

# THE LOST PEARL OF THE MOJAVE – EPISODE 1

## A SHIP IN THE DESERT 1839-1842



**FADE IN: EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DAWN (1840)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Mojave Desert, Alta California  
(Mexico) 1840"

The sun rises over an endless expanse of sand and rock. This is the Mexican frontier—wild, unforgiving, and on the brink of change.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

Between the river  
and the mountains  
the Mojave was a  
vast, untamed land  
guarding its  
secrets.

## **EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DAY (1840)**

The desert stretches endlessly, waves of heat distorting the air. A LONE FIGURE bearded, sun burnt, and hardened by travel stumbles forward—CAPTAIN CAMERON SMITH (late-20s). His canteen dangles empty, and his boots drag. He pauses, shielding his eyes against the glaring sun.



A sharp CRY echoes—VULTURES circle above. Cameron glances up, lips cracked, eyes sunken. He forces himself forward, his breath shallow. His fingers tremble as he pulls out a YELLOWED MAP, the ink faded but clear—a ship, a river, mountains.

His vision blurs. He collapses, his eyes fluttering shut.

## **MALIKA (V.O.)**

He came from the  
sea, chasing a  
legend across a

land where no man  
should walk.

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DAY (HALLUCINATION, 1840)**

A sudden WIND gusts, lifting a veil of sand to reveal a HALF-BURIED SKELETON—clad in TATTERED SPANISH ARMOR. Rusted, ancient, a relic of the past. Cameron kneels, brushing sand from a DECORATED DAGGER near its remains. A distant RATTLE—Cameron jerks back as a RATTLESNAKE coils near the skeleton's ribs.

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DAY (1840)**

Cameron startles awake and scrambles up, shaking off his exhaustion, moving faster now. A shadow moves in the distance. Watching.

**EXT. CAMERON'S OYSTER BOAT – DAY (FLASHBACK, 1839)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "1 Year Earlier 1839"

The sun casts a golden hue over the gentle waves. Cameron Smith, a sturdy man in his late 20s, stands at the bow, hauling up oyster flats with practiced ease. Beside him is his DECKHAND, a wiry youth of about 19.

**DECKHAND**

(grinning) Another  
good haul, Captain.

**CAMERON**

(nodding) Aye, the  
bay's been kind to  
us.

They continue working in rhythm, the sound of water  
and creaking wood filling the air.

**DECKHAND**

This boat will make  
you a good living.

**CAMERON**

(raises an eyebrow)  
I don't know James  
sometimes I wonder  
if there is  
anything else out  
there for me.

**DECKHAND**

Well, with your  
father's exploits  
during the War and  
your uncle Jedediah  
exploring out West...  
I guess adventure  
runs in your blood.

**CAMERON**

(pauses, looking  
out to the horizon)

They were men of  
great deeds.

**DECKHAND**

And you?

**CAMERON**

(smiles faintly)  
Who knows what the  
tides may bring?

They share a contemplative silence, the boat gently  
rocking beneath them.

**DECKHAND**

Guess the sea's in  
your veins too.

**CAMERON**

Aye, but sometimes...  
(glancing westward)  
I wonder what's  
beyond the horizon.

The two men continue their work, the vast expanse of  
the bay stretching out before them, hinting at  
possibilities yet to be explored.

**EXT. PHILADELPHIA DOCKS – NIGHT (1839)**

The moon hangs low over the bustling Philadelphia  
docks. Lanterns flicker along the wet, creaking

planks, casting long shadows. Ships groan on the tide, their rigging clattering in the wind. The scent of brine, sweat, and fish guts fills the air.

At the edge of the dock, CAMERON SMITH, strong, young, but still rough around the edges, unloads oyster crates from a weathered skiff. He moves with confidence, his muscles straining under the weight. He sets the last crate down with a thud.

A FISHMONGER, burly and gruff, MR. HENDERSON tosses Cameron a small stack of bills—his payment for the haul. Cameron nods in appreciation, tucks the money into his vest, and wipes his hands on his trousers.

A sudden roar of laughter catches his ear.

#### **EXT. DOCKSIDE – GAMBLING CIRCLE – NIGHT (1839)**

A group of rough SAILORS, their faces weathered from the sea, huddle in a circle, throwing dice against the wooden planks. The clink of coins rings out as bets are made. A few empty rum bottles lie scattered around them.

Cameron hesitates, rolling his shoulders. He's not a gambler—but he knows an opportunity when he sees it.

An old MARINER, scarred, and missing two fingers, is running the game and catches sight of him. His eyes narrow, then a slow grin spreads across his face.

#### **MARINER (GRAVELLY, INTRIGUED)**

Cameron Smith? Hey  
boy! I sailed with

your father on the  
Ticonderoga... and I  
knew your uncle  
Jedediah before he  
went out West.

Cameron stiffens slightly at the mention of his family name. The Mariner gestures to the dice.

**MARINER**

Come on, boy. Let's  
see if you've got  
your uncle's luck.

The circle parts slightly, making room. Cameron sizes them up—these men are notorious dockside drifters, but something in him itches for risk. He relents, kneels and tosses a single bill taken from his pay.

The Mariner hands Cameron the dice and he rolls them confidently. He wins. The Sailors grunt. Coins slide across the planks into Cameron's hand. Cameron grins, confidence swelling. Another roll. Another win. The pot grows. One more roll—and again, fortune favors him. A small pile of silver now rests at his knee.

