

WILDCAT

By

WH Clark

WILDCAT

FADE IN:

MONTAGE - OPENING CREDITS - SUNSET

Chaco Canyon ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG. Remote mountains. Jagged reds in a New Mexico mountain valley. DRILLING RIG nearby.

Workers excavate PETROGLYPHS: A cat-like spirit creature. A tall skeleton-esque figure. Angled rays of the late afternoon sun animate the glyphs into shadowy lifelike motion.

HAWK (75, male, gray hair, ponytail) smokes a joint with another NATIVE AMERICAN ELDER (50, female, dark hair). Harsh expressions. Angry. Glaring at the drilling rig.

Hawk and the Pecos Elder move over to a rusty old pickup. She sorts through a variety of signs in the truck bed.

She hands Hawk a sign. He hesitates. She scowls. He grabs the sign and stalks away toward a group of activists picketing the dig.

EXT. NEW MEXICO - SANTA FE - STATE CAPITOL COMPLEX - NIGHT

A TORCHLIT protest. Police in riot gear.

Angry activists in high gear. Signs waving: "STOP FRACKING." "NO DRILLING IN CHACO." "CLOSE CHACO NOW." Torches. Many torches. BURNING.

KASE (42, male, rugged, short hair) muscles through the crowd. Wearing a white shirt with a Navajo string tie, he has a colorful papoose on his back.

MAXIMO the cat's head pops out of the papoose, ears alert. He ducks back into the papoose as Hawk, carrying a "THERE WILL BE BLOOD" sign approaches. Kase stares at the sign, confused.

HAWK

The Pecos chief, she gave it to me.
I do not wish to offend her.
(quietly, afraid)
Nor her deity, the Spirit of Death.
She calls him The Skeleton Man.

Hawk stops a lady PROTESTER carrying a "WATER IS THE NEW OIL" sign. Hawk points at the sign. Shakes his angry fist at it.

HAWK (CONT'D)

When I see whole oceans of water
wasted on fracking, I reach for my
tomahawk. Not words on cardboard.

PROTESTER

Chinese farmers are draining our
aquifer down to zero. O. M. God.
Whole rivers - to grow alfalfa?
Alfalfa! In the high desert.

HAWK

The Great Spirit is on life
support. The land has become a
feeble stick-figure skeleton.

PROTESTER

Skeleton? O. My. G. Swinging a
scythe harvesting alfalfa. Yes!

Hawk grabs his heart, wheezing, struggling... Kase hustles
Hawk toward a beat-up old pickup truck.

HAWK

Hola. I am no longer a rodeo bull.
I will not jump the fence.

They sit on the tailgate... as the Legislators filter out.
The Crowd goes silent. Reporters rush forward. Cameras flash.

HAWK (CONT'D)

They approved the drilling ban.

Kase rips off his tie. Throws it to the ground. Stomps on it.

KASE

Boom. We're ruined. You, me. Half
the Navajo Nation. Flat. Broke.

Hawk gets Kase's tie and tucks it away, fighting a sudden
melancholy. Downturned face. Eyes narrowed. Hawk mutters:

HAWK

I am responsible for my tribe. What
is your buffalo to hunt?

They climb into the pickup. Kase CRANKS the ENGINE. It won't
start. Kase slams the steering wheel with his fists.

KASE

Everybody associates drilling with
fracking. That's wrong. Ignorant!

Hawk opens the door. Steps to open hood. Props it up.

KASE (CONT'D)

Geothermal drilling taps a
renewable resource bigger than
solar and wind combined.

HAWK

Don't be a rodeo clown. Geothermal
is not made in China like solar
panels and wind turbines. China
owns this day. You disbelieve me?

Kase gets out. Rolls up his sleeves. Ducks under the hood.
Hawk steps over to sit in the driver's seat.

HAWK (CONT'D)

Does a duck get wet when it rains?

Kase motions to Hawk with an angry fist. Hawk turns the
engine over. It CRANKS then sputters out again.

HAWK (CONT'D)

First the Supreme Court voids our
water rights to the Colorado River.

KASE

Then keeps the spigot wide open for
the farmland bought by communists?
To harvest their effing - alfalfa?

Kase SLAMS the hood shut, glaring at the crowd. Flames
reflect off Kase's distraught face, splintering reds
projected from the protesters' torches.

KASE (CONT'D)

Now the legislature takes away our
oil kickbacks? This. Is... War!

Kase grabs Hawk's sign from the pickup bed - runs to join the
protesters. Hawk talks to Kase's disappearing figure.

HAWK

If you ever tame that fire in your
belly... Ahohai!

Hawk slumps in the driver's seat. He gives a deep, frustrated
sigh. Deflecting flames highlight the grief in his face.

The protesters light a 10-foot-tall wooden oil rig. FLAMES
SOAR. The rioters dance around it. Wild. Frenetic.

EXT. SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS - DRILLING OPERATION - NIGHT

A drilling rig surrounded by a large compound of trailers and
equipment operates in a remote mountain setting.

Starry night sky. Floodlights. Spotlights. Task lights.

Workers busy on the rig floor, DRILLING AHEAD. Powerful
diesel ENGINES. MOTORS.

The rig SHAKES violently. A TOWERING PLUME of BURNING GAS EJECTS from the top of the derrick. The BALL OF FIRE illuminates the mountain basin.

EXT. DRILLING FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

DRILL PIPE rotates in the ROTARY TABLE, SPEWING steam, gas, and drilling fluid on roughnecks trying to control the mayhem. They're losing the battle, fighting heavy rain now.

ODAN (45, male, large, heavy German accent, long blond hair) hurries out of the RIG SHACK - yelling at the crew.

ODAN

Whoa! Slow the rotary down. We are not drilling to China.

Roughnecks SLAM a MANUAL EMERGENCY BRAKE. The drilling string (locked in giant rotating grips), SCREECHES to a stop.

Pulling on a rain slicker, MONK (28, female, built) bolts up metal stairs and runs to Odan. She's hands-on-hips angry.

MONK

Can't handle a fast woman?

ODAN

We underbalance the geology. Hint.

Monk hands Odan a large tablet. Frowning, he flips through the screens quickly. Odan grits his teeth. Grinds them.

MONK

Never shoulda taught you subtext.

ODAN

I am not feeling guilty. I am just worried for my rig.

MONK

(sotto voice)

I'm jealous of a freaking oil rig.

The RIG SHAKES. Workers grabs the nearest steel for support. Fluid GUSHES from drill pipe joints. SPRAYS the rig floor. Dark, viscous DRILLING FLUIDS. Odan yells at his crew.

ODAN

Raise the mud weight two tenths.
That will control the pressure.
Hurry before -

A ROAR moves up the DRILL STRING. Monk and Odan follow its movement up, until - FLAMES SHOOT out the top of the derrick.

MONK

This is payback for booting me out
of your rack. At zero dark twenty!
(crude German accent)
Geology women are too fracking deep
for me. I just want good food. A
warm body. Not a telenovela drama.

BURNING OIL falls from above. The RIG FLOOR is ablaze. Rig
hands flee down metal stairs to the ground level. Odan and
Monk run into the rig shack just off the rig floor.

MONK (CONT'D)

We have to shut 'er in.

ODAN

No can do. The drill pipe cutoff
rams are inoperable right now. We
must ride this caterwaul out.

MONK

I'll jack off the manual switch.
(angry, belligerent)
For all I mean to you.

Monk grabs a large steel plate, holding it over her head.

ODAN

Stop. There are rules. Procedures.

Odan tries to stop Monk, but she bolts across the rig floor
to a control panel. BREAKS a glass cover. HITS A KILL SWITCH.

A GLOB of burning oil hits Monk. Pins her to the deck. She
screams. Odan - can't go through the RAINING FIRE.

Odan rushes to Monk's side. She's unconscious. Odan pulls his
jacket off to douse flames on her arms and side. BERT (45,
robust, Australian, talks slowly) and several workers arrive.

BERT

Not my fault. I tested the safety
shutoff rams just yesterday.

ODAN

I know this. I tested them also.

Bert starts to say something then ducks his head and slinks
away, hands deep in his pockets. The other roughnecks help
Odan carry Monk into the drill shack. Out of the weather.

Daybreak silhouettes the mountains all around. Thick plumes
of black smoke waft upward. Into the overcast and rain. The
drilling rig is a stick frame against a dark background.

INT. ALBUQUERQUE - UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO - CLASSROOM - DAY

Kase (threadbare pants and sports jacket) stands before the chalkboard showing a cross section of geology with a "DRILLING RIG" (a steel tower) on the surface.

KASE
You're drilling ahead at twenty
thousand feet. Four miles deep!

Kase erases a vertical section of the geology below the rig and draws "DRILL PIPE" leading down inside the drilling rig, down the "OPEN HOLE" - draws a "DRILL BIT" at the very end.

KASE (CONT'D)
The driller yells at me.
(strong Texas accent)
Y'all got major gas in the mud.
What the tarnations do I do now?

Nobody answers. Pressing hard, Kase colors a deep stratum with red chalk. The drilling bit is just above the red layer.

KASE (CONT'D)
This RED layer. The DANGER zone.

Nobody answers. Kase points at CHENOA (18, Navajo, female).

CHENOA
The deeper you go underground, the
higher the pressure.

Suddenly a raucous gang of students barges into the classroom, carrying signs: "Stop Fracking the Earth," "Fu*k Big Oil," and "Navajo Nation Traitor." Kase reels around to confront them, blocking their path.

KASE
Stop. Right. There... I do have
office hours.

Chenoa hustles to join the protesters. She grabs a newspaper, scans it - holds it toward Kase, her voice shaking with rage.

CHENOA
You're the 'Jo on the news.

Kase stalks over. Grabs the newspaper. Scans it. Rips it up!

KASE
The Navajo family who lost their
fracking royalties. Judas!
Damn reporters. They didn't write a
word I said. Well... Write! This!

Ripping up the newspaper, Kase bulldozes into the activists, backing them toward the exit. He keeps ripping. Ripping.

KASE (CONT'D)

Yeah. I'm a driller. Royalties pay my fellowship. Sure they do. So I can learn to be a better driller.

(bitter sarcasm)

Drilling is. So. Evil. And look a here - you people are in my class.

Angry young faces stare at their desks. Chenoa yells:

CHENOA

Hydrocarbons are killing the planet. Our sacred Mother Earth.

Kase steps into Chenoa's face, fists clenched at his sides.

KASE

Hydrocarbons are shallow. Three miles. Geothermal? SIX. Miles.

(long beat)

How do we get down to SIX MILES without developing the technology - Doh! By DRILLING. Baby. Drilling.

Suddenly the CAMPUS POLICE show up. They muscle into the protesters and corral them toward the door - close the door as they leave. Kase turns toward his class. He's perplexed.

Tears well down Chenoa's cheeks as she scolds Kase.

CHENOA

You never should have taken the Oil Mafia's dirty money. The guilt has destroyed your Navajo soul.

Kase hustles to the chalkboard. Angry motions. Draws fluid gushing out of the well. A rash of red chalk fluids. He faces this class, fist fists, upset.

KASE

I ignored the gas bubbles. The well is out of control. She's gushing red hot, BURNING. What can I do?

Kase turns, staring at the class. Everybody ducks their head down, avoiding direct eye contact with him.

CHENOA

(sotto voice)

What you always do. Throw ice on my passion and - walk the frack away.

One hand remaining clenched at his side, Kase draws with stark, bold strokes. Pressing very hard: A giant red "X" at the top of the drill string on the surface.

KASE

When all else fails, hit the BLOW
OUT PREVENTERS. Close off the well.
Contain the PRESSURE.

Chenoa - and others - start to protest. The CAMPUS BELL CHIMES. Urgently, Kase shoulders his backpack and heads out.

One of the students hurrying out is LOS ALAMOS (45, linebacker physique, wearing a tie dye shirt, faded jeans, dark shades), smiling as he dons a Bogart hat. Adjusts it to just the right angle.

His SMARTWATCH RINGS (Spartan war tone). He quickly disables the alarm, hunkers down, and hurries out.

EXT. NEW MEXICO MOUNTAINS - SULLIVAN DRILLING RIG - DAWN

Light silhouettes the drilling rig. A GAS flare burns above the derrick. Workers surround the drilling rig floor:

Odan, Bert, and REBUL (35, Southern accent, thinning hair) watch the TV news... Rig blowout. Fire. Casualties.

REBUL

Monk told us to slack off. You
wouldn't listen. And now look it.

ODAN

You. Go and drink some bleach.

Rebul backs away from Odan's rage, cowed. Still scowling, Odan climbs on board. The chopper powers up.

The chopper lifts off and banks away - just as a sleek black SUV pulls into the compound. Bert stays put as Rebul runs to open the door of the sedan, standing back - saluting.

LOS ALAMOS

I ORDERED you to nix the SUPER.
Rowdy. As in dead. Zombie dead!

Los Alamos (Jersey accent, grizzled, yellow smoker's fingers) turns his back to Rebul, studying the rig, stuffing a fresh stick of gum in his mouth - chewing vigorously.

LOS ALAMOS (CONT'D)

She's still breathing... Warm!
You best hope she goes into a coma.
Six feet deep! Colonel.

Los Alamos strides out to survey the rig. Rebul scurries beside him. Across the compound, Bert watches them from his vantage point, standing in a wide, shallow puddle.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO - THE DUCK POND - DAY

Kase speed-walks past a greenspace by a pond. He sees Hawk sitting on the grass at water's edge, reading The Daily Lobo.

Kase looms over Hawk, who shows him the front page, splashed with a photo of Kase waving the "THERE WILL BE BLOOD" sign.

HAWK

It is written any P.R. is good P.R.
However, I see no silver lining -

Kase YANKS the paper from him. Rips it to shreds.

They don't see a Los Alamos clone (same clothes, Black Bogart hat, dark shades) sitting on a park bench nearby, watching them over the top of his newspaper, smiling.

Hawk waits patiently, tossing bread crumbs to DUCKS in the pond. QUACK. QUACK. Kase remains standing, arms akimbo.

Hawk hands Kase a business card. Kase takes it, reading:

HAWK (CONT'D)

It is from the Pecos chief. She -

KASE

Is suddenly your B.B.F.?

HAWK

Hola. It is a geothermal project.

KASE

I don't give a junkyard Sally what kind of well it is. I am not quitting grad school.

HAWK

Oye. I enjoy junkyards. They are a renewable. They give me hope.

Chuckling, Kase sits beside Hawk. They feed the ducks.

KASE

I'll get a night job. Do shift work. Anything to pay the bills.

HAWK

Don't you need to test your P.H.D. thesis with the A.I. inside?

They watch the ducks paddle around. Safe. Healthy.

KASE

Sorry... Fracking the land really messes with your head, doesn't it?

HAWK

Tribal leaders confront these issues all the time. Get with it!

Fighting back strong emotions, Kase hurries away. Hawk finds a spot in the sun and lies down, closing his eyes.

FLASHBACK - HAWK REMINISCING

A younger Hawk presides over a tribal meeting of elders and oil executives. The elders argue. The oil barons argue. They reach a concord. Everybody looks at Hawk for approval. Hawk looks away. Bites is lower lip. Tears on his cheeks.

EXT. MOUNTAIN VALLEY - WELL LOGGING OPERATION - DAY

Sun reflecting off a "SCHLUMBERGER" van pulling up to the rig. Odan and Rebul watch the activity from the rig floor.

REBUL

Just because that Gestapo landed this job for means - diddly squat.

ODAN

Some dogs bark. Bite! Others slobber on the outstretched hand.

A HEAVY CABLE extends from the top of the "SCHLUMBERGER" van, looping around the top of the rig, then extending down into the open well. Los Alamos, chewing hard, stands nearby.

SIMULATION - INSIDE THE WELL - CONTINUOUS

A long steel pipe with 2-inch holes in the sides lowers down the well at the end of a cable.

REBUL (V.O.)

Or rip your jugular out.

The "WELL LOGGING TOOL" is initially inside "CASING" (steel pipe sealing off the well), then at five thousand feet, it moves down into the "OPEN WELL."

The "TOOL" hits bottom, then moves slowly upward, emitting a constant flux of "LASER" and "ELECTROMAGNETIC" pulses.

ODAN (V.O.)

Everybody hits bottom. It's what -

REBUL (V.O.)
 Back home in Ohio town, we still
 recite the pledge of allegiance in
 school. Every day, in home room.

HOLLOW BULLETS explode out of the PIPE at random intervals:
 PLUG into the side of the well, CAPTURING a sample of rock.

REBUL (V.O.)
 Defending the flag is in our genes.
 Fighting terrorism - I was, well...
 let's say, over-zionous about it.

Each plug is PULLED out of the sidewall by a wire cable
 tethered to the WELL LOGGING TOOL, which pulls them with the
 entire pipe-shaped device, up the wellbore.

ODAN (V.O.)
 I hope he starts smoking again. I
 will gift him a carton of tobacco
 without filters.

As each PLUG is yanked out, GAS JETS into the wellbore from
 the geology. Thick bubbles of GAS percolate up the well.

REBUL (V.O.)
 Just let sleeping monsters lie.

As more and more ROCK SAMPLES are taken, more and more GAS
 BUBBLES RUSH INTO the well.

INT. SCHLUMBERGER TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

A TECH (40, Texas accent, male, chubby) studies a bank of
 monitors, watching the activity on the above real-time
 simulation. Behind him, a HELPER (18, female, Black, very
 fit) operates a mechanized gear that reels in the cable.

TECH
 We're going into four miles deep!
 Wow. Makes my pimples goose.

HELPER
 Then this will give you acne...
 (beat)
 The cable tension has been trending
 upward for an hour now. Maybe -

The MECHANICAL GEAR SPINS UP. The CABLE REELS IN. SIZZLING
 with STEAM, it's moving so urgently. The tech checks gauges.

TECH
 Gas levels are off the chart. It's
 floating our drilling tool upward!

HELPER

Before, if I just stopped reeling
the cable in... the weight of the
cable slows the ascent.

The truck SHAKES and RATTLES. The GEAR SPINS - back down.

HELPER (CONT'D)

I'm not sure how much longer
that'll work, boss. This here well
is itching to cut loose.

TECH

I'll go start rigging down. I want
out of here as soon as we can.
(hesitating)

HELPER

Boom! Explosion. Blowout?

