

DEEPER

Written by

Thomas Jamieson

tjamiesonbb1@gmail.com

OVER BLACK

A VEHICLE ENGINE idles. Discordant. Throaty. Like a chain smoker's cough.

EXT. WEST TEXAS DESERT - SUNSET

A STONE WALL stands amid the forsaken landscape. A remnant of a bygone era. Crumbling, it retains an impenetrable quality.

In the background, the Rio Grande River flows southbound, Mexico only a long stone's throw away.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to a beat-up work van parked beside a lonely road. The engine continues its dissonance --

Daylight wanes.

INT. BEAT-UP WORK VAN - SAME TIME

SELENA SANCHEZ (22) sits shotgun, a coral linen scarf tied loosely around her neck. Her face is like a classic Spanish painting, but taut now as she eyes her side mirror...

... something in the ashen twilight has her spooked.

She eyes a rosary bead dangling from the rearview, a moment of solace. Now fidgety again, she scrolls through messages on her phone.

The sound of DOORS SLAMMING in the rear of the van and FOOTFALLS come up along the side before --

-- the driver's door opens, ENGINE NOISE amplifies as LUIS ALVAREZ (24) climbs in. He's more disarming than handsome. A repairman shirt is rolled up, forearm tats are profuse.

Selena eyes him with restrained urgency --

*All dialogue in *italics* is spoken in Spanish and subtitled.

SELENA
Something was back there.

LUIS
Selena, you need to stop worrying.

SELENA
Baby don't do that. Just don't.

Luis thinks better of arguing with her, pulls his door shut.

EXT. WEST TEXAS DESERT - SAME TIME

The van KICKS UP a dust cloud as it drives off.

SUPERIMPOSE: CHIHUAHUAN DESERT, WEST TEXAS

As the dust settles, an oily snake slithers into the gloom.

INT. BEAT-UP WORK VAN - NIGHT

A RANCHERA SONG plays low on the radio. Selena clutches a leopard print purse, flips her long black hair tensely. She'd rather be *anyplace* else right now.

Luis smiles to soften the mood, but Selena is distracted.

LUIS

Hey, what happened with that job interview?

SELENA

They flaked on me. It was weird. I don't want to talk about it.

She realizes she was terse, rubs his arm. She eyes her mirror again, face drops at seeing DISTANT HEADLIGHTS.

SELENA (CONT'D)

Luis.

LUIS

It could be anyone. Relax.

SELENA

You said we'd be alone.

Luis can't summon a reply. Suddenly, the engine CHUGS HARD. Selena leans forward, her nerves completely frayed.

SELENA (CONT'D)

Shit. Shit!

EXT. ROADSIDE AUTO REPAIR SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

The van sputters to a stop. A red neon light in a window reads "Closed."

MOMENTS LATER: The hood CLANKS open. Selena aims a flashlight at the engine while Luis looks it over.

LUIS

The plugs are almost shot.

SELENA
We shouldn't be out here.

LUIS
Ay. I don't have any spares.

SELENA
I think we should go.

Luis fiddles with a spark plug; the flashlight turns off.

SELENA (CONT'D)
 (insistent)
Luis. Now.

A VEHICLE SLOWS off-screen. Luis steps around the driver's side of the van and squints from the headlights.

Selena looks on with portent as --

-- a black sedan stops behind the van. Lights dim as a red dashboard LED pulses like a heartbeat. A COP type steps out, formidable in a dark sports jacket. His face is obscured.

COP
 Habla Ingles?

SELENA
 Yes. Of course.

COP
 You live out here?

LUIS
 El Paso.

The cop points an index finger languidly to his left.

COP
 El Paso.

LUIS
 I had a repair job down in Ruidosa.
 The engine was acting up, but we're
 good now.

WIND whistles mournfully. The cop tilts his head and eyes a PIECE OF WET FABRIC wedged in the van's rear double doors.

SELENA
 Look, we're really tired and we'd
 just like to --

COP
Get home. Eat dinner. Watch the news.

He hooks his thumbs on his decorative belt buckle and --
-- Selena's smile vanishes; she plucks nervously at her scarf.

The sound of CAR DOORS shutting nearby. Selena and Luis turn to an SUV parked in the shadows. *How long has it been there?* TWO BURLY MEN, their faces also obscured, stand beside it.

Selena, choking back terror, pivots back to the cop.

SELENA
Officer, what's going on?

LUIS
(under his breath)
Selena. Run.

SELENA
What do you want from us?
(no reply)
We haven't done anything.

COP
-- Don't look so surprised. After all, you contacted us.

Selena pales as FOOTFALLS approach from behind. Luis eyes her desperately --

LUIS
Run, Selena! *Run!*

Sound of a TASER CRACKLING and Luis collapses to his knees.

SELENA
Luis!!

A man from the SUV -- wearing a hideous black mask resembling a wolf skull -- steps between them. Selena gapes, horrified.

SELENA (CONT'D)
Stop! Please. Stop!

She backpedals around the van. Frightened. Emotional. Hurls the flashlight at the man, but he keeps stalking her like a large predatory animal.

SELENA (CONT'D)
Who are you? -- WHO ARE YOU?!

She takes another step and STOPS. Slow turns to the cop standing right behind her, his face veiled in darkness. The LED creates a blood red halo around him.

Selena's eyes open wider in terror.

INT./EXT. BEAT-UP WORK VAN - NIGHT

The van's rear doors OPEN to a tool panel. A bandana, the wet fabric stuck in the doors, drops to the ground.

The masked man pulls a small lever down and opens a section of the panel to reveal a HOLLOW AREA behind it.

The hollow looks empty at first, but the persistent LED highlights a --

-- HISPANIC MAN and WOMAN (both 20s) cowering inside. They have been smuggled in.

The detective lowers his arms. A stun gun baton SLIDES out of his jacket sleeve, CRACKLES as he saunters toward the van.

TO BLACK

PLEADING followed by SCREAMS rupture the darkness and end with... a disquieting silence.

PRELAP: A CELL PHONE VIBRATES over HEAVY BREATHING -- as the phone VIBRATES again, the breathing intensifies.

UP FROM BLACK

EXT. EL PASO, TEXAS - EARLY MORNING

MIA SANCHEZ (27) jogs amid a sprawl of moldering warehouses and steaming oil refinery stacks. Her breathing is ponderous in the dewy mid-Autumn air.

Mia's lengthy black hair is pinned back. Her soulful, delicate features are stained by sadness, yet an inborn determination is undeniable.

Mia fights through her fatigue, upping her pace as the phone VIBRATES again. She runs like her very life depends on it.

Her cell phone, tucked in a runner's arm band, VIBRATES yet again. *Unknown Caller* is displayed on the screen.

Mia checks it and continues through the dreary milieu.

EXT. SHADOWY SIDE STREET - EARLY MORNING

Post-run: Mia stretches out in an exacting, attentive manner. It's how she does everything.

She checks her wrist pulse like a medical pro, as POLICE SIRENS WAIL in the distance.

Mia, her breathing inching toward normal, notices several *Persona Desaparecida (Missing Person)* posters hanging on a nearby wall. All Hispanic men and women.

Her gaze lingers on them before she turns to leave.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia, walking, speed dials a number. It RINGS ONCE and --

SELENA'S MESSAGE (V.O.)

Ola. It's Selena. Leave a message.

BEEP.

MIA (PHONE)

Hey, chica. What's up? You blow off dinner last night and no 'sorry, my bad?'

INT. SHOWER STALL - DAY

Mia stands under the jet and lets the water cascade over her.

MIA (V.O.)

You missed some great baleadas --

She pulls her hair aside, which reveals a heart shaped shoulder blade tattoo with *Mamá y Papá RIP* inscribed.

MIA (V.O.)

-- call me back and let me know you're okay.

Mia turns off the water. Eyes the steam floating around her like a disembodied phantom.

A CELL PHONE VIBRATES somewhere nearby. Mia looks up.

INT. BATHROOM - MINUTES LATER

Mia stands at a mirror wearing nurse scrubs.

On the vanity: her phone, an RX bottle labeled *Lorazepam*, a hairbrush, hair pins.

Mia grabs her phone. The lock screen is *Selena and her making funny faces together*. She checks recent calls; the last four are from *Unknown Caller*.

Mia, annoyed just enough, brushes out her hair.

INT. SMALL KITCHEN - DAY

Mia stirs scrambled eggs and peppers in a pan. Ghoulis Halloween decorations hang in a window.

MIA

Hey, Charlie, are you having egg tortillas?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Hell yeah. And throw in a bunch of extra cheese.

CHARLENE "CHARLIE" GUZMAN (29), Mia's housemate, swaggers in wearing a crisp shirt, slacks, detective badge on her belt. Equal parts brassy and beautiful, she's Texas to the core.

MIA

Seriously, Dama? That's a total salt bomb.

CHARLIE

Please, girl. You try working a double shift with wall-to-wall assholes. Hypertension is the least of my worries.

MIA

We're doing smoothies tomorrow. No excuses.

CHARLIE

Fine. Listen, I can get tickets to that Zombie Hollow thingy downtown. It should be a hoot.

MIA

You're joking, right?

CHARLIE

It's just a little ol' house of horrors. And you know I've got your six. Come on, Mia. Do it for your best friend in the *whole* world.

She plays coy and adorable, throws an arm around Mia.

MIA
Nice try, mamá. But you know I
don't do dungeons. Or scary
monsters.

She plates the eggs. Charlie plucks a pepper and devours it.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - DAY

Charlie and Mia, toting a shoulder bag, approach the street.

MIA
She's supposed to call me. No
matter what. She knows that.

CHARLIE
Selena's in love. She's probably
not even thinking straight.

MIA
How hard is a text? I mean, she's
always on her phone.

CHARLIE
No argument there.

They stop at a parked Mustang. Charlie notes Mia's concern,
playfully air punches at her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Listen, how about we find a dive
bar tomorrow and rustle up a couple
of super hot Halloween cowboys.
Your little sis shouldn't be the
only one getting laid.

MIA
You're so bad.

They giggle together and hug it out. Charlie steps into the
Mustang and turns the ENGINE on --

CHARLIE
Selena will turn up. Just in time
for leftovers. Meantime, try to
take it easy.

She winks to reassure Mia. The engine roars as she drives
away.

Mia checks the time on her cell phone.

It's 7:43.

MIA
Dios ayúdame.

She hurries over to a modest compact model car, as DISTANT POLICE SIRENS trail off.

She unlocks the doors with a key fob and quickly gets in.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - NURSE'S DESK AREA - DAY

Mia sets her shoulder bag down behind the desk, smiles at a HISPANIC FEMALE NURSE with freshly permed hair.

MIA
 Morning. I'm *loving* the new curls.

The nurse, appreciative, forms a heart with her fingers.

FEMALE NURSE
 By the way, room three-twenty-four was asking for you, Mia. She had a rough night.

MIA
 Heading over there now. Gracias.

Leaving the desk area, Mia applies hand sanitizer, waves to an approaching FEMALE SECURITY GUARD.

MIA (CONT'D)
 You all ready for Halloween, Roselie?

SECURITY GUARD
 Definitely. And you?

MIA
 Ummm, still deciding.

The guard giggles agreeably as she passes by.

Mia, clearly in her element, admires children's drawings adorning a wall.

She exhales deeply now. Her game face is on.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM 324 - DAY

Mia carefully hangs an IV bag hooked to a CUTE HISPANIC GIRL (10) in a patient bed.

A VOICE ON A TV is indecipherable.

MIA

Want me to order some breakfast? I know you really like that frosted cereal.

The girl shakes her head dolefully. Mia notes her anxiety and smiles.

MIA (CONT'D)

It's easy to be scared. Believe me, I know. But we'll get you back home where you belong. Good as new. And you won't need to be afraid anymore. Okay? *I promise...* no te preocupes niña bonita.

The girl smiles, more at ease. Mia rubs her arm gently.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia stands at a mobile workstation near the door. Checks a medicine vial and types in the dosage info on a laptop computer.

The VOICE on the TV edges louder --

TV REPORTER (V.O.)

... El Paso activists are voicing concern over what they believe is an uptick in disappearances among undocumented residents...

CLICK-CLICK-CLICK. Mia continues typing away. Her fingers glide over the laptop keys as --

-- the TV reporter's voice fades into the background --

CELL PHONE VIBRATES.

Mia checks her cell phone sitting nearby, ignores the call. The rapid CLICK-CLICK-CLICK of the laptop keys grows more syncopated.

CELL PHONE VIBRATES again.

Mia glances over at the girl resting in her bed, smiles lightly.

CLICK-CLICK-CLICK --

Mia turns back to the laptop, focused on the task at hand.

CELL PHONE VIBRATES yet again.

Mia eyes her phone again and sighs like "stop already."

CLICK-CLICK-CLICK --

The typing overlaps with the persistent PHONE. The competing sounds are testing Mia's last nerve and --

-- she stops typing all at once.

The display on Mia's phone again reads *Unknown Caller*.

Mia answers it this time, and chafing --

MIA (PHONE)
 Whatever you're selling I don't
 want. So stop calling, okay?

A MAN on the other end chatters away. Mia's expression grows more uneasy as she listens --

MIA (PHONE) (CONT'D)
 How did you get my number?

EXT. ROADSIDE AUTO REPAIR SHOP - DAY

The beat-up work van sits right where we saw it last. The hood is still open.

Mia's car stops nearby. She steps out, still in nurse scrubs, and pulls her hair back into a ponytail, unaware of a --

-- HEAVYSET MAN, in hazy focus, ambling in her direction.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia eyes the van's rear doors, the empty hollow inside. She walks up the side and peers in the passenger window, looking for... anything.

MECHANIC (O.S.)
 Looks like one of them coyote
 [pron: ky-o-tey] jobs to me.

Mia turns to a MECHANIC (45), flabby good ol' boy.

MIA
 Someone called me. Was it you?

The mechanic bats an eye, pulls Selena's leopard print purse and an emergency contact card from his grimy coveralls.

MECHANIC
 I didn't take nothing from that
 purse except for the card. There
 wasn't no ID or anything.

MIA
How long has the van been here?

MECHANIC
Just tell your friend to make an
appointment like everyone else.

He slams the hood shut.

MECHANIC (CONT'D)
You could call the police. 'Course
I know you folks ain't big on that.
For obvious reasons.

A smug grin forms on his discolored lips.

MIA
It must hurt to be so smart.

She turns to leave. The mechanic is annoyed by her snark.

MECHANIC
If this shit wagon ain't gone in
twenty minutes consider it *towed!*

Mia ignores him, walks on.

INT. MIA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Mia, distressed, speaks on her cell phone --

MIA (PHONE)
Selena. *Call me.* I'm coming over
there if I don't hear back soon.

She wants to say more, but ends the call. Checks Selena's
purse and sees there is no ID. Finds it odd.

