

The Fallen- Ep1 Atonement

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The Fallen

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*** . TEASER

*** . INT. BAR - NIGHT

A man is crying. MAURY DEMEULLE sits by himself, drinking. Looks rough, hasn't slept in days. He picks up his phone and makes a call. The BARTENDER cleans glasses and watches him from the bar. It's past closing time.

TONY (V.O.)

Hello?

MAURY

When's a raven like a writing desk?

TONY (V.O.)

Maury? That you?

MAURY

Yeah, I'm pretty far down the rabbit hole this time.

He laughs to himself.

MAURY

I been thinking about coming clean.

TONY (V.O.)

That'd be a bad idea.

Static on the line, breaking up the call.

MAURY

Yeah, well, tough.

TONY (V.O.)

You at the Rec?

More static.

MAURY

Well, I ain't driving.

The bartender puts a glass down and yells from the bar.

BARTENDER

He's mad we stopped serving him!

TONY (V.O.)

I'll be there in a few.

Static as Tony HANGS UP. Sounds like someone's talking.

Maury stands up.

MAURY
 Serious about cutting me off?

BARTENDER
 Yup.

MAURY
 You got any coffee?

BARTENDER
 Yeah, un memento, Maury.

Carlos fills up a cup with coffee and places it on the bar.

MAURY
 What?

BARTENDER
 Nothing. Is it cold in here?

MAURY
 A little, maybe you should get that
 checked. Gonna hit the head.

Maury puts some money down on the bar and staggers away.

***.
 INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

In the bathroom, MAURY squints at the lights flickering.

MAURY
 Carlos! The lights are crap!

He moves to a stall, closing the door behind him. Someone
 jiggles the stall handle.

MAURY
 Someone's in here.

It jiggles again.

MAURY
 Damn it! I said someone's in here.

He finishes urinating and shakes.

MAURY
 Can't even piss in peace.

As he stands at the sink, washing his hands, his breath
 FREEZES. The mirror glazes with ice in front of him. A
 SHADOW is in the reflection behind his. The ice on the
 mirror vignettes Maury's reflection. He looks at the
 DARKNESS behind him in the mirror, and starts to cry.

MAURY
Knew something like this would
happen: just knew it. I'm sorry
about what we did.

Blood runs from his nose and ears, as his face turns blue.

MAURY
It...it can't be you, cause you're
dead. We killed you.

Tears roll down his face.

MAURY
Oh God, I'm sorry.

Maury dies as tears fall down his face.

***.
INT. BAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The BARTENDER mans the bar, cleaning glasses after a long night. He hears noises coming from the back of the bar, where the restrooms are. He throws the bar-towel down on a table as he passes. Pauses just outside the door, putting his ear to it.

BARTENDER
Hey, Maury, you fall in?

No response.

BARTENDER
If you passed out on the toilet...

The bartender pushes open the door to the men's room. Lights flicker. It's dark inside, with a smattering of sparking light.

In the half-light, something's in the shadows of one of the stalls. It's MAURY, hanging and twitching.

Carlos looks ready to vomit, but he gets a grip on himself and pulls out his cell-phone to make a call.

It's the same voice that Maury heard on the phone.

BARTENDER
Get over here, like right now, we
got ourselves a problem.

END OF TEASER

START OR ACT 1

***.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY
POV: from a Deputy Sheriff's car.

CHERYL drives down a lone country road as the theme song plays. People wave as they pass the car, some on foot; some in trucks.

The car drives down several more roads until it comes up behind a POS car that's parked on the side of a dirt road, next to a bridge and river. Someone is lying down in the backseat of the car: passed out.

Cheryl parks behind the car and grabs her sunglasses, puts them on her face and gets out of the car.

The Deputy walks up to the POS car. FRANK sleeps in the back. She KNOCKS, unable to wake him.

CHERYL
Frank, damn it!

Drunken and depressed. The man sleeps in a wrinkled and stained suit. His face is covered in a couple of days worth of beard.

He looks up at her with bleary eyes and rolls down the car window.

FRANK
Good evening, officer, may I help you?

CHERYL
Actually, Frank, it's morning. Have you been out here all night?

FRANK
Depends. What day is it?

Frank opens the door and exits the backseat, but only makes it far enough to put his feet on the road and gives up. When he does, beer cans and food wrappers fall from the car.

CHERYL
Wednesday.

FRANK
Then, yeah, just one night.

CHERYL
You look like shit, Frank...

FRANK
 ...and you wonder why I don't come
 into town more often.

CHERYL
 Well, you need to come in today.

FRANK
 If this is about the car, I was
 sober when I got here, drank after
 parking: swear to God.

CHERYL
 That's not what this is about.

FRANK
 Then what?

CHERYL
 We got ourselves a serial homicide.

***. INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - DAY

FRANK sits in the Deputy's car, parked outside a diner. He looks through his pockets and brings out a broken cigar and frowns at it, taking the front end and stuffing it into his pocket, and then he tries to light the other end, but CHERYL walks out of the diner with coffee. He quickly hides it as she gets in the car: sniffing.

CHERYL
 No. No. No. Don't you be smoking in
 here, Frank.

FRANK
 Wouldn't dream of it.

He stares at the coffee like it's poison, as Cheryl drives.

LATER:

FRANK
 This stuff tastes like ass.

CHERYL
 Sorry, they don't sell the good
 stuff in our small town diner.

FRANK
 What, you mean that fine dining
 establishment only serves crap?

CHERYL

Do your job, and you can go back to drinking beer in your hidey-hole, after you get your car out of tow.

FRANK

You didn't have to go and do that!

CHERYL

That, or ticket you for DUI.

Silence. Frank begrudgingly drinks his coffee and quietly glances sideways at Cheryl.

FRANK

Fair enough. Look: I heard about your dad. I'm sorry.

Beat.

CHERYL

...not sorry enough to come to his funeral.

FRANK

I was busy.

CHERYL

You were drunk.

Beat.

CHERYL

I thought he was your friend: him, you, and Avery, the golden boys of Quantico.

FRANK

More like tarnished brass. Never understood why he quit to become some po-dunk county sheriff.

