

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD

A young boy walks through the street slowly. He looks hurt, abused, disoriented and dehydrated. He is crying and is bleeding from his wrists.

He walks slowly toward a yellow house.

Camera pans up to street sign which reads

WIDE: BIRCH AVE.

FADE TO:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD

It is a Autumn late afternoon in a quiet rural neighborhood.

An elderly man, 70s a bit old fashioned, sits on a porch drinking whiskey, smoking a cigar and reading a newspaper.

The house, a one family, 2 floor house looks old fashioned. There is an american flag hanging.

He notices a younger man posting flyers on lamposts. The man looks frantic and disoriented. The elder man looks around and notices the flyers are on cars and gated fences as well.

The man takes a break and sits on the steps to the house next door. The elder man continues to read the paper.

The man puts his head down, it looks as if he's crying. The elder notices this.

ELDER MAN

You selling something?

The man turns around.

MAN

What?

ELDER MAN  
Are you selling something?

MAN  
Uh...no.

ELDER MAN  
Then I'll take one.

He extends his hand out.

MAN  
Yes, Please.

The man looks at the flyer. It reads:

MISSING: DEREK HARPER

AGE: 10

HEIGHT: 4'6" EYES: BROWN HAIR: BROWN

MISSING SINCE: OCTOBER 7TH,

LAST SEEN RIDING A BIKE ON EAST PIKE ROAD

WEARING A BLACK JACKET AND JEANS

PLEASE CONTACT (314) 555-1219

There is also a picture of the boy.

The man pours another drink.

ELDER MAN  
Your son?

MAN  
Yes.  
(beat)  
Please, if you hear or see  
anything.

ELDER MAN  
Of coarse. Absolutely.

MAN

Thank you I appreciate it.

The man is about to walk away.

ELDER MAN

Wait, I've see you around before.

(beat)

Yeah, you have the house on Birch,  
Right?

MAN

Possibly. Which house?

ELDER MAN

The yellow one on the corner.

MAN

Yes. that's mine.

Elder man looks at the picture again.

ELDER MAN

Good looking boy.

Man says nothing, but stares at him.

ELDER MAN

Like his pop.

He takes a puff from his cigar.

ELDER MAN

You got a a name friend?

MAN

Grant. Grant Harper.

ELDER MAN

Please to meet you Grant.

He reaches into his shirt pocket and hand him a new cigar.

GRANT

No thank you, I don't smoke.

He hands him the bottle of whiskey.

GRANT

No thank you, I really should be...

ELDER MAN

C'mon, I ain't gonna bite ya.

GRANT

Ok.

Grant takes a swig as the man watches on.

GRANT

Ahhh. Hit the spot.

Elder man pours him in a small glass and hands it to him.

GRANT

Thank you.

ELDER MAN

I remember your son.

GRANT

Really?

ELDER MAN

Yep. Used to speed up and down the street on that bike of his.

Grant slightly chuckles.

ELDER MAN

One time, your boy came around this corner here, with another boy, riding like a bunch o maniacs. I'd yell out, "Slow down son, before you hurt yourself!" But it was done to late, he'd done sped past the house. I wasnt gonna chase em.

Grant laughs.

ELDER MAN

Couple seconds later, They come from dat way, don't know, the bike musta hit a bump or rock or somethin', cause he fell flat on his face.

GRANT

Yeah, I think I remember that.

ELDER MAN

Then you know he skid about four feet.

(beat)

Tough kid, though. Just got up and shook it off.

GRANT

Yeah, hes a...tough little guy.

ELDER MAN

Yeah.

Grant finishes up the last of the drink.

ELDER MAN

You finished.

GRANT

Thanks a lot, it was great.

ELDER MAN

Come on in, there plenty more.

GRANT

No I really should be getting home.

ELDER MAN

Ten minutes. I promise you won't regret it.

GRANT

Okay.

INT. HOUSE

Inside the house, it looks just as old as the outside. It's dark, cold, there is dinjy wallpaper, faded furniture and plastic covered sofas.

We notice that the house is decorated with war memorabilia, metals, pictures and newspaper clippings.

We also notice, over the mantlepeice there is a shrine to a fallen soldier, there is also more metals and a folded flag

hanging.

ELDER MAN  
Any other kids, Grant?

GRANT  
No. Just the one.