Mia's uncertainty turns overwhelming. Her breathing grows
heavier. Fingertips press into the steering wheel.

Gasping. Panic consumes her. A full blown attack.

She rummages in her shoulder bag. Fumbles with the RX bottle.

MIA (CONT'D)
Come on. Come on. Come on.

She takes a Lorazepam, swallows it without water. Waits for
it to take effect --

-- inhaling -- exhaling -- repeating --

Her breathing starts to normalize, but she's far from okay.

EXT. URBAN WORKING CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - SUNSET

Mia gets out of her car into this squarely immigrant 'hood. Mexican, Salvadoran, Honduran flags hang in run-down homes and low-rent apartments. It's quiet, like a ghost town.

A DOG BARKS distantly.

Mia prepares to cross the street. A cat wanders up to her.

MIA

Beanie? What are you doing out?

She stoops to collect the feline. Glancing up, she sees the same MARKETING FLYER in every car windshield.

PRELAP: KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK.

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - EVENING

Mia enters with a key, sets the cat down.

MIA

Selena? Luis?

She turns on a lamp, sees the cat pawing an empty food bowl.

KITCHENETTE

Mia grabs a can of cat food, eyes the refrigerator --

PHOTOS of Mia and Selena through the years, held in place by magnets reading *Honduran For Life* and similar. The photos catalogue a close and loving sibling bond.

A FUNERAL CARD from 2018 features a smiling HISPANIC MAN AND WOMAN (40s, attractive). They were Mia and Selena's parents.

FLASHBACK - EXT. PARK AREA - DAY

Mia's parents -- her mother wearing the same coral linen scarf Selena wore in the opening -- along with Mia and Selena pose together for a carefree family photo.

END FLASHBACK

Mia's heartbreak is palpable as she studies the same family photo. Her words are only a whisper --

MIA (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry.

She is haunted by memories.

LIVING AREA

Mia, on one knee, feeds the cat as SPORADIC BANGING draws her gaze to a half open bedroom door.

Mia, unnerved by the sound, stands up.

BEDROOM

Mia eyes a full size bed that has not been slept in. The BARKING DOG is louder here --

Daylight is fading fast.

A BANG from an open window turns Mia's glance to a loose screen swaying in a breeze.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia appraises the screen, which is bent outward and hangs askance. The gap is large enough for a cat to slip through.

Mia hooks two fingers under the screen and pulls it toward her. The BARKING distracts her and --

-- her finger gets caught on a screen wire. Ouch! She pulls it away. Sees a blood dot forming.

MIA (CONT'D)

Jesus.

She's done tinkering and shuts the window. Glances about the room. Nothing appears to be out of place.

But not so fast --

She sees a MARKETING FLYER on a nearby desk. It is exactly like the flyers on the cars outside.

She picks it up, looks it over.

Cover reads: **FAIRBORN FOUNDATION: A FAST TRACK TO CITIZENSHIP**

Below that: **Associate Positions Available**

At the bottom is an email: **Ryann@fairborn.org**

Below that in neat female handwriting: **(email sent 10/28)**

Interview: _____

It is just curious enough to get Mia's attention.

INT. MIA'S CAR - NIGHT

Mia, on her phone again, sits with the engine off.

MIA (PHONE)

Listen, do you have a break soon? I really need to talk... yeah, I know the place. See you then.

She ends the call, rubs her tired eyes.

Refocusing now, she opens her phone's web browser. Types something quickly and taps the "search" icon --

BROWSER WINDOW: *No Results for Fairborn Foundation.*

She checks the flyer again, opens an e-mail client. Enters the following in the "to" field --

Ryann@fairborn.org

The following text auto-populates:

Subject: Associate Position Inquiry

Mia types a brief message and hits send.

EXT. OUTDOOR FOOD COURT - NIGHT

Mia walks with Charlie, who scarfs down a fully loaded hot dog. A CACOPHONY OF STREET SOUNDS overlap.

CHARLIE

ICE would've impounded the van in two seconds flat, so you can count them out. Which is a good thing.

MIA

Definitely.

CHARLIE

Did you check the emergency rooms?

MIA

And the clinics. There's no record of Selena or Luis anywhere.

CHARLIE

Okay. What else you got?

Mia waits before showing Charlie the Fairborn Foundation flyer. Charlie is vaguely amused.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

A fast track to citizenship. Hm.
Sounds like it's right down the
yellow brick road.

MIA

You know Selena's been desperate to
get a sponsor. Since her student
visa expired.

CHARLIE

I know. The system's a hot mess.

They stop at the street. Mia's face is heavy with regret.

MIA

Charlie, this is all my fault.

CHARLIE

Oh, come on. Don't even start with
that.

MIA

Our parents would be alive if I
hadn't sent those funds back to
Honduras. You know that.

CHARLIE

Christ, girl, you were helping to
put her through college --

MIA

Yeah. And I ruined her life.

CHARLIE

No. The greedy ass neighbor who
killed your folks for the money did
that. You did everything right.
Like how you helped me when Dave
broke off our engagement. I'll
never forget that. Damn, Mia, don't
beat yourself up here.

MIA

I promised Selena I'd keep her safe
if she came to live here. I can't
lose her, too.

Charlie gives Mia a comforting hug.

CHARLIE

Go get some sleep. I'll be home
tomorrow night.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'll call if anything comes up
before then. I love you.

MIA

Love you.

As they turn to leave, Mia spots a BLACK SUV parked across the street. It commands attention.

EXT. QUIET RESIDENTIAL STREET - NIGHT

Mia sets her CAR ALARM with the key fob and starts down the sidewalk.

Her cell phone CHIMES a notification. Mia slows her steps and opens the e-mail client.

EMAIL: *From: Ryann@fairborn.org*

Someone will be in touch for an interview.

MIA

(aggravated)

I don't want an interview.

She goes to reply, but sees it's a *no reply email*.

MIA (CONT'D)

Are you serious?

As Mia considers what to do next, she side-eyes a --

-- WIRY MAN standing across the street. Pooling lamp light reveals he's wearing a black wolf skull mask.

A wave of dread ripples through Mia, but she remains cool.

She glances straight ahead at --

-- the black SUV from the food court parked directly in front of her apartment complex. She recognizes it.

Mia's stress level just skyrocketed.

She turns back to the masked man across the street --

He watches her with purpose. This is not a random weirdo.

Mia touches a metal fence for safety. Her breathing is heavier.

A CAR DOOR OPENS nearby; Mia turns back to the SUV as --

-- A TALL MAN, also wearing a wolf skull mask, steps out and squares himself to her.

Mia, trembling with terror, STOPS.

MIA (CONT'D)

What. The. Hell.

Barely restraining panic, she glances between the two masked men who stand like sinister statues. Things are going sideways real fast and --

-- Mia suddenly BOLTS back toward her car at a full sprint.

The tall man jumps back in the SUV and --

-- the wiry man pursues Mia on foot, but she is too fast.

Mia presses the key fob, almost involuntary -- BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-BEEP -- as the car alarm disengages over and over.

Arriving at her car, Mia pulls the door handle. LOCKED!

MIA (CONT'D)

No, no, no! *Come on!!*

The SUV makes a hard U-turn and --

-- high beams shine on Mia's face. She realizes the wiry man is just steps away from her car.

Mia presses the fob deliberately, panting at this point. It's her last chance --

She pulls the door handle and IT OPENS.

INT. MIA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Mia starts the ENGINE as --

-- THWACK, the wiry man yanks at the locked passenger door.

MIA

Get away from me!!

Mia, struggling to see from the SUV headlights, shifts into reverse and STOMPS the gas pedal --

As Mia backs the car up, the wiry man falls away from the door.

Mia throws the car into drive and cuts the wheel. FLOORS the gas, leaving the SUV and the wiry man behind.

She's shaken to her core, struggles to catch her breath.

EXT. DOWNTOWN EL PASO - NIGHT

Mia's car speeds through a quiet intersection.

INT. MIA'S CAR - SAME TIME

Mia dials 911 and waits for the call to connect.

MIA

Pick up. Come on. Pick up.

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)

911. What's your emergency?

MIA (PHONE)

Yes. Someone is following me. I think they're trying to hurt me.

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)

Ma'am, what is your location?

MIA (PHONE)

I'm at the corner of, um, North Mesa and Texas Avenue. Driving south.

She eyes the rear-view mirror, sees the SUV following her.

MIA (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Oh my god. They're *right* behind me!

911 OPERATOR (V.O.)

Can you describe the other vehicle?

MIA (PHONE)

SUV. Black. I -- I don't know the model. Just send someone. *Please*.

(no reply)

Hello?

The phone battery is DEAD. Mia growls in frustration, STEPS on the gas. Her heart is pounding out of her chest and --

-- she cuts the steering wheel to the right.

TIRES SQUEAL as she turns onto an intersecting street.

In the rear-view: the SUV makes the turn at a distance.

Mia struggles to hold herself together, turns the wheel hard to the left and drives down ANOTHER SIDE STREET before --

-- she hangs a quick right down a NARROW SIDE STREET and checks her side mirror again --

There is no sign of the SUV anywhere.

EXT. NARROW SIDE STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Mia's car slows to a crawl and parks between two trucks, hidden from view.

INT. MIA'S CAR - SAME TIME

Mia's eyes are locked on her side mirror. Her defenses are still way up. Her breathing is uneven.

In the side mirror: no vehicles are approaching from behind.

Mia's fear level subsides a touch. She notices a nearby fence with a dozen *Persona Desaparecida* (*Missing Person*) posters.

The sheer number of posters disturbs her.

She turns off the engine. Eyelids are heavy, but she watches the street like a hawk. She's not taking any chances.

TO BLACK

Silence... before CHIRPING BIRDS grow louder.

UP FROM BLACK

INT. MIA'S CAR - DAY

Mia's eyes flutter open, squint from the intense daylight. She slept in here.

A big yawn and she pulls herself up straighter. The BIRDS continue their morning call-and-response.

Mia uses the rear-view mirror to fix a loose hair pin while she checks the street again. Satisfied no one is lurking back there, Mia starts the ENGINE.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Charlie, looking relieved, stands up from her desk as Mia approaches. Phones ring, voices chatter indistinctly.

CHARLIE

Girl, I've been calling you for two full hours. Where have you been? Is everything alright?

MIA

(wearily)

Give me a sec.

Charlie signals for a HANDCUFFED MAN to get up from a chair.

CHARLIE

Move. Now.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia sits in the chair. Charlie is stumped.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You said wolf masks?

(Mia nods)

I don't know. Maybe college kids were getting their Halloween on early?

MIA

No. This was different.

CHARLIE

Different how?

MIA

Like they knew where I'd be before I got there. And kids don't chase you halfway across the city.

CHARLIE

They sure as hell don't. Did you get a plate number by any chance?

MIA

(shakes her head)

Hey, what do you know about people disappearing in the city?

CHARLIE

About as much as missing persons tells us, which is jack. They have a real hard-on for narcotics.

She grabs a square of paper off her desk, hands it to Mia.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

For what it's worth, this is the only address I could find for that Fairborn place. It wasn't easy.

MIA

Rock Springs? That's in the desert.

CHARLIE

I'll see what else I can dig up,
but it's not an official case yet.
And I'll be in deep shit if they
see me working on it. Be patient.

(then)

You will be patient, right?

She waits for a reply. Mia eyes the paper with intent.

INT. PUBLIC BATHROOM

Mia wears jeans and a white V-neck tee, stuffs her scrubs in her shoulder bag. Fixes her hair in a rushed but typically attentive manner.

MIA (V.O.)

I can get to Rock Springs in three
hours. Maybe less.

She grabs the shoulder bag and exits in a hurry.

EXT. SIDE STREET - DAY

Mia tosses the shoulder bag into her car and gets in.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Come on, Mia. It's in the damn
middle of nowhere. Don't make me
start worrying about you again.

The ENGINE turns on.

INT. MIA'S CAR

Mia takes a Lorazepam with water, exhales slowly.

MIA (V.O.)

Selena didn't vanish into thin air.
And she sure as hell didn't run
away.

She eyes the Fairborn flyer again. The only readable text is:
Ryann@fairborn.org.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 I get it. And you know I want her
 back, too, but what do you think
 Fairborn has to do with all this?

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAINS - DAY

AERIAL SHOT of Mia's car driving on a desolate road amid bone-dry hills and shadowy canyons (think Big Bend National Park).

MIA (V.O.)
 Maybe nothing. But it's all I've
 got right now.

Mia's car pulls off in a dusty turnaround.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia stands by her car in the turnaround, removes two loose hair pins and pockets them. Takes in the bleak landscape, always on alert. It's the middle of nowhere.

She checks her phone. No Wifi signal. It's exasperating.

MIA
 Perfect.

She puts her phone away, vexed. Listens to something... the sound becomes clearer: A DISTANT ENGINE.

She turns back and sees an SUV approaching at high speed.

Relieved to see *anyone* up here, Mia waves for it to stop, but the SUV doesn't slow down. In fact, all three tons haul ass STRAIGHT TOWARD HER. Mia's eyes widen and --

MIA (CONT'D)
 Hey! Watch it!

-- she jumps aside as the SUV barrels past her at a perilous clip before STOPPING ON A DIME up the road.

Dust clears as the driver's window powers down. The MALE DRIVER is obscured from view.

Mia throws her arms up in anger --

MIA (CONT'D)
Are you crazy?!
 (no reply)
 Look, is Fairborn Foundation around
 here? My GPS stopped working, but I
 think it's nearby.

The driver says nothing. His hands grip the steering wheel.

MIA (CONT'D)

Hey, man, do you know where it is
or not?

The engine revs slowly. The driver is taunting Mia.

Mia takes a step back, feeling suddenly vulnerable.

The engine stops revving. The window powers up and the SUV
SPEEDS AWAY like a bat out of Hell.

Mia watches dust scatter behind the SUV and a LARGE STONE
WALL, forbidding and fortress-like, comes into view on the
next hill over.

Mia eyes it with equal parts excitement and apprehension.

EXT. FAIRBORN FOUNDATION - ESTABLISHING - DAY

Mia's car follows the stone wall -- eight feet high with iron
spires on top -- before it turns into an open MAIN GATE.

An engraved sign reads: *Fairborn Foundation Est. 2019.* Below
that: *Private Property.*

Mia's car continues up a long driveway toward a STATELY
FEDERAL-STYLE STONE HOME --

Texas and U.S. flags fly in concert on a pole. The lawns are
verdant. A small pond glistens. Gardens abound.

An oasis in a wasteland.

EXT. FAIRBORN FOUNDATION - A MINUTE LATER

Mia walks away from her car, regards the eerie near-silence.
Eyes a fancy sports car and black sedan parked nearby.

Strolling past SPUTTERING SPRINKLERS, Mia sees a CAMERA
mounted above the stone home's main entrance. Sensing she's
being watched, she turns to a garden where a --

-- HUMAN FIGURE, six feet tall and wearing dark clothes,
stands obscured behind sunflowers and corn stalks.

