

Desert Claim

By Ace

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT - MORNING

A harsh vast Nevada desert. A variety of cacti, shrubs and Bushes, mountains in the distance. A coyote walks along. A lizard runs fast out of a shrub bush. A snake slithers along.

The faint sound of a bike in the distance gets slightly louder and louder, until...

A person on an electric bike appears, we follow them as they zoom through this desert. They're wearing a helmet and an illuminated green strap across their t-shirt. We follow them until they stop outside a trailer.

EXT. DESERT / TRAILER / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

A nice exterior white trailer, clean, not one of those small unkempt trailers. The person gets off of their bike and removes their helmet. We now get a good look at them. An African-American woman, 38, bald, tomboyish style with a feminine edge. This is JUSTINE FIELDS. She walks her bike into her trailer.

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Justine shuts the trailer door behind her. We're in an open-plan nice one-bedroom trailer. The basics, a TV, DVD player on a unit, sofa, coffee table, the kitchen quite small, long hallway leading to the one bedroom and a bathroom. Decor is decent enough, light brown walls, light grey carpet.

Justine leans her bike against the wall by the front door. She walks to the kitchen and refills her sports bottle and puts it in the fridge. There's a small framed photo on the kitchen wall of Justine and an older African-American woman on a tall building, New York City scenery behind them. They look happy to be there. There's another small framed photo on the kitchen-side of Justine with a pitbull-mix in an apartment, the dog halfway on her lap, the dog licking her face as she smiles. She picks up the framed photo of her and the dog. Justine smiles warmly as she looks at the photo.

JUSTINE

I miss you Max.

She puts the photo back down and walks to the living room and unzips her bag, her cellphone in her bag rings, she takes out the cellphone and answers it.

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Mike, what's up?

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) You know I only do morning shifts.

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Wow. The diner's really busy today...

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Okay, I'll do the dinner shift this evening.

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) No problem. You're welcome.

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Bye.

Justine hangs up the phone. She throws the cellphone next to her. She sighs deeply and leans back on the sofa.

INT. DINER - EVENING

A busy diner. Seats are full. The sounds of chatter.

INT. DINER / KITCHEN / EVENING - CONTINUOUS

Justine finishes cooking spaghetti.

JUSTINE
(yells) Spaghetti for table ten, almost done.

CONTINUOUS:

WAITRESS 1 walks up to Justine. She hands the waitress the plate of plain spaghetti.

WAITRESS 1
Got it. Thank you. The macaroni next...

JUSTINE
I'm on it.

The waitress leaves the kitchen with the plate of spaghetti. Justine starts making the macaroni. A cook next to her mixes up a stir fry, this is REUBEN BLACK, early 30s, white, slim.

JUSTINE
As soon as they open a vegetarian diner, I'm changing jobs.

REUBEN
Still a vegetarian, huh?!

JUSTINE
Yep. Felt guilty eating dead animals. I want no part in animal slaughter. I'm glad they let me cook non-meat meals here at least.

REUBEN
So, how's everything? How's Vantrice?

JUSTINE
Mama's okay. She wants to come down from Seattle and stay with me soon.

REUBEN
How is the desert life?

JUSTINE
For an introvert like me, it's perfect.

REUBEN
Maybe we could go for a hike out there sometime.

Justine looks at him.

JUSTINE
Reuben, you know I'm asexual, right?

CONTINUOUS:

Reuben looks at her.

REUBEN
Of course.

They both go back to focusing on making the meals, talking to each other while they cook.

JUSTINE
And I'm not one of those dating
asexuals neither. I don't want no
relationship like that. None
whatsoever.

REUBEN
Look. J. I was just asking as a
friend. Look, forget I said anything.
I'm sorry.

Justine looks at him.

JUSTINE
No, I'm sorry. Guess I still have some
PTSD. One time in my life, random men
were constantly hitting on me on a
regular basis, on the street, at my
old workplaces...sexual harassment.

REUBEN
I'm sorry.

JUSTINE
It's not your fault.

JUSTINE
A hike would be cool.

Reuben looks at her.

REUBEN
Great.

WAITRESS 2 approaches Reuben.

WAITRESS 2
Stir Fry, table nine.

Reuben hands Waitress 2 the plate of food and she hands him a new order.

CONTINUOUS:

WAITRESS 2

New order for Chilli and Hash Browns.
Table six.

REUBEN

Got it.

Waitress 2 leaves with the stir fry, Reuben walks over to the freezer. Justine stirs the macaroni that's almost ready. The other cooks are also working hard. Smoke rises above food.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Smoke from a broken-down car rises in the air. Two men stand by the car. These men are QWANTEZ WEST, 40, African-American. SIMON MELVILLE, 45 Jamaican-American.

QWANTEZ

This is your damn fault, Simon. If you just let me drive instead of giving me wrong directions, distracting me--

SIMON

--I'm sorry, aight? I guess it's the Jamaican blood in me. Sometimes we speak before we think.

QWANTEZ

Give me a break. That's your excuse.
Okay.

Qwantez scans the desert area around them. He looks at Simon.

QWANTEZ

We're gonna have to leave the money
out here.

Simon looks at him.

SIMON

Is that some kind of lame joke? Stop
playin', man.

QWANTEZ

I'm not making some joke. Look, I'm
not getting stopped by some racist
white cop and then he catches us with
all this cash.

CONTINUOUS:

SIMON

We can't leave this money out here.

QWANTEZ

(sarcastic) Okay, well get cosy and camp out here with the cash. I hope you know the temperature is below freezing when it hits nighttime.

QWANTEZ

I'm gon' fix this car and find a route out of here where there's less cops around. Then we can come back for the money tomorrow.

SIMON

This is a stupid idea.

QWANTEZ

Last time I checked, out of the two of us, I'm the only one that can drive. You wanna stay the night out here, that's up to you. Now imma fix this car, then i'm outta here.

