

Please Hold

Story By  
Jonathan D. Mabee

Screenplay By  
Jonathan D. Mabee  
&  
Rich Johnson

(c) Jonathan D. Mabee

1 INT. VA HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

A man stares angrily into terrified faces. The gun in his hand trembles slightly as he points it across the counter at the people huddling behind it. Desperation rings in his voice. This is JACOB.

JACOB  
You. Will. Listen. To. Me!

CUT TO:

2 INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - MORNING

35 HOURS BEFORE.

Students and tables are lined in neat rows as a man lectures behind a podium. This is PROFESSOR RICHARDS. Jacob sits amongst the students, attentive and alert. He's taking notes.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
... And so after an exhausting campaign, Gorbachev reluctantly ordered the military to withdraw the last of the Soviet troops from Afghanistan. And in doing so, ended a 10-year proxy-war between the world's greatest super powers and their allies. So now you have the blatant corruption, the loss in Afghanistan, plus the disaster in Chernobyl, plus failing infrastructures, and an empire stretched beyond its capacity to both protect and provide for its citizens... who knows what happens next?

ERIN, early 20's, raises her hand meekly. Professor Richards gestures for her to answer.

ERIN  
The collapse of the U.S.-

BAM. The door bursts open. A MAN in dusty robes enters suddenly, faced covered loosely by a scarf. His eyes dart around the room, observing. They stop on Jacob. He shouts something unintelligible while pulling an AK-47 out from his robes. Everyone, sans Jacob, ducks under their desks in fear; but he remains frozen in place. The man raises his gun, pointing it directly at Jacob. His finger tightens on the trigger.

(CONTINUED)

SMASH TO:

3 INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - MORNING

BANG! Jacob's books hit the floor violently as he startles himself awake. His outburst startles those around him, along with Professor Richards. Jacob stares around the room, bewildered.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
Ahh Mr. Malkins, thank you for reminding me that class is almost over - again.

The students chuckle awkwardly as they begin to pack their things.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
OK, for tomorrow, please read chapters 7 and 8. Thanks for your attention guys, have a great day!  
(beat) Mr. Malkins, swing by my office when you get a chance.

Jacob nods in embarrassment, gruffly hoisting his bag off the floor.

CUT TO:

4 INT. PROF. RICHARDS' OFFICE - MORNING

The TAP TAP of computer keys.

Richards' sits at his desk in a small but inviting office, with book-lined walls and low, warm lighting. A KNOCK at the door causes him to look up. It's Jacob. Richards gestures to a chair opposite him.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
Jacob, come on in.

Jacob enters, sitting a little stiffly.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
How's your week treating you?

JACOB  
Good. Yours?

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
Pretty good, thanks. (Beat.) OK, so  
first off, here's your paper, I  
just got done grading it.

Jacob takes the paper, looking for the grade. It's an "A."

JACOB  
Thanks!

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
Well written and argued as usual -  
in fact, it's one of the better  
papers I've read while teaching  
this class.

Jacob smiles, a little embarrassed.

JACOB  
Thanks, Professor.

Richards adopts a more somber tone.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
You're very welcome. (Beat.) But,  
we also need to talk about your  
falling asleep in class. This has  
to be the 10th time it's happened,  
and it's starting to become a  
serious distraction.

The elation from the earlier praise falls from Jacob's face  
as he looks down at Richards' desk.

JACOB  
Yeah, I know.

Sensing the change in Jacob, Richards changes to a more  
positive tone.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
But you're obviously learning the  
material, and that's the important  
thing. In fact, I get it. I mean  
it's hard to stay awake at 8 in the  
morning and listen to me drone on  
and on.

JACOB  
No, not at all. Your lectures are  
always really interesting  
actually. (Beat.) I just haven't been  
able to fall asleep lately.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

How come?

Jacob opens his mouth to say something, then closes it, sighing deeply.

JACOB

(Flatly)

I dunno.

Richards leans back in his chair.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

You don't?

JACOB

I mean, I guess I do. But you wouldn't understand.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

Try me.

Jacob stares intently at Richards for a few seconds, closes his eyes for a moment, then opens them.

JACOB

This is a hard time of year for me.

Jacob and Richards sit in silence for a moment.

JACOB

Two years ago this Tuesday... I lost two of my best friends.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

What happened?

