

THE JACKET

Written by

Massy Tadjedin

Based on a screenplay by

Marc Rocco

April 15, 2003

A pure white screen. Idyllic stillness. All of it looking and feeling like the heavens are supposed to.

After some seconds of calm, water seems to mist the screen and the slight shifts to the left and then the right suggest this is a man's P.O.V. Then, suddenly, the white screen is tugged and we see it was a sheet covering a presumably dead man.

WILLIAM STARKS (V.O.)

I was 25 years old the first time I died...

INT. HOSPITAL, KUWAIT, DAY

One more tug on the sheet and we see, and suddenly hear, from William Starks' P.O.V. the CHAOS of the hospital around him as DOCTORS and NURSES tend as best as they can to the injured soldiers.

Our glimpse of STARKS reveals a red stretcher -- soaked in blood -- and the severe head wound where a bullet's minced his skull.

Then, slowly, steadily, a heartbeat is heard over the muffled sounds of the hospital and, as his pulse quickens, so does the pace of the world around him.

INT. HOSPITAL, KUWAIT, DAY

WILLIAM STARKS (V.O.)

I remember there was so much white everywhere. And I felt peace...even though there was war around me. And I felt alive, even though I knew I was dead.

INTERN #1

Come on, come on, let's tag these guys and get them out of here.

An INTERN, clipboard in hand, stands above STARKS' unmoving body with another INTERN (2) beside him. INTERN 1 pulls the rest of the SHEET off of STARKS as the OTHER searches for his DOG TAGS and gently closes his EYES with her hand.

INTERN #2 [Reading from the TAGS]
Starks, William. Born December 25,
1966.

INTERN #1
Wait, so how old?

INTERN #2
25.

INTERN #1
[Searching through records] Here he
is. William Starks. Born in Vermont.
He hasn't got a family listed. The
naval hospital'll figure out what to
do with him.

As the INTERN puts the TAGS back down, she meets STARKS' wide-open EYES -- now filled with surfacing tears, sadness, and life. She stares at them curiously and, after some seconds, STARKS blinks and a TEAR runs down his cheek -- jarring her.

INTERN #2 [Calling out]
Oh my God! This soldier is ALIVE!
Code blue! CODE BLUE! This man just
blinked!

INTERN #1
He's been tagged already. Worry about
the others... [then seeing STARKS
blink] Oh shit! Shit! CODE BLUE! We
need a doctor! Get a doctor over here
now!

As the MEDICAL STAFF rush over to STARKS, preparing NEEDLES and OXYGEN MASKS, STARKS merely closes his eyes and we follow the now BLOODIED white sheet as it falls to the ground...

EXT. IRAQI VILLAGE, DAY

A NEWSANCHOR interviews CAPTAIN ROBERT MEDLEY (30s) -- a particularly photogenic and affable participant.

CAPTAIN MEDLEY
The level of arms on the ground
really depends. [Answering a
question] But no, I'd have to say we
haven't had to engage on the ground
as heavily as we might have expected.

NEWSANCHOR
Have you lost any men today, Captain?

CAPTAIN MEDLEY
No. One of my Corporals took a bullet

to the head, but it looks like he
might make it. Looks that way...

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. IRAQI VILLAGE, DAY

We see only the HAND, and not the man to whom it belongs,
enter the frame and pull the TRIGGER on a gun. The sound
pierces the air, and the bullet hits the side of STARKS' head
in a FLASH, shaving the skin around it right off.

EXT. AMERICAN NAVAL HOSPITAL, DAY

STARKS convalesces in a navy hospital bed -- his head heavily
BANDAGED and his arms suited with I.V.'s and dressings -- as a
MAJOR, a LIEUTENANT and a DOCTOR stand above him.

STARKS' face -- now cleaned of the blood that masked it before --
is alert, and striking. Even with the bandages, he remains
well-built and strong, like a shot straight to the head would
have been the only way for an enemy to take him down.

DOCTOR

Sergeant Starks was very lucky. A
little more to the right and it
wouldn't have wanted to come out...

MAJOR

But he's never gonna be able to
remember what happened?

DOCTOR

It's hard to say. Sergeant Starks
could have retrograde amnesia
or... [lowering his voice] any form of
psychological suppression. It's very
common with traumas like this.

STARKS [Cutting him off]

Sergeant Starks is in the room,
[beat] and I want to know when I'm
going home.

When he speaks, STARKS maintains the sharp, steady gaze of a
man assured of himself, even if he is lost among his
surroundings.

LIEUTENANT

Sergeant, you have no surviving
family in the States. I'm sure you
have friends or distant relatives,
but unfortunately we have no record
of them yet.

MAJOR

Captain Medley has recommended you
for the Purple Heart, Sergeant.

STARKS lets the tribute roll right off him. He spots the CIGARETTES in the Lieutenant's pocket.

STARKS
Can I have one of those?

LIEUTENANT
Of course.

The LIEUTENANT lights one for him.

DOCTOR
There is help for you, Sergeant.

LIEUTENANT
Of course there is.
Their VOICES start to fade as STARKS smokes his cigarette, blowing the SMOKE upwards and following it with his eyes. He's finished with these men and everything they stand for.

STARKS [V.O.]
I didn't know where my home was. I just knew I didn't want to be there anymore.

EXT. HIGHWAY, RURAL VERMONT, WINTER, DAY

STARKS -- recovered now -- walks by himself along a long highway. He seems to be walking away from things even if he can't remember what they are yet.

EXT. HIGHWAY, RURAL VERMONT, WINTER, DAY

JEAN PRICE (30s) -- a hippie who happens to be a mother -- and her daughter, JACKIE (8) tremble in the cold next to their stalled car. JEAN sits next to the car, holding her knees to her chest, more like a child than her daughter.

JACKIE runs her little gloved hand over her mom's ski-hatted head as she cautiously watches STARKS approach them. He cuts an arresting figure against the empty landscape.

JACKIE
Come on, mom. Don't fall asleep...

STARKS
You two ok?

JACKIE
Our car won't start.

STARKS [Looking at JEAN]
What's your mom's name?

JACKIE [Cautiously]
Jean.

STARKS takes off his backpack and kneels down.

STARKS

Jean? Jean, can you hear me? I need you to try to wake up, Jean.

JEAN opens her eyes, stone red.

STARKS

Your mom take anything before this happened?

JACKIE

Yeah, but I don't know what.

STARKS

[Beat] What's your name?

JACKIE

Jackie.

JACKIE decidedly sticks out her gloved hand. STARKS smiles and briefly shakes it. STARKS rubs a hand over his chin and cheek as he thinks of what to do.

STARKS

Nice to meet you, Jackie. Why don't you wrap this scarf around yourself and try to keep your mom awake while I take a look at your car.

EXT. HIGHWAY, RURAL VERMONT, WINTER, DAY

As Starks works on their engine, JACKIE anxiously watches her mother throw up in the distance. STARKS sees her watching and tries to distract her.

STARKS

What do you think of all this snow?

JACKIE looks at him curiously.

JACKIE

[Beat] Nothing.

STARKS looks at her and smiles at her honest answer; Jackie turns her head back towards her mother.

JACKIE

But I like it I guess.

STARKS

Hey, can you reach the gas pedal?

JACKIE

Yeah.

JACKIE gets behind the wheel, crouching down in the seat just enough so her foot reaches the pedal.

STARKS

Go ahead, turn it on. Keep pushing

it.

JACKIE revs up the engine and, a few coughs and sputters later, the car settles into a nice, working hum.

JACKIE [Smiling]

It works!

JACKIE steps down. She looks like she could hug Starks and, unexpectedly, decides to. As STARKS awkwardly returns it, he sees JEAN lifting her eyes to see him holding her daughter.

JEAN

Get your fucking hands off my daughter!

JACKIE

Mom, he just fixed our car.

JEAN

Jackie, get in the car. NOW!

JEAN reaches for a RIFLE in the back of the truck but stumbles from the nausea before she can pick it up.

JEAN

Look, I don't want any trouble, so...

STARKS

Neither do I, ma'am. I'll be on my way.

JACKIE

Mom, you've got it wrong...

STARKS motions for JACKIE to stop as he collects his bags.

JACKIE

You're just gonna walk?

STARKS

Yeah, I'll hitch a ride or something.
[Beat] Let her throw it all up before she gets back behind the wheel.

STARKS' DOG TAGS are tied to the ZIPPER of one of his bags.

JACKIE

What're those?

STARKS

Dog tags. [Off her blank look]
They've got your name and date of birth for identification.

JACKIE

What for?

STARKS

[Beat] In case you get lost, or can't

remember who you are.

JACKIE [Still looking at them]

Hm.

STARKS unties them and gives them to her. She reads them.

STARKS

I think I can remember what's on them.

JACKIE

William Starks. [Beat] Thanks.

CUT TO:

INT. COURTROOM, SMALL TOWN VERMONT

STARKS faces the screen with nothing but a cryptic BLACKNESS about him and a confused look on his face as a MENACING VOICE questions him.

VOICE (O.S.)

"Jackie" and "Jean" are the only
...things you know for certain about
that day?

STARKS nods.

VOICE (O.S.)

Are you aware we have no last name,
no place of residence, and no record
of any physical presence for these
"friends" of yours? How's that
possible in this day and age?

STARKS nods as a muffled "Objection" flickers away in the background...

VOICE (O.S.)

I may need to actually hear that
answer, Mr. Starks.

STARKS

[Beat] Yes.

With Starks' answer, the background of the courtroom is suddenly illuminated and we see that THIS IS STARKS' OWN TRIAL. The VOICE belongs to a satisfied PROSECUTION who turns to face a medium-sized CROWD watching on...

INT. COURTROOM, SMALL TOWN VERMONT

There are three KEY WITNESSES called to the stand: CAPTAIN MEDLEY, Starks' commanding officer in the Persian Gulf; DR. HALE, a psychiatrist; and OFFICER NASH, the cop who first came upon the crime scene. Their three testimonies are intercut to present the case against Starks quickly and confusingly -- just like it appears to himself.

OFFICER NASH [Emotional]
Eddie [correcting himself], Officer Harrison, was lying in a pool of his own blood -- on his back.

DR. HALE
William Starks could be blocking the incident. It would explain his well-systematized scheme about the little girl and her mother. A delusion as complex as that can often replace the reality of an incident like this.

OFFICER NASH [Cont'd]
Officer Harrison'd been shot three times. He was long dead by the time we got there.

DR. HALE
I have heard of Gulf War Syndrome. The medical community is only beginning to gather information about it.

PROSECUTION
Gulf War Syndrome? What the...Why don't we start diagnosing Hard Life Syndrome while we're at it? I've gotten a lot of convictions we could overturn with that logic...

CAPTAIN MEDLEY
Sergeant Starks was awarded the Purple Heart. That award doesn't applaud violence or murder. [Beat] It applauds honor.

DR. HALE [Cont'd]
His subconscious is blocking it, the same way it began to in the Gulf, particularly as something similarly traumatizing happened to him then.

The following summations are punctuated by the BLACK FADES between them and the simulated BLACK around them as they speak -- like STARKS, at the beginning of his own testimony.

PROSECUTION [Disdainfully]
It's not a question of whether or not he was sane when he did it?! He absolutely was. Three bullets in one man are three moral failings in another.

CAPTAIN MEDLEY [Incensed]
War isn't a CNN Special. Half the shit that went on couldn't be tidied into a top of the hour headline -- either 'cause it couldn't be said neatly or 'cause it couldn't be said

at all. It was ugly. And they don't
put ugly on TV. [Looking at Starks]
If Starks did kill that officer
... [Beat] You can't hold a man
responsible for a damaged mind.

DEFENSE

For God's sake, my client said he
thinks he's already died once. He
doesn't know what's going on.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. MURDER SCENE, HIGHWAY, VERMONT, DUSK

STARKS lies bleeding -- eyes half open -- by OFFICER HARRISON'S
dead, bloodied body as falling SNOW slowly whitens them both
and covers any FOOTPRINTS that may have been left behind. We
hear a distant gavel delivering a distant judgment...

STARKS [V.O., nearly whispered]
I don't know how it happened.

STARKS' eyes finally close as he lapses into unconsciousness.

INT. COURTROOM, SMALL TOWN VERMONT

The JUDGE nods as he hands the JURY FOREMAN back the verdict.

JURY FOREMAN

On the count of first degree murder,
we find the defendant, William
Starks, not guilty by reason of
insanity.

EXT. HIGHWAY, RURAL VERMONT, WINTER, DAY

In his mind, STARKS is walking out of the woods as the sun
sets and bounces off the snow all around him. We see JACKIE
watching him walk away into the woods.

JUDGE (O.S.)

I hereby sentence you to be committed
to a facility for the criminally
insane, where I hope that doctors and
the proper treatment can help you...

INT. COURTROOM, SMALL TOWN VERMONT

The JUDGE sentences STARKS, who stares back vacantly, like a
man who checked out of his life long before this judge
decided he had to.

EXT. ALPINE GROVE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, DAY

A white VAN pulls up to Alpine Grove Psychiatric Hospital -- a
bleak, dated facility embellished only by the barbed wire
that seems to be everywhere around it.

STARKS' anatomy instantly and intensely separates him from

the staff of the hospital and the infirm patients who might be in it. TWO MEMBERS of that STAFF lead him in.

JUDGE [O.S.]

Mr. Starks, I hope that someday you might be well so that we will have lost only one life in this tragedy.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM, ALPINE GROVE MENTAL HOSPITAL

DR. THOMAS BECKER (overworked, dogmatic, disenchanted), DR. BETH LORENSON (30s, unassuming, perceptive), and DR. GRIES (20s, green) are convened with other STAFF at a routine hospital meeting. These doctors deal in the currency of madness every day and wear the heaviness of that burden on their faces.

CHIEF OF STAFF

I'd certainly say he should be considered violent, just given his case...

DR. BECKER

How'd he dodge a conviction?

CHIEF OF STAFF

His defense argued post-traumatic stress and delusional disorder. He evidently couldn't account for a similar incident during his service in Desert Storm.

DR. BECKER

[Beat] So why isn't he just in the psych ward of the county jail?

CHIEF OF STAFF

Apparently, he's a decorated vet. And had another one testify for him. Who knows? [To DR. BECKER] Tom, do you mind taking him?

BECKER shrugs a nod as the Chief moves on to the next order of business...

INT. STARKS' ROOM, WARD, ALPINE GROVE, DAY

STARKS is shown to his room by NURSE HARDING -- stern, senior -- and her henchman, DAMON -- a BURLY ORDERLY who relishes his command, however diluted it may be.

DAMON unceremoniously puts Starks' UNIFORM on the bed. He and NURSE HARDING wait at the door for Starks to change into it.

DAMON looks at STARKS -- his eyes inadvertently conceding that Starks is more threatening than the common senile he marshals; STARKS stares him back -- deliberately conceding that he's right.

STARKS turns around -- only then looking stunned in the

sterile, cotton-white room, wondering where his life disappeared to.

INT. DR. BECKER'S OFFICE, ALPINE GROVE, DAY

STARKS sits opposite DR. BECKER in a harsh, tiled office. STARKS wears his blue uniform and BECKER wears a doubtful expression. From STARKS' P.O.V.: the DRUGS they've already started giving him BLUR his vision of Becker.

BECKER
William? William, can you hear me?

STARKS nods groggily.

BECKER
I've given you some drugs to help with your adjustment...

STARKS [Cutting him off]
What kind of drugs? [Beat] 'Cause these seem pretty...pretty serious.

BECKER
Well, your condition's pretty serious.

STARKS
[Beat] So they say. [Off Becker's steady gaze] What?

BECKER
I'm just looking at you. Does that make you uncomfortable?

STARKS
Depends on what you're seeing.

BECKER eyes STARKS mistrustfully.

BECKER
You said you couldn't remember killing Officer Harrison. Correct?

STARKS
[Beat] You don't believe me, do you?

BECKER
It's not my job to believe you.

STARKS [Squinting to better see]
You're a doctor. I would think...

BECKER [Cutting him off firmly]
It's not my job to believe you or to understand you. It's my job to try to cure you and if that's a no-go, then to...take some kind of care of you.

STARKS [Flatly]

Lucky me.

BECKER looks at Starks -- his eyes casting shame upon the alleged murderer that sits before him.

BECKER [Stupefied]

You shot a man three times: first in his heart, then in his stomach and then...point blank, in the back of his head. And then you just...forgot all about it. A whole life erased with three easy little words: I. Don't. Know. What would it be if we could all not know what we didn't want to have to face.

BECKER glances at his WATCH and gets up -- still blurred in Starks' P.O.V. It's only as he's walking off that Starks notices he has a limp.

FADE TO:

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, DAY

From STARKS' P.O.V., we follow him walk down the hospital halls, even hazier from the medication than before. FORMS blur into one another and, on either side of him is a crazy world with crazy patients who've lost their way in it.

STARKS reaches for the WALL and runs his HAND over it, trying to keep his balance. He's walking towards BECKER who stands at the end of the hall, talking to other PATIENTS.

STARKS [Softly]

I don't belong here. I don't...

STARKS falters but stays up. He turns to see a shell of an OLD MAN looking right through him with wooden eyes. STARKS' eyes stay so completely fixed on the old man's haunting sight that he doesn't see what's ahead of him.

He bumps right into a HYSTERICAL PATIENT whose sudden, earsplitting SCREAMS peal interminably through the air.

STARKS [Mumbling]

I'm sorry. I didn't mean... I'm sorry. I didn't mean it.

STARKS' fumbled efforts to help the PATIENT only feed his hysteria more. The SCREAMING is intolerable.

STARKS [Forced to yell]

Will you listen to me? I'm not going to hurt you. Please. I didn't mean to bump...I'm sorry.

ORDERLIES and NURSES, followed by DR. BECKER, surround them now, violently pulling STARKS off the patient. BECKER, familiar with the PATIENT (HAROLD), tries to calm him.

BECKER

It's ok, Harold. It's ok.

STARKS searches their blurred faces and stops on Becker's as they restrain him and give him more drugs.

STARKS [To Becker]

I don't belong here...

BECKER [Angrily, to the ORDERLIES]

Get him to his room.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ALPINE GROVE, LATE NIGHT

STARKS is slowly rebounding from the drugs when he hears disquieting FOOTSTEPS in the hall, coming closer and closer...

What follows happens too quickly for STARKS to react.

DR. GRIES, NURSE HARDING AND DAMON -- enter Starks' room. They close the door and deftly administer a TRANQUILIZER and a GAG.

STARKS has no idea what's happening to him as they drag him out, and his STIFLED CRIES ensure no one else does either.

NURSE HARDING

Come on, army boy. Time for some therapy.

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, LATE NIGHT

The first face STARKS sees as the world comes into focus is NURSE HARDING'S. Around it loom those of DR. BECKER, DR. GRIES and DAMON.

A shot of the room shows a constraint-ridden apparatus hanging sternly on the wall. It is THE JACKET: an apparatus designed to encase a man's body. Made of coarse, sickly-stained red and brown canvas and velcro restraints that would first chafe, then forever burn, the skin they're wrapped around, the JACKET looks medieval. Its appearance suggests its purpose: to slowly STRANGLE THE LIFE OUT OF A MAN.

STARKS has been stripped of his blue uniform and is lying nearly naked on a burial slab in the cold of the basement. Even under the tranquilizers, STARKS formidably resists them as the ORDERLIES wrestle to strap him in. Then Starks, sensing as anyone would, that something bad is being done to him, wisely stops resisting long enough to petition them.

STARKS

Wait. Wait a minute... Please.

BECKER motions for them to stop with his hand. STARKS blinks, trying to bring the faces above him into focus...