Qwantez walks to the back of the car and opens the trunk door.

SIMON

I'll pop the hood.

Simon walks to the front of the car and pops the hood.

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER - MORNING

Justine puts the coffee pot on. A knock at the door. She walks to the door and opens it. It's Reuben.

JUSTINE

Hi Reuben.

REUBEN

Hi Just.

Reuben walks in, a backpack on his back. Justine shuts the door. She walks to the kitchen.

CONTINUOUS:

JUSTINE

I just put on some coffee. You want some, before our hike?

REUBEN

Yeah, sure.

He walks to the living room and puts his backpack on the sofa. He joins Justine in the kitchen. He looks at the photo of Justine and the older African-American lady.

REUBEN

You and Vantrice look happy.

Justine pours some coffee into a second mug.

JUSTINE

That was our first New York holiday.
Mother and daughter memories.

Justine puts Reuben's coffee on the kitchen-side. He sees the framed photo of Justine and the pitbull-mix. He picks up the photo.

REUBEN

This is a really good one of you and your dog. You miss her?

JUSTINE

Yeah. It's been five years, but I'll always miss her. Some days are more painful than others.

JUSTINE

Milk?

REUBEN

Please.

Reuben puts the photo back and walks to the fridge, he opens the fridge door and grabs the milk, he adds it to his black coffee.

REUBEN

Do you miss the old apartment?
Seattle? The memories?

JUSTINE

Yeah. Sometimes I don't know why I even came down here. But the memories...the memories of my dog, I

(MORE)

always take with me. I have a brilliant memory and I have photos and videos of Max.

REUBEN

Well you know what they say. Our loved ones will always be with us in spirit.

JUSTINE

I don't like that philosophy.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

My dog is not with me anymore. She's dead. She's in heaven. And as a Christian, I know I'll be reunited with my dog again.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

I just can't stand it when people say that their loved ones are still with them. I can't see that being a truly healthy way to grieve.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Accept the fact that they're gone. You know what I'm sayin'?

REUBEN

Yeah.

JUSTINE

It's the same with deceased humans and the whole graveyard thing. People are just visiting a piece of concrete with their loved ones name on it. You're loved ones are not in the graveyard, even if their corpse is there...it's just their corpse, it's not them. I'm not trying to be mean--

REUBEN

--No. I get what you're saying.

REUBEN

I just hope I didn't trigger you. If I did, I'm sor--

JUSTINE

--No, you didn't trigger me.

CONTINUOUS:

REUBEN

Would you ever get another dog?

JUSTINE

No way. If I did...things just
wouldn't be the same. A new dog...it
wouldn't be Max.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Even though I love animals. I don't
want any more pets.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)

Max was my one and only dog.

A melancholy silence of a few seconds.

JUSTINE

So, you ready for the hike?

REUBEN

Yes.

Justine opens the fridge door and grabs her sports bottle of
water. She walks to the front door and grabs her backpack.

REUBEN

Think I'll refill my water. Hold on a
sec.

JUSTINE

Yep. No problem.

Reuben walks to the living room and takes his sports bottled
water out of his backpack, while Justine puts her backpack
on.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Justine and Reuben walk in the hot harsh desert. Both wear
sunglasses as the sun glares on them.

REUBEN

I need some water.

JUSTINE

Good idea.

They both stop and take their sports bottles out of their

backpacks. A scorpion scurries out of a shrub bush.

REUBEN
(yells) Aaaah.

JUSTINE
That's a strip tailed-scorpion.

REUBEN
You're not scared of em' or anything,
huh?

JUSTINE
Well, Reub, you already know I'm an
animal lover.

JUSTINE (CONT'D)
Wild creatures out here...they won't
bother you if you won't bother them.
And we're in their territory anyway.

JUSTINE
The desert wasn't made for humans. But
we can adapt. Animals just naturally
thrive here.

Justine drinks some of her water. Reuben sees something else
in the shrub bush. He leans forward as he examines it more
closely.

REUBEN
What is that?

Reuben walks further towards the shrub bush. A bulky sports
bag sits in the shrub. Reuben pulls the bag out of the bush.

JUSTINE
Some sports bag. So what.

REUBEN
This bag's not empty.

REUBEN (CONT'D)
Could be an animal in there or
something.

Reuben looks at Justine.

CONTINUOUS:

REUBEN
Just. Could you?

REUBEN (CONT'D)
If it's a creature...you know I'm a
scaredy cat for stuff like this.

JUSTINE
I don't think it's an animal.

JUSTINE
Hold this?

She hands him her sports bottle. She walks over to the bag,
she unzips it. Rolls and rolls of CASH covered in elastic
bands.

JUSTINE
Oh my God.

REUBEN
What the hell?

They both stare at the money. Not sure what to do.

JUSTINE
This money can't be real.

Reuben puts the sports bottles on the ground. He grabs one of
the elastic band covered cash notes out of the bag, he
removes one of the cash notes, he holds the cash note up in
the air, the sun strongly shines on the note as he examines
it. He looks at Justine.

REUBEN
This money is real.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

Qwantez and Simon stand opposite a man, African-American,
tattoos all over his face, early 40s, this is ICE.

ICE
So let me get this straight. You two
dumb niggas left my money in the
middle of the damn desert. Is that
right?

CONTINUOUS:

SIMON

(nervous) Yeah, boss. But listen, we--

Ice points his gun at Simon.

ICE

--I don't wanna hear any lame ass excuses. I should just shoot you both right here.

QWANTEZ

Hold on, hold on, boss. Look. We hid your money. We're sure it's fine, boss. Just let us go get it.

Ice now points his gun at Qwantez. Qwantez gulps. His fear is difficult to mask. Ice stares at Qwantez for a moment.