The crafty Mariner, eyes him carefully and points to his bag of silver.

**MARINER (SOFTLY, AMUSED)**

Seems the boy's got

the family luck.  
How about you make  
a real wager?

Cameron hesitates, but is swept up in the moment  
puts his entire stack of bills on the ground.

The Mariner smirks as he hands the dice to Cameron.

Cameron shakes them deliberately, and rolls. Cameron  
wins again.

A grumble from the circle as Cameron is paid three  
gold coins.

Cameron hesitates but knowing he has already doubled  
his pay, he lets his winnings ride.

The Mariner's smile tightens as he palms the dice,  
and hands them to Cameron.

Cameron rolls the dice— Snake eyes.

His winnings and sack of coins are swept away in an  
instant. The circle erupts in boozy laughter.  
Cameron clenches his jaw, realizing too late—he's  
been had.

Cameron pushes up to his feet, anger simmering, but  
the Mariner raises a hand.

**MARINER (GRUFF, YET ODDLY REGRETFUL)**

Don't go away mad.  
I wouldn't want  
your pops to be  
angry with me... I



can't take all of  
your money today.

He tosses something through the air. A single gold coin. It flips end over end, landing in Cameron's outstretched palm with a soft clink.

Cameron stares at it. A small mercy, but also a lesson.

**MARINER (SMIRKING, BUT NOT UNKIND)**

Don't forget,  
boy—hard work  
builds a man. But  
fortune? That's  
another matter.

Cameron pockets the gold coin in his vest, fingers lingering on it. His jaw tightens. Then, something catches his eye. A NEWSPAPER POST nailed to a wooden piling, fluttering in the breeze. Bold black letters shout: "GOLD IN CALIFORNIA! A Land of Riches Awaits!" Cameron's gaze lingers, his grip tightening around the single coin in his pocket. A gust of wind lifts the newspaper's edge, revealing more words beneath the headingline..."FORTUNE FAVORS THE BOLD."

Cameron exhales sharply, jaw set. This isn't the end. It's only the beginning.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

The sea was his  
past. The West... his

future. Cameron  
yearned for the  
opportunities and  
adventures that  
awaited him in the  
western frontier.

FADE TO BLACK.

**INT. MEXICO CITY – POLITICAL HALLS – DAY (1839)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Mexico City"

Inside an **ornate chamber**, the air is thick with the scent of burning incense and old paper. **Gilded chandeliers** cast flickering light on the marble floors. The **political elite of Mexico**—military officers, landowners, and advisors—sit in tense anticipation.

At the heading of the assembly, **PRESIDENT ANASTASIO BUSTAMANTE** stands tall, a **decree in his hand**. Next to him, **PÍO PICO**, standing with composed intensity, listens intently. **Priests murmur and protest** in the background—their grip on power crumbling before them.

**PRESIDENT BUSTAMANTE**

This land in Alta  
California no  
longer belongs to  
the Church. It  
belongs to Mexico!

The chamber **erupts in whispers**. Some nod in approval, others exchange uneasy glances. The power shift is undeniable.

**PRESIDENT BUSTAMANTE**

From now on, it  
will be granted to  
Mexican patriots  
who are willing to  
cultivate, to  
build, and to  
defend it for the  
glory of Mexico!

**Pío Pico does not react immediately**. His expression is measured, his hands clasped behind his back. But inside, he knows—this is **his moment**.

He inclines his heading, hiding the satisfaction creeping into his features. **His future has just been sealed**.

**EXT. ALTA CALIFORNIA — DESERT TRAIL — DAY (1839)**

Under the searing desert sun, a **procession of riders** carves a path through the vast and desolate landscape. At the heading of the entourage, **PÍO PICO**, adorned in **fine charro attire**, rides with quiet confidence. His eyes scan the **golden plateaus** and **parched valleys**—lands that will soon be his to command.

They pass the **Barco Plateau**, a lonely stretch of desert that whispers of forgotten secrets. Pico

rides aheading, momentarily **slowing his horse**, taking in the land's rugged beauty—untamed, unclaimed, but not for long.

The **dust cloud** of his caravan trails behind him as they continue westward, toward the seat of power. And from the plateau—**A FIGURE WATCHES.**

**EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION – MONTEREY – DAY (1839)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Monterey Bay Alta California"

The grand **adobe estate** of the Governor of Alta California rises above the coastal city, the **Pacific breeze** stirring the banners on the balcony. The **hollow sound of hooves on cobblestone** fills the courtyard as Pico and his entourage **arrive at the gates.**

A **guard steps forward**, recognizing Pico immediately, and signals for the gates to open. **The doors swing wide**—welcoming a man who knows his destiny.

**MATCH CUT TO: EXT. MALIKA'S MOJAVE VILLAGE – DAY (1839)**

The village hums with quiet activity—**woven shelters, smoking fires, children laughing in the distance**—but a weight lingers in the air. The fields have rows of crops and are fertile. The **Colorado River glistens nearby**, an unspoken lifeblood, its gentle current at odds with the tension in the camp.

**MALIKA** strides in from the desert, her **footsteps swift but measured**, dust rising at her heels. She

**pauses**, scanning the horizon, her gaze thoughtful—troubled. She turns toward a group of **Elders**, their faces **lined with wisdom and warning**.

