

EXT. SPACE. NIGHT.

Huge, molten rocks tumble towards us out of the dark. We don't know where we are, just that it's terrifying. Were one to hit us, we would be obliterated in an instant.

EXT. SPACE. NIGHT.

Further back, it is now clear that we are in the middle of an asteroid shower powering through space. Behind the turmoil of flying rocks, in suspended tranquility, we see the striped, exotic colours of distant planets.

EXT. SKY. NIGHT.

Black. Faint pin-pricks that we recognise as stars. Distantly, we see the asteroid shower trailing its fire across our dark galaxy.

EXT. EARTH. NIGHT.

A mile above the earth. We are moving towards a beacon of light in the darkness. Closer, it is revealed to be a stadium, lit up for an event. It could be baseball, soccer, a U2 concert....whatever it is, we hear the growing roar like the sea crashing against the shore.

Closer still, we see the seething crowd. Which mixes into...

EXT. CROWD SCENES. VARIOUS.

...more crowds. Thousands and thousands of people, all having a huge, huge night. A Mexican wave erupts. A soccer crowd roars its approval at a goal. An army of fans stretch their yearning hands towards the singer on stage, a million Indians at the Kumbh Mela, a rave in a field, a subway party, a flash mob in Victoria Station, faithful singing at a midnight mass in St Peter's Basilica...

This is humanity, united.

INT. ARON'S HOUSE. BEDROOM/ HALL/ LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Sudden and jolting silence. A bedroom. Not much in it. Then, a phone rings. Shocking in this silent world. The camera stops then moves through the house, the camera our POV.

We see a meticulously tidy, sparse environment. Very male. The camera stops in the doorway of the living room where the phone is ringing. Eventually, the answer-phone clicks in.

PHONE

Hi, this is Aron. Leave a message.

Business-like. We can't get any kind of a fix on Aron's personality from this.

INT. ARON'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

PHONE

Hi Aron, only Mom. Dad's out of town on a conference so I thought it'd be nice to have a chat... Anyway, guess you're out having a good time! Hope so. Try and give me a call sometime soon. If you can. I know how busy you are. Love you. Bye.

The phone rings off, leaving nothing but a flashing red light in the dark room. The camera moves back down the hall into the bedroom again. We are its eyes.

INT. ARON'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Then a hand reaches high and opens a cupboard door. Picks up a mini cam-corder off a high shelf. Drops it in a back-pack. Reaches in again, gets a climbing harness. The jingle of carabiners. The hand clips a descender onto a loop on the harness. A Camelbak pouch of water, another water bottle. All drop in the rucksack.

The hand gropes blindly around the high shelf. Looking for something else, something out of sight. We see a Swiss Army Knife at the back of the shelf. His hand skims past it a couple of times, millimeters away. Misses it.

Clearly giving up on this, the hand picks up a coil of climbing rope, moves into another room. We move with the hand, not seeing the person, just his efficient intent.

INT. ARON'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Tidy, clean surfaces. The hand reaches up, grabs a neatly-made burrito wrapped in a transparent sandwich bag, goes into a cupboard and takes three energy bars, a bottle of Gatorade. The hand shuts the cupboard, skims the spotless surface, picks up a grapefruit on the way past and moves towards the door. We hear a door shut. A key turn. The sound of a truck door opening and shutting. An engine starts with a roar.

EXT. CITY. NIGHT.

We focus on a 98 red and white Toyota Tacoma with a topper driving down a busy street.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

From the inside of the truck, we look out on large groups of people crossing the road at random, crowding the sidewalks, all congregating on a big stadium by the side of the road. There's clearly a massive football game on tonight.

We can see shouting, cheering, laughing from the crowds outside the truck, but can hear nothing. Even when a couple of drunken fans lurch around the car, banging on the trunk, we barely hear a thing. We are in a silent bubble moving past and away.

EXT. FREEWAY. NIGHT.

An overhead shot of a crammed freeway. The Toyota is one of many cars heading out. It turns off the freeway.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

A hand slips a CD into the truck's player. Music booms out.

For the first time, we see the owner of the truck: Aron Ralston, 27. We study his face for clues. Fit, tanned by the wind, not the beach. Not giving much away.

The screen splits into two and then three, though at times there appears to be no division at all.

TRIPTYCH TITLES

The opening titles are a series of triptychs, three strips of pictures that merge, blend, overlap and are intercut with adverts from the tv and radio and some that flash past outside Aron's Toyota.

A title card reads:

"Utah. The Canyonlands. The slickrock desert. The red dust and the burnt cliffs and the lonely sky- all that which lies beyond the end of the roads."

Edward Abbey. Desert Solitaire.

EXT. ROAD. NIGHT.

Aron's truck is now alone on an interstate road.

EXT/INT. VARIOUS COMMERCIALS FOOTAGE.

Billboards, TV, cinema, www: commercial America sells everything to us through every means. As many brand names as we can get.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

At the south-west edge of Green River, Aron drives under the interstate into a landscape of obscurity. He looks to his right and left. Not a single light perforates the absolute blackness of the San Rafael Desert.

EXT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Three quarters of the screen is black. All we see are truck lights running parallel with the darkness.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Out of the black, a sign rears up. Next Service 110 miles.

America's challengers for the Tour de France flash by: a pack of 15 or so neon spirits. Night training.

C/U: WATCH.

A huge close-up of a sports watch. One of those chunky jobs with both analogue watch hands and a digital cut-in. The minute hand makes a loud click as it hits the top of its arc. 10 pm.

EXT. ROAD. NIGHT.

A BLM sign indicates that Horseshoe Canyon Trailhead is 47 miles ahead through the desert darkness.

EXT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

The truck skids to a halt. Turns a sharp left down the trail and bumps into the darkness.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Aron's whole upper body is pumping along to the music. Another bright yellow sign flashes past. "Roads may be impassable due to storms". But Aron is too focussed on the music to notice.

EXT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

The truck's headlights scrape a massive slice of rock. The lights illuminate a series of petroglyphs and pictographs carved and painted into the rock by ancient civilisations.

The images materialise on different parts of the triptych: superhumans hovering 8 feet high over groups of indistinct animals, their long dark bodies and huge eyes more extra-terrestrial than human.

EXT. DESERT. NIGHT.

Tyres rushing across the desert grooves, pulling, snatching, hard left and right. The rear of the truck fish-tails madly.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Everything in the truck is bouncing up and down crazily. All except the bike, locked down in the back of the truck, braced solid. Suddenly, a small brown sign flashes past.

ARON.

Woah.

He kicks down on the brakes.

EXT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

The truck skids to a halt.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

ARON.

Nearly missed it!

Aron leans over to the rucsac on the passenger seat. Gets out a small video camera and films the sign.

VIDEO POV- we see the sign, shakily filmed as with a roar, the truck starts up again.

Still driving, now with one hand, Aron flicks on the interior light. Turns down the music. Turns the camera round on himself.

VIDEO POV

ARON.

Friday night, April 25th, two thousand and three. Heading for Bluejohn Canyon. Aron at the wheel, Phish on the stereo and a whole lot of night ahead.

He throws the video camera into the top of the back-pack, turns up the music to ear bleed level.

EXT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

From high up we see the truck take a sharp right, the headlights barely penetrate the dark.

INT/EXT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Jackrabbits dart onto the road, racing him, darting left and right as he chases them down. They dart away into the black. The truck's headlights pick out three other vehicles and two encampments at the Trailhead.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Aron turns off the music. Ejects the CD. Bangs open the glove-box and flings the CD inside. Shuts the glove box.

The camera watches the plastic glove box for a longer moment than seems necessary. Then, Aron's hand comes back in, reaches inside, roots around and gets out a multi-tool hidden at the back. Slams the glove box again.

EXT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Aron gets out of the truck, expecting a head to pop out of a tent. But silence. Stillness. Ghostly. He goes round to the back of the truck, opens the doors.

INT. BACK OF ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Aron flings everything out of the way of his mat, clambers in the back of the truck. The doors shut on the night. Black.

END OF TRIPTYCH TITLE SEQUENCE.

Still black. The faint pre-history trace of that comet across the dark sky again.

C/U WATCH.

The sports watch in massive close up. The edge of a finger presses a button on the side. The stop-watch hands ticks into life.

INT. BACK OF ARON'S TRUCK. DAY.

The doors smash open to reveal the bluest of skies and sharp sun. Aron's bike careers into it.

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

VIDEO POV

The video camera is mounted on the handlebars, pointing up at Aron's face as he rides across the desert, jolting, skidding, huge amounts of video drop-out and electronic chaos. But despite all that, there's Aron's face, loving every moment of it.

ARON

Bluejohn Canyon. Guidebook time to the drop-in, two and a half hours. Aiming to take 45 minutes off that. Yee-hahhhh!

And with an adrenaline yell, he tips down a suicidal slope at speed. He wears a bandana across his mouth to keep out the dust, an old Phish t-shirt and lycra bike shorts. He is an advert for extreme sports, the smile on his face and the complete control over his bike telling us all we need to know.

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

Even uphill, Aron is hammering his way up the sandstone. Gasping for oxygen, his legs screaming for rest, he pushes and pushes until he crests the ridge. His mouth sucks on the tube from his camelbak rehydration system- a bladder of water in his back-pack.

BIG CLOSE UP.

Huge in camera, we see the air bubbles and the water be sucked towards his parched mouth.

ARON

*(utter delight.)
Ahhh.*

God, that's good. But no rest. He is off again, down, down the steep slope, controlled skids dodging the boulders, an extreme sports junkie at the top of his game- until....

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

Suddenly, his front wheel hits a sand trap. He is hurled forwards over the handle bars, face first into the sand. His toe-clips and his momentum bring the whole bike with him. The bike has him trapped on the desert floor like a wrestling take-down. He sits up, disentangles himself from the bike, detaches the camera and carefully wipes the sand from it. Turns it towards him.

VIDEO POV

ARON
*Uncool. You didn't see that. Nobody
saw that.*

Aron rewinds the images.

ARON (CONT'D)
Erase. Erase.

The camera pulls back and up, higher and higher until Aron is a tiny speck marooned in a hundred miles of red sand.

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

From a dot in the landscape to the huge ticking watch again. Aron checks the time. He is up, back on the bike and away, not in the least deterred by his crash. He is unstoppable.

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

At what seems like the only tree for miles, he U-locks his bike in the shade, pockets the keys, and jogs off into the desert, scoffing a muffin as he goes.

EXT. APPROACH TO BLUE JOHN CANYON. DAY.

Aron is bum-sliding down a steep slab. Lands neatly on his feet at the bottom. Then stops dead. As if the film has frozen. Voices. Girls' voices. A giggle. Definitely a giggle. Aron listens. Checks his watch.

C/U: WATCH.

The huge second hand sweeps by.

EXT. DESERT. NIGHT.

Looks towards the canyon. Looks towards the direction of the giggle.

Aron climbs up the other side of the slope.

EXT. APPROACH TO BLUE JOHN CANYON. DAY.

Aron looks down on two girls staring at a map. Kristi and Megan. Kristi the lead girl in confidence and looks: Megan the eager acolyte.

ARON
Hey.

They squint up at him haloed by the sun. They both look surprised. You really don't meet other people out here. They can barely see him, whited out by sun, just an outline of human. He scrambles down towards them. Lands as neatly as an acrobat right next to them. As far as they are concerned, he's just landed from outer space. They take a step back.

MEGAN

Woah...

ARON

Hi. You doing Blue John, too?

KRISTI

Err, no, we're headed for the petroglyphs on the Long Wall.

ARON

Yeah?

KRISTI

But I think we're-

MEGAN

- *you're-*

KRISTI

Seeing as I'm today's designated map-reader, *I'm...lost.*

ARON

Okay, well, no problem. You're... here.

He points to the map.

KRISTI

We are? (pretending to be in control) Sure we are. I knew that.

Aron laughs.

ARON

And the Long Wall is back up there.

KRISTI

Oh.

ARON

Easy to miss.

KRISTI

No kidding. Err, hi, by the way.

ARON

Hi. I'll take you back up there if you like.

The girls look at each other. Don't know how to break it to him. Then he gets it.

ARON (CONT'D)
Oh, sorry. The Friday the 13th,
Child-Killer look.

He struggles with the bandana around his mouth.

ARON (CONT'D)
I'm really only a psychopath on
weekdays. And as it's Saturday...

He takes the bandana off with a flourish. Shrugs as if that's the best he can do with the materials available.

ARON (CONT'D)
I can't take this one off. It's my
face.

Kristi and Megan laugh. Aron laughs. Ice broken. He sticks out his hand, extremely formal.

ARON (CONT'D)
Aron.

Kristi sticks hers out, equally formal.

KRISTI
Kristi. Allow me to introduce you
to my friend and companion, Megan.

MEGAN
Pleasure to meet you, Mister Aron.

ARON
An honor.

And they shake too. And all laugh.

ARON (CONT'D)
So, you're lost. And I'm a guide.

He looks at them, expectantly.

ARON (CONT'D)
I'm good.

The girls look at each other.

MEGAN
Sure. Why not.

Aron checks his watch. Puts his hand to it.

C/U WATCH.

Huge on the watch. With a click, the sweeping second hand comes to a stop.

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

Kristi looks surprised at a man on a schedule in the middle of nowhere.

