

FALLEN

by

Sarah E. Sheldon

Sarah Sheldon
2400 Chew St, Seegers Box 2113
Allentown, PA, 18104
(609)-651-0226
sarah.e.sheldon1@gmail.com

EXT. BACKYARD (SUMMER 1929) - DAY

Two young boys, between the ages of 4 and 7, play Cowboys and Indians in a sunny yard. The older of the two, RICHARD, wears a COONSKIN HAT and cocks a WOODEN GUN while chasing JAMES.

James playfully skips through the grass, just out of reach of his older brother. He darts through drying clothes on a line, running his hands through the wind-driven maze.

Richard jumps in James' path and pushes him to the ground.

RICHARD

You're dead. I shot you.

James picks himself off the grass and snuffles noisily.

JAMES

No! No, that's not fair. That's not how we play.

Richard shoots James again with the wooden gun and pushes him to the ground.

RICHARD

You can't get up!

James pounds the dirt as Richard fixes the coonskin hat.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Richard, be nice to your brother.

James jumps from the ground and narrowly escapes Richard's grasp.

James runs sniffling into his mother's skirt as she stands in the doorway.

MOTHER

It's okay James. You're safe.

James blinks tears away through large round blue eyes. His mother carefully brushes away sweaty and dirt filled curly black hair from his forehead.

EXT. WOODS (WINTER 1944) - DAY

A man, early twenties, runs through a forest. Deep rifts of snow slow his speed. He is wearing a dark green military uniform.

Bullets dent trees as he passes, showering him in blackened bark. He rests behind a tree for a moment and we see him [U+2015] JAMES. Curly black hair and blue eyes. He trembles and grabs for his dog tags.

Jagged breaths escape from blue and bleeding lips. His eyes close.

FLASH: DEAD SOLDIERS FALL AROUND JAMES

James starts running again.

A bomb goes off to his left and he looks to the sky to see a plane steadily outpacing him.

James stops at the edge of a compound. A bloodied man runs past him and James screams, trying to be heard over the deafening bombs.

The tents and soldiers before him are in flames. Countless squirming and flickering figures dance in the red snow. His lips tremble before he repeats the message in a whisper.

JAMES

They're coming.

A man on fire runs past in desperation, causing James to stumble backwards to avoid the flames. A bomb falls nearby; James is thrown against a tree.

A muffled echoing silence fills the screen as rasping breaths become increasingly distant.

He lays motionless in the snow staring up at the gray and black smoke-filled sky.

James stares at the sky and into the camera. We drift slowly away from him. A mangled broken leg bleeds quickly, staining the white slush around him.

James' eyes slowly close.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

A blinding white light seeps through pale blue eyelids. A SHRIEKING noise disturbs the peace.

James wakes in a thin metal bed. Blurred figures move around the room towards the patient in the bed beside him. Nurses and guards attempt to restrain a screaming heavily bandaged man.

James shies away from the bits of flying food and debris. He hides beneath his sheets; trembling fingers pull the stiff bleached covering closer.

A nurse looks over from the screaming patient to see James. She motions for another nurse to see to him.

James peeks above the blankets to see a wrinkled nurse looking down at him.

NURSE

You're finally awake.

James nods shyly and looks around the nurse's wide frame to see a large needle being injected into the neck of the screaming soldier. The man appears heavily burned.

FLASH: JAMES SEES BURNING SOLDIERS AND BODIES IN A FIELD

NURSE

Do you know where you are?

(beat)

What's your name?

James shakes his head timidly and carefully reaches to his chest and to touch his dog tags. They aren't there. His fingers grasp at his empty neck.

NURSE

We didn't find them on you...

The screaming man's continued struggle and shouts sets James on edge.

NURSE

You're safe, it's okay. We just need to know your name.

The man beside James twitches silently until his body relaxes. The crowd of medical personnel around him disperses.

JAMES

Is he okay?

NURSE

He will be. Name?

JAMES

James, James Evans.

NURSE
Service number?

JAMES
36-972-984

The nurse pulls the blanket tightly around James' upper body and smiles while injecting him with a clear liquid.

After a moment, his eyes flutter and he falls asleep.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

James wakes in his bed and looks around, puzzled. Everyone is asleep, except for a nurse with a candle on the far side of the room.

NEIL PARNE (O.S.)
Busy day?

James jumps at the sound of the man's voice beside him. NEIL PARNE, burnt and bandaged, has dark brown hair and a scarred smile.

James sits up in bed, carefully, to turn toward the man.

NEIL PARNE
I didn't mean to frighten you
earlier.

James nods solemnly and turns away.

NEIL PARNE
It was a mistake. They keep forcing
me to take medication I don't want
to take.

JAMES
Why wouldn't you want to take it?

Neil Parne smiles and laughs to himself instead of answering.

James reaches his hand across the divide between their beds.

JAMES
I'm James.

Neil jangles the restraints on his arms against the frame of the bed. He smirks to himself.

NEIL PARNE

It's nice to meet you. Finally I'll
have some company here. The rest
are all stiffs.

Neil laughs again. A nurse walks by with a candle.

JAMES

Does it hurt?

Neil looks at him questioningly.

NEIL PARNE

The burns?

(beat)

It's been over two months since I
got them. I had hoped they weren't
noticeable.

James motions to a thread barren badge with a faded red and
white pattern.

JAMES

84th division?

NEIL PARNE

Yep.

JAMES

I knew some people in that
infantry...

(beat)

You took Lindern?

NEIL PARNE

We tried. I missed most of the
fight.

JAMES

Was it a bomb?

(beat)

A bomb that burned you?

NEIL PARNE

Petrol. On our tents. It happened
while we were sleeping.

A moment passes in silence and James turns around to sleep
on his side.

FLASH: JAMES SEES A MILITARY COMPOUND BURNING

NEIL PARNE (O.S.)
How bad is it out there?

JAMES
Worse every day.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

James is sitting outside with a coat tightly wrapped around a hospital gown. One leg is in a thick cast; crutches lean on a nearby wall. Neil Parne sits next to him.

The ground is covered in a patchwork of melting snow.

Neil Parne looks significantly less burned. James stretches to soak up more sun.

JAMES
I heard the 84th took the offensive again.

NEIL PARNE
They can't take all the credit.

JAMES
With you sitting on your lazy ass here?

NEIL PARNE
Come on!

JAMES
Half the nurses would throw you on the next plane out of here.

NEIL PARNE
To where?

JAMES
The frontlines. The farthest from here as possible.

NEIL PARNE
The Pacific then?

JAMES
Farther the better!

Neil smiles and laughs, the burnt scars on his face writhing in the sunlight.

NEIL PARNE

I don't think I could afford the
sunburn.

James laughs and closes his eyes as a breeze ruffles his hair.

A helicopter's muffled engine fills the quiet hospital yard. James turns, frightened at the noise.

NEIL PARNE

Looks like new meat.

(beat)

Must be serious to land here
instead of the pad though.

The helicopter makes its descent, sending new waves of wind and debris swirling around the two soldiers sitting on the bench.

James, in a terrified fit, hides behind the bench, flipping it over.

A few medical personnel and guards split off from the group heading towards the helicopter.

The helicopter lands, its wings echoing throughout the compound.

A guard attempts to subdue James as he rolls on the ground.

GUARD

(shouting)

What the hell!

James clutches his head and pulls away from the hands of the nurses and guards. Tears stream from red eyes and his hands rip at his hair and face.

JAMES

No! No! No! No!

Neil stands horror struck, watching the struggle of guards and James on the asphalt.

A man in a stretcher is hurried past James.

James is injected with a needle and continues to fight against the burly man holding him down. James hits his head, hard, on the ground. He starts bleeding and a puddle forms around him.

His eyes close slowly.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. ISOLATION CHAMBER - DAY

James wakes up in a small enclosed cell with brick walls. A singular light bulb hangs from the ceiling.

He tries to call out but his voice is raspy and barely over a whisper.

A cup of water sits near the door of the cell. James eagerly reaches for it. He gulps it down, spilling most of it on his chest.

JAMES

Hello?

James bangs on the door. He walks along the brick wall, steadying his legs.

FLASHBACK - GERMAN CITY (FALL 1944) - DAY

James brushes his hand along blood stains on a crumbling stone wall.

Gunshots echo in the distance and James takes cover behind the wall.

BACK TO SCENE

James sits in the corner of the cell, the room is dark and the ground is covered in glass. The light bulb swings wildly from the ceiling; it's broken with an exposed filament.

James hides his face in his hands.

FLASHBACK - GERMAN CITY (FALL 1944) - DAY

James shoots at German soldiers from behind the wall. He notices the corpse at his left, screams, and stumbles away from the wall.

Shots fire near him, letting off bits of rock and dust. He is forced farther into the building.

BACK TO SCENE

James looks up to see a guard staring at him.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - DAY

James is led down a long hallway, flanked by two guards.
He lets his hand drift gently along the wall as he walks.

FLASHBACK - GERMAN CITY (FALL 1944) - DAY

James walks with his fingers brushing against bloody hand prints.

INT. HOSPITAL OFFICE - DAY

A well-dressed man in his fifties sits across from James, his beard twitches slightly while reading a report on his desk.

DR. BERG

I still don't understand, James.
Please, explain it to me.

James shuffles uncomfortably in the chair.

DR. BERG

This is unacceptable.

James tenderly touches fresh stitches on his forehead.

JAMES

I was scared. I saw things.

DR. BERG

I see. Why were you scared? You are safe at this hospital.

JAMES

I don't know...

DR. BERG

You can't do this again. We already have enough problems here.

The doctor violently throws a stack of papers in the trash. James noticeably flinches at the sound.

JAMES

I'm sorry, I don't know wha-

The doctor sighs angrily and stamps a folder before glaring up at James again.

DR. BERG

I am pleased to inform you that the United States Military is formally discharging you on medical grounds. We thank you for your service in the struggle against fascism.

James stammers in surprise.

DR. BERG

We can't have people like you. With your 'condition' hurting others in the field.

(beat)

Off record, you are unreliable. We can't have your 'shock' becoming a problem in the future.

JAMES

Where are you sending me?

The doctor walks to the door of the office. He motions for James to leave.

DR. BERG

Home, James.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

James is led to a plane on a stretcher. Half-delirious, he tries to open his eyes.

The doctor walks beside him towards the plane, muttering unheard information.

The door of the plane creaks closed and the engine starts up.

James' breathing becomes ragged as violent images of war flood his eyes.

Blood and salty tears mix on his lips as his teeth clench around his bottom lip. The deafening sound of the plane increases as tears flood James' eyes. A crew member makes a muffled comment beside him and James is injected with another needle. His eyes close, letting the tears spill down his now-relaxed face.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

A large plane lands on a runway.

A small group of people excitedly wait on the runway as passengers begin to exit the commercial plane. After everyone has exited, two soldiers carefully lead a limping man from the back of the plane to the exit and down the attached steps.

James, exhausted and weak, is led across the runway towards the group. He is incredibly thin, with his clothing hanging loosely off his body.

BARBARA EVANS, mid-forties and kind-faced, pulls away from the group and embraces James.

James smiles widely and tightly holds his mother as the few people cheer.

BARBARA EVANS

We're so happy to have you home,
James.

JAMES

It's great to be back.

A soldier hands his suitcase to a young well-dressed girl in her twenties, MEREDITH. She smiles politely at James and gives him a kiss on his cheek.

JAMES

It's good to see you, Meredith.

WILLIAM, early twenties with sandy blond hair and smiling eyes, steps out from the group. He claps James on the back, hard. James turns and embraces him.

JAMES

William! You came!

WILLIAM

You must have a million stories!

William pokes him hard in the chest.

WILLIAM

And we have to hear them all!

James laughs and looks at the group of people before him. His smile fades slightly and he looks to his mother.

JAMES
He didn't come?

BARBARA EVANS
He wanted to but he had to be at
the shop... he'll be at home when
we get there though.
(beat)
We have a party for you.

William claps James on the back again.

WILLIAM
We couldn't welcome you back
without a proper party, now could
we?

INT. CAR - DAY

Barbara drives an old PLYMOUTH. Meredith sits in the front
seat and James in the back.

A car beeps as it drives past them on the other side of the
road. James flinches noticeably.

BARBARA EVANS
It's okay sweetie. It's just a car.

James nods and looks out the window.

BARBARA EVANS
We got a letter about what
happened. We'll make everything
better again.

