of BOB, gun raised.

Ruiz OPENS FIRE. Stone chips fly off the monument--

A VOLLEY OF SHOTS answers from the darkness.

The police car windshield SHATTERS.

Ruiz collapses beside his car.

CROUCHING IN THE HOLE, Asa is eye level with Ruiz. He sees the BULLET HOLE IN THE OFFICER'S FOREHEAD.

BEHIND THE MONUMENT, Bob reloads. Shells litter the dirt.

ASA makes a run for it. Climbing from the hole, he dashes across the cemetery and pulls Keith to his feet. Keith groans but stumbles along, as Asa shoves him--

BEHIND ELLIOT'S CAR

--where Asa finds JUNE. As Asa grabs the pickax and cuts through her duct tape handcuffs:

ASA
Where's Elliot?!

MONUMENT

Meanwhile, Bob peeks around the corner of the stone monument. No sign of movement. Just the two cars, headlights beaming, the police car's red-and-blues still flashing.

Bob drops to an army crawl. Turns on his headlamp.

BEHIND ELLIOT'S CAR

As Asa finishes cutting through June's duct tape, Bob's LIGHT beams beneath the car, illuminating their feet. A GUNSHOT kicks up dirt next to Asa's bare left foot.

ASA
Go go go--

A few more GUNSHOTS chase them into the--

DESERT

With the car between them and the graveyard, Asa, June, and Keith are protected from Bob's headlamp and gunfire.

Between Keith's injury and their bare feet, navigating the desert terrain isn't easy.

As his eyes adjust to the moonlit night, Asa spots a small, disembodied STAIRCASE: four cement steps that once led up to a building entrance.

EXT. BEHIND THE STEPS, DESERT - NIGHT, MOMENTS LATER

Asa and June lean Keith against the concrete wall.

ASA
Let me see.

Asa carefully shines his headlamp on Keith's wound. Asa and June look. Keith doesn't. Asa clicks off the light.

KEITH
How does it look?

ASA
(bad)
Not bad.

Asa peeks out from behind the cement barrier.

ACROSS THE DESERT, Asa sees the parked cars. As he continues to watch, he makes out Bob's silhouette framed against the car headlights, walking across the cemetery.

Meanwhile, June squints in the opposite direction. They aren't too far from the reconstructed BARRACKS building.

They all cringe at the sound of another GUNSHOT.

BY THE POLICE CAR

Bob lowers his pistol. Inside the car, the wreckage of the POLICE RADIO smokes. After prying Ruiz's gun from the dead officer's cold hand, Bob unsheathes a hunting knife.

BEHIND THE STEPS

Asa and June watch Bob slash the police car tires. The car sinks with their hope. Bob's voice floats across the desert:

BOB
This ain't on me!

CEMETERY

Bob wanders to the hole, shouting to be heard over the wind.

BOB

This could have been easy!

DESERT

While Bob rants, Elliot lies prone behind a bulge of bushes, sawing at the duct tape with his spare key blade.

BOB (O.S.)

Blame your fucking friend!

Finally, Elliot's duct tape bonds break apart.

CEMETERY

At the hole, Bob looks down at the suitcase, still partially buried. After glancing around, Bob climbs into the hole.

DESERT

Through the bushes, Elliot watches Bob struggling to excavate the suitcase. Then Elliot looks at his--

CAR. A few bullet holes. The hood scratched by Bob's utility belt. But otherwise, the brand-new RKK Limited is unscathed.

BEHIND THE STEPS

Asa and June have negotiated Keith into lying down.

ASA

Just keep pressure on it.

KEITH

What's going on?

ASA

He's digging up the suitcase. Then he's going to leave. Once the coast is clear, we'll get you some help--

KEITH

(groaning)

How? He'll take Elliot's car.

ASA
I'll just run for help. It's going
to be okay. Just hang on--

He's interrupted by the distant GROWL OF AN ENGINE.

CEMETERY

AT THE HOLE, Bob successfully hauls the suitcase out of the ground. At the same time, the STARTING CAR ENGINE gets his attention. He looks over at--

ELLIOT'S CAR, where Elliot has made it into the driver's seat. Before Elliot can even close the driver's side door--
BANG.

Elliot SCREAMS as the bullet shatters the window--and strikes him somewhere.