STARKS

I, I don't belong here.

BECKER looks into Starks' eyes. Sanity stares back.

BECKER

No. I don't think you do either.

[Beat] But neither of us can do anything about that.

BECKER barely nods and STARKS is trussed in the JACKET with METAL CLAMPS. BECKER writes some details down, presumably about Starks' treatment.

A CADAVER DRAWER -- just barely deep enough for a body or tall enough for the height of a nose -- is slid open and STARKS, already dreadfully sheathed in the JACKET, is crammed inside.

The ORDERLIES slam the cadaver drawer into the wall.

INT. CADAVER DRAWER

STARKS is literally entombed alive. Silence. Stolen breath. They bolt the drawer and the CLANG echoes through his body. The BLACKNESS and CLOSENESS of the space choke him as his heart beats the frantic rhythm of his struggle.

We see only the WHITES of a pair of petrified EYES on a man who's losing it -- hyperventilating, suffocating... for all intents and purposes, dying the worst kind of a death.

Combing the walls for any sign of an explanation of what's happening to him, STARKS sees a single white DOT -- almost like a fleck of dust -- flitting between undecided SHAPES in the blackness until, slowly, it grows bigger and bigger...

INT. JACKET/TUNNEL PASSAGE

It's now a PATTERN of WHITE DOTS that changes the more STARKS stares at it. Beneath it seems to be a smaller pattern with formless shapes and figures that STARKS tries to discern before they change into something else. Only after STARKS blinks does he start to see the WHITE of the DOTS is SNOW from a picture that is slowly and terribly coming together in the following glimpses, each hardly longer than the time between BLINKS.

- 1) A little river of RED marring the snow around it, spilling from...
- 2) OFFICER HARRISON'S mouth just seconds before his last breath. His eyes close and STARKS sees and hears a FLASH...
- 3) From the barrel of a GUN fired near him.

BLOOD sprays STARKS' hands as he looks down at them and realizes he's in the scene and not just watching it. He looks up from his hands and sees in similar flashes...

- 1) The snow beneath the BLOOD changing to DIRT as STARKS stares at it. This time, the little river of RED comes

from...

2) The BODIES of IRAQI villagers, all still except one...

3) That of a IRAQI WOMAN. She unflinchingly lays her hand in the entrails of a CORPSE and smears its blood on her face just before she lies back down among the dead, content to be one of them.

The only SOUNDS during these dreadful images have been a trapped man's anxious BREATHS and the BEATS of a HEART pumping so fast it could be a drum...

The screen goes BLACK and QUIVERS as STARKS clenches his eyes shut.

INT. CADAVER DRAWER

Just then, as the MUSCLE beneath his eyes starts to VIBRATE, something terrible and wet falls from the ceiling of the drawer. PING! Right on his eye. The drop of WATER is enough to send this man right over the edge.

STARKS' EYES roll back into his head and start to flutter, shaking the SCREEN right along them until...

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE

STARKS stands outside his body, looking at the wall of drawers he is in. He bends down to look more closely at a STAIN on the floor -- DRIED BLOOD -- and as he runs his HAND over it and stands back up, he is back in the...

INT. JACKET/TUNNEL PASSAGE

IMAGES RACE PAST HIM too fast for him to catch anything but fleeting clips of them. The IMAGES are his MEMORY and, no matter how badly he wants to slow them down, he can't...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DINER, SMALL TOWN VERMONT

STARKS sees JACKIE, 8, sitting by a window in the diner. She turns her head towards the ENTRANCE and, as she looks there, so does Starks. That is when he first lays eyes on a woman, a WAITRESS -- worn but still lovely -- leaving the diner. He is taken with her and, for the first time since he's been in the Jacket, seems calm. Just then, however, the reverie is shattered...

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, LATE NIGHT

The drawer is yanked open to reveal STARKS' still, drenched face. BECKER, GRIES and the ORDERLIES stand above him.

BECKER

Take him out of it.

The ORDERLIES unstrap the JACKET from his body. Blood from his chafed skin drips onto the burial slab. STARKS' eyes remain closed.

BECKER

William. William, can you hear me?

We hear BECKER's voice as it sounds to STARKS...MUTED. STARKS' EYES open only enough for him to see the PEOPLE'S FACES morph chillingly into one another's.

DR. GRIES [Less muffled]

Pulse is 16, temp, just a hair under 90. 'Bout right for three hours of psychosis.

NURSE HARDING

That's not enough, is it?

BECKER looks at STARKS' battered body.

BECKER [Wearily, indifferently]

It's enough for now. Take him to the infirmary and let him recover there.

INT. WARD, ALPINE GROVE, NEXT MORNING

STARKS sits, totally disoriented, in the ward with the other, more vocally INSANE patients. He runs his hand uncertainly over the SCARS on his arm from the Jacket and looks around -- not knowing where his PARANOIA ends and REALITY begins.

The OLD MAN from the previous day is moving slowly with the aid of his walker. He is far less threatening to STARKS today...just a senile man about to walk into a wall.

STARKS [Getting up to help him]

Let's get you a destination other than this wall.

RUDY MACKENZIE -- 40s, smart eyes, fidgety, with an innocent face -- watches STARKS help turn the OLD MAN around.

MACKENZIE

That's Kingsley. Old bastard hears us, I'm sure. He just doesn't want to bother answering so he makes us think he can't talk. I know. I tried it on my mother for two months once before she fished out my tongue. Literally. [Beat] You're the cop killer, right?

STARKS

Yeah, guess so. How'd you know?

MACKENZIE

TV. Helps numb [makes a "crazy gesture"] any active mind. [Sticking out a jittery hand] Rudy MacKenzie.

(MORE)

MACKENZIE (cont'd)
Welcome to the village, William
Starks.

STARKS doesn't offer his hand, just looks back at MacKenzie.

STARKS [Looking away]
I'm not really in the mood to talk.

MACKENZIE
That's too bad. I don't believe in
disposable language either -- you
know, the small talk, the little
talk. Chit. Chat. Useless. The game's
something else though. Think about
it: What can we trade with each other
in the air between us? This...
[running his hand through the air] is
our court. [Beat, so eager it's sad]
I'm ready to throw the ball. Come on.

STARKS looks at MACKENZIE and sees that the constant flow of
words from his mouth only masks the tragic hesitation in his
eyes. A dead arm hangs limply by his side, like a weight.

STARKS [Relenting]
What are you in here for?

MACKENZIE
I tried to kill my wife.

STARKS
Don't you go to jail for that?

MACKENZIE
I tried something like 30 times.
There is, as STARKS rightly figures, no suitable response to
that.

MACKENZIE
She's bigger than me, and she's
stronger than me. And I never planned
on doing it. It was always in the
heat of the moment. I didn't beat her
or anything. Hell, she beat me. But
when we'd start fighting, I'd go for
the knife. Then she kept threatening
to have me put away, and [looking
around] she finally did.

As he talks, MACKENZIE notes the SCARS on Starks' arms. Dr.
LORENSON observes STARKS and MACKENZIE talking and starts
walking towards them.

STARKS
Yeah, well 30 times probably would
make you seem crazy.

MACKENZIE

Or just plain stupid. You'd think by the twentieth time, I'd have found an alternative method. Maybe a more effective one, if you know what I mean.

DR. LORENSON

Morning, gentlemen. How are you doing today?

MACKENZIE winks discreetly at STARKS before he replies.

MACKENZIE

It's a hard one for me, Dr. Lorensen. [Finally turns to face her, grimly] The world around me, it's shrinking. There's not even room for light to make its way in. [Beat] Da-da-bum! Da-da-bum! I feel like the horseman of doom is coming for me, Doc. Only today, he's not carrying flowers.

LORENSON reprimands MacKenzie by turning to Starks.

MACKENZIE

What? It's better than fine.

DR. LORENSON

And you, Mr. Starks?

STARKS [Already on the defense]

I'm fine.

DR. STARKS

Mr. MacKenzie, do you think I could talk to Mr. Starks privately?

MACKENZIE

Of course you can, Doc. William, it was an absolute pleasure. Thanks for playing.

Just before he walks away, MACKENZIE turns around nervously and uncharacteristically looks STARKS right in the eye.

MACKENZIE

Hey...when they talk you out to the woods tonight and invite the wolves, dance with them. [Beat] They don't eat you when there's music playing.

STARKS looks at MacKenzie briskly, wondering if his words were directed or just the meandering of a nut. But MacKenzie just nods his farewell and starts humming as he walks away -- dead arm in tow.

DR. LORENSON

So you're ok?

STARKS [Still distracted]

What?

DR. LORENSON

I asked you if you're ok.

STARKS [Suspiciously]

I don't know. You tell me, Doc. You think there's anything wrong with me?

DR. LORENSON

I don't know. You're not my patient.

STARKS looks away. Lorensen gives him a once over.

DR. LORENSON

You look like you've lost some weight. Are you eating?

STARKS

I am. One of the few things I remember doing is eating. So I guess I must be exercising it off in my dreams.

STARKS looks at LORENSON, seeing if he'll respond. LORENSON looks back curiously at STARKS' pointed stare.

STARKS

You done with your small talk?

DR. LORENSON

Sure.

STARKS

Good.

STARKS walks away slowly and WEAKLY -- a fact that doesn't escape LORENSON's observation.

INT. MEN'S ROOM, ALPINE GROVE HOSPITAL, DAY

STARKS walks into the bathroom, keenly eyeing the thin slit of WINDOWS at the top of the wall. He walks closer to them, when he suddenly hears some STRAINED BREATHING from inside one of the stalls. He checks the first stall, pushing it open. It swings both ways since it doesn't have a lock.

The sound continues. STARKS walks slowly past the second stall to the third and then... WHACK! The door swings all the way towards STARKS. BRUTALLY. He falls backwards -- his head just barely missing a fatal confrontation with the sink.

DAMON, the ORDERLY, walks out.

DAMON

I'm sorry, Starks. Must have not seen you coming there.

STARKS writhes in PAIN -- straining for his own breath now.

DAMON [Leaning down close to him]
Were you worried about me? [Smiling]
That's so sweet. Thanks.

With that, DAMON walks out, leaving STARKS on the floor.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ALPINE GROVE, NIGHT, CHRISTMAS EVE

STARKS sits in his room, listening to the silence of the night interrupted by first faint, then approaching, FOOTSTEPS. Closer and closer...then harmfully near until DAMON and HARDING enter his room.

They pause -- awaiting a reaction. STARKS doesn't give them one.

NURSE HARDING
You gonna get the fuck up?

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, NIGHT, CHRISTMAS EVE

STARKS walks stoically down the cold corridors to his own torture -- flanked by HARDING and DAMON on either side.

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, CHRISTMAS EVE

They're all in the room. STARKS seems pretty calm. Only in a C.U. do we see his eyes register the JACKET...

BECKER
I'm glad to see you're cooperating
this time, Mr. Starks.

STARKS looks at the WIDE, STURDY restraints on it. They would really hurt if you hit someone as hard as you could with them. They might even knock someone out...

DAMON and HARDING move to undress him, when STARKS makes a move to do it himself. They look to DR. BECKER who NODS that it's all right.

DAMON begrudgingly lets go of Starks but not before he steps on one of Starks' bare feet.

STARKS doesn't flinch. He merely turns away from them and bends down to take off his pants. On his way up, he GRABS THE JACKET OFF ITS HOOK and, using it like a weapon, aims to smack it across Damon's face. DAMON deftly ducks and the JACKET hits BECKER instead. The force of the blow sends Becker down, and as he falls against the wall, DAMON and HARDING leap to restrain Starks.

BECKER opens and closes his eyes, trying to get them into focus. His right cheek is cut pretty bad. DR. GRIES helps BECKER to his feet and picks his BROKEN GLASSES up off the floor. BECKER puts them on.

DR. GRIES

Hold him while I get the
tranquilizer.

DAMON

Fuck the tranquilizer! I got a foot.

DAMON KICKS Starks hard in the back, nearly sending him down.

BECKER

No. That's not necessary.

BECKER looks down and sees his own BLOOD fall on the floor. He looks up at STARKS who, even in his pain, looks shocked at the force he just used.

BECKER

Let him go. [More firmly] I said, let
him go!

As soon as they let him go, STARKS lunges for BECKER -- pushing him up against the wall. STARKS stops, presumably about to harm Becker but unsure, even to himself, of what he's capable of doing...

BECKER looks fearlessly into Starks' eyes.

BECKER [An inch away from his face]

What, Starks? What are you going to
do? End me just because I'm an
inconvenience to you? [Beat] Just
like you did with Officer Harrison?

STARKS' face registers the meaning in Becker's words and a look of self-doubt crosses his face.

BECKER

The only thing your mind is missing
is a conscience.

STARKS lets go of him and, as soon as he does, DAMON and HARDING restrain him. BECKER calmly wipes the BLOOD from his face, looks at his hand, shakes his head and walks out.

DR. GRIES

Wait...Dr. Becker, how long do you
want us to leave him in for?

BECKER doesn't answer. He doesn't even turn around. DR. GRIES goes after him.

DR. GRIES

Just strap him in for now.

And DAMON and HARDING start to...

INT. BECKER'S OFFICE, ALPINE GROVE, CHRISTMAS EVE, SOME TIME
LATER

BECKER turns around from the window and we see that his cheek

is BANDAGED. He opens a drawer, takes out some SCOTCH and pours himself a SHOT. He swallows some pills with it.

After he drinks it, he looks up to see GRIES standing opposite him, watching.

DR. GRIES

You ok?

BECKER

I'm fine.

DR. GRIES

[Beat] Listen, I hate to bother you...

BECKER

Then don't.

DR. GRIES

But... what about Starks?

BECKER

What about Starks?

DR. GRIES

Should we be...

BECKER

Should we be what? Trying to change him any way we can? [Beat] Yes.

DR. GRIES

But the Jacket? I mean...should we be leaving him in like that?

BECKER [As if stunned by the question] Leaving him in? [Beat] The medication I'm given him is intended to adjust -- maybe even reset -- his violent proclivities. You know, peel away some of those layers of hate. The Jacket's merely a safe place for that to happen. The grounds and the halls -- where I can't monitor side effects I can't predict -- aren't.

DR. GRIES [Still doubtful]

But, but...what about...

BECKER [Mocking Gries]

But...but what about the gun? I mean, should he have been firing away like that? [Shaking his head at GRIES] You can't fuck up a life that's already been fucked up. [Turning away] There, there's the insurance you're looking for.

DR. GRIES

I'm not looking for anything.

BECKER shakes his head, laughing inside at the world's stupidity.

BECKER

[Beat] It's Christmas Eve, Justin.
Don't you have somewhere to be?

BECKER doesn't wait for an answer, just turns back towards the window and takes another sip of his drink.

CUT TO:

INT. HOSPITAL LOUNGE, ALPINE GROVE, CHRISTMAS EVE

NURSE HARDING turns on the television as DAMON sits in one of the lounge chairs.

NURSE HARDING

Ah, man, look, It's A Wonderful Life.

DAMON

You got any booze?

HARDING takes out a FLASK from her BACKPACK.

NURSE HARDING

'Course I do. [Smiling] And it is the season for giving so let's get to it.

DAMON smiles and rubs his hands together eagerly.

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, CHRISTMAS EVE

A shot of the WALL OF DRAWERS, with no one in the room, just someone in the wall...

INT. CADAVER DRAWER

STARKS finds himself in the physically wrenching place once more. But nothing happens for some seconds. He breathes anxiously, not knowing what to expect. His heart beats steadily: THUMP...THUMP, until, finally, with each beat, a SMALL WHITE FLECK becomes two flecks...then, two dots...then, two circles...then, the WHITES of a pair of EYES with a terrific meanness in them.

The EYES blink, then disappear like they were never there.

The pace of STARKS' heart quickens, and the inexplicable madness surrounds him once more...

EXT. MURDER SCENE, HIGHWAY, VERMONT, DUSK

The SOUNDS of BOMBS RAGE around him but he's in the middle of the murder scene, watching OFFICER HARRISON lie on the floor. He turns to look over his shoulder and sees...

EXT. IRAQI VILLAGE, NIGHT

Through a PHOSPHORESCENT GREEN NIGHT-VISION CAMERA, we see FIRE, FLESH, and RUIN littering the sand. Slowly the terrifying images shift to a naturalistic, real-time documentation of the action -- the ruin -- as it's occurring.

As STARKS blinks, TEARS fall and he hears, over it all, a counseling voice...

MACKENZIE (O.S.)

When they take you out to the woods
tonight and invite the wolves, dance
with them.

The TERRIBLE SOUNDS become less terrible as they fade away.

MACKENZIE (O.S.)

They don't eat you when there's music
playing.

The scene morphs slowly and the following IMAGES appear vaguely -- forming the walls of the TUNNEL around him.

- 1) C.U. A WOMAN'S NECK and a small child's HAND
- 2) INT. STAIRWAY, OLD HOUSE (STARKS' CHILDHOOD HOME)
- 3) C.U. A black and white PHOTOGRAPH
- 4) EXT. CREEK: A shot of clear water, not too deep...
- 5) EXT. A NEW ENGLAND BEACH
- 6) EXT. DESERT, IRAQ: A sublime sunset...

STARKS walks up uneasily to the wall and touches the IMAGES. They move like they're liquid and, when they settle, the whole wall is replaced with one large IMAGE of a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN -- a waitress -- standing at the counter of a COFFEE SHOP, moving a STRAND OF HAIR out of her face with her hand.

STARKS blinks slowly -- struck by this dream of her. He reaches out and closes his PALM around her like he might catch hold of the moment with this simple gesture.

The whole WALL OF IMAGES twinkles marvelously, as we...

CUT TO:

EXT. DINER, SMALL TOWN, VERMONT, CHRISTMAS EVE

The WAITRESS (early 20s) -- tired, with kind eyes, soft skin and a beautiful mouth that hasn't smiled in a long time -- emerges from the diner. Even with no effort, she is remarkably pretty.

From her UNIFORM, we know that her day was spent there. STARKS simply stares at this WOMAN who seems markedly removed from the world around her. The only fact she wears on her is that she's tired.

She spots STARKS and can't help but do a double-take. Both are momentarily taken with each other, though she tries to hide any indication that she is.

INT. WAITRESS' CAR

She gets in her old car and starts it. As it warms up, she looks for STARKS in her REARVIEW MIRROR and sees he's still there.

He starts to walk over to her when she jumps out of her car.

EXT. PARKING LOT, DINER, VERMONT, CHRISTMAS EVE

The WAITRESS treads angrily towards STARKS.

WAITRESS

Where do you think you're going?

STARKS looks at her. He doesn't know anymore than she does.

WAITRESS

You gonna answer me?

STARKS just stares.

WAITRESS

If you're deaf, read my lips...I don't need a psycho following me today.

STARKS

[Beat] I'm not deaf.

WAITRESS

Good.

She turns and gets back in her car, slamming the door shut. She starts to drive and STARKS stares after her.

After a few hundred yards, she SLAMS on the brakes and turns the car round, coming back. Then she jumps out of the car and heads back in the diner, without looking over at STARKS.

EXT. DINER, SMALL TOWN VERMONT, SOME SECONDS LATER

She comes out -- this time PURSE in hand -- and sighs at Starks.

WAITRESS

[As if she owes him an explanation] I forgot my purse.

STARKS nods slowly. The WAITRESS gets in her car and looks again at STARKS in her REARVIEW MIRROR. He has hardly any winter gear on him -- no gloves, no hat, no coat -- just jeans and a flannel. He looks lost among his surroundings, as much because he doesn't know where he is as because he doesn't look like he belongs there.

She reverses towards him.

