

DESERT SPRINGS

Written by

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TITLE CARD

"The third year of the California drought. The worst water crisis in the history of the state. Water allocation has become a major political issue in the upcoming election for governor of the state."

EXT. NORTHERN LOS ANGELES COUNTY - HIGH DESERT - MISSION RESERVOIR - DAY

A waterline around the reservoir indicates a low water level. Brown, dry hills. Many boat docks but little signs of boating. A political rally is in progress. The crowd chanting "Water equality!" Signs with "WE" on them in headlines and underneath the words "Water Equality for Californians." Other signs in the crowd proclaim "Lewis for Governor." Congressman TRAVIS LEWIS stands on the bank of the reservoir addressing the crowd.

TRAVIS LEWIS

At one time Mission Reservoir was one of California's largest reservoirs and recreation areas. Now it's little more than a muddy pond with a few struggling businesses. Do we want more of this under Governor McCloud?

CROWD

NO! NO! NO!

TRAVIS LEWIS

Reservoir water has been diverted to large real estate developments. Another example of corruption under McCloud's administration where money buys water. People of California should have equal access to water.

CROWD

YES! YES! Water equality! Water equality!

Newspaper reporter for the *Los Angeles Journal* MCKENZIE MORRIS listens to Travis Lewis and take notes. The rally is winding down and when it breaks up staffers for Lewis hand out literature and Lewis shakes hands. As the crowd thins out Lewis walks towards McKenzie.

TRAVIS LEWIS
Surprised to see you here Ms.
Morris.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I'm missing a rally for the
governor in Santa Monica to be
here.

TRAVIS LEWIS
I feel honored.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I'm interested in seeing what a
candidate 20 points down in the
polls does two months before the
election.

TRAVIS LEWIS
The same thing I've been doing all
along. Exposing corruption in the
administration.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
The people's hero battling
government corruption.

TRAVIS LEWIS
Like your grandfather.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
You can leave my family out of
this.

TRAVIS LEWIS
You certainly have.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
What's that mean?

TRAVIS LEWIS
Henry Oliver would be investigating
corruption in the current
administration.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
If there was corruption.
Allegations of corruption get a lot
of attention during elections.

TRAVIS LEWIS
Especially when they're true.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

So far they've all proven to be false.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Proven to be false by administration mouthpieces like your newspaper.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I've heard all this before.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Maybe you've heard of the Big Sky Ranch development?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Another allegation that leads nowhere.

TRAVIS LEWIS

More than an allegation. A real estate development in the valley draining water from this reservoir.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

That's ridiculous. Water from the reservoir goes north to the Central Valley.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Common propaganda from the administration. The water flows south ten miles into the valley and developments like Big Sky. Water flows towards money in California. Your grandfather knew this.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(looking at her watch)

I've got an important press conference to attend in a few hours.

TRAVIS LEWIS

The governor's announcement of his new water czar. Probably one of his old cronies like Carlton Shields. Water corruption in California will now be institutionalized.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(walking away)

In a few months you can return to
Washington and get away from all
the corruption out here.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CITY PARK - DAY

A rolling park of lush vegetation, brilliant green grass and large shade trees. The grass is perfectly manicured. Pink flamingos float peacefully on the lake. A school of ducks on the water. We move around the park and towards a beautiful building on the side of the park. A sign says "Desert Springs City Building."

INT. - MAYOR'S OFFICE (DESERT SPRINGS) - DAY

A meeting in progress in the office of Desert Springs MAYOR DWAIN CROSS. The Mayor wears his usual attire featuring a Hawaiian shirt and shorts. A number of golf putters bloom out of a container in the corner of the office. On the walls, photos of the Mayor posing with celebrities on the golf course. On a large table in the room is a model of a new development and a plate on the model reads "Cactus Springs." The Mayor is watching a Power Point presentation by water consultant ALLEN YATES of Yates Associates. Yates is maybe in his seventies. A distinguished looking man who looks like an aging academic archeologist.

MAYOR CROSS

Your report is hard to believe.

ALLEN YATES

It shouldn't be. You know about the water fiction Desert Springs was created on.

MAYOR CROSS

But reports showed we had at least another ten years of water underground.

ALLEN YATES

The drought has dried out water from the mountains where most of our water comes from. Add to that the amazing growth out here. Thirty golf courses. Fifty thousand people. Bill Clayton's Cactus Springs projects.

Mayor Cross gets up from his desk and takes one of his putters from the container. He drops a golf ball on the carpet, lines up a putt and taps the golf ball toward the leg of his desk.

MAYOR CROSS

This has to be kept quiet for now.
I need to talk to some people.

ALLEN YATES

Something has to be done soon. The
water situation is critical.

MAYOR CROSS

I need time to make a plan.

ALLEN YATES

My report needs to go public.
People down here have a right to
know how serious things are.

MAYOR CROSS

You'll keep things quiet until you
hear from me.

ALLEN YATES

That's going to be hard to do.

MAYOR CROSS

Last time I looked, your business
was registered in Desert Springs.
I'd hate to see your contacts dry
up.

Allen Yates looks at the Mayor without saying anything and leaves his office.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DEPARTMENT OF WATER & POWER -
MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

A twenty-story modern building that is an island in a shallow moat of water with huge fountains throwing water high into the air. TV news crews and reporters gather in front of the building. California GOVERNOR HARRIS MCCLOUD is holding a news conference to introduce his new water commissioner.

GOVERNOR MCCLOUD

The water crisis calls for a new
level of coordination of state
resources. That's why I'm
appointing someone I trust to the
position of California Water
Commissioner.

(MORE)

GOVERNOR MCCLOUD (CONT'D)
Carlton Shields has been involved with water for his entire career. As our new Water Commissioner, he'll monitor water usage throughout the state and allocate water on a priority basis. I'll let Carlton say a few words.

CARLTON SHIELDS
It's a great honor as well as a great challenge to be your new Water Commissioner at this critical time. Everyone knows how hard the governor is working on ways to increase water production. Until we get more water production, our priority will be water allocation on a priority basis. I'll take a few questions now.

ONE REPORTER
What is the priority system for allocating water the governor mentioned?

CARLTON SHIELDS
We're in the process of finalizing the system. I'll have more to say in a few weeks.

ANOTHER REPORTER
Will the allocation system be made available to the public?

CARLTON SHIELDS
Absolutely. It's important there is full transparency in California water allocation.

ANOTHER REPORTER
We know you're an avid golfer. I assume golf courses will have a high water priority under the new system.

General laughter among the reporters at the event.

CARLTON SHIELDS
(laughing)
I don't want to even go there. That's all for now. I'll have more to tell you when I get settled in.

He chats with the governor for a few minutes and then walks to his SUV with a few aids. McKenzie Morris follows Shields to his car.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Congratulations.

CARLTON SHIELDS
Thanks McKenzie. I want to do a series of articles with your paper about our water plan.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Just let me know when you're ready.

CARLTON SHIELDS
We need strong media support. Need to educate the public.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Of course.

CARLTON SHIELDS
I'll give you a call in a few weeks after the new job has settled in.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I look forward to getting together.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES SKYLINE - DAY

A line of skyscrapers. Huge black and glass buildings. Among them, an old retro concrete building with a sign on top of it that says "Los Angeles Journal." It was once the tallest building in LA when it was built in the 1930s but is now a dwarf in a canyon of giant skyscrapers owned by new media companies with silly, playful names on them. A new generation is in control.

INT. MAIN OFFICE OF THE LOS ANGELES JOURNAL - AFTERNOON

A large newsroom on the top floor of the building. Many empty desks. Little activity. The once great newspaper has run into hard times in the age of digital media. It is late afternoon and the sun slants into the large newsroom like sunlight might fall into the hulk of an abandoned Detroit factory.

INT. EDITOR OFFICE - AFTERNOON

The corner office of Editor Stan Simmon.

SIMMON

You got the two big events today?

MORRIS

Just the press conference this afternoon. I missed the rally for the governor this morning in Santa Monica.

SIMMON

Why was that?

MORRIS

(pointing to her head)
Partying with the girls last night. Katie's getting married. Besides, the governor's a shoe in to get elected again. Little news in another rally for him.

SIMMON

(pulling out a file)
Always some news. You just need to look harder. We need to do a story on Carlton Shields.

MORRIS

I've already talked to him. I'm sitting down with him in a few weeks after he's settled in.

SIMMON

The administration's battle against the water crisis needs to be kept in front of the voters before the upcoming election.

MORRIS

I don't think the governor has much to worry about.

SIMMON

These campaigns bring out lots of things from the woodwork. Lies. Half truths.

MORRIS

From people like Travis Lewis.

SIMMON

Lewis can't be dismissed. There's enough crazies out there to support candidates like him. His poll numbers continue to inch upward.

MORRIS

He's still 20 points behind the governor two months before the election.

SIMMON

Lewis is making outrageous allegations against the governor. Tossing everything he can against him. Some things are bound to stick.

INT. CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE - WILLIAM CLAYTON HOME - EVENING

Mayor Cross is at the home of WILLIAM CLAYTON, founder of Desert Springs and the Cactus Springs Resort. The home is a large, sprawling adobe monster on the Cactus Springs golf course. Clayton is a distinguished, patrician type in his early-80s. He is reviewing the report of Allen Yates that Cross has brought with him.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Jesus Christ. I never knew things were this bad. This couldn't come at a worse time with the opening of Cactus Springs a month away.

MAYOR CROSS

What are we going to do?

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Keep the report quiet at all costs. This is the kind of news that can ruin everything down here.

MAYOR CROSS

Yates is getting nervous about it. Wants to go public.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

You can't let this happen. I need time to work something out.

AERIAL SHOT - DESERT - EVENING

Twilight falls over the desert. The light at the top of the tram winks from fifteen miles away. An airplane descends into Palm Springs. Desert Springs lights twinkle fifteen miles away. A pick-up truck travels down a highway and turns onto a dirt road that winds into the foothills of mountains north of Desert Springs.

EXT. FORT SUN - EVENING

The truck stops in front of a fort-type complex that looks like a miniature Alamo. An adobe home is inside the fort walls. Colored lights along the walls make the palm trees pink and yellow. Flags are on the wall. A large American flag and a smaller flag of California. Flags with Indian symbols on them. On the top of the adobe home a flag with a large sun with its rays spreading out over a desert landscape proclaiming in bold letters "Fort Sun."

Allen Yates sits on the roof of Fort Sun with his old friend HENRY OLIVER drinking Henry's Fort Sun ale. Henry is in his early 80s and the grandfather of McKenzie Morris.

HENRY

The Mayor will go running to Bill Clayton. We all know Clayton controls things down here. And Clayton will then go running to his old business partner Carlton Shields.

ALLEN YATES

Risky with Shields the new water commissioner and the election a few months away.

HENRY

Shields knows Clayton has a lot of things on him. His history with Clayton goes back to all those early water deals that built Desert Springs.

ALLEN YATES

When Shields was head of the desert water district and governor McCloud our congressman.

HENRY

Shields will be down here to work a deal with Clayton.

ALLEN YATES

It better be soon. The water situation is critical. Be one hell of a story if someone can put the pieces together.

HENRY

I'm getting my granddaughter down here.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

This might open her eyes to what's really going on with the governor. Get her involved with a real story for once in her life. Let her see how money buys water in California.

EXT. NORTHERN SAN FERNANDO VALLEY - DAY

McKenzie drives north on the freeway past endless housing developments and shopping malls.