ICE

Aight. You go get my money. But Maniac is gonna go with you.

Ice lowers his gun. He looks at a man sitting on a chair, the man gets up and approaches them. This man is MANIAC, big-build, muscly, African-American, mid-40s.

ICE

Make sure these fools retrieve my money. If not...you know what to do.

Maniac nods his head, he looks at Qwantez and Simon, a cold hard stare.

MANIAC

Lets go.

Maniac, Qwantez and Simon leave the warehouse.

EXT. DESERT - LATE AFTERNOON

Maniac, Qwantez and Simon drive up to the shrub bush. They exit the car and walk up to the shrub bush, they look around it.

SIMON

It's not here.

QWANTEZ

Shit!

CONTINUOUS:

Simon looks at Maniac.

SIMON
(nervous) Listen...Listen, man. Please
don't kill us, aight?

QWANTEZ
(yells) Nigga don't beg for your life.
You sound pathetic.

Maniac raises his arm with the gun in his hand. A GUN SHOT.
Blood leaks out of the front of Maniac's forehead. He falls
on his face DEAD. Qwantez holds a gun, his hand shakes, his
eyes wide, he breathes fast and heavy.

Simon stares at Maniac's dead body. Simon looks at Qwantez.

SIMON
(yells) What the hell did you do? What
the hell did you do?

Simon runs up to Maniac's dead body and feels the pulse on
his neck.

QWANTEZ
He's dead. Don't bother.

Qwantez puts his gun in the car glove compartment. He shuts
the car door. He looks at Maniac's dead body.

QWANTEZ
We gonna have to bury this nigga.

SIMON
We're the ones that are gonna be
buried!

Qwantez looks at Simon.

QWANTEZ
So you would have preferred that he
killed us?

SIMON
Course not.

CONTINUOUS:

QWANTEZ

Well then, shut the hell up about this dead fool.

SIMON

What are we going to tell Ice?!

QWANTEZ

We'll think of something. We gotta find this money.

SIMON

The money's gone!

Qwantez scans the area around them.

QWANTEZ

Nah. The money ain't far. Someone took it, but it ain't far.

SIMON

They're probably long gone with the cash.

QWANTEZ

There's a few trailers in this desert. Someone livin' out here has the money, I know it.

QWANTEZ

Come on. Let's put Maniac in the car. Find somewhere we can get rid of his body. Find a damn incinerator.

SIMON

What are we gonna tell Ice?

QWANTEZ

We can tell him Maniac wanted the money for himself, he was gonna shoot us, so I shot him first.

QWANTEZ (CONT'D)

Ice ain't gonna care if he believes that nigga was gonna steal his money.

Qwantez opens the trunk of the car. They both grab Maniac's dead body and put him in the trunk. Simon closes the trunk door. They get in the car and drive away.

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER - LATE AFTERNOON

Justine and Reuben sit on the sofa. The money sprawled out on the coffee table.

REUBEN

Eight million. We have Eight million dollars in our possession.

JUSTINE

We need to put it back where we found it.

Reuben looks at Justine.

REUBEN

I can't give this money up, J.

JUSTINE

No one just leaves eight million dollars. This money could belong to bad people.

REUBEN

I won't spend it straight away.

Justine shakes her head in disbelief. Reuben starts to roll up the cash notes into the elastic bands.

EXT. DESERT - EARLY EVENING

Qwantez and Simon walk through the desert, the sun has gone down, the chill of the early evening brings a cold atmosphere.

SIMON

Eight million. Nowhere to be found.

Justine's trailer is in sight. Reuben exits the trailer with a sports bag. Qwantez sees Reuben.

QWANTEZ

Yo. Look.

Simon sees Reuben throw the sports bag into the back seat of his car. Reuben gets into his car.

SIMON

Some white dude. So what?

CONTINUOUS:

QWANTEZ

He's got a sports bag. It's the same sports bag, man.

SIMON

Are you sure?

QWANTEZ

A hundred percent.

They watch Reuben drive away.

QWANTEZ

We'll come back tomorrow and see if he brings back the money.

QWANTEZ

Come on. Lets go.

Qwantez and Simon walk away.

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER - MORNING

Justine in the kitchen takes a sip of her hot coffee. A knock on the front door. She walks to the door and opens it. Reuben walks in with the sports bag.

REUBEN

Morning Justine.

JUSTINE

You brought that money back here? Why?

REUBEN

I don't think you're thinking this through, Justine.

Justine closes the front door. Reuben puts the bag on the floor, he sits down on the sofa.

REUBEN

This is eight million dollars.

JUSTINE

I know how much it is.

REUBEN

We can split it.

JUSTINE

I already told you, I don't want it.

(MORE)

It's not my money and it's not yours.

REUBEN

Look, Just. Whoever left this money...they were stupid to think no one would take it. If it wasn't me who took it, someone else would have.

A sudden LOUD KNOCK on the door.

REUBEN

Are you expecting anyone?

JUSTINE

You know I don't have any other friends except you.

JUSTINE

Hide the bag.

Reuben quickly zips up the bag full of money, he puts it behind the sofa. Justine walks to the door, she opens it. Qwantez...

QWANTEZ

Hello. Sorry to bother you. I was hiking...I got lost...and I need to find the nearest highway--

JUSTINE

--Yeah. Um, if you take a right from here and keep walking straight, you'll see a highway.

QWANTEZ

That's great. Thank you. Again, sorry to bother you.

JUSTINE

You're welcome. It's no problem.

QWANTEZ

Bye.

JUSTINE

Bye.

Qwantez walks away. Justine closes the door. She walks to the kitchen.

CONTINUOUS:

REUBEN

Is that common? Lost hikers?

JUSTINE

Not that common, no. But hikers can easily get lost out here.