Barbara parks outside of a house.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

James steps out of the car timidly and smiles at the sight
of the familiar house. A dozen cars line the street.

William pulls up behind them and parks. He gets out and
walks up to James.

WILLIAM
Let me help you with that, buddy.

William tries to support James but Meredith swoops in.

MEREDITH
Can you grab the suitcase?

William appears annoyed, but doesn't argue.

Meredith supports James towards the front steps.

JAMES
(whispers)
So is my dad really happy I'm
coming back?

MEREDITH
I think so.
(beat)
He has to be.

JAMES
Has there been any word from
Richard yet?

Meredith stops suddenly and smiles sadly before continuing to lead him to the house.

MEREDITH
We thought you might have heard
something...

She shakes her head again, to herself this time.

MEREDITH
No, nothing yet.

Barbara opens the front door for them and hands James a wooden crutch.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

A crowd of people cheer when the door opens.

Countless people hurry over to talk to him. A round of polite kisses, strong perfume, and weak handshakes.

After the crowd disperses James heads towards a swinging door on the far side of the room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A man in his forties with thinning hair, CHARLES EVANS, sits at a table with a newspaper. His shirt is unbuttoned and rolled up to his elbows. He turns and smiled sadly when he sees James.

CHARLES EVANS
Gotten thinner still?

JAMES
They didn't feed me like Ma' does.

Charles Evan smiles and shakes James' hand.

CHARLES EVANS
Is it good to be back?

JAMES
It's warmer here... And the party's nice too.

CHARLES EVANS
Your mother planned that.
(beat)
She cried when she heard you were coming back. It took three phone calls to convince her you were coming back on the top side of the plane.

James laughs and re-adjusts his crutches.

JAMES
I wasn't so sure myself.

CHARLES EVANS
Shame about the way you're coming back though.

JAMES
I suppose...

CHARLES EVANS
The military is setting up some-
(beat)
support for you though.
(beat)
Hopefully you can still be some help.

William barges in the room.

WILLIAM

This is your party, James. Come on!

Charles sits back down at the table, reading his newspaper. James understands the conversation is over. William shuffles James out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

James is talking with a group of people when Barbara Evans timidly walks over with a man.

DR. GRATH, mid-fifties, has neatly trimmed gray facial hair and a tweed jacket.

BARBARA EVANS

I'd like you to meet someone,
James.

James warmly offers his hand and a smile to the gentleman.

DR. GRATH

I look forward to getting to know
you, James.

JAMES

Me too, um-

DR. GRATH

Dr. Grath.

JAMES

It's nice to meet you, Doctor.

The doctor and his mother lead James away from the party.

Dr. Grath carefully cradles a glass of scotch.

BARBARA EVANS

I'm sure you two have much to talk
about.

She leaves them alone in a hallway.

DR. GRATH

You must have a lot of questions.

JAMES

No, not really.

DR. GRATH
Not a lot of people with[U+2015]your
condition[U+2015]are sent home.

JAMES
I imagine the U.S. military has
their reasons.

Dr. Grath laughs graciously.

DR. GRATH
I'm here to help you, James. A lot
of people don't understand what you
are feeling.

JAMES
And you do?

DR. GRATH
Yes. I do. I know your 'reactions'
are clinical, not cowardice. Many
people will not understand. I'm
here to talk you through it.
(beat)
Is that okay, James?

James smiles sadly.

JAMES
That sounds good.

Dr. Grath takes a piece of paper from his pocket and
scribbles messily on it.

DR. GRATH
We have so much to talk about.
We'll be meeting twice a week to
start. If we need more--

He looks up.

DR. GRATH
--or less. We'll make changes.

The two shake hands.

DR. GRATH
I look forward to seeing you.

Dr. Grath quickly drinks the rest of his scotch and places
the glass on a shelf with picture frames. He leaves James
standing alone in the dark hallway.

James looks at the largest PICTURE. His mother and father are standing in the background. James stands in the front next to a man with the same dark hair as himself but tall and muscular. The man's arm is tenderly wrapped around Meredith's waist, and everyone is smiling.

James smiles sadly and limps away on his crutches.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

James walks into the kitchen, heavily leaning on the door. He is without his crutches and his cast echoes loudly across the linoleum floor.

BARBARA EVANS
Good morning, hunny.

She looks up, smiling while cooking eggs over the stove. Charles Evans is sitting at the table reading a newspaper again. He does not look up.

JAMES
Have you seen my crutches?

BARBARA EVANS
We put those away in the attic. We thought you might not need them anymore.

JAMES
I think I sti--

Charles coughs loudly and speaks up in a gruff voice.

CHARLES EVANS
You'll heal faster without leaning on those sticks all the time.
(beat)
Your brother never needed them when he broke his leg playing ball.

JAMES
Okay.

James limps over to sit at the table, his cast drags loudly against the floor.

Barbara comes over and puts fried eggs and toast on a plate in front of James.

JAMES
Thanks Ma'.

She smiles warmly at him.

BARBARA EVANS
If you need them we'll pull them
down for you, but let's just see
first.

CHARLES EVANS
(motions to the food)
He gets his first?

James pushes his plate in front of his father and sits back
in the seat.

JAMES
I'm not very hungry anyway.

BARBARA EVANS
Not eating, and barely sleeping?
Are you feeling well?

She puts a hand to his forehead. He smiles warmly, but
shrugs her off.

JAMES
I'm feeling fine.

CHARLES EVANS
Heard you walking around last
night...

JAMES
It's hard to sleep, being back...

BARBARA EVANS
You should mention it to Dr. Grath.

CHARLES EVANS
He's not that kinda doctor,
Barbara.

BARBARA EVANS
He should still tell him.

Charles takes his food and newspaper before he leaves the
room.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

James walks down a sidewalk with his hands in his pockets. He is noticeably on edge and wary of others. His cast drags on the cement as he shuffles along.

He stops outside of a quaint brick building. James looks around and pulls a piece of paper from his pocket to check the address before entering.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Grath sits before James in a small but comfortable room. The furniture and tapestry are all shades of mustard brown and orange, matching the doctor's coat.

Dr. Grath adjusts his glasses and hands James a cup of tea. James waves it off.

JAMES
I'm not thirsty.

DR. GRATH
I know, but you should still drink it.

James accepts the mug and takes a small sip.

JAMES
It's good.

DR. GRATH
It's English.

James takes another sip.

DR. GRATH
Did you meet any English soldiers while abroad?

JAMES
A few. Not as many I imagined.

DR. GRATH
Nothing much was probably as you imagined.

James doesn't answer.

DR. GRATH
I know this must be difficult. But that's why I'm here. I get it, I
(MORE)

DR. GRATH (cont'd)
get it all. Every piece of crazy
and confusion floating around in
that brain. And I'm here to help.

James smiles sadly.

DR. GRATH
I've been over there. A different
time, mind you, but nearly the same
war. And now I can help you better
than anyone else in this town.

JAMES
Thank you, sir.

Dr. Grath claps his hands together.

DR. GRATH
Great! Then let's get started.

The doctor picks up a folder on a desk beside him and
riffles through it.

DR. GRATH
I have reports here of an incident
that happened at a medical base in
Belgium.

JAMES
I don't-

DR. GRATH
I understand this must be hard, but
we must talk about it.
(beat)

It appears in that situation a
helicopter set you off. Two days
later you were sedated for the
flight home. It was believed you
would become a problem. And
previously during your stay there
you attacked two guards.

JAMES
I don't know why I acted like that.
I'm sorry. I never meant to hurt
anyone... I never wanted to.

Dr. Grath pulls his chair uncomfortably close to James.

DR. GRATH

You don't have to be sorry. Other people may expect that from you, but not me.

(beat)

At that time do you know if it was the noise that triggered you or the sight of the helicopter itself?

JAMES

The noise. I think it startled me.

DR. GRATH

Have you ever noticed any other 'triggers'.

JAMES

Triggers?

DR. GRATH

What are other things that make you startled? Set you on edge?

JAMES

Nothing that I know o-

DR. GRATH

Give you visions or bring back memories of sorts?

JAMES

Lots of things.

Dr. Grath grabs James' hand and pats it enthusiastically. James tries to shy away.

DR. GRATH

I'm going to try to help you not have these reactions anymore. We're gonna get you back to normal, where you don't even remember being away. It is important that you help me with this.

(beat)

I'm going to save you.

The doctor smiles warmly and takes a bottle from a locked cabinet.

DR. GRATH

For now I want you to take these pills. Two a day, with breakfast and dinner. They should help.

JAMES

How?

DR. GRATH

They'll relax you. They are just going to be temporary though.

James takes the bottle and carefully holds it in his hands.

DR. GRATH

Let me know if you have any other problems. Any at all.

Dr. Grath stands up and opens the door for James. He grabs James' hand again as he walks by.

DR. GRATH

God speed.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

James lies in bed. He is clearly restless and bothered. He continuously shifts his weight, unable to fall asleep.

INT/EXT - MONTAGE

James creates a monotonous routine of spending time at home and at the doctor's office.

The time has not made him look any healthier, and dark circles scar his thin face. He seems to barely eat or sleep.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

James exits the brick building with Dr. Grath waving goodbye from the doorway. He starts to walk slowly down the street.

William comes up behind him and jumps on his back. James shouts, but forces himself to laugh it off.

WILLIAM

What are you doing in town? I haven't seen you around.

William questioningly looks at the doctor and then back at James.

JAMES

Just getting some air.

WILLIAM
How's the walking going?

James pats his hard cast as he stumbles along with William.

JAMES
I'm trying it without crutches.
Better, though.

WILLIAM
Do you know the bone grows back
stronger after your break a bone?
It'll be harder to break next time.

JAMES
(laughs)
Next time?

William claps him on the back.

WILLIAM
Oh, you didn't hear? They're
sending you back tomorrow. You're
gonna take all of Berlin and then
some.

JAMES
That might be a bit hard without
the crutches.

William laughs again.

WILLIAM
You do look horrible though.

JAMES
(sarcastically)
Really? I didn't know.

WILLIAM
A couple of friends are thinking
about going to the lake tomorrow.
With the weather getting warmer, I
think it'll be fun!

JAMES
Sounds like it might be too much
for me.

WILLIAM
Come on, it's just what you need.

A car pulls up next to them on the sidewalk. Meredith sticks her head out the window.

MEREDITH

James!

James limps over to the car with William at his heels. He gets in the passenger seat.

WILLIAM

Is she your driver now, James?

MEREDITH

(scoffs)

Just trying to help.

James sits shamefully in his seat.

JAMES

Maybe I'll see you tomorrow,
William.

William pats the car.

WILLIAM

Just what I wanted to hear!

They drive away.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Hoads of brightly dressed people crowd the beach closest to the water. A cheerful and content murmur fills the absence between children's laughter.

James lays on a towel soaking in the sun, while Barbara and Charles set up an umbrella and chairs. James' toes curl under the warm sand. His eyes close, and he breathes contently.

BARBARA EVANS

It's so nice out today.

William waves as he walks up the beach towards them. He shakes Charles' hand and politely kisses Barbara on the cheek.

WILLIAM

Nothing's wrong with some early hot
spring days!

BARBARA EVANS

I'm sure my garden isn't too happy
about it.

CHARLES EVANS
It'll be fine, Barbara.

Charles relaxes on a chair and opens a newspaper.

WILLIAM
Glad you could come, James.

James squints up at William, the sun blinding him.

EXT. LAKE - DAY (LATER)

James and William walk to the water's edge. Excited screaming children run past them and splash wildly.

WILLIAM
School's good you know... Better
than off where you were I imagine.

JAMES
I'm sure it was.

The two enter the water and swim until it is up to their chests. The lake is crowded and filled with adults floating in tubes and children playing.

James suddenly looks flustered.

WILLIAM
James?
(beat)
James, are you okay?

James ducks under the water, hiding from the noise and commotion.

FLASHBACK - EXT. RIVER (WINTER 1944) - DAY

James emerges from the water surrounded by gorged floating blue bodies of soldiers.

A light snow falls around him and his breath is gray and smoky against the cold.

James pushes past the dead bodies as he shivers uncontrollably.

BACK TO SCENE - LAKE

James desperately pushes through the crowd of people in the water.

FLASHBACK - EXT. RIVER (WINTER 1944) - DAY

James trips and falls fully into the freezing water. He struggles against the reeds tangled at his feet.