MCKENZIE MORRIS (V.O.)

On the weekend I decided to drive out to the valley and take a look at the Big Sky Ranch development. I didn't believe what Travis Lewis told me about it but it was an empty weekend and another spotless day.

The landscape changes to groups of large green trees and lush landscaping. Flags and banners wave and a sign reads "Big Sky Ranch." McKenzie drives into the community. Wide streets with palm trees. Large homes set back from the street by thick lawns. Water sprinklers going everywhere.

INT. BIG SKY RANCH DEVELOPMENT - SALES OFFICE - DAY

A busy office. Young sales associates coming and going from showing property to prospects. A number of people look at a large model of the project on a table. Photos of standard home designs on the walls. McKenzie is looking at one of the designs. A woman named TABITHA WHITLEY comes up to her.

TABITHA WHITLEY

Our Monterey Model. Three bedrooms and baths. Half an acre. My name is Tabitha Whitley. I'm Sales Manager. (giving her card to McKenzie)

MCKENZIE MORRIS

McKenzie Morris. It looks beautiful.

TABITHA WHITLEY

What brings you to Big Sky Ranch?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I've heard a lot about it.

TABITHA WHITLEY

It's unique for LA.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

So green in the middle of our big drought.

TABITHA WHITLEY

(smiling, this is not the first time she has heard this comment)

We've really got to get out and drive around to see how beautiful the community is. Do you have the time?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Yes, that would be good.

INT. CAR OF TABITHA - DAY

McKenzie looks out the car window amazed at the view.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

One would never know we're in the northern San Fernando Valley. This is like an island simply plopped into the area.

TABITHA WHITLEY

That's what a lot of people say.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Who is the developer?

TABITHA WHITLEY

Norris Hall.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

How do they get so much water in the middle of our drought?

TABITHA WHITLEY

A special water district was created for the development. They call it a Water Compensation Zone.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

You're not part of the LA water district?

TABITHA WHITLEY

No, we're not part of it. Have our own rules on water.

Tabitha pulls up in front of a home and parks on the street. There are already a number of people coming and going from it.

TABITHA WHITLEY (CONT'D)
Our Monterey Model. The one you
were looking at back at the sales
office.

INT. MONTEREY MODEL HOME - DAY

Tabitha walks McKenzie around the home.

EXT. MONTEREY MODEL HOME BACKYARD - DAY

They walk outside to the backyard which contains a large pool in the middle of a lawn with large trees. It is the type of yard one doesn't see often in LA except in places like Belaire or Beverly Hills.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
This all must take a lot of water.

TABITHA WHITLEY
We have a lot of water.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
It's just amazing to me you can get
this much water in the middle of
the water crisis.

TABITHA WHITLEY
Mr. Hall knows a lot of important
people.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
He must.

INT. BIG SKY RANCH DEVELOPMENT - TABITHA'S OFFICE - DAY

A large, well furnished office. Tabitha Whitley puts materials in a folder for McKenzie. She hands the folder to McKenzie.

TABITHA WHITLEY
Feel free to call me with any
questions. It would be wonderful to
have you as a new homeowner.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

It's a lovely community. This water thing is very important to me. You don't have any more information on the special water district of Big Sky?

Tabitha shakes her head and walks over to her filing cabinet and searches through it. She finds what she is looking for and takes it out and hands it to McKenzie.

TABITHA WHITLEY

I probably shouldn't be giving you this information but I have a few copies. It's a memo from Mr. Hall giving a little background on our special water district.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(leafing through it
briefly)

I appreciate it.

McKenzie gets up and shakes Tabitha Whitley's hand.

MCKENZIE MORRIS (CONT'D)

I'll be giving some serious thought to a home in Big Sky Ranch.

INT. NORTHERN SAN FERNANDO VALLEY - COFFEE SHOP - DAY

McKenzie sits at a booth reading the memo of the special water district that Tabitha gave her. As she reads the memo she becomes more excited. She pulls out her cell phone and makes a call.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

This is McKenzie Morris. I'm trying to reach Congressman Lewis. (pause) Please let him know I called and it's important he get back with me.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - TOP OF NOB HILL - THE SAN FRANCISCO CLUB
- DAY

A fortress like building. It might be a branch of the Federal Reserve. Covered with ivy, it sits in the middle of Nob Hill above the city.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CLUB - CLUB ROOM - DAY

One would never know it's day. A large, dim room with thick curtains let in little light. Men slumber in overstuffed chairs. The past controllers of the world. Now falling asleep in their monasteries of control. Issues of the world's newspapers spread across their laps like napkins. Cigar smoke rises in the room giving it a hazy look. Somewhere, the distant sound of big band music of the 40s. The smell of mildew or rot in the thick, warm, air.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CLUB - DINING ROOM - DAY

Carlton Shields addresses a luncheon group of club members. He is in his element at the club. Among old friends.

CARLTON SHIELDS

The governor appreciates your support in this election year. Our water crisis forces changes in water policy around the state. But I want you to know that we will do everything we can to make sure that your development projects move forward and that there will be enough water to support them. Development is the future of the state.

INT. SAN FRANCISCO CLUB - CLUB ROOM - DAY

After the speech Carlton Shields huddles in private discussions with a number of club members.

ONE CLUB MEMBER

What about golf courses Carlton? Most of my real estate projects have large golf courses that need a lot of water.

CARLTON SHIELDS

We realize that and will make sure golf courses in projects get enough water.

ANOTHER CLUB MEMBER

Why can't you control the drought since we can control the weather?

CARLTON SHIELDS
(smiling)
We're working on this.

Carlton Shields then sees a club member NORRIS HALL and walks over to him and they go into a corner of the club away from others.

CARLTON SHIELDS (CONT'D)
Good to see you Norris. How's the project coming along?

NORRIS HALL
Big Sky is up and running. Sales are going well. The water from Mission Reservoir is flowing into the club.

CARLTON SHIELDS
I'll have to come out and play a round of golf.

NORRIS HALL
I appreciate what you and the governor have done to make all of this possible. Making us a Special Water Zone.

CARLTON SHIELDS
We appreciate your support to the governor's re-election campaign.

NORRIS HALL
So you're confident these Special Water Zone's won't get media scrutiny. That wouldn't be good for us.

CARLTON SHIELDS
I can assure you the SWZs are almost invisible.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO CLUB - THE PARKING AREA - DAY

Shields heads to his car with his aid. His cell phone rings. He looks at the number calling. It is Bill Clayton. He thinks of not answering but then answers and walks away from his aid to talk in private.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
Congratulations on your appointment.

CARLTON SHIELDS
Thanks Bill. Nice of you to call.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
A big job. But I know you'll do a great job.

CARLTON SHIELDS
So how is Cactus Springs coming along?

WILLIAM CLAYTON
Almost ready to open. That's why I'm calling. Tommy and I want to invite you down to play a round on it before we open next month.

CARLTON SHIELDS
(hesitating)
That's a nice offer.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
Stay in the new Presidential Suite. On me of course.

CARLTON SHIELDS
(laughing)
That's too good of an offer to pass up.

INT. SANTA MONICA - BAR - EVENING

McKenzie is at a table with girlfriends having a girl's night out. Large television screens are all over the bar. Everyone has had a few drinks and laughing. McKenzie watches the news conference of the governor yesterday on one of the large screens.

ONE GIRLFRIEND
(to McKenzie)
There might be a position for a writer at my company.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
That's nice of you to think of me. I think I'm going to stick out the newspaper job until the bitter end.

ANOTHER GIRLFRIEND
No one reads the paper anymore.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Tell me about it.

ANOTHER GIRLFRIEND
You should start your own blog.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
(shrugging her shoulders)
Another blogger. I can't get that
interested in it.

McKenzie's cell phone begins buzzing and she answers it.

HENRY
When are you coming down to visit?

MCKENZIE MORRIS
(a large smile breaks on
her)
You never ask.

HENRY
What about coming down to the
desert for a few days? Not the best
time of year. Between summer and
fall. Not the worst either. Stay at
my place. You haven't been down for
awhile.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
What's up. I know you too well.

HENRY
Does something have to be up? I
just want to see you.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
(doubting this)
Henry...

HENRY
Maybe a story on water. Maybe a big
story. I don't want to say anything
more than this on the phone.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
A big story on water.

HENRY
Something that could involve your
friend Shields and the governor.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I'll drive down tomorrow.

HENRY

Good. Meet me in Desert Springs at Ruth's Café. Noon. Got someone I want you to meet.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Be good to see you. I can use a break from LA.

McKenzie then calls Stan Simon and leaves a message on his phone that she is going to Desert Springs to stay with Henry Oliver and follow a water story.

MONTAGE - MCKENZIE DRIVES FROM LOS ANGELES TO DESERT SPRINGS - DAY

Signs of the drought along the freeway. Billboards tell people to conserve water by not watering lawns. A bone-dry sky. Little color. The thinning suburbs of LA slowly turn into desert. The two mountains Mt. San Geronimo and Mt. San Jacinto guard the entrance to the desert like great sentries. McKenzie tunes her radio to the Desert Springs station.

There is suddenly the sound of Frank Sinatra and "Summer Wind" blaring around her SUV. As if emphasizing the a summer wind, the huge windmills outside of Palm Springs were all spinning at full throttle.

After the wind turbines the Interstate is straight with large billboards along the road advertising big acts coming to the Indian casinos. (Sinatra's "Summer Wind" is still on the radio of her car). There are a number of billboards for a new resort called Cactus Springs that is opening soon. Morris turns off the Interstate at the sign for Desert Springs and heads down the road that mixes patches of developments with barren sand.

All of the sudden, vast green, lush landscapes of golf courses. The contrast of the brilliant green with the white of the desert is a startling sight of contrasts. Morris passes a vast new development on her way into town called Cactus Springs Resort. It seems to go on and on forever. Huge sprinklers throw water across the vast expanse of green. Morris makes a note of the name. It seems to her that Cactus Springs Resort is one of the great wasters of water in Desert Springs. Sinatra's "Summer Wind" ends the Montage.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - PALM AVENUE - DAY

The exclusive street in Desert Springs that is filled with expensive shops. McKenzie drives down Palm Avenue. Bentleys and Rolls glide up the street.

A bronze statue of a William Clayton is in the grass center meridian of Palms Avenue. He is looking up towards Mt. San Jacinto that rises above Palm Springs ten miles west. A determined look on his bronze face. The face of a visionary who built all of this out of just sand and cactus. It was a beautiful little monument to a legendary figure on the local scene out here in Desert Springs.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - OLD PART OF TOWN - DAY

McKenzie turns off the exclusive Palm Avenue and into the old section of Desert Springs full of the original businesses in town like vacuum cleaner stores and shoe repair shops. People pass on either oxygen bottles or strollers. The old area of town with its own residents who have held out their original desert persona in the midst of all the growth in this piece of desert sand.

INT. DESERT SPRINGS - RUTH'S CAFE - DAY

The oldest restaurant in Desert Springs. Originally by the only gas station for twenty miles. The same yellow and red Formica tables and waitresses with the (same) beehive hairdos. A noisy popular place for the year-round locals in Desert Springs. An old 60s tune plays on the café's big jukebox. McKenzie Morris, Henry Oliver and Allen Yates sit in a corner booth.

HENRY

I've filled in my friend Yates on our escapades at the *LA Journal*.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

They're still talking about them. So you're causing trouble down here with the *Fort Sun Gazette*?

