

T H E S T O I C

By

Matt Venne

OVER DARKNESS:

PART FOUR

"The best revenge is not to be like your enemy."

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

FADE IN:

INT. GREASY SPOON - DAY

A crowded diner in the heart of a large metropolis.

FRANK MANSFIELD (30s), a modern day Man With No Name, eyes hidden behind mirrored sunglasses, enters the diner, sits at a table in the middle of the busy eatery.

There is an aura of danger about Frank. It might be the **H-A-T-E** and **H-A-T-E** tattoos on the knuckles of his right and left hands, respectively. It might be the cuts and scrapes and scars on his body. It might just be him.

WAITRESS (50s) -- a spent piece of used jet trash:

WAITRESS

Coffee?

Frank nods as the waitress pours him a cup of coffee.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

You know what you want?

Frank reacts with the slightest smile of bemusement: it's existentialism disguised as Greasy Spoon rote -- do any of us really know the answer to her question?

Waitress, frazzled and frantic, loses her patience --

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

I'll be back.

Frank watches her go, and as he takes off his sunglasses, we REVEAL: the inside of his fingers are tattooed **L-O-V-E** and **L-O-V-E**. Frank sets his sunglasses on the table, positions them so:

ANGLE: THE SUNGLASSES -- he can now see everything happening behind him in their mirrored frames.

Frank looks to his cup of coffee:

The steam swirls up from the mug like junkie ghosts.

Focusing on the hypnotic image, Frank's concentration becomes laser-focused... almost like he is going into a deep, meditative trance... whereupon:

SOUND DESIGN -- FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE: Frank begins to HEAR things happening in the crowded diner MORE CLEARLY, every SOUND taking on HEIGHTENED CLARITY:

The FRYING of the bacon...

The DRIP of the coffee maker...

The REPEATED GUFFAWS of a nearby patron...

The RUSTLING OF A NEWSPAPER being read at the counter...

The BUZZING OF TOO MANY CELL PHONES on "SILENT"...

The SOUNDS become akin to a HUMAN SYMPHONY:

FRY FRY FRY DRIP DRIP GUFFAW RUSTLE BUZZ BUZZ --

FRY FRY FRY DRIP DRIP GUFFAW RUSTLE BUZZ BUZZ --

FRY FRY FRY DRIP DRIP GUFFAW RUSTLE BUZZ BUZZ --

As Frank continues listening to the SYMPHONY OF SOUNDS:

FRANK (V.O.)

6 months ago I took a Vow of Silence.
Like a Stoic. A modern day Stoic. See,
the problem is, we get so used to using
words all the time, we forget they
actually have meanings. Every single one
of 'em. For example: STOIC. It isn't just
a word. It isn't just an adjective, or a
noun. It's a way of life.

Push in tightly on Frank Mansfield, modern day Stoic...

FRANK (V.O.)

Stoicism was a school of philosophy
founded in the 3rd century BC by Zeno of
Citium --

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ANCIENT GREECE, ATHENS - DAY

ZENO OF CITIUM (40s), an ancient Greek philosopher with a long beard and ringlets of hair, paces before his school of attentive POETS AND PHILOSOPHERS.

FRANK (V.O.)

Zeno and his Stoics were concerned with
the active relationship between
Determinism and *Freedom*, and the belief
that it is virtuous to maintain a will
that is in accord with nature.

Zeno approaches one of his STUDENTS. Nods at the student.
The student obediently sticks out his tongue.

FRANK (V.O.)

They believed the best indication of an individual's philosophy was not what a he said, but, rather, what he did.

Zeno reveals the sharp blade in his hand.

FRANK (V.O.)

You know:

Zeno cuts off his student's tongue.

FRANK (V.O.)

"Actions speak louder than words."

As the blood from Zeno's mutilation splatters camera --

FRANK (V.O.)

The Stoics were right.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. DANUBE, EMPEROR'S TENT, ANCIENT ROME - DUSK

MARCUS AURELIUS (55), the famed Roman Emperor, sits alone in his tent in the latter stages of his life (176 A.D.), in between ferocious battles with the German tribes at the Danube, quietly writing down his troubled thoughts.

FRANK (V.O.)

In 176 A.D., the most famous student of Stoicism, Emperor Marcus Aurelius, wrote what would eventually become the movement's Bible.

CLOSE ON TITLE PAGE OF AURELIUS' JOURNAL: "MEDITATIONS -- TO MYSELF."

FRANK

"Meditations." Which, two thousand years later, would also become my Bible.

SMASH BACK TO:

INT. GREASY SPOON - DAY

Frank continues to sit at his table in the center of the crowded diner, listening with acute attention to all of the SOUNDS around him:

SOUND DESIGN -- FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE: the SYMPHONY OF SOUND takes on new refrains as DIFFERENT ELEMENTS are added and others fade to silence, Frank waiting for some sound that he hasn't yet heard...

We study Frank: he looks like he could spring forth and snap somebody's neck at a moment's notice, every one of his taut muscles coiled.

FRANK (V.O.)
The human body has over 800 muscles.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MEDICAL SCHOOL, LECTURE HALL - DAY

HEAD LECTURER shows his MEDICAL STUDENTS a life size model of the HUMAN ANATOMY, the body's musculature exposed, all of its red ligaments and muscles bared.

FRANK (V.O.)
But the human ear only accounts for 3 of those 800 muscles.

ANGLE: CLOSE UP -- the meager anatomy of the human ear.

FRANK (V.O.)
By comparison, it takes nearly 30 muscles just to move your fucking mouth.

ANGLE: CLOSE UP -- the complex muscles of the mandible.

FRANK (V.O.)
Big surprise, right?

SMASH BACK TO:

INT. GREASY SPOON - DAY

Frank -- still seated, listening intensely, muscles of his tattooed body coiled and ready to strike.

FRANK (V.O.)
Who really uses their ears anymore? Who really *listens* anymore? All we do is talk -- so much so, that it's a wonder our ears haven't fallen off from atrophy. But, of course, without ears, where would we hang our mouthpieces?

FRANK HEARS -- and then sees A YOUNG EXEC IN AN EXPENSIVE SUIT talking into his EARPIECE as he walks past the diner toward his leased luxury sedan.

FRANK (V.O.)

When was the last time you really listened? Really HEARD? There's a sound to silence. Can you remember it? Or are you one of "them?" It's a sound deeper than words. Words, on the other hand, are like fences: they keep us caged in, and, ultimately, they betray us.

Frank closes his eyes, listens more closely than ever...

SOUND DESIGN -- FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE: the AMBIENT SOUNDS are more clear than ever -- when A DISTINCT AND EMPHYSEMA-ADDLED COUGH suddenly pops into the symphony.

Frank immediately bolts to his feet in reaction to the PARTICULAR COUGH, knocking his chair back, his startled waitress stumbling as he pushes past her:

WAITRESS

Asshole -- !

But Frank just continues marching toward the SOUND OF THE COUGH, hopping over the counter, pushing people out of his way with deft martial arts balance disruptions, stalking toward the kitchen like Death itself:

INT. GREASY SPOON, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Stout FRY COOK (50s), prison tattoos fading on his forearms, gray ponytail pulled back, nasty long beard dirty and unkempt, continues his EMPHYSEMA COUGH --

Frank storms into the kitchen, startling Fry Cook --

FRY COOK

What the hell?!

But Frank wastes no time with an answer -- instead he lunges at Fry Cook, who defensively grabs a sharp butcher's knife from the rack.

Fry Cook stabs the knife at Frank -- whereupon it becomes immediately clear that this guy knows how to use a knife.

Frank grabs a pan, uses it as a shield against the blade.

A ferocious knife fight ensues, Frank's reactions lightning fast as Fry Cook lunges and stabs and swings.

Frank uses a mixture of leaps and parries and kicks to defend himself... and all the while:

He continues to LISTEN to his surroundings.

SOUND DESIGN -- FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE: A SIZZLING SOUND.

Fry Cook knocks Frank back -- but the SIZZLING SOUND has brought Frank's attention to the DEEP FRYER filled with a batch of HASH BROWNS SIZZLING IN BOILING OIL.

Fry Cook stabs down with the knife --

But Frank reaches out and grabs the FRYING BASKET from the boiler, using it as a "catcher's mit" for the knife!

Fry Cook -- caught off-guard -- as Frank flings the knife from his hands, then spins out behind him, grabbing the back of his head by the pony tail -- then:

Smashes the Fry Cook's face onto the BLAZING HOT GRILL!

FREEZE-FRAME: Frank holds Fry Cook's face atop the grill next to the bacon and eggs and pancakes, Fry Cook's arms blurred mid-flail, Frank's teeth clenched in rage:

FRANK (V.O.)

Do I look crazy to you? Unhinged? Like a maniac? "D -- all of the above?"

(studying the FREEZE FRAME)

Well... maybe I am. But before you rush to judgement, let's rewind a bit.

FILM REWINDS: as if the projectionist was playing the reels backwards at lightning speed -- whereupon we glimpse snippets of the things that have lead up to this point in the film (and to which we will return):

-- Frank in ANOTHER WOMAN'S bedroom in a small house.

-- Frank in the county jail.

-- Frank using martial arts against a GANG OF THUGS.

-- Frank in a heated argument with a POLICE DETECTIVE.

-- Frank slumped beside a scary-looking GERMAN SHEPHERD.

-- A funeral. For two.

FILM REWINDS EVEN FURTHER BACK -- UNTIL WE ARE IN:

DARKNESS.

OVER DARKNESS:

PART ONE

"How quickly all things disappear."

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

FADE IN:

EXT. SKYRISE, DOWNTOWN METROPOLIS - DAY

The large metropolis spread out before us.

INT. SKYRISE, LAW FIRM OFFICES - DAY

A DEFENSE ATTORNEY (30s) sits at the desk inside his cushy office on the uppermost floors of a skyrise, talking into his earpiece, the city spread out below him.

He has slick hair, a slick suit, and a slick tongue -- and it isn't until the smarmy D.A. swivels around in his expensive desk chair that we realize:

It's FRANK MANSFIELD. Our Frank. Before whatever drove him to take a Vow of Silence and live his life on the violent fringes of society.

Frank is almost unrecognizable as he continues to YAMMER on the phone: no tattoos... pudgy... out of shape... unfocused... a quintessential windbag.

FRANK (V.O.)

That's me, about a year and a half ago.

MONTAGE: shots of Frank TALKING the day away on his phone, in the CONFERENCE ROOM, at LUNCH MEETINGS, having DRINKS, too quick with a FAKE LAUGH...

FRANK (V.O.)

Women speak approximately 20,000 words a day. Men, approximately 17,000.

THE WORDS FRANK SPOKE IN HIS PAST LIFE BEGIN TO FALL AROUND HIM LIKE SNOW. LITERALLY. WORDS LIKE "PLEA BARGAIN" "INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN" "KIBOSH" "USELESS" "TIME" "WHEELHOUSE" "WORK THE SYSTEM" AND "BRO"...

INT. CITY SUPERIOR COURT - DAY

Frank -- TALKING UP A BLUE STREAK to the rapt JURORS as his WORDS LITERALLY continue to RAIN DOWN ALL AROUND HIM:

FRANK (V.O.)

I spoke approximately 70,000 words a day.

As the MEANINGLESS WORDS AND PHRASES AND CLICHES pile up, they begin to obscure our view of Frank as he literally drowns in a sea of his meaningless words.

FRANK (V.O.)
And out of those 70,000 words a day, do
you know how many of them mattered?

Frank is now completely hidden behind piles of words.

FRANK (V.O.)
Six.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, GIRL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank, at the end of a long day, exhausted -- but eyes filled with love as he tucks in his beautiful little girl, OLIVIA MANSFIELD (7), telling her:

FRANK
I love you.

A TICKER TAPE TALLIES: 1 - 2 - 3 with each spoken word.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank, in bed with the love of his life, his wife, SUE MANSFIELD (30s), illuminated by Frank's laptop as she rolls over to go to sleep, Frank kissing her sweetly on the forehead:

FRANK
I love you.

TICKER TAPE: 4 - 5 - 6

Suzanne smiles at that, drifts off to sleep as Frank returns his attention to his work and continues working into the night, typing WORDS WORDS WORDS WORDS WORDS into his laptop...

FRANK (V.O.)
6 words total, out of 70,000. Not a good
ratio. No wonder it takes more muscles to
talk than it does to hear.

SMASH CUT TO:

MANSFIELD FAMILY HOME MOVIES SHOT ON FRANK'S iPHONE:

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - DAY (HOME MOVIE)

Via iPhone video:

Riding a roller coaster, Olivia in Sue's lap, Sue in Frank's lap, filmed by Frank -- who yells off-camera:

FRANK (O.S.)
(while filming)
Raise your hands -- it's even more fun!

EXT. GRIFFITH PARK - DAY (HOME MOVIE)

Via iPhone video:

Sue and Olivia filmed from behind by Frank as they hike, the footage wobbly, the love solid -- Frank off-camera:

FRANK (O.S.)
(while filming)
They're called 'Century Plants' because they only sprout once every 100 years.

EXT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, BACKYARD - DAY (HOME MOVIE)

Via iPhone video:

The backyard is decked-out with DISNEY PRINCESSES and other "Little Girl" accoutrements as Olivia blows out six candles on her birthday cake.

Sue and OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS and KINDERGARTEN CLASSMATES are gathered around -- Frank, off-camera:

FRANK (O.S.)
(while filming)
Remember: don't tell anybody what you wished for and it'll come true, sweetie!

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY (HOME MOVIE)

Via iPhone video:

Olivia SINGS RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REINDEER into the iPhone as Frank HELPS HER ALONG off-camera:

FRANK (O.S.)
(while filming)
"... you would even say it glows..."

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (HOME MOVIE)

Via iPhone video:

Sue is getting undressed after a formal dinner, looking sexy as hell as Frank comes snooping into the bathroom with his phone -- off-camera:

FRANK (O.S.)
(while filming)
*Ever thought about making one of those,
uh, "tapes?"*

Sue just looks into the iPhone with a reprimanding face.

SUE
Don't even think about it, Mansfield.

PULL OUT FROM THE iPHONE IMAGERY... REVEAL THAT WE ARE:

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The house looks dark and gloomy as the iPhone continues to play the old home movies.

Frank isn't wearing a shirt and his strong and wiry torso is covered in tattoos now: images of Olivia and Sue, Biblical quotes, "Love the Neighbor" adorned with brass knuckles and a dagger and billy clubs, etc.

There is a huge GERMAN SHEPHERD ("ACE") lying on the floor beside Frank. It is an incredibly scary-looking animal. As Frank continues to watch old iPhone videos:

FRANK (V.O.)
When you watch old videos you shot, you realize how annoying the sound of your own voice is. Especially when, if you're anything like I used to be, you never shut the fuck up for two seconds.

ANGLE: FRANK'S iPHONE -- another HOME MOVIE now playing, FRANK CONTINUING TO YAMMER FROM BEHIND THE CAMERA, never seen but always heard -- until:

Frank finally just throws his iPhone aside.

Disgusted with himself. Missing his wife and daughter.

He glances over at a tattered copy of Marcus Aurelius' Meditations (the book from which our film's "chapter markers" come from).

But he doesn't feel like reading right now.

The German Shepherd can see how upset Frank is.

It looks back to the iPhone.

Trots over to it. Picks it up with its huge jaws. Then brings it back to Frank, dropping it in his lap.