KRISTI
Late for a meeting?

ARON
Those Kangaroo rats get very antsy
if they're kept waiting.

And he turns and heads off up the canyon.

EXT. DESERT. DAY.

From high on the edge of the canyon we look down on the three figures hiking their way along the bottom.

MEGAN
You biked from Horseshoe? That's
twenty miles or more.

ARON
Seventeen on the milometer.

MEGAN
(teasing)
Not seventeen and a half?

ARON
Seventeen point three, actually.

MEGAN
Okay. I got you. You're one of
those.

ARON
Yes, Ma'am. One of those.

They walk on, pleased to be together.

KRISTI
Spend a lot of time out here?

ARON
My second home.

KRISTI
On your own?

ARON
(certainty)
Oh-yeah.

EXT. CANYON. DAY.

They stop at a junction.

ARON
It's this fork here.

KRISTI
Oh. Okay. Totally missed that. Glad
we bumped you into you.

MEGAN
Yeah. What are the chances of that?
I mean, out here?

ARON
You go to the one place in America
you can guarantee you won't run
into some weirdo and....whaddya
know!

They all laugh and head up the narrow canyon.

EXT. LONG WALL. DAY.

The three of them are standing in front of the petroglyphs and pictographs that are carved and painted onto the flat cliff side. Outside the shade of the cliff, the day is fierce, white, mottled heat. In contrast to the previous, breezy scenes, this all hazy, Picnic at Hanging Rock trippiness.

They stand in the shade of the golden wall, moving silently from one shape to another. The images merge dreamily. The strange, warrior-like aliens, the wild sheep, the circles and spirals that nobody understands.

You can hear their quiet breathing, echoing off the cool rock.

Aron watches Kristi wipe a tear from her eye. Silently, he offers her his water bottle. She smiles, shakes her head and moves away.

EXT. LONG WALL CANYON. DAY.

Back in the fierce sun, they can breathe and speak freely again. The three of them make their way down from the images. Silence for a long time.

ARON
You okay?

KRISTI
Yeah.

ARON
Something special, huh?

KRISTI
Yeah, it was just- that was one of
the most amazing things I've ever
seen.

ARON
Three thousand years they've been
there. Maybe more.

KRISTI
Yeah, but's it's like not just
another time, it's another world.
Another galaxy. Very- I dunno.

She shakes her head, moves off down towards the path. Aron
and Megan follow. They reach the bottom of the canyon.
Another fork in the road. There is an awkward pause.

MEGAN
Well, thanks, Aron.

KRISTI
Yeah, we'd never have got there
without you.

ARON
Total pleasure-

He pauses.

ARON (CONT'D)
Look, there's this kinda secret
place I know near here. Twenty
minutes that way. It's like the
most fun you can have with your
clothes on? Actually, it's best
without your clothes on, but that's
your call-

The girls look at each other.

ARON (CONT'D)
It's a bit of a climb...

KRISTI AND MEGAN
We climb!

They all laugh.

EXT. CANYON. DAY.

They are negotiating a narrow gully. Aron is half-way down, Megan at the top and Kristi on her way down to him.

ARON

...I'm not qualified yet, but that's what I want to do.

MEGAN

So when you said you were a guide... This is illegal instructing!

ARON

You're Union busting, Ma'am, right this minute.

MEGAN

If I'd a known...well, maybe I wouldn't have my ass stuck in a crack.

ARON

There's a hold for your right foot, down, down, down, that's it. It's hard to get the hours. Catch 22.

Kristi is sort of stuck. No panic, she's just- well, stuck.

KRISTI

We'll sign your time-card...as long as you tell me what to do now. I'm kinda stuck.

ARON

Okay, push your butt hard on the wall and udge your way over, back and footing it. Then reach your right hand out there for those bomber jugs high on the left wall and bring your left foot onto that incut there.

KRISTI

I didn't understand a word of that.

ARON

Why don't you just put your ass on my head.

KRISTI

That Instructor Talk. Wooh...

INT. CAVE. SMOOTH DOME. DAY.

Towards us comes Aron, upside down like a tiny, fast spider, talking all the time. His voice echoes. He is stripped to the waist and topless looks even fitter than we suspected. We can't even see the girls.

KRISTI O/S

Shall we just follow you? Aron?

ARON

It's easier than it looks, trust me. There are hundreds of holds, but you can't see them until you're right on them. And they keep on coming...It's an act of faith. Keep climbing and lo! Holds will appear...take off as much as you dare...you'll see why in a minute.

MEGAN O/S

You behave Aron Ralston or we'll tell your Mother where you lure young girls.

ARON

Swear I won't look. Swear you won't care when you get there!

There's a lot of air below him, a feeling of the vertiginous as much from the echo and the reflected light from the dome.

ARON (CONT'D)

Oh, about the holds? I forgot to say, when you get to the middle....

He lets go.

ARON (CONT'D)

...there aren't any....!

And we see him drop 60 feet into the most exquisite emerald blue pool. Megan screams, has a heart attack.

KRISTI

Oh my God!

INT. CAVE. DAY.

They can't see him, only hear the explosive crack of man on water. He could be dead.

MEGAN

Jesus! Are you okay? Aron? Aron?

KRISTI

Listen to the guy. He's okay.

Aron fills the cathedral dome with his version of a Phish song at the top of his voice. Kristi strips to her underwear and traverses away from Megan.

KRISTI (CONT'D)
Gotta be there, Meg.

INT. CAVE. DAY.

We are in the pool with Aron. Slick wet hair, buzzing with adrenaline. He is looking up at Kristi traversing out along the line of holds.

ARON
Woo! That's it! Keep coming!

Then Megan appears. She's left everything on except her shoes.

ARON (CONT'D)
Better hope you don't sink with all those clothes on, Megan.

MEGAN
Better hope I don't land on your head, Aron.

They crash into the pool, one after the other. They bob together in the centre, their breath coming in short excited bursts. The light seemingly coming from beneath them and rippling over the cavernous ceiling. They are laughing- at their own daring, at the craziness of where they are, at being alive.

KRISTI
Oh my God, oh my God...

MEGAN
Again. We've got to go again.

ARON
And this time, film it!

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CAVE. DAY.

They are drying off in the sun and picking at the remains of their lunch. Kristi is stretched out near Aron, taking in the sun on her near naked body. She is flicking through the stills on his camera. Megan has taken off most of her clothes to dry too. Still a touch self-conscious she sits a little bit away from them.

CAMERA STILLS.

Aron at the top of various snowy Colorado peaks. Some have far-reaching views, others are beset with snow flurries and Aron is only just visible underneath hood, helmet and balaclava.

ARON V/O
That's Long's Peak, Grays, Mount
Oxford...Quandary.

But always, it's just Aron, centre of frame, taking a photo of himself.

KRISTI V/O
Could be anywhere.

ARON V/O
Big storm on Mt Princeton...

KRISTI V/O
Always on your own?

ARON V/O
That's the point of soloing. You're
on your own.

Then we see Aron and Kristi.

KRISTI
Why?

ARON
Nobody likes me.

MEGAN
Or that awful band you're always
singing. Phish. Ugh.

ARON
Exactly. Nobody likes me or my
music. Gotta go solo.

But Kristi really wants to know.

KRISTI
Seriously. Nobody to share the view
with- though if you're doing it in
winter, hello, what view? The
experience. Nobody to share *that*
with. Don't get it, Aron.

ARON
It's the challenge. You get
yourself in trouble, you get
yourself out. You live or die on
your own decisions. Ultimate self-
reliance.

KRISTI
I guess. Seems kinda lonely.

ARON
(shrugs)
It's the way I like it.

Still a little mystified, Kristi gives the camera back to Aron. Lies back on the slab and closes her eyes to the sun.

KRISTI
Hmm. Fabulous...You must be way behind schedule by now.

He looks at her. Without turning her closed eyes from the sun, she smiles.

KRISTI (CONT'D)
Those Kangaroo rats you're keeping waiting?

ARON
Actually, I stopped the clock.

This gets a response. She turns.

KRISTI
You "stopped the clock"?

ARON
I'm timing myself. Seeing if I can cut 45 minutes off the guide book time. When you guys are gone...click. Clock's running again.

Kristi doesn't know quite what to make of this. But there's just the hint of unease.

KRISTI
Huh.

She turns back to the sun.

MEGAN
No girlfriend, then, Aron?

ARON
Nobody special.

MEGAN
There's always somebody special. There's always the "one".

ARON
Not for me.

KRISTI
They all say that.

MEGAN
Sounds real certain about that.

He shrugs.

ARON
Don't believe in all that 'one'
baloney, that's all.

KRISTI
I bet you don't.

Said with more weight than she intended. She's not sure why,
but she's going off him. Gets to her feet.

KRISTI (CONT'D)
Let's hit the trail, Meg. This
man's on a schedule.

ARON
No, I'm-

But Kristi has clearly decided. Is getting into her trousers.

MEGAN
(surprised by this shift)
Oh. Okay.

EXT. TRAIL. DAY.

The three are walking down the dry water-course, Megan now in
the ascendant with Kristi hanging behind.

MEGAN
How far is it to your bike?

ARON
Eight miles. Two in the main part
of Blue John.

MEGAN
You'll never do that before dark.

ARON
Sure I will.

MEGAN
Come back with us, kick back, have
a beer.

ARON
Gotta do that canyon. This is you.

They reach a cross-roads.

ARON (CONT'D)
One last photo?

They pose with raven feathers in their hair as Aron turns the camera round.

VIDEO STILL POV of all three, their heads tight together. Kristi is notably quieter, less smiley.

MEGAN
Listen, some friends of ours are having a party tomorrow night if you want to swing by.

ARON
Yeah? Where?

But he is already delving in his back-pack, getting out his CD player and putting on his headphones.

MEGAN
On the Moab road towards Denver? About forty miles out, we're putting up this massive inflatable Scooby Doo. Can't miss it.

ARON
Cool.

Reshouldering the pack, adjusting the head-phones.

MEGAN
Turn down that track and it's about two miles further on. Starts late, goes right through. We'll have some beers chilling for you.

ARON
Sounds great.

He checks his watch. Puts his hand to it. Click.

ARON (CONT'D)
Well, so long!

Turns. A finger hits the button on the CD player.

We see the CD begin to spin. The LED display tells us there's 38:47 to play before 0:01 appears.

The noise of five hundred people cheering blasts his- and our-ears.

CD RECORDING
Good evening, Las Vegas...! Are you having a good time? Are you ready? Are you....readdddyyyy?

The music crashes over us. Aron's running feet negotiate the rough ground.

Close up of Aron's face, eyes already focussed on placing his feet. The measured breathing of an athlete pacing himself. Megan shouts after him.

MEGAN
Scooby Doo, yeah?

But he is in a different world.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Do you think he'll come? You liked him, right?

She looks at Kristi looking at Aron. Nudges her knowingly.

MEGAN (CONT'D)
Yeah, you liked him.

Kristi continues to stare at his disappearing figure.

KRISTI
Know what? I don't think we figured in his day at all.

EXT. BLUE JOHN CANYON.

Aron's eyes. We see what really figures in his day. His hands grip small holds. His feet smear on smooth rock. He is moving traversing across steep rock towards a water-worn, S-shaped log trapped across a narrow fissure. His mouth sings along to the music. He reaches the S-shaped log, crouches down, gives it two firm hits with his palm. Solid. He drops all the weight onto his arms, allows his body to dead-hang from the log for a couple of beats and then drops the four feet to the sandy ground below. His feet neatly hit the sand with a puff of dust. Nothing to it.

EXT. C/U. DAY.

A small snake slithers away from his giant feet.

EXT. S-SHAPED LOG. DAY.

He takes a photo of the S-shaped log above him. Right into the blinding sun.

Title: 2:41 PM. Saturday, April 26th. 2003.

ARON
Won't be coming back this way.

INT. SLOT CANYON. DAY. (FROM HERE ON, CANYON SHOTS **INT.**)

He spins and continues along the narrow alley of the slot canyon, seeing the first huge chockstones, half-buried in the sand, big as trucks. He easily scrambles over one and around another.

Thump, thump. He gives it two firm hits with his palm again, an automatic instinct that accompanies every new boulder. The boulder doesn't move.

It's a tight fit, but he's like a contortionist and just squeezes through.

INT. DEEPER INTO THE CANYON. DAY.

The slot is now just 4 ft wide and as he stops to look at massive logs jammed way above his head, silhouetted against the cloudless blue, he drinks deeply from his water bottle.

INT. CANYON RIM. LOOKING DOWN. DAY.

On we go and so does the concert in Aron's head. He pumps the air to the music. One set of chockstones leads to another. He rapidly negotiates them like an obstacle race, giving each one the requisite test with his palm to check for movement. Then, he is stopped by one the size of a big refrigerator, jammed between the walls of the canyon, eighteen inches above the floor.

INT. CANYON. CHOCKSTONES. DAY.

Over or under? He drops to his belly and squeezes underneath, rucking the sandy floor in front of him. He's halfway, his chest rising out the far side when suddenly, he jams. The music locks up too, looping continuously on two notes like bad techno. He pushes but nothing.

Utter stillness. Only a flicker of panic in Aron's blinking eyes reassures us that the world has not frozen.