She steps forward, addressing her father, **THE CHIEF**, a **stoic and commanding presence** draped in ceremonial hides. His **deep-set eyes watch the land**, seeing beyond the present moment.

**MALIKA**

More men are  
coming.

The **Chief does not look at her immediately**. Instead, he stares into the distance, where the desert meets the sky—where **change always comes from**.

**CHIEF**

They always come.  
And they always  
take.

(**A beat**. He finally turns to her.)

**CHIEF**

But it is not our  
task to stop them.  
Only to endure.

**Malika tightens her grip on her bow**, her knuckles pale against the wood. A flicker of defiance in her eyes—she is not convinced.

**MALIKA**

What if they do not  
just pass through?

The **Chief** watches her for a long moment. He knows her spirit, the fight in her heart. But his voice remains firm, heavy with years of knowing.

**CHIEF**

Then we will  
outlast them. As we  
always have.

He steps closer, his **presence casting a shadow over her**, not in menace, but in warning.

**CHIEF**

Our secrets must be  
protected. The  
water must be  
protected.

He lets those words settle, as weighty as the sun above them.

**CHIEF**

If they pass  
through, fine. If  
they perish, fine.  
If they search for  
our secrets, **only  
then do we engage.**

A breeze shifts through the village, lifting dust into the air. **Malika lowers her gaze**, swallowing the words she wants to say—that **this one is different**. That something **pulls at her**. But to say it would bring challenge. Bring doubt.

She nods, though her heart does not.

The **Chief studies her a moment longer** before turning back to the desert, as if **listening for something only he can hear**.

**EXT. PHILADELPHIA DOCKS – DAY (1839)**

The salty breeze carries the scent of the bay as Cameron Smith steps onto the bustling dock. The wooden planks creak underfoot. Before him, a weathered FISHMONGER, inspects the oyster boat moored alongside the wharf.

**FISHMONGER**

She's a fine  
vessel, Cameron.  
You sure you're  
ready to part with  
her?

**CAMERON**

She's served me  
well, but my course  
is set westward.

Mr. Henderson nods, running a calloused hand over the boat's worn rail.

**FISHMONGER**

I'll give you a  
fair price. Oyster  
season's still  
strong.

**CAMERON**

Fair's all I ask.

They shake hands, sealing the deal. Mr. Henderson reaches into a leather pouch and counts out a stack of bills, pressing them into Cameron's hand.

**FISHMONGER**

Anything else I can  
do for you?

**CAMERON**

You don't by any  
chance know where I  
could buy a  
Winchester?

Mr. Henderson raises an eyebrow, a knowing smirk playing at the corner of his mouth.

**FISHMONGER**

A rifle, eh? Your  
mother is not going  
to like that. Try  
old McTavish's shop  
on Front Street. He



deals in all manner  
of things.

Cameron nods, tucking the money away as he takes one last look at his boat. He exhales, then turns, stepping toward his next adventure.

**EXT. OVERLAND TRAIL – WESTWARD JOURNEY – DAY (1840)**

A gold coin flips through the air, catching the sunlight as Cameron slips it into his vest while riding in a wagon. WAGONS roll westward. Dust rises, the air thick with heat. Cameron rides a buckboard, holding a Winchester Rifle, alongside a grizzled PROSPECTOR. Other wagons carry TRADERS, and FAMILIES.

**PROSPECTOR**

What are you  
looking for, boy?

**CAMERON**

I hear there is  
gold for the taking  
in California, and  
I'm looking for my  
share.

The Prospector eyes Cameron's rifle, shiny and well-maintained, then flicks his gaze to the fresh leather of Cameron's boots.

**PROSPECTOR**

A man with a new  
rifle and new  
boots—either you're  
the luckiest miner  
I ever met, or you  
just started  
playin' the game.

Cameron stiffens slightly, gripping the rifle a bit tighter. The Prospector chuckles, nudging his horse along the trail.

**PROSPECTOR**

Gold's a tricky  
thing, son. She  
calls to men like a  
siren, makes 'em  
foolish. Makes 'em  
desperate.

**CAMERON**

I'm not a fool.

The Prospector smirks, rubbing his jaw as if weighing the words.

**PROSPECTOR**

Maybe not. But  
you're green. And  
green's worse than  
foolish in these

parts. Green gets a  
man robbed. Or  
worse.

Cameron narrows his eyes, but the Prospector just  
grins, tipping his hat against the sun.

**PROSPECTOR**

Tell you what—since  
we're travelin' the  
same road, maybe I  
can show you how to  
keep that pretty  
rifle from bein'  
someone else's  
prize.

Cameron studies the Prospector, sensing the offer  
comes with its own price. But the open plains  
stretch aheading, full of unknown dangers. He nods.

**CAMERON**

I'll listen. But I  
don't take charity.

**PROSPECTOR**

Good. 'Cause I  
don't give it.

The two ride on, dust kicking up behind them as the  
westward journey unfolds, full of promise—and peril.

**EXT. CAMPFIRE – WESTWARD JOURNEY – NIGHT (1840)**

The fire crackles, casting flickering shadows on the desert floor. Cameron and the Grizzled Prospector sit opposite each other, their boots resting in the dust. Coyotes howl in the distance, and the vast western sky stretches endlessly overheading.

**PROSPECTOR**

So you're looking  
for gold? Did you  
know there's more  
than gold in the  
desert? Ever hear  
'bout the Lost  
Pearl Boat?

