

The Shirts

WRITTEN BY DIANA OSSANA, PRODUCER/CO-SCREENWRITER, *BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN*



Ennis and Jack were my companions for nearly eight years, as real in my imagination as the corporeal. I knew their rhythms, their silences, their longing. But nothing prepared me for the moment I first saw them—really saw them—in costume. It hit me with such force that I had to step outside and collect myself. I stood alone for nearly an hour before I could return and meet the rest of the crew before production began. That day, fiction stepped off the page into flesh.

At a recent Q&A before the 20th anniversary screening of *Brokeback Mountain*, someone asked which scene remains most memorable to me. About half the audience had seen the film. The others were about to. I chose my words carefully.

"For those of you who have seen the film, you will understand. For those about to experience it—you will soon understand. I have two words for you all: *the shirts*." Silence, then a collective intake of breath. Gasps scattered across the theater. A woman in the front row began to weep.

This is my photo from the final scene of our unforgettable, evergreen film. ■