As Bob unloads, Elliot ducks low and STOMPS ON THE GAS.

The car SHOOTS forward, straight toward BOB in the hole.

Bob ducks just in time: the car PLOWS over the hole. Bob pops back up as the car zooms into the--

DESERT

The open car door flaps around as the car turns and bounces the rough terrain.

IN THE CAR, Elliot drives. Teeth clenched, bleeding from somewhere, knuckles white on the wheel. He scans the dark desert, HONKING desperately.

ELLIOT
Guys!?

No sign of his friends. The world beyond his headlights is a mystery. More GUNFIRE from the cemetery sends Elliot accelerating back toward the main road.

BEHIND THE STEPS

Asa and June watch Elliot's car make it to the highway.

JUNE
He's leaving us!

I/E. ELLIOT'S CAR/HIGHWAY - NIGHT

As the wheels find precious asphalt, the car zooms forward.

Elliot tries to close the car door--but groans with pain. He has a bullet in his shoulder. He flicks a switch.

CAR
Lane detection activated.

The car drives itself. Elliot reaches for the door--

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT

Bob aims his hunting rifle. THROUGH THE SCOPE, Elliot is clearly visible in the well-lit cab.

Elliot's head falls right into Bob's crosshairs.

BEHIND THE STEPS

Bob's rifle BOOMS across the desert. June covers her ears.

KEITH
What was that?

Asa watches Elliot's car continue to speed down the highway. Inside the car, the cab light shuts off, darkening with Asa's hopes. But he puts a brave spin on it:

ASA
Elliot got away. He'll get help.
It'll be okay. Come on.

INT. ELLIOT'S CAR - NIGHT (DRIVING)

Blood leaks onto the leather upholstery. The steering wheel turns itself, like a ghost.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT

Bob lowers the rifle. Grimly watches the car speed out of sight. Bob heads out into the--

DESERT

--and shines his headlamp around. Sees the CEMENT STEPS.

Handgun raised, Bob plods forward. Circles around the cement steps and the cracked foundation--

Asa, June, and Keith are gone. Nothing but a small puddle of blood staining the old concrete.

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Asa and June help Keith stumble behind the barracks.

KEITH

I can't. My legs--

Keith's legs give out from under him. Asa and June drag him into the crawlspace formed by the barracks' stilted legs.

ASA

It's okay. You're okay.

Asa presses Keith's hands against his wound. For a moment, the only sound is their frightened breathing and the wind. No engines, no gunshots. No footsteps.

Asa peers between the stilted legs of the barracks toward the cemetery. Suddenly, the police car emergency lights flick off. The only light comes from the moon and stars.

JUNE

Asa. He needs hospital.

ASA

Elliot will get help.

June looks at him dubiously.

KEITH

I think I'm dying.

ASA

You're not dying.

KEITH

I can't feel my legs.

ASA

It's going to be okay.

Keith shivers uncontrollably. Tears of pain and rage well in his eyes. As he speaks, his teeth chatter.

KEITH

Why did you have to report him?

ASA
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry--

KEITH
That psycho motherfucker. He can't
get away with this.

ASA
He won't.

KEITH
You've got to get him. Promise me.

ASA
Keith, just--

KEITH ASA
Tell my sister I love her-- Stop talking like that.

KEITH
Tell my parents I tried. My
hardest. All my life.

Between his chattering teeth and sobs, Keith's words are almost unintelligible. On the verge of breakdown, something hardens inside Asa. Despair hatches to purpose.

ASA
Shut up.

Keith obeys--or maybe he's too weak to keep talking.

ASA (CONT'D)
June. Put your hands here.

June takes over pressing on Keith's wound. Asa scans the--

DESERT

The highway is visible by a few signs giving the moon back its light. No sign of Bob. Not at first. But then:

A flash of light from a headlamp reveals Bob's position. He stands in the middle of the desert. His headlamp sweeps around like a watchtower, then clicks off.

UNDER THE BARRACKS

Asa strips off his T-shirt. Now half naked in the cold, Asa wraps the shirt around his bare left foot.

ASA
I need to run for help.

JUNE
Run?

ASA
There was a house 2 miles south. I
can get there in 15 minutes. Less.