Cameron glances up, intrigued but suspicious. The Prospector grins, revealing yellowed teeth, and spits into the dirt.

**CAMERON**

A boat? In the  
desert? Sounds like  
the heat's cooked  
your brain.

**PROSPECTOR**

Yep a Spanish  
galleon, boy. Full  
of gold and black  
pearls, lost  
somewhere in the  
sands of the

Mojave. Some say  
it's just bones and  
bad luck. But I've  
got the map—and I'm  
gonna find that  
ship and its  
treasure.

He coughs into his sleeve, then leans forward,  
pulling a battered leather pouch from his coat. He  
carefully unfolds an ancient, yellowed map, its  
edges frayed, ink smudged with time.

### **PROSPECTOR**

Real? I ain't just  
spinning campfire  
stories, boy. Take  
a look.

CLOSE ON the aged TREASURE MAP—California in the  
1600s, its coastlines still uncharted, the Baja  
Peninsula drawn as an island. A shaky finger traces  
an inland passage, symbols of rivers, mountains, and  
cryptic notes scattered across the parchment. A  
faded newspaper clipping, brittle with age, is  
pinned to one corner.

### **CAMERON**

A ship, buried in  
the desert? That's  
a fool's  
hallucination. I'll  
stick to the gold

God put in the  
ground—that's real.

The Prospector chuckles, rolling the map between his fingers.

**PROSPECTOR**

You think digging  
in the dirt's any  
less a fool's  
errand? Gold's a  
gambler's game. But  
treasure—treasure  
is history. Fortune  
with a story, a  
legend men die for.

He watches Cameron closely, gauging his reaction. The firelight dances in Cameron's eyes, the idea tempting but ridiculous. The Prospector leans in, voice hushed.

**PROSPECTOR**

I just don't know  
if I'm going to  
make it all the way  
to California this  
time.

Cameron scoffs, shaking his head.

**PROSPECTOR**

I like you kid, as  
hard as it is for  
me to give it up, I  
might be persuaded  
to part with this  
map... for a fair  
price.

Cameron scoffs, shaking his head.

**CAMERON**

You expect me to  
buy a fantasy?

**PROSPECTOR**

You're already  
gambling, son.  
This? This is a  
better bet than  
digging holes and  
hoping for luck.

The prospector hands Cameron the map and Cameron studies the map again, the brittle paper whispering secrets of an age long past. His fingers twitch—curiosity flickers, but he shakes it off.

**CAMERON**

I'll take my  
chances in the  
goldfields.

Cameron leans back, staring into the fire as the flames crackle. The Prospector smirks, tracing the map with a practiced hand. The Prospector grins in the flickering light—he's planted the seed. Now, he just has to wait for it to grow.

**CAMERON (CONT.)**

What even makes you think that thing is real?

**PROSPECTOR (V.O.)**

Early Spanish maps had California as an island with an inland passage through the Sea of Cortez that connected up north to the Pacific Ocean. In 1615 there was a Spanish Captain named Iturbe who was leaving Acapulco with his ship laden with Spanish gold and black pearls.

**EXT. ACAPULCO DOCKS – DAY (FLASHBACK TO 1615)**

SCREEN OVERLAY: "Acapulco Mexico – 1615"



A Spanish caravel is loaded with gold and a single heavily armored chest. Iturbe opens the chest to inspect and scoops a hand-full of black pearls, letting them slip through his fingers as they drop back into the chest.

**PROSPECTOR (V.O.)**

On their journey  
north Iturbe ran  
into pirates at the  
southern tip of  
Baja so he  
navigated north  
through the Sea of  
Cortez. Eventually,  
he ended up in the  
ancient waters of  
Lake Chuilla deep  
in the Mojave.

**EXT. SEA OF CORTEZ – DAY (1615)**

The caravel sails north with Baja to its west.

**PROSPECTOR (V.O.)**

By the time Iturbe  
realized there was  
no inland passage  
the floodwaters of  
the Colorado River  
that fed Chuilla  
each spring had  
receded and his

ship was trapped.

**EXT. DECK OF A SHIP – DAY (1615)**

A fight breaks out on the deck of the caravel and it is beached with men scattering into the desert.

**PROSPECTOR (V.O.)**

When supplies ran  
out the crew  
mutinied and the  
ship was run  
aground. The crew  
scattered into the  
desert looking for  
food and water.

**EXT. BEACH – DAY (1615)**

Iturbe and a group of sailors stand guard with the chest and beached craft behind them.

**PROSPECTOR (V.O.)**

Iturbe and a few  
trusted men stayed  
behind to protect  
their precious  
cargo. The desert  
just swallowed them  
up and they are  
still there to this  
day.

**EXT. CAMPFIRE – WESTWARD JOURNEY – NIGHT (1840)**

The Miner coughs, his hands trembling as he rolls-up the faded map, staring hard at Cameron.

**CAMERON**

And how do you know  
where the ship is?  
Have you seen it?

**PROSPECTOR**

Ten years ago I was  
crossing the desert  
with a Mojave guide  
who told me the  
story of the “Great  
Bird of the  
Mojave”.

**INT. CAVE – NIGHT (FLASHBACK TO 1830)**

CLOSE ON an ancient petroglyphs.

**PROSPECTOR**

He took me to the caves  
and showed me the drawings  
on the rocks and the  
“bird” was the mast of a  
ship. Then he showed me  
the valley where the ship  
was last seen. The hull  
was buried, but its mast  
and crows nest were  
sticking twenty feet out  
of the sand.

