

"JACOB'S LADDER"

by

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EXT. VIETNAM - DUSK

A swarm of helicopters swoops out of a yellow sky and deposits an army of men over a Vietnamese hillside.

The SOLDIERS scramble over the terraced rice paddies for the protection of the jungle. Falling into columns, like strands of soldier ants, seventy-five men, at combat readiness, assemble on the edge of a sweltering wilderness.

It is dusk. The mood is lazy, soporific. Members of one platoon huddle close to the ground smoking a joint.

JERRY

Strong stuff.

ROD

(to JACOB, a soldier
squatting several
yards away)

Hey, Professor, how many times can
you shit in an hour?

GEORGE

Don't bug 'im.

DOUG

Where are those gooks already?

FRANK

Some offensive. I don't even think
they're out there.

PAUL

Jesus, this grass is something else.

JACOB SINGER returns to the group, pulling up his pants.

ROD

Why even bother to pull 'em up?

FRANK

You jackin' off out there again, huh
Jake?

PAUL

Hey, get off his back.

ROD

It's called philosophizing, right
Professor?

JACOB gives them the finger.

JACOB

Up yours, you adolescent scum.

Laughter.

SERGEANT (V.O.)

Mount your bayonets.

FRANK

(frightened)

Oh shit!

PAUL

Goddam!

ROD

Gimme that joint!

JERRY

Hey, something's wrong.

GEORGE

What is it?

JERRY

My head.

GEORGE

It's nerves. Take another toke.

GEORGE reaches out, extending a joint. Suddenly he gasps and falls to the ground, his body convulsing uncontrollably. The others stand back, startled. JACOB grabs him and shoves a rifle barrel between his chattering teeth.

ROD
What's going on?

Before anyone can answer JERRY grabs his head, screaming. He turns frantically in all directions.

JERRY
Help me! Help me!

PAUL
What the hell... ?

In seconds JERRY is spinning wildly out of control, his head shaking into a terrific blur. He crashes into FRANK with the force of a truck. FRANK slams into the ground as all the air rushes from his lungs. He begins gasping and hyperventilating. His eyes grow wide and frenzied as he gulps for air. Fear and confusion sweep across his face. The MEN watch, horrified, as FRANK's terror escalates beyond reason into all-out panic.

Suddenly FRANK begins howling. He lunges for his bayonet and, without warning, attacks the MEN around him.

PAUL
God Almighty!

PAUL spins out of the way as FRANK's bayonet impales the ground. JACOB jumps on top of FRANK and wrestles him into the tall grass. PAUL rushes to his assistance.

JACOB stares at FRANK's face as FRANK struggles beneath him. It is the face of a madman.

PAUL
Good God! What's happening?

The sudden chaos is intensified by the sound of fighting erupting behind them. Guns crackle and bursts of light penetrate the darkening sky.

ROD
Behind you! Look out! This is it!

The MEN spin around. PAUL panics and jumps to his feet, leaving JACOB alone with FRANK. FRANK's eyes burn with demonic force as he gathers his strength.

JACOB
Don't leave me.

Dark figures, silhouetted by the setting sun, are storming at them. SOLDIERS squint to see. It is a horrifying vision.

PAUL
They're coming!

Gunfire explodes on all sides. Suddenly PAUL flips out. He begins screaming uncontrollably, ripping at his clothes and skin. FRANK is struggling like four men and JACOB is weakening in his effort to restrain him. Bayonets glimmer in the exchange of fire. Bodies fall. More bodies keep coming. The first wave is upon them.

ROD shoots into the air. Shadowy forms hurl forward screaming like banshees. ROD, squinting, jabs with his bayonet, piercing the belly of his attacker. Agonizing cries accompany his fall. ROD yanks the bayonet out and stabs again.

In the midst of this madness FRANK shoots to his feet and slams the butt of his rifle into JACOB's back. There is a cracking sound. JACOB's eyes freeze with pain. His hands rush for his spine. As he spins around one of the ATTACKERS jams all eight inches of his bayonet blade into JACOB's stomach. JACOB screams. It is a loud and piercing wail.

CUT ON THE SOUND OF THE SCREAM to a sudden rush through a long dark tunnel. There is a sense of enormous speed accelerating toward a brilliant light. The rush suggests a passage between life and death, but as the light bursts upon us we realize that we are passing through a SUBWAY STATION far below the city of NEW YORK.

INT. SUBWAY - NIGHT

THE WHEELS OF AN EXPRESS TRAIN screech through the station. JACOB SINGER, sitting alone in the last car, wakes up. The sounds of the scream and the grating wheels merge. He is dazed and confused, not certain where he is.

JACOB glances around the empty car. His eyes gravitate to overhead advertisements for hemorrhoid preparations and savings banks. Gradually his confusion subsides. Shifting uncomfortably he pulls a thick book out of his back pocket, "The Stranger" by Albert Camus. He begins reading. Another station blurs by.

JACOB is a good-looking man, of obvious intelligence. He is in his mid-thirties. It is surprising that he is wearing a mailman's uniform. He doesn't look like one.

The subway ride seems to go on interminably. JACOB is restless and concerned. He glances at his watch. It is 3:30 A.M. Putting his book in his back pocket, JACOB stands up and makes his way through the deserted car.

INT. SUBWAY TRACKS - NIGHT

JACOB enters the rumbling passageway between the cars. The wheels spark against the rails. The dark tunnel walls flash by. He pulls the handle on the door to the next car. It is stuck. He struggles with it. A LADY sitting alone inside turns to look at him. She seems threatened by his effort. He motions for her to help. She turns away.

A look of disgust crosses JACOB's face. He kicks the door. It slides open. The WOMAN seems frightened as he approaches her.

JACOB

Excuse me, do you know if we've passed
Nostrand Avenue yet?

(she doesn't answer)

Excuse me.

(she does not
acknowledge his
existence)

Look, I'm asking a simple question.
Have we hit Nostrand Avenue? I fell
asleep.

WOMAN

(speaking with a Puerto
Rican accent)

I no from around here.

JACOB

(glad for a response)

Yeah, you and everyone else.

JACOB walks to the other end of the car and sits down. The only other passenger is an OLD MAN lying asleep on the fiberglass bench. Occasionally his body shudders. It is the only sign of life in him.

The train begins to slow down. JACOB peers out of the window. Nostrand Avenue signs appear. He is relieved. He gets up and grabs hold of the overhead bar.

The OLD MAN shudders and stretches out on the seat. As he adjusts his position, tugging at his coat, JACOB catches a brief glimpse of something protruding from beneath the coat's hem. His eyes fixate on the spot, waiting for another look. There is a slight movement and it appears – a long, red, fleshy protuberance. The sight of it sends shivers up JACOB's spine. It looks strangely like a tail. Only the stopping of the train breaks JACOB's stare.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

JACOB is the only passenger getting off. The doors close quickly behind him. He glances at the LADY sitting by the window. There is a fearful expression on her face as the train carries her back into the dark tunnel, out of his sight.

JACOB reaches the exit, a huge metal revolving door surrounded by floor to ceiling gates. He is about to push when he notices a chain locking it shut. He stares at it in disbelief.

JACOB
Goddam it.

He turns in a huff and hikes to the other end of the platform. As he approaches the far exit, his eyes widen. The gate there is also locked. His hands reach for his hips as he studies an impossible situation.

CUT TO JACOB stepping cautiously onto the ladder going down to the tracks. A rat scampers by and he gasps.

JACOB
No way!

He starts to climb back up the ladder but sees that there is nowhere else to go. He juts out his jaw and steps back down.

JACOB is not comfortable on the tracks. He cannot see where he is stepping. His shoes splash in unseen liquid which makes him grimace. The steel girders are coated in subway grime. The oily substance coats his hands as he reaches for support.

JACOB

Goddam fucking city!

He wipes the grime on his postal uniform as he steps toward the center track. He reaches for another girder when it begins to vibrate. Two pinpoints of light hurl toward him. Then the noise arrives confirming his fear. A train is bearing down on him. JACOB looks frightened, not sure which way to go. He steps forward, up to his ankle in slime. He cannot tell which track the train is on. It is moving at phenomenal speed. The station is spinning. The train's lights merge into one brilliant intensity.

In near panic JACOB jumps across the track as the train spins by. Its velocity blows his hair straight up as though it is standing on end. He clings to a pillar for support, gasping in short breaths.

A few PEOPLE are staring at JACOB from the train. Their faces, pressed up against the glass, seem deformed. A lone figure waves at him from the rear window. The train bears them all away. Then it is quiet again. For a moment JACOB is afraid to move but slowly regains his composure. He continues to the other side of the tracks and stumbles up the ladder to the UPTOWN PLATFORM.

CUT TO:

JACOB smiling. The smile, however, is one of irony, not amusement. This exit too is locked. A heavy chain is wrapped through the bars. JACOB stares at it with an expression of total bewilderment.

A sudden muffled scream alerts JACOB that he is not alone. His head turns but sees no one. He hears the scream again. He senses its direction and walks toward the MEN'S ROOM. A crack of light appears under the door. He can hear someone moaning inside. JACOB knocks softly and the moaning stops. The lights click off.

JACOB

Hey, is someone in there?

There is no answer. JACOB stands silently for a moment, not sure what to do. He can hear whispering. He chews his lower lip nervously and then reaches for the door. It pushes open.

The light from the station penetrates the darkness. He gasps. He sees a MAN tied naked to the stall with ANOTHER NAKED MAN

grabbing quickly for his clothes. The BOUND MAN screams.

BOUND MAN

Fuck off! Mind your own business!

A THIRD MAN spins out of the shadows, pointing a knife at JACOB's throat.

MAN

You cocksucker! Get outta here.

The MAN's face is barely human. Before JACOB can even react the door slams shut. The lock engages. The crack of light reappears. JACOB can hear laughter coming from inside, followed by a scream. He backs away from the door. His face is white.

JACOB turns with full fury and storms the gate. The chain gives way to his anger. It flies apart and the gate flings open. He stands in amazement, observing the chain as it slides from between the bars and drops to the concrete below. The gate squeaks loudly as JACOB pushes it aside and clangs with an almost painful burst as he slams it shut.

EXT. WILMINGTON TOWERS - DAWN

JACOB walks toward the towering shadows of a massive PUBLIC HOUSING PROJECT. It is dark and the moonlight silhouettes the huge monolithic structures. JACOB passes through a vast COURTYARD dominated by the imposing shapes. Aside from his moving body everything is still.

INT. HALLWAY - DAWN

JACOB steps off a graffiti-festooned ELEVATOR into a long impersonal hallway. He uses three keys to unlock the door to his APARTMENT.

INT. JACOB'S APT. - DAWN

JACOB enters the darkness without turning on the light. He tries to navigate his way to the BATHROOM, illuminated by a tiny nightlight in the distance. His effort is unsuccessful. He bangs loudly into a table. A WOMAN's voice calls out.

JEZZIE (V.O.)

Jake, is that you?

JACOB

What the hell did you do, move all
the furniture?

JEZZIE (V.O.)

Why didn't you turn on the light?

JACOB

I didn't want to wake you.

JEZZIE (V.O.)

(sleepy but pleasant)

Gee, thanks a lot.

JACOB

Where is the lamp?

JEZZIE (V.O.)

Where are you?

JACOB

If I knew I wouldn't have to ask.
What did you do? I was happy the way
it was.

JEZZIE (V.O.)

I moved the couch. That's all.

JACOB

Where to?

JACOB crashes into it. A light suddenly goes on. JEZEBEL
"JEZZIE" PIPKIN, 33, is standing in the BEDROOM door tying a
man's terrycloth bathrobe around her waist. Although sleepy,
disheveled, and not looking her best, it is obvious that
JEZZIE is a beefy woman, juicy and sensual.

JEZZIE

That help?

JACOB

(nearly sprawled over
the couch)

Thanks.

He pushes himself up.

JEZZIE

What do you think?

JACOB

What do you mean?

JEZZIE

The room!

JACOB

Oh God, Jezzie, ask me tomorrow.

JEZZIE

It is tomorrow. Four A.M. How come you're so late?

JACOB

Roberts didn't show up. What could I say? Besides, it's double time.

JEZZIE

(seeing the grease on his uniform)

What happened to you?

JACOB

(unbuttoning his shirt as he walks to the bathroom)

Don't ask.

JACOB steps into the BATHROOM and pulls at his clothes, leaving them in a pile on the floor. He reaches for the faucet and sends a stream of water pounding against the porcelain tub. JEZZIE enjoys JACOB's nakedness. She reaches out to his chest and squeezes one of his nipples. His body tenses slightly. JEZZIE drops her robe. They enter the shower together.

EXT. VIETNAM - NIGHT

A DENSE RAIN falls on a dark night filling puddles of water. JACOB is crawling through the underbrush in the Vietnamese JUNGLE. His shirt is bloodsoaked. He moves slowly, creeping on his right forearm. His left arm is holding his intestines from spilling onto the grass.

JACOB

Help me. Someone.

Suddenly a flashlight beam can be seen in the distance. It dances around the bamboo trees and draws closer to JACOB. It is impossible to see who is carrying it. The light darts near the ground where JACOB is lying and then bursts directly into his eyes.

INT. JACOB'S APT. - DAY

SUNLIGHT pours through the BEDROOM window. JACOB is sleeping fitfully as a bar of light saturates his face. His hand rushes up to cover and protect his eyes but the damage is done. He is awake.

JACOB lies in bed for a few moments, dazed. Slowly his hand gropes along the shelf at the head of the bed, searching for his glasses. He has trouble finding them. As his hand sweeps blindly across the headboard it hits the telephone and sends it crashing to the floor. He sits up with a disgusted look on his face and searches the out-of-focus shelf behind him. Suddenly JEZZIE enters.

JEZZIE
You up?

JACOB
No. Have you seen my glasses?

JEZZIE
(shaking her head)
Where'd you leave 'em?

JACOB
I don't know.

JEZZIE
Did you look around the headboard?

JACOB
(wearily)
Jezzie, I can't see.

JEZZIE
(she scans the shelf)
Maybe you left 'em in the bathroom.

She leaves and returns moments later with his glasses and a large paper bag. She tosses them both onto the bed.

JACOB

Thanks.

(he puts on his glasses
and notices the bag)

What's that?

JEZZIE

Your kid dropped it off.

JACOB

Who? Jed?

JEZZIE

(stooping to pick up
the phone)

No. The little one.

JACOB

Eli. Why can't you remember their
names?

JEZZIE

They're weird names.

JACOB

They're Biblical. They were prophets.

JEZZIE

Well, personally, I never went for
church names.

JACOB

And where do you think Jezebel comes
from?

JEZZIE

I don't let anybody call me that.

JACOB

(shaking his head)

You're a real heathen, you know that,
Jezzie? Jesus, how did I ever get
involved with such a ninny?

JEZZIE

You sold your soul, remember? That's
what you told me.

JACOB
Yeah, but for what?

JEZZIE
A good lay.

JACOB
And look what I got.

JEZZIE
The best.

JACOB
I must have been out of my head.

JEZZIE
Jake, you are never out of your head!

JACOB
(ignoring the criticism
and reaching for the
paper bag)
What's in here?

JEZZIE
Pictures. Your wife was gonna toss
'em so "what's his name" brought 'em
over on his way to school.

JACOB lifts the bag and pours the photographs onto the bed. There are hundreds of them. He examines them with growing delight.

JACOB
Look at these, will ya? I don't
believe it. Jesus, these are
fantastic. Look, here's my Dad...
And here's my brother, when we were
down in Florida.

JEZZIE
Lemme see.

JACOB
(rummaging excitedly
through the pile)
Here. Look. This is me and Sarah

when I was still at City College.

JEZZIE

(looking closely)

That's Sarah?

(she studies the photo)

I can see what you mean.

JACOB

What?

JEZZIE

Why you left.

JACOB

What do you mean you can see?

JEZZIE

Look at her face. A real bitch.

JACOB

She looked good then.

JEZZIE

Not to me.

JACOB

Well, you didn't marry her.

He digs through more photos. Suddenly he stops.

JEZZIE

What's wrong?

To JEZZIE's surprise and his own, tears well up in his eyes. For a moment JACOB is unable to speak. He just stares at one of the photos. JEZZIE looks at the picture. It is an image of JACOB carrying a small child on his shoulders.

JEZZIE

Is that the one who died?

JACOB

(nodding)

Gabe.

JEZZIE is silent. JACOB grabs a Kleenex and blows his nose.

JACOB

(continuing)

Sorry. it just took me by surprise.
I didn't expect to see him this
morning... God, what I wouldn't...
He was the cutest little guy. Like
an angel, you know. He had this
smile...

(choking up again)

Fuck, I don't even remember this
picture.

Hiding his emotions, JACOB scrambles over the bed and reaches for a pair of pants. He pulls out his wallet and then carefully puts the photo of GABE inside. It joins photos of his two other boys. JEZZIE begins shoving the remaining pictures back into the paper bag.

JACOB

Wait. Don't.

JEZZIE

I don't like things that make you
cry.

JACOB

I just want to look...

He reaches into the pile for other snapshots. We see an array of frozen moments, happy, unfocused, obscure. Suddenly he stops and stares at a yellowing snapshot.

JACOB

God, this is me!

(he holds up a baby
photo)

Look. It's dated right after I was
born.

(he stares at it
intently)

What a kid. Cute, huh? So much
promise.

JEZZIE surveys the scene.

JEZZIE

It's amazing, huh Jake? Your whole
life... right in front of you.

(she pauses before
making her final
pronouncement)
What a mess!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

JEZZIE carries the garbage to an INCINERATOR ROOM down the hall. She is carrying several bags. Two of them are tossed instantly down the chute. She hesitates with the third. After a moment she reaches into it and pulls out a handful of photos. They are pictures of JACOB and SARAH. With cool deliberation she drops them down the chute. An apartment door slams shut. Quickly she disposes of the pictures remaining in her hand. JACOB opens the door to the tiny room as the bag filled with the memories of his life falls to the fire below.

JACOB
Ready?