When he finally gets to the surface he splashes desperately, throwing swollen bodies left and right.

BACK TO SCENE - LAKE

James violently thrashes and throws children and inflatable tubes out of his path.

FLASHBACK - EXT. RIVER (WINTER 1944) - DAY

A hand grabs James, stopping him from reaching the bank of the river.

The wide-eyed body holds resiliently to James' arm, as blue lips whisper silently.

JAMES
GET OFF! GET OFF!

SOLDIER
please.

James beats the half-alive soldier, but his frozen hand will not let go of him arm.

WILLIAM (O.S.)
JAMES!

James thrashes harder against the figure.

WILLIAM (O.S.)
JAMES!

James fights against the echoing voice calling his name. The water, blood, and ice flood around him in a mess of fear and panic.

BACK TO SCENE - LAKE

William tightly grips James above the water, fighting against his thrashing.

A wide-eyed crowd has surrounded them at a safe distance, as a child CRIES off screen.

WILLIAM
James?

James relaxes in William's arms. The silence mixes unnervingly with the reflections off the lake.

WILLIAM

Let's get you out of here.

William carefully drags James through the water towards the beach. James is flaccid against William and the water around him, obviously distressed and confused.

WILLIAM

I'd only heard rumors... I hadn't actually seen anybody with it before.

(beat)

I don't think it's how they say.
You're not a coward.

William lays James on the beach. Barbara is seen running to them in the distance.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Grath sits across from James, unmoving.

DR. GRATH

I can't help you if you don't want my help.

The doctor taps a pencil impatiently.

DR. GRATH

I think it is important for you to tell me exactly what you saw.

(beat)

People are talking, James. People think you have gone insane.

JAMES

Is that better than being called a coward?

DR. GRATH

What do you think?

Silence.

DR. GRATH

We are the only ones that know about the real world out there. Not a single person in this whole town understands except me. They wouldn't see their feet if they were two steps in front of them.

James picks at his fingers, not looking up.

DR. GRATH
James, are you listening to me?

JAMES
Yes.

DR. GRATH
Have you been taking the medication
I gave you?

JAMES
It's not helping.

DR. GRATH
It can't help if you don't take it.
(beat)
I'm gonna write up a new
prescription for you. Take it this
time please.

The doctor hands James the PRESCRIPTION SLIP.

EXT. PHARMACY - DAY

Barbara drives up in the Plymouth; James is sitting in the
passenger seat.

BARBARA EVANS
I need to grab a few things. I'll
just be a minute.

She walks into the pharmacy.

James picks at his fingers in the car. After a minute, he
follows her into the pharmacy.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

James hesitantly walks in the front door; a bell rings at
his entrance.

A group of kids at the candy aisle stare at him wide-eyed,
waiting for something to happen.

James quickly turns down another aisle and walks to the back
of the store.

He slaps the prescription on the counter. A lean PHARMACIST
in a button-down white coat glares at him over his glasses.

PHARMACIST
Yes? Can I help you?

JAMES
This. I just need this filled out.

The pharmacist looks at him uncertainly before bringing the slip into the back room.

James impatiently waits at the counter. He looks around nervously for his mother.

A soft noise catches his attention, and James sees two girls his age giggling.

He averts his gaze but looks back. They are laughing at him.

PHARMACIST
Mr. Evans. Mr. Evans.

James turns back to the counter, now flustered.

PHARMACIST
That will be eighty five cents.

James digs through his pockets, dumping change onto the counter.

BARBARA EVANS (O.S.)
James? Did you need something?

She walks up to the counter.

BARBARA EVANS
Hello Mr. Farmer.

PHARMACIST
Nice to see you Mrs. Evans.
(to James)
Eighty five cents, Mr. Evans.

BARBARA EVANS
What is this for, James? Something
Dr. Grath gave you?

Barbara affectionately fixes the hair away from James' forehead.

The girls giggle off in the distance and James cringes.

BARBARA EVANS
I'll take care of this, Mr. Farmer.

Barbara digs through her purse and takes out her wallet.

BARBARA EVANS

Why don't you go sit in the car,
James? I'll be there in a minute.

James quickly turns and walks out of the store at the opportunity.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

James falls into his bed. The springs in the mattress wheeze in distress.

He takes a pill bottle from his pocket and swallows four.

James closes his eyes and tries to control his rasping breaths.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James storms through the living room. His eyes look bloodshot and crazed. Sweat soaks through his back.

Barbara, Meredith, and Charles look up from the television, surprised.

JAMES

I'll be back in a bit.

James runs out the front door.

Meredith follows and stands in the doorway. She watches him get in a car and drive away.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

James walks along the sand at the water's edge.

He stumbles while taking his shoes and socks off. James walks to where the lake narrows. A large rusted bridge shadows the beach; thin trees grow like weeds.

He sits at the edge of the water and watches the moonlight reflect off the crashing waves and rocks underneath the bridge.

James, clearly distraught, rolls the legs of his pants to his knees.

He pounds at his head and pulls his hair in frustration.

JAMES
COWARD!

James throws his shoes skidding across the small corner of the beach.

He walks into the water, timid at first because of the cold. He stops when the water is at his knees.

James pulls a dark object from his pocket; it shimmers in the moonlight.

It is a GUN.

He waves it around wildly and places the muzzle to his temple. Tears stream down his face through red and swollen eyes.

His sweating hand shifts nervously up and down the polished wooden grip as he pounds the barrel hard against his forehead.

FLASHBACK - INT. BARN (FALL 1943) - DAY

A gun is against James' head. He tries to harden his expression, but instead his features tremble. His eyes show his true fear.

German is being shouted around him. James winces as the muzzle rustles against his unkempt hair.

James kneels at the end of a line of a dozen American soldiers. Five German soldiers surrounding them are shouting inconsolably.

The American soldiers start to fight back. In the confusion of gunfire and shouting James runs to hide in a corner. He drapes himself in a stained wool blanket.

German voices are heard after the fighting stops.

James peeks from underneath the blanket to see the soldiers going from body to body with singular shots to the head.

An American soldier, eyes wide and chest leaking blood on the hay ground, stares at James.

A German soldier shoots him in the head.

BACK TO SCENE - LAKE

James opens his eyes; the gun is still tight against his own skull.

GERMAN SOLDIER (V.O.)
Fehlen wir irgendwelche?

A sudden sharp fluorescent light blinds James where he stands. He smiles, his breathing becoming ragged.

JAMES
 (mumbles)
 I did it?

A figure starts to emerge from the light and grows more pronounced.

James drops the gun into the water in pure bliss.

MEREDITH
 James!

Meredith runs up the beach toward him and stops at the edge of the water.

MEREDITH
 James!

Her voice noticeable cracks.

JAMES
 I'm here.

MEREDITH
 He's alive. We got the call. He's
 alive.

The smile slowly slips from James' face as he comes back to reality.

JAMES
 Who's alive?

MEREDITH
 Richard. He's been taken as a
 prisoner, but alive!

James falls to his knees in the water.

JAMES
 Richard's alive?

Meredith chokes back a new stream of tears.

MEREDITH
 Yes!

Meredith runs out to him in the water and helps him stand. The bottom of her dress is heavy and soaked as it floats on the surface of the water.

MEREDITH
He'll be home soon.

James balances himself.

JAMES
Do we know that?

She barely hears his comment and smiles wildly.

MEREDITH
He's coming home. I know it.

She jumps into his arms.

James smiles to himself; the anxiety seems to melt from his face for a calm moment.

The car lights delicately illuminate them standing in the water. The trees wave slightly from a breeze.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

James and Meredith sit in the Plymouth; Meredith is driving. She is smiling while playing with her ring.

JAMES
How did you know where I was?

MEREDITH
Your mom told me what happened at
the lake.
(beat)
And a couple of friends mentioned
it too...

A silence fills the car.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

James enters through the front door and hugs his mother. She is tearful, yet happy.

BARBARA EVANS
So Meredith told you already?
(beat)
We were all so happy to hear.

She pats a handkerchief gently across her face and smiles again.

BARBARA EVANS
He'll be back soon now.
(beat)
Very soon.

Charles comes into the room and nods at James. He starts shuffling through a drawer.

James walks off toward the hallway.

CHARLES EVANS (O.S.)
Hey has anyone seen my gun? It was
right next to my lighter.

BARBARA EVANS (O.S.)
That's not important right now,
Charles.

James looks at the picture frame of his family. Richard smiles down at him.

BARBARA EVANS (O.S.)
I think we can start planning for
the wedding now. With the
engagement happening so soon before
he left we didn't get a chance.

A firm hand grabs James by the arm. He turns. Charles Evans is inches from his face.

CHARLES EVANS
I don't want you acting like the
women out there, boy. Do you
understand?

They look at each other with hardened expressions for a moment. James pushes his father's hand from his arm.

JAMES
I understand completely.

CHARLES EVANS
Good. We don't know when or if he
is coming back. He's alive, that's
all we know.
(beat)
He a god damn POW not in some
hospital like you were...

James walks past Charles, bumping him with his shoulder. He turns to face his father again.

JAMES

I think I may know better than you,
too.

Charles laughs heartily and claps James on the back as he passes him back into the living room.

CHARLES EVANS

Sure you do! Fightin' where again?

James stiffens and stands his ground.

JAMES

80th won the Ardennes.

CHARLES EVANS

You sound like a fucking Nazi when
you say it like that!

Charles walks into the living room, James only a few feet behind.

BARBARA EVANS

Don't say things like that,
Charles! It's not right.

Barbara and Meredith go back to chatting about the wedding while Charles takes a seat with his newspaper.

James watches silently from the doorway.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

James peeks out the door of the kitchen to the living room. It is empty.

He adjusts a sleek black ROTARY PHONE against his ear and ducks back into the kitchen.

JAMES

Yes. I'm here.

(beat)

I wanted to inquire about a U.S.
soldier that was at a Belgium
medical base.

(beat)

I don't know his service number.

(beat)

No. I wouldn't be able to guess.

James wraps the phone cord around his finger as he listens intently.

JAMES

He was in the 84th division. I'm almost certain.

(beat)

Name? His or mine?

(beat)

Right. Parne. Neil Parne.

(beat)

He was there for burns.

James peeks outside the door again. His father is walking around the living room, seemingly looking for a newspaper. He quickly closes the door behind him and spins with the phone farther into the kitchen.

JAMES

(whispers)

No information?

(beat)

If you hear anything new can you please call this number?

(beat)

Thank you.

James hangs up the phone.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Meredith drops James off outside the brick building.

MEREDITH

Do you want me to pick you up in an hour?

JAMES

Sounds great.

The two trade warm smiles and Meredith drives off; James waves.

James stops in front of the brick building. He jumps back when the door opens before him.

William walks out and smiles mischievously. Dr. Grath holds the door open and shakes William's hand.

DR. GRATH

It was nice to meet you again, William.

WILLIAM

Hey James-ey, chance seeing you here.

William waves and walks off down the road.

James questioningly looks at the doctor as he follows him into the building.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The doctor begins making tea and sits across from James.

DR. GRATH

You look well today.

JAMES

I feel much better.

DR. GRATH

You slept last night then?

JAMES

I haven't slept that hard for a long time.

DR. GRATH

After the incident at the lake I didn't expect such a fast turn-around.

JAMES

We learned that Richard is alive. A POW, but alive.

DR. GRATH

I did hear about that. Congratulations! How are you feeling about it?

JAMES

Like I said, I slept well last night.

The doctor finishes preparing his tea; the whistling teapot fills the silence.

JAMES

How do you know William?

DR. GRATH

I met him at your party.

(beat)

He actually came to talk to me
about you.

JAMES

What did he say?

DR. GRATH

William seems to think you would do
well back at school. Now I wouldn't
want to push you to do anything you
don't want to though.

JAMES

I'm a bit excited about the idea.

Dr. Grath smiles.

DR. GRATH

It might go against some of our
progress. But I understand why you
may want to. But...good. That's
really good, James.

JAMES

I feel like I need to start
something, keep myself busy.

DR. GRATH

Of course.

He brings his chair closer to James.

DR. GRATH

But I want you to remember, I'm
still here for you if you need me.
I'm here to help you through
everything.

JAMES

I know.

James leans in closer to Dr. Grath.

JAMES

I was also wondering if I could ask
you another favor as well.

DR. GRATH

Yes?

JAMES

The US military set up this between us. So you must know someone you can ask.