Frank smiles almost imperceptibly. Takes the phone as the dog drops his head onto Frank's lap. Frank begins rubbing the dog's ears. Smiling sadly.

CAMERA PUSHES IN ON FRANK'S SAD EYES...

Until we are swallowed whole by FRANK'S PUPILS.

PULL OUT OF THE DARKNESS OF FRANK'S PUPILS...

EMERGE TO:

THE PITCH BLACK ROBES of a PRIEST. WE ARE:

EXT. SMALL CEMETERY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

This has the grainy feel of a "home movie" to differentiate its look. It is like 16mm or 8mm from Frank's memory of the event:

Two coffins. One big, one small.

Frank is wearing his Sunday best, jowly cheeks streaked with tears, tie poorly knotted around his flabby neck.

FRANK (V.O.)

I buried my wife and daughter 19 months,
two weeks, three days, seven hours,
and... eighteen minutes ago.

Frank begins to SOB INCONSOLABLY as his wife and daughter's coffins are lowered into the ground.

FRANK

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!

FREEZE-FRAME: FRANK'S GRIEF-STRICKEN FACE -- mid-shout, ugly-cry, strands of spittle between his pudgy lips.

FRANK (V.O.)

Even at my wife and daughter's funeral I
couldn't shut my mouth. And you see that
surly looking guy standing behind me?

FREEZE-FRAME SCOPES TO: OLDER MAN (60s) -- standing over Frank's shoulder, watching Frank with a look of disdain.

FRANK (V.O.)
That's Chuck Willeford. My father-in-law.
What do you think he thought of me and my
crying and my inability to have protected
my wife and daughter?

FREEZE-FRAME: CHUCK WILLEFORD -- staring at Frank, the
older man's face filled with pure scorn.

FRANK (V.O.)
Yeah. That's exactly what he thought.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, RECEPTION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank has cornered Chuck in a back corner of the
reception after the funeral, Frank a bit tipsy:

FRANK
Justice will be served. Sue and Olivia's
deaths will not go unpunished.

But Chuck just continues to regard Frank with that same
look of scorn... then:

CHUCK
Chances are they'll never catch the
people responsible.

FRANK
Chuck --

CHUCK
It's true. And the fact of the matter is,
even if they did catch the bastards, some
slick talking D.A. would get them off;
some slick talking D.A. just like you.

Frank looks like he's just been hit in the stomach.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
I've held my tongue a lot on my
daughter's behalf through the years,
Frank. Truth be told, I never knew what
she saw in you. But as long as she was
happy? I was happy.
(fights back his emotions)
But now my daughter and my granddaughter
are both dead. So I no longer have to
hold my tongue. You, Frank Mansfield, are
a useless windbag. You are all talk.
(MORE)

CHUCK (CONT'D)

You make a living spinning words into meanings that are vague and hazy and unclear, and, as of this moment forward, I never want to hear your mealy-mouthed voice again.

Frank is completely and totally shocked.

For once, he is speechless.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Am I understood?

A long beat -- this must be some sick joke... but as Chuck continues to glower at Frank, it becomes more than apparent that it's not... and finally:

FRANK

I --

CHUCK

No. I said don't want to hear your voice ever again. A nod will suffice. So once again:

(beat)

Am I understood?

Frank stares at the sturdy looking bastard. Chuck Willeford may be thirty years Frank's senior, but he could still kick his former son-in-law's ass.

And so Frank finally just nods.

FREEZE-FRAME: on Chuck Willeford's glare.

FRANK (V.O.)

The old man was right. Only it took me another year to realize it -- and then to take it to its logical conclusion.

(beat)

To its logical extreme.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, HOME OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Frank -- working away in his office, TALKING ON THE PHONE, writing notes, reviewing TESTIMONIES, etc.

FRANK (V.O.)

Here are the facts of my wife and daughter's deaths: they had gone to the zoo, which had just opened its Gorilla Compound, and they were eager to see it.

EXT. CITY ZOO, GORILLA EXHIBIT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

This is a factual "flashback" -- as such, it should have a stark, almost B&W feel, possibly even taken from the security cameras at the zoo:

Sue and Olivia stand alone in front of the thick glass partition, staring at the FAMILY OF GORILLAS, who are just staring back at them.

FRANK (V.O.)

I, of course, was too busy obsessing over my work to join them.

There are three gorillas -- the father, the mother, the child -- and Sue and Olivia seem aware that they might be less of a complete family than the primates are.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, HOME OFFICE - DUSK (FLASHBACK)

Frank is working in his home office as the sun sets.

FRANK (V.O.)

So immersed in my work, it took me too long to realize they should've been home a lot sooner...

Frank finally glances up from his computer and notices that the sun is setting. He's surprised by that.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank looks slightly concerned now, phone pressed to his ear as he leaves a message:

FRANK

(into phone)

Hi, honey -- it's me. Wondering where you are, when you think you'll be home. Let me know -- I can order some pizza or something for dinner.

He hangs up. Looks more worried than ever.

FRANK (V.O.)

But by the time I realized how long they'd been gone, it was too late.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank -- leaving another message:

FRANK
(into phone)
It's me again. Call me.

Frank hangs up. Glances at the clock: it's 9:15 PM.

He doesn't know what to do.

Finally just dials 911.

EXT. CITY, SIDE STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Shot almost like a news broadcast. Grainy digital video imagery of the event exactly as it factually happened:

A luxury sedan. Abandoned on a side street beneath a freeway overpass, the driver's door open, the scene illuminated by flashing red and blue lights. Ominous.

FRANK (V.O.)
At 1:17 AM on Sunday, January 21st, my
wife's abandoned car was discovered on a
side street near the freeway.

REVEAL: Frank, surrounded by police officers, staring in mute horror at the finding. He rushes to the sedan.

Frank -- surprised... even slightly relieved -- because:

The car is empty.

EXT. CITY RIVER BASIN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Almost like a news broadcast, grainy digital video:

TEAMS OF POLICE OFFICERS search for Sue and Olivia Mansfield, their searchlights cutting through the night's darkness, SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS running around wildly.

Suddenly -- ONE OF THE POLICE OFFICERS looks aghast, his flashlight trained on something down in the basin below:

POLICE OFFICER
Over here!

As NUMEROUS OFFICERS make their way to him --

FRANK (V.O.)
But their bodies were found shortly after
discovering my wife's abandoned car.

INT. CITY RIVER BASIN, DRAINAGE BASIN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Grainy, digital news camera style video:

Frank nodding solemnly as he IDs his wife and daughter's bodies for the GATHERED OFFICERS, tears spilling down his cheeks as the world moves around him in SLOW MOTION.

FRANK (V.O.)

My wife and daughter had been beaten to death. Their bodies had been dumped in the city's concrete River Basin, stashed approximately 200 yards from my wife's abandoned car.

EXT. SMALL CEMETERY - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Something like 16mm or 8mm "home movies" of the event:

Exactly as before. The coffins are lowered into the ground, Frank sobbing, his father-in-law glaring at him.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, RECEPTION - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

And now, exactly as before:

Chuck finishes reaming Frank --

CHUCK

Once again: am I understood?

Frank nods.

FRANK (V.O.)

The days and weeks and months that followed unspooled as you would expect: at a snail's pace, and -- much like my father-in-law suspected -- with no breaks in the case.

Chuck finally walks away, leaving Frank alone.

FRANK (V.O.)

And still -- my wife and daughter murdered, killer or killers free, out there on the streets -- and all I could do -- all ANYONE could do -- was talk. Talk talk talk talk talk talk --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DOWNTOWN, POLICE STATION, OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

DETECTIVE BILL LUSTIG (40s), heavysset but strong -- like he might have some dusty Golden Gloves trophies at home -- lays out the facts for Frank.

Throughout the meeting, Lustig is as distracted as everyone in this day and age:

His cell phone RINGS. He gets TEXTS. He RETURNS TEXTS. Gets E-MAILS. His DESK PHONE RINGS, hell, even SIRI tries to tell him something -- a slice of the modern, distracted living with which we're all too familiar:

LUSTIG

The car was wiped down by the assailant,
so we don't have any prints --

Lustig gets a TEXT -- glancing at it:

LUSTIG (CONT'D)

(reading the text)

Although we did find a single microscopic
gold fiber in your wife's hair.

Frank perks up at that as Lustig returns the text...

FRANK

Any leads from that?

LUSTIG

(typing a text)

Nothing yet.

Lustig sets his phone down -- but his DESK PHONE RINGS -- he grabs:

LUSTIG (CONT'D)

(into phone)

Yeah, yeah, I'll call you back.

He hangs up, returns his attention to Frank, distracted:

LUSTIG (CONT'D)

Sorry about that. Let's see... uh --

(remembers)

The fiber -- no. No leads. It's a pretty
common thread.

FRANK

And no witnesses?

Lustig adjust his seat. His COMPUTER CHIRPS WITH AN E-MAIL -- he glances at it quickly as he speaks:

LUSTIG

None -- not that we're aware of, anyway.
 (finishes glancing at e-mail)
 But we're still looking.

Frank shakes his head.

FRANK

Can I see your file on the case?

Lustig -- about to answer -- but:

THERE'S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR -- Lustig and Frank glance at the doorway, where another OFFICER is now standing:

This is uniformed OFFICER HANK STRODE (40s), built like he's seen his share of scrapes in the mean streets. He glances at Frank -- *"sorry to interrupt"* -- then returns his attention to Lustig:

STRODE

Chief wants a word with you.

LUSTIG

(to Strode)

Yeah yeah, I know -- tell him I'll be right there.

Strode nods and hurries away, nodding a quick goodbye to Frank, as Lustig returns his harried attention to Frank:

Lustig clearly doesn't remember what they were TALKING about. Frank reminds him:

FRANK

The file?

Remembers now:

LUSTIG

Right. I'm sorry, it's confidential.

Angered by that:

FRANK

It's my wife and daughter.

LUSTIG

I understand that.

(glances at computer screen)

And I assure you we're trying our best to bring the men who did this to justice.

Frank finally snaps --

He slams the detective's laptop closed!

FRANK

Try harder!

Lustig... manages to stay cool.

He has been through this too many times to count.

And now, for just this time -- maybe for the first time ever -- he gives Frank his full attention.

LUSTIG

Do you know how often a violent crime is committed in a large city, Mr. Mansfield?

Frank doesn't.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)

Every 6.3 seconds.

(lets that sink in)

For the 20 minutes we've been sitting here, there have been over 200 assaults, robberies, or murders in the city. And... there goes another one... and another one... and another one....

Frank is overwhelmed by the statistics. Finally just looks Lustig in the eyes... almost resigned:

FRANK

These animals. They're never found, are they?

Lustig's eyes flicker at that. He hates this.

LUSTIG

Sometimes we catch them.

Frank just nods, half-hearted.

Watches as Lustig -- already resigned to the futility of his existence -- returns his scattered attention to his laptop as his PHONE RINGS and he glances at it --

LUSTIG (CONT'D)

(re: the call)

I'm sorry, I gotta take this.

Frank can't believe what a waste of time all of this is.

INT. POLICE STATION, HALLWAY - DAY (CONTINUED)

Frank moves down the hallway in a type of daze, Lustig watching Frank go from the doorway of his office.

ROUNDING A CORNER: Frank bumps into Strode, who is clearly hurrying back to Lustig's to remind him again about the meeting --

FRANK
Sorry about that.

Strode just nods --

STRODE
No problem.

-- as Frank continues past him.

Frank rounds the corner, heading out of sight.

REVEAL: Strode is still watching him go. Something like a look of sympathetic recognition on his face.

EXT. POLICE STATION, STREETS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Still rattled by the realities he's learned from Lustig and his unsettling encounter with Strode, Frank continues to his car, a Shelby Mustang, parked in the lot across the street and down the block from the police station.

FRANK (V.O.)
The scales had been lifted from my eyes.

As he moves through the city streets, we see him eyeing all of the PEDESTRIANS with intensity and suspicion:

-- *TOUGH-LOOKING STREET KIDS* walk by...

-- *A GROUP OF GANG THUGS* drives past...

-- *TWO HOMELESS MEN* start to *ARGUE* in an adjacent lot...

FRANK (V.O.)
And that afternoon, I began to wonder in earnest which of the people around me were criminals. Which of them were vandals? Were thieves? Arsonists? Rapists? Which of them were murderers?
(beat)
And which of them, if any, were The Innocent?

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank gets out of the shower, notices his soft reflection in the mirror.

FRANK (V.O.)

But maybe the most terrifying thing about what I had come to discover about my existence was my complete and total ineffectualness...

INT. LARGE CHAIN GYM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

BEGIN MONTAGE. A modern take on the classical "martial arts-vigilante-kung fu movie training sequence."

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D.)

Because the fact of the matter was, even if I had been with my wife and daughter that night, I probably couldn't have done a damned thing to save their lives.

We are at a typical "meat market" gym, where people are there more to be seen than to get fit... we come across Frank, in his earlier, softer days, on a treadmill:

Frank looks like a hamster, CHATTING with the person next to him about the SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS playing on the TV MONITORS overhead, barely breaking a sweat. Pathetic.

FRANK (V.O.)

That's the way I used to work-out.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, GARAGE - NIGHT

Frank -- hanging a heavy bag, setting up a weight bench, inserting a chin-up bar to a beam on the ceiling, installing battle ropes and heavy kettle bells.

VARIOUS SHOTS: Frank is working hard, sweating as he pounds the heavy bag, lifts the weights, and performs increasing amounts of chin-ups, push-ups, and sit-ups.

FRANK (V.O.)

That's the way I started working-out after.

VARIOUS SHOTS: Frank is getting into much better shape, losing pounds, shedding fat, looking tough, and performing exercises that are breathtaking in their strength and agility.

INT. STRIP MALL, KARATE SCHOOL - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Frank -- still soft, but at least doing a little bit of martial arts training. He looks okay. But even though he's getting the basics down, he doesn't exactly look like a member of the warrior class.

As he works on a kata (Short Form One) -- which, while helpful, looks more like a fancy dance than fighting:

FRANK (V.O.)

Before.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. ECHO PARK, MMA STUDIO - NIGHT

Frank -- looking lean and mean, utilizing various MMA techniques against TOUGH AND SCARY-LOOKING FELLOW MARTIAL ARTS STUDENTS, their SENSEI BARKING ORDERS.

FRANK (V.O.)

After.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Frank, in his earlier days: expensive track suit, matching expensive sneakers, expensive iPhone earbuds jammed into his ears as he speed walks, talking into his earbud mouthpiece the entire time.

FRANK (V.O.)

Before.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. HIKING TRAILS - DAY

Frank, fit as hell, wearing an old T-shirt, shorts, and combat boots, running hard up the trails, winded, sweaty.

FRANK (V.O.)

After.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank -- sitting on the couch, gut hanging out from his T-shirt as SPORTSCENTER BLARES from the TV, COMMENTATORS talking endlessly about GAMES whose scores will be forgotten by the time Frank goes to bed.

FRANK (V.O.)

Before.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank sits in a chair, lean and in shape, fully tattooed, likely only a few days ago, in the SILENCE of his living room -- the only sound the PANTING of his German Shepherd lying on the floor nearby.

Frank continues reading from his tattered and blood-stained copy of Marcus Aurelius' MEDITATIONS:

FRANK (V.O.)

After.

ANGLE: THE MEDITATIONS PASSAGE -- *"THERE IS NOTHING THAT HINDERS YOU FROM DOING WHAT MUST BE DONE."*

Frank looks up from the passage. It strikes a chord.