We see from his point of view. There's a hell of a lot of stone above him.

Then Aron slowly reaches back with his hand. With the careful precision of a lock-picker, he releases a part of his back-pack strap that has snagged. The music unjams too. He jumps up, brushes off the sand.

INT. SLOT CANYON. DAY.

Tight on Aron's throat as he swallows water down from his bottle. Big gulps.

We follow his gaze down the slot. It's steeper, now. We're already 60 feet below ground level it's falling further in front of us. This is more like caving. He gets the map out.

INT/EXT. SILHOUETTE PROFILE. CROSS SECTION OF THE CANYON. DAY.

We see a section of the canyon and the tiny figure of Aron moving within it. We track in and elide into a graphic view of him chimneying his way along the canyon- now only three feet wide at most. We see his skill, using his legs, back friction to body-walk along the smooth, sheer walls. He's going deep.

INT. SLOT CANYON. DAY.

He moves towards another chockstone below him. You can see his thinking: this one's about the size of a bus wheel. He can crouch on top, dead-hang from it and reduce the drop to the canyon floor.

INT. SLOT CANYON. DAY.

He reaches it at the same time we do, jumping down on top of it. Crouches. Gives it the two thumps with his palm. Solid. Reaches his hand around the back of the boulder for a hold. Dangles.

INT. CANYON. C/U TIGHT ON ARON.

Just as he dangles, there's a scraping sound. Small, but close. The stone judders towards him, pulled by the torque of his hand, weighting it from the back. It rotates.

ARON

Shit.

Instantly and instinctively, he lets go and drops- as if he's trying to detach a mine dragging him to the sea floor.

INT. CANYON. ON CHOCKSTONE. DAY.

But it's following him down.

INT. CANYON. ARON'S POV. DAY.

The backlit chockstone falls towards him. Two tons of boulder, consuming the sky.

INT. SLOT CANYON. DAY.

He lifts his arms to protect his head, but his eyes remain open. Through his fingers, we see the next three seconds.

The rock grabs his left hand and flings it against the left wall. He pulls it away as the rock ricochets against the canyon wall and careers towards his right arm which he instinctively raises to protect his head.

The rock smashes his right wrist and hand against the wall and drags it down, tearing the skin from him like a cheese-grater.

Aron is utterly powerless to stop its force, able only to land on his feet as the rock crunches to a halt, trapped in the slot. With his hand. Everything stops.

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

No movement. Aron's standing behind the rock. As if he's in a line for a bus, as if he's shaking someone's hand. A handshake with a canyon.

Silence, except for waves of applause and cheering coming from the head-phones that have been ripped off Aron's head. The cheering and clapping comes to a painfully slow end. Now, shocked, utter silence.

Title: **127 Hours.**

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

Adrenaline, searing roaring pain and panic.

ARON

Get your hand *outta there!*

Pulls and pulls. Yanks, twists, screws until his shoulder is almost dislocated. But nothing moves.

Sweat on his face.

ARON (CONT'D)

Shit, shit, shit, SHIT!

He pushes the boulder with his left hand to reverse the movement. Heaves at it with every sinew in his body. Nothing. Heaves again. And again and again, thrusting with his knees, thighs, shoulder, everything. Nothing. He rests for a while, taking huge breaths.

ARON (CONT'D)

This is- this is...*ridiculous.*

Even gives a brief puff of laughter. Gathers himself. Slams upwards with his entire body, a man running full pelt into a door.

ARON (CONT'D)
Unnn...agh!

Air explodes out of his lungs. There is the tiny, hollow sound of the boulder shifting fractionally.

A howl of phenomenal pain.

ARON (CONT'D)
No, no, no no no no. Damn!

He reverses the fraction and goes limp, whimpering in sweat. His knees are bleeding from smashing them into the rock. He looks at his good fingers, now lacerated. He would collapse to the floor. But he can't. He's stuck.

He grabs a bit of shirt, wipes the sweat away from his eyes. Loosens the strap on his back-pack, pulls it over his head and hula-hoops it around his body until it falls at his feet. With his free hand, he gets out the water bottle. Drinks deep. One gulp, two gulps, three- stops, mid fourth and backwashes it into the bottle.

ARON (CONT'D)
No. No more water.

One-handed, he rescrews the lid with difficulty. Drops it back in his pack.

ARON (CONT'D)
Stop. Relax. Come on, think.

He breathes and breathes, taking stock for the first time.

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

Aron examines the boulder at each point he can reach- stretching and contorting his body to see into his crushed hand, to where his thumb is visible above and his little finger below. Compares left hand with right. The right wrist is now squeezed to the size of the width of his little finger. We know because he can barely get the little finger of his left hand in the gap. He's still processing this whole event; how unlikely, how bizarre.

ARON
Jesus. Jesus. How? How did you do *this*? You idiot, you total idiot! It's crushed, man. It's fucking dying.

He reaches up and touches the trail of blood, hair and skin on the canyon wall. Looks at it on his fingertips. Silence. Except for the tick, tick, of his watch.

One-handed, he undoes his watch.

We see the time in big close-up. 3.14. Click. The second hand of the stop-watch comes to a halt.

Aron looks up at the slit of sky. Shouts.

ARON (CONT'D)

Hello?

Tries again.

ARON (CONT'D)

Kristi! Megan! Anyone there? Hello?

INT/EXT. PULL OUT OF THE CANYON. DAY.

From the slot canyon, back, back, back, higher and higher until it nothing more than a hair-line crack in the millions of filaments that make up this endless desert.

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

Aron unpacks everything with great energy. Lays it all out at his feet. A man taking stock.

BIG C/U: VARIOUS. DAY.

Aron examines each item in turn, looking for its potential. These are his only companions.

Chocolate bar wrappers, a bakery bag with crumbs of muffin. Two small bean burritos. A CD player, CDs, LED head-torch with spare AA batteries, mini cam-corder, bike-lock key, climbing harness, rehydration pack (he checks for water-empty) money, credit cards, climbing rope in rope bag, a stick, and a small multi-tool.

He stares at it all, neatly laid out around his feet. It all stares back.

He picks up the multi-tool. Opens all the blades. Thinks.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

3.28 changes to 3.29.

HARD ENERGY CUT
TO:

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

Inside the tiny gap we see Aron's head-torch flick on. We see the rock, the wall and his hand, trapped between the two. He picks a point and begins to chip away with the multi-tool. He's back. Energy, purpose, action.

He stops to assess his hand. Flexes it. It's swollen and puffy. He doesn't dwell on it. Gets back to chipping.

A rhythm develops. Chip, chip, chip. Flex, flex, flex of the hand. And back to the chipping.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

4.19 changes to 4.20.

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

Huge close up of Aron's eye. In the foreground there is a pile of steel filings mixed with the small pile of sand-dust.

ARON

That's not rock. It's metal.
Wearing down the knife.

He blows the whole pile of steel filings into our face.

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

The dust clears from our eyes. Aron chips away at the boulder again. Stops. Changes tack and starts chipping away at the wall. Stops. Considers.

ARON

Aron, you're gonna have to cut your
arm off.

A bark of a laugh. Not humour, just surprise.

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

Aron is trying to balance the tip of the knife on top of his forearm- with his mouth. His left hand holds a flat rock. A bizarre close up as he almost taps the side of his eye socket.

ARON

And....

Suddenly, he hammers down with ten times more force onto the handle of the knife. The rock explodes in his hand, showering us with fragments.

The knife bounces off the arm, hits his shorts. As he moves to grab it, he misses it and knocks it further round the back of his leg.

He pivots to try to catch it again, but gravity is quicker and the tool falls into a hole between the rounded rocks near his left foot.

ARON (CONT'D)
No, no, no.....!

INT. CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

The knife is visible in the crack below and behind his right leg. Because he can't twist, he can't get anywhere near it. Heaves against the canyon wall to get there. Pointless.

ARON
Shit!

He pulls off his right shoe and tries to squeeze his foot into the hole. Too big. He looks upward. Can't believe it.

ARON (CONT'D)
Shit, shit, shit!

INT. BENEATH CANYON FLOOR. DAY.

We're on a level with the knife in the hole beneath Aron's feet. An enormous light blasts on overhead. Aron's head-torch. The stick enters from top of screen and nudges the knife in a semi-circle. It's all a bit arcade game if it wasn't so fucking serious. No success. The stick is withdrawn. The knife remains.

Pause. An ant runs over the knife.

The stick returns. This time, its top is almost broken off to form a natural hook. We push in on the knife as the stick hooks through the little ring on the end of the knife. Slowly, slowly, it lifts.

INT. ARON IN CANYON. DAY.

Looking down onto the ground, around his leg, his toes holding the stick like a chopstick. Tremulously, his leg lifts the knife out and up towards his good arm. Slowly, breathlessly. He picks it off the end of the stick. For the first time in a long time, a smile.

ARON
Sweet.

INT. WIDE INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

We pass through the transparent title on our ghostly ride along the canyon. We're with the wind blowing dust through the canyon slot, and come across a miner in the distance, digging at the rock. Aron is using the shorter file from the multi-tool now and has tied a shoe-lace to from his wrist through the ring of the tool.

He pulls his cap down to keep most of the dust from blowing in his eyes. His lips are caked in sand, but he keeps blowing on his arm to keep it clear.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

The luminous watch changes to 00.00.

Title: **Sunday.**

INT. ARON IN THE CANYON. NIGHT.

Aron celebrates midnight with a tiny, careful sip of water. He holds it in his mouth, puffing his cheeks, circulating the precious fluid.

He leans his head against the canyon wall. Closes his eyes.

EXT. NEVADA DESERT. BLACK ROCK CITY. PRE-DAWN.

On top of some 4x4 vehicles are 8-10 ft tall multi-coloured Easter Island masks. Various bikes are strapped to the backs of the trucks too.

INT. TRUCK. NEVADA DESERT.

It becomes clear that the camera is Aron: his POV, his eyes. And his eyes are our eyes. We never see more of him than a wisp of hair or a soft-focus bit of shoulder. But what we do see, beside him in the truck is a beautiful, flame-haired free spirit of a woman. Rana.

RANA

Don't be scared.

ARON O/C

Not scared of anything.

RANA

I'm not talking about soloing five tens, hero. I'm talking about in here.

Rana puts her hand to her heart.

ARON O/C

Like I said, I'm not scared of anything.

RANA

Okay then, let's go.

She smiles bewitchingly and gets out of the truck.

INT. CANYON FLOOR. NIGHT.

Chip, chip, chip. He stretches his left arm, flexes his legs. Changes blade. Prises at a section of rock with the file. Without warning a dime-sized shred of boulder arcs through the night. He catches it perfectly on his right elbow.

ARON

Cool.

Picks it off his arm and places it on top of the rock. A grain of sand on a sea-shore. But something. He stands up from his crouch. Flexes. Man, his legs are aching.

INT. ABOVE ARON, LOOKING INTO CANYON. NIGHT.

Aron is in his harness. He is throwing 30 feet of rope up towards us. A tangle of knots and carabiners at the end of it looking for purchase close to camera. Each time, it falls back. He persists. Dozens of jump cuts, dozens of attempts.

Finally it catches.

He pulls on the rope, gently at first, then fiercely. It's caught. He clips the rope into his harness and sinks gently down, allowing the weight off his feet.

ARON

Ahhhhhhh.

He dangles, luxuriating in the sudden weightlessness. Examines the knuckles of his left hand, skinned by the digging.

He switches off his head-torch. Eyes close. Black....

EXT. NEVADA DESERT. BLACK ROCK CITY. PRE-DAWN.

...smashed by twenty headlights flashing on. They illuminate Rana, standing, Goddess-like in front of the trucks. Shouts.

RANA

Welcome! My name is Rana. I am here to lead you to the other side. Okay! Lights off. Line up alongside me.

The vehicle headlights die, allowing a diamond of distant lights to be seen- clearly some sort of tented city- and a group of young men and women line up along the straight line she is drawing in the sand with a long stick. The camera is in the line- Aron's POV. Again, we never actually see Aron.

RANA (CONT'D)

Join hands. This is the line. If you're not ready for this, don't cross the line. Because once you cross, everything- everything will be different. Ready? Three, two, one....go!

And the line of people- including us- take a step forward, over the line. As they do so, the sparkling crescent-shaped town of vehicles and encampments that is Burning Man is replaced by an astonishing sunrise. Their faces are burnished by the sun. Hooting and hollering from all around. Rana turns the full force of her beauty towards Aron and smiles.

But over the smile, a dark boulder is falling towards us.

INT/EXT. VARIOUS. DAY.

A re-run of the accident. He can now witness it in detail, from all angles- almost as if his role is to point out the salient details of the accident. 3 seconds becomes 30.... We fall with his face in high-definition slow motion watching his future.

We fall with the rock chasing him pitilessly to the bottom of the canyon.

INT. CANYON. PRE-DAWN.

Aron's eyes snap open and he stands unsteadily. Rubs at his legs and arms. Starts chipping at the boulder again.

INT. CANYON. TIME-LAPSE. PRE-DAWN.

Lit only by the head-torch, the black shifts to grey and then finally, light. He watches it arrive. A rush of wind. A noise.

ARON

Hello-?

He whips his head to look up. A raven flaps overhead.

RAVEN

Caw-caw.