DR. GRATH

About?

JAMES

There was a soldier I met. 84th Infantry. His name was Neil Parne. I wanted to see if he ever made it back home.

Dr. Grath claps his hands together, nearly spilling his tea.

DR. GRATH

I greatly appreciate you coming to me like this, James.

(beat)

Of course I'll look into it for you.

James smiles and sits back in his chair, content.

EXT. COLLEGE (SUMMER) - DAY

James parks a rusty red truck outside of a building. He steps out, enjoying a thin breeze with books in hand. He no longer has a cast on his leg.

The entire campus before him looks green and alive, with bright flowers and neatly trimmed grass.

William jogs down the steps to greet him.

WILLIAM

I'm so happy you're doing this.

JAMES

I'm happy about it too.

They start to walk through the campus.

WILLIAM

Don't be nervous, think about it like a trial run. Summer study is a lot easier and about a tenth of the people are here.

William motions to James' books.

WILLIAM
What are those?

JAMES
Um...

WILLIAM
You're already studying? Trying to
make me look bad?

William laughs and messes up James' hair.

INT. CAMPUS BUILDING - DAY

James and William stop outside of a classroom.

WILLIAM
Here we are.

JAMES
You're not going in?

WILLIAM
Not this class. I'm working in a
lab this summer.

James hesitates before entering.

WILLIAM
Hey, you should come down to the
lab after class. You might be
interested. It'd be fun.

JAMES
Maybe...

WILLIAM
Great! See you then. 34C.

William claps him on the back and walks down the hallway.

James walks into the classroom and looks around at the
filled desks. The door closes behind him; he jumps.

MEDIUM: THROUGH WINDOW IN DOOR

James takes a seat and organizes his books. A portly
gray-haired professor walks in.

INT. CAMPUS BUILDING - LATER

Students file out of the classroom. James shuffles along with them.

JAMES
(to student)
You wouldn't happen to know where
34C is, would you?

The student gives him a questioning look and walks away.

JAMES
(to another student)
Please? Would you know-
(to third student)
Excuse me?

STUDENT
It's in the basement.

JAMES
Thanks!

The rest of the students shuffle off down the hallway.

James looks around, suddenly very alone.

INT. CAMPUS BUILDING BASEMENT - DAY

James slowly walks down a hallway, checking the numbers as he goes.

He stops at one numbered 34C and hesitantly knocks at the door.

A man immediately opens the door. SCHRUB, a short balding man in his twenties with glasses.

JAMES
Um. Hi, I'm here to-

SCHRUB
Oh yes, yes of course. Guys!

He aggressively pulls James into the room.

INT. CAMPUS LAB - DAY

SCHRUB

We know why you're here, and we're
happy to have you.

Two men approach him: LEOVITZ and JOHNSON. Along with Schrub they surround James and force him to sit in a chair. Leovitz, dark hair and a long face. Johnson, unrecognizably average.

JAMES

I don't know-

LEOVITZ

Like he said, we're happy to have
you. Now your name and insurance
provider are...?

William runs from a corner of the lab looking mildly worried.

WILLIAM

Gentleman, try not to scare him
off. This is my friend, James, I
told you about. He's just here to
look around.

They look at William questioningly.

SCHRUB

I thought you said-

WILLIAM

I said he'll look around before
agreeing to anything.

William glares at them all and they scatter. He helps James up from his seat and they walk through the lab.

WILLIAM

Don't mind them. New people don't
come into the lab often.

A rat squeaks loudly as they pass. James jumps.

WILLIAM

Don't mind him either. He does that
a lot.

William sits down at a desk in the back and motions for James to sit down next to him.

WILLIAM
How was your class?

JAMES
Slow. But interesting.

Schrub, Leovitz, and Johnson watch in the distance.

JAMES
What was all that about?

WILLIAM
I'm so sorry. I really didn't mean
for them to bring all that up.

JAMES
And?

WILLIAM
And... I may have mentioned to them
that you might want to spend some
time in the lab. It doesn't pay
much, but it's fun.

JAMES
...maybe. This might be all
starting a little soon.

WILLIAM
I completely understand.

William glares at the men staring.

WILLIAM
I meant to mention it in a couple
weeks. Not today. Forget it though.
I just thought you might want to
keep busy.

JAMES
Oh I do!

WILLIAM
So you want to do it then?

JAMES
Maybe...

William stands up abruptly and motions the three other men
over.

WILLIAM
That's great news!

Johnson hands James a white LAB COAT.

They all lead James around the room. A large foam-padded box sits in one of the corners.

WILLIAM
That's the isolation chamber. Sound and light deprivation, fun stuff.

LEOVITZ
I sometimes like to take naps in there.

William punches Leovitz in the arm.

They walk farther; dozens of cages of white rats fill a small side room.

WILLIAM
And these are all Schrub's favorites. Every single one.

SCHRUB
They're just hungry, don't mind.

JAMES
And what are you studying here exactly?

They all trade glances.

WILLIAM
A variety of aversive reactions. Really breaking edge stuff for psychology.

Leovitz laughs.

INT. CAMPUS BUILDING - DAY

A crowd of students leave the classroom. James comes out last.

William is waiting for him and pulls him aside.

WILLIAM
Wanna have some fun?

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

James, William, Scrub, Leovitz and Johnson are sitting around a table eating and drinking.

WILLIAM

What I'm saying is that they just won't be able to make the playoffs. There isn't a chance at this point.

LEOVITZ

Saying it doesn't make it true. You know as well as I that they have two more games to turn things around.

WILLIAM

And then a miracle!

LEOVITZ

And then an impossible miracle!

The entire table laughs.

LEOVITZ

So James, you haven't told us anything. You're one of the first soldiers back. Come on, tell us some interesting stories.

They all lean in, waiting for James to reply.

JAMES

You don't know anyone that's back yet?

JOHNSON

Not anyone whole, without bits and pieces missing.

WILLIAM

I don't know if we should be ask-

SCHRUB

What was it like the first time you killed someone?

JAMES

I don't wanna talk about it.

WILLIAM

Drop it guys.

William pushes another drink towards James.

WILLIAM
Schrub was just joking, weren't
you?

SCHRUB
No I wasn't. I wanna know!

LEOVITZ
Was it hard the first time? Did it
get easier after?

James is clearly uncomfortable.

JAMES
How do you know I even killed
anyone?

They all laugh.

SCHRUB
Well, you're alive.

They go back to eating and drinking.

LEOVITZ
Do you see things sometimes?

JAMES
See things?

Leovitz waves his hands in front of his face.

LEOVITZ
Yea, my cousin says he sees things.
Scary things. Half the time he
isn't even sure he's even home.

JOHNSON
Is he one of the ones with pieces
missing?

LEOVITZ
(laughs)
Shut up!

JOHNSON
Maybe a piece of his brain.

SCHRUB
More likely his sanity.

William watches James closely. James is trying to casually
laugh along with the others.

A waitress comes to their table and drops a tray of DRINKS all over James from behind.

He falls to the ground and screams.

William is at his side in an instant.

WILLIAM

James?

WAITRESS

I'm so sorry. I'll get you a towel.

James closes his eyes and bites down on his lip, hard. He regains his breathing after a few moments.

JAMES

Oh it's fine, I'm fine.

James pulls himself up and sits back down in a chair.

JAMES

Boy, was that cold.

Leovitz slams his hand down on the table playfully.

LEOVITZ

ANOTHER ROUND!

The waitress comes back with a towel and another round of drinks.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY (LATER)

Everyone is getting up from the table and heading to the car.

SCHRUB

So will we see you around tomorrow?

JAMES

Probably...

WILLIAM

I'll just be a sec.

William runs back to the restaurant. He checks to see that James isn't watching him.

William hands the waitress extra money and winks.

WILLIAM
Coming!

William jogs back to the car. James is sitting in the passenger seat. William smiles.

WILLIAM
I'm really happy you're back,
James.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

James, Meredith, Barbara, and Charles sit eating dinner.

BARBARA EVANS
How was school today?

JAMES
Good.

CHARLES EVANS
Learning something useful I hope,
for all the time you spend there.

BARBARA EVANS
That's not the point, Charles.

CHARLES EVANS
Of course it's the point. He seems
healthy enough in the head. He
could be helping me in the shop.

BARBARA EVANS
Charles!

JAMES
I actually spent some more time
with the guys in the lab today.
William's friends.

Meredith straightens up at the name.

MEREDITH
William?

JAMES
Yep.

BARBARA EVANS
What a nice boy. I like him.

CHARLES EVANS
So, you'll work for him, but not
for me in the shop?

JAMES
I'll work WITH them. And I'm just
helping them out.

MEREDITH
What are they studying?

CHARLES EVANS
Working in a dress you mean.

JAMES
It's a lab coat.

CHARLES EVANS
If a man has to wear all white to
work it doesn't seem like much of a
job for a man.

BARBARA EVANS
I'm sure Richard will give you a
hand around the shop when he gets
back.

JAMES
You're not paying for any of this,
remember? I earned it.

CHARLES EVANS
My taxes are surely paying for all
that 'education'. For the million
that come back too! And don't you
forget those clothes on your back.

JAMES
MY SERVICE IS PAYING FOR MY
EDUCATION!

CHARLES EVANS
YOUR SERVICE WHERE?

BARBARA EVANS
Please!

Charles slams his plate on the table and leaves the room.

EXT. PATIO - NIGHT

James is relaxing, sitting in a worn-out beach chair.

Meredith comes outside and sits next to him.

JAMES
Sorry about dinner.

MEREDITH
It happens. I understand.

She hands him a plate of desert.

JAMES
How soon will the wedding be once
Richard comes back?

MEREDITH
You know you don't have to talk to
me like that.

JAMES
Huh?

MEREDITH
I know he's not safe yet. But I try
to stay positive for your mom, like
you do.

JAMES
If anyone can get out of it safely
it's Richard. Right?

They sit in silence for a moment.

MEREDITH
You said you were hanging out with
William and the guys at the lab.

JAMES
Yep.

MEREDITH
I think you should be careful.

JAMES
What do you mean?

MEREDITH
Do you trust them?

JAMES
I trust William. I don't know the
others very well yet.

MEREDITH
I just think you should be careful.
They might be using you.

JAMES
You don't have to worry about me.

James reaches across the table and tenderly pats her hand.

MEREDITH
I want to.
(beat)
Just be careful. For me, okay?

James smiles and nods.

INT. CAMPUS BUILDING BASEMENT - DAY

James walks down the hallway and enters the lab.

INT. CAMPUS LAB - DAY

James is greeted by everyone in the lab.

WILLIAM
Ready to be put to work?

Schrub hands him a lab coat; James smiles.

JAMES
Very!

CUT TO:

James and Johnson clean out rat cages. They are laughing and
having a good time.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

James is playing a game of checkers with Meredith.

JAMES
Checkmate.

They laugh.

MEREDITH

Wrong game.

JAMES

Not if I'm positive I'm going to win.

MEREDITH

You've never beaten me before. Why are you so certain this time?

James defiantly moves a piece, grinning.

JAMES

Because: CHECKMATE!

Barbara comes into the room and pulls Meredith away from the game.

BARBARA EVANS

I have some lovely new fabric swatches for you to look at.

INT. CAMPUS LAB - DAY

James and William cheer wildly as rats run through a maze.

Schrub and Leovitz shout in the background, as Johnson waits at the finish line.

INT. HARDWARE SHOP - DAY

Dozens of greasy metal pieces and dusty drawers line the small room.

James is cleaning the counter, his hands black with grease.

A bell attached to the front door rings, catching James' attention. Meredith walks in, a tupperware container under her arm.

JAMES

Meredith! What brings you around?

MEREDITH

Your mother sent me over with some lunch for you and your father.

James wipes his hands on his apron before reaching for the food.

Meredith pulls the container back and looks him over with a smirk.

MEREDITH
You're looking more and more like
your dad you know.

JAMES
(laughs)
Oh don't say that!

He looks over his shoulder to see if his father heard from the back office.

JAMES
Really don't.

MEREDITH
It must be the clothes. I didn't
realize you traded the lab coat in
for an apron. Cooking much?

JAMES
Very funny... speaking of.

James takes the Tupperware container and looks inside, his nose turns up at the food.

MEREDITH
Satisfactory?

JAMES
Egg salad sandwiches. I can't say
they aren't consistent.

James puts the container on the counter and wipes more grease off his hands.