JACOB

We were on patrol in Ramadi... we were clearing out houses when... We didn't even see it coming. One minute we're joking around... (Sheepishly) I was telling Bradshaw how I was gonna-

Jacob stops abruptly, a slight look of embarrassment on his face as he remembers who he's talking to.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

What?

JACOB

Uh... impregnate his sister?

Jacob shrugs slightly, grinning. Richards rolls his eyes, amused, shaking his head slightly.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

I see.

Jacob lets out a little snort of laughter.

JACOB

Yeah...

His eyes drift out of focus and his face falls somberly, the suppressed memory begins to seep through his guarded walls.

JACOB (CONTINUED)

The next thing I know, I'm compressing a sucking chest wound on Keller. (Beat.) I did everything I could, but the shrapnel was just too deep. (Beat.) And we didn't find Bradshaw's body for almost an hour.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

Holy shit. (Beat.) What happened?

JACOB

A Mortar. That whistle- I'll never forget it...

They both sit in silence for a moment. Richards leans forward a bit.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

I... Is there anyone you can talk to?

JACOB

It doesn't feel like it.

Richards reaches towards a mug on his desk, the movement draws Jacob back into focus.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

Have you talked to a psychologist?

JACOB

I can't really afford it.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
They've got therapists at the  
Student Health Center, don't they?

JACOB  
Yeah, my ex-fiance talked me into  
seeing them. They don't really know  
what to do with me.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
Hmm. What about the VA? They offer  
those kinds of services, don't  
they?

Jacob's demeanor changes to a sarcastic tone.

JACOB  
Sure. But I've been rescheduled 3  
times in the last month.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
But they have people you can talk  
to, right? I mean, it's what  
they're there for, isn't it?

JACOB  
When you can get in to see'em,  
yeah. But you know, budget cuts,  
right?

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
Huh.

Richards pauses for a moment in contemplation.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS (CONTINUE)  
What *have* they done?

JACOB  
Well they did give me some pills  
back when I first got home, but  
they don't really do much.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
Are you still taking them?

JACOB  
No.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
How come?

JACOB

Have you ever had a dream that  
feels like a waking nightmare?

Richards leans back in his seat, quietly digesting what's  
been said.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

How- What do you do to cope?

Jacob looks down at Richards' desk for a moment, then looks  
back up, and just as he opens his mouth to answer, the phone  
on Richards' desk RINGS. They both jump slightly, startled  
by the interruption.

Richards picks up the phone.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

Alan Richards.

Richards listens.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

Hi. Yeah. Hold on a second, I'm  
with a student.

He covers the receiver, and looks at Jacob.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

I need to take this, Jacob. You  
wanna hold on for a few minutes?

JACOB

No, no. Don't worry about it. I  
gotta run anyway.

Jacob stands, picking up his bag.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

(Hurried)

Sure, sure. Listen, try to get some  
help, OK? Go talk to the VA, and  
keep talking to them until they  
help you! And I feel bad saying  
this, but you need to stay awake in  
class, or I'll have to ask you to  
leave. It's disturbing the other  
students. I'm sorry!

JACOB

Don't be. I totally understand.  
Thanks for the time, Professor.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS

Anytime!

Richards directs his attention back to the phone call.

CUT TO:

5 INT. HARDWARE STORE - AFTERNOON

Jacob, now wearing the apron of an employee, lifts boxes from palette to shelf, stocking. His PHONE also sits on the shelf, blaring ELEVATOR MUSIC from it's minuscule speaker.

A VOICE suddenly comes on the line, nearly causing Jacob to drop a box.

VA (FEMALE) OPERATOR

Thank you for calling Veterans Affairs. All of our operators are currently busy, and your call will be answered in the order it was received. Your call is important to us, and we appreciate your patience. If this is a medical emergency, please hang up and call 911. (music changes) Did you know you can access the VA online at [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)?

A co-worker approaches Jacob with a soda in hand. This is RYAN. An older lady lurks behind him. She seems spacey, but warm. This is JAN.

RYAN

Hey man, here's that soda. (eyeing the phone) You're *still* on hold?

JACOB

(Sarcastically)

Nah, I just *really* like the music they play. But seriously, it's only been an hour, no biggie.

RYAN

That's terrible. (beat) Well, while you're waiting, would you mind helping this lady out with a faucet issue?

JACOB

Sure thing.

Ryan beckons Jan over.