JEZZIE
Just gettin' rid of the garbage.

JACOB and JEZZIE, both wearing postal uniforms, head for the ELEVATOR. They are surprised that it has arrived promptly. JEZZIE reaches out and playfully sticks her tongue into JACOB's ear. He pulls her into the ELEVATOR. They disappear, laughing, behind its closing doors.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - DAY

JACOB is driving a mail truck through the crowded streets of midtown Manhattan. As he drives he is humming to himself a rendition of Al Jolson's "Sonny Boy."

JACOB stops his truck in front of a LAUNDRY on West 46th Street. He opens the back door and pulls a stack of boxes toward him. He lifts them with effort and slams the door with his foot. It doesn't close. He considers giving it another whack but the boxes are heavy. He turns instead and waddles toward the store.

INT. LAUNDRY - DAY

A heavysset WOMAN with a dark tan is standing behind a counter cluttered with laundry. A picture of Richard Nixon is still stapled to the wall. She looks at JACOB.

WOMAN

Where do you expect me to put those?
I don't have any room.

She tries clearing the counter, but it doesn't help.

WOMAN

(continuing)

How 'bout over there?
(she points to a table)
No wait. Do me a favor. Bring 'em to
the back room.

JACOB

They're awfully heavy.

WOMAN

I know. That's why I'm asking.

JACOB waddles reluctantly toward the back of the store.
CHINESE LAUNDERERS are hovering over piles of clothes. Steam
from the pressing machines shoots into the air.

JACOB

(huffing and puffing)

Where's Wong?

WOMAN

That's what I'd like to know. If you
see him on the street somewhere,
tell him he's fired.

JACOB stoops to put the boxes on the shelf. There is a
snapping sound and he winces in pain. Massaging his back,
JACOB unfolds some papers for the WOMAN's signature.

JACOB

How was Palm Springs?

WOMAN

Hot. Where do I sign?

JACOB

(pointing to the line)

You got a nice tan, though.

WOMAN

Tan? What tan? It faded on the airplane. I'd try to get my money back, but who do you ask?

(she looks heavenward)

Two hundred dollars a night, for what?

She hands JACOB the wrong sheet.

JACOB

No. I'll take the other one.

(he takes it)

Right. Well it's good to have you back. See you tomorrow, probably.

WOMAN

If you're lucky.

JACOB smiles to himself as he leaves the store. He walks carefully. His back is out.

INT. MAIL TRUCK - DAY

ANGLE ON THE MAIL TRUCK stuck in traffic. Nothing is moving. Horns are blaring and drivers are agitated. JACOB reaches for a newspaper lying on top of his mail bags. To his shock one of the bags appears to move. Curious, JACOB pokes at it. Instantly a terrifying figure pops out from beneath it and stares at him with a frightening glare. JACOB jumps back, stunned. It is a moment before he realizes that he is looking at an old WINO who has been sleeping in the truck. The man's face is covered in strange bumps.

JACOB

Goddamn it! What the hell... ?

WINO

(pleading)

I didn't take nothin'. I was just napping. Don't hit me. I was cold.

JACOB

(lifting the man up)

What the hell do you think you're doing? You can't do this. This is government property.

He begins opening the door. The WINO begs.

WINO

Don't throw me out. They're gonna get me. They'll tear me to pieces.

He holds on to JACOB's leg. JACOB tries to pull away.

JACOB

Come on. You can't stay here.

WINO

Please! I never hurt anybody when I was alive. Believe me. I don't belong here.

JACOB gives the WINO a strange look and then escorts him from the truck. A hundred eyes peer out of motionless cars and follow him as he leads the WINO to the sidewalk. JACOB pulls a dollar bill from his pocket and places it in the WINO's hand. The OLD MAN crumples it into a ball and turns away. He has a frightened look on his face. JACOB returns to the truck shaking his head.

JACOB

New York!

He climbs into his seat and glances into his rear view mirror. He notices the WINO edging fearfully along the side of a building. A horn honks and traffic begins moving. When JACOB looks back the WINO is no longer there.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

JACOB drives his mail truck into the huge POST OFFICE PARKING GARAGE on 34th Street. His mind seems distracted. He has difficulty parking.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

We see a vast room filled with hundreds of PEOPLE sorting and moving mail.

JACOB, carrying a bag of McDonald's hamburgers, walks stiffly through the aisles, his left hand rubbing his back. Several workers greet him and grab for his french fries. He offers them around.

ANGLE ON a conveyor belt sorting mail. A hand reaches in,

correcting mistakes. Suddenly a hamburger passes by. JEZZIE looks up and smiles.

JEZZIE
Jake!

JACOB
How's it going?

She takes the hamburger and shrugs.

JACOB
(continuing)
I'm going home.

JEZZIE
What's wrong?

JACOB
I don't know. One of these days, I'm gonna see Louis. My back's killing me.

JEZZIE
Now? What about the boss? He's not gonna like it.

JACOB shrugs.

JEZZIE
(continuing)
Well, I'll miss riding home with you. I was looking forward to it.

JACOB
I'll be glad to avoid the crush.

JEZZIE
I enjoy crushing into you.

She grabs him and hugs him tightly.

JACOB
Gently. My back.

JEZZIE ignores him and squeezes again.

INT. CHIROPRACTIC OFFICE - DAY

CUT ON A SCREAM to JACOB in a CHIROPRACTOR'S OFFICE. He is lying on a long leather padded device that looks like an instrument of torture. LOUIS, the Chiropractor, is a giant of a man, 280 pounds. He is adjusting JACOB's spine.

LOUIS
Come on, Jake. That didn't hurt.

JACOB
How do you know?

LOUIS
I know you. How come you're so tense today?

JACOB
What can I tell you?

LOUIS
I saw Sarah the other day.

JACOB
Her knee acting up?

LOUIS
A bit.

JACOB
What did she have to say?

LOUIS
Turn on your right side.
(he turns on his left)
How about the other "right?"
(JACOB turns back)
I don't understand you philosophers.
You've got the whole world figured out but you can't remember the difference between right and left.

JACOB
I was absent the day they taught that in school. What did she say?

LOUIS
Who?

JACOB

Sarah.

LOUIS

Not much. She's like you that way.
Two clams. No wonder your marriage
didn't last. Put your hand under
your head. Take a breath and then
let it out.

He makes a rapid adjustment pushing down on JACOB's thigh.
JACOB groans.

LOUIS

(continuing)

Ah, good. Now turn to your left.

JACOB

She talk about the boys?

LOUIS

She says she can't get them new coats
because you haven't sent the alimony
for three months.

JACOB

She told you that?

(he shakes his head)

Did she tell you about the \$2,000
I'm still paying for the orthodontist?
I'll bet she didn't mention that.

LOUIS

She said you were a son of a bitch
and she regrets the day she set eyes
on you.

JACOB

I thought you said she didn't say
much.

LOUIS

She didn't. That's about all she
said. Put your hand up. Good. I think
she still loves you. Take a breath
and let it out.

He makes an adjustment. JACOB screams.

JACOB

Loves me!? She hasn't said a kind word about me in years!

LOUIS

Right. She doesn't stop talking about you. You're always on her mind. That's love, Jake.

JACOB

She hates me, Louis.

LOUIS

You should go back to her.

JACOB

What? She threw me out, remember. She wanted some professor to carry her far away from Brooklyn. Only we didn't make it. She can't forgive me that she still lives in the same house she grew up in.

LOUIS

Her problem is that you spent eight years getting a PhD and then went to work for the post office.

JACOB

What can I tell you, Louis? After Nam I didn't want to think anymore. I decided my brain was too small an organ to comprehend this chaos.

LOUIS

(looking at JACOB
with affection)

If it was any other brain but yours, I might agree. Relax, this is going to be strong.

JACOB

I can't relax.

LOUIS

Wiggle your toes.

JACOB wiggles his toes. At that instant, LOUIS twists JACOB's neck rapidly. There is a loud cracking sound.

EXT. VIETNAM - NIGHT

THERE IS A FLASH OF LIGHT. A MAN rushes at the camera yelling.

MAN

I found one. He's alive.

He shines a flashlight into the lens creating rings and halos.

CHIROPRACTIC OFFICE - DAY

Suddenly LOUIS reappears, a halo effect still visible behind his head.

JACOB

God almighty. What did you do to me?

LOUIS

I had to get in there. A deep adjustment. Rest a moment and let it set a bit.

JACOB

I had this weird flash just then.

LOUIS

What?

JACOB

I don't know. I've been having them recently.

(he thinks a moment,
then changes the
subject)

You know, you look like an angel, Louis, an overgrown cherub. Anyone ever tell you that?

LOUIS

Yeah. You. Every time I see you. No more Errol Flynn, okay? Your back won't take it. You tell your girl friend to calm down if she knows what's good for you.

JACOB
Louis, you're a life saver.

LOUIS
I know.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREETS - EVENING

JACOB is walking down Nostrand Avenue. He is singing to himself and imitating Al Jolson.

JACOB
When there are gray skies, I don't
mind the gray skies, as long as
there's you ...

He hums. It is near dusk and lights are just coming on. The shop windows have a particularly garish look about them. The mannequins are dressed in inexpensive, almost tawdry, clothes and have a pathetic appearance. A few shops have set up their Christmas decorations.

The ornamentation seems strangely out of place; almost blasphemous.

JACOB passes a street gang standing in the doorway of a local drug store. They chortle and make taunting sounds.

GIRL
(shaking her tits,
singing)
"Hey, Mr. Postman..."

JACOB stops and stares at them. To their surprise, he begins to sing with them. He knows the words. They like that. It is a sweet moment.

JACOB continues walking. He comes to a cross street. The light is green. He is still singing to himself and does not notice a BLACK CAR charging around the corner. The car is moving at full speed, heading straight toward him. A YOUNG MAN walking a few steps behind yells out.

YOUNG MAN
Look out!

JACOB turns and sees the car. He scoots out of the way but it swerves in his direction. The YOUNG MAN calls out again.

YOUNG MAN

Jump!

With a huge thrust, JACOB hurls himself onto the curb as the car shoots by. Two MEN are peering at him from the back seat. They are laughing like madmen and shaking their heads. They do not look human. JACOB yells and waves his fist, to no effect. After a moment he turns to thank the YOUNG MAN whose scream had saved him, but he is gone.

INT. JACOB'S APT. - DUSK

JACOB and JEZZIE are lying in bed. They are a sensual couple and even in quiet, reflective moments such as this, their positioning is erotic and stimulating. Both of them are nude. JACOB's hands are clasped behind his neck and he is staring mournfully at the ceiling. JEZZIE is lying on her side, her left leg draped across JACOB's pelvis. Her head is propped up on her right arm while her left hand strokes the bayonet scar on JACOB's stomach. Neither are talking. Suddenly, out of the blue, JEZZIE speaks.

JEZZIE

Maybe it's all the pressure, Jake.
The money. Things like that. Or your
wife.

JACOB

Why do you bring her up?

JEZZIE

'Cause she's always on your mind.

JACOB

When was the last time I said a word?

JEZZIE

It has nothin' to do with talkin'.

She pauses for a while, long enough to suppose that the conversation is over. Then she continues.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

Or maybe it's the war.

JACOB closes his eyes.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

It's still there, Jake.

(she points to his
brain)

Even if you never say a word about
it. You can't spend two years in
Vietnam...

JACOB

(annoyed)

What does that have to do with
anything? Does it explain the
barricaded subway stations? Does it
explain those Godforsaken creatures?

JEZZIE

New York is filled with creatures.
Everywhere. And lots of stations are
closed.

JACOB

They're like demons, Jez.

JEZZIE

Demons, Jake? Come on. They're winos
and bag ladies. Low life. That's all
they are. The streets are crawling
with 'em. Don't make em into somethin'
they're not.

(she rubs his forehead)

It's the pressure, honey. That's all
it is.

JACOB

Those guys tried to kill me tonight.
They were aiming right at me.

JEZZIE

Kids on a joy ride. Happens all the
time.

JACOB

They weren't human!

JEZZIE

Come on. What were they, Jake?

JACOB doesn't answer. He turns over on his stomach. JEZZIE stares at his naked back and drags her fingernails down to his buttocks. Scratch marks follow in their wake.

JEZZIE
You still love me?

He does not respond.

INT. JACOB'S KITCHEN - DAY

JACOB and JEZZIE are sitting at the breakfast table. JEZZIE is reading the National Enquirer and chewing at her lip. Suddenly a drop of blood forms and falls onto the formica table top. Staring at it for a moment, she wipes it with her finger and then licks it with her tongue.

JACOB is nursing a cup of coffee and staring out the window at the housing project across the way. The toaster pops. JEZZIE jumps. She gets up, butters her toast, and returns to her paper.

JEZZIE
Says here the world's comin' to an
end. The battle of heaven and hell
they call it. Should be quite a show;
fireworks, H-bombs, and everything.
You believe them, Jake?

JACOB doesn't answer.

JEZZIE
(continuing)
Me neither... God, look at this. Two
heads. Only lived two days. A day
for each head. Could you imagine me
with two heads? We'd probably keep
each other up all night – arguing
and whatnot. You wanna see the
picture?

He does not respond. JEZZIE gets up and walks over to JACOB. Standing in front of him she slowly unties her robe and lets it fall apart. She is naked underneath it. Sensuously she leans forward, unbuttons his shirt, and strokes his chest. She waits for a response from him, but there is none. He sits silently, disinterested.

Furious, JEZZIE turns away. Grabbing the vacuum cleaner from the broom closet she angrily unravels the cord and switches it on. Breasts flash from beneath her gown as the vacuum roars back and forth across the floor.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

Goddamn you son-of-a-bitch! My uncle's dogs used to treat me better than you do. At least they'd lick my toes once in a while. At least they showed some fucking interest.

A NEIGHBOR bangs on the wall, shouting.

JEZZIE

All right! All right! All right!

JACOB peers at the courtyard eighteen stories below and watches the patterns of early morning movement. Tiny figures drift purposefully over the concrete.

Suddenly the vacuum cleaner goes off. In the silence, JACOB realizes that JEZZIE is crying and turns to see her curled over the kitchen table. He walks to her side and strokes her hair. JEZZIE begins to sob. After a moment she looks at him with puffy eyes.

JEZZIE

You love me?

He nods his head "yes." She smiles coyly and rubs her hair like a kitten against his crotch. After a few moments she speaks.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

Della's party's tonight. Why don't we go? It'll take your minf offa things. And I won't make you dance. I promise. Huh?

(he nods his head in consent. JEZZIE hugs him)

You still love me, Jake?

He nods his head again, only heavily, as though the question

exhausts him.

INT. BELLVUE HOSPITAL - DAY

JACOB is in the "Mental Health Clinic" at BELLVUE HOSPITAL walking through the PSYCHIATRIC EMERGENCY ROOM. It is overflowing with people. Some are handcuffed to their chairs. POLICEMEN are with them. JACOB approaches the main RECEPTION DESK. He speaks nervously.

JACOB

I'd like to speak to Dr. Carlson,
please.

RECEPTIONIST

Carlson? Is he new here?

JACOB

New? He's been here for years.

She shrugs and looks at a log book.

RECEPTIONIST

Not according to my charts. Do you
have an appointment?

JACOB

(shaking his head)

Look, I need to see him. I know where
his room is. Just give me a pass. I
won't be long. Ten minutes.

RECEPTIONIST

Our doctors are seen by appointment
only.

JACOB

Damn it. I was in the veteran's out-
patient program. He knows me.

RECEPTIONIST

(not happy)

What's your name?

JACOB

Jacob Singer.

She walks over to a file drawer and goes through it several

times before coming back over to JACOB.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry but there's no record of a Jacob Singer in our files.

JACOB

Whataya mean, no record?

RECEPTIONIST

You want me to spell it out? There's nothing here.

JACOB

That's ridiculous. I've been coming here for years. Listen to me. I'm going out of my fucking mind here. I need to see him.

RECEPTIONIST

If this is an emergency we have a staff of psychiatric social workers. There's about an hour's wait. I'll be glad to take your name. Why don't you just fill out this form?

JACOB

Goddamn it! I don't want a social worker. Carlson knows me.

JACOB pounds the desk, rattling a tiny African violet and knocking the RECEPTIONIST's forms to the floor. She grunts angrily and stoops to retrieve them. Standing up her cap hits a drawer handle and slips off. TWO KNUCKLE-LIKE HORNS protrude from her skull where the cap had been. JACOB's eyes lock on them like radar. He backs away. She immediately replaces her cap and breaks the spell, but her eyes glare at him with demonic intensity. JACOB, freaked, angry, turns and runs toward the "In Patient" door.

RECEPTIONIST

Hey! You can't go in there!

JACOB doesn't stop. A POLICEMAN, guarding the entrance, runs after him.

JACOB charges through the interior corridors of the aging institution. A LINE OF MENTAL PATIENTS, all holding hands,

is moving down the hall. They break ranks as he charges by and begin to scream. Their ATTENDANT tries to calm them down but the sight of the POLICEMAN increases their hysteria. They grab hold of him as he tries to get by.

POLICEMAN
LET GO! GET AWAY!

INT. GROUP ROOM - DAY

JACOB dashes out of view. He runs down another corridor, wildly searching for a specific room. He finds it and rushes inside. He is surprised to find A GROUP OF MEN AND WOMEN seated in a circle. They all look up at him.

LEADER
Can I help you?

JACOB
I'm looking for Dr. Carlson. Isn't this his office?

The LEADER stares at him uncomfortably. After a moment he gets up and takes JACOB into a corner of the room. Everyone is watching them. The LEADER speaks quietly.

LEADER
I'm so sorry. Obviously you haven't...
Dr. Carlson died.

JACOB
(stunned)
Died?

LEADER
A car accident.

JACOB
Jesus, Jesus!... When?

LEADER
Last month, before Thanksgiving.

JACOB
How did it happen?

LEADER
No one knows. They say it blew up.

JACOB
(growing pale)
Blew up? What do you mean it blew
up?

The LEADER shrugs and tries to put his arm around JACOB, but he pulls away.

