

EXT. DEATH VALLEY - DAWN

From a pinpoint of light, the sunrise grows until it pries open the desert sky, hot with technicolor wisps of cloud. The morning SOUNDS grow to a low, dry BUZZ.

The Mercurian landscape stretches and CREEKS as the sun slowly microwaves the last of its dying greenery to dust, and the dust settles on the rock to stare up at another day of its eternal sentence.

We hear FOOTSTEPS approaching O.S. - human. They are weak, shuffling, approach falteringly. As they gradually get closer, WE begin to hear LABORED BREATHING - dry and cracked. When the FOOTSTEPS are right next to US, they stop.

It is SILENT for a moment. Then, in an instant, he falls into VIEW - right in front of us, face filling the FRAME. He lies motionless, with the side of his face pushed into the dirt - eyes closed, skin red and peeling, lips swollen and split, barely alive. He would be bleeding from the fall, if he had any liquid left in his body.

He appears to be a man of average build - probably mid-thirties, but appearing much older owing to his condition. His right arm sticks straight out. A folded piece of paper is clutched tightly in his hand.

SAME - HOURS LATER

The only thing that has moved is the sun, which is much higher and bleaching the sky white with heat.

The man is probably dead. He looks stiff and dry as kindling.

A car approaches and CRUNCHES to a stop just outside our view. A door opens. FOOTSTEPS.

DORIS (OS)

It is a man. Jesus Christ!

BOB (OS)

What?!

DORIS

Look for yourself!

BOB

Holy shit!

Another door opens and closes. And FOOTSTEPS approach. BOB and DORIS shout every word.

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DORIS
Well, do something!

BOB
(Angry)
What am I supposed to do?!

DORIS
I don't know. See if he's alive!

The legs of Bob and Doris enter FRAME and stand around the body. Like most people in cars, their concept of the world comes from looking through their own bug-spattered windshield.

BOB
Nah, he's dead! Let's go back to that gas station and have them take care of it!

DORIS
How do you know he's dead?!

BOB
He's dead and even if he's not, what are we supposed to do!

DORIS
We can't just leave him here!

BOB
All right, I'll go back, you stay here!

DORIS
No wait. What if he... You know. I don't...!

The man's eyes pop open. He starts to work his mouth, but nothing comes out, and Bob and Doris don't notice.

BOB
Okay, you go and I'll stay!

DORIS
No, it's too dangerous, let's both go!

BOB
That's what I said in the first place!

They head back to the car.

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DORIS (O.S.)

You know what I meant! You know exactly what I meant when I said that! It doesn't have anything to do with that dead man and you know it!

BOB (O.S.)

Shut up!

DORIS (O.S.)

It has to do with that self-centered attitude of yours! This whole trip has been whatever you want! Whatever you want! It's all your mother's fault for giving in every time you opened your damn mouth!

SLAM! The doors are shut, the car starts and spins off down the road, leaving the man opening and closing his mouth, still holding tight to the piece of paper.

INT. CAMELOT HOSPITAL - DAY

Double doors fly open and the man is rolled in on a stretcher by two paramedics JOSE and LES. The nurse, JENNY, has been forewarned and she hustles over and directs them into one of two treatment rooms.

The Camelot, Nevada Memorial Medical Center is small, but new. The equipment is kept up well and the staff is helpful. The pulse of Camelot is somewhat slower than most places and that probably has to do with the climate, which is mostly hot. But where Camelot Memorial lacks in sophisticated brain scanners, it makes up for in its effectiveness at handling snake bites and heatstroke.

JENNY

What's that in the IV?

Jose looks at the bag connected by a tube to the man's arm.

JOSE

Uh, something electro...

JENNY

Good. You got it going in him too fast.

She grabs the valve away from Jose and adjusts the drip.

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JENNY (CONT'D)
He hasn't had water in days.
Kidneys can't take that much.

She speaks right into the man's ear.

JENNY (CONT'D)
Sir. Can you hear me? Can you hear
me? Sir. Can you-

JOSE
(Rolling his eyes)
He can't hear you, he's out.

JENNY
(Patronizingly)
I know that.

They lift him efficiently onto a regular bed and she attaches his IV to a stand.

JENNY (CONT'D)
You're supposed to keep talking to
them whether they can hear you or
not. You must be new around here.
You don't seem to know very much.

LES
Barstow.

JENNY
Oh, Barstow. Well, things are a bit
different up here in Camelot. For
one thing, we know what we're
putting in people's arms.