WAITRESS

In case you hadn't figured, it's
Christmas Eve. You're never gonna get
a cab here.

STARKS

[Beat] Thanks.

She looks him over and then rests her hands on the wheel.

WAITRESS

All right. [Beat] You got somewhere
you need to go, Mister?

STARKS

I'm not sure.

WAITRESS

Let me ask you that again. This time,
look around and consider your
options.

Being cold and freezing are his options.

WAITRESS

[Beat] You got somewhere you need to
go, Mister?

STARKS [Nodding slowly]

Yeah, I do.

WAITRESS

Great, get in.

INT. WAITRESS' CAR

WAITRESS

So, where do you want me to drop you?

STARKS rubs his hand over his chin and cheek as he thinks it
over. She watches him curiously.

STARKS

I'm not sure.

WAITRESS

You don't have anywhere to stay?

STARKS

I don't think so.

The WAITRESS takes out a FLASK and a sizable SWIG from it;
she swallows it smoothly, like someone used to doing so.

WAITRESS

Well, where are you from?

STARKS

I'm not sure. [Beat] I don't really know.

WAITRESS

Of course you don't know.

STARKS

Why "of course"?

WAITRESS

Because in my life, it wouldn't make sense for me to pick up some normal guy with a place where he's from and a place where he's going to. It'd be too simple. I probably wouldn't know how to handle a situation like that.

STARKS

Well, you definitely didn't pick normal or simple this time either.

She looks over at him -- momentarily suspicious. He looks back innocuously; there's something innately safe about him.

WAITRESS

At least you're honest. That's some kind of start.

STARKS sees her take another DRINK from the flask. She pulls out a CIGARETTE, and STARKS lights it for her with some

MATCHES.

WAITRESS

That's great. You're not sure where you're from or where you're going, but at least you've got manners.

She laughs, noticeably more relaxed now after the drink.

WAITRESS

Well, you got a coat or something?

STARKS [Looking down at his clothes]

No. Doesn't look like it.

WAITRESS

Well, how'd you get here?

STARKS

[Beat] I was dropped off.

WAITRESS

Do you have a motel or something? Money?

STARKS feels his pockets.

STARKS

No.

WAITRESS

Well, don't you somewhere? Stuff?
Belongings?

STARKS

No. [Beat] Not around here.

She casts a long sideward glance at STARKS, taking him and her circumstances in for herself. He looks back gently.

WAITRESS

All right, we'll get to my place and call around, see where I can take you. [Beat] Just don't think of trying anything.

(MORE)

WAITRESS (cont'd)

I have the biggest defense for gun control living upstairs from me. She's armed and angry even when she's asleep.

INT. WAITRESS' APARTMENT, EVENING

She is on the PHONE, calling various shelters. Her apartment has some pieces of mismatched furniture, along with a string of lopsided CHRISTMAS LIGHTS strewn around the WINDOWS in the room. They, more than anything else, light the place.

WAITRESS [Pleading tone]

I could have him there in 15 minutes.
[Beat, disappointed] Hmm. Yeah, thanks. Merry Christmas to you, too.

She hangs up the phone.

WAITRESS

Great. That was our last option. What am I going to do with you?

STARKS

Nothing. [Getting up] Thanks for bringing me this far.

WAITRESS

Where are you going? You'll freeze out there. You don't even have a coat.

STARKS

I'll manage.

WAITRESS

No, you won't. You'll die of cold out there and then I'll have to feel guilty. And I've already got more

guilt than I know what to do with.
[Beat] Do you want something to
drink?

STARKS

No, I'm ok.

She leaves to the KITCHEN to fix herself a drink and STARKS stares after her. Suddenly, a SMASHING SOUND is heard as something falls in the kitchen. STARKS' whole BODY TENSES UP as he wonders whether he's being taken out of the Jacket.

WAITRESS

Shit! That was one of my good
glasses!

As she presumably cleans it up, we stay on STARKS who slowly gains hold of himself. She comes back, DRINK in hand and pushes the STRAND OF HAIR in her face back the same way she did when he saw her in the tunnel. Even through her weariness, she looks radiant under the Christmas lights. She takes a long SIP.

WAITRESS [Noticing he's shaken]

Hey, you ok?

STARKS

[Beat] Yeah, I'm fine.

WAITRESS

You know what? It's Christmas Eve.
And you look clean -- I mean, you're
normal-looking. [Resolutely, for her
own benefit] It's Christmas Eve, and
I have a couch.

And sadly, no plans for the evening anyway. She looks back -- her EYES even more tired from the liquor.

STARKS

I'm not gonna hurt you.

WAITRESS [Softly]

I know. [Clearing her throat] I'm
gonna go take a bath. Make yourself
at home. You know, fix yourself
something to eat if you're hungry or
anything. There's nothing to steal,
but don't be a jerk and take
something anyway. And don't snoop,
ok?

STARKS

Ok. [Beat] My name's William by the
way.

WAITRESS [Shakes her head]

No, no. Let's not do the name stuff,
'cause you see, I don't want to meet
you. I may want to help you tonight,

but I don't want to know you. Honest.

STARKS nods as she walks out.

EXT. YARD BEHIND WAITRESS' APARTMENT, EVENING

STARKS, still without a coat, collects some WOOD...

INT. KITCHEN, WAITRESS' APARTMENT, EVENING

STARKS looks in her fridge. There's not much to work with -- just some JARS and plenty of VODKA.

INT. LIVING ROOM, WAITRESS' APARTMENT, SOME TIME LATER

STARKS has lit a FIRE and set out a feeble dinner for them when the WAITRESS comes out of the bedroom in sweats.

WAITRESS

What's this?

STARKS

The best I could do with what was in your fridge.

She looks and sees a SANDWICH on a BUN in one plate and a SANDWICH on two different colors of TOAST on the other.

Then she looks over at the fire; it's obvious from the way she looks at it that it's been years, if ever, since someone's done something like this for her.

STARKS

I only lit it because it was so cold in here. I'm sorry if...

WAITRESS

No, it's fine. [Beat, swallow]
Thanks.

She turns and goes in the kitchen, calling out to him...

WAITRESS

You want a drink?

STARKS

Sure.

INT. KITCHEN, WAITRESS' APARTMENT, NIGHT

As she makes their DRINKS, a curious LOOK crosses her face, just for a second.

INT. LIVING ROOM, WAITRESS' APARTMENT, A LITTLE WHILE LATER

They've sat down to eat under the blinking CHRISTMAS LIGHTS.

WAITRESS

This is pretty good. Considering...

STARKS

Thanks.

They eat quietly for a second. STARKS looks at her, then down at his food, still subtly stunned by it all.

STARKS

So you're a waitress, right? I mean...from the uniform you were wearing.

WAITRESS

Yup. That's me.

STARKS

You like it?

WAITRESS

[Beat] I do it.

STARKS

Have you always been a waitress?

WAITRESS [Remembering sadly]

No. I used to be a nurse.

STARKS

[Beat] Why'd you stop?

WAITRESS

Shit happens, and your life changes. 'Bout the best explanation of a lot of things that happen. [Beat] So how come you don't know where you're coming from?

STARKS

I don't know, but I think part of it's...

STARKS looks around as he decides to be honest with her.

STARKS

That I don't really know what's real.

She stares at him until a small sympathetic smile appears on her lips.

WAITRESS

Well, good for you.

STARKS

[Beat] Why?

WAITRESS

[Beat] Real is overrated.

STARKS smiles back uncertainly.

STARKS

You don't think that's crazy?

WAITRESS

Maybe. [Beat] Maybe not.

She holds up her glass somewhat sadly.

WAITRESS

Sometimes I don't know the difference myself. And, you know something? I think I like it better that way.
[Finishes her drink] You want another one?

She goes to the KITCHEN, and STARKS clears their PLATES.

INT. LIVING ROOM, WAITRESS' APARTMENT

STARKS goes in the KITCHEN as she comes out with their drinks. He hears her turn on the RADIO. She lands on an OLDIES station that's playing "Girl of North Country" by Bob Dylan.

INT. KITCHEN, WAITRESS' APARTMENT, NIGHT

STARKS smiles a little, then realizes he remembers, and likes, the song. It's the first familiar thing for him in days.

He walks out slowly to the living room, where the WAITRESS sits on the couch, drinking. STARKS moves closer to the radio, leaning into it, listening and forgetting, for a short while -- only as long as a piece of song -- everything else.

BOB DYLAN

If you go when the snow flakes storm
When the rivers freeze and summer
ends.
Please see she has a coat so warm
To keep her from the howlin' winds...

STARKS listens close -- smiling a small, sad smile. Over the HARMONICA, we pull back and see two very lonely people passing time together the way people sometimes need to be able to.

STARKS

This is a great song.

WAITRESS

You remember it?

STARKS [Nodding slowly]

It's like I feel like...I know who I am. I just can't remember anything that made me this person.

When STARKS looks at her then, he's so close to a meltdown that it takes him a moment to fight his way out of it.

STARKS

But hey, who can forget those words?
The man just wants simple and good
things for his woman -- that she be
warm and happy. How hard can that be
to remember?

WAITRESS

May be easy to remember, but not easy
to get. Being warm, maybe -- but,
look, you don't even have a coat and
I still have to chop wood to make a
fire. [Beat] And, being happy...you
tell me if that's simple.

The CHRISTMAS LIGHTS flash drowsily to their own tempo.

WAITRESS [re: the lights]

Why don't I try to get them to stop
blinking?

INT. LIVING ROOM, WAITRESS' APARTMENT, AN HOUR OR SO LATER

She is visibly drained, after the day and the drinks.

STARKS

They told me I joined the army when I
was seventeen. That's when my father
died and, before that, it was
apparently just me and him since I
was born 'cause my mom split.

WAITRESS

So you never knew your mother?

STARKS

I guess not. But, as of now, I never
knew either.

WAITRESS

I'm sorry.

STARKS

Yeah. [Beat] How about you?

WAITRESS

Never knew my father. I grew up with
my mother. Actually, I grew up around
my mother. She was great though. I
mean, the way she was with her
friends... She was this woman who had
so much life in her, she had to find
ways to kill some of it just to be
like the rest of us. [Beat] She died
young.

STARKS

How?

WAITRESS

She fucked herself up day after day
and then, one day, she fell asleep
with a burning cigarette. [Beat] I
came home from work and she was gone.

The TEARS still run after all these years.

STARKS

I'm sorry.

WAITRESS

Yeah, me too. [Softly] Every day for
the last ten years.

STARKS

That when you stopped being a nurse?

She is surprised that he gleaned the connection -- and that he'd
been listening so closely.

WAITRESS [Exhausted]

Yeah, that's when I stopped being a
nurse. I never thought I could stop
being one, I wanted it for so long,
but... you just can't do it anymore
when you lose someone like that. You
can't take care of other people.

She closes her eyes and finally passes out. STARKS watches
her face, lit serenely by the FIRE and the Christmas lights.
It bears her grief even in sleep.

He covers her with a BLANKET then looks around and spots the
only PERSONAL EFFECTS in the room on her mantle. He walks
towards them, tripping slightly on a CORD from the LIGHTS. He
stumbles but regains his balance by reaching for the wall.

As he pulls himself up, he spots what is only inches away
from where his hand landed on the wall: HIS OWN DOG TAGS,
given to Jackie, only a couple weeks ago, hanging from a
single NAIL tacked into the wall.

Stunned, he stares at his NAME and BIRTH DATE scored on the
metal. He looks back at the WAITRESS and then to the few
PICTURES on the mantle: they are of JACKIE and her mother,
JEAN. STARKS runs his hand through his hair, trying to
swallow the improbability, and inexplicability, of the
situation.

STARKS' EYES search the room for ANYTHING that could help him
figure out what's happening. On the console is an OLD PAPER
and some MAIL. Totally disoriented, STARKS nearly STUMBLES on
his way to the PILE.

The label on the first BILL reads "Jackie Price." On the
second, the same. And the third...until at the bottom of the
pile, STARKS spots an OLD NEWSPAPER with the answer on its
DATE: December 3, 2004.

STARKS is absolutely stunned.

STARKS looks over at JACKIE and, just then, the HARSH SOUND

of the DRAWER being opened rings deafeningly in his ears and the image of her starts to DISSOLVE at this worst moment. He is being taken out of the JACKET...

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, LATE NIGHT

It's DR. GRIES, racked with guilt, who pulls Starks out...

He winces at the sight of the BLOOD and SWEAT streaked across Starks' face. DR. GRIES checks his pulse and cleans his face as best as he can with a WET TOWEL.

DR. GRIES

William, can you hear me?

His VOICE echoes in the morgue, sounding to Starks, as it does to us, faint and distant. DR. GRIES drips some WATER in Starks' mouth. As some of it trickles out, it runs into the JACKET, burning STARKS' chafed skin.

STARKS' EYES flutter and DR. GRIES pushes the drawer back in, afraid of what they've done to this man...

INT. CADAVER DRAWER

STARKS clenches his face and pleadingly closes his eyes. FIVE SECONDS OF TOTAL BLACKNESS and SILENCE and he's back in...

INT. LIVING ROOM, WAITRESS' (JACKIE'S) APARTMENT, NIGHT

Only now, he's kneeling beside her sleeping FACE, just looking at it. STARKS doesn't know what's going on but her serene, sleeping face steadies him. He can only call out the name he thinks she might respond to...

STARKS

Jackie? Jackie?

Sure enough, she answers with a STIR in her sleep.

JACKIE

Hm...

We see, in STARKS' eyes, the unbelievable connection: she is the same little girl he met only a few weeks ago in 1992.

STARKS [Swallowing, softly]

Jackie? [Beat] What year is it?

JACKIE [In a drunken slumber]

What?

STARKS

What year is it?

JACKIE [Barely opening her eyes]

2004.

STARKS looks around as JACKIE moves in her sleep, almost falling off the couch. STARKS picks her up and, in her sleep,

she WRAPS her arms around his neck.

INT. BEDROOM, JACKIE'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

STARKS tenderly lays her down on the bed...

INT. LIVING ROOM, JACKIE'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

STARKS picks up his DOG TAGS from the console, looks around, spots the TELEVISION and fumbles a bit as he figures out how to turn it on. STARKS sits down, throws back the rest of JACKIE'S DRINK and another shot and looks around nervously, unable to explain what's happening to him...

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM, JACKIE'S APARTMENT, CHRISTMAS MORNING

JACKIE sits in her sleep as she wakes up, clearly hung over.

INT. BATHROOM, JACKIE'S APARTMENT, CHRISTMAS MORNING

As JACKIE closes the MEDICINE CABINET, she sees her hungover reflection in it.

She puts her face under the WATER and lets it restore some color and life in her. As she comes up, that's when she remembers the night before and the voice she barely heard in her sleep.

STARKS [O.S., echoing distantly]
Jackie? [Beat] What year is it?
She SHOOTs UP from the sink, staring at her reflection.

INT. LIVING ROOM, JACKIE'S APARTMENT, SECONDS LATER

JACKIE spots STARKS asleep on the couch -- newspaper strewn all around him and the TV still on. He's holding the TAGS.

She kneels down close to his face and stares at him for awhile before STARKS is jarred. He defensively GRABS HER WRIST as his EYES BURST OPEN, startling her.

JACKIE [Desperately]
Who are you?

STARKS lets his GRIP loosen.

STARKS
[Beat] I'm William Starks.

A short look of SHOCK cross her face before she leaps up.

JACKIE
Get the hell out of my house!

JACKIE grabs the nearest object -- the IRON FORK from the FIREPLACE set -- and holds it, shaking, against STARKS. STARKS stays calm; he hardly expected a different reaction.

JACKIE

What'd you do? Snoop all over the place? You had no right. You had no right to go through anything.

STARKS

[Beat] I know it doesn't make sense. It doesn't even make sense to me.

JACKIE

If you don't get out of my house right now, I'll call the police.

STARKS [Remembering]

Your mom was passed out on the side of the road when I found you. Her name was Jean. [Beat] She was dizzy the whole time...

JACKIE [Trembling]

Why would you do something like this? I tried to help you.

STARKS

Jackie, I'm William Starks. I can prove it.

JACKIE

What? Now you're gonna show me some kind of driver's license?

STARKS

No, I don't have anything to show you. I'm here from a mental hospital.

JACKIE

Well, you belong in one.

STARKS [Solemnly]

[Beat] You and your mom were in a truck and she kept a rifle in the back of it...

JACKIE

Stop it! Stop it!

JACKIE covers her ears and looks at him, pleading with her eyes. STARKS' eyes plead right back.

STARKS

I'm sorry for upsetting you, [beat] but I'm not lying to you.

JACKIE

You can't be William Starks. He's dead.

STARKS

[Beat] What?

JACKIE

William Starks is dead... [Beat] I've been to his grave.

STARKS

[Beat] What?

JACKIE

His body was found New Year's Day, 19...1993. At Alpine...

STARKS [Finishing for her]

Alpine Grove. That's the mental hospital. How do you know that?

JACKIE

I looked it up.

STARKS

How?

Then he remembers -- understanding with a chill that what she is saying could entirely be true.

STARKS

I gave you my dog tags.

JACKIE

No, you didn't. They found William Starks' body dead in the snow.

STARKS

How'd he die?

JACKIE

I don't know. But he did die.

STARKS falters under the news. JACKIE looks around, through her now blurred eyes, like she might find some help in the apartment. She settles for the BOTTLE of VODKA on the table, lowers the iron fork and takes a long heavy drink, then laughs nervously as she looks up.

JACKIE

I know what this is...I picked you up when I was drunk and you probably thought I'm just fucked up enough to fall for this. But the thing is I know what I'm doing when I drink. I just usually don't care. Right now, I do though. And I want you out. Now.

STARKS

It's December 25th, 1993 today.

JACKIE

No, it's not. [Beat] It's December 25th, 2004.

STARKS [Desperate]

That can't be. That's...just, I mean... You're telling me I died in

less than a week in the time I'm in.

JACKIE

I'm telling you I don't care what time you think you're in. You're not William Starks. [Beat] I don't believe in many things, but I believe in death. And it doesn't give back what it takes. So whoever you are...I did a nice thing, you've made me regret it enough already, so please, just leave.

STARKS

I'll leave. But look at me. Look at my face, Jackie. I'm not lying. I met you and your mother. I told you then that I'd lost my memory. [Beat] There was no one for miles around so I know you know there's no way I could have known that from a pair of dog tags you had lying around.

JACKIE

Please...

STARKS looks at her tenderly before he turns to leave. JACKIE, a little calmer, looks at the door like he's still on the other side of it and calls out softly, and sadly...

JACKIE

Happy Birthday.

INT. JACKET/TUNNEL PASSAGE

STARKS looks around him and, we see, from bottom up, the exterior around Jackie's house melt away as STARKS suddenly faces the massacred village in Iraq. Shocked at what's happening to his body, he looks up, petrified. His body is wound as tightly as a knot.

EXT. IRAQI VILLAGE, NIGHT, 1991

Again, we're glimpsing the scene through PHOSPHORESCENT GREEN NIGHT VISION intermittently negotiated with real-time images.

Opposite Starks stands a CRAZED IRAQI SOLDIER -- seething in anger and pointing his gun at a LITTLE BOY, presumably belonging to the MAN not five feet away. Next to Starks is an angry CAPTAIN MEDLEY, ordering STARKS to follow him. STARKS is watching himself in the scene.

MEDLEY

You walk on. They pick up their guns and fire at you, you stay. They pick up and fire at each other, and you walk on!

STARKS

He's got his gun pointed at a kid.

MEDLEY

That is not our problem.

STARKS

Yeah, well, none of this is our
fuckin' problem.