June looks between Asa and Keith. Keith's eyes are closed.
His teeth chattering.

JUNE
He's cold.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Asa jogs as fast as he can with one shoe and no light. He
winces periodically as his shirt-swaddled left foot comes
down on rocks.

THE SUDDEN FLASH OF BOB'S LIGHT. Asa drops to the ground.

In the distance, Bob does his lighthouse-like sweep, then
clicks the light off.

Safe in the darkness, Asa scrambles back to his feet.
Resumes running.

MOMENTS LATER, the distant headlamp clicks back on. Closer
this time.

The beam goes right in Asa's direction--just as he throws
himself to the ground.

Facedown in the dirt, Asa doesn't move a muscle. Was he
seen? He waits. The light shuts off. He waits--

Then slowly raises his head. Looks around.

He gets to his feet. Stands--

Starts jogging again--

BOOM.

The hunting rifle blows a branch off a nearby tree.

ELSEWHERE IN DESERT

Bob racks the bolt. He's shooting by starlight.

THROUGH SCOPE, Bob's crosshair struggles to find the blurry shadow of Asa against the burry shadows of the desert.

Bob lowers the rifle. Checks his watch. Curses under his breath. It's hopeless.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT

Bob SPRINTS through the cemetery. He grabs the SUITCASE.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Bob huffs it toward the MUSEUM, on the other side of which is his TRUCK, strategically parked to be hidden from view.

I/E. TRUCK/DESERT - NIGHT

As Bob's truck heads toward the road, his headlights land on the BARRACKS. He sees a flitter of movement at the door.

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Bob parks the truck by the barracks. Kills the headlights. Takes the keys. The wind covers his footsteps as he approaches the dark rectangular building.

UNDER THE BARRACKS - SAME TIME

June crouches in the shadows of the crawlspace. Keith is nowhere to be seen--except for his blood on June's hands. June grips the PICKAX tight.

June watches Bob's BOOTS tread a path alongside the barracks. She retracts deeper into the shadows.

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

At the barracks entrance, Bob clicks on his headlamp. He sees traces of BLOOD leading up the steps.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Window moonlight illuminates the museum exhibit: the depressing newspaper clippings and grainy photographs.

IN THE DIORAMA AREA, the three narrow beds. One of them has been stripped of its blankets and sheets.

In the corner, behind a rack of clothes, KEITH lies bundled in blankets. Hidden and alive--but weak, cold, and helpless.

Keith hears the CREAK of the barracks door opening.

Heavy boots fall on floorboards as Bob prowls into the barracks, following the traces of bloody footsteps toward the diorama.

BEHIND THE CLOTHES RACK, Keith holds his breath.

Bob shines his headlamp across the beds. The beam of light lingers on the bed with stripped sheets.

Bob's gaze follows the trail of bloody footsteps, which ends at the SHOE RACK. One pair of shoes is MISSING.

Suddenly, YELLOW LIGHT beams through the barracks window. Bob whips around--

EXT. BARRACKS, DESERT - NIGHT

Outside the barracks, in--

BOB'S TRUCK, June searches for keys, weapons, anything. The cab light is on, turning the truck into a lantern for all the desert to see.

In the cup holder, she finds Elliot's confiscated key--and another spare.

She jams the second key into the ignition of Bob's truck, stepping on the brake pedal with her now-sandaled foot.

But the key doesn't take.

SLAM.

June startles at the sound of the barracks door blowing shut in the wind. She ducks out of the cab.

MOMENTS LATER

Bob runs toward his truck, the door still open, the light still on.

Nobody in the cab. The suitcase still rests in the footwell of the passenger seat.

Bob whirls around. Scans the desert. No sign of June. No movement except for trees waving in the wind.

He drops to his knees, looking under the truck.

Nobody there.

Bob checks his watch again. Curses under his breath.

EXT. HIGHWAY, DESERT - NIGHT

Asa stumbles onto the highway. The bloody mess of his left foot touches down on smooth asphalt.

Asa heads south. He hobble-jogs at first, his gait made strange by his wrapped left foot and booted right foot.

But soon, he hits his stride. He runs. He sprints. His hands chop at the air. Keith's blood still wet on his fingers.

He's fast. Maybe he's fast enough.