MIA

Hello?

No reply.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia approaches the garden with caution. DRIED
CORN HUSKS crunch underfoot.

Mia, pushing flowers aside, realizes the human figure is only a SCARECROW. But not just any scarecrow --

Hollowed out eyes and a uniquely terrifying face set this one apart. Crossbow bolts protrude from its chest. Like it's been used for target practice.

Mia grimaces at the grotesque display.

EXT. STONE HOME - ENTRANCE - A MINUTE LATER

Mia stops at a Victorian door with frosted glass panels, a metal knob and plate. All originals. No doorbell.

She eyes a vintage "Welcome" mat at her feet. It's like she stepped into a cauldron of Americana.

Mia KNOCKS on the door and sees no movement through the glass. She KNOCKS again and the door OPENS on its own.

She's not waiting for an invitation.

INT. STONE HOME - PARLOUR - MOMENTS LATER

Mia regards the bland and utterly conventional decor.

A grandfather clock's TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK is metronomic.

MIA

Is anyone around? Hola perezosas?

No reply. She takes mindful steps. Hardwood CREAKS underfoot.

ON THE WALLS: A LARGE ILLUSTRATION of the mythological nine-headed Hydra; Framed PHOTOS of political, business, medical types, all older white guys in suits, lab coats, hunting gear brandishing rifles and crossbows --

It's like a museum devoted to Caucasian testosterone, and Mia is not captivated by it. Not at all.

She stops at a crossbow with a quiver of bolts mounted at eye level. Glances up to a PAINTING of a STATELY MAN (70s), who seems to preside over everything. An inscription reads:

Founder, Gordon Fairborn, U.S. Senator, 1984-2020

Mia sighs with disappointment. Like she's reached a dead end.

A LOW CREAK from behind startles Mia and --

RYANN (O.S.)

I had the privilege to work with
Senator Fairborn before he died --

-- she turns to RYANN SLIDE (32), a perfectly blond corporate type in Gucci heels. Her swanky facade barely masks a sinuous intensity. She's the polar opposite of Mia.

Ryann checks her pricey watch before regarding the painting with pride and --

RYANN (CONT'D)

-- he embodied everything we stand for: shared values, cutting edge innovation, and the belief that anything is possible through our assets... but I'm guessing you're not here for our company pitch.

MIA

Are you Ryann?

Ryann fidgets with her watch restlessly. That's a yes.

MIA (CONT'D)

I believe my sister may have had an interview here. Her name is Selena Sanchez and --

RYANN

Sorry. I have to stop you right there. See, that's not even possible.

MIA

(holds up the flyer)

Selena seemed to think so. This is her handwriting on your flyer.

RYANN

What I mean is we don't take applicants here. Our recruiting is done in the field through our reps. Truth is, we can hardly keep up with demand as it is.

MIA

Okay, then I'd like some rep names in El Paso --

RYANN

Look, I have a call in about thirty seconds, so can we get to your point regarding -- ?

MIA

Selena. She's disappeared.

SHERIFF DYLAN RAZOR (44) steps up. Cocksure and middle-aged handsome in a sports jacket, shiny badge, snakeskin boots.

SHERIFF RAZOR

Is there a problem, Ms. Slide?

RYANN

No, Sheriff. I think we're pretty much done.

MIA

Wait. What are you talking about?

SHERIFF RAZOR

Easy does it, darlin'.

MIA

Look, I'm just asking for help.

RYANN

Having a sister myself I feel your concern. I really do. But I've told you everything I can.

(admiring)

Your hair is amazing.

A crooked smile forms on her lips. She speed dials a number and walks away down an ADJACENT CORRIDOR.

Mia is bewildered.

EXT. FAIRBORN FOUNDATION - LATE DAY

Mia, crestfallen and frustrated, stops at her car. Gazes at the distant hills, the fading sun.

SHERIFF RAZOR (O.S.)

They always come out after dark.

Mia turns to Sheriff Razor standing almost too close.

SHERIFF RAZOR (CONT'D)

Those Texas wolves. Yeah. They've been up here a long time. Pretty much from the beginning.

MIA

I -- I'm sorry?

SHERIFF RAZOR

Ruthless creatures. I tease the wife sometimes. Tell her if she steps out on me I may just have to feed her to them.

He chuckles to himself. Mia is not amused.

MIA

I'd just like to leave.

Sheriff Razor smiles with sex and menace before he gets in the black sedan and drives away.

Mia exhales like she was holding her breath, turns back to the stone home where --

-- RYANN stands in a window, speaking on her cell phone, as she watches Mia.

This makes Mia even more uneasy.

EXT. DUSTY LITTLE TOWN - LATE DAY

Mia takes in the "town" of Rock Springs, which is little more than a dingy bar with neon "Perez's Bar" sign, a shabby motor lodge, and a handful of tiny homes.

Nothing has been updated since probably 1985.

Mia catches the eye of an ELDERLY HISPANIC WOMAN pattering outside one home.

MIA

Buenos tardes, señora.

The woman scowls at her and turns away.

MIA (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Rude.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia paces as she speaks on her cell phone.

MIA (PHONE) (CONT'D)

The place is so cracker barrel white -- photos of old dudes with big guns -- but there's just something *off* about it.

CHARLIE (V.O.)

Hello? You're cutting out.

MIA (PHONE)
 Ryann. I feel like she knows more than she's saying. Call it a gut feeling.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 Listen, what are you doing now?

MIA (PHONE)
 I could definitely use a nap.

CHARLIE (V.O.)
 Well, don't go hanging around up there. My abuela swears those mountains are cursed. And the woman is always right, y'hear?

MIA (PHONE)
 Lo tengo mamá. I'll be in touch.

She ends the call, glances over at Perez's Bar.

EXT. PEREZ'S BAR - MOMENTS LATER

DANA PEREZ (36), earnest but lonely, cropped hair, struggles to lower a booze crate off a pickup truck bed as --

MIA
 Hold on. I got it.

Mia helps Dana set the crate down on a hand truck.

DANA
 Damn, kid. You're a life saver.

She jumps down off the truck, sticks a butterfly knife in the crate. Smiles at Mia like she figured something out --

DANA (CONT'D)
 Salma Hayek.

MIA
 Okay. Is that a drink special?

DANA
 You remind me of a younger version. Now don't get me wrong, the lady is still a total bombshell, but --

MIA
 But nothing. She's the bomb.

They smile together. Dana grabs a second crate.

DANA

I'm not open 'til six. The stew should be ready by then. My name is Dana, in case you come back. Not many folks do. Not these days.

MIA

You've been up here for a while?

DANA

Let's put it this way: four generations of Perez's have been slinging booze and changing bed sheets in this town. You could say I'm the last of a dying breed.

She sets the crate down and bottles CLATTER as --

-- a ratty pickup truck stops nearby. A SHADY GUY (40) with a severe face sits behind the wheel.

Dana looks wary upon seeing him. Mia notes it.

EXT. SHABBY MOTOR LODGE - EVENING

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS

- 1.) The place is retro awful. One star on Trip Advisor.
- 2.) A CREAKY, faded sign reads "*Perez's Lone Star Lodge.*"
- 3.) Mia stops at a guest unit door, inserts an old school key in the lock.

INT. PEREZ'S LONE STAR LODGE - MIA'S UNIT

Mia sits on a full size bed, her cell phone on speaker --

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)

The user's mailbox is full. Please hang up and --

Mia, downcast, ends the call.

MIA

Come on, Selena. Where are you?

She stacks some pillows and lies back on the bed. Gets herself comfy and turns to face the window. Reaches over and pulls a sheer curtain aside.

OUTSIDE: Daylight is almost gone. The town is tranquil.

UNIT: Mia's tired eyes flutter and close. She is drifting toward dreamland.

Her chest rises and falls with each halcyon breath...

... ONE breath... TWO breaths... THREE breaths...

(o.s.) RUMBLING ENGINES stir Mia from her near slumber. She eyes a digital clock on the night stand.

The time is 6:03.

EXT. PEREZ'S LONE STAR LODGE - EVENING

Mia watches TWO SUVs with tinted windows drive by at high speed and continue up the road.

Her curiosity is piqued.

INT. PEREZ'S BAR - NIGHT

Mia sits at the bar enjoying a bowl of stew and a beer.

A carved pumpkin with a Pride flag witch hat sits nearby on a dusty liquor shelf.

The place has a certain Lost Highway charm.

MIA

Mmm. This stew is so good.

DANA

The poblanos are the key. You show them the proper love and they'll love you right back.

She winks and pours a tequila shot, drinks it fast.

MIA

What do you know about Fairborn Foundation?

DANA

You a history buff?
(Mia shrugs "sure")
Well... the house was used in the Civil War to hide escaped slaves. Pretty wild, huh?

MIA

Sure. But I mean recently.

The shady guy enters and sits down at a table. Dana sees him and grows evasive with Mia.

DANA

You know... my hands are full with this place. Since my girlfriend left I don't have a minute to look up. She was the organized one.

MIA

You don't know *anything*? Like what they specialize in? What their assets are?

This last part resonates with Dana, but she shakes her head.

DANA

Look, I really don't have -- what's your interest anyway?

MIA

My kid sister is missing, and I'm trying to figure out what happened.

DANA

-- I'm sorry. But it's like I said.

Mia, annoyed by Dana's reticence, grabs her purse to pay.

DANA (CONT'D)

Your money's no good here. Dinner's on me.

Mia can feel the shady guy's eyes on her. It creeps her out.

EXT. PEREZ'S BAR - NIGHT

Mia walks back toward the lodge, glances over at --

THE TINY HOMES: The elderly woman from earlier stands inside a window watching Mia. Pulls a shade down fatefully. This is repeated by two more ELDERLY WOMEN in other homes.

Mia bristles and stops walking --

MIA

What is wrong with this place?

A FRANTIC HISPANIC WOMAN (26) suddenly grabs her arm.

*All dialogue in *italics* is in Spanish and subtitled.

FRANTIC HISPANIC WOMAN
Please! Help me, lady! Please!

MIA
Hey! Stop it! Stop!

FRANTIC HISPANIC WOMAN
The monster! I've seen it!

MIA
What are you doing? Let go of me!

FRANTIC HISPANIC WOMAN
The monster with many heads!

MIA
Monster? What -- what do you mean?

HEADLIGHTS blind them as the sports car and black sedan from Fairborn Foundation stop in front of them.

Ryann gets out of the sports car as --

-- Sheriff Razor approaches the woman. Despite her pleas, he wrestles a keycard from her hands aggressively.

SHERIFF RAZOR
 Come on now. That's enough.

MIA
 Hey, hey! You're hurting her.

Sheriff Razor cuts Mia a hostile look and leads the woman to the black sedan. Mia, incredulous, turns to Ryann.

MIA (CONT'D)
 What are you doing with her?

RYANN
 I figured you'd be halfway to El Paso by now.

MIA
 The woman is terrified. And I asked you a question.

RYANN
 She took something that doesn't belong to her.
 (calling back)
 Isn't that right, sheriff?

SHERIFF RAZOR

Folks don't respect a damn thing
these days. That's the sad truth.

He leans on the sedan roof, eyes Mia darkly. Ryann catches
Mia's glance and nods at Perez's Bar --

RYANN

I recommend the Margarita. Super
potent. Tell her it's on me.

MIA

(with contempt)
I'm not thirsty.

RYANN

It's worth a taste. Just a few sips
and you forget everything.

Her crooked smile emerges. She gets in her car before both
vehicles speed away. Mia, flushed with anger, walks toward
the lodge. Dana catches up with her --

DANA

Hey. You forgot your bill.

MIA

I thought it was on the house.

DANA

Pay when you can. I'm around.

She shoves a receipt in Mia's hand and hurries back to the
bar. Mia, confounded, watches her go.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Charlie scrutinizes her computer monitor, snacks on barbecue
potato chips. It's near the end of her shift.

COMPUTER MONITOR: **Fairborn Foundation** stands out amid other
text.

Charlie types something in the search field, taps enter and --

COMPUTER MONITOR: **RZ Edge Technologies, Inc. (RZE-T:NASDAQ)**

Semiconductors and Medical Technology

CHARLIE

(suspicious)
What are you people up to?

She crunches a chip deliberately, now taps the down arrow and scrolls to --

COMPUTER MONITOR: **Glanmorrow Holdings / Cultivate America PAC**

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What --

As she reads on, a look of alarm blossoms on her face.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Holy shit. Mia.

(turns to a MALE
DETECTIVE)

I gotta go. Family emergency.

She gathers her things. The detective "whatever" and watches her leave.

EXT. PEREZ'S LONE STAR LODGE - NIGHT

Mia stops at her unit and sees something scrawled on the receipt.

Trailer out back. Knock twice.

She looks up.

PRELAP: KNOCK-KNOCK.

EXT. RUNDOWN TRAILER - NIGHT

The front door OPENS and Dana nervously waves Mia inside.

DANA

Come in. Yeah. Come in.

She checks to see if anyone is watching them and pulls the door SHUT.

INT. RUNDOWN TRAILER - LIVING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Dana cracks open a beer can, takes a hefty gulp.

DANA

You thirsty? I have toasted lager
and a foolishly strong IPA.

MIA

No, thanks. What is this all about?

DANA

There's something I think you should see, but it's not right here.

MIA

Look, just tell me what you're getting at. I'm not in the mood for guessing games.

DANA

You seem like a cool chick, you know? Whatever your name is --

MIA

Mia.

DANA

-- and I want you to find your sister. Family is everything, Mia. God knows I lost mine before I was ready. It haunts you forever.

MIA

Wait. You know where Selena is?

DANA

Let's use the back door. They have eyes and ears all over the place.

She grabs her butterfly knife, which is stuck in the wall.

EXT. ROCK LEDGE - NIGHT

Mia and Dana reach the crest, which overlooks the road.

DANA

They come and go all day, but the real party starts at night.

Mia eyes the lifeless road with skepticism.

MIA

Is this some kind of joke?

Dana signals "hold on." Moments later, distant ENGINES grow rapidly louder and FIVE SUVs appear at the far end of town, moving at breakneck speed.

DANA

They deliver them to Fairborn almost every night. Damn near half the plates are out of state.

MIA

What do you mean? What are they delivering?

DANA

People. Lots of them. For awhile now.

MIA

What?

DANA

Sheriff Razor wants us to act like nothing's going on. The old folks play ball, but I'm tired of living in silence.

MIA

The sheriff. He works for Ryann?

Dana sips from a whisky flask, nods.

DANA

She runs the day-to-day operations. Girl's one of those climber types, but it doesn't end with her. There are others involved.

MIA

(lets it sink in)
After they bring people up there, what happens next?

DANA

Can't say for sure, but it's not long before the big trucks show up.