Justine opens the fridge door and grabs two cans of sodas from the fridge. She puts one of the sodas on the kitchen-side.

JUSTINE

Your drink. Unless you want something different.

REUBEN

You got any beer?

JUSTINE

Nope.

Reuben chuckles. Justine takes a long sip of her soda.

EXT. DESERT / INT. CAR - DAY

Qwantez in the driver's seat. Simon next to him in the passenger seat. The car near Justine's trailer, but not too near.

SIMON

So what you wanna do about these people?

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER / LIVING ROOM - DAY

Justine wipes the coffee table with a cloth. Reuben grabs the sports bag from behind the sofa.

REUBEN

Well, I better get home and get ready for the dinner shift at the diner later.

JUSTINE

(sarcastic) You don't need to work anymore.

A slight smile on her face. Reuben smiles.

CONTINUOUS:

REUBEN

I'm not gonna spend any of it yet.

A LOUD THUD at the DOOR. Three times.

REUBEN

(half-jokingly) Sounds like the cops.

Justine walks to the front door and opens it. Simon and Qwantez stand there, Qwantez points a GUN at Justine. She freezes in fear.

QWANTEZ

Bitch. Ya'll got my money!

Justine slams the door shut. She turns around, she looks at the sports bag of money in Reuben's hand. She looks at Reuben.

JUSTINE

(panicked/scared) Oh my God...That's it. That's the money. Give me the bag.

REUBEN

No. No way.

JUSTINE

(panicked/scared) That's the guy that was here earlier. He just pointed a gun at me. Give me the bag.

Four LOUD THUDS on the front door.

SIMON (O.S.)

(yells) Y'all got our money. Give us our cash!

More loud thumping on the front door.

JUSTINE

Reuben!

REUBEN

No. Justine, they will kill us!

CONTINUOUS:

JUSTINE
They just want the money.

Two loud GUN SHOTS hit the outside of the front door. Justine screams.

REUBEN
(panicked/scared) We gotta find a way
outta here.

JUSTINE
The bedroom window.

EXT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER / DAY - CONTINUOUS

QWANTEZ
(yells) Y'all better open this door!

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER / BEDROOM / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Justine climbs out of her bedroom window. Reuben hands her the sports bag of money, he climbs out of the window.

EXT. DESERT / BACK TRAILER / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Justine and Reuben stand outside for a moment. They hear the two men talking.

QWANTEZ (O.S.)
These fools are dead.

Another loud GUN SHOT at the window this time. Justine signals to Reuben to run. They take off.

EXT. FRONT TRAILER / DAY - CONTINUOUS

QWANTEZ
You hear that?

SIMON
Hear what?

Qwantez walks slowly around the back of the trailer, his gun in his hand. He turns to the back of the trailer and sees Justine and Reuben RUNNING.

QWANTEZ
(yells) Hey!

CONTINUOUS:

They keep running, not looking back. Qwantez points his gun and fires at them twice, he misses, they keep running.

QWANTEZ
(yells) Simon. Come on!

Qwantez starts to run after Justine and Reuben. Simon runs to the back of the trailer and sees Qwantez running after them. Simon runs/follows.

EXT. DESERT / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Justine and Reuben run for their lives. An old abandoned trailer is in sight. They run behind it. They stop and wait, they breathe heavily.

Sounds of someone running, the running slows down into footsteps. Justine and Reuben look at each other, quietly breathing heavily. Stay quiet...

The footsteps get closer and closer until they stop for a moment. The sound of footsteps walking away. Justine and Reuben still frozen in fear, wait a moment.

REUBEN
Okay. Let's go.

Justine and Reuben make a run for it. Qwantez and Simon are still in sight. Qwantez walks towards Simon. Simon sees Justine and Reuben running. Simon points to them. Simon yells, but his words are inaudible. Qwantez turns around and sees Justine and Reuben running. Qwantez stops in his tracks, his eyes wide, his mouth tightens. He BOLTS after them.

Qwantez fires his gun at them, BANG BANG BANG. He misses. Qwantez fires again TWICE. He misses again. Justine and Reuben get behind another abandoned trailer. They catch their breath, breathing heavily.

JUSTINE
Reuben, just give them the money!

REUBEN
No. They will kill us!

The sound of running footsteps get closer and closer. The sound of running footsteps stop. Slow walking now among the crunchy sand.

CONTINUOUS:

QWANTEZ

(yells) I know you're here. Give me my money and I won't kill you.

Justine looks at Reuben. The kind of desperate look in her eyes that wants to surrender. Reuben looks at Justine. He shakes his head. Not giving up this money.

QWANTEZ (O.S.)

(yells) Yo. I got em'.

Four LOUD GUN SHOTS. A sound of a body hits the ground. Justine and Reuben both in fear, Justine shakes in terror, they both stay silent. New footsteps.

SIMON (O.S.)

You guys can come out now. I'm not gonna shoot you.

Justine and Reuben don't respond. They stay frozen in fear.

SIMON (O.S.)

Look, I know you're there. I just shot my homie to protect you. Come on out.

Justine attempts to walk around.

REUBEN

(quietly) Justine! No!

JUSTINE

Okay, we're coming out.

Justine looks at Reuben.

REUBEN

Justine, don't.

JUSTINE

Come on.

Justine walks around, Reuben follows, they come out of hiding. Qwantez lies there DEAD. Justine jump-scares in shock, like she just watched a scary scene from a horror film.

CONTINUOUS:

JUSTINE

Oh my God.

Justine and Reuben look at Qwantez's DEAD BODY. His lifeless body lies there, his eyes wide open and empty. A bullet hole in his forehead, some blood on his face. Three bullet holes in his chest, blood on his body. Simon stands there, gun in his hand by his side, he stares at Qwantez's dead body, a hint of sadness in Simon's face. He looks at Justine and Reuben. He glances at the bag of money Reuben holds. He looks at Reuben.

