

ZERO . DARK . THIRTY

A Screenplay
by
Stephen Susco

Story by
John Stalberg, Jr. & Stephen Susco

Based on the film
"Deathdream"

Written by Alan Ormsby
Directed by Bob Clark

Prod. Draft (Blue)
2/21/2006

Prod. Draft (White)
1/23/2006

OVER BLACK, an OUT OF TUNE PIANO begins to play. A few of the keys are FLAT -- but still it's haunting and beautiful, evocative of a nostalgia... a deep yearning...

Then VOICES can be heard. A child's GIGGLING. The LAUGHING of a woman. And we FADE IN ON --

1 EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY (VIDEO)

1

-- a hand-held HOME VIDEO, circa mid-80s. BIRTHDAY CANDLES flicker on a CAKE with the number '7' in the center. YOUNG ANDY (7) blows out the candles, and HIS LITTLE SISTER (3) looks on, and HIS PARENTS cheer.

The video CUTS to a GIFT being handed to Young Andy. He rips it open eagerly. It's a TOY RIFLE. Andy BEAMS at the camera -- it's just what he wanted.

We CUT AGAIN to Andy in the BACK LAWN, hiding behind a tree. He peers out from behind it, and POINTS THE RIFLE at us, taking a shot. Then --

-- he RUNS, with glee on his face, across the lawn. The video ZOOMS IN on him, as his legs race across the grass.

As WE GET CLOSER, new SOUNDS begin to creep in, draining the joy and life from the scene before us:

-- ragged, desperate BREATHING; a disembodied VOICE, filtered over an airborne transmission; a harsh metallic CREAKING, like the death keens of some unseen behemoth --

-- and the video SLOWS DOWN, moving CLOSER on ANDY'S LEGS, almost GRINDING TO A HALT as his last foot TOUCHES DOWN --

HARD CUT TO:

2 EXT. DESERT - DAY [ONE CONTINUOUS SHOT]

2

-- a BOOT plunges into thick, yielding sand. Then another. They WOBBLE, almost losing their balance.

As we WIDEN OUT, ANOTHER PAIR of boots joins the first, stepping down from a CROOKED METAL LEDGE. And BLOOD drips down from somewhere unseen, splattering the sand floor.

We keep PULLING BACK as SOUND begin to emerge -- muffled VOICES, distant and discordant, as if from another world. The vision before us RESOLVES before the sound does --

-- two young soldiers, PVT. ANDY WOODWARD (19, hard eyes) and PVT. NEVINS (19, baby face) support a wounded man (LT.

REED, late 20s) between them. Blood soaks Reed's pants, spilling down from beneath his BODY ARMOR above.

Andy and Nevins position Reed and quickly DRAG HIM towards us. We PULL BACK, staying with them as we reveal --

-- their downed BLACKHAWK HELICOPTER. Black smoke plumes from the wreckage. A half-dozen BODIES litter the area around it. But Andy and Nevins are focused intently on getting Reed as far away from there as possible --

The first CLEAR SOUND reaches us. It's the sound of something STREAKING IN from off-camera --

-- an RPG SCREAMS IN from the left, SLAMMING into the wreckage, LIFTING IT off the ground in a FIREBALL.

And now THE SOUND returns with a vengeance, filling our aural world with violence and terror.

Nevins is nearly thrown off his feet. But Andy YELLS:

ANDY
COME ON! THEY COULD HIT US AGAIN!

Andy and Nevins don't look back -- they brace Lt. Reed between them, moving as quickly as they can towards the base of the rocky hillside. Just when they get there --

-- Andy sees a short FLASH, like light reflecting off glass, about halfway up the ridge.

ANDY
SNIPER!!!

THWAP. Reed's head DISAPPEARS in a burst of crimson mist.

Nevins is splattered with blood and bone fragments. It's not until we hear the REPORT AND ECHO of the shot that Nevins realizes what's just happened. As he stares down numbly at Reed's body --

*
*

-- Andy quickly GRABS REED'S SHOULDER STRAPS and drags him to a rocky area nearby. He uses his free hand to PULL NEVINS TO THE GROUND, pressing against up a boulder.

*
*
*

Nevins stares in terror at what's left of Reed's head as Andy fumbles through his pack for the radio:

ANDY (INTO RADIO)
Contact zero-five-zero! Western
ridge --

PILOT (ON RADIO)
Copy. Standby.

Andy turns to A DARK SPECK in the distance, barely visible. It's a DISTANT HELICOPTER. Backup.

There's a THUD, and a chunk of rock right next to Andy's head shatters. A REPORT immediately follows it.

GUNSHIP POV: ZOOMING IN on the ridgeline, finding what appears to be the mouth of a SMALL CAVE. The optics switch to a SICKLY GREEN color -- and the heat images of THREE MEN crouched in the underbrush become immediately visible.

ANDY (ON RADIO)
Goddammit, take those guys out!

We hear the DISEMBODIED CHATTER and INTENSE BREATHING of the pilot and gunner:

CO-PILOT (ON RADIO)
Auto ranging -- got a lock --

PILOT (ON RADIO)
Hit 'em.

The heat signatures are BLOWN APART as a hail of depleted uranium shells batter the ridge. The white colors SMEAR the hillside, like a crushed lightning bug in the palm of a hand.

BACK TO ANDY: he peers around the rock as DIRT CLOUDS billow out from the hillside. Chunks of debris fall around them. *

Andy lowers the radio. His eyes go to --

-- Nevins. He's staring at WHAT REMAINS OF THE GUNSHIP. The bodies of soldiers are BURNING.

Keeping low, Andy moves quickly towards Lt. Reed. But there's clearly nothing he can do to help.

Andy glances up towards the hillside, then over at Nevins:

ANDY
Joe.

Nevins finally turns, eyes wide. He's going into shock. But the look in his eyes is clear.

With a shaking hand, he picks up his carbine.

3 EXT. CAVE - DAY

3

Smoke, sand and dust still hang in the air. Pieces of what used to be three human beings are scattered about.

Andy and Nevins appear, M4 carbines at the ready. They approach cautiously, ignoring the carnage around them.

They walk past A HEAD on the ground. The eyes are open, and the mouth is working slowly, like a goldfish. But Andy's attention is focused entirely on --

-- THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE, yawning open before them. It's pitch black inside. And deathly silent.

FROM INSIDE: the long tunnel looks like a mouth, preparing to swallow Andy and Nevins alive.

Nevins eyes Andy warily -- he's in no hurry to go in. But Andy is resolved. Steeling himself, he TAKES THE FIRST STEP.

4 INT. CAVE - TUNNEL - DAY

4

The sun is immediately squelched by the claustrophobic corridor leading into the ridge.

Andy and Nevins are thrown into silhouette -- they quickly switch on their carbine-mounted FLASHLIGHTS. Their harsh breathing is amplified by the walls around them.

The ceiling becomes lower and lower with each step, and it's not long before Andy and Nevins can't stand up straight.

And then they TURN A CORNER -- and the sunlight is gone. Only their flashlights illuminate the path.

Nevins abruptly stops, putting a hand on Andy's shoulder as he peers into the darkness before them.

THEIR POV: the tunnel WIDENS ahead of them, a larger room carved into the ridgetside. A FLICKERING LIGHT beckons.

They listen for a moment, but there's only silence up ahead. Andy turns off his light and slowly moves forward, into --

5 INT. CAVE - DEATHROOM - DAY

5

It's a small round room, with a sputtering GAS LAMP on the floor. The floor is almost entirely filled with CORPSES. Some are wrapped in dirty linen, others are exposed.

Nevins tries to keep from retching at the stench, staring in horror at the decaying forms lying around them. It's a nightmarish vision straight out of a Goya painting.

*
*

NEVINS

Andy... I can't --

A SOUND makes him stop, swinging his rifle up at --

-- A TUNNEL across the room. Muffled VOICES in a foreign tongue can be heard. Along with the sound of SOBBING.

Andy mouths a silent "cover me" to Nevins, and slowly makes his way towards the opposite end, stepping around the bodies.

The VOICES and SOBBING get louder as he gets closer. Many voices YELLING -- one voice MOANING in fear and pain.

Eyes in the tunnel, Andy loses his balance -- and STEPS ON THE BLOATED CHEST of a corpse. His foot BREAKS THROUGH, the corpse emitting a BELCH of trapped gas.

Nevins whirls around, a hand going to his mouth as VOMIT spills out. Trying to stifle the sound of his retching.

Andy goes pale. Without looking down, he extricates his foot from the decaying corpse, and continues on, reaching --

-- THE MOUTH of the tunnel. He peers around the edge as the YELLING gets louder... and as the SOBBING becomes a SCREAM OF SHEER AGONY. Like someone being tortured.

We don't see what Andy sees. But we see the horror reflected on his face, as his lips move numbly, whispering:

ANDY

Lewis...

As the word leaves his lips, there's a muffled BARK. And Andy now sees, too late, at a bend in the tunnel --

-- the STAKE in the ground, with a CHAIN leading from it. A DOG appears from around the corner, staring directly at him. Missing a front leg, it hobbles to the end of it's chain... and lets out a fierce GROWL.

The VOICES grow silent. Then the CRUNCH of approaching FOOTSTEPS echoes through the room.

Andy quickly presses against the wall next to the tunnel's mouth, sliding his KNIFE from it's sheath --

The FOOTSTEPS stop. Then the MUZZLE OF A RIFLE appears. Someone stepping out into the room --

Andy SPINS, grabbing the gun and JERKING IT --

-- and SLAMMING HIS KNIFE into the temple of the FIGURE he's pulled into the deathroom.

It's a BOY. No more than thirteen years old. His wide eyes are fixed on Andy's, blood slowly beginning to spill from his ears and tear ducts, his body TWITCHING in Andy's grip.

And now the dog begins to BARK MADLY.

Andy backs away from the tunnel as the SCUFLING OF FEET fills the room. DARK FIGURES appear in the entrance --

Nevins lets out a CRY and OPENS FIRE. The explosions from his gun are deafening in the enclosed space.

The FIGURES in the mouth RETURN FIRE, bullets RICOCHETING off the carved-out walls. Andy DIVES FOR COVER --

-- just in time to see Nevins' head BLOWN APART. But his finger keeps JERKING THE TRIGGER as his body falls back --

-- and we get a FLASH of a grinning DEMONIC FACE looming directly in front of Andy's --

*
*

-- the LAMP on the floor BURSTS under the fire.

And darkness fills our vision.

It takes a moment for the ECHO of gunfire to fade away. Soon all that is left is Andy's HARSH BREATHING. And the SQUISH of the bodies he's lying on.

There's a HARSH WHISPER from nearby -- and the room erupts in MUZZLE FLASHES as Andy shoots in that direction. But then his rifle begins to DRY-CLICK... he's out of bullets.

A soft CHUCKLE emits from the darkness, and Andy's desperate breathing quickens. They know they've got him now.

Soon there are WHISPERS all around, and more SQUISHING sounds -- they're surrounding Andy in the darkness. His breathing becomes more and more panicked as he GULPS FOR AIR --

Silence returns for a beat. A long beat. Then --

-- there's a BURST OF RED LIGHT, and we get A GLIMPSE of Andy, illuminated by the flare he's ignited, clutching his KNIFE in the other, LUNGING UPWARD WITH A CRY OF MADNESS --

6

EXT. CAVE - DAY

6

The mouth of the cave yawns at us. Too dark to see inside.

Somewhere along the ridge, a HAWK CRIES. Then --

-- there are SOUNDS from inside the cave. Shuffling feet.

And then A FIGURE is visible, approaching the mouth. Moving slowly, dragging his feet, struggling to stand --

INSIDE THE CAVE: we're BEHIND THE FIGURE now as he moves toward the washed-out cave exit, stark black against the blazing light, like an afterimage burned into our cornea.

And we're in the figure's AURAL POV: the sounds of the world have vanished, replaced by the singular HIGH-PITCHED RINGING of eardrums pushed to their limits... and beyond.

OUTSIDE: -- it's ANDY. He reaches the end, squinting at the light. He's COVERED WITH BLOOD, still clutching his gore-covered knife, his rifle DRAGS on the ground behind him.

He stops in the sunlight, wavering on his feet. Then he DROPS TO HIS KNEES. Lets go of his knife.

Eyes on the ground, he reaches out a trembling hand, cupping a palm full of SAND. Raises it, watching it run through his fingers. His body shuddering. And then --

-- a SOUND makes him look up. Squinting to see --

HIS POV: something begins to resolve in the distance, moving into focus... a VEHICLE of some kind, with the blurry figures of THREE MEN atop it...

Andy stares numbly at the approaching vehicle. Unable to even lift his weapon. Helpless.

HIS POV: it's a HUMVEE. The men are U.S. SOLDIERS, waving their arms at Andy, mouthing silent words. An AMERICAN FLAG ripples in the air as the Humvee races towards us.

Andy's been saved. But his face holds no recognition or awareness of this fact, as the sand finishes spilling from his limp hand...

...revealing a PROMISE RING, coated with the fine dirt, on the middle finger of his left hand.

Andy numbly stares at the ring as we --

FADE TO WHITE.

After a beat, BLACK LETTERS appear against the background:

ZERO

DARK

THIRTY

The letters abruptly SPIN wildly, like some CRAZED SPEEDOMETER beginning to CYCLE DOWN -- and for a moment we get FLASHES OF OTHER WORDS caught up in the jumble...

...the letters DISAPPEAR ONE BY ONE until all that remains is HOME.

We hold on the single word, like a silent promise. Then:

CUT TO BLACK.

7

EXT. YOUNGTOWN - DUSK

7

AERIAL SHOT: we're moving over a patchwork of fields and rolling hills, until we finally find:

YOUNGTOWN. An all-American town in the flatlands of the mid-west. There's nothing but blue sky and cloud-draped vistas all around it.

Another Autumn day is winding to a close: KIDS wrap up the ninth inning of their baseball game on the hometown diamond; OTHERS race home on their bikes for family dinner.

Elegant street lights wink on along MAIN STREET. LOCALS stroll hand-in-hand, deciding which restaurant to dine in. OLDER FOLKS sit on their front porches, surveying the very landscape they grew up in.

A stately brick VFW HEADQUARTERS sits across from a Moose Lodge. VETS play cards out front, watch the KIDS run past, laughing as they jump into piles of colorful leaves.

*
*

And then we catch A CAR slowly driving through town. It's a black sedan, an anonymous model. No one even gives it a second glance. But we do. There's an odd feeling, something that makes us want to keep our eyes on it. And so we --

-- FOLLOW IT through town, past an AUTO DEALERSHIP studded with American flags, past a CHURCH and a HIGH SCHOOL.

A DARK CLOUD moves in overhead. Fat RAINDROPS spatter the windshield. The wipers TURN ON, brushing them aside.

INSIDE THE CAR: we get more GLIMPSES OF THE TOWN from inside the vehicle, but they're mere fragments, seen from odd angles, as if THE MEN inside aren't very interested. We're no longer drifting aimlessly, now. There's a destination.

8 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - NIGHT 8

A turn-of-the-century woodframe home in a tree-lined neighborhood. Like the others, it has a perfect white-picket fence out front. This is the kind of place where you don't have to worry about where your kids have run off to.

9 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - NIGHT 9

We start CLOSE ON a window of the house next door. There's a FIGURE standing in the darkness, watching us --

-- this is GERALD (50s). There's something in his gaze -- not envy, but a deep yearning -- as he stares at us.

We begin to ZOOM BACK, and find ourselves in the DINING ROOM of the Woodward home. We hear VOICES all around us, the chatting of a loving FAMILY.

As we keep RACKING BACK across the DINING ROOM TABLE, a SALAD BOWL is placed in front of us. Then a large steaming plate of corn. And a huge ROASTED CHICKEN. We finally see --

-- CAROL (50s) and HEATHER (16). Mother and daughter bringing food out from the kitchen, talking with --

-- EDGAR (50s, Dad). He's helping DANIELLE (18) with the place settings. We keep PULLING BACK as --

-- the family sits around the table. Everyone takes a cue from Carol, lowering their heads in prayer. As they do --

-- a PHOTOGRAPH drifts into frame, as we finally slow to a stop. It's an imitation of the famous WW2 photo, of the nurse and sailor kissing in the Times Square V-J Day parade.

But in this photo, the girl is DANIELLE. And the YOUNG SOLDIER in uniform kissing her is familiar to us --

-- it's PVT. ANDY WOODWARD.

With their silent prayers done, Edgar pulls the chicken closer and reaches for his carving knife. But he stops in mid-motion. All eyes are still on --

-- CAROL. She's still praying, lips moving silently.

Edgar exchanges a nervous look with his daughter. But everyone patiently waits for her to finish. She does, nodding at her husband with a smile. And he begins to carve.

10 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - NIGHT 10

Through the windows, we can see the Woodward family eating inside. Warm and safe at home. And then --

-- THE BLACK SEDAN slowly passes the house. And leaves frame.

But then we see RED LIGHT thrown onto the trash cans in front of the house. They're BRAKE LIGHTS.

WHITE LIGHTS join the red, and the sedan reverses back into frame, pulling to a stop in front of the house.