ELDER MAN  
One, huh? Tell me Grant. What does  
he want to be when he grows up?  
(beat)  
Dont tell me...race car driver.

GRANT  
No, actually he want to make video  
games.

Elder man laughs.

ELDER MAN  
Right, I'm sure thats right up his  
ally.

GRANT  
Im sorry, I dont follow.

ELDER MAN  
Well, a 10 year old kid, in today's  
society only got to be into video  
games, right?

GRANT  
Oh yeah, right. He's into his  
Playstation and what do you call,  
Xbox.

Grant walks around the room, looking around the  
memorabilia, metals, honors etc.

ELDER MAN  
How is he in school?

GRANT

Good. Always can do better, but,  
he's getting A's and B's.

ELDER MAN

Good.

Elder man pours more whiskey and hands glass to Grant. They  
toast.

ELDER MAN

What do you do Grant?

GRANT

I work at the GE building downtown.

ELDER MAN

Okay, and what do you do in this  
building.

GRANT

(hesitantly)

Custodian.

ELDER MAN

Okay. Union?

GRANT

Yes. Local 73.

ELDER MAN

Hm. But, what do you want to do.

GRANT

I'm sorry.

ELDER MAN

What is your dream job?

GRANT

(laughs)

This is very embarrassing.

ELDER MAN

It's all right.

GRANT

Well, when I was younger, I wanted  
to be a um, rapper.

ELDER MAN

A rapper?

GRANT

Yeah.

They both laugh.

ELDER MAN

That's interesting.

GRANT

I was obsessed. See, my father was  
a dj and had this huge collection  
of records. I would put them on and  
lip sing to them in the mirror.

ELDER MAN

Ha. To who?

GRANT

Nobody you know I'm sure.

ELDER MAN

Try me.

GRANT

Oh you know, Big Daddy Kane,  
Beastie boys, Run D.M.C. and  
whoever emerged in the late 80s.

ELDER MAN

Never heard of em.

ELDER MAN

Know what I want to be when I grow  
up?

(Beat)

A cowboy.



GRANT

Really?

ELDER MAN

Yeah, I was obsessed with John Wayne movies as a kid. Wanted to be like him. I wanted to live in the western frontier.

Grant Chucked as he takes another swig.

ELDER MAN

Married, Grant?

GRANT

(Beat)

No. I mean, yes....I mean...I was.

ELDER MAN

Which was it there, Grant?

GRANT

She, um, passed away.

(Beat)

Some time ago.

ELDER MAN

I'm sorry.

GRANT

Thank you.

ELDER MAN

How long?

GRANT

About four years now.

ELDER MAN

Wow. How does your boy take it?

GRANT

He says he doesn't remember, but I think he does. He was about six years old.

Beat.

GRANT

He was there when it happened. Good old fashioned auto accident.

ELDER MAN

Ah. Damn.

GRANT

We were coming back from a day trip. Kid was in the back sleeping, wife was sleeping...

Flashback.

INT. CAR

Nighttime. Rainy and wet. Grant looks a bit tired at the wheel, but fights it. Driving a bit below speed limit, while cars speed past him.

His wife, Michelle, wakes up.

GRANT

Hey sleep good?

MICHELLE

(Yawning)

Like the dead.

They lock eyes briefly.

MICHELLE

Like me to drive hon?

GRANT

No, I'll be okay.

Michelle looks back at Derek, who is asleep in a car seat.

MICHELLE

He's had one heck of a day, huh?

GRANT

Yeah, he's been asleep for almost the entire ride.

Michelle stretches, while Grant looks on. She grabs his hand.

CLOSE UP - seat belt is off.

MICHELLE  
It's been a good day.

INT. HOUSE

Present.

GRANT  
It was wet. Dark. I lost control.

LOUD SCREECHING. BANG! Screams.

GRANT  
I panicked. Derek was pinned.

EXT. ROAD

Grant climbs out of wreckage and sees Michelle's body. She was thrown from the car.

GRANT(V.O)  
She died instantly. All I could think about was getting to my son.

He reaches and grabs his son out, who is unconscious but alive.

INT. HOUSE

GRANT  
Derek was okay, just a bit shook up, with minor injuries. The car seat saved him.  
(Beat)  
Such a horrible night, yet, I was thankful my son was alive.

ELDER MAN  
That's normal.