The tech leaves his console and bolts out a side door.

EXT. DRILLING RIG - SCHLUMBERGER TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The tech runs up to the rig floor, where Los Alamos calmly
observes VOLUMES OF GAS BUBBLING out of the open well.

TECH

Your drilling fluid is barely
holding back the formation gas.

LOS ALAMOS

Never logged out a rank wildcat?

TECH

Your work order said it was a milk
run. Not a four-finger shot of
Irish whisky.

The tech hurries around. Unfastening hold downs tying the
well logging truck to the ground. Pulling wheel blocks out.
Los Alamos pulls out a stick of gum, chews it - grinds it.

TECH (CONT'D)

Seriously. You need to seal off
that pressure behind a wall of
tempered steel. A.S.A.P.

Los Alamos checks notes on a pad, muttering to himself:

LOS ALAMOS

Drilling open hole for another
month... I Love putting people in a
pressure cooker... Flame on!

TECH
Go ahead, G man.
(bitter sarcasm)
Wipe your butt with our report.

Los Alamos gives him a wrinkled Charlie Brown smile - hitching up his trousers. Just as - Bert and Rebul bustle up to the rig floor and help the tech stow his gear on the van.

As soon as the tool clears the hole - Bert holds out giant cable cutters. He and Rebul each take one handle each (as the tech holds the cable steady) to -

CUT the CABLE above the tool. Bert and Rebul help muscle the tool out of the open well (SPLATTERING GAS BUBBLES of thick, viscous drilling fluid now), and stow it in the truck.

TECH (CONT'D)
You need to blow this suicide rig.

REBUL
(ruminating, dark)
Can't. We got debts to pay off, me
and Bert. El Alamo holds the noose.

Rebul and Bert stand back, watching the helper reel in the rest of the cable. They gather around the tech.

BERT
He yanks the lever... Our feet are
dangling under the gallows floor...
Faces turning purple. Spine snaps!

Heads down Bert and Rebul hustle away. The tech hops in his van. Hits the gas. SPEEDS AWAY from the rig.

Bert and Rebul turn toward the rig - to see Los Alamos staring at them (angry, wearing shades now, chewing away).

EXT. NEW MEXICO - CENTRAL MOUNTAINS AND VALLEYS - DAY

A panoramic view of the drilling site in a remote mountain valley. Following a hawk flying... Over the mountains. Over a wide basin (thin river, green fields on either side). To a large metropolis. The University of New Mexico campus. The Duck Pond. A student ghetto of apartments off campus.

INT. ALBUQUERQUE - DOWNSCALE APARTMENT - DAY

Kase steps into an efficiency apartment. Stacks of well-worn books. Peeling paint. Carpet worn down to the carpet pad.

Maximo sleeps in a splash of sunlight on a ratty old sofa. Kase NUDGES Maximo. He startles awake, MEOWING VERY LOUD.

KASE
Heads up, sport. Our vacation in
the Big Sunshine is over.

Maximo CHOKES - VOMITS up a slog of half-digested cat food.

KASE (CONT'D)
Doh! Forgot how empathetic you are.

Kase sits on the sofa. Pats his lap. Maximo climbs into his lap, PURRING VERY LOUD. Kase is melancholy. Droopy eyes. Maximo becomes very quiet and still.

KASE (CONT'D)
Remember when that German Shephard
got hold of the chihuahua? Grrr...

Kase reclines on the sofa. Maximo adjusts into a corner in his arms. Kase scratches Maximo's head. PURRING very LOUD.

KASE (CONT'D)
Hate little dogs. Just hate them.

Kase puts Maximo on a "coffee table" (a beat-up old saddle), facing a beat-up old vintage television.

KASE (CONT'D)
Let the good times roll! Sleepless
nights. Mosquitoes. Vermins galore!

Kase plugs in a CD, grabs a remote, and turns on the TV.

ON TV SCREEN - DRILLING MEMENTOS WITH MAXIMO

Snap shots of Kase and Maximo: posing on the drilling rig floor. Repairing a giant diesel engine. Fishing over the side on an offshore rig. In the mess hall. Chowin' down on fish.

Flying in a helicopter toward an offshore rig. On an inland drilling barge feeding alligators. Fishing. Reeling one in. The sequence freezes on a ROARING RIG FIRE: multiple angles.

BACK TO SCENE

Frantic, Kase punches the remote. Nothing happens. He jumps up and yanks the power cord out of the wall. He looks at Maximo (big black eyes, alert stance, ready for action).

KASE (CONT'D)
Never properly thanked you. I was
out cold. You howled and howled
until somebody came to get me.

Maximo paws a bare spot of skin on his back. Wincing.

Maximo mans up. Sits tall. HOWLS - looking directly into Kase's astonished face.

KASE (CONT'D)
You sure?

Kase pulls the SULLIVAN DRILLING business card out of his pocket. Shows it to Maximo. Maximo HOWLS. Kase stares at him - then smiles, real big.

KASE (CONT'D)
Alright. Let's get you ready for
Z.Z. Top.

Kase grabs a brush. Gives Maximo a good brushing. Kase steps over and starts dressing up: White shirt, string tie.

INT. SULLIVAN DRILLING - WORLDWIDE CORPORATE OFFICES - DAY

Hawk and Kase sit in the posh Fortune 500-esque lobby. Maximo is curled up on the sofa between them, sound asleep. Hawk whispers to Kase, indicating Maximo.

HAWK
This animal is a real native. Mrs.
Hawk chose him for your spirit
guide. Lose one sense and the
others grow stronger. She thinks -

KASE
It's just you and me now, Pops.

Kase stares at the coffee table and an intricate model of a working oil drilling rig. Leans forward to press a button. The MODEL goes into MOTION. Kase watches, fascinated.

Smiling contentedly, Hawk studies photos on the wall of SULLIVAN (70, female, Irish, fit), matching her expression.

MELBA (24, female, Mayan, athletic, badly dyed blonde hair) works at a desk across the lobby. Two monitors. Fast typist.

Odan walks out of a de lujo office. Shows Melba two fingers. Mouths "two minutes." Slips into a "CONFERENCE ROOM." Kase winces, grabbing his stomach. Biting his lower lip.

KASE (CONT'D)
Ulcers revving up.

HAWK
Hola. Every young warrior must go
on a vision quest.

Kase fights a wave of anger, grinding his teeth.

Maximo wakes up, yawning and stretching his back, looking around. Hawk hooks a Navajo-theme leash on his collar. They talk quietly as Maximo (edgy, alert) examines their environs.

KASE

Say again? The Great Spirit fracked
up my life - so I could go on a
mind trip? That's your religion?
I'll take *Los Pecos'* Skeleton Man.

HAWK

He is a trickster, playfully
pursuing women for sport. You are
not like that.

KASE

Well, maybe I want to be like that.

HAWK

He does command the underworld and
fire. If there is any god for
geothermal engineers, it would be
Masauwu, the Spirit of Death.

KASE

Like that really helps. Although...

Melba points to Kase. He jumps right up. Follows her into the
"BOARD ROOM," easing the door closed. Putting puts his feet
(old running shoes) up on a coffee table, Hawk reads up a
copy of Drilling International.

Maximo jumps onto the coffee table, playing with the rig
model (still moving), making a cat-and-mouse game out of it.
Melba glances up, sees Maximo - double takes - shaking her
head sadly, she motions for Kase to approach. He jumps up.

INT. SULLIVAN DRILLING - BOARD ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kase slips into a small, lavish room and sits across from
Odan at a shimmering glass conference table. Odan puts a
thick "PECOS DRILLING PLAN" folder on the table.

ODAN

Here is a wildcat drilling plan.
You are the decision maker. I give
you ninety seconds. What to do?

Kase studies the "PECOS DRILLING PLAN." Melba slips quietly
into the room and sits down, typing quietly at her laptop.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Kase pages through the document, muttering to himself:

KASE

Good thing I'm not grading this as homework. Just ran out of red ink.

Kase looks up, eyebrows furrowed. Odan taps his wristwatch.

ODAN

Time and tide, Mr. Walker.

Kase blinks, incredulous - looks at the document, at Odan.

KASE

Four plus miles deep already. Maxed out all your technology.

Odan tenses up: dark glare. Kase keeps reading, mumbling:

KASE (CONT'D)

Please tell me this isn't the well I'm interviewing for.

Neither Odan nor Melba will make eye contact with Kase. Flustered, Kase flips through the "PECOS DRILLING PLAN."

KASE (CONT'D)

What the? Half the data is redacted. Every important data point. Depths. Mud weights...

His face a masterpiece of horror, Odan grabs the well log from Kase and puts it away.

ODAN

That is company confidential.

Kase stands up. Arms crossed. Scowl on his face.

ODAN (CONT'D)

Wildcats are a mystery. You never know everything. Often what you do know is - *zeitgeber*. Confusing.

Dark and brooding, Kase won't make eye contact. Melba ducks her head into her laptop and types away at a breakneck pace. Kase slams the table with his clenched fist.

KASE

Where's your engineer?

Odan focuses on Kase. His bully facade cracks briefly.

ODAN

The geologist is right here. She talks geek.

Arms crossed, everybody clams up. Evasive. Dark. Brooding.

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - DAY

Monk's unconscious in a hospital bed, sedated - hooked up to an I.V. and multiple electrodes. Los Alamos (colorful surgeon's cap, doctor's garb, mask over his lower face) enters with a POLICE OFFICER. They approach Monk's bed.

Monk's eyes open; droopy. Los Alamos points to the cop.

LOS ALAMOS

Dragnet has some questions. Lady.
Routine. You appear - terrified!

MONK

I - I just remembered something.
(dazed, eyes unfocused)
Stop the rig, Odan. The BOP's,
they were jammed. Sabotaged!

LOS ALAMOS

Wrong answer.

Los Alamos steps up to the bed. He pulls out a syringe - taps it to rid the air; slides the needle into a I.V. connection.

MONK

That voice. I know you. What's -

LOS ALAMOS

Stay in your lane. Monk. You done
crossed the solid yellow line.

Monk stares at Los Alamos. At the syringe. She starts to scream, but the police officer clamps a hand over her mouth. She struggles, ripping the I.V. line out. Electrodes fly.

As the police officer manhandles Monk, Los Alamos slips over to close blinds opening out into the ER ward.

INT. SULLIVAN DRILLING - BOARD ROOM - DAY

Kase stares at basketball decals on the back of Melba's laptop. He makes a T with his hands, trying to be calm.

KASE

Time out. It's halftime. So. You
have a plan... There were problems.
(deep breath, ruminating)
I had problems like that once. A
blowout. Rig fire. Hospital time.

Odan pulls out a pocket knife to clean his dirty fingernails.

KASE (CONT'D)

Six miles. Nobody's ever gone down
six miles. Or even - tried.

(wincing)

Other than experimental projects
with a room full of scientists and
government funding out the wazoo.

Kase grabs his stomach. Bites his lower lip.

ODAN

We interview geologists later. You
can help us decide who to hire.

Melba grits her teeth, struggling for control, standing.

MELBA

He. Can. Not. I was Monk's backup.
I know more about the prospect -

ODAN

I forbid you.

Odan stares at Melba - until - she finally sits down... Melba
types at her laptop, her face gloomy. They whisper:

ODAN (CONT'D)

You can visit to the site.

MELBA

Oh, bully. I'm so excited.

ODAN

You are not a teenager, flirting
with the rig hands. This is work!

Kase stands up. Surprised, they both look up at him.

KASE

Never argue in front of the hired
help.

ODAN

You are no employee of mine.

Odan levels a hard look at Kase, who crosses his arms tight.

KASE

Do we have a prospect to drill out
or not?

(to Melba)

As little as we know about the
geology down there at SIX MILES -
who needs a lousy geologist?

Melba sits bolt upright, scowling at Kase. Kase jams his hands in his pockets, staring at his feet.

ODAN

Come, you will now meet the C.E.O.

Odan gathers his papers and heads out of the room. Kase and Melba (scooping up her laptop) scurry after him.

EXT. MOUNTAIN VALLEY - SULLIVAN DRILLING RIG - DAY

Rebul sneaks under the rig floor, wary of being followed. Directly under the rotary table, the drill string goes through giant, red BLOWOUT PREVENTERS.

Rebul pulls out a wrench. Loosens a pressure connection to a metal line on the BLOWOUT PREVENTER stack.

He yanks the line free. UNSCREWS a PLUG in the line. Wrenches the plug free. The pressure line oozes thick hydraulic fluid. Rebul studies the plug. Cleans it off. Inspects it...

LOS ALAMOS (V.O.)

Get rid of the damn plug. It's evidence, you moron.

Rebul freaks. Looks around, frantic. Spots a video camera perched nearby focused on the blowout preventers. Relaxes.

REBUL

Oh. It's Saturday Night Live.

LOS ALAMOS (V.O.)

I'm watching you. Rowdy. Wherever you go. Whatever you do. I'm there.

Rebul reaches up and rips the camera out of its socket.

LOS ALAMOS (V.O.)

There are worse places than Fort Leavenworth. Dark. Dirty. Demonic.

Rebul reconnects the pressure line. Tightens it with the wrench. Turns a valve on the BOP stack above the line.

Studying a pressure gauge above the valve, Rebul smiles as the pressure in the line goes from zero into the green zone.

Rebul smears everything with grease, looks both ways, and - he stops, spotting a second camera nearby - frowning. Biting his lower lip, Rebul turns his back slowly to the camera.

Then he drops the THREADED PLUG to the ground (being sure the camera can't see this).

Rebul turns. Flips a finger at the second camera. Hastens away, head up and chin held high.

INT. SULLIVAN DRILLING - DE LUXE LOBBY - DAY

Kase and Melba exit the interview room to see - Sullivan (worn, faded dungarees, reddish hair) paces the lobby. (Hawk sits across the room, observing. Maximo's asleep in his lap.) Kase hurries up to Sullivan. Stops. Crosses his arms.

KASE

I'm working for a - lady?

Sullivan studies Kase, top to bottom. Adjusts her bra strap.

SULLIVAN

I'm a wildcatter not a Barbie doll.
(steely glare)
Now. What's itching your brain?

KASE

The *Los Pecos* said the well is in a national park. I'm not hankering to disrespect the land. Our - history.

Mouth agape, Sullivan glowers at him, hands on her hips.

SULLIVAN

We have all the necessary permits.

KASE

Native Americans are very sensitive about drilling.

Sullivan takes a sudden step forward. Crossing her arms.

SULLIVAN

The only sacred I recognize has an oil and gas lease.

Kase takes a baby step away from her, his eyes wide.

KASE

How refreshing. Honest... Absurd!

Sullivan frowns at Kase. She turns to Odan:

SULLIVAN

Where's your geothermal expert?

ODAN

He does not score high in tactful.

Sullivan gets in Kase's comfort zone. Kase holds his ground.

SULLIVAN

All the Wall Street hype on
geothermal wells? Bogus. It's just
another cold-fusion ripoff. Fraud!

KASE

That's just plain - ignorant.
Geothermal wells last for
centuries. Maybe longer. Each one
can power a small city.

As Sullivan starts to get flustered, a SECRETARY holding out
a smartphone hustles up, a look of disgust in her face.

SECRETARY

Ma'am? You need to take this.
(urgent whisper)
Are we THAT desperate for work?

Scowling, Sullivan yanks the phone away from the secretary -
fierce grip - and turns aside.

SULLIVAN

I told you not to -

Sullivan stands still, turning pale. She looks at the screen.

INT. HOSPITAL - INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - DAY

Los Alamos holds the smartphone camera on Monk (pale, eyes
bugging out, black tongue, shallow breathing). Her neck is
black and blue from a bruising struggle.

LOS ALAMOS

Your engineer saw the light. She's
washing Jesus' dirty feet now.
(long beat)
You best get your Christian work
ethic on. Lady.

Los Alamos turns the camera to show his face, laughing with
demonic fervor. The screen is interrupted by a phone prompt
(Wagnerian ring tone). Los Alamos cuts the connection.

INT. SULLIVAN DRILLING - DE LUXE LOBBY - DAY

Turning on heel, and biting his lower lip, Kase heads for the
door. Sullivan scoots over and blocks his path.

SULLIVAN

You're hired.

KASE

I'm not your hero.

Hawk steps up to them, Maximo on a leash at his side. Maximo steps toward Sullivan, staring up at her. Their eyes meet.

HAWK

What my grandson means is that we
have no feud with the Big Oil
Mafia, *madam*. Just with Uncle Sam.

Sullivan turns to face Hawk, speaking with conviction:

SULLIVAN

Now THAT I understand. Sure I do.
Washington D.C. is an outhouse.
(focusing on Maximo)
Except. Just who are you?

Maximo nudges up to Sullivan's ankles, "liking" her, PURRING very loud. Hawk extends his hand toward Sullivan.

HAWK

William Hawk, Chief of the Navajo.

Sullivan looks at Hawk's hand - turns to face Kase.
(Crestfallen, Hawk jams his hands into his back pockets.)

SULLIVAN

(to Kase)
I'll get you a spread in Drilling
International magazine. Funding for
a geothermal chair on campus.
(toward Maximo)
Have I seen you before somewhere?

Maximo HOWLS at her. Hawk pulls the leash so Maximo is behind him. Maximo sits. Sullivan points at Maximo.

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Sure I have. On the cover of
Drilling International magazine.
The wildcat Maximo cat.

Hawk speaks up, chest pumped up, shoulders reared back.

HAWK

My grandson killed more out-of-
control wells than any other -

SULLIVAN

Sure. The blowout champion of the
free world... Gets. Blown. Out.

KASE

It was a freak accident. I was
knocked unconscious. I was -

SULLIVAN

Saved by a damn cat. Sorry, I don't want you running my drilling rig.

Hawk steps into Sullivan's comfort zone, fighting mad:

HAWK

The U.S. Supreme Court cut off the Navajo Nation's water supply. We can't grow food. We're - starving.

Hawk fights back rage as Sullivan studies his face.

HAWK (CONT'D)

And now, last week, the - the New Mexico legislature revoked my our drilling revenues. Ours. The Navajo nation's. We're all broke. Ruined.

SULLIVAN

That's brutal. Although... HATRED for Uncle Sam trumps all else.