CHERYL

He had a family to take care of. He had obligations to see to. You remember what duty is, don't you?

FRANK

In case you haven't noticed, duty hasn't been on my radar lately.

CHERYL

Yea, noticed. Avery came.

FRANK

He did? Didn't know that...that
dick. Could've come by.

CHERYL

He's probably embarrassed, didn't
want to see you like this.

FRANK

Don't blame him. I wouldn't want to
see me either.

CHERYL

Dad took care of you when Uncle
Avery needed a place to hide you,
but he ain't here no more, Frank.

FRANK

You're right, he was a friend, but
he killed himself. I'm not the one
you should be mad at. Wait. Did you
say Uncle Avery?

CHERYL

He didn't.

FRANK

Didn't what?

CHERYL

My dad. He didn't kill himself.

FRANK

What makes you say that?

Cheryl pulls over to the side of the road. Up ahead of them
is a SHERIFF taking pictures of a MAN HANGING FROM A TREE.

CHERYL

That.

***.

EXT. THOMPSON HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

A MAN HANGS from a tree in front of his rural house. His
face shows the horror of his death. A SHERIFF stands before
him, taking pictures of the scene, so absorbed in the scene
before him that he doesn't notice as CHERYL and FRANK walk
up behind him.

CHERYL

With Brian here, that makes three.

TONY

Two. Cheryl, nothing links these to your dad.

The sheriff is absorbed in taking pictures of the crime scene and doesn't look up.

CHERYL

Three hangings in a month, Tony, and they don't have anything to do with each other?

TONY

No. Two suspicious deaths that followed your father's suicide.

FRANK

Think someone's using Sheriff Clark's suicide as a template for these murders?

With hearing Frank's voice, the sheriff finally looks up to see that Cheryl isn't alone.

TONY

Didn't say that, and who are you?

FRANK

Agent Wash: FBI.

Frank shows the sheriff his badge.

CHERYL

He's been living out by Jeff Ross' farm. Sorry, I'm being rude: Tony-Frank; Frank-Tony.

TONY

It's Sheriff Roberts. So, you're the drunk I've been hearing about.

FRANK

More of a Federal Agent really, but you probably didn't realize that from my badge.

TONY

Here officially? Or did you come to town cause you're out of booze?

CHERYL

I asked him to help.

TONY

Sorry, but we don't need help on this. Sheriff Clark wasn't murdered, and it wasn't the start of some big case. Short of it is, he took the coward's way out.

CHERYL

He wouldn't...

TONY

...but he did. Listen, I liked him; Hell, we all did, even the criminals around here liked him, but we have to accept the truth eventually, not everything's a conspiracy. Sometimes people are weak.

Cheryl has tears in her eyes, but she does not cry. She gets inches away from Tony's face. She's angry. Her hand is clinched and shaking, ready to hit him.

CHERYL

He was not weak. Watch your mouth.

FRANK

So, you got this then, **TONY?**

TONY

It's Sheriff, and yeah, we got this, and if you two don't mind backing up, I'd like to get back to work.

Cheryl backs up, but stares him down.

FRANK

What's your theory then?

TONY

I think you should leave this to the locals. It's nothing that concerns a wash-out Fed.

Frank holds up a finger, silencing Tony. He pulls out a cell phone and looks at the screen.

FRANK

Sorry for rudely interrupting you, but I thought you might need to see this.

Frank hands the phone to the sheriff.

FRANK

As you can see, that form is also being faxed to your office; if you can't see it too well, it basically says that I'm taking the lead in this now.

Tony hands back the phone.

TONY

Don't know much yet. The last killing was in a bar. We thought it was someone with a grudge.

FRANK

I'd say someone had a grudge with this guy too. Look at the bruising around his elbows, fingers, and throat. He was in a fight. There's new and old wounds all over him, and these patches of black skin. Was he into drugs?

CHERYL

Busted a couple of times for meth.

FRANK

That explains the old wounds, but look at the others, and at his eyes. There's a sadness.

CHERYL

It had to have been at least two, right: one to pull up the rope and tie it, the other to stand down here and lift up the body?

FRANK

(To Tony) Is that what you figure too?

TONY

I guess.

FRANK

You guess? There's only one set of footprints down in the dirt here: yours, Sheriff. Where's the others?

CHERYL

So, there were two in the tree?

FRANK

From the lack of bruising on his neck, where the rope is, he was dead before being hung, plus his footprints aren't here, and if he was dead, where are the drag marks to bring him out here, or the prints of those who carried him?

CHERYL

That doesn't make any sense. How else did he get up there. There's obviously a dead guy hanging in a tree, Frank.

FRANK

Something's off here. Sheriff, what about the house?

TONY

No sign of struggle in there. Went through it already.

FRANK

Maybe we should look again, never know what a fresh pair of eyes can find. You just stay here and contaminate the crime scene some more until the medical examiner gets here.

TONY

I told you; I already looked. There's nothing.

Frank walks to the house, followed by Cheryl. They leave while Tony is talking, ignoring him as if he ceased to exist, leaving Tony alone with the dead man hanging.

***.

INT. THOMPSON HOUSE

The front door opens to a messy house. Old food sits rotting on counters. Dirty dishes piled around the room. A big television sits surrounded by video games.

In walks FRANK and CHERYL. Frank wears latex gloves and hands a pair to Cheryl.

FRANK

Put these on.

CHERYL

You do realize that we don't actually have a medical examiner?

FRANK

Really? Who solves your murders?

CHERYL

We do.

FRANK

I have yet to see one of you with medical training. Who determines the cause of death?

CHERYL

Not many people die unnatural deaths around here, except for an occasional farm accident, cheating spouse, or drunk driver.

FRANK

Sounds like a nice place to live.

Frank uses a pen to poke through things scattered around the room. Cheryl rummages through piles of pizza boxes.

CHERYL

We do have a town doctor, you know. He's the one who figured out that Marsh Brown had been poisoning Old Lady Maggie's cats.

They keep searching.

CHERYL

Turns out, he thought Maggie's cats were cleaning out his chicken coup.