JAMES
How's Ma'?

MEREDITH
She's currently insisting Richard
will like roses more than lilies.
So you tell me.

JAMES
I don't think he could tell the two
apart.

MEREDITH
That's what I said!

James looks at the back office again.

JAMES
Wanna get some real food?

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

James and Meredith are eating.

JAMES
So how impatient are you about
Richard getting back?

MEREDITH
I thought we already talked about
this?

JAMES
I know you're trying to be rational
and unemotional about it. But I
know I'm out of my mind.

MEREDITH
Really?

JAMES
Of course! The last time I saw him
was in training. We were placed in
different infantries. And it's been
almost three years since he dragged
me down to that recruiting station.

MEREDITH
Your dad must have loved that!

JAMES
It was as much Richard's idea as my
father's!

MEREDITH
Really?

JAMES
They both told me how good it would
be for me. Ya' know.

MEREDITH
And your mother?

JAMES
She was so angry at them she didn't
cook anything for a week.

MEREDITH
A pity for the egg salad!

They laugh.

MEREDITH
So how's the lab work?

JAMES
You mean cleaning out rat cages?
It's fun.
(beat)
Everything's really good actually.

He smiles.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

JAMES
(angry)
What do you mean?

James sits across from Dr. Grath. He is clearly distressed.

DR. GRATH
I don't want this to affect our
progress. This isn't more than a
speed bump.

JAMES
(hysterical)
A speed bump?

DR. GRATH
I know this is difficult to take
in. But I understand. The war
leveled your whole life and how you
see the world. But that's the past.
And the people and places of that
time have to be forgotten.

JAMES
It doesn't make any sense...

James hides his face in his hands.

DR. GRATH
Let me give you something new. It
might help control what you are
feeling-

JAMES

No!

James runs out of the room.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

James stumbles out of the building. He squints at the bright sun and covers his eyes in desperation.

William is sitting on his car right outside the building. He stands up when he sees James. He notices something is wrong.

WILLIAM

James? Are you okay, buddy?

William grabs James and stops him. James clutches his head.

WILLIAM

Come with me. I'll get you home.

William leads him to the passenger seat of the car. James doesn't resist.

William gets in the driver's seat.

INT. CAR - DAY

WILLIAM

I just came to see if you were free.

James hides his face in his hands. He kicks the dashboard in front of him violently.

WILLIAM

Calm down!

James breaths deeply, trying to calm himself. He looks at the building. Dr. Grath comes out the front door.

JAMES

Could you drive? Please, now.

William drives away quickly.

WILLIAM

What's happening?

JAMES
He shouldn't be dead.

WILLIAM
Did something happen to Richard?

JAMES
No.

WILLIAM
Who?

JAMES
He was fine. Why is he dead? He was fine, he was fine.

WILLIAM
WHO?

JAMES
No one who matters to you.
(beat)
To many people keep dying and not coming back and I'm here for no reason at all.

WILLIAM
I don't know who this is, but you matter to me James. What you are going through matters to me. And I can help.

James wipes his messy tear-stained face.

JAMES
Everyone seems to think they can help, or understand.

William laughs to ease the moment.

WILLIAM
I'm not most people.

James hesitates.

JAMES
Someone I knew died. He was fine and should've been home.
(beat)
Richard is off God knows fucking where, dead or alive. Neil is dead. Half the fucking country may well as be dead and I'm here sitting on
(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)
my ass wondering how I'm still
breathing every morning when I
can't get out of bed.

WILLIAM
What was wrong with him?

JAMES
What?

WILLIAM
Your friend, Neil. What killed him.

JAMES
He was burned.

WILLIAM
That's a painful way to go.

JAMES
Months of pain, but he should've
been better. Or at least be better
than me. More alive than me.

WILLIAM
I understand how hard this must be
for you.

JAMES
Really?

James laughs.

JAMES
You know, I was terrified of him
when I first saw him. He saved my
ass a couple times too when I went
crazy at the hospital. Too many
times for my own good.

William straightens in his seat.

WILLIAM
What were you scared of?

JAMES
His burns. At first I couldn't even
look at him without remembering
some horrible shit I had seen.

WILLIAM
Like what?

JAMES
You wouldn't get it. I can't even
light a match these days.

William pulls up in front of James' house.

WILLIAM
Here we are.

William pats James hard on the back and smiles warmly.

JAMES
I appreciate the ride.

WILLIAM
Don't mention it. If you need
anything don't be afraid to ask.

James gets out of the car.

WILLIAM
And I better be seeing you in the
lab on Monday!

JAMES
I'll try.

James walks up to the house. William watches with a
mischievous smile.

INT. CAMPUS LAB, SIDE ROOM - DAY

Schrub shows James the rat lab.

SCHRUB
These little guys may be a little
nippy, but they're pretty friendly
after they've gotten their food.

JAMES
And so you want me to feed them?

SCHRUB
Nope, not today. Just changing
their water.

William pokes his head in through the door.

WILLIAM
Schrub, I need you for a minute.

SCHRUB
(to James)
You think you got it?

JAMES
I think so.

WILLIAM
Just call if you need anything.

William and Schrub leave the room.

James starts to refill the water canisters in the cages.

When he is changing one of the bottles, a rat catches his attention. It is hiding in the back of the cage and shaking.

James carefully picks up the rat and looks at it; it is covered in thinly healed scars.

The rat bites James' thumb. He drops the animal and his finger starts to bleed.

JAMES
SHIT!

He tries to catch the rat.

He hears a loud SCREAM from the next room. James runs out to see what it is.

INT. CAMPUS LAB - DAY

James runs into the main room. The men are hurriedly running around in the back corner.

Smoke begins to fill the room and James catches sight of flames.

He slowly walks towards it, almost numb to the sight.

FLASHBACK - EXT. FIELD (SUMMER 1943) - DAY

James sees a burning fire off in the distance. He slowly approaches the flames, American soldiers at his side.

The fire licks the sky, its smoke consuming the immediate area.

BACK TO SCENE

James walks closer to the flames in the lab. He eyes are red and swollen.

FLASHBACK - EXT. FIELD (SUMMER 1943) - DAY

James begins to gag. The soldiers closest to the fire run away. James closes in. The fire is consuming a pile of bodies 10 feet tall. Flickering and charred unnamed faces.

He stumbles and falls backwards, digging desperately at the dirt around him to get away.

BACK TO SCENE

James falls to the ground, with his back to a desk.

William puts out the last remaining flames with a FIRE EXTINGUISHER.

James tries to regain his balance but falls to the floor again. He throws up.

JOHNSON

We got it!

William crouches by James' side.

WILLIAM

James?

EXT. HOUSE - DUSK

William drops James off at his house and watches him walk up the pathway.

William speeds away.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

James walks in looking shaken.

Barbara runs to the door and hugs him. Charles and Meredith watch without standing.

BARBARA EVANS

Where were you? You should've called.

CHARLES EVANS

You shouldn't have done that to your mother. I've been hearing about it for the last hour.

JAMES

There was just a problem at the lab.

BARBARA EVANS

A problem?

JAMES

A fire.

BARBARA EVANS

Oh I hope no one was hurt.

JAMES

Everyone was fine. Someone just threw a cigarette into a trash bin with paper. It was perfectly safe.

BARBARA EVANS

Oh I'm so glad.

Meredith looks at him skeptically.

MEREDITH

Why would someone do that?

JAMES

Huh?

MEREDITH

It just doesn't sound like a mistake someone would make.

JAMES

I don't know...

BARBARA EVANS

Oh hush. He's fine, that's all that matters.

CHARLES EVANS

Can everyone just be quiet while I finish the game!

JAMES

I'm going to bed.

James walks off to his room.

BARBARA EVANS

Oh, James.

James, frustrated, stops and turns.

BARBARA EVANS

Dr. Grath called again today. He says you missed your last meeting.

JAMES

I was busy. I'll make sure to go to my next one.

James walks off again quickly.

INT. BEDROOM - DUSK

James throws himself onto the bed. He fidgets, unable to get comfortable. Thin rays of light coming from the window make it impossible for him to sleep.

James opens his eyes to see Meredith standing in the doorway. The light from the living room illuminates her.

MEREDITH

I don't believe you about the fire, ya' know.

JAMES

You don't think there was one?

MEREDITH

I don't think it was an accident.

JAMES

I have no clue what you're talking about.

She comes and sits on the side of his bed. James sits up.

MEREDITH

Those guys aren't good for you.

JAMES

You're saying they started a fire on purpose? Why would they do that?

MEREDITH

I don't know.

Silence.

JAMES

How's the flower situation going?

MEREDITH
We decided on roses.

JAMES
I'm very happy for the two of you.

Meredith punches him in the shoulder.

MEREDITH
I'm serious though.

JAMES
Fine.

MEREDITH
So you'll watch your back then?

JAMES
But you're watching it so nicely.

She punches him again in the shoulder.

JAMES
Fine! Fine!

INT. CAMPUS BUILDING - DAY

James leaves his classroom and walks through the building.
He exits through the front door.

EXT. COLLEGE - DAY

James walks through the campus. He hears FOOTSTEPS running
behind him but doesn't turn.

WILLIAM (O.S.)
James! James, wait up!

William catches up to him.

WILLIAM
James, where have you been?

JAMES
Just busy...

WILLIAM
You haven't been down in the lab in
a couple days. We were worried.

JAMES

Really?

WILLIAM

Of course! You're our friend.

James smiles at the comment.

WILLIAM

Come on, are you coming back around today?

JAMES

Probably not.

William sits down on a nearby bench and gestures James to do the same.

WILLIAM

What about the races though? You're only ahead by a little bit. No reason to get cocky now!

JAMES

My dad's just having me work around the shop more.

WILLIAM

If it was the fire, forget it! It was just an accident, you know that.

JAMES

It's not the fire.

WILLIAM

How you reacted to the fire?

JAMES

Maybe a little bit.

WILLIAM

Wanna talk about it. You know you can tell me. Did you see something?

JAMES

I'm serious, I really don't wanna talk about it.

WILLIAM

Come on, it may surprise you but I know plenty about shell shock.

James turns.

JAMES
(sarcastically)
Yea, I'm sure you know all about
it.

WILLIAM
I do. Leovitz brought his cousin by
the lab a few times...

James doesn't respond.

WILLIAM
Could I ask you something personal?

JAMES
...sure.

WILLIAM
I was there with you at the lake.
I'm dying to know what you saw. I
just want some idea.

JAMES
I don't think-

WILLIAM
I think you owe it to me. Tell me
exactly what it was like. A memory?
A feeling? I want to know so I can
help you.

JAMES
I've been getting better you know.

WILLIAM
I know. But you owe me. You could
have hurt someone if I hadn't
stopped you.

JAMES
I don't know if-

WILLIAM
Tell me everything. Where were you?
Was it like a memory?

James chokes on his words.

JAMES
It... um... was something I had
seen... and felt... while I was
away.

WILLIAM
What do you think triggered it?

JAMES
Noise sometimes...

WILLIAM
And fire too, right?

JAMES
Yes.

WILLIAM
Where was it exactly, what was the
memory like? Real?

James stares straight ahead as if frozen, and begins.

JAMES
It was right before Christmas. We
were catching up to an infantry
that had requested help. The snow
slowed us down. We got there too
late. We found them when crossing a
river. The water was frozen and
they were floating blue and bloated
on the surface...One was still
alive

FLASHBACK - EXT. RIVER (WINTER 1944) - DAY

James is pulled underneath the water.

JAMES (V.O.)
The Germans were waiting for us on
the other side.

A mess of shouting, gunshots, and blood are distorted
through a haze of water. James watches from below.

BACK TO SCENE

James turns to William, noticing he is writing everything
down.

WILLIAM
And how were you feeling?

JAMES
What are you doing?

William puts away his notebook, out of James' grasp.

WILLIAM
Don't you think it's interesting?
Don't you think it's important to
understand?

JAMES
I think it's torture.

James stands up to leave.

WILLIAM
Wait. Wait, I'm sorry. I didn't
mean to offend you... But you can
trust me. You know you can, right?

JAMES
Yea, I know.

WILLIAM
I'm here to talk if you ever want
to for any reason.
(beat)
And the guys and I really want you
back. Please?

JAMES
Maybe.

WILLIAM
Come on. I know you don't want to
be hanging around in that greasy
shop all day.

William pats James on the back and starts to walk away.