EXT. FORT LIBERTY - NIGHT

The small town sleeps. The stoplight sustains a monotonous green. Despite the go-ahead, ELLIOT'S CAR is parked at the intersection.

On the perpendicular street, A MINIVAN waits to turn left. The DRIVER lays on the HORN. Elliot's car does not move.

Finally, the minivan runs the red light. As it turns left and passes Elliot's car, the window rolls down. The Driver leans out, shouting:

DRIVER
Green means go, buddy!

The Driver's expression changes as he sees Elliot's shattered window. A robotic voice drifts out:

CAR
Return hands to wheel.

The Driver pulls out his phone, starts dialing.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Asa runs, exhaling hot fog into the freezing night. He's covered several miles fast--at a cost. His vision blurs with fatigue and cold.

Up ahead, he sees a little SQUARE OF LIGHT. A window in a trailer. He keeps running.

EXT. TRAILER, DESERT - NIGHT

Asa stumbles up the gravel driveway to the trailer home.

ASA

Help!

His voice can't compete with the wind. Shivering from exhaustion and cold, Asa staggers to the door and BANGS.

Just as the door opens--Asa's vision tunnels. He slumps forward, losing consciousness.

INT. LIVING ROOM, TRAILER - NIGHT

Asa wakes up on a couch. The room comes into focus: an American flag. Posters of anime and western films.

Above an excessive RGB gaming computer, a bunch of nerdy weaponry is mounted to the wall: paintball guns, medieval Renaissance daggers, and a samurai sword.

Asa sits up. A blanket slides off him. A glass of water and a folded sweatshirt rest on the table nearby. Asa pulls on the oversized sweatshirt, which reads "FREEDOM ISN'T FREE."

ASA

Hello!?

Sam, Bob's long-haired cousin, enters with a bottle of Advil. Asa tries to get to his feet--but clutches his head.

SAM

Easy. You bumped your head on your way down. What the hell happened?

ASA

Call the police.

SAM

What for?

Not sure how much to reveal, Asa gulps water to buy time. Appraises Sam. Decides he has no choice.

ASA

My friends need an ambulance-- police. There's a cop. A dead cop.

Sam stares. Brow furrowed.

ASA (CONT'D)
Where's your phone? My friend is
bleeding out!

Sam heads for his desk. Slowly picks up his phone.

SAM
What happened to the cop?

As Asa hesitates--HEADLIGHTS beam through the window. A TRUCK screeches to a halt in front of the trailer. Sam peeks out through the window blinds.

SAM (CONT'D)
It's my cousin.

Asa's reaction tells Sam the whole story. Asa springs to his feet, unsure of what to do or where to go. His eyes flick around: the one exit. The swords above the computer--

SAM (CONT'D)
Hey.

As Asa's gaze swivels back to Sam--

Sam tosses Asa his phone.

SAM (CONT'D)
It's okay. Call the cops.
(points down the hall)
Go in there. Keep quiet. Go on.

Relieved, Asa heads to the bedroom door.

SAM (CONT'D)
The pin is 197238.

ASA
What--

SAM
197238. Go!

EXT. TRAILER - NIGHT

Bob HAMMERS on the door until Sam opens it.

SAM
What's going on?--

Bob shoulders his way past Sam, into the--

TRAILER

Sam gets a good look at Bob. Sees the dirt and bloodstains covering his clothes and hands.

SAM
Jesus Christ. What--

BOB
I love you, man.

Bob hugs Sam. A moment of peak intimacy for a man like Bob.

BOB (CONT'D)
It's been you and me, hasn't it?
Since Jeff and Marlene left, since
grandpa died. You're like a fucking
brother to me.

SAM
What the hell is going on?

BOB
Less you know, the better. I need
your truck.

Sam takes a step back.

SAM
Tell me.

BOB
You were right about those Asian
guys. With the shovels? They were
digging something up in the desert.
I was just messing with them but
one thing led to another.

SAM
Jesus.

BOB
This is a moment, man. If you give
a shit about me, about family,
about blood--this is a moment you
can save my ass or stab me in the
back. I need your truck.

Sam hesitates.

BOB (CONT'D)
Okay. I'll make this easy for you.

Bob pulls out his revolver.