LEADER
Do you want me to get someone?

JACOB
No. No. It's okay. I'm okay.

He backs quickly to the door. As he turns to leave he realizes that all of the PEOPLE in the group are watching him intently.

Unsettled, JACOB hurries back into the hallway. He is frightened and confused. Suddenly a voice calls out.

POLICEMAN
HEY YOU! MAILMAN!

JACOB turns and sees the POLICEMAN waiting for him. His gun is drawn.

POLICEMAN
Hold it. Just hold it. Where the hell do you think you are? This is Bellevue, for God's sake. People running around here get shot.

The GROUP LEADER pokes his head out of the door and motions to the POLICEMAN.

LEADER
It's alright. He's okay.

POLICEMAN
(nodding, re-holstering
his gun)
Come on, get out of here. I wouldn't want to interfere with the U.S. Mail.

He leads JACOB toward the lobby. JACOB does not look back.

INT. DELLA'S APT. - NIGHT

WE HEAR LOUD DANCE MUSIC. SLY AND THE FAMILY STONE. JACOB is with some POST OFFICE EMPLOYEES at a crowded party in a small apartment. A DRUNK is telling a bad joke and trying to hold a glass of wine at the same time. It is constantly on the verge of spilling. JACOB is fixated on it. In the background, we see JEZZIE dancing and motioning for JACOB to join her. He nods no. The DRUNK, who keeps asking people if they "get it," takes JACOB's head nodding as a sign of confusion and keeps trying to re-explain the joke.

JACOB hears a strange noise and looks around. It seems to be coming from a covered bird cage. He goes over to it and lifts the cover. The BIRD is flapping its wings wildly as if trying to get out. The sound, loud and insistent, startles him. He lowers the cover.

In the DINING ROOM, several people are gathered around ELSA, an attractive black woman who is reading palms. She sees JACOB and calls over the music.

ELSA

Hey, you! Let me look at your hand!

JACOB shrugs. DELLA, dancing nearby, calls out.

DELLA

Go on Jake. She reads 'em like a book.

JACOB

No, thanks.

DELLA

It's fun.

CUT TO A CLOSE UP OF JACOB'S HAND. ELSA is squeezing the mounds and examining the lines. What begins as a playful expression on her face turns suddenly serious. She reaches for his other hand and compares the two of them. JEZZIE looks over from her dancing and eyes the scene jealously.

ELSA

You have an unusual hand.

JACOB

I could have told you that.

ELSA

You see this line here? It's your life line. Here's where you were born. And this is where you got married. You're a married man, huh? Oh oh. Nope. Divorce. See this split.

She studies his life line with growing concern. JEZZIE tries to get JACOB's attention. He ignores her.

ELSA

(continuing)

You know, you got a strange line here.

JACOB

(examining it)

It's short, huh?

ELSA

Short? It's ended.

JACOB

(laughing)

Oh, terrific.

ELSA

It's not funny. According to this... you're already dead.

JACOB

(smiling)

Just my luck.

CUT TO:

THE DANCERS. Their movements are loose and getting looser. The music is strong and insistent. The smokey atmosphere disfigures the dancers and gives them a strange, distorted appearance. Suddenly JEZZIE breaks from the crowd and reaches for JACOB. He pulls away. Some of the MALE DANCERS call out to him.

DANCERS

Come on man, show your stuff.

JACOB is easily intimidated. Relenting, he glares at JEZZIE and nods apologetically to ELSA. It is obvious that he is

embarrassed at his inadequacy on the dance floor.

MAN

Come on professor. You got feet,
too.

JACOB tries to smile but it is pained and unconvincing. JEZZIE is playing with him, mimicking his movement. A number of DANCERS notice and laugh, which only increases his discomfort. JEZZIE's taunting has a strange effect on JACOB. He grows distant and withdrawn, even though his body is still going through the motions of the dance.

A MAN taps JEZZIE on the shoulder. She spins around, smiling, and begins dancing with him. JACOB is left alone, dancing by himself. He looks away, uncomfortable.

In the shadows a WOMAN kneels close to the floor. She seems to be urinating on the carpet. JACOB is shocked. Several DANCERS obscure his view. He turns around.

A PREGNANT WOMAN stands half naked in the kitchen. JACOB cannot believe what he sees.

In the next room, past JEZZIE, JACOB glimpses a terrifying image, a MAN whose head seems to be vibrating at such enormous speed that it has lost all definition. Something about the image compels and frightens JACOB. Slowly he approaches it. As he draws nearer to it the tortured image lets out a scream of such pain and unearthly terror that JACOB backs away.

A WOMAN, laughing, grabs JACOB, spins him around, and begins dancing with him. He is totally disoriented.

WOMAN

Hold me, baby!

She takes JACOB's arm and guides it to her back. THE CAMERA follows his hand as it reaches the smooth skin beneath her sexy, loose fitting dress. He runs his fingers up to her shoulder blades. Then, suddenly, he recoils. Her back is a mass of shoulder blades, hundreds of strange, bony protrusions. JACOB gasps. Out of the blue, JEZZIE leans into him and wiggles her tongue in his ear. JACOB, startled, jerks his head and his glasses go flying to the floor.

JACOB

Shit!

He stoops down blindly to pick them up. Shoes just miss his fingers as he digs between dancing legs trying to recover them. Miraculously, he grabs the spectacles just before they are crushed and slips them back on. Instantly his world comes back into focus.

As he stands, JACOB is surprised to find JEZZIE facing him, gyrating in wild abandon. There is a huge, satisfied smile on her face. She grabs his hand as if encouraging him to dance but it is obvious that she is dancing to her own rhythm. JACOB stares at her, confused. It takes him a moment to realize that her smile is not for him.

Standing behind JEZZIE is another DANCER, his hands around her waist. They are moving together, locked in erotic embrace. It appears that he is mounting her from behind. Looking down we see that the DANCER's feet are deformed. They have a bizarre clubbed appearance and look very much like hooves. They skid and careen amidst the dancing feet.

Something horrible and winglike flaps behind JEZZIE's back. We cannot make out what it is, but it elicits a primal terror. Before JACOB can react, JEZZIE opens her mouth. With a roaring sound, a spiked horn erupts from her throat. It juts menacingly from between her teeth and thrusts into the air. A CIRCLE OF DANCERS scream out in excited approval.

CUT TO JACOB's face as it registers terror and disbelief. He stares at the DANCERS who are crowding around him. They have become perverse, corrupt aspects of their normal selves.

JACOB grabs his eyes as though trying to pull the vision from his head but it won't go away. The music throbs. His actions become spastic, almost delirious.

JACOB is out of control. His frenzy becomes a kind of exorcism, a desperate attempt to free himself from his body and his mind. WE MOVE IN ON HIM as his eyes pass beyond pain. The dark walls of the APARTMENT fade away.

EXT. VIETNAM - NIGHT

Strange faces in infantry helmets appear in the darkness, outlined by a bright moon that is emerging from behind a cloud. The faces are looking down and voices are speaking.

VOICE

He's burning up.

VOICE

Total delirium.

VOICE

That's some gash. His guts keep
spilling out.

VOICE

Push 'em back.

JACOB (V.O.)

Help me!

His eyes focus on the moon. Rings of light emanate from it filling the sky with their sparkling brilliance. The rings draw us forward with a quickening intensity that grows into exhilarating speed. The rush causes them to flash stroboscopically and produces a dazzling, almost sensual, surge of color. The display is spectacular and compelling.

Music can be heard in the distance, growing hard and insistent, like a heart beat. Heavy breathing accompanies the sound. The stroboscopic flashes are replaced by intense flashes of red and blue light. The music grows louder and reaches a thundering crescendo. Then silence.

INT. DELLA'S APT. - NIGHT

The APARTMENT reappears in all its normalcy. The neon sign is still flashing outside the window. DANCERS are smiling and sweating.

Cheers and applause ring out for JACOB and JEZZIE but JACOB barely hears them. JEZZIE hugs him tightly. PEOPLE smack him on the back.

ADMIRER

You are out of your mind, man. Out
of your fuckin' mind.

WOMAN

Jake, you little devil. You never
told me you could dance like that.

MAN

Jezzie, what did you put in his drink?

JEZZIE smiles while pulling JACOB to a corner chair. He plops down. His chest is heaving and he is grabbing hold of his stomach. His face is frightened and distorted.

JEZZIE
You okay?

JACOB
I wanna leave. Get me out of here.

JEZZIE
Oh, come on. It's early.

JACOB
(pulling JEZZIE close
to him, his voice
filled with paranoia)
Where are we?

JEZZIE
(surprised by the
question)
We're at Della's.

JACOB
Where?

JEZZIE
What do you mean? Where do you think?

JACOB
Where's Della? Bring her here?

JEZZIE
Why? What for?

JACOB
Show me Della!

JEZZIE
(confused)
Hey, I'm here.

JACOB eyes her with a pleading look. Annoyed, JEZZIE leaves JACOB and crosses the room. He watches her as she goes. JACOB is holding his stomach and rocking painfully. Moments later JEZZIE returns with DELLA.

DELLA
Hiya Jake. That was some dance.

JACOB
(staring at her closely)
Della?

DELLA
(feeling the
strangeness)
You want to see me? Well, here I am.

JACOB
I see.

DELLA
What do you want?

JACOB
Just to see you. That's all.

DELLA
(a bit uncomfortable)
Well, how do I look?

JACOB
Like Della.

Suddenly JACOB breaks out in a dense sweat and begins shaking.
His entire body is convulsive.

JEZZIE
Are you feeling all right? Shit,
you're burning up. Feel his forehead.

DELLA
(checking his forehead
and cheeks)
Damn, that's hot. Maybe from dancing.

JEZZIE
I think you should lie down.

JACOB is shaking uncontrollably. People are gathering around.

JEZZIE
(continuing)

Can't you stop it?

JACOB

If I could stop it, I'd stop it.

WOMAN

Is he sick?

DELLA

He's on fire.

ELSA

Let me help you.

She reaches out to JACOB. Unexpectedly he recoils, jumping to his feet like a wild man. He begins to scream.

JACOB

Stay away from me! Don't you come near me! All of you. Go to hell! Go to hell, goddamn you! Stay away!

JEZZIE stares at JACOB with a confused and embarrassed look. A MAN whispers to her.

MAN

I'll call a cab.

INT. JACOB'S APT. - NIGHT

JACOB is lying in bed in his own BEDROOM with a thermometer in his mouth. JEZZIE is pacing the floor with great agitation.

JEZZIE

I've never been so mortified in my whole life. Never! Screaming like that. I don't understand what's gotten into you, Jake, to make you do a thing like that. You're not acting normal. I've lived with too many crazies in my life. I don't want it anymore. I can't handle it. I'm tired of men flipping out on me. Shit, you'd think it was my fault. Well you picked me, remember that. I don't need this.

The NEIGHBOR pounds on the wall.

JEZZIE
(continuing)
All right! All right!

JEZZIE jabs her finger at the wall.

JEZZIE
(continuing)
If you go crazy on me you're goin'
crazy by yourself. You understand?

JEZZIE reaches for his mouth and pulls out the thermometer.
She looks at it closely and then squints to see it better.

JACOB
What's it say? A hundred and two?

JEZZIE
I don't believe this. I'm calling
the doctor.

She runs out of the room. JACOB calls after her.

JACOB
What does it say?

JEZZIE (V.O.)
It's gone to the top.

JACOB
How high is that?

JEZZIE (V.O.)
The numbers stop at 107.

JEZZIE is on the phone to the doctor in the next room.

JACOB begins shaking again and reaches for the extra blanket
at the foot of the bed. He pulls it up around his shoulders.
The whole bed vibrates with his shivering. Suddenly JEZZIE
rushes through the BEDROOM and into the BATHROOM. She turns
on the bath water.

JACOB
What the hell are you doin'?

JEZZIE

Get your clothes off.

JACOB

What are you talking about? I'm freezing.

JEZZIE

Get your clothes off!

JACOB gives her a confused look as she rushes back to the KITCHEN.

JACOB

What'd the doctor say?

JEZZIE (V.O.)

That you'd die on the way to the hospital. Now get into that tub.

JACOB stares at her as she bursts back into the BEDROOM carrying four trays of ice cubes. She hurries into the BATHROOM and dumps them in the tub.

JEZZIE (V.O.)

He's coming right over.

JACOB

Coming here?

JEZZIE (V.O.)

Goddamn it. Get in here. I can't stand around waiting.

She rushes out of the BATHROOM and pulls JACOB out of bed. He is shaking violently and she has difficulty navigating across the room and undressing him at the same time. She maneuvers him into the BATHROOM next to the tub. He looks down at the ice cubes floating in the water.

JACOB

You're out of your mind. I'm not getting in there. I'd rather die.

JEZZIE

That's your decision.

JACOB

Look at me. I'm ice cold.

JEZZIE

You're red hot, damn it. Get in there.
I've got to get more ice.

She runs out of the room. The door to the apartment slams shut. JACOB sticks his toe into the water and pulls it out again instantly.

JACOB

Oh Jesus!

He sticks his whole foot in and grits his teeth as the ice cold water turns his foot bright red. He keeps it in as long as he can and then yanks it out, quickly wrapping it in a towel. JACOB rubs his foot vigorously to get rid of the sting and stares at the water, afraid of its pain.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

JEZZIE is running up and down the CORRIDOR knocking on doors and collecting ice cubes from those who will answer. She hurries back to the BATHROOM with several PEOPLE behind her carrying additional ice trays. One of the MEN is shifting the trays in his hands to avoid the burning cold.

INT. JACOB'S BATHROOM

As JEZZIE enters the BATHROOM, JACOB is sitting on the rim of the tub with the water up to his calves, shivering vigorously.

JACOB

I can't do it.

JEZZIE

What kind of man are you?

She unloads two trays into the water.

JACOB

Don't gimme that.

JEZZIE

Lie down!

JACOB

(pleading)

Jezzie! My feet are throbbing!

JEZZIE

(calling out)

Sam, Tony, come in here.

JACOB

Hey, I'm not dressed.

SAM

You got nothin' we ain't seen before.

SAM and TONY grab hold of JACOB who wrestles to get away.

JACOB

Get the hell off me.

TONY

He's like a hot coal.

SAM

It's for your own good, Jake.

JACOB

Let go of me, you sons of bitches.

The TWO MEN struggle with JACOB and force him into the water. TONY winces when the water hits his arm. JACOB nearly flies out of the tub. The TWO MEN fight to hold him down. JACOB screams and cries for the MEN to let him go but they keep him flat on his back.

JACOB

(continuing)

I'm freezing! I'm freezing! Goddamn you!

TONY

(his hand turning red)

Sam, I can't take it.

SAM

Don't you let go.

TONY

Jez, get help. My hands are killing me.

JACOB
Help me! Help me!

JEZZIE
(to TONY)
Here. I'll do it.

TONY
Take his legs.

SAM
Run your hands under hot water.

MRS. CARMICHAEL comes in.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
I have some ice from the machine.

JEZZIE
Bring it in.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
Is he all right?

JEZZIE
He doesn't like it.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
I don't blame him. What should I do
with the ice?

JEZZIE
Pour it in.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
On top of him?

JEZZIE
He's melting it as fast as we dump
it in.

MRS. CARMICHAEL
Okay. My husband's got two more bags.
He's coming. They're heavy.

TONY helps her pour the ice into the water. JACOB yells.

JACOB

Oh God! You're killing me! Stop!

INT. A BEDROOM - NIGHT

CUT TO JACOB lying in a BEDROOM we have not seen before. He is tossing and turning in his bed as though struggling to get out. Suddenly he sits up and looks over at the window. It is open and the shade is flapping. Cold air is blowing in and he is shivering.

JACOB

Damn! You and your fresh air.

He jumps out of bed and goes over to the window. He pushes at the frame and it comes flying down with a loud bang. A woman in the bed sits up. It is SARAH.

SARAH

What was that?

JACOB

It's freezing.

SARAH

I'm not cold.

JACOB

Of course not. You have all the blankets. It must be ten degrees in here. I'm telling you, Sarah, if you want to sleep with fresh air, you sleep on the fire escape. From now on that window is closed.

SARAH

It's not healthy with it closed.

JACOB

This is healthy? I'll probably die of pneumonia tomorrow and this is healthy.

He settles back into bed and pulls the covers back over to his side. He lies quietly for a moment, thinking.

JACOB

(continuing)

What a dream I was having. I was

living with another woman... You know who it was?

SARAH

I don't want to know.

JACOB

Jezebel, from the post office. You remember, you met her that time at the Christmas party. I was living with her. God, it was a nightmare. There were all these demons and I was on fire. Only I was burning from ice.

SARAH

Guilty thoughts. See what happens when you cheat on me, even in your mind?

JACOB

She was good in bed, though.

SARAH

Go to sleep.

JACOB

She had these real beefy thighs. Delicious.

SARAH

I thought you said it was a nightmare?

Suddenly, out of nowhere, we hear the tinkling sound of a music box. A YOUNG BOY enters the room, carrying a musical LUNCH BOX in his arms. He is wearing a long T-shirt nearly down to his ankles. We recognize him from his photograph. It is GABE.

GABE

Daddy, what was that noise?

JACOB

(surprised to see him)

Gabe?

(he stares curiously at his son)

What are you doing... ?

GABE

There was a bang.

JACOB

It was the window.

GABE

It's cold.

JACOB

Tell your mother.

GABE

Mom, it's...

SARAH

I heard you. Go back to sleep.

GABE

Will you tuck me in?

SARAH

(not happily)

Oh... all right.

She starts to rise. JACOB stops her and gets up instead. He whisks GABE upside down and carries him into his

GABE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

BEDROOM, licking his belly and tickling him all the way. GABE laughs and snuggles into his pillow as soon as he hits the bed. JED, 9, and ELI, 7, are both in bunk beds across the room. JED looks up.

JED

Dad?

JACOB

Jed. It's the middle of the night.

(he kisses GABE and
goes over to JED in
the lower bunk)

What's up?

JED

You forgot my allowance.