**EXT. CAMPFIRE – WESTWARD JOURNEY – NIGHT (1840)**

Miner waves the rolled-up map towards Cameron and grins.

**PROSPECTOR**

Then he showed me  
on this map right  
where the bird was  
buried.

**CAMERON**

I don't know, that  
sounds like a tall  
tale that has been  
passed down, but  
it's only a story.

CLOSE ON the miner. His face is aged, and tired and reveals his poor health.

**PROSPECTOR**

That ship and its  
treasure are buried  
in the sand right  
there in the Mojave  
Desert. And that  
treasure is mine  
for the taking.  
Only problem is...  
(cough) I'm not  
sure I'm going to  
make it.

CLOSE ON Cameron. His mood is changed from skeptical

to hopeful. He wants the miner to realize his dream.

**CAMERON**

Come on old-timer  
you can't give up  
on your dream now.  
You've come this  
far. You've got to  
see this out.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

The desert does not  
give—it only takes.  
It lures men with  
promises of gold,  
whispers of  
fortune, and the  
dreams of the  
desperate. But  
dreams have a  
price. And those  
who chase them too  
far often vanish  
into the sands,  
just like the ship  
they seek.

The miner leans in and his face changes and he  
entices Cameron with an offer.

**PROSPECTOR**

You're young. Your  
fortune's still

aheading of you.  
Me? I'm done. (He  
coughs, wiping his  
mouth.) But I'll  
make you a deal—my  
map for that gold  
coin in your  
pocket.

Cameron considers the offer, and places his hand on his vest pocket. Cameron hesitates but relents to his optimism and flips the coin to the miner. The miner hands Cameron the rolled-up map.

**PROSPECTOR**

Now keep that safe  
boy, I think you  
have what it will  
take to finish what  
I started.

**CAMERON**

I guess I aim to  
find out.

The miner lets out a dry laugh, hoarse as the desert wind.

**PROSPECTOR**

If you don't... well,  
you wouldn't be the  
first to die

trying.

FADE TO BLACK.

**EXT. COLORADO RIVER – DAY (1841)**

A **makeshift raft** drifts down the sluggish, mud-brown river. Sunlight glares off the water. **CAMERON**, bearded, sunburnt, his skin cracked like old leather, leans on a long pole, guiding the raft through the slow current. His eyes—feverish with hunger, with hope—**scan the barren banks**, searching for something that refuses to be found.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

The river was  
drying. The ship, a  
ghost. The  
treasure, only  
sand.

The wind stirs the reeds. The **river murmurs its secrets**.

And from the shore—**A FIGURE WATCHES**.

**MALIKA.**

She steps forward, the desert woven into her—**regal, wild, eternal**. A **bow slung over her shoulder**, her dark eyes unreadable, but knowing. The sun crowns her silhouette like an omen.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

And so, the desert  
gave him something  
else...

**A fate. A guide. A warning. Cameron senses her before he sees her.** He turns, eyes locking onto hers across the water— But in the next breath, **she is gone.** A shift in the wind. A trick of the light. He blinks, gripping the pole tighter. Was she real? Or another mirage?

**EXT. DESERT SHORELINE – LATER (1841)**

The raft **bumps against the shore.** Cameron steps off, his boots sinking into the damp sand. He does not look back. He walks **into the desert.**

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – NIGHT (1841)**

The sky yawns wide, stars scattered like shattered bone. The **cold bites deep,** a cruel contrast to the day's inferno. Cameron crouches beside a **small fire,** his fingers extended toward the meager flames.

A **presence** lingers beyond the fire's reach. He senses it before he sees it. **A shadow on the ridge.** Still as stone. Watching. Cameron turns sharply—**but she is gone.**

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DAY (1841)**

**Days pass.** He **crisscrosses the desert,** tracing invisible paths, chasing a dream carved in dust.



**She follows.** From the crests of dunes. From the shadows of canyons. A fleeting shape in the heat mirage. **Always watching.**

He spots her once—just a glimpse. **Dark eyes beneath the folds of her headscarf.** Then she is gone again.

**EXT. DRY RIVERBED – EVENING (1841)**

Cameron stumbles, his lips cracked, breath ragged. He **kneels, digging** with shaking hands into the bone-dry riverbed. Nothing but dust.

**Malika watches.** She knows this land. Knows the madness of men who seek what is buried beneath it.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**  
Is he searching?

A gust of wind. She steps back into the dunes, unseen.

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – SUNSET (1841)**

**Cameron stops walking.** He turns in a slow circle, scanning the horizon. **He knows she is there.** A look is she Friend or foe? Silence. He exhales and turns away.

As the sun sinks below the dunes, **Malika lingers.** She is not ready to answer.

**EXT. MALIKA'S MOJAVE VILLAGE – NIGHT (1841)**

The village hums with quiet activity. **Flickering firelight** casts dancing shadows against the woven shelters. The **Colorado River glistens nearby**, reflecting the glow of the moon.

Around a **central fire**, the **CHIEF** sits in quiet authority, flanked by the **ELDERS** and several **YOUNG BRAVES**. The crackling flames highlight their **weathered faces**, men who have seen many seasons pass and know the ways of the land.

**MALIKA steps forward**. The firelight **catches in her eyes**, determination flickering within. She stands before her father, heart pounding against her ribs.