EXT. SKY. DAY.

The raven flies the length of the canyon slit above him.
Blue, blue sky.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

He stretches his neck, desperate to follow the only other living thing in this universe. But it's gone. He stares at its absence for a long time.

ARON

Caw-caw.

INT. CANYON. DAWN.

Aron is very still, staring at the rock and the open blade lying on top of it. Steeling himself to start work. Suddenly, he looks over his shoulder and sees a dagger of sunlight cutting across the top of the slot. Sunrise.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

9.30 AM

INT. CANYON. DAWN.

He watches the sunbeam as if it's a living thing. It moves towards him. He stretches his hand towards it. It's going to miss him. He whips off his left shoe and sock and pushes his leg towards the beam of light. Slowly, it climbs, caressing his ankle and calf. He pulls the other sock off and bathes this one now. And then sunshine bursts upon him.

He turns his face full into the sun that explodes the image of him into nothing. The screen whites out.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE ONE.

The white-out is replaced with electronic static and then Aron's image.

ARON

It's three oh five on Sunday, April 27th, two thousand and three. This marks twenty-four hours of being stuck in Blue John Canyon above the Big Drop. My name is Aron Ralston. My parents are Donna and Larry Ralston of Englewood, Colorado.

A long pause.

ARON (CONT'D)

Whoever finds this, you can keep the cam-corder. But please make an attempt to find my parents. Give them the tape. I would appreciate it.

He takes long blinks, seems to avoid looking at himself though the screen is facing him. He looks alarmed and wide-eyed, though his speech is oddly slow and slurry.

ARON (CONT'D)

So....I was descending Blue John yesterday, when this happened.

The camera swings rounds to show where his forearm and wrist disappear into the horrifyingly skinny gap between the chockstone and the wall.

INTERCUT WITH

INT/EXT. VARIOUS. CANYON. DAY.

Flashes of the accident, almost in silhouette, as if an animation side-view. It freezes just before the moment of entombment.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE ONE.

ARON

What you're looking at there is my arm going into the rock...this chockstone was loose. Rolled onto my arm and it's- stuck. It's been without circulation for twenty-four hours now. It's a kind of grey, blue color. No circulation.

He pulls the camera back round to his face.

ARON (CONT'D)

It's pretty well gone. I'm low on food and-

He leans, picks up the water bottle and shakes it for the benefit of whoever might ever watch this.

ARON (CONT'D)

Yeah. That's about three hundred, four hundred mill in there. That's it for water.

Another long pause. Forced smile.

ARON (CONT'D)

I'm in pretty deep doo-doo here.

The smile is replaced by something nearer sudden terror. Suddenly the screen turns to static.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron gathers himself. Clears his throat Switches back on.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE ONE.

ARON

I've had a lot of time to think about this...and the way I see it is there are four options. I tried to move the boulder with the rope. I managed to get it around that boulder up there-

The camera swings up to the sky, focusses on another boulder.

ARON (CONT'D)

- but I've only got the gear to rig a two-to-one ratio. And this boulder must be two tons. Do the Math. I tried chipping away at the rock but I'm getting to think that my hand is actually supporting it. So every time I chip it a bit, the rock just settles further.

INT. WIDE. MOVING THROUGH THE CANYON. REAL TIME.

A breeze slides through the canyon. Five seconds of involuntary shuddering from Aron that shakes his whole body.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE ONE.

ARON

Christ.

He pulls himself together.

ARON (CONT'D)

So the third thing was to cut my arm off.

He shrugs. As best he can in the circumstances.

ARON (CONT'D)

Which has its own problems. Apart from the obvious one. It's four hours to my vehicle, even if I could get back up the canyon with one arm. There's some five eight moves.

(MORE)

ARON (CONT'D)
*And then there's the biking...with
 one arm...and the knife's blunt as
 hell now. Which means I'm left with
 option four: waiting for rescue.*

*He turns away from camera. Suddenly a guilty man. Looks back.
 How to say this?*

ARON (CONT'D)
*Didn't tell anyone where I was I
 was going, did I? No note on the
 truck.*

Another strange smile.

ARON (CONT'D)
*Rule number one, First Grade, just
 before 'don't talk to strangers'.*

*Nothing left to say. The video whirrs on until his eyes snap
 into focus.*

INT. CANYON. DAY. REAL TIME.

Voices. Something. He can hear something. Electrified, his
 head snaps around trying to locate the direction.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE ONE/ CANYON REAL TIME.

We see variously on tape and in real time reacting. He's
 forgotten the camera in his hand- the angles are crazy and
 oblique, but shocking nonetheless. He is screaming,
 screaming. We can see the unleashed panic, the fear, the
 desperations.

ARON
 Help! Help! Hello? Please!

Stops, wide-eyed to listen. Definitely noise.

ARON (CONT'D)
 Help me! Help me! Helllllp!

INT. CANYON. DAY.

He stops, heart racing, breathing hard. Still, the noise.
 Looks above and behind him. A kangaroo rat scuffling behind
 another chock-stone. The rat scuttles off.

ARON
 You little....bastard.

Aron's entire frozen body goes limp.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

He stares at the camera in his hand. Sees it is still recording. Stops it. Rewinds. Re-runs the footage of the tinny screams for help coming from the speaker.

ARON

Help! Help! Hello? Please! Help me!
Help me...!

Disgust on his face.

ARON (CONT'D)

No. You. Do. Not.

He rewinds the tape.

ARON (CONT'D)

Erase. Erase.

EXT. GOOGLE-EARTH SATELLITE SHOT OF WILDERNESS. DUSK.

We're high above the desert. In time-lapse, we see nightfall: a soft, grey, endless line of darkness cross the earth.

INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

A flashing light. Aron's head-torch bouncing off the canyon walls. Chip, chip, chip. Aron is at work.

INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

Another involuntary shudder grips Aron's entire body. He stops work. Thinks.

C/U: DIGITAL THERMOMETER.

The temperature gauge on his watch falls ridiculously fast from 70 degrees down to 48.

INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

Jump-cut, strobe-lit as if stop-frame animation: Aron madly gets dressed for the night.

He cannibalizes everything he can get his hands on, using his knife, his teeth, his free hand.

He tears holes in a cloth camera bag. Thrusts his good arm into the newly fashioned sleeve. Pulls it around him with his teeth.

Wraps purple webbing around his right arm.

Shoves the empty Camelback water bladder between the wall and his right arm to insulate it.

Wraps a grocery bag around his upper right bicep.

Curls the dirty green-and-yellow ropes around his legs. Like he's being squeezed by a python.

All done at massive speed. To generate warmth, stop him from thinking.

Finally, he sticks his head inside the rope bag.

INT. ROPE BAG. NIGHT.

It's lined with plastic. Shiny. By the light of the head-torch, he's suddenly alarmingly illuminated.

EXT. ROPE BAG. NIGHT.

From the outside, he looks a cross-between an alien and a tramp.

INT. ROPE BAG. NIGHT.

Bizarrely, Aron laughs, aware of how ridiculous he looks.

ARON

The Michelin Man! Bit thinner. Lot thinner.

Stops laughing. He roots in his pocket, pulls out the remains of a bean burrito. Takes a bite. Chews fast. Stops. Chews slow. We understand the thought process.

INT. ROPE BAG. NIGHT.

Black. We can hear breathing in an enclosed space.

ARON

I've not paid a lot of attention over the years. Said a lot of bad things about you, admit it. But I guess you know that. God.

A long silence. Then a rustle and a sudden blast of light illuminates Aron. Ghostly green. The head-torch bouncing off the shiny interior of the rope bag.

ARON (CONT'D)

I'm- I'm hoping I'm on with the all-forgiving God, though just my luck that's it's the plagues, pestilence and damnation version on shift right now. Which case, I'm really screwed. God. Look, God, I don't know what to do. I don't know what to do. I've tried everything I can think of. I. Don't. Know. What. To. Do. You want me to go to church every Sunday, never climb again, whatever. It's done. Done. Please.

He waits. Switches off the light. Only his breathing and his heart-rate. Too fast.

ARON (CONT'D)

Okay, then. Devil. As your pal's busy. So, if you're listening, I need some help here, yeah? How about a deal? You cut deals, right? Seriously. I'll trade you an arm, a soul, whatever. Name your part. Ready to sign right on the line. Though I might have to write left-handed because- well, because, y'know, under the circumstances-

A burst of hysterical laughter which frightens him. He wrestles himself back into control.

ARON (CONT'D)

Seriously. I will. Just get me out of here. Out of here.

Pause. And then his entire body spasms with cold.

ARON (CONT'D)

Ungg-ggg-ggg....!

Five seconds of demonic shaking from the multi-coloured headless man. This too is scary for Aron.

ARON (CONT'D)

Yeah. Funny.

He lays his hooded face against the rock. Shuts his eyes. Black.

ARON (CONT'D)

Oh, Jesus.

INT. ROPE BAG. NIGHT.

Shivering with cold. His head in the rope bag, he is rewinding the video camera, the light on his face, soft blue LCD hell.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

The time on the cam-corder, hurtling backwards.

EXT. CATHEDRAL CAVE. VIDEO FOOTAGE.

Kristi and Megan. The Cathedral. They clamber out of the pool, wet and buzzing from their first jump. We see the two girls climb and jump again, smashing into the water and coming up beaming, screaming and hollering like children on their first helter-skelter.

The sounds echo around the canyon.

He watches as if an alien from outer space discovering humans for the first time. He laughs along with them, stares, fascinated. Laughs again. Nearly cries. Stares again.

He rewinds this time in vision. Kristi's bra and pants are soaking. Body underneath. Very clear. Presses pause. Stares.

Presses fast forward. The tape speeds up until it is a blur...

INT. TENT. DAY.

....the blur slows with an electronic whine and we are looking down at Rana on Aron's chest. As ever, the camera is our POV, Aron's eyes. We never see him, only her. There's clearly been sex and there's clearly going to be sex. The pheromones are coming off the screen. She puts a finger on his heart. Puts her head to it, listening. Mimes turning a safe's combination lock.

RANA

So how do I get in, Aron? What's the combination?

INT. ROPE BAG. NIGHT.

The faintest of smiles from Aron. He mumbles the words.

ARON

If I told you I'd have to kill you.

INT. TENT. DAY.

RANA
You already kill me.

Her hand reaches down out of sight of the camera.

RANA (CONT'D)
I reckon I got the numbers.

She slides slowly down his chest.

RANA (CONT'D)
Yeah. I got the numbers.

ARON
Oh....

The head-torch clicks on. Big on Aron's blinking eyes.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

11.59 Changes to 00.00.

INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

Aron pulls the bag off his head. Pulls the water bottle out of the sand hole in the ground. He curses to himself for tightening the lid too much. Puts it between his teeth and levers with his head. Nothing. Getting weak.

He examines his puffy left hand. It's trembling. He shakes it out. Jams the bottle between his legs.

We're tight on the neck of the bottle as it releases. He lifts it slowly and ceremoniously to his lips. A half-mouthful of water slides onto his tongue. He tilts the bottle back. Circulates the water around his mouth. Doesn't swallow.

INT. CANYON. C/U BOTTLE NECK

The bottle neck stares at Aron.

INT. CANYON. C/U ARON.

Aron's eyes stare at the bottle neck.

INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

Aron shakes the bottle. Water splashes inside. Not much water. Puts the bottle back down. Moves to pop a contact lens out of his eye and into his mouth.

INT. ROPE BAG. PRE-DAWN.

In big close-up, an ant crawls across Aron's face. His muscles twitch in response.

INT. ROPE BAG. PRE-DAWN.

Aron's eyes, open a slit. That's as much asleep as he gets. Targets some puffs of breath at the ant. Doesn't work. Flicks the ant away with a finger. Eyes close again.

A noise. The eyes are suddenly alert, though the rest of him remains motionless. In one move, he rips off the bag.

INT. CANYON. PRE-DAWN.

Nothing. Nobody. Grey slot canyon. Then something moves on the desert floor. It's the kangaroo rat. Back to nibble at a crumb from the burrito.

ARON

Hi.

The kangaroo rat scuttles away.

ARON (CONT'D)

No, don't...

But it's gone. He stares at the place it has disappeared to longingly.

Caption: **Monday**

INT. CANYON. PRE-DAWN.

Aron's busy. Out of his Michelin Man gear, he is involved in rigging a pulley system. Obsessive, inventive, he adjusts, adds, subtracts, undoing and redoing knots with his teeth. He throws the rope again and again over another boulder until finally it catches. More tying and clipping. He pulls on the rope. He pulls down on the rope. Harder and harder. The boulder doesn't move a millimeter. He goes limp on the rope, open-mouthed with exhaustion. Shuts his eyes.

INT/EXT. CANYON. VARIOUS. DAY.

Suddenly, we are crashing through the canyon, weaving this way and that, rollercoasting up and out onto flat desert. Past the chained-up bicycle and along the slick rock humps.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. DAY.

We crash into the back of the truck and there, lying on its side is an almost-full bottle of Gatorade. And a grapefruit! They've got sparkly condensation on them- like advertising spritzer mist- all over them. And then there's another water bottle and an orange...The Gatorade lies on its side and the liquid seems to be slapping slowly, backward and forward like a Lava lamp, bulging with wetness and moisture.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron tries to lick his parched lips. But it's a parody of lip licking. No saliva.