JOSE
I put in what you told me to, okay.

Les gives Jose an "ignore her" look.

JENNY
Let go of that.

She pulls the end of the sheet out of Jose's hand and keeps working on the man.

JENNY (CONT'D)
What else did you or did you not do
for this man?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOSE

(To Les)

Hey, you can deal with her, man.
I'm out of here.

LES

Come on, Jose.

JOSE

No, no. If she's got a problem with
me, I'll listen, okay. But I don't
need this shit.

JENNY

Girls! We have a life to save here!
Can we discuss this later?!

JOSE

Fuck you, bitch.

Jose storms out. Jenny attaches a heart monitor to the man
and adjusts it, so it beeps regularly.

LES

(To Jenny)

Thanks.

JENNY

Les, he's useless. You know that.
Another Barstow drop-out. Just what
you need.

LES

I can't ask people to come here. I
can only nab them on the way
through. And they all seem to come
from Barstow. Speaking of Barstow,
where's Lance?

JENNY

The good doctor's fishing I
believe. Hand me the tape.

She tapes the wires and tubes in place.

LES

What do you think?

JENNY

Well, he's alive. No thanks to Ben
Casey there. What ever came of that
fellow from Vegas?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

LES
You hated him too.

JENNY
At least he wasn't from Barstow.

LES
Look, he moved.

Les and Jenny stop talking and stare. Nothing. She squirts some water on a washcloth and wets his face. His eyes pop open, and then his mouth opens and closes.

JENNY
(Quietly)
You know what... I think... you had better... Hmm.
(To the man)
Hello. How do you feel? You're in a hospital... in Camelot, Nevada.

The man just looks lost.

JENNY (CONT'D)
You're all right now. We're taking good care of you. Can you tell me your name? Where are you from?

He opens his mouth and let's out a very dry groan.

JENNY (CONT'D)
(To Les)
Quick hand me that.

LES
What?

JENNY
That. On the tray. Quick.

She hastily rips his fly open, as he passes her the urinal. She manages to get through the layers of clothing and hold it in place under the sheets just in time.

The man is staring straight up, holding his breath. After a moment, he exhales deeply, as relief washes over him.

JENNY (CONT'D)
If you're going to keep that Jose character around, you better show him how to work an IV. He might've blown up this man's kidneys.

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Almost as quickly as his bladder is emptied, his eyes close again and he drifts away.

INT. MILITARY HELICOPTER - NIGHT

ANGLE POV of the man, as he dreams. He is paralyzed, lying on the cabin deck, face up, staring out the sliding door. His visual field is dominated by quiet stars, stirred by the black lashings of the blades on a moonless night. All SOUND is drowned out by the THUMPING ROAR of the huge rotor. The running lights are off and the helicopter is dark, except for the radium green glow of the instrument panels O.S.

Two helmeted figures hover over him. They are TALKING, but he can't pick up what they're saying, because he doesn't have a helmet with a walkie-talkie. They also have flight suits, which he doesn't.

Suddenly, with a BUMP, they are down.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

The man's eyes pop open. He is gasping for air, in a cold sweat. He tries to find his bearings. He is alone. The rotor noise is replaced with the whir of MEDICAL EQUIPMENT and PEOPLE talking and laughing outside the room.

The room is small and shiny with hard surfaces, metal trays, and thin curtains hanging from the ceiling. The light comes from behind his bed - a florescent fixture with plugs and buttons and tubes. An IV bottle hangs on a stand with a tube running down into his wrist. Into his wrist!

He panics and jerks the tube out. It starts bleeding, but all he cares about is getting out. He scrambles out of bed and stumbles to the door.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR

He opens the door cautiously. The corridor is long and dark. A clock reads, "3:36." The only light comes from the nurses' station at the far end of the hall, where two nurses are conversing across a counter.

At the other end is a door with a glowing exit sign. He goes that way.

EXT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The door opens onto a gravel parking lot beside some dumpsters. He keeps to the shadows and heads toward what looks like the main street.

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The new hospital is a single-story structure - the pride of Camelot, Nevada. It has ten rooms, including one they had to repurpose to hold linens because the linen room was repurposed to hold the new x-ray machine.

EXT. HIGHWAY - NIGHT

The main street has four slow lanes, bordered by dirt and gravel parking strips and a haphazard row of uninspired businesses, all dark now. Once every minute or so, a car passes through town at high speed and disappears out the other end in less than five seconds.