JACOB

Your allowance? It's five A.M. We'll talk at breakfast.

JED

Okay, but don't forget.

Suddenly another voice pipes in from the top bunk.

ELI

I love you, Dad.

JACOB smiles.

JACOB

What is this, a convention? I love you, too, Pickles. Now go back to sleep.

He turns to leave.

GABE

Wait... Daddy.

JACOB

Now what?

GABE

Don't go.

JACOB

Don't go?

(he smiles)

I'm not going anywhere. I'm right here, Gabe.

(he looks at his son tenderly)

Come on, go back to sleep. You can still get a couple of hours.

He hugs him warmly and then walks to the door.

GABE

...I love you.

There is deep emotion and seriousness in GABE's words. JACOB is struck by them.

GABE
(continuing)
Don't shut the door.

JACOB nods and leaves it a tiny bit ajar.

GABE
(continuing)
A bit more... a bit more.

JACOB adjusts the opening enough to please GABE and make him secure. GABE smiles and cuddles in his bed.

INT. SARAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JACOB settles back into bed. SARAH turns over and gets comfortable. JACOB lies on his back facing the ceiling. He pulls the blankets up to his neck. He is overcome with feelings of sadness and longing.

JACOB
I love you, Sarah.

She smiles warmly. His eyes close and in a matter of seconds he is back asleep.

EXT. VIETNAM - PRE DAWN

WE HEAR SUMMER MORNING SOUNDS, CRICKETS and BIRDS. The image of trees materializes overhead and a beautiful pink sky, just before sunrise, can be seen through the branches. It is an idyllic setting.

Suddenly a strange sound can be heard in the distance, a metallic humming, growing louder. There is a scramble of feet and a sound of heavy boots moving through the tall grass. Voices can be heard. Men's voices.

VOICE
They're here.

VOICE
Thank God. Move 'em out!

VOICES
Bust your balls!

VOICE
Move it! Move it!

There is an instant swell of activity. Trees and branches blur and speed by overhead. The idyllic image of moments before reveals itself as a P.O.V. SHOT. The CAMERA races out of a JUNGLE covering and into a huge CLEARING.

High overhead a helicopter appears. Its blades whirl with a deafening whine. Long lines drop from its belly and dangle in mid-air. SOLDIERS leap up into the air reaching for them. The air is filled with turbulence. Tarps fly off dead bodies. SOLDIERS hold them down. Voices yell but the words are not clear. They are filled with urgency.

The CAMERA leaves the ground. The edges of the sky disappear as the helicopter's gray mass fills the frame. It grows larger and darker as the CAMERA approaches. Rivets and insignias dotting the underbelly come into view. Suddenly the stretcher begins spinning, out of control. Hands emerge from inside, reaching out to grab it.

Watery, womb-like sounds rise out of nowhere, the rippling of water, a heart beating. Gradually voices can be heard mumbling; distant sounds, warm and familiar.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

JACOB's DOCTOR reaches down to help him out of the tub. Surprisingly JEZZIE and MRS. CARMICHAEL are standing there too. JACOB stares at them in total confusion.

DOCTOR
You are a lucky man, my friend. A
lucky man. You must have friends in
high places, that's all I can say.

SAM and TONY appear next to the DOCTOR. They are extending their hands to the P.O.V. CAMERA. JACOB'S arms, nearly blue, reach out to them.

Slowly they lift him from the icy water. JACOB takes one step onto the tile and collapses to the floor.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. JACOB'S BEDROOM - DAY

FADE IN sounds of feet shuffling across the carpet. A glass rattles on a tray. A television is on low in the background. Slowly the CAMERA LENS opens from JACOB's P.O.V. and we see JEZZIE pattering around the BEDROOM. Suddenly she is aware that JACOB is watching her. She smiles.

JEZZIE

Jake.

(she places her hand
on his head and
strokes his hair)

You're gonna be all right, Jake.
You're gonna be fine.

JACOB

Am I home?

JEZZIE

You're here. Home. The doctor said
you're lucky your brains didn't boil.

(she smiles)

What a night, Jake. It was crazy.
You kept sayin' "Sarah, close the
window," over and over. And talkin'
to your kids. Even the dead one.
Weird. You know you melted 200 pounds
of ice in 8 hours. Amazing, huh?

JACOB

Are we in Brooklyn?

JEZZIE

You're right here, Jake. You just
rest.

(she puffs up his
pillow)

The doctor said you had a virus.
That's what they say when they don't
know what it is. You can't do anything
for a week. He says you gotta
recuperate.

(she strokes his
forehead, and gets
up)

Now you just lie here. Mrs. Sandelman
made you some chicken soup. It'll
warm you up.

JEZZIE leaves the room. JACOB watches her as she goes. He seems lost and confused.

INT. JACOB'S KITCHEN - DAY

JACOB, unshaven, wearing his bathrobe, is sitting at the KITCHEN TABLE. PILES OF BOOKS on demonology are spread out before him. He studies them to distraction. JEZZIE is standing by the counter making sandwiches. She wraps them in plastic Baggies and puts one in a lunch box, another in the refrigerator. She is dressed in her postal uniform.

JEZZIE

You know, you really ought to get out today. You can't just sit around like this all the time. It's not healthy. It's not good for your mind. Go take a walk, or somethin'. Go to a movie. Christ, who's gonna know? You think I care? I don't give a shit. Go. Enjoy yourself. One of us should be having a good time.

(JEZZIE knocks on JACOB's head)

Hello! Anybody home?
(she looks in his ear)
Anybody in there?

JACOB

What?

JEZZIE just stares at him. She does not respond. JACOB returns to his books.

CUT TO CLOSE UP IMAGES OF WINGED DEMONS, real demons, with spindly horns and long tails. JACOB's huge finger, magnified, scans page after page of ancient images and archaic text. JEZZIE, enraged at his lack of attention, returns to packing her lunch box. Suddenly she spins around.

JEZZIE

Goddamn it! I can't stand it anymore. I've had it up to here. Go ahead and rot if you want... You son-of-a-bitch, I'm talking to you.

CUT BACK to the DEMONS. Suddenly a crashing sound catches JACOB's attention as a KITCHEN POT flies by his head. He

looks up to see JEZZIE knocking pots and pans off the kitchen counter and kicking them wildly across the room. The noise is terrible. The intensity of her rage is shocking. The pots crash into every surface, knocking all his books onto the floor. And then, suddenly, she stops.

JEZZIE stoops down to the floor and picks up her sandwich, stuffs it back in its plastic Baggie, and puts it back in her lunch box. She is about to leave when she stops and looks at JACOB.

JEZZIE

(continuing, her anger
in check)

I made you a tuna fish sandwich.
It's in the fridge. Eat a carrot
with it. The aspirin's on the bottom
shelf. We're out of soap so, if for
some reason you decide to wash
yourself again, use the dishwashing
stuff.

(she walks out of the
room and returns
with her coat)

I'm sorry I yelled, but you get on
my nerves.

(she bends down and
makes eye contact
with Jacob)

Hello? Listen, I gotta go.

JEZZIE sits on his lap, gives him a big kiss, and then, unexpectedly, raises two fingers, like horns, over her head. The gesture catches JACOB's full attention.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

Look, I'm horny. Keep it in mind.

(she kisses his cheek)

Love me a little?

JACOB

(speaking with
affection)

You are the most unbelievable woman
I have ever met. One second you're a
screaming banshee and the next you're
Florence Nightingale. Who are you?

That's what I want to know. Will the
real Jezzie Pipkin please stand up.

Suddenly the telephone rings. It startles them.

JEZZIE

Oh shit. Tell 'em I've left.

JEZZIE grabs her jacket and shoves her arm in it upside down.
A pocketful of change falls on the floor. JACOB smiles. JEZZIE
curses as she struggles to pick it up and get the jacket on
right. JACOB gets the phone.

JACOB

Hello.

PAUL (V.O.)

Jacob Singer?

JACOB

Speaking.

PAUL (V.O.)

Paul Gruneger!

JACOB

Paul Gruneger! Well I'll be goddamned!

JACOB indicates it's for him. JEZZIE throws him a kiss goodbye
and hurries out the door.

JACOB

(continuing)

Paul! You son-of-a-bitch, how the
hell are you? I haven't seen you in
what, five, six, years?

PAUL (V.O.)

A long time.

JACOB

Jesus Christ. How've you been? What's
happening in your life?

PAUL (V.O.)

Nothin' much.

JACOB

Me neither. Nothing too exciting. So tell me, to what do I owe the honor?

PAUL (V.O.)
I need to see you, Jake.

JACOB
Shit, Paul. I'd love to see you. But I'm kind of laid up here. I've been sick.

PAUL (V.O.)
I need to see you.

INT. PAUL'S CAR - DAY

JACOB and PAUL are driving through EAST NEW YORK heading toward WILLIAMSBURG. The elevated trains rumble above them. JACOB pats PAUL on the back.

JACOB
Jesus, man, you look terrific. You must have put on twenty pounds.

PAUL
I work in a bakery.

JACOB
You're lucky. How many vets you know are even employed?

PAUL
Count 'em on one hand.

JACOB
It's almost like a conspiracy, huh?

PAUL
No joke. Fuckin' army! That goddamn war. I'm still fightin' it.

JACOB
It's not worth it. You'll never win.

PAUL
You tellin' me? How many times can you die, huh?

PAUL looks in his rear view mirror before changing lanes. He sees a black car tagging close behind him. He pulls out. So does the car.

PAUL
(continuing)
Still married, Jake?

JACOB
Nope.

PAUL
You and everybody else. God I hate this area. Makes me nervous.

JACOB
Why the hell we drivin' here?

PAUL
I just need to talk.

JACOB
You can't talk in Brownsville?

PAUL
I'm not sure where I can talk anymore.

JACOB
What's wrong?

PAUL
Let's get a couple drinks, okay?
(he looks at his rear
view mirror)
Hey, take a look behind us. Do you think that car is followin' us?

JACOB
(turning to look)
That black car?

PAUL
Pull the mirror down on the sun visor.
(JACOB does)
Just watch 'em.

JACOB
What's goin' on Paul?

PAUL
I don't know.

JACOB
You in trouble?

PAUL
Yeah.

JACOB notices PAUL's left arm. It is shaking. The black car passes on the left. Both PAUL and JACOB stare at it as it speeds by.

INT. BAR - DAY

JACOB and PAUL are sitting in a dark booth in an obscure WILLIAMSBURG BAR. It is nearly empty. PAUL is leaning across the table in a very intimate fashion.

PAUL
Somethin's wrong, Jake. I don't know what it is but I can't talk to anybody about it. I figured I could with you. You always used to listen, you know?

JACOB nods. PAUL takes a sip of his drink and stares deliberately into JACOB's eyes.

PAUL
(continuing)
I'm going to Hell!

JACOB's face grows suddenly tense.

PAUL
(continuing)
That's as straight as I can put it. And don't tell me that I'm crazy 'cause I know I'm not. I'm goin' to Hell. They're comin' after me.

JACOB
(frightened, but holding back)
Who is?

PAUL

They've been followin' me. They're
comin' outta the walls. I don't trust
anyone. I'm not even sure I trust
you. But I gotta talk to someone.
I'm gonna fly outta my fuckin' mind.

PAUL cannot contain his fear. He jumps up suddenly and walks
away from the booth. JACOB follows him with his eyes but
does not go after him. A YOUNG MAN in the next booth observes
the scene with interest. He looks vaguely familiar, like we
have seen him before.

PAUL stares out the window for a moment and then walks over
to the juke box. He pulls a quarter out of his pocket and
drops it in the slot. His finger pushes a selection at random.
Some '60's rock hit blares out. JACOB's mind is reeling by
the time PAUL sits back down.

PAUL

(continuing)

Sorry. Sometimes I think I'm just
gonna jump outta my skin. They're
just drivin' me wild.

JACOB

Who, Paul? What exactly... ?

PAUL

I don't know who they are, or what
they are. But they're gonna get me
and I'm scared, Jake. I'm so scared
I can't do anything. I can't go to
my sisters. I can't even go home.

JACOB

Why not?

PAUL

They're waitin' for me, that's why.

PAUL's hand starts to shake. The tremor spreads rapidly to
his whole body. The booth begins to rattle.

PAUL

(continuing)

I can't stop it. I try. Oh God! Help
me Jake.

JACOB slides quickly out of his side of the booth and moves in toward PAUL. He puts his arm around him and holds him tightly, offering comfort as best he can.

PAUL is obviously terrified and grateful for JACOB's gesture. A few PEOPLE at the bar look over in their direction.

JACOB
It's okay, Paul. It's okay.

PAUL
(crying)
I don't know what to do.

JACOB
Don't do anything.
(PAUL begins to relax
a bit and the shaking
subsides)
Paul, I know what you're talking
about.

PAUL
What do you mean?

JACOB
I've seen them too... the demons!

PAUL
(staring at JACOB)
You've seen them?

JACOB
Everywhere, like a plague.

PAUL
God almighty. I thought I was the
only one.

JACOB
Me, too. I had no idea. It's like I
was coming apart at the seams.

PAUL
Oh God. I know. I know.

JACOB

What is it Paul? What's happening to me?

PAUL

They keep telling me I'm already dead, that they're gonna tear me apart, piece by piece, and throw me into the fire.

(he fumbles in his coat pocket and pulls out a small Bible and silver cross)

I carry these everywhere but they don't help. Nothing helps. Everyone thinks I'm crazy. My mother filed a report with the army.

JACOB

(stunned)

The army?

PAUL

She said I haven't been the same since then. Since that night. There's still this big hole in my brain.

It's so dark in there, Jake. And these creatures. It's like they're crawling out of my brain. What happened that night? Why won't they tell us?

JACOB

I don't know. I don't know.

PAUL

They're monsters, Jake. We're both seein' 'em. There's gotta be a connection. Something.

JACOB leans back in the booth, his mind racing. The YOUNG MAN in the next booth is watching them with rapt attention.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY

PAUL and JACOB are in the MEN'S ROOM. PAUL flushes the urinal.

PAUL

I'm afraid to go by myself anymore.

I keep thinkin' one of 'em's gonna come up behind me. Somethin's wrong when a guy can't even take a leak by himself. I've seen 'em take people right off the street. I used to go home a different way every night. Now I can't even go home.

JACOB

You come home with me.

PAUL

What about your girlfriend? You don't think she'll mind?

JACOB

Are you kidding? We've put up more of her cousins. You wouldn't believe how they breed down there.

PAUL smiles.

EXT. BAR - DAY

The TWO MEN leave the bar on a dingy side street. It is cold outside. Christmas lights seem ludicrous dangling in the bar's front window. PAUL looks at them and smiles.

PAUL

Merry Christmas.

PAUL steps into the street and walks to the driver's side of his car. He pulls out his keys and opens the door. JACOB looks down on the sidewalk and notices a dime.

JACOB

Goddamn, this is my lucky day.

He bends down to pick it up. PAUL inserts the key into the ignition and steps on the gas. He turns the key.

THE CAR EXPLODES. Pieces of metal and flesh fly into the air. JACOB sprawls out flat on the ground as the debris hurls above him. He covers his head.

EXT. VIETNAM

CUT TO A HELICOPTER suffering an air bombardment. Flack is

exploding all around it and the shock waves are rocking the craft violently. JACOB's eyes peer to the left.

INFANTRY GUNNERS are firing rockets into the JUNGLE below. A pair of MEDICS are huddled over him. A sudden gush of arterial bleeding sends a stream of blood splattering over the inside of the windshield. The PILOT, unable to see, clears it away with his hands.

JACOB screams over the roar of the chopper. One of the MEDICS presses his ear close to JACOB to hear.

JACOB
Help me!

MEDIC
We're doing the best we can.

JACOB
Get me out of here!

EXT. BAR - DAY

THE YOUNG MAN from the bar grabs JACOB under the arms and drags him down the sidewalk.

YOUNG MAN
Just hold on.

JACOB
Where am I? Who are you?

The YOUNG MAN yanks JACOB around the corner just as another explosion consumes the car. The air is filled with flames and flying debris. The YOUNG MAN pulls JACOB into the bar.

YOUNG MAN
Just lie still. You're okay. You're not hurt.

The CUSTOMERS are in a state of bedlam. Part of the wall has blown apart and bricks and glass are everywhere. The cross from around PAUL's neck is buried in the debris. Sirens are heard in the distance. A BLACK CAR speeds off down the street. JACOB looks for the YOUNG MAN who had helped him. He is gone.

EXT. FUNERAL PROCESSION - DAY

A FUNERAL PROCESSION heads down Ocean Parkway.

INT. JACOB'S CAR - DAY

JACOB and JEZZIE are driving in an old Chevy Nova. They are dressed up. JACOB's face is bruised and he has a gauze pad over his ear. They drive in silence. JACOB appears very sad. Slowly his right hand reaches across the seat, seeking JEZZIE's. Their fingers embrace.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The FUNERAL PROCESSION enters the CEMETERY. Cars park along the length of the narrow road. MEN IN DARK SUITS emerge from their cars along with WIVES and GIRLFRIENDS.

They are the SOLDIERS we have seen at the opening of the film, only they are older now. A small group of FAMILY MEMBERS are helped to the graveside.

JACOB joins the other VETERANS as pallbearers. They carry the casket in semi-military formation to the grave.

INT. PAUL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

JACOB'S OLD ARMY BUDDIES are sitting together in Paul's living room, talking. PAUL'S WIFE can be seen in the BEDROOM. Several WOMEN are comforting her.

JEZZIE is talking to a small group of LADIES in the DINING ROOM and nibbling off a tray of cold cuts. PAUL'S SISTER is with her and they seem to be having a lively, almost intimate, conversation.

JACOB and his BUDDIES are drinking beer. They all have a tired, defeated look about them.

FRANK

Did anyone see the police report? It sounds like a detonation job to me.

JERRY

The paper said it was electrical; a freak accident.

ROD

Bullshit. Someone's covering somethin'. That was no accident.

GEORGE
Why do you say that?

ROD
Cars don't explode that way. Any
simpleton knows that.