HENRY

(tossing a copy of the paper on the table towards McKenzie)

Lots of trouble. Writing wicked entertainment reviews and articles on saving birds at desert solar plants.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(shuffling through the pages of the paper)

Still the old rock fan and crusading environmentalist.

HENRY

Always.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

So what's the big story about water?

HENRY

Mr. Yates just presented an interesting report to the mayor.

ALLEN YATES

The city asked me to review water levels for Desert Springs.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I've always heard they're huge springs under the town.

ALLEN YATES

A common myth. The fact is, the city has been importing water for years.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I've never heard about this.

ALLEN YATES

No one has.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Why have they kept it a secret?

HENRY

Because your friend Carlton Shields has been involved. As well as Governor McCloud when he was a congressman for this area. Lots of shady deals at this time. If everyone thinks there's lots of water here there's little thoughts of deals to bring it into town.

ALLEN YATES

The fact is, Desert Springs is out of water and needs to import water immediately. The new Cactus Springs development has drained water reserves faster than anyone thought. Water reserves have been a lot less with the big drought going on. Little water run-off from the mountains.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I saw Cactus Springs on my way into town.

HENRY

Hard not to see it. The Clayton's new project.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

This could be that big story you told me about on the phone.

HENRY

This is a story but not the big story. The real story is how the town is going to get water.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

A deal will have to be made with Shields and the governor.

HENRY

That's the way we see it.

ALLEN YATES

The only choice they have now.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

And Shields will give them what they want?

HENRY

He always has given them what they want in the past. And he doesn't have a lot of choice in the matter. Bill Clayton has too much on him over the years. They started working water deals when the town was first started. Clayton has a long history of importing water into Desert Springs since he founded the town in the 60s. He worked deals with a young guy that ran the Desert Water District named Carlton Shields and a young congressman named Harris McCloud.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

You've never mentioned any of this to me.

HENRY

There was no reason to get you mixed up in this.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

It's dangerous for one's health. I published a few articles in the *Gazette* when I first came down here. Thought I was going to really shake things up. Until I learned it wasn't good for my health.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

What's the next step?

HENRY

Hang out down here for a few days. Keep your eyes open. Yates and I will let you know what we hear. Much more going on down here than in LA and chasing around stories of people using too much water on their lawns or cars.

ALLEN YATES

(handing a card to
McKenzie)

I brought this for you. It's an invitation to a reception in a few days at the new Cactus Springs Resort. The movers and shakers in town. I don't have a lot of interest in going. Especially with the report I just gave the Mayor. You might be able to talk to the Tommy Clayton. He likes pretty women. He probably won't tell you anything more than how much they're just recycling all the water from their underground springs for the new development. But at least you can meet him and hear him lie to your face. Maybe you can even meet the old godfather Bill Clayton.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE - LATE
AFTERNOON

A vast golf course with large, beautiful fairways. No one would know there is a water crisis in Desert Springs. Carlton Shields is playing golf with Mayor Cross, William Clayton and Tommy Clayton. The Water Commissioner has made a low-key trip to the desert. No one knows he is in town except the governor. William Clayton and Carlton Shields walk alone during most of the holes and Tommy Clayton discusses how much water the new development might need from the city.

CARLTON SHIELDS
 (after hitting a ball
 right onto the green)
 One of the great courses I've ever
 played on. And you know I've got a
 place at Pebble Beach.

TOMMY CLAYTON
 (laughing)
 We'll be opening soon. I'm planning
 on showing you some properties
 while you're down here.

CARLTON SHIELDS
 Now we're talking.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE - LAST HOLE -
 LATE AFTERNOON

William Clayton walks up to his ball ten feet from the pen. The green for hole nine has a number of curves that spread out for twenty-five yards as soft and even as the green felt from gambling tables. As bright as the green of a horse jockey's jersey or the paint on a NASCAR. William Clayton carefully lines up his putt.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
 The hills on nine are deceiving.
 Something you really have to plan
 for. But they're hard to see.

He slowly putts his ball. The ball negotiates a slight hill to the left and is pushed back to the right before going over the top of the hill. It rolls towards the hole in its new trajectory and then plops into it. A fifteen-foot putt. He lifts his putter into the desert afternoon day like it is an ancient tool of battle.

INT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS CLUBHOUSE - TWILIGHT

William Clayton shows Carlton Shields around the new clubhouse. It is a magnificent palace in the desert with the ostentatious trappings of an exclusive Las Vegas casino.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS CLUBHOUSE PATIO -
 TWILIGHT

They sit outside on the wide patio of the new clubhouse having wine. Carlton Shields sweeps his right arm over the landscape of Cactus Springs. There is a large lake not far away.

Great spouts within the lake shoot water a hundred feet into the air. The contrast with the desert is stunning. A great amount of lush green and blue water in the middle of the white, barren desert.

CARLTON SHIELDS

I think you've finally conquered the desert.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Of course I have.

CARLTON SHIELDS

You've created a new world down here. I never thought all this was possible when you started things down here.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

(bowing slightly and raising his glass in a toast to Shields)

Thanks. You and Harris McCloud made all of this happen.

Then Clayton tosses Allen Yates' report across the table at Shields who picks it up and begins reading. Shields is a water consultant and familiar with the terminology and technical aspects of the report.

WILLIAM CLAYTON (CONT'D)

Like the curves on the 9th green. Water down here is hard to plan for. You know this. Lots of angles to the whole thing.

Shields continues to read the report in the darkening light. He pulls out his cell phone and uses its light to continue read the report. He then puts it aside.

CARLTON SHIELDS

It doesn't surprise me much. We know how much water this town needs. With Cactus Springs there are greater needs. It doesn't surprise.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

We need a lot of water now. We need to get plugged into the state water channel. Open up the pipeline again. Get back into the water importing business. We need a lot of water right now Carlton.

CARLTON SHIELDS
 (studying his glass of
 wine for a long period of
 time like it is some type
 of religious object)

Things have changed since our old
 partnership. My new position and
 all. I'm high visibility these
 days. This is a major water deal
 not something for another
 development.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
 You're saying you can't help me.

CARLTON SHIELDS
 I just see no way.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
 (tossing a manuscript
 across the table at
 Carlton Shields)

CARLTON SHIELDS
The Early History of Desert Springs
 by Marge Madsen.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
 You remember my first secretary
 Marge Madsen. The one with the
 steel trap memory. You know how she
 kept everything. How she recorded
 everything in those years.

Carlton Shields leafs through the manuscript.

CARLTON SHIELDS
 Everything?

WILLIAM CLAYTON
 Enough to cause a big stir with a
 lot of people in this state. Not
 good around election time and not
 good for our new water
 commissioner.

CARLTON SHIELDS
 (looking away and over the
 golf course)
 How long ago was it?

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Almost fifty years ago. We were al
in our 20s. Me. You. Harris
McCloud.

CARLTON SHIELDS

Kids.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Kids building something in a big
sandbox.

CARLTON SHIELDS

You've always been the great
promoter.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

We need water soon. The media will
have a field day with Marge's
manuscript.

CARLTON SHIELDS

Blackmail.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Call it what you want to. I call it
saving the city I've built and
Cactus Springs. Think about it. The
governor has many of his largest
donors down here in Desert Springs.
They are not going to be happy to
see the town die.

CARLTON SHIELDS

So Tommy is going to show me some
properties down here?

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Got things lined up tomorrow.
You'll like the price.

Clayton reaches in his sports jacket and pulls out a check
and hands it to Carlton Shields.

WILLIAM CLAYTON (CONT'D)

Five million to the governor's
campaign right now. Another five
million when the deal's finalized.

CARLTON SHIELDS

(putting check into his
pocket)

I'll talk to the governor on
Monday.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - THE POOR INNER CITY COMMUNITY OF ROSE HILLS - DAY

The same signs from the Mission Reservoir rally. "Water Equality" and "Lewis for Governor." Some of the crowd wears "WE" t-shirts for "Water Equality" the platform Lewis is running on. He stands on the back of an old pick-up truck and addresses a crowd through a makeshift speaker set-up. It is obvious that the campaign is having money problems.

TRAVIS LEWIS

My staff is investigating why wealthy communities in town like Palm Wood have few water restrictions while places like Rose Hills have severe restrictions on water use.

A roar from the assembled crowd and a number of the "WE" signs are waived.

TRAVIS LEWIS (CONT'D)

I'm discovering more and more unfair allocations of water in town. It appears that our new water commissioner is not living up to the promises he made about fair water allocation. We will get to the bottom of this. California needs a change. If I'm elected Governor I'll do everything I can to fight for water equality.

CROWD

Yes!

EXT. LOS ANGELES - CONGRESSMAN LEWIS' OFFICE - DAY

A red, white and blue banner hanging over the doorway that says "Lewis for Governor" in faded letters. The office in on a street full of carpet stores, pawn shops and quick loan offices with bars on the windows.

INT. LOS ANGELES - CONGRESSMAN LEWIS' OFFICE - MEETING ROOM - DAY

Travis Lewis reviews documents with staff members in a meeting. There is a discouraged look on his face. He shakes his head.

ONE STAFFER

We haven't been able to find out much about a connection between the depletion of water in Mission Reservoir and the governor. We're pretty much at a dead end on this. You know how the governor never leaves much of a paper trail.

TRAVIS LEWIS

I think that commissioner Shields' handprints are all over the water that Rose Hills is not getting and the water going to wealthy suburbs like Palm Wood.

ANOTHER STAFFER

You know we're working to find the connections. It's hard to find them.

TRAVIS LEWIS

McKenzie Morris, the reporter from the *LA Journal*, has something. She called the other day and wants to meet me. I'm driving down to Desert Springs to meet her. We need something big and we need it soon or it's all over. I've got Victor Gonzales looking into things up in Sacramento. He might turn up something.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE - PATIO - NIGHT

A reception on the patio of the new Cactus Springs Clubhouse. An elegant event. A jazz trio plays among Tiki torchlights. Men dressed in bright colored tuxedos. The women sparkle under layers of jewelry. McKenzie Morris wanders around the party. She looks stunning. Heads turn as she walks around the event. Tommy Clayton is huddled with his father and a few women. Laughing. Tossing expensive wine down. He notices McKenzie and approaches her.

TOMMY CLAYTON

I don't believe we've met.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

McKenzie Morris.

TOMMY CLAYTON

The name sounds familiar.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I work for the LA Journal.

TOMMY CLAYTON
Ah, the crusading water reporter.
What are you doing down here?

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Just visiting a friend.

Clayton grabs a glass of wine off the tray of the passing server. He hands one glass to McKenzie and takes her empty glass and sets it on the tray. He raises his glass in a toast.

TOMMY CLAYTON
I'm interested on how you wrangled
an invitation to the event.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I know one of your invitees. They
couldn't attend and gave me their
invitation.

TOMMY CLAYTON
Almost sounds believable. So what
story are you chasing down?

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I'm not always chasing down a
story. Is there one down here for
me to chase down?

TOMMY CLAYTON
Probably another one of your water
stories. About how much Desert
Springs wastes water in the middle
of our great water crisis.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
(sweeping her arm out over
the vast golf course off
the patio)
Who would ever think there's a
water crisis down here.

TOMMY CLAYTON
We're lucky to be on top of a lot
of water.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Of course.

TOMMY CLAYTON

One of the largest underground
springs in the world.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Looking around it's not hard to
believe.

TOMMY CLAYTON

Why do I get the feeling you're
down here to do a story for your
paper?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Maybe you're paranoid. I don't mean
to spook you.