They keep searching.

CHERYL

He ended up putting out poisoned chickens for the cats to eat. Wasn't till later that we found out that it was a fox.

Something falls, scaring both of them. Quieting them.

FRANK

Well, was there a fight or not?

CHERYL

Oh yeah, we had to put Maggie in jail for an afternoon to cool off, finally let her out after she promised to leave him alone...

FRANK

...not the Chickens.

CHERYL

Oh, Thompson? Yeah, he wasn't very social, and I'm pretty sure this place always looks like this.

FRANK

Then why are four game controllers over there, and a plastic cup with lipstick, and the dead man outside didn't seem the type to wear it.

CHERYL

His sister works at Chuck's Diner, but I never thought they liked each other. She's more of a good Christian girl--okay, more of a slutty Christian girl, but he was, well, you know.

FRANK

Yeah, I get it.

Frank picks up a demonic looking statue and gives it a good once over, then begins searching the garbage sacks that are piled in one room.

FRANK

Always hated the whole demon thing, demons and angels both, not very realistic, if you ask me.

CHERYL

My dad always said mom was with the angels now.

FRANK

I don't remember James ever mentioning her. She's the reason he left Quantico, but I never met her.

CHERYL
That makes two of us.

FRANK
Hold on...

CHERYL
...what? Does that surprise you?

FRANK
I think we're getting off the topic here. Hey, does this place seem a little too clean to you?

CHERYL
Yeah, not the word I would've used.

FRANK
Where's the drug paraphernalia?

Cheryl looks confused.

FRANK
Check the bedroom.

Cheryl goes into the bedroom, as Frank sits on the edge of the couch to look over the coffee table. A jumble of half empty glasses sit among empty bottles. He sniffs at the couch, scrunching his nose in disgust, until he notices a bottle that has liquor still in it.

CHERYL
He doesn't even have a bed!

FRANK
Probably why the couch smells like sweat. What's in there?

CHERYL
Bags of trash.

He starts to drink from it, but spies something on the table. He reaches down and picks up a cellphone. He turns it on, but finds that it had been reset and wiped clean. He stuffs it in his pocket.

CHERYL
Hey, Frank!

Frank comes to the door to find Cheryl staring out a window.

FRANK
Cheryl?

CHERYL
There's a shed out back.

***. EXT. THOMPSON HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Outside, FRANK and CHERYL stand in front of a rundown looking shed. Cheryl takes a large rock and smashes the lock, trying to open it.

CHERYL
Are you looking at my ass, Frank?

While Cheryl's trying to open the lock, Frank grabs a metal rod laying on the ground and uses it to pry off the lock. They both pull back from the stench coming from the doorway.

FRANK
I think we found what we're looking for.

CHERYL
After you, kind sir...

FRANK
...and now you're lady-like?

***. INT. DRUG SHED - CONTINUOUS

Frank walks into the shed. It's dark. He tries a light switch, but it doesn't work. Cheryl refuses to enter.

FRANK
Flashlight?

She throws a flashlight Frank.

FRANK
Thanks.

He catches the flashlight and tries to get it to come on, but it's on the fritz. When it comes on, Frank sees broken glass, and the place has been trashed.

FRANK
You coming in?

CHERYL
No!

FRANK
Really? Why?

CHERYL
I ain't going in. Might be spiders.

FRANK

My hero.

Frank sighs and starts looking around the room. It looks like it was a meth lab, but the equipment has been trashed. There are bloody fingerprints on the walls. Letters are written on the back wall in blood. It says, "I'm sorry".

CHERYL (O.S.)

So, what do you see?

FRANK

Unless he was finger-painting with his own blood, I think this is where he was killed.

***.

EXT. MECHANIC'S GARAGE - DAY

Outside the garage, the MECHANIC works on a random car. FRANK'S CAR is parked outside. CHERYL'S DEPUTY CAR pulls up on the road. FRANK gets out, but leaves the door open as he grabs some files from the seat.

CHERYL

Don't forget this.

She offers him his coffee, but he just stares at it. He uses his free hand to grab one of the nitrile gloves from his pocket. Inside, the cellphone that he found at the crime scene is wrapped up. He hands it to her.

FRANK

I forgot: I found this.

CHERYL

You found his phone?

FRANK

Don't get excited. Someone reset it already. Could you run this for prints, without telling anyone?

CHERYL

I'll try. Can I use Uncle Avery?

FRANK

Really, Uncle Avery? Yeah, why not.

CHERYL

Faster than sending it to Little Rock.

FRANK

So, are you giving me a note or something to get my car, without having to pay for the tow?

CHERYL

Nope.

She slams the car door and drives off fast. Nathan comes up behind Frank. They both watch Cheryl drive off.

MECHANIC

Hey, Frank, hadn't seen you in awhile. Started to think you died.

FRANK

Nope. I don't think I'd be that lucky.

Turning, he sees his car.

FRANK

Did she give you any trouble?

MECHANIC

Who? Cheryl, or your car?

FRANK

I take it you got history?

MECHANIC

I've got plenty of history with your car. I sold her to you.

FRANK

With Cheryl.

MECHANIC

Not much. She doesn't tend to keep guys around for long. Last time I HUNG OUT with her was right after they found her dad dead. We got all kinds of drunk that night.

FRANK

Probably explains why she didn't give me a ticket.

MECHANIC

Yeah, she don't have room to talk. We were driving around drunk and naked, shooting that gun of her dad's out the window of the car.

Frank stares blankly at Nathan.

MECHANIC

T.M.I.?

FRANK

Just a bit.

Frank gets in his car, brushing trash out of the way.

MECHANIC

Let you know, I did an oil change
and transmission flush while
waiting for you.

FRANK

Why the hell did you do that?

MECHANIC

Would you rather I charge the FBI
"One Towing due to drunken stupor"?
I don't think that flies on expense
forms.

FRANK

Good point.

***.

INT. DINER - DAY

Small greasy-spoon diner. The bar-stools are filled with farmers and truck-drivers, quietly contemplating their existence and growing old.

Frank walks in. The only person who notices him is Sandy Johnson, the waitress and sister of the latest victim.