GEORGE
But the paper...

ROD
That was set. I'm tellin' you.

DOUG
By who? Why? Paul didn't have an
enemy in the world.

JERRY
How do you know?

DOUG
Hey, you're talkin' about Paul. Who'd
want to hurt him?

FRANK
What did he talk about when you guys
went out? Did he say anything?

JACOB
He was upset. He thought people were
following him.

JERRY
You're kidding. Who?

JACOB
He didn't know... Demons.

GEORGE
(obviously struck by
the word)
What do you mean, demons?

JACOB
He told me he was going to Hell.

The statement has a surprising impact on the group. There is

immediate silence and eyes averted from one another.

ROD

What'd he say that for? What made him say that? Strange, huh? Strange.

GEORGE

What else did he say, Jake?

JACOB

He was scared. He saw these creatures coming out of the woodwork. They were tryin' to get him, he said.

GEORGE

(his arm shaking)

How long had that been going on?

JACOB

A couple of weeks, I think.

He notices GEORGE's beer can rattling.

GEORGE

He say what they looked like?

JACOB

No. Not really...

GEORGE

Excuse me a minute. I'll be right back.

ROD

In one end, out the other, huh George?

GEORGE tries to smile as he hurries to the bathroom. His arm is nearly out of control and beer is spilling on the carpet as he walks.

ROD

(continuing)

Still a spastic, huh? I hope you can hold your dick better than you hold that can.

No one laughs. There is an uncomfortable silence.

EXT. A BACK ALLEY - DAY

The SIX MEN are walking quietly through an unpaved alley. It is already gray and getting darker.

DOUG

I know what Paul was talking about.
I don't know how to say this... but
in a way it's a relief knowing that
someone else saw them, too.

ROD

You're seeing... ?

DOUG

They're not human, I'll tell you
that. A car tried to run over me the
other day. It was aiming straight
for me. I saw their faces. They
weren't from Brooklyn.

ROD

What are you tellin' me? They're
from the Bronx?

DOUG

It was no joke, Rod.

JERRY

Something weird is going on here.

What is it about us? Even in Nam it was always weird. Are we
all crazy or something?

DOUG

Yeah, ever since that...

He hesitates. They all understand.

ROD

What's that have to do with anything?

FRANK

It was bad grass. That's all it was.

JERRY

Grass never did that to me.

DOUG

You know, I've been to three shrinks
and a hypnotist. Nothing penetrates
that night. Nothing.

ROD

It's not worth goin' over again and
again. Whatever happened, happened.
It's over.

JACOB

...I've seen them, too.

ROD

Shit!

JERRY

So have I.

JACOB

Look, there's something fucking
strange going on here. You know Paul's
not the only one who's died. You
remember Dr. Carlson over at Bellevue?
His car blew up, too.

ROD

Dr. Carlson's dead?

JACOB

An explosion, just like Paul's.

JERRY

No!

FRANK

Jesus!

GEORGE

You think they're connected?

JACOB

(he nods)

I think something's fucking connected.
I mean, a car tried to run me over
the other day. Doug too, right?

We've got six guys here going fucking crazy.

ROD

Not me, buddy.

JACOB

Okay, not you Rod. But the rest of us are flipping out for some goddamn reason. They're tryin' to kill us. Fuck it man, we need to find out what's going on.

DOUG

Do you think it has something to do with... the offensive?

JACOB

It's got something to do with something. I think we've got to confront the army. If they're hiding shit from us, we better find out what it is.

ROD

Come on, Professor. The army's not gonna give you any answers. You'll be buttin' your head against a stone wall.

JACOB

Maybe that's the only way to get through. Besides, six heads'll be better than one.

ROD

Not my head, buddy. Not me. I'm gettin' a headache just listenin' to you.

JACOB

We should get ourselves a lawyer.

ROD

I say you should get a shrink.

DOUG

Too late. I've tried. I think you're right, Jake. I'm game.

JERRY

Me, too.

ROD

You guys are fucking paranoid. It was bad grass. That's all it was. There's no such thing as demons.

INT. LAW OFFICE - DAY

JACOB, FRANK, JERRY, GEORGE, DOUG, and ROD are sitting on plush chairs in the LAW OFFICE of DONALD GEARY. GEARY, a red-faced man with three chins, is sucking on an ice cube. He looks at each of the men, and then spits the ice cube into an empty glass. It clinks.

GEARY

I'm sorry, Mr. Singer, but do you have any idea how many people come to me with the injustices of the world? It'd break your heart.

JACOB

This isn't injustice, Mr. Geary. The army did something to us and we've got to find out what.

GEARY

The army. The army. What is it with you guys? We're not talking about a trip to the library here. This is the United States Government for God's sake. This is red tape coming out of your ass. You know what I mean?

JACOB

Exactly. And we need someone to cut through it. We hear you're the man.

GEARY

Oh yeah? What am I – Perry Mason here?

GEARY stands up and grabs a bag of Cheetos from a file drawer. He chomps down a few and offers the bag to the others. There are no takers. Thirsty, he downs the ice cube and cracks it between his teeth.

GEARY
(continuing)
Okay. I'll look into it.

The MEN are surprised and excited.

PAUL
Wow! Do you think we have a chance?

GEARY
What do you want, a fortune teller
or a lawyer?... I'll need sworn
depositions from each of you and a
list of the other members of the
platoon, or their survivors.

DOUG
Hey, this is great.

GEARY
I'll tell you, if we find the military
is implicated in any way, you could
stand to recover quite a lot of money.
Not that I can predict anything, but
some class action suits of this kind
have been awarded fairly generous
judgements. That wouldn't be so bad,
would it Mr. Singer?

JACOB
Doctor.
(GEARY looks at him
oddly)
Ph.D.

GEARY
Ah! I thought you were a mailman.

JACOB
I am.

GEARY
(confused)
Then why aren't you teaching? Why
aren't you in a university?

JACOB

I'm too messed up to teach.

GEARY

(smiling)

Ah! Well then, they're going to have to pay for that, aren't they?

The MEN all nod in agreement.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

JACOB and the others exit the OFFICE BUILDING. They are jubilant, clasping hands and smacking each other on the back. We watch as they break up. JACOB heads for the subway. FRANK and another group hop a cab. As the cab pulls away we notice that a black car pulls out behind it. It follows them out of sight.

INT. JACOB'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

JACOB and JEZZIE are making wild and unadulterated love on the kitchen floor. The wastebasket flips over. JACOB's hand splashes into the dog's bowl. Nothing impedes their passion. JEZZIE laughs, hollers, and swoons. Hands grab hold of table legs. Chairs topple. Feet bang wildly against the stove. It is all mayhem and ecstasy. And then it ends.

JACOB's face is ecstatic. He can barely talk and simply basks in JEZZIE's glow. She looks especially lovely and radiant. They lie exhausted and exhilarated on the linoleum floor.

JEZZIE

So tell me... am I still an angel?

JACOB

(smiling broadly)

With wings. You transport me, you know that? You carry me away.

JEZZIE kisses him softly around his face and gently probes his ear with her pinky. JACOB loves it.

JEZZIE

We're all angels, you know...

(she bites his earlobe.

He winces)

...and devils. It's just what you choose to see.

JACOB
I love you, Jez.

JEZZIE
I know.

JACOB
Underneath all the bullshit, just
love.

JEZZIE
Remember that.

JACOB
You know what? I feel... exorcised...
like the demons are gone.

JEZZIE
How come? The army?

JACOB
In a way. At least now I have some
idea of what was happening. If we
can only get them to admit... to
explain what they did... I don't
know. Maybe it'd clear things up in
my head. I'll tell you something,
Jez, honestly... I thought they were
real.

Silence. Suddenly JEZZIE roars like a monster and scares
JACOB half to death. They laugh and tumble back to the floor.

INT. JACOB'S APT. - EVENING

JACOB emerges from the bathroom shower and pulls on a robe.
JEZZIE is moving rapidly around the KITCHEN.

JEZZIE
I put a frozen dinner in the oven, a
Manhandler. It'll be ready at a
quarter of. I threw a little salad
together. It's in the fridge. I also
bought some apple juice, Red Cheek.
Don't drink it all. Oh, and Jake,
your lawyer called.

JACOB
He did? When?

JEZZIE
(grabbing her coat)
While you were in the shower.

JACOB
Why didn't you call me?

JEZZIE
He didn't give me a chance.
(she pauses nervously)
Look, honey, don't get upset, but
he's not taking your case.

JACOB
(stunned)
What? What do you mean?

JEZZIE
He said you didn't have one.

JACOB
What's he talking about?

JEZZIE
I don't know. That's all he said. He
wasn't very friendly. Oh, yeah. He
said your buddies backed down. They
chickened out, he said.

JACOB
I don't believe this.

JEZZIE
Baby, I'm sorry. I feel terrible.
I'd stay and talk but I'm so late.
Look, don't be upset. We'll talk
when I get home. See you around
midnight.
(she kisses him on
the cheek)
Bye. And don't brood. Watch T.V. or
something.

JACOB'S APT./FRANK'S APT. - INTERCUT

The door slams securely. The locks set. JACOB begins instantly rifling through a desk drawer. He comes up with a frayed address book and looks up a number. He dials.

FRANK (V.O.)

Hello.

JACOB

Frank. It's Jake. Jacob Singer.

We see FRANK standing at a window fingering the Venetian blinds. He does not reply. The scene intercuts between the two men.

JACOB

(continuing)

Listen, I just got a strange call from Geary. He said the guys backed down. What's he talking about?

FRANK

(fingering the Venetian blinds)

That's right. We did.

JACOB

What does that mean, Frank? I don't get it. Why?

FRANK

It's hard to explain.

JACOB

(angry)

Well, try, huh.

FRANK

I don't know if I can. It's just that war is war. Things happen.

JACOB

Things happen? What the fuck are you talking about? They did something to us, Frank. We have to expose this.

FRANK

There's nothing to expose.

JACOB

Jesus Christ! Who's been talking to you?

(silence)

What's going on? How can you just turn away?

(no response)

What about the others?

FRANK

They're not interested, Jake.

JACOB

Shit! You know it's not half the case if I go it alone. We're all suffering the same symptoms, Frank. The army is to blame. They've done something to us. How can you not want to know?

FRANK

(pausing)

Maybe it's not the army, Jake.

JACOB

What do you mean?

FRANK

Maybe there's a larger truth.

JACOB

What are you talking about?

FRANK

Maybe the demons are real.

JACOB

Goddamn it. What kind of bullshit is that?

FRANK

Listen, Jake. I gotta go.

JACOB

What the hell? What kind of mumbo jumbo... ?

FRANK

I'm hanging up.

JACOB
Hey, wait!

FRANK
Don't bother to call again, okay?

FRANK hangs up. JACOB stands holding the phone for a long time, until the high pitched whine from the receiver reminds him it's off the hook. The sound frightens him and he slams the receiver down. QUICKLY JACOB tears through his address book looking for other phone numbers. They aren't there.

JACOB
Shit!

INT. JACOB'S APT.

JACOB hurries into the BEDROOM and pulls an old shoe box from the closet. The box is filled with yellowing army papers, dog tags, and photos of old comrades. Beneath his discharge papers he finds a sheet scribbled with the names and addresses of platoon buddies. JACOB grabs it. Then his eyes fall on the frayed remains of an old letter. He picks it up and unfolds it with great care. The letter is written in a child's handwriting. "DEAR DADDY, I LOVE YOU. PLEASE COME HOME. JED GOT A FROG. ELI LOST MY KEY. MOM WANTS YOU TO SEND HER MONEY. LOVE, GABE."

CUT TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN SIDEWALK - DAY

GABE, on a BICYCLE, is rushing down the sidewalk. JACOB is running alongside him, holding onto the seat. Plastic streamers trail from the handlebars. GABE is a bit wobbly, but determined. After a couple of false starts, JACOB lets go and GABE is riding by himself. For an instant, GABE looks back at his father with a huge grin on his face. JACOB is grinning, too. THE CAMERA HOLDS ON GABE as he pulls away from us and heads into the distance.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. JACOB'S APT. - NIGHT

JACOB swallows hard as he stands there, holding the letter.

Suddenly his eyes lift off the page and glance at a full length mirror mounted on the bedroom door. Something in the mirror, like the image of a child, seems to move. He looks over. There is nothing there. Curious, JACOB walks toward the mirror. As his image appears, he gasps and stops moving. To his horror and ours, it is his own back that is reflected in the mirror. The impossibility of the moment startles him. He lifts his hand. The reflection moves with him. Frightened but defiant, JACOB moves toward the mirror. The image in the mirror spins around. It is the FRIGHTENING VIBRATING FACE he saw at the party with JEZZIE. An unearthly scream comes from both their mouths.

JACOB
NO!!!

INT. BROOKLYN COURT HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

A huge wooden door slams open. JACOB charges through it.

He is chasing his lawyer, DONALD GEARY, through a crowded court house corridor. GEARY, sweaty and unshaven, is cradling a Coke in one hand, a sandwich and a briefcase in the other. His stomach bounces wildly as he walks.

JACOB
Geary! Mr. Geary! Listen, goddamn it! You can't just walk away from this.

GEARY keeps walking. JACOB catches up to him.

JACOB
(continuing)
Who's been talking to you? The army?
Have they been talking to you, huh?

GEARY
Nobody's been talking to nobody. You don't have a case, you hear me? It's pure and simple. Now leave me alone. Okay?

JACOB grabs the back of GEARY's jacket and pulls him up short.

GEARY
(continuing)
Take your hands off me!

JACOB lets go. He stares into GEARY's eyes.

JACOB

Listen, will you listen? They're trying to get me. They're comin' out of the walls. The army's done something to me. I need you.

GEARY

You need... a doctor.

JACOB

A doctor? And what's he gonna do, tell me I'm crazy? They've fucked with my head. I've got to prove it. You've got to do something.

GEARY gives JACOB a pitiful look.

GEARY

There's nothing I can do.

He turns and walks away. JACOB stands there a moment, and then rushes after him. GEARY is biting into his sandwich.

Mayonnaise spills onto his hand. He licks it with his tongue. JACOB catches up to him.

GEARY

You mind? I'm eating, huh?

JACOB

Something's going on here. You're not telling me something. What the hell's gotten into you?

GEARY

I'll tell you what's gotten into me. I don't know you from Adam, right? You come to my office with this bizarro story and demand I look into it. Okay. I said I'd check it out and I did. Now I don't know what kind of fool you take me for, but you have used and abused me, and I don't like it.

JACOB
Used you?

GEARY
I talked to the Army's Bureau of
Records. You've never even been to
Vietnam.

JACOB
What the hell is that supposed to
mean?

GEARY
It means that you and your buddies
are whacko, that you were discharged
on psychological grounds after some
war games in Thailand.

JACOB
(stunned)
War games? Thailand? That's not true!
How can you believe that? Can't you
see what they're doing? It's all a
lie. We were in Da Nang, for God's
sake. You've got to believe me.

GEARY
I don't have to do any such thing.
I'm eating my lunch, okay?

GEARY takes a swig of his COKE and begins walking away. JACOB, enraged, charges after him. With a wild swipe he sends the COKE CAN shooting out of GEARY's hand. It reverberates down the corridor. GEARY is stunned.

JACOB
You slimy bastard! You goddamn piece
of shit!

With a powerful thrust, JACOB rips the sandwich from GEARY's other hand. Tossing it on the floor, he grinds his heel in it. Tomato and mayonnaise squirt onto GEARY's shoe. JACOB turns away.

CUT TO JACOB walking down the COURT HOUSE CORRIDOR to the elevators. There is a look of satisfaction on his face.

CUT BACK TO GEARY. He picks up a telephone and dials. Someone

comes on the line. GEARY speaks quietly.

GEARY
He's on his way.

CUT TO JACOB stepping onto the elevator. The doors close. The Muzak is playing "Sonny Boy" with Al Jolson singing. JACOB is surprised to hear it. He presses the down button for the main floor.

The elevator stops at the LOBBY. The doors open swiftly. SEVERAL SOLDIERS are standing there. They approach JACOB.

SOLDIER 1
Let's go, Singer.

JACOB is shocked to see them. He tries to get away but two of the SOLDIERS yank him toward the LOBBY doors.

SOLDIER 2
You're coming with us.

INT. CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

JACOB is hustled to a waiting car and shoved inside, in between two officious looking MEN. The doors lock from the DRIVER's command.

ARMY OFFICIAL #1
Mr. Singer. What an appropriate name for a man who can't keep his mouth shut.

The car drives off.

JACOB
Who are you? What do you want?

ARMY OFFICIAL #2
We've been watching you for a long time. You and your friends. You've been exhibiting some very odd behavior. Frightening people with foolish talk about demons – and experiments.

JACOB tries to speak but the other MAN grabs his mouth.

ARMY OFFICIAL #1

You're in over your head, Mr. Singer.
Men drown that way. The army was
another part of your life. Forget
it. It is dead and buried. Let it
lie.

ARMY OFFICIAL #2

I hope we have made our point, Mr.
Singer.

JACOB stares at the men for a moment and then goes totally berserk. Letting out a howl, he begins pounding and thrashing like a madman. He is totally out of control.

With a wild leap, he grabs for the door handle. The door flies open. It flaps back and forth, slamming into parked cars. JACOB tries to jump out, but the men yank him back in. One of them pulls out a gun. JACOB sees it and goes crazy. His feet kick in all directions, slamming the DRIVER's nose into the steering wheel and shattering the side window.

The car careens around a corner sending the gun flying to the floor. The men dive for it. It lodges beneath the seat. In the mayhem, JACOB throws himself out of the flapping door and sprawls onto the pavement. People look down at him as the car speeds away.

EXT. BROOKLYN - LATE AFTERNOON

JACOB grabs his back. He is in excruciating pain. He tries to get up, but can't move. He reaches out to people passing by, but they ignore him and hurry past.

A SALVATION ARMY SANTA has been watching the entire scene. After a moment's consideration he leaves his post and ambles over to JACOB. He leans down and steals his wallet.