**MALIKA**

I saw a traveler.  
He needs help.

The **Chief does not answer at first**. He studies her in silence, his expression unreadable. The wind rustles the reeds, the desert **breathing in the pause**.

**CHIEF**

He is an outsider.  
You must let him  
travel his own  
path. If he  
perishes, let the  
desert have him.

**A young brave MALIKA's younger brother VETA'AK watches from the shadows. His gaze lingers on Malika— and something else. Suspicion.**

**Malika's hands tighten into fists. She opens her mouth—then stops. She knows pushing further would be dangerous. Her father's words settle like stones in her chest. But she cannot ignore what she saw—a man, lost, dying, searching. As she leaves her brother grabs her arm and tries to stop her.**

**CHIEF**

Veta'ak let her go!  
This does not  
concern you.

**She pulls away and walks towards the horizon. The desert stretches endless beyond the village, swallowing all things that do not belong. Something stirs in her chest. A feeling she cannot name—only that it refuses to be ignored.**

**The Young Brave notices this. His brow furrows slightly, as if he senses what she does not say.**

**The fire crackles. The elders continue speaking of other things, but Malika is no longer listening. She has already made her choice.**

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT HALLUCINATION – DAY (1841)**  
**CAMERON** trudges across the barren wasteland, his boots dragging through the scorching sand. His canteen swings empty at his side. The sun bears

down—merciless, unrelenting. His breath rasps. His vision wavers. Each step is a battle. The world ripples with heat. Then—his knees buckle. He stumbles, tries to rise—and fails. He collapses, his body sinking into the burning dunes. Sand clings to his sweat-drenched skin. His eyes flutter. The desert swallows him.

**Malika** watches from the ridge.

On the horizon—**something shimmers**. A **grand Spanish galleon**, its **masts towering** over the dunes. The sails **billow** in a phantom wind. The ship—half-buried, yet eerily intact—**glides over the sand**. Cameron's cracked lips part in awe. His fingers twitch, reaching. The ship begins to fade. A whisper—soft at first, then rising—a chorus of desperate voices. **Spanish. Urgent. Pleading**. Cameron's breathing quickens. His eyes dart, searching for the unseen speakers. The whispers swirl around him like desert wind— Then—**darkness**.

#### **EXT. DESERT CAMP – NIGHT (1841)**

Cameron blinks awake, groggy, the scent of burning sage filling the air. A FIGURE kneels nearby, silhouetted against the fire—MALIKA. The glow flickers across her face, her dark eyes unreadable as she tends to a small pot.

She turns, sensing his gaze.

**MALIKA**

You should not be  
here.

Cameron tries to sit up, wincing from dehydration. Malika moves closer, pressing a hand to his chest, urging him to stay down. The touch is brief, but lingers in the air between them.

**CAMERON**

(hoarse,  
struggling) The  
ship... I have to  
find it.

Malika studies him, searching his face. A long silence.

**MALIKA**

As in life, if you  
wish to cross the  
desert, you will  
not survive alone.

She lifts a water skin, offering it to him. Cameron hesitates, his lips cracking, then drinks deeply. She watches him, her expression softening.

**MALIKA**

(gentle but firm) I  
will help you  
search for your  
mystic ship... but  
you must listen, or  
you will die.

Their eyes meet. For the first time, Cameron sees something more in her gaze—something unspoken. Malika sees a familiar figure watching them from the ridge. It's a Mojave BRAVE.

## **MONTAGE – CAMERON AND MALIKA LEARN TO TRUST(1841)**

- **EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DAY**

**Endless dunes.** The desert stretches vast before them, a world of **shifting light and shadow.** Cameron and Malika trek across the landscape, their footprints swallowed by the wind.

- **EXT. DESERT RIDGE – LATER**

**Cameron studies a weathered map.** He traces his finger along faded lines, glancing at Malika. **Malika points to the horizon.** The mountains rise in the distance, silent and knowing. She doesn't need paper to read the land—**the stars, the sand, the wind** tell her everything.

- **EXT. CANYON PASS – SUNSET**

**Cameron follows Malika's lead.** She moves through the desert like she belongs to it—**because she does.** He watches her. The way she **feels the wind,** the way she **listens to the earth.**

- **EXT. CAMPFIRE – NIGHT**

**They sit by a fire.** The flames flicker between

them, casting shadows on their faces. **Silence.**  
Not awkward. Not strained. **Just there.**

▪ **EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DAY**

**Malika** draws in the sand. Constellations.  
Mountains. Ancient paths. **Cameron** watches, his  
brow furrowed—then, understanding dawns.

▪ **EXT. JAGGED CLIFFSIDE – LATER**

**Malika** climbs effortlessly. **Cameron**  
hesitates—then follows. **At the top, they look**  
**out together.** The desert stretches **infinite**  
before them.

▪ **EXT. CAMPFIRE – NIGHT**

**Embers** rise into the black sky. **Cameron** stares  
into the flames, lost in thought. **Malika**  
watches him.

▪ **EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DAWN**

They move as one now. No longer traveler and  
guide—just two souls searching for something.

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT – DUSK (1842)**

As they continue wandering the desert **Cameron** grows  
weaker. Exhaustion creeps in. The weight of failure  
gnaws at him. He slows, breath ragged, dropping to  
his knees in the dust at the base of a great cliff.