SANDY

Hey ya, Hun, sit where you like,
got plenty of booths open. You want
some coffee?

Frank sits and grimaces.

FRANK

Not really, how about some juice?

SANDY

Pineapple, apple, cranberry,
orange, grapefruit, or lemonade?

FRANK

Orange juice is fine.

SANDY
Sure thing, Hun.

Frank looks around before subtly looking through the file that Cheryl had given him about the victim from the bar. He shuts it quickly when he hears Sandy walking up.

SANDY
Here you go, Hun. Do you want a menu, or is your stomach not in it today?

FRANK
You can tell?

SANDY
Oh, I've seen the look of a man suffering from sobriety before.

FRANK
This should be fine, thanks.

SANDY
If you need anything, just let me know.

FRANK
Yeah, just a minute. Are you Brian Johnson's sister?

Sandy looks around the room, looking to see if anybody heard him besides her. She looks over at a guy sitting in the next booth, a guy dressed like a used car salesman, with a saccharin smile that never touches his eyes.

SANDY
Yeah, Hun, he was my brother.

FRANK
Oh, so you've heard already? News travels fast around here.

SANDY
It's a small town.

FRANK
So I keep getting reminded. You don't seem very broken up.

She glances at the slicked hair man again.

SANDY
It was bound to happen sometime.

FRANK

When was the last time you talked to him?

SANDY

Sorry, Hun, been a long time. Now, I got to get back to work.

She disappears into the kitchen. The man comes over to Frank's booth and sits without asking permission.

He extends his hand to Frank.

BOBBY

Hi, name's Bobby Harraway. New in town, or just passing through?

FRANK

Been here awhile. Don't come into town often.

The smile slips a little, but then comes right back.

BOBBY

I'm the mayor here in town. What's your name, son?

FRANK

Frank.

BOBBY

Frank? Just Frank?

FRANK

Yeah, for now. Don't give out my last name till the second date.

BOBBY

Well, Just-Frank, what's your interest in Brian Johnson? I heard the the Sheriff has this in hand.

FRANK

Does he? Well, I'm glad someone knows what's going on around here.

BOBBY

You an old cop or something? You kind of have that feel about you.

FRANK

Dealt with a lot of cops in your past, Bobby?

The slimy smile slips again. The Mayor looks angry for a moment, but in a flash, the smile is back.

BOBBY

Well, Frank, we're having a town meeting about this whole ordeal, tomorrow at my vineyard. It would be good to have everyone's ideas as to what might be happening...

The Mayor hands him a flier from his pocket.

BOBBY

...if you're not too busy. Details to get there are on the back. Or, if you need a ride...

FRANK

...your accent? That Californian?

BOBBY

Yeah, but it's been awhile since I left. Surprised you noticed, nobody usually does.

FRANK

It's one of my parlor tricks.

BOBBY

Can't wait to see what else you've got in the bag. See you, Frank.

The Mayor winks, before turning and leaving the diner, briefly chatting with some of the other diners as he leaves, handing out fliers as he goes from booth to booth.

Frank looks over to see Sandy watching the Mayor leave; she looks worried, notices Frank looking, and ducks back into the kitchen.

A man sits a cup of coffee on the table in front of Frank.

FRANK

Is this: annoy the stranger day? I didnt order coffee.

CHUCK

On the house, looks like you need it. Heard you're working with the locals on this murder. So, you a Fed?

FRANK

Why do you want to know?

CHUCK

Oh, didn't mean to be rude. My name's Chuck. I own this here greasy-spoon.

FRANK

Not very good advertisement, calling your diner a greasy-spoon.

CHUCK

These guys don't mind. They just come here for the all you can drink coffee, maybe get a bite to eat, and stare at Sandy's tits. They wouldn't budge if I was roasting a rat on a spit. They'd just ask for a refill and drop a fork for Sandy to pick up.

FRANK

Guess as long as Sandy doesn't decide to leave town or something, you've got it made.

CHUCK

Except for these dead folk. They got people spooked. Sure would appreciate it if you catch whoever's doing this.

FRANK

Well, I was planning on just going home and jerking off, but since you asked...

CHUCK

...smart-ass. Just figure this out before it drives away my customers.

FRANK

Aren't you just a sentimental bastard?

CHUCK

Business is business. By the way, noticed the pictures you were looking at, why was Maury covered in frostbite?

FRANK
 What does a burger flipper know
 about frostbite?

CHUCK
 Well, I ain't always been a burger
 flipper.

Frank looks down at the cup of coffee, wrinkles his face
 into a sneer, and slowly pushes the coffee back to Chuck.

***.
 EXT. FRANK'S HOUSE - EVENING

FRANK sits in a lawn chair on the porch. He stares
 thoughtfully at an unopened bottle of beer that sits on a
 table next to him.

FRANK
 Don't stare at me like that.

He turns the label to face away, then turns it back.

FRANK
 It's been awhile since I got out.
 You're just jealous because I spent
 time with someone other than you
 today.

CHERYL (O.S.)
 Talking to yourself?

Frank looks up to see CHERYL in civilian clothes, holding a
 brown paper bag.

CHERYL
 I come bearing gifts. A peace
 offering.

FRANK
 The horse which once Odysseus led
 up into the citadel as a thing of
 guile.

CHERYL
 Huh?

FRANK
 It's from Samuel Butler's
 translation of the Odyssey.

CHERYL
 I don't get it.

FRANK

You really are a small town's
child, aren't you?

Cheryl smiles and holds up the liquor.

CHERYL

Piss off. You want some of this
whiskey, or should I just take it
home?

FRANK

Are we brainstorming?

CHERYL

If that's what you want to call it.

FRANK

Can't think of anything else.

CHERYL

Venting?

FRANK

That'd work too.

Frank gets up and offers her a lawn chair. She sits as he
goes inside and comes back out with glasses and more beer.

CHERYL

Beer before liquor makes you
sicker.

FRANK

Never found it matters which way
it's done. All goes down the same.

CHERYL

And you're an expert?

FRANK

I know a thing or two.

CHERYL

What do you think about these
killings so far?