STARKS turns and aims his gun at a CRAZED IRAQI SOLDIER threatening to shoot a child. We hear him YELLING in Arabic.

What STARKS doesn't see is another IRAQI SOLDIER (2) aiming his GUN at STARKS.

MEDLEY

We are leaving this site right now.

STARKS doesn't hear him; he's busy perfecting his aim.

STARKS [To the first Iraqi soldier]

Hey!

At the force of the word, the SOLDIER lowers his gun and the LITTLE BOY flees.

STARKS, who is now in the scene himself, lowers his gun slightly as he approaches the SOLDIER. Neither speaks the other's language but they're both saying everything with their eyes. Neither moves his off the other.

Just then, though, we see the SECOND IRAQI SOLDIER get a clear aim at STARKS.

He takes his SHOT before anyone else does. STARKS goes down as the skin off the side of his head is shaved off.

He falls to the ground. As the rest of the picture fades to black, all that is left is previously mysterious, still haunting PAIR of EYES that we now see belonged to the

CRAZED IRAQI SOLDIER.

And over it all is the now more distant CLANK OF METAL as the drawer is opened and the nightmare momentarily ended...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MORGUE, ALPINE GROVE, CHRISTMAS DAY

DR. GRIES, DR. BECKER, DAMON and NURSE HARDING enter the room.

BECKER

You left him in all night?

NURSE HARDING

Shit, he's probably dead.

DR. GRIES [Defensively]

I tried to ask you if we should leave

him in yesterday...

BECKER

Don't get all worked up, Justin. I expected some common sense on your part and clearly I was expecting too much. [Beat] Just open the drawer.

DR. GRIES

We never should have done this to him...

BECKER

Well, what are we gonna do about it now?

Nothing is Gries' answer. Still, Becker seems to share the concern.

BECKER motions for them to open the drawer. They pull him out. STARKS looks cold and wrecked.

DR. GRIES

Is he? [Impatiently] Is he dead?

BECKER feels for a pulse and seems surprised to find one.

BECKER

No. [To Harding and Damon] Get him upstairs.

INT. WARD, ALPINE GROVE, CHRISTMAS DAY

DR. LORENSON walks into the ward to check on STARKS. The attending NURSE is walking around the ward.

LORENSON

Where's William Starks.

NURSE

I'm not sure. Dr. Becker had him moved.

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, DAY

DR. LORENSON walks anxiously down the halls of the hospital, peering into every room, looking for Starks.

INT. ANOTHER HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, DAY

DR. LORENSON spots BECKER walking out the DOORS of the hospital and RUNS after him, in only his white coat...

EXT. PARKING LOT, ALPINE GROVE, DAY (CONT'D)

LORENSON [Calling out after him]

Dr. Becker! Dr. Becker!...Tom, wait!

DR. BECKER stops walking and waits a moment, registering the voice, before he turns around to face Dr. Lorensen.

LORENSON [Out of breath]
Where's William Starks?

BECKER
He's recovering on the third floor.

STARKS
Are you kidding me? He's not
psychotic!

BECKER
Then how would you describe him,
Beth? Merely rebellious?

LORENSON
He'll be a zombie in a few days, Tom.
His behavior's hardly suggested he
needed neuroleptics.

BECKER
And you know that from what, a couple
two-minute stares across a room?

LORENSON [Firmly]
He didn't need anti-psychotics, if
that's even all you're giving him...?

BECKER ignores Lorensen's insinuation and merely turns his
CHEEK all the way round towards Lorensen so he can see the
BANDAGE from the CUT Starks gave him.

BECKER [Steadily]
After he slashed me with a hospital
instrument, I determined, in my
professional opinion, that Mr.
Starks, needed a little placating.

LORENSON
[Beat] You sure he wasn't provoked?

BECKER
You sure you want to begin making
that kind of insinuation? [Beat] I
took five stitches during a routine
therapy session.

LORENSON
I'm sure he took some, too.

BECKER [Smirking, unphased]
Happens sometimes when you've got to
restrain them. You watch the rest of
us work. You know that.

LORENSON [Appealing to him]
Our patients are sick.

BECKER
Yes, they are.

LORENSON looks at BECKER; he knows he's hiding something.

LORENSON

He's not gonna end up like Casey, Tom. Whatever happened to him is not going to "happen" to Starks. I don't know what you're trying to do here ...but he's not a lab animal, Tom. You can't reprogram him no matter the drugs or the treatment.

BECKER

Jesus, you really don't let up, do you? Just because you failed your patient doesn't necessarily mean the rest of us did, too. [Beat] Sorry to tarnish your war hero's image, but he is psychotic.

LORENSON looks back, starting to grasp Becker's misshapen beliefs.

BECKER

Now, if you'll excuse me, it's Christmas, and I have a family I'd like to see.

INT. ROOM, INTENSIVE CARE UNIT, ALPINE GROVE, CHRISTMAS DAY

STARKS, IV in arm, lies asleep in bed, recovering...

INT. HOSPITAL, VERMONT

JACKIE walks in a hospital -- with many aspects parallel to the mental hospital. White on white and, for Jackie particularly, the presence of painful memories.

INT. ROOM, INTENSIVE CARE UNIT, ALPINE GROVE, CHRISTMAS DAY

LORENSON walks closer to STARKS and carefully examines the BRUISES and BURNS on a body that's been badly beaten. His eyes bear his guilt.

INT. NURSE'S STATION, HOSPITAL, VERMONT

JACKIE waits until a nurse, CLAIRE, greets her perfunctorily.

CLAIRE [Not looking up]

How can I help you?

JACKIE

Hi, Claire.

CLAIRE looks up, astonished to see her. She smiles warmly.

CLAIRE

Jackie, hi. How are you, honey?

JACKIE

I'm ok. [Beat] I need a favor.

CUT TO:

INT. STARKS' HOSPITAL ROOM

STARKS is asleep when a DARK FIGURE walks, like a GHOST, past the WINDOWED DOOR of his room. STARKS opens his eyes and snaps his neck in its direction -- fearful of everything at this point. When he looks, there's nothing there; he's not sure there ever was. The room starts to blue as he looks around it, not knowing if he is crazy...

RETURN TO:

INT. OFFICE, HOSPITAL, VERMONT

JACKIE peruses HEADLINES and ABSTRACTS pulled up on the web:

"ALPINE GROVE INVESTIGATION into the mysterious death of William Starks..."

"The body of WILLIAM STARKS, the former war hero who was charged with the murder of OFFICER EDWARD HARRISON, was found on the grounds of ALPINE GROVE on January 1, 1993. STARKS was believed to have died from a wound to the head."

The words and PHRASES that confirm Starks' story RISE from their couched places on the computer screen.

"Local Doctor charged with medical malpractice." "Dr. Thomas Becker resigns..." "It involved the recreation of a womb-like environment." "Former patients testify to being put in instrument known as the 'Jacket'..." "Patient Rudy MacKenzie testifies..."

"WILLIAM STARKS, laurelled war hero..."

As JACKIE keeps scrolling, her face wears her disbelief that what STARKS was saying may have been true. Then, she sees, archived in a state newspaper, a mention of Dr. Lorenson and a particular patient, "Eugene Yazdi."

"Local Boy, Eugene Yazdi, Overcomes Absence Seizure Syndrome to Win Mathematic Decathlon...with the aid of Local Doctor, Dr. Loel Lorenson." "Panelists for National Epilepsy Conference include Dr. Lorenson, Alpine Grove Hospital."

INT. STARKS' HOSPITAL ROOM, DECEMBER 26TH

A NURSE is checking on STARKS as he slowly wakes up.

STARKS

What the hell kind of drugs are you people giving me?

STARKS is asking the NURSE, but it's BECKER's voice that answers though Starks can't see him.

BECKER [O.S.]
Just something to help you sleep.

STARKS panics when he hears the voice. He looks around nervously but the BRIGHT SUNLIGHT pouring into the room is blinding. He swallows as he looks at the NURSE'S FACE as she continues adjusting his pillows.

STARKS [Swallowing nervously]
Did you say something?

The NURSE shakes her head lightly and just then BECKER steps out of the LIGHT.

BECKER
I said the drugs were to help you sleep. [Beat] Did you sleep well?

Becker is remarkably calm, further confusing Starks' sense of reality.

STARKS [Doubtfully]
But I wasn't asleep. Was I?

BECKER
Yes. You were. You were asleep for nearly a whole day. It's December 26th, William.

STARKS sits up groggily, remembering what happened to him and wondering how much, if any of it, was real.

STARKS
It's December 26th?

STARKS examines himself -- looking at his arms, spotting the BRUISES on them.

BECKER
That's right, William.

STARKS [Slowly figuring it out]
1992?

BECKER nods. STARKS sits up -- his predicament and the room slowly coming into focus.

BECKER
Yes. [Caustically] And that's the sun and you're on earth. [Beat] And I know you know better.

STARKS begins to piece it together. BECKER, as we begin to see, is right. It is 1992 in Alpine Grove.

STARKS
I don't know better. All I know is that you left me in there.

BECKER

In where?

STARKS

[Uncertainly] In that thing...the Jacket.

The NURSE gives Becker a knowing look -- suggesting Starks really is delusional. Becker doesn't even flinch as STARKS tries to get a better look at Becker's face.

BECKER

We were forced to use restrains if that's what you're referring to.

STARKS

That wasn't a fucking restraint.

BECKER

Actually, that's exactly what our equipment is.

STARKS' EYES widen with alarm as BECKER reaches for the I.V. in his arm, lingering on it long enough that Starks braces himself for an ATTACK of some sort. But Becker just looks back innocently as he adjusts it.

BECKER

Relax.

STARKS

Don't act like I don't know what's real. [Beat] I'm not the one that's crazy here.

BECKER

[Pointedly] Of course you're not.

Then he clarifies, wryly enough for Starks to catch it.

BECKER

You're just suffering from delusions that are unfortunately part of your condition.

STARKS

Don't give me that. I know what's real, goddamnit! You strapped me in something and stuck me in a drawer.

BECKER nods diagnostically. The NURSE's nonchalance about it as she LEAVES the room further disquiets STARKS.

STARKS

I didn't dream it. I may have been asleep but it wasn't a dream.

BECKER sits down in a CHAIR, half-shrouded in the light.

BECKER

I had a patient a few years ago. His name was Ted Casey...

STARKS

I don't give a shit about your patient!

BECKER

I wasn't pausing to see if you did.
[Beat] But, incidentally, you should, because you're birds of a feather.

STARKS squints as he searches out Becker's face.

BECKER

Ted raped and sodomized a seven-year old girl. [Beat] His lawyers asked me to have a look at him because, after his deeds were done... he climbed into the trees of the forest where he killed her and woofed like a dog. He couldn't even remember his name when I spoke to him, but, curiously enough, he could speak back. [Beat] Ted never went to prison because everyone -- including me -- was convinced he was sick. So he came here.

BECKER leans into Starks' view to make sure he's listening. STARKS is.

BECKER

Then one day a little girl came with her mother to visit a relative and I caught Ted stealing looks at her -- the kind you really have to steal if you know what I mean. [Beat] I asked Ted then if he could remember what the little girl who he had... slain ...was wearing. [Beat] He gave me a look I'll never forget, and, when he answered, it wasn't with a color or any sort of physical description I'd expect. "Oh yes," he said. "I remember it. I remember it well." [Beat] Those were actually his last words I think.

BECKER's expression bears a hunting mixture of anger and remorse as he recounts Ted's tale.

STARKS

We are not birds of a feather.

BECKER

Maybe not. [Beat] But I do think you're in a tree... woofing like a dog. And I'm just trying to help you the only way I can think of.

BECKER gets up and, as he moves out of the light, STARKS sees his BANDAGED CHEEK, reinforcing his memory of what

happened...

STARKS [Provokingly]
What happened to your cheek, Dr.
Becker?

BECKER
I was careless. Happens sometimes.

FADE TO:

INT. STARKS' ROOM, RECOVERY WARD, ALPINE GROVE, DAY, 1992

STARKS looks out on the SNOW-COVERED GROUNDS from his room on the third floor. He seems pacified for the moment.

INT. HALLWAY, RECOVERY WARD, ALPINE GROVE, DAY

Everything about the dingy hospital punctuates the sad mechanics of managing madness. CATATONIC PATIENTS and dated equipment litter the hall and, as we follow a NURSE who walks among them, we spot STARKS -- ARMS suspended in air and GLAZED EYES fixed on the ceiling -- pretending to be one of them.

His ARMS fall and he wipes his dried MOUTH as soon as she passes. STARKS has successfully made it out of his room. She turns one corner as STARKS hustles to turn another...

INT. DAY ROOM, ALPINE GROVE

STARKS is almost there. As RANDOM ORDERLIES pass him, STARKS lets his posture collapse as he despondently hangs his head down so low they can't see his face. They pass, and STARKS starts scuttling towards the door to the outside.

As soon as he reaches it and is outside in the cold -- with only his BLUE PATIENT UNIFORM -- Starks walks normally, like he no longer remembers the risks. Instead he remembers what Jackie told him.

JACKIE [O.S.]
They found William Starks' body dead
in the snow.

STARKS [O.S.]
How'd he die?

JACKIE [O.S.]
I don't know. But he did die.

EXT. GROUNDS, ALPINE GROVE

STARKS leans down -- seemingly oblivious to the cold -- and lifts some snow to his mouth, TASTING it like a man who needs to affirm he is still alive. He's so rapt that LORENSON'S VOICE takes him by surprise.

LORENSON
Hey. You're not supposed to be out
here.

STARKS stiffens as he realizes he could be in the place where his body was found. The terrible question asks itself on his face: Is this when Starks is killed?

STARKS [Turning around sharply]
What are you going to do to me?

LORENSON
Well...

As LORENSON reaches into his POCKET for something, STARKS anxiously holds his breath. It's BLACK when it comes out and... a SKI HAT when it opens up. STARKS lets out his breath, relieved.

LORENSON [Nonchalantly]
I thought I'd just ask you to come back inside with me.

STARKS
And if I didn't want to come?

LORENSON
I guess I'd ask you why.

STARKS
Because I don't think I'm crazy.

LORENSON
You're not crazy.

STARKS is surprised by Lorensen's agreement.

LORENSON
You suffer from delusional disorder. That doesn't mean you're... crazy. It just means you're confused. And you're here, instead of in jail, because that was determined to have played a role in your killing of a police officer.

STARKS [Correcting him]
Alleged killing of a police officer.

LORENSON
You were convicted of the crime.

STARKS
That conviction doesn't convince me of anything. Until I know that I did it, I'm not going to accept that I did.

LORENSON
You may never remember at all. [Beat] Your mind's grasp of reality and the real events that have happened to you has been damaged.

STARKS

No. The real events that have happened to me have been fucked up. Not my mind.

LORENSON seems to realize -- at least for an instant -- that he is looking at a desperate man who is persuasively, and cogently, staring back at him.

STARKS

[Beat] William, I'd like to ask you something if I can.

STARKS

Since when do people around here have to ask permission to do anything?

LORENSON [Suspiciously]

How's your treatment progressing with Dr. Becker?

STARKS still doesn't know how much Lorensen knows, and if he should trust him.

STARKS

Fine. [Beat] Why made you ask?

LORENSON answers first with his eyes looking over Starks' body. STARKS merely stares back tersely.

LORENSON [Carefully]

I just hope you'd let me know if that wasn't the case.

STARKS

Why, what would you do?

STARKS

I could try to...make it stop.

STARKS

No. I don't want it to.

LORENSON

So it's helping?

STARKS [Choosing his words carefully]

[Beat] It's making me feel like a different person.

LORENSON -- sensing she's not going to get any more from Starks -- turns around to go back inside. It's only as she turns her face away from STARKS that we see how nervous she is. But you'd never guess it from her tone...

LORENSON [Casually]

You comin'?

STARKS looks towards the FENCES locking him in from every direction. LORENSON waits until she hears STARKS' FOOTSTEPS

following her. She waits until STARKS has reached her.

LORENSON

You should be careful. You could be killed if they found you out here.

STARKS

Believe me, I know.

INT. PATIENT CAFETERIA, WARD, ALPINE GROVE, 1992

STARKS and MACKENZIE are eating opposite each other.

STARKS

What were you talking about the other day?

MACKENZIE

I wasn't talking about anything.

STARKS

Yeah, you were. What you said about them taking me out to the woods...

MACKENZIE clams up slightly at the mention of it...

STARKS

What do you know about the Jacket?

MACKENZIE's eyes start to twitch nervously.

MACKENZIE

I know you need one when it's really cold.

STARKS

[Cutting in] MacKenzie, listen to me. Listen. I'm going to die.

MACKENZIE

Mortality's actually a great thing to be familiar with. It means you're sane on some level.

STARKS

[Gravely] No, I mean in four days, I'm supposed to die.

MACKENZIE

[Beat] How do you know?

STARKS

The Jacket.

MACKENZIE grows visibly more nervous at this second mention of it.

MACKENZIE

Oh no, you're pretty young. Your body'll be able to handle a lot more

of it than you think...

STARKS

No. [Beat] I mean I found out while I was in it that my body's gonna be found in four days.

Just then, NURSE HARDING is upon them. She carries a ROD in her hand which she TAPS menacingly on the floor as she walks towards them.

HARDING

What are you two yappin' about?

STARKS tenses up as he sees only the ROD, which could inflict a GASH if hit across a man's head the right way. Nearly every object could be a threat to his life as this point.

MACKENZIE [Spoken like a nut]

[Beat] We're talking about our ability to go forward in time, to go into the future. [To Starks] That is what we're talking about here, right?

STARKS is startled MacKenzie gets it.

STARKS

Yeah, it is.

HARDING

You know something? You're two fucking freaks is what you are.

STARKS [Smiling]

Well, no shit, Einstein. What do you think we're doing in this place?

MACKENZIE tries not to laugh but a CHUCKLE slips out.

HARDING

I want the two of you to shut the fuck up and eat your food.

HARDING walks away with a final stare that Starks returns.

STARKS [Under his breath]

I gotta get back in it, MacKenzie.

MACKENZIE

It's gonna be sticky.

STARKS

Why?

MACKENZIE's body betrays his discomfort talking about it in its sudden jerks accompanying every word.

MACKENZIE

'Cause Lorenson's got her claws in it

now. When she started getting suspicious about me was when they stopped using it on me. Women!

STARKS

So what am I supposed to do?

MACKENZIE

You could still always give Becker an itch. 'Course you might get killed when he goes to scratch it, but seems to me you're saying that's about to happen anyway. [Beat] Just be careful not to walk yourself right into something.

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, 1992, DAY

Dr. LORENSON and DR. GRIES are walking briskly to a meeting.

DR. GRIES

We're late.

LORENSON

I wish they'd skip the formality of this annual review and just cut our budget. Our silence on the matter should be enough to appease the civic conscience without wasting an hour we don't have.

DR. GRIES

Maybe it's not such a waste.

LORENSON looks at GRIES askance before she sets the record straight.

LORENSON

It's the ticking of a box on a sheet of paper no one cares about.

DR. GRIES

They don't care about all the things we do right. [Beat] But they might ...they might care about what we're doing wrong. [Beat] That's what they should come here to look for.

LORENSON can see GRIES is trying to tell her something.

LORENSON

What should they be looking for?

DR. GRIES

They should just be looking harder.

LORENSON grabs GRIES' arm, sensing the import of her words.

LORENSON

Where? [Beat] It's Becker isn't it?

He's doing stuff, isn't he?

DR. GRIES

Later. I'll tell you about it later.
We got a session to catch now.