HAWK

I wager a truckload of Benjamin Franklins he will drill your well to completion without incident.

SULLIVAN

Yeah. I love a betting man. Deal.

Sullivan extends her hand. Kase hesitates, staring at her hand. But Hawk steps out, to shake her hand. Effusively.

Kase opens his mouth to say something. But Hawk grabs him and hurries him out. Forcibly... Sullivan yells after them:

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

All hands are on site by dawn's first light. Make it so!

Fighting strong (dark) emotions, Sullivan steps over to a coffee service and pours a cup of java. Her hand shakes.

EXT. DOWNTOWN ALBUQUERQUE - SULLIVAN DRILLING - DAY

Melba (backpack stuffed with papers) scoots out of a stylish adobe building. Spots Kase and Hawk, chatting by their beat-up old pickup. Hurries over to join them. Approaches Kase.

MELBA

Why did you not have the wildcat Maximo credit on your resume? Is there something I should know?

Upset, Kase hands Maximo's leash to Hawk and hustles away.

Melba hurries after Kase. They head toward a street bazaar down the block - Native American clothing. Souvenirs. Carvings. They amble through the stalls, chatting quietly.

KASE

What was all that hanky-panky with the rig super? Huh?

MELBA

The grizzly bear is my father.

KASE

And the lady engineer? Talk about hiding something. Important!

MELBA

Do you retort me out of arrogance? Or maybe... Insecurity?

Melba stops at a shaman's stall. SKELETON MAN logos. Statues. Books. Shawls. Wafting incense. Kase is silent. Brooding. Melba studies his face, the contours in angled shadows.

MELBA (CONT'D)

You are spooked. Drilling on the sacred land. I thought you -

KASE

Were playing the minority card?

Melba reels back at his strong resentment. Kase becomes quiet, fingering some fine embroidered linens.

KASE (CONT'D)

The rig fire. When I was passed out. I had a vision. Ancient warriors on the warpath. Scary.

Kase shoves his hands in his pockets and hurries away. Melba buys a turquoise trinket and follows him at a distance.

EXT. PECOS PUEBLO HISTORIC PARK - NIGHT

Deserted. Skewed lighting from a full moon. Rugged mountains. Rocky terrain. Scrubby underbrush. Shifting shadows.

An "ALBUQUERQUE TAXI" pulls up. Kase and Melba exit. Get their duffel bags out of the trunk.

Melba (stylish jeans, rugged hiking boots) has a basketball-shaped gym bag. Kase (loud Navajo shirt, jeans, worn hiking boots) has a large pet cage.

KASE

Rise and shine. It's daybreak. The
 gods are passing over our heads.
 Worship them at your own risk.

Kase gets Maximo out of the cage. Maximo takes one look at
 the sky and HOWLS - so loud Melba JUMPS. Kase looks up:

TOWERING CUMULONIMBUS build over them. Turning DARK.
 Extending into a THUNDERCLOUD. Melba stares at Maximo:

KASE (CONT'D)

See no evil. HEAR no evil.

MELBA

Ah. He cannot hear himself... A
 common male attribute.

Melba stares at rows of ancient graves nearby. Behind the
 cemetery, the mountainside has been razed by a recent
 wildfire. It's black with debris, rocks scorched black.

KASE

Your rig fire got out of control.
 Best rig in our fleet? Hah.

Dark, pensive - Melba ignores him, approaching a "PECOS
 PUEBLO" historical marker. She lights the marker with her
 smartphone light. Kase steps over to stand beside her,
 studying the marker. Standing a little too close.

MELBA

First settled by three thousand
 years ago. Later on, all the
 Anasazi pueblos were high in
 canyons, accessible only by rope.
 What were they afraid of?

Melba shines the light in Kase's face. He swallows. Hard.
 Melba picks up Maximo. He's restless, staring at the sky.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Anasazi is Navajo. It means. Oh,
 my... Enemy of the people.

Kase looks toward sturdy Pecos Pueblo ruins on a rise nearby.
 Silhouetted by a sudden mist. He's shocked:

KASE

The light. The shadows. Looks
 ancient... Anasazi ancient!

Maximo gets very quiet. Eyes darting at: BATS zipping around.
 SHADOWS against the horizon. A mist drifts over them.

KASE (CONT'D)

The Anasazi were in this area for thousands of years. Then - boom. They disappeared without a trace.

MELBA

Did the Navajo wipe them out??
(hugging Maximo)
Climate change? War? Drought...
growing alfalfa in the desert?

Kase shivers in a sudden, brisk breeze. His breath shows.

KASE

Okay. So you read the papers. What do you know about rigs? Drilling?

MELBA

Oye. I grew up in the oil patch, after Mom - left us. I know the sights, the sounds. The dangers.

KASE

Dangers? For a cute little Latina?

MELBA

I am not Hispanic. I am Mayan. Who are worse off than even you Navajo.

Sunrise approaches behind the ruins. The sky fills with a spider's web of lightning. The mist fades into a thin fog.

MELBA (CONT'D)

The Anasazi had a connection to the land. An understanding. Have your elders taught you nothing? Manners?

THUNDER rolls over them. The GROUND SHAKES briefly.

KASE

I learned the legends. The sacred wisdoms. The fireside dances... My father was a Medicine Man.
(quietly)
Big fan of The Skeleton Man.

They head back. Sit down on Kase's duffle bag. Kase picks at her basketball-shaped gym bag, his eyebrows arched:

MELBA

The hoops put me through college.

Kase studies her belligerent face. Self-conscious, Melba turns to look at the sun rising over the cemetery, shivering.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Do you feel it, the frightening
chill? The angry land beneath?

KASE

Dead people, I can handle. Dead
civilizations? That's way too close
for comfort.

MELBA

You didn't mind drilling on sacred
Chaco lands. But not that you
discover it is Anasazi sacred...

Maximo CATERWAULS. It ECHOES between the steep canyon walls.

KASE

I was - remembering. My vision. At
the rig fire. When Maximo saved my
bacon. They had primitive weapons.
Strange war paint. Now I know
why... They were - Anasazi!

By now, the sun is well above the horizon. Glaring heat.
Shirts soaked with sweat. Maximo climbs out of his cage,
PANTING, and jumps down, chasing a LIZARD.

MELBA

Poor deaf kitty, suffering from the
dry heat. He jumps out, Geronimo.

Kase loosens his shirt, struggling to breathe in the heat.

MELBA (CONT'D)

I have had coaches who are aloof.
Gruff. Ruling by fear and
trepidation.

WOP. WOP. A helicopter approaches from the west. SWOOPS over
them. HOVERS DOWN on the far side of the ruins. Disappears
below the horizon.

MELBA (CONT'D)

That is you facade. But inside? I
believe you are a conejo, the lost
rabbit looking for a briar patch.

Heaving his duffel bag over his shoulders, Kase heads toward
where the chopper disappeared.

KASE

Geronimo was Apache. The great
chief of the Navajo was called
Manuelito of the Folded Arms Clan.

Melba muscles her duffel bag onto her shoulders and scurries after him. Heat rises from the land. Waves of heat.

MELBA

That is not a name to inspire. Must
lest inspire fear in the enemy.

They cross a rocky terrain. SWIRLING DUST DEVILS. Haze.

KASE

The Apache called him Bullet Hole.

Just past a rocky outcropping, they look down on a drilling rig in a clearing, surrounded by trailers and equipment.

KASE (CONT'D)

The Skeleton Man was - Anasazi.
(quietly)
He carries a burning torch,
continuously circling the land.

MELBA

Just as our Mayan God of the Sun.
Kinich Ahoa.
(staring at Maximo)
Depicted in relief as a jaguar.

Kase steps out with new vigor, heading toward the rig.

KASE

Masauwu is a fearsome figure, with
a gruesome, bloody mask. Hah!

Kase hustles away, chin high. Melba holds back, muttering:

MELBA

You have Monk's same arrogance.
Look at her now. Knocking on Saint
Peter's door. Not even God hears...

Melba's studies the Anasazi cemetery, her eyes narrowing:
Another mirage: LIGHTNING STRIKES a drilling rig. It's on
FIRE. Explosions. People running away. More EXPLOSIONS.

EXT. SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAIN VALLEY - DAY

Bright, clear day. High mountain valley. Snow on distant
peaks. A drilling rig. Surrounded by trailers. Equipment.

DRILLING RIG - CROW'S NEST

Standing on a diminutive platform at the top of the derrick,
Kase works on an open "CONTROL PANEL." Kase wears the papoose
on his back. Maximo's head sticks out and looks around.

SQUAWK. Kase looks at a walkie-talkie hooked to his belt.

MELBA (V.O.)
We are ready to trip back into the
hole, señor. We are into business.

The control panel is for a "RIG FLARE," a pipe that extends ABOVE the very top of the derrick structure, from which GAS is vented and then ignited. SQUAWK.

MELBA (V.O.)
Kase? Are you there?
(beat)
Are you hiding from me?
(beat)
Ashamed to have shared things with
me? Private things? Spiritual.

Kase scrapes grease off a rig-structure joint and smears it over a bright orange USB CONNECTOR FITTING at the bottom of the "FLARE IGNITION CONTROL" panel.

FOOTSTEPS approach on the derrick ladder. Melba (tight jeans, sexy lowcut blouse) appears from below.

MELBA
The intrepid sidekick finds him in
the cuckoo's nest. Hiding.

A TALL CRANE lifts a length of DRILL PIPE OFF pipe racks.

There's a parallel structure where sections of drilling pipe are stacked in lengths. The TALL CRANE aligns the (vertical) PIPE with the derrick to make a new connection. The derrick sways. They grab on tight.

KASE
If... If you want something to work
then - by Sally, fix it yourself...
(to himself)
Can't wait for your buttons to pop.

MELBA
I am no bar maiden.

The rig shakes. A CRANE lowers the PIPE, aligning it with the DRILL STRING (adding a new length of pipe).

MELBA (CONT'D)
Serving spirits up to your macho.

They talk as Kase works (there's barely room for two people on the platform, so they're standing hip-to-hip).

KASE

Just doing a routine check of the
gas flare ignition system. It was
damaged. Takes a lot to -
(staring at Melba)
Has the rig had any HIGH-pressure
KICKS - lately?

Kase studies her face. She answers too quickly, looks away.

MELBA

I meant no disrespect.

KASE

Didn't you hear the valve pop off
earlier. POW! Smoke and all. POW.

A stiff breeze keeps the derrick swaying. Melba fights off a
frantic fear of heights. Her pants button pops off.

MELBA

Many things go POW on the rigs.
(quietly)
You set me up. You wanted me alone
up here. Frightened of heights. On
the edge of terrors. Vulnerable.

Maximo's head pops out of the papoose on Kase's back.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Now the little jaguar? To discom-
boob-ulate me even more?

Maximo MEOWS. Kase laughs at her horrified expression.

KASE

Maximo was raised on oil rigs. I'm
just getting him - re-acquainted.

Frowning, Melba reaches out to scratch Maximo.

MELBA

And how long have you yourself been
vegetating on campus? Many years!

One last tweak and a GAS FLAME briefly ejects. A SWOOSH OF
FIRE jets from the FLARE PIPE high above them.

KASE

There we go, all fixed up. System
overload, as in from a major, MAJOR
gas blow-by. Fried all the sensors.
(staring at Melba)
What is a flare for? *Señorita*.

MELBA

Extreme pressure venting. Oh, my.
From the formation... Into the
drilling fluid. Out the flare! POP!

Fighting back a bright blush of anger, Melba looks away.

KASE

Your engineer screwed up. Bad.

Eyebrows arching with skepticism, Kase closes the "FLARE
CONTROL PANEL." Stows his tools away in his cargo pants.

MELBA

J.B. Montana. We called her Monk.
They say she will have Sullivan's
job one day. Very competent.

Frowning, Kase cleans his hands with a red shop towel.

KASE

Scuttlebutt around the rig is that
she's in the hospital. More touch
than go.

MELBA

You are only fishing, and I do not
enjoy high altitude sport.

AS Melba maneuvers to head back down - the FLARE ejects a
BURST OF FLAME. They reel away from the HEAT - almost falling
overboard. Awkward moment as they get their balance back.

KASE

That valve popped off after we got
here. Pressure! We're drilling into
that pressure now. Clueless. Blind.

MELBA

Why do you need me to confirm this?
Do you truly value my opinion?

Slamming the railing with open palms, Kase grabs ladder rails
(aligned with the derrick, on the outside - the drill pipe is
inside) and JUMPS for a reckless SLIDE down.

Melba yells after him:

MELBA (CONT'D)

I have a brain. Talent. Insight.
You will see this one day.

Melba takes the ladder down. Carefully. Afraid of heights.

Melba SLIPS. Grabs the railing. SLIPS again. SLIDES down, all the way down, SCREAMING. Down the derrick. To the rig floor.

BELOW ON THE DRILLING FLOOR

Drilling is underway: the ROTARY TABLE turns slowly, with big clamps on the DRILLING PIPE, rotating with it.

Kase sneaks over to a computer console and, looking both ways, slips a bright orange USB CONNECTOR FITTING into a USB plug in the back of the panel.

Kase is just scooping grease from a nearby fitting when - BERT (45, robust, Australian, slow) SLAMS a giant WRENCH onto the steel structure right next to Kase's head.

BERT

Hey, you. This area is off limits.

Kase turns around. Bert recognizes him - startles.

BERT (CONT'D)

Oh. Sir. Welcome.

They both look over as Melba SCREAMS down the ladder railing to the rig floor nearby. She lands on her feet. Balanced.

Melba dusts herself off. Smiles at them (deep bow from the waist, showing serious cleavage). Scurries quickly away.

KASE

I damn near killed myself, first time I tried that.

BERT

What, giving yourself up to lust?

(quietly)

Sorry, I... That just - came out.

Bert grips the wrench - nervous. Kase stares at the BRIGHT ORANGE USB FITTING, and maneuvers to obscure it from Bert.

KASE

Everybody's acting scared. What happened last week? Melba sure is rattled. Odan, in my interview.

(staring HARD at Bert)

How bad is it? On a scale of -

In a sudden fit of anxiety, Bert GOLF-SWINGS an open paint can aside with the giant pipe wrench. SPLASH.

BERT

Marque dos for terror?

KASE
Schlumberger's well log is
redacted. Every problem. Every -

BERT
Problems, hell. Gas gushing up from
below damn near blew their truck
clean off the site.

Bert stares at the splashed paint. Blinking. Zoning out.
Maximo (unseen in Kase's papoose) CATERWAULS.

BERT (CONT'D)
Oh, Lord. I can hear MONK'S voice.

Bert shatters back to the present. Terror in his face.

BERT (CONT'D)
Screaming bloody hell.

Reacting to some unseen horror, Bert pushes Kase, hard. Kase
almost tumbles over the railing, grabbing Bert's sleeve.

KASE
Whoa, Betsy.

Kase looks. At a rip from Bert's cloth sleeve is in his hand.
At a Bulldog tattoo on Bert's bare forearm.

KASE (CONT'D)
(quietly, soothing)
United States Marine Corps. You
seem - out of place, here.

BERT
I captured a terrorist. I pushed
him too hard. He ended up in the
hospital. I ended up at Fort
Leavenworth busting apart rocks.

KASE
You did this? All by yourself?

Bert fumes. Kase stumbles away from him, grabbing the
"CONTROL PANEL" for support (covering the bright orange USB
CONNECTOR with grease. Blending it in with the surroundings).

KASE (CONT'D)
(sotto voice)
Hating on the government. Huh.
Sullivan's number one priority. A
whole rattler's nest of - venom.

Bert yanks Kase away from the computers. Pushes him back.

BERT

The Super shoots straight. He goes by the rules. Doesn't bend them all catawampus like everybody else.

Melba hurries forward, yelling at Bert:

MELBA

Hands off the Navajo.

BERT

He started it. Pumping me for intel on rig ops last week. Then he went and insinuated me and Rebul -

Ignoring Bert, Melba stands up on a nearby pipe rack - deep breath, stealing herself - announcing to the rig at large:

MELBA

Everybody, rig up. Time to replace the drill bit with a diamond one.
(clapping her hands)
Chop-chop, round trip out of the hole. Make. It. Happen!

Rig hands hustle. Hurry to the rotary table. Break a DRILL PIPE CONNECTION. Haul the DRILL STRING up.

With one last hateful glare, Bert grabs a toolbox and hustles to his work station.

EXT. SULLIVAN DRILLING - KICKOFF MEETING - RIG FLOOR - DAY

Kase (sport coat, tie, work boots) and Melba (pressed blouse and jeans, hiking boots) wait just off the rig floor, watching roughnecks set up a table, chairs, and a whiteboard.

MELBA

Something going on here. Everybody knows. All he blue collars.

Kase and Melba study the grim silhouette of the Pecos ruins in the setting Blood Sun, looking like it's on fire.

A black STEALTH HELICOPTER HOVERS overhead. Lands.

KASE

The old man didn't say anything?

Odan is the first one out of the chopper, working BIG RED WORRY BEADS, terrified.

MELBA

I see a cat enclosed there.

Melba runs, down stairs, across the compound to Odan.

Kase watches as Sullivan exits the chopper, smiling - surveying the rig. Her smile turns to a grimace as Bert and REBUL (35, Southern accent, thinning hair) hurry to her side.

KASE
(sotto voice)
Everybody hating on the
government.. Or the G-man.

Kase steps into the shadows. Observes Sullivan's behavior with Bert and Rebul. Two hulking roughnecks acting in control: Sweeping arm motions. Contrasted to Sullivan's submission - that turns to outrage and command influence.

RIG COMPOUND

Melba reaches Odan. He's struggling with grief.

ODAN
Monk is in the E.R. They will now
place her into a coma.

There's a CRASH nearby and a CAT YELP, as Maximo jumps off a deck. Lands on a loose tool rack. Dumps the contents.

ODAN (CONT'D)
I'm going to murder that damn cat.

Odan rushes after Maximo.

MELBA
She's not gonna to make it.

Melba double-takes as Kase appears out of nowhere. Heading her way. Wiping blood off his hands with a shop rag. Kase sees Melba watching him - does an about-face.

Head down, Kase navigates through a maze of equipment. Studying readouts on a over-sized smartphone in his hands.