He underlines it. The book a sea of highlights and underlines and dog-eared pages.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, GARAGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Frank working hard in his garage (NOTE: HE ISN'T FULLY TATTOOED YET) -- REVEAL: he has BLOWN-UP A PHOTOGRAPH OF SUE AND OLIVIA TO WALL SIZE. It is the thing he stares at to stay focused and motivated.

He pounds the heavy bag so hard his hands might break.

He looks down at his bloody knuckles. He gets an idea.

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank getting the **H-A-T-E** and **H-A-T-E** tattoos on his knuckles --

INT. MMA GYM - DAY

Frank fights THREE MMA TOUGH GUYS (hair dyed, mohawks, weird piercings -- you know the type) at the same time inside the ring of an MMA GYM -- REVEAL: Frank's knuckles are now tattooed with the foreseen **H-A-T-E** and **H-A-T-E** --

FRANK (V.O.)
I gave the world my hatred...

INT. TATTOO PARLOR - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Frank gets **L-O-V-E** and **L-O-V-E** tattooed on the inside of his hands --

INT. MARTIAL ARTS DOJO - DAY

Frank shows a STUNNING DISPLAY OF MARTIAL ARTS PROWESS as he continues fighting the THREE MMA FIGHTERS at the same time: flying "Superman punches," spinning roundhouse kicks, and gruesome locks and breaks.

ANGLE: FRANK'S POV -- his opponents are blurred in the background, his attention focused on the portraits of his deceased wife and daughter and the words **L-O-V-E** on the insides of his fists, visible only to him:

FRANK (V.O.)
But my hatred was fueled by the love I
had for my deceased wife and daughter.

Frank's opponents are finally so bloodied and broken (literally) that his Instructor has to tackle him.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. JIU-JITSU STUDIO - NIGHT

Frank -- engaged in a ferocious Jiu-Jitsu match with an ENORMOUS WEIGHT LIFTER (30s), who is much stronger-looking, and much tougher-looking than Frank -- but:

Frank suddenly shrimps away from the man, wrapping his huge arm in an arm-bar like none we've ever seen

ENORMOUS MAN
I'm gonna fuckin' kill you.

SNAP! -- Frank breaks Enormous Man's arm at the elbow.

Enormous Man is reduced to screaming and tears.

EXT. JIU-JITSU STUDIO - NIGHT

Frank's gear is shoved into his duffel bag, which is slung over his shoulder, as the owner of the Jiu-Jitsu studio YELLS at him while he walks away.

FRANK (V.O.)

I was kicked out of too many martial arts
dojos and MMA gyms and Jiu-Jitsu studios
to count...

Frank rounds the corner into an alleyway:

EXT. JIU-JITSU STUDIO, ALLEYWAY - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

Frank rounds the corner -- is greeted by the Enormous Man, arm now wrapped and in a sling, who is accompanied by a LARGE GANG of peers. All of them scary-looking. All of the clearly out for revenge.

Frank smiles.

Drops his duffel bag to the ground.

Then steps willingly -- happily -- into the alleyway.

A jaw-dropping display of Frank's MMA/martial arts skills ensues, whereupon he uses everything in the alleyway -- brick walls, chain link fencing, fire escape ladders, trash from the dumpsters, etc. -- to *DECIMATE* the entirety of the large and bloodthirsty group.

Even though he has become an accomplished mixed martial artist, it is clear from the fighting style (i.e. the *FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY*) that it is still more Frank's HEART and WILL that propel him when engaged in combat as opposed to ultra-complex Martial Arts moves:

The fighting style is rough and mean and real.

Just like Frank has become.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - NIGHT (LATER)

Frank emerges from the alleyway, duffel bag strewn over his shoulder, bloodied but victorious, bodies writhing in the alleyway behind him.

INT. SKYRISE, DOWNTOWN - DAY

Frank -- face bruised from the alleyway fight, lip cut, looking like hell to his WARY CO-WORKERS as he packs his office belongings into a box.

INT. SKYRISE, HALLWAY - DAY

He wheels his stuff down the hall. His CO-WORKERS clearly relieved that he's finally resigned. And judging by the look on Frank's face, the feeling is mutual.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, GARAGE - NIGHT

Frank works-out harder than ever at home.

FRANK (V.O.)

Quitting my job didn't matter. I had enough money in the bank to last a few years, and so I decided to try letting out my rage and frustration in the local fight circuit for a while.

INT. SMALL LOCAL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

The small auditorium is filled with ROWDY MEN in cheap fold-out chairs that have been set up around the makeshift ring.

Frank is currently fighting, letting all of his fury on his OPPONENT, easily dominating the poor bastard -- whereupon a GIGANTIC REFEREE steps in and knocks Frank back. Frank clearly wishes the fight wasn't over.

INT. SMALL LOCAL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT (LATER)

Frank, now dressed in his sweats and T-shirt, post-fight, duffel bag with gi and fight gear over his shoulder, watches the seedy fights later in the night.

FRANK (V.O.)

And much to my surprise, there was someone on the fight circuit who seemed as unhinged as me.

REVEAL: one of the MEN in the ring is the previously seen **OFFICER HANK STRODE**, who Frank bumped into when leaving the police station many, many months ago.

Several MEMBERS OF THE AUDIENCE are WHISPERING about Strode, his reputation clearly legendary on the amateur fight circuit as his opponent taps out --

FRANK (V.O.)

But in the end, even the carnage and violence of the local fight circuit couldn't quench the rage simmering inside me after my wife and daughter's deaths. It was, after all, still just a "sport."

Frank walks away from the fight circuit scene.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, GARAGE - NIGHT

Frank is working out like a maniac in his garage, beneath the portraits of Sue and Olivia.

FRANK (V.O.)

And so with nothing but time on my hands, I decided to put my training to the test at something more "real."

(beat)

But I would quickly come to find out that something crucial was still missing.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, STREETS - NIGHT

Frank moves through the seedy streets of the city's downtown, past homeless encampments, crack row, whores and pimps.

He is like an early Bruce Wayne (or maybe more like a Travis Bickle), looking for a situation in which he might be able to do some good.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, USED BOOKSTORE - NIGHT

Frank moves past a ratty old USED BOOKSTORE WINDOW FRONT that is chained and locked shut for the night --

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)

Hey, Mister!

Frank turns toward the sound of the Young Girl's voice:

He frowns at what he sees: the YOUNG ASIAN GIRL (15) can't be a day older than 15, yet she's clearly working the streets:

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)
You lookin' for company tonight?

Frank continues to frown at the sad sight, shakes his head as he moves toward the Young Girl protectively:

FRANK
You shouldn't be out here. You're too young. You should... ---

But before he can finish, a HULKING ASIAN MAN (30s), steps out from an SUV parked down the street that Frank hadn't noticed, engine running, headlights on.

SEVERAL OTHER ASIAN MEN are visible in the SUV, obviously all members of an ASIAN GANG, as the Hulking Man screams at the Young Girl:

HULKING MAN
Get your ass over here!

All pretense and bad attempts at "worldliness" vanish from the Young Girl's face, replaced by fear as she moves obediently toward the Hulking Man who is charging across the street toward her.

Hulking Man glances quickly at Frank:

HULKING MAN (CONT'D)
Sorry, buddy. Thought you were somebody else...

Clearly afraid that Frank might be undercover, the Hulking Man leads the Young Girl back toward the SUV, hand pressed firmly into the small of her back --

Which Frank suddenly removes with a firm grip:

FRANK (O.S.)
She's just a girl.

Hulking Man spins around quickly at that -- REVEALING: he has a *BALISONG* (a "Butterfly Knife"), which he unfurls with lightning speed --

Frank is quick to react, parrying several lethal swings of the deadly sharp knife -- finally managing to bat it from the Hulking Man's hand with a brutal chop.

As the knife skitters to the ground, the Hulking Man's GANG MEMBER BROTHERS rush from the SUV, whereupon Frank is forced to fight all of them at once:

And after several moments of BRUTAL MARTIAL ARTS ACTION (again: Frank has more "will" than "skill"):

All of the gang members have been laid to waste, save for the Hulking Man, who is now propped up on one knee and struggling to get back to his feet.

Frank moves toward his final foe...

FRANK (V.O.)

Had I been *listening* more closely -- had I been listening AT ALL -- I would have been more aware of my surroundings.

(beat)

I would've heard it.

At that:

THE SOUND OF A KNIFE SWEEPED UP FROM THE ASPHALT --

Moments later: Frank CRIES OUT IN PAIN!

REVEAL: the Young Girl has stabbed Frank in the leg with the fallen butterfly knife, lodging it deep into Frank's leg, now gushing with blood!

Frank stumbles back, crashing into the WINDOWS of the USED BOOKSTORE, its ALARM NOW BLARING into the night!

Frank -- stunned -- looks over at the Young Girl, who stares at him with spite born from having already spent too many years of her young life on these mean streets.

The Young Girl removes the knife, then holds it out at Frank as she starts toward Hulking Man.

POLICE SIRENS are heard in the distance, making their way toward the RINGING ALARM and the crime scene!

The Young Girl helps Hulking Man to his feet as he and the rest of his crew hobble toward the SUV.

Frank grabs something -- anything -- to stop the blood from flowing from his leg as the SUV races away.

He presses a TATTERED OLD PAPERBACK BOOK against the wound to stop the bleeding, then limps away from the scene of the crime as quickly as he can.

EXT. DOWNTOWN, RUNDOWN MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

POLICE SIRENS closer, Frank hobbles into the rundown theater for shelter beneath a marquee that reads:
SPAGHETTI WESTERN DOUBLE FEATURE! THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY and THE GREAT SILENCE.

INT. RUNDOWN MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Frank takes a seat amidst the SMALL HANDFUL OF PATRONS scattered throughout the mostly empty aisles of the rundown movie theater, *THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY* playing on the screen in front of him.

The POLICE SIRENS can be heard in the distance... eventually passing as Frank takes a look at his wound:

He removes the tattered and now-blood soaked PAPERBACK he had grabbed to stanch the bleeding. The wound is not as severe as he initially thought, and could probably even heal without stitches.

Frank looks over at the paperback: it is the copy of Marcus Aurelius' **MEDITATIONS** that we've previously seen Frank reading. And now we know why it's caked in blood.

Something about the book draws Frank -- and he begins to flip through its tattered, bloody pages by the light of the epic playing on the screen in front of him.

Flipping through the book, Frank stops at one of Marcus Aurelius' key maxims:

"ACCEPT THE THINGS TO WHICH FATE BINDS YOU."

The words impact Frank profoundly.

He reads them again. Then looks at the cover of the book. Studying its depiction of the famous image of the marble bust of Emperor Marcus Aurelius.

Just then -- on the screen -- we hear:

TUCCO
 (on movie screen)
If you have to shoot, shoot. Don't talk.

Some idea is forming in Frank's head.

FRANK (V.O.)

That night, sitting in a rundown movie theater with a blood-splattered copy of Marcus Aurelius' Meditations, I discovered what had been missing from my journey...

Frank looks back to the image of Aurelius. Studies the Roman Emperor's solemnity. His *STOICISM*.

TIME CUT -- THE SCREEN: **THE GREAT SILENCE** is now playing:

PAULINE

(on movie screen)

Once, my husband told me of this man: he avenges our wrongs, and the bounty killers tremble when he appears. They call him "Silence." Because wherever he goes, the Silence of Death follows.

ON FRANK: eyes glassy as the words roll over him.

FRANK (V.O.)

I found the final piece I needed.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, GARAGE - NIGHT

Frank pours over the Meditations, the ancient movement's latest convert. Frank underlines this latest passage: "**NO LONGER TALK ABOUT, BUT BE ABOUT.**" He looks up at the image of his wife and daughter that he has on the wall.

FRANK (V.O.)

With a clarity of purpose, I took my Vow of Silence. A Vow that I promised to keep until my wife and daughter's deaths were avenged. At times my Vow would be an advantage. At times, it would be a disadvantage. But always it would be a stark reminder of my life's singular mission -- of the only thing that still mattered: to kill the person who took my wife and daughter away from me.

CLOSE ON FRANK'S EYES: silent, deadly, scary, focused.

Frank is now a man fully tethered to his mission.

No matter the cost. No matter the odds.

No matter how insane his Vow might make him seem.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER DARKNESS:

PART TWO

*"A man's voice should be plainly written on his
forehead."*

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

FADE IN:

EXT. CITY, RIVER BASIN - NIGHT (PRESENT)

Frank -- fully tattooed now, lean, tough-looking -- skulks through the empty river basin, studying the scene where his wife and daughter's bodies had been dumped for the millionth time, looking for any type of clue.

He kneels down beside the nearly completely faded blood stains that mark the spot where their bodies were found.

But now... per his skill set... Frank closes his eyes...

Shutting out the rest of the world... and then simply...

LISTENS.

And as he continues to do so, the **SOUNDSCAPE** of our film slowly morphs as we hone in **SUBJECTIVELY** to:

FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE:

-- *THE WASH OF FREEWAY TRAFFIC* from the nearby freeway which we couldn't hear before... but that slowly gives way to...

-- *MARIACHI MUSIC* somewhere in the distance... but we stop focusing on that... going **DEEPER** into:

-- *SOUNDS OF A QUINCEANERA*, which we move away from to...

-- *THE WIND* moving through the surrounding trees, which we move away from into...

-- *POUNDING BASS* rattling the **SPEAKERS OF A CAR** -- which we decide to "key in on" for several moments... going **DEEPER** into this sound... which draws us to:

-- *THE CAR'S ENGINE*.

FRANK (V.O.)

A car with something like a 427 V8 Engine was headed my way from off in the distance...

Frank opens his eyes... begins scanning the dark distance for the vehicle...

FRANK (V.O.)

A pretty mean ride. Not something most people wanna mess with...

Frank stares into the seemingly empty distance for another moment, his hearing keyed in solely to the SOUND OF THE ENGINE in the distance -- and then:

He takes off toward it.

FRANK (V.O.)
... But I wasn't "most people."

EXT. CITY, SIDE STREETS - NIGHT

Frank makes his way down the side streets near the freeway overpass where his wife's car had been abandoned, a heavily modified lowrider now visible in the distance, its MASSIVE ENGINE heard even more clearly now as it drives away...

FRANK (V.O.)
But it wasn't the vehicle I cared about.

Frank continues to scan the horizon in silence, looking for something... eyes suddenly alight.

FRANK (V.O.)
It was how it got to this stretch of the road:

REVEAL: a gap that's been cut out in the chain link fence that separates the side streets from the river basin.

EXT. CHAIN LINK FENCE - NIGHT

Frank stands at the gap in the fencing. Can see the spot in the near-distance where his wife and daughter's bodies were discovered.

He looks around, studying the area deeper... "calms" himself, allowing himself to hear his surroundings:

SOUND DESIGN -- FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE: after several moments, he hears *WIND RUSTLING THROUGH SOMETHING LIKE CANS, NEWSPAPERS, BOTTLES...*

Frank follows the SOUNDS... soon discovers:

Marks in the dirt that have ashes and remnants of charred black sticks and wood and newspaper along with myriad discarded food cans, old takeout boxes, and empty bottles of beer and alcohol...

FRANK (V.O.)
A homeless person's encampment.

Frank looks out to the spot where his wife and daughter's bodies were dumped from this vantage point:

FRANK (V.O.)