TOMMY CLAYTON

We're a provincial bunch down here.
Like to keep things to ourselves.
Don't like people nosing into our
business.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I'm not nosing into your business.
I'm just enjoying a glass of wine
at your beautiful new club.

TOMMY CLAYTON

There's a lot of people down here
who would be interested in
preventing a story about Desert
Springs. A few former Presidents
and Senators. All good friends with
me and my father. Any bad news on
water is not good for the economy
down here.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(McKenzie hands the empty
glass of wine to Tommy
Clayton)

You are paranoid. Thanks for the
wine.

Tommy Clayton watches her go and wonders how much she knows
about things. Then he walks over to his father.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Who is she?

TOMMY CLAYTON

McKenzie Morris from the *LA
Journal*.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

That damned water reporter. What does she want?

TOMMY CLAYTON

Hard to know. She didn't say much.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

She doesn't know about the water situation.

TOMMY CLAYTON

I don't know.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

We need to keep an eye on her.

TOMMY CLAYTON

I'll track her number down through the paper and get together with her. I think she knows something.

EXT. DESERT - FORT SUN - ROOF OF HOME - NIGHT

Yates and Henry sit on the roof of Fort Sun drinking Fort Sun Ale.

ALLEN YATES

The water report quiet is becoming a valuable commodity. Keeping it quiet even more valuable.

HENRY

Threatening the mayor to release it is dangerous. When you threaten the mayor you threaten the Claytons and you know what that means.

ALLEN YATES

I know. But the town needs to know the situation down here once and for all. Things have been covered up too long. You know this.

HENRY

I know you're ready to do something dangerous. That's what I know. The Claytons are already spooked that McKenzie is down here. Something like this might put them over the edge.

ALLEN YATES

I'll take my chances. Half a million is worth the gamble.

INT. SACRAMENTO - GOVERNOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Governor McCloud paces back and forth in his office and Shields sits at his meeting table and watches him. A copy of the Yates report on water in Desert Springs sits on the table.

GOVERNOR MC CLOUD

That old fox. Has us between a rock and a hard place.

CARLTON SHIELDS

Clayton's putting a lot of money out there on the table for a water deal.

GOVERNOR MC CLOUD

It's dangerous money. Big Sky Ranch is one thing but Desert Springs is different. We're talking about an entire city. The deal is too big. Too visible.

CARLTON SHIELDS

I don't know how much choice we have in the matter. Clayton has our names on a lot of early deals down in Desert Springs. Remember Marge Madsen, Clayton's old secretary. She's kept a record of all the deals we worked for him. Clayton's threatening to release it to the media.

GOVERNOR MC CLOUD

What's in the deal for us besides blackmail.

CARLTON SHIELDS

Five million up front and five million when they get their water. A place on the new golf course thrown in.

GOVERNOR MC CLOUD

How do you plan on doing all this?

CARLTON SHIELDS

I have some of my people come in and re-open the pipeline for Desert Springs in the water channel.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

What do we say if someone gets wise to this?

CARLTON SHIELDS

I run things through our people at Water & Power and get it declared another Special Water Zone. Like Big Sky Ranch. Like the twenty other Special Water Zones we've created around the state.

The governor paces back and forth in his office for a few moments thinking.

CARLTON SHIELDS (CONT'D)

Let me remind you that William Clayton is one of your biggest supporters in the state. Lots of your top contributors in Desert Springs who are going to be pissed off to find their water turned off and you not doing anything about it.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

You can tap Desert Springs into the old hookup into the channel?

CARLTON SHIELDS

Just like the old days. They are still using the same pipeline. But we're going to have to channel more water through it than before.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

Then let's do it.

CARLTON SHIELDS

I'll work it out.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

I don't want to have any connection to this.

CARLTON SHIELDS

You're invisible as groundwater.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD
Let's keep it this way.

INT. PALM SPRINGS - SPENCERS RESTAURANT - EVENING

Travis Lewis is having dinner with McKenzie. She hands the memo that Tabitha Whitley gave her at Big Sky Ranch and Lewis reads it.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I drove out to a development called Big Sky Ranch the weekend after your rally at Mission Reservoir. It's like a lush, tropical island in the middle of the bone-dry San Fernando Valley.

TRAVIS LEWIS
Plenty of water.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
The place is practically made of water. I drove around a little and then went to the sales office and got a tour. Afterwards, I was able to get that memo from the Sales Manager. The memo comes from the owner of Big Sky, a man named Norris Hall. And you notice that Carlton Shields is on his board of directors.

TRAVIS LEWIS
(still reading the memo)
Very interesting. Very interesting indeed.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
In the memo Norris Hall mentions they have received the designation of a Special Water Zone.

TRAVIS LEWIS
A Special Water Zone.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
This is all too familiar to me. I did a story on Carlton Shields a year ago. He was by-passing water allocation requirements by having friends in Water & Power create Water Compensation Districts.

(MORE)

MCKENZIE MORRIS (CONT'D)

Almost put him away but they settled the whole thing out of court.

TRAVIS LEWIS

You think these Special Water Zones are like Water Compensation Districts?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Yes, I suspect they've evolved into these. Probably more sophisticated but still no more than ways to get water out to cronies of the governor for various projects. I did some research on the Internet. Norris Hall is one of the largest supporters of the governor in the state.

TRAVIS LEWIS

This could be a turning point in my campaign. We're starting to find all types of corruption in water allocation. Poor communities have different rules than wealthy ones. Large real estate development projects that require lots of water move forward while the farmers continue to get their water cut off.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

But still nothing directly tied to the governor.

TRAVIS LEWIS

This might be our opening. I hope so. I'm running out of time and money. Close to shutting the campaign down.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I'm working on something else down here in the desert that might be big.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Can you tell me anything about it?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I have it on good authority that Desert Springs is out of water.

TRAVIS LEWIS

That's impossible. They're on top of a huge natural springs.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

The common mythology. All fiction to cover up the fact that water has been brought in here from the beginning by Bill Clayton through water deals with two old friends. Carlton Shields and Harris McCloud.

TRAVIS LEWIS

When McCloud was the congressman for the town.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Yes. And Shields was with the desert water district.

TRAVIS LEWIS

You can prove there were deals made?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Some woman who used to work for Bill Clayton. A friend is going to introduce me to her.

TRAVIS LEWIS

It'll be interesting to see what she has.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

It's a long time ago. Maybe too long ago for anyone to really care much about it today. I don't know.

TRAVIS LEWIS

I'm going to see what I can find out through my colleagues in Congress about these Special Water Zones. Someone should know something about them. So you're down in Desert Springs for awhile?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Staying with my old friend and mentor in the reporting business Henry Oliver. Eighty-one years. Owner of a weird place in the desert called Fort Sun ten miles out of Desert Springs. Publisher of the *Fort Sun Gazette*.

(MORE)

MCKENZIE MORRIS (CONT'D)
Brewer of Fort Sun Ale. You have to try some. A true desert rat. You've gotta visit some time.

TRAVIS LEWIS
I'll take you up on the offer. It'd be good to get out of LA for a few days.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
You ever been anything but a politician? I don't mean to sound forward.

TRAVIS LEWIS
I've been everything else besides being a politician.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Oh?

TRAVIS LEWIS
Maybe I'll tell you about it someday. What about you. Has the career of reporter always been your goal?

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Ever since I was a kid.

TRAVIS LEWIS
It's good to find what you really want to do.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
To be honest, I might have to find something else. My paper was just bought by a conglomerate and its future is up in the air. And too there's also the feeling that no one cares about important news these days but just who is the next winner of American Idol. It's like you said. Californians aren't good at facing invisible issues like water.

TRAVIS LEWIS
What else do you want to do?

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Probably do some creative writing rather than just reporting.

(MORE)

MCKENZIE MORRIS (CONT'D)
I just bought Final Draft 8 and I'm
working on my first screenplay.

TRAVIS LEWIS
You need a good cast of characters.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Oh I think I have a pretty good one
right now.

TRAVIS LEWIS
Maybe I'm one of the characters in
the story?

MCKENZIE MORRIS
(smiling coyly)
Maybe.

TRAVIS LEWIS
You've gotta' let me read it when
you complete it.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
That would be good. I'm getting
tired of spending my time observing
the actions of others and writing
about it. I feel like a spectator
to lives others are living. Maybe I
want to be more of an actor in
life. Have a reporter report on my
life. Be a character in the story
I'm writing.

TRAVIS LEWIS
Such an interesting answer. A deep
answer in a shallow culture.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Too deep for you?

TRAVIS LEWIS
That I don't know right now.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I wish I knew what I wanted to do.
It's funny when you pursue
something in life you have wanted
to do forever and then one day it
is gone. The passion, the love, no
longer there.

TRAVIS LEWIS
I think it's been just the opposite
for me.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

What do you mean?

TRAVIS LEWIS

I mean that you start with a goal and pursue it and I start with no goal and then land on something I want to pursue.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

And what is that?

TRAVIS LEWIS

A good question. I've been trying to get a shape to it in my head. I know some parts of it but others are hidden and invisible.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Invisible like groundwater is to Californians.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Yes, this type of invisibility. Sometimes I think I get a glimpse of it. Like a shadow showing itself and then disappearing.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I must tell you that you're a different kind of politician than any I've ever known before.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Thanks. That is what my district tells me.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

The northern district of Los Angeles. The valley. The area around Mission Reservoir.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Yes. A wonderful district. But a hurting district with the water crisis. It is enough that I represent a poor district like the upper desert towns around the Mission Reservoir. But it breaks my heart that a new wealthy part of my district in the valley might be sucking water from the poorer Mission Reservoir area.

(MORE)

TRAVIS LEWIS (CONT'D)
It sounds like this is happening
with Big Sky.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
That is not a politician talking.

TRAVIS LEWIS
No?

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I think something else. A different
type of person. Different from a
politician.

TRAVIS LEWIS
That's good to know because I'm
looking for something else to do
after this run for the governor and
four years as a congressman.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Return to California?

TRAVIS LEWIS
Maybe but it's no longer the only
"golden state" in my mind.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
What do you really want to do? If
you want to know, I want to right a
great injustice I see in the world.
It appears in that invisible
resource called water. Something
the west was built on more than
anything else and something
recognized as the key to building
the west less than anything else.
Water. I don't know what it is. But
water has become a passion to me.
Something fueled by something
internal more than anything
external. Maybe I'll become some
type of water advocate. Join the
Sierra Club.

Travis Lewis' cell phone buzzed and answered and talked to an
associate at his campaign office about meetings he had
scheduled for tomorrow.

ASSOCIATE OF LEWIS
You've got that rally in Los
Angeles tomorrow morning.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Yes, I'll be at our office by nine.

ASSOCIATE OF LEWIS

Was it an interesting evening with McKenzie Morris?

TRAVIS LEWIS

Yes, learned a lot. We could be on the verge of a breakthrough in our campaign.

EXT. PALM SPRINGS - OUTSIDE SPENCER'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Travis Lewis walks McKenzie to her car. He holds her hand. Right above them the foothills of Mt. San Jacinto jut upward to the blinking light on top of the tram. They both look up at this magnificent sight. The most dramatic (highest ascending) mountain in north America. Travis Lewis takes McKenzie in his arms.

It was a long time since she had let a man take her into his arms. There had been so many bad memories. Each new man seemed to be more of a symbol to her rather than someone to be considered from a non-symbolic angle.

TRAVIS LEWIS

I want to see you again.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Oh we will see each other I have a feeling.