The SHADOWY FIGURE of the man in the passenger seat leans closer to the window, as if checking THE MAILBOX. Then --

-- the engine CUTS. The TWO MEN sit in the car, staring at the house. Watching the family inside. Rain patters the windows. And then, after a long beat --

-- the two men finally get out. And now we can see that they're IN UNIFORM. Military men. One older, one younger. After a moment, they reluctantly head for the door.

11 INT. GERALD'S HOME - NIGHT 11

It's dark in here. We can barely make out Gerald standing by the window, watching the military men --

-- but there's enough light to see his face TIGHTENING. And his hand CLUTCHING the window frame. He knows what this means. But he can't turn away...

12 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - PORCH - NIGHT 12

The two military men walk up the porch. They stand before the front door for a long beat. One glances over at the other. And nods.

13 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 13

The family stops in mid-conversation as THE DOORBELL RINGS. They turn to see the MEN standing outside on the porch.

Carol's body tenses, going ram-rod straight. Her wide eyes turn to Edgar's.

Edgar numbly gets up from the table and walks to the front door. He opens it, and the men step inside --

-- and now the family can see THEIR UNIFORMS. And the looks on their faces. They slowly take off their hats.

Carol STANDS, her chair FALLING BACK to the ground. Her body TREMBLES, and she puts a hand on the table for support --

-- her eyes are fixed on the military men, as she slowly shakes her head in denial -- *

Edgar goes to Carol, putting a hand on her shoulder. But she doesn't notice, never taking her eyes from the military men -- *

-- and we MOVE PAST HER, slowly ZOOMING back to the window, past a mortified Heather, her hand going to her mouth -- *

-- to DANIELLE, who stands frozen in shock -- *

14 EXT. GERALD'S HOME - WINDOW - NIGHT (SAME) 14 *

Gerald is barely visible in the window, watching the scene next door. The rain on the glass reflects onto his face like tears streaming down his cheeks... a substitute for eyes that have lost the ability to cry. *

CAROL (O.S.)
Not my boy... not my Andy!!! *

Carol's desperate cries of denial are too much for him. He steps away, retreating into the darkness. *

15 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - STAIRS - NIGHT (LATER) 15

Edgar slowly steps out of the living room into the foyer. He's CRADLING HIS WIFE in his arms. Slowly, his face a blank, he begins to carry her upstairs. He fills the frame --

CUT TO:

16 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - NIGHT 16

The neighborhood is dark. It's not the kind of place where you need street lamps. A deeper darkness, one of spirit, seems to hang over the street tonight.

There's a CREAK from nearby. Movement from the hallway. He looks at the clock -- it's after 3:00 in the morning.

20 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT 20

Edgar steps into the hall. It's empty. But a warm GLOW appears around the edges of a door at the end of the hall.

He walks towards it, and as he gets closer we can hear a muffled WHISPERING coming from inside. He turns the knob gently and opens the door a crack --

21 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - ANDY'S ROOM - NIGHT 21

EDGAR'S POV: nearly a dozen melted-down CANDLES have been placed on a chair around a PHOTO OF ANDY. Carol kneels before the chair, head bowed, rocking back and forth --

-- and WHISPERING RAPIDLY. Her words are coming so quickly we only get bits and pieces of what she's saying:

CAROL
...you're not dead, Andy... you're
alive... come home to me...

CLOSE ON HER LIPS: she's breathing in short, harsh gulps as she whispers. Her tongue brushes across her chapped lips, but she keeps going, intensely, a desperate pleading...

ON A CANDLE, melted all the way down to the chair. The flame FLICKERS, fading, dying...

CAROL
...come home...

The candle EXTINGUISHES. We TILT UP, following the smoke that drifts up like a prayer to the heavens.

Edgar watches the surreal scene for a moment. But a nearby CREAK makes him turn --

-- to see HEATHER standing by her room. Regarding Edgar blankly. They stand in silence, Father and Daughter, not knowing what tomorrow will bring...

Off Edgar's face, we --

DISSOLVE TO:

Another FACE. A SOLDIER in full dress. His gaze bores into us. There's no detectable emotion behind the eyes.

A beat of stillness. Then --

-- the soldier abruptly SWINGS HIS RIFLE TO THE READY --

CUT ON GUNSHOT:

22 EXT. MAIN STREET - DAWN (TWO WEEKS LATER) 22

The "downtown" strip is silent and idyllic in the morning light. Perfectly-trimmed shrubs line pristine sidewalks in front of the movie palace, the pharmacy, the corner diner.

Sprinklers KICK ON, watering the grounds of the TOWN SQUARE, framed by the HIGH SCHOOL and TOWN HALL building.

A SHOPKEEPER (70s) opens the door of his bakery, sipping from a steaming mug of coffee and stretching his back. He's about to step back inside when he notices --

-- A FIGURE walking slowly down the center of Main Street, framed by the light of the morning sun.

The Shopkeeper winces, peering to get a closer look at --

-- THE YOUNG MAN. Though in silhouette, we can see he's wearing full military dress, and has a large camouflage sack slung over his shoulders.

FROM BEHIND: we follow him as he walks slowly through town, footsteps ECHOING off the buildings. Eyes straight ahead.

23 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MORNING 23

Danielle stands alone in the empty hallway, limply clutching her books. Muffled laughing VOICES come from the closed door before her. But her eyes are on --

-- THE RING on her finger. The same as Andy's.

She finally looks up at the door, listening to the sound of THE STUDENTS INSIDE reciting the Pledge Of Allegiance.

Danielle takes a breath, steeling herself, and enters.

24 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HOMEROOM - MORNING 24

The TEENAGERS filling the room go silent as Danielle enters. She walks to her desk near the front and sits, trying to ignore the uncomfortable WHISPERS behind her back.

RICH (18), in a hooded sweatshirt, stares at her from a desk nearby. He seems to want to say something. But he doesn't.

The HOMEROOM TEACHER watches her, concerned. Danielle manages a faint smile of assurance. But it doesn't ease the tension her presence is causing.

As the Teacher begins her lesson, Danielle absently glances outside the window --

-- her face goes slack. Her jaw drops open.

And she slowly STANDS. Everyone watches her, worried.

TEACHER

Danielle?

Danielle ignores her. She numbly steps towards the window, staring outside, dumbfounded. She puts a hand on the glass.

The rest of the class moves to the window, staring out at --

-- THE YOUNG MAN walking slowly down the middle of the street, his back to the school, pack slung over his shoulder.

DANIELLE

(disbelieving:)

Andy...

25 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - BEDROOM - MORNING 25

Edgar lies in bed, fully dressed, staring at the ceiling. He's obviously been up all night.

26 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - HALLWAY - MORNING 26

Edgar shuffles into the hallway. Stands there a moment. Eyes on the floor. Then he looks up at --

-- the door leading to Andy's room. It's open.

27 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - ANDY'S ROOM - MORNING 27

Edgar stands in the doorway, looking at Carol. She's curled up on Andy's dress, a ROSARY in her fingers. She's wearing the same dress from the night she learned her son's fate.

After a beat, Edgar gently pulls a quilt up to her chin. Then he surveys THE ROOM. Andy's posters, trophies, photos. Nothing has changed since he's been gone.

28 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - FIRST FLOOR - MORNING 28

Edgar comes down the stairs, his eyes vacant, his shoulders slumped. The life has been drained from this man.

He follows the sound of SINGING VOICES into --

THE LIVING ROOM. Heather is asleep on the couch in front of the television. An OLD WAR MOVIE plays silently.

Edgar ignores the television, watching his daughter sadly.

29 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - LIVING ROOM - MORNING 29

Edgar walks to an antique cabinet, beginning his morning ritual: he slides out a drawer, revealing a carefully-folded AMERICAN FLAG. As he takes it out, he pauses --

-- his eyes going to a polished triangular BURIAL FLAG CASE. The flag inside is vibrant and new. A BRASS PLATE reads: *IN RECOGNITION OF SERVICE AND SACRIFICE -- SPEC. ANDY WOODWARD, KIA, 6/28/06.*

Next to it is ANOTHER PICTURE of Andy -- age AGE 8, he's wearing a baseball uniform and grinning a toothy smile.

After a beat, Edgar puts down his old flag. And breaks the seal on the burial case.

30 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - MORNING 30

Edgar walks down the porch steps, holding the flag reverently in his palms. He walks to a FLAGPOLE in front of the house.

And with the utmost care, unfolds the flag and attaches it to the rope line. He begins to raise it, revealing --

-- THE YOUNG MAN standing under an elm tree across the lawn, watching the flag reach the top. Now we can see: it's ANDY.

But Edgar doesn't notice him at first. His eyes are on the flag, rippling in the breeze. He raises a hand to his heart--

CAROL (O.S.)

ANDY!!!

Startled, Edgar turns to see his wife in a window on the second floor, staring wide-eyed. He follows her gaze --

-- and sees his son. He stands there numbly, barely noticing THE CAR that races around the corner and pulls up to the curb. Danielle leaps out and runs over. Rich, behind the wheel, stares blankly at --

ANDY. He hasn't moved. His eyes are fixed on the flag.

EDGAR

Andy?

Andy doesn't respond. Edgar slowly walks towards Andy, as Danielle reaches him, staring at him in shock and awe.

The FRONT DOOR opens and Carol steps out onto the porch. An odd smile spreads across her lips, and she whispers:

CAROL

There you are.

HEATHER appears behind her, looking bleary-eyed.

HEATHER

Mom? What --

The words catch, and her eyes widen, as she sees Andy -- *

-- she RUNS DOWN THE PORCH, racing across the lawn and running SMACK INTO HIM, hugging him, tears streaming down her face. But Andy's eyes never leave -- *

HIS MOTHER. There's an unsettling calm in her eyes as she walks over, standing before him.

CAROL

They said you were dead... but I just knew they were wrong...

After a long moment, Andy finally turns to HIS FATHER.

EDGAR

Andy... you're...

Then, slowly, a TEAR falls from Andy's eye.

And Edgar lets go, pulling his son into his arms. He hugs him tightly, tears of relief in his own eyes --

EDGAR

Welcome home. Welcome home, son.

CLOSE ON ANDY: no one notices as a DROP OF BLOOD slowly winds it's way from one of his nostrils.

We DRIFT AWAY from the tender scene as NEIGHBORS appear on their lawns, and PASSING CARS slow, to witness the return of the lost son...

33

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

33

The news has traveled, and FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS have come to bear witness. They mill about in subdued celebration -- as if half expecting Andy's return to be a dream.

Edgar sits on the couch across from the TOWN MAYOR (50s):

EDGAR

A parade?

MAYOR

Absolutely.

EDGAR

That's very kind, but I really don't think it's necessary --

MAYOR

Nonsense. It's just what this town needs. Ever since the funeral...

(delicate:)

It's been a difficult two weeks for everyone in Youngtown. A celebration would surely bring everyone back to rights.

EDGAR

I'm not sure Andy'd be up to it.

MAYOR

We still have one more boy Over There, Mr. Woodward. And with Andy showing up like this, it gives everyone hope for his safe return home. Especially his parents.

As Edgar considers the Mayor's words, we DRIFT AWAY to --

-- a GAGGLE OF LADIES in the corner, gossiping animatedly:

LADY #1

-- apparently his whole unit was ambushed. They didn't think anyone could have possibly survived.

LADY #2

It's a miracle. Plain and simple --

-- but we keep moving, interested not in their chatter, but instead gliding towards DANIELLE. She stands by the stairs, cupping her lemonade, apart from the group. Lost in thought.

She makes eye contact with Rich, across the room with a few other FRIENDS of Andy's. He gives her a faint smile. Hers is even fainter in return.

HEATHER (O.S.)

You okay?

Danielle turns to see Heather standing next to her.

DANIELLE

It just doesn't seem real.

HEATHER

Yeah. I guess it's the only good mistake the Army can make.

Danielle smiles. But it's half-hearted. She glances at -- ANDY. He's visible through a window, sitting on the porch.

HEATHER

Why don't you go talk to him?

DANIELLE

I shouldn't. I mean, he needs his space. I don't want to push him.

HEATHER

The day he shipped out, he told me he'd never take your ring off his finger. I'm guessing it helped to keep him alive, and bring him home.

Tears start to well up in Danielle's eyes, and she gives Heather a thankful hug. But then her eyes catch --

-- RICH. He's watching her closely. And for a moment, we see the conflict in Danielle's eyes.

34

EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - FRONT PORCH - DAY

34

Andy sits in a wicker rocking chair, staring out across the lawn. He's wearing civilian clothes now, but they're too baggy for him. And his skin seems a little pale in the sun.

Heather steps outside, sits next to him.

HEATHER

Kinda claustrophobic in there, huh.

Andy doesn't respond. His hands grip the arms of the chair.

HEATHER

It's so weird. Everyone in there was at your funeral last week.

They sit in silence for a beat. She doesn't notice him turning to fix his gaze on her. Then:

ANDY

My funeral.

She turns, surprised. Gives him a playful smile.

HEATHER

Yeah. There was a headstone and everything. Rich gave a speech, about how good of a friend you were. It was kinda sappy.

But Andy doesn't smile. This unnerves Heather. She stands:

HEATHER

I'll check up on you later, if you need anything --

She cuts off, startled. Looks down at her arm. We follow her gaze to see that Andy has gently grabbed her cuff.

Heather's eyes fill with tears as she realizes it's all the emotion he can muster. Then she turns away and goes inside.

Andy's blank gaze returns to the lawn for a beat. Then his head COCKS slightly, as if sensing something. He turns --

-- to see Gerald watching him from the window of his house next door. After a beat, Gerald pulls down the blind.

35

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - FIRST FLOOR - DAY

35

Andy opens the screen door and steps inside. He stands there for a moment, as if oblivious to the people filling the room.

Then he walks towards the stairs. People take notice as he passes by, and the room QUIETS as --

-- Andy heads up, slowly, one step at a time. A gaggle-lady LAUGHS awkwardly. It's a shrill sound in the suddenly quiet room, and her hand reflexively goes to her mouth.

And then Andy disappears out of view. Everyone just looks around, the rhythm of the celebration broken. Carol tries to pick up the slack, cheerfully:

CAROL

Well. I've got a fresh batch of iced tea brewing in the kitchen. Would anyone like some?

36 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - SECOND FLOOR - DAY 36

Andy walks stoically down the hallway, the wood floor CREAKING under each deliberate step.

37 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - BATHROOM - DAY 37

Andy steps inside the bathroom at the end of the hall and closes the door behind him --

-- and stands there for a beat. A long beat. And it takes a fair amount of time before we realize --

-- that HE'S STILL HOLDING THE DOORKNOB. His knuckles are bloodless and white under the strain.

He finally lets go. Turns and walks to the mirror. Raises his eyes to study his reflection. *

After a beat, Andy begins to UNBUTTON HIS SHIRT. He slides it off, his eyes moving across his chest, his shoulders, his arms. As if they belong to someone else. *

And all the while there's A SOUND building -- like a distant wave of SCREAMING VOICES, churning and thrashing, GROWING as it RISES UP from inside Andy, about to CRASH onto shore -- *

-- we get a sudden FLASH: an OLDER MAN IN SPECTACLES as he LUNGES AT US, his face a mask of RAGE AND DESPERATION, his mouth open, teeth bared, the veins on his neck bulging -- *

CUT TO BLACK. *

38 INT. REST AREA BATHROOM - DAY 38

SHERIFF BRIGHTON (30s) stands before a mirror, the worn fluorescent lights casting a sickly pall on his face. He's not staring at his reflection, but rather at --

-- THE BLOOD DROPLETS on the mirror. Then his eyes go to --

THE SINK. More blood splatters cover the surface. Someone made quite a mess here.

There's more blood on the SOAP DISPENSER. The lid has been WRENCHED OFF, and the yellowish fluid drips slowly into a viscous puddle on the floor below.

A YOUNG DEPUTY (20s) stands behind the Sheriff. He looks pale, too. But not because of the lighting.

YOUNG DEPUTY
Musta cleaned up in here, huh?

The Sheriff glances at him in the mirror. Doesn't respond. But a BURLY DEPUTY with him lets out a snort:

BURLY DEPUTY
Gee, you think so?

Brighton ignores them. His attention is on the small plastic COMB lying perfectly-aligned with the edge of the sink.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Get me an evidence bag.

The Burly Deputy nods at the Younger, and he scurries out. Brighton picks up the comb in his gloved hand, looking at --

-- THE HAIRS caught in the teeth. There's a lot of them.

BURLY DEPUTY
(sarcastic:)
So, should we put out an APB for a balding man with very clean hands?

The Deputy's grin fades when Brighton fixes him with a stare.

39

INT. TRUCK / EXT. REST AREA - DAY

39

CLOSE ON A HAND, the pale fingers curled around the cord of an AIRHORN. The windshield, and the PORNOGRAPHIC PHOTOS that are taped around it, are SPLATTERED WITH BLOOD.

Through the window, we see Brighton and his Deputies walking out of the bathroom. They stop to confer with HIGHWAY PATROL OFFICERS. Everyone keeps glancing uneasily at the truck.

We slowly PAN TO REVEAL the large HUNTING KNIFE, with bloody hand and palm marks on the handle, jutting up from the center of the dashboard. And beyond it --

-- the PASSENGER DOOR. Yawning wide open.