He reaches down to the water bottle. Wets his lips with the tiniest drop.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE TWO.

Aron speaking to the video. He is beginning to fray at the edges a bit. Thinner, hollow-eyed. Still holding it together, but there are hints of darkness in his occasionally wayward delivery.

ARON

It's Monday. All day. Late for work...So. I spent the morning trying to rig the pulley again. Different anchors, worth a try. But there's so much friction and it's climbing rope. Too much bounce. What I need is a twenty metres of static rap rope. Nine point eight mill. Two grigris, a rack of carabiners, slings, a power drill and a bolt kit.

A wry smile.

ARON (CONT'D)

That would do it.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

We see him below us as the raven flies overhead. He flicks his head round to follow it as it goes.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE TWO.

ARON

There's this raven. Flies overhead every morning. I clocked it a eight fifteen yesterday.

Looks at his watch.

ARON (CONT'D)

Regular as clockwork. I'll film it for you tomorrow. I have about one hundred and fifty millilitres of water left. And I peed twice already. It's two days since I went last and then I nearly go wet myself. Bodily functions going weird on me. I saved the second lot in the Camelbak. Smells pretty rank, but it'll settle, I guess. Chill it in the sand. Like Sauvignon Blanc... What else? I get fifteen minutes of sun at nine thirty.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron is deathly still as we travel towards him with a dagger of light. His leg is stretched out and the only movement is the change of leg halfway through. He stays in shot throughout getting bigger and then smaller as the light approaches and recedes.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE TWO.

ARON

I keep chipping at the rock, but more to keep warm than anything else. I'm pretty sure it's actually making it worse. If that's possible. I reckon the more I chip, the further it settles down onto my arm.

Big pause.

ARON (CONT'D)

So.

Smiles in a slightly embarrassed way.

ARON (CONT'D)

I tried to cut my arm off.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

We see him pull the elastic neoprene tubing insulation from the Camelbak. Stretchy and strong, it emerges like a long snake. Perfect. He wraps the neoprene strip around his right forearm, below the elbow. Tightens it with his teeth. Knots it again. And again. Clips a carabiner into the end and twists and twists it tight.

ARON

Owww. Oh, yeah. That hurts. That hurts.

Takes out the multi-tool and switches to the long blade. Then he presses the blade and draws it quickly across his forearm. Nothing. Repeats it harder. Then slashes hard, sawing viciously at the same point.

ARON (CONT'D)

Shit. Shit, shit.

Releases the tourniquet, allowing blood flow to return to his arm and a series of angry red slash marks to reveal themselves.

ARON (CONT'D)

That it? Aron, that's- that's pathetic.

Self-disgust on his face.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE TWO.

Smiley again, in a slightly worrying way. The camera skims over the slash marks. Back onto Aron's face.

ARON

Lesson: don't buy the cheap, made-in-China multi-tool. Couldn't find my Victorinox. This one came free with a torch. And the torch was shit too....Not blaming you, Mom. Really. As stocking-fillers go, more than okay. How were you to know I'd get into this much trouble?

A pause. A different Aron altogether, suddenly.

ARON (CONT'D)

I can imagine you watching this at home. Aron's really gone and done it this time.

Suddenly a smile lightens his face. Fresh and surprised.

ARON (CONT'D)

Hey, Sis! How you doing?

INT. CANYON. DAY.

We see a shot of Sonja, Aron's younger sister, sitting on a sofa placed neatly in the open part of the canyon. She is dipping into a bag of chips while staring at camera, a girl watching tv.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Sonja disappears. Aron blinks, frowns. Shakes the image away. Didn't like that.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron is chipping at the stone. Dig, dig, dig.

EXT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron shakes his water bottle to check the contents. He opens the top, tilts and then holds the water in his mouth as he ritualistically removes his contact lenses and washes them in his mouth.

Suddenly a shiver tears across him like an attack dog. He coughs a lens out. As he tries to catch it before it disappears in the sand, he tips the bottle in his lap.

The bottle falls horizontally on his shorts and a leak of sacred fluid darkens his tan shorts. He whips it upright.

ARON

No....! Useless idiot! Jesus, pay attention.

He screws the lid carefully on. Shakes the bottle. Scarcely anything in there now. Can barely be bothered to lift the contact lens to his eye. But he does. Needs to take a rest in his harness after this gargantuan effort. Blinks a couple of times to get the lens settled. Shuts his eyes.

The sound of slow and regular chipping. Dig, dig, dig.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE TWO.

ARON

Been doing a lot of thinking. In between chipping pointlessly at a big stone and amateur arm surgery there's not a whole lot else to do down here. Anyway. Something amazing. Really. Amazing. This boulder.

There's an enthusiasm in his eyes that isn't entirely reassuring. He swings the camera right around. Films it.

ARON (CONT'D)

This boulder's been waiting for me all my life. And all its life.

Brings the camera back on himself.

ARON (CONT'D)

Isn't that awesome? Since it was some bit of a meteorite a million billion years ago. Up there in space. It's been waiting. To land here. Right here. And me, I've been moving towards it all my life.

He leans in, earnestly trying to convey this idea.

ARON (CONT'D)

My DNA brought me right here. From the minute I was born. Every breath I've taken, every act has been leading to this. To this little crack in the earth's surface. To this boulder. Cosmic. Incredible. Beautiful.

He stops, as if listening to the other half of this conversation.

ARON (CONT'D)

No, you don't get it. I know you don't get it. But it makes sense to me. Total sense.

Gives up trying to convince the invisible audience.

ARON (CONT'D)

You had to be there.

Laughs.

ARON (CONT'D)

Really. You had to be there.

A long, violent burst of shivering afflicts him. He comes out of it, finally.

ARON (CONT'D)

This canyon's like an ice-box. And the wind. Jesus, the wind....

Electronic static for a second as he switches off. Then he is back, the wind bringing him back to some sort of reality.

ARON (CONT'D)

I've got some American Express insurance that should cover the costs of the recovery operation. Bank accounts are all in credit. You'll have to sell the house....All my life, I've been asking for this and I got it.

The screen fills with static.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

Aron is dangling, asleep in his harness. He is so still, he might be dead.

And ant wanders across his free arm. The arm twitches. Twitches again, then shakes the ant off it. No more movement.

INT. BEDROOM. TWILIGHT.

Rana, naked. She is making love to the camera, staring right into it.

RANA
I love you.

INT. BEDROOM. LATER.

Rana is sitting on the side of the bed, her naked back is turned away from the camera which is our point of view- and Aron's.

ARON V/O
Rana?

Her head whips round.

RANA
Nothing. Silence. Fucking silence!

An arm comes out in front of camera to touch her. She shrugs it off instantly.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

Close on Aron's face, his lips.

ARON
(barely whispered)
I- I- I'm sorry.

INT. BEDROOM. TWILIGHT.

RANA
I say I love you and what do you say? "I'm sorry." You won't let anyone in, will you? Nobody. Mister fucking Solo.

She gets up, roughly gathers her clothes together, utterly unconcerned with her nakedness.

ARON V/O
Rana...

RANA
You're frozen.

She turns on the camera, on us. Right into the lens.

RANA (CONT'D)
You're stone.

She walks to the door, an action that allows her tears to come.

RANA (CONT'D)
You're gonna be so lonely, Aron.

Walks out.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

A tear falls down his cheek, lying against the rock.

ARON
Stone.

Suddenly, CRACK! A sound that makes Aron- and us- startle out of our seats.

He looks around, panicked.

Another crack. He looks down. Dark spots on his shorts.

EXT. SLOT CANYON. DAY. ARON'S POV. SUNSET

Looks up. There's an angry-looking, black motherfucker of a cloud above him.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

C/U on Aron's eyes. We look up at the sky. A blob of rain spatters the lens. And then another.

EXT. CANYON. SUNSET.

Suddenly, a crack of thunder like the earth has just split.

A flash of Aron driving past the roadside sign that reads "danger flash floods".

Aron reacts as if it's come to get him. Panic.

ARON
No. No...

He wrenches at the boulder, pulls, pushes. Moans, heaves. Nothing, of course.

EXT. DESERT. SUNSET.

Massive, thunderhead clouds rolling in, impossibly fast. The desert dust is hit by silent bullets. Raindrops gathering and multiplying, soaking the sand dark, and then flowing into a groove and slit, being joined by other rivulets until water is running, finding its way along the jagged cracks in the ground.

Above us, the sky is furious black. Lightning arcs across the sky.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

Aron's sky darkens above him. He looks truly scared, has somehow found some energy. Gathers his possessions together. Sticks out his tongue to catch the drops.

ARON

Please God, not this. Not this.

EXT. DESERT. SUNSET.

Water is pouring into a bigger channel. We are with the water, being joined by other rivulets until in turn, we join a bigger water-course.

EXT. DESERT. SUNSET.

Another channel explodes as a volume of water engulfs it. The camera literally slips and slides as the water picks up speed, looking for release, for a gulley, for a- canyon.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

The bottom of the canyon has become a river. It is surging down the natural pipe-work of the desert.

EXT. BLUE JOHN CANYON. S-SHAPED LOG. SUNSET.

From below, we are looking at the S-shaped log as unimaginable tons of water come pouring suddenly over the lip of the canyon. The canyon becomes a six foot wall of churning mud and debris, hurtling downwards.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

We see Aron in the distance, tugging at his arm. Without time to register, the wall of water hits him.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

In an instant, he is engulfed with freezing water. Gasping at the cold, wrenching his head to one side to get out of the main force of the blast. He tries to gain height, but the water is filling the canyon by the second.

ARON

No, no, no, no.....

His head is only just above the water level. He is going under. Takes a last few desperate breaths before the water closes over him.

INT. CANYON. UNDERWATER. SUNSET.

We're with Aron underwater, in the churning, dark waters. Only Aron's head-torch flashing around desperately.

Then in the maelstrom of mud, we see the boulder shift. A thrashing of body. The arm pulls, tugs. And then, he is free.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

Aron's face coming up, roaring for breath. Gasping, choking. Alive. And moving with the current. He is smashed into one side of the canyon and then the other.

His good hand tries to grip onto anything, but the canyon walls are smooth, holdless. He barrels onwards, a man on a rollercoaster, rolling, smashing, careering along the twists and turns of the canyon.

We are now underwater, now above water, upright, upside down, bowled along as if inside some infernal washing machine, half drowning, half living.

INT. CANYON. SUNSET.

The canyon spits out his writhing body into a wider valley. The water is slowing. Aron's body bumps its way to a halt on a tiny 'beach'. Motionless.

C/U ARON'S FACE. SUNSET.

Aron's head is on the sand. Grains of sand all over the lens. No movement. For a long time.

When we are convinced that he must be dead, the eyes blink once. A barely perceptible grunt. The mouth opens slightly and water pours out.

EXT. WIDE CANYON. SUNSET.

Painfully, slowly, Aron rolls onto his back. Stares at the pink, orange, deep blue streaks in the sky. Heaves himself upright. Looks down at his hand.

Mottled white and grey, a dead surgical glove at the end of his arm.

Aron gets to his knees. His feet. Steadies himself for a long moment. And then starts to stagger forwards, a man learning to walk again. Grunting with pain and exhaustion.

EXT. STEEP. SLOPE. NIGHT.

One-armed, Aron drags himself, painful inch by inch, from one step to another. He slumps upright, his head actually resting on the rock, eyes almost closed. On some auto-pilot.

He almost falls over the last holds. Lies on the ground, staring up at the stars in the sky.

A shooting star sparkles across the sky.

C/U: SHOOTING STAR.

A blaze of burning rocks, white hot, tumbling impossibly through space.

C/U ARON'S FACE.

A reflection of the star's trail in Aron's eye.

EXT. CAR PARK. NIGHT.

Aron is kneeling by the back door of his truck. His face is flush with the smooth metal, actually against it. A smile of love. He could be kissing it. But he's actually trying to unlock it, his face inches from the lock, his trembling hand wrestling with the keys. Eventually, he gets the key in. Turns it. Bliss.

EXT. CAR PARK. NIGHT.

Aron is sitting, slumped against his truck, drinking the bottle of Gatorade.

C/U of his throat as it gulps and gulps. Gatorade is running all over his face. He can't get it down fast enough. It is liquid pornography.

Aron pauses to groan with sheer delight. Looks down at his useless hand. Starts laughing and laughing. With relief, with delight.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Aron driving. One-handed. The pain is coming in waves that make him hunch over the wheel, but he keeps going.

Punches the radio. Music crashes in on us. A grimace of pleasure from Aron.

The occasional sign flashes past. Seems to leave a trace on his retina, on the screen.

EXT. DESERT. NIGHT.

A huge inflatable Scooby Doo rears out of the darkness.

From the driver's mirror, we see its inflatable body waving at him, caught in the back-draft from the truck. There is something slow and unearthly about this.

EXT. TOWN. NIGHT.

Aron is driving through a large town. All the street signs and shop lights seem extra-bright, painful on the eye. These, too, are leaving a faint, hallucinogenic trace on the screen. Aron is clearly getting weak.

ARON

C'mon, c'mon. Nearly there.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. NIGHT.