KICKOFF MEETING - RIG FLOOR

Melba, Kase, and Odan wait as Sullivan arrives. RIG HANDS (including Rebul and Bert) have gathered around.

SULLIVAN
We have a new engineer.
(pointing at Kase)
He's on-site full-time. Got
pressure fever? Talk to Kasey.
(pointing at Odan)
Give me the word, Super.

ODAN
We are drilling right on the specs.

KASE
Excuse me. But. Well, you know. You were drilling fast like this before the - er, INCIDENT. Last week.

Sullivan stares at Kase. Her eyes are daggers.

SULLIVAN
(whispering to Kase)
Be confident. Put your macho on.

KASE
(whispering to Sullivan)
This is where everybody sees you and I all cozy. If you trust me so much - they will too.

Kase sees Bert's expression: The fire in his eyes. Bert's giant fists clenched in suppressed rage.

KASE (CONT'D)
It's okay to be afraid. It keeps a body on his toes. Right, Bert?

Her head snapping around, Sullivan positively glares at Kase.

SULLIVAN
I will not have you -

BERT
Relax, ma'am. I'm good, here.

Melba leans close to Kase, whispering, sarcastic:

MELBA
This is where you terrify us with your knowledge. So we then glom onto your sleeve for reassurance.

Everybody takes seats at a sturdy table covered with detailed "GEOLOGY CROSS SECTIONS" and engineering drawings.

A LONG HOUR LATER

Kase stands by the whiteboard, showing the well completed to just above a bright red layer in the geology cross-section.

KASE
The core samples from Schlumberger came back. From our last position downhole. Before the - Monk...

Kase pulls out a box of small rock cores, passes them around.

KASE (CONT'D)

We're right where nearby wells ran
into extreme pressure - the red
sands, on the diagram there.

Standing up, Melba draws wells on the geology diagram, with
RED pressure escaping from their well into the surrounding
wells, lowering their pressure down to a cool BLUE.

MELBA

Those prospects have all played
out, relieving our formation
pressure. Those wells -

KASE

Are irrelevant. Because we're now
three thousand feet deeper than any
of them. We're drilling blind.
Blind I tell you. BLIND!

Melba swallows - hard. There's a sudden, hushed silence. All
eyes are on Kase. He smiles, eyebrows up, eyes bright.

SULLIVAN

(to the rig hands)

This is the signature rig of
Sullivan Drilling. Raise the flag.

Everybody looks up: A rig hand in the crow's nest raises a
black skull-and-crossbones Pirate Flag. Energized, Sullivan
points at Melba - then Odan. Everybody almost yells:

MELBA

I'll know when we reach the high-
pressure sands from the extreme
curvature of the drilling cuttings.

ODAN

We are in lock step with the
drilling plan. Target one.

KASE

Screw the drilling plan. I say -

SULLIVAN

Tally ho, y'all. Anchor's aweigh.

Sullivan jumps up, shaking hands all around. Sullivan extends
her hand to Kase, but he turns on heel and strides away.

Sullivan watches him go, lips pursed. Odan eases up to her
side. They talk as he walks her toward her helicopter.

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)
We should tell him.

ODAN
Wait until he gets his sea legs.

SULLIVAN
One wrong step and the G monster
will wreak our havoc.

ODAN
I will restrict all hands to the
rig site. Alamo will not -

SULLIVAN
I'll go recon the overflow pits to
be sure that jerkoff isn't spying
on us from the vulture's roost.

Smiling, Odan helps her into the helicopter, then steps back
as it lifts off - waving with a grim smile.

Odan turns, to see Kase climbing up a short set of metal
steps to the mud pits. Eyes narrowed in concentration, Odan
watches Kase, crossing his powerful arms.

EXT. DRILLING COMPOUND - MUD FILTRATION PITS

Kase pulls a filter out of a giant metal pit of circulating
mud (brown, viscous fluid), inspecting the contents.

Kase plugs a USB CONNECTOR FITTING into a computer console.
It won't fit. Kase struggles. Frantic. Looks around, eyes
wide. Finally, it inserts.

Rebul appears out of nowhere.

Panicking, Kase scoops out a batch of mud from the pit.
Washes it under running water: Ends up with bits of rock.

KASE
These cuttings are curved. That
means we're drilling into pressure.
And NOW I'm finding out?

One eye on the BRIGHT ORANGE fitting, Kase holds out the
cuttings. His hands shake. Rebul oozes Southern hospitality.

REBUL
Been curved for weeks now. No big
deal, Odan said.

KASE
Why isn't it in your reports?

Rebul hawks up a wad of chewing tobacco and spits it out at Kase's feet. He spots a camera. Panics! Points at it...

REBUL

Go vegetate in your quiet room. Got it all on M.T.V. A room full of video feeds. Live. From Baghdad!

KASE

Nobody's watching us. That's just plain paranoid. Isn't it?
(soothing command)
Drunks, children, and Marines don't lie.

REBUL

I'm no child. Nor a drunkard.

Over-reacting, impulsive - Rebul swats Kase's hand. The cuttings FLING aside. Kase treads carefully:

KASE

Sure. You're officer material. Let me explain... Depending on oil and gas is lethal to my people. Deadly! Geothermal is wholesome. Clean. Our souls will be reborn.

Kase grabs a slop of drilling mud. He slips. Splatters the mud over the rig console. Covers up the NEON ORANGE fitting. Rebul yanks Kase away the computer console.

KASE (CONT'D)

On my old rig. The blowout rig. They had cameras. Everywhere?

Kase's knees weaken. He grabs a railing for support. His eyes are distant. Blank. Remembering...

REBUL

Sure they do. Watching night and day. For the liability insurance carrier. Mister - you okay, there?

KASE

(quiet desperation)
They watched me burn. Live on candid camera. Mother frackers.

REBUL

Huh. So you get it.

Kase backs away. Rebul follows him, cracking his knuckles.

REBUL (CONT'D)

It's creepy, isn't it? Knowing the brass are watching from some comfy wardroom. Watching the bullets fly. The blood gushing. The gore. Death.

Kase's back hits a railing - winces. He turns around - to see SPIKES on a tool behind his back... Kase hurries away, head down, wiping his hands clean with a red shop towel. Melba storms up. She confronts Rebul:

MELBA

Come on, Rebul. We go way back. When ya'll go there. No friends...

Melba steps closer, hands on her hips, sexing up to him.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Just because I have a college pedigree now doesn't mean I'm not still extreme off limits to any bloody rig hand with gonads...

Rebul fights back a smile. Melba steps closer. Grabs his arm.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Mr. Walker is a jerk and arrogant and reclusive and I don't like him so can you explain yourself?

REBUL

Actually. Ma'am? He seemed kinda alright to me. For an engineer.

MELBA

Did you just ma'am me?

REBUL

We're scared. Drilling on sacred Anasazi land? Don't have to be a native to be afraid o' that.

(deep breath, afraid)

Then, last week, the EVENT. Monk rapping on Heaven's Gate. We're one spat short of panic.

Rebul spits a wad out at her feet and hurries away. Melba spots Odan across the rig compound and hurries over to talk to him. Odan walks very fast. She matches his pace.

MELBA

What's going on? Last I heard, Monk was recovering nicely. Then Rebul just said - not?

ODAN

I am not authorized to say.

Kase is in the shadows below them, under the rig floor (visible through the steel deck grating).

Kase studies the giant red BLOWOUT PREVENTERS. Something flashes on the ground at his feet. It's Rebul's THREADED PLUG. Kase kicks it, looking every which way.

KASE

The safety rams locked up on Monk.
The question is - why?

Kase steps back, leaning over to pick up the THREADED PLUG. Kase's backside HITS a tool rack, RATTLING the loose TOOLS. Odan and Melba stop, looking that way.

It's only Maximo. Balancing on a railing, tail twitching. Eying a lizard. Melba oozes calm:

MELBA

How's Monk? She was my boss. My mentor. My heroine!

ODAN

Nein. We cannot afford to lose another engineer. Or geologist...

Melba steps closer, fury in her every feature.

MELBA

You always told me all the ugly before. Spared no gore. What's going on, Pa?
(sad, deflated)
Why aren't you trusting me?

ODAN

What matters out here is field experience... Following? Orders?

Kase grabs a giant wrench. Throws it over his shoulder. Scurries away like any other roughneck, head down.

MELBA

All we went through after *Mama* died. From an effing. Drug. Overdose. Make. That. Suicide?

An ALARM goes off. Odan runs that way, yelling at Melba:

ODAN

Tame. That. Wildcat.

Melba yells after him:

MELBA

I can make the clutch shots.

Melba stomps one foot - then the other - and finally notices Kase - now in the middle of the rig compound, pacing in circles, talking himself into a frenzy.

KASE

Two combat Marines, scared out of their wits. The rig super. The goddamn C.E.O. Wildcatters all. People like that don't scare easily. Doh! Don't scare at all.

Melba storms up to Kase, cornering him toward a RUNNING RIG PUMP. Kase's eyes go wide, looking every which way - trapped.

KASE (CONT'D)

That threatened plug. Beside the B.O.P.s that failed - sabotage?

Melba steps closer, assertive, but with a calm voice.

MELBA

Rebul's not good with authority figures. *Capiche?*

KASE

An engineer without data? That's cruel and unusual - punishment.

Kase takes a step back. His back HITS the NOISY pump. He's trapped - zoning out.

MELBA

I say again. This is no campus exercise. Where you can discover the answer in the back of the book. Or the teacher's manual.

Melba's watches, concerned, as Kase scratches one arm compulsively, eyes darting, a nervous wreck.

Melba takes his arm and walks him toward several trailers.

KASE

Have you seen - Maximo. I just saw him - and again.

MELBA

I locked the baby panther into the mud shack.

KASE
 (clutching his stomach)
 The acid is killing me, here. I'm
 effing SEEING THINGS. And - I - I -
 I'm all alone. Just me and Max.

Melba tries to pull Kase forward. His feet won't move.

MELBA
 (brave smile)
 This is no time to go cataleptic.

Kase fights back a thin smile, wiping tears of frustration from his eyes.

MELBA (CONT'D)
 What's this? The almighty engineer
 shows he is afraid...
 (quietly)
 The past coming back to haunt him?
 Your old blowout? How bad WAS it?

They stop to watch the helicopter land. Sullivan darts out, grabs Rebul and Bert and bundles them into a company truck.

They speed out of the compound in a cloud of dust.

KASE
 Oh, great. Right when we need all
 hands on deck, ready for action.

They watch the dust settle as Sullivan's truck disappears into the hills.

MELBA
Mamasita will go and play office
 babe and try and find out what's
 gong on. *Si?* See you in thirty.

Melba steps out. Kase focuses, watching as she heads toward a small trailer, his expression becoming grim.

Kase heads to another small trailer nearby.

Kase pauses to look up - saying a silent prayer - then ducks his head down and shuffles across the compound.

Kase sees a souped-up, desert-ready FORD BRONCO. Walks faster. Energized. Looking both ways to see if he's alone...

A FEW MINUTES LATER

The same Fort Bronco (Melba driving) slips out of the shadows and away from the rig site, heading toward the Pecos ruins.

Frowning deeply, Odan stands on the rig floor watching the Bronco leave, working worry beads in his big, dirty hands.

EXT. MOUNTAIN VALLEY - ANASAZI RUINS - DAY

Melba and Kase (both in well-worn rig coveralls now) exit the Bronco with Maximo. Kase lets Maximo off his leash. The big cat ZIPS around. Jumping for joy... Suddenly, Maximo stops. His head tilts. Listening. Alert.

Kase looks over - focusing, intense - on the other side of the ruins and flats below their elevation: Sullivan, Rebul, and Bert are searching with a Metal Detector.

KASE
They're looking for Anasazi
artifacts? Talk about - losing it.

MELBA
Sullivan has no hobbies.

KASE
Wildcatters do not get rattled by a
lousy one-day blowout... Something
else going on here. Something -
company confidential.
(quietly)
Speaking of which.

MELBA
Oh, yes. Be right back.

Melba hurries away. Walking, then - running. She reaches the Bronco. Opens the door. Roots around inside.

A BLAST OF SAND hits Kase in the face. He looks up: A VORTEX SWIRLS above the valley. Envelops it. A pulsating pressure aura. It's defined by specks of sand reflecting sunlight.

KASE
(to himself)
Masauwu holds dominion over the
land, helping lost spirits escape
from the malevolent underworld.

The vortex fades - just as Melba returns with a laptop.

They set it on a flat rock. Kase's voice is shaky.
Preoccupied.

CLOSE ON LAPTOP

A topographical map: Central valleys of New Mexico. The east edge borders Pecos Ruins. The images FLICKER sporadically.

MELBA (V.O.)

The Rio Grande Rift is one of five active continental rifts in the world. Think volcanoes, geysers, and molten magma right close to the crust. We're at the eastern edge of a continental. Danger. Zone.

KASE (V.O.)

What are all those little dots?

MELBA (V.O.)

Other geothermal wells drilled into the rift. I found all of their drilling reports.

(quietly, afraid)

Except for one.

Another simulation: A cross-section of the Earth. A giant "FRACTURE ZONE" a mile deep under Pecos. Marked with a red X.

KASE (V.O.)

I bet all those shallow wells were test wells. They found the sweet spot, then dug one last well, real deep, the one you couldn't find.

A simulated well drills down from the surface. Punctures the "FRACTURE ZONE." Purges enormous pent-up pressure. A GEYSER of WATER hits the STRATOSPHERE, forming CLOUDS.

MELBA (V.O.)

Talk about a wicked geology.

KASE

(sotto voice)

If you knew the myths... Ouch.

The simulation zooms: A close-up of the "FRACTURE ZONE." A mile below the surface. PULSING RED with pent-up pressure.

BACK TO SCENE

They stare at the screen: the ground implodes. Deep chasm. Dark. Then - the film burns away... Kase mangles his hands.

KASE (CONT'D)

It's a pressure inversion.

MELBA

That is only a theoretical.

Kase points up at THE VORTEX. It picks up more sand. Becomes more defined. Grows. Until now its stiff WINDS reach them.

KASE

Those flickers on the video? That was sections of the film they removed, then spliced together.

MELBA

You mean it's worse than the video? But of course it is because we are now looking right at the worst.
(crossing herself)
Santo Christo, what a *diablo*.

They stare as THE VORTEX vacuums up ambient colors from the mountains. Reds. Yellows. Oranges. Whole STREAKS of BLACK. Maximo steals back to them and sits quietly, staring upward.

KASE

I've always been uncomfortable with spirituality. Feels like we're staring right into it.

MELBA

I feel your need for data, now. And your loneliness. Desperation!

The VORTEX touches down. Kase grabs Maximo, and they hurry back to the Bronco. They stop short of the Bronco - afraid of the glistening colors of the WALL OF WIND blocking their way.

They rush through the WALL OF WIND. Bustle into the Bronco. CRANK the ENGINE. The STARTER GURGLES and DIES.

MELBA (V.O.)

How can we drill this well if what we need is secret classified? I mean, this is the government's damn well we're drilling here.

KASE (V.O.)

We're supposed to fail. Then they can splice us out of the picture.

They sit in the Bronco, watching a thin layer of wind-blown sand build up on the windshield.

EXT. ANASAZI PUEBLO RUINS - DOWNRANGE - DAY

Sullivan has a large tablet with a GPS topographic map of the area, leading Bert and Rebul, searching with metal detectors.

SULLIVAN

They'll figure this out. What are you gonna do then? Rub them out? Like you did Monk?

BERT
Monk wasn't an accident?

SULLIVAN
Los Alamos is a problem. We must do something about that man. I will NOT be denied my - vengeance.

BERT
You go first.

REBUL
What's he got on you?

Bert pauses to watch the VORTEX above them. It's transparent from their perspective, but the WIND is picking up.

SULLIVAN
The Irish Rebellion. Sinn Fein?

BERT
So you can beat the system?

Sullivan has their movements on a G.P.S. map. She leads them in a wide searching pattern. Bert points at a reflection off glass in the Anasazi ruins.

BERT (CONT'D)
Sir? Eyes in the ruins, there.

REBUL
We need to go.

Bert gets a HIT. All three fall to their knees, digging.

SULLIVAN
Hush. They need to know what's going on. There's too much at stake to take chances. The Earth itself -

They uncover a 2-foot square "NUCLEAR RADIATION HAZARD" panel. Rebul uses a special HEX KEY to open it.

REBUL
Hey, lady. God gave us the Earth to frack with as we damn well please.

SULLIVAN
That's what Oppenheimer said when they detonated the atom bomb.
(quietly)
There was a chance they'd evaporate the whole fracking atmosphere.
Poof. Suddenly gone. Dead planet.

Rebul activates a SWITCH (red light blinking). PUMPS an ELECTRICAL PLUNGER. An electrical panel blinks, "ACTIVATED."

A countdown starts from 90 seconds. Rebul closes the panel. They cover it back up.

REBUL
Come on, people. God Almighty's
watching - let's beat feet.

They hustle away. Disappear over a hill out of view.

There's a DEEP EXPLOSION. The ground TREMBLES. Rocks roll down nearby mountainsides.

EXT. PECOS NATIONAL PARK - DAY

Kase tries the Bronco - it STALLS. Kase and Melba exit.

KASE
That E.M. vortex must have skewed
the electronics... Also.

They find a place to sit, with a vantage on the rig below them. The vortex is a faint breeze now. (Sullivan and the others are on the other side of the ruins, out of sight.)

They watch Maximo. He's keen on a MOUND OF PEBBLES nearby.

KASE (CONT'D)
Grandpa says he's my spirit guide.
Until I go on a vision quest. And
then - whatever all that means.

MELBA
I share your skepticism. Many
Catholics go into the Wilderness.
Seeking perplexing answers. Sanity?
As did Jesus. Moses. Job.

KASE
Speaking of lost in the wilderness.
I forgot to introduce you to the
other member of our - team.

Kase pulls an oversized smartphone out of his backpack.

Kase opens an app, studying the display.

KASE (CONT'D)
We're at twenty-four thousand feet,
making good progress.

Suddenly animated, Melba grabs the smartphone, scans it.

KASE (CONT'D)
 I've been plugging U.S.B.
 connection ports into key rig
 systems. They transmit data.