SANTA

Merry Christmas.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREETS - EVENING

CUT TO THE SOUND OF A SIREN as an AMBULANCE races through the streets.

INT. HOSPITAL - EVENING

AN AMBULANCE CREW rushes JACOB to a HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM.

BEARER

He's been screaming like a madman.
You better get something in him.

RESIDENT

(approaching JACOB)

Hi. I'm Doctor Stewart. Can you tell
me what happened?

JACOB

My back. I can't move. I need my
chiropractor.

RESIDENT

Your back? Did you fall?

BEARER

They said he slipped on the ice. May
have hit his head.

ATTENDANT

Does he have any identification?

BEARER

No wallet. Nothing.

JACOB

They stole it.

RESIDENT

Who did?

JACOB

I don't know. Santa Claus. I had my
son's picture in it. Gabe's picture.
It's the only one I had.

RESIDENT

We better get an orthopedic man in
here. Is Dr. Davis on call?

NURSE

I'll page him.

JACOB

Call my chiropractor.

NURSE

We're doing everything we can.

JACOB

Louis Schwartz. Nostrand Avenue.

RESIDENT

I'm going to have to move you a bit,
just to check for injuries. This may
hurt a little.

JACOB

No. Don't move me.

The RESIDENT ignores him. JACOB screams.

RESIDENT

I don't have to ask if you can feel
that.

JACOB

Goddamn it. I want Louis.

NURSE

Who's Louis?

RESIDENT

He's out of it. I'm taking him down
to X-ray.

An ORDERLY pushes the gurney through a pair of sliding doors.
JACOB tries to get up but the pain keeps him immobilized.

INT. CORRIDORS - NIGHT

JACOB begins a journey down what appears to be an endless series of corridors. The wheels of the gurney turn with a hypnotic regularity. The smooth tile floor gives way to rough cement. The ORDERLY's feet plod through pools of blood that coagulate in cracks and crevices along the way. The surface grows rougher, the wheels more insistent. Body parts and human bile splash against the walls as the gurney moves faster.

JACOB

Where are you taking me? Where am I?

ORDERLY

You know where you are.

JACOB, panicked, tries again to get up but to no effect. He glances to the side and sees mournful CREATURES being led into dark rooms. No one fights or struggles. We hear muffled screams from behind closed doors. Occasionally he glances inside the rooms and sees mangled bodies in strange contraptions, people in rusty iron lungs, and hanging from metal cages. Dark eyes peer out in horror. In one room a baseboard heater bursts into flame. No one seems concerned. A door opens. A bicycle with plastic streamers on the handlebars lies crushed and mangled. One of its wheels is still spinning. JACOB cries out but it is not his voice we hear. Rather it is a familiar unearthly roar. His whole body stiffens. As he rounds the corner he sees a figure, its head vibrating in endless terror. It is the same image he has seen before. JACOB screams.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

JACOB is wheeled into a tiny ROOM. A number of "DOCTORS" are waiting. As they draw closer JACOB notices that something about them is not right. They bear a subtle resemblance to Bosch-like DEMONS, creatures of another world. JACOB tries to sit up but winces in pain. He cannot move. He tries to scream but no sound comes out.

Chains and pulleys hang from the ceiling. They are lowered and attached with speed and efficiency to JACOB's arms and legs. He screams.

JACOB

Oh God!

The "DOCTORS" laugh. There is the sound of a huge door closing. JACOB is left in semi-darkness. Suddenly a new group of "DOCTORS" emerges from the shadows. They are carrying sharp surgical instruments. They surround JACOB, their eyes glistening as bright as their blades. JACOB is panting and sweating in fear. One of the "DOCTORS" leans over JACOB. He gasps with horror. It is JEZZIE.

JACOB

JEZZIE!

She pays no attention to him. He stares at her, THE CAMERA TILTING DOWN HER BODY. As it gets to her foot we see it is a

decaying mass, swarming with maggots. The "DOCTORS" laugh. They take great pleasure in his suffering. Their voices are strange and not human. Each utterance contains a multitude of contradictory tones, sincere and compassionate, taunting and mocking at the same time. The confusion of meanings is a torment of its own.

JACOB
(continuing)
Get me out of here.

"DOCTOR"
Where do you want to go?

JACOB
Take me home.

"DOCTOR"
Home?
(they all laugh)
This is your home. You're dead.

JACOB
Dead? No. I just hurt my back. I'm not dead.

"DOCTOR"
What are you then?

JACOB
I'm alive.

"DOCTOR"
Then what are you doing here?

JACOB
I don't know. I don't know.
(he struggles like an animal)
This isn't happening.

"DOCTOR"
What isn't happening?

JACOB
Let me out of here!

"DOCTOR"

There is no out of here. You've been killed. Don't you remember?

A "DOCTOR" approaches JACOB. As he turns, we notice with horror that he has no eyes or eye sockets. He extracts a long needle from his belt and positions it over JACOB's head. Like a divining rod it locates a particular point near the crown of his head. With a powerful thrust the "DOCTOR" shoves the needle into JACOB's skull and pushes it slowly into his brain. JACOB howls.

EXT. VIETNAM - NIGHT

CUT RAPIDLY TO VIETNAM and a replay of flashes of the opening sequence of the film. SOLDIERS with bayonets are charging over rice paddies in the dark of the night. ONE OF THE SOLDIERS charges at JACOB with a long bayonet blade and jams it into his intestines. JACOB cries out.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

CUT BACK TO THE "DOCTORS".

"DOCTOR"
Remember?

JACOB
No! That was years ago! I've lived years since then.

"DOCTOR"
It's all been a dream.

JACOB
No! The army did this to me! They've done something to my brain.
(he raves like a madman)
Jezzie! I want my boys! Sarah! I'm not dead! I want my family!

The "DOCTORS" laugh and back away, disappearing into the darkness.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Suddenly a fluorescent light flashes overhead. NORMAL HOSPITAL WALLS materialize instantaneously around him. A NURSE enters the room followed by SARAH, ELI, and JED. They approach JACOB

who is lying in traction, suspended over a hospital bed.

NURSE

He's still pretty doped up. I don't think he'll be able to talk yet and I doubt that he'll recognize you.

SARAH

I just want to see him.

JED

(eating a Snickers bar)

Dad. Hi. It's us. We just found out.

ELI

You look terrible. Does that hurt?

NURSE

I'll be outside if you need me.

SARAH

Jake. It's me. We heard what happened.

JACOB

(his voice hoarse, nearly whispering)

I'm not dead. I am not dead.

SARAH

No. Of course you're not. You've just hurt your back. That's all. You're going to be fine. It'll just take some time.

JED

A month, they said.

ELI

(trying to joke)

You just hang in there, Dad.

SARAH

(smacking him)

That's not funny.

(she reaches over and rubs JACOB's brow)

What a mess, huh? God I wish there

was something I could do. I love
you, Jacob. For whatever that's worth.
I do.

There is a sudden sound of "DOCTORS" laughing. JACOB jerks
his head painfully, but does not see them.

"DOCTOR" (O.S.)
Dream on!

JACOB
(yelling at the unseen
voice)
No! Oh God.

SARAH
Jacob, what can I do?

JACOB
Save me!

JACOB's plea confuses SARAH. She responds with a kiss.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

DAYLIGHT streams through the window in JACOB's ROOM. He is
still in traction and looks very uncomfortable. A new NURSE
enters holding a plastic container with a straw poking out.

NURSE
Well, don't we look better this
morning? That was a hard night, wasn't
it?

JACOB
Where am I?

NURSE
Lennox Hospital.

JACOB
I'm awake?

NURSE
You look awake to me. Here.
(she holds the straw
to his lips)
Drink some of this.

JACOB
(staring at her
intently)
Where's Sarah? Where did she go?
(the NURSE gives him
a strange look)
She was here ...

NURSE
No. No. You haven't had any visitors.

JACOB
That's a lie. My family was here.

NURSE
I'm sorry.

JACOB
Last night! They were as real as you
are!

The NURSE smiles and nods in appeasement.

JACOB
This is not a dream! This is my life.

NURSE
Of course it is. What else could it
be?

She giggles nervously. There is a funny glint in her eyes.
JACOB looks away. He doesn't want to see it.

OMIT

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - EVENING

There is a loud commotion in the HALL. We see LOUIS SCHWARTZ,
JACOB's chiropractor, screaming JACOB's name.

LOUIS
Jacob! Jacob Singer!

JACOB yells.

JACOB
Louis! I'm here! In here!

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - DAY

LOUIS storms through JACOB's door followed by several NURSES and ORDERLIES.

JACOB
LOUIS!

NURSE 1
You can't go in there!

ORDERLY
You're going to have to leave.

LOUIS stares furiously at JACOB stretched out on the traction apparatus. He begins to yell.

LOUIS
Good God, Jake. What have they done?
(he examines JACOB
and screams at the
NURSES)
What is this, the Middle Ages? And
they call this modern medicine. This
is barbaric! Barbaric!
(turning to JACOB)
It's okay, Jake. It's not serious.
I'll get you out of here.
(yelling at the ORDERLY)
What is this, the Inquisition? Why
don't you just burn him at the stake
and put him out of his misery?

LOUIS charges over to the traction equipment and begins working the pulleys that suspend JACOB over the bed. The NURSES and ORDERLIES become instantly hysterical and start screaming.

ORDERLY
What the hell do you think... ?

LOUIS
Don't you come near me.

NURSE 2
You can't do that!

LOUIS
What is this, a prison? Stay back.

NURSE 1
You can't. Call the police.

One of the ORDERLIES lunges at LOUIS who swings back at him with one of the pulley chains. It just misses.

LOUIS
(to the ORDERLIES)
You take one step and I'll wrap this around your neck.

LOUIS lowers JACOB into a wheelchair while holding the others at bay.

LOUIS
(continuing)
Hold on, Jake, we're getting out of here.

NURSES and ORDERLIES part as he pushes him quickly from the room.

OMIT

INT. CHIROPRACTIC OFFICE - EVENING

LOUIS helps JACOB over to an adjusting table in a room that, compared with the hospital, is comfortable and serene. He pushes a lever and the table rises to a vertical position. JACOB leans against it and rides it down to a horizontal position. Every moment is agony for him.

LOUIS
Half an hour from now and you'll be walking out of here all by yourself. Mark my words.
(JACOB barely hears them)
Well, you've done it to yourself this time, haven't you?

JACOB
(nearly whispering)
Am I dead, Louis?
(LOUIS leans over to

hear)
Am I dead?

LOUIS
(smiling)
From a slipped disc? That'd be a first.

JACOB
I was in Hell. I've been there. It's horrible. I don't want to die, Louis.

LOUIS
Well, I'll see what I can do about it.

JACOB
I've seen it. It's all pain.

LOUIS
(working on JACOB's spine like a master mechanic)
You ever read Meister Eckart?
(JACOB shakes his head "no")
How did you ever get your Doctorate without reading Eckart?
(LOUIS takes hold of JACOB's legs and yanks them swiftly)
Good. Okay, let's turn over gently. Right side.

JACOB turns to his left. LOUIS shakes his head in dismay.

LOUIS
The other "right," okay?
(he helps JACOB turn over)
You're a regular basket case, you know that?
(he moves JACOB's arm over his head)
Eckart saw Hell, too.

LOUIS positions JACOB's other arm, bends his legs, and then pushes down on his thigh. His spine moves with a cracking

sound. JACOB groans.

LOUIS

(continuing)

You know what he said? The only thing that burns in Hell is the part of you that won't let go of your life; your memories, your attachments. They burn 'em all away. But they're not punishing you, he said. They're freeing your soul. Okay, other side.

He helps JACOB and repositions him. Again he pushes and the spine cracks.

LOUIS

(continuing)

Wonderful. So the way he sees it, if you're frightened of dying and holding on, you'll see devils tearing your life away. But if you've made your peace then the devils are really angels freeing you from the earth. It's just a matter of how you look at it, that's all. So don't worry, okay? Relax. Wiggle your toes.

JACOB's toes dance as LOUIS gives him a quick, unexpected jab to the lower vertebrae in his back.

LOUIS

(continuing)

Perfect. We got it.
(LOUIS pushes a lever
and the table rises
back up)
Okay. Let's just give it a little try. See if you can stand.

JACOB

What? By myself?

LOUIS

You can do it. Come on. Easy. Just give it a try.

JACOB steps cautiously away from the table. He moves hesitantly, with deliberate restraint. LOUIS encourages him

like a faith healer coaxing the lame. His first steps have an aura of the miraculous about them. JACOB walks slowly, without help. LOUIS smiles impishly. He looks like a giant cherub.

LOUIS
Hallelujah.

LOUIS puts his arm around him. Then JACOB tries again, gradually rediscovering his balance and strength. With each step his confidence returns. LOUIS is pleased. Then, suddenly, without warning, JACOB turns and heads toward the door.

LOUIS
What are you doing?

JACOB
There's something I've gotta take care of, Louis.

LOUIS
What are you talking about? You can barely stand.

JACOB
I'm walking, aren't I?

LOUIS
Jake, you need to rest.

JACOB
Not tonight, Louis. No more rest.

He walks slowly out the door. LOUIS starts to go after him. JACOB turns around and shakes his head "no." The look on his face is firm and defiant. LOUIS stands back and lets him go.

JACOB
I love you, Louis.

EXT. U.S. ARMY RECRUITING HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

CUT TO A SIREN BLARING and a fire engine racing through the streets of lower MANHATTAN. A CROWD is forming. Banks of lights and television cameras amass in the cold night air. Police cars and mobile units rush to the scene.

CUT TO JACOB. In one hand he is holding a brightly lit torch.

In the other he is holding a container of gasoline and pouring it on the steps of the U.S. ARMY RECRUITING HEADQUARTERS. The volatile liquid splashes against his pants and shoes and runs down the pavement. A five gallon container lies emptying nearby. Gasoline belches from it insistently and pours onto the street. Bystanders back away as the gasoline snakes toward them.

Television cameras and microphones are pointing in JACOB's direction, but at a safe distance. He is yelling at them, his teeth chattering from the cold.

JACOB

Listen to me. There were four companies in our battalion. Five hundred men. Seven of us were left when it was over. Seven! Four companies engaged in an enemy offensive that not one of us who survived can remember fighting.

BYSTANDERS

Use the torch!

ONLOOKER

Shut up! Let him talk!

POLICE AMBULANCES are arriving at the scene. FIREMEN ready hoses at nearby hydrants. T.V. CAMERAS are rolling.

JACOB

(shouting)

You don't forget a battle where 500 men were killed. They did something to us. I want to know the truth, the goddamn truth. We have a right to know.

(he yells toward the cameras)

Are you getting all this? I want this on national T.V. I want the whole country, the whole world to know.

He holds up the torch. A loudspeaker blares through the crowd.

VOICE

Throw that torch away, young man.

Give yourself up. You're under arrest.

JACOB

For what? For seeking the truth?

VOICE

Please come quietly.

JACOB

You come near me and I'll blow us all up.

VOICE

We're not going to hurt you.

ONLOOKER

Give him a chance to talk!

JACOB

The army will deny it. They've falsified my records. They've lied to my lawyer, threatened my buddies. But they can't threaten me.

BYSTANDER

You tell 'em!

BYSTANDER

Use the torch!

VOICE

Okay, let's clear the area. Everyone out.

Suddenly a lighted match flies in JACOB's direction. JACOB is enraged. He brandishes the torch at the crowd.

JACOB

What the fuck do you think you're doing?

Another match hurls toward him and dies in mid-air. PEOPLE on the fringe of the crowd begin to run. JACOB does not move.

VOICE

Clear the area. This is an order!

JACOB

What is wrong with you?

We hear laughter from PEOPLE in the crowd. As JACOB looks out into some of their eyes he sees demons looking back. One of them throws another match. Crazed, JACOB runs toward them. PEOPLE jump back.

Suddenly JACOB freezes. Standing on the sidelines, he sees one of the ARMY OFFICIALS who trapped him in the car. He is reaching for a gun. JACOB, stunned, yells at the top of his lungs.

JACOB

NO!

With a defiant roar, he hurls the torch straight up into the air. We see it from high above the crowd spinning higher and higher. All eyes stare upward watching it in a kind of wonder. Then, reaching its apex, just below the camera, it begins its descent. The eyes of the crowd turn to fear. SOMEONE yells.

ONLOOKER

He'll burn us all!

Screams fill the air as PEOPLE scramble to escape the potential conflagration. Only JACOB remains motionless, standing silently, almost heroically, in the middle of it all.

Suddenly the torch hits the ground and a pool of gasoline ignites with a blinding flare that sends flames shooting in all directions. PEOPLE panic. T.V. REPORTERS and CAMERAMEN run for their lives. The ARMY OFFICIALS run, too. The flames travel toward the Army Headquarters and rush along the curb. Water hoses are trying to douse them as they spread. JACOB, surprisingly untouched by the fire, walks slowly through the frightened crowds, as if in a daze. Viewed through the flames the scene momentarily resembles a vision of Hell.

INT. JACOB'S APT. - NIGHT

JACOB, stark naked and covered with goose bumps, runs his hands under a shower spray. The water is freezing and taking forever to warm up. Anxious, he dashes past his gasoline drenched clothes, grabs a suitcase from the BEDROOM closet, and stuffs it with clothes. Then he hurries back to the shower, tests it, and jumps in.

Lather covers JACOB's hair and hangs over his tightly closed eyes. His entire body is covered in suds. He is washing as quickly as he can. Suddenly he hears a noise as someone enters the BATHROOM. He tenses.

JACOB
Who's there? Who is it?

JACOB struggles to rinse the soap from his eyes. They are burning. There is a shadow behind the curtain.

JACOB
(continuing)
Goddamn it! Who's there?

JACOB rubs his eyes, fighting to see. Suddenly the shower curtain is thrown back. JACOB backs against the wall. A hand reaches in and pulls his nipple, pinching hard.

JEZZIE
It's just me.

JACOB
Jezzie?

JEZZIE
Who else were you expecting?

JACOB
Let go!