If somebody was here the night my wife and daughter were killed, they would have had a perfect view of the crime -- which would make him or her the perfect witness.

Frank LISTENS to his surroundings: nothing out of the ordinary, just the same "SILENCE" he'd heard before.

But in this state he realizes how cold it is, pulls out his cell phone, checks the WEATHER: it is 36-degrees.

He is struck by that, makes a mental note.

EXT. NEARBY CITY STREETS, NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Frank returns to the spot where he parked his car.

Only now he discovers that it is surrounded by:

SEVERAL GANG MEMBERS, their faces tattooed ala the infamous MS-13 and 18TH ST. GANGS.

LEAD GANG MEMBER

Nice ride, homie.

The other GANG MEMBERS chuckle ominously at that --

ANGLE -- CLOSE: FRANK'S HAND -- as he clenches his fist tightly around his car keys, allowing the main key to protrude, though, like a knife.

LEAD GANG MEMBER (CONT'D)

How 'bout you give me the keys, and we let you live?

Frank -- the slightest hint of a smile.

FRANK (V.O.)

I decided to oblige him.

And then -- almost too fast for us to realize it's happening -- Frank lunges forward and punches the key that his fist is balled around into Lead Gang Member's neck, plunging it deep into his jugular vein!

Other Face Tattooed Gang Members are momentarily shocked -- which Frank uses to his advantage:

He enters the fray, choking out the nearest Gang Member with rapid speed and then shoving his unconscious body into another one!

Another one of the Gang Members pulls out a gun -- but Frank bats it away then delivers a ferocious spinning back, knocking the man out, his jaw shattered!

As Frank continues to fight, things GO SUPER SLOW MOTION:

FRANK (V.O.)
Without my Vow of Silence -- I never
would have HEARD my surroundings the way
I did...

As Frank continues the brutal fight he seems to be one step ahead of his attackers --

FRANK (V.O.)
Listening -- hearing -- the world around
you is like having a superpower in this
day and age...

Frank hears HEAVY BREATHING RIGHT BEHIND HIM -- he spins:

FRANK (V.O.)
And a superpower gives you a step up on
your enemies --

He back kicks the attacker high enough to shatter his windpipe before turning his attention to the rest:

SOUND DESIGN -- FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE: THE FIGHT via Frank's heightened SENSE OF SOUND: every BREATH... GRUNT... APPROACHING FOOTFALL... all of which allow Frank to anticipate movements before they actually happen --

AN ODD, METAL UNSHEATHING SOUND -- Frank spins, discovers that one of his foes has a retracting STEEL BATON and is currently swinging it toward Frank's skull --

But Frank ducks and knocks the baton out of his assailant's hand, picking it up and then:

Frank uses the weapon against the rest of them, tearing through the last of his attackers with merciless speed.

As the last assailant falls to the ground, Frank, panting, turns to his car, collects his breath for a moment, and then wipes the blood from his car keys.

He goes to enter his car --

A GUN IS CHAMBERED via his soundscape!

Frank spins in anticipation --

BOOM! the gun is FIRED in their direction!

Frank avoids a full-on hit, but the bullet still manages to graze his side! Bleeding profusely, head spinning, he manages to stomp the gun out of the Gang Member's hand, and then kick him in the head, knocking him out, but...

Frank doesn't look good.

He looks down. The blood is running from his side.

He looks up, into the uncaring stars of the night sky.

He collapses.

Amidst the sea of men he has decimated.

There's no way this ends well for Frank as we:

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CITY NEIGHBORHOOD, SMALL HOUSE - DAY

Frank awakens from a troubled sleep with a startle --

He doesn't recognize his surroundings.

FRANK (V.O.)

I expected to wake up in jail. Instead I
woke up in an unfamiliar house with no
idea where I was.

Frank realizes he is lying on a bed inside a tiny bedroom, sunlight streaming in through the window's threadbare curtains --

He HEARS SOMEONE APPROACHING THE CLOSED DOOR -- is suddenly alert and ready to fight, goes to stand --

WINCES IN PAIN -- looks down: his laceration from the bullet that glanced him has been bandaged, the blood pooled in the center of the white dressings.

The door opens:

It is a beautiful YOUNG WOMAN (late-20s) -- who screams, startled, when she discovers that Frank is standing in front of her, rather than still lying in bed.

YOUNG WOMAN

Jesus Christ -- you scared the shit out of me!

Her huge reaction provides a moment of levity as Frank just continues to hold his ground, obviously confused...

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

My name's Shella.

(nods at his bandages)

I'm a nurse.

Frank nods slightly at that, the pieces starting to fall into place.

An awkward silence follows, though, as Shella waits for Frank to tell her his name now... But after several beats she realizes he's not going to...

SHELLA

I was coming back home from a late shift at the ER last night when I found you lying in the street. You were surrounded by a bunch of the animals that run these streets.

(appreciates it)

It looked like you'd hurt those bastards pretty good...

Shella struggles to process something complicated; some memory of a past trauma (or a current one) -- then finally just shrugs with a wounded smile:

SHELLA (CONT'D)

... So I figured one Good Samaritan deserved another.

Frank nods.

He appreciates crossing paths with a kindred spirit.

At that -- Shella turns and his tray of food on a table in the corner, then turns back around to face him --

But Frank has already left the room, and Shella only catches a glimpse of him closing the front door on his way out of her house.

EXT. SMALL HOUSE - DAY (CONTINUED)

Frank hurries away from the small house in the rough neighborhood near where his wife and daughter were killed, gets his bearings, then starts away.

Shella watches him go from her bedroom window.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

Frank continues down the rough streets, passing by small houses with cracking paint and chain link fences protecting lawns that haven't been watered in months.

Several of the houses have ROUGH-LOOKING MEN gathered on their front porches, all eyeing Frank suspiciously...

Frank ignores them, continuing on his way, eyes and ears alert to his surroundings --

A DOG YELPS IN PAIN. THEN IT YELPS AGAIN. AND AGAIN.

Frank turns toward the sound, sees: A TOUGH-LOOKING MAN (40s) menacing his frightened-looking GERMAN SHEPHERD (*NOTE: THIS IS THE PREVIOUSLY SEEN DOG NAMED "ACE"*).

Frank notices: the dog's ears remain inert amidst the man's VIOLENT YELLING. The man grabs a rusty hoe from the lawn, starts after the whimpering and frightened dog.

Frank has seen enough.

EXT. FRONT YARD, HOUSE - DAY

Tough-Looking Man has backed the scared German Shepherd into a corner of the chain link fence. He lifts the rusty hoe to beat the dog --

His hand is suddenly grabbed from behind -- Tough-Looking Man is confused -- turns -- discovers:

Frank is standing in his front yard, holding onto the man's arms to prevent him from beating his dog --

TOUGH-LOOKING MAN
The fuck you doin'?

Frank just stares Tough-Looking Man down as he moves himself between the man and the dog. Protectively.

Tough-Looking Man realizes what's happening:

TOUGH-LOOKING MAN (CONT'D)
Okay. You want to take my dog's beating, be my guest -- but somebody's gonna get their ass whupped today.

At that Tough-Looking Man swings at Frank with the rusty three-pronged hoe -- a makeshift deadly weapon!

Frank evades the man's violent swings and thrusts -- grabs hold of the hoe mid-swing -- extends the man's arms -- then rams his forearms into the back of his elbows:

THEY SNAP as the MAN SCREAMS IN TERRIBLE PAIN!

His POSSE -- all as tough-looking as he is -- pile out of the house in response as Frank takes hold of the hoe.

The tough-looking man's posse files out of the house and down the porch steps, all attacking Frank!

But he wields the old gardening hoe as if it was a type of WUSHU SPEAR, taking out the entirety of the posse with expertly timed swings, stabs, and circular blocks!

TIME CUT TO: the entirety of the posse is now splayed on the front lawn, a small crowd gathered in the streets to see what's happening -- nobody daring to confront Frank.

Frank moves across the lawn toward the scared German Shepherd, still whimpering in the corner of the yard, looking away from the action, cowering in the corner.

Frank CLAPS HIS HANDS behind the dog's head:

The dog doesn't react. It's ears not even flinching.

Frank CLAPS his hands behind the dog, LOUDER this time:

Again, no reaction from the dog.

Frank looks over to the Tough-Looking Man, who realizes:

TOUGH-LOOKING MAN (CONT'D)
It can't hear?

Frank nods. Then walks up to the Tough-Looking Man, who continues to hold his elbows, cowering like... a dog.

TOUGH-LOOKING MAN (CONT'D)
I -- I'm sorry, man -- I didn't know the goddamned thing was deaf!

Frank -- suddenly just CLAPS HIS HANDS together as HARD AS HE CAN AGAINST THE TOUGH-LOOKING MAN'S EARS!

Then does it again to be sure -- blood now running out of one of his ears, the man CRYING OUT IN TREMENDOUS PAIN:

TOUGH-LOOKING MAN (CONT'D)

I -- I can't hear anything -- my ears --
they're -- they're just ringing!

Frank smiles with grim satisfaction at that. Then kicks the once Tough-Looking Man aside, making his way back to the German Shepherd.

He tenderly rubs his hands together in front of the dog's face, making sure to get its attention. The German Shepherd turns to Frank with its sad, canine eyes.

Frank smiles ever-so-slightly at it, then taps his leg twice so that the dog can see the big movements, then turns and walks away.

The dog realizes what's happening... then follows.

FRANK (V.O.)

A guy who doesn't talk, with a dog that
can't hear.

Frank and the German Shepherd exit the front yard, nobody daring to say a word or try and stop them as they continue away, and down the street.

FRANK (V.O.)

A match made in heaven if you ask me.

Frank and his new dog fade from view.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Frank dumps some leftovers into a bowl, then sets it on the floor. His new dog CRIES gratefully -- is clearly ravenous as it begins devouring the food.

FRANK (V.O.)

And even though he'd never know it, I
would eventually name my dog Ace.

Frank watches Ace with love in his eyes.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank works on the computer in his office, Ace curled by his feet:

REVEAL -- THE COMPUTER SCREEN: Frank is reading the WEATHER REPORT for the night his wife and daughter were killed (*NOTE: the date of a bookmarked story about their deaths is visible just behind the weather report, the dates matching*). Frank is intrigued:

FRANK (V.O.)

It was only 34-degrees out the night my wife and daughter were killed, which didn't make any sense...

That is troubling to Frank (for reasons we will discover) -- but for now he's interrupted by THE DOORBELL.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Frank opens the door to Shella, the young nurse who took care of his wounds after he decimated the local gang that runs the streets of her neighborhood.

She looks nervous. Especially when she hands him something:

SHELLA

You, uh, you left this at my house.

REVEAL: it's Frank's wallet.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

Your address is obviously on your Driver's License -- I'm not, like, stalking you or anything.

Shella smiles a goofy and lovable smile as her nerves and the awkwardness of the moment kick-in and she really starts to ramble:

SHELLA (CONT'D)

I mean, I would stalk you -- it's not like you're not totally stalkable or anything, it's just...
(she trails off)
I'm going to stop now.

Shella just smiles again. Blushing.

She is totally adorable.

Frank can't help it -- there's a hint of a smile on his face as he nods and takes his wallet.

An awkward beat.

Frank shrugs -- there's nothing more for her to say -- then goes to close the door -- but:

SHELLA (CONT'D)
You don't have me fooled, you know.

Frank turns back to Shella, confused. And now there's a new look on her face: she's a little bit hurt and a lot bit defiant:

SHELLA (CONT'D)
I know you can talk.

Frank grimaces in confusion -- is surprised by that.

SHELLA (CONT'D)
Last night -- after I bandaged you. In your sleep... you kept saying two words over and over.

Frank steels himself at that -- he knows what's coming.

SHELLA (CONT'D)
"Sue" and "Olivia."

A pained look rips across Frank's face upon hearing the names of his dead wife and daughter. Frank literally has to work as hard as he can to fight back his emotions.

Shella glances past Frank at that -- glimpses a FAMILY PORTRAIT on the wall behind him of the MANSFIELD FAMILY in happier times -- and she suddenly puts it together.

SHELLA (CONT'D)
Oh my god -- they...
(re: the portrait)
They're your wife and daughter.

Frank nods solemnly.

Shella looks back at the portrait. Notices the small table beneath it with the fresh flowers and the small funeral cards. And now she KNOWS.

And now she feels absolutely fucking horrible.

Because now she realizes what has happened to the broken, tattooed, maniac of a man standing before her.

SHELLA (CONT'D)
I am so sorry.

Frank just holds her gaze as she trails off, her eyes damp with sympathy for Frank.

And there is something about the genuine sympathy that Shella displays for Frank and his plight -- pure sympathy that, quite possibly, Frank hasn't received from anyone else up to this point -- that moves Frank.

He holds Shella gaze.

He feels it:

He can trust her.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Shella finished reading the foreseen BOOKMARKED ARTICLE ABOUT OLIVIA AND SUE'S DEATHS on Frank's computer, then looks up from the screen to Frank:

He is standing in the corner of the room, almost as if waiting for her judgement.

SHELLA

So if I know you can talk, then...

Shella trails off, still trying to figure it out.

But Frank just gives her a look that says: "*You know the answer.*" She knows what's going on here -- she just has to say it, as crazy as it sounds...

And so -- tentatively -- Shella does so:

SHELLA (CONT'D)

You've CHOSEN not to talk?

Frank nods... keep going...

SHELLA (CONT'D)

Which means...

Shella -- really realizes it now -- finally just says it:

SHELLA (CONT'D)

You took a Vow of Silence.

Frank smiles at that -- "*Bingo*" -- as he nods.

Shella nods back... continues tentatively fishing...

SHELLA (CONT'D)

Until...

Frank looks back to the article about his wife and daughter's deaths. Nods toward the word "KILLED."

SHELLA (CONT'D)
Until their killer is caught?

But Frank shakes his head at that. Adamantly.

A scary look in his eyes.

SHELLA (CONT'D)
Not caught...

Frank balls his hands into fists, revealing the **H-A-T-E** tattoos atop each of his knuckles.

SHELLA (CONT'D)
Killed.

Frank nods solemnly at that.

Shella looks back to the article... then back to Frank...

And then -- because of that connection that they have:

SHELLA (CONT'D)
I'm here for you if you need anything.

Frank just holds her gaze.

Where did this young woman come from?

In another life, maybe they'd be something.

CUT TO:

EXT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, FRONT DOOR - NIGHT (LATER)

Frank watches Shella drive away.

She smiles kindly at him.

There is a genuine connection between them.

A genuine affection for one another.

CUT TO:

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, HOME OFFICE - NIGHT (LATER)

Frank -- re-focused on that weather report:

34-degrees the night they were killed.

Something about that fact troubles him.

Frank looks away, his gaze lands on his new German Shepherd. Frank realizes something. Pats the dog to get its attention. The dog responds. Ready for an adventure.

FRANK (V.O.)

There was something I needed to confirm.

Before leaving, Frank grabs his USB flash drive.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, OLIVIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Just as it was on the day she died. A room for a little girl that no longer exists. Frank has trouble being in the space, moves through it quickly, grabs several articles of clothing from Olivia's dresser.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frank grabs several articles of Sue's clothing from her dresser, quickly exits the room.

EXT. SEEDY STREETS, FRANK'S MUSTANG - NIGHT

Frank is parked at the empty lot, overgrown with weeds, where his wife's car had been abandoned. He studies the scene, his German Shepherd seated in the passenger seat.