INT. WARD 3, ALPINE GROVE, 1992, DAY

STARKS is in a different ward with PATIENTS who appear more threatening and disturbed. As he is anxiously looking around -- presumably for a way out -- Starks hears one of the PATIENTS humming an eerily DISCORDANT MELODY. Looking to see who it comes from, STARKS happens to spot ONE PATIENT -- a young, fierce-looking guy -- eyeing a YOUNG NURSE, SALLY, administering medication from a dated CART.

STARKS looks around the room and notes there are NO DOCTORS or ORDERLIES around. The YOUNG NURSE, meanwhile, is focused on the medicine -- oblivious to the BRUTE eyeing her.

The BRUTE's not that far away when he starts walking towards the YOUNG NURSE. STARKS starts in their direction, picking up speed -- maneuvering through VARIOUS INCOHERENT PATIENTS -- as the BRUTE reaches the NURSE.

He throws her TRAY down and pushes her against the WALL. She starts screaming as he pushes up against her. STARKS picks up the TRAY and strikes the BRUTE across the head with it.

The BRUTE holds his head in pain as he tries to regain his balance. It's clear he's impaired. But it's also clear he understands pain.

STARKS [To Sally]

You ok?

As she NODS, her EYES dart above to the HAND about to strike him. Off her look, he ducks and turns around, punching the BRUTE in the stomach -- HARD -- but not before the piece of GLASS he held from one of the broken MEDICINE BOTTLES comes perilously close to STARKS' head.

The BRUTE bowls over and STARKS looks at the GLASS terrified. Is this when he dies?

The BRUTE -- incensed more than ever -- lunges at him a final time. STARKS gets him by the NECK, expertly applying PRESSURE POINTS and, after only a few seconds, subdues him. STARKS himself seems surprised that he knew how to use them. He lets out a suspended BREATH, instinctively touching his FOREHEAD to make sure he's not cut. He looks back at SALLY.

SALLY

Are you ok?

STARKS

Yeah, Why are you in this ward alone?
Where is everyone?

SALLY [Defensively]

There's a state rep visiting so they've moved everyone around. But I've been alone before...

STARKS

Where are the other orderlies?

SALLY

In the therapy session downstairs. That's what the rep's sitting in on...

STARKS

Ok, listen. I want you to get out of here and lock the door behind you. I'll go get some doctors.

SALLY looks at STARKS, wondering whether she can trust him. Her eyes shift to the BRUTE on the floor and she remembers that she can.

INT. MAIN ROOM, WARD, ALPINE GROVE, DAY, 1992

The STATE REP -- 40s, disgruntled, even drowsy -- is recognizable among a group that includes the CHIEF OF STAFF (Dr. Williams), BECKER, LORENSON and GRIES. They are presiding over a GROUP THERAPY SESSION when STARKS enters...

STARKS [Calling out]

Sorry I'm late, Dr. Becker.

BECKER is noticeably taken aback but tempers his response.

BECKER

Mr. Starks, this session is for our civil patients. Damon, please take Mr. Starks back to his ward.

STARKS cuts him off and threatens with his gaze.

STARKS [Derisively]

No. Please, Dr. Becker. You can strap me in a Jacket or even gag me, but please don't leave me out of therapy. This is where I feel like I make the most progress.

BECKER relents, seeing STARKS has the upper hand -- an AUDIENCE, deranged but eager no less.

BECKER

Fine, Mr. Starks. You can pull up a chair for yourself.

As STARKS walks across the room, it's obvious to everyone -- as they turn their heads to watch him -- that he is a physically ailing man. Using all his strength, he walks up slowly to the group, dragging a CHAIR behind him because he doesn't have the strength to lift it. STARKS sits down.

BECKER

Mr. Jensen, please continue.

JENSEN -- a twitchy schizophrenic -- surveys the group seriously, determining whether it's safe to say what he's about to...

JENSEN

Well, [beat] I've been approached by the Federal Trade Organization.

BECKER's not listening to a word JENSEN says. But STARKS is.

BECKER [Calm as ever]

And what have they approached you about, Mr. Jensen?

JENSEN

They want me to head the Organization for the Organized.

The other PATIENTS look at him in wonder as the STATE REP listens limply.

BECKER

The Organization...for the Organized?

JENSEN

That's right. Have you heard of them?

BECKER

No, Mr. Jensen. I have not.

GROUP PATIENT 2

That's because there is no such Organization, you idiot.

JENSEN

That is categorically not true. Bl-bl-bl-
blatantly and manifestly NOT TRUE.
I've been asked to lead them. But, if
you'd heard of them, then they
wouldn't be hush-hush, would they?

BECKER [Wearily]

What do the rest of you think?

The GROUP stares at one another silently.

STARKS [Loud and emphatic]

Well, [beat] I know they exist.

BECKER

And how is that?

STARKS looks at JENSEN, who looks back avidly. MACKENZIE eyes Starks nervously, like he senses what he is about to do.

STARKS

When I was in the Gulf, the
Organization was recruiting the

Organized.

BECKER [Incensed]
Is that a fact, Mr. Starks? Because
if it's not, it doesn't help Mr.
Jensen.

STARKS [Looking right at Jensen]
It is a fact. Bona fide, and
classified.

LORENSON and MACKENZIE watch STARKS curiously.

JENSEN
I knew it! I knew it! Those little
fuckers are everywhere.

STARKS
They recruit only the best, Mr.
Jensen. [Beat] I didn't want to have
to say this...

Not even the DOCTORS dare disrupt the silence...

STARKS
But these people [pointing to the
Doctors] know about it. In fact, when
Presidents of this country and heads
of state leave office, they come
here, to Alpine Grove. They're among
us right now! [Looking right at
Becker] Isn't that right, Dr.
Thatcher? And Jensen, I'm proud they
picked you.

JENSEN looks on nobly.

STARKS
They're always ordering us to stay
calm, but how can we be calm?

STARKS suddenly turns right at Becker, wrapping his message
to him in the seemingly crazed theatrics of a nut.

STARKS
[Looking suddenly directly at Becker]
All they do is give orders. That's
all they have to do. And no one will
ever know. All it comes down to is an
order. [Beat] They've got hands
everywhere.

STARKS stands up, ready to SALUTE Mr. Jensen. The OBSERVERS
look to BECKER for order.

STARKS
Long live the Organization for the
Organized!

BECKER

Sit down, Mr. Starks! Sit down, Mr.
Starks!

But, at that, Jensen's completely lost it. His excitement erupts in the form of him JUMPING out of his chair and eagerly and elatedly HITTING HIMSELF in the head.

BECKER

Sit down, Mr. Jensen!

Too late. OTHER PATIENTS are on their feet, HANDS jubilantly up in the air. And, in the midst of the havoc, the speechless order is soundly delivered in Becker's NOD to Damon.

RANDOM PATIENTS

Dr. Thatcher! Dr. Becker!

DAMON and HARDING grab STARKS while the other members of the STAFF slowly calm the other patients. LORENSON is too busy to notice them taking Starks out. STARKS winks at MACKENZIE, who smiles somewhat sadly back.

CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, LATE NIGHT, 1992

HARDING and DAMON stand above Starks, who lies on the brutal slab, already hemmed in the Jacket.

DAMON

Starks, you're like a mule. You're real stubborn. But there's ways of fixin' that. All you need is a good stick. [Beat] Here's your stick.

DAMON slams him in the drawer.

INT. JACKET/TUNNEL PASSAGE

STARKS' eyes dart about him; it sounds like something is in there with him. The sound stops momentarily and, then, out of nowhere, a DROP falls on his eye. PING! STARKS winces. He clenches his face, not knowing when the next drop will fall. His heart starts to beat more and more madly, punctuated by the DRIPS -- making a score fit only for hell. He closes his eyes and begins to die...

EXT. CRIME SCENE, HIGHWAY, VERMONT, DUSK, 1992

STARKS and TENNY -- 30s, shifty, a total stranger -- sit in silence in TENNY'S CAR. (We recognize the murder scene.) RED POLICE LIGHTS FLASH in the rearview mirror though STARKS doesn't see them yet.

STARKS and TENNY are talking to one another. TENNY's voice takes a dangerous tone.

TENNY

You ever been to jail?

STARKS

No.

TENNY nods, distracting STARKS long enough to slip a hand down his leg to the GUN he's hidden there.

TENNY

It's worse than war. It's worse than anywhere you've ever been.

STARKS

I doubt it. [Beat] I don't think prison's so bad you don't want to remember it...

TENNY carefully pulls over to the side of the road, assured and cautious with each word, each move.

TENNY

Well, I've never been to war, but I'm sure as hell not going back to prison.

STARKS [Finally spotting Harrison]

What's he pulling us over for?

TENNY [Still preparing himself]

Recreation.

OFFICER HARRISON walks up to their car.

OFFICER HARRISON

Gentlemen, I'm gonna need you to step out of the car, with your hands at your side please.

STARKS

Why?

OFFICER HARRISON [Sternly]

Step out of the car.

STARKS

Ok, sir. I was just asking what for.

OFFICER HARRISON

This is a stolen vehicle you're driving. Now put your hands in the air, out where I can see 'em.

That's the second when OFFICER HARRISON sees where TENNY'S HAND is. As he reaches for his own GUN, the situation explodes as TWO FLASHES eclipse all else. OFFICER HARRISON goes down, still holding his own GUN and STARKS jumps out of the car to check on him.

STARKS

Jesus Christ, what'd you do that for?

TENNY looks around, still holding the GUN. Starks swallows, assessing whether to back away or not. TENNY waves his gun as he half points it in Harrison's direction. Then, GUN still in hand, he smirks nervously and looks at STARKS.

TENNY

Man, if you're so deaf and dumb, you ain't even worth a fucking bullet.

TENNY raises the gun, then aims it away from STARKS and shoots OFFICER HARRISON once more. From the ground, OFFICER HARRISON fires back and STARKS, now lunging at Tenny, TAKES THE HIT.

STARKS falls, clearly unable to get up, let alone pursue anyone. TENNY smiles sardonically and slowly puts the GUN in his back pocket as he turns to leave. This SMILE was one of the eerie FLASHES that haunted Starks in the JACKET...

STARKS struggles but can't move. That's when he passes out, looking at OFFICER HARRISON from the ground, as he did in the scene before.

INT. JACKET/TUNNEL PASSAGE

STARKS stands in the lighted tunnel, which only gets brighter as his heart races with fear in the first seconds that he's back in there. Then he sees an IMAGE of a WOMAN'S FOREHEAD that lulls him to a calm until his heart slows and the LIGHT gradually dims...

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. DINER, SMALL TOWN VERMONT, 2004

STARKS enters the diner, calming down even more as he spots JACKIE. She looks up, holding PLATES in her hand. She's understandably surprised and unexpectedly pleased when she sees him. She greets him with a small smile.

She drops off her orders and then walks up to him.

JACKIE

I'll be off in 15 minutes. Can you wait till then?

EXT. RAVINE, VERMONT, DAY, 2004

STARKS and JACKIE smoke in the cold, standing next to the hood of her car.

JACKIE

The Jacket. That's what they call it, right?

STARKS

Yeah.

JACKIE

It was banned, you know... and it led to an investigation of Dr. Becker's mistreatment of some of his patients. That's when they found out how badly he was drugging his patients...

STARKS [Starting to make sense]
So he was giving me all kinds of drugs...

JACKIE [Nodding]
Apparently. He was taking a lot of them, too. It said he was trying out behavior modification treatments that were banned back in the 70s -- "womb treatment" is the name he gave to what he did to you...

STARKS [Cutting in]
Womb? A fuckin' womb? What kind of animal did he come out of?

JACKIE
But no one knew until after...

STARKS
After I...

JACKIE nods.

JACKIE
[Beat] You bled to death.

STARKS
What?

JACKIE
I don't know how you got the cut to your head, but you died bleeding from it.

STARKS [Digesting]
And you're sure my body was found on January 1st?

JACKIE nods.

STARKS
Do you really believe me?

JACKIE
I don't know. [Beat] I thought I was crazy after you left that day. I died. I still think I could be crazy. But then I replayed that night in my head -- the parts of it I could remember -- and it was like...I don't care if I was, or am. I haven't felt that way in a room with someone my whole life. [Beat] And when you left, all I

wanted was...

JACKIE looks around her; coupled with the cold, her sobriety is obvious. STARKS takes hold of her and holds her face close to his so that their foreheads touch.

JACKIE

[Softly] I want to trust you. Should I trust you?

STARKS

Yes.

JACKIE

Then we need to figure out what happened to you. It's the only thing we can do.

STARKS

I know.

JACKIE

Alpine Grove still exists. I looked it up on the net. We should go there and see if there's still anyone around who might have known what happened to you.

STARKS

If they don't take me out before then. [As an afterthought] What's the net?

JACKIE looks at him and laughs.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR, 2004, DAY

They are driving through VERMONT to ALPINE GROVE. STARKS looks out the window and watches her drive.

STARKS

I didn't kill Officer Harrison.

JACKIE

I know.

STARKS

How? Did they figure it out after I died?

JACKIE

No. They never figured it out. I did. Most murderers don't stop to help a drunk woman and her little girl on the side of the road. Not without hurting them.

INT. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE, ALPINE GROVE, 2004

STARKS and JACKIE sit opposite DR. MORGAN, the current young

face of the hospital. MORGAN has a boyish face and a matching gullibility.

DR. MORGAN

I'm sorry I can't tell you more about your father's death, Mr. Starks. Our own medical examiners determined only that he died from a blunt trauma to the head but that was right around the time the Alpine Grove's staff changed and I'm afraid we didn't have the best record system before then.

STARKS

His body was found on January 1, 1993, but do you know if that was long after he had died?

DR. MORGAN

No, I don't. I'm sorry. I wish I knew more.

STARKS

What about Dr. Thomas Becker or Dr. Loel Lorenson? There was also a Dr. Gries, I think.

DR. MORGAN

Well, Dr. Lorenson is still here at the hospital. If she was here at the time your father was, then I'm sure she'd be of more help to you.

STARKS

What about Dr. Becker and Mr. Gries?

DR. MORGAN

Unfortunately, I'm not familiar with Dr. Becker and Dr. Gries passed away three, four years ago.

JACKIE

Do you have any kind of forwarding address for Dr. Becker?

DR. MORGAN

Your father was here 12 years ago. I doubt the hospital would have that, if Dr. Becker is still even alive. [Beat, a little suspiciously] Is there a particular reason you need to know how your father died?

STARKS doesn't waver when he answers.

STARKS

He was the only family I remember.

DR. MORGAN [Nodding]

I'll see what I can find out about

Dr. Becker. And maybe Dr. Lorenson
will know something.

INT. WARD, ALPINE GROVE, DAY, 2004

Dr. MORGAN leads JACKIE and STARKS through a ward. STARKS looks around in disbelief; it's more like a hospital now than it ever was in 1993.

INT. RECEPTION AREA, LORENSON'S OFFICE, ALPINE GROVE, 2004

As they arrive outside Lorenson's office, MORGAN turns to them.

DR. MORGAN

Let me just tell her we're here.

DR. MORGAN goes inside and JACKIE takes STARKS' HAND as they wait. It's hardly more than a couple seconds when LORENSON appears in the doorway. She looks at STARKS curiously and the two share a very lengthy, intense STARE.

DR. LORENSON -- now in her 50s -- walks closer to Starks suspiciously. For his part, STARKS doesn't look as unfamiliar with Lorenson as he should; this doesn't escape Lorenson.

LORENSON

Hello. I'm Beth Lorenson.

She puts out a hand that is trembling slightly.

LORENSON

It's nice to meet you, Mr. Starks...

STARKS hesitates before he takes Lorenson's hand. There is something very eerie about the exchange. STARKS quickly lets go and LORENSON turns to JACKIE...

LORENSON

And you are...?

JACKIE looks back uncomfortably.

JACKIE

I'm just William's friend.

LORENSON looks over both of them acutely and then calmly turns to Dr. Morgan.

LORENSON

I think we'll be fine from here.
Thanks, Stanley.

INT. LORENSON'S OFFICE, ALPINE GROVE, 2004

LORENSON leans against her desk while STARKS and JACKIE sit in the chairs. As they talk, each seems cautious in his exchange -- not knowing what the other one does or doesn't know.

LORENSON

My God you look exactly like him.

STARKS

I never knew my father. Did you?

LORENSON

Yeah, I did. [Beat] He was my most memorable patient.

STARKS

Why?

LORENSON considers her answer.

LORENSON

At the end, he made me change my mind about a lot of things.

STARKS

You thought my father was crazy?

STARKS

No. I don't think he was crazy. He needed help...but he wasn't crazy. [Beat] Your father actually helped me with a case of mine.

LORENSON waits to see if STARKS knows what she is talking about.

STARKS

What case?

LORENSON

I was working with a boy named Eugene.

STARKS shows no recognition but JACKIE does.

JACKIE

Who was Eugene?

LORENSON [Peaked]

He was a friend's son. [Beat] Are you familiar with the case?

JACKIE

Just a little, when we were looking up information about William's father. How did he help?

LORENSON

It's complicated, but [looking at Starks] in a way, your father let me know how I'd get through to him.

JACKIE

How?

LORENSON

He just said...that I'd shock Eugene
and then things would change for him.

JACKIE

I don't understand.

LORENSON

I still don't either, even after all
these years.

STARKS

Do you know how my father died?

LORENSON [Unconvincingly]

I don't know how much I remember but
I seem to think it was from a... cut or
blow of some sort or another.

STARKS

How'd he get it?

STARKS

[Beat] I don't know.

STARKS

But Dr. Morgan said you were around
when my father was...

LORENSON

I was. But I saw a lot of cuts and a
lot of blows. I'm sorry I don't know
more about your father's. [Sincerely]
I didn't know about everything that
went on here.

LORENSON says it like she's hiding something.

STARKS

Well, do you think Dr. Becker would
have any idea?

LORENSON

How do you know about Dr. Becker?

STARKS

My dad wrote some things down before
he died.

LORENSON looks like she's suddenly remembering something.

LORENSON

That's right. He did.

STARKS looks at Lorensen curiously; he doesn't know what
Lorensen is talking about.

LORENSON

So maybe Dr. Becker would know.

[Beat] But, as I'm sure you know, the statute of limitations has run out for charging the hospital with any liabilities.

STARKS

Why would we do that?

STARKS just stares at LORENSON, not knowing if he died by this man's hands or not, not knowing who he can trust...

JACKIE

Because Becker resigned after the charges brought against him by State Patient Advocacy Groups.

LORENSON

I see you've done your homework.
[Beat] Alpine Grove's undergone a lot of changes since then. At the time, we didn't have the...resources to help our patients the way we needed to. [Beat] Now, we do. And things are different.

STARKS

I wouldn't be so sure. Like you said about back then, you might not know everything going on around here.

DR. LORENSON looks right at STARKS.

LORENSON

It's important for you to know who your father was, isn't it?

STARKS

[Beat] Yeah, it is.

LORENSON [Eerily]

It's almost as if your life depended on it. Isn't it?

STARKS

Exactly.

LORENSON

Well... [beat] let me know how your search turns out.

STARKS

[Beat] We will.

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, DAY

STARKS and JACKIE walk briskly down it, away from Lorensen's office.

STARKS

I don't believe a thing she just

said.

JACKIE

Me neither. Who was the boy she was talking about, Eugene?

STARKS

I have no idea.

JACKIE

You think Lorensen kills you?

STARKS

Maybe. I don't know. Seems more likely Becker does, but at the very least she knows how I died.

JACKIE

Let's see if they have an address for Becker. I also want to figure out more about the kid you helped her with.

STARKS

Why?