JEZZIE
Where were you, Jake? Where've you been? Why haven't you called?

JACOB
Stay away from me, Jez.

JEZZIE
I want to know. You tell me!

JACOB
You wanna know? Turn on the T.V.
Watch the fucking news!

He pushes her away and jumps out of the shower.

CUT TO JACOB dressing and piling the last of his clothes into his suitcase. JEZZIE, in a robe, is watching him.

JEZZIE

Why are you doing this to me? You can't just go away like that.

JACOB

I can do anything I want.

She stares at him with confusion. THE PHONE RINGS.

JACOB

Don't!

JEZZIE

It might be for me.

JACOB

I'm not here. You haven't seen me.

JEZZIE

(picking up the receiver)

Hello... No. He's not here. I haven't seen him all night... I don't know when... What? Tell him what?

(JACOB looks up)

Vietnam?... What experiments?

JACOB lunges for the phone.

JACOB

Hello. This is Jacob Singer.

(he listens with growing fascination)

God almighty!... Yes. Yes. Right.

Where would you like to meet?

(he listens)

How will I know you.

(JACOB seems uncomfortable)

Okay. I'll be there.

He hangs up the phone and stands silently for a moment.

JEZZIE

Who was that?

JACOB

A chemist. Part of a chemical warfare unit out of Saigon. He said he knows me and that I'll know him when I see him.

JEZZIE

How?

JACOB

I have no idea.

(he thinks)

I was right. There were experiments.

I knew it. I knew it. My God.

JEZZIE

How do you know he's telling the truth?

JACOB stares at JEZZIE for several moments but does not respond. The 11:00 NEWS is coming on. JACOB's image can be seen on the screen. We hear the NEWSCASTER speaking.

NEWSCASTER

Leading the news tonight, a bizarre demonstration on the steps of the U.S. Army Recruiting Headquarters, in downtown Manhattan. Jacob Singer, an alleged Vietnam vet...

JACOB

Alleged? Alleged?

NEWSCASTER

...challenged the United States Army to admit conducting secret experiments involving hundreds of American soldiers during the Vietnam war.

JEZZIE stares at the T.V., dumbfounded. JACOB takes his suitcase and hurries to the front door. He opens it a crack and peers into the hallway. JEZZIE runs after him.

JEZZIE

(almost threatening)

Don't leave me, Jake.

INT. BUILDING CORRIDOR - NIGHT

JACOB gazes at JEZZIE for a moment and then hurries down the HALL. He stops at the stairwell and looks back. JEZZIE is still standing there. She is very angry. JACOB just stares at her for a moment and then disappears down the stairwell.

EXT. WESTSIDE HIGHWAY - NIGHT

JACOB is standing near the WESTSIDE HIGHWAY. GROUPS OF MEN in black leather jackets are cruising the area and look at JACOB with curiosity. One MAN in particular cruises by several times and then approaches him.

MICHAEL

Jacob? Hi. I'm Michael Newman. Friends call me Mike.

JACOB is startled when he sees him. He is the same YOUNG MAN who has appeared throughout the film, assisting JACOB in moments of crisis.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

Surprised, huh? I told you you'd know me. I've been tracking you for a long time. I just wish I'd spoken to you before tonight.

JACOB

I don't get it. Who are you? Why have you been following me?

MICHAEL

Observation, mainly. Clinical study. You were one of the survivors.

A POLICE CAR passes them on the street. MICHAEL grabs JACOB's shoulder and turns him away nervously.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

Come on, we're not safe around here.

HUDSON RIVER PIER - NIGHT

JACOB and MICHAEL are sitting on a deserted WEST SIDE PIER that juts into the Hudson River. JACOB is wide-eyed as he

listens to MICHAEL's story.

MICHAEL

So first I'm arrested, right? Best LSD I ever made, right down the drain. I figure this is it, twenty years in the joint, if I'm lucky. That was '68.

JACOB

Long time ago.

MICHAEL

(nodding his head)

Next thing I know I'm on Rikers Island. Ever been there?

(JACOB shakes his head)

Suddenly they take me from my cell to the visitors room with those bank teller windows, you know. Four army colonels, medals up their asses, are standing on the other side. They tell me if I'll come to Vietnam for two years, no action, mind you, just work in a lab, they'll drop all the charges and wipe the record clean. Well, I'd only been in jail for thirteen hours and I already knew that Nam couldn't be any worse.

JACOB

Shows how much you knew.

MICHAEL

No shit. They had me by the balls. Next thing I know I'm in Saigon... in a secret lab synthesizing mind-altering drugs. Not the street stuff mind you. They had us isolating special properties. The dark side, you know? They wanted a drug that increased aggressive tendencies.

JACOB

Yeah, sure. We were losing the war.

MICHAEL

Right. They were worried. They figured you guys were too soft. They wanted something to stir you up, tap into your anger, you know? And we did it. The most powerful thing I ever saw. Even a bad trip, and I had my share, never compared to the fury of the Ladder.

JACOB

The Ladder?

MICHAEL

That's what they called it. A fast trip right down the ladder.

(he makes a downward
dive with his hand)

Right to the primal fear, the base anger. I'm tellin' you, it was powerful stuff. But I don't need to tell you. You know.

JACOB can barely catch his breath, the information he is receiving is so powerful to his mind.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

We did experiments on jungle monkeys.

They bashed each other's heads in, gouged out their eyes, chewed off their tails. The brass loved it.

Then they made us try it on Charlie.

(he pauses)

They took these POW's, just kids really, and put 'em in a courtyard.

We fed 'em huge doses of the stuff.

(he stops for a moment;
a tear rolls down
his cheek)

They were worse than the monkeys. I never knew men could do such things. The whole thing still blows me away.

MICHAEL stands up and begins walking in circles around the PIER. JACOB, astounded, gets up and walks beside him.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

Anyway, this big offensive was coming up. Everyone knew it; Time Magazine, Huntley-Brinkley. And the brass was scared 'cause they knew we couldn't win. Morale was down. It was gettin' ugly in the States. Hell, you remember.

JACOB

Like it was yesterday.

MICHAEL

A couple days later they decided to use the Ladder, on one test battalion. Yours. Just in an infinitesimal dose in the food supply, to prove its effectiveness in the field. They were sure your unit would have the highest kill ratio in the whole goddamn offensive. And you did, too. But not the way they thought.

JACOB is beginning to shake. MICHAEL pulls a container of pills out of his jacket pocket.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

Hey, want something to calm you down?
Made 'em myself.

JACOB shakes his head no.

JACOB

None of us can remember that night. I get flashes of it but they don't make sense. We saw shrinks for years. But nothing they did could ever touch it. What happened? Was there ever an offensive?

MICHAEL

A couple of days later. It was fierce. You guys never saw it.

JACOB

But there was an attack. I can still see them coming. There was a fight, wasn't there?

MICHAEL
Yeah. But not with the Cong.

JACOB
Who then?

He hesitates, obviously uncomfortable. His eyes grow puffy. He looks at the river for a moment and then turns to JACOB.

MICHAEL
You killed each other.

JACOB's mouth drops open. The words hit him like a truck.

EXT. VIETNAM - NIGHT

Gunfire explodes in the darkening sky. We are in Vietnam. JACOB is at the bottom of a trench fighting with FRANK. Chaos surrounds them. Men are screaming. The ENEMY is storming at them from the rear. ROD raises his bayonet and jams it into the belly of his ATTACKER. It is only after a series of jabs that he sees it's another American he's killed. ROD's eyes go blank with confusion and terror.

ROD
Oh my God! WHAT'S HAPPENING?

JACOB looks up from the trench and sees a continuing wave of AMERICAN SOLDIERS bearing down on them. FRANK jumps up, knocking JACOB to the ground and slamming his rifle into JACOB's back. As he spins around JACOB sees another SOLDIER charging at him. His bayonet is aimed at JACOB's stomach. For the first time JACOB remembers the face of his attacker. He is a YOUNG MAN, about 19 years old, clean cut, wearing glasses. The two men stare at each other in terrible confusion. It seems like a moment out of time. And then the SOLDIER lurches forward and rams his bayonet deep into JACOB's abdomen.

CUT TO MICHAEL BACK ON THE PIER. JACOB is ashen-faced.

MICHAEL
It was brother against brother. No discrimination. You tore each other to pieces. I knew it would happen. I warned them. I WARNED THEM. But I was just a hippie chemist, right?

Jesus! And I helped 'em make the stuff... I talked to the guys who bagged the bodies. They're in worse shape than you, believe me. They saw what was left. It's a blessing you don't remember. Of course the brass covered the whole thing up right away. Blamed it all on a surprise attack.

(he pauses)

I needed to find you. The Ladder was my baby.

Tears start flowing down MICHAEL's face. He wipes them with his sleeve. It takes him a moment to regain his composure. JACOB is shivering. MICHAEL takes off his jacket, drapes it over JACOB, and leads him to the wooden planks overhanging the water. They sit and gaze at the JERSEY SHORE.

CUT TO A WIDE SHOT OF MICHAEL AND JACOB in pre-dawn light.

MICHAEL

I always suspected the effects might come back. That's why I had to follow you. I had a hell of a time getting hold of your records.

JACOB

If you knew, why didn't you say anything?

MICHAEL

The truth can kill, my friend. Five hundred men died out there. This isn't a story they'd ever want out. When Paul's car blew up I realized the scope of the thing. I knew they meant business.

JACOB

So why tell me now?

MICHAEL

Because I can get rid of the demons. I can block the Ladder. I have an antidote. We can kill them off, chemically speaking. They'll all disappear. It's chemistry, my friend.

I know. I created it. Come with me.
I can help.

INT. HOTEL - DAWM

JACOB and MICHAEL enter a sleazy HOTEL near the docks, obviously frequented by a gay clientele. JACOB is uncomfortable as they check in. MICHAEL, however, seems to know the ropes. They go to a small room.

JACOB
You come here often?

MICHAEL
Sometimes. When it's convenient.

JACOB
How do I know this isn't just some kind of, you know, seduction or something?

MICHAEL
Hey, I'm not the problem. You've got bigger problems than me.

MICHAEL reaches into his pocket and casually extracts a vial.

MICHAEL
(continuing)
I came up with the formula back in Nam but I never got a chance to use it.

JACOB
Never?

MICHAEL
I'd hoped I'd never have to. Just open your mouth and stick out your tongue.

JACOB
What is it?

MICHAEL
Don't worry. Take it. It'll free your head. Come on.

JACOB
(fearful)
I don't know.

MICHAEL
"Yea though I walk through the valley
of the shadow of death I shall fear
no evil," but no one ever said I
wouldn't be shittin' in my pants
every step of the way, huh?
(JACOB smiles, his
mouth open)
Stick out your tongue.
(JACOB obeys as an
eyedropper deposits
a drop of liquid on
the back of his tongue)
That'a boy. Now why don't you just
lie down and relax.

JACOB
One drop?

MICHAEL
It's strong stuff.

JACOB stretches out on the bed. He stares up at the ceiling
and examines its pock-marked lunar look. Long cracks and
shallow craters erode the surface. It is an alien terrain.

JACOB
I think I'm falling asleep.

MICHAEL
Pleasant dreams.

The words send a jolt through JACOB's body. He tries to get
up but can't. He's frightened.

JACOB
I can't move.

MICHAEL
Just relax.

JACOB
What's happening? Help me.

The ceiling begins to rumble. Cracks split wide open. Huge crevasses tear through the plaster. JACOB's world is crumbling. He stares in horror as DEMONIC FORMS attempt to surge through the rupture above him. Piercing eyes and sharp teeth glimmer in the darkness. Hooved feet and pointed claws clamor to break through.

JACOB
(continuing)
HELP ME!

Instantly MICHAEL appears standing over him. He is holding the vial with the antidote. He draws an eyedropper full of the fluid and holds it over JACOB's mouth.

MICHAEL
Take it!

JACOB fights him, but MICHAEL forces the entire contents of the eyedropper down his throat. JACOB gags. He tries to spit it out, but can't.

Suddenly the ceiling erupts in violent clashes as whole chunks break off and collide like continental plates. The collisions wreak havoc on the DEMONS, chopping and dismembering them. Body parts fall from the ceiling like a Devil's rain. Horrible screams echo from the other side.

MICHAEL
(continuing)
Don't fight it. It's your own mind.
It's your own fears.

Flashes of light and dark storm over JACOB's head, thundering like a war in the heavens. It is a scene of raw power and growing catastrophe. It builds in fury and rage until suddenly the ceiling explodes. JACOB's eyes stare into the formlessness expanding around him. All space is becoming a dark liquid void.

Gradually the liquid grows bluer, clearer. There is an undulating sense to the imagery, a feeling of womb-like comfort. Strange lights appear and sparkle before us like sunlight on the ocean. JACOB is rushing upward, toward the surface.

With the delirious sound of water giving way to air, JACOB breaks through. To his amazement, he finds himself floating

out-stretched on shimmering sunlit water. Above him are clouds of such wondrous beauty that they cannot possibly be of the earth. Pillars of golden light reach down from the heavens creating a cathedral of light. It is a vision of heaven, a vast, almost mythic paradise. JACOB is awed.

A sudden movement catches his attention. He looks over and sees MICHAEL standing before him. Only MICHAEL looks different. His face seems to radiate an inner light, a transcendental beauty. JACOB is nearly blinded by his presence and must shield his eyes to look at him.

MICHAEL

So, how you doin'?

The casualness of the words catches JACOB by surprise. He sits up. To his shock and amazement, he finds that he is back in THE HOTEL ROOM. MICHAEL is standing at the foot of the bed. JACOB is totally disoriented. His eyes move slowly around the room, taking everything in. He doesn't speak.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

It was better than you expected,
huh?

JACOB just stares at him for a while and then suddenly begins to laugh. It is a huge laugh, full of energy and life.

MICHAEL

(continuing)

And no more demons. I told you they'd
be gone.

JACOB

I don't believe this. It's a miracle,
Michael. A miracle.

MICHAEL

Better living through chemistry,
that's my motto.

EXT. GREENWICH VILLAGE - DAY

JACOB and MICHAEL are walking through the STREETS OF GREENWICH VILLAGE. It is early MORNING and the sidewalks are bustling with PEOPLE. JACOB stares into their faces and beams when they smile back. MICHAEL enjoys JACOB's happiness.

EXT. WASHINGTON SQUARE - DAY

JACOB and MICHAEL walk through WASHINGTON SQUARE PARK.

JACOB

It was paradise, Michael. You showed it to me. You were there.

MICHAEL

Well that's good to know.

JACOB

Mike, it was real. It was glorious.

MICHAEL

Glorious. I'm not surprised. I fed you enough of that stuff to send a horse to heaven. I'm just glad you came back.

JACOB

I would have stayed there if I could.

MICHAEL

I'm sure. You've got nothing but troubles waitin' for you here.

He points to two POLICEMEN on the far side of the SQUARE.

MICHAEL

(taking JACOB's arm)

Come on.

EXT. GRAMERCY PARK HOTEL - DAY

The TWO MEN head up to GRAMERCY PARK and stop in front of the GRAMERCY PARK HOTEL. Reaching into his wallet, MICHAEL pulls out a huge stack of credit cards and hands one to JACOB.

MICHAEL

Here. I've got every credit card ever printed. Take this. Stay here till you can arrange to get away. It's on me.

JACOB

No. I couldn't.

MICHAEL

What? You want the Plaza? Don't be foolish. Here. Take this, too.

(he pulls out a business card)

This is my place on Prince Street. It's got my phone, everything. Call if you need me... but you won't. Everything's gonna work out. You just get outta town as fast as you can. The New York police can be effective when they want to be.

JACOB

I don't know what to say.

MICHAEL

Save the words... Just send back my credit card.

MICHAEL laughs, hugs JACOB, and walks away.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

JACOB is in a lovely MOTEL ROOM overlooking GRAMERCY SQUARE. He is sprawled out happily on the bed when there is a knock at the door. He jumps up and opens it. JEZZIE is standing there. She looks at JACOB quizzically. He smiles and takes her in his arms, swinging her into the room.

JEZZIE

What are you doing here? Are you all right? How do you expect to pay for this?

(JACOB smiles)

Everyone's looking for you, Jake. I dodged people all over the place, reporters, police. I don't know what you're gonna do.

JACOB

I'm gonna make love to you. That's what I'm gonna do.

JEZZIE

Are you out of your mind?

JACOB

Yep. Finally. I love you, Jez.

JEZZIE

God, I can't keep up with all your changes.

JACOB

Me neither.

JEZZIE

What's gotten into you?

JACOB grins.

CUT TO JACOB and JEZZIE lying in bed gently caressing one another. For all his ardor JACOB is exhausted from the events of the preceding day. While stroking JEZZIE's hair he begins to fall asleep. JEZZIE crawls on top of him and shoves her hand down his pants. JACOB smiles.

DISSOLVE TO JACOB and JEZZIE making love.

TIME CUT:

DISSOLVE TO JACOB and JEZZIE lying in front of the T.V. watching a romantic movie. JEZZIE snuggles up to JACOB.

JEZZIE

It's amazing, you know, that a drug could change things like that, destroy a life and then give it back. It's hard to believe that the world could be so hellish on day and like heaven the next.

JACOB

I tell you, it was so wonderful. I felt like a little boy. I saw Paradise, Jezzie.

JEZZIE

It's so hard to believe.

There is a knock at the door. JACOB throws on a bathrobe. JEZZIE jumps under the sheets.

JACOB

Who's there?

BELLBOY (V.O.)

It's your dinner, sir.

JEZZIE's eyes brighten. JACOB opens the door. A BELLBOY wheels in a table set for dinner. He sets it in a corner of the room. JEZZIE jumps out of bed, runs to the table, sniffs at the food, and squeals excitedly.

JEZZIE

This is one of my dreams, Jake. Ever since I was a little girl. I never thought it would happen.

JACOB

Stick with me, kid.

JEZZIE smiles.

TIME CUT:

DISSOLVE to JACOB and JEZZIE sitting next to a large window overlooking GRAMERCY PARK. They are sipping champagne.