TRAVIS LEWIS

(laughing at his silly observation)

We have to keep in close contact with the two stories breaking almost at the same time.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

You let me know if you find out anything on those Special Water Zones. They might be a way to get at Shields and the governor.

TRAVIS LEWIS

And you let me know what happens down here with Shields and the governor.

Then Travis Lewis pulled McKenzie Morris close to him and kissed her. It felt good to McKenzie.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - HISTORICAL SOCIETY - ESTABLISHING - DAY

An old building near Ruth's Cafe in the original section of town.

INT. DESERT SPRINGS - HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICE - DAY

Inside, a dim atmosphere. Old photos on the walls of the early history of the town. The town in the photos appears as a little speck of civilization surrounded by the vast whiteness of the desert. There is a little woman that greets Henry with a smile. Henry has been here a lot before and waves to her. They walk down a hall to a door that is half way open. Light coming from the office of the archives of the society. Henry knew the room well.

HENRY

(pushing the door open)

I want you to meet someone. A good friend of mine.

An elderly woman MARGE MADSEN is bent over a table cutting something out of the newspaper. The walls of the room are lined with grey filing cabinets.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Marge. I want you to meet a good friend of mine.

MARGE MADSEN

(jumping up, startled)

You shouldn't scare me like that.

HENRY

This is my friend McKenzie Morris. She's the reporter friend from LA I've told you about.

MARGE MADSEN

(lifting a bony hand up to McKenzie's cheek)

A reporter from the big city.

HENRY

I told McKenzie about your book *The Birth of Desert Springs*. About Bill Clayton.

Marge Madsen slowly goes to one of the grey filing cabinets and then unlocks it and pulls out one of the drawers and extracts a manuscript and hands it to McKenzie. McKenzie looks at it. It is *Early History of Desert Springs*.

MARGE MADSEN

I want you to have this. Bill Clayton was my boss and he was a crook during these years. He built the myth of springs underground and invented the named Desert Springs. But it was all a fiction. The city always made illegal deals to import water. It's all in the manuscript. But Clayton wasn't the only crook. A young water guy named Carlton Shields negotiated the deals for him. And our young congressman down here named Harris McCloud cleared the path for the water deals in Congress. It was all such a grand relationship. One that built one of the world's great desert resort communities.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(hugging the old woman)

Thank you so much for this gift. I will take good care of it and probably read it all tonight.

MARGE MADSEN

Something needs to be done. No one is going to publish anything like my manuscript in Desert Springs. Henry has told me about you.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(leaving with Henry)

I'll make sure many hear your story Marge.

EXT. DESERT - FORT SUN - ROOF OF HOME - NIGHT

McKenzie and Henry sit on the roof of Fort Sun drinking Fort Sun Ale.

HENRY

I can't believe she gave you a copy of her manuscript. I've been trying to get one from her for years.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(holding up a chip)

She also gave it all to me on a disk. I think we've hit gold. Something that can tie many years of scandals together.

INT. DESERT - FORT SUN - MCKENZIE'S ROOM - NIGHT

McKenzie sits in the old leather chair (Henry has had forever) under a dull brass lamp and reads *The Birth of Desert Springs* by Marge Madsen of the Historical Society. McKenzie becomes increasingly excited about the manuscript. There is a map in the manuscript that purports to show the pipeline for water that runs into Desert Springs. She calls Allen Yates and sets up a meeting with him to show the diagrams from the book to him.

INT. DESERT SPRINGS - ALLEN YATES & ASSOCIATES OFFICE - DAY

McKenzie Morris sits in Allen Yates' office at a table and shows him the diagrams listing an old water pipe into Desert Springs in the copy of Marge Madsen's manuscript. He studies the diagrams and begins pulling out some large maps of his own. Yates is able to put together a map of where the pipeline comes into the channel.

ALLEN YATES

The diagrams in her book are invaluable in locating the place in the channel.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

It seemed like this to me.

ALLEN YATES

You up for heading out into the desert tonight to track the pipeline to the channel?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Of course.

EXT. DESERT - OUTSIDE DESERT SPRINGS - NIGHT

Yates drives McKenzie into desert and shows her the path of the pipeline that brings water into Desert Springs. They follow it along an old dirt road out of town. The road marked only by limp little rags of red flags.

Maybe ten miles out of town they arrive at a great silver streak of silver cutting through the desert under a full moon. The Great California Channel. Taking water west into Los Angeles and into the Central Valley. A type of interstate freeway for water. But just going one way. Heading west.

EXT. DESERT - OUTSIDE DESERT SPRINGS - ENTRANCE TO THE DESERT
SPRINGS PIPELINE - NIGHT

Yates shows McKenzie the large circular steel door where the pipeline from Desert Springs comes into the large water channel taking water west into LA. The big metal door is locked now and not in use.

ALLEN YATES

It is dangerous for people to know this type of stuff. Dangerous that I'm showing all this to you right now.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

It needs to be exposed.

ALLEN YATES

Yes, it does.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

The public has a right to know.

ALLEN YATES

Yes. A right to know.

INT. DESERT SPRINGS - MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Allen Yates meets with the Mayor and asks for money to keep the water report quiet. Says he has been in contact with a reporter. The Mayor is astounded that Yates wants money.

MAYOR CROSS

This is not like you Yates in all the years I've known you.

ALLEN YATES

The information has to get out for the public good. The public has a right to know.

MAYOR CROSS

Give me a little time to come up with the money. Half a million is a lot of money.

ALLEN YATES

It's the worst crisis in all the years we've known each other. The information has to be released. The public has a right to know the dangerous water situation down here.

(MORE)

ALLEN YATES (CONT'D)
 Something they'll never hear from
 the local media and the Claytons.

MAYOR CROSS
 I need time to come up with the
 cash.

ALLEN YATES
 Two days. That's all the time I'm
 giving you. Two days and I talk to
 my reporter friend down here.

The mayor walks Yates out of his office and walks into his
 office shuts the door and calls Bill Clayton on his cell
 phone.

MAYOR CROSS
 Yates is going to talk to the
 reporter about his report if we
 don't get five-hundred thousand to
 him by Friday.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
 Thanks Dwaine. We'll take care of
 things from here.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS CLUBHOUSE - PATIO -
 EVENING

McKenzie Morris is having a candle-light dinner with Tommy
 Clayton on the clubhouse patio. The vast new Cactus Springs
 clubhouse looms up behind them like a great ocean liner.

TOMMY CLAYTON
 You're a mysterious woman.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
 Why do you say that?

TOMMY CLAYTON
 We've had dinner together. A few
 glasses of wine. Shared a number of
 stories. And I can't tell if any of
 what you tell me is true.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
 You're not the easiest person to
 figure out yourself.

TOMMY CLAYTON
 I just never understood reporters.
 Maybe I overestimate their
 intelligence.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Maybe you underestimate their intelligence.

TOMMY CLAYTON

Are you ready for a small lecture?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I have a feeling I'm getting one anyway.

TOMMY CLAYTON

I think there are two groups of people. Those who do things in life and those who watch those who do things. Actors and the spectators. A reporter is a spectator to life.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

And you're the great actor.

TOMMY CLAYTON

My father has done things in life. I have done things in life. People like you come down here and just watch us do things and report on us. It's disgusting to me.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

As the son of a wealthy man don't give yourself too much credit for doing everything yourself.

TOMMY CLAYTON

That's a nasty thing to say.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(getting up from the table)

Truth is nasty sometimes. I have to get back. Thanks for dinner.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS CLUBHOUSE - PARKING AREA
- NIGHT

As McKenzie walks towards her car she sees Carlton Shields arrive at the entrance to the clubhouse in a large limo.

INT. MCKENZIE MORRIS CAR - NIGHT

McKenzie calls Henry.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Henry, I just saw Shields arrive at the Cactus Club. They have to be close to cutting a deal.

She leaves the club and turns on her scanner radio. It was a habit she had gotten into since she became a reporter.

SCANNER

A fatal accident is reported on State Route 64 above Desert Springs. A red Ford pick-up.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(to herself)

Jesus, the type of truck Yates drives.

EXT. MOUNTAINS ABOVE DESERT SPRINGS - NIGHT

Halfway up the mountain road rising out Desert Springs and cutting over the mountains to San Diego. Sharp turns and deep cliffs everywhere. Flashing red and blue lights of police cars and an ambulance. McKenzie parks her car. A small crowd of police and spectators assembled next to a broken wall of the road. Tire tracks going through the wall. A few hundred feet below, a fire coming from the pick-up truck. Firefighters below work to put the fire out.

ONE PERSON IN CROWD

Allen was a neighbor of mine up in Pinion Pines. He's driven this road hundreds of times. Careful driver. Doesn't make much sense.

MCKENZIE MORRIS (V.O.)

I stood there like the others. All spectators, reporters, watching this tragedy. We all seemed to be reporters. All watching something. Voyeurs. Watching life but not living it as Tommy Clayton said. Maybe he was right in some ways? Peeking in on the hardships of others. Watching life go by rather than living life. There seemed to be all the difference in the world between those who reported about life and those who lived life and were the subject of reporters. I thought about what I just told Travis Lewis at dinner the other night.

(MORE)

MCKENZIE MORRIS (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It suddenly seemed to me this was really all I was doing in life as a reporter. Standing around the tragedies of others. Like tonight. Looking over the cliff at the wreckage below. In front of us. Ready to report it. Report on the lives of others. But not living my own life.

EXT. DESERT - FORT SUN - ROOF OF HOME - NIGHT

Later the same night of the accident. McKenzie and Henry sit on top of the roof of Fort Sun discussing what they are going to do.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

You're sure it wasn't an accident?

HENRY

Yates went to the mayor and asked for five hundred thousand to keep his report quiet. He threatened to take it public if he didn't get the money by tomorrow. There'll be a quick investigation in Desert Springs and the death of Yates will be declared an accident. That's the way the Clayton's work things down here."

MCKENZIE MORRIS

We need to get out to the pipeline entrance. They're close to turning on the water with Shields in town. It would be good if we could document them turning on the water for an article.

HENRY

I'll get things together. We're going camping.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE - DAY

Carlton Shields plays golf with Tommy, Bill Clayton and the Mayor. Carlton Shields talks privately with William Clayton.

CARLTON SHIELDS

You're getting your water.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

I knew he would see it our way.

CARLTON SHIELDS

We'll be opening up the pipeline in a few days.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

I'll start planning the fund-raiser for the governor. We'll be making a significant donation to the governor's campaign.

CARLTON SHIELDS

(pointing with his golf club at the condos around the club)

And that little matter of a condo down here ...

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Tommy has some properties to show you.

MONTAGE

The Snowbirds begin arriving in Desert Springs. Television commercials about the opening of Cactus Springs Golf Course. Expensive packets have been sent out all over the world to an exclusive group of potential buyers. Prospects are being shown around the club in gold Cactus Springs golf carts. It is close to the opening of the club. There is much activity at the clubhouse. Wealthy Japanese businessmen linger over drinks.

EXT. DESERT - OUTSIDE DESERT SPRINGS - ACROSS FROM WATER CHANNEL - LATE AFTERNOON

A few small tents are set up in the desert across the channel from where the pipeline for Desert Springs taps into the channel. The two of them are hidden in the hills. McKenzie and Henry take turns observing the opening of the pipeline for activity. They sit out in beach chairs Henry has brought. It is a beautiful sunset with orange and pink clouds across the desert sky. The type of view that one only gets in the desert.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

It's a funny thing. Confronted by the desert, the first thing Americans want to do is change it.