INT. BEDROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT, SAME TIME

In Sam's messy bedroom, Asa taps in the passcode with trembling fingers, but he's getting it wrong.

ASA
197823...

He tries the pin again. Incorrect. Five attempts remain. But finally, Asa notices the button for "EMERGENCY CALL"

Asa smashes the button. 911 starts ringing, bypassing the lock screen. Asa holds the RINGING phone to one ear while he listens at the bedroom door.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT, SAME TIME

Bob snatches Sam's keys from where they hang on a hook. Noticing the modem nearby, he rips it off the wall.

BOB
I don't need you ratting me out as soon as I leave. Phone.

Sam makes a show of checking his pockets. Then he backs up to his desk and searches around.

SAM
I don't know where it is.

Bob whips out his own phone, dials Sam's number.

INT. BEDROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT, SAME TIME

A 911 OPERATOR answers Asa's call.

OPERATOR (PHONE)
911, what's your emergency?

ASA
(whispers)
My friend needs help. He's been shot. He needs an ambulance.

OPERATOR (PHONE)
What's your location?

ASA
Not me. Not me, my friend is in the desert, at the museum--

Asa is suddenly distracted by an ALERT on the phone. Asa looks at the screen. BOB is calling.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT, SAME TIME

Bob lets the phone RING. Listens. Sam listens as well, hands still raised. They don't hear a sound.

SAM
Might be on silent.

INT. BEDROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT, SAME TIME

As Bob's incoming call comes to an end--

OPERATOR (PHONE)
Sir, I can't hear you--

ASA
You need to send an ambulance for
my friend. He's been shot at Cold
Valley. The historic site. The
incarceration center--

OPERATOR (PHONE)
The internment camp?

ASA
Yes--

OPERATOR (PHONE)
We have an ambulance and police on
the way already.

Asa, stunned, as we FLASH TO:

I/E. ELLIOT'S CAR, FORT LIBERTY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

An ambulance parked next to Elliot's car at the intersection. IN ELLIOT'S CAR, an EMT leans over Elliot's inert body, shining a light into his eyes--

Suddenly, Elliot GRABS the EMT's arm with bloody fingers.

BACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Back with Asa and the 911 Operator:

OPERATOR (PHONE)
Where is the gunman? Where are you?

Before Asa can answer--FOOTSTEPS approach.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT, SAME TIME

Hands raised, Sam walks down the hall. Bob steers him, gun at his back. With trepidation, Sam opens the bedroom door--

INT. BEDROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

The room is empty. Bob and Sam look around.

SAM
Swear to God, I don't know where it is. I won't call the cops, all right? You can trust me. Just go--

BOB
This is a trust-but-verify situation. Check the bed.

As Sam shakes out the sheets. Bob glances under the bed--

BOB (CONT'D)
There it is.

Bob snatches up the phone from the floor. He doesn't see ASA, far under the bed, pressed against the wall.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT

As Bob ushers Sam toward the couch, Sam's phone RINGS in Bob's hand. An eight-bit pixilated video game theme song.

Sam freezes. Bob looks at the phone in his hand, frowning. An unfamiliar number.

Keeping the gun trained on Sam, Bob answers the call, on speakerphone.

OPERATOR (PHONE)
Sir, I need to know your location.
Where is the gunman? Sir?

Bob looks at the phone. Sam looks at the phone. Bob hangs up the phone.

Sam RUNS for the door--

INT. BEDROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Asa crawls out from under the bed--and hears THREE GUNSHOTS.

INT. LIVING ROOM, SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Sam COLLAPSES through the open trailer door. Bob stares at the empty doorframe for a moment. Gun smoking.

When Sam's phone starts RINGING again, Bob drops the phone and SHOOTS that too.

EXT. SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Bob leans over Sam, who convulses and spits blood. Bob watches Sam shudder--and then go still. Heavy beat. Bob crouches over his cousin's body in the dark.

BOB
Asshole.

Bob walks away, shaking spent cartridges from his revolver as he goes. It isn't easy: his bloody hands tremble as he approaches his--

TRUCK. He pulls out his duffel bag and the ancient suitcase, then hurries over to--

SAM'S TRUCK

Bob throws in his guns and luggage. He starts the engine-- and sees the gas gauge. Almost empty.