GRANT  
I was a mess. I mean I really hit rock bottom. The bottle, suicidal. I could eat, sleep yet alone function. I was out of work. Had to get therapy.

ELDER MAN

You had a tragic loss. You're not to blame. But you still have your son to live for.

GRANT

Yes. And I thank god every day, for my boy. That's why I keep him protected.

(Beat)

I can't imagine how my life would be if my son was the one who died in the accident.

ELDER MAN

No, no, no. We parents don't think of that. No parent should ever bury their child.

GRANT

No. No.

(Beat)

I wouldn't wish it upon my worst enemy.

ELDER MAN

Mm hmm.

GRANT

The scariest moment of my life.

ELDER MAN

But you got your boy back, that's what counts.

GRANT

But my wife, his mother.

ELDER MAN

Hey, life full of tough decisions, it's suck we have to make them too.

GRANT

But does it make me a horrible person? Not only did I cause the accident, but I choose to save my

(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

boy. I mean, would you have done the same.

ELDER MAN

Yes absolutely! I would've saved the kid.

GRANT

I think about her all the time. I hear him talking to himself most nights. He misses her.

(Beat)

I don't know, I guess I'm just filled with guilt. I wish there was more I could've done.

ELDER MAN

It's not your fault, stop blaming yourself.

Beat.

GRANT

I can't.

ELDER MAN

it's going to take some time, but you will son, you will. You know why? Cause you gots a little boy.

Elder man gets up.

ELDER MAN

Would you excuse me? I need to excuse myself.

Grant nods, and looks around at the shrine of the fallen soldier. He walks around the the room looking at everything from, metals to photos and old newspaper clippings.

Man comes back to room.

ELDER MAN

Man at my age, you just cant hold it anymore.

GRANT

You have a lovely home.

ELDER MAN

Why thank you. Excuse the look, we werent much of decorators.

GRANT

Its okay.

ELDER MAN

Not that we werent decorators, but, we hadn't much company over.

GRANT

Sir, how long were you in the military?

ELDER MAN

Twenty two powerful years. 196th Brigade. Was in that for about ten years until a land mine nearly blew my face off.

GRANT

Wow.

ELDER MAN

Yeah. Got lucky, though, minor cuts and bruises, but, lost hearing in my left ear.

GRANT

So that was the day of your Career?

ELDER MAN

No, I was too young to call it quits, so I was promoted, was in charge of the entire platoon.

(Beat)

I couldn't hear.

GRANT  
(points to shrine)  
Your son?

ELDER MAN  
I dont want to talk about it.

GRANT  
Was that Iraq?

ELDER MAN  
(stern)  
Dont ask about my son.

GRANT  
Come on, I told you about my wife.

ELDER MAN  
Don't ask about MY son.

GRANT  
With all do respect sir, I opened  
up to you, you cant expect me to...

ELDER MAN  
(blowing up)  
DONT ASK ABOUT MY SON!!

Elder man stares at him, Grant just looks down.

ELDER MAN  
(softly)  
You got no right. No right.

GRANT  
I'm sorry. I apologize sir. I  
think I better leave, now.

Grant gets up to leave.

GRANT  
Thank you for the...

## ELDER MAN

He was a good boy. A good soldier.  
A good father, husband and a damn  
good son. We raised him good. His  
mother and I. Made him tough.

(laughs)

His mother wanted him to be a  
doctor. I wanted him to be a  
baseball player. But he wanted to  
go into the military. Right out of  
high school, eighteen years old. He  
was still a kid. We tried to talk  
him out of it, tried talking some  
sense into him, but his mind was  
made up. I remember, when he was  
younger we'd watch reruns of the  
military tv shows. You know, Hogan's  
Heroes and M.A.S.H. Even Sgt.  
Bilko. But, it's war time. this  
country needs men, men like us. He  
had just finished his first year,  
was Deployed to Afghanistan on his  
19th birthday. He called me the  
night before, I was so upset, not  
at him, but the situation.

(Beat)

It was a rescue mission, couple of  
our kind were being held hostage in  
a small shack out in the middle of  
nowhere. The troop tracked them,  
had been for days. They finally got  
in, found the hostages, but, they  
wouldn't surrender. It was a  
standoff, guns pointed.

In the background we can hear the scene. Men arguing in  
English and Arabic and women and children screaming.