Mia's face drops as she watches the SUVs drive on.

EXT. DANA'S RUNDOWN TRAILER - NIGHT

As Dana hurries inside --

-- the shady guy lurks in the darkness, calmly texts someone.

MIA (V.O.)

It's Fairborn --

INT. PEREZ'S LONE STAR LODGE - MIA'S UNIT - NIGHT

Mia, on her cell phone, paces urgently.

MIA (PHONE)
 -- They have Selena. I'm sure of
 it.

INT. CHARLIE'S MUSTANG - SAME TIME

Charlie speaks on Bluetooth as she drives.

CHARLIE
 You're not up there now, are you?

INTERCUT -- PHONE CONVERSATION

MIA
 No. But I think she could be in
 danger.

CHARLIE
 Listen to me: Fairborn is *seriously*
 connected.

MIA
 What do you mean?

CHARLIE
 It's part of a larger company with
 its tentacles in politics, biotech,
 you name it. And they're funded by
 right-wing groups with some strange
 ideas and money to burn.

MIA
That's it. I have to get her out of
 there.

CHARLIE
 You need to be careful, girl. These
 people have friends in real high --

Her voice breaks up on the word "*places.*"

MIA
 Charlie? -- Charlie?

The call disconnects.

CHARLIE
 Mother of -- shit!!

Frustrated, she FLOORS the gas. FOLLOWING her Mustang as it
 accelerates down a dark highway.

END INTERCUTTING

INT. MIA'S UNIT - SAME TIME

Mia speed dials Charlie, but the call won't reconnect.

HEADLIGHTS shine through the window, as TWO VEHICLES STOP out front. Engines turn off, but the lights remain on.

Mia shields her eyes from the light, opens the sheer curtain.

OUTSIDE: Two black SUVs face the unit. High beams are on, but no one is inside.

UNIT: Mia, struggling to see, cranes her neck to the right.

OUTSIDE: TWO BURLY MEN wearing black wolf skull masks stand in the dark facing the unit.

UNIT: Mia's internal alarm is going crazy. Her breathing turns uneven. She looks to her left.

OUTSIDE: A THIRD MAN BURLY MAN, wearing an identical wolf skull mask, also faces the unit.

UNIT: Mia's fear level is multiplying. She turns back to her eleven o'clock, stunned to see --

OUTSIDE: A TIRE on her car is flat, like it was slashed.

UNIT: Mia watches a dark human figure race past the window; a look of horror overwhelms her and --

MIA

No, no, no, no, no!!!

-- she dashes to the door and throws her weight against it, as someone tries to push it open from outside.

MIA (CONT'D)

Get away from me!!

The DOOR RATTLES from pressure on both sides. Mia, desperate, quickly engages a dead bolt and the rattling ENDS.

Mia backs slowly away from the door as --

-- FOOTFALLS approach from outside. Mia's eyes widen in realization just before --

-- the door is kicked OPEN and two masked men enter and case the place. One of them grabs Mia's purse off the bed --

But Mia is already gone.

INT./EXT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mia struggles to squeeze through a narrow window frame.

MIA
Come on. God, come on.

A LOUD CRACK at the door, like someone kicked it.

Mia strains even harder and --

-- clears the window frame, tumbles onto a PILE OF JUNK outside.

Mia, banged up from the fall, staggers away.

INT. DANA'S TRAILER - LIVING AREA - NIGHT

FERVID KNOCKING makes the door RATTLE in its frame.

MIA (O.S.)
Dana? Are you there?

The door OPENS. Mia steps in, sees furniture thrown around.

MIA (CONT'D)
Dana?

A GRINDING NOISE puts Mia on high alert. She swallows hard and slowly traverses a dark hallway --

The GRINDING grows louder as she enters --

THE KITCHEN

-- and eyes Dana's bloody knife on the floor. She looks up to see DANA'S BODY hanging from a ceiling fan. A belt cinched around her neck prevents the blades from moving and GRINDS.

MIA (CONT'D)
Oh, no. Nooooo!

Distraught, she grabs Dana's waist to get her down from there, but the belt is stuck.

MIA (CONT'D)
Come on!

STUMBLING SOUNDS jar Mia as the shady guy, his shirt soaked with blood, grabs her from behind and hurls her --

Mia lands against the stove, injures her arm. Instinctively, she picks up a cast iron pan and --

-- WHAM! She strikes the shady guy in the face. He crumples to the floor, stares blankly up at her.

MIA (CONT'D)
Did they tell you to do this?
Ryann? The sheriff?

The shady guy is recalcitrant, wheezes with each breath.

MIA (CONT'D)
Answer me!

The shady guy, bleeding from a gut wound, emits a shallow groan and dies.

Mia, agape over Dana, reacts to the sound of a DOOR OPENING and looks down the hallway as --

-- a masked man enters through the front door.

Mia ducks out of sight. Her terror level just hit 10.

EXT. PEREZ'S BAR - MOMENTS LATER

OUT BACK: Mia peers around a corner and checks if she is being followed.

OUT FRONT: The three masked men search for Mia. One studies a handheld device, now looks directly at Mia's position and points her out to the others.

OUT BACK: Mia realizes the man is tracking her phone. Aghast, she powers it off and runs into the nearby brush.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia climbs into a CULVERT across the road and a hundred paces down, trembles as --

-- the masked men search for her around the bar and lodge; their INDISTINCT VOICES overlap.

Mia sinks further into the culvert to avoid being seen.

TO BLACK

Silence... now a VEHICLE APPROACHES SLOWLY.

UP FROM BLACK

EXT. CULVERT - NIGHT

Mia's head emerges just enough to see the masked men and the SUVs from the lodge are gone.

Relieved at first, she turns and gazes skeptically as --

CAR HEADLIGHTS

-- creep slowly in her direction from the far end of town.

INT. CHARLIE'S MUSTANG - SAME TIME

Charlie eats a mouthful of trail mix, glances around expectantly as she drives.

HER POV: Mia's car sits at the lodge with a flat tire.

CHARLIE

What in the name of --

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK! Charlie slams the brakes, surprised to see Mia signaling her to pull off the road.

EXT. CLUSTER OF TREES - NIGHT

Mia, livid, stands with Charlie. They are unseen from the road.

MIA

They advertise jobs, but there's not even an interview.

CHARLIE

So Fairborn grabs your phone IP off the email --

MIA

-- and someone finds you. Like they found me. And they'll even kill you if you talk. Like Dana.

CHARLIE

Jesus. It sounds like a cartel.

MIA

Think about it: the people they're recruiting would probably slip right through the cracks and they know it. I mean, who goes looking for undocumented immigrants?

CHARLIE

(nods)

I'll kick this up to the Feds, but they won't get here right away.

MIA

No! No esta pasando! This needs to happen tonight!

CHARLIE

Mia, come on. We don't have backup.

MIA

Trucks are coming here, okay? And if they take Selena to God-knows-where, chances are I'll never find her again.

(with passion)

Charlie. I need your help.

Charlie's look softens. She's all in.

CHARLIE

Girl, you found a hornet's nest.

As she dials her cell phone, they watch two SUVs zip past.

INT./EXT. CHARLIE'S MUSTANG - NIGHT

Mia eyes the road as Charlie taps a dash-mounted display with annoyance.

CHARLIE

The broadband up here is for shit.

She taps it again and finds what she's searching for --

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That's her? Ryann?

DISPLAY: MAGAZINE PHOTO of Ryann in a sleek suit, arms folded assuredly. A story headline reads: "*Young Tech Spotlight.*"

MIA

It says she was a Fairborn scholar, which is awarded to underprivileged students.

CHARLIE

So the old man paid for her school.

MIA

She was poor?

CHARLIE

Worst kind. They'll do anything to hold onto what they have.

MIA

You know, I couldn't figure out why a tech CEO and a wealthy senator would be connected... they have history. But the man is dead, so what is Ryann protecting?

Charlie shrugs "no idea" and removes a Taser handgun from the glove box, hands it to Mia.

CHARLIE

Just in case. You get one shot.

MIA

(gesturing)

Pull over here. Past the gate.

Charlie pulls the car off the road and stops. They get out and walk to the open trunk. Charlie grabs two smoke grenades. She pockets one, gives the other to Mia.

CHARLIE

Okay. Let's not get killed.

She rubs Mia's arm encouragingly, unholsters her pistol. Now together they SHUT the trunk.

EXT. FAIRBORN FOUNDATION - NIGHT

FOLLOWING as Mia and Charlie sneak up the driveway, suddenly crouch behind some shrubs, as an SUV approaches from the stone home and drives past them toward the main gate.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia and Charlie race through the garden from earlier. Charlie looks horrified by the impaled scarecrow.

CHARLIE

(to herself)

Psychos.

MIA

Camera. Above the entrance.

They exit the garden and move in a wide arc around the camera to avoid detection, flattening themselves against the wall.

INT. STONE HOME - PARLOUR

Mia and Charlie scuttle past the Hydra illustration, the crossbow, the photos. Charlie's arm inadvertently brushes a photo frame and knocks it sideways.

Mia signals toward the darkened adjacent corridor like "let's check it out."

Charlie holds her pistol in low ready position, scrutinizing.

CHARLIE
Okay, we're clear.

They head down the corridor and disappear into darkness.

SERIES OF SHOTS - MIA AND CHARLIE SEARCHING THE HOME

- 1.) Mia enters a completely empty room, looks baffled.
- 2.) Charlie stands in another empty room, equally confounded.
- 3.) In yet another empty room Mia carefully approaches a table, looks troubled as she surveys bins of USED TOYS, like they've been confiscated.

INT. ADJACENT CORRIDOR

Mia and Charlie, both disappointed, meet up.

CHARLIE
Nothing?

MIA
(shakes her head)
They have to be around here.

CHARLIE
I believe you, but all I'm seeing
are empty rooms.

MIA
We're missing something.

CHARLIE
Do they have a barn out back?
Anything?

Mia considers something and realizes --

MIA
Charlie, they hid slaves here. For
the underground railroad.

They both gaze down at the floor. Mia knows she needs to go below ground and exhales apprehensively as --

-- A VEHICLE ENGINE from outside distracts her. She looks up.

EXT. STONE HOME - NIGHT

Mia and Charlie stand by the entrance and watch an SUV drive from around the back of the home toward the main gate.

They share a hopeful smile.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia and Charlie creep along the BACK WALL of the home amidst shrubbery. They spot an SUV parked near a BULKHEAD DOOR (double doors to a basement) and --

-- the door suddenly opens as TWO MEN, both maskless, exit from the basement.

CHARLIE

Welcome to the drop zone.

One man clutches a wolf skull mask as he gets in the SUV.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

The wolf masks again? These people have a strange sense of humor.

MIA

Think about it: what do wolves do best?

MIA/CHARLIE

They hunt.

They share a scornful look and hide as the SUV drives past.

Now they race over to the bulkhead door. Mia pulls a handle, but the door won't open. She spots a mounted card reader.

MIA

We need a keycard to get in.

CHARLIE

Forget it. I've busted these open before. The lock assembly is right underneath. We just need something heavy enough to get it started.

They glance around as --

MOMENTS LATER: SMASH! Mia brings a flat rock down on where the doors meet. SMASH! She strikes it again. One door sits ajar and the lock assembly underneath is visible.

Charlie slides a punch knife in there, disengages the lock.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Try it.

Mia pulls on the door handle and it OPENS... but the moment of triumph is short-lived as --

-- they glance up the wall to a CAMERA pointed down at them.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRWELL

Charlie holds a mini flashlight as they descend a long flight of concrete stairs, going deeper --

The flashlight beam reveals sodden walls... a spider in a web... all the ambiance of a *dungeon*.

At the bottom they behold a BLACK DOOR up ahead. Mia's legs turn rubbery.

Charlie sees Mia starting to falter, grabs her arm.

CHARLIE

Hey, hey, hey. Stay with me.

Mia is wobbly, perspiring. She struggles to breathe.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Panic attack? You have your meds?

MIA

In the -- in the car.

CHARLIE

Shit. You need to go back?

Mia fights for each breath. Charlie strokes her arm lightly.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm right here. Okay? Just keep looking at me. *Breathe*.

Mia's eyes are glassy, but she keep them on Charlie. Draws a deep breath -- and another -- now one more. Focusing. Legs are under her again. Eyes are clearer. And resolute --

MIA

Hell no. I'm not going back.

CHARLIE

That's my girl.

They take a moment and continue on. As they approach the door, WHOOSH, it slides open. A hint of technology in this seemingly low-tech domain and --

INT. UNDERGROUND STRUCTURE - ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

-- they stand before three tunnels. It's like a catacomb. Lighting is murky. The place is a relic. Maybe 200 years old.

Mia and Charlie share a collective "wow" moment.

CHARLIE

Damn. These tunnels could go on for miles.

WHOOSH. The door, equipped with a card reader, slides shut behind them. They try to open it, but it won't budge.

MIA

Diosa. It locks from inside?

CHARLIE

Well, shit.

They take a moment to process this before they inch down the CENTER TUNNEL --

Mia holds the Taser at chest level, eyes SMALLER TUNNELS that branch off like in a MAZE. A FAINT CLICKING NOISE puts them on high alert. Charlie raises her pistol and --

-- A DISTANT YET RESONANT GROWL, like a dragon awakening, stops them. As it abates, Mia recalls something --

MIA

A woman earlier kept talking about a monster.

CHARLIE

Come on. You don't think a monst --

She is cut off by another GROWL. As it fades --

MIA

A monster. With many heads.

They gaze down the tunnel with dread.

EXT. DESERT MOUNTAIN ROAD - NIGHT

An SUV stops. A BURLY MAN wearing a wolf skull mask steps out and walks around the front as he eyeballs CHARLIE'S MUSTANG parked alongside the road.

The man removes the mask to reveal he is 35 with a red beard and scary features. He's one of the men who chased Mia at the lodge. We'll call him COLE.

START INTERCUTTING:

TUNNEL: Mia grips the Taser handgun, proceeds with caution. Charlie checks to see if anyone is sneaking up on them.

DARK CORRIDOR: Ryann, walking, reacts to A TEXT CHIME. She checks a message on her phone and STOPS.

PARLOUR: Sheriff Razor notices the lopsided photo (the one Charlie brushed against) and looks around with suspicion.

TUNNEL: Charlie and Mia scrutinize something up ahead, unsure what to make of it.

DARK CORRIDOR: Ryann eyes a PHOTO OF CHARLIE'S MUSTANG in a text. Shakes her head with annoyance and walks on.

END INTERCUTTING**INT. TUNNEL**

Mia and Charlie squint to see whatever is up ahead.

MIA

Hold on. Are those --

ANOTHER GROWL has a primal yet vaguely industrial quality. As it wanes, Mia and Charlie are utterly horrified.

MIA (CONT'D)

Oh my god!

CHARLIE

Holy shit!