SIMON

Is the money all there?

Reuben hesitates, he's still shaken up. He looks at Simon.

REUBEN

(scared) Yeah. Yes. It's...it's all here. Take it. I'm sorry.

Reuben holds out the sports bag of money. Simon walks towards him and takes the bag. Simon unzips the bag and looks at the cash.

REUBEN

It's all there. I didn't spend any of it.

Simon zips up the bag.

SIMON

I believe you.

Simon looks at Justine and Reuben.

SIMON

Now, you both better get outta here. The guy i work for--

A swift almost quiet GUNSHOT sound. Simon stumbles, he falls to the ground. Blood comes out of the back of his head. He's DEAD. They stare at Simon's dead body.

Reuben looks up. A man with a long flashy GUN in the distance. The man points the gun at them. Two more swift almost quiet GUNSHOTS.

CONTINUOUS:

REUBEN
(yells) Justine, run!

They turn around and run as fast as they can. The shooter runs after them. We get a closer look at the shooter, it is ICE. Ice stops running the moment he approaches Qwantez and Simons' dead bodies. Ice grabs the bag of money, he unzips the bag and sees the cash. He zips up the bag. He looks up and sees Justine and Reuben running in the distance.

ICE
(to himself) No witnesses.

Ice continues to run after them.

Justine and Reuben run through the open space of the vast desert. A trailer ahead. Justine and Reuben run to it. They get to the front door. Pounding at the door.

JUSTINE
(yells) Help!

REUBEN
(yells) Help us!.

JUSTINE
(yells) Please help!

REUBEN
(yells) Open the door! We need help! Please!

A curtain moves from inside the trailer. Justine looks behind, the shooter is not in sight. The door opens. An African-American man, early 70s, opens the door. This is DWIGHT THOMAS.

DWIGHT
(startled) What's going on here?

JUSTINE
(panicked/scared) There's a man trying to kill us. You've gotta help us. Please!

CONTINUOUS:

DWIGHT

Okay. Yeah...Yeah. Okay. Get in here.

JUSTINE

Thank you.

Justine and Reuben rush into the trailer. Dwight shuts the door behind them.

INT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / HALLWAY / DAY - CONTINUOUS

DWIGHT

Go on into the living room.

Justine and Reuben walk into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A medium sized living room, mustard color walls, salmon color carpet, the basics, TV, sofas, coffee table, some shelves with some books.

DWIGHT

Now tell me what is going on here?

JUSTINE

My name is Justine.

DWIGHT

Hi Justine. I'm Dwight.

JUSTINE

Hi, Dwight.

JUSTINE

This is my friend, Reuben.

DWIGHT

Hi, Reuben.

REUBEN

Hi.

JUSTINE

We found a lot of money stashed in a sports bag on our hike the other day. We found out the money belonged to bad people. They've been trying to kill us. And there's a man after us right now. He has a gun.

CONTINUOUS:

DWIGHT

Okay. Okay. So where is this money now?

REUBEN

The guy has it, but he's still after us.

DWIGHT

I see. I see. He don't want any lose ends right?

DWIGHT

Okay. Well, you two just wait it out here.

EXT. DESERT / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ice walks the desert, he looks around, anger in his eyes, the gun at his side. He's in sight of Dwight's trailer, he doesn't take notice of it yet.

INT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / LIVING ROOM / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Dwight walks up to the window.

DWIGHT: POV

He sees Ice, the gun in his hand, walking near the trailer.

DWIGHT

Son of a bitch.

Justine walks hastily to the window, she sees Ice outside.

JUSTINE

That's him. That's the guy who's after us.

DWIGHT

This nigga ain't the only one with a gun.

Dwight leaves the living room and walks into his bedroom.

REUBEN

(quiet voice) Justine.

CONTINUOUS:

Justine turns around and looks at Reuben.

REUBEN

(quiet voice) How do we know we can trust this guy?

JUSTINE

(quiet voice) Don't say that, Reuben. He's risking his life now. He didn't have to let us in.

Dwight walks back into the living room with a SHOTGUN.

DWIGHT

It's okay. I got your backs.

Dwight walks to the window, the shotgun in his hand. Ready for anything.

DWIGHT: POV

Ice gets closer to the trailer, he looks around.

EXT. DESERT / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ice looks around the desert as he walks, He notices Dwight's trailer. He walks towards it. He walks up to the trailer and bangs on the door with his fist, three times. No answer. He bangs on the door again, two times.

INT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / LIVING ROOM / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Justine quietly closes the living room door.

JUSTINE

(quiet voice) Everyone stay quiet.

The sound of thumping on the front door, another three times.

DWIGHT

He ain't gonna leave.

Dwight leaves the living room, closes the door behind him. The sound of the front door opens. Justine and Reuben silent, listening...

CONTINUOUS:

Muffled voices. The front door closes. Footsteps. The living room door opens. Dwight enters, ICE right behind him.

REUBEN
(yells/scared) What's going on? You
just let this man in?! We told you he
just tried to kill us.

DWIGHT
Calm down. It's okay.

JUSTINE
(yells/scared) It's not okay. He just--

DWIGHT
--He's my son.

Reuben and Justine silent, shocked. Ice throws the sports bag of money on the sofa, Ice stares at Justine and Reuben. The danger in the atmosphere intensifies.

REUBEN
He's your son?

DWIGHT
Yes. And he's not gonna hurt you.

Dwight stands there with two guns in his hands. His shotgun in one hand and Ice's gun in the other hand.

DWIGHT
Now we're gonna make a deal.

Dwight looks at Ice.

DWIGHT
Jerome, you're gonna let these people
be.

Ice/Jerome looks at Dwight.

ICE/JEROME
Dad, this is none of your business.