EXT. DRIVEWAY, TRAILER - NIGHT

Crouched by his own truck, Bob works with tubing and a gas can, setting up a siphon. As the gas starts flowing, he perks up at the sight of distant EMERGENCY LIGHTS.

He runs around the side of the trailer and looks at the--

HIGHWAY

The flashing red and blue horns of a POLICE CAR head straight toward Sam's trailer.

BOB
Shit.

Bob prepares to run--but something about the police car gives him pause. He watches the vehicle drive closer. It's moving slowly. Very slowly.

MOMENTS LATER

Now armed with his rifle, Bob peers through the rifle SCOPE, his crosshairs finding the--

HIGHWAY

--where a bullet-chewed POLICE CAR rolls at a snail's pace. The shreds of flattened tires flap with each rotation.

INSIDE THE POLICE CAR

June drives. The nail-on-chalkboard grind of rims on asphalt. Squinting through the shattered windshield, June sees Sam's trailer. She steps on the gas with her bloody sandal and turns up the--

DRIVEWAY

Bob aims. As the car slogs up the driveway, his crosshair finds June's silhouette in the driver's seat.

Bob's about to squeeze the trigger--

ASA slashes at his arms with a SAMURAI SWORD.

Bob SHOUTS in pain. The rifle DISCHARGES into the sky.

The headlights of the oncoming car illuminate the scene:

Arm bleeding, Bob tries to turn the rifle on Asa--

Asa SLASHES with the samurai sword again, slicing into Bob's forearm with a SPRAY OF BLOOD.

Losing his grip on the rifle, Bob stumbles back and draws his SIX-SHOOTER--

Another SLASH.

Bob SCREAMS as his handgun and a few FINGERS go flying.

Bob has one more hand. One more chance. He draws the police officer's glock--

Raises it faster than Asa can raise the sword--

JUNE swings her PICKAX into Bob's back.

Bob spasms. He squeezes off one wild SHOT before Asa CUTS the gun from his hand, kicks Bob to the ground, and presses the sword to Bob's grizzled throat.

Bob looks up the blade. Asa and June stand over him, hyperventilating. Asa's "FREEDOM ISN'T FREE" sweatshirt and June's face both flecked with blood.

BOB

Easy. You got me.

As Bob speaks, the sword scratches his Adam's apple.

ASA

Get his guns. His guns.

June gingerly grabs the hunting rifle.

ASA (CONT'D)

There's another one. Over there.

When June sees Sam's corpse, she RETCHES but keeps it together.

She snatches up Bob's revolver from the gravel--and BOB'S FINGER falls from the trigger. This time she can't keep it in. June vomits, then begins crying in earnest.

ASA (CONT'D)

It's okay. Elliot made it. There's an ambulance on the way to help Keith. We're gonna be okay.

BOB

I'm gonna need an ambulance myself.

Incredulous, Asa and June turn to look at Bob. Blood flows from his wounds. He grins up at them.

June suddenly SCREAMS with rage. She turns the pistol on Bob, aiming straight at his head--

ASA

No! Don't! No no no--

Asa grabs June's wrist, bending the gun away.

ASA (CONT'D)

June. It's not worth it.

June gets control of herself. She sniffs. Nods. Lowers the handgun. Asa relaxes. He releases his grip on her wrist--

And June points the gun at Bob and UNLOADS one round after another while SHOUTING with rage.

Bob screams, closing his eyes--

The gun clicks empty.

Alive, Bob risks opening an eye.

June has shot every bullet into the ground beside Bob's head. Bob trembles. His pants soiled.

June tosses the gun, spits on him, and walks away.

LATER

Bob leans against the trailer, his arms elevated above his head. His wounds have been crudely bandaged with duct tape--tape that also binds his wrists and bare feet.

While June pulls a tarp over Sam's body, Asa ends a call on Bob's phone.

ASA
10 minutes.

Silence. Asa and June shiver. Bob shakes his head.

BOB
Never meant for this.

Asa and June turn to look at Bob, incredulous.

BOB (CONT'D)
This was a pebble that turned into
an avalanche. Drinks. Jokes.

Asa grabs a roll of duct tape. Tears off a strip.

BOB (CONT'D)
Nice. Don't like what I'm saying,
so you shut me up.