FRANK (V.O.)

I had no idea why my wife and daughter would have been in this neighborhood, but maybe Ace could help me figure it out...

He looks away from the empty lot, eyes scanning the barren surroundings. Nothing stands out. There is no reason for his wife to have been here. It is a confounding mystery. Frank glances into the distance:

The concrete emptiness of the River Basin beckons in the distance, the final resting place of his wife and daughter's bodies a mere 200 yards away.

He looks past it:

Sees the spot in the chain link fence that's been cut out, where a homeless encampment was.

Frank looks over to his German Shepherd -- then:

He grabs the ARTICLES OF HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER'S CLOTHING from the backseat that he brought with him.

FRANK (V.O.)

Any animal -- human, dog, or otherwise -- will make up for a missing sense by increasing the ability of another. My hearing had improved by my lack of speaking. And my dog's inability to hear meant that his already-stunning canine sense of smell would be off the charts.

He presses the clothes against the dog's nose, allowing him to inhale deeply, immersing the dog's powerful snout in the scent of his Sue and Olivia.

After a beat, the German Shepherd looks up at Frank.

Wagging it's tail. Ready for action.

Frank actually smiles at his new companion.

Two wounded souls helping each other heal.

EXT. FRANK'S MUSTANG - NIGHT

Frank holds the clothes to the German Shepherd's snout one last time -- then abruptly pulls them away.

He marvels as the dog immediately sprints away, searching for the smell that's been abruptly taken away:

It sniffs the ground frantically, correctly makes its way to the spot where Sue's car had been abandoned.

Frank nods, watching with great interest:

His eyes go toward the cut in the chain link fence granting access to the concrete River Basin where they were dumped, expecting the dog to go to the likely path their killer used -- BUT:

The dog does not go from the spot where their car was abandoned and then along the road to the hole in the chain link fence along the River Basin -- RATHER:

It vigorously follows the scent of Frank's wife and daughter from the spot where their car had been abandoned back to where Frank's Mustang is currently parked.

Frank is somewhat confused by this development. He takes out their clothes again, goes up to the dog and pushes them to its snout, and has it try again:

The dog rushes to the spot where their car had been abandoned -- and then immediately rushes back to Frank.

Frank looks back to the hole in the chain link fence:

FRANK (V.O.)
That should have been where the killer
transported their bodies into the
concrete river basin...

Frank goes with his dog to the spot where their car had been abandoned, puts the clothes back in front of its snout, then begins to lead the dog from the abandoned car spot along the route that leads to the hole in the fence.

But the dog immediately turns around, vigorously tracking the scent BACK TO THE SPOT WHERE FRANK'S CAR IS PARKED, close behind where their car had been abandoned.

FRANK (V.O.)
But it wasn't.

Frank can't believe it.

TIME CUT TO: Frank's car has been moved across the street, Frank realizing the dog is probably drawn to their old scents in his car.

He resumes the process, putting the clothes to the dog's snout, then letting it go:

It tracks the scent to the same spot where his wife's car had been abandoned -- and then immediately follows the scent to a spot BEHIND WHERE THE CAR WAS ABANDONED.

The dog sniffs vigorously around that area -- then begins WHIMPERING IN CONFUSION, the scent leading nowhere from that point onward, the dog moving around the area in confused and frustrated circles.

Frank -- just watching... trying to put it together.

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN - NIGHT

Frank and his dog, at the former homeless encampment near the cut in the chain link fence, amidst the debris, looking down toward the spot in the distance of the river basin below where the bodies were dumped.

Frank holds his wife and daughter's clothes to the dog's snout -- but, again, it doesn't pick up any scent of them in this area.

Frank scans the fence that runs along the river.

FRANK (V.O.)
But if this wasn't the place, how else
could he have moved their bodies?

Frank looks around.

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN, CHAIN LINK FENCE - NIGHT

Frank and his dog walk along the vast stretch of the fence that lines the empty concrete river basin, Frank periodically putting the articles of his wife and daughter's clothing to the dog's snout -- but:

It continues to pick nothing up, scent-wise. Frank is about to turn around to go back -- until:

His dog begins to BARK LIKE CRAZY, its snout pressed to the ground, sniffing in circles at a certain point near the chain link fence.

Frank is intrigued... goes to the dog, studies the spot where it has picked up their scents:

REVEAL: the **OFFICIAL LOCKED VEHICLE ACCESS POINT** of the river basin, complete with HEAVILY PADLOCKED swing gate openings, currently locked and sealed shut.

Frank looks back to the dog: it is sniffing like mad, has definitely picked up their scent here.

Frank looks back to the OFFICIAL ENTRY POINT:

ANGLE: THE SIGN POSTED -- "**OFFICIAL VEHICLES ONLY.**"

Frank notices the plumes of his breath in the cold night air, looks at his phone's WEATHER APP: 36-DEGREES.

He SNAPS A PICTURE of the OFFICIAL VEHICLES ONLY sign.

Frank shakes his head at the mounting mysteries. Isn't sure how they all fit together.

He closes his eyes to focus his hearing...

And after a beat:

SOUND DESIGN -- FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE: certain SOUNDS BEGIN TO DROP AWAY... other sounds are HEIGHTENED... GRAVEL... CRUNCHING... the TREAD OF TIRES ROLLING...

Frank opens his eyes, pulls out a pair of small binoculars from his coat pocket:

ANGLE -- FRANK'S BINOCULAR POV: Frank can now see the VEHICLE that he could only hear in the distance thanks to the heightened POV of the binoculars (which he never would have known to look for without HEARING it first).

He removes the binoculars from his eyes. Intrigued.

He looks back through the BINOCULARS: the vehicle moving slowly along the deserted stretch of the concrete River basin in the distance is... A POLICE PATROL CAR.

FRANK (V.O.)
(realizing)
"Official vehicles only."

Frank tries to get a look at the COP driving the vehicle, but he can't see him. He notices the **PATROL CAR ID #** atop the patrol car's roof, goes to write it down --

The sound of Frank's GROWLING DOG suddenly distracts him from the Motorcycle Cop in the distance -- he spins toward the sound:

REVEAL: THREE MEN are approaching. And they are not afraid Frank. Nor of his dog. They are all holding weapons: a CROWBAR, a CHAIN, and a KNIFE.

Chain has just finished smashing in the front of Frank's windshield with his weapon, a heavy padlock at the end of the chain making it akin to a modern-day mace:

CHAIN
You know the drill. Wallet. Watch. Keys.
Any other valuable shit.

Crowbar and Knife LAUGH as they pat their weapons against their palms, Chain's weapon just hanging menacingly by his side -- but they are surprised when:

Frank just shakes his head.

The trio is surprised by Frank's defiance.

Maybe even slightly impressed by it.

Frank pats his GROWLING German Shepherd soothingly between his shoulder blades, keeping his dog calm, not worried in the least.

Crowbar -- just the slightest bit unnerved by that:

CROWBAR
You better obey us, motherfucker.

But Frank keeps just starts toward them.

The trio of thieves are surprised.

Frank is nearly upon them now:

Chain looks at his small posse one last time -- they silently give him the go-ahead:

He lunges at Frank, swinging his heavy chain and padlock!

Frank moves with the swing of the weapon, rearing back with the blow, blocking Chain's swinging arm with one hand while hammering with his other.

Frank swings his fist hard across his attacker's face, instantly dropping his foe, taking hold of his chain as he falls to the ground!

Frank, now holding the heavy chain and padlock, turns to the remaining two attackers. They look nervous.

Frank takes a moment to soothe his SNARLING DOG once again, patting it tenderly on its side.

Which only makes his remaining two foes more nervous.

Frank looks back to them. Eyes inviting them forward.

Crowbar and Knife share a look. Then Crowbar obliges, rushing Frank, taking numerous fast and deadly swings with his weapon.

Frank expertly avoids them, though, moving back, allowing only the smallest amount of room between the crowbar and his body and face, no movement wasted!

And then Frank lunges forward, shoving the palm of his hand into his attacker's nose, smashing it to a pulp, man and weapon falling hard to the asphalt.

Frank kicks the crowbar aside.

Then looks up at the last man standing.

Knife looks terrified.

Suddenly just turns and runs as fast as he can.

Frank looks over at his WHIMPERING German Shepherd. Nods.

The German Shepherd hunts Knife, easily catching up to its prey as Knife tries to hop the chain link fence that surrounds the nearby empty lot.

The dog wraps its strong jaws around Knife's leg and pulls him to the ground. Knife lands with a heavy THUD, the German Shepherd biting at him as he tries to defend himself, SCREAMING IN AGONY AND TERROR --

Frank, upon them now, puts a soothing hand to the dog's neck: it turns, realizes it's Frank, immediately backs away from Knife. Frank pats the dog lovingly.

Knife looks relieved -- until Frank moves forward and kicks his foe in the face. Hard.

Knife -- face smashed, nose bleeding, barely conscious.

Frank kneels down close to him. Then lifts his hands.

Knife flinches defensively, shutting his eyes -- but:

No strike from Frank follows.

Knife cautiously opens his eyes:

Frank has unbuttoned his shirt, revealing the TATTOOED PORTRAITS OF SUE AND OLIVIA.

Knife is confused, has no idea who the portraits are of or what their significance is:

KNIFE

I -- wha -- what's that?

Frank just continues to study Knife. Indicates his tattoos once again -- the action clearly demanding him to focus on the portraits. Knife gets his meaning -- but:

KNIFE (CONT'D)

I don't know who those people are, man.
Swear to God, I ain't never seen 'em
before in my life.

Frank continues studying Knife keenly:

"Knife's" reaction makes it clear: he doesn't recognize them. Frank knows it would've been quite a coincidence if these were his wife and daughter's attackers.

After a beat:

Frank SMACKS Knife in the face, nearly knocking the criminal out with the force of the blows --

KNIFE (CONT'D)

Please -- please, man -- please -- !

But just before Knife has been beaten unconscious, Frank pulls out his cell phone. Knife watches groggily as FRANK DIALS 911... then puts his phone against Knife's ear.

Knife is completely and totally confused. But Frank pushes his cell phone harder against his face -- clearly urging his would-be attacker to speak into it.

Knife is filled with trepidation... but finally stammers:

 KNIFE (CONT'D)
 (into Frank's cell phone)
 I'd like to report... an attack?

Knife looks up at Frank. Unsure.

Frank nods: *Good job.*

Then delivers a concussive blow that knocks Knife out.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER DARKNESS:

PART THREE

*"There is nothing that hinders you from doing what must
be done."*

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

FADE IN:

INT. DOWNTOWN, POLICE STATION, HOLDING CELL - NIGHT

Frank -- now sitting patiently in the holding cell, eyes focused on the grimy wall across from him.

THE BARRED DOORS slide open -- Frank nonplussed as the OFFICER tells him:

OFFICER

Punk you beat up didn't wanna press charges. Neither did his friends.

Frank -- expected as much, gets to his feet...

OFFICER (CONT'D)

You must'a really did a number on 'em.

Frank looks at the officer.

It's hard to tell if the officer is disdainful of Frank's actions, or if he approves.

Or probably a little bit of both.

Frank just moves past the officer and out of the cell.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Frank finishes filling out his release papers alongside SEVERAL OTHER MEN being released from holding.

The SMALL GROUP begins to file out into the night, unnoticed and practically invisible within the hive of activity all around them.

FRANK (V.O.)

Most people can't wait to get out of the police station...

Frank suddenly veers off in a different direction than the rest of the men who have been released, and makes a quick turn around a corner.

FRANK (V.O.)

I was trying to go deeper inside.

Frank is headed back into the police station.

INT. POLICE STATION, UPPER FLOOR - NIGHT

Frank makes his way through the myriad corridors of the police station, illuminated by the dull glow of overhead fluorescent lights.

He uses his skills to evade being discovered by SEVERAL PASSING OFFICERS, but, by and large, the hallways are empty at this hour.

And as Frank continues around various turns we realize:

He seems to know where he's going.

INT. POLICE STATION, CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Frank makes his way down a hallway filled with small offices, eyes scanning the placards beside the doors...

He finally stops at one marked: DET. BILL LUSTIG

Frank looks up and down the corridor. Then enters.

INT. DETECTIVE LUSTIG'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank enters the familiar office of Detective Lustig, the detective who had been assigned to the case of Frank's wife and daughter's deaths.

Frank goes to LUSTIG'S COMPUTER: myriad FOLDER ICONS labelled by the CASE NAMES to which the FILES apply.

Frank finds the "MANSFIELD MURDERS" CASE FILE.

He removes the FLASH DRIVE he put in his pocket earlier.

Inserts it into a port on Lustig's computer...

Then begins copying the case file to his flash drive...

It takes several moments for the file to transfer, Frank on-edge, nervous about being found in Lustig's office...

Frank suddenly cocks his head -- he has HEARD SOMETHING that we are not yet privy to.

SOUND DESIGN -- FRANK'S SOUNDSCAPE: a soft SQUEAKING...

Which Frank FOCUSES on... going DEEPER... then realizes:

It's a SQUEAKING WHEEL.

Moving down the hallway and headed right toward us.

ANGLE: THE COMPUTER -- the FILE IS STILL TRANSFERRING...

Frank moves toward the door, slightly ajar, discreetly peeks out the hallway:

ANGLE: FRANK'S POV -- a JANITOR (40s) is pushing his wheeled trash can (the source of the SQUEAKING WHEEL) down the hallway, moving closer toward us.

Frank returns to the computer: FILE STILL TRANSFERRING...

The JANITOR is heard getting CLOSER...

Frank glances at the computer, anxiety on his face...

TRANSFER COMPLETE.

Relieved, Frank EJECTS his flash drive, turns to leave --

But the janitor has just entered the office.

Startled to find Frank standing there.

Frank frowns regretfully.

He hates to do what he's about to do.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. DETECTIVE LUSTIG'S OFFICE - NIGHT (MOMENTS LATER)

Frank finishes setting the now-unconscious janitor down carefully atop the small couch in Detective Lustig's office. He double-checks that the man is okay.

Then hurries from the office and back out to the night.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, HOME OFFICE - NIGHT

Frank is sifting through the POLICE FILE:

ANGLE: B&W CRIME SCENE PHOTOS: the brutal aftermath of what his wife and daughter's killer did to them.

Frank comes across a photo of the evidence bag containing THE MICROSCOPIC GOLD FIBER that was found in Sue's hair, accompanied by a MICROPHOTO OF THE FIBER.

FRANK (V.O.)

The gold fiber Lustig mentioned before...

Finally studies it a moment longer, then finds the crime scene photo of SUE'S ABANDONED CAR.

Looking closely and in the PURE SILENCE of his home, Frank notices something: THE DRIVER'S WINDOW IS DOWN.

FRANK (V.O.)

Just as I'd thought: my wife's window was down...

Frank hits PRINT, and as the CRIME SCENE PHOTO is spit out from his printer, Frank double-checks the WEATHER REPORT for the DATE THEY WERE KILLED: 34-DEGREES.

FRANK (V.O.)

... On a night when the temperature was 34-degrees.

Frank takes hold of the CRIME SCENE PHOTO of his wife's car, her DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW DOWN, more troubled by that than ever in light of the TEMPERATURE.

He CIRCLES the LOWERED DRIVER'S SIDE WINDOW.

Thinks on it for a moment --

FRANK (V.O.)

Who rolls their windows down in the middle of a freezing night?