(MORE)

MCKENZIE MORRIS (CONT'D)

People say they love the desert but few of them love it enough to live there. I mean in the real desert. Not make-believe cities with exotic palm trees and golf courses and hundred-foot fountains and artificial turf. Most people love the desert by driving through it in air-conditioned cars. HenryLike everything. We try to conquer it.

HENRY

One never conquers a place like this. One simply inhabits it. Like an occupying army. At best, it makes an uneasy truce with the place.

EXT. DESERT - OUTSIDE DESERT SPRINGS - ACROSS CHANNEL - NIGHT

The light from a vehicle goes across the desert. We see it from the POV of Henry and McKenzie in the hills. A full moon is out tonight. In the moonlight we can see the silver strip of the water canal like the silvery iridescent path of a snail. The vehicle stops close to where the pipeline entrance is and a few men get out of a truck and walk to the opening of the pipeline. They work for a while under lights and then there is a creaking sound and we see the door to the pipeline opening and water from the channel flowing into it.

EXT. DESERT OUTSIDE DESERT SPRINGS - ACROSS FROM MEN IN TRUCK - NIGHT

Henry watches the men through large binoculars. McKenzie has a large lens on a camera and is taking photos.

INT. DESERT - FORT SUN - HENRY'S PUBLISHING OFFICE - DAY

McKenzie and Henry have all types of materials spread out on a large wooden table in Henry's newspaper office: the documents obtained from the Historical Society; the black and white photos of Bill Clayton with Carlton Shields and Congressman Harris McCloud (all young men); the map showing the pipeline from the channel into Desert Springs; the materials Henry has written before; the report of Yates. Marge's manuscript. She pushes a number on her cellphone.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Travis, it's me. Anything new on Special Water Zones. I'm putting together all we have.

TRAVIS LEWIS

I'm getting together all the information we have on them. I've got a few congressman friends working on it. The new California Special Water Zones are a new mutant of our government. What are they? We're trying to figure this out. How are they set up? Who controls them? We're working at it.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE - PATIO OF CLUBHOUSE - EVENING

Tommy Clayton and his father are having dinner.

TOMMY CLAYTON

The pipeline is close to maximum operation. We'll have full water in a few weeks.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

What about the reporter.

TOMMY CLAYTON

I couldn't find out anything from her the other night. Maybe she talked to Yates. Maybe not.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

She's been down here long enough. She has to know something.

TOMMY CLAYTON

So an article appears in her paper. We play damage control. Get some of your good friends involved in this if it gets out of hand.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Maybe not. Maybe her article will never appear in the *Journal*.

TOMMY CLAYTON

What do you mean?

WILLIAM CLAYTON
The *Journal* is owned by Allied
Media.

TRAVIS LEWIS
The company that Ray Burton runs.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
Yes. I'm going to have a little
talk with Ray.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - WEALTHY SUBURB OF PALM WOOD - AFTERNOON

Tall, palm trees. Wide, vast lawns. Great swimming pools.
Somewhere far away, there was another country called Los
Angeles.

INT. LOS ANGELES - INSIDE A PRIVATE HOME IN PALM WOOD -
AFTERNOON

Carlton Shields addresses a lunch group in this exclusive
suburb of Los Angeles about the water situation.

CARLTON SHIELDS
I know there's concern about water
in Palm Wood but I want to assure
everyone that we are not cutting
water into this community.

ONE PERSON IN AUDIENCE
Can you be more specific.

CARLTON SHIELDS
Your beautiful parks will remain
open. Your golf courses. You can
fill your swimming pools. Wash your
cars. You'll find not much will
change. The governor expects to be
able to count on your vote this
November.

After his talk Carlton Shields walks over to a man sitting in
the back of the room.

CARLTON SHIELDS (CONT'D)
(leaning over and getting
close to him)
The governor is approving more
water for Big Sky Ranch.

NORRIS HALL

That's good to hear. Travis Lewis has been talking about the connection between the governor and my project.

CARLTON SHIELDS

Political talk. He can't show any connection at all. There is nothing to worry about.

NORRIS HALL

I hope not.

CARLTON SHIELDS

He's tanking in the polls. He need's to spin a lot of lies. There is nothing to worry about.

INT. OFFICE OF THE LOS ANGELES JOURNAL - DAY

Employees are packing their office items. McKenzie knows something is up and immediately heads toward her editor Stan Simon. He is walking around the office. McKenzie walks next to him.

STAN SIMON

We're officially closed down. Got a call from Ray Burton at Allied yesterday. I was going to call you but figured it wouldn't do much good. Not unexpected. We all knew this was coming.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I didn't think it would be so soon. Thought we'd have some warning on this.

STAN SIMON

I did too.

McKenzie tosses a manuscript at Stan Simon. He picks it up and leafs through it with interest.

STAN SIMON (CONT'D)

Explosive stuff.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

It's all there. Old documents that show Shields and the Governor worked crooked deals with Bill Clayton to bring water into Desert Springs. Evidence they have just brought in more water. It's all there.

STAN SIMON

I wish I would have gotten this a week ago. Now, there's nothing I can do.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

We have to publish this.

STAN SIMON

There is no "we" anymore.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

This is all political. Can't you see? Someone has gotten to Burton. Probably Bill Clayton.

STAN SIMON

Maybe so. But there's nothing I can do.

McKenzie quickly gets up and exits from Simon's office. She leaves the newspaper office without cleaning things from her desk. She gets in her car and drives to Fort Sun.

EXT. DESERT - FORT SUN - ROOF OF HOME - NIGHT

McKenzie tells Henry about the sale of the *LA Journal*. They ponder what to do as they sit on the roof of Fort Sun drinking Fort Sun Ale. Despite getting the bad news her story will not be published by the paper, McKenzie is surprisingly light-headed and optimistic.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I don't know what good the story would have done anyway. No one reads the *Journal* anymore these days.

HENRY

Maybe it's time the *Fort Sun Gazette* tries to tell the story of this whole thing again.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

I'm getting tired of writing about the plight of the desert tortoise against the solar power plants.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Not a bad idea.

HENRY

Just like old times. The old *LA Journal*.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

A learning experience. Sure you have space for an article on the water scandal with all your entertainment reviews?

HENRY

A tough choice. I'll have to write shorter entertainment reviews.

McKenzie laughs. They sit drinking beer and watching the sun disappear below Mt. San Jacinto. Suddenly, an idea hits McKenzie.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I just thought of another source to publish the article. Why didn't I think of this at first.

She makes a cell phone call.

MCKENZIE MORRIS (CONT'D)

Where are you now? The story I've been working on is finished. I've got some things on Carlton Shields and the governor I know you're going to want to see. (pause) Good. I'll see you there tomorrow.

HENRY

Who was that?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Travis Lewis. He's got a rally at the Salton Sea tomorrow. I'm taking him what we've developed on Shields and the governor. And the Claytons.

SALTON SEA - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

The vast Salton Sea southeast of Desert Springs and the farms around it. The terminus of the main source of water to the western states, the Colorado River.

SALTON SEA - EASTERN SHORE - TOWN OF BOMBAY BEACH - DAY

The congressman meets with farmers on the shores of the Salton Sea.

ONE FARMER

We've told the governor we need water immediately or we'll lose much of our lettuce crop.

TRAVIS LEWIS

And you haven't heard anything from him?

ANOTHER FARMER

We got a form letter from the water commissioner that the governor is looking into our situation.

TRAVIS LEWIS

That's all?

ONE FARMER

Nothing else.

McKenzie stands in the back of the crowd of farmers Travis Lewis talks to. He meets McKenzie after the rally. She gives him a copy of the story she has written on the corruption in Desert Springs and the binder of information she has developed in Desert Springs.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

The story of the involvement of the governor and Shields with water in Desert Springs. It's all in there.

TRAVIS LEWIS

(leafing through it)
I need to read this right now.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Why don't you stay out here tonight at my friend Henry's place.

TRAVIS LEWIS

That's not a bad idea. I'll let my staff know.

INT. DESERT - FORT SUN - HENRY'S PUBLISHING OFFICE -
AFTERNOON

Travis Lewis sits in the newspaper office at Fort Sun reading the article McKenzie has written and looking through the materials McKenzie has gathered. McKenzie and Henry sit in the office watching him.

TRAVIS LEWIS

This is what we've been looking for. Documents that prove Shields and McCloud were involved with years of water scandals in Desert Springs. Photos. Maps. It's all here.

He picks up the manuscript *The Birth of Desert Springs* that Marge Madsen at the Historical Society gave McKenzie.

TRAVIS LEWIS (CONT'D)

The smoking gun.

Lewis paces the office. A big moose head looks down on him from one end of the room. From the other end, a deer with his black eyes and horns watches the scene.

TRAVIS LEWIS (CONT'D)

There's a lot to do.

HENRY

You need to stay out here awhile. Desert air do you good. Use my place as a temporary campaign headquarters. The big water scandal centers around Desert Springs. It's the Desert Springs scandal that'll bring down the governor's water regime. You need to be out here.

TRAVIS LEWIS

I think you're right.

Travis Lewis pulls out his cell phone and makes a number of calls. Then he comes back into the office.

TRAVIS LEWIS (CONT'D)

My staff will arrive in a few days.

HENRY

Good. We've got plenty of room for them to stay here.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS CLUBHOUSE - PATIO - DAY

Bill Clayton is having lunch with RAY BURTON on the patio of the Cactus Springs Club.

RAY BURTON

I think the problem is solved. We're going to close the *Journal* in a few weeks anyway. A losing business for us. The sooner the close it the better. I made a call to Stan Simon at the paper. Her article will never see print.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

I appreciate you talking with the paper. You know how reporters are. Get some half-assed facts and figures and run with them. Destroy a lot of lives.

RAY BURTON

Yes, a lot of lives.

He takes a sip of his wine and pulls out a map of the Cactus Springs course.

RAY BURTON (CONT'D)

Now where is that condo off the seventh hole you wanted to show me?

EXT. LOS ANGELES - DEPARTMENT OF WATER & POWER - DAY

The spouts of the fountains surrounding the large building shot water high into the air. A group of protestors in front of the building. Signs reading "Against Special Water Zones!"

INT. DEPARTMENT OF WATER & POWER - OFFICE OF W&P COMMISSIONER - DAY

A meeting between Carlton Shields and Department of Water & Power Commissioner DIEGO HALE.

DIEGO HALE

We've had more than a few calls in the last week about our Special Water Zones. Congressman Jones and State Senator Gonzales. They want information on how the SWZs are set-up. The criteria we use. Where they're located.

CARLTON SHIELDS
Jones and Gonzalez. Both friends of
Travis Lewis. You haven't given
them anything.

DIEGO HALE
I can't keep stonewalling them.

CARLTON SHIELDS
You have to hold them off until
after the election.

DIEGO HALE
Maybe I can push them but they're
getting insistent. They want to see
something.

CARLTON SHIELDS
Remind them of the emergency
legislation they authorized to set
up the SWZs.

DIEGO HALE
The bill the governor slipped into
the Water Bill at the last minute.

CARLTON SHIELDS
They don't have to know that.

DIEGO HALE
But they do. They're not happy
about it. Feel the governor pulled
one over on them.

CARLTON SHIELDS
I'll make some calls. We have to
nip this in the bud before it
blooms into a major investigation.

DIEGO HALE
Like your Western Water deal a year
ago.

CARLTON SHIELDS
Like the Western Water stuff. We
don't need any investigations
before the election.