Asa wordlessly walks toward Bob with the duct tape.

BOB (CONT'D)
You, me, and her, we're going to be
living with this story. Don't you
want to hear my side of it?--

Asa stretches the duct tape over Bob's mouth, gagging him.

SLAM.

Asa looks over. Sees June has retrieved the SUITCASE from Sam's truck.

June drops the suitcase in front of the headlights of the destroyed police car. She squats and wedges the pickax into the suitcase clasp, popping it off easily.

From where he's strung up against the trailer, Bob watches, curious.

Asa takes a deep breath. Joins June in squatting beside the suitcase.

The cousins exchange a glance.

Together, they crack it open.

An exhalation of dust.

Asa and June gaze down. Unsure of what they are looking at.

JUNE
What is it?

Asa gingerly reaches in. He pulls up a bundle of decayed rags. What might've once been a soft blanket.

Asa lifts back the corner of the rotten cotton--

Revealing a tiny SKULL.

Shocked, Asa drops the blanket. The little SKELETON rattles.

Asa reaches back in and picks up the skull, small enough to rest in the palm of his hand.

Bob starts laughing into his gag--laughter that is soon drowned out by approaching SIRENS. As Asa stares into the pitch-black of the fetus's eye socket--

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. OFFICE BUILDING, COLD VALLEY - DAY (1943)

Familiar footage. Young Heidi (14) works around the office. She pushes a cart, passing mail to the staff at their desks.

-- Young Heidi organizes envelopes at her table. A CLERK (male, 40s) approaches. The clerk hands Heidi an open envelope for processing.

The Clerk SMILES as he watches Heidi lick it. Her red tongue darting out between her soft lips.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT (1943)

Young Heidi lies in a rickety metal bed. The sheets soaked with blood. Through blurry vision, she sees her MOTHER (40s, Japanese) and DANISHI (her father), talking in whispers.

Her weeping Mother wraps Heidi's dead infant in a blanket.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - NIGHT (1943)

Danishi drops the suitcase into the hole.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - DAY (1943)

Young Heidi walks among the gravestones, counting her steps as she heads toward the barbed wire fence. She looks down at THE UNMARKED GRAVE, visible only by a faint outline.

EXT. CEMETERY, DESERT - DAY (2005)

Adult Heidi (70s) stands in the same place, seemingly staring at nothing. The barbed wire fence is gone. So are most of the tombstones.

SUE (O.S.)
Mom? What are you doing?

Heidi turns around to see Sue (30s), looking at her curiously. In the background over her shoulder, a few other tourists solemnly mill around the cemetery.

Heidi looks at the camera Sue has clutched in her hands.

INT. KITCHEN, SAN FRANCISCO HOUSE - DAY (2005)

Heidi sits at the table with a cup of steaming tea. She shuffles through a pack of recently developed photographs. She finally finds THE PHOTO.

Sue washes dishes. When she glances over at her mother, she sees Heidi scrawling on one of the photos with marker.

HEIDI
There's something I never told you.

LATER

Heidi's tea has gone cold. Sue now also sits at the table. Her eyes red. She holds the annotated photograph. She looks at her mother.

SUE

What do you want to do? Do you--
want me to call somebody there? Do
you want to dig it--her--up?

HEIDI

I thought--I thought, yes, maybe.

They're interrupted by the front door opening. YOUNG ASA (10) runs through the hall, excited about something. As he passes the kitchen--

ASA

Hi Obaachan!

Young Asa speeds off. Heidi smiles. Turns to Sue.

HEIDI

But now I've been thinking, better
to leave it alone. Not worth it.

EXT. SAM'S TRAILER - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Asa and June crouch over the suitcase, staring at the skull of their aunt. Red and blue lights of approaching emergency vehicles illuminate the scene.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. JAPANTOWN, SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

Somewhere on Geary Street, near Japantown. The San Francisco Peace Pagoda visible over the tops of buildings.

JUNE (V.O.)

My grandmother was a kind woman.

INT. COMMUNITY HALL, SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

A small gathering of mourners. Everybody wears a mask, except for June, who speaks from behind a podium. June's speech is simple, but precise and well-rehearsed.