They're so intent on the screen, they don't see several small
 boulders roll down the hillside - then stop. Maximo sees
 them, though. STALKS toward them.

KASE (CONT'D)
 To this A.I. algorithm. My P.H.D. -
 project. Early warning system for
 blowouts. It's amber now. Caution.

Behind them, unseen, Maximo DIGS into the MOUND OF PEBBLES.

MELBA
 Caution? What is - caution - on a
 scale from zero to ten?
 (quietly)
 Did you feel a tremor just now?

KASE
 When you're wilddcatting, everything
 is important. You can't miss a
 single, solitary detail, no matter
 how small - inconsequential.

MELBA
 Such as a tremor? A baby
 earthquake, with aftershocks?
 (louder)
 Are you even listening to me? Your
 geologist sidekick? HELLO?

Kase points toward where Maximo is digging.

KASE
 For example, THAT mound does NOT
 belong here. Come on.

Kase jogs over to the mound. He inspects a fistful.

KASE (CONT'D)
 These are cuttings, from a drill
 well. This is what Sullivan was
 looking for.

They each get a hand full of cuttings, studying them.

KASE (CONT'D)
 They're curved as if popped off the
 well from extreme high pressure.
 Just like Rebul's cutting sample...

MELBA

You want popping off, do you? O.K.
 (LOUD, insistent)
 Did you hear me before, asking if
 you felt the earth shake?

Kase's BOOT makes a HOLLOW SOUND. He STOMPS the ground.

KASE

Huh. Felt solid. Sounds solid. This
 is what they were looking for.

MELBA

(to herself)
 It is time to bring the briar patch
 to the *conejo*.

Melba stomps one foot, exasperated. Then the other.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Enough already. You are avoiding me
 because you do not value my opinion
 over the A.I. This rankles me.

Kase squats down to dig down into the rubble. Melba helps.

Several inches beneath the surface they find the top of a
 four-foot diameter vertical pipe, filled with concrete.

KASE

It's an old wellhead.

MELBA

Dios, mio. We're drilling into that
 goddamn super-fracture zone be -
 because the vortex proves it.
 (crossing herself)
Jesus, Maria, and Jose. This is the
 last well in that simulation video.
 The Well to Hades.

A STIFF WIND kicks up a wall of sand. They turn aside. Shield
 their eyes from a wicked sandblast. Eyes closed tight,
 they're disoriented, afraid.

KASE

We believe the searing hot winds of
 the desert are the righteous breath
 of Tawa, the avenging Sun Goddess.
 (quietly)
 Mother to The Skeleton Man.

The GUST of wind fades away. Opening their eyes, they watch
 the WALL OF SAND sweep down the valley.

KASE (CONT'D)

Tawa. That's what the Anasazi called the electromagnetic vortex we saw. The sudden death in the deep desert. Dune Apocalypse.

MELBA

Well, at least we are now talking.
If not yet in complete sentences.

They study the environs: craggy mountains, desolate, all but lifeless. The setting sun makes it look like a moonscape.

MAXIMO HOWLS. They follow him back to the Bronco. Kase arrives first. He gets a bag of cat treats. Feeds Maximo.

INT. BRONCO/EXT. PECOS FIELD - NIGHT

The Bronco (headlights on, Kase driving) motors across the bleak landscape. Sunset falls. Deep shadows. Contrasted against a bright sky visible above the mountain rim.

KASE

I was raised in a - a Navajo boarding school. They treated us like cattle.
(quietly)
Forced us to become good little Christians. To worship your *Jesus*, God of Death.

Melba studies Kase's face in the shifting shadows, approaching the lights of the rig compound.

MELBA

This dark animosity of yours. I think this is because you are too alone. You must work on that. Also.

Kase slows down. His eyes become distant. Staring...

KASE

Tawa, the biting sand wind. It's where my people go. On their last vision quest. To meet their maker.

MONTAGE - FLASHBACK TO KASE'S CHILDHOOD

- A young Kase and a girl leave a schoolhouse adjacent to a church. As soon as they're out of sight, they hold hands.

- A medicine dance at dusk. Kase helps his father, keeping the ceremonial fire going. One figure dancing is THE SKELETON MAN. A somber priest looks on, scowling, disapproving.

- Several late-model pickups kick up dust, surrounding the medicine ceremony. A bunch of drunk rednecks jump out and set up a tailgate barbecue - watching the ceremonial dance.

- The rednecks are rowdy. Rude. Ugly.

BACK TO SCENE

Kase blinks back to the present - squinting at the now very close BRIGHT LIGHTS of the rig compound. He quickly brakes...

The rig compound is full of folks in colorful clothes, mingling. Smoke rises from a cookout.

Rig hands relax around a couple of kegs, sipping draft beer.

EXT. SECRET LOS ALAMOS TEST SITE - DOWNRANGE - NIGHT

Sullivan surveys the mountains around them, outlined by the fading sunset. The VORTEX is above them, getting STRONGER.

REBUL

That's it? One baby earthquake?

SULLIVAN

Up here all we saw was a grumble.
But three miles down? A cataclysmic
explosion fractured the ground for
miles in every direction.

BERT

The radiation symbol I saw. They
exploded a nuclear device way down
yonder?

SULLIVAN

There will be aftershocks. Then
this whole area will crater away.
Boom. Suddenly gone. Every. Thing.

Rebul grabs her arm, brandishing a pistol.

REBUL

You lie.

SULLIVAN

Sorry, boyo. We just opened the
Gates of Hell.

Sullivan points up at the VORTEX. They all look upward:

BERT

You mean like Leviathan, the Old
Testament desert monster?

The VORTEX has lifted upward, but it still SWIRLS above the mountains like the eye of a hurricane. It SUCKS UP CLOUDS from every direction. An overcast becomes BRIGHT BLUE sky.

SULLIVAN

(quietly)

Who dares open Leviathan's mouth,
ringed with fearsome teeth? When
she rises up, the mighty are
terrified. They retreat before her
thrashing.

Three worried faces bundle into the rig truck.

The ENGINE STARTS. The headlights come on. They head back to the rig.

The compound is a block party.

EXT. PECOS OIL FIELD - RIG COMPOUND - BARBEQUE - NIGHT

Kase and Melba exit the Bronco and walk toward picnic tables set up near a grilling pit. (Maximo follows them for a few steps but then disappears. Chasing lightning bugs.)

MELBA

I need normal right now. P-lease.

As Kase and Melba wait in the serving line for hamburgers and fixings - across the way, workers rig up a basketball goal.

KASE

Who'd you play for?

MELBA

The Kentucky Wildcats, which is a
poetic injustice, right? Pa said -
(deep voice)
If I pay the bills you will at
least get the proper pedigree. *Ja?*

KASE

I thought it was a vanity bag. When
we first arrived. Then, your slide -

MELBA

You were watching my moves. And
with bad thoughts in your groins.

KASE

Just - being honest.

MELBA

You admit it!

She grabs her plate, a soda, leaving. Kase yells after her:

KASE
Is that normal enough for you?

Melba flicks him the bird, and hurries away - running.

Odan (loud party clothes) swoops in and grabs Melba's arm.

ODAN
We are all professionals here.

Odan slows Melba down and steers her to a quiet table.

Kase watches them go. He looks at his plate. Unsure, wanting to follow them. He grabs a soda, turns, and -

A basketball rolls up to Kase's feet. Coasts to a stop. Kase stares at the ball - looks up. Around.

ROUGHNECK
Come on, Mr. Walker. Afraid to
break a sweat with the hired help?

A lady ROUGHNECK swoops in. Grabs the basketball. Jets away, dribbling into a pick-up game going on. Kase yells at her:

KASE
Hola. A little respect there.

Kase heads over to the game - walking faster, taking his shirt off in route.

EXT. DRILLING RIG - COMPANY BARBECUE - CONTINUOUS

Melba and Odan fill plastic cups at a keg and step over to a picnic table, sitting on the top - watching the b-ball game.

MELBA
We're drilling into an active
volcano of highest pressure, and
you go and throw a *fiesta*.

Melba glares at him, her arms crossed, face scrunched up.

ODAN
We lost rig power earlier. People
became frightened. OMG, it's the
mummy's curse that killed Monk.

MELBA
Monk died? *Dios mio.*
(crossing herself)
I feel a need for religion now.

His eyes downcast, Odan mutters:

ODAN

I had to do something to get them
back into harmony. Family time is
the only thing I could think of.

There's a GROUND TREMOR. They step off the table to stand.

ODAN (CONT'D)

Chill. It is the rig weight
settling down into the bedrock.

MELBA

It is NOT. The geology has been
changing and very fast beneath us.
It has changed the whole gravity
field. The E.M. vortex overhead -

ODAN

Gotterdammerung, you read our
confidential files!

MELBA

F your stupid rules.

Melba turns, head high, shoulders back, and bustles away.
Odan, shoulders slumping, depressed, watches her go:

ODAN

So much for the teenage flirt.

Melba spots the basketball game. Runs to her trailer. Rebul
and Bert exit the serving line and head for a table.

BERT

I feel like we're working for
Satan, the Devil Herself.

REBUL

She needed muscle. Pay's good. Come
on, Bert - you just need to let off
some steam. Righteous steam.

Melba emerges from her trailer, wearing gym shorts and a tank
top. Bert and Rebul stare at Melba. Stare at each other.

Rebul and Bert stand up. Head over the b-ball game. Rebul
talks to the players - and waves them off. As she approaches
the b-ball court, Kase throws Melba a pass.

MELBA

Pa doesn't want you around the
crew, with your dark forebodings.

KASE
Your Pa? Or - you?

Melba THROWS the ball. HARD. Knocks the wind out of him.

MELBA
You wish to get me all sweaty, do
you? You and all the other macho
rig hands? Well, game on - Kasey.

Rebul and Bert line up against them. (Their shirts are off,
revealing many colorful Marine Corps tattoos.)

REBUL
Vengeance is the Lord's.

Kase extends his hand to Melba. Hesitating, Melba grabs it
and shakes - HARD, suddenly fiercely determined.

LATER

A dozen rig crew hoot and holler for the home team (Bert and
Rebul), groaning every time Melba makes a goal.

Odan watches from the rig floor above, arms crossed, but
smiling.

Both drenched in sweat, Kase hits Melba with a bullet pass.
She streaks in for two easy points. Kase gives a "T" with his
hands. Everybody stops to tank up on water (or beer).

Kase and Melba chat, downing bottled water:

MELBA
You are a lousy shot. But that
killer pass? My fingers need glue.

KASE
Oh, crap. Where did THAT come from?

Kase double takes, staring across the compound as a couple of
WOODEN PLANKS lining a roadway leaving the rig (to distribute
weight for very heavy loads) POP UP.

KASE (CONT'D)
The drilling parameters were okay.
(yelling at Melba)
Boards. POPPING!

Kase points that way. Melba looks - as MORE BOARDS POP OFF.

MELBA
It's the video. The fractal field
craters the ground beneath us.

KASE

Oh, man. The last frame in the
video. The earth cratering away.
Blackness. Melting. Burning!

Kase reaches into his pocket for his smartphone, just as -
Rebul SLUGS him. BONES CRUNCH. Kase stumbles back. His legs
are putty.

Kase gets his balance.

Kase ducks his head down and starts punching Rebul - then
pounding Bert. High. Low. Hard. Furious.

Rebul immobilizes Kase from behind and holds him steady.

BERT

Down under, we stake bogans like
you in the middle of a termite
mound, sit back with a cold brew,
and listen to the music. Beauty.

Bert SLAMS a DOUBLE JAB in Kase's back. Kase screams, in pure
agony, falling - screaming. Odan swoops in. Grabs Bert and
Rebul. Throws them back.

ODAN

Boo! You two missed my talk on the
Adams Family Values.

Odan (winking at Kase) muscles Bert and Rebul away.

Fighting back a mischievous smile, Kase puts his shirt on.
Maximo appears out of nowhere. Climbs into Kase's lap.

KASE

Hey, Maximo. Having fun, are we?

MELBA

You and that damn pussy. Why can't
you be this sort of kind to me?
Melba? After what you just -

An angry Melba stands over him, hands-on-hips upset. Kase
scratches the big cat, who's PURRING real LOUD.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Oye. You let them beat up on you.

KASE

Nothing better for uniting a crew
than hating on the starched white
collars.

Maximo, eying BUGS flitting in the lights, darts away. They watch Maximo bolt across the compound, stalking.

MELBA
Coaching I like. But being
manipulated? Very outrageous. And I
am no starched collar. WHITE?

Kase eases his smartphone out, pulls up the app - and shows her a BLINKING ORANGE SCREEN.

MELBA (CONT'D)
Do not show this to my Pa.
(gruff German voice)
What matters here is experience. Of
which you have - *nein*.

Melba points at the derrick above them.

MELBA (CONT'D)
There is darkness above.

KASE
We need that flare. It purges the
toxic fumes. Deadly fumes.
(quietly)
On my old rig fire. The toxic
fumes... Made me - hallucinate?

Wide-eyed, Kase bolts into the night. Melba watches Kase climb the rig tower. He disappears into darkness at the top. (Above the rig lights.) She yells after him:

MELBA
That toxic will kill you up there.
(to herself)
It's all an illusion. The vortex.
The cat. The video clip from Hell.

Suddenly the FLARE EXPLODES in a BALL OF FLAMES, lighting up the rig compound like it was daytime. Then - it goes dark.

EXT. RIG DERRICK - CROW'S NEST

Kase closes the "FLARE CONTROL PANEL." Grabs on tight with one hand. YANKS a LEVER with his free hand.

A huge BALL OF GAS explodes above him - JETTING HIGH ABOVE.

As the BALL OF FIRE rises, Kase startles - at a large pit being dug in a ravine. Piping. Pumps. All hidden from view.

KASE
THAT doesn't belong THERE either.

He pulls out his smartphone. Snaps a photo, just as the fireball dissipates. He's in shock. Mortified. Blank.

Kase sits down on a precarious edge, pulling the walkie-talkie out of his cargo pants pocket.

KASE (CONT'D)

Got a wild theory. Not sure if I
could spit it out face to face.

No answer. Kase sighs and goes to put the radio away.

MELBAS (V.O.)

Oops. The buttons just - POPPED!

The canopy of stars is spectacular. Oranges. Yellow. Trillions of dots. The Milky Way at its proudest.

KASE

We look for oil in faults, right?
That's where hydrocarbons collect,
where layers of rock shift apart.

MELBA (V.O.)

Yes. We do look for faults in the
geology. In the people...

KASE

Faults are like hinges that keep
the Earth's crust flexible. If we
remove the oil. The hinges freeze
up. You get earthquakes.

MELBA (V.O.)

So the fracture under the ground we
saw in the simulation is causing -

KASE

Massive tectonic plates? Colliding!
The mother of all - EARTHQUAKES!

There's a TREMOR. The TOWER SHAKES. Kase grabs on with two hands. The radio - falls into the darkness below. As soon as the TREMOR subsides, Kase hurries down - into darkness.

RIG COMPOUND - COMPANY BARBECUE

The RIG SHAKES. The derrick lights go out. By the light of the FLARE OF FIRE roiling into the sky: Rig hands hustle away. Walking. Then running as PANIC sets in.

Kase appears out of the darkness, just as the rig lights come back on: The picnic is empty. Rig hands are all at work... Melba gets up to leave, but Kase pulls her back.

KASE
Let them do their job.

Melba is as nervous as a caged tiger.

MELBA
I despise sitting here and doing
nothing. Thinking of that video.
The earth imploding into a chaos.

Kase shows her the photo he took from the derrick tower.

KASE
Saw this from the tower just now.
They're digging an overflow pit in
a deep ravine north of here.

MELBA
That shimmering - it is plastic.
That is for storing oil, so it does
not pollute the ground dirt.

KASE
They're expecting oil. And then -
mega quake. Mega oil. Hurray!

They watch the rig crew hustling around on the drilling
floor, starting to drill again. Kase says quietly:

KASE (CONT'D)
This is where you tell me I'm being
paranoid. Delusional. *Conejo*.

Melba jumps up, hands on her hips, glaring at Kase.

MELBA
You would not hear me anyways.
Please, go rest your frazzles.
(pointing skyward)
That's an order, from *El Señor*.

Melba hurries off, first walking - then running - and
disappears into a small trailer.

PECOS DRILLING SITE - NIGHT

Drilling proceeds. Workers scurry around. A full moon rises.
The shimmering VORTEX hovers over the rig. Fading in and out.
A massive STORM FRONT approaches. Blacks out the Moon. Dark.

OFF THE RIG FLOOR - MUD SHACK - DAY

Kase and Melba (well-worn coveralls, work boots) watch a
BREWING STORM in the distance. A MAZE of LIGHTNING.

Bags under his eyes like he hadn't slept, Kase slips on sunglasses. Distraught and fidgeting, Kase says quietly:

KASE
It was a long night, waiting for
Maximo to show up. After he -
(quietly)
We need him. He senses things far
beyond our perceptions.

Heavy cloud-to-ground LIGHTNING hastens toward the rig.
THUNDER rolls, REVERBERATING the canyon with RESTLESS ENERGY.

MELBA
Whatever about women's intuition?

They watch workers scurry around. Tying things down against a
GUSTY, violent WIND from the incoming storm front.

They look up at a WHOOSH and a brief FLARE ON FIRE above at
the top of the rig. A stiff wind blows the fire out.

MELBA (CONT'D)
You smell the gas? With the flare
out - there is no fire to burn away
the toxic gas.

A thick, sooty SMOKE surrounds the rig now, obscuring
everything. Melba breaks away, coughing. Heaving.

MELBA (CONT'D)
The toxic fumes. They. Will make us
go psychotic. Happened. On my old
blowout. Just before -

Coughing from the smoke, they hustle across the rig floor to
a rugged trailer squeezed between powerful rig engines.

MUD SHACK

Kase and Melba bundle into a rugged trailer. Wall-to-wall
computers. Reference books. Equipment lockers.

Kase rifles through a kitchenette - finds a can of tuna.

KASE
If all else fails. Charlie Tuna.

Kase opens the can of tuna and sets it outside the door. Then
he turns and, arms crossed, levels a hard look at Melba.

MELBA
Señor, I have been the best cat
Mommy ever... He is deaf to me.

Melba points around the room. Toys made out of rope and rig clutter. A bag of cat treats. An opened can of tuna.