GLASS CAGES are built into the walls. Inside each cage are nine undocumented, mostly Hispanic (one or two Middle Eastern & African) people, their wrists tethered to one other.

These people are sad, confused. They are prisoners.

Mia stops at a cage with children inside. Forlorn BOYS and GIRLS look to her for answers. Mia chokes back tears.

MIA (CONT'D)

No. No. No.

FOOTFALLS approach at a distance.

CHARLIE

Mia, come on. Let's go.

Mia, furious, attempts to open the children's cage, which is locked.

MIA
They can't do this.

CHARLIE
I know. But we need to move. Like
right now.

Mia is conflicted, but she joins Charlie and they scurry around a corner as --

-- a burly Caucasian man (29) shaved head, ex-military type, steps up to a cell. He's the second man who chased Mia at the lodge. We'll call him TROY.

AROUND THE CORNER: Mia eyes Troy with disdain.

MIA
(whispering)
He's one of the goons who broke
into the lodge. I can tell.

TUNNEL: A second burly man (30) joins Troy. He is light-skinned Hispanic and also ex-military. He is the third man who chased Mia at the lodge. We'll call him JOSE.

Jose taps a stun gun baton on the cage door, unlocks it with a keycard. Waves the prisoners on.

JOSE
Vamanos. Ahora. Come on.

AROUND THE CORNER: Charlie watches Jose and Troy carefully.

CHARLIE
Is that all of them? The goons?

Mia holds up a finger to indicate "there's one more" and her eyes widen as --

TUNNEL: Jose turns and scrutinizes the area where Mia and Charlie are hiding.

AROUND THE CORNER: Mia and Charlie hold their collective breath, trying not to make a sound.

TUNNEL: Troy shrugs at Jose like "what's up?" Jose lingers before he shrugs it off. They lead nine prisoners away.

AROUND THE CORNER: As Mia watches the men go, a DIM LIGHT from behind draws her gaze down a NARROW TUNNEL. The light, which STROBES slowly, is utterly hypnotic.

INT. WINDOWLESS OFFICE

Ryann watches as Sheriff Razor shuttles through *Recorded Surveillance Footage* on DUAL VIDEO MONITORS.

RYANN
Stop. Right there.

MONITOR: Mia and Charlie stand at the open bulkhead door.

SHERIFF RAZOR
I'll be damned.

RYANN
Really? *Three* of them missed her?

SHERIFF RAZOR
The girl is lucky, I guess. But they're not going anywhere. That's for damn sure --

RYANN
Dylan. Just find them. And not like the bartender. I mean, we're not serial killers here.

SHERIFF RAZOR
I'm on it.

He strokes Ryann's neck like a lover would; she likes how it feels, but --

RYANN
Go.

The sheriff grabs a stun gun baton off a table and swaggers out. Ryann's PHONE RINGS. The caller ID reads MORGHAN.

RYANN (CONT'D)
Christ.

She lets it RING again, conflicted, before she answers --

RYANN (PHONE) (CONT'D)
Hey.

MORGHAN (V.O.)
They say she's not responding to treatments. You should probably get on a flight to Houston.

RYANN (PHONE)
There's too much going on. I told you that.

MORGHAN (V.O.)
Look, I'm not doing this by myself.

RYANN (PHONE)
I need a few more days.

MORGHAN (V.O.)
Yeah, well, Mom may not even have that long.

RYANN (PHONE)
You know I can't leave right now. People are expecting us to deliver. We're so close.

MORGHAN (V.O.)
Ryann --

RYANN (PHONE)
And don't forget, I'm saving you a place. You'll have everything you wanted, Morghan. All the things we dreamed about... I have to go.

MORGHAN (V.O.)
I'll tell her you love her.

Ryann ends the call and closes her eyes. Battling emotion, she rubs a temple methodically... eyes open again, damp with tears. An uneven breath escapes her lips.

Steeling herself, she speed dials a number while gazing at --

MONITOR: A *Freeze Frame* of Mia glancing up at the camera.

An INDISTINCT VOICE answers "hello" --

RYANN (PHONE)
Tell the partners we're set for tonight's deadline. And the numbers are better than expected... No, there won't any delays or issues. I can personally guarantee it.

As she fidgets with her watch, her sullen eyes are fixed on the image of Mia. It bothers her.

INT. NARROW TUNNEL

Mia and Charlie arrive at a LARGE GLASS CAGE, like a holding cell, with many prisoners inside. An identical glass wall stands on the far end. Light STROBES slowly from within --

Mia searches the prisoners' faces with urgency.

MIA

I don't see Selena. God, I don't see her.

CHARLIE

She's definitely not in there.

MIA

(spots something)
Luis?

Selena's boyfriend, Luis, stands among the prisoners. Mia waves to get his attention, keeps her voice low --

MIA (CONT'D)

What are they doing with you? Where is Selena?

Luis stares vacantly at Mia. Like he doesn't know her.

MIA (CONT'D)

Luis...
(to Charlie)
Do you see a door anywhere?

CHARLIE

Maybe there's one on the other side, but chances are it's locked. What we need is one of those keycards.

MIA

(to Luis)
We'll get you out of here. Real soon.

Luis eyes her blankly and turns away.

MIA (CONT'D)

Luis... what's wrong with him?

CHARLIE

I don't know, but they're all the same. Every last one of them.

Mia notices the prisoners, including the woman who grabbed her arm, are not sad or confused. They're glazed over. Devoid of all expression.

FEMALE SCREAMS further down the tunnel have Mia and Charlie's undivided attention.

INT. ANOTHER TUNNEL

Mia and Charlie round a corner at a brisk pace. Mia signals up ahead --

MIA

It came from up this way.

Charlie nods and they move faster, approaching --

SWINGING DOORS

-- and stop on either side. Charlie signals "wait." They listen. Weapons are up. They're going in.

INT. LAB ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mia and Charlie step away from the swinging doors --

The space is crude, unfinished. Each side wall has several patient "rooms," like a hospital ER, divided by curtains. In the center, four lab desks are spaced several feet apart.

Mia gestures toward an open STONE ARCHWAY at the far end --

MIA

There's something back there.

They pass by a lab desk and Charlie grabs a small transparent case with TINY ELECTRONIC CHIPS inside. They scrutinize the chips together --

MIA (CONT'D)

Computer chips? You think that's their business?

CHARLIE

(pockets the case)

Hard to say, but nothing would surprise at this point.

SWOOSH, a curtain to a patient room suddenly opens and --

-- Charlie drops the case, they duck behind the desk as a --

-- MALE LAB TECH (32) wearing a blue smock, pulls the curtain shut. Walks to a lab desk and starts typing on a laptop --

As the lab tech CLICK-CLICK-CLICK's away, the Taser barrel is pressed against his neck. He stops.

MIA (O.S.)

Where else are you holding people?

The lab tech looks up at Mia with the Taser, Charlie brandishing her pistol. Raises his hands in surrender.

CHARLIE

'Atta boy.

The lab tech is forming a reply as --

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)

Transports will arrive in thirty-nine minutes.

The voice distracts Mia and --

-- the lab tech sees his chance, grabs at the Taser.

MIA

No!

Mia struggles for control of the weapon and accidentally taps the trigger --

The probes STRIKE the tech. He slumps backward. Head smacks the desk near the floor and SNAPS his neck.

Mia gasps in horror. Charlie winces, but she's already thinking about next steps --

CHARLIE

We need to move him.

She holsters her pistol.

INT. PATIENT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The dead tech's body flops into an armchair, his broken neck bulges under the skin.

Mia pulls the curtain shut. Charlie notes her distress.

CHARLIE

Hey. It's not your fault.

MIA

I killed the man, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Listen, the jackhole should've left the thing alone. *He* did this. You hear me?

She rubs Mia's arm, now rifles the tech's pockets.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Dammit. There's no keycard.

A MOAN from the next patient room over and --

-- they take a defensive posture. Charlie unholsters her pistol. Mia gathers the curtain separating the rooms in her hand and mouths "ready?"

Charlie raises her pistol, gives a short nod.

ANOTHER MOAN and Mia pulls the curtain open to reveal a --

-- HISPANIC MAN (40) slouched in an armchair. A medicine vial stands nearby. Mia grabs it, reads the label --

MIA
Propofol. They're sedating them?

Charlie shakes her head in disgust. Mia, alarmed, eyes the curtain to the next patient room and --

MOMENTS LATER: The curtain OPENS as Mia scrutinizes a YOUNG HISPANIC WOMAN (early 20s) in an armchair. She is drugged. Her black hair falls across her face.

MIA (CONT'D)
Selena?

She hesitates slightly, now brushes the woman's hair aside, realizes she is *not* Selena. The disappointment stings.

CHARLIE (O.S.)
(loud whisper)
Mia.

Mia does not look up right away.

INT. ANOTHER PATIENT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Mia steps in and grows emotional upon seeing --

MIA
Selena.

Selena sits in an armchair, drugged and utterly vulnerable.

Mia takes a knee and embraces Selena like she'll never let her go. Lavishes her with kisses to her head, her hands.

MIA (CONT'D)
It's me, baby. It's Mia. I'm here.

Selena's face displays vague recognition, unlike Luis.

Charlie is teary-eyed. Mia is teary-eyed.

MIA (CONT'D)
We're going home. Okay? Nosotras
vamos a casa.

She removes an ID card/lanyard from Selena's neck. Furrows her brow as she reads it.

CHARLIE
What's going on?

Mia hands the card to Charlie --

ID CARD: **Sanchez, Selena, Sarasota**, and **998638000** stand out.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
A voter ID? Okay, this whole damn
thing is wrong.

MIA
(confounded)
Sarasota. They were sending her to
Florida.

CHARLIE
Shit. We definitely need to go.

They lift Selena out of the chair, as THE GROWL emerges again like it's nearby and --

INT. LAB ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

-- as they exit the patient room the GROWL FADES, but Mia reacts to something else.

MIA
Wait. Wait.

They stop moving and eye the swinging doors at the far end of the room, as INDISTINCT VOICES approach from the other side.

MIA (CONT'D)
Oh no.

CHARLIE
Move, move, move, move, move!

They hustle back under the stone archway and --

-- THE CAMERA PANS UP to reveal an ENGRAVING OF THE NINE-HEADED HYDRA at the top.

INT. LONG TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Mia eyes smaller tunnels branching off on either side --

MIA
There has to be another way out.

CHARLIE
(glancing around)
I don't know about that.

MIA
The place has been around for ages.
Maybe there are hidden exits.

CHARLIE
I hope you're right. Otherwise
we're three *real* pretty rats in a
cage.

A SHARP CLANK can be heard behind them. Instinctively, they duck into a recess as --

-- A SHADOW darts across the tunnel thirty paces down before it vanishes into the murk.

Charlie brings her pistol up, and keeping her voice down --

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Don't move. Not one little bit.

Mia struggles to control her breathing. Charlie probes the tunnel with her eyes, anticipating the worst --

-- but there is no movement.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
It's gone. Whatever it was.

MIA
Okay. Let's keep going.

Continuing now, their pace gets faster... *faster*... faster --

START INTERCUTTING:

LAB ROOM: THE SWINGING DOORS open as Ryann enters and walks up to Cole and a FEMALE LAB TECH (28, mousey) standing over the dead lab tech.

Ryann looks horrified by the man's hideously broken neck.

RYANN

Christ.

Her initial dismay turns to anger.

NARROW TUNNEL: Mia and Charlie struggle with Selena.

MIA

Come on, Selena. Wake up, wake up.

She looks back over her shoulder and sees no one is following them, but the uncertainty is torturous.

DARK TUNNEL: Sheriff Razor saunters along with his stun gun baton in both hands like a riot policeman as --

-- Jose and Troy follow. They are truly scary dudes as they search for Mia and the others.

PATIENT ROOM: A curtain SWOOSHES open and Ryann sees Selena's armchair is empty. She shakes her head, her irritation level growing by the second.

NARROW TUNNEL: Mia and Charlie turn a corner, fatigued from holding Selena, but neither will relent. They are gritty and completely determined.

LAB ROOM: Ryann, fidgeting with her watch, marches under the stone archway and waves Cole on. He joins her and they fade into the gloom of a tunnel.

END INTERCUTTING

INT. NARROW TUNNEL

Mia and Charlie, both winded, stop at a METAL DOOR --

MIA

I don't see a card reader. Let's give it a try.

They push on the door, but it won't move. They try once again. Nothing happens.

Charlie throws a shoulder into the door. Still nothing.

CHARLIE

It must be sealed from the other side.

(kicks the door)

Dammit!

MIA

Forget it. We'll find another one.

As they turn to leave, SCRAPING, like nails on a chalkboard, draws their gaze back to --

-- Sheriff Razor stepping out of the dark. He scrapes his stun gun baton against a wall once more and --

SHERIFF RAZOR

You girls have spirit. I'll give you that.

MIA

She's coming with us. You hear me?

Charlie levels her pistol at Sheriff Razor.

CHARLIE

Set the baton down, asshole. Do it!

Sheriff Razor grins as Jose and Troy -- holding stun gun batons -- step up beside him.

SHERIFF RAZOR

Oh, and we don't allow guns down here. Except for this one.

He reaches under his jacket and brings out a BIG ASS HANDGUN.

CHARLIE

Go back, Mia! Go on!

MIA

No! I'm not leaving you.

CHARLIE

Take Selena and go. I'm right behind you. Go, dammit. Now!

A reluctant Mia doubles back with the groggy Selena.

Charlie, anxious yet defiant, keeps her pistol on the men.

Sheriff Razor levels his handgun at Charlie, nods to Troy and Jose and they approach her.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Get back!

The men ignore her. Charlie side-eyes a DARK TUNNEL to her right, considers her options as the men close in and --

-- she suddenly bolts down the tunnel.

INT. LONG TUNNEL - MINUTES LATER

Selena's eyes flutter as she emerges from her stupor. Mia can barely hold her up anymore.

MIA
Come on, Selena. *Come on.*

They stumble against a wall. Mia cries out, clutches the arm she hurt at Dana's trailer.

Selena's legs are shaky, but she remains on her feet.

SELENA
Mia -- what's going on?

MIA
You were drugged. We're trying to get out of here.

Selena, stronger and more lucid, touches Mia's injured arm.

SELENA
Hey. Are you okay?

MIA
(shakes her head)
Listen, Charlie is back there with some bad dudes.

SELENA
For real?
(glances back)
Then we need to go and find her.

MIA
They have weapons. I mean -- are you sure?

SELENA
Really? You think you're the only fighter in our family?

Mia smiles at Selena's sass and they head back the way they came as BANGING, every second or so, puts Mia on alert.

MIA
Wait, wait, wait, wait.

They stop as the BANGING gets faster. *And closer.*

MIA (CONT'D)
Get back.

BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG!

SELENA
What is that sound?

BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG!

MIA
Get back. Get back.

BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG!