FRANK

Still working on that.

He sits down; grabs the file with the crime photos.

FRANK
You notice the bruising on Brian?

CHERYL
Yeah.

FRANK
And that bruising on Maury.

Frank takes a drink.

FRANK
It's not from a beating. It's
frostbite; look at the black
fingertips on Brian.

Cheryl pours a shot in each glass, and they both drink.

CHERYL
Dad always said you were good.
Frank twists off two beers and hands her one.

FRANK
You're dad was pretty good too.
They take another shot.

CHERYL
My dad didn't have frostbite.

FRANK
He didn't?

CHERYL
Tony didn't say anything about it.

FRANK
If he noticed. He's not exactly the
sharpest knife in the drawer.

They do another shot, slower; the alcohol is working.

FRANK
You know, something's been
bothering me.

CHERYL
Hm?

FRANK
John left Quantico in two thousand
ten. Where were you before that?

CHERYL

That's none of your business,
Frank. You going to tell me what
got you sent to this dump?

FRANK

No, but I can show you what I've
been doing while I've been here.

CHERYL

Besides drinking?

FRANK

Besides drinking. Shh.

Frank walks over and turns off the porch-light. The night
floods in, leaving them in darkness, but soon small green
lights start appearing around the woods. Cheryl walks over
to stand beside Frank, staring in amazement.

CHERYL

Wow, and here I thought you were
looking through cold-cases.

FRANK

A man can't work all the time, and
whiskey only sings a man to sleep
so often. See those glowing lights?
The light's comes from a fungus
called Foxfire; it grows on
decaying wood. My mother taught me
about it when I was a kid. Been
collecting it from the woods here.
Reminds me of things lost.

Cheryl lays her head on Frank's shoulder.

CHERYL

Like what?

FRANK

That's none of your business.

Cheryl sniffs at the air,

CHERYL

Something burning?

FRANK

Damn it! The ramen!

Frank rushes into the house.

***. INT. FRANK'S HOUSE - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

There are boxes and files everywhere. Inside the kitchen, FRANK has no dishes, except for a pot of burning ramen. It smokes as he puts it into the sink. He tries to eat some noodles, but gags and gives up on it. CHERYL laughs at him.

FRANK
Well, that's my dinner.

CHERYL
I don't usually go for sexist stereotypes, but I think you need a woman's touch around here, maybe more than one dish for a start.

Frank unconsciously rubs the finger where a wedding ring should be and SUDDENLY LOOKS TIRED.

CHERYL
Pizza?

FRANK
You can order some, if you want. I think I'm heading to bed.

Cheryl walks behind Frank as he goes to the bedroom door. She peeks inside the room. She's obviously drunk.

CHERYL
Well, the bed looks comfortable enough for two.

Frank goes into a closet and brings out a pillow and a sheet, tossing it at Cheryl.

He shuts the door, leaving Cheryl outside the room, looking disappointed. She takes the pillow and sheet to a couch. After moving some boxes from it, she lays down.

CHERYL
Wonder if it's something I said.

***. INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

FRANK sits on the side of his bed, having removed his tie and jacket. He kicks off his shoes and watches as they knock over things in the room.

He pulls open a drawer in the night table by his bed. There's a picture inside the drawer. He handles it and looks hard into it. He puts it back and closes the drawer, before turning off the light.

***. INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - DAY

FRANK'S cellphone rings, waking him from drunken slumber.

FRANK
Hello?

CHUCK
Frank?

FRANK
Who's this?

CHUCK
Chuck, down at the diner. I have a bit of a problem. Mind coming in?

FRANK
Can it wait?

CHUCK
Not really. Sandy done got hanged.

FRANK
Where?

CHUCK
The diner.

FRANK
I'll be right there.

Frank hangs up the phone, but stares up at the ceiling, looking like he doesn't want to get up.

***. INT. DINER - DAY

CHUCK'S the only person in the diner. He sits alone at the bar, drinking his coffee. His apron is white and clean.

FRANK knocks on the frosted glass door.

CHUCK
Sorry, we're closed today.

FRANK
Chuck? It's me, Frank.

Chuck unlocks the door and lets Frank inside.

CHUCK
Sorry about that. Been trying to keep the regulars out. I called Tony too. He's on his way now.

FRANK

Where's Sandy? Has anyone else
been in here?

Chuck goes behind the bar and pours himself some more
coffee, looks deep into the cup.

CHUCK

Naw, no one else, yet. You know,
Sandy, she was just passing through
this diner. Must've been ten years
now, she came in that door. Said
she was done with this little town,
wanted to head to New York to get
the backwoods out of her system.
She was going to be a star, but
needed a job to get up some
bus-ticket money. I guess she
wasn't as tired of this town as she
thought. After awhile, she had the
money to leave, but never bought
that ticket.

Chuck shakes himself from a daydream and looks up at Frank.
There are tears rimming his eyes. He rubs them away.

CHUCK

Dang allergies. Sorry, where are my
manners? You want some coffee? Just
made some. It's not like any of
it's getting sold today.

FRANK

I think I'll pass. Care to show me
where the body is?

Chuck leads him into the kitchen. Sandy is hanging in the
walk-in. Her body is frozen blue, and blackened from
frostbite. Her face is forever in shock; tears are frozen on
her face. Her hands are claws. There's bruising around her
neck, like she'd been choked.

There are bloody letters on the walk-in door.

They spell out, "FORGIVE ME"

Frank turns to Chuck, who is studying the writing.

CHUCK

I can't quite make it out but
something about it...

FRANK

...it says, "Forgive me."

CHUCK

I wonder who wrote it. I mean, it's not Sandy's.

FRANK

Well, if not hers, then it's the killer's.

CHUCK

You know what. That's odd, looks just like... I recognize it; it's James's handwriting.

FRANK

The dead sheriff wrote this?

CHUCK

That's why I said it was odd. So, you want that coffee now?

***.

EXT. WINERY - DAY

CHERYL walks up a driveway filled with cars; people arrive for the town meeting. She's on the phone with Frank.

CHERYL

You need me to come over there?

FRANK (O.S.)