WILLIAM
We'll see you tomorrow then! Leave
the work in the shop for Richard
when he gets back!

INT. CAMPUS LAB - DAY

PAN: LAB

The lights are off. The camera drifts past beakers and lab
benches illuminated in an eerie gray glow.

LEOVITZ (O.S.)
I'm telling you, it's like a
trance.

SCHRUB (O.S.)
How can you tell?

JOHNSON (O.S.)
He's not blinking.

A muffled noise of someone throwing up is heard.

WILLIAM (O.S.)
(muffled recording)
James? James are you okay?

LEOVITZ (O.S.)
Awe, not again. How many times do
we have to watch that part?

William, Schrub, Leovitz, and Johnson are watching a
PROJECTION on the wall.

A gray image of James on the floor is paused on the wall. It
is apparent that they recorded the incident with the fire.

SCHRUB
Until we understand what is
happening exactly in his head.

LEOVITZ
William's gonna know more than
anyone.

William laughs and looks up from a heavily written in
notebook.

WILLIAM
I think he knows better than we do.

JOHNSON
So what are we doing here then?

WILLIAM
Play it again!

Johnson sets up the projector again and starts the strip.

On the wall the film begins again and we see the entire
scene play out.

JAMES (O.S.)
Guys?

The lab door slowly opens and William jumps from his seat,
flipping on the lights.

Johnson quickly shuts off the projector.

James stares at them, confused.

WILLIAM
James is back!

William runs to his side and puts his arm around him, leading him further into the lab.

WILLIAM
Just watching some case studies through lunch.

JAMES
Can I see them?

WILLIAM
And bore you to death?
(beat)
I think we have a different project in mind for you today.

EXT. COLLEGE - DAY

Meredith pulls up in a car, parks, and gets out. She ascends the steps of an academic building. She appears determined and headstrong.

INT. CAMPUS BUILDING BASEMENT - DAY

Meredith walks down the hallway. She stops at room 34C and knocks.

Schrub opens the door; he appears surprised.

SCHRUB
Can... can I help you?

MEREDITH
Is William here? William.

Schrub gestures to someone behind him and closes the door slightly.

SCHRUB
(stuttering)
William, there's a girl here to see you.

William comes to the door smiling, his expression drops upon seeing her.

WILLIAM
Meredith!
(to Schrub)
I'll take this.

William closes the door behind him, a phony grin coming to his face.

WILLIAM
What can I help you with?

MEREDITH
You know why I'm here.

WILLIAM
I can't think of any reason-

MEREDITH
William, I know what you are doing!

WILLIAM
What do you mean?

MEREDITH
The waitress you paid to pour drinks on him was a friend of mine. I put the pieces together.

WILLIAM
And you think you're so smart.

MEREDITH
I don't know what you think you're doing to him all the time - if it's a prank, initiation, or if you think there's some god-damn moral reason behind it.
(beat)
But he's not your lab-rat.

WILLIAM
He's my friend. And I'm a lot closer to him than you are. What makes you think I would ever hurt him?

MEREDITH
He was getting better before all this. Whatever you're doing to him is not helping.

WILLIAM

He wasn't getting better. He's not himself; he's completely lost his sanity. If we can understand it we might be able to help him.

MEREDITH

You're torturing him! And in no way do I believe you are doing this to help him.

WILLIAM

Then why?

MEREDITH

To help yourself!

WILLIAM

He'll be fine. He's doing fine.

Meredith looks concerned.

MEREDITH

He's here right now, isn't he?

WILLIAM

I didn't say that.

MEREDITH

Isn't he!

Meredith pushes past William and through the lab door.

INT. CAMPUS LAB - DAY

Meredith runs into the room, William at her heels. Johnson, Schrub, and Leovitz crowd around the door to the isolation chamber and stare at her.

MEREDITH

Where is he?

WILLIAM

I told you he isn't here.

Meredith runs to the door and throws it open. James is curled up the corner. He looks up from the dark room, his eyes red.

MEREDITH

God, what did they do to you?

Meredith runs inside and wraps her arms around him.

WILLIAM
Just a little sensory deprivation.

MEREDITH
A little, really?

WILLIAM
It's proven to cause
hallucinations. We were trying to
understand what he was seeing.

Meredith helps him up. James' hands are torn up and bloody from scratches. She leads him out of the chamber. He is silently delirious.

MEREDITH
How long has he been in there?

WILLIAM
Just an hour or so. He's fine.

MEREDITH
Really? Does he look fine to you?

James leans on Meredith with most of his weight; he won't look anyone in the eye.

WILLIAM
You're fine. Right buddy?

William reaches to put a hand on James, but James flinches away.

MEREDITH
You have your answer.

She leads James out of the room.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

James sits across from Dr. Grath; his hands are heavily bandaged. The doctor looks at papers in a folder.

DR. GRATH
This seems to be a reoccurring
problem, James. If you do not tell
me what happened, there is nothing
I can do for you.

James looks at the ground, silent.

DR. GRATH
I thought you were getting better.
(beat)
You were fine when I saw you last
month.

JAMES
I thought it would get easier.

DR. GRATH
How so? With the pills? What is
making it harder for you?

JAMES
The people.

DR. GRATH
I see. William came by about you...
wanted to get in touch about
something.

JAMES
What did he talk to you about? Did
you tell him everything?

DR. GRATH
I would never talk to him about
confidential information.

James aggressively reaches for the folder, but the doctor
holds firm.

DR. GRATH
This is highly inappropriate,
James.

JAMES
What are you two doing together?
Did you plan all this?

DR. GRATH
I don't know what you are talking
about. And I do not understand this
behavior. I need to know what is
wrong.

JAMES
Everything.

DR.
Everything is fine, you can't seem
to accept or appreciate that.

(beat)

(MORE)

DR. (cont'd)
I'm fascinated by you, James. And I
know I understand what you are
going through.

James grabs for the folder again, causing the contents to
spill across the room.

DR. GRATH
STOP THIS!

The doctor eyes James warily and fixes his tie to regain
composure.

DR. GRATH
The US Military set up this service
for you and under my advisement it
will be ceased immediately.

JAMES
No, please.

DR. GRATH
You have nothing to be afraid of
James Evans. You going to have to
realize that soon enough. And
without my help.

JAMES
You don't understand-

DR. GRATH
I understand completely.

Dr. Grath opens the door for James to leave.

JAMES
I still need your help. Please, you
were the only one-

DR. GRATH
If you need further services you'll
have to find someone else.
(beat)
Now please leave my office.

James' face twists in anger. As he stands, he flips his
chair and stares down at the doctor. He throws a pile of
papers off a table and a mug across the room. It breaks the
window.

Papers fall around them like snow in an eerie silence.

He storms out.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

James wakes up suddenly, as if from a bad dream.

He is sweating uncontrollably, his fists clenched.

BARBARA EVANS (O.S.)
(whispers)
James? James?

James sees Barbara standing in the doorway.

BARBARA EVANS
James, the police are here to speak
with you about the incident that
happened today at Dr. Grath's
office.

INT. HARDWARE SHOP - DAY

James carries a pile of boxes from the back of the shop. His hands are lightly bandaged with grease stains on the wrappings. He looks like he hasn't slept in weeks.

Charles is reading his newspaper behind the counter.

CHARLES EVANS
I heard you walking around last
night a lot.

JAMES
I didn't sleep too well.

CHARLES EVANS
You should tell the doctor that.
You wandering around the house
keeps us all up.

JAMES
I don't see him anymore.

CHARLES EVANS
Really? I'm proud of you son! It
didn't seem right you going around
talking about your feelings.

James goes back to stacking a pile of boxes in the corner.

CHARLES EVANS
A little cowardice on the field
shouldn't be brought back home
anyway.

JAMES

Really that's what you think?

CHARLES EVANS

No need to get defensive about it, boy. People are starting to forget.

JAMES

You think you know so much?

James grabs his father by the collar and throws him to the counter. James grabs a nearby screwdriver and puts it to Charles' neck.

JAMES

You think you know so much? TELL ME!

Charles stutters in disbelief. James screams, spit flying everywhere.

JAMES

Every second of every miserable day over there plays in my head every moment. My hands and eyes are stained with blood that I can't get rid of. I clean my hands raw but the blood is still there.

(beat)

You know nothing about having dead memories haunt you. How the worst part of your life can appear before your eyes again and again in an instant. And everyone around you tells you you're safe. And all you can think about is tearing your skin off because of how much pain there is. Every time I close my eyes I see my dead friends and I wish it was me. And sometimes I wish it was you and every bloody person like you. Every person who doesn't understand.

His father looks horror struck, his face smeared with grease and spit. A thin stream of blood runs from where the screwdriver cut through skin.

James lets go of his father and throws his apron to the ground.

He leaves the shop, grabbing a bag of trash as he goes.

EXT. HARDWARE SHOP - DAY

James throws the trash into a dumpster. William walks down the alleyway towards him.

WILLIAM

James?

JAMES

What do you want?

WILLIAM

I just want to talk.

JAMES

I'm not interested. You can find another test subject.

James walks away; William grabs his arm. James quickly spins, stopping his fist and inch from William's face.

The two stare at each other in silence.

JAMES

You shoved me in and locked the door [U+2015] probably smiling the whole time.

WILLIAM

It wasn't like that. We needed you-

JAMES

I banged on the door.

WILLIAM

It's important work. You need to understand that.

JAMES

No. You need to understand that the next time I see you I won't stop myself.

James drops his clenched fist to his side and walks away.

As he makes his way down the alleyway he fixes the bandages on his hands.

EXT. HARDWARE SHOP - DAY

James storms out of the alleyway away from the hardware shop. A car screeches in front of him and stops. James bangs on the front hood.

James glares at the driver. It is Meredith. She looks awestruck and scared.

He turns away from the road and hurriedly walks off down the sidewalk.

Meredith follows him down the sidewalk slowly in the car and rolls down the window.

MEREDITH

James? What's wrong?

James hurries ahead of her, not turning to look.

MEREDITH

I didn't see you. Are you okay?

Meredith beeps the horn, frustrated. Others on the sidewalk turn to watch the commotion. James turns for a second, puts his hands in his pockets, and walks faster.

He turns at the entrance of a park, walking away from the road.

Meredith hastily parks the car and runs after him. She pulls off her shoes to catch up.

MEREDITH

Listen to me will you!

Meredith pulls at James' shoulder to stop him. He turns, his red eyes brimming with tears.

MEREDITH

James?

She hugs him close to her and walks him to a nearby tree. They sit.

Meredith dabs at his eyes with a handkerchief.

MEREDITH

What's wrong?

JAMES

This isn't the way it was all supposed to happen. I never should've left.

MEREDITH

No one should have. But you're
back.

James tears at the bandages on his hands, causing fresh cuts
over the healing scabs.

MEREDITH

STOP THIS!

Meredith grabs his hands forcefully, trying to stop him from
hurting himself.

James freezes and stares at Meredith, as if seeing her for
the first time. One of his bloody hands delicately reaches
for her cheek. It makes a soft red streak on her face. He
pulls her face close to his.

JAMES

I envy you, and everything you have
that I don't. I envy Richard, and
everything he gets to come home to.

MEREDITH

I'm here for you too... You have to
understand that by now, James.

JAMES

I can't do this anymore, Meredith.
I just want to go to sleep and not
wake up.

They stare at each other in silence. She clasps her hand in
his. They share a long and comforting look.

Nearly a kiss.

James crumples into her chest. She holds him close. James
whimpers and sobs.

JAMES

I'm so...tired.

Meredith rocks him softly, cradling his upper body. She
lays her red-streaked cheek against his head and holds
tightly, comfortably.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

James and Meredith weave through the huge crowd of people sitting in the grass.

Barbara waves them over from where she and Charles are sitting.

MEREDITH

This'll be fun!

(beat)

It's good you're getting out of the house some more.

They lay out a towel on the ground and sit down.

JAMES

It is nice to get out sometimes.

Children run past them waving sparklers and American flags.

Meredith watches James silently as they sit together.

MEREDITH

Happy July 4th, soldier.

She ruffles his hair and he laughs.

MEREDITH

How are your hands healing?

JAMES

Slowly. The pain is going away.

Barbara hands them a container full of food.

JAMES

Let me guess-

BARBARA EVANS

Oh don't start with that again, James!

Meredith and James trade glances before laughing.

The fireworks start, echoing throughout the park like gunshots.

James closes his eyes for a moment, his fists clenched.