DWIGHT
The moment I let these guys in, it
became my business.

CONTINUOUS:

ICE

I'm not going to prison for them or
for you.

DWIGHT

No one said you're going to prison.
But you are gonna let these people be!

ICE

They've seen my face. They gonna go
straight to the cops if I don't bury
them.

REUBEN

Look. We never saw you, alright?

ICE

(angry) And I'm supposed to just
believe you, nigga?

DWIGHT

I'm not gonna let you kill these
folks, Jerome.

Ice/Jerome stares at Justine and Reuben.

ICE

Just let me do what I gotta do, dad.

DWIGHT

You're not gonna kill--

Ice PUNCHES Dwight in the FACE knocking Dwight down, Dwight falls on the sofa. Ice grabs his GUN from Dwight's hand. Ice points the gun at Reuben. A loud GUNSHOT. Justine screams. She walks backward, her back to the window. She stands there, in shock. Blood on the side of Ice's face. Ice turns around and looks at Dwight who is half-lying on the sofa, Dwight holds his shotgun pointed up at Ice. Ice stumbles, his gun still in his hand. Ice falls to the ground. Ice is DEAD.

Reuben runs up to Ice's dead body, he kneels down and grabs Ice's gun that lays on the floor beside him.

REUBEN

Someone take this.

Dwight walks up to Reuben and grabs the gun. He watches Reuben check Ice's pulse on his neck.

CONTINUOUS:

REUBEN

He's gone.

Dwight empties Ice's gun and throws the empty gun and bullets on the coffee table.

JUSTINE

I think we should call the police.

DWIGHT

No.

Dwight stares at his son's dead corpse. Sadness in Dwight's eyes.

A cellphone rings. Reuben grabs the cellphone that half hangs out of Ice's trouser pocket. Reuben stands up, holding the dead man's cellphone.

DWIGHT

Don't answer it.

The cellphone stops ringing. Reuben puts the cellphone on the coffee table.

Dwight sits down on the sofa. Justine looks at Dwight.

JUSTINE

I really think we should go to the cops.

Dwight looks at her.

DWIGHT

We'll all implicate ourselves in this stolen money. I'll go down for murder. I'm not ready to go to prison.

JUSTINE

We can tell the police that you were protecting us.

DWIGHT

I don't wanna risk it.

REUBEN

I can't be here. If we're not going to the cops...I can't be here with his dead body.

CONTINUOUS:

Dwight looks at Reuben.

DWIGHT

Listen. It's gonna be dark soon. We'll
bury my son's body.

Reuben nods his head. They all look at each other. All
decided. Bury the body. No cops.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Dwight, Justine and Reuben dig a deep hole. The sounds of a
howling Coyote in the distance. Dwight stops digging.

DWIGHT

This ain't a good plan.

Justine and Reuben stop digging.

JUSTINE

Why? This was your idea.

DWIGHT

The wild animals will eventually dig
him up. Hikers come out here everyday.
We need to burn his body.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)

We need to go back to the
trailer...get the stuff.

They put the shovels and the torch in the back seat of
Dwight's car. They get in the car. Dwight in the driver's
seat, he starts the car and drives on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Dwight, Justine and Reuben stand around the flames. Nothing
but fire and ash remain. Dwight grabs one of the can water
containers and throws water on the flames, Justine and Reuben
do the same with the other can water containers until the
flames disappear. Burnt ash floats in the air. Dwight angrily
throws the empty water can on the ground. Dwight begins to

weep. Reuben hugs him.

INT. DWIGHT'S CAR / NIGHT - DRIVING

Reuben is at the wheel. Dwight in the front passenger's seat. Justine in the back seat.

DWIGHT

I know he was a bad man. But he was still my son, you know?

REUBEN

Yeah.

REUBEN

I should never have taken that money. This would have never have happened.

DWIGHT

Don't blame yourself. I don't blame you. My son lived a life of stealing and killing...he took people away from their loved ones. He never even attempted to change.

DWIGHT

You guys can keep the money.

JUSTINE

I don't want that money. I never did the moment we found it.

REUBEN

You should have the money, Dwight. It was your son's cash.

DWIGHT

No it wasn't. It was blood money. Money from people he killed.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / BACKYARD - NIGHT

The eight million cash in a pile. Dwight, Justine and Reuben stand there. Dwight has gasoline. Justine has matches. Dwight looks at Justine and Reuben.

CONTINUOUS:

DWIGHT

Now are you sure you don't want this money?

REUBEN

A hundred percent.

JUSTINE

Let's burn it all.

Dwight pours gasoline all over the money. Justine lights a match and throws it on the soaked eight million. The cash lights up. Flames of red orange fire begin to consume all the money.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / LIVING ROOM - LATER ON THAT NIGHT

Justine, Reuben and Dwight drink some beers.

DWIGHT

I think you two should just stay here tonight. In case Jerome's people come lookin' for you.

DWIGHT

This trailer's only a one-bedroom. Me and Reuben can take the sofas. Justine, you can have the bedroom.

JUSTINE

Okay. Thank you.

DWIGHT

Let me get you guys some clean sheets.

Dwight gets up and puts his beer on the table. He walks towards the living room door.

REUBEN

Dwight.

Dwight turns around and looks at Reuben.

JUSTINE

Thank you.

Dwight looks at Justine. He nods his head. He smiles at both of them.

CONTINUOUS:

DWIGHT

You're welcome, guys.

Dwight leaves the living room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / KITCHEN - MORNING

Dwight and Reuben are in the kitchen. The back door is wide open, the sound of birds chirping, a bright sunny desert morning.

Dwight pours coffee into three mugs. Reuben looks at a photo on the fridge of a younger Dwight and an African-American preteen at a theme park. The man and boy smiling in front of a man-made waterfall, roller-coasters and other rides in the background.