No. Tony's on his way over now. I'd hate to take that small piece of being the new sheriff away from him.

CHERYL

Could've woken me up this morning.

FRANK (O.S.)

Did you want me to make you some breakfast in bed?

CHERYL

It's a good start.

FRANK (O.S.)

Well, I'll head out to the meeting as soon as Barney Fife gets done contaminating this crime scene.

CHERYL

Okay. See you when you get here.
Oh, and Avery found a print on the
cell phone from Brian's. He's
running the print now.

FRANK (O.S.)

Maybe we finally have some luck.

CHERYL

I'll let you know, once I hear
anything. Just hurry up and get
over here.

Cheryl hangs up the phone and continues inside the meeting.
There are seats organized for the TOWNSPEOPLE, so they can
watch the MAYOR standing on a dais with his microphone.

BOBBY

Thank you, everybody, for showing
up today. Hopefully, we can clear
things up about this.

TOWNSFOLK 1

We've had three murders! There's a
killer running around! What you
doing about it?

BOBBY

Two. The former sheriff sadly took
his own life.

CHERYL

So, these other murders just happen
to be just like his *suicide*?

BOBBY

It's a very sick individual. The
other two had blackened fingertips.
Your father didn't have a scratch.

CHERYL

You know a lot for someone that
wasn't a part of the investigation.

BOBBY

Your new boss keeps me apprised.

CHERYL

Pretty cozy. So, what's your theory
on those two murders?

BOBBY

Brian was known to be into drugs...

A noise rises up from the crowd, as if they agree.

BOBBY

...and we know that Maury had his own run-ins with drugs as well.

The mayor keeps ranting to the crowd, and they listen.

***.

INT. DINER - DAY

FRANK and CHUCK are at the diner's counter. Chuck pushes a cup of coffee to Frank, who looks at it with suspicion. TONY takes pictures of Sandy. There's a LITTLE OLD MAN in a suit, who pokes and prods SANDY'S CORPSE with latex gloves.

FRANK

Tony, you should've been a photographer.

TONY

It's just part of the job, Frank.

FRANK

No, I mean instead of a sheriff.

Chuck puts two empty coffee cups on the counter.

CHUCK

Do they want some coffee?

FRANK

Tony, you want some coffee?

TONY

No, thank you.

FRANK

And you, good doctor?

DOCTOR

That would be nice, thank you.

CHUCK

Cream, sugar?

DOCTOR

Just black, thank you.

Chuck pours a cup. While Chuck is looking the other way, Frank pours something from a flask into his own coffee.

He quickly hides it when Chuck comes back with the doctor's coffee. He hands it to Frank.

FRANK
Why're you giving it to me?

CHUCK
I ain't going in there again.

FRANK
Really?

Frank takes the coffee into the kitchen, when his phone buzzes. He puts the coffee down on a shelf near the doctor.

FRANK
Your coffee's here, doc.

DOCTOR
Thank you, sir.

Frank pulls out his cell-phone and looks at it.

DOCTOR
Welp, one thing's for sure, she was dead before she was hanged.

Frank looks up at Tony and puts the phone away.

FRANK
Tony, is that James' old pistol?

Tony looks down; he's wearing the pistol in a side holster.

TONY
Oh, yeah, forgot I had that on me, took it from Cheryl. Caught her and that mechanic, Nathan, buck naked, drunk, and shooting that thing at empty bottles a few nights ago.

FRANK
Can I see it? Haven't seen that thing in years. Always thought he just kept it for show, you know, some kind of wild west thing.

TONY
Huh? Sure, I guess.

Tony hands the gun over to Frank.

FRANK

He bought this at a pawn shop in California. Some Marine sold it, probably came into hard times, wanting money for more drink.

TONY

You've been there?

FRANK

Been close, real close.

Frank cocks the gun and points it at Tony, and then winks.

TONY

Frank, what the hell?

FRANK

Why'd you erase Brian's cell-phone?

TONY

What you're talking about, Frank?

FRANK

Funny thing: I remember this thing had a twitchy trigger, sometimes it goes off accidentally.

TONY

This isn't funny, Frank.

FRANK

Yeah, I know. So, why'd you do it? Your fingerprints were all over it.

TONY

I picked it up, checking it.

FRANK

You do realize that phone records are not hard to get into, right? You were friends, weren't you?

Tony shrugs.

FRANK

One of his quiet, unseen friends that no one talks about. Trouble is: you, Brian, Maury, and Sandy over there, good friends as kids, then suddenly you stopped talking to each other? The question is, why?

Frank motions with the gun for Tony to move to the front door. Tony tries to answer, but Frank shakes his head, "NO."

FRANK

Let me tell you something else:
your phone calls kept going after
you stopped hanging out. About that
time, you made a new friend, didn't
you? Bobby, the greasy mayor.

Frank grabs one of the cups of coffee and hands it to the doctor.

FRANK

We'll be back in a few, doc. Well,
maybe not Tony, but I will.

DOCTOR

Okay, thanks.

FRANK

By the way: what's that blackness
around the extremities?

DOCTOR

If I didn't know any better, I'd
swear it was frostbite.

As Tony and Frank start to leave the diner, Chuck looks up from his coffee; his eyes meet Frank's.

CHUCK

Told you. I ain't always been no
burger-flipper.

***.

INT. WINERY - DAY

BOBBY still smiles his greasy smile to the crowd. No one realizes that the lights starts to flicker. Suddenly, the microphone shorts and sparks. The CROWD gets uncomfortable.

BOBBY

Wow. Maybe I need to get a new mic.

The crowd laughs nervously.

BOBBY

I vow to not relax, until whoever's
doing this is brought to justice,
just like the justice we did to the
sheriff...er, I mean, that he would
have wanted.

CHERYL
What did you say?

BOBBY
Sorry. I'm sorry. Slip of the
tongue. The Sheriff's murder. I
mean suicide. It was sad. He was a
good man, but we had to...

He looks confused.

BOBBY
...I...we didn't mean it. It was...
What was I saying?

CHERYL
Bobby?

BOBBY
He shouldn't have been there.