Aron gets out of his truck. Walks up the middle of the street. After what he has been through, traffic is not going to scare him. Lit from behind by streetlights, he strikes a battered but heroic figure as he strides towards us in silhouette. Turns into the drive of a house.

EXT. RANA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Stands on the step. Gathers himself from the pain in his hand. Leans on the door, resting his head. Pulls back. Rings the bell.

ARON

Rana.

A light goes on. A cautious voice.

RANA O/S
Who's there?

ARON
Rana, it's Aron.

RANA O/S
Aron?

Rana opens the door. We see her standing there in all her beauty. Behind her the room is lit softly. A fire burns in the grate. It is a vision of intimacy, comfort, safety.

In slow motion, Rana smiles at Aron. She holds out her arms to him.

We see Aron's face. He is talking, but no sound is coming out of his mouth.

Rana keeps smiling. Steps to one side to invite him in.

Aron trying to communicate, trying to form words.

Rana's smile drops. She looks disappointed. Slowly, slowly, closes the door.

C/U: ARON'S FACE. NIGHT.

Aron's lips are moving. He is desperately trying to say something.

INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

Aron's lips are still moving, desperately. But he is in the rope bag. He never went anywhere. Oh, Jesus.

He rips off the rope bag. Wailing, screams, cries. Finally, after so much control, so much order, this is despair. Naked, terrifying despair. A true rending of a soul gone beyond hope for release or rescue, into the darkest pit of loneliness. This is a man, dying on his own in the universe.

ARON
Oh, God, oh God, oh God....

Gradually the sobbing subsides. He is slumped by the boulder, encased in his own pity. Motionless for a long, long time.

EXT. CANYON. SUNRISE.

Hundreds of miles of canyon. The inner canyons change from dark umbers and black shadows to immense bands of pastel yellow, white, green and a myriad shades of red. A hallucinogenic movement towards light.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

The massive numbers go from 6.59 to 7.00.

Title.

Tuesday.

INT. CANYON. SUNRISE.

V/O

Good morning, America!

There's a chorus of Good Mornings from a thousand American TV and radio shows from Texas to Oregon, Massachusetts to the Carolinas.

ARON

Good morning, everyone! It's seven o'clock in Canyonland, USA. Today, on the boulder, we've got a special guest- the self-styled American Superhero Aron Ralston. Shout it out, Aron!

Applause from the studio audience. Where the hell did they come from?

Flashes of Aron's photos. Hero poses on top of various snowy peaks, crags, on bikes with huge panoramas stretching away beneath him.

ARON (CONT'D)

Thank you! Pleasure to be here!

Suddenly, Aron has adopted the role of chat-show host, switching voices and persona with frightening dexterity.

ARON (CONT'D)

Can I say a big hi to Mom and Dad in Englewood, Colorado?

ARON THE HOST

Mom and Dad! Never forget Mom and Dad. *Right*, Aron?

ARON

Umm. Yeah. Sorry I didn't pick up the other night, Mom.

(MORE)

ARON (CONT'D)

Or all the other nights. Would have told you where I was going and- well- wouldn't be stuck here now, would I?

ARON THE HOST

Well, I always like to say, your supreme selfishness is our gain, Aron. Anyone else you'd like to say hi to?

ARON

Sure. Hi Brion at work! I'm not gonna make it in today, I'm afraid.

A big laugh from the audience.

ARON THE HOST

A question coming in from another Aron, this one in Loser Canyon, Utah. Aron asks: "am I right in thinking that even if Brion at work did notify the police, they'd put a 24 hour hold on it before filing a missing person's report, which means that you'd only become officially missing midday Wednesday at the earliest?"

ARON

Right on the money, Aron. So they'd get about four hours searching before dark, then they'd call it off until Thursday first light.

ARON THE HOST

And how do you know all of this, Aron from Loser Canyon, Utah?

Puts his finger to the invisible ear-piece as if talking to the questioner down the line.

ARON

Oh, well, I know all this 'cos I'm a volunteer in the rescue service- I'm something of a big, fucking, hard, hero. I can do it all. On. My. Own. You see?

ARON THE HOST

Yes, I *do* see. And is it true that despite being a big, fucking, hard hero, officially the cleverest man in Colorado and on course to be the first ever to solo all the fourteeners's in winter- *On Your Own*- you neglected to tell anyone where you were going?

ARON
That is entirely correct.

A pause.

ARON THE HOST
Anyone?

ARON
Anyone.

ARON THE HOST
Oops.

ARON
Oops.

ARON THE HOST
So, just to be clear, it's just
you, the crow and the kangaroo rat
in on this one?

ARON
Don't let's forget the big bag of
piss.

ARON THE HOST
The bag of piss, ladies and
gentlemen! Wooh!

Applause and cheering echoes around the canyon as Aron picks up the Camelbak, toasts the imaginary audience.

ARON
Thank you, thank you!

Suddenly, utterly, utterly sober, he stares straight into camera.

ARON (CONT'D)
I love you Mom. I'm so, so sorry.

After a long moment, the screen is filled with static.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

A very sober Aron tips the Camelbak very cautiously towards his mouth. Takes a mouthful. Retches. But keeps it down. Summons all his strength and takes another sip.

ARON
Oh...

Retches again.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron, slumped. A noise, a swoop of wings. He grabs the camera just in time to catch the very end of the raven's flight along the line of the canyon.

ARON

Shit. Missed it. 8.31. He's late.
Still missed it.

We can hear his heart pounding. Unnaturally fast. He holds his hand to it, trying to calm it, slow it down.

A flash of a woman's finger tracing a circle on his naked chest where his heart lies.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

A distinctive rustling. Aron opens his eyes. The kangaroo rat is back.

ARON

Hello.

This time the rat doesn't scuttle off.

ARON (CONT'D)

Yeah, what am I doing here? Good question. In all of the places in all of the world. Huh. Did all the routes, all the big descents. Not good enough. Not hard enough, right?

The rat looks back.

ARON (CONT'D)

Right. Got what I wanted. Got what I asked for. Everyone else is out there. And I'm in here. Dying. Real cool.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron is very still. Without warning, he suddenly tourniquets his arm again. Twice around the forearm, knotted twice and clipped with a carabiner that he twists up to tension.

He folds open the knife, grasps it in his fist and picking a spot just above the rock's grip on his right wrist, he plunges the blade into his arm. Up to the hilt.

He lets go, leaving the knife embedded. He swoons, and stares at it, the whole picture going blurred for a moment. Then, he grasps the tool and wriggles it slightly.

The blade connects with something hard. He taps the knife down and feels it knocking on the radius bone on his upper forearm.

He puts his ear close to his arm and wiggles the knife again. We hear the thocking noise.

ARON

Woah, that's bone.

He pulls the knife out, opening the wound. There's barely any blood and he pokes around with a sort of detached curiosity. We can see the epidermis, thick and leathery. And the yellow layer of fat. Suddenly, he jams the knife against the bone.

ARON (CONT'D)

Aggghhhh!

Pulls the knife out. Wipes the sweat away. So dry in the mouth, he is gagging. Pulls the lid off his water bottle. Shakes it. Drinks down the last precious drops.

Holds the bottle above his mouth to catch the final drops. Licks the inside as far as his tongue will reach. Screws the lid back on. Puts the bottle back down.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

8.00

Loosens the tourniquet. Watches the blood come back into his arm.

Picks up the video camera.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE THREE.

Again, there's a touch of hysteria lurking in the delivery. A mixture of too formal and too wild.

ARON

At precisely five pm, I finished the last of the water. The last of the clean water, anyway. Kinda gulped it down in response to...Had another go at cutting off the arm. It, err- let's just say it didn't go that well.

He swings the camera onto the bloody hole he has made in his arm.

ARON (CONT'D)

A short career in surgery as it turns out.

(MORE)

ARON (CONT'D)

I can cut down through the fatty tissue and some of the muscle. Might have chopped a tendon on the way, not sure. But. These knives. No way. The bone. No way it'll get through the bone. Blunt. Next Christmas a proper Leatherman, yeah, Mom? Next Christmas....

He shrugs.

ARON (CONT'D)

Gave it a go.

Long pause.

ARON (CONT'D)

Out of water.

An even longer pause.

ARON (CONT'D)

I'm really fucked now.

INT. CANYON. TWILIGHT.

Night is falling. Aron is slumped in his harness, leaning against the boulder. Perhaps for the first time we get the sense that he has given up.

INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

The head-torch is weak, almost dead on batteries. Aron is chipping at an entirely new area of rock. This is odd.

Then we see what he is chipping. His name and the date he was born. And the date he is going to die. He is chipping his own headstone.

Faintly, we hear music. Piano music. Aron hears it too. Stops chipping.

INT. CANYON. NIGHT.

Aron listens to the music- a series of light, innocent scales with an almost childish tune attached. Entirely at odds with everything around him.

A flash of a young Aron- maybe ten years old- playing on the piano in a light, sunny room.

In between bouts of shivering, Aron continues to chip his own name. Tries to hum along to the scales. It sounds like the mumblings of dementia.

Another flash of the young Aron at the piano. We move past him into the next room where his Mother is working at the kitchen table, surrounded by piles of paperwork. His Mother's head nods slightly to the music.

INT/EXT. VARIOUS.

The rest of Tuesday night and Wednesday and Wednesday night play out through the triptych. Repetition is used to create a trippy sense of losing coherence- sometimes there are three Arons doing the same thing. Sometimes, it's Young Aron, or the past or the present running on different sections of the triptych at the same time.

At key moments, it resolves to one image and then back again. Things seem to loop and his close-ups almost seem to watch the loops happening again and again. This is particularly true inside the rope bag at night. When his light is switched on, it's bleached and monstrously overlit, like cruel HD close-ups. Without water, his disintegration is terrifyingly fast.

When the head-torch is off, we establish a night vision of green and blue that allows us to witness him in hiding. The images play out on the interior surface of the bag. The effect is like wraparound Imax, multi-screen Technicolor.

INT. CANYON. DAY. DIPTYCH

EXT.

Aron has his headphones on, listening to the Phish concert. The laser in the CD is damaged and the track skips.

EXT. STADIUM. CROWD

The crowd smears, dragged and distorted. The numbers skip on the display.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron falls into the canyon.

Beyond the foot in the sunlight dagger. We don't see above waist height. Someone carrying 2 huge office water dispensers by their necks walks into the canyon He walks up to Aron And puts them down

Aron falls again into the canyon replayed in slower motion

11.32 => 11.33
HUGE figures.

V.O: HERE he is

Aron lifts a huge rock onto his shoulder and heaves it to crash on the chockstone It shatters into dust.

his side and leaves.

ARON:

'Thanks'

Adverts - 7UP, etc. Some
televised, some billboard
some radio, pull tab cans
split and spit, slurpees
grapefruit juice, OJ
popsicles.

...since it was a bit
of a meteorite flying
through space a million
billion years ago...to land
Here. It's been waiting for
me. And I've been moving
Towards it all my life...

It's like
quarry mining.
He finds a
black shot-
putt sized
rock and
begins
hammering with
that -

ARON:

'Owwwww!'

But he carries
on.

Rana's face.
**You're gonna
be so lonely,
Aron.**

Molten rocks, tumbling
Through space, hurtling
Towards us.

Temperature 57 -
56 - 55 (huge
Figures)

A figure starts
a small fire to
comfort Aron.
Perfect for bacon
and beans.

Shuddering so
violently with
shivers, like
a fit teeth
chattering,
racking his
body with a
furious
vengeance.

He pisses again

ARON:

"I can't believe
this..."

decants the
sediment out of
Camelbak. The
stench of the
sediment makes
him retch and jerk
away. Where is all
This coming from?

ARON:

'Fuck Aron
That shit stinks'

Finished he tucks
back in but

02.02=>03.03=>04.04

Huge luminous figures on
the inside of the black
bag.

V.O: There you are
Rana's face, smiling at
him

05.05 We see it reflected
on his eyeball the eyelid
rustles back and forward.

VIDEO FOOTAGE:

There's the
interior Scooby
Doo waving at a
table in front
of it piled to
creaking point
with margaritas,
the excess runs
down the table
legs.

During this we

there's a small
bloom. **ARON:**
'You can shake
and you can dance
but the last
drop is in the
pants' - of pee
on his shorts.

+ Erik + Rana +
Sonja + Jean Marc
+ Chad + Keller
+ Soha + Craig +
Brandon + Chip +
Norm

[**ARON: RAMBLING ON VIDEO
ONLY SOMETIMES COHERENT**]
It's sort of
perfect, really...
I've been asking for
this all my life.....
and now I've got it...

**My DNA brought me
here to this little crack
in the earth's surface
.....cosmic.
Incredible.**

Does that make sense?

*He switches off and applies
lip balm.*

He looks at it and bites a
bit off. Masticates it on
and on... Chewing.

*The chockstone
waits and Aron's
foot kicks and
then lands and
they fall together.*

*The raven flies. => The accident runs in
reverse*

The petroglyphs on
The canyon walls
Detach themselves.
Start walking. Come
Down the canyon
Towards him.

INT. STORE ROOM. DAY.
REFLECTED ON THE INSIDE
OF THE NIGHT HEAD BAG.