Tears well in Kase's eyes. His shoulders slump. His mouth is downturned. He collapses into a chair. Stares ahead.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Unlax. He is okay. We cannot lose focus...

There's a motion. Kase looks at a window. Maximo is sitting there. Looking inside. Tail wagging.

Kase bolts out the door.

Kase returns with Maximo. Hugging him. True joy in his face. Victory from the jaws of defeat.

KASE

Oh, thank the Gods.

Kase grabs the cat of tuna and fishes a portion out. Maximo ignores the food. He only has eyes for Kase. He PURRS very LOUD.

Maximo stops purring. He backs away from Kase, alert - tail twitching.

Kase tries to get close, but Maximo backs away, ears back, hackles up, brief YELP. Kase reaches out, oozing calm:

KASE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, sport. I was busy. Confused. I looked for you all night. All over the rig.

MELBA

Get him a G.P.S. collar.

KASE

And take the mystery out of cats?

MELBA

I feel sorrow for your girlfriend.

Kase pats his lap, but Maximo - HOWLS again, looking around, JUMPING UP at a SOUND. Kase stares at Melba.

KASE

He's a rig cat. We grew up in the oil field. He knows the sights, the sounds, the tempo.

They JUMP as Maximo CATERWAULS.

The big cat's eyes are wide and black now - pacing around, anxious and jumpy, his tail TWITCHING.

Every nuance of a sound and Maximo REACTS.

KASE (CONT'D)
(quietly)
Huh. The tempo.

Kase stares blankly at Melba. She crosses her arms, upset.

KASE (CONT'D)
It's the rig. That's it. The rig.

Suddenly energized, Kase jumps to his feet, eyes sparkling. Kase hustles over to yank open a rusty locker.

MELBA
I have an opinion. You are loco.
The cat is loco. Certifiable loco.

Kase puts on a hard hat. Pulls out a duffel bag (orange "EMERGENCY" embossed lettering).

KASE
Suit up, Melba. Now.

Biting her cheek, Melba takes a baby step backward.

KASE (CONT'D)
Maximo. He's deaf. He depends on
VIBRATIONS. All his other senses.

Shaking her head slowly, Melba watches Kase pull on a safety belt with quick-release tools (flashlight, rope, wrenches).

MELBA
I do NOT take orders from any cat.

KASE
Then hear this.

Kase gets a WHISTLE tied to a suspender. BLOWS THE WHISTLE in Melba's face.

MELBA STARTLES BACKWARD.

Melba gets her gear out of a locker, suiting up - slowly, reluctant.

The rig JOLTS. Melba moves faster.

Vibrations shutter through the rig superstructure. Tools on the walls RATTLE.

Melba FLINCHES at the noise. Her face pale, Melba stumbles backward until her back HITS a wall, her eyes big and afraid:

MELBA

That was more than a tremor. Ohhhh,
myyyy, it's still tremor-ing... The
whole earth is shaking - away!

Melba points to water in a glass shifting, waving. In a blind panic, she rushes to put her gear on.

Kase picks up an intercom receiver, yelling into it:

KASE

All hands. This is the engineer.
Rig for -

A KLAXON GAS ALARM SOUNDS.

Kase and Melba bend over, in pain from the high-intensity sound. Kase rushes over to a control panel to disable the KLAXON. Kase yells into the intercom:

KASE (CONT'D)

Gas alarm. This is not a drill. I
repeat. Rig. For. Battle. Stations.

Maximo jumps onto a table, watching all the excitement, ears up, tail twitching.

Kase grabs a long paper plot from a drum roller, RIPS it off, and shows it to Melba.

KASE (CONT'D)

More gas spikes. Seen any before?

MELBA

One giant spike when we returned
from the Grande Rift field trip.

KASE

(studying the chart)
This signature - an explosion.
Underground. Very - underground.

Melba acts offended, her fists balls of fury before her.

MELBA

Oye. Have I not been saying just
that since the get-go? Since the
moment it happened when we were at
the Anasazi ruins site?

Melba stares at Kase, frozen, her eyes focused beyond him:

KASE
Talk to me. Tell me about the
geology. Please. I'm all ears.

Melba hesitates.

Melba hurries to find a cross-section drawing of the geology.
Points at a SPIKE on the graph.

MELBA
Just below us are the RED super-
charged sands on your kickoff
meeting diagram, and - and -

KASE
The extreme high pressure on the -
on the - Top Secret - video.

Holding his stomach like he had acid reflux, Kase looks
queasy and nauseous. Eyes blinking rapidly. Unfocused.

KASE (CONT'D)
A super blowout? Here? Now?

Melba gets him a bottle of water and fans his face.

MELBA
Relax, Kasey. Swallow a big breath
of fresh air. I am here for you.
Me. Melba. Your briar patch.

Kase picks up the red "DRILLER'S HOT LINE" phone on the wall,
yelling into it.

KASE
Raise the mud weight. Two tenths.

Verging on panic, Melba talks too loud:

MELBA
That is wrong. The geology is
delicate. On edge. This will break
it. The chain-of-events...
(stern, commanding)
I must cancel this order.

Melba picks up the "DRILLER'S HOT LINE," but Kase slams it
down.

KASE
Who's the Maximo here? Huh?

Melba stares at her hand on the phone (painted fingernails,
cracked and jagged), in shock.

MELBA

I cannot do this. I am an office
girl. I have polished fingernails.
I wear perfume and lacy lingerie.

They both stagger from another TREMOR. Melba gloms onto Kase
to keep from falling.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Wait, check your A.I. drilling app.

Kase pulls out the smartphone and shows her. He reads it:

KASE

(mechanical monotone)

I warned you. *Adios, amigos.*

They stare at each other, mouths agape - frightened.

DRILLING RIG FLOOR - ROTARY TABLE

Nervous roughnecks (including Bert and Rebul) hustle around
the rotary to plug STEAM VENTING around the drilling pipe.

Pulling on his emergency gear, Odan (harried, wild hair,
working the RED WORRY BEADS in his grimy hands) exits the
driller's shack just as Kase and Melba come run up.

ODAN

Am I ever glad to see you. What is
happening with your instruments?

MELBA

(German accent)

They are screaming out to me.
Blowout. Pressure. Disaster.

Around them, workers hurry to plug a rash of ANGRY GAS LEAKS.

ODAN

Everything is gone *kaput*. No data.
We have only - us.

MELBA

Time to shut her in.

ODAN

Affirmative.

Kase leads them to a "BLOWOUT PREVENTER PANEL."

Suddenly a WAVE OF ORANGE fumes wafts over them.

They CHOKE and WHEEZE.

ODAN (CONT'D)
Hydrogen sulfide. Poison. Toxic.

They hold RAGS over their mouths, CHOKING as they talk.

ODAN (CONT'D)
We cannot shut the well in now. We
must contain the hydrogen sulfide.

They look toward Kase, but he's not paying attention.

KASE
(scared voice)
This is exactly where I was before.
On the Global Marine drillship. The
blowout. Rig fire. Disaster...

Kase rocks back and forth, mumbling:

KASE (CONT'D)
Same place. Same situation. What
did I do wrong?

All the rig hands (including Bert and Rebul) stare at Kase,
waiting - anxious - pale, sweating buckshot. Melba steps up
to Kase and grabs his collar, SHAKING him.

MELBA
Shake out of it. We need you.
(shaking him harder)
I need you!

KASE
(dull, lifeless tone)
A hydrogen sulfide bomb vortex? It
would wipe out all of Santa Fe. We
have to burn it. Boom! Torch the
rig. We're crispy critters...

Melba THROWS Kase against a wall.

Kase CONKS his head. He shutters. His knees buckle. He grabs
a railing for support. He has a vision. In the distance...

ANASAZI WARRIORS! Charging the rig. Tomahawks drawn. WAR
CRIES. ARROWS FLY....

Kase is dazed and confused. Mumbling:

KASE (CONT'D)
TRAPPED. The pressure is trapped
down there. Nowhere to go.

Kase shakes out of it. He grabs Melba's arms, SHAKING her.

KASE (CONT'D)
That's it. We have to give the
pressure somewhere to go.
(sudden resolve)
Rig up for drilling ahead. Now.

Melba and Odan don't move a muscle. Kase yells at them:

KASE (CONT'D)
Don't just stand there. Man your
stations.

ODAN
Not after you zoned out like that.

MELBA
Explain for us. Fast. Rational.

Kase points out at the rig compound.

KASE
The pressure is here. We can't stop
it. It's coming, no matter what we
do. Coming. COMING!

MELBA
This is your plan? WAIT?

Suddenly, Kase grabs Odan and Melba, pulling them close.

KASE
We don't STOP the blowout. We MAKE
it happen. But we CONTROL it.

Melba's distracted. She stares at an arrow embedded in a
wooden strut. Still vibrating...

ODAN
Create a blowout? That is just -
madness.

KASE
We FORCE the pressure - ALL the
pressure - into the wellbore - then
LET. IT. RIP.

They both stare at Melba. She startles back to reality.

MELBA
Vent all that pressure up the
wellbore? Before it can earthquake
the ground from under us? Huh.

They both stare at Odan, who's pensive, brow furrowed.

ODAN

I believe this is as good a time as
any to break the rules.

The EARTH QUAKES. They grab on until the TREMORS subside.
Giant CRACKS form in the rig compound, venting STEAM. SINK
HOLES appear.

MELBA

The ground is cratering. Implosion!

KASE

(yelling to the rig hands)
Man your stations. NOW!
(to Odan and Melba)
Rig for pressure. Hurry.

Odan steps over to mechanical controls for the ROTARY TABLE.
Melba rushes over to a complex computer console, pulling up a
series of graphics. Her motions are exact - purposeful.

MELBA

Finally, we see the Wildcat
Maximo's large *cojones*.

Kase pulls out his smartphone, making calculations with
lightning-fast motions.

KASE

I sure hope this works.

Pressure increasing everywhere: STEAM vents. DRILLING FLUIDS
GUSH. The RIG RATTLES from TREMORS. Kase yells at them:

KASE (CONT'D)

Status report.

Odan and Melba give Kase a Thumbs Up.

ODAN

Sullivan had me trip in a new
diamond drilling bit two days ago.

KASE

Put everything you got on that
diamond bit. Weight. Speed.

Odan punches levers and knobs on a mechanical control panel.
Kase hollers at Melba:

KASE (CONT'D)

Tell me when we break through that
caprock. The split second.
Understood?

Melba dials up readings on her computers. Kase screams to Odan:

KASE (CONT'D)
Okay, Pops. Pour. It. On. Maximum torque.

Odan THROWS LEVERS. The ROTARY TABLE SPINS UP, slinging mud everywhere. The drill string picks up speed. SPINNING FAST.

Kase grabs a steel bracing with both hands, bracing his legs.

KASE (CONT'D)
Here comes the pressure. Hang on.

STEAM VENTS all around the rig floor from broken pipes.

The GROUND SHAKES. STEAM VENTS upward from FISSURES.

MELBA
Oh, glory, we are going straight to Hell.

Melba points to fingers of GLOWING GAS hovering close over the rig floor. Odan yells:

ODAN
Everybody stay put. One stray spark and the gas explodes.

The RIG SHAKES from MASSIVE UNDERGROUND PRESSURE. Odan and Melba grab the superstructure for support, whispering (relative to the RAGING NOISE):

MELBA
This does not feel like controlling a blowout.

They both look at Kase: Intent on his calculations. Eyes darting at instruments all around the rig floor.

ODAN
He is looking at all the right data. I do believe he is one with Mother Nature right now.

TREMORS increase in WAVES. DEEP FISSURES form in the ground.

STEAM VENTS from the CRACKS, JETTING wet sand high into the air, BLOWING through TRAILERS, VEHICLES, and EQUIPMENT.

KASE
Okay, girl. Tell me when we reach that caprock.

The venting steam forms clouds overhead. It's dark as night.

MELBA

How do I know when... ?

ODAN

Your instincts are good. That hook
shot of yours never fails to amaze.

Melba nods, resolved, focusing on her instruments. Both Odan and Kase watch Melba with one eye. The chaos with the other.

LIGHTNING STRIKES - very near the rig floor. THUNDER RUMBLES.

LIGHTNING hits a bank of pumps. FIRES erupt at the fuel tanks, on pumps, and vehicles.

ODAN (CONT'D)

Hydrogen Sulfide. It is extremely
flammable. One more lighting hit
like that and we are pop tarts.

Melba raises her FIST. Kase and Odan don't see her.

MELBA SCREAMS. That gets their attention. Kase darts over to muscle a giant BRAKE LEVER. It won't budge.

Bert hustles up to help Kase. They activate the BRAKE. The drill string GRINDS TO A STOP. Metallic SCREECHING rattles the steel rafters.

People clamp hands over their ears. BLOOD seeps from BROKEN EARDRUMS. Kase jumps onto the rotary table, and YELLS:

KASE

NOW! Disconnect the drill string.
Close the blowout preventers.

Roughnecks clamp massive pneumatic POWER GRIPS on the drill pipe and TWIST the pipe apart, BREAKING a connection.

ODAN

(yelling, frantic)
Evacuate the dance floor.

Black drilling fluid SHOOTs OUT of the open drill pipe.

Odan opens a glass "EMERGENCY B.O.P." cover, holding his fist over a shiny RED KNOB.

ODAN (CONT'D)

Closing the Blow Out Preventers.

Odan SLAMS the RED KNOB with his clenched fist.

ON DIGITAL CONTROL PANEL

Bright red "BLOW OUT PREVENTER STACK" comes to life.

Large pneumatic rams close over the drill string, IMPLODING the steel pipe like so much Papier-Mache.

A bold RED "X" flashes on the display - BLINKING.

BACK TO SCENE

Mud SPURTS ever higher out of the open-ended drill string.

ODAN

I can't close off the drill string.

MELBA

There is too much pressure inside the well. The explosion down there has fractured the whole area - releasing all that pressure - here!

ODAN

My blowout rams aren't designed to operate against this extreme a pressure.

Hands a funnel over his mouth, Kase SCREAMS at them.

KASE

Run. Goddammit. Run like a rabbit.

Melba hurries to the mud shack and ducks inside. Runs back out, carrying Maximo (ears back, eyes black) in her arms.

Odan is right behind her.

Kase grabs a FIRE AX and hurries down to the ground level.

GROUND LEVEL - BOP STACK

Kase STOPS at the cluster of equipment around the drill pipe.

Kase swings the ax and severs the main ELECTRICAL SERVICE.

Kase FREEZES in a blue electromagnetic cloud (you can see his FULL SKELETON like an x-ray), his hair standing on end. This lasts for a while, as he works to contain the blowout.

The power goes off rig-wide. It's dark. Shadows. Steady lightning strikes. Burning gas hovering at ankle height.

MELBA

Run, Kasey, run.

Kase runs away from the rig. FIRES burn on the soles of his boots. BOARDS POP OFF the plank-board roadway.

When Kase is halfway across the rig compound, the gushing oil turns into a water gusher. Kase slows down, holding his arms out, turning round and round.

KASE

Water. Damn. We did it. Pay dirt.
It's hot water. Geothermal hot.

MELBA

Fire! On the boots!

Melba points at Kase's burning boots, waving her arms - frantic. Kase looks down - STOMPS the PERSISTENT flames out, turning it into a styled Navajo war dance.

Melba runs up to Kase and throws her arms around him.

MELBA (CONT'D)

You did it. Hurray! Touchdown.

Kase peels her arms off him and holds her at arm's length.

KASE

WE did it. Not me. We... Give
yourself some credit, or I'll have
to give the kudos to Maximo again.

She backs off. Kase takes a step toward her but - stops. They stand in the water spray, washing the drilling mud off their clothes - eyes locked on each other. Smiling.

MELBA

You have unexpected depths, Mr.
Walker. For a *conejo*.

KASE

Walking on fire? That sounds like -
(quietly)
Anasazi. Vision quest - lingo.

Odan steps over and extends his hand - he and Kase shake.

ODAN

You have saved my people. I salute
you.

Odan thumps his chest over his heart with his right fist.

They stare up as the water geyser is tinted in GHASTLY shades of BLOOD RED, wiping mud and grease from their faces.

MELBA

Oye. You controlled the rig, Pa.
(looking at Kase)
But - how did you do it?

KASE

With the power off, the pumps stop.
Blowout stops... More or less.

Kase looks at her, arms crossed, his hands tucked into his armpits, thumbs visible and pointing up - real proud.

MELBA

The toxic gas. Feeling...

Melba wobbles on unsteady knees, falling in a faint. As Kase and Odan grab Melba, they all collapse under her weight at a picnic table from the barbeque.

ODAN

She is only exhausted. This happens
after every big game.

KASE

Speaking of - championships...

ODAN

He is in my house... Sleeping on my
best German wool sweater. Damn cat.

They remain there, in shock, unmoving, in the misty haze of the water blowout geyser.

A LONG WHILE LATER

The sun hovers above the horizon to the west, casting the Pecos ruins in a ghastly red. It's almost dark. The wind has picked up a lot. Kase, Odan, and Melba haven't moved.

Kase shutters back to the present. He looks around, blinking, rubbing his arms - slowly getting his bearings.

KASE

Chills just ran down my spine.

ODAN

You are being post traumatic.
(quietly)
Plus a cold front is just now here.

Odan looks at Kase with bleary eyes, shaking his head.

ODAN (CONT'D)

Come. We talk in the *Passivhaus*.

Odan grabs Kase and hustles him over to an eighteen-wheeler parked on the rig site, retrofitted like a mega mobile home.

Melba follows. They bound up metal stairs and disappear into the big rig.

INT. ODAN'S EIGHTEEN-WHEELER

The eighteen-wheeler is decked out like a luxury condo. Multiple levels. Modern furnishings. Kase collapses into a chair. He sees a jacket and puts it on. Vacant stare.

Pulling on a sweater, Melba sits at a computer workstation.

MELBA
(sotto voice)
Huh. This is oddly comforting.

Melba pulls up a live image on a giant monitor: the rig water geyser - a wicked TORNADO of wind now - hits the stratosphere and morphs into a gigantic SAND DEVIL.

MELBA (CONT'D)
It's that vortex we saw. *Jesus Christo*. Is that Tawa ever angry.