STATE TROOPER (O.S.)
Sheriff Brighton.

Brighton turns to see the TROOPER (30s) approaching. Behind him, half a dozen STATE POLICE CARS are lined up. Brighton self-consciously removes his hat. *

STATE TROOPER
(curt:)
You and your men can call it a day,
we'll take it from here. *

Brighton glances over his shoulder at the OTHER TROOPERS -- they're all gathered around a MAN IN A SUIT.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
That Detective Manning?

STATE TROOPER
Type up your report and get it to
my office tonight. I'll send it
along to him.

Brighton stares at his reflection in the Trooper's dark sunglasses before he speaks:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
We don't have many incidents like
this here in Youngtown --

STATE TROOPER
(supercilious:)
That's why we're here, Sheriff.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
And I do appreciate it. But I'd
like to be kept in the loop. *

STATE TROOPER
Anything comes up in your little
town, you let me know right away.

The Trooper turns and heads back to the others.

40

INT. POLICE STATION - BRIGHTON'S OFFICE - DUSK

40

Brighton is at his computer, filling out his report.

ON THE SCREEN, we see the essentials: *NAME AND AGE* of victim, *TRUCK DRIVER*, method of death (*HUNTING KNIFE, OWNED BY VICTIM*). And of course, mode of death -- *MURDER*.

Brighton hesitates as he types that final word. Studies it. It's clearly an unfamiliar cause of death in this town.

He finally continues, making a note: *'CONTENTS OF VICTIM'S WALLET UNTOUCHED, NO POSSESSIONS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN TAKEN.'*

A KNOCK at the door disturbs him -- it's MICHELLE (19).

MICHELLE

Deputy Straub radioed in, Sheriff. There's a waitress, over at the 210 diner --

(checking a note pad:)

She said the trucker came through for dinner, three am or so. Said the guy said something about picking up a hitchhiker.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

Did she give a description?

MICHELLE

She said it was too dark. Couldn't see the guy's face.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

That's fine, Michelle. Thank you.

MICHELLE

Okay if I head off now?

Brighton nods, and she leaves. He leans back, eyes going to the window, and the setting sun beyond.

41 INT. POLICE STATION - BREAK ROOM - DUSK

41

Brighton fills a mug of coffee as he speaks into his cell:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON (INTO CELL)

-- I know, but I've got this thing, it's gonna take me another half-hour or so. I'll tell you when I get home. -- Love you too.

As he hangs up, he sees THE MAYOR through a window, sitting at a desk. Brighton walks into the quiet MAIN AREA:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

Evening, Mayor.

The Mayor looks up from THE PAPERS he's filling out:

MAYOR

I'll just be one more second,
Sheriff. Don't mean to keep you.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

(reading the forms:)
Event permits? July 4th parade
wasn't enough for you?

MAYOR

No, no, Sheriff. This is for Andy.

He signs the forms and hands them to Brighton. Off his look:

MAYOR

You haven't heard? It's Andy
Woodward. He's come home.

We hold on Brighton's expression as we --

DISSOLVE TO:

42

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

42

A PLATE OF FOOD is laid on the table. A luscious pork chop,
creamed corn, mashed potatoes. Andy stares blankly at it.

CAROL

I wanted to make your favorite.
It's been almost two years, and...
you look like skin and bones.

Andy slowly looks up at her. She needs something from him,
and he gives what he can -- a smile so faint it's almost
invisible. But Mom sees it, and it fills her with relief.

As Carol sits, Heather leans in to Andy, whispering:

HEATHER

It's my favorite too, but she
wouldn't make it until you came
home. So thanks for coming home.

She's grinning, teasing. But he just stares at her. Carol
takes her husband's hand, and reaches for Andy's. A beat: *

CAROL

Grace.

Andy finally raises his hand, and Carol takes it --

-- and at the contact, her smile falters. As if something has passed through her. But it only lasts a second. Then:

EDGAR & HEATHER

(by rote:)

"Bless us oh Lord, and these thy gifts, which we are about to receive from thy bounty, through Christ our Lord, Amen."

But Carol isn't reciting the usual prayer. Head lowered, eyes closed, she WHISPERS breathlessly:

CAROL

Praise to you. Praise to you for bringing him home. Praise to you.

Edgar and Heather wait awkwardly until she finished. She finally raises her head, tears of joy in her eyes.

CAROL

Amen.

Everyone releases hands, and begin eating. The sound of clinking utensils and chewing dominates. Edgar and Heather look awkward, thinking about what to say. But Carol eats in total contentment, happy merely to have Andy home. Finally:

EDGAR

Not hungry?

Andy's just staring at his plate. With the attention on him, he slowly lifts his knife and fork, starts to cut his chop.

CAROL

If you'd like, Andy, you could invite Danielle to join us for dinner tomorrow night.

He doesn't respond. Just spears a piece of meat and raises it to his mouth. Seems to have trouble getting it in.

CAROL

She had Sunday night dinner with us every week. We all prayed for you, together.

Andy just stares at her, his eyes blank, as he slowly chews. Heather watches him warily. It's a bit eerie.

Carol glances at Edgar. He clears his throat:

EDGAR

Andy, I had a talk today with Joe Jacobs, down at the plant. He said that when you're feeling up to it, he can find you a position on the line. Whenever you're ready.

Andy stops chewing. His eyes focused on nothing.

EDGAR

There's no rush, obviously. But I thought it was nice that he --

He's interrupted by a HORRIBLE CROAKING SOUND, halfway between a gag and a retch. Startled, everyone turns to --

ANDY. His eyes have widened, his jaw hangs slightly open as--

AAAAARRRRRRRRKKKKKKK -- the sound is coming from his throat.

CAROL

Andy? Are you alright?

Andy's wide eyes move up to her. Then he reaches up, putting two fingers into his mouth, PULLING OUT THE HALF-CHEWED MEAT that was stuck in his throat. He stares at it in his hand.

A long beat as everyone glances at one another.

And as we slowly MOVE IN ON EDGAR'S FACE, the light around him DIMS TO DARKNESS. We start to PULL BACK AGAIN --

43

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT (DREAM SEQUENCE)

43

-- and just as before, Edgar is now standing on the TRAIN TRACKS, facing --

-- THE SOLDIER with his back to him. Edgar steps forward:

EDGAR

Andy?

This time, the soldier doesn't turn. Edgar takes another tentative step --

-- and REACHES OUT A HAND towards the soldier's shoulder --

A bright WHITE LIGHT suddenly washes over Edgar, and HE TURNS, the light filling his wide eyes as --

-- the SOUND OF THE TRAIN HORN bears down on him --

44 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (LATER) 44

Edgar JERKS AWAKE in an easy chair, the Churchill book he was reading spilling onto the floor.

After a beat, he settles back into the chair. Exhales.

45 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT 45

Edgar walks down the hallway, stopping at the closed door to Andy's bedroom. Hesitates, unsure. Then he finally KNOCKS.

EDGAR

Andy? Can I talk to you for a sec?

There's no response. He looks at the bottom of the door. Through the crack, we can see THE LIGHTS ARE OFF inside.

EDGAR

Andy?

Still no response. He grabs the knob and turns it.

46 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - ANDY'S ROOM - NIGHT 46

The door opens and Edgar peers inside. The room looks empty. He's about to leave when he notices something --

-- ANDY is sitting in a rocking chair, facing the window. Almost invisible in the dark room.

Edgar switches on the light. Though Andy sits with his back to him, his reflection is visible in the window.

EDGAR

Andy, I... I'm so glad you're home.

Andy doesn't respond. Edgar's shoulders slump, an emotional release building inside of him.

EDGAR

I was... so proud of what you did.
But I was so scared... every day,
on the news, they talked about more
deaths, and... I just knew one day
I'd see my boy's face...

This is a man who doesn't cry. But he's challenging that aspect of his personality as we watch. He steps closer.

EDGAR

I can't imagine what it was like for you. And I want you to know that you can talk to me. About anything.

Andy still hasn't given any indication he's aware of his father's presence. Edgar's brow furrows.

EDGAR

Andy?

Edgar reaches out, just like he did in his dream, and places a hand on Andy's shoulder --

-- and there's a sudden loud CREAKING SOUND. Wood GROANING under severe tension. Edgar looks down to see --

ANDY'S HANDS. They're gripping the edges of the chair so tightly, the wood is on the verge of splintering. His knuckles and fingers are TURNING WHITE with the strain.

But HIS EYES, still at the window, remain eerily calm. It's like a Francis Bacon image, reflected in the glass. *

Startled, Edgar lets go of his son. And takes a step back. *

CUT TO:

47

EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - MORNING

47

A car pulls in front of the house. The driver, TANYA (16), taps the horn. Heather emerges from the house, backpack slung over her shoulder, and gets in the passenger side.

INSIDE THE CAR: Heather hands Tanya a CD.

TANYA

What'd you think?

Heather just shrugs, distracted.

TANYA

Maybe you didn't listen to it loud enough.

She pops it into her CD player, cranks the volume. "Flowing Glower" from Deadsy kicks into gear.

TANYA

So what's it like, with Andy back?

Heather looks out up at THE HOUSE. Andy is visible in the second floor window, still sitting in his chair.

TANYA

Your brother was cute before he was a hero. Now he's scorching hot --

HEATHER

C'mon. I don't want to be late.

Heather keeps her eyes on Andy as they pull away.

48

EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - DAY

48

BEN (late 50s), the postman, walks down the sidewalk dropping mail into boxes. As he reaches the Woodward home, he hesitates, looking at something o.s. --

-- Edgar and Carol sit on the front porch with Andy, with a platter of sandwiches and a pitcher of lemonade between them.

BEN

Jesus H. Christ...

He excitedly walks across the lawn. Edgar sees him coming and stands, smiling.

EDGAR

Afternoon, Ben.

BEN

Andy? That you?

Andy, wearing dark glasses, turns his head.

CAROL

He came back yesterday.

BEN

I've just gotta shake your hand.

He juts it out to Andy, who just looks up at him blankly.

BEN

Well, it's mighty brave what you did, son. Many others, well, they just wouldn't have the stones.

Andy still stares at him. Ben is put off. Carol covers:

CAROL

Would you like a sandwich, Ben?

BEN

Sure. Feet could use a breather.

He sits, and Carol passes him the plate of sandwiches. He takes one, and sits on a cooler next to Edgar. But his delighted eyes remain on Andy.

BEN

Man, it's so good to see you, Andy.
Helluva fight goin' on Over There.
Costing us lots of kids.

EDGAR

It's for a good cause.

BEN

Yeah. Seemed that way, didn't it.
(off Edgar's look:)
I was in Nam for two years.
Wartime correspondent, fresh outta
college. Had a bee in my bonnet,
wanted to prove to the folks back
home that what we were doing was
wrong. Time I made it back,
though, it just didn't matter
anymore. Everything I thought
before had gone all topsy-turvy.

He pauses, his former joviality slipping away. We start
MOVING IN on him, all other sound fading away...

BEN

Unit I was with was made up of kids
my age. We listened to the same
music, did the same drugs. Only
difference was they had a gun. I
had a camera. One day we were on
the move through safe territory.
Been cleared out weeks before. So
we weren't even thinking...

(beat:)

Joey T. stepped on a mine. Heard
the 'click' clear as day, like the
sound of a bone breaking. I saw
the cap fly into the air, only had
time to turn my head -- I felt
something fly right past me, right
where I'd been. And the rifleman
behind me...

He SNAPS HIS FINGERS. It's startlingly loud. Edgar flinches.

BEN
His head just disappeared. Just
like that.
(beat:)
His name was Frank. He had a girl,
he was gonna propose the moment he--

ANDY
(softly:)
Shut up.

Ben's words catch in his throat. All eyes go to Andy.

BEN
I'm sorry, Andy. I didn't mean --

ANDY
Just shut the fuck up. *

Andy's eyes are almost visible behind his dark glass, burning
a hole into Ben.

EDGAR
Ben, he just came back, and --

BEN
(rising, cool:)
No, I get it. It takes time. I
should have been more considerate.

He trails off, the words failing him. Finally:

BEN
Thanks for the sandwich, Mrs.
Woodward. Mr. Woodward.

He walks away, heading for the sidewalk. The family sits in
silence for a moment. Then Edgar notices --

GERALD. He's standing on his porch, watching them. We get a
good look at him now: he's a hulking frame in a V-neck t-
shirt, white goatee with a few days' growth everywhere else.

After a beat, he walks across his lawn towards them. Stops
at the boundary. Stands there awkwardly for a beat.

GERALD
Afternoon.

Edgar nods. Carol glances at her husband warily. Then:

GERALD
Wonderin' if you might like to have
a drink.

Edgar stares at the man, bewildered. Clearly these two have never spoken before. Finally he regains his civility:

EDGAR
Sure. What'd you like?

GERALD
I've got some beer in the fridge.

Edgar gets it -- Gerald wants him to come over.

49 INT. GERALD'S HOME - DAY

49

Edgar follows Gerald inside, glancing around the place. The blinds are all drawn, and the place is very dark. It's the opposite of the Woodward home -- uncomfortable, unwelcoming.

He looks around the LIVING ROOM. Two couches, a television circa 1970. That's about it.

EDGAR
Nice place.

Gerald looks at him for a beat. Sees through the gesture.

GERALD
Beer alright?

EDGAR
That'd be fine, uh...

GERALD
(picking up on the cue:)
Gerald.

EDGAR
Ed. Woodward.

He sticks out a hand. Gerald takes a beat before shaking it.

GERALD
Miller's all I've got.

EDGAR
That's fine.

Gerald heads off to the kitchen. Edgar exhales, glancing around. He's about to sit on an old couch when he notices --

A FLAG CASE, much like Andy's, on Gerald's mantle. He walks over, looking at the DISPLAY CASE next to it. There are a half-dozen MEDALS inside. Some are familiar. Some aren't.

Gerald re-enters with two beer cans.

EDGAR
This a Purple Heart?

GERALD
Yeah.

EDGAR
You've got two of them.

GERALD
Yeah.

He opens a beer, hands it to Edgar.

EDGAR
What're these others for?

Gerald turns away, walking to the couch.

GERALD
Coming back alive. And helping a few others do the same.

Gerald clearly doesn't want to talk about them. He sits on the couch, opening his own beer. Edgar sits in a chair nearby. Takes a pull. A long beat. Then:

EDGAR
How is it we've been neighbors for almost twenty years, and we've never had a beer together?

GERALD
Maybe we've never had anything to talk about before.

Edgar isn't pleased at the response to his friendly attempt.

EDGAR
You've got something you want to talk to me about?

Carol and Andy sit in silence. But she keeps glancing over at him. Finally:

CAROL

Andy? Would you mind taking off the glasses? I haven't seen your eyes in so long.

Andy turns to her. A beat. Then he slowly raises a hand and takes off the glasses. His eyes are glassy and cold underneath. But Carol summons a smile:

CAROL

There. That's much better.

VOICES from the street grab her attention. She turns to see--

-- three KIDS riding their bikes down the street. A cute Jack Russell terrier chases after them, yipping. They notice Carol and Andy and stop, jaws open, dumbfounded.

THE KIDS

ANDY!!!

They abandon their bikes, racing across the lawn. The dog follows. Carol beams.

51

INT. GERALD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY (SAME)

51

Edgar and Gerald continue talking:

EDGAR

-- his unit was on a reconnaissance mission. Looking for a missing member of another unit. They fell under heavy fire. Most of them were... they couldn't identify most of them, and they didn't think anyone could have made it out. But they were wrong.

GERALD

Did they call you? Let you know he was alive?

EDGAR

No. He just -- came home.

GERALD

Did you talk to anyone? His commanding officer, or --

EDGAR

I've learned too many times not to look a gift horse in the mouth.

(MORE)

EDGAR (cont'd)
My son's home. I don't care much
about the hows or the whys.

Gerald seems troubled by this. He finishes his beer, stands.

GERALD
You want another one?

EDGAR
No. I'd like you to tell me what's
on your mind.

Gerald stares at him for a beat. There's a steel behind his
blue eyes that we haven't noticed before. Finally:

GERALD
They should have talked to you
about your son, Mr. Woodward. What
he'd be like. What kind of
condition he'd be in --

EDGAR
"Condition"? You make him sound
like an object.

GERALD
That's exactly what he was. He was
a soldier. To his superiors, he
was a nameless, faceless number on
a list.

EDGAR
(rising, angry:)
My son volunteered to fight for his
country. He knew right from wrong
and what was what. He was more
than just a number --

GERALD
Please calm down.

Something about his tone stops Edgar. For a moment.

GERALD
When your son went over there, he
found himself in the thick of
something different from what he
could have expected.

EDGAR
He went over there because he
believed in what we're doing.

GERALD

I'm not talking about politics, Mr. Woodward. Or patriotism. I'm talking about war.

52 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - DAY (SAME)

52

The three kids -- DOUG (9), THOMAS (10) and CHARLIE (8) -- are gathered around Andy, talking excitedly:

CHARLIE

Did you have a gun?

THOMAS

Of course he had a gun, dumbass.

CAROL

Please don't cuss, Thomas.

THOMAS

Sorry, Mrs. Woodward.