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Jan, this is Jake. He's an expert in faucets, and is more than capable of helping you with your issue. (to Jacob) Thanks, Jake.

Ryan departs. Jan approaches Jacob, clutching a faucet tightly. She thrusts it out in front of her.

JAN

This is leaking all over the place! I think I need a new fitter.

JACOB

Oh no! Well let's see what we can do... you say you need a new fitter?

JAN

A fitter, yeah. You know, the little rubbery things that sits inside the thing.

Jacob pauses for a moment, thinking. A second later, he smiles.

JACOB

Oh, you mean a washer.

JAN

No no, my washer works fine. I need a *fitter*.

JACOB

Ah, I know exactly what you're looking for! It can be found down in aisle 12. (he points) Right down that wa--

JAN

(interrupting)

Could you just take me there? I'm terrible with directions and I'm in a hurry.

Letting out a little chuckle, Jacob pulls his phone from the shelf, putting it in his shirt pocket. The tinny MUSIC still emanates from its speaker. He motions Jan to follow him.

JACOB

No problem! If you'd follow me this way ma'am.

They walk down towards the appropriate aisle.

JACOB

How are you doing today?

JAN

Well, it was fine until my sink exploded!

JACOB

I'm sorry to hear that! Hopefully we'll find what you need, and you can get back home to fix it!

JAN

Me too!

The recorded VA message can be heard playing through the phone's tiny speaker again. Jan takes notice.

JAN

They let you use your phone at work?

JACOB

Generally, no. But I've been trying to get an appointment at the VA and--

JAN

(interrupting excitedly)

Oh, you're a veteran?! My grandson is in the Army, and he's coming home tonight! That's why I need to hurry up and get back home to fix this *damn* sink!

JACOB

Ah, I see. Well good for him! It's always nice to come back home after a tour in the desert.

JAN

Oh, did you go to the Middle East? What branch were you in?

JACOB

I was in the Marine Corps, Ma'am - and did two tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

JAN

Wow! Well good for you, young man! Four tours... you must have given those A-Rabs a run for their money!

(CONTINUED)

JACOB

(Grimacing Slightly)

Yes, Ma'am... We sure did. (Beat.)  
How many tours has your grandson  
done?

JAN

Oh, this was his second, I think.  
But we're all so proud of him. Out  
there defending our freedom and way  
of life from those horrible  
Muslims! (Beat.) And of course, he  
just looks so handsome in his  
uniform!

Jacob rolls his eyes slightly, but he knows it's not her  
fault. Ignorance is bliss, after all.

JACOB

I'm sure he does! (Beat.) Make sure  
to welcome him home for me too,  
alright?

JAN

We sure will! And thank you for  
your service too, Jake... You  
should be proud for keeping us safe  
here at home, never forget that.  
Without heroes like you, we could  
never be the greatest country on  
Earth.

JACOB

Uh... Er, well thank you for your  
thank you.

Just as they reach the washers, the music stops playing and  
a THIN VOICE is heard from the phone's speaker. Jacob pulls  
it from his pocket.

JENNIFER

Thank you for calling Veteran's  
Affairs. My name is Jennifer. Can I  
have your Social Security Number?

Jacob, relieved that his call has finally been answered,  
hurriedly grabs a pack of washers and thrusts them in Jan's  
general direction.

JACOB

(Quickly)

These should work. I'm really  
sorry, but I've got to take this

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACOB (cont'd)  
call. I've been waiting forever!  
Thanks for your business!

He walks down the aisle, away from Jan, and puts the phone to his ear.

JACOB  
Hi, yes I'm here. My name is--  
He's cut off.

JACOB  
Oh yeah, sorry. It's 281-33-0804.  
He listens.

JACOB  
Right, I know. I was hoping I  
could move the appointment up  
sooner. (beat). Yeah, I'll wait.  
Thank you.

Jan sidles up behind him, motioning for his attention. She's got a pair of faucet knobs in hand. He raises his hand in response, whispering "Just one second."

She moves a little closer to him.

JAN  
(Quietly)  
Will these fit my sink?

Jacob smiles politely, motioning again for her to give him a moment.

JACOB  
(into the phone)  
Yes Ma'am.

He takes a few steps away. Jan follows.

JAN  
I just want to know if these will  
fit my sink!

JACOB  
(into the phone)  
I'm sorry, give me one second.