SELENA
Mierda. Ahora no.

They back up as Troy emerges forty paces up ahead, whacking the non-business end of his stun gun baton against a wall.

MIA
Go, go, go, go, go, go. Go!!!!!!

Selena turns to run, but Mia only drifts backward. She reveals the smoke grenade from her jeans, pulls the ring --

SELENA
Mia. What are you doing?

Mia tosses the grenade in Troy's direction and --

-- as it SKIDS across the floor, YELLOW SMOKE engulfs him.

Mia, satisfied, joins Selena and they run off together --

Smoke OVERWHELMS the tunnel.

INT. WORKSHOP - MOMENTS LATER

A DOOR OPENS as Mia and Selena enter and glance at boards, bricks, and plate glass stacked in piles. A small RED LIGHT provides dim illumination.

MIA
Let's give it a minute.

SELENA
Wait. How did you get in here before? Let's just go back that way.

MIA
We can't. Not now.

SELENA

What do you mean? Why not?

INDISTINCT SOUNDS come from the tunnel. Mia signals for them to get away from the door, but Selena is indignant.

MIA

Seriously, Mia, stop with the mystery. Why can't we --

MIA (CONT'D)

Just trust me, okay?

As the SOUNDS get closer, the pouting Selena relents and follows Mia.

MOMENTS LATER: They stop at a BOARDED-UP DOOR. Mia sees a nearby work table has saws, propane torches, and --

MIA (CONT'D)

Grab that crowbar.

Selena, still annoyed, grabs a crowbar. She likes the way it feels in her hands.

MOMENTS LATER: Selena, using the crowbar, pries at the last board. Mia offers help but Selena, determined, wants to do it. She yanks harder and the board separates --

Mia and Selena pull the door open together. AIR HOWLS through the opening as they gaze into --

-- A DARK AND UNCERTAIN ABYSS.

INT. DARK TUNNEL

Charlie grips her pistol, reacts to MOVEMENT in an adjacent tunnel. Flattens herself against a wall.

Teeth clenched now, she inches forward --

A MAN HOWLS distantly, taunting her.

CHARLIE

(to herself)

Freak.

She negotiates a jagged rock corner and steps into --

ANOTHER TUNNEL

Her hands are shaking. She swallows hard, takes a step and --

-- Jose, cloaked in shadow, emerges from behind and strikes at her with his stun gun baton in python-like fashion.

Charlie eludes the CRACKLING tip by a hair, punches Jose in the head and --

-- Jose disappears around the corner.

Charlie, her finger on the trigger, rounds the corner but --

-- Jose is gone, yet the HOWLING persists.

Charlie exhales deeply, readying herself for battle.

INT. LARGE CHAMBER

Selena holds the crowbar, Mia holds a FLAMING propane torch in one hand. It is ECHOEY in here with a high ceiling.

Selena gestures at the flickering torch flame --

SELENA

Check it out. There must be an
airway nearby.

Mia nods, bring the torch up higher to reveal --

-- A WINDOW far above. Glass is broken, which allows air in from outside. Below the window, a RUSTY METAL STAIRCASE runs up the wall.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia plants a foot on the staircase. CREAK! She pauses before taking another step and --

-- Mia and Selena, ascending the staircase, glance around at METAL RAILINGS turned up at odd angles like twisted metal fingers --

They stop at a GAP in the staircase. A six foot section has collapsed or been removed.

SELENA (CONT'D)

It's too far to jump.

Her hope is waning, but Mia remains bullish.

MIA

We can rig something. You know?

SELENA

Mia --

MIA
Come on. Let's see if there's rope
back there.

SELENA
Mia. *Your right side.*

Mia notes Selena's terrified look, slow turns to her right as a HUGE BLACK SNAKE descends from a railing.

Mia freezes. Gripped by primal fear. And whispering --

MIA
Cottonmouth. Don't move.

The torch flame illuminates the stairs beyond the gap, which slither with a second serpent --

SUDDENLY, the snake above Mia's head HISSES. Mia stumbles to her left and falls off the staircase.

SELENA
Mia!

SMACK. Mia hits the floor hard, gasps for precious air. The torch lands nearby.

Selena rushes to Mia's side --

SELENA (CONT'D)
Are you okay?

Mia spots a DOOR on the far end of the chamber, as MORE HISSING just overhead chills her.

She looks up through the dying flame and sees the large snake prepared to strike from above.

MIA
Run!!

She grabs the torch and they scramble to their feet as --

-- THE FLAME DIES.

INT. DARK TUNNEL

Charlie makes her way along with extra caution, wipes sweat from her neck as --

-- Jose appears and PLOWS her against a wall. Charlie tries to aim the pistol, but Jose pushes the barrel up and --

-- Charlie PUMPS TWO QUICK ROUNDS into the ceiling.

CHARLIE
Piece of shit!

Jose shoves her into the wall again. Charlie, enraged, kicks him in the shin, drops him to one knee and --

-- points the pistol at his forehead.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
Get up.
(Jose balks)
Are you deaf?

A PISTOL HAMMER CLICKS behind Charlie as --

-- CAMERA PANS to Sheriff Razor pointing his handgun at the back of her head.

SHERIFF RAZOR
Turn real slow.

CHARLIE
I suggest you rethink what you're doing. Fast.

The gun is pressed right *against* her head.

SHERIFF RAZOR
Hand it to him. Barrel toward you.

Charlie reluctantly hands the pistol to Jose and turns to Sheriff Razor.

CHARLIE
You're making a big mistake.

SHERIFF RAZOR
(re Charlie's badge)
Detective Guzman. What are we gonna do with you?

Charlie senses danger before Jose grabs her from behind.

INT. MECHANICAL ROOM

Mia and Selena push the door SHUT behind them, shaken from their brush with death.

BOILERS RUMBLE unnervingly.

Mia eyes PIPES and WIRE CASINGS snaking up a nearby wall --

MIA
Hot water pipes. We must be right
under the house.

SELENA
What? This place is a house?

The boilers turn OFF. It is eerily silent. Selena eyes Mia
with remorse.

SELENA (CONT'D)
Mia, I'm sorry. This is my fault.

MIA
Come on.

SELENA
No. I need to say it... the night
we were picked up, Luis was helping
his cousins across the border. He's
done it before. For his family.

MIA
Selena. Stop.

She sets the unlit torch down, walks on. Selena follows, more
insistent.

SELENA
I don't know why I agreed. You told
me not to get involved in all that,
but he said it would be okay. Dios,
we completely screwed it up.

MIA
That's not why you're here.

SELENA
Mia, listen to me --

Mia turns to Selena, cutting her off.

MIA
No. *Listen to me.* These people are
not what you think. This is *not* an
ICE facility. It's something else.
It's... worse.

Selena is not entirely surprised. The BOILERS suddenly turn
ON and rumble again.

Mia side-eyes something to her left. Restraining terror, she
shakes her head at Selena like "don't react."

Selena follows Mia's eyeline, stifles a gasp upon seeing --
-- Troy lurking in the dark. His muscular outline is barely visible, a truly menacing sight.

Selena and Mia share a heavy look. Mia reaches for the crowbar and once it's in her grip --

MIA (CONT'D)
Go, Selena! Run!

She pushes Selena aside as --

-- Troy closes on them and knocks Mia down. The crowbar drops out of her hand, CLANGS on the floor.

SELENA
Mia!

Mia crawls behind oil drums. Pushes an open drum over with her legs. It topples onto its side, oil glugs out.

Troy slips on the oil, but steadies himself as --

-- Selena swings the extinguished torch at his head. Troy blocks it and throws her aside --

Selena falls against a boiler and burns her hand, shrieks.

Mia sees the crowbar in the oil and crawls toward it as --

-- Troy reveals his stun gun baton and stalks her.

Mia slips through the viscous slick, Troy breathing down her neck as --

-- Selena dives on Troy's ankles. He lurches forward and crashes hard into the oil.

Mia lunges for the crowbar but --

-- Troy grabs her feet and yanks her toward him.

Mia turns at the waist, shouting and desperate, and jams the flat end of the bar down Troy's throat.

He chokes hideously, the bar protruding from his mouth, before he collapses and dies.

Selena gapes at the sight. Mia, trembling, eyes Selena with regret.

MIA
I'm sorry you saw that.

SELENA

Come on, sis. We've both seen worse.

Mia wipes oil from Selena's face adoringly. Her fingers brush Selena's coral linen scarf.

MIA

Mama's favorite.

Selena nods, tearful. They embrace in a moment of shared and silent grief.

MIA (CONT'D)

We're getting out of here. I promise. They won't take you away from me again.

They share a look of resolve.

EXT. LONG TUNNEL

Mia, running at a steady clip, brandishes the stun gun baton.

Selena runs alongside her with the crowbar, looks around with uncertainty.

SELENA

Hold up. Didn't we come this way?

MIA

I don't think so. But we have to keep moving.

Selena slows her steps, lags behind.

SELENA

Mierda. It feels like we're going in circles.

MIA

Don't stop. Come on.

Selena sighs with impatience, but keeps going. FOLLOWING Mia and Selena as they run faster and approach a bend in the tunnel when --

COLE

-- rounds the bend heading toward them. He steps aside and --

-- RYANN emerges from behind him.

Mia, startled, starts to backpedal.

MIA (CONT'D)

No, no, no, no.

She tumbles against the wall and strikes her head, slides to the floor. The baton drops from her hand.

Selena makes a move for the baton, but Cole pins it under his boot, rips the crowbar out of her hand.

Selena retreats and kneels beside the dazed Mia.

Ryann stares down at them, stops fidgeting with her watch --

Her anxiety is quelled. She's in control again.

INT. DARK TUNNEL

Jose secures plastic handcuffs on Charlie's wrists (hands in front of her). Charlie eyes Sheriff Razor with disdain.

CHARLIE

Was your daddy a crooked cop like you? Did he show you the way?

SHERIFF RAZOR

(to Jose)

Let's go.

CHARLIE

Did he knock your mama around?

They start walking. Sheriff Razor cuts Charlie a cross look.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Yeah... I know the type. Came home pissed off about life, because his pecker was just so small and sad. *Lawman*. Please. I bet he beat the living shit out of her. Didn't he?

Sheriff Razor, agitated, grabs her arm. She wheels around and elbows Jose in the face, shoulder blocks Sheriff Razor.

Startled at first, he grabs her throat.

SHERIFF RAZOR

You like to play rough?

He squeezes Charlie's throat. Gasping, she head butts him.

Sheriff Razor shouts in pain. Blood trickles from his nose.

Jose applies a choke hold on Charlie until she's out cold.

Sheriff Razor, wiping blood away, eyes a text on his phone. His ego dented, he saunters off.

Jose glances down at the unconscious Charlie.

INT. LONG TUNNEL

Cole lifts the dazed Mia to her feet. Ryann steps up to Mia, touches her hair with one hand, fascinated by it.

MIA
(resisting)
You need to let us go. Right now.

RYANN
Is it fractured? Her head?

Cole checks the back of Mia's skull and shrugs it off.

RYANN (CONT'D)
Good. Nobody's looking to hurt you,
Mia Sanchez. That includes the guy
whose neck you broke so savagely.

She releases Mia's hair, takes the stun gun baton from Cole, holds it up in front of Mia.

RYANN (CONT'D)
Where did you get this?

MIA
The Feds are coming. They'll be
here any minute.

RYANN
I said *where*.

MIA
Your guy. Big dude. He's back there
in the oil. He's dead, too.

Ryann bristles at Mia's defiance as Sheriff Razor walks up, dabs his bloody nose.

SHERIFF RAZOR
Her friend is a cop. Real spitfire.

Selena looks terrified at seeing the sheriff and --

BEGIN SELENA'S FLASHBACK:

EXT. ROADSIDE AUTO REPAIR SHOP - NIGHT

Sheriff Razor is revealed as the cop who abducted her.

END FLASHBACK

SELENA

It was him. He took us.

MIA

(reacting to Selena)

I swear to God. Let us out of here
right now!

RYANN

Nobody forced you to come back
here. That was your choice.

MIA

That's right. And I'd do it again.

She lunges at Ryann, but Cole restrains her. Ryann checks her watch --

RYANN

Christ. We're behind schedule. Just
take them to The Core.

Sheriff Razor approaches the whimpering Selena and --

-- Mia starts to pass out from the pain.

TO BLACK

PRELAP: A BODY IS DRAGGED SLOWLY OVER STONE.

UP FROM BLACK

INT. DARK TUNNEL

Charlie is dragged on her back across the floor. Groggy, she eyes THE CEILING -- cracked and discolored -- passing by overhead.

Her eyes flutter open a bit. She turns her head just enough to see --

-- Jose dragging her by her wrists.

CHARLIE

(under her breath)

Asshole.

Her face registers concern, but she's barely coming around.

INT. THE CORE [MORE ABOUT MIA BEING A NURSE; DO FOR OTHERS]

Mia is woozy as Cole leads her into a large open area --

This is *The Core*.

Selena, led by Sheriff Razor, resists --

SELENA

Eres un cerdo. Let me go!

They approach a LARGE CIRCULAR MACHINE with nine robotic arms resembling tentacles. Nine bucket seats, all occupied by sedated prisoners, are arranged around the center, held in place by shoulder restraints like on a roller coaster.

Mia and Selena are seated in folding chairs facing the machine. Mia views it with dismay, now recalls something --

MIA

The monster with many heads.

Ryann hears this as she steps past Mia --

RYANN

The Hydra was named for Senator Fairborn's favorite mythological predator. He always enjoyed the conceptual side of things. This honors his legacy.

She signals to the female lab tech, who taps a tablet screen.

Mia eyes the first of TWO WALL MONITORS with uncertainty --

WALL MONITOR 1: CURRENT ASSETS TO BE DISTRIBUTED: 356

Mia glances warily at the second wall monitor --

WALL MONITOR 2: Citizenship and Voter documentation updated.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)

Transports will arrive in twenty-six minutes.

Mia eyes the first monitor again, growing more uneasy --

WALL MONITOR 1: Processed Asset Distribution:

Minnesota: 43
Georgia: 58
Michigan: 41
Wisconsin: 37
Florida: 62
Pennsylvania: 48
Arizona: 45
Nevada: 22

MIA

What are you doing with these people?

RYANN

We'll expand distribution to twelve states in December. Twenty by next year. The Hydra has cut processing time by half. It's truly a godsend.

Mia's dread intensifies. Her eyes move up the wall to --

A HUGE AMERICAN FLAG

-- which looms over everything.

She glances at **Monitor 1** again and the word **Asset** --

She eyes the prisoners in the Hydra again. Horror overcomes her, realizing *they* are the assets.

MIA

Why -- why are you doing this?

As the Hydra's robotic arms engage with a HUM, Ryann considers something before --

RYANN

Imagine a world where *everything* is on-demand, from custom sex, to armies of voters for elections, to wild-eyed anarchists, if that's your thing. And low salary labor? How about *no* salary, with a return on investment that shreds expectations... and when our technology is sold, this is all going global.