JACKIE

Because that's the part I believe is true. You probably did help her somehow with the boy and Eugene's name did come up over and over again on the abstracts I pulled.

STARKS nods.

STARKS

[Beat] There's one more thing I want to see.

INT. CORRIDOR [LEADING TO BASEMENT], ALPINE GROVE, 2004

STARKS, determined, now leads JACKIE. As they reach the end of the hall, we see DAMON -- now in his 50s -- look after them curiously before he goes back to his work with a PATIENT.

INT. BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, 2004

JACKIE watches STARKS ignore the "Authorized Personnel Only" SIGN as he pushes the door open without so much as a pause.

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, 2004

The morgue looks exactly as before.

STARKS is momentarily jarred in the room. He looks to the wall on which the JACKET hung and sees only the BARE HOOKS that used to hold it up.

STARKS

This was the room. They used to hang

the Jacket there. [Turning to Jackie]
This is where it happened. This is
the room I'm actually in right now.

JACKIE isn't doubtful, but it's also hard to be
convinced...

STARKS

I can show you. It's probably in
there.

STARKS walks to the CADAVER DRAWERS and rests his hands on
the one they put him in. Then, with great difficulty --
physical and emotional -- he opens it to see if there is
anything left.

He pulls it out, and there's nothing in there.

JACKIE

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea...

STARKS leans closer, locating all the proof he needs: the
stained metal -- still reddened and browned with DRIED BLOOD --
and the part of the morgue slab he CLAWED his NAILS into when
he was in it. JACKIE looks at it in disbelief.

STARKS

Yes, it was. [Softly] My fingers were
the only things I could move. [Beat]
Dead bodies don't bleed. And they
certainly can't claw so hard they
dent metal.

INT. HALLWAY, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE

STARKS and JACKIE are leaving the MORGUE, when STARKS spots
DAMON, now hardly a hair of the bully he was before. DAMON
stares at him curiously; STARKS glares back furiously.

DAMON

You folks ain't supposed to be down
here.

JACKIE

We were just leaving.

DAMON doesn't take his eyes off Starks.

DAMON

Do I know you from somewhere?

STARKS

You may have known my father, William
Starks.

DAMON smiles, remembering...

DAMON

That's right! Goddamn, you're the
spitting image. I didn't know he had

a son.

STARKS
He didn't either.

DAMON [With a dirty laugh]
I'll be damned. He musta been 12 when
he had you. [Beat] You could be his
ghost.

STARKS
Did you know my father?

DAMON
Oh yeah, sure. He killed a cop,
right?

STARKS looms strangely over DAMON in this exchange.

STARKS
You wouldn't happen to know how he
died, would you?

DAMON [Slightly apprehensive]
No, I don't. I just remember them
finding his body.

STARKS
You don't know any more, Damon?

DAMON [Shocked]
How'd you know my name?

STARKS
My father used to talk about you.

DAMON
Oh yeah, what'd he say?

Damon's eyes betray his unease.

STARKS
He said you were a sadistic fuck that
belonged in jail.

DAMON is shocked, and cowed. So much that he shakes as he
looks for his bearings.

DAMON
Look here, I don't like you getting
in my face and saying this bullshit
to me...

STARKS
That's too bad.

DAMON
I thought you said you never knew
your father.

STARKS

I didn't. [Beat] Did you have anything to do with his death?

DAMON

I don't know what you're talking about, man. I swear. This is some weird shit you're telling me... and I don't know how come you're doing it.

STARKS starts to see a shaking man who stands confused and distraught before him.

STARKS

He died because he bled to death from a blow to his head. Someone had to have given him it.

DAMON

I never touched your father! I swear!

Damon's eyes are filled with dishonesty, tears and a craven FEAR. STARKS leans in closer to DAMON as he remembers...

STARKS

You know something, Damon? You're like a mule. You're real stubborn. But there's ways of fixin' that. All you need is a good stick. [Beat] Here's your stick. Live with it.

STARKS looks like he could easily bash Damon's head against the wall, but instead he lets it go and walks away.

EXT. CEMETERY, ALPINE GROVE GROUNDS, 2004, DAY

STARKS is standing above his own headstone: WILLIAM STARKS, December 25, 1967 - January 1, 1993. Next to his grave is that of RUDY MACKENZIE. STARKS looks down sadly at both. JACKIE comes up behind him.

JACKIE

How long do we have?

STARKS

I don't know.

JACKIE

They told me Becker's in Shelbourne now. I looked him up and he was listed.

STARKS looks scared and lost -- like it's all catching up to him. And like he might be being taken out of the Jacket.

STARKS

How far away is that?

PAGE MISSING

JACKIE kisses his SCARS -- from the war and the Jacket -- and STARKS lifts her higher so he can look at her as they make love for the first time.

INT. BEDROOM, JACKIE'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

JACKIE is lying in STARKS' arms, running her FINGERS over one of the SCARS on his chest. STARKS strokes her hair.

JACKIE

What about Captain Medley? He never told them what happened to you over there. His testimony...that coward wanted them to think you were crazy.

STARKS

I know. It was perfect. [Beat] Erase my sanity and you erase anything I'll ever say.

JACKIE [Frustrated]

Well, doesn't what he did to you make you mad?

STARKS

Of course it makes me mad. It makes me more than mad. Just like remembering the face of the man who killed that officer and knowing nothing more about him. But what's it gonna do for me to find them now? I can't fix everything in three days.

JACKIE

You've got to get yourself out of that place. They're going to kill you if you don't.

STARKS

I might not be able to.

JACKIE

It's not a prison, it's a hospital. There's got to be some way out of there and you've got to find it...

She doesn't finish because it's too hard to. STARKS nods, wiping her tears and kissing her.

FADE TO:

INT. BEDROOM, JACKIE'S APARTMENT, NIGHT, 2004

The sore sound of the DRAWER being opened stirs Jackie -- awakening her as if she heard it in her sleep. She reaches across the bed, but STARKS is no longer there. She runs her hands over the bed like he's alive in the sheets.

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, NIGHT, 1992

DR. LORENSON is administering medicine to a patient in the ward, when she sees -- almost like a shadow -- a STRETCHER being wheeled down the hall. She finishes with the patient and runs to the end of the hall in search of it...

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ICU, ALPINE GROVE, LATE NIGHT, 1992

STARKS lies recovering under a small light above his hospital bed. His body bears marks of the brutalization. As we pull back, we see DR. LORENSON standing guard over him at the foot of his bed.

EXT. WARD, ICU, ALPINE GROVE, NEXT MORNING

STARKS sits by a window -- I.V.'s in his arm -- smoking feebly, still severely weak from the Jacket, while DR. LORENSON observes him for a bit from the hall before she goes inside.

LORENSON

You'll die if you keep smoking those
in your condition.

STARKS

I'll die either way.

LORENSON pulls up a chair and sits opposite him.

LORENSON

I can't try to help you unless you
let me. [Beat] I know about the
Jacket.

STARKS waits to see what this means.

LORENSON

I'm sorry for what you were put
through, and I'm sorry I couldn't
stop it earlier. But I promise you
that I will from now on...

STARKS [Cutting him off]

I don't want you to.

LORENSON doesn't understand.

LORENSON

What do you mean?

STARKS

You have no idea what's going on.

LORENSON

No, I do. That's what I'm saying to
you.

STARKS

Listen to me! You don't! The Jacket
is my only chance in this place.

LORENSON just thinks it's another delusion.

LORENSON

How can you say that in your physical condition? Do you realize that it's because you were put in it that you're as...weak as you are now? Becker's a man who's not well himself.

STARKS searches for words that won't sound as crazy as he knows he appears. They don't exist.

STARKS

You don't understand.

LORENSON

Then help me understand. You know, you're not alone. A lot of Gulf Vets have begun to experience curious symptoms. What you have might well be a syndrome and, if so, it's not one we know enough about to be treating it this vigorously.

STARKS

This has nothing to do with that.

LORENSON [Exasperated]

Then what? What? [Beat] I can't guess it. You have to help me.

STARKS fixes his eyes on Lorensen. He has nothing to lose but still he treads carefully. The words that follow come almost unwittingly.

STARKS

...What you do not know is the only thing you know.

(MORE)

STARKS (cont'd)

[Beat] And what you own is what you do not own...

And where you are is where you are not.

LORENSON

[Beat] Where is that from?

It's as though STARKS hears his words for the first time.

STARKS

I don't know. [Frustrated] Remember?

STARKS

Come on. Tell me what you do know.

STARKS

[Beat] I've seen a time that's not

this time. And I'm only able to see it when I'm in the Jacket.

LORENSON
Well, what time is it?

STARKS
2004.

LORENSON nods, trying to mask his dismay but failing.

STARKS
You don't believe me.

LORENSON [Testing him]
Well, what year do you think it is now?

STARKS [Exasperated]
I'm not delusional. I know it's 1992. Same as every sane person.

LORENSON
Ok fine. Tell me about it. Tell me about the future. 2004. What does it look like?

STARKS
It doesn't look all that different.

LORENSON
The future doesn't look different?

STARKS
No. Not for people like me. [Beat]
Not in the places I come from.

LORENSON
What about the world?

STARKS
I didn't see that much of it -- same as now. I only saw it as part of my own life.

LORENSON looks at STARKS, unintentionally patronizing.

LORENSON
Do you think you're traveling in time? Is that it?

STARKS shakes his head and momentarily challenges Lorensen simply with his air of calm resolve.

STARKS
Not everyone in here is crazy, Doc.

LORENSON searches for another approach.

LORENSON
[Beat] Like who? Like MacKenzie

maybe?

STARKS

Maybe.

LORENSON [Matter-of-factly]

Did he tell you he tried to kill his wife?

STARKS nods.

LORENSON

MacKenzie locked himself up in his house for two months and nearly starved himself to death before he was brought here. All because his wife left him for another man.

STARKS moves to put his cigarette out and his I.V. almost falls out of his arm. LORENSON makes a move to adjust it and STARKS flinches perceptibly, startling LORENSON.

STARKS [Adjusting it himself]

Maybe that just makes him weak, not crazy. Or maybe he is crazy. [Beat] Still doesn't make me think I am.

(MORE)

STARKS [Adjusting it himself]

And, judging by the fact that you just told me about another patient, it doesn't even make you think I am, so what don't you work on persuading yourself first.

LORENSON

Why don't you help me?

STARKS

Because I don't have time.

LORENSON

Why not?

STARKS

I'm about to die unless I do something to stop it.

LORENSON

And how do you know that?

STARKS

Because of the future. I know what's going to happen.

LORENSON

William, that is just another facet of my delusions.

Then, STARKS remembers the only thing that might help him. He pauses, trying to recall as much of it as he can.

STARKS

And what about your work with Eugene -- the kid? Is that another facet of my delusions?

LORENSON -- having prepared to continue -- is bowled over at the mention of her patient. She loses all color and calm in her features.

LORENSON

How do you know about Eugene?

STARKS

You told me about him. I saw you and I think you thought I knew something about him. So you told me.

LORENSON doesn't know what to say.

LORENSON [Somewhat angrily]

How do you know about Eugene!?

STARKS [Shaking his head in disbelief]

You told me. It's like two parts of you talking through me. Look, judging from your reaction, there's no other way I could know about him.

LORENSON

There obviously is, so what don't you just tell me how you found out about him.

STARKS looks at her convincingly.

STARKS

Some part of you suspects -- even if you don't know for sure -- that what I'm saying is true.

LORENSON

I don't know how you know about Eugene, but these ideas are part of your delusions.

STARKS

NO! They're not my delusions! Look, just leave my business with Becker to me!

LORENZO

One thing's got nothing to do with the other.

STARKS

One's got everything to do with the other. So unless you want my blood on

your hands...leave what's between me
and Becker between me and Becker.

LORENSON backs off, jarred by Starks' assertions and fearful
of his debilitating vehemence.

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, DAY, 1992

MACKENZIE sits idly on one of the hallway benches until the
hallway is clear of the STAFF. Then he scuttles quickly -- all
the time close to the wall -- to Starks' room.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ALPINE GROVE, DAY, 1992

MACKENZIE gets inside, ducks as a NURSE passes and then taps
lightly on the wall, announcing himself gladly.

MACKENZIE

Hey, I brought you some smokes.

STARKS doesn't waste any time.

STARKS

Lorenson said your wife left you for
another man and that's when you lost
it.

MACKENZIE almost imperceptibly winces -- confirming the truth
for Starks -- before he has to sit down.

MACKENZIE

Geez, how's that for a fucking "thank
you"?

STARKS

Is it true?

MACKENZIE tosses him the CIGARETTES and lights himself one.

MACKENZIE

She left me, I tried to kill her, I
tried to kill myself. She was mean, I
was weak, I was cruel so she left, I
didn't plan it, didn't see it...FINE!

MACKENZIE suddenly stops, distraught. When he resumes, it's
in an oddly more normal tone than he's ever used before.

MACKENZIE [Softly]

I didn't want to see it. I'm in here
because they say I have a nervous
condition. [Beat] Well, here's my
question, who wouldn't be nervous if
they really looked at their life?
[Beat] Whose life is that good?

STARKS doesn't have an answer.

MACKENZIE

Not this luckless little mammal's.

What difference is it to them? [Beat, slows down] You believe what you want to believe. One version is easier than another so you make it your own.

As MacKenzie runs his hand over his forehead, he looks hurt, and sad, but strangely not a bit crazy.

MACKENZIE

I'll tell you this though. However nuts I am, I wasn't nuts enough not to know how wrong it was to put a human being in something like that.

MACKENZIE's twitching continues as he recollects it.

STARKS

MacKenzie, [beat] what if we are crazy?

MACKENZIE

[Shrugging] What if we are? There're crazier things than thinking up fictions for yourself. [Beat] Everyone does it, don't they? Even Becker. That roller coaster car pops more pills than all of Ward 3.

STARKS

Becker does? Are you sure?

MACKENZIE

I've been here for 11 years. It's my neighborhood. 'Course I'm sure. He's as drugged up as the rest of us...I guess he has to be to put up with all this.

STARKS nods and MacKenzie puts his head down, suddenly vulnerable and embarrassed. STARKS lights TWO CIGARETTES.

STARKS

Thanks for the cigarettes. You still got a lot of problems, MacKenzie, but you're ok.

MACKENZIE and STARKS smoke together quietly.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ALPINE GROVE, DECEMBER 29th, 1992

STARKS is trying to see if the windows open through the bars covering them. It's especially hard with the I.V. still connected to one of his arms.

BECKER

At least it's some kind of bars we've got you behind.

STARKS turns, startled.

BECKER

Hello, William. I understand you've been asking for me almost every hour. I would've been here sooner but you gave our little state visitor quite a bit to talk to me about.

STARKS

That's too bad.

BECKER

It is. But when it comes down to it, you just have to patient with them. They'd rather have their vacation, too, so they just push dealing with our "practices" off to the New Year.

STARKS

They make it hard for you to get away with your business, huh?

BECKER

Temporarily.

STARKS lights a cigarette and, with that gesture, adopts the unscrupulousness of a criminal so convincingly it bears little resemblance to his usual demeanor.

STARKS

Makes it a little easier for me to get away with mine.

BECKER looks at STARKS seriously.

BECKER

And what's that?

STARKS

My business?

BECKER

Yes.

STARKS

Getting away with things. Like whatever I may or may not have gotten away with Officer Harrison.

BECKER

You killed him?

STARKS simply delivers one slow nod.

STARKS

And wound up in a better cage. [Beat]
But I still want to make a deal.

BECKER looks understandably disgusted and STARKS proceeds with the calculation of someone who is guilty.

STARKS

See, the deluxe lab animal treatment I've been receiving -- well, I don't think it's worked. I woke up today and realized... [eerily lowering his voice] ...I don't think I'm cured. So really, what was the point? Torture? I think that's still sort of illegal in some states -- though we'll have to check on Vermont. And, how's this for the cherry on top: it seems my physician is a pill-popping freak. [Beat] Last time I checked, that makes some pretty good copy for a lot of these news shows. [Humbly, deftly] "I don't remember everything they did to me. I just remember the worst parts." I think I should be sitting down when I say it, don't you think?

It takes BECKER some seconds to swallow this.

BECKER

I think...I have to think about it.

BECKER cocks his head to one side as he does. Then he slowly makes his way over to STARKS and leans in closer to him. STARKS instinctively raises his hand to his HEAD -- prepared to be defensive if he has to be. If this is the moment when he's killed.

But BECKER only YANKS the I.V. angrily out of Starks' arm, tearing his skin with it.

BECKER

I think your story needs a little fleshing out before it's ready to go.

BECKER turns to leave as STARKS bleeds onto the floor.

BECKER

I'll say a prayer for you in Church today, Starks. Maybe the Gods can pick up where the medicine left off.

STARKS

You sure you know where to find one?

BECKER

I've managed to every Sunday of my life. [Beat] Some of us are God-fearing men, Starks.

STARKS

And what does that mean?

BECKER

Means we believe in doing his work and fear what the world would be like if we didn't at least try to.

STARKS smirks at the hypocrisy he sees.

STARKS

Becker, how do you sleep at night?

BECKER

You in here. [Beat] Works like a drug.

BECKER leaves without looking back and STARKS closes his eyes, breathing a sigh of relief that it's over.

INT. NURSE STATION, ALPINE GROVE, 1992, EVENING

LORENSON, dressed to leave, stops to talk to NINA, one of the evening nurses.

LORENSON

Nina, William Starks is to stay in ICU all night. If anything is supposed to change, I want to be called about it.

NINA

Sure, Dr. Lorensen.

INT. LORENSON'S HOME, VERMONT, 1992

LORENSON comes home to an unremarkable apartment to find a thin, young mother, TALIA YAZDI, and her eleven year-old mute, and seemingly retarded son, EUGENE, waiting for her outside her door.

STARKS

Hi. [Beat] Sorry I'm late.

TALIA

It's ok. [To Eugene] Hi, Eugene.

EUGENE returns her greeting with a blank stare.

INT. LORENSON'S HOME, VERMONT, SOME TIME LATER

LORENSON sets her things down on the kitchen table as TALIA starts to tidy things around the apartment.

LORENSON

Talia, I need to ask you something.

TALIA looks at LORENSON.

TALIA

What is it?

LORENSON

Have you told anyone about my sessions with Eugene?

TALIA [With an accent]

Of course not. [Off Lorensen's still doubtful look] I swear I haven't. I wouldn't do that to Eugene, or you. You know that.

LORENSON

Has anyone been asking about him?

TALIA

No. I would have told you.

LORENSON nods. She believes her.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ALPINE GROVE, NIGHT, 1992

STARKS spots DAMON standing cautiously in the hall.

INT. NURSE STATION, ALPINE GROVE, NIGHT, 1992

We see (but don't hear) HARDING speak to NINA as DAMON slips into STARKS' ROOM. NINA seems sufficiently distracted.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, SECONDS LATER

DAMON flashes a KNIFE at STARKS.

DAMON

No funny business or we can make this a lot fucking harder for you.

One look at the KNIFE and the SAME QUESTION burns once more...

STARKS

[Weakly] No funny business.

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, NIGHT, 1992

DAMON hustles Starks down the hall as fast as they can before the NURSE or any other staff member spots them.

INT. OFFICE/LIBRARY, LORENSON'S HOME, NIGHT

EUGENE sits opposite LORENSON, who quietly observes him, jotting some notes down on her pad. She is intermittently holding up PICTURES for Eugene, asking him to repeat their names as if she were teaching him to read.

LORENSON

Eugene, this is a "TRAIN."