He turns to Jan, covering the phone's mouthpiece. His patience clearly starting to fade.

JACOB  
I'm sorry ma'am, but I just need  
two minutes, then I'll give you all  
the help you need, OK? This is  
really important.

He puts the phone back to his ear.

JACOB  
(Into the phone)  
Right, right. I just need to  
reschedule-

JAN  
But I just nee--

Jacob walks a few more feet away, raising his forefinger  
cutting her off. Now Jan is pissed.

JAN  
Listen here, young man! You need to  
put that phone down this instant  
and answer my questions, I need to  
get back home!

Jacob snaps.

JACOB  
Holy shit, Ma'am! Can I have two  
Goddamn minutes? Just hold the fuck  
on, and I'll be right with you.

Jan steps back, shocked and offended. She marches off  
angrily. Jacob is back on the phone.

JACOB  
(Pissed)  
What do you mean you don't have any  
available?! You said that a *month*  
ago. And the month before that. I  
really need to see someone.

Listening.

JACOB  
The 27th? That's in like three  
weeks! Look, I really need--

More listening.

JACOB  
No, it's not really a medical  
emergency- but I can't sleep, and  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACOB (cont'd)  
 it's-- (Beat.) I know you're not a  
 doctor. Fine. Yeah, the 27th works.  
 (sarcastically) Thanks for all your  
 help, I appreciate it.

CUT TO:

6 INT. JACOB'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

CLICK. The door opens and Jacob walks in, dropping a liquor store bag on a table, along with his phone. He moseys over to a bookshelf, kicking off his shoes and placing his wallet and keys on a shelf, which jingles a coin tray perched on top. An engagement ring and Purple Heart sit amongst the change. Next to it is a framed photo, the glass cracked. It houses a well-worn and heavily creased photo of Jacob and a woman embracing lovingly. This is PAIGE.

Jacob sighs as his eyes meet the photo. He then heads towards the bathroom, closing the door partially behind him. His phone vibrates with a call, but he doesn't notice.

He plops himself down on the couch, reaching for one of the bottles, but notices a blinking light on the phone. He grabs it, dialing his voice mail.

PHONE

Please enter your password.

He does.

PHONE

You have two new mes--

He presses the 1 key.

PHONE

First new message:

JACOB'S BOSS

Jake, this is Mike at work. Listen buddy, that outburst today was completely unacceptable. (Beat.) But we know you're going through a rough patch right now with your PTSD. So we've decided to let you take a two-week leave of absence, until you've got a better handle on things, OK? We really like you here, Jake, and want to see you succeed! So get some help from the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JACOB'S BOSS (cont'd)  
 VA, and let's get you back to work  
 as soon as we can, alright? Thanks  
 Jake! Take care and we'll see you  
 soon!

Jake sighs, takes a swig, and presses a key on his phone.

PHONE

Next message:

VA (FEMALE) OPERATOR  
 Hi, this message is for Jacob  
 Malkins: Mr. Malkins, this is  
 Debbie Quail over at the VA. I'm  
 sorry to call you so late in the  
 evening, but we've had to cancel  
 your appointment with us on the  
 27th due to backlogs. Please call  
 us back at your earliest  
 convenience to reschedule for next  
 month. Thanks, and have a great  
 evening.

He deletes the message.

PHONE

Message deleted.

He tosses his phone aside. Taking a large swig from the  
 bottle, he reaches for the remote, turning on the TV. He  
 then grabs a small water pipe, lighting it and inhaling  
 deeply. He holds his breath for a moment before letting out  
 the smoke, and with it, some of his stress. He then swaps  
 bowl for bottle, and takes another long swig of whiskey.

TV (NEWS)

... and as the US again chooses to  
 intervene in the Middle East,  
 thoughts turn to the veterans of  
 the last decade of war in the  
 region, and the lack of care they  
 receive when they come home...

FADE TO:

7 INT. JACOB'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

A clock reads 3:22 am. An annoying INFOMERCIAL BLARES on the  
 TV. One empty whiskey bottle rests next to a half-full one  
 on the table, along with some crushed beer cans. It's also  
 littered with orange VA prescription bottles, lids off,

(CONTINUED)

pills spilling out. Jacob's head bobs with inebriation, and his eyes flicker open and shut.