Bobby 's face starts to turn red, and he shakes visibly.

CHERYL
My father's death wasn't a suicide?

The lights start failing, flickering. The air turns cold
enough to see Bobby's Breath.

BOBBY
He's screaming, inside my head! I
hear him! Tell her about the drugs!
No. Yes. I did. Leave me alone!

FRANK comes in from a side door, with a handcuffed TONY.

BOBBY
Is it cold in here?

FRANK
Go ahead, tell her what you did.

BOBBY
We were trying to make some money.
Nobody was supposed to get hurt.

CHERYL
Drugs? What about the users? Don't
tell me nobody gets hurt...

BOBBY
...but they're just addicts. Nobody
cares about them.

CHERYL

Drugs? This was all about drugs?
What did you do to my father?

The crowd files out of the room, quietly, as the lights dim and glitch. Suddenly, the lights shut off behind Bobby, leaving a darkness falling on him, halfway in the light, half in the shadows. Bobby's breath is visible, and his skin turns blue. He shakes from the cold. The crowd runs.

BOBBY

He came up on us as we were doing
an exchange. I didn't mean to. He
just wouldn't listen to reason.

CHERYL

And you killed my father?

BOBBY

It was an accident. The others just
helped me clean it up. Tony made
sure it looked like a suicide.
Cheryl, I'm sorry.

The lights flicker. Sheriff Clark's ghost appears, holding onto Bobby's neck raising him off the ground. The lights go out, and the room becomes dark. There is screaming, but it's cut short. In the blinking light, Bobby's body hangs in the shadows, twitching. The lights come back on, and he is hung by his tie from the ceiling fan.

FRANK

And that's why I don't wear ties.

***.

EXT. WINERY - DAY

TOWNSFOLK run out of the winery. FRANK and CHERYL drag TONY out in handcuffs. Cars drive away, leaving the three of them alone in the driveway.

TONY

What the hell was that?

FRANK

I'm not an expert, but I think it's
a pissed off ghost, Tony.

Cheryl rushes at Tony and hits him in the face.

CHERYL

How could you? I'm gonna kill you!

TONY

Pretty sure I deserve that.

CHERYL

You deserve more than that. Why don't we just give him to it?

FRANK

Remember, that IT is your father.

TONY

Can we talk about this somewhere else, like, as we're driving away?

CHERYL

My father should get his revenge.

FRANK

It's your duty as a police officer.

TONY

Really? Can't we just, you know..

Cheryl takes her badge and throws it at Frank; he catches.

CHERYL

Forget it, Frank: no way in hell!

FRANK

Fine!

Frank takes Tony and handcuffs him to a fence, then throws the handcuff keys away.

CHERYL

What are you doing, Frank?

TONY

Yeah, Frank, what're you doing?

FRANK

Leaving him to your father.

Frank walks toward his car, leaving Cheryl and Tony alone.

TONY

Ha ha. Not funny, Frank.

Frank keeps walking.

FRANK

Well, come on. He deserves this. You said so yourself.

Tony looks pleadingly at Cheryl.

TONY
Please, don't do this.

CHERYL
Give me one good reason.

TONY
You're not a bad guy.

Cheryl is frustrated, yet takes out her own handcuff key and unlocks Tony from the fence.

CHERYL
I want you rotting in prison.

TONY
Fair enough

Frank comes walking back.

CHERYL
Thought you were running away.

FRANK
I couldn't run away.

CHERYL
Because it's our duty?

FRANK
No. I threw my car keys away.

***. INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

CHERYL drives; FRANK'S next to her. TONY'S in the backseat, leaning to keep pressure off his handcuffed wrists.

TONY
Never been on this side of the arresting. Thought they were just complaining, but these are painful.

CHERYL
Wouldn't lean too far over. Henry Dorchester threw up back there a couple of nights ago: haven't got it all out.

FRANK
You arrest criminals in your personal car?

CHERYL
No. Ex-boyfriend, long story.

TONY
Nice, Cheryl, real nice.

CHERYL
You're no longer my boss, so I say
this with all due respect: shut up.

FRANK
This isn't the way to the sheriffs'
office. Where are we heading?

CHERYL
Out of town. Ghosts haunt a place,
right? If we go far enough, he
can't chase us. We're heading to
the State Police.

FRANK
Hope you're right. Oh, by the way,
Tony had this when I arrested him.

Frank hands Cheryl her father's pistol.

TONY
Look out!

Cheryl turns the steering wheel sharply, overcompensating to
miss hitting the shadowy figure of the dead sheriff that
stands in the road, looking colorless and transparent.

***. EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

The car is wrecked. The back door is wrenched open by the
wreck. It slowly opens as TONY shoulders it wider to try to
get free. He falls out and pulls the handcuffs underneath
his feet to bring them to the front.

The passenger window is open, and FRANK is knocked out by
the passenger airbag. Tony opens the door slowly and feels
Frank's pockets. He finds no keys.

TONY
You really did get rid of the keys,
didn't you? You're such an ass.

He goes to CHERYL who is dazed and bleeding from the crash,
and he fishes out the keys. He undoes the handcuffs and
cuffs her to the steering wheel, then grabs the pistol that
lays on the floorboard at her feet.

TONY
Don't need you following.

Tony's breath frosts before him. He shakes from the cold as a hand grabs him from behind and throws him back into the dark woods, crashing through the dark underbrush.

JAMES' GHOST
(Whispers)
Cheryl.

JAMES' GHOST looks tenderly at his daughter as she lays there unconscious. His face turns to rage as he turns back to see that Tony has run off. James' ghost howls with anger.

***.
EXT. FOREST - DAY

TONY runs along a creek. He keeps looking around, paranoid that someone's hiding behind every tree, bush, and rock. He stops, hearing something. He points the pistol and fires. Nothing. He runs on. Something makes a sound. He fires.

TONY
Don't come near me!

FRANK (O.S.)
Easy! It's only us!

TONY
Don't you come near me either!

FRANK stands behind a tree and pulls his gun. CHERYL stands behind him.

CHERYL
We're trying to help.