DOUG

Did you get the letters we sent?

CHARLIE

Yeah, the whole school wrote them and mailed them.

THOMAS

Everyone stood outside and took a big picture --

DOUG

What about Lewis? Is he home now, too?

At the mention of that name, Andy's glazed eyes focus. He turns his gaze onto Doug. The kids go quiet.

The Jack Russell stares up at Andy. And GROWLS.

53 INT. GERALD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY (SAME)

53

Gerald walks closer to Edgar, who tenses. There's something about this man's presence that makes him uneasy.

GERALD

You need to understand something, Mr. Woodward. Your son, he's not your boy anymore.

EDGAR

I know that. He's a man now.

GERALD

(shaking his head:)

He's not yours anymore.

Edgar just stares at him, not understanding.

GERALD

There are things you need to look out for. Rules you need to follow--

EDGAR

"Rules"? I'm sorry, I don't --

GERALD

You need to be quiet.

Edgar shuts his mouth, offended. But then:

GERALD

When you talk, and when you move. Do it as quietly as possible. But don't come up behind him. Let him know you're there, first. And do not touch him. He's your son, and you'll want to. But you have to fight that instinct.

54

EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - DAY (SAME)

54

The dog continues to growl at Andy. He stares at it.

CHARLIE

So, uh, Andy.

Charlie's head slowly rotates from the dog back to Charlie. And there's an odd darkness behind his eyes now. It seems to intensify with each BARK of the dog.

CHARLIE

(awkward, but curious:)

Did you, like, shoot anybody?

Charlie and Doug stare up at him, waiting for the big story. But nothing comes. Doug NUDGES Charlie. But Charlie just NUDGES him right back. Thomas butts in:

THOMAS

I bet you got shot at a whole lot, huh Andy?

Thomas grins, RAISING A HAND --

-- and we move to SLOW-MOTION, all sound FADING AWAY --

-- as Andy watches the cocked and loaded "gun" rising up to meet him. Thomas points it RIGHT AT ANDY'S FACE --

-- and as he "pulls the trigger", making a silent "PFFFEW" sound with his mouth, what we hear instead is --

-- A GUNSHOT. And Andy's eyes TWITCH with the sound --

Andy IS A BLUR as he SNATCHES THOMAS' WRIST out of the air, WRENCHING IT. Thomas' face becomes a mask of pain --

CAROL

Andy!

Thomas SCREAMS as ANDY STANDS, twisting his arm and FORCING HIM to the ground, turning his arm to the breaking point --

-- the dog starts BARKING MANIACALLY, and LUNGES --

Andy's arm LASHES OUT, catching the dog by the throat --

-- it lets out a desperate, helpless YELP as Andy LIFTS IT FROM THE GROUND --

-- ANDY'S POV: for a FLASH, we see THE BOY FROM THE CAVE standing with the other kids. His blood-filled eyes are fixed on Andy.

*
*
*

55 INT. GERALD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY (SAME)

55

Edgar just stares at Gerald, floored. He puts his beer down.

EDGAR

I don't believe you know me, my son, or my family well enough to speak to me this way.

He turns and heads for the door.

GERALD

I know Andy better than you do now.

Edgar just SLAMS the door behind him.

56 EXT. GERALD'S HOME - PORCH - DAY (SAME) 56

Edgar stalks outside, and immediately hears the commotion from next door. He runs around the corner, seeing --

ANDY. He's clutching the neck of the squirming, writhing dog, raising it higher. His own teeth are bared as --

-- he wraps his other hand around the SCREAMING dog's head, slowly PULLING and WRENCHING --

-- the dog's SQUEALS are cut off as it's neck SNAPS horribly. But Andy doesn't stop. He continues to TWIST the animal's head, the neck ELONGATING and CRACKING --

GERALD steps out of his house and freezes, seeing what's happening. Wide-eyed, he steps off his porch --

-- and Andy's head WHIPS TOWARDS HIM, fixing him with a burning gaze. Gerald stops in his tracks.

EDGAR

ANDY!!!

Andy turns to his father. Drops the dog. And without looking back, slowly and calmly enters the house.

Everyone stands there for a moment, in shock. Then Edgar's paralysis breaks. He runs for the house.

57 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - FIRST FLOOR - DAY (SAME) 57

Andy slowly climbs up the stairs. Edgar bursts in the front door behind him, following him.

EDGAR

Andy! Get back down here!

Andy keeps going. Edgar storms forward up the steps --

EDGAR

Don't you ignore me! --

-- and PUTTING A HAND ON ANDY'S SHOULDER.

Andy SWINGS AROUND, madness in his eyes. He EXPLODES into movement, VIOLENTLY PUSHING HIS FATHER as hard as he can --

-- and Edgar SAILS BACK down the stairs, SLAMMING into a table at the bottom. FAMILY PHOTOS tumble from the table, falling to the floor, the glass CRACKING.

Edgar lies there, stunned, looking up at ANDY. He's almost grinning as he glowers at Edgar. Looking like someone else.

Carol appears in the doorway. She stares down at her husband for a beat. Then walks up the stairs to Andy. She looks back over her shoulder at Edgar... With fury in her eyes.

CAROL
What did you do?

Edgar shakes his head, trying to form words.

CAROL
You leave him alone. Do you hear
me? You LEAVE HIM ALONE.

She turns back to Andy, whispering something to him. Edgar watches as she takes his hand, and slowly leads him upstairs.

MATCH TRACK TO:

58 EXT. YOUNGTOWN - NIGHT

58

The town is dark and silent. The elegant GAS LAMPS lining the street are strictly ornamental. In a town like this, there's not much need for streetlights.

We hear the sound of FOOTSTEPS echoing off buildings, even before we see --

ANDY. He's walking down the middle of the street. Hands stuffed in his pockets. Head lowered. Eyes stormy.

A SOUND reaches his ears. He stops in the center of town.

Listening to the WHISPERS. They're close by.

One comes at him FROM THE LEFT. Andy JERKS his head towards--

-- a DINGY ALLEY nearby. Did it come from there? Before he can call out --

-- ANOTHER WHISPER hits him from the right. Andy SWIVELS instinctively. Scanning the street. But he's alone.

And then we realize... it's not just ONE VOICE whispering.

It's DOZENS of them. And it's coming from all around.

We SWING AROUND Andy as he orients himself. Then, as if locating the possible source, he starts walking again.

ON ANDY'S FEET: as they leave the pavement, stepping onto the grass. His feet disturb the light MIST that hangs low over the ground. Andy slows as he reaches -- *

-- A BLACK IRON FENCE. His feet stop right at the threshold. *

And THE WHISPERS are more intense now. More urgent.

A long beat. Then --

-- Andy STEPS FORWARD, crossing the threshold of the fence.

And the whispers INSTANTLY CEASE. Replaced by an eerie silence. The sound of THE WIND is all we can hear now, as --

-- Andy CONTINUES WALKING. We TILT UP his body, seeing the intent look in his eyes. Like he's being called somewhere.

Andy keeps moving, jaw tight. And then he stops.

We slowly RISE UP, arcing above him, to see --

-- the STONES in the earth that surround Andy.

He's in a cemetery. And he's standing before an area set apart from the rest, filled with uniform gravestones adorned with small American flags -- it's a VETERANS' SECTION. *

Andy slowly enters, his eyes fixed on THE STONE he's approaching. Unlike the others, which look beaten and weather-worn, this one is POLISHED AND NEW... *

...the stone, standing above the cheap FAKE TURF, reads 'ANDY WOODWARD, 1985-2005. A loving son, a true patriot.'

It's HIS OWN GRAVE. Andy stares at it for a long beat.

HIS HANDS clench into fists. And begin SHAKING.

He kneels down and GRABS THE GRAVESTONE, straining as he TRIES TO PULL IT FROM THE GROUND. It won't budge. *

Andy's breathing quickens as he scrabbles at the dirt around the stone, trying to loosen it. Then -- *

-- he GRABS THE STONE again. And pulls. Still nothing. *

Frustration takes over. Andy tries harder... and harder... his teeth clenching, his neck straining -- *

-- and then his right arm SPLITS OPEN under the strain. There's a sudden POP, and the other arm RIPS OUT OF IT'S SOCKET just a moment before the right arm SNAPS IN HALF. *

Andy SPINS AROUND, blood flying. He hits the ground, landing face-down in the dirt. He SCREAMS and rolls over -- *

-- but HIS ARMS are intact. He calms as he stares at his shaking hands. And then he looks back up at -- *

HIS GRAVE. It looms over him. Taunting him. *

59

EXT. DANIELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

59

It's a small white house next to the woods. A white picket fence, tightly-trimmed shrubberies out front. Idyllic.

There's a RUSTLING sound from the woods across the house and Andy appears. He stops at the tree line, looking up at --

THE HOUSE. A TV is on in the living room, and PEOPLE are visible behind the curtains, laughing at the show.

After a moment, Andy heads for the street --

-- but stops when the LIGHTS of an approaching car wash over him. He steps back behind a tree, watching as --

-- RICH'S CAR pulls up in front of the house. Rich turns it off and looks up at the house for a beat. Keeping his hands on the wheel. Unsure about what he's doing.

Then he gets out and closes the door. Starts around the car, but hesitates, checking his reflection in the window.

ON ANDY: his face darkens. It's not a pretty sight. The malevolence in his eyes nearly distorts his entire face.

ANDY'S POV: Rich walks to the porch, hesitating again at the door. He almost changes his mind... but he finally KNOCKS.

A few moments later, the door opens. DANIELLE seems surprised to see Rich. It takes her a moment to invite him inside. He enters, and she closes the door.

Andy's gaze moves up to the second floor. As if he knows.

HIS POV: and sure enough, through the gauzy curtains of Danielle's room, we see her enter with Rich. She closes the door behind them --

-- and instantly we hear the sound of their ARGUING. The words are too muffled to make out. But she's letting him have it. And he's giving it back to her.

Finally the two stop yelling. They stare at each other.

And then Danielle's body slumps. She doesn't resist as --
-- Rich STEPS FORWARD, pulling her into a hug. She rests her head on his shoulder.

Andy watches this silent tableau as we slowly MOVE IN on his stoic face.

Danielle finally pulls away from Rich. Almost angrily.

Then she pulls off her shirt. And Rich does the same.

And their bodies COLLIDE, pushing into each other, groping with a violent desperation. Sex as a brutal, forceful act. *

ON ANDY as he steps back, DISAPPEARING into the woods. *

DISSOLVE TO:

60 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - DINING ROOM - NIGHT 60

Edgar, Carol and Heather eat in silence. There's a plate of food cooling in front of Andy's empty chair.

Heather absently plays with her food. She glances over at her mother, who gives her a smile. But it's plastic, a front with no emotion behind it.

Edgar abruptly stands. Still staring at his food. And after a beat, he leaves the dining room.

61 INT. BRIGHTON'S HOME - NIGHT 61

Sheriff Brighton and his WIFE (30s) sit in their living room, playing gin rummy. But like the Woodwards' dinner, it's a silent game. The sound of the cards hitting the table, and the GRANDFATHER CLOCK in the corner, are unusually loud.

Brighton's Wife wins the game. She counts her cards and notes the score on a pad. As she does, she eyes her husband - he's staring absently out the window.

She finally puts the pad down and stares at him. It takes a moment for him to turn to her. Then:

BRIGHTON'S WIFE
Want to talk about it?

After a beat, Brighton picks up the cards and shuffles them.

62

EXT. DANIELLE'S HOUSE - NIGHT (LATER)

62

Danielle and Rich sit on the front porch swing. Staring out at the quiet night. The silence between them is deafening. There's so much they want to say... but can't. Finally:

RICH

So.

DANIELLE

Yeah.

RICH

I guess I'll see you tomorrow.

He stands. Heads for his car.

DANIELLE

Rich.

He stops, turns back. Danielle looks up, and there are tears forming in her eyes.

DANIELLE

Let me do it. Okay? I should be the one.

Rich nods. Danielle gets up and goes inside. He doesn't move, even after she's closed the door. There's more he wants to say. But he can't.

He finally turns and walks back his car. Gets inside, closes the door. We lose him for a moment in the darkness, until he STARTS THE CAR --

-- and his face appears again, lit by the sickly glow from the dashboard. He grips the wheel, staring straight at us.

We slowly MOVE TOWARDS him, over the hood, right up to the windshield glass...

... the BACK SEAT behind him is very dark. Someone could be sitting right there, and we wouldn't even know it, until --

-- Rich suddenly EXPLODES, SLAMMING A FIST into the dashboard, as hard as he can. And then --

-- he BEGINS TO CRY. It's almost imperceptible at first. But then it overwhelms him, his shoulders shaking, his body trembling. And he lets it wash over him like a wave...

63 EXT. RICH'S HOUSE - NIGHT 63

Another idyllic neighborhood. The houses are a little bit bigger than Danielle's.

Rich's car pulls off the road, up a driveway to a house perched on the slope.

64 INT. RICH'S HOUSE - NIGHT 64

It's nearly pitch black inside. We can see the HALLWAY we're in due to the porch light throwing through the curtains.

We see Rich walk up outside, flipping through his keys. He unlocks the door and enters, closing it behind him --

-- as he locks it, and turns back to the hallway --

-- RICH'S POV: there's a BLUR OF MOVEMENT, and we get a FLASH of a FIGURE rushing at us --

-- violently SWINGING A CHAIR directly at us.

SMASH! The blow sends Rich REELING BACKWARDS THROUGH THE WINDOW NEXT TO THE DOOR, the glass SHATTERING --

65 EXT. RICH'S HOUSE - NIGHT 65

Rich BURSTS through the window, hitting the ground hard. He lies there for a second, dazed --

-- and then he COUGHS, a spray of BLOOD AND TEETH jetting from his mouth.

HIS POV: a FIGURE resolves as his eyes regain focus. His assailant, stepping from the house, BROKEN GLASS crunching under his feet, as he looms over --

RICH. His face is mangled. His JAW is dislocated and protruding from his cheek, his NOSE has been broken, the top flattened between his rapidly-blackening eyes.

His voice is a LIQUIDY GURGLE as he looks up at us:

RICH
What... what are --

He never gets to finish. A HUNTING KNIFE abruptly JAMMED UP under his breastbone, piercing his heart.

Rich's eyes go wide, his mouth forming an 'O' as his face freezes into a rictus of horror. A horrific RATTLE leaves his lungs as the last breath flees from his body --

-- a long beat. And then suddenly --

THE KNIFE is YANKED from his body, and DRIVEN DOWN HARD into the center of his torso. ONCE. And AGAIN. And AGAIN --

CUT TO BLACK.

66 EXT. HIGHWAY DINER - MORNING 66

An isolated, rundown place off a bend in a local highway. Large TRUCKS barrel past it at light speed. One sleepy driver could end this greasy spoon's miserable life.

67 INT. HIGHWAY DINER - MORNING 67

Sheriff Brighton sits in a booth, sipping coffee as he scribbles notes on a ratty old pad.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

So this was about three o'clock?

LYNDA (30s, Hispanic), a waitress, sits across from. She looks older than her age, her voice is husky from years of smoking. She lights one as she talks, putting the flirt on: *

LYNDA

Just 'bout exactly. I was outside, on my cigarette break, when Johnny pulled off the highway.

The surly COOK approaches with a coffee pot:

COOK

You want a refill, Sheriff?

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

I'm fine, thanks.

But Lynda pushes her cup casually towards him:

LYNDA

Hit me.

The cook glowers at her as he hits her glass.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

We're almost done here, Bert.

Lynda blows smoke in the cook's direction as he leaves. *

LYNDA
He's always in a foul mood on
Fridays. I think that must be when
the alimony check comes in.

She gives the Sheriff a big grin.

LYNDA
Me and Johnny, we was -- you know --
friends.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
"Friends".

LYNDA
Off and on. He'd swing in 'bout
once a month, headin' to Denver or
St. Louis or some other place.
"Gets lonely on the road," he
always usedta say. We used to have
some good times in that truck.

Brighton glances up at her. Caught off guard.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
You mean, in the truck he was
murdered in?

Something changes in Lynda's face -- a vulnerability appears.
She quickly covers, leaning forward. Exposing as much of her
breasts as humanly possible.

LYNDA
He had all those hours on the
highway. All those late nights.
You ever work late, Sheriff?

There's something sadly desperate about her attempt. But *
Brighton's response is cold: *

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Johnny have any other "friends"
around here, Lynda?

Again, he hits home. Lynda leans back, sulking.

LYNDA
No.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Are you sure?

LYNDA

He never stayed longer than the time it took for a cup a coffee, maybe a piece of pie.

Her previous veneer is slipping away. She stares at her coffee, avoiding his gaze.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

You know where he was from?

LYNDA

I never asked. Didn't matter, I guess.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

Uh-huh. And did he have a habit of picking up hitchhikers?

LYNDA

That was the first time he wasn't alone.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

Did you get a good look at the guy?
(she shakes her head:)
He stayed in the truck?

LYNDA

Yeah. Johnny said the guy wasn't hungry. Weird, huh? -- he just gets back from Over There, and he doesn't want so much as a piece of apple pie.

Brighton looks up, surprised.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

He was a soldier?