CUT TO:

8 INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An EXTREME CLOSE-UP of Paige's face is smiling under a brightly lit white sheet. No sound can be heard. Her radiant smile and kind eyes express a deep love, as she gazes playfully at Jacob (POV). She reaches out, caressing his cheek, asking him a question. His response elicits a delighted laugh, and teasing push. She sighs, and closes her eyes. The sounds of IRAQ fade up.

CUT TO:

9 INT. IRAQ - BUILDING - NIGHT

The room is dark and closed-quartered. The Muslim CALL TO PRAYER can be heard over the city's loud speakers. Jacob is looking down at the same picture seen in the broken frame. He folds the photo up gently, placing it back in the inside pocket of his uniform.

A loud, sudden FART is heard in the dark. The sound of LAUGHTER is heard from the 3 other men in the room - BRADSHAW, PETERS, and KELLER - who can now be seen sitting around Jacob.

JACOB

OK, who the fuck's insultin' the prophet?

BRADSHAW

Uh Whiskey. Tango. Foxtrot. Over?

PETERS

Yo. My bad. Just thought I'd add that remix up in here.

Peters makes a CLUB BEAT with his mouth, and FARTS again. The men laugh.

KELLER

Man, fuck this Hadji music. I hate this whinny bullshit- it's worse than country.

(CONTINUED)

BRADSHAW

Nah man, this is my *jam*. I call this shit the G. Dub!

KELLER

Why?

BRADSHAW

'Cause this shit's like Genital Warts, man. It just kinda *grows* on you.

The men laugh again. The radio on Jacob's shoulder CRACKLES to life.

RADIO

Echo-Whiskey One-One, this is Hotel-Bravo, over.

Jacob moves his hand to the radio key, pressing it.

JACOB

Hotel-Bravo, Echo-Whiskey One-One, go ahead.

RADIO

Yeah guys, let's go ahead and rally up at the corner. Area looks secure.

JACOB

Copy that boss. Echo-Whiskey One-One out. (To group) Alright Marines, let's get the fuck out.

They all begin to stand up. Bradshaw let's out a groan as he gets to his feet.

JACOB

Hey Bradshaw?

BRADSHAW

Yeah?

JACOB

Think your sister's gonna groan like that when I'm balls deep? You know I'm gonna get that girl pregnant, right?

BRADSHAW

Hey, fuck you man! Just 'cause your dating my sister, doesn't give you the right to-

(CONTINUED)

A faint whistling sound begins to fill the air. As the whistle becomes louder and recognizable:

KELLER

Mortar! Get the fuck down!

The men try to run towards the exit, but it's too late. CRACK! The mortar hits the side of the building. The men are thrown across the room.

Jacob lies on his back, gently shaking his head, a loud pronounced RINGING blaring in his ears. Time seems to move slower for just a moment. He looks over at Keller, who's coughing up blood and bleeding from the chest. A woman's voice echoes:

PAIGE (VO)

Yes! Oh my god yes! I can't wait to tell my parents! I love you Jacob!

Jacob does a quick self-check, and doesn't find anything immediately wrong with himself. Distorted, he crawls over to Keller. He sees an open wound rhythmically pumping blood from his chest. He grabs a small med kit from his pocket, takes out a plastic card and places it over the wound.

JACOB

It's going to be OK man! Just stay with me!

Paige's voice echoes again.

PAIGE (VO)

(Sobbing)

I'm so happy you're home! When I heard... I thought...

The ambient sounds of the shattered room begin to fade to silence. Jacob is pushing down on Keller's chest, yelling at him. He looks up for the others, but doesn't see anyone. He looks back down at Keller's now lifeless body.

Paige's voice echoes again.

PAIGE (VO)

Please! Stop yelling at me! I'm just trying to help... Jacob, I love you.

Time is now moving slower. Jacob is holding Keller's body, looking around desperately for someone, anyone. He screams for help in the silence.

Paige's voice echoes for the last time.

PAIGE (VO)

(Crying)

I can't do this any more, Jacob. I wish I could, but I can't. I'm scared of you, Jacob. I don't know why you're so angry. (Beat.) Come find me when you've gotten some help, OK? I love you!

CUT TO:

10 INT. JACOB'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Paige's tearful face is briefly seen, before the front door is slammed shut.

SMASH TO:

11 INT. JACOB'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Jacob's eyes jolt open. BEEP BEEP BEEP. His phone's alarm goes off. It's 7:15am. His hair is wet and matted, his face and chest are damp with perspiration. He turns off the alarm, and sits up on the couch. He turns off the TV, and stares at the blank screen for a moment. Letting out a sigh, he gets up.