When he opens his eyes Meredith is watching him again, concerned.

MEREDITH

Are you gonna be okay being here?

JAMES

It's important that I can be.

MEREDITH

I'm proud of you then!

James points to the sky.

JAMES

But if one of those comes for me
I'm allowed to scream!

James pretends to jump back at the next bang. Red shimmers explode and fall from the dark black sky. She punches him playfully.

MEREDITH

Oh stop!

Another child runs by with poppers. Meredith jumps and laughs at herself.

MEREDITH

That even scared me!

JAMES

(playfully)

That's cause you aren't a soldier!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

James is sitting in the middle of a crowded classroom. He is busily taking notes. His hands, although without bandages, have white streaks of scars. His hair has also grown much longer.

Outside the window, the trees have begun changing colors, adding a warm orange glow to the room.

A tall thin man lectures at the front. William sits in the back of the room.

A knock on the door interrupts the professor's lecture. He is handed a folded note.

PROFESSOR

James Evans.

James looks up from his notes, surprised. He walks up to the teacher.

PROFESSOR

(whispers)

Your mother called administration.
You have to go home immediately.

James goes back to the desk and hastily collects his belonging. The room is silent and staring, especially William.

James leaves the room.

INT. CAR - DAY

James is driving down a road lined with brightly colored autumn trees. He sees a dark black car parked in front of his house.

James parks his car further away and watches, his hands still rest on the steering wheel.

Two soldiers step out of the front of the car. James watches, his breath in his throat.

The back door of the car slowly opens and a thin man gets out with the help of the soldiers. James smiles, his eyes starting to redden.

The three men walk to the front door of the house.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

James leaves the car and runs up the front lawn. He passes two soldiers returning to their car and nods respectfully.

The front door is wide open and Barbara and Meredith are hugging a man.

After a moment, the soldier turns to James.

RICHARD, although smiling, is grotesquely thin and missing an arm.

James runs to him and surrounds his brother in a hug. Although older and taller, Richard's figure is practically hidden by James' embrace.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

PAN: ROOM

Two twin beds lay opposite each other. A thin stream of moonlight comes through the blinds to cast shadows on a PICTURE of young Richard and James together. Richard is wearing a coonskin hat and holding a wooden gun.

The camera drifts to James sleeping. A sudden unheard noise wakes him.

James looks to the bed beside him. It is empty.

Another shuffling NOISE is heard from outside the room.

James turns to see a figure, Richard, walking past the doorway. James gets out of bed and stands in the doorway.

Richard is pacing the living room.

James looks concerned but understanding. He goes back to bed, now unable to sleep himself.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

James walks through the living room towards the swinging door of the kitchen.

Charles Evans is sitting in a chair in front of the television. He looks up and nods at his son.

CHARLES EVANS

I wouldn't go in there if I was
you...

James stops to look at him questioningly before continuing.

CHARLES EVANS (O.S.)

Shame...

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

James walks through the swinging door. His brother is sitting at the table; Barbara is fawning over him.

BARBARA EVANS

You have to eat something...

James sits down at the table, opposite Richard.

BARBARA EVANS

Will you eat something at least,
James?

JAMES

Yea of course. Thanks!

Barbara slides a full plate of bacon, eggs, and toast in front of him. She goes back to the stove.

JAMES

Not sleeping well?

Richard looks up, distracted.

RICHARD

Huh?

JAMES

It's fine. I understand how hard it
must be to be back.

Richard nods silently and James goes back to eating.

A long moment of silence passes between them.

Barbara carries a plate of food to the living room for Charles.

JAMES

Psst.

James nudges Richard's foot under the table. Richard distractedly looks up again.

JAMES

Want some?

Richard shakes his head.

JAMES

Come on.

James pushes a thin piece of heavily buttered toast halfway across the table.

JAMES

I get it, I know. Just try a bite.
I was surprised by how much better
it made me feel.

Richard hesitates but reaches for the toast. He reaches with his stump of an arm and shamefully pulls back.

JAMES

When I was in the hospital, a lot of guys said they could still feel it there. Do you?

Richard nods.

James pushes his entire plate in front of Richard and eats the lone piece of toast himself.

JAMES

I see you looking at my bacon. You might not think you want it but your stomach has other ideas.

James walks away as Richard starts eating. He comes back with two glasses and a carton of orange juice.

He pours them each a glass, which Richard hastily grabs and swallows.

JAMES

I swear I had forgotten what good food and a full plate felt like when I came back.

RICHARD

Even at the hospital?

JAMES

Dad told you?

(Richard nods)

I swear. Hospital food tastes bad in every country. It must be a rule. Remember after you broke your leg and you had me eat the food for you for two days.

RICHARD

(laughs)

How was that?

JAMES

I still don't know if it was jello or peas.

Richard has nearly eaten the whole plate of food while James nibbles at the toast, watching him.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

James riffles through boxes. The attic is dim except for a small window.

He pulls a coonskin hat from a dusty box and smiles sadly.

A noise catches his attention and he walks to the window.

MEDIUM: WINDOW

Outside Richard is pacing the yard. He is visibly distressed.

Richard kicks at the ground until Charles comes through the back door.

CHARLES EVANS

Stop that! Stop that now or you'll
be the one reseeding it.

Charles slams the door behind him, leaving Richard standing stunned and motionless. He sits on the ground, hopeless. James watches on, concerned. He quickly packs up the boxes again and hurries downstairs.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

James mows the lawn.

CUT TO:

James throws grass seed on a large patch of dirt. The sun is beating down hard and James is sweating heavily. His shirt is unbuttoned and rolled up at the sleeves.

Charles watches James from the kitchen window momentarily. James notices.

He waters the newly laid seed and goes back inside.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

James walks down a hallway and passes by his bedroom.

Richard is sitting on the bed, his head resting in his hand.

JAMES

Wanna try to get some sleep,
Richard?

Richard doesn't answer and James continues past the doorway.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

James stands in the shower.

He brushes his hair off his forehead, clearly enjoying the water.

FLASHBACK - INT. TENT (1944) - DAY

A pale of water is thrown at James' near naked body. The water comes off his skin steaming, his eyes petrified and alert.

BACK TO SCENE

James gasps in the shower, barely holding his balance.

JAMES
(mumbling)
It's okay... okay.

James sits on the floor of the shower, the steam filling around him.

FLASHBACK - INT. TENT (1944) - DAY

James head is thrust into a bucket; air bubbles escape from his silently screaming mouth.

BACK TO SCENE

James stands up and his hand grasps desperately to shut off the water.

CUT TO:

James stands dripping on the sleek tile floor; he doesn't seem to notice the large puddle at his feet.

He gasps and clutches at dog tags that aren't there.

JAMES
Breathe. Just breathe.

James tries to calm himself; he balances his weight on the sink while staring at himself in the mirror.

He bites his lip, hard. His breathing, although raspy and choked, slows down.

A thin drop of blood falls from his lip.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

James walks through the hallway. He is neatly dressed and freshly washed, his hair still wet.

He passes by his room and stops outside the doorway. Richard is lying still in his bed, apparently sleeping.

James walks in and covers him affectionately with a blanket.

CHARLES EVANS (O.S.)

James?

James walks back out of the room and looks at Charles sitting on the couch watching television.

CHARLES EVANS

Have you seen Richard around?

James slowly closes the door of the bedroom, soundlessly.

He walks into the living room and sits on the couch.

JAMES

I think it'd be better to let him rest.

Charles pays him no mind.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

James stands at the sink cutting potatoes.

He watches Richard and Meredith on the patio. Richard rocks steadily back and forth while Meredith tries to comfort him.

Barbara is hurrying around the kitchen causing a commotion while preparing food.

BARBARA EVANS

Do you hear me James? James?

James looks away from the window and cuts his finger with the knife.

JAMES

Yea Ma'?

BARBARA EVANS

Not that thin. We want to still be able to taste the potato.

James wipes his bloody finger on his pants and looks back out the window.

Richard is wandering away from the patio.

Meredith walks in from outside, she gives a small sad smile to James.

MEREDITH

How can I help, Barbara?

BARBARA EVANS

I thought you wanted to stay with Richard?

MEREDITH

He seems to want to be alone for a bit.

BARBARA EVANS

In that case, help James with the potatoes. If he keeps doing them the way he is we won't have them done till breakfast.

Meredith nudges him playfully in front of the sink. They start cutting the potatoes together.

EXT. PATIO - DUSK

Barbara and Meredith clear dishes from a table on the patio. The sky has begun to glow brightly as the sun sets. A breeze makes the moment calm and genuine.

Richard is strolling near the outskirts of the property, drifting along the white picket fence.

James walks up to him.

JAMES

Hey Richard!

Richard nods his hello.

JAMES

What'd you think of dinner?

RICHARD

Good.

JAMES

Do you wanna know a secret?

Richard looks up from the ground for the first time. James motions him over so he can whisper in his ear.

JAMES

I made the potatoes.

RICHARD

(sarcastically)

There were potatoes?

Richard smiles privately to himself and then shies away again.

JAMES

Very funny!

James looks over to the house to see Meredith watching them. She looks concerned.

JAMES

You know mom's gonna bring out some drinks. Have you had her lemonade since being back?

RICHARD

Umm... no, I haven't.

JAMES

Or if you want a beer or something else-

RICHARD

I don't want anything.

JAMES

That's okay. If you want to we'll be right over there. If you need anything.

James shuffles back to the patio and sits down. He watches Richard. He seems to be reading a book, but paying more attention to his feet than the pages.

Meredith comes back outside holding two glasses.

MEREDITH

RICHARD! I brought you a drink.

Richard waves her off.

MEREDITH

James?

She gestures at the extra lemonade in her hand.

MEREDITH

Do you want some?

JAMES

I'd love it, thank you.

He smiles affectionately to calm her obvious dismay.

They sit silently sipping their drinks.

MEREDITH

What was it like over there?

(beat)

You never told me.

Meredith's gaze doesn't leave Richard.

JAMES

What do you want to know?

MEREDITH

I just don't get it. It doesn't sound so bad. I read about it all-

JAMES

It's not anything like the news.

MEREDITH

But he's not over there anymore, he's home. He's with me.

James hesitates.

JAMES

It doesn't end. It kinda follows you. As much as you want to make it all go away you can't.

MEREDITH

Do you want to forget?

JAMES

I want everything to go back to the way it was.

(beat)

Going over there every second was horrible. Really bad, the worst nightmare you can imagine. But

(MORE)

JAMES (cont'd)
that's war. Coming back home. It's
like torture. And everyone is
watching all the time. And only you
can feel the pain.

MEREDITH
And you think it's like that for
him too?

JAMES
I think it's worse for him. Worse
than I can imagine.

Meredith turns to James, her expression cold.

MEREDITH
I don't know what to do sometimes.
He's different you know?

JAMES
And I'm not?

MEREDITH
No, not in the same way. You're
different. You got stronger.

James drinks, not knowing what to say.

JAMES
(scoffs)
I can't imagine that coming from
you.

MEREDITH
I'm serious. I know how bad it was
like at first but at least you
fought against it. He seems to have
given up completely.

James looks sadly at Richard.

MEREDITH
You're like all the soldiers I see
on television. They're getting
medals and they're smart and brave
and strong. They aren't scared of
anything.

JAMES
And Richard?

MEREDITH

Richard's like the soldiers no one talks about. He's like a ghost.

JAMES

I'm so sorry, Meredith.

MEREDITH

Will he get better like you did?

Barbara walks out with extra glasses of lemonade. She sits down between Meredith and James.

BARBARA EVANS

Oh looks like you already got yours, James.

MEREDITH

Richard wasn't thirsty.

BARBARA EVANS

Charles! Come on! Your lemonade is gonna get hot.

Charles saunters back to the patio from inside the house.

CHARLES EVANS

Will someone get that boy back over here!

Meredith and James trade a glance.

INT. CAR - DAY

James drives up to the pharmacy and parks. Richard is sitting in the passenger seat.

JAMES

I'll be right back, okay?

Richard nods and hands James a prescription note.

JAMES

Your doctor's good?

RICHARD

He's helpful.

James comfortingly puts his hand on Richard's shoulder and exits the car.

INT. PHARMACY - DAY

James stands at the counter waiting for the prescription to be filled.

PHARMACIST
That will be eighty cents Mr.
Evans.

James pays.

JAMES
Thanks! Have a good day.