LYNDA

(nods:)

Johnny said he wanted to do the kid a favor, considering what he must have just been through...

She trails off, tears welling up in her eyes.

LYNDA

He was a good guy. I could tell.

After a beat, Brighton puts his hand on hers.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
I can give you the number of
someone you can talk to.

Lynda manages a thankful smile, nods.

68 EXT. YOUNGTOWN - MAIN STREET - DAY

68

The Sheriff's car pulls up in front of the POLICE STATION. Brighton gets out, lost in his thoughts. Then he glances at--

-- THE DECORATIONS that are being hung along the street. Signs reading "WELCOME HOME!" are plastered in the windows, and RED, WHITE AND BLUE ORNAMENTS hang from every lamp.

Brighton stares at the parade preparations for a beat. Then he turns, raising his gaze up to --

-- A BANNER a few LOCALS are hanging across the street. It has a LARGE PHOTO of ANDY in his dress uniform, from his last day of Basic. His eyes are beaming with innocent pride.

69 INT. HIGH SCHOOL - HALLWAY - MORNING

69

Heather is at her locker, pulling out books. She's trying to ignore the way her FELLOW STUDENTS are eyeing her as they walk by. As she closes the locker, she sees --

DANIELLE, at her own locker further down. Her own disturbed expression is identical to Heather's. They hold each other's gaze for a beat.

The CLASS BELL rings, and the hall thins out. Danielle heads for her classroom, but Heather catches up with her:

HEATHER
Danielle, wait.

DANIELLE
How are you holding up, Heather --

HEATHER
Is it over?

DANIELLE
Is what over?

Heather holds Danielle's gaze. Not wanting to play games.

HEATHER
You and Rich.

Danielle flushes. But Heather doesn't look angry. In fact, she looks a bit on the desperate side.

DANIELLE

Heather --

HEATHER

It's alright. I understand. But he won't. He doesn't need to know.

DANIELLE

I can't lie to him.

HEATHER

Yes. You can. Please.

70

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

70

The house is quiet and empty. But there's an odd rhythmic CREAKING sound from nearby.

A FIGURE appears by the front door. It's Danielle. She takes a breath, steeling herself, and KNOCKS.

She waits. The CREAKING continues. No one comes.

Danielle KNOCKS again. Still nothing. She peers inside, her eyes immediately fixing on something. We FOLLOW HER GAZE --

-- to ANDY. He's sitting in a rocking chair in the corner, staring at the blank television screen. Staring at his own DISTORTED REFLECTION in the curved glass.

After a long beat, Danielle RINGS THE DOORBELL.

ON THE ROCKING CHAIR: it stops in mid-rock. Andy finally turns his head. Seeing Danielle.

He slowly stands, walks to the door, opens it. The two of them regard each other for a beat. Then Danielle smiles.

DANIELLE

Hi.

71

EXT. LAKE - DAY

71

A large lake surrounded by forest. Danielle and Andy sit on a blanket by the edge of the water.

Danielle watches Andy as she plays idly with a fallen leaf. *
He looks pale and gaunt in the light, and he's got dark
circles under his eyes. He's staring at the lake, squinting.
The light seems to hurt his eyes.

Danielle pulls a pair of sunglasses from her purse.

DANIELLE

Here.

Andy stares at them for a beat before he puts them on. He
turns to her -- and she LAUGHS. He looks a bit ridiculous.

DANIELLE

Maybe not.

Giggling, she takes the glasses off again --

-- but her humor fades when she sees that Andy is still
staring at her with that blank gaze. He just turns away.

DANIELLE

You look tired.

ANDY

Can't.

DANIELLE

Can't what?

ANDY

Sleep.

Danielle regards him for a beat. Then, understanding:

DANIELLE

Nightmares?

Andy turns to her. His expression is hard to read. Finally:

ANDY

Yeah.

DANIELLE

It must have been real scary.
Being Over There.

He doesn't respond. She steels herself, about to get into
the reason they're here. But then --

-- she notices THE PROMISE RING on his finger.

DANIELLE

Did you wear it the whole time?

He stares at her. She touches his ring, brushing her finger across it. The finger where she wears her matching ring.

Andy looks down at her hand. Something FLASHES across his face. As if her touch REPULSES him...

... but it's gone in a flash. Replaced by a softness that we haven't seen in him.

ANDY

I never took it off.

DANIELLE

I never took mine off, either.

Andy stares at her blankly for a long beat. Then:

ANDY

Never?

DANIELLE

Never. It's illegal to take off a promise ring, isn't it?

She's teasing to cover up her guilt. And ANDY'S LIPS slowly spread into a SMILE --

-- and it's one of the most terrifying smiles we've ever seen. All teeth and gums. No emotion.

A bit put off, Danielle turns away, looking over the lake...

...and a SOUND begins to grow in our ears -- the sound of a blaring HORN, and a MECHANICAL NOISE BEARING DOWN ON US --

HARD CUT TO:

72

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

72

Edgar WAKES UP, a SCREAM catching in his throat. He swings his legs off the bed, facing away from us --

-- and he LOWERS HIS HEAD, his shoulders shaking. Crying silently in the darkness.

73 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT 73

FROM THE LIVING ROOM: the stairway light SWITCHES on and Edgar plods down into the darkened first floor.

He walks away from us, into the kitchen. LIGHT spills into the room as he opens the fridge door, pulling out a bottle of water. He pops the top and takes a long pull.

Edgar stands there for a minute. Shoulders slumped. Wondering if he can get back to sleep tonight. Then he closes the door again, and heads up the stairs --

-- but he pauses on the first step. His body going tense.

Then he quickly TURNS. Looking DIRECTLY AT US.

Then he comes back down to the first floor. Enters the LIVING ROOM. Fumbles for the LIGHT SWITCH, and hits it --

-- and now we see that ANDY'S been sitting RIGHT IN FRONT OF US the whole time. Watching his father.

EDGAR'S POV: Andy almost seems to be LEERING at him. Clenching the arms of the chair. His face is pallid, his lips stretched tight in a bloodless grin.

A long beat.

74 INT. GERALD'S HOME - NIGHT 74

The FRONT DOOR opens, revealing a haggard Edgar. *

EDGAR
Sorry. Didn't mean to wake you.

We CUT TO a REVERSE -- Gerald fills the doorway. He looks just as exhausted as he regards Edgar.

GERALD
You didn't.

He turns and walks away, leaving the door open.

75 INT. GERALD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 75

The room is filled with an eerie orange glow, the light cast from the half-dozen HEATING LAMPS in the room. *

Edgar and Gerald sit on opposite couches. In silence. Then: *

GERALD

We were just gettin' off the plane -
- we hadn't even set foot on home
territory yet -- and there was this
line of people waitin' for us.
Mostly young kids. College age.
As soon as the door opened, they
started booing. Hollering. Like
we were all Adolf Hitlers, Pol
Pots, somethin' like that. Like we
weren't mostly just like them.
They just let those kids out on the
tarmac. Our own families had to
wait inside. We had to walk past
the line to get to the terminal.

He pauses. Edgar waits, knowing well enough to stay silent.

GERALD

There was this one guy. Older than
the rest. Mid-twenties. He had a
beard, long hair. Looked like a
mountain man. He stepped out in
front of me. Called me a child-
killer. And a baby-rapist. And
then he spit on my medals.

(beat:)

I sized him up. He was soft. It
would have taken two seconds.

He looks over at Edgar. Expecting a reaction to his words.
Nods, when he sees it in Edgar's eyes.

GERALD

That time I was able to turn and
walk away. I was able to keep the
Beast at bay. That's what we
called it, in the field. "The
Beast". That part of ourselves we
had to create, just will into
existence, if we didn't want to die
face down like the rest of our
friends. We had to make it our
own. But no one ever told us that
once we summoned the Beast, we
could never send it away again.
That it would just become a part of
us forever. And that we'd carry it
home. To our families. To our
jobs. To our towns. It'd always
be there, just below the surface.
Watching. And waiting.

He holds Edgar's gaze as the other man turns away.

GERALD
That's what you see in your boy.
That's what's behind his eyes.

EDGAR
I can't ever understand -- how hard
it's been for him. What it must be
like to -- carry that inside.

He turns to Gerald, eyes filled with need:

EDGAR
But you do understand. You can
help him. Can't you?

76

EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - NIGHT

76

Gerald follows Edgar outside, and they walk across the lawn
to the Woodward home. They slow as they approach --

-- seeing CAROL standing on the front porch, holding her robe
closed around her body. Glaring at Edgar and Gerald.

CAROL
It's three o'clock in the morning.

Edgar lowers his eyes, walking up the porch. Walking PAST
Carol, into the house. Gerald starts to follow him --

-- and Carol STEPS IN FRONT OF HIM. Blocking his path. Her
eyes burning like hot coals.

CAROL
(sarcastic, pointedly:)
Gee, I'm sorry. Maybe it's not a
good time. I should come back
tomorrow.

Gerald looks calmly up at her for a beat. With a deep
sadness in his gaze.

And in the face of that stark calm, Carol's storm dissipates.

GERALD
I'm sorry, Mrs. Woodward.

Gerald simply steps around her, entering the house.

77 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 77

Gerald enters to see Edgar staring at the chair Andy had been sitting in. It's EMPTY now.

There's a CREAKING noise from the ceiling. They look up.

78 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT 78

Edgar leads Gerald up to the second floor. Gerald gets a glimpse of HEATHER peering out at them from her door.

 EDGAR
 It's alright, Heather --

But she CLOSES HER DOOR before he can even finish.

Edgar leads Gerald to Andy's closed door. There's a rhythmic CREAKING sound from within. He softly KNOCKS.

 EDGAR
 Andy? I'd like to talk to you.

A long beat. Then a calm voice can be heard:

 ANDY (O.S.)
 C'mon in, Pop.

79 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - ANDY'S ROOM - NIGHT 79

Edgar and Gerald enter. Andy is in a rocking chair by the window. He looks over at them, giving that creepy grin.

And he STOPS ROCKING.

 ANDY
 Howdy, neighbor. Nice to see you.

Gerald glances at Edgar, who gets the hint. He steps back into the hall and leaves. Gerald and Andy are alone.

After a long moment, Gerald walks across the room, sitting down on the edge of the bed. He and Andy are face-to-face.

Neither one of them blinks. But it's like they're having a telepathic conversation. And --

-- Andy's face changes. The pretense falls away, the shields drop. Exposing what's going on within.

And the look in his eyes is terrifying.

But Gerald isn't intimidated. He holds Andy's malicious gaze coolly, sending a silent message right back... "I know."

Andy's lips curl into a frightening grin. "I know you know."

A long beat. A stalemate. Then Andy leans forward:

ANDY
Welcome home.

80

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

80

Edgar leans against the wall, anxiously rubbing his hands. Listening. But there's nothing but SILENCE from inside.

He hears footsteps approaching the door and he straightens --
-- as GERALD exits the room. Closes the door behind him. He turns to Andy's father. His face pained.

EDGAR
Well?

Gerald turns and walks towards the stairs.

EDGAR
Hey. Wait a second...

He catches up with Gerald, who turns back at the top.

EDGAR
What happened? What did he say?

GERALD
I can't help him.

Edgar can only watch as Gerald walks down the stairs and out the front door. Hold on Edgar's expression as we --

CUT TO BLACK.

A sudden burst of PARADE MUSIC brings us back to...

81

EXT. YOUNGTOWN - MAIN STREET - DAY

81

The street is a COLORFUL STRIP of red, white and blue. Every single resident of the town has turned out on this beautiful Saturday afternoon. The "Americana" is in full swing --

-- the HIGH SCHOOL MARCHING BAND doing their best to ravage Sousa while they land their feet in not-so-perfect sync;
-- the BATON TWIRLERS and FLAG SPINNERS in front of them;
-- the VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS filling the Studebakers, proudly displaying their medals as they wave to the crowd;

82

EXT. YOUNGTOWN - TOWN SQUARE - DAY

82

The parade ends here, where dozens of long BENCHES have been assembled before a GRANDSTAND. Varieties of MEATS sizzle on large open-flame grills, flipped and manipulated by the pros.

The TOWNSPEOPLE dig into the massive pot-luck brunch, while some of the kids throw FRISBEES and BASEBALLS nearby, trying to keep them over the heads of the DOGS in pursuit.

It is, in a nutshell, Rockwell's vision of the American town.

DANIELLE, helping to serve food, glances over at a pride of JOCKS tossing a pigskin. She makes her way over, asking them a question, her voice drowned out by the music. The Jocks just shrug. No, they haven't seen Rich.

HEATHER, sitting with her parents, watches the exchange. She barely manages a smile as she passes along a plate of corn.

ON THE GRANDSTAND: the VETERANS are gathering, undoubtedly trading stories, carousing about the way their wounds act up just before the rain starts to fall. Apart from them is --

-- GERALD. His old UNIFORM seems a little tight on his body. He's tried to clean up, and almost looks like a different man. But not quite. He can't erase that haunted look in his eyes as he watches --

ANDY. He's standing with the Mayor, posing with another YOUNG VETERAN for the PHOTOGRAPHER from the local paper. The difference between these two young men couldn't be more stark -- the other kid looks, well... alive.

PHOTOGRAPHER

(trying hard:)

Okay, give me a smile for this one!

Happy to be home!

But the blank expression on Andy's face doesn't change. The Mayor gives him a nudge:

MAYOR

This is gonna be on the front page of every paper in the county. Go ahead and show 'em those chompers.

After a beat, Andy's lips curl into that EERIE SMILE. Even the photographer hesitates, deciding not to snap the photo.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Okay, I think we got it.

ON GERALD: he watches as the Mayor leads Andy up the grandstand steps. Andy catches his gaze as they pass.

The Mayor clears his throat, stepping up to the MICROPHONE:

MAYOR (INTO MIC)

Okay, everyone, if I could have your attention.

The CROWD quiets as the Mayor looks over the town. The HIGH SCHOOL TECHIE monitoring the soundboard raises the volume:

MAYOR (INTO MIC)

Well, I've sure enough never been to heaven. But I imagine it looks a bit something like this.

(scattered applause:)

The Lord couldn't have given us a better day to welcome back one of our boys.

He puts an arm around Andy -- who's still glancing back at Gerald -- trying to corral him closer to the mic.

And THE CROWD is getting to it's feet, giving Andy a standing ovation. Tears of joy and pride are everywhere.

Andy looks out over the crowd. His smile fading.

MAYOR (INTO MIC)

You're a hero, Andy. To all of us. We owe you a debt of gratitude. Why don't you give us a few words?

He steps away from the mic. Andy doesn't move. He just keeps looking over the crowd with an odd bewilderment.

ON HEATHER: Andy's gaze meets hers. There's nothing but emptiness there. And it kills her.

ON GERALD: sitting with the other Vets. Watching closely.

The Mayor leans in to Andy, encouraging:

MAYOR
C'mon, Andy. Don't be shy.

Andy just turns and stares at him blankly.

ON THE SHERIFF: he's leaning against his patrol car, watching from the street. Also watching closely.

MAYOR (INTO MIC)
I suppose even the bravest warrior can be scared by the microphone. Why don't you tell us about Lewis Lawrence? His unit was out with yours for awhile. It's been a while since his parents heard from their son.

The Mayor gestures to MR. AND MRS. LAWRENCE (50s). They've been given "seats of honor", close to the stage. Mr. hugs Mrs. tightly, bravely, at he mention of their son's name.

Andy finally steps up to the mic, looking out over --

-- THE TOWNSPEOPLE. And from the looks on their faces, maybe they aren't sure what they want. Maybe they just want the old Andy back.

One of the JOCKS yells out:

JOCKS
You rock, Woodward!

The teenagers laugh. But it dies a quick death. Andy's eyes go to the LAWRENCES. And finally...

ANDY (INTO MIC)
I saw him.

Relief floods the faces of Lewis' parents.

MAYOR (INTO MIC)
That's fantastic! Where'd you see him? What'd he say?

ANDY (INTO MIC)
When I saw him, they'd just finished cutting out his tongue. So he didn't say anything.

A deafening SILENCE settles over the town square. Horror fills the eyes of the Lawrences. But Andy keeps talking to them, soothingly, softly:

ANDY (INTO MIC)
They'd started with his feet, I think. They let the dogs eat them, while he watched. Then his fingers had been crushed, one at a time, with pliers.

The Mayor just stands there in shock. Too stunned to react.

ANDY (INTO MIC)
When I saw him, they were sticking a hose inside him, down his throat--

Gerald slowly STANDS behind Andy --

-- and Andy QUICKLY TURNS. Fixing him with a stare.

The kid at the soundboard finally comes to his senses, and POWERS DOWN the speakers.

Andy turns away from Gerald, back to the crowd.

He looks over them, a silent tableau, as we...

FADE TO BLACK.

83 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - DUSK

83

The last vestiges of sunlight are dying through the trees. And in the fading light, the Woodward house seems darker, and quieter. Not as inviting as before. Not by a long shot.

Sheriff Brighton's patrol car pulls up out front. He looks up at the house for a beat before getting out and walking to the front door.

Carol opens the door even before he gets there. She stands in the doorway, blocking it. They regard each other for a long beat. It's so dark, we can barely see their faces. *

CAROL
What are you doing here, Jody?