JEZZIE

I want to go with you, Jake. Wherever you go.

JACOB

It's not practical, Jez. It'll be hard enough alone.

JEZZIE

I can waitress. I'm good.

JACOB

No. Things are too hot. Later. I'll send for you.

JEZZIE

Bullshit!

JACOB

I promise.

JEZZIE

Please.

JACOB

No. I'm a marked man, Jez. I'm the only one left. I don't want to expose you to that. It's not right for you or me. Be reasonable.

JEZZIE

Reasonable? Reasonable? Jake... You're gettin' me angry.

JACOB

I love you when you're angry.

JEZZIE

Oh yeah?
(her eyes twinkle suggestively)
Try leavin' without me.

JACOB laughs. JEZZIE doesn't. Unexpectedly she grabs JACOB and pushes him onto the bed. In seconds they are all over each other, their clothes flying in all directions. They seem as happy as could be.

OMIT

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

JACOB enters GRAND CENTRAL STATION. He checks out all the PEOPLE around him. Not a DEMON in sight. Hurrying to the TICKET WINDOW he gets in line. The TICKET SELLER looks up.

JACOB

Chicago. One way. For tomorrow.

SELLER

How many?

JACOB

One.

SELLER

That'll be \$119.75.

JACOB pulls out MICHAEL's credit card. The SELLER rings it up. While he is waiting JACOB notices a POLICEMAN looking at him. The stare unsettles him. The SELLER hands JACOB his

ticket. He takes it and hurries into the CROWD. Looking back he notices the POLICEMAN is following him.

INT. MEN'S ROOM - DAY

JACOB enters the MEN'S ROOM. He hurries into one of the stalls, drops his pants, and sits. He eyes the graffiti on the walls and then notices a wad of tissue stuffed into a hole between him and the next stall. It is moving. Suddenly the tissue falls to the floor. JACOB glances at the hole curiously and leans forward to examine it. He is shocked to see an eye staring back at him.

JACOB
Goddamn it!
(he covers it with
his hand. A pencil
jabs his palm. He
yells)
Fucking pervert.

Two lips form around the hole. A tongue wags obscenely.

VOICE
Dream on!

JACOB
(shocked)
What?!

The mouth is gone. JACOB hears the stall door fly open and feet running from the room. He jumps up and grabs his pants. He dashes out of the MEN'S ROOM. He hears footsteps and chases after them.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL STATION - DAY

JACOB bursts into the MAIN TERMINAL. He sees someone rushing toward the main doors and speeds after him. HOMELESS PEOPLE, huddling along the corridors, watch as they run past. Escaping to the street, the MAN disappears in the holiday throngs. JACOB, crazed, stands gasping for breath. His fists dig into his coat pocket. Suddenly he feels something and seems surprised when MICHAEL's CARD emerges in his hands.

OMIT

INT. SOHO LOFT BUILDING - EVENING

JACOB runs up the stairs in a SOHO LOFT BUILDING. It is a dingy, industrial staircase, poorly lit. He reaches a door with MICHAEL's name painted on it in large black letters. He knocks loudly. There is no answer. He pounds on it. Another door opens on the floor above. A head sticks out.

MAN
You lookin' for Mike?

JACOB
(panting hard)
Where is he?

MAN
Don't know. Hasn't picked his mail
up in days. It's not like him.

JACOB has a frenzied look in his eyes. He searches around the staircase and sees a pile of lumber stacked in a corner. He grabs a two-by-four and lunges at the door.

MAN
What the hell are you doing?

JACOB doesn't answer. He smashes wildly at the door until the lock flies open.

INT. MICHAEL'S LOFT - EVENING

JACOB charges into the dark space groping for a light. He finds it. The LOFT is a disaster area. Nothing is standing. JACOB runs from room to room. In the back he discovers a large private chemistry lab. Glass vials and bottles are shattered on the floor.

JACOB rifles through the cabinets. A few bottles are intact but their labels mean nothing to him.

He reaches for one cabinet and notices a reddish liquid oozing out from the bottom. He opens it. MICHAEL's severed head stares him in the face. It is smiling.

A scream rings out as the MAN from upstairs sees what JACOB has seen. JACOB jumps back, trips, and falls over MICHAEL's headless body. It is lying sprawled across the floor.

MAN

Oh my God!

JACOB stumbles to pull himself up. He is in a state of unrelieved panic. He runs past the MAN and spills out the door. He takes two and three stairs at a time, nearly flying to the street.

EXT. SOHO STREETS - NIGHT

JACOB rushes into the icy air and runs wildly down the sidewalk as fast as his legs will move. With unexpected violence he charges into the side of a building. Over and over he hurls himself against it. He grabs for the bricks. His fingers insert themselves into the crevices. It is as though he is trying to merge with the wall.

Suddenly JACOB turns and dashes into the street. A taxi is speeding toward him, its lights the only sign of life and warmth in the dark night. JACOB steps into its path. It is hard to tell if he is trying to stop the cab or waiting to be hit. The taxi screeches to a halt. JACOB stares at it a moment and then steps to get in. The DRIVER tries to pull off but JACOB yanks at the door and drags himself inside.

INT. TAXI - NIGHT

Rain is beginning to fall. It streaks the windows.

JACOB
(barely audible)
I'm going to Brooklyn.

DRIVER
Sorry, Mac. Not with me you're not.
I get lost in Brooklyn.

JACOB
I know the way.

JACOB reaches into his pants pocket, pulls out a twenty dollar bill, and hands it to the DRIVER. He takes it.

JACOB
(continuing)
Look, this is all the money I've got
in the world. Take me home and it's
yours.

DRIVER
...Where's your home?

CUT TO THE TAXI heading down WEST BROADWAY, approaching the BROOKLYN BRIDGE, crossing the EAST RIVER, and driving through dark BROOKLYN STREETS.

JACOB's face passes in and out of dense shadows. Every time he is bathed in light his image seems to alter. Something in him is falling away.

EXT. SARAH'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

JACOB gets out of the TAXI and approaches the LOBBY of SARAH'S APARTMENT BUILDING. JACOB is greeted by the DOORMAN.

DOORMAN
Dr. Singer. It's been a long time.

JACOB
(greeting him warmly)
Hello, Sam.

DOORMAN
(noticing JACOB's
battered condition)
Are you all right?

JACOB
I'm okay.

DOORMAN
Do you want some help? I can call
upstairs.

JACOB
No, don't. But thanks.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

JACOB stops in front of the APARTMENT door and reaches his hand underneath a section of the hallway carpet. It comes back with a key. He inserts it into the lock and gently opens the door. He calls out.

JACOB
Hello. It's me.

INT. SARAH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Some lights are on. The APARTMENT looks comfortable and cozy.

JACOB

Hello? Is anybody home? Jed? Eli?
Daddy's here.

There is still no answer. JACOB is surprised. He peers into the dark LIVING ROOM and then walks to the KITCHEN. No one is around. A photo of JACOB, SARAH, AND THEIR BOYS is sitting on the counter. He picks it up and carries it with him through the apartment. He walks into his old BEDROOM and then into the BOYS' ROOM. The beds are still unmade. There is no one home. He sees his image in the BATHROOM mirror and turns away in disgust. He walks back to the LIVING ROOM. He is about to switch the lights on when he hears footsteps coming down the hall. He calls out.

JACOB

Sarah, is that you? I hope you don't
mind. I needed to come home.

JACOB is startled to see JEZZIE enter the room. She does not seem he usual self. She appears larger, more imposing.

JEZZIE

Hello, Jake. I knew you'd come here
in the end.

JACOB is nervous.

JACOB

What're you... ? Where's Sarah? Where
are the boys?

JEZZIE

Sit down, Jake.

JACOB

Where are they?

JEZZIE

Sit down.

JACOB

No! What's going on? Where's my
family?

JEZZIE

It's over, Jake. It's all over.

JACOB

Where have they gone?

JEZZIE

Wake up. Stop playing with yourself.
It's finished.

JEZZIE stares at JACOB with a frightening, powerful glare. The edge of her coat rustles and flutters as she moves toward him. It is an innocent sound at first, but after a moment it transforms into something else, an obsessive flapping noise, the sound of a wing.

JACOB's body feels the first waves of an inner tremor. His legs are shaking.

JACOB

What's going on?

JEZZIE

Your capacity for self-delusion is
remarkable, Dr. Singer.

JEZZIE begins walking around the dark living room as she talks to him. Something about her walk is very unnatural. JACOB eyes her fearfully.

In the darkness JEZZIE's movements become increasingly strange and elusive. We see her pass before a shadow and disappear within it, only to reappear, seconds later, in a doorway on the other side of the room. JACOB spins around, confused. Suddenly JEZZIE is inches from his face, although it seems like there has been no time for her to get there. Her movements are totally impossible, defying all logic, all physical laws.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

What's wrong, Jake?

(she mocks him)

Forget to take your antidote?

JACOB

Who are you? What are you doing to

me?

JEZZIE

You have quite a mind, Jake. I loved your friends. That chemist – the Ladder. What an imagination you have!

JACOB freezes.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

And your vision of paradise... fantastic! You're a real dreamer, you know that? Only it's time to wake up.

JEZZIE has disappeared in the darkness of the room. Only the sounds of flapping wings remain. They grow louder and more menacing, whooshing past him with no visible source.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

Your mind is crumbling, Jake. No more "army." No more conspiracies. You're dying, Dr. Singer. It's over.

JACOB, frightened, turns toward the door as if to hurry out. "JEZZIE" laughs.

JEZZIE

(continuing)

Where's to run, Jacob? Where's to go?

JACOB pauses a moment and then turns to confront the terror behind him.

JACOB

WHO ARE YOU?

JEZZIE

How many times have you asked me that? How many times?

JACOB

TELL ME, DAMN YOU!

JEZZIE

(with consummate power)
YOU KNOW WHO I AM.

JEZZIE appears from the shadows. Her coat collar obscures her and it seems for a moment that she has no face. Then, to JACOB's horror, she turns around. He is staring at the vibrating creature he has seen so often before. Glimpsed almost in abstraction it is a living terror, dark and undefinable. Its face is a black and impenetrable void in constant vibration. Its voice is an unspeakable demonic cry, the essence of fear and suffering. JACOB pulls away from it, overwhelmed by confusion. He is rooted in fear.

A sudden wind howls through the room, great gales blowing JACOB's hair straight up. It is like a hurricane pushing him into the wall. He can barely stand. He struggles to pull himself away. The flapping sound returns, charging at him from all directions. It is as if the darkness itself is swooping down, trying to envelop him.

JACOB
(whispering to himself)
This isn't happening.

New terrible sounds arise, chain saws slashing through the air, knives, and sabers ripping through space with unrelenting anger. Guns fire and explode past his head. It is as though all the sounds of destruction are closing in on him. JACOB yells but his own voice is lost in the melee. Terrified, he looks heavenward, as if crying for help.

Suddenly, from the noise, a calm voice rises, speaking, as if from a distance. It is LOUIS. JACOB is shocked to hear him. He stands motionless.

LOUIS (V.O.)
If you're frightened of dying you'll
see devils tearing you apart. If
you've made your peace then they're
angels freeing you from the world.

The voice fades. JACOB just stands there, not sure what to do. And then the sounds return. Only now they are more terrifying than ever. Hideously loud, they become a cacophony of sounds, voices of parents, friends, lovers, the sounds of battle, fighting, and dying.

JACOB looks up and sees the creature in the center of the

room. All the sounds seem to emanate from it. The more JACOB stares at it the louder they become. After a moment, JACOB takes a huge breath. We sense a great resolve forming inside him. Then, slowly, courageously, he begins moving toward it.

New and more terrifying noises assault JACOB, attempting to drive him back, but he will not be stopped. He continues walking toward the creature.

In the hallway a standing lamp slams sparking to the floor. It rolls back and forth like a living thing, with a maddening hypnotic regularity. Doors slam open and closed, unlatching, snapping, shutting, with deafening force. The room itself seems like an organic presence. It is alive, angry, and threatening.

The CREATURE sits in the midst of the insanity like the source of madness itself. It writhes, contorts and vibrates with unstoppable fury. JACOB, terrified, but unrelenting, continues to approach it.

AS THE CAMERA DRAWS CLOSER TO THE CREATURE'S HEAD the density of its featureless form overwhelms the screen. It is like staring into emptiness itself, the ultimate darkness.

With superhuman effort JACOB grabs hold of the creature. It is like grabbing hold of a live wire. His body begins shaking uncontrollably like a man being electrocuted. He is flying in all directions but does not let go. His fingers claw at the creature's head. JACOB struggles defiantly with the monster.

Suddenly a terrible voice emerges from within it.

CREATURE
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE FIGHTING!

JACOB does not respond. It cries out again.

CREATURE
WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE
FIGHTING?

Deep inside the darkness JACOB begins to make out the presence of a form, something writhing and tortured lurking before us. It looks briefly like an animal until we realize it is the image of a human face. It is covered by a dark suffocating film, like a mask.

JACOB digs into it with all his might and pulls it off.

CUT TO:

DEAD SILENCE as JACOB SEES HIS OWN FACE staring back at him from beneath the mask. It is JACOB SINGER as we first saw him on the battlefield in Vietnam. Only now his image is pale and lifeless. It takes JACOB a moment to realize that he is dead. The recognition is one of terrible confusion and pain. JACOB stares at himself for a long time as a huge cry wells up inside him. It bursts forth with devastating sadness.

As that instant the whole of space seems to explode in a flash of cataclysmic power. Hundreds of images from JACOB's life flash before us, his birth, his childhood, his adulthood. The demons, the room, JEZZIE, LOUIS, MICHAEL, SARAH, all seem to assail us in a rush of blinding intensity.

We are flying over a landscape of memories, zooming across a constantly changing field of images. Some of the images move, some of the people in them speak. They are not particularly significant memories, in some ways they are quite banal, but something about them is infused with life and joy. Even the painful moments resonate with vital force. Some of the moments we recognize from the time we've spent with JACOB. Some we have not seen before. There is no order to them, no logic to why they have been recalled.

A newborn baby takes its first breath and screams. SARAH pulls clothes off a clothes line on a rainy day. JACOB's FATHER stands in the Florida surf as sea foam laps gently at his legs. PAUL, FRANK, and JACOB play cards on the edge of a rice paddy. GABE rides his bike into the path of an oncoming car. A child puts his ear next to a bowl of cereal, listening to it talk. A young girl standing in a doorway lifts up her blouse to show her new breasts. JACOB and SARAH slice a wedding cake that topples to the floor. JEZZIE looks at JACOB and asks "Love me a little?"

And then it is over. Total silence overwhelms the screen, a wonderful soothing calm. JACOB's eyes open and he is shocked to find himself sitting on the floor in SARAH's apartment. He is all alone. The first rays of early morning sunlight are filtering through the window. Something about the apartment seems transfigured, magical. JACOB sits motionless, stunned to be back there.

The faint sound of music can be heard coming from the hallway. It is warm and familiar, the tinkling of a music box. JACOB listens to it for a few moments and then something registers inside him. Curious, he gets up and approaches the corridor.

JACOB
Hello?

There is no response. Suddenly the music stops. JACOB freezes for a moment. He sees someone standing in the shadows at the other end.

JACOB
(continuing)
Who is it? Who's there?

Tentatively JACOB moves forward. As he draws closer he begins to see the outline of a child. Then, all of a sudden, he realizes who it is. His eyes well up as he stands there, the full impact of the moment registering inside him. It's his son, GABE. He is carrying the same musical lunch box we have seen before. The young boy smiles warmly at his father. It is the smile of an angel. JACOB swallows hard.

JACOB
(continuing)
Gabe? Gabe!

JACOB runs to his son. Unable to hold back the tears, he embraces him in a rush of love and emotion.

JACOB
(continuing)
Gabe. Oh God. I don't believe...

They hug one another over and over. JACOB, overcome, sits down on the stairs. After a moment GABE puts his arm around his father's shoulder in a gesture of surprising maturity and compassion. We sense for an instant that their roles have reversed. GABE reaches for JACOB's hand and gently encourages him to stand up.

With a sweet tug GABE leads his father up the steps.

Sunlight streams down from the top of the stairs, hitting the first landing. GABE is bathed in its warm glow. As JACOB reaches the landing, he too is surrounded by the comforting light.

GABE hurries up the last set of stairs. JACOB turns to follow but is stunned by the brilliance of the light pouring in from above. Squinting, he cannot see his son. Then suddenly GABE steps back out of the light and takes his father's hand once more. His eyes sparkle with excitement.

GABE

Come on Dad... You know what we've got? A sandbox just like the Williston's, only it's bigger and the sand's all white. You won't believe it.

JACOB smiles at his son. GABE smiles at him. It is a moment of total euphoria. THE CAMERA HOLDS as they continue up the stairs.

GABE

(continuing)

And my parakeet. Remember, the one grandma let out of the cage? He's okay. And he's talking now. He knows my name.

GABE's voice slowly trails off as he and his father disappear in the intensity of the light. THE CAMERA HOLDS on the image. For a brief but stunning moment there appears to be a huge ethereal staircase shimmering before us. It rises up into infinite dimensions. Then the brilliance of its blinding light overwhelms the screen.

Suddenly the brightness condenses into a smaller light source. It holds for a second and then flashes off. An overhead surgical lamp remains stubbornly in view.

INT. VIETNAM FIELD HOSPITAL - DAY

A DOCTOR leans his head in front of the lamp and removes his mask. His expression is somber. He shakes his head. His words are simple and final.

DOCTOR

He's gone.

CUT TO JACOB SINGER lying on an operating table in a large ARMY FIELD TENT in VIETNAM. The DOCTOR steps away. A NURSE rudely pulls a green sheet over his head. The DOCTOR turns

to one of the aides and throws up his hands in defeat.

AN ORDERLY wheels JACOB's body past rows of other DOCTORS and NURSES fighting to save lives. A YOUNG VIETNAMESE BOY pulls back a screen door to let them out of the tent. It is a bright, fresh morning. The sun is rising.

THE END