**CAMERON**

(voice breaking,  
eyes distant)  
Maybe... maybe this

was all just a  
dream. (beat) Is a  
dream a lie if it  
doesn't come true?  
Or is it... something  
worse?

Malika studies him, then steps closer, kneeling  
beside him.

**MALIKA**

(soft, almost a  
whisper) Not all  
dreams are lies.

She reaches out, brushing a damp strand of hair from  
his forehead. The touch is tender, and unguarded.  
Cameron looks at her, something shifting between  
them—trust, understanding... something more.

**EXT. MOJAVE ROCKY PATH – NIGHT (1842)**

Malika takes his hand, guiding him up a rocky path.  
They crest a plateau—before them, a canopy of palms  
sways gently in the desert breeze. **An oasis.** Cameron  
exhales sharply, eyes wide with wonder. He turns to  
Malika, grateful, awed, seeing her in a new light.

**CAMERON**

(softly) You saved  
me.



Malika watches him, a faint smile tugging at her lips.

**MALIKA**

(a promise, a  
truth) Not yet. But  
we will  
survive—together.

**EXT. OASIS – FOLLOWING DAYS (1842)**

Cameron and Malika remain at the oasis for several days, their bond deepening as they rest and recover. They share meals, laughter, and quiet moments by the water. Cameron tells her stories of the sea, of ships that carried men to distant lands. Malika shares the myths of her people, the spirits that guide the desert, and the stories written in the wind.

One evening, as the fire crackles between them, Malika reaches for Cameron's hand. Their fingers intertwine, a silent acknowledgment of something unspoken but deeply felt.

**CAMERON**

I never thought I'd  
find something like  
this... someone like  
you.

**MALIKA**

The desert brings

many things. But it  
never gives without  
a price.

Before Cameron can respond, Malika tenses. Her eyes scan the darkness beyond the oasis. In the distance, she recognizes the Mojave **WARRIOR** stands across the oasis at the edge of the trees, watching. Silent. Unmoving. Malika grips Cameron's hand tighter, her voice low and urgent.

**MALIKA**

I have to go. If I  
don't... they will  
come for us.

She stands, gathering her things swiftly. Cameron turns and sees the warrior. Cameron rises, uncertain.

**MALIKA (CONT.)**

I will speak to my  
father... if he won't  
listen, then we  
will go.

She disappears into the darkness, leaving Cameron alone by the fire, staring into the shadows where the warrior waits.

**EXT. MOJAVE VILLAGE – NIGHT (1842)**

Malika kneels before her father, the MOJAVE CHIEF.  
The firelight flickers between them. The elders  
watch, silent.

**CHIEF**

The desert's  
secrets are not  
yours to give.

**MALIKA**

He was dying.

**CHIEF**

Then he should have  
died. The desert is  
not his home.

A long beat. Malika clenches her jaw.

**MALIKA**

I did what was  
right.

Gasps from the elders. The WARRIOR watches from the  
shadows. The chief's eyes darken.

**CHIEF**

More outsiders will  
come. They always  
do.

Malika swallows, but she does not look away.

**MALIKA**

Father, what would  
you have me do?

**CHIEF**

It's too late. I  
can see in your  
eyes, you will  
protect this  
outsider, you will  
make him your own.  
The fate of our  
people now rests on  
your shoulders.

The WARRIOR watches from the shadows and slips away  
unseen with intent to purge the desert of this  
outsider.

**EXT. MOJAVE DESERT OASIS – NIGHT (1842)**

The **oasis** is a stark contrast to the barren  
desert—lush palm trees sway, the **moonlight rippling**  
across the water's surface. The air is thick with  
the scent of damp earth and life. Cameron kneels at  
the water's edge, cupping his hands to drink.

**A shadow moves. A blade glints in the moonlight.**

From the darkness, **THE WARRIOR** emerges—silent,  
deadly. He moves with the grace of a predator, his  
blade drawn, his eyes burning with fury.

**EXT. HIDDEN OASIS – MOMENTS LATER (1842)**

Cameron's instincts flare. The air shifts. He turns—**too late. The Brave is on him.** The knife presses against Cameron's throat.

**WARRIOR**

You should not be here.

Cameron grips the Brave's wrist, his muscles straining. The knife **digs into his skin**, a thin line of blood beading against his throat. **The Brave's eyes burn.** This is not just duty—it's **fury, love, and hate woven together.**

**WARRIOR**

You do not belong.

Cameron's breath is ragged. He **twists beneath the Brave's weight**, his fingers scraping for anything—Then—A HISS. DIVINE INTERVENTION.

**EXT. HIDDEN OASIS – IN AN INSTANT (1842)**

A rattlesnake strikes. The Brave **gasps**, his body jerking as the serpent's fangs sink deep into his flesh. He staggers backward, his knife slipping from his grasp. Cameron scrambles away, gasping for breath as the Brave falls backward, clawing at the wound hitting his head on a rock at the water's edge.

**Poison floods his veins.** His limbs convulse. His

heading bleeds. He locks eyes with Cameron, the fire fading from them, replaced by something else. **Fear.** Then—**stillness.**

**EXT. OASIS – MORNING (1842)**

**The desert is quiet.** The first light of dawn washes over the oasis, turning the water into molten gold. Birds stir in the trees. The night's violence is buried beneath shifting sand. **Malika returns.** Her silhouette appears at the edge of the oasis, moving with purpose, with longing. She sees **Cameron standing by the water,** his back to her.