MIA

For godsake! These are people!

RYANN

People living in shadows. Afraid
the boogeymen will send them away.
But we're making sure they never
have to leave. We're giving them
exactly what they want.

MIA

(with dread)

A fast track to citizenship.

She tries to stand up, but Cole restrains her. Selena shakes her head in horror.

SELENA

No. They can't -- es malvado!

Mia takes her hand to comfort her. The HUMMING grows louder.

The robotic arms RISE and LONG METAL PROBES -- like oversized needles -- PROTRUDE from each.

Mia watches with dismay as --

-- the Hydra's metal probes open and SMALL PINCERS emerge with a TINY METAL CHIP inside each.

Mia's eyes dampen, her heart is breaking for the helpless prisoners as --

-- the robotic arms BEND DOWN, accompanied by the CLICKING SOUND from earlier.

Sheriff Razor hooks his thumbs on his belt buckle. Ryann inserts plugs in her ears. She's done this before.

The robotic arms SNAKE up under the prisoners' noses.

MIA

No. No. No. N --

The GROWL we've heard before cuts her off. It's overwhelming!

Mia and Selena hold each other's hands tighter, gaping at the nightmare coming next. Selena screams in terror as --

-- the PROBES are inserted up the prisoners' noses and penetrate their brain's frontal lobes with a POP.

The GROWL REACHES A SHARP CRESCENDO --

-- and then fades quickly.

Moments later the probes RETRACT and the prisoners sit expressionless. *They have been processed.*

Mia sits in stunned silence, her lips quivering.

The Hydra restraints OPEN and a WIRY MALE LAB TECH (29) directs the newly compliant prisoners to a far doorway.

RYANN

(re Mia and Selena)

You can process them together. I'll finish the paperwork.

Sheriff Razor grabs Selena. Cole seizes Mia.

SELENA

No! Wait -- wait!

MIA

You can't do this. You hear me? I'm a permanent resident.

RYANN

That's okay. Our immigration people can fix all that.

SELENA

Let go of me! LET GO!!

MIA

Get your hands off her!

Cole sits Mia down in the Hydra. Sheriff Razor pushes Selena down beside her. Mia is urgent, desperate, and emotional --

MIA (CONT'D)

How can you do this? You came from nothing yourself.

RYANN

(surprised)

What did you say?

MIA

You were dirt poor. Just like these people. You had to struggle.

Mia hit a raw nerve in Ryann, but she restrains herself, holds up Mia's hospital photo ID.

RYANN

You're a nurse. I admire that.

MIA

What gives you the right? Huh? To decide our lives? You and some dead ass senator.

RYANN

(bristling)

That dead senator took care of those he loved most. Like you take care of your patients.

(re Selena)

And her.

(then)

We all have someone.

MIA

Eres un monstruo. What gives you the right?

Ryann steps close to Mia and --

RYANN

You won't feel pain when the chip hits your frontal lobe, but you won't remember your life. Any of it.

MIA

(trembling with rage)

Yeah... but you'll remember this.

She quickly removes two hair pins from her jeans pocket, and, breaking free of Cole's grip, leaps to her feet and jams the pins into Ryann's left eye.

Ryann howls in agony, the pins protruding from her eyeball.

SHERIFF RAZOR

Holy shit!

Mia eyes Ryann with anger and contempt as --

-- Ryann, panicking, removes the pins with a SLURP. Shrieks as she exits in a hurry.

Cole pushes Mia back down and SHUTS her shoulder restraint.

INT. LONG TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

Ryann, wheezing with pain and rage, exits The Core and stops at Jose looming over the half-conscious Charlie.

Jose hands Ryann the unused smoke grenade, frowns at her maimed eye.

JOSE
I can get rid of this cop.

RYANN
(voice wavering)
Fine. Then do it. Do it!

She walks on. Sheriff Razor, concerned, exits The Core.

SHERIFF RAZOR
Ryann?

Ryann ignores him and walks away.

INT. THE CORE

Mia and Selena watch the female lab tech prep a syringe.

SELENA
What are we gonna do?

Mia pushes on her restraint, but it doesn't move.

MIA
Check around. See if there's a manual release.

Selena looks around, but shakes her head --

SELENA
I don't see anything.

Mia's face is heavy with remorse and fear. She's searching for inspiration. *Anything*. But hope is fading.

Her heart is breaking for Selena. She let her down.

The female lab tech approaches them. Mia sees the tablet poking out of her smock pocket.

The lab tech stops at Selena, who resists, and checks her pupils.

FEMALE LAB TECH
You're still dilated.

She gives Selena a look and steps in front of Mia.

FEMALE LAB TECH (CONT'D)
You'll just feel a pinch.

Mia and Selena share *the most forlorn look ever* --

The lab tech holds Mia's arm, prepares to inject her with the syringe and --

-- Mia STOMPS on her ankle. The tech shrieks.

Selena intuitively heel kicks the tech behind her knee.

The tech falls forward. Mia grabs the syringe and jams it deftly into her neck, pushes down on the piston.

The tech collapses sideways in front of Selena.

MIA

Grab the tablet from her pocket.

Selena reaches down for the tablet, but the restraint prohibits her.

SELENA

Shit. This *thing* is in the way.

MIA

You can do it. Okay? Just focus.

Selena strains more and her fingers reach the tablet. She pinches it between the index and middle fingers.

SELENA

Got it. Got it.

She carefully passes the tablet over to Mia, as FOOTFALLS approach in the distance.

SELENA (CONT'D)

Hurry. Someone's coming.

Mia examines the tablet screen, trying to make sense of it.

MIA

Come on. Come on. Where is the release?

She taps the screen. Nothing happens. FOOTFALLS get closer.

SELENA

Mia.

MIA

I know. I know.

She taps another section of the screen. Nothing.

MIA (CONT'D)
Release. Come on. Release.

THE FOOTFALLS *are really close* at this point.

MIA (CONT'D)
Release.

Mia's desperation is spiking. She taps the screen again and --
-- the restraints POP OPEN. It's sheer relief.

SELENA
Yes.

Mia stands up and the wiry male lab tech seizes her.

MIA
Get off me!

Selena punches the tech from behind and distracts him momentarily as --

-- Mia grabs a robotic arm, pulls it DOWN on his head and knocks him senseless.

Mia takes a knee and digs through the male tech's pockets.

MIA (CONT'D)
Check her for a card. The doors
won't open automatically.

Selena searches the female tech's pockets --

SELENA
No. I don't see -- there's nothing.

MIA
Mierda. They must only give them to
certain people.

She contemplates what to do.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia and Selena rummage through a storage cabinet. Mia brings out a metal probe like the ones in the Hydra. Not a bad weapon.

Selena signals to a BREAKER BOX on the wall -- a mess of wires run in and out.

SELENA
Hey. Check it out. If we can knock
out the electrical system --

MIA
 (finishing)
 -- it may disable the doors. *I love
 you.*

Selena, hopeful, attempts to open the breaker box. To her dismay --

SELENA
 It's locked.

Mia eyes a LARGE PAD LOCK on the breaker door.

PRELAP: SMASH!

MOMENTS LATER: Mia winds up and SMASHES a folding chair against the breaker box again, but the lock is still intact.

MIA
 Come on. Come on.
 (thinking fast)
 Maybe we can cut the wires.

She removes the probe from her pocket and stabs at the wires tepidly.

SELENA
 You need to break the casing.

Mia, summoning the nerve, stabs at the wires more deliberately -- and again, and again, and --

-- POP! SPARKS FLY EVERYWHERE.

Selena shrieks as they jump back. The lights around them start to FLICKER ominously.

Mia cradles her arm like she received an electrical shock.

MIA
 Al diablo con eso.

SELENA
 You okay?
 (Mia shrugs "yes")
 We can find another way.

They eye the flickering lights with apprehension.

INT. NARROW TUNNEL

Jose leads the slightly groggy Charlie amid the flickering lights.

CHARLIE

You have any ideas how many laws
you're breaking here?

She tries to work her wrists free of the plastic handcuffs.

They approach a BLACK DOOR we have not seen before.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You'll be lucky to get out of
prison while you can still walk.

No reply. Charlie drags her feet. Jose shoves her.

JOSE

Move.

Charlie takes note of where they are. Jose swipes a keycard
and the door SLIDES OPEN as --

INT. SECOND STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

-- they start to walk up a CONCRETE STAIRCASE. Charlie drags
her feet again. Jose grabs her neck.

JOSE

Move. Whore.

Charlie's eyes narrow. They continue -- halfway up -- nearing
the top -- Charlie takes one more step and --

CHARLIE

Whore? Really?

-- she turns sharply and throws a forearm into Jose's throat.

Jose, choking, blocks Charlie's two-handed punch and clamps
down on her temples.

Charlie, shouting in pain, knees Jose in the ribs.

Jose punches her in the mouth, bloodies her lip.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Son of a --

She lands a clean throat punch. Jose chokes like crazy.

Charlie, lightning fast, reaches behind Jose and grabs her
pistol from under his belt as --

-- Jose traps her arms with his own, strikes her with his
other fist --

Charlie yanks the pistol out from under Jose's arm.

The struggle is fierce. Primitive. Charlie tries to level the pistol at Jose, but he hooks her arm.

Charlie swipes Jose's leg. Shouts wildly and pushes him backward.

Jose loses his footing. Teeters on the edge. Ready to fall down the staircase. Momentum is taking over --

He grabs Charlie's bound arms and PULLS her with him.

INT. WINDOWLESS OFFICE

Ryann stands at a mirror, dabs her injured eye with gauze.

The flickering lights agitate her. She knows something is up.

She pulls her eyelid down to reveal a GROTESQUE MASS OF RUINED MATTER, whimpers in horror.

RYANN
(mutters bitterly)
You little bitch.

Her intact eye locates a 4x6 inch PHOTO affixed to the wall. It's easy to miss amid white boards, charts, and scanned photo ID cards of prisoners, including Mia --

IN THE PHOTO: A BLOND WOMAN (30), poor and sullen, stands by a dumpy little trailer with two BLOND GIRLS (Ryann, 6 and Morghan, 3). Their clothes are second hand, their faces dirty, but their smiles are big and hopeful --

Ryann mournfully studies the image of her mom, her younger self, the impoverished life she left behind...

She removes the photo from the wall, turns it over. Writing on the back reads: "*Sky's The Limit - Mom,*" with a little red heart that's been badly smudged over time.

RYANN (CONT'D)
Christ.

Her pain is complex. Her tears are angry. Past scars are exposed. She is now losing control of *this* life.

(o.s.) THE DISTANT POP of Charlie's gun triggers Ryann's anger. She swipes an arm across a table and knocks papers and electronic equipment onto the floor and --

-- she seethes -- and seethes -- and seethes --

INT. LAB ROOM

Mia and Selena hurry past a row of the patient rooms. Lights flicker around them.

MIA
We need to find Charlie.

SELENA
What about Luis? He must be
somewhere around here.

Mia can't muster a reply as they approach the swinging doors.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)
Transports will arrive in eighteen
minutes.

The swinging doors OPEN and Cole enters from the other side.

MIA
Oh, come on!

Selena grabs her hand and they back up as Cole pursues them.

Mia pushes a curtain in front of Cole. He bats it away. She pushes another curtain in front of him and --

-- Cole is gone. Selena glances around, dismayed.

SELENA
Where did he go?

Mia raises the metal probe as they continue.

MIA
Stay close to me. Stay close.

They take another step back, and another, and --

-- Cole springs out from behind a curtain, throws Selena to the floor and injures her leg.

Mia lunges at Cole, but he swings her around into a --

PATIENT ROOM: Mia lands in an armchair and pushes herself back up but --

-- Cole grabs her in a bear hug.

Mia cries out as Cole lifts her off the floor. Vertebrae CRACK. Mia stabs him in the neck with the probe and draws blood.

Cole squeezes tighter, compresses Mia's lungs. She loses her handle on the probe. It falls between her and Cole as --

-- Selena comes up from behind and wraps the curtain tight around Cole's face and head --

Cole drops Mia, tries to pull the curtain off his face.

Mia kicks him in the groin. He doubles over and --

SELENA

Quick. Help me out.

Mia joins Selena and they cinch the curtain around Cole's face, cutting off his air. Cole is suffocating. Fists strike wildly at the air.

MIA

Don't let go.

Selena and Mia pull tighter. Cole starts to falter, his movements are more random.

Mia and Selena are not letting up --

Cole stops fighting and collapses. The curtain RIPS out of its track as he topples to the floor. He's done.

Mia and Selena stand over him, solemn but relieved.

MOMENTS LATER: Mia searches Cole and comes up with a keycard.

MIA (CONT'D)

Let's shut it down.

Selena flashes a determined smile.

INT. SECOND STAIRWELL

Charlie lies at the base of the stairs, dazed. She sees Jose lying on his side, facing away. He appears unconscious.

Charlie spots her pistol nearby, starts crawling to it and --

-- Jose's hands wrap around her waist. Charlie falls hard on her belly. She turns back and sees Jose's jaw is broken to one side. It's appalling.

CHARLIE

Oh shit!

She punches Jose square in the jaw and BREAKS it even worse.

She lunges for the pistol, grabs it, squeezes the trigger. CLICK. It's jammed.

Jose dives on Charlie, unsheathes a punch knife from an ankle strap, stabs her in the shoulder.

Charlie cries out in pain. Pistol whips Jose in the head.

Jose falls sideways. Charlie pistol whips him again, but he slashes her wrist, draws blood.

Charlie's anger explodes. She gets to her knees. Screaming, she pistol whips Jose in the head. And again! AND AGAIN!

Jose collapses onto his back, eyes are open. Blood pools from a head wound.

Charlie touches her injured shoulder, groans in pain as --

-- Jose's arm suddenly jerks upward.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
(startled)
Jesus!

She is ready to strike again, but realizes it was Jose's nerves firing. He's dead.

Charlie weeps quietly, releasing all her fear and trauma. Glad to be alive... she pries the knife from Jose's death grip. Slices the plastic cuffs off her wrists.

She checks Jose's keycard, which is bent, torn, useless.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)
You know what?

She angrily tosses it aside, now spots Jose's wolf skull mask hanging out of his pants pocket --

She has an idea.

MOMENTS LATER: Charlie wedges Jose's mask in the sliding door to keep it from closing all the way. Glances up the stairwell, her path to freedom, but she's not going. Not yet.

She hurries back into the tunnel to find Mia and Selena.

INT. NARROW TUNNEL

Mia and Selena pass by the LARGE GLASS CAGE we saw earlier. Selena stops, surprised and delighted to see LUIS standing in the flickering light.

SELENA
Querido Dios. Luis? *Mia, he's here.*

MIA
No, no, no. Listen to me --

SELENA
What do you mean *no*?