Frank looks away -- but his brow suddenly furrows, intrigued by something he had just noticed:

REVEAL: THE CASE FILE -- amidst the text, Frank scans a passage in the REPORT that reads:

"HOMELESS MALE, no ID, POTENTIAL WITNESS..."

Frank is stunned that there might have been a witness to the crime, hits PRINT, scans the REPORT with an increasing sense of urgency, eyes wide:

ANGLE: THE CASE FILE -- a little further down, reads:

"Homeless Male sometimes camps at the edge of the River Basin."

FRANK (V.O.)

The homeless encampment I'd found.

Frank has seen that camp with his own eyes -- which have returned to the words **HOMELESS MALE** and **POTENTIAL WITNESS** in the police report.

FRANK (V.O.)
And a possible witness after all. But how
to find him?

Frank mulls that over -- suddenly gets an idea.

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN - NIGHT

Frank and his German Shepherd, Ace, are parked in Frank's car, staking out the Homeless Person's encampment at the edge of the River Basin, printed out pages from the police report beside Frank.

FRANK (V.O.)
I didn't care if I had to wait for
centuries for the homeless person to
return to his camp -- if there was a
potential eye witness, I'd wait 'till
hell froze over if I had to.

Frank is reading Meditations. Ace is chewing a bone.

They seem content.

Frank looks up from his book often. Scanning the scene --

And then Frank hears it:

THE SAME COUGH WE HEARD AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR FILM.

AN EMPHYSEMA-ADDLED, HACKING COUGH.

Frank puts a hand up -- Ace stops chewing the bone at the command, giving them even more SILENCE than before --

Silence within which:

Frank can HEAR THE COUGH PERFECTLY.

Can tell exactly where it's coming from:

He follows the sound through the night's darkness --

REVEAL: a SILHOUETTED HOMELESS PERSON now visible in the vast distance, making his way to the camp in the fence by the River Basin COUGHING HIS IDENTIFIABLE COUGH --

FRANK (V.O.)
Thankfully I didn't have to wait as long
as I was prepared to.

Frank gets out of the car and starts hustling toward the homeless person --

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN - NIGHT

But when the Homeless Person hears Frank approaching --

He suddenly just turns and runs!

FRANK (V.O.)

Not exactly the actions of an innocent.

Frank takes off after the silhouetted homeless person!

EXT. RIVER BASIN - NIGHT (CONTINUOUS)

The silhouetted homeless person continues down into the concrete River Basin --

Frank follows, running as fast as he can --

Loses his balance down the steep concrete incline --

Tumbles -- regains his footing -- resumes his pursuit --

But:

The homeless person is like a rat in a familiar maze --

And before Frank even has a chance of finding him --

The homeless person is gone, lost to the maze of concrete tunnels scattered throughout the depths of the basin.

Frank cannot believe it.

He looks crushed.

FRANK (V.O.)

My one chance to apprehend what might be an eye witness -- what might even be the killer -- and I scare him off, probably never to return to his encampment again.

(beat)

So how to track him down now?

Frank thinks on that a moment...

Suddenly remembers someone.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN - NIGHT

Frank has lead Shella to the homeless encampment. Shella is holding the print out of the police report about the **HOMELESS MALE** who was a **POTENTIAL WITNESS**.

SHELLA

Yeah, I know this spot well -- it's Mr. Shivers' place.

Frank perks up at that.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

That's not his real name, of course, that's just what we call him, 'cause he gives us a serious case of the creeps...

Frank -- glad she might have a lead.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

When he's here you can see him at night, smoking his cigarettes, drinking his beer. He works on and off at a local diner as a Fry Cook.

Frank -- supremely intrigued by this -- until:

SHELLA (CONT'D)

... I think.

Frank doesn't like the "I think." Shella explains:

SHELLA (CONT'D)

Nobody's ever really gotten a good look at him.

Frank -- disappointed to hear it.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

I wish I could've been more of a help.

He returns his attention to her. It's okay.

EXT. SHELLA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank's car pulls back up to Shella's house to drop her off -- but his attention is drawn to THREE SILHOUETTED MEN on her front porch, including one who easily weighs over 300-pounds. He is as scary looking as they come.

Shella is terrified.

REVEAL: the three men are more of the GANG MEMBERS with FACE TATTOOS -- just like the group who Frank had decimated at his car on the night Shella rescued him.

STILL INSIDE FRANK'S CAR -- REGARDING THE GANG MEMBERS:

SHELLA

The guys you beat up the other night?
Like I told you before -- they're members
of one of the most notorious gangs in the
neighborhood.

She turns away from the scary three GANG MEMBERS on her porch, who have noticed her and Frank and are now slowly making their way to the car...

SHELLA (CONT'D)

But what I didn't tell you is that, about
six or seven months ago, when they found
out I was a nurse, they forced me to
start paying "protection."

Frank -- an inquisitive look at that.

Shella is completely ashamed. She lowers her gaze.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

To steal drugs from the hospital for
them.

Frank realizes what's going down now.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

The head of their gang is a guy named
Casper...

She looks back at the trio of gang members almost at Frank's car now, nodding toward the scary looking motherfucker who easily weighs over 300-pounds:

SHELLA (CONT'D)

Him.

Casper and his men are now at Shella's window, which she rolls down a crack as he leans down -- his calm demeanor only adding to his sense of menace:

CASPER

You got something for me?

Tears in her eyes, voice trembling with fear:

SHELLA

I told you I was done.

CASPER

Nobody's ever done. Not until I say so.

Casper eyes Frank at that.

CASPER (CONT'D)

This *pendejo* gonna play hero?

SHELLA

He has nothing to do with this.

Casper just SIGHS at that.

Then nods toward his two henchmen, one of whom has circled around the car to Frank's side --

They reach into their flannels...

Frank realizes it's now or never:

He suddenly throws open his door, using it as a battering ram, knocking the henchman on his side of the car to the ground -- then leaps out to disarm and then throttle him with a punch to the throat!

Other henchman circles around -- but Frank leaps up at him before he can level his gun and rips the henchman's face down into the driver's side mirror with such force that the mirror is ripped clean from the car!

The gang member's tattooed face is lacerated into a bloody mess as he falls to the ground and Frank smashes the back of his neck with his boot.

At that Frank turns --

Just as Casper levels his gun on him.

CASPER

Gotcha.

Frank is dismayed.

Realizes that this is where his violent journey ends.

His mission of vengeance unfinished.

His wife and daughter's death to go unavenged.

Casper smiles with vile satisfaction.

Then squeezes the trigger --

BLAM!

His gun misfires as Shella finishes RAMMING HER PASSENGER DOOR into the unsuspecting Gang Leader!

Frank uses the distraction to pounce upon the enormous man as they engage in brutal fight, Casper outweighing Frank by over one-hundred pounds.

It takes everything Frank's got -- but at the end he manages to beat Casper into a pulp, pummelling the Gang Leader's face into a bloody, unconscious pulp.

After which -- shaking with rage and fading adrenaline, knuckles a mess of blood -- Frank turns to Shella:

She fights back her tears -- quickly wipes them away:

SHELLA
(voice trembling)
They'll kill me for this, Frank! They
know where I live!
(voice trembling)
What are we gonna do?!

Frank thinks that over for a beat.

Then looks back into Shella's eyes.

He isn't afraid.

CUT TO:

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank and Shella return to his house, Frank petting his German Shepherd lovingly as it rushes to greet him.

Shella still doesn't really understand what's going on.

Especially when Frank leads her down the hallway to the bedroom...

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Shella follows Frank into his bedroom -- notices all the photographs of Sue lovingly throughout, is still very uneasy about this...

SHELLA
I appreciate you giving me a place to
stay until things die down, but...
(hesitant)
This doesn't feel right.

Frank -- not sure what she means.

SHELLA (CONT'D)
You still love your wife.

Frank nods. Absolutely.

Which is why it's even more odd for Shella when:

Frank resumes leading her gently to...

The bed.

And then:

He indicates that he wants Shella to lie down.

Shella -- uneasy... but... she does... and then:

Frank begins to rearrange Shella into the exact same spot where his wife used to lay in bed (NOTE: SEEN WHEN HE SAID "I LOVE YOU" AND KISSED HER GOODNIGHT -- which we FLASHCUT BRIEFLY TO).

Shella lies down in the bed, fully clothed, in the same spot Frank's wife used to lie.

And once the positioning is perfect...

Frank looks up at Shella, tears in his eyes as he smiles gratefully and nods: "perfect."

And then Frank wipes the tears from his eyes... and gets into bed beside Shella, on "his" side of the bed --

Frank, too, remaining fully clothed.

FRANK (V.O.)
If I closed my eyes, I could almost
believe that it was my wife lying beside
me once more.

It is an endearing beat as they both just lie there for a moment, awkwardly, and then...

FRANK (V.O.)
And for that brief moment of bliss I
would be forever grateful to Shella.

... Frank turns out the lights.

TIME CUT TO: Shella lying awake in bed beside Frank, who has fallen fast asleep, both of them still fully clothed, a smile of peaceful contentment on Frank's face.

Shella takes one last look at Frank.

She admires him more than he'll ever know.

As she rolls over to go to sleep --

SHELLA
(whispered - to herself)
You're a good man, Frank Mansfield.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Frank wakes up from a restful sleep, sunlight shining on his face, the windows open, a nice breeze blowing into the room. He rolls over toward his wife's side of the bed. He flinches (comically) --

REVEAL: his German Shepherd is lying in bed beside Frank, watching him with those big, loving, sad eyes, waiting for his master to wake up. Not what he expected.

Frank can HEAR THE SOUNDS OF COOKING COMING FROM THE KITCHEN. He gets out of bed, starts toward the sounds, his German Shepherd trotting along happily behind him...

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, KITCHEN - DAY

Frank enters the kitchen, is greeted by the smell of breakfast and coffee. He smiles at Shella as she turns to him -- but her expression is troubled.

Frank's expression: *What's wrong?*

Shella nods toward the NEWSPAPER, spread out on the kitchen table, the METRO section opened to an article about a **WOMAN'S BODY FOUND IN RIVER BASIN.**

SHELLA
There was another murder the other night.
The body was found near the same place as
your wife and daughter.

Frank's hands are trembling as he scans the article...

SHELLA (CONT'D)
Turns out there's been a handful of
bodies dumped there over the last two
years, but the police have been loathe to
call it a serial killing.

Frank sets the newspaper aside. Unsure how to proceed.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

That potential witness; the homeless guy, Mr. Shivers, who's rumored to work as a part-time fry cook at that diner? Like I said, I've never gotten a good look at his face -- I couldn't pick him out of a lineup -- but... he had this cough.

Frank perks up at that -- he's heard it himself.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

A hacking cough you'd recognize anywhere.

Shella is emboldened. She wants to catch this guy almost as much as Frank does now.

SHELLA (CONT'D)

(determined)

Especially someone who listens like you.

Frank's murderous gaze sets with determination.

FRANK (V.O.)

For me, a recognizable sound was as good as a face... I'd found my mark.

FADE OUT.

OVER DARKNESS:

PART FOUR

"The best revenge is not to be like your enemy."

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

FADE IN:

INT. GREASY SPOON - DAY

We have come full-circle now, back to the crowded diner in the heart of the large city where our film began.

Frank, our modern day Man With No Name, walks into the diner just as he had before.

A SERIES OF QUICK CUTS THROUGH THE FORESEEN SCENE:

-- *Frank taking off his glasses.*

-- *Frank listening keenly, close on his ear.*

SHELLA (V.O.)
Mr. Shivers... Fry Cook... A hacking
cough you'd recognize anywhere.

-- *Frank hearing the EMPHYSEMA-ADDLED COUGH -- which we now know identifies MR. SHIVERS!*

-- *Frank lunging to his feet, knocks past the waitress!*

-- *Frank hopping the counter!*

-- *Frank storming into the back, startling the FRY COOK -- who we now know is MR. SHIVERS, his long gray hair pulled back in a ponytail, his nasty beard covered with his hand as he continues to COUGH LIKE CRAZY!*

-- *Snapshots of the foreseen brutal fight in the back room, Mr. Shivers swinging a knife at his attacker, Frank using the metal fry basket to swoop it away -- until:*

WE CATCH UP COMPLETELY TO WHERE OUR FILM HAD LEFT OFF:

-- FREEZE-FRAME: *Frank holding Mr. Shivers' face atop the grill next to a bunch of bacon and burgers and eggs and hotcakes, Mr. Shivers' arms blurred in mid-flail, Frank's teeth clenched in frightening rage:*

FRANK (V.O.)
Do I still look crazy to you? Unhinged?
Like a maniac? "D -- all of the above?"
(studying the FREEZE FRAME)
Well... you're probably right. But now at
least you know where I'm coming from.

FILM UN-FREEZES: *Frank releases Mr. Shivers' face from the grill, there are already nasty burn marks on the side of his face that had been pressed against it, then:*

Frank shoves the dazed homeless man/part-time fry cook against the wall, Mr. Shivers still in shock, just standing there, motionless as:

Frank reveals the tattooed portraits of Sue and Olivia.

EXTREME SLOW MOTION: Frank -- using all of the stillness and observational abilities he has learned during his Vow of Silence, watching with extreme attention as:

Mr. Shivers looks up from the portraits into Frank's eyes, Mr. Shivers blinking rapidly know with the memories of who the tattooed portraits are, his mind rapidly piecing together what is going on here.

All of which is keenly observed by Frank in this moment.

FILM RESUMES AT REGULAR SPEED -- as Frank cocks his head, the slight movement questioning Mr. Shivers.

Mr. Shivers responds by looking back at the portraits of Sue and Olivia -- then back up to Frank:

He nods in shame.

He saw what happened.

A heavy moment between the two men.

Frank realizes how big this moment will be.

Inadvertently takes a moment --

Which Mr. Shivers takes advantage of, suddenly pushing past Frank, catching him off-guard as he knocks him back and escapes via the kitchen's back entrance!

EXT. DOWNTOWN, GREASY SPOON, ALLEYWAY - DAY

Mr. Shivers rushes from the diner, escaping from Frank and having to tell what he knows --

GROWLING FROM BEHIND --

Mr. Shivers turns -- just as Frank's German Shepherd lunges at him, bringing the fleeing man to the hard asphalt just as Frank exits the diner!

Frank pets his German Shepherd tenderly, the ferocious animal quickly releasing Mr. Shivers from its jaws.

Shivers rolls over, squinting up at Frank amidst the harsh sunlight that streams into the dirty alleyway behind the diner.

Frank leans down -- goes to smash Mr. Shivers' face --

SHIVERS

Okay okay -- I saw it -- I saw what happened that night!

Frank pulls Mr. Shivers up from the asphalt violently, commanding Shivers to tell him more -- which Shivers does, his eyes filled with fear as he blurts:

SHIVERS (CONT'D)

It was a cop who killed them.

Frank is hit hard by the revelation.

EXTREME CLOSE UP -- FRANK'S EYES: as the pieces fall into place now, and it all finally makes sense:

INT. SUE'S CAR, FREEWAY - NIGHT (MOVING) (FLASHBACK)

This imagery should be photographed like the other crime scene B&W stark imagery -- although Frank is "reconstructing" these moments as he uncovers them, they are pieces of what really happened:

Sue is driving back home along the freeway after a long day at the zoo, Olivia asleep in the backseat.

Sue's face is suddenly illuminated by the flashing red and blue lights of a police car in her rearview mirror.

She frowns. Is being pulled over.