CUT TO:

12 INT. RESTAURANT DINING AREA - DAY

Jacob eats alone. A tray with food and candy sit in front of him, as he looks at his phone. A little boy in a long coat walks by, tripping over his coattails. Jacob gets up and helps the boy to his feet. He smiles up at him as he gives him the candy from his tray. The boy walks a few feet from him, turns, then whips the coat open, revealing an explosive vest wrapped around his body. Jacob's eyes widen when--

SMASH TO:

13 INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - MORNING

BOOM. Jacob's books fall to the floor as he startles himself awake. Again.

JACOB

No!

(CONTINUED)

Richards and the students jump. Again. Jacob reaches for his stuff, apologizing profusely.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
(Irritated)  
Jacob. The hallway. Now.

Jacob, books in hand, gets up.

JACOB  
(to himself)  
Shit. (to Richards) Uh, sure.

They go into the hallway.

14 INT. COLLEGE BUILDING - HALLWAY - MORNING

Jacob steadies himself against the wall.

JACOB  
I'm really sor--

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
Jacob. This is getting absurd. We talked about this. Now, you need to go home and get some rest.

Jacob tries to interrupt, but Richards speaks over him.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS (CONTINUE)  
*I know that it's a rough time right now, but you need to show up to my class well-rested and ready to learn.*

JACOB  
Professor Richards, please! I'll stay awake. Really.

PROFESSOR RICHARDS  
I'm sorry. I truly am. But Jacob the whole class is being effected by this. You need to go the VA and take care of this.

JACOB  
Professor, please! I'm sorr--

Richards is already back in the classroom, closing the door behind him. Jacob stares at the door, dumbfounded. He smacks the wall.

(CONTINUED)

JACOB

FUCK!

15 INT. VA HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

Sterile yet grimy walls are basked in the glow of harsh florescent light. Dated People magazines and out of date brochures litter functional but ugly tables. A SECURITY GUARD sits lethargically in a corner. A few of the seats are filled with waiting VETERANS. Jacob steps in, pauses a moment, and then heads to the check-in desk. The RECEPTIONIST greets him with false sincerity.

RECEPTIONIST

Good afternoon, how can I help you today?

JACOB

Hi, yes ma'am, I was wondering if I could see someone about some problems I've been having?

RECEPTIONIST

Do you have an appointment?

JACOB

I have one in a few weeks, but I was really hoping to see someone today. You keep rescheduling me.

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry to hear that. Is it a medical emergency?

JACOB

Well no, but- Look, I was just hoping I could talk to someone about my insomnia and PTS-

RECEPTIONIST

(coldly)

Unfortunately we're back-logged with a lot of people right now. There's no way we can get you in today.

JACOB

I promise it wouldn't be more than 20 minutes. I just really need to speak with someone.

The receptionist goes to her screen for a moment, then back to Jacob.

(CONTINUED)

RECEPTIONIST

We can't get you in today. I can set you up with another appointment though, if you'd like.

JACOB

(Somewhat relieved)  
I'd really appreciate that.

RECEPTIONIST

Name, please?

JACOB

Jacob Malkins.

CLICK CLICK. TAP TAP TAP. She goes back to her screen.

RECEPTIONIST

The last four of your Social?

JACOB

0804.

RECEPTIONIST

Ok... it looks like I have a few slots open. What times are best for you? I've got a 7:30...8...8:30...

JACOB

Uh, 7:30 I guess? It's not like I'll be sleeping anyways.

RECEPTIONIST

Great. I've got you down for 7:30am on March 21st.

JACOB

March 21st?! But it's February 4th. That's over a month away!

RECEPTIONIST

I'm sorry Mr. Malkins, but it's the best we can do. Since this isn't an emergency, it takes a lower priority.

JACOB

*Lower Priority?* Are you shitting me? I need to talk to someone now, before this becomes an emergency. I can't sleep. I can't--

(CONTINUED)

RECEPTIONIST

(Interrupting)

Sir, I'm very sorry about your sleep issues, but like I said, that's the soonest we can see you.

Jacob's voice rises with anger.

JACOB

With all do respect, *ma'am*, that's just unacceptable. I really need to speak with someone now. You guys keep blowing me off, and I'm not gonna take it any more.