EUGENE starts to pronounce the word when abruptly, and without any warning, he looks like he's unconscious, only with a blank stare. Lorensen quickly moves beside Eugene and watches him from up close, apparently not altogether surprised at what's happening.

EUGENE doesn't even blink. The only sounds we hear from him are a couple, barely audible guttural noises. LORENSON -- exhausted -- takes off her glasses wearily and gently addresses the boy.

LORENSON

Come on back down here. Wherever you
are...try to come on back. You'll
like it, I promise.

Just then, TALIA walks in with TEA, JUICE and COOKIES for Eugene and Lorensen. She spots her son in his absent, staring state and forces her face into a small, sad smile to avoid tears as she sets the tray down and the cookies before them.

TALIA gently touches LORENSON'S hand. LORENSON looks at her warmly. TALIA knows how hard she's trying.

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, NIGHT, 1992

BECKER soundlessly watches as HARDING and DAMON finish strapping Starks in the Jacket.

DAMON slams the DRAWER shut, sending STARKS back in.

INT. JACKET/TUNNEL

What STARKS lacks in strength, he counteracts with his OVERWHELMING WILL. The SCREEN TREMBLES with it. One TERRIFIC, WHITE LIGHT and we...

CUT TO:

INT. JACKIE'S CAR, SHELBOURNE, VERMONT, 2004, DAY

STARKS sits by himself in Jackie's car, parked in a gas station. He looks around, trying to make sure it really is her car. He looks in the back and sees a pair of sneakers and an empty BOTTLE of VODKA.

He looks outside and sees a few people walking into the FOOD MART of the gas station. He trembles with cold as he looks down at his plaid shirt.

Then, JACKIE unexpectedly appears outside the DRIVER'S WINDOW opening the car door and nearly spilling her COFFEE when she spots STARKS next to her.

Seeing it's him though, she smiles warmly.

JACKIE

You just scared me, that's all.

She leans over to him and gives him a kiss, handing him the coffee.

STARKS

Me, too.

JACKIE

Here, drink this. I'll get the heat going.

EXT. MAIN STREET, SHELBOURNE, VERMONT, 2004

JACKIE speeds through the streets of Shelbourne, presumably on their way to Becker's house.

EXT. BECKER'S NEIGHBORHOOD, SHELBOURNE, VERMONT, 2004

They've slowed down a little.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR, 2004, DAY

JACKIE reads from some directions on a PAPER as their CAR slows down on one particular street, towards one particular house.

EXT. BECKER'S HOUSE, SHELBOURNE, 2004, DAY

JACKIE [O.S.]

I think this is his house.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR, 2004, DAY

STARKS looks at the house, bedecked with a lopsided SNOW MAN on the front lawn.

STARKS

You're sure?

JACKIE

Yeah. I called the number yesterday to make sure. Thomas Becker, retired M.D.

STARKS gets out of the car.

EXT. BECKER'S HOUSE, SHELBOURNE, 2004, DAY

STARKS knocks on the door. No answer.

EXT. BECKER'S HOUSE, SHELBOURNE, 2004, DAY

JACKIE tries to look through the windows to see if anyone's there. No one is. It looks small and dark inside.

EXT. BECKER'S HOUSE, SHELBOURNE, 2004, DAY

STARKS knocks again, looking down anxiously at his feet. JACKIE walks up to him from around the side of the house. They don't have the time to wait.

JACKIE

They're not here.

STARKS

They're not.

JACKIE

[Beat, lost] No.

JACKIE notices how COLD Starks looks.

JACKIE
Maybe they're out.

STARKS nods.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR, 2004, DAY

STARKS rubs his hands together as he looks out the windows and sees NO CARS or PEOPLE on the street. JACKIE watches him despairingly.

JACKIE
How much time do we have?

STARKS [Distracted]
I don't know.

JACKIE
What? What are you thinking?

STARKS
There're no cars on this street.

JACKIE looks around; there really aren't.

JACKIE
Yeah, you're right. But wait, how can that be?

STARKS turns to JACKIE, thinking.

STARKS
I don't know. Maybe that's because this whole thing is a dream. How can you have a street with no cars on it?

JACKIE
I don't know. But this isn't a dream. I'm real, and so is where we are.

STARKS
Then why isn't there anyone around?

JACKIE
[Beat] I don't know.

STARKS runs his hand over his head and closes his eyes in desperation.

JACKIE
What are you doing?

STARKS doesn't answer.

JACKIE
William! William!

STARKS opens his eyes. She sighs in relief.

JACKIE

Maybe he's gone somewhere. He'll have to come back.

STARKS starts to shake his head in disbelief, when suddenly, he realizes...

STARKS
Of course he will. [Beat] What day of the week is it?

JACKIE
It's Sunday.

STARKS [Nodding]
It's Sunday.

JACKIE
So?

STARKS looks ecstatic with hope.

STARKS
Look where these people live.

A small, beautiful, removed place.

STARKS
They've got lives to be grateful for.

JACKIE
William, you're not making sense.

STARKS
[Beat] They're at Church. And I bet that's where Becker is.

EXT. STREETS, SHELBOURNE

JACKIE and STARKS head back to the only MAIN STREET in the town. As they approach the town church, they start to see a ROW of cars parallel-parked on the street.

JACKIE pulls up to the entrance of the CHURCH.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR, 2004, DAY

STARKS watches JACKIE get out of the car and walk up to the doors of the CHURCH.

EXT. CHURCH, SHELBOURNE, 2004

JACKIE boldly opens the CHURCH door.

INT. CHURCH, SHELBOURNE, 2004

JACKIE sees the town seated in the Church. The PRIEST looks up at her briefly and some people turn around, but she closes the DOOR before she causes a major interruption.

INT. CHURCH, SHELBOURNE, 2004

We move to the third or fourth row, where, from behind, we see a head of GREY HAIR. He slowly turns around, casting a look towards the door and revealing a glimpse of his face. Though it's aged slightly, it hasn't softened.

EXT. CHURCH, SHELBOURNE, 2004

JACKIE and STARKS watch as the people file out of Church. They are leaning against her car when STARKS spots him.

DR. BECKER walks beside a SMALL CHILD -- presumably his GRANDSON. JACKIE registers his formidableness with some surprise; Becker's maintained a strong physique and is hardly a shade less intimidating than he was before. Only his hand has a permanent shake now.

STARKS doesn't waste any time. He heads straight for him. Almost sensing him, BECKER looks in his direction. The casual look on his face is instantly supplanted by one of DISBELIEF.

STARKS

You still go to Church. How's that work? Your God just doesn't notice? That it? [Beat, serious] How you doin', Dr. Becker?

BECKER stops walking and looks at Starks. His GRANDSON looks at him.

BECKER'S GRANDSON

Grandpa?

BECKER [Still looking at Starks]

Sean, why don't you wait for me by the car? I'll be there in a minute. [Turning to the kid] Ok?

His grandson, momentarily appeased, heads for the car.

BECKER [To Starks]

Can I help you?

STARKS

I don't know, Dr. Becker. Can you?

That's enough to confirm for BECKER who STARKS is.

All around them, people leaving Church socialize routinely -- unaware of the haunted history being made between them.

BECKER

Who are you?

STARKS

I think you know. Your eyes say you do.

BECKER

[Beat] You're his son?

STARKS

No. I'm not his son. I'm him. [Beat]
What? You look like you've seen a
ghost. You can come here and touch
me, old man. I'm the real thing.

BECKER

How...how are you here?

STARKS looks at Becker -- each a terrifying reminder of the
other's past.

BECKER

You died, Starks. Years ago, in the
hospital.

STARKS

I know. [Beat] You killed me, didn't
you?

BECKER

No. I didn't. I swear I didn't. I
probably helped push you to kill
yourself, but I didn't do it.

STARKS

I didn't kill myself. I died from a
blow to the head. How'd it happen? I
have to know.

BECKER looks at him, nearly too stunned to speak.

BECKER

I don't know how you died. The last
time I put you in the Jacket was just
after you told me you remembered
killing that police officer...

STARKS

I didn't say I remembered killing
him. I just repeated some words to
get myself back in there.

BECKER

I know. [Beat] I knew that when you
came out.

STARKS

How?

BECKER

Because...because you came out and
said something you couldn't have
possibly have known. You came back
and repeated three names...

BECKER falters as he recalls his offenses.

BECKER

Of people like you. People I was just trying to help. They couldn't get worse so I thought, with medication, they might get...

STARKS

Medication? What kind of meds do you chase with nights in a cadaver drawer?

BECKER

It was part of the treatment I intended...I didn't know what the effects would be...

STARKS

So, what, you guinea pig sick people to find out?

BECKER

The three of you weren't regular patients. You were criminals that ended up at Alpine Grove.

STARKS

No, we were patients.

BECKER concedes after all this time.

BECKER

You and the others didn't seem that way then.

STARKS is quiet as he comes to understand how it's about to work out: if Becker tells him those names now, he essentially indicts himself.

STARKS

Who were the others?

BECKER remembers with a hint of remorse.

BECKER [Racked with remorse]

Nathan Piechowski, Jackson MacGregor, and Ted Casey. [Beat] I didn't ask for you -- for any of you. You were all sent to me.

STARKS looks at Becker, in astonishment.

BECKER

What is it?

STARKS just stares at Becker, waiting for the realization to hit him, too.

BECKER

How did you come to know their names?

STARKS

You just told me. The last time I was with you was when I was in the Jacket. I'm in it right now, Dr. Becker.

BECKER

I don't understand...

STARKS

I'm in it as we speak. [Beat] You're haunting yourself right now. [Beat] I guess sometimes we indict ourselves if no one else does. You didn't make history like you wanted to, huh, Dr. Becker. It turned out different, didn't it?

BECKER

I didn't put you in Alpine Grove.

STARKS

No. [Beat] You put me on drugs and then you put me in the Jacket.

BECKER [Stoically]

I was sorry when I heard you died. I was, but...how was I to know you didn't shoot that police officer?

STARKS

The same way you just said I didn't without my ever telling you. [Beat] And that still doesn't excuse what you did. Just because you had keys to a cage didn't mean you had animals inside. [Beat] You've earned your guilt, Becker.

STARKS shares a last look with Becker before he walks away towards the car.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR, DAY, 2004

JACKIE and STARKS sit inside the parked car as STARKS touches his head.

JACKIE

That's all you got from him? That bastard helped take your life away from you.

STARKS

No, he didn't.

JACKIE

What? How can you say that? He's the one that put you in that goddamn medieval...Jacket. He's probably the one who killed you.

And with those words, JACKIE starts to break down.

STARKS
No one's killing anyone.

STARKS takes her hand and runs it over his head.

STARKS
Touch me. I'm okay.

STARKS looks at her with love, understanding and, for the first time, a sense of peace. He strokes her hair to calm her down.

STARKS
If everything hadn't happened the way it has, then I wouldn't be here right now, sitting in a car with you, touching your face.

JACKIE
Why are you saying that? [Beat] We don't have long, do we?

STARKS looks at her without answering. JACKIE wipes her eyes, fastens STARKS' seat belt, and seeing that Starks' EYES have started to flutter, starts driving. In the distance, the barely audible sound of the DRAWER opening, and their time ending, is heard.

STARKS
Where are we going?

JACKIE
To the hospital.

EXT. HIGHWAY, VERMONT, DAY, 2004

JACKIE and STARKS speed on the highway. As STARKS sleeps, JACKIE keeps looking over at him like it's a way to make sure he stays with her.

INT. HOSPITAL, VERMONT, DAY, 2004

JACKIE helps STARKS -- who's severely weakened at this point -- to the nurse's station. CLAIRE is there.

JACKIE
Claire, I need help.

CLAIRE helps JACKIE, and they take him into a room. From afar, we hear CLAIRE asking about him.

STARKS
What's happening to me? Why am I getting so much weaker?

JACKIE
Because your body can only take so

much of what they're putting you through.

CLAIRE

Jesus, what's happened to him?

INT. ROOM, HOSPITAL, VERMONT, DAY, 2004

JACKIE helps CLAIRE do for STARKS what they can; it doesn't seem like much at this point.

STARKS

Lorenson's the only one that could let me out of there. I need something to persuade her that I was there. Get me something to take to her.

JACKIE

Ok. Ssh. Rest.

INT. OFFICE, HOSPITAL, 2004

JACKIE stands above a PRINTER as it prints the information she's looked up about Dr. Lorenson. The PAPER gets jammed, and that's when JACKIE completely loses it. She WRESTLES with the printer as if it were responsible for what's happening.

Then she realizes she's not alone. She looks back and sees CLAIRE, watching from the doorway, with a sympathetic look in her eyes.

JACKIE [In a panic]

He's not...?

CLAIRE

No, no. [Beat] Not yet. But he doesn't have long. Are you sure you don't want a doctor to look at him?

JACKIE

No! It won't do any good. [Beat] Please, Claire. They won't understand.

CLAIRE acquiesces with her eyes.

INT. JACKET/TUNNEL PASSAGE

STARKS is trapped: back on the day when Officer Harrison was murdered.

FLASHBACK TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY, RURAL VERMONT, WINTER, LATE AFTERNOON, 1992

(Cont'd from the scene after STARKS left Jean and Jackie's place):

STARKS is walking back on the same highway just after the sun has set, and just after he helped JEAN and JACKIE, on that

fateful day...

This time we see a CAR stop for him from a much closer distance. TENNY pulls up towards STARKS and rolls down the window on the passenger side. STARKS bends down to be able to see the driver.

TENNY

Hey, Mister, you need a ride?

STARKS

Where are you going?

TENNY

I'm going to Canada but I can let you ride with me up to the border.

STARKS considers this.

TENNY

Can you drive?

STARKS

Sure.

TENNY

Great, get in. We'll switch off in a bit.

We pull back and see the same SHOT, from a distance, of STARKS putting his BAG in the back and getting in. As he opens the CAR DOOR, we hear the MUSIC playing inside. As they drive off, the MUSIC fades further and further in the distance as we...

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM, JACKIE'S APARTMENT, NIGHT

It's the night that they slept together, and the departure we never saw. We see, from Starks' POV, JACKIE sleeping serenely in the bed.

We catch one glimpse of STARKS in the moonlight, standing naked in the doorway, before he turns and then...disappears -- having been taken out of the Jacket at that point.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, VERMONT, 2004

JACKIE is by STARKS' side, lying on the hospital bed, next to him, smoothing his sweating head.

JACKIE

William, please, honey, wake up.
For me.

STARKS' eyes flutter open.

JACKIE

Can you hear me?

STARKS nods; JACKIE tries to continue without choking up.

JACKIE

I found out about Eugene. The little boy. He's the key. That's who you have to tell her about when you get back there. It's the only way to prove this to her.

JACKIE's VOICE fades as we...

CUT TO:

INT. LORENSON'S HOME, VERMONT, NIGHT, 1992

LORENSON watches EUGENE continue to look unresponsively in the distance.

RETURN TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM, VERMONT, 2004 (SOME TIME LATER)

STARKS is awake, watching JACKIE sleep wearily on his chest. He sees the TOLL this has taken on her, just as he senses he is about to be taken out of the Jacket. He nudges her gently.

STARKS

Jackie?

JACKIE stirs her eyes to look at him.

STARKS [Somewhat urgently]

Where do you live?

JACKIE

What?

STARKS

When we first met, when you were 7, where was the house you lived in with your mother? Do you remember your address?

JACKIE

112 Orchard Way. [Realizing, in a whisper] You're not coming back, are you?

STARKS, faint, struggles to get out of the bed.

STARKS

You gotta stop thinking like that.

JACKIE

Then, where are you going?

STARKS

Nowhere. [Beat] I just think I'm gonna be sick.

STARKS moves towards the bathroom of the hospital room.
JACKIE moves to help him and he motions for her to stop.
STARKS falters in the doorway when he turns to look back at
Jackie -- like it might be for the last time.

JACKIE [In a whisper]
You come back to me...

STARKS nods, then goes in and closes the door behind him.
JACKIE stares after him -- alone in the total silence of the
room. She listens for the slightest noise and that's when she
actually hears the sound of the DRAWER being opened for
herself.

She realizes he's gone. She RUSHES after him, opens the door
in a fit, and then, sees what she feared most: no sign of
Starks. JACKIE falls to her knees, right there, on the
bathroom floor and cries out like a woman only beginning to
realize how unfathomably deep her heart is...

INT. ALPINE GROVE, 2004

STARKS is suddenly in the waiting area outside Lorenson's
office -- still severely weakened.

He walks slowly to the OFFICE DOOR and feebly knocks.
LORENSON answers and STARKS falls into her arms.

LORENSON [Stunned]
Oh dear God.

INT. LORENSON'S OFFICE

LORENSON has laid STARKS down on the COUCH in her office.
STARKS can barely talk. He spews as much of it as he can out
in his feverish state...

STARKS
I'm William Starks. I'm not his son.
And...and the kid you work with.
Your friend's son...Eugene...

LORENSON is stilled by the words STARKS just spoke.

LORENSON
I know. I know it all. Save your
strength. I already know everything
you're going to say. [Beat] You're in
the Jacket right now, aren't you?

STARKS
How...how do you know?

LORENSON
You told me this was how it
happened.

STARKS
I did?

LORENSON

Yeah.

STARKS clutches his side in pain as they prepare to take him out.

STARKS

Who...who kills me?

LORENSON

You have nothing to fear, William.

But when we look to see STARKS' reaction, he's not there...

INT. BECKER'S OFFICE, ALPINE GROVE, EVENING

BECKER is dressed to leave the hospital when he suddenly decides not to. He takes off his coat and his gloves, but not his SCARF, and walks out of his office with a decided urgency.

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, 1992

BECKER pulls STARKS out of the drawer and looks down ruefully at STARKS' scathed face. STARKS, drenched in BLOOD and SWEAT, seeks the outline of Becker's face in the light.

STARKS [Whispering]

Becker, I know about you. [Beat] I know what you did to your patients.

BECKER looses the straps around Starks' neck to help him speak.

STARKS

Nathan...Piechowski. [Beat] Jackson MacGregor...Ted Casey. [Beat] You didn't cure them. You killed them.

BECKER momentarily loses color and his forever cool mien. After some seconds, STARKS passes out and BECKER -- hands trembling -- looks as though he might stick him back in when, instead, he starts to remove him from the Jacket himself. He silently and carefully unties each of the straps -- taking unusual care for Starks' flesh as he prepares to put him on a stretcher.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ICU, ALPINE GROVE, EARLY MORNING

As the SUN starts to rise, we see STARKS -- now cleaned up -- recovering in his bed. He is unconscious. From his window, we look down and see Dr. Lorensen's car pulling into the lot...

FADE TO:

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ICU, ALPINE GROVE, EARLY MORNING

LORENSON, still wearing her winter gear, walks into Starks' room, anxiously checking his VITALS. Her anxious expression

reveals Starks' frailty. She looks to the window then and sees an empty chair with only Becker's SCARF on it.

LORENSON goes to the window in time to see BECKER getting into his car.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ICU WARD, ALPINE GROVE, LATER THAT MORNING

STARKS lies unconscious in the bed. The NURSE, SALLY, stops by the room to check on Dr. Lorensen.

SALLY
Would you like anything, Dr.
Lorensen?

LORENSON
A cup of coffee would be great,
Sally. Thanks.

SALLY
Is he gonna be ok?

LORENSON
I hope so.

SALLY
Me, too.

LORENSON looks after her as she leaves.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ICU WARD, ALPINE GROVE, MORNING, 1992

LORENSON wakes up as STARKS stirs in his sleep, slowly waking up.

LORENSON
You're going to be ok, William. We
just need to get your fever down
and we'll be able to hopefully
stabilize you.

STARKS
Who are you kidding, Doc? You or
me?