Dwight sees Reuben looking at the photo.

DWIGHT

That's me and Jerome.

Dwight puts one of the coffee mugs on the round wooded table that sits in the middle of the kitchen. Reuben sits down at the table and grabs his coffee.

REUBEN

Thank you.

Dwight puts the two other mugs of coffee on the table. He sits down and joins Reuben.

DWIGHT

Jerome was a happy kid until the divorce. Jerome's mom, my wife...she was cheating. I couldn't stay married to her any longer. Turned out her new guy cheated on her and left her for another woman...Jerome's mom fell into depression. She eventually took her own life. Jerome was nineteen when his mom passed.

REUBEN

I'm so sorry.

CONTINUOUS:

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
Jerome went the wrong way in life ever
since his mother's death.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
(sombre/sad) I don't know why I even
kept calling him Jerome.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
(sombre/sad) The moment he went into a
life of crime...Jerome no longer
existed.

DWIGHT (CONT'D)
(sombre/sad) My son died long before I
killed him.

Dwight takes a sip of his coffee. The sound of a door opening
and closing. Footsteps. Justine enters the kitchen.

JUSTINE
Hey guys.

DWIGHT
I made you some coffee, child.

JUSTINE
Thank you.

JUSTINE
Need some milk.

Justine looks at Dwight.

JUSTINE
Is it okay?

DWIGHT
Help yourself.

JUSTINE
Thank you.

Justine opens the fridge door, she grabs a carton of milk and
pours some milk into her coffee. She puts the carton of milk
back in the fridge. She joins the guys at the table. She
takes a sip of her coffee.

CONTINUOUS:

DWIGHT

If y'all want some breakfast, y'all gonna have to make it yourself. I don't like cooking, if you want cereal, it's there too.

REUBEN

That's fine.

Dwight takes a sip of his coffee.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT / DWIGHT'S TRAILER / LATER ON - MORNING

A car drives up near the trailer. Two African-American men, late 40s, HENCHMAN 1 and HENCHMAN 2 exit the car.

INT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / LIVING ROOM / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Dwight runs up to the window.

DWIGHT: POV

HENCHMAN 1 and HENCHMAN 2 stand outside their car. In conversation, their words inaudible.

INT. KITCHEN / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Justine at the table eats her toast. Reuben leaning back against the sink.

JUSTINE

So now I'm thinking about going back home to Seattle.

REUBEN

It makes sense. I want us to stay in touch though.

JUSTINE

Of course. Come up to Seattle. We'll hang out.

Dwight walks in the kitchen.

CONTINUOUS:

DWIGHT

We got company.

Justine and Reuben follow Dwight into the living room

INT. LIVING ROOM / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Reuben walks to the window and looks out.

DWIGHT

I think those guys worked for my son.
They're probably looking for him.

Reuben turns around and looks at Dwight.

REUBEN

What do we do?

DWIGHT

Let me deal with this. I'll go talk to
them. I'll make something up.

JUSTINE

Dwight...wait...your gun.

DWIGHT

These guys will just shoot the moment
they see my gun.

DWIGHT

Listen, guys. If anything happens.
Take my gun and go out the back.

Dwight leaves the living room.

JUSTINE

Dwight...wait.

Dwight closes the living room door behind him. The sound of
the front door opens. Muffled inaudible voices. Justine and
Reuben run to the window and watch.

EXT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / DESERT / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

HENCHMAN 1

Where is he?

DWIGHT

I don't know where my son is.

CONTINUOUS:

HENCHMAN 2
Don't lie to us old man.

HENCHMAN 1
Ice would have contacted us by now.

DWIGHT
I don't know what else to tell you.

HENCHMAN 1
Okay.

Henchman 1 SHOTS Dwight. Middle of the forehead clean shot.
Dwight falls to the ground. He's DEAD.

INT. DWIGHT'S TRAILER / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

JUSTINE AND REUBEN - POV

Justine and Reuben see Dwight dead on the floor outside.

JUSTINE
(cries/yells) Oh no. Oh no.

The two Henchman talk, their words are inaudible.

REUBEN
We gotta get outta here. Out the back
like Dwight said. Come on.

Reuben runs to the sofa and grabs Dwight's shotgun. Reuben
opens the living room door. Justine follows.

INT. HALLWAY / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Justine and Reuben head for the kitchen/back exit.

HENCHMAN 2 (O.S.)
(yells) Hey!

Justine and Reuben turn around. The front door wide open. The
Henchman see them try to get away. Henchman 2 points his gun
at them.

REUBEN
(yells) Justine!

CONTINUOUS:

Reuben turns and gets in front of Justine. Reuben puts himself in the line of fire, he lifts up the shotgun and attempts to shoot the Henchmen. BANG BANG BANG. Justine screams. Reuben falls on his back. Blood all over his chest. Reuben struggles to breathe.

JUSTINE
(yells) Reuben!

She bends down, she tries to stop the bleeding on his chest.

JUSTINE
(sobs) Reuben hold on.

Reuben's struggle to breathe is over within four seconds. He stops breathing. Reuben is dead.

HENCHMAN 1 (O.S.)
(yells) Where's Ice? Where's the eight million?

Justine still kneeling on the ground, she grabs Dwight's shotgun that lies next to Reuben's dead body. She turns around. She shoots. BANG BANG. Henchman 1 flies back and falls dead on the ground. Henchman 2 moves back out of sight, against the wall, he leans forward and SHOOTS at Justine, BANG, he misses. He leans back out of sight again, he leans forward towards the hallway. Justine SHOOTS at Henchman 2, BANG BANG in his neck and chest, he falls back DEAD. Justine drops the gun. She breathes heavily, tears fall down her face. She stands up. She looks at Reuben's dead body. His face pale and lifeless. She cries. She turns and walks slowly to the front door. She steps over Dwight's dead body right by the door.