EXT. SUE'S CAR, SIDE OF FREEWAY - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Sue pulls her car over, the OFFICER, silhouetted menacingly by the flashing red and blue lights, approaching from behind.

FRANK (V.O.)

Now I knew why somebody rolls down their window in near-freezing temperatures.

SUE ROLLS DOWN HER WINDOW FOR THE POLICE OFFICER.

FRANK (V.O.)

For a cop.

FLASHCUT: THE POLICE FILE PHOTOGRAPH -- of Sue's abandoned car, the window rolled down, something that had always troubled Frank. Now he knows why.

BACK TO SCENE: as the OFFICER -- seen only from the waist up, but even in this limited vantage point we can see that he's big and strong and burly -- commands Sue:

OFFICER (O.S.)
 (face obscured by car roof)
 Let's get off this freeway, ma'am -- it'd be safer if you pulled over on one of the side roads up ahead.

EXT. CITY, SIDE STREETS - NIGHT (FLASHBACKS)

Sue exits the freeway, pulling her car over to the safer side streets -- which is spot where her car will be found abandoned several hours from now --

FLASHBACK: THE POLICE FILE PHOTOGRAPH -- of the MICROSCOPIC GOLD FIBER found in Sue's hair.

FLASHBACK: EXTREMELY CLOSE -- the ACTUAL GOLD FIBER in the EVIDENCE BAG.

FLASHBACK: EXTREMELY CLOSE -- myriad identical microscopic GOLD FIBERS... PULLING OUT OF THE SEA OF GOLD FIBERS... to:

REVEAL: THE GOLD FIBERS FORM THE LAPD UNIFORM PATCH.

FRNAK (V.O.)
 Which also explained...

EXT. CITY, SIDE STREETS - NIGHT

FLASHCUT: Frank puts his wife and daughter's clothes to his German Shepherd's snout to track them --

FLASHCUT: the German Shepherd rushing to the spot where Sue's car had been abandoned, then following the scent it's picked up back to Frank's car behind it --

FLASHCUT: the OFFICER, face still obscured, drags the DEAD BODIES OF SUE AND OLIVIA from Olivia's car, then puts them into his patrol car and drives away.

FRANK (V.O.)
 "Official Access Only."

FLASHCUT: Frank watching his German Shepherd pick up a scent at the **OFFICIAL ACCESS ONLY** part of the fence that surrounds the concrete River Basin.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. GREASY SPOON, ALLEYWAY - DAY (PRESENT)

Mr. Shivers is wracked with guilt. Fights back his tears.

SHIVERS
I was there. I... I saw it.

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Mr. Shivers -- on the night Frank's wife and daughter were killed, at his encampment where the chain link fence is cut open beside the River Basin, smoking a cigarette --

Suddenly notices:

A POLICE CAR (*NOTE: IT IS THE SAME ONE FRANK SAW THE OTHER NIGHT*) stops at the **OFFICIAL ACCESS ONLY** portion of the fence, the **SILHOUETTED OFFICER** hurrying out of his car as he looks around, then unlocks the fence and hurries back into his car.

Mr. Shivers continues to watch as the POLICE CAR barrels down the concrete bed of the concrete River Basin, coming closer and closer to his encampment, Mr. Shivers feeling like something is going down here.

The police car stops and the still obscured officer get out of his patrol car.

The obscured officer looks around.

Mr. Shivers instinctively crouches down.

The tension is thick in the night air.

Then the obscured officer drags Sue and Olivia's dead bodies from his plastic backseat and dumps them.

Shivers watches him go... glances back at the two dead bodies dumped in the distance of the River Basin.

Knows he's in a world of shit.

EXTREME CLOSE: MR. SHIVERS' EYES -- as they skitter back-and-forth... pull out from them to REVEAL THAT WE ARE:

EXT. GREASY SPOON, ALLEYWAY - DAY

Mr. Shivers continues to look up into the eyes of Frank.

SHIVERS

(ashamed)

I didn't see his face. I really don't
know who it was; just that it was a cop.
A uniformed cop.

(fighting back tears)

I'm so sorry, man. I just -- I got
enough trouble already. I don't need no
more from the cops.

POLICE SIRENS are heard racing toward the diner in the
distance, getting closer, likely responding to a call
about Frank's act of violence in the diner.

Frank studies Mr. Shivers for a long beat.

Then...

Frank nods.

FRANK (V.O.)

I believed him.

At that -- Frank turns and hurries away.

FRANK (V.O.)

Which meant that now I had to figure out
which cop was the man who murdered my
wife and daughter.

EXT. MANSFIELD HOUSE - NIGHT

Frank returns home, his German Shepherd following him
from his Mustang and into the house.

The German Shepherd begins to GROWL at the shadows on the
side of the house as Frank unlocks the front door.

Frank opens the door, pats the dog to soothe it:

The dog takes the lead into the house --

Frank looks back into the shadows --

Is suddenly TASERED!

Frank's German Shepherd responds -- turning around --

But ATTACKER quickly pulls the front door shut --

Trapping the German Shepherd inside the house.

Attacker steps forward, REVEALING:

It is DETECTIVE BILL LUSTIG.

He stands over Frank's prostrate body, Frank writhing in pain at the electrical shock.

Lustig shakes his head at the maniac Frank has become since they last spoke -- the weight loss, the tattoos, the myriad scars from fighting...

FRANK (V.O.)

Could it be? Was the detective assigned to my wife and daughter's case the same man who had brutally murdered them?

At that --

Lustig punches Frank hard in the face.

Whereupon Frank is knocked out as we subjectively:

CUT TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. WAREHOUSE, INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT - NIGHT

Frank -- slowly comes to, realizes he is in an abandoned warehouse in one of the city's industrial districts, Lustig standing over him:

LUSTIG

I don't take kindly to people breaking into my office and stealing files off my computer.

He hits Frank hard in the face.

Frank reacts to the pain in tortured silence.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)

I also don't take kindly to those same people knocking out janitors who work in my building.

Lustig hits him again.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)
 And, lastly, I don't like it when the
 same person, described by too many eye-
 witnesses to count, causes mayhem and
 commits assault at a local diner.

Detective Lustig hits him once more.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)
 So let's start at the beginning: WHY?

Frank says nothing.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)
 What, you don't talk now?

Frank... nods. Lustig is almost amused by that.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)
 For real?

Frank nods.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)
 What, like... like some kind of Vow of
 Silence or some shit?

Frank nods again.

Detective Lustig stares at Frank with a mixture of
 admiration and revulsion.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)
 Christ Almighty -- just when you think
 you've seen it all...

Frank just shrugs and smiles sarcastically -- a moment of
 levity in the stark proceedings: *"What can I say?"*

LUSTIG (CONT'D)
 Well your little Vow of Silence ends
 tonight -- cuz I got some questions and
 you're gonna answer them.

Frank just stares Lustig down.

LUSTIG (CONT'D)
 Why'd you do it? Why break into my
 office, steal files, assault a janitor,
 and cause mayhem at a diner?

Frank just keeps staring. But we realize that Frank isn't
 just STARING at Lustig. He's STUDYING him.

FRANK (V.O.)

I realized that he truly didn't know.
Which meant that he wasn't the officer
who had taken my wife and daughter's
life. Nor was it likely he even knew it
was a cop...

LUSTIG

God damn it, you're gonna talk.

Lustig hits Frank again... and again... and again.

FRANK (V.O.)

My Vow of Silence was being put to the
ultimate test. It would have been so much
easier to talk in this moment. To tell
the frustrated detective everything that
I knew. And to save myself from a world
of hurt.

Lustig continues beating Frank... it is horrific...

FRANK (V.O.)

But as another famous Stoic once said:
*"What matters is not the idea a man
holds, but the depth at which he holds
it."*

Lustig hits Frank again.

FRANK (V.O.)

I had made a Vow. I intended to keep it.
(beat)
I would not be broken.

Frank Mansfield maintains his Vow of Silence.

Lustig finally just shakes his head.

His admiration now trumping his revulsion for Frank.

LUSTIG

I almost hate to have to do this...
but...

LUSTIG FINALLY JUST HITS FRANK AS HARD AS HE CAN --

KNOCKING FRANK BACK IN HIS CHAIR --

THE CHAIR SHATTERING AS FRANK FALLS TO THE FLOOR!

FRANK (V.O.)
 (ironic)
 What do you know: turns out my Vow of
 Silence was helpful in this moment.

Frank suddenly pounces atop Lustig!

A BRUTAL FIGHT between the two men ensues:

Lustig relies on traditional BOXING SKILLS, his JAB, STRAIGHT RIGHT, HOOKS, and UPPERCUTS put to good effect against Frank's MARTIAL ARTS SKILLS.

But, in the end, Frank's combination of hands and legs proves to be too much for Lustig's traditional approach:

Frank finally delivers a stunning KICK to the side of Lustig's head, KNOCKING THE BIG MAN OUT.

Frank just stands over the downed cop.

Knows he's in an increasingly deep world of shit.

Wonders what the hell he should do.

If there's some kind of message he can leave.

Suddenly pulls Lustig's coat aside... pats his body down... finally finds what he's looking for:

Lustig's LAPD BADGE -- which Frank throws to the ground, then grinds against the filthy concrete floor.

After several moments, he throws the now "dirty" badge atop Lustig's body before fleeing into the night.

He's about to exit -- suddenly looks back to Lustig's body, lying flat in the warehouse, knocked unconscious.

Frank has an idea.

EXT. WAREHOUSE, INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT - NIGHT

Frank exits the warehouse, begins skulking around, looking for something...

FRANK (V.O.)
 Had I broken my Vow of Silence, it would have made my life easier in that moment, yes, but it wouldn't have lead me to my just reward, either.

Frank finds what he was looking for.

FRANK (V.O.)
 My Vow of Silence had earned me
 something:

REVEAL: Lustig's unmarked patrol car parked in the shadows nearby. Frank CLICKS it open with Lustig's key.

INT. LUSTIG'S UNMARKED PATROL CAR - NIGHT

Frank has logged-in to the MOBILE DATA TERMINAL inside Lustig's unmarked patrol car, and is busily looking up information on the high-tech computer...

FRANK (V.O.)
 Since the killer was a uniformed cop, I tracked all the tickets handed out in the area where my wife and daughter were killed during the months leading up to my their deaths. Turns out there was one officer who'd written nearly five times as many tickets as the others -- about 200 a month in that region alone...

Frank hits ENTER -- clicking on the officer's file:

REVEAL: the OFFICIAL POLICE RECORD OF A POLICE OFFICER, including all of his background, ID information, etc:

It is OFFICER HANK STRODE, in his official police department photo.

FRANK (V.O.)
 And suddenly it all made sense.

FLASHCUT: *Frank bumping into Strode in the halls of the police station. Long before Frank got into shape and took his Vow of Silence:*

FRANK
 Sorry about that.

STRODE
 No problem.

FLASHCUT: *Strode watching him go.*

FLASHCUT: *Frank, in his "training phase," watching Strode ravage a competitor on the small, local fight circuit.*

Frank stares at the photos of Strode, rage simmering.

He begins looking deeper into Strode's file -- CLICKING LINKS and REPORTS MADE ABOUT STRODE... shocked by his findings:

FRANK (V.O.)

But even more than the tickets was the fact that, according to an anonymous report filed by another officer, Strode showed up back at the locker room the night of their deaths bloodied and disheveled, saying he'd slipped and fallen against a chain link fence after refueling his vehicle at headquarters.

FLASHCUT: Strode in the police locker room, uniform bloodstained, acting furtive.

BACK TO SCENE: as Frank continues looking into him:

FRANK (V.O.)

And then, a check of the traffic citations Strode handed out the night my wife and daughter were killed turned up a ticket with the time 10:37pm written-in over the original 9:12pm -- as if Strode was trying to establish an alibi for the time between 9 and 10pm, which, of course, was the time they had been killed.

FLASHCUT: the digitized carbon copy of the ticket with the time written on the ticket changed to give an alibi.

BACK TO SCENE: Frank is taking all of this in, hands trembling as he continues scrolling through Strode's police record in Lustig's car.

FRANK (V.O.)

Strode's home address was in that file. And although it appeared that he was my wife and daughter's killer, I had to make 100% certain before I ended my Vow.

CLOSE ON FRANK: ready to see his mission through.

He looks scary as hell.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER DARKNESS:

PART FIVE

"To expect bad men not to do wrong is madness."

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

FADE IN:

EXT. STRODE HOUSE, QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

Frank is parked across the street from the small house in the quiet neighborhood. He glances around, waiting for Strode to return home. He catches the reflection of his eyes in the REAR VIEW MIRROR:

CLOSE ON: Frank's icy eyes staring out at us.

Headlights reflect in the rear view mirror, Frank slinking lower in his seat, keeping his eye on the car that approaches, a mean looking '68 El Camino SS.

The El Camino pulls into the small driveway of Strode's house... and then HANK STRODE gets out of his vehicle.

Frank can hardly contain himself. Jaw clenched. Fists gripping the wheel of his car with white knuckled fury.

Strode quickly enters his house.

EXT. STRODE HOUSE, QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT (LATER)

Strode returns to his El Camino, now dressed in workout gear, with a duffel bag slung over his shoulder.

Strode fires up the engine to his vehicle than tears away into the night.

Moments later: Frank follows at a distance.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT (MOVING)

Frank follows Strode's El Camino through the neon streets and digital billboards and skyscrapers alongside crumbling buildings of the city at night.

Several cars behind Strode:

Frank watches Strode via Strode's side mirror: he can tell that Strode is eyeing TWO WOMEN crossing the street.

Strode REVS THE ENGINE of his vehicle as the women cross the street in front of him -- startling them -- then PEELS OUT as the light turns green.

The women are unnerved by the exchange.

Frank is only more emboldened.

EXT. MMA GYM, DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Frank watches Strode fighting at a hardcore looking MMA gym in the heart of downtown. The CLIENTELE at the gym look like the TOUGHEST BADASSES the city has to offer.

And, unlike the first time we saw him fighting in a gi in the local fighting circuit, Strode is currently fighting shirtless, REVEALING:

He is heavily TATTOOED -- his body covered in death skulls and reapers and other violent imagery, the most stunning of which is a POLICE BADGE / SKULL TATTOO, wherein the shape of the LAPD BADGE provides the skull's face, its hollow eyes and death snarl inside the badge.

But as Frank continues to watch his enemy, he realizes how hard Strode has been training. He looks scarier -- *more savage, yet also more skilled* -- than the last time we saw him fight.

Strode is fighting THREE MEN at once in the cage. He is easily dismantling them. Brutally inflicting a stunning display of martial arts prowess upon them.

Strode SNAPS his final foe's knee in half, SCREAMING with blood-curdling savagery.

We're not sure Frank can beat this guy.

And he isn't either.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT (MOVING)

Frank follows Strode at a distance, Strode cruising up and down the freeways at night. Keeping odd hours.

FRANK (V.O.)

I followed Strode for several days and nights...

EXT. STRIP CLUB - NIGHT

Frank watches Strode enter a strip club.

EXT. STRODE HOUSE - DAY

Strode returns home after being out all night.

Frank is watching him from afar.

FRANK (V.O.)
Waiting for the first sign of "proof"...

EXT. MMA GYM - DAY

Strode is working out at another rough-looking MMA gym.

But even though this is a different place, the results are still the same: Strode is absolutely demolishing his opponents, and is easily the best fighter there.

FRANK (V.O.)
For the first sign that I should actually
do what I was prepared to do.
(beat)
What I wanted to do.