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Evenin', Mrs. Woodward.

She just stares at him. Doesn't bother with pleasantries.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Your boy home?

CAROL
Do you have a warrant?

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
I just want to have a few words
with him. No need for --

CAROL
Not without a warrant, Sheriff. We
know our rights here.

Brighton regards her for a beat. Then, sadly:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
I didn't want to come here that
way. But I will, if you'd prefer.

EDGAR (O.S.)
Let him in for godssakes.

Carol turns as Edgar appears in the doorway. He hits a
switch, and the PORCH LIGHTS switch on. *
*

CAROL
He's sleeping --

EDGAR
You know he doesn't sleep anymore.

Edgar pushes the screen door open.

EDGAR
C'mon in, Jody.

Brighton takes off his hat and enters.

84

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - FIRST FLOOR - DUSK

84

Brighton enters, awkward under Carol's withering stare.

EDGAR
He's upstairs. I'll get him --

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
One minute, Mr. Woodward.

Edgar pauses, turning back. Brighton steels himself:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
The morning Andy came home. Did he
say how he got to town?

EDGAR
No, he didn't.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Did you ask him?

EDGAR
Sheriff, I was just happy to see my
son. I didn't care much at all how
he got back.

Brighton nods, getting it. But now Edgar knows:

EDGAR
This is about that trucker.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
He picked up a hitchhiker that
night. A young man, in military
uniform --

CAROL
My son is a hero. And you have the
nerve to come to his house, and
call him a murderer! --

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
I'm not calling him anything. I
just want to clear a few things up.
Don't want it on-record.

It's directed more at Edgar. He finally calls out:

EDGAR
Andy. Come down here a second.

There's no reply. Edgar didn't expect one. He heads
upstairs, leaving Brighton alone with Carol.

CAROL
You don't have any kids.

It's not just a statement. It's an attack. But Brighton
doesn't let the wound show:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
No, ma'am. I don't.

CAROL

You don't know what it's like.
What our family sacrificed. What
Andy sacrificed. For this country.
For this town. For you.
(he doesn't respond:)
You owe him, Sheriff. You owe us.

85 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - ANDY'S ROOM - DUSK 85

Edgar walks up to Andy's door and KNOCKS. Silence.

EDGAR

Andy?

Still nothing. He opens the door and peers inside --

-- THE ROOM is empty. No Andy.

A mournful ARIA begins to play as we --

CUT TO:

86 OMITTED 86 *

87 INT. GERALD'S HOME - NIGHT 87 *

CLOSE ON AN EMPTY GLASS as two ice cubes are dropped inside,
followed by a heavy dose of scotch. *
* *

Gerald lifts the glass with a shaky hand. He's still in his
dress uniform, sitting in a recliner, smoking as he listens
to opera on his nearby stereo. *
* *

The drapes are drawn, and the only illumination comes from
the glowing HEATERS around the room. *
* *

Gerald polishes the glass off in one swill. As he grabs the
bottle to refill, he hears A CAR STARTING outside. *
* *

He hesitates, leaning forward to look out the window, seeing
BRIGHTON'S PATROL CAR pulling away from Edgar's house. *
* *

Gerald watches the taillights recede for a beat. Then he
turns his attention back to refilling his glass -- *
* *

-- there's a CREAK. From above him. A footstep. Upstairs. *
* *

Gerald looks up at the ceiling. A long beat. *

He finishes his drink. And then he slowly stands, walks to the stereo and turns off the aria. Silence takes over. *

He stands silently, looking at the ceiling, waiting. And now his eyes are clear, the drunken tremble gone from his body. He knows it wasn't just his imagination. *

Gerald walks to the foot of the stairs. Looks up. *

GERALD
Alright. C'mon down here now.

Silence. Gerald calmly walks to a small table by the front door. Slides open the drawer. Pulls out a Colt .45.

GERALD
You know you're home, don't you?

He slides in a clip. Pulls one into the chamber. Then he reaches deeper into the drawer, pulling out a HUNTING KNIFE.

GERALD
You're back in the good 'ol U.S. of A. With your family. With a pretty girl that loves you more than anything. It's all sunshine and apple pie from here on out.

He slides the knife into his belt. Returns to the bottom of the stairs. Peers up into the darkness above.

GERALD
You don't really want to go back there, do you Andy? Back into the darkness. Back to zero-dark-thirty. Back to the dead of night.

Still no answer. Resolution creeps into Gerald's eyes --

-- and he HEADS UP. Taking the first step. And the next. With each one, something HARDENS in his face. It's a TRANSFORMATION happening right before our very eyes...

...it's THE BEAST. It's being let out of it's cage.

Gerald reaches the top of the stairs. It's quiet up here.

His eyes scan the area, stopping on the open BATHROOM DOOR.

GERALD
(quieter:)
Don't make me go back there with
you, Andy.

But there's no answer from the bathroom.

Gerald raises the gun, walking towards it. He knows exactly
where to PUT HIS FEET to keep the floor from creaking.

89 INT. GERALD'S HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT 89 *

Gerald slides silently inside. It's empty. The SHOWER
CURTAIN is closed. He walks to the wall next to it --

-- PEERING INSIDE. The shower is empty.

90 INT. GERALD'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT 90 *

Gerald steps into the hallway. Stands there for a minute.
His face is too dark to see his expression. Then --

-- he SLAMS A FIST into his own chest. Again. Again.

And now we see his CHEST HEAVING. He's PRIMING THE PUMP.

GERALD
C'mon. C'mon you petulant
motherfucker.

He's not worried about the creaky floor anymore as he heads
towards a bedroom.

GERALD
You couldn't handle it. You're
weak. You let it take control of
you. You're pathetic.

He grasps the doorknob. Turns it.

GERALD
You shouldn't have come back. You
should have died over there.

91 INT. GERALD'S HOME - BEDROOM - NIGHT 91 *

It's almost pitch black in here, the THICK CURTAINS keeping
out the light. But Gerald can see just fine:

GERALD

You're just like them. You're a
coward. Hiding. Afraid.

He kneels, looking UNDER THE BED. Nothing there.

Gerald stands, knees CREAKING as his eyes go to A CHAIR in
the corner of the room. He slowly approaches it:

GERALD

I bet you hid over there, too.
Behind your friends. Letting them
take the bullets. I bet you pissed
your pants the first time you heard
gunfire.

He LEANS OVER IT, gun pointing down at THE CORNER --

-- which is empty. No one behind the chair. He turns away
from the corner, scanning the CLOSETS across the room.

GERALD

That trucker you killed, he didn't
even have a chance. Did that make
you feel powerful? Like a God?

He's really worked up now, SNARLING his words:

GERALD

I'm not gonna give them a chance to
try you. I'm not gonna let you get
off on temporary insanity.

He stops with his back to the DARKENED CORNER. And as if our
eyes are slowly adjusting, we begin to see --

-- ANDY. He's standing there, directly behind Gerald. His
eyes are wide, he's grinning manically --

GERALD

You're a blot on this Earth. A
mote in God's eye. A splinter in
your own legacy --

Andy moves swiftly, WRAPPING HIS HANDS around Gerald's neck.
Gerald HEAVES HIS BODY to the side, and Andy GRABS HIS GUN
ARM as they --

-- HIT THE GROUND like a tree falling. The gun SKITTERS
across the room. Eyes bulging, Gerald SLIPS HIS FINGERS
under the cord, freeing his windpipe --

-- GASPING for air. With his free hand, he FEELS FOR HIS KNIFE, sliding it out --

-- and CUTTING THE CORD. Then, in the same movement, he TUMBLES AWAY from Andy, SLASHING OUT. Andy JERKS HIS HEAD back just in time to save his throat.

Gerald ROLLS TO A CROUCH, knife at the ready, a hideous GRIN across his face as he catches his breath.

GERALD
Alright. Alright then.

He LUNGES FORWARD, stabbing out --

-- Andy SIDESTEPS, grabbing Gerald's wrist and using his momentum to carry him ACROSS THE BED --

Gerald LANDS ON THE NIGHT TABLE, smashing it to pieces. But he recovers immediately as Andy advances, backing into--

92

INT. GERALD'S HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

92

*

Gerald takes another step back, and another...

...but it's just a feint. He's suddenly THROWING HIS WEIGHT FORWARD, pushing the knife AT ANDY'S FACE --

-- Andy PUTS UP HIS HAND, stopping the blow. They GRAPPLE there, teetering above the stairs, both men straining --

Gerald DRIVES A KNEE into Andy's groin. Grabs his shoulders and THROWS HIM THROUGH THE BANNISTER --

-- Andy FALLS DOWN THE STAIRS, coming to rest at the bottom.

And Gerald is AFTER HIM IN A FLASH. As Andy rises --

-- Gerald SLAMS HIS BODY into Andy's, CRUSHING HIM against the wall. But Andy doesn't even make a sound. He DRIVES HIS HAND into Gerald's Adam's apple, winding him.

As Gerald staggers back, regaining his breath --

-- we hear the sound of BLOOD SPATTERING onto the floor.

Andy raises a hand to his face, leaving a DARK RED streak. Then he looks at his hand, surprised --

ANDY'S POV: as he sees blood POURING down his body, onto his shoes and the floor below. Where is it coming from?

ON ANDY, we he turns his head to the side, to finally see --
-- GERALD'S KNIFE. It's been driven into his shoulder with
such force, the blade has COME OUT THE OTHER SIDE --
-- and is PINNING ANDY to the wall behind him.
Andy meets Gerald's gaze with a look of approval. Then --
-- he STEPS FORWARD, the knife PULLING FREE from the wall.
Gerald BACKS AWAY, recovering, stepping into --

93

INT. GERALD'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

93

*

Gerald is thrown by Andy's mettle -- the young man keeps
coming forward, no pain evident on his face as he SLIDES THE
KNIFE FROM HIS ARM and drops it. *

*

*

The two men CIRCLE EACH OTHER. Knowing only one of them will
be standing soon. And then --

-- THEY MOVE at the same time, RUSHING EACH OTHER. And they
SLAM into one another, dropping to the floor.

Their hands MOVE QUICKLY as they grapple, each seeking an
edge, an angle, a good grip. Sweat covers their bodies.
Sweat and blood. They SLIP and fall to the floor --

-- but it doesn't slow them. Now they USE THEIR LEGS,
wrapping around each other. PULLING the other's hair.

And it all happens in near-silence. Punctuated by the
occasional GRUNT. It's all focus. Intensity. Pain.

The ROOM IS DESTROYED around them. Gerald's DISPLAY CASES
fall to the floor and shatter. Chairs are broken. A
bookshelf is KICKED OVER, spilling it's contents.

Andy suddenly FREES A HAND, grabbing GERALD'S EAR --

-- and RIPPING IT. Gerald CHOKES OUT A HOLLER, pulling
aside, his ear dangling from a flap of skin. He responds --

-- GRABBING ANDY'S HAND, and LUNGING FORWARD, BITING AT
ANDY'S NECK. His FINGERS seek purchase on ANDY'S EYES,
trying to puncture them. It's all-out animalistic now --

Then Andy suddenly SLASHES at Gerald. Gerald throws up a
hand, and it CUTS THROUGH IT like a hot knife through butter,
slicing TENDON, exposing STARK WHITE BONE -- *

*

-- Gerald ROLLS AWAY, losing the edge, but Andy STAYS ON HIM, SLASHING like a machine, over and over --

Gerald THROWS UP HIS ARMS, which begin SPROUTING DEFENSIVE CUTS. Blood SPLATTERS both of them. GASHES like long mouths stretch across Gerald's forearms, revealing BONE beneath.

With a CRY, Gerald WRAPS ANDY'S ARMS in his own, OPENING HIS OWN wound wider as he strains, SPITTLE flying --

GERALD

Fuck you... FUCK YOU...

The eerie calm never leaves Andy's eyes as he YANKS HARD --

-- POPPING GERALD'S SHOULDER from it's socket. Gerald CRIES OUT, and Andy ANGLES HIS ARM to the floor --

-- swinging up a foot and LEANING DOWN --

Gerald arm BREAKS, the ulna POPPING THROUGH FLESH, a splintered white fracture tearing to the surface --

-- Andy stands as Gerald PUSHES AWAY, mewling as he stares at his arm bone, blood CASCADING down his face and body.

Gerald stares up at Andy as he looms over him, raising the knife. He holds up his broken arm --

-- as Andy SLASHES. Again and again. Hitting Gerald's arm, his shoulders, his legs, his SCALP, his FACE...

... and Gerald is reduced. Like meat in a butcher shop. His body quivering, he hardly looks human anymore.

Andy kneels down next to the twitching bundle of blood and viscera, his eyes calm as ever, focused on --

-- GERALD'S EYES. Barely visible through the curtain of blood spilling from his scalp. He never looks away as --

Andy WRAPS HIS HANDS around Gerald's neck.

And SQUEEZES.

Gerald reflexively PUTS HIS OWN hands around Andy's neck as they throttle each other, nose-to-nose --

-- then Gerald's eyes WIDEN IN SURPRISE. He squeezes Andy's neck harder, seeing HIS EFFORTS AREN'T HAVING ANY RESPONSE...

...Andy isn't breathing. And he doesn't seem to mind.

*

GERALD
(gasping:)
You're... you're not --

ANDY
Yes. I am.

Gerald's mouth opens, as if to comment on this fact -- *

-- but Andy's grip tightens. Gerald lets out a terrifying
GROAN as His eyes rolls back, and his own grip lightens -- *

-- as Andy PULLS HIS HEAD HIGHER. Gerald's body slumps --

-- but yet Andy KEEPS PULLING. Like he's trying to separate
Gerald's head from his torso. His neck ELONGATES, twisting
unnaturally as Gerald's unearthly GROAN BUILDS to a climax -- *

There's a horrible SNAP as we -- *

CUT TO BLACK. *

A long beat. We hear the SOUND of fluorescent lights
CLINKING to life, and we see -- *

94

INT. GERALD'S HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

94

-- ANDY. He stands before the mirror, staring at his
reflection. His pallid, bloody face is a horrific vision
under the light. But his eyes are eerily calm, as if he's
just woken up from a long sleep -- *

-- and as he holds his own gaze, it seems as if he's finally
come to some sort of truth, a great epiphany about himself...

Then his eyes go to a STRAIGHT RAZOR lying on the sink.

Andy reaches out, picks it up. Slides out the long blade.

He stares back at his reflection. And raises the knife.

As he does, we get ANOTHER QUICK FLASH of the face of the
SPECTACLED MAN LUNGING AT US. But this time, we hear his
voice as he SCREAMS, spittle flying --

SPECTACLED MAN
COME ON!!!

CUT TO BLACK.

95 INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 95

Edgar stands in the dark room, staring at --

-- ANDY'S DISPLAY CASE. The FLAG is wrapped up inside, under the inscription: "KIA, 6/28/06".

We MOVE IN on Edgar as he makes an internal decision.

96 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - PORCH - NIGHT 96

Edgar steps outside, pulling on his jacket. As he stuffs his wallet into his pocket, and heads for the stairs:

CAROL (O.S.)
Where are you going?

He turns to see Carol sitting on the swing chair.

EDGAR
Out for a drive.

Carol stares at him. She knows he's not telling the truth.

Edgar finally walks over, sits down next to her. His eyes on his hands. Finally:

EDGAR
I'm going to see Sheriff Brighton.

CAROL
Why?

EDGAR
To tell him about Andy. About how he's been acting --

Carol abruptly SLAPS his face. Edgar looks up, stunned.

CAROL
Don't you dare.

Edgar can see there's no reasoning with her. He stands.

CAROL
He thinks he's dead.

Edgar turns back, surprised.

CAROL
Andy thinks he died Over There.

EDGAR

How can he think that?

Carol stands. Walks over to him.

CAROL

Because it's true. Our boy didn't come back whole. A part of him is gone. A part that he can't ever reclaim. Not without our help.

EDGAR

What if he killed that man, Carol?

CAROL

Well that surely was his job for awhile, wasn't it?

She touches his shirt, entreating:

*

CAROL

He came home to us, Edgar. He came home because I prayed, every night, that God would send him home. It was God's will --

Edgar pulls away, heading for the stairs. She follows:

CAROL

Don't you dare send him away again!
It's God's will! DON'T YOU DARE!

But Edgar's not listening. He gets in his car, already gone.

97

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

97

Heather is primping in the mirror, putting on the final touches of makeup. She's succeeded in making herself look a few years older... and a good deal sexier.

She hears her mother YELLING outside, and TURNS UP THE VOLUME on her radio. She can't take hearing it any more.

Heather finishes, stepping back from the mirror, checking out the short jean skirt she's wearing. Unsure.

The sound of a CAR pulling up makes her to turn to look --

-- OUT THE WINDOW. A Honda pulls out front, and DANIELLE gets out. She looks up at the window, seeing Heather.

HEATHER

You're early.

Danielle just nods. Uncertain about this. Heather can see the tension in her eyes. But she just smiles, covering:

HEATHER

C'mon up.

98

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - HEATHER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

98

Danielle sits awkwardly on Heather's bed. Heather is in the closet, fumbling around.

HEATHER (O.S.)

I don't know where he is. I told him we were leaving at eight.