TONY
Didn't want to kill him! He died right there, you know? Bobby pushed him off that cliff right there. That's why he brought me here; it's where he died.

Tony stands in the creek waving the gun around, pointing at a sandstone cliff.

CHERYL
We'll take you to the State Troopers; you'll be safe there.

TONY

No. No. He'll find me wherever we go; it's all my fault, **my fault!** Bobby thought he killed your dad, pushing him off the cliff. I knew he was still alive though, heard him, came down here and finished the job, set up those pictures of the suicide so you couldn't see the bruises. I hid the truth, thinking it'd never get out, but here it is.

Tony fires the gun a couple more times in different directions, laughing hysterically. He looks scared, to the point of crying while he continues to laugh.

TONY

I don't want to die.

CHERYL

I don't doubt that, Tony.

TONY

I deserve this.

Tony's skin starts turning blue, and his shallow breaths freeze in the cold air. His body lifts into the air above the creek. He tries to raise the gun, but his arms are weak.

The JAMES' GHOST comes out from the trees, walking slowly toward Tony. Tony stares at him helplessly.

CHERYL

Dad, no! Don't do it!

The shadow stops and turns to look at her. For a moment, the sheriff's face is visible. It's a pale dark imitation of what it once was in life.

In that moment of distraction, Tony looks alert. He raises the pistol up and points it at Cheryl.

TONY

Sorry, old man. I ain't going out like that. Try and kill me, and I'll put a bullet in your daughter before I die.

Tony drops out of the air and into the creek. James' ghost looks more human now. The color returns as he looks to his daughter. In the confusion, Frank picks up a branch and hits Tony, knocking him down. James' ghost walks over to Cheryl.

JAMES' GHOST

Sorry. Never meant to get you
involved in this.

Cheryl reaches out and touches him. Her hands glow softly.

CHERYL

It's time for you to rest now, dad.
Mom's waiting for you.

JAMES' GHOST

No, she's not. She's still alive.

James' ghost glows brighter and brighter as he fades away.

CHERYL

Wait. She's alive?

When James' ghost vanishes, Cheryl and Frank walk over to Tony's body. Tony starts to move, and Frank hits him again and again with the branch till he stops moving.

Frank bends down and picks up James' old pistol.

FRANK

You mind if I keep this?

CHERYL

Why?

FRANK

Well, it was mine in the first
place. Sold it to your dad. Kind a
think I paid him back for it now.

CHERYL

How're we gonna report this?

FRANK

Um... a branch fell on him?

CHERYL

Well, good luck with that.

Cheryl walks off, leaving Frank standing there staring. He looks down and drops the branch.

TAG

***. INT. FBI OFFICE - DAY

***. OVER BLACK--

TWO DAYS LATER - FBI SATELLITE OFFICE - FAYETTEVILLE, AR

FRANK sits uncomfortably in an interrogation room. He looks tired. There are files spread out in front of him. TWO OTHER FBI AGENTS sit across from him, looking through files.

FBI 1

So, you really believe this stuff?

FRANK

I wrote like it was.

FBI 2

A ghost committed these murders?
You understand how this sounds,
don't you?

FRANK

Sounds like you're busting my
balls, even with a dozen eye
witnesses backing it up.

FBI 2

And we're supposed to take their
word on what happened? Don't you
think there's other explanations?

FRANK

Mass hysteria?

FBI 1

Could be.

FRANK

Human sacrifice. Dogs and cats
living together. Mass Hysteria.

FBI 2

No one mentioned human sacrifice.

FRANK

It's a quote. Never mind.

FBI 1

Are you taking this seriously?

FRANK

This: I take seriously. You: I don't.

FBI 1

You're in hot water here, Frank.

FRANK

Good. I needed a bath anyway.

FBI 2

Do you *really* believe these people were attacked by a ghost, or not?

FRANK

I wouldn't have put it in the report, if I didn't believe it.

FBI 2

So, you're sticking with that then?

The door to the room opens. DIRECTOR AVERY comes in the room, holding more files and a pie with plastic forks. He has a relaxed demeanor, friendly, smiling.

AVERY

I got it from here guys.

The other two look at each other briefly and leave the room.

FRANK

You going to chew my ass too?

AVERY

Who me? Is that what they were doing? Oh, heavens no. You want some pie? Me, I love me some pie.

Frank and Avery start eating the pie.

FRANK

Then, why am I being interrogated?

AVERY

Interrogation's a strong word. Debriefed. Or we call it a review?

FRANK

A what?

AVERY

A review. How'd you feel about your little adventure?

FRANK

Let's just say, I'd rather have my testicles nailed to this chair than do that again anytime soon.

Frank takes a bite.

AVERY

We would like you to do it again. In fact, We want you to do it again full time: heading up a specialized department.

FRANK

Sorry, what?

Avery takes a bite of pie.

AVERY

Frank, there are some of us in the FBI that know about monsters. We investigate them, and if need be, cover them up, so the ordinary folks can go about their lives, not being afraid of every little bump in the night, or every shadow in a darkened room.

FRANK

You knew these things were real? And you didn't tell me?

AVERY

What was I going to say: *'Hey, Frank, by the way, ghosts and demons and shit are real. You wanna help get rid of them?'*

FRANK

Guess not. Wait. Demons are real too?

AVERY

So, now you've entered the looking glass. Are you going to stick this out, or are you gonna quit on me?

Avery gets up and throws his fork in the trash.

FRANK

Demons. Really?

AVERY
I need you, Frank.

FRANK
Head of my own department?

Avery nods.

FRANK
But, you were kidding about demons,
right?

Avery nods, 'No.'

FRANK
Is my job riding on me saying yes
to this?

AVERY
Pretty much.

FRANK
Damn it.

AVERY
Good, it's settled. We'll begin
finding you a partner.

Avery sits on the table.

FRANK
There's really only one person I
can think of, and she's it.

***.
EXT. FBI - DAY

ONE OF THE TWO FBI AGENTS that were grilling Frank walks out of an exit and into a parking lot. He walks to a car and gets in, looks around before pulling out his cell-phone. His eyes go solid black as he makes a call.

FBI 1
We may have a problem.

END OF FILM