DIEGO HALE
I'll keep holding them off somehow
but we're going to have to give
them something pretty soon.

MONTAGE - FORT SUN - DAY

Fort Sun is busy with cars arriving and office machines being brought in by Congressman Lewis' staff. Congressman Lewis in meetings with key staff advisors and they are making copies of the materials that McKenzie gave to him.

INT. FORT SUN - NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

Travis Lewis in a meeting with staff discussing strategy with his key advisors. McKenzie Morris is at meeting.

TRAVIS LEWIS

I want to hold a news conference. A news conference right at the place where the water pipeline for Desert Springs comes into the California Channel. Let people see what is happening down here. Get the facts out to them. I want a lot of press at the event.

EXT. DESERT - OUTSIDE DESERT SPRINGS - THE WATER CHANNEL - OVER THE TUNNEL THAT RUNS INTO DESERT SPRINGS - DAY

Travis Lewis holds a news conference at the channel above the pipeline sucking water out of the channel for Desert Springs. A number of the farmers we have seen from the Imperial Valley rally are at the event with signs reading "Water Equality!" The scene has some familiar aspects to it as it is like the scene at Mission Reservoir. But unlike Mission Reservoir and his rallies, there are now many press at the event. Satellite trucks are scattered about. The logos of familiar alphabet television networks are seen. McKenzie Morris is making a video of the event.

TRAVIS LEWIS

In a time of our greatest water crisis, Commissioner Shields talks of allocating water fairly to those who need it most. Our farmers need water the most.

FARMERS IN CROWD

Yes!

TRAVIS LEWIS

Now I stand right over a huge water pipeline that is sucking water needed for our farmers and transporting it to the golf courses of Desert Springs ten miles away.

(MORE)

TRAVIS LEWIS (CONT'D)
 All approved by Commissioner
 Shields. Is this right?

FARMERS IN CROWD
 No! No! No!

TRAVIS LEWIS
 (holding up the manuscript
*The Early History of
 Desert Springs* and waving
 it)
 None of this is a new thing for
 Carlton Shields. He has a long
 history of water deals in Desert
 Springs. Both him and governor
 McCloud when he was the congressman
 for Desert Springs. It's all
 documented in this book.

INT. CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE - HOME OF WILLIAM CLAYTON -
 DAY

William Clayton watches the news conference of Travis Lewis
 on his television. He makes a call on his cell phone.

WILLIAM CLAYTON
 We've got a big problem. Travis
 Lewis is giving a news conference.
 You near a television? Turn it on.
 It's on all the news channels. I
 don't know how Lewis got hold of a
 copy of the manuscript. I sure as
 hell didn't give it to him.

EXT. SACRAMENTO - SACRAMENTO GOLF CLUB - DAY

Shields and Governor McCloud are playing a round of golf on
 the exclusive private course.

CARLTON SHIELDS
 I talked to Bill Clayton. He didn't
 give the book to Lewis. I don't
 know how the hell he got it.

GOVERNOR MC CLOUD
 We've got to figure out a response.
 This is going to be all over the
 news.

CARLTON SHIELDS

I'm calling Clayton and flying down to Desert Springs. We'll work something out.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

We've got to plug this up as soon as possible.

INT. FORT SUN - DAY

McKenzie writes a story about Lewis' news conference and gives it to the Congressman's aids to disseminate. She posts the video she made on the Internet. The phones are ringing at the makeshift campaign headquarters for Travis Lewis at Fort Sun. Much activity. News people are gathered out in front of Fort Sun.

MONTAGE

McKenzie Morris' video goes viral on YouTube. Travis Lewis becomes a rising topic on social media. News of the event makes the headlines of the Drudge Report and the news conference is tweeted all around the nation.

EXT. DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES - DEPARTMENT OF WATER & POWER - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

A huge angry crowd surrounds the building. Signs in the crowd read "Impeach the Governor!" Or "Lewis for Governor!" Or "Indict Shields!"

EXT. LOS ANGELES - THE POOR INNER CITY COMMUNITY OF ROSE HILLS - DAY

A large angry crowd has gathered in front of the Water Department in Rose Hills. It is the same town that Travis Lewis held a rally a few weeks before. They chant "Water equality! Water equality!" There are signs that read "Why All The Water for Desert Springs?" The scandal in Desert Springs has spread.

INT. CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE - CLUBHOUSE MEETING ROOM - DAY

Carlton Shields, Tommy Clayton, Mayor Cross, William Clayton, Ray Burton and retired U.S. SENATOR ROBERT SMITH. A lunch discussion around a round table. The key "power cabinet" of Bill Clayton. They sit around a large table.

CARLTON SHIELDS

I had little choice in the matter. Bill Clayton showed me a report the city was out of water. I had to take immediate action for public safety. I had no choice but to order the pipeline open.

SENATOR SMITH

That makes sense. But the past history of water deals down here is disturbing.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

It was necessary to build the city Senator. I make no apologies. We had to work some deals. But that was fifty years ago.

CARLTON SHIELDS

Fifty years is a long time ago. We made some deals to grow this city to what it is today. I don't make excuses for my actions.

SENATOR SMITH

The governor's involvement is disturbing.

CARLTON SHIELDS

Fifty years ago. Besides, who is going to believe what an old lady says. Especially when we've found a few people to discredit her.

RAY BURTON

I think this whole thing can be turned around in the media to make Carlton look like the good guy and Lewis to look like the bad guy.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Go on.

RAY BURTON

Carlton didn't do anything but save an entire town from a water crisis. On the other hand Lewis is trying to kill a town by cutting off its water.

MAYOR CROSS

That's something our residents can get behind.

SENATOR SMITH

But what about people around the state? Farmers in the Imperial Valley? In the Central Valley? Residents in inner city suburbs?

RAY BURTON

Let me contact my people. Get something going with our network news people. I'll make some calls to friends.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

Water brought in to save a city. Nothing less than this. That's how all this has to be positioned. Shields acted to save our city. Lewis is out to destroy it.

RAY BURTON

It's the type of story the media can get their arms around. They need heros and villains. You all know this.

CARLTON SHIELDS

We have to work fast. There are starting to be rallies for Lewis all over the state.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS GOLF COURSE ENTRANCE - DAY

The group in the meeting comes out of the Cactus Springs Clubhouse to see a group of protestors marching in front of the entrance to the club with signs reading "No More Water For Cactus Springs!"

EXT. SALTON SEA - EASTERN SHORE - BOMBAY BEACH - DAY

A large group of angry farmers holding a rally in protest to the water deal Desert Springs has gotten.

EXT. NORTHERN SAN FERNANDO VALLEY - ENTRANCE TO BIG SKY RANCH DEVELOPMENT - DAY

Travis Lewis and McKenzie Morris at a large rally. McKenzie is next to Travis Lewis. There are a number of media at the event. We see familiar media logos.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Desert Springs is not the only place that is getting water through crooked deals. The governor has worked out deals all over the state for his cronies. One of them is Norris Hall the owner of Big Sky Ranch. He's been making deals for years. It's time for a change. Water is not a matter of money and power.

CROWD

Yes, yes, yes!

TRAVIS LEWIS

Big Sky has sucked Mission Reservoir dry. And all of this made possible by making Big Sky Ranch into a Special Water Zone. These zones have been set up by our water commissioner and allow water to flow towards money. In the middle of our water crisis, water cannot flow towards money!

CROWD

No, no, no! Not towards money.

Tabitha Whitley, the sales person at Big Sky Ranch, stands in the crowd watching Lewis on stage. She recognizes McKenzie Morris. After the rally she approaches McKenzie Morris.

TABITHA WHITLEY

I guess you're not going to be a buyer at Big Sky.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Too rich for my blood. Besides, I'm not sure how much longer everything is going to be so lush green around here.

MONTAGE - MEDIA

News reporters talk about Travis Lewis in a different light than before. He is now seen as someone who wants to kill a great desert city by cutting off it's water supply.

There is newsreel footage of protests in Desert Springs and signs that read "Keep the pipeline open!" And "Water for Desert Springs!"

Citizens are interviewed and Shields is made out to be a hero who has come to the rescue of a city.

The line is repeated by various talking heads on television in interview shows.

Newspaper headlines declaring Carlton Shields as rescuing a city out of water.

Headlines on the Drudge Report that Shields rescued the town of Desert Springs from its water crisis.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS CLUBHOUSE AND GOLF COURSE - DAY

The course is full of home and condo buyers getting shuttled around in golf carts. It is busy. The large sprinklers still watering the vast grass of the club. Tommy Clayton is greeting people on the patio of the clubhouse. Champaign is being served. The opening is moving forward without much of a problem.

INT. FORT SUN - NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

Henry directs a number of mailings going out with Travis Lewis' campaign staff. Things are busy. Televisions tuned to various stations are around the office. Reporters still talking about Travis Lewis and how he tried to close down Desert Springs. He is being made out to be a heartless person. There is a photo of Marge Madsen on the television with a picture of her manuscript *The Birth of Desert Springs*.

TELEVISION NEWS REPORTER

It's been confirmed by reliable sources that Marge Madsen suffers from paranoia and delusions and for years have been writing a fictional novel about Desert Springs.

PSYCHIATRIST ON TELEVISION

Mrs. Madsen has created a fantasy around what she wanted to believe many years ago and this fantasy has taken over her life. For years she has tried to get a publishing deal for her fantasies.

HENRY

(watching the television)
Jesus, they're even trying to and her manuscript.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - IN FRONT OF MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mayor Cross is holding a news conference.

MAYOR CROSS

The vicious attack by Congressman Lewis attempted to cut off the water to Desert Springs. All for political reasons. Water equality is a convenient myth. No more than a cheap campaign slogan. There is no water equality down here. We need water for our city to supplement our underground springs. It's as simple as this.

He passes out copies of Allen Yates' report to the reporters gathered at the news conference. Once the report was hidden but now it serves to show why they acted.

MAYOR CROSS (CONT'D)

When I got this, I really had no choice but to contact the water commissioner.

REPORTER

It wasn't Bill Clayton that contacted the water commissioner?

MAYOR CROSS

Bill Clayton has had nothing to do with this.

REPORTER

There's talk that Cactus Springs takes five times as much water as any place down here.

MAYOR CROSS

It will bring millions in to the local economy. The water it uses is worth the money the city gets back.

EXT. SACRAMENTO - STATE CAPITAL BUILDING - DAY

INT. STATE CAPITAL BUILDING - OFFICE OF STATE SENATOR VICTOR GONZALES - DAY

Travis Lewis, McKenzie Morris, VICTOR GONZALES and CONGRESSMAN HAROLD JONES.

VICTOR GONZALES

This Special Water Zone stuff is getting legs fast. We're finding out that they've been set up all over the state. Big Sky Ranch is just one of them.

CONGRESSMAN JONES

Diego Hale at Water & Power has been stonewalling me on getting information on them.

VICTOR GONZALES

We're really onto something with these. I've established a special committee to investigate them. We will be sending a subpoena to Diego Hale at Water & Power for his records.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

They're close to the water compensation districts Shields created when he was President of Western Water. I think the old water compensation districts have evolved into these. A little more sophisticated. A little harder to get at.

CONGRESSMAN JONES

Your story almost nailed Shields in the scandal.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Almost.

VICTOR GONZALES

We'll see what Mr. Hale has to tell us about the SWZs when he gets our summons.

TRAVIS LEWIS

My campaign can use it. The Desert Springs thing has backfired on us as you can see. I've become the bad guy in all of this. The one who wants to kill a city by taking its water away.