**Cameron turns.** Their eyes meet. Something **unspoken** passes between them. She moves to him. He doesn't hesitate. Their bodies meet in a **desperate, unguarded embrace.** **She kisses him.** Their fates are intertwined. But behind Cameron's kiss, behind the warmth of his arms, **something lingers.** A weight. A secret buried just beneath the sand.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

Water is not the  
only secret buried  
in the desert sand.

**Malika pulls back.** She studies his face, the exhaustion in his eyes, the tension in his shoulders. **Something is wrong.**

**MALIKA**

Cameron. What

happened?

**He doesn't answer right away.** The oasis is silent except for the **wind stirring the palms.** His jaw clenches, his gaze falling to the ground. He leads her to the water's edge where a body is wrapped in a burial cloth.

**CAMERON**

He came in the  
night. I didn't see  
him until it was  
too late. He hit  
his heading. The  
serpent saved me.  
We must take him  
home. Explain.

**Malika's breath stills.** She knows who is dead. Her brother.

**MALIKA**

We cannot take him  
home, he's not  
suppose to be here.  
The desert has  
taken him. He'll  
stay here.

**Cameron nods.** There is no argument. Only acceptance.

**EXT. BURIAL SITE – LATER**

The desert wind is softer now. It moves gently through the canyon, as if holding its breath. Cameron and Malika work in solemn rhythm. Cameron lifts the warrior's wrapped body with care, carrying him toward the shade of the cliffs—where the winds cannot scatter him, where the land holds memories.

**MALIKA**

He will not be  
forgotten.

They gather wood in silence, building a funeral pyre with practiced, reverent movements. Malika sprinkles sagebrush and desert herbs, whispering something low in Mojave. Cameron helps place the warrior's body on the pyre. Malika lights it. The flames rise—slowly at first, then reaching. Smoke curls into the sky, a final breath.

After the fire smolders and dies, they collect the ashes with care, burying them in a shallow pit, lining it with stones. Malika arranges a circle of stones, each placed deliberately. A single upright stone marks the center. Cameron watches, breath heavy. The weight of loss and something more—something sacred—settles in his chest. Malika places the final stone. She looks at Cameron. No anger. No blame. Only quiet understanding.

**MALIKA**

This is where my



brother is buried,  
this is where our  
children will be  
buried. And their  
children after  
them.

Her words settle like the stones—firm, enduring. A truth neither had spoken until now. A commitment—not just to each other, but to this land.

### **MALIKA**

Veta'ak—Iron  
Path—will guard  
their journey.

**Cameron exhales. The burden is still there, but now it feels shared. Honored. The desert wind shifts again. The warrior is at peace. For now.**

### **EXT. OASIS – NIGHT (1842)**

A **small fire** flickers under a canopy of palms, its glow casting restless shadows on the rocks. The oasis hums with unseen life—the whisper of wind through the fronds, the trickling of water over stone. **Cameron sits on a rock.** Exhausted. Defeated. His shoulders sag as he stares into the flames, the flickering light **reflecting the turmoil inside him.**

Nearby, **Malika kneels by a bubbling spring**, filling his canteen with steady hands. The water is clear, pure—a gift in a world of dust. She turns, holding

it out to him. **Cameron takes the canteen but hesitates.** He stares at the water, his own reflection rippling on the surface.

**CAMERON**

I was a fool.  
Chasing ghosts.

**Malika watches him.** Her expression unreadable, but her fingers tighten slightly on the canteen. Cameron exhales, his voice **low, hollow.**

**CAMERON**

I know now. The  
ship isn't real.  
The treasure is  
just dust. Blood  
has been spilled.

He **shakes his head**, eyes dark with something deeper than failure.

**CAMERON**

I need to leave. I  
need to return  
home, I was never  
supposed to be  
here. This is not  
my place.

**Silence.** The fire crackles. The desert listens. Malika's gaze lingers on him. She **rises, stepping**

**closer.** There is no hesitation in her eyes. Only knowing. **She grabs his hand.** A firm grip—refusing to let him drift away like sand in the wind. **She motions for him to follow.**

**EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE – NIGHT (1842)**

They move through **thick foliage**, past the **ancient bones of the desert**—stone worn smooth by time. They reach the mouth of a **cave**, yawning dark and silent beneath the cliffs. The air is cooler here, thick with something ancient. Something waiting.

**INT. CAVE – NIGHT**

**Firelight dances over petroglyphs carved by hands long gone etched into the walls—serpents winding through rivers, the sun bursting over jagged mountains, and a great bird with outstretched wings,** as if guarding something unseen. **Cameron runs his fingers over the carvings.** The rough stone presses against his skin—**solid, real.** More real than the myths he chased across the sands. Malika steps aheading, leading him deeper into the shadows. **Cameron hesitates.**

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

The desert had  
tested him.

**Malika turns back to him.** Her eyes steady, unwavering.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

And now, it would  
reward him.

**Cameron follows.** Malika's torchlight flickers over the rock walls. His breath catches. A gleaming VEIN OF GOLD snakes through the stone—untouched, waiting. His fingers brush the gold, real, solid, true.

**CAMERON (BARELY A WHISPER)**

My God...

Cameron kneels transfixed by the vein of gold. Malika turns to leave but looks back to see him frozen, knowing what this means.

**MALIKA (V.O.)**

He came for a ship.  
He found a kingdom.

FADE TO BLACK.