## ELDER MAN

But, they walked right into a trap.  
They were the ones being tracked.  
An ambush, guns were fired,  
hostages were killed and the  
soldiers, including Nathan, my son.  
Nineteen years old, nineteen! So

(MORE)



ELDER MAN (CONT'D)

young. Afgani bastards! took my boy. My only boy. She, his mother couldnt take it. In and out of hospitals, physhiatrist after physhiatrist. Just got worst, til one day, she didnt wake up. they said she lost the will to live. Can you belive that? Will to live, and what am I?! I hated her for giving up on me, I hated every thing and everyone. Especially him.

He point up, refering to Jesus.

GRANT

I'm sorry, sir.

ELDER MAN

I lost faith in him and everything, cause I lost everything. I didnt feel I had anything to live for.

There is a long uncomfotable silence. Elder man tries to break the tension.

ELDER MAN

What's your favorite war film, Grant?

GRANT

Oh. Full Metal Jacket.

ELDER MAN

Ah. Good one. Very good one.

(Beat)

Funny thing about that film. The drill sergeant. Did you know the actor who played the drill sergeant in the beginning of the film wrote his own lines.

GRANT

I wasn't aware, no.

ELDER MAN

Yea. He wasnt even supposed to be in the film. Being a former drill sergeant in vietnam, he was just a mentor and advisor on set. When he asked Kubrick for the part, Kubrick originally said no, and Ermey, the actor portraying the drill sergeant, barked an order at him, which made him secure the role.

Grant chuckles.

ELDER MAN

I'll tell ya, war, it's a serious thing.

GRANT

I know, sir. But unfortunately, I've never been.

ELDER MAN

Yea, lets just hope your boy doesn't.

Grant's voice cracks a little.

GRANT

Jesus I hope not.

ELDER MAN

That's why you need to cherish them, mold them. You see, my son had to go, it was his job. His father and grandfather went. So he felt he was destined to go. I tried to talk him out of it, but, no, he wasn't having it.

Elder man pours another drink.

ELDER MAN

Another?

GRANT

No thanks, I've had enough. In fact, I think I've invaded your privacy long enough. I best be on my way.

ELDER MAN

It was a pleasure having you over to keep me company. I do dearly appreciate it. Thank you for listening to my stories.

GRANT

Thank you, sir for having me. I never got your name, sir.

ELDER MAN

William.

(beat)

Sargent Major, William E. Rickle

GRANT

Sir. I would like to shake your hand.

Grant extents hand, William accepts.

GRANT

Thank you for your service. My deepest condolences for your losses.

Grant steps back and salutes. William replies.

WILLIAM

It's been a pleasure. I hope you find your son.

GRANT

Thank you, sir.

William stand on the porch, watching Grant turn the corner.

INT. HOUSE

As William sits looking at a photo album, he notices a picture of himself and his son as a young boy. He starts to reminisce as he looks through.

NATHAN(V.O)

Dad, can we finish reading Dr. Suess?

WILLIAM(V.O)

Sure. Lets see, where were we?

NATHAN(V.O)

Page Four.

WILLIAM(V.O)

Four?! Yes. I remember. Here we go. Yes some are red and some are blue. Some are old and some are new. Some are...

NATHAN(V.O)

Sad.

WILLIAM(V.O)

Some are...

NATHAN(V.O)

Glad!!

WILLIAM(V.O)

Very good!

They joke around as father and son do. It's clear they are close.

William gets up and walks to the back of the house. We follow him and stop at a framed newspaper article, with a picture of his face.

It reads; ARMY VET AND VIETNAM HERO MIA FROM MENTAL HOSPITAL.

As we follow we stop in the hallway where there is a trap door. He puts down his drink, grabs a knife from the kitchen and opens the trap door.

POV - Stairs and darkness

He walks down the stairs slowly, we can hear a muffled sound. He walks to a crate, we cant make out what it is yet. He opens the crate and we see a little boy blindfolded and tied up by his wrists. Its DEREK, Grant's son. He is sleeping in the corner of the crate. Next to him is an empty plate and cup. William picks up the knife, looks down at Grant.

FADE TO:

EXT. HOUSE

The police and authorities raid the old man's house. They go through all windows and the roof dressed in full regalia.

Sirens and cars pull up ready to shoot. An agent comes out of the house looks at Grant, who is holding his son, and shakes his head no, signaling William got away.

CLOSE UP: GRANT AND DEREK

CUT TO BLACK