KASE
That's why it's getting so cold out there. She's sucking air all the way down from the upper atmosphere.

Kase spots Odan's RED WORRY BEADS. He picks them up and works them in his greasy hands. Fast and strong, desperate.

KASE (CONT'D)
Wait. Where's Maximo?

Kase gets up, rooting around for Maximo. Melba pulls up a "SATELLITE FEED." Zooms in on their location.

Behind them: Kase finds Maximo. He picks the big cat up, and they sit in a spot in the sun. Maximo PURRS.

KASE (CONT'D)
Maximo. Thank God you're okay.

Odan (yanking a thick German sweater over his head) steps up to Melba's monitor and points (dirty fingernail) at a black snake-like feature, moving.

ODAN
What's that dark feature? Zoom it.

The image zooms on the black snake. Kase steps over.

KASE
It's a convoy. A dozen Humvees.
Military, from the markings.

ODAN
Can you send it back in time?

Melba maneuvers the computer mouse. The convoy goes backward -
to Santa Fe - into the mountains - to Los Alamos.

ODAN (CONT'D)
They come from Los Alamos.

Maximo in his arms, Kase steps up to look at the monitor.

KASE
The national lab? Where they
classify everything so high that
only the Chinese can use it - after
they steal it. Doh! With consummate
ease. What a racket...

They both stare at Kase - the same bullheaded expression.

KASE (CONT'D)
They stole our atom bomb designs.
The hydrogen bomb. Strategic nukes.
Tactical nukes. Space lasers...
WATER. Navajo WATER!

Maximo struggles out of Kase's arms and bolts for a hiding
place. Kase looks at Odan.

ODAN
The trophy cat is safe here.

Kase heads for the door. Talking to himself. Ruminating.

KASE
I hope Tawa destroys them. Yes!

Kase leaves - RUSH OF WIND THROUGH THE DOOR - disappears.

RIG COMPOUND

Kase steps out of Odan's trailer, just in time to see a GIANT
CARGO HELICOPTER lifting off to the north. He steals
underneath the rig to the B.O.P. stack.

Kase stops cold: Giant PUMPS are at work, connected to the
drilling stack and the blowout preventers, PUMPING FAST.

Kase steps back, looks out across the rig compound: flexible
pumping lines from the pumps are headed directly NORTH.

KASE
North. Right where I saw the pit
being dug in the ravine.

Kase hustles up the rig floor. Climbs up the derrick tower.
Trying his best not to be seen.

ODAN'S EIGHTEEN-WHEELER

As soon as Kase closes the door, Odan scoots over to Melba.

ODAN
First chance you get, take the rig
bike. Run it into the canyon. Blow
it up. Then go hide yourself.

Odan tosses Melba keys. Melba stares at the keys - at Odan.

ODAN (CONT'D)
Los Alamos? They come to destroy
all traces of this operation.
Hurry. We have no time to argue.

MELBA
I'm so not quitting, not this time,
not with seconds on the clock -

ODAN
The cuttings over that old
abandoned well? This rig site will
look exactly like that this time
tomorrow. Twenty more unmarked
graves in the Anasazi cemetery.

MELBA
You knew about that place? How -
(screaming)
Do not say it is the rules!

Odan heads outside. Melba agonizes, wringing her hands.

On the verge of tears, Melba looks up at the DEEP, vibrating,
WOP-WOP sound of an approaching HELICOPTER.

Maximo steps up to Melba, rubbing against her ankle.

She leans over and picks him up, scratching him - listening
to the HELICOPTER LANDING.

MELBA (CONT'D)
We're coming to take you away away.
(to herself)
What, we were supposed to let the
damn well blow out?

Maximo gets rattled, SCRATCHING Melba as he scurries away. Melba jumps up, massaging her scratches.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Ouch. Bad cat. So bad. See if I stay here and cuddle you.

Full of a sudden fury, Melba grabs a motorcycle helmet and storms out the door. Brief RUSH of WIND through the doorway.

DERRICK TOWER - CROW'S NEST

Breathing hard, Kase reaches the top of the derrick. He turns to look north toward the ravine. The whole valley glistens BLACK in reflected sunshine.

KASE

Oh. My. God. An ocean of oil.
Fucking crude oil!

He's SHOCKED. Grabs onto the railing to steady himself. He gets dizzy. He leans over the rail - THROWING UP.

Kase gathers himself together, grabs the railing, and SLIDES DOWN, then disappears into the rig infrastructure.

RIG COMPOUND

Sullivan's black helicopter lands across the rig compound. Kase appears from the shadows, striding toward the chopper. He catches up to Sullivan as she exits.

KASE

You're the Whore of Babylon!

Kase stands in her path, arms crossed, livid. Sullivan takes a step back, afraid. Kase steps toward her, into her face.

KASE (CONT'D)

This isn't a geothermal well. It never was.

SULLIVAN

We got hot water. A geothermal geyser! It's a start. One baby step forward for mankind.

Kase pulls the THREADED PLUG out of his pocket and shoves it into Sullivan's unwilling hand.

KASE

Here's your threaded plug. It worked like a charm. Damn near killed us all.

Sullivan stares at the THREADED PLUG, shock in her face, her hand shaking with rage. Kase vents his enormous rage:

KASE (CONT'D)
Drilling without a B.O.P. is like
effing driving without brakes.

SULLIVAN
That goddamn mother effing son of a
bitch Alamos. He sabotaged my rig.
(snake venom)
Killed Monk. She was like my... My
own flesh and blood!

Sullivan glances aside: Bert and Rebul are running toward them. Rebul has a pistol in his hand.

KASE
Lies. You and that Alamos bitch.

SULLIVAN
How do you think you found the
detonation site? Found this?
(showing him the plug)

Suddenly, a DIRT BIKE FISHTAILS in front of them. It's Melba:

MELBA
Hop on, Kasey. Yeee-haaaa, let's go
let off some steam. *Hay, Chihuahua,*
it is time to go and celebrate.

Kase gets on behind her, struggling as she SPEEDS AWAY. Rebul hustles up. Stops. Aims. FIRES A FULL CLIP at the motorcycle.

Melba RIPS away from the rig compound, disappearing from sight behind the compound.

Darting forward, Rebul grabs Sullivan.

REBUL
You let them go?

SULLIVAN
I completed the well for you. What
you do with it now is between you
and Dr. Divine Providence.

Sullivan turns and stalks away. Rebul screams after her:

REBUL
The contract isn't complete until
the government takes over. You're
dead. I'll kill you myself.

Not turning to face him, Sullivan flips him the bird and keeps on trucking - toward the rig floor.

SULLIVAN

Finally. I get to flip off Uncle Sam. Yes!

Odan steps out of the driller's shack - spots Sullivan, and hustles down the metal stairs to join her. They move into the shadows under the rig, talking urgently:

ODAN

I heard shots fired. I was worried for you.

Sullivan slips the THREADED PLUG into Odan's gnarly palm. He studies it - confused.

SULLIVAN

Rebul plugged the B.O.P.'s pressure line with that. That's why it failed on Monk. When she - she...

Odan blinks. Chokes down his rage. Fights to be calm:

ODAN

Gesundheit. I want to go with a torch and burn up that oil pit.

Sullivan loops her arm into his and pulls him forward.

SULLIVAN

(Irish brogue)

Maybe it's me old Irish green. Don't shoot until ye see their balls suck up into their groin.

Odan laughs. Sullivan chuckles a bit herself.

ODAN

You have been a good boss. A good mother for my filly. I do hope your Irish lucky has one more charm.

They set upright one of the picnic tables from the barbeque. Odan rolls up a keg. He pours them a couple of mugs.

SULLIVAN

I got me eye on your spitfire. She'll be my C.E.O. one day.

ODAN

In that case, I will try and break the rules more often.

Sullivan starts to get upset. Odan smiles big. They relax.

ODAN (CONT'D)
I like this geothermal. It is -
liberating. Can we do it again?

SULLIVAN
Hmm. Our stock will skyrocket when
the NASDAQ opens. Wall Street's
very gung ho on the green agenda...
(Irish brogue)
Shall I get me Irish green on?

They set their mugs aside and huddle, chatting away.

EXT. SECRET LOS ALAMOS TEST SITE - CUTTINGS MOUND

Melba heads the dirt bike up a steep ridge of the cuttings mound. Melba points toward the rig: The black helicopter is taking off, turning - coming their way.

MELBA
Okay. They saw us. Hold on!

Melba HITS THE GAS, throwing Kase back onto his butt on the rocky ground.

She takes a sharp turn and JUMPS OFF. The motorcycle CAREENS into a narrow canyon - CRASHING far below.

They get on their feet and watch their wheels EXPLODE into FLAMES. Melba grabs Kase's arm, pulling.

MELBA (CONT'D)
Come on. Follow me.
(sotto voice)
Play my game. Or die.

Kase doesn't move. Melba pulls harder

MELBA (CONT'D)
Stupid! Where there is a deep
ravine there are caves.

Kase relents. They scurry down a ravine. Duck through a BRUSH FIRE. Through deep brush. Into a cave entrance.

They disappear into a cave just as the CHOPPER hovers above the area, fanning the BRUSH FIRE into a FRENZY.

INT. CAVE

Kase pulls his smartphone out. Sets it in LIGHT MODE. The helicopter sounds fade away and then disappear altogether.

KASE

They saw the motorcycle wreckage.
They're leaving. You did it!

They explore the cave.

MELBA

They called me crashdown, after I
choked at the buzzer.

(sotto voice)

An easy layup. For God's sake, a
lousy two-bit layup.

They reach a RUSTY STEEL PIPE going vertically from the
surface above. Through the cave - into the ground below.

KASE

This is the abandoned well we saw
yesterday. Look, it has markings.

Kase snaps a photo of THE MARKINGS.

MELBA

La Señora, she knew what was coming
down. She had me insure the rig for
three times its worth.

KASE

So she played us.

Huffing with resentment, Melba hurries outside. Kase takes a
few more photos of the abandoned well and the cave, then
scurries after her.

EXT. CAVE

Kase runs out of the ravine at full speed, breathing hard,
pumping his arms, and -

THERE'S MELBA, standing on the mound. Looking toward the rig,
lit up like a Christmas tree. Kase stands beside her. They
talk quietly, fighting a STIFF WIND.

KASE

I thought you'd be halfway back to
the rig and your Pa by now.

MELBA

I am no longer that person.

KASE

He's in this as thick as axel
grease. Whatever THIS is.

They scoot around to have their backs to the stiff wind. It's colder now. They shiver, rubbing their arms to warm up.

MELBA

Thank you for following my lead.

(long beat)

It has been a long time coming.

Aghast, Melba's knees wobble. Kase lowers her gently then sits down beside her. They stare at the rig. The oil pit.

MELBA (CONT'D)

We have helped them to super-frack
a whole region.

KASE

This is why the U.S. Supreme Court
took away our water rights.

MELBA

So they could then use all your
water fracking this oil and gas out
of the ground.

Kase stands up, resolved. Resolute.

KASE

We have to DESTROY that damn rig.

MELBA

Did I hear a collective pronoun?

They walk toward the rig, faster striding out, confident.

KASE

All abandoned wells have an I.D.
Can you track that down?

Kase walks faster. Melba matches his pace, in step.

MELBA

No. But Barbie the office babe can.
Come on!

They run full speed toward the rig, kicking up dust. The WIND ROARS, increasing, from the GROWING VORTEX storm.

Behind them, the storm picks up their dust, showing how ENORMOUS it is now - blotting out the stars, the mountains.

INT. RIG COMPOUND - ODAN'S EIGHTEEN-WHEELER - NIGHT

Kase and Melba step into the truck-turned-condo, both PUSHING the doors closed against the FIERCE WIND outside:

KASE
Sorry about the NCAA fiasco.

MELBA
My ego was too big.

KASE
Speaking of sports -

Maximo comes running out from under a sofa and jumps into Kase's arms.

KASE (CONT'D)
Wait. If we destroy the rig, your
Pa. It will ruin him. Maybe even
send him to jail.

Kase scratches Maximo briefly, but Maximo scrambles to get free - pacing around them, full of restless energy.

MELBA
Sullivan took a whole month off to
help train us for the NCAA
tournament. Nobody else thought
we'd make it past round one.

KASE
She bets on the long shots.

Melba pulls up a chair at a computer workstation. Kase hands her his smartphone. She connects it with a cable to the computer. Melba pulls up the image of the drill well I.D.

MELBA
The E.P.A. keeps a database of all
abandoned wells.

Kase pulls up a chair to watch her work.

A WHILE LATER

Melba pulls up images on an overhead monitor. She looks aside:

Kase is asleep with Maximo in his lap. She kicks Kase in the shin. He startles awake.

MELBA
I got a hit on that well I.D.

CLOSE ON MONITOR - VINTAGE DRILLING OPERATION

Photos of a YOUNG SULLIVAN at a drill well. Working on site.
At a staff meeting.

Fighting a blowout situation. Various formal military documents.

MELBA (V.O.)

It was a secret government project,
Project Deep Rift. They sent a
nuclear warhead down into a well.

KASE (V.O.)

To create the fracture zone in the
video. That spike in your well
logs. They detonated it.

MELBA (V.O.)

They could not complete the
experiment until we had the
drilling technology to handle that
level of extreme pressure.

BACK TO SCENE

They stare at the last screen: a YOUNG SULLIVAN posing with
the drilling rig crew. They talk quietly:

KASE

The blowout I had. Body full of
broken bones. Terrible pain... Been
in academia since - healing.

MELBA

They put you on ice, to take off
the bench for this project.

(quiet fury)

Sullivan knew it. Pa knew it.

Melba grabs a photo of herself and Odan. THROWS it down.
CRASH. She gets up and STOMPS on it. STOMP. Stomp.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Sullivan loves to gamble with her
people.

(quietly)

She made a bloody fortune, betting
my Podunk team would make it into
the NCAA finals.

Kase studies the bank of computer screens, now reverted to
security images from all around the rig site.

Melba takes her seat beside him again, staring at the
screens. Eyes dull.

KASE

The bet Sullivan placed with Hawk.

They stare into nothing. Gloomy. Mouths downturned.

MELBA

I play hoops not combat Marine.
(quietly)
Is your broken body - functional?
Enough to come off the bench?

Maximo jumps up into Kase's lap and, in the same seamless motion, arcs up to the bank of computer monitors above them.

Kase's blurry, bloodshot eyes focus on the monitors.

KASE

Wait. Are those security feeds?

MELBA

Okay, sure, I stay here, watch live feeds on all the security monitors, and tell you what's going on.

Suddenly animated, Kase stands. Stretches. Jogs in place, warming up. Thrusts his arms out, shadow boxing. Winces... fights back the pain. Keeps moving.

KASE

Can you pull up a flow diagram for the pneumatic oil system, lubricating all the equipment?

Melba searches files on the computer. Pulls up a diagram on a LARGE MONITOR. Kase gets closer to study the diagram.

KASE (CONT'D)

Now the fire sprinkler system.

Melba pulls up another diagram on an adjacent monitor. Kase studies them side-by-side, pointing at a valve.

KASE (CONT'D)

We interconnect the two systems - at this fitting, that valve. Then we displace the chemicals in the fire sprinklers with pneumatic oil.

MELBA

Trigger the fire alarm. Then it covers the rig with flammable oil.

KASE

Start a fire. Pow! Rig burns up.

They study the diagrams, zooming in on the interconnection.

MELBA

We still need to escape.

Kase sits down, watching Melba pulling up tech diagrams on the monitors. Kase rubs his bleary eyes, blinking hard.

HOURS LATER

The monitors show VIEWS OF THE DRILLING RIG FROM EVERY ANGLE, most at ground level.

Kase hooks up earphones. A microphone - adjusts everything.

KASE

Here's to my vision quest. And a new tribal name.

MELBA

Geothermal tech strikes back.

(quietly)

An NCAA championship.

Melba gives him two thumbs up. Kase steals into the night.

Melba gets a headset and - sits in front of a joystick, controlling all the security feeds.

Snow flurries SPARKLE across the camera images.

Bits of ICE on the lenses.

Maximo jumps up on a chair right next to her, watching the security cameras, tail twitching - intense.

MELBA (CONT'D)

Another magazine cover for you.

Melba looks at Maximo and frowns - working the RED WORRY BEADS with fierce abandon.

Maximo CATERWAULS when he sees Kase on one of the cameras.

EXT. MOUNTAIN VALLEY - DRILLING RIG - RIG COMPOUND - NIGHT

A vicious mist whips around the rig site.

Kase exits the eighteen-wheeler. Steels into the night.

Kase shields his face from the STINGING water spray, ducking down against the ROARING wind.

KASE

Kase to Mamasita, come in.

MELBA (V.O.)
The wind is at hurricane strength.
We did not figure on that.

KASE
Fax the orders to the driller's
shack. I'm moving on the target.

Kase hunkers down and heads up steel steps to lights shining up on the drilling floor.

OFF THE RIG FLOOR - DRILLER'S SHACK

The new superintendent, AMAZON (34, Brazilian accent, strong, attractive), pulls a fax out of a printer, reading it.

MELBA (V.O.)
The super on duty now, is the buxom
broad who hit on you at in our
offices. Be careful because she
might recognize you.

Amazon pulls on a heavy parka and heads for the door.

ASCENT TO THE DRILLING FLOOR

Kase's grabs the stair railing. He yanks it off.

KASE
What's the temperature out here?
Railing is freezing cold.

MELBA (V.O.)
Damn Tawa vortex is sucking down
sub-zero air from the stratosphere.

KASE
Roger that. The lady super hit on
me? How would you know that?

MELBA (V.O.)
I watched the reruns. Was that
Barbie girl a pathetic office boob,
or what?

KASE
I'm at the rig floor now.

Kase reaches the top of the ladder. He eases back when he sees Amazon pacing in front of the driller's shack.

Kase slips over to an oil pit. Scoops out a fistful of grease. Smears it over his face: stylized like WAR PAINT.

His breath is FROSTY in the freezing cold.

Amazon waves the fax at a passing ROUGHNECK (Kase).

AMAZON

Orders from the front office. ASAP.
Secure the Blowout Preventers. The
wind chill could freeze up the lot.

Kase-the-roughneck SNAGS the fax and hastens away.