SMACK! His hand slaps the counter, raising the interest of the Security Guard, who moves towards the desk.

RECEPTIONIST

Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to calm down.

SECURITY GUARD

Is there a problem here?

Jacob barely turns to address him.

JACOB

No, no problem. I'm just trying to speak with someone about some issues I'm having.

SECURITY GUARD

If you can't see someone right now, there's a few hotlines you can call that are trained to--

JACOB

Trained to what? Put me on hold? No. I want to talk to someone face to face, and I want to do it *now*.

The security guard firmly puts his hand on Jacob's shoulder.

SECURITY GUARD

Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to--

In a flash, Jacob unholsters the guard's gun, pushing him into the desk. He steps back.

(CONTINUED)

Jacob stares angrily in to terrified faces. The gun in his hand trembles slightly as he points it across the counter at the people huddling behind it. Desperation rings in his voice.

JACOB

You. Will. *Listen.* To. Me!

The waiting veterans run out of the room, while the five people behind the desk and the guard raise their hands.

SECURITY GUARD

Sir, you don't want to do this.  
Please just put the gun down.

JACOB

Can you hear me?

SECURITY GUARD

(Confused)  
Ex-excuse me?

JACOB

I said, can you fucking hear me?!

SECURITY GUARD

(Nervously)  
Yes sir, I can hear you.

The gun sweeps over the people almost instinctually.

JACOB

Can all of you hear me?

Heads nod and whimpers emerge.

JACOB

Then why the fuck would I put the gun down? (Beat.) You're right. I don't want to do this. But everyone keeps telling me to get help, and the one place I'm supposed to go to get it, keeps telling me to wait. How long do you expect me to... (Beat.) I kept my part of the bargain! I did everything I was told to do. I bled for you. I killed for you. I kept you safe! (Beat.) The sacrifices I had to-

Jacob's eyes redden. The trembling of the gun becomes more pronounced. His voice becomes horse.

JACOB (CONTINUED)

I gave you my life...

A thousand-yard stare falls upon his face.

A moment passes before his eyes come back into an enraged focus, the gun in his hand becoming sturdy as he points it at the people again. His voice booms:

JACOB

(Angrily)

My friends gave *you their lives!*  
(Beat.) But you don't have to see  
their faces every time you close  
your eyes, do you? You don't know  
who they were, or what they were  
like. Or even... how they died.

He looks at each of the people behind the desk. His arm now visibly trembling, tears welling in his eyes.

JACOB

You know what I want? (Beat.) I  
want to tell you what happened, and  
I want you to listen. I want to  
tell you about my friends... these  
random people who were brave and  
stupid enough to do what we did.  
(Beat.) I want you to stop just  
saying 'thank you for your  
service,' if you don't know what  
that service was or what we even  
did. (Beat.) I want you to listen  
to how hard it was... and how hard  
it is now.

Tears stream freely down his face as he begins to sob. He stares at the gun momentarily, then drops it hastily, kicking it towards the guard. The guard immediately grabs it, pointing it at Jacob and makes a call on his radio.

Time slows. Jacob is on his knees, hands behind his head. A faint whistling sound begins to fill the air. The door behind him bursts open, and police officers tackle Jacob to the floor as the sound of the mortar hits.

SMASH TO:

16 INT. BUILDING - DAY

BANG! Jacob's books and folders hit the floor violently as he startles himself awake. His chest heaving, face covered in sweat. He's stares at the ceiling for a moment, before swinging his legs off the side of the cot. He rolls his head around a few times, before settling at it's lowest point. He stares at the floor blankly.

The camera slowly dollies out to reveal that Jacob is now in a prison cell.

FADE TO BLACK

17 CREDITS

PTSD affects about 7.7 million American adults.

It is often accompanied by depression, substance abuse, and other anxiety disorders.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that PTSD afflicts:

- 31 percent of Vietnam veterans
- 10 percent of Gulf War (Desert Storm) veterans
- 11 percent of veterans of the war in Afghanistan
- 20 percent of Iraqi war veterans

However, these numbers are based on those who actually seek treatment.

Research suggests that up to 50% of those with PTSD do not seek treatment due to the lack of resources or the stigmatization of having PTSD."

Out of the 50% that do seek treatment, only about half of them get "minimally adequate" treatment.

It's time to listen. It's time to help.

18 END.