EXT. DESERT / DWIGHT'S TRAILER / MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Justine stares at Dwight lying dead and lifeless. She continues to weep. She tries to pull herself together. She wipes the tears from her eyes. She turns around, two African-American women hikers, late-50s, approaching. They see Justine and the dead men. The two hikers stop. Shock and horror all over their faces.

WOMAN HIKER 1
Oh my God. What happened?

CONTINUOUS:

JUSTINE
(sobs) They killed...they killed my friends.

WOMAN HIKER 2
I'll call the cops.

Woman Hiker 2 grabs her cellphone from her trouser pocket and dials 911. Woman Hiker 1 approaches Justine and puts her arm around Justine as Justine weeps.

WOMAN HIKER 2
(into the phone) Yes. I need the police immediately...there are...

Woman Hiker 2's phone call fades into inaudible words as we stay with Justine...Woman Hiker 1 hugs Justine as Justine weeps in her arms.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DESERT / DWIGHT'S TRAILER - DAY

A police car and an ambulance are outside Dwight's trailer. FEMALE PARAMEDIC and MALE PARAMEDIC zip up the dead bodies and wheel them into the ambulance on stretchers. A FEMALE COP talks to the two women hikers. A MALE COP talks to Justine.

JUSTINE
So that's everything that happened.

MALE COP
Okay. You're not in any trouble, but we need you to come down to the station and give an official statement there.

JUSTINE
Sure.

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The Trailer now bare with a few boxes. Justine puts the last of her belongings, framed photos in a box. Her cellphone rings. Justine picks up her cellphone on the coffee table.

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Hi, mom.

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Yeah, i'm good.

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) You don't have to
come out here, mom. My flight is in a
couple of days.

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Okay. Well, I'm
looking forward to seeing you
tomorrow.

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Have a good flight.

(BEAT)

JUSTINE
(into the phone) Bye.

Justine hangs up the phone. She stands there and looks around
the room. This place that was her home.

JUSTINE
I'm gonna miss you.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER / LIVING ROOM - MORNING

The sounds of birds chirp outside.

FADE IN:

A knock on the door. Justine exits the bathroom. She jogs to
the door and opens it to an older woman, early 60s, African-
American. This is VANTRICE FIELDS, Justine's mom. Vantrice, a
big smile on her face.

CONTINUOUS:

VANTRICE

Hi honey.

Justine smiles.

JUSTINE

Hi mom. Come on in.

The uber leaves as Vantrice enters the trailer. Vantrice puts her spinner suitcase against the wall by the door. Justine shuts the front door. They hug. Vantrice looks at Justine. The look in a mother's eyes of love.

JUSTINE

What can I get you to drink?

VANTRICE

A cold drink would be nice.

JUSTINE

You got it. Go ahead and sit down.
Make yourself at home. You must be
tired from your flight.

Vantrice walks to the living room and sits down on the sofa.
Justine goes to the kitchen. She opens the fridge door.

VANTRICE

Yeah. But I'm feelin' upbeat seeing my
baby girl.

JUSTINE

It's good to see you too, mom.

JUSTINE

I've got a few cans of ice tea, I've
got Lime juice--

VANTRICE

--Ice tea would be great.

JUSTINE

Sure thing.

Justine grabs two glasses from the cupboards, she puts the glasses on the kitchen counter, she opens the cans and pours the drinks.

CONTINUOUS:

JUSTINE

You really didn't need to come out here, mom. We're leaving tomorrow. Not that I don't want you here.

VANTRICE

I know J. I just want to be here for you. After everything you've just been through. It's a mother thing.

Justine walks to the living room, the two glasses of ice tea in each hand. She hands her mom her drink and sits down.

VANTRICE

Thank you.

VANTRICE

So you're all packed.

Vantrice takes a sip of her ice tea.

JUSTINE

Yeah.

VANTRICE

This is a beautiful place you have here.

JUSTINE

Good thing I'm a minimalist. Only gonna have those few boxes shipped out.

JUSTINE

I'm gonna miss this place. This trailer, the desert was my home. I just can't be here anymore. Reuben...what happened to him...I just can't live out here anymore.

VANTRICE

I wasn't here to protect you.

Vantrice's voice shakes, upset. Justine puts her hand on her mom's shoulder.

JUSTINE

Mom, it's okay. And I'm fine. You can't be with your kids twenty four seven.

CONTINUOUS:

VANTRICE

I know, honey.

JUSTINE

I feel that God brought me to Dwight.
He didn't know us, but Dwight died
protecting me and Reuben. If it wasn't
for Dwight and Reuben, I'd be dead.

VANTRICE

Dwight sounds like he was a good man.
And Reuben was a good guy too.

Justine nods her head.

JUSTINE

The police raided Dwight's son's
place. They made some arrests. They
told me I'm safe, but I'll never feel
truly safe here again.

VANTRICE

You're doing the right thing.

JUSTINE

Am I? I've quit my job, and now--

VANTRICE

--You're gonna come back to Seattle
with me. We already arranged it. You
can stay with me until you find a new
job. It's time you came back home.

Justine looks at her.

JUSTINE

Thanks, mom.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER - DAY

An uber arrives.

INT. JUSTINE'S TRAILER / LIVING ROOM / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Justine and Vantrice have their spinner suitcases ready.

CONTINUOUS:

VANTRICE
Are you ready, J?

JUSTINE
Yeah. Let's go.

Vantrice walks to the front door. She opens the door and walks out. Justine follows, Justine turns around and takes one more look at her now former home. Justine smiles warmly. She turns around and exits the trailer and closes the door.

EXT. / DESERT / JUSTINE'S TRAILER / DAY - CONTINUOUS

Justine and Vantrice get into the uber and drive away.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