Amazon watches Kase go, scratching her head, thinking hard.

Quick decision: Amazon pulls out a smartphone to make a call.

MELBA (V.O.)

Hurry your feet, Kase, two Bogarts
just ran out of the mud shack.
They're coming up on your nine.
Splitting up, now.

Kase hoists a dangerous-looking WRENCH from a tool rack.

MELBA (V.O.)

The first Bogart is running right
your way. Well, God bless America,
it's Rebul.

Kase spots Rebul running his way and steps behind a post.

MELBA (V.O.)

Swing. At knee height. Now.

Kase swings the wrench, and trips Rebul. A swift kick to the
head and Rebul's out cold.

Beat. Rebul moves slightly. Kase reels his leg back and KICKS
him again. Harder.

MELBA (V.O.)

Please tell me you wore steel-toe
boots today.

KASE

Standard field issue.

MELBA (V.O.)

Down to the Christmas Tree and all
the valves. Hurry. My feeds are
going in and out from the shear-
force winds. Lenses frosting over.

Kase runs down metal stairs back to the ground level.

INT. ODAN'S EIGHTEEN-WHEELER

Melba watches the action on the bank of monitors, using a joystick to switch a very large, main monitor to the most relevant screen.

On the main screen: Kase stops in front of big RED DEVICES on the wellhead. The snow flurries are now a steady snowfall.

KASE (V.O.)

The valve we targeted. It's not even there. They piped everything new when they set up the crude oil filters and pumps.

MELBA

Get your smartphone out. I will send you the updated equipment diagram. Searching.

Kase pulls his smartphone out, turning his back to the WIND.

KASE(V.O.)

Wait. You have to fill out a form in triplicate.

Maximo jumps into her lap, but she SWATS him aside.

She opens a "RIG EQUIPMENT LIST" on a computer, searching.

DRILLING RIG - GROUND LEVEL

Kase rubs his arms, freezing cold - looking around - he finds an oversized jacket and tucks it on, shivering.

MELBA

I will punish you so bad for that.
(on a side screen)
There's a Bogart to your nine, then another one coming to your six.

As Bert approaches, Kase wheels around to his left, SWINGING THE PIPE WRENCH with both hands - not seeing, just reacting.

(Behind them, Rebul climbs down the rig stairs, wobbly.)

Kase knocks Bert in the CHEST - hard - and the poor guy, WHEEZING for air, SLAMS onto the ground.

In one smooth motion, Kase swings the GIANT WRENCH around to the opposite side - delivering a glancing BLOW to Bert, who falls to his knees.

MELBA (V.O.)
 Rebel, he's coming at you. Swing,
 Kasey. Just swing.

Rebul is on his feet now, running toward Kase.

Kase - not even trying to see Rebul, keeps swinging around with the momentum, and CLOCKS Rebul in the midsection.

As Rebul struggles onto his feet - a LINE DRIVE, and he's out for the count.

One last KICK and Rebul doesn't move.

MELBA (V.O.)
 Here's the diagram, on your lower right. The specs says it's painted red.

Kase checks his smartphone. Blowing sleet forms ice on his face. He turns his back to the wind, looking at the smartphone display - at the rig, searching.

MELBA (V.O.)
 Kasey? Are you there? That last move - Kase! Talk. To. Me.

Long beat.

KASE
 Lost my bearings, girl. Point me in the right -

MELBA (V.O.)
 All the cameras are frozen over. I'm blind, here... Red fitting, Kasey. Look. For. Red.

Kase wanders around, looking - searching. He spots a large RED valve.

Kase grabs a pneumatic line and inserts a hydraulic fitting. Nothing happens.

KASE
 Male went into female socket. Nothing. Plan B. Hurry.

Kase studies his smartphone - zooming.

KASE (CONT'D)
 My vision is blurring. Got some heavy grease in my eyes. Damn.

MELBA (V.O.)
I found a female for you, on a
valve stack, green fitting. Green.

KASE
Where is it? Directions.

MELBA (V.O.)
I'm blind. No cameras.

Kase finds a GREEN FITTING on a cluster of valves and applies
a WRENCH, trying to break it free.

The GALE FORCE wind WHISTLES through the rig structure.

INT. ODAN'S EIGHTEEN-WHEELER

Melba's feeds flicker as rig power goes off briefly. The
computers take a while to reboot.

MELBA (V.O.)
The pressure alarm is going wild in
the driller's shack. I bet that hag
is going berserk.

Melba wrings her hands, frantic, talking to - blank screens.

Maximo HOWLS. She starts to SWAT him, then sees he's sitting
near a pair of binoculars.

Melba grabs the binoculars and runs out the door and into the
storm.

EXT. ODAN'S EIGHTEEN-WHEELER

Melba (still wearing her mike and headphones) zeros in on the
rig floor.

MELBA
The Amazon lady, she is fighting
mad, Kasey, and she just now picked
up a giant pipe wrench.

KASE (V.O.)
No can do. You have to distract
her. Diesel crud burning in my
eyes.

Melba runs back inside.

INT. ODAN'S EIGHTEEN WHEELER

Melba pulls up an ALARM PANEL screen on her computer and
activates the HYDROGEN SULFUR ALARM.

As soon as the alarm is FLASHING, she runs back outside.

DRILLING RIG - DRILLER'S SHACK

Amazon is just leaving when - a KLAXON ALARM SOUNDS.

Amazon hesitates, turns - hurries to a console in the driller's shack.

DRILLING RIG - GROUND LEVEL

Kase breaks the line off the GREEN FITTING and muscles it into a fitting on a RED FILTER.

(Behind him, Amazon is on a mad charge, pipe wrench raised, murder in her eyes.)

KASE

Pneumatic line attached. Start pumps. Maximum through-put.

MELBA (V.O.)

I am on it. Pink Barbie is a wizard when it comes to office tech. Yes!

A pneumatic line SNAKES AROUND under extreme pressure, knocking Kase off his feet -

- just as Amazon swings her wrench at his head.

She misses, and the momentum carries her aside.

MELBA (V.O.)

The pneumatic fluid is online now, it's starting to come out of the rig piping, whole gobs of it.

A clear, white oil gushes from FIRE SPRINKLER fittings.

MELBA (V.O.)

Get out of there, the whole rig is going to blow.

(yelling, frantic)

You hear me, run for your life.

Kase runs at Amazon, dives - slides arms-first across the greasy deck, and HITS her in the legs, KNOCKING HER backward.

Amazon hits her HEAD on a pipe and is out cold.

MELBA (V.O.)

I am leaving the computers. Now I am in the cockpit. I am pulling the big rig out of the compound. Hurry.

Not missing a heartbeat, Kase gets on his feet and runs for Odan's eighteen-wheeler as it moves forward.

The eighteen-wheeler is towing the Ford Bronco.

Kase runs parallel to the Bronco. Opens the driver-side door. Hops inside.

MELBA (V.O.)
We got the oil, but we forgot to
ignite it. You're the engineer. How
could you not think of that?

KASE (V.O.)
Screw it. Our luck's run out, girl.
We escape as planned.

Listening to MUSIC on headphones, oblivious to all the goings-on, a WELDER (Odan) lowers a shield on his helmet. Begins cutting a steel I-frame.

KASE (V.O.)
I'm in the Bronco. Hit it. Get us
the hell out of the kill zone. Now.

The eighteen-wheeler (towing the Bronco) SPINS OUT, accelerating away.

KASE (V.O.)
Don't forget to tie off the
steering wheel.

MELBA (V.O.)
Brick on the accelerator. Did that,
doing the other.

Lights come on in the Bronco as Kase STARTS the engine.

The Bronco disengages from the eighteen-wheeler and drifts back - then speeds up, matching the speed of the eighteen-wheeler.

The Bronco pulls to the left of the eighteen-wheeler, and Kase opens the passenger side door.

KASE (V.O.)
I'm parallel now. Open your driver-
side door. Jump.

A pool of pneumatic oil creeps toward the welder (Odan).

SPARKS from his torch hit the ground, IGNITING a POOL OF OIL.

MELBA (V.O.)
Jesus, but that was righteous.

FIRE spreads in a flash, engulfing the whole area in flames.

MAXIMO (V.O.)
MEEEEOOOWWWW.

MELBA (V.O.)
OUCH, that hurt. Your feline is
actually having fun... Likewise.

In a FLASH the entire rig is in flames.

Odan spirits away.

RIG COMPOUND

Several BLACK HUMMERS pull up at the perimeter, headlights
shining on the mayhem.

A dusting of snow covers everything now.

KASE (V.O.)
OMG. It's the Hurricane Commandoes.
I thought they were a myth.

MELBA (V.O.)
Shut up and drive, Fire Walker.

A cluster of ARMED MEN in patterned black fatigues exits the
Hummers and fans out, fighting a wicked wind.

A sleek black helicopter lands.

Sullivan steps out of the chopper to survey the carnage,
shaking her fists at the burning rig, livid.

SULLIVAN
Jesus H. Christ. My rig. My
company. My life. Destroyed. All of
it.

In the background, near the burning rig, two figures emerge
from the shadows: Bert carrying Rebul in a fireman's shoulder
carry. They're both covered in charred clothes and mud.

Bert slows down at the edge of the rig compound.

REBUL
Don't stop. Head for the ravine.
(urgent)
The Good Lord opened a door for us.
It's high time we knocked on it.

Sullivan spots Rebul and Bert out of the corner of her eye.

SULLIVAN

Those young fools. Beat it!

Sullivan grabs a ROCKET PROPELLED GRENADE from a mercenary.

She sights on Rebul and Bert - and HITS THE SUPERSTRUCTURE above them. Bert hustles Rebul into the shadows. They scramble away, dodging burning debris and projectiles.

BERT

Mr. Alamos will skin us alive.

REBUL

After that show we put on for his almighty cameras? He'll think we died in the fire. Died heroes.

In the LIGHT OF THE EXPLOSION, the Bronco SWERVES.

The PASSENGER DOOR OPENS. Out of the shadows, Odan runs forward. Grabs on. Swings inside the Bronco. Slams the door.

ODAN (V.O.)

Santa Fe Regional Airport. And make it pronto, driver. Sullivan's private jet is on standby for us.

Sullivan does a happy jingle, elated.

SULLIVAN

Woo-hoo. Awesome. I love war.

Amazon (singed hair and clothes half burned off her torso) steps forward to stand quietly at Sullivan's side.

Suddenly a vicious tyrant, Sullivan SLAMS Amazon against a vehicle and GRABS her by the throat, CHOKING her.

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

I've been working fifty years to complete this project. A lifetime wasted. Millions lost. Billions!

Amazon's arms flail as she struggles to get free.

AMAZON

(hoarse, choking)

We have the video cameras. We can figure out how they did it. Drill another well. Do it again.

Sullivan THROWS Amazon back, then yells at the mercenaries.

SULLIVAN

Secure the rig. I want every video
archive under lock and key. Now.

Several mercenaries hurry to their vehicles and drive into
the flames. Sullivan YELLS after them:

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Every. Last. Archive.

The rest of the mercenaries surround Sullivan, waiting for
orders. Sullivan spots the eighteen-wheeler kicking up snow
as it speeds away. She stares at the mercenaries - an RPG.

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Nah. This is too much fun.

Sullivan GRABS a ROCKET PROPELLED GRENADE launcher from a
mercenary. Sights on the eighteen-wheeler, and -

Sullivan waits a BEAT until the Bronco disappears and -

FIRES. She throws the weapon away, waving her arms,
screaming:

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

Apocalypse. Now. Today. Forever.

The RPG ZOOMS into the dark sky, SLAMS into the eighteen-
wheeler. BLOWS IT TO SMITHEREENS.

Undamaged, the Bronco accelerates into the darkness and out
of sight. Amazon stumbles up, hands massaging her sore neck,
keeping her distance from Sullivan.

AMAZON

All the video records were in that
eighteen-wheeler you just blew up.

Sullivan fights back rage. Amazon backs away from her.

SULLIVAN

How did that happen?

AMAZON

Odan's orders. Yesterday. Said he
had to review everything for the
insurance carrier.

SULLIVAN

(to the mercenaries)

Find Odan. I want him alive and
kicking. I'll rip his guts out with
my bare teeth.

The rest of the mercenaries run to the rig, into the flames.

SULLIVAN (CONT'D)

I hope they get blown to effing
kingdom come. Come on, girl. Let's
blow this popcorn joint before the
main feature starts.

Sullivan and Amazon run for the helicopter. Climb in. And
take off - into the dark night.

SULLIVAN (V.O.)

Yay! No more government contracts!

Behind them, the rig EXPLODES IN A MASSIVE BALL OF FLAMES,
consuming the mercenaries and their vehicles in an inferno.

A black Hummer arrives. Maneuvers through the smoldering
wreckage. Stops. A rear door opens. Los Alamos steps out.
Carefully dons his Bogart hat. At just the right, rakish
angle.

Los Alamos pulls out a pack of chewing gum. Takes a stick.
Throws it away. Throws the whole damn pack away.

Several more Men in Black arrive. They fan out. Recover the
dead mercenaries. Stack them in a pile. Burn them.

A mercenary in a burn pile MOANS. Tries to get up. Los Alamos
stands over. Stands over him.

Something catches Los Alamos' eye. He leans over and pulls
out a small metal box from the injured mercenary's vest. He
opens it: a few cigarettes and a pack of matches.

The mercenary MOANS again. Reaches a bloody hand up for help.
Los Alamos STEPS on him, moving away, lighting up a smoke.

Los Alamos pauses, inhaling deep. Exhaling. He surveys the
maelstrom all around: Fires. Explosions. SCREAMS for help.

Los Alamos looks up at Sullivan's chopper, a speck of
brightness in the dawn's early light - REFLECTING sunlight.

A black stretch limo pulls up, flying red CHINESE flags. A
CHINESE AGENT exits. He and Los Alamos shake hands. They
watch Sullivan's chopper disappear into the sunrise.

LOS ALAMOS

Who said deep rift geothermal
energy recovery is a pipe dream?

CHINESE AGENT

The Chairman will be most pleased.

Los Alamos points two fat fingers at the burning rig.

LOS ALAMOS
Sorry for the chaos. Comrade. You
know Texans and green energy.

CHINESE AGENT
We do hear the drill, baby drill
mantra of your conservatives.

The rotund, Chinese agent grunts loudly, pulling out a giant
cigar. Los Alamos rushes to light the stogie for him.

LOS ALAMOS
Big Oil got wind of this prospect.
Sir. They despise geothermal.

CHINESE AGENT
Our media in China will report how
drilling heroes died in vain here.

Los Alamos pulls out a notepad and jots down notes.

LOS ALAMOS
In the U.S. they'll say this proves
geothermal is a fool's gold. Not
Possible. Waste of taxpayer money.

CHINESE AGENT
We are interested in the East
Africa Rift Zone. Ethiopia. Kenya.
Egypt. But we lack the expertise.

LOS ALAMOS
If Lady Sullivan survives the witch
hunt, she'll be your best bet.
Comrade. We'll lease you the
technology. I guarantee it.

Smoking away, the two men stroll through the chaos, chatting.

EXT. SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS - NIGHT

As the helicopter lifts off, Sullivan stares out one window:
the rig is in flames. A weak VORTEX sucks the fire far into
the night sky. Briefly enveloping the helicopter.

SULLIVAN (V.O.)
(quiet, solemn)
Behold, Leviathan. She makes the
depths churn like a boiling
cauldron. She stirs up the sea like
a pot of ointment. Nothing on Earth
is her equal.

The helicopter cruises over rocky ravines, ragged mountains, and rugged desert.

AMAZON (V.O.)

You just ambushed the Army's best.
The goddamn Hurricane Commandoes.

SULLIVAN (V.O.)

We'll read about a training
accident in the news tomorrow.

Heading east, the sun rises above the horizon, illuminating the landscape a vivid BLOOD RED.

MONTAGE - CLOSING CREDITS - PECOS PUEBLO HISTORIC SITE

Maximo the cat is on the cover of Drilling International magazine, wearing the turquoise Navajo-design collar - holding a ripped-apart dead mouse in his teeth. The caption reads, "Maximo 2.0 Kills The Well From Hell."

HAWK

Mrs. Hawk always tells me, any
fight is a good fight. You know
what that means, Fire Walker?

KASE

Yeah. Don't come home until you've
earned another eagle feather.

Kase (Navajo headband with a single eagle feather) and Hawk (full chieftain's headdress with many eagle feathers) stand in front of a NAVAJO WATER RIGHTS FUND sign.

Hawk glances to the sky several times, with a growing apprehension. He whispers into the wind:

HAWK

It is written that one day The
Skeleton Man will return to walk
once again on sovereign land.

The sign hangs in front of a large "Sullivan Drilling" DUMP TRUCK FULL OF MONEY, where children play, tossing high-denomination bills into the air like confetti.

Melba is with the kids, smiling - happy - glancing frequently at Kase.

HAWK (CONT'D)

They should not be so happy,
playing with all those Benjamin
Franklins. This worries me.

KASE

I told them we will buy out the
government schools on the rez.

(quietly)

No more Christian imperialism in
the classroom. Back to the old
ways. Hurray! They were thrilled.

The truck driver exits the cabin to watch all the hoopla.
It's Sullivan, wearing dirty coveralls. Very dark glasses.

HAWK (V.O.)

You surprise me, grandson... This
new confident you. With the girl,
also. She is smitten.

(quietly)

Have you had a vision? Is your
quest now completed?

(beat)

Has the Great Spirit spoken to you?

Sullivan leans her back against the truck, crosses her arms,
and relaxes - soaking up some rays. Mona Lisa smile.

Suddenly the sky is covered by dark thunderclouds, filling
the mountain valley. THUNDER ROLLS through the canyon.

FINGERS OF LIGHTNING crackle overhead. A giant BOLT OF ENERGY
singes the ground nearby.

The children scream pell mell.

Leaning into the metal side of the dump truck, Kase hands the
kids overboard into Melba's arms.

LIGHTNING STRIKES the truck!

Kase is frozen in electroshock. His SKELETON IS VISIBLE (like
an x-ray) - beat - Kase hustles to get the rest of the kids
to safety (his skeleton remains luminescent).

Everybody runs toward a yellow school bus and crowds inside.

FADE OUT.

THE END

★

★