Strode is also still the scariest fighter in the gym.

EXT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Strode pulls out of the police station in his patrol car.

Headed out into the night.

Frank is following in the distance.

FRANK (V.O.)
And as the hours turned into days, and
the days into nights, I began to wonder
what it might feel like...

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT (MONTAGE)

Frank follows Strode throughout his night shift on duty:

-- Driving slowly past PROSTITUTES, Strode eying them...

-- Driving through rough neighborhoods...

-- Stopping at a Taco Stand for food, rousting CLIENTS...

FRANK (V.O.)
If I would feel a sense of satisfaction
when my Vow of Silence came to an end...

Throughout his shift, Strode seems to be looking for trouble. Wallowing in it. As if trying to satiate his dark impulses and pitch black needs.

Strode is clearly a bad guy.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT (MOVING)

Frank follows Strode's patrol car from a distance.

FRANK (V.O.)
Or if I would feel the rumored
"emptiness" of revenge.

Suddenly alert and ready for action when:

STRODE PULLS OFF THE FREEWAY, having noticed something.

FRANK (V.O.)
Either way, I was about to find out -- as
Marcus Aurelius said: *"Do what is
necessary."*
(beat)
I had come up with a way to confirm my
mounting suspicions once and for all.

Frank takes a deep breath. Follows Strode off the freeway. Eyes set. Hands clenched tightly on the wheel. Ready for whatever comes next.

EXT. SIDE STREETS - NIGHT (MOVING)

Strode has noticed a CAR stalled by the side of the road next to "his" freeway and killing field. Takes several moments to get out of his car. He examines his cold eyes in his rearview mirror: they are the eyes of a killer.

He readies himself. Then exits his vehicle. Begins walking with deliberation toward his next potential victim: the car is driven by a WOMAN who we can only glimpse via her driver's side mirror.

Strode walks right up to the driver's side of the car:

STRODE
Car trouble, ma'am?

The woman -- not seen, only heard:

WOMAN (O.S.)
Yes, officer. Thank god you're here.

Strode begins fingering his handcuffs -- the kindness from his voice suddenly gone as he commands the woman:

STRODE
Out of the car, hands where I can see
'em.

The woman is confused by that:

WOMAN (O.S.)
Pardon me, officer?

STRODE
You heard me. Stick out you hands.

WOMAN (O.S.)
I --

STRODE
(suddenly enraged)
NOW!

The woman finally steps out of her car, hands raises:

REVEAL: IT IS SHELLA!

And even though this is now clearly a trap that she and Frank have devised, Shella looks scared -- especially when she realizes that one of Strode's hands is still fingering his handcuffs, the other now resting on his gun...

Strode moves toward Shella...

Then shoves her violently against her car --

She SCREAMS!

Strode grabs the back of her hair violently.

Shella begins to cry. Mascara running. Eyes scanning the plain for any sign of Frank.

Strode violently kicks her legs apart wider.

It is clear he wants to sexually assault her.

Shella is really crying now --

Especially when Strode unholsters his baton.

SHELLA
No no -- please! NO!

He goes to ram Shella with it --

HEADLIGHTS SUDDENLY ILLUMINATE THEM from the opposite direction! Strode squints into the bright light facing them. His look goes from confusion to anger -- especially when the driver of the vehicle begins to REV HIS ENGINE.

Threateningly.

Shella is relieved but still overwhelmed and scared out of her wits.

Strode is no longer paying attention to her. He only stares defiantly into the HEADLIGHTS.

The car up ahead suddenly PEELS OUT and begins racing right at Strode and Shella's vehicle!

INT. FRANK'S MUSTANG - NIGHT (MOVING) (SAME)

Frank is racing directly at Strode. Ready to run him over. Teeth clenched. Hands gripping the wheel tightly.

This is the man who killed his wife and daughter.

Frank begins to scream in agony and rage.

Especially when:

Strode just steps out into the middle of the desolate stretch of road. As if daring whoever is behind the wheel of the oncoming car to just try and kill him.

STRODE -- stares into the fast-approaching headlights.

FRANK -- grips the wheel tighter.

Floors the gas pedal.

Levels his gaze. Death in his eyes.

FRANK (V.O.)
I couldn't wait to kill this man...

Frank is about to blast into Strode!

BUT FRANK SWERVES AWAY FROM STRODE AT THE LAST MINUTE.

Then continues racing away down the desolate road.

Frank is anguished at not having just killed Strode -- but -- as Frank looks into his rearview mirror -- it becomes clear that running Frank over wasn't the plan.

FRANK (V.O.)
But killing him with two tons of steel,
versus killing him myself wasn't an
option...

It took incredible restraint for Frank not to do it.

His only satisfaction coming when:

Strode hurries back into his patrol car to pursue Frank.

Just as Frank had hoped he would.

FRANK (V.O.)

I was out for blood. And I intended to
have it on my own bare hands.

Shella just watches them recede into the distance like a woman watching a beloved gunslinger head off to his final showdown, hoping he'll return to her.

I/E. FRANK'S CAR / STRODE'S CAR - NIGHT (MOVING)

A high-speed pursuit through the streets surrounding the River Basin, Frank putting his Mustang through the paces as Strode uses his tactical skills to pursue him.

VARIOUS SHOTS: car chase imagery -- ripping down tight streets and alleyways, wheels skidding around hairpin turns, obstacles barely avoided at nearly 100 mph!

STRODE -- eyes filled with murderous anger as he pursues the person up ahead who interfered with his latest kill. He stays "off grid," preferring to settle this score on his own...

FRANK -- whips around tight turns, eyes darting from Strode's patrol car in the rearview mirror to the road up ahead -- whereupon we realize he's headed straight for the fence surrounding the River Basin -- intentionally!

Frank's car blasts through the OFFICIAL ACCESS ONLY portion of the fence, which is Strode's preferred access point to dump his victims.

STRODE -- recognizes the area, a curious look crossing his face: could the person up ahead realize how "important" this location is to him?

Frank smashes through the fence, blasting down the steep sides of the River Basin and into its dry, concrete basin below -- where he continues to race away!

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN - NIGHT (MOVING)

Strode pursues Frank into the concrete River Basin --

Strode is nearly upon him --

Frank realizes it... eases off the gas ever-so-slightly --

Allowing Strode to gain on him --

Whereupon Strode SLAMS HIS PATROL CAR into the back of Frank's Mustang, nearly hitting it at the point that would cause Frank's vehicle to flip --

But Frank manages to keep control of his car --

STRODE -- about to ram into Frank once more --

But Frank swerves into the adjacent STORM DRAIN right before impact, a nearly 90-degree turn, escaping into the darkness of the huge cavern, momentarily evading Strode!

STRODE -- nearly loses control of his vehicle, but eventually rights it and U-turns, headed back toward the storm drain into which Frank drove.

EXT. RIVER BASIN, STORM DRAIN - NIGHT (MOVING)

Strode turns on his SEARCHLIGHT to illuminate the cavernous darkness of the storm drain into which Frank has disappeared. It looks clear.

He drives cautiously into the dank space, wherein it is so dark that even the powerful beam from his searchlight just trails off into darkness...

Strode continues deeper into the dark tunnel --

BRIGHT LIGHTS SUDDENLY RIGHT BESIDE HIM -- *BLAM!* -- FRANK SMASHES INTO STRODE'S CAR FROM AN ADJACENT TUNNEL!

Frank's SILHOUETTED FIGURE suddenly darts out from his Mustang, Strode momentarily dazed, realizes his car has been wedged into the tunnel.

He pulls out his gun. Then cautiously exits his vehicle --

Movement in the darkness --

Strode turns toward it --

Too late --

Frank lunges from the shadows --

Does a back-flipping kick in which he kicks the gun out of Strode's hand with one foot while delivering a kick to Strode's jaw with the other!

Strode is knocked to the ground.

Mouth bleeding.

Disarmed.

He looks up.

REVEAL: Frank is standing before Strode. He has taken off his shirt, revealing the TATTOOS OF SUE AND OLIVIA.

Strode stares at the tattoos for a moment...

And then we see it in his eyes:

Recognition.

And then... Strode actually smiles at the memory.

Realizing what's going-on here, he gets to his feet.

This is a man who loves a good, brutal, bloody fight.

And he is clearly ready for one.

STRODE

They weren't my first, you know.

(beat)

Won't be my last, either.

At that -- Strode lunges at Frank, and it's on!

An extraordinary martial arts fight ensues between Frank and Strode within the bowels of the concrete River Basin tunnels.

Frank leaps up, grips piping in the ceiling like a pull-up bar, uses it to swing a spinning kick from --

Which nearly knocks Strode's head off --

But Strode manages to wrap his arms around Frank's legs --

Then body slam him hard to the concrete below --

Wrapping one of his legs into a brutal leg lock --

Nearly snapping Frank's leg in half --

FRANK -- struggling with the pain, wincing in agony!

FLASHCUT: the image in Frank's mind's eye of the B&W atrocities Strode committed against Sue and Olivia.

FRANK -- surges with hatred and adrenaline -- finds a burst of strength to kick Strode back with, freeing himself from the leg lock and delivering a spinning roundhouse back kick --

Which connects flush with Strode --

Who falls back into steaming pipes -- smashing them into pieces -- two of which Strode grabs and begins to use like makeshift *ESKRIMA STICKS*!

Strode swings them with brutal force --

Frank barely managing to evade every deadly swing!

Realizes he has to even the score -- BACK KICKS into a smattering of piping behind him, smashing it into several pieces and picking up two "*ESKRIMA STICKS*" of his own.

A brutal, urban version of STICK FIGHTING ensues between the two men, each of them managing to both deliver and evade horrendous blows with the pipes!

Frank finally manages to clock Strode in the side -- Strode reacting in pain -- whereupon Frank leaps into the air and kicks Strode as hard as he can in the head!

Knocking Strode into a ditch in the tunnel!

Frank leaps into the ditch for the kill shot--

SHUDDERS IN PAIN as Strode stabs him in the arm with a broken bottle, plunging it deep into Frank's arm!

And before Frank realizes what's happening --

Strode is on him:

Kicks and punches to Frank's head and body --

Frank staggering back, legs wobbly, bleeding and bruised, broken bottle still protruding grotesquely from his arm!

Strode is bearing down on Frank with psychotic fury in his eyes, raging and filled with unbridled hatred!

Frank is nearly out on his feet --

FLASHCUT: B&W -- as if real and documentary: Sue and Olivia -- **CALLING FOR HELP!**

Frank digs in, finds a reserve of strength:

As Strode lunges for a killing blow, Frank ducks and parries, sending Strode back -- as:

Frank pulls the broken bottle from his arm and stabs it in an arcing motion --

FLASHCUT: B&W crime scene photos: Sue and Olivia dead.

Whereupon Frank plunges it deeply into Strode's neck!

Strode's eyes pop wide.

He staggers back in jagged, spasmodic motions.

Falling against a tunnel wall in shocked alarm.

Blood gushing from his mortal wound.

Frank gathers himself.

Then staggers slowly over to Strode.

FRANK (V.O.)

As a society we're conditioned to
subscribe to the notion that vengeance is
wrong. That it is somehow immoral...

Frank stands over his vanquished foe for several moments.

FRANK (V.O.)

Standing there, staring at the man who
murdered my wife and daughter as the life
gurgled out of him, I felt no "great
emptiness," no, "terrible sense of
remorse," no terrible, "loss of my
humanity"...

Frank leans down close to Strode. Inches from his face.

FRANK (V.O.)

Looking into the eyes of the dying animal
sprawled out before me, I felt only one
thing...

Frank suddenly stomps Strode as hard as he can, his foot
literally crushing Strode's skull into shards of bone.

FRANK (V.O.)

Pure, unadulterated happiness.

FADE TO BLACK.

OVER DARKNESS:

PART SIX

"Accept the things to which fate binds you."

Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

FADE IN:

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN - DAY

Now a crime scene, several patrol cars parked in the dry concrete river, police tape dangling in front of the tunnel like tired streamers.

EXT. CONCRETE RIVER BASIN, TUNNEL - DAY

SEVERAL OFFICERS continue to conduct their investigation into the death of Officer Hank Strode -- including:

Detective Lustig. The look on his face makes it clear:

This one's going to remain "unsolved."

FRANK (V.O.)

Detective Lustig never came around asking questions about the murder. In fact, I never saw him again after the night we had our altercation.

He only adjusts the message Frank had left him:

FRANK (V.O.)

I guess he got my message about the murders having been committed by a dirty cop and he figured to leave well enough alone...

REVEAL: Lustig's badge, which Frank had scuffed and made "dirty," signifying a "dirty cop."

INT. SHELLA'S VW BEETLE - DAY (MOVING)

Shella drives, Frank seated in the passenger seat, his German Shepherd in the back.

FRANK (V.O.)

Having completed my task, I was finally able to break my Vow of Silence. I wondered what words would be important enough to compel me to finally speak?

They are headed across town, Frank staring out the window, taking in all the sight and sounds of the city.

There are two bouquets of flowers on his lap.

EXT. CEMETERY - DUSK

Frank tends to the graves of Sue and Olivia, placing the bouquets of flowers by the headstones.

FRANK (V.O.)

But my Vow of Silence had taught me that
actions truly do speak louder than words.
And that most words really were
pointless.

He pulls a few weeds just starting to bud in the grass,
stands, eyes welling with tears, staring at the
headstones like a man searching for the right words.

FRANK (V.O.)

I also knew, no matter how bad I wished
it wasn't true, that the dead don't hear
us.

Frank puts a hand to each of his beloveds' headstones,
the gesture full of undying love... then:

He turns and walks away.

INT. SHELLA'S CAR - DUSK

He gets back inside Shella's car. She looks at him with
raised eyebrows, curious:

SHELLA

You break it yet?

Frank shakes his head. Almost feels bad about it.

But Shella just nods with understanding.

She starts the car as they head away from the cemetery.

It's clear that Shella and Frank probably have a future
together, but for now they're still taking things slowly.

EXT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, GARAGE - NIGHT

Frank works-out hard in silence. Maintaining his strict
physical regimen, even though his task is complete. His
German Shepherd lies in the corner watching him.

Jumping rope, Frank gets an idea.

TIME CUT TO: Frank is spray painting halos over the
images of his wife and daughter. His guardian angels.

INT. MANSFIELD HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Frank is reading Meditations, his German Shepherd lying peacefully on the floor in front of him, staring out at the night beyond the screen door.

FRANK (V.O.)

I knew that in order to fully complete the task I had set out to accomplish, I would have to break my Vow of Silence at some point, just as I had avowed to do when my task was complete....

Frank notices a passage he's never contemplated before.

CLOSE: Meditations: ***"Think not so much of what you lack as of what you have."***

Frank re-reads the passage. Is struck by it.

He looks over at his dog, who continues to stare forward while lying at his feet.

Frank smiles at broken but beautiful creature.

Then...

He finally breaks his Vow of Silence:

FRANK

Good boy.

But the deaf German Shepherd doesn't hear him.

FRANK (V.O.)

My words went unnoticed by the deaf dog.

Frank watches his dog for a moment, then reaches out and pats him lovingly between the ears.

FRANK (V.O.)

But my actions did not.

The dog reacts. It is happy.

After another moment, Frank Mansfield, our Stoic -- our modern day Man With No Name -- returns his attention to Meditations, a new Vow of Silence having begun, his next adventure lying in wait.

FADE OUT.