DANIELLE

(tense:)

Heather, it's alright if he doesn't want to come.

Heather steps out of the closet, pushing her skirt down over the black tights she's put on underneath.

HEATHER

He'll come. I know he will. Don't worry, it's gonna be just like it was before.

Her eyes seem to beg for agreement from Danielle, as if she doesn't believe her own words. But Danielle is silent.

Heather awkwardly strikes a pose for Danielle:

HEATHER

So? Does it look good?

Danielle slowly shakes her head. Heather's smile fades.

DANIELLE

Better without the tights.

Heather ducks back into the closet to take them off. Danielle sits in silence for a beat. Then:

DANIELLE

Are you sure he doesn't know?

IN THE CLOSET: Heather stops. Leans against the door frame. Danielle can't see the look on her face as she responds:

HEATHER (O.S.)
About what?

Danielle doesn't respond. Heather steps out of the closet, holding her friend's gaze for a beat. Finally:

HEATHER
He has no idea. I'm sure of it.

They regard each other. The air is thick between them.

DANIELLE
Rich is gone.

HEATHER
(sharp:)
What do you mean, "gone"?

DANIELLE
He wasn't in school on Friday. And his car isn't in the driveway --

HEATHER
Maybe he went away for the weekend. Doesn't he go camping all the time?

Heather turns away, stabbing her feet into her shoes.

DANIELLE
Yeah. But he never goes alone. And he would have told me --

HEATHER
(harsh:)
Maybe he had stuff to think about.

Heather's breathing quickens. It's all out in the open now. But Danielle speaks calmly:

DANIELLE
I heard his parents' house was robbed. Someone broke in. Messed up the place pretty bad.

Heather just stares at her for a long beat. Then:

HEATHER
He doesn't know, Danielle.

99 EXT. RICH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

99

CLOSE ON THE DOORFRAME: a soft-hair BRUSH carefully dusts the area around a FINGERPRINT, searching for more.

Brighton watches the procedure stoically for a beat. Then:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
If there's a match, you let me know
right away. And only me.

Brighton glances down at THE DRIED BLOOD on the porch before he turns to walk to his car.

RICH'S FATHER (O.S.)
Excuse me, Sheriff?

Brighton turns to see RICH'S PARENTS (50s) approaching. They both look terribly shaken.

RICH'S FATHER
Do you think this has anything to
do with... with that other murder?

It's clear from his tone he thinks his son is dead.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
We'll find Rich. Don't worry.

His words clearly have a relieving effect on them --

-- but as he turns away, his expression falters. As if he knows clearly that his own words will be proven wrong.

As he approaches his car, the Young Deputy opens the door, stepping out, holding out the CB radio. There's a grave look on his face. *

Edgar finally takes the CB and raises it. *

100 EXT. YOUNGTOWN - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

100

Sheriff Brighton's patrol car pulls up to the station. He gets out, looking through the window at --

-- EDGAR. He's sitting alone in a side room.

101 INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

101

The Burly Deputy looks up from his desk as Brighton enters:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Has he said anything yet?

BURLY DEPUTY
Said he'd only talk to you. And
that it was important, something
about that trucker.

102 INT. POLICE STATION - SIDE ROOM - NIGHT

102

A small conference room. Edgar sits at one end of a long table, staring at his hands. The door opens, and he looks up at Brighton and the Deputy enter.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Evenin', Mr. Woodward.

Edgar nods. Brighton nods back. After a long beat, he sits across from Edgar, the Burly Deputy stands nearby. Then: *

EDGAR
Twice in one night, huh Jody?

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Always good to see you, Edgar.

But he's waiting to hear what the man has to say. Finally:

EDGAR
I didn't quite tell you the truth
about my son, Sheriff.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Oh?

Edgar's eyes stay on his hands. He's got a tough choice...

EDGAR
I was worried. Worried that you
might not understand.

Brighton and the Deputy exchange a glance. Finally, Edgar looks up, meeting the Sheriff's gaze. A long beat.

EDGAR
Andy wasn't traveling alone that
night. Another boy was with him.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Another boy.

EDGAR

Andy said he was a couple years older. They were on the same flight back to the States. Said he was from Colorado.

Sheriff Brighton doesn't respond. Just regards Edgar.

EDGAR

He never got the kid's name. But he could describe him, to a T. If you needed.

He holds Brighton's blank gaze. Finally:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

That'd be a big help.

EDGAR

I'm sure Andy'll do all he can.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

I'm sure.

Another long beat. Then Edgar finally stands:

EDGAR

Alright then. I'll have him come by tomorrow?

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

I'll be here all day.

Edgar looks a bit nervous now, unable to read the Sheriff. He gives the Deputy a nod and leaves. They watch him leave the building and get into his car. Then:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

Call Judge Peterson. Have him work up a warrant. Right now.

The Deputy nods, heading for the door. But he hesitates:

BURLY DEPUTY

Want me to call that Detective?

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

No. Not yet.

103 EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT 103

A large ranch-style house on a spacious piece of land. Cars are LINED UP all along the street, and MUSIC blares within.

104 INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT 104

It's not exactly what we might expect: yeah, there's loud music and a beer in every hand. But the DOZENS OF TEENAGERS inside are subdued, talking quietly in groups.

Heather is at the keg in the corner, trying to fill a glass. She's self-conscious as she struggles, glancing at --

-- the OTHER KIDS. Some of them are looking in her direction and whispering. Talking, no doubt, about her brother.

TANYA is with them. She sits on a counter, her legs around a jock watching Heather coldly as she sips her beer. *

Growing angry, Heather TRIES THE SPICKET, shaking it.

BOB (O.S.)
You have to pump it first.

She turns to see BOB (16) approaching. He's a handsome kid with dark hair and kind eyes. They melt her instantly.

Heather steps aside as Bob takes her cup, PUMPS THE KEG vigorously and fills her glass.

BOB
New to this, huh?

HEATHER
Yeah. Kinda.

BOB
How old are you, anyway?

HEATHER
Eighteen.
(off his look:)
Sixteen.

He grins, hands her the beer.

BOB
Sounds old enough to me. Need all the help we can get -- I got three of these.

Heather takes a sip, awkwardly looking around. Amazed this guy is giving her his complete and undivided attention.

HEATHER

So. I like your place.

BOB

Thanks.

(beat:)

So, uh, your brother comin'?

Heather glances at DANIELLE, hanging in the corner across the room. She's by herself.

HEATHER

He was going to, but, who knows?

Bob raises his own plastic mug. But it's more to cover up the look in his eyes, than it is to drink.

ACROSS THE ROOM: Danielle notices Bob and Heather. And though Heather doesn't catch it, Danielle does --

-- Bob's TWO FRIENDS hanging nearby. Giving Bob ENCOURAGING NODS. Prodding him along. But their expressions are dark.

Danielle's face sours. She starts to cross the room.

BACK ON HEATHER: she's oblivious to the exchange between Bob and his friends.

BOB

Andy must've seen some real crazy shit while he was Over There.

HEATHER

He doesn't really talk about it.

BOB

You hear about Rich?

Heather finally starts to get what's going on here.

BOB

Some people think something happened to him.

HEATHER

Danielle's waiting, I should go --

Bob GRABS HER ARM. But his expression never wavers.

BOB
You know anything about that?

HEATHER
Let me go!

That gets people's attention. The room goes silent. But Bob doesn't care. He keeps his eyes on Heather's:

BOB
You sure there isn't anything you want to tell me? 'Cause pretty soon, we might just ask Andy ourselves --

Danielle MOVES BETWEEN THEM, yanks Bob's arm away.

DANIELLE
Asshole.

She puts an arm around Heather and leads her away.

BOB
You and Rich got pretty close while your boyfriend was off fighting a war, huh Danielle?

Danielle stops. Turns back, and THROWS HER BEER in his face. Everyone watches to see what's going to happen next.

HEATHER
My brother went away and fought so you all could just sit here and drink and smoke your fucking pot. *

Bob turns crimson, shamed. Heather's eyes go to Tanya. *

HEATHER
He sacrificed for you. *

Danielle pulls Heather away. As they go: *

BOB
Your brother came back a goddamn psychopath! You know that?

ON DANIELLE: she keeps her arm around Heather, leading her through the crowd --

DANIELLE
Don't listen to him, Heather.

ON BOB: the RING of the doorbell makes him walk to the front door behind him, as he yells after them --

BOB
He's fucking nuts, and I'd tell him
to his face!

He opens the door and turns --

-- to see he's FACE-TO-FACE with ANDY. He's on the porch, grinning under his DARK AVIATOR SUNGLASSES, which only enhance the yellowish waxy tinge of the skin on his face...

...and on his RECENTLY-SHAVED HEAD.

ANDY
Hi, Bob.

Bob just stands there. Mouth agape.

ANDY
Can I come in?

Bob steps aside, and Andy slowly walks past him.

TRACKING IN FRONT OF ANDY: the room is silent as he makes his way through the crowd. Everyone gives him space, staring at him strangely. Looking at something behind him...

He finally STOPS, in the center of the room. Fixing his eerie grin on Danielle and Heather. Then he turns around, as if wanting to look in every single person's eyes.

And as HE TURNS, we finally see what everyone is staring at --

-- the TATTOO on the back of his shaved skull. It's a HAIRLESS HUMAN HEAD, the face, partially in profile, is a mask of unimaginable TORMENT AND AGONY. A gnarled hand CLAWS OUT, as if seeking purchase on an intangible salvation.

ON ANDY, as his grin widens. He slides off his sunglasses.

ANDY
I thought this was a party.

FROM OVERHEAD: a small, polished wooden table. An ornate CRUCIFIX stands at attention on an elegant doily.

Carol enters frame, gently laying a PILLOW on the floor in front of the table. Then she kneels down on it, genuflecting and raising her ROSARY to her chest.

Then silently, lips moving furtively, she begins to pray.

A long beat. Then the sound of a CAR PULLING UP out front makes her pause. She opens her eyes for a second, distracted. Then she finds her place, and continues.

BANG! Someone BURSTS THROUGH the front door. Startled, Carol turns in time to get a glimpse of --

-- EDGAR. He's quickly heading upstairs.

CAROL

Edgar?

He doesn't answer, disappearing from view. Concerned, Carol stands and follows after him.

106

INT. THE WOODWARD HOME - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

106

Carol enters to find Edgar tossing clothes into an OPEN SUITCASE on the bed.

CAROL

What did you tell them?

He doesn't answer. She grits her teeth:

CAROL

What. Did. You. Tell. Them --

EDGAR

NOTHING!

He whirls around, eyes full of anguish.

EDGAR

I lied to them. And they'll find out. Jesus Christ, they'll find out. We have to get out of here --

CAROL

Edgar. What did you tell them?

Edgar's on the verge of breaking down in his guilt.

EDGAR

I told them it was someone else. Someone he came home with.

CAROL
(soothing:)
It's okay. It's okay. You did
what you had to do.

EDGAR
I just sat there and lied to them --

She pulls his head into her shoulder, patting his back
maternally, nodding. Her eyes at peace.

CAROL
Now, now. You did nothing of the
sort, dear.

Edgar tenses in her arms. He pulls away, looking at her.

CAROL
Of course it wasn't Andy. He would
never do such a terrible thing.

Edgar stares at her in disbelief. Her expression retains
it's quietude. But there are CRACKS around the edges... *
she's afraid. But not of Edgar. Of the truth. *

EDGAR
I -- I don't know what happened to
him Over There, Carol. But -- *

CAROL
He didn't do it... he couldn't
have... he could never --

EDGAR
Carol, please, listen to me.

But she's MOANING now, in torment, shaking her head...

EDGAR
There's something wrong with Andy.
He's not right anymore --

He gently puts his hands on her shoulders --

-- and she JERKS AWAY violently: *

CAROL
IT'S YOUR FAULT!

She raises her hands towards his face, but he GRABS HER
WRISTS. She struggles futilely against him... *

CAROL
ALL! YOUR! FAULT!

Each word from her lips bores into Edgar's soul. But he holds her tightly, his face devoid of emotion --

*
*

CAROL
He would have been okay. If you had given him time... if you had just left him alone...

She slumps to the floor. Edgar kneels down next to her.

EDGAR
There was nothing we could do, Carol. Nothing.

She looks up at him, seeing the pain in his own eyes. Somehow, finally, her sense is returning.

EDGAR
But we can at least protect him.

CAROL
(understanding:)
Yes. We can.

She takes Edgar's hand and gets shakily to her feet.

CAROL
I'll need to... get my things --

EDGAR
Get Heather and Andy. Tell them they have ten minutes.

He turns back to a bureau, grabbing clothes. Then he notices that Carol hasn't moved. He turns back, realizing:

EDGAR
Where are they?

CAROL
The party. They're at the party --

EDGAR
Where?

CAROL
The Franklin farm. Ash Mill Road.

Edgar stares at her for a long beat. Finally:

EDGAR

Pack their bags. Five minutes.

She runs into the hall, heading for Heather's room.

Edgar stands there for a beat, shoulders slumped. Then he turns to a night stand, and opens the drawer --

-- pulling out a GUN CASE. He unlocks it, and pulls out his silver .38 Special.

107 EXT. THE WOODWARD HOME - NIGHT

107

Edgar's car BACKS WILDLY from his driveway and swings onto the road, racing off into the night. We PAN TO --

-- a PATROL CAR further down the street. The BURLY DEPUTY watches the taillights receding, as he raises the CB: *

BURLY DEPUTY (INTO CB)

He just took off like a bat outta hell. Whaddya want me to do? *

SHERIFF BRIGHTON (ON CB)

Follow him.

108 INT. PARTY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

108

The party seems to have livened up a bit. Too much beer will have that effect. But DANIELLE is alone, staring out at --

-- THE POOL behind the house. ANDY sits in a chair, eerily lit by the sickly green underwater light. He's facing the house. Smiling. Head slightly lowered, like a bird of prey.

She finally heads for a side door and opens it...

109 EXT. PARTY HOUSE - POOLSIDE - NIGHT

109

Andy doesn't even turn towards Danielle as she steps outside, walking around the pool. She stops next to him.

DANIELLE

Andy.

ANDY

(without turning:)

Yeah.

Trying to rein in her emotions, Danielle sits next to him. *

DANIELLE
(softer:)
Andy.

Something in Andy's body seems to UNCLENCH. He turns towards her, looking into her eyes. *

DANIELLE
Do you still love me?

Pain lances across his face. But his eyes seem incapable of producing tears. He strains:

ANDY
I came back...

DANIELLE
Andy --

ANDY
... I came back for you.

DANIELLE
Then where are you?

ANDY
I don't know.

DANIELLE
Andy, can you still love me?

Andy doesn't answer. Danielle can't hold back the tears now:

DANIELLE
(struggling:)
I understand, if... if there's something else you need, or... if you've met someone else --

ANDY
"Met someone else"?

The dark slips back into Andy's eyes. He scrutinizes her:

ANDY
Where?

His tone brings her back to reality. She's seeing that the Andy she's loved may finally, truly be gone.

She TWISTS THE PROMISE RING from her finger. Holds it out.

DANIELLE

I'm sorry, Andy. But I can't...

He stares at the ring. She lifts his hand, lays it gently in his palm.

DANIELLE

I just can't.

Andy lowers his head, staring down at the rings. And something changes in Danielle's face, as she realizes:

DANIELLE

(re: his hand)

Andy, you're cold...

*

As she stares at his hand, a DROP OF BLOOD appears in the middle of it. Then another, on the edge.

DANIELLE

Andy? What? --

He slowly looks up at her -- and now we see that the blood is COMING FROM HIS EYES. Crimson tears, tracing his cheeks.

DANIELLE

Andy, something's wrong...

*

ANDY

(malevolent:)

I think we've already established that.

*

*

*

*

The promise ring SLIPS FROM HIS PALM as he LIFTS A HAND to her face, and then the other, cupping her --

-- as he SLOWLY STANDS --

DANIELLE

You're so... cold...

His hands move from her face TO HER NECK as he looks in her eyes. Wondering what could have happened to him --

-- and then HE SQUEEZES. His teeth gritting.

Danielle's eyes GO WIDE as she struggles for a breath, her own hands going to his wrists --

-- he LOWERS HER TO THE GROUND, out of sight from the house, as he throttles the life from her.

Danielle's face is TURNING PURPLE, eyes pleading, staring helplessly at Andy's strangely stoic face --

-- HER FINGERS TIGHTEN around Andy's wrists, STRAINING --

And then, as if his flesh were merely a shirt, HIS SKIN suddenly SLIDES UP HIS ARM. Collapsing like a sleeve. Revealing the BLOODY MUSCLE AND SINEW underneath.

Danielle's eyes widen even more at the sight, and she TRIES TO SCREAM -- all that comes out is a liquidy gurgle.

But Andy doesn't seem to notice what's happened. He focuses on the task at hand, murmuring:

ANDY
I came back for you...

*

Losing strength, Danielle's hands MOVE TO ANDY'S FACE, pushing his head TO THE SIDE --

ON DANIELLE, as BLOOD spatters onto her face. She chokes out a SCREAM as she sees --

-- Andy TURNING HIS HEAD BACK towards her. As he does, the skin STAYS WHERE IT IS. Like a mere mask he's wearing.