He finds a shadow against a wall and rests a moment to take stock of his predicament. A car ZOOMS by, and he has to shield his face from the wake of dust. He looks up and down the highway, and decides to head toward a dirt street running next to an old two-story building.

The CRUNCHING of his feet seems way too loud, so he has to stop occasionally to look back. The farther he goes from the hospital, the darker it becomes. Finally, he stops. He can't see his feet anymore. He can barely see his hands. No ground. No sky. There is just enough light to make out a row of disconnected stores ahead. With no people. And no sound.

Right now is the first time he has felt alive and in control of his senses in days, maybe weeks. Everything is very present and clear. The clearness and nowness of everything buzzes in his head and presses against his eyes. As he looks around, the realization begins to come to him that he is nowhere. Everything in his world has come apart. There is no good or bad, just nothing.

Then, he hears a small SOUND coming from two lights on the horizon. The SOUND grows. He watches with all his soul, as the crescendo of sensation works its power throughout his body. He stands motionless, like a roadkill jackrabbit, staring into the lights. Closer. Louder. Brighter.

Then, another SOUND begins to grow - the SOUND of his own VOICE. The wind from his own lungs is RATTLING the dry chards of vocal chord in harmony with the oncoming sensation.

The car RUSHES by at blinding speed, mere inches from him. As the car passes, the lights illuminate his immediate surroundings in a split second. He is standing in the middle of the street. The dust envelopes him.

EXT. CAMELOT - DAY

The sun rises over Camelot. The sky has already gone through its morning colors and is well into its transformation from deep blue to white.

EXT. ROADSIDE - DAY

The man is asleep. It appears he was sitting cross-legged and simply fell over on his side into a clump of dead grass and dog turds. LYLE the town Sheriff is standing over him, nudging him with a foot.

LYLE

Come on, wake up. Come on. We got to get you back to the hospital. Let's go. Wakey, wakey. That's it.

The man awakens with a start, bolting straight up, eyes wide.

He sees that his tiny clump of dead grass is located on the edge of a busy parking lot, next to the highway. One car is parked two feet from his head. Others are parked this way and that near him, leaving just enough room for a gray SUV to squeeze by, inches from his side.

LYLE(CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Good morning. How we doing today?

MAN

I, uh... Where...

LYLE

You got a name?

MAN

Tom.

LYLE

Tom, huh? You got a last name?

The man catches sight of a license plate inches from his head, "ROG 049".

MAN

Row... Rogger, Roger.

LYLE

(Not buying it)

Tom Roger. Where you from, Tom Roger?

MAN

Uh, Phoenix... Arizona.

LYLE

Where's your ID?

He stands and dusts himself off.

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MAN

I seem to have lost it. I was hitching a ride and somehow it got lost... Somewhere... Probably fell out... Of the car.

Lyle circles him.

MAN (CONT'D)

I don't know where exactly. I was in town here to make some calls and try to get another license in the works.

LYLE

What were you doing walking around in Death Valley in the middle of August with no water or supplies?

MAN

Well-

LYLE

And why did you leave the hospital to come out here and sleep by the side of the road?

MAN

It's hard to explain-

Lyle cuts him off, puts his arm around him buddy-buddy and walks him back to his cruiser.

LYLE

Tom, I got to tell you something.

MAN

Okay.

LYLE

(Sincerely)

I'll be straight. I think you're lying to me.

MAN

Really?

LYLE

Yup. I think there's a whole big story here that I'm not hearing. What do you think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MAN

Well, I just didn't want to bore you with my problems-

LYLE

(As if serious)

Tom, Tom. I live in Camelot, Nevada. I know boredom. I know it inside and out. I have seen boredom that would turn most mortal men into screaming babies. If I have a problem with you boring me, I'll tell you right away. And I'll be brutally honest. Okay?

The man nods.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Now the way I see it. You're either crazy or you're stupid or you're in real big trouble. Which one?

MAN

Um, the last one.

LYLE

Big trouble?

MAN

Yeah.

LYLE

Good. We're making progress. Now, do you want to tell me about it?

MAN

I can't. Sorry.

LYLE

Why not?

MAN

I don't know.

Lyle cocks his head, disappointed in him.

MAN (CONT'D)

I mean, I don't know, I don't seem to remember... anything.

Lyle looks him right in the eye.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAN (CONT'D)

I just remember walking through the
desert and being in the hospital. I
don't even know where I am... or
how I got out here.

LYLE

Let's go for a ride, shall we?

Lyle holds the back door open for the man. He sits and looks
out. The window reflects the cars as they pass by. Lyle pulls
away.