*Aron chipping
away desultorily. A slit of light in blackness*

*see pictures,
unremarkable
lovely, natural*

ones of Erik +
Jon + Kristi +
Matt + Brent +
Gary + Judson +
Bryan + Mike +
Rachel + Angie
[SOME TAKE
THEIR TURN ON
THE SOFA IN
THE CANYON]

Aron falls
again - the
accident
re-runs in
silhouette

*He eats the
last bite of
burrito washed
down with a
swig of urine,
winces and
swallows
somehow. **ARON:**
'That's it.
I'm on the
urine diet
now. Well,
it's no
slurpee...'*

*Aron watches
the raven*

Aron shaking
with terror.
No, no, no!

Aron licks moisture condensation from inside the bag. His head-lamp blinks unreliably.

V.O: Where are You going?

INT. GARAGE. DAY. We're in the doorway of a garage with friends in the background gathered around Rana who is working on one of the giant Easter Island masks for Burning Man. She chats away, carefree, she's in baggy dungarees or overalls with her hair falling around her face out of its hairband. She brushes it back and flecks of Plaster of Paris dust her skin. She notices Aron.

RANA: There you are.

Aron carries on chipping. He's not particularly interested in All the voices. He's busy.

She shouts to someone:

RANA: Here he is.

Mum and Dad sitting on Sofa. Sofa sitting in canyon In front of him - flash-floods Of light

Rana naked,

Rana's face is

reveals Jon in work clothes. A light switch flicks on and thin metal shelves full of cleaning supplies appear on 3 sides, industrial mop, Aron in his canyon gear, right arm out of focus. Tries to knock on door with left arm. Jon stops him and indicates it won't do any good.

VIDEO FOOTAGE:

ARON: I'm holding on but it's really slowing down, the time is going really slow but my heart rate is going like crazy [WE HEAR IT POUNDING IN CONTRAST TO HIS SLURRING DELIVERY] I swear it's like 3 x what it should be...

Rewinded video - Megan and Kristi and back through his life in the canyon and then some of him climbing in snow that existed on the tape - triumphant pose on top of the icy wonder. All ice axes and Gore-Tex.

He takes shots of himself with his still camera and of his hand and of the light in the canyon. He takes one with the flash at night in the canyon. And one inside the bag blinding himself. The spots in his eyes bleed across into other shots and change colour.

V.O: He's over here

He imagines his head in the dagger of sunlight. his head turns always remaining in

ARON

God, it's Aron again. I still need
some help. It's getting bad here.
I'm out of water and food.
Listen. Give me the strength not to
do anything against myself.

A rumbling thunderous sound grows and the inside of the bag begins to bear the image of the top of the canyon at dawn but crumpled like paper, creased like the bag [BUT STRETCHED ACROSS 2 SCREENS]. The noise grows and grows...

CUT TO:

INT. CANYON. DAY.
ARON'S UPWARD POV.

When it can get no louder
a horse leaps the 6 ft gap
at the top of the canyon.
it's followed by dozens of
horses stampeding across his
roof....

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Obscuring the light on
his face once they've
gone and only dust
falling lightly is
evidence then...

INT. CANYON. SINGLE SCREEN.

We tilt down the wall to see Aron lying slumped in the harness. He has completed his obituary dates. Scratched on the wall:

Aron oct 75- Apr 03 RIP

INT. CANYON. DAY

With terrible slowness, an eye opens. A very red eye. You can hear him blink, eye socket rasping against eyeball.

His head lolls as if he's lost control of his neck muscles. His tongue rasps as he flexes his mouth to prevent it sealing. Without water, the disintegration is terrifyingly fast.

Title:

Thursday.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

He looks up at his own obituary. Whispers.

ARON

Out of date. May Day. Not dead.
Can't even get that right. Loser.

He smirks.

C/U: WATCH.

8.15.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Pushes his lolling head to stare up at the slit of sky. No raven.

ARON
Where. Are you?

C/U: WATCH. DAY.

8.30. Sky. No raven.

ARON
Please.

C/U: WATCH. DAY.

8.45. No raven.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE FOUR.

He's only just coherent. Hollow cheeks, croaky. Wild-eyed.

ARON
Raven didn't come. Didn't come.

He looks utterly distraught by this.

ARON (CONT'D)
So, that's it. Just me. Me. Not for long. Sonja, if you still want me to play at your wedding, there's a tape in a box in the- the basement of Mom and Dad's lounge. Me in 1993. 4.

He drops his head. It seems just too heavy. The screen goes to static.

INT. CANYON. DAY. VIDEO MESSAGE FIVE.

The screen comes back to life again, focussed on Aron again. He is struggling to communicate through his slow death.

ARON

I want you to know. All of this. It all makes sense. Everything comes together. Me, I chose it. Chose to turn away from everyone. Stone. Chose...this. Sort of perfect. Mom and Dad....I love you. Rana. Rana, I just couldn't.....do it. Say it. Show it. But someone will.

He's fading out, like a radio station out of range. Pulls himself back for one last effort.

ARON (CONT'D)

This is important. I need you all to understand. Every one of you. I need you to understand that it's okay. All of this...

He smiles at the camera. A brave, unmanic, genuine smile.

ARON (CONT'D)

I'm- I'm cool with it. At peace. It's okay. Everything. Is. Okay. Goodbye.

And he clicks the camera off.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron puts the camera down. With terrible slowness, he packs all the bits of his strange, trapped life back into his bag. Finally, there is nothing left to pack but the knife. He looks at its smashed-up blades, cleans them on his t-shirt. With a final effort, he folds the blades shut and puts it back in the sack. Sits back in the harness. Shuts his eyes.

BIG C/U. DAY

An ant crawls right across Aron's lips and onto his cheek. No muscles twitch. He could be dead.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

There are three, four ants on his face now. A shaft of sunlight hits Aron's dangling foot. No movement.

The shaft of sunlight moves up his body, finally hits his face. After an age, an eye opens slightly. Something makes the eye look up towards the light.

Standing right in the glare of the sunlight stands a small boy. He can't be more than three years old. Standing there in a red polo shirt. Right in the canyon. The boy smiles at him.

Aron gets up and walks towards the boy, the sunlight hitting his face like a train. We can't see his damaged arm, but it is clear that he is free. He keeps moving towards the boy. And the boy starts towards him, running until Aron crouches and lifts him, laughing into the sun. They are both so, so happy.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

The shaft of sunlight leaves the canyon. Aron is left slumped by the rock, staring at the disappearing light. There is a calm smile on his face.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron looks at his good hand. It's swollen like an inflated prosthetic on top of his real hand. Suddenly, he has energy. He opens his rucksack with uncharacteristic carelessness, grabs the knife. Rips off his shoes and pulls the sock over his hand to cushion his palm. Picks up the black, rounded, hammer rock again. Ignoring the pain, he starts hammering at the rock surface. Smash. Where has this huge energy come from.

ARON

I hate this rock.

The rage blooms.

ARON (CONT'D)

I hate this rock. I hate this
fucking rock.

A small mushroom cloud of pulverised grit and dust erupts each time.

ARON (CONT'D)

I hate this place. I hate this
rock. I hate this fucking rock!

With each individual word he gives a blow. The sock disintegrates under the battering. But he is oblivious. He stops hammering. His fingers are paralysed, fused rigid around the rock. He pulls them off with his teeth and the stone drops to the canyon floor.

He pokes the thumb with the stubbed point of the blade. On the second prod, the blade punctures the epidermis and there is a clear hiss as gases escape. The look on Aron's face tells us about the stench.

ARON (CONT'D)

Get rid of it, Aron. It's dead.
It's gone. Garbage.

ARON (CONT'D)

Aron, you are not dying here. You are not dying here.

He drops to his haunches, but the webbing stops him at his waist. He takes it off and drops down again in a squat.

ARON (CONT'D)

Yes. Yes.

He pushes and pushes with his left hand under the boulder, creating maximum downward force on his right arm. Hard, harder. His teeth are clamped shut. No sound.

POW.

Like a gunshot in the canyon, the bone breaks. The sound echoes. He rises and looks at the bone pushing up violently against the skin. He touches the jagged edge. No sound.

Now, he humps his body up and over the chockstone, smearing with his feet against the wall. He pushes his body further and further round the dark side of the chockstone with a silent, furious intensity.

BANG.

A second gun shot echoes around the canyon. He's sweating heavily and yet has a euphoria in his eyes. He checks the underneath of his arm. Yep, another broken bone.

He can rotate his forearm as if it's a shaft inside a housing.

Still, he makes no sound. There is a high-pitched ringing in his ears. Nothing else.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Picks up the knife. Pauses, with the blade above his wrist. Here we go. He pushes the knife hard to the hilt in between two veins in his wrist.

Sweat pouring out of him. His tongue flicks out automatically to catch the occasional drop.

Sawing downwards, he makes as large a hole as he can without tearing any of the noodle-like veins. He puts the knife in his teeth and pokes his left forefinger and thumb inside his right arm.

Drops of sweat falling on the knife blade.

He pulls muscle up, nearer the surface, allowing his knife to slice and pare away at a fragment of muscle bit by bit. It takes a dozen actions, each time the knife goes back to his teeth so his free hand can arrange the meat.

Sort. Pinch. Rotate. Slice.

Blood flows, though surprisingly little. He stops briefly to twist up the tourniquet.

Silence.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

He can't cut the tendon, no matter how hard he slices. But nothing will stop his addiction to surgery now. He fold in and swaps the blades for the pliers. He uses them to bite into an edge of the yellowy tendon. Then squeezing and twisting, he tears away a fragment.

Grip. Squeeze. Twist. Tear.

Finally, he tears the last fibre of tendon. Stares at his handiwork. With a sniff of satisfaction, returns to his knife blade.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Finally, all that remains inside is a pale white strand. Like a swollen length of angel-hair pasta. The nerve.

He touches it gently with the blade of his knife.

ARON

Aaaagggggghhhhhh!

After so long in silence, the scream is shocking, long and utterly terrifying. He's stunned. Stock-still with fear.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

He stares at the nerve. The nerve looks back. It's like a Mexican stand-off. It could go on all day.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Out of the corner of his eye, the boy is there. Smiling patiently. Aron whips his head around. The boy is gone. But he definitely saw him.

ARON

Just this.

He pulls the knife in and pulls it towards him: an inch, two inches. It lengthens like pulling a guitar string. Unimaginable pain builds in his body until finally the nerve snaps. And Aron snaps.

ARON (CONT'D)

Aaaagghh.

Retching, slumps in a heap, head lolling forward, his head buzzing and ringing with trauma.

C/U: DIGITAL NUMERALS.

The numbers flick fast. There's ten minutes gone in a flash. The numbers slow...and stop.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

He's back upright, cutting, sawing, stretching the skin like he's a butcher, using the canyon wall as his chopping block. Huge energy suddenly. Sweat running in his eyes, blurred vision, rasping, parched breathing.

And then he's staggering backwards. Free. His hand, just stuck there, a stump in the crack. He stares at it. He's out here. And his hand is in there. Weird.

His head is swarming with colours, his legs faltering like a new foal. He stumbles up to the canyon wall. Stares close at his own obituary.

ARON

No. Not yet.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron is busy. Wrapping his arm in the plastic grocery sack and then wrapping that with the yellow webbing he wore around his neck to keep himself warm at night. He stuffs his arm into the empty Camelbak pack and throws the straps around his neck to make a sling.

Packs his bag, water reservoir, video, pocket knife. Grabs his climbing rope and heads off down the canyon.

Turns. Goes back. Looks down at his feet. Sees a tiny hole that goes god-knows-where.

Takes the watch out of his pocket.

C/U: WATCH.

The second hand sweeps past.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

He bends and drops the watch down the hole. Looks up, around, searching for somebody.

ARON

Thank you.

INT. CANYON. DAY.

The motion and energy of the action movie returns.

It's like Ray Liotta's final day in Goodfellas; relentless, frustrating, pressure of life again now he's free from his tomb. Deeper and deeper he goes, twisting and turning through the scoops of sandstone, his rope trailing behind him a hundred feet. We follow its progress snaking after him.

Specks of blood on the canyon walls.

The canyon becomes a chute, increasingly steep, deep and dark. But at the end, there is a glow of light, pink, red, soft, getting brighter by the step. He pushes forward, the rope whipping around the corners. Faster and faster until....

EXT. ROCK SHELF. DAY.

...we burst into dazzling midday sun on a rock shelf perched dizzyingly high above the canyon floor. It's a two hundred foot sheer drop to the bottom. Vast cliffs face him opposite.

He drinks in the sun, the space. Looks over the edge. Sees...

Water. A stagnant pool of green water.

Turns back, suddenly desperate, rabid. Is searching the rock for something. Doesn't take long to find two clean, shiny, metal bolts drilled into the rock. Gets down on his knees and kisses them as he were the Pope on new soil.

Feverishly Aron unravels the knots in the rope. Every single knot must be untied with his good hand and his teeth. Stops, suddenly overwhelmed with thirst and exhaustion. Reaches into his pack and pulls out the Camelbak. Empties urine all over his head. He is licking and retching all at the same time. Stops. Instantly.

He can hear a noise. We can hear a noise. A shuffling, zipping sound. The rope is uncoiling over the edge, running faster and faster. There's only a few feet left.

He lunges across the ledge and catches it just in time. Lies there whimpering.