His skull LITERALLY ROTATES UNDER HIS FLESH.

One of Andy's eyes PEERS DOWN through the other eyehole, and HIS JAW PROTRUDES ODDLY through his cheek. It's monstrous.

BOB (O.S.)
Hey! Get off her!

Andy looks up, seeing BOB AND HIS FRIENDS running from the house towards him, ready for battle...

...but they slow as they get closer, seeing --

-- ANDY'S FACE. He slowly stands, ignoring the SPUTTERING DANIELLE as she rolls away from him.

The boys watch in horror as Andy turns to them, his skin stretched oddly across his face, in the wrong position.

They can only stare as Andy REACHES UP to his face, PULLING THE SKIN back where it belongs.

*

110 EXT. COUNTRY ROAD / INT. EDGAR'S CAR - NIGHT

110

The car RACES DOWN the quiet road, taking turns at dangerously high speeds.

INSIDE THE CAR: Edgar grips the wheel tightly, eyes alert on the road. He glances up into the rear-view, seeing --

-- THE DISTANT HEADLIGHTS rounding the bend behind him. The only other lights visible on the road.

His eyes go the SPEEDOMETER as he pushes it past eighty.

AT AN INTERSECTION: we SWING PAN as Edgar's car zooms by, revealing THE PATROL CAR sitting at the t-intersection.

INSIDE THE PATROL CAR: Brighton knocks the car into gear, pulling out behind the Burly Deputy's vehicle.

ON THE ROAD: Brighton's car ACCELERATES, trying to catch up with the other two.

INSIDE BRIGHTON'S CAR: he's keeping an eye on the speedometer. It passes sixty... seventy... eighty...

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

Shit.

(into CB:)

You're too close. Pull back.

INSIDE EDGAR'S CAR: at a fork in the road, he SWERVES to the right. Keeps an eyes on the rear-view, watching as --

-- THE LIGHTS behind him take the opposite road. He lets out a breath, relieved. Then slows his speed.

INSIDE BRIGHTON'S CAR: he stares ahead, gripping the wheel for a beat. Then he raises the CB mic:

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

Make the call.

111 INT. PARTY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

111

From a LOW ANGLE, we can see the kids in the LIVING AREA.

DANIELLE'S FEET step into frame. We FOLLOW THEM as she walks towards the crowd, staggering, as if off-balance... *

...and BLOOD begins to drip onto the floor next to her feet.

The partying kids see her, their faces dropping, stepping
aside as she stops in the middle of the room. A long beat. *

ON HEATHER: she's splattered with Andy's blood. Her eyes
are wide, and there are dark CONTUSIONS all around her neck.

She opens her mouth, trying to form words, GASPING --

-- and we catch MOVEMENT in the window behind Heather, just
before it SHATTERS as something is hurled through it with
astounding force -- *

-- it's BOB'S BODY. It SLAMS against the opposite wall and
DROPS to the floor like a sack of potatoes.

And before anyone can break from their stunned paralysis --

-- ANDY appears in the window, grinning, EMERGING INTO FOCUS
through a shard of glass still in the window frame. *

He taps it, and it falls with a CLINK. He GRINS. *

112 EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

112

Edgar and Carol pulls up quickly, his car SKIDDING onto the
front lawn. He leaps out, seeing the lawn is COVERED WITH
KIDS. At first, it seems like the party has moved outdoors.

But then Edgar opens his door, stepping from the car, he can
see the PANIC in their eyes. The kids are all in shock.

He GRABS HIS GUN from the dashboard.

EDGAR

Stay here.

Carol watches as Edgar approaches the house. All the kids
turn to him, wide-eyed. Hoping he can help.

ON EDGAR: as he walks through the teenagers, unnerved by the
way they're all looking at him. Finally he sees --

-- HEATHER. She's on the front porch, comforting a very
shaken DANIELLE. There's blood all over her face. They both
look up at him blankly, overcome.

EDGAR

Heather. What happened?

Heather just stares at him. There aren't any words.

113 INT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT 113

The front door opens and Edgar steps inside. The LIVING AREA, previously full, is now deserted. But the music continues, playing to a room without an audience. *

There's an odd, rhythmic THUDDING sound coming from the kitchen. Edgar slowly walks towards it. *

114 INT. PARTY HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT 114

Edgar turns the corner... and the first thing he sees is BLOOD. It's all over the floor, the walls.

As he stops, there's a CRUNCH. He steps back, looking down --
-- at THE BROKEN TEETH scattered on the floor. Then his wide eyes move up to --

ANDY. He's on the other side of a dining island, facing away from his father. And he sure is working hard --

-- DRIVING HIS ARM DOWN, and then UP, and then DOWN, and then UP. The LOOSE SKIN on his forearms makes an odd FLAPPING sound with each movement.

EDGAR

Andy...

Andy doesn't stop. Edgar walks closer, getting a better view of THE FIGURE lying on the floor --

-- it's BOB. He's almost unrecognizable now, as Andy continues to DRIVE HIS FIST INTO THE MASS THAT USED TO BE BOB'S FACE. Over and over. Mechanical. Purposeful.

EDGAR

Oh my God...

Andy stops. Straightens. And slowly turns.

Now we can see how far gone he is. His skin is pale and loose, as if it simply doesn't fit his face anymore --

-- and there are blood splatters ALL OVER HIM. Nearly every single inch. There's NO SKIN on his knuckles, and WHITE BONE gleams out from underneath.

He STEPS OVER Bob's body, moving toward his father. Who can only stare at the SKIN dangling from his hands.

EDGAR

What -- what happened to you...

Andy's lips form a rictus of a grin.

ANDY

What do you think happened to me,
Dad?

Trying to steady his shaking hand, Edgar RAISES THE GUN.
Just like he did in his nightmare.

EDGAR

Stop. Andy, stop.

Andy looks at the gun. His body WOBBLER -- and he GRABS the
island for support. Closes his eyes for a beat.

ANDY

Don't think -- there's not much
left. Not so much to do now.
Nobody wants me here anymore.

EDGAR

I -- I want you, Andy. You're my
son.

Andy looks up at him. Straightens.

ANDY

Then why are you pointing a gun at
me?

EDGAR

I want my son back. The way you
were.

ANDY

This is all I've got. Not enough
for you, Dad?

He starts advancing again. Edgar steps back into the LIVING
ROOM, as Andy keeps coming.

EDGAR

Did you do it?

ANDY

Do what, Dad?

EDGAR

Andy, please --

ANDY
"Andy, please!"

EDGAR
DID YOU KILL HIM?

We can see the pain in Andy's eyes, behind his terrifying visage, as he speaks: *

ANDY
Do you want to know what he called me? Do you want to hear what he said about my friends who died --

EDGAR
Andy, please --

ANDY
(advancing:)
-- who died Over There in the dust, and the dirt, and the filth, and the rot --

EDGAR
-- please stop --

ANDY
-- and how he spit on my uniform when I tried to leave --

EDGAR
(raising the gun:)
-- please --

ANDY
HE CALLED YOU A COWARD FOR LETTING ME WASTE MY LIFE --

There's a GUNSHOT from o.s. He stops in mid-sentence, eyes widening in shock, as BLOOD spills from his mouth. We BOOM DOWN to see -- *

-- there's a HOLE in his neck. Right next to his throat. *

EDGAR
I'm... I'm so sorry...

Andy looks back up. With pain in his eyes. Emotional pain.

There's a SCREAM from outside. Andy turns to see --

-- HEATHER AND DANIELLE watching through the window. Staring at Andy's gunshot wound.

Andy slowly turns back to Edgar. He's lowered the gun, staring at Andy in disbelief.

EDGAR
How?... I don't underst...

BURLY DEPUTY (O.S.)
FREEZE!

Edgar turns to see the Deputy in the door, holding a shotgun. Sheriff Brighton is running up behind him. He enters the house, his own gun out --

-- his eyes on Edgar, and the gun he's holding.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Put it down, Edgar. Now.

The gun FALLS from Edgar's limp hands, as he turns back to his son. All eyes are on Andy now. He shouldn't be standing.

And Brighton's own gun lowers as he stares at Andy. Unable to speak.

Andy just stares vacantly. Finally understanding...

ANDY
I don't...

He ABRUPTLY COUGHS, and thick dark blood spills from his mouth. Andy raises a hand, collecting it. Staring at it. *

Then he looks back up, mouth glistening as he struggles to form the words, his mouth making a horrible SLURPING: *

ANDY
(muffled:)
I... I don't think I can stay.

BURLY DEPUTY
Jesus H. Christ...

Andy ABRUPTLY TURNS -- and staggers for the kitchen door.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Andy! NO!!!

The Burly Deputy FIRES -- and the door frame BURSTS APART as Andy runs through it. *

SHERIFF BRIGHTON
Stay here, Edgar!

The Sheriff and the Deputy RUN PAST HIM, chasing after Andy. Edgar just stands there in the middle of the room, stunned.

Then his eyes go to HIS GUN, lying on the floor.

115 EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

115

Carol gets out of the car, seeing the kids standing around, still in shock. They look like walking zombies.

Her eyes find HEATHER AND DANIELLE in the crowd. She takes a step towards them --

-- but then she sees something else o.s. It's A FIGURE staggering around the house, barely visible in the dark.

CAROL

Andy...

116 EXT. PARTY HOUSE - POOLSIDE - NIGHT

116

Brighton and the Burly Deputy carefully make their way around the back of the house, scanning the area.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

C'mon, Andy! Don't let this happen!

They hear a SQUEAL of tires, and the ROAR of an engine. Exchanging a look, they RUN AROUND the house --

-- in time to see EDGAR'S CAR ripping up dirt as it screams out of the driveway.

ON HEATHER, as she feebly runs toward the road, SCREAMING
insanely, watching as the car drives off down the road. She
collapses to the ground. *

Danielle catches her, supporting her, watching the car disappear into the night.

BACK OF THE HOUSE: Edgar emerges from the kitchen. Stands there for a moment, staring at the ground. Then he walks --

-- TO THE POOL. Moving around it, to the same chair Andy was in earlier. He SITS DOWN, looking out across the treeline.

He exhales. His breath is visible in the cold air.

Then his eyes go to the TWO BLOOD-STAINED RINGS lying on the grass by his feet. *

Edgar sits still for a long beat. Then he suddenly RAISES
THE GUN TO HIS TEMPLE --

*

BANG! His body goes limp.

Silence falls again. The wind BLOWS through the trees.

117

EXT. COUNTRY ROADS / INT. CAR - NIGHT

117

The car SPEEDS DOWN the road. Andy LEANS AGAINST his
mother's body. He almost appears to be DISSOLVING before our
eyes, his body losing cohesion --

Carol glances up at the POLICE CARS catching up quickly.
Their FLASHING LIGHTS are filling the car.

CAROL

(to herself:)

They'll follow us... they'll follow
us, Andy. We have to go.
Someplace safe. A place where
they'll leave you alone. My poor
boy...

Dark blood SPILLS FROM ANDY'S MOUTH as he tries to speak:

ANDY

T-- Town...

CAROL

We can't go there, Andy!

ANDY

Town.

OUTSIDE THE CAR: Carol MAKES A HARD TURN, heading towards --

118

EXT. YOUNGTOWN - MAIN STREET - NIGHT

118

Carol slows the car as they drive down the deserted street.
It's the oddest parade we've ever seen --

-- FOUR PATROL CARS are right behind her in a slow-speed
chase, flashing BLUE AND RED across the quiet storefronts.

And it's driving in the OPPOSITE DIRECTION as the earlier
parade. Some of the DECORATIONS still hang down above.

119 EXT. YOUNGTOWN / INT. CAR - NIGHT

119

INSIDE THE CAR: Carol is sobbing now, looking around desperately, trying to hold on to the wheel:

CAROL

Where, Andy? Where can we go now?

Andy slowly raises A HAND -- the FLESH is falling off, exposing the bone underneath. Carol follows it --

ANDY

There.

She sees where he's pointing. Sorrow wrenches her face, and she shakes her head.

CAROL

No... Andy, no... please --

But he doesn't lower his hand. His eyes are urgent.

Carol finally acquiesces, slowly turning the wheel, passing through the brick walls that line the entrance to --

120 EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

120

The car PULLS TO A STOP just inside. Andy opens the door, STUMBLING from the car. Moving quickly across the grass.

Carol tries to keep up with him --

*

CAROL

Please, Andy... not here...

The PATROL CARS stop at the entrance, and the Deputies get out. Guns raised, ready for the hunt.

SHERIFF BRIGHTON

No shooting. Not unless I give the order.

ON ANDY: he STAGGERS through the graveyard, eyes fixed on a point, ignoring the stones around him --

-- ignoring CAROL as she pleads with him, catching up --

CAROL

Stay with me... stay...

Andy's leg HITS THE EDGE of a stone. There's an audible SNAPPING SOUND as his leg SPLITS OPEN.

He drops to the ground with a CRY, his face contorting with the pain. But he DRAGS HIMSELF along, intent on reaching --

HIS OWN GRAVE. Relief seems to course through his body as he RIPS ASIDE the fake grass turf --

-- SINKING HIS FINGERS into the loose dirt below it.

Carol kneels next to him, watching helplessly as --

*

-- he PULLS HIMSELF FORWARD, onto the grave that has been prepared for him. TEARS OF BLOOD spilling down his cheeks --

-- which are FALLING OFF in flaps, dropping from his skull.

CAROL

Andy... no... you're still alive...

She makes a desperate attempt to return his face to normal, picking up the pieces of flesh and putting them back on.

We MOVE IN on Andy as he hears her muffled words --

CAROL

You're still alive...

-- his eyes START TO WIDEN, and ALL SOUND begins to fade --

-- until all that's left is a MUFFLED, HIGH-PITCHED RINGING. The sound of deafness. Of ears gone into overload.

And we suddenly FLASH TO -- **THE OPENING SEQUENCE** --

ANDY'S POV: staggering out of the cave, moving from oppressive darkness to overwhelming light...

BACK ON ANDY: his head reflexively moves back and forth, a futile denial, as --

ANDY'S POV: as he drops to his knees, PUTS UP A HAND to shield his eyes from the sun, he sees something MOVING in the distant, muddled by the heathaze of the desert...

BACK ON ANDY: as CAROL'S VOICE emerges from the silence --

CAROL (O.S.)

You're still alive, Andy...

ANDY'S POV: the object approaching is a HUMVEE. The men are U.S. SOLDIERS, waving their arms at us, mouthing silent words. An AMERICAN FLAG ripples in the air.

CAROL (O.S.)
...still alive...

ANDY'S POV: as the Humvee MOVES INTO PERFECT CLARITY, we see what we didn't get a chance to see earlier --

-- that the U.S. soldiers aren't WAVING in greeting. They're waving in WARNING. THEIR LIPS are moving in silent, but recognizable words... and suddenly ALL THE SOUND RUSHES BACK:

"GET DOWN!!!!"

And now we SEE ANDY, kneeling in the dirt, awareness leaking into his gaze --

-- too deaf to hear THE FIGURE staggering from the mouth of the cave, a mass of black hair and thick beard, clutching the wall for support with one hand --

-- and RAISING A RIFLE with the other --

There's an EXPLOSION, and Andy's neck BLOWS OPEN --

-- and FLECKS OF BLOOD hit the lens --

Andy remains kneeling for a moment, a look of tranquil surprise on his face -- and we STAY WITH HIM as he slowly topples to the side IN SLOW-MOTION --

-- we get A FLASH of TWO MEN running with a stretcher below the THUMPING blades of a medical helicopter --

-- FROM ANDY'S POV: as THE MEDIC climbs on top of him, now recognizable as THE SPECTACLED MAN, as he PRESSES DOWN on Andy's chest, YELLING silently as he tries to revive him --

-- we MOVE IN ON ANDY'S EYES, his body JERKING under the Medic's vain efforts. His PUPILS DILATE as life leaves him.

As Andy CONTINUES HIS FALL (still slo-mo), the Figure behind him is TORN APART BY GUNFIRE. But Andy doesn't notice --

-- we get a FLASH of a MATCHING FRAME: Andy as a kid, clutching a toy gun, pretending to be shot and dying --

And as Andy's head finally HITS THE GROUND, we go --

BACK TO THE PRESENT: Andy HITS THE GROUND with a gurgle, jaw moving soundlessly. Carol LEANS FORWARD, caressing his head.

CAROL

Andy...

His eyes find hers. He struggles to speak his final words:

ANDY

Let... me... go...

CLOSE ON CAROL: as her expression changes. Now, finally, she understands. She nods, knowing what her son needs.

And finally, a SINGLE TEAR emerges from her eye as -- *

-- she slowly REACHES OUT AN ARM, dutifully PUSHING DIRT over Andy's body. *

A thankful smile reaches Andy's lips, and his eyes close --

-- and Carol doesn't even notice as THE POLICEMAN run up behind her, their SHOUTING oddly muffled --

-- we CRANE UP above Carol, as Brighton lowers his weapon, and now OTHER POLICE OFFICERS and STATE TROOPERS are driving up and running over --

-- but everyone can only stand there in bewilderment --

As a mother slowly buries her son.

FADE TO BLACK.