He leaves the store.

EXT. PHARMACY - DAY

James walks up to the car and sees it empty. Richard is gone.

He looks around desperately at the stores and sidewalks.

JAMES
RICHARD!

He starts running up and down the street calling his name.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

James turns the corner at the heart of town: a quaint plaza at the center.

James sees Richard sitting at the fountain. William sits next to Richard with his arm around him.

James runs over to the fountain.

WILLIAM
James, I was just...

James violently grabs William and drags him away from Richard. James pulls him to his feet by his collar and punches him in the face repeatedly. James lets William go and he falls backwards into the fountain.

James kneels in front of Richard, catching his breath.

JAMES
I want you to stay away from him,
okay?

Richard doesn't answer, awestruck.

James walks into the fountain and grabs William by his collar. His nose is bleeding profusely, staining the water around him.

JAMES

You will not go near him. You will
NOT even think about him. Do you
understand?

William smirks and James thrusts him under the water.

JAMES

If I see you near him again, I will
kill you.

James drops William back into the water. A small crowd has gathered. A herd of elderly men and window-shoppers.

JAMES

(to Richard)

Let's go.

James carefully pulls Richard to follow and they start walking up the sidewalk.

William manages to gain his balance in the fountain and shouts after them.

WILLIAM

JUT REMEMBER WHAT I SAID RICHARD!
REMEMBER MY OFFER!

INT. CAR - DAY

James gets in the car, slamming the door behind him.

Richard sits silently as James fumes.

JAMES

I don't want you to trust him. He's
just going to manipulate you.
(turns to Richard)
Do you understand?

RICHARD

Yes.

James takes his clenched hands from the steering wheel and tenderly touches the white scars covering them.

JAMES

Good.

They drive away.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Richard shuffles around the room, carefully arranging a stack of newspapers. He seems lost.

He looks out the front window and sees James and Meredith laughing together.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Richard runs up to Meredith and James, he is screaming.

JAMES

What's wrong?

Richard jumps on James and they scuffles on the ground.

James catches Richard by his throat and holds him to the ground with little trouble.

JAMES

WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

RICHARD

YOU!

Richard fights against James' hold on him with little success.

JAMES

Talk to me Richard? What's wrong,
tell me.

(to Meredith)

Go get Ma'.

Meredith runs into the house, clearly frightened.

James lowers his face next to Richard's, speaking slowly and softly.

JAMES

Now I'm going to let you go, but
you have to be calm.

James releases Richard, who crawls away desperately before standing up.

He glares at James and dusts the dirt from his pants.

RICHARD
Calm? You want me to be calm?

JAMES
I understand what you may be
feeling. I can help.

RICHARD
How? How can you help, James?

Richard grabs his head, whether from pain or distress.

JAMES
Just tell me.

RICHARD
Just stay away from my fiancé, stay
away from Meredith.

JAMES
(bewildered)
Is that what you think? No! No!
Nothing is happening. We're just
friends. With you gone we just
became friends. She helped me. Just
like the way I want to help you.

Richard, fuming, stomps back into the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Richard storms into the room, James at his heels. Barbara,
Meredith, and Charles freeze on their way to the front door.

Richard grabs a pair of dog tags from his pocket and throws
them at James.

RICHARD
I'm so sorry.

James looks at them. They're his own, missing in action.

JAMES
Where'd you get these?

Richard doesn't answer.

JAMES
Richard?

RICHARD
I saw you, that day you got hurt.

James stares awestruck at Richard

FLASHBACK - EXT. WOODS (WINTER 1944) - DAY

The scene is eerily familiar. Richard runs desperately through heavy drifts of snow.

He spins wildly around in a circle as soldiers run past him.

Richard's eyes narrow on a lone soldier running off in the distance.

RICHARD
(whispers)
James?

The figure rests behind a tree for a moment, near collapsing, and then continues on. It is James.

Richard chases after the soldier, his breathing becoming haggard.

BACK TO SCENE - LIVING ROOM

The dog tags lay on the floor, Richard picks them up and places them in James' hand again.

RICHARD
James, I didn't think I would find you. My infantry had been disbanded and lost. We were brought there for a last minute defensive.

FLASHBACK - EXT. WOODS (WINTER 1944) - DAY

Richard chases after James through the woods.

James stops in a small clearing and watches a burning compound as bodies run past him.

Richard stops and screams after him.

A bomb goes off near James and he is thrown against a tree.

Richard runs towards him.

WIDE: JAMES STARING AT THE SKY

James lays motionless in the snow staring up at the gray and black smoke-filled sky. A mangled broken leg bleeds quickly, staining the white slush around him.

James' eyes slowly close.

Richard falls at James' side, tears streaming down his face.

RICHARD
James? James?

Richard desperately tries to wipe the blood from James' face. He holds the unmoving body against his chest.

Loud echoing GUNFIRE goes off in the distance, catching Richard's attention.

RICHARD (V.O.)
I thought you were dead.

Richard carefully lays James back on the snowy earth and pulls at the chain around his brother's neck. The dog tags come off easily and Richard places them in his pocket.

The sounds of gunshots and screaming closes in.

Richard pulls a nearby body and drapes it over James.

RICHARD (V.O.)
I thought I had watched you die.

Richard runs off into the woods in the opposite direction of the fighting.

RICHARD (V.O.)
When I heard you were alive it was
the only thing that kept me going.

BACK TO SCENE - LIVING ROOM

JAMES
I forgive you okay. Let's just not
talk about this...
(beat)
Please.

RICHARD
I can't stop wishing we had
switched places. That I had been
dead instead of in that camp.
(beat)
But now that I know you're alive
and doing so much better than I am
I want it even more.

JAMES

Richard. Please, please just stop talking. You don't know what I went through before that.

James hastily throws his dog tags on a table.

RICHARD

I wanted to tell you the truth for so long.

JAMES

I SAID STOP!

Richard falls into James' arms and James pushes him to the floor.

JAMES

GET OFF ME!

RICHARD

James, please.

JAMES

After everything you put me through. It's your fault we even went over there. You dragged me over there with you and I had to deal with all that shit day after day until I might as well have been dead too.

RICHARD

But you aren't-

JAMES

You think after all that you might as well have checked to see if I was really alive.

(beat)

What would you have done if I wasn't here right now? What if I had died? Shit, you probably would've been happier. Me being alive is a mistake to you isn't it? It's proof you screwed up, and more than just yourself.

Richard collapses further to the ground, spit and tears falling from his face.

JAMES

And you want me to forgive you? To
say thank you?

(beat)

Well man up.

Richard runs out the front door, slamming it behind him.

James, still fuming, sits on the couch.

BARBARA EVANS

You didn't have to say all those
things, James.

Charles throws down his newspaper and claps James hard on
the back.

CHARLES EVANS

I think it needed to be said. I'm
proud of you.

James looks up at his father in disgust and walks out of the
room.

EXT. HOUSE - DUSK

James is sitting silently on the porch steps. Meredith comes
out of the house.

Small droplets of rain fall slowly as the sky darkens and a
storm rolls in.

MEREDITH

Can I sit down?

JAMES

Fine.

MEREDITH

Your mother is right. You shouldn't
have said those things.

JAMES

He left me to die.

MEREDITH

But you didn't, isn't that the
point?

(beat)

He needs you right now, can't you
tell?

JAMES
Of course I can tell.

MEREDITH
Just like you needed me.

JAMES
With William... Thank you.

MEREDITH
No at the lake.

James turns to her surprised.

JAMES
You knew?

MEREDITH
Yes I knew. And I'm happy you
didn't go through with it... But
I'm really worried about Richard,
please.

(beat)
I don't trust him with himself
right now.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

James walks at the end of the beach, studying the area. It is beginning to rain. James looks around but no one is in sight.

JAMES
(to himself)
Richard where are you?

James looks deep into the water where somewhere, the gun lays dormant.

The large rusty bridge towers above him. A human figure blocks his view of the moon: Richard.

In sudden realization James backs up the beach.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

James pulls up to the bridge in a rusty red truck. He skids slightly on the wet pavement.

The rain pours heavily as he gets out of the truck and runs to the center of the bridge.

Richard stands over the edge, leaning dangerously over the side.

JAMES

Don't do it Richard, you don't have to.

RICHARD

I want to.

JAMES

Please, please don't.

James approaches the ledge and holds out his hand. Richard leans farther over the edge.

RICHARD

I should never have come back. I should've died over there.

JAMES

That's not true.

RICHARD

I'm already dead.

Frustrated, James walks away and paces through large puddles.

JAMES

FUCK THIS. FUCK YOU!

James pulls a gun from his pocket. He runs to Richard and pulls him to sit on the rail. They struggle and James thrusts it up against his forehead. Richard grimaces and cries with his eyes closed.

JAMES

Is this what you truly want?

RICHARD

Yes.

Richard waits desperately for the single shot. He opens his eyes to see a children's wooden gun against his forehead.

James throws the wooden gun skidding across the bridge and backs away from Richard.

MEDIUM CLOSE UP: GUN ON GROUND WITH RAIN POURING

The two stand out of reach in the pouring rain. Richard sits back down on the ledge. Richard looks over through crying eyes, snot runs against his thin face.

JAMES

Richard, listen to me.

(beat)

I have these dreams. These horrible horrible dreams. But I don't see the blood. Or the smoke and fire... Richard. Richard listen to me. I'm all alone and I keep running in a woods and can't find a single living thing...No one is there and I'm alone.

RICHARD

Why ar-

JAMES

(interrupting)

I'm not scared of dying. I'll never be scared again. I can't ever be.

(beat)

But I'm scared of losing you. I'm scared that even though you're home you're so far away. Farther than I ever was. And I can't help you unless you let me.

(beat)

I was scared for a long time. Everyone was. But I'm not scared anymore. I'm not scared of dying because I'm safe. I'm not scared of dying because I'm not alone anymore. I've found you, Richard. And you've found me.

Richard's legs dangle idly over the edge.

JAMES

I was here before. This same bridge. I came here to try to escape too.

James runs to the railing and swings his legs over the edge five feet down from Richard.

JAMES

And so if you choose to go I can't stop you. But I can sure as hell follow.

RICHARD

I should've been here for you. I shouldn't have left you dying back there.

JAMES

And I can't let you die here!

James shuffles over down the railing to Richard. James momentarily slips and Richard desperately grabs his hand.

Richard pulls James up and the two collapse on the road.

They embrace in the pouring rain.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

James is driving; Richard sits in the passenger seat. They are both dripping wet, their dark hair sticky against their foreheads.

RICHARD

I'm sorry.

JAMES

(smiles)

I'm not gonna let you get off that easily. As far as I'm concerned you're the reason I'm alive.

RICHARD

Soldiers aren't supposed to leave brothers behind.

JAMES

Then I'll be here for you now.

They sit in silence for a moment.

JAMES

I'm sorry you thought anything was happening between me and Meredith.

(beat)

I didn't have anyone when I came back. She watched out for me.

(beat)

She's perfect. Perfect for you, Richard.

RICHARD

You really think so?

JAMES

(scoffs)

Maybe...shit at checkers though. If she's willing to handle you, you better not let her get away!

Richard playfully punches James in the arm.

JAMES

You two are perfect for each other!
You both think punching me is
somehow hilarious.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Barbara Evans and Meredith sit impatiently on the couch. The television is humming in the background yet muted. They are visibly distressed.

Charles is attempting to fold a newspaper, and failing.

Richard and James walk through the front door, soaking wet. Richard leans on James for support.

Meredith and Barbara jump up from the couch and run to them.

Barbara reaches them first and desperately hugs Richard.

BARBARA EVANS

Don't you ever do that to me again.

RICHARD

I won't, Ma'.

Barbara lets go of Richard and hugs James.

Meredith embraces Richard. James and Meredith trade small familiar smiles with one another before Meredith buries her head in Richard's shoulder.

BARBARA EVANS

(whispers)

Thank you.

James tightly holds his mother.

Meredith supports Richard to the couch and they chat tenderly by each other's side.

CLOSE UP: RICHARD AND MEREDITH'S HANDS TOGETHER

Charles gets up from his seat and shakes James' hand, firm and full of respect.

James watches as a pleasant buzz of conversation fills the room. He slowly walks to the edge of the room and slowly reaches for dog tags sitting alone on a table.

James picks up his dog tags and puts them around his neck.

The tags swing lightly against his chest and James smiles.

FADE TO BLACK