LORENSON doesn't answer.

STARKS
Can I get some paper and something
to write with.

LORENSON
What for?

STARKS [Solemnly]
I'm starting to think I'm really
gonna die soon. So I'd like to write
some things down.

LORENSON

I'm not gonna let that happen.

STARKS

You still don't believe me, do you?

LORENSON

I do believe you...

STARKS

No. Listen to me...the kid, Eugene...

LORENSON still gets taken aback by Starks' knowledge of Eugene.

STARKS

No one knows you're working with him so how would I have found out? He's your friend's son, right?

It's true; no one could have known about Lorensen's private life. STARKS coughs, clearly in great pain.

LORENSON

William, I can't indulge these delusions, even when you're in this state.

STARKS

Listen to me. That's all I ask.

LORENSON has no choice.

STARKS

He's having absence [pronounced "absance"] seizures when he stares off into space like he does. He has them so often that that's why he hasn't learned to speak properly.

LORENSON

Who told you this?

STARKS

You did, in the future. You figured it out because a part of you already knows this. That's how it works. [Beat] I'm just telling you something you already know, even if you haven't realized it.

STARKS closes his eyes, gathering what strength he can.

STARKS

I don't know when it'll happen but soon I think, you'll shock the boy and it'll wake him up.

LORENSON

What are you talking about?

STARKS

You'll figure it out and you'll do
good by him.

That's all STARKS can manage before LORENSON sees he's about
to pass out again.

CUT TO:

INT. LORENSON'S APARTMENT, NIGHT, 1992

LORENSON answers the KNOCK at her door. It's EUGENE and
TALIA.

STARKS

Hey.

TALIA

What is it?

LORENSON [Finding it hard to explain]

Nothing. [Beat] I don't know. I
thought of something I could try.

LORENSON looks at TALIA helplessly. TALIA nods and leads
Eugene inside. LORENSON can't help but look down the hall to
make sure no one's there.

INT. STUDY/OFFICE, LORENSON'S APARTMENT, NIGHT, 1992

LORENSON sits across from EUGENE, holding up a picture of a
DOG. Between them is a tray of MILK and COOKIES.

LORENSON

Come on Eugene, try to say it with
me. This is a "DOG".

EUGENE

D--d---d----

But Eugene can't hold the sound of the letter long enough to
make the word. An absence seizure takes hold of him as he
looks out unconsciously into space.

LORENSON moves closer to him.

LORENSON [Softly]

What's happening to you?

LORENSON checks Eugene's pulse and leans in close to the
boy's unconscious face like the answer is there if she just
looks hard enough.

LORENSON

Are you having a seizure? Is that
really what's going on?

LORENSON spots a corner of Eugene's EYE twitching slightly,
and, rushing to get a better look, takes the shade off of the
nearby LAMP and holds it above his head so she can get a

better look at him.

Just then, TALIA opens the door, startling Lorenson. She knocks over the MILK and, as it spills on the LAMP CORD -- now on Eugene's lap -- it causes an ELECTRIC SHOCK. Eugene catches it. TALIA gasps and Lorenson watches the boy in fear.

The moment passes and Eugene -- more responsive than he has ever been before -- looks at his mother and Lorenson. He doesn't know what's happened but he is aware, and awake, like never before.

EUGENE picks right up where he and Lorenson left off.

EUGENE

Dog. [To Talia] Hi.

TALIA and LORENSON look at him and each other at shock.

STARKS [O.S., distantly]

You're going to...shock the boy and then things will change for him.

LORENSON

You ok, Eugene?

EUGENE holds Lorenson's gaze steadily for a few moments.

LORENSON [Stunned himself]

Yeah, you are ok.

TALIA

What's happening?

LORENSON [Putting the pieces together]

He got a little shock. [To himself]
And it's reset him. Not permanently probably...but at least for a little while. They use it on epileptic patients sometimes...

TALIA

But he's not epileptic.

LORENSON

No, but he is having seizures.

TALIA looks at LORENSON. She's still confused. LORENSON's merely surprised.

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ICU UNIT, ALPINE GROVE, 1992

STARKS looks up from his PAPER -- now covered in WORDS -- to see Dr. Lorenson in the doorway. STARKS still looks weak but much better than before.

STARKS

It worked, didn't it?

LORENSON nods.

STARKS

This is really happening, isn't it?

DR. LORENSON

[Beat] What do you need me to do?

STARKS

[Beat] Thank you.

STARKS folds the LETTER.

STARKS

I need to get this letter to someone.

DR. LORENSON

I can't take you out of here in your condition...

STARKS

And I can't stay here in my condition. I am going to die tonight. It's already been decided.

DR. LORENSON

No, it hasn't.

STARKS

Yes. [Beat] It has. Everything up 'till today is done. Everything starting with tomorrow is up for grabs.

EXT. PARKING LOT, ALPINE GROVE, 1992

LORENSON helps STARKS into the parking lot as it snows.

INT. LORENSON'S CAR, DAY, 1992

LORENSON and STARKS are driving on the same, now familiar highway.

STARKS

You know how to get there?

LORENSON

Sure. It's an easy address. A little far out there, but easy enough.

STARKS

Good.

Bob Dylan plays on the RADIO. STARKS smiles as he hears him and turns the music up; the act is sad because, as LORENSON notices, it belongs to someone with an interest to live.

EXT. JACKIE AND JEAN'S HOUSE, DAY, 1992

DR. LORENSON and STARKS drive up to Jean and Jackie's house.

STARKS

You want me to come with you?

STARKS

No, I'll be ok.

STARKS slowly makes his way to their front door and knocks on it as best as he can. The sound, however, is still understandably soft.

STARKS waits and then reaches for the knob on the door. He opens it and looks inside. We first see his face, and the devastation on it, as we guess the sight he's laid eyes on.

JACKIE is sitting at the kitchen table, still only 7 years old. Though STARKS expected it, he falters under the disappointment of seeing a girl he liked instead of the woman he loved. As she looks up at him, it's all he can do not to break down.

STARKS

Hi.

JACKIE [Surprised]

Hey. [Beat] I remember you.

STARKS

I remember you, too.

STARKS shakes his head, looking at her. She looks beautiful, and still hopeful. Her life lays ahead of her and her fate -- when he found her in 2004 -- remains as distant as possible from this innocent, still promising image.

STARKS

Jackie, how have you been?

JACKIE smiles; she doesn't get asked that often.

JACKIE

I've been ok.

STARKS

Good. How's your mom?

JACKIE

Ok, I guess.

STARKS nods. JACKIE smiles. It's all he can do not to crumble.

STARKS

Do you think I could see her?

She looks at him and senses, like kids do, the desperation in his eyes.

JACKIE

Sure.

JACKIE calls out for Jean, then runs up the stairs to get her. LORENSON has gotten out of the car and is waiting outside on the porch. STARKS remains in the doorway.

Some seconds later, JEAN appears -- gaunt but in a slightly better state than we saw her before.

JEAN
Can I help you?

STARKS
Hey, Jean. Nice to see you.

JEAN looks a little confused.

JEAN
I'm sorry? Your face looks awfully familiar, I just can't quite place it...

JACKIE
Mom, this is the guy that drove us home that afternoon we were stuck on the highway. The guy you yelled at for no good reason...

JEAN
Oh, yeah.

She gives him a once over, and, seeing how weakened he looks, decides intuitively he can't be much harm. She also notices LORENSON waiting by the car.

JEAN
There something you need?

STARKS
You could say that.

STARKS looks at JACKIE, hesitating because of her. Sensing this, JEAN asks Jackie to leave.

JEAN
Jackie, go play in the snow.

JACKIE
Why?

JEAN
Just do it.

JACKIE leaves and walks to the yard. STARKS watches.

STARKS
I can't stay long. [Motioning to Lorensen] That's my doctor and I gotta get back to the hospital. Everything I want to say is in this

letter. [Beat] You can check as much of it as you can.

STARKS hands her the LETTER.

STARKS
I won't be around when you read it...but I hope you believe it. It'd be a real shame if you didn't.

JEAN looks baffled but, seeming to grasp his urgency, nods.

STARKS
[Beat] I should be on my way.

JACKIE has been watching this exchange from the shed. When he looks over there, he catches her eye and CALLS OUT, with what strength he has left...

STARKS
Bye, Jackie.

These are the hardest words STARKS has probably ever had to say. JACKIE just stares after him, as does JEAN, as he shows himself out.

STARKS
Happy New Year to both of you.

JEAN
Thanks. You, too.

EXT. JACKIE AND JEAN'S HOUSE, DAY, 1992

As STARKS is walking away, we see his eyes begin to tear in the cold -- but not from it.

INT. JACKIE AND JEAN'S HOUSE, DAY, 1992

JACKIE abruptly runs after him.

JACKIE
Hey, wait!

STARKS stops in his tracks; he clears as much sadness from his face as he can before he turns around to face her.

STARKS
[Beat] You be good to yourself, Jackie.

JACKIE
Ok.

Then, suddenly, she sticks her hand for him to shake, as she did that day on the roadside; only now, it trembles slightly in the cold.

STARKS takes JACKIE'S HAND and holds it in his own softly and affectionately. JEAN and DR. LORENSON look on curiously as

STARKS looks in her face, at her hand in his, and then to the heavens for the means to get through this.

As STARKS lets go at last, JACKIE looks back at him, sensing the connection even if she doesn't know it yet.

STARKS turns and stumbles as he walks back to his car. LORENSON moves to help him, but STARKS tells her not to with his eyes. He makes his way to the car on his own.

MONTAGE:

INT. LIVING ROOM, JEAN AND JACKIE'S HOUSE, DAY, 1992

JEAN sits down and starts to open the LETTER. Starks' voice, as we hear it now, is presumably from parts of the LETTER he's written to her.

INT. LORENSON'S CAR, DUSK, 1992

LORENSON looks over to STARKS, who stares painfully out the window. They drive on in silence.

STARKS (V.O.)

I was 25 years old the first time I died. It didn't end anything though. [Beat] Sometimes I think we live through things only to be able to tell them, to bear witness, to say this happened.

INT. ALPINE GROVE, NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1992-1993

STARKS walks back through the gates of the hospital, despondently returning inside, with LORENSON at his side.

STARKS (V.O.)

And it wasn't to someone else. It was to me. And I lived despite it. Sometimes I think we live to beat the odds. And sometimes I agree that life can only begin with the knowledge of death. That it can all end, even when you least want it to.

INT. WARD, ALPINE GROVE, EVENING

MACKENZIE looks up from his game of solitaire as LORENSON helps STARKS down the hall. He holds up his hand in the gesture of hello, or goodbye.

STARKS raises his hand back with an earnest smile.

STARKS

I'm telling you my story because it's the only way I can try to help your daughter, and you, have a better one of your own.

INT. BECKER'S HOME, SHELBOURNE, 1992

We see BECKER taking his DRUGS. In his dark den, on his worn desk, is a bottle of WHISKEY. He closes his eyes as he administers to himself whatever aid he can...

INT. JACKIE AND JEAN'S HOUSE, DAY, DECEMBER 31, 1992

JEAN is reading each page avidly, affected by this man's last words.

STARKS (V.O.)

It's scary...and lucky...how much we can forget. Scary because we think the past gives us our bearing, and lucky because in those moments I'm talking about, you realize it doesn't. And it never had to.

INT. SMALL BAR, CANADA, NIGHT, 1992

TENNY (Officer Harrison's murderer) is at the bar ordering a drink from the BARTENDER. As he gets his DRINK, he slaps a BILL down on the counter and turns around to survey the bar...

INT. JACKIE'S ROOM, JACKIE AND JEAN'S HOUSE, EVENING, 1992

JACKIE rummages in a box of her personal belongings, looking for something specific in them. She stops finally when she finds STARKS' DOG TAGS. She takes them out slowly and puts them around her neck.

STARKS (V.O.)

I am not a crazy man, even though they mistook me for one. I live in the same world as the rest of you. Only I saw more of it.

Then, after a moment of staring down at them, she tucks them under her sweater.

INT. CAPTAIN MEDLEY'S HOME, NIGHT, 1992

CAPTAIN MEDLEY holds a beer as he stares blankly at a TV broadcasting news about MIKE TYSON'S RAPE CONVICTION. Medley's barely watching the footage...

INT. STARKS' ROOM, ALPINE GROVE, 1992

Dr. Lorenson helps Starks back to bed. STARKS looks up at Lorenson, thanking her without words but with his eyes. LORENSON smiles as she looks back sadly at Starks' even more weakened self.

STARKS (V.O.)

And the seeing is the only way you can hear what the truth around you is saying: you can always start believing in things you don't already believing in. And, while

you're alive, it's never too late.

Then he turns and walks out, closing the door so that Starks' room and the screen darken at the same time.

INT. HALLWAY, ALPINE GROVE, NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1992

TWO PAIRS of legs walk down a corridor, darkened by the night, through the now familiar passage to the basement...

STARKS is not restrained this time though we don't see who is walking down the hall with him. He runs his hand over his forehead and looks at it when he's done. STILL NO CUT.

They slow down their pace as they round the corner, as STARKS appears dizzier and dizzier. He doesn't stop and the PERSON beside him doesn't see how weak he is... until STARKS TRIPS.

In slow motion, we hear a DISTANT, GARBLED VOICE CALL OUT...

DISTORTED VOICE

No! Wa...atch out!

But STARKS' head hits the GLASS CASE of the FIRE EXTINGUISHER on the wall, as it was destined to. In the terrific SHOWER OF GLASS, one PIECE cuts a neat, deep, fatal GASH in Starks' head.

BLOOD starts to flow. As STARKS' eyes struggle to regain their focus, we see the BLURRED, indiscernible FACE of the PERSON leaning over him to see if he's all right.

The details start to make sense, even to Starks. This is the WOUND they said he died from.

INT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, ALPINE GROVE, NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1992

STARKS collapses on the familiar slab, ready to be strapped into the Jacket one final time. BLOOD pours from his head onto the floor.

The PERSON with him struggles to get all of Starks' weight onto the metal slab. She's doing it as carefully, and gently, as she can -- taking observable care with every strap of the JACKET, almost as if the act itself is a humane one.

When the HANDS finally reach the straps around his neck and the hardest part of the struggle has passed, STARKS smiles kindly, and thankfully, into the single overhead LIGHT in the room that obscures the face of the person strapping him in.

As the drawer is pushed in, one of the STRAPS gets caught on the side, CUTTING STARKS' ARM. We hear a small CRY in the room. Then the HANDS adjust the strap and slowly push STARKS in.

INT. JACKET/TUNNEL

It's more beautiful and serene inside than it's ever been before. This time, as he travels through the tunnel, it's as

though he's traveling in a heaven of his own. The IMAGES he sees are the best moments of his past -- connected in a tranquil, fluid narrative that suggest STARKS has finally retrieved his memory without it haunting him...

STARKS (V.O.)

I promise you, Jean. No matter how bad the days and things around you look, they look better awake than they do asleep. I can offer you some proof: when you die, there's only one thing you want to have happen...sometimes so badly it comes true, I guess. [Beat] You want to come back.

PANELS:

The PANELS we saw briefly are completed further now.

- 1) C.U. A WOMAN'S NECK as a small child's HAND touches it.
- 2) INT. STAIRWAY, OLD HOUSE (STARKS' CHILDHOOD HOME): STARKS, aged 9, running up the stairs, knocking a PICTURE on the wall with his elbow...
- 3) C.U. A black and white PHOTOGRAPH of Starks' father, a much older version of himself.
- 4) EXT. CREEK: A shot of clear water that's not too deep and, on its surface, the reflection of a TEENAGE BOY'S FACE before he touches it and sends it rippling...
- 5) EXT. A NEW ENGLAND BEACH: STARKS (20s) dressed in a black suit, holding an URN, letting the ASHES fly into the water...
- 6) EXT. DESERT: A SANDSTORM WHIRLS round before it's replaced with... EXT. VERMONT: A FIELD of snow.

EXT. MORGUE, BASEMENT, MENTAL HOSPITAL

We see now that it was DR. LORENSON who put Starks in. Exhausted from the physical strain of getting him in there, she stares at the closed drawer, like looking at it is one way to look after Starks.

INT. JACKIE AND JEAN'S HOUSE, VERMONT, 1992

JEAN puts down STARKS' LETTER and walks out of the kitchen and watches JACKIE sitting absently on the couch, looking past the TV.

JEAN kneels wordlessly beside her daughter and looks her daughter in the eye. JACKIE looks back curiously as JEAN wraps her arms around Jackie's LEGS and rests her head in her lap, holding onto her with the dearness of having narrowly missed a tragedy.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. DINER, SMALL TOWN VERMONT, 2005

Over the sounds of CARS slushing in the snow, an IMAGE fades up slowly on the screen, until we see it's STARKS, standing in the parking lot outside the diner once more.

This time he seems situated, and hopeful. After a slightly longer wait than the first time, JACKIE walks out -- in the same way as before except that she wears a NURSE'S UNIFORM and an unmistakable air of vitality.

Jackie looks directly at Starks and we see the same attraction between them teeming even more than before. Even as a physically injured man in jeans and a flannel, with a BLEEDING CUT on his head and no coat in the cold, STARKS is someone we see she wants to be near.

Then we see JACKIE as STARKS does: she looks beautiful, alive, happy and just like the woman he never wanted to leave. She approaches Starks warmly, less suspicious of the world -- and less devastated by it -- than we remember her being.

JACKIE

Hey there. [Beat] You ok?

STARKS revels in the moment. In their reunion.

STARKS

I think so.

JACKIE

You're bleeding pretty bad there.

STARKS touches his FOREHEAD in a panic and, seeing the BLOOD on his hands, looks up at her, terrified. Sensing this, she moves closer to calm him.

JACKIE

It's ok. It's ok. Relax. It's just a cut. We can get it fixed. But we need to get you to the hospital now. How'd you get that?

STARKS

I fell down. [Beat] But I'm alive.

STARKS looks at her -- immensely relieved and grateful.

JACKIE [Laughing a little]

Yes, you are alive. But, listen, it's New Year's Day. You're not going to get a cab. Especially not here. And you're gonna freeze if you stand out here in the snow much longer. I'm on my way back to my shift at the hospital...

STARKS

You work there?

JACKIE [Gesturing to her uniform]
Yeah, I'm a nurse. Why don't you let
me give you a ride...

STARKS falters slightly as he walks. JACKIE helps him make it
to the car, much like before...

STARKS
Thanks.

INT. JACKIE'S CAR, 2005

STARKS can hardly keep his eyes off her when her CELL PHONE
suddenly rings.

JACKIE
Sorry, one sec.

JACKIE answers it, smiling.

JACKIE
Hey! How are you? [Beat] Thanks. I
was just thinking about you, too.

STARKS listens nervously to her conversation and the
affection in her voice.

JACKIE
Listen, I gotta go, mom, 'cause I'm
late... but, thanks. Happy New Year to
you, too. I'll call you later. [Beat]
Ok, bye.

JACKIE hangs up and looks at Starks -- feeling a little
awkward after the call.

JACKIE
Sorry about that. It was my mom.

STARKS smiles back warmly at her; he gets it more than she
knows.

STARKS
Nothin' to worry about there.

EXT. OVERHEAD, VERMONT HIGHWAY, 2005

Jackie's car pulls onto the highway, alongside the other,
more modern cars on the highway.

JACKIE (O.S.)
How you doin'?

STARKS
I'm doing fine.

The happy sound of their engine on the highway continues,
uninterrupted, for some seconds, before, first faintly then
louder, we hear a racking, all too familiar sound: the DRAWER

creaking as it's opened once more...

THE END