CONGRESSMAN JONES

But you're become a hero to a lot of voters out there.

(MORE)

CONGRESSMAN JONES (CONT'D)

There are rallies all over the state on water equality. This is not going away just because of the Desert Springs situation.

TRAVIS LEWIS

It might be too late.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS CLUBHOUSE PATIO -
ELECTION - EVENING

A festive, celebratory mood. An election night party watching the election returns come in for governor of California. Large screen televisions are placed around the patio. Bill Clayton, Tommy Clayton, Mayor Cross, Ray Burton, Senator Smith with a number of the governor's big supporters in Desert Springs. The reporters on television are beginning to call the election as a landslide in favor of the Governor.

RAY BURTON

The water crisis brought out people like Travis Lewis who were only interested in killing our town. Desert Springs is lucky to have someone like Bill Clayton who has worked tirelessly to save this great town.

He raises a glass to toast Bill Clayton. There is loud applause.

WILLIAM CLAYTON

(looking at Mayor Cross
and lifting his glass in
a toast)

We're fortunate to have a fantastic mayor in Desert Springs.

Loud applause again.

WILLIAM CLAYTON (CONT'D)

The future of our town is bright. We will have plenty of water thanks to our new designation as a Special Water Zone by commissioner Shields.

INT. FORT SUN - EVENING

An election night event at Fort Sun. Lewis, McKenzie, Henry and Lewis staffers watch the election results on a big screen television in the big room of the home.

It is not a celebratory party like the one at Cactus Springs. The election has just been called a big victory for the governor.

Lewis passes around the event thanking his staffers for all their hard work on his campaign.

Author of *The Birth of Desert Springs* Marge Madsen has a special chair in Henry's office and people come up and shake her hand and tell her what an amazing history her book is. She is almost like some type of Queen holding court for her subjects.

EXT. FORT SUN - EVENING

Henry and Travis Lewis stand in front of the fort having a few Fort Sun Ales and smoking cigars.

HENRY

The water battle is not over. Clayton and Shields and the governor are still as crooked as ever.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Someday someone might peg them. But it's hard fighting the powerful machine McCloud has created.

McKenzie Morris looks down at Henry and Travis Lewis from the roof of Fort Sun.

MCKENZIE MORRIS (V.O.)

I'm still not sure what to make of this whole thing. After the news conference, events went forward like a bunch of dominos falling, like Montage scenes in a screenplay. It all seemed to move with its own internal power. All going against Travis. I still wonder about the story in all of this. Where did it start? I begin to write the story in my mind again as I've done a number of times. It seems to be a story about many things. The villains of the story are pretty obvious. Does it have a hero?

INT. FORT SUN - EVENING

Travis Lewis talks to McKenzie.

TRAVIS LEWIS
I appreciate all you did.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I wish it was more.

TRAVIS LEWIS
It was a difficult battle from the start. I thought we could turn things around with all we had. But all they did was make me out as some villain in all of this.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Their some tough characters. It's enough to have some seasoned crook like Shields to deal with. But the help he got from Bill Clayton was hard to overcome. What are you going to do now?

TRAVIS LEWIS
Go back to Washington. Serve out my term. I'm not sure after that.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
California needs you.

TRAVIS LEWIS
I might come back. I've got a little place out in the valley. Nothing like Big Sky Ranch but its enough for me.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
The water crisis is not over.

TRAVIS LEWIS
No. I think it'll only get worse. Maybe someday the people will see the corruption in all of it. What are you going to do?

MCKENZIE MORRIS
I'm not sure. All I know is that I've had it with reporting. Maybe I'll stay down here with Henry for awhile. Help him publish his paper. I don't have a lot of interest in getting back into LA.

TRAVIS LEWIS

That's not a bad idea. Will I see you?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I don't get back to Washington that often.

TRAVIS LEWIS

I'll be out here in a few weeks. Maybe we can get together.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

That would be nice.

TRAVIS LEWIS

(kissing McKenzie)

Yes, it would be.

INT. SACRAMENTO - STATE CAPITAL BUILDING - OFFICE OF VICTOR GONZALES - DAY

Travis Lewis, Victory Gonzales and Congressman Jones in a meeting. Gonzales tosses a report across the table at Lewis.

VICTOR GONZALES

Our little subpoena to Hale at Water & Power produced a gold mine of incriminating evidence on Carlton Shields. His fingerprints are all over these Special Water Zones out here. He had Hale set them up through an old defunct department at Water & Power. We have a list of all of them. All huge developments like Big Sky Ranch. All cronies of the governor. There are records of huge kickbacks paid to Shields.

CONGRESSMAN JONES

I think we have finally got him.

TRAVIS LEWIS

What are you going to do?

VICTOR GONZALES

I'm releasing this report to the media tomorrow. Should cause some real fireworks up here in Sacramento.

EXT. DESERT SPRINGS - CACTUS SPRINGS - CARLTON SHIELDS CONDO -
OUTSIDE BY THE POOL - DAY

Carlton Shields sits around the pool of his new million dollar condominium at Cactus Springs. A gift of Bill and Tommy Clayton. He wears a bathing suit and has a beer. He is being entertained by a woman less than half his age. His cell phone rings and he sees that the governor is calling.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

Have you seen the newspaper today?

CARLTON SHIELDS

No. What's up?

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

Victor Gonzales has released a report on Special Water Zones to the press. He talked to Hale at Water & Power. He knows everything. Where they're located. How they are set up. The owners of the projects. It's like reading a list of my major political donors.

CARLTON SHIELDS

Jesus Christ. I told Hale to stone wall them.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

You can't stone wall a subpoena from a special committee of the state senate. I need to see you up here as soon as possible.

INT. LOS ANGELES - CONGRESSMAN LEWIS' OFFICE - DAY

A few people cleaning out records from Lewis' campaign office. Lewis walks around putting things in boxes. His cell phone rings and he answers it.

VICTOR GONZALES

How soon can you make it up to Sacramento?

TRAVIS LEWIS

I can catch a flight tonight.

VICTOR GONZALES

See you at my office tomorrow at eleven.

TRAVIS LEWIS
You won't tell me what's going on?

VICTOR GONZALES
Eleven tomorrow morning.

EXT. SACRAMENTO - PRIVATE GOLF CLUB - DINING ROOM - DAY

The governor and Shields sit at a table in the corner of the club. The report of Gonzales' committee that investigated the Special Water Zones in on the table. Shields skims through it.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD
Everything's in there. I don't know how they got so much information from Hale but they did. Son of a bitch sung like a canary for them. He's out at Department of Water & Power.

CARLTON SHIELDS
What the hell we gonna' do?

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD
(tilting his head)
We?

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD (CONT'D)
What are you getting at.

CARLTON SHIELDS
All this leaves me little choice in the matter.

CARLTON SHIELDS (CONT'D)
What do you mean?

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD
I'm going to have to cut you loose. It's all too close to me.

CARLTON SHIELDS
Cut me loose?

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD
I'm holding a press conference tomorrow. You're offering your resignation for "health" reasons.

INT. STATE CAPITAL BUILDING - OFFICE OF STATE SENATOR VICTOR GONZALES - DAY

Travis Lewis, Gonzales and Congressman Jones watch the governor's news conference on television. The governor with Carlton Shields standing next to him.

EXT. SACRAMENTO - STATE CAPITAL BUILDING - ON STEPS - DAY

The governor is holding a press conference. Carlton Shields stands next to him.

GOVERNOR MCCLOUD

A little over a month ago I appointed Carlton Shields California's first Water Commissioner. Carlton has done an outstanding job as commissioner. Many of you know of his heroic efforts to save the city of Desert Springs from its water crisis. Unfortunately, Carlton has related some pressing health issues to me that must be addressed immediately and has therefore offered his resignation which I've accepted. I'll take a few questions.

ONE REPORTER

Are you going to appoint a new water commissioner?

GOVERNOR MCCLOUD

That remains to be seen. The state does need someone to monitor water allocations during this difficult time. I have this under consideration.

ANOTHER REPORTER

Did you know about the Special Water Zones that were set up?

GOVERNOR MCCLOUD

Unfortunately I had no knowledge of these.

ANOTHER REPORTER

There's allegations that they have been given to your friends.

GOVERNOR MCCLLOUD

This is ridiculous but I have my staff looking into all of this. That's all the questions for now.

INT. SACRAMENTO - STATE CAPITAL BUILDING - OFFICE OF VICTOR GONZALES - DAY

Travis Lewis, Victor Gonzales and Congressman Jones watch the news conference on television.

VICTOR GONZALES

We thought this was going to happen. McCloud has to throw Shields under the bus to save his own ass.

TRAVIS LEWIS

I'm sure that McCloud is going to be "looking into" all of this.

VICTOR GONZALES

The governor did get one thing wrong. There is going to be a new water commissioner in this state.

TRAVIS LEWIS

Another crony of the governor.

CONGRESSMAN JONES

No, not this time. This time it's going to be a little different.

VICTOR GONZALES

The state needs someone to allocate water fairly. It doesn't seem like there is going to be any let-up in this drought. Water needs to go to farmers, to places that need it most. Not to golf courses and real estate developments.

CONGRESSMAN JONES

I've been in discussions with your colleagues in the house. There is no one that cares about water equality out here as much as you do.

VICTOR GONZALES

One of the results of my committee meetings was the recommendation that the legislature nominate our own water commissioner. Your name kept coming up.

CONGRESSMAN JONES

The position is yours if you want it.

TRAVIS LEWIS

An interesting proposition.

EXT. DESERT - FORT SUN - TWILIGHT

Henry and McKenzie sit on the roof of Fort Sun. There is a slight wind tonight enough to make the big Fort Sun flag in the middle of the roof come alive. Of course they are having a few Fort Sun Ales.

HENRY

Look at that line of traffic out there on 10. The snowbirds all coming down for the winter months.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I knew someone would finally get Shields. Even corruption has a limit.

HENRY

You've never told me if you like the Honey Blond better than the Wild Red version of Fort Sun.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

It's a close call.

HENRY

I'll bet the Claytons will have some problems with our new water commissioner. Cactus Springs just might not be so green in the future.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

Travis wants me to come up to Sacramento and be Deputy Water Commissioner.

HENRY

Deputy. A big word. Next to an even bigger word.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I'm thinking about it. Not much in LA for me with the paper closed and all my girlfriends getting married and having kids and families.

HENRY

What about that story you were writing? Does it have a beginning?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I think the rally at Mission Reservoir.

HENRY

And an ending?

MCKENZIE MORRIS

(shaking her head)
Maybe no ending.

HENRY

(taking in a big breathe)
Something new is in the air. I can feel something new approaching. You can feel things like this in the desert.

MCKENZIE MORRIS

I can feel it too. (Pause) Feel it for the first time in a long time. It's a good feeling.

HENRY

Yes, a good feeling.

Over Mt. San Jacinto, there is a flash of lightning. A wind stirs and the flags around Fort Sun come alive and proclaim their weird symbols into the windy evening. Clouds appear over the mountains and then over the Coachella Valley. A hard rain falls. It rains harder than any time Henry can remember since he has been down in the desert. They sit on the roof and let the rain pound down on them.

HENRY (CONT'D)

There is nothing like the renewing power of water. Washing away the old world.

MCKENZIE MORRIS
Washing in the new world.

HENRY
For us. For Travis Lewis. And maybe
for the people of California. And
maybe even all over the world.