MIA
I'm sorry, Meda. He was processed.

Selena shakes her, indignant --

SELENA
What? And you didn't think to tell me? Why would you do that?

MIA
I didn't know what it meant before.

SELENA
(emotional)
No, Luis. No, baby. No. No. No.

MIA
Come on. We can't help him.

SELENA
Don't say that, Mia. Just don't.

MIA
You saw what happened to those people back there. He doesn't know you. He doesn't know *us*.

Selena sees Luis is staring right past her. She's coming to terms with the reality, but she's bitter and heartbroken.

MIA (CONT'D)
We can't stay here.

Selena wipes her eyes, still angry. Mia gently takes her arm and they move on --

-- but Selena's eyes remain on Luis as they go.

INT. GLASS CAGE AREA

Mia and Selena stop at a small cage with nine *unprocessed* prisoners.

MIA
The town isn't far away. We can
bring them down there for now.

A CLICK as she unlocks the glass door with the keycard, waves
the prisoners on --

MIA (CONT'D)
Come on. We're leaving.

The prisoners don't move, spooked by the flickering lights.

SELENA
Estamos dejando gente!

Her emphatic words resonate and the prisoners exit the cage.
Mia moves down to the next cage down, half-turns to Selena --

MIA
Look, they can *not* get on those
transports. No matter what.

SELENA
Mia, look out!

Sheriff Razor grabs Mia's shoulders from behind.

SHERIFF RAZOR
Alright. Enough of the bullshit.

He hurls Mia backward and --

INT. GLASS CAGE - CONTINUOUS

-- she CRASHES through the glass of an empty cage and lands
in a sea of tiny fragments.

Sheriff Razor steps over the cage frame's jagged glass. The
shards CRUNCH under his boots.

Mia struggles to get her bearings, sees glass chips stuck to
her arms, specks of blood.

The sheriff raises his stun gun baton as --

-- Selena rushes him from behind. He ZAPS her with it and she
crumples to her knees.

MIA
Selena...

SHERIFF RAZOR

I didn't mean to throw you so hard.
I just see red sometimes. Can't say
I'm proud of it, but so goes life.

He yanks Mia up to her feet. She punches at him, but he steps behind her, holds the baton across her throat.

SHERIFF RAZOR (CONT'D)

My step-daughter is about your age.
The wife's kid. She's got the same
impetuous side... I swear, the good
Lord made you all the same.

MIA

Get. *Off!*

She throws her weight back, knocks him into a wall. He chokes her with the baton, his free hand slips under her shirt. Fingers trace her bare abs, move salaciously up her torso.

SHERIFF RAZOR

Easy now, darlin'.

Everything SLOOOWWSSSS DOWN for Mia. SOUNDS of CRUNCHING GLASS, PAINED GROANS, HEAVY BREATHING are muffled, distorted.

SHERIFF RAZOR (CONT'D)

It's over. Just relax.

Mia's strength is fading as the CACOPHONY of SOUNDS turns more jumbled -- yet one sound pierces the audio fog --

-- Selena SCREAMING as she stabs Sheriff Razor in the neck with a glass shard. The sheriff shouts and --

-- Mia's eyes come to life. She plants her feet, spins herself and the sheriff in a 180. Turns to face him and --

MIA

I'm not your darlin'.

-- pushes off the wall with her legs to propel them.

Sheriff Razor grabs for his handgun, but Mia gets to it first and -- in a flurry of motion -- FIRES SIX SHOTS into his gut.

They fall together on the cage frame. Mia on top. Sheriff Razor on his back, impaled on the jagged glass. He gurgles and dies.

Mia catches her breath, surprised by how things unfolded. She glances up at Selena's outstretched hand and takes it.

QUICK SERIES OF SHOTS: MIA AND SELENA FREE THE PRISONERS

- 1.) Mia opens a small cage, hands the keycard to Selena who unlocks yet another cage.
- 2.) Mia checks the clip of Sheriff Razor's gun. It's empty.
- 3.) Selena directs prisoners down the tunnel.
- 4.) Mia unlocks the children's cage and frees them. Several race to their awaiting parents for joyous reunions. Mia and Selena smile together.

INT. ENTRANCE AREA

Mia holds open the sliding door she entered through, waving thirty six prisoners on.

MIA
Necesitas esconderte! Go, go, go!

As the prisoners exit in single file, Mia turns to Selena.

MIA (CONT'D)
Make sure to get them outside the wall. You can't miss it.

SELENA
Why? What are you doing?

MIA
I have to find out where they took Charlie.

SELENA
What if she's already out? We don't even know for sure.

MIA
Charlie? *Please*. She'd rather die than leave anyone behind. You know that.

SELENA
I'm coming with you then.

MIA
Ryann is still out there. Just go. I'll catch up.

SELENA
No. I'm not just letting you --

MIA

Go!

She takes Selena's face gently in her hands and --

MIA (CONT'D)

Make sure the children are safe.

Selena goes to reply, but Mia races away down the center tunnel. Selena watches her go with trepidation.

EXT. NARROW TUNNEL

Mia runs at a vigorous pace and scans the adjacent tunnels for a sign of Charlie.

The flickering lights are disorienting. VAGUE NOISES coming from the darkness unnerve Mia.

She is more uncertain than ever, but she will never let up --

This time she's truly running for her life. She accelerates.

EXT. LONG TUNNEL

Charlie takes cautious steps and peers through the flickering lights as --

-- DISTANT FOOTFALLS, like someone running, approach.

Charlie reveals her punch knife and assumes a defensive posture as --

-- Mia turns a corner forty paces up ahead. Charlie, relieved, waves to her --

CHARLIE

Mia. Hey.

Mia smiles as she approaches Charlie, holds up the keycard.

MIA

Selena's upstairs. Let's get out of here.

CHARLIE

(gestures behind her)

There's another way. It's just back here.

They are twenty-five paces apart, running hard -- twenty paces apart, overjoyed to see each other -- fifteen paces, and --

-- CHARLIE'S SMOKE GRENADE lands between them and a plume of BLOOD RED SMOKE escapes with a HISS.

Mia stops running and coughs like crazy as --

-- Charlie feels her way slowly through the acrid haze.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Mia? -- Mia?

Mia struggles to see even a foot in front of her.

MIA

I'm here.

Charlie looks back over her shoulder as --

-- a HUMAN FIGURE'S SHADOW darts quickly through the smoke before disappearing.

CHARLIE

Shit.

Mia, coughing worse, ducks into a recess and struggles to catch her breath.

Charlie, clutching the knife, wiping her eyes, turns in a slow circle.

Mia cups her mouth with one hand and, using the wall as a guide, starts moving again as --

-- Charlie brings the punch knife up higher.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(calling)

Surrender yourself.

She half-turns again and, WHAM, something strikes her square in the back, knocking her to the floor.

Mia heard the noise, squints to see through the smoke, eyes watering and --

MIA

Charlie?

-- as the heaviest smoke dissipates, she sees RYANN emerge up ahead, visible from the waist up.

Mia takes a step back, but she's not backing down.

MIA (CONT'D)

It's over, Ryann. You hear me? The sheriff is dead.

Ryann, angry, stops a few paces from Mia, holds the CROSSBOW from earlier in one hand. A bolt is loaded in the flight groove with two more in the quiver.

She levels the weapon at Mia and --

MIA (CONT'D)

Wait!

-- SHOOTS a bolt into her thigh. Mia screams, drops to her knees. Ryann approaches her with belligerent steps and --

RYANN

That's for taking my eye.

-- shoves Mia onto her back with the crossbow stock.

INT. ENTRANCE AREA

Selena watches the last of the prisoners exit. She warily eyes SHADOWS moving about in the flickering light: they are like wicked apparitions.

SELENA

(whispering)

Dios me bendiga y me guarde.

She blesses herself, glances to where the prisoners just exited. They're all safe. She steps away from the door, lets it slide shut, trapping her inside again and --

SELENA (CONT'D)

Screw it.

-- she takes off running down the center tunnel to find Mia.

INT. LONG TUNNEL

Ryann loads a second bolt in the crossbow --

RYANN

The senator used this for his boar hunts. I never understood the appeal, but it kind of grows on you.

MIA
Enough! *That's enough!*

Ryann aims the loaded crossbow at Mia.

RYANN
Stand up. Hand me the card.

Mia hesitates. Ryann grabs the bolt in her leg, twists it.

MIA
Okay, okay, okay!

She wills herself to her feet. Ryann plucks the keycard out of her hand.

RYANN
We'll get you patched up and on a transport. There's still some time.

MIA
(emotional)
Do you care? At all?

Ryann thinks about this and nods lightly before --

RYANN
I learned a long time ago you can't always be the hero.

Her crooked smile emerges, bittersweet now, and she suddenly grunts in pain as --

-- Charlie removes her bloody punch knife from Ryann's right flank.

CHARLIE
Go to hell.

Ryann strikes Charlie with the crossbow and knocks her down again, aims the bolt at her head as --

-- Mia tackles her from behind and knocks the crossbow free.

MIA
Grab the crossbow!

Ryann gropes around, frantic. She can't see the crossbow is directly to her left.

Charlie dives for the crossbow, but Ryann yanks her hair and she cries out.

CHARLIE

You bitch!

NARROW TUNNEL: Selena, running, hears CHARLIE AND MIA SHOUTING distantly. She pinpoints where their voices are coming from and runs faster.

LONG TUNNEL: Mia grabs for the crossbow, but Ryann claws her face and rips it from her hands, rises to her knees --

RYANN

You're not taking this away from me!

She starts to stand up, the crossbow aimed at Mia, when --

-- Selena tackles her from behind like a linebacker and the crossbow FALLS out of her hands.

Mia scrambles over to the crossbow, secures it in her hands. Kicks the lunging Ryann away with her good leg, locates the crossbow trigger.

MIA

Stop!

Ryann ignores her and attacks again. Mia squeezes the trigger and SHOOTS the bolt into Ryann's chest and --

-- Ryann's body jerks backward, but she doesn't fall. She lingers on her knees, in shock, and eyes the bolt in her chest.

Mia, trembling, looks on with surprise and --

-- Ryann lunges at Mia, knocks her on her back, pulls at her hair with one hand and slaps her savagely with the other.

Mia whacks Ryann with the crossbow stock and knocks her away. Ryann screams in anger, continues slapping Mia, who crawls on top of her and starts to choke her --

Every bit of Mia's rage and sadness are concentrated in this moment, but she notices something --

Ryann's eyes are glassy. She stops slapping Mia and grabs her arms, like she's seeking comfort. Mia stops choking her; she's not sadistic.

Ryann's breathing grows shallower... and shallower... and stops. Blood collects around the wound. She's dead.

Mia, Charlie, and Selena eye Ryann in silence. Now Mia cuts Selena a disapproving but appreciative look.

MIA (CONT'D)

I told you to go.

SELENA

Yeah? When have I ever listened?

Mia crawls off Ryann and winces at the bolt in her leg.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)

Transports will arrive in eight minutes.

MIA

I can't do it.

Selena strokes her hair and mouths, "I got you." Mia bites her lower lip and Selena pulls the bolt out of her leg. Blood bubbles out. Mia chokes back only part of a scream.

CHARLIE

Shit. We need to get pressure on it.

Selena considers something, touches her coral linen scarf.

MOMENTS LATER: Selena ties the scarf around Mia's leg wound. Charlie helps her get Mia up and they head down the tunnel.

Mia tries to hold on, but almost collapses from the pain and blood loss. Selena is fearful, her voice cracking with emotion --

SELENA

Don't you do this, Mia. No me dejes. Stay with me. I need you, sis. I need you.

They hold each other, more bonded than they've ever been.

INT. SECOND STAIRWELL - MOMENTS LATER

They reach the top and traverse a DARK CORRIDOR, hurrying through an uncertain gloom toward a DOOR up ahead. Mia gets her second wind, determined to reach the end on her own.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)

Transports will arrive in five minutes.

Mia leans like a runner at the finish line, pushing the door OPEN. Squints from light spilling in and arrives --

INT. STONE HOME - PARLOUR - CONTINUOUS

-- back where it started. No flickering lights. No automated voice. Only the TICK-TICK-TICK-TICK of the grandfather clock.

Mia, Charlie, and Selena notice the door they entered through has no knob and blends into the wall. They regard this concealed entrance with scorn.

EXT. FAIRBORN FOUNDATION - NIGHT

Mia, drained yet indomitable, walks with the freed prisoners. Touches her chest and realizes something: Her breathing is finally normal. This provokes a smile.

Suddenly, HEADLIGHTS turn into the main gate as FOUR LARGE TRANSPORT TRUCKS approach at an ominous pace.

Everyone watches them with apprehension. Mia turns to the prisoners and gestures at the transports --

MIA

Los camiones vienen a llevarte!
Ellos no pueden hacer esto!

The prisoners murmur before a HARD-LOOKING MAN and TATTOOED WOMAN nod to each other and race toward the transports, shouting like a battle cry, as more prisoners follow.

The transports SQUEAL to a halt. The drivers are overwhelmed by the furious mob, dragged out, beaten.

Mia, Charlie, and Selena watch the melee, as THREE SUVs with DASHBOARD LEDs (Federal vehicles) turn into the main gate.

Charlie displays her badge and waves the SUVs toward the transports. AGENTS wearing "Department of Homeland Security" windbreakers get out, shocked by what they're witnessing.

Mia glances up at the stone wall and smiles. She's not afraid anymore.

TO BLACK

FEMALE REPORTER (V.O.)

Six months later, at least three government officials have been linked to human rights violations at the former Fairborn Foundation --

PRELAP: Mia and Selena SHRIEK together with excitement.

UP FROM BLACK

EXT. DOWNTOWN COURTHOUSE - DAY

Mia and Selena hug it out on the courthouse steps.

MIA
So what did they say?

SELENA
Well, my hearing is Tuesday and all systems are go for my green card.

Mia smiles adoringly. Charlie walks up, throws her arms around them.

CHARLIE
It's five pm. Do you know where your Tequila is?

MIA
Yes. Let's do a toast.

CHARLIE
Hell yeah. And the bars should be crawling with lonely cowboys.

They walk off giggling and triumphant.

ACROSS THE STREET: FANCY HEELS step into frame. They belong to a young woman in a sleek business suit. She is perfectly blond and could be Ryann's sister.

In fact, MORGHAN SLIDE (29) *is* Ryann's sister.

MORGHAN (CELL PHONE)
Let the partners know I'll be in Alamogordo tomorrow to check out the proposed facility --

She watches Mia and the others walk around a corner.

MORGHAN (CELL PHONE) (CONT'D)
-- but right now I have a personal matter to look into regarding my late sister, Ryann.

She ends the call and fidgets with a bracelet. A familiar crooked smile crosses her lips. *She's definitely up to no good.*

CUT TO BLACK