EXT. CANYON. DAY.

Aron inches over the edge. Difficult rappelling with one arm, but once at ninety degrees to the cliff face, equilibrium returns and he starts lowering, his feet walking their way carefully down the rock.

But we're not interested in his rappelling prowess. His eyes never leave the pool of dirty water, and that is our focus too.

EXT. POOL. DAY.

Still tied to the rope, he staggers to the pool and buries his head in it. Dead leaves, insects, just two inches of undrinkable water. But he drinks it, bathes his head in it. Drinks again. The sounds coming out of his mouth are half cave-man, half ecstasy.

Kneeling in the water, he pulls out the map. Gets up and staggers off.

EXT. CANYON. DAY.

He walks, shedding any weight that might slow him down. Carabiners, his harness, the rope, all dropped behind him without a thought.

INT. HORSESHOE CANYON. DAY.

Finally, he comes to the Great Gallery. A 330 foot long wall with dozens of broad-shouldered figures painted and chipped into the rock by strangers 3000 years ago.

The heat and his condition makes everything shimmer. He wanders on.

EXT. HORSESHOE CANYON. DAY.

Seventy yards on, there are three more alien figures- tiny heads and elongated bodies. Cave paintings come alive?

He tries to shout, but nothing comes out. Another attempt, lost in the vastness of the canyon. The figures are disappearing in the shimmer.

ARON

Help!

The figures stop. Turn.

ARON (CONT'D)

Help!

A terrible pause.

ARON (CONT'D)

Help me! I need help!

The figures begin to run towards him. We watch his face in close up as they come.

Tears come, now as the shimmering figures shapes themselves into the first real people he has seen for five days.

ARON (CONT'D)

My name is Aron Ralston. I was trapped by a boulder on Saturday and I've been without food or water for five days. I cut my arm off this morning. I need medical attention. My name is Aron Ralston...

They look at this refugee from a horror movie. He is staring at the water bottles hanging from their waist belts. This gives them a way into his world. The moment is broken as they hurry to offer him water. He pours it down his throat, bypassing the swallow mechanism entirely.

INT. TV STUDIO. DAY. ERIK MEJER TESTIMONY.

Erik's English is almost perfect, although accented and entirely without humour. His family sit around him on comfy chairs in a tv studio. There are clearly rather pleased to be there.

ERIK

We are the Mejers from Holland. At the start of the trailhead, we talked to a ranger who told about a car that was parked in the area already for several days and the owner might be missing in the canyon.

EXT. HORSESHOE CANYON. DAY.

Back now live as Aron wolfs down the cookies and organises the well-meaning but freaked Mejers. Aron is brutally practical.

ARON

Phone. Do you have a phone?

ERIK

Yes, but no signal.

INT. TV STUDIO. DAY. ERIK MEJER TESTIMONY.

ERIK

We joked that we would keep our eyes open.

(MORE)

ERIK (CONT'D)

After a hike of five point three kilometers to the Great Gallery, we returned after taking photographs and suddenly heard a noise behind us. It was obviously the lost boy.

EXT. HORSESHOE CANYON. DAY.

ERIK

You should stop and rest.

ARON

No, we need to keep moving. We need a helicopter. Who can run fastest. You. Go fast. Take him.

Monique runs ahead with Andy, her son. Nobody for six days and then people start turning up like London buses. Another couple.

ARON (CONT'D)

Cell. Do you have a cell?

WAYNE.

No. I'm Wayne. I have some medical training.

ARON

Is it okay to drink so much water?

WAYNE.

Sure, so long as you don't vomit.

Aron drinks more and more. He overhears....

WAYNE. (CONT'D)

Make sure he doesn't pass out.

ARON

I gotta stop and empty my shoes. You'll have to tie my laces.

As he sits, his head slumps forward. He's absolutely motionless. Erik tries to talk to him, but there's a pop song in his head and he can barely hear him.

ERIK

Aron, are you okay? Stay with us, Aron.

WAYNE.

Jesus, he's asleep. Aron! Wake up!

Aron pulls his head up and sees in front of him a vision coming from the sky. Whirling and screaming, dust blasting everywhere. A helicopter.

EXT. HELICOPTER. DAY.

Very subjective, woozy camera moves as a strange, slightly formal man pops out of the helicopter. He almost looks like he's part of the Matrix. All of this seen from Aron's befuddled perspective.

PILOT
Are you Aron?

ARON
Aron Ralston. Can I get a lift?

The man smiles at him in a strange way.

PILOT
I reckon so.

EXT. HELICOPTER. DAY.

Aron looks at the beautiful white leather seats before he gets in the chopper. Surreal. He touches them with his hands.

PILOT
Need a hand?

ARON
Hand?

The camera tilts down, looks at his stump. Back up to the Pilot's face. It wasn't some kind of joke, after all. Looks at the pristine white leather seats.

ARON (CONT'D)
Leather. I'm gonna make a terrible mess of your seat.

PILOT
Just get in buddy.

The helicopter sucks upwards into the sky leaving Wayne, Monique, Andy and Erik far below.

Title:

1000 HOURS LATER

INT. UNDERWATER. DAY.

Underwater. A figure dives in, pulling strong breast strokes down and towards us. It's Aron, fully recovered after surgery. Eyes open, he pulls and pulls down through crystal clear, oxygenated water.

INTERCUT WITH:

EXT/INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

As the helicopter and gurney staff transfer him into the medic room he's surrounded by vertical giants as he lies horizontal for the first time in 6 days.

ARON

Thank you for bringing me back.

The most senior of the burly men says,

BURLY MAN

That's all your miracle days used up kid. You need to rest. You can stand everyone a beer later.

Aron is greeted by medics. Needles. Care. Machines. Tubes. By his side, is his Mother. There is sudden focus in Aron.

ARON

Mom. I'm sorry.

ARON'S MOM

My boy. My only boy.

The gurney is wheeling him away from her.

ARON

Wait. Wait.

The gurney stops.

ARON (CONT'D)

Mom, look after this for me?

He opens his fist and there is the small folded up knife. His Mother takes it. He manages a smile.

ARON (CONT'D)

Christmas...

INT. UNDERWATER. DAY.

Aron, swimming deep. He pulls again releasing a huge chunk of air into a metallic bubble.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM. DAY.

A very soft voice reading.

VOICE (MOM)

...his love, the peace that passeth all understanding...

The picture gradually comes into focus. We are looking up at Aron's Mother from Aron's perspective.

ARON

Mom.

MOM

I'm here. I'm here.

She strokes his head so gently.

ARON

Hey.

MOM

How are you feeling?

ARON

Okay.

MOM

You've been asleep for 2 days.

She looks weary, worn out with worry and love for her boy.

ARON

I'm-

MOM

- I know. You're my boy. I know.
You're my boy, my boy, my boy...

From Aron's POV, we see his Mother stroke his head.

INT. UNDERWATER. DAY.

Aron deep underwater. Pull and kick. Wanting oxygen now.

INT. WEDDING. DAY.

A wedding. Sonja, Aron's sister and Tim her groom. We are at the reception. Hugging, laughing, drinking, toasting. Life in all its ordinariness and wonder.

ARON'S DAD

This is a day every Father prays
for. His beautiful daughter married
to a fine boy- yes, you're still a
boy, Tim-

Laughter from the crowd.

ARON'S DAD (CONT'D)

- but today is particularly special
for Donna and myself. A day we
thought for a while might never
happen.

(MORE)

ARON'S DAD (CONT'D)

Not only do we welcome a new son into our family, but we have *our* son back. Which makes us the luckiest- and happiest- parents in the United States of America.

There is applause from the crowd. Aron raises his Margarita glass in acknowledgement.

ARON'S DAD (CONT'D)

And now he's back, he can darn well fulfill his promise to his sister.

Suddenly, Aron snaps to. What? Then, Sonja is dragging, pulling him out of his chair, leading him laughing and protesting as he realises what is going on. He is being led to a piano. This is a set-up. Everyone at the tables is laughing, cheering them on.

ARON

No. Sonja, don't do this. I can't.

SONJA

You promised, Aron.

ARON

Yeah, but-

SONJA

- the only butt is sitting on that seat.

And she plonks him on the piano stool. Sits down next to him. Aron looks genuinely terrified. Oblivious to what Sonja sees in his eyes, the crowd cheer the pair on.

SONJA (CONT'D)

Oh my God. You're *scared*?

ARON

Yes.

This is suddenly not a joke and she realises it.

SONJA

You can do it, Aron.

He looks at her. She looks around at the expectant crowd who are beginning to hush.

SONJA (CONT'D)

You're gonna *have* to do it.

They place their fingers on the keyboard. Three human fingers and one titanium one.

They start. The note C played three times. C, C, C. Tentative. The crowd are silent, suddenly aware that this joke might not be funny at all.

They're really concentrating. C, B, A, B, C, D. The music is becoming clear: it's the piano tune from the film *Big*. That simple, melody full of childlike charm.

E, E, E. The crowd are willing them on and they are beginning to flow.

E, D, C, D, E, F. They almost stumble but recover. The crowd are utterly silent, on tenterhooks. On to the high notes.

G, C....

And onto the finish: A, J, F, E, D, C...with a flourish as Aron jumps the octaves with his titanium finger. And Sonja and Aron's faces split into the widest of grins. The crowd erupt in cheers and applause as Aron and Sonja hug each other as if they'll never let go.

Aron's Mom and Dad take each other hands. They are both in tears.

SONJA (CONT'D)
Promise kept.

And she kisses his cheek.

EXT. POOL. DAY.

We can see him beneath, swimming along the floor of the pool, like a diver building lung capacity.

INT. ARON'S TRUCK. NIGHT.

Aron driving.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. NIGHT.

Aron parks up. Gets out of the truck. We might recognise the street.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET. NIGHT.

We definitely recognise it now. It's the same street he walked up in his head- to Rana's house.

EXT. RANA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Knocks on the door. Stands back. Everything's the same as before, but different. Different colours, different sizes. The memory street and house have become a real street and house.

The door opens.

RANA
Aron! My God.

Runs at him and folds him a huge hug. Keeps on hugging until there's barely any breath left in him. And he hugs back. Finally, she disengages and wipes the tears from her eyes.

RANA (CONT'D)
You total fucker, Aron Ralston.

They laugh. She takes his hand and takes him inside.

INT. RANA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Rana is mixing a drink in the kitchen. He watches her. She moves beautifully.

RANA
My famous Margarita. Coming right up.

Comes through with the drinks.

ARON
I'm trying to change. I am changing. It's hard, you know?

RANA
You wouldn't bother if it wasn't.

ARON
That's exactly the kind of thing I'm trying to change...

RANA
Go figure, Ralston.

Serious now.

ARON
It's the hardest thing I've ever done. But I have to.

RANA
Yeah?

She gives him a very direct look.

RANA (CONT'D)
What about the climbing?

Aron reaches in his bag and pulls out his scary looking prosthetic arm / axe. He clicks the points together. She doesn't laugh, maybe a smile.

ARON
I'm gonna finish the fourteeners
this winter or next.

RANA
Solo?

ARON
Yeah.

RANA
So much for change.

Aron just stares. She turns away. Occupies herself with her drink.

ARON
I killed us. I know that. I'm so
sorry. For what I did. I couldn't
accept it. Couldn't let anyone in.

RANA
Didn't have to be anyone, Aron.
Just me.

ARON
I know.

Silence.

ARON (CONT'D)
Rana, when I was in the canyon,
before I did it, when I thought I
was dead, I was hallucinating and I
saw this child, a little blond boy -

RANA
Not Jesus please...

ARON
He looked like my cousin Charlie,
actually, but way too young...not
him. Somebody else.

Aron stands up injects some conviction, forces her to concentrate on him.

ARON (CONT'D)
I knew he was mine- my child- and
that this was what lay in front of
me. My future.
(MORE)

ARON (CONT'D)
 Rana, this little boy, he- he saved
 me. Do you see? I thought maybe...

He looks at her. She doesn't say anything. Her silence tells
 him everything.

ARON (CONT'D)
 But it's not going to be you, is
 it?

She takes his hands in hers, smiles sadly.

RANA
 No, Aron, it's not.

ARON
 But-

RANA
 - everyone who cares for you, a
 little bit of them dies each time
 you go back out there.

ARON
 (nods)
 Okay. Understood.

Though it is breaking his heart. Rana leans over and tenderly
 kisses his cheek.

RANA
 I'm sorry.

INT. UNDERWATER. DAY.

His face pushing for the surface. He surges up and out of the
 water, takes a huge breath of air. We see he is right next to
 the edge of the pool.

EXT. POOL. DAY.

There in front of him on the grass by the pool is the same
 sofa as in the canyon. On it and around it, his friends and
 family, including Rana. There's so many of them they fill the
 screen, all looking at him.

He looks right back at them and smiles.

We see what has conjured the smile. The sofa has lost its
 crowds. There are only three people on it now. The *real* Aron
 Ralston, his wife Jessica and their tiny baby.

The real Aron takes the baby in his arms.

CAPTION.

"Aron met Jessica a year after the accident. They married on August 22nd, 2009. Max Ralston was born in March, 2010."

The camera pulls back and back. Above the sofa are towering, snowy peaks. Above the mountains are just the first, faint stirrings of the stars.

The end.