JUNE

She worked hard and gave her family a good future. I remember *Obaachan* when I was young. She came to stay with my mother and me in Japan. *Obaachan* slapped me when I was being bad. Later she said, "Sorry" and gave me candy.

Charmed chuckles from the mourners.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I did not see her again for a long time. I came to stay in America over one year ago. It has been a hard year. But I was glad to see my grandmother again before she passed. I know she would be glad you are all here. Thank you for coming to honor her life.

Everybody smiles behind their masks as June steps down from the podium and sits in a folding chair beside Sue. The ceremony's OFFICIANT steps to the podium:

OFFICIANT

Thank you. Now, her other grandchild: Asa Ikeda-Smith.

Asa rises. Walks up to the podium. Removes his mask. The cuts on his face have resolved into barely noticeable scars. But there's something in his eyes that is far from healing.

He flattens a page of densely typed text on the podium's surface. Leans toward the mic.

ASA

When my grandmother's illness took a turn, she and I both moved into my mom's place. I was working on my PhD in American Studies. I spent a lot of time asking my grandmother about the hardest period of her life. She lived through a dark chapter in American history. I wanted to do her story justice--to help make sure nothing like it happens again.

(beat)

I think that's important. But I wish I'd paid less attention to her history and more attention to her.

Sue watches Asa with rapt attention.

ASA (CONT'D)

My grandmother was a hard worker. She picked strawberries with her father starting when she was 5 years old. By the time the war was over, her father had passed away in the camps and her mother was sick. But my grandmother worked full-time as a cleaner while going to college. She was the first person in our family to earn a degree. The first person with a bank account. She raised two children who always had everything they needed. She never complained--except maybe about food not being salty enough.

Titters.

ASA (CONT'D)

I wish more than anything I was with her the night she died. But she would've told me not to worry about it. "No point."

(beat)

She belonged to a generation that valued looking forward and dismissing the past--sometimes by diminishing one's own experience. I used to think she was repressed. That she never got properly loud and angry about everything that happened to her.

(beat)

I still think that. But I've also realized that sometimes, we end up in situations where the only thing we can do to help ourselves and the people we care about, is to let it go. And move on.

(beat)

Refusing to give the past power over your future is a strength. My grandmother was a strong person. I miss her.

Asa's voice cracks. He steps down. As the Officiant reclaims the podium, Asa takes his seat next to Sue, who puts an arm around him--the first time we've seen them touch.

Although startled, Asa leans into his mother's embrace. Sue puts her other arm around June, pulling her niece and her son in for a family hug. Tears flow into their masks.

EXT. PATIO, RESTAURANT - DAY

Asa and June sit at a table in a parklet. A server sets down water glasses. Asa swirls his ice. June watches traffic.

JUNE
It's Elliot.

June points out Elliot getting out of a brand-new Prius.

KEITH (O.S.)
Coming through.

Keith rolls toward them in his WHEELCHAIR. His biceps even bulkier than before. No smiles or wisecracks as he parks at the table.

LATER

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot sit. The sky glum with fog.

KEITH
How do you like the new car?

ELLIOT
Yeah, it's good. Great mileage.

ASA
That's great.

ELLIOT
Yeah.

Silence.

ASA
Where are our drinks?--

Asa trails off when he sees their Waiter walking toward them with four bottles of TSINGTAO. Condensation glistens on the green glass.

Blood pumps in Asa's ears--until the Waiter puts the drinks down at another table. Asa tunes back into the conversation.

ELLIOT
--when do you leave?

JUNE
Next week.

ELLIOT
Oh, that's soon.

JUNE

Yes. But it's time to go home. I've saved enough and my old job is open again.

The Waiter returns, setting down pints of beer and fries.

KEITH

Thank you, sir.

Keith reaches for his beer and gulps.

JUNE

Excuse me, will you please take a picture of us?

WAITER

Oh--sure.

June hands her phone to the Waiter, who takes a step back.

THE CAMERA frames Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot in the same order they stood against a barracks on a windy day months ago. Except for June, their smiles are halfhearted.

WAITER (CONT'D)

How about some smiles?

Asa, June, Keith, and Elliot exchange glances. They turn back to the camera.

They smile widely. Aspirational smiles that come from a genuine place--albeit not a place of happiness, but hope.

Before the camera